

2009

## Bryant Connections: Thomas Duxbury and George Sutcliffe

Meghan Barry

*Management Concentration and History Concentration, 2009 Bryant graduate*

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### Recommended Citation

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**Bryant Connections:**  
**Thomas Duxbury and George Sutcliffe**  
**HIS 490**  
**Professor Judy Barrett Litoff**  
**Bryant University**  
**Spring 2009**

Meghan Barry

April 30, 2009

HIS 490

### **Introduction**

“What did World War II do for me? Well, it made more of a man out of me”<sup>1</sup>. World War II changed the lives of millions of people in a magnitude of different ways. The connections among these individuals are endless, regardless of the institution or organization from which the association can be made. Bryant College served, and still serves today, as one institution that connects the lives of thousands of former servicemen and their civilian counterparts. During World War II, Bryant College created the Bryant Service Club, which sent tens of thousands packages and letters to Bryant alumni and students who served in military units both at home and abroad. Although the Bryant Service Club tried to reach out to its alumni spread across “far flung fronts,” it was unable to reach every one. Thomas Duxbury, a Navy seaman stationed in the Pacific Theatre, never graduated from Bryant. He did, however, attend Bryant between 1936 and 1938. Although Duxbury never received a formal degree from Bryant, the Alumni Office considers him to be a member of the class of 1938, and he regularly celebrates reunions with his classmates. George Sutcliffe, a United States Army Air Force fighter pilot, stationed in England, France, and Belgium was one of thousands of servicemen who, with the help of the G.I. Bill, attended Bryant immediately after the war. For different reasons, neither of these men received letters or packages from the Bryant Service Club, but they are forever linked by their Bryant College connection. In addition, their extensive wartime travels, both within the

United States and overseas, are examples of how America was a nation on the move during World War II. Indeed some 20 percent of the population moved at least once during the war years. As we shall see, Thomas Duxbury and George Sutcliffe moved multiple times over vast geographical areas.

### **Thomas Duxbury**

Thomas Elmer Duxbury, born on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1917, grew up in Smithfield, Rhode Island. As a boy, he enjoyed sports, such as football and baseball, as well as spending time with friends. Duxbury and his friends also spent time at the local dance hall in Olneyville where they paid twenty-five cents to watch couples dance and listen to local bands. Duxbury attended Nathaniel Reed High School through ninth grade and then transferred to Central High School in Providence, Rhode Island<sup>2</sup>. Upon graduation in 1936, Duxbury continued his education by enrolling in the two-year Accountancy and Finance degree program at Bryant.

At that time, Bryant College was located on Providence's East Side, known as the "Educational Center of Providence" because it was the home to Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Bryant College<sup>3</sup>. Semesters lasted approximately twenty-four weeks. In his second year, Duxbury enrolled in three classes: Law, Corporation Accounting, and Taxes. Though the course load seems light compared to today's standard of five courses per semester, Duxbury remembers spending many hours in the classroom. Despite the effort he put into his studies, he was unable to pass two of his classes. Duxbury believes that this resulted from two separate incidents and not lack of effort<sup>4</sup>.

The first incident occurred during his law class. A member of the Phi Sigma Nu fraternity had taken charge of the class when the professor had had to step out. Duxbury often spent time

with the members of the Beta Sigma Chi fraternity, the largest and most popular fraternity on campus, which often found itself in friendly competition with Phi Sigma Nu<sup>5</sup>. The student witnessed Duxbury conversing with friends from Beta Sigma Chi and reported that Duxbury had cheated. This was immediate grounds for failure.

Duxbury attributes his inability to pass accounting to a derogatory poem, written by him and a few friends about Professor Shor, their accounting professor. Unfortunately, Professor Shor found the poem which read as follows<sup>6</sup>:

He came to us this fellow Shor/  
And all but he knew of his flaws/  
He hypothetical and assumed/  
But never a thought was there consumed.<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, Duxbury left Bryant College in 1938 and never formally graduated.

After his departure from Bryant, Duxbury went to work in his father's insurance business, the Duxbury Insurance Agency, founded in 1935. After a brief period of time, Duxbury decided he did not like "sitting for days [at] accounting"<sup>8</sup>. Instead, he chose to work for Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Company, a well known tool company located in Providence<sup>9</sup>. Since Brown & Sharpe manufactured tools and equipment for the military, Duxbury was deferred from service until early in 1944. Duxbury received his draft notice in March 1944 and shortly thereafter entered the Navy as an Apprentice Seaman

Shortly thereafter, Duxbury reported to boot camp at the US Naval Training Station in Sampson Springs, New York<sup>10</sup>. He remembers taking many written tests and participating in fire training schools. Following boot camp, he was assigned to the *USS Estes*, a flagship, which was in the final stages of production. Duxbury attended the ship's commissioning at Todd Shipyard

in Brooklyn, New York on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944<sup>11</sup>. The ship took many trial runs along the Atlantic coast prior to and following its commissioning to ensure it was sea-worthy<sup>12</sup>.

