

15th February 1993.

96, Sedgwick Street,  
Mill Road,  
Cambridge CB 1 3 AL.

Lillian, you ask about Weary Bones. She was, as you know, on the crash dump here in Cambridge, behind Marshall's aerodrome, in the autumn of 1944, where I used to visit her. The dump was cleared, I am told on good authority, by March 1946, so she would have been there just over a year. Civilians were not allowed on the crash dump, of course, and the main gates were guarded by armed sentries. I had always gone along the stream, before the war, to visit the poor old horses in a field there, awaiting slaughter, and was fascinated one day to find all these crashed aircraft had suddenly materialized on 'my patch'. Some were almost complete, and some were just small bits and pieces, I remember climbing onto a Typhoon which was perched on top of another aircraft, and my light weight made it rock precariously, which scared me off. I had visions of being buried underneath and not discovered for days! As far as I know there were only two Fortresses, the other was from the 303rd Bomb Group, then called Tugboat Annie, but she had previously been 'Bat Outa Hell', I have since met a man who remembers her - but not Weary Bones - and who has done some research on her. Tugboat Annie was up on the back of another aircraft, Weary Bones was down on her belly on the ground. I used to go in through a gash at the wing root by the radio operator's station I think, and up into the pilot's seat, for some strange reason I never did sit in the right hand seat. Many of the dials were still in situ, but there were no wings or engines of course, I expect she had been cannibalized before leaving Thurleigh. The chin turret was gone and the upper turret, I remember one day sitting in the pilot's seat in the cool shady interior, with the hot sun blazing on the back of my neck from where the turret would have been.

You ask about photographs. The only photograph I have is the one you will have seen of the tail damage taken after the crash at Thurleigh. We had been at war for five years when Weary Bones appeared on the dump, as far as I am aware there was no film available for the civilian population, we certainly didn't see any. Several years ago I looked through war photographs at the Cambridgeshire Collection but there was nothing on the crash dump. Now there is a road through those fields running almost exactly over the place where she ended her days. And for years that road was known as 96 as 'Weary Bones' Road' in fact I don't think my mother knew its correct appellation! I was very interested in aircraft then, and it was absolutely vital to be quick on aircraft recognition and get under a hedge if you couldn't identify it! We were machine gunned once at school, our school was a new one, just finished in 1939, and was situated on the outskirts of town beside a railway line and road bridge. I expect he thought it was a factory, or was after the line and bridge, when we went out onto the hockey pitch after the all clear there were scuff marks all over the field where his bullets had gouged out the turf.

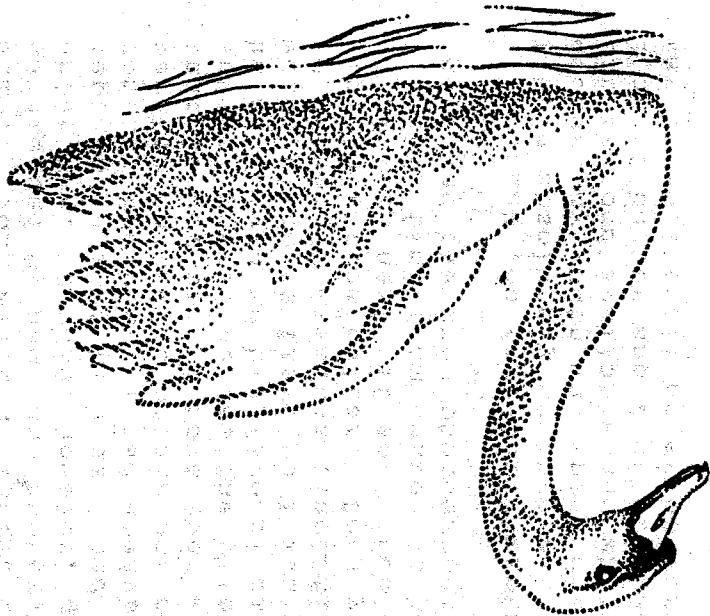
Weary Bones was my favourite of all the planes there, and it was a huge dump, and fascinated me. I used to wonder where she had flown and how she came to be there. After the publication of Roger Freeman's 'The Mighty Eighth' I began to wonder whether it would be possible to trace her and amongst many others, wrote to him. He had noted that she was from the 306th BUT GAVE ME THE WRONG SERIAL NUMBER, so for about five years I was trying to trace something that did not exist. I felt it was a faint hope, as I was only really certain of her name, and originally didn't even know she was a fortress, the tail chopped off made her look so different somehow. I remember she had I think 35 bomb symbols on the fuselage along with her name and the dice, and five swastikas denoting enemy fighters shot down. To me she was an unsolved mystery. Cliff Bishop, author of 'Fortresses of the Big Triangle First', was instrumental in putting me on the right track,

He is probably the foremost authority on the B 17 over here. He insisted that there was NO B 17 with the serial number 42.34943, but that the 306th had 42 37943, although he remained unconvinced for simply ages that the serial and the name were one and the same. John Mills at Thurleigh eventually clinched it, he had her catalogued by name and number, although had no other information about her. He did, however, give me some crew addresses, which I kept for a long time as I had never had any intention of trying to contact the crew, I had always thought I could write to some USAAF records centre to obtain her operational history, but I now know that is not so! I have been in touch with Robert Edwards now for several years, he was the pilot on the day of the crash, but although he has given me his five missions before that date, he doesn't know which plane he flew, so I was not much further forward. I now have 10 of her 70 missions (including the last which she didn't actually fly) most from Walter. Does your husband remember ANY of the missions he flew in her? if so I should be most interested to hear. After all this time I am amazed at how much I have discovered about my old lady, and the crew photographs Water sent me are an added bonus.

*Mr R Strong of the 306th is unable to help.*

Thank you for your Christmas card, I was amused by all the EATs. I have absolutely no interest in food and I cannot cook. Probably because my youth was spent during the war years when there was very little food available and what was was severely rationed (we had 2 oz of butter and 2 oz of sweets a week at one time during the war). So I shall never be very fat and can worry weight off easily.

To return to my main theme, I was absolutely enchanted with the story of how she was named, and am sorry that Old Weary Bones himself is no longer with us. I think probably it was partly the name which intrigued me, if she had been called Anytime Annie or Impatient Virgin I should not have been interested. But the dog story disgusted me,



to think that the crew of 'my' B 17 could have been so stupid to have parachuted a dog out of the aircraft was beyond me.

Over the years when I have been at Madingley I have often wondered whether any of her crew were there, and now I know that her original navigator was indeed buried there, but was returned to The United States before I had progressed enough with my investigations to be able to visit his grave

Did your husband finish his tour after WALTER If so did he fly in her with another pilot?? ANY tiny piece of information helps in the jigsaw I AM trying to put together.

With good wishes,

*Pamela Austin*

Does your husband remember the ground crew  
**UNITED AGAINST CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

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