

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

AUG 1988



Loading the airmail addressed to Hitler.

'89 REUNION SHAPING UP AS BEST EVER

You'll enjoy your stay at the Omni International Hotel! It's guaranteed.

The 442 room, 10 story Omni is one of Norfolk's newest and finest. It is located downtown, across the street from the business district, overlooking Norfolk Harbor and the city skyline and right next door to the Waterside Festival Market.

Waterside is the center for fun and excitement in Norfolk. The building is patterned after Norfolk's original ferry terminal. It's a two story, 130,000 square-foot pavilion that shelters an extraordinary variety of shops and

eateries. In food, you'll find everything from freshly shucked oysters to fine Italian cuisine. From a choice of international snacks on the run, to fine dining overlooking the harbor, it's all there at the Waterside. In all, there are more than 120 boutiques, small shops, and pushcarts vending designer fashions, toys and handicrafts. Harbor cruises and the ferry to Portsmouth also depart from this location. Adjacent to The Waterside is Town Point Park, site of frequent concerts and festivals.

Back at the Omni, you'll enjoy the Riverwalk Cafe, Norfolk's

finest seafood restaurant with all the specialties for which the Tidewater area is famous. It's an informal spot with a sweeping view of the waterfront. For more formal dining, the Esplanade offers regional American cuisine that ranks with the best restaurants on the East Coast. The setting is elegant, intimate, yet friendly at the same time. You'll spend some of your free time relaxing in the warm and inviting Lobby Bar. One entire wall of 30-foot high windows overlook the Elizabeth River with its traffic of colorful sails, power boats and luxury yachts.

Your reunion committee has arranged a special 303rd rate of \$62 per night, single or double. That's a real bargain for an East Coast luxury hotel. An exciting program is being planned. It will include an early-bird reception, a day at Williamsburg, museum tour, harbor cruise, a very special memorial service at the Douglas MacArthur Memorial and much more.

Make your plans now to enjoy the comradeship, fun and fellowship of Hell's Angels Reunion '89 in Norfolk-By-The-Sea.

Bud Klint
Reunion Committee



303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC. "HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Hal Susskind
2602 Deerfoot Trail, Austin, TX 78704

AUGUST 1988

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc., a tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501 (c) (19), founded in 1975 is chartered in the State of Florida to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and to provide opportunities for 303rders to meet and do things together.

Because you are helping to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group, your dues and/or donations to the 303rd Bomb Group Association are tax deductible.

The Association is open for membership to all persons, assigned or attached to the 303rd Bomb Group, from its activation in 1942 in Boise, Idaho throughout its war years at Molesworth Air Base in England to its deactivation in Casablanca in 1945. Spouses of 303rders may also become members. All other persons, interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and in furthering the aims of the Association, may apply for Associate status.

Membership years begin on the first day of January. In the future, the 303rd Bomb Group Newsletter will be sent only to paid up members. When you pay annual dues, the membership chairman will send you an updated membership card.

If you do not receive the 303rd Newsletter for a period of more than four months it means you are delinquent in your dues for that calendar year.

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IT'S MY OPINION

There has been much heard about "fractionalizing" the 303rd Bomb Group Association by re-organization of groups-within-the-group. The latest was the idea that the ground echelon feels sort of out-of-it, as it were.

In an era when many clubs and "association" groups are being attacked by the fringe for not allowing this one or that one to become a member, here we are suffering the tearing assunder of an organization knit together by something put upon us in wartime and which none of us chose. But it made a brotherhood which looked death in the eye day after day.

That much like the NFL quarterback, the flight echelon seems to be getting the notoriety, let no one be fooled that none of us is unaware of the fact that it took every goddamn one of us to whip the enemy! The Lew Lyles know this and the Roger Staubachs know this.

In every organization one will find so-called cliques. Groups which stick together. Stand at the bar. Go to breakfast. Reserve tables for lunch, dinner and other functions. *But we are all members of the 303rd Bomb Group from Molesworth in World War Two!*

Rank was a fact of life. It is necessary in any military operation. If any person allows former position or rank to affect any interpersonal relationships in his life, he will do it whether it be colonel and private or banker and hardware clerk. Kentucky Colonels abound and we laugh at them and with them! We are Americans. Former comrades-in-arms in ALL echelons. I don't like this attitude of the 303rd trying to break up into splinter groups for ANY reason whatsoever.

And I am standing up to say so! My name is Bill Heller! I am a member of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and not a member of any group-within-the-group!

Hell's Angels Forum

Your Chance to Sound Off!

Reunion at Margraten

Several months ago, Jean Fessler sent me the Sunday, May 29, 1988, Magazine section of the Pittsburgh Press which contained the story "Reunion at Margraten" written by Charles Palmer. It is a wonderful story of the love and respect one brother has for the other and how it endured over the years.

Charles' brother is Lt. Joe Palmer who was assigned to the 360th Sqdn., 303rd Bomb Group in March of 1943. While Joe was flying missions out of Molesworth, Charles was a corporal building airfields with the 819th Engineer Aviation Battalion in England. In the story Charles chronicles the four reunions they had together in different parts of England.

But it was 44 years before their fifth reunion which was held at the American Military Cemetery in Margraten in Holland. On June 25, 1943, returning from a bombing mission to Hamburg, Lt. Joe Palmer, on his 11th mission, was shot down and crashed in Holland.

Charles describes his feeling upon visiting his brother's grave and his amazement at the reverence and respect the Dutch people have for the Americans who are buried at Margraten.

"These brave soldiers gave their lives for the liberation of our country, and we shall never forget it," said a citizen of Margraten.

It is a great story and Charles has given us permission to reprint it in a future issue of our newsletter. In the meantime I thought you would like to read Charles Palmer's letter which follows.

I read your letter with mixed emotions. You unraveled one of the questions I had: His Fortress was finally named "The Avenger." Their first Fort was named "Desperate Journey", but I don't know if the name was ever painted on the fuselage. My parents had seen a newsreel during the war showing Forts returning from a mission, and one of them was lettered "Desperate Journey" with ten bombs painted on the fuselage. The manager of the theater clipped three frames from the film, which we had printed. But I couldn't figure out the mystery. Joe was shot down on his 11th mission on June 25, but he had completed mission number 10 on June 24. He had told me that he was considering naming their Fort "The Avenger" when Laufner was killed, but I heard nothing more. Now I know.

Yes, you may definitely use all, or excerpts from my story, and I definitely would like to see your newsletter. I am curious as to the whereabouts of his navigator Nathan "Rosey" Rosenbloom. Joe and Rosey became very close friends. However,

after all these years I question the possibility of contacting him, and if it's a wise thing to do.

Incidentally, I knew about the 11th person, a photographer aboard the plane. I didn't know that two planes were lost that day. If I'm not mistaken, the 303rd group, or 360 squadron was ordered to return to Molesworth after encountering storm clouds up to 40,000 over the north coast of Germany. Joe never received the message.

I should have clarified in my story that my brother arrived in England in March 1943 during the winter, but that isn't very important. What is important to me is your knowledge of my brother, the name of his B-17, and the information you have of his last mission. How did you acquire all of that? What was your status during the war? Did you fly? Yes things were indeed rough in the autumn and winter of 1943. 60 Forts lost over Schweinfurt; heavy losses over Regensburg, etc. I had, and still retain the greatest respect and admiration for the airmen who flew the missions over Europe. Claude Kieffer wrote my parents a detailed letter after he was released from the prisoner of war camp and returned home to Seattle, Washington. A detailed letter also followed, sparing no gruesome details of Dutch eyewitnesses describing the crash and what followed.

You might be interested to read "Reunion in Margraten" that will be published in the V.F.W. Magazine this November. The American Legion Magazine rejected my story. I may send the story as it was printed in the Pittsburgh Press to the Reader's Digest. I feel a deep desire to tell the world about the Dutch, and my lasting admiration for the courageous flying crews, and my respect and love for my brother.

Thanks for your informative letter, especially the last sentence. Please keep in touch.

Charles Palmer
141 Laurie Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

The Supreme Sacrifice

A copy of your May 1988 "Hell's Angel's Newsletter" has just been forwarded from Princeton to the island of Nantucket where we spend the summer. I presume it came through the courtesy of Everett Dasher who is the subject of the article on Page 8 of that issue. The Reverend Dasher and I have been in correspondence off and on because my brother, Lt. Robert S. O'Conner, was the pilot on the mission when Dasher was wounded.

The story also referred to my brother's last mission aboard the "Mugger" on July 4, 1943. Four men

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of the crew did indeed evade capture after bailing out over Malicorne-sur-Sarthe. Four others were picked up by the Germans. The bombardier, Lt. Richard Peterson, was killed in the air combat. My brother was killed in the crash. Several of the four who got back to England via Spain and then were shipped home got in touch with my parents, and told them what they could of these events. I was by this time in the service myself and never had any first hand contact with the survivors. However, my mother carefully preserved what they reported and perhaps some members of your association, particularly any who might have been in the 358th at Molesworth, might like to know the rest of the story.

Apparently, "The Mugger" was shot up and had to drop out of formation. After further battle damage my brother gave the order to bail out. Peterson by this time was dead. The last member of the crew to bail out was, I believe, the crew chief, one of those who were not captured. He called to my brother to get out. My brother signaled that he understood the message but stayed at the controls. He never made it. The townspeople of Malicorne, some of whom my parents were in contact with in the immediate postwar years and many of whom I met in a visit there in 1949, believed that my brother stayed with the stricken ship so that it would not hit the town. It crashed two or three miles outside of Malicorne.

