

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

February, 2000

## DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL AT MOLESWORTH TO HIGHLIGHT 303RD BOMB GROUP'S RETURN

The dedication of a new memorial to the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (H) on Saturday 3 June 2000 will highlight the return of the 303<sup>rd</sup> to RAF Molesworth. The ceremony and a hangar dance to follow will culminate two days of events honoring the Hell's Angels.

The Joint Analysis Center and 423<sup>rd</sup> Air Base Squadron have designated Friday 2 June as Molesworth Heritage Day, and will host a picnic for returning 303<sup>rd</sup> veterans and family members. Brian McGuire and Robin Beeby will guide tours of the base, providing an opportunity for the veterans and family members to meet with Molesworth personnel.

Prior to the dedication ceremony at 1700 hours on 3 June, the group will tour the Might In Flight Building which houses the artwork honoring the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group. Guests will also receive mission briefings on the two units at Molesworth today – the JAC and the 423 ABS.

Tamarac Travel, Inc., has been named tour agent for the return to Molesworth scheduled from 31 May to 8 June. Estimated per person costs are \$1,299 plus air fare. Dick D'Amato, the travel agency tour director, can be reached toll-free at (800) 228-9690 for details.

The impressive design for the memorial was based on features of numerous memorials at former 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force airfields in eastern England. The site selected and approved for the construction by both the U.S. Air Force and UK Ministry of Defense is on a grassy knoll just inside the outer fence of the base but outside the security gate. This will afford 24-hour daily access for the general public as well as visual security.



**SITE OF THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL ( X marks the spot) is inside the main gate of RAF-Molesworth but outside the security gate, thus providing easy daily access to the location by the public.**

Perfitt Ltd, was selected from the six UK stonemasons that submitted formal bids. Keith Rackham, Managing Director of Perfitt, visited Molesworth in August and September to meet with Brian McGuire, who heads the project, Lt. Col. John Howe who commands the 423<sup>rd</sup> Air Base Squadron, Sqdn Ldr Clive Wood who commands the Molesworth RAF contingent, and civil engineers who will prepare the site. In December, Rackham returned to Molesworth with scale models to get final approval on placement and composition.

The design includes three granite panels. The central horizontal will include an outline of a B-17 in 303<sup>rd</sup> livery. There will be a granite triangle, in which a C will be engraved, atop this panel. On either side of this central panel will be a taller vertical panel. On these panels, under an American flag on one and USAAF wings on the other, will be engraved information on the history of the 303<sup>rd</sup> at Molesworth. Site preparation began in January and construction was sched-

uled to begin in February.

There will be a short reception after the memorial dedication ceremony, followed by a hangar dance in one of the original T-2 hangars. Several other 8<sup>th</sup> AF groups will also be in England in early June, and they will attend the hangar dance. An estimated 1,300 people are expected, mostly local British citizens. Nearly everyone will be dressed on 1940s garb, as the orchestra plays '40s music. The inside of the hangar will be ringed with displays by many 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force-related organizations.

Fund raising for the memorial is underway. The cost of the project is around £15,000, which equates to approximately \$25,000, depending on the exchange rate at the time of payment. Contributions are being sought by Brian McGuire from private individuals and both U.S. and U.K. corporations. The extent of a contribution, if any, from the 303rd Bomb Group Association treasury has not been determined. (See "THE EDITOR COMMENTS" on page 20).

### Campaign To Save 303rd Gets Off To Good Start

The 303rd Bomb Group Association's treasury, which suffered a net loss last year as operating expenses exceeded income, is making a slow but steady comeback with the concerned support of Molesworth veterans, their families and friends.

Treasurer Jack Rencher reported that as of 20 December 1999 341 donations had been received in the total amount of \$15,316. He said the average donation was \$45 with individual contributions ranging from \$500 to \$5.

Rencher pointed out, however, that this was only a beginning and more donations are needed if the Association is to remain solvent. He urged members who haven't donated to send in their checks.

In his recent letter to all members, President Bill Roche noted that the Association's survival now depends more than ever on loyal membership to sustain "an outstanding newsletter, a fine membership directory, enjoyable reunions and support for memorials."

Roche explained, "In the past, a significant source of our income was from dues, donations and gifts. As our membership grows older and fewer, we cannot maintain our financial needs from dues because when you reach 77 you are exempt from the required dues. We must now move to another plateau. We will establish a Benefactor Program for voluntary annual donations."

The names of the first wave of benefactors are listed on page 18 of this Newsletter. Future donors will be named in upcoming editions.

**Please make benefactor checks out to the 303rd Bomb Group Association, and mail them to Jack Rencher, 303rd BGA Treasurer, P. O. Box 7927, Boise, ID 83707.**



## 303<sup>RD</sup> BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor--Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXII, No. 1 3552 Landmark Trall, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 February, 2000

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc., a tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501(c)(19), founded in 1975, is chartered in the State of Florida to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) and to provide opportunities for 303<sup>rd</sup> veterans, families and friends to meet.

Because members are helping to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H), dues and/or donations to the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc. are tax deductible. 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, become non-voting Associate Members.

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

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## The Hamburg Mission of 25 July 1943

# DEATH-DEFYING GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS ON 303rd's *FLAK-WOLF*

The difference between life and death on a B-17 during a combat mission in World War II was often decided on how effectively crew members worked together, meshing their skills like gears in a fine watch. An example of teamwork at its best was the mid-combat interaction of the 10 men aboard the 427th Squadron's *Flak-Wolf* on the 25 July 1943 mission to Hamburg.

Their story was told the following day in newspapers throughout the United States by Gladwin Hill, foreign correspondent for The Associated Press, who was covering Molesworth. Late last year, AP granted permission to the Hell's Angels Newsletter to publish the article as it originally appeared.

To verify the details in the story, Editor Eddie Deerfield recently interviewed three members of the original crew for their recollections of the Hamburg mission.

Jack Rolfson, who would often alternate positions with Bill LeFevre as pilot and co-pilot, said the Hamburg raid was "a problem mission" and described the AP story as "very accurate."

Engineer and top turret gunner Jake Good said, "I was hit by shrapnel when I was firing on three fighters coming straight at me. I got one and the next got my oxygen bottle. It blew up against my stomach and the shrapnel cut through my twill flying suit, wool pants, shirt and long johns, and lodged in my cotton underwear before reaching my skin. After the flight, I loosened my belt and all the pieces fell to the ramp."

"I had passed out in the turret and with my legs locked slipped from the hatch to the lower cat walk between the pilot and co-pilot. The navigator said his log showed I was unconscious for over an hour. Back at base, the doctor checked me and said I was OK. The next day, July 26, I made the trip back to Hamburg."

Bombardier Abbott Smith said, "This was one of my roughest missions from flak and fighters. Chuck Herman, our navigator, was credited with shooting down

an FW 190. Robert Sink, in the ball turret, continued firing until he passed out after his heat suit and oxygen failed.

"For Sgt. Sink's bravery, the Lucky Strike Hit Parade radio program dedicated a carload of cigarettes to him and to the crew."

□ □ □  
A U.S. BOMBER STATION, Somewhere in England, July 26—(AP)—Accidents happened so fast on the Flying Fortress "Flak Wolf" in the American raid yesterday on Hamburg that the gunners had to play a game of musical chairs pinch-hitting for each other.

The bomber came back with a bag of three German fighters.

The pilot, Lieut. William Lefevre of Chicago, said laughingly, "It was a tough one to finish on." He was on his last mission over here.

Soon after the plane started out the ball turret gunner's heating equipment failed, leaving Sergt. Robert Sink of South Haven, Mich., freezing in his cramped, underside fishbowl.

The below-zero cold quickly froze up his oxygen apparatus. Although gradually losing consciousness, he stuck to his guns through the defense screen of 200 German fighters, until bombs were dropped and the target had been passed. Then, when he tried to climb out of the turret, he collapsed.

Waist Gunner Sergt. Durward Hinds of Los Angeles, who also was finishing his last raid, said, "I turned around and saw him slumped over the turret opening. The radio operator, Sergt. T. Dale Brandfas (of Columbia, Neb.) and I went over, lifted him out



THEY HAD TO BE "JACKS OF ALL TRADES" on the Hamburg mission of 25 July 1943. Standing (l-to-r) are Co-pilot Jack Rolfson, Pilot William LeFevre, Bombardier Abbott Smith, Navigator Charles Herman and Flight Surgeon Major Laird (not on mission). Kneeling are Ball Turret Gunner Robert Sink, Radio Operator Dale Brandfas, Waist Gunner Durwood Hines, Radio Operator J. J. Jessie (not on mission), Waist Gunner Bill Fleming, Tail Gunner Joseph Serpa, Engineer Joe Gray (not on mission) and Engineer Jake Good. Co-pilot Rolfson often flew as pilot with this crew.

of the turret and worked over him with oxygen until we got him conscious again."

Lefevre said, taking up the story, "Then our guns started going out. The tail guns froze up, then the top turret phoned down to say he was in trouble. He had been whirling around so fast shooting at German fighters that he tore the mixing bag on his oxygen mask and said he couldn't see. I told him: 'If you can't shoot, keep swinging that turret around so they'll know we got a boy in there.'

"So, right there, at the thickest of it, three of our most important guns were out—tail, top turret and ball turret—whew!

"Then the top turret gunner, Sergt. Jake Good (of Indianapolis) started passing out from lack of oxygen. I could hear over the interphone his voice was getting weaker and weaker."

The pilot leaned back and knocked at the top turret gunner's legs with an emergency oxygen bottle but the

gunner couldn't reach it.

Just then, waist gunner Hinds came forward and took over the top turret so Good could climb down and get oxygen.

Tail Gunner Sergt. Joseph Serpa of Onset, Mass., who is small, moved up to take over the important ball turret position.

Radioman Gunner Brandfas moved into Serpa's place in the tail.

Ball turret gunner Sink, revived in the radio compartment, took over the radio-man's gun.

Lefevre said, "The old interphone kept us going. We had a lot of tail attacks, and with them you have to fly by the tail gunner. When he says 'kick it' kick it—you fly by sound."

With half the crew members working other men's jobs, Lefevre, with the assistance of the co-pilot Lieut. Jack Rolfson of Omaha, Neb., got the bomber through the fray and home safely.

□ □ □

## US Engineers Rescue *Werewolf*

# 303rd B-17 Gets “Made to Order” 2,250-foot Runway

(In the last issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter, military historian Iris Drinkwater described how Pilot George Oxrider brought *Werewolf* down on one engine, landing on a football field at Langdon Hospital, a British mental institution at the south coast seaside town of Dawlish. Moments earlier, Oxrider had ordered the rest of the 358th Squadron crew to bail out. The story continues.)

By Iris Drinkwater

*Werewolf* was hemmed in by trees, hedges and walls, and the road was too narrow for the plane to be removed that way. Thus it was initially thought that she would have to be dismantled in order to get her out of the cabbage patch.

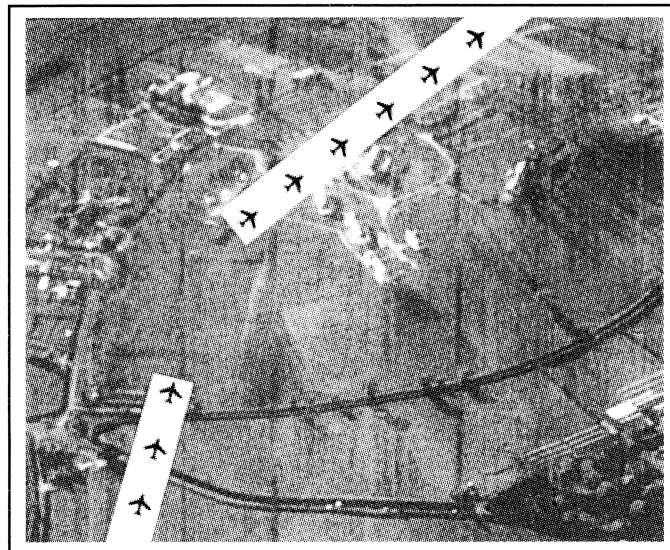
Then, in came the American Engineers, under the command of Lt. Col. Charles R. Broshus, with: "If the Air Corps can get it in here, the Engineers can get it out." And so, twenty men, equipped with a bulldozer, grader, caterpillar and dump trucks got down to work.

They felled oak trees, removed 120 feet of wall, and a hedgerow, making a 2,250 feet runway strip, adding a further 1,000 feet, for reasons of safety, by clearing and compacting fields at the end of the "runway". Fourteen days after landing, *Werewolf* revved up with three new engines installed by a Mobile Repair Unit and went gracefully on her way, kicking up the biggest dust storm ever seen in the area, and passing right over the head of one farmer who had lost a number of oak trees.

