

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

May, 2000

"WHEN PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED," a work of art by Mark Postlethwaite of Leicester, England.

B-17 Flying Fortresses of the 303rd Bomb Group based at Molesworth pass over the adjacent St. Swithin's Church, Old Weston, upon their return from a combat mission in the winter of 1944-45.

See Mr. Postlethwaite's letter in the Open Forum section on page 17.

See President Roche's column on page 13 for his insights on the 303rd's return to RAF Molesworth in early June.



AFTER MOLESWORTH IN JUNE, IT'S SAN DIEGO IN SEPTEMBER

In a few weeks, an estimated 125 303rd Bomb Group veterans, family members and friends will return to RAF Molesworth for two days of events honoring the Hell's Angels. After those festivities and visits in Cambridge and London, the next major port of call for the 303rd will be the Silver Anniversary Reunion in San Diego in September.

Association President Bill Roche and Reunions Vice President Jim Taylor have endorsed the California city for the 17th in the series of Group get-togethers.

The first reunion under the auspices of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association was held in Orlando, Florida in 1975. Initially, reunions were held every other year; since 1991, they have gener-

ally been annual affairs.

A contract has been signed for the year 2000 with the Hanalei Hotel. While recent reunions have included weekends, the San Diego meeting will run Monday through Friday, from September 25 to 29.

President Roche visited San Diego last year and inspected six hotels for their ability and interest in hosting the 303rd's reunion. He selected the Hanalei, a hotel with a Hawaiian atmosphere, in the heart of Mission Valley. (See photo on page 20).

It has 402 guest rooms and 14 suites, and is just a short drive away from downtown San Diego, historic Old Town State Park, Sea World, the municipal zoo and the Pacific Ocean.

The San Diego Interna-

tional Airport is a convenient 10 minutes away.

The grounds of the hotel are spectacular, with gardens fragrant with lush tropical flowers and accented by cascading waterfalls.

Reunion registration packets were scheduled to be mailed to all members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association in April and include a full schedule of activities and fees. Early registration will be helpful to the 303rd's reunion managers in assuring that tour providers have spaces available to meet all requests.

Following is a tentative schedule of activities:

Monday, 25 September

Board of Directors meeting, Registration opens, Hospitality Room opens, PX

opens, World War II exhibit opens.

Tuesday, 26 September

Registration continues, Golf Tournament on adjacent course, City tours begin, San Diego Zoo tour, visit to the "Queen Mary" used as a troopship during World War II, Hospitality, PX and military exhibits continue daily.

Wednesday, 27 September

Registration continues, Tijuana, Mexico shopping tour with lunch, San Diego Wild Animal Park tour, musical theater featuring "Forever Plaid" and dinner.

Thursday, 28 September

Group breakfast, Squadron meetings, General Membership meeting, Board of Directors meeting, Hawaiian luau dinner and dancing.

Friday, 29 September

Memorial service.



303RD BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor--Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXII, No. 2 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684

May, 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 303rd 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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Editor Emeritus: Hal Susskind

ELECTED OFFICERS — EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

William J. Roche (Doris)
1428 Gleneagles Drive
Venice, FL 34292-4306
TEL: (941) 485-5073 EM: dbroche2@aol.com

Vice President - Administration

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

Vice President - Reunions

James B. Taylor (Evelyn)
421 Yerba Buena Avenue
Los Altos, CA 94022-2152
TEL: (650) 948-6596

Editor, Hell's Angels Newsletter

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

Secretary

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

Treasurer

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

Past Presidents Chairman

Nominating, Awards, Memorials
Harry D. Gobrecht (Barbara)
505 Via Deseo
San Clemente, CA 92672-2462
TEL: (949) 361-2662
EM: Pilot8thaf@aol.com

ELECTED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

358th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Walter J. Mayer
W. 14605 Taylor Road
Cheney, WA 99004-9425
TEL: (509) 299-3250

359th Bomb Sqd. Representative

John W. Ford (Florice)
4248 W. Colby Street
Springfield, MO 65802-5612
TEL: (417) 831-3819
EM: warrenburke@worldnet.att.net

358th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

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

359th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

William M. Beasley (Joan)
1613 Magnolia Avenue
Lady Lake, FL 32159-2197
TEL: (352) 753-8500

ELECTED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Continued)

360th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Richard Smith (Betty)
790 Crenshaw Drive
Hemet, CA 92543-8044
TEL: (909) 6524793
EM: spider@ivie.net

427th Bomb Sqd. 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: (570) 473-3816

360th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

William Eason
RR# I Box 404
Vincent, Ohio 45784-9742
TEL: (740) 989-2326
EM: weason@1st.net

427th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

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

Hdqs & Supporting Units

444th Air Depot Alternate

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

Associate Members Rep

Lance Stoner
11422 W. 70th Street
Shawnee, KS 662034026
TEL: (913) 268-3944
EM: lstoner@gvi.net

APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Membership & Roster

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

PX Administrator

Charles R. Sykes (Vicki)
16281 N. 3 1st Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85023-3008
TEL: (602) 993-8015
EM: PX303BG@aol.com

Computer Data Base

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

Historian, 8thAFHS &

8thAFH Museum Liaison

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

Budget & Ways & Means

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

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: bmcguire@acsddefense-dc.com

Group Advisor

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

By-Laws Committee

William S. McLeod, Jr. (Alice)
1676 West Mesa
Fresno, CA 93711-1944
TEL: (559) 439-8922
EM: B17bomberbill@aol.com

Webmaster

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

Audit Committee

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

Mission Reports Administrator

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

United Kingdom Representatives

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

CHAPLAIN -- CATHOLIC

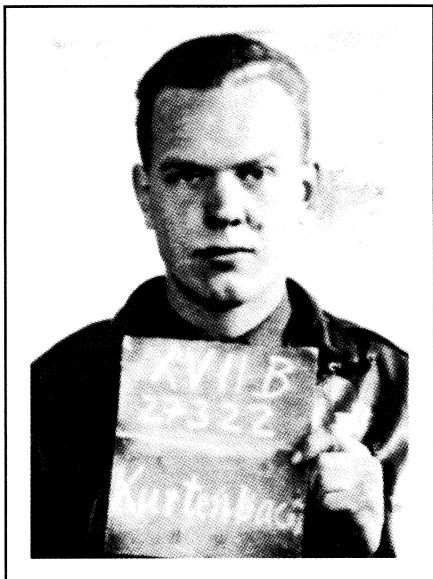
Bishop Rene H. Gracida, 4126 Ocean Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78411-1224

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

Elected Leader at Three POW Camps

303rd's "MAN OF CONFIDENCE" LEAVES REMARKABLE LEGACY



The Lives of Thousands of American Prisoners of War Depended on His Dedication and Negotiating Skills

By Eddie Deerfield

Staff Sergeant Kenneth Joseph Kurtenbach was tail gunner on Paul Flickenger's 360th Squadron crew when the B-17F *Wulfe Hound* took off from Molesworth on 12 December 1942 to attack the railroad marshalling yards at Rouen, France. It was only the 303rd Bomb Group's sixth mission of the war out of an eventual 364, but proved to be the last for Kurtenbach. His plane was forced down by enemy fighter aircraft and, after evading the Germans for two weeks, he was arrested by the Gestapo at the Dijon train station.

Kurtenbach's capture on Christmas Day, 1942, marked the beginning of one the most remarkable sagas of individual leadership to emerge from World War II. For most of the next two-and-one-half years, the man affectionately known by other POW's as "Kurt" came to symbolize their resistance to their Nazi captors. His command abilities and language skills earned him their nomination and election as Enlisted Camp Leader (Man of Confidence) for the longest term of any Army Air Corps prisoner. He became a legend in his own time, serving the interests of his fellow prisoners at Stalags III-B, VII-A and XVII-B.

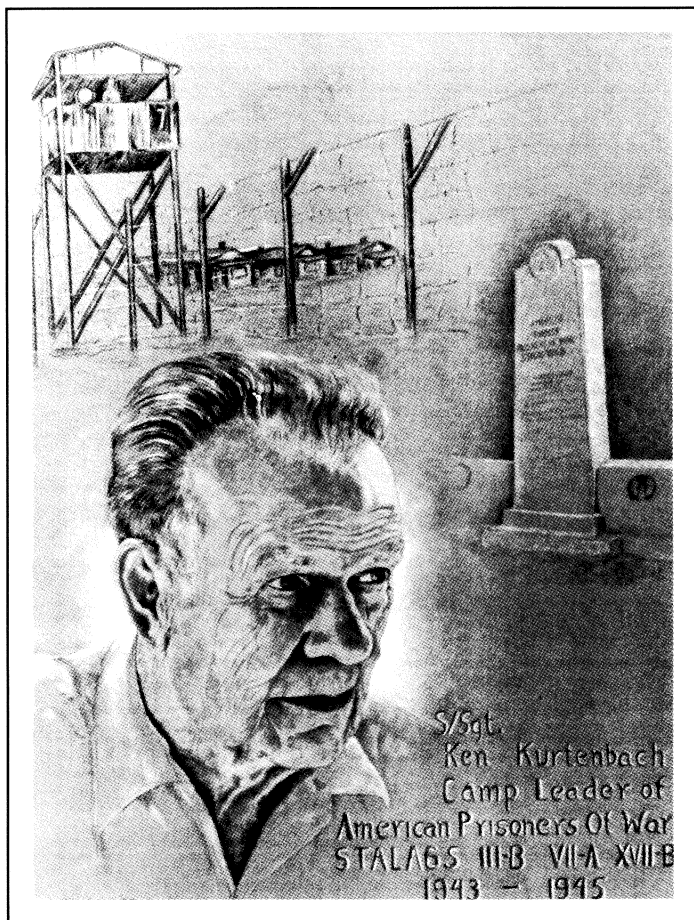
A year after Germany surrendered, in an action unique in the annals of military history, Kurt was awarded the U.S. War Department's Legion of Merit for accomplishments as a prisoner. The citation read:

"Staff Sergeant Kenneth J. Kurtenbach served as Man of Confidence for four thousand American prisoners of war at Stalag 17B Krems, Austria from October 1943 to May 1945. He ably supervised all phases of camp life and energetically negotiated with the German staff, delegates of the International Red Cross and representatives of the Protecting Power. His firm protests on several occasions secured the return of Red Cross food and clothing parcels when they had been confiscated by the Germans, and insured the eventual reception of all such items by the prisoners. The wise leadership he provided influenced his fellow prisoners to maintain dignity, preserve discipline and abide by his sound policies."

Kurt passed away on 9 April 1999 in Tucson, Arizona at age 77 after a long bout with lung cancer. There are many among his fellow prisoners who feel that the citation fell far short of the mark and that he was worthy of the Medal of Honor.

Tail gunner **Frank W. Bartlett**, another 303rd Bomb Group and 360th Squadron veteran, became a prisoner on 29 May 1943 when *Yardbird* went down on the Saint Nazaire mission. He had this to say about Kurtenbach, "Of all the American POW camps, Stalag XVII-B was known to be the one with the worse conditions. Every day we faced the threat of death by gunfire, starvation or disease. Kurt was our elected leader in dealing with the Nazi's. He kept our survival rate high."

Bartlett and Myrt Kurtenbach, the POW camp leader's widow, gave the Hell's Angels Newsletter introductions to some



BENEATH THE 1943 STALAG XVII-B MUG SHOT of Ken Kurtenbach is Lee Kessler's artistic interpretation of the Man of Confidence 51 years later. Kessler, 306th Bomb Group, was a POW at the same camps with Kurt.

