

Name Leland (Lee) Kessler Address 170 Saratoga, Ave. Canton, O. 44708
Telephone Area Code 216-477-0341

MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT

Pilot 1st Lt. Maxwell Judas Plane # and Name Borrowed from 423rd. ?
Mission Date May 21, 1943 Target Wilhelmshaven, Germany
Cause of loss: AA fire _____ Fighter attack X Other, explain _____

Describe conditions in the plane as completely as you can: Visablity was zero after rondevous until almost target area. We came out of cloud cover and began to make some type of formation as we were jumped imediatly by fighters. We were to be lead shbpin our sqd but under the circumstances planes sought any type of protection and we fell into a tail end Charlie position and I have no idea what squadron or group we tacked onto. I didn't seem to recognize any planes as ours. The attacks were all frontal and we released the bombs we were hit with 20MM from one of the attacks. One came through the corner of the cockpit taking out the windsheild post, the pilots control wheel and the throttle handles. The explosion hit both Pilot and Co-pilot blowing or shattering Judas' shoulder and pepering the co-pilots face with shell and glass splinters. Another shell exploded in the nose and in #2 engine setting it on fire. The co-pilot was slumped over the wheel and when I realised we were not making the turn away from the target I came out of the turret and saw the situation. I had been to busy firing my guns but knew we were hit because of the fire in #2. I tryed to take care of Judas who was trying to get out of his seat but the wind and the blood and hydralic oil thattwas on the floor (cont.)

How and where did you leave plahe?

I called over the intercom to abandon the plane and helped pull the pilot out of his seat as he was semi-conscious and with his arm apparently helpless I pulled him through the turret base, opening the door to the bomb bay and out.

What happened when you got on the ground?

I came down in the bay of Wilhelmshaven between a beach and sand bar keeping the patrol boats from being able to get to me. On shore I was captured be a Wehrmach & SS officer.

Did you meet any of your crew mates?

We were taken to the navaa base and driven by truck around the country side to whree other crew members were held. The ball turret gunner had been pitchforked and the Bombadiers body was loaded on the truck. His chute was so perforated it didnt open.

How were you treated, if captured?

In order to get to my captors I had to swim aross a stream that emptied into the bay. As I came up the side of the bank they hit me in the face and when I got to my feet the SS officer knocked me down again. The villa age people spit and threw rocks at me but the guards ran them off. At the naval base I was taken to Admiral ~~Donitz~~ office and given a cup of ersatz coffee and a n Old Gold ciggerett. Donitz

Any additional details, reminiscences, letters, or documents of these events would be appreciated. If you do send such materials, I will copy them and put them back in the mail to you within 24 hours.

Do you know the present, or WW II, addresses of any of your crew or other 306th personnel?

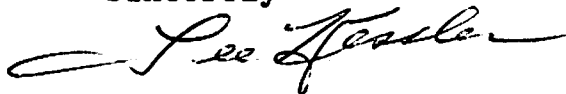
(continued)

and sløpped through the hatch to the nose where through the wind I saw both the bombardier and navagator slumped almost on top of each other. One of the bodies was very bloody and I gave them up for dead. I returned to the flight deck in time to see two holes appear through side where I had been. All told Judas was hit ghree more times before we got out. As I have it figured now, the Navagator was dead and the Bombadier who had a chest type chute was hit and unconcous later must have come to and left the nose or was blown out or fell out but I did examine hñs chute when we went around gathering up the crew and it was full of holes and his body was hardly recognizable. The ball turret gunner was dead and his body was covered with his chute. When I was asked the recognize him I saw a prong which was broken off of what I thought was a pitch fork. The German Sgt. said his chute did'nt open but his body wasin to goog a condition , except for marks on his face and the holes in his rib cage. My radio operator had a broken hip from his chute and one waste gunner a broken toes being drug b y his chute. They took us to the plane which had crashed between a barn and farm house. They told us there was one body in it. This was the navagator.

Some years back I wanted to write^{my} experiences into an auto biography and illâstræe it as I like to do art work. I did cover the main parts and my memories were sharper. A lot of this is taken from my work but not as detailed. I will send you the names of the crews as I listed them at Thurligh. Many times guys flew with other crews when some spot had to be filled in order to gamble and hope they would get closer to that "Lucky 25 ". Many went down or was killed while flying with some other than their crew.

As you can see I am not a typèst but I will do all I can to give you any details of the 368th men, crews, or data that I can. Please let me know what you think.

Sincerely



Lee Kessler

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE
Russell A. Strong, Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr. Laurinburg, NC 28352

Name Leland (Lee) J. Kessler
Address 170 Saratoga Ave. N.W. Canton, Ohio 44708
Telephone (216) 477-0341 Date 12/6/76
Occupation Cust. Fireman Employer Canton City Bd. of Ed.
Address _____ Telephone _____

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:

Enlisted Jan. 12, 42. Ft. Hayes, Col. O. - Shepard Field, Tex.
for assignment. Sent to Wendover Field, Utah. to 43rd Bomb Grp.
Left Mar. 1 for Las Vegas Gunnery School. Graduated Class 42-15
Returned Assigned to 368th B.Sqd. 306th B.Grp. April 16th 1942. Wendover, Utah.

After leaving the 306th:

Shot down May 21 1943 over Wilhemshaven Ger.
Liberated May 5th 1945 near Braunau Austria.

Remained unassigned until discharged.

306th Record:

Arrival Date April 16 1942 Squadron or other unit 368th

MOS _____ Combat Status T/Sgt. Top Turret Eng.

Missions Completed 16

Promotions _____

Decorations AM olcs XDFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM

PH Battle Stars other _____

(OVER)

Other personal data: I was the first enlisted combat man assigned to the 368th. I was also the so called Sqd. artist and painted all of the planes titles and pictures on the noses. I did a couple planes for other Sqd. crews. I also painted the Squaddrons ensignias on the ceiling of the Aereo (Red Cross) Club at Thurligh for Mrs. Hesther Levitts, Red Cross prop.

Description of Air Missions:

(What were the highlights of your combat career? What was your role? What heroics did you witness? What events were there of which you have special knowledge?)

There are too numerous details although I do have a diary in which I kept my account of the raids and what it was like to me. The highlights to me was ; Crashing in the ocean on the way to Europe, Sept. 12 42. after the engines caught fire. The Pilot was Capt. Wm. Melton. The 423rd lost one out of Gander. It exploded. Ours was the second of the 306th.

Flying the first mission the group made on Lille, France Oct. 8 42 with Maj. Wm. Lanford, Sqd. C.O.

Making the first low level attack on St. Nazair, a catastrophe, Nov. 42.

Shooting down my first acknowledged plane over Romilly Sur Seign Dec. 20 42.

Making it back from Bremen, Ger. being the only one of six crews to return. This was the most intense air battle the Group encountered up to this time. This loss of five planes and crews cleaned out the 368th. On this mission my Pilot Max Judas received the Silver Star & rec'd the D.F.C. & Purple Heart. This was April 17 43 (2365)

On May 20 43 we cracked up a new plane hedgehopping under fog on the way back from a practice bombing run on the Wash. Tearing up two wheat fields and a potatoe field the plane broke in half. We were driven back to Thurligh (40miles) in an English lorrie and the next day with a borrowed plane from the 423rd whos crew was on pass, went to Wilhelmshaven and was shot down. May 21 1943.

There were so many 306th men in prison that by the time I was shot down it was like a reunion.

I do have much material that I will tell you of or in some way work out. All of my material is from the Groups start, up until May 1943 . I have the names of the early crews and their ships names but not numbers. I do have a prsonal scrapbook with some early Stars & Stripes clippings, however as I say much is of the 368th.

If you think anything of these breif notes would be of help by more detail let me know. I will be more than glad to help. I think you have an excellent idea and would be anxciuous to see it finished.

Add additional pages, if necessary

12/11/76

Russel A. Strong
Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr.
Laurensburg, N.C. 28352

Dear Russ:

After all these years I see you are trying to do what should have been done back in '42. I suppose the "top brass" was too involved in the war to think of a group or sqd. historian. You are to be complimented on your endeavors. As we get older and nostalgia grips us it seems that we do things that we never had time to do in our younger days and this is the case with me and since your acquainted with this subject, thought I'd relate it to you.

Ever since I came home I wanted to paint a picture of what I imagined it looked to the fighter pilots who shot us down. After much research I finally did one, a 3x6 ft. oil painting. The funny thing is, I finished it exactly thirty years to the day it happened and this was never planned. After I accomplished this I decided to build a replica of a B-17 F. Again the research began. Through hundreds of pictures and with the help of a fellow who loaned me a maintenance specs book I started. It is to 3/4 scale and the only purchased parts are the wheels. I sculptured all the crewmen, the turrets and all moving parts work. The landing gear retracts. A heart attack and 2 yrs & 2 months later I finished it.

Now I'm getting involved in Radio Control and intend to build one to fly. See what nostalgia can do? I've had both the plane and picture in several shows around my state and it is amazing the people who either worked on, flew, or "just saw them flying over". I have met some very interesting former airmen through this and is most enjoyable listening to their experiences. I'll drop a couple snaps of the plane since you flew in this type, or was it a G model?

Addresses I'm also sending you one of the 368th Squadron Christmas cards we had made in England for us in 1942. A whole pack of them were sent home with my personal effects and now that I have some of my Sqd. buddies, I thought it would be fun to get rid of them this year, 34 years later.

Hope I did not bore you with all this and will be waiting for the day you will finish your project.

Sincerely,



Lee Kessler

15 December 1976

Mr. Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga, NW
Canton, BB 44708

Dear Lee:

Got your pictures today. They are terrific.

If you would be able to send me black and white prints of both the plane and the painting, I'd run them in the next Newsletter. I'd also like color slides of both, if this is possible. I'd like to get a color print of the painting. It is one of the best things I've seen.

I am also interested in seeing your diary and your autobiographical writing, if you'd be willing to loan them to me for a few days. All such material is terrific grist for the mill in trying to reconstruct those days.

I certainly am impressed with both the model and the painting. I have an idea that prints of the painting would sell like hot cakes at the 8th AF reunion next October in St. Louis.

Nice to hear from you again.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr. Laurinburg, NC 28352

Lee Kesler
10/24/82

20 May 1943

practice bombing mission
new bombardier

4 planes in flight to Wash

judes lagging, then overshoot,
dorsal fuel tank ball turret of lead plane

Weather came in on way home
spread out on deck.

Saw row of poplar trees ahead.

#3 engine hit trees, broke prop shaft.
Came down, went thru 2 wheat fields,
& Corn. Broke in two behind radio room.

Other 3 planes buzzed thru.

Went back by truck, abt 10 p.m.

check on little Savage



U.S. AIR FORCE
 AIR CORPS SERIAL NO. 44-1023
 CREW WEIGHT 1100 LBS

LITTLE SAVAGE

Lewis J. Hlavac
 Top 1 W 62

Woodward
 "Camp" 6

Bowling

Woo
 Kester

W.C. Coak

RALPH

W.C.

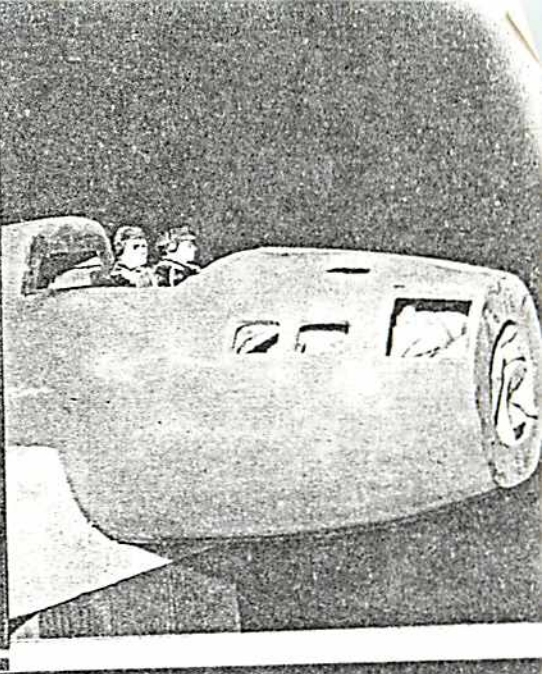
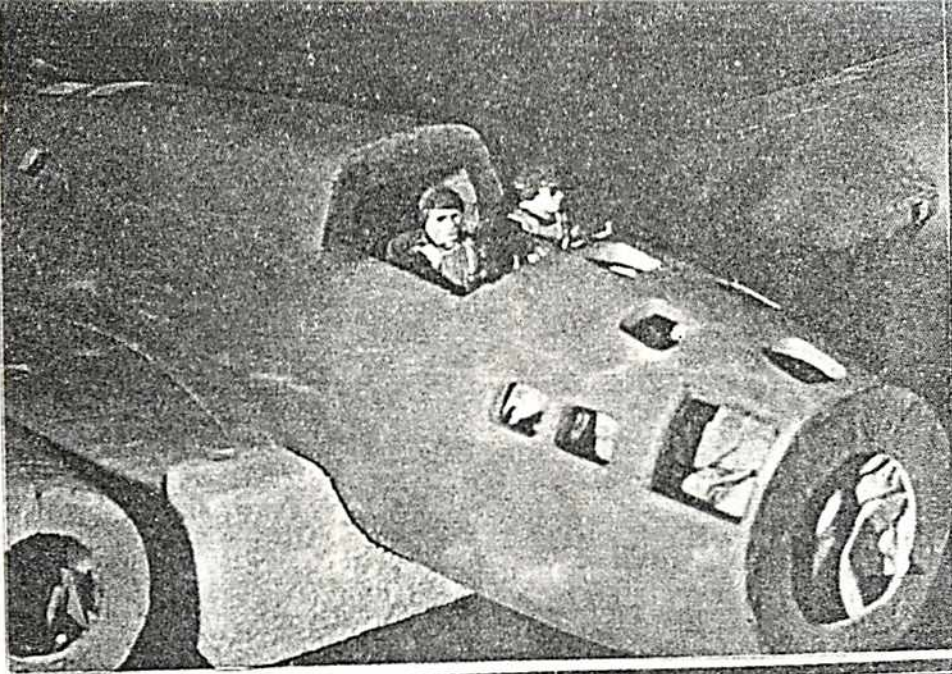
Brown
 Raid
 April 17,
 1943.

This
 was
 the
 "Little
 Savage"
 that
 never
 flew
 again.
 It was
 so shot
 up it
 was used
 for parts.
 At least
 that's what
 I heard
 in POW
 camp.

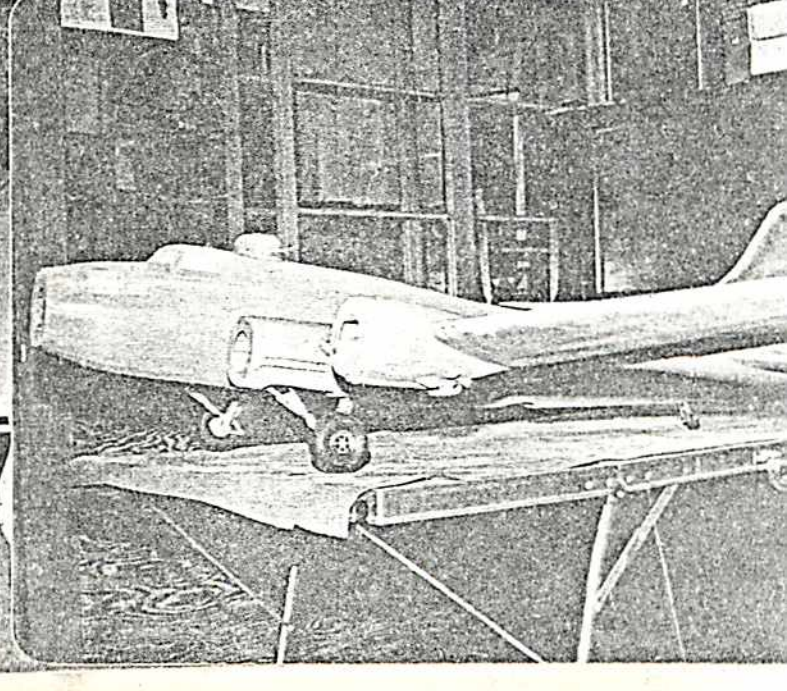
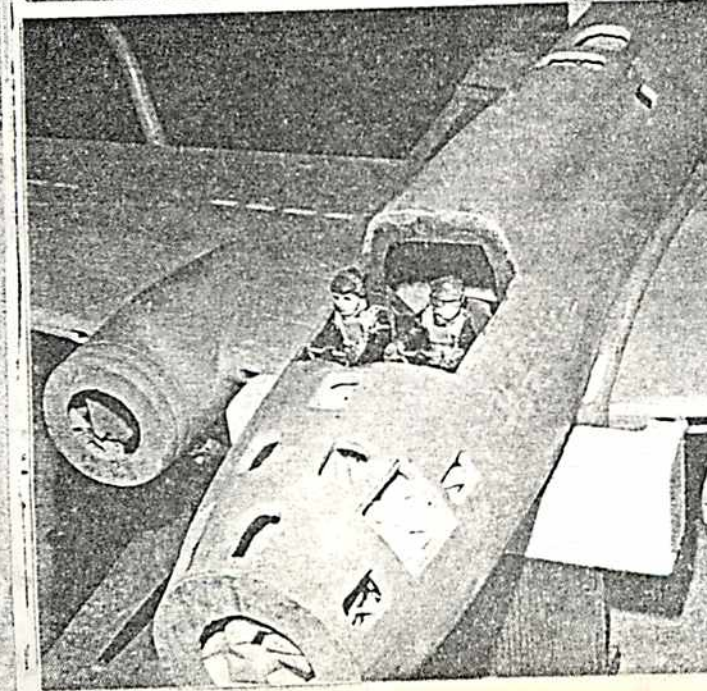
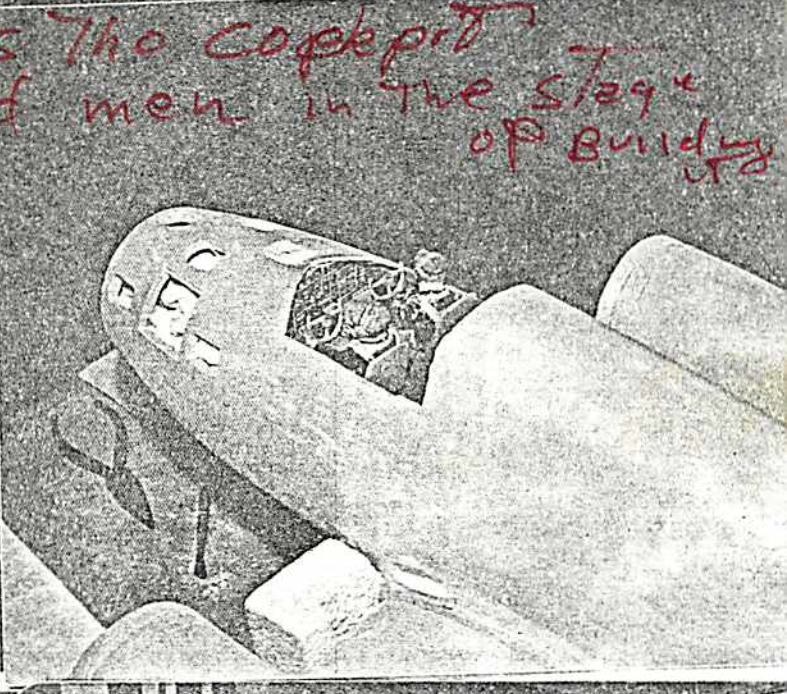
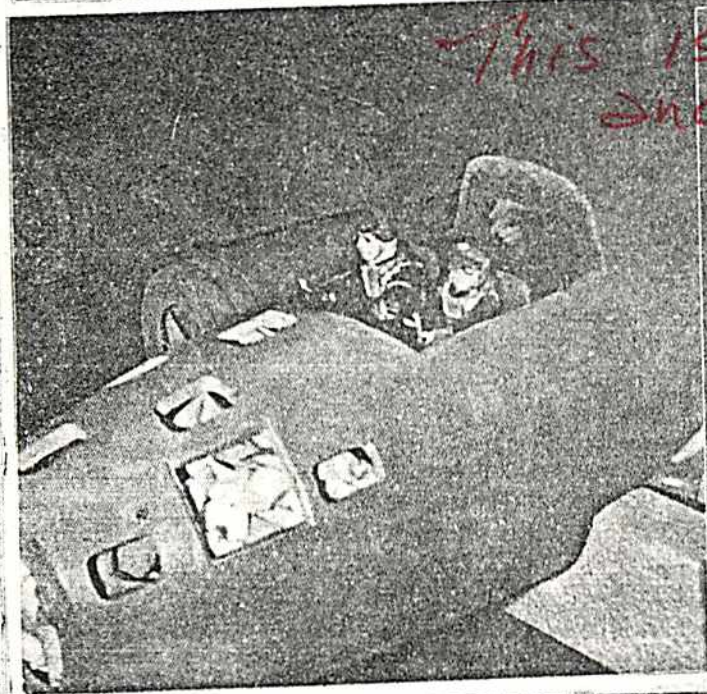
The
 clipping
 is from
 The
 Stars
 &
 Stripes
 paper.

Thought you might enjoy
The KROX copie. of pics I have
as the plane was built & afterwards
than the color and did not come
out too good,

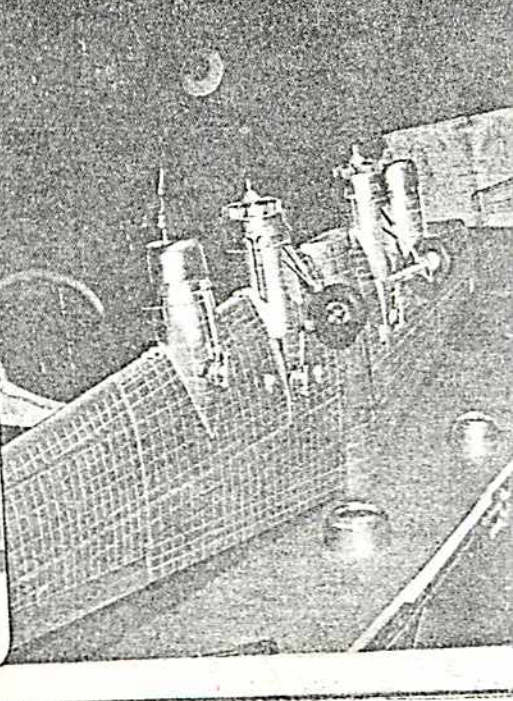
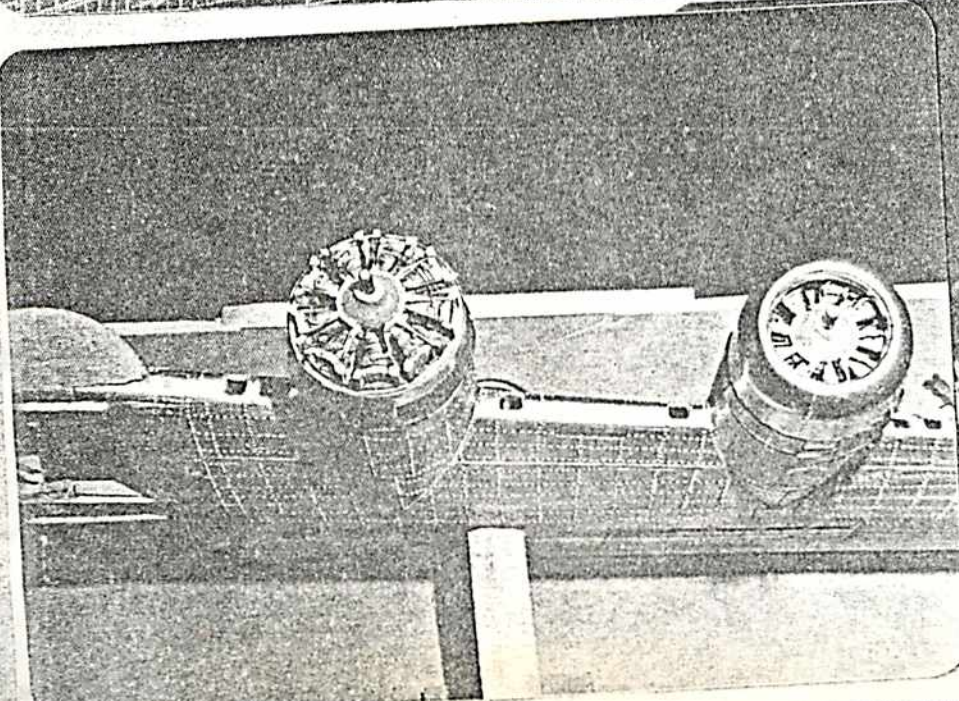
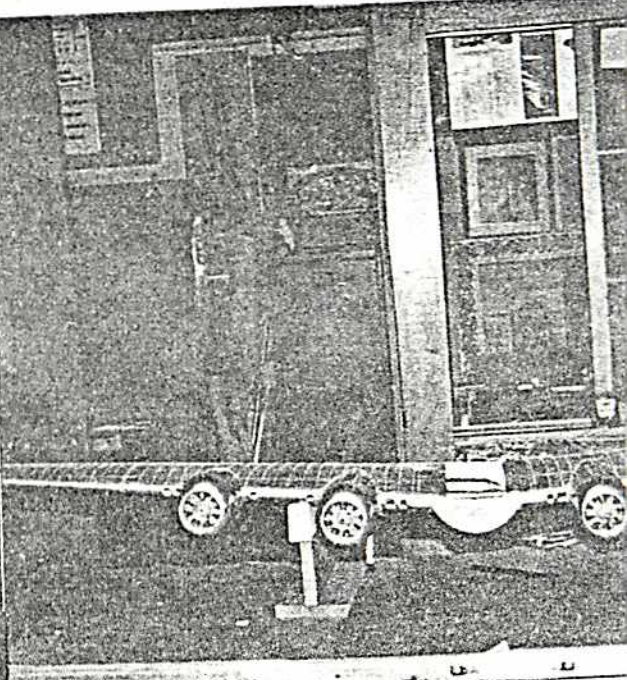
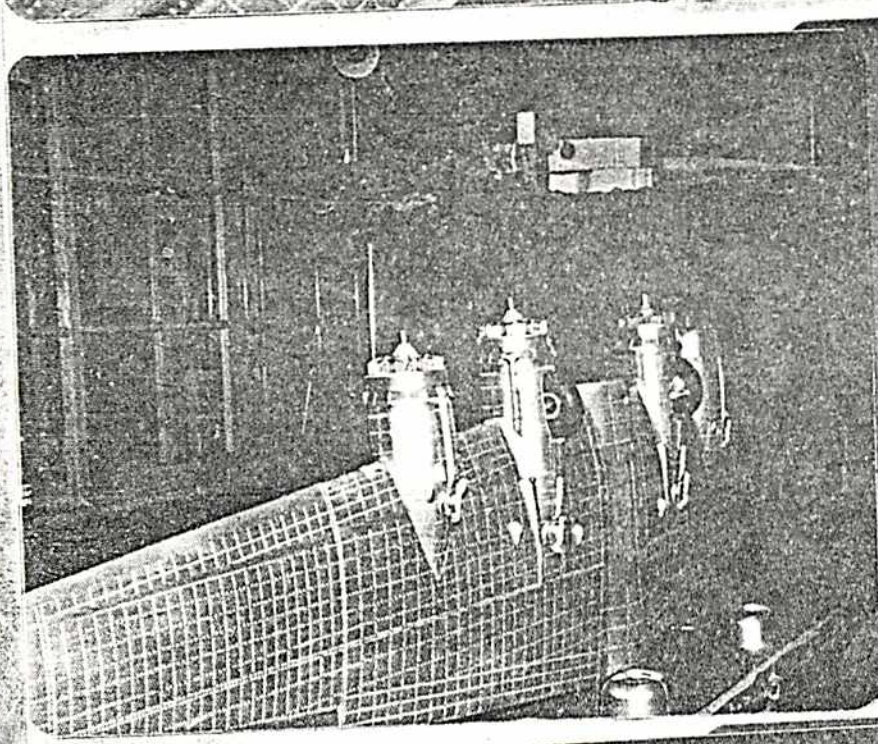
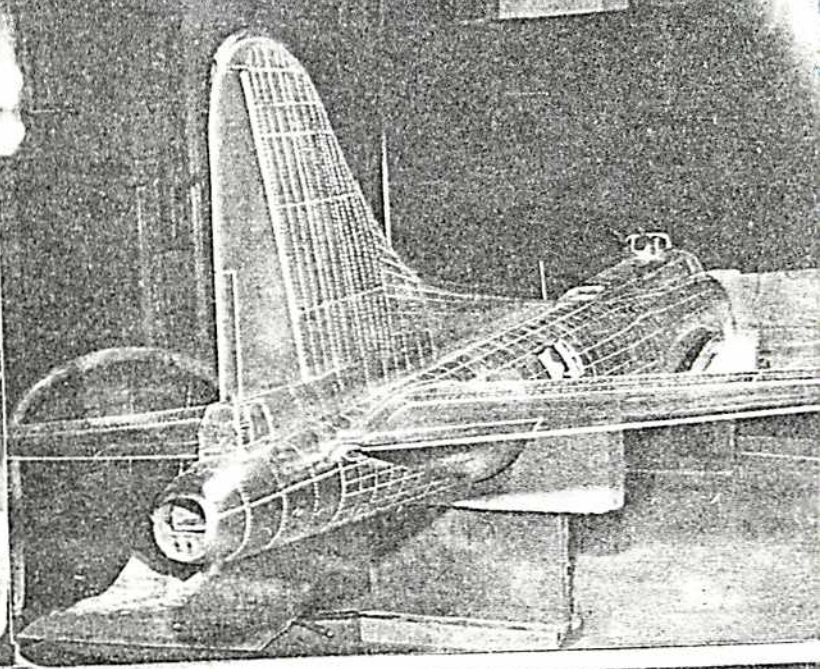
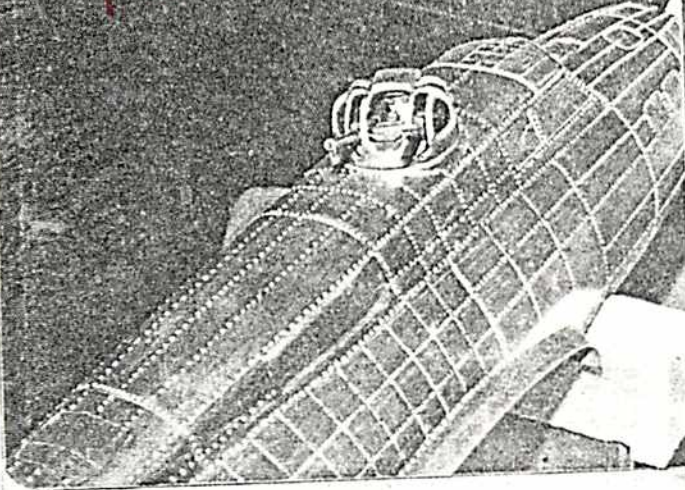
V.K.