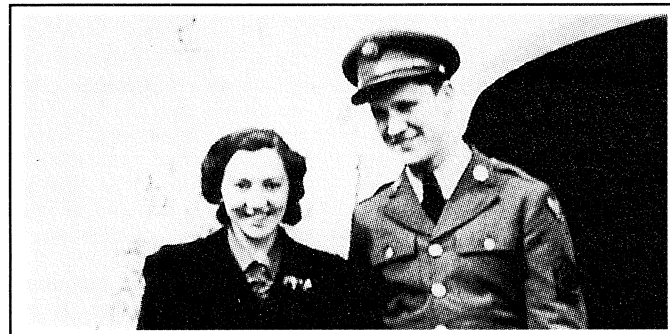
*Werewolf* would not return to the 303rd Bomb Group again. First, it was flown to Honington, then on April 22, 1943, it was assigned to the 401st Squadron of the 91st Bomb Group, but not for long. On June 11, *Werewolf* went to the US 3rd Base Air Depot at Langford Lodge, then on June 14 to Little Stoughton (8th Group RAF Bomber) and finally to 1st Combat Crew Replacement.

Exactly 50 years after he had parachuted onto Dartmoor, *Werewolf's* radio operator Everett Dasher returned to the exact spot on which he had landed. It was a typical English winter's day. Cold, raining and with a strong wind blowing. Everett was taken onto Dartmoor in a restored American World War II jeep, in company with Monica Alford, then a teenager, who had rescued him on January 23, 1943, and with whom he had kept in contact since that day.

Afterwards, Everett and his wife, Helen, visited the place where George Oxrider had landed in *Werewolf*, and then on to the Mayor of Dawlish's Parlour and an official civic welcome. He met many of the people who had witnessed the landing of the Flying Fortress.



THE FLIGHT PATH IN AND OUT as *Werewolf* descended on one engine to land on the football field on the Langdon Hospital grounds, and then took off two weeks later on a dirt runway cleared from a farmer's field. In this 1997 photo by Dickie Dougan, former RAF pilot, many of the buildings shown were constructed after the war.

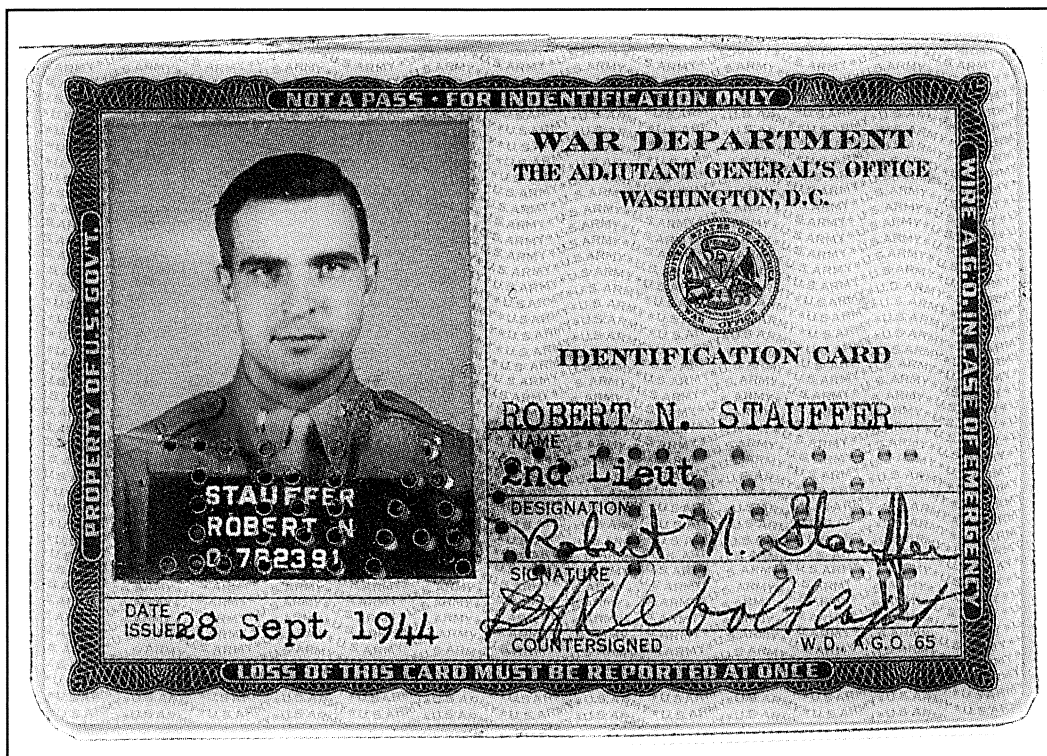


THE HEROINE ON 23 JANUARY 1943 was Monica Alford, who led 358th radio operator Everett Dasher to safety after he bailed out of *Werewolf* onto the desolate Dartmoor hills near Dawlish.



TELLING IT THE WAY IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO— Everett Dasher, who became a Protestant minister after the war, gestures as he briefs Dr. Prentice of Langdon Hospital about his bailout near the mental institution. At left is Monica Alford who came to his aid. At right is Dasher's wife, Helen.





## CLERICAL ERROR OR TACTIC TO TRAP A FORGER?

By Bob Stauffer

Back in 1946, The Detroit Free Press ran a story about the misspelling of the word IDENTIFICATION in the border at the top of the standard US War Department ID card. The newspaper asked if the spelling with the extra "N" as IDENTIFICATION was an honest mistake or an attempt to trap a forger who might inadvertently correct the spelling. As far as I know, no one responded to that question in the newspaper.

I still don't know the answer. I wonder if there are any members of the 303rd BGA who noticed the error? Maybe it's still a legitimate question.

## A Combat Rarity — Original Crew Flies Together to Complete 30 Missions

By Cleveland Woodward Whitten, Jr.

The crew "found" me at Pyote, Texas during first phase training in the early fall of 1943. I was standing outside of my barracks when I saw this group of airmen headed towards me. I guess they had found out from headquarters that I was not assigned to a crew. They told me they had a full crew except for a ball turret gunner, and asked if I would like to join their crew in that position. Although I had been trained as an engineer/top turret gunner, I said "yes." It was the best decision I made during the war.

We were together for 30 missions, flying with the 360th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group from 26 March 1944 to 22 June 1944. Five of those missions were to Berlin and also included some of the roughest battles of the air war.

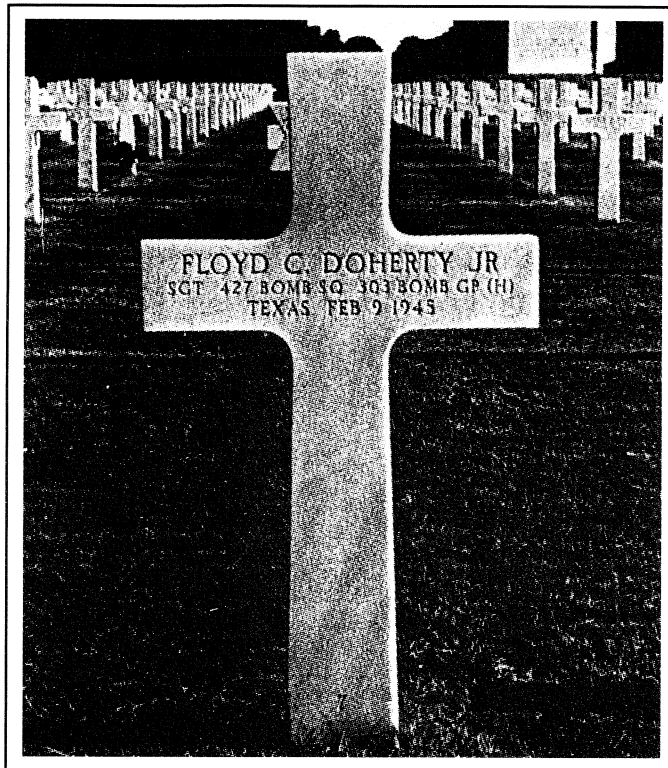
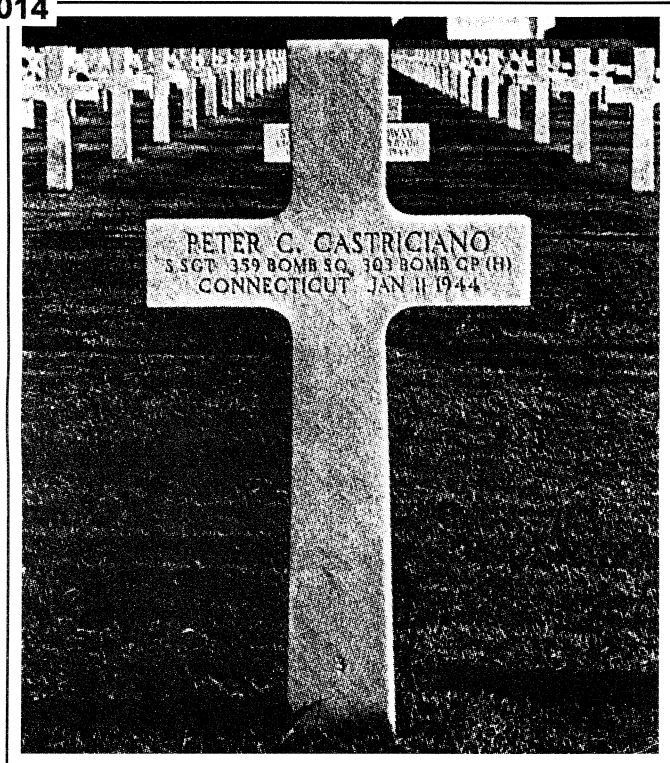
Our pilot, John Williams, was great. He had finished his 30 missions by the time the rest of us had completed 28 missions. This happened because John had volunteered to fly as pilot for two brand new crews on their first missions. Afterwards, he could have told us, "I'm through and out of here," but he did not. He flew our number 29 and 30 missions with us. We credit John's skills with our crew making it through our 30 missions and all able to come home safe.

When I look back to those times, I have to say that our mission number 14 to Saarbrücken on 11 May 1944 was the roughest. The flak was fierce. Our number 4 engine was knocked out. The controls were knocked out for the number one engine. There was oil all over the wings and fuselage and even in the ball turret. The formation went off and left us. Some P-51's escorted us to the enemy coast. We were lucky. Our squadron lost at least one plane. That crew went down over the target, and I think they had only one mission to go.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to Carol Jean Whitten, Cleve's "Iowa War Bride" for helping to compile the story. I can confirm the flak on the Saarbrücken mission. Shrapnel hit me in the face, narrowly missing my left eye.)



THE CREW THAT STAYED TOGETHER—Standing under *Mary*, a training B-17 at Pyote, TX are (l-to-r) John Ott, tail gun; James Northam, waist gun; Stuart Barber, radio operator; Cleveland Whitten, ball turret; Howard Schwenke, engineer, John Mitchell, waist gun. Kneeling are Neil Coats, co-pilot; John Williams, pilot; Ronald Gruneth, bombardier, and Joseph Fazlo, navigator.



## Ardennes—Lest We Forget GRIM REMINDERS OF 303RD BG LIVES LOST

Terry Eckert, son of 303rd Bomb Group veteran Merle Eckert, traveled recently to Belgium where he visited the Ardennes Cemetery at Liege. He obtained a Selected Burial Manifest which listed the names of 303rd servicemen buried at Ardennes. There were 92 names. By squadrons, there were 22 from the 358th, 27 from the 359th, 20 from the 360th and 23 from the 427th.

S/Sgt Peter C. Castriciano, whose marker is shown above, was killed on the 11 January 1944 mission to Oschersleben, Germany to attack FW-190 assembly plants. He was engineer on the 359th B-17 *Baltimore Bounce* piloted by Lt W. A. Purcell. The plane suffered a direct hit, exploded and all 10 aboard perished.

Sgt Floyd C. Doherty, Jr. was a 427th tailgunner on Lt. A. K. Nemer's crew. On 9 February 1945, aboard *Pogue-Ma-Hone* to attack a synthetic oil plant at Lutzendorf, Germany, his B-17 collided with another 427th B-17 piloted by Lt R. J. Barrat. Doherty bailed out, but his parachute failed to open. Of the 18 men aboard the two aircraft 13 died in the collision.

Partially visible behind the Doherty cross and in the upper corners behind the Castriciano cross are Stars of David marking Jewish graves. Death in war was no respecter of race or religion.

