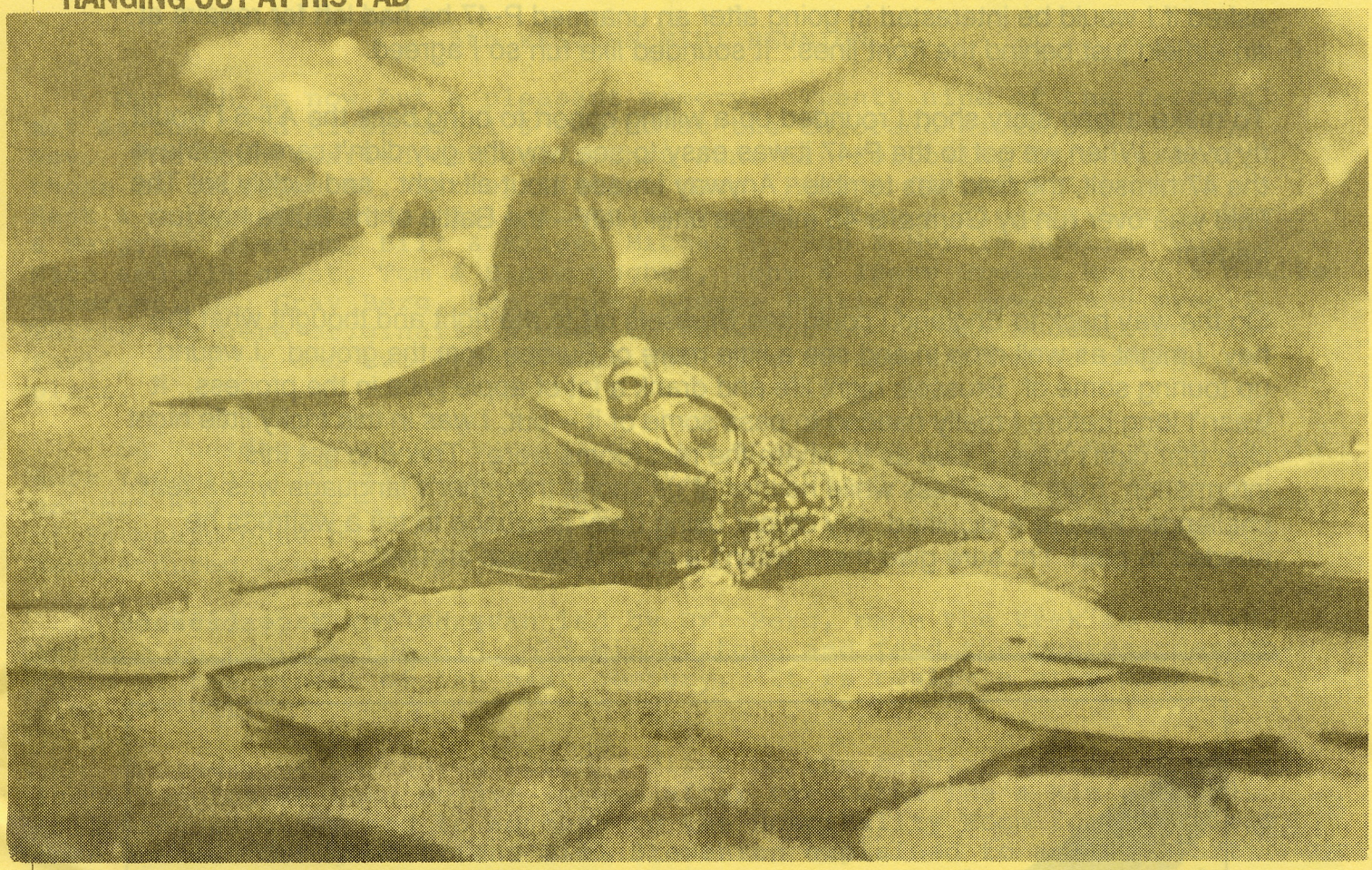
HANGING OUT AT HIS PAD



A HUNGRY BULLFROG hides among the lily pads awaiting his lunch and enjoys the afternoon sun in a small pond behind the Overstreet home off Colonial Avenue in Southwest Roanoke.

The above newspaper photo contributed by our Treasurer, Bill Overstreet

BAZER'S MINI

On the 14th of June, a small group of 364th F.S. people gathered in South Florida at the home of Irving and Honey Bazer. The Bazer's treated us to lunch at their club house where it was quiet, pleasant and a fine luncheon. After lunch, we returned to the Bazer home where we enjoyed coffee and beautiful desserts and friendships of many years. Everyone appears to be enduring the ageing process very well, thanks to medication and care.

