

# MEN OF

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# THE 57<sup>TH</sup>

*Women of the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing,  
Army Air Force in World War II*

Winter 2024

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Penny postcard showing an early version of the beloved B-25 Mitchell Medium Bomber.

The description on the back of the card reads:

*The North American B-25. Five men man this 300-mile-an-hour medium bomber, now in mass-production for the Air Corps. Two Cyclone engines twist up 3,400 horsepower; the landing gear is the new tricycle pattern.*

See more B-25 postcards later in this issue.

# 57TH BOMB WING ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR 2023

Title	Name
President	Richard (Dick) Reed (340th/486th Veteran)
1st Vice President	Gregory Wichtowski, Jr (310st/381st - Leonard Wichtowski)
2nd Vice President	Pam Cosbey (310th/379th - Bernard T. Peters)
Secretary	Patty Koenitzer (310th/380th - James Moffitt)
Treasurer	Louise Bourg (340th/489th - Harry DeBoer)
Web Admin/Editor	Dan Setzer (340th/HQ - Hymie Setzer)
Membership Coordinator	Linda Buechling (340th/489th - Millard E Rives)
Wing Historian /Archivist	Dan Setzer (340th/HQ - Hymie Setzer)



Dick Reed



Len Wichtowski



Bernie Peters



James Moffitt



Harry DeBoer



Hymie Setzer



Millard Rives



## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER - DICK REED 340TH/486TH

So sorry Claire and I missed Kansas City., We are at the age of "airport fatigue" - too damn old to change planes en route to destination, as was the problem traveling to KC. Let's hope the next get-together will be non-stop. If so, we will try our best to get there.

I understand big changes are happening with the old 57<sup>th</sup>. I will be 100 years old this year and I think I was one of the younger members of the group. The last few reunions I attended, only two or three vets, including me, showed up. I'm sure these were big disappointments to everybody. Oh yes, the years do go by!

Danny Setzer has furnished me with many copies of the past "Men of the 57th" publications. It is just a pleasure for me to go through them There are so many great stories, it's hard to believe. We live now in a retirement complex here in Florida and I have passed several copies of these stories around. And they are much appreciated and have been asked for more. I really like doing this.

Speaking of our present quarters, this is quite a place, I might brag. There are several retired pilots, one B-26 guy from our war and other civilians from major airlines. Also a 3 star General from Vietnam and a WW-2 soldier who loves telling about his conversation with General George Patton during the Battle of the Bulge. We do like living here,

We hope to see all of you at the next reunion, wherever that might be ( hopefully a non-stop from West Palm Beach) and a Happy New Year to all.

Finally, I want to thank all of you people f or keeping this organization going!

Dick REED



Chris Gilley Photo



Bombardier, Dick Reed



Patch for the 486th BS

# Final Veterans Reunion in Kansas City

After 53 consecutive years of reunions, the veterans and families of the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing held their final reunion in Kansas City.

Kansas City was selected because that is where most of the B-25 Mitchell bombers, much beloved by the men who flew them, were built.

Three veterans were able to attend, Bob Stangier (310<sup>th</sup> BG, 381<sup>st</sup> BS), Charles Wagamon (340<sup>th</sup> BG, 486<sup>th</sup> BS), and Paul Young (321<sup>st</sup> BG, 446<sup>th</sup> BS). Our Association President, Dick Reed (340<sup>th</sup> BG, 486<sup>th</sup> BS) was scheduled to attend, but had to cancel at the last minute.

In addition to our veterans three lovely ladies, all Rosie the Riveters who worked at the B-25 plant building the bombers, also attended.



The Minnesota Wing of the Commemorative Air Force flew in their B-25, “Miss Mitchell,” and made seats available for purchase so that attendees could take an unforgettable ride in the same type of aircraft their fathers and grandfathers flew.



The beautiful Miss Mitchell set to go. She carries the livery of the 310<sup>th</sup> BG, 380<sup>th</sup> BS in tribute to the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing.

At the airfield Dan Desko, Founder of the B-25 History Project, gave a fascinating history of the B-25 aircraft and its production at the Kansas City plant.



Dan Desko with three of the women who worked at the KC plant building the B-25's during WW2.

Our veterans were also honored by the presence of representatives of the 340<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Group.

The 340<sup>th</sup> FTG was represented by Col. Kyle Goldstein, 340<sup>th</sup> FTG commander, Maj. Matt Quy, instructor pilot who is also a member of the Commemorative Air Force and flew “Miss Mitchell” in to the KC airport, and Chief Master Sgt. Warisar Villarreal, 340<sup>th</sup> FTG senior enlisted leader.

See the article on page 11 for more about the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG and their participation in this event.

On Sunday the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Association held its final business meeting where it was agreed to dissolve the current Association, and form a new entity, the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Historical Society, to continue the work of preserving the history and memory of the achievements and the individuals who served their country when called upon.

It was a very emotional moment when the gavel came down for the last time for an organization which had been in existence for 53 years. Many of the second and third generation members had attended the annual reunions since they were children, coming with their parents.

Bob and Hans Stangier had brought a bottle of whisky to the reunion, offering it for raffle as a fund raiser for the Association. However, since we did not have a fund-raising event for this reunion, the bottle was put to better use.

In conscious imitation of the Doolittle Raiders, and in memory of the shot of whisky offered to the combat crews when they returned from a mission, the golden liqueur was divided into shot glasses for the entire membership.

The business meeting ended with a final toast to the veterans attending, and to those old soldiers who had faded away over the intervening years.



# Throwing in the Towel

We were contacted by an aviation historian about two photos he found on the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing website.

The photo shows a German-made BF-109 in color.

The historian had more information about this aircraft and how it came to be photographed and a part of our collection. He is from Croatia, and pointed out that this Messerschmitt BF-109 G-14 “black 4” carries the markings of the Croatian Air Force.

He tells us that it landed in Falconara, Italy on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1945.

In our accounts of this incident a number of details were skewed. Our guys thought the aircraft was Czechoslovakian.

