Peter Kivett Family Association, Inc.

(MUCH MORE THAN)

A WAR STORY

What is shared here with written permission of the author is an example of what that individual has been moved to document for posterity. Most will not be able to write about such a world changing life, or express their story so eloquently. However, deep within everyone is a meaningful story that, if they let themselves dare to express it, should be left to inspire others as he did.

A note about this author: On 11 May 2011 this most remarkable gentleman turned 91. He openly admits (maybe not to his doctors) that he still rides his Yamaha V-Star Classic motorcycle “4/5 times a week”. His support for the Peter Kivett Family Association remains strong, including having personally attended their annual October meetings, using more conventional transportation. In his permission note he states. “I can only hope that some aspects of my life will inspire someone. I truly believe in God and my country! Sometimes I may stray off the straight path. I guess that is the “devil” doing his “bit” – no excuse!”

Hopefully you will agree that his story is worthy of inclusion in this section. Still somewhat lengthy, for file size restrictions a few pages from his original manuscript have been omitted here – hence the page numbering discrepancies, and missing footnote referenced material.

Bill Kivett, PKFA Secretary - May, 2011
Eighth Air Force, Thirty Fourth Bomb Group (H), Seventh Squadron
World War Two, 1944
REMINISCENCE

In our yard is a red rose bush. The bush produces red roses that live for a few days and then die. The bush produces more; they do the same. While living though, they are pretty and fragrant.

Memories are like roses: you remember an incident, it lasts a little while and it goes away. Sometimes they are fleeting, sometimes vivid and seemingly real. They are of the past and, like the rose bush, they regenerate and return again and again.

Sometime ago I decided to jot these memories down so I could better bring them back. Some are only of interest to me, some only to those who shared the same experiences. By writing them down and putting them into book form I can share them with my children, grandchildren and anyone else who might be interested. So what follows is a summary of my life as I remember it. Hopefully these memories will last for many years in the written word.

Now I know that I am not pretty and fragrant like the rose, but my wife is!
Introduction

A recent inquiry from Mr Cor Janse of The Netherlands concerning my World War II experiences on specific bombing missions during September 1944 triggered a research of my records and memory. So I decided to put in writing a little history of my life, especially detailing the periods during World War II and Vietnam.

Fifty years have passed since that time. (They say that the older you get the better your long term memory!) Over the years many questions have been asked concerning my experiences in WWII. Except in piecemeal answers I have tried to forget or wash from my mind some aspects of the experience. Some things are better forgotten!

This narrative will be both specific and general: specific as it relates to personal experiences; general as to conditions, times and happenings, etc. I will attempt to show the light and bright side as well as the heavy and serious side.

In writing about one’s self you become very self-conscious and tend to leave out things that might be important. You also see the missed opportunities in life that one could have witnessed for Christ and did not!
I was born May 11, 1920 in White Hall, North Carolina. White Hall was later renamed Seven Springs. Seven Springs is a small, farming community located on the banks of the Neuse River, in the south-eastern corner of Wayne County.

My parents were father, Charles Wesley Ivey, and mother, Frankie Kivett, for whom I was named. I was the seventh child of nine children. My father was a general auto, truck, tractor repairman who operated a General Auto-Tractor repair shop. My mother, in addition to being a housewife, was a member of the county school board. She also boarded school teachers, as we lived next door to the school. Needless to say, my school attendance and behavior, by necessity, was good.

By the time I was a teenager I was very proficient in auto mechanics and could operate just about any type vehicle: tractor, truck, auto, you name it.

I graduated from Seven Springs High School in 1939. I attended trade schools at N.C. State and in Charleston, West Virginia.

On December 29, 1940, I married my high school sweetheart and classmate, Lucille Smith. We both went to work at Middletown Army Air Depot, Middletown, Pa. Later we transferred to Richmond, Virginia sub-depot.

In February 1943, I was drafted into the Army Air Corp at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
Ivey Coat of Arms

1943                1943              1943

1958                1962              1971
1974

1975 Retirement
**Awards and Decorations**

1- Distinguished Flying Cross  
2- Bronze Star Medal  
3- Meritorious Service Medal  
4- Air Medal with 5 oak leaf clusters (olc)  
5- AF Commendation Medal  
6- Presidential Unit Citation  
7- AF Outstanding Unit Award with 1 olc  
8- AF Good Conduct Medal with 3 olc  
9- Good Conduct Medal with 3 olc  
10- American Campaign Medal  
11- European-Africa-Middle East Campaign Medal with 3 Battle Stars  
12- World War II Victory Medal  
13- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal  
14- National Defense Medal  
15- Vietnam Service Medal  
16- AF Longevity Service Award Ribbon w/4olc  
17- USAF NCO Academy Graduate Ribbon  
18- Vietnamese Honor Medal Second Class

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*Kivett & Lucille at Retirement*
Dedication

To Lucille: my wife, my lover, my mentor and my best friend (especially my friend).

For over 63 years, whether together or apart, you have been foremost in my mind. From the very beginning your love, trust and guidance have influenced all aspects of my life. You have provided me with 4 wonderful children, whom you have raised to be God fearing and respectful. By look, touch or unspoken word you have righted me when I was wrong. Good times or bad, your love and support have given me the confidence to do what was required. Your love of God shows in your every action. Thank you! I love you!
Appreciation

To Edward G. Berry for his manuscript, “Reflections of a Ball Turret Gunner.” To Debbie Cobb and Kay Sugg for teaching me about computers and pressing the right buttons and giving me valuable suggestions and helping me in putting the final form to this manuscript. To my sister Adele for support and help. To my daughter, Billie Ivey Hoyle, for editing this manuscript. To Jerry Bean for designing and painting the cover for this book. To all the surviving “Tiger Rag” crew members for all your input into my memory bank. My heart-felt thanks to you all and may God Bless You!
THE 34TH WAS TRAINED AND WENT TO ENGLAND WITH B-24 AIRCRAFT AND COMPLETED ITS MISSIONS AS A B-17 GROUP.

SQUADRONS

4TH  7TH
18TH  391ST
England East Anglia Air Traffic for One Day and its Role in World War II

As a land area the United Kingdom is roughly the same size as the State of Colorado. Imagine then, packing into the same area, close to 700 airfields and landing strips. That was the picture from the air during WWII.

Airfields were so close to one another that their traffic patterns were frequently interwoven with one another, making air traffic control a monstrous problem…worse yet when the weather conditions were minimal.

Pilots faced many problems to boot. Most airfields were constructed to a common design so that recognizing one’s home base was difficult and getting lost simple. Land patterns were a fraction of those found in the United States; cities and towns all looked alike; few major rivers could be found; and railroad tracks and other common guides were minimal.

At night, with the British blackout, one could not differentiate when one was over land or the North Sea or English Channel. No modern electric airway system existed. Mandates for radio silence minimized the ways pilots could obtain help from ground facilities. Thus it was up to flying control to come up with formal and informal ways to resolve the air traffic problem.

Specializing in daytime operations, the USAAF might mount an attack involving 2,500+ four-engine bombers with 1,200 fighter escorts, and the same night, the RAF might mount an equivalent number of aircraft. Add to this the training flights from 156 RAF air training bases in the UK, and one could find in a 24-hour period, over 10,000+ aircraft in the air! Think for a moment that number of aircraft in the air over the state of Colorado and you get the picture clearly!

The worst conditions arose when weather forced the closure of many bases in one part of the UK and forced flying control to quickly divert all aircraft to other bases to the north, before they ran out of gasoline following deep attacks into Europe.

A typical USAAF/RAF air base comprised:

One 6,000 foot runway.
Two 5,200 foot runways.

A Group was composed of 4 squadrons in which each had 15-20 aircraft and a personnel complement of 600 aircrew members and up to 3,000 ground crew.
War Posters in WWII. I expect they are just as true for today.
Chapter I

World War II Experiences

Drafted

In February 1943 I was inducted into the United States Army Air Corp at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This was the beginning of a lifetime experience!

Basic Training

After a couple of weeks at Fort Bragg I was transferred to Keesler Field, Mississippi for basic training. What an experience that was! I learned many things in that “Hell Hole” such as how to wear my uniform properly and how to make my bunk. (We lived in tents.) During that 8-week period I learned my left from my right foot, how to clean and shoot a rifle, how to wash pots and pans and all things regarding KP! After a few ass chewings, I could recognize and salute a 2nd Lt. I also learned how to sing “Wild Blue Yonder” and other marching songs while marching.

Most of all I missed my home and family. My wife treated and fed me much better than the army did! Oh, did I learn a lot at Keesler!
Gunnery School

From Keesler, I went to Harlingen, Texas for aerial gunnery training. I not only learned aerial gunnery, but more discipline, more marching, more KP! One thing for sure, they kept me so busy that I did not have time to be homesick. I did graduate, getting my gunnery wings and promotion to buck sergeant. I had fun, too! I liked flying.

Aircraft Mechanics School

From Harlingen I went back to Keesler for Aircraft Mechanics School. Boy was that a downfall! I thought I had seen the last of Keesler. I hated that place!

Nevertheless, I got to know all the inner and outer workings of aircraft mechanics. In addition more KP, more drilling, more mud and all the discipline I could handle!

One of the bright spots during this period was when my wife visited me. She came down and stayed in the town of Biloxi just off the base. If KP or guard duty did not call sometimes I could wrangle a weekend pass to town. By having this pass I could go to town and visit my wife. A great life!

Furlough

Upon graduating from A M school I was promoted to Staff Sergeant and granted a three week delay en
route to the assignment center at Salt Lake City, Utah.

I spent a wonderful three short weeks at home. Suddenly it was over and off to war I went!

Salt Lake City Crew Assignment

It's a long way from North Carolina to Utah. Upon arrival there, after about ten days, I received orders assigning me to the 34th Bomb Group at Blythe, California as B-24 flight engineer. By the time I arrived at Blythe I never wanted to see a troop train again. (Everyone should cross the US in a troop train one time!)

Blythe Aircrew Training

At Blythe I was flight engineer on 1st Lt. Gerald E. Holmes’ crew in the 7th Bomb Squadron. The crew consisted of ten men: four officers and six enlisted men. Holmes named his airplane “Tiger Rag.” He liked the song Tiger Rag! He painted the picture of a tiger on each side of the nose.
My Pilot, First Lieutenant Gerald E. Holmes, was a tall lanky Oklahoma native and part Native American. He had a dry humor and was a no nonsense leader. He was an excellent pilot. The whole crew trusted his leadership and flying ability. He was the oldest man on the crew (24 years old).

Co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Dale Granger (22 years old) was a native of Colorado. He met and married a nice looking young lady all in a month’s time before we left for overseas. About half the time he seemed to be in a dream world. I guess it was love! I never trusted his piloting ability.

