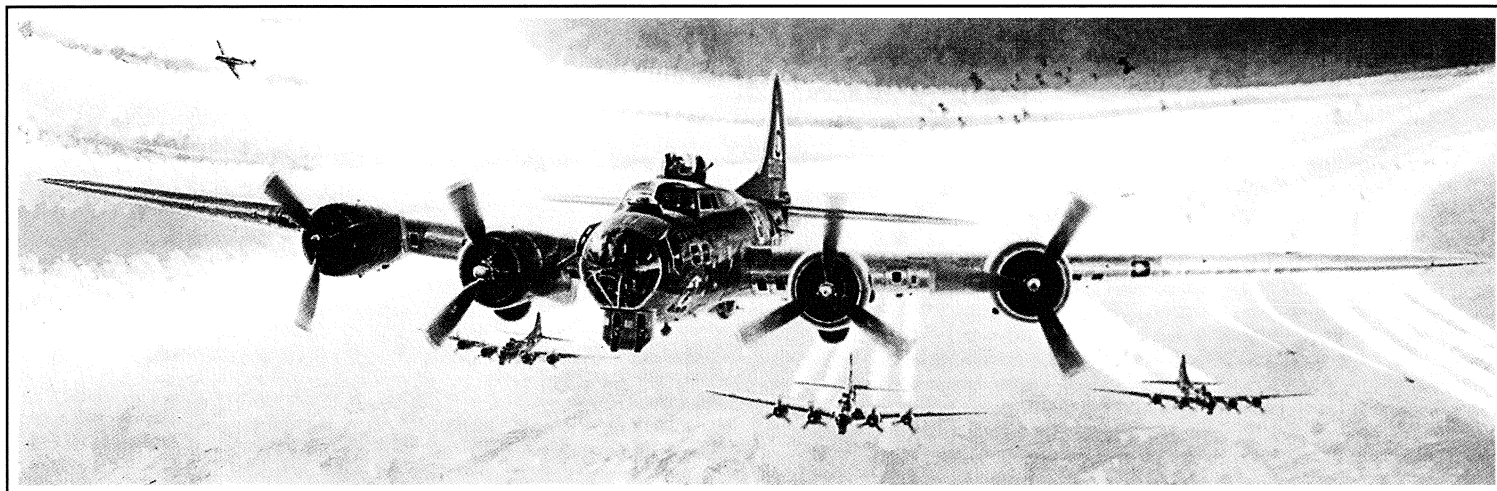


# Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

May, 2001



ROARING DIRECTLY AT VISITORS TO THE WORLD WAR II AVIATION GALLERY IN THE NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM is the 359th Squadron's B-17 *Thunderbird*. This tense moment, frozen in time on a giant mural titled "Fortresses Under Fire" by noted artist Keith Ferris, sets the theme for the exhibit. The 15 August 1944 mission to Wiesbaden, Germany, memorializes the men and aircraft of World War II in general and the 303rd Bomb Group in particular. The Washington, D.C., museum is on the program schedule for the Group's 2001 reunion. (Used with permission of the artist © 1976 Keith Ferris)

## From Its 2001 Reunion Base In Baltimore 303rd TARGETS WASHINGTON AND ANNAPOLIS FOR SIGHTSEEING

Walt and Ruth Ferrari, who masterminded the 303rd Bomb Group Association's sparkling reunion in Savannah in 1998, are poised to produce another winner in 2001. The 427th Squadron pilot and his wife have blended a montage of exciting events in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Annapolis to attract veterans and their families.

The base for reunion operations will be the Marriott Hotel at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The dates are from September 5 to 9.

One full day will be spent in the nation's capital, a 45-mile drive from Baltimore on air conditioned motor coaches with reclining seats and restroom facilities. A guided sightseeing tour will include the Vietnam and Korean War memorials. The National Air and Space

Museum will be a highlight, with lunch in the cafeteria. Among the scores of fascinating exhibits is the World War II Aviation Gallery where a most impressive feature is a huge wall mural by artist Keith Ferris showing the 303rd Bomb Group's B-17 *Thunderbird*, piloted by the 359th's Jack Hillary, on a mission flight.

Also on the schedule is Arlington Cemetery, with a stop at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to witness the ceremonial changing of the guard.

A second all-day trip will feature a guided sightseeing tour of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, including stops at the Academy Museum, the crypt of John Paul Jones and lunch at the Officers' and Faculty Club. A cruise on the scenic Severn River has been laid on, affording panoramic

views of the Academy and a glimpse of the Bay Bridge.

Downtown Baltimore, with its magnificent harbor, famous aquarium and fine restaurants is well worth a special visit, and there will be ample time in the reunion program for guests to make their own arrangements.

Other local attractions of particular interest are the Maryland Science Center in a "please touch" environment and the Arundel Mills, a shopping, entertainment and dining destination.

Also in the works is a golf outing at Fort Meade's fine course in the area.

The Ferrari's have identified numerous restaurants within a short walk or a short drive from the hotel for a culinary change of pace.

Members received their registration packets a month or so ago and are encouraged to climb aboard ASAP.

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Family members of crew of *Old Glory*, killed in action 22 June 1944, visit crash site in France. Page 3.

303rd POW becomes leader of the band at Stalag 17-B's Cardboard Theater. Article on page 5.

On page 7, ball turret gunner tells how crew's engineer saved him from Nazi bayonets on forced march.

What it takes to keep a B-17 flying into the 21st Century. Page 8 interview.

Crossing the Atlantic on a troop ship in 1942—303rd personnel more demoralized by food than by threat of Nazi U-boats. Harrowing account on page 10.

303rd's Sub-Depot technicians pioneer design and installation of 8th AF's first nose cone guns. Details on page 12.



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

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor—Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXIV, No. 2 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 May, 2001

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 Association are tax deductible. Regular Members include persons assigned or attached to the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) from its 1942 activation in Boise, ID, through its war years at 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 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. The *Hell's Angels Newsletter* will only be sent to members whose dues payments are current. New annual dues are \$25 in the US and \$30 for foreign addresses, \$60 for a veteran's life membership and \$150 for a family member's life membership.

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FISHER CREW ALL SMILES,  
BUT A WEEK AFTER PHOTO  
WAS TAKEN, EIGHT OF NINE  
ARE KILLED IN ACTION

The official report on the 22 June 1944 mission to Lille, France, described the flak in the target area as "meager to moderate." Yet, a single burst blew up 360th Squadron B-17 *Old Glory*, killing eight of her nine-man crew.

All four officers died. Standing, l-to-r, Bombardier Carthel Gaskin, Navigator Carl Felton, Co-Pilot Carlos Johns and Pilot Dale Fisher.

Of the six enlisted men, four died. Kneeling, l-to-r, Radio Operator Robert Johnson survived after bailing out and evading capture, Waist Gunner Victor Crandell died, Waist Gunner Walter Moore didn't fly that day, Engineer John King perished along with Tail Gunner Robert Cooper and Ball Turret Gunner Bernard McKeever.



## *To Honor Dead of Crew of "Old Glory"* **BOMBARDIER'S SISTER, PILOT'S NEPHEW ON PILGRIMAGE TO SITE OF FATAL CRASH**

The target was the railroad marshalling yard at Lille, France. The date was 22 June 1944, 16 days after the invasion by Allied forces along the Normandy coast. Dale M. Fisher was at the controls of the 360th Squadron B-17 *Old Glory*, carrying a crew of nine. Shortly after "bombs away," flak slammed into the right wing just behind the number three engine and the aircraft burst into flames. As it fell from the sky, the radio operator, Robert H. Johnson, managed to bail out. The rest of the crew died when the plane plunged to earth near the town of Tressin in France.

Jocelyn Leclercq, a French historian and authority on the role of the 8th Air Force in World War Two, arranged a commemorative display in Tressin last Veterans Day, 11 November 2000, dedicated to the 303rd airmen who were killed in action on *Old Glory*. He was successful in locating and inviting to Tressin the families of five of the crew to participate in ceremonies honoring their war dead.

Only Jane Schauburger, sister of bombardier Carthel O. Gaskin, and Phillip Fisher, nephew of pilot Dale M. Fisher, were able to attend. Following are their reminiscences about their kin and personal accounts of the highlights of their pilgrimage:

**JANE SCHAUBERGER WROTE** — My brother is Carthell Owen Gaskin, but the family always called him "Tommy." The family home was in Burgin, Kentucky. Even though he was deferred from the draft because he had a war essential job, Tommy enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942. He was 20 years old at the time and I was 11. After basic training, he was sent to Brazil where he would have served during the war. But, when our brother, Delmer, was captured by the Germans in North Africa in 1943, Tommy asked for a transfer and went into bombardier training at Midland, Texas. He and his crew left for England in late May, 1944. A month later, flying his eighth mission on 22 June 1944, he was killed.

At first, we received a telegram from the War Department that Tommy was missing in action and that another crew in the bomber formation had reported a single parachute leaving the aircraft. In September, we received confirmation of his death. The

lone survivor was Robert H. Johnson, the radio operator. He escaped capture with the help of the French underground.

On March 1 last year, a letter from France written by Joss Leclercq reached us, requesting information and photographs to use in a Veterans Day exhibit he was arranging to honor the crew in Tressin, where the B-17 *Old Glory* had crashed. We made arrangements to fly to Paris and take the train to Lille, where Joss would meet us.

I was surprised and very impressed by the amount of research Joss had put into gathering materials about *Old Glory* and its crew for the commemorative display. It was overwhelming to actually be there to meet so many who had witnessed the crash and to see how much the French people of the community really cared about my brother and the other seven Americans who died when *Old Glory* went down. A man who came to the exhibit told us he was 17 at the time, and helped his father build the caskets for the crew members. We heard about how the mayor of Tressin defied the Germans in order to hold a funeral service and give the bomber crew a decent burial. More than 1,200 townspeople attended the funeral and interment in the Tressin Community Cemetery. Fresh flowers were kept on their graves through the years until my brother's body and those of Carl Felton, John King, Bernard McKeever and Victor Crandell were moved to the Ardennes Military Cemetery in Belgium while the remains of Dale Fisher, Carlos Johns and Robert Cooper were repatriated to the U.S.

My brother, Delmer, who returned home after two years in a German prisoner-of-war camp, describes Tommy as the most moral person he has ever known. Tommy was valedictorian of his high school graduating class and always encouraged me to get good grades and to respect our parents who he said were our best friends. When he was home on furlough before going overseas to Molesworth, he came to my school and gave a talk to my sixth grade geography class. I was so proud of him.

