

Finding Captain Baber's Crew

Version 1.5 07 Apr 15

This story is actually two stories. The first story is about courage and sacrifice seventy years ago. The second is a current story about the kindness of strangers. The common element is ten young men flying a B-17G named 'I'll Get By' out of Horham, England as part of the 412th Bomb Squadron, 95th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force during World War II.

1.0 Courage and Sacrifice

1.1 The Americans

2 Aug 44 started well for the crew of 'I'll Get By.' The pilot, Capt. Robert O Baber, had a good crew. They had been selected as a 'Lead Crew' in recognition of their competence and experience. Every man in the crew had at least 20 combat missions to his credit. Those missions had been flown at the rate of 4 or more a month since arriving in England in Mar 44. They had included 10 missions to Germany (2 of which were to Berlin). Lately, the majority of the missions were Tactical missions in France. These missions were targeting transportation hubs and German troop concentrations in support of the British and American Normandy landings.

Today's mission was another Tactical mission. While no combat mission was without risk, they were confident that this would be another successful mission to add to their goal of completing their lead crew tour of 33 combat missions. Better yet, the sun was shining even though it was still muddy around their base at Horham, England. They had been scheduled to get a crew photo taken before the flight. The 10 men of Capt. Baber's crew were posed in and around a jeep in front of their B-17G, 'I'll Get By.' The photo is included as Attachment 1. If you count noses in the picture, there are 11 men. For this mission, Capt. Elmer E Bockman, an Assistant Operations Officer on the 95th Bomb Group staff, would fly in place of SSgt Adamson, one of the waist gunners. Since this was a picture of Capt. Baber's crew, SSgt Adamson is there; but, unlike the other 10 men, he is not in flying gear. With the photographic preliminaries out of the way, the men (minus SSgt Adamson) departed on the mission flying as the lead aircraft of the Low Squadron of the 95B Combat Box. Four hours later, 7 of the 10 men in the photo that flew the mission were dead and 3 were POWs.

The 'I'll Get By' and the 11 other aircraft of the 95B Group took off at about 1500 on 2 Aug 44, formed up with the other two groups (95A and 95C) into the 13A Combat Wing, and departed the English coast at 1718. The mission planning

was already disrupted when the Pathfinder aircraft leading the 95A Group (and the 13A Combat Wing) reported failure of radio and navigation. The 13A Combat Wing command pilot (not named) directed that the 13A Combat Wing lead be turned over to the 95B Group. That put Capt. Baber and the crew of the 'I'll Get By' in the lead of the 13A Combat Wing. That also put Capt. Bockman, the Command Pilot for the 95B Group, into the position of Command Pilot for the 13A Combat Wing. The enemy coast (occupied France) was crossed at 1749. At 1752 and 5 miles East of Caen, France, enemy Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) started and hit the 'I'll Get By.'

The AAA hit next to the #1 engine (outermost engine on the left side). The tip of the wing was blown off and the wing was set on fire. The 'I'll Get By' swung out of formation to the left, rolled inverted, and started to spin in. With the fire spreading, control was regained and the crew began to bail out of the mortally hurt aircraft. Two minutes after being hit (1754), the 'I'll Get By' blew up. Three parachutes were observed. The loss of the 'I'll Get By' was reported as 'near Lisieux, France.' The paperwork was completed and filed and the war went on. (Atch 2)

Sometime later, the three men who parachuted from the aircraft were identified to the Red Cross as POWs: SSgts Lipkin, Collyer and Phillips, all gunners from the rear of the aircraft. All were captured as soon as they reached the ground – SSgt Collyer having broken his ankle upon landing; SSgt Phillips having sprained his knee. All were sent to the same prison camp, Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow Germany (now Tychowo, Poland). All were subjected to the infamous 'Black March' as the Germans tried to force-march the POWs out of the path of the advancing Russian Army in the middle of winter. All returned to the United States in 1945 and picked up their lives from there. As an aside, SSgts Collyer and Adamson both re-enlisted in the Air Force and retired as senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) (Collyer as a Master Sergeant, Adamson as a Chief Master Sergeant).

After his return to America in 1945, SSgt Phillips applied for membership in the Caterpillar Club on 9 Jul 45 (Atch 3). The Caterpillar Club is an informal association of people who have successfully used a parachute to bail out of a disabled aircraft. In his application, SSgt Phillips described the loss of the 'I'll Get By':

I was going over the French coast – over the front lines – when our ship got a direct hit with flak. [The] ship turned over and started to burn. I came out of my turret and put on my [para]chute and jumped. Our ship blew up a few seconds later. My [para]chute opened [at] about 18,000ft. I [landed] in a wheat field [and] sprained my knee.

SSgt Phillips summarized the reason for the jump as 'Aircraft hit, burning and out of control.'