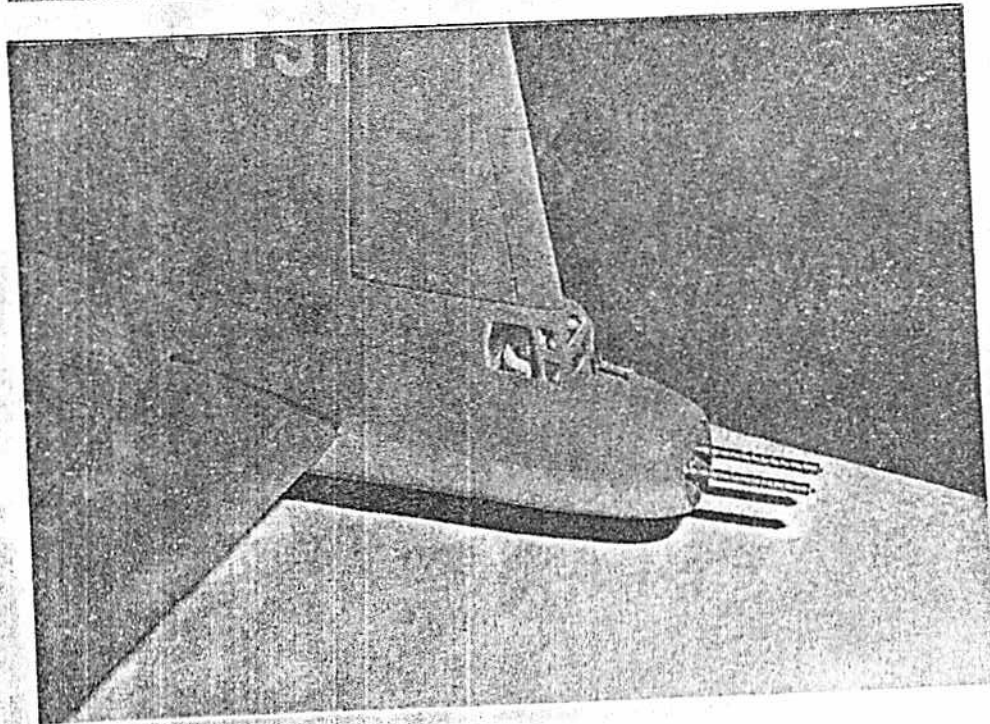
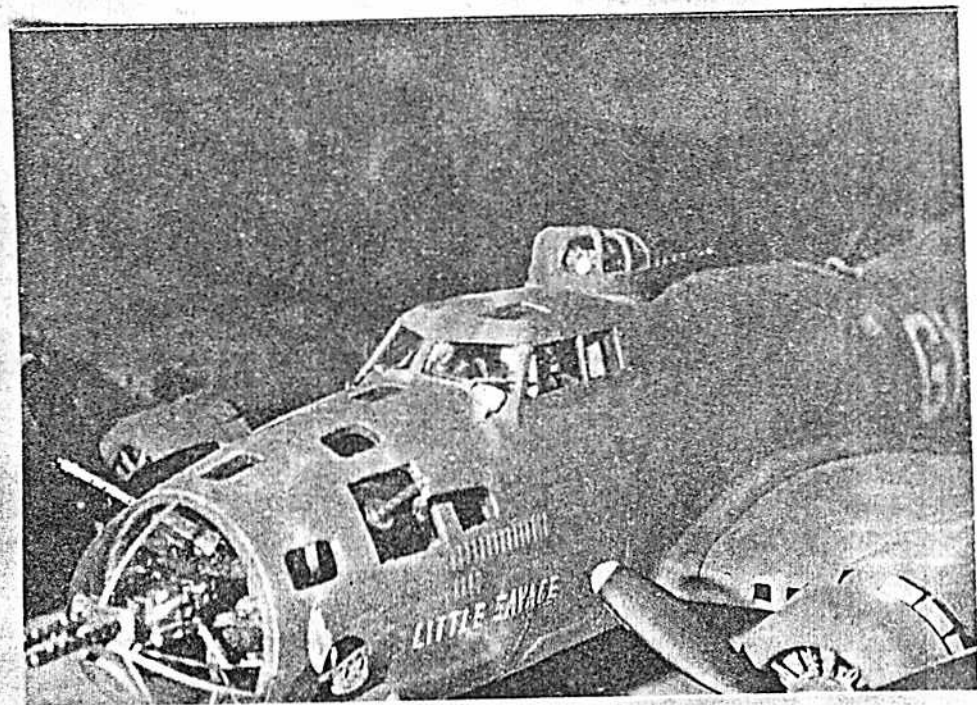
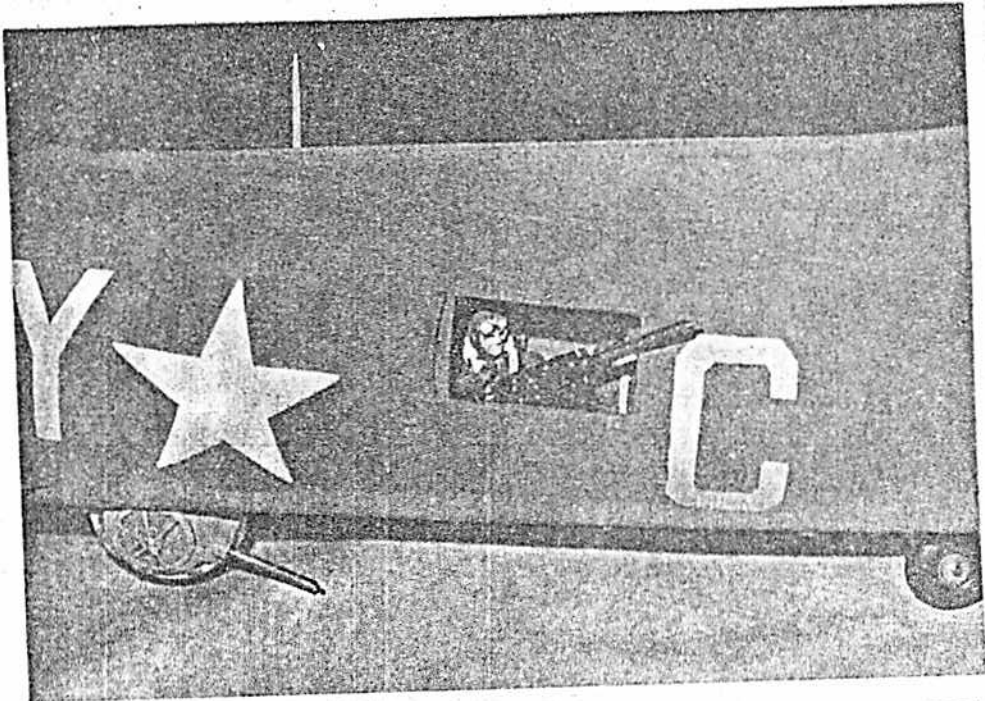
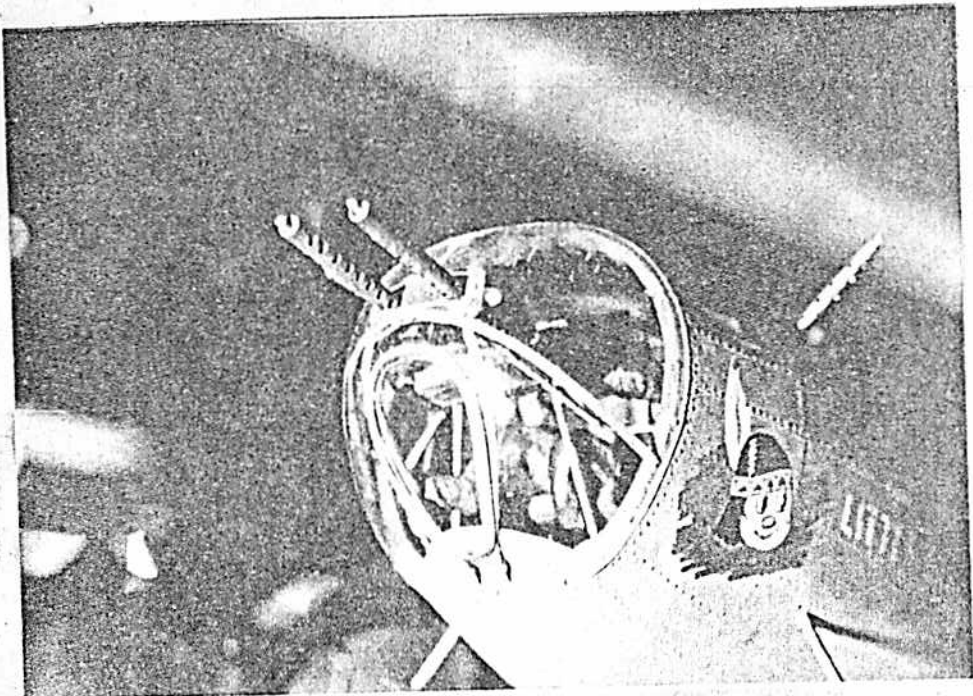


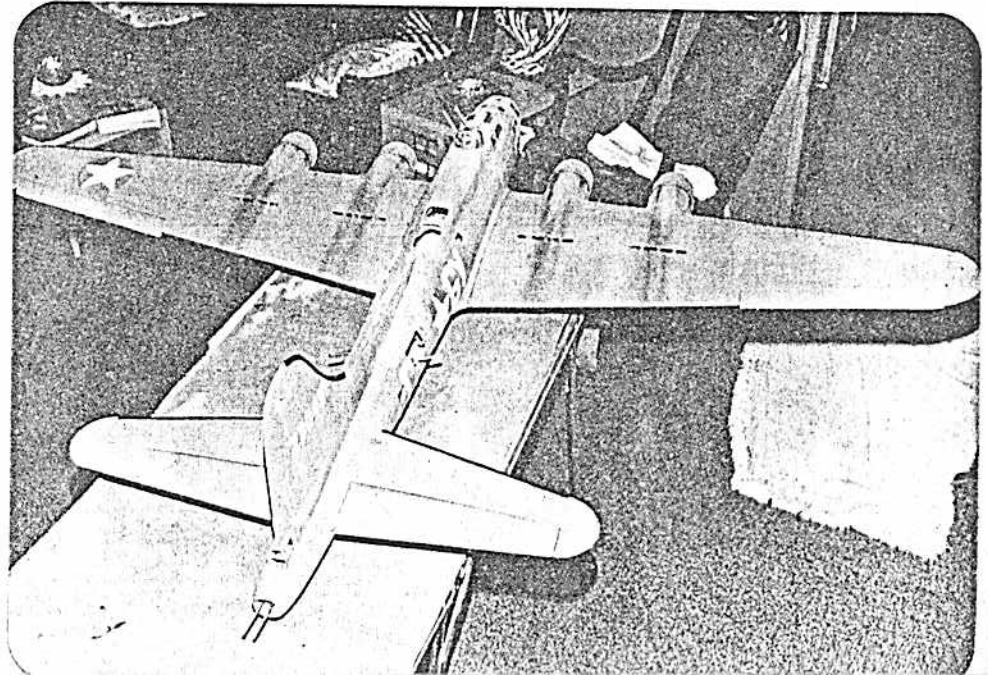
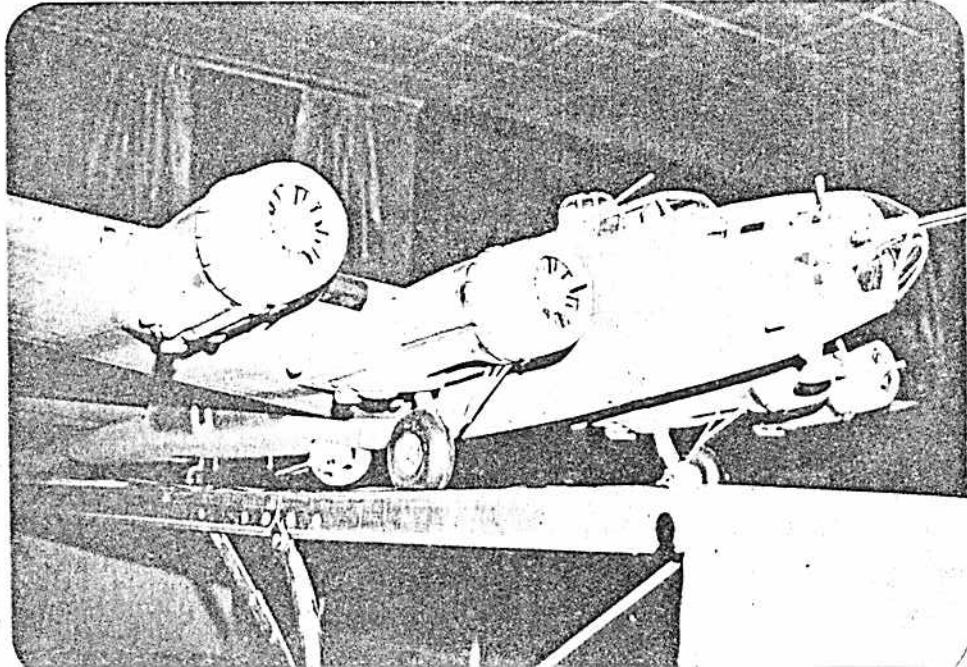
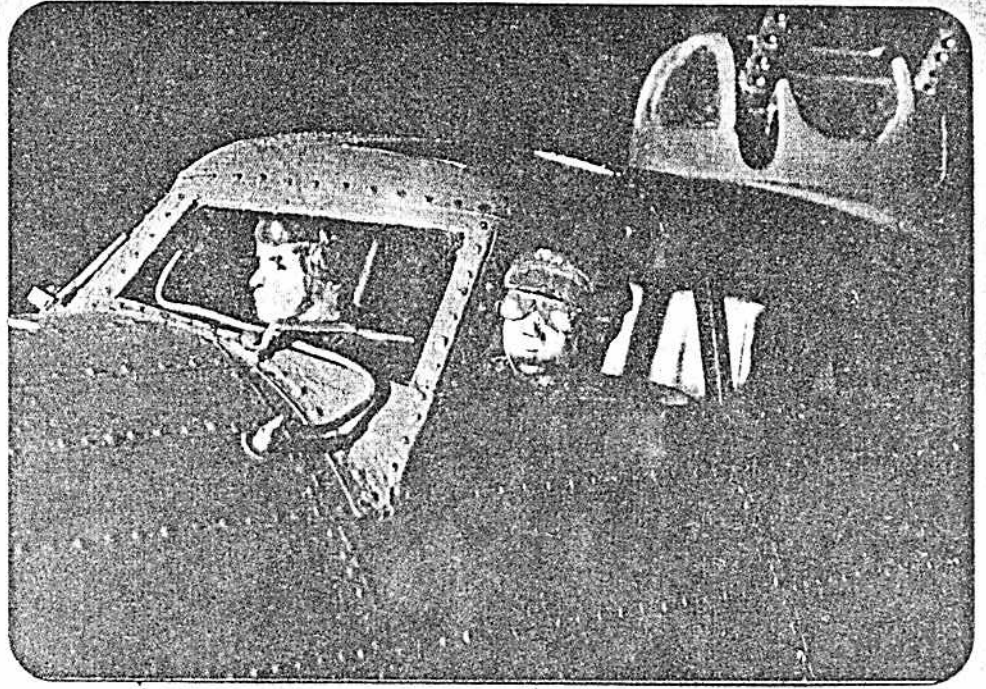
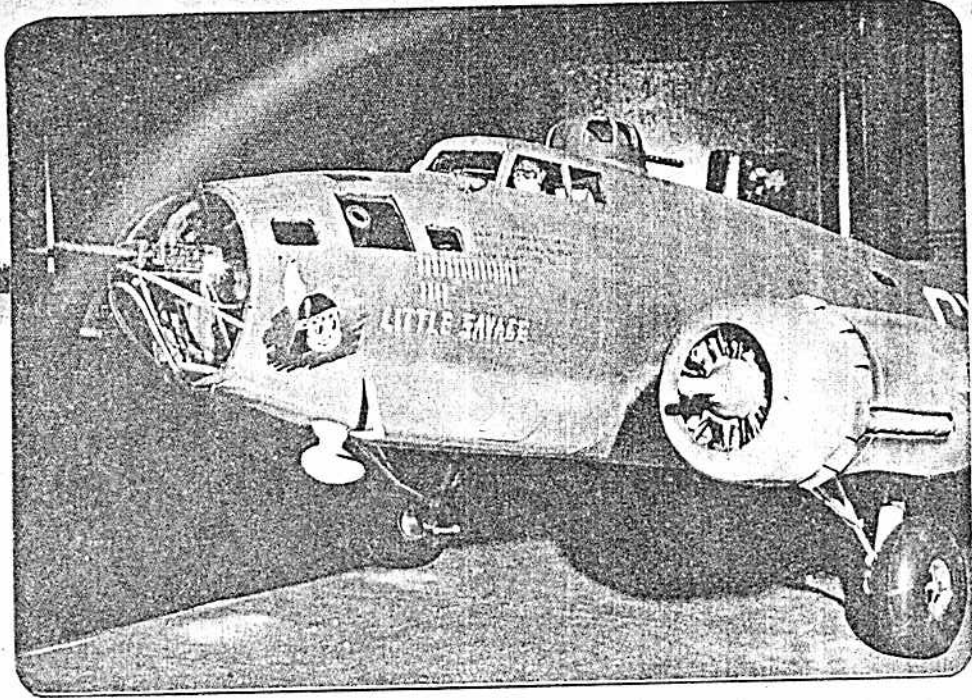
This is the cockpit and men in the stage of building it

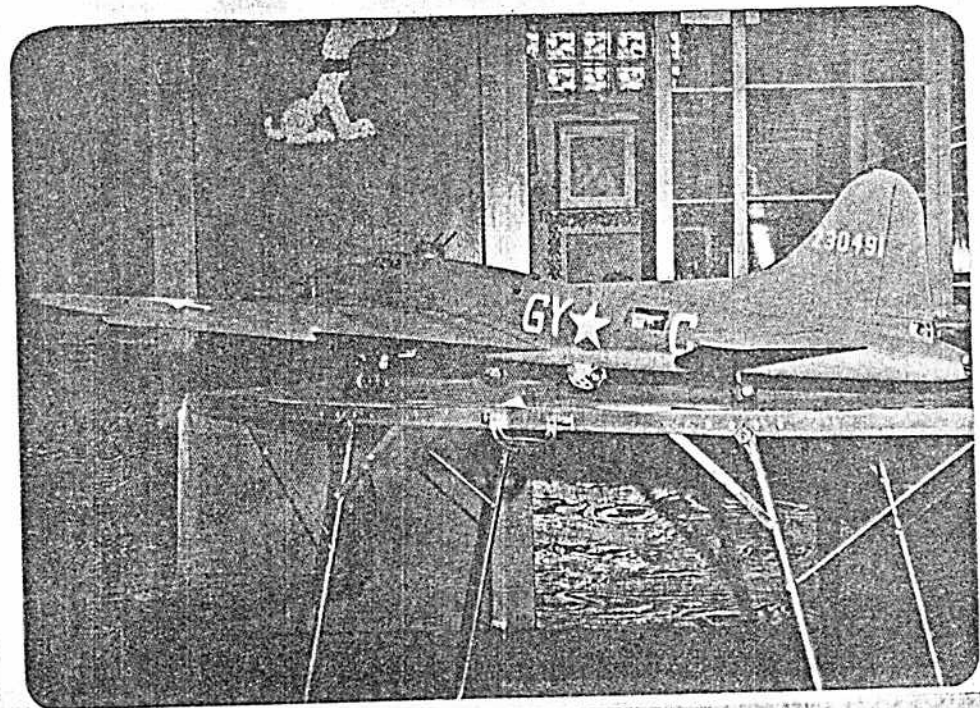
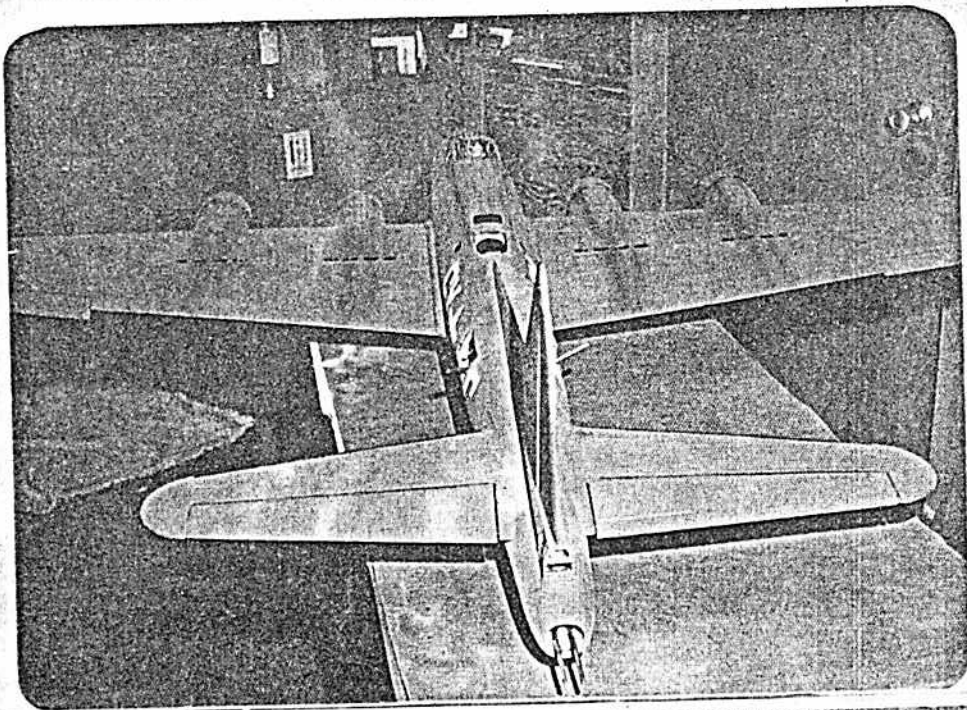
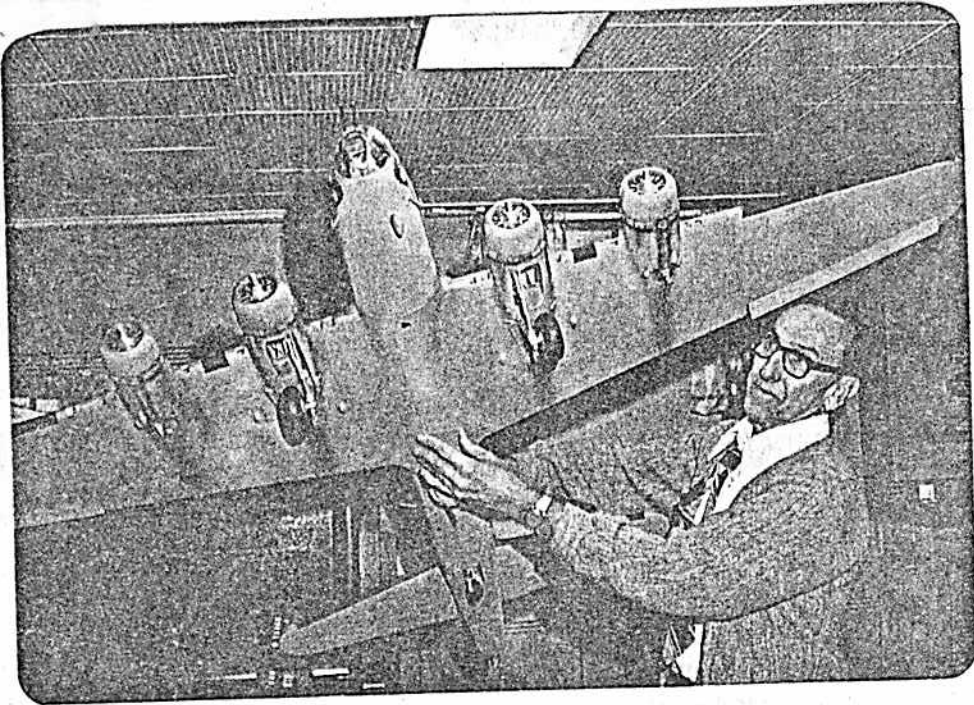


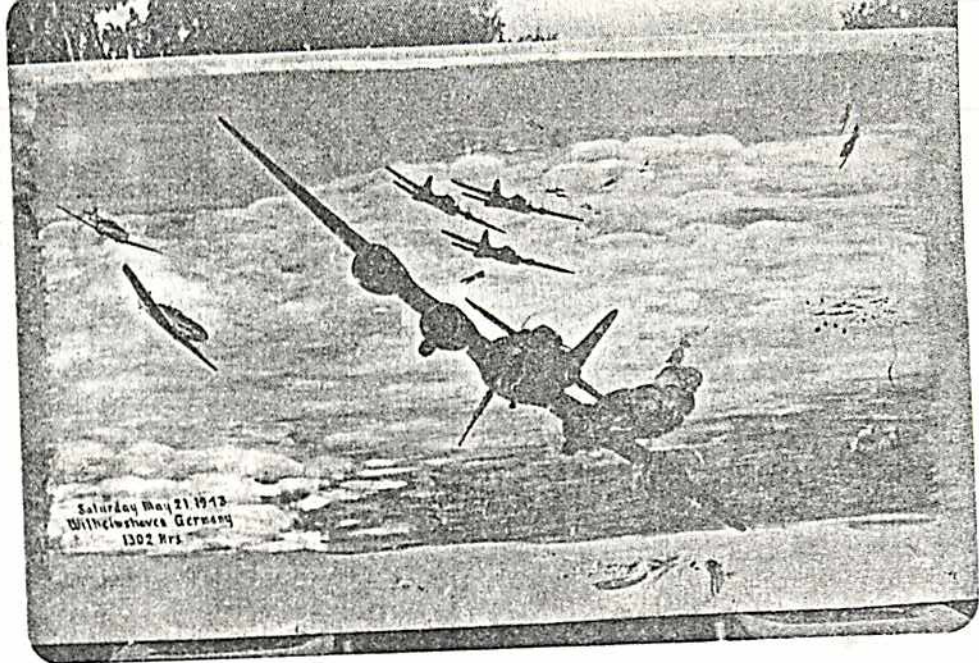
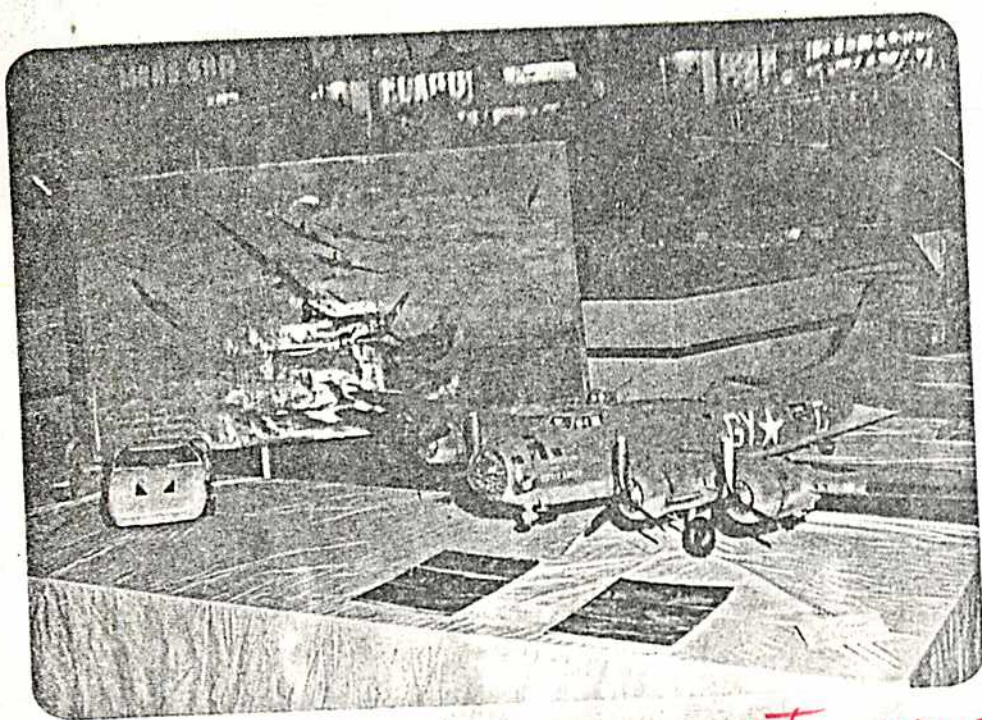
Folding on
The rivets