(Continued on page 4)

"MAN OF CONFIDENCE" — Continued from page 3

of the airmen who had been imprisoned with Kurt at Stalag III-B in Fuerstenburg, Germany; Stalag VII-A in Mossburg, Bavaria and Stalag XVII-B in Krems, Austria. Even after more than a half-century, the ex-POW's recollections are still vivid:

Ed McKenzie, 92nd Bomb Group — Kenneth "Joe" Kurtenbach was among the 'greats' of American wartime leaders. A resolution was approved in 1995 by our Stalag XVII-B Association to add the name of Kenneth J. Kurtenbach to the register of outstanding World War II air force leaders at the U.S. Air Force Academy. It read, in part, "It was his indomitable courage and determination in continuous confrontations with the enemy at all levels of authority that literally meant the difference between life and death for thousands of American flyers, each of whom had survived the destruction of his airplane, then the physical and mental trauma of capture, and commitment to a prisoner of war camp. It was his outstanding ability to organize men, under incredibly difficult circumstances, men with non-commissioned officer rank similar to his own, and then to direct them over 18 months of incarceration toward the cross purposes of making life more difficult for the enemy while at the same time trying to get relief from the awful conditions at camp for his comrades, that makes Joe Kurtenbach deserving of this high honor."

John Katuzney, 384th Bomb Group — Sometime in the fall of 1943, several POW's came into Stalag 17-B from Stalag 3-B. One of them was Kenneth J. Kurtenbach. When we had our next election for camp leader to represent us in dealings with the Germans, Kurt and another candidate were chosen to run for this position. This was a democratic election. They went to opposite sides of the parade grounds. Those who wanted Kurt went to his side, those who wanted the other candidate joined him. Kurt's demeanor was such that about 80% of the camp's prisoners voted for him. Time proved that we were lucky to have such a leader. Conditions in the camp were appalling. There was insect infestation, poor food and filth. He was so well-liked that the men would control themselves and listen to him as problems arose. He also won the respect of the Germans so that we gained improvements in food, shelter and sanitary conditions. When the Swiss Commission came to inspect the camp, Kurt would meet with them to voice our complaints so the Germans would be forced to make concessions.

Charles M. Belmer, 310th Bomb Group — I was elected as the Stalag 17-B Adjutant. Kurt and I lived, ate and worked together in the POW compound office. He was a great leader as he had a wonderful personality and always had a smile on his face. He had the responsibility of relations with the Germans and the Swiss protective powers as well as the hands-on running of the airmen in Stalag 17-B. The camp was divided by barracks. Four barracks made up a battalion, one barrack was a company and half of each barrack was a platoon. Each of these elements had its own POW leader. We met with these leaders once a month. Kurt was, in effect, a Colonel and the Enlisted Prisoner's Commander by virtue of his election. He worked with the various leaders to solve problems as they arose.

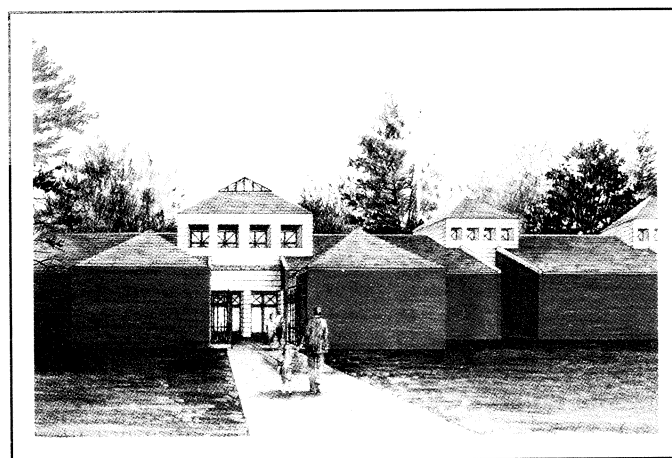
Ralph E. Lavoie, 384th Bomb Group — Another fellow and I tried to escape. A hail of gunfire stopped us. He was killed and I was shot in the shoulder, neck, ribs and face. I was rolling around on the ground trying to dodge the bullets. Kurt was at the other end of the compound, fighting with the Germans to let him come down to see if we were alive. One German hit him in the mouth with a rifle butt. Finally, they let him come, and he helped get me to the aid station. He saved my life.

Jim Clark, 305th Bomb Group — In negotiating with the Germans, you didn't have any strength to bargain from. Kurt would pound the Geneva Convention into them. There were times he would stand up to the German commandant that you were almost afraid for him. We didn't want to lose him. Near the end of the war, when Soviet army forces were approaching



A MONUMENT TO HONOR FORMER POW'S at Stalag XVII-B was dedicated on 3 May 1989 by Kenneth Kurtenbach at the Andersonville Prisoner of War Memorial Park in Georgia.

BELOW IS AN ARTIST'S RENDERING of the National Prisoners of War Museum at Andersonville, painted in 1990 by Joyce.



the camp, the Germans marched all able-bodied prisoners out of Stalag 17-B. Kurt stayed behind with some 200 ill and wounded captives to make sure they were fed and received proper attention. It was a brave thing to do. The Russians were very hostile. You couldn't trust them at all. Finally, the Russian colonel agreed not to interfere with us and we were eventually rescued by American troops.



While the 303rd Bomb Group can take special pride in the fact that Kenneth J. Kurtenbach was one of our very own, he was truly a man for all seasons.



During World War II, Rainbow Corner, the American Red Cross Club near Piccadilly Circus in London, was the most famous in the ETO. For 24 hours a day, every day, it was open to American servicemen from 11 November 1942 to 9 January 1946. In addition to extensive recreation facilities and programs, the club offered excellent food service.



The Genial Ghosts of Rainbow Corner

A delightful reminiscence by an English dance hostess at London's American Red Cross Club, as told exclusively to the Hell's Angels Newsletter

By Gwendoline Hollingshead McIntyre

A girl I used to meet on the tube worked for Rainbow Corner. She asked me if I could dance. I told her I had taken ball-room dancing classes. She asked me if I would be interested in being a hostess at Rainbow Corner. I told her, "yes."

I went for an interview with "Sally" (Mrs. Helen Elting), and was accepted as everyone was carefully vetted. My time would be after I had finished work, in the evenings. She gave me an Identity Card which showed I was a valid member.

On my first evening on the dance floor, a G.I. asked me to dance and started jitterbugging, which I couldn't do. Fortunately, I could follow his instructions and picked it up very quickly. I had a good time dancing and talking with all servicemen—Air Corps, Infantry and Navy.

One evening, the crew from an LST, which was in for an overhaul, said they would ask the Captain if he would allow the hostesses to come on board. The Captain agreed, so we were taken on board to have a tour of the ship, and were given a splendid meal, which included ice cream, a special treat.

Another happy day was

our "Picnic". We were able to get an open truck filled with straw for our "Hayride". People had to look twice as we drove through war-time London to get to our destination. We had a great time.

We put on a show for our Navy friends. They kindly loaned us some of their uniforms. It was a good laugh, thanks to our organizer Blossom Brown.

A place we liked very much was the basement "Dunker's Den", where coffee and doughnuts were enjoyed by all. "Men Only!"

Fred Astaire's sister Adele (Lady Charles Cavendish) was also there to help the boys. She would write letters to their mothers, wives and sweethearts. A girl with a big heart.

So, too, was "Ma" Whitaker, a volunteer who has sewn on over 10,000 stripes for every boy who flies. She had a plane named "Lady Irene" after her. Wonder if

the plane is still around?

She sewed on over 10,000 stripes inserting a lucky farthing coin under the stripes for every boy who flies. Wonder if there are any airmen around who still carry their lucky piece? The boys really loved her.

One might see Irving Berlin, George Raft, James Stewart and many others who came in for a few minutes. Kim Hunter looked terrific. Other important personages who wanted to see how the Red Cross was taking care of the G.I. included General Theodore Roosevelt, General Dwight Eisenhower and many more.

Glenn Miller made his "Eagle Broadcasts" here. On a special occasion, Artie's Shaw's Navy Band, with Sam Donoghue conducting. Sometimes Petula Clark as a youngster sang for us. She is now a star. The joint really rocked.

We couldn't have our dances without the help of our great bands to dance to. Just to name a few: The Flying Forts, The Thunder Bolts, The Flying Yanks, Hepcats, Rosato, The Skyliners.

We were always happy

to have a break and go to the soda fountain to have a coke. Sometimes I helped there, and was always amazed to see the syrup which came in barrels become a glass of coke, with ice, which we were not accustomed to, and a very welcome relief after all the dancing we did.

However, one day Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt came to finally close the doors on a great building which had helped so many servicemen and provided them with over 62,000 main meals and over 412,000 snacks. A barber shop, valet service, hot showers, and other amenities.

For a "Special Thank You" we were each given a letter and pin by Mrs. Roosevelt for our time and effort to help, especially when air raids had us rushing down to the basement for safety, as bombs were dropped close by.

I only hope I gave some relief to all the servicemen who came to have an enjoyable evening, to have a dance and chat about their home town and life, before leaving all this behind to venture into

(Continued on page 6)



THE AMERICAN RED CROSS CLUBMOBILE, with its pretty hostesses, great coffee and tasty doughnuts, was a welcome sight whenever it pulled to a stop on U.S. Eighth Air Force bases all over England. It is shown here visiting the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth.

(Continued from page 5)
the unknown.

"Tex" stationed at Cambridge, and all the airmen in East Anglia, who died. I knew so many boys who went on missions and never returned. This left me with such a sad feeling, as in the main they were really happy-go-lucky guys, and always said how many more missions they had to complete before going home.

My friend Jo married a G.I. and went to live in Oklahoma City, and became Mrs. Zimmermann. My husband and I are still in contact with a couple of servicemen, and Anona Moeser who worked for a short time in Rainbow Corner. She is now in her 90's and lives in Sister Bay, Wisconsin.

But, let us never forget our wonderful staff who had charge of running every detail and had great difficulties sometimes when things did not go to plan. Your readers may remember some of them.

"Mrs. G" was Helen Gibson of New York City, the Club Director.

"P.H." was Peirce Hammond of Haverford, Pennsylvania. His two sons were in the services.

"V.F.G." was Verbon F. Gay of New Orleans, Louisiana. (He wrote a marvelous history of The Story of Rainbow Corner in its first year, which helped me immensely in doing this story.)

"Sally" was Helen Elting of Boston, Massachusetts.

"Tickle" was Marguerite Tickle of Carmel, California.

"Sippy" was Josephine Sippy of St. Louis, Missouri.

"Gwen" was Gwen Winningham of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, a practicing lawyer.

"Lizzie" was Elizabeth O'Connor of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan.

"Ilse" was Ilse Schluter of Brooklyn, New York.

"Judy at the piano" was Judy Underdown of Odessa, New York.

"Hal" was Harold Bowler of New York City, an artist of international repute. There must be many G.I.'s in the U.S. who had their portraits painted by Hal.

"Dorothy" was Dorothy Berker of Montgomery, Alabama.

The volunteer staff was approximately 379. Total number of hours volunteers worked monthly -- 5,485.

To look at Rainbow Corner in terms of brick and mortar, it is five story building, fairly modern, but over three months of hard work were necessary to convert it for club use.

Rainbow Corner is located at the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Denman Street, a short distance from Piccadilly Circus. It was a fairly inconspicuous building in peace time, operated as part of a chain of Lyons Corner Houses and the Monico Restaurant, built to accommodate a few thousand people who would leisurely come in, eat and depart.

The "sister" Corner House was a short distance away on Coventry Street, and was extremely popular with men and women, and the window display for wartime was a joy to behold. Many of your readers will have also, no doubt, visited the latter.

On opening day, November 11th, 1942, ten G.I.'s were fished out of one of London's dense fogs and invited to see their new Red Cross Club. On December 5th, 1943, over 70,000 entrances to the building were made on its First Birthday Party -- the largest number to



29803 AMERICAN RED CROSS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

This card will identify

HOLLINGSHEAD, Gwendoline L.
(Surname) (Christian name)

who is working for the American Red Cross in Great Britain in the capacity of:

Dance Hostess.