The Germans immediately flooded the area and caught four of the crew. The other four were hidden and passed along until they could be taken over the border to Spain. In retaliation, the Germans took every male member of the town between the ages of 16 and 60 and shipped them to the Ruhr where they were slave laborers in factories there.

Many did not return, having died of malnutrition or maltreatment or having been killed in the Allied bombings. The most prominent man in the area, a Count, was one of those who did not come back. I met his widow in 1949.

After the war, the citizens of Malicorne erected a small granite monument on the site of the crash. On top is a cylinder from "The Mugger." The monument has both the French and American flag and the inscription commemorates the sacrifice of Peterson and my brother as well as those who were deported. There was still wreckage from the aircraft when I visited the monument in 1949. The ground has been ploughed up now and when I visited it in 1985, the monument was well maintained and, because of my visit, fresh flowers had been placed in front of it. No wreckage remains however.

The Germans buried the two dead

airmen in shallow graves next to the wreckage. Photographs of the crash site that were sent to my parents after the war by the schoolteacher in Malicorne show that much of the plane, though badly smashed up of course, remained, including engines, rudder and much of the fuselage. There was no fire it appeared. After the war, the remains of the two men were reburied in a temporary military cemetery and then transferred to the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach, both Peterson's parents and mine having decided not to ask for the return of the remains to the United States. They now lie side by side in one extreme corner of the cemetery in the last row next to the bluff looking down on the beach.

Should you wish photographs of the monument or the graves in Normandy, I'd be glad to send you some prints. These are back at our home in Princeton and since we will not be returning there until early October, I could not send you anything until then.

In retrospect, I have always felt it a shame, for my parent's sake, that Bob's actions that day were not recognized with a gallantry decoration. He was on, I believe, something like his 22nd or 23rd mission and had not as yet received a D.F.C. But nobody pushed for it and he became just another statistic like many before and after him were. I am now in possession of all my brother's effects and cherish his Air Medal with the 3 Oak Leaf Clusters and his posthumous Purple Heart. Our first born son is named after my brother.

The article on Dasher mentioned that Lt. Colonel (Ret) Donovan B. Manifold was Bob's co-pilot on the July 4 mission. I would very much like to get in touch with him to find out any further details of that day that he might be able to provide. In fact, if you print these words, I would welcome contact with any surviving members of "The Mugger" or men who might have flown with my brother on other missions.

Enclosed is a check made out to the Association in the amount of \$75 for a Life Membership, if such is available for Associate Members. My age is 63. If a Life Membership is not available for this category, please credit me with dues paid up through 1994.

Thank you very much for handling this application. Best wishes to the Association. I'm glad to know you have such an active and interested group.

Neal W. O'Connor
P.O. Box 212
Princeton, N.J. 08542

Ed. Note: In view of the fact that the French still honor Bob O'Connor, let's try to reopen his case and see if we can get him the DFC which he so richly deserved.

Father Skoner Remembered

Received your new Newsletter and I want to congratulate you on a superb job! Then when I leafed through it, I learned something I had not known—passing of our dear friend and Chaplain, Father Skoner. I should like to relate a story that perhaps some of our 303rd'ers know, but is held dear to me.

My brother, Emerson Heller, who was a career Air Force Officer killed in the Viet Nam action in 1969, came to Molesworth as a pilot with the Marv Richeson crew and was assigned to the 359th Squadron. He eventually flew a few missions as pilot with his own crew. General Travis was instrumental in getting my brother assigned to the same combat Bomb Group as myself. As some may know, General Travis' brother was also at Molesworth...

My brother happened to be a Roman Catholic. I was Protestant. When my brother and I flew on the same mission, after briefing Chappie Skoner used to give solace to my brother prior to the mission while Chappie Slawson gave aid and comfort to me on the opposite side of the room. Many times I would hear Father Skoner challenge Chappie Slawson by saying, "Don't worry, I'll get the other Heller in my flock one day." It was a pleasant sort of jest. It held pleasant memories for me. My brother had been a Roman Catholic by personal choice. Our family was proud of that. He is in Arlington now.

The other evening after reading your marvelous newsletter and the obituary on our dear Father Skoner, I stood on my patio, faced West, and drank a hearty two-fingered toast to my brother and Father Skoner. They were both good soldiers.

Hal, I'm also enclosing some information from Tom Hardin which was generated by one of my Squadron letters. It might be grist for your wonderful "mill." Tom seems proud of what he did with his PX purchases, doesn't he. Might be a come-on for more PX purchases.

Just returned from my 50th High School Class reunion. It reminded me how fragile we all are, I'al.

Bill Heller
Half Moon Bay, CA.

I was deeply saddened to read in the last newsletter of Father Skoner's passing. Ed Barry and I, with my wife Bea, spent most of our time with Fr. Skoner, assisting at Mass, taking him places, running errands, dining with him, etc. The picture in the upper right hand corner on page 9 of the newsletter is what caught my eye. It was taken in the spring of 1943. I am also curious as to how it got published in the newsletter as I

have a copy and haven't seen it, or looked at it in years. I would also like to know of the details regarding Father's death. I visited him many times in Chicago and Florida; also attended his retirement party in Chicago.

He was the greatest and we shall miss him very, very much.

Hank Pratten
Canton, IL

Let's Hear It For The Old Timers

Your great newsletter was eagerly devoured upon its arrival. If you will excuse an old man's nostalgia I would like to reminisce with a few stories I recall. The years may have detracted a bit as to accuracy but it is the way it comes to me.

I believe I was responsible for Father Skoner's first getting involved in the 303rd Association. I knew him of course at Molesworth, but after the war as a young lawyer I met him off and on in Chicago and gave him information about the reunion. How many guys remember pretty Janine Hoefkins who assisted him? Her family lived in the very large house with the clay tennis court in Molesworth and many of the young men were guests. They were very kind people and treated the Yanks as members of the family.

Father Skoner was a regular guy and a damn good poker player and as I recall very understanding at confession time. I'm sure he will put in a good word for all of us who spent time with the 303rd.

As to "Yardbird", can it be that Frank Bartlett was the boy from Texas who won all our money on the trip over on the Queen Mary? The guy who bought a motorcycle and blew the engine using 100 octane? The guy who bought a horse and another horse to have someone to ride with? We thought he was a lucky guy until he was shot up, but I thought he made it back. Like Billy Southworth Jr. who finished his tour and in celebration flew the P-51 into the ground. At first we thought he was lucky.

Like most people the happy memories are the strongest. Who can recall the time the stripped down "17" landed with its wheels up (it had a gaggle of nurses from the 303rd field hospital aboard for a thrill ride after a party at the O'Club). It seemed there would be one helluva problem until a M/Sgt from maintenance pulled the warning light and pronounced it defective as he broke it, but except for the bouncing and shaking no one was injured and the nurses had a real thrill.

How many people remember 1st Lt. Lew Lyle whom we young men (I was 18) thought had been a gas station attendant before the war and who commanded with such ability

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and leadership and whose courage was an inspiration to all of us who served with him as he achieved promotion after promotion. Do I recall in '45 he had his star? I remember him not only as an officer but truly a real gentleman even without congressional blessing. We heard he went on many many extra missions.

Do any of you recall the old old soldier (at least he looked old old) M/Sgt Pete Zell who ran the large E.M. Mess. Pete could always come up with an extra bottle of Scotch! Rumor was Pete had enlisted in 1900 and had no place else to go.

I'll bet the medics remember the first fatality in the 303rd. A medic sgt. who it was said, after a few snorts, fell from the 3rd floor of a bombed out club in London. I really believe it was a road accident. He is now in Cambridge, the first headstone on the right, first row. Incidentally, a must for any 8th guy is a visit to that most beautiful memorial.

The best memory I have is the Pubs in Molesworth, the one on the hill outside the main gate (the last beer before going into the base when returning from leave). The Rose & Crown and Wheatseath in Titchmarsh down the old road back of the 360th. The guest house in Thrapston, Mr. & Mrs. Edgar Cooper.

Many years after the war I had a weekend party there and had all the locals including the Hoekins and Constable Parker (policeman to you) who sent me his Bobby Cap when he retired. After the weekend of drinks and dinners when I went to pay the bill, Edgar said, "You don't owe me a bloody penny, you're the first of the lot to come back." It seems we did leave them with some fond memories too!

I have so many memories of the guys, the base, the raids, the "sweating them out" when we would count our returning group. The terrible losses both in and out of combat and to common goals we shared. Hell, I could write a book about it, maybe I will someday.

I know what Wm. Shakespeare meant when he wrote:

"And gentlemen in England now-a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here

And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks

That fought with us upon St. Crispins day."

I for one am proud to have been a part of the 303rd and of the men whom I served with.

Marty McGuire
Palm Desert, CA

Enclosed photos ought to bring back some memories to some of the fellows that were part of a practice convoy to Ketchum, Idaho (Sun Valley) during May or June 1942.



Chow line on the road

We drove up in a day from Boise, Idaho, slept in tents or trucks which were pitched and parked in the Sun Valley Rodeo Grounds, overnight. The next day before heading back to Boise, those wishing to take a ride on the ski lift chairs to the top of the ski run were given the opportunity to do so.

If I recall correctly, coming back to Gowen Field that evening — during the day in our absence the base had a gas drill for the personnel who didn't go on the convoy — we caught some of the remains of the gas without our gas masks.

