

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

August, 1999

303RD'S STEVENS AND GOBRECHT HONORED AT HERITAGE MUSEUM'S ANNIVERSARY GALA

Kermit D. Stevens, the 303rd Bomb Group's longest serving commander at Molesworth, and Harry D. Gobrecht, the Association's incumbent president and longtime historian, were honored during the third anniversary celebrations of the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum near Savannah, Georgia.

Col. Stevens was recognized at the unveiling of the museum's new *Flight of Discovery* "touch screen" exhibit which traces the history of flight from balloons to space travel. He founded the exhibit in honor of his late wife, Marion Bass Stevens.

In his address, Col. Stevens acknowledged the crucial importance of education and his wife's shared dedication to youth. The retired Air Force veteran, accompanied by his two daughters, drew a standing ovation for his remarks.

The exhibit, designed and built by the Heritage Museum's Jeffrey Bilderback, is the first of a series of interactive stations to be installed in the galleries. The goal is to expand the museum's interactive and educational scope with a vastly improved computer system.

Lt. Col. Gobrecht was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross for action over Germany on 22 January 1945. In the certificate accompanying the award, he was cited "for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight."

While at the controls of the B-17 *Emma* on a mission to bomb a synthetic oil refinery at Sterkrade, Germany, Gobrecht's aircraft came under heavy ground fire. An engine was knocked out and the electrical system was destroyed. After he made a successful landing at Molesworth, the crew counted over 100 flak holes in the aircraft.

Gobrecht explained the 54-year delay in receiving the award, "My squadron leader, who was responsible for

processing the recommendation, got shot down and was made a prisoner of war. The thing was forgotten, and then I saw him at a reunion three years ago and he said he was going to resubmit."

The long delayed recommendation was made by 358th Squadron Commander Glynn F. Shumake and 303rd Bomb Group Air Executive Edgar E. Snyder. After a number of reviews, the Air Force finally approved.

Aside from the two 303rd Bomb Group veterans, the only other retired Air Force officer honored during the Heritage Museum's Third Anniversary observance was Lt. Gen. E. G. "Buck" Shuler. He was credited by the 303rd's Maj. Gen. Lewis E. Lyle for bringing the museum "from the dream stage to reality through sheer hard work and initiative."

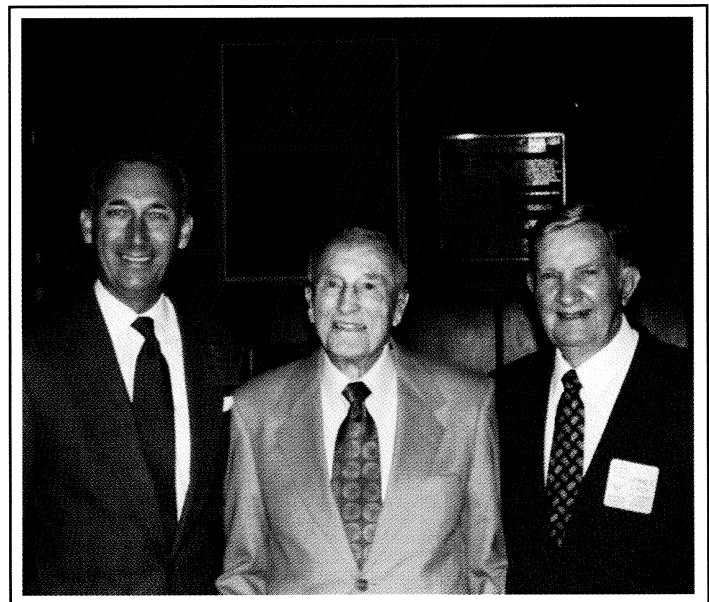
During the anniversary celebrations, which took place in the first weekend in May, the museum hosted thousands of visitors and friends. For three years, it has been gaining ground as one of the most respected aviation history museums in the world, with new high-tech exhibits, acclaimed art and an ability to portray the human side of men and women at war.

Dr. Barry Buxton, Heritage Museum President and CEO, said their stories are at the heart of the museum—a portrayal of values in action.

With attendance up and an ambitious goal of educating hundreds of thousands of new visitors each year about the heritage and values of Eighth Air Force veterans, the future is bright.



THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS is pinned on Harry Gobrecht by Lew Lyle, the 303rd Bomb Group Association's Senior Advisor, while Barbara Gobrecht looks on in the Lewis E. Lyle Rotunda of the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum.



KERMIT D. STEVENS, donor of the new Muriel Stevens Computer Kiosk Exhibit, is flanked by Barry M. Buxton, Heritage Museum President, and Lewis E. Lyle, who first envisioned the Museum.



303RD BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

"HELL'S ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

Editor — Eddie Deerfield

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

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

Association Regular Members include persons assigned or attached to the 303rd Bombardment Group (H), from its 1942 activation in Boise, ID, throughout its war years at Station 107 Molesworth, England, to its 1945 deactivation in Casablanca. Spouses, children & grandchildren of regular members may become Family Members. All other persons, interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H), and in furthering the aims of the Association may, with approval at a membership meeting, become non-voting "Friends of the 303rd" Associate Members.

Membership years begin on the 1st day of January. Our *Hell's Angels Newsletter* will only be sent to members whose dues payment are current. Annual dues are \$10 and \$15 for foreign addresses.

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Editor Emeritus: Hal Susskind

OFFICERS 303RD BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION

President

Harry D. Gobrecht (Barbara)
505 Via Deseo
San Clemente, CA 92672-2462
TEL: (949) 361-2662 FAX: (949) 361-1669
EM: pilot8thaf@aol.com

Vice President – Administration

William J. "Bill" Roche (Doris)
1428 Gleneagles Drive
Venice, FL 34292-4206
TEL: (941) 485-4073
EM: dbroche2@aol.com

Vice President – Reunions (1999)

Edgar C. "Ed" Miller (Jill)
422 S. Walnut Avenue
Temple, OK 73568-0219
TEL: (580) 342-5119
EM: edmiller@pldi.net

Secretary

Richard R. Johnson (Marjorie)
5901 Joe Road
Deale, MD 20751-9739
TEL: (410) 867-0597
EM: fortdriver@aol.com

Treasurer

Jack P. Rencher
P.O. Box 7927
Boise, ID 83707-1927
TEL: (208) 343-2265
BSNS: 1-800-635-8930
EM: jprencher@aol.com

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

358th Bomb Sq. Representative

Walter J. "Walt" Mayer
W. 14605 Taylor Road
Cheney, WA 99004-9425
TEL: (520) 344-6961

359th Bomb Sq. Representative

William E. "Bill" Eisenhart (Mary)
1734 72nd Avenue NE
St. Petersburg, FL 33702-4712
TEL: (813) 526-5088
EM: EISENCOL@aol.com

360th Bomb Sq. Representative

Richard "Spider" Smith (Betty)
790 Crenshaw Drive
Hemet, CA 92543-8044
TEL: (909) 652-4793
EM spider@ivic.net

358th BS Alternate Rep

William H. Simpkins (Evelyn)
348 S. Cologne Ave., Box 217
Cologne, NJ 08213-0217
TEL: (609) 965-2871

359th BS Alternate Rep

Eugene E. Girman (Corlis)
8420 Parrish Place
Highland, IN 46322-1441
TEL: (219) 838-5882
EM: gcgirman@aol.com

360th BS Alternate Rep

William Eason
RR#1 Box 404
Vincent, Ohio 45-784-9742
TEL: (740) 989-2326
EM: weason@speed1.net

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

427th Bomb Sq. Representative

Fred E. Reichel
553 Mallard Street
Rochester Hills, MI 48309-3431
TEL: (248) 852-2980

Headquarters & Supporting Units

444th Air Depot Representative

Henry G. Johansen
8989 E. Escalante, Site #78
Tucson, AZ 85730-2899
TEL: (602) 886-6093

Widow Member's Representative

Joanna M. Tressler
Rd #1, Box 373-K
Northumberland, PA 17857-9766
TEL: (717) 473-3816

427th BS Alternate Rep

Albert "Al" L. Dussliere (Lorene)
1901 5th Street
East Moline, IL 61244-2421
TEL: (309) 755-5339
EM: ald@derbytech.com

Hdqs & Supporting Units

444th AD Alternate Rep

Maurice J. Paulk (Opal)
205 W. 12th
Wood River, NE 68883-9164
TEL: (308) 583-2583
EM: mjpmtman@kdsi.net

Associate Members Represent.

Lance Stoner
11422 W. 70th Street
Shawnee, KS 66203-4026
TEL: (913) 268-3944
EM: lstoner@gvi.net

APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Hell's Angels Newsletter Editor

Eddie Deerfield (Mary Lee)
3522 Landmark Trail
Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016
TEL: (727) 787-0332
EM: ED303fsra@aol.com

Membership & Roster Mgmt Chairman

Edgar C. "Ed" Miller (Jill)
422 S. Walnut Avenue
Temple, OK 73568-0219
TEL: (580) 342-5119
EM: edmiller@pldi.net

PX Administrator

Charles R. Sykes (Vicki)
16281 N. 31st Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85023-3008
TEL: (602) 993-8015
EM: PX303@aol.com

Computer Data Base Committee Chmn

Edward W. Gardner, Jr. (Sue)
5764 Lakeview Drive
Interlochen, MI 49643-0246
TEL: (616) 276-7126
EM: ewg303nav@aol.com

Historian

8th AF Historial Society Liaison

M8thAFH Museum Liaison

Harry D. Gobrecht (Barbara)
505 Via Deseo
San Clemente, CA 92672-2462
TEL: (949) 361-2662 FAX (949) 361-1669
EM: pilot8thaf@aol.com

Webmaster [303BGA.com]

Gary Moncur (Susan)
4483 Palmer Drive
West Valley City, UT 84120-5052
TEL: (801) 969-7639
EM: glm@xmission.com

United Kingdom Representatives

Robin & Sue Beeby
40 St. Catherine's Road
Kettering, Northants, England NN15 5EN
TEL: USA 011-44-1536-516-423
TEL: U K 1536-516-423
EM: RJBeeby@aol.com

Group Advisor

Lewis E. "Lew" Lyle (Betty)
207 Ridge One
Hot Springs, AR 71901-9118
TEL: (501) 321-1956

By-Laws Committee Chairman

William S. McLeod, Jr. (Alice)
1676 West Mesa
Fresno, CA 93711-1944
TEL: (559) 439-8922

Audit Committee Chairman

Frank C. DeCicco, Jr. (Jean)
6 Kitty Hawk West
Richmond, TX 77469-9710
TEL: (281) 341-5004

Mission Reports Administrator

Jack Rencher (Louise)
2901 Hill Road (POB 7927)
Boise, ID 83707-1927
TEL: (208) 343-2265
BSNS: 1-800-635-8930
EM: jprencher@aol.com

Past Presidents Advisory

Committee Chairman

Nominating, Awards &

Memorials, Press Secretary

Harold "Hal" Susskind (Rae)
2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, TX 78704-2716
TEL: (512) 441-6475
EM: susskind@webtv.net

Budget & Ways & Means

William "Bill" J. Roche (Doris)
1428 Gleneagles Drive
Venice, FL 34292-4306
TEL: 941-867-0597
EM: dbroche2@aol.com

RAF Molesworth England, Rep

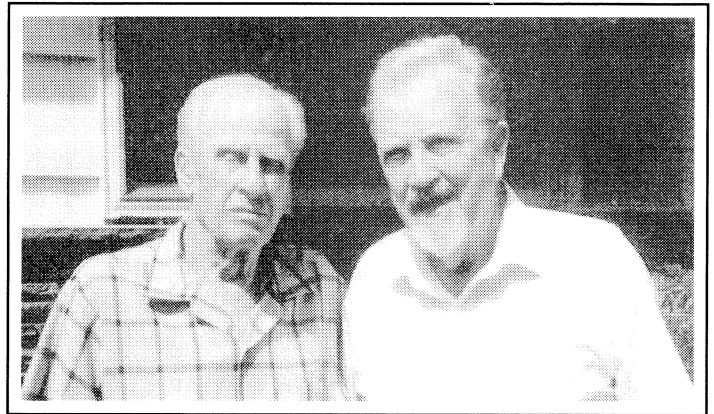
Brian S. McGuire (Dina)
JAC-USEUCOM
PSC 46 Box 404 APO AE 09469
TEL: USA 011-44-1480-394274
TEL: JAC 011-44-1480-842626
EM: mcguire@betac.com

CHAPLAIN - CATHOLIC

Bishop Rene H. Gracida, 4126 Ocean Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78411-1224

CHAPLAINS - PROTESTANT

Rev. Everett A. Dasher (Helen), Rt#4 Box 425, Saluda, SC 29138-9159
Rev. Warren L. Hedrick (Alma), 3 Andrew Avenue, Sanford, ME 04073-3149
Rev. Robert L. Johnson (Mary), 2208 W. Granite St., Siloam Springs, AR 72761



THE LONG VOYAGE HOME TO RECOVERY—After six months near death at the 65th General Hospital in England, Sgt. Buske leaves by stretcher for air evacuation to the US for further treatment. Capt. Ivan Brown, one of his attending surgeons, stands at his side. Some 54 years later, a healthy George Buske welcomes Dr. Brown to the home that Buske built himself in Rochester, NY.