Navigator, Second Lieutenant Charles Grezelak was from Pennsylvania, 22 years old and an excellent navigator. He always knew where we were and on missions, could always plot us around Flak batteries and get us home. I remember on July 4, 1944, while we were waiting for a mission, he and Berry (ball turret gunner) decided to celebrate by firing a Flare. The Flare set a farmer’s haystack ablaze. The base fire trucks responded and the whole crew caught hell! Happy 4th of July!

Bombardier, Second Lieutenant George E. Ritchie, a New York Yankee, was always going on about something, but was a first class bombardier. So good in fact, that after we got overseas, he was assigned to another crew as lead bombardier. Shot down later, he was a POW.
Bombardier's replacement was Second Lieutenant Henry K. Lambert. Lambert was 22 years old and a native of Virginia. A very quiet and likable individual, he knew his job and was accepted immediately by the whole crew. Later, after our 24th mission and while flying with another crew he was shot down and became a POW.

The flight engineer was Technical Sergeant Kivett Ivey, a North Carolina native and 24 years old. I was married, wife expecting our first child when we departed for overseas. I wondered if I would ever see it! I was the 2nd oldest man on the crew. I will leave the explanation of my abilities to someone else! My battle position was top turret gunner.

Radio Operator, Technical Sergeant Claude H. Gibbs. Gibbs was a native of Missouri, 21 years old, an excellent radio operator. His battle position was left waist gunner. Gibbs loved to sleep and whenever he did not have anything to do he was sleeping. I believe he could have slept through enemy Flak if he did not have to man a gun and throw out Chaff now and then!

Nose Turret Gunner, Staff Sergeant Henry (Swede) Jenson. A native of Minnesota, he was of Swedish decent, 21 years old, blonde and a lady's man. He was a hard drinker. He and our waist gunner (Tex) were brothers-in-law and party goers! He knew his job, but had a very hair raising battle position facing all that Flak in the nose turret position.
Right Waist Gunner, Staff Sergeant Leroy (Tex) Weaver. A native of Texas, 21 years old, big and brawny, loved his booze and a good fight! A good man to have around if you got in trouble! Tex was wounded on our 24th mission.

Tail Gunner, Staff Sergeant Harry M (Pete) Peterson. He was a native of California, 19 years old, of German descent. His father was a German Cavalry trooper during World War I. Pete was a very laid back happy young man, and in some ways, much more mature than some of the older crew members. He was wounded on our 24th mission and after recovering, flew with another crew and was shot down over Germany. He was listed as killed in action. I thought it was ironic that his parents were German and he was killed over Germany.

The Ball Turret Gunner, Staff Sergeant Edward G. Berry, 20 years old was a native of Arkansas. Berry was the smallest man on the crew; hence he was assigned to the ball turret, one of the most demanding positions on the plane. Hung below the belly of the plane, seemingly floating in space, with an unobstructed view of the sky and earth, you felt very exposed to all the elements. Flak, in that position was terrifying! Berry was a very cocky individual and sometimes could grate on the nerves! However, I think his battle position allowed him to do a lot of thinking and praying (and growing up). This probably contributed to him becoming a missionary in Brazil after the war!
Aircrew Training

We went into accelerated ground and flight training, getting to know our jobs and each other. Team work became second nature and we worked long hard hours. We had to become combat ready in a short time. The war in Europe was becoming rough and we were needed.

As engineer I was responsible not only to ensure that our plane was in first class flying condition, but that the enlisted crew members knew their jobs and pulled together as a team. We soon became a very close knit and proficient team.

Three Day Pass to Los Angeles

Swede’s wife lived in Los Angeles and he had a convertible that he kept just off base. We got a three day pass to Los Angeles and Swede furnished the transportation. One little catch though, he did not have any gas ration coupons. I rigged up an extra gas tank, then we pulled up beside our B-24 and I pumped gas out of the bomb bay tank into the convertible. We had plenty of gas for the round trip, an explosive situation, with all the 100 octane gas in the boot!

We did not let that slow us down though. The trip to Los Angeles was a welcome break from our everyday 12-15 hour work/flying day. We saw the usual Hollywood sights and had a good time. Swede and Tex were still drunk when we got back to Blythe!

34th Bomb Group (H)
The 34th Bomb Group consisted of 4 bomb squadrons: the 4th, 7th, 18th, and 391st. We were assigned to the 7th squadron.

We trained as a group to go overseas as a group, not as replacements. By training as a group and going into combat as a group we were much more combat ready than other organizations.

New B-24 H’s

Sometime in March 1944, we were assigned new B-24H’s direct from the factory. Each crew BROKE IN its assigned plane. Thus we became familiar with every aspect of our plane. We put about 100 flying hours on it before departure from Blythe.

The Bent Wing

Our squadron was the last to depart Blythe for Lincoln, Nebraska. This left us several days to have the base to ourselves. Our planes were parked on the other side of the base and we were directed to taxi them to our staging area across the base.

Holmes ordered Granger and me to taxi our plane (Tiger Rag) across the base. That’s where I lost all confidence in Granger’s flying ability! I had to show him how to start the engines, which direction to taxi, and remind him to get clearance to cross the active runway. As we taxied into our parking area he was very unsure about getting into the parking spot. I told him to stop and I would get out and guide him into the spot. I placed
myself where he could see me and started waving him into the spot. Instead of following my guidance he turned too late. While I frantically signaled him to stop, he overshot the spot. The left wing hit a light pole, knocking the pole down and putting a slight dent in the wing. Holmes and the squadron commander raised hell! However, all the experts agreed that the damage was minor and we could fly the plane.

**Overseas Bound**

In the latter part of March 1944, we departed Blythe for Lincoln, Nebraska for staging and modification prior to departure overseas. We checked and double-checked everything. We knew we had a long hard trip ahead and we did not want any trouble. Gibbs and I were promoted to Technical Sergeant prior to departure.

Berry went overseas with the ground crew by troopship. Holmes had requested he be replaced by the Line Chief because we had some problems with our plane and the line chief did not want to fix it. The line chief decided he could fix our plane after all! We got first-class attention!

**To West Palm Beach, Florida**

We departed for West Palm Beach, Florida around the middle of April 1944. By flying non-stop it gave us some practice on flying a long flight while maintaining fuel conservation. This flight helped ready us for our long over water flight.

En route to Palm Beach we flew over Arkansas. The line chief stated that his home was in some small town in Arkansas. The pilot decided to buzz the town. The *Weather* was clear and we made a 500 foot pass over the town. We woke up the town! I
remember the school kids climbing out the windows to get a look at that big plane buzzing their town! Our thrill for the day!

**To Port of Spain, Trinidad**

After a couple of days’ layover in West Palm Beach we departed for Trinidad. We had sealed orders and could not open them until one hour after departure. Thus we learned our route and final destination to England.

**The Route**

Our route was Port of Spain, Trinidad; layover a couple of days; then to Belem, Brazil; layover a day; then to Natal, Brazil.

At Natal we really inspected and readied our plane for a trip across the Atlantic to Dakar Senegal, Africa. This was a very critical portion of our trip. Fuel was critical so we had to lay over until the Weather and winds were right. Any error in navigation or Weather change could cause us to run out of fuel and to risk possible ditching in the ocean.

**Crossing the Atlantic Ocean**

We left Natal in early morning darkness because the trip was long and we wanted daylight for the landing in Dakar. Our flight time for this leg of the journey was 11:50. We had about 15 or 20 minutes reserve of fuel upon landing!

Some crews did not have that much. Some had to throw equipment overboard to lighten their load so they could make it. One crew ditched a few miles off the coast.
To Morocco, North Africa

After a few days in Dakar we departed for Marrakech, Morocco. This flight was over jungle and arid desert. A piece of cake! We were getting to be pros by this time.

To England

Departing Marrakech to England we had to fly over water, skirting the coast of Portugal, Spain and France. This was another long trip that lasted approximately 11 hours. Before departure we had to arm our guns because of possible German interception off the coast of France. Thus all crew members had to be more alert. Gibbs did not get much sleep on this leg of the trip! We landed at Valley Aerodrome, England about dark. We stayed overnight and departed next day for our home base Mendlesham, Suffolk England.

From Lincoln, Nebraska to Mendlesham, England took 15 days and 70 flying hours, 90% of which was during daylight hours.

Mendlesham

Upon landing in Mendlesham we were assigned a permanent parking area for our plane. The enlisted crew was assigned quarters in a Nissan Hut. Each Hut held three enlisted crews (18 men). All buildings were widely dispersed in case of a bomb attack. Therefore, to get from one place to another required a lot of walking! I bought a bicycle.

The Huts became our home for the duration and the 18 men became like a family. Any wounded or losses really affected us because we knew each man and a lot about his personal life.
We did not get much down time. We immediately went into an accelerated flying training program to get ready for our first combat mission. We had combat experienced instructors helping us train. The war stories they told did not exactly help our frame of mind! Our required 35 combat missions seemed a long way to go!

Letters Home

Of course we all tried to catch up on our letters to our loved ones. We wanted to tell them what was going on and where we were. We could not do this since all mail was censored; we could only say we were well and we love you. I can tell you it is hard to write a letter when you know someone is going to read it and censor it! A juicy love letter is out of the question!

Ground Crew

Each plane was assigned a crew chief and two helpers. They became part of our team and we were very close. We tried to help them when we could. Their job was a tough one and required long hours. We had one of the best ground crews in the squadron. They were:

Crew Chief, Technical Sergeant William N. Gray, a Virginia native. “Pete,” as we called him, was a no nonsense expert mechanic. If you did something wrong he minced no words in setting you straight. You couldn’t help liking him. Pete was the last to wave us off on a mission and the first to see us upon return. I can tell you his big grin was a joy to see as he parked us! Pete had two assistants,
Smitty and Pee Wee. I can’t remember much more about these guys except that they were hard workers and very outgoing and helpful.

First Combat Mission

We had arrived at Mendlesham on 27 April 1944 and, after many hours of flying and training, we were combat ready by 20 May 1944.

On 23 May, we flew a 7-hour combat mission to Modiser, France. This was supposed to be a Milk Run mission, but to me it was not! There were actually guys down there shooting at us! We all made it back okay, but the ground crews had a few Flak holes to patch.

More Milk Runs

On 24 May we flew a 6 hour milk run to Paiz, France, a little easier than the day before, but they were still shooting at us!

Our 3rd mission was a 7:35 milk run to Metz, France on 27 May. We were getting more acquainted with Flak.

We attempted a mission on 28 May, but air aborted because of engine trouble after 3:50 in flight.
Veterans

By now we were veterans, so on 29 May we flew a 10-hour mission to Politz, Germany. Target: Synthetic Oil Refineries. This was a max effort target and over 1500 planes participated. The sky as far as you could see, ahead and behind, was full of B-24s and B-17s. There was plenty of Flak en route to the target, still more at the target, and more than enough on the return route!

The bomb run to the target seemed to take forever. The Flak was so thick you could hardly see! We could hardly wait to drop our bombs and take evasive action.

