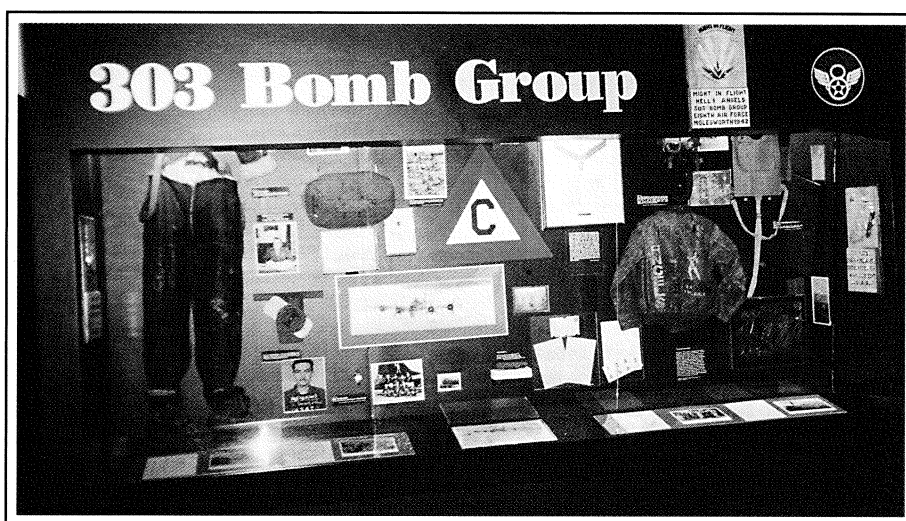


Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

August, 2001



A COLOR GUARD FROM THE BENEDICTINE MILITARY SCHOOL opened The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum's fifth anniversary festivities. One of the most impressive showcase exhibits in the museum displays 303rd Bomb Group artifacts, highlighted by Forrest "Woody" Vosler's Medal of Honor.

The House That Lew Lyle Built 8th AF HERITAGE MUSEUM CELEBRATES FIFTH YEAR

(THE FOLLOWING STORY WAS COMPILED FROM REPORTS BY 8TH AF HERITAGE MUSEUM PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR DEBRA KUJAWA AND TRUSTEE CURTIS TARR)

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, founded by the 303rd Bomb Group's Maj. Gen. Lewis E. Lyle as the culmination of a cherished dream, celebrated its fifth year of existence on May 12. The museum honors the courage, character and patriotism embodied by the men and women of the Eighth Air Force from World War II to the present. It celebrates these values for future generations, and is dedicated to character education.

Prior commitments prevented General Lyle, who flew most of his combat missions with the 303rd before moving on to take command of the 379th Bomb Group, from attending the event.

It was a memorable fifth

anniversary celebration, with the crowd estimated at 1,000. Beginning with the presentation of colors by an honor guard from Benedictine Military School, the entire day bubbled with activities.

On the parking lot, guests strolled among humvees, tanks, communications equipment, mannequins in jungle gear and static displays set up by area military units while ROTC drill teams performed nearby.

In the Rotunda, the US Marine Corps Band presented a patriotic concert which stirred the hearts of the audience.

Overhead, a C130 transport plane roared its approval in a fly by.

The individual stars of

the show, however, were Bob Morgan, pilot of *Memphis Belle*, the first B-17 to return to the US after completing 25 combat missions, and his radio operator, Bob Hanson.

Their participation began when Morgan addressed a large audience in the Colonial Art Gallery about his experiences in World War II aboard *Memphis Belle*.

Following the lecture, Morgan and Hanson responded for more than an hour to questions from the audience. Morgan said he knew before his 25th mission that his B-17 had been chosen by the War Department for a documentary film. When he returned from his 25th, he asked the film's director what would have happened if *Memphis Belle* failed to come back. The director

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Did Chaplain Slawson man a gun in the air as well as minister on the ground? Story on page 3.

Deadly accuracy of mission to Norway to destroy Nazi factories in Heroya confirmed by residents. Page 5.

French resistance forces in 1943 hid 303rd bombardier for four months, then set up his evacuation by sea. Page 7.

Former 1681st C.O. takes us behind the scenes in report on Molesworth Ordnance operations. Page 9.

303rd Pictorial—Mission Story is told in memorable photos. See center spread.

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303RD BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor--Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXIV, No. 3 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 August, 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 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 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 Moleworth, 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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WAS 303RD BOMB GROUP CHAPLAIN MERRITT O. SLAWSON ABOARD *WINNING RUN* WHEN IT CRASH LANDED IN ENGLAND AFTER THE STUTTGART MISSION? His son, Jack, believes "Chappie" made a promise to pilot Jacob C. James to keep his unauthorized flight on the mission secret, and then kept that promise even after James passed away in 1974. The 427th Squadron B-17 came down on a small RAF fighter field after running out of gas on the return from Stuttgart, Germany, 6 September 1943. Pictured at the crash site, l-to-r, standing, pilot Jake James, navigator Howard Ness, engineer William Watts, bombardier Walter Witt and Life Magazine correspondent Frank Scherschel, an authorized passenger. Kneeling are tail gunner Jesse Tripp, ball turret gunner Angelo Longo, left waist gunner Albert Martel, radio operator A. J. Hamilton and right waist gunner Frank Misiak. Chaplain Slawson said that he was in the picture—out of sight behind the tail section.

Praise The Lord And Pass The Ammunition! A CHAPLAIN'S MISSION AT BASE (AND IN ENEMY SKIES?)

By Jack M. Slawson

My dad, Merritt O. Slawson, served as Protestant chaplain with the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth from April, 1943, to the end of World War II. Chappie, as he was popularly known, has passed on. A few years ago, while he was still able to travel, he visited my home, took me aside, and gave me a detailed first-person account of the crash of the B-17 *Winning Run* in England after the mission to Stuttgart, Germany on September 6, 1943. He told what it was like coming in over the channel with an engine out, dumping excess weight overboard, trying to maintain altitude, barely clearing the coastline, running out of fuel and crashing at an RAF fighter base. This conversation was unembellished and meant to tell me something.

When he had finished, I asked, "Were you on *Winning Run* on that mission?"

"What do you think?"

"I think you were. Why won't you tell me?"

"I made a promise."

If, indeed, my father was on the Stuttgart mission, the promise made was that he would never tell that Jake James, the pilot, had taken him along. There would have been official repercussions. Dad would have to have stayed out of sight after evacuating the B-17, and

then alluded that he arrived at the RAF fighter base on a flight from Molesworth sent to pick up the James crew.

Chappie and Jake James both remained in the service after the war. Jake died in 1974.

Chappie hinted on occasions over the years to having flown "a few" missions. He explained that he was counseling a young airman one day and said to him, "I know what you're going through." The combat crew member replied, "No, sir.

You don't."

My father then realized that he couldn't adequately minister to the needs of the men at Molesworth if he never experienced what it was like to engage in aerial combat.

I was never able to get specifics from Chappie on these clandestine flights. Several times, he pointed out to me one of the guns in the side of the B-17's nose compartment, saying "That was my gun." He never claimed to having hit anything, but said with obvious pride, "Enemy fighter pilots knew that the gun was manned and working."

When my mother passed away last year, I inherited a small clear plastic heart suspended from a fine gold chain. She had worn it frequently, and it was known to the family as "The Heart of *Winning Run*." My father had fashioned it out of a fragment of Plexiglas from the nose cone of *Winning Run*.

Chaplain Slawson first wanted to be a doctor but the

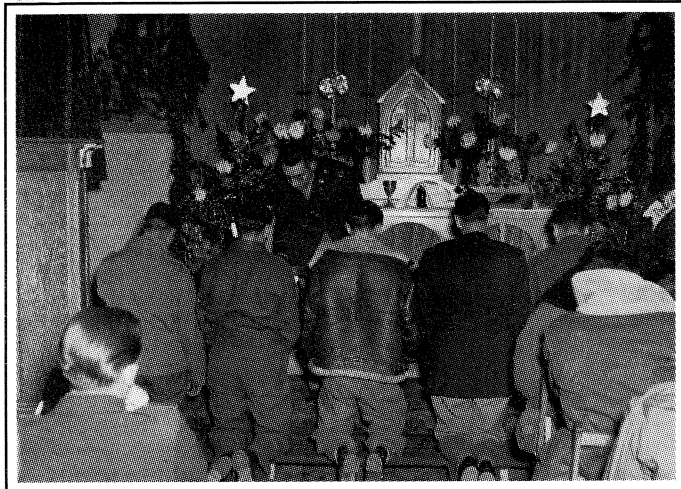
economics of the depression did not allow that to happen. He did manage to work his way through college and during the latter part of his studies "got the call" to become a preacher and continued his education into the ministry.

His first parish was a tiny church in the town of Canal Point, Florida. This was not a rich parish and he was often paid in kind (produce, chickens, etc.).

When the U.S. entered WWII he began trying to get into the service, and, after a time, the Methodist Commission on Chaplains gave its blessing to his request. He was commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant on June 27, 1942 and assigned as Chaplain for the 322nd Bomb Group, a B-26 outfit then training at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.

He moved with the Group to England in late 1942, crossing the Atlantic on the *Queen Mary*. He was with the 322nd until April of 1943 when orders came

(Continued on page 4)



CHAPLAIN MERRITT O. SLAWSON conducts Christmas services at Molesworth on 25 December 1944. In an average month, he led 14 religious services among a host of other ministerial duties.

(CHAPPIE from page 3)

transferring him to the 303rd Bomb Group. He remained at Molesworth for the duration of the war.

His stories after the war didn't dwell on tragedy, more often ringing with humor about life in military service, common themes among veterans. He would always express extreme disgust at the very mention of Spam, Brussels sprouts or mutton. Apparently these were the staples of life for a long time after he reached England. Mud was also frequently mentioned with a pronounced lack of enthusiasm.

Chappie was a down-to-earth type, a "people person." His type of ministry was not pushy or stuffy. He had a sense of humor and was one helluva a preacher. His time at Molesworth was the defining period in his life.