Chris M. Christoff
Merrillville, IN

The latest May newsletter was superb. Particularly in the fact that your articles seem to be getting at the nitty-gritty of the old 303rd. For your effort you earn my thanks!

We were shot down, that is, "the mighty One O'Clock Jump" (Great Heart G for George of the 358th) on the same December 12th, 1942, as was Paul Flickinger. Although it is not of major consequence, that incident occurred exactly one year and one hour ("One O'Clock Jump?") following the graduation of a group of us from Observation School at Brooks Field, Texas. The class was numbered 41-I and was the last 1941 flying school class and the first of the newly declared war classes.

That graduating group included John Barnett, Bill Calhoun, John Farrar, Paul Flickinger, Bill Frost, Lew Lyle, Hoss Shumake, O.T. O'Conner, and possibly a couple of others. The group, along with others of the class, was posted in late January or early February to Boise and Spokane, Washington, where the 303rd and 301st (Spokane) were organized. In late May about half of the 41-I pilots came over to the 303rd from the 301st at steaming Alamogordo.

Anyone might readily recognize the traumatic feelings of that young group of eager-beaver pilots, trained to fly O-52 and O-47 Observation planes, facing the 4 engine B-17Ds and Es and facing an overseas assignment. On our side however was extremely high morale and the cocky confidence that we were capable of almost anything! This experience, and the later contributions as pilots

in one of the major early air groups in Europe proved the mettle of that unique flying school bunch. To me, it seems coincidence that so many were from one particular group of flying school pilots. It probably would be worth a story.

Some did not survive the war, some spent the better part of the war in lagers and some reached astounding heights in the military world. I shall always be proud to be named as a 41-I man and particularly proud to have been with so many outstanding classmates in the original 303rd.

William N. Frost
ex-358th
726 N. Kenilworth
Oak Park, Ill 60302

P.S. Another tip... if you are looking for another hot story, contact Bob Mays in Ripley, Tennessee. Bob was my copilot and the first Eighth Air Force evader to reach England following being shot down. He "got back" to England prior to Christmas in 1942! I don't believe he has ever received what one would consider true recognition for his escapade.

Ed. Note: Bob, how about sharing your story with us?

First, I would like to thank you and your staff for putting out "Hell's Angels Newsletter". Maybe we (you) can get more of the "Old Timers" to write in and tell their story.

I am Robert E. Stout Sr. and was with the first group that formed in Boise, Idaho.

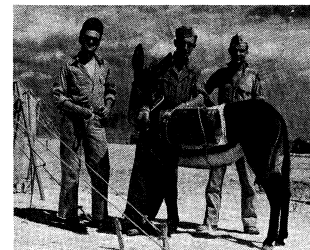
I was with the 359th and was the first cook for the group. We had three shifts each day, 24 hours on and 48 hours off. I had two second cooks, one was Sammy Faunce, from Philadelphia Pa. and the other one was Roger P. Carocari, from N.J. He liked his "Cigar" and he played the "Guitar" for Robert Featherstone's "Rhythm Pilots". My good friend was Charles Gonzales, my first baker and he also played the guitar, and then there was "Pollard" from Yakima, Washington, and our mess S/Sgt, whose name I can't remember, was from Rochester N.Y. So, if possible, let's hear more stories and have more letters about the ground personnel, like the cooks and bakers, who kept close to the ground crews and mechanics and pilots and flight crews.

Harold Froehlich of Cumberland Wisconsin asked if anybody remembers the accident and incident that killed M/Sgt Buford Pafford, the crew chief of the "Knockout Dropper". That accident I remember. I didn't know his name at the time but one of the ground crew came to the mess hall and asked if we could send a few gallons of coffee to the area of the accident. He told us all about it and that stayed with me for many years.

Somebody also wrote in saying how bad our menus were. The first few months we had powdered milk, powdered eggs, lamb, cold cuts, cheese, spam, which we fried, meat loaf, etc. Then near Christmas of 1942 we started to receive boxes of frozen beef, boxes of fruit (apples and oranges) crates of eggs, (30 dozen) carrots, celery, onion, along with peanut butter, jams; the bakers would make jelly rolls and from then on we had good menus.

Thank you again, hope to hear from some old buddies.

Robert E. Stout Sr.
1380 48th Ave. #4
San Francisco, CA 94122



Alamogordo, N.M., July 1942
— Expedition to PX



Squadron Picnic, Gowen Field, May 1942

Enclosed are some photos taken during our European experience of WW II. I thought I had better make use of same as I would think they would be of great interest to some of our old buddies. I have photos from Gowen Field to summer of '44, as I was a photographer with the 427th; later in June with the 351st Gp. at Polebrook. If you are interested I will forward others that may be of interest to your publication and the Group as a whole. I'm getting to the age that I will have to make use of some before it is too late.

E.J. Thorson
Albuquerque, NM

Ed. Note: Thorson forwarded a selection of photos which I hope to use in this issue and future issues of the newsletter.

I would like to know where the fellows are that I was with for nearly three years at Molesworth. The ones I was with the most were in Operations of the 360th Bomb Sqdn. It has been so many years that I can't remember full names — Fluke was one and I think he came from Ohio or out that way — then there was

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"Doc" Younglove — Emory Staub who is now gone with a heart attack. I went with him from Boise, Idaho, where the 360th started I think; all the way to England. He was one of my best friends. He came from Nebraska.

Walt Shayler rings a bell; I think he was Operations Officer for a while. Please send me a newsletter — I would like to join.

**Wilbur "Ham" Arnold
Warwick, R.I.**

Just finished reading the latest Hell's Angels Newsletter and it was terrific. You people are sure doing a great job and we are indebted to you for all the information we receive.

I noted with great interest the letter from John Farrar and your note about Yardbird II. I am not sure about there being two **Yardbird IIs** but I believe I know what happened to the first **Yardbird**. If my memory serves me right **Yardbird I** had to be scrapped after the left wing dropped several inches — or was it feet — after one of its missions. As I recall, John did the forbidden after a hard mission — he really buzzed the field at Molesworth. He landed and returned to the dispersal area; the crew got out and started walking away when a strange sound was heard. As they looked back at the ship, the left wing dropped down. It was found that the main spar had been hit by flak and as long as the weight was on the wing it held; but when the plane was sitting on the ground, the spar gave way. Only the man above knows how it held until the crew got home. And to think John Farrar had done a buzz job on the airfield with a wing like that.

I do not know if anyone might be interested but I have photographs of the eight original crews of the 360th Sqdn., along with group orders naming the members of those crews. I also have pictures of, I think, every crew of the 360th Sqdn. until I left the sqdn. for stateside.

I can recall the names of all the aircraft assigned to these crews except for Schulstad and Adams. M/Gen. Lyle's aircraft was called **Old Soljer** with a picture of Disney's Pluto standing at attention. I believe the ship was given that name in honor of P.C. Moore, the navigator, who was the oldest member of the crew. Flickinger's ship was named **Wulfe Hound** — why, I do not know. Breed's ship was named **Shak-Hak** for reasons I will not put in writing. Frederick's ship was **Snap-Crackle-Pop** in honor of Kellogg's cereals, the company he worked for before going into the Army Air Corps. Castle's ship was called **Thumper** and had a picture of Disney's rabbit which was named Thumper. Farrar's ship was **Yardbird** but you will have to ask John why that name. I have a picture of Dr. Fyler's crew also.

The operations orders which I have are numbers 223 and 224 and are dated Oct. 16 and 17, 1942, issued at Gander Lake, Newfoundland. The orders list each member of each crew and direct these crews to proceed to report to the 8th Air Force for duty. If anyone would like copies of these orders I can reproduce them and send them.

My photo album includes pictures of every section of the 360th: Personnel, Operations, Medics, Engineering, Armament, Ordnance and Mess. It took all of the men and each of these sections to make our missions a success. Without them, we "fly boys" would not have gone anywhere. They did the dirty work while we fly boys got the glory. Just looking at the pictures brings back many memories. My hat will always be off to the men under Lucey, Quinney, Jurgenson, Perry and the others.

I wonder if anyone can help me find Sgt. Wm. C. Fluke who was in operations.

Hope to see you all in Norfolk-By-The-Sea in 1989.

**Walter K. Shayler
Redlands, CA 92373**

Ed. Note: Here's Walt's answer to my requests for the orders and pictures:

Thanks for the note. I am glad you found the information helpful. Am enclosing copies of orders 223 & 224 which lists all the original crews of the 360th Sqdn. You will note that the squadron commander was Major Richard D. Calloway when the crews flew to England. In looking at my album I believe I have orders listing all the members of the 360th who were ordered from Alamogordo, N.M., to Briggs Field, Texas before leaving for overseas.

The name of the navigator for whom Lyle's ship **Old Soljer** was named was Paul G. Moore and if my memory serves me right, he was the first airman of the 360th to become a POW. As I recall the 360th was on a short mission over France; I think the sub pens at St. Nazaire were the targets. German flak hit the ship he was on and ruptured a hydraulic line for the brakes. This line was above the navigator's area. P.G., as he was known, panicked when he saw the red hydraulic fluid and thinking the pilot and copilot had been hit and the red fluid was blood, he bailed out without checking with anyone. So he went floating down to become a POW while the entire squadron flew back to England. After that incident we always turned off the hydraulic pump so there would be no pressure in the lines. I think Lew Lyle will agree with this but this is the way I recall it.

I'll see what I can do about the pictures. I have pictures of Site 6 where the 360th lived and also pictures of the aircraft **Old Glory**,

Is Available, Witches Tit and pictures of Berlin.

