

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

November 2001

BOARD VOTES TO PUBLISH 25-YEAR HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER COLLECTION

The Board of Directors of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, meeting on 5 September 2001 at the Group's reunion in Baltimore, MD, voted unanimously to publish 25 years of the Hell's Angels Newsletter in a two-volume set. The Silver Anniversary Collection will include every page of every issue of the newsletter from the first edition published in 1976 through the November 2001 edition. Pages will be reproduced in the standard 8 1/2 by 11 inch size, as originally printed in black, tint or full color.

The Board recognized that, along with the "Might In Flight" history book and the CD-ROM "Molesworth Story," bound copies of 25 years of the Hell's Angels Newsletter would make up the most complete collection of

facts, figures and story narrative of any bomb group in the Eighth Air Force. As readers know, the issues include thousands of names of veterans and their family members, places, missions, memorials, aircraft, reunions and other events, along with hundreds of articles, letters and both vintage and modern photographs.

From April 1976 to November 2001, 86 issues of the Hell's Angels Newsletter were published. The total page count is 1,176. A detailed index will be added to the end of the publication to make it easy for readers to find their own names and items of particular interest to them. To learn how to get your copy, see The Editor Comments column on page 20.

1976

2001

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1 303rd BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER APRIL 1976

FLORIDA REUNION A HUGE SUCCESS

What many of us old 303rd members thought was our first reunion (actually the second) was without a doubt a huge success. Over two hundred members and their wives came from far and wide. Members started arriving a day early and some stayed an extra day or two. A room was set up for the many pieces of memorabilia that was on display. Movies of bomb missions over Europe were shown. This brought back to many of us memories of the good old days or were they all that good. However some were good and some not so good.

Friday night was met re-acquainted night with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. Everyone met some one he knew at Molesworth during WWII. It was without a doubt a most memorable evening. We relaxed, revived and retold stories of experiences that happened some 30 years ago. If anyone was ever in doubt as to which group was the greatest had but to listen to all of us on that Friday night.

On Saturday night we enjoyed a trip back to memory lane in listening to Father Skoner after the banquet. Father Skoner was probably the oldest member with the 303rd. He joined the group when it was first organized and stayed with it to the end. He saw us all come and go. On Sunday he offered Catholic Mass for the living and the dead of the 303rd. We all hope to see the good Father at our next reunion. I am looking forward to it.

I believe Col. Wm. Eisenhart and his charming wife journeyed the farthest to attend. They came all the way from Rhein-Maine AFB in Germany. I also believe he is the only member still on active duty. Any challenges on this?

We had hoped the great entertainer and comedian Bob Hope would be able to attend our get together but he was on tour and already committed. He did send me a letter offering his regrets at being unable to join us. We had also hoped to get Clark Gable's son but at this point we still have not been able to locate him. If anyone knows of his whereabouts would you let me know. I hope we can find him in time for our next reunion. His father was a very fine and gallant member of our great organization.

Well in spite of the 30 odd years or so since we flew into the wild blue yonder on missions we all still look like we could fly off again. Only lets just make peaceful and to future reunions instead. Lets hope no one has to go thru another war.

A good time was had by all and to those of you who didn't make this one we will see you in '77.

HOW ABOUT SOME MINI-REUNIONS BY SQUADRON???

Is any squadron planning on having a mini-reunion????? If you are going to meet would you nominate someone to take notes and pictures. Black and White polaroid pictures would be best for reproduction in our newsletter. Also send me a brief outline of time place etc so I can include it in the next publication.

If anyone in the New England, New York and New Jersey would like to start a mini let me know and I will be glad to lend a hand. On any mini or other news items write to me Al Martel, 142 Pine St., Portland Maine 04102.

EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS PLANNING A REUNION RECAP

A reunion is to be held September 12th 1976 to September 26th 1976. A 707 will be used to transport personnel leaving from Kennedy Airport in NY on Sept. 12th. Basic cost per person is \$599.00. This will include fare, accommodations, meals, picnic lunches and other activities. All major credit cards accepted. Time is short if you want to attend write now to Eighth Air Force Reunion C/O Reunion Service P.O. Box 1304, Hollandale Florida 33009.