THE SAVING OF SERGEANT BUSKE—303RD BOMB GROUP HERO'S AMAZING SURVIVAL

By Ivan W. Brown, Jr. MD

(Excerpted from his article in the North Carolina Medical Journal)

In the hours before dawn on December 20, 1943, it was bitter cold at the US 8th Air Force base at Molesworth, England. The crew of a B-17 bomber named *Jersey Bounce* hardly needed the 4 a.m. wake-up call of the Charge of Quarters.

Like most bomber crews anticipating the next day's mission over enemy territory, their sleep was easily interrupted. The sound of the CQ's Jeep pulling up to their tarpapered hut had already awakened them.

Twenty-two year old Sgt. George W. Buske, a tailgunner from Rochester, NY, had perhaps more reason to be apprehensive than the others. Just five months earlier, a 20mm exploding shell fired by an attacking German fighter plane had caused deep wounds to his left hip. For that mission he had been awarded his first Purple Heart, another Oak Leaf Cluster for his Air Medal, and the Silver Star for conspicuous bravery. After 45 days in the hospital, he had finally returned to full duty.

Now, after a breakfast of fresh eggs at the mess hut—a treat compared to the powdered variety served on non-mission days—he and his crewmates, including radio operator T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler from Livonia, NY,

went to the pre-mission briefing. Their day's mission was to be a return bombing raid on Bremen, Germany. They had flown to Bremen twice earlier that week. On those raids, their 303rd Bomb Group had encountered only moderate anti-aircraft fire, a few German fighter planes, and lost no bombers. Little did they realize how different the forthcoming mission would be.

Just after dawn, the *Jersey Bounce*, with Capt. Merle R. Hungerford, Jr., from El Paso, TX, at the controls, took off with its heavy bomb load. Their group's slow circling climb to altitude and rendezvous with other bomb groups took nearly two hours. It was after 10 a.m. when the stream of more than 500 bombers left British air space for Germany. Approaching the Dutch coast, they encountered the first of their unexpected problems: a strong head wind, which caused some planes to reach the target off course and a half-hour late. At 26,000 feet, the assigned bombing altitude, the air temperature was below -50F. Heavy condensation trails left by the bomb engines spread like white

clouds in which large numbers of German fighter planes could hide to launch their attacks unseen. And unlike their last Bremen visit, there was intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire as they approached the target.

Suddenly, an anti-aircraft shell burst knocked out the *Jersey Bounce's* No. 1 engine. Moments later, just after the bombardier called out "bombs away," another shell knocked out the No. 4 engine, leaving its propeller, which could not be feathered, windmilling out of control. On only two engines and losing altitude and speed, the crippled *Jersey Bounce* fell out of formation. It was a sitting duck and German fighters lined up to shoot it down.

Capt. Hungerford and his copilot struggled to maintain altitude and keep the plane on course for home. The waist, turret, and tailgunners kept up defensive fire to ward off the fighter attacks. Their 50-caliber guns knocked down four German fighters, but others followed them out over the North Sea with relentless attacks, firing machine gun bullets and exploding 20mm shells into the stricken plane. One shell sent fragments into the legs and feet of T/Sgt. Vosler. Then a machine gun bullet passed completely through the upper abdomen of Sgt. Buske. Almost simultane-

ously, a 20mm shell exploding in front of Buske's waist, blew his chest and abdomen open and propelled him backward from his tailgunner's seat into the fuselage.

The German fighters, convinced their prey was about to crash into the sea, broke off and turned back toward Germany.

By this time, the *Jersey Bounce* was just above the waves and fast running out of fuel. Out of gas but within sight of the East Anglian coast the *Jersey Bounce* finally crashed into the frigid North Sea.

Fortunately, their crash had been spotted by a Norwegian coaster, which picked them up and transferred them to a fast E-boat of the British Sea Rescue Command.

T/Sgt. Vosler, who had suffered multiple wounds, was sent to a Northampton hospital and later to the States for a long hospitalization. Sgt. Buske, barely alive and in profound shock from blood loss and exposure, was rushed to the local Great Yarmouth Hospital. After several blood transfusions and treatment for shock and hypothermia, he underwent emergency surgery.

Because of his extremely critical condition, the British surgeons could only control the bleeding from his

(Continued on Page 4)

(BUSKE—From Page 3)

torn liver, reattach the disrupted diaphragm, and close the sucking wound of the right chest. The left chest wound was dusted with sulfanilamide and packed open. The large abdominal wound was packed with gauze and also left open.

His condition, though still critical, stabilized enough to permit transfer to the nearest US Army hospital; the 231st Station hospital at Botesdale, Suffolk.

When the US Army's 65th General Hospital replaced the 231st station hospital at Botesdale in February 1944, Buske was on a downhill course because of malnutrition and the repeated complications of his formidable injuries. He was largely unresponsive and his condition appeared terminal. Yet, his resilience and stamina in those critical days were remarkable. Often, as a nurse changed his position, he would arouse from his semicomatose state and exclaim "Damn it, can't anybody get any sleep around here?" then lapse back into coma.

His weight fell to 88 pounds. To improve his nutrition, and to provide a source of protein, daily units of reconstituted dried human plasma were added to his intravenous fluids.

Finally in March, three months after he was wounded, the decreasing drainage from his large abdominal fistula allowed him to retain some fluids and nutrients taken by mouth. His nutrition was further improved by egg nog made with fresh eggs—a rare commodity in wartime Britain—brought to him by the vicar of the local Anglican church. His abdominal and lower chest wounds gradually healed. In May, he underwent further operations to close his wounds, including skin grafts to cover the still unhealed wounds of his right thigh.

By mid-June 1944, he was strong enough to be evacuated by plane back to the states for further treatment. The 65th General Hospital surgeons who treated him marveled at his recovery up to that point, but we feared that his multiple severe injuries would lead to future medical problems,

even limit his lifespan.

He arrived in the US on June 24, 1944, and was immediately admitted to the Army's Halloran General Hospital on Staten Island. He stayed there for four months of further convalescence and rehabilitation. Then, after a three-week furlough home in November 1944, he requested, and amazingly enough, was returned to active duty at Langley Field, Virginia. He was not discharged from the Air Force until September 3, 1945.

For 30 years after his discharge from the Air Force, Buske was employed as a yard foreman at a lumber company. He retired in 1978. Since the war, he has had two physical reminders of his near fatal 1943 wounds. In 1952, he developed abdominal pain and fever that led to the surgical removal of shell fragments and the machine gun bullet. In 1988, he underwent successful coronary artery bypass surgery. Afterward, his cardiac surgeon presented him with a souvenir of the operation: an encrusted shell fragment the surgeon had found near his heart.

George W. Buske and Eleanor, his wife of 45 years, still live happily in Rochester, NY. They take great pleasure in their family, including their four grandchildren. In spite of all the past odds against his recovery and survival, this remarkable, twice wounded, and highly decorated Air Force veteran, now 78, continues to enjoy good health.

(Dr. Brown is a former Professor of Surgery at Duke University, Durham, NC. A retired cardiovascular surgeon, he was a captain on the surgical service of the 65th General Hospital, a Duke Army Reserve Unit. He and his colleagues served as the principal medical personnel for casualties of the 8th Air Force as well as thousands of Army casualties from the war.)

EDITOR'S NOTE—It was for this mission that T/Sgt Forrest L. Vosler, whose heroic story has been told often in the Hell's Angels Newsletter, was awarded the Medal of Honor.



A MAN AND HIS MODEL—Peter Carr's downsized replica of one of the 303rd's most famous B-17's is faithful to the original, even including patches which covered the scars of battle damage.

The Return of *Knockout Dropper* AN ENGLISHMAN'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE 303RD'S FAMED FLYING FORTRESS

Peter Carr of Newport Pagnell, England, first became interested in the B-17 during the war years, and began building models of the Flying Fortress soon after. When he acquired a copy of a booklet on the first 300 missions of the Hell's Angels, he began to focus on the 303rd Bomb Group's *Knockout Dropper*.

"Originally," he wrote, "I was interested in building a model of *Hell's Angels*, itself, which I did out of wood, plastic kits being in the future, but the wood model was terrible. In the 303rd Bomb Group's 300-mission journal, there was a picture of *Knockout Dropper* which lit the spark, as it were, why I don't know.

"Soon after, with her in mind, I obtained a photograph from the U.S. War Department of the Dropper running up her engines either before or after a mission. Steadily, over the years, I gathered information on B-17's.

"A few years ago, the Monogram kit company produced the "G" version which I built. When they followed up with an "F" version, I dug back into my files for the *Knockout Dropper* data. I contacted Harry Gobrecht, the 303rd's historian, and Burford Pafford, the Dropper's crew chief, and they both supplied a wealth of detail.

"As you can see in the photograph, the number one engine is missing. I hope to build an 'engine change' diorama using the model as soon as my health improves."

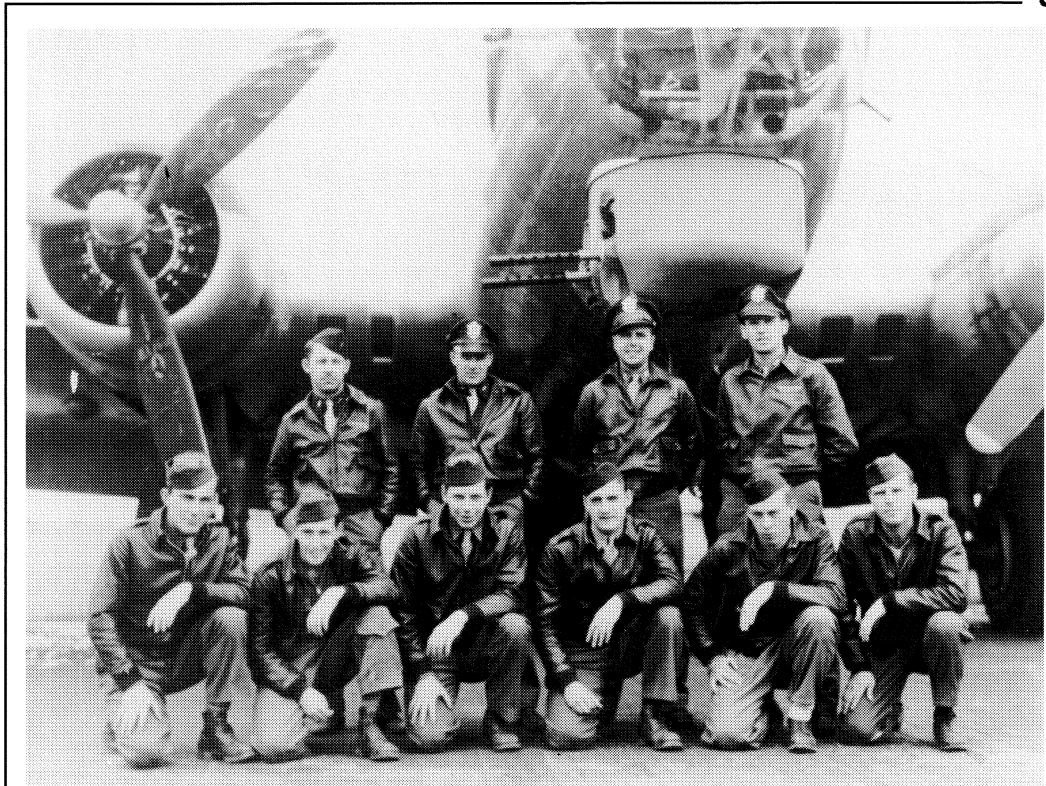
In his letter, Peter Carr expressed concern that his models "would be slung in a trash bin" after his death. Robin Beeby, the 303rd's representative in England, and Brian McGuire of the Joint Analysis Center at Molesworth have been informed of his concern, and, hopefully, Peter Carr's life work in B-17 craftsmanship will survive.

Knockout Dropper completed 50 missions on 16 November 1943, the first B-17 in the 8th Air Force to reach this goal. It surpassed its own record when it reached the 75-mission mark on 27 March 1944, and was returned to the US. By then, it had flown 675 combat hours and dropped some 750 tons of bombs.

**THE HARRY COOK CREW,
BOUND FOR DISASTER ,
SEEN A MONTH BEFORE
THE FATAL BOMB RUN ON
WIESBADEN 15 AUG 1944**

**Standing (l-to-r): Bombar-
dier W. G. Warmuth (POW),
Navigator R. E. Page (POW),
CoPilot F. H. Mason (POW),
Pilot H. S. Cook, (Killed).**

**Kneeling (l-to-r): Gunner W.
W. Duggan (not aboard),
Radio Operator F. H. Howell
(POW), Ball Turret Gunner
R. F. Eaglehouse (POW),
Gunner C. H. Fisher (not
aboard), Engineer J. E.
Slight (Killed), Tailgunner
J. L. Smalley (POW). Jesse
Joyce (not shown) flew as a
replacement gunner and
was the third Cook crew
member killed in action on
the Wiesbaden mission.**



Professional Singer In 303rd Loses Voice, Memory After Bailing Out Of Stricken B-17

Frederick Hunter Mason was a professional musician and singer long before he became a co-pilot on the 427th Squadron's Harry Cook crew. Bailing out of heavily damaged *Tiny Angel* on the Wiesbaden, Germany mission of 15 August 1944, Mason developed amnesia and a wrenching stutter. Three of the crew died in the action; five others jumped with Mason and became prisoners of war.