The Bazer home is in the Ft. Lauderdale area. Harry and Anita Mann came up from Hollywood which is a short distance south. Ellen and Joe De Shay and Betty Donohue drove down from north of Fort Lauderdale, about a 1 hour drive. Irv, Bazer told us how he was assigned to join the squadron and the 357th Fighter Group at Tonopah. When he arrived at Tonopah, the Group had already departed. ALL GONE! MOVED OUT! He had to catch up with the squadron at Santa Rosa, CA.

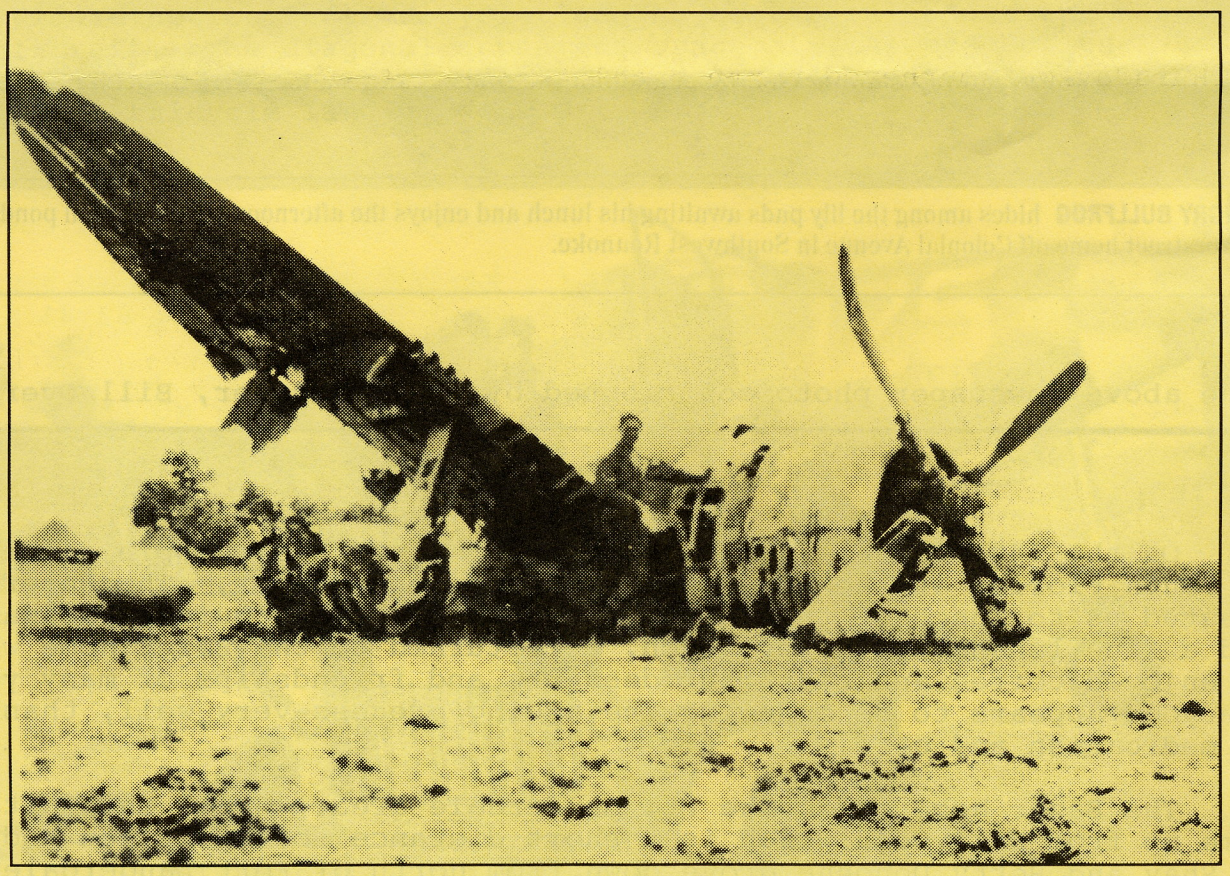
This mini was an enjoyable occasion spent together by we few.

At the end of my combat tour I was assigned to Third Bomb Division as Fighter Controller. One day a higher ranking officer (they all were higher ranking than I was!) asked if I would be interested in going after an unarmed P-47 he had left for repairs at an airfield just behind the front lines. It sounded like fun so I agreed.

To make a long story short I rounded up a willing cohort to bring back the AT-6 I would fly over. When we got to the P-47 it was easy to see why the guy didn't care to retrieve the 47 himself, the field was terrible. Anyway I made it out all right , and luckily so! The field was over run by Germans 45 minutes after I left -- the Battle of the Bulge had just begun!

On the way back to England I could see Brussels off to the right and thought what the hey, I might as well drop in and see a little more of Europe from the ground. I wound up touring some of Brussels night life and drank a lot of apple juice in the process. It wasn't long before I really needed to pass some of it -- but, I was in this tricky little night club that didn't have a clue as to where the rest rooms were. Trying to get this information from a waitress while neither of us spoke the other's language was a real challenge Picture a dignified, shy officer using body language to tell a waitress he needed to pee! I'm sure glad there wasn't a candid camera around!

by Harvey Mace (362nd)



In a previous newsletter, O'Bee O'Brien wrote about the P-47 "Thunderbolt" fighter aircraft that crashed and burned firing off it's 50 caliber guns. Historian, Merle Olmsted submitted a photo of that incident including himself by the wreckage at Leiston Air Field.