Immediately after bombs-away we saw enemy fighters and we prepared for the worst. Luckily, the fighters decided to attack a Formation behind us. We felt relieved, but the poor guys behind lost several planes.

As we left the area we could see black clouds of smoke reaching 15-20 thousand feet. We had hit the target. We had several planes in our group with severe battle damage, but they all made it home.
After the target on our trip back home we encountered heavy Flak near Kiel. Somehow we made it to the North Sea and peace and quiet. The rest of the trip home was uneventful, but we had time to reflect on our luck. Prayers were in order and from that day on I never flew a mission without saying one!

Upon landing we had about 10 or 15 minutes of fuel left, not much room for error! We now knew why our first missions were called Milk Runs.

Weather Stand Down

We stood down due to Weather for several days and flew a four-hour training mission on 2 June. Being on alert is just about as bad as combat flying!

D-Day

On 6 June 1944, we were awakened about 1:00 a.m. We went to breakfast, then to Briefing. As we walked to the Briefing we heard and saw hundreds of planes and gliders passing overhead. We thought, invasion at last! At the Briefing we learned the invasion of Europe was in progress!

Our first mission was to Caen, France in support of the invasion force. Our second mission was to Lusicus, France. We were instructed not to drop our bombs unless we could see the target. We were not to salvo our bombs over water, as we usually did, because of so many ships carrying the invasion forces.

We could not see the target because of clouds, so we had to bring our bombs back home. This created several problems. One, a B-24 is very tricky to land with a full bomb load. Secondly, we
had to fly a circular route to and from the target due to the large number of aircraft in the air. Fuel became very critical!

Some aircraft had to land at other bases because of fuel problems. One ran out of fuel and attempted to ditch in the English Channel. Some of the crew bailed out of the plane. The pilot elected to try and ditch the plane rather than let it crash into one of the thousands of boats and ships in the Channel. In the ditching he attempted a last minute change in course to miss a ship. One wing hit a wave and the plane came apart. All aboard were lost.

Casualties in our Hut

The enlisted crew of the plane that crashed lived in our Hut. The only survivor was the radio operator. He bailed out and nearly drowned because he could not release his parachute. A crewman on one of the ships nearby jumped into the sea and rescued him. He was a nervous wreck and I do not know if he ever flew again.

When you lose 5 men out of a Hut, men that were your buddies, it really brings home the reality of war and how vulnerable you are!

Fighter Attack

On 7 June our squadron stood down. As the other squadrons returned from their mission it was dark and German fighters attacked them as they were in the landing pattern.

The fighters had flown in the clouds just above the group as they returned from the mission, thereby evading our radar net.
Normally, as we returned from a mission and reached friendly territory we unloaded and removed our guns prior to landing. So our planes were defenseless.

We lost 4 planes. One crashed into the Personal Equipment Building. A second plane crashed just off the base. The third plane landed at another base, and the fourth crew bailed out of their crippled plane several miles south of the base. Of the 36 crew members involved, 12 lost their lives, 9 were wounded or injured.

The fighters turned out to be a single plane, a German Junker (JU88) night fighter. It was shot down by antiaircraft fire.

I witnessed all this action from the ground and helped salvage some equipment from the burning Personal Equipment Building. A very scary evening! We changed our procedure after this and kept our guns loaded until after landing. Also someone manned the upper turret during landing.

This was the second day in a row our group had casualties. Made you think a guy could get killed in this job!

**Take-off and Landings Could Be Nerve-Racking**

As engineer, on take-off and landings, I sat behind and between the Pilot and Co-pilot. I monitored all the instruments and called the air speed. I could tell at a glance if all the instrument readings were normal. I could also tell if the landing or take off was going to be hairy. Holmes said he could tell by the tone of my voice whether he was making a good take-off or landing!
In taking off with a full bomb and fuel load sometimes the runway got mighty short. Once we just made it and then it took several miles to gain enough altitude to feel safe. On one mission the plane in front of us pulled his landing gear up too soon. He skidded down the runway in a shower of sparks, crashing just off the end. Luckily, everyone got out safely!

**Remainder of June**

We flew 4 or 5 more missions in support of the invasion forces to France in June. Although we encountered antiaircraft fire, it was not too bad.

On 20 June we flew an exceptionally rough 8-hour mission to Hanover, Germany. The *Flak* was very accurate and the *bomb run* too long, but we hit our target, a ball bearing factory.

I received a *Flak* hit on my turret Plexiglas dome, scaring the daylights out of me! I had plenty of air-conditioning on the trip home!

I did not know it at the time, but on 29 June 1944, Lucille gave birth to our first child, a son. On that day I was flying a training mission over England.

**Fourth of July**

We flew a 4-hour training mission on the 4th. Prior to take-off, before taxiing out, Berry and Grezelak decided they should celebrate the 4th. I am not sure which one did it, but they fired a *Flare*. It was a nice red *Flare* and very pretty until it descended into a farmer’s haystack and set it on fire. We all got a first-class ass chewing on that!
**Remainder of July**

On 6 & 8 July we flew 5-hour combat missions to France. The 9th, we air aborted after 3:30 because of engine problems. The 16th of July we flew a 4-hour training mission. On 18, 19, 20, 21 and 24 July we flew 6&7 hour combat missions to France and Germany. All of them were rough and nerve-racking!

**Jolted Awake**

On one of the Germany missions I was very tired and sleepy as a result of our heavy schedule. About thirty minutes from the target, I had my heated suit turned on high and the sun was shining into the turret. I went to sleep. My hands were on the trigger grips. I accidentally fired a short burst. The intercom came alive! Everybody was screaming, where is he? They thought we were under fighter attack. Thinking fast and not wanting anyone to know I had screwed up, I said, “I just fired my guns to wake you guys up!” No one ever questioned me about this, and they did wake up! I did, too. Luckily, I did not have my guns pointed at another plane in the Formation!

**Intoxicated**

During this period Tex and Swede slipped off base one night and spent the night living it up. They did not show up for *Briefing*. The rest of the crew loaded and did the pre-flight on their guns.

About 20 minutes before *start engines* they came staggering up, drunk as skunks! Holmes was mad as hell and was going to leave them behind. I said, “No, if I go they go.” I figured that if we were shot down they deserved the same. Besides if we put them on pure oxygen they might be sober enough
to man their guns by the time we got to enemy territory.

Holmes said okay, but put Tex in the nose turret and Swede in the waist position. Tex was afraid of the nose turret position and Swede was uncomfortable in the waist position. Punishment of a sort! Sick, boy were they sick. From that day on they didn’t pull that trick again.

**Heavy Flak and Battle Damage**

On 27 July, we flew a mission to Brussels, Belgium, to target a German airfield. We were briefed for heavy Flak. We had it. On the **Bomb run** (about 10 minutes) we encountered very heavy and accurate Flak. Just before **bombs away** we received several hits. I noticed all the other planes in our **Formation** turning out of the Flak after bombs away. We were still in it and out of **Formation**. Our tail gunner and waist gunner called over the intercom that they were wounded. The pilot said he did not have any rudder or elevator controls. He was having problems controlling the plane. He finally managed to turn the aircraft by using throttle and aileron controls.

We were headed toward home and losing altitude fast. Everyone went on standby for bail out. I went back to the tail to see if I could repair the severed control cables. No good, every time I tried to splice the cables the pilot would scream over the intercom, “Don’t touch them; you are about to put me in a spin!” Believe me I did not want us to spin, because it’s very hard to jump out of a spinning plane!

In addition to dozens of Flak holes in the tail section, one shell had gone all the way through without exploding. This shell left a hole about
six inches in diameter near the ball turret position. Had it exploded the plane would have broken in half. We were lucky!

I returned to the flight deck and after consulting with the pilot he decided to try to make it across the English Channel.

Bail-out¹

As we neared the English coast (near the Cliffs of Dover) we decided it would be foolish to try to land the plane. I was sent to the tail section to oversee the bail out of the wounded and any other crew member who wanted to jump from that position. The bombardier (Lambert) decided he would rather jump from the tail hatch.

We were at about 13000 feet at this time and gradually losing altitude. There was cloud cover between us and the ground, but you could spot the ground through breaks in the clouds.

Peterson, who had a head wound, went first. Tex, who had a leg wound, went second. Because of his leg wound he could not dive head first out of the escape hatch. He went feet first and despite our caution, his head struck the escape hatch rim, peeling his scalp back. We were afraid he would not be able to open his chute. However we later learned he made it okay, despite a bloody head.

Berry immediately followed Tex, then Lambert. I went back to the flight deck and reported everyone out of the tail section.

I had once told the crew that if anything ever happened that required bail out, “don’t look around for Ivey because I would be the first one out from

¹ See ed berry’s narrative same subject in attachment # 1
the flight deck." So Holmes told me to open the bomb bay door and jump. Time was getting short and the plane was hard to control. I lost no time in doing so, followed by Jenson, Gibbs, Grezelak, Granger and then Holmes. The plane blew up immediately after Holmes\textsuperscript{2} jumped.

The Descent and Landing

As I jumped I could see the land with water nearby, so I decided to free fall and delay opening my chute so I would not come as near falling in the water. After I had cleared the slipstream of the plane everything became very quiet and since I could not see the ground I had very little sensation of falling. Still delaying my chute opening I decided to fall through the clouds first. I had second thoughts as I neared the clouds and opened my chute just as I entered them. After a bone jarring jerk as the chute opened, everything became quiet and eerie. I was in the clouds and could not see the ground. I seemed to be floating. I heard the drone of aircraft engines and thought, "that plane will come through the clouds and hit me." Boy was I scared. I floated out of the clouds at about 1200 feet. I did not seem to be descending very fast, but as I neared the ground I was headed toward a deep gully near a cow pasture. I decided to pull the shroud lines on one side of my chute so I would miss the gully. (I had been taught this in training.) I missed the gully all right, but in doing this I fell the last hundred feet like a brick. I attempted to roll to cushion my landing. That was another mistake. I landed on my head and it knocked me out.

\textsuperscript{2} See ed berry's narrative of this event in attachment # 1
I do not know how long I lay there, but as I came to, I was confused and thought I was dreaming. So I decided I would just go back to sleep. I was lying on my stomach with my head on my curled arm. As I laid my head back on my arm I smelled something. I raised my head and looked. My arm was curled around cow droppings! I lost no time in getting up!

As I rolled my chute up I looked across the field and saw two men running my way. They arrived and I asked the way to the nearest airfield. They pointed and said, “about two miles to the road, turn left about five miles.” I gave them the chute and started walking. As I neared the road my flying boots (I always wore fur lined flying boots over my GI shoes) became heavy. I bent over to pull them off and discovered that I still had my chute ripcord in my hand! I must have had a death grip on it! I still have it today! As I started walking down the road a jeep, with Gibbs and Jenson aboard, picked me up and transported us to a British aerodrome near the Cliffs of Dover. There we were checked over by a doctor. I was given something for the headache I had as a result of my landing.