When Duxbury entered the Navy, he had listed his highest level of education as a BSBA which at Bryant meant a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration<sup>13</sup>. The Navy interpreted the BS and the BA as two separate degrees, a bachelor of science and a bachelor of arts, and assigned Duxbury to its highly-technical Electronics Training Program (ETP) which focused on the operations of radar equipment. Radio and radar had become an essential part of naval operations by World War II. Radio equipment had been installed in all naval surface vessels and most of the low-powered shore radio stations. The ETP, initiated in 1942, prepared men enlisted in the Navy to operate the highly complex electronic equipment. The training programs consisted of two parts: a three-month primary school and a five-month secondary school<sup>14</sup>. Persons who had studied electrical engineering were ideally suited for this training; however, such persons were not always available. As a result, the training program included the essential topics to provide a background in electric engineering, covering important topics that were typically included in the standard college curriculum. The program introduced participants to more than thirty models of sonar or echo-ranging equipment and twenty-five models of radar<sup>15</sup>. This training would prepare Duxbury for his assignment to the combat information center aboard the *USS Estes*.

The *USS Estes* became the twelfth member of the rapidly growing Amphibious Force of Flagships to be assigned to the Pacific that would take part in the fierce naval battles in early 1945 for preparation for what was then thought to be an invasion of Japan. Flagships serve as naval command headquarters and host a number of commanders, war correspondents, and high ranking naval officials. They also serve as medical centers for wounded soldiers.

The *USS Estes* officially began its journey to the Pacific two weeks following its commissioning in October 1944. After passing through the Panama Canal, the *Estes* arrived at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on November 20th, 1944. The ship and crew spent the month of December at Pearl Harbor, installing additional radio and radar equipment. After a brief stop at Saipan in early February 1945, the *Estes* set course for Iwo Jima as part of Commander Task Force 52<sup>16</sup>.

The *USS Estes* arrived at Iwo Jima on February 16, 1945 under orders to prepare for the invasion of the island which would begin three days later on February 19. Iwo Jima, the first of the Japanese home islands to be captured by the United States, was strategically important because it had been a haven for Japanese naval units and would be a staging area for the proposed invasion of mainland Japan<sup>17</sup>. The *Estes* role in preparation for the invasion was to supervise and strategically place cruisers, bombers, and landing craft infantry, as they bombarded the island with gunfire and bombs. As a radar specialist, Duxbury helped to warn the fleet of incoming enemy planes.

On the morning of February 19<sup>th</sup>, as the *Estes* approached Iwo Jima in its daily routine, an unexpected crash awoke those on board. The *USS Chester* (CA-27) collided with the *USS Estes*<sup>18</sup>. Fortunately, the two ships had turned in time to avoid major disaster and only minor damage had been inflicted to the *Estes* port bow. Patched with cement, the *Estes* continued to oversee the bombardment of Iwo Jima. That same morning, the ground invasion of Iwo Jima began. The *USS Estes* sat 5,000 yards directly off of the coast as thousands of Marines stormed the shores<sup>19</sup>. Over 110,000 marines took part in the invasion<sup>20</sup>.

While stationed at Iwo Jima, the *Estes* also acted as a medical center for many of the wounded and dying soldiers who stormed the island. At Iwo Jima, 6,821 Navy, Marine, and Army men were killed in action, were reported missing, or died thereafter of afflicted wounds.

An additional 19,217 troops were wounded<sup>21</sup>. However, their small medical section did not meet the demands that the battle brought forth. As a result, the halls of the ship were lined with dead and dying soldiers. Duxbury stated that he will never forget this site and the feelings of disgust, regret, and remorse at seeing the bodies lined along the halls<sup>22</sup>.

Duxbury remembers his visit to the deck of the *Estes* on February 23, 1945, where he noted, for the first time, the U.S. flag on top of Mount Suribachi. The flag symbolized the capture of the southern end of the island. However, fierce fighting on the island would continue until March 26<sup>23</sup>. Having completed the preparation for the ground invasion, the *Estes* left Iwo Jima on February 24, 1945 and went to the Philippines to repair the hole in the port bow from the collision with the *USS Chester*<sup>24</sup>.

