

Livermore Heritage Guild

"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"



Veterans Hospital Livermore, California

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Recently with the help of Anna Siig and Lynn Owens we installed a new display at the Carnegie Museum about the Livermore Naval Air Station, Camp Parks and Camp Shoemaker in Dublin and the stories of local veterans from WWII. Artifacts were loaned by several veterans and their families, including John Shirley, Ken Nather, Charles (Chuck) McFann, John Aspinwalls, Bill Junk and Tillie Calhoun as well as the family of Malvern Sweet. The Sweet family are long-time ranchers who first settled in Livermore in the early 1880s. Malvern loved the ranch, but along with his wife Jewell, he devoted much of his life to education in the Valley, serving as Principal at Pleasanton Elementary and later Junction Avenue School in Livermore. Malvern joined the Livermore Heritage Guild in the 1970's and his stories reflected his love for the Valley; he contributed greatly to our archives. It was with some surprise that we discovered he had been decorated in WWII and the Korean War for his efforts in the Army Air Corps and later the United States Air Force as a navigator on B-17 and B-26 bombers. In reflection, in knowing him it was never about Malvern but always about the other person, which is what made him so respected by the people who knew him.

In August 1943 Malvern's B-17 was seriously damaged in the bombing run over Schweinfurt, Germany, a strategic target in WWII. One of the waist gunners was killed during the attack; four of the crew had to

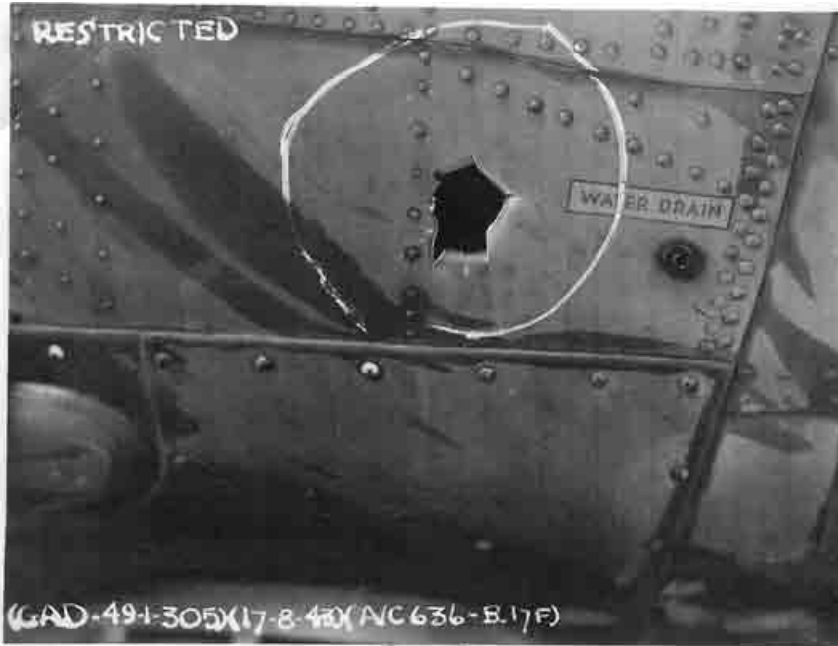
abandon ship because of a lack of oxygen before reaching the target; the remaining five crewmen, including Malvern, finished the run but barely made it back to England where they finally crash landed. This, as well as many other stories, is in Edward Jablonski's book "Double Strike, The Epic Air Raids on Regensburg/Schweinfurt".

Below is Malvern's deposition given on Sept 16, 1943 about the mission. Also included are two letters that Malvern received in 1945 when he finally was able to make contact with the crewmembers that were forced to bail out. We found these first hand accounts interesting reading and thought you might as well. We also feel they offer insight into Malvern and reflect his unique way of making others shine, a quality that he maintained throughout his life.

Malvern Sweet deposition Sept 16, 1943

Personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths, one Malvern R. Sweet, 2nd Lt., Air Corps, 0-729673, who deposes and says as follows:

Just over the Dutch-German border, about one hour and ten minutes before reaching the target, the formation was attacked by approximately twenty-five enemy fighters, coming in in spread formation, diving out of



August 17, 1943
Martlesham S.E. England



Hendricks, Sweet, Boyle, Nelson, Tyler

Five of the ten crew members who returned with the damaged B-17 August 17, 1943
Photo taken at the RAF fighter base at Martlesham S.E. England where they made an
emergency landing. Not shown are Johnson, Salamon, Dougherty and Lee who bailed
out and were POW's. Frye was killed on board the plane.