FOR SALE AT THE DE SHAY PX

White Caps -- 357th Fighter Group -- $12.50 each.
Emblems ----- 362nd, 363rd, 364th -- $ 4.00 each.(Grp. emblems sold out)
Lapel Pins -- 357th Fighter Group -- $ 4.00 each.
ALL PRICES INCLUDE PACKAGING AND POSTAGE. MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
Joe De Shay, 465 N. E. 34th Street, Boca Raton, FL 33431

RETIRED PLANES BASK IN THE SUN!

Arizona base is now home to thousands of old U.S. aircraft. Retired airplanes, like retired people, flock to the Tucson desert for the climate. More than 5,000 older military aircraft are parked smartly in formation at Tucson's Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. Nicknamed "the Boneyard," it's where the Pentagon puts out-of-service aircraft - an operation so immense that several miles of desert are now carpeted with planes.

The Pentagon has been running this airplane retirement community for half a century. It chose the Arizona desert for its year-round warmth, the lack of rain and the hard-baked alkaline soil. These factors keep the airplanes from corroding while they sit and wait for a new mission. Some aircraft never get that new mission; they're sold for scrap, like the fleet of B-52 bombers here. Other planes are used for spare parts to keep the active fleet flying. Still others are sold to friendly foreign governments, put back into service, donated to museums or used for such civilian purposes as the anti-drug effort.

Officially called the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, the Boneyard houses aircraft from the 1950's and 1960's. Anything older is too much of a relic; anything newer is still in service. The airplane population waxes and wanes, depending on world events. More than 1,000 F-4 Phantom fighter jets are parked there, in rows so plentiful the sight is reminiscent of a cornfield. There are giant cargo planes and small training airplanes, helicopters by the hundreds and fighter jets by the thousands.

The sheer spectacle of so many planes draws visitors from around the world. It's a glorious sight to some, an appalling waste to others. And to the large number of visiting veterans, it's a touchstone to the past. Despite its parking-lot-like appearance AMARC's task is to keep the mothballed planes ready to fly, if necessary. There's a continual cycle of regeneration and fifty-five to 60 percent of everything out there could fly out.

