

PARHAM AIRFIELD MUSEUM NEWSLETTER APRIL - MAY 2020



Registered Charity Number 284146

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the April edition of our regular newsletter. It includes our usual selection of articles, which we hope you enjoy reading. Many thanks to those who have contributed, especially Lydia, our indefatigable editor.

As I write this in late March things feel very far from normal. Government restrictions to prevent rapid spread of the COVID 19 virus have affected us all and the museum is closed to the public. This is extremely disappointing because volunteers have been working hard over winter to prepare for our usual April opening. Events scheduled for the early part of the season have had to be cancelled. These include the play about the loss of Joe Kennedy when his B24, loaded with explosives, blew up over Blythburgh. However, we remain close to INK Festival and hope it can be performed next year. Rehearsals were already under way.

After a late start owing to wet weather, the building of our new Exhibition Room has proceeded apace. It is largely complete save for internal wiring and painting. We hope you will agree that it looks as much like an airfield utility building as is possible within modern building regulations. Currently the ventilation is very good because we await the delivery of a third window! This is compensated for by the very high degree of insulation, which should keep our heating bills low and provide a good atmosphere in which to preserve our artefacts.

The combination of spending as planned on the new build, then having to unexpectedly close the museum may give us some cash flow problems but these will be eased by the slowing down of building completion. You can be confident that our precious museum will survive, although any help you can give at this crucial stage would be much appreciated.

We thank you for your continued interest in our museum. Please keep in touch with us and be safe!

Peter Senior

Editor's Note

We had hoped to focus on the fast-approaching 75th Anniversary of VE Day on 8th May in this edition. Alas, with the world's current situation our plans for the special weekend at the museum have been cancelled, as have most events across the country. Perhaps we will be able to commemorate the day on 15th August which is VJ Day, but time will tell. We will keep you updated as to when we are able to open again and of any future events.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

In the UK, the May Day Bank Holiday has been moved from the Monday to the Friday in order to allow the country to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day. The Bank Holiday has only been changed once before, in May 1995, to mark the 50th anniversary of VE Day (read on for a reminder of how we commemorated this event at Parham).



Many special events have been planned to commemorate the 75th anniversary, but at the time of writing, it is unknown how many of these will be going ahead. Churches across the country should be taking part in a Ringing Out for Peace. More than 20,000 pubs had planned to encourage patrons to toast the heroes of the war. However, with pubs in the country currently closed, and no re-opening timeframe in the pipeline this is now looking unlikely. Events change on a daily basis- who knows what the situation will be by May 8th? But I for one hope to be raising my glass and thanking all those who fought for our freedom- I would love for you to join me.

Peter Kindred



VE DAY AT THE BASE

This rare photo of the reaction to the news of VE Day at Station 153 comes from an album donated by the family of brothers Ralph and Glenn Oyler who served together in the 458th Sub-Depot Welding Shop.

NEW BUILDING PHOTO JOURNAL



Access to the Operational Base will now be from inside the new Exhibition Hall. Left, this is the first view of the steps which will allow visitors to see the hidden entrance hatch to the secret resistance base.

The entrance for visitors will be via the new internal ramp, above right.

We are now working on fitting out a new desk and computer/book shelf area for our archive records. The materials are reclaimed packing case wood that were discarded from a nearby factory that have been sanded into usable timber.

There are no volunteers working on the building project currently because of the coronavirus.

Right, this will be our new cinema, showing a short introductory film.



Left, wartime roads on the base had these concrete hoops to prevent vehicles driving off and spoiling the grass. We have added some to our new access road.

Below, the blast wall, to protect a doorway from enemy action, as with the wartime buildings. It also protects the emergency exit from vehicles that may wish to park too close!



A RECENT VISITOR

A few weeks ago, we welcomed Tim Kennedy on a visit from the USA. He is the grandson of Co-pilot Warren McGuiness. We enjoyed showing him around the old airfield, our exhibits and the sights of Framlingham. It was a great privilege to also speak with his grandmother, Warren's widow, via Facetime- the wonders of modern technology!



Left, Warren McGuiness, co-pilot on the Ray Thompson crew. Warren flew 29 missions from Station 153, and an additional 6 missions with the 99th Bomb Group in Italy.