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC. August, 2001

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 376th 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 C-130 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

Former 181st C.O. takes us behind the scenes in report on Molesworth Ordnance operations. Page 5.

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

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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 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*, published quarterly, will only be sent to members whose dues payments are current. 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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RAF Molesworth, England Rep

Bruce Henninger, head of Protocol at the Joint Analysis Center, has offered to assist. Persons planning to visit the base, however, should first contact UK Representative Robin Beeby to advise him of travel plans.

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WOMEN AIR FORCE SERVICE PILOTS (WASPs) FLEW B-17'S AND OTHER AIRCRAFT IN TEST FLIGHTS, GUNNERY TRAINING, FERRY RUNS AND MULTIPLE NON-COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II.

Six of them are shown at the Flexible Gunnery School at Buckingham Army Air Field in Fort Myers, FL in January, 1944. From left to right are Dawn Rochow, Charlotte Mitchell, Frances Green, Julie Ledbetter, Virginia Acher and Blanche Osborn.

In a letter home, Dawn Rochow wrote, "We fly B-17's every day, morning or afternoon gunnery missions. Our biggest thrill is to see a class of gunners graduate and realize that, at last, we are working and helping."



NON-VETERANS FOR 36 YEARS! THE BRAVE AND UNHERALDED WOMEN PILOTS OF WORLD WAR II

By Dawn Rochow Seymour

In 1942, General Henry "Hap" Arnold, commanding the U S Army Air Force, desperately needed pilots to perform non-combat duties. He turned for help to Nancy Harkness Love and Jacqueline Cochran, two of America's pioneer women in aviation.

Nancy's assignment was to recruit at least 25 women pilots with a minimum flying credit of 500 hours and 200-HP ratings for duty with the 2nd Ferrying Command at New Castle AAB, Delaware. Twenty-eight women pilots responded to her call. Jacqueline's first assignment was to recruit another 25 to fly with the British Air Transport Auxiliary.

Reports crossing General Arnold's desk confirmed that the performance of the women pilots was exemplary. His next step was to appoint Jacqueline Cochran to develop and implement a program to recruit and train American women pilots from every state in the union. From the 25,000 who answered the call, 1,830 pilots were accepted and 1,074 went on to graduate from training programs similar to those given to male aviation cadets. I was among the volunteers and was assigned to the class of 1943-5 at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas.

Women Airforce Service Pilots, (WASPs) became the designated title on 5 August 1943. We were promised military status, but were paid by Civil Service. We wore uniforms, oper-

ated under military orders, lived in barracks or military housing and conformed to military regulations. Graduate WASP salary was \$250 a month. We paid for our lodging, food, uniforms and travel. We served without government insurance or expectation of death benefits.

Thirty-eight American women pilots gave their lives, 11 during training and 27 in operational flying. None were lost while piloting B-17's. We were ineligible for a military funeral, the American flag, GI benefits or a gold star displayed in the window of the family home.

We were assigned to over one hundred and twenty airfields in the United States. WASPs flew more than sixty million miles in all aircraft types including the trainers, the pursuits, the twin and four engine bombers, even the first experimental jet and the radio controlled PQ. Flying duty included ferrying thousands of new and war weary aircraft, target towing, simulated bombing, strafing and gunnery training missions, instructing, administration and test flying.

On 21 June 1944, the WASP militarization bill H. R. 4219 failed in Congress by nineteen votes—188 nay's and 169 aye's. The WASPs were deactivated on 20 December 1944, eight months before the end of the war. We were just sent home. The WASPs didn't become a legal veterans organization until 8 March 1979 when President Jimmy Carter signed a bill recognizing that our roles in World War II were "active milit-

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ary service for the purpose of all laws administered by the Veterans Administration." We became eligible to receive American flag honors, headstones and specified VA medical benefits.

When I was president of WASP WWII, Inc., in 1984, we received in the mail our World War II Victory Medal and, for those eligible, the American Theater Medal. As Chair of our organization's Memorials Committee, the four of us researched and wrote "IN MEMORIAM," a tribute to our 38 lost pilots. Our Memorials are located at Avenger Field, Doolittle Garden and Woman's University in Texas, the USAF Museum in Ohio and the USAF Academy in Colorado.