Among the 303rd's finest buried at Ardennes:

**358th Squadron**—Sgt James S. Baker (24 May 44), 2nd Lt James R. Burns (2 Mar 44), S/Sgt Edward J. Cassidy (11 Jan 44), Sgt Sidney N. Chambers (19 Jul 44), 2nd Lt Alfred B. Clumpner (24 May 44), 2nd Lt Robert P. Davidson (22 Jun 43), Sgt Dante Di

Martino (11 Jan 44), S/Sgt Jim F. Hoy (11 Jan 44), 1st Lt Ray W. Jess (22 Jun 43), S/Sgt Byron W. Johnson (22 Jun 43), S/Sgt Alex Le Blanc (18 Mar 43), Sgt Elmer D. McWilliams (20 Mar 45), S/Sgt Delbert Mikkelsen (18 Mar 43), 2nd Lt William J. Millner (11 Jan 44), Sgt Nicholas Rodock (10 Apr 45), S/Sgt John Schor (24 Feb 44), S/Sgt L. H. Schweinebraten (24 May 44), S/Sgt Gustaf J. Simon (24 Feb 44), 1st Lt Marshall L. Smith (24 Feb 44), S/Sgt Herman L. Stauter (24 Feb 44), 2nd Lt Edward J. Troy (24 Feb 44), S/Sgt Frank M. White (22 Jun 43).

**359th Squadron**—T/Sgt Thomas F. Bachom (20 Dec 42), 2nd Lt Arthur A. Bergeron (16 Oct 44), 2nd Lt George J. Beys (19 May 44), Sgt William A. Brookstra (20 Mar 45), S/Sgt Peter C. Castriciano (11 Jan 44), 2nd Lt Richard L. Clemensen (12 Sep 44), Sgt Harley R. Eastburn (11 Jan 44), Sgt Leonard N. Faner (11 Jan 44), S/Sgt William K. Forsythe (30 May 44), 2nd Lt Edmund W. Gaines (16 Oct 44), 1st Lt Rolland M. Haines (11 Jun 43), T/Sgt Kenneth T. Kalk (11 Jun 43), Sgt Frederick Kohan (20 Mar 45), S/Sgt Ralph E. Ledogar (30 May 44), 2nd Lt James Litherland (28 Feb 44), Sgt Rufus C. Litton (3 Jan 43), 2nd Lt Francis M. McMurtry (20 Dec 42), S/Sgt Herman G. Moening (19 May 44), S/Sgt Shirley L. Moss (21 Nov 44), 2nd Lt Marvin H. Mussett (11 Jan 44), Sgt Clarence A. Pesta (20 Mar 45), 1st Lt Noel E. Shoup (28 Feb 44), 2nd Lt Frank W. Stafford (12 Sep 44), 2nd Lt William A. Sysel (30 May 44), S/Sgt Laurence W. Thomas (20 Dec 42), 1st Lt Orville S. Witt, Jr (20 Dec 42), T/Sgt Lyle C. Woods (20 Dec 42).

(Continued on Page 16)

## 1,530 Copies in Circulation

# 2ND EDITION OF "MIGHT IN FLIGHT" HISTORY SOLD OUT

With the sale of the last book in the second edition of "Might In Flight," the highly praised comprehensive history of the 303rd Bomb Group is no longer available for purchase from the Association and is now out of print. The first edition sell-out was 1,000 copies, with 530 ordered and sold in the second edition.

The last remaining copies were sold at the Oklahoma City reunion last October. Sales of the 1,530 books in the first and second editions earned a total net profit of almost \$15,000 for the Association's treasury.

Harry Gobrecht, 303rd Bomb Group Association Historian, started to compile the first edition of "Might In Flight," with the sub-title "Daily Diary of the Eighth Air Force's Hells Angels," in May, 1991 at the request of then president Carl DuBose. It was published late in 1993. The second edition, with substantial revisions, was published in 1997. There are no plans for a third edition.

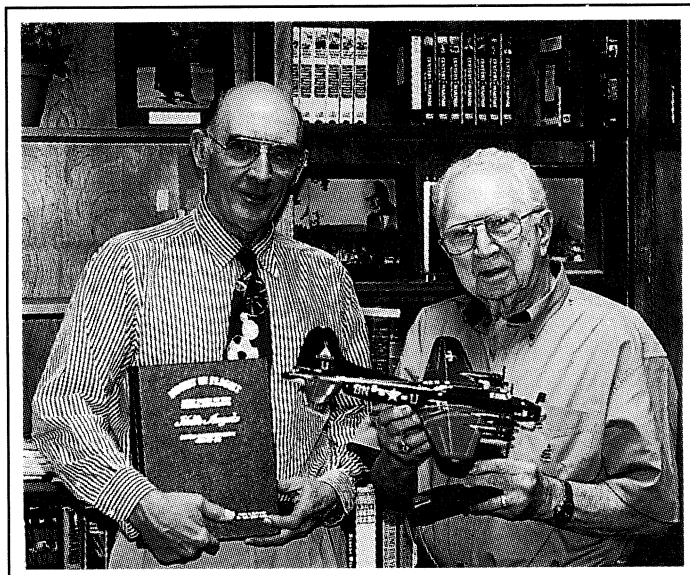
In Gobrecht's words, "Our book is the daily diary of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) from its activation in February 1942 to it's deactivation in 1945. We proudly consider the 303rd Bombardment Group as the premier Eighth Air Force Bomb Group during World War II. We were one of the few pioneer Bomb Groups that participated in the air war against Germany from the beginning to the end. Our B-17 Flying Fortresses helped prove that daylight precision bombing could be achieved with devastating results.

"Our early "trial by proof" missions demonstrated the effectiveness of air power and helped develop bombing methods that were later utilized by the many bomb groups that later joined the Eighth Air Force. Our 364 combat missions from England were an Eighth Air Force record.

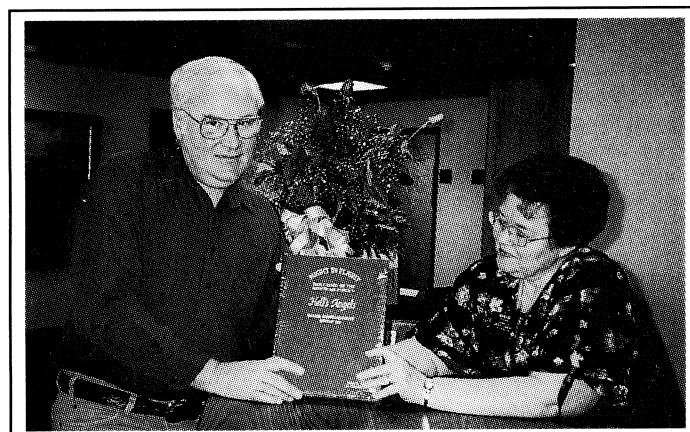
"Our *Might in Flight* book attempts to portray the important heritage of both the Eighth Air Force and our 303rd Bombardment Group. Leadership, courage and heroism were required to complete a successful combat bombing mission. All of these essential traits were daily exhibited by the men of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H)."

In addition to the three special presentations pictured on the right half of this page, "Might In Flight" has also been presented to the Gann Museum of Saline County, Arkansas by 303rd BGA Senior Advisor Lew Lyle; the Strategic Air Command Museum at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska by Robb Hoover, president of the Lemay Chapter of the SAC Society; the Eighth Air Force Museum at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana by former 303rd president Bud Klint (with Quentin Hargrove and Lew Lyle); the Command Library at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida by Hell's Angels Newsletter editor Eddie Deerfield; the Air Education & Training Command Museum Library at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas by Bill Bergeron; the Colorado State University ROTC Library at Fort Collins, Colorado by Harold "Red" Timm; the Museum of Valor in Fresno, California by former 303rd president Bill McLeod, and the Stillwater Airport Museum Library, Texas by Membership Chairman Ed Miller.

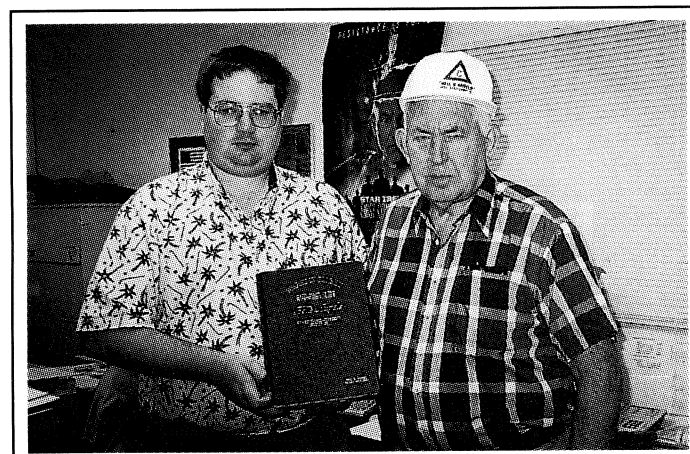
The first and/or the second edition can also be found in the collections of the US Library of Congress, the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum, the United States Air Force Academy, the US Air Force Museum, the National Air and Space Museum, the Virginia Military Institute, the Maxwell Air Force Base Simpson Center, Penn State University, Travis Air Force Base, the Lone Star Flight Museum, the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall of Pittsburgh, the Orange County Public Library in California and the Joint Analysis Center at RAF-Molesworth.



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN — Tom Hatfield, Dean of Continuing Education, holds a copy of the 303rd's "Might in Flight" presented to him on behalf of the Association by Past President Hal Susskind. The B-17 model of "Thunderbird" displayed by Susskind is part of the dean's personal collection of WW II memorabilia.



LATTER DAY SAINTS CHURCH LIBRARY IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH — 303rd BGA Web Master Gary Moncur makes the presentation to Eldrena Lee for the church's Family History Library.



MARCH FIELD, CALIFORNIA — Todd Bothel, Museum Library Collections Manager, receives the donation from Harry Gobrecht, 303rd Bomb Group Association Historian and editor of "Might in Flight."



# Return to Molesworth

For a change, that day in June 1945 was clear and warm at Molesworth Air Base in England. The war in Europe had ended a month before. All of the famous Hell's Angels aircraft of the 303rd Bomb Group had already left for other bomb groups and airfields in England. Practically all of the flying and ground personnel had gone with the aircraft except for a small group of us who were selected to carry the colors of the 303rd to North Africa to join the Air Transport Command in Casablanca.

Finally, it was my turn to leave. Sitting in the bombardiers seat of the 3rd Division B-17 sent to transport us, I looked out through the plexiglass nose at the camouflaged buildings as we taxied into takeoff position at the end of the runway. I felt the pilot release the brakes and the B-17 started to roll. Our speed increased and soon we were abreast of the control tower, ready to break ground.

As we lifted off I took a last look at the compact piece of England known as Molesworth AB and thought of my first mission from there, when we bombed the rocket installations at Pas-de-Calais, France on December 24, 1943. I thought of my other forty takeoffs, loaded down with flak suit, and oxygen mask, to bomb targets deep in Germany like, Stettin, Leipzig, and Berlin.

It was a little like leaving home. As the Fortress gained altitude, I took one final look at Molesworth and silently promised myself that someday I would revisit her.

Here I was, June 20, 1970, twenty-five years later, at 18,000 feet, departing the coast of Belgium aboard Sabena Flight 605, a jet from Brussels to London. It was quite a contrast to the 150-mph B-17 that I'd left England in a quarter century before.

From that 18,000-foot altitude, the waters of the English Channel seemed very calm and a long way down. In a matter of minutes we would be making a landfall on the English coast, as I had done so many times before...so very long ago.

As I racked my memory, I recalled that the last time I had flown this route was as a lead navigator returning from a long mission to Germany in April of 1945. It had been my forty-first combat mission.

As the Caravelle let down, we

breezed over the lush English countryside and soon we were circling, on final, for Heathrow Airport. The tires softly kissed the runway. I was back in England, keeping that vow I had made a quarter of a century ago.

Before going to Molesworth, my wife and I plus three of our children decided to drop in at St. Clement Danes Church, in the Aldwych section of London. Destroyed in the war, it was restored and rededicated as the Central Church of the Royal Air Force in 1958.

Inside the entrance and on the left is a moving tribute to the US airmen based in England who died in World War II. In a lighted, glass-enclosed case, under the US Air Force shield, a large logbook contains their names. That day the book was opened to the list of names starting with "H." The page is turned daily.

Below the glass case, in a recessed cubicle, are four books that also contain the names of the dead in alphabetical order. I opened to page 195, which listed five Mathises. One of them was Jack, the 303rd Medal of Honor winner. Also listed was his brother Rhude Mark. On page 295 I found the name of C. G. Turkington, the tail gunner on my original crew who was wounded on the Oberpfaffenhofen mission and lost his life on the raid on Magdeburg in September of 1944.

More than ever I wanted to visit Molesworth AB.

So at 8:00 a.m. on a sunny June day, by myself, I thought Molesworth was a place I had to visit alone - I boarded the Underground at Paddington for St. Pancras Station. I had hopes of getting the 8:30 train to Kettering, just as I had done when returning from a weekend pass to London, twenty-five years ago.

Then the huge glass-domed station was dirty, dusty, crowded. The glass roof bore gaping holes from errant shrapnel and German bombs. Today the glass was whole and clean. Blue trains had replaced the dirty olive-drab ones of wartime.