His monthly activity reports give a statistical accounting of various actions. The August 1943 report, a typical example, notes 14 religious services conducted. Other activities, noted as "personal contacts," include 20 hospital visits, four visits to control tower personnel, four hanger visits, six barracks and day room visitations, four visits to the YMCA hut, six visits to guard posts, 10 visits in officers club lounge, eight orderly room visits, five welfare cases, 16 visits on line and 11 attendance's at meetings of combat crews (briefings and interrogations).

In the folder with the

monthly activity reports is a copy of a letter dated 6 November 1943, to the Office of the Chaplain, Eighth Air Force, titled REPORT OF ACTIVITIES AT BRIEFING OF COMBAT CREWS. This letter outlines how he operated. He was available before and after the briefings, went to early breakfast with the crews and from there to the briefing room. He was available for personal prayer or prayer with a crew at the plane. He accompanied the ambulances to the end of the runway when the planes returned and if there were wounded, he went with them to the hospital. If there were no wounded, he went to the interrogation and mixed with the men.

One of the things he did was to scratch the names of crewmen on British pennies and then give the coins to the named individuals before missions with the admonition "bring it back."

After the war he had a box filled with little envelopes, each containing a penny and annotated with the name of an airman and other brief data. Over the years he presented many of the pennies to the original crew members and gave others to individuals who would appreciate their significance.

I was the recipient of one of the pennies. Chappie gave it to me stating that it was the coin with the highest mission count in the box. This particular penny went back to war in 1967/68. The penny's luck held. I still have it and never travel without it!

It was not widely known



CHAPPIE ACCOMPANIED THE AMBULANCES when the 303rd's planes returned, and if men were wounded he went with them to the hospital. He was always available for personal or crew prayer.

that Chappie was a pilot in his own right. In the archives I have accumulated is his pilot's log book. The first entries are dated in August 1944 and show dual time as a student in Army Cub L1 flights originating from Molesworth.

I suspect that he flew on many a B-17 practice flight and know that he had certain special buddies who catered to his love of flying.

He especially talked about Jacob C. (Jake) James. Chappie and Jake did some B-17 "driving" together and one incident was recited frequently over the years. They were setting a B-17 up for landing and the closer they got to touchdown the more Chappie hinted to Jake to let him take over and land the bird. Jake sat there with his arms folded shaking his head "no" to each admonition. Finally, he relented, and Chappie got the bird down.

Afterwards, Jake told the emotionally exhausted chaplain, "You had it made and I wouldn't have let you get in trouble".

Another oft told tale was about a B-17 practice flight with Chappie logging time at the controls. It appears that the copilot was down in the nose with the navigator and bombardier. Then the pilot climbed down with them, making it a four-some. The others exclaimed "Who the hell is flying this plane?" The pilot replied, "The chaplain."

Chappie owned several aircraft after the war and I often flew with him. He had

single engine land and sea-plane ratings as well as glider at one time. His friends at Molesworth taught him good fundamentals!

Among the archives is another folder labeled E.T.O. GRAVE REGISTRATIONS & FUNERALS CONDUCTED. It is almost ½ inch thick and provides a somber reminder of the hazards of aerial combat. I know that Chappie was affected by having conducted so many funerals.

He was transferred back to England in April 1951. He took the family to Molesworth once to show us where he had been stationed during the war. I was 11 or so at the time. There was a British caretaker who appeared at the gate and, after hearing that Chappie had been there during the war, asked if he wanted to come on the base and drive around. Chappie declined, with thanks. I wondered about that at the time. Now I think I understand. The emotions he would have felt had he gone back to the chapel would have been too much.

The depth of his emotions about the Molesworth period is illustrated by a ritual that he followed throughout the remainder of his military career and carried over into his ministry following retirement. Every Christmas eve, he held a special communion service in memory of the men who did not come back from missions. For this service he used the same small portable communion set that he had used at Molesworth to give what turned out to be the last communion to so many men.

2,000-Mile Mission to Heroya B-17's DESTROY GERMANY'S NEW FACTORIES IN NORWAY

View From the Ground Told by Townspeople

In the summer of 1943, construction of aluminum and magnesium manufacturing factories vital to Germany's war effort had been completed in Heroya in Nazi-occupied Norway. A dedication ceremony was set for July 24th. The 8th Air Force had its own "dedication" plan.

On that day, B-17 bomb groups left their bases in mid-morning on a 2,000 mile round trip to Heroya, flying at 2,500 feet to conserve fuel. They climbed to 15,000 feet to drop their 500-lb bombs on the target and were back at base by 1800, an eight-hour flight. It was one of the most successful missions of World War II. Destruction was so complete that the factories never were able to begin production of the metals which were critical to the German war machine. The Nazi authorities decided to abandon the project entirely.

The 303rd's Major Lewis E. Lyle, leading the Group in *Satan's Workshop*, said at the debriefing, "There was a pillar of smoke up to about 6,000 feet before we got there. The ships that went in ahead of us really bombed hell out of it. The target was so smoky that we had to make two passes at it in order to try to see it. Our bombs landed right smack on it. It was the best mission I have been on, heavy bombardment at its best."

Anti-aircraft fire was heavy and accurate, but not a single German fighter came up to challenge the bombers. All 20 B-17's in the 303rd formation returned to base without casualties.

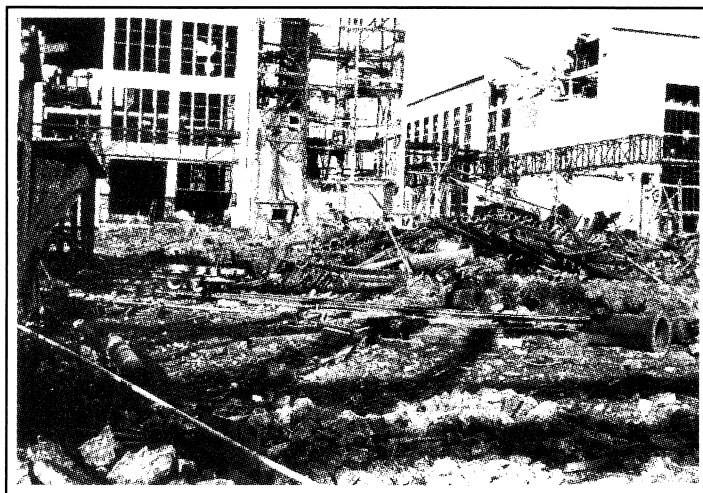
In Heroya today, on the site of the one-time German factories, Norway can boast with pride in having constructed Hydro Agri Porsgrunn, one of Europe's largest fertilizer plants and a major contributor to world food production.

In 1993, on the 50th anniversary of the raid, a Norwegian radio station broadcast eye-witness accounts of the bombing. Charles S. Schmeltzer, who flew the mission as waist gunner on Dave Rogan's 358th Squadron crew, had visited Norway two years earlier and presented official 8th Air Force accounts of the raid to museums in Heroya. He was subsequently invited to participate in the broadcast, along with four local inhabitants on the ground in Heroya and in the neighboring town of Porsgrunn when the air raid sirens sounded.

Schmeltzer was later given a copy of the broadcast script by Tom Andersen who conducted the radio interviews. Andersen is now Hydro's public relations director. Following are excerpts from the original program, translated from Norwegian to English.

ANDERSEN—Joining me in the studio today are Finn Rafn, president of Hydro Porsgrunn; Ragnar Lassen, a member of the underground during the German occupation; Rolf Jacobsen, then a civilian air raid warden, and Ingaborg Nenseth, who was employed in a shop in the town. We also have an audio tape from Charles Schmeltzer, who was a member of one of the American bomber crews. First, Finn Rafn, an engineer at Heroya in 1943, will tell us why the Germans wanted to build their factories here.

RAFN—There is a simple explanation of why this particular location was chosen to construct these facilities. The required infrastructure was in place. We had electricity, gas, water, roads, railroads and ports and large land areas on which to build. It is believed that the Germans had plans for these types



THE 8th AIR FORCE ATTACK ON HEROYA wiped out Germany's new aluminum and magnesium factories in Nazi-occupied Norway. The enemy abandoned the site and never rebuilt the factories.

of factories long before the war broke out as there was a shortage of magnesium and aluminum in Germany. So, the decision to build at Heroya was not a difficult one to make. We were told by the Germans that this is where the factories will be built and that we must furnish them with everything they might want to use in building them.

ANDERSEN—The Norwegian authorities in London were informed through the underground movement in Norway about what was happening at Heroya. The underground was instructed to get the details and pass them on to London. This required getting people into the factories to get the construction plans and other papers needed by the Allies. Ragnar Lassen, with the code name "Per Sveit," was a part of the MILOG organization responsible for sending the information to the Norwegian government in exile in London.

LASSEN—There was an engineer who was our contact in the plant and he was the one who got the plans and papers. My brother, Christian, helped with the smuggling of the material from the factory. We accomplished this in about a week or so. When we got all of the papers from my brother and the answers to the questions London was asking, we had maps made of the factories and buildings. All of this information was turned over to the Secret Service Headquarters we had at Drammen in the southern part of Norway. From there, it was sent to London.

