



367th, 368th, 369th, 423rd Squadrons, and service organizations  
Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England – September 1942-April 1945

## 306<sup>TH</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION

Secretary/Historian

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To: Frank Bolf  
Eddie Perin

Author

First Over Germany  
Command and Staff  
Officers, 8th Air  
Force, 1942-45

Editor

306th Echoes  
306th Directory

Attached is a copy of the story I have written about the Prop Shop, working from some notes Eddie sent me and after talking with Frank.

Please read over the story more than once. Make any suggestions to improve the story, such as additions or deletions, or any other changes that you think about.

I just may have the whole thing backwards.

I'd like to get your comments sometime during the next month so I can make sure to get it in the January issue of Echoes.

Thanks for your help,

Russ

Looks good to me except there are two more men. Don't know their first names but they were Bantch and Balcon. Heard anymore about a VHS video of the 50<sup>th</sup> in England?

Eddie

~~documents~~  
*occupants*

The Prop Shop, known to its ~~documents~~ at Thurleigh as Airscrews, Ltd., wasn't a place frequented by fliers, or those not concerned with props, governors or engines.

But it was a unique business essential to the aircraft being flown by the Group. It was a foregone conclusion that the crews from the Prop Shop would visit each plane when needed, and for some planes it was often.

The prop crew was responsible for removing errant props from the engines, doing what ever needed to be done, and replacing them on the plane. Engines and props, as replacements, did not come as a unit, but were only "married" at the plane.

In the early days at Thurleigh new props came in assembled, making the three-bladed unit a heavy thing to handle, only done with hoists. Later on the new props arrived in boxes, much the size and shape of a coffin. Then, the props were taken out and assembled on the base. Eddie Perin, #2 man in props, says that the pre-assembled units often were not properly balanced, so they had to be dismantled adjusted and remounted anyway. He preferred having them come in a box.

Frank Bolf was the EM in charge of the prop works, which operated under the overview of CWO William Fyfe. Bolf handled most of the prop work while Perin specialized in governors. Both had their hands full, and frequently operated around the clock to keep the planes flying.

Bolf states that there may have been an occasion once or twice in the early days when a plane did not fly, purely because there was no propellor available to put on an engine. But, after a few of the early planes had been cannibalized, spare parts were a bit easier to come by. As time went and supplies caught up with the combat unit, props were always in good supply.

Bolf recalls a period when there was a continuing problem with runaway props on the planes. When he set about to trace down the difficulty he found that

a valve was sticking. Hot oil caused the valve to expand, while at the same time the housing was contracting from the cold temperatures. He found that by changing a sleeve valve to a ball valve that the problem was solved.

Blades that were distorted couldn't be straightened and were discarded, but sometimes it was possible to work out holes in propellers caused by machine gun fire--ours or theirs--and the props could continue to be used. It depended on just where the hole was and how big it was.

Again, in the early period, when propellers were in short supply, they once took two propellers apart and salvaged enough good parts to rebuild them into one good propeller.

Bolf invented a hydraulic puller to remove the cam roller pins. This came about by borrowing an emergency brake pump, a cowl flap cylinder and selector valve, and putting them together. It made a tough job a lot easier.

Balancing props, an essential to good flying, was helped by using a balancing arbor that had been left behind by the RAF.

Perin's specialty was prop governors, and there was plenty of work to do. "I repaired so many governors," says Perin 50 years later, "I can still remember the model number, 4K11-GOJ. They were all Hamilton-Standard, made in Hartford, CT, and were shipped to us from the Spokane Army Air Depot."

Robert F. Brenner and Frederick H. Hobson were Prop Shop occupants, each of whom headed a small crew that worked together on whatever project was first in line. Other men in the Prop Shop were Jack Davis, Eugene Koch, John French, Edward Kern, and Carl Rathke.