At 9:47 a.m., still on time we pulled into Kettering. I found a bus station, but the service was no better than wartime - a sort of generation gap. The buses to Thrapston ran only on Tuesdays and Fridays. Today was Thursday.

Was I to get this close and still not make it, after all these years?

A phone booth in the bus station listed, under the heading US Air Force, an organization called "Redistribution and Marketing." Place of business - Molesworth.

The boss of the plant, a Scotsman named James Hodgkinson, listened to my story and promised to send a car for me.

Barry Vickers, a likeable RAF veteran, picked me up and deposited me in front of his office in a low green structure at Molesworth. I recognized it immediately. It had housed Group Headquarters.

After a few more moments with Vickers and Hodgkinson, I strolled down a street of the base. It was quiet. Off in the distance you could hear a faint noise, like aircraft metal being thrown on a salvage heap.

I was attending a wake - the wake of an airfield. Down another street, past a row of empty Nissen huts, entrances almost hidden by tall grass, I found an open door and stepped back in 1944.

There was rubble on the floor, and the quiet emptiness was in strong contrast to the noise of times past, when young airmen crowded around the coal stoves at night - when we had coal - shooting the breeze, writing letters, and eating. On alert nights, the lights went out early. Who can ever forget the wake-up voice behind the flashlight, saying you were scheduled for a mission that day?

Who can ever forget how empty that hut could seem after a mission when you walked in and learned your buddies had failed to return? Like the sixty empty bunks in the 358th Squadron on the night of the Oschersleben raid in January '44. Taking a last look, I slowly closed the door and returned to 1970.

I kept walking and at last came to the main runway. A barricade, long rusted and broken, marked its end. Grass pushed its way up through the tar, reaching for the sunlight. Far off in the distance you could see the control tower. Its shape had changed quite a bit from the days when Bodie Fite and Captain "Mac" used to stand on its balcony and fire their flares, signaling the planes to start down the runway. I could still hear the engines of thirty-six Fortresses awaiting takeoff, roaring defiance. In my two years at Molesworth, visibility was rarely ever this good. You were lucky if you could see the plane ahead.

But no engines roar and no

planes roll down this runway anymore.

Each step brought back more memories: Col. Kermit Stevens, "Old Bow Your Neck," who was the group CO when I reported in; Colonels Lew Lyle, William Calhoun and William Raper, who replaced Stevens and who used to show up at the morning briefings with his huge German Shepherd. The dog usually managed to steal the chair of the Deputy Commander, Lt. Col. Snyder. But the dog had more rank in his toothy mouth than Snyder had on his shoulders, and squatter's rights usually won out. Lt. Col. Dick Cole, who was my CO at the 359th, and Capt. J. "Tailwheel" Kaiser, who was my roommate for almost two years at Molesworth, at Casablanca and Dakar in Africa, and the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, these names stuck in my mind. Bob Hullar, Bill and Em Heller (a recent casualty in Southeast Asia), John Tulloss, Bill Hoover, Dick Bowen, Bill Goolsby, the latter three Texans - what outfit didn't have its share - all accompanied me down the runway of time.

Jack Mathis and Forrest Vosler, Medal of Honor winners; Jim Cheney, then the Group Navigator, now the USAF JAG; Murray Pearl, the wake-up voice behind the early morning flashlight.

And of course the planes: "Hell's Angels," "The Knockout Dropper," "The Duchess," veteran of fifty-nine missions, which carried me to Oschersleben on its fiftieth mission - only one man was ever injured in her crews - Jack Mathis; "The Eight Ball," "Jersey Bounce, Jr.," in which Vosler won the Medal of Honor; "Miss Behavin," which carried me on my first mission; "The Duchess' Daughter," "Miss Lace," and so many more gallant ladies.

I said good-bye to Molesworth and wished her well. Chief Master Sergeant Devorchuk, one of the two Air Force people assigned to the Center, gave me a lift to the rail station at Huntington to catch a fast train to London.

The Molesworth I knew is dead. Perhaps I should have been content to remember her as she was, busy, vibrant, and alive. But what airman doesn't want, at least once, to turn back the hands of time and revisit the scenes of early triumphs? Molesworth was my "Kitty Hawk." I had to make that final sentimental journey.

# From The President

Now that we are in the last year of the twentieth century, it is a good time to look back over our years in that century. All of us have had three fourths of our lives or better in that century. Therefore, I think we have the knowledge to enable us to evaluate the changes that have occurred in all aspects of modern life.

In travel alone the change is spectacular. For untold centuries the fastest means of transportation was the horse until in the last century the speed increased by the introduction of the train and, in the very end, the introduction of the automobile. Now, however, in this century we have moved from there through improved cars to planes to interplanetary rockets. What will the new century, starting a new millennium, produce? Interplanetary space ships traveling at the speed of light or a method of travel that allows a ship to "warp" from one galactic area to another in seconds?

In communication we went from primitive telephones through cable transmission to today's ubiquitous cell phones and now through the international web we can communicate by instant transmission to any country in the world and carry on a lively conversation. We went from face to face conversation to teleconferencing in cities across the globe. From tintype pictures to movies to digital cameras, from picture albums to VCRs and home movies to cable transmitted family documentaries.

Our ability to calculate abstruse problems has gone from the pad and paper and the abacus to giant computers that occupied a whole building on to laptop computers that can calculate more and faster than the previous monsters. This has led to space travel to the moon and now to a neighboring planet. Technology is now reaching for areas that we could not even consider possible in our early years.

During this century we have just about doubled longevity through improved medical advances. One of the contributing factors has been the decrease in the infant death rate. Unfortunately, however, we have also increased the efficiency of death dealing armaments from muzzle loaders to atomic bombs. We have moved significantly from small alliances to multi-nation groups such as the United Nations.

In this century we have all had a part in contributing to the general advances in all areas as depicted above although our contribution has been on a total effort rather than a significant individual contribution. We must take credit for the negative aspects as well as the good results of our efforts.

However, I think our guardianship of this century has been beneficial to all of mankind and we will pass the responsibility we have had to the new generation with the expectation that they will guide civilization to greater heights during their interim.

**Bill Roche**

## 8th AF HERITAGE MUSEUM ACQUIRES F-4 PHANTOM

Ferocity: the word best describes the main attribute of one of the most famed and feared planes to ever fly combat missions. The F-4 Phantom was indeed an awesome aircraft to behold. Marked by its screeching approach and characteristic nose, its thundering dual engines announced its arrival. Now 35 years after its service in the jungles of Vietnam, The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum is taking possession of an F-4 Phantom, to be placed on exhibit in front of the Museum in Pooler, Georgia. Its purpose will be to form the core of a memorial to honor the men and women who served during the Vietnam era.

After a full "demilling" and removal of combat and electronic systems by the 165th Airlift Wing of the Georgia Air National Guard, the plane will undergo complete refurbishment and re-painting at Gulfstream Aerospace before its circuitous journey back to the Museum and eventual display. Once at the Museum, fighter jet #815 will form the centerpiece for a memorial to all Vietnam War aviators of all five branches or the Armed Forces who gave their lives in service to their country. It will also serve as a tribute to all United States aviation personnel. (See PHOTO on page 20).

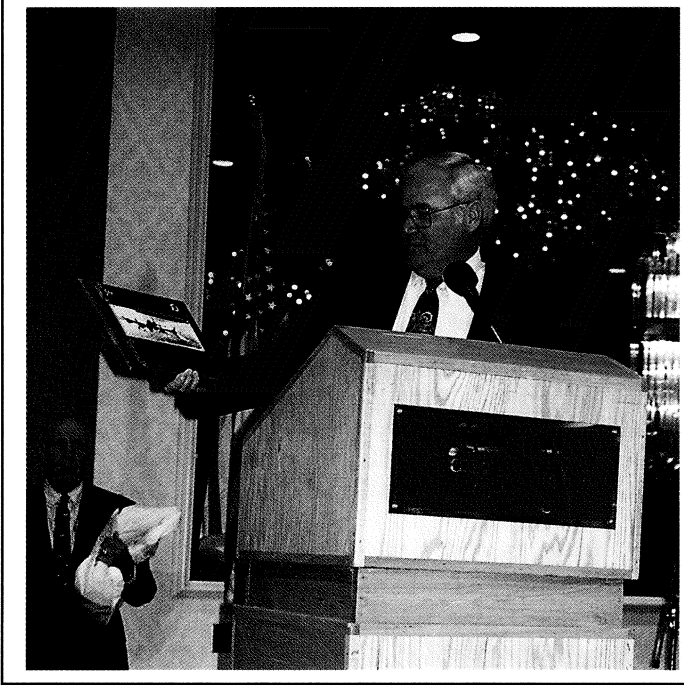
On December 11 of last year, The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum presented Christmas Over There: An Eighth Air Force World War II Christmas. It represented the Museum's first annual Christmas program celebrating the friendliness and generosity of the Eighth Air Force while stationed in England. Using a series of actual first person narratives, performed by costumed actors, the past truly came alive.

In December of 1942, Eighth Air Force airmen worked together to make Christmas a festive special occasion for the local British children, many of whom were war orphans. Airmen decorated bases, arranged visits by Santa Claus, served the children a holiday meal, made cards, introduced them to ice cream, and arranged for special presents. The heartwarming stories renewed many a belief in human selflessness, dignity, and kindness.

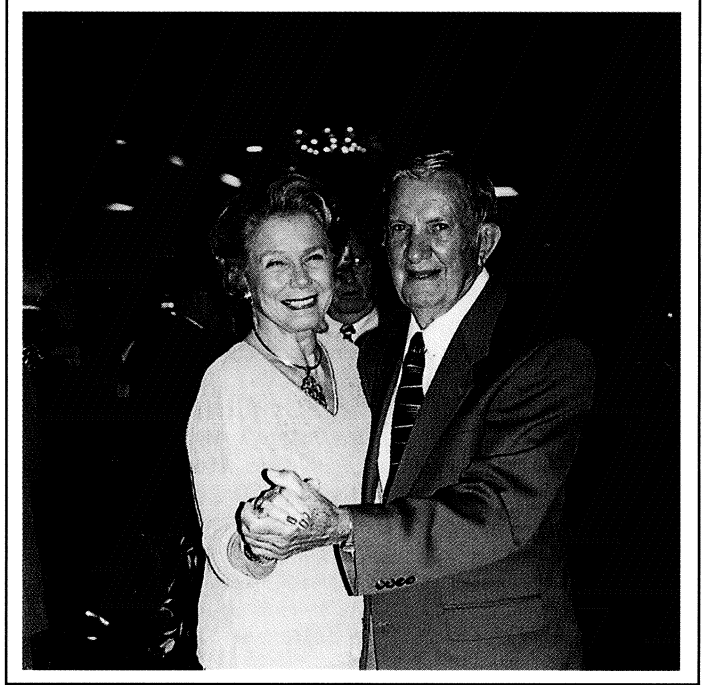
Part of the John P. McGovern Heritage of value series, this program is sponsored by the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, John P. McGovern, M.D., The Chatham County, GA Grants-In-Aid Program, and the 94th Bomb Group in honor of Cliff C. Hatcher, III.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum is a history and aviation museum that promotes understanding and appreciation of the contributions of the men and women who have served in the air forces of the United States. The Museum is committed to meeting the educational needs of future generations through a variety of innovative programs, unique exhibits, and historical archives.





**PROUDLY DISPLAYING HIS AWARD**, 303rd BGA Web Master Gary Moncur is honored for designing and maintaining a web site that has been recognized far and wide for its excellence. Hovering in the background is presenter Walt Mayer.



**THE GENERAL AND HIS LADY** glide gracefully around the Marriott ballroom dance floor at the farewell banquet. Retired USAF Major General Lewis E. Lyle, who continues to serve the 303rd as Senior Advisor, holds his radiant wife Betty.

# THE WAY THINGS WERE IN REUNION IN OKLAHOMA CITY

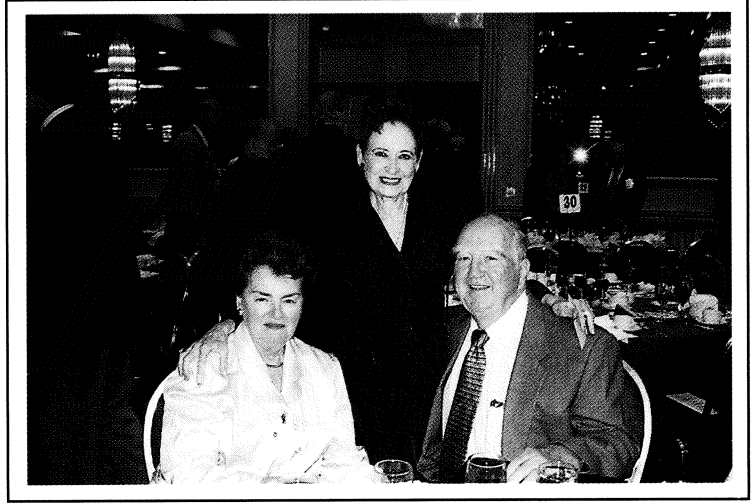


**OKLAHOMA CITY REUNION CO-HOST JILL MILLER** counsels several guests on how to make seating reservations for the banquet. The stampede for tables which marred earlier reunions has been resolved in recent years by assigning table locations by lot to individuals asking to sit together.