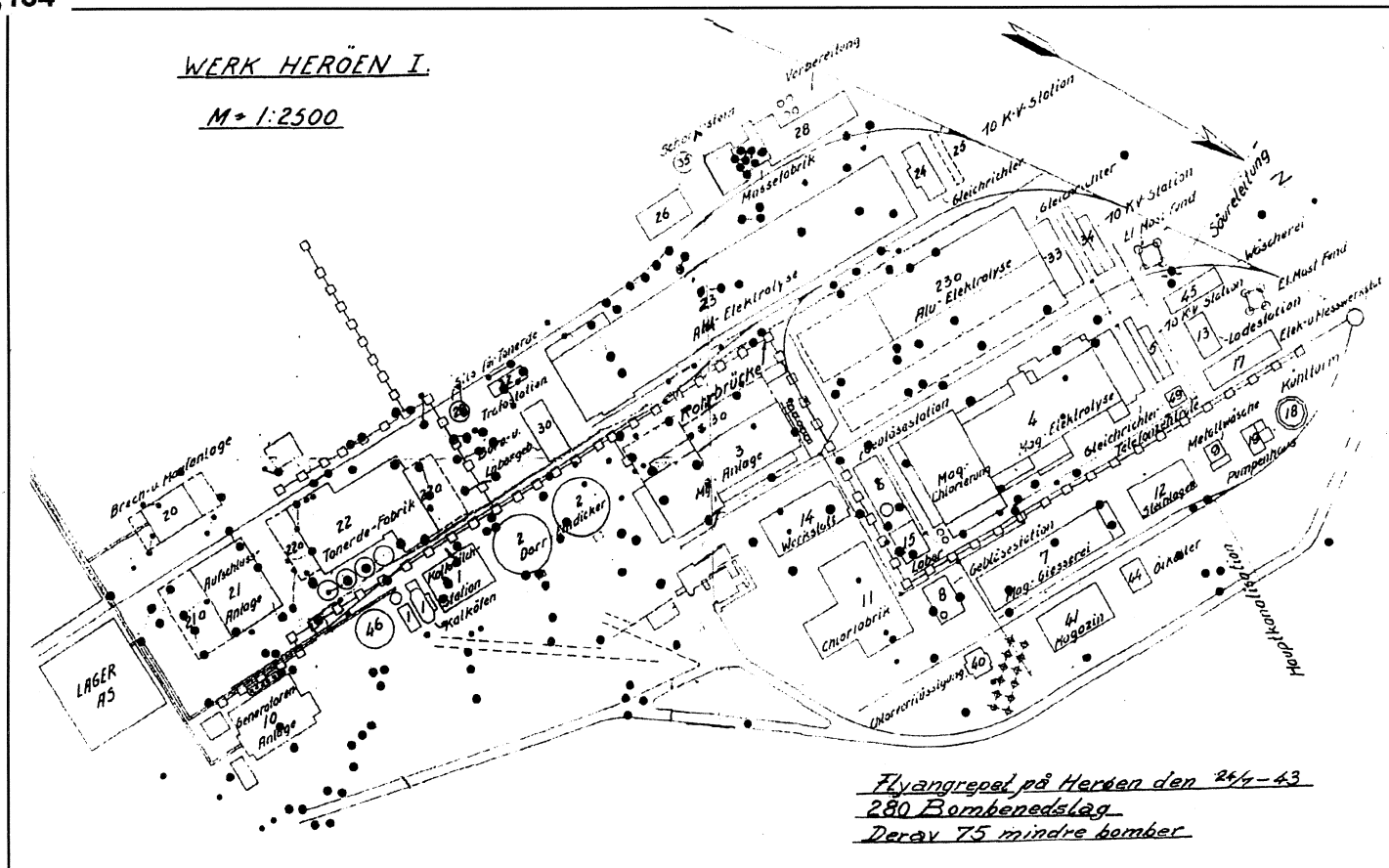
ANDERSEN—Did you ever get any feedback that your information had reached London? Did you have advance knowledge of the bombing raid?

LASSEN—We never got feedback, because underground headquarters wanted to keep us as secret as possible. Any feedback would just have given the Germans more opportunity to track us down. We did not know there would be a bombing on that day, but, based on all of the work we had done, we assumed something would happen.

ANDERSEN—Rolf Jacobsen was in charge of air raid security.

JACOBSEN—Thirty minutes prior to the attack, the alarm in Porsgrunn went off. Many people were able to leave the fac-

(Continued on Page 6)



(HEROYA, from Page 5)

Afterwards, it was so quiet. It was more than quiet. During the bombing there was a little break. I ran from the shelter over to my house two blocks away to see if my mother was all right. I found her standing outside behind our neighbor's house. I took her and we ran to the other side of the market place and found a narrow entrance into another basement shelter. Six people were already there, and we tried to comfort each other. After the bombing ended, people started to walk to their homes again. My mother and I decided that we did not dare to spend

We knew that the attack was on the aluminum factory which was the main target. When we got out, we could see the mess that the bombers had made of the whole factory of Hydro at Heroya. It was not more than two weeks after the attack that we got orders from the Germans that we should take salvageable parts from the factories and send them to Germany. It appeared obvious that they wanted to build the factory in Germany rather than using the Norwegian area again and they wanted everything that was not damaged, like motors or pumps or anything. They used a lot of people to disassemble the parts and pack them for shipment. It was clear that the Germans considered their aluminum and magnesium manufacturing project super important.

HELL'S ANGELS WAS THE B-17 OF CHOICE for bombardier Walt Hargrove's missions with the 358th Squadron's Bill Monahan and Ripley Joy crews. In an unusual air and ground personnel photo, 22 men whose lives were directly intertwined with the historic aircraft, posed on and next to the plane in July, 1943.

The combat crew is on top of the B-17. From left to right are tail gunner David Miller, waist gunner James Comer, radio operator Frank Kimotek, ball turret gunner Alfred Bunicky, waist gunner Walter Gasser, engineer M. D. Ignaczewski, pilot James Monahan, pilot Ripley Joy, navigator William Maher and bombardier Walter Hargrove.

The ground crew on the scaffolding are, front row—John Johnson, Ernest Touhey and Kasmer Weygrayn. Middle row—Edward West, John Kosilla and Wilson Fairfield. At the top is crew chief Fabian Folmer.

There are no identifications for the four armorers sitting on the bomb. The officer in the jeep is Robert Brown of Ordnance.



Days of Wine and Hope

FRENCH UNDERGROUND SAVES 303RD BOMBARDIER IN FOUR-MONTH ODYSSEY

By Walter Hargrove

Our crew loved *Hell's Angels*. We flew in her for most of my first 12 missions. Sometimes Jim Monahan was the pilot, sometimes Ripley Joy. I was bombardier, a Second Lieutenant. *Hell's Angels* was assigned to another crew on our 13th mission, and that's when all hell broke loose.

It was August 31, 1943, and the target was the Romilly-sur-Seine air depot near Paris in France. We were aboard a B-17 named *Auger Head*. Heavy clouds obscured the target, so the Amiens/Glisy Airdrome near the coast was selected as a secondary objective.

Auger Head was hit by heavy flak during our approach. The number 4 engine was damaged and we were unable to feather it. We dropped our bombs, fell out of formation and were attacked by five ME109's and FW190's with yellow-painted engine cowlings. We downed two of them, but lost two engines and a fire broke out in the radio room. Bill Monahan ordered us to bail out.

I raised the secret Norden bomb sight to throw it from the plane. Bill Maher, our navigator, was chewing up the classified code sheet. The tail gunner, David Miller, had been hit in both legs by a 20mm shell. Frank Kimotek, our radio operator, with help from waist gunners Olson and Comer, got Miller to the escape door, placed his hand on the parachute ring and pushed him out. His chute opened, but he was badly wounded and didn't survive.

I bailed out into a free-fall, and yanked at the small chest pack. The parachute didn't open. I had been pulling on the carrying handle! I grabbed the rip cord ring. Landing in a tree, I undid the harness, took off the Mae West and sheepskin boots, and climbed down. I paused to pray for the Lord's help in whatever lay ahead. There was a large thicket of vines so I crawled in as far as I could. Upon hearing trucks, I decided to vacate the briar patch that night, regretting that my escape kit with maps, money, candy and water purification tablets had been left in the airplane. It was a cool night, and I was wearing flight coveralls, a leather A2 jacket, cap, and light dress shoes.

For days I raided gardens for potatoes, carrots and apples. I slept in haystacks or in the woods during the days and traveled at night, crossing one highway that had guards near a

railroad bridge. On the fifth day I was cold, tired and hurting from shrapnel wounds. Thinking about surrendering, I climbed up into a hayloft on the outskirts of a village. A young fellow came out of the house, and began forking hay down to the horses. On seeing me, he kept working, and asked, "English?" I said "No, American." He ran into the house and brought his father back. The older man left and shortly returned with a young lady carrying a French/English dictionary. We communicated by pointing to phrases.

My hosts took me into the house and gave me food and wine. They found a shirt, jacket, trousers and a pair of shoes. Two days later the young lady returned and gave me half of a note. She said, "I will not see you again. The people who will come for you will have the other half of the note." I later learned that they were verifying that a B-17 did go down where I said. Germans sometimes posed as American aviators to trap members of the Resistance.

About 2 PM, two men arrived in a car. They had the other half of the note. I got in the rear seat. We drove into a town and entered a home where a lady, apparently the driver's wife, and two teenage girls were preparing a supper of steak, oven-fried potatoes, bread, butter and wine.

Soon there was a knock, and two other men entered. One motioned for me to follow him into a back bedroom. He introduced himself and claimed to have been a correspondent with the Chicago Tribune in Paris. He asked, "Do you know whose house you are in?" He told me that my host was a German General who was head of the Gestapo for that area! He hated the Nazis and was doing whatever he could to defeat them. Then I was escorted to a shop run by a woman and her mother in the town of Auxi-le-Château. While there, French agents took me to a photographer who made an ID card, travel permit and work permit. I was identified as being Marcel Croisille, Flemish and mute.

About Sept. 12th, an English airman and I were taken to Amiens to catch a train for Paris. We were taken to a bombed out office building. The upper floor contained old mattresses and a few blankets. A Frenchman named Raoul asked me if I knew Frank Kimotek, our radio operator. "Do you want to go see him?" We caught a subway train and then walked to an apartment

(Continued on page 8)

(HARGROVE, from page 7)

building. Frank said that within hours of landing in France, he was placed in the custody of a young lady who was to play the part of his wife. They made it to Paris without trouble.

Raoul and I took a train to meet a contact at the Swiss border. There was too much German activity on the border, so we returned to a house near Paris. Supper was served with anisette, a licorice tasting alcoholic beverage.

After overnighing in a church bell tower, we rode a train to Quimper on the west coast of France, where we stopped with a family whose father had been drafted and sent to Germany. The next day, a B-17 tail gunner and I bicycled to a destination on Quimper Bay where islands are numerous. We rowed to an island with a petite lady who was later identified as a Countess. Her husband, a retired French Admiral, was sheltering a group of men and women. One fellow was waiting to get to Africa to join General DeGaulle, and others were avoiding conscription by Germans.

From Quimper, I was taken by automobile to an apartment in Brest. Several Frenchmen and an English air crew were in hiding with a French family. The father was a retired colonel of the French Colonial Forces. The younger daughter, Josephine, had been taught to handle weapons and explosives, and spoke freely of her escapades in English. Returning late one night, the Colonel and Jo gave me a rucksack full of classified German papers that diagrammed submarine pens and showed the location of Nazi regiments and tanks in Brest.

