

**WWII WEARY BONES**

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From: "lillian larwig" <lilarwig@swbell.net>

To: "Lil" <lilarwig@swbell.net>

HELLO

I am writing this to Mike Kemp's son in PA and to Tex Vaughn's grandson in Texas. Also, I am going to label all photo's with a number with explanation of the photo, if I know it. In that way, you can arrange the photo's however you wish.

I apologize for not getting to this sooner but other things were taking up my time and it was sort of put 'on the back burner'. sorry.

I met all members of the crew except Shelby Tanner, the navigator and Howard Harmsten, the bombardier. It was truly a joy to meet all the others. In this letter, I will describe each one as I remember them.

Bill Wiersma, the tail gunner: he was a fun character. He came home on leave with Henry several times to Oklahoma City. My Dad needed work shoes. Just in passing he mentioned it as items were rationed during the war plus, my Dad probably did not have the money at that time for new shoes. So, the very next time, Henry and Bill came to our house, Bill had two pairs of shoes, high top shoes that my Dad needed. Of course, he stole them from the military. And Bill's home in NJ is where I planned the first reunion of the crew. Photo's in your packet.

James P. Smith, Smitty, was from Ct was the second reunion and only Smitty, Henry and pilot, Walt Keilt were there and both Keilt and we stayed in Smitty's home. Smitty came to our home in OKC on his honeymoon, en route to Texas to visit Tex. If I remember correctly, he worked at a bar and brought the largest doll for our very young daughter. He later was a fireman and when we visited him, he had retired but had his fireman crew bring the big fire truck to his house to show us what he used to do.

Henry Larwig, engineer, was my husband. He died Oct. 21, 2009. In December of 2009, we would have been married 65 years. After he came home from the Air Force, he worked for Bell Telephone for a little over 38 years. He began as an installer in our down town area for large company's, like the gas company, telephone company, Kerr McGee oil company and a few others. When Kennedy came to OKC, he set up the RED PHONE for him and saw him, but did not meet him. Other persons he shook hands with that impressed me was John Wayne. Wayne was in town for some event and also a parade, which I witnessed and saw Wayne within 6 feet of me. What a handsome brute he was. There were many movie stars he also got to meet, because he worked the downtown area and he was called upon to set up phone service for some as they stayed in the down town hotels.

George Allen, Shorty, the radio man. He was short. He and his wife came through OKC on several occasions and we had a chance to visit. I almost think, memory a little faint on this, but Kemp and Allen worked the postal service and rode a train between cities sorting mail.

Philip Vaught, waist gunner, Tex. He and his wife and young daughter visited us in OKC several times. We also visited them in Texas. I have forgotten what profession he was in. I do remember on one of their trips to our home, I had black rye bread and Tex made the comment that he hadn't seen that kind of bread since he came back from the service. Henry was born in Germany and his family loved the black bread which is still served in Germany to this day. They also have other breads too.

Mike Kemp, ball turret gunner. Mike and his wife came to the NJ. at the Wiersma home and on our way back toward Oklahoma, we stopped at the Kemp home for several days. At that time, their two boys were quite

young. Their grandma lived with them. They lived in a house that really surprised me. It was a narrow house, but three stories high. In Oklahoma where I lived most of my life, our houses were almost never three stories high and were a much wider house, including, possibly, at least two rooms across the house. If I remember correctly, the Kemps house was one room across. Something new for this Oklahoma gal. Loved it though. Mike took us to a cave. I never liked caves but I did not mention this to him and really enjoyed the trip. After Mike's death, I continued to be in touch with his wife for a while. She and I corresponded while the guys were in service. I so enjoyed her, a great lady.

Walter Keilt, pilot, Walt. Walt come to OKC several times after he was out of service. We had a business that sold airplane parts and he came to purchase some items. He came to our house and also, at other times, we met him at his motel. In 1995, Henry and I made a trip to Concrete, WA to visit him. He lived at the base of a mountain, which at one point, we drove to the top of the mountain. It was snow covered except the parking lot. Walt and Henry walked out to an edge, and looking down, was a large lake. I was scared to get on the ice cause it was slick. I watched the guys, knowing they would fall over the edge and land in the lake. They didn't. Beautiful. Concrete is a very wooded area, not a large town, but it had a small airport, surrounded by mountains. Walt had built a plane and we went to the hangar to see it. He had pulled the two seats out to work on it. He insisted I take a ride with him. I was scared to death, all I could imagine was this tiny plane and all around the field, mountains. Lucky for me, he had a problem with the fuel line and decided it was not safe to take off. Whee, was I glad. He did fly to other areas to fish and as he loved the outdoors, he flew whenever he could to those places. Henry said he was married briefly before he went into the service but he never mentioned it to me and he lived a bachelor life. He had a brother with a family somewhere East U.S. but seems they were never close. He died before Walt. I understand that his sister in law took care of Walt's funeral. A close pilot friend of Walt's took care on Walt's person affairs on his death. I tried to find out his actual death date but the man I contacted never returned my calls or letters.

Rene Fix, co-pilot. From what the other enlisted men and also Walt told me, that Rene did not mix with the rest of the crew very much. But, Rene and his wife were on their way to Florida in their very large house trailer and made a stop near OKC. They phoned and I went to where they were parked and brought them to our home. I took off work the next day and took them around our City. They are very wonderful people. We had a good visit.

Since Henry's death, only Rene is alive of the original crew. Rene became a pilot while in England, left the Weary Bones crew, if I have my story correct (or the crew finished their tour and then he became a pilot, any way, he was a pilot on another plane, another crew)

He was shot down but do not remember the details just now, but did come home safely. I have more information on him but not right in front of me, when found, I will send it to you.

Tanner, navigator, and Harmsten, bombardier, I was in touch with after the war. Mostly with their wives. And then, I guess, we just kind of lost touch. Again, if I find anything on these two, I shall send it to you.

Pamela Austin lives in Cambridge, England. As a girl, she lived near the 'dump' where they dumped the damaged planes. Her letters to me explain that part. There is a museum in England, near or on the former air strip that is quite large. A group of 306th persons went to England to see the museum. A couple in England were very important in founding this museum. The English people are very fond of the Americans who came and won the war. Well, helped win the war and the English people are still remembering those days, persons like Pamela. But that generation is dying out, will the next generation remember??

I needed to get this information down for myself too, so I hope you haven't minded reading it all. I would love to hear from both of you to find out more about your information on your - parent- grandfather. Keep in touch and please let me know you received the packet of photo's and stuff. Kemp, if you have email, send me your address. Mine is at top of this writing. Lil

Lillian Larwig, 2133 NW 25th Okla.City, OK 73107 phone. 405-525-3218

Would love to have you come to our City, visit and I could take you around to show off what we have in OKC.