On 19 Jul 45, SSgt Phillips wrote to Capt. Baber's mother. As kindly as one can tell a mother, he said that there was little hope for her son. He went on to say that he didn't know what happened after he left the plane; but he thought that the only way the three survived was that Capt. Baber held the plane in the air long enough for them to get out. (Atch 4)

In 1947 a Graves Registration team traveled to Airan, France to investigate the crash site of an American B-17. They recovered 7 bodies including one with the ID tags of Capt. Robert O Baber and an engine ID plate that matched one of the engines on the 'I'll Get By'. The 'I'll Get By' was found – not 'near Lisieux' but in a farmer's field in Airan, France. The next of kin were notified of the recovery of the bodies and asked for their preferences as to the burial – in Europe or returned to America for burial there. Three opted for repatriation to America. Four chose burial in France.

1.2 The Germans

In Aug 44 two flak (Flugzeugabwehrkanone) batteries, each with 4 88mm Model 37 guns, were deployed near Airan France – one about one kilometer directly south of Airan, the other about 2 km southwest of Airan. These were 2. und 3. Schwere Batterien d. I.(gem.mot.)/Flak-Sturm-Regiment 20 – the 2nd and 3rd Heavy Batteries of the 20th Flak Sturm Regiment (motorized) whose Kommandeur was Major Anton Meckel. The 20th Regiment was part of the 16th Flak Division of the 3rd Flak Corps. The nearer battery was the 3rd Battery of the 20th Flak Sturm Regiment (Motorized). The farther one was its companion 2nd Battery.

At 1754 on 2 Aug 44 they began firing at a formation of B-17s flying SSE at 6700m (approx. 22000ft) at 104m/sec (approx. 233mph). At their closest approach to the nearest battery, the B-17s were at a slant range of 8400m to Battery 2 and 9200m to Battery 3. The batteries fired 39 rounds apiece during the two minutes that the B-17 formation was within range. At 1755, one B-17 was hit, fell out of the formation to the left of the flight path, turned right under the formation and crashed due East of Airan. The location of the witnesses to that action is marked on the attached map as 'Zeugenstandpunkt.' Note: independent witnesses were required in order for the batteries to claim a 'kill.' The B-17 that they shot down was the 'I'll Get By'.

The action was duly reported by (signature unreadable), Oberleutnant u Ord Offz (1st Lieutenant and Administrative Officer), with maps drawn by Zeichner Obergefreiter (Artist Lance Corporal) Putz (Atch 5).

The German sketch of the action came from the files of Joel Huard of ANSA 39/45. Mr Henry L. (Larry) deZeng IV of the Axis History Forum generously helped me with the German military terms, acronyms and amplifying data.

2.0 The Kindness of Strangers

2.1 The Search for the Crash Site

I grew up hearing about my mother's favorite brother, Bob, who died in the war one month before I was born. He was a B-17 pilot, her childhood hero and her big brother. She would also cry if I asked too many questions; so, I learned to avoid asking about him. To me he was a photograph on the wall of a good-looking young officer in the khaki uniform of an Air Corps pilot and the reason why my middle name was Robert.

However, I inherited my mother's love for genealogy. That and my fascination with personal computers made me my mother's data entry clerk with the early genealogy software that ran on Apple II's. A fortuitous assignment to Air Command and Staff College in 1976 put me next door to the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA). Now, I could add to the thin entries on Capt. Robert O. Baber. From the AFHRA came the MACR and Unit Histories of the 95th BG – the source of most of the information above.

I learned that military personnel data was filed in the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records (NPRC-MPR) in St Louis MO (part of the National Archives). I submitted the required form, the SF-180, and waited. In due course, the response came back that the Center had no information on Capt. Robert O Baber. A fire in the center in 1973 had destroyed 80% of the records dealing with World War II personnel. Apparently, Capt. Baber's records are among the many that were lost.

Much later, I was going through my mother's papers and found Capt. Baber's Form 5 (Individual Flight Record). From his Flight Records I learned that he had 1275 hours of flying time when he died – almost all of it as first pilot or command pilot. He had flown 600 of those hours in B-17s. He also had logged time in Basic and primary trainers, AT-6, AT-7, L-1, L-3, L-4, P-39, P-40, P-51, BT-13, DB-7, A-20, B-25, and B-26. Most of those aircraft were flown before transitioning to B-17s and while assigned to the 76th Observation Group.

There it stood until my retirement in 1995 and a newfound interest in World War I. My wife, Peggie, is a patient, good-hearted lady; but too many battlefields and cemeteries while visiting Europe forced a renegotiation of the itinerary. NOTE: Renegotiation meant me saying, 'Yes, Dear' a lot. So, battlefields were

interspersed with churches, gardens and non-military museums. On the latest trip (late Apr 14) with my wife, son and daughter-in-law, the ladies wanted to see the Bayeux tapestry. Bayeux is in Normandy and so was the crash site of 'I'll Get By'.

