

# “MILK RUN”

Oregon Chapter 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society News Update  
December, 2008



February 2009 Meeting is **February 7**. 10 AM till 2 PM.

## History News

*Readers, where's your story?*

### DIARY OF DELIVERY

**(Clint Gruber was a POW for 18 months at Stalag Luft One in Germany during WW2. One of his roommates at the camp for the remainder of the war was Lt Charles Early, pilot of a B17 in the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group. Both Early and Clint were shot down on the same mission, to Solingen in the Ruhr Valley, on 1 December 1943.**

**Lt Early kept a very complete journal during his confinement. Thanks to his son, Gary Early, for permission to print Lt Early's "Diary of Delivery", his vivid word picture, of the final couple of weeks at Stalag One.)**

April 20, 1945: Adolph Hitler's birthday. Am told by the Germans that there has been great celebrations among the populace. Most flattering, a salute rendered by the Russians who laid down an artillery barrage from 0200 to 0800, somewhere within hearing distance of here—Stettin, most likely.

Later in the week: Russians have reached Berlin, and are advancing into the city in their best steam roller fashion. Hitler is reported to be in the front lines of the city's defenses, so the fall of Berlin will probably bring the end of the war.

April 25: Heavy artillery fire from the south at 2045, continuing at intervals through the night. FW190s and ME109s at the airfield at Barth—tactical aircraft, so the front must not be very far away. We estimate 40-50 miles, from the sound of the firing.

April 29: Short air raid at 1240. Guns sound louder. Saw our first Feiseler "Storch", a reconnaissance aircraft used for artillery spotting.

April 30: This morning we started walking guard in the compound. I will have a squad as soon as we take over. Col. Zemke came over and started the boys digging foxholes. Himmler is reported to have his headquarters just across the bay. Goering with him. Hitler has died in Berlin. All the planes are leaving the airfield, and demolition has commenced.

German Intelligence department has left. Barth is being evacuated. Russians reported 20 to 25 miles away, driving like mad. We can see smoke from the airfield.

April 30: 1600. The Germans are blowing up the installations at the Flak School by the South Compound, also the factory west of there. The demolitions get louder and occur at more frequent intervals. It gives one a rather queer feeling to see Germany fall to pieces before one's eyes. Rumors are flying around so fast that I can't keep up with them. Several

Russian pilots were shot down at Stralsund and were brought to this camp. They say that Joe will be here tonight. I shall not undress. All lights went out about 2300.

May 1: 17 months a prisoner today. Very fitting that I should be awakened this morning at 0500 by the fellows raising a hell of a racket. Looked out the window, and there are American guards in the towers. It leaves me a little numb. I just can't believe it.

Seems that the Germans stole silently away last night under cover of darkness. So, after all the talking and planning, we have finally taken over the camp. Now we wonder when the Russians will arrive. Major Blum and Col. Sluga came over about 0500 and shot the bull a bit. Everybody very excited! Wonder where the Kommandant and his staff went, and if Himmler is still on the peninsula. Know that, in the future when I read this, I shall be appalled at its coherency, but things have happened so damned fast that my head is spinning...more than somewhat. Now that it is practically over and I look back on the whole period, I find that it has not seemed so terrible. Of course, the months of the famine when we had no food or cigarettes were pretty grim, but usually we had enough food, and with a wonderful cook like Trubia we really ate quite well. Our bridge sessions with Col Sluga and Major Blum have been a lot of fun, as have our crazy discussions.

I believe that I am a more mature, level-headed person, and far more fitted to tackle life in the future. Underneath all the joy, however, lies a feeling of sadness at the thought that I may never again see the fellows that I've lived with and scrapped with for over a year. What a hell of a good bunch here in my room.

May 1: 0830. Listening to British Broadcasting Corporation on the barracks speakers. How wonderful it is to hear English spoken instead of the old harsh German! Col Zemke made a short talk. We're taking over the camp today.

This afternoon we're passing through another low feeling...an anti-climax. All sorts of wild rumors have been going around. Russians are 3 kilometers away. Burgermeister commits suicide.