Tom Webb, Observer Washington Bureau

from Ann Stevenson

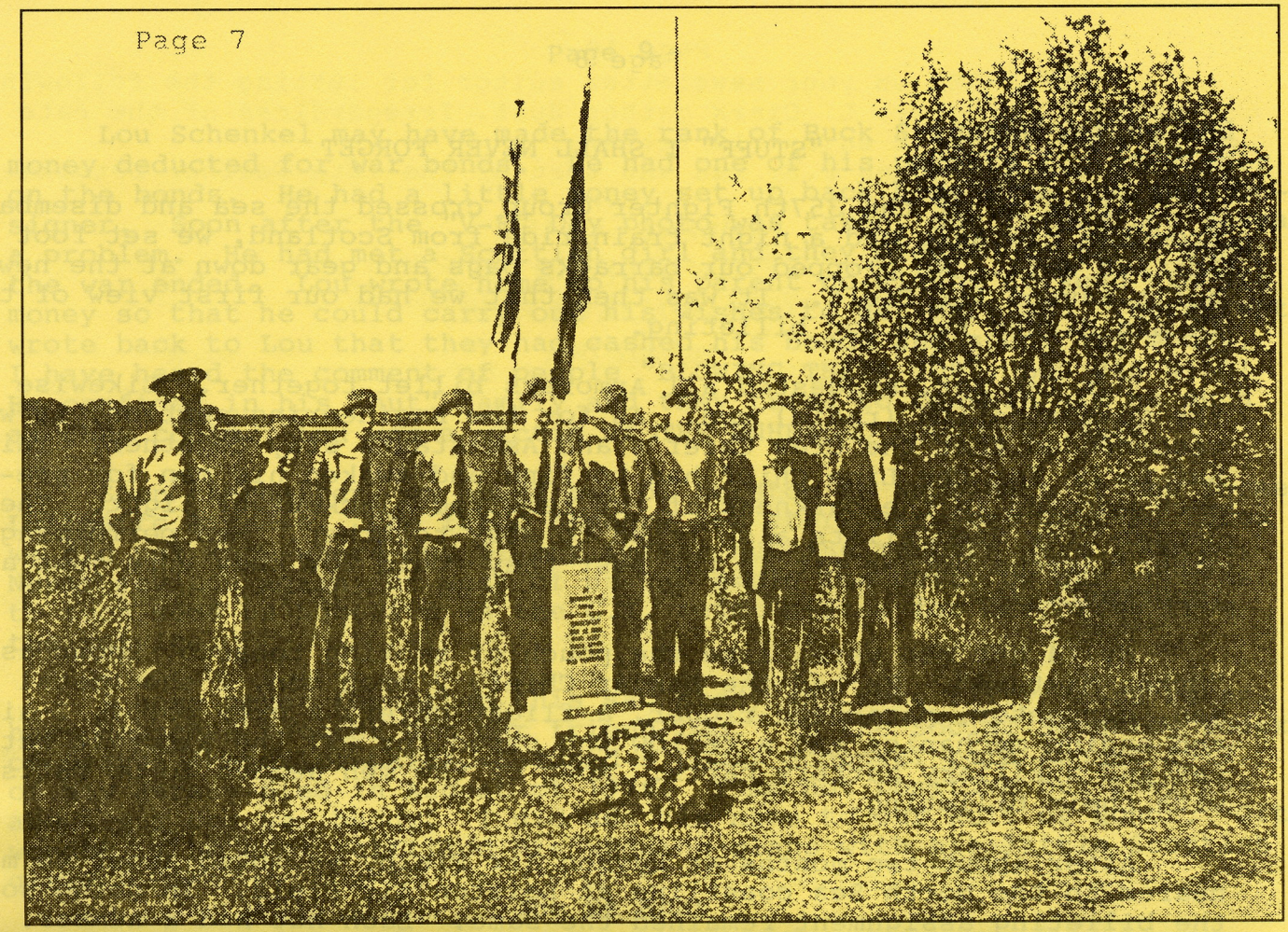


Photo by Bob Clark. Nov.,1996
LEFT: Gus Clutten, Committee member
Right Peter Saunders, Chairman of the FRIENDS OF THE LEISTON AIRFIELD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

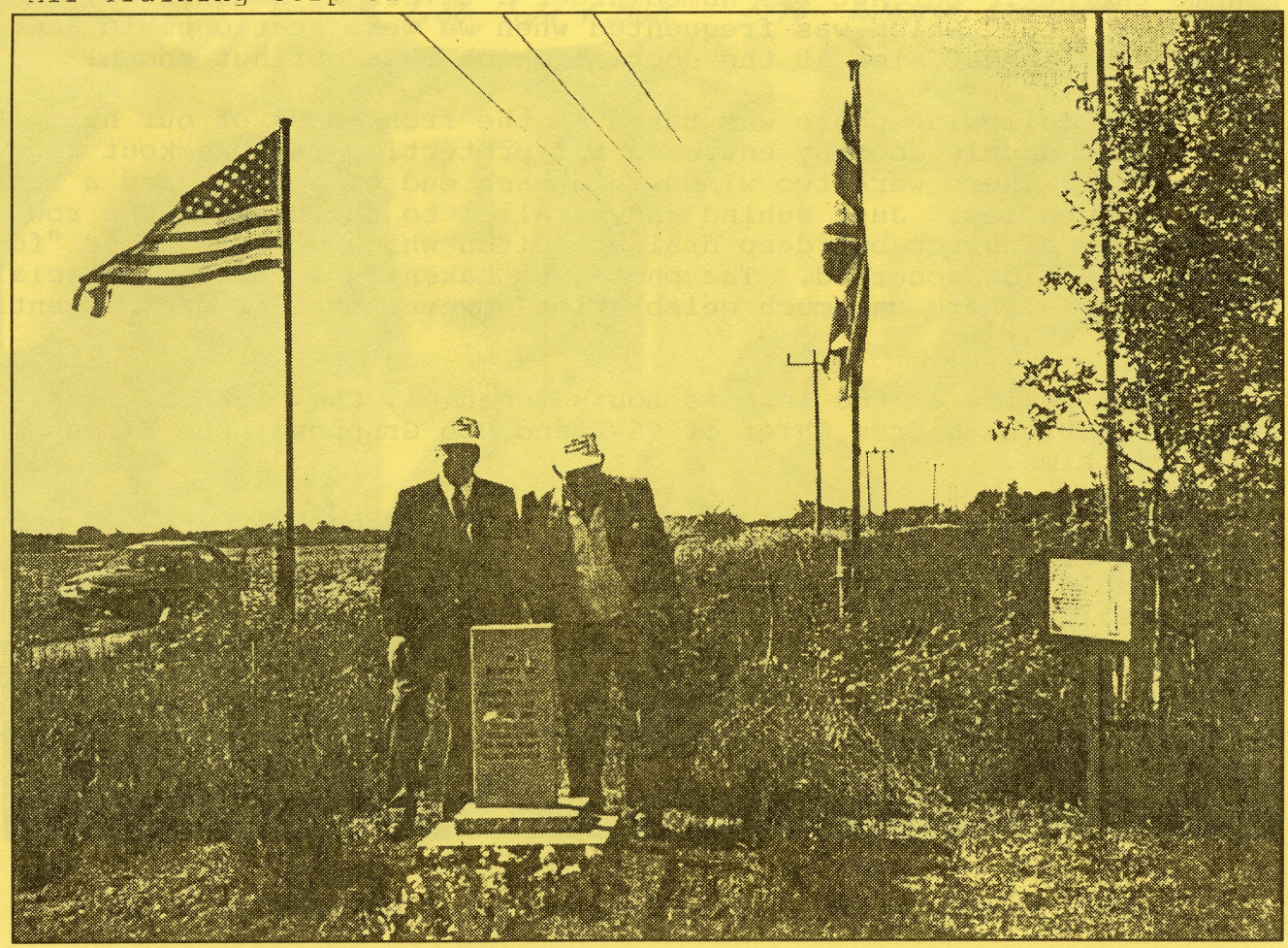
Other Committee members:

Peter Drew	Leiston, Suffolk
Tim Bissell	Leiston, Suffolk
Mike King	Leiston, Suffolk
Chris Benson	Leiston, Suffolk
Brian Plunkett	Wickford, Essex

Secretary and Treasurer:
Brian Boulton Saxmundham, Suffolk



Memorial Day, 1997 Leiston Airfield, England
Air Training Corp Cadets and Associates Gus Clutten -Fred Church



Fred and Gus

"STUFF" I SHALL NEVER FORGET

After we of the 357th Fighter Group crossed the sea and disembarked from the big ship and a night train ride from Scotland, we set foot on British soil. We plopped our barracks bags and gear down at the newly built Raydon Air Field. It was then that we had our first view of the 14 man Nissen Huts for billeting.

Our 1st Sgt. suggested all Armorers billet together. Likewise with the Communication (radio) men. As for the Engineering section, it was recommended that the Crew Chief's and Assistants stay together. This had to be for the Line Chief had to find and awaken his men for pre-flight each morning in the darkness of the required blackout of light. The Hangar Crew Specialists also tried to stay together. Men performing other various duties fit in the best they could for they were just as important.

My 14 hut men were, like the pouch of smoking tobacco, known as "Dukes Mixture". We had the Hangar Chief, 2 prop men, 2 sheetmetal repair men, carpenter, parachute rigger, a flight chief, a crew chief, 2 aircraft and engine mechanics and a fellow who cared for all the aircraft batteries and auxiliary battery carts. Most of the men seemed to be satisfied with their billeting.

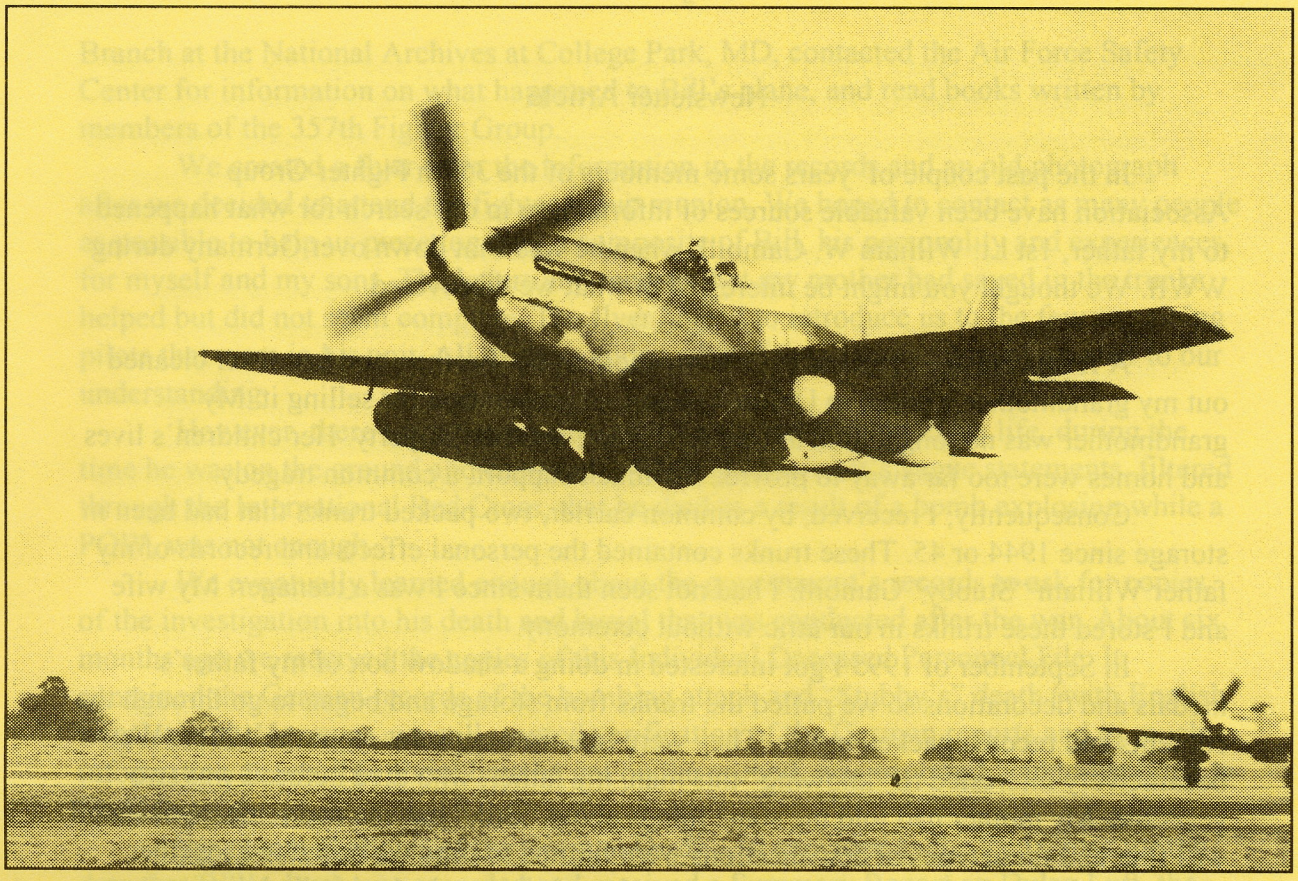
After about two months at Raydon Air Field, we moved about 40 miles nearer to the North Sea coastline at Leiston Air Field. In doing so, the billeting assignment remained the same. Each hut had a number. Ours was #56. It was a bit of fun for someone in each or most huts to name the hut. Our hut was named after a tavern at Santa Rosa, CA the "TIL TWO CLUB" which was frequented when we were stationed in Santa Rosa. There was a neat sign at the doorway which made our hut known.

