

View From The Editor's Desk

"It's the same old story, the 8th gets all of the glory," Well so it seems, But . . . ?"

After the 1991 reunion in Kansas City, Bea and I travelled to England for a short vacation before resuming association work. We had been to the UK before, but even with our previous experience, we were overwhelmed by the English hospitality and friendliness everywhere we went.

In London near Leicester Square I was in a bookstore that specialized in aeronautical books, when a chance encounter with an English gentleman occurred. He had overheard me asking the proprietor about WWII war books. He approached and advised me that one of the authors, whose books I had been seeking lived not far from where we had planned to visit. This set off a chain of events that was to lead to our meeting some famous writers whose books are in the Association's collection. The object of these meetings was to obtain material for future issues of the *Flyer*. In this regard the trip was very successful. You'll be seeing some of these stories in upcoming issues.

We drove into East Anglia (Yes, they drive on the left) where the 8th Air Force was based during WWII. What we found were some very dedicated English people who have established several museums at former airfield used by the 8th AF. Bea and I were impressed with the sincerity of the staffs in that their primary interest was in preserving history that took place upon their homeland. It was not to glorify war, but to record and remember the ultimate sacrifices made by so many young American airmen. From everyone we met, the story was the same, whether authors or collectors, the prime importance was the preserving of the events that took place so long ago, and not for any personal gain. At Thorpe Abbots and Framlingham, private citizens have restored the tower buildings and have reconstructed the curved metal buildings (quonset) that were familiar sights on many allied airfields during WWII. Inside the towers they have collected memorabilia, documents, photographs, artifacts and aircraft parts in

museum displays that are truly remarkable, considering that all labor is strictly voluntary.

In the city of Norwich, the all B-24, 2nd Air Division Association, 8th Air Force has established a memorial library that sits within the main central library. After entering the main entrance, the 2nd Air Division collection is off to the right where it occupies floor space paralleling a wide passageway. Above the top row of books, replicas of the group's tail insignias are placed. Just below each print a memorial book is placed with a listing of the crewmen who did not return. The library itself consists mainly of works dealing with American culture. There is a smaller World War II history section and current American magazines and newspapers as well. The collection is not specialized or complete enough for use by scholars, but instead is used as a reference library by



Joe Kennedy Jr.

writers and anyone interested in American subjects. When we visited the library on several occasions, we found it quite busy. All of the patrons were British. The library was established many years ago by the members of the 2nd Air Division Association, and they have supported the library ever since, paying all necessary costs, including the salary of an American librarian, Phyllis DuBois who alone services the collection. The 2nd Air Division, part of the 8th AF, was composed of 14 groups as

compared to the whole 15th AF of only 21 groups. As can be seen, it would take a large organization to support such an endeavor.

Through the efforts of the librarian, we were able to meet Tony North, formerly head of the library who is an avid collector of B-24 photographs. It was through him that the cover picture was obtained. We chose it because it is quite striking even though a bit outlandish, and because to the best of my knowledge this type of assembly was not seen in the 15th Air Force. It was the assembly ship of the 448th Bomb Group. The airfields of East Anglia were often covered with a thick blanket of clouds, necessitating a slow climb through the clouds. The brightly colored assembly ships would fly around shooting flares to attract the groups' planes now circling in an effort to locate the group leader. The assembly ship would assume group lead for a period, but would peel off and return to base before the group entered enemy airspace.

Probably, because the Italian weather was somewhat different, assembly ships were not used by either the 461st or the 484th Groups. Instead, several P-40s were used by group commanders at Torretta to assist in tightening the formations. Towards the end of the European war, as the fighter threat diminished, the formations began to spread out to lessen the danger of mid-air collision. Inversely, the larger formation reduced the mutual protection afforded by massed firepower. When fighters did appear, the results were often disastrous. You will note the assembly ship shown on the cover is an older "D" model that was retired from active combat with the 8th Air Force.

The museums at Thorpe Abbots and Framlingham display parts of crashed aircraft from WWII operations that have been excavated from sites in East Anglia.

On August 12, 1944, the skies near Blyburgh, England, lit up in a gigantic flame, mushrooming up in a huge yellow ball of fury. It was the end of "Zootsuit Black," a PB4Y Liberator bomber flown by Joe Kennedy Jr., the older brother of the future president, John Kennedy. The aircraft had been loaded nose to tail with Torpex, an explosive thought to be stable. The aircraft, a B-24J-125, serial 42-11007, transferred to the US Navy as Bur No 32271, was being flown in a secret operation known as Aphrodite, on a one way mission to bomb a secret weapons site across the channel in German held territory at Mimoyecques. The laden bomber was flown by live crew until the aircraft was in a position where it could be controlled from a mother ship by radio.