**Walt Shayler
Redlands, CA**



OPERATIONS ORDERS NUMBER 223

B-17F #41-24567

P 1st Lt. Lewis M. Schulstad
CP 2nd Lt. Roy W. Christianson
N 2nd Lt. John H. Embach
B 2nd Lt. Reinaldo J. Saiz
E T/Sgt. Antone Pacheco
A/E Sgt. John H. Sherman
RO Sgt. Charles L. Roth
A/RO Pvt. Peter Soria
G Sgt. Wayne O. Stevens
Pass M/Sgt. Henry B. Harward

B-17F #41-24559

P Capt. Lewis E. Lyle
CP 2nd Lt. Keith O. Bartlett
N 1st Lt. Paul G. Moore
B 2nd Lt. Anton E. Haas
E T/Sgt. Frederick Hartung Jr.
A/E Sgt. Edward A. Bradford
A/E Sgt. William J. Greene
RO Sgt. Clayton S. Balcombe
G Sgt. Woodrow W. Smith
Pass 1st Lt. Walter K. Shayler

B-17F #41-24585

P 1st Lt. Paul F. Flickinger
CP 2nd Lt. Jack E. Williams
N 1st Lt. Gilbert T. Schowalter
B 2nd Lt. Beverly R. Polk
E T/Sgt. William A. Whitman
A/E S/Sgt. Arnold H. Schlottfeldt
RO S/Sgt. Iva L. Fegette
A/RO Sgt. Joseph R. Sunderlin
G Sgt. Lincoln T. O'Connell

B-17F #41-24579

P 2nd Lt. John E. Castle
CP 2nd Lt. Kent M. Fitzsimmons
B 2nd Lt. Louis B. Sinopoli
E T/Sgt. Gene K. Smith
A/E S/Sgt. Meyer Levin
RO Sgt. Emilio J. Yannie Jr.
A/RO Sgt. Cecil E. Craft
G Sgt. Martin A. Semonick
Pass M/Sgt. John W. Freeman

OPERATIONS ORDERS NUMBER 224

B-17F #41-24602

P 1st Lt. John W. Farrar
CP 2nd Lt. Joseph E. Trojan
N 2nd Lt. Rictor H. Auman
B 2nd Lt. Jack W. Stewart
E M/Sgt. Mike Cimbalo
A/E Sgt. Kenneth C. Hassler
RO T/Sgt. Erick K. Lindewall
A/RO Sgt. George N. Dillard
G Sgt. Kenneth J. Kurtenbach
Pass 1st Lt. Donald E. Quinney

B-17F #41-24620

P Capt. Jacob W. Fredericks
CP 2nd Lt. Arthur C. Way
N 2nd Lt. Otis A. Hoyt
B 2nd Lt. Milton S. Fonorow
E T/Sgt. Michael S. Hiastala
A/E Sgt. Henry G. Schneiderman
RO Sgt. Richard J. Smith
A/RO Sgt. Howard H. Nardine
G Sgt. Gilbert A. Murray Jr.
Pass M/Sgt. Nicholai Hansen

B-17F #41-122967

P 1st Lt. William H. Breed
CP 2nd Lt. Harry T. Sample Jr.
N 2nd Lt. Homer R. Allen
B 2nd Lt. Homer N. Santere
E T/Sgt. Stanley Putala
A/E Sgt. Samuel D. Easter
RO S/Sgt. Joseph M. Herbert
A/RO Sgt. Mathias A. Kuffel
G Sgt. James H. Lentz
Pass S/Sgt. William C. Fluke

B-17F #41-24563

P 2nd Lt. Arthur I. Adams
CP 2nd Lt. Gene A. Witterstetter
N 2nd Lt. Glen M. Herrington
B 2nd Lt. Michael L. Libonati Jr.
E T/Sgt. Lewis C. Hart
A/E S/Sgt. A. W. Durant
RO S/Sgt. A. M. Union
A/RO Sgt. Alan E. Magee
G Sgt. James I. Gordon
Pass /Sq. Comm. Major
Richard B. Callaway

More About The Knockout Dropper

In the last issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter there was an item about the **Knockout Dropper** crew that I want to clarify.

First the crewman who was killed by the prop was Victor Cozza and not Buford Pafford. I was witness to this tragic accident and was about 20 feet or less away from it. Vic tripped over the Homelite Generator and fell headfirst into #2 prop. Also Vic was in my barracks and slept on the bottom bunk and I was on the top bunk. According to the Hell's Angels roster Buford still is living and lives in California, and is a member of our Association, as I am.

Also, I left the **Knockout Dropper** after the 50th mission and crewed **Marie** taken over from Les Hanson when he became the squadron aircraft electrician. I also was crew chief on **Scorchy** and **Pistol Packin' Mama**, all 359th aircraft.

Anyway I enjoyed the letter and hope to attend the reunion.

**Morton Moon Jr.
Harlingen, Texas**

Harold Froehlich is mistaken about Buford Pafford being killed by a prop; it was Vic Cozza. Buford will be shocked to learn that he is dead. Buford and his wife were at the Fort Worth reunion.

I was on the first crew of The Duchess at the right waist gun. I

Continued on Page 8

I Went Back!

by

Colonel (Ret) Cyde W. Bradley, Jr.

Twenty-nine thousand feet over Berlin, Germany. A powerful burst of an antiaircraft shell! Total damage to the two right engines of the B-17 Flying Fortress! Losing altitude! Fighting fire! Evading German fighters! Trying to control the airplane! Finally, a crash landing near Soltau, Germany! Time, 2:00 p.m. Date, 18 April 1944.

For many years I thought about the crash landing and our capture by German civilians. I wondered what it would be like to visit the crash landing site and the subsequent place of capture. In early 1985 I discussed a possible return visit with my wife, Liz. She thought it would be a rewarding experience, so I wrote to the other crew members suggesting that after 41 years we should hold a reunion, visit the site of our crash and our capture, and possibly the camps where we were imprisoned until our liberation in April of 1945. To my dismay, none of the other crew members could go due to poor health, job commitments, or various other reasons. I also discovered, much to my sorrow, that the navigator, Lt. Charles N. Pace and the engineer/top turret gunner, Sgt. John A. DeMarco, had passed away. Now I wish we had planned a reunion earlier since Pace, DeMarco, and I banded together when we left the crashed aircraft.

Persisting with the idea of returning, I wrote a letter to the burgemeister of Soltau, Germany, and thus set in motion events that were to shape one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. In my letter I told the burgemeister of our plans to visit Germany and explained our interest in his city. I also asked him if he would try to locate anyone who might remember any of the details about our crash site or capture. His speedy response contained a cordial invitation to visit Soltau. Also, he told me that Soltau and Coldwater, Michigan were sister cities. Later, I received a telephone call from Mr. Casey Medendorp, who invited me to be the featured speaker at Coldwater's annual sister city festival.

In June, Liz and I flew from Montgomery, Alabama to Toledo, Ohio; rented a car and drove to Coldwater. At the downtown, open air ceremony I talked to an enthusiastic small-town crowd about freedom and how important it is. During our two day stay we met many extremely pleasant people, participated in the annual parade, attended the arts and crafts show, ate our fill at the community pancake breakfast, and thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful German food.

Among the many fine people we met, one couple, George and Mary Henderson, told us that the daughter of a former burgemeister of Soltau had lived with them

while she attended school as an exchange student in Coldwater. Her father had recently passed away and she invited George and Mary to her wedding in September, and asked that George give her away. We casually mentioned to the Hendersons that we were considering a visit to Soltau in September also and that we might see them there.

Time passed and the urge to return grew stronger, so in September we flew to Amsterdam, enjoyed a Rhine River cruise to Basel, Switzerland, and visited Garmish and Munich, and the site of one of my prison camps, Moosburg, which was near the Dachau concentration camp.

Driving on to Soltau we arrived two days early. The clerk at the Meyns Hotel was very apologetic and explained that no more rooms were available for two days. He called an inn for us on the outskirts of town. The innkeeper, Ms. Marie-Louise Gruber, was very pleasant and accommodating, telling us of various places of local interest. We spent the afternoon sightseeing in the city of Soltau, which will be 600 years old in 1988. Following dinner at the inn Ms. Gruber came to our table to visit. We mentioned our dilemma in trying to locate the Hendersons since they were not registered at the Meyns Hotel. Ms. Gruber said, "Oh yes, they are the Americans here for the wedding. They are staying at Ms. Minor's home." What a lucky coincidence to have met Ms. Gruber.

Very excitedly we called the Minor home, but everyone was at the wedding and reception. The next day we telephoned Ms. Minor, who asked us to come to her house for coffee and to see the Hendersons.

During our visit I asked Ms. Minor if she had heard if the burgemeister had located anyone who remembered our crash landing. To our astonishment, she calmly stated that her husband had taken her to the location and she saw the airplane resting in a field. She distinctly remembered many specifics - the time of year (April), the temperature (cold, since it was close to Easter) - because she was a new bride in early 1944 and had come down from Hamburg where she worked to visit her husband, who lived in Soltau. She had never seen an airplane on the ground before so it made a lasting impression on her. She volunteered to show us the site the next day. It was like waiting for Christmas! The next morning Ms. Minor drove us along a wooded lane a few miles north of Soltau, turned into an open field and stopped. Enthusiastically she said, "This is where you crashed."