the sun, and leveling out about twenty feet over the ships, pressing the attacks home viciously. The elevator and rudder cables were shot out; the supercharger on #1 engine was shot out, four out of the five oxygen systems were rendered useless, the electrical system of the bomb-bay shot out and the right gas tanks hit, and leaking gasoline. Seeing the plane disabled in this manner, and faltering, the fighters concentrated on the aircraft, swarming in for the kill. These determined attacks persisted for about one half an hour, and in their course, Sgt., Frye, Left Waist Gunner was killed, the Top Turret Operator, Sgt., Boyle, was wounded, and the Tail Gunner, Sergeant Salamon, Right Waist Gunner, Sergeant Dougherty, Ball Turret Gunner, Sergeant Johnson, and Radio Operator, Sergeant Lee, were forced to bale out because of lack of oxygen, but only after they had fought off attacks of enemy fighters as long as it was humanly possible. Their self-sacrifice, so that the rest of the crew could carry on is exemplary of the "Esprit de Corps" of the entire crew, and especially in view of the fact that two of them had virtually completed their tour of duty. Sergeant Lee was on his twenty-fifth mission, and Sergeant Salamon had completed twenty three. Sergeant Lee continued at his post, after his oxygen was exhausted, to inform the Pilot of the conditions existing, and that their positions would have to be abandoned.

Sergeant Johnson left his post in the Ball Turret only after he had bravely and skillfully fought off attacks, and it was impossible for him to carry the fight any further. The coolness and bravery displayed by Sergeant Dougherty, in the face of great danger, and on his first combat mission was truly remarkable, and the brave manner in which Sergeant Frey fought determinedly at his post, until rendering the supreme sacrifice, is worthy of emulation and highly commendable. In fact, the actions of these five men, and the remarkable coolness, bravery and self-sacrifice displayed by them certainly reflects the highest credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

Despite the lack of these important crew members, and the persistent, vicious fighter attacks, Lt. Tyler, with complete disregard for his own safety, but thinking only of the mission entrusted him, and with complete confidence and the abilities and acumen of the remaining crew members, continued to lead the formation

over the target. Had Lt. Tyler been thinking only of his own safety rather than the successful execution of his mission, when the enemy fighters were forced to withdraw, to refuel, and the attacks subsided, about forty minutes from the target, it would have been possible for him to attempt a forced landing in Switzerland, a neutral country, or to return to base, as the lack of gasoline presented a very serious threat to the possibility of reaching England, if the bombing run was made. The lack of oxygen presented another serious problem, and the unselfishness displayed by Lt. Tyler in the conservation of the remaining supply of oxygen, by setting it at 10,000 feet, while flying at 22,000 feet, and making two walk around bottles last for one hour and ten minutes each, made it possible for the remaining crew members to continue at their posts. As soon as the plane had been hit, and the extent of the damages determined, Lt. Tyler and his Co-Pilot, Lt. Hendricks take over the controls, so he could change oxygen systems. Lt. Hendricks smoothly operated the controls, and performed a masterful job by not letting the plane fall out of formation, despite the damage to the controls. After adjusting his oxygen, Lt. Tyler then took over and the one remaining oxygen system was shared by the Co-Pilot, Bombardier and Navigator. Sergeant Boyle went around collecting what oxygen bottles were available. Holding an oxygen mask to his face for twenty minute intervals, he continued firing his guns, warding off many enemy attacks, and probably destroying one enemy aircraft, and damaging others. In the course of these attacks, Sergeant Boyle was painfully wounded in the knee, but did not reveal this fact until the plane had finally landed, and Lt. Nelson noticed his blood-soaked trousers.

When the target was reached, the bombs would not release, because of the damage to the electrical system, and it was then that Sergeant Boyle and Lt. Nelson crawled into the bomb bay, and using only a screwdriver, finally managed to release three bombs over the Ruhr district of Germany, while Lt. Sweet manned the nose guns. The other seven bombs were eventually "Kicked out" over the Channel.

The homeward journey, from the enemy coast, and out over the sea to within sight of the English shores was practically a gliding operation, with the plane constantly losing altitude, two engines out of action, and

August 22, 1945

most of the gas gone. It was very dubious if the ship would ever make the English coast, or if it did, to land safely.

It was Lt. Sweet who navigated the ship to within sight of a small field on the English coast, but four miles out, all motors cut out, and orders were given to prepare for a crash landing. While gliding the plane in, it was quickly seen that the field was a very small fighter drone, with grass runways, which later proved to be quite bumpy. Hangers at the field's edge presented another difficulty and hazard because of the shortness of the landing space. It was impossible to circle the field and choose the most advantageous point of approach, and the first point contacted had to be it. Coming in, the plane was set down, but the brakes were inadequate to stop the large ship in the limited space, and the poor gripping power of the smooth grass contributed greatly to this fact. It was necessary to start a ground loop to stop the plane before it crashed into the hangers. This landing, from which all occupants emerged, uninjured, is a fine example of superb airmanship and perfect co-ordination between Pilot and Co-Pilot.