Rainbow Corner.

Nationality: British.

Nat. Reg. No. YBIA 1551

Title



Date 28.3.43

AFTER GWENDOLINE HOLLINGSHEAD was "vetted" by Mrs. Elting, she was issued her ID card as a dance hostess at Rainbow Corner.

enter its doors on one day.

Then came the big finale, V.E. Day. What a wonderful day for us all.

So many people in Rainbow Corner. The flag flying on the balcony, and with so many people congregated, it might have collapsed with the weight. There was singing, dancing, we were all kissing each other, joy beyond belief.

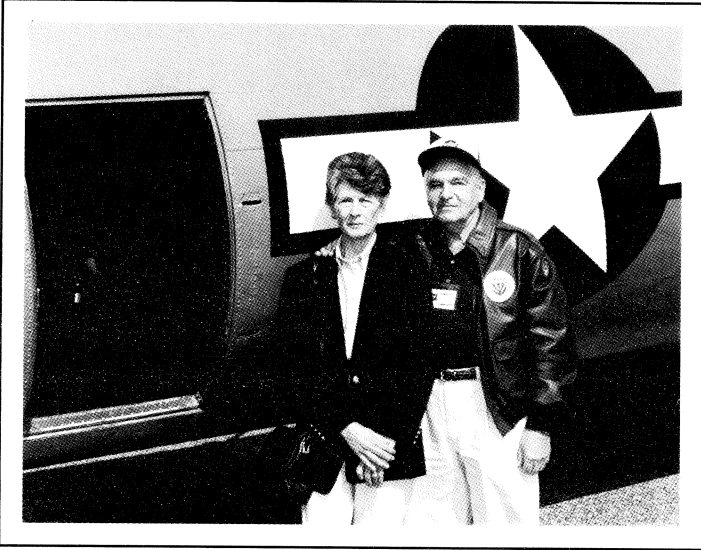
Now, the ships and planes which had brought to these shores all these weary men would soon be returning them to their own country, and loved ones.

After the war, the building "Rainbow Corner" was sold for development and is now an office block with nothing on the outside to indicate the important role it had in the war. The "Sister House" in Coventry Street was also sold and is now a restaurant.

Shaftesbury Avenue and Coventry Street will never ring with the excitement it generated. A war, so bad for us all, has left me with poignant memories.



GWENDOLINE MCINTYRE at her home in Romford, Essex, England. She and her husband still hear from some of the "boys."



THE FIRST CHALLENGE was climbing into the B-17. I put my back to the opening, grabbed the rim at the top, hoisted up into a sitting position, and swung around. Eddie faced the door, and pulled himself up and through in one motion. I guess that was the old way.



IN THE RADIO ROOM, which was my husband's position on the B-17 during the war, I tried my hand at sending Morse code. No harm done because the key wasn't connected. The radio was a U.S. Army Signal Corps Receiver BC-348-H model.

My First Flight On A Flying Fortress

By Mary Lee Deerfield

You can imagine my complete surprise when my husband informed me that one of my upcoming birthday presents would be a ride on a B-17. Eddie had flown 30 missions over Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe. His last flight was in May of 1944.

The logistics of accomplishing this feat were not easy. We would have to meet the plane, owned by the Collings Foundation, on its next to the last stop before it flew to our St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Florida airport. We arranged to leave our car at that airport and took a limousine to Zephyrhills, about 60 miles away.

There the B-17G sat, looking very majestic. It was named *Nine-O-Nine* for a 91st Bomb Group aircraft which had flown 140 missions. A large crowd was viewing the plane, including many men who had flown on B-17's during the war. A B-24 was also on display, but everyone agreed the Flying Fortress was far superior.

Just before time to board, we saw a mechanic examining one of the B-17's engines. He called another person over to look. This did not add to my feeling of confidence. I wondered if we were going to have parachutes.

We had to hoist ourselves up through the side door. We were told to go forward to the radio room, which was where my husband had spent his wartime years on the B-17. There were plastic covered pads on the floor with seat belts nearby. We strapped in and were ready for take off. I'm sure Eddie was thinking of the many times during the war when they lifted off not knowing if they would ever return from this mission and if they did how many friends on other planes would not be so lucky.

As the engines were revved up we were overwhelmed with exhaust fumes and horrendous noise. The hatch over our head that had held a gun was completely open; the gun had been removed, although all of the other 12 guns on the plane were in place. I'm sure all of the radio equipment brought back many memories to my husband to be sitting there in that little room more than 55 years later. On his last mission the plane had been hit and he was injured in the face by flak.

The plane started moving. The pilot kept revving up the engines, when suddenly the engines became very quiet. By our

shared look, I knew we were both thinking "We're not going, there's something wrong with the plane!" Probably a minute went by, (it seemed longer) then we continued moving forward slowly with the brakes screeching. The engines revved up again and, finally, the great plane lifted off the runway and we were airborne.

We unbuckled the seat belts and stood up. Maintaining your balance was not easy as the plane bounced around a lot. You had to keep a firm grasp on something secure. I strapped down my handbag with the seat belt (I thought if this purse should fly out of the plane it might kill someone in Pasco County!) and we started toward the front. My first thought moving along the very narrow walkway between the bombs was that there could not have been a fat member of a combat crew or he never would have been able to squeeze by from one end of the plane to the other!

When we reached the point where the pilot and co-pilot sat we had to get down on our knees and crawl past the top turret through a low opening that led to where the navigator and bombardier sat. It was like a glass ball on the front of the plane. The view was wonderful. I'm sure it wasn't so wonderful during the war when you had enemy planes flying directly at you.

The countryside was beautiful and we were only flying at 1,200 feet so everything was bright and clear. The sound of the engines was deafening which made conversation of any kind difficult. We circled over the Florida State Fair several times and viewed the colorful umbrellas covering the small stands and the many rides. The Fair had just opened and thousands of people were milling around, many of them looking up at us.

When we flew over MacDill Air Force base, there on the runway were four Air Force jet planes. I thought what a long way we have come, but those new planes with all of their capabilities could never be loved as much the B-17 was by the crews who flew her. Now, our journey was coming to an end and we had to return to our small pads on the floor and get ready for landing.

To our amazement when we reached the radio room and looked out the gun port on the top of the B-17 we had a small plane flying just off our right wing. Standing on tip toes I waved to the pilot of the other plane. We learned later that it was a Mooney-252, and the pilot was Dick Dinning who had flown B-17 missions with the 351st Bomb Group.

Then it was time to buckle up for the landing. We have flown hundreds of thousands of miles during our married life, but the pilot made one of the most gentle landings I have ever experienced. It was obvious he didn't want to jar the old girl. And so ended my wonderful birthday ride. Just as it had brought my husband back from so many missions it had held up one more time for my 45-minute ride. I'm sure that Eddie enjoyed it and he didn't have to go to the hospital when this "mission" ended! It would be very hard to top this fabulous experience.

In combat it was usually 40 miles long and lasted about seven minutes

"The Bomb Run"

by Hal Susskind

Of the 299 combat hours I spent in the nose of a 303rd Bomb Group B-17 during World War II, I was surprised to learn that collectively, only four hours and forty-six minutes of that time were spent on bomb runs.

Yet to me, each of the forty-one bomb runs seemed to last for an eternity. Time seems to move very slowly when the enemy's anti-aircraft gunners are trying to make each minute your very last.

As a student in the Bombardier School at Deming, New Mexico in 1943 I made hundreds of bomb runs; first sitting on a moving platform, about ten feet high, chasing a "mechanical bug" around the floor in a hangar. This was to introduce us to the intricacies of the Norden bombsight and to learn and master the SOP for dropping bombs from an aircraft. The magic word was "procedure."

Finally we made the transition to the AT-11. The first bomb I dropped was a "shack" It went right through the wooden structure right in the middle of the circle. Turning to my instructor and expecting a pat on the back, I became the victim of a "royal ass chewing." "Your shack was the result of compensating errors," sputtered my instructor. "You forgot to uncage the gyro, you didn't level the bubbles," and he drolled on and on repeating the litany of my mistakes. There were many more bomb runs both in daylight and in darkness before I graduated with the wings of a Bombardier in March of 1943. Then I was off to navigation school.

Graduating from San Marcos Navigation School in July of 1943 our class was sent off to phase training. Half of my dual rated class were sent to Moses Lake in Washington to join crews as Bombardiers. I was sent to Ephrata Air Base also in Washington where I joined the Stoullil crew, with the Skaer Provisional Group, as a navigator. Eventually we joined the 303rd Bomb Group at RAF Molesworth in November of 1943.

On December 24, 1943 I participated in my first bomb run - as a Navigator. It was an ideal introduction to combat. The target was special construction works in Vacqueriette, in the Pas de Calais area of France. There was no flak or enemy fighters, a rarity in combat. The

fourth mission to Oschersleben on January 11, 1944 was a nightmare. Strange as it may seem, the only respite from the numerous fighter attacks was on the bomb run. The 303rd lost 11 aircraft and crews on that mission.

Normally on bomb runs you were exposed to a lot of flak as the Germans fought to protect their dwindling resources. The skies over Berlin and Merseburg appeared as walls of flak as you gazed on these cities from the start of the bomb run.

Peering over the shoulder of the bombardier who usually was busy turning knobs on the Norden sight, I tightened my flak suit, tried to disappear inside my helmet and started praying as I watched that black wall move closer and closer.

Finally the words, "bombs away," rattled over the intercom and we breathed a sigh of relief as the pilot whipped the aircraft around and raced to get the hell out of there. Somehow or other we had survived another bomb run.

In my experience, all bomb runs were pretty much the same except one that stands out.

It was with Lew Lyle on his last mission with the 303rd bomb group on October 6, 1944. Our primary target was the synthetic oil plant at Politz. Since the primary and the secondary were socked in, we took off for the power plant at Stralsund. Turning on the I.P. I watched my Bombardier, Bill Hoover, start spinning the knobs on the sight. Suddenly he sat up and stretched with his arms in the air. He just sat there without moving. I thought he had fallen asleep. I slapped him on the head and told him to get to work. He smiled, leaned over and told me to look into the sight. It was the first time I had peered into a bombsight since my bombardier school days. There were the crosshairs riding right on the aiming point. It had all the earmarks of a "shack."

My 41st and last bomb run with the 303rd took place on April 11, 1945 when we bombed the underground oil storage tanks at Freidham, Germany.

Would there ever be a 42nd bomb run? Only fate and time would tell.

I separated from the service in February of 1946 and was recalled to active duty as a navigator in Au-

gust of 1949, I was sent to Mather AFB to take a refresher course in navigation. My original navigation course took three months, the refresher course took six months. From there it was off to Ellington AFB where I was a navigation instructor for almost two years.

In April of 1951 I was assigned to the Air Rescue Service in Bermuda. as a navigator on one of the four B-17 crews. Our area of responsibility was practically the entire Atlantic Ocean as far as the Azores. Any aircraft or surface vessel declaring an emergency in that area was our target. We were required to intercept any aircraft and escort it back to Bermuda. If the emergency was on the surface we dropped a lifeboat to the survivors.

Since the SB-17 was too slow to keep up with any aircraft even with a feathered engine; we transferred to SB-29s.

On July 21, 1952 I was part of the alert crew and was airborne on a training mission when we were instructed to land.

The Air Rescue Duty Controller received the following message from New York Oceanic Control: "Ocean vessel Parramatta at 27 N 50 W enroute Capetown requesting blood plasma." Our crew "COCOA" was assigned the mission.

The Base Hospital was notified to prepare two parachute kits containing six pints of blood plasma each. No data was available as to the time of the position or speed and course of the vessel. Since no maps were available I went looking for a globe of the world to plot my course. On this mission I was to be both navigator and bombardier. I had to locate the vessel which was 1,000 miles out of Bermuda and then drop our "bomb load" on the deck of the Swedish ship.