On a freezing winter's night, three other evaders and I were taken to the Bay of Biscay where we would try to escape from occupied France. With one guide, we waded through howling winds out to a small island. Two of us were given flashlights and sent to opposite ends of the island. We faced the open ocean and signaled every few minutes. Out of the darkness came three row boats with British officers in the stern seats calling directions. We headed out to sea seeking a British warship.

As we cleared the lee of the island, the wind and waves hit us full force. Only one boat made it to the warship. Ours returned to the island with four British sailors and four cold airmen. We huddled, shivering in a small cave, while the storm kept up until the next night. We had pushed the two boats out to sea and had no way to leave.

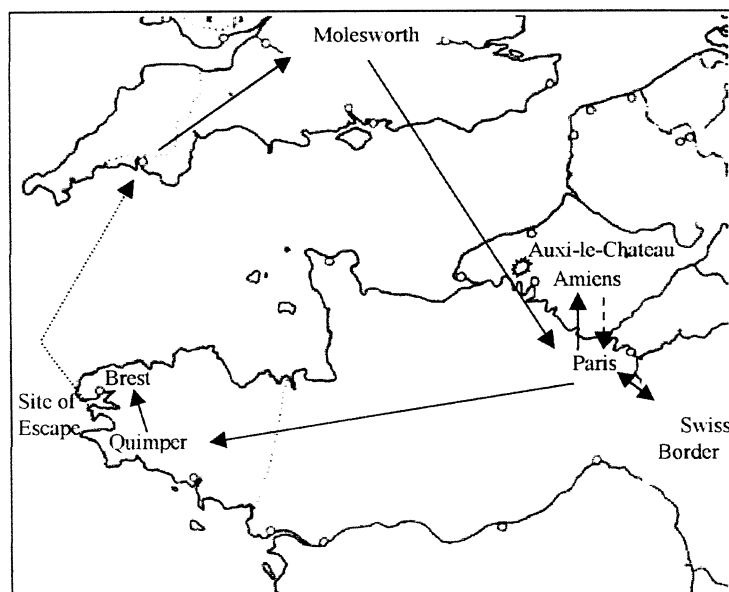
The second day was sunny, and a lone boatman appeared. He took us one at a time to shore where we were given baskets of kelp to carry. Women guided us past mine fields marked "Achtung Danger de Mort," past barbed wire and pill box emplacements. Eventually we got on a train to return to Brest. As we exited the train at midnight, we showed our ID's and were given curfew passes stamped with the German double eagle. We returned to the Colonel's place, where we slept on the floor.

The next day, we learned that the Gestapo were looking for Josephine. A British navigator, myself, and Jo were moved to an apartment where a doctor lived with his wife and two daughters. All but the doctor spoke English. On Christmas Eve, 1943, the ladies requested our shoes. We thought they wanted to keep us from wandering outside. On Christmas morning our shoes were returned with a bottle of Cognac in one and gifts in the other—leather cuff links and post cards of Brest. We had a hot dinner, lots of wine, cider, cognac and champagne.

About 3 PM we were to listen to the British Broadcasting Co., and the message was "Get your fannies out to the coast, we are coming for you". Only emergency vehicles were allowed on the road on a holiday. The doctor's Red Cross nurse agreed to steal an ambulance from the hospital. After dark, they drove us to the Bay of Biscay. Just before midnight, we waded to an island past obstructions meant to rip the bottom out of landing craft.

We were met by undercover agents in dark uniforms and carrying radios. A whale boat with 18 British commandos soon beached on the island. We unloaded weapons, ammunition and explosives for the Resistance. Then we rowed out into the Bay to a 110-foot gun boat. I clambered on board, and was assigned a bunk. It was a fine feeling to hear the engines start and to head off the coast. When the ship stopped abruptly, I came straight up out of my bunk. A British sailor said, "Take it easy, Yank. We just fouled the plugs." In a few minutes, we were under way again.

About noon the next day, December 26, almost four months after *Auger Head* went down, we pulled into a port on the



ESCAPE ROUTE FOR WALTER HARGROVE — After bailing out near Amiens, Hargrove was moved by the French underground to Auxi-le-Chateau for his forged ID papers, to Paris, to the Swiss border in a failed attempt at freedom, back to Paris, to Quimper by train, to an apartment in Brest, and then to the coast of the Bay of Biscayne to escape in a whaling boat manned by 18 British commandos.

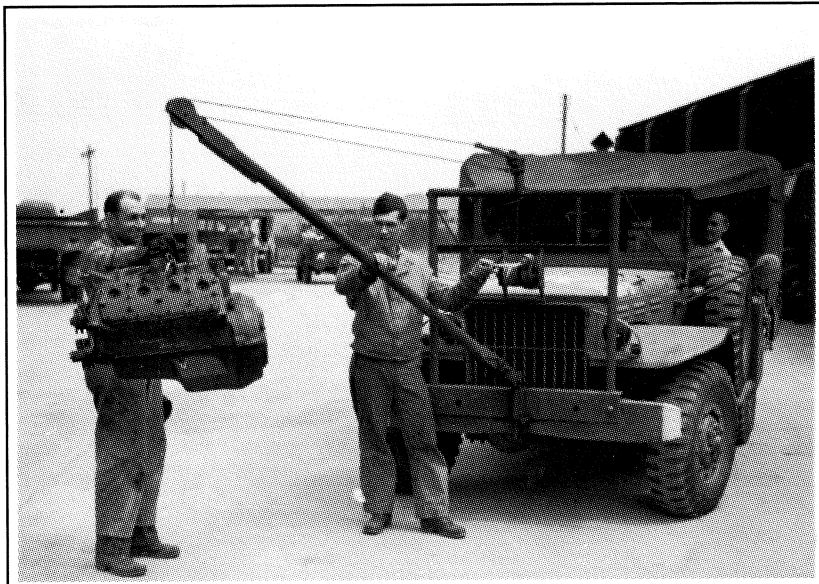
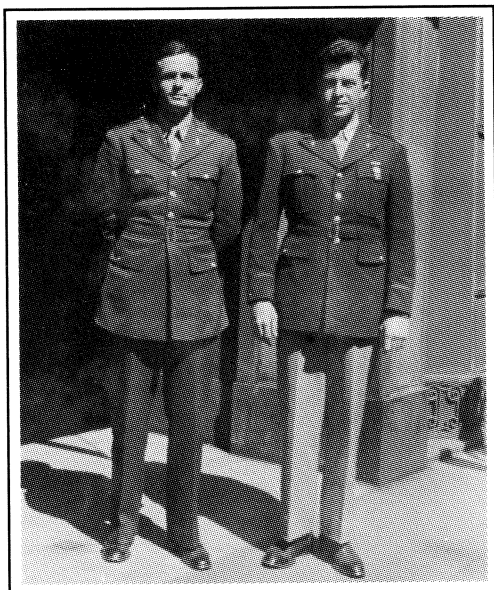


A FORGED IDENTIFICATION CARD with the name "Marcel Croisille" was prepared for Walter Hargrove by the French underground in the Pas De Calais area in September 1943, along with a forged travel authorization and work permit.

south coast of England. We were given American GI uniforms and put on a train for London where we were met by an American intelligence officer, Major White. We were confined to quarters for a short time. Pete Clark from our 303rd Bomb Group came to London to verify my identity. We described what we had seen on the beaches, and I handed over the rucksack of documents that Jo had given me when I promised her parents to help get her out of France. That information may have been useful six months later when the Allied forces launched the D-Day invasion.

After rejoining the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth, I found that I had been credited with shooting down a FW190 and was presented with a second oak leaf cluster for my Air Medal and a Purple Heart.

My wife, Catherine, had joined the WAC's when she heard that I was missing in action. She was a Private at a post in Denver. She was given a furlough, and we met during my 20-day leave in Billings, Montana. I can't say for sure, but I think my first words were "See here, Private Hargrove, I love you!"



ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE AND VERSATILE ORGANIZATIONS AT MOLESWORTH DURING WORLD WAR II WAS THE 1681st ORDNANCE COMPANY. It carried the dual responsibilities of supplying bombs and ammunition to the four squadrons while also maintaining all vehicles on the base. Capt. Humphrey P. O'Leary, on the right in the top left photo, was the company's commanding officer from July 1943 to January 1944. He is seen with Lt. Joseph Rose, his Armament Officer. An engine repair job is underway in the other photo.

1681st ORDNANCE DELIVERED 50-MILLION POUNDS OF BOMBS TO THE 303RD'S B-17'S

By Humphrey P. O'Leary

The 1681st Ordnance Company was under my command from July 1943 to January 1944, until I was transferred to the Service Command of the Ninth Air Force. Our mission at Molesworth was to provide ordnance supply and maintenance services to the 303rd Bomb Group, its squadrons and other assigned units.

Before each combat mission, we transported to our B-17's the bombs designated by headquarters for the day's target. We distributed a wide range of weapons from pistols and carbines to aircraft machine guns and their ammunition. We were also responsible for issuing and maintaining base vehicles from bicycles to jeeps to 2-1/2 ton trucks to 6-ton prime movers.

The 1681st Ordnance Company's accomplishments during its time in England from October 1942 to April 1945 were impressive. Records show that 25,000 tons of bombs and appropriate fuzes were delivered to the squadrons for redistribution over Germany. Five million rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were provided to the combat crews.

All this activity, often on short notice, required a high degree of respect for the sensitivity and awesome power of the TNT or amatol aircraft bombs. A prime example of the devastating effect of mishandling bombs occurred at a Second Division airfield on 15 July 1944. The entire bomb dump, consisting of 300 tons, was accidentally detonated in a moment of carelessness and poor judgment. Eighteen men were killed and ten B-24's were demolished.

The 303rd's 80-man Ordnance Company worked hand-in-glove with the ordnance personnel of

the four squadrons. Bomb handling and automotive repair were the two main activities for the bulk of the personnel.