10:20, or 2220, as you like. A damned historic moment. The Russians have really arrived!! The camp has gone mad. The main body is reported to be four or five hours away. German radio announced the death of Hitler...at long last. Listened to BBC again. They played the Star Spangled Banner. My God, what a moment! All the men came out of their rooms and stood at attention in the hall, tears running down their faces, some of them sobbing. More important goings-on should take place tomorrow. I'm dead!

Did I say the Russians arrived? My God, they took over the place! In order to keep us from roaming all over the peninsula, the American Senior Officers have locked the place up tighter than it ever was. A mistake, I'm afraid. The fences were torn down today on orders from a Russian who said he was a Colonel. He raised a hell of a row about us being locked up and brandished a pistol more than somewhat. (He was later exposed as a corporal). We all went barreling across the fields to Barth to see what the place looked like at close range. The Russians greeted us wildly, and wine actually

flowed in the streets. They have tanks drawn up in the square, have taken all automobiles, horses, etc, and there is great activity.

The populace looks quite different that it did when we arrived here a year and a half ago. There are reports of looting and rape by the Russians, but rape seems a little on the order of wasted effort, as the frauleins are most generous. The village people seem to be glad that we're here. After seeing the Russians!

Visited the concentration camp, which will forever remain in my memory as the most horrible sight I have ever seen! The place was surrounded by electrically charged wire, and inside were freshly dug graves which the inmates had prepared for some of the more fragrant inmates. The filth in the living quarters was indescribable. The floor and walls were covered with human offal, and over the whole place hung a sickish sweet odor....an odor which I have never before smelled, but which is instinctively recognized as death. And, indeed, the place was filled with death. We went into rooms where all the inmates were dead. Sitting up in chairs, sprawled on their bunks, or crumpled on the floor....starved to death. Not 1,000 feet away was the post hospital, a beautiful establishment with very modern medical aid, but it was denied to these poor wretches. I talked with some of the Frenchmen who had been here for years (I found it very difficult to speak French without lapsing into German every now and then). We brought the helpless ones out and carried them to the hospital where they were bathed and put into clean beds, and treatment began. Many of them are too far gone, however, to save. The most shocking thing was the number of women there.

May 10: The Russians have rounded up the cattle of the area and have driven 150 Holstein cows into our camp. We're eating steaks!! Ah, luxury!  
We still don't know when the Americans are coming for us. It's been 10 days since we were freed, and still they haven't come.

May 13: They've come!!! Started arriving at 2:00 PM today. My old Group, the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group was the 1<sup>st</sup> to arrive. Have found that I will leave tomorrow.

May 14: Rheims, France. At last, it has happened. I am out of Germany. We marched from camp this morning, through Barth to the airdrome, and were flown here. We came over the Ruhr. I don't believe it! Huge cities like Essen, Dusseldorf, etc. can't be so completely annihilated. It's numbing!

We will go from here tomorrow to a camp called, of all things, "Camp Lucky Strike", which is at St Valery en Caux, between Le Havre and Dieppe. We expect to ship from Le Havre and go straight to New York.....and then home!!!

That is all. Over and out.

**“. . . Sunday December 7, 1941, a date that will live in infamy.”**

The above is the famous quote from President Roosevelt address to Congress on December 8, 1941, asking Congress to declare war on the Empire of Japan.

A joint Resolution of Congress declared war on Germany on December 11, because Germany (Hitler) deliberated for three days before declaring war on the USA on

December 10. Germany / Italy were NOT obligated to declare against the USA since Japan was not attacked by the USA but instead attacked the USA.



This photo was taken by one of the Japanese planes at the start of the attack on Pearl Harbor. One of the first torpedoes to hit battleship row can be seen as well as a "Kate" torpedo bomber silhouetted against the water. All but a few photos, and movies, that were taken during the attack by Japanese aircrew were lost since they were all stored on the Japanese carrier Akagi -- and it was sunk with three other carriers at the Battle of Midway June 4-6, 1942.

This year, December 7, actually falls on a Sunday. This means that if you change the year from 2008 to 1941 the calendars match, as does all the next four years to the same dates of events that occurred during World War II.