In the early afternoon, SB-29 #0137 departed on course. We set out on a true course of 135 degrees and a cruising altitude of 5,000 feet to afford us a good radar search range. Cruise control power settings were chosen with the idea of arriving over the ship before darkness set in.

Because of the loss of one hour, due to the 15 degrees difference in longitude, the race against darkness was lost and the sun was already below the horizon when the

Parramatta was contacted by our radio operator, A1C Joseph E. Kahl. At that time, the Parramatta acknowledged her request for blood plasma. The ship's radio operator was then asked if he could transmit on a voice frequency. The answer was negative.

During subsequent transmissions between the ship and the SB-29, the rescue aircraft homed in on the vessel with the use of the AN/ARN-7. The reading on the radio compass was 005 degrees, so we altered our course to a heading of 140 degrees to set up a collision course.

A1C Kahl requested the Parramatta to turn on all its lights. Thirty-five minutes later, Lt. William J. Morrissey, our Aircraft Commander, started a slow descent. When the plane broke through the undercast the target vessel was sighted dead ahead.

The vessel, which was glowing with lights, was advised to head into the wind and to stand by for a drop from the aircraft. Since voice contact was never established, all messages had to be relayed in code between the radio operators of the vessel and aircraft. The vessel was advised that the rescue aircraft would make two runs from stern to bow. The first run at 1,200 feet so that the bombardier could study the target, and the final run at 500 feet for the drop. The vessel was requested to clear her decks and to watch for a parachute container.

After figuring out the wind direction, I moved up to the nose of the aircraft to direct the pilot in setting up the pattern for the drop.

Finally, Rescue #0137 came out of the darkness and started on the bomb run. I focussed my eyes on the lights on the top of the masts as the target got closer and closer. Finally as I reached the drop point, I yelled, "Let her drop." This was soon followed by the left scanners report of "Parachute opening." Within a matter of minutes, as I waited with baited breath, a message from the Parramatta confirmed the accuracy of the drop. "Plasma received, sufficient quantity, thank you very much."

"The Bomb Run" that I had trained for nine years ago was successful. "I was right on target."

Three Months in the Lives Of Molesworth's Weathermen

The men of the 18th Weather Squadron at Molesworth briefed combat crews on local flying conditions as well as predicting temperatures, clouds, icing, contrails and winds over the target and enemy territory.

The following historical narrative, with its rare insights to life at Molesworth, was extracted from a report by 1st Lt. Walter J. Saucier, Station Weather Officer, for the months of January, February and March, 1945:

M/Sgt Robert E. Lutz and Sgt Israel (NMI) Cantor are rated as flying weather observers. They receive instructions from 1st Air Division Weather Office and take turns at flying over a certain route, investigating weather phenomena several hours prior to a combat mission.

For the betterment of our performance we have acquired another new edition aeronautical map, scale 1:500,000.

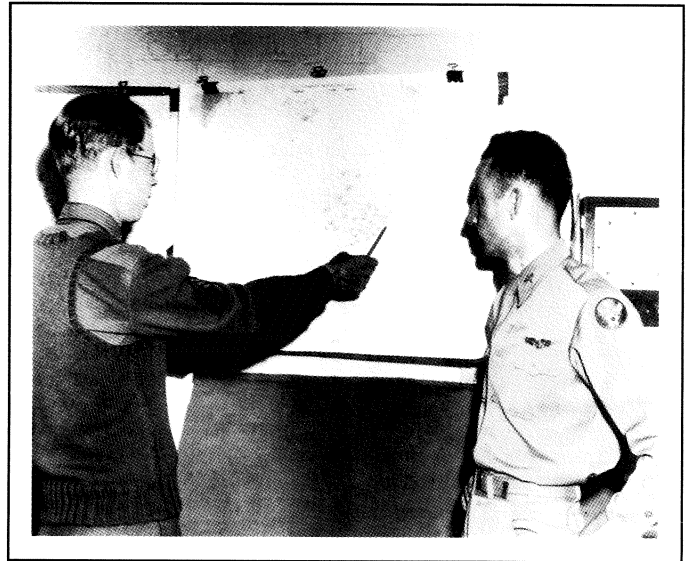
A set of bookends have been constructed to make the book shelf more tidy. We also have another clock, issued without complaint, strangely enough, by the local ordnance organization.

Our basketball team, *The Underdogs*, has made fabulous gains in reputation and success. We have lamented the necessity of employing other players when shortages existed because of our military responsibilities. However, in spite of these vicissitudes, the team has easily dispatched all previously difficult opponents, placing us in the enviable position as number one rival for the base championship. In the next few days, we shall play the last game, thereby acquiring the plaque denoting our success.

With an alert eye for the summer, we have dug out the baseball equipment and are secretly developing a staff of pitchers. By this means, the Weather Detachment will undoubtedly play a highly successful part in summer athletics.

All the dilapidated bicycles have been repaired and the usual short evening pub runs will soon go into effect.

Morale of the detachment seems satisfactory. Perhaps it has been stimulated by the availability of three-day passes. Also, we have recently been receiving some excellent Special Service reading materials. The men seem to favor historical novels and western stories, characterized by rapid action, keen literary quality and amorous adventure.



TWO METEOROLOGISTS AT WORK—It was their responsibility to furnish weather information, conduct briefings before missions and attend debriefings to update their charts. (A Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum photo)

Generally speaking, the health of detachment personnel has been good. Several times the enlisted men became infected with scabies, but luckily enough this condition has been eliminated. Booster shots for tetanus and typhoid were administered. Early in February, all enlisted men were given physical examinations to determine eligibility for infantry.

Several innovations in our actual operation are also noteworthy. Being a Wing Station, we have become responsible for gathering the weather interrogations from the outstations after each mission. These reports are summarized and the resulting data is telephoned in to 1st Air Division Weather Office within four hours after the landing of the first mission participating aircraft.

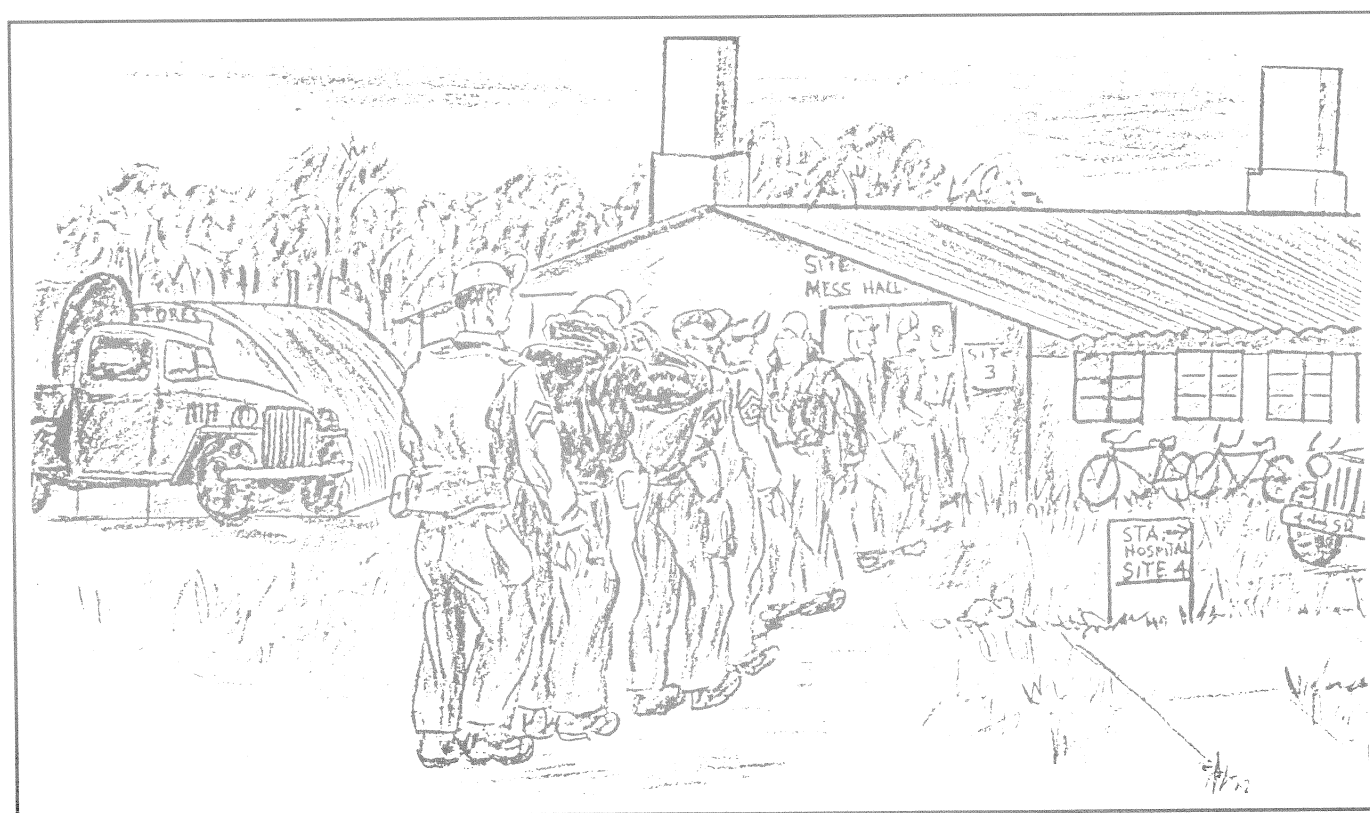
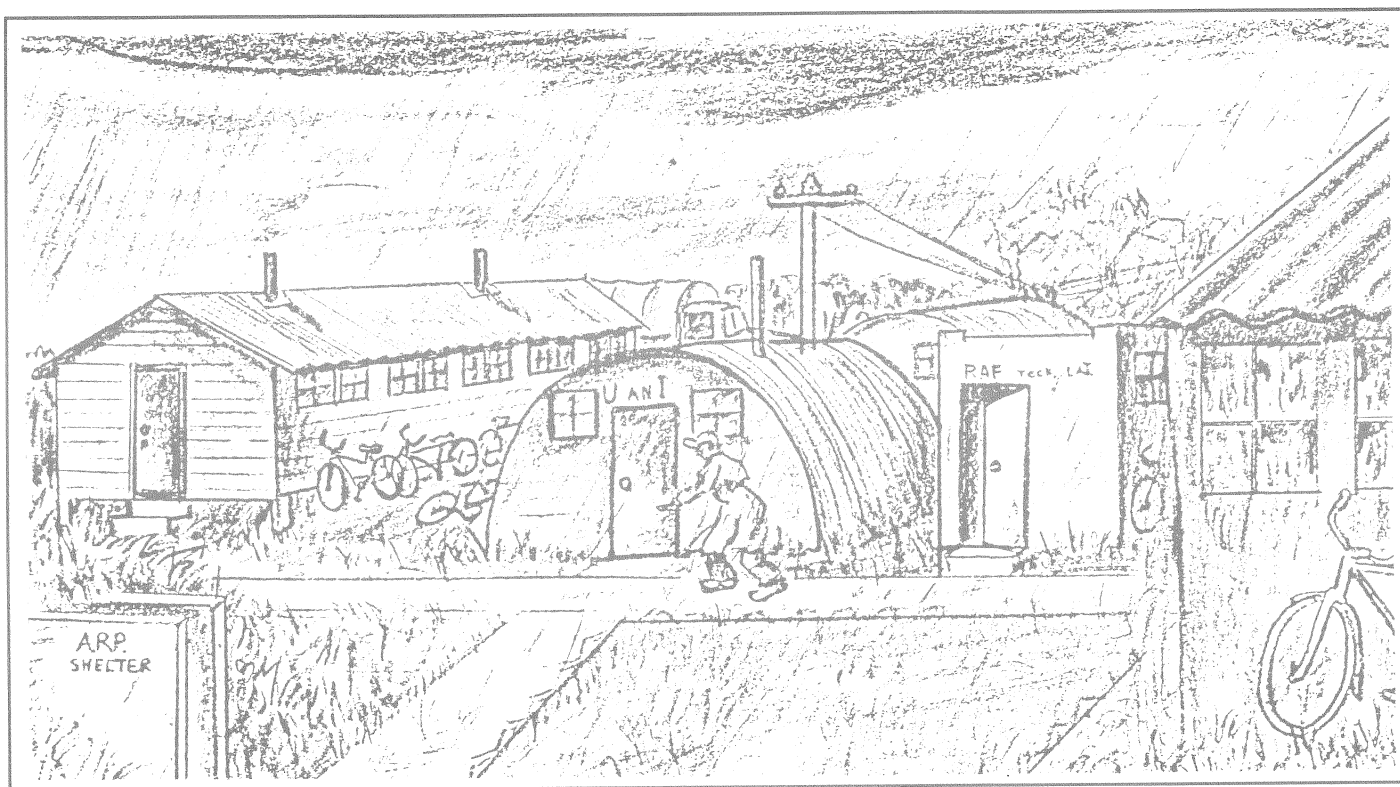
A Plexiglas overlay has been hung in the main office for recording of latest forecasts of winds, temperature, etc. This attractive display is useful in distributing weather information, particularly when several air crews come in simultaneously to get the forecasts.

