

MINUTES OF THE 357th FIGHTER GROUP BUSINESS MEETING

9:30 A.M. Saturday 26 September 1998

Antlers Doubletree Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO.

The room was packed with only a few empty seats. Announcements by Co-Reunion Manager, Ted Conlin as follows:

Our "Friends" member Archie Mc Lachlen painted a good sized painting of Chuck Yeager's aircraft "Glamorous Glen". The painting was generously donated to the association. "Chuck" applied his signature to the painting and it was auctioned off by silent bids. Bought by member Tom Hughes for \$250.00. Conlin also explained banquet tickets and seating arrangements for the banquet.

Board General Meeting of Members:

Presiding President, "Bud" Anderson.

Plans for future reunions discussed with definite plans for the next reunion in two years at San Antonio, TX with Frank Gailer managing.

Anticipate the following reunion in 2002 at Memphis, TN with John Bacon managing. Reunions beyond that time will be evaluated as the two year intervals approach.

Frank Aldridge of Great Britain was introduced. For the past four years, he has studied the history of the 357th Fighter Group through corresponding with members and his interest in F.O.L.A. at Leiston. A pleasure to have him travel so far to meet and speak to our gathering of members. Report made on Joe De Shay's recent surgery and his absence. Thanks expressed to both Joe and Ellen De Shay for their contribution to the daily business matters of the association.

Four new "Friends" members were approved by the Board. All P-51 owners or in process of restoring the same. Notification made that rules applying to restored aircraft owners must be observed. New "Friends" as follows:

Roger Broyles, John Turgyan, Joseph H. Thibodeau and Gene Mallette.

Frank Aldridge showed the ceramic plaque as presented to the De Shay's and other three delegates to the Leiston Airfield Dedication stating how much the English people enjoyed Joe and Ellen De Shay and thanked them for coming to the Dedication representing the association.

John Roche, a delegate to the Dedication reported on the program and the kindness received. On behalf of absent Ellen De Shay, John presented "Bud" Anderson, the pilot of the aircraft "Old Crow" with Ellen's small box containing three pebbles from the original hardstand spot where "Old Crow" was parked at Leiston during WW II. Bud requested a photo of the hardstand which he also received.

Treasurers report by Bill Overstreet:

Receipts July 1, 1997 to Sept. 30, 1998 --	\$16,638.00
Dispersements -----	18,884.00
Cash Flow, balance on hand -----	25,000.00

Nominating Committee Chairman:

Merle Olmsted presented the new proposed officers and directors as follows: All were approved.

President, Arval Roberson
 Executive Vice President, Joe De Shay
 Treasurer, Bill Overstreet
 Historian, Merle Olmsted
 Director, Claude Allen
 Director, "Bud" Anderson
 Director, "Chuck" Yeager
 Director, Carroll Ofsthun
 Director, John Warner
 Secretary, Ellen De Shay

Arval Roberson is Chairman of the Board and all others are Directors with the exception of Ellen De Shay.

Mark Stepelton reported on the Plaque and the Dedication of the same on the previous day.

Past Director Bob Prante reported 7 out of 10 living 364th Fighter Squadron Armorers in attendance.

Three vans were leased for a trip to Pikes Peak with drivers, Claude Allen, Joe Murphy and Tom Hughes.

Meeting adjourned with a well deserved STANDING OVATION for Past President "Bud" Anderson as he completed his four years in office.

Minutes compiled by Ellen De Shay

from notes recorded by Ann Stevenson in Ellen's absence.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF MEMORABILIA SENT BY VINCENT E. BUENING
 T/Sgt. Group Headquarters

I wish to commend all GPS and particularly 357th and GPS for the most outstanding escort job ever performed on 29 June 1944. No bombers were lost due to enemy aircraft. In providing protection, you destroyed 48 HUNS and damaged others. You made the enemy pay dearly for his attempt to intercept our bombers. We strive for perfection and on yesterday's mission, you made the closest approach to it under difficult conditions ever recorded. I am proud to be "THE OLD MAN" of you who carry the fight to the HUN WHEREVER YOU FIND HIM!

----- KEPNER -----

INFORMATION FROM OUR HISTORIAN

In our July 1998 Newsletter on page 18, we published a list of 357th Fighter Group men interned at the Cambridge Cemetery at Madingley, England.

Merle has told us that only two 357th F.G. men are interned there and the names on the listing preceded by WOM, indicates that the names of those men are on the WALL OF THE MISSING. Thanks Merle.

RETURN OF A MUSTANG

(over Leiston Airfield)

by Janet Everitt

ON Sunday 31st May the tranquil caravan site of Cakes and Ale became the fitting place for the Friends of Leiston Airfield memorial and dedication service.

Formerly Station 373, Leiston was a fighter escort base — home first to the 358th Fighter Group, late in 1943, then the P-51 Mustang 357th Fighter Group, who moved there from Reydon. Evidence of the airfield as main roads on the Cakes and Ale site.

Excitement mounted as the marquee was erected then during the Sunday morning, as I cycled around the site, I witnessed a microlight being assembled in the car park. Four restored American Army vehicles arrived with an outrider to complete the static display alongside the site's permanent model of a Mustang.

From two o'clock, the first notes from the Leiston Royal British Legion band attracted the crowd to the start of the ceremony. It was a rare sight to see so many people streaming along the usually quiet Harrow Lane to assemble around the memorial. Here we were treated to a flypast and display by a Mustang aircraft from the Old Flying Machine Company based at Duxford. The weather was ideal — a gentle breeze with just enough cloud cover to allow the Mustang display and hazy sunshine.

The presence of the Mustang reminded us of the skill of those young pilots whose Group earned two distinguished Unit citations whilst at Leiston — the second for one mission which destroyed over 50 aircraft.