British Rest Home

We were transported to a British rest home near the Cliffs of Dover to spend the night. There we were united with Berry, Lambert, and Granger. Pete and Tex were hospitalized for their wounds. Holmes and Grezelak were hurt on landing and also hospitalized.

At the rest home I asked for and received medication for my severe headache. I was hoping a good night’s sleep would help too. Not to be!
This rest home was located next to an antiaircraft battery and right in the path of Buzz Bomb Alley. Between the sound of antiaircraft fire and Buzz Bombs going over, it was a sleepless night! Not very good for the headache!

The next day the squadron sent a plane to pick us up and carry us back to the base.

**The Tiger Rag Crew Broken Up**

We had bailed out on our 24th mission. We had 11 more to go for 35 missions and the end of our tour.

With our pilot (Holmes), our navigator (Grezelak), our waist gunner (Tex) incapacitated (Pete recovered quickly), we were a broken crew and subject to flying as fill-in for other crews. A most undesirable position!

To preclude doing this, Granger was made first pilot and we were assigned a co-pilot, navigator and waist gunner. We were a crew (of sorts) once more. We flew a number of training missions to try and get our crew coordinated as a team.

I flew two combat milk run missions with Granger in August. Hair-raising to me because I did not trust Granger as a pilot!

On 27 August we air aborted on a mission to Kiel, Germany. Kiel was one of the toughest and most heavily defended targets in Germany. Everyone was scared of it!

**Fate**

We were 4 hours into the mission and near enemy territory. I was dozing in the upper turret
when I felt the plane yaw, then the bomb bay doors opened and the bombs were salvo-ed. From my position I could see the airborne spare take our place as we fell out of Formation.

I could see that number four engine had been shut down. I came out of the turret and asked the pilot and co-pilot what was the problem. The co-pilot (who was Flak Happy) said number 4 prop ran away so he feathered it and shut the engine down. I wondered why I had not been consulted. I soon found out. The co-pilot had faked a problem. I restarted the engine and it ran okay! Too late, the airborne spare had taken our place. Later we found out that they received a direct hit over the target and blew up. Everyone aboard was lost. I felt relieved that it wasn’t us, but very bad for the lost crew. This still preys on my mind.

When we arrived back at base, the Commander met our plane. As always I was the first man out of the plane. Immediately the commander jumped me, wanting to know what the problem was and why we returned early. I told him to ask the pilot and co-pilot, so far as I was concerned the plane was okay. That co-pilot did not fly with us anymore!

**Last B-24 Flight**

That was the last flight I flew on B-24s. Eighth Air Force decided our group was to transition into B-17s. Our B-24s were sent elsewhere and we started receiving new B-17s.

I had flown 26 combat missions on B-24s. That left me 9 more missions before I could finish my 35 and go back to the states. Now I had to retrain in B-17s before I could complete my tour. The losses were getting higher and the missions tougher. I did not look forward to the delay.
B-17 Training

We went into an accelerated training schedule. Granger (pilot) could not fly a B-17 any better than he could a B-24. I really sweated each flight! Somehow we survived the training and flew our first B-17 combat mission on 17 September 1944.

Assigned to another Crew

That mission was to Arnheim, Germany, target antiaircraft batteries and troop barracks (our actual target was in Holland, very near Arnheim) in support of advancing allied troops.

The mission was briefed as a milk run. For me it wasn’t. I was sweating out the flight because of the pilot (Granger). He kept me scared to death all the time!

I reported my fears to the squadron commander. He let me know in no uncertain terms that it was me that had the problem. However, he told me to stand down next day and he would take his engineer and fly a training flight with Granger. When he landed he told me that he was assigning Granger to another crew as co-pilot. I was assigned to McDermott’s crew as engineer and was told that when he completed his mission, mine would be over too. He had two fewer missions to do than I, so I wound up with 33 combat missions. I don’t think I could have lasted until 35!

The only other member (that I can recall) of our original Tiger Rag crew that flew with me after that was Swede, the nose gunner. The others flew piecemeal missions with other crews.
Flying with Strangers

A lot of the original crews were finishing their missions and returning to the states. Replacement crews were coming in. I was flying with a strange crew. Things were not the same anymore. The fun was gone, sweat was in!

As the Germans were retreating back to the homeland most of our missions were into Germany. They were long and rough!

Forced Landing in Belgium

My first mission with the new crew was 22 September to Kassel, Germany. We encountered heavy Flak. We received severe damage over the target, losing the number 3 engine, plus receiving numerous Flak holes throughout the aircraft.

We fell out of Formation and decided to make a forced landing at an airfield in Brussels, Belgium. The Canadians had liberated Brussels 2 days before. We landed at the same airfield we had bombed in B-24s 25 July, the day we were shot up and had to bail out. That was my first close-up look at bomb damage!

Brussels, People in Festive Mood

A repair crew was assigned to the plane and our flight crew was bussed into Brussels to spend the night. The people, having just been liberated, were in a festive mood and could not do enough for
us. Having no money, we broke open our Escape Kits and used the candy and chewing gum as barter goods. It was surprising what a piece of “Chiclets” chewing gum would buy!

**Everyone Thought We Had Been Shot Down**

By noon the next day our plane was repaired and we departed for England and home base. As we taxied into our parking area, it was occupied by another plane; the crew chief came running out to meet us. He told us we had been reported shot down and he had been assigned another plane. He had all he could handle, so please park our plane somewhere else! We parked anyway, letting someone else figure it out!

Whenever a crew went down, whatever personal belongings they had, the scavengers requisitioned them. My bicycle, flight jacket and other things were gone! I had to make a few people mad to get my property back!

**Pete Shot Down**

On 2 October, Peterson, our original tail gunner, was flying with another crew on a mission to Wiesbaden, Germany. They received a direct hit over the target and the plane blew up. Everyone aboard was lost.
Pete’s loss hit me hard! He was only 19. His father was a German cavalry trooper during World War I. When I returned to the states, I wrote to his parents. I found out he was an only child. His parents were very distraught!

The End is Near

Our losses were increasing and my next 4 missions were all to Germany. Each one seemed rougher than the last. I guess it was because I knew that my tour was getting close to the end and it seemed that everyone I knew was shot down on their last mission.

Berlin

The crew’s next to the last mission, their 34th and my 32nd, was to Berlin on 6 October. Berlin was one of the longest and toughest targets we had. Losses were usually very high. This being our next to last mission, it really sunk home!

This was an 8th Air Force max effort mission. The Briefing was very detailed, laying out very specific, detailed routes and altitudes. We were
routed around known Flak batteries, but the unknown one was what got us!

As we reached our altitude and started assembling our Formations, just as far as you could see, to the front and rear, there were hundreds of B-24s and B-17s.

**The One that Nearly Got Us**

We had reached the German coast and started our zigzag course to Berlin. About 30 minutes into enemy territory, we ran into an uncharted 3-gun antiaircraft battery fire. Three bursts of Flak hit right into our flight element. We were lead in our element; the plane on our left received a direct hit and vanished from my sight in a flash. We received a hit; I watched as a hole big enough to stick my head in appeared in the right wing just behind number 4 engine. The plane on our right wing received the next burst, wobbled and continued on. All this in about 30 seconds!

We immediately had to feather number 4 prop and shut down the engine. We fell out of Formation and started losing altitude. I departed my turret, opened the bomb bay doors and salvo-ed the bombs. (I wonder what they hit!) With my chest chute snapped on I was ready to jump. The pilot said he had the plane under control, maybe we could make it home if nothing else happened.

We sweated the next 2-1/2 hour flight back to base. We landed okay. The “old man with fire in his eye” met me as I got out of the plane. I didn’t give him time to say anything, just pointed to the right wing. He looked, shook his head, crawled in his jeep and left.
Last Mission

We flew one more mission, a Buzz Bomb launch site target, in the St Lo area of France, a milk run. No close calls, very little Flak. A safe return and a happy crew!

Mixed Feelings

My feelings were mixed, relieved that it was over, yet some part of me wanted to stay until the Germans were licked. Another part wanted to go home and see my loved ones. I was sad for those who would never make it back. I guess the loss of Pete was the hardest to take.

View from waist position of B-17 formation.
Certificate of Honor

As a member of a Heavy Bombardment Combat Crew, 7th Bomb Squadron, 34th Bombardment Group (H) Army Air Forces

Technical Sergeant, KIVETT IVETT, ASR 34665878

has participated in 33 bombing attacks on enemy installations, has contributed heavily to American Victory, and has completed his Tour of Combat Duty with honor to himself and to his Country.

1. Mondesir, France
2. Poix, France
3. Noyon, France
4. Pots, Germany
5. Liége, Belgium
6. Flers, France
7. Beauvais Tillé, France
8. Lagny-Cambray, France
9. Laval, France
10. Hanover, Germany
11. Haute Côte, France
12. Touruay-sur-Bries, France
13. Beaumont-le-Sport, France
14. Esterwegen, France
15. Crepelieul, France
16. St. Eloy-les-Prés, France
17. Frentoville, Germany
18. Konsartheim, Germany
19. Russelhein, Germany
20. Target of Opportunity
21. Area West of St Lo, France
22. Brussels, Belgium
23. Area South of Rouen, France
24. Saintes, France
25. Roye Amy, France
26. Coulombs, France
27. Arnhem Dorstede, Germany
28. Kasel, Germany
29. Bremer, Germany
30. Ludwigsbaken, Germany
31. Munster, Germany
32. Berlin, Germany
33. St. Lo, Area, France

SIGNED, AIR CORPS,
SQUADRON COMMANDER.

SIGNED, GROUP COMMANDER.
B-24’s lined-up for mission—enlisted crew—officer crew

Swede & Ivey  Gunner with combat gear

A little drink will go good boys!
Peterson and Ivey

B-17’s in “flak”.

Swede, Tex, Gibbs, Pete

Ivey

B-17s bombs away
Awaiting the Ticket Home

It was decided that the remaining enlisted crew members of Tiger Rag would get credit for a tour. We had from 30 to 33 missions each. Gibbs, Swede, Berry and I received our orders and departed Ipswich Station by train for Southampton, England. There we caught the Liberty Ship SS Thomas Barry. In a slow moving convoy we took 11 or 12 days to reach New York. The Statue of Liberty was a beautiful sight!

The Eleven Day Cruise

I remember when we boarded ship and received our first meal. For the first time since leaving the states I got white bread. I believe that was the best bread I had ever tasted! I volunteered for kitchen duty on the trip home just so I could eat all I wanted!

Some of the guys played poker; some, other games. Time was slow. The ship was slow! Everyone wanted to get home! All we needed was to be hit by a torpedo!

As we entered the harbor at New York, the word was put out, don’t get caught with anything other than your GI issue. Anyone caught with anything illegal would be held at the port! I guess there must have been 50 of us who threw 45s, lugers, rifles and everything else overboard. New York harbor picked up a lot of metal! As it turned out we were not even searched!
Good-bye Crew

Everything moved so fast that I didn’t get time to say good-bye to the other crew members. It was over 40 years later before I saw any of them again.

