

FRANK

Nov. 13, 2003

June 1, 2003

Re: "Memories of the 8th Air Force" Project

To: Chapter Members who Contributed Articles

We now have stories, records, pictures, tapes etc from 31 members. Some are short and some are long. All are gold mines of historical information.

The Board of Directors has decided to retain these stories in the Chapter Records as long as the Chapter is active. The Board has not determined on a final disposition if the Chapter ever deactivates.

Until that time, rather than have them gathering dust in a file cabinet, it has been proposed that they be available for members to review at the meetings. It has also been suggested that our members be able to check them out to read and return at the next meeting.

However, to do this we need your authorization. Please review these options and circle the one that would be most comfortable for you.

Option # 1 0. K. to check out to anyone. 0. K to make copies.

Option # 2 0. K to check out but with the stipulation that no one makes any copies.

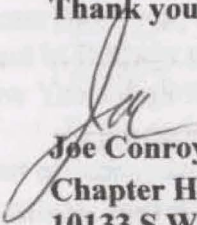
Option # 3 0. K. to check out, however, the member must first obtain permission directly from the story author. If approved, the author should advise whether or not it could be copied.

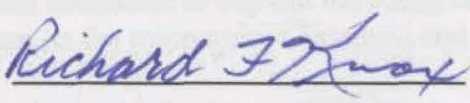
Option # 4 No, not to be checked out to anyone.

Please sign below and use the enclosed addressed envelope to return your choice.

That in NO case is permission granted to republish your material for profit or otherwise.

Thank you for your cooperation


Joe Conroy
Chapter Historian
10133 S.W. 61 AV
Portland, OR 97219
503-246-2912



Signature

Phone # 503-723-9004

Eighth Air Force Historical Society -- Oregon Chapter

Chronological Record of Assignment to 95th Bombardment Group (H)

LTC Richard Franklin Knox, Air Corps Reserve (Retired)

When the draft was instituted in 1938, I was a student at Central Washington College of Education in Ellensburg. My chemistry professor, a reserve officer in the Army Chemical Corps, suggested to me that I apply for the Air Corps Reserve. I followed his advice, submitted my application, was scheduled for physical examination at McChord Field, WA, and was subsequently instructed to wait for the next available class at Scott Field, Belleville, IL. Because my physical tests showed a lack of depth perception I did not qualify for flight training, and was relegated to Communications Cadet status.

Having completed eleven quarters of college work and expecting an immediate call to military service, I elected to forego enrollment in fall quarter of 1941. Instead I spent two months visiting relatives in eastern Montana and returned to Ellensburg a few days before Sunday, December 7. My college chum and I were anxious to respond to the clarion call and applied for work at Boeing Airplane Company until Uncle Sam should call our numbers.

Subsequent to Pearl Harbor, the length of the Cadet class was reduced from ten months to five months. I was enrolled as a Communications Cadet on January 15, 1942, and graduated on May 15, 1942. Half of our class was assigned to Radar School in Orlando, FL, for the next thirty days. Effective July 1, 1942, I was sent to Geiger Field, Spokane, WA, for training in the field. In October I was assigned to the 95th Bomb Group as Group Communications Officer.

Our first station assignment was to a base under construction at Ephrata, WA. Our Group Commander, Col. A. A. Kessler, used his rank to get the group transferred back to Geiger Field where we remained until after Thanksgiving. Because the foggy weather at Geiger hampered the air crews from conducting their training, Col. Kessler arranged our transfer to Ellsworth Field at Rapid City, South Dakota, before Christmas. Air crews flew their planes directly, but ground personnel were moved by train. The Ground Executive, LTC Covington was the unit commander for the move, but upon our departure from Spokane he retired to his compartment and put me, a 22-year-old Second Lt, in charge of the train.

Our route took us from Spokane on the Great Northern Railroad to Great Falls, MT, where we switched to the Northern Pacific via Billings, MT, Sheridan, WY, and Scotts Bluff, NE, to Rapid City. I arranged through the conductor to buy out the candy bar stand in Billings and then sold the candy to the airmen on the troop train. Christmas and New Years days were celebrated in Rapid City.