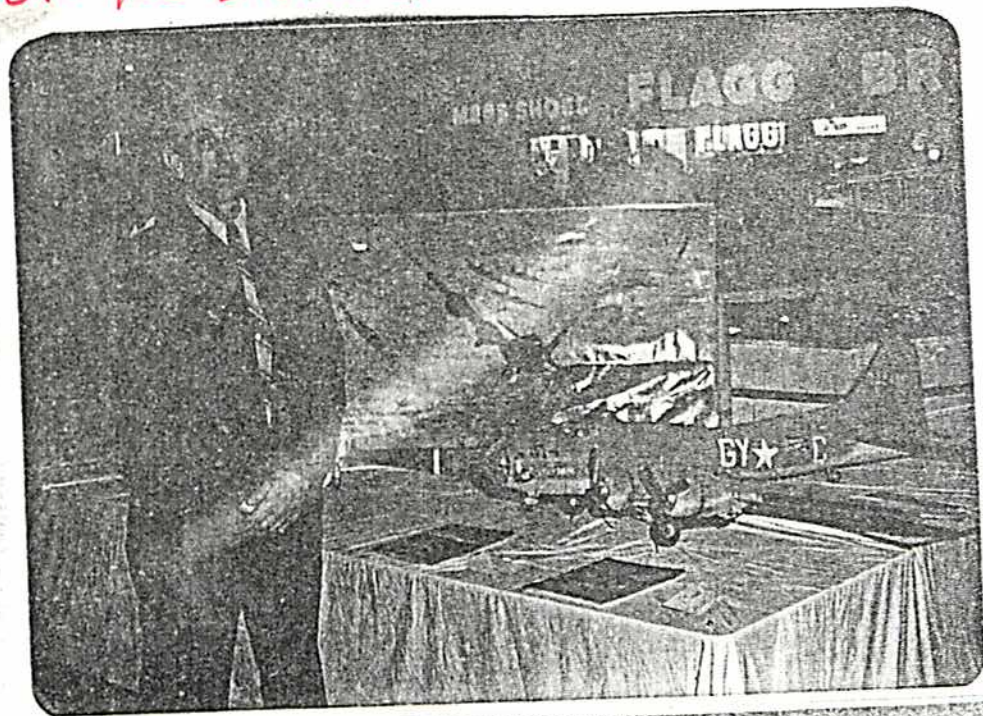


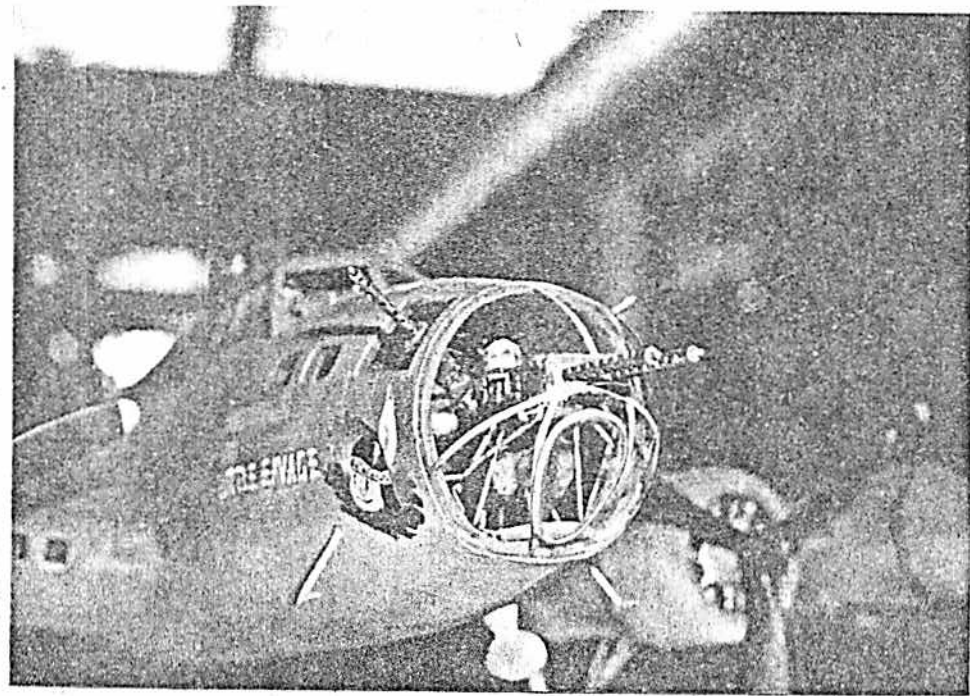
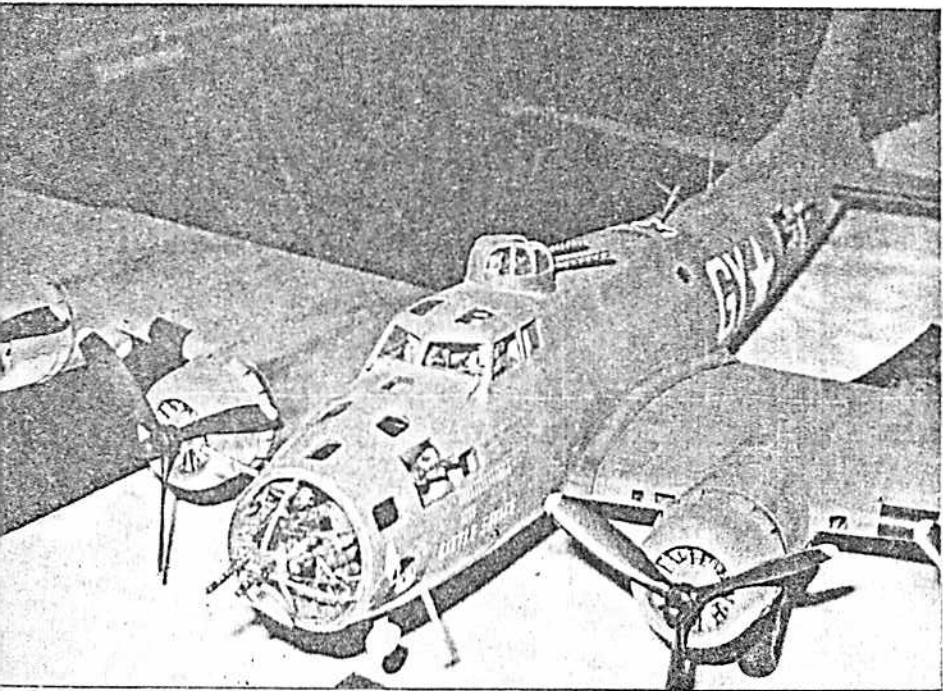
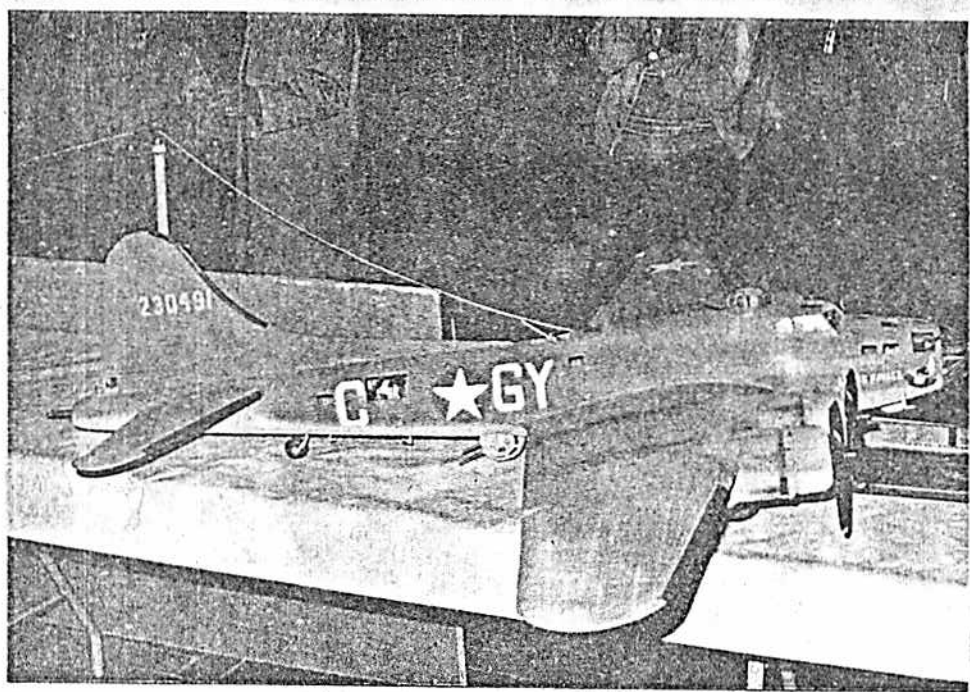
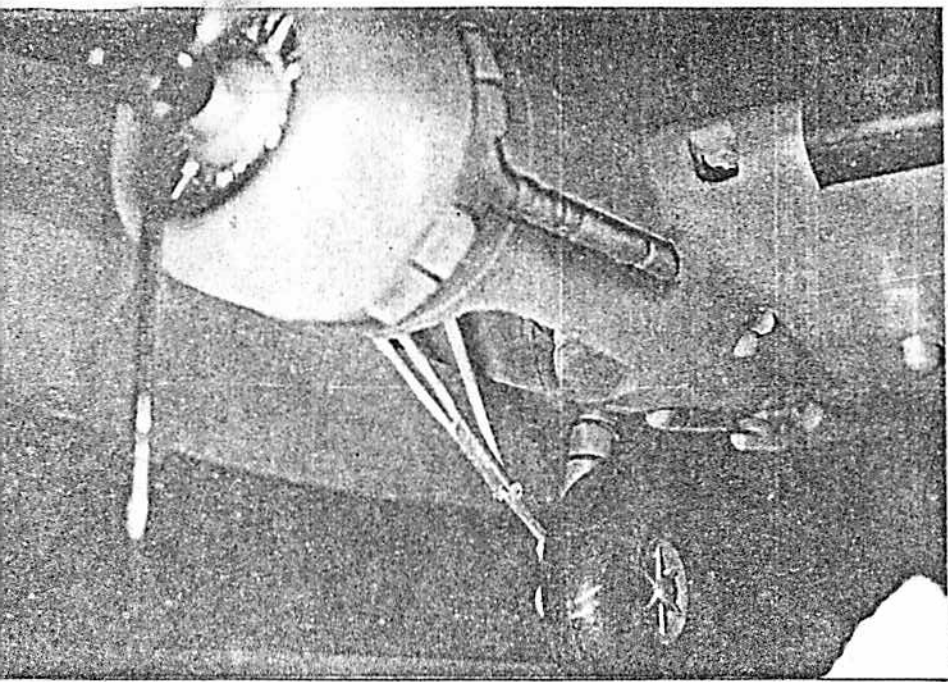


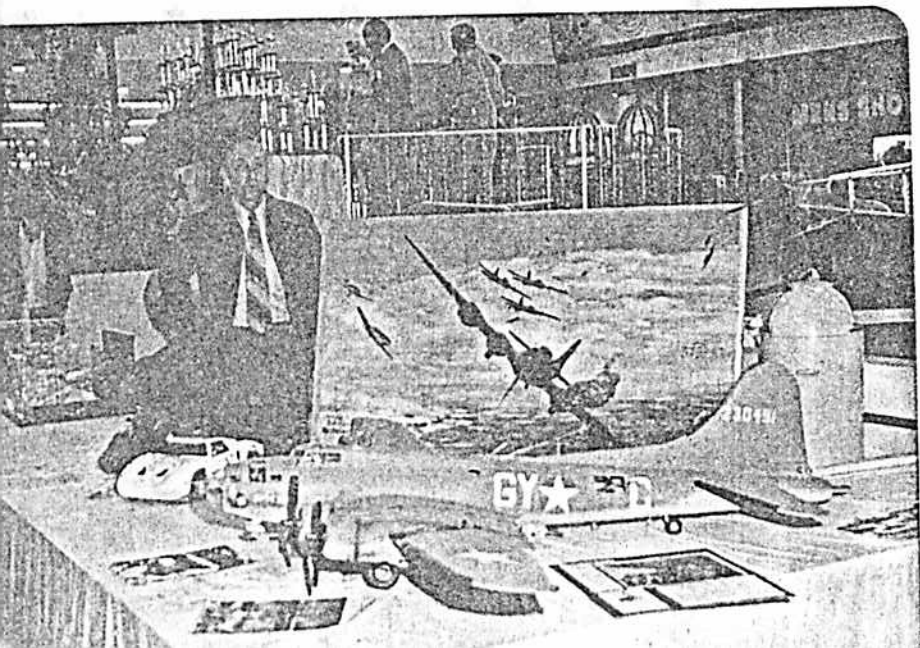


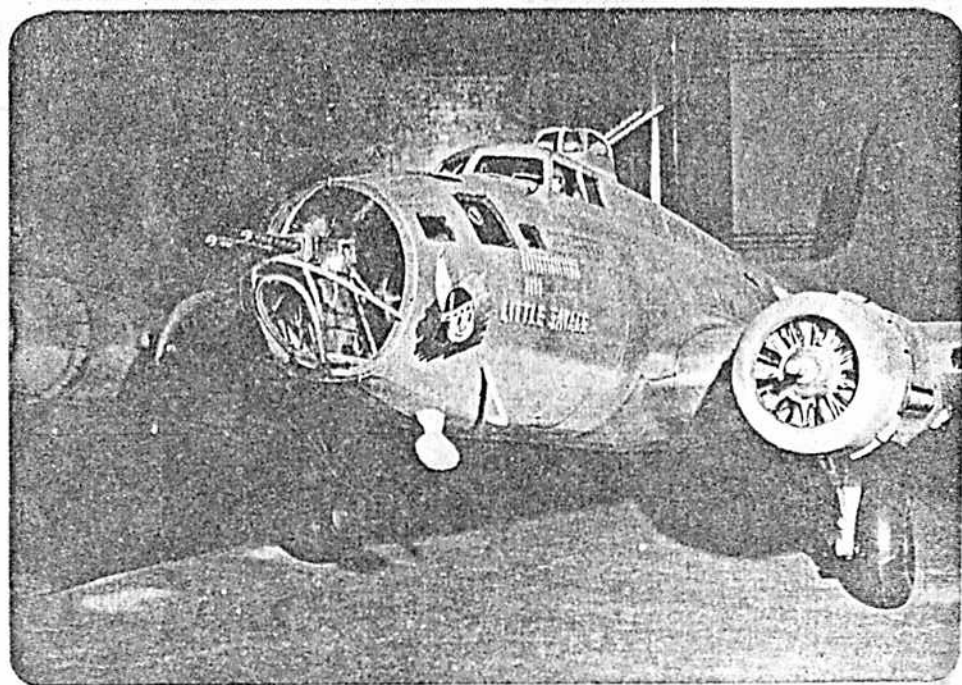
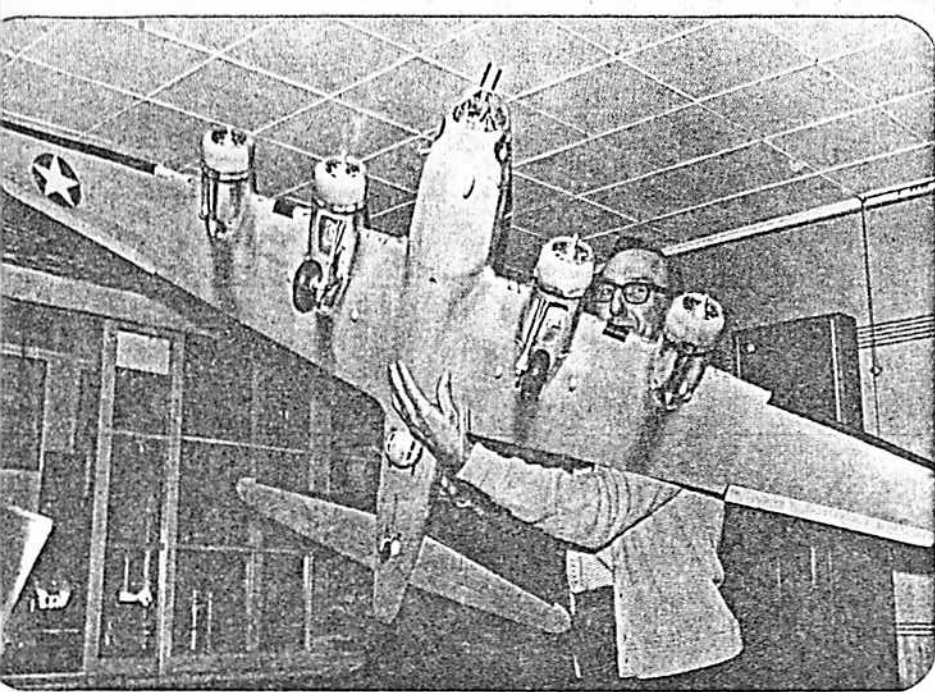


at one of the shows









The "Little Savage Crew"



ARMY MODEL 117 31-31
AIR FORCE SERIAL NO. 42-388
CREW WEIGHT 1100 LBS

LITTLE SAVAGE

James J. Haver
1st Sp. W. C.

Neville J. Gault
"Camp" B

Joe

W. C.

Joe

W. C. Camp

RADIO

W. C.



February 17 1977

Russell Strong
Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr.
Laurinburg, NC 28352

Dear Russ:

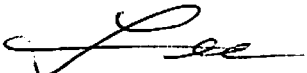
Have been so busy I have'nt had a chance to get around to the pictures you asked for but will try to with the help of those who take slides as I do not have film. The model has been in another show recently and through this some publicity which I thought you may enjoy since your name is in it. I don't know how the reporter got it unless I mentioned it while the interview. I thought the writeup was to be on the plane but the young man got carried away and practically wrote a book. He did a nice job but not completely accurate. The part about Doanitz is wrong. It was his aide who spoke English and did all the talking and interpeded. The other is the plane. It is 74in. wing spread not 3½ feet.

I'm sending the pictures that the newspaper took. They are not the best but my Kodak has to go back to the factory and the only other camera I have at present is a Polaroid which I think is a toy and not adequate for what you want. Will get the rest of my junk together for you as soon as possible.

I have written to my old CO's and have received some fine letters from them. It is indeed fun to hear from many of the old guys and this was all possible through the list you guys assembled. I have also met (through this write up) two guys who were in PW camp with me whom I havent seen since 43, and many phone calls from other ex B17 men who just want to get together. One call from an ex Luftwaffe man who now makes his home in the town the article was written in. I talked to him on the phone and plane an evening with him. It should be interesting.

Will be in touch.

Sincerely yours.



Lee Kessler

Aug. 9 1977

Dear Russ:

Sorry I have not gotten back to you on the diary material but I am sorting the info which I think is the most important. After reading it (after all these years) it sounded so corny and some lines that I prefer not to be read so will break it down and you can do what you like with it. I am sending you a list of crews as I had them in my diary as original crews when we started in Oct. 42.

I read in the "Echoes" Six missing crews still not located. You may have heard from some others but I will give you what I know and it may help.

First, William E. Friend, Mar. 4 43.

Capt. Bill Friend was my pilot and went down while I was in ^{him} the hospital. I dont have the names of all the crew who was with but these I know. T/Sgt. Wm.E. Cherry, T/Sgt. Malon Snover, S/Sgt. Gilbert Shoemaker, S/Sgt. Ernest Garland.

At the end of the war and at Camp Lucky Strike at Le Harve France, I by chance ran into Major Barnsfather who had been in intelligence in the 306th. He was at this time in some capacity with the Grave Commision, one who hunted out men who were missing. I asked him about Capt. Friend (who he knew) and he told me the only information he had was the varification of the bodies of Ernie Garland and Gil Shoemaker that had washed up on shore, (and here I dont remember if he said the Frisian Islands or the Island of Helgoland. This is the only thing I ever heard except from some of the guys on the raid with them who said the last they saw them was going into a cloud bank.

Walter N. Smiley. April 17, 43.

On this raid (Bremen Ger.) there were six planes of the 368th participating. Out of the six, five were shot down. The plane I was on (Lt. Max Judas) was the only one to make it. Most of the planes were knocked down aròund the target area. We were hit several times and had lost altitude and were with no formation as we headed for the coast. Leaving the coast we past the Frisian Islands when we saw Smileys ship. He was a little below us and was being jumped by two fighters. They were attacking from the rear but soon left, I assume either amo or gas shortage. The plane was ~~lisg~~ing and burning (Idont know how many engines) and the top turret was immobile and there was no sign of return fire and I have always thought for some reason the engineer, Ray Clifton was trying to fly it. We were now parralel with them, about 2000 yds and it was apparent they could not make it and I remember somone saying "My God Smiley, turn back for land." Almost on cue the plane turned and whether it hit the water or not I could'nt tell but it was just off the deck when it exploded. It was just a big red flash and a white wake. We told this at the interigation and you could check with others of my crew that day. I know we were the last to see Smiley. Whether the ship had been abanded earlier or whether most of the crew was dead I dont know but the only life seemed to be in the cockpit. ^{bomb} The crew that day as I have them are; P.^{ilot} Smiley, CP. Ewan, NA.^{ut} Breuning, B. Strauss, Eng. Clifton, Rad.^{ar} Hepler, Gunners Clark, Payne, Sliff, Staiff.

Hope this helps and keep up the good work.

LX

Roderick
Lee Jossie

These are the crews as I have them listed in my diary dated October 1942. I will mark them as I did if they were KIA. Some changed to other crews but this was the start of the 368th.

A FLIGHT

Pilot Capt. Wm. C. Melton Shreevsport, La. ? *Don't know what EVER happened to him*
Co. " 2nd Lt. Alexander Kramarinko *KIA.*

Major Wm. Lanford and *KIA.* Capt. Wm. E. Friend flew with this crew when ever Lanford (Sqd. C.O.) went on mission.

When Melton left Friend became pilot and his co_pilot was 1st Lt. A.E. Cuddeback - ?

Nav. 1st Lt. Chas. L. Grimes St. Louis, Mo. -- *K.I.A.* Nov. 18

Bomb. 1st. Lt. Robt. T. Levy N.Y.N.Y. *K.I.A.*

T/Sgt. Wm. E. Cherry Rt. #1 Georgetown, Ill. *M.I.A KIA.*

Radio T/Sgt. Mahlon Snover Los Angeles Calif *MIA KIA.*

T.T. S/Sgt Leland Kessler Canton, O. *POW 5/21/43*

B.T. S/SGT. Gilbert Shoemaker Binghamton, N.Y. *MIA KIA*

Waist. S/Sgt. Russell Dykes *Don't know about him.*

Tail. S/Sgt. Ernest Garland Ft. Worth, Tex. *Mia. KIA*

CREW #2 Pilot 1st Lt. Robert W. Smith 538 Hunington St.
Pamona, Calif.

Co Pilot 2nd Lt. Fred Gillogly La Grange, Ill. *POW 4/17/43*

Nav. 2nd Lt. C.G. Jones 1136 Hazel Ave Lima, Oh. *POW 4/17/43*

Bomb. 2nd Lt. Chas. Ketchie 1108 24th St. Ogden U. ?

Eng. T/Sgt. Lyle Edwards 1460 E. McKinley Phoenix Ar *POW*

Radio. T/Sgt. Chas. Fehr 709 N. 3rd Madill, Okla. *POW*

TT S/Sgt. Wm. Allan San Francisco Calif. *POW*

B.T. S/Sgt. Henrey Warren Benton Harbor, Mich. *POW.*

Waist Corp. Raymond Banks South Easton, Mass. *MARRIED in Eng.*

L. Sted Echos Tail S/Sgt. James W. Haywood Rt. #2 Adrian, Georgia ?

CREW #3 Pilot 1st Lt. Walter N. Smiley *PLANE Exploded April 17. 43*

Co Pilot 2nd Lt. R.C. Miller - ? *POW. Had his own crew 4/17/43*

Nav. 2nd Lt. M.M. Strauss - ? *KIA.*

Bomb. 2nd Lt. W.W. Bruenig - ? *KIA.*

see he passed away March 77.

CRW #3 Cont.

Eng. T/Sgt. Raymond Clifton KIA 4/17/43

Radio T/Sgt. Donald Hepler KIA 4/17/43

T.T. S/Sgt. Earl Kirbow KIA.

BT S/Sgt. Roderick Clark KIA 4/17/43

Waist S/Sgt. Jos. Spiro POW.

B FLIGHT Crew #4

Pilot Capt. Wm.S.Raper ?

Co.Pilot 2nd Lt. Robert Fryer?

Nav. 1st Lt. Frank E. Ross KIA 4/17/43

Bomb. 2nd Lt. ~~Geo.~~ Fredericks ?

Eng. T/Sgt. Alve E.Dye ?

Radio T/Sgt. Robt. E. Nelson ?

B.T. T/Sgt. James Curry POW. 4/17/43 last address Ridgeway Pa.

B.T. S/Sgt. Jesse Downard KIA. 4/17/43

Listed — Waist S/Sgt. Joe Graziano POW 5/31/43

Tail S/Sgt. Robert McKeage POW. 4/17/43

Crew #5

Pilot 1st Lt. James A. Ferguson ?

Co. " 2nd Lt. Robt. P. Dresp ?

Nav. 2nd Lt. Don R. Greene ?

Bomb. ?

Eng. T/Sgt. Charles A. Edinger Pgh. Pa. POW.

Radio T/Sgt. Ropt. G. Hackworth Kitts Hill Oh. POW

T.T. S/Sgt. James B. Stelzer Gunter Tex. POW - 4/17/43

Listed — B.T. S/SGT. Robt. Kingen PW

Waist S/Sgt. Robt. Arnold KIA.

Tail S/SGT. James V. Loving P.W.

CREW #6

Pilot 1st. Lt. R.W.Seelos ?
 Co- " 2nd Lt. John R. King ?
 Nav. 2nd Lt. J.J. Hogan ?
 Bomb. 2nd Lt. V.D. McKelevy ?
 Eng. T/Sgt. Stanley Stemkoski ?
 Radio T/Sgt. Wm. H. Keskey Wakefield, Mich. ?
 T.T. S/Sgt. Edward H. Small Verona Pa. *P.W. 4/17/43*
B.T. S/Sgt. Roland McGee *P.W. but Died in U.S.*
Waist S/Sgt. Arther Chapman KIA Oct. 14 1942
 " S/Sgt. Crowther ?
Tail S/Sgt. Wm. E. Baker *KIA 4/17/43*

CREW #7

Pilot 1st. Lt. M. Reber ?
 Co. " 2nd Lt. G. J. Lally *POW. 4/17/43*
 Nav. 2nd Lt. Luther Bergen ?
 Bomb. 2nd Lt. Wm. Sanders ?
 Eng. T/Sgt. Clyde Christian Maud, Okla. ?
 Radio T/Sgt. Waverly Ormond Norfolk, Va. ?
 T.T. S/Sgt. Richard L. Bohland Toledo, Oh. ?
 B.T. S/Sgt. Clifton Kimberly ?
 Tail ?
 Waist S/Sgt. John Geimer Chicago, Ill. ?

There is one more crew that I do not have. That is John Reagans original crew.

I have a S/Sgt. Eddie Becker from Leola, S. Dakota who froze both hands on the Oct. 9 42 raid and was sent back to the States.

September 26, 1978

Col. (Ret.) M.V. Judas
Route 1, Box 226
Wartrace, Tenn. 37183

Dear Sir:

It was quite a surprise to hear from you and know you are alive and well. After reading your report I am sure to agree with you on one thing that "We were shot down". I do feel however that I owe you an explanation regarding my statement that you had received the Silver Star.

According to my diary and notes ; Sometime after the Bremen raid, 4/17/43, a M/Sgt. Marshall Baker (who I think was from Group Hdqts. or thereabouts) came to me and gave both me and Joe Graziano a copy of a story he had written to be sent to the Stars & Stripes. (see enclosed copies). At this time he told me I had been recommended for the D.F.C. and that " your pilot Judas was getting the Silver Star. I remember asking him "was this because we were alive and the rest all shot down".

Sometime in 1944 , while in P.O.W. camp, my parents were presented with the D.F.C. at a ceremony held at the local American Legion. I knew nothing of this until I returned home in 1945 and going on what I had been told in England just assumed

you had received the S.S. I am also sending you a copy from an article of a 1944 Life magazine who I believe is you and though it does not state you specifically as the recipient of the S.S. you will note the underlined which I also assumed. As for myself, I have no idea who made the recommendation and was never at an interigation of that mission since I went to the hospital directly from the plane. I apologize for the error and will inform Russell Strong as such.

Sincerely

Lee Kessler

Dear Russ:

This is a copy of my letter to M.V. Judas: I think the above will explain. As to his report I do not agree to much of his explanation. I am amazed that in his condition he was able to comprehend so much. I think it rather foolish to argue any points. I based my report from my diary & notes & conversation with Jim Cummings (Co pilot) who visited me after the war and I would like to read or have a copy of his if you have one. I am sorry if this may be confusing to you.

Sincerely
Lee Kessler

Part of the article by Baker
The 2nd page would not copy
JFK.

"CRIPPLED FORT RETURNS ALONE"

U. S. A. A. F. BOMBER STATION
SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND
BY: 1/SGT MARSHALL E. BAKER

It was the beginning of another beautiful spring day - the sun was shining and the countryside seemed to sparkle with the radiance of peace and tranquillity. In certain Nissen huts at various USAAF Bomber Stations in England could be heard the familiar "the target for today" chant of the Intelligence Officers briefing crews for another aerial assault right in ~~the~~ Hitler's face.

As the men were leaving the briefing huts and waiting to be taken to their respective planes their minds were filled with memories of by-gone days when they were, on a day, much similar to this strolling on a college campus to their classes, driving to work on farm or factory or perhaps opening up their own stores for another day of business. Whatever it was, it was America to them; it was the thing for which today's mission of destruction was necessary.

Today it was going to be possible to yield a deadly blow to the enemy by dropping many tons of explosive on the FW factory at Bremen, Germany. Of the lot to go perhaps no one was more eager and gratified at this chance to blast the stronghold of tyranny than was 1st Lt MAXWELL V. JUDAS, Chicago, Illinois, who although a veteran of many previous missions as co-pilot was now making his initial venture as pilot. He was now the plane commander - the one responsible for the crew and the valuable equipment entrusted to him. Only those who fly can fully realize the pride and satisfaction derived from the heretofore dream that has at last become a reality.

The crew of the "Little Savage", as this fort was named, consisted only of three veterans; T/Sgt Joseph R. Grasiemo, Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, S/Sgt Elwood H. Brotzman, Laceyville, Pennsylvania and T/Sgt Leland J. Kessler, Canton, Ohio, who had 15, 23 and 7 missions respectively under their belt. The remaining crew members were making that "first" trip. Having spent numerous hours of training they were now ready for the supreme test. Kessler had only recently been released from the dispensary after having had a severe attack of pneumonia and Brotzman a few days before had received the Purple Heart from wounds obtained when the glass from his tail gun position had been shattered.

Now there was the familiar thunder bursting about the ears of the crew as the motors were gunned and the props begin to bite bright circles in the air. The runway was trembling under the rumbling wheels and now there was the long driving rush and rear as the ship that was to prove that miracles still happen in our modern day soared into the sky.

As the familiar landmarks of the airfield disappeared in the distance far below and Lt JUDAS soared his heavy bomber to position in the formation high in the blue, probably none of the crew realized just how eventful the next few hours were to be. Indeed a big day was destined for the "Little Savage". As the target area was reached puffs of black smoke began to appear which gradually converged into a dense black cloud. It was the heaviest concentration of flak that the veterans of the crew had ever encountered. The FW 190's and ME 109's began to attack right after "bombs away" and even before the ship was out of the flak area. The number one engine was shot out after the first attack. The fort began to drop out of formation so Lt JUDAS, being master of this predicament, eased it down to pick up speed and get under the main group.

