Five Years for Freedom

... My Memories of the U.S. Army Air Corps, 1940-1945

Staff Sergeant William J. Bodenschatz
384th Bombardment Group (H)
443rd Sub-Depot Ground Support
World War II
ON THE COVER

“Mad Money II 25838,” a B-17 of the 384th Bomb Group (H), was lost to flak on Jan. 4, 1944, on the 384th’s 50th mission, a bombing run to Kiel, Germany.

Of the crew of 10, one fell from the plane and survived by parachute, the remaining nine belly-landed in Denmark and set the plane on fire.

All were captured by the Germans, becoming POWs for the remainder of the war.

The badges:

Top left: US Army Air Force
Top right: 8th Air Corps, U.S. Army
Center: 384th Bombardment Group (H)
Bottom left: 443rd Sub-Depot of the 384th (H)
Bottom right: 6th Service Squadron

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Staff Sergeant William J. Bodenschatz
Sent home with a Valentine’s Day Card to V. Lucile George, 1944

Photo by Helen M. Speight, Kettering, England
About These Memories

How does a surviving physical collection of memories get preserved and shared with all generations of an extended family, especially from such an important time in history?

This book is intended to share the box of photos, documents and memorabilia kept all of these years, so the memories can be appreciated by everyone. The short storyline is meant to fill in the gaps, and pass along some verbal stories told by Dad over the years.

This is not meant to be a history of the war or of the Army Air Corp. Your independent readings can satisfy that thirst. In a sense, this is a diary of Dad’s five years of experiences for us all to cherish, and anyone else who is interested in the Greatest Generation’s service to their country.

Rick Bodenschatz, Son

Editor’s Note:

Where possible, this story is told in the first person by S/Sgt. Bodenschatz, through memories he shared and his written notes.

All photo captions are as he recorded on the back of each photo.

Many of the details originate from Bill’s military diary, “My Life in the Service.”
# Contents

Forward ........................................................................................................ ii
My Time Line .............................................................................................. iii
Commendations ......................................................................................... iv

1. Early Influences .................................................................................. 1
2. Enlistment .......................................................................................... 11
3. Langley Field, Virginia ....................................................................... 13
4. The War .............................................................................................. 27
5. Muroc Air Field, California ................................................................. 29
6. Wilmington Air Base, North Carolina .................................................. 41
7. Hattiesburg Air Field, Mississippi ....................................................... 61
8. It’s Time to Go ..................................................................................... 77
9. Grafton Underwood, England .............................................................. 79
10. Combat .............................................................................................. 91
11. The Plane News ................................................................................ 105
12. Rest & Relaxation ............................................................................. 109
13. Victory .............................................................................................. 119
14. Moving to France ............................................................................ 127
15. Buddies, Friends and Comrades ....................................................... 129
16. Going Home and Discharge ............................................................... 133
17. After the War ................................................................................... 143
18. Leftovers .......................................................................................... 157
19. Postscript ........................................................................................ 159
20. Debriefing ......................................................................................... 165
Sources ...................................................................................................... 166
Forward

I was told that I was born on January 14, 1917 at home, located at 602 Willow Street, Lilly, Pennsylvania. My parents were Michael and Annie (Beck) Bodenschatz. Lilly is a small town in the Alleghany Mountains located between Altoona and Johnstown. Coal mining was the major industry of the day, supporting a population that climbed at one point to almost 3,500 people within the town and Washington Township surrounding Lilly. The bustling four tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad (Philadelphia to Chicago) ran through the town.

My father worked for the railroad as a ticket and mail agent, shifting location assignments as demands of the Great Depression changed. I had seven older sisters and one younger brother.

My youth was uneventful, doing all the normal things—attending school on a regular basis, helping with the family garden especially during the Great Depression, playing baseball, setting pins at the bowling alley and any other odd-jobs I could find.

A bad case of pneumonia curtailed my activities and delayed life for a while, as I was hospitalized, even having to have a rib removed to help with the breathing and to aid in the battle. I missed a year of school and it prevented further involvement in physical activities, so I stayed involved by being the Student Manager of our high school football team. I gradually brought my physical capabilities back to normal.

But enough, since I understand my family story is to be told another day. Instead, I am focusing on my military years in this book. I have fond memories of my time in the military from 1940 to 1945. Many friends and acquaintances were lost by accident from the very beginning and while we were together with the 384th Bomb Group in England during World War II. And being away from home “for the duration” caused some sad days. Fortunately, my positive experiences and friendships helped to counterbalance the tough times, even into the later years.

This book contains my collection of photographs, documents and personal memorabilia of my military years. Pre- and Post-military materials are shared for a better understanding of how and why those transitions occurred, as related to my five years of service. My brief narratives provide further explanations in support of my collection while additional information through editing has been provided for overview. Although I departed life in 2004, I tell my story through my “collection” and stories shared with my family.

Bill

My Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July, 1936</td>
<td>Civilian Military Training Camp, Fort Meade, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 29, 1940</td>
<td>My enlistment into the U.S. Army Air Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 29, 1940-December 12, 1941</td>
<td>Stationed at Langley Field, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 7, 1941</td>
<td>Japanese Attack of Pearl Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2018</td>
<td>Ordered for Immediate Departure to the West Coast (December 13th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18, 1941</td>
<td>Arrived Muroc Air Base, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 1942</td>
<td>Arrived Wilmington Air Base, North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 19, 1942</td>
<td>Arrived Hattiesburg Army Air Field, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 25, 1942</td>
<td>Departed Hattiesburg for Camp Kilmer, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 27, 1942</td>
<td>Arrived Camp Kilmer, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 5, 1943</td>
<td>Departed Camp Kilmer to Brooklyn, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 1943</td>
<td>Departed Brooklyn for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14, 1943</td>
<td>Arrived Gurick, Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 1943</td>
<td>Arrived Station 106, 384th Bomb Group Grafton Underwood, Northamptonshire, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8, 1945</td>
<td>VE Day (Victory in Europe), Nazi’s Surrender!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 1945</td>
<td>Departed Grafton Underwood for Istress, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-October, 1945</td>
<td>Arrived in 3 hours, 25 minutes on a B-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 20, 1945</td>
<td>Return to England for transport to the States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31, 1945</td>
<td>Departed England for Home, arrived Oct. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31, 1945</td>
<td>Honorable Discharged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I.

Early Influences

Childhood and adolescence life are influenced by so many factors ... family, school, church, community, social life and global affairs. As a teenager during the 1930s I was tuned into the radio — music, baseball games and the news. My father was an avid reader of the daily newspaper. Knowledge and impressions grew with me.

Our community and its social conscience had an impact. Celebrations on Decoration Day, 4th of July and Armistice Day formed a patriotic sense of pride and duty in our young lives. I watched Civil War, Spanish American War and The Great War veterans march in our local parades. And I heard my uncles and neighbors speak of the trenches and heroics of their experiences in Europe. With the simple, small town life of the 1920s and 1930s, it was not difficult to be influenced by service to our country.

We all remember the less than easy life during the Great Depression. One respite was the Civilian Military Training Camps held annually at about 50 military posts around the country. Each summer for one month, male youths were able to obtain basic military training to experience military life without any further obligations for duty. My good friend, Paul Dougherty, inspired me when he sent this photo and a postcard to me.

![Paul Dougherty (center X) July 1935, Civilian Military Training Camp, Fort Meade, MD](image-url)
Wow! A month learning to be a soldier. Machine gun company!

Since Paul said he liked “it a good deal” and “Boy, this is the life,” I couldn’t miss a chance like this compared to the Depression. And Paul could show me the ropes to get enlisted for the summer of 1936. So, I gave it a shot, and the next summer I was off to Fort Meade. I learned a lot, and about myself, too. Here are some of my memories.

“Individual Score Book for the Rifle” cover, above, and back cover, right
Years later, I found this cartoon.

