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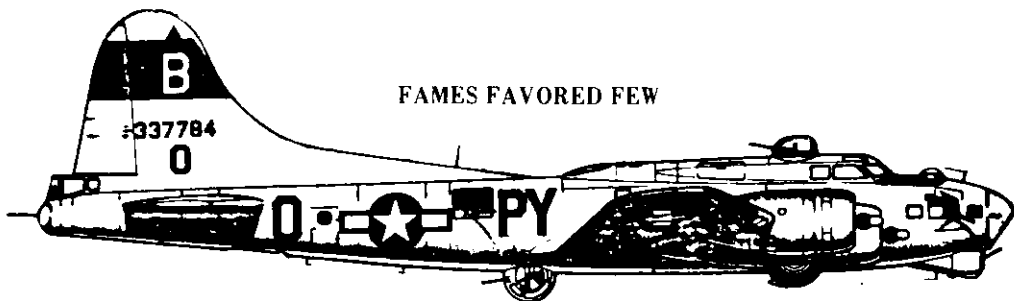
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# 92nd Bombardment Group NEWS



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## PHANTOMS OF THE OPERA by William B. Post

### PART VIII

The B-17's and the P-51's roamed the skies at will. It was becoming a daily occurrence for the siren to wail. I wondered if my 327th squadron was one of them flying by. Would they come and rescue me or blow me to "Kingdom Come"? I had a feeling I'd bought a one way ticket.

I arrived at Ober Mansfield with a limp and healing wounds. It was more like a traditional P.W. camp with a high fence topped by barbed wire and guard towers. It had a death wire three feet inside the fence; step over this wire and you could be shot without warning. I was accompanied by a group of P.W.'s of mixed nationalities. It was a place of minor wounds, men recovering from major wounds and regular non-com P.W.'s. The Germans could not make non-coms work. This irritated them because none of our airmen were privates. They sent Pvt's to work in the salt mines: a horrible place to be. Quite a few men maimed themselves to get into a hospital.

### Weeping Willie

The guards herded us into a large hall. It was filled with double decked wooden bunks. The ceiling held a huge chandelier that must have weighed four tons. It was covered with crystal prisms. The place was originally an opera house. Long tables stood by the windows. The rush was on, as every P.W. wanted a bottom bunk. There was only one left and I gimped along to it. An Australian soldier grabbed me and said, "You don't want that one, mate, Weeping Willie sleeps on top. Here, take mine." And with that he hopped into the upper bunk. "I feel bad taking your bunk, but thanks. What's wrong with Weeping Willie?" I asked. I looked over at him. He was an

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FOLLOWING COPY PROPAGANDA BROADCAST FROM GERMANY HAS BEEN INTERCEPTED QUOTE COMPLICATED FRACTURE OF THE LOWER ARM, THE RIGHT UPPER ARM, BULLET WOUND IN RIGHT SHOULDER AND ALSO IN RIGHT HIP. FUNCTIONAL FOLLOW UP TREATMENTS BEING GIVEN T/SGT WILLIAM B POST JR ASN 12093211 UNQUOTE THIS ARRANGING SUPPLEMENTS ALL PREVIOUS REPORTS STUDE; LEUCH PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL.

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English soldier and looked like he had a mental problem. His eyes kept searching for some danger that wasn't there. "You'll find out. It's a big joke here," the Aussie said. Another group of P.W.'s arrived and the rush was on. A French soldier, in a swirl of dust, claimed the bunk under Weeping Willie.

That night the Aussie leaned over and whispered, "Don't go to sleep." About an hour later, there came a roar as the French soldier cursed in French and English. "You pissed on me, you filthy pig." He jumped on Willie pummeling him. Two P.W.'s grabbed him and led him to the bathroom still cursing. The whole room burst out laughing. It seems Willie had an additional problem of not being able to hold his water. The bunk under Willie was again empty awaiting the next victim.

# Season's Greetings

### Playing Games

To break the monotony and to make the enemy unhappy the P.W.'s played games. When the guards told you to go left; you went right. When they asked a long question in German, you would say, "Huh?" After they repeated it, you would say I don't speak German. A dangerous game was when a guard gave an order in English. You would hesitate a few seconds, as if you were going to refuse the order. You had to watch his hands and his eyes. When his hands tightened on his rifle or his eyes got a crazy look, you would move out saying "Sorry," and act as if you were thinking of something else. It was a matter of timing.