Friends & Family Regional Gathering

On behalf of the Friends and Family of the 390th I wanted to inform everyone that this years regional gathering that was announced for July 25th in the quarterly J-bulletin (published by Tucson Museum) has been cancelled. The gathering was set to take place in Salem, Oregon to facilitate those located on the west coast. As of now we have no plans on rescheduling until next year.

In the meantime for all of those associated with the 390th bomb group I would love to hear where you would like to see a regional gathering located in the future.

Kevin Drain

50th Anniversary of V.E Day, 7th May 1995

With the current uncertainty of the 75th V.E Day anniversary plans, we thought it might be nice to look back on how we celebrated the 50th Anniversary.

We were honoured to welcome back a group of 390th Veterans and their wives for this special event. The day began with a service at St. Michael's Church, Framlingham, where the hatchment honouring the 390th Bomb Group was admired.



Then back to Silverlace Green, Parham, the wartime main entrance to the airfield and directly opposite the former 569th Squadron Area, where a tree-planting ceremony took place.

A red oak tree and a maple were planted by the 390th Veteran Bob Penovitch and Mrs Pat Galceran. All the Veterans had brought small amounts of soil from their home states in America, and this, mixed in with Suffolk soil, cemented our mutual friendship still further.



Moving speeches were then followed by Colin Durrant (the then Chairman of the Museum), Bob Penovitch, Michael Gray (Chairman of Parham Parish Council) and the late Percy Kindred. Percy, who had personally witnessed the arrival, and then the departure of the Americans with their B-17s Flying Fortresses, and whose family still farm on the airfield as they did during the war, concluded by saying "We owe all those who flew from here, and sadly didn't return, a debt that can never be repaid".

After the ceremony, the Veterans went to the museum for a moving service and wreath-laying in front of the Control Tower, after which presentations were made. Attractions for this special day included helicopters from RAF Wattisham, Rapier Missile battery, vintage and military vehicles, sideshows and exhibitors. After a tour of the airfield in jeeps and other vehicles, the Veteran's Day was rounded off by a visit to Moat Hall, near the former 571st Squadron, where John and Myrle Gray kindly provided tea and refreshments on the lawned gardens on Moat Hall.

The veteran's and wives party consisted of the following:-

Patricia Galceran, Vernon & Nona Chambers, Robery & Mary Jo Davila, Alan & Gill Smith, Robert & Iris Taggart, Donald John & May Belle Warner, Glenn & Anita Hale, Anthony & Claudine Hubery, John & Ann Phalen, Nevin & Irene Kauffman, Robery & Zora Penovich, Ray Thomas, Karl & Judy Wallace and Howard & Angeline Stephen.

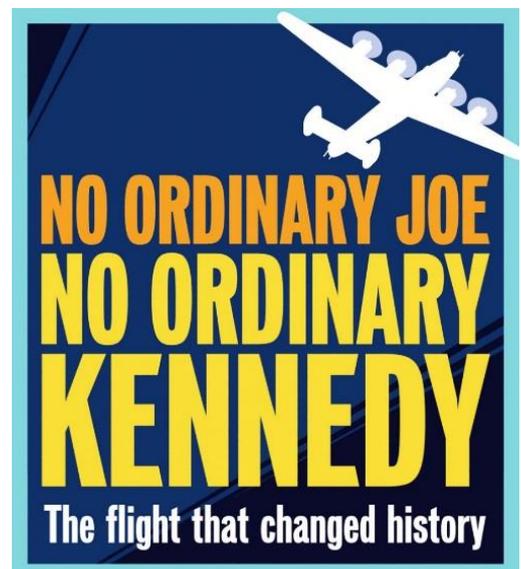
Another VIP to attend this special occasion was Ralph Tuttle, the President of the 390th Memorial Museum Foundation in Tucson.

Sadly there are very few 390th Veterans still with us to commemorate the 75th VE Day anniversary, but they will all be very much in our thoughts.

“No Ordinary Joe, No Ordinary Kennedy”

Unfortunately, but understandably, this play has been postponed. We are hopeful that we will be able to reschedule this when we are over the worst of this pandemic. Watch this space! To whet your appetite, and give us all something to look forward to when normality resumes, we thought you might like to read more about the play and the events that inspired it.