Home

I arrived home in the early part of November 1944. It had been nearly a year since I had seen any of my family. We had a wonderful family reunion! Thirty days flew by very fast! Before I knew it I was on a train heading for Miami Beach, Florida, to the reassignment center.

Reassignment

I spent a miserable two weeks awaiting reassignment. Christmas came and went and suddenly I was on a troop train headed for Keesler Field, Mississippi. The last place in the world I wanted to be. Upon arrival one of the first things they did was put me on KP. Here I was a Technical Sergeant, a combat veteran, doing KP under the same Buck Sergeant KP pusher I had in tech school over a year ago! Along with several others we went to the commander. Changes were made!

Volunteer

After several weeks a group of us was lined up and given a choice as to what we could do. I had the choice of volunteering to (1) go to B-29 flight engineer training and then to the South Pacific; (2) go the South Pacific as a B-24 flight engineer; (3) to remain at Keesler as permanent party and become a B-24 aircraft mechanic instructor.
Well, I certainly didn’t want to go to fight the Japs in a B-29 or B-24 so I volunteered to stay at Keesler as an instructor! Even if I did hate the place!

Permanent Party

As an instructor I became permanent party and had the privilege of bringing my family down and living off-base. Finding housing was not easy, but I finally found a rat hole and brought my wife and son to Biloxi, Mississippi. Life was much more livable after that.

Kivett, Lucille and son 1944

P-38 attacking FW-190—B-24 in background
B-24 “Tiger Rag” in flight.

P-51 escort

German Fighters Attacking B-17 Formation
B-24 & B-17 and Flight and Ground Crew

B-24 and B-17 Nose Art

B-24
Chapter II

Back to Civilian Life

Discharge

The war wound down. Forces were being cut. In September 1945 I was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for discharge. I enlisted in the Army Air Force Reserve, received my orders and went back to Seven Spring, N.C. and the good life.

Adjustment

After 2-1/2 years of military life it took me a few months to adjust, but adjust I did. I had a family to support!

Brothers

At about this same period my three brothers, who were Navy veterans, were up for discharge.

The oldest, Charles, had about 10 years of service so he decided to make a career of it.

Bill, a few years younger than I, got out and went to college at the University of North Carolina.
Harry, the youngest, got out, married and went to work with his father-in-law as an auto and tractor repair mechanic.

My mother still kept her flag with 4 stars, signifying how many sons she had in service, in her window. Later, I obtained this flag and have it today.

**In Business**

My father, 60 years old, still operated his Auto Repair business. He asked me to join him in the business. I consented and we signed a partnership agreement. We prospered. I worked hard and Dad caught up with his fishing!

**My Family**

My family of one child (Kivett Jr., nicknamed Butch) grew. Our first daughter, Susan, was born 25 March 1946. Dennis, our second son, was born 5 December 1949. Billie, our second daughter, was born 1 February 1954. A family of four, enough!
1946 to 1957

During this period Lucille and I purchased a home and started raising our family. I’m afraid I didn’t always assume the responsibilities I should have. I bought a motorcycle, an airplane and co-owned and drove a race car, participating in NASCAR racing events. Lucille was the glue that held everything together! All in all God gave us a hard, but good life.

Being in the Reserve I pulled several short periods of active duty. I was called up for the Korean War, but orders were cancelled before I reported.

I was promoted to Master Sergeant in reserves and in 1957 I asked for and was recalled to active duty as a Jet Aircraft Mechanic at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina.
Chapter III

US Air Force – In the Military Again

Active Duty

At Seymour I was assigned to the 4th TAC Fighter Wing Field Maintenance Squadron. I started attending every school I could get into so I could get myself up to speed with the regular Air Force. In 6 months I considered myself as well qualified as any one of equal rank. I could hold my own with the best of them. Lucille and the kids were getting acclimated to Air Force life.

Overseas

Toward the end of 1957, I received orders for Wheelus Air Base, Tripoli, Libya. In February 1958 I departed for Wheelus, leaving my family behind. After arriving at Wheelus, I applied for and received permission for my family to come over. My car and household goods arrived and I rented an apartment off base in downtown Tripoli. In May Lucille received her orders and port call. She very bravely loaded up 4 kids and made the long flight to Libya. The kids adjusted to the new life rapidly. During our short stay in Libya we saw many sights. The kids learned much about ancient history by visiting historic sites, Roman ruins, etc. around Tripoli.
**Duties**

I was assigned to the 431st Fighter Interceptor Squadron as Inspection Dock Chief. My job was to supervise 25, 50, and 100-hour inspections on F102 aircraft.

**World War II B-24**

Sometime in the summer of 1958 an oil exploratory crew found a slightly damaged and well-preserved World War II B-24 in the desert. The remains of the crew were found scattered over the desert. They had bailed out safely but later all died of thirst. The B-24 landed itself, with very little damage. Research showed that the B-24 flew a mission into Germany from Tripoli and on return, with overcast skies overshot its base and ran out of fuel over the desert. The plane and crew had been missing for over 14 years.

I flew in B-24s in World War II. This discovery brought home to me memories of my adventures in B-24s. But, for the grace of God, I could very well have been a member of that crew.
Another Move

Just prior to my family’s arrival, the squadron was notified that it would be transferred to Zaragoza, Spain in September 1958. This would be a big job. To move 25 planes, all the equipment, men and dependents to Spain was a tremendous undertaking.

Advance Party

I was one of those selected to be in the Advance Party. Our vehicles were shipped to Leghorn, Italy. We flew up, picked our cars up and drove through Italy and France to Zaragoza, Spain. Our dependents followed a month later with the rest of the squadron.

The drive was very interesting. We all had a good time on the trip. Once we arrived in Zaragoza though, our work began.

Preparing for the Arrival

Each of us had specific duties to perform in preparation for the squadron arrival. Mine was to help prepare the hangar and flight line for the aircraft.

The base mission was B-52 alert under the control of SAC. The Spanish Air Force had one side of the base and the US Air Force the other.

We, as a Fighter Interceptor Squadron, would assume responsibility of air protection of the base and the B-52 Bombers.
Families Arrive

Our families arrived and some of them were quartered temporarily in downtown Zaragoza hotels. Others were assigned to off-base housing. This housing was in construction stage, and as a unit became completed, we moved into them.

The base schools were prepared for the influx and we all put our kids in school. My youngest child, Billie, started school in Spain and my oldest, Butch, graduated from high school the spring before we came back to the states.

Our Spain Tour

We spent nearly four years in Spain. In this time we travelled as a family all over Spain, France and Italy. I think it was very educational, especially for the children.

My job was Quality Control Inspector, and later on, Maintenance Control Superintendent. I enjoyed my work.

After about 18 months we moved from off-base housing to newly completed on-base housing. The on-base facilities were new and living there was great. The schools were outstanding. Our family really grew in more ways than one during our tour, all for the good.

Back to Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina

Sometime in early March of 1962 I received word that my dad had terminal cancer. I applied for and received assignment to Seymour. We started preparing for the trip. I shipped my car and furniture. Butch graduated from high school in
early May and we departed soon thereafter for the states.

We landed at McGuire Air Base in New Jersey. We went to the port in Brooklyn, New York to pick up our car, and then we were en route to Seven Springs, N.C. and home. We stopped in Washington D.C. to let the president know we were in town, saw the sights and continued on our way.

Home

We had a very nice homecoming. Lucille’s parents, as well as mine lived in the Seven Springs area. The children’s friends of 4 years ago were there, so everybody stayed on the go!

There had been many changes since we left in 1957. Our parents were aging fast. My dad's health had failed a lot. The cancer was dragging him down fast. I spent as much time as I could with him that summer. He passed away 13 December 1962. I guess I felt the loss more than anyone else because he and I had always been very close.

Back to Work

After a 30 day leave I reported to Seymour Johnson and was assigned to the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing as NCOIC of Maintenance Control. This being a key assignment I had to move into on-base housing so I would be readily available for on-call duty.

The 4th Wing had F-105 aircraft and four squadrons. One squadron was TDY somewhere or another on a rotational basis just about all the time. The others had to stay in a combat-ready status and were subject to world wide deployment in
a few hours’ notice. It seemed as if we were on constant alert!

**Lucille’s Hands Full**

The summer passed fast. The kids had to get ready and start school. They were in three different schools. Lucille had her hands full keeping up with the schools and extra activities. Plus she, being near our parents now, was called on more to help them.

I had my hands full learning the F105 aircraft and running maintenance control. Being responsible for controlling scheduled and unscheduled maintenance on nearly 100 aircraft was not an easy task! I put in some long hours.

**Out of the Fold**

Kivett Jr. (Butch as we called him) decided to join the Air Force. In September 1962, he enlisted and departed for basic training, later going on to Radar Technician School. After graduating from Tech School he was assigned to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada as a F105 radar technician. All of us missed him very much.

**Promotion Time**

As soon as I was eligible (in 1965) I was promoted to Senior Master Sergeant, and again when I was eligible (1967) I was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant. All my hard work had paid off! The responsibilities increased.
Transition to F4 Aircraft

Sometime in 1966 we transferred some of our F105s to the National Guard and some to Southeast Asia. We received new F4 aircraft.

Vietnam was getting hotter. We went into an accelerated training program. We had to become combat-ready in a very short period. Needless to say we spent long hard hours getting ready!

Deployment

In 1968 the North Koreans seized one of the Navy’s ships. We went on red alert and in three days I was in Kunsan, Korea. I can tell you no one had much chance for any lingering good-byes!

All 4 squadrons of the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing were deployed and ready for war in less than a week! All that training and the practice alerts paid off!

Kunsan was a small base; living conditions were sparse, tents and mud! We stayed there over 6 months.

We deployed to Korea with F-4 Phantom aircraft.
F-105, one of the main type aircraft used in Vietnam
Chapter IV

Vietnam

Getting Ready for Vietnam

When I returned from Korea, knowing that I was hot for a Vietnam assignment, I started preparing my family for my absence. I bought a house off-base and moved my family into it. We just got settled in and I got orders for Vietnam. I was to leave in June 1970.

In the 8 years I had been at Seymour, many things had happened. Butch had gone into the Air Force, married, had two children, gotten out of the Air Force, settled in Las Vegas and was working at the atomic test site near Las Vegas.

Susan had finished high school, two years of college, married, had two children and was living in Goldsboro, NC.

Dennis had finished high school and was going to college at East Carolina University.
Billie was in the 10th grade, making straight A’s, the only one left at home.

We had been stationed 8 years in our home county, our health was good, and we had four grandchildren. God had been good to us!

Off to War Again

Twenty-six years had passed since I went off to war in World War II. Now, at the age of 50, I was on my way to the unknown again! I certainly wasn’t thrilled and I had a certain amount of dread. This was a political war and we were fighting with one hand tied behind our back. However, I had been training for war all my life so I resolved to do my best.