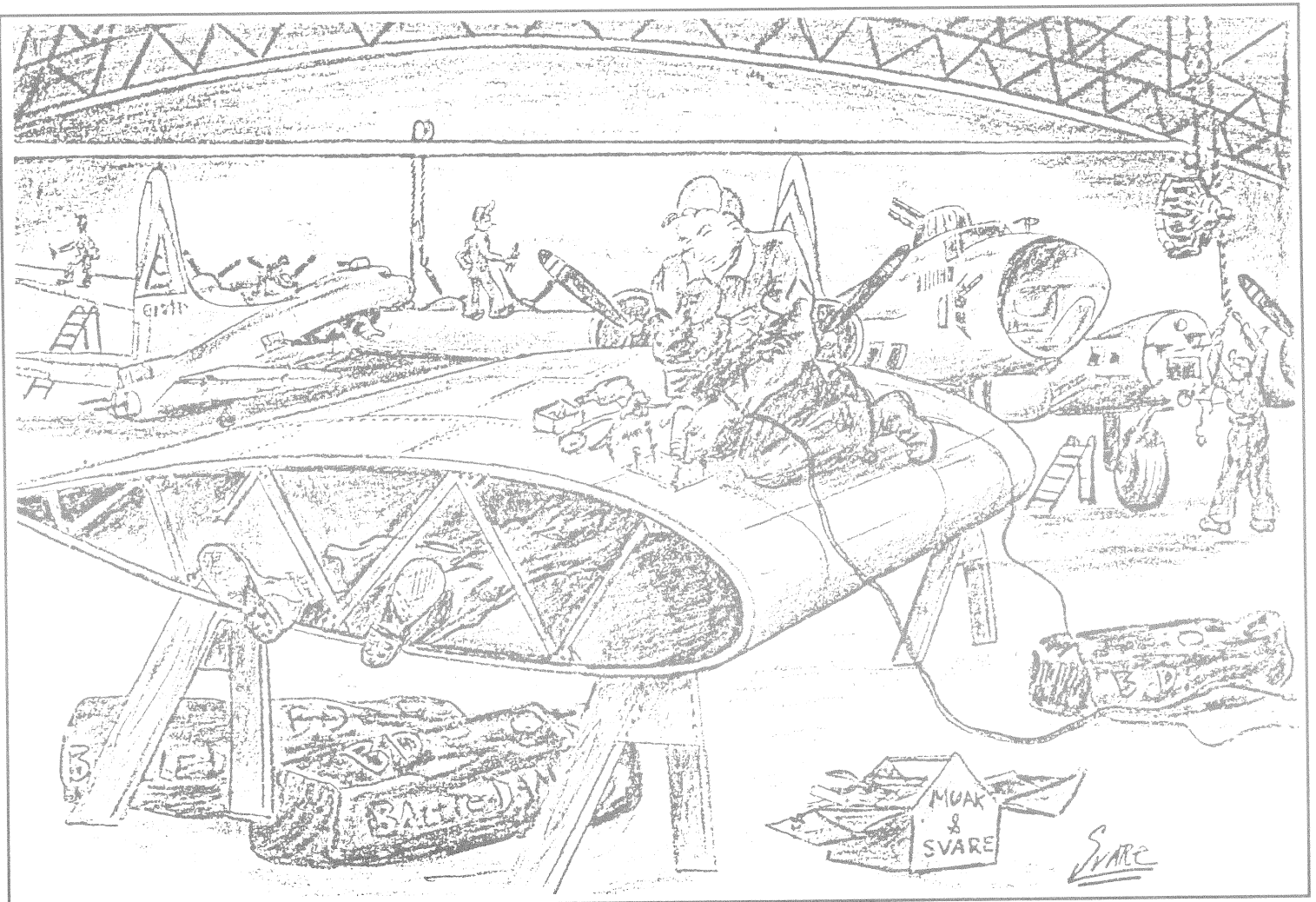
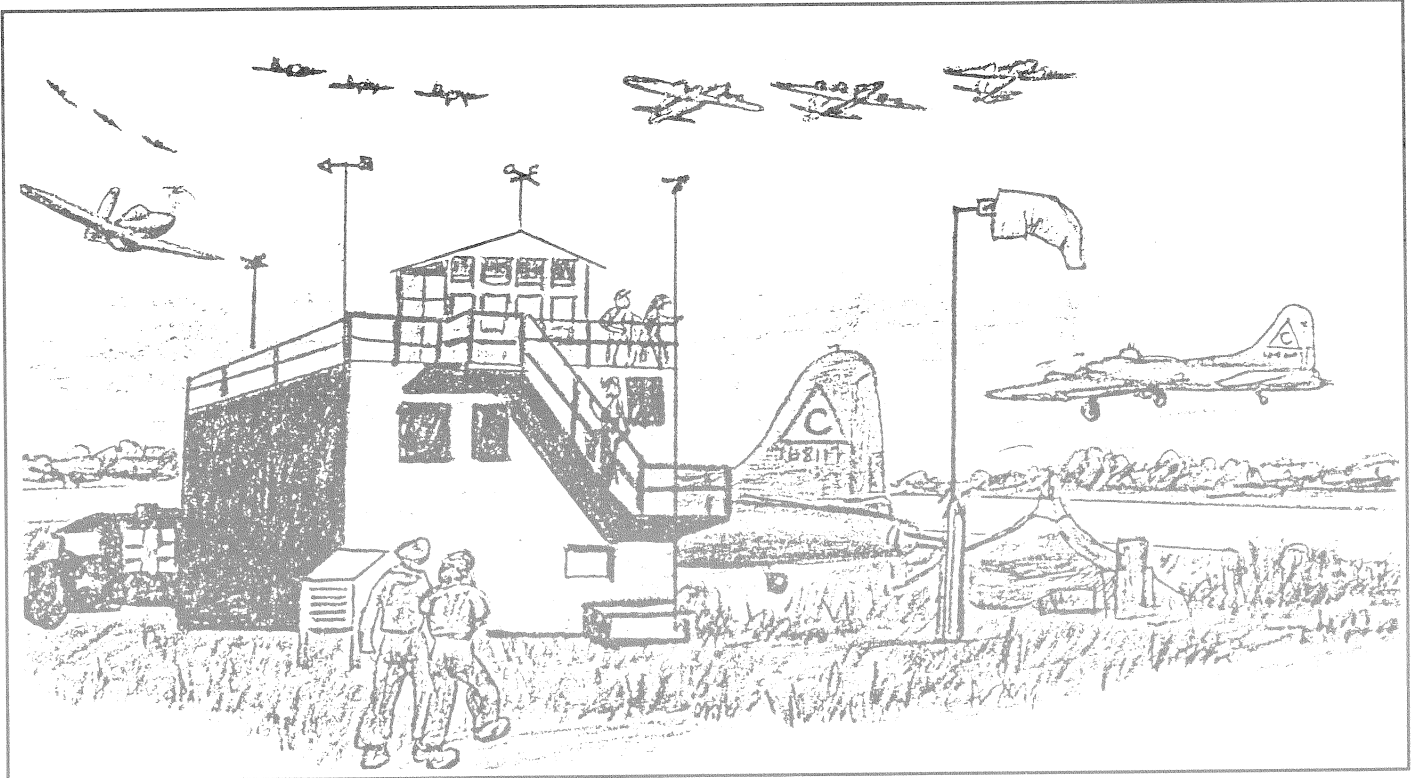
We broadcast by telephone a morning weather forecast at 0645 hours to all squadron operations. This forecast is supplemented and corrected at 1200 and 1800 hours successively and whenever else deemed necessary.

Our instrument shelter, unfortunately damaged by an accidental pyrotechnic discharge, has been repaired and repainted. New equipment has been installed.

SKETCHES BY SVARE

Corporal Neil Svare served in the 444th Sub Depot at Molesworth from late in 1943 to mid-1945, when the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) was deactivated. In his spare time when away from duties in the Radio Section, Electrician Shop and Sheet Metal Shop, he sketched. On these pages are four of his views — the home of the 444th on Site 1, a chow line at the mess hall on Site 3, B-17's returning from a mission and "tinbenders" repairing an outer wing panel of a B-17 in the base's main hangar.





MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS

General and Board of Directors

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association

Monday 11 October 1999

(Following is a summary of the minutes of the **General Meeting** as compiled by 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 by President Harry Gobrecht. There was a brief discussion of reunions, treasury, Newsletter, and much about the 8th AF Heritage Museum.

Ed Miller gave a run down of problems associated with hotel and registration problems at Oklahoma City and gave numbers of participants. Treasurer Jack Rencher gave a report on finances including needs, costs and income. Dues and donations are our only income. We endured a net loss last year of \$21,000 with the previous year's loss of only \$51. Last year's loss was caused by a one-time expenditure to fund the 303rd Records Project being put together by Ed Miller.

358th Bomb Squadron Representative Walt Mayer gave a brief report of the activities of the past year. He was followed by 359th Rep. Bill Eisenhart, 360th Alternate Rep. Bill Eason and 427th Squadron Rep. Fred Reichel who asked for a standing moment of silence for the late Vernon Stone. Vernon's son David Stone noted that this was his first reunion. He told how much his father had loved the organization and the people of the 303rd. Henry Johansen of HQ and supporting units told of visiting a hospice to see a 303rd member but was too late as the member had passed away. Widow Rep. Joanna Tressler told of her problems with getting answers to her mailings. Associate Member Rep. Lance Stoner has 366 on the roster of Associates. Frank DeCicco gave a very brief report.

Bill McLeod, By-laws Chairman, reported on changes that were proposed by the Board. He moved that the amendments be approved as enumerated. Motion was seconded and the vote from the general membership was unanimous. Positions of Newsletter Editor and Chairman of the Past Presidents Advisory Committee were proposed to be elected instead of appointed. It was seconded and passed without dissent.

Harry Gobrecht said the newly elected 359th Rep. will be John Ford and the alternate will be Bill Beasley. Ed Gardner, Computer Data Base Chairman, says he will work with Bill Roche on the next reunion.

Newsletter Editor Eddie Deerfield said that the Hell's Angels Newsletter is alive and well and is going to stay that way. Historian Harry Gobrecht reported that there are no more copies of our daily diary "Might in Flight," all having been sold. There will be no more printings.

Ed Miller, Membership Chairman, talked about the Ways and Means Committee. He counted those of different ages to illustrate the dwindling resources from membership dues. He mentioned the work that Ms. Garrison has been doing to put together for CD's on the "303rd Records Project." Charlie Sykes, Associate Member, who chairs the PX Committee, said that it was a privilege to work with the 303rd.

