GUS CLUTTEN

Many members of the 357th Fighter Group Association will be saddened to learn that our "Friends of the 357th Fighter Group" member Gus Clutten, passed away in the hospital on 12 February 1998.

Gus was born at his home, Rose Cottage, which is located within the borders of our former airfield at Leiston, England. He was raised there and went into the British Navy during World War II. Due to war injuries, he was discharged from the Navy and returned home to Rose Cottage. For the remainder of the war, he was an employee at the Leiston Airfield performing ground maintenance. Rose Cottage was adjacent to a hardstand of the 363rd Fighter Squadron flight line and Gus was permitted to live there while we were located at the airfield.

Years after the end of the war, the organization "Friends of the 8th" came into being. As members representing this organization, David Hudson and Gus began to communicate with men of the 357th F.G. In mid 1987, both became members of the 357th Fighter Group Association. Both "CAME ACROSS THE SEA" to attend our Dayton 1987 reunion and Memorial Dedication. They came again in 1989 to Salt Lake City and in 1991 to the Marietta, GA reunion. Many members of the 357th F.G. who met Gus, became his good friend. I am one of those!

Gus was a friendly person. As he came to join us at our reunions, there was something about him that attracted us, especially the enlisted men. Our enlisted men were the ones who made evening bicycle missions to the pubs and homes of the people living in the area of the Leiston Airfield. Our men at that time had met men who were the age of Gus and with whom friendships were made. Most of the British young men were in the British military and away from home.

As Gus appeared on the scene at our reunions dressed in his tweed jacket and wearing his poachers hat and speaking with his British accent, he represented those friends of the war years. Gus had his feelings too for as he finished out his life at the Caravan site near Rose Cottage, he proudly spoke of "The Boys" who served there. It was Gus who in our first piece of correspondence, created his saying and "signing off" with "Hands Across the Sea".

Gus had a lot of interest and influence in the creation of the new memorial that is to be dedicated May 31 at the Leiston Airfield. We all had hopes that he could be part of the dedication.

Year after year, Gus has obtained and placed a 357th F.G. Floral Wreath at Madingley Cemetery (Cambridge) for the Memorial Day program. We of the 357th Fighter Group Association have lost a real friend as well as a "Friends" member. He will be missed here in the United States as well as in Leiston but leaves behind some fine friends who will carry on his ideals.

by Joe De Shay

Three happy veterans of the 362nd Fighter Squadron at the 1997 Christmas party of the Georgia State Chapter of the 8th A.F.H.S.



Photo -- Bob Shearer

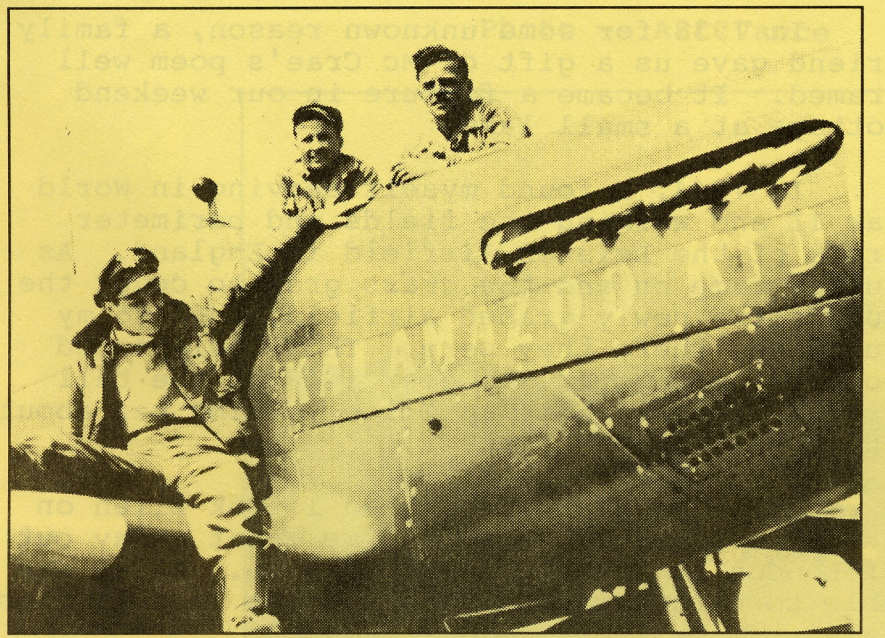


Photo -- Richard Verdon

The "Kalamazoo Kid" aircraft of the 363rd Fighter Squadron. Pilot is Charles S. Pearson who came into the military service from Kalamazoo, Mich. He is now retired at Homosassa, Fla.