About half-way between Bremen and the coast, while being heavily engaged from all angles by seven FW 190's, the number two engine faded away. What a "helluva" time for this engine to get temperamental. The odds were now more than seven to one and it was now game time. From all appearances it seemed as though these odds were overwhelming but this was not the case for long. S/Sgt Gerald D. Barnett, Alhambra, California, firing from down under in the ball turret position saved the day.

The article from The Star & Stripos

Little Savage Staggers Home Bearing Grim Scars of Battle

Two Engines Wrecked, Guns Silent, Flying Fortress Escapes Nazi Trap

TWO engines were out of commission, the main rudder was hit, the top turret guns were out of action, and the wings and fuselage of the Flying Fortress named Little Savage were riddled with bullet holes—but the big American bomber returned to its home station in England after helping to bomb nazi airplane factories at Bremen, Germany.

Lt. Herschel Ezell, of Nashville, Tenn., bombardier, had just dropped his bombs on the target when Lt. Maxwell V. Judas, the pilot, of Elgin, Ill., saw a German fighter plane come diving. He watched its tracers bore into the No. 1 engine of the Little Savage. An explosion shattered the engine's supercharger and propeller.

Out of Formation

The Little Savage lost speed and dropped out of formation, and 18 or 20 German fighter planes tried to finish it off, as is the nazi habit.

A cannon shell smashed into the top turret, putting its guns out of action. Another shell crippled the No. 2 engine. Still another tore the main wing spar and knocked a corner off the bomb-bay door. The main rudder spar also was hit and damaged.

Reeling from these blows, the Little Savage headed for the sea, flying low. Unexpectedly, after all enemy fighters were thought to have abandoned the chase, a nazi plane roared down and attacked from the rear.

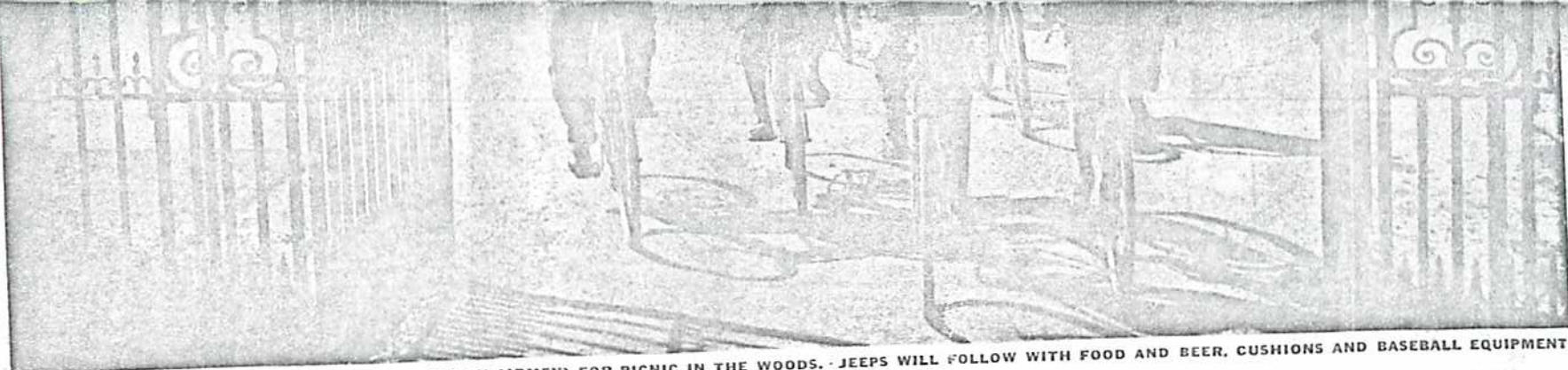
But the tail gunner, Staff Sgt. Elwood H. Brotzman, of Laceyville, Pa., drove it off with his guns.

Staggers Back Home

A short time later, with the plane staggering in the air, the Little Savage crossed the English Coast and landed at its base.

In the crew, besides Judas, Ezell, and Brotzman, were Second Lt. Louis G. Cook, of Tupelo, Miss., co-pilot; Second Lt. Maynard D. Dix, of Cedar Falls, Iowa, navigator; Tech. Sgt. Joseph R. Graziano, of Williamsburg, Pa., radio operator; Tech. Sgt. Leland J. Kessler, of Canton, O., top turret gunner; Staff Sgt. Gerald Stroud, of Plumerville, Ark., right waist gunner; Staff Sgt. Gerald D. Barni, of Alhambra, Cal., ball turret gunner, and Staff Sgt. Lewis J. Havac, of East Islip, Long Island, N. Y., left waist gunner.





BICYCLE PARTY LEAVES "FLAKHOUSE" (NICKNAMED BY AIRMEN) FOR PICNIC IN THE WOODS. JEeps WILL FOLLOW WITH FOOD AND BEER, CUSHIONS AND BASEBALL EQUIPMENT

Life Visits Air Force Rest Home

U. S. fliers relax at British estate

The young people on these pages seem to be having an extraordinarily lazy, carefree time. They have earned it. They are officers of the U. S. Army's 8th Air Force who, during a week at one of the English rest homes maintained by the Service Command, try to forget enough of the strain and horror of bombing missions over the Continent to go out and do it again. Each has 20 missions to his credit. Lieut. Max Judas of Elgin, Ill. (right, opposite) was reported missing on first raid after he left the home. These

pictures were taken by LIFE Photographer David Scherman at Stanbridge Earls, 1,000-year-old manor house owned by Walter Hutchinson, wealthy British publisher, who lives with his wife in a trailer on the estate. As for their guests, they are awakened at 8:30 each morning by a butler bearing a cup of tea. After breakfast they may sit in the sun and read, play croquet or tennis, fish or skeet-shoot, or go bicycling with Red Cross hostesses. All of these men have the Air Medal, three have the D.F.C., one the Silver Star.



Burmese maiden gets a light from Colonel Harold Smith of New York. The former owner imported Burmese pieces.



Dinnertime is only full-dress occasion, when air medals and decorations appear. Diners are fined for talking shop.



Kay Dean, Red Cross hostess, of Hartford and Lieut. Royal Furman, adjutant, get set for evening croquet game.

May 17 1979

Dear Bill:

I'm somewhat in a bind and am hoping you may have the answer as I dont know who else to ask. Do you have any idea what the dates of the Reunion in Oct. may be. My job requires my requests for vacation now and I would like to save some time for the reunion even though I can't really say I'll be able to make it. I am only trying to play it safe but I cannot list the dates. Is there going to be one? With this energy crunch it doesn't look to good and it may end up out of my price range but I've come to look forward to the camaraderie and all that goes with it. If there is any possability I'd be there.

There is another question that you may be able to answer. At the D.C. reunion I left the hospitality room and went down to see the dancing in the ballroom. This was after the banquet on Sat. evening. I passed a room off the lobby where a movie was in progress so I stopped in and watched. It was a combat film of the Eighth A.F. and I think someone told me the name was "Target for Today" or something like that. It was all authentic film and I wondered who had it and is it available for public. I did not get to see the beginning as I only stumbled on to it. I had thought about writing the 8th A.F. News if you know nothing about it. I'm sure it had to be produced late 44 since there were "G" models of Forts in it.

I would appreciate any info you could supply on these questions. How is everything going otherwise? Hope this finds you in the best of health.

sincerely



Lee Kessler

1/16/81

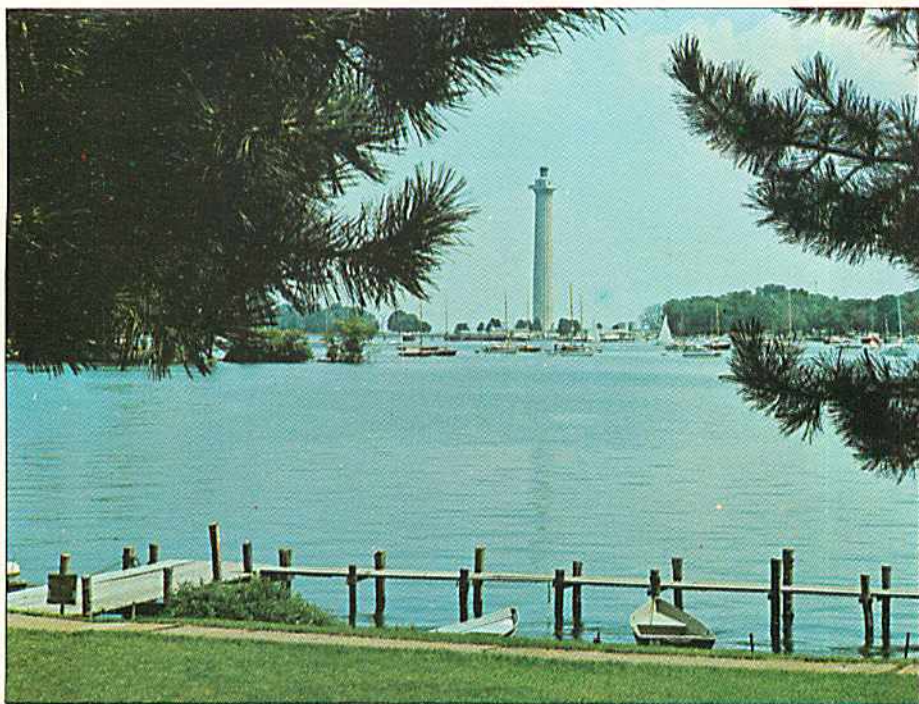
Dear Russ:

Finally got around to the slide you ask for in Orlando. I don't know how well it will show up as I do not have slides or projector. The picture itself is not in too good a shape as I cut it from the original frame in order to put it in another frame once & find a place in my basement. Then I put it on a piece of wall board for a model shown at a local shopping mall. Naturally it never stretched like it was on the board that I made it on originally. I don't really care as I did it as a whim and feel I could do much better if I were to do it over however I have too many other that I want to make, so — someday.

Thanks for calling when you passed through and for thinking of me.

Best of luck
L. Co

Towering 352 feet into the air the Perry Victory Memorial Monument stands as a memorial to the victory of Commodore Perry over the British fleet in 1813. From the top observation deck, visitors get a fine view of the waters of Lake Erie, where the battle took place. This monument is just one of many that proclaim the role of Ohio and Ohioans in the establishment of our great nation.



Perry Victory Monument on South Bass Island in Put-In-Bay, Ohio

27 January 1981

Dear Lee:

Many thanks for the slide.

Today I took it in to have an 11x14 print made. I think the quality is in the slide to make a very nice print, and I shall look forward to getting it next week. It ought to make an excellent addition to the collection on the wall of my study.

Thanks again.

Sincerely yours,

Sun. March 8

Dear Russ:

Just a short note in regards to another 306 er. Ernie Moriarity was an AM in the original 368th and as we kept losing men, he went on combat around Jan 43 and was shot down over France in March. He was at that time the fastest returnee, or escapee if you like, making it in two weeks. I buddied around with him while he was waiting to return to the states in the meantime I got shot down. During his waiting period he was not allowed to tell his story but after the war he and his family visited me in 1953. We corresponded until he dévored and until last week I had heard nothing from or about him. When he called I asked him if he knew about our ~~organization~~ organization and he never heard about it. That is why I am writing as I told him I would give someone his name. He does have an interesting story. It seems when he was shot down and went to go out the bombays he pulled his ripcord too soon and the chute blew up in the bombay and hung by the bonb racks. He was dangling as the ship was going down, so he pulled himself back up into the bay, unhooked the chute, and holdin it in a ball jumpeé again. As the chute blossomed his feet hit the ground at the same time. This is why the Germans neversaw him and from then on the contact with the Underground and back to Thurleigh.

His address- Ernest Moriarity, Warwick Road, Orange, Mass. 01364.

He then returned to England and made 50 more missions and tried to go to Japan but was refused. He's crazy but interesting. When I was at Dulag Luft and they showed me their book on the 368th I noticed they had him listed killed in the plane.

Russ, I am flattered that you think that painting I made is worth hanging. The more I see it the less I like it as I feel I could do such a better job now. Had I built the model I could have had a much better knowledge of the planes detail. I am making another at work in my spare time. I am doing this in pastels on cheap paper that they have for the school amd in stead of laying out the picture I just started and am adding what I think should look right. I'M having a ball. Surprisingly I like it which I seldom am satisfied with what I make but I think it is going to be good. I'm calling it "Intoduction to the Abbeville Kis". I'm learning more about FW'S and am making planes to build a 3/4 scale model. Along with all this I got my plane tickets to England last week. I'll be ariving in London the 27th of July and the Prince is getting married on the 29th Wont that be a mess. I am writing to him to elope th Scandanavia but he probably wont listen. I am going to have to write and make plans to get on the base. I would also likr to visit Roger Freeman if possable. Well Russ take care and

Best of luck

Lee

March 8, 1981

Dear Bill:

First off, I would like to have another 306er added to the mailing list. I rec'd a call from this person who I had lost contact with since 1952. He was an original member of the group who was shot down around Mar. 43 and escaped and was back in two weeks. He hung around Thurleigh until he was shipped home and after awhile returned back to England with another group and made 50 more missions but would like to be placed in the 306 list.

NEW

→ His name is Ernest Moriarity
Warwick Road
Orange, Mass. 01364

I would also ask your help in getting Roger Freemans address if you have it or any knowledge of where I can get it. Also where the devil is Duxford located. I have my airline tickets to England for latter July and August and want to line up an itinerary and even though I searched the 'th AF News they show pictures but never tell where it's located.

Would appreciate any help you can give.

Best of luck



Lee Kessler

Aug 14 80

Dear Bill:

After receiving the Echoes which is so welcome, I once again had to be reminded of the fact that I should send some form of (\$) donation in that I don't think many of us stop to realize the expense that goes into this. It's to bad we don't have some method of compulsory payment in the form of dues, etc! I think you and I have done (and are doing) a tremendous job. Am willing in any way to help if that's possible. Hope to see you in Orlando. Am only trying to decide whether to go for Wednesday or Thursday.

Regards.
Lee

Tues. Oct.20 1981

Dear Russ:

So sorry to hear of your loss and you certainly have our deepest sympathy.

Since I had intended to see you in St. Paul where I would have given you the slides that you requested, I will explain a few things which as you view them may need some clarification. I used the Ektachrome film as you said and experimented with settings and distance. I wanted to take the pictures outside as I think the natural light is better.

A year or so after I made the painting I decided to put it over the fireplace in my basement which used to be our rec room before all the kids moved out. I used to make different scenes for the seasons and put them in the frame above the fireplace. In order to get the painting in it I had to take it off the frame it was stretched on. This left it just a peice of painted canvase. In order to paint in the correct day which we discussed, I mounted it on a large masonite board that i use for pastel work. We then took it outside to take the pictures. After a few shots I could see what appeared to be some wrinkles in the painting evidently caused when we were taking it out of the frame. We then place it in a different position in the sun and tried again. I do think we ha ve some good shots and for the heck of it I took a couple of the other picture. I took a couple inside with Flash and a couple flood but they are too dark. Anyway these are it and I hope you will be able to use one of them.

I took last week and this off as vacation as I always need a week to recuperate. I taped the symposium of Adolph Galland Roger Freeman and the rest of the panel. I have been replaying it and find it as enlightening as the first time. I had the oportunity to ask him about the Abbeyville Kids and get that sraightened out.

I know you would have enjoyed this reunion and we all missed you but we also realise the circumstances and the loss you have suffered.

If I can be of any further help, let me know.
sincerely *Lee*
Lee

December 1980

Dear Friends:

As the holiday season approaches and my address book has swelled with the names of so many acquaintances, I decided to send a newsletter which I realize is not as personal as I would like, however it does solve the problem of repetition which in my old age should take care of who I told what.

I look back on this year as one of the most pleasant and memorable one for several reasons. First it has been good health wise and that I am most thankful compared to so many. This allowed me to make a dream come true, thus my trip to Europe. Thirty nine years and a little nostalgia made me want to go back to where hectic and impressive years were spent. Making the acquaintance of the folks representing the 306th Historical Group from England when they were in Orlando Florida, at the 8th Air Force Reunion seemed to finalize my decision. A good friend and neighbor, Bob Thellman and I to free lance the trip rather than take a tour. This way we could spend as much time where and when we wanted. Both of us had the same interest since we both were in the European Theater.

The flight over was perfect and uneventful considering the last time I flew the Atlantic, I ended up floating in it. We arrived at Gatwick, took the train out of St. Pancras for Bedford where we had been invited to stay with John and Diane Mills. Their gracious hospitality was fit for royalty and will never be forgotten. The weather was even with us, high 70s and sunny. Much different than the humid 90s of July when we left the states. John took vacation that week and drove us around to visit the sights of the Midlands. This made it doubly pleasant since we did not have to drive "on the wrong side of the road". We took in anything that pertained to the war and the Air Museum at Duxford, where the movie "The Battle of Britain" was made as well as the Shuttleworth Collection were so interesting. Reading the names on "The Wall Of The Missing" at the American Cemetery at Cambridge made one reflect on the past, and the custodian was most helpful in looking up records of those I knew.

One of the days was set aside for Keith Paull to take us on a tour of the Base at Thurleigh. Keith works on the base which is still in operation by the RAF. We had to check our cameras at the gate for security reasons. Keith did a terrific job of reorienting me with his aerial photos of the base as it was in 42 and now. We drove to different parts of the field and slowly things began to come back. Little is standing as we who were there knew it but when I stood on the 368th dispersal areas hardstands where we took off for that last mission, it brought back a barrage of memories. The Ingle Farm is still there between the 368ths and 69ths areas and the woods still stands although half of it had been cleared for a vertical takeoff pad. A large runway has been added. It runs east and west right through the middle of the field.

After leaving the base itself, we drove around to the old barracks sites which are outside the fence that surrounds the field. Site 6, the 368th EM site, still has the cement pads but the barracks have been long gone. The bomb shelter is still there and is still full of water.

The area is grown up with weeds, but with a little imagination you could visualize the barracks with bikes parked around.

Thurleigh is picturesque, in fact more so as everything is painted since those war years and with flowers growing every where made it much different then the drab winter of 42. All the pu bs are still operating and I believe the drinks are better.

The party at Gordon, Connie and Loyd Richards home was like topping on the cake. John Hadfields gift of a copy of the 368ths records and Gordons self designed "Completed Mission" sign for returning after all these years hangs in my rec room among my mementoes. It is unbelievable the memorabilia and knowledge this group has of the 306th. They showed their movie "A Time To Remember" which is made up, and about, the 306th at Thurleigh.

We hated to say goodbye to these wonderful people but we had to move on. We left for Edinburgh, Scotland which was most beautiful. After a couple of days there we headed for St. Andrews with hopes of a game of golf but it began to rain so we only did some sightseeing and then back to London for a week. We stayed at the St. James and was within walking distance of most of the sights. Much had changed but the main points of interest are there and just as fascinating. The British Imperial War Museum and the R.A.F. and Battle of Britain Museum was our highlight of London. Then by boat from Portsmouth, across the Channel to Cherbourg. This was Bobs big part of the vacation as we toured the Beaches of Omaha and Utah. He had made his first visit to Europe via these beaches. Not being around and only reading about the Invasion it was hard for me to comprehend how we could have been successful. As I stood and looked at these cliffs and the pock marked bunkers and ruins one thought of the slaughter that took place there. Then above the beaches at St. Laurent the American Cemetery with its thousands of white crosses brought back the reality of it.

We spent our remaining week in Paris although we would have liked to go on. We found the city so interesting but the natives rather cold to us. Since we struggled with the language we felt we would just take in all the interesting points and not go any further. We saw the things completely and I am not sorry for that. We had to return to England and Gatwick for our departure flight and with the controllers strike on we were could not get any information in France as to how it was going so we headed for the airport. Our flight was still on and that was a relief when the hundreds of people stranded in the parks waiting for their flights. It was good to get home but I will always remember the great time I had.

As for home and the Kesslers, Peg is well and still taking care of the house. She kept busy cleaning up after the carpenters as we had our kitchen and dining room remodeled. Our oldest, Jim is still single but says he may as well get married "as there is nothing left to do" since the doctors have told him he is through with all sports due to a very bad knee. He was a champion weight lifter and still thought he could make it but he is finished. He is still off work but hopes to be back by the first of the year. Craig is still maintaining his home though separate and Carol has presented us with our second beautiful grandson, Mathew. Little Kristopher is happy about his new brother as is his dad Bernie but Carol had her heart set on a girl. I'm still struggling along popping pills for the old ticker but was also able to make it to St. Paul for the 8th Reunion. Getting to hear Adolph Galland, the German Ace and General was so interesting. Also seeing some of the old timers like Bus Ormand and Irv Karpman and Joyce Smith the English gal who worked at the Red Cross Club on the field was so good after all these years. We had a great time remembering. It's so good to see all the guys for those few days and relive the past.

I could not end this without mentioning the movies that I received from the Group in England. These were the same ones I had seen in Fla. and when I saw them again at Gordon Richards home I asked if it were possible to get a copy. The first part of October I received a reel, 200ft of colored film taken of the crews of the 368th from Wendover, at Scott Field Ill. on our way to Westover, and then England. Much is pictures of our formations going over France, shots of Black and a couple of fighter attacks. Much is of my crew, Freund, Grimes, Levey, Cherry, Snover, Garland, But there are a couple of other crews. Also shots of many officers. It is exceptionally good for as old as it is. To sit and look at many of these faces many of them no longer with us brings back thoughts of how young and carefree we really were.

I took them to St. Paul where I showed them to the gang that was there. Even those who did not know those of us in the pictures enjoyed them. They will be a help to me as I intend to use them as help in painting some combat scenes when I retire. I consider these my most prized possessions.

Take care and I always enjoy hearing from you.

Write when you can

and God Bless.

as ever,

Lee Kessler

Dear Russ:

How was the Florida Trip? Would have liked to make it but just impossible.

Have a pleasant holidays.

as ever

Lee

May 19 - 82

Dear Russ:

Boy am I getting forgetful. Sorry for the inconvenience. Wanted to give John Mills a book for a present but will have to think of something else. Would you mind autographing this book. It is for my son.

Thanks.

Sincerely,
Lee

May 12 1982

Dear Russ:

Thanks so much for the jackets and the compliments you sent with it.

Let me in turn compliment you on a fine job. Am enjoying the book and learning much about the 306th. I've been working on a "breakdown" of the Lanford film for the English 306th Group and between the film and the book, I'm once again living in the past.

Ernie Moriarty called me and is now in France re visiting the people who helped him escape. The one woman is 93 yrs old and one of the others who was caught just after helping him made it through Dachau but lost her husband there. He should have an interesting reunion and will be visiting me on his return.

Russ, I am enclosing a check for two books, but I need to know if John Mills of England has bought one. I would like to send him one as a gift but if he already has one it would be useless for me to send one. I am getting a package ready so if you know he has not ordered one then send 2 (two) copies. If he has, send one copy and the refund.

One other thing, there is no hurry but some time could you have a 5x7 print made of the painting from a negative you have. I dont have any since I changed the day to Friday. I sent you all the slides and I do'nt want to have anyone see how dumb I was with the original. Not that I think it is that good. I know it is not my best work but am glad that you thought enough of it to use it.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lee', written in dark ink.

170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708
December 1, 1983

Dear Friends:

When I look at the stack of unanswered cards and letters from our many friends, I decided to eliminate the repetitious letters and do it this way. With the holidays upon us, another year is coming to an end and for me it will be one with the most pleasant memories.

First, the Ex-P.O.W. Convention this July in Cleveland was actually an adventure! My resurrecting the American Flag that I carried on the forced march, we of Stalag XVII-B made in Germany, became a high point of the Convention. The flag given to us by the Red Cross was used for burials in camp and when we evacuated ahead of the Russians, I was asked to carry it. When aircraft approached I was to spread it on the ground so as to distinguish us from German troop movements. I saved this flag which I slept on or used as a pillow when we bedded down at night.

Ed Allen, the convention chairman who was also in 17-B, brought the story to light through an article in The Cleveland Plain Dealer which became a human interest story and hit the AP wires across the country. This in turn produced calls from NBC, CBC, ABC, and Mutual ending up with not only being interviewed on local coverage and talk shows but on "Good Morning America" with David Hartman. How something like this all came about because of something I saved for 38 years was almost more than I could comprehend.

The media in all instances connected it with the movie "Stalag 17" and all the exposure was about our group. The real thrill was the reunion of all our Kriegiers, seeing someone you bunked with, the conversations where stories resurrected both funny and tragic which were long forgotten, brought back memories. Just seeing and talking to so many of you, some of whom I haven't seen since the day of liberation, left me with a sense of comradeship that I had never felt before. It is something that only one who experienced our situation could understand. The highlight was 17-B banquet. Orlo and Ruth Natvig along with Ed and Shirley Allen did a magnificent job. I can only anticipate seeing all of you again next year.

* * * * *

With the exuberance of that convention over, I began to look forward to the 306th Bomb Group reunion in October in Omaha. I have been to several 8th AF reunions but none as enjoyable as this. It was so well organized and it was our own. It is always great to see those who come each year, but it was even better to see the new faces and especially those originals. Some who were in Cleveland also made this one and rightly so since there were so many 306 P.O.W.'s.

Peg did not make the trip so my traveling buddy who was in the infantry, but who is an airplane history and military buff, came with me. I was asked to bring my B-17 model along. The fuselage would fit in the trunk, but the 78-inch wing had to lay between us stretching from rear window to windshield. It was not too uncomfortable but did you ever drive 1900 miles with a propeller in your ear? It was worth the trouble just to hear the discussions it brought about.

Of all the greeting and talking that I did, I still came away not getting to talk to some as much as I would have liked. There just is not enough time. The Rodeo, the trip to SAC base with its most informative briefing, the band playing those '40 tunes while we ate at the officer's club was fantastic. Don Ross and his committee deserved the highest praise.

The finale was the banquet with Doc Shuller's speech which at times had us in stitches, then choking back that lump in the throat that memories bring. I was so glad I taped it as I have played it for my family and friends and most of all for the solitude of reminiscing for myself. It was sad to break up but one of the biggest compliments was paid by my traveling friend who on the way home told me he wished he had been in the 306th. It is such a great group of guys (Amen).

* * * * *

Before Omaha, I was told by my doctors of the possibility of open heart surgery but they would first do a catheterization. I waited until I came home when I began to have angina problems. I went in November for the cath and never got off the table. I began to go under and went straight to surgery. I awoke two days later to find they had to open me the second time - God should have put zippers on us. I am recuperating now but am disappointed they could only replace one artery. I'm told the rest of my heart had been damaged from the previous two heart attacks. This is all they could do. This is my lifeline. One of the team doctors told me I had "about seven to ten days, give or take a couple," and I had just traveled 1900 miles! I was so fortunate to be where I could be taken care of. We celebrated the best Thanksgiving ever, although for the first time I had feelings for the turkey Peg was preparing. It is so good to be here.

I want to thank all of you who sent news clippings and especially those who were kind enough to write letters on my behalf for the V.A. For the fifth time, I have been turned down and I'm just too tired to fight anymore.

May all of you and yours have a most Joyous Holiday. God Bless You.

Sincerely,
Peg & Lee
Peg and Lee Kessler

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered with failure, than to be ranked with those poor souls who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, for they live in that grey twilight that knows not victory or defeat."

Dear Russ:

Here are the tapes I promised. I just numbered the symposium tapes. You can do the breakdown of each one as you want. You will find that the various members of the panel will speak in different tones especially Galland. Some parts are not as audable as others as I just used a regular recorder and was not as close as I would have like to have been to the forum. The same as with Shullers speach. At times he did not speak into the mic like you did. Also I noticed that there is a loss in rerecöding with the equipment I have. If you want you can send the Shuller tape to Ralph Bordner as he has borrowed my tape and has just bought a big casset outfit that can reproduce perfect tapes and even though my original is not perfect it is still better than what I am sending you and I know Ralph would be more than gald to do it for you. I have told Doc Shuller the same as he didnt know that anyone taped it and has also ask me for one. As I said in my letter, I enjoy these talks the tenth time as well as the first as you pick up something that might not have registered the first time.

I want to take the opporrtunity to thank you for your concern about me and the VA. I wa s really moved to think that you and Don Ross would was willing to go to bat for someone like me and it makes me proud to think I have friends like you. It was the 13th of Dec. that I was notified and I had already sent my letters out. It was a big surprise as I had given up and even though it is not all that much it will help as I have to retire now. I'm doing fine but am limited in some activities and diet etc. Now I will have time to do the reading, drawing and model building that I was not able to get done before.

Keep in touch, and hope you havea good year

Sincerely



P.S. Rec'd a note from Don Ross saying he was glad I had things straightend out with the V.A.

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Kessler
10000 Ave. N.W.
Seattle, Ohio 44708

Dear Reginald:

According to the Echoes, POW's are to give a note as to their status. You will undoubtedly receive many as the camps were full of 306ers. Mine is as follows;

Shot down over Wilhelmshaven, Germany May 21 1943
Was captured immediately and taken to Wilhelmshaven
Naval Base and in front of Admiral Doenitz who was
there at the time.
Spent nine days at Dulag Luft Interigation Center.
Sent to Stalag 7-A Mooseburg, Bavaria. Then to Stalag
17-B Krems Austria, Then forced marched west and then
liberated in a woods by tank division of Pattons 3rd
Army May 2 1945.

At present I am Vice Commander of the Stalag XVII-B Organization.
We just finished with a great reunion at Seattle, Wash. and are
planning a 40th Anniversary of our liberation for next May at
Clearwater Fla.

Sounds like wr will have a great time at Ft. Worth and
am looking forward to it.

Best of luck;

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature that reads "Lee Kessler".

Lee Kessler

25 February 1985

Dear Lee:

Your envelope has lain on my desk for some time. I have fiddled with it a bit, and yesterday really got down to cleaning up things. I reread Leonard Berman's letter, and then took it to work with me today.

This afternoon I dialed the number of the Landmark hotel to Metairie, LA, and the voice that answered in the sales office was Ralph Davidson, who became first sergeant of the 423rd in July 1942 and stayed with the group until December 1943 when he came back to go to cadet training.

We had a nice chat and tomorrow I'll mail him some Echoes and a directory. He is all hot and excited after having been found. He has lots of good memories of his days with the 306th.

That was an interesting piece from John Mills.

I don't believe that someone's wild dream, led by Alan King, ever materialized on a movie built around Thurleigh. I think it was just a dream that couldn't be sold to anyone who would have the money to back such a venture.