When I stopped looking for Capt. Baber, all I had was the MACR location ('near Lisieux'). I wanted to visit the crash site; but needed a more precise location than 'close to Lisieux'. I contacted Lt Col John Lacy, the Assistant Air Attaché in the American Embassy in Paris. That led to Mr. Josh Fennell of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office in Washington DC. He led me to Mr. Joel Huard of the ANSA 39-45 organization (a team of amateur archeologists researching and excavating downed aircraft in France). Mr. Huard led me to Mr. Michel Duperron and Mr. Patrice Martin of the small town of Airan, Calvados, France. Mr. Duperron, who speaks no English, was researching the 'I'll Get By' crash site. Mr. Martin, the mayor of Airan, speaks English.

We drove to Airan and had a marvelous three-way conversation with Michel and Patrice. From them we learned of the ceremony to unveil a granite stone commemorating the loss of 'I'll Get By' and remembering the crew. This memorial was part of the 'Liberation Day' ceremonies celebrated in this part of France. In this case, Airan (and the surrounding 5 towns) were all liberated by the British Army on or around 14 Aug 44. Airan wanted to recognize the contribution and sacrifice of the Americans with a monument to the 'I'll Get By' which they planned to unveil on 14 Aug 14 – the 70th anniversary of their Liberation Day

Mr. Duperron took us to the crash site in a farmer's field on the edge of Airan. There is not much left of the aircraft - just occasional small debris. Apparently, the Germans recovered most of the wreckage immediately after the crash for recycling into the German war effort.

It was entirely serendipitous that we would arrive there when we did. We were the first crewmember relatives that had visited Airan -- and the timing for our trip was purely by chance. They asked if we could return for the ceremony in August (we said we would) and would we try to contact other relatives of the crew (we said we would). This was the start of the search for Capt. Baber's crew.

2.2 The Search for the Crew

Two things had changed since I last looked for Capt. Baber:

- The explosion of data available on-line through internet searches
- Ancestry.com

I had the names of the crew from the MACR and other data from the unit histories. There were discrepancies, however.

- In the MACR, SSgt Lipkin is not listed; in fact, no waist gunner is listed. Yet, SSgt Lipkin was on the aircraft, did bail out, and was a POW. I suspect that, at the time of the mission debriefing on 2 Aug 44 (and the creation of the MACR), it was known that Capt. Baber's crew had been shot down and that Capt. Bockman had replaced one of the waist gunners; but which waist gunner wasn't clear. Rather than guess, the waist gunner entry was left blank.
- In 95th BG Special Order (SO) 195, dated 18 Jul 44, which lists the 'Lead Crews' by name, 1st Lt Kaylor is not listed as part of Capt. Baber's crew. In fact, no co-pilot was listed. Yet, 1st Lt Kaylor, who had more combat missions than anyone else in the crew, did fly and was killed. 1st Lt Kaylor flew 32 combat missions with another crew. Since this was supposed to be an easy mission, he was assigned as the co-pilot to finish the 33 missions required for completion of a combat tour for a 'Lead Crew.'

My reconstruction of the crew is the following:

Capt. Robert Oris Baber, O-375909, Pilot, KIA, Age 28, Kansas
1st Lt Jasper W. Kaylor, Jr., O-817042, Copilot, KIA, Age 27, Georgia
1st Lt Raymond D. Dallas, O-696069, Navigator, KIA, Age 20, Kentucky
1st Lt Frank T. Sohm, O-745983, Bombardier, KIA, Age 22, New York
TSgt Oscar C. Walrod, 19004514, Flight Engineer & Top Turret, KIA, Age 25, Kansas
TSgt Robert V. Hill, Radio Operator, 35644893, KIA, Age 23, Ohio
SSgt Donald W. Phillips, 15377309, Ball Turret Gunner, POW, Age 21, Ohio
SSgt Walter J. Collyer, Jr., 32804322, Tail Gunner, POW, Age 18, New York
SSgt Barney Lipkin, 32695273, Waist Gunner, POW, Age 24, New York
Capt. Elmer E. Bockman, O-2044718, Command Pilot, KIA, Age 24, Texas
*SSgt William W. Adamson, 18106995, Waist Gunner, Age 21, Texas

* Normal member of Capt. Baber crew – did not fly on 2 Aug 44 mission – Capt. Bockman flew in his position

From the Internet came the crew photograph already mentioned as Atch 1. The Internet version came with the notation that the 5th man from the left is TSgt Oscar Walrod. Also from the Internet came a restatement of the MACR from a French website that documents all the 8th AF losses in France (Atch 6). These two sources gave me the aircraft's name: 'I'll Get By.'

My starting point was, therefore, a list of 11 names, seven of which I knew had died on 2 Aug 44, and a picture of 11 men which one of them identified but without the source of that identification documented. My daughter, Kate, resolved the documentation problem when she found the crew picture on the photo-sharing site, Flickr. Mike Walrod, grandson of TSgt Oscar Walrod, had identified his grandfather in the picture in a comment on the picture. Kate sent him a message. Mike and his father, Joe, were soon in email contact with us.