In the spring of 1943, our 95th Bomb Group was alerted for overseas shipment. Four officers, namely: Ground Executive LTC Lester E. Burt; S-2 Officer Major "Jiggs" Donahue; Operations Officer Capt. Clifford E. Cole; and myself, Group Communications Officer, 2nd Lt. R. F. Knox; were dispatched as the advance party to our yet-unknown destination. Orders directed us to Atlantic City, New Jersey, where we were housed in

one of the hotels near the Boardwalk. Daily after breakfast we spent two hours on the Boardwalk for our exercise regimen. After lunch we four retired to our suite and played four-handed (partners) cribbage until time for dinner. In general, our evenings were spent in a similar manner. After about three weeks in Atlantic City, we received orders transferring us to Camp Kilmer which was a staging area. If a unit was not alerted for shipment, half of the unit could be issued an overnight pass. We paired up with LTC Burt and Major Donahue together, and we junior officers as the other pair. We took turns going in to New York City for the night clubs and theatres. After a couple more weeks of this, the senior officers made a trip to the Pentagon and a General's office. Within 48 hours we were in New York for a flight in a DC-6 out of LaGuardia, via Gander, NF, and Prestwick, Scotland, to London, England.

Our advance party was attached to the 92nd Bomb Group at Alconbury. Upon our arrival we discovered that our air crews had arrived there before us. Their route had taken them from Rapid City to Florida, to the easternmost tip of Brazil, to the westernmost tip of Africa, thence to Alconbury. The air crews continued their indoctrination with those of the 92nd while we awaited the arrival of ground personnel which traveled by boat. While attached to the 92nd, our group suffered a serious accident which resulted in loss of life as well as destruction of at least two planes. Armament and radio personnel were lost when the bomb load was detonated aboard one plane. The other plane sharing the one hardstand was rendered useless.

Framlingham in Suffolk, was our first station assignment in East Anglia. Because our bases were on British soil, the telephone and radio systems were installed by the Post Office and we supplied the personnel to operate them. It was therefore appropriate to put Squadron Communications Officers in charge of operations used by personnel from all squadrons. One Squadron officer was in charge of radio training, another had oversight of radio maintenance, another responsible for land-line communications, a fourth officer became Assistant Group Communications Officer. My job was to oversee all such operations and to be responsible for briefing flight crews (usually the Navigator) on all radio aids to navigation. The radio direction finder (RDF) station was manned by RAF personnel who lived at the station near the main runway. I was responsible for including the status of the RDF in my monthly report to higher headquarters. Subsequent to briefing the crews for the mission of the day, ground personnel involved went to breakfast at the combat mess, then to our quarters for a few hours of sleep prior to the return and debriefing of the combat crews. It was a time of anxiety and trepidation as the returning planes began to appear on the horizon and enter the landing pattern. Planes with wounded airmen aboard were given priority for landing and met by ambulance on the perimeter near the runway in use.

A reorganization of the 8th Air Force prompted our move to Horham, near Diss, in Norfolk, and our assignment to the 13th Combat Wing, along with the 100th Bomb Group near Eye, and the 390th which replaced us at Framlingham. During the course of my twenty-five month stay in the United Kingdom, the 95th Bomb Group personnel celebrated with a One-Hundredth Mission Party, a Two-Hundredth Mission Party, and even a Three-Hundredth Mission party. The 95th was awarded three Presidential Citations, the third citation for being the first combat group to bomb Berlin. Certain missions stand out in memory among the three hundred-plus sorties flown by our

aircrews; suffice it to name a few such as Augsburg, Schweinfurt, Wilhelmshaven, Magdeburg, Regensburg, Osnabruck, and Nurenburg.

Aircrews were given rest and recuperation (R & R) time off, ground personnel took liberty as individual assignments permitted. One weekend four officers including myself rode the London & Northeastern Railway (LNER) from Diss to London. One highlight of the weekend was an afternoon at Madam Toussaud's Wax Museum. Theatres and nightclubs were popular. Lodging was available through the USO facilities.

During the summer of 1944, the Eighth Air Force conducted three shuttle missions. Our Group participated in two of them. Selected ground personnel were taken along to brief the crews for the next leg. I was assigned as Communications Officer and found myself riding in the nose with the navigator and bombardier. Two wings of B-17s, and a wing of fighters were consigned to three bases near the German front in Russia. That night German night fighters hit the fighter base and the near-by bomber base and left nearly a hundred combat planes in shambles. The next day our wing of bombers was flown from the third base to a more remote location near Karkhoff. Our second leg took us from Russia, through the Ploesti oilfields, and on to bases of the 15th Air Force near Foggia, Italy. Weather in England kept us in Italy over Independence Day, and on our return leg we bombed the harbor of Marsailles, France.