Plans are moving along for the meeting in Colorado Springs, as you will see in a few days when Echoes arrives at your house.

I'll be sending along a photo shortly, and would appreciate very much the acceptance of your offer to do a sketch for me. I liked the one you did of Doc Shuller.

I wish I had more time to roam around the country a bit and visit with a lot of people, but being one of the younger members of the 306th, I still have to make a living. So, I remain tied to a desk much of the time doing research for the fund raisers at my University. It does provide me with opportunities to continue my 306th research. And the names continue to come in. We ought to go over 2000 during the calendar year on our mailing list.

All the best,



Landmark HOTELS

2601 SEVERN AVE., METAIRIE, LA. 70002, (504) 888-9500

Ralph Davidson
2145 Pasadena Apt D
70002
1st flt
\$00/535 = \$840

920 N. RAMPART ST., NEW ORLEANS, LA 70116, (504) 524-3333
541 BOURBON ST., NEW ORLEANS, LA 70130, (504) 524-7611
501 DECATUR ST., NEW ORLEANS, LA 70130, (504) 561-5621

LEONARD W. HERMAN

P.O. BOX 313

BENSON MANOR - SUITE 109

JENKINTOWN, PA 19046

215-572-8380

December 28, 1984

Leonard W. Herman
Benson Manor, Suite 109
P.O. Box 313
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave., N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44798

Dear Lee:

Well dear friend, back to the drawing board. It certainly was a pleasure speaking to you last week and I cannot tell you how pleased I am that you are giving me an opportunity to expose and promote your talent.

Just to confirm I received the original art of the "Hand". Also your short note and your letter of December 17th.

Lee, since you are your own critic and undoubtedly the toughest one you will find around, I will certainly bow to your judgement. If you wish to re-do the work and make the "Hand" more gaunt and callused and labor-worn, most certainly it is okay with me. However, as we discussed I am going to show the work around to a few people and get their opinions. I am also setting up an appointment with a top gallery in this area. Unfortunately this must all wait until after the first of the year, which is really not too far off.

As I told you over the phone, we have several plans to choice from and just as soon as all my ducks are in a row, I will get back to you on that score.

Incidentally, I did receive the book "First Over Germany" by Russ Strong. I see where you have been given credit for the jacket art. It is interesting to note that on May 21st, 1943 I flew a mission to Emden, Germany.

Interestingly enough, when the group reunion was in Metairie (New Orleans) I met one of the management individuals of the hotel where we were staying. Unfortunately I cannot recall his name at the moment, but he told me he was the First Sergeant that put Snuffy Smith on K P. He also was a member of the 306th Group. I believe he was Convention and Sales Manager. (see attached). Small world isn't it.

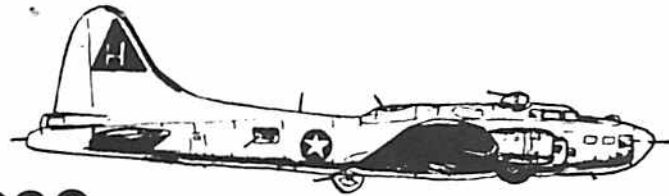
I hope you and your family had a Very Joyous Holiday Season and I want to take this opportunity to wish you and all your loved ones a Most Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year.

My very sincerest regards,

Leonard

*Do you have any idea
who this might be?
LJK*

LWH:fr



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

January 12 1985

Dear Russ:

Have been going through my files and tossing out duplicate copies of 8th AF Reunion stuff (as you know I'm a pack rat) and other paraphernalia when the mail came and there was a letter from Doc. and Joan Shuller. I had done a picture for him, and this was a response. Had a nice letter from Doc. Munal also. Both really enjoyed the Ft. Worth get together as I'm sure we all did. Its always good to see friends and I always wonder just how long our health will allow us. Thanks for the info on the Eager Beaver. I guess I just kept interested in her from 1949 on when I contacted Colliers magazine who ran an article about her in Williamsport, Pa. I have kept in touch and have followed her through destruction. I was encouraged by Ralph Bordner to try and aquire the remaining piéce and went to alot of usless writing and will send what correspondence I have to you and you can do what you like with it. I have lost interest as the Beaver has been repainted over which ta kes away any pride that I had in her remains Reber and Lally brought up interesting things that I didnt know and if I remember right I thought he said he flew his last mission in her and that was after I was shot down. Anyway it was just curiosity on my part. Thanks for your help.

I received a letter from Leonard Herman telling me he got a book from you. He is responsible for the printing of the 95thBG book. They are having Ian Hawkins write it. I have a business venture with Herman who saw a picture I had done and wants to promote it. It's the one Doc Shuller was so fond of. I regret I didnt meet this guy sooner. I think I could have done the jacket for their book. I have agreed to let them use the background story of the picture he is promoting for their book under their POW chapter.

One of the reasons for this letter concerning an article I received from a friend who grew up in Bedford and worked with John Mills of FOTE before she married and came to this country. She gave me this newspaper. Since you know John also (he is the one I stayed with when I visited England) I thought you'd like to see it. I think it is an interesting article.

I am now starting to design a place mat for our 40th Liberation Anniversery of Stalag XV11-B which we are holding in Clearwater Fl, May 2-6 It will be quite an affair and should almost be another 306th get together with all of the PWs from our outfit.

Well Russ, I'm sorry you did'nt stop when you passed through but understand. One is always anxious to get home, but the door is always open. We did the same with Borings as time just didnt work out.

Take care and

Regards



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England - September 1942-April 1945

306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

LEE KESSLER
170 Saratoga NW
Canton, Ohio
44708

August 18 1984

The Williamsport Area Community College
1005 West Third Street
Williamsport, Penn. 17701-5799

Robert L. Breuder

Dear Sir:

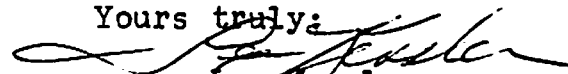
I have been asked by my Bomb Group Association, to pursue the possibilities of acquiring the logo which hangs in your airport hanger and is all that is left of the "Eager Beaver". This was a Model B-17 Flying Fortress which at one time was in your schools possession after WWII in 1946.

Noting an article and picture in a Colliets magazine renewed an old interest. I had special reasons for that interest as I not only painted the logo "Eager Beaver" on her nose in England, September 1942 but then was a member of crew on her maiden bombing mission. I made many more on her but was later shot down on another plane.

Through a Ann McNamara of the Sun-Gazette I received photoes and write-ups of how the school acquired her but they knew nothing of her background. This information I passed on to a G.H.Parks, a director at the school. I tried to keep up on her career and would pass on the information to others who flew in her and was interested. There was a love for her that no one at the school could understand and we were saddened to find her being destroyed, a plane that could have been a legend. She had more combat time then any other plane that returned to the States and now there are only in all the U.S. for public viewing. I last looked at the logo when I passed through Williamsport in 1982. We who fought with her. and on her would like to see what is left, placed in a museum where others may view and learn of her history.

I would appreciate any help you can give me on this matter as I will report to our groups upcoming reunion in October at Ft. Worth, Texas.

Yours truly:


Lee Kessler

ALWAYS FIRST

FIRST OVER GERMANY



WILLIAMSPORT
AREA
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

1005 West Third Street • Williamsport, Pennsylvania 17701-5799 • (717) 326-3761

September 7, 1984

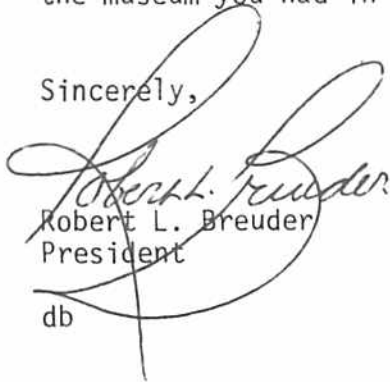
Office Of The President

Mr. Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga NW
Canton, OH 44708

Dear Mr. Kessler:

The College would be happy to contribute what remains of the "Eager Beaver" to a bona fide museum. Please provide us with information on the museum you had in mind.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Breuder
President

db

*Lee
Jill thought you
might like this
article from her English paper
about John Mills!*



Major Glenn Miller, Bedford, 1944.

Not quite vintage '44 but, a brave show

IT'S said that distance lends enchantment. We tend to overplay people, events and places from the past.

A modest Carl Lewis, running to an equalling four gold medals in the Olympics, still rates Jesse Owens a god; we say this or that old film was the greatest even when it flickers up rather flatly on TV; a dream holiday of childhood holds good even if a re-visit lets us down.

Bill Morris is leaving Bedford Corn Exchange early. He attended every Glenn Miller concert from June to December, 1944, including the public one being recreated this evening.

As an employee of Ald J. A. Canvin who organised the wartime forces concerts, Bill, in his own phrase, dispensed hospitality. "I was the young man with the bottle."

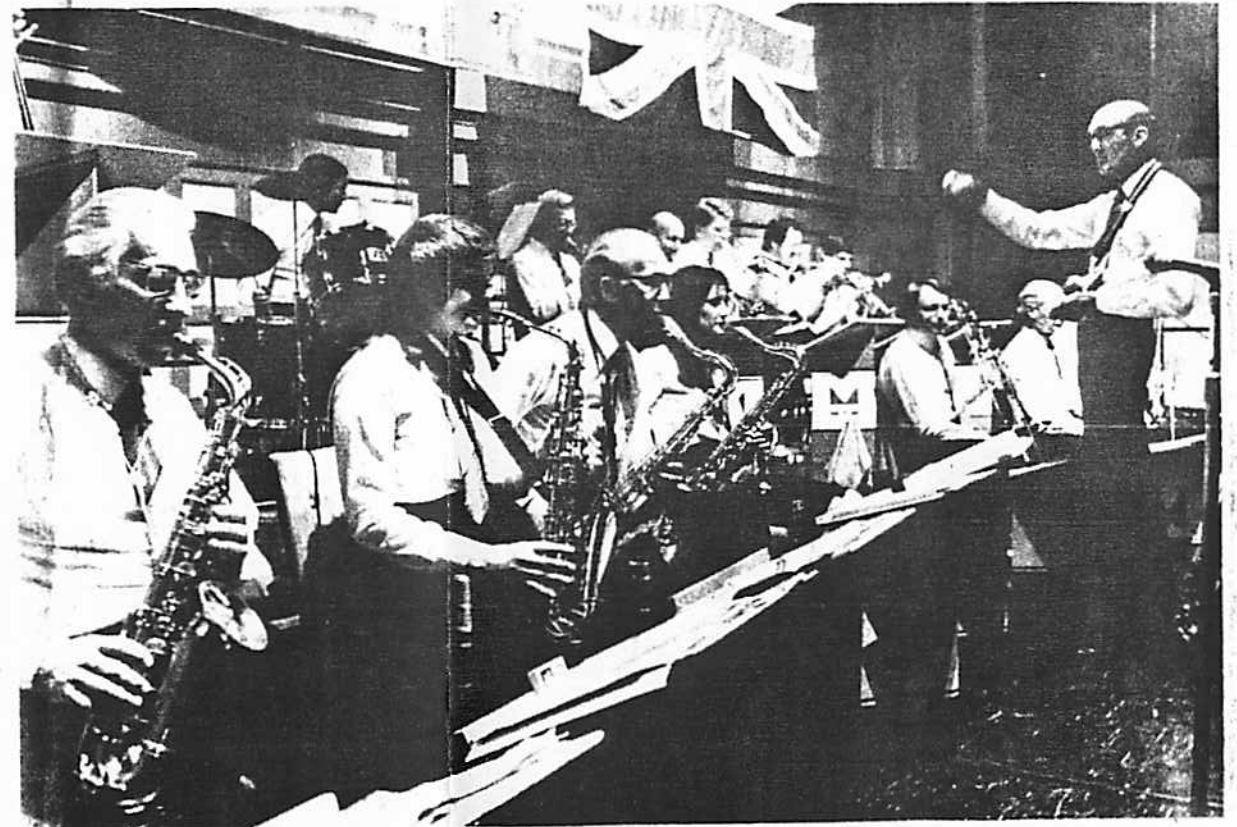
He's off now because, he says, "the band doesn't sound like Miller."

To be fair, Miller had the pick of the American music scene when he brought the Band of the Supreme Allied Command to Bedford, and tonight's musicians, Mainline Big Band, don't even claim to be Miller copyists.

"We enjoy playing his style of music, and that of his contemporaries," says chairman Stuart Greenwood. "We produce the Mainline Big Band sound."

And Gordon Richards of the 306 Bomb Group Historical Association introducing the dance/concert says, "We are going to try, with your help, to reconstruct the concert and the aura surrounding it." The key word is 'try'.

In August, 1944, it was real servicemen and women coming from the long dark tunnel of war to grab an evening of romance which now might become more commonplace as the Allies pushed for final victory in Europe. The August 1984 uniforms and clothes are 1944 vintage but many of those wearing them weren't



A section of Mainline Big Band under Pete Muncaster.

Story - DOUG BOWKER, Pictures - TONY WOODCOCK



Joe and Peggy Albertson arrive for the concert with a smart salute from military policemen Lloyd Richards (left) and John Mills.

the Mayoress won a scholarship from Clapham Road School to Bedford High, a rare achievement in those days.

"I remember slipping away from school to stand outside the Corn Exchange and listen to Glenn rehearsing," she says.

Ian McArthur and wife Carolyn look the 1940s part. Ian bought a vintage Jeep before he got an American uniform to

(costing around £50 apiece) and wear them at air shows and rallies. But Natalie will soon be swapping her American one for she's joining the Women's Royal Air Force.

It's tempting to query adults dressing up in uniforms, especially those of a foreign power. But John Mills, one of the military policemen on the door, expressed a generally

atmosphere. I only wear it on suitable occasions like tonight."

And John has pride in British uniforms — he put in 29 years' service with the Territorial Army. His wife Di — tonight in the American equivalent — served 30 years with the British Red Cross.

The dancers take the floor again as the band under Peter Muncaster play. In the



Joe and Peggy Albertson arrive for the concert with a smart salute from military policemen Lloyd Richards (left) and John Mills.



Veteran of 306 Bomb Group — Jim Richwine.



Veteran of the 1944 concert — Bill Morris.



All dressed up — left to right, Andy Haydon, Natalie Maughan, Peter Skillman and Lisa Ives.

the Mainline Big Band sound." And Gordon Richards of the 306 Bomb Group Historical Association introducing the dance/concert says, "We are going to try, with your help, to reconstruct the concert and the aura surrounding it." The key word is 'try'.

In August, 1944, it was real servicemen and women coming from the long dark tunnel of war to grab an evening of romance which now might become more commonplace as the Allies pushed for final victory in Europe. The August 1984 uniforms and clothes are 1944 vintage but many of those wearing them weren't around in those days.

Miller — quiet, undemonstrative, occasionally turning to acknowledge the dancers' enthusiasm — was already planning to follow the Allies into Europe.

A December concert, then the next day off for a Christmas celebration in a free-again Paris. But his aircraft, flying from a cold, foggy Twin Woods airstrip near Thurleigh, never reappeared.

The man was lost, his music lives on. If Mainline Big Band can't quite match the Miller Moonlight Serenade, nor the dancers of peace emulate those of war, it's still a brave, nostalgic show.

And there are 'real' people here, including two veterans of 306 Bomb Group based at Thurleigh, Joe Albertson and the splendidly named Jim Richwine.

Joe headed the maintenance crew of the B 17s carrying out daylight raids on occupied Europe, and with him is his English wife, Peggy, whom he met on a 'blind date' at Milton Ernest, and who tonight is wearing her old Land Army uniform.

The couple lived for a while in the States, but came back in 1967 to Bedfordshire — Stotfold and Wilstead — but now live in Suffolk.

Jim, who ran the postal unit at Thurleigh, is at the concert by chance; he's in Bedford re-visiting old friends in Richmond Road.

Joe and Jim, meeting up for the first time in 40 years, are uncertain if they were at that August 1944 concert at the Corn Exchange, recall more easily those given by Miller in the hangar at Thurleigh, and stars like Bob Hope and Frances Langford who topped up the entertainment.

Jim wonders if this newspaper can help trace a young boy, Donald Jones, who came from the village with his brother (or friend) cadging American stamps. Are you still around Donald?

Arthur Lockwood tried to get into the 1944 concert but was turned away at the door by military police. "A friend and I weren't really old enough. We had on Home Guard uniforms and were puffing fags trying to look the part. But the MPs knew."

The Mayor of Bedford then, Ald F. A. Rickards, was allowed in, and here's today's mayor, Vic Storrow. Vic wasn't in town then, but his wife-to-be was.

Born and bred in the Black Tom area,

the Mayoress won a scholarship from Clapham Road School to Bedford High, a rare achievement in those days.

"I remember slipping away from school to stand outside the Corn Exchange and listen to Glenn rehearsing," she says.

Ian McArthur and wife Carolyn look the 1940s part. Ian bought a vintage Jeep before he got an American uniform to match. Carolyn only managed to obtain her shoulder-padded dress the day before. But the fur wrap is genuine, her mother-in-law's.

There must have been some boy-girl romances made at the concert. Just for the sake of a photograph(?) we bring together 17-year-olds Lisa Ives and Natalie Maughan of Bedford with Andy Haydon of Luton — the only 'sailor' in the hall — and Peter Skillman.

The youngsters think Miller music great. Lisa has "hundreds of Miller records and tapes". They own their uniforms

(costing around £50 apiece) and wear them at air shows and rallies. But Natalie will soon be swapping her American one for she's joining the Women's Royal Air Force.

It's tempting to query adults dressing up in uniforms, especially those of a foreign power. But John Mills, one of the military policemen on the door, expressed a generally held view.

"As a Kempston lad, I used to cycle to Thurleigh to see the B 17s. I was only 14 when the war ended but I was already collecting militaria.

He then lost interest, but nine years ago found a lot of people were interested in researching military history. He became a founder member of the 306 Bomb Group Historical Association and a member of Friends of the 8th.

But what about the dressing up? "Basically, I'm an historian and collector and I think the uniform helps with the

atmosphere. I only wear it on suitable occasions like tonight."

And John has pride in British uniforms — he put in 29 years' service with the Territorial Army. His wife Di — tonight in the American equivalent — served 30 years with the British Red Cross.

The dancers take the floor again as the band under Peter Muncaster play In the Mood. Round the corner in the Harpur Suite a wedding party are dancing to today's music. I wonder if we'll be re-creating that in 40 years' time?

● The concert was a sell-out and those disappointed at not being able to get a ticket should note there will be another Mainline Big Band function linked with Glenn Miller in Bedford before Christmas. Tickets from Stuart Greenwood, 51 Cleavers Ave., Conniburrow, Milton Keynes (Milton Keynes 660211).

A section of Mainline Big Band under Pete Muncaster.

Story - DOUG BOWKER, Pictures - TONY WOODCOCK



Arriving — Ian and Carolyn McArthur, suitably bestocked.



Dancing — genuine US Air Force duo Barry and Christine Spink.

This was a clipping from a
Bodley's paper sent to me
(E. 191) last fall.

Superstars will light the sky over Thurleigh

THERE will be superstars over Thurleigh in Spring this year.

Gregory Peck, Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr are due to come to the village for the filming of an epic which follows the lives and fortunes of Americans who flew with 306 Squadron during World War II.

The news leaked out when a chauffeur-driven car arrived at The Jackal pub in Thurleigh.

Landlord Sam Hill said: "I recognised one of the passengers as Alan King who I had seen on television

in 'Live at Her Majesty's' only last Sunday."

Mr. King is a comedian, better known in America than here, a producer and entrepreneur. He heads the King-Hitzig film company, an MGM subsidiary.

Mr. Hill added: "He was very taken with the village. I heard him talking about their plans and, realising it would bring work and trade to the village, asked him straight out, and he confirmed the details."

Filming is due to start in April. Mr. King has now returned to America.

Do you know if this ever
materialized? →

6 August 1986

Dear Lee:

Enjoyed your lengthy, informative letter. I hope you enjoyed the Ex-POW meeting. I know that they are highly emotional gatherings, and that most people wouldn't miss them for anything.

The 306th led the first raid to Germany, but there may be some debate as to who dropped the first bomb. Ed Hennessy says they approached the coast on the bias and that his plane was the first, not that in which Col. Armstrong was riding up front.

8th AF News is showing a penchant for printing anything that comes along, and not worrying about the facts. They've screwed up badly several times, at least three times in the last issue, that I can account for. Walter Cronkhite's piece was full of holes, as well as the letter on the 306th dedication of Rose of York.

During my tour I may have flown in an F once or twice. But my first mission was in a brand new G, and most of them were in G's. We didn't have many Fs left by mid-44 and later.

It'll be good to see you in DAYton,



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Dear Russ:

Have been planning on writing you for some time and since it's pouring rain out, it seems like a good time. Was back in the hospital the latter part of March, but with change of medication am doing much better. Hell to get old.

Will give you the sketch back as I don't need it. I had found it among some things and my son laminated it. By the way, I have several photos of the Beaver when it first arrived in the States in '46. Had many names of 306ers painted all over it. Some recognizable. Also writeups from the Williamsport Gazette, and pics of when she was being vandalized. I saw the panel in the hanger, which is all that's left. It has been repainted over the original. If any of this stuff would be of use, let me know, as long as I get it back.

Received a letter from Wm. Curt Melton who was my original pilot, and the one who ditched on the way over. This is the first I've heard of him since Nov. '42. According to him, he finished his missions with the 305th. He lives in Atlanta but is bringing his wife to Akron where he lived for 11 years, and wants to pick me up and we would drive to Dayton for the Reunion. I may take him up on it. It would be a good time to get re-aquainted and he promised, no bath. There are many questions I would like to ask. I always thought him a stuffed shirt, but at that time I think he took his responsibilities very serious and I never really got to know him. The other officers (Kramerinko, Levy and Grimes) used to kid around and many times we broke the rules of EM and Officers fraternizing, by bar hopping etc, but never Melton. One thing I want to know and discuss is the trip over. All these years I was under the impression we had some sort of sabotaged fuel because of the fires. Then at the 8th AF Reunion in '78 at D.C. a group of us were sitting on one of the Govt. Building steps and old Bob Stevens who has a memory like an elephant, related this story. It seems that when the 306th was getting our new Fs at Westover, there were four ships that came with covers over the superchargers (proving the controversy between daylight and night bombing was in question) Each squadron got one but no one knew what to do about them. Overacker sent Stevens and another officer to Wright- Pat to find out the story. With no luck there, they flew to Kansas to a Boeing plant, and still with no instructions was called back to Mass. The 367th and 69th had removed theirs, but the 68th and the 423rd didn't. This became ours (Melton's) but we did fair better than the 423rd (Leahy) as he blew up on the way over. You know that story. What I can't figure out is why I never knew of this at that time. I'm sure Melton must have known.

There is another interesting part to this. We all put in for a claim because we were on peridium at the time but I must have made out on this escapade better than the rest.

When Hester Levitts came to Thurleigh as the head Red Cross, I was just out of the hospital and not flying. She wanted me to do the insignias on the Red Cross Club ceilings. I learned to know her very well and learned that her husband (though they were seperated) was one of FDRs cabnet men. She still had some influence in high places and thats why Putnam, Wilson and the rest were so friendly to her. She introduced me to an Ed Lockett who was Editor of the Europe Time & Life. At that time as I understood it our ditching was the only one ,at least surviving the northern route and so he wrote the story and I made two ink sketches and was paid \$250. Life bought hundreds of stories this way. By the time the Govt. released the story it was old stuff, the African Campaign was the big thing, but I was \$250. richer. Melton and I should have much to talk about.

I'm flying down to Jackson, Miss. tomorrow for the 4 day Ex=POW Convention, but I'M really looking forward to Sept. It will be a busy month as I'm invited to the 95th BG reunion at Valley Forge, Pa the 2nd-6th. A Leonard Herman, who was a Navagator in that group, has the same job as you in the 306th, only he is not a writer and is having their history written by the wrote Munster, The Way it Was. I became aquainted with Herman when he wanted to promote and publish a picture that I had done. It became popular after it was seen on Good Morning America and a couple other TV shows. We met and after working out a deal, it was published. He is Jewish and a promoter. It worked in with the Holocaust bit and is out on both coasts ad I have just signed another batch of copies that are going to the Netherlands. I have no idea how they will do there. I will never get rich altho it has been an extra income and the recognition is nice. One print hangs in a private gallery in N.Y. and another is in the largest Jewish Synagog in Phila. which was designed by Frank Loyd Wright. The lithographs are very good although I was disappointed with the story. When I wrote it, I thought they would have it re-written by a writer. It could have been phrased better. A friend of mine who runs a print shop reduced and made a composite and gave me some. I am enclosing a copy along with an artictla done by the local Jewish newspaper. Pitch them when your done. The 95th is recognizing their POWs as we did and some of the guys remember the incider in ghe picture. I think thats why I was invited to their affair.

I have wondered about something for some time. Some time ago I was reading a military book(dont recall the name) and in it it stated another BG as t the first over Germany. I wanted to bring it to your attention at that time and forgot. Now in the last issue of the 8thAF News shows a picture and caption-Capt. Lewis Lyle of the 303rd BG receiving the pin from the first bomb dropped on Germany, Jan 27 43. If our group was the first over Germany, why did we not drop the first bomb. I dont know the facts but it does raise a question.

Also, when you were there ,flying, were you in Fs or Gs?

Guess, I'd better knock off for now. If I dont hear from you before, I'll see you in Dayton.

Regards


Lee



The Background For The Picture

by Lee Kessler (Artist)

With the onslant of the Russian advance through Hungary and the approach toward the Danube River in late March of '45 the German's evacuated our camp and put us on the road marching toward the west. After a couple of weeks on the road we were marching past a place called Mauthausen. We learned it was a concentration camp, also at the time we knew little about them. Approaching us from down the road a group of these prisoners from this camp who we learned later were working in a quarry. They were Hungarian Jews and were guarded by the SS. We were halted at the side of the road for these walking skeletons to pass, but when they came even with us their guards stopped them. One of our guys threw a cigarette over towards them which was a mistake as they were like a pack of hungry dogs. The SS beat them back and one who was too weak to get up a spectacle was made for our benefit.

As we moved on we heard shots, mostly pistol, and we knew what they were for. Those who could not get up because of weakness were shot. Two prisoners followed in a wagon and loaded the bodies. As I approached one of the bodies at the side of the road, I noticed a crinkled photograph by his hand. As he lay with one arm stretched out as if reaching out for the picture, I saw that he had been shot in the head. I moved off the road to get a better look at the photograph and was about to pick it up when a guard halted for me to get back.

The picture was of a woman and two children. As I looked back, a butterfly landed on him. I was numb the rest of the march. Here was this man, dead by the side of the road, probably the last thing he looked at was his family, a photo which was his only possession and where were they? Dead or in some other camp. At that moment I could only think that everyone has the right to die with dignity and here was this poor soul who died with such obscurity.

Some time in the fifties I started and outlined the drawing but finally put it away as I felt no one would understand what I was trying to portray. Then twenty years later after a severe heart attack and out of I.C. recovering, I needed some form of therapy and at the suggestion of a nurse who knew me and my association with art, I had my wife hunt for the layout, bring me my ink and pens and with the encouragement of the staff I finished the picture.

Like other pictures, I put it away and until two years ago it lay in a drawer. I still felt that no one but me could really understand it. Then at the POW Convention when another POW was being interviewed, he related a story of how he saw this man lying on the ground, pull a picture from his pocket and as he kissed it the Guard shot him.

Lee Kessler '79

↑ This was done by John Wells

Certificate of Authenticity

This lithograph
"The Hand" by Lee Kessler

a special signed limited edition
printed by Yoder and Armstrong
East Lansdowne, Pa.

The background for the picture as described
is true and the artist's personal experience.

Signed for and on behalf of the Publishers and Distributors

Reduced

January, 1985

THE BACKGROUND FOR THE PICTURE - By Lee Kessler (Artist)

With the onslaught of the Russian Army and their advance on Austria and the Danube in late March 1945, the Germans evacuated Stalag XVII-B, marching those who could walk, on the road West. After a couple of weeks on the road, we passed a place called Mauthausen. We later learned it was a Concentration Camp, although at the time we knew little about them. Approaching us from the opposite direction was a group of prisoners from this camp who had been working in a quarry. They were Hungarian Jews and were guarded by the S.S. We were halted at the side of the road as these walking skeletons passed. Occasionally we heard the crack of pistols and knew what they were for. Those who fell and were too weak to get up were shot. Two prisoners followed a wagon and loaded the bodies.

I approached one of the bodies of a man shot in the head lying along the side of the road and noticed a crinkled photograph by his hand. As he lie, his arm stretched out as if to be reaching for the picture. I moved off the road for a better look at the photo and was just about to pick it up, but a guard shouted for me to get back. The picture was of a woman and two small children. As I glanced back, I saw that a butterfly had lit on him.

I was obsessed with the scene. Here was this man, dead by the side of the road. The last thing he looked at was a picture of his family, probably his only possession, and where were they? Dead or in some other camp. At that moment I could only think that everyone has the right to die with dignity, and here was a poor soul who died with such obscurity.

Sometime in the fifties, I started a sketch of a rough outline but put it away, since I felt no one would understand what I was trying to portray. Twenty years later as I lie in the hospital, a nurse who knew me and my association with art suggested I do art work for therapy. I had my wife hunt for this sketch, bring my pen and ink, and with the encouragement of the staff, I finished the picture.

Like other pictures, I put it away feeling that no one but me could really understand it.

In 1983 at a POW Convention in Cleveland when another POW was being interviewed, he related the story of how he saw a man fall. "While lying on the ground, he pulled a picture from his pocket, and as he kissed it the S.S. guard shot him." Thus, this was another testimony and confirmation of an unforgettable scene.