Here is the description in the “Remembrances” book published by the Wing after the war:

“The men of the 321st were quite aware that the War was drawing to a close in late April of 1945 as combat missions became less difficult. The men seldom if ever saw enemy fighters, and even the flak seemed lighter and inaccurate.

At least one 445th crew lived through an experience which convinced them that soon they would be going home.

Flying out of the Rimini area, ship 742 (Winnie Mae) picked up speed to join the formation on the way to a target north of Bolzano. Tail Gunner Jack Osborn (Muskegon, Michigan) and Engineer Gunner Ed Krauk (Cleves, Ohio), both spotted the ME 109 at the same time.

Neither man could believe it. What was a German fighter doing so close to a 57th Bomb Wing base? The fighter flew along, out of range, parallel with Winnie Mae, for a few minutes, with both B-25 gunners ready to fire if the German came close enough.

When the ME 109 peeled off and away, the two gunners agreed to say nothing. Who would believe them?

When the mission was completed and Winnie Mae returned to the base the mystery was solved. Parked near the tower was that ME 109 with its cannon sticking out of the prop hub. It seems that this plane, with a Czechoslovakian pilot, flew across the Adriatic from Yugoslavia to surrender at the nearest Air Force Base. That base happened to be the 321st.

The strangest aspect of this incident is that not one man on that mission reported seeing the ME 109 to the tower or at debriefing following the mission.

A few Weeks later these same men were on the way home to the States, thus the story of the ME-109 was conveniently forgotten.

Edward J. Krauk, 445th”

The entry in the War Diary of the 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron was short, but more accurate:

445th BS War Diary: Much excitement created on the line today. A Messerschmitt 109 landed at base. No one observed it en route because it circled the field and dropped right in. The pilot was a Yugoslavian serving in the Luftwaffe. Two theories are advanced; (1) that he was lost and low on fuel, (2) that he just “threw in the towel.” Perhaps reason No. 2 is more likely.

The Croatian historian, Tomislav Haraminčić, also commented on a second photo, although we do not have the story to go along with it:

The second photo is the Croatian Bücker Bü181 coded “7415” which landed near Foggia on the 3rd September 1944.

He was particularly delighted with the photo of the Messerschmitt stating:

“This is the first ever known photo of this aircraft in color!”



## Dining in Rome

This must have been a very popular restaurant for the GI's visiting Rome on R&R. We have two photos from two very different sources showing the interior of the same restaurant but from different sides of the same dining room.



Sgt. Hymie Setzer, 340th BG HQ, on left front looking into camera.

Below: H. Gene Stanley, 321st BG, 445th BS, center.



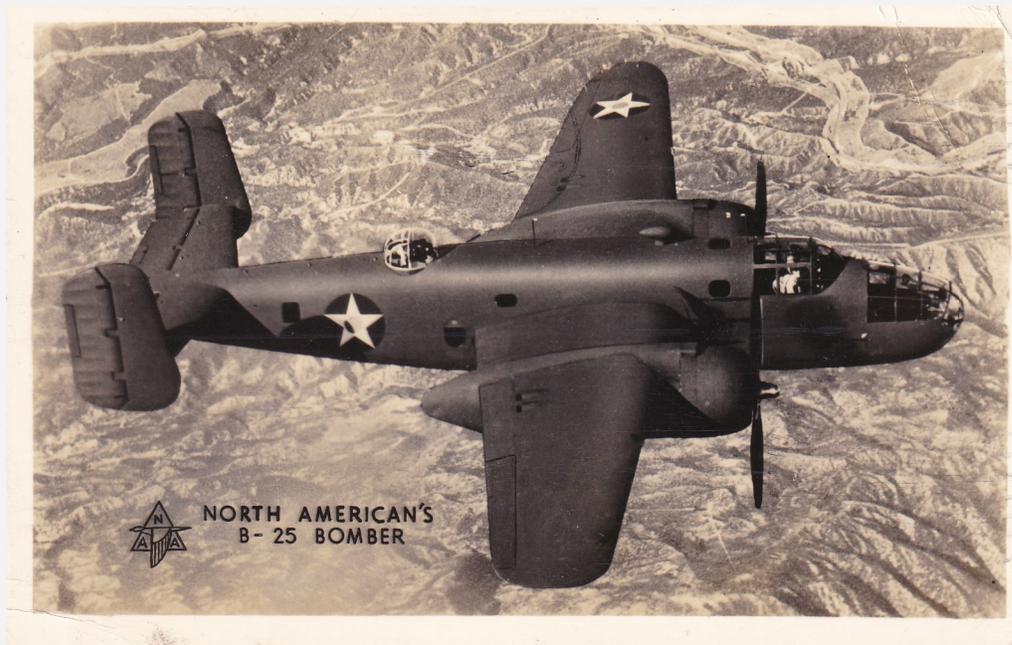
# Bomber Postcards

Harken back to a time when it only cost a penny to mail a postcard. And what better postcard to send than one that shows off the advanced weapon of war that you will be flying.



U. S. Twin-Engine Army Bomber with Escort Pursuit Plane in Flight Above Clouds

*[From the collection of Louise DeBoer Bourg]*



# Bomber Postcards



*[From the collection of Joan DeBoer Heath]*

# The 340<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Group

The Veterans and the Members of the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Association were especially honored by the participation of the 340<sup>th</sup> Flying Training Group.

Members of the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG flew in from their base in Texas to celebrate the day at the Wheeler Downtown Airport in Kansas City.

The Minnesota Wing of the Commemorative Air Force flew their vintage B-25, “Miss Mitchell,” to the Wheeler airfield also.

As it happens, Major Matt Quy, who is an instructor pilot with the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG, is also a member of the Commemorative Air Force and piloted “Miss Mitchell” to Kansas City.

Also honoring our veterans were Colonel Kyle Goldstein, 340<sup>th</sup> FTG commander and Chief Master Sgt. Warisar Villarreal, 340<sup>th</sup> FTG senior enlisted leader.



*[L-R] Maj. Matt Quy, Col. Kyle Goldstein, M/Sgt. Warisar Villarreal*

In a short ceremony the representatives of the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG Command Team made a number of presentations to our veterans.