The next step was to search the 1940 and 1930 census returns for the crew names. I wanted to find both the crewmembers and their close relatives (mother, father, sister, brother, children). From the 1940 Census and other sources comes the following:

- Robert O. Baber was born 18 Oct 15 in Mentor KS, graduated from Kansas State College (now Kansas State University) in 1939 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Milling Industry. He was also a Cadet Major in the ROTC unit and was commissioned as a 2nd Lt in the Infantry at his graduation.
- Jasper W. Kaylor Jr. was born on 15 Aug 16, was married to Dorothy Ruth Moore in 1939, had a daughter, Mary Ruth, in 1940, worked as a postal clerk, enlisted in the Army 16 Sep 42 in Atlanta GA
- Raymond D. Dallas was born 19 Oct 23 in Paducah KY, was in high school in 1940
- Frank T. Sohm was born in 1922, was a high school graduate working as a salesman in Kingston, NY in 1940, enlisted 12 Dec 1941 in Kingston NY.
- Oscar C. Walrod was born on 19 Nov 18 in Correctionville IA, was working as a ranch hand in Oregon in 1940, was married to Dorothy Rosina Deters on 5 Jun 43 and had a son Joseph in 1944
- Robert V. Hill was born in 1921 in Green OH, was a high school graduate living with his father in 1940 and was married to Elizabeth.
- Barney Lipkin was born on 29 Jan 20 in Brooklyn NY, enlisted 24 Jan 43 in Brooklyn NY
- Donald W. Phillips was born 5 May 23 in Alliance OH, was a high school graduate working as a machinist's apprentice in 1940, enlisted on 4 Dec 42 in Columbus OH
- Walter J. Collyer Jr. was born on 19 Sep 25 in New York NY, was a high school student in New York, and enlisted in New York 1n 1943

- Elmer E. Bockman was born on 25 Nov 19 in Nacogdoches TX, was working as a clerk in the family grocery store in Ft Sumner NM in 1940, enlisted on 30 Dec 40 at Ft Bliss TX
- William W. Adamson was born on 24 Apr 23, enlisted 3 Oct 43

With that 1940 Census data I could also enter the search feature in Ancestry.com and search the family trees for the crewmembers and/or their close relatives.

There are two problems with this approach:

- Ancestry.com redacts the data for living people – and I wanted to contact living relatives to invite them to the ceremony.
- Ancestry.com allows family tree authors to declare their trees ‘private’ – the search will return the info that the person is in the tree but nothing else.

The solution is the same for both cases: a message to the tree author asking them to release data on the person in question or to put me in contact with someone who did have the data. Using that process, we (my daughter, Kate, and I) were able to find the following:

- Mary Jandene Placania, granddaughter of 1st Lt Jasper W Kaylor, through the help of JeffreyWilliams2067
- Tony Dallas, brother of 1st Lt Raymond D Dallas, through the help of Mary Sexton, Robert & Annette Dallas, Keith Wayne Ragan
- John Sohm, nephew of 1st Lt Frank T Sohm, author of his own family tree
- Jeff Dillow, 2nd cousin to TSgt Robert V Hill, through the help of Kristi Massie
- Deborah Williamson, daughter of SSgt Donald W Phillips, through the help of Diredtor271 from Ancestry.com
- Joshua C Roan, grandson of SSgt Walter J Collyer Jr., through the help of Johnny Roan (jroan150)
- Paula Lipkin, daughter of SSgt Barney Lipkin, through the help of Alana Lipkin

I am still looking for the relatives of Capt. Elmer E Bockman and SSgt William W Adamson. Perhaps someone who reads this can give me a lead that will prove successful.

2.3 Crew Combat History

The 95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation maintains a database of the 334 combat missions flown by the 95th BG from 13 May 43 to 25 May 45. That database is available at <http://95thbg.org/j3migr/missions/missions-list>. The entire list is included at Atch 7. A companion database of flight records is available at <http://95thbg.org/j3migr/missions/missions-list>. It can be searched by name (among other things) to determine which missions an individual flew and with whom. Using that database the following history can be reconstructed:

- Capt. Robert O Baber began his combat flying as a copilot in Capt. J. B. Campbell's crew on Mission 101 on 23 Mar 44. That was his first and only combat mission as a copilot. With the exception of four missions, his subsequent missions were as pilot with his own crew. The four exceptional missions were those that Capt. Baber flew as a Command Pilot (Group Leader) with another crew.