Vietnam

I arrived at Da Nang Air Base in early June 1970. My assignment was to Air Force Advisory Group I as an advisor to the Vietnamese Air Force.

My duty was flight line maintenance advisor. They had T37 jet aircraft, H-34 helicopters, UH-1H Huey helicopters, and O1A observation aircraft.
I wound up with the Huey helicopters. Of course, I did not know too much about them, but it did not take me long to learn! After all an airplane is an airplane!

My counterpart was a Master Sergeant named Lem. He could speak some English and we hit it off right away. He had been trained in the states and was well qualified. We spent many hours together, on base and out in the boondocks.

Frequently, we had helicopters make forced landings out in the boondocks. Lem and I would take a crew, go out and repair or put a sling on it. By pre-arrangement a US Army flying crane would come out, pick it up and take it back to base. My job was to supervise the installation of the sling and to make radio contact with the flying crane. The call sign and accent had better be right, or no pick up!

These trips were no fun; you never knew what to expect. A careful inspection was a must; booby traps and snipers were a danger. Sometimes the helicopter that transported your crew left and you were stuck, wondering if they would come back and pick you up. When the sun started going down you really got worried! That happened a couple of
times and that pickup helicopter really looked good as it came in!

Cambodia

Cambodia was off limits to US Forces. Our army was not allowed to cross the border (politics). The South Vietnamese could do whatever they wanted, so they were encouraged to invade Cambodia. The invasion was on and my helicopter squadron had to deploy in support of the army.

We deployed and encamped in a bomb and bullet-riddled old army base just a few miles from the border. The first night there was not too bad. We were housed in a bullet-riddled barracks. Everyone rolled out the sleeping bags while it was still light enough to see (no lights). As I rolled my bag out, Lem and the crew chiefs indicated that I was a VIP. As such, I rated a folding cot. They set the cot up and I set down on it to pull my boots off. About time I started pulling the second boot off the fabric on the cot split. I fell to the floor. Everyone had a good laugh at my expense! I told Lem that I had just as soon sleep on the floor!

Our field rations were not very good. I learned to mix my rice with beef stew. We used part of the old barracks to make a fire to heat the rations.

Battle is On

The South Vietnamese troops advanced quickly into Cambodia. After about 10 or 15 miles they encountered heavy resistance. The going got tough for them. Our helicopters were busy ferrying troops forward. They began to pick up battle
damage. One of them had to make a forced landing just a few miles over the border.

I got the word, “take your crew and go put a sling on the downed helicopter.” I said, “I cannot go because that is in Cambodia and I’m not allowed there.” I was told, “Go anyway, it's only just across the border, and the US Army is sending in the flying crane. You’ll need to man the radio. Besides it's a secure area with lots of South Vietnamese troops there.” I had heard that song before!

The Excitement Begins

So Lem, the crew chief, a US Army pilot advisor, a Vietnamese pilot and I flew in (about 50 miles from our camp). We landed and the pilot left the engines running just in case we had to leave fast. We installed the sling in record time. (The noise of the battle was close!) The flying crane responded immediately to my radio call and was in and out quickly.

We hurriedly boarded our Huey and the pilot revved up the engines. About that time a whole swarm of South Vietnamese soldiers decided that they wanted out of there! They started climbing aboard. I got in the middle of the copter, directly behind and between the pilot and co-pilot. I was afraid all those men getting in would shove me out! Lem and the crew chief were trying to kick the guys off, but finally had to give it up and try to hang on to their positions.

Meanwhile the pilot was doing his best to lift off. We were about 20 feet off the ground, but could not lift high enough to clear the trees. Guys were standing on the skids, hanging on wherever they could (like an overcrowded bus)! Lem
and the crew chief started hammering guys' fingers, punching and kicking, knocking some of them loose. Being 20 feet off the ground they fell pretty hard. Finally, the load lightened enough so we could lift and clear the trees. We started flying, but it took all the power that Huey could muster!

We were low on fuel and barely made it about 15 miles to a refueling bladder. We sat down pretty hard with that entire load. The soldiers got off and headed elsewhere. I guess they were far enough away from the battle to feel safe! Including our crew, I counted 35 men. The Huey normally carries only 14 or 15 men and then it's crowded!

The US Army pilot told me that he had his doubts for a while, but damn if he was going to abort that take off with that entire mob wanting out of there! We were lucky!

The Army pilot and I told the commander that we did not think it would be wise for us to do that again. He agreed, because there was a bunch of news hounds around. We didn’t want our pictures taken across the border.

If I remember correctly that battle was a waste. It was lost before it started!

Hawaii R & R
About midway of my tour in Vietnam I was given the choice of 10 days in Hawaii or Australia. I picked Hawaii because Lucille could meet me there. So I bought her airline tickets and made hotel reservations for us.

She was hesitant to fly over, but she did. We had a wonderful time! It was too short though; we soon had to go back our separate ways.

**Transportation**

The advisory group had three jeeps at our disposal. One belonged to the commander, one to operations and one to maintenance. Needless to say if you needed transportation someone else had it!

I was tired of walking and begging for a ride. Da Nang was a big base. The US Air Force had their flight line on the southwest end of the runway and the Vietnamese Air Force on the southeast end. The Marines had the northwest end and the Army the northeast end. The Mats terminal was about midway on the north side of the runway.

Everything was scattered over a wide area. I travelled to all these areas because I always needed parts or something.

I cultivated an army master sergeant who was in charge of army salvage. I told him my problems. He said, “For 300 bucks I can fix you up with a nice jeep,” but you’ll have to figure out how to get gas for it.
Well, we made a deal! I took my jeep to our ground power shop, borrowed a gallon of paint and a spray gun and painted it Vietnamese Air Force colors. I put my old army World War II serial number on it. I was in business!

My maintenance officer and the commander wanted to know where I got my wheels. I told them it would be best for all concerned not to know! They agreed! When I finished my tour I sold it to my replacement. I could get all the gas I wanted for a carton of cigarettes!

Scrounging

As a member of the Advisory Group, I had a pass that allowed me to go off base anywhere anytime. The regular Air Force troops could not do this.

The Army had a big encampment just north of the base. They also had a repair helicopter depot northeast of the base alongside the bay, called Red Beach.

The Marines had a large encampment and salvage depot south of the base, called Marble Mountain. They had a pile of junk that must have been a mile square and 50 to 100 feet high.

All of these places had Post Exchanges. Now that I had wheels I could visit all of them. Usually, I could find just about anything I wanted.

I cultivated all the salvage yards and depots because we always needed parts that were hard to get through regular channels. By the same token I sometimes had things those guys needed too. A barter system!
Red Beach

This army depot got all the battle-damaged helicopters. They had hundreds lined up along the beach. What they could not repair they put in cocoons to preserve them. Then they would pick them up with a flying crane and ferry them across the bay, load them on a ship, and send them back to the states for overhaul.

Mountain Top Crash

North of Da Nang was a range of mountains. There was a wide pass through these mountains. Normally, our helicopters would fly through the pass rather than over the mountain. About center way in this pass was a high hill that had been flattened off. The Army had a fortified fire base located there.

We had several helicopters start through the pass one day that ran into fog. One pilot tried to turn back and crashed into the mountain, killing all aboard (3 men).
My crew and I had to fly into the fire base and then get a jeep and drive as close as we could to recover some classified equipment and the bodies (what was left of them).

In flying over the country I could never quite understand how the North Vietnamese could infiltrate without being seen. I found out that day!

The army fire base commander gave us a jeep, a map with coordinates on it, some weapons and advice. He showed us the location of the crash on the map, which winding path to take, stating that we would have to walk the last 500 yards. He also gave us a radio and said “if you run into an ambush call us and give us the coordinates on the map and we will give you some supporting mortar fire.” It looked to me as if I might become an infantry man in a hurry!

We proceeded as far as we could by jeep. We started up the trail to the crash site. It was then that I understood how someone could go undetected. The underbrush was so thick that the trail could not be seen from the air, yet it did not look that thick from the air. I could hardly see daylight above my head for the thick foliage.

We recovered the equipment and bodies without any problem and made our way back to the fire base.
As we took off for home base I thanked the Lord that I didn’t have to be stuck in that hellhole! I could better appreciate the hardships and danger of the forward ground troops. Those guys were stuck out there several months at the time.

**Mortuary**

The mortuary was located at the east end of the runway, near our flight line. When crossing from one side of the runway to the other we had to drive right by it. There were stacks of coffins all around. The smell of chemicals was very strong, whether from the mortuary or from the Agent Orange stored nearby, I’m not sure. I do know that the mortuary was very busy! I wondered how the guys working there could keep their sanity. It was referred to as *The Body Shop*.

**Controlled Crash**

Whenever we changed or worked on something that required a test flight our helicopter pilots in the Advisory Group would test fly it. Occasionally I would go along. Being a private pilot, I never passed up the chance to get a little stick time.

On one of these flights we had gone through about all the procedures except one, that being *Auto Rotation*. This procedure was used whenever there was a tail rotor problem. If the tail rotor system failed you could not steer the helicopter and the fuselage would turn with the main rotors, causing a crash. If you went into auto rotation, and kept your forward speed up you could land like an airplane. Even then, if you landed on a hard surface, as the airspeed slowed, the fuselage would rotate with the main rotors. Usually this resulted in serious damage to the helicopter, but survival of the crew.
The pilot went into the auto rotation test. Just as he started to come out of it we heard and felt a loud jolt. He said to me, “I don’t know what happened, but I’m staying in auto rotation. Get set for a hard landing!”

We were over the delta, a lot of water and rice paddies. As we descended the pilot radioed an emergency, giving his location and intentions. We made a hard, jolting landing in a nice muddy and wet rice paddy. I guess that rice paddy saved us, because when the skids sunk into the mud it prevented the fuselage from rotating. Somehow I manage to get a bloody lip, but was otherwise okay. The pilot was okay, too.

Our radio still worked and we were assured that help was on the way. In about 30 minutes one of our H-34 helicopters came and hovered over us. We crawled on top of our helicopter and were assisted aboard and taken back to base, muddy and shaken up, but okay!

We sent a recovery crew out, a sling was installed and the flying crane brought it in. On inspection we discovered that the tail rotor control turnbuckle had broken. The pilot had done the right thing by not coming out of auto rotation. We were lucky! I thanked God.

**Rocket Attacks**

The Viet Cong would somehow smuggle rockets near enough to the base so that every now and then they made a surprise attack. This happened six or seven times during my 12 month tour. Usually it was at night, but on one occasion they made a daytime attack.
During the daytime attack the rocket hit fuel storage tanks a couple of blocks from our hangar. That was our thrill for the day!

The night attacks were thrilling, too! I remember during one such attack, the rocket hit a barracks in the Air Force compound, which resulted in the death of an airman who had arrived only 2 days before.

On another occasion one hit just a short ways from our barracks. All of our barracks had sand bags about 4 or 5 feet high all around them. This offered some protection unless you got a direct hit.