Joe Kennedy Jnr was the elder brother of JFK. As a young man he seemed destined to become President of the United States – until, that is, the Second World War intervened.



‘No Ordinary Joe; No Ordinary Kennedy’ examines Joe’s complex character, and traces events which led Joe to volunteering for a top-secret and highly dangerous mission, in which he was required to fly a Liberator plane packed with explosives and bail out before it crossed the Channel. Tragically his plane exploded over Blythburgh in Suffolk, killing him and his co-pilot.

Annual General Meeting

On 22nd March, before lockdown, we held our AGM in the new room, where the underfloor heating awaits commissioning. Well wrapped against the cold and socially distanced from each other, you may recognise some of the characters in the photos! We had to exclude the public for health reasons and consulted all volunteers in advance about the important matters on the agenda and to receive their comments and questions. This approach means that legally we have completed our AGM as normal.



FROM OUR ARCHIVIST

GENERAL SUMMARY- APRIL 1944

The 390th Bomb Group took part in 17 combat missions during April with two missions being flown on 27 April. Aircraft were dispatched in the morning to attack targets at La Glaciere and in the afternoon to attack targets at Le Culot, Belgium. Six crews participated in both attacks.

More losses were sustained from flak than in any previous month. Flak was particularly bad over Berlin and Augsburg.

Wing racks were used for the first time. A 1,000lb bomb was carried under each wing, in addition to 6,000lbs. bombs in the bomb bay.

The tremendous increase in battle damage, sustained in the month of April required a corresponding increase in maintenance work. Twice as much damage was done to the Flying Fortresses of this group in April as in any previous month. The 13 April attack on Augsburg was especially costly in battle damage to the planes that returned. Three aircraft went down on this mission. All the aircraft that returned required repairs or replacement of parts. Seventeen wing panels and 7 engines were changed. Eleven of the aircraft returning from another mission later in the month were on non-operational status until repairs could be made.

The Group was operating with 59 B-17s at the beginning of April with an additional twelve being received during the month.

The perimeter track and the runways are continually in the process of disintegrating and being repaired. With the limited labor available for the work, the problem of keeping the repairs ahead of the disintegration is a serious one.

Our Wonderful Supporters

At Parham we are really blessed with the support we receive from the ‘other side of the pond’ – the families of ‘our boys’.

Sometimes we are lucky enough to have them visit, and I’m sorry but we do get a bit over excited! It makes all that we do so so worthwhile. It is a joy to see the range of emotions on people’s faces when they see what still survives of the airfield to this day, and to learn how grateful the British people are for the sacrifices their relatives made to keep us free. Some of ‘our boys’ made the ultimate sacrifice but we should not forget the toll several years away from home, in a strange country and daily stress and anxiety had on those that made it home.

One such person was **Harry Ross Robison**. We are extremely grateful for the support we receive from his family.

Harry was born in Hanford, California in June 1916. He enlisted into the Army Air Corps in October 1941 when he was 25. He was posted to Station 153 and flew **35** missions, all with crew 82 between 16 November 1944 and 11 April 1945.

According to his Draft Record, Harry had red hair, hazel eyes, weighed 155lb and was 5ft 10” tall.



SERIAL NUMBER 439	1. NAME (Print) Harry Ross Robison		ORDER NUMBER 333803
2. ADDRESS (Print) 900 Franklin Monterey Monterey Calif			
3. TELEPHONE 6837	4. AGE IN YEARS 24	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Hanford Calif	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. H. H. Harms			8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON mother
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 6928 So. E. 122 Ave. Portland, Multnomah Oregon			
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Pacific Greyhound			
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS San Francisco San Francisco Calif			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. Form 1	(over)	16-17105	Harry Ross Robison (Registrant's signature)

Draft Record (Source Fold3)

Nine of Harry’s missions were flown on #337895 ‘Take It Easy’, six on #339134 ‘Loveable Lass’, five on #46901 and the rest on various planes that were available at the time.

Harry did not have a totally easy time; on 16 March 1945 the Tower Log reports that “at 16:10 Pilot Robison, taxiing to runway 05 for compass swing. Hydraulics

went out on his #3. Aircraft looped around, left wing panel scraping gas truck parked in hardstand!”