Each veteran received a Certificate of Appreciation, a logo shirt, and the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG's newest "Avengers" shoulder patch.

"The "Avengers" patch was created and adopted as the unit's morale patch to honor the legacy and identity of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group." [Quoted from the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG website.]

The 340<sup>th</sup> FTG has its own official shoulder patch of course:



But they have also created a unit morale patch, allowed to be worn on special occasions. This morale patch is a tribute to the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group:



Notice how they have conserved the lightning bolt and bomb and used a head-on view of a B-25 to complete the "A" for "Avengers."

You will recall that "Avengers" is the nickname the 340<sup>th</sup> BG selected for itself in 1943.

The 340<sup>th</sup> FTG takes the legacy of the 340<sup>th</sup> BG very seriously.

I would refer you to the podcast they created labeled "Episode 1 – What's in a Name?"

You can find it on the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG website here:

[Avengers Podcast – What's in a Name](#)

We would like to express our appreciation to the members of the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG who took time out to participate in our final reunion.

In addition to thanking Major Quay, Colonel Goldstein and Chief Master Sergeant Villarreal, we would also like to extend a special thanks to Jet Fabara, also a member of the 340<sup>th</sup> FTG who handled the video, and photography for the FTG.

Jet Fabara produced a two-minute video which was posted on the FTG's Facebook page. You can find it here:

[57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Association Final Reunion](#)



# Tracers Are Tricky

*The following article is found in the March 1945 War Diary of the 380th Bomb Squadron.*

*A tracer is an incendiary bullet that is loaded along with regular bullets in a machine gun belt. Usually, every fifth round would be a tracer.*

*The idea is that it would give the gunner a visual cue as to where his bullet were going. However, the use was controversial.*

“Our tracers were going right through those enemy fighters,” said the gunners after the last fighter attack, but “Jerry still got in and picked off one of our bombers.” If those tracers had actually been going through the enemy fighters then all of our bombers would have returned to the base. You cannot sight accurately with tracers no matter how simple it looks.

ing fighters. On the other hand it makes sighting less accurate, and decreases fire power.

Take this question of sighting accuracy; a high ranking officer once thought he could sight accurately with tracers, so the gunnery officer of the group linked a belt of straight tracer ammunition and took



*B-25 firing tracers to demonstrate the awesome firepower of the Mitchell*

That tracer controversy has been going on ever since there was an Air Force, and it will probably continue for a long time to come. What it all boils down to is this: tracers probably improves a gunner’s morale, and sometimes has a psychological effect on attack-

the high ranking officer to the firing range. The tracers seemed to be blazing thru the target even though this officer was firing from a distance of 600 yards, but here was the result: “no hits.” The tracers, which seemed to be hitting the target were going over.

## TRACERS ARE TRICKY (cont'd)

If optical illusion is deceptive when firing on a stationary target, you can figure out how misleading it is when you fire from a moving plane, and add the effect of apparent trail. You would swear the tracers were passing through the enemy fighter, but actually the tracers may be going around the enemy fighter or burning out in front of it. Even if tracers did give the exact location of the bullet, it would still be stale information; it tells you what happened to the bullet you fired a minute ago, but it doesn't tell you if the bullet you're firing right now is aimed correctly. On top of that, tracers have a much larger bullet drop; at long range, even if you were sure that tracers were hitting the enemy plane, your API [*Armor Piercing Incendiary*] rounds might be going over it. You shoot a lot more accurately when you use your sights, not your tracers. The minute you jerk your head up over the sights to look at your tracers, your accuracy goes down.

Other fundamental objections to tracers is that it's a shot wasted in as far as bringing down the enemy fighter is concerned. Tracers have very little penetrating power, and almost no incendiary value. Except in short range firing, the chances are that only a few of your bullets will hit the enemy; of those few bullets the tracer shots are practically useless. It takes API to damage.

That's the chief song and dance against tracers. The argument for it runs like this:

There's no doubt that gunners like tracers; they feel better when they see their guns spitting tracers in the general direction of the enemy aircraft. It's not easy to keep your mind on your job when an enemy fighter is drilling in, so plenty of people figure if a fellow is happier with tracers, he's entitled to it. Another argument for tracers is that it warns the crews on the other bombers, and points out the direction of the attack. Then there is always the possibility that tracers will make enemy fighters break off at long range; it has happened. It probably depends on the enemy pilots, and on the type of formation they're flying. Some captured German pilots have even said that they like to see tracers, because it shows up any gun positions that are not firing.

So, that's the story – tracers are good for morale, but bad for sighting and firepower. Which is more important? Use your sights, not your tracers; the tracers are in there to upset the enemy's aiming; **DON'T LET IT UPSET YOURS.**



*Edward Ennis, 321st BG, 447th BS, getting ready for action.*

# Song of the Bombardiers

**THE SONG OF THE BOMBARDIERS**

Lyric by JACK SCHOLL  
A.S.C.A.P. **Marziale**

From The R.K.O. Picture  
"BOMBARDIERS"

Music by M. K. JEROME  
A.S.C.A.P.

We're read-y to make a flight, The gun-ner is at his sight, The bom-ber is fuel'd and read-y to go, The weath-er is clear to - night, A typ - i - cal "bom - ber moon". The mo-tors are all in tune, The pi - lot is in the cock - pit, So we've got to get go - in' soon, To

**Refrain**  
roar a - way with the bom-bardiers... Rack up the eggs, line up the "goalen goose,"

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12

Soar a - way with the bom-bar-diers, We're head-in' for the spot to turn 'em loose. High or low, in rain or snow, or heath a trop-i-cal sun. Off we go, look out be-low, We've got a job to be done With bombs, bombs bombs dropped as souvenirs, From the U. S. bom-bar - diers... So diers...

**ALTERNATE REFRAIN**  
Night or day, in rain or snow, Or skies as clear as a bell. "Bombs away" means "off we go." To give 'em plenty of hell With bombs, bombs, bombs dropped as souvenirs, From the U. S. bombardiers.