Hal Susskind told of the 303rd BGA Service Recognition awards. Gary Moncur gave a report on the Web Page and said that mission reports are no longer offered on the web because of the work load they imposed on Jack Rencher.

Lew Lyle gave an extended report on activities at the Heritage Museum and gave a pitch for funding ideas and the importance of individual's recognition. Most groups don't do as well in this regard as does the 303rd. The Museum is doing well and is starting to break even. He lauded the Board of the 303rd for doing such a tremendous job. The B-47 project at the museum is on schedule. Additional money will be needed to mount and display this bomber which will carry the 303rd triangle "C" logo.

Ed Miller reported on the condensed Records Project and asked people to save material for their children, including newsletters, so that when the veterans are gone the kids will have something of this historic period.

Harry Gobrecht gave a brief report on the Michael Lugez award. Overlooked WW II awards can still be applied for—he and

Hal Susskind will help in any way they can. He gave an overview of the coming reunions in San Diego in 2000 and on the East Coast in 2001. He also talked of the return to Molesworth and urged all to attend. Lew Lyle will lead us. Bill Roche gave a brief report on our next reunion which will be in San Diego and lauded Ed Gardner for his work in setting up the data processing. Hal Susskind gave names of nominated officers as follows: President, Bill Roche; VP Administration, Dick Johnson.; Secretary, Al Dussliere and Treasurer, Jack Rencher. VP reunions was left up to the president. There being no nominations from the floor, the new officers were elected by acclamation.

The meeting adjourned at 1235.

(Following is a summary of the minutes of the **Board of Directors Meeting** as compiled by Al Dussliere. To request a copy of the full minutes, write to The Secretary, 1901 Fifth Street, East Moline, IL 61244)

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Roche at 1342. He expressed his thanks for the guidance of his predecessors and asked that they continue to offer their input. He asked Jim Taylor to be VP Reunions. Taylor accepted and was approved. Dick Johnson, VP Admin, offered to read the minutes of the previous meetings but was asked to send copies later.

Hal Susskind will nominate Eddie Deerfield and Harry Gobrecht to serve as Newsletter Editor and Chairman of the Past Presidents Advisory Committee, respectively, for election by the membership to those offices and concurrent Executive Board status at tonight's farewell dinner.

Ed Miller discussed the Membership Program and donations for the Molesworth Memorial. There was considerable discussion about categories of donors and how to recognize them. Ed offered to work on a plan for the Ways and Means Committee. Bill Roche then appointed him as chairman of that standing committee. Lew Lyle offered a few scenarios in the area of Ways and Means. Miller also commented on the problem of finding missing comrades including Social Security records. He has software to find many members if enough time is expended.

Bill McLeod, By-Laws Committee, gave a report on his project. He was reappointed to that chairmanship. Ed Gardner, Computer Base Chairman, commented on means of getting people to donate to the 303rd. He was reappointed. Newsletter Chairman Eddie Deerfield talked of the costs of publication and distribution. Financing had previously been approved. Deerfield will continue as Editor.

Harry Gobrecht will continue as Group Historian. Jack Rencher's Mission Reports program will be held in abeyance. Charlie Sykes will continue as PX Chairman. John Ford was appointed Hospitality Room Chairman. Hal Susskind received the appointment as Press Secretary. There were comments about mentioning our reunions in veteran organization publications.

Reports by Squadron and other Units were presented. Fred Reichel, 427th Squadron Representative, will attempt to contact The History Channel for recognition of the 303rd. Gary Moncur indicated he would list on the Web Site the libraries where "Might In Flight" can be found. He was reappointed as Chairman of the Web Site Committee.

The situation of Copyrights was discussed. Permission to use our material must first come from the Hell's Angels Newsletter Editor and, if necessary, also from the author.

Ed Miller described briefly the process of producing our CD ROMS and is soliciting bids to do so. He suggested a price of \$49.95 for the general public and \$39.95 for members.

Howard Froman, the local contact for the San Diego reunion, will provide necessary information, as it is available. Casual dress, Hawaiian garb, will be suggested for the luau. Any reports will go to Jim Taylor.

There will be 439 attending tonight's gala banquet. A discussion was held concerning seating at these affairs.

Comments were made about the length of reunions, women's activities and locations of upcoming reunions. The year 2000 is set for San Diego and Washington D.C. or other eastern areas are priority for 2001. Jim Taylor will be the point man.

Further appointments of Committee Chairmen were made by President Roche and were accepted (all are listed on page 2 of this newsletter).

The meeting adjourned at 1530.

From The President

Our mini-reunion in Molesworth in early June promises to be interesting. Besides the opportunity to visit our old base, the visit will include the dedication of a memorial to our group on the base by General Lew Lyle. Following the dedication will be a hangar dance in one of the two hangars still there, a visit to the Cambridge Cemetery where many of our comrades are in their final resting place, and a visit to the American Air Museum at Duxford. The final three days will be spent in London.

The size of the group is still undetermined but it appears to be a large contingent. If you still have not decided on going, arrangements are being handled by Tamarac Travel.

Coming in to RAF Molesworth on Saturday, June 3rd, will be like entering a time machine. There will be World War II vehicles scattered about the base. Several people will be dressed in World War II era uniforms. Most of the public attending the hangar dance will be dressed in 1940s garb, and the USAFE Band, The Ambassadors, will play 1940s music. There will be lots of displays, food, drinks and door prizes at the dance.

The present JAC command is making an all out effort to extend hospitality to our group. There will also be delegations from the Dutch, French, Belgian and Danish resistance that saved so many lives of airmen shot down over Europe. They will lay wreaths at the 303rd Memorial that day.

The memorial planning and financing has been directed by Brian McGuire. He is planning on raising the financing through donations. His main effort has been in England. As individuals, we can contribute to the financing by making donations specifically noted for the memorial to our treasury, where the money will be held until needed and released by our Board of Directors.

The next event for our group will be the annual reunion in San Diego on September 25th to the 29th. Description of the events of that meeting and reservation forms for all tours and planned activities will be in the mail about the end of April. It is requested that you make reservations early. Last minute decisions to attend cause a considerable amount of extra work that requires additional cost after a determined cut-off date. It promises to be an enjoyable affair.

The formal dinner on the last night will be replaced by a Luau with Hawaiian entertainment followed by an evening of dancing. The final event will be the Memorial Service on Friday morning that will be conducted by Dick Johnson, the administrative Vice-President.

We hope to see all of you there.

Bill Roche

8th AF Heritage Museum President Buxton Resigns

Dr. Barry M. Buxton, President and CEO of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, has resigned to become Vice President for Institutional Advancement of the Savannah College of Art and Design. The resignation was effective March 20. Museum Board Chairman Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Jr., praised Dr. Buxton's tenure as "an unqualified success." A search for his successor is underway.

PROJECT TO RECORD 303RD HISTORY ON CD/ROM NEARS END

The much-heralded and complex task of recording a multitude of details about the 303rd Bombardment Group's men and machines in World War II is nearing completion. The \$21,000 project, under the direction of Membership Chairman Ed Miller, was funded by the Association. All profits from sales of the CD/Rom disks will be returned to the 303rd BGA's treasury. The disks will be an essential computerized companion piece for the Association's "Might in Flight" history book which earned a total net profit of almost \$15,000 for the Association's treasury.

The following information was received from Project Director Miller:

303rd BOMB GROUP RECORDS-1942-1945

This CD/ROM disk will contain the largest collection of information about all aspects of the 303rd Bomb Group's outstanding contributions to defeating the Nazi's to include:

- ◆ The names of every man who served at Molesworth during WW II.
- ◆ Every B-17 flown by crews of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H).
- ◆ A summary of each of the 364 Bombing Missions to include the formation flown, the names of the individual pilots and their crew members; Enemy aircraft destroyed, or damaged; the number of each mission flown by each crew member, alphabetically indexed; the number of each mission flown by each B-17, indexed by serial number.
- ◆ The names of every man who served in a Ground Support role, by Bomb Squadron or Support Organization, alphabetically indexed with rank, and job assignments, where known.
- ◆ Hundreds of action photos, covering missions and ground support efforts to place the bombers in the air and over the Nazi targets.
- ◆ Many additional records will be included to provide overall coverage.

ADVANCE ORDERS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

Anticipated date of delivery will be Oct/Nov 2000.

The CD/ROM disk will include over 120,000 entries of names and will have over 6,000 pages of records and photos. The indexes will allow you to move from names, to aircraft, to missions, and to dates with ease.

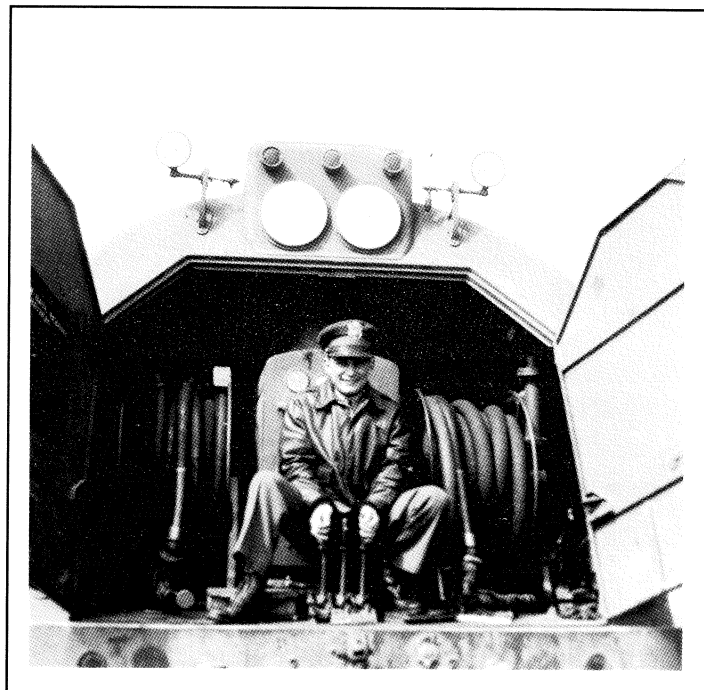
\$50.00 each for Members of the 303rd BG Association

\$70.00 each to members of the Public

Overseas Addresses must add \$10.00 per disk

(These prices include packaging and mailing costs)

Please send your check, made out to the 303rd Bomb Group Association to Ed Miller, P. O. Box 219, Temple, OK 73568-0219. Each CD/ROM disk will be individually prepared, so your order will be filled based upon date received.



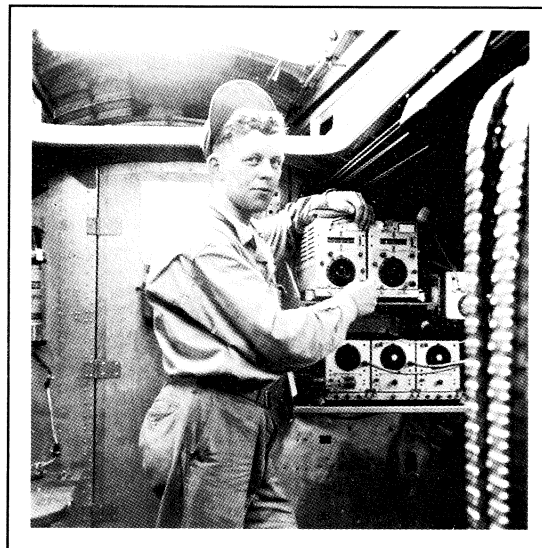
303rd's Pin-up Men of The Month

TOP LEFT—Checking out a B-17 engine after the Flying Fortress returns from a combat mission are 358th ground crew mechanics (l-to-r) PFC Stanley Melnick, Crew Chief T/Sgt Carl L. Mohr, Sgt Harris D. Westerhoff, Cpl Albin L. Malenski and Sgt Loy E. Tingley.