In the automotive section, the 2,000 vehicles on the base were repaired and countless bicycles mended. The men in the company's 10-bay shop served beyond the call of duty in using their skill with tools to also satisfy the personal requests of combat crew members and others. They even made picture frames sized to meet special orders!

After staging for overseas movement at Fort Myers, Florida in mid-1942, the 751st Ordnance Company made the Atlantic crossing in October in convoy on a Dutch ship. At Molesworth in January 1943, the company was redesignated as the 1062nd. Finally, in July 1943, the 1062nd was merged with the 1681st Quartermaster Company to form the 1681st Ordnance Company.

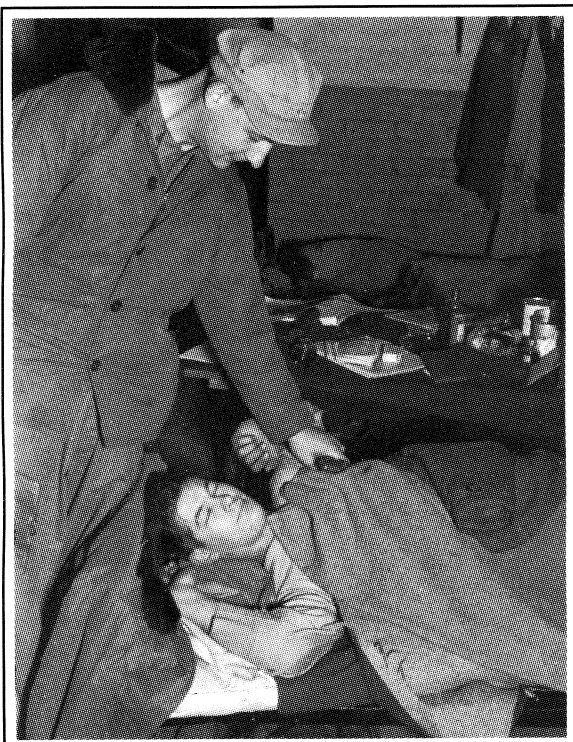
During the time I commanded the company, I was ably assisted by Armament Officer Joseph Rose, Administrative Officer Richard Myers, Automotive Officer Robert Brown and Ammunition Officer Cyrus Galley. In Ordnance at the squadron level were John Kass (358th), Archie McGuire (359th), Dean Piper (360th) and Delbert Pugh (427th).

In the waning days of World War II in Europe, the concept of ground support was drastically changed in the Eighth Air Force. On 1 April 1945, companies such as Ordnance, Signal, Quartermaster and Chemical at Molesworth were incorporated into an Air Service Group, and the 1681st Ordnance Company was inactivated. The war ended before the new organizational concept could be put to the test.

303rd Pictorial

MISSION STORY

ON 9 DECEMBER 1944, THE 303RD BOMB GROUP DISPATCHED 42 B-17 COMBAT CREWS AS PART OF AN ARMADA OF 413 BOMBERS TO ATTACK AN AIRFIELD AT STUTTGART, GERMANY. THE AIRFIELD WAS BEING USED BY THE NAZI'S TO LAUNCH LUFTWAFFE STRIKES AGAINST THE US 7TH ARMY ADVANCING IN FRANCE. TWO 303RD CREWMEN WERE WOUNDED AND 15 B-17'S DAMAGED. ALL AIRCRAFT RETURNED SAFELY TO MOLESWORTH. THE FOLLOWING STORY IN PICTURES SHOWS THE WAY IT WAS.



THE CHARGE OF QUARTERS, ARGUABLY THE MOST HATED MAN AT MOLESWORTH IN THE PRE-DAWN HOURS, WAKES A COMBAT CREW AT 0400 TO PREPARE FOR A MISSION.



STILL RUBBING THE SLEEP FROM THEIR EYES, THE COMBAT CREWS GATHER FOR A BRIEFING. TARGET STUTTGART, GERMANY. PRIMARY, A LUFTWAFFE AIRBASE. SECONDARY, A RAIL HUB. TAKE-OFF 0630, RETURN 1630—A 10-HOUR ROUND TRIP. THE MEN KNOW THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO BATTLE ENEMY FIGHTER PLANES AND FACE FLAK FROM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS.

NO POWDERED EGGS ON MISSION MORNINGS! COMBAT CREWS PREPARING FOR BATTLE HAD A HOT BREAKFAST FEATURING FARM FRESH EGGS. NO DOUBT SOME LOOKED ON THE TREAT WITH MIXED EMOTIONS, LIKE A CONDEMNED MAN MIGHT VIEW A "LAST MEAL."





PREPARING FOR BATTLE —

COMBAT CREW MEMBERS MADE STOPS IN SUPPLY ROOMS TO DRAW CHEST OR BACK PACK PARACHUTES, "MAE WEST" LIFE PRESERVERS, STEEL HELMETS AND ARMOR-PLATED FLAK SUITS.

HOW TO USE THE FLAK SUITS WAS A MATTER OF PERSONAL PREFERENCE. SOME WORE THE SUITS, SOME STOOD ON THEM, SOME SAT ON THEM. IT ALL DEPENDED ON WHERE YOU EXPECTED ENEMY GUN FIRE TO COME FROM AND WHAT BODY PARTS YOU VALUED THE MOST.

A CREW MEMBER CHECKS HIS WEAPONS IN THE NOSE TURRET OF A B-17G.

THE BOMBER, BRISTLING WITH 13 CALIBER-50 MACHINE GUNS FROM NOSE TO TAIL, WAS APTLY NAMED A "FLYING FORTRESS." EACH AIRMAN WHO MANNED A WEAPON WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING IT "COMBAT READY" AND HAVING AMMUNITION ABOARD.

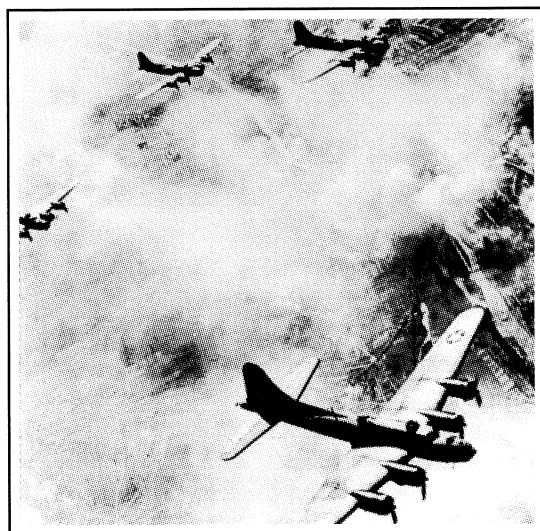
THE GUNS WERE TEST FIRED IN THE AIR, USUALLY OVER THE ENGLISH CHANNEL OR NORTH SEA, ENROUTE TO THE TARGET.



BOMBS AWAY

MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED

LET'S GO HOME



MOLESWORTH IN SIGHT.
AH, THE SHEER JOY OF BEING!

(With thanks to Charles Schulz and MetLife)

Now It Can Be Told (From an article by Ian Walker, with permission of The Flying Fortress News Letter)

HOW AMERICAN WAR DEAD CAME HOME DESPITE BRITISH CONCERNS

One of the most closely guarded secrets of the 1940's was the shipment of 170,000 American war dead from overseas to the United States for burial. As part of this massive repatriation, almost 6,000 of the bodies were returned from England at the request of spouses or relatives. The British government kept the operation secret for fear of political and public repercussions. While the American government had decided that no cost was too great to rebury the fallen at home, the UK had decided that it couldn't afford the cost of returning British dead to England.

Confidential British Foreign Office and Home Office files, now open to public scrutiny, reveal how Prime Minister Clement Atlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin were fearful that news of the huge project might leak out. In a 1948 letter, Foreign Office official J. G. P. Spicer wrote, "We must be anxious to avoid giving publicity to the American repatriation operations, as the Imperial War Graves Commission have decided not to adopt the same policy, and if the American scheme became known it might have serious repercussions." His colleague, C. G. Kemball, expressed concern about the potential for indignant complaints by the public to newspapers and to members of Parliament from, in his words, "irate next-of-kin of British war dead who will ask why American corpses are treated differently from ours."

The journey from England began at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley near Cambridge. The bodies were exhumed, identified and placed in bronze caskets. They were loaded in a siding at Cambridge station on a special train so long and heavily laden that it had to meander on a 200-mile journey to Wales to avoid tight bends and steep gradients. At Cardiff docks throughout 1948 and in the spring of 1949, America's dead from Madingley were taken aboard U.S. transport ships bound for the port of New York.

Only a dozen or so officials and railway personnel knew the full story. Morris Lawn, the station master at Cambridge at the time, recalls, "The train was one of the most handsome things anyone could imagine. Inside there were white enameled walls and black tile floors. The coffins were so heavy, it could only take ten to a carriage." James Shaffer, Assistant Superintendent at Madingley, said, "It was a big task, digging up all those boys, but it was done with the utmost decency and respect."

At Cardiff docks, as the first coffins were taken aboard ship, a British Guard of Honour, secluded behind a high security fence, snapped smartly to attention. Not a sound broke the silence. The Yanks were going home.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 18th reunion of the 303rd Bomb Group Association is upon us. We hope to see everybody there so we can all enjoy each other's company. Our reunion chairman, Walter Ferrari, has a program that is sure to please. The hotel Marriott at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport is pure elegance and it is handy to the airport with free shuttle service. They also provide free parking for the drive-ins. Please register early! There will be some notable speakers attending.

This will be my last newsletter column as your president. I have been highly honored to serve as president of so prestigious an organization. My job was easy compared to that of some of the other officers who kept me straight. You can be assured that our next president to be elected at our reunion will be an able and dedicated individual. He will receive the same assistance that I have received. As you know, our reunions are set up so that we may enjoy ourselves and perpetuate our heritage in the memory of those yet to come.

I can't find enough words to praise the staff of this fine Group. They are what holds the Group together. Some of them have no other hobby except to further the aims of the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

I have been urging the veterans of the 303rd to wear their earned medals at the appropriate times and I have found a source of the WW2 Victory Medal that all veterans of that war are entitled to wear. We plan to have a supply of those miniature, hat-pin medals for sale at a reduced price of three dollars instead of the usual five dollars.