The curator of the Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum and his assistants have established a display honoring Pearson and his notable aircraft.

In the photo, we observe Pearson's Assistant Crew Chief and the Crew Chief for "Kalamazoo Kid" which was coded B6-H. WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHO THESE TWO GROUND CREW MEN ARE? THE MUSEUM IS ALSO INTERESTED. Please notify Joe De Shay if you can help!

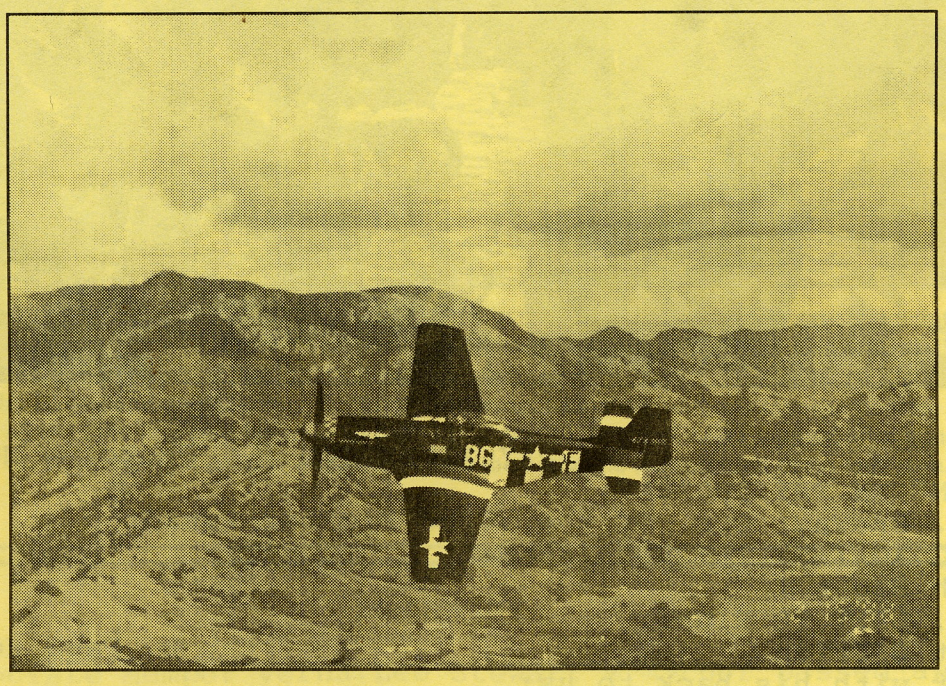
A PROGRAM FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE LEISTON AIRFIELD COMMITTEE

The programme we have mapped out for the afternoon looks as follows at the moment:

2pm Members & Partners together with Official Guests assemble at Cakes & Ale Clubhouse.
2.15pm Assembly moves into position around the memorial.
2.30pm Flying display by Mustang Aircraft.
2.35pm Dedication and Remembrance Ceremony, conducted by the Rev. Christine Brooks, Chaplain to 1379 Squadron (Leiston) Air Training Corps, commences with the playing of both National Anthems. The Service will include two hymns, two readings and conclude with the unveiling of the memorial by Major General Hinton, followed by the laying of wreaths.
3.05pm The assembled gathering invited back to the Cakes & Ale Clubhouse.
3.15pm Speeches by local dignitaries and invited guests.
3.30pm Refreshments and the opportunity for members to speak with our guests whilst the Leiston Royal British Legion plays.
5pm Conclusion of the formal occasion.

You will appreciate there may be slight amendments to timing and content but we are hopeful this will remain the format for the day.