During our visit to Europe to attend the memorial observances in France, we went on to Belgium to pay our respects to my brother and the other men of *Old Glory* buried at the Ardennes

(Continued on Page 4)



**BOMBARDIER "TOMMY" GASKIN'S SISTER JANE SCHAUBERGER AND PILOT DALE FISHER'S NEPHEW PHILLIP FISHER journeyed to Tressin, France for a memorial service and commemorative display honoring the *Old Glory* crew. (Photos by Kaye M. Fisher)**

### (PILGRIMAGE, from page 3)

American Military Cemetery. In retrospect, though, I believe I truly felt closest to my brother during our visit to Molesworth, to have the sense of where he lived and worked and from where he took off on his final mission against Nazi world domination. It really came alive for me. We now feel a oneness with the French and English people that we did not feel before. I wish Tommy could see all that has been done at Molesworth to keep alive the memory of his 303rd Bomb Group. My brother was a very special person. The pain of his loss never goes away.

**PHILLIP FISHER WROTE** — I was seven years old when my uncle Dale Fisher was killed when the B-17 he was piloting exploded over France. Another uncle, Dale's brother John, died in Normandy shortly after the invasion. I have no recollection of meeting either of them, but their deaths devastated our family.

Jocelyn "Joss" Leclercq is president and founder of a non-profit organization called Antiqu'air Flandre-Artois and is an Associate Member of the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association. He specializes in researching WW II air warfare over Northern France. When my family learned that he was planning a Veterans Day tribute in Tressin to honor the crew of *Old Glory* who died there, I was delegated to follow up. Knowing very little about my uncles who died in the war, I was glad to get involved.

The scope of Joss's project did not hit me until we were at the Multipurpose Building in Tressin, France. All this was, as the granite memorial plaque in the cemetery stated, "In Memory of the Crew of the B-17 *Old Glory*." Among the dignitaries attending the memorial service were the mayor of Tressin, the deputy mayor, a uniformed representative of the French military, a uniformed member of the United States Air Force and a representative of the US Consulate in Lille, France.

At the commemorative exposition, open from Armistice Day November 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>, we met people who, as teenagers 56 years earlier, were outside working when they heard American bombers approaching and saw *Old Glory* get hit by flak, and begin to fall and then explode in the sky. They saw the parachute of Robert H. Johnson, the only survivor, make its way to the ground.

We met the family who hid, fed, clothed and kept Johnson from being taken prisoner. These people are still traumatized by what they witnessed and they still cannot fully understand why young men would come from thousands of miles away to risk and give their lives for total strangers. They would break down in tears when they recounted their stories.

The ceremonies continued with a procession from the Multipurpose Building to the town hall, about 100 yards, then up the street to the graveyard behind the church. There, the mayor gave a 20-minute speech, starting with a brief history of French military involvement in both world wars and then expressing the gratitude of the French people for the sacrifices made by the Americans, and the crew of *Old Glory* in particular.



**MAYOR VAN DE KERCHOVE OF TRESSIN participated in the Veterans Day ceremony which took place at a memorial dedicated to the World War dead of France. The plaque at the base honoring the 303rd Bomb Group crew was added in 1994.**

The cemetery plot in which the crew members were first buried has remained empty since the remains were transferred to the American Military Cemetery in Ardennes, Belgium. They reason, "These men were killed over our village. They are ours to take care of." The plot is kept clean, neat and well manicured.

At the conclusion of the Tressin events, Herman and Jane Schauburger, Joss, my wife Kaye and I drove to Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium where the Ardennes cemetery is located. For Jane, visiting the grave of her brother Tommy was an especially emotional event. The remains of my uncle Dale, along with those of his brother John, had been repatriated to the U.S. in 1949. The cemetery superintendent, Mr. Hooker, was especially knowledgeable, gracious and sensitive. He arranged for flowers to be delivered for the graves of the five crew members of *Old Glory*. In Belgium, there is a waiting list of Belgian citizens who want to lay flowers on American soldiers' graves.

The final segment of our trip included a tour of RAF Molesworth, England. Brian McGuire was our guide and showed us around the facilities. We stood near where Dale Fisher, Tommy Gaskin and the others had boarded *Old Glory* for the last time, saw the hangar where the B-17's were maintained, the pub across the road, the church nearby.

We are grateful to all who enriched our pilgrimage.

**MRS. ANNE JOHNSON WROTE** — After the war, Bob told me about his experience. He bailed out of his B-17 while it was burning, and he landed in a wheatfield. He dug a hole to bury his chute and flying boots, and put on a pair of shoes he had tied to the parachute harness. He hid in the field until dawn, and then crept into a barn at a nearby farmhouse. The farmer found him, and informed the French Resistance Forces. They dressed Bob in peasant clothes and told him to pretend to be a deaf-mute. The next night, they moved him to the home of Georges Ormond where he hid for 10 weeks until September 3, 1944 when Allied troops reached the area. Bob passed away September 1, 1999. I lost my best friend. We had been married 57 years and I miss him.

## FRENCH GIRL RETURNS RINGS TO NAVIGATOR FELTON'S FAMILY

In a storybook turn of events 56 years after the incident, Josee Dufay of Tressin, France, has returned to the family of navigator Carl Felton the two rings he was wearing when he died. She explained that her grandmother had given her the rings many years ago, saying they came from a dead American flyer whose plane crashed near their house. One was a high school ring, the other an Air Force ring. Josee said, "I met Jane Schauburger at the display in Tressin and she helped me put a name on those rings. I was so happy to return them to Mary Louise Briggs, Lt. Felton's sister, where they belonged."



# 303rd's Bob Garcia Is The Leader Of The Band CARDBOARD THEATER OF STALAG XVII-B

*"My name is Robert A. Garcia. I was born on September 13, 1922 in Oakland, California to an Italian mother and third generation Portuguese father. I enlisted in the Army Air Corps on May 30, 1942. Less than a year later, I reached Molesworth, England with my combat crew as a flight engineer in the 359th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group. On our 11th mission on June 11, 1943, to Wilhelmshaven, Germany, four of my crew members were killed when we were shot down and the other six of us became prisoners of war. We were shipped by cattle car to Stalag 17-B near Krems, Austria. I spent 21 months in this camp with 4,500 Americans. We suffered from bitter cold, extreme crowding, near starvation and constant harassment by German guards and their dogs. After the YMCA donated musical instruments to our camp, a stage was constructed from cardboard boxes. I could play the saxophone as well as the clarinet and became the leader of the Cardboard Theater Band."*

By Carrie Wahl

(While interviewing former POW Robert "Bob" Garcia, I learned of his experiences with the "Cardboard Theater of Stalag XVII-B." I was moved to tears by the inspiring story of a group of talented men who were able to filter a little sunshine into the dark and dismal days of incarcerated fellow GI's. This is their story.)

"Entertainment is second only to security." This quote of Prisoner of War T. B. Randolph may have been the unofficial motto of Stalag XVII-B, located near Krems, Austria.

With over 4,000 American POW's, prisoner morale was of vital importance. Various forms of entertainment were necessary to occupy their endless idle hours and temporarily take their minds off of their aching stomachs, freezing limbs, and ceaseless worries of being shot or attacked by guard dogs.

A small troupe answered the call to entertain their fellow GI's and took their act "on the road." They were known as "The Table Top Minstrels" because they went from barrack to barrack, putting on their shows from table tops. The first planned show was written by Tex Howard of Barrack 36-A and performed by Frank Foss, Inky Davies, "Head" Elias and T. B. Randolph, with Tex Homer as M.C.

According to F.M. DeWolfe, they rehearsed in zero degree weather with gloves on. Instruments had luckily accompanied them from Stalag VII-A and included a guitar, an accordion, two saxophones and two violins. This group grew as they made themselves known throughout the barracks.

As more talent poured into the Stalag, there was soon a pool large enough to draw from and create a theater company. Under the somewhat broad banner of the Entertainment Committee, whose organizational design was carried over from Stalag VII-A, Sgt. Al Underwood became the Theater Director.

Sgt. Underwood met once a week with the Entertainment Committee's personnel, made up of one man from each end of a barrack who in turn acted as talent scouts in their own barracks.

In addition, there was a separate Theatrical Committee consisting of eight men, selected according to their previous experience in entertainment work. Their job was to supervise



ROBERT "BOB" GARCIA of the 303rd Bomb Group

the production and direction of all presentations in the theater.

In December of 1943 a stage was constructed in Barrack 16-A. Not your average stage, this was constructed from wooden and cardboard Red Cross and YMCA boxes. Cardboard boxes were also used for props and backstage walls, hence the name, "Cardboard Theater."

Paint was obtained for the talented artists who decorated the props. Women's clothing and some material for

(Continued on page 6)

## (CARDBOARD THEATER from page 5)

sewing costumes were obtained and they received one box of women's wigs and one small box of make-up from the Red Cross to start. Programs and tickets were printed up and distributed to the barracks chiefs and posters were displayed in the barracks. The shows were scheduled to run ten days, giving all those who wanted to see the show a chance to attend. This included the German camp commander and many of his men. German authorities were curious themselves as to what kind of productions these men would muster, so they allowed it. They realized also that it would make their jobs easier if the prisoners had something constructive to do with their time.

No theater is complete without its accompanying orchestra. The Cardboard Theater Orchestra was led by Bob "The Brain" Garcia who also played alto saxophone and clarinet. A veteran of the 303<sup>rd</sup>, Bob was top turret gunner when his plane, *Good Enuf*, was shot down. He landed in a lake and, after swimming ashore, was taken into custody by armed guards and a "helpful" peasant farmer with a pitch fork. In addition to the instruments already on hand from Stalag VII-A, the band received shipments of donated instruments as well. The first such shipment consisted of a bass violin, an accordion, three alto saxophones and two clarinets. The second shipment included two violins, a trombone, two guitars, an accordion, two cellos, one bow, and six ukuleles. German authorities provided two violins.

The Cardboard Theater opened to a full house with "The Man Who Came to Dinner," by Kaufman and Hart. It ran from its December 26 opening through January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Through the magic of the theater, the prisoners were able to escape into a fantasy world and forget that a war was being fought.

Script writers Beven and Trzinski also penned their own version of the musical "Hellzapoppin", featuring the talents of Don Beven, Sam Magun, and Red "Hot Lips" Lewis. Members of the permanent company of actors included Frank Christensen, James Mac Gammond, Robert Morgan and Leo Buckley. All shows, including the delightful "Guys and Dolls," brought rave reviews in the Stalag newsletter, "The Gremlin."

There was singing, dancing, laughter, and maybe a few tears shed. The more memorable scenes were those of a burlesque nature. With no female prisoners, all female roles were played by men. This brought tremendous howls of laughter from the audience. There was even a man who did a Lena Horne impersonation and sounded just like her when he sang.

Besides Garcia's orchestra, there were other musical entertainers such as the "Kriegie Krooners" featuring Donald "Guts" Guthrie, "The Barbed Wire Mountaineers", and dance entertainment by the "Barn Dancers", "Boogie Woogie Stars"

and the "Jitter Bug Troupe." They always livened up the show.

Bob Garcia's orchestra set a precedent in excellence of dedication and performance. Living together as a unit in Barrack 16-B, directly opposite the theater, they were not only always present for rehearsals, but on time as well. Sgt. Underwood recognized this exceptional set-up and requested that all theater personnel be allowed to live in the same accommodations, better utilizing their own time to the dedication of quality performances. This was a full time occupation for many of these men. As with any theater production, there was a constant need for scheduling, set construction, script writing, song writing, and costume designs. Sgt. Underwood took his position quite seriously and felt that organized entertainment was third only to health and food in the needs of Kriesgefangener.