Our missing comrades are being located at a surprising rate and it is astonishing that some of them had never heard of our association. We will continue looking for these veterans until we no longer exist as a viable organization. We plan for that to be many years in the future as we agreed at a previous reunion. In the words of our mentor, Lew Lyle, "We will go wide open until we run out of gas." Let's hope that our bomb bay tanks are full.

Dick Johnson

VA'S URGENT MESSAGE TO FORMER POW'S

Of the approximately 46,000 former prisoners of war still living, only about 16,000 have come forward to accept the benefits for which they are eligible from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The others, now in their 70's and 80's, may not be aware that this help is available to them.

The VA provides benefits related to over 20 health maladies that were presumed to have been initiated because of severe prisoner of war conditions suffered at the hands of the enemy. In the last quarter-century, congressional legislation has identified frostbite, heart problems, post traumatic stress, malnutrition, osteoarthritis and many others. Those airmen who were shot down and experienced the forced marches in the winter of 1944-45 in northern Germany can well remember the swollen, frozen feet and later may have developed heart problems which the VA presumes were an effect of imprisonment.

303rd Bomb Group ex-POW's who have not submitted a claim application to the Veterans Administration are urged to do so. Many may be missing well-deserved benefits for themselves and spouses.

Veterans should contact their nearest VA offices to initiate the claims. Alternatively, a special office of the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association will help present your claim. For more information, write to American Ex-Prisoners of War, National Service Office, 3225 N. Central Ave., Suite 407, Phoenix, AZ 85012-2421 or call (602) 745-2201.

MUSEUM from page 1

answered, "We had a back-up, *Hell's Angels*, a B-17 and crew that had already completed 25 missions."

There was no explanation as to why *Memphis Belle* was the first choice. One can only speculate that the Pentagon felt that the name *Hell's Angels* would be less desirable in a public relations campaign.

The lecture and discussion program was covered by the CSPAN television network, and broadcast several times.

From the Gallery, Col. Morgan moved to the Museum Store where he signed copies of his autobiography "The Man Who Flew The *Memphis Belle*." Visitors stood in long lines to have a moment with Morgan and T/Sgt Hanson, who also autographed crew pictures. The gift shop sold 153 copies of the book, generating sales in the amount of \$7,000.

That evening, some 600 guests gathered in the Lucas Theater for a special showing of the original William Wyler World War II documentary "The *Memphis Belle*." Morgan and Hanson were joined at the theater by Jim Verinis, the original co-pilot.

The documentary has earned high praise from air veterans over the years. This is in contrast to reaction to the recent commercial film "Memphis Belle" which many felt was an abomination, bearing little resemblance to a real life crew's actions under combat conditions.

As the evening ended, Jason Wetzel of the Georgia Humanities Council presented each of the three men with a Certificate of Commendation signed by the Governor and the Superintendent of Education of the state of Georgia for their contributions to the Heritage Museum's goals of character education.

While many of the day-long activities swirled around the *Memphis Belle* legend, another notable highlight was the dedication of the Saint Nazaire exhibit.

A delegation of four persons from the French city traveled to the museum to participate in the formal opening of the exhibit. Michel Lugez, president of Association du Memorial Americain,

was accompanied by 2nd vice president Mrs. Helgard Graham, research historian Alain Kossura and translator Alain Charles.

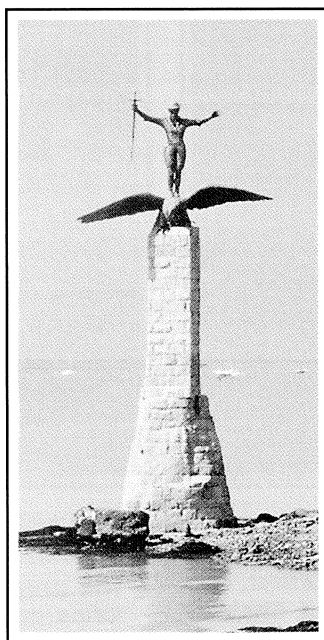
Lugez was instrumental in raising a half-million dollars to rebuild the American Memorial Monument overlooking Saint Nazaire Harbor, first dedicated in 1926 to honor American troops who fought in France in World War I. It was destroyed in 1942 by the Nazi's after Germany's invasion and occupation of France.

The new monument was dedicated in 1989 to honor the American dead of both world wars.

In a measure of reciprocity, the exhibit in the museum honors the citizens of Saint Nazaire for their efforts, suffering and sacrifices in enduring 11 bombing attacks, while it also pays tribute to Eighth Air Force crew members who were killed by intense barrages of flak during bomb runs on the harbor's submarine pens.

The principal plaque in the exhibit cites, in particular, the 91st, 303rd, 305th and 306th Bombardment Groups for the losses they endured in the attacks on the enemy installations.

The dedication featured remarks by Lugez and by Harry Gobrecht, 303rd Historian and Heritage Museum Trustee. Gobrecht played a key role in arrangements to establish the exhibit.



THE MAJESTIC AMERICAN MEMORIAL MONUMENT IN SAINT NAZAIRE HARBOR



FUND RAISING, SPEECH COMMITMENTS CAUSE LEW LYLE TO MISS FESTIVITIES

On May 12, as The 8th AF Heritage Museum celebrated its fifth anniversary, its founder, Maj. Gen. Lewis E. Lyle, USAF, Ret., was in Houston to raise funds for the museum and to address a reunion of Stalag Luft III veterans. In the photo, General Lyle, on the left, accepts a token of appreciation from Bob Weinberg, the organization's president. Historian Arnold Wright later reported that Lew Lyle told his audience he was always prepared to die in combat but never accepted that he could become a prisoner of war.



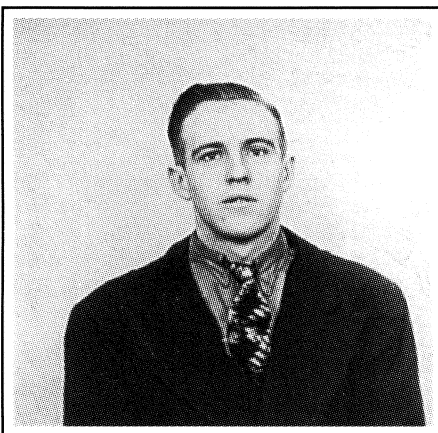
THE INDIVIDUAL STARS OF THE MUSEUM CELEBRATIONS were *Memphis Belle* pilot Bob Morgan (blue cap) and radio operator Bob Hanson. They signed copies of Morgan's new autobiography in a well-publicized appearance.



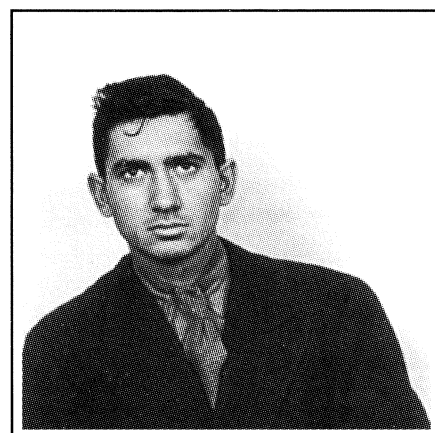
THE MOST NOTABLE NEW EXHIBIT was dedicated to those who perished in attacks on Nazi targets in St. Nazaire. L-to-R, Trustee Harry Gobrecht, a French delegation of Michel Lugez, Helgard Graham and Alain Kossura, and Chairman Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Jr.



William P. Beasley



George D. Mabary



Rene H. Gracida

ESCAPE AND EVASION PHOTOGRAPHS OF ALL COMBAT AIRMEN were made at Molesworth and carried on missions for use by Resistance forces in forging identification papers. 359th Squadron pilot Bill Beasley and his bombardier George Mabary and tail gunner Bishop Rene Gracida are still active members of the 303rd BG Association. All who know them and see these photos will testify to the fact that they have aged gracefully.

303rd's Pin-Up Men of the Month



LOGISTICS TO KEEP THE 303RD BOMB GROUP UP AND RUNNING were the responsibility of the S-4 Section. Seated, l-to-r, are Capt. Quentin W. Hargrove, Engineering Officer; Maj. Benjamin B. Ramsey, S-4 Officer, and Capt. William J. Morrison, Technical Inspector. Standing, T/Sgt. Sheldon Van Duzer, Administration; M/Sgt. Pete Kearns, Technical Inspector; M/Sgt. Harry H. Heller, Technical Inspector; Sgt. James E. Cooney, Administration, and M/Sgt. Mike Karpiak, Administration.



IZA AVAILABLE II WAS A WORTHY B-17G SUCCESSOR TO B-17F IZA AVAILABLE.

The grease stains on the fatigue uniforms of ground crew members Gilbert Bengston and John R. Hughes attest to their devotion to duty.

Molesworth Diary

REMEMBERING VIEIRA AND POWDERED EGGS

Of all the units and places I've known since I left the 303rd, there have been none that have been anything but anticlimax to the experiences, memories and guys I knew from the 303rd. The faces, scenes and colors seem as sharp and clear as ever—Joe Vieira clambering out of our B-17 after a mission, wearing his long-billed shearling-lined cap, looking so cold I couldn't help but wonder if he would break into little tinkling pieces with his first step. And the best powdered eggs put on the table at any base in the UK were by the cooks of the mess hall shared by the 359th and 360th squadrons. The emotional bond I feel for the 303rd is more than a matter of nostalgia. It's like being struck by lightning. It's an experience you never forget. For those of us who have memories of Molesworth, there never was nor will be another outfit like the 303rd Bombardment Group. Although it would be difficult for outsiders to appreciate considering the appalling conditions of war, it was truly a time of magic, unlikely ever to be experienced again.

Richard H. Cole
359th Squadron Commander and Pilot

AN EARLY LESSON IN BLADDER CONTROL

I was at Molesworth to replace someone who had not come back from a mission. It was very depressing but I knew I had to overcome it. I learned an important lesson on my fourth mission. The target was Hamburg, Germany, on 25 July 1943. I had downed many cups of coffee before take-off. I didn't realize how long the flight was going to be. By the time we arrived over the target, I had to pee so bad that I think my goggles even steamed up. I wasn't about to use the relief tube at temperatures of about 50-degrees below zero and freeze my tallywacker off. Lesson learned—no more than one cup of coffee before heading into enemy territory.