- The complete list follows:

○ 101	23 Mar 44	Brunswick	Co-pilot
○ 103	27 Mar 44	Cazaux	Pilot
○ 104	28 Mar 44	Chateaudun	Pilot
○ 105	01 Apr 44	Ludwigshafen	Pilot
○ 107	10 Apr 44	Beaumont-sur-Oise	Pilot
○ 110	13 Apr 44	Augsburg	Pilot
○ 112	19 Apr 44	Werl	Pilot
○ 113	20 Apr 44	NoBall 10A and 32	Pilot
○ 120	28 Apr 44	NoBall 18	Pilot
○ 121	29 Apr 44	Berlin	Pilot
○ 122	01 May 44	NoBall 120	Pilot
○ 126	08 May 44	La Glacerie	Pilot
○ 128	11 May 44	Liege	Pilot
○ 129	12 May 44	Brux	Pilot
○ 131	19 May 44	Berlin	Pilot
○ 139	30 May 44	Brussels	Pilot
○ 140	31 May 44	Osnabruk	Pilot
○ 146	06 Jun 44	Normandy	Pilot
○ 149	08 Jun 44	Tours	Pilot
○ 159	22 Jun 44	Paris	Pilot
○ 170	08 Jul 44	Tactical	Cmd Pilot
○ 173	14 Jul 44	Cadillac	Pilot
○ 174	16 Jul 44	Stuttgart	Cmd Pilot
○ 175	17 Jul 44	Tactical	Cmd Pilot
○ 178	19 Jul 44	Schweinfurt	Pilot

○ 181	24 Jul 44	Tactical	Cmd Pilot
○ 183	28 Jul 44	Merseburg	Pilot
○ 186	02 Aug 44	Tactical	Pilot

NOTES:

'Tactical' targets were troop concentrations and transportation hubs to isolate the Normandy invasion beaches

'NoBall' targets were V-1 and V-2 launch sites

'Cadillac' missions were supply drops to Resistance units in Occupied Europe

- There are issues with this data. The MACR (Atch 2) lists Capt. Baber's mission number as 27 – not including the last mission on 2 Aug 44. The list above is 28 including the last mission. The 95th BG database lists only 24 missions; it does not include the four missions Capt. Baber flew as Command Pilot. I believe the solution lies in Capt. Baber's Flight Log for Jul 44 (Atch 8). The following missions are listed in the Flight Log as 'Acting Command Pilot' and have flying hours consistent with the missions flown by the 95th BG on that day. Capt. Baber is not listed as flying those missions in the 95th BG database. Their inclusion would, however, make the 95th BG database mission count agree with the mission count on the MACR.
- In his 23 missions when he had his own crew, Capt. Baber flew:
 - 2 times with 1st Lt Jasper C Kaylor Jr. as co-pilot
 - 3 times with 1st Lt Raymond D Dallas as navigator
 - 3 times with 1st Lt Frank T Sohmer as bombardier
 - 23 times with T/Sgt Oscar C Walrod as flight engineer/top turret gunner
 - 20 times with T/Sgt Robert V Hill as radio operator
 - 23 times with S/Sgt Donald W Phillips as ball turret gunner
 - 22 times with S/Sgt Barney Lipkin as right waist gunner
 - 18 times with S/Sgt William W Adamson as left waist gunner
 - 22 times with S/Sgt Walter J Collyer as tail gunner
- It is apparent that the 'Baber Crew' was Capt. Baber and the six enlisted men. In fact, Sgts Hill, Walrod, Phillips, Lipkin, and Collyer only flew with Capt. Baber. Sgt Adamson flew 12 of 18 missions with Capt. Baber.

- The three other officer positions were not consistently crewed with Capt. Baber. Since Capt. Bockman was assigned to the HQ 95th BG, he had no assigned crew.
 - o 1st Lt Jasper C Kaylor Jr. flew 31 of his 33 missions as the co-pilot of 1st Lt Paul Ribnikar's crew.
 - o 1st Lt Raymond D Dallas flew 27 of his 30 missions as the navigator on 1st Lt Charles A. Besser's crew
 - o 1st Lt Frank T Sohm flew 22 of his 25 missions as the bombardier on 1st Lt Jack D. Beckelman's crew
 - o Capt. Elmer E. Bockman flew only one of his 23 missions with Capt. Baber.
- Capt. Baber flew most often with the following:
 - o 1st Lt Claude L. Bodin as Co-pilot – 19 missions
 - o 1st Lt Robert M. Staum as Navigator – 12 missions
 - o 1st Lt Robert L. Rathgeber (11 missions) or 1st Lt Joseph T. Bartoszek (7 missions) as Bombardier
- If I am correct about the four missions flown as 'Acting Command Pilot' (see above), then Capt. Baber would be flying those missions as a additional member of another pilot's crew. Therefore, his one flight as a co-pilot and four flights as an 'Acting Command Pilot' with other crews would make his mission count 5 more than T/Sgt Walrod and S/Sgt Phillips. Both of those men had faithfully flown every mission with Capt. Baber and both were credited with 23 missions on the MACR.
- While Capt. Baber was qualified to be a 'Command Pilot,' apparently the duties of a 'Command Pilot' were not an additional duty for the aircraft pilot. Therefore, Capt Bockman was added to the crew as the Group Command Pilot and flew in place of one of the gunners.

2.3 The Crew Photograph

The first problem with the picture was the quality of the picture taken from the Internet. The Internet copy is a poor quality copy of the picture from the National Archives. The National Archives has a list of four companies authorized to produce high quality copies of Archive photographs. However, they require the file number of the picture to get started. An email to the National Archives, Still Picture Branch with a copy of the picture and as much information about the picture as I had produced a response from Holly Reed, of Still Picture Reference, with the file number. Then Jim Parker of Double Delta Industries created a very high quality version of the crew picture.

