Lawrence P Weakley, 824 Sq.

Lawrence P Weakley, 824 Squadron, Bom bardier, has died from fibrosis of the lungs, a condition that is believed to be caused by too many hours of hard oxygen breathing from the 400 combat hours at high altitude he endured during WWII and Korea. He had suffered from prostate cancer some twelve years prior to his death, but the intervention of radiation therapy resulted in cancer negative tests since then.

Among his many decorations are: The (DFC) Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the WWII Victory Medal.

He had written a letter to me that was sent to me by his wife after his death:

"Please excuse the delay in responding to the picture and short note regarding the Tailender No #18 in the spring 1986 Flyer. The origin of the name refers to our departure from ZI (Zone of the Interior-Good Old USA) and not to any particular position in flight formation. The reason for the late departure from Lincoln, Nebraska was a bad tooth, I know because the tooth was mine. The base dentist required an extra day to fashion 2 removable bridges so I could bite my nails in case of Mel905s or flak getting too close.

The following day (approximately April Fool's day) we departed from West Palm Beach but only after digging out the left main landing gear which had managed to find a soft place in the taxi strip.

The 'Jackass' painting was the work of a sergeant based at Fortalez, Brazil. His artistic skill may have been subject to question, but his work adequately expressed our feelings regarding the delays.

Incidentally the dental masterpiece which made us late was so uncomfortable that it resides under several fathoms of Caribbean water.

Our crew flew all but one mission in 'Tailender.' It, too, like us was rotated back to the States for much needed R&R after the European war was over. The photographer credited with the photo of No #18 was Forest Nance who had been designated as the original pilot of our crew when it was formed at Gowen Field, Idaho, according to Special Order No 335 dated December 1, 1943 which transferred eight crews to Harvard, Nebraska."

(Crew photo above right)