As with any organization, the Theater Committee wasn't without its problems. According to original Stalag records, accusations arose regarding favored seating allegedly shown to cooks, Red Cross, and Hospital Staff. In response to these charges, the theater offered an open invitation to anyone in camp to visit the theater office and examine past ticket records. Complaints were issued against the ushers, claiming they were discourteous and rough. In response to this, the Theater Committee pointed out that the average height of ushers was 5' 3" with the idea that the smaller they were, the less forceful they would be.



**PRISONERS OF WAR cook food from gift parcels over open fires on makeshift grills to supplement meager camp rations.**

The audience weren't the only ones to benefit from this grand undertaking. The theater personnel were given a duty and the chance to feel a higher sense of purpose. They weren't allowed to wallow in constant self pity, but were called upon to uplift their fellow prisoners and in effect feel uplifted themselves. Their time was taken up with various production tasks and this helped them to pass the days.

Of course, nothing could alleviate the suffering experienced from being a prisoner of war under dreadful conditions, but it certainly helped to be involved in something that they enjoyed and to work with people who shared common interests.

For a short time, the GI's were able to forget about everything outside of the theater, to laugh and feel inspired. These hours of reverie were interrupted by the occasional air raid siren. In such instances, someone would step out and examine the threat. If not imminent, the show would go on.

Appreciation for the theater was great, and men such as Garcia still receive letters after all these years from former POW's expressing gratitude and admitting they don't know how they would have survived without the reprieve provided by the Cardboard Theater. Even in captivity, Robert "Bob" Garcia upheld the high standards of the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group.



THEIR FATE WAS A PRISONER OF WAR CAMP less than three weeks after this photo was taken. The crew bailed out over Germany when a flak burst destroyed their B-17 on a Schweinfurt mission. Standing, l-to-r, Pilot John Henderson, Navigator Warren Wiggins, Bombardier Woodrow Monkres and Co-Pilot Calvin Brothers (Kenneth Crook flew in place of Brothers on the fatal mission). Kneeling, Radio Operator Robert King (Charles Maple flew the Schweinfurt mission), Tail Gunner Mike Milliff, Waist Gunners Stanley Moody and Norman Shuhart, Engineer William Simpkins and Ball Turret Gunner Richard Miller. Paul Kistulentz, at far right, didn't fly the mission.

## A 303rd Airman Pays Tribute to a Crewmate SURVIVING CAPTIVITY AND NAZI BAYONETS

By Dick Miller

While on a mission to Schweinfurt, Germany on February 24, 1944, our 358<sup>th</sup> Squadron B-17 was hit by flak and the entire crew had to bail out. We came down in a village north-east of Frankfurt. Nine of the crew were captured almost immediately and kept in a potato storage barn over night. The tenth crew member was brought in the next morning.

Flying his first mission, co-pilot Kenneth Crook broke some of his ribs when the chute opened, and was in great pain. Engineer Bill Simpkins' chute failed to open when he pulled the rip cord and in tearing at the canvas cover he broke his nails and his fingers were bloody.

The Germans marched all 10 of us a few miles to a railway station and took us to Frankfurt to an interrogation center called Dulag Luft. We were kept in rooms the size of telephone booths, two persons in a room. I didn't know the person in the room with me. Neither of us spoke. We were sure the other was a Nazi spy in an American uniform. He was as much afraid of me as I was of him.

After three days in Frankfurt, the officers were shipped to Stalag Luft One in Barth and the rest of the crew to Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug, East Prussia. While at Stalag VI, Bill Simpkins came down with diphtheria. I nursed him through a very high fever, and, with the help of the Lord, he recuperated. Then, I developed diphtheria and he brought me

through it. When we were loaded into a hold of a captured Russian coal boat a few months later, we were quite weak.

After three days, we landed at the Baltic sea port of Swinemunde where Bill and I were handcuffed together. Some of the Americans were chained by the ankles. Bill and I were lucky by comparison.

They put us on a train in box cars. We were packed in like sardines and traveled seven days without food or water. The only moisture we were able to get was by holding pieces of torn cardboard through the bars on the window and licking rain water from them. We were never allowed off the train. One man died and the Germans would pay no attention when we asked them to remove the body.

The next day we arrived in the railway yards at Kiefeide, in Pomerania. We were unloaded and ordered to march to Stalag IV at Gross Tychow. It was about four miles, but it seemed like 40 miles. The German guards prodded us with bayonets to make us run. If a man fell he was bayoneted. One prisoner was stabbed more than 50 times. I went about three-quarters of the distance to the Stalag and was too weak to go any further. I fell, and before a guard could reach me with his bayonet, Bill picked me up. With the help of two prisoners behind us, he carried me about a mile to the camp.

When you see us together like brothers at 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group reunions, this is our bond. Bill was a real hero—not just because of me, but because he proved his leadership.

# KEEPING A B-17 FLYING — INTO THE 21ST CENTURY!

*Little more than a dozen of the more than 12,000 B-17's built during World War II are still flying. One of the survivors is B-17G number 44-83575, owned by The Collings Foundation. It's named Nine-O-Nine after an historic 91st Bomb Group aircraft which flew 140 missions without an abort and then became scrap metal in the U.S. after the war ended. The new Nine-O-Nine flew no combat missions, but served in an Air/Sea Rescue Squadron, the Military Air Transport Service, fought forest fires and was subjected to three nuclear weapons test explosions.*

When the B-17 flew into Florida's Clearwater/St. Petersburg, airport recently, Hell's Angels Newsletter Editor Eddie Deerfield interviewed Flight Engineer Bill Strawn to find out what it takes these days to keep the most widely recognized and revered bomber of WW II flying:

Q How long have you been working maintenance on B-17's?

A This is my fifth year. I didn't work on any war birds before this opportunity.

Q What were your professional qualifications for getting the World War II bomber job?

A I worked in automotive maintenance for 12 years and restored many cars, so this seemed like the next logical step up. It's just a large ongoing restoration project, really.

Q What brought you and The Collings Foundation people together?

A I used to come out and volunteer with the group for several years whenever they came into my local area. When I got my certificate with the FAA, I approached them. They were lacking a mechanic at the time and they asked me to come aboard. I was in the right place at the right time.

Q During World War II, B-17 ground crews were under tremendous pressure to get their assigned aircraft ready for the next combat mission. In peace time, of course, your operating procedures are different. First, how much help do you have?

A It varies. Sometimes it's just me, sometimes I have four or five volunteers. Local mechanics, who offer to help me with any maintenance job on the aircraft.

Q What are the major problems you encounter in keeping your B-17 flying?

A The hardest thing is finding parts. There's only a handful of Fortresses still flying, and, really, hardly any new parts available. What we're doing is re-manufacturing, rebuilding the available pieces from wartime and putting them back on the aircraft. Parts are our biggest problem.

Q Then, when a part goes bad, can you actually tool an identical part?

A Yes. We've even had parts broken beyond recognition, and I've been able to contact other B-17 owners of flying or museum displays and they let me borrow that part so that I can have a new one manufactured. Once we have it, it's



**NEXT LOGICAL STEP UP FROM AUTOMOBILE MAINTENANCE FOR BILL STRAWN WAS B-17 MAINTENANCE — Bill's wife, Dee, serves as Flight Coordinator for The Collings Foundation.**

easy to install.

Q Is this an ongoing relationship between B-17 owners or only for emergency contacts?

A The Collings Foundation is always in touch with other B-17 organizations. There are B-17 co-op meetings where all the owners get together and sit down to talk about touring, parts, general problems, available bits and pieces to trade and any matters of mutual interest. They do that on a yearly basis.

Q How often is your B-17 grounded for routine maintenance or for lack of parts? How many hours can the B-17 fly without a full maintenance check?

A We do regular 25-hour interval inspections, but at any time we can discover a mechanical problem in the air and have to come down. Just yesterday, for example, a chip light came on in flight indicating we had a problem with one of the engines. Pretty much after every flight we have to check something that was leaking or loose or shifted position. Almost all the parts are old, they're worn, and they need replacing or tightening before taking off again. There are 14 airworthy B-17's still around, and I don't think you could get six in the air at any given time because of maintenance problems. It's a hectic life, but at least we don't have to patch up any flak or bullet holes.

Q What's the longest period that your B-17 has been out of action?

(Continued on page 9)

THE FLYING FORTRESS, QUEEN OF THE SKIES A HALF CENTURY AGO, still commands attention wherever it goes. People line up for a walk through the historic aircraft at one of its airport tour stops.



#### (B-17 MAINTENANCE from page 8)

**A** We were on a tour stop in Holland, Michigan when we lost an engine. We didn't have a spare readily available. We had hung our spare 19 hours earlier in Boise, Idaho, so we sat on the ground for two weeks waiting for an engine to be assembled and sent to us. There are several places that we deal with that re-manufacture engines for us, yellow tag them and ship them out.

**Q** What's your estimate on the cost of keeping the B-17 flying in an average year?

**A** Last year, we figured it at almost \$3,000 a flight hour. That's including fuel, oil, bits, pieces, parts and insurance. We tour all year long, usually moving on to the next airport every third day. Rides on the aircraft are our main source of income from the general public, but we have many sponsors and donors who keep us flying with tax-deductible contributions on a regular basis.

**Q** Do you ever do any of the driving yourself or is that left to a regular pilot?

**A** We have a fulltime flight crew on the aircraft. As a Flight Engineer, I do understand flying and landing characteristics. During the year, I get to make one or two landings just in case there's a cockpit incident so that I can get the plane back on the ground. I'm not a licensed pilot. It's probably the biggest thrill of the year when they put me in the seat and say "go ahead and put it on the ground." I don't know about my taxiing skills, but I can get it down safely.

**Q** Is there a timeline on how long The Collings Foundation will continue to tour the country in the B-17?

**A** For as long as the interest is out there and she can pay for herself. With losing so many of our World War II veterans on a daily basis, interest may wane and it may come to the point where we won't have the money to fly her any more. We don't know what will happen when the World War II veterans are gone.

## PARADE MAGAZINE HONORS 8TH AF HERITAGE MUSEUM FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

The February 4, 2001 issue of nationally syndicated Parade Magazine carried the following tribute to The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum:

Character education is a priority in many schools nationwide. Congress even appropriated millions in grants for states to provide such programs, designed to promote community values in students. A museum in Pooler, GA, outside Savannah, also took that message to heart.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum—which commemorates the sacrifices of U.S. airmen from World War II to today—has become a living classroom for character education. Its exhibits are real-life examples of compassion, generosity and the 25 other traits in Georgia's character curriculum.