See my handwritten notes on it.
MILITARY TRAINING CERTIFICATE

Citizens’ Military Training Camps

To all who shall see these presents, greeting,

Know ye that ____________________________

HAS ATTENDED THE _______________ COURSE OF INSTRUCTION,

____________________, ARM. AT THE CITIZENS’ MILITARY TRAINING

CAMP HELD UNDER THE AUDIENCES OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

AT ______________________, ________________.

FROM ______________________ TO ______________________, ________________.

NINE HUNDRED AND ______________________.

GIVEN AT ______________________, ________________.

DAY OF ______________________, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ______________________.

NINE HUNDRED AND ______________________.

REMARKS: ______________________.

[Signature]

EDGAR W. MYERS

GEO. L. B. 3rd INFANTRY, COMMANDING

Military Training Certificate, Side 1
Back to the Future

I am breaking ranks from ancient history here for a story closely related to my high school days’ experiences in the CMTC.

In 1987, my grandson, Danny Bowman, enlisted in the PA National Guard. He enlisted under a special program while still in high school, after which he immediately did his basic training. In return for his commitment for service, the U.S. Government paid for a good part of his college education.

Dan went into accounting and eventually became involved in finance, while continuing his service in the National Guard as a citizen soldier. When the time came, he re-enlisted; time and time again. For some time, he also served in the U.S. Army Reserves. While in service, he advanced in rank while serving in numerous posts such as planning in Kuwait, and later led a battalion in Iraq.

After starting as a citizen soldier just like me, in 2017 Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Bowman retired from the U.S. Army after 30 years of service.

2. Enlistment

After high school graduation, finding a good job was not easy. We were still in the Great Depression. Although there was some improvement for jobs, it was still very tough. Especially in a small, rural town in the mountains. Since the first three choices were to work in the mines, work in the mines or work in the mines and develop lung disease or worse, I looked for other options.

I did consider joining the Army since I had my CMTC training. But it seemed as though the military was continuing its static pace with a lot of isolationism sentiment throughout the country.

My sister Alice and her husband, Max “Hutch” Hutchinson, lived in Lewistown, Pennsylvania about 75 miles to the east. Job openings were available there, and she said I could live with her. I was able to land a job at a large food market in Lewistown, named The Giant Store. The company was from Carlisle, PA and this was their second store. They had aggressive plans to build several stores in Pennsylvania. Today, they are the mega-supermarket chain, Giant Food Stores.

By 1939, the world was changing. We heard Hitler invaded Poland on September 1 and the UK declared war on Germany two days later. Over the next year we heard of the British army being thrown out of Europe while Hitler invaded most of Europe and bombed England.

This made us mad, and we saw war coming. So did our government, as it began to ramp up military orders from factories and increase the size of the army and navy. Now a game-changer, events were making it more interesting to become part of the rapidly expanding army. We heard that Congress authorized the expansion of the army air corps combat groups from 29 to 54, and decided in October, 1940 that we should do our duty.

Davey, Bob and I enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. My official enlistment was October 29, 1940. We were off to the army air corps at Langley Field, Virginia. We had expectations of adventure, fun, hard work, learning trades and war. Little did we know what to expect of the latter.
Langley Field was opened in 1916 and is one of the oldest military air operations in the country. Today, it serves tactical fighter groups and a host of other critical operations for the U.S. Air Force, including research and development.

It wasn’t long before I was assigned to the 2nd Material Squadron in the 1st Air Base Group at Langley. We were responsible for everything to support maintenance of aircraft and air crews.

The name of our squadron was changed and merged into the Sixth Material Squadron (M-6), then the Sixth Service Squadron. I was transferred from the sixth to the Fifth Material Squadron on July 18th, 1941, but quickly back to the Sixth Service Squadron — the Fight’n’ Sixth, on August 13th. That’s the Army!

My dog tags show my home address, mother’s name my religion as Protestant (P) and blood type (O).
While at Langley I decided to keep a record of more important information about my service record. *My Life in the Service* was ideal for me to list so many things. Although it could also serve as a personal diary, I wasn’t into that, but making notes of the highlights of my service seemed the right thing to do. I share a lot of that information throughout this story.

I quickly became proficient in operating the big rigs.
Maneuvers

We went on extended 2-month maneuvers from August 15, 1941 through October 15, 1941. Following is what I recorded in my diary:

- Trip to Texas and return for fall maneuvers of 1941.
- Left Langley Field, VA on Sunday, Aug. 15th, 1941.
- First stop was at Danville, VA on Aug. 15th, 1941.
- Second stop was at Bristol, Tenn. on Aug. 16th, 1941.
- Third stop was at Knoxville, Tenn. on Aug. 17th, 1941.
- Fourth stop was at Nashville, Tenn. on Aug. 18th, 1941.
- Fifth stop was at Brownsville, Tenn. on Aug. 19th, 1941.
- Sixth stop was at Camp Robinson, Little Rock, Ark. on Aug. 20th, 1941.
- Seventh stop was at Ruston, LA on Aug. 21st, 1941.
- Eighth stop was at Beaumont Texas on August 22nd, 1941.
- Arrived at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas on Aug. 23rd, 1941.
- Manuevers was from Sept. 1st to the 7th and 14th to the 21st.
- Trip from Ellington Field to our home base of Langley, VA.
- Left Ellington Field on the morning of Oct. 8th, 1941.
- First Stop was at Lake Charles, LA. on Oct. 8th, 1941.
- Second stop was at the Army Recreation Camp, New Orleans, LA on Oct. 9th, 1941.
- Third stop was at the Army Recreation Camp, Mobile, AL on Oct. 10th, 1941.
- Fourth stop was at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, AL on Oct. 11th, 1941.
- Fifth stop was at Camp Wheeler, Macon, GA on Oct. 12, 1941.
- Sixth stop was at Fort Jackson, Columbia, S.C. on Oct 13th, 1941.
- Seventh stop was at Raleigh, N. Carolina on October 14th, 1941.
- Arrived at Langley Field, VA on Oct. 15th, 1941.
Ellington Field, Texas Aug. 1941

Bill at Ellington Field, Texas September, 1941

Convoy to Ellington Field, Texas 5:30 AM in Beaumont, Texas

Picking cotton Arkansas, Aug. 1941. 'The Fight'n 6th'.
Bill is on left.
Bill and Jones, Ellington Field, TX Sept. 1941

Stewart Beach, Galveston, TX Gulf of Mexico Sept. 1941

Jones, Ellington Field, Texas September, 1941

P-39 and Grumman Navy Fighter, Ellington Field, Texas Sept. 1942
Convoy in Georgia, Oct. 1941

Harry Kunkle, Ellington Field, Texas Oct. 1941

City Park, New Orleans, October

Rebel Wiseman N.C. Oct. 1941
Major Woodward issued a permanent pass to me as his driver, so I could drive him to anywhere, anytime when I was not on duty. And for my personal use, too. What an arrangement!

And time for personal R&R.
My first year of service life settled into daily duties on and off base, with some fun in off-duty times. Then the day finally came for which we had been preparing. But the way it arrived caught the entire country by surprise that Sunday afternoon when we heard that the Japanese attacked our naval fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Since “The Fight’n Sixth” was an experienced service squadron with mobile abilities from recent maneuvers, it made sense that we were deployed to the west coast after Pearl Harbor.

The next day, December 8th, we received orders to pack up for the west coast. We departed on December 13th. There was considerable concern that the mainland could be attacked after losing huge resources in the Pacific Fleet, caused by a very capable enemy. Our air corps planes needed to be in position to defend our country, and the 6th was needed to support them.

I wrote in my diary the cities and states we passed through on the way to California:

- Richmond, VA
- Petersburg, VA
- Bristol, Tenn
- Knoxville, Tenn
- Nashville, Tenn
- Memphis, Tenn
- Little Rock, Ark
- Amarillo, Texas
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Gallup, New Mexico
- Winslow, Arizona
- Flagstaff, Arizona
- Barstow, California

We didn’t waste any time getting to the west coast via train and convoy, arriving at Muroc, California, on December 18, 1941. We were assigned to the 1st Air Base.
Muroc Air Field, California

Muroc Air Field was built on a farm in the middle of the high Mojave Desert. The dry beds of the desert went on for miles, so it was a natural air field that eventually became the expansive, and famous, Edwards Air Force base.