Photo -- Art Vance



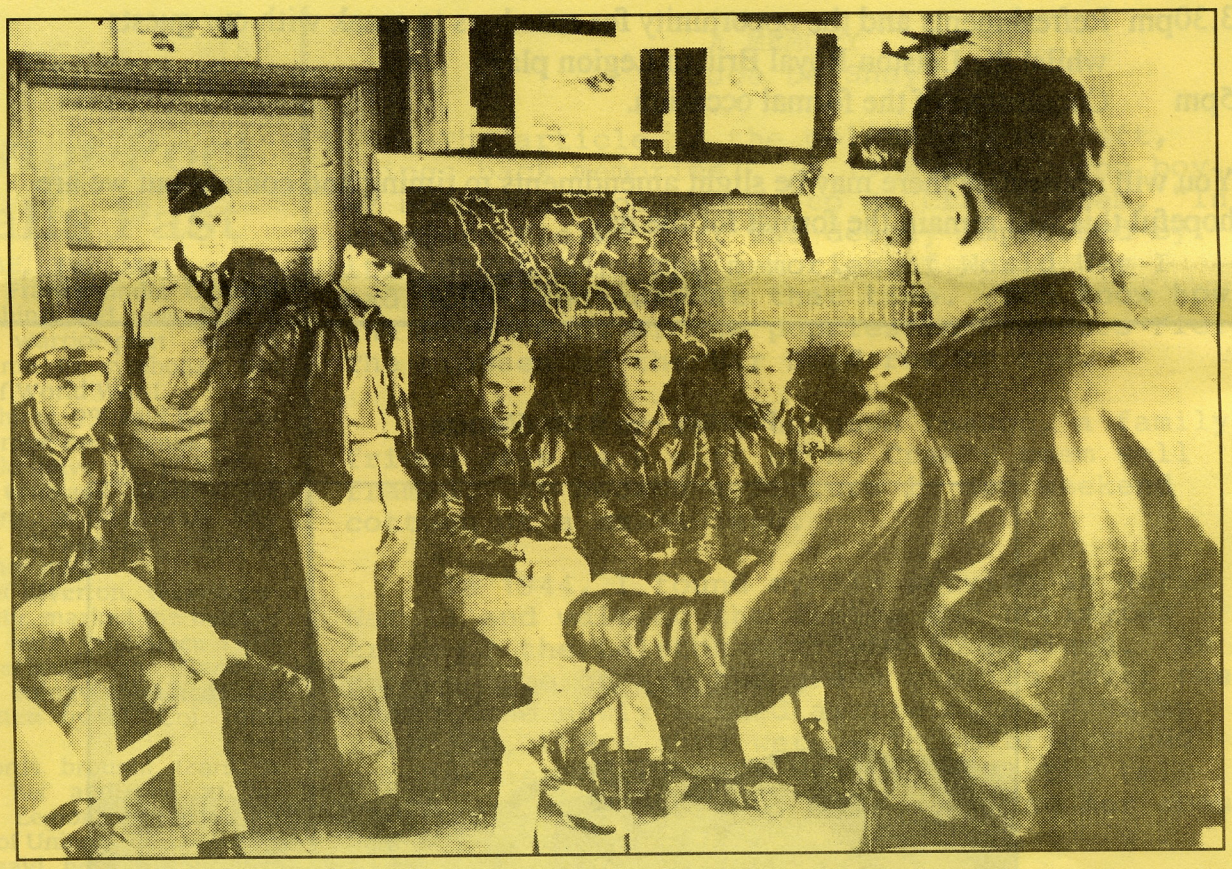
"THE WINGED ACE OF CLUBS" IN FLIGHT OVER THE SONOMA MOUNTAINS OF CALIFORNIA

OUR 1998 357th FIGHTER GROUP REUNION

Have you considered applying for your airline tickets?
September 24, 1998 thru September 27, 1998
Give your reunion managers prompt response if you plan to attend!

Touch wing tips one more time! Help the Armorers find their ammo! The Clerks need someone to sharpen their pencils! The Cooks want to enjoy a meal without cooking it! The Mechanics can fix things with clean hands! The Radio Men can continue to chase static!

MAY WE ALL DO IT TOGETHER AT THE REUNION!
Joe De Shay



PAY ATTENTION Photo -- Merle Olmsted

STANDING IN THE DOORWAY:
Paul S. Brown. C.O. Of the 362nd Fighter Squadron.
LEANING AGAINST THE DOOR FRAME:
Kenneth Hagan
SEATED, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Gilbert O'Brien,____?_____,_____?_____, L. Paul Henslee____?____.
Officer with his back to us:
Flight Surgeon "Doc" Harold E. Snedden giving one of his lectures to 362nd men. Location Hayward, CA. 1943.

The following photo and comment is from an article written by 357th Fighter Group Historian, Merle Olmsted. No doubt the photo was taken at Leiston Airfield, England on the 363rd Fighter Squadron flight line. The visible steel matting was in use for surface on several of the 363rd hard stands.