TOP RIGHT—Capt Robert P. Livingston, 303rd HQ Statistical Officer, who often flew missions as an observer, tries his hands at the controls of an aviation fuel truck.

BELOW LEFT—427th Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt Ward M. Kirkpatrick tosses expended .50-caliber brass cartridge shells into ammunition waste boxes after firing on enemy aircraft during an attack on targets in Germany.

BELOW RIGHT—Cpl Donald W. Corrigan of the 359th's Communications Section calibrates equipment in the B-17's radio room as take-off approaches.



Molesworth Diary

LAST MISSION, FIRST WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Oschersleben raid on 11 January 1944 was my 25th and last mission, without question the roughest of my whole tour, and on the very date of my first wedding anniversary. I had flown 24 missions with the 358th and had just been transferred to the 359th as squadron navigator. On this mission deep into Germany, I was in the nose with 303rd Group navigator Norm Jacobson and bombardier Jack Fawcett. Bill Calhoun was pilot, with General Travis in the co-pilot seat. We flew in *8 Ball*, and led the entire 1st Division.

The flight was fairly routine until General Travis told us that the 2d and 3rd Divisions behind us were returning to their bases due to deteriorating weather in England. He said that because we were well along, he had elected to take the 1st Division to the target—FW assembly plants. Our P-47 escort soon left us, and we were hit by about 40-50 FW-190's. We lost our left wing man and then our 2nd element leader along with one of his wing men. The low group was also really catching hell. The bomb run was excellent. On the way back, near Celle, Germany, a P-51 came out of nowhere and blew up an ME-110 preparing to attack us from 600 yards ahead. We flew right through its smoke and debris.

Weather back at Molesworth was really bad, and we landed with the help of magnesium flares.

Darrell D. Gust
358th & 359th Navigator

RADIO OPERATOR "SWEATS OUT" CO-PILOT

At the time I finished my missions in March, 1945, Mel Alderman, our co-pilot, still had three to go. He told me he didn't think he'd ever get back home. I told him not to worry, that I would be out there when he went to the plane and be waiting for him when it returned. He flew his 33rd and 34th. Then, I heard he had been grounded because he was "too nervous" to fly. I checked with the Air Surgeon who said that Lt. Alderman was grounded. Although I had a premonition about him, I thought nothing could go wrong—he's grounded. I went off on a three-day pass and visited relatives in London. When I came back to Molesworth, I learned that Mel Alderman had flown as pilot on the April 6th mission to Leipzig and was in a mid-air collision over Germany with another B-17. There were no survivors.

George F. Parker
427th Radio Operator

O.D. GETS SCARE CHECKING GUARDS

On a foggy night, I was on guard duty with a buddy. A 2nd lieutenant was Officer of the Day, perhaps his first effort. He approached us and I challenged him. He said, "Aren't there supposed to be two guards on this post?" I said, "Of course there are two of us." I shined my light to the ground where I thought my buddy was lying down, but he wasn't

there. I looked back to the lieutenant, and there was my buddy with his M-1 about six inches from the O.D.'s face. The lieutenant almost jumped out of his jump suit.

Horace B. Jenson
1199th MP Company

B-17 GROUP FLIES INTO "FLAK BOX"

The memorable part of the 11 December 1944 mission to Mannheim, Germany was the panorama of a B-17 Group in front of us flying into a box of flak and dropping their bombs as one plane blew up and another with an engine on fire fell out of formation. As the 303rd continued to target, the flak began to come up again, tracking along the previous group's flight path. It was a little unnerving to sit in my greenhouse and watch as the box of intense flak came closer to surrounding us. Just before we reached the bomb smoke markers, the flak stopped and we dropped our bombs.

I've always assumed that the bombs from the Group were striking the ground and forcing the German gunners to seek their shelters.

Maurice G. Hackler
360th Bombardier

CREW CHIEF WHITTLES B-17 INTO ACTION

I was responsible for maintenance on a PFF, one of the B-17 pathfinder planes which led bomber formations to their targets. As I waited for the flight crew to arrive, I suddenly heard fluid splashing on the hardstand. I quickly found the source which was a main tank vent overflow line. I had two choices—I could ground the plane or try to stop the leak. I had full knowledge of the fuel tank system of the B-17, so I thought I could solve the problem with no jeopardy to the crew or the plane. With a pocket knife, I whittled a plug large enough to jam the vent and stop the leak. I told no one because if they didn't understand the tank system they would have thought I did wrong. The plane made the mission—no sweat. This was my finest moment in the war effort.

James C. Hicks
359th Crew Chief

TRAGIC ENDING TO AN OLD FRIENDSHIP

I had a deep pride in serving with the 303rd. There were fond memories and a really horrible memory. I would chuckle when I thought about stealing coal for our barracks stove, shooting rats with a .45, and about our tail gunner who once dropped an armful of flares down the chimney of an officers hut.

Then, there was the other side of the war. On one mission, we were forced to land at an emergency strip for fuel. A B-17 from another Group had just landed, and I was told the engineer had been wounded and the crew needed help. I

(Continued on page 16)

Diary

(Continued from page 15)

rushed over and climbed to the plane's top turret. There was no rush—the back of the engineer's head had been blown off. I disengaged the power train and rotated the turret by hand. When I then saw his face, I was looking into the lifeless eyes of a friend I had made at gunnery school.

William J. O'Brien
359th Engineer

(As told by his son, Frank)

MID-AIR COLLISION CUTS MAIL RUN SHORT

I was in Wellingborough picking up mail for Molesworth on 31 March 1943 when the 360th's *Ooold Soljer* collided overhead with the 358th's *Two Beauts*. I had been with the fellows all the way from Boise in March of 1942. I didn't really recognise anyone until I saw the name *Ooold Soljer* on the plane. I found out later that only five of the 20 men on the two B-17's survived.

Wilbur Arnold
360th HQ

MISSED TOURING WITH GLENN MILLER

Before returning to the US after completing my missions, I happened to meet the famous band leader Glenn Miller at an American Red Cross Club. He asked if I would like to tour some sites with him the next day. I was happy to accept, and we made plans. Then, I had to cancel because I got word that my orders had come through to return home. I left for the States on the USS West Point. While on the ship, I read in the Stars and Stripes that Glenn Miller was missing on a flight from England to France.

C. Eugene Flick
427th Pilot

As the Allies prepared for the full scale invasion of Nazi Occupied France, General Dwight D. Eisenhower rallied the Expeditionary Force with a stirring message to the troops before the D-Day landing on 6 June 1944....

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

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

COPYRIGHT FEE PAID "A THOUSAND TIMES OVER"

Regarding your request to use my painting "When Prayers Were Answered" for the cover of the Hell's Angels Newsletter—I consider it an honour. Although I am a professional aviation artist making a living solely from my paintings and prints, I would safely regard that the 303rd have already paid my copyright fee a thousand times over in the skies of Nazi-occupied Europe.

I must congratulate you on the newsletter which I found more interesting than many of today's leading aviation magazines.

**Mark Postlethwaite, GAVA
Leicester, England**

WOUNDED TAIL GUNNER PRAISES STATION HOSPITAL

I flew missions during July and August of 1944. My combat career on Caplinger's crew ended on the August 24 mission to Mersberg. At the very enjoyable Oklahoma City reunion, my first, I asked about the 303rd Station Hospital where I spent the rest of 1944. No one seemed to know much about the hospital, which was only a few miles from our base. I think we are remiss in not expressing our admiration and appreciation for their efforts. I can assure you, they are a great group of people.

**Ted Holen
427th Squadron**

AN INTROSPECTIVE ON THE FEBRUARY 2000 ISSUE

I eagerly wait for the Hell's Angels Newsletter and totally agree that it is a great magazine to read. In last February's issue, I found at least six names which I knew while in Molesworth. Hal Susskind hit it right, on page 8, when he revealed his feelings as he took off on that last flight from Molesworth to Casa Blanca, Africa. I, too, looked out as we climbed after take-off and said to myself, "Goodbye, England. I'll never see the friends I made there."

When I recognized the

picture of Lt. Allyn Lindquist on page 14, I thought about Fred Yetter, the American Red Cross Club director in Northampton, who arranged for a hall where Lt. Lindquist played a terrific trumpet and led the "Rhythm Pilots" dance band every Sunday night. I played the drums. I also remembered the B-17 formation collision described by Lucius Arnold on page 15. We were in line for breakfast at the mess hall, heard a loud explosion, and saw debris falling from the sky.

I especially read with delight the poem on page 13 that Quentin Hargrove gave about "The Forgotten Man." I was one of those "grease-stained" men!

**Raymond A. Espinoza
444th Sub-Depot**

"SMALL WORLD" INCIDENT, AND GIVING DUE CREDIT

I was in the group that accompanied Pilot Donald Stockton's body to the cemetery in England in 1943. In 1988, I was refinancing a house and took the papers to a lady named Mary Sue Barker. I mentioned that I had known a Lt. J. C. Barker (Stockton's co-pilot) in the 303rd Bomb Group. She said, "In the 427th Squadron. He was my father!" She knew about Don Stockton, and told me that J. C. had suffered a heart attack and died while on a fishing trip in Canada.

The 303rd's Bombsight and Auto Pilot Maintenance Section is seldom mentioned in the history of the Group. I was privileged to serve with a great bunch of officers and enlisted men who deserve a lot of credit.

**Morris B. Sjoberg
Group Bombsight Officer**

B-17 LOST ON MISSION TO SAARBRUCKEN IDENTIFIED

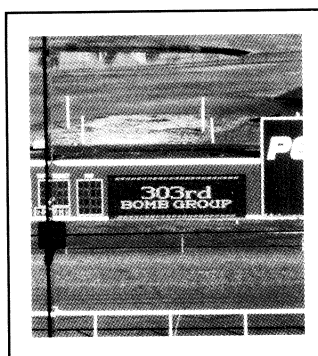
The B-17 lost over the target mentioned in Cleve Whitten's article in the February issue was Capt. John Long's plane. Our Number 2 position on John's right wing gave us a very close view of that fateful loss. As pilot, I

thought it was a wrong decision to make that second bomb run over Saarbrücken at the same altitude. It seemed to me that we should have gone on to the secondary target. The Hell's Angels Newsletter certainly creates interest and many answers.

**Don Johnson
360th Squadron**

303rd BOMB GROUP MAKES THE TOTE BOARD AT RACES

Here's a shot of the tote board at the Remington Park Race Track in Branson, Missouri. We made our usual contributions to get this recognition.



The picture was taken through the glass of the clubhouse window.

**Marv Edwards
360th Squadron**

CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY TO WIN DFC FOR O'DONNELL

It has taken a long time to get them together, but I now have letters of recommendation and supporting documentation for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Robert "Duke" O'Donnell, my bombardier.

The combat action took place on 31 December 1944 while on a mission to Neuss, Germany during and in support of the Battle of the Bulge. We were on the bomb run at 26,000 feet, so, as pilot, I could not take evasive action. The German anti-aircraft guns were getting their bursts closer to our formation. A flak burst showered fragments through the plexiglass nose, causing Flight Officer O'Donnell to be

blinded. He was in intense pain, with blood running down his face, but refused to leave his station until bombs away. Upon landing after the mission, F/O O'Donnell was taken to the base hospital where he remained for a week.

He did receive the Purple Heart for this action, but many of us believe he was deserving of the DFC for displaying great courage, skill and devotion to duty while severely wounded.

**William S. McLeod
358th Squadron**

DID YOU KNOW FRANK NESTOK, MY FATHER?

My father, Sgt Frank Nestok, flew as tail gunner in the 303rd Bomb Group on the B-17's Iza Vailable and Iza Vailable Two. He died of heart disease in 1988. I would appreciate hearing from his fellow crew members.