We found little in the way of comforts, so life in the desert was lived in tents with field kitchens. Few buildings existed to house operations, so we had to make our own work sheds.

While at Muroc I was promoted to Private 1st Class on January 1, 1942. Our mission was to service two bombardment groups.
Bill at 1st Air Base Group Reinforced Motor Pool, Muroc, CA Jan-Feb 1942

Dug Out Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Muroc, Calif., Post Office, Jan. 1942
Lucas, Dinuble, Hollister, Chapman, Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Lockheed Hudson A-29, Muroc, CA Jan 1942

Cpl. Levy, Muroc CA Jan. 1942

Ferguson, Levy, Parator, Faust, Love, Hollister, Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Lucas, Dinuble, Hollister, Chapman, Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Sammy Kunkle, Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Lockheed Hudson A-29, Muroc, CA Jan 1942
Cpl. Grassel, Muroc 1st Air Base, CA Jan. 1942

Sgt. Faust, Muroc, CA, January 1942

Cpl. Levy and Cpl. Parator, Ace Wright back left, Muroc, CA Jan. 1942

Big Pine Lodge, Great Sierras, CA Jan. 1942

“The Gang,” California 1942 (Bill is second in row)
Off to Yuma

While at Muroc we took a trip to Yuma, Arizona, with the Mobile Repair Unit. I recorded in my diary the places we stopped on the way to Yuma:

- Riverside, Calif.
- March Field, Calif.
- San Bernardino, Calif.
- The Salton Sea
- El Centro, Calif.
- Palm Springs, Calif.
- Twenty-Nine Palms, Calif.

While at Yuma I crossed the border to Mexico for a stay of one evening.
The Next Deployment

The top brass was still feeling their way for the strategy and use of the Army Air Corp. What type of units should be used in the Pacific and what types in Europe?

After 2 months in Muroc, we were ordered to Wilmington Air Field, North Carolina, assigned to the 3rd Air Force Service Command.

I noted in my diary that we left Muroc on Feb. 10, 1942. I listed the cities we passed through:

- Flagstaff, Arizona
- Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Amarillo, Texas
- Wichita, Kansas
- Topeka, Kansas
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Hannibal, Missouri
- Springfield, Illinois
- Rantoul, Illinois
- Chicago, Illinois
- South Bend, Indiana
- Ft. Wayne, Indiana
- Dayton, Ohio
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- Newport, Ohio
- Bluefield, KY
- Huntington, West VA
- Lynchburg, VA
- Petersburg, VA
- Rocky Mount, N. Carolina

Arrived at Army Air Base Wilmington, N.C. on Feb. 16th, 1942

6.
Wilmington Air Base, North Carolina

Wilmington Airport was built in 1929 as a small public airport. In 1940 Wilmington Airport became an emergency landing field for the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Shortly after the beginning of the war, the army took control. It was named Wilmington County Army Air Field and was referred to as Wilmington Air Base.

During our six-month deployment there, we saw Wilmington Air Base grow and grow, with B-25’s and fighter groups. But it was still tent city. Our training and support of air operations were getting more serious and diverse.
Motor Vehicle Operator's Permit, Wilmington Air Base – Outside (above) and Inside (right)

Gardecki on guard duty, Wilmington Air Base, Feb. 1942

Wilmington Air Base February 1942
P-39 with Cannon, Wilmington Air Base, March 1942

Wilmington Air Base, February 1942

Sgt Irwin, McClosay & Rachunas, Wilmington Air Base, February 1942

Wilmington Air Base, February 1942

The Welders, McKnight, Klohe, Kish, Kuzak, February 1942

P-39 with Cannon, Wilmington Air Base, March 1942
Bill. I need some sleep. Wilmington Air Base, March 1942

Peters, Siragusa, Hollister and Bill, Wilmington Air Base, March 1942

B-25 Bomber, Wilmington Air Base, March 1942
B-25 Wilmington Army Air Base, (NC) March 21, 1942.
This crew and plane sunk a German sub off the East Coast.

Bell Airacobra P-39, Wilmington Air Base, March 1942

Dinuble and Russell Emergency Crew. Wilmington Air Base, March 1942

Furlough or Stinky M-6’s Chow Hound, Wilmington Air Base, April 1942
1st Sargent George M. Perry, M-6, Wilmington Army Air Base, April 1942


Transient Aircraft, Wilmington Air Base, April 1942

Bill at Wilmington Air Base, April 1942

1st Sargent George M. Perry, M-6, Wilmington Army Air Base, April 1942
Presentation of Soldier’s Medal Wilmington Air Base, June 21, 1942

Sixth Service Sqdn, second platoon, Wilmington Air Base, June 21, 1942

C.B. Love of Philadelphia, Wilmington Air Base, April 1942

Camp Visitors, Carl and Bobby, Wilmington Air Base, June 24, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING THE ISSUANCE
AND USE OF SOLDIER'S INDIVIDUAL PAY RECORD

When issued.—Upon enlistment. Date of issue will be endorsed in soldier’s service record on page 2.

Preparation.—Carefully complete all entries on page 2.

Purpose.—To identify and authorize payments to the soldier to whom issued and is to be kept by him in his personal possession at all times except when in the hands of personnel officers for preparation of payrolls or vouchers, or verification with service record.

Payments.—Casual payments not in excess of amount due computed from the information contained in this book are authorized by AR 346–163, the provisions of which will be fully complied with. Entry of all amounts paid will be made on pages 4, 5, 6, or 7, together with complete information called for thereon. Amount due will be computed from and not in excess of amount earned since the first of the month prior to date shown in “Casual Date” on page 3; and collection will be made for all allotments, insurance premiums, and class A pay reservations. If again paid while absent from his organization, pay will be computed from date of last payment, in which event settlement should bring soldier’s account to the end of the month, unless he is being returned to his organization, in which event he may be paid a partial payment, and entry made on pages 4, 5, 6, or 7. In exceptional cases where there is no Army Finance Officer available, this pay record may be presented to Navy, Marine, or State Department disbursing officers for pay.

Changes.—Any changes in status affecting the pay due will be entered on page 3.

Lost.—If this pay record becomes lost, duplicate may be issued only by the personnel officer having custody of soldier’s service record.

All entries in this book will be authenticated by the signature (name, grade, and arm or service only) of a commanding officer.

(S)

56
In August we learned that we were being assigned to Hattiesburg Army Air Field in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

As written in my diary:

Trip from Wilmington N. Carolina to Hattiesburg, Miss.
Left Wilmington August 17, 1942.

Cities and states we passed through enroute to Miss.
    Florence, S. Carolina
    Sumter, S. Carolina
    Atlanta, Georgia
    Anniston, Alabama
    Birmingham, Alabama
    Laurel, Miss.

Arrived at Hattiesburg Army Air Base on Aug. 19, 1942.

While at Wilmington I was promoted to Corporal and became a squad leader.
Hattiesburg opened in 1930 as a civilian airport. Due to the growing threat of war, the Army Air Corp leased Hattiesburg Airport in 1940, with construction of expanded facilities taking almost all of 1941. It opened on December 8, 1941 as Hattiesburg Army Air Field (the day after Pearl Harbor Day).

Its first assignment was antisubmarine patrols in the Gulf of Mexico. Then B-25s of the 21st Bombardment Group arrived, later replaced by O-29 Vigilants and O-52 Owls. Next, the 27th Bombardment Group and their A-20s arrived when we arrived, in mid-August. They were reforming after being mauled in New Guinea, flying A-24s. The original 27th became ground troops in the Philippines and were all captured, being forced into the Bataan Death March. Of the 880 airmen, less than half survived.

We were part of the Third Air Force, but that meant little as the army was playing a gigantic chess game, moving units all around the country. This was all in preparation for the eventual, gigantic army air corps build-up … somewhere.

Training was wrench up. Range target practice, training films and lectures and 15-mile hikes with full field equipment prepared us for Europe.
MSgt. Saunders, SSgt. Sabin, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept. 1942

1st Sgt. Joe McAvoy, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Miss.