The B-17 Flying Fortress was the finest aircraft built and, to this day, I follow her around the country, feeling the same excitement when I hear those engines cough, sputter and then purr. Then, the joy when the wheels break away and it's airborne. I salute those who served in past battles, those who were wounded and those who gave their lives, those who were POW's and MIA. I feel kinship with those who waited and served here at home. I am proud of our men and women who serve today in our all-volunteer Armed Forces while our nation works for peaceful resolutions.

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW BY LAS VEGAS SUN FEATURE WRITER JERRY FINK WITH FORMER WASP HELEN CANNON, A RESIDENT OF THE NEVADA CITY:

Q—What kind of aircraft did you fly?

A—I was a test pilot on AT-6's, an advanced trainer—650 horsepower and retractable gears—at the aviation cadet school at Luke Field in Arizona. These cadets would crack up a plane once in a while, and the plane had to be flight-tested before it went back to the cadets. That was my job. I figured I was expendable and the cadets weren't. I loved it. There was a certain maneuver you had to do. Go up to 10,000 feet and go into a spin, five times to the right and five times to the left. If



WASP DAWN ROCHOW PREPARES FOR TAKE-OFF ON A B-17 GUNNERY TRAINING MISSION AT BUCKINGHAM ARMY AIR FIELD IN FLORIDA IN 1944.

you're not out of the spin at 5,000 feet, bail out. I never crashed or had to bail out.

Q—How long were you a test pilot?

A—Just a couple months. I was accepted into the WASPs in 1944. I was in the next-to-last class at Sweetwater, Texas, where we trained. Then, I went to Luke Field. The WASPs folded that December.

Q—Why did it cease before the war ended?

A—After the male pilots finished their tour of duty in the war, they came back to the US and thought the WASPs were taking up the jobs they should have. So the program was shut down.

Q—Women weren't allowed to fly combat in World War II. Did that bother you?

A—No. We could have done just as good a job, but we didn't have any options. Those were the rules. The WASPs were a unique bunch of women. There weren't too many of us flying at that time.

Q—Why did you become a pilot?

A—When I was nine years old, growing up in northern Wisconsin, a little yellow monoplane landed in a field near where I lived. That started it. From then on, I knew I would learn to fly. My only pin-up picture was Amelia Earhart. After high school and college, when I had a little money, I took flying lessons.

Q—Did it ever bother you that you were not considered a veteran until long after the war ended?

A—No. They never promised me anything.

Q—What did it mean to you to finally be declared a war veteran?

A—It was nice to be recognized, that we had done something for the war effort. I was always a flag-waving American. All of us women pilots who were there and made it through the war, if they had put us into combat we would have gone. We were just as patriotic as the fellows.

FIRST SCHWEINFURT RAID HAILED AS "TRIUMPHANT VINDICATION"

By Eddie Deerfield

The Schweinfurt raid on 17 August 1943 deep into Germany would prove to be the first real test of America's stirring World War II slogan "Victory Through Air Power." None of us in the Nissen hut at Molesworth Station in England that day was aware of this when the squadron duty corporal barged in at five in the morning, switched on the lights, and yelled "All crews up! There's a mission today."

A few hours later, at a briefing for our 303rd Bomb Group crews, we were told that the target was a strategic complex of ball-bearing factories and that the war would be shortened by six months if we pulverized the target. The 8th Air Force was putting up 230 B-17's, including 29 from the 303rd BG, and each of our "Flying Fortresses" would carry ten 500-pound demolition bombs.

America was experimenting with daylight bombing, but often suffered unacceptable losses. The U.S. goal was to destroy specific military targets in daylight with precision bombing using four-engine heavy bombers equipped with the Norden bombsight, while the RAF targeted entire cities at night. Bombings by Britain's Royal Air Force against smaller targets such as aircraft plants, oil refineries, submarine bases and roller bearing factories had often been minimally effective.

