

# Buffalo Tales

January/February 2014

## The Kearney Army Air Field: Military Missives from the 581st Bombardment Squadron, 393rd Bombardment Group

Edited by Ross D. Huxoll

*Note:* The following represents a collection of handwritten letters composed by Samuel (Shorty) Stanczak while stationed at the Kearney Army Air Field in 1943. Stanczak, originally from Waukegan, Illinois, frequently wrote home to his parents and brother while serving as a sheet metal worker/flying mechanic with the 581st Bombardment Squadron, 393rd Bombardment Group. These letters offer an intimate view of life at the airfield and have been transcribed verbatim from the originals; they have not been abridged, edited, or been subject to interpolation in any way.



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August 22, 1943

Hi Eddie,

Received your letter and am glad the shirt fits well. Tell dad that I got his khaki shirt and it fits like a glove. I just took it to the tailor to have the air corps insignia, mechanic insignia and the cpl. stripes sewed on. So, I see the three kids had their tonsils taken out. It's swell to hear that they came out pretty good. Do you remember when I had mine taken out? I stopped breathing and then bled to hell. I just had my tough luck then. Say Spence & I heard your [sic] trying to get in the marines. is that true? Couldn't you wait for awhile and then get in the air corps, maybe as a cadet. You know, do a little flying. I fly but I don't do the flying, but by golly I know enough to fly one. My eyes aren't good enough for that. I expect to get my sergeant stripes soon and that's as far as a specialist sheet metal goes so I guess as soon as I get it I'm going to try to get transferred to the combat crew as an aerial engineer (flying mechanic). But I'll be sent over and I don't mind: a little action is what I want. I heard we're going to be permanent instructors here and the fellas don't like it. They want to go over and fight.

Well Eddie my mind is getting blank with words so I'll close now wishing you luck and God Bless you.

Your loving bro.

Shorty

P.S. Tell Jerry to look for those negatives. She should know where she put them. I'd like to have them.

September 13, 1943

Dear Dad & Mom.

I'm sorry I couldn't write any sooner. I've been kind of busy lately. Not only that but there's nothing to write about. I'm working and studying pretty hard and am learning a lot too. Really like my work and maybe I'll get a good job after the war as an airplane mechanic. I just hope that it doesn't last too long. The first think we heard about Italy surrendering really made us boys feel good. But the biggest part is just coming and I sure hope that this winter weather cripples the Germans for good. As you see I'm at the U.S.O. club with four of my buddies. The town's pretty dead, just as bad as Waukegan and North Chicago. It's sure good to hear you've got some [leagues] lined up. Maybe it won't be so bad this winter after all. Dad I'm trying like heck to get a 3 day pass for my birthday. It'll cost me \$18 round trip but it'll be worth it. So I hear that old Sox has been A.W.O.L. again for 3 wks. Boy something tells me he's in for it this time. Do you remember when he was in the C.C.C.'s he went over the hill too and then 4 days during my furlough and now. That kid doesn't know what's coming to him this time but it's too late. Well folks I guess it's time for me to sign off. Good-bye and God Bless you.

Loving son.

Shorty

October 15, 1943

Dear folks,

Received your letter and am sorry I couldn't answer any sooner. We've been pretty busy and will be right along. Am fine and hope everything okay at home too. We had a swell review today - paraded around the ramp (where the planes park) had the band and everything else included. I'm sorry I didn't come home for my birthday. I could of got my pass but didn't want it on account of not having any clean clothes. We won't be long in this post. About the first part of Nov. we'll be in Sioux City again taking our overseas phase again. We were told we'd get a 15 day furlough. Half of the bunch will get theirs Dec. 12 so they'd be home for Christmas and the other half will be home for New Years. Either day will do for me. How did our Eddie make out with enlisting in the navy? Sure hope he makes it. That's a good branch to get in. Say if he does get in, let me know because I'd like to ask him something. I had a little fun on my birthday - had a two day pass and spent it with my girlfriend in Mitchell, So. Dakota. Say did you see those pictures I had you get developed for me? They were pretty slick. I'm going to take some good pictures and send you some. I'll take it with my Class A uniform and some with my flying suit. Well folks I'll have to sign off for now so here's hoping we'll spend this Christmas together. I've been praying for that right along. So long & God Bless you.