13

From the "Air Force Airs Songbook" published 1943. [Joan DeBoer Heath Collection]

This bombardier song was featured in the 1943 RKO movie *Bombardier*. The movie introduced audiences to the specialized training that bombardiers underwent. The aircraft featured were primarily B-17s.



See the trailer for the movie here: [Bombardier Trailer](#)

## The B-25 Mitchell was Resilient

The crews who flew the B-25 loved the aircraft for its ability to get them home.

It could take an incredible amount of damage and still stay in the air.

Our Italian friend, the historian Claudio Mischi, sent us this photo which he collected from the Internet some time ago. We believe it to be ship #76 of the 319th Bombardment Group, 440th Bomb Squadron.



### Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer

Our copies of the War Diaries of the 319th Bomb Group are fragmented and we have been unable to capture an account of the action this aircraft was part of when it took this hit.

# Report on Lt. William B. Berry

310th Bombardment Group, 380th Bomb Squadron

**FROM: Capt. M. Brutsche, Commanding Mission "Scorpion." No. 1 Special Force. Special Ops Mediterranean, C.M.F.**

*[We tend to think of the men of the 57th as fighting uniquely from the air. However, when the occasion arose, the men of the 57th could acquit themselves well fighting on the ground.]*

*During the war, the British and Americans both had operatives stationed behind enemy lines. Their mission was to support and coordinate local partisan activities, and to assist downed air crews to escape enemy territory and return safely to their units.*

*Needless to say, this was extremely dangerous work.*

*This report is found in the May 1945 War Diary of the 380th Bomb Squadron.]*

Lt. Berry was shot down in the Brenner area in December 1944 [*December 10<sup>th</sup> on mission to Dolce Fill*]. He contacted British mission commanded by Capt. Orr-Ewing, who helped to put him on his way out through Yugoslavia. He proceeded east and contacted Major Wilkinson in Asiago, area, who also helped him on his way until he, with a party of eight other shot down pilots and air crews, came into my area and contacted me in the St. Antonio area on approximately 10, January.

As there was a slight hitch in the escape arrangements organized by Major Benucci, OSS [*US Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of the CIA*], the party requested me to take them under my wing and endeavor to get them past Cavallo, and on towards the next British mission commanded by Capt. Mosdell in the Tramonte area, and thus finally away on their route home.

Owing to snow conditions, I was unable to leave the Piave area until 12 February, and I took with me, out of the party of airmen, Lts. Berry and MacLanahan. Owing to the difficulties of travel, it was impossible for me to take more than two at one time, and it was my idea to have them passing through me at intervals of four to five days in twos and threes.

Berry and MacLanahan arrived with me at Cansiglio on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, and after having organized guides for them, I dispatched them east a few days later. On approximately 20 February, Berry returned to my HQ on Cansiglio and informed me that his companion had fallen down 1500 feet along with one partisan guide, down the side of Monte Cavallo.

MacLanahan had been quite seriously hurt, but had been pulled up the mountain again by Berry and taken to a partisan hut, and there they were patching him up and generally looking after him.

Taking two factors into consideration viz 1/ The quite appalling snow and weather conditions 2/ The fact that the Barcis area was being strongly patrolled by enemy troops, thus cutting the route, I advised Berry not to reattempt to get through until at least the weather had improved, and it was possible to find more reliable guides. He desired to make a final attempt alone, but I refused to accept the responsibility of allowing him to leave until I could see a reasonable chance of getting through.

In the meantime, more airmen were piling up on me at my HQ, and I was forced to disperse them around various partisan formations, in order to insure their safety in the event of an enemy drive which was threatening daily.

I was so impressed by the character, energy and initiative of Berry that I offered him a job with my mission until such time that either we were overrun by Allied troops or some other opportunity presented itself of getting him home safely. As both these possibilities appeared remote at the time, he was straight away considered part of the mission, and base informed accordingly. I was very short handed at the time and endeavoring to open up new dropping grounds, and arm and organize the partisans for what we then termed our Spring Offensive,. The mission then consisted of myself, Capt. Tolson, Berry, and wireless operators, plus Pte. Black (NZE) and Sgt.

Gurka (USAAF). The latter two were helping with odd jobs in a general way.

Above is how Berry happened to join the mission – the following is a general account of the work he did with me until finally overrun by Allied troops towards the end of the campaign. It is naturally impossible to give full details, as diaries were not kept, as they were insecure.

Berry's first task was to arm and organize the Osoppo [*A region in Italy*] bde [?] in the Cavallo area. He organized the dropping ground and received successfully three sorties, recovered all stores under very bad snow conditions. The partisans were rather reluctant to work for thirty-six hours in ten feet of snow looking for badly placed drops, but Berry was always out, often by himself, looking for missing stuff. I remember, at the end of one rather tiring sortie, hours later, Berry turned up carrying a sack of boots on his back which had been one of the rather famous "free drops," which were usually quite impossible to find. His absolutely tireless example to partisans he was with, most definitely inspired all concerned to greater efforts. Having finished with the Osoppo area, Berry took over the Pizzoc area. Up to the end, he received twenty-six bodies successfully, and innumerable stores sorties. His area was almost continually under shell fire, and most difficult in all respects, as they were being constantly attacked by enemy forces, and thus were in an almost permanent state of alarm. Berry succeeded in keeping the partisans calmly under control, and became most popular with all. Once again, his incredible energy came to the fore; he covered mountains as if he enjoyed it.

During this period, a large number of Allied personnel were arriving in the area from hurt aircraft, and presented a problem of dispersal, feeding and clothing. Naturally, conditions were not ideal, and morale of these personnel was inclined occasionally to lag. Berry would make tours of these people, which may be described as "morale raising tours," and generally kept everyone from feeling too depressed about the

general position. Once again, his exceptional character came to the fore, and in this respect he was also invaluable, as he could talk to a great percentage of the personnel in their own language, and enabled me to overcome a very difficult problem. As long as Berry continued his work, it was quite impossible for others to set up large scale moaning.

With regard to fighting and sabotage, he was impossible to suppress.