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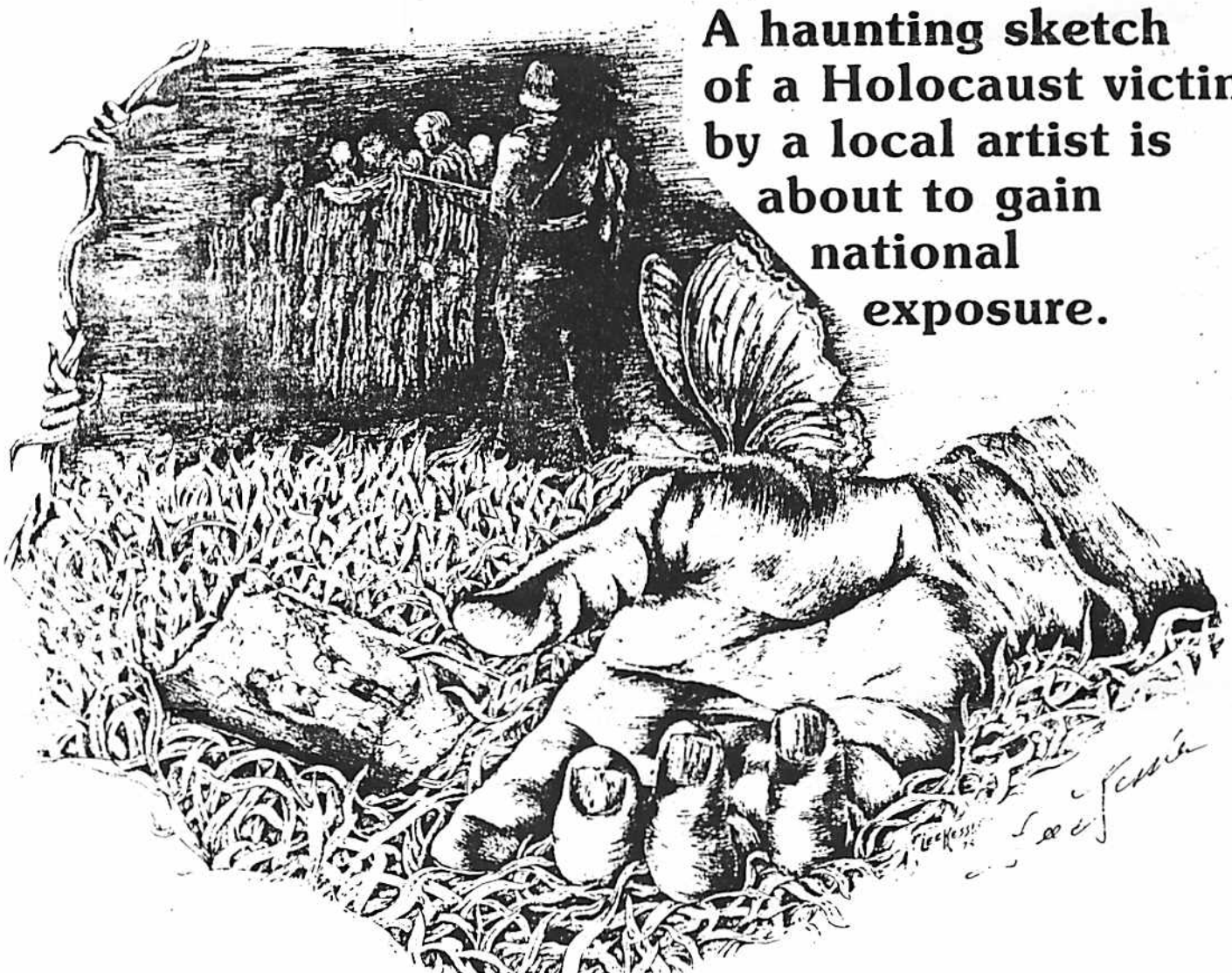
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**A haunting sketch
of a Holocaust victim
by a local artist is
about to gain
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**The artist is a Canton native, a Roman Catholic,
and a former employee of the Canton City
Schools. His story, on page 7, provides a powerful
backdrop to the subject of his work.**

A Haunting Sketch



Lee Kessler

Canton Man Captures Lonely Death of a Holocaust Victim

by Adele Gelb

A haunting sketch of a Holocaust victim by a local artist is about to gain national exposure. The artist is Lee Kessler and his story provides a powerful backdrop to the subject of his work.

Kessler is a Canton native, a Roman Catholic, and a graduate and former employee of the Canton City Schools. A member of the 306 Air Force Bomb Group during World War II, Kessler was shot down over Germany in 1943. He spent the balance of the war as a POW in Austria.

Forced March

With the advance of the Red Army in late March 1945, the Germans began a forced evacuation of POWs. Here Kessler picks up the story in his own words:

"At that moment I could only think that everyone has the right to die with dignity, and here was a poor soul who died with such obscurity."

"After a couple of weeks on the road, we passed a place called Mauthausen. We later learned it was a Concentration Camp, although at the time we knew little about them. Approaching us from the opposite direction was a group of prisoners from this camp who had been working in a quarry. They were Hungarian Jews and were guarded by the S.S. We were halted at the side of the road as these walking skeletons passed. Occasionally we heard the crack of pistols and knew what they were for. Those who fell and were too weak to get up were shot. Two prisoners followed a wagon and loaded the bodies.

"I approached one of the bodies of a man shot in the head lying along the side of the road and noticed a crinkled photograph by his hand. As he lay, his arm stretched out as if to be reaching for the picture. I moved off the road for a better look at the photo and was just about to pick it up, but a guard shouted for me to get back. The picture was of a woman and two small children. As I

glanced back, I saw that a butterfly had lit on him.

"I was obsessed with the scene. Here was this man, dead by the side of the road. The last thing he looked at was a picture of his family, probably his only possession, and where were they? Dead or in some other camp. At that moment I could only think that everyone has the right to die with dignity, and here was a poor soul who died with such obscurity."

Return Home

Kessler returned to his home in Canton and a job in the maintenance department of the Canton City Schools after the war. He sketched a rough outline of the Holocaust scene in the 1950s and "buried the memory" away in his attic.

In 1975, Kessler had a heart attack and spent several weeks at Aultman

Hospital. A routine bland meal of boiled potatoes produced an unusual result.

"I had eaten plain boiled potatoes in solitary confinement during the war," Kessler recalled. "I went into a deep depression until one of the nurses took an interest in my case. She talked to a professor at Kent State University and he told her many POWs have problems from trying to forget rather than to face up to the past."

A Task Completed

The nurse urged Kessler to complete his earlier sketch. His wife found the line drawing in the attic and brought his pen and ink to the hospital. With the encouragement of the staff, he finished the Holocaust scene begun in the 1950s.

In 1983, Kessler attended a POW convention in Cleveland. He brought the American flag he had carried on the march 40 years before to the gathering. This made him one of the luminaries of

the group and a subject of frequent interviews by the local and national press.

Sharing the Memory

One afternoon he heard a buddy recount the story of the prisoner in his picture. "He saw the man lying on the ground pull a picture from his pocket and as he kissed it, the guard shot him," Kessler remembered. He now knew he had to share his drawing and brought it with him to a Channel 5 interview the following day. His buddy was overwhelmed at the sight of it and Joel Rose of TV 5 insisted it be shown during the interview. The following day the segment aired on Good Morning America. Others contacted Kessler for a photocopy of the drawing.

A 95th Bomb Group convention in New Orleans in September 1984 brought the photocopies of the drawing to the attention of Leonard Herman of Philadelphia. Herman had an immediate reaction: "I must have this. I want this to be recognized."

Lithographs

Herman called Kessler and spoke to him regarding the drawing. Kessler felt the subject matter had a limited field of interest. Herman asked him, "Lee, are you Jewish?" Kessler replied that he was Catholic. "I am Jewish," Herman responded, "and I can promise you

trained Wells as a calligrapher and forger. He had crafted the documents used by the British in the actual "Great Escape." Wells designed the certificates of authenticity and the written narrative for the Kessler lithographs.

The work has been shown at Philadelphia's Beth Shalom Synagogue and at the recent American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

Gift to Canton

Herman suggested Kessler present his hometown Jewish community with a lithograph. Unsure of how to contact the local Jewish community, Kessler called Ronnee Furman at WHBC. She put him in touch with Jay Rubin at the Jewish Community Federation. The lithograph is currently being framed and will be displayed in the near future.

"I could not get this scene out of my mind," Kessler reiterated. "Everyone has the right to die with dignity. If I had died, someone would have notified my family. This man's death was so isolated — it bothered me that no one who loved him would know."

"I have not sought fame," Kessler stated, "I'm just an average Joe. I used to think that it would have been nicer if a prettier subject of my work had been noticed, but if my drawing causes only one person to say 'this terrible thing must never happen again' then I will have achieved something on this earth."

"If I had died, someone would have notified my family. This man's death was so isolated - it bothered me that no one who loved him would know."

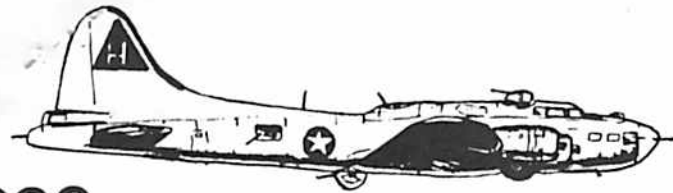
there are lots of people interested in this."

Herman persuaded Kessler to send him the original. In Philadelphia, Herman lined up an engraver and watched the process from start to finish.

The network of 95th veterans contributed further to the work with the talents of John Wells. The army had

Herman sums up his feelings about Kessler simply: "I do believe he is a righteous gentile," he said.

I have never met him. I understand he is a college professor now.



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Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



August 4 1986

Dear Russ:

I've been going through a bunch of my things and tossing out this and that. At one time I thought it fun to make portraits of various 306ers and I did make a few. However I was not satisfied and discontinued making them. I worked from snapshots which was extremely difficult not that I should use that as an excuse, but it seems my hands dont want to put down what my eyes see and that can be frustating, so I just gave up. Rather then pitch it my son said to at least allow you to do that, so I am sending you and Ralph Bordners to him. If you have mice in your garage, it may help to scare them out.

Hope it does not offend you, and will see you in Dayton,

regards

P.S. just received back my hotel reservations. They are sold out at the holiday so will make it at The Ramada, which is close by.

29 August 1986

Dear Lee:

I'm sorry that I haven't responded sooner concerning the sketch, but guess I was a bit overwhelmed by it.

I am ready to get it framed and hang it in my study, as soon as I get it put back together next week after having to do some repair work on an outside wall that leaked. It entailed getting the heating people in to unhook my baseboard units, so without heat in the house we are now in the midst of a cold wave.

I made some prints of the sketch so that I could give them to my sons, and also thought that you might not have a copy and would want it for your files. So I enclose one.

Thank you so very much. I feel very privileged to have such a sketch in my possession, and especially because it was done by such a fine artist as you are. That makes two of your works on the wall of my study, as I had a book jacket framed there, as well.

I look forward to seeing you in a couple of weeks in Dayton.

All the best,



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

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Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

Russ: Thought you might find this of interest:

On April 22 1987, I drove to the Air Force Museum at Dayton, Ohio to attend a lecture given by Hans Sharf, "The Master Interrogator of The Luftwaffe".

I had read the book some years back which was written by Col. Raymond Tolliver who is the author of several WWII books. I was never sure whether I had any contact with Hans Sharf, since I passed through Dulag Luft as all captured airmen did. I could only remember the name of Ober Lt. Kohler. Forty odd years later, I thought I would, as a Former POW, find the lecture interesting.

There were close to 150 in the theater and half were any where from college age to the mid forties. When ask for a show of hands of Former POWs there were about twenty.

Col. Tolliver was introduced by Museum Director Col. Richard Upstrom who gave the authors background. He was a test pilot throughout the war, testing every type of aircraft the military had. He was never in combat however, and became a writer while in the military. After the war he located Hans Sharf and they collaborated in writing the book. Tolliver then talked about Sharf and went on to explain many parts and subjects of the book. He then introduced Sharf and he spoke on how he went about his interrogations, his association with the captured fighter pilots, and his success at extracting information from them. With the exception of the introduction by Upstrom, I taped the entire dialogue.

At the end of the lecture, I came to these conclusions:

1. I learned that Hans Sharf only interrogated fighter pilots.
2. That Fighter pilots (to him) was the elite, of the Bomber crews were of the lower category.
3. That there was an amazing camaraderie between captured fighter pilots and the German pilots.
4. My impression that Sharf was not as clever as our pilots were stupid.
5. That both men gave more regard to the Germans than to us. Since Tolliver was never a POW let alone never even saw combat seemed to have all the answers to any questions regarding prisoners and the camps.

The attached pages are a couple excerpts of the tape in their exact words. If you would like to listen to the 90 min. tape, contact me. Any airman whether prisoner or not could learn much from this.

Col. Tolliver-- Almost all American fighter pilots that I knew, told me-- "You've got to meet Sharf. He's the most rare individual you've ever seen. One guy wrote me and said " Yes, I knew Sharf and if I ever see that SOB, I'll kill him". So I wrote him back a letter and said, "You know I'm very curious about your statement because I'm writing a book about him and I would like to know the exact problem". Of course I've never heard from him again, because he found out I was writing a book about Sharf. You see a lot of fighter pilots who returned from POW Camps came back and told their families how badly they were treated by the interrogators or something else. Well this book proves that things were not quite as bad as they said they were, and they didn't want their families to know it so several of them said; "Well, you can tell the story but you can leave my name out, which I did.--But most of them said "Sure, go ahead and tell the story. It's exactly right. It's exactly as Sharf says and if you look at his Guest Book you will see what they said when they left after the interigation, then you have to believe.

(Both Tolliver and Sharf mentions the Guest Book that Sharf kept, through out the lecture. He tells of how the pilots wrote overtures and praise to to him in this book which is on display at the Museum. I have not seen the the book, but if this is true, it seems to me this was a breach of the Code of Honor if indeed our fighter pilots had any. Sharf was still the enemy at this time.)

From a member of the Audience--who stated he was a B-24 pilot and had been shot down, Sharf remarked that he called in other interigaters. "I had nothing to do with you bus drivers".

QUESTION--Did you detect any American spies that were coming back into Germany? Infiltration of spies?

SHARF---Yes. This is quite interesting mater which Col. Toliver wrote about-- the spies- the agents and double crossers which is quite a chapter by themselves. These are the men I have no respect for. Naturally there is a game going on of spies, counter spies and double crossers all the time and we send out our Prisoners of War Camps our own spies and those spies to be caught by the Americans who had been into prisoner of war camps, who had set up their own intellegence center and screen everybody and we allowed certain fellows to be caught by them, not knowing which one was the real one. And this is the game that goes on from the time people are fighting each other.

TOLLIVER--Incidently, that is a very deadly game. The British in particular thought it was a quite a characteristic thing and part of their role to try to escape under any, and every condition. No mater what it is, they are going to try to escape. As you may recall, I believe it was at Luft 1-- I'm not quite sure, but they had one great big escape. Seventy five or so guys escaped. About twenty three of them were captured imediatly. Fifty were recaptured and executed if you recall. Those fifty were among the group that had been told: "Look, this is a big game and we know you think it is a game. But it is no longer a game. You try to escape again and --we gotcha." Only three guys escaped from that. One of them was Brad Vanderstock. He lives in Hawaii today and he's just written a new book on that, which should be coming out soon. But it was not a game as far as the Germans were concerned because what it did- it tied down hundreds of guards- hundreds of people they could put on the Russian Front were tied down to hunt escapees.

The British and Americans too thought it was a great game, but when they got shot, they came home and said "Murder". Now I don't think it was what I would call murder under any circumstances during war time. Now maybe I'm wrong-- maybe I'm not seeing it correctly. That is my opinion that it was not murder. I think we would do the same thing if we were being bombed day in and day out, and these guys were raising a ruckus all the time escaping at every opportunity when we told them after they had done it three or four times, the next time you do it, you're a dead duck.

COL. UPSTRUM-- They had also abandoned their Military Identification at that time. (This is questionable)

TOLLIVER-

Yes they had and they were now captured by the Gestapo and so the order had been out to execute them and they did.

Moderator -- Okay , a couple more and we'll wrap this up.

KESSLER-- I don't understand how you can say that Col. Tolliver. We were told our duty was to escape at any time and at any cost so if that was our duty, on one hand our Commanders was telling us we must try to escape, that it was our job to tie down as many guards as we could whether it was digging tunnels or what ever it took to keep them there-- but you say--their not wrong, that we were wrong.

(See- INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE IN THE EVENT OF CAPTURE AG 8 AF No.1 21 July, 1942)

TOLLIVER_ They had their rights and you had your rights and your rights were in conflict. You have to look at their viewpoint too. It's your viewpoint one way and in other words, I have my opinion and you have an opinion - ah-ah- maybe we are at conflict of opinion-wise. Well-same thing exists in my orders from the U.S.--I would have tried to escape if I would have been a POW. I'd be right there trying to do it, but I don't believe you can legally say that it was murder when they executed them. That's-that's my only complaint You were told by the Germans, what they were told. That's my analysis of that. (?)

k. After my QUESTION OR STATEMENT TO Col. Tolliver the program ended and I was convinced I had belonged to the wrong Air Force, however in the parking lot I was confronted by some (I assume Veterans) who were as stunned as I was.

May 12 1987

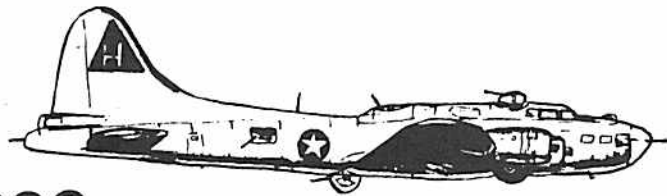
Dear Russ:

Just a note to let you know how much I enjoyed the last two issues of the ECHOES. The story of Bob Seelos was extremely interesting and the Butler story about the Bomb Dump in the last issue was so knowledgable to me. I knew there was a Bomb Dump but never saw it or knew any of its workings or background. I guess I never saw those putting the eggs in the plane. They were all ready there when we got out there. During those winter months I never traveled around the base that often, and just took those guys for granted. They did a hell of a job and it's funny it has taken a story and fourty odd years to realize it.

Keep up the good work. I wait for everycopy.



See



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January 8 1988

Dear Russ:

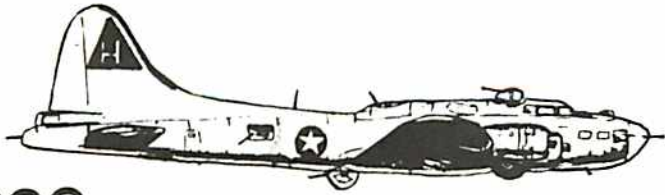
Was going through my copies of the Echoes which I made into a book and noticed the Caterpillar Club form you had placed. I became a member back in 46, however it said they were reviving their files, so I filled this out. If it is not necessary or I am too late, just ignore it.

While on the subject, I tried one time to try to make a list of all the 306ers who bailed out and tried to use your book but it was quite difficult as being shot down didn't mean they all bailed out. It would be interesting to know how many belonged to The Sea Squatters Club also. Not much is said about this organization. I received my card and pin in 46 also from the Walter Kidde & Co. manufacturers of Carbon Dioxide Inflation Equipment for Rafts and Mae Wests. The pin was a Sea Gull. I don't know if they are still in business yet.

If you have any ideas as to how I could get this information or go about getting it I would appreciate it.

Regards

Lee Kessler



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708



Feb. 5 1988

Dear Russ:

Your note and pics of the planes came at the same time as the ECHOES, so had to sit right down and read it. Cant say enough about the job you are doing and really look forward to it. Thanks for the pictures. I will use them as reference for a layout I want to get started on as soon as I finish and get off to Ed Hennessy a variety of program covers I am working on. Just about done and will ship them out for him to select. Then I can get back to "my" drawings.

In reference to your question about how much gas the planes used from Gander to Prestwick-- I looked in my notes or diary that I wrote after we arrived in England as the one I had with me was lost on the way over. My notes say We topped off around 3,000 gals. Personally I cant remember, and since I wrote "around 6,000 gallons that is not an exact figure, so I looked in my specs manual and adding up the figures it comes to 3600 gals with bomb bay tanks. Enclosed are pages from the specs but if you noticed even though these are 1942 specs, they have been revised 6-15-43 which means by this date they could have added more tanks in the wings on the later models which could have brought them up to another 600 gals. It's the best I could come up with. Some of the crew Engineers or some of the pilots might remember.

I took your advice and went to the Library about the Kidde Company. Found two address', one in North Carolina, the other in New Jersey. The original was in New York. Have written to both. Thanks for the help.

regards

Lee
Lee

ENGLISH FARM NEXT TO BASE THUREIGH



SEA SQUATTERS CLUB

140 CEDAR STREET, NEW YORK 6, N. Y.

We are very glad indeed to welcome you to the Sea Squatters Club.

The Club insignia and your membership card are enclosed. We hope this membership will lead to many new friends.

Our heartiest congratulations on your survival of the dangers of an emergency water landing.

John F. Kidde, President
Walter Kidde & Company, Inc.
Manufacturers of carbon dioxide inflation equipment for rafts and Mae Wests



ST. MARYS CHURCH BUI
1256 THURLEIGH-KES
BROOKEND ROAD



SEA SQUATTERS CLUB

This certifies that

T/Sgt. Lee Kessler USAAF

has qualified as a member of the Sea Squatters Club, having come down at sea and used a rubber life raft, September 12, 1942 in the Irish Sea.

16 March 1989

Dear Lee:

Your letter of 9 February, with attachments, has floated to my surface, and I want to thank you for sending them.

I have a print of the plane in Switzerland, which I will probably use in Echoes sometime.

The story on the filming of "12 O'Clock High" has appeared in several places. When I first saw it in a book, I tried to get permission from the publisher to use it in Echoes, but without success.

I may run it through again, as it would make a good issue.

I suspect the author holds the rights to it, and wants to make a few more bucks on it if he can.

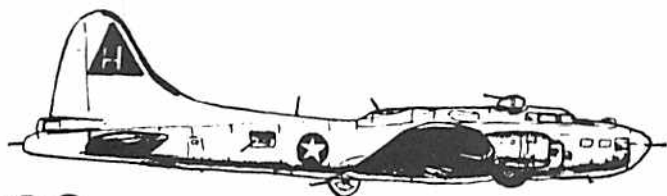
I shall keep it in my file, and just may pop it into view. I know that some others have read it, but probably only a very small percentage of our 306th people.

Busy, busy, busy here, with some home renovation and redecorating, baby sitting a bit, traveling, and trying to get my 306th stuff in better shape. Well, it keeps me out of the bars at least.

Hope you are feeling well these days.

It was good to hear from you.

All the best,



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Feb. 6 1989

Dear Russ:

A friend of mine who has stacks of AIR CLASSICS magazines and allows me to rumage through for pics of 17s for use in my drawings. In doing so, I came across a couple of articles I thought interesting and thought you might find also. Maybe you have already seen them. The one of the 306th plane in Switzerland I found the number on one of the zexored sheets that Ralph Bordner sent me out of Bishop's book that has researched planes and their history. I found only its MIA.

The other article I found interesting about the MAKING OF 120'CL HIGH. The most interesting about this was the picture of the crashed plane has the nose art of the EAGER BEAVER only painted lower than it was on the real ship. What is strange to me is why did they pick this particular one to paint on a plane. I have seen the movie a couple times but either didn't spot it or it was not clear. I remember talking to John McKee at one of the reunions and he told me he was a consultant for the movie but quit when they didn't agree with his ideas but he was out of the 367th and wouldn't be familiar with the Beaver. It's no big deal but is a point of interest to me. I'm enclosing both articles since their 306th related.

Hope this finds you in good health and have a good year.

Regards

Lee
Lee



AMERICAN AIRCRAFT INTERNED IN SWITZERLAND

For several years I have been working on a book on American aircraft down in Switzerland. This is a project for the well-known American company Squadron/Signal Publications.

For my project I am still looking for information and pictures on these aircraft down here in Switzerland. I would be very much interested to get in touch with former crew members interned here in my country. Also I would be glad to obtain photos on American aircraft interned here.

Any information is very much appreciated and will help me to do the book as accurate as possible. All photos will be fully credited in my book and returned to sender within eight weeks.

The enclosed picture shows an interned Boeing B-17F from the 306th BG down in Switzerland on 6 September 1943. Engine troubles forced the ship to go down at Magadino airfield on the fateful Stuttgart Mission. Aircraft 42-5841 was subse-

quently ferried to Emmen Test and Research Center of the Swiss Air Force.

Hans-Heiri Stapfer
Bergstrasse 35
CH-8810 Horgen/ZH
Switzerland

LITTLE TIGER

Just wanted to let you know that I enjoyed reading the first part of "The Little Tiger" in the April issue of *Air Classics*. As a fellow member of Mustang International, I thought that you might appreciate the comments on the incident as related in the 67th FBS squadron records:

"Stewart kept cool, and thought fast, and headed his sick Mustang west. Reaching the estuary east of Chinnampo he had to leave it, and bailed out successfully, landing in the water. He immediately inflated his Mae West and dingy, crawled in the dingy and began to paddle down the river. He soon came under some small arms fire from the banks, and realizing his dingy was a good target, abandoned it. He then floated on his back, keeping his nose above

the water to present as small a target as possible. This gave him a good chance to observe the remainder of his flight working up and down the river banks on strafing runs.

"A RESCAP flight, led by Lt. Joseph Babasa, kept the Mustangs on assigned runs, avoiding the pilot in the water and watched for the arrival of a SA-16. Babasa observed heavy flak coming from the city of Kyomi-po, and then diverted the F-51s to attack the positions, which were silenced by .50 caliber and rocket fire as Stewart drifted by.

"The SA-16 took two hours to get to the area, having to fly up the coastline and avoid the hotspot Yonan Pensulia. Darkness arrived, and Stewart was hard to spot, but he had a flashlight with him which was used for signaling. The Dumbo pilot made a night water landing, difficult during peacetime conditions, and picked up Stewart in completely unfamiliar conditions."

The 18th FBW lost two F-51s on this date, 44-74595 and 44-74604, but I have not been able to determine which one Stewart was flying.



Savage salutes bad boy Ben Gately (Hugh Marlow) as the crew of his B-17, "The Leper Colony," look on. The film's male extras were all USAF personnel.

where the two labored on the final draft of the script. By this time Beirne Lay was already at work on his next aviation film *Above and Beyond* at MGM. The efforts in Florida centered primarily upon deletion and curtailment of the over-length dialogue which hindered the story's movement and pace. Lay and Bartlett had earlier eliminated forty pages of script by removing the group commander's love interest. Zanuck had further tightened up the plot with the removal of all but the climatic combat sequence. Upon completion of the final draft King, an accomplished pilot in his own right, flew the script back to California. After reading it, King now recalls, Zanuck offered his congratulations and concluded by saying: "Henry, this is the best script I've ever read." It was a statement, King remembers, Zanuck used on more than one occasion when he was particularly pleased with a script.

THE PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING

At the time King took over the picture the former P-38 field at Santa Maria, California, was under consideration as a possible location site for the film. He, however, immediately eliminated this locale as being unsuitable to represent England, although it is interesting to note that twenty years later, Santa Maria Airport was the site for the filming of the low-budget Eighth Air Force yarn, *The Thousand Plane Raid*.

Lighton had originally envisaged a more modest production which would

have been filmed, for the most part, on a Fox sound stage using exterior process projections of the Santa Maria Airfield as background. Though this would have saved the expense of an extended stay for the cast and crew on location, it clearly was not King's way of making a motion picture. Zanuck concurred and told King to go ahead and do the film "as you want it and where you want it."

In February 1949, King phoned the film's newly assigned technical advisor, Colonel John H. deRussy, at Maxwell AFB in Alabama. During World War Two, deRussy had been Operations Officer of the Eighth Air Force's 305th Bomb Group in England.

"King called," deRussy remembers, "and asked if I had any thoughts on a stateside location similar to the Midlands bases in England. I suggested McGuire AFB in New Jersey. A few days later he flew there from Los Angeles and I flew in from Maxwell Field, Alabama. Henry King is an audacious pilot and holder of one of the earliest private pilot's licenses issued in the US. The flight he made from LA to McGuire, as told to me by the three passengers he carried, was an epic in endurance."

Among King's exhausted passengers was the film's Location Manager, John W. Adams. Adams was another recent veteran of the Eighth. "We had at first thought that we would go to England," remembers Adams, "but General 'Snuffy' Smith, then AF-PIO, told us there were no B-17s operational there. He suggested Alabama or Florida because the last operational B-17s were returning from Caribbean weather patrol and could be made available."

From McGuire airfield King's party

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89 Supermarine 5.6B \$35. 95 Doug. DC-3 (C47) \$55.

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94 Curt. Hawk P-6E \$54. 64 Stout Sky-Car \$18.

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95 Monocoupe Sport \$36. 108 Cor. 02U1/A 1 & 5 \$56.

80 Mail Spr. Bulldog \$40. 60 Douglas M-2 Mail \$24.

107 Aerona C-3 Spr \$35. 68 Bristol Bulldog Fr. \$30.

62 Howard Race Ike \$45. 59 Brown Race M.L.A. \$54.

78 Turner's W.W. Rac \$35. 107 Grum Bearcat F8F \$54.

63 Cur. Gosh'k F11C \$42. 69 Lindbergs NX-211 \$28.

94 Cur. Gosh'k F11C \$54. 91 Lindbergs NX-211 \$39.

66 DeHov. Comer Rac \$24. 96 Wr. NW-1 Now Rac \$46.

55 How. Mr. Mulligan \$35. 74 C. Hellier SB2C-4 \$42.

94 How. Mr. Mulligan \$45. 108 Fairch. P-19 Tr. \$59.

62 Boeing P-26A Fr. \$36. 60 Waco Taper-Wing \$36.

84 Boeing P-26A Fr. \$48. 90 Waco Taper-Wing \$48.

69 Waco C-6 Cabin \$36. 75 West'd Lysander \$32.

64 Beech C17-B Stag \$38. 100 West'd Lysander \$49.

96 Beech C17-B Stag \$39. 57 Ford Trimr. 4-AT \$48.

55 Lock. 11 Electro \$30. 72 Ford Trimr. 4-AT \$48.

82 Lock. 11 Electro \$40. 114 Ford Trimr. 4-AT \$48.

62 Stinson T.W. SR7 \$18. 96 Bellanca Aircrus \$40.

81 Stinson T.W. SR7 \$26. 93 Loening C-2 Amph \$69.

122 Stinson T.W. SR7 \$38. 58 Grum. J2-F Duck \$39.

59 Bristol Fr. F2-B \$20. 78 Grum. J2-F Duck \$56.

118 Bristol Fr. F20B \$49. 124 Lock. Air Express \$24.

74 Turner's "Paco" \$45. 62 Lock. Air Express \$24.

56 Cur. Workh. P-40 \$24. 83 Lock. Air Express \$36.

60 Vogt Corsair F4U \$35. 77 W.Wms 121 Redl. \$48.

80 Vogt Corsair F4U \$69. 63 C. Seahawk F7C-1 \$45.

78 Lock Light'n P-38 \$38. 94 C. Seahawk F7C-1 \$57.

56 Rep. Sea-Bee Am. \$24. 108 Sikor S-28 Amph \$49.

74 Rep. Sea-Bee Am. \$39. 60 Boeing 100 Sport \$36.

70 Piper J-3 Cub \$39. 90 Boeing 100 Sport \$49.

106 Piper J-3 Cub \$39. 72 Northrop Gamma \$48.

98 Lock Hudson Bmb. \$38. 96 Northrop Gamma \$75.

63 Grum F6F Hellcat \$28. 90 Shins "A" Low 3/M \$42.

77 Boeing B-17G Fort \$35. 60 Shins "A" Low 3/M \$42.

103 Boe. B-17G Fort \$55. 120 Shins "A" Low 3/M \$82.

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68 N. Amer. Navion \$39. 104 Con. Cat. PB5A \$56.