The extraordinary bravery, self-sacrifice, and "Thinking of the Other Fellow" displayed by each member of this ten man team, which caused one member to give his life in combat, four others to sacrifice their freedom, and possibly their lives, that others might carry on, while a sixth fought courageously and heroically, despite a painful wound, and the complete confidence of the remaining crew members in each others' ability, skill and loyalty is representative of the true spirit, devotion to duty, and fighting qualities of the soldiers of the United States Air Force.

Malvern Sweet
2nd Lt, Air Corps
Eye Witness

George Schubert
1st Lt. Air Corps
Asst. Base Adjutant

Dear Sweet:

Your good letter of last August (arrived) here yesterday, and my Mother and I sure have enjoyed it. It was mighty nice to hear from you and thanks for your thoughts about my Dad. He was a grand man, and I wish you could have met him. Yes, I was able to be with him for a few weeks and for this I am mighty thankful.

It was very considerate of you to have phrased your last letter to him as you did concerning me, and I, along with you, am glad your fears were only a rumor. I don't know where Salaman got his news, and I must let him know that I am still kicking around. Jerry didn't harm the barracks at all, and other than making a nervous wreck out of me for the three days I was in the roof, everything was O.K. I managed to get into the hospital that was there and sweated the Russians out from a fairly safe spot. I took a chance in a way, but it was worth it since I got off that march and did accomplish a half-way escape.

Thanks a lot for the report on that last mission, and I have found it quite interesting. I realize that it is, naturally, concerning that things which happened to you all, and you sure had more than your share of them. However, it seems that you all have made us who left a bunch of bleeding heroes, and for that I thank you, but I think the real job was done by you all who were left. I am only sorry that we who left couldn't have done a better job. As for what happened – well, I can tell you all I know about it, so here goes.

As you have said, things were pretty hot, and when those yellow bastards started coming in, I, along with all of you, sure had my time well taken care of. Here is my story for what it is worth as there are parts of it which I have to piece together.

As you will recall, along towards the middle of that attack there were a bunch of 190's off to our right flank. Well, they started in and there was one of them who sure was bent on getting us. We potted at each other, and when he was about 200 yards away, he pulled up into a power stall with his belly right in my sights. I let him have a fairly long burst and the last I saw of him was when he fell off on his right wing in a downward glide. Up to this time the two of us in the waist were O.K.

It must have been only a few minutes afterwards that that shell burst in the waist, and up to that time both Frye and I were exchanging shots with those yellow noses who were still coming in. Now, we were both firing toward the tail end of the ship, and where that shell came from I haven't the slightest idea. However, I can recall this: there was a large ball of fire, very similar to a ball of lightning when striking an object, shoulder high in the waist of that ship. This appeared slightly behind and to the right of me as I looked out of the waist towards the tail of our ship. Here is a small diagram as to how I recall it.

Well, the next thing I knew was one hell of a blow on my left leg and being knocked down onto the cat-walk underneath my gun. When I regained my feet, Frye was down and Jerry coming in, so I manned my gun once more. Then there was a few minutes when they seemed to leave us alone, and I awoke to the fact that my oxygen and phones were all disconnected. Next, after connecting up again, there was still a wee bit of oxygen left, I went over to Frye. As I bent over him, I noticed the oxygen indicator was not registering, so I grabbed hold of a walk-around and connected it onto Frye. But it was flat too, and at this time he started bleeding very badly. It was at this time he expired, and I am sure he did not know what had hit him.

I then regained my feet and tried to contact you all but with no success. I decided it best to stay as long as I could since Jerry was still around. It was at this time Lee came back, and I can recall I maintained that he should go back to the radio room since there was nothing he could do. It must have been just after this that I passed out from lack of oxygen as I can recall firing my gun and then nothing more.

There is nothing more until my mask was jerked off my face and either Lee or Johnson was giving me a shot of oxygen from a high pressure bottle. They both had their chutes on, and one of them was struggling to get mine onto my harness. Then, as I stood there in front of the waist window, both Lee and Johnson ran to the door and I saw Johnson take off. I still stood there in a half fog until Lee came back and dragged me to the door and motioned I should go. So, go I did, and I next came to hanging upside down in my chute and half sick. So in a rough way, the above is what happened as I can recall it.

Thanks a lot for all the news concerning the different fellows, and I shall write Tyler a letter real soon. I will be in Santa Monica soon, but plan on going back East when or if I get out of the Army.

My Mother is feeling much better and sends her regards. Here is hoping all goes well with you, and let me hear from you again.

As ever,
Jackson Dougherty

July 19, 1945

Hello Mal:

Received your letter & I sure was surprised & very happy to hear from you. I also had a wonderful letter from your mother. I just returned from Canton, Ohio where I spent a few weeks. I had a swell time but I thought I better get back home to the folks as I have only a few days left. I have to report to Miami, Florida for reassignment but I don't know what they will do with me. I have a pretty good chance of getting a discharge.