Love your son,  
Shorty

October 18, 1943

Hello Dad.

We're delayed a little so I thought I'd drop you another line and the hundred bucks. You can put it away for me or use it yourself. I won't need it till this thing blows over. My buddies were very nice to me here. They asked me to go to church with them this morning. I didn't know why till the chaplain said that this mass is for epl. Stanczak from the boys of the 581<sup>st</sup>. (I thought it was nice.) Can't say how long I'll be in good old U.S. but I guess I should of been over long ago. And by the way, I'm going to try [to] squeeze an oversea furlough from the new outfit so here's hoping I'll see you. Say hello to [Gram] for me. she's always at the alleys I hear. I haven't heard from her for a hell of a long time. Dad I don't want you to worry about anything because it won't do you any good. So please for me, don't worry.

Your loving son,  
Shorty

October 18, 1943

Dear folks,

Havent' but 10 minutes to write to you. I'm being transferred to a different outfit that's going over. It happened that they needed some specialists to fill in, and I got the dirty deal. The fellows here hate to see me go & the officers are trying to get me back. So I guess I won't see you on Christmas. I have some money saved up and am going to send it to you to hold for me. I suppose you can use it while I'm in. You'll also get a \$50 bond every three months, you can put that away for me too. I'll send my \$125.00 in a couple of days. So long & don't worry. Will write as much as possible.

Your son,  
Shorty

October 26, 1943

Hello folks,

As you see I'm back again with the old outfit. Right after I made that call to you I went back to the barracks. The fellows there told me that I was wanted at the office so I went. They told me to pack up that I'm going to Kearney with my old outfit. I'd like to go over but with the 393<sup>rd</sup>. I had all my clothes stenciled with my name and serial number including my barracks bag. I also had my tent and steel helmet. Had to sign my 6 - A.P.O. cards and write out my will, but I see where I didn't have to do it now. Well anyway I'll be ready if we ever have to go. I'm tired now folks. I guess I'll go to bed. So long & God Bless You.

Love,  
Shorty

October 29, 1943

Dear Dad &amp; Mom.

Just to let you know I'm fine and hope things are pretty good at home. It feels swell to be back with the fellows. You know I wrote a letter to one of our Lts. When I was in Harvard telling him how good our outfit (581) was and what a fine bunch of fellows we had. When I got back I noticed the letter was posted on the hangar bulletin so everyone could see it. Then I found out that my captain called up Harvard and requested that I'd be sent back to his outfit and he did it alright. This captain said that I was one of the old boys that started with this outfit so he wanted to get me back. I was also told that as soon as we hit Sioux City that I'd be re-classified as an A.M. [airplane mechanic] instead of a sheet metal worker. And that I'm going to go to school for a month for advanced training. I noticed being a sheet metal worker that I've been pushed around a lot and later when I'll be classified as a mechanic I won't have to worry. Well folks I guess I'll quit writing now. have to go to work. So long & God Bless you.

Love,  
Shorty

October 30, 1943

Dear Dad &amp; Mom.