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65 M. Marauder B-26 \$49. 94 Curtiss NC-4 \$69.

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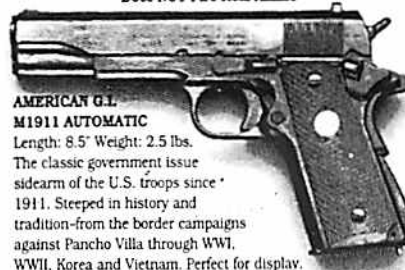
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100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

C. Rust's *Eighth Air Force Story* and Robert Grinsell's text on the P-51 from Bonanza Books' *Great Book of WWII Airplanes*, among others. Any help from readers would be appreciated.

Robert E. Godsil
Apt. #306
1633 S. Michigan Ave.
Villa Park, IL 60181

PRESERVED PHANTOM

I am currently a sophomore at the USAF Academy and we recently had a famous Warbird added to our static display park. It's a McDonnell Douglas F-4D Phantom II that was the personal mount of USAF ace Capt. Steve Ritchie (six kills). As an interesting sidelight, the first kill was made by Ralph Kittinger who, I believe, holds the record for the highest parachute jump. He wrote the book *Long Lonely Leap* and jumped from over 102,000 ft. He would later destroy a MiG-21 in the Phantom that is now on display.

Kurt Belker
Colorado Springs, CO

NORWEGIAN INVADER

It's a bit hard to believe, but there was a civilian Douglas Invader operating in Norway during the late 1950s and early 1960s. On 19 September 1958, Wideroe's Flyveselskap A/S, Oslo, registered Douglas RB-26C-30-DT, c/n 28524 s/n 44-35245, as LN-AER. Wideroe bought the Invader from USAF Germany because the company had received a large contract from the Norwegian Polar Institute for a total photo-mapping of Spitzbergen.

The Invader was in service until 25 January 1963, when it was scrapped. I am interested in obtaining further information (and color schemes) on this aircraft when it was in service with the USAF, including units with which it operated and any possible crew information.

B.O. Mojord
Hogtunveien 4
N-1370 Asker, Norway

HARRIER ON POLE

In the December "Warbird Report" there appeared a picture of a Warbird close to my heart. Though I have many hours flying time in just about every aircraft that USMC aviation had from 1942 to 1969, this is not the case here. I am the Public Works Director for the City of Havelock, North Carolina, and right in the middle of the Harrier static display project. Working with a female engineer

from MCAS Cherry Point, the pedestal for the Harrier was designed and built. The flags, sidewalks, shrubbery, and lighting design were mostly my project with the help of the City Manager and Recreation Director. Many people were involved in placing the AV-8B on its pedestal - this help came from our many military and civilian friends at the Air Station. Unlike some other displays, this one, being next to City Hall, will be constantly inspected and the grounds manicured weekly. Who knows? Someday this Harrier may be replaced by a later version and then restored to flying condition. It's all there except for some instruments and the engine.

James W. Shank
Col., USMC Ret.
Havelock, NC AC

TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH

(Continued from page 31)

lining up his hand-picked all-male cast. A youthful Gregory Peck was chosen by Zanuck for the lead role of General Frank Savage. With some misgivings, the veteran film and stage actor Dean Jagger agreed to take on the important role of Major Harvey Stovall, the group's Ground Executive Officer. Gary Merrill was assigned the role of Colonel Keith Davenport, the likeable group CO that Savage would replace, while actor Hugh Marlowe played the part of the plot's pet whipping boy, air exec. Ben Gately who commanded the B-17 known as the *Leper Colony*.

THE FILMING BEGINS

With location manager John W. Adams' pre-production chores at Eglin now behind him, the shooting company of actors and technicians, approximately 72 in all,

began arriving in Florida on 17 April.

During the first three weeks of their stay in the south-east, the cast and crew were constantly on the move, flying back and forth between Eglin and Ozark in a Delta Airlines DC-4 Adams had chartered for the occasion.

Among the first scenes shot at the Alabama locale during this early part of the filming schedule was Jagger's post-war return to his former group's field at "Archbury" with its overgrown fields and derelict runways seen in the opening moments of the film. Following this

(Continued on page 78)

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RECORD UPDATE

306th Bomb Group Association

(Please complete as much of this form as you wish, and give)
(to Russ Strong at the Las Vegas reunion, or mail to his ad-
(dress: 5323 cheval Pl., Charlotte, NC 28205)

Date completed November 11-1988

LAST NAME: KESSLER FIRST NAME: LELAND (LEE) Title:
Street address: 170 SARATOGA AVE. N.W. Telephone: (216) 477-0341
City, state, zip: CANTON, OHIO 44708

Date of birth: May 25 1921 Wife's name: PEG
College(s) attended: OHIO UNIVERSITY Degree(s): Year(s): 1 1/2
Last employment & job title: Canton City School System

Chief Custodian Athletic Complex

Year joined 306th Association: ~~xxxxxx~~ 1975

Reunions attended: (by year or location) 1977-78-80-81-82-83-84-86-87-88

Serial #: 15074078 Sqn: 368th Speciality: Engineer T/Tu
T/Turret Gunn

Date joined 306th: April 15 1942 If combat, what crew?

Special duties or assignments w/306th: Eng. T/Turret Gunner
Capt. Melton- Friend, Judas

If commissioned w/306th, date & specialty:

Date departed: Shot down Highest rank/grade w/306th: T/Sgt.
May 21 1943

Other 8thAF units served with:

Top service assignments after 306th:

USAF retirement date: Sept. 22 1945 Rank/grade: T/Sgt.
Discharged

Most memorable experience w/306th: (use back of sheet, too)

Ditched in Irish Sea after leaving Newfoundland-only 368th plane to
return April 17 43- crash landing after practice bombing May 20 43-
becoming POW after being shot down May 21 1943.

In the continuing search for 306th people, please inform the secretary as to any
persons you know from the 306th who are not listed in the 1988 directory; con-

RECORDS UPDATE

306th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

(Please complete as much of this form as you wish to, fold and mail as per address on reverse side. Or, if obtained at a reunion, hand to Russ Strong)

LAST NAME: KESSLER FIRST NAME: LELAND (LEE) TITLE: T/Sgt.
STREET ADDRESS: 170 SARATOGA AVE. N.W. TELEPHONE: (216) - 477-0341
CITY: CANTON, OHIO STATE: OHIO ZIP: 44708

DATE JOINED 306th ASSOCIATION: 1975

REUNIONS ATTENDED: (Years) 77-78-80-81-82-83-84-86-87

WIFE'S NAME: PEG
LAST EMPLOYMENT: CANTON CITY SCHOOLS

COLLEGE(S) ATTENDED: OHIO UNIVERSITY DEGREE(S): DATE:

SERIAL #: 15074078 SQDN: 368th MOS:
DATE ARR: APRIL 16 1942 CREW: MELTON --- FRIEND --- JUDAS
DATE DEPARTED: MAY 21 1943 HIGHEST RANK IN 306th: T/SGT.
SERVICE RETIREMENT DATE: SEPTEMBER 22 1945 RANK or GRADE: T/SGT.
DECORATIONS WITH 306TH: AIR MEDAL- PURPLE HEART- DFC
TOP SERVICE ASSIGNMENT AFTER 306TH:
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS WITH 306TH:

QUESTIONNAIRE

CATERPILLAR CLUB - IRVING CHUTE COMPANY

NAME: Leland J. Kessler

COMBAT JUMP DATE & MISSION: May 21 1943, Wilhelmshaven, Germany

HEIGHT WHEN BAILED OUT: 21,000 ft.

ANY PROBLEMS WITH PARACHUTE: Did not adjust leg straps properly. No problem with chute.

306th Bombardment Group. SQDN: 368th

VI.—WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY

1. You can plan to escape. Opportunities will be offered. Even attempts which fail are worth while as they have an appreciable nuisance value and the information collected will make later attempts successful. If you succeed in escaping and arriving in friendly territory do not discuss your experiences with anyone, in military service or out, until you are interviewed by the proper military authorities. And never, under any circumstances, mention the name of any person who may have helped you to escape.
2. You can damage enemy morale by spreading proper ideas and correcting misinformation among the prison guards and such civilians as you may be able to reach.
3. You can, if you are an enlisted man and go out of the camp on working parties, do as little work as possible and you may be able to do real damage.
4. You can keep your eyes and ears open at all times. We want information. Help us to get it.

RESTRICTED

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE IN THE EVENT OF CAPTURE

AG 8 AF NO. 1.
21 July, 1942.

THIS DOCUMENT MUST NOT
BE TAKEN INTO A PLANE.

1. The information contained in this document is not to be communicated, directly or indirectly, to anyone not in the armed forces of the United States.

2. C.O.'s are to see that a copy of this publication is issued to every member of the 8th Air Force whose duties might take him over enemy territory.

By Command of Major General SPAATZ.

B. L. DAVIS,
Colonel, A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.

RESTRICTED

Inevitably some members of the Eighth Air Force will be captured by the enemy. This document contains instructions and information for their guidance. It should be preserved and read from time to time so that its contents will not be forgotten.

I.—GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Any officer or enlisted man who becomes a prisoner of war remains in the military service of the United States. He is to escape when practicable, to perform other military duties when ordered and to obey his American military superior in the prison camp. No parole is to be given to the enemy except with permission of the senior American officer or non-commissioned officer and then only for periods of several hours duration and for special purposes. No broadcasts are to be made from prison camps for any purpose.

Prisoners of war have many rights. These are fully stated in the Geneva Convention of 1929, which the United States and all the great powers except Japan have signed and ratified. According to its terms a copy of the treaty should be available in every prison camp. Insist on this being done. Study it and insist on your rights. There is a neutral Protecting Power to whom all serious complaints can be addressed by the senior American officer or non-commissioned officer through the Camp Commandant.

II.—WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE ENEMY

A prisoner must give his Name, Rank and serial Number. This is required by the Geneva Convention of 1929. No further information of any kind should be given.

III.—WHAT THE ENEMY WILL TRY TO FIND OUT FROM YOU

The American Air Force is a new factor in the war, so the enemy will try desperately to ascertain its strength and capabilities. They will want to know:—

1. The number, strength and location of your squadron or unit.
2. The location of other squadrons and of airdromes.
3. The length of time you have been in England and the way you travelled from America.
4. The training you have received.
5. The size of the American Air Force.
6. The types of aircraft used with their performances and armament.
7. The signals and radio equipment used.
8. The tactics used by the American Air Force.
9. Anything and everything about A.A. defences and Air Defence organization.
10. Anything and everything about the Ground Forces of the American Army.
11. Any facts about the R.A.F. or its co-operation with the American Air Force.
12. Anything about conditions in Great Britain and in America—food supply, politics, morale among civilians and the armed forces, production of war supplies, etc.

IV.—HOW THE ENEMY WILL TRY TO LEARN THESE THINGS FROM YOU

There are only three sources through which the enemy can obtain information from you. They are:—

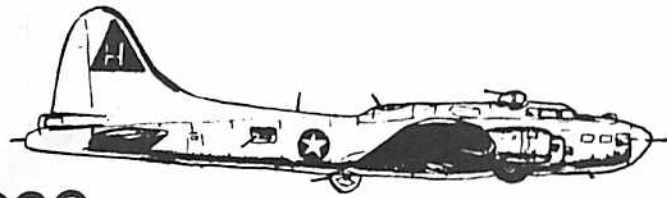
1. Your aircraft and its equipment.
2. Your papers—either official such as maps and documents, or personal such as letters and diaries.
3. Your talk.

The enemy cannot add to the information provided by your plane or papers, but he can do a lot to make you talk. The first Americans captured must expect the most rigorous interrogation, and must be prepared for all the tricks that the Germans have used. Among the methods which the enemy has employed to get people to talk, and which have been reported by prisoners of war who actually experienced them, are the following:—

- (a) Direct interrogation, sometimes for long periods in the hope of wearing you down and sometimes renewed long after capture.
- (b) Indirect interrogation through casual conversations about flying and the war in general—shop talk—in the hope of having you reveal something.
- (c) He will try to impress you with his great knowledge about yourself, your plane and the American Air Force in the hope you will think he knows everything already, and therefore there is no "harm" in talking freely. He may suggest that others have already told everything so your silence is no longer necessary.
- (d) He will appeal to your vanity by letting you show how much you know.
- (e) He will try to arouse you to angry protest by ridiculing the war efforts of the United States.
- (f) He will flatter you with special attentions, inviting you to parties with German airmen of great prominence. A spirit of good sportsmanship will prevail and liquor will flow.
- (g) He will reveal all sorts of German facts and secrets to you in the hope that you will feel like a heel if you do not tell him something.
- (h) He may try to intimidate you with threats.
- (i) On first arriving at a prison camp a "Red Cross" official, really an enemy officer dressed up, may give you a blank to fill out which will ask you to supply your squadron number and location. He may say your capture will not be reported or your mail transmitted if you refuse to fill out the blanks.
- (j) Enemy officials may dress in Allied or American uniforms and engage genuine prisoners in conversation.
- (k) Hospital nurses or attendants may try to gather information after being very sympathetic.
- (l) Microphones will certainly be used as they are a favourite German device and may be expected in every room at every stage of your imprisonment.
- (m) In addition to the above much-used methods the enemy will resort to many other tricks to extract information from you.

V.—HOW YOU CAN DEFEAT THE ENEMY

1. Destroy, if possible, your aircraft, maps, etc., by fire if brought down. You have instructions. Do not forget to follow them.
2. Do not carry and do not allow anyone else to carry any unauthorized papers, official or private, on a flight. An envelope, a bill or the stub of a movie ticket may give away the location of your squadron. In writing letters after becoming a prisoner do not address them in such a way as to reveal the location of your squadron or any other unit. Use the official A.P.O. or write c/o War Department.
3. (a) Tell only your Name, Rank and Serial Number. If you answer any other questions you are helping the enemy. Say "I cannot answer," or "I do not know," or following the advice the enemy gives his own airmen, say "Would you answer that question if you were me?" By sticking to these you win.
- (b) Do not talk shop with the enemy. He is not really anxious to talk with a fellow flyer. He wants to gain knowledge which will help him in the war. Do not try to deceive him with lies. Remember he is an expert interrogator and among your lies he will find some truths. You can outwit him only by saying nothing.
- (c) Don't be impressed with his knowledge, which may have come from papers or markings in your plane. It may partly be a guess or he may want you to confirm something. No facts are harmless. They may be used to persuade the next prisoner that all is known and he may as well talk.
- (d) Don't try to prove to the enemy how big you are by telling him what you know. He will only think you are small, and you will be much better satisfied with yourself afterwards if you have told only your name, rank and number.
- (e) It is good to be patriotic, but you can best prove your patriotism by keeping silent and not by telling how much the United States is doing.
- (f) The enemy will not treat you nicely and offer you drinks because he likes you. Remember he treats any likely prospect that way. He is after information to use against us. Among the "good sports" will be one or several interrogation officers waiting to seize on any chance remark you may let slip. It is not good sportsmanship but a stupid mistake to go on parties with the enemy.
- (g) Never believe anything you are told from enemy sources. Even if he should give you correct information, it is reasonably safe for him to do so, while any fact you reveal may cost your friends their lives.
- (h) Threats are bluff. The enemy will not dare to carry out threats; he knows that reprisals would follow.
- (i) In order to have your capture promptly reported and your mail delivered you need only tell your Name, Rank and Number.
- (j) Remember the person to whom you are talking may be an enemy. The only friend you can be sure of is the man you knew before capture.
- (k) Tell no enemy person, however sympathetic, anything except your Name, Rank and Number.
- (l) Because you cannot find a microphone do not think there isn't one. We know that there is and that the enemy, who has had years of experience in eavesdropping, is listening. If you have plans to discuss with friends, do your talking outdoors and even there be careful.
- (m) You can defeat every effort of the enemy by keeping silent.



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



July 29 1987

Dear Russ:

Before I start, let me compliment you on the fine job you are and have done with the Echoes. I always look forward to it and I might say it makes the 8th AFNews look sick. Stories like Seelos' and the Bomb Dump were terrific.

After receiving your card regarding Crew Chiefs I had to dig back and do some deep thinking. My early days were so screwed up. In my case- there were no ground crews at Westover, only squadron Line Chiefs, the 368ths being a guy named Gunderson, a M/Sgt. along with Capt. Bob Stevens, Service Officer. When we received our new F, (#41-2456) and had an engine catch fire on a practice flight over New York, the crew changed it under Gundersons supervision. Then we lost this plane in the Irish Sea leaving us with no plane of our own in England. Planes were as scarce as a colored guy at a KKK convention. From here on it was borrowed ships. The first raid (Oct 9) our crew flew with Lanford who used the Eager Beaver. Since Lanford and Melton didnt see eye to eye, Lanford used Friend as his co-pilot. I only flew one combat mission with Melton. When he left Friend took over our crew and we picked up a plane #42-5129. It was the Sons of Fury. I have just rerun that movie of Lanfords and four different times our picture was taken in front of this plane so I'm sure about this. In fact your computer list verifies that Friend went down in this. I was in the hospital when they went down. The crew chief as I recall was a fellow named Gurr.

Since I was left without a crew, I became a floater flying with any crew who needed a fill in. Then Judas who had been a copilot was elevated and I was placed on his crew with Brotzman and Graziano who also were floaters. That was when we were given the Little Savage. We only had that a couple weeks when we went on the Bremen Raid(April 17) and it was so shot up it just sat until they took it to some depot. I think Drumm was our CC then. We again was back to borrowed ships until we finally got a brand new plane. #42-27786 had no name and I think Abernathy was the crew chief. I could be wrong but it seems we had it only 3 days when we took it out and cracked it up. This is the one you referred to as hitting a tree. Actually we hit the tops of a row of poplars and then plowed up two wheat fields and a potatoe field. The next day we went down in a borrowed 423rd plane so I had no idea who it's CC was. So you think I didnt have a crazy and confused combat period. Some of the CCs that I remember were- Gunderson, Bill Cavaness, Abernathy, Edney, Drumm, Tiny Crossland, Joe Gabrish, Mays and Davis. There may have been a guy, DesRoaches too. I'm sure Russ "Hoot" Houghton would know them all. I enjoyed the list and studied it. Thanks for sending it. It will go into my collection of data as I keep regarding 306th.

The mailman just came and my ECHOES are here. I had to read it while time out for lunch and to my surprise (and regrets) in the death column Raymond Abernathy passed away. I had forgotten his first name. Here we are talking about him. Ironic isn't it.

Say, Quite a story about Wendover by John Reynolds. I am flattered that he remembered me. With a face like mine, who could forget.

I received a call and later a nice letter from Marshal Baker and have been asked to bring my plane to the reunion which I will. I am enclosing a copy of a cartoon who was done by a good friend and very successful cartoonist in this area. I was telling him about our reunion and how it was actually our 45th anniversary and that us old geezers get together and hash over stories. He gave me this drawing which I had reduced at the print shop. I've ask his permission to make a larger repro of it and will bring it to the reunion. It could be put on an easle in the lobby or if not there, in one of the hospitality rooms. I thought it quite good.

While I'm at it I'm going to burden you with something else, not that you are busy enough with all your reading. Back in April I went to Dayton for a lecture at the Museum by Hans Sharf the German Interigator of POWs. The author of the book about him, Col. Raymond Tolliver was with him and also was part of the platform. I dont remember if I sent you anything on this before but am sending you the tape that I made at the time of the lecture. I have been so infuriated over this guy (Tolliver) who as an American going around giving lectures to younger Americans who are getting a false impression of prison camps or how brilliant the Germans were and how stupid we were. If he is true then our fighter pilots (Sharf had nothing to do with bomber crews) even the Aces he talks about, should have been court martialed for the info and signing his "Guest Book" and the praises ~~we~~ gave him. He was still the enemy. You will hear my remarks to Tolliver at the end of the tape in regards to the mass escape at Luft 1 and the killing of these prisoners. I just thought you might be interested in hearing the tape.

Now I will ask one more favor if you can help. I am asking everyone I know and will at the reunion if anyone has or knows where I can find a picture of the planes nose to tail lined up before take off. I want to do a painting of before a mission when the planes are ready to pull out on the runway. I have a very good shot of this but it is on one of my tapes of the World At War and I cant hold it on pause long enough to make a painting or even an accurate sketch, so if you come across a picture of 17s line up let me know where you've seen it and I'll buy it if its in a book or wherever.

Another question- Do you have any information on when the first raid of the 306th that a G Model was used. I need it for research for future paintings. I always use Fs because I never saw a G until a few years ago. If I make the large battle scene that I want to do of the 306th I'll need to put the triangle on the Fins (which I never saw) and use Gs in the painting. This will be a 4½ ft. by 10ft painting and can be rolled up and transported. Big ideas, huh? I have the canvass, so all I can lose is some paint and my time. It will be dedicated to the 306th and "IF" it should turn out good enough I would give it to Dayton as a memory of the 306th. I just depends on how it turns out.

God willing, will see you in Washington

regards

Lee



45 YEARS
Haven't
AND
Changed...



A Bit!"



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945



Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

On April 22 1987, I drove to the Air Force Museum at Dayton, Ohio to attend a lecture given by Hans Sharf, "The Master Interigator of The Luftwaffe".

I had read the book some years back which was written by Col. Raymond Tolliver who is the author of several WWII books. I was never sure whether I had any contact with Hans Sharf, since I passed through Dulag Luft as all captured airmen did. I could only remember the name of Ober Lt. Kohler. Forty odd years later, I thought I would, as a Former POW, find the lecture interesting.

There were close to 150 in the theater and half were any where from college age to the mid fourties. When ask for a show of hands of Former POWs there were about twenty.

Col. Tolliver was intruduced by Museum Director Col. Richard Upstom who gave the authors background. He was a test pilot throughout the war, testing every type of aircraft the military had. He was never in combat however, and became a writer while in the military. After the war he located Hans Sharf and they collaborated in writing the book. Tolliver then talked about Sharf and went on to explain many parts and subjects of the book. He then introduced Sharf and he spoke on how he went about his interogations, his association with the captured fighter pilots, and his success at extracting information from them. With the exception of the introduction by Upstom, I taped the entire dialogue.

At the end of the lecture, I came to these conclusions:

1. I learned that Hans Sharf only interogated fighter pilots.
2. That Fighter pilots (to him) was the elite of the Bomber crews were of the lower catagory.
3. That there was an amazing camaraderie between captured fighter pilots and the German pilots.
4. My impression that Sharf was not as clever as our pilots were stupid.
5. That both men gave more regard to the Germans then to us. Since Tolliver was never a POW let alone never even saw combat seemed to have all the answers to any questions regarding prisoners and the camps.

The attached pages are a couple excerpts of the tape in their exact words. If you would like to listen to the 90 min. tape, contact me. Any airman whether prisoner or not could learn much from this.

Col. Tolliver-- Almost all American fighter pilots that I knew, told me-- "You've got to meet Sharf. He's the most rare individual you've ever seen. One guy wrote me and said " Yes, I knew Sharf and if I ever see that SOB, I'll kill him." So I wrote him back a letter and said, "You know I'm very curious about your statement because I'm writing a book about him and I would like to know the exact problem". Of course I've never heard from him again, because he found out I was writing a book about Sharf. You see a lot of fighter pilots who returned from POW Camps came back and told their families how badly they were treated by the interrogaters or something else. Well this book proves that things were not quite as bad as they said they were, and they didn't want their families to know it so several of them said;"Well, you can tell the story but you can leave my name out, which I did.--But most of them said "Sure, go ahead and tell the story. It's exactly right. It's exactly as Sharf says and if you look at his Guest Book you will see what they said when they left after the inter. @gation, then you have to believe.

(Both Tolliver and Sharf mentions the Guest Book that Sharf kept, through out the lecture. He tells of how the pilots wrote overtures and praise to to him in this book which is on display at the Museum. I have not seen the the book, but if this is true, it seems to me this was a breach of the Code of Honor if indeed our fighter pilots had any. Sharf was still the enemy at this time.)

From a member of the Audience--who stated he was a B-24 pilot and had been shot down, Sharf remarked that he called in other interigaters. "I had nothing to do with you bus drivers".

QUESTION-Did you detect any American spies that were coming back into Germany? Infiltration of spies?

SHARF---Yes. This is quite interesting mater which Col. Toliver wrote about-- the spies- the agents and double crossers which is quite a chapter by themselves. These are the men I have no respect for. Naturally there is a game going on of spies, counter spies and double crossers all the time and we send out our Prisoners of War Camps our own spies and those spies to be caught by the Americans who had been into prison- er of war camps, who had set up their own intellegence center and screen everybody and we allowed certain fellows to be caught by them, not knowing which one was the real one. And this is the game that goes on from the time people are fighting each other.

TOLLIVER--Incidently, that is a very deadly game. The British in particular thought it was a quite a characteristic thing and part of their role to try to escape under any, and every condition. No mater what it is, they are going to try to escape. As you may recall, I believe it was at Luft 1-- I'm not quite sure, but they had one great big escape. Seventy five or so guys escaped. About twenty three of them were captured imediatly. Fifty were recaptured and executed if you recall. Those fifty were among the group that had been told: "Look, this is a big game and we know you think it is a game. But it is no longer a game. You try to escape again and --we gotcha." Only three guys escaped from that. One of them was Brad Vanderstock. He lives in Hawaii today and he's just written a new book on that, which should be coming out soon. But it was not a game as far as the Germans were concerned be- cause what it did- it tied down hundreds of guards- hundreds of people they could put on the Russian Front were tied down to hunt escapees.

The British and Americans too thought it was a great game, but when they got shot, they came home and said "Murder". Now I don't think it was what I would call murder under any circumstances during war time. Now maybe I'm wrong-- maybe I'm not seeing it correctly. That is my opinion that it was not murder. I think we would do the same thing if we were being bombed day in and day out, and these guys were raising a ruckus all the time escaping at every opportunity when we told them after they had done it three or four times, the next time you do it, you're a dead duck.

COL. UPSTRUM-- They had also abandoned their Military Identification at that time. (This is questionable)

TOLLIVER-

Yes they had and they were now captured by the Gestapo and so the order had been out to execute them and they did.

Moderator -- Okay , a couple more and we'll wrap this up.

KESSLER-- I don't understand how you can say that Col. Tolliver. We were told our duty was to escape at any time and at any cost so if that was our duty, on one hand our Commanders was telling us we must try to escape, that it was our job to tie down as many guards as we could whether it was digging tunnels or what ever it took to keep them there-- but you say--their not wrong, that we were wrong.
(See- INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE IN THE EVENT OF CAPTURE AG 8 AF No.1 21 July, 1942)

TOLLIVER_

They had their rights and you had your rights and your rights were in conflict. You have to look at their viewpoint too. It's your viewpoint one way and in other words, I have my opinion and you have an opinion - ah-ah- maybe we are at conflict of opinion-wise. Well-same thing exists in my orders from the U.S.--I would have tried to escape if I would have been a POW. I'd be right there trying to do it, but I don't believe you can legally say that it was murder when they executed them. That's-that's my only complaint. You were told by the Germans, what they were told. That's my analysis of that. (?)

A.

After my QUESTION OR STATEMENT TO Col. Tolliver the program ended and I was convinced I had belonged to the wrong Air Force, however in the parking lot I was confronted by some (I assume Veterans) who were as stunned as I was.

LEST WE FORGET

A wartime experience etched itself on the mind of veteran Lee Kessler. He recounts the time he spent as a...



Photo by 1st Lt. John Skinner

Prisoner of War

Lt. John Skinner

Public affairs

Six years after his B-17 Flying Fortress was shot down by German fighters, Lee Kessler became the first former prisoner of war to visit the base's POW/MIA monument. On his 19th mission, many flooded his memory. He was attacked by fighters while we

were going in for a target," Kessler explained. "One shell went through the nose of the bomber, killing the bombardier and navigator. One shell went through the cockpit, wounding the pilot and knocking the co-pilot unconscious. A third shell hit the number two engine."

After receiving the order, Kessler bailed out over Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Upon his landing, he was greeted by a rifle-wielding farmer. He was turned over to the SS, searched and taken to a Naval base for interrogation. Children threw rocks at him, and ladies spat on him, as he was walked through a village to the base.

Like all the POWs in Germany, his time in the camps was extremely difficult, both emotionally and physically.

"I remember the first soup I ate as a POW," Kessler said as he discussed conditions in the camps. "I couldn't understand why the other POWs didn't like rice, until someone told me.

worms were in the soup, not rice. The guys would skim as many off the top of the soup as they could, and then stir it up real good."

But people ate what they were given, Kessler said, remembering men who cried because of their hunger. "To this day, because of that experience, I can't stand to see people leave food on their plate."

But of all the memories of his POW experience, one haunts him above all others. The incident, or tragedy, occurred while he was being evacuated from an Austrian based POW camp.