He took a prominent part in the successful ambush of eighty-five enemy, where all except one were either killed or captured. Berry distinguished himself with a rifle, and proved to all that his stories of hunting in America were justified. He also took part in attacks on local enemy garrisons, and was always out hunting for trouble at the slightest opportunity.

Berry's war did not finish when he landed by parachute in the Brenner area. When he saw it was quite impossible to make his way out, he continued his fight on the ground with the partisans. He was a tremendous asset to my mission in every way, and a credit to his country and force. With our combined efforts, the Nino Nanetti Division was finally organized into a powerful fighting force, which was proved on the final day, when the Division came down from the mountains and accounted for approximately eleven thousand Germans and one thousand trucks, including armored cars, and successfully blocked the Fadalte pass, preventing the enemy from escaping into Austria. During March and April, the "Spring Offensive" reached its climax. Sabotage and attacks were continuous daily.

Success would naturally have been achieved in any case, but without Lt. Berry's magnificent assistance, I doubt whether it would have been achieved so quickly. If it were possible, I would like to insist that this officer should receive recognition for his distinguished services with me in the Field from 10 January 1945 until 2 May 1945.



*Partisans of the Nino Nanetti Division*

# Military Jargon

## Origins and Definitions of some Common Army Terms

### **Aerodrome:**

The word aerodrome derives from Ancient Greek ἀήρ (aēr), air, and δρόμος (drómos), road or course, literally meaning air course. An ancient linguistic parallel is hippodrome (a stadium for horse racing and chariot racing), derived from ἵππος (híppos), horse, and δρόμος (drómos), course. A modern linguistic parallel is velodrome, an arena for velocipedes. Αεροδρόμιο is the word for airport in Modern Greek, which transliterates as aerodromio.

In British military usage, the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War, and the Royal Air Force in the First and Second World Wars, used the term—it had the advantage that their French allies, on whose soil they were often based, and with whom they co-operated, used the cognate term aérodrôme.

### **Hangar Queen:**

If it were an automobile, we could call it a lemon. Hangar Queen is an aircraft that always seems to have mechanical problems of one sort or another, and spends more time in the hangar being repaired than it does on the flight line.

### **Mae West:**

Personal flotation device also known as a life vest. Some people claimed to see a similarity between the inflated vest and the chest of the famous actress/comedienne of the 1930's Mae West.



This writer remains neutral on the subject.

# Military Jargon (cont'd)

## Origins and Definitions of some Common Army Terms

### **May Day:**

The "mayday" procedure word was conceived as a distress call in the early 1920s by Frederick Stanley Mockford, officer-in-charge of radio at Croydon Airport, England. He had been asked to think of a word that would indicate distress and would easily be understood by all pilots and ground staff in an emergency. Since much of the air traffic at the time was between Croydon and Le Bourget Airport in Paris, he proposed the term "mayday", the phonetic equivalent of the French m'aidez ("help me") or m'aider (a short form of venez m'aider, "come [and] help me"). [Source: Wikipedia]

### **Nickel:**

When our bombers were sent out to drop propaganda leaflets instead of bombs, it was referred to as a "Nickeling" mission. In 1939 the British began running operations to drop leaflets behind enemy lines. The code name for the operation was "Nickel." The Americans adopted the term from the British. Eventually, nickel also came to refer to the leaflets themselves.

### **Roger Wilco:**

Used in radio communications. In the days of the telegraph, operators would respond to a message with the letter "R" which was short for "Received." When voice communications came along the "Alpha, Baker, Charlie" code was developed to remove the ambiguity between similar sounding letters of the alphabet. "Roger" was the code word for the letter "R," and was the abbreviation for the phrase: "Message Received."

"Wilco" is short for "Will Comply."

Roger Wilco = "Message Received and Understood. I will comply with the instructions."

### **Sortie:**

"Sortie" is the French word for "Exit." When one aircraft leaves the field that counts as one "sortie." It is a better measure of a squadron's engagement as opposed to "mission." A mission might consist of a box of six aircraft, or as much as three boxes totaling 18 bombers.

Thus, stating that the squadron flew 18 sorties on a mission is a better measure of the squadron's involvement.

### **Window:**

The aluminum-faced paper (chaff) dropped to confuse enemy radar. Adopted from the British code name for the device.

# Bravery

*We all rightly admire the bravery of the combat crews who went up and faced the threat of enemy flak and fighters 50, 60, 70 times.*

*But, as a someone once said, "Bravery is being the only one who knows you're afraid."*

*Writing decades after the war, Frederick U. Nelson, S/Sgt. Bombardier with the 310<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, 381<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron, still vividly recalled what it was like preparing for a mission.*

*This is an excerpt from his combat diary:*

## FORWARD

This is what it was personally like for me in the time periods between getting out to the aircraft and getting off the ground. To me it was always quite stressful since I was blessed with an active imagination and as the mission totals rolled up there were more and more events to imagine and be stressed about.

Ghisonaccia, Corsica

Late afternoon – 22 June - 1944

Dust and exhaust fumes rasp my throat and screaming gears batter my hearing as the combat crew truck jolts down the rocky Corsican road toward the scattered line of aircraft hardstands. Encased in his flight gear next to me, Bill is singing "Lili Marlene," off key as usual and I grin, recalling where I had first heard it. Then the crowding memories of the heat and dust of the Tunisian summer, the Khanseens dancing across the Majardah River valley, the long white beaches and the incredibly blue water off Cap Bon all tug at my consciousness. I remember too, the many missions before this one, shivering in the blackness of the pre-dawn briefings, the slamming recoil of airborne cannon fire, the leaping clamor of a caliber .50 in my hands and the surging upward lift to "Little Joe" as four thousand pounds of high explosive salvo loose from its racks. Memories ebb and flow across my mind and lie like the dust in my mouth – The smell and taste of cordite when the flak is tracking close

– a red-gold Algerian sunset flaming across the poppy covered low hills and glinting from the shattered bloodstained Plexiglas turret dome of a bomber bellied into the dirt along the runway – cool water and white sand hot against my chest beside the racing mountain stream that borders the squadron area – Vin Rouge, a whole jerry can full and how funny everyone was and how awful the next day.... Brakes screech and dust wraps us in a choking cloud. "Zero eight seven's crew, all out!" We jump down and lug our gear to the aircraft. There she sits, a gull winged B-25-J, squatting heavily on her wheels, brooding darkly in the late afternoon sunshine.