## Ex WWII Fighter Pilot Writes New Novel

"The Hellish Vortex: Between Breakfast and Dinner" is a novel about the Eighth Air Force's aerial combat of World War II by retired U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Richard M. Baughn. General Baughn trained in P-40s Warhawks (B/C models) and flew P-51 Mustangs when stationed with the 8th Air Force. He also had two combat tours in Vietnam.

"Baughn found that 41,802 airmen were killed from a force of about 100,000 pilots, navigators, bombardiers and aerial gunners. By comparison, the entire U.S. Navy, 3.3

million strong, lost less than 37,000 during WWII and less than 20,000 Marines were killed from a total force of over 475,000."

The statistics are for world wide USA losses during the war – not just in the ETO.

Via Amazon "[The Hellish Vortex](#)" for \$20.99.

[View the press release.](#)

## **Old Newspaper Clippings – A Great Research Source**

In the [Huntsville Times](#) there is an article that says in part ""Jesse O. Wikle in Africa Flight - Madison Boy is Pilot of 'Flaming Mayme,' Account of AP Reveals. Lieutenant Jesse O. Wikle Jr., son of Dr. and Mrs. J.O. Wikle of Madison, is the first Madison County boy to have the distinction of participating in the battle for Tunisia. He has been in foreign service approximately six months, most of it in England." The local press officer was in each unit and they were constantly writing articles to get published in hometown newspapers, but in this case it was an AP writer who created this.

This single paragraph, knowing what we know now, means that he was part of the B-17s groups that went to North Africa from the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force – and was in one of the groups that stayed there (97<sup>th</sup> BG (H) perhaps) and formed the 12<sup>th</sup> AF (later the bombers were re-assigned to create the 15<sup>th</sup> AF) while the other BGs returned to Britain.

This article cites other reference sources such as the US Census to fill in details about the people mentioned in the articles. If you are doing research, an article like this helps you learn how to perform research.

## **Pearson Post Exchange to Close – was the 1<sup>st</sup> one in the US Army**

Pearson Army base had the first official Post Canteen – at it was first called. Later on with General Army Order number 56 it was renamed into the Post Exchange and the canteen = bar – and the selling of goods was split into different buildings. This was inspired by the British model.

Brief history of the US PX system at:

<http://www.aafes.com/pa/history/docs/BriefHistory.pdf>

## **The Whole Nine Yards**

A number of theories as to the origin of the phrase "Whole Nine Yards" have been spoken of in the past and honestly, we may never know for certain which one, if any, should be considered as the actual source.

Some believe that the phrase may first have come into use in medieval times when convicts were tortured to death as a means of punishment. As you may already know there was a multitude of creative, yet unsavory means of torture employed in those

days and one of the most feared was disembowelment. Depending upon one's crimes, of course, one might simply have been eviscerated and left for dead, but in response to especially heinous crimes the bowels were strewn about while the living victim writhed in pain. Since the intestines are believed to be roughly 27 feet long, the phrase "whole nine yards" referred to the complete disembowelment of the victim and the most severe punishment a person could face.

Others contend that the phrase came into use during the reign of King Henry VIII when the church declared that bodies were to be buried in graves that were of a minimum depth. If two family members were being buried at one, as was not uncommon in the days due to the rampant contagious diseases, a grave at least 6 feet long, 6 feet wide and 6 feet 9 inches deep was required. These measurements surpassed the Church's minimum requirements by nine inches in depth. Among gravediggers, this became known as "the whole nine yards" as they were required to remove roughly 9 cubic feet of material, as opposed to the removal of substantially less for only one coffin.

Still others prefer to believe these origins:

Nine yards is believed to be the amount of material need to create a nun's habit, or as some would claim, a man's three-piece suit. Nine yards is the length of a maharajah's ceremonial sash, the maximum capacity of a West Virginia ore wagon, the volume of trash that a standard garbage truck can carry, the entire length of a hangman's noose, the distance you would have to run from a cell block to the outer wall in order to survive a jail break, the actual length of a standard bolt of cloth, the length of a burial shroud, the size of a soldier's backpack, the length of cloth needed to make a kilt, the number of yards in a ships sails, or that nine yards refers to some memorable event in the game of American football (that no one seems to recall specifically).