General Henry "Hap" Arnold, commander of the U. S. Army Air Force, desperately needed a major victory to silence critics at home and abroad opposed to the high risks of daylight bombing. In the last week of July 1943 alone, almost a hundred of the 400 B17's in action with their crews of 10 men were lost to German fighter planes or flak. In human terms, more than 900 crew members were killed, wounded or missing.

My crew was "lucky" that week. On July 30, we crashed in the North Sea on the return to England from a mission to Kassel, Germany after we were chewed up by Messerschmitt 109's and Folke-Wulf 190's. As radio operator, I vividly recall sending a stream of SOS messages as we fell towards the water. We came down in a "pancake" landing midway between the British and Nazi-Occupied Belgium coasts. Nine of us scrambled out of the doomed B-17 "Upstairs Maid" into two dinghies, lifting out the navigator who was the only crew member seriously injured in the crash. Less than an hour later, a British Air-Sea Rescue mosquito boat swept us off the rafts and sped us back to safe-haven in England.

The B-17F was called a "Flying Fortress" for good reason. It bristled with eleven .50 caliber machine guns and normally flew in combat "box" formations of three 21-plane groups. Although the firepower of the massed bombers was fearsome, German pilots when unopposed by Allied fighters were able to penetrate the "boxes" and then concentrate on picking off stragglers.

On August 17, American P-47 "Thunderbolt" fighters would escort us to the German border, then the limit of their range. We took off at noon in the crew's favorite B-17 "Iza Vailable" after a delay of several hours due to heavy cloud cover over England. Visibility over Schweinfurt was reported as excellent. As we gained altitude, it was reassuring to see our little friends, the P-47's, tagging along in the distance. They would help protect us against enemy fighters based in France and Belgium.

We began drawing anti-aircraft fire at the coast. I heard a "whomp" and from my radio room window saw a jagged hole a few inches wide where a piece of flak had penetrated near the tip of the left wing. On intercom, I reported the damage to the pilot. It wasn't serious and we stayed on course. Near the border of Germany, the P-47 escort planes wagged their wings in a silent salute and peeled away for their return to England.

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T/Sgt Eddie Deerfield, 360th Squadron radio operator/gunner, stands by the B-17 *Iza Vailable* on 17 August 1943 minutes before take-off for the first 8th Air Force mission against the ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt, Germany.

THE KALLET CREW—They were introduced to B-17G number 43-38451 at an airfield in Savannah, Georgia in the summer of 1944. They flew in her on most of their first 33 combat missions from Molesworth, until shrapnel from one of their own fragmentation bombs knocked the Flying Fortress out of action.

Posed in front of their beloved B-17 are (l-to-r) kneeling, Waist Gunner Ray Killelea, Radio Operator Frank Clark, Engineer William Lewis, Ball Turret Gunner Ed Macy and Tail Gunner Joe Terreri. Standing, Co-Pilot Cliff Muth, Navigator Mike McCarthy, Pilot Sid Kallet and Bombardier William Harrison.



KALLET CREW'S ENDURING LOVE AFFAIR WITH A "NO NAME" B-17

By Sidney Kallet

So here we were in Savannah, Georgia, in August of 1944, under orders to pick up a B-17 Flying Fortress, deliver it to England and report for duty to the 8th Air Force. As pilot and chief officer of the crew, I had to sign for the aircraft as a piece of equipment loaned to me by the Air Force, which I was expected to return at a later date. The price listed on the receipt was \$125,000.

The crew and I went out on the field to our new plane, number 43-38451. I felt like I was picking up a rental car by looking for the correct license plate number. There it was, this beautiful, silver, brand new Flying Fortress, all my own! I could hardly wait to climb into the pilot's seat. It was like getting into a new car. You couldn't wait to drive out of the dealer's showroom.

During the next couple of weeks, we flew "451" checking out all the instruments, engines, controls, radios and operational features. This was similar to a shake down cruise that the Navy does with a new ship prior to releasing it for combat. The time finally came when we were ordered to deliver "451" to a staging area in England where we would be assigned as a bomber crew to a Group in the 8th Air Force.