The mission that stands out most was to Kassel about a week later. We had been shot up pretty bad, and as we approached the North Sea on the way back, our pilot, Bob Cogswell, gave the order to prepare to ditch.

When the last of the four engines died, we were a heavy glider and the silence was the loudest I ever heard in my life. Our B-17 *Upstairs Maid* came down on the water in a pancake landing about 22 miles from the English coast. Only the navigator was injured and we carried him into the life rafts. We were picked up by British Air-Sea rescue in



Timm points to one of more than 200 flak holes on the Watten raid.

less than an hour.

My tenth mission on 27 August 1943 was my last. The target was the Nazi V-bomb installation at Watten, France. We were badly chewed up by flak and made an emergency landing at RAF Manston. We counted more than 200 flak holes in our favorite B-17, *Iza Vailable*. I was grounded because of a ruptured eardrum and reassigned to Bovington, England as a crew instructor.

Harold "Red" Timm
360th Squadron Tail Gunner

PARADE OF STARS PASS THROUGH GROUP OPS

When the Queen Mary sailed for England in September, 1942, I was aboard as a member of the cadre assigned to take over the RAF base at Molesworth and prepare it for B-17 operations. The 303rd's first mission was to St. Nazaire, France, on 17 November 1942. My most interesting job in Group Operations was to work on administrative preparations for a mission after word reached us from 8th Air Force Headquarters. The office bustled with activity from the time the first teletype was received until the final mission details were worked out.

The 303rd's operations office was the center of the action. On two occasions, Clark Gable came in with 359th Squadron commander William Calhoun. Gable seemed like a regular guy, considering his fame as a movie actor. Another movie star who would visit us from time to time was Gene Raymond. He was a fighter pilot at a base near London. Bob Hope and members of his entourage came through the operations office. He always put on a great show, with many jokes about our base.

I helped open Molesworth for the 8th Air Force in 1942 and helped close it in 1945. I reached the U.S. just before V-J Day.

Hugh J. Parkhurst
S-3 Clerk in Group Headquarters

A COMBAT TRIBUTE TO KERMIT STEVENS

I first met Kermit Stevens before a mission when he was introduced to the crew as an "observer." We were pleased to have a Lieutenant Colonel along, flying his first mission with us. Billy Southworth was our pilot, and he was a very very particular aircraft commander and every crew member had to meet his standards. I credit his leadership as one of the reasons I am still around. Col. Stevens watched as Southworth went through the pre-mission checkout procedures and seemed pleased. After the mission, he went to debriefing with us and was first class all the way. He flew with us again, and we always glad to welcome him aboard. We didn't know at the time that he was destined to become the 303rd's commanding Officer.

On August 16, 1943, the 303rd led the combat wing

(Continued on page 16)

(DIARY from page 15)

on a mission to Le Bourget, France, as a prelude to the attack on Schweinfurt, Germany, the following day. Kermit Stevens flew with us as pilot. The mission was very successful and he received the Silver Star for his leadership. During his command we all knew what a fine officer we had and how lucky we were.

Abbott M. Smith
427th Squadron Bombardier

SCARED OLD MAN CAPTURES SCARED AIRMAN

Almost at the very time we were raining bombs down on the oil refinery at Mersberg, Germany, on September 13, 1944, our luck ran out. Flak knocked out two engines and the controls on the third. Pilot Carl Heleen gave the order to bail out. We were over Oberhof in an area of forested terrain. I dropped down to the escape hatch, with Carl right behind me. We learned later that Carl's chute didn't open. The rest of us made it successfully to the ground. I hid in the forest for the rest of the day, and started walking when it was dark. It was on the second night, when I attempted to walk through a small village, that I was captured.

A night watchman blinded me with the light from his flashlight and then took me by the arm and led me to the town jail. His hand was shaking and it was obvious that he was just as scared as I was. When he had me locked up, I could see that he was a very elderly man. Had I known that earlier, I probably could have escaped from him. But, that likely would have caused an alarm and I would have been caught in a short time. The German military came for me the next morning and took me to an interrogation center. I spent the rest of the war as a prisoner at Stalag Luft I near Barth, Germany.

Stanley Davidson
358th Squadron Co-Pilot

HE'S "JACK OF ALL TRADES" AT MOLESWORTH

My military specialty was chemical warfare. My duty at Molesworth was to maintain special clothing for each man in the squadron in the event of a poison gas attack, and also to schedule gas mask tests using tear gas. Some of my extra time was in the supply room. Once a week, I took dirty clothes to a commercial laundry in Leicester, about 55 miles away, and picked up last week's clean clothes. For a time, I was loaned out to the Military Police Company to do guard duty from midnight to 6 AM. One night I heard a noise coming from up the road near the guard house. It sounded to me like a person walking, taking short steps. We had been instructed about the dangers of an attack by German paratroopers. I drew out my Colt .45 caliber pistol. All at once an object appeared in the doorway of the guard house. I pulled the trigger, and then discovered I had killed a big tom cat. The Corporal of the Guard heard the shot and called my post. Word got around that I had mistaken a cat for an enemy soldier. Everyone had a big laugh. I was glad to get back to my regular duties. Next, I was assigned to help load bombs on special trailers and proceed to the planes to load them. Everything went smoothly.

Harold J. Hall
360th Squadron Chemical Warfare Specialist

ARMED FORCES DAY ARTICLE FEATURES TWO 303RD VETERANS

(Following are excerpts from an article by Kent Ward, op-ed page columnist, in the Bangor (Maine) Daily News.)

During the years of a prominent military presence in Maine, Armed Forces Day was a major event in the many communities impacted by a major military installation. Now, with the military out of sight, out of mind—and, in many circles, out of favor—the day seems pretty much just your basic third Saturday in May.

No matter. We may renew a sense of gratitude by getting veterans to talk about their service. My targets of opportunity this year were 85-year-old Ray Hills, a tail gunner in a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber in World War II air battles over Europe, and Bob Umberger, a B-17 waist gunner, who is turning 80. Both were members of the 303rd Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, stationed at Molesworth, England. They didn't meet until after the war [although both were in the 359th Squadron].

Hills was 2 1/2 inches taller than the maximum six-foot height allowed for a tail gunner. "I scooched a little bit when I took my physical, and the doctor just smiled and marked me down as six-feet-even," he explained.

His most memorable mission was his last, on April 25, 1945, to hammer the Skoda Armament Works at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. Damaged, the plane lost two of its four engines and the crew had prepared to bail out. By the time the pilot was able to coax the aircraft back across the English Channel, a third engine had quit. Within two weeks, the war was over.

As with Ray Hills, Bob Umberger's wartime service was easily the defining experience of his life.

Although the closest he came to getting wounded was when a chunk of shrapnel bounced harmlessly off a plastic survival kit he wore on his hip, other crew members were not so fortunate. When a German shell exploded opposite the waist gun positions, Umberger's crew mate fell, seriously wounded. Umberger tended to the man until he could receive aid back at Molesworth.

The subsequent pervasive guilt he felt at his buddy's misfortune "is common when a crew member gets hurt," he said. "There's no reason for it, because it's just the luck of the draw. But, it's there."

Taking flak from enemy anti-aircraft guns in the target area became a common occurrence. Umberger vividly recalls one mission in which a German shell tore "a hole you could throw a 10-quart pail through" in the plane's tail section. Fortunately for the crew, no hydraulics lines were severed.

Both Hills and Umberger graphically described the flight to the target, the adrenalin rush as the bomb run begins, and the exhilaration when the bombs have been dropped and the plane turns for home. "When the bombardier shouts, 'Bombs Away,' not only does the plane lift about 20 feet, but the crew's spirit lifts with it as you get the hell out of there," said Umberger.

Then he showed me a photograph of the euphoric crew of the famed "Hell's Angels" B-17, the first in the Eighth Air Force to complete 25 missions that, early in the war, guaranteed crew members a ticket home. The photo was taken outside the plane just after touchdown.

"You want to see jubilation?" Umberger asked. "Now, that's jubilation."

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

"CARDBOARD BAND" STORY FAIR MIX OF GOOD AND BAD

That was a very fine article in the May issue on Bob Garcia, one of the outstanding morale boosters in Stalag XVII-B during the year that I spent there as a POW. Bob had expressed concerns about anyone writing his story, for fear it would give the impression we enjoyed too many luxuries. Carrie Wahl did a masterful job of mixing together the terrible times with the times we remember as "good." I enjoyed that article particularly, but the whole newsletter is really one of the finer ones coming out of WWII organizations.

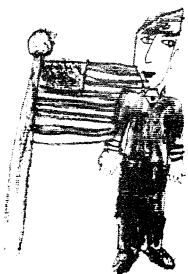
Ed McKenzie
Albany, NH

TALK TO 4TH-GRADERS EARNS THEIR PRAISE

Recently I talked to the combined 4th grade classes at Leland Street School in San Pedro, California. The students were doing a Social Studies Unit on World War II and I was able to give them an oral history on the air war. Afterwards, I received many written responses and drawings from the students. For example, Devin De La Rosa wrote, "Thank you for sharing your experiences of World War II. I really enjoyed all of the information you told us during the assembly. I could understand that you might wanted to tell us what happened in our countrys past, so we in the future can prevent things like this from happening again."

I encourage our 303rd veterans to tell their personal and unique stories to students in their communities.

Roger Ayers
427th Pilot



Sketch by Devin

INTEREST STRONG IN B-17'S THAT STILL FLY

About your interview with the B-17 "9-0-9" flight engineer in the May newsletter, you may like to know that the Collings planes have landed here at the Porter County, Indiana, airport for most of the last 10 years. Bob Collings is a former resident of Valparaiso, and I think his mother still lives there.

When the Experimental Aircraft Association's B-17 "Aluminum Overcast" pays us a visit, local EAA chapter members help out by selling tickets for a walk through the aircraft. I help out as a tour guide, answering questions and explaining various parts of the B-17.