Ralph Page, now retired in Virginia, was navigator on the original crew formed under pilot Harry Cook. He went through training and then 303rd Bomb Group combat missions with Mason and the others.

He recalled that Fred was a talented bass fiddle player and singer, and entertained the crew and a whole nightclub audience one evening in Florida.

"We had the night off while training at MacDill Air Force Base in April of 1944," said Page, "and went into town to the Tampa Terrace Hotel. They had an all-girl band. Fred sat in with them for one set and sang several songs. After that, all of us were in the spotlight and really treated royally."

The B-17 that the crew was preparing to fly across to Molesworth needed a name. Mason proposed *Tiny Angel*,

one of "Hell's Angels," and the crew was quick to agree.

Audrey Mason Gibson, Fred's youngest sister, says she can still remember a phone call the family received from Hunter Field in Georgia.

"Fred told us that 'cockter and dingle,' his imaginary bird playmates as a child, would be flying over. To our great surprise, *Tiny Angel* flew over our home in Belleville, New Jersey on the way to Newfoundland and then to England.

"John Smalley, the tail gunner, was dropping paper cups with goodbye messages on them, but we never received them. It was a sight I'll never forget."

Ralph Page couldn't recall any time that Fred Mason sang for the men at Molesworth, "We were too busy flying missions."

Page said that *Tiny Angel* was attacked by more

than 25 FW-190's about ten minutes after the bomb run on Wiesbaden, and was being shot to pieces. He, Mason, and four other crew members managed to bail out. Pilot Cook, Engineer Slight and Waist Gunner Joyce died at their positions.

Ralph Page said he and Fred Mason came down near Malberg and were captured and taken to Stalag Luft 3.

"I didn't see Mason at the camp after that," said Page. "It was a big place. I was in the Center Compound and he was in the South Compound. We didn't meet again until we were back home after the war."

Fred's sister Audrey provided some insights to her brother's amnesia and stuttering at the POW camp and his eventual recovery. It came in the form of a tape recording of a dramatized radio program sponsored by the US Treasury Department in 1946, urging listeners to invest regularly in US Savings Bonds. Singer Johnny Desmond played the role of

Fred Mason.

The program was part of "The Treasury Salutes" series, and was broadcast to more than 800 radio stations.

The narration begins, "When you're 30 years old, don't know your name and can't talk, you're in a spot." There's a flashback to Fred (Johnny Desmond) in the 303rd "pilots' day room" singing "I'll Be Seeing You" when the crew is suddenly called out to bomb Wiesbaden.

According to the dramatization, Mason injured his head on the mission and became an amnesiac with a severe stammer. After the POW camp was liberated, Mason was returned to the US for treatment. Most his memory had returned, but he was still afflicted by a debilitating stutter. The program concludes happily when he is compelled by a psychiatrist to perform in a Special Services Show and recovers his confidence and his singing voice.

Sister Audrey said that Fred, who passed away in 1983, used to kid about the radio show, quipping "Buy bonds and don't let this happen to you."



DIGGING INTO HISTORY

Flying Fortress salvage buffs in the Sandwich, Kent area of England hope to reconstruct pieces of the 303rd's B-17 Number 42-31243, which ditched in Pegwell Bay.

The 427th's 10-man crew was picked up by British Air-Sea Rescue on 1 December 1943, and taken to nearby Manston.

MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT SALVAGE TEAM FINDS DITCHED 303RD B-17 ALREADY PLUNDERED

Thieves beat a British B-17 recovery team to the site of the 427th Squadron's unnamed bomber which ditched in shallow waters off the English coast on 1 December 1943 on the return from a mission to Solingen, Germany. The crew of the aircraft, piloted by Lt. Alan Eckhart, was saved by British Air-Sea rescue.

Elliott Smock, the English team's leader, said they had been planning the dig in the marshland for six months, and were horrified when they arrived at Sandwich Flats near Pegwell Bay to find that the site had been plundered a few days earlier.

Police called to the scene estimated that the thieves may have stolen most of the B-17's cal. 50 machine guns and many rounds of ammunition. According to a report in the Thanet Times, Detective Constable Steve Adelsberg warned, "The shells may be unstable and life-threatening to people moving or touching them."

"Ammunition and guns on sites like this are covered by firearms laws and anyone caught in possession could find themselves in court."

Two machine guns and a vast amount of ammunition were located by the volunteer recovery team, after bomb

disposal experts from Portsmouth made the site safe. The team will turn all the artifacts over to Britain's Brenzett Aeronautical Museum.

The team continued to collect as much of the B-17 wreckage as it could. Team Leader Smock said "We had planned this carefully and got a special license from the Ministry of Defense before work could begin."

"The plane had been almost whole in the mud, but when we arrived bits of it were strewn across the flats. Two engines are missing and we only found two of the machine guns."

At the outset, John Williams, Chairman of the Margate Historical Society, helped the B-17 enthusiasts, most of them from the London area, to locate the ditched 303rd bomber. The wreck was identified initially when Williams was able to visit the site and make out

the serial number on the downed aircraft.

The Margate Chairman added that the police had caught up with the individuals who had raided the site first, and took away items which would be passed to the Brenzett Museum.

Speaking on behalf of the official recovery team, Elliott Smock said, "It was very muddy so there wasn't much science involved in the dig. We just all chipped in and did our best and everything worked out all right."

"We feel it's important to recover these planes, although they're not rare, before the sea water destroys them completely."

"It's a terrible shame that parts of it have gone missing when we're doing our best to return the bomber to its former glory."

He said further attempts will be made to recover the remaining two engines and other air frame components.

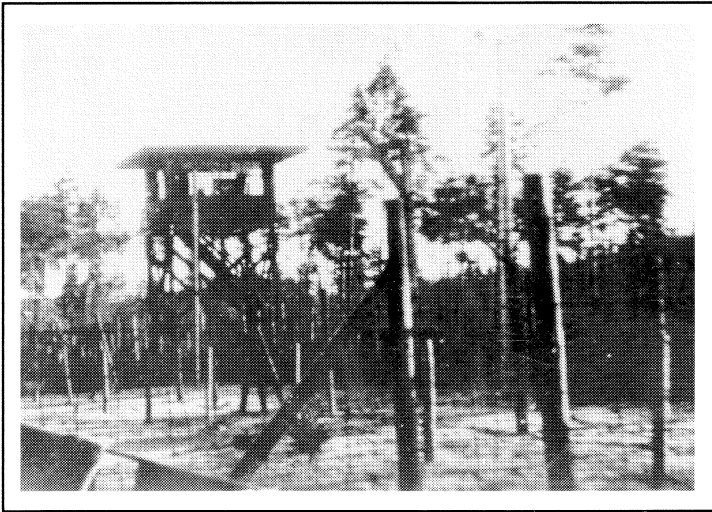
Twenty-one 303rd Bomb Group aircraft took off for the attack on Solingen, Germany on 1 December 1943, with the 427th as the

lead squadron.

The intense cold gave combat crews more trouble than enemy flak and fighters at the 26,700 foot bombing altitude. P-47's, P-38's and Spitfires provided protection all the way to and from the target. Not a single enemy fighter penetrated the formation. P-47's claimed 20 German fighters destroyed, four probables and seven damaged. Anti-aircraft fire was scattered, reaching its greatest intensity over the Ruhr Valley on the way home.

In addition to the 427th's ditched bomber, the 360th lost another unnamed aircraft piloted by Lt. G. W. Luke when it crash-landed near Lille, France. Both B-17's were the "G" model, the first of the series to be lost by the 303rd on a mission.

Word has been passed to the Sandwich Flats recovery team that T/Sgt. Frank Neuner, engineer on the ditched B-17, left his lighter and his wrist watch in the top turret when the crew abandoned ship. He thanks his English friends in advance for promising to keep an eye out.



THE STALAG LUFT THREE COMPOUND was surrounded by barbed wire fences and German guard huts spaced so all prisoner areas could be covered by rifle fire.



PRISONERS OF WAR often supplemented meager German rations by heating up tinned food reaching the camps from home or in Red Cross parcels.

Stalag Luft Three 303RD PILOT RECALLS LIFE AS A GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR

(Editor's Note—The May issue carried an article on "The Terrifying Last Mission of the Martin Plocher Crew." It concluded with the B-17's crash at sea 6 March 1943 on the return from a mission to Lorient, France, and the capture of 360th Squadron survivors by a German patrol boat. The article continues with a personal account by the pilot.)

By Martin E. Plocher

The captain of this vessel wore a black patch over his left eye and was waiting as we climbed aboard. He asked for the pilot of the bomber airplane. I followed him to his office. He offered me a chair. I was not in an accepting mood, but I sat down anyway. I was tired. He asked me several questions, but I refused to give him any information other than my name, rank and serial number.

After this short interrogation, he led me to a room and told me that this is where I could sleep. The room contained a cot and many empty wine bottles. I searched, hoping to find a full bottle; but no such luck. The captain offered neither food or drink. I took off my wet clothes and put on the dry suit they gave me. The cot was comfortable and I fell sound asleep.

At sunrise they woke us up and put blindfolds on us. I guessed that we were somewhere in Brest Harbor, France. My blind-fold slipped down a little, and I could see out of one eye. Four armed German guards escorted us to a bus which carried us to Brest Hospital where we were

processed and assigned beds. They gave us some bread and jelly for breakfast. I was not injured, so I didn't require medical attention. I crawled into the bed and again fell sound asleep.

That afternoon, a German officer came to the Brest Hospital and asked to speak with me. He said that the fighter pilot who shot us down wanted to meet me at the officer's club. I didn't quite know what to think of this. What did I have to lose?

I went with the officer and an armed guard to the club. The pilot was drinking a beer and introduced himself as the pilot of the FW190 who shot us down. He said

he was glad that I was not hurt. He spoke in very broken English and was hard to understand. He asked me to join him in a beer. I declined and asked to return to the Brest Hospital. We shook hands and I departed with the other officer and guard. To this day, I cannot remember the pilot's name.

I was lucky to not get hurt. Why I escaped injury while the 20mm shell shrapnel were ricocheting in the cockpit I will never know. Lt. Tyler, the co-pilot, wasn't so lucky; he took a hit on the head and was killed instantly.

After two days rest in the Brest France Hospital, Lt. Kahliden, the bombardier, and I were escorted by three German armed guards to a vehicle which carried us to the train station. I thought it would be a good time to escape, but the opportunity never came.

We arrived at the train station where a German Army officer handed each of us a loaf of bread and told us that we wouldn't get any more food during the long train ride to the Dulag Luft POW processing camp located at Frankfurt, Germany on the Rhine River.

We arrived at Dulag Luft where we were separated and locked in what is known as the cooler. The room is very small, six feet wide and twelve feet long, with a very small window on the end wall. It had a 10-foot ceiling. The officer in charge instructed us not to speak out loud or make noises that would cause any disturbance.

The first day I slept, no

visitors. The second day, after a breakfast of coffee and a slice of dark brown bread, a German officer came in my room and asked me questions that I refused to answer. All I would give were just my name, rank, and serial number. He looked at me and said, "If you don't cooperate with us you could be in this cooler for a long time," and departed.

After a lunch of cabbage soup and a slice of bread, I heard a tapping on the wall. It was the POW in the next room tapping out in Morse code, asking what my name was. I tapped back my name, rank and serial number. He in turn told me his name and that he was a Canadian fighter pilot. We tapped messages back and forth for half an hour when suddenly it stopped. The Germans caught up with him, moved him to a different room, and gave me a warning not to do it again.

The third day was just another day to sit and wait for things to happen. The fourth day I got anxious, started to sing out loud. A German guard opened my door and gave me a scolding.

Late that afternoon, I sang out loud again and banged on the walls. A German officer and an armed guard entered my room. The officer pointed his revolver at my forehead. He said, "If you continue to make noises I will pull the trigger and all will be finished."

He told me that I was a prisoner of war of Germany and that I had to obey the
(Continued on Page 8)

**AMERICANS HOUSED
IN THIS STALAG LUFT
prisoner of war barracks
lived in rooms with
tightly clustered wood
frame bunks and slept on
mattresses stuffed with
sawdust.**

(Photo courtesy of Richard Stearns Collection, 8th AF Heritage Museum Library)

PRISONER OF WAR

(Continued from page 7)

rules. The officer and guard left my room. A short time later a small man dressed in a Red Cross uniform with a briefcase came in to talk with me and started to tell me about the Red Cross and that he could get messages to my family back in the United States. I thought for a moment and said to myself, you sawed-off bastard, you are a phony. After telling the Red Cross story and how much he could help me, he asked me some questions related to the war - why the US entered the war and why the US is now bombing German cities. This made me mad, I didn't say anything, just looked at him and envisioned a phony. I didn't give him the time of day. He then departed with his briefcase.

The fifth and sixth days were rather quiet, no visitors. I figured the Germans were letting me cool off for a while. On the seventh day a doctor came to see me and wanted to know how I felt and if I needed any medical attention. The eighth and ninth days were without visitors and I wondered how long this was going to last. I was getting damn tired being caged in that small room.

Early in the morning of the tenth day two armed guards came to my room and told me to come with them. I was escorted to the office of the commandant who wore the German rank of Oberst (Full Colonel). He asked me

to sit down because he had some things to show me. He first told me what bomber group I belonged to and who my commander was. He then told me I graduated at Stockton Field, California and showed me a picture of the graduating class. This just threw me for a loop. I asked him how Germany got all this information. He told me that Germany had agents living in Mexico who can get anything they want from the United States. He then said, "For you the war is over. You are free to join your buddies in camp."