Compassion, for instance, is taught through the story of an injured B-17 pilot and a German flier. Instead of shooting down the damaged plane, the German flew along side and guided it out of enemy air space. Generosity is taught through the story of a supply drop to starving Dutch citizens. And all this happened while one in four airmen in the Mighty Eighth was being lost in raids over Germany.

"We can teach by example," noted Vivian Rogers-Price, the museum's director of education. And her museum's accomplishments also serve as an example of character. When budget cuts forced many regional schools to cancel field trips, the Mighty Eighth found sponsors like Wal-Mart to help cover the cost of a museum visit. Now, this is the only field trip some schools will have.

Last year, more than 10,000 students participated in the museum's character education program, assisted by volunteers, mostly combat veterans.



## *An Atlantic Crossing By The 303rd in 1942*

# IF THE NAZI U-BOATS DIDN'T GET YOU, THE HORRIBLE FOOD WOULD

### Life Aboard Dutch Troopship "Marnix Van Sint Aldegonde"

By PFC Robert S. Petersen  
Sheet Metal Worker, 328th Service Squadron  
(Renamed 444th Sub-Depot at Molesworth)

24-25 SEPTEMBER 1942 — We ride a ferry across the bay to a New York City pier where we are quickly lined up and loaded onto the Dutch troopship *Marnix Van Sint Aldegonde*. The ship is packed with men in uniform. When we reach our assigned compartment I see that our living conditions will be like something out of Dante's Inferno. We will sleep like bats in hammocks slung from the ceiling, end to end and wall to wall. Meals will reach us in large pans or buckets, some say like slop for hogs. We're young and we're going to war, and I tell myself that our spirits will adjust to these hellish conditions.

We're the 328th Service Squadron, to be renamed the 444th Sub-Depot when we reach the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth in England.

The Dutch captain arrives with a flock of officers to inspect our quarters. He speaks English with a throaty accent. "No smoking except in the canteen and on decks...canteens open one hour morning, noon and afternoon, with two hours in the evening...drinking water turned on only between 8 and 9 A.M. and 6 to 9 P.M."

All bedding is stowed in a huge pile at one end of the compartment. Equipment is stacked in racks on the ceiling. Mess tables are erected and barracks bags stowed under them and along the wall. After the evening meal, the tables come down and the hammocks are slung. A man can hardly find his own gear.

For meals, orderlies from each table go up to the galley. They come back with two pans of grub which are shared by those at their table. When the orderlies bring down our noon meal, the corn beef is already gone, and I don't like the looks of the

cabbage and boiled potatoes. I eat pears and bread, and drink tea.

A notice is posted that the decks will be open at noon. I go up with John Paul, and we stroll a complete lap around the ship. Later a fire drill is held. Our section is forward on the boat deck. We are given instructions by a Dutch officer and then dismissed. I take a Readers Digest and climb up on a life raft pile to read it. Gilbert Pacheco and Chris are up there too, matching pennies.

After a supper of ham, cheese and coffee, we're up on deck again to watch the sun set on the good old U.S. A. for what will be the last time in a long time. The boats in the convoy are all facing the open sea now and we should be shoving off soon. When darkness shrouds the view I go below and clean my rifle bolt. Finish the chore and go up to the canteen for a smoke and last breath of air before swinging into the hammock for the night.

It was miserably hot in our compartment all day and evening but that night the ventilators are put to work and it cools off considerably. Still, I lay awake a long while

waiting for sleep to come.

#### SATURDAY 26 SEP 1942

We're at sea. Pulled out of the Sound during breakfast. And what a strange breakfast it was. Fish. I nibble a little, but it's not my dish.

There is no excitement in our leaving. Just a lot of ships starting a journey they are destined to make. Of course, I was up on deck as soon as possible and from a vantage point up forward I watch the convoy assemble. It's my first time at sea and I really enjoy taking it in.

Five boxes of books and magazines are distributed to our section. I grab a book containing tales by various authors. I read Sinclair Lewis, Conrad and Doyle all morning and afternoon. A fire drill is held before dinner and our performance is bad. The Dutch officer tells us we need to "get a move on it".

All afternoon I sweat out getting seasick as I have a clammy emptiness in my stomach, but all that comes of it is a feverish feeling. I'll have to drink more water. On deck, the cool air of the evening is refreshing as I talk to Harry Freestone and a fellow named Ramsey in that warm friendly way that goes with watching the twilight together. It's into the hammock again as another day of "army life" is finished. I hope I don't spend too many more days aboard ship.

#### SUNDAY 27 SEP 1942

Slept soundly last night, so soundly that when I awake with daylight shining in my eyes I'm startled. Breakfast is scrambled eggs—watery and lousy. The butter tastes of cod liver oil. I get picked for a detail. We haul flour, meat and other rations from the hold of the ship. Don't like it at all. It's damp and smells of rotten something or other. I take off early and go

to the canteen for some cookies and candy. Eat a candy bar and then go below for lunch. Fish! Getting sick and tired of fish. Met Robert Veach on deck and we chew the fat all afternoon so I don't get down again for rifle check or return to work.

The ships in our part of the convoy are having gunnery practice. I'm sit up forward just under the bridge. Pete, Chris, and Carl Hiscock are here too. We can feel the roll of the ship. It's getting rougher. I suppose we'll be running into nasty weather soon. Its getting very foggy out, too.

#### MONDAY 28 SEP 1942

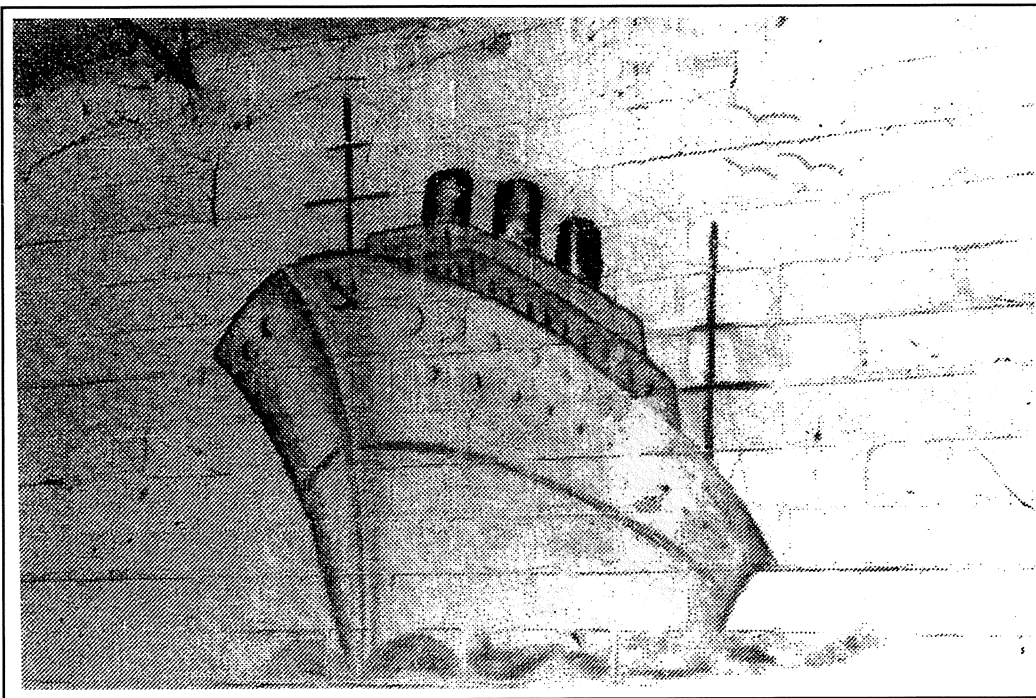
We pass through the submarine net and into the harbor of Halifax. We'll be able to mail letters ashore today.

I'm orderly for our table at breakfast and do my share in hauling food that is worse than anything I'd care to eat unless I was starving. It is a good thing we did pull into port because the sea is rough and a good many of the fellows are really sick. I'm getting woozy myself but it's nerves more than an unhealthy feeling in the stomach.

After dinner, the night is bitterly cold, even with a jacket on. I stay on deck and watch Halifax light up like a thousand jewels.

The canteen is the most crowded part of the ship, especially after blackout time when it becomes the only place to smoke. I move around by continually shoving and pushing.

In peace time, not so many months ago, this room was probably one of the more enjoyable parts of the ship. Now, there is a ceaseless babble of excited voices and coarse laughs in air thick with cigarette smoke. All the while a newly formed band blares forth with loud jazzy



### A BOTTISHAM WALL MURAL IN ENGLAND.

A nostalgic reflection on troopships crossing the Atlantic in time of war.

The *Marnix Van Sint Aldegonde* was sunk by a German aircraft in 1943. It had been named for the man who wrote the Dutch National Anthem.

music. It's mass confusion.

I follow John Paul around, carrying a hammock with me. He wants to sleep upstairs somewhere and I just want to sleep. He couldn't find us a space immediately so I go below again and find two hooks to swing my bed from. Like most of the nights aboard I sleep very soundly. Must be the fresh air.

#### TUESDAY 29 SEP 1942

Just finished a salt water shower, washing my hair, shaving, but leaving a few hairs to grow a moustache. Then, I rinse out my socks and underwear and in general make myself feel very clean.

I write this while sitting at a mess table. A crap game to my right, a blackjack game in front of me and one to the left of me, every one shouting louder than the next guy and in general making it noisy indeed for thinking and writing.

Halifax is a day's journey behind us now. We left after being joined by several additional ships, ships whose plates were rusty, and from all outward appearance relics from some naval graveyard. But, they steam out with the best of us, their lean bows pointed towards the east like a greyhounds nose, as white foam beats back from their flanks. We are big ships, carrying large loads, and there are many of us making every trip count. Are you waiting, Hitler?

The air is much colder now, even though we have a very sunny day with clouds floating around in their own sea that is the sky. Our overcoats are out and appreciated, even though I did venture forth on the deck wearing only a field jacket. Sat all afternoon on Aft C deck reading Rafael Sabatini's "Captain Blood". I always wanted to read the book.

About 3:30 PM, Bob Wittner, a medic, sees me on deck and tells me that Admin is giving out our partial pay. I hurry below, just in time to hear my name called by the First Sergeant. I walk up, render the hand salute to Lt. Cook, pick up the \$5 bill, do a sloppy about face and walk off. I finish "Captain Blood" while waiting for supper.

The fellows hold an angry demonstration over the food after supper. We show the slop (I don't know any other word for it) to a couple of sympathetic lieutenants, then a procession of about 12 men carry the pans back to the kitchen, pushing by the guards to stick it under anybody's nose worth sticking it under. But, when the demonstrators come back, they say that they accomplished nothing.

#### SUNDAY 4 OCT 1942

Haven't made notes in a long time. For one reason or other, I never seem to want to write. We can't be far from our destination as the best of rumors has it that we'll be in

port Monday night or not much thereafter. Its been pretty cold for any deck life so the fellows are sticking below most of the time, reading, playing checkers, poker, and other card games. The food, in comparison to what we have been getting, is improved somewhat. Either that or we are getting used to it.