Our second shuttle mission occurred in August. On this flight I was assigned as tail gunner. The Luftwaffe had been knocked out of the skies, so I did not charge my guns on the entire trip. Again we bombed in Germany, landed near Poltava, bombed the oil fields, and landed near Foggia. Because southern France had been liberated there were no targets to bomb on the return leg. All told, we had completed five bombing runs on the two shuttle missions, so all we ground personnel were awarded the Air Medal for our efforts.

At the time of V-E Day, I was at an RAF base and enrolled in a class on radio countermeasures. The base was promptly closed down and everyone set out the celebration going on in London and elsewhere. Within two weeks of V-E Day, I became part of a contingent of technical officers headed back to the states for retraining to go to the Pacific theatre of operations. I was flown from England to Wales, to Iceland, to Goose Bay, Labrador, and to Presque Isle, Maine, in the belly of a B-24. (It had recently arrived in England and was never flown in combat!)

863rd

N

MC COMB, John S, Jr., O-700168

MISSION REPORT

<u>NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
1.	20 Jun 44	L'Hey, Fr.	16.	7 Aug 44	Givet, Belg
2.	22 Jun 44	Etamps, Fr.	17.	10 Aug 44	St Florentin, Fr
3.	23 Jun 44	Coulommiers, Fr	18.	13 Aug 44	Ground Support, Ft
4.	25 Jun 44	Avord, Fr.	19.	14 Aug 44	Anguleme, Fr
5.	29 Jun 44	Fallersleben, Ger	20.	10 Sep 44	Eurth, Ger
6.	8 Jul 44	St. Saens, Fr.	21.	11 Sep 44	Eulda, Ger
7.	14 Jul 44	Montdidier, Fr.	22.	13 Sep 44	Ludwigshafen, Ger
8.	18 Jul 44	Caen, Fr.	23.	17 Sep 44	Flak Install, Hol
9.	20 Jul 44	Russelshaim, Ger.	24.	22 Sep 44	Kassel, Ger.
10.	24 Jul 44	Le Mensil Eury, Fr	25.	26 Sep 44	Bremen Ger
11.	25 Jul 44	St. Lo, Fr	26.	30 Sep 44	Bielefeld, Ger
12.	31 Jul 44	Creil, Fr	27.	2 Oct 44	Kassel, Ger
13.	1 Aug 44	Quincampoix, Fr	28.	5 Oct 44	Munster, Ger
14.	3 Aug 44	Brussels, Belg	29.	7 Oct 44	Merseburg, Ger
15.	5 Aug 44	Halberstadt, Ger	30.	9 Oct 44	Gustavsburg, Ger
			31.	14 Oct 44	Cologne, Germany
			32.	16 Nov 44	Duren, Ger (ground support)
			33.	21 Nov 44	Merseburg, Germany