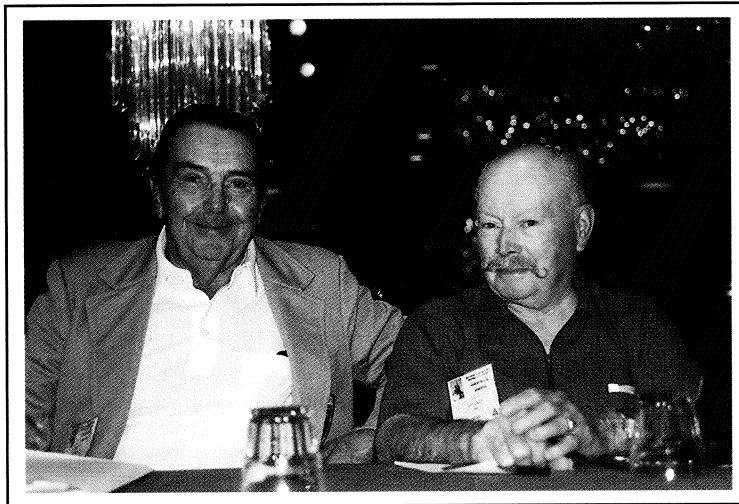
Helping to maintain law and order are Betty Kelley (left) and Rae Susskind.



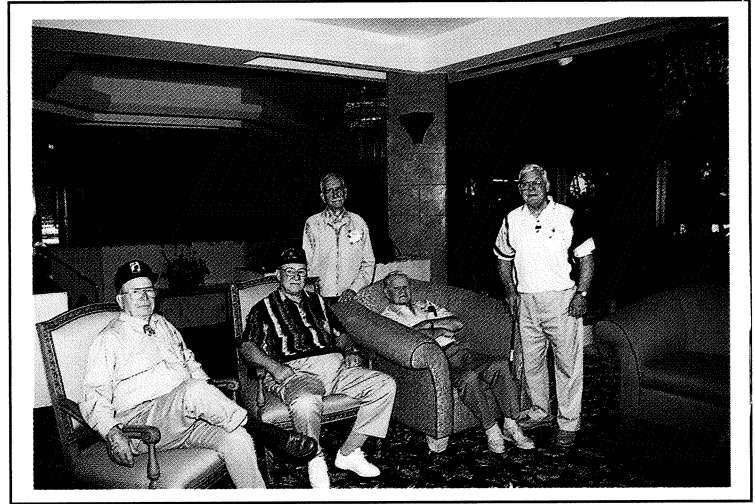
**BELLYING UP TO THE BAR** before entering the ballroom for dinner and the evening's festivities are some of the 303rd's finest. The Oklahoma City reunion attracted approximately 450 veterans, family members and friends.



**PHOTOGRAPHER ANNE CARUSO**, who took most of the reunion photographs for the Hell's Angels Newsletter, poses in front of the camera for a change. She's seen with Doris and the 360th's Bill Roche, newly elected president of the 303rd BGA.



**A RARE MOMENT TO RELAX** for Bill Eisenhart, former 359th Squadron representative on the Board of Directors, and Ed Gardner, 427th veteran, who serves as the Association's Computer Data Committee Chairman.



**TAKING A BREAK FROM EXCHANGING WAR STORIES** are (l-to-r) Jack Fischer (358th), Dick Miller (358th), Frank Cueto (359th), Bill Simpkins (358th) and Gene Girman (359th). The stories seem to get bigger and better at every reunion.



**A SMALL REUNION AT THE BIG REUNION**—358th waist gunner Angelo Petix and his wife Louise (at left) join up with co-pilot Clayton David and Scotty. The men flew missions on the same crew.



**PREPARING TO REPORT AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** are Fred Reichel, the 427th's representative on the Board, and Joanna Tressler, elected to represent the widows.

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

## **Board of Directors**

### **303rd Bomb Group (H) Association**

### **Friday 8 October 1999**

(Following is a summary of the minutes of the meeting as compiled for the record by Secretary Richard R. Johnson. To request a copy of the full minutes, write to The Secretary, 5901 Joe Road, Deale, MD 20751)

The meeting was called to order at 0900 by Harry Gobrecht, President of the Association. Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted without being read. The president told of other groups that were about to dissolve, but the 303rd was not one of them. "We have been very fortunate to have a dedicated staff."

Bill Roche, VP for Administration, commented on the 2000 reunion in San Diego and mentioned that the Luau would be informal "with Hawaiian shirts."

The treasurer's report by Jack Rencher covered past expenditures authorized by last year's board. Extensive discussion ensued concerning the search for new members and the cost. The board will fund this project as needed. Eddie Deerfield gave a run down on the cost of printing and delivering the newsletters. He requested a \$4000 advance to hold in reserve in the event the quarterly allotment was not received in time to pay the printer and post office. Moved and seconded that the board approve the budget items as discussed. Passed with no dissent.

VP for Reunions Ed Miller gave a financial report on the 1999 reunion. Total attendance was 432 with possible drop-ins.

Squadron and supporting unit reports were given at this point. Al Dussliere was introduced as the new alternate for the 427th squadron by Fred Reichel, 427th rep replacing the late Vern Stone. Joanna Tressler reported a disappointing response to her letters to widows. Charlie Sykes gave a report on the PX which is doing well. Hal Susskind, chairman of the Past Presidents Advisory Committee, presented the slate of nominees for the coming year. They are: Bill Roche, president. Dick Johnson, VP Administration. Al Dussliere, Secretary. Jack Rencher, Treasurer. VP Reunions was left vacant for now.

Lance Stoner, Associates Representative, gave a report on his trip to Molesworth. The museum wall in the JAC was very impressive. Bill Roche said that Budget and Ways and Means has all been taken care of in previous reports. Ed Miller's "Project Digest" is on course and on budget.

Bill McLeod, chairman of by-laws committee, gave a run-down of changes. Voting rights of the various categories of membership were discussed at length. "Friends of the 303rd" was dropped from the by-laws. They are covered in "Associate Members." Eddie Deerfield recalled a recommendation made at last year's Board meeting that the Newsletter Editor and chairman of the Past President's Committee should be on the executive board. There was favorable comment.

Walt Mayer said that he is out of the plaque business but that \$1,000 per year has been on the budget.

Directory donations were received from 250 of 1800 members bringing in \$4,348.50 to help cover the cost of \$4,400 dollars. (\$5,500 was budgeted).

Lew Lyle brought up Ways and Means as one of the standing committees. Ed Miller accepted this responsibility. It was proposed that the positions of Newsletter Editor and chairman of Past Presidents Committee become elective offices to enable them to become members of the Executive Board. Majority "aye," one "nay."

A reunion at Molesworth was described by Harry Gobrecht. Tamarac Travel is setting up a trip to coincide with the dedication of the monument at the gate. Moved and seconded to go ahead with travel plans by Tamarac. All voted aye. Planning for the gateside monument proposed for Molesworth has been started and funding was discussed at length. There was a discussion on the funding of any shortfall, only after the people in the area of Molesworth were unable to pay for the monument.

Hal Susskind reported on how members had been found through press releases. Harry Gobrecht reported on the activities of Brian McGuire and Robin Beeby on our behalf in England.

Lew Lyle gave a report on the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. There will be a groundbreaking for the chapel soon and the hope is that the B-47 will be mounted by the time the chapel is finished. The museum is starting to break even on its funding.

Ed Miller asked all to sign the posters that will be located in the hall. Linda Garrison will have entered 155,000 names in the computer for our CD Rom. Ed Miller has enlarged the "Project Digest" to include ground personnel. We are spending \$21,000 dollars on this project and would like to sell these CD Roms to recoup our expenses.

Overlooked WW II awards need to be filed and presented through the proper channels.

Bill Roche reported on the next reunion to be held at San Diego. This reunion was approved, and the East coast in the Washington DC area was approved for 2001.

Return to Molesworth for May 28 to June 3 was to be arranged by Tamarac Travel Agency who will be handling reunions for a few other bomb groups at the same time, but we will only be with other units at the hangar dance. We will do a tour of JAC and see how they do satellite photos. This facility will assure that Molesworth will be there for a long period.

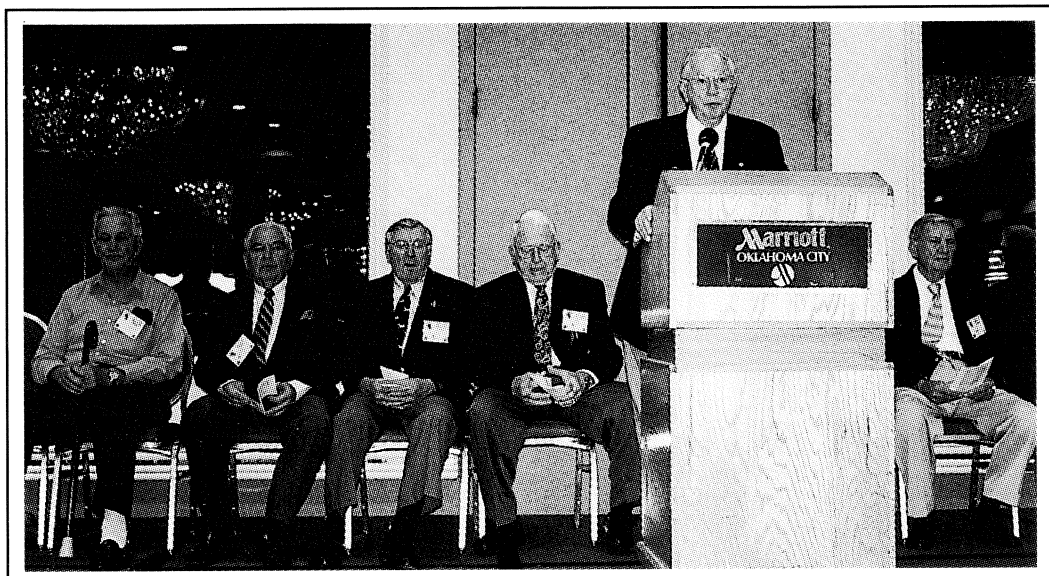
Harry Gobrecht showed diagrams of the 303rd Bomb Group monument that will be placed at the Molesworth gate. It will cost an estimated \$23,653 dollars. Most, if not all, funding for the monument will be supplied by corporate and citizen donations in the UK. The following motion was made by Eddie Deerfield: 303rd member donations for the Memorial will be held in reserve by the Association's treasurer until after all donations made from outside sources are applied to the costs of the Memorial. 303rd donations in excess of the balance required to cover the remaining actual costs of the Memorial will be retained in the Association's treasury to be used for other approved projects. The motion was seconded and after a short discussion was passed as read.

Motion and second to have the Molesworth reunion on the proposed dates. Passed.

Under new business, we have adequate directories for this year. Ed Miller moved that the super life members donate 100 dollars for a two year period at which time they would be required to donate a like amount in order to remain on the rolls as super life. Lew Lyle questioned the concept and mentioned that members paying on an annual basis would be paying as much over a period of years. It was decided to let the Ways and Means committee take care of the fundraising and Ed Miller withdrew his motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 1238.

Those present: Joanna Tressler, Eddie Deerfield, Hal Susskind, Ed Gardner, Al Dussliere, Walt Mayer, Fred Reichel, Lance Stoner, Henry Johansen, Lew Lyle, Bill Eisenhart, Jack Rencher, Frank DeCicco, Harry Gobrecht, Edgar Miller, Bill Eason, Charlie Sykes, Bill Roche, Bill McLeod, Walter Brown and Dick Johnson.



THE 303RD BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION'S REUNION MEMORIAL SERVICE was conducted by Membership Chairman Ed Miller.

Seated and waiting to come to the podium are (l-to-r) The Reverend Everett Dasher who gave the benediction, Eddie Deerfield, Jim Taylor, Quentin Hargrove and Lew Lyle.

## REMEMBERING THE RECENT PASSING OF NINETY COMRADES

The Memorial Service conducted on Sunday 10 October in the ballroom of Oklahoma City's Marriott Hotel was the emotional high point of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association's 16th reunion. The names of 90 Molesworth veterans who passed away in the preceding 12 months were read aloud by Chairman Ed Miller, followed by the mournful sound of TAPS by a bugler of the Oklahoma National Guard.

The service opened with the posting of the colors by the Guard contingent. The then-president Harry Gobrecht made welcoming remarks, Bishop Rene Gracida gave the invocation, Hal Susskind as chairman of the Past Presidents Committee named 1999's four Association Service Recognition honorees (Ed Gardner, Ford Kelley, Charles McClain and Jim Taylor) and Senior Advisor Lew Lyle delivered a memorial message.