During the speeches that followed, there were general thanks all around. We were told some of the history of the site by Tony Errington, once manager of the Long Shop Museum — now representing Friends of Leiston Airfield. The General relayed the tale of the first plane — a Fortress — which was forced to land on the site in July 1943 when the airfield was still under construction. Joe De Shay said how well he and the rest of the group of Veterans had been received then followed a heartfelt speech by Mr Frank Huxley, chairman of Leiston-Cum-Sizewell Town Council.

He reported meeting the Veterans during his voluntary duty in the town's Museum the previous day. He had been delighted to have the opportunity to show them around and especially proud to show them the display area devoted to the 357th Fighter Group.

The speeches finished with Mr Richard White — chairman of Theberton Parish Council who said that part of the airfield had been in his parish.

Personally I thought it was a lovely afternoon and well organised. My thanks must go to everyone involved, who helped to make the event such a success. I shall long remember the genuine displays of affection for the men who served at Station 373 when those who remain, were presented with plaques, similar to the ones at the memorial.

Among the assembly of 300 or so people, were a party of Veterans who had served at the base during the War. We all watched as the USAF Honour Guard took up their positions before the band played both National Anthems (United Kingdom and United States of America).

Many of us were aware as we stood in the lane beside a field of crops, we were yards from what had been Gus Clutten's home. He had kept in contact with many of the Yoxford Boys and had been the instigator in the formation of the Friends of Leiston Airfield. Sadly he had died just months before but his contribution was remembered by us that day.

Reverend Christine Brooks (Chaplain for the Air Training Corps) led the Service. After prayers and a dedication, Major General Hinton (Commander US 8th Air Force, Europe) performed the unveiling ceremony of the new memorial stone. Before the crowd dispersed, wreaths of red and yellow flowers were laid, representing the red and yellow striped spinners and red and yellow checkerboard nose markings of the Group's planes.

We joined the others for a gentle stroll across to the Clubhouse. Here we were able to sit and relax, listening to the band's excellent repertoire of the era and enjoying the refreshments, provided by the Friends of Leiston Airfield.

The above newspaper article was taken from the "Community News" of Leiston, Saxmundham, Aldeburgh and District. Brian Boulton sent it to us because of the excellent description of the Dedication of the Airfield Memorial. We have enlarged the print and re-arranged the article for spacing reasons.

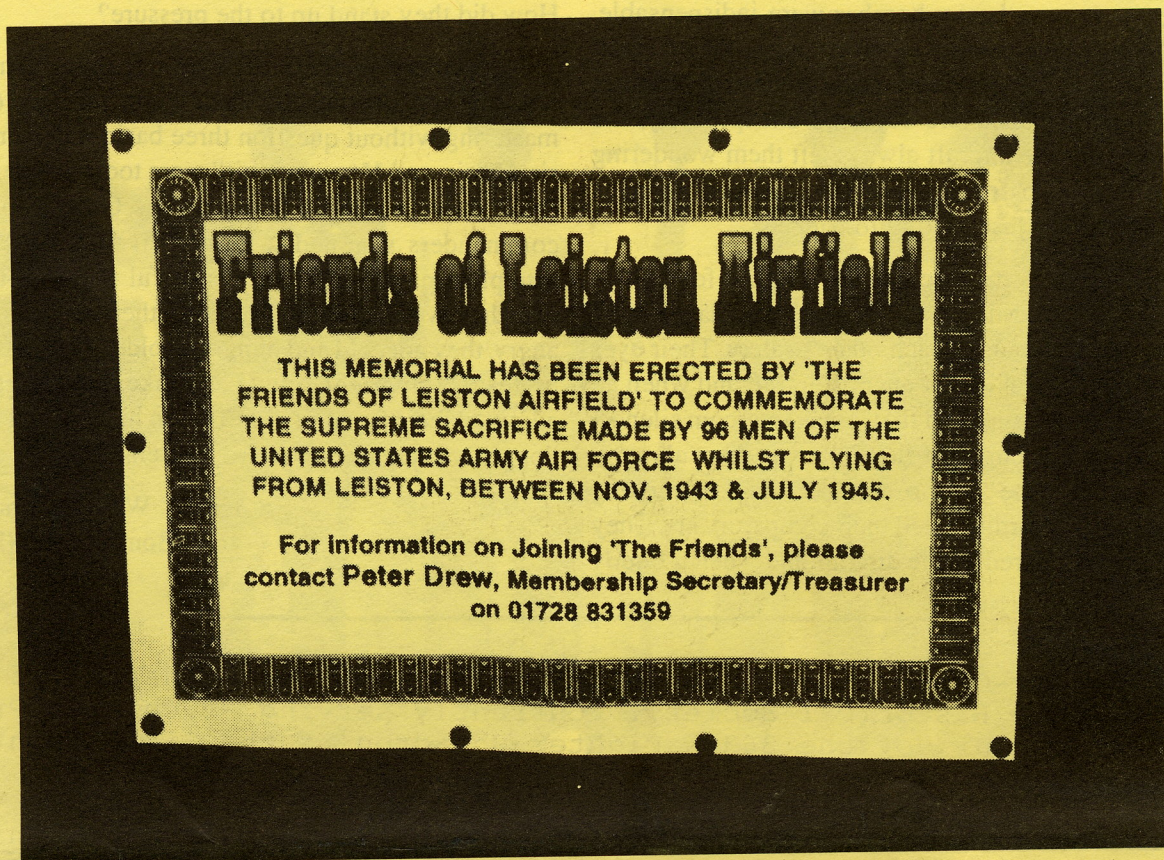


photo- John Goodey

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