Sgt. Nicborowicz from Gallitzin, PA (near Lilly), Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept., 1942

Ssgt. Herman Molsky “Fat Boy,” Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept. 1942
Sgt. McNamee, Cpl. Lyons- Pill Rollers, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept. 1942

Bill, Nov. 1942

Sgt. Rebel Wiseman, Cpl. Call, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept. 1942

Thomas and Don Reed, The Cooks, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Sept. 1942
Bill, Hollister and Cramer, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Dec. 12, 1942

Irish Hollister, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, December 12, 1942

Hollister, Cramer and Bill, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Dec. 12, 1942

Brickner, Cramer, Bill, Hollister Hattiesburg Army Air Base, December 14, 1942
It was no military secret that we were headed to the action, somewhere. We knew it was around the corner in November when we all had to qualify for shooting the 30-caliber rifle over at Camp Shelby. I received my Marksman badge.

**My scores:**
New Testament Bibles were issued to us at Hattiesburg Army Air Base. I gave this to my Grandson, Rob. (Rick’s son.) At right, inside cover and first page, received September 3, 1942

A message from our President in my Bible

Cramer, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Dec. 14, 1942

Rear: Bill, Hollister-Pittsburgh, Cramer-Punxsutawney
Front: Harper-Phila., Brickner-Beaver Falls, Hattiesburg Army Air Base, Miss. Dec. 15, 1942
While at Hattiesburg I got an eye exam and new glasses. We didn't have a base eye doctor, so they sent me into town.
It's Time to Go

Over the months, so many units shipped out. We heard rumor after rumor. And we were ready. Then the orders came. The Fight'n 6th was to convoy to New Jersey as our next step, but first all of our equipment was crated and prepared for shipment to . . . somewhere.

We were to leave Hattiesburg Air Base and get to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, as quickly as possible. We did it in a few days.

I wrote the following in my diary:


Camp Kilmer was located in central New Jersey. Activated in June 1942, it was a staging area for embarkation of troops from the Port of New York. Troops were quartered there in preparation for transport to the European Theater of Operations.

Eventually, it became the largest processing center for troops heading overseas and returning from World War II, processing over 2.5 million soldiers.
Built as a British airfield in 1941, Grafton Underwood is almost two hours north of London. It covered approximately 500 acres.

The 97th(H) and 305th (H) Bomb Groups briefly occupied it during 1942 and early 1943. The 97th launched the first B-17 raid from Grafton Underwood on August 17, 1942. We briefly supported the 305th BG until they left and our birds arrived. The 384th was its longest tenant, occupying the base for over two years.

Remnants and skeletons of the 384th exist today, with part of the main runway sitting as a testimony to the heroes of the 384th. The village of Grafton Underwood has less than 200 residents, and is a picturesque, traditional English village with some homes having thatched roofs.
Although our base was only a couple years old, it was never really finished with the final touches necessary to support a large permanent installation, since it had two short-term operational B-17 Bomb Groups in it for just a year or so.

Then we learned to expect our first contingent of B-17s in May. Although it sounded like a lot of time, we soon learned how quickly time was going to pass, to get everything ready to “Keep the Show on the Road.” During that time, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant and eventually as section leader of the parachute shop.

The first 22 of our B-17s arrived on May 25th, and our ground support started to get acquainted with both their crews and the aircraft. Their first mission was on June 22nd. Of the 20 B-17s to hit the General Motors Truck Factory in Antwerp, Belgium that day, two failed to return, 10 crewmembers were killed in action, one was missing, nine became prisoners of war and four were wounded. One mission, 12% casualties. For the next year, this was the norm.

After arriving that January, we learned how to support our flyers, live together, recreate together, learn the customs of the English, do a lot of sightseeing and make many English friends, and in general, build a life for ourselves … not knowing when this would all be over. And if and when we could head home.
Some times I “doubled” in the motor pool. That gave me access to vehicles for those “official” not so official trips off base. Especially since I was approved for cars, in addition to trucks.

GIs are famous for working the system. I found out that I could get flight pay. I had the authority to flight-test parachutes, by throwing dummies wearing parachutes, out of a B-17 over Station 106. So, I earned flight pay!

Dear Sis,
I’m censored and can’t write a thing.
Just that I’m well and live like a king.
Can’t tell when it’s sunny, can’t tell when it rains.
All military secrets must secrets remain.
Don’t know where I’m going, don’t know where I’ll land.
Couldn’t even inform you, if met by a band.
Can’t tell where we sailed from, can’t mention the date.
And can’t even remember the meals that I ate.
Can’t keep a diary, for which is a sin.
Can’t keep the envelopes your letters come in.
Can’t use a flashlight to guide me at night.
Can’t light a cigarette, except out of sight.
Don’t know for sure as what I can do.
Except sign this letter and mail it to you.

As ever,
BILL

Bill, August, 1944
Censorship and controls of materials were important for the security of our army.

This stamp (left) appears on the back of the squadron photo above.
The V-Mail process, which originated in England, was the microfilming of specially designed letter sheets. Instead of using valuable cargo space to ship whole letters overseas, microfilmed copies were sent in their stead and then “blown up” and printed at an overseas destination before being delivered.

V-mail ensured that thousands of tons of shipping space could be reserved for war materials. The 37 mail bags required to carry 150,000 one-page letters could be replaced by a single mail sack. The weight of that same amount of mail was reduced dramatically from 2,575 pounds to a mere 45 pounds.
Probably from the *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*. Somewhat in error.

Although technically a supply sergeant, I was section leader of the parachute shop, and we were a combat unit, not a repair facility.

But I appreciate the recognition, anyway.

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**Supply Sergeant**

**AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND STATION, England — Staff Sgt. William J. Bodenschatz, son of Mr. and Mrs. M.J. Bodenschatz, Lilly, Pa., is a supply sergeant in the air corps supply section at this subdepot bomber repair base where battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortresses of the Eighth Air Force are repaired.**

Staff Sgt. Bodenschatz was graduated from the Lilly High School in 1937 and prior to his entry into the military service Oct. 29, 1940, at Langley Field, Va., he was manager of a delicatessen department at the Giant Food Shopping Center, Lewistown, Pa. He has been stationed in the European theater of operations 19 months.

**Serves as Yeoman**

**AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND STATION, England—Staff Sgt. Walter J. Neufer, son of Mr. and Mrs. H.W. Neufer, Altoona, Pa., is a yeoman at this subdepot bomber repair base where battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortresses of the Eighth Air Force are repaired.**

Staff Sgt. Neufer was graduated from the Altoona High School in 1938. Prior to his entry into the military service Oct. 16, 1944, in Morristown, N.J., he was employed by C.A. Glasgow, a mercantile firm in Altoona. He has been stationed in the European theater of operations 3 months.

**Moultrop and Simmons, Grafton Underwood, May 1945**

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**First Sergeant John H. Henkle, Capt. John C. Burke, Grafton Underwood, May, 1945**

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**3 Area Boys At Bomber Repair Base**

**AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND STATION, England—Tech. Sgt. Andrew A. Dziedzic, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Dziedzic, Grafton Underwood, Pa., is stationed at this supply-bomber repair base. He is a sheet metal worker repairing the battle-damaged B-17 Flying Fortresses of the Eighth Air Force.**

Tech. Sgt. Dziedzic was graduated from the Johnstown Central High School in 1934. In 1936 he was employed as Assistant House Cn., 123 Ten St., Johnstown, Tenn. He enlisted in the Army Oct. 29, 1940, at Langley Field, Va., and has been stationed in the European theater of operations 20 months. He is stationed in England.

**As published**

**Supply Sergeant**

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10. **Combat**

Note the bombs painted on the front-side, denoting this B-17 as a seasoned veteran of at least 12 missions.

Bombs away!
A B-17 (lower right) surrounded by German anti-aircraft “flak.”

A B-17 takes a direct hit from German flak as bombs are released to the target.