"Watch out! Here comes trouble!" During a visit to the author's home in the early 90s, Kit Carson saw this print and asked for several for his sons. In a letter soon after, he wrote: "Thanks for the photos, the clarity and definition are great! If my count is right, these four shot down 77 enemy aircraft, and that's the whole point of the picture." They are (l-r), Richard A. Peterson, Leonard "Kit" Carson, John B. England and Clarence E. "Bud" Anderson. One of the author's favorite photos, it hangs on his den wall, autographed by all but John England, killed in an F-86 flight in 1954. England AFB is named after him, and the name of his P-51D, *You've Had It!*, sums up what usually happened when the Luftwaffe encountered these four men.

LONGEVITY

Our Associate Member Verna Lee Stewart's mother passed away at the age of 104 on December 20, 1997. Our condolences to Verna Lee as well as our compliments for the exceptional long life of a family member.

STORY OF CHARLES G. GOSS P-51 FIGHTER PILOT
OCTOBER 19, 1944

During World War II, I was stationed in Leiston, England as a fighter pilot of the 362nd Fighter Squadron 357th Fighter Group. We flew P-51 Mustangs, a very good fighter plane.

On October 19, 1944 our mission was a fighter sweep over the target of Ludwigshaven, Germany. Our Group assignment was to be the first planes over the target. This was to make sure no German planes were in the area. The Bomber planes would then have a safer run over the target to drop their bombs.

I was not scheduled to fly October 19th, and was planning to go to London on a three day pass. Chuck Weaver, my friend, had planned on going to London. Then he found he was scheduled to fly. So I also scheduled to fly on the 19th. Chuck came back, but I didn't.

When we were circling the target the German ground gunners filled the air with flak. My plane was hit and the engine was damaged and failed to run. I tried everything to restart the engine, without success. Then a sense of calmness came over me, and I knew what I had to do. I know this change came from the Lord. There were many things that happened to me that were miracles. The altitude was around 18 thousand feet when I was hit. I could control the plane in a downward descent on a heading (direction) that would take me back to the American lines. At approximately 5,000 feet I prepared to parachute from the plane. I don't know the exact altitude when I bailed out, but I was not in the air very long and landed in a wooded area at the top of a large tree. When I bailed out of the plane, I injured my right leg when I hit the tail. Many pilots' legs were broken. It was numb when I landed in the tree and I could barely reach the limb below and unhook from the parachute. This was a very tall tree, with moss on the bark, so it was difficult to get my injured leg past the limbs as I climbed down. After a struggle I was able to get past the last limb of the tree. It was still a long way to the ground and I couldn't reach around the trunk of the tree because the tree was so large. I finally put my arms around the tree as far as I could reach. With the slick moss on the tree I could slide down most of the way before I let go and fell the rest of the way. When I got to the ground I could see someone in the clearing so I knew I would have to move quickly. I had heavy boots on which I discarded so I could move faster. I went in the opposite direction from where the person was looking into the area where I went down. The time of day was around noon to one o'clock. I kept walking on the heading I was going in the plane. (I had an escape kit with a small compass, maps, water bag and some rations). My walking put me in wooded areas and open areas.

I would walk in the wooded areas in daylight and open areas at night. It was quiet walking in the wooded areas and I was able to get very close to the wild deer. They never did "spook", just looked at me as I continued on my way. Another time I was sitting on a wood pile and I heard voices. I immediately fell to the ground parallel to the wood stack and they failed to see me. When they were out of sight I continued on.

Many events took place. We were told in the briefing <u>if</u> we had to turn ourselves in, it should be to a German officer because pilots were often pitchforked. Also, we were not to carry firearms. The next day I saw a German officer walking along a Macadam road with his helper behind him. I was behind a tree when they passed. So I walked out on the road behind them and they didn't even see me so I crossed the road and went my way. I thought if I could continue cross country it would be my best chance.

Some of the hazards were getting through barb wire entanglements, people coming up behind me on bicycles, when I was on a roadway, looking at me, but continuing on their way. I also got off the road as soon as I could. Many flowing streams were a source of water. I filled my bag, the escape kit had chlorine tablets to put in the water, so I was able to have liquid to drink.

I came to a clearing the third night and I was on a knoll. So I waited until daylight to continue. However, workers came to dig gun emplacements in the same area and I had to stay on this knoll all day. I could see the men working. Also they walked by me several times and failed to see me. When they left that evening I continued on my way.