On March 21, 1945, the *Estes* left the Philippines, en route to Okinawa, arriving on March 25, 1945, six days before the ground invasion began. Okinawa signified the continued American encroachment towards mainland Japan, only 340 miles away. It was also one of the last major battles to occur in the Pacific<sup>25</sup>. The crew of the *Estes* had the responsibility of defending the U.S. fleet against the many kamikaze air attacks. Duxbury's position in radar allowed him to play a key role in this mission because of radar's ability to pinpoint the locations of incoming planes. For the next three weeks, the *Estes* oversaw the intense shore bombardments by battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and fire support ships. At night, frequent enemy air attacks kept the crew on high alert<sup>26</sup>. Over 182,000 troops participated in the invasion of Okinawa<sup>27</sup>.

Although the battle at Okinawa would continue until June 23, 1945, the *Estes* received orders to leave the island on April 20<sup>th</sup>. The ship and crew were ordered to proceed to Saipan for a short period of "R&R"<sup>28</sup>. Two months later, the ship returned to San Francisco for a complete overhaul. It then set out to return to Commander Task Force 52 in the Pacific. On August 14,



1945, while in the vicinity of Hawaii, the *Estes* received notification that the war had ended. It then proceeded to the Philippines where, from late August until early November 1945, it visited various ports in the area. While in the Philippines, the first portion of the ship's crew was discharged<sup>29</sup>. Unfortunately, Duxbury had yet to accumulate enough points to return home, so he continued with his normal duties.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, the *Estes* set route for Shanghai, China to patrol the area that had once been occupied by Japan. For the next ten weeks, the *Estes* cruised the shoreline and visited ports throughout China. At this point, Duxbury had earned enough points to take leave and travel home; however, he had no way of getting there. While waiting, Duxbury took on shore patrols to pass the time and tour Shanghai.<sup>30</sup> Of the time spent ashore, he remembers the lack of industry within the city and the overwhelming amount of poverty. He recalls thinking he could be a protector to the young, desolate children who lined the doorsteps in the city. He could not believe the vast differences in lifestyle between his family and friends at home in the United States and the poverty-stricken people he found in Shanghai<sup>31</sup>.

After one month of waiting, Duxbury located a ship that was able to grant him passage home. The ship, a tanker, ultimately headed for the port of New Orleans, stopped in San Francisco, California where Duxbury received clearance to disembark. He had already spent a month aboard while traveling from Shanghai to San Francisco and was not keen on spending the additional weeks that it would take for the ship to travel through the Panama Canal to New Orleans. Fortunately, on January 30, 1946, while in San Francisco, he received his official discharge from the Navy and was allowed to travel by train across the country to his home in Rhode Island.

Upon his return to the United States, Duxbury settled in Esmond, Rhode Island with his family. He entered a rotational program through the Esmond Mill sponsored by the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill. The Act, carried out through the Veterans Administration, helped former servicemen obtain education, training, loans for homes, farms, and businesses, and offered unemployment pay<sup>32</sup>. Duxbury spent the next two years familiarizing himself with each department of the mill. After the program, Duxbury took charge of the second shift of over 200 employees.

Once Duxbury found himself in a stable job, he decided to obtain the insurance licenses that would allow him to work with his father. He began attending classes twice a week at the University of Rhode Island. He eventually took over for his father in the late 1940's. At the same time, he continued to work for Esmond Mills and other local mills in Rhode Island as they slowly shut down. He used his position in the mills to his advantage as a way to advertise and network for his insurance business<sup>33</sup>. Eventually, the Duxbury Insurance Agency became his sole concern, and today, at age ninety-three, he is still involved in this family-run business.

Duxbury's travels through the Pacific exposed him to a much broader world than he previously knew. While he had little difficulty transitioning back to civilian life after the war, he did feel that the war contributed to his growth as a person. As he recently commented, "What did World War II do for me?... It made more of a man out of me?"<sup>34</sup>.

### **George Sutcliffe**

George Sutcliffe, born in 1923, grew up in North Providence and Smithfield, Rhode Island. He spent his childhood playing a variety of sports, including tennis and hockey. He graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in 1940. Sutcliffe had few post graduate plans, as during his schooling he took few subjects seriously. However, he had a strong interest in flying.

For the next year, he worked in a textile machine shop. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, he volunteered for the Navy<sup>35</sup>.

Upon enlistment, Sutcliffe had hopes of becoming a Navy pilot. However, after travelling to Boston for a physical, he found he had a deviated septum, which meant that he did not meet pilot qualifications. The Navy gave him six months to have the deviated septum surgically repaired, which neither he, nor his parents, could afford to do. Instead, Sutcliffe began taking advanced night school classes, four days a week, for people interested in flying. The classes were offered by a teacher he had had at Mt. Pleasant High School and focused on algebra, physics, geometry, and other subjects valid to flight. These classes were designed to prepare students to pass the entrance exam to become cadets in the U.S. Army Air Forces. Sutcliffe did pass his entrance exam which allowed him to officially begin flight training as part of the U.S. Army Air Forces in April of 1942<sup>36</sup>.