The flight over the Atlantic took two weeks due to bad weather along the entire route. Our first stop overnight to refuel was in New Hampshire, then on to Goose Bay, Labrador, again overnight. From there we flew to Greenland and were forced to spend one week there due to bad weather in England. Our next stop was Iceland, overnight to refuel, then off to England. All the time we were over the Atlantic our B-17 "451" flew like a dream.

We finally reached our destination, and to my dis-

may I had to turn over "451" to a pool of other B-17's which were to be assigned to various bomb groups in England. My crew was ordered to report to the 303rd Bomb Group, 360th Squadron, in Molesworth. I was near the runway watching new replacement aircraft being ferried in when I saw this beautiful silver B-17 coming in for a landing. To my delight, it was "451." I ran to squadron headquarters to see the Commanding Officer and asked if "451" could be assigned to my crew since I had flown it all the way from the States. He agreed, saying it would bring us good luck.

On 7 October 1944, we started flying missions as a crew, sometimes 3 or 4 times a week. Never once did I encounter any trouble or have to abort a mission due to mechanical failure. The operational success of our plane was due to our wonderful ground crew and their mechanical skill.

All went well until our 33rd mission over Ingolstadt, Germany, an attack on railway marshalling yards. By now we had P-51 and P-47 fighter escort as protection against enemy fighter planes, and very little anti-aircraft fire was encountered that day. Our bomb load consisted of 100-pound fragmentation bombs, each with an arming spinner, and tied together in bundles of six. The bomb run was nice and smooth, and all went well until "Bombs Away." At that moment I heard a loud bang that sounded like a single shot from the top gun turret just behind me.

All hell broke loose and things started happening. The number 2 engine on the left wing was losing power and the number 4 on the right lost oil pressure. I pushed all throttles forward, checked the instruments, and then feathered both engines while I was still able to do so. The ball turret gunner, Ed Macy, shouted over the interphone, "black smoke

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KALLET from page 6)

out of number 3 engine." On too many occasions we had seen bombers burst into flames and explode killing everyone on board, so I immediately feathered number 3. Our B-17 "451" was now flying on one engine.

I placed my hand on the toggle switch and was about to sound the "bail out" bell. Jumping would have meant crew members killed in action or made prisoners of war. I decided that we would stay with "451." We fell out of formation and dropped from 27,000 feet to about 15,000 feet, where I was able to level off and maintain altitude. The number 1 engine was running at full throttle and I was not able to slow it down. It seemed that the throttle cable had sheared off and, fortunately, the engine assumed a full throttle position through an automatic spring load for just such an occasion. I was concerned about the fuel the one engine was using since a single engine wide open uses more fuel than four engines at low power.

Soon after we dropped out of formation, two P-47s came along side as protection against enemy fighters. They escorted us all the way back to the English Channel at which point they did a slow roll and took off into the distance. After reaching the Channel I had the crew throw out anything they could, guns, ammunition and whatever was not tied down, in order to lighten the load. I started a slow descent and headed for home. Close to Molesworth I called the tower and explained the situation so as to prepare them for a crash landing. I lowered the landing gear and to my relief it worked fine. The wind stream started rotating the tires which gave me a chance to check the brakes. As Co-Pilot Cliff Muth and I looked out the windows I applied brakes and nothing happened. The wheels kept spinning.

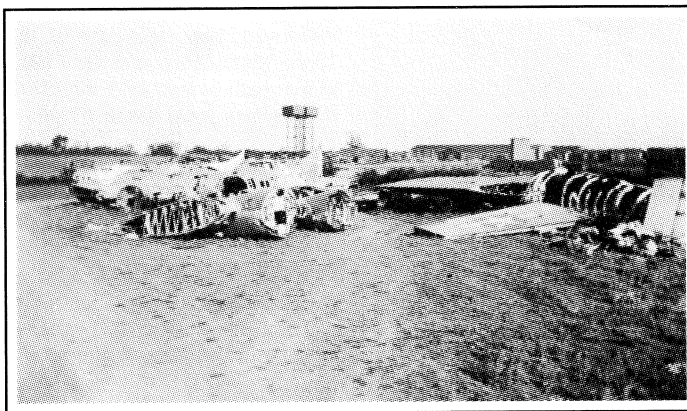
I instructed the crew, with the exception of the co-pilot, to take up crash landing positions in the radio room. Cliff and I were then ready to bring in "451." I made a wide turn onto the final approach, let down slowly to the runway, and Cliff shut power on the number 1 engine that was still running full. We touched down, the landing gear held up, and Cliff immediately shut down the master electric switch to avoid any chance of fire. I applied the brakes hoping that I might get one shot but nothing happened. We kept rolling. I was able to kick the rudder while we still had enough speed and our plane turned off the runway into the mud and slowly bounced to a stop. It had rained the day before and the ground was muddy. Fire trucks, ambulances and crash wagons were there to greet us. Fortunately they were not needed.