Bomb drop over Cologne, Germany.

Cologne, Germany, bomb drop.
Bombs away.

Bomb drop over Hamburg, Germany.

Bombing raid to Bremen, Germany, 1944

Bombs away.

384th bomb drop, unknown target.
A note about Clark Gable

In 1943 I ran into Clark Gable in a pub sitting alone. So, I approached him and he invited me to sit with him. I learned he had volunteered for the air corps and was an aerial photographer. I told him I was ground support and never got to see the action.

So, we arranged to meet over beers, at which time he shared with me some of his photographs. Quite a few of the aerial shots in this section are from his “collection” of originals that he shared with me.

Of course, these did not “clear” S-2 for security clearance, so they were accepted with the promise of being careful with them. I marked each photo on the back that they were taken by him, and the caption as he explained to me.

Above is a stamp he placed on the back of one, intending to turn it in for intelligence, but gave to me, instead.

Clark was a solid guy, who seriously volunteered for his country.

Years later, this news story I snipped brought up those memories.
Recognition

443rd Sub-Depot Wins 8th Air Force Stitt Trophy

Most proficient sub-depot ground support unit in the entire 8th Air Force, August 1944

This monthly mission recap is from “As briefed,” my 384th leather-bound historical book produced by our unit and distributed to us after the war.
April 15, 1944, 100th Mission Party Bike Race

100th Mission Field Day
FOR SERVICE personNEL ONLY

Program of Events

MORNING
10.00 Hours ... Semi-Finals Softball and Volleyball
11.00 to 12.00 Hours ... Outdoor Meal, Ashicle Field

AFTERNOON
13.00 Hours ... Continuous Movie, Bob Hope
15.30 Hours ... Boxing Matches, Hangar One
15.00 Hours ... Bike Derby, Hangar One
15.30 Hours ... Plane Softball and Volleyball

EVENING
17.00 Hours ... ... ... Officers' Dance
19.00 Hours ... ... ... U.S.O. Show
20.30 Hours ... ... ... ... *Dancing

*Guests are invited for the final event on the day's program. These separate shows will be held, one enlisted men's show in Hangar One, a non-commissioned officers' dance in the Officers Club, and an officers' dance in the Officers' Club.

April 15, 1944, 100th Mission Party Defense Squad Sgt. Welky, Sgt. Watters
A Special Remembrance

Inspection, repair and packing of parachutes was a very serious business. We knew lives depended on us.

Each time a crew bailed out, we were so happy to hear that so many chutes were counted as opened, by observing planes. Most of our guys were captured and rode out the war in Stalags as POWs. Some perished in unfortunate landings. It was rare that we ever heard of their fate.

But once in a great while, our boys would make it back with the help of civilians, resistance fighters and their underground network. Even more rare it was for any to make it back to Grafton Underwood.

So, such a special memory was when a pilot returned and presented our parachute shop with a bottle of French wine, to say, “Thank You!”
11. The Plane News

I saved three issues of our 384th newspaper, *The Plane News*. I show the front page of those three here because these issues feature the 443rd, including the parachute shop, Christmas and New Year's 1945 and winning the Stitt Trophy as the best-rated sub depot squadron of the 8th Air Force.

D-Day was June 6, 1944 but there was no news of the invasion in *Stars and Stripes*. It was printed in the early hours before the dawn surprise attack.

Here is the June 7th edition, covering the invasion. I kept both newspapers.
I wrote the names of my friends on the 1944 issue.
Morgan is showing in the parachute photo inset.
Left to right, the others are: Smith, Dieck, Garner, Lindauer, Chistman and Wilds.
Rest & Relaxation

We had long work hours when the weather was good for bombing raids, so relief for rest and relaxation (R&R) was welcomed.

We caught up on writing letters home and reading. We played ball, weather permitting. Movies and some traveling shows at our own Roxy Theater kept us entertained. And libations, music and activities at our Zebra Club was popular. Civilian employees helped at these venues.

Then there were those big bash base sponsored dances held off-base! Of course, we learned the best pubs to visit.

Very special to us were the relationships we developed with the Brits in Grafton Underwood, Geddington, Kettering and Corby, to name a few towns. Our government host encouraged Brit families to host GIs to make them feel at home, with some social warmth and home cooking. I have such fond memories of so many people.

We were even invited to “Tea.” I was invited to one where they had food with the tea. I thought I was spooning sugar in my tea which I always did. The family looked at me strangely. When I tasted the tea, I found that it was salt. It seems that they did not use salt shakers, but put the salt into a bowl like a sugar bowl. And rarely did they use sugar or milk in their tea.
The agreement between Lucile and I was that we could “see” others during my service and deployment in England. I met Ruby and we saw each other as friends.

Ruby’s boyfriend was also deployed and I met him while he was on leave. As a remembrance, she gave me a signet ring. I eventually gave it to my grandson, Danny, which he has to this day.

Friend’s addresses recorded in my diary:
Mr. & Mrs. Sam Barclay  
130 Rockingham Road  
Corby, Kett., Northhants. England

Ruby Robson  
53 Pengreen Lane  
Corby, Kett. Northamts. England

Ruby’s neighbor

Bill, 1944 (possibly in Corby at Ruby’s)

My sunglasses
Making 50 Caliber Salt and Pepper Shakers in the machine shop helped to pass the time. Adding British coins to the base of the shakers added value.

Right: My road map got me around to see a lot of England. I circled the towns and cities I visited. The map is very large, approx. 29” x 39” unfolded.

Below: My gloves, which I used post-war for years to shovel snow.
As appeared in the local Pennsylvania news, possibly the Johnstown Tribune-Democrat, a story forwarded to them by Bill.

First paragraphs, as published

**I Say, Ole’ Chap**

THROUGH THE CONSIDERATION of two local boys now serving overseas, an English newspaper’s account of an American football game played between two service teams, is published herewith.

Both service boys – Capt. John F. McGrath of Kernville, former Johnstown High gridder of about a decade ago, and Staff Sgt. William J. Bodenschatz, former student manager at Lilly High School, forward accounts of the game carried in the London Daily Express Monday, Nov. 13.

**FIRST DOWN TO NAVY**

Just cantankerous is the Navy. Horrified, I watched a c.i. scraper cross the field with two buckets in his hands. It was not, as I thought, to mop up the blood. He avoided the running players while the heel of the boot fell on him.

The buckets contained water and sand for the players still half alive. No sooner did the game begin the buckets are rushed out. If a team asks for them very often they are denied.

The deductions are dealt with by a doctor, who rushes out with a black bag, a pair sawn-off, spread in white pants and spats and chiffon and the stretcher bearers, if they are needed.

American football is played in four quarters, with two minutes rest. Each team has its own four “linemen”. If by that time they have not made enough ground the other team will then have a “fourth down” and the game goes on. The boys will then see the opposing team and the substitution made.

Ends & Arays beat the Navy by 30 points to nil.
Victory

We kept my VE-Day issue of Stars and Stripes, May 8, 1945

I kept my VE-Day issue of Stars and Stripes, May 8, 1945

We kept The Show On The Road to total victory in Europe. Our celebrations were well-earned, but at the same time, hanging over our heads was the continuing war in the Pacific. None of us knew what our eventual fate would be.

But for now, enjoy the victory. Our high command saw it fit to reward us in the ground crew support units with victory flight tours of the European theater, to see what our boys did with their B-17s.

Two tours were designed, and we could take both. In addition to the written description provided with each, air crews gave us more insight. So, we packed our lunches and thermos bottles, and headed to Europe. So many observations to share, so I will limit it to one that is best descriptive. When flying over Cologne, Germany we saw a city totally destroyed by bombing. But still standing was the grand Cologne Cathedral above the landscape - a testimony to perseverance of man and his God, and target-bombing.

Years later, my son Rick called me from there when in Germany on business, to share our moments together, as he remembered my account of the flight.
The Observation Tour - May 1945

The Observation Tour, by air, over France, Belgium, and part of Germany, is to show the results, value, extent on utility of our efforts of the past eight months in victory for the Allies. It has been widely understood.