The Army Air Forces, established in 1941, replaced the Army Air Corps which had been established in 1926<sup>37</sup>. Sutcliffe was enrolled in pre-flight training where he took advanced classes in mathematics, aircraft identification, Morse code, maps and charts, as well as vigorous physical conditioning. Sutcliffe began his formal pilot training in August 1942 as an Army Cadet. The formal training took place in three, nine-week phases: primary, basic, and advanced. He attended primary pilot training at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas<sup>38</sup>. Here, he flew his first solo mission and completed eighty-five hours in Ground School<sup>39</sup>. For basic training, he was assigned to Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, which Sutcliffe described as “the West Point” for the Army Air Forces<sup>40</sup>. Randolph Field was well-known for its rigorous pilot training program, which included over forty-seven hours of flight training<sup>41</sup>. The diversified flight maneuvers he participated in included day and night formation, with and without instruments,

and navigation<sup>42</sup>. Sutcliffe's advanced training took place at Moore Field in Mission, Texas<sup>43</sup>.

While at Moore, he learned, to his delight, that he would be a fighter pilot<sup>44</sup>. Sutcliffe graduated from advanced training in May of 1943 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

In June 1943, Sutcliffe relocated to Westover Field base in Massachusetts. Before he flew his first maneuvers, he recalled being blindfolded and told to locate all gears and instruments in the plane. Having done this successfully, he began his flying career with the P-47 Thunderbolt plane, nicknamed the "jug," short for "juggernaut," because fighter pilots considered the P-47 to be the best American fighter plane of World War II<sup>45</sup>. The P-47 Thunderbolt, a single-engine plane, was vastly different from the planes that Sutcliffe used during training; the planes used in advanced training had only 650 horsepower, while the P-47 had 2000 horsepower<sup>46</sup>. However, Sutcliffe adjusted quickly to this change and began flying a variety of missions and maneuvers around New England and New York.

One of those missions went awry. While on a routine flying maneuver over North Haven, Connecticut, Sutcliffe found himself in a difficult situation. The plane shuttered, and when looking down at his control panel, Sutcliffe noticed the plane had no oil pressure. The Westover Air Field had run out of 100 Octane fuel required in the P-47 planes; the flight crew decided instead to fill the tanks of the planes with regular 87 Octane fuel. The engine of Sutcliffe's P-47 had rejected the fuel and stopped, leaving him in what he described as a "seven ton glider"<sup>47</sup>. He made a split second decision to bail out rather than attempt to land a plane for which he had no control. Luckily, Sutcliffe safely ejected, diving straight into the wind and just missing the tail of the plane.

Sutcliffe faced another challenge when opening his parachute. The rip cord on each parachute takes a lot of strength to pull, and he managed to pull it out completely. The chute did

open, but wrapped itself around Sutcliffe's foot. He kicked off his boot and safely glided down to a nearby farm as he watched his plane barely miss Connecticut's Merit Parkway. Once he was disentangled from his parachute, a lady at the farm who saw him floating down came and brought him back to her house. While Sutcliffe continued to insist that he be brought to his downed plane, filled with live ammunition, she poured him tea and required that he drink it before driving him to the Parkway. He arrived just in time to see the plane go up in flames as the ammunition exploded. Luckily, no one had been hurt. Shortly after, a plane from Westover brought him back to the base, where he immediately flew again to ensure he would not have any traumatic emotions or reactions to the bail out<sup>48</sup>.

Following the war, Sutcliffe and his wife, Olive Chew, decided to return to Connecticut to thank the farm lady who found him and returned him to his burning plane. Luckily, they found her, where they had tea together, and then proceeded to a local bar. At the bar, Sutcliffe discovered that the boot he had kicked off while launching his parachute was prominently displayed on top of the counter<sup>49</sup>.

Sutcliffe, part of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, headed overseas in December of 1943. The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group consisted of three major fighting divisions: the 395<sup>th</sup>, 396<sup>th</sup>, and 397<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadrons. Sutcliffe belonged to the 397<sup>th</sup> Squadron, known as the "Jabo Angels." The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group was assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force division, stationed at Greenham Commons in England<sup>50</sup>. Sutcliffe participated in the "breaking in" of his own P-47 plane, which he named Junior, while at Greenham Commons<sup>51</sup>. After months of training in England, the 368<sup>th</sup> took part in its first operational mission on March 13, 1944. Sutcliffe took part in this particular mission as the 397<sup>th</sup> headed into France to destroy "Hitler's parlor". Luckily, they faced no enemy action in their initial mission<sup>52</sup>. Three days later, on March 16<sup>th</sup>, the division was transferred to RAF

Station 404 in Chilbolton, England, where the division remained until shortly after the invasion of Normandy<sup>53</sup>. Coincidentally, the same day the 368<sup>th</sup> moved to RAF Station 404, they engaged in their second mission and came into contact with enemy flak for the first time<sup>54</sup>.