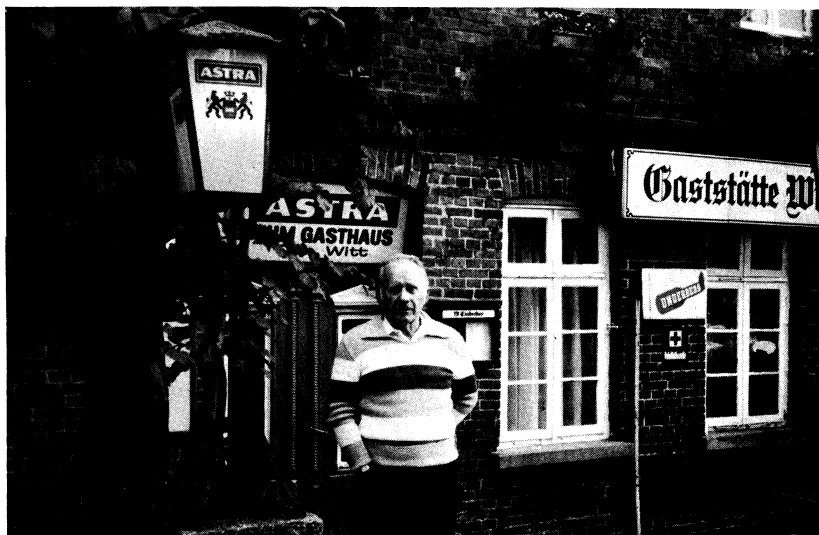
With a sudden rush of memory I recalled the exact events of 18 April 1944. At 0500, the operations sergeant had entered our

Quonset at an air field in Molesworth, England and awakened me and 15 other officers from a deep sleep. As we dressed hurriedly in the chill of the early morning, the sergeant growled, "Breakfast at 0530, briefing at 0600, take off at 0700." At the officers' mess, we ate breakfast in silence, each lost in his own personal thoughts. This was to be my last scheduled flight, and my mind began to wander. When I returned from this mission there would be a celebration for completing a combat tour — much excitement would prevail. Then I pictured going home and my homecoming celebration — me surrounded by Mom, Dad, my two sisters, and my brother. My thoughts were interrupted by a friend who said we had only ten minutes until briefing time.

At the briefing we were told that the target was Berlin. A deep feeling of concern came upon me, but quickly I felt confident of completing the mission for we had been to Berlin three times before. Although I had discarded any doubt about our success, many questions raced through my mind. What is the target? How long will we be over enemy territory? How much antiaircraft fire will we receive? How many German fighters will attack us? Will we have a good escort of American fighters?

Time passed quickly and almost in a flash we were airborne. We joined up with the other 19 wing airplanes heading toward enemy territory. Shortly after we crossed the English Channel and reached enemy territory we saw our escort fighters (P-51s). Flying steadily to the east we soon saw to our left B-17s returning from the target and headed back to England. Immediately behind them was another group of B-17s, then a group of B-24s and another B-24 group. At the same time, we saw escort fighters — P-51s and P-47s — flying at a higher altitude and criss-crossing the sky looking for German fighters. Soon we could see a steady stream of aircraft going east and a steady stream going west. It was an awesome sight with more than 3,000 American airplanes in the sky! It gave me a tremendous feeling of pride to witness and be part of such a formidable air armada. It was sight that will never be duplicated.

We flew steadily onward and reached the target at noon. Just as we dropped our bombs a heavy concussion rocked the aircraft. An antiaircraft shell had exploded between the two right side engines and had caused us to lose control of them. So, we cut the fuel switches to the lost engine and let them windmill in the slipstream. The aircraft began losing altitude and we had difficulty keeping it from going into a spin.



Bradley in front of Gasthouse.

We all agreed to stay with our ailing aircraft as long as it could fly. To reduce our weight we decided to throw out everything we did not need. As we continued flying to the west, the left waist gunner yelled excitedly on the radio, "German fighter is coming in at our 8 o'clock position." The German pilot, flying a ME-109, pulled up alongside and recognized that we had a severely damaged aircraft and could offer little resistance. Then, in a dramatic gesture, he saluted us and flew away! We experienced a tremendous feeling of gratitude for his compassion. It was not until much later that I discovered how totally vulnerable we had been - the left waist gunner had thrown his gun overboard! Although the aircraft experienced a loss of altitude, we flew about an hour and a half and reached an altitude of 2,000 feet and began to look for an open field in which to land. We spotted a narrow field and made a landing with our gear up to prevent cartwheeling into the woods.

Immediately after the aircraft slid to a stop the crew split into three groups, hopefully to avoid detection and capture. I along with three others, Lieutenant Pace, Sergeant DeMarco, and Sergeant Hustus, started running into the woods heading west. A tremendous feeling of despair overtook us since we were still a long way from Belgium and the Netherlands. Jointly we vowed to do all we could to evade capture. We soon came to a busy main highway so we hid along the edge of the woods until we could dash across. The woods were void of underbrush so walking had been easy, but hiding was difficult. About 10:00 p.m. we became fatigued since we had been walking for almost eight hours. Hunger and thirst, combined with the cold took its toll. Additionally, Pace had fallen into a peat bog earlier in the night and was shivering from the cold. We built a fire and kept it burning until dawn. The warmth raised our spirits and permitted Pace to dry his clothes. We thought the dawn would usher in a better chance for evasion. All of our training on escape and evasion had stressed sleep during the day and travel at night. Following that concept we lay down

alongside one another and used leaves and pine needles to cover our bodies. After a couple of hours the coldness of the ground made it impossible to sleep. We discussed our situation and decided to continue walking into the woods heading west. We walked for about six hours and suddenly emerged from the woods into an open field. Several elderly ladies were digging potatoes and nearby some men were loading the freshly dug potatoes on to a wagon. The ladies looked up, saw our unfamiliar uniforms and started yelling. The men started towards us so we retreated into the woods and changed directions as we ran. In a few minutes we stepped from the woods into another potato field only to be confronted by men wielding pitchforks and a shotgun. Being surrounded along with our sighting the pitchforks and shotgun, convinced us to stop and raise our hands and surrender. What a sinking feeling! We feared what might happen! The farmer with the shotgun motioned for us to follow another man. He led us down a slight hill, across a plowed field, across a small stream and along a cow path adjacent to a brick building. Upon reaching the roadway I noticed that the building, which turned out to be a gasthaus (inn), was very close to the road. The farmers led us into a room containing four tables and a large potbellied stove. We sat at the most distant table from the door where the farmer with the shotgun stood guard. People crowded in to see the "strange" American flyers. The lady innkeeper stood at a doorway leading to another room. Two small girls, about one and four years old, respectively, clung closely to her side.

We had not had food or water for two days so I kept asking for water and making a motion with my hands as if I were raising a glass. The lady innkeeper went into the next room and soon returned with four large steins of German beer! DeMarco and Hustus did not drink, so Pace and I were compelled to drink two steins of beer each on empty stomachs. Soon our worries and fears diminished somewhat and we became more amenable to directions from our captors.

Our survival kits contained several pieces of hard candy. I had three pieces left so I put them in my hand and extended it toward the two little girls. The man with the shotgun very excitedly yelled, "nein, nein" (no, no). I assumed he thought the candy was poisoned so I ate one piece and again offered the remaining two pieces to the girls. The man then smiled and nodded approvingly and the oldest child shyly accepted the candy and shared it with her sister. As they tasted the candy, beautiful smiles appeared on their faces and I felt good about sharing this valuable treat with the children.

Soon Wehrmacht soldiers arrived and we were loaded on a military truck and driven to a nearby Luftwaffe fighter base at Rotenburg. As we rode along we surreptitiously discarded the various items in our escape kits. Later we were to wonder who the finders were and what their thoughts were upon discovering the discards along the roadway.

Following a short stay at Rotenburg we were placed in a dungeon in Bremen and then moved to Frankfurt, which was the main interrogation center for allied flyers. After the officers of the crew were interrogated, we were herded into boxcars and transported to Sagan (Stalag Luft III) where we remained until January 1945. With the Soviets approaching from the east we were forced-marched in freezing weather (10 degrees F) for three days and nights, then loaded in boxcars and moved to Nuremberg (Stalag XIII D). Our experience on that forced march is another story of pain and suffering and cries to be told, all at some later date. In April, after our short stay in the filthy conditions at Nuremberg we were once again forced-marched, this time towards Dachau (the infamous death camp). Fortunately, we were diverted to a camp at Moosburg (northeast of Munich) where we remained until we were liberated on 29 April 1945, 1 year, 11 days, 2 hours, 15 minutes after our crash landing at Soltau.

Now in 1985, 40 years later, Ms. Minor waited while I took pictures of the field and the woods. Later, Liz and I drove to Neuenkirchen, a small town north of Soltau and then criss-crossed our way towards the south hoping to find the gasthouse and our place of capture. As we traveled each road back and forth for more than four hours we became discouraged. We proceeded south on Road 440 and were about to abandon our search when I looked to my left and said to Liz, "See that small hill with trees on the edge, the sloping field, the little valley, and the stream and the cow path along that building? Look it is the place! I parked and walked across the road, memories flashing through my mind, it was the gasthouse!"

I entered the inn and walked into the room where we were held. Suddenly I realized that the potbellied stove was missing and that a small unfamiliar bar sat in the corner. Overpowering disappointment consumed me! Several people were in the room so I said, "Does anyone sprechen zie English?" The only reply was "nein" and I

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Forum

have pictures of the original ground and air crews in one picture and one of just the air crew taken in late '42 or early '43 in the 359th Sq.