My roommate, who was over six feet tall and weighed about 200 pounds, would jump up, put his Flak vest on and crawl under his bunk at the sound of the explosion. As big as he was he had a hell of a time getting under the bunk! On one occasion I had to get the bunk off him when the all clear
was sounded! I laughed at him and told him that all the action was over before he ever got his Flak vest on and got under the bunk! I stayed in bed myself for that reason.

**Going-Away Party**

As my tour was drawing to a close, Lem and the flight line crews gave me a going-away party. I supplied the beer and cokes! They roasted a chicken (head and crown attached) and cooked up other local delicacies. Lem carved the chicken and served the plates. To tell the truth that chicken, staring at me, didn’t look too appetizing! Their squadron commander, a captain, was at the party, too. Lem cut the chicken’s head off and placed it on my plate. Everyone was laughing at me and I didn’t know what to do. I really wasn’t sure, as guest of honor, that it might be a local custom. I didn’t want to offend anyone, but I sure was not about to eat that chicken head!

The squadron commander was laughing at me the loudest so I asked him to hand me a beer. As he turned to get it I sneaked the chicken head on his plate. Everyone saw this except him and it was awhile before he saw the head. Then everyone was laughing at him! It wasn’t long before he sneaked that head on someone else’s plate. It finally made the rounds and disappeared.

To get back at the captain, I took 4 cans of beer, and while no one was looking, I poured all but a swallow out of each can. Then I challenged him to a chug-a-lug. I proceeded to drink my 4 cans, one after the other. Not to be outdone the captain drank his. They had to carry him home! I think Lem was the only one there that caught on to my trick! We all had a big laugh!
Orders for the States

About 45 days before I was supposed to rotate I received orders to Chanute Air Force Base. I had no desire to go there and tried to get them changed. I was told there was not enough time; it would take over 60 days. Since I had a delay in route I decided that I would go by Air Force
Headquarters and see about getting my orders changed to a more acceptable location.

Additional Pictures of Vietnam

Aerial view of Da Nang river

Forward Army Base

Fire Base; in middle of farm land.

Bay scene

Beach scene

Harbor view from mountain top
Back to the USA

My time was up; I had my flight number! I had one more night at Da Nang. I bade good-bye to Lem and all the flight line crew. I think the Viet Cong knew I was leaving too, because they sent a couple of rockets in to disturb my last night’s sleep at Da Nang! I have often wondered, since I left, what happened to all those Vietnamese I knew and worked with.

The flight back to the states went smoothly. On my arrival in California, I purchased commercial airline tickets home via San Antonio, Texas and Randolph Air Force Base. Air Force Headquarters and Air Training Command Headquarters were located there.

Orders Changed

I went to Air Force Personnel to try to get my assignment changed. I was informed that I was assigned to Air Training Command; any changes would have to come from them.

I went next door to Training Command Personnel. I told the Sergeant in charge that I was camping in his office until I got my assignment changed. I guess he took me at my word after looking at my records. He then agreed to reassign me to Craig Air Force Base, Alabama using my secondary Air Force Specialty (AFSC). I learned then that it's to my advantage to have more than one specialty! (I have three.)

30 Day Leave

Leaving San Antonio a happy man I proceeded on to Goldsboro, NC. Home! I had a happy reunion with my family and a wonderful 30 day leave. I
refused to let Vietnam protesters bother me. I would not discuss the war with anyone. I felt it was better for my peace of mind to forget it. Some twenty-five years have passed since that experience. This is the first time I have given any details about it.

Craig Air Force Base

My leave up, it was time to go back to work. I reported in to Craig AFB. My orders had not arrived there yet. They did not know I was coming. I was sent to the Chief of Maintenance for duty assignment. He promptly put me in charge of Maintenance Control in my primary AFSC. I pointed out to him that I had been assigned to Craig in my secondary AFSC. Therefore, it was not legal to assign me in that position. He stated that it made no difference to him, that’s where he needed me and that’s where I would go! I went back to work!

Since my youngest daughter (the last child at home) had flown the nest, Lucille and I were alone. We moved on-base at Craig and started living the good life! We really enjoyed our stay there!

My Last 4 Years in the Air Force

Craig Air Force Base was a pilot training base, a much different type of duty than I was accustomed to. We did not have alerts or mobility exercises. Our work week was 40 hours, the weekends free. It was more like civilian life. This was a big change from tactical air command and less stressful. After working in Maintenance Control for a year, the Wing Commander (whom I had known at Seymour Johnson AFB) asked me to take the position of Senior Airman Advisor to the Wing Commander. I agreed to accept the position. This would freeze
any reassignment for two years and I was hot for another tour to Vietnam.

This job required me to work with all the enlisted personnel on the base. I was involved in all kinds of personnel problems and believe me there were plenty of them! I reported directly to the Wing Commander (the boss of the base) advising him on any problems involving enlisted personnel. The Air Force was just beginning to get more and more females in the service. This created more problems and required some very delicate problem solving!

I became very well known on the base and made a lot of friends. I worked for 4 different wing commanders during the three years I held the job. The job was very demanding, yet exciting and gratifying. I really enjoyed those last 3 years prior to retirement.

**Retirement**

The Air Force regulations stated that “an enlisted man who had 20 years or more service must
I was approaching that age fast and did not want to retire. I objected in writing, that I was being discriminated against because of age! I got plenty of laughs, but no help!

**Parade**

Several other guys were retiring at the same time as I was (30 May 1975). The Wing Commander decided to have a parade.

Now I never did like a parade (especially if I had to participate in it). I thought, since I was retiring, that I would be on the reviewing stand, but not so; I had to march!

As we assembled, I jokingly told the troops that I asked for this parade, not knowing I would have to march in it. They laughed, saying that I should have to march alone.

All 4 of my children came for my retirement ceremony. They were the ones on the reviewing stand! It was an emotional and happy experience for us all. They had grown up in the Air Force life and we had fun recalling our good times!
At this parade ceremony, the 7 of us who were retiring received awards. My award was the Bronze Star medal. This medal, along with all the other medals and campaign ribbons I was authorized made an impressive 5 row salad dressing on my uniform. Some of my other medals included: the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service with 1 oak leaf cluster, Air Medal with 5 oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation medal, National Defense Service medal, Army Good Conduct medal with 3 oak leaf clusters (of course I was good), Air Force Good Conduct medal with 4 oak leaf clusters, World War II Victory medal, Vietnam Service Medal, and others.
Reminiscence

I remember quite clearly during my high school years, when asked what I would do after graduation, I replied: “I will never be a teacher or a farmer”. I must say that so far as the teacher part went, I ate my words many times! In the Air Force I was constantly teaching or learning. Each change of equipment, aircraft, re-assignment, promotion, etc. required more training. Either I was teaching or being taught just about all the time. I have a file full of diplomas certifying qualification to do all kinds of things in and out of my career field, one of them being a teacher. The Air Force certainly prepared me to do many things. It made civilian life easy! A young person today could really benefit from a career in the Air Force.
Chapter V

Retirement and a Different Life

Back to Civilian Life

As we said our good-byes to our many friends at Craig and to the Air Force, Lucille and I felt, well, it is hard to describe! After all 29 years 11 months and 28 days was a big chunk of our lives; we were going to miss it! Lucille more so than I!

Travel - No Hurry

We took our small camper, departed Alabama, made a short visit to see our families in Wayne County, North Carolina and went on a 5 month tour of the United States and Canada.

We visited many places and many friends on this trip. We had a wonderful time, no hurry, no set pace, just taking our own sweet time. Most likely we would have stayed on the road longer, but Mother became ill and passed away in late October 1975. We came home (Goldsboro, NC), became bogged down and never have taken over a 2 month trip since.

A New Job, A New Career

Soon after we returned home, our youngest son, Dennis, who was married and living in our house, had a job transfer to Greenville, NC. We had planned to resume our travels, but now our house was vacant. We decided to take our furniture out of storage, fix up our house and move in.

My cousin, who owned a GMC truck dealership, asked me to take over and manage the
repair shop portion of the business. I accepted the job. This was a challenging and demanding job. Being a perfectionist, I spent long hours improving the operation and building up the business. In less than a year I had tripled the business. I made many friends and proved to myself that I was just as capable, maybe more so, of operating a business as any civilian. My Air Force training and experiences certainly played a major role in my success.

Retired Again

In 1981, after nearly 6 years in this job, I decided to give up my 12-hour days and retire again. My intentions were to travel, but time and circumstances prevented anything but short trips.

Back to Work Again

After about 18 months of “retirement” a friend of mine, who had a heavy duty equipment business, asked me to manage his shop. He had had a lung operation and was unable to look after that portion of the business. Because of the friendship I accepted the job, but only until he could get back on his feet.

After a couple of years, even though he wanted me to stay, I decided that he was quite healthy enough to take care of it himself. So I “retired” again!

I had purchased a house in the country not far from where I had been born and raised. We moved into it and sold our home in Goldsboro.

We had been living there about 6 months when a tornado came along and severely damaged it. So I kept pretty busy repairing and modifying it like we
wanted it. I also became the neighborhood fixer-upper.

**World War II Crew Members**

I had often wondered what had happened to my fellow crew members after World War II. Sometime in 1983, I was contacted by Ray Summa, a former member of the 34th Bomb Group. He was helping form up the 34th Bomb Group Association, made up of World War II members. He had a listing of all the personnel in the group and was trying to find them. This was a tremendous undertaking, since 40 years had passed and we were scattered all over the world!

I joined the association and Ray sent me a roster of those he had located. I learned that one of my old crew (George Ritchie) lived at Cape Carteret, just 75 miles from me. I immediately contacted George and we had a nice reunion, catching up on each other’s lives.

In 1984, the association had a reunion in Nashville, Tennessee. Lucille and I attended. Our pilot, Gerald Holmes; bombardier, Henry Lambert; radio operator, Claude Gibbs; and George Ritchie attended. At that time our nose gunner, Jenson; waist gunner, Weaver; co-pilot, Granger; and ball turret gunner, Berry; had not been located. Grezelak, our navigator had died after the war. Peterson, our tail gunner, was killed in action.

We all had a good time remembering, rehashing old times and catching up on our lives.

Each year the association has a reunion in different parts of the US. We have attended and enjoyed a number of these, always meeting someone who was attending his first one.
In 1993, we attended the reunion in Little Rock, Arkansas. There we met newly found ball turret gunner Edward Berry. ³ Berry had been a missionary in Brazil for the past 32 years and now lives just outside Little Rock. We had a great time and we relived a lot of our World War II adventures!

Henry Lambert passed away in 1991. We have not been able to locate any other missing crewmen. We all decided that the 34th Bomb Group Association is a dying organization! After all we are all in our seventies! We get smaller each year. The attrition rate is high!

It is now 1995 and in May I will be 75 years old. Lucille and I are in good health and we have a nice home and lots of good friends. We also have 4 children, 10 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren. God has bestowed his blessings upon us! We intend to serve him and to encourage others by example and deed to do the same as long as we live.