There were two main responsibilities Sutcliffe undertook as a fighter pilot while stationed in England. He served as an escort for B-17 and B-24 bomber planes and as a dive bomber. Travelling as an escort was an emotional task for Sutcliffe. The P-47 planes did not have the same fuel capacity as the bombers they escorted and were only able to protect the bombers, heading for military targets in occupied territory and Germany, before having to turn back. The German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, quickly became aware of this matter and used it as an advantage, waiting until after the escorts had left before attacking the bombers. Sutcliffe remembers watching helplessly as the bombers were attacked and counting the crew members, in hopes that all ten men successfully ejected. Unfortunately, more often than not, Sutcliffe would not reach the number ten<sup>55</sup>.

Dive bombing, the second priority task of Sutcliffe's fighter group, played a significant role in helping to hinder Nazi expansion and prepare for an Allied invasion of Europe. Such actions were used for targets including railways, trains, manufacturing facilities, and other specific military marks<sup>56</sup>. Dangerous dive bombing allowed for precision targeting, causing "widespread explosions, fires, and dense clouds of smoke"<sup>57</sup>. The dive bombing missions Sutcliffe participated in during March, April, and May of 1944 helped to prepare for the ground invasion of Normandy, Operation Overlord<sup>58</sup>. The combined efforts of the Army Air Force and Royal Air Force effectively weakened the Luftwaffe, leaving them with fewer than one hundred planes to defend Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944<sup>59</sup>.

Sutcliffe flew four missions on D-Day, looking for targets of opportunity inland of Omaha Beach that would inhibit additional Germans from reaching the shore<sup>60</sup>. Over 171 squadrons took part in the D-Day assault, and Sutcliffe's was one of thirty-three that focused on inland targets, which included "gun emplacements, boats, trucks, and areas of troop concentration"<sup>61</sup>. Looking down upon the beaches, Sutcliffe witnessed the action of people running around, although he could not clearly identify the level of destruction<sup>62</sup>. He flew similar missions over the next few weeks around Normandy, assisting General Patton's Third Army as they made their way deeper into France<sup>63</sup>.

Between March and October 1944, Sutcliffe flew eighty missions. In a recent interview, he singled out three missions as being especially significant. The first occurred the day after D-Day, June 7, 1944. While flying a routine mission over Normandy with his squadron, one of his comrades, and best friend, Lieutenant Norman Langmaid, was shot down and killed. Langmaid's plane flew only a half mile in front of Sutcliffe's, and he heard the pilot call out, "I've been hit... I'm going back"<sup>64</sup>. Unfortunately, he crashed and was killed. In response to his friend's death, Sutcliffe sent a letter to Langmaid's parents, feeling they deserved an explanation of what happened. In a July 18, 1944 letter, he wrote, "I was on that same mission with Norman (his 31<sup>st</sup> mission) so I will tell you [as] much as I know about what happened... evidently Norman got hit in the engine and he called on the radio that he was going back but a few seconds later he called again and said that he couldn't make it and he crashed into some woods"<sup>65</sup>. Years later, Sutcliffe and Langmaid's cousin, Richard Shover, returned to Normandy, and with the help of a local travel agent found three people who saw the crash. The small town had buried Langmaid's body in the local church until the Allies transferred the body to an American cemetery. Sutcliffe and Shover received a hero's welcome from the small town. To their

surprise, they discovered a plaque of honor for Norman Langmaid had been placed on the side of the small church<sup>66</sup>.

The second prominent mission occurred one week following Langmaid's tragic death. This time, Sutcliffe found himself in his own life or death situation. After routine maneuvers across France, his flight unit began making its way back to England, looking for targets of opportunity<sup>67</sup>. Sutcliffe noticed a group of approaching German fighter planes, around three dozen Me-109's<sup>68</sup>. Barely able to get on the radio in time, he successfully warned him of impending disaster<sup>69</sup>. Two members of his unit safely made it into the clouds, but Sutcliffe had committed to a flight pattern that would require him to fight in order to survive. His best bet for escape meant reaching the overhead cloud cover, which sat about 2000 feet above him. His plane, however, could only spiral for 1500 feet before the engine would stall. If he leveled off, he would be surrounded by Me-109's. Instead, he took them by surprise by tightly rolling above or below them. As the fight continued, Sutcliffe's plane increasingly became a hazard within itself as a result of the many hits it took. One hit exploded right behind Sutcliffe's head and another severed one of his steering cables<sup>70</sup>. With every dive and resulting spiral towards the clouds, Sutcliffe found it harder and harder to control the plane. He was so close to the Me-109's that he could see the German's shake their heads at him, as if to tell him he was only avoiding the inevitable. Finally, he resolved to spiral until he reached cloud cover. Thankfully, the engine did not stall and he successfully found protection in the clouds. Unfortunately, the fight had disoriented him and he soon discovered he was heading further into occupied territory. He quickly realized he needed to turn around<sup>71</sup>. He knew he had little fuel left, and when he broke through the clouds right at Omaha Beach, he needed to decide whether to try and land or bail out. Luckily, Allied troops had begun building an emergency landing strip at Omaha Beach. He