There was a discussion last night about what the war will mean to us in the 328th Service Squadron. The conclusion being that our next view of the States is two years off. I can't help but add "only if we're lucky."

#### MONDAY 5 OCT 1942

Heaviest seas so far, which is pretty rough. Port-holes are kept closed. Too much water coming in, and salt water showers aren't the most pleasant things especially with clothes on so we don't mind them being closed. It's very drafty in our compartment and many of the fellows have bad colds, including me. Oh how we will welcome land again.

It's beyond me how they can keep on feeding us what they have. All I had for supper was two slices of bread and jelly, two apples and a chunk of raw onion Reyes gave me. (He wandered down to the kitchen and came back with onions in his pocket.) The staple food was supposed to be beans and pork. I take a helping in good faith even though the pasty gray color isn't appetizing. It

doesn't take more than the first mouthful for me to push my meal aside. Somebody must have thought sand and grit would add to the flavor. I couldn't digest it. That's what almost all our meals have been like. Dinner was something with a very foul odor like rotted cabbage. I haven't touched potatoes so far. The meat was cold beef that looked like it must have been cooked weeks ago. Good thing they keep on giving us bread and jelly.

We had a second typhus shot today. Must be getting used to them because the needle doesn't even cause me to flutter an eyelash anymore.

As yet, at least from what I know, we haven't had even a good scare by the enemy. Tonight and tomorrow will tell the tale. We are given special instructions to have full canteens handy. Why? Guess only God knows. My damn cold is making me feel lousy, but if I get off this tub with only a cold I won't kick. I hope we make port soon.

#### WEDNESDAY 7 OCT 1942

We are docked in Glasgow, Scotland. There are many horses and wagons on the wharves to haul cargo, beautiful horses, I think they call them "Drysdals." I never thought I'd be so happy to see horses.

From this day forward, I will pray to whatever Gods may be to allow me to leave sailing to the sailors.

THE 427th's B-17F, KNOWN AS *JOE BTFSPLK II*, WAS THE FIRST AIRCRAFT TO BE FITTED WITH EFFECTIVE NOSE CONE GUN INSTALLATIONS, ANOTHER PIONEERING INNOVATION OF THE 303RD BOMB GROUP.



## *Necessity Is Mother of Invention*

# 303rd DESIGNS, INSTALLS FIRST B-17 NOSE CONE GUNS IN 8TH AIR FORCE

By Harry Gobrecht

Men of the 303rd Bomb Group pioneered the installation of two 50 caliber machine guns in the tip of the B-17F's nose as a surprise for German pilots who thought that they had found a soft spot in the Flying Fortress armor. Guns on the right and left side of the nose, as well as those in the top and ball turrets, had been unable to fire on German fighters coming head on for a direct frontal attack. The later B-17G, with its nose turret, was the direct result of experience hard-won by the Group's original flyers.

The role that men in the 303rd Bomb Group played in the development of effective B-17 nose guns is little known. Capt. Ross C. Bales, an original 359th Squadron pilot of the *Idaho Potato Peeler*, came to S/Sgts Ed Russell and Anthony Sequin of the 444th Sub-Depot (then the 328th Service Squadron), on his return from a mission where a close call with German tactics started him thinking of nose guns. This led, ultimately, to the first nose gun installation, a prime example of cooperation between the air and ground echelons of the 303rd Bomb Group.

Capt. William R. Calhoun, another 359th pilot, flying *Eight Ball*, couldn't get it home to Molesworth due to damage on mission number seven, 20 December 1942, to Romilly, France, 75 miles SE of Paris. He made a wheel's up "belly" landing at the 92nd Bomb Group airfield at Bovingdon after ordering his crew to bail out. M/Sgt. Sidney

E. Guthrie's *Eight Ball* ground crew went to Bovingdon and stripped the *Eight Ball* of her nose cone, a scarce item in those days. S/Sgt's Russell and Sequin, assisted by Capt. Bales, then undertook the job of designing a gun mount to fire forward through the nose cone. The design was complicated by the need to avoid interfering with the use of the Norden Bombsight.

Salvaging a tail gun mount from the bone yard, they worked out a means of attaching it to the frame of the nose cone. The structure was then mounted on a truck and taken for testing on the firing range.

Capt. Bales was anxious to have this 303rd invention mounted on his B-17F *Idaho Potato Peeler*, but this was not to be. His crew was shot down in the English Channel on 14 May 1943 with no survivors. The first nose cone with machine guns firing straight ahead was installed on the 427th Squadron's B-17F

#41-24610 *Joe Btfsplk II*. This B-17 first became famous when Capt. Donald E. Stockton brought the bomber back to Molesworth with a hole in the rudder two feet wide and six feet high.

The nose cone installation in *Joe Btfsplk II* was a tremendous success. The B-17's gunners downed 15 German fighters before being shot down on the 1 May 1943 mission to St. Nazaire, France.

Twin 50 caliber guns installed in the B-17G chin turret first appeared in Eighth Air Force Bomb Groups in October 1943. The first 303rd B-17G was assigned to the 360th Squadron, #42-31052 (No name), followed by twelve more on 18 October 1943. One 359th and four 360th B-17G's were first used on the 303rd's

16 November 1943 mission to Knaben, Norway.

YB-40 Gunships, fitted with an additional top turret and a new chin turret, were introduced in May 1943 at the 91st, 92nd and 303rd Bomb Groups. The YB-40's weighed about 10,000 pounds more than a loaded B-17F and were unable to keep up with the formation after bombs were dropped. They were returned to the USA after flying a few missions. While the YB-40 concept was unsuccessful, it did introduce the chin turret and other armament innovations that were utilized in later model B-17F's and B-17G's.

(The writer thanks Henry G. Johansen, 444th SubDepot, for his recollections of the 303rd nose gun installations).



THE TAIL END OF *JOE BTFSPLK II*, after it was chewed up by an FW-190 on the 16 February 1943 mission to St. Nazaire. Pilot Don Stockton stands below while Navigator Hubert Miller perches in the well created by the German fighter's cannon fire.

The cartoonist is the 303rd Bomb Group's Jack Gardner of Pittsburgh, PA, an Armament Officer in the 427th Squadron, who helped arrange the 1997 reunion. Here, Jack takes the easy road to the 2001 Baltimore reunion while his wife, Toni, struggles with the luggage. They're a great couple with a healthy respect for team work.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

At this writing it is learned that the program to find our lost comrades is ahead of schedule. Already there have been over a thousand lost souls found in the program set up by Ed Miller. Unfortunately most of the men located have passed on, but a few are being located who are alive and well and have responded. We urge those volunteers to continue with the good work until we can account for all the lost comrades of the 303rd.

This program is also helpful in setting up a new directory that is being compiled by Ed and Dennis Smith. They plan to streamline the new directory and add a multitude of Email addresses of members. Since not all members want or need a roster-directory, only those who have paid a small fee will receive one.

The reunion in Baltimore, scheduled for this September 5-9, is going along very well, thanks to the intense work being carried out by Walt Ferrari.

Our web site continues to get rave reviews from all who visit it. Gary Moncur continues to be the best! If you haven't visited the site or don't have a computer, I urge you to visit a friend or relative who has one so you can see what all the shouting is about.

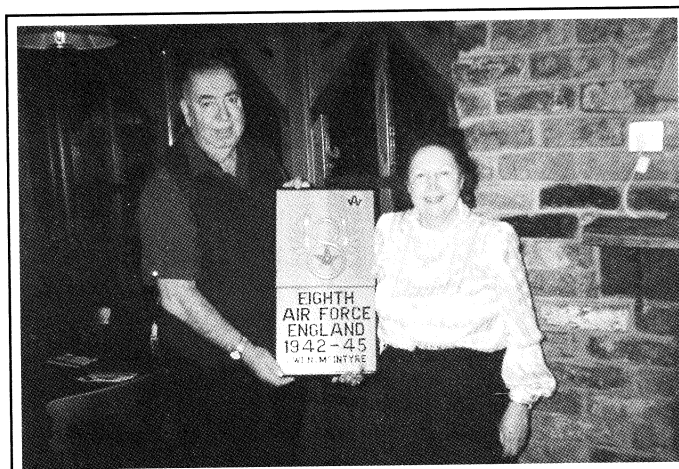
As you may know, the CDROM that Ed Miller designed and built is being sent to those who purchased one. It contains nearly five thousand pages of text and pictures. Even if you don't own a computer, you should own the disk for the future. I believe that some will be for sale at the reunion.

We hear rumors that a Hell's Angels quilt will be offered for raffle at the reunion and that it will be one of the first things you will see when you walk in to register.

I urge all 303rd veterans to buy a WW2 victory medal miniature to wear on their hat or jacket. There is no paperwork for this medal, and all veterans who were in the service in WW2 are eligible to wear it. Some of our schools don't even mention the history of the war that we participated in and we need to give them a reason to ask about it.

I will try to have a small supply of these medal miniatures at the reunion. I think that they cost less than five dollars. Stay healthy and we will see each other in Baltimore.

Dick Johnson



WOOD CARVER BILL ADAMS presents one of his plaques to Gwen McIntyre to honor her for outstanding volunteer work at London's American Red Cross Rainbow Club during World War II.

## Carver Bill Adams On Path To British Award Nomination

William "Bill" Adams of London, England, has been recommended by members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and many others for the United Kingdom's "National Honour Award."

It's estimated that more than a hundred 303rd Molesworth veterans have been privileged to receive Bill's carvings directly or as raffle winners of his donated works. Newsletter readers who know of Bill's talents and unselfish generosity are urged to write to the London office responsible for making the formal nomination.

Help Bill get the recognition he so richly deserves. Send your letter recommending him for a National Honour Award to The Nominations Unit, Cabinet Office, 2 Monck Street, London SW1P 2BQ, England.





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

AT THE TOP — 303rd combat crews gather for debriefing after the Augsburg mission of 16 March 1944. Of the Group's 27 B-17's dispatched, three were damaged by flak and four by enemy aircraft fire. All returned to base. Navigator/photographer Coleman Sanders is lifting the coffee cup. Can our readers identify the other two? Possible clue: the man in the middle has latched onto three doughnuts, eating one, with two more hooked onto his fingers!

AT LEFT — Crew Chief M/Sgt. Tom Harrelson displays his artistic talent painting the nose art on *Princess Pat*, his 358th Squadron aircraft. Observing (l-to-r) are Cpl. Fred Hoag, PFC Hank Brudzinski and Sgt. O. P. Sahli.

BELOW — Maj. Charles A. Green, at the wheel, the Group's S-2 Intelligence Officer, and S/Sgt. Harold E. Rush of 360th Squadron Ordnance attend to business on the base.





# Molesworth Diary

## ESCAPE AND EVASION — FROM SWITZERLAND!

I was flying ball turret on the mission to Oberpfaffenhofen April 24, 1944. We were just about to start our bomb run when the fighters hit us. Their 20mm cannons knocked out our number three engine and our top turret. We were at 25,000 feet one minute and at 6,000 feet the next. "Mac" McClure, our pilot, told us at first to prepare to bail out, and then said he would try to get to Switzerland.