A German sergeant, who looked like Hitler, had my number but unfortunately for him, neither he nor the private, who followed him with a notebook, could speak English. One day, I was lying on my bunk when they blew in and had me nailed. (You were not allowed to lie on your bunk during the day.) He sauntered up to me and shouted, "What are you doing on your bed?" To get up would mean I knew I was doing something wrong, so I stayed put. "Hi!" I said cheerfully. He started screaming at me and his face was turning red. I got scared, he had a luger on his hip. I slowly got up scratching my head like Laurel and Hardy. "I don't speak German," I said apologetically. He kept demanding my name. I kept repeating, "I don't understand German." On the end of every bunk was a blackboard with your name and rank in chalk. The P.W.'s used to congregate around my bunk and had rubbed most of it off. He held it up, looked at it and then turned it sideways. He couldn't make it out. He asked the P.W.'s if anyone spoke German. "No one here speaks German," they chorused in German. The air raid siren sounded and the sergeant and private scampered off. No planes showed up but they were up there somewhere.

### Queen Bee

One day, the Germans brought in an American nurse. She had been shot down behind the lines in a C-47. She caused quite a sensation. They quartered her in officer country. She came down to have a look-see around the camp. Most of the guys started shaving and combing their hair. A few even shined their shoes with spit. She was always encircled by British and American officers. It was like a football huddle with her in the middle. The only way we could see her was by jumping up and down or standing on a bench. There was a lot of pushing and shoving and when one guy fell off a bench, I managed to get up and teeter there. Every way she turned she bumped into an officer. Her hands fluttered like two butterflies in the circle. After all, she was a symbol of apple pie, mom, and the girl you left behind. She was only there a few days, when she was repatriated.

### One Tough Potato

I met a grizzly sergeant from Kentucky. He looked very old to have been flying missions, but he said he flew thirty with the R.A.F. before switching over to the 8th A.F. where he flew another thirty before being shot down. He had a problem. He wouldn't wash and he stunk to high heaven. The Germans complained to the British officer in charge. He came down and ordered the sergeant to wash. The sergeant said he didn't take orders from a blankety-blank stupid Limey. The colonel got eight men and carried him off kicking and screaming like a man

possessed. They dropped him in a tub of water and attempted to wash him with half his clothes still on. Water and curses flew every which way. The eight men walked away to nurse their bruises. The Kentucky sergeant pulled on the rest of his wet clothes and sat dripping on his bunk looking like a wounded wet wildcat.

He still would not wash and was soon as stinky as ever. The Germans again ordered the colonel to wash him. He refused saying that he had eight wounded from the last attempt. The Germans grabbed the sergeant and threw him kicking into a dark potato bin in the cellar. They locked him in there for three days. When they opened the door, there was the sergeant smiling and chewing on a potato. His stomach was bloated from eating a bushel of our precious potatoes. He was dirtier than ever. When they brought him back he looked like a chimney sweep. The Germans gave up on him.

"How'd things go?" I asked. He ignored my question and stared out the window. An old guard in his seventies shuffled by carrying a rifle that seemed too heavy for him. "If my pappy could see what's guarding me, he'd never let me come home," he drawled. His face was hidden by potato dirt. You could only see his eyes and they were all firey-like. He had seen too much for one man.

### One-Eyed Jack and the B-17's

The siren wailed the overhead. Most of the P.W.'s headed for the cellar. A few stayed put. I didn't think the 8th A.F. would bomb a rinky-dink town like this, so I stayed in my bunk. One-eyed Jack was amongst those who stayed. Jack was a British soldier who had an eye shot out. He was P.W. for a long time. It had taken him a year to get the Germans to get him a glass eye. He protected it like it was a crown jewel.

Most of us were lying down when the first batch came down. Windows blew in; plaster fell in clouds of dust; and the giant chandelier swayed back and forth. It was panicsville! The rush was on for the cellar. One-eyed Jack dropped his glass eye on the stairs and bent down looking for it. He wouldn't move. P.W.'s had to go around or over him, which they did with a few curses thrown in. Because of my wounds, I was the last to reach the first floor where the German officers stayed. The second batch came down blowing in more windows. The concussion took my breath away. The floor was a jumble of broken glass and plaster. I looked out the window and saw a little blond boy, about seven, holding on to the outside of the fence. He was screaming in terror. He had on Austrian short pants with suspenders. I limped to the window and shouted to him to go to the shelter. He only cried louder. "Go, go, go," I shouted and pointed. He didn't move. There was no one else around. I could hear more planes coming. I could do nothing. I made my way to the cellar.

I got down to the cellar for the first time. It gave me some satisfaction to see the guards shaking as badly as I. I sat under a large beam, which I thought would hold the rest of the place up, unless it broke. I moved to a large fireplace. I sat in there. After all, chimneys are the last to go, but I could be buried alive in this chimney. I moved to a corner and so it went with my mind driving me crazy.