successfully landed, and the flight crew quickly added gas to his tank and used large sheers to cut debris off the plane. When he returned to England, he found his fellow pilots trying on his clothes and accessories, thinking he had been shot down and killed<sup>72</sup>.

The third mission occurred a few weeks later when Sutcliffe's unit received a call from the Third Army to help assist in removing a German defensive unit of tanks. Two out of Sutcliffe's unit were unsuccessful in hitting the targets. Because the planes avoided entering the clouds, they simply could not garner enough height or speed to hit the targets through dive bombing. Sutcliffe asked permission to attempt a steeper flight pattern, which required him to enter cloud cover. He began his ascent, counting his way up to ten, before he leveled off. He then counted to ten as he travelled horizontally through the clouds and then dove down towards where he believed the two tanks were. Sutcliffe hit both tanks with precision, once again demonstrating that he was a skilled, determined fighter pilot<sup>73</sup>.

Throughout the duration of the war, Sutcliffe depended heavily upon mail from his family, and especially his girlfriend, Olive, in order to maintain his morale. It was not just Sutcliffe who benefitted from receiving letters, as "mail was universally recognized to be the number-one morale builder"<sup>74</sup>. Government and the popular press focused on the importance of mail and encouraged home front civilians to write to their servicemen. Sutcliffe corresponded frequently with Olive and his parents. On October 15, 1942, while still finishing training in San Antonio, he included this statement in the postscript of a letter to Olive: "I don't care if you write in pen or pencil as long as you keep writing"<sup>75</sup>. In a July 14, 1944 to Olive, he included a longer comment about the importance of mail: "Today I received 3 wonderful letters from you, 5 from my mom, and one from dear old Grandma. I have just finished reading them all and they make me feel great! Boy! Mail does wonders for a guy's morale"<sup>76</sup>. Receiving messages from friends

and family helped sustain Sutcliffe throughout the duration, just as it did for many other servicemen.

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group moved its base to Cardonville, France. The 397<sup>th</sup> Squadron had made history only a few days earlier on June 13<sup>th</sup> as the first of the American planes to safely land on the continent<sup>77</sup>. The group continued its dive bombing missions as troops moved further inland, relocating to Chartres, France in August, and Laon, France in September, before making their way to Chievres, Belgium on October 2<sup>nd</sup><sup>78</sup>. On October 9, 1944, after completing his required eighty missions, Sutcliffe, along with eight other pilots, was sent to the “Zone of Interior: USA,” as part of the USAAF’s “Combat Crew Rehabilitation Policy”<sup>79</sup>.

For his time and heroism overseas, Sutcliffe received a number of honors and medals. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the Ninth Air Force division awarded Sutcliffe the Silver Star<sup>80</sup>. The Silver Star was awarded to those “cited for gallantry in action with an opposing foreign force and preformed with a marked distinction.” Only twenty three Silver Stars were awarded to members of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group<sup>81</sup>. Secondly, in November 1945, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for the destruction of a German FW-190 during his June 14, 1944 dogfight<sup>82</sup>. The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for “heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. The performance of heroism must be evidenced by voluntary action above and beyond the call of duty”<sup>83</sup>.

Sutcliffe returned to the United States, awaiting his next assignment. He received one week’s rest in Atlantic City and within two weeks of his return, he married Olive Chew. His next assignment took him to Luke Field in Arizona, where he served as an instructor for advanced cadets in training<sup>84</sup>. Later, he was transferred to Punta Gorda, Florida as a gunnery

instructor for the P51 Mustang. Olive joined him at these postings. Approximately one year after returning from Europe, Sutcliffe left active duty, although he remained a serviceman in the reserves through 1950. Following his discharge from active duty at Westover Air Base, he picked up a major who lived close by. In their car ride discussions, the matter of the future arose, with the major recommending that Sutcliffe get an education at Bryant College<sup>85</sup>.

With the help of the GI Bill, George Sutcliffe entered Bryant in the fall of 1945. He became one of 7.8 million veterans who took advantage of the GI Bill for educational purposes<sup>86</sup>. Returning veterans flocked to Bryant during the post-war decade. By 1949, Bryant's enrollment peaked at 3,000, with facilities that were designed to serve only 1000 students<sup>87</sup>.