During the tour the battalions will be flown to ports as to the time you are over.

The following information is to further assist you in identifying the map of the land.

On returning the British coast you will see many areas with very few installations and which have never received sufficiently trained for the greater food.

Mr. Churchill has insisted upon his visit with the German army. It was most important as a visit and a goodwill gesture. It is a gesture of the British people, as we believe, to become an element in the destruction of the very enemy, who, with our help and assistance, the Germans could claim victory in this war. We have the example and coordinate plan a team of aircraft and other.

Mr. Churchill visited the American army and one of the most important cities, New York, to promptly.

Doubtless the United States will be a great challenge in the coming years. Therefore, it was tactically desirable. This area with large deposits of oil, in addition to what is known which will be found in this area, and also large deposits of iron, will be found in the area of coal. The importance of coal and iron is being utilized to make a victory of the great discoveries. The area is largely developed. The aircraft have been flown in this area. The area has been very heavily the cigarettes. The plan is to assist to the conclusion of the campaign.

On the evening of the tour, the aircraft were flown every hundred and installation collided from the air and to his home.
As briefed ...

Before VE-Day, some men were collecting money claiming they were going to publish an account of the 384th at Grafton Underwood after the war. I went along with it, but thought I would never see anything for my ten bucks. I was shocked in 1946 when I opened a package in the mail that contained the leather-bound book entitled, “As briefed ...” It has 210 pages of memories.
14. Moving to France

We had to crate everything up for shipment to our new base in Istress, France. Non-essentials couldn’t go, so I gave my bicycle to the first boy I saw in Grafton Underwood. I hated to give it up. I never had a bike when I was a kid.

The last paragraph as written in “As briefed ...” sums it up:

> For occasionally, in the villages around Grafton Underwood, you’ll still hear someone say “Okay, Joe!” instead of “Quite,” and once in a while a native walks by humming “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.”

I wrote this account in my diary ...

> Left Grafton Underwood June 14, 1945 for Istress, France by Flying Fortress. Flying time 3 hrs. 25 min.

Our mission at Istress (near Marseilles) was “... to play its part in flying the American army out of Europe. After that it might be the Pacific, where another war was still going on.” (As written on Page 160 of “As briefed ...”)

Our B-17’s also took forced laborers home to Greece and other countries, from Berlin, Munich and other areas, who were captured and enslaved into the German war machine factories. These included infants born in Germany during the laborers’ long stay.
I recorded the following “Buddies In The Service” in my diary so I could always remember them:

Pfc. Edgar Hollister “Iggy”  
Mount Wolf, Penn.

Pfc. George Siragusa “Saggy”  
Bronx, New York City

Corporal Maurice Levy “Mush”  
40 and Girard Avenue Philadelphia, Penna.

Corporal George Phratore “Sayee”  
Wilkes-Barre, Penna.

S/Sgt. Herman Molsky  
Jeannette, Penna.

Pvt. Wm. Jones “Jonesey”  
Suffolk, Virginia

Pfc. Irvin Gantz “Grants”  
Lewistown, Penna.

Pfc. Robert Roubaugh “Road”  
Johnstown, Penna.

Pvt. George Colwell “Fat”  
Blandburg, Penna.

Corporal Frank Wiseman “Rebel”  
Jackson, N. Carolina

Sgt. Joseph McAvoy “Mac”  
Philadelphia, Penna.

Pvt. Joseph Deskiwiecz “Desky”  
Conshohocken, Penna.

Corporal Kenneth Grassel  
Lancaster, Penna.

Pvt. Harry Kunkle “Von”  
Coplay, Penna.

Pvt. Charles B. Love “Charlie”  
Philadelphia, Penna.

First Sgt. George Ferry “Baldy”  
Forty Fort, Penna.

Sgt. John Hankle “Baldy”  
Hanover, Penna.

Pvt. David L. Goss “Gossie”  
Lewistown, Pa.

As shared earlier, I worked together with Gossie at the Giant. We volunteered together. We were fortunate to serve together until discharge.

We returned to Lewistown. Gossie married a nurse, Margie, and he worked for years as an upholsterer and detailer for Ganoe Motors, the Plymouth dealership in Lewistown. He was also known as Davey. We attended the same church and attended the reunion together.

Pfc. Murray Gardner “Murphy”  
Suffolk, Virginia

Pfc. Sheldon Smith “Smitty”  
Johnstown, Penna.

Pfc. Albert Cook “Nigger”  
Roanoke, Virginia

Sgt. Wm. Lucas “Luke”  
Uniontown, Penna.

Sgt. Irvin Faust “Slim”  
Ringtown, Penna.

Sgt. Harry L. Peters “Pete (10 percent)”  
Harrisburg, Penna.

Pvt. Robert Holsinger “Human Parasite”  
Johnstown, Penna.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Company/Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. Robert Martens</td>
<td>&quot;Budweiser&quot;</td>
<td>Trenton, NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. Andrew B. Sabin</td>
<td>&quot;Andy&quot;</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sgt. Langston Shelton</td>
<td>&quot;Red&quot;</td>
<td>Pearsburg, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. Radford Morton</td>
<td>&quot;Hot Dog&quot;</td>
<td>Bristol, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sgt. Wm. Taylor</td>
<td>&quot;Bill&quot;</td>
<td>Ligonier, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Henry Young</td>
<td>&quot;Hen&quot;</td>
<td>Langley Field, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. William Johnson</td>
<td>&quot;Bill&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. Roy Russell</td>
<td>&quot;Russ&quot;</td>
<td>Long Island, NY</td>
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<td>Pfc. Daniel Silvere</td>
<td>&quot;Dan&quot;</td>
<td>Bryn Mawr, PA</td>
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<td>Pvt. Lester Steele</td>
<td>&quot;Les&quot;</td>
<td>Uniontown, PA</td>
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<td>Pvt. Joseph Nigborowitz</td>
<td>&quot;Nick&quot;</td>
<td>Gallitzin, PA</td>
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<td>Cpl. Burton Cramer</td>
<td>&quot;Whitey&quot;</td>
<td>Punxsutawney, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. John Yoran</td>
<td>&quot;Johnnie&quot;</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl. Paul Newhouse</td>
<td>&quot;Gashouse&quot;</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Fred Piper</td>
<td>&quot;Pipe&quot;</td>
<td>Connelsville, PA</td>
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<td>S/Sgt. Henry Nicks</td>
<td>&quot;Hennie&quot;</td>
<td>Six Mile Ford, VA</td>
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<td>S/Sgt. John Barley</td>
<td>&quot;Doc&quot;</td>
<td>Roaring Springs, PA</td>
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<td>Pfc. Andrew Demko</td>
<td>&quot;Andy&quot;</td>
<td>Johnstown, PA</td>
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<td>Pfc. John Carter</td>
<td>&quot;Hardhead&quot;</td>
<td>Berlin, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFC Edward Foster</td>
<td>&quot;Ed&quot;</td>
<td>Lynchburg, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. George Spencer</td>
<td>&quot;Spence&quot;</td>
<td>Narrows, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. Donald Reed</td>
<td>&quot;Don&quot;</td>
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<td>Pfc. George McGinley</td>
<td>&quot;Mac&quot;</td>
<td>Norfolk, VA</td>
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<td>M/Sgt. Oppelt</td>
<td>&quot;Joe&quot;</td>
<td>Langley Field, VA</td>
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<td>Corporal Herman Henry</td>
<td>&quot;Hennie&quot;</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<td>Sgt. McNamee</td>
<td>(Medical) &quot;Mac&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<td>Pfc. Ted Calder</td>
<td>&quot;Ted&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. John Dinuole</td>
<td>&quot;Dinube&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. Raymond Leach</td>
<td>&quot;Midnight&quot;</td>
<td>Everett, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. William Over</td>
<td>&quot;Over there&quot;</td>
<td>Altoona, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. Joseph Polapis</td>
<td>&quot;Pop&quot;</td>
<td>Shenandoah, VA</td>
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<td>Pvt. Thomas Harper</td>
<td>&quot;Harp&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<td>Cpl. Benjamin Needleman</td>
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<td>Langley Field, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Linus Cleveland</td>
<td>&quot;Zombie&quot;</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl. Stephen Bokros</td>
<td>&quot;Shorty&quot;</td>
<td>Johnstown, PA</td>
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<td>S/Sgt. Hiram Stauffer</td>
<td>&quot;Shorty&quot;</td>
<td>Newport News, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sgt. Wm. Vernon</td>
<td>&quot;Bill&quot;</td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl. Joseph Marasco</td>
<td>&quot;Joe&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl. Howard Austin</td>
<td>&quot;Wolf&quot;</td>
<td>Raytoule, IL</td>
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<td>S/Sgt. Clyde Bradley</td>
<td>&quot;Gearie&quot;</td>
<td>Hampton, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. Donald Casey</td>
<td>&quot;Don&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl. John Determan</td>
<td>&quot;Johnnie&quot;</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfc. Joseph Friedman</td>
<td>&quot;Joe&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. Frank Gerson</td>
<td>&quot;Geezel&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. Howard Clowe</td>
<td>&quot;Howdy&quot;</td>
<td>Front Royal, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. William Diech</td>
<td>&quot;Bill&quot;</td>
<td>Sunbury, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. Ruben Loggins</td>
<td>&quot;Groggins&quot;</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. Peter F. Mc Knight</td>
<td>&quot;Pete&quot;</td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfc. Victor Pocrorob</td>
<td>&quot;Vic&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. Thomas Thomas</td>
<td>&quot;Tom-Tom&quot;</td>
<td>Wheeling, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. John Stafurik</td>
<td>&quot;Slim&quot; or &quot;Stf&quot;</td>
<td>Trenton, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. George Vest</td>
<td>&quot;King of the Mess Hall&quot;</td>
<td>Martinsburg, W.VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. Fred Sullivan</td>
<td>&quot;Sullie&quot;</td>
<td>Bridgeport, CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. Robert George</td>
<td>&quot;Bob&quot;</td>
<td>Utica, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. Alvin Jackson</td>
<td>&quot;Jack&quot;</td>
<td>McKeensport, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. Steve Kuzak</td>
<td>&quot;Russian&quot;</td>
<td>Shamokin, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Henry Snyder</td>
<td>&quot;Hennie&quot;</td>
<td>Lancaster, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Ralph Masmelemy</td>
<td>&quot;Mac&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. William Miller</td>
<td>&quot;Wild Bill&quot;</td>
<td>Fredrick, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pfc. George Rupp</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Cumberland, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pvt. Wm. Glassmeyer</td>
<td>&quot;Glassie&quot;</td>
<td>Lemoyn, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt. Tony Valenta</td>
<td>&quot;Tony&quot;</td>
<td>Petersburg, VA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Martinsburg, W.VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. John Detwiler</td>
<td>&quot;Fat&quot;</td>
<td>State College, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/Sgt. Richard Fitzmorris</td>
<td>&quot;Pitz&quot;</td>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpl. Francis Call</td>
<td>&quot;Brother&quot;</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pvt. James Brickner</td>
<td>&quot;Hairless&quot;</td>
<td>Beaver Falls, PA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the Japanese surrender in August, it was clear our next big trip would be home. We hoped. We also knew more work was to be done in Europe, ferrying GIs for shipping out of Europe for home.