The fourth night was cold and wet, also very dark. I could not determine what I was getting into. I would come to a fence, climb through and walk a very short distance and another fence. I'd climb through again and milk cows were lying down. Then I saw a light (very rare). It was a door of a house which shut quickly. I determined I was walking behind dwellings and these fenced areas were where their cows were kept. I retraced my steps through all the fences and back to a road. I went along the road and saw an out building. I went in. It was a shelter for cattle, but was empty. I couldn't sleep since it was so cold, my feet were freezing. I kept kicking the stone watering trough to keep from freezing.

Early the next morning (it was still dark) a 1934 Ford stopped along side of this building, a man got out of the car and came to a road sign near the building and got back in the car and drove off.

After they left I went down the same road, across the bridge and the road made a right turn. By the time I got to this turn in the road someone else came up the road in a car, slowed down and I just continued walking off the road and the car continued down the road.

This was the morning of the fifth day. When I left the road on the heading I was trying to keep, I came to the same road that made a turn. By this time I was good at hiding behind a tree as cars passed by. But this day there were two horse drawn wagons. When I moved around to avoid being seen, the men in the second wagon saw me. They stopped their wagons and came over to where I was. Leopold Pietruszewski was one of the men. A Polish man.

No one could speak English, and I couldn't speak any other language. I got my language phrase card out and when I came to the one Leopold recognized, I could point to different phrases. This way we communicated and were able to agree on the next happening. The two wagons with men had to go on to work. They were slave labor of the German's digging gun emplacements. I was to stay in the same location until dark. When they came back at dark they would contact me.

They were very generous with the food they had for their lunches. They gave me fruit, meat and bread. I was so grateful since I had not eaten for five days.

Many things went through my mind waiting for the evening darkness. Would I be turned in and would someone come to capture me? But from the sincere actions and joy these men showed I felt they would return at dusk.

However, during the day while I was hiding in the thicket, a car did pull up and park approximately 20 feet from me. I never moved from my position, nor did I know exactly what he was doing. It appeared he was getting a tree (similar to a Christmas tree), but I don't know for sure. Time-wise, he was there a long time I thought but he never stooped down to look into the thicket.

At dusk, I heard the wagons and I soon heard someone whistle. I came out of the thicket and Leopold was the person I met. We walked to where he was living and he took me to the barn which was part of a German house. He helped me up to the hay loft which was to be my new hiding place for approximately 15 days.

Leopold was so faithful in helping me. He would get the left-overs from their meals, chunks of bread, an egg, and canned meat. Years later when I talked to him in Chicago, he told me it was difficult to do this. He was able to get the ladies to save the

pieces of bread, etc. so he could bring it up to me. If they were caught it would have been the end to those who acquired the food, Leopold and me. I thank the Lord that this did not happen.

The plan was to wait until the Americans came closer and then we would try to make it through the front lines. During this stay in the loft, Leopold was able to come up almost every day. Those days that he missed were a real concern to me, when I didn't know if something happened to him and if so, should I take out on my own. However, things went real well.

I was moved from the hay loft to a chicken coop. The coop had a loft area but very little hay. It was cold but I did survive. I was here about 2 to 3 days, then we thought we could make it through the lines. I didn't know how many would be in our group. I knew Leopold and his friend would be going. However, it turned out to be Leopold and four other persons. Two of this group were quite young.

We left the area where they lived near midnight. They had a polish rifle but could not find the bolt, but they carried it anyway.

I personally was not feeling real good. I think I caught cold in the chicken loft, but I was able to keep up with everyone.

Early the next morning we came to a farm house. We waited while Leopold's friend went ahead to determine the safety of the situation. He signaled us to come on, so we did.

This house was not occupied, however the farmer and his helper came up while we were in the house. The farmer was very angry and I was not able to understand what was taking place. But the man that had the polish rifle held his hand over the bolt location, poked the gun into the man's ribs and the farmer changed his attitude. The farmer didn't want anything taken, however one took a ham, one some sugar and I took a blanket to keep me warm since I was chilling. We left the old gentleman farmer and walked until we came to a canal.