**Blake R. Nestok, MD
P. O. Box 342
Milford, OH 45150**

303rd PILOT COMMENTS ON CHARACTER OF AIR CREWS

The young men who fought World War II would be considered naïve by the standards of today's youth. The use of drugs was unknown at the time and the individuals involved had been raised as children of the depression era. Those years produced a moral, selfless, reliable breed.

Surviving a tour of combat missions in the 8th Air Force was the upshot of fate to a great extent. At that age, we had no thought of not returning. There was patriotism and a determination that Germany must be defeated. There was concern for one another, and the respect and dependency we shared was evident.

There would be periods of fear, even terror, but no cowardice. Boys would become men with guts but yet compassion. The skies over Europe would see to that.

**William Crawford
360th Squadron**

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

I am seeking volunteers who may be interested in becoming a "back-up" for the Membership duties. Following my recent heart attack and triple by-surgery, one never knows when one might walk under a truck. This person or persons must have knowledge of the Microsoft ACCESS database software program. Any one interested is asked to advise Ed Miller at (580) 342-5119 or by e-mail at edmiller@pildi.net

We hope your name appears in the listing of those who have donated to the Benefactor Program, as shown below or in the February issue. If your name has not been listed, please respond to the request from our President Bill Roche and send your check to 303rd BGA Treasurer, Jack P. Rencher, P.O. Box 7927, Boise, ID 83707. Mark it "Benefactor Program."

IN MEMORIAM

Edwin H. P. Assenheimer	359 th	18 Feb 1999
Bruce E. Babbitt	360 th	19 Feb 2000
Marshall L. Belcher	360 th	3 Oct 1999
James E. Haney, Jr.	358 th	28 Jul 1987
John D. Hill	359 th	12 Jan 2000
Leif H. Hoklin	359 th	15 Dec 1986
Bennie Koon	427 th	31 Oct 1999
Roger L. Kuykendall	360 th	11 Mar 1999
Twyla S. Jenkins		30 Dec 1999
(Wife of John I. Jenkins—427 th)		
Thomas A. LaBelle	358 th	Nov (?) 1999
Charles W. Latta	427 th	17 Jan 2000
Bernice B. Lemley		31 Dec 1999
(Wife of Jack A. Lemley—359 th)		
Frank F. Perez	358 th	5 Sep 1999
Arthur S. C. Shanafelt	360 th	8 Dec 1999
Samuel L. Tyler	360 th	20 Jan 2000
George W. Vogel	359 th	25 Jun 1999
Elvin F. Webbink	360 th	20 Dec 1999
John C. Woolpert	360 th	20 Jan 2000

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(N) – New Super Life Members (R) – Repeaters	
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 Lee J. Tavvab (360th), V.A. Dormitory, Section #1, White City, OR 97503-???? (Served as Morris B. Glaser during WW II)

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Edwin B. Barry	In Memory of Henry Pratten, Jr., and Paul K. Fink-1114 th QM Co.
Robert P. Ives	Donation to 303 rd BGA
John A. Jenkins	In Memory of Lt. Stonewall J. Raley and members of Lt. Cureton's Crew (All KIA on Merseburg mission—21 November 1944)
Jocelyn Leclercq	Donation for Memorial at Molesworth
Henry H. Means (427 th)	Donation to 303 rd BGA
Grover C. Mullins (358 th)	Donation to cover Hell's Angels Newsletter printing
Eileen E. Schmidt	In Memory of her Husband, Elmer J. Schmidt
Harold L. Scott (360 th)	Donation to Master Directory
Jack Silver (358 th)	Donation to the 303 rd BGA
Lee J. Tavvab (360 th)	Donation to Master Directory

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Ernest L. Cofrances (359th), P. O. Box 1761, 17328 LaBonte Lane, Brookings, OR 97415-0057 (541) 412-7238
Niles E. Cotner (360th), 7650 Cotner Lane, S.W., Central, IN 47110-7831 (812) 732-4897 (Glenda Alyne)

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Richard F. O'Leary, P O Box 12, Waterloo, NE 68960-0012 (402) 359-5564 (Brother of James W. O'Leary, Sr - 427th)
Mrs. Ailina McNamara, 105 Standish Avenue, Wollaston, MA 02170-2611
James E. McNutt (360th), 4213 Warner Road, Ashtabula, OH 44004-9679
Norman O. Peterson (427th), 2 Arista Lane, Hot Springs Village, AR 71909-7772 (501) 915-9659 (Jane) (Winter Address)

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Kenneth R. Bowler, 32 Frederick Road, Essex Junction, VT 05452-2706 (802) 879-1170 (Joanne)
John E. Cannon, P. O. Box 31244, Santa Barbara, CA 93130-1244 (Nephew of Lt. Arthur "Dale" Michaelis-KIA 28 Sep 44)
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John A. Jenkins, 6910 Old Redmond Road, #141, Redmond, WA 98052-6833 (425) 885-0595 (Fran) (Son of John I. Jenkins)
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Sally Radebaugh, 3212 High Point Drive, El Paso, MN 79904-2400 (915) 751-8269 (Brother of B. J. Radebaugh-KIA)
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Donald F. Lasseeter, 6730 Via Iрана, Stanton, CA 90680-1921 (714) 952-2952
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Kenneth Reynolds, P. O. Box 344, Lacygne, KS 66040-0344 (913) 757-2638 (Loretta)
Robert R. Robertson, 301 Congress Square Plaza, Portland, ME 04101-2843

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Kenneth R. Bowler	Son of Richard Bowler Jr (427 th)
Brian Hansford	Nephew of Irwin Blankenship
Gary Neely	Son of Glenn Neely (358 th)
Lee J. Tavvab — Served as	Morris B. Glaser at Molesworth
John J. Stenger, Jr.	359 th
John W. Stoullil	Son of Donald W. Stoullil (359 th)
George W. Vogel, Jr.	Son of George W. Vogel (359 th)

THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

Where did all the graceful, gallant B-17's that survived World War II go to die? From 1935 to 1945, Boeing, with the help of Douglas and Lockheed, built 12,731 B-17's. Today, according to "FlyPast," a highly respected British publication which conducted a worldwide survey, only 45 B-17's have survived the ravages of war and peace. Fifteen are still flying, 22 are on static display and eight are stored or under restoration.

Let's look at the numbers. The Eighth Air Force suffered losses of more than 3,000 Flying Fortresses during combat over Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe. Operational sorties by other U.S. Air Forces in the European and Pacific theaters took a toll of another 2,000 B-17's. Add these to 2,000 other Flying Fortresses simply written off as battle weary and beyond repair. The ignominious reward for almost all of the thousands of healthy B-17's still engaging the enemy or ready for combat at war's end was the scrap heap.

A graphic insight to the fate of many of the B-17's and other WWII military aircraft appeared in an article written in 1947 by Jerry McLain for Arizona Highways magazine. Kingman Army Airfield in Arizona was a flexible gunnery school with a wartime population of 17,000 officers and men. After the war, it became Storage Depot 41 of the War Assets Corporation. More than 7,000 retired army bombers, fighters and training planes were lined up row on row, covering five square miles, the world's greatest concentration of aircraft in one area at one time.

Kingman storage records in the summer of 1946 showed 1,832 B-17 Flying Fortresses and 2,567 B-24 Liberator bombers. In addition, there were hundreds of P-47 Thunderbolts, the P-40's of "Flying Tiger" fame, P-38 Lightnings, B-25 and A-26 medium bombers and even 37 B-29 Super Fortresses.

The depot offered B-17's to the American public at the bargain basement price of \$13,750. A year earlier, each B-17 had cost the U.S. Government \$187,000. Bargain or not, there were very few takers. In those days, you could buy a really nice house for \$13,750.

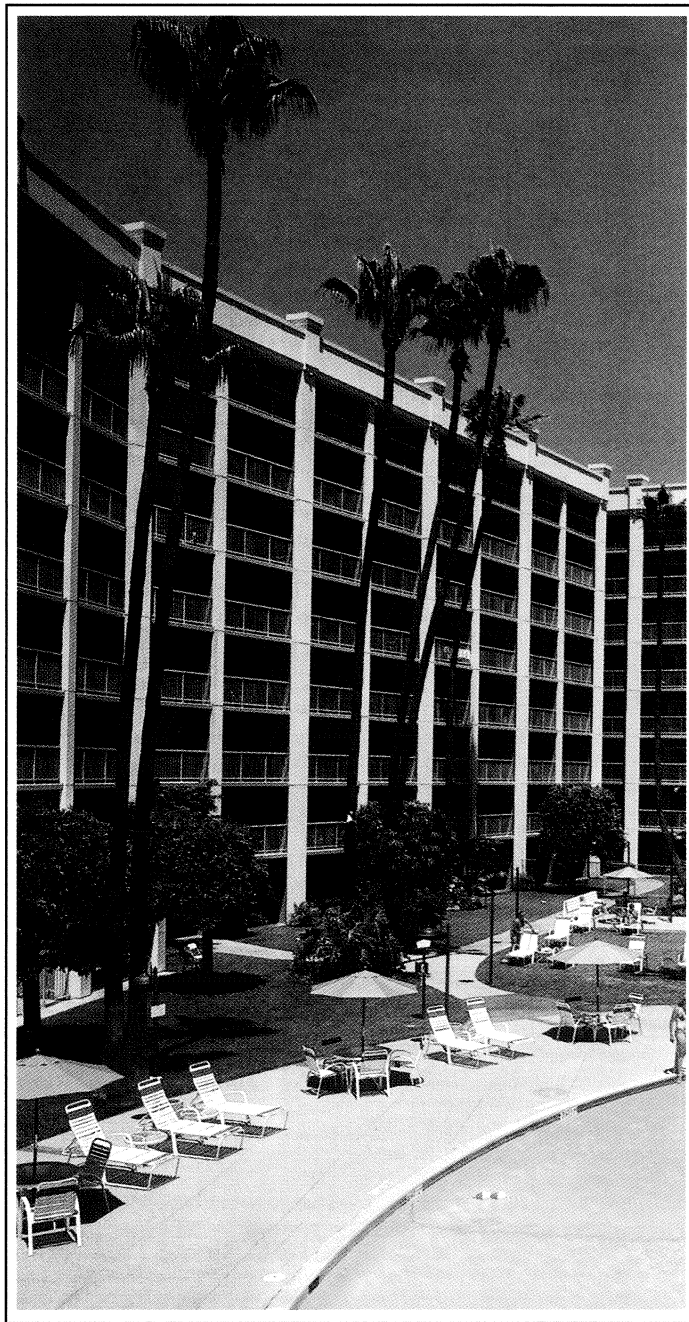
In an all-out effort to clear away the unwanted aircraft, the War Assets Corporation offered a mixed bag of 5,437 planes for competitive bidding, with the provision that they could not be used for flight purposes of any kind. The lot was purchased by a Jefferson, Missouri contractor for \$2,780,000. It was later rumored that just the fuel drained from all those aircraft was sold for more than the contractor's total original purchase price!

The fortunate few B-17's that stayed airborne for the next several decades went to the rescue of those in distress at sea, fought forest fires, flew on weather reconnaissance and served in the radar early warning system. Several dozen others were converted to VIP passenger transports or wound up in the miniscule air forces of nations friendly to the U.S. Government.

Over the years, though, with the exception of those 45 known to have survived, the ultimate destination of the noble and illustrious B-17 was the smelting furnace.

Eddie Deerfield

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.



SAN DIEGO'S HANAIEI HOTEL will be the site in September for the 303rd's annual reunion. It's eight floors high with balconies overlooking towering palm trees and a sparkling pool, and is located just 10 minutes from the airport and near many attractions.

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
Hell's Angels Newsletter
Eddie Deerfield, Editor
3552 Landmark Trail
Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016

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 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 PALM HARBOR, FL.
 PERMIT NUMBER 303