The following photo was taken at the front door of our hut. Each hut had a double doorway entrance for protection per blackout regulations at night. There were two windows in each end of the hut and a back door for emergencies. Just behind and parallel to the back of the row of huts, was a narrow but deep drainage ditch which served as our "fox holes" when air raids occurred. The photo was taken on a rare and special day, "V-E" Day. There was much celebration however the war was not entirely over for us.

The fellow on the left is Louis Schenkel, the "battery man". Then Thomas Babich, a Crew Chief of C5-Z and Bob Grupposo, the Flight Chief at that time.

The feature person of this story is Lou Schenkel. He did not have the highest I.Q. of the men in the hut but he was a very likeable and dependable guy. He had his battery recharging equipment set up in our #2, the lesser used blister hangar. He cared for his responsibilities so well one would hardly know he was there. never had any problems. He was a rather quiet fellow concerning his off duty affairs. Y'all likely remember how we not only took part in the war but we were asked to finance the war by having U.S. War Bonds deducted from our monthly pay.

continued



MISSION TAKE OFF Olmsted photo
"Cathy Mae II C5-U Pilot Dale Karger Crew Chief Arthur Krantz

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A RINGSIDE SEAT
by Jim Sloan (363rd F.S.)

Sometime in December of 1944 while on a test flight before our mission was scheduled, I had a ringside seat for a very spectacular crash. As I was about to enter the traffic pattern to land, a black and white checkerboard nose P-51 (78th F.G.?) smoking heavily, was approaching our N/S runway at a very high speed. His altitude was about 200 feet and 2000 feet from the end of the runway. He dropped his gear and still at about 150 miles per hour speed, managed to touch down about midway on the runway. A short distance off the end of the runway, he left his landing gear in a drainage ditch. A bit further, his wings sheared off in a hedgerow. The fuselage continued on still at a high rate of speed and finally came to rest against a straw stack. The pilot immediately got out of the fuselage and was running away from the wreckage when it exploded. He was knocked flat but was not injured from the blast. Later I learned that the pilots only wound was a cut on his nose from the gun-sight.

The base emergency crew was moving on the runway very quickly but was stopped by the ditch. This all happened so quick that other than the control tower men, emergency crew and myself, very few people on the ground were aware of what had taken place. I might add that the response of the emergency crew was excellent. Upon reading my story, perhaps someone will recall this event and add their version!

Newsletter Article

In the past couple of years some members of the 357th Fighter Group Association have been valuable sources of information in our search for what happened to my father, 1st Lt. William W. Gambill, when he was shot down over Germany during WWII. We thought you might be interested in what we discovered.

A few years ago (1989 or (1990) my mother, her brother, and her sister cleaned out my grandmother's house in Union, Oregon, in preparation for selling it. My grandmother was no longer able to care for herself and her property. Her children's lives and homes were too far away to provide her much support, a common tragedy.

Consequently, I received, by common carrier, two packed trunks that had been in storage since 1944 or 45. These trunks contained the personal effects and records of my father William "Stubby" Gambill. I had not seen them since I was a teenager. My wife and I stored these trunks in our attic without ceremony.