I was happy to be through with the questioning and joined a group of 30 British, Canadian and American flying officers who were waiting to go to Poland. We all climbed aboard the train enroute to the POW camp at Posen, Poland. We arrived the next day. This camp was temporary; all the cooking was over campfire and when we had to go to the bathroom, slit trenches were used. It was all a big mess. We managed to keep clean and healthy.

After spending 40 days in this camp we were moved by train to the main prisoner of war camp, Stalag Luft Three at Sagan, Germany. The camp was new and to be our permanent home until the war ended. The entire camp compounds were surrounded by large pine trees, barbed wire fencing and guard huts

spaced so all areas around the camp were covered by rifle fire power. We were permitted to walk the perimeter on a trail which was 50 feet inside the guarded fence line. Anyone caught in the forbidden area would be shot.

Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi leader chief of Gestapo, let it be known to all POW's that he would recommend that all American airmen be put to death and buried in a mass grave. The head of the German Air Force, Hermann Goering, intervened and put a stop to any such actions. He visited our camp and assured us that we didn't have to worry.

Our day would start with a roll call in the morning. The Germans wanted to find out if anyone escaped. The same procedure roll call was held in the afternoon at 4 PM. Our curfew started at sundown. We had to be in the barracks with all shutters closed to prevent any light showing. No one was allowed outside during the time of darkness. The German guards would patrol the compounds with dogs to find a POW who was hiding to make an escape. A very important thing was to keep busy doing something, playing bridge, softball, reading, working a garden or walking the perimeter. We did not have to work.

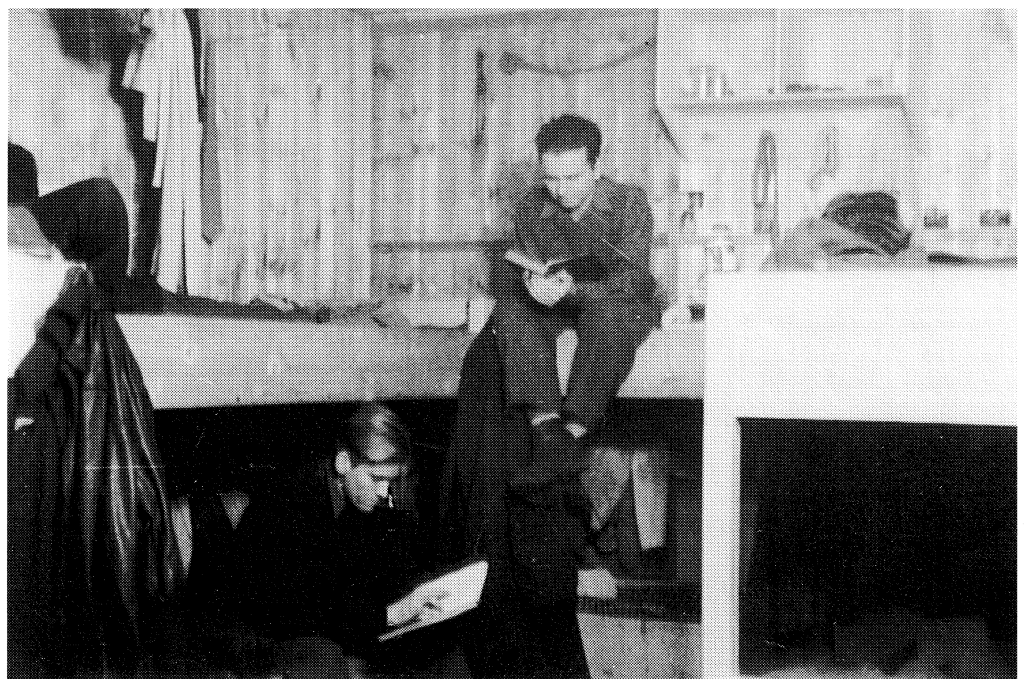
Food was critical. The German rations were limited. They consisted of dark brown

bread, potatoes, cabbage, blood sausage and once in a while ground beef and ersatz coffee and jam. The International Red Cross was authorized by the Germans to provide additional food for all POW's. This consisted of a parcel, one box per man per month, which contained a can of dried milk, Spam, bully beef, crackers, flour, margarine, tea, coffee, sugar, salt, pepper, dried soup, fruit and chocolate bars. Before I was shot down I weighed 170 pounds; when the war ended I weighed about 135 pounds. I can imagine what my weight would have been without the Red Cross food parcels.

Mail from home was the life-blood of all POW's. The travel time for letters during autumn of 1944 took eleven to twelve weeks to reach camp. I received my first letter from my wife Frances in July, 1943 telling me about the birth of our daughter Marti Ann. She was born the 1st day of May, 1943. I dreamed about the event and knew she was a pretty baby.

Each sixty days, a POW's next-of-kin could mail him a private parcel containing clothing, food and other items not forbidden by German or U.S. regulations.

POW's of Stalag Luft Three feel a deep debt of gratitude toward the Red Cross for supplying food and clothing, which were considered the two most important things in camp life.



"I Never Saw Him Again...."

WHO GAVE ME HIS AIR MEDAL IN 1944?

By M/Sgt. Phil Berube, Editor, The Griffin

For more than half a century, he kept the medal tucked away in a cupboard, waiting for the owner to come back and collect it. He never came back. But, after all these years of waiting, the medal has found a home.

In a small, April ceremony in the Joint Analysis Center on RAF Molesworth, Reginald Gambrell returned the Army Air Corps Air Medal he had been entrusted with for more than 54 years to the unit from which it came, the 303rd Bomb Group. The ceremony partially fulfilled a promise made in a local pub during the waning months of World War II.

As was his nightly routine during the war, Gambrell pedaled his bike the four miles or so from his home in Bythorn to the Black Swan pub in Old Weston, a small, quiet village about a mile down the road from RAF Molesworth. The pub, which was affectionately nicknamed the "Mucky Duck" by American servicemen, was a favorite haunt for the GIs assigned to the air base, and Gambrell would occasionally entertain the troops at the pub by playing the piano.

It was shortly before closing time one October evening in 1944, he said, that a mutual friend, Sgt. Louis Skotzky Jr., introduced him to the medal's rightful owner. "He pulled the medal out of his pocket, handed it to me and said, 'I'm going on a mission tomorrow. Can you keep it until I get back?' Gambrell recounted.

That evening he brought the medal home with him for safekeeping, thinking the serviceman would return in a few days.

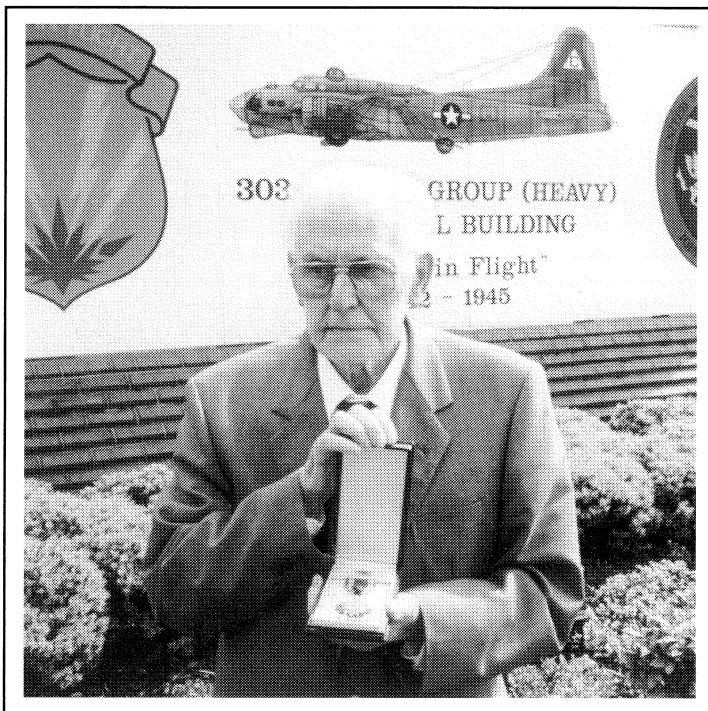
"I never saw him again," Gambrell said.

Because their introduction was brief, Gambrell, who is now 90 years old, forgot the serviceman's name and what he looked like. The only specifics he can recall are the month and year the encounter took place and that the serviceman was a B-17 crewmember.

At the ceremony, Gambrell also returned a small box of Army Air Corps literature and personal affects given to him by Skotzky before he returned to the United States shortly before the end of the war. Skotzky, who passed away recently, was Gambrell's only link to the unknown serviceman.

Concerned about his advancing years, Gambrell said he felt obligated to do something appropriate with the medal and memorabilia, but was unsure as what to do. That was until he befriended fellow Bythorn resident and 303rd Bomb Group enthusiast Peter Ashford. Gambrell told Ashford the story surrounding the World War II artifacts and that he felt they should be placed in a museum or, if not a museum, in some other suitable home.

Ashford, thinking he'd found the answer, contacted Brian McGuire a few months ago. McGuire, a contractor assigned to the Joint Analysis Center, is RAF Molesworth's point of contact for the U.S.-based 303rd Bomb Group Association. McGuire said he would gladly accept the Air Medal on the Association's



ON AN OCTOBER EVENING IN 1944, an unidentified 303rd Bomb Group airman gave his Air Medal for safekeeping to Reginald Gambrell at a pub near the Molesworth base. The Englishman, now 90, hopes to find the airman and return the medal.

behalf, and that he would try to match a name with the medal.

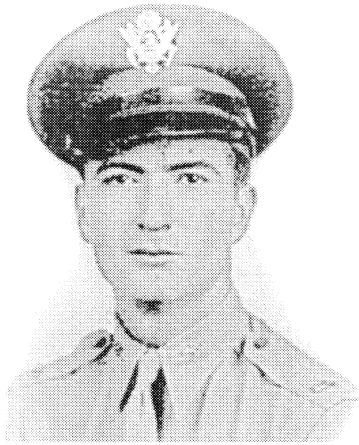
Thinking it might help jog his memory, McGuire showed Gambrell a list of names of B-17 crewmembers who were killed when their planes were shot down on three separate combat missions during October 1944. Gambrell didn't recognize any of the names.

To help narrow the search even more, McGuire has asked the 303rd BG Association to dig through their archives to see if any of the crewmembers killed had been awarded an Air Medal in the months preceding their fatal missions.

"It's a shot in the dark," he said. "But it might be possible for a match if they come up with a couple of names. It might be impossible if they come up with more than three names, however."

It is a good possibility that more than a few names might surface, McGuire said, because crewmembers were awarded the medal for completing a certain amount of combat missions or for other acts of valor. "If a match can be made, however, it would be a fitting tribute to return the medal to the crewmember's family, if they can be located," he said.

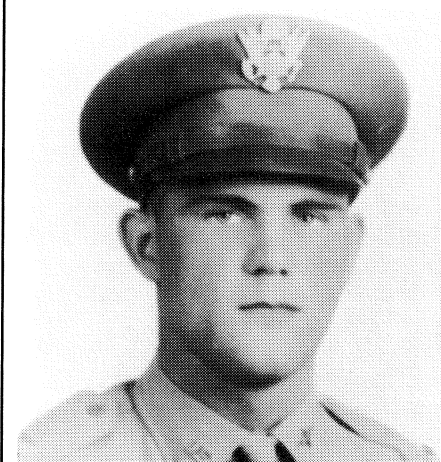
If the search turns up empty, McGuire said he will set up a display in one of Molesworth's facilities, a showcase for Skotzky's Army Air Corps memorabilia and a fitting home for the unknown crewman's Air Medal.



Jack Mathis



Robert Swindle



Donald Hurlburt

MILITARY, CIVIL SITES IN TEXAS, AR NAMED TO HONOR THREE OF THE F

By Eddie Deerfield

Jack Mathis, Bobby Swindle and Don Hurlburt. What do these men have in common? Each was a 303rd Bomb Group airman who fought his way to glory on B-17's during World War II. Each died in an aircraft tragedy—two in separate attacks against Nazi targets and the third in a stateside crash a few months after surviving 25 combat missions. Each achieved posthumous recognition when a military or civil installation was named to honor him.

Jack Warren Mathis was lead bombardier in *The Duchess*, a 359th Squadron B-17, on the 18 March 1943 mission to Vegesack, Germany. It was his 15th combat flight against enemy targets. As *The Duchess* started her bomb run, a flak burst ripped through the nose of the aircraft. Mathis was hurled back against the rear bulkhead as shrapnel shattered his right arm above the elbow and tore a gaping wound in his side and abdomen.

As lead bombardier, he knew the success of the mission depended on him. Other B-17's in the formation would drop their bombs when they saw his fall. He crawled back to his position, pulled himself up to realign the aiming mechanism, released the bombs, and died slumped over the bomb sight. On that morning, the 303rd Bomb Group scored one of the most accurate raids of the war, damaging seven German U-boats and knocking the Vegesack submarine construction yards out of action for six weeks.

1st Lt. Jack W. Mathis was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously, the first made to an Eighth Air Force airman in World War II. He was cited for conspicuous gallantry in accomplishing his mission by sheer determination and will power while mortally wounded. He was 22 years old.