I swing my parachute pack up through the forward hatch and duck back into the open bomb bay. Keerist! Look at them! Six one thousand pound armor piercing weapons for the mountain Bridges at Vernio, six bombs, six fuses, six safety pins. I clamber awkwardly up into the bay, bruising my arm on the sharp fins. It is dark and close up behind the long fat bombs, there is a combination smell of hy-

draulic fluid, fuel and sweat, all the odors of a new aircraft and the ever strange reek of high explosive. Six pins, count 'em again.

“Hey Bob, here’s Six!”

The bomb bay doors clamp shut with a sigh of released pressure and the waiting begins. A glance at my watch; 1835 hours, twenty minutes till we crank engines, twenty minutes to think and remember – the tension winds tighter in my belly like twisting a big key in a small doll. I wander aimlessly around the hardstand kicking at stones and trying to rub my hands dry. This is Ralph’s old spot – Christ – Ralph! - fifty feet off the water with the left engine sheeted in flame – not a chance – and that 379<sup>th</sup> ship, an 88 right square in the gut – her tail section like a falling leaf – the wreckage dribbling down the sky – one chute only – knock it off, Knock it Off! Ten minutes left. My shirt is sticking to my back and I can’t spit. .... Wonder what happened to Schwindle over Piombino – straight into the ground and all those bombs....! Christ! Think of something else!

Right over there by the runway is where Smitty’s ship stopped, wonder how he is.... His left leg was really a mess when they got him out of that turret and the radio compartment floor .... Like sticking pigs... blood all over Hell... nearly a month ago...

Only four minutes left till engine start now, four minutes, twenty miles – initial point to target, straight and level – the longest, damndest four minutes on this Earth – your heart choking you and the flak barrages kicking the ship... God!!

Sweat trickles down my glasses...

“Engine Time!” says the pilot, “Let’s Go!” Killian [*Robert F.*] disappears up the ladder, and I follow him into the aircraft. The hatch slams shut behind us and in the wringing silence there is the rustle of gabardine on canvas, the snick of phone jacks seating home, a clatter of safety belt latches on armor plate, rising

moans from the inverters and a pungent smell of the voltage regulators as the battery switches snap on.

“Clear Left!” The starter issues a winding scream, the long propeller blades whip through when Bob hits the ‘Mesh’ and the engine fires up with a clanking roar, shaking the whole aircraft while the thick white smoke billows out of her lower stacks.

“Clear Right!” The low sun glitters off the blades, now it is kicking over and its deep throated barking is added to the general noise level.

The Crew Chief is saluting us with circled thumb and forefinger, the way Ralph did on that first gunnery run into San Stephano harbor and I haven’t liked that gesture since.

There goes the Flight Leader racketing past on the taxiway, with his left wingman nosing the dust. Our ship groans heavily out of the hardstand as Killian powers it up onto the track and we rumble on down to the run up area with the ship curtsying clumsily as brakes are applied while the dust drives past in great blinding clouds. Now we swing around on the edge of the runway and lock the brakes, the noise drowns all as we check our engines.

Mag checks; Right – Left – Both, dropping 50, OK. Prop Cycle down and up, OK. Power check; 40 inches of manifold pressure, steady and solid, OK. Power down, Flaps one quarter – Boosters on – Cross Feed on – Generators on – Cowl Flaps full open – Props full increase – Brake and System pressures OK – Engine gauges in the green – everything OK – throttle back and wait – don’t think – Don’t Think!

An arching green flare from the tower! 1915 hours. A blast of dirt and stones and a wall of dust hurricanes over us as the Flight Leader bellows down the metal mat runway and lifts heavily into the air. Left wingman moves into his slot... now he is howling down the line, his exhausts spouting blue flame and we swing into

takeoff position as he lifts his wheels from the strip. A touch of brakes to steady her --