Well Mal, you remember Dougherty the waist gunner? Well the day we were starting on the forced march he & a friend of his hid in the upper part of the barracks & that evening after we left the vicinity of the camp they poured gasoline all over the place & burned the place down so I don't know whether they got out alive or not but Lee & I went on the march together & you know how absent minded Lee was. Well, he packed what he thought was a good pack we went on the march for more than 2 hours when it started falling apart so on our rest period we revised it that made it easier going for the day. The first night out we slept on the side of the mountain & boy was it cold & wet. The next day we had four other fellows go in combine with us. I was supposed to break ranks & try & trade soap & chocolate & cigarettes for food of any kind we could get. The reason I did it was I could speak a few different languages & there was a lot of forced labor mostly Polish & Russians they would give me most anything for soap & cigarettes. The women liked chocolate. Bread was what we needed most as wherever we went you could steal potatoes & eggs sometimes a live chicken & that's the way we lived on the march but at



**Navigator
Malvern Sweet**

Display in Carnegie Library



that we still lost about 30 to 40 boys. The worst part of the trip was the last eight days because it rained for eight days & nights. The only shelter we had was a lean-to that we built out of trees & leaves. They were OK for the first day but the other seven we were miserable although I & one of the combine managed to get away from the camp for about 16 hours & we got enough food for a few days. We could hear machine gun fire & the heavy were blasting away then on the eighth day an American tank Capt. came into camp & you could hear the fellows holler for miles around. The boys just about tore their clothes from the Capt. back & then the inf. Came in & disarmed the Germans & we took over the camp & we sure gave the Krauts a hard time while we were loose & that about ends the story for now.

Well Mal send me Tyler's address & I'll probably write to you from Florida it will be about the 4th of Aug so until then so long fella I'll be seeing you soon I hope.

Your tail gunner
Stan (Salamon)

The 2006 Livermore Heritage Guild calendars are here!

CALENDAR

Month of Dec & January

Livermore Naval Air Station and Veterans display

Wednesday, January 4th @ 7:00 p.m.

LHG Board Meeting, Carnegie Library, downstairs

Wednesday, February 1st @ 7:00 p.m.

LHG Board Meeting, Carnegie Library, downstairs

Agenda for LHG Sponsored History Talks:

7pm to 9pm, Community meeting room of the Livermore Civic Center Library.

Dec 21, 2005:

Don Meeker will share discoveries about Livermore Politics entitled "Livermore Has Gone to the Dogs" Don has been recording the early town records from 1876-1892.

(Note in 2006 date changed to second Wednesday of the month)

January 11, 2006:

Herb Street. WWII dive bomber fighter pilot and POW shares his experiences from WWII as a dive bomber and prisoner of war.

\$2 suggested donation. Coffee, tea and sweet breads provided by the Library Cafe. The Library Cafe is open until 8:00 p.m. providing sandwiches and drinks.

2006 Heritage Guild Calendars are here!

They make great gifts and cost only \$10.75 each including tax. We will mail calendars to other locations in the Continental United States for \$2.00 each.

A Brief Word

We recently set up new exhibits in the Carnegie Library about the Livermore Naval Air Station, Camp Parks and Camp Shoemaker. All were located here in the Valley during World War II. We also have artifacts on display loaned by several collectors and veterans of WWII and the Korean War. The response to this display was pleasantly surprising as many people eagerly volunteered to loan us items. Consequently, we decided to devote all our display space to this exhibit. We especially want to thank John Shirley, Ken Nather and the family of Malvern Sweet for the loan of their numerous personal artifacts as well as those of loved ones who served in the military. Thank you also to John Aspinwalls who donated his navy uniform, metals and watch used to check the chronometer on board ship along with his fathers WWI dog tags to the Livermore Heritage Guild archives. A special thank you to Tillie Calhoun for sharing her memories of her cousin, Bob Holm of Livermore, who was killed in action in WWII. Regardless of which conflict military members have served in, or whether you agree or disagree with the involvement of our nation, these servicemen and women have risked their lives, and in some cases forfeited them, in support of their pledge to serve our country. Our respect and support for their personal commitment should never waver.

If you enjoyed this newsletter, you should mark Wednesday, January 11th on your calendar as Herb Street will talk about his time in the service as a WWII dive bomber fighter pilot and a POW. Don Meeker's, Dec 21st talk about his discoveries while recording information from the old ledgers from City Hall should also be interesting. Doors open at 6:00pm followed by a short film starting at approximately 6:15. We hope to see you at both these events.

From all of us to all of you, "Happy Holidays".
Larry Mauch