We made it and were interned in Switzerland at Adelboden and later at Wangen. In early September, after we learned that Gen. Patton was making his swing, three of us took off. We had help for our escape from a young lady. I came through Interlaken dressed as a woman. I knew the disguise was good when two Swiss soldiers whistled at me. It took us two days to get into France where members of the French underground guided us to the American lines. After six days in Lyon, we were flown back to England, part of the way in a B-25 and then in a cargo plane. We were officially listed as "escapees" and debriefed. They wouldn't let me fly anymore. I was sent back to the U.S., and ended the war at the Victorville Training Base in California.

**George T. Duncan**  
358th Squadron Ball Turret Gunner

## GUNNERS STOPPED FROM HITTING OWN TAILS

In the summer of 1943, B-17F number 41-24561, called *The Duchess*, came back from a mission with a .50 caliber hole in the horizontal stabilizer, about midway between the outer edge and the tail. It was pretty clear that the waist gunner had done it, probably while firing at enemy fighter planes. Our ground crew flight chief was Bill Caldwell. He had a brilliant mind for solving problems. During the next few days, we saw him studying the waist gun mounting assembly. He had a pencil and paper and was making drawings. Then, we didn't see him for a couple days. Someone said he was spending time in the hangar machine shop.

The next time he showed up at *The Duchess*, he went straight to the waist guns with several pieces of equipment. He fitted them with what looked to me like solenoid switches and cam brackets. He was putting together attachments that would prevent the guns from firing when pointed at any part of the B-17. After some testing, he had it adjusted so that it would be impossible for a waist gunner to shoot his own tail assembly. Soon, these kits were made up and installed on all the 303rd's bombers. Bill Caldwell deserved a military citation, but I don't know if his ingenuity was ever recognized.

**Jim Hicks**  
359th Squadron Crew Chief

## LANDING AT BASE WORSE THAN MISSION ITSELF

Our crew arrived at Molesworth on August 19, 1944. My first mission on August 30 was to Pas de Calais in France and my 35th and last on January 6, 1945, to Cologne, Germany. It would be fair to state that the overall hazard level for a tour of duty was less than what existed a year or more earlier.

Of all my missions, one in particular comes to mind. On November 16, 1944, we were aboard *Queenie* on a ground troop support mission over Weisweiler, Germany. On the return flight, because of bad weather at Molesworth, a number of our B-17's were diverted to RAF Sleaford near Shrewsbury. After more than one attempt to find the runway in poor visibility, pilot George Newton managed to bring us down. There was another 303rd B-17 at the end of the runway. The sight of an Aldis lamp flashing repeatedly from the tail gunner's position in the other B-17 to warn us off still stands out clearly in my mind. I could appreciate what was going on in his mind. But, our brakes were not functioning as they should have. As George steered *Queenie* to the left, our right wing rode up over the left wing of the other B-17 in passing. We went off the end of the runway and stopped just short of a pole with our main wheels deep in mud. Instead of a jump, it was an easy matter to step from the front hatch onto the ground.

**John J. Jenkins**  
427th Squadron Navigator

## THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE IN THE ARMY

I was one of the "originals." I joined the 303rd Bomb Group in Boise, ID in June of 1942 and arrived at Molesworth with my crew aboard *Snap Crackle Pop*. We flew the 303rd's very first combat mission on November 17, 1942, to St. Nazaire, France. We had 80 men when we arrived in England. By the time I finished my 25th and last mission on May 23, 1943, there were only 18 of us left. My crew, with pilot Jacob Frederick, survived. No member was wounded and we never had a gun malfunction through some really hard missions. I had credits for three enemy aircraft "kills" and two "probables."

We were a highly efficient crew in the air, but on the ground the Army Air Corps and I had many differences. I figured it was lack of communication. They wouldn't listen to me. The trouble began my first day in the Army. They got us up at 5 AM in cold, foggy Monterey, CA. We were told to stand in a line. A sergeant ordered me to take my hands out of my pocket. I took a dim view of this request because I had no gloves, but I figured I would humor him on this one occasion. Then,

(Continued on page 16)

(DIARY from page 15)

he told me to start policing up the area, mostly picking up cigarette butts. I tried to explain that I didn't smoke. He left and came back with an officer who read me the Articles of War. My relationship with the sergeant never improved.

In my three years and 10 months of military duty, the men I served with in the 303rd at Molesworth were the finest I have ever known.

**Gilbert A. Murray**  
360th Squadron Tail Gunner

### FATE TIES HIM TO MATHIS BROTHERS

My role in the Mathis brothers events is so improbable that it is even now hard to believe. Bombardier Jack Mathis died on the Vegesack, Germany, mission of 18 March 1943, earning the Medal of Honor. His pilot, Harold Stouse, was selected for reassignment to the Second Air Force Training Command in the States to train replacement crews. I was taken off the Ross Bales crew to fill Jack's place as bombardier and accompany the Stouse crew home. Meanwhile, Jack's brother, Mark, also a bombardier, arrived at Molesworth after his request for a transfer to the 303rd had been granted. Mark was assigned to take my place as bombardier on the Bales crew. On 14 May 1943, on a mission to attack submarine pens at Kiel, Germany, Mark Mathis and the entire Bales crew were killed when their B-17 *FDR's Potato Peeler Kids* crashed in the North Sea.

After I returned to the U.S., I earned pilot's wings and was in B-25 transition training when the war ended.

**Paul M. Thomas**  
359th Squadron Bombardier

### SCREWDRIVER RELEASES THREE 1,000-LB BOMBS

We were flying *Floose* on 11 October 1944 to bomb a synthetic oil plant at Wesseling, Germany. Our pilot was Clyde Freeman, and we were in the "tail-end Charlie" position in the formation. As we went over the target, the flak was thick and very accurate. We lost two of our wingmen, the Price and Lord crews, and then our B-17 was hit in the right inboard engine. After the bomb bay doors opened, we discovered that a piece of shrapnel from the blast had cut the cable release for three of the 1,000-lb bombs we were carrying. We began losing altitude.

I put on a portable oxygen mask, took a screwdriver from my kit in the radio room and went into the bomb bay. Laying stretched out on the narrow catwalk between the tiers of bombs, I managed to release the lowest of the three bombs. My oxygen was running out, so I got up, found another bottle and went back to work on the other two bombs. The screwdriver did the job again. We limped home alone a few hundred feet over the English Channel. Thank God we made it.

**Donald E. Vanlier**  
358th Squadron Radio Operator



**CHANGE OF COMMAND**—Major Ben Ramsey (on the right) turned over the reins of the 303rd Bomb Group's S4 Section to Captain Quentin Hargrove on 13 December 1944. Maj. Ramsey stayed on to take command of the 444th Sub-Depot.

## Bomb Groups in World War II Structured Like Infantry Divisions

By Quentin Hargrove

The Air Corps during World War II was a branch of the Army, same as the Infantry, Field Artillery and other units. An Air Corps Bomb Group, such as the 303rd, was structured along the lines of an infantry division, with each squadron equivalent to a company. Our 303rd headquarters, for example, was similar to a division headquarters with a staff to assist the Commander, designated as S1 (Personnel), S2 (Intelligence), S3 (Operations & Training) and S4 (Supply & Maintenance).

The S4 Section consisted of Technical Supply, Armament, and Engineering, including Maintenance, Transportation and Technical Inspection. The misconception has always been that the Engineering Officer was the S4 Officer. This was not always the case, as they are separate specialties. All elements of S4 were an integral part of the operation, and the section would not have functioned without unity.

At the heart of operations was the airworthiness of our aircraft. The most difficult and demanding part was keeping as many of the assigned aircraft combat ready as possible. This percentage had to be reported daily, and it was relayed to higher headquarters. This was needed to assess the damage from the previous mission, and to establish the maximum force available for future raids. In other words, the airplanes and crews were part of the battlefield armada, same as soldiers, tanks, and cannons. But, beyond that, all the S4 elements had to function properly even before the B-17's were airborne. One of the duties of the Section was conducting classes to indoctrinate new flying crews with the operation of the mechanical parts of the B-17 at high altitude under combat conditions.

To this day, I marvel at how the logistics worked so smoothly in the 303rd Bomb Group, and give credit to our many well trained and talented personnel. What a rewarding experience to have served with such a dedicated and honorable group.

# 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

## HUSBAND NOW STROKE VICTIM, BUT STILL HERO

Your February 2001 issue brought tears to my eyes. Bill Herod, my husband, was a tail gunner in the 427th Squadron at Molesworth in 1944. He often spoke of his war-related experiences and so proudly mentioned his plane named *Miss Lace* which Mr. Byers wrote about on page 15. Bill is now 80 and a stroke victim in a health care center. He had high hopes of attending reunions, but was struck down by illness and the dream never materialized. He's a hero in my life. We're blessed with three daughters and seven grandchildren. It's the twilight years now, and I've accepted the things I cannot change, and trust I'll have the wisdom to know the difference. God bless the 303rd Bomb Group.

Louise Herod  
Morgantown, WV

## SEARCHING FOR THE REAL SHOO SHOO BABY

I just finished reading from cover to cover the February issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter. When I get that publication, I darn near read it without putting it down. I have a question—on page 16 there's a story by Howard Isaacson about *Shoo Shoo Baby*. He said it was destroyed after the war. I visited the Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio a few years ago, and that famous B-17 is in the hanger for all to see. Can you explain? My brother is 427th Squadron pilot John McGarry. He died when *Spirit of Flak Wolf* crashed on take-off from Molesworth on April 9, 1944. I served in the Navy in the Southwest Pacific during the war.

Donald McGarry  
Grand Rapids, MI

(Editor's Note —There were many 8th Air Force B-17's named *Shoo Shoo Baby*. The B-17 at Wright Patterson is actually named *Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby* {sic} and was a 91st Bomb Group aircraft.)

## EVER HEARD OF LANDING A B-17 WITHOUT PILOTS?

Crews newly arrived at Molesworth in late 1944 flew practice flights to familiarize themselves with the terrain. I was the only member of my crew, besides the pilots, who had flying instruction and some experience. Our pilot, Jack Bailey, called me up from the tail a couple times to steer. He put me in the driver's seat on the left while he sat on the right. No turns, nothing to do but hold the heading and the altitude. I'm not sure the crew felt any safer because of my ability.

Is there any record of a 303rd crew member, not a pilot, landing a plane if the pilots were incapacitated? Heck, that was my fantasy!

Merle Eckert  
359th Tail Gunner

## IN 1940, FATHER HELPED BUILD RAF MOLESWORTH

I was 11 years old in 1940 when my father got a job working with a surveyor to set out the area for a new air base. It was bounded by the villages of Old Weston, Brington, Molesworth and Claxton. He stayed on as a bricklayer to build the base.