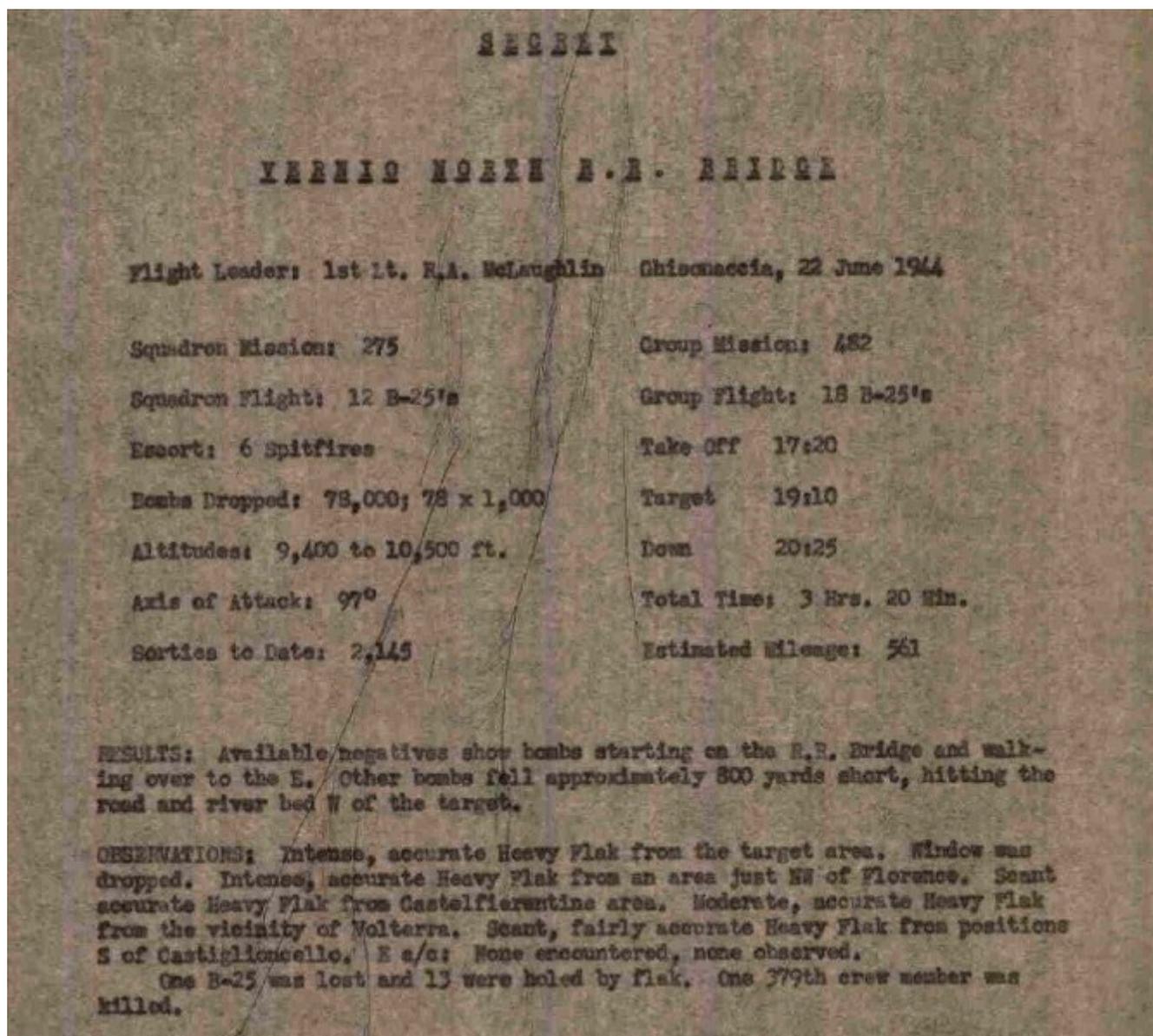
Now! Hit it! Manifold pressures and Tachometers on the Red Line – Checked and Locked! Our propellers scream a sustained ear shatter-

ing note – Thirty eight thousand pounds of men and machine surge forward – Faster – Faster – The ground blurring past – The metal mat roaring under our wheels – Both engines thundering their diapason – Ninety – One hundred – One hundred twenty – AIRBORNE!!

[Fred Nelson was right to be apprehensive about this mission in particular. Here are the OBSERVATIONS as recorded on the mission report:

*Intense, accurate Heavy Flak from the target area. Window was dropped. Intense, accurate Heavy Flak from an area just NW of Florence. Scant accurate Heavy Flak from Castelfierentine area. Moderate, accurate Heavy Flak from the vicinity of Volterra. Scant, fairly accurate Heavy Flak from positions S of Castiglioncello. Enemy Aircraft: None encountered, none observed.*

*One B-25 was lost and 13 were holed by flak. One 379<sup>th</sup> crew member was killed.]*



# The 57th Bomb Wing as a Source of Historical Information

The 57th Bomb Wing Historical Society serves as a unique source of information for historians and for individuals seeking to know more about a family member's service during WW2.

In 2023 we answered 30 requests for information on a variety of topics.

Most of the requests came via email links posted on the Wing website. A few more questions were posed on Facebook.

Below you will find the log of contacts along with the disposition on each of the inquires.

01/13/23	<a href="#">Henry Rosendale</a>	<a href="#">Henry Rosendale</a>	Father	310	428	Contacted us wanting to join Assn, and send us photos from family collection.
01/26/23	<a href="#">Bob Dicey</a>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Curator of Greenville SC Military Museum is requesting first-person accounts of training at Army Base Airfield. We were able to provide accounts from Glenn Black, Joe McCormick, George Underwood.
02/19/23	<a href="#">Nathan Shields</a>	<a href="#">Leslie H Hills</a>	Great-Grand Uncle	57	HQ	Asking to confirm service of family member. We were unable to provide reference to Hills.
02/20/23	<a href="#">Jill Kramer</a>	<a href="#">Eugene Jordan</a>	Grandfather	340	488	Requested info about Grandfather's service. Info provided.
03/15/23	<a href="#">Bruce Droge</a>	<a href="#">Lyle I Droge</a>	Father	310	428	Asking about Vol II of Charles Hair's history of 310 <sup>th</sup> BG
03/24/23	<a href="#">Jacob Pairsh, Lt. Col.</a>	n/a	n/a	310	428	Commander of the 428 <sup>th</sup> EWF is asking for common nicknames of the 428 <sup>th</sup> BS.
03/29/23	<a href="#">Jeff Haberman</a>	<a href="#">Marvin A Haberman</a>	Father	321	448	Son asking for more information about father's service.
03/29/23	<a href="#">Lucilla Esham</a>	<a href="#">Walston Stanley Jones</a>	Father	340	489	Asking about training bases her father was assigned to. Sent copy of Maxwell AFB brochure.
05/30/23	<a href="#">Michelle</a>	<a href="#">Peter J. Miller</a>	Uncle-in-Law	340	489	Requesting more information about service member killed in accident while in combat zone.
07/05/23	<a href="#">Matthew Gregg</a>	<a href="#">Robert D King</a>	Grandfather	340	486	Seeking info about his grandfather, shot down POW.
07/18/23	<a href="#">Allen Heilbron</a>	<a href="#">Milton E Heilbron</a>	Father	340	?	Seeking info on his father's service in N Africa. Found his name on travel orders, but no sqdn identified.
07/30/23	<a href="#">Randy Todd</a>	<a href="#">Samuel Todd</a>	Father	340	486	Son is offering to send us copies of over 200 photos collected by his father during the war.
08/03/23	<a href="#">James Cox</a>	<a href="#">James Leighton Cox</a>	Great Uncle	321	446	Family member seeking more info, and photo of plane. We only have the entries in the War Diary
08/14/23	<a href="#">Taylor Boudreaux</a>	<a href="#">Albert Brussell</a>	Great Grandfather	340	HQ	Request for information on Brussell's service
08/14/23	<a href="#">Anna Enright Stuckey</a>	<a href="#">Claude M. Enright</a>	Grandfather	310	381	Pointed family member to War Diaries, and provided quotes from two memoirs.
08/16/23	<a href="#">Mary Soltis</a>	<a href="#">Michael L Soltis</a>	Grandfather	340	486	Request for more info about his Grandfather
08/21/23	<a href="#">Lucilla Esham</a>	<a href="#">Walston Stanley Jones</a>	Father	340	489	Asking about information on "Lady Barbara, 9F. No photo available but found photo of Ellen & Son he flew 4/23/44.
08/30/23	<a href="#">Corrado Iannucci</a>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Requesting information about a strafing mission 5/1/44 at Foligno. Not us. Probably fighters.
09/08/23	<a href="#">Kelly Hutchinson</a>	<a href="#">Wardell Pennington</a>	Great Uncle	340	489	Asking for name(s) of ships he flew in as tail gunner. Sent photo of 9M
09/13/23	<a href="#">Chad Schneider</a>	<a href="#">Francis J. Schneider</a>	Grandfather	319 <sup>th</sup>	?	Contacted us with photos to share.
09/19/23	<a href="#">Tim Stanley</a>	<a href="#">H. Gene Stanley</a>	Father	321	445	Contacted us with photos to share.
09/21/23	<a href="#">Bob Skertic</a>	<a href="#">Joseph Skertic</a>	Uncle	340	486	Asking for info. Found MACR. KIA.
10/07/23	<a href="#">Dylan Kuhn</a>	<a href="#">George E Kuhn</a>	Grandfather	340	487	Asking for info, and wishes to get involved in Assn.
10/10/23	<a href="#">Jane Wilkinson</a>	n/a	n/a	340	n/a	Producer of BBC radio program is asking for permission to use material in War Diary regarding Vesuvius
10/17/23	<a href="#">Josh Miller</a>	n/a	n/a	310	428	B-25 restoration project seeks info on ship S/N 44-28938 Old Glory and ships S/N 053, 566, 637.
10/17/23	<a href="#">Hermann Buttigieg</a>	<a href="#">Macon A. Gunter, Jr</a>	none	321	445	Inquiry from researcher in Malta regarding ship diverting to Malta after pilot kill by E/A.
10/22/23	<a href="#">Robert Drogosch</a>	n/a	n/a	?	?	Requesting information about a ship named "Fury." Found photos of nose art associated with Joe Bajsh who is not mentioned elsewhere.