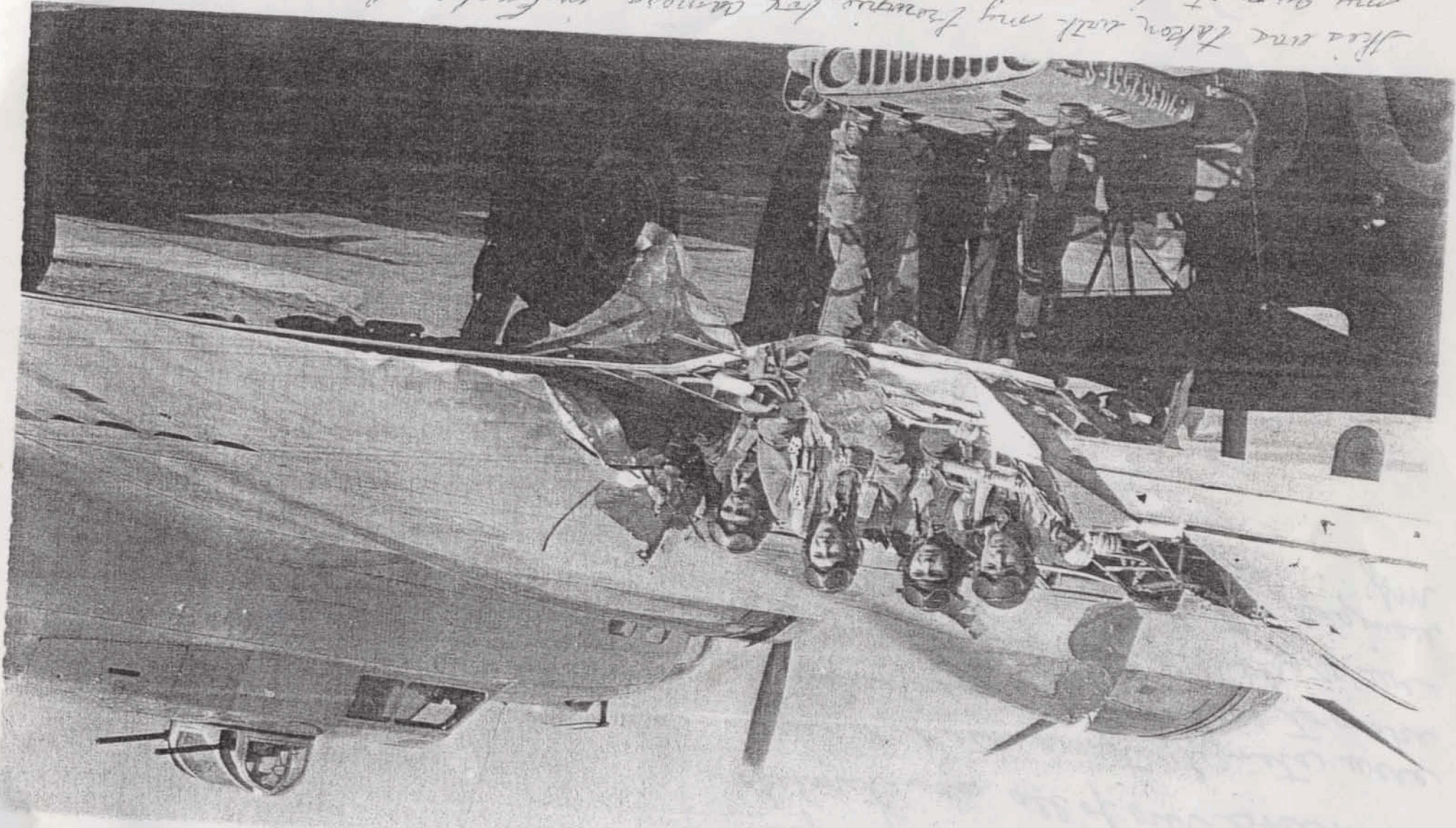
From JSM
3-24-03

(over)



24 Nov 1944

The 4 Kitchener boys in the world. The backbone of
This force is the ^{near} side of the wing gas-tank. No records
This and over 300 other holes in the aircraft above on 13 Sept 44 over
Fürstengraben, Germany. Picture taken at Debach, England



Here are taken with my former box camera in England and developed in
my guest darkness and printed in ~~the~~ ^{SEP} 1944, by "Standard", just
had this enlarged in a local letter size printer.
(1/15/44)

* There were more than 300 holes in skin of plane. One pellet hit my helmet which probably saved my life. I do not have the metal helmet as all of our loose metal guns, flack vests, helmets were tossed into North Sea to make plane as light as possible; so we could get back on two engines. jsm

~~54318~~ AC .. "RUM RUNNER" RETURNS FROM ATTACK

ON LUDWIGSHAVEN....When crewmen on this 8th Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress, returning from an attack on the chemical plant at Ludwigshaven, told intelligence officers that flak had made a hole in the plane's wing big enough for four men to stand in, they were not exaggerating. Here the four officers who brought the plane that was mangled by the German's anti-aircraft defenses, stand inside the torn wing. L to R - 1st. Lt. Roy J. Murphy, 104 S. 53rd St., Omaha, Neb., pilot; 2nd Lt Norman M. Tesch, Lake Mills, Wisc., co-pilot; 1st. Lt. John S. McComb, Jr., 427 Bell Ave., Sheboygan, Wisc., navigator; 1st Lt Donald L. McKenna, Onieda, N.Y., bombardier.

~~54318~~ PHOTO

My BROWNIE Box Camera