I lost contact with my crew, when we were chosen to return to the U.S. in April 1943. After a few months in the U.S., I entered the flying program and graduated as a fighter pilot in 1945. Thanks to the Fort Worth reunion, I heard from our tail gun, C. Owens, top gun E. Audiss and left waist, T. Tupper. I was sad to hear our pilot Harold Stouse and ball gun J. Garrott are no longer with us.

None of the crew were at Fort Worth, but I have hopes for 1989 at Norfolk.

Houston B. Brown Jr.
Laguna Niguel, CA

I like the new format. You should be commended for making this a first class newsletter. Am looking forward to the super-newsletter.

I am enclosing a copy of an old B&W photo taken by The Stars and Stripes when we landed after the Knockout Dropper's 75th. I am second from the right kneeling. Attached to the back of the picture are names of the rest. Would certainly appreciate hearing from any of the fellows. I have lost track of the crew.

I was planning to send you a copy of an article that appeared in a Pittsburgh Press Sunday magazine entitled "Return to Margraten", by Mr. C. Palmer. However, I talked to Mr. Palmer today and he informed me he has sent you a copy along with his permission to use it at your discretion.

Thanks for a fine and enjoyable newsletter. Hope to meet more of the 303rd in Des Moines.

Ray Moessner
141 Monks Road
Saxonburg, PA 16056

Yardbirds Had Many Friends

With reference to your Editor's note on page 3 at the conclusion of John Farrar's letter concerning the number of Yardbird aircraft in the 360th, probably you will receive better information from either Frank Bartlett, Joe Trojan or John Farrar, but I can give you what I knew plus what the lads that were on the crews later told me, as well as telephone conversation with John Farrar back 2 or 3 years ago.

The original Yardbird aircraft and crew started out in the States and flew a number of missions. During this time George Dillard and I were shot down on another aircraft, the Wulfehound, on December 12 1942. I understood the original Yardbird continued on for several missions until it was so shot up it became a hangar queen and the crew was assigned to Yardbird II. John Farrar

had finished his 25th and Joe Trojan, now first pilot, took the original Yardbird out of the hangar and flew it for the May 29, 1943 raid when it was shot down. Yardbird II continued on until its demise on October 2, 1943. Hope this helps clear up the confusion.

If you should desire a copy of the original Yardbird crew photograph taken in London sometime in October 1942, I will be glad to send it to you.

K.J. Kurtenbach
2740 Newell, Rt. 3
Waterloo, Iowa 50703

In the May 1988 issue of the Newsletter, you posed a question about the number of Yardbirds in the 360th. Perhaps I can shed some light on this subject.

The original Yardbird flew nine missions with its original flight crew. On the ninth mission the Yardbird was severely damaged and assumed the ignoble title as a Hangar queen. From the ninth mission on, the crew flew Yardbird II. Most of the original crew completed their missions on Yardbird II. On May 29, 1943, the original Yardbird was rolled out of the hanger and it became another casualty of the sub pens at St. Nazaire.

The real story of the original Yardbird restoration is a tribute to the wonderful ground crew of the 360th. M/Sgt. Mike Abrams and his faithful scroungers were able to rebuild the old bird until it resembled a combat ready B-17. How they were able to secure the parts for reconstruction would certainly be another chapter in the saga of the 360th.

Frank W. Bartlett
Temecula, CA

Reference to aircrafts Yardbird, May 1988 Newsletter.

I was a member of the maintenance crew that was assigned to M/Sgt. Mike Abrams.

Your question, "Were there two 'Yardbirds' aircraft in the 360th Sqdn at the same time?" The answer is negative.

After the loss of the original Yardbird, the next aircraft that was assigned to our crew was named Yardbird the Second.

After the loss of the Yardbird 2, we discontinued the painting of a bomb on the nose of the aircraft, signaling a completion of a mission, for obvious reason.

P.E. (Bart) Del Core
Lynn, MA

Information Wanted

I was wondering if you or if you knew someone that could help me to find the addresses of two of my old buddies. Neither one belongs to the outfit. They are:

Cpl. Donald J. Lau, ASN 1703503

Cpl. Lawrence C. Morton, ASN 13033801

I got a roster of all the fellows in the 360th SQ., name and ASNs until June 10, 1943. If you could use it in any way, let me know and I will send one to you. It has both enlisted and officers' names.

Charles F. Prosser
Drawer C
Hot Springs, Mont. 59845

Ed. Note: Send it along and maybe we can reconstruct the names of all the people who were assigned to the 360th. It will help us in trying to arrive at an approximate figure on how many people actually were assigned to the 303rd during the war years.

On the 10th of March 1945 (Belgium was already liberated), a B-17 G "Flying Fortress" crashed at Moorsel, which is a village in Belgium near Aalst and can be situated between the cities of Brussels and Ghent.

The plane belonged to the 303rd BG, (Triangle "C"), of the 359th Squadron, based at Molesworth, Hunts. Out of some local photographs, I couldn't find enough data concerning the fuselage number (BN or GN). The S/N was 338516 or 338519. During this crash, none of the crew died or got hurt.

For some time, I've been systematically studying all crashes in Flanders during the Second World War. Would it therefore be possible to send me some information on the particular crash in Moorsel? I would be much obliged if you could look up for me the names of the crew, the places where they lived, the plane course of flight and the reason of the crash. It would be of use to me.

Cynrik De Decker
Sasstraat 64
9310 Lede, Belgium

Duchess' Granddaughter

The "Newsletter" arrived today and the new format is quite impressive.

I noted your request for pictures of ground personnel and remembered having the enclosed. Took me a little while to dig it out and, naturally it was in the last place I looked.

The picture depicts the ground crew of T-309, the "Duchess Granddaughter" in the 359th. It was assigned to our crew brand new and served us well. Bob Akers was our pilot and I was engineer. The original crew chief was "Dutch" Dewald before he was pulled out for a special assignment somewhere else in England. The chief in the picture was named Rosenberg, I believe, and "Doc" Felkner might more correctly be Felker.

The other names are all I have. The notes on the back go back to 1944.



(l to r) Stretch, Doc Felkner, Rube and Fisher

Hope this is of some help. If possible, I would like to get the picture back. If not, it's for a good cause.

Herb Shanker
Mashpee, MA

P.S. The 1st mission for this aircraft was Merseberg, July 28, 1944. My notes say the turret motor smoked. Rosenberg doesn't sound quite right. Maybe it was Rubinstein or Rubinfeld.

Last Raid



Thanks for the most recent issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter... I look forward to receiving each issue, and in fact have made a few "long-lost" contacts through articles I've seen in them.

Possibly for your interest, I have enclosed a Polaroid print of a recently completed painting I made, based of course on actual experience. I did it as the cover of a forthcoming (44 years in coming... I should live so long!!!) book entitled "Last Raid!" which is a compilation of thoughts written on the day after my 35th mission to Berlin on Feb. 3, 1945. I have been horribly busy for the past eternity trying to raise a family (6 children) which accounts for the book constantly taking second place.

As added information, I was with the 360th Sqdn., and flew most of my raids in the B-17 in the picture, FP-U #46517. I'd appreciate hearing from you... meantime my very best wishes and thanks for a great publication.

Robert A. Hand, Sr.
(Capt. USAF/RET)
Wellington, FL 33414

If you are planning to attend the 8th AFHS (303rd) Mini-Reunion, please let President Carl Fyler know you are coming.

I Went Back!

(Continued from Page 7)

said in broken German, "Ein Herr Bradley vos Kriegerfängen April 1944, Kamen ze Heir, B-17 zwei der motoren kaputt." (I am Mr. Bradley and was a prisoner in April 1944 coming here after my B-17 with two dead engines crashed). They did not seem to understand my southern accent so I decided to leave. Rather dejectedly I returned to the car and sat looking at the building, path, stream, valley and hill and woods and I knew it was the right place!

We returned to Soltau and had a friend, CDV Politician and Munsterian soldier Heiner von Loewis, call the gasthouse to inquire if anyone there remembered our capture. Heiner von Loewis talked to the lady innkeeper who confirmed that her mother often told a story about four American flyers who came out of the sky and drank beer at her inn. She related that her mother passed away in 1984 and that she and her sister ran the gasthouse now. She invited Liz and me to the inn that evening when it reopened for business. We returned at 7:00 p.m. and met Ms. Gerda

Reiter, who was a little lady from Poland who had moved to Berlin and then to the village of Kleinhart where she worked for Ms. Ingelbrand Dreyer, the innkeeper. Ms. Reiter spoke fairly good English so she and Ms. Dreyer, who spoke no English, sat with us at the same table where I sat in 1944. Through animated gestures and simple English I stated that the room was different, the potbellied stove was gone and a bar had been added. Ms. Reiter confirmed that a potbellied stove had indeed stood in the center of the room until it was removed to allow repairs to the floor and that the bar had been added at that time. My initial feelings were proven, it was the place! I told Ms. Dreyer that we had not paid for the four beers we drank in 1944 so I gave her five German marks (about \$6.25). Through Ms. Reiter's interpretation, Ms. Dreyer said she would take that money to buy flowers for her mother's grave. Liz and I shed a few tears when she said that. Ms. Dreyer explained that she was one year old when we were there in 1944 and that many times

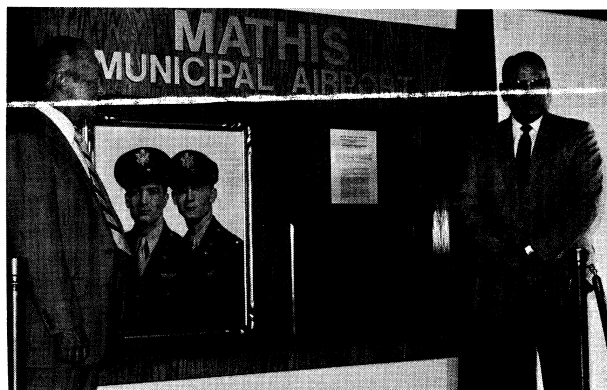
her sister mentioned getting candy from the American and what a treat it was.