Harry passed away on 2 October 1979. His obituary states that he was survived by sisters, children and grandchildren. **We will remember him.**



Back Row L to R:
Ralph E. Rios, Radio; Loran A. Pritchard, Engineer/ Top Turret; Oma B. Cartwright, Tail Gunner; Benjamin L. Gordon, Co-Pilot; Victor C. Apgar, Waist
Front Row L to R:
Eldon G. Marquardt, Navigator; Earl W. Wallace, Ball Turret; Gilbert A. Parks, Bombardier, Harry R. Robison, Pilot



Take It Easy (Source 390th.Org)

Crew 82 (Source 390th.org)

GENERAL SUMMARY - MAY 1944

Twenty missions were flown by the group in May – the largest number flown in any month since the 390th became operational in August 1944. On three days two missions were flown.

A/C losses during the month were unusually heavy. Fourteen B-17s were lost in action, the most the group has lost in any one month. However, when the number of missions flown and the number of aircraft dispatched are considered, the percentage of loss is smaller than that sustained in some of the months when the Luftwaffe was still a potent factor and when friendly escort was not provided for the round trip to target and back again. In October 1943, for example, the group lost 13 A/C – but only seven missions were flown that month and the group was operating on the single unit basis.

Bombing results generally were good to excellent. A factor contributing to better bombing was the fact that many missions were flown with 12 or 14 ship formations, resulting in a much smaller and more compact pattern.

Releasing bombs with the salvo method, with the arming wires tied up, has been made SOP. More bombs have been dropped on the target by this method.

Eight of the month's missions were directed against targets in Germany, 8 in France, 3 in Belgium and 1 in Czecho-Slovakia.

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

APRIL



JACK CHAPMAN

22nd February 1909 - 24th April 1944

Jack was born in Sarasota, Florida and enlisted into the USAAF on 09 April 1942. He trained as a Bombardier and flew 23 missions from Station 153.

On Jack's 23rd mission, just before bombs away, his plane was hit by flak and part of the left wing was torn off. The aircraft then rolled over onto its back with the remainder of the left wing and the bomb bay on fire. The plane exploded in mid-air. No chutes were observed.

Jack is buried with his crew mates at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in Missouri. He was 35.

SERIAL NUMBER 3042	1. NAME (Print) Jack Chapman	ORDER NUMBER 2311
2. ADDRESS (Print) 444 S.W. 2nd St. Miami Dade Fla.		
3. TELEPHONE 3-4639	4. AGE IN YEARS 31	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Sarasota Fla
6. DATE OF BIRTH Feb 22 1909		6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP American
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Carriehou Grant		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Wife
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON Wallohalla S.C. Wallohalla Oconee S.C.		
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Mr Low Fallo		
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 500 W. Flagler Miami Dade Fla		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1		Jack Chapman (Registrant's signature)

AIRMAN OF THE MONTH

MAY



JOSEPH GONOS

1st December 1920 - 8th May 1944

Joseph was born in Marsteller Pennsylvania and enlisted into the USAAF on 05 September 1942. He was the Radio Operator on 22 missions which took off from Station 153.

On 8th May 1944 Joseph and the crew of 42-31603 'Belle of the Brawl' took off from Framlingham on their way to a target in France. The plane was observed, after bombs away, to fall out of formation with No.4 engine smoking. The aircraft was out of control and the bomb bay doors remained open. Two of the crew managed to bail out but Joseph and 6 of his crew were found in the wreckage of the crashed plane.

Joseph is buried in the Normandy American Cemetery. He was 23

HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD									
IDENTIFICATION (Printed) (Name, Rank, Organization, Date, Date of Death, Grade, etc.)									
JOSEPH GONOS T. SGT 569 BOMB SQ 390 BOMB GP (H) PENNSYLVANIA MAY 8 1944 34									
IDENTIFICATION (Handwritten) (Service Number)									
13108721									
INTERMENT DETAILS									
GRAVE	ROW	SPACE	SECTION	MARK	NO.	GRADE	AGE	SEX	RELIGION
2	1		AM (3 OLC) PH	E	18	34			
3508									
MR. JOHN GONOS (FATHER) BOX 233 BARNESBORO, PA.									



Jennie Smith