

CRASH AND RESCUE UNIT

By
JAMES I. FLINCHUM*

THE 2026TH. CRASH AND RESCUE UNIT JOINED THE 354TH FIGHTER GROUP AT BOXTED AIR BASE NEAR COLCHESTER, ENGLAND EARLY IN OCTOBER, 1943. WE REMAINED WITH THE 354TH UNTIL THE END OF THE WAR.

WE WERE ALWAYS OUT ON THE FIELD BESIDE THE CONTROL TOWER. THE CRASH FIRE TRUCK AND AMBULANCE WAS READY TO RESPOND TO ANY EMERGENCY. YES, YOU GUYS KEPT US RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE RUNWAY, WHEN THE FOG WAS BAD OR JUST ONE LANDING GEAR WAS DOWN. SOME HAD SAD ENDINGS AND MANY HAD HAPPY ENDINGS, HOWEVER WE ALWAYS DID OUR BEST.

THE LONG HOURS AND WATCHING YOU GUYS FLY THE P-51 WILL ALWAYS BE A MEMORY FOR ME. ALSO THE 2026TH. HAD OTHER DUTIES TO PERFORM. WE WERE ON CALL AT NIGHT! "MY MATTRESS IS ON FIRE. MY TENT IS ON FIRE," AND MANY OTHER SUCH CALLS SUCH AS A GASOLINE STORAGE DUMP ON FIRE, AND THE MESS HALL ABLAZE. BUT, WE WERE BACK ON THE FIELD THE NEXT MORNING AT DAY BREAK.

BUT, OUR HEARTS WILL ALWAYS BE WITH THE 354TH. AND THE GUYS THAT FLEW THE P-51. WE FAITHFULLY SERVED THEM TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, AND HAVE NO REGRETS.

WE COMPLETED OUR SCHOOLING AT THE CRASH & RESCUE SCHOOL AT LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN NEAR NEW ORLEANS, LA. WE WERE TRAINED IN STRUCTURAL FIRE FIGHTING AS WELL. WE WENT TO CAMP KILMER, N.J. AND WENT ABOARD THE S.S. MONERAY AND LANDED AT LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND. FROM THERE WE WERE TRANSPORTED TO BOXTED AIR BASE AND STAYED WITH THE 354TH. UNTIL WAR'S END.

JAMES FLINCHUM CONTINUED TRAINING AFTER THE WAR AT THE NORFOLK NAVAL BASE, SHIPBOARD FIRE FIGHTING SCHOOL, NORFOLK, VA., AND CONTINUED TO TRAIN IN CRASH AND RESCUE WITH MORE MODERN AND NEW EQUIPMENT, PLUS NEW METHODS IN FIRST AID. WE HAD THE MOST ADVANCED COURSE IN USE AT THAT TIME, AND I REMAINED AT THAT NORFOLK NAVAL BASE UNTIL I RETIRED.

SOME OF THE FELLOWS WHO SERVED WITH ME WERE: R.A. JONES, PAUL WHITNEY, ANTHONY BURGESS, KENNETH GERTNEY, WITH WHOM I MAINTAIN CONTACT. OTHERS I RECALL INCLUDE: 1ST. LT. EMIL NEHOL, SGT. HATFIELD, EARL MILLER, PAUL SCORCE, CHARLIE MILLER, RICHARD JONES, DAVID RIESEL, JAMES V. LOVE, AND SOME WITH LAST NAMES LIKE, BURCHFIELD, CUMMINGS, WATTS, MELUGIN, HENDERSON, MYERS AND REASONS. *JAMES BLEVINS*

*THE ABOVE STATEMENT WAS PREPARED BY MR. JAMES I. FLINCHUM, AND AT HIS REQUEST WE ARE INSERTING IT IN ALL BOOKS GOING TO MEMBERS OF THE 354TH FIGHTER GROUP. (ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 175, RIVER VIRGINIA.)