We later found out that one of our own bombs, probably due to a faulty spinner fuse, exploded on the way out just below our plane. The bomb was of the type that was scored like a hand grenade so it would burst into many small pieces upon explosion. The fuel tanks in the wings were self sealing so we did not lose fuel. The damage was so extensive that I wondered how the wings had held up and did not fall apart on the way home. That only convinced me again how reliable the B17 Flying Fortress was and the damage it can absorb and still keep flying.

Our "451" was grounded for repairs. As a crew we completed the last two of our 35 missions in any pick-up plane available, finishing on 20 January 1945 after an attack on a railroad bridge in Mannheim, Germany. We all felt that we had lost a good friend that had served us well in many a

tight spot and it was time to move on.

(EDITOR'S NOTE—B-17G 43-38451 was repaired and flew its next mission on 28 January 1945 to Cologne. It flew 27 more missions until its return from an attack on Berlin on 28 March 1945. Almost out of fuel and in near-zero visibility, pilot Bob Edmunds brought the plane down in a crash-landing on an English beach near Rye Harbour. The landing destroyed the ball turret and the chin turret, and no-name B-17 "451" was retired for salvage. There were no injuries to the crew.)



THE "BONEYARD" WAS THE FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR "451." The B-17 was salvaged for spare parts after crash-landing on an English beach on 28 March 1945 returning from a mission to Berlin.

FROM MIA TO KIA— A TRAGIC TRANSITION

Here's how the parents of Clarence Mooneyham, Jr., 360th Squadron bombardier, were informed that their son was missing in action, and then later advised he had been killed in action. The sequence of messages from US military authorities spanned the period of a year.

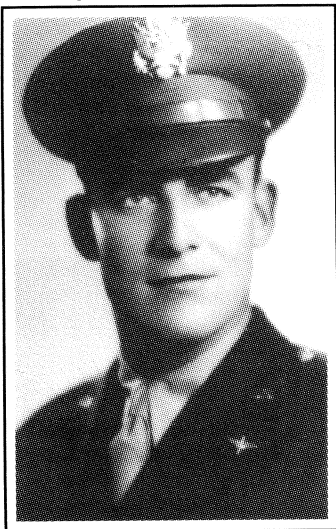
First, in mid-April of 1945, there was the dreaded Western Union Telegram—"THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON S/SGT MOONEYHAM CLARENCE JR HAS BEEN MISSING IN ACTION IN GERMANY SINCE 06 APR 45 CONFIRMING LETTER FOLLOWS. THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

This was followed on 21 May 1945 by a letter from Headquarters, Army Air Forces, which explained that while on a mission over Leipzig, Germany, on April 6, S/Sgt. Mooneyham's aircraft was in a collision with another B-17, fell into a spin and disappeared from view. The letter assured the parents that a search by land, sea and air was continuing. It also enclosed a list of the names and addresses of the next of kin of S/Sgt. Mooneyham's fellow crew members.

Finally, a letter from the Adjutant General of the Army dated 7 April 1946 provided further details about the collision, concluding, "In view of the fact that twelve months have now expired without the receipt of evidence to support a continued presumption of survival, the War Department must terminate such absence by a presumptive finding of death....I trust that the ending of a long period of uncertainty may give at least some small measure of consolation."