In a ceremony on 21 July 1988, the City of San Angelo, Texas named its airport Mathis Municipal Airport, later changed to Mathis Field. Although the bronze plaque read "In Memory of Jack W. Mathis," the dedication also honored Jack's brother R. Mark Mathis, another 359th bombardier who was killed in action on the B-17 *FDR* on 14 May 1943 on a mission to Kiel, Germany. The Mathis brothers were native sons of San Angelo.

On 19 June 1996, the new 3.5 million dollar Jack Mathis Sports and Fitness Center at Goodfellow Air Force Base in Texas was dedicated. In his remarks, Base Commander Colonel Ronald D. Tabor told the audience that Jack Mathis had served as an enlisted man clerk in the 49th Squadron's Orderly

Room at Goodfellow in 1941, moving on to bombardier training at Ellington Field, Texas and then assignment to the 303rd Bomb Group in September, 1942. Col. Tabor described Mathis' last heroic minutes at the bomb sight on *The Duchess* as "remarkable, even among Medal of Honor winners."

Robert James Swindle was born in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas on April 10, 1920, the son of Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Swindle. He graduated from Walnut Ridge High in 1938 and continued his education at Arkansas Tech University. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in December, 1940, and took basic training at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. After being accepted as an aviation cadet at Ellington Field, Swindle went on to bombardier training at Victorville, California, graduating second in his class. He arrived at Molesworth in the fall of 1942, and was assigned to the 427th Squadron.

On 23 January 1943, Bobby Swindle was flying with the E. H. Reber crew on a mission to bomb the port area at Lorient, France, and the Brest U-boat pens. The 303rd's 21-plane formation had to fly through a wall of flak and braved some 25 attacks by German fighters. Swindle went to his death when the heavily damaged B-17 *Jerry Jinx* crashed in the Bay of Biscay. None of the bodies were ever recovered.

Lt. Swindle was the first U.S. Army Air Corps resident of Lawrence County, Arkansas to be killed in World War II. His memory was honored when the Walnut Ridge airport was named Swindle Field. A bronze marker, set on a field stone monument, says in tribute, "Though they died before the dawn of victory, as did many brave men, their sacrifice will long be remembered wherever free men shall live."

Donald Wilson Hurlburt enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 1941, and was assigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey for basic training. Two months later, following a promotion to PFC, he was transferred to the Preflight Training School at Maxwell Field, Alabama as an aviation cadet, the Basic Flying School at Shaw Field, South Carolina and then to the Advanced Flying School at Moody Field, Georgia. He was assigned to the 358th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group on 19 July 1942 and reached Molesworth three months later as part of the 303rd's original air echelon.

Hurlburt's combat missions came during the most disastrous period of the war for the Eighth Air Force. Bomber formations attacked targets in Germany and Nazi Occupied Europe virtually without American fighter protection against the dreaded FW-190's and ME-109's. The combat range of British Spitfires

Three Combat Veterans of the 303rd Bomb Group, Whose Heroism Earned Them Special Places in the Sun



KANSAS AND FLORIDA FINEST "HELL'S ANGELS"

barely enabled them to escort B-17's beyond the enemy coastlines.

Although it's safe to assume that Don Hurlburt had countless brushes with death, one of his particularly traumatic missions was as co-pilot on *Werewolf* on the ill-fated 23 January 1943 Lorient raid which claimed the life of Bobby Swindle. Pilot George Oxrider ordered his crew of nine to bail out over the south coast of England after *Werewolf* limped to the coast on one engine. After Hurlburt and the rest of the crew bailed out, Oxrider stayed at the controls and managed to nurse the plane to a landing on the grounds of a mental hospital at Dawlish. There were no crew injuries on the mission or during the bailout.

Don Hurlburt completed his 25th and last combat mission on 22 June 1943, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. He was next assigned to Headquarters, First Air Force, at Mitchell Field, New York. In August 1943, he reported to the First Proving Ground Electronics Unit at Eglin Field, Florida.

On the first day of October 1943, First Lieutenant Donald W. Hurlburt died of injuries when the AT-18 he was flying crashed on take-off during a local mission. Six persons were killed in the incident. By that date, Hurlburt had accumulated 638 hours of flying time in a variety of aircraft. He was 24 years old.

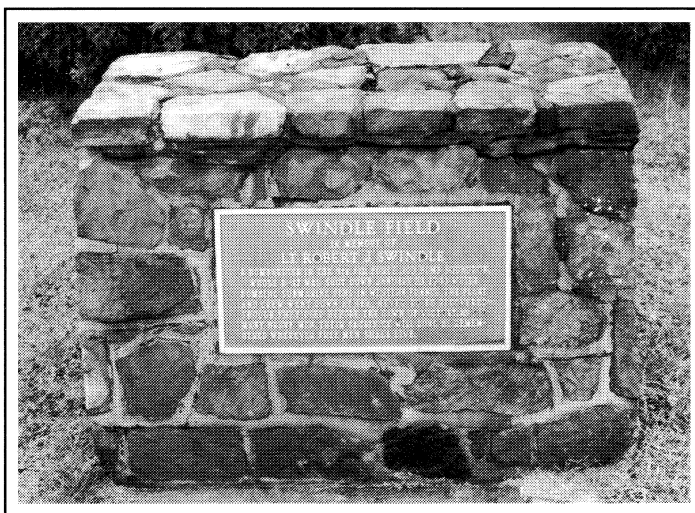
To honor his memory, a portion of the sprawling Eglin Air Force Base complex originally designated as Auxiliary Field Number 9 was officially named Hurlburt Field. At that time, it was primarily a pilot and gunnery training field. Today, it is home to the Air Force Special Operations Command and the 16th Special Operations Wing.

In early 1991, President George Bush ordered *Desert Storm* to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Aircraft from Hurlburt Field went into action. The MC-130E Combat Talons dropped 15,000-pound BLU-82 bombs for the first time in combat. The MH-53J Pave Lows teamed with Army helicopters to knock out Iraqi early warning sites and open holes in the enemy's air defense system. The AC-130H Spectre gunships flew armed reconnaissance and destroyed targets. The MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters performed search-and-rescue missions and inserted Special Forces behind enemy lines.

Hurlburt Field's 1st Special Operations Wing, now redesignated as the 16th SOW, lost one AC-130H and its crew of 14 while supporting U.S. Marine ground forces. It was the largest single loss suffered by any unit in *Desert Storm*.



MATHIS MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, SAN ANGELO, TEXAS



SWINDLE FIELD, WALNUT RIDGE, ARKANSAS

From the President

"PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE"

OUR NEXT 303RD BG(H) MISSION

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum

The 303rd was well represented at the May 1, 1999 Museum third anniversary celebration.

* The Kermit Stevens family dedicated the Marion Stevens Combat Gallery Computer Touch Screen Educational Kiosk. This new educational tool is the first of many future museum innovations.

* A belated DFC medal was presented to Harry D. Gobrecht.

* The 303rd leads all other 8th AF units: Amount of giving; Number of "Wall of Valor" names; Number of individual crew and other memory plaques; Members on the Museum Board of Trustees (Four).

* The B-47 static exhibit will soon be erected in the memorial garden. The 303rd triangle "C" insignia will appear on the B-47's tail surface.

* We can all be very proud of our museum and how the 303rd has played an important part in its establishment and growth.

303rd BG(H) Photo Archives

Our crew, B-17, nose art and other photo archive albums will be at Oklahoma City. Take time to view them. Help complete our 303rd photo archives by donating missing photos that you may have. It is very important that your photos be included in the 303rd BG(H) photo archives that will eventually be housed at our Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum.

Next 303rd Mission: Preserving Our History

On V-E day the 303rd was the premier 8th AF Bomb Group. We are now the premier 8th AF unit association. Every 303rd member contributed to these accomplishments.

Our next mission is to ensure that our 303rd history and heritage is preserved. Each member should search through their records, photos, etc.

Share your information with our *Hell's Angels Newsletter* Editor, Historian & Webmaster. They will help you in making sure that your accomplishments are recognized and that our next mission is accomplished.

Don't let yourself and your Crew or Ground Support Unit be forgotten.

1999 Oklahoma City Reunion

Advance registrations have exceeded expectations. Reunion Chairman Ed Miller and his wife Jill have planned an outstanding program. Join your friends in visiting and in having fun.

My Thanks to Many

Serving you as your 1998-1999 303rd BGA President has been a special honor and pleasure. My thanks to those who helped make 1998-1999 an outstanding year.

We are in good shape to continue our programs of excellence in the future.

HARRY D. GOBRECHT

"Might in Flight" Book Order

Daily Diary of the 8th Air Force's Hell's Angels - 303rd Bombardment Group (H)

No more books will be printed when the present limited supply depleted

Price per book (Includes S&H): USA Address \$75.00 Foreign Address \$78

Payment: Check drawn on a bank with a USA address or postal money order

Payment must be in USA Dollars payable to "303rd BG(H) Association"

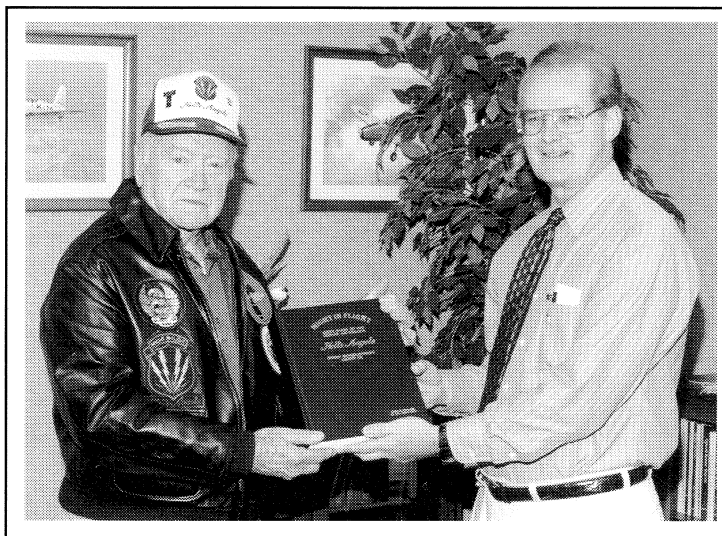
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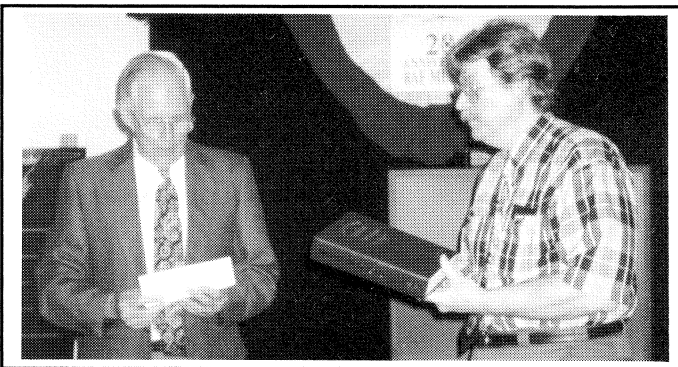
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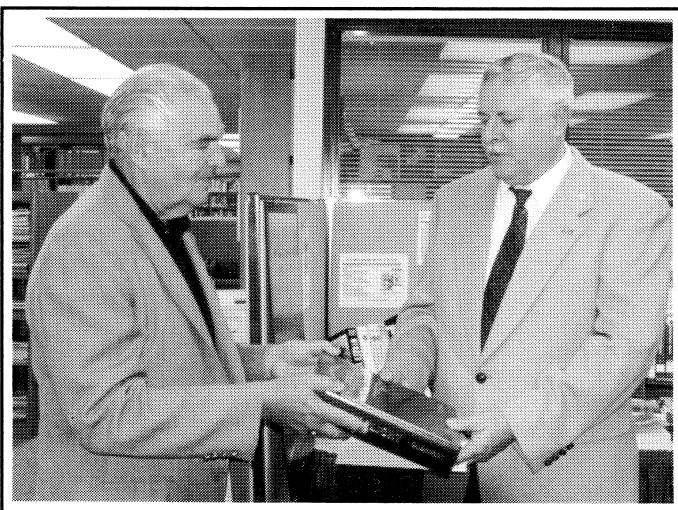
Harry D. Gobrecht, 505 Via Deseo, San Clemente, CA 92672-2462



RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS is the site of a presentation of the Hell's Angels "Might in Flight" history. Bill Bergeron, on behalf of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, donated the edition to Thomas A. Manning, Command Historian, Air Education and Training Command, Museum Library.



BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, LOUISIANA, which houses the Eighth Air Force Museum, received "Might in Flight" from the Association's Wilbur "Bud" Klint (left) who presented it to Museum Director Bruce Rigg. Klint was accompanied by the 303rd's Lew Lyle and Quentin Hargrove.



MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA was also the recipient of the "Might in Flight" Diary of the 303rd Bomb Group's outstanding World War II achievements. Eddie Deerfield (left) represented the Association in handing the book over to William F. Foster, Director of Libraries.

LAST CALL FOR THE OKLAHOMA REUNION

Many of our Members have already finalized their plans for the Oklahoma City Reunion on October 8th through 11th. They have already reserved for the peak nights of Saturday, Oct 9th—198 rooms; for Sunday, Oct 10th—195 rooms, and for Monday, Oct 11th—187 rooms.