There were readings by three veterans of the 303rd, a traditional feature which had its beginnings at the Association's 1996 reunion memorial service in the main chapel of the US Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs. At the 1999 service, Quentin Hargrove and Jim Taylor recited favorite poems by anonymous authors and Eddie Deerfield composed and read a eulogy.

### THE FORGOTTEN MAN

Quentin Hargrove

Through the history of world aviation, many names have come to the fore. Great deeds of the past in our memory, the heroes of many a war. The pilot was everyone's idol—he was brave, he was bold, he was grand as he stood by his battered B-17 with his helmet and goggles in hand.

But for each of our flying heroes there were thousands of little renown. These were the men who worked on the planes but kept their feet on the ground. We all know the name of Lindbergh and we've read of his flight into fame. But think, if you can, of his maintenance man—can you remember his name?

And think of our Molesworth heroes who flew Thunderbird, Iza Vailable and Bad Penny. Can you tell me the names of their crew chiefs? A thousand-to-one you couldn't name any. Now, combat crews are highly trained people and silver wings are not simply a trifle, but without the work of the maintenance man they would be in the infantry carrying a rifle.

So, when you think of the mighty B-17's as they marked their paths through the air, remember the grease-stained man with the wrench in his hand. He's the one who put them there.

### FLYING FREE

Jim Taylor

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free; I'm on the course Fate set for me. I've dropped my wing and pulled away; I could not stay another day—to laugh, to love, to fly or play.

Things left undone must stay that way; I've found calm winds at close of day. If my flight has left a void; then fill it full with recalled joy.

A flight we shared, a laugh, a kiss; oh, yes, these things I, too, will miss. Don't be burdened by this sorrow; I wish you tail winds for tomorrow. My life's been full; I've savored much—good flights, blue skies—a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my span seems all too brief; don't stretch it now with undue grief. Lift up your soul and soar with me; God has me now—I'm flying free.

### EULOGY

Eddie Deerfield

Each of us, at some time or another, has listened to a eulogy. We encounter them, often somewhat reluctantly, along the path of our lives. They signify a final chapter -- the passing of a person, an event or a thing. Sometimes they're quaintly humorous, more often serious, always melancholy because they commemorate an ending.

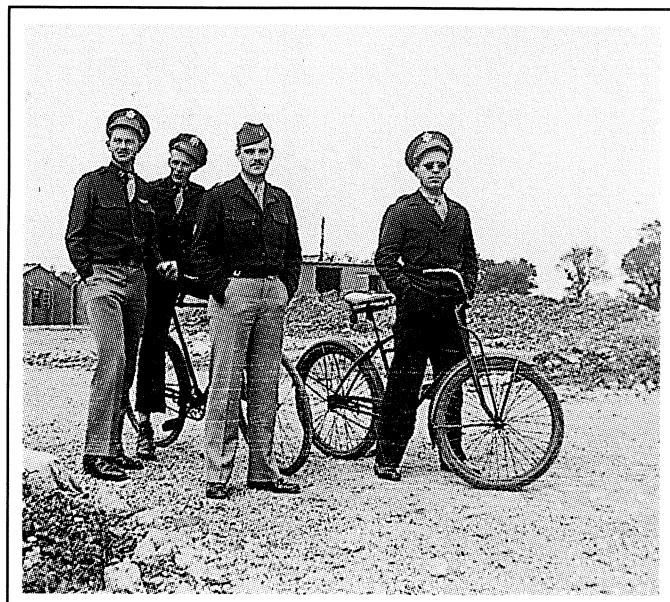
I can't do a eulogy today. It wouldn't be right. This is not about an ending. This is about a beginning. A beginning that every veteran of the 303rd Bomb Group feels in his heart and mind each time we gather in reunion. A new beginning, a rejuvenation of the spirit, a celebration of the days of our lost youth.

Don't look in the mirror to see who you are. Mirrors lie. Don't dwell on the failings in your physical being, on the infirmities of age. They're just part of life. To see who you really are, look deep into the eyes of your wife, your children, your grandchildren, your fellow veterans of the Great Generation. The men who stood shoulder to shoulder with you at Molesworth during the Second World War, when loyalty and honor had real meaning, when we lived one day at a time, not daring to think about the future because there might not be a future.

The love you'll see in the reflections in those eyes don't lie. They'll tell you how old you really are. In those eyes, you're ageless.

So, don't consider my brief remarks as eulogy. Perhaps a better word would have been prologue. Every year that we meet in reunion is a new beginning. I pray that all of us here today will continue to come together in reunion for countless years into the next century. We are each to the other the true mirror of our lives. We are each our brother's keeper.





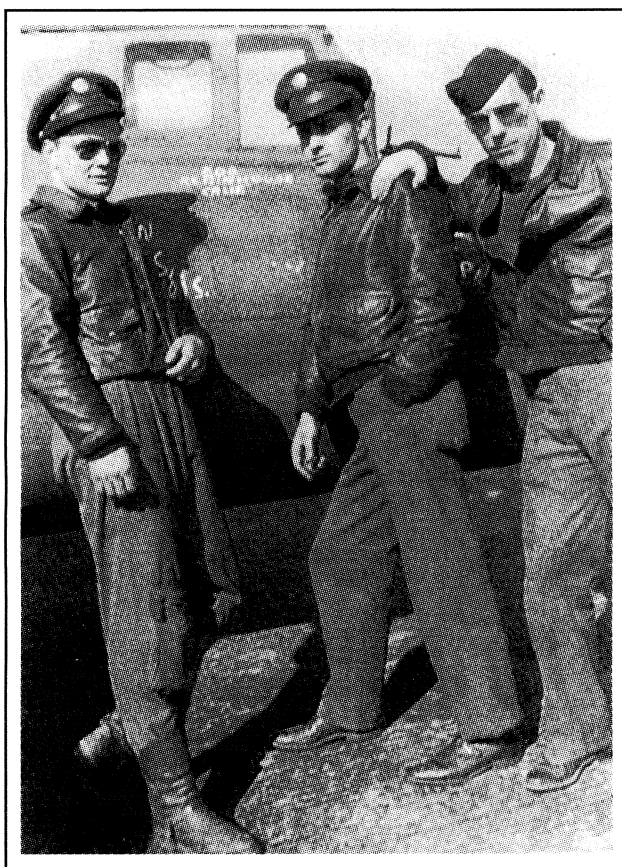
## 303rd's Pin-up Men of The Month

**TOP LEFT**—Capt. William Calhoun and Capt. Clark Gable compare notes at Molesworth on the 4 May 1943 mission to attack the GM and Ford plants at Antwerp, Belgium. Calhoun piloted the 359th's *8 Ball MK II* while Gable flew as observer and manned the radio room gun. Gable produced and narrated the USAAF film "Combat America."

**TOP RIGHT**—Heading for the chow hall are (l-to-r) Capt. Joseph Strickland, 359th navigator; Lt. Norman Jacobsen, 359th navigator; Lt. Richard Vinal, 427th HQ Staff Officer and Lt. Allyn Lindquist, Group Mess Officer.

**BOTTOM LEFT**—Autographing the B-17 *Black Diamond Express* before the aircraft left Molesworth on 30 March 1944 to return to the US for a bond drive tour are (l-to-r) 359th Staff Sergeant gunners Bob Rettinhouse, Adam Champagne and Joe Robichaud.

**BELOW**—Salvaging repair parts is T/Sgt. Anthony Seguin, team leader in the 444th's Sheet Metal Section.





# Molesworth Diary

## **"THE LORD WAS WATCHING"**

On the raid over Magdeburg on September 28, 1944, a flak burst hit near my tail gun position. Pilot McCutchan called over interphone to see if I was OK, and I told him I was. Some time after the mission, Howard Scott, our ball turret gunner, told me the Germans had fired in volleys of four bursts. He said the first burst was near me. The second exploded behind our left wing, the third between the number one and two engines and the fourth ahead of our plane.

With those "88's" scattering flak that close, how did the crew come through without a scratch and how did those engines keep running without a sputter? I am confident that the Lord was watching over our crew that day.

**Robert "Cookie" Wherry**  
360th Tail Gunner

## **EMPTY BUNKS A DEVASTATING EXPERIENCE**

Shortly after arriving at Molesworth in a ground support position there was an explosion overhead. As I recall, three planes from Kimbolton drifted into our traffic pattern and collided with one of ours. The thought that 40 men had died instantly had a sobering effect on me and made me realize that war was indeed dangerous. It seemed like my training up to this point was fun and games.

Sometime in 1944, I was transferred to the 427th Squadron for quarters. Four of us were put in one end of a combat barracks. We were told to stay away from the combat personnel because they and the ground personnel did not mix. That was false and we did become friendly. I was happy to do small favors for them in my work at the PX. I came back to the barracks one night from my job to find the entire combat personnel had gone down. It was a devastating experience and I did not get over it for some time.

**Lucius E. Arnold**  
3rd Station Complement

## **DANGLING BOMB RUINS "ROUTINE MISSION"**

On an otherwise routine run-of-the-mill mission, we crossed the Dutch coast with some mild flak, made it to the target with some tracking flak and then ran into a box barrage as we started the bomb run. The bomb bay doors opened, and the plane lurched with the cry of "bombs away." A moment later, the bombardier reported that it appeared that not all of the bombs had dropped. I entered the bomb bay from the radio room and the top turret gunner came in from the front. Sure enough, there was a 500-pounder hung up by the rear shackle.

The nose was hanging down and the arming propeller was spinning in the wind. If that propeller spun off, we had a live bomb ready to detonate. So, standing on that narrow catwalk, no parachute and Germany 23,000 feet below us, Gus Gustafsson and I hammered at the shackle with God knows

what. I had visions of either falling through the bomb bay clutching the bomb in my arms or landing at Molesworth where the bomb would drop onto the runway. Fortunately, the shackle finally released and the bomb fell into the middle of a German forest.

**William J. La Perch**  
358th Ball Turret Gunner

## **COINCIDENCE IN THE NUMBERS GAME**

On the 303rd's mission number 66 to Romilly Sur Seine, France on September 3, 1943 we encountered severe flak over Paris and our ship *Vicious Virgin* took some hits, especially in the nose area. One of the pieces of flak was wrapped around a supporting bar under the bombardier's seat where I was sitting. After we landed at base, Sgt. Markovich, our ground crew chief, pried it loose. He found that the serial number on the flak, which was threaded and apparently designed to hold a delayed fuse for burst at altitude, was DL341. These were the exact same numbers as the last three of our B-17's serial number.

**Edwin G. Lamme**  
427th Bombardier

## **MISSION NOT A MISSION UNLESS SHOT AT**

On 28 March 1945, Lt. Col. W. C. Sipes flew a scouter B-17 with a crew from the 359th. I was the navigator. I thought it was interesting that HQ had us out checking on the formations. "Tighten up!" When we got to the target, big B for Berlin, we got bounced around a bit. I told the colonel we were inside the red flak area on my map. He replied, "Lieutenant, I don't feel like I've been on a mission unless I've been shot at. Give me a heading for home when I ask for it."

After we crossed the battle line on the ground, he decided to go home "on the deck." We passed close to the famous Remagen bridge. A couple days later, it fell into the river.

**Glen R. Swenson**  
359th Navigator

## **CRASH LANDING CLOSES 30 MISSION TOUR**

On April 19, 1944 our Fortress was shot out of formation on a mission to Kassel, Germany. One engine gave out and we couldn't keep up. We were lucky in that friendly fighters picked us up and stayed with us. The plane's gas gauges were shot out and when we made it back to base we found there wasn't enough gas left to wet a handkerchief. On that trip we got 80 holes in one wing. The flaps were shot out and we had to land without flaps and with a flat tire. It made landing pretty tricky.

My 30th and last mission was to Metz, France over the  
(Continued on page 16)

# Diary

(Continued from 15)

invasion area just six days later on April 25. We were bombing rocket gun emplacements. All over France that day flak was particularly accurate. There is nothing you can do about it. You just sit and hope and pray, complete your run over your bombing objective, and start home if you're lucky.

Our tanks were hit and I knew we wouldn't have enough gas to make Molesworth so I made for a fighter base close to the English coast. The tanks registered zero, two engines were gone, and then to add to our difficulties the wheels wouldn't come down as I prepared to land. On my last mission, I had to crash land but we all considered it was lucky we got back at all.

Vere A. Wood  
427th Pilot  
(From family records)

## TACKLE FOOTBALL IN THE OFFICERS CLUB

After one raid where our losses were very heavy, after debriefing we congregated at the officers club for a few beers. Well, after several beers, the tears stopped flowing. Someone suggested we play touch football in the club. We cleared out the furniture, and, not having a football, rolled up a couple of scarves and tied them with string. We chose up sides and began. But, we didn't play touch football—it was tackle football and mayhem.