Being young lads, we used to cycle up to Molesworth, and I well remember seeing the A-20 Bostons that carried out the first missions over Europe. Later, I joined the local Army cadets and was able to visit the base from time to time after the B-17's began operations. We used to cycle around the dispersal areas to look over the planes. I remember a Sunday afternoon when a Fort made a landing with just one wheel down, came in perfect, just dropped down on a wing and spun off safely onto the grass, no fire.

That was almost 60 years ago. In recent years, I have visited the American war cemetery at Madingley near Cambridge. All those men died that we may be free. How can we ever thank them for what they did?

Derek G. Guest  
Bracknell, Berks, England

## GUNNER PAYS TRIBUTE TO 303RD LEADERSHIP

I flew 21 missions before our B-17 was shot down on the Berlin mission June 21, 1944. It seemed to me that the tougher the mission, the higher the rank in the lead plane. Lt. Col. Lewis Lyle led us on this mission. It makes me real proud of our outfit. I doubt that many other military units of World War II can say their C.O. was the leader into combat.

Lee Knedler  
427th Ball Turret Gunner

## COIN TRADITION PART OF MEMORIAL CEREMONIES

I have been working diligently to erect a memorial monument to honor the Mighty Eighth Air Force along a historical walkway at the Rock Island National Cemetery in Illinois. With the help of the Moline Monument Company and the Iowa Chapter of the 8th AF Historical Society, my wife and I finally succeeded in making this dream a reality. We dedicated the memorial last September.

Col. Charles M. Schencke attended as the principal speaker. He was representing Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Keck, commander of the Eighth at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. During the ceremonies, Col. Schencke presented me with the 8th Air Force coin. This custom of presenting a coin from a military unit was new to me. A few months ago, I was watching President Clinton on TV, who was giving a tour of the White House. One of the things he pointed out was his collection of over 400 such military coins given to him by various units.

My wife and I presented a trophy to Col. Schencke for his participation in the ceremony and a plaque to Larry Williams, the cemetery director. In addition, we had commissioned Dick Bowler, a 427th Navigator, to build a clock plaque for presentation to General Keck in absentia.

William (Bill) Zachar  
359th Crew Chief

## WIDOW ASKS TO REMAIN MEMBER OF 303RD BGA

Fred Buddingh, my husband, died on November 29, 2000. He was a tail gunner in the 358th Squadron. The newsletter meant such a great deal to him and I feel the same way and wish to continue receiving it. I am enclosing a check to pay the dues for the 303rd Bomb Group Association. For the past 14 years, Fred was a victim of Parkinson's Disease, but ultimately died of a ruptured aorta. I miss him so much, but at least his aches and pains are over.

Edna Buddingh  
Lubbock, Texas

## EDITING OF ARTICLES PRAISED BY WRITERS

You did an excellent job of editing my article "Long Walk Out of Danger" in the February 2001 issue. The newsletter is so well laid out and easy to read. The people I have shown our newsletter to always comment about how professional it is. I liked your story about the cow bomb and when I think about it I have to laugh. I am thankful that you are willing to do the newsletter for the 303rd. We are proud to have you as our editor.

John Snede  
427th Waist Gunner

Just a note to thank you for doing a very professional job of editing my article "A Real Hush-Hush Operation" in the February issue. It looked pretty good to me.

Ray Holland  
303rd Base Radar Shop

What a great job you did on the story of my return to Stalag 17-B in the last issue. I really appreciated it. I am amazed that you got so much in with the limited space you had to work with.

Ed Sexton  
359th Radio Operator

(Editor's Note — Without memoirs such as the above, we wouldn't have a newsletter. I thank each of you for sending in your stories.)

## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

I would like to thank Ed Miller for his very kind introduction and warning about what being the membership chairman is all about.

My father "Smitty" (Carlton Smith) first introduced me to the 303<sup>rd</sup> BGA while he was the membership chairman. My first reunion with the 303<sup>rd</sup> was in San Francisco, CA in 1995 where my wife Marriane and I helped my father "work" the membership roster table. His theme that year was "ZIP+4".

As this will be my first year in the hot seat, I will make it my top priority to ensure that the addresses in the roster are correct and up to date. This means that I will need your help in order to do this. If you maintain a summer and winter address, please let me know at what times of the year you would be receiving mail at those addresses. In that way, your copies of the newsletters will be sent to the correct address.

I have two pages to post as much information that will fit in. If your name is not listed, please except my apology. I will continue to add names in the next issue.

Dennis S. Smith

## IN MEMORIAM

Louis B Sinopoli, (360<sup>th</sup>), April 6, 2000  
 Raleigh L Alderson, (358<sup>th</sup>), October 24, 2000  
 Carl A Hokans, (427<sup>th</sup>), January 9, 2001  
 LeRoy E Daub, (359<sup>th</sup>), March 8, 1997  
 Herbert Wells Kennedy, (359<sup>th</sup>), January 23, 2001  
 Armand F Burch (427<sup>th</sup>), November 11, 2000  
 James D Cox (360<sup>th</sup>), February 4, 2001  
 Rodolfo A Villarreal (360<sup>th</sup>), October 25, 2000  
 Roy Quinn Smith (427<sup>th</sup>), December 30, 2000  
 Bert T Prendergast (359<sup>th</sup>), February 9, 2001  
 Joe M Eby (358<sup>th</sup>), February 15, 2001  
 Abel G Guzman (359<sup>th</sup>), November 7, 2000  
 Fred E Call (359<sup>th</sup>), September 25, 2000  
 Fred Buddingh (358<sup>th</sup>), November 29, 2000

## SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

Milton B Abernathy	358 <sup>th</sup>
Roger K Bates	359 <sup>th</sup>
Harold A Belles	359 <sup>th</sup>
Robert D Brassil	359 <sup>th</sup>
Nancy Shultz Byers	Family
Joseph R Cappucci	359 <sup>th</sup>
James C Crangle	427 <sup>th</sup>
William H Cox, Col(R)	358 <sup>th</sup>
James A Davis	Family
Patrick Dooley	358 <sup>th</sup>
Earl B Douglass Jr.	358 <sup>th</sup>
Jerome L Drewry	427 <sup>th</sup>
Robert H Hitchcock	427 <sup>th</sup>
Earl Ray Howard	359 <sup>th</sup>
Horace S Kenney Jr.	427 <sup>th</sup>
Bobbie B Reese	359 <sup>th</sup>

## REPEAT SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

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William L Cylatt Jr	427 <sup>th</sup>

William J Dallas	427 <sup>th</sup>
Carl DuBose	427 <sup>th</sup>
Melvin A Durst	427 <sup>th</sup>
William M Eason	360 <sup>th</sup>
Ernest A Fischer	427 <sup>th</sup>
Alan E Frey	360 <sup>th</sup>
J Wayne Fredericks	360 <sup>th</sup>
Charles Fulanovich	358 <sup>th</sup>
Carl J Fyler	360 <sup>th</sup>
Louis Grandwilliams	359 <sup>th</sup>
Richard D Green	358 <sup>th</sup>
Jackson H Hunt	358 <sup>th</sup>
Robert Hurdle	359 <sup>th</sup>
Robert L Johnson	360 <sup>th</sup>

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

John F Reed	358 <sup>th</sup>
Warren K Hume (Sgt.)	
Glen B Walley	358 <sup>th</sup>
Thomas J Quinn	359 <sup>th</sup>

## NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

Robert H Johnson, 3 Spring Circle, Broomall, PA 19008-1220  
 \*Joseph W Lowe, (427<sup>th</sup>), 7204 Ash Ave, Raytown, MO 64133-6713, 816-353-2176  
 \*Nicholas A Pepe, (360<sup>th</sup>), 33 Pembroke St., Quincy, MA 02169-8905 (617) 479-8143, (Leona G.)  
 • Found as a result of "Lost 303<sup>rd</sup> Comrade Search Project"

## NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Michael Wayne Brooks, (uncle Kirk R. Mitchell, 358<sup>th</sup>), 1730 Larkeller Lane, Los Altos, CA 94024-5827, (408) 765-4344  
 Carl L Moyer, (brother S/Sgt. Leroy H Moyer, 427<sup>th</sup>), 9202 Olde Davenport Rd., Dubuque, IA 52003-9524, (319) 556-6319  
 Jeanne Grsetic Johnson, (daughter of Julius E (Sam) Bass (358<sup>th</sup>)), 3803 Ebonhurst Dr., Apt 240, Allison Park, PA 15101-3559, 412-487-7587  
 Dennis R Hejna Jr., (son of Dennis R Hejna Sr., 38 St. Maurice Ct, Danville, CA 94526-5115, 925-737-4043  
 Elrie J Iverson, (son of Ingvald M Iverson), 22550 Dark Horse Ln, Hampton, MN 55031-9700, 651-463-2590  
 A Nicklas Badart, (son-in-law of Joseph R Monyok (427<sup>th</sup>)), 6001 Old Lawyers Hills Rd, Elkridge, MD 21075-6923  
 Kenneth Bozman, (brother-in-law of Malcolm L "Mac" McKenzie, 427<sup>th</sup>), 16 Cove Road, Lake Wylie, SC 29710-9210  
 Denese G Lee, (daughter of Jacob R Gornto, 359<sup>th</sup>), 4701 Harmony Church Rd., Efland, NC 27243-9383, (Spouse David), 919-563-4060  
 Helen Kirk, 6652 Quail Way, Paradise, CA. 95969-2429 (sister of William E Lewis (427<sup>th</sup>))  
 Eugene J Kelly, (son of Eugene J Kelly) 1388 Pilgrim Rest Rd., Doyline, LA 71023-3024, 318-745-2492 (Spouse Sallie J)  
 Ben Ramsey (son of Maj. Benjamin B Ramsey), 10002 Balmforth Lane, Houston, TX 77096-5302 (713) 723-5541 (Spouse Jane)  
 Ronald D Dunn (son of Douglas D Dunn), PO Box 283, Sharon, WI 53585-0283, (262) 736-9160 ("Family Life Member")  
 Stephen N Gornto (son of Jacob R), 2536 Bimini LN, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312-4750, (954) 791-5040

## NEW FRIENDS OF THE 303<sup>RD</sup>

Timothy Gagon, 100 E Tenny Ave., Louisville, KY 40214-2114, 502-380-0747  
 William D Keane, 352 72<sup>nd</sup> St., Brooklyn, NY 11209-1402, (718) 238-7166

## DONATIONS

Robert K Shayler, son of Walter K Shayler(360<sup>th</sup>), for the best use of the association  
 Dennis R Hejna Jr, son of Dennie R Hejna Sr(359<sup>th</sup>), general fund contribution  
 Lloyd D Hester (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Brenda E Keegan, donation for the newsletter  
 John I Snede (427<sup>th</sup>), donation for the newsletter  
 Donald McGarry, donation for the newsletter