We have an agreement with the Marriott Hotel that if our members reserve before August 15th, they will be allowed to increase the number up to 275 room nights for those three days. After that date, the guaranteed room blockage goes back to 210 room nights at \$62. This rate is good only until 23 September.

Hopefully, this should encourage you "tardy" members to call in for a reservation without delay. The number is (405) 842-6633 and be sure and let them know that you are with the 303rd Bomb Group Association. If you have misplaced your Reunion Registration Packet, please call Ed Miller, (580) 342-5119, for a new one.

We are sorry to report that we were not able to arrange for the Tinker AFB

Tour on Tuesday, Oct 12th. The military powers failed to recognize that Oct 11th was a holiday.

Remember that the 1999 Reunion Registration Form specifies an increase in your per person registration fee to \$100.00 per person, if not received by 15 August, and the Optional Tours will be "Space Available" after that date.

Driving instructions are shown below. If you are coming in from the East you will be arriving via I-44 or I-40. If from the South it will be I-35 or I-44. If from the West it will be I-40, and from the North, it will be I-35. Remember there are two Marriott Hotels in Oklahoma City. You will be at the "Oklahoma City Marriott Hotel." The address is 3233 Northwest Parkway, which is off of I-44.



Branson, Missouri -- On The Road To The Reunion

By Marvin Edwards
360th Squadron Tail Gunner

We moved to Branson in 1978. At that time it was a small sleepy city of 2,000. In the mid-sixties, country music along with fishing and sheer scenic beauty started attracting tourists. From that time until now, over 5.5 mil-

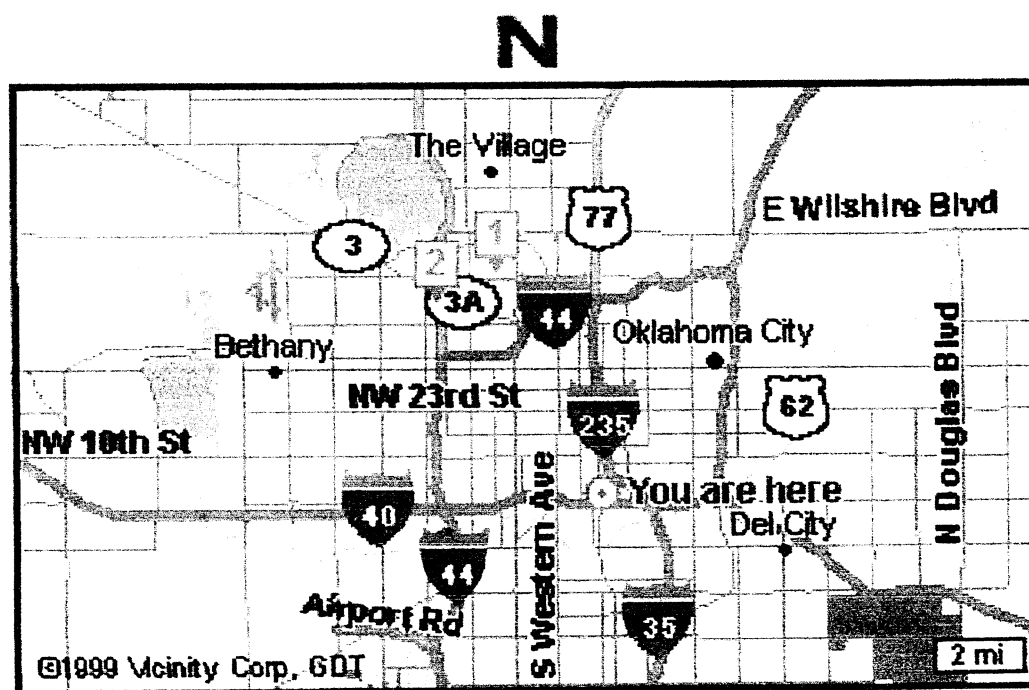
lion people visit this area every year. There are 22,500 motel rooms available, 295 restaurants, 7,000 campsites and theaters with the capacity to seat 54,000. The Miss U.S.A. Pageant is being held here in 1999, and Silver Dollar City, the local theme park, was voted the best in the nation.

For the last seven years, Branson has honored our veterans for a week during Veterans' Day in November. They are honored with patriotic shows; many with reduced prices, and the week climaxes with a huge parade.

All of this is located in Taney County, 34 miles south of Springfield, Missouri on U.S. Highway 65. If you are traveling on U.S. Highway 44 to Oklahoma City, Branson is only 304 miles north-east.

Let me extend an invitation to visit my town, prior to or after the reunion.

(The Branson Chamber of Commerce adds that the music and styles of entertainment span the globe and the decades. Authentic international folk music, 1940's swing, inspirational gospel, stirring patriotic themes and contemporary country, in multi-million dollar facilities that feature climate-controlled environments with state-of-the-art lighting and sound. The performers are drawn to Branson and genuinely like people and want to spend time with the guests.)



The Oklahoma City Marriott Hotel is shown as **2** on the map.



303rd's Pin-up Men of The Month

AT THE TOP—358th Refueling Section's Cpl. Hoppes, Cpl. Hoffman, Sgt. MacComber, PFC Reynolds, Pvt. Valley and Sgt. Sustnick.

TO THE LEFT—359th Ground Crew's Cpl. George Turkel.
BELOW—360th Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt. Gene Morton.



Molesworth Diary

FIRST DAYLIGHT RAID A PHOTOGRAPHIC SNAFU

When the first daylight raid on Germany was scheduled, my crew was on R-and-R, so I was assigned to fly with another crew as photographer on *Eight Ball*. The target was Wilhelmshaven, but, due to cloud cover, we bombed Kiel instead. My job was to stand in the bomb bay and photograph the release. Because we flubbed around looking for a target, I almost froze to death. When the bombs were released, one of them nudged my shoulder and almost pushed me out; then the bombardier closed the doors so fast I didn't have time to shoot any film. I then went back to the cockpit and starting taking footage of incoming FW-190's passing head-on.

After we returned to Molesworth, I turned in the camera equipment and was later informed I had forgotten to remove the lens cover. About that time, a newsman who introduced himself as Walter Cronkite cornered me and asked my reactions to the mission. I was so angry with myself, I told him to "bug off." My home town newspaper wrote me up as a hero for participating in the "first raid." C'est la guerre!

Jay Trojan
360th Pilot

THE PROP FELL OFF

We were in formation over Germany at about 25,000 feet near Hanover when the number two engine went out and would not feather. I watched some of the cylinders explode as it ran away, until I was ordered by the pilot to leave the nose. We dropped out of formation and, as we lost altitude, we jettisoned our bombs. We continued to England with the prop on the number two engine windmilling all the way until we landed at Molesworth. It fell off halfway down the runway and we ran over it.

Leo E. Laverty
427th Navigator

THE COLONEL GAVE THEM HELL

I was a driver for Colonel Wallace. He was very good to me and treated me with respect. When we were on any trip, he would give me money and tell me what time to meet him. I was free to go and be on my own with a car and money until the appointed time.

One time, in Cambridge, the local Military Police had set 10 PM as the time for all GI's to be off the streets. The colonel didn't know that, and had asked me to pick him up at 11 PM. I got arrested and put in jail. They took everything away from me and impounded the car. They even took the belt that held up my pants "so that I couldn't hang myself with it."

I sat in the cell laughing to myself, thinking of what was going to happen when Colonel Wallace found me. I wasn't disappointed. Boy, was he ever mad! He took those MP's apart and nailed the pieces to the wall. After that, I carried a

letter from him to keep the MP's away.

One day at Molesworth just before a mission, I was driving the colonel all over the base while he checked to make sure that everybody and everything was ready. He was riding in front with me and his parachute was on the back seat. When he was satisfied with what he saw, I took him to his aircraft. I reached for his parachute and accidentally got hold of the rip cord handle. The chute opened there in the car. Colonel Wallace was pretty angry and threw his hat on the ground, but he never took his anger out on me.

Richard M. Vincent
359th Driver and Aircraft Mechanic

A GRUESOME TASK, AND REMEMBRANCE

Two of our B-17's on a training flight collided near the base. While three of the crew miraculously survived, 17 died and their bodies were removed to the Molesworth Base Hospital. I was called to come and pick up their equipment and flight clothing. Seeing those men dead was a horrible sight. I never forgot those men.

In 1993, I visited the Mattingly cemetery in England where I thought they might be buried. I spent some time looking for their grave sites. I felt that just my being there helped to honor the dead and the missing in action.

John C. Zerr
358th Technical Supply

THE LEMON DROP KID

I was a bombardier on one of the 303rd's early missions into France in the winter of 1942. On the bomb run, a hole opened over my machine gun where my head would have been. While I was looking at this hole another opened up just over my bomb sight. In a few seconds I had just missed being hit twice. After the bomb run, our B-17's heating system and hydraulic system were both knocked out by enemy fighters. Our thermometer's indicator arm ran off the end past 45 degrees. Holes were opening up in various parts of the plane. Excited voices over the intercom sounded like a bunch of guinea hens cackling. The waist guns were frozen, and the gunners were manually pushing single tracers into their guns and firing them like a single shot rifle.

The navigator and I were unable to use our guns because of heavy frost on the aircraft's nose. The upper turret gunner was keeping up a steady roar with his twin 50 cal. machine guns but he was running out of ammunition. With the aid of an oxygen bottle, I took him a string of 50 cal. ammunition. The weight of my load at high altitude was very tiring, and I was gasping for breath. After my second trip, I sat down on the floor of the nose compartment, and, over the intercom, I asked the navigator to pass the lemon drops. There was silence on the intercom, then laughter. That

(Continued on Page 16)

Diary

(Continued from page 15)

is how I gained the reputation for being cool under fire.

The truth of the matter was that I was just plain pooped. Several hours later I was more than glad to be back at Molesworth. Our plane *Holy Mackerel* had brought us home again, but was shot down a few missions later.

William D. Cargill
359th Bombardier

PROUD OF BEING A "HELL'S ANGEL"

I guess my achievement was in doing the job I was assigned to do, in keeping as many airplanes as possible in flying condition at all times, even if it required working 12 to 24 hours a day and sometimes for weeks without a day off. I was always proud of being a part of the 303rd Hell's Angels Bomb Group.

Sam M. Masinton
444th Sub-Depot Engine Mechanic

FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

Our target on November 21, 1944 was Merseburg, Germany. The flak was heavy. We dropped our bombs, made a right turn with the formation, and got hit. The number three engine spewed flame back to the tail. I made sure my chest pack parachute was securely on. The ship careened and lost altitude. The pilot and co-pilot finally righted it, but then on my headset I heard the pilot shout "Bail out, everybody out."

I worked my way back to the waist hatch, and found the crew trying to open the door. It wouldn't budge. As we struggled with the hatch door, I heard the pilot on intercom shout that the fire was out and to stay with the ship. As I turned to tell the others to wait, the hatch door suddenly fell away and three of the crew went out with it. We saw their parachutes open, but never saw them again.

The pilot put us on a course to allied territory in France, but somehow we found ourselves over Frankfurt. We were at 14,000 feet, and it seemed like 300 anti-aircraft guns opened up on us all at once. As our B-17 was blown out of the sky, we all bailed out and most survived as POW's.

Albert Miller
358th Radio Operator

CLARK GABLE ASKED "WHAT'S TO EAT?"

Three years as a cook/baker at Molesworth provided ample time to explore the British Isles. Most rewarding was the friendships with British families in Northhampton.

Quite memorable was when Clark Gable came into our kitchen at 1:30 in the morning and asked, "What's to eat?" We fixed him a filet mignon (kitchen personnel had access to the good stuff.)

The turnover of B-17 crews was very sobering. Some completed missions, others didn't return. Always new faces.

Dick Miessler
359th Cook/Baker



B-17 COLLISION SPOOKS HORSE—Pam Langston is astride *Pink Lady*, the horse she was riding to a blacksmith shop in Wellingborough when two B-17's collided overhead.

English Bride Remembers Molesworth and Life In East Anglia During War

By Pamela Langston

I lived in Wellingborough near Chelveston (305th) and Podington (100th), but in 1944 I was a school teacher at Corby near Kettering a few miles from Grafton Underwood (384th) and Molesworth (303rd). We used to watch the flights get up in the morning from the various fields and circle into formation until they took off. Sometimes we would try to count them and count again in the evening when they returned. It was incredible how they made it home. I often saw planes with the tail gone, holes in the fuselage and one or two engines out. We would watch as they came down and pray that they landed safely, but sometimes we'd hear that horrible thud. It was so sad that they would struggle all the way home only to crash on landing.

One night, I was walking along the street in Kettering and a plane came in low over the rooftops on fire. It crashed in flames just outside the town. I was told later that it came from Molesworth.

I once saw two B-17's collide in the fog as they were taking off. It was in 1942, and I was riding my horse *Pink Lady* to the blacksmith in Wellingborough to be shod. The mare was very temperamental and could buck like a mustang. At the sound of the crash, she bolted down High Street. I pulled her up in time to see one lone parachute coming down. None of the wreckage landed on the town, but the lone survivor came down in a garden where a woman was hanging out her laundry. Most of the wreckage and the remains of those poor boys came down in two of my uncle's pastures.

A friend and I used to go to the weekly dances at The George Hotel in Kettering. There were always lots of men from Molesworth and Grafton Underwood. I dated a pilot from the 384th, but he failed to return from a raid over Germany. In the summer, I would take the train home from Kettering to Wellingborough at night, and it was often full of men from the surrounding bases on their way to London for a few days leave.