Then the orders came. With light at the end of the tunnel, we headed back to England so we could join up with thousands of others.

We boarded the USS Lake Champlain on October 20, 1945. It was a brand-new aircraft carrier. Transporting over three million troops home from the war was named Operation Magic Carpet.

After landing in New York, I made my way to Fort Indiantown Gap, PA for processing and was discharged.
Stamped on my boarding card (bottom) was the assignments of Hammock Mattress 143 and Mess Table No. 209.
ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1st DAY 19 - pHST IN - WHOS INTL
2nd DAY 06 - WHOS INTL
3rd DAY 15 - WHOS INTL
4th DAY 015 - WHOS INTL
5th DAY 6 - WHOS INTL
6th DAY 07 - WHOS INTL
7th DAY 15 - WHOS INTL
8th DAY 20 - WHOS INTL
9th DAY 25 - WHOS INTL
10th DAY 30 - WHOS INTL
11th DAY 05 - WHOS INTL
12th DAY 10 - WHOS INTL
13th DAY 15 - WHOS INTL
14th DAY 20 - WHOS INTL
15th DAY 25 - WHOS INTL
16th DAY 30 - WHOS INTL
17th DAY 05 - WHOS INTL
18th DAY 10 - WHOS INTL
19th DAY 15 - WHOS INTL
20th DAY 20 - WHOS INTL
21st DAY 25 - WHOS INTL
22nd DAY 30 - WHOS INTL
23rd DAY 05 - WHOS INTL
24th DAY 10 - WHOS INTL
25th DAY 15 - WHOS INTL
26th DAY 20 - WHOS INTL
27th DAY 25 - WHOS INTL
28th DAY 30 - WHOS INTL
29th DAY 05 - WHOS INTL
30th DAY 10 - WHOS INTL
31st DAY 15 - WHOS INTL

Side Two
I received this base pass in the mail in 1946, and carried it in my wallet ever since. During a second trip with Rick to the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, in 1990, it came into use after 45 years. Waiting for the museum to open, we visited Wright Paterson Air Force Base.

While speaking with an air police gate guard, we learned he was from Carlisle, not far from Lewistown. Then Rick remembered the pass and asked if I still had it, so I took it from my wallet and presented it. The reaction was, “I never saw one of these before.”

So, he called the officer of the day. He got off the phone, opened the airfield gate, approached us, snapped to attention and stated, “Go right in, Sir. Just stay off of the tarmac!”

This was during the beginning of Desert Shield, the air campaign leading up to Desert Storm of the Iraqi War. We could see several empty spaces where F-15’s would normally park, already in action in the Gulf.
Home at Last!

My Uniform in 2018

Each bar on left sleeve represents 6 months of overseas duty.
17. 

After the War

Immediately after discharge, I returned home to Lily to see Lucile, Mom & Dad and family and friends. And then I returned to my second home, Lewistown, to see Alice and Hutch, and to take care of business. I had to register with the state employment office, and look for a job. I also had to register for the draft! Knowing the future at the Giant was limited, I applied for work at the American Viscose plant and was hired.

Then I had to look for a house to rent since I couldn’t live with Alice and Hutch. Why? Lucile and I were married on December 30th!

After getting settled, over the years I got involved in various activities — the Air Force Association, St. John’s Lutheran & community government. Our first born, Diane, came along in 1947 and then Rick in 1950. Then we purchased our house at Juniata Terrace just outside of Lewistown.

Through the years these memories have survived. Helped by all of the saved photos, documents and memorabilia kept in a cardboard box in the basement with the Christmas decorations. Christmas was a good time to refresh my memories.
**APPLICATION FOR SERVICEMEN'S READJUSTMENT ALLOWANCE**

**STATE AGENCY**

**Social Security Number:**

| Periods of service in armed forces when separation is after September 16, 1941 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date of entrance into active duty | Date of separation from active duty | Reason for separation |
| 10-27-40 | 10-31-45 | |

1. I hereby make application for Readjustment Allowance under Title V of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

**Penalty Provision—Title V, Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944:** "Whoever shall obtain or receive any money, check, or allowance under this title, without being entitled thereto and with intent to defraud the United States, shall be punished by a fine of not more than $1,000 or by imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or both."

Signed: ____________________________________________________________________________

[Signature]

[Date: December 31, 1945]

[Signature]

Approving This Blank (to be signed by)

[Signature]

Service issued above entitles veteran, if eligible, to ______ payments.