After many false starts, with the combination of a high quality picture and relatives of 9 of the 11 men in the picture, we were able to match names and faces in the crew photograph. The key points are these:

- This photograph was taken on 2 Aug 44 because there are 11 men in the picture – the normal crew and Capt. Bockman.
- 10 men are in flight jackets – they will fly. The man on the left is wearing a cap with an enlisted cap badge and is without a flight jacket. He is SSgt Adamson – he will not fly.
- There are 4 men wearing flight jackets that are also wearing hats with officer hat badges. These are the normal officer crew of pilot, co-pilot, navigator and bombardier. Specifically, they are Capt. Baber, 1st Lt Kaylor, 1st Lt Dallas and 1st Lt Sohm.
- There are 6 men dressed as enlisted men with fleece lined ball caps. The 6 positions left to fill are Flight Engineer/Top Turret, Radio Operator, Ball Turret, Left Waist, Right Waist, and Tail Gunner. Since SSgt Adamson (a waist gunner) is not flying and Capt. Bockman is flying in his place, then Capt. Bockman is dressed as an enlisted gunner.
- 1st Lt Sohm, 1st Lt Dallas, TSgt Hill and SSgt Collyer were identified from contemporary photos.
- Their children, grandchildren, or nephews identified Capt. Baber, 1st Lt Kaylor, TSgt Walrod, SSgt Lipkin, and SSgt Phillips.
- Capt. Bockman is identified by elimination.

The names to match the faces in the picture are, therefore, (left to right):

- SSgt William W Adamson, Waist Gunner, did not fly - replaced by Capt. Bockman
- Capt. Elmer E Bockman, Asst. S-3 95th BG, Command Pilot, KIA
- 1st Lt Jasper W Kaylor, Jr., Copilot, KIA
- 1st Lt Frank T Sohm, Bombardier, KIA
- TSgt Oscar C Walrod, Flight Engineer & Top Turret, KIA
- TSgt Robert V Hill, Radio Operator, KIA
- Capt. Robert Oris Baber, Pilot, KIA
- 1st Lt Raymond D Dallas, Navigator, KIA
- SSgt Barney Lipkin, Waist Gunner, POW
- SSgt Walter J Collyer, Jr., Tail Gunner, POW
- SSgt Donald W Phillips, Ball Turret, POW

2.4 The Ceremony

14 Aug 14 was a sunny day with a chance for showers. We were staying in the delightful town of Lisieux, France. After a 30 min drive we arrived at the Airan town hall. Seven of us were attending the ceremony: my wife, Peggie, and I; my daughter, Kate, and two of our grandchildren, Sarah and Nate; my son, John, and his wife, Megan.

The ceremonies in Airan began at 1030 14 Aug 14 with laying of a floral tribute for the British Army liberators of Airan at the 12th century Church of Saint-Germain (Atch 9).

We then moved to a small farming road on the Eastern edge of Airan where the monument to the 'I'll Get By' is located. After raising the American and French flags on the flagpoles behind the monument and the playing of the national anthems for both nations, Mayor Patrice Martin and I unveiled the monument (Atch 10). Mayor Martin gave a speech welcoming us and praising the courage and sacrifice of the Americans and more specifically, the crew of 'I'll Get By' (Atch 11&12). I responded with a short speech thanking them for their kindness to us and for their thoughtfulness in creating this monument to the crew (Atch 13).

The ceremony concluded with the laying of a floral tribute (Atch 14) and the presentation by Michel and Lucienne Duperron of a recovered part from the crash site (Atch 15)

The three men who are responsible for this tribute to the crew are shown here (Atch 16). They are (from left to right): Joel Huard (ANSA 39-45), Michel Duperron, and Mayor Patrice Martin. We thank these men for this fine monument to the crew (Atch 17).

2.5 The Reception

After the ceremony, the group reconvened in the Town Hall for a reception. During the reception it was my honor to read a letter from the current 8th Air Force Commander, Major General Scott Vander Hamm, thanking Airan for remembering and honoring the crew (Atch 18&19). Then I presented a copy of the crew picture taken from the high quality copy that Jim Parker created for me. (Atch 20) Translating the high quality data on a thumb drive to a beautifully detailed photograph was the work of Bobby Currie of WANT Photography in San Pedro CA

The final event for this ceremony was the newspaper article published about the event (Atch 21)

2.6 Finding the Monument, Picture and Crash Site

The picture is in the Airan town hall (Marie) as is Mayor Patrice Martin's office (GPS 49.100823, -0.151194) (see pin in Atch 22). The monument is East of town along D47 (GPS 49.094147, -0.136203) (see pin in Atch 23). The crash site is at the pin in Atch 24 (GPS 49.097755, -0.136930).