Cal Langston was an MP with 8th Headquarters at Huntingdon, and was later transferred to Podington and then to Wellingborough where we were married. We went back to England in 1948 and visited Podington. The runways were all overgrown with weeds and the buildings derelict. We were there again 40 years later, and it was a racetrack, with a big meet going on.

OPEN FORUM

READERS—THIS IS YOUR SPACE. LET'S HAVE YOUR COMMENTS ON THE WAY THINGS WERE OR THE WAY THINGS ARE. WRITE TO: EDITOR, HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER, 3552 LANDMARK TRAIL, PALM HARBOR, FL 34684

WHAT WAS NAME OF R&R HOTEL IN MIAMI BEACH?

When I returned after completing my missions in March, 1945, I was sent to Miami Beach for R&R. My wife and I stayed in one of the hotels on the beach taken over by the military. We had a great time, and neither of us can remember the name of the hotel.

It was small, on the river side of the street, and had a French-sounding name. If we heard the name or saw a picture, I think we would recognize it. Can anyone help?

Jim Walling
P. O. Box 636
Pahoa, Hawaii 96778

CAN ERROR IN BRONZE PLAQUE BE CORRECTED?

Back in May of 1997 in the Hell's Angels Newsletter on page 7 is a picture of one of the 303rd's plaques at the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum, listing the Ground Support Units. They made a mistake listing the 1119th Military Police when it should be the 1199th Military Police Company. Can anything be done to correct this?

Art Akers
5017 12th Street
Albuquerque, NM 87107

(EDITOR'S NOTE)

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association apologizes for the error, and thanks Art for pointing it out. The monument company has been informed and will make the correction to 1199th.

SEARCHING FOR THOSE WHO KNEW LT. EHRKE

My dad, Warren Ehrke, was a navigator in the 303rd, assigned to the 359th in April, 1944. He passed away in September, 1997. A great dad and grandfather, and, from what I understand, a great serviceman.

It has only been since my father's death that I have really understood the enormity of what you men did, and how you served so proudly. You are truly heroes. I'm so impressed that

there are so many people appreciative of World War II veterans.

If anyone knows anything about my dad's war years, please contact me.

Jo Burke
3646 Cummings Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701

303RD ORDNANCE VETS RECOGNIZED IN PHOTO

The photo on page 12 of the February, 1999 newsletter is of particular interest to me. It's of 1681 Company personnel in front of the 10-bay repair shops at Molesworth. The personnel are gathered around a crane that they designed and fabricated. They are T/3 Athel Fowler, T/3 Clifton Schow, Capt. William Holaday and M/Sgt. Robert Morton.

I took over the 1681 Company from Capt. Holaday when the Company, a Quartermaster maintenance unit, was reorganized as the 1681 Ordnance Company in July, 1943.

Humphrey P. O'Leary
11262 Davenport Road
Rossmoor, CA 90720

358th VET SEARCHING FOR CREWS

I served July '43 till May '45 on 358th's Paper Dollie and Meat Hound. Would like info on any crew.

Ray Derr
941 First Street
Nescopeck, PA 18635

GLOWING COMMENTS ABOUT NEWSLETTER

The whole May issue sparkled with diverse and lively features laid out and edited in a very readable style. What a lot of time you must have devoted to this issue. I found especially poignant your comments on the back page about the irony that six of the pilots at the dining room table in the photo were soon to meet tragic ends.

It's the best newsletter (not just Hell's Angels) I've ever seen.

Jack Gardner
1519 Fairmont Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15221

.... MORE OF SAME

It's a great issue. I don't know why I didn't retire 10 years earlier.

Hal Susskind
2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, TX 78704

(EDITOR'S NOTE)

Editor Emeritus Hal Susskind is the acknowledged guru among World War II Bomb Group newsletter editors. In 13 years of outstanding performance at the helm of the Hell's Angels Newsletter, he set the standards for others to follow.

LOOKING FOR CREW OF AIN'T MISBEHAVIN

To any crew members who served with Russell W. Meier—I am currently researching the missions that Russell flew on his plane *Ain't Misbehavin*, and would like to hear from you.

What was the correct aircraft number for this B-17 and what eventually became of it?

Bob Theiss
1744 Monte Vista Drive
Camarillo, CA 93010

PHOTO OF SCORCHY CRASH SITE SOUGHT

On 11 February 1944, the 359th's B-17 *Scorchy* crash-landed at RAF Shoreham. I would like to find a photo of the crash scene.

Edward J. Twohig
180 East Border Road
Malden, MA 02148

VIETNAM VET'S THANKS TO 303RD AND 8TH AF

As one who was born about five days after VE Day, I would just like to express my appreciation to everything that all of you in the 8th Air Force did for our country and the world.

While in Europe on active duty in the Army, I got to Molesworth in 1991. I have read a lot about the 8th AF, and it was exciting to be there. One hangar remained, and as I flew over, I could still see the outline of the runway.

Thanks again for your sacrifices. You shall not be

forgotten.

I am raising my son and daughter to understand the sacrifice your generation made for mine—and their's.

Michael Crutcher
COL, USA Ret
(1st Bn/5th Cav Vietnam)

WIFE KEEPS 303RD VETERAN INFORMED

My husband, Vernon G. Marker, worked in Supply at Molesworth from 9/44 to when it was disbanded in Africa. He was a parachute rigger as well as clothing and equipment repair person. One of the fliers who bailed out thanked him personally.

Vernon has been the last five years in a skilled nursing facility after a severe stroke. He thinks clearly, but oh so slowly, it's hard to get anything from him about his years at Molesworth.

I have the book "Might in Flight" (I need spinach to carry it), and I hope I can interest Vern by reading to him. He always complimented Col. Kermit Stevens highly, and we were fortunate to live across the street from the colonel's daughter, Ellen, in Camarillo.

Becky Marker
2109 N. Tracy Street
Visalia, CA 93292

PRAISE FOR REVISED EDITION OF O'NEILL BOOK

Brian D. O'Neill's revised edition of "Half a Wing, Three Engines and a Prayer" is a great book about the 303rd and many of its combat crews and mission experiences. It is available through the Internet or major book stores.

Photos and stories about Eddie Deerfield and other combat veterans have been added, with special plaudits to Hal Susskind, Carl Fyler, Lew Lyle, myself and many other 303rd members and friends.

The original edition was one of my favorite 8th AF books. The special revised edition is even better; in my humble opinion it is by far the best collection of stories about a B-17 Bomb Group that has ever been published.

Harry D. Gobrecht
President and Historian
303rd BG (H) Association

EDITOR'S NOTE — Please send any additions and corrections to Pages 18 & 19 to the Membership Chairman. He will include them in the next issue. His mailing address: Edgar C. "Ed" Miller 422 S. Walnut Avenue, Temple, OK 73568-0219

DONATIONS

(Continued from May Issue)

359 Wesley G. Loosemore	Memorial to John J. Fydrychowski
Hdq L. E. Lyle, Maj. Gen.	B/T Gunner-Deceased 10 Sep 1991
Mary (Pratten) Maier	Super Life, to the 303 rd BGA
	Memorial to Lt/Col Henry Pratten Jr.
	Commanding Officer, 1114 th QM
358 Costa Markos	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
444 Sam Masinton	Memorial to my Fallen Comrades
359 L. J. McCullough, Jr	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Charles E. Mc Partlin	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
427 Sterling L. Morrison	Memorial to Thomas H. Morrison
427 Henry H. Means	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
359 James D. Mickle	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
358 Grover C. Mullins	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
358 Joseph A. Murphy	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
358 John J. O'Donnell	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Nathelle B. Oates	Memorial to my Brother,
	Capt Ross C. Bales KIA
427 Andrew R. Olds	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
359 A. Ralph Peters	Memorial to My Fallen Comrades
427 John E. Phillips	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
444 Robert J. Phillips	Memorial to Danny Di Martino
Rene G. Pilon	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
358 Maynard F. Pitcher	Memorial to Loy E. Tingley
358 James H. Pleasant	Memorial to S/Sgt Howard H. Zeitner
Robert L. Redmond	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
427 George K. Richter	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
359 Anthony Sacco	Memorial to his Wife, Annie
	(Royal Air Force member)
	Memorial to the Original Crew of the
Steven G. Sanders	"Knock-Out Dropper"
	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 Aloysius "Al" Sapak	Memorial to Elmer J. Schmidt
427 Eileen E. Schmidt	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 Harold L. Scott	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 B. J. Shipp	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
427 Abbott M. Smith	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Donald G. Smith	Memorial to Richard Smith
360 Samuel W. Smith	Super Life Donation to 303 rd BGA
Douglas T. Sovern	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
359 John W. Spence	Two Donations to the 303 rd BGA
427 Donald L. Spruner	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Roxanne Stafford	Super Life Membership for her
	Father Sheldon A. Stafford
427 Clifford Steinberg	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
427 A. C. Strickland, Jr	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
444 Thomas H. Struck	Memorial to my Buddies in the 444 th
359 Raymond Tartaglia	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
427 John A. Thurmon	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 Rodolfo Villarreal	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 Hector F. Vitale	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Hdq G. R. Weinbrenner	Memorial to Maj Howard E. Norris
	EO, 303 rd BG under Col. Stevens
	Super Life Donation & Memorial to
H. Ronald Welsh	my Father, 1/Lt Harry A. Welsh
427 Edward J. Wienczek	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
360 C. Ramsay Younglove	Donation to the 303 rd BGA

IN MEMORIAM

Robert S. Born	427	1 Nov 1998
Donald Bumgarner	359	3 Mar 1992
Alan D. Chesney	358	Aug 1997
William Chraniuk	359	24 Feb 1998
Jean Couch		20 Mar 1998
		(Wife of Ted Couch-360 th)
Pat Eason		15 Apr 1999
		(Wife of William M. Eason-360 th)
Warren D. Ehrke	359	21 Sep 1997
Wesley James Flanders	427	16 Feb 1999
Lloyd E. Goff	360	18 Jan 1998
Lawrence H. Grant	427	5 Sep 1985
Durward L. Hinds	427	8 Jul 1997
Chester B. Hoven	863	25 Dec 1987
Nicholas P. Konsuvo	Hdq	29 Mar 1998
Kenneth J. Kurtenbach	360	8 Apr 1999
Stanley J. Jacobs	359	3 Mar 1997
William J. Lewis	360	21 May 1997
Rudolph S. Lopez	358	14 Feb 1999
Virginia C. Martel		16 Jan 1999
		(Wife of Albert E. Martel, Jr-427 th)
Joseph J. Manina	359	1 Jun 1999
Paul L. Mazey	358	23 Feb 1997
Edwin C. Munn	359	28 Jan 1999
Edward Neuwirth	358	4 Feb 1990
John J. O'Donnell	358	4 Jan 1999
Elizabeth Pawlowski		10 Dec 1997
		(Wife of Edward J. Pawloski-427 th)
Ernest C. Price	358	28 Nov 1998
Jack Q. Rencher		27 Feb 1999
		(Son of Jack & Louise Rencher-358 th)
Louise Rencher		18 Apr 1999
		(Wife of Jack P. Rencher-358 th)
Irvine Schmeltzer		Jan 1999
		(Wife of Charles S. Schmeltzer-358 th)
Albert J. Senechal	427	2 Jan 1999
Cosby D. Thomas	863	13 Mar 1994
William L. Travis	41CBW	22 Nov 1998
Henry A. Welsh	359	3 Apr 1987
John B. White	358	9 Apr 1999
Julius W. Whitney	359	31 Jan 1995

NEW DONATIONS

Thomas I. Akens	359	To the 303 rd BGA
Richard Bowler, Jr	427	To the 303 rd BGA
John H. Broshear	427	To the 303 rd BGA
Ted Couch	360	To the 303 rd BGA
Gordon E. Hoeft	427	To the 303 rd BGA
Kenneth G. Hildebrand	358	To the 303 rd BGA
Richard R. Johnson	427	To the 303 rd BGA
Bill & Alice McLeod, Jr	358	Memorial in Honor of
		Louise Rencher & son, Jack Q. Rencher
Peter L. M. Packard	358	To the 303 rd BGA
Edward J. Pawloski	427	To the 303 rd BGA

DIRECTORY DONATIONS WANTED—The 1999 Membership Directory was published at a cost of \$5,339.60. Donations are requested to defray this cost. Please send to Membership Chairman at the address in the box at the top of this page.