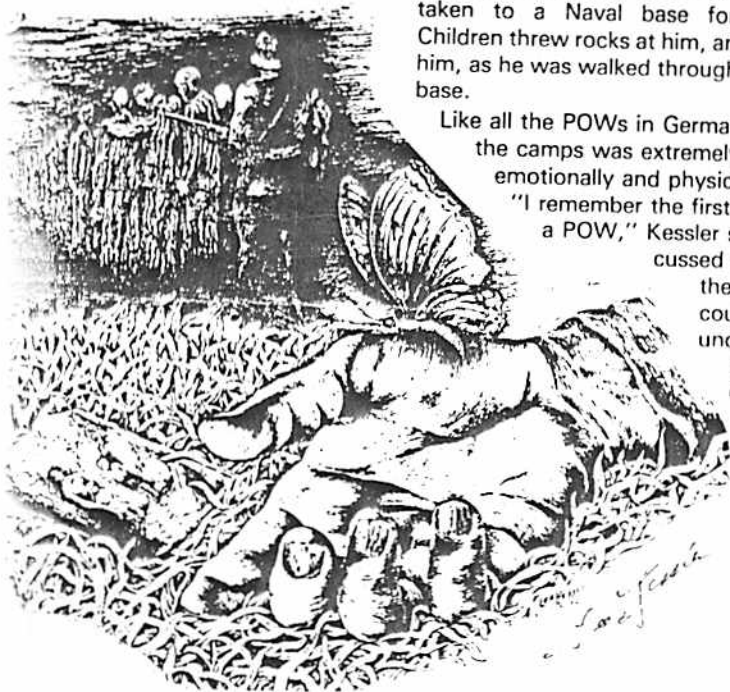
"We were being marched hundreds of miles because the Red Army was advancing," Kessler explained. "Along a journey down one road, a group of Hungarian Jews, after laboring in a quarry, were being marched back to their concentration camp. Those who fell and were too weak to get up were shot. I saw one guy fall and pull out a photograph. He kissed it, as though he knew he couldn't get up, and was shot in the head by his guard."

Kessler said he got close enough to the body, before a guard ordered him to get away, to see the photograph was of a woman and two children. He also noticed a butterfly had landed on the man's hand.

It was this experience that led Kessler to sketch the scene. He said it would never leave his mind, and that his drawing was a way of sharing it with others.

"I've always felt that everyone has the right to die with dignity," he said. "It must be a terrible thing to die without knowing where your family is, and without them knowing where you are. He shouldn't have died."

Kessler, a former technical sergeant, was assigned to the 306th Bomb Group during WWII. He was stationed down the road from Chicksands at Thurleigh and came back to England to visit friends and relive some of the fonder memories.



From THE CHICKSANDS AFB MAGAZINE.

Dec. 15, 1989

THE ANTENNA "ANOTHER FIRST FOR THE 306"

This is the color it would be
printed on.

PS. I forgot to mention, I figured
on 200 copies.



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942-April 1945

Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



March 31 1992

Dear Don, Russ and Casey:


I am sure all of you have much more important things on your mind, but I would appreciate your opinion of the enclosed copy.

At the Pittsburg Reunion, I mentioned about a 50th anniversary poster of some type. I have drawn up one that I thought would have something that every one could relate to. The enclosed is only a zerox copy of the original and therefore does not have the effect that it should but will give you an idea of what it would look like. I would like your opinions on the following-

1. The size of this is 18"X24". Do you think this is too large? There is no problem reducing it.
2. I would have liked to have done it in color but the cost was out of reason. How ever I can have it done as "dark blue on light blue" , black on any color paper or board, but I selected the attached paper as I thought blue was more Air Force. Also paper instead of heavier type because of rolling in mailing tubes.
3. As officers, am I allowed to sell these? My plan is to sell them for \$5.00 a print and turn a dollar for each sold over to the organization. The price would take care of the printing, handling (mailing, etc.) and I would make about a buck for my time, although I sure didnt do it for the money. I loved every minute of it.

I would takes copies to England with me if I thought the people over there would like one. I would appreciate your input and will do nothing until I hear from you.

Sincerely,



Lee Kessler

:cc Don Ross
Russ Strong
Casey Jones

I am not afraid of tomorrow, For I have seen yesterday, And today is beautiful. An ex-P.O.W.



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AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



March 22 1992

Dear Russ:

I owe you an explanation. Our "answering machine went on the fritz and we just bought a new one. My wife happened to put the old tapes in and found your message on it. I would call but since I am writing this, thought I would explain.

I am returning your pictures which has been a great help. Also your information on the ROSE OF YORK was very helpful as I new little about the planes at that time. I had to make some changes as the name and the rose seemed between the engines and the fuselage, so I moved it up for the profile. Thanks again for your help.

I have finished the poster and I will have my son run off "a couple of dummy copies (black & white zerox) just to see how it will look. I'll send you and Don Ross one to get your opinion. I wish it were in color but it would be so expensive that no one could have afforded it and the printer has told me it could be done on colored poster paper so I will give you more info when I send you a copy probably in a week. As of right now I am thinking 200 prints and sell them for \$5.00 per and I will donate a dollar of each to the organization. This will cover the printing and mailing plus a little for my work. If this is not satisfactory let me know.

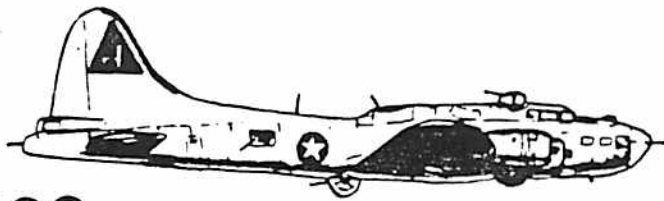
Hope you had a good time in Florida. I will be in Washington in April with the American Ex-POWs meeting with the people at Foggy Bottom which should be interesting. I think I told you I (we) will make Eng. but will also be in Germany & Austria for 2 weeks. Will be staying 40 miles from the woods where the 17-B gang was liberated. I have been invited to meet with a couple JG 1 & 11 fighter pilots who were in on the raid at Wilhelmshaven when we were shot down. I have corresponded and am looking forward to it. Also will be taken to Oberuseral where I was in solitary. That should bring back some memories.

Well, thanks again for your help and will look forward to your opinion on the poster.

Regards,

Lee
Lee

I am not afraid of tomorrow, For I have seen yesterday, And today is beautiful. An ex-P.O.W.



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AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

March 1 1993

Dear Russ:

Will be glad to do what I can on finding Russell K. Decker. However I am just recovering from open heart surgery and am yet not too stable.

This was the second time around and they had a rough time finding some conduit. Took it from where ever, used the left mamery artery as well as the stomach, thigh and right leg both back and front down to the arch.

That will be a long tme healing as the nerves have been affected. I am doing fine however and will be taking therapy which should put me in shape for golf by May.

Will get on this real soon and let you know what I find.

Regards

Lee

I am not afraid of tomorrow, For I have seen yesterday, And today is beautiful. An ex-P.O.W.



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Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

Russ

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



May 14 1993

Dear Folks:

Thanks so much for your newsy letter. It is always good to hear from you as you always have a source of information and I enjoy that. I do remember of Nells foot problem and am glad to hear that she is back in the dancing form. From all indications it sounds as though you are the same and enjoying as good of health as us old goats could expect.

You asked—"What has Lee Kessler been doing since last September?" Well, it has not been the best new year, or depending how you look at it. We really enjoyed our three weeks abroad, especially Germany. I went to the places that was so impressive to a twenty year old kid, like the air raid by the RAF the night we pulled into Frankfurt Station. Or my time in solitary and interrogation at Oberusal (Dulag Luft). And standing in the woods where we were liberated after that long forced march across Austria. To be able to re-visit those places after almost 50 years was indeed a life-time fulfillment, not that I did not enjoy England but I had been back there three times. Being able to show Peg these places was also very important. She had never been out of the country and made some good friends other than the Mills who had stayed with us for a week in 90. I was so happy that God had allowed me the good health to make the trip, but he made me pay for it. I had been feeling so good and even went to a basketball game on a Sat. night and on Sunday Jan. ~~XX~~ 3, went to church and was to go to a POW meeting in the afternoon but started to feel lousy in church. Came home and in the noon had Peg take me to the emergency room at the hospital. Once they get you in they don't let you out which was probably the best thing. Even though the pain let up they gave me a stress test (which I thought I did good) but flunked.) They did a Cath and told me I was a walking time bomb and don't know how I walked in. Everything was diseased, clogged and clotted. Only choice—operate. Remember, I had open heart after I saw you and your old Buick in Omaha? Well now again. The big problem was locating some veins and arteries to use. The ones I had wasn't good enough, so they said. I had to have another Cath and this time they looked at the mamery arteries and decided to hook the heart to the left mamery artery. Then they took one from my stomach, right thigh from the groin to the knee beside the one they took ten years ago, then the back and side of my right leg down to the arch. My body looks like a road map. My leg or foot is numb. Fells like when you get bumped in your crazy bone as all the nerve endings are severed. Some time feels like an electric shock running up my leg. My heart is doing fine though and I am going to therapy three times a week. My only recent problem is I thought I was having another attack about four weeks ago during the night. Took some Nitro pills and by morning it let up. Woke up seeing double— even with my glasses. Went to the Docs and he checked me out and could find no damage as far as the heart but sent me to a optomolgist who gave me a good going over informing me that I had a mini-stroke in the mucle aria. The good new is that it will clear up but I have a tape over my right eye glass which means I only see with one eye. This is a real problem as I was doing a portrait of a young couple as a wedding present and also two horse heads for the Robsons in Milto Ernest in England. I finished them using a magnifying glass and will ship the horse heads this week. I cannot get used to one eye, although I played golf today for the first time and shot a 51 which I didn't think too bad for seeing two balls.

(OVER)

I am not afraid of tomorrow, For I have seen yesterday, And today is beautiful. An ex-P.O.W.

You know Ralph, I have been talking to history classes at the high schools for the past 6 years. It's a pain as its so repetitious but they plead each year and I go back. Well this year I told them that my friend from Germany was coming to stay with me and that did it. They wanted the both of us, made a big deal with newspapers etc. He was here for ten days and I took him to Dayton where we stayed over night and he was in seventh heaven. His name is Karl Heinz Geyer. He is the one we stayed with in Konigstien. He was drafted at 15 yrs old with his whole school class and served in the Flak, in the Frankfurt area shooting down 20 allied planes. He knows as much about the 17s as I do. this was in 1944 so he never shot at me as I never made that target and was already down when he was drafted. Maybe he shot at you? Anyway as the war wound down he was transferred into the infantry and sent to Czech-slovakia and was there when the war ended, surrounded by Russians and captured. On the way to Siberia he escaped and made it back to Germany. He was in at 15 and out by 18 yrs. I was 20 when I went in. He speaks perfect English as does his wife and children and has money as he has traveled to Russia (after the wall came down) Indonesia, Turkey England, Ireland Isreal and China. We never shut up all the while he was hear and I think I could write a boo book as he had so many interesting stories. It was great to talk with some one from the other side and get thier feelings.

He brought me the Stars and Sripes about Camp King which is Dulag Luft where we were inter-igated but now an American Camp. It will be closed this summer and with it will go a lot of history as all the American flyers went through there. He was very friendly with the American Commander and made arrangements for me to visit it. I was going to give pictures and the papers to the 8th AF NEWS but instead sent all the stuff to Russ Strong because we had so many 306th POWs that I thought Russ might print something about it, but not being a POW he might not think it important. He can pitch it if he dont want it. I cant send all the stuff to every 306th POW but will to my special buddys as I know they will appreciate reading about it after 50 years.

Well Ralph. I've told you enough to hold you for awile and I have a stack of letters to n answer. I owe Houlahan, Casey Jones and a bunch of others. The Stalag 17-B reunion was last week in San Antoinio. I dont know if you knew Helmut Roeder or not. He was in the 367th and shot down Dec. 20 1942. He was on McKees crew. He has been to quite a few 306th reunions and is a millionaire in Texas. We have been very close and he wanted me (us) to come down and stay at his place then drive on to San Antonio but I just was'nt up to it. I have know idea about Seattle yet. I am realy not too enthused. I would like to see people like you Houlahan and I see Hennessy is going to be there, but most of the names yoe sent I dont know and many of the old gang who used to come are not around any more. I had a letter from Irving Karpman and he had a stroke and cant write and is paralyzed. Seems its catching up to us. Havent heard from Joe Gabrish either.

Take care, both of you and always enjoy hearing from you

Regards and love

Peg & Lee



306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd, Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England — September 1942 - April 1945

AMERICAN FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR



Lee Kessler
170 Saratoga Ave. N.W.
Canton, Ohio 44708

May 14 1993

Dear Russ:

Just got back from Dayton. Tried to locate Russel K. Decker, as you requested, but with no luck. I tried the Library as well as the Directory. There are several Deckers but none seems to know of him. I also thought maybe he had moved and checked such towns such as Fairborn but to no avail. He has either moved out or is deceased.

I am enclosing some newspaper articles that may or may not be of interest to you. Last year after the England reunion we spent a week with a German family in Konigstein, just outside of Frankfurt. We became acquainted some ten years ago when he was visiting in the States. Karl Heinz Geyer was in the German Flak and was one of those trying to blow us out of the sky. Through correspondence he researched the GEMEINSHAFT DER JAGDFLIEGER and put me in contact with those who were in the battle at Emden and Wilhelmshaven, May 21 43. Thus I was able to find out the Jagdeschwader who was involved (JG 1 and JG(11) I have been in contact with Heinz Knoke, the author of "I FLEW FOR THE FUHRER" and altho he was on the raid he did not shoot any 17s down that day. There are so few pilots living any more. The material I have is very detailed and interesting.

While visiting the Geyers who lives about five miles from Oberusal, he made arrangements for us to spend an afternoon at Camp King. This used to be Dulag Luft, where all airmen who were shot down was taken for interrogation. This was most interesting to me and when Karl Heinz Geyer came to stay with me here in the States two weeks ago he informed me that Camp King was to be closed this summer. So will a piece of history. I was going to send the enclosed to the 8th AF NEWS but figured they had their own sources. Since so many of 306th guys were POWs, and they all probably went through Dulag Luft it might be of interest to them. Use your own judgment. If it is not of interest, toss it.

Incidentally, after leaving Germany we went to Austria and I had the opportunity to visit the woods we stayed in at the end of the forced march from Stalag 17-B Krems, and was liberated at. It is just the same as it was 50 years ago except the road is paved. To stand on the same spot where I was liberated in 45 was an emotional experience.

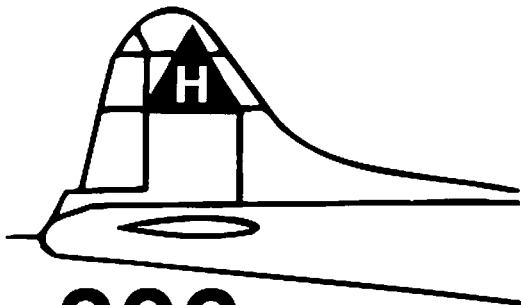
Am doing well after my second bypass operation in January although had a mini stroke in my right eye but the Doc says it will come around. I have a problem seeing double and when I look in a mirror, that can be frightening.

Hope this finds you Ok,

Regards,

Lee

I am not afraid of tomorrow, For I have seen yesterday, And today is beautiful. An ex-P.O.W.



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England - September 1942-April 1945

306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

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2348 Old Knoxville Pike
Maryville, TN 37804

Vice President

Paul J. Reiox
613 Luana Pl
Kihei Maui, HI 96753

Secretary

Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
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2000 Reunion Chairman

John J. Endicott
1050 Summit Trail
Escondido, CA 92025

British Representative

Ralph Franklin
Mill Hill
Keysoe, Beds MK44 2HP
England

6-10 Sep. 2000 Reunion
San Diego, CA

February 8 2000

Russ Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC 28205

Dear Russ:

Rec'd the ECMOES and on page 5 recognized the picture in the upper right corner. This photo was taken after the April 17 43 raid on Bremen, Ger. We were the only crew of the 368th to make it back. In this pic are L/R front Maynard Dix, N.- Louis Cook, Co-P -Joe Graziano, R.- Gerald Stroud, WG- Back row-Louis Elvac, WG - Marshal Ezell, N.- Elwood Brotzman, TG- Maxwell Judas, P.- Gerald Barnt. G.- L. Kessler, E. The plane was "Little Savage. I am enclosing a copy of a photo taken from the side.

I also senn in the Obits where Bill Kellum passed on. This is probably not the correct time but he was known to some of us as "Zero Buster Kellum". I am sending a page from my Bio as I think you might get a kick out of it, as to how he got this title. We went through a hell of an experience later and I admired him for it.

I suppose you have had your share of snow and such as the news shows. We have had a bunch dumped on us also but then you know we're used to it.

Take care and

Regards, Lee

14 Pavenham Road
Oakley
Bedford
England
MK43784.

Jan 31st 2002

Dear Lee

Thank you for your letter of a few weeks ago. sorry its taken a while to answer but weve been very busy. Your request for the return of Memorabilia that we hold here apertaining to the 306th is only minimum.

at the time of writing this letter no one only Wallace Borning has written to us requesting this. at that time Wallace was contacted telling him that as soon as a 306 Museum was completed his jacket & Sertant would be tranferred. he has never commented on that again.

We are sorry that it has come to an agrivating source about this Memorabilia as we have displayed some of these items at Commemoral Display talks and to the Public Media.

We are still disgusted at the way we have been blurred and treated by some of your so called Officers of the 306th when together with John Mills Cynel Norman and John Hadfield we put up the 306th Menour. Prayer Seats and Flagpole.

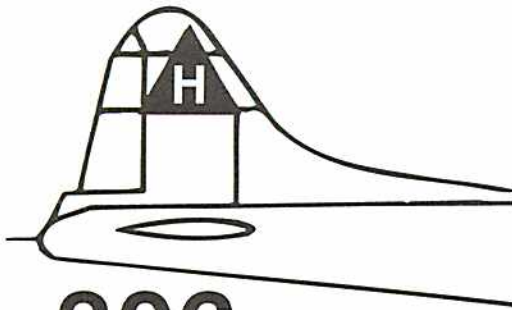
I hope by the way, when we hear from
the 300+ people whose memorabilia we have
and they wish us to hand it over it's been
in our safe keeping for nearly 20 years
it remains safe

By the way on a lighter note we are
opening our Glenn Miller Museum on the 2nd
at Twinwoods which will be a great success
will let you have details. But I'm sure
you know about this by now.

Do you hear from John Stanner. now. seem to
have lost contact

Yours sincerely and with respect.

Indon & Jomei.



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England – September 1942-April 1945

306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

President

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3510 Elizaville Rd.
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March 15 2002

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170 Saratoga NW
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Past President

Paul J. Reiox
613 Luana Pl
Kihei Maui, HI 96753

British Representative

Ralph Franklin
Mill Hill
Keysoe, Beds MK44 2HP
England

Reunion, 24-28 Sept 2002
Radisson Hotel Riverfront
Covington, KY

Dear Russ:

I guess I've been somewhat derlick in my duties. I had written to the Richards back in January about turning over the things given them by 306ers. I received an answer and sent a copy to Ralph Franklin but should have sent you one also and dont remember if I did or not.

I am sending you the original now and you can see how they feel. I will follow through with your instructions and sigm and send on to Lowell the present letter.

By the way have you heard any more from the "Irish". I have had several calls and have an awfull time understanding their brougue. So far they say there is a fella writing a book - a TV outfit doing a documentary and that they have several investers on the "lifting process". I am waiting to find out when they plan all this. They said "Spring". I have also rec'd letters from Curt Melton and it has been good hearing froom him.

Regards

Lee

AGITUNG

DAS FLIEGER MACHINE IS NICHT FÜR
FINGERPOKEN UND MITTENGGRABBen.
IS EASY ZU SCHNAPPEN DER SPRINGEN
WORKEN, BLOWEN FUSEN, UND POPPEN
CORKEN MIT SPITZEN UND SPARKEN.
IS NICHT FÜR GEWERKEN BY DUMM-
KOPFEN. DAS RUBBERNECKEN,
SIGHTSEEREN KEEPEN DIE
HANDEN IN DIE POCKETEN !

DIE BUILDER

AGITUNG

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KOPFEN. DAS RUBBERNECKEN,
SIGHTSEEREN KEEPEN DIE
HANDEN IN DIE POCKETEN !

DIE BUILDER

Russell Strong

From: "William Houlihan" <whoulihan@twmi.rr.com>
To: "Russell/June Strong" <Russell.a.strong306@worldnet.att.net>
Cc: "Marty Lenaghan" <MCL1224@yahoo.com>; "Nena Leary" <nena@leary.org>; "Thurman/Joan Shuller" <tshuller@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Saturday, October 04, 2003 1:58 AM
Subject: Fw: lee kessler
FYI;

As you can see, Lee Kessler died last night after a long, serious illness. I did call his son, ~~Craig~~, a few minutes ago to express our sympathy and to find out a few details known to the family at this time. Lee will be available for showing at the Lamiell (?) funeral home in Canton, OH on Monday; 2-4 PM and 7-9 PM. He will be buried from ST. Joan of Arc's church in Canton at 10 AM. As a minimum, the Association will send flowers and sincere regrets.

We will miss Lee and his warmth and great conversations!

Bill Houlihan

— Original Message —

From:
To:
Sent: Friday, October 03, 2003 7:56 AM
Subject: lee kessler

Dear Bill, my father passed away last night. Just wanted to inform you. Craig Kessler

Do you Yahoo!?

- with improved product search

GREETINGS FROM THE KESSLER PLACE

The year 2002 has been as interesting as past years. Each awaking day is a bonus and I think I made the most of each one. I still love painting pictures and other art work. I also finished building my B-24 which I struggled with since I was not familiar with that plane.

My main interests is our MAPS Air Museum and in June we held our annual "Air Show" at the Akron Fulton Airport and it was a huge success. Again I had the honor of meeting Gen. Paul Tibbetts of "Enola Gay" fame as well as two pilots from the Tokyo Raid, Doolittle's Raiders whom were very interesting. The visiting aircraft as well as the F-16's and Stealth Bomber fly overs a thrill to all.

In July I did time in the hospital with a case of congestive heart failure. The hospital did a good job and I don't plan on going through that again. This summer was a hot and dry one. The good part, the grass didn't grow!

The 306th reunion in Covington, Ky. Was intersting as my old pilot Curt Melton and his wife came and we had a great time reminiscing. Curt was my pilot when we ditched in the Irish Sea back in September of 42. He and I are the only living survivors from that crew. Since the Irish Divers found the plane after 60 years, both of us plan to be there when and if they bring her up. As an added feature there is an Irish author writing a book about the plane and her history.

I'm still speaking to different groups. This year I spoke at two colleges, seven high schools and five other functions. The greatest thrill of all was speaking to the B-2 Stealth Bomber Project Group at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. It was amazing to me how interested this group was in my talk. I was presented a model of the B-2 by Col. Walthenbarger who is in charge of the project. After lunch we were taken by bus to the flight line where a Stealth flew in. After a security check I was allowed to sit in the cockpit at the controls. Neever in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to sit in such an advanced piece of technolgy. This was "the iceing on the cake". The 27 year old pilots seem more interested in hearing about the B-17 than answering my questions. I was soamazing!

My sons; Jim, retired but is still involved in sports medicine, and Craig is also retired and enjoys runnig marathons. My daughter Carol is still working for as long as she has kids in college. Kris, the oldest grandson, is a Lieutenant in the Air Force. Matt is a senior in college. Joe, a sophmore in high school, is a 4 point student and is involved in football, track and swimming.

I want to wish all **THE HAPPIEST OF HOLIDAYS.**



Leland J. Kessler

Leland (Lee) J. Kessler, age 82, of Canton, died Friday in his home. He was a life-resident of Canton and a 1940 graduate of McKinley High School. He retired in 1984 from the Canton City School System after 30 years of service. Lee was a member of St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, The American Ex-Prisoners of War North Central Ohio Chapter, The Eighth Air Force Historical Society, The M.A.P.S. Air Museum, The DAV St. Mihiel Chapter, The American Legion Post 44, The Hall of Fame Luncheon Club, and The Catholic Men's Luncheon Club. He was a World War II Army Air Corps veteran. Preceded in death by his wife, Marguerite M. Kessler, who died in 2000. Survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Carol and Bernard Waechter of Massillon, two sons and a daughter-in-law, James W. Kessler and Craig J. and Patricia (Crum) Kessler, all of Canton; and three grandsons, Kristopher, Matthew and Joseph Waechter. A Mass of Christian burial will be Tuesday at 10 a.m. in St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, with Fr. Patrick Manning as celebrant. Burial will be in Calvary Cemetery. Friends may call Monday from 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. at the Lamiell Funeral Home. The American Ex-Prisoners of War North Central Ohio Chapter will have a service Monday at 2:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the M.A.P.S. Air Museum, 2260 International Parkway, Green, OH 44232.

(Lamiell, 330-456-7375)



pository file photo
Kessler of
his time in
storian, died
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82
amp in
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rmany," a

Thank you for your Kindness
during our time of Sorrow
Thank you also for the
flowers they were beautiful
and greatly APPRECIATED

Thank you
The Kessler
Family

Perhaps you sent a lovely card, Or sat quietly in a chair

Perhaps you sent a floral piece, If so we saw it there.

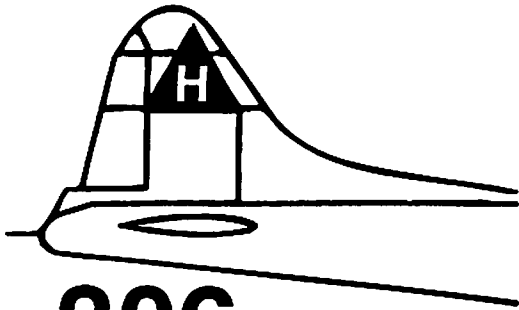
Perhaps you spoke the kindest words, As any friend could say.

Perhaps you were not there at all, Just thought of us that day.

Whatever you did to console our hearts,

We thank you so much whatever the part.

In
Appreciation



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England – September 1942-April 1945

306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

Secretary/Historian
Russell A. Strong
5323 Cheval Place
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704/568/3803

E-Mail: russell.a.strong306@worldnet.att.net

10 February 2004

Author Books
First Over Germany

Command and Staff
Officers, 8th Air
Force, 1942-45

306th Echoes 1975-2000

Editor
306th Echoes (quarterly)
306th Directory
306th Squadron Diaries
367, 368, 369, 423

Craig Kessler
3575 Cromwell Dr
Canton, OH 44708

Dear Craig:

We have had a bit of a time getting the January Echoes. And I am hoping it will go in the mail tomorrow. Here are copies for you and your siblings, etc. If you need more, let me know.

I would like to at least get a chance to see any of your father's work that deals with the 306th. He and I had talked about my devoting about half an issue to his paintings, etc.

Do you suppose you could arrange for me to see things, or are they all distributed by now? I'd like to come with a camera and do what I need to do right there, rather than taking anything away.

Please give me your thoughts on this, and I am sure I can clear time to do something.

Sincerely,

12-3-02
GOOD MORNING,

THIS IS A COPY OF
THE ORBIT.

I WILL SEND A COPY
TO STAFFS DR.

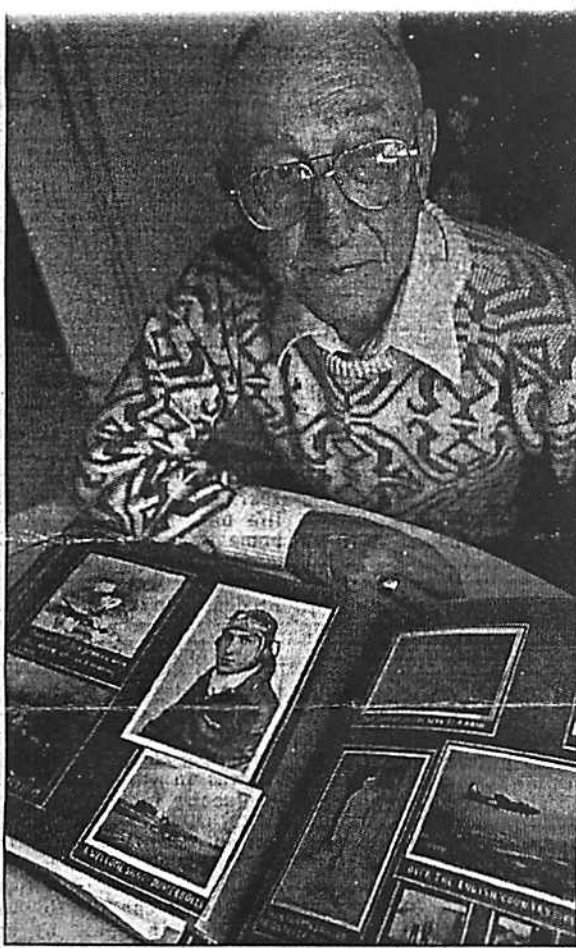
BROWN FOR HONORABLE
MENTION IN THEIR
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE.

BEST REGARDS TO
YOU AND JUNE,

Leland J. Kessler

Leland (Lee) J. Kessler, age 82, of Canton, died Friday in his home. He was a life resident of Canton and a 1940 graduate of McKinley High School. He retired in 1984 from the Canton City School System after 30 years of service. Lee was a member of St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, The American Ex-Prisoners of War North Central Ohio Chapter, The Eighth Air Force Historical Society, The M.A.P.S. Air Museum, The DAV St. Mihiel Chapter, The American Legion Post 44, The Hall of Fame Luncheon Club, and The Catholic Men's Luncheon Club. He was a World War II Army Air Corps veteran. Preceded in death by his wife, Marguerite M. Kessler, who died in 2000. Survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Carol and Bernard Waechter of Massillon, two sons and a daughter-in-law, James W. Kessler and Craig J. and Patricia (Crum) Kessler, all of Canton; and three grandsons, Kristopher, Matthew and Joseph Waechter. A Mass of Christian burial will be Tuesday at 10 a.m. in St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, with Fr. Patrick Manning as celebrant. Burial will be in Calvary Cemetery. Friends may call Monday from 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. at the Lamiell Funeral Home. The American Ex-Prisoners of War North Central Ohio Chapter will have a service Monday at 2:30 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the M.A.P.S. Air Museum, 2260 International Parkway, Green, OH 44232.

(Lamiell, 330-456-7375)



Repository file photo.

■ **SOLDIER AND ARTIST.** The late Leland (Lee) Kessler of Perry Township is shown with a scrapbook from his time in World War II. Kessler, an artist and amateur war historian, died Friday at age 82.

POW-turned-artist Kessler dies at 82

Repository staff report

PERRY TWP. — Leland (Lee) Kessler, the prisoner of war who transformed his death-defying experiences into soaring works of art, has died at age 82.

A flight engineer with the 306th Army Air Corps Bomb Group during World War II, Kessler's B-17 plane was shot down during a mission over northern Germany in 1943. He spent two years in a

prisoner-of-war camp in near Munich.

A former Canton City Schools custodian, but an artist and war historian by hobby, Kessler crafted World War II airplane models, and painted depictions of World War II air battles. In the 1980s, one of his paintings graced the cover of "First Over Germany," a book about World War II.

An obituary notice is on page B-5.