Received your letter and am sure glad to hear everything's okay. But first of all I know Ma's birthday was in the latter part of October but don't know which day. So if you get the card and it's late don't feel bad. I wish you a happy birthday and the best of health. I would of sent both of you a present of some kind but I figured it would be better to get everyone a present for Christmas. I might be home ya know. And another thing I wouldn't worry about me going over. I don't expect to for quite a while and if they said we had to go, I wouldn't believe it till we got on the boat. I don't mind going over, after all it's better if we all went and got it over with. I feel bad when I think of my buddies being over and I'm still here. I've been getting the News-Sun for a long time already dad, I thought I told you about it. There's nothing like keeping up [with] the news from our home town. You keep telling me to be a good soldier. I am dad, and if I wasn't I would of been busted to a private and sent out of the outfit for good. You see I had 4 Lts. And a Captain request to get me back because I must of been doing good work and now I'm back. I haven't got any enemies here and don't expect to have. Why did anyone ever say anything, if they did, say so. Maybe I did write something in a letter that wasn't right but I never mean it anyway. Don't think I'm sore at you for telling me all this because that's the only way a fellow learns. They also turned me in for a sergeant but maybe I won't make it. They usually have to turn a guy in 2 or 3 times before he ever makes it so here's hoping I'll get it. O[h] yeah about the school situation. I was told that me and a few of my other buddies are going to be reclassified as mechanics instead of sheet-metal workers. We've been doing good work and we're supposed to get advanced schooling besides. That's a good chance for a higher rating. I guess this is as far as I'd get as a sheet-metal worker. I get letters from Gram alright but if she keeps writing the letters she has been. I don't care to get any from her. No hard feelings I hope. Well dad & mom I guess it's time for me to sign off for now so here's hoping I'll see you soon and I hope you'd quit worrying. everything will be okay. So long & God Bless you.

Loving son,  
Shorty

November 2, 1943

Hello Eddie.

I'm sorry I couldn't write any sooner. You see I just got your letter today. It was sent to Kearney first, then to Harvard and now back to Kearney. o you see why it took too long for you to get this letter. How's everything in good old North Chicago? Ed, fine I hope. As you see I'm back with the old outfit and expect to be home for Christmas. They're figuring on sending me to a school for advanced training in mechanics. I'm going with a bunch of Cpls., sgts... and Lts. I guess we all need more training. I see if you get in the service by Nov 1, you'll never see Christmas yourself. Say how about sending me one of those keys for my locker because I'm going to have a lot of crap brought home. I haven't heard from [Val] for a hell of a long time. I figured he was on the high seas. Eddie, I haven't got any pictures to give you now but will have a nice one made for you in my flying suit. And if you get in the navy, dad will give me your address. I sure hope you make it Ed and I know damn well you'll make good. After I go to this school I've got a chance to go as far as [master]. Well Eddie I guess it's time for me to quit writing so here's hoping I'll hear from you soon. Take it easy and may God Bless you.

Your best pal and brother,  
Shorty

**Letter From the Editor**

I hope everybody survived the holidays and are ready to get 2014 off to a great start! Jen just said that the preliminary attendance numbers for last year were right around 8012 people. That is up over 7000 people from 2004! I can't wait to see what we can do this year! There are some great events planned so make sure you check out our 2014 Calendar of Events!  
Katherine



**2014 ANNUAL MEETING**

This year's Annual Meeting will be on April 6 from 1-3 pm. It is a great time to look back over our accomplishments from last year and look forward to what this year will bring. There will also be a great presentation and wonderful food! The public is invited to join us for the presentation. We look forward to seeing you there!

**New Family History Center**

Below is a picture of the new family history center being planned to enhance BCHS/Trails & Rails Museum. It will house the archives, offices, gift shop, and displays.



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Phone: 308.234.3041 Email: bchs.us@hotmail.com

Katherine Wielechowski, Editor

2014 Annual dues, payable January 1, are:

Individual.....	\$35.00
Family.....	\$40.00
Institutional Membership.....	\$50.00
Supporting Membership.....	\$75.00
Silver Engineer.....	\$125.00
Gold Engineer.....	\$250.00

\*\*We have replaced the word 'Basic' to 'Family'.\*\*

Directors

Term expiring June 1, 2014: Mary Beth Lowe, Sharon Martin, Duane Muhlbach, Mike Peak

Term expiring June 1, 2015: Corene Phillips, Dan Speirs, Gary Straatmann, Bernie Hascall

Term expiring June 1, 2016: Dr. Roger Davis, Lance Hehner, Matt O'Callaghan, Jan Rodehorst

Officers (1 year term)

President.....	Mary Beth Lowe
Vice-President.....	Lance Hehner
Secretary.....	Corene Phillips
Treasurer.....	Bernie Hascall

## 2014 Calendar of Events

**February 29 and 30:** Don't Come Event-This is the most amazing, fun event that you WILL miss. We send you an invitation about all the fabulous things that WON'T be happening and you absolutely will want to attend, but instead, you get to RSVP and then stay home and enjoy your family time.

