
Harvard Army Airfield Today

*Its connection with the Schwenk Family
by Vernon Janke*



One of the hangars at Harvard Army Airfield as it looks today, now used for grain storage.

Harvard Army Airfield was constructed in 1942 from 1740 acres of Clay County farm land. Work was started on the field September 17, 1942 and completed November 16, 1942. The Army took over on December 16, 1943. The site was located three miles northeast of the city of Harvard. On July 1, 1943, the base had 278 officers and 3,030 enlisted men. From 1942-1945 seven bombardment groups were stationed at Harvard flying the B-17, B-24, and B-29 bombers. The base was decommissioned in 1945.

Today one runway remains, the one that ran parallel with the hangar line. Originally there were two hangars, but one burned down probably because it was used for grain storage. I didn't find out the cause, but it was probably started by spontaneous combustion.

Jennifer's father was a volunteer fireman at Harvard when the big fire occurred. He was on top of the roof of one of the hangars when it started to collapse. He said he managed to slide to safety before the whole building went up in flames.

Jennifer's father is a corn farmer and has a fairly large farm

west of the airfield. The corn crop has not been good the last few years, yielding 75-90 bushels of corn per acre. In a good year the yield is 150 bushels per acre. It is interesting to note that Jennifer's grandparents had their farm taken over by the government for the construction of Harvard Airfield.

Jennifer's mother, who is also the school's secretary said that

Jenny wanted the 484th scholarship more than any of the other scholarship awards. As class valedictorian with straight As except for one B, she scored over 1100 on the SAT. She is a very nice lady and we can be proud that she is our first American recipient of the 484th BG scholarship.

There were about 300 in attendance but the thing that struck me was that the great majority of the attendees were too young to have much knowledge of WWII let alone the 484th at Harvard in 1943-44.

The airfield is seldom used today, but two years ago they had an airshow here with

many WWII "Warbirds." When I visited Harvard back in May of this year there was talk of an airshow this year.



The burned out hangar at Harvard Army Airfield