[Signature]

Information as to service and entitlement certified to by:

[Signature]

[Date: December 31, 1945]

[Signature]
AFA Squadron Officers Are Installed

Randall Leopold, national vice president of the Air Force Association, congratulated George Reaves, newly elected commander of Mississippi County Squadron 1. Squadron officers were installed at the March meeting of the organization in its new headquarters on West Fifth Street. Other new squadron officers in the photo are: left to right: J. C. Baker, executive director; William Reddick, executive secretary; Robert Hjort, vice commander; Robert Nahl, treasurer; Sherron Rehbein, executive council, and Paul Fox, secretary. Absent at the time was Rudolph Reynolds, squadron adjutant.
Looking Back on a Sentimental Event

With Katey and Ross Lehman

I'm a man of sentiment, and my children tell me repeatedly that I'm always taking sentimental journeys.

There are haunting and indescribable moments that occur in our lives, and I— for one— always look to someone to understand that fleeting, evanescent moment.

That's why Bill Bermanachabuk met a Christmas morning in 1950's Air Force Association meeting. He was a member of the 309th Bombardment Group in England during World War II, and he talked about how much he enjoyed our mutual experiences with B-17s flying in formation.

It was then I recalled my Christmas as a prisoner of war in a German prison camp. It was 1944, I was confined with a bunch of American and English wounded, men with arms and legs amputated or blind and maimed so they were no longer combative.

We prisoners decided to stage a Christmas show. I was selected to direct a choir, because I was a passionate lover, which blossomed in the camp, once a shared love, we were assigned a bird's flight.

We were not only a gang of a fully appreciated and spirited crowd of prisoners. The jokes, songs, andidiots broadly or briefly at our German captives, received enthusiastic applause.

We were high, not only from the spirits, but also from just being together and sharing our mutual humor and experiences.

Our choir was the final number. It was a magnificent, looking ensemble. Some of the choir members were led on stage, others cried to their places, and some caressed their singers in a way that each other" in order that we could change places for the other. As the conductor, I shook one crutch in my strong fist and stood on one leg with an arm free for my mid-direction.

We performed our repertoire. Then we sang the first verse and chorus of "Silent Night." I turned and asked the audience to join in. Suddenly, I noticed tears were falling down my cheeks. I brushed them away. I wasn't alone. There is no one but the soldiers singing and crying, tears symbolizing their pasts, hopes, and yearnings. The whole place was one spirit, crying for peace and love.

Everyone rose, we joined (all bent in "All God's Men."

The worst thing was that we knew this moment was fragile but everlasting. It was a tender sentimental journey.
Bill and Lucile — 1980 Reunion

"Gossie"  
"Davey"  
Goss  
1980 Reunion

Hankles on left, person on right not labeled.  
1980 Reunion

1980 Reunion

1980 Reunion

1980 Reunion

1980 Reunion
In 2002 Ken Decker, historian of the 384th, published his 2nd edition *Memories of the 384th Bombardment Group (H)*. Rick was in contact with Ken and contributed a number of my photographs that now appear in it.

This edition featured a special section about the ground crews. It is in 3-ring binder form to allow additions along the way, and contains over 700 pages. It is a comprehensive history of the 384th in WWII.
18.

Leftovers

I recorded my physical statistics in my diary:

- Oct. 29, 1940: Weight: 133
- 1941: Weight: 150, Color of hair: Light
  Height: 5 Ft., 10½ in., Color of eyes: Gray
- Mar. 1942: Weight: 150
- June 22, 1942: Weight: 143
- Aug. 19, 1942: Weight: 143
- Sept. 12, 1942: Weight: 140

In the ‘Officers I have Met’ section of my diary, I recorded the names and locations of 36 officers that I thought I wanted to remember.

I also recorded 14 ‘Civilians I Have Met’ that I wanted to remember.

Not to forget ‘The Folks Back Home’ I recorded 20 relatives and friends.

The Autograph section of my diary is limited to those sentiments shared from Buddies in 1942. One in particular stands out, from “Dutch” H. Eugene Stauffer on September 6, 1943 at the Army Air Base in Hattiesburg, Miss.:

*One big happy family, filed with rumors and itchy feet.*
I tried to record as many of ‘The Places I Have Been’ in my diary, along with a few comments, during my time in the states:

Ellington Field and Houston, Texas
- Sam Jancinto Memorial, oil wells, hospitable people.
- Hurricane of Sept. 23rd, 1941.
- Largest air base we stopped.
- In Blue-Army, which won the maneuvers.

New Orleans, La.
- Near a large lake, French Quarter, Boulevard of the States.

Galveston, Texas- Stewart
- Beach on the Gulf of Mexico, the sea wall and low built buildings

Muroc, Calif.
- Center of Mojave Desert. Surrounded by snow-capped peaks.
- A dry lake which is 30 miles long and 7 miles wide.
- Sand storms on the average of three a week.

Palm Springs, Calif.
- “Playground of the stars.”
- Large swimming pool and beautiful terrain.

Yuma, Arizona
- Quiet during the day but lively at night.
- The “16 Club” held my interest. Party at “The Cottage.”

Mexico
- Same landscape as Arizona.
- Drank some Mexican tequila, same as T.N.T.
- Visited an Indian reservation.

Yorktown, VA.
- Battlefield and monuments.
- Large sandy beach.

Hattiesburg, Miss.
- Town full of soldiers, cold shoulder from the civilians, the mud is terrible.

Newport, Neas, Va.
- Dirty city and no recreation for soldiers.

Wilmington, N.C.
- Best camp site we ever had.
- Clean city.
- Had plenty of fun at Cap’n Ben’s.

March Field, Calif.
- Large runways, saw the B-19, very good chow.

Postscript

In 1992, Rick was able to vacation in London, so they went to Grafton Underwood. With his description and photos, little has changed since we arrived in 1943. Parts of Station 106 remain. Some buildings, and part of the main runway. (Of which he brought a chunk of it home for me.) Unfortunately, a month before his arrival, they tore down the building my parachute shop occupied. But it was wonderful to see the old place, through these photos.

The village church with a special stained-glass window.
This stained glass window in St. James the Apostle Church in Grafton Underwood is dedicated to those of the 384th who gave their lives for the freedom of England. It depicts a B-17 flying over the white cliffs of Dover as it returns from a combat mission. The memorial window, called “Coming Home,” was dedicated May 21, 1983.

A replica of this window is a part of the chapel windows at the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Ga., honoring those of the 384th lost in the war.

This memorial rests at the end of one of the old runways along a public road, for all to see the honors given to the 384th. The front (right) reads: The 384th Bombardment Group (H) – 8th Air Force of the United States of America Flew From This Airfield 1943-1945. Engraved on the base is: 544th Squadron.

The back of the memorial reads: The First And Last Bombs Dropped By the 8th Air Force Were From Airplanes Flying from Grafton Underwood. The monument was dedicated October 5, 1985.
The traditional British phone booth has long been eliminated in England. However, this one survives in Grafton Underwood as Historically Registered, in honor of the American GIs who used it to call their English girlfriends.

Opposite page: Several buildings on the base were still standing in 1992, as a testament to the memories to the thousands of GIs in the 384th.
Debriefing

My box of “stuff” has been nicely organized in support of this mission, “Five Years to Freedom.”

If you ever want to see the real McCoy — my collection — just go to Rick’s house and ring the doorbell. You will hear it play, “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.”

Just like the Brits in Grafton Underwood are probably still singing today.
Sources

The photographs, documents and memorabilia of S/Sgt. William J. Bodenschatz: the “Collection”

“As briefed...” The history of the 384th Bombardment Group (H) at Grafton Underwood, England


www.384thbombgroup.com | The website of the 384th Bombardment Group (H)

A special thanks to Diane, Dan and Rob, for sharing their keepsakes and stories they experienced through the years.
Anticipating war, the U.S. Army Air Corp started an immense build-up of strength and force in 1940.

Recognizing the opportunity for learning, advancement and service to our country, William “Bill” Bodenschatz volunteered for service in the Army Air Corps. He moved from base to base, and then to England with the 384th Bombardment Group (H) of B-17’s during World War II, then to France after VE Day. His 443rd Sub-Depot ground support unit helped the 384th B-17 bombers to “Keep the Show on the Road.”

This is a collection of his memories — photos, documents and memorabilia saved from his five years of military service.