2.7 Where are they now?

All eleven men in the crew photo are dead. Seven of the crew died on 2 Aug 1944. A Graves Registration team recovered their bodies in 1947. The next of kin had the choice of burying the relative either in Europe or returning to body to the US for burial.

Capt. Robert Oris Baber is buried in the Gypsum Hill Cemetery, Salina KS (Atch 25)

Capt. Elmer E. Bockman is buried in the American Military Cemetery, Coleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France (Atch 26).

1st Lt Jasper Wiley Kaylor Jr. is buried in the Westview Cemetery in Atlanta GA (Atch 27)

1st Lt Raymond Donald Dallas is buried in the American Military Cemetery, Coleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France (Atch 28)

1st Lt Frank T. Sohm is buried in the American Military Cemetery, Coleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France (Atch 29)

TSgt Oscar Cyrus Walrod is buried in the Correctionville Cemetery, Correctionville IA (Atch 30)

TSgt Robert Vernon Hill is buried in the American Military Cemetery, Coleville-sur-Mer, Normandy, France (Atch 31).

Four of the men in the crew photo survived the war. One man (SSgt Adamson) did not fly on 2 Aug 44. The remaining three did fly, bailed out of the aircraft over occupied France, were captured, and spent the remainder of the European war in a POW camp (SSgts Lipkin, Phillips, and Collyer).

SSgt Barney Lipkin died 02 Oct 1986 and is buried in the New Montefiore Cemetery, Brooklyn NY (Atch 32)

SSgt Donald Warren Phillips died on 11 Mar 1995 and is buried in the Highland Memorial Park, Beloit OH (Atch 33).

SSgt (later Master Sergeant) Walter James Collyer Jr. died on 18 Jan 2001 and is buried in the Rocky Branch Cemetery, Rocky Branch LA (Atch 34)

SSgt (later Chief Master Sergeant) William Wallace Adamson died 15 Oct 1993 and is buried in the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio TX (Atch 35)

2.8 What Is Next

I have written to the National Personnel Record Center- Military Personnel Records (NPRC-MPR) for the data they hold for each of the crew. I expect to be denied access to the records for SSgts Lipkin, Phillips, Collyer and Adamson. The requisite 62 years have not passed since their death so the records are not yet in the public domain. So far, I learned from Mr. Harold Sill that the records for 1st Lt Kaylor and 1st Lt Sohmer were destroyed in the 1973 fire (as were Capt. Baber's). I am waiting word on the records for the remainder of the crew.

The response from the NPRC-MPR recommended that I also request the Individual Deceased Personnel File from the U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Casualty & Memorial Affairs Operations Division. I submitted that request for Capt. Baber's file on 2 Jul 14. The response from the Army said the request might take up to 48 weeks. If that request is successful, then I will submit requests for the other 6 crewmembers that died on 2 Aug 44.

I continue to work with the AFHRA at Maxwell AFB AL. Mr. William M. Russell, AFHRA/RC, is researching the following:

- Mission reports for each of Capt. Baber's combat missions while in the 335th and 412th Bomb Squadrons
 - What position did he fly in the combat box?
- Any mention of the other crewmembers in mission reports or Special Orders
 - Copies of Special Orders pertaining to those names

Hopefully, that search will turn up more information about the earlier missions (before the fateful 2 Aug 44 mission).

Under the category of unfinished business is the following:

- Finding living relatives for Capt. Elmer E Bockman. His father was Hernando Desoto Bockman. He has two brothers: Jacob Archie and Hernando Desoto Jr.
- Finding living relatives of SSgt (later CMSgt) William W Adamson. There is one tantalizing clue: CMSGT Adamson married Elizabeth Ida Weir on 3 May 74. The Reserve Officer Training (ROTC) building at North Texas University is named for 'William and Elizabeth Adamson.'
- Pictures of the gravestones for SSgt Phillips, and SSgt Lipkin.

According to a 3rd Bombardment Division letter dated 23 Jun 44, the awards for sustained operations for combat personnel were one Air Medal (or oak leaf cluster) for each six combat missions and a Distinguished Flying Cross for the tour. Crewmembers that were Missing In Action (MIA) could be granted exceptions. A Purple Heart was awarded for each wound or death caused by enemy action. Further, the three crewmembers that survived as POWs were

subjected to the Stalag Luft IV 'Death March' which could mean the award of the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in the march as well as the POW medal. With those rules in mind, I want to review the awards and decorations granted to each of the crewmembers to assure that they were given the awards that they were due.