For the next the two years, Sutcliffe balanced schoolwork and a position at a local gas station as he supported his small family. He had little free time and did not get involved with extracurricular activities on campus, such as Chi Gamma Iota, the Vets Club, which helped strengthen the relationship between ex-servicemen and faculty at the college<sup>88</sup>. At the time Sutcliffe attended Bryant, the most common degree programs took only two years, with classes breaking only briefly between twenty-four week semesters. Sutcliffe graduated from the business administration class with a degree in accountancy and finance, on August 8, 1947<sup>89</sup>.

Sutcliffe joined a local tax firm, eventually buying out the owner. He also returned to school to receive his insurance licenses to complement the tax services he offered. Eventually, these two practices required too much time and attention, causing him to focus solely on his insurance business beginning in 1957<sup>90</sup>. Today, that insurance business is known as the Bradford-Sutcliffe/Lawrence-Sutcliffe Insurance Agency. At age eighty-five, Sutcliffe continues to oversee the aircraft insurance department of the agency<sup>91</sup>.

Sutcliffe had little difficulty transitioning back to civilian life. Soon after his return, he started his family and took on the associated responsibilities. Without the war, Sutcliffe believes he would have been more likely to have become a laborer in a local factory, following orders and directions from superiors. Instead, World War II provided him with the opportunity to become a fighter pilot, attend college, become independent, and provide a better living for his family. He described the war as “his own chance” to succeed and prosper in life<sup>92</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Although George Sutcliffe and Thomas Duxbury had very different World War II experiences, their lives are linked in multiple ways. They are “friendly” competitors within Rhode Island’s insurance community, they are appreciative of their extraordinary wartime experiences and the impact the war had on their lives, and they are enthusiastic alumni of what is now Bryant University.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The East Side Campus had only recently been opened, on September 3, 1935. Valerie Quiney, *Bryant College: The First 125 Years*, (Smithfield, Rhode Island, 1988), 39.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009

<sup>5</sup> *The Ledger* (Bryant College, 1939), 77-78. Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> *The Ledger* (Bryant College, 1939), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Funding Universe, “Browne and Sharpe Manufacturing Company,”  
<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Brown-amp;-Sharpe-Manufacturing-Co-Company-History.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

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<sup>14</sup> Raymond C Watson, *Solving the Naval Radar Crisis: The Eddy Test- Admission to the Most Challenging Training Programs of World War II* (British Columbia: Trafford Publishing, 2007), 167-173.

<sup>15</sup> Raymond C Watson, *Solving the Naval Radar Crisis: The Eddy Test- Admission to the Most Challenging Training Programs of World War II* (British Columbia: Trafford Publishing, 2007), 168.

<sup>16</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 4, 25.

<sup>18</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Iwo Jima, Inc., “The US Invasion,” <http://www.iwojima.com/battle/battleb.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 296.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Richard F. Newcomb, *Iwo Jima* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 284.

<sup>24</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Marines In WWII Commemorative Series, “Introduction,” <http://www.nps.gov/archive/wapa/indepth/extcontent/usmc/pcn-190-003135-00/sec1.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> *USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Marines In WWII Commemorative Series, “L-Day and Movement to Contact,” <http://www.nps.gov/archive/wapa/indepth/extcontent/usmc/pcn-190-003135-00/sec3.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> “*USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> “*USS Estes Association*, “A History,” <http://www.ussestes.org/ShipInfo/History.htm>.

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> *United States Department of Veterans Affairs* 2009, "GI Bill,"

[http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/history.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Duxbury, personal interview by author, January 30, 2009.

<sup>35</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> C.C. Elebash, *Army Air Forces Historical Association*, "Was it the Air Corps or Army Air Forces in WWII?," [http://www.aafha.org/aaf\\_or\\_aircorps.html](http://www.aafha.org/aaf_or_aircorps.html).

<sup>38</sup> Sweetwater, Texas, became the home to the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program from August 1943 until its deactivation in December of 1944. *National WASP WWII Museum*, "Education," <http://waspmuseum.org/education/>.

<sup>39</sup> Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training 1907-1945* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), 392.

<sup>40</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Today, Randolph Field is known as the Randolph Air Force Base. *GlobalSecurity.org*, "Randolph AFB, Texas," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/randolph.htm>. Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training 1907-1945* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999), 396.

<sup>42</sup> Rebecca Hancock Cameron, *Training to Fly: Military Flight Training 1907-1945* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999) , 396-397.

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<sup>43</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009. Moore Air Force Base, which was opened in September of 1941, trained 6,000 pilots on single-engine planes. *Handbook of Texas Online*, “Moore Air Force Base,” <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/MM/qbm3.html>.