In September of 1995 I got interested in doing a shadow box of my father's medals and decorations so we pulled the trunks from storage and began to go through the contents and records packed inside. They were like time capsules from the 1940s. We became very interested in "knowing" this man, my father, who died before I was two years old. My mother had told me some things about "Bill," but she had remarried when I was four and these types of conversations were limited to time we had alone together.

The trunks, whose loose military awards and ribbons had rekindled this interest, held many questions and few answers. We pursued having the awards and decorations replaced by the government. In the course of this quest, we discovered that Chuck Yeager was also in the 363rd Fighter Squadron with "Stubby." We have had a couple of conversations with him, both over the phone and in person last summer at the Fighter Group's Reunion in Louisville. He was most helpful in directing us to the group historian and others who helped us either by providing direction or access to records we knew nothing about.

We started our search at the National Personnel Records Center, which promptly informed us that many records of past military personnel were burned in a fire in the early seventies. This just meant that other government sources would have to be tapped for information. We ended up writing several Air Force bases where different pieces of information is archived. We tried contacting foreign embassies over the internet. We wrote to the Bundesarchiv/Militararchiv in Germany. We learned the name of a young man who lived in Germany and had his own militaria shop and wrote to him for help. He even made a trip to the area where the interrogation camp was located but could find nothing for us.

We contacted the International Red Cross, found names and addresses of people connected with the archives of the 8th Air Force, contacted friends in the military who had contacts in Washington, DC, wrote to surviving members of the 357th who were referenced in Bill's letters, searched for and read books written on the subject of WWII and fighter pilots/aces from the era, read accounts of what kind of flight Bill was on and what kind of things were going on in the war when he was shot down, purchased microfilm and searched through it, visited Air Force museums,located a Textual Records

Branch at the National Archives at College Park, MD, contacted the Air Force Safety Center for information on what happened to Bill's plane, and read books written by members of the 357th Fighter Group.

We created a flyer from the information in the records and an old photograph after we decided to attend the fighter group reunion. We hoped to contact as many people as possible to help us piece together a composite of Bill, his personality and experiences, for myself and my sons. The letters and records that my mother had saved in the trunks helped but did not seem complete. The flyer helped to introduce us to the few remaining pilots that were in his unit. All of them added a bit of detail in one way or another to our understanding.

However, there were fifteen days of information missing in his life, during the time he was on the ground and captured, and the government's vague statements, filtered through the International Red Cross, that he died as a result of a bomb explosion while a POW, was not enough.

We eventually learned enough about the government's records to ask for copies of the investigation into his death and burial that was conducted after the war. About six months ago we received the copies of this Individual Deceased Personnel File. It contained the German records of the bombing attack and "Stubby's" death (with English translations). However, we still wanted verification of the German reports and as much information as possible about how he got on the ground, was captured, and transported to Frankfort.

We obtained copies of the German Death List provided to the Red Cross for the date that Bill's death was recorded and received a Summary Report on Dulag Luft, the main Interrogation Center at Frankfort am Main, Germany, where Bill was held the two weeks prior to his death. We wanted to know anything we could find out about what kinds of things he might have experienced after capture.

We attempted to purchase a copy of The 1000 Day Battle, a book about a bomber group located in the same general area in England, from the Seething Tower Association, whose address was furnished to us by Dick's uncle who was based in England as well. We inserted copies of the flyer with our membership dues and a request that they check their membership for someone who may have been down in Germany during the same time period.

Then, on June 4, 1997, lightning struck in the form of a letter from a gentleman we didn't even know. Following is a copy of his letter:

"Dear Richard and Terry,

I've just received the enclosure about "Stubby" from some of my English friends who are particularly interested in my own 8th Air Force Group (488th Bomb Group). They have no connection that I knowof with the fighter groups, and so it was perplexing for me to receive this inquiry about a MIA fighter boy. Nevertheless, I have the answer to your inquiry. It is a sad answer, but I know were I in your shoes I'd want to know the real story. Here it is:

I was a four-engine command pilot of a leading wing on the March 8, 1944, one thousand plane raid on Berlin. (Same date, same raid as Stubby). We

were both shot down (I don't know Stubby's particulars), and sent by the internal security forces who captured us down to Frankfort, and then to Oberursel (an interrogation center about 10 miles or so north of Frankfort). Oberursel, known in the trade as "Dulag Luft," was an interrogation center where "guests" were placed in small cells in solitary confinement, with one or two slices of black bread and a bottle of water per day. (Softening up for an ensuing interrogation).

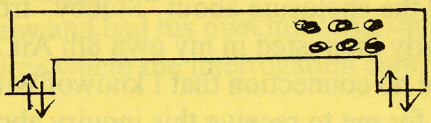
This would go on for a couple of weeks--in some cases more, in some cases less--and then the rather penetrating interrogation (that seemed more Hollywood than threatening). Anyway, after this extended softening up and questioning, we'd be sent (under guard, of course) to a "transit camp" in Frankfort to await assignment and transport to a large permanent camp (like Stalag Luft I, up on the North Sea, or Stalag Luft III in Sagan, (then Ostreich, now Poland).