# HERE'S WHAT'S NEW ONLINE...

## The “Stories” Page Updated

The “Stories” page on the 57th Bomb Wing website has been completely redesigned and new content added. Here you will find copies of the *Men of the 57th Journal* posted as they appear. Currently a digital copy of the last printed issue of the Newsletter can be seen.

Here is a direct link to that page: [57th Bomb Wing - Stories](#)

## The “Battle of the Brenner” - Nicola Saggini

The latest addition to the “Stories” page is an excellent 90-minute video entitled, “The Battle of the Brenner.” It is presented by Nicola Saggini and is a product of his extensive research on the topic.

A link can be found on the “Stories” page, or you can go directly to the Saggini video here: [The Battle of the Brenner](#)

## The Illustrated Transcripts of the 379th BS

Another enhancement to the Wing website that might interest you, especially, if you have an interest in the 310th Bombardment Group, 379th Bomb Squadron is the addition of transcripts of the Squadron War Diaries.

The original PDF files of the War Diaries supplied by the Army have been posted on our website for quite some time, but the original diaries could be difficult to read can attempts to do a computer search yielded uncertain results.

The transcribed diaries are clear and fully searchable. What’s more we have taken the opportunity during the transcription to illustrate the diaries with photos from our Digital Archives and other sources.

[379th Bomb Squadron War Diaries](#)

# OUR ONLINE ACTIVITY:

The 57th Bomb Wing website is a key source for information about the activities of the Wing during the War and it gets quite a bit of attention. The chart below shows the number of visits to the site during 2023:

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits
Jan 2023	835	1,073
Feb 2023	1,189	1,620
Mar 2023	849	1,137
Apr 2023	804	1,119
May 2023	1,090	1,511
Jun 2023	919	1,216
Jul 2023	938	1,263
Aug 2023	1,243	1,732
Sep 2023	931	1,331
Oct 2023	1,299	1,909
Nov 2023	1,071	1,668
<b>Dec 2023</b>	984	1,582
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,152</b>	<b>17,161</b>

This chart show the most popular downloads of Wing online content just during the month of December 2023:

Downloads (Top 10) - Full list					
Downloads: 630		Hits	206 Hits	Bandwidth	Average size
	<a href="#">/340th_History/487th_History/14_Hist_Jun_1944.pdf</a>	124	0	529.59 MB	4.27 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1945-02.pdf</a>	62	13	256.94 MB	3.43 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-12.pdf</a>	58	59	222.23 MB	1.90 MB
	<a href="#">/448th_History/19450301_19450331.pdf</a>	42	0	477.82 MB	11.38 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-02.pdf</a>	42	9	86.70 MB	1.70 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-05.pdf</a>	35	44	199.80 MB	2.53 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-09.pdf</a>	28	66	283.12 MB	3.01 MB
	<a href="#">/321stHistory/321_BG_1944-06.pdf</a>	28	8	118.26 MB	3.29 MB
	<a href="#">/links_files/Over%20the%20Med%20Part1.pdf</a>	28	15	1.63 GB	38.78 MB
	<a href="#">/links_files/Over%20the%20Med%20Part2.pdf</a>	26	13	1.11 GB	29.06 MB

The Wing Facebook page is also very active and currently boasts 785 active members in addition to the people who visit the page without joining as a member. You can find our Facebook page here:

[57th Bomb Wing on Facebook](#)

# LET'S KEEP 'EM FLYING



[WWW.57THBOMBWING.COM](http://WWW.57THBOMBWING.COM)