The canal was completely blocked with vessels that had been damaged. We wanted to cross the canal so we continued to walk along the canal. Leopold talked to a man living on one of the damaged vessels. He told us we could cross on the locks farther up. We continued to walk to the locks and cross over. This was near a town and this was where we encountered the German troops. They chased us down into a small wooded area with a stream on one side. Leopold's friend was the lead person and the German troops caught him and marched him down the road with his hands up over his head. We all stayed in this small thicket. We could also

see two armed Germans on the other side of the stream. They walked back and forth trying to see us, but we lay still and they gave up and went on their way. We laid in the snow until dark.

I wanted to cross the stream on the bridge, but no one agreed so we waded across the stream and it was very cold. We continued to walk. It was very dark. We came to a fence which we all crossed and soon after, we heard voices. It was a german gun emplacement. We turned back across the fence and continued until we came upon another stream. The stream had a large tree that had fallen across the exact point where we wanted to cross. We crossed on this tree and a Macadam road was on the other side. We walked one direction and the bridge was knocked out. We turned around the other direction and we came to a "T" in the road. We walked on this sideroad. It had timber across it to keep vehicles from sinking into the mud. We turned back and went into a house that was near this "T" in the road. In the house we found "K rations" so we knew Americans had been there.

We waited until morning which was November 17, 1944 and I heard a halftrack coming down the road. I went out to the vehicle and told them what we needed, that the four Polish men and I needed transportation. The driver said he had wounded men in his halftrack, but another one would be along real soon. I thanked them.

Soon the second halftrack came up and I told them our situation and they had room for us. We all climbed into the halftrack and were transported to the Army Outpost. We were all put up for the night after a good meal.

The next day a dentist from Kansas in the U.S. Army had a German Ambulance and he took us to the Army Headquarters at Luneville, France. We had to wait at the guard house until a Major came from the headquarters building. I was still dressed in my flying suit and did not have any rank to identify me as a Lieutenant. The Major greeted us and I acknowledged why we were there. After a few remarks he said you are from the Mid-West. I said yes, I was from Kansas. I was surprised. The Major told me they were confronted with German's trying to get through the lines that spoke good English, had perfect American uniforms and papers. The Americans had to be able to identify them.

I told the Major the background of Leopold and the three other Polish men. How they helped me for so long and how we made it through the lines. He said they would have to be interrogated and they were more than willing to cooperate in every way they could.
For my interrogation, I was taken to a Colonel's office. I went up to his desk and introduced myself and started to tell him

about the area we walked through. He jumped up from behind his desk and got a chair and asked me to sit down. Then the Colonel informed me the American Army had put up the heaviest artillery barrage in the area we walked through to get to the American lines. The artillery barrage was over a long period of time. Also, 90 percent of the casualties of the American troops were from land mines. He could hardly believe we walked through the area without setting off a land mine. From the Army Outpost I had to hitchhike to Paris to be interrogated. They had a war going on, they did not have time for a "beat up" pilot. After this interrogation, I returned to London and was interrogated again. From the London Headquarters I was able to get back to my group before returning to the United States.

In Washington, D.C., I was again interrogated at the Pentagon and new orders were cut to check in at Santa Monica, California after a 10 day furlough to visit my family. I had been reported Missing In Action (MIA). I was not sent back into combat in the European Theater. If I were to go down again and be captured, I could be tried as a spy.

The decision that Leopold and his three friends made was to serve in the Polish Unit of the British Army so they could fight the Germans. The four Polish men had to go through prisoner of war channels. This was the last time I saw Leopold but he had my home address and I learned from his letters he was wounded twice while fighting in Italy.

After the war, I was privileged to see and talk to Leopold in Chicago where he lived. It was so great that he could speak English. I always tell people the first time I met Leopold, he could speak seven languages but English was not one of them. So it was <u>good</u> to converse with him and meet his family.

WANT TO TELL YOUR STORY?

Ken Delve, the Editor of "Fly Past" magazine which is published in England, has contacted us. The 357th Fighter Group received exposure through several photos in the November issue.

Mr. Delve invites you to help him with a publication intended for later this year which will pertain to the P-51 Mustang. Any stories, anecdotes or photos would be helpful and of course they would be returned to the sender. Address:

Ken Delve, 46 Watton Road, SWAFFHAM,
Norfolk, PE37 8HF, England

Photos observed in the November issue were as follows:

G4-11 nosed up on the Raydon runway, "Old Crow", "Hurry Home Honey", Kit Carson and "Nooky Booky II", Charles Weaver and G4-A, "Big Beautiful Doll", "U've Had It".

All of the above were Merle Olmsted photos.