<sup>44</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009. *Aviation History*, “The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt,” <http://www.aviation-history.com/republic/p47.html>.

<sup>46</sup> More than 15,000 P-47’s were produced during WWII, flying 546,000 missions. While in combat, only .07% were lost. *Aviation History*, “The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt,” <http://www.aviation-history.com/republic/p47.html> (Accessed February 15, 2009). George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> They also asked him if he would like his shoe back, which he quickly declined, as the other shoe was long gone, and the townsfolk look at it as a symbol for an exciting event that occurred in their small town. George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> *368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group*, “368th Fighter Group History & Time Line of Events,” <http://www.368thfightergroup.com/>.

<sup>51</sup> “Junior” was the name given to the stuffed Panda Sutcliffe bought for his girlfriend, Olive, prior to being deployed overseas. He told her that they would get married and have their own “Junior” one day. George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 21.



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<sup>53</sup> *368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group*, “368th Fighter Group History & Time Line of Events,” <http://www.368thfightergroup.com/> (accessed February 12, 2009). George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 21-22.

<sup>55</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> For larger targets, bombers were used. *368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group*, “368th Fighter Group History & Time Line of Events,” <http://www.368thfightergroup.com/>.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 30.

<sup>58</sup> *368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group*, “368th Fighter Group History & Time Line of Events,” <http://www.368thfightergroup.com/>.

<sup>59</sup> Richard P. Hallion, *D-Day 1944: Air Power Over the Normandy Beaches and Beyond* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1994), 2.

<sup>60</sup> Prior to D-Day, all Allied planes had four white stripes painted on the wings, so troops on the ground could easily identify them. George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009. Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 47.

<sup>61</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 47. Richard P. Hallion, *D-Day 1944: Air Power Over the Normandy Beaches and Beyond*, Air Force History and Museums Program, 1994, 8.

<sup>62</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

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<sup>64</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> George Sutcliffe, letter to the Langmaid Family, July 18, 1944.

<sup>66</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Targets of opportunity were places and objects they could bomb in order to hinder German progress and defense. George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> The Me-109 was the most commonly used German fighter plane, with approximately 35,000 produced and used up to and during World War II. *Aviation History*, "Messerschmitt Bf-109," <http://www.aviation-history.com/messerschmitt/bf109.html>.

<sup>69</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> The armament behind the seat protected Sutcliffe from the shells. George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>71</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>74</sup> Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith. "I Wish That I Could Hide Inside This Letter': World War II Correspondence," *Prologue*, 24, Summer 1992, 103.

<sup>75</sup> George Sutcliffe, letter to Olive Chew, October 15, 1942.

<sup>76</sup> George Sutcliffe, letter to Olive Chew, July 14, 1944.

<sup>77</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 52.

<sup>78</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 310.

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<sup>79</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 98.

<sup>80</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), 118.

<sup>81</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), Lineage and Honors 13.

<sup>82</sup> The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, “368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Aerial Victory Credits,” <http://www.368thfightergroup.com/368-av-w.html> (accessed April 22, 2009).

<sup>83</sup> Timothy M. Grace, *Second to None: The History of the 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group* (The 368<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, 2006), Lineage and Honors 13.

<sup>84</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009. Luke Air Force Base opened in June of 1941 for advanced pilot training and focused on four different fighter planes, the AT-6, P-40, P-51, and P-38. It was deactivated in November 1946. Bill Jones, *History of Luke Air Force Base*, <http://www.usacitiesonline.com/azcountylitchfieldparkluke.htm>.

<sup>85</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> United States Department of Veterans Affairs 2009, “GI Bill,” [http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI\\_Bill\\_Info/history.htm](http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/history.htm).

<sup>87</sup> In 1942, there was only 250 graduates, in 1943, only 205, and in 1944, only 153 graduates. Valerie Quinney, *Bryant College: The First 125 Years* (Smithfield, Rhode Island, 1988), 43.

<sup>88</sup> “Instructors enjoyed teaching the veterans and felt the older students brought business experience and maturity to the classroom. They were eager to do well in college, and they were serious students, but they also had to work at part-time jobs. They had no time to participate in

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extracurricular activities” Valerie Quinney, *Bryant College: The First 125 Years* (Smithfield, Rhode Island, 1988), 44. *The Ledger* (Bryant College: 1947), 76.

<sup>89</sup> *The Ledger* (Bryant College: 1947).

<sup>90</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> *BSJS: Bradford-Sutcliffe/Lawrence-Sutcliffe Insurance Agency*, “About Us,” <http://www.bradfordsutcliffe.com/about.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> George Sutcliffe, personal interview by author, January 26, 2009. George Sutcliffe passed away on January 20, 1011.

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