End of Story

This story has been mostly about World War II, Vietnam and my military career. I have purposely only hit a few highlights concerning my family. This does not mean that part of my life has not been exciting. It’s just that I am not sure I could find enough words to express all my love and appreciation for them.

³ See ed berry’s narrative of 50 years later in attachment # 1
Epilogue

New Additions

Over four years have passed since I printed the first edition of this book. I have decided that since I am now more computer literate and many people want copies of my book I will update and try to improve it. Hopefully it will be more interesting.

The year 2000 is here and my 80th birthday is coming up. We celebrated our 59th wedding anniversary last December. Lucille and I are blessed. Our health is good; we have 10 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. The LORD has been good to us, we thank HIM.
To my children and grandchildren I say “May the good LORD bless you and that you know and believe in HIM”.

KIVETT IVEY, March 2000.

EPILOGUE number two, three years later-July 2004

Over three years have passed since I printed the second edition of this book and a new demand is causing me to print a third edition. I will bring you up to date on my life since then. The bulk of the book remains the same with only a few minor changes.

My wife’s health is failing fast; she has Alzheimer’s and Pulmonary Fibrosis. Her memory is slowly leaving her and she has difficulty breathing and is bedridden most of the time. So far I have been able to handle things with some help. I have prayed a lot and have asked the LORD to give me the strength to take care of her as long as she lives. She would do the same for me. After over 63 years together we need each other!

I know our children will do all they can to help, but they have their lives and families to look after and they are scattered far away.

The LORD has given us a good life and I thank HIM.

Kivett Ivey, July 2004
Billie, Dennis, Susan. Butch (back)
Kivett & Lucille
2003

FAMILY TREE

Charles W. & Frankie K. Ivey
V
Kivett Ivey

Van & Daisy W. Smith
V
Lucille Smith
Kivett Jr, Susan, Dennis, Billie.

Susan, Butch, Dennis and Billie---Kivett and Lucille
I certainly didn’t think that I would live this long – long enough and healthy enough to be able to start a fourth edition of this book!

Lucille, my wife passed away in October of 2009. We had been married 69 years! She was ill for 10 years and I took care of her at home. I thank the Lord for enabling me to do this! Still I have a big hole in my heart; no one knows how much I miss her. Life goes on though and I am surviving.

Last January I had a heart attack and a four bypass operation; since then I have been much stronger. For a 90 year old I am walking 3 miles a day, driving my car whenever and wherever I desire. I even bought a motorcycle and rode it! The nay-sayers were “agin” it, but I can’t hear very well! You might say I am stubborn!

I have made a few minor changes to this, new pictures etc.

Our 34th Bomb Group organization disbanded after 25 years. I sure miss all the yearly reunions – but we are all dying out slowly – so guess all good things come to an end. WWII is history and I am not sure anyone in this new age pays any attention to history!

Kivett Ivey; December 2010
Lucille and Kivett

Kivett and his toy!
I send greetings to those gathered for the 2008 reunion of the 34th Bomb Group.

Our men and women in uniform have triumphed over brutal enemies, liberated continents, and answered the prayers of millions around the globe. They have shown us that freedom is the most powerful force on Earth and set a standard of courage and excellence that is unmatched. With selfless devotion to duty, courage in the face of danger, and unwavering valor and decency, the veterans of our Armed Forces have helped to advance freedom and make our Nation more secure. All of us who live in liberty live in their debt, and we will never forget their service and sacrifice.

This event is an opportunity to renew the strong bonds of friendships forged in adversity and celebrate the proud history and achievements of the 34th Bomb Group. Your continued commitment to each other and our country is an inspiration.

Laura and I send our best wishes on this special occasion. May God bless you, may God bless our troops and veterans, and may God bless America.
WWII POSTERS _ COULD BE USED TODAY!
Definitions

- **Armament Building**

A place where you cleaned and stored your machine guns between missions. Each crew member that had an assigned gun position or turret was responsible for installing, removing, cleaning and repairing his guns.

- **Briefing**

Prior to each mission each crew was awakened about 2 am. They went to breakfast and then to a mission briefing. These briefings lasted about an hour. They covered in detail, weather, mission route, antiaircraft fire expected en route and over the target, the target, target time, fuel load, bomb load, emergency landings, alternate target, etc. After the briefing the crew had to install their weapons, check bomb load, pre-flight aircraft, top off with fuel and line up for take-off at the designated time. You made sure your aircraft was in top flight condition and you made your take-off time! Any abort or late start required a good excuse, or else!

- **Bomb Run**

In order to line up on the target it was necessary to fly straight and level so the bombardier could aim the bombs at the target. Any small deviation at 20 to 25 thousand feet could cause you to miss the target a country mile. This 15 to 20 minute run allowed the antiaircraft gunners to better track (aim) at you and shoot you down. It was a very harrowing experience. A pilot and crew had to
muster all the courage they could find not to take evasive action during this period!

- **Buzz Bomb**

A long cylinder with fins, a war head and a pulse jet motor. The motor sounded like 10 Mac trucks with no muffler (very nerve rattling). They usually came in at about 3, 4 hundred feet, and were very fast. As long as you could hear it you were safe, but if it cut off, look out! It could do severe damage! The first time I saw one was in London. A couple of my crew and I stood in the street gawking while everyone else ran for a bomb shelter. A British Bobby, in no uncertain terms, informed us of the danger! From then on, if we heard it, to the bomb shelter we went!

- **Chaff**

A tinfoil type confetti. Thrown from the plane it scattered across the sky confusing enemy radar. Thus radar aiming of antiaircraft fire was less accurate. If things got really hot we sometimes threw more out than we should. It didn’t help, but it sure worked off your frustrations!

- **Chow Hall**

A place to eat. We had two chow halls, one for flying crews, one for ground personnel. The flying crews got a different diet than ground personnel because certain types of food and high altitude flying didn’t go together. We often loaned our chow hall pass to ground crew since our food was better, one of the perks for flying dangerous missions!
• **Clock Positions**

The nose of the plane was 12 o’clock, the right wing 3 o’clock. Any enemy action was always referred to as, for example, 3 o’clock high, low or level. Then each crew member knew in which direction to look and take whatever action was required.

• **Debriefing**

At the end of a mission we stored our guns and personnel equipment then went straight to the debriefing room. There we were served hot chocolate and doughnuts and a shot of bourbon if we so desired. After getting up at 1 or 2 am, eating breakfast, briefing and flying 8 or 10 hours, a shot of bourbon could pep you up very quickly! Sometimes if we had been on a real rough mission the crew would give their shots to the pilot or some other crewman. Needless to say they got a big buzz on! As quickly as possible the whole crew was debriefed together, each man giving his version of what he saw and what happened on the mission, etc. Then we went to chow and to our huts for rest until the next mission.

• **Escape Kit**

A kit issued to each crew member prior to each mission to be used in case you were shot down in enemy territory. This kit consisted of a silk map, currency for the countries you were flying over, candy bars, chewing gum, compass and phrase book (language). I used mine once when we made a forced landing in Brussels, Belgium two days after it was liberated by the Canadians. I bartered the chewing gum for a hotel room and the candy for a bottle of champagne!
• **Flak**

Antiaircraft fire. A shell fired at us that was set to explode and spray shrapnel at a set altitude. This created a puff of black smoke and a hail of shrapnel that you had to fly through. The shot gun pattern! Sometimes we were tracked by radar, at other times the enemy used the barrage attack. We gauged their accuracy by: see it, not too bad; feel the concussion, very close; hear and smell it, lookout! At times the flak was so thick that you felt you could get out and walk on it! It was like flying into a wall! Very nerve-racking! Yet, we flew through it and often never got hit! I often wondered what it must be like on the ground, because all that shrapnel had to fall back to the ground.

• **Flak Happy**

This term was used to describe some crew member who would do most anything to avoid being exposed to the danger of another mission and flak. Sometimes they faked problems and caused aborts or put other crew members at risk.

• **Flares**

Each plane had a flare gun and “chute” to attach the gun to. We used the flare to signal emergency (wounded aboard) when landing, to signal for fighter support and, on one occasion, when the navigator and ball turret gunner were playing, to set a haystack afire!

• **Formation**

Each Bomb Group had 4 squadrons. Each squadron had 15 aircraft. When flying a mission each squadron
flew 12 aircraft plus an airborne spare. (The spare flew as far as enemy territory, and then returned, providing there were no air aborts.) The group flew three squadrons on each mission, the fourth squadron standing down. So every 4th mission one squadron stood down on a rotational basis. The aircraft took off one at a time and climbed to 15-16 thousand feet where they formed up in elements of three, 4 elements per squadron. The three squadrons (in tight formation) trailed each other to the target. A tight formation was required for protection in case of enemy fighter attack. The tight formation enabled one squadron to concentrate their fire power on enemy aircraft.

Also the lead aircraft in each squadron pinpointed the target; the other aircraft in the squadron dropped their bombs when the lead aircraft dropped. This was called saturation bombing. Any aircraft separated from the squadron for any reason was easy fighter prey.

- **Huts**

Our quarters were Nissan huts, an oval type building with 18 double bunks, a coal heater and a cement floor (a cold place most of the time!) Our hut housed three enlisted crews (6 men per crew, 18 men). The men in the hut became very close (like family). Any losses or injuries to anyone in the hut really affected everyone. You realized in a hurry how vulnerable you were!

- **Personal Equipment Building**

A place where all your flying personal equipment was stored and repaired as required between missions. Personal equipment consisted of flak jackets, heated suits, heavy flying pants, jacket, boots, gloves, oxygen masks, parachute harness,
parachute, helmet and radio intercom gear, etc. When you got all this gear on you were loaded down and it somewhat restricted your movements! The pilot and co-pilot wore seat pack chutes. The rest of the crew wore a harness to which you snapped on a chest pack chute. This allowed you to move about the plane easier.

• **Pub**

A bar where you could purchase hot beer and occasionally a shot of scotch or gin. No bourbon available. You most certainly had to acquire a taste for “hot beer”.

• **Rest and Recuperation (R&R)**

About every three weeks or so each crew member was given an R&R pass. That meant he could catch the train to London or somewhere else and live it up a few days! Most of the time when you went to London you wound up staying in a bomb shelter because of the buzz bombs striking London. Usually the crew wasn’t very rested when it returned! A few of the sights we saw in London were Big Ben, London Bridge, etc. I walked across London Bridge in London and many years later in Arizona! (The whole bridge was moved from England to the US!)

• **Weather**

Weather was always a critical factor. England always had cloud cover. You had to fly through them to take off and land. A very stressful situation! Quite a number of times we lined up for take-off and waited a couple of hours or didn’t take off at all because the weather didn’t lift. Sometimes we took off and flew to the target, but were unable to drop our bombs because of weather. Fuel became very critical if that happened and
often we would drop our bombs over the water or elsewhere in order to lighten the load.