It saddens me that Pace and DeMarco were not alive to share the excitement and joy of going back to our place of capture. I have vowed not to put off doing things again.

Burgemeister Emil Werner and member of the Soltau City Council hosted a dinner for the Hendersons and us at the Meyns Hotel. These very kind and warm people believe in peace and are proud of their sister city status with Coldwater, Michigan. Herr Werner invited Liz and me to visit Soltau in 1988 when the city celebrates its 600th birthday. We definitely plan to go back!

This tremendous series of coincidences and fateful events let me enjoy success in my quest. The Lord works in mysterious ways and I am so thankful I was able to see again this beautiful area that had such an important impact on my life, and this time to see it in a different light. I'm glad I WENT BACK!

Ceremony Honors Two Mathis Brothers



Col. Calhoun and San Angelo Mayor Dick Funk unveil plaque.

About 30 members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association turned out to honor Lt. Jack Mathis at a ceremony in San Angelo, Texas, practically 45 years to the day that he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously on July 12, 1943.

On July 21, 1988, a plaque honoring the memory of Jack Mathis was unveiled at Mathis Field, named in honor of the two brothers who died on bombing missions over Germany while serving with the 359th Sqdn. of the 303rd Bomb Group.

The plaque that now graces the Mathis Field terminal entryway was first placed in a Tucson, Arizona, airbase hospital to memorialize Mathis when the 303rd Bomb Group

was reactivated as a wing at David Monthan AFB in the 1950s.

Tom Harrelson, a member of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, found the plaque at the hospital and started negotiations with the base commander to have it moved to Mathis Field in San Angelo. After further negotiations with John Schwab, the airport manager, it was moved to the hometown of the Mathis brothers and to the airport which bears their name.

Dedication speaker for the ceremony was Ross McSwain, Chairman of the Tom Green County Historical Commission.

Other speakers included: San Angelo Mayor Dick Funk; Col. William R. Calhoun, Har-

old A. Susskind and Wilbur "Bud" Klint from the 303rd Bomb Group; John Schwab, and Neal Bradshaw, Chairman, Airport Board.

Calhoun, who was commander of the 359th Sqdn., said the Mathis brothers were "good men" who kept up the morale of the unit. Calhoun was on the same mission and watched Mark Mathis' B-17, named **FDR**, go down in the North Sea after German fighter planes shot it to pieces.

"Although it's been 45 years since they were killed, it seems like yesterday," said Calhoun. "The night before Jack was killed, we were sitting around in my quarters wondering what we would do

after the war. Mark and Jack said they were coming back to San Angelo. You can be proud of your two native sons and the feeling they had about their community."

McSwain, who dedicated the memorial, said, "The heroism of the Mathis boys provided inspiration to thousands of airmen who followed them into the skies over war-torn Germany. World War II was over several generations ago, but heroic deeds like those of Jack Mathis and his comrades will always remain strong in our memory."

Ed. Note: Other stories on the Mathis brothers appeared in the March and July 1987 issues of the newsletter.



A/C # 124619. S for Sugar of 427th Bomb Sqdn. on bomb run over Germany. Fred Kuhn was crew chief.

Ken J. Kurtenbach — *A Man of Confidence*

Continued from May Issue

Kurtenbach as Man of Confidence for his POW Camp tells how they had to cover the escapes of his fellow POWs.

The problem arose when, unknown perhaps to the leadership, the man or men had been recaptured perhaps the same night as the escape or within a day or two of escape. I was always very fortunate to have the confidence and help primarily of the French. Many of these prisoners worked in the *vorlager*, or front portion of the camp, in the offices, as they had for a long period of time. They worked there to replace Germans who were utilized at the various fronts. These men would send a message to me that so-and-so had been caught and were either being brought into camp within a short time, or that they were already in the "cooler" or prison within the camp.

When this information was received, it was a simple matter to allow the Germans to truly discover an escape had been made and thus the appearance of an "honest" count was allowed to happen.

Generally the men so recaptured were given sentences of from ten to thirty days in the "cooler" and every effort was made to supplement their food by smuggling food to them through an exterior window or by coercing foreign workers into carrying food to them. Bribing might be a better word than coercion.

Novel escapes were made at 7-A formulated by the fertile minds of both British and American soldiers. One escape was made by three men dressed in Russian prisoner clothing. They simply bartered with the Russians for clothing, a pail of whitewash and a brush, and they assiduously painted their way up the center camp street that separated the nationalities and, when they reached the gate, the guard helpfully opened the gate and they continued their centerline out into the middle of the road passing by in front. These three British lads then dropped their implements and took off in double time. It was only a few hours before their recapture, but they were happy souls at having succeeded in outwitting the guards.

Another escape that I witnessed was composed of a band of several prisoners, again in bartered Russian clothing, who took a ladder, hammers and pieces of barbed wire, and they worked for some time crossing and recrossing the barbed wire enclosure very carefully pretending to repair wire that had become loosened from the posts. They continued in these endeavors until close to rollcall time in the evening, at which point they were on the outside of the wire. The guards had seen

them for such a long time that they no longer paid a great deal of attention to them. At a signal they scampered off into the woods near the camp. They, too, were returned over the next several days.

Another tale of an escapee concerns an American soldier who still had his g.i. shoes. He made his way carefully at night, resting during the days, until he was well south of Munich and very near the Swiss frontier. Finally he started walking during the day in his civilian clothes that had been made by artisans within the camp, or perhaps bartered for. When crossing a stream one day he noticed a small child playing by the stream as he crossed a wooden bridge. He noticed the child looked at him and immediately scampered for home. Down the road a distance he was suddenly brought to a halt by armed constabulary. They later informed him the child had run to his mother and told her that he saw a man cross the old bridge but he didn't make any noise. The mother knew at once it had to be a foreigner as Germans did not have rubber heels on their shoes as all rubber had long gone for the war effort. She notified the authorities at once and another escapee was brought back to the camp.

Another group of men, perhaps three or four, successfully negotiated their way to the Swiss border. There were guards patrolling the border on the German side, but after some time they located a way through where they were not seen. It was after dark and they were concerned that people living on the Swiss side could perhaps be sympathizers with the Germans, so they continued walking all that night so they would be deep into Switzerland before stopping. The next morning they came into a small village and went into the *gasthaus* where they announced to one and all that they were escaped Americans and willing to be interned in Switzerland for the balance of the war. An older gentleman listened to their story, left the *gasthaus* and returned with a contingent of German soldiers. He thereupon showed the shocked soldiers a map and how they had indeed crossed the frontier, but in their march through the night they had recrossed the frontier back into Germany as the border of Switzerland jutted out into the Bavarian countryside.

In the first part of October 1943 the Kommandant informed me that the American Air Corps prisoners, now numbering about 1500, would be transferred to a wonderful new camp with all the amenities, that it would be exclusively for American non-commissioned officers who were members of the Air Corps, and that the move would be made soon.

As the final day for entrainment approached I was informed that

there was an adequate supply of Red Cross parcels that I could choose to take with the group, or I could leave them for the other prisoners. I agonized over this necessary decision. Finally after sounding out the opinions of those about me, I decided that we would take all but two weeks supply of parcels on the train with us to the new camp, deep in Austria, at Krems-Gneixendorf. My reasoning was that Stalag 7-A was well known to the Swiss Legation, acting as the Protecting Power, and that parcels came in a regular flow at that time. On the other hand, 17-B was unknown to the Swiss Legation, it could be a very long time before they were made aware of our existence at that camp, an even longer time before transportation was made available by the Germans on their overworked rail lines. When we left 7-A there were not a few catcalls and remarks made by those left behind.

As events proved out later, the decision to take the parcels had been the correct one. 7-A continued to receive parcels but 17-B went without any additional parcels for about five months. I honestly feel that had this decision not been made, we very well could have lost some men to malnutrition and disease as we had only one parcel per month for that time and were completely out for about two months before new parcels arrived. That did not lessen my personal anguish over whether the right decision had been made or not.

In any event, either two or three American Air Corps men wished to remain behind, believing that escape would be easier after we had moved out of camp. They obtained either two or three volunteers from the Russian contingent to trade places with them. We were made aware of this fact, introduced to the substitutes, and now our only problem was the photo checks made of each man as they passed single-file through the gate. This was handled by either myself or a person in the know approaching the two or three guards making the check and urgently pressing questions upon them and demanding an immediate answer. Occa-

sionally we would have a couple of men stage a fight nearby thus drawing their attention from the person at hand. In the confusion the substitute would move through the gate and out into the large band of men being held nearby. I don't believe we ever had a time when this ruse was not successful. So the chronology is maintained, I will drop the three Russians until later.

After the customary boxcar ride, we arrived about the middle of October 1943 at Krems, Austria, located about 50 miles upstream on the Danube River from Vienna.