NEW MEMBERS

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Henderson, NV 89104-3123 (702) 454-9651
Loren M. Clark (359), 925 Catalpa Rd, Arcadia, CA
91007-6020 (626) 446-8621 (Florence)
Ray E. Derr (358), 941 First St, Nescopeck, PA
18635-1235 (570) 752-7480 (Dora)
Howard E. Fox (358), 22350 Fox St, Cassopolis, MI
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Ira Friedman (427), 15075 Whitney Road #207, Delray
Beach, FL 33484-4013 (561) 498-5119 (Ruth)
Harry S. Goland (360), 5333 N. Sheridan Rd, #P 7,
Chicago, IL 60640-7371 (773) 907-9553 (Ethel)
Henry R. Krebs (358), 1928 S. Adams Rd, Veradale,
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Robert L. Phelps, Jr (359), 36500 Marquette #429,
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Horace Proctor (358), 6555 Brunswick Road,
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Walter J. Saucier (18th Wea), 2000 Hillock Dr,
Raleigh, NC 27612-3951 (919) 781-2865
Howard E. Tullus (1199), 1321 Edgefield Dr,
Garland, TX 75040-7628 (972) 272-7687
Cleveland W. Whitten (360), RR 1, Box 75, Stanton,
TX 79782-9711 (Carole)
Elmer A. Wilson (427), P. O. Box 219, North
Carrollton, MS 38947-0219 (601) 237-6687

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE 303RD

Paula J. Barentine, 9202 Oglethorpe Dr, Houston, TX 77031-
3406 (713) 981-7314 (Dau of S/Sgt Dana A. Hodge-359th)
Aaron T. Beck, 794 Crawford Road, Box 464, Fredericktown,
PA 15333-
Bruce A. Bielecki, 1115 Johnson Place, Reno, NV 89509-2379
(775) 322-2257 (Vicki) (Son of S/Sgt John B. Bielecki-359th)
John M. Bielecki, 9880 SW 104th St, Miami, FL 33176-2845
(305) 271-9222 (Karen) (Son of S/Sgt John B. Bielecki-359th)
Walter A. Bohannon, 1215 Windsor St, Gadsden, AL 35903-
2148 (256) 492-3332 (Betty) (Friend of S/Sgt Bill Hendon)
John B. Carder, 10218 67th Lane N, Stillwater, MN 55082
(Son of T/Sgt Warren O. Sproule-358th)
Linda L. Carter, 6809 W. Lake Anne Dr, Raleigh, NC 27612-
7219 (919) 785-9610 (Mike) (Dau of Sgt Jack A. Lemley)
Janice Chapman, 12 Drydens Close, Titchmarsh NR,
Kettering Northants NN143 DD England
David R. Cooley, 311 John St., Bound Brook, NY 08805-
2057 (732) 356-9107 (Maureen)
Lennell L. Farrell, 2328 Glen Ellen Circle, Sacramento, CA
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Jean B. Harmon, 4703 Ashton Court, Tampa, FL 33624-4351
(813) 969-0958 (Peter) (Dau of S/Sgt John B. Bielecki-359th)
Thomas B. Hayman, JAC PSC 47, Box 1366, APO AE 9470
Phone: 01480 52740 (Anna)
William J. Lewis, 831 Northwinds Dr, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-
2070 (610) 527-3908 (Nancy) (Son of Sgt Wm. J. Lewis)
Ken MacDermid, 3490 N. Key Dr, #416C, N. Fort Myers, FL
33903-7034 (941) 997-0309
Mary Mack, 1014 N. State Street, New Ulm, MN 56073-1348
(507) 354-4249 (Dau of PFC George E. Schwartz)
Francis E. Moden, 2917 Dubuque St., Des Moines, IA 50317-
8314 (515) 265-2695 (Stella)
John D. Myers, 1144 Mermaid Dr, Annapolis, MD 21401-4777
(410) 757-2081 (Pat) (Nephew of 1/Lt Donald Brightbill-KIA)
Frances A. Paino, 11 Shelley Pl, Huntington Station, NY 11746-
3425 (516) 427-8745 (Bro of Louis V. Garbarino, Jr KIA)
Bud Peed, P.O. Box 846, McHenry, MD 21541-0846 (301) 387-
8571 (Pat)
Major Ted A. Pierson, 2601 Putnam Drive, Clovis, NM 88101-
9350 (505) 762-8938 (Son of S/Sgt Lawrence C. Pierson)

Christopher J. Ryder, 2013 NE Ridgewood, Portland, OR
97212-1463 (503) 287-9922 (Son of S/Sgt Irving J. Ryder)
John O. Sproule, 163 Baltusrol Road, Franklin, TN 37069-
7149 (Son of T/Sgt Wayne O. Sproule—358th Togglier)
Dr. Woody Harris, Stillwater Arpt Mem. Museum, 2020-1 W.
Airport Rd, Stillwater, OK 74075-1023 (405) 372-7881
Bryon Stoner, 1042 S. 57th St, Kansas City, KS 66106-1528
(Grandson of T/Sgt Charles H. Stoner-359th Flt. Engr.)
Patrick A. Walsh, 228 Main St, #1R, Malden, MA 02148-6905
(781) 324-8129 (Amy) (Grdson of S/Sgt A. J. Senechal-427)
Timothy A. Walsh, 20 Pond St., Georgetown, MA 01833-1638
(978) 352-9783 (Patricia) (Grdson of S/Sgt A. J. Senechal)
Deborah (Goudy) Ward, 116 Sheffield Dr, West Grove, PA
19390-9737 (610) 869-3048 (Richard) (Dau of Cpl Wm. F.
Goudy-Waist Gunner 359th)
Mark J. Adamic, 808 Westminster Rd, Juliet, IL
60435-3402 (815) 730-0729

ADDRESS CHANGES

Arvid Anderson (358), 2892 Mickelson Pkwy, #108,
Fitchburg, WI 53711-6459 (Summer Residence)
G. Neil Bech, Jr (358), P.O. Box 2855, Carefree, AZ
85377-2855 (480) 575-0744 (Betty)
Robert L. Bogert (360), 254 Bel Air Road,
Los Angeles, CA 90077-3811
David Chang (359), 1562 Pele Street, Honolulu,
HI 96813-1852 (808) 524-3497
Mrs. Jean Conver, 7272 Deaconsbench Court,
Cincinnati, OH 45244-3708 (For reason's unknown
Mrs. Conver was not included in the Widow's list.)
Mrs. Jean Dombrowski, 114 Hayes Mill Rd, #C-206,
Atco, NJ 08004-2457 (609) 753-2109
Mrs. Marjorie Dyer, 17 Washington Lane, #B,
Westminister, MD 21157-5869
Andrew T. Goettman (359), 9705 Lake Dess Road,
#825, Winter Haven, FL 33884-3236
(Street # incorrect in 1999 Master Directory)
Lester L. Hilliard (427), 23485 Evening Snow,
Moreno Valley, CA 92557-2808 (Incorrect zipcode
number in the 1999 Master Directory.)
Thelma N. Hubley, 2540 Grass Valley Hwy, #67,
Auburn, CA 95603-2535
Richard W. Jamieson (358), 371 Bethel #34,
Sanger, CA 93657-9441
Thomas N. Kelly (359), 504 Carlyle Road, Knoxville,
TN 37922-4608
Robert R. Kerr (427), 2625 E. Southern Ave, C-57,
Tempe, AZ 85282-7650 (480) 831-3573
Derek Lee, 209 S. 650 West, Payson, UT 84651-2060
(For reason's unknown, name was left out of the
Associate Listing, but contained in Zipcode list.)
Edmond Maggia (359), 573 SW 21st Way, Deerfield
Beach, FL 33442-6119 (954) 596-2780
Gary L. Moncur, 4483 Palmer Drive, West Valley
City, UT 84120-5052 (801) 969-7369 (Susan)
Robert W. Morris (360), 3246 Pine Terrace #1,
Macedon, NY 14502-8873 (315) 986-0198
Rayford E. Pullen (358), 6311 Hwy 224, Greenville,
TX 75401-6190 (Mary)
Joseph W. Szudlo (360), 719 W. Wescott Dr, Phoenix
AZ 85027-5557 (623) 492-9839 (Lucy)
Arnold A. Wedlund (427), 29410 Chapek Road,
Ashland, WI 54806-3665 (715) 682-6549
Franklin F. York (358), 748 E. County Ln, Greencastle,
IN 46135-8898 (765) 653-5545 (Summer Residence)

NEW SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

Richard Bowler, Jr.	427th
Ted Couch	360th
Gordon E. Hoeft	427th
Richard R. Johnson	427th
Peter L. M. Packard	358th

THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

In 1945, as a 303rd Bomb Group pilot at Molesworth, **Harry Gobrecht** had *The Right Stuff* to earn a Distinguished Flying Cross—the ability and guts to overcome formidable challenges in the air and get things done. However, as our front page story reports, the DFC didn't come his way.

A half-century later, he had a different and more potent combination of *The Right Stuff*—witnesses to testify to and support his World War II exploits and the political clout to back them up. After a rigorous review by the Air Force, the awarding of the Distinguished Flying Cross was finally approved.

What does this mean for the scores, perhaps hundreds, of other 303rd veterans who justly deserved military awards which they never received, often for the simple reason that no one did the required paper work in wartime England? The Gobrecht formula can be a winning one, but the odds against it grow greater and greater with the passage of time.

The 358th Squadron action for which Harry Gobrecht was cited took place on 22 January 1945. **Glynn Shumake** was named commanding officer of the 358th three days later. Shumake's B-17 went down on the Bremen raid of 30 March 1945, and he became a prisoner of war. An award to Gobrecht didn't materialize.

In 1997, as a direct consequence of a casual meeting with Gobrecht at a 303rd reunion, retired Air Force Colonel Shumake filed a formal recommendation. It was seconded by retired Air Force Colonel **Edgar Snyder**, the Deputy Group Commander in 1945, and endorsed by retired Air Force Major General **Lewis Lyle**. Further endorsements came from California Congressman **Ron Packard** at the request of Gobrecht and from Arkansas Congressman **Jay Dickey** at the request of Lyle. Even with this array of support, it took numerous reviews and two years of processing before the DFC grant was approved.

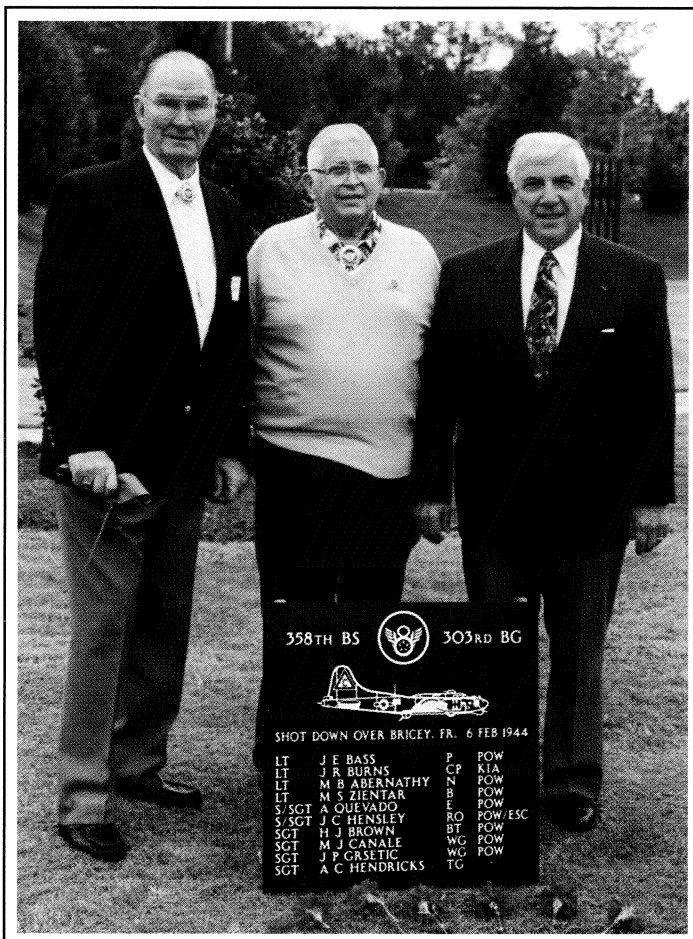
Look at the fortunate confluence of people and events that made it happen. The four 303rd Bomb Group principals who took action to win approval of the award were all members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, easily accessible to each other, let alone alive to tell the tale. Documentation and corroboration were readily available.

This should not deter others in the Association from seeking recourse to awards they believe they should have received. Under the pressures of the war, many justified recommendations were never made, or, if made, were inadequate, lost or ignored. Those oversights applied to ground support personnel at Molesworth as well as to air combat crews.

Take the case of **Martin Plocher**, the 303rd pilot whose story appeared in the May issue and continues on pages 7 and 8 of this edition. He was awarded the Air Medal for successfully ditching his B-17, with two engines out and a dead co-pilot, to save the lives of the eight surviving crew members. Didn't he deserve at least a DFC?

URGENT APPEAL FOR 303rd BOMB GROUP PHOTOS!

The Hell's Angels Newsletter needs photos taken during your time at Molesworth. Send them to Editor, Hell's Angels Newsletter, 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016.



BASS CREW DEDICATES PLAQUE IN HERITAGE MUSEUM CEREMONY

As part of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum's third anniversary celebration, three of the five surviving members of the 358th Squadron's Julius "Sam" Bass crew gathered to dedicate their plaque. Pilot Sam Bass (above, on the left) was joined by Navigator Milton Abernathy (center) and Waist Gunner Michael Canale.

The Bass crew was part of the Vickery Provisional Group formed at Pyote, Texas in the summer of 1943 for first phase training, then moving on to Dyersburg, Tennessee for second and third phase training. The mounting losses of the 8th Air Force in bombing attacks on Nazi Germany forced an early overseas shipment of the crew after it had completed little more than half of the training cycle.

On 6 February 1944, the original Bass crew, with a new co-pilot and tail gunner, bailed out over Bricey, France. Co-pilot Myron Goldman perished. The others became prisoners of war.

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
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Eddie Deerfield, Editor
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