Christ Christoff
358th Radio Mechanic

Arthur "Jim" Tarvid, my father, was a pilot in the 303rd, completing 37 missions, mostly in "Old Black Magic." I noticed with interest the feature on the Collings Foundation and their B-17 and B-24. They recently visited Austin, Texas, and I took a ride on the B-17. As a member of the Association, I get the newsletter and think it's great. Keep up the good work!

Allan Tarvid
Manhaca, Texas

WIDOW TELLS OF LATE HUSBAND'S PRIDE IN 303RD

My husband, Ernest Toth, died last February. He was a flight engineer in the 427th Squadron. Ernie was so proud to have served in the 303rd Bomb Group. From the day I married him in 1950, I heard about the 303rd and his crew members. We have been in touch with all of them. I'm sending in my membership dues and a donation in memory of Ernie. He continued to serve humanity after the war as a teacher in Michigan and at Ohio University. We both looked forward to and read every word of the newsletter. It is the best of any I have ever been aware of.

Maxine M. Toth
Green Valley, Arizona

MEN AT AUGSBERG MISSION DEBRIEFING IDENTIFIED

In the May issue on the Pin-Up Men of the Month page, you asked if anyone recognized the man in the middle at debriefing with three doughnuts in his hand. I can do that. It's me! I was radio operator on Roy Larson's crew in the 358th Squadron. We had just completed our first combat mission, flying in "Pugnacious Peter." It was a hard day, over nine hours in the air as I recall. A reality experience that I will never forget.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw that picture. I'm still in good health, and keep up with WW-2, thanks to your wonderful newsletter.

Everett E. Culp
358th Radio Operator

In reference to page 14 in the May issue, I believe that the man on the left in the debriefing photograph is my navigator, James G. Clark, Jr., now deceased. Jim and I were in the same room at Molesworth until he and our bombardier were sent to some special school. Neither of them was with our crew when we were shot down on the Pas De Calais mission on March 26, 1944.

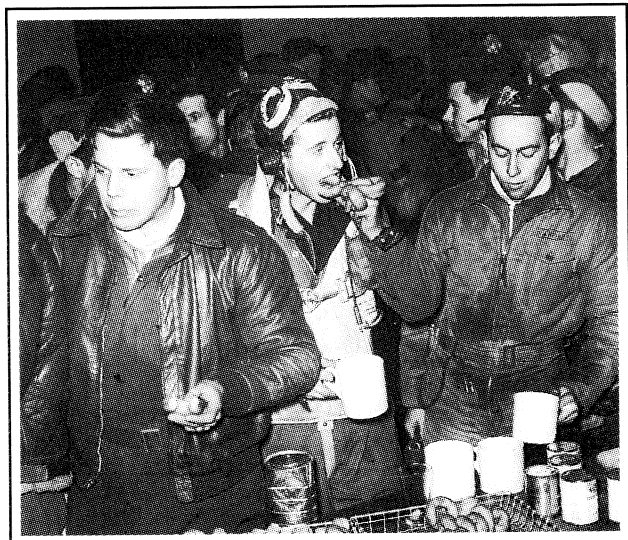
Bill Dallas
427th Co-Pilot

303RD COMBAT VET'S WAR JOURNALS FOUND BY KIN

My father, Jacob Gornto, was a flight engineer and flew 30 missions as a member of Bill Beasley's crew in the 359th Squadron. He rarely spoke about his experiences in the war, and passed away in 1995. Then, after reading Tom Brokaw's book "The Greatest Generation" I discovered that Dad had kept a journal and some photos from his time at Molesworth. These memories had been stored in a box in the attic for all these years. Even now as I read through his account of the missions, I can feel some of the emotions he must have been feeling as he wrote those words on the pages.

I recently discovered the 303rd Web Page. I want to thank all of you for your dedication and hard work to preserve the memories. I read the Hell's Angels Newsletter from cover to cover as soon as it arrives and then often reread it until the next issue arrives. Your editorial in the May issue brought tears to my eyes. You were so right in urging veterans to write their memoirs. My mom and I have made copies of Dad's journal and will share them with my sister and brothers.

Denese Gornto Lee
Efland, North Carolina



NOW KNOWN! Left to right, James G. Clark, 427th navigator; Everett E. Culp, 358th radio operator, and Coleman Sanders, 359th navigator, at debriefing after the Augsburg mission.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Well, another issue is here. I have worked hard to finish going through all of the funding needs letters from last November and list everyone. If I have still missed anyone, I will have you in the next issue.

In order to try to get every bit of information listed on these two pages, I'm leaving out any change of addresses. As there will be a new membership directory being printed and mailed out to the members that have requested and made payment for the directory, these address changes will be part of the new directory.

I hope that by now everyone has received their new membership cards. If I have not mailed your card to you by this date, I will have them with me at the reunion in Baltimore.

Hope to see you there.

Dennis Smith

IN MEMORIAM

Harold R Manning (168th), May 7, 2000
 Jack L Timmins (360th) Lt. Col., unknown
 Wayne E Krouskup (358th), Feb 27, 2001
 Nyle E Cotner (360th), Jan 11, 2001
 William P Kiggins (427th), Jan 11, 1999
 Walter D Beckwith (358th), Feb 4, 2001
 Robert P Rabassa (358th), Sep 8, 2000
 Loren E Zimmer (427th), Mar 29, 2001
 Ernest Toth (427th), Feb 27, 2001
 Charles L. Gerstel (360th), Apr 16, 2001
 Donald L. Stoberl (427th), Dec 26, 2000
 William F. Cervenka (427th), Mar 28, 2001

SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

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Rex Chambers	358 th
Donald F Geng	359 th
Edmond A Maggia	359 th
Ellen Marshall Mc Bride	Family
Forrest E Miller	427 th
James P Miller	358 th
William J Milligan	358 th
Blake R Nestok, M.D.	Family
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Ralph E Page	427 th
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Joseph Vieira	359 th

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T Lamar Simmons	427 th
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Wm. Robert Byers	427 th
Albert J Orth	358 th

NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

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* Albert B Skarsten, (wife Rita), 8 West Court St., Plattsburgh, NY. 12901-2302, 518-561-8827

** James H Kelly Jr., (359th), 3997 Partridge Circle, Bettendorf, IA 52722-7224 (563) 449-9377

* Wilfred M Walder Jr. (wife Ann) (427th), 6 Westwick Rd., Richmond, VA 23233-5726 804-740-8863

* Found as a result of "Lost 303rd Comrade Search Project"

** Found by Al Dussliere

NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

David A Bacon (grandson of Arthur J Hybert, 359th), 114 Yorkshire Dr., Homewood, AL. 35209-4306, 205-871-9268

Mark Brooks, P O Box 6752, Beaverton, OR 97007-0752, 503-629-5429

Jay T Primavera, (wife Robin), 21 Country Club Dr., Sullivan, IL. 61951-9400, 217-728-8790

Steven L Dritz(son of Arthur Dritz, 359th), 9000 Odessa Ave., North Hills, CA 91343-4113, (wife Brenda), 818-894-5078
 Claire A Rutiser(related to Jacob Rutiser), 102 Cameron Rd., Willow Grove, PA 19090-2404, 215-706-4153
 Mark E Donnelly(nephew of James Donnelly), 19 Stuyvesant Oval, Apt MH, New York, NY 10009-2045(wife Abigail) 212-677-7885

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 Mrs. Edna Buddingh, general donation
 Frank C DeCicco Jr., for the CD ROM project
 Donald McGarry, for the Hell's Angels Newsletter

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 Kenneth D Allen, in memory of Lt. Robert H Woodley

THE EDITOR COMMENTS

The wheels of big government grind slowly, but why take 56 years for the passage and signing of legislation to build a World War II memorial in the nation's capital? That's a prime example of shameful foot-dragging. The war ended in 1945. It wasn't until a few months ago, on Memorial Day, 2001, that President George W. Bush signed into law H.R. 1696, a bill authorizing the construction of a World War II monument on the National Mall. He commented, "The legislation will allow the nation to express the appreciation due the World War II generation for their selfless sacrifices that preserved the freedoms we all enjoy."

In the last eight years, there have been 22 public hearings on the project. A well-organized coalition of critics filed a lawsuit last October to block construction. They claimed that the review process had violated federal laws and that the design for the memorial was too grandiose, cluttering the Mall and obstructing panoramic views. Their litany of complaints included charges that grounds made sacred by the civil rights movement would be desecrated, that the natural beauty of the Mall would be marred, that pedestrian walks would be restricted between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, that fountains in the memorial would cause arsenic contamination in the Tidal Basin and Potomac River, that the design echoed the Nazi Fascist architecture of triumph and public spectacle.

The American Battle Monuments Commission condemned these allegations as distortions and misinformation by opponents of its efforts to establish a tribute to America's World War II generation. The facts of the matter, the Commission said, are:

- The National WWII Memorial is the right statement in the right place.
- The design is open and transparent, preserving views in all directions.
- The architecture complements the classic style of Washington.
- The architecture creates a sense of place and sets the stage for remembrance and celebration.
- The memorial is destined to be one of the great public gathering places on the National Mall.

The memorial, on a seven acre site in the heart of the Mall, features a circle of 56 granite pillars representing America's states and territories, and two four-story high arches signifying victory in Europe and Asia. Fountains at the base of the two arches complement the historic waterworks of the Rainbow pool. A field of sculpted gold stars on the Freedom Wall commemorates the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives to defeat two of history's most powerful and dreaded military forces.

In our priceless democracy, the opponents of the memorial had the right at those 22 public hearings to voice their concerns. What if Germany had been the victor in World War II? The National Mall would now be lined with Nazi swastika flags and symbols, and no one would dare to criticize. The very right to dissent was a legacy of America's military victory.

Eddie Deerfield



ARTIST'S VIEW OF THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL ARCH AND PILLARS, WITH WASHINGTON MONUMENT IN THE DISTANCE.



ARTIST'S VIEW OF THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL'S FREEDOM WALL AND FIELD OF GOLD STARS HONORING THE FALLEN.

303RD COMRADE SEARCH RESULTS

Names in Search List — 4,895	Names traced — 2,379
Found deceased — 2,251	Found living — 128
Joined 303rd Bomb Group Association — 12 (21 pending)	

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
Hell's Angels Newsletter
Eddie Deerfield, Editor
3552 Landmark Trail
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