The camp lay on top of a hillside overlooking the Danube and the way to the camp was all uphill. We had many wounded and sick men and the guards were brutal in forcing the men up the hill. Many collapsed and were unable to continue. With the aid of a Luftwaffe Captain we commandeered a truck and two guards as drivers and picked up some by the wayside and patrolled the hill most of the day in an effort to see that those who could not make the march were spared further injury.

There were initially 18 barracks, capable of holding 300 men to a complete barracks, with 150 men in each end and the wash facilities located in the center. The American compounds, four barracks to each compound, were at the far eastern end of the camp, completely isolated by guard towers from the balance of the camp. Gone were the days of nationalities intermingling.

By evening my staff and myself had determined that we were in dire straits as these barracks had just been vacated by the Russians and the barracks with their 12-man wooden bunks were alive with fleas and lice. The second day I persuaded the Luftwaffe officers, our first experience with them, to send guards with the men and to allow us to cut willow branches and bind them together as brooms for sweeping the barracks. They also provided a strong lye soap and the men knocked the bunks apart, cleaned them, and then rebuilt them. Within a few days the danger of flak typhus, while not totally eliminated, was in a somewhat controlled status. **To Be Continued**



Ground Crew of Holy Mackerel on March 10, 1943. Where are they now?

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - in - Flight

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New P.X. Item

Pictured above is a new 303rd Bomb Group P.X. item. It's a blue cap, one size fits all, with the 8th Air Force emblem mounted on a white back-ground. Cost is \$5.50 each with the same minimum total on Bob Kidd's sheet of \$20.00. For postage and handling when cost is less than \$20.00, add \$2.50.

The Editor's Scratchpad

"The May issue of the newsletter was great! But... it won't fit into my looseleaf book," was the familiar phrase I read in a lot of your letters. I'm going to do this issue in the same format without a four color cover. After you have seen two issues of this format and you still want me to go back to the original format, let me know. It's your newsletter!

I was happy to read from your letters that quite a few of you are looking forward to the next reunion in Norfolk. From all indications it looks like it will be one of the best, both in attendance and content.

One of the items that should be voted upon at the next general membership meeting is the idea of holding an annual reunion in the future. From the mail that I have received, quite a few of you are for it. But most of you are for a separate reunion, not one in conjunction with the 8th AFHS annual reunions.

Evidently the idea of designing a 303rd certificate and distributing it at the next reunion was not a popular one since I received no inputs for its content. The idea of a super newsletter for the reunion was about as popular as the certificate. So both ideas are going on the back burner.

Walt Mayer and his Reunion Committee have come up with a smashing agenda for the Norfolk reunion. Information on it is carried in other parts of this newsletter. I think we may top the 850 we had for the Seattle get-together.

I'm really pleased at the success of the red dots in reminding you that your dues are overdue. What concerns me the most is the number of newsletters I got back because you moved without sending us a notice. Because of its weight, it costs us \$1.78 to get back each copy of the May issue.

As you read this I hope to be revisiting Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Munich, but this time I'll be on the ground enjoying the sights and talking to the German people.

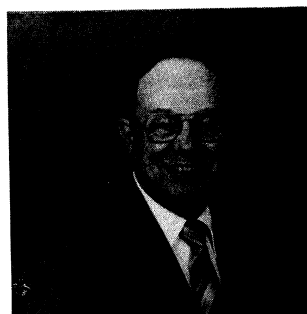
Flash: ...To comply with the directive to shave expenses, I am limiting the number of pages in this issue to 12 — I was planning on 16 — and going back to a non-coated stock paper. In future issues we will go back to the 8½ x 11 inch format but with the possibility of going to 20 pages. You will have to admit that the May issue was one fine newsletter — probably the best looking bomb group newsletter in the U.S. Another change will be the insertion of a one page PX order slip. This will save you from having to cut up the newsletter in ordering an item from the PX. Bob Kidd has asked me to pass on his thanks for your orders which came in as a result of his special letter.

Many thanks for your letters. They make this newsletter interesting and informative. Please keep them coming.



There's always action on the Waterside Promenade in Norfolk-by-the-Sea. The beautiful Omni International Hotel, headquarters for the 303rd Reunion '89 appears in the background.

In Memoriam



C/M Sgt. Marvin L. Hoke (358th Sq.) Marvin began his military service as an aerial gunner, air communications specialist in 1943. He served with the 303rd B.G., 358th Sq., completing 35 combat missions,

1944-45. He added to his combat service on B-29s in Korea, flying 16 missions. In 1951 he was assigned and served on the Joint Military Mission in Thailand. He served with the Airway and Communication Service, Strategic Air Service, USAS Security Service and Air Force Headquarters Frequency Management Group until retirement in 1971. Marvin died following complications from his second heart by-pass operation at Walter Reed Hospital. He is survived by his wife Helen. Internment was at the Fort Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

J. Robert Cole (360th Sq.) passed away in Las Vegas, Nevada on May 23, 1988. He is survived by his wife Selma.

427th Bomb Sqdn., 303rd Bomb Group, Molesworth 1945. The personnel lined up in front of the B-17 *City of Albuquerque* were previously members of the 38th Recon. Sqdn. of the 19th Bomb Group stationed in Albuquerque in June 1941 and the same squadron that landed at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 during the Japanese attack that Sunday morning. The 38th were on their way to the Philippines. Most of the planes were damaged and the ground personnel who were two days at sea returned to the mainland and proceeded to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho where they became the 427th Sqdn., 303rd Bomb Group. Other elements of the famous 19th who had preceded the 38ths by several months were the 30th, 32nd, 93rd and other support groups who were in the Philippines during the early days of the Pacific War and many were lost during this phase of the war. E.J. Thorson who was a member of the 19th and later the 303rd reminds us that the 19th Bombardment Association is holding a reunion on Sept. 5-10 at the Clarion Hotel, 200 South 4th St., St. Louis, MO 63102. The dog in the photo is Recon.



Address Changes

Flowers, Selwyn D. (Pappy), 1409 Forman, La Marque, TX 77568
 McLaughlin, Jesse R. (427), No Forwarding Address
 Bech, G. Neil Jr. (359), 3544 Banyan St., Santa Rosa, CA 95403-1528
 Whitaker, James E. (427), 1750 Jamaica Way #131, Punta Gorda, FL 33950
 Ferguson, Jack D. (427), No Forwarding Address
 Barder, Emmett R. (360), 1717 Parkshore Dr. #1103, St. Paul, MN 55112-3917
 Balcomb, Clayton B. (360), 1070 E. Washington #8, Escondido, CA 92025-3253
 Hoida, Donald J. (427), 255 Traders Pt. Ln., Green Bay, WI 54302
 Griffith, Elwood A., 4961 Jupiter Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33905
 Roche, William J. (360), 30210 Wolf Rd, Bay Village, OH 44140
 Yonkman, Robert J. (359), 1538 W. Ridge St., Marquette, MI 49855
 Gravrock, Howard C., Rev. (360), 5510 70 St. W., Minneapolis, MN 55435
 Riley, Milton S. (359), 14003 George Rd., San Antonio, TX 78231
 Webster, Don (427), 141 Holland Rd. Ormond Beach, FL 32074
 McDonald, Billy L., P.O. Box 244, Wamego, KS 66547
 Prendergast, Bert T. (359), 4436 N. Parkview Dr., Matthews, NC 28015-7348
 DeGroat, Robert B., 9 Merry Rd., Newark, DE 19713
 Gerstel, Charles L., 468 Hemingway Terr., Ft. Pierce, FL 34982
 Ririe, Mrs. Peggy L., 1001 Carroll Pkwy., Apt. 317, Frederick, MD 21701
 Brian, Carville J., 710 Town Center Drive, Joppatown, MD 21085
 Leonard, Joseph F., 13 Glen Street, Wappinger Falls, NY 12590
 Haney, James E., 1746 S. 32nd, Kansas City, KS 66106
 Bush, Duane A., 28404 Las Palmas Cir. SE, Bonita Springs, FL 33923
 Moessner, Raymond J., 141 Monks Road, Saxonburg, PA 16056

New Associate Member

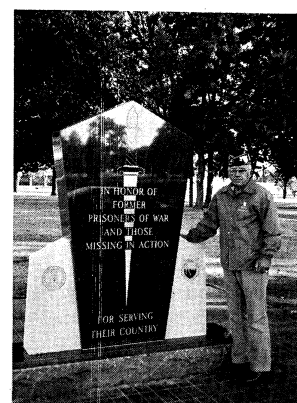
O'Connor, Neal W., 10 Constitution Hill East, Princeton, NJ 08540
 Tel. (609) 921-9159, Wife: Nancy T.

First Monument Dedicated At An Air Force Installation

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama was the site of the dedication of the first monument on an Air Force installation in honor of Ex Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action.

General Truman Spangrud, Commander of Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base spoke at the dedication ceremony. He described the honorees as heroes who would always be remembered for their brave deeds, their valor and their service.

The black granite monument was presented to the Air Force as a gift from the Exchange Club of Montgomery. Colonel Clyde W. Bradley, Jr. a POW during WWII, served as the Chairman of the National Defense Day Program for the Exchange Club. He conceived the idea for the monument as a lasting tribute



to Ex POWs and MIAs.

Mayor Emory Folmar, Mayor of Montgomery, saluted the Ex POWs and families of MIAs in attendance at the ceremony, stating that a grateful nation remembered their sacrifices.

Pictured is the monument with Colonel Bradley alongside. The monument is located in the Air Park at Maxwell AFB.

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