After a few bloody noses and several bruises, sober heads prevailed and the game was terminated. We all proceeded to our various Nissen huts to repair the damage.

Hank Pratten  
Supply Officer, 1114th QM



THE AMERICAN EAGLE COLORS OF THE 303RD BOMB GROUP (H) held aloft by (l-to-r) Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, 8th Air Force commander 1942-1944; Col. Kermit D. Stevens, 303rd CO 1943-1944; Col. Lewis E. Lyle, 303rd Deputy and Acting CO 1943-44, and Col. James H. Wallace, 303rd CO 1942-43. The photo, from Col. Stevens' files, was taken in Washington, DC. Present whereabouts of the Colors not known.

## ....GRIM REMINDERS OF LIVES LOST (Continued from Page 6)

**360th Squadron**—T/Sgt Albert W. Baker, Jr (27 Aug 44), S/Sgt Francis E. Bratcher (6 Apr 45), 2nd Lt Harry B. Britter (27 Aug 44), S/Sgt Victor P. Crandell (22 Jun 44), 2d Lt Carl H. Felton, Jr (22 Jun 44), S/Sgt Ray D. Ford (29 Nov 43), Sgt Louis V. Garbarino, Jr (6 Apr 45), 2nd Lt Carthel O. Gaskin (22 Jun 44), S/Sgt Hugh F. Gibney, Jr (2 Oct 43), Sgt David H. Hoffman (29 Nov 43), T/Sgt John M. King (22 Jun 44), Capt John A. Long (11 May 44), S/Sgt Bernard E. McKeever (22 Jun 44), Sgt Marion M. Mooney (10 Jan 45), S/Sgt Clarence J. Mooneyham (6 Apr 45), 2nd Lt James B. O'Neil (6 Apr 45), Sgt Howard S. Payton (20 Dec 44), Capt John Van Wie (25 Jul 43), Sgt Robert H. Washburn (1 Dec 43), 2nd Lt Gaylon C. Williams (10 Oct 44).

**427th Squadron**—Sgt Irving Bellitt (29 Apr 44), 1st Lt John W. Bradshaw, Jr (15 May 43), Sgt Robert T. Britz (28 Sep 44), 2nd Lt Robert V. Bruce (9 Oct 43), T/Sgt George A. Callihan (11 Jan 44), Sgt Marion L. Canfield (9 Feb 45), Sgt Melvin C. Carlson (17 Apr 45), Capt Lloyd D. Cole (11 July 43), Sgt Floyd C. Doherty, Jr (9 Feb 45), T/Sgt Andrew A. Dyke (9 Oct 43), S/Sgt Edward G. Eschinger (17 Apr 45), Flt Off George W. Franzen (29 Apr 44), Sgt Frank Gorgon (29 Apr 44), S/Sgt Ed Helton, Jr (29 Apr 44), S/Sgt Henry Hoff (29 Apr 44), Sgt Hilaire A. Lizabeth (28 Sep 44), S/Sgt Warren G. Morrison (15 May 43), Sgt Roaul R. Prieto (6 Apr 45), Flt Off George S. Thomas (6 Apr 45), Sgt Warren T. Vasel (15 May 43), T/Sgt Ralph N. Warne (16 Feb 45), 2nd Lt Howard G. Weinberg (6 Apr 45), 1st Lt Leonard E. Weiss (29 Jun 44).

# 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**

## TIME TAKES TRAGIC TOLL OF SHOPE CREW

Silas Ashwell, my husband George Shope's copilot, tried to keep in touch with as many of the 427th crew as possible. He said that Arthur Burns, Frank Smith, Charles Walsh and Leonard Ratliff were deceased. Silas, himself, was taking a handicapped friend to visit relatives in Poland in August 1988 when he dropped dead of a massive heart attack at Chicago's O'Hare Airport.

We kept in touch with Goldie Hoover's wife who was a nurse. She told us he had fractured an ankle bailing out on the Kassel mission of 30 July 1943, couldn't work at his construction job after the war, and committed suicide. Angelo Tambe died in April, 1990 after a long battle with cancer. We're still looking for the two remaining crew members, Robert Doyle and John Reeder.

My husband, George, has had heart problems since 1981. We used to travel to Florida each year, but age and health problems are making it too difficult.

**Dorothy E. Shope**  
1 Irving Avenue  
Birmingham, NY 13901

## WHATEVER BECAME OF DREW FIELD IN FLORIDA?

I took my training at Drew Field. Did it close or change its name? I was in the 303rd until I got shot down.

**Joe Szudlo**  
360th Squadron

(EDITOR'S NOTE—Drew Field is now the Tampa International Airport. Pinellas Field is the Clearwater - St. Petersburg Airport. MacDill Air Force Base is still in the military business.)

## OPEN FORUM MESSAGE FINDS CARING FRIENDS

I feel I must write to tell you that Vernon heard from two of your readers who saw my letter. Charles Mainwaring came to the Skilled Nursing Facility to see Vernon and Thomas Struck wrote

him a very nice letter from Oregon. Thanks to you, he got two rays of sunshine in his otherwise dull life.

**Becky Marker**  
2109 N. Tracy Street  
Visalia, CA 93292

## READER QUESTIONS DATE OF BASS CREW LOSS

The August 1999 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter has a photo of the Bass crew plaque dedication at the 8th AF Heritage Museum. The plaque shows the date of 6 February 1944 for the crew's bailout over France. This is at odds with a Bass crew photo I have with the same date showing Bill Gamble as tail gunner. I know Bill didn't bail out and become a POW because he gave me the crew picture!

**Richard Scharch**  
358th Squadron  
(EDITOR'S NOTE—Pilot Sam Bass explained that the crew photo you have was actually taken on 5 February 1944. Gamble completed his tour on that date and the Bass crew flew the next day with a new tail gunner.)

## OKLAHOMA CITY REUNION LAUDED

What a terrific reunion it was. Ed and Jill Miller really outdid themselves. Some of my enjoyment came from my World War II navigator attending his first reunion and being able to see him for the first time since 1945. And thanks to all the ladies that helped make this reunion unforgettable.

**Bill Dallas**  
427th Squadron

Never before have we been treated so royally and felt so welcome. I have never seen any event more organized. Your generation is without doubt "The Greatest Generation." I hope we can come close to what you have done.

**Gary Moncur**  
303rd BGA Web Master

A wonderfully well run reunion. I expect it took Ed and Jill the better part of a

year to organize. But, I don't recall any time during the reunion when those attending gave them a standing ovation. That was an important omission.

**R. M. Vincent**  
303rd HDQ

## AUTHOR'S TESTAMENT TO 303RD'S LEGACY

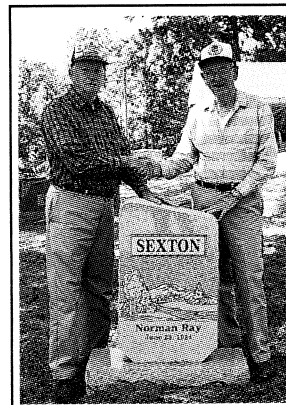
*A Noble Spirit* is my testament to noble youth who were willing to lay down their lives in defense of our nation and its highest ideals in military operations from the British Isles. This anniversary commemorative album presents the operational highlights of the aircraft crews who faced the enemy with no thought of defeat, the maintenance crews who kept the B-17's in the air, and the ground support units with their diversity of responsibilities.

Our 303rd Bomb Group left an inspiring noble legacy, the embodiment of a creed: Duty, Honor, Country.

**Alvin L. Morton**  
359th Squadron

## FOUND—NEW MEMBER AT LOCAL CEMETERY

When a visit to Clarksville, Arkansas to look for old acquaintances of my youth was not getting results,



**Dick Johnson (left) and his new found buddy, Norman Ray Sexton.**

my wife, Marjorie, suggested we look for names in the local cemetery. No familiar names there either, but I no-

ticed a tombstone with a beautiful engraving of a B-17 and a Staff Sergeant's stripes on one side and the name Norman Ray Sexton on the other side. There was a birth date, but no date of death.

At the motel that evening, I found his name in the phone book and rang him up. It turned out he was in the 303rd's 358th Squadron as a top turret gunner on the Donald Walter and Everett Thornton crew. He didn't know there was a 303rd Bomb Group Association.

We went together to his pre-arranged monument, took some pictures, and I signed him up as a life member.

We need to keep trying to find our missing comrades, and will even dig them from a cemetery if need be!

**Dick Johnson**  
427th Squadron

## DID YOU KNOW MY UNCLE, ALEX LEBLANC?

My uncle, S/Sgt. Alex LeBlanc, was 25 years old when he was killed in action in a bombing raid over Vegesack on March 18, 1943. Uncle Alex, a ball turret gunner on the *Hunga Dunga* (aircraft # 41-24558), flew with the 358th Squadron. The aircraft crashed on the Jadesusen Flats area of Wilhelmshaven. I would love to hear from anyone who survived that raid, and most especially if you remember him.

**Linda Ruffini**  
10 Jamieson Place  
Princeton Junction, NJ

## PRAISE FOR NEWSLETTER AND ITS CONTRIBUTORS

The newsletter continues to be a source of high quality and is deserving of accolades. Your comment of being blessed with much good material coming in from other veterans certainly has much significance for future publications. I will always provide respect for your continued endeavor of fairness to the many who have not been heard.

**Dick Bowler**  
427th Squadron

## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

The most important message that I have is to ask the many, many members, who have not already done so, to consider the recent request by our President, William J. Roche. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find more details on the Benefactor Program, and you can see their names below. They are listed in the order that they were received by our Treasurer, Jack P. Rencher.

## IN MEMORIAM

Gordon E. Barr	359 <sup>th</sup>	16 Oct 1999
Stanley Bober	427 <sup>th</sup>	27 Nov 1999
Joseph T. Freedman	444 <sup>th</sup>	13 Oct 1999
Bernard A. Gergash	358 <sup>th</sup>	24 Jan 1998
Richard C. Grimm	358 <sup>th</sup>	19 Sep 1999
Russell W. Meier	359 <sup>th</sup>	23 Dec 1998
Ray A. Miller	358 <sup>th</sup>	29 Jul 1999
James D. Moody	358 <sup>th</sup>	8 Aug 1995
Frank X. Nestok	360 <sup>th</sup>	11 Dec 1988
Homer C. Stover	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sta. Comp.	11 May 1988
Oscar A. Tellinghuisen	360 <sup>th</sup>	Jun 1999
Burton K. Voorhees	Hdqs	Apr 1984
Thomas J. Westmoreland	359 <sup>th</sup>	17 Aug 1999

## SUPER LIFE DONATIONS

Robert C. Bogert (360 <sup>th</sup> )	Richard Bowler, Jr. (427 <sup>th</sup> )
Joseph R Cappucci (359 <sup>th</sup> )	Norman M. Clark (358 <sup>th</sup> )
Richard L. Dawes (427 <sup>th</sup> )	Eddie Deerfield (360 <sup>th</sup> )
Merle W. Eckert (359 <sup>th</sup> )	John E. Fletcher (427 <sup>th</sup> )
Richard E. Gable (427 <sup>th</sup> )	Ilic V. Genovese (359 <sup>th</sup> )
James K. Good (427 <sup>th</sup> )	Wesley L. Hasty (427 <sup>th</sup> )
William C. Heller (360 <sup>th</sup> )	Robert L. Johnson (3 <sup>rd</sup> St)
Harold A. Lanigan (358 <sup>th</sup> )	Raymond T. Leal (427 <sup>th</sup> )
Lewis E. Lyle (Hdqs)	Vernon G. Marker (444 <sup>th</sup> )
Costa "Mark" Markos (358 <sup>th</sup> )	Campbell Miller (358 <sup>th</sup> )
Edgar C. Miller (360 <sup>th</sup> )	John B. Moore (Gndson
Linton S. Munroe, Jr. (360 <sup>th</sup> )	of Bill & Jean Beasley)
Philip A. Olander (359 <sup>th</sup> )	Jack P. Rencher (358 <sup>th</sup> )
William J. Roche (360 <sup>th</sup> )	Geo. E. Schweinebraten
Claude W. Sherwin (358 <sup>th</sup> )	Samuel W. Smith (360 <sup>th</sup> )
John W. Spence (359 <sup>th</sup> )	Robert D. Stewart (427 <sup>th</sup> )
James B. Taylor (358 <sup>th</sup> )	Richard E. Wakefield (427
Van R. White (358 <sup>th</sup> )	Mrs. Barbara A. Stier
Mrs. Charlotte McCoy Sullivan	
Mrs. Jean Conver—Widow of Milton K. Conver	
Mrs. Norma Russell—Widow of Edwin C. Russell	
Mrs. Betty Shayler—Widow of Walter K. Shayler	

## NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

Lucius E. "Lou" Arnold (3<sup>rd</sup> Stat. Comp.), 18 Chapman St, Putnam, CT 06260-2306 (860) 928-5690 (Ann)  
Ira B. Baker (359<sup>th</sup>), 1482 S. Palo Verde Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85713-2335 (520)326-2538  
William E. Bernum (360<sup>th</sup>), 3351 Pine Grove Ave, Port Huron, MI 48060-1942 (810) 985-5557  
David S. Clifton (360<sup>th</sup>), 2651 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Court, Pompano Beach, FL 33062-1125 (954) 942-7759

Mac Chesney Desmond (427<sup>th</sup>), 48 Wilbur Drive, Newington, CT 06111-2616 (860) 666-9833  
Clifton R. Fincher (358<sup>th</sup>), 439 Country Road 4790, Boyd, TX 76023-5452 (940) 433-2622  
Jerome W. Fogle, Jr. (359<sup>th</sup>), 1654 S. Porter Street, Aurora, MO 65605-2645 (417) 678-3243 (Melva)  
Franklin C. Hall (359<sup>th</sup>), P. O. Box 351, Foley, AL 36536 (334) 943-5224 (Myrtis)  
Earl "Frank" Ingalls (359<sup>th</sup>), 520 Luella, Mulvane, KS 67110-1439 (316) 777-1791  
Walter R. Kabrich (1681<sup>st</sup>), 9230 E. Kensoha Court, Floral City, FL 34406-2435 (305) 726-1386 (Doris)  
James W. Northam (360<sup>th</sup>), 301 Hughes Ave, Daingerfield, TX 75638-1815 (903) 645-2604 (Mary)  
Phillip A. Olander (359<sup>th</sup>), 13478 Robleda Road, Los Altos Hills, CA 94022-3423 (650) 948-6491 (Nola)  
Aloyius R. Pero (427<sup>th</sup>), 3810 E. Bakerville Road, Ashley, IL 62808-3302 (618) 485-6649  
Alphonse R. "Al" Serwa (360<sup>th</sup>), 6484 Penrod St, Detroit, MI 48228-4748 (313) 271-2291

## DONATIONS & MEMORIALS

Bill Beasley	Donation toward printing the Hell's Angels Newsletter
Mrs. Jean Conver	In Memory of Captain Milton K. Conver
Mrs. Eva E. Cozzo	In Memory of Sgt Lawrence Cozzo (360 <sup>th</sup> )
John W. Ford	Donation to the 303 <sup>rd</sup> BGA
Wesley L. Hasty	Memorial to my living Crew Members—
Thomas L. Simmons (Pilot); Fred E. Reichel (Co-Pilot); & Robert D. Stewart (Waist Gunner)	
Robert L. Johnson	Donation to the 303 <sup>rd</sup> BGA
Harold A. Lanigan	Donation to the 303 <sup>rd</sup> BGA
Brian Rencher	Donation to the 303 <sup>rd</sup> BGA
Mrs. Norma Russell	In Memory of Sergeant Edwin C. Russell
Mrs. Virginia Schrader	In Memory of Harold L. Schrader
Mrs. Betty Shayler	In Memory of Colonel Walter K. Shayler
Lloyd E. Timm	Donation to the 303 <sup>rd</sup> BGA

## BENEFACTOR PROGRAM

William J. Roche....James B. Taylor....Costa Markos.... Jean Markos....A. G. Oswald....Richard D. Dimick....Robert C. Benja....Mrs. Phyllis Smith....Eugene F. Ashton....Arthur L. Bailey....Paul O. Harmon....Donald L. Spruner....James H. Fisher....Arthur J. Brown....Henry J. Brudzinski....Calvin K. Hansen....John E. Fletcher....James K. Good....Norman M. Clark....Anthony D. Zelnio....Marvin S. Boyce....William J. Polk....Stanley Backiel....Robert L. Ward....Horace J. Miller Jimmie W. Clark....Robert A. Rettinhouse....James D. Mickle Richard J. Broderick....Curtis O. Brooke....Fabian Folmer Mrs. Frances E. Miller....Dominck D. De Lorenzo....Kenneth R. Carnahan....Donovan B. Manifold....Hector F. Vitale....Mrs. Cora Lee Richeson....Clyde L. Dewald....Edward J. Wiencek Alyoius R. Pero....Ralph B. Adams....Isadore Gepner....Orvis K. Silrum....Donald W. Stoullil....Dyle K. Davidson....Raymond Tartaglia....Edwin B. Barry....Richard H. Wentworth....William M. Eason....James E. Cummins....Gordon A. Ballagh....Walter E. Ringen....Donald G. Stettler....Christopher G. Kelly....Chet H. Jameson, Jr....Gareth G. Lee....Thomas L. Weems....Bodie G. Fite....James D. Kelley....Robert J. Passenat....Robert E. Wherry....John L. Beringer....Arthur E. Johnson....Leslie G. Giddings....Terence Hanna....Harry A. Schwaebe....Frank J. Doherty....Melvin Howell....Elmer R. Barkman, Jr....Francis G. Hinds....Robert S. McCall....Irl E. Baldwin....Robert N. Perry Dale E. Schneider....Paul A. Tognetti....Frank P. Trosi....Max Smolar....Wallace Goldfarb....Bruce E. Babbitt....Mrs Margo E. Rahn....James A. Hickey....Samuel W. Smith....Roger C. Lee George E. Schweinebraten, Jr....Alphonse B. Serwa....Albert J. Orth....John Charles Bennett....Mrs. Elaine Wagner....John D.

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## NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Carlton Currie, 3503 Fresh Meadow, Houston, TX 77063-1205 (713) 781-1201 (Haise) (Son of Lt. Herman C. Currie)  
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William J. Denney, 5 El Quanito Way, Burlingame, CA 94010-6025 (650) 343-4875 (Mary) B-I-L of S/Sgt Delbert S. Nivens  
Mary Anne Finnell, 56-30 Waldron Street, Corona Heights, NY 11368-3940 (718) 699-4988 (Richard) (Niece of Alex E. LeBlanc (358<sup>th</sup> B/Tur Operator-KIA)  
Helen M. "Audrey" Gibson, 19 Packanack Lake Road, Wayne, NY 07470-5809 (Sister of Lt. Fred Mason-358<sup>th</sup> Dec)  
Linda B. Le Blanc Ruffini, 10 Jamieson Place, Princeton Jct, NJ 08550-5405 (609) 716-4935 (John) (Niece of Alex E. LeBlanc (358<sup>th</sup> B/Tur Operator-KIA)  
Todd Hollritt, 51 Wallace Lane, West Paterson, NY 07424-2647 (973) 256-7754 (Son of Sgt Alfred Hollritt-living)  
John B. Moore, 3059 Island Crest Way, #10, Mercer Island, WA 98040-2949 (Grandson of Bill & Joan Beasley's)  
Blake R. Nestok, MD, P. O. Box 342, Milford, OH 45150-0342 (513) 585-0874 (Son of S/Sgt Frank Nestok)  
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Brian Rencher, 1722 W. Idaho, Boise, ID 83702-5127 (208) 343-7253 (Monica) (Son of Jack P. Rencher)  
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Tamara M. Rager, 5224 W. Chadderton Circle, Lincoln, NE 68521-4323 (402) 435-9368 (Anthony) (Daughter of Frank Ingalls)  
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Susan H. Willis, 312 Indian Springs Road, Aiken, SC 29801-9238 (803) 642-8610 (Keith) (Daughter of Franklin C. Hall-359<sup>th</sup>)

## NEW FRIENDS OF THE 303RD

Dorothy J. Burke, 9056 La Vine St., Alta Loma, CA 91701-5617 (909) 989-6849 (Friend of Kenneth "Dick" Hawes)  
Eugene E. Gillette, 3366 Elgin Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84109-4202 (801) 486-0108 (Gerri) (Friend of Roland W. Smith)  
Wayne Jeglum, 7152 W. Country Club Drive, N., Sarasota, FL 34243-0086 (941) 351-4382 (Kathryn) (Pilot-489<sup>th</sup> BG)  
Edward M. C. Rowe, 68 Junction Road, Andover, Hampshire SP10 3QX England (Friend of Iris Drinkwater)

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Gilbert Cohen....David S. Clifton (360<sup>th</sup>)....MacChesney Desmond (427<sup>th</sup>)....Clifton R. Fincher (358<sup>th</sup>)....Jerome W. Fogle, Jr (359<sup>th</sup>)....Walter R. Kabric (1681<sup>st</sup>)....John B. Moore....Blake R. Nestok, MD....James W. Northam (360<sup>th</sup>)....Phillip A. Olander (359<sup>th</sup>)....G. Kurt Richards....Alphonse R. "Al" Serwa (360<sup>th</sup>)....Barbara A. Stier....Rudy H. Theobald



## THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

In the epic poem *Invictus* there's a line "In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud." The words are reminiscent of how **William J. Roche**, the newly elected president of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, faced a dilemma quietly and professionally in his first months in office.

The "circumstance" was the Molesworth Memorial Project. The "fell clutch" was the fact that while the Association's Board of Directors favored the project in principle, it had refrained from approving contracting authority or a funding allocation to cover the \$25,000 memorial. Faced with a depleted treasury, the Board passed a motion to hold in reserve member funds donated toward the project (\$870 as of 20 December) until all funds raised outside of the Association have been applied.

Roche had served for many years as the Association's treasurer where the hallmarks of his leadership were accountability and responsibility. He was now confronted by the apparent legal and fiscal challenge of a costly project which seemed to be proceeding without Board authorization or funding. Seeking answers, he contacted **Brian McGuire**, an American contract employee at the Joint Analysis Center at Molesworth, who is managing the Memorial Project.

McGuire, who has been instrumental in perpetuating the World War II memory of the 303rd Bomb Group at present day Molesworth, replied that Association member **Kenneth Clarke** of Houston, Texas had first proposed a smaller memorial to the 303rd and was going to pay for it himself.

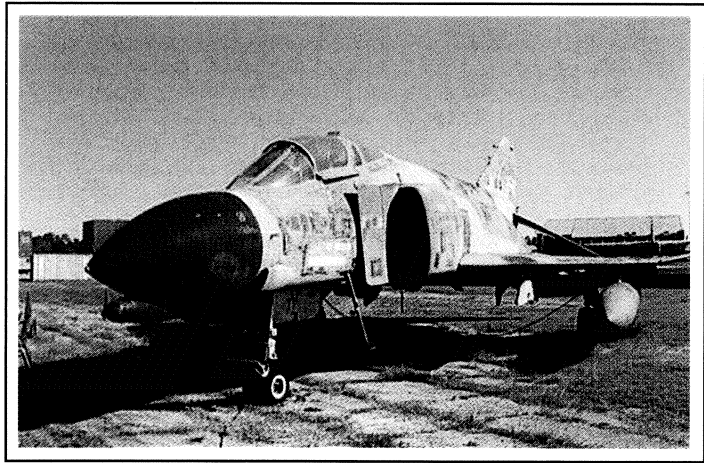
McGuire's two-page explanation said, in part, "I saw this as an opportunity to erect a memorial at Molesworth that would make a statement to future generations. **Perfitt, Limited**, has done other memorials and was one of the least expensive. They also very much wanted to do it, providing tips on taxes and virtually offering to work out any financing scheme I wanted. Obviously, with the new design the cost was much higher and fundraising was required, which I agreed to do.

"Ken originally wanted the memorial unveiled in the fall of 1999. With the expansion of the project, it couldn't be done that quickly. I wanted the dedication to get as much publicity as possible. Since we would have a very large group of veterans for the hangar dance (3 June 2000), by having the memorial dedication the same day I could get the appropriate publicity. This also gives me enough time to raise funds (from private and corporate sources) and for the memorial to be erected.

"I will continue to work this, and remain optimistic. Fortunately, the stone mason doesn't seem to care when he gets paid. If I have to, I will pay for the memorial myself, and continue to seek sponsorship until the costs are covered."

The next meeting of the Association's Board is on 25 September 2000, the first day of the reunion in San Diego. By then, McGuire, who is skilled in community relations, may have raised the funds to defray the costs of the memorial. Let's hope this "circumstance" plays out to a happy ending.

**MOLESWORTH PHOTOS IN YOUR FILES?** Share those memories with your fellow veterans. Send them with a brief description and identifications to the Editor at the address below for possible publication.



THE MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE HERITAGE MUSEUM gets mightier with the acquisition of an F-4 Phantom jet fighter. The F-4 will undergo a thorough refurbishing and repainting before it goes on display as the centerpiece for a new memorial to Vietnam War airmen. Story on page 9.



MAJ. GEN. LEWIS E. LYLE (USAF-RET) 303rd Bomb Group Senior Advisor, stands "at ease" as the cornerstone for the new Chapel of Fallen Eagles is dedicated at the 8th AF Heritage Museum. Construction is expected to be completed by December, 2000.

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