There are, of course, many others that I have not mentioned and you can recreate my search strategy to find dozens more. My favorite, and frankly the most plausible modern explanation, comes from the more recent 1940's, when, as you know, American culture was rife with slang and "old sayings", many of which originated from World War II military vernacular. As the explanation goes, the phrase "the whole nine yards" first gained fame among fighter pilots who employed the use of .50 caliber machine guns onboard their planes. The gun belt for this weapon is said to have been exactly 27 feet long, so if a pilot was really determined to hit a specific target he might completely discharge his weapon in the enemy's direction, thus giving his enemy "the whole nine yards".

Tom Davis (Oregon member 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS)

### ***“Milk Run” Definition***

Milk Run: noun, uneventful routine. Slang for an “easy mission”. A combat mission where you attack the enemy and get credit for a successful mission toward your tour total but no enemy fighters, nor any effective anti-aircraft guns, are expected to be firing at you. Word origin based upon the routine nature of delivering milk every morning to people in the US in the 1920s. First referenced in print in 1925. See “cake walk”. Antonym of Schweinfurt.

## Local Chapter News and Groups

### **John Horne 1923-2008**



Past chapter President John Horne died on November 18 at the age of 85. S/Sgt Horne flew 44 missions as a tail gunner in the 790 BS of the 467 BG during his tour with the 8<sup>th</sup> and was awarded the DFC – Distinguished Flying Cross - as one of his many awards.

John was President of the Oregon Chapter 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS from 2002 thru 2003.

### **Chapter Membership Annual Renewal**

Reminder that the annual \$10 chapter dues should be sent to our new Treasurer Sharon Campbell, PO Box 275 Beavercreek, Oregon 97004-0276. Any amount above the \$10 is tax deductible. We also have new officers for the coming year: President Bert Campbell; Vice President Charles Gallagher.

### **Pearson Air Museum**

December 13 – Santa in a plane -- have your kid's photo taken in one of Pearson's aircraft between 10 AM to 2 PM.

### **Old Bold Pilots Club**

Meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month from 12 Noon till when people leave. Meetings are at The Village Inn Restaurant; 17070 SW 72nd Tigard right at Lower Boons Ferry Road and I-5 on the west side of I-5 at Exit 290.

### **ANA – Association of Naval Aviators**

Meetings are the last Thursday of each month at the Elks Lodge next to Gateway Transit Center. 711 NE 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland, Oregon. Meeting is from 11:30 till around 2 PM.

Contact Ltc George Bickford (Ret) at 503-789-8061. e-mail: bick @ teleport.com  
Mailing address: Flying Beaver Squadron; PO Box 432; Clackamas, Oregon 97015-0432

### **Southern Oregon Warbirds Association**

If you live in southern Oregon you can meet x-aviation personnel at the Southern Oregon Warbirds Association (SOWA) <http://www.southernoregonwarbirds.org>.  
Meeting location: New Life Christian Center, 1723 NE Vine Street, Roseburg, Or 97470.  
POC: Elmer L Giles, 102 Shadow Ranch lane, Roseburg OR 97470 Cell phone 541 430 4165. Dues \$10 a year.

### **Aviation Breakfast Club**

This is the Walt Bohrer Chapter and they meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month (except Easter and Mother's Day) from 10 AM till 12 Noon at various places now that their long time meeting place shut down. Call for details: 503-254-5555; e-mail: aviationclub @ aol.com

### ***Need to do Photo or Video research?***

You are free to go over to and talk, learn, and do photo, movie, and audio research at:  
The National Combat History Archive  
5801 NW Cornelius Pass Road  
Hillsboro, OR. 97124  
TEL: +(1) (503) 597-7030  
FAX: +(1) (503) 597-7037  
EMAIL: Gary Mortensen [grmortensen@militarylibrary.net](mailto:grmortensen@militarylibrary.net)

### **Contact Information E-mail and Postal**

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