The Missing A/C Report documents the number of combat missions completed prior to the 2 Aug 44 mission. Those data are:

- 27 Capt. Robert Oris Baber, O-375909, Pilot,
 - 32 1st Lt Jasper W Kaylor, Jr., O-817042, Copilot,
 - 23 1st Lt Raymond D Dallas, O-696069, Navigator
 - 27 1st Lt Frank T Sohm, O-745983, Bombardier,
 - 23 TSgt Oscar C Walrod, 19004514, Flight Engineer & Top Turret
 - 20 TSgt Robert V Hill, Radio Operator, 35644893,
 - 23 SSgt Donald W Phillips, 15377309, Ball Turret Gunner,
 - 22 SSgt Walter J Collyer, Jr., 32804322, Tail Gunner,
 - 23 SSgt Barney Lipkin, 32695273, Waist Gunner,
 - 23* Capt. Elmer E Bockman, O-2044718, Command Pilot
- * Capt. Bockman's mission total courtesy of Rod Hupp, researcher for the

95th BG Association

Finally, personnel who successfully bail out of a disabled aircraft are eligible for membership in the Caterpillar Club. I have contacted Marie Gowen of the Switlik Corporation (Switlik controls membership in the Caterpillar Club) in the names of SSgts Lipkin, Phillips, and Collyer. Ms. Gowen informed me that SSgt Phillips is already a member of the Caterpillar Club. She has approved the memberships of SSgts Collyer and Lipkin (Atch 36, 37 & 38). I will forward to the next of kin the membership packages (membership certificate and caterpillar pin).

2.9 Miscellaneous Information

The 'I'll Get By' was a B-17G-55-BO with the tail number 42-102700. B-17s were built at Boeing Plant 2 in Seattle, Lockheed Vega in Burbank, and Douglas Aircraft in Long Beach. The United States built 12,731 B-17s of all variants. Of that total of 12,731, 8,680 were B-17Gs. Of that total of 8,680 B-17Gs, Boeing built 4035 under various contracts. Of the Boeing-built 4035 B-17Gs, 200 were built at Boeing under contract B-17G-55-BO. 'I'll Get By' was one of those 200.

The Capt. Baber crew photograph (Attachment 1) is the dust cover photograph for **Bombers** by Philip Kaplan (Atch 39). **Bombers** was published in 2000 by Barnes & Noble (ISBN 0-7607-2057-6).

The B-17G gun positions are described in Atch 40. Note: The two navigator-operated 'Chin Whisker' .50 Cal machine guns are not shown. Atch 41 describes the 'chin' turret and the bombardier's position for operating the turret. Atch 42 shows the ball turret gunner at his position. Atch 43 shows the tail gunner in his position.

Atch 44 shows the crew bail out exit routes.

3.0 The Kindness of Strangers

The following people made this story possible:

Lt Col John Lacy, former Assistant Air Attaché, DAO Paris
Josh Fennell
Joel Huard
Michel & Lucienne Duperron
Patrice Martin
Mike & Joe Walrod
Mary Jandene Placania
JeffreyWilliams2067 from Ancestry.com
Tony Dallas
Mary Sexton
Robert & Annette Dallas
Keith Wayne Ragan
John Sohm
Jeff Dillow
Kristie Massie
Deborah Williamson
Director271 from Ancestry.com
Joshua C Roan
Johnny Roan
Paula Lipkin
Alana Lipkin
Holly Reed
Jim Parker
Bobby Currie
Marie Gowen
Rod Hupp
William M Russell, AFHRA
2nd Bomb Wing/Public Affairs Staff
MG Scott Vander Hamm, Commander 8th AF
Henry L. (Larry) deZeng IV

Thank you,

John R (Jack) Wormington, Brig Gen USAF (Ret)
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Rancho Palos Verdes CA 90275
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Attachments

1. Crew Photograph
2. Missing A/C Report (MACR), A/C No 2700, 412th Sqdn, 95th BG, 2 Aug 44
3. Letter, SSgt Phillips to Mrs. Baber, dated 19 Jul 45
4. Caterpillar Club Application - Phillips
5. German Report of B-17 'I'll Get By'
6. Screenshot of entry 635 of 778 from web site www.b-17-france.org
7. Missions List
8. Flight Log
9. British Army Ceremony
10. Unveiling the Monument
11. Mayor Martin Giving His Speech
12. Mayor Martin's Speech
13. Wormington Speech
14. Placing Flowers
15. Presenting Recovered Artifact
16. Joel Huard, Michael Duperron, Patrice Martin
17. Monument
18. Reading the Letter
19. MG Vander Hamm letter
20. Presenting Photo
21. Newspaper Copy
22. Airan Marie
23. Monument Site
24. 'I'll Get By' crash site
25. Baber Gravestone
26. Bockman Gravestone
27. Kaylor Gravestone
28. Dallas Gravestone
29. Sohm Gravestone
30. Walrod Gravestone
31. Hill Gravestone
32. Lipkin Gravestone (No photo available, yet)
33. Phillips Gravestone (No photo available, yet)
34. Collyer Gravestone
35. Adamson Gravestone
36. Caterpillar Club – Collyer
37. Caterpillar Club – Lipkin
38. Caterpillar Club pin
39. Bombers by Kaplan
40. B-17G Gun Positions
41. B-17G Chin Turret
42. B-17G Ball Turret

- 43. B-17G Tail Gunner
- 44. B-17 Crew Bail Out Exits