The all clear sounded and we went upstairs. The little boy was gone. I don't know what happened to him. On

the stairs, where I was standing, I found a bomb splinter. I dug it out and still have it. We finally cleaned the mess up.

### **Verboten**

One day I was on the first floor, when I saw a door with a sign over it. It said "Verboten." The door was a short cut to the yard. I looked all around and seeing no one, I stepped through it and right into the arms of the sergeant who looked like Hitler. "Ah ha!" he gloated. Grabbing my arm, he hustled me off to the captain's office. The sergeant excitedly told him of my dastardly act. The captain, who spoke perfect English, said I was going to be sent to the city jail on bread and water for ten days. (Every man who went to the city jail was on crutches. We took the tops off and filled the tubes with cigarette. At the jail you could bribe the guards and get more food than we got here. The only trouble was the jail was near the train station.)

I told the captain I didn't think it was fair. "Why not?" he asked sharply. "That sign is in German and I don't know what it means," I said in an injured manner. Shirley Temple would have said it just like that. His voice rose as he said, "You mean to say you don't know 'Verbotten' means forbidden?" He was very skeptical. "So! That's what it means— forbidden!" I said as if relishing a new word.

The sergeant, who couldn't follow our conversation, kept swinging his head back and forth between us like he was watching a tennis match. The captain told the sergeant to write forbidden under Verboten. I was tempted to say I'd be glad to help, but when I looked into his eyes, there was nothing but hate there. I'd have to be very careful. I was on his hit list.

I was soon to be sent to Unter-Mansfield, where I met the SS, a drunken captain, and the house of cards collapsed, but that's another story.

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## **UK TRIP SCHEDULED FOR 1987**

Planning is now in progress for a return trip of the group to Podington scheduled for late May and early June. This will essentially be a repeat of the 1985 trip and will be again handled by Tamarac Travel Agency. Everyone will receive a brochure from Tamarac and if the interest is as great as indicated, I would advise getting in your reservations to Tamarac as soon as possible. This return visit is expected to be filled with those who were unable to make or missed the 85 trip. A few from the 85 trip have indicated they will sign up again.

The tentative program as furnished by the UK committee is as follows: Depart US on Thursday, May 28. Party will be met and bussed to Bedford and will stay at the Moat and Swan Hotels. A Briefing will be held Friday night at the Moat by the UK Committee. On Saturday, the group will go to Podington for a re-dedication service, a buffet lunch and Airfield visit. A Banquet is in store that evening in Bedford. Sunday the group will visit Madingley Cemetery near Cambridge for the Memorial Day service with other 8th AF Groups. A wreath will be laid for the 92nd. There will also be visits to Cambridge or Duxford depending on how the group wants to split.

Monday's activities are still in the planning stage and may contain trips to Shuttlesworth Vintage Aviation Collection, etc. On Tuesday the 2nd of June we depart Bedford for London via Hendon Air Museum (Battle of Britain). We will stay at the Tara Hotel in the Knightsbridge area for three nights. Tamarac will oversee all transfers of baggage, etc. After London you are on your own if you desire a side trip such as the Rhine Cruise, Scotland Trip, etc. This will also be arranged thru Tamarac. Those of you interested let the Secretary know so I can publish your names in the next issue as some of you may want to team up on side trips as was done on the first UK trip.

ONE NOTE OF CAUTION: Last year a number of people turned up at the hotel on the Friday evening who were not booked on the tour but had come entirely under their own arrangements. Some went in to dinner, thus swelling the numbers. They were also present in the village on Saturday which could have caused embarrass-

ment with the local arrangements, particularly the buffet, had the villagers not foreseen that numbers might increase and allowed extras. As a result, the following policy will be in effect: namely, PERSONNEL TRAVELING ON THEIR OWN WILL BE REQUIRED TO NOTIFY THE UK COMMITTEE 30 DAYS IN ADVANCE THAT THEY WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE AND WILL BE EXPECTED TO MAKE A SMALL CONTRIBUTION TOWARD THE EXTRA COST.

I believe this is a fair policy as the Committee must have reliable info for planning purposes. Advance notices indicate that just as many are planning to go as on the previous visit.

The names and phone numbers of the UK Committee are as follows:

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NOTE: If calling from the USA eliminate the first "0."

REMEMBER: IF YOU PLAN TO VISIT PODINGTON IN 1987 AND ARE NOT ON THE TAMARAC TOUR, I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO WRITE ONE OF THE UK MEMBERS LISTED ABOVE. THEIR ADDRESSES ARE LISTED IN THE ROSTER.