NOTE: I'm telling you all this because I believe you wanted to know what happened at Oberursel.

It was at this transit camp that Stubby was killed. I believe he was in the group of us POWs that went out of Dulag Luft down to Frankfort on March 23rd. That same night a thousand RAF bombers came over and bombed the area wherein the transit camp was located. I have no name for the transit camp nor do I have its exact location, except that it was my impression that it was on the grounds of a former Rothschild estate and close by to an installation of I.G. Farben, a German industrial organization (probably the primary target).

Anyway, target flares (dropped by the mosquito bombers to aid bombing accuracy) fell right into our prison compound. At that point the world erupted. Bombs started falling all around us--big ones, 2000 lbs., plus incendiaries, plus DAs (delayed action). All Hell was breaking loose. Bombers overhead 40 minutes or so.

There were two shelters built early in the war by the British POWs using International Red Cross materials. The Brits (RAF) got into one; the Americans into the other. A few of us tried to stay outside (I think Stubby must have been with us) to see "the show," but the concussions and falling pieces of flak soon changed our minds, and so we went into the shelter and curled up against the entrance.



The concussion and whoosh of the falling bombs was (is) indescribable--not different impacts, but one deafening continuous blast. My left eardrum was and is still split. I couldn't tell a loud from a soft noise after the raid. I know my hearing has been slightly impaired ever since.

We almost took a direct hit. The roof of the shelter came in and some big heavy timbers holding up a concrete roof slab came in. It just missed me but fell right on top of Stubby who was severely injured and died within the hour.

Next morning, two British (RAF) sergeants and I took Stubby up an incline within the compound and we dug a grave and buried him there. Such a sad task. I said a prayer, we gave Stubby a salute and went down the hill to the other POWs. I stayed on burial details all day.

The transit camp was completely destroyed--to matchsticks. All trains in and out of Frankfort were inoperative. A few days later we were moved through town amidst an angry populace to catch a troop train full of unhappy Krauts enroute to der Ost Front to face the Russians (a very unhappy prospect at the time).

I'm sure in my bones that the fighter boy I've talked about above is your "Stubby." All the dates are identical. Someone must have seen his dog tags (I didn't), and the word went around that "the guy killed was a little fighter pilot from California."

Besides, he was the only one of us killed on the 23rd. And I've been back to Oberursel not many years ago and have verified that it never got hit during the entire war. (The Dulag Luft prison itself is now a lovely school for little tots).

I'm of the definite opinion that the fact of Stubby's death went back through the chain of command from the transit camp to Dulag Luft at Oberursel, who then notified the International Red Cross, who then notified Stubby's next of kin by simply naming Oberursel and not the transit camp as the place of death. (The transit camp had no such administrative capability).

You want to know what went on with Stubby in the 363rd Fighter Squadron. I suggest you inquire at the 8th Air Force Historical Society at the new museum in Savannah. If that doesn't produce results, let me know what you want and perhaps I can help you from some possible Air Force contacts in Washington, DC. Somewhere there exists complete records of this outfit which should be available for your scrutiny. Maybe I can find out for you where these records are if you can't find them on your own.

This is a rough letter for me to write and for you to receive. But these were very rough times and we weren't more than kids ourselves. So be sure to let me know if I can assist you in any way.

Respectfully,

John E.D.Grunow
ex-major
448th Bomb Group
20th Wing
8th Air Force"

You cannot imagine the different feelings that went through us after reading this letter. To my wife, it was a strong sense of it being "the end of the story," the answers to

our questions. To me, it was a confirmation, down to the last detail, of all the information we had been able to piece together from all our correspondence.

The most interesting and creepiest part of hearing from him was that on that very day we heard from our oldest son that we were going to be grandparents and this would have been Bill's great-grandchild. Like the end of one life and the beginning of another.

After two years and nine months and six three-inch binders later, it was phenomenal to think that we could get an answer to our questions. What are the odds of locating another person who was at the prison camp at the same time, much less find that someone who was standing right next to Bill when he died.

We earnestly appreciate all the help you have given us and hope you enjoyed knowing the end of the story as much as we did.

Richard & Terry Gambill
109 Stondfield Court
Warner Robins, GA 31093

We have received many interesting stories and letters that can be used in our newsletter. However, due to space, we cannot publish all of them in this issue. Thanks to those who have sent us material and eventually, most items will be used.

Joe De Shay, your Editor

This past August, Joe and Ellen De Shay celebrated another wedding anniversay.

Per Joe, "After pitching my tent with the same woman for 60 years, I h'aint got no complaints. The chow has been good (look at me) and always a clean sack to sleep in. Much to be thankful for! A dependable co-pilot makes for an enjoyable life's mission".

Old Joe D.