## BENEFACTOR PROGRAM

Ben M Agrifoglio...Richard M Albright...Arvid Anderson...Sibley M Andriessen...James E Aberdeen...Lucius E Arnold...Karl Arundale...George W Ashworth...Eldon Audiss...Roger D Ayers...Stanley J Backiel...Harry Baffa...G. E. Bale...E. R. Barkman Jr...Deane L Barnes...Dale E Bartholemew...Max R. Bartholemew...Herb Bauer...Albert T Beavers...Richard W Beebe...Robert C Benja... J. Anderson (Andy) Berly III...William E Bernum...Mrs. Nellie C Bielecki...John R Bitter...M. D. Blackburn...Joesph A Blindbury...Paul L Boat...Robert C Bogert...Anthony J Boland...Ralph C Brehl JR, (LtCol, Ret.)...Aarthur J Brown...Col. James F Brown...Henry J Brudzinski...William H Bruns Jr...Mrs. Clara C Butler...Mrs. Frances M Byers...Raymond N Calenberg...Michael J Canale...Joseph R Cappucci...Kenneth R Carnahan...Edward K Carter...Louis M Christen...LeRoy P Christenson...Orlyn D Chunat...Andrew Cluster...William J Cline...Charles F Coe...Harvie L Collins...Clarence L Counsell...William Crawford...C. David(Lt.Col.(Ret))...Dominick D De Lorenzo...Louis R De Mailo...Ray E Derr...Frank S Destito...John S Diel...Richard D Dimick...Douglas L Dolan...Lee E Dolan Jr...Jerome L Drewry...James R Durfee...Marvin R Edwards...William E Eisenhart...James T Elovich...Frank L Farmer...Robert J Farrell...Richard T Fogarty...Leon P Foltz...Mrs Mary Foreman...John W Ford...Fabian S Folmer...Carl A Fredrickson...Carlyle A Frost...Charles Fulanovich...Norman Genter...W Ralph George...E Michael Gerhardtstein...Mrs. Helen M Gilkes...Harry D Gobrecht...Andrew T Goettman...Edward F Goggin...James K Good...Graham C Gould...Ambrose G Grant...Richard D Green...Alexander W Gray...Mrs. Carolyn A Guertin...Stanley Gurka...Harold J Hall...Norman D Hammel...Roy D Harvey...Willard L Heckman...William C Heller...Donna Q Hendel...Angela Hewitt...James A Hickey...Mrs. Ella S Hight...Francis Hinds...Robert H Hitchcock...Raymond E Holland...Mrs. Maxine Holper...Mrs. Betty Holmberg...Jackson H Hunt...John W Hunt Jr...Robert Hurdle...James W Hughes...Mrs. Rose Jacobs...Charles P Johnson...Joe Bob Johnston...Lawrence G Johnson...Wilfred B Johnson...John (Vic) Jones...Milton Jansky...B. M. Kastenbaum...Mrs. Betty Kelley...Virginia K Kelley...James D Kelley...Christopher G Kelley...Mrs. Sarah Kindig...Harry D Kinsland...Lee F Knedler...Russell A Knudson...Robert W Krohn...George A Kyle Jr...Guy A. Lance...Steve and Debra Lange...Thomas D Lardie...John D St. Julien...Robert M Wertz...Thomas J Quinn...

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 Bruce E Arnold, in Memory of William J Arnold  
 Edwin B Barry, in memory of Henry Pratten & Paul K Fink,  
 1114<sup>th</sup> QM CO (AVN)  
 Mrs. Shirley L Bennett, in memory of Joseph A. Bennett (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Nellie C Bielecki, in memory of her husband John B Bielecki  
 Marvin S Boyce, in memory of the B-17 "The Little Princess"  
 Mrs. Dorothy J Brandt, in memory of her husband Waldo B Brandt  
 Mrs. Eva Cozzo, in Memory of her husband Lawrence Cozzo (427<sup>th</sup>)

Curtis O Borrke, in Memory of of William Hembree (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Arthur J Brown, in Memory of Vernon Stone  
 Mrs. Clara C Butler, in Memory of Harold E Butler (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Michael J Canale, in Memory of John Grsetic  
 Louis M Christen, in Memory of Paul Kindig (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Christ M Christoff, in Memory of all the ground personal that passed away  
 Clarence L Counsell (360<sup>th</sup>), in Memory of all the Vets who died on duty at Molesworth Air Base  
 Daryl W Davis, in Memory of Darwin Knudson & David Hertman  
 Eddie Deerfield, in Memory of "Dear departed of Cogswell crew"  
 Charles R Doback Sr., in Memory of Capt. Donald DeCamp & T/Sgt. William Hembree (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Barbara I Donnelly, in Memory of Lt. John J McGarry Jr. (427<sup>th</sup>)  
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 Mrs. Mary Foreman, in Memory of David B Foreman (444<sup>th</sup>)  
 Fabian S Folmer, in Memory of John R Kosilla (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Carl A Fredrickson, in Memory of Harry G Stube (KIA)(flight engineer on "Jigger Rooche II")  
 Mrs. Kay Garriott, in Memory of John Arnold Garriott (359<sup>th</sup>) (ball turret gunner)  
 Janet Minick German, in Memory of Melvin Richard Minick  
 Helen M "Audrey" Gibson, in Memory of Frederick H Mason (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Helen M Gilkes, in Memory of M/Sgt. Barry B Bilkes (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 James K Good, in Memory to those that have gone before  
 Ambrose G Grant, in Memory of Bob Harneson  
 Richard D Green, in Memory of Jane S Green  
 Nino Guiciardi, in Memory of Alvin Bader  
 Maurice G Hackler, in Memory of Donald R Christ (T/Sgt. Radio)  
 Mrs. Gloria D Hendry, in Memory of Capt. John W Hendry Jr. (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Leon H Hoegh, in Memory of Bille K Davis (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Betty Holmberg, in Memory of John F Holmberg (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Milton Jansky, in Memory of his wife Betty Jansky  
 Sue Lehmann, in Memory of Al Lehmann (427<sup>th</sup>)

## NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES

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 Nancy Schultz Byers, bimswife@aol.com  
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## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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 William (Bill) Sears, 10825 Mission Lakes Ave, Las Vegas, NV 89134-5269, (702) 304-1327  
 Thomas H Gano, 7950 Foothills Blvd., Apt. 84, Roseville, CA. 95747-6551  
 Thomas W Richardons, 2916 Hill Hedge Dr., Montgomery, AL. 36111-1107 (no change in phone number)  
 Mrs. Rose Jacobs, 18 Rolling Springs Ct., Carmel, IN. 46033-4451  
 Francis (Pete) Kowalk, P O Box 160, Nashville, NC 27856-0160, (252) 443-6634  
 Robert Lyda, 523 W Jewel St, Russell, KS 67665-2845  
 Chuck R Storer, 502 Dover Ct, Belton, MO 64012-2860 (816) 331-3373  
 Kenneth Nye, 301 E Boardwalk #272214, Ft Collins, CO 80527-2214, (970) 282-3626  
 Howard J Frohman, 1363 Via Cibola, Oceanside, CA 92057-2623  
 Mrs. Betty Dando, 400 Willow Valley Square, GA 108, Lancaster, PA 17602-4866



## THE EDITOR COMMENTS

The men who fought and won World War II are passing away at a far greater rate than they did in air combat or on the battlefield. In all of that war, 406,000 men died and more than 16-million came home to build the world in which we live.

Tom Brokaw, in his book *The Greatest Generation*, wrote, "They were mature beyond their years, tempered by what they had been through, disciplined by their military training and sacrifices....they stayed true to their values of personal responsibility, duty, honor and faith."

But, all generations come to an inevitable end. According to the Associated Press, over the years since the end of World War II, 10-million of us have passed away. And now we are dying at the rate of more than a thousand a day. And the law of averages guarantees that the daily mortality rate will double, triple and up as the years pass.

In the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (H) Association, we are blessed to have more than 1,200 of our veterans in our ranks. When a generation passes, its history passes with it—stories, memories of special moments, triumphs and tragedies, a sense of those qualities that made the generation unique. Unless these wonderfully personal stories are recorded, they are lost forever.

Since 1975, the *Hell's Angels Newsletter* has published for posterity the memories of many of our Molesworth veterans, ranging through the gamut of their wartime emotions. In recent years, their recollections have found a place in the Association's masterful history *Might In Flight*, on our widely heralded *Web Page* and in the impressive encyclopedic CD-ROM *The Molesworth Story*.

But, these are only drops of paint on a large canvas. The great majority of our 303<sup>rd</sup> veterans have yet to commit to writing the events that highlighted their lives.

This is not an appeal for stories for our newsletter. This is an urgent reminder to each of our veterans that the time is now to capture your past and preserve it for your children, their children and the family generations to follow.

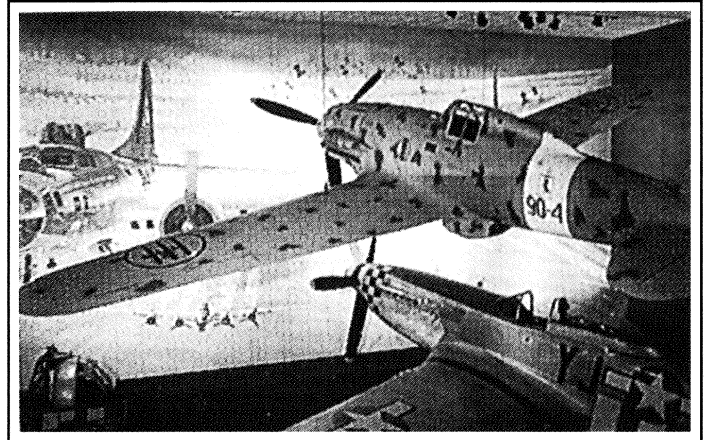
Among my wife's treasures is a handwritten letter by her great-grandfather about his travels west from Ohio by rail and covered wagon to lay claim to homestead land in what is now the state of Washington. I don't have so much as a paragraph to bring the personal eras of my ancestors to life.

Whether you write a page or a book, don't fail to present your family with the gift of your lifetime. Share the memories of your time in The Great Generation. Those memories will become family heirlooms to be read and treasured by future generations.

Eddie Deerfield



THE BWI AIRPORT MARRIOTT HOTEL, site of the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association's reunion in Baltimore, 5-9 September 2001.



THE WORLD WAR II AVIATION GALLERY in the National Air and Space Museum is on the reunion program tour schedule.

### 303RD COMRADE SEARCH RESULTS

Names In Search List — 4,907      Names traced — 1,085  
Found deceased — 1,004      Found living — 81  
Joined 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Association — 9

### CD/ROM "THE MOLESWORTH STORY"

Project allocation from 303<sup>rd</sup> Treasury — \$26,250  
Total expenses — \$25,398  
CD/ROM disks manufactured — 1,000  
CD/ROM disks sold — 767  
Income from sales — \$39,990  
Net gain to 303<sup>rd</sup> Treasury — \$14,592

(All statistics as of 1 March 2001 provided by Gary Moncur, Ed Miller, Dennis Smith and Jack Rencher)

303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.  
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