**Sunday, April 6 from 1-3 pm:** BCHS Annual Meeting-A great gathering of BCHS members to reflect back on the past year's accomplishments and enjoy an entertaining program while eating yummy food. The general public is welcome to join us for the program, too!

**Sunday, June 8:** 7th Annual ½ Marathon/5K: Buffalo County Stampede—Reg. @ 6 am. Race @ 7 –Enjoy the beautiful scenery during a chip-timed ½ marathon and/or 5K race.

**Saturday, June 28 from 10-2 pm:** 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Wagons West Celebration and Flea Market-Live music by Paul Siebert, delicious food, exhibitors, demonstrators, archive researchers, kids' games, contests, and a flea market. FREE admission/donations are appreciated. NEW in 2014: Beard Contest (see web site for details)

**All of November:** Christmas Decorating (during regular business hours)

**First two weekends in Dec. (Dec.6/7 and Dec. 13/14) from 1-5 pm:** Open to the public: 27th Annual Christmas Tree Walk \*\*\* Saturday, December 6 from 12-1pm: Members Only Preview of the 27th Annual Christmas Tree Walk\*\*\*-check out dozens of trees decorated by area not-for-profits that tie their mission into this year's theme. Each theme is announced at the end of the current year's Tree Walk.

### Education notes:

**Listen to Mardi Anderson on KGFW 1340 AM** at 9 am on the last Friday of each month for a fabulous story about Buffalo County!

**Trails & Rails Museum closed April 28 through May 9 for Kearney Public Schools.**

**Fabulous Fridays** are held on the 2nd Friday monthly at 2 pm. Locations vary, so check the web site.

**January:** Friendship Quilts

**February:** Dowsing

**March:** Jacob's Sheep and Spinning

**April:** Early Electricity in Buffalo County

**May:** Aprons - Now and Then

**June:** One Room Schools

**July:** Early Kitchen Utensils

**August:** Horse Shoeing

**September:** Apples

**October:** Old Time Musical Instruments

**November:** Hand Corn Husking

**December:** Christmas Traditions

Volunteers, chairpersons, and sponsors are still needed. Please contact the office for more information on supporting your Buffalo County Historical Society!

PO Box 523, 710 W. 11th St., Kearney, NE 68848  
(308) 234-3041 www.bchs.us bchs.us@hotmail.com

We hope you enjoy these stories about Buffalo County. We would love to have a stock pile of Buffalo Tales ready so they can go out in a more timely manner. Please submit your memories and stories to us by e-mailing them to bchs.buffalotales@hotmail.com or sending them to the post office box: BCHS, PO Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848.

**We appreciate your support!**

### Director's Report

-M & J Signs has cleared our parking lot of snow two times, so far, this year for free. They just ask that in lieu of payment, we send free family passes to the Elm Creek schools.

-Union Pacific sent us a letter stating they have granted us \$20,000 for the Family History Center. They will contact us in May to discuss the check delivery. This is a grant that Mark Foradori wrote for us.

-The proposed Kearney Army Air Base Historical Marker to be placed at the new Veteran's Home is still in the works. We have the wording and funding in place. I need to get the wording to Suzanne at the City for her review before sending the order on to the state.

**Be our friend on Facebook: "BuffaloCountyHistoricalSociety"**

**Trails & Rails Museum**

**Buffalo County Historical Society  
710 West 11th St. P.O. Box 523  
Kearney, NE 68848-0523**



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[www.bchs.us](http://www.bchs.us)

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