Lts. O'Connor and Peterson honored by the French

By Hal Susskind



Lt. Robert S. O'Connor

For the French to remember an incident that happened 57 years ago is amazing; for the U.S. Military to ignore the merits of such an incident is deplorable.

On June 10, 2001, the citizens of the French town of Malicorne-sur-Sarthe held an all-day ceremony honoring the memories of Lts. Robert S. O'Connor and Richard Peterson, two members of the 303rd Bomb Group who were killed in the crash of their B-17 outside of this French town some 57 years ago.

Briefly, the town and in fact, the French and American visitors, went all-out to celebrate the occasion. The ceremonies started with a High Mass in the town's 11th century church which was packed with veterans, government officials, French military, a USAF color guard and other specially invited guests. Neal O'Connor brother of Robert, his three sons and two grandsons occupied a front row pew as did Jeanne O'Connor Kelley, Robert's 83 year old sister.

After the mass, with the band playing American marches, there was a parade to the town center and the Mayor's house. Opposite the Mayor's house is a stone memorial dedicated to the French dead of WW II. To the surprise of the American visitors, especially the next of kin of the dead heroes, they had inscribed the names of Lt. O'Connor and Lt. Peterson on one side of the stone memorial which was unveiled by Neal O'Connor while his oldest son and the Major in charge of the color guard raised the American flag.

With the conclusion of the official

ceremony, the O'Connor family visited the crash site memorial erected by the citizens of Malicorne in 1949 to honor the dead crewmen and also the French patriots who aided some members of the O'Connor crew to escape capture by the Germans. Thirty-two French citizens took part in the escape of four members of the crew of "The Mugger." For their part in the evasion of the American flyers, 21 French patriots were deported to Germany and 13 died in Nazi prisons and slave labor work camps.

Independence Day, July 4, 1943, was celebrated in fine fashion as 24 B-17s of the 303rd Bomb Group took to the skies to attack the Gnome Rhone Aircraft Engine Works at LeMans, France. Major Lewis E. Lyle, Deputy CO of the group led the formation. Take-off and assembly were normal. Weather on the way to the target was good with 1/10 cloud cover and unlimited visibility. The approach to the Initial Point (IP) was as planned.

In the cockpit of "The Mugger," for this fireworks' day mission, was pilot Lt. Robert S. O'Connor on his 23rd mission, assisted by co-pilot Lt. Donovan B. Manifold on his fifth mission. Lt. Manifold remembers the mission quite vividly. "We were escorted by the RAF Spitfires across the channel into France until they had to break off at their maximum range. As we neared the I.P., we were supposed to be picked up by P-47s. They were to escort us to the target and to a point where the Spits would pick us up again and escort us home."

"Unfortunately the P-47s did not arrive on time (they were recalled) and we were intercepted just before the I.P. by 'The Abbeville Kids.' These were the FW-190s from one of the best German fighter groups."

"On the first head-on pass, our number two engine was shot out. Very shortly after this, our number three engine propeller went into flat pitch and ran away and could not be feathered. We could no longer maintain our position in the formation. Thus we were pounced upon by the FW-190s. We were being shot up badly, and a fire started in the right wing. There were many hits throughout the aircraft including the nose section and at least one in the cockpit."

"Our gunners were firing away, but I don't know if they actually shot down any of the enemy fighters. Bob and I were very busy in the cockpit. Unfortunately, we had no

chance to reach the English Channel. We headed towards a town, I have no idea which one it was. In retrospect, I think it may have been Malicorne-sur-Sarthe. Our controls had been damaged by enemy fighters."

"Bob turned on the alarm bell and announced over the intercom to bail out. We succeeded in turning the aircraft away from the town. As we were over France, Bob was concerned about avoiding civilian casualties."

"We were on fire and Bob said to me, 'Let's get out of here.'"

"I received a scalp wound above my right ear, and had a small piece of bone chipped away above my right eye socket. I didn't know the extent of the injuries to Bob at this time but there were some."

"We were still on fire. I headed for the exit. We were using chest type parachutes. When I got near the exit, I saw the navigator sitting there with his parachute on. Immediately, I pushed him out. I think Lt. Peterson was dead at this time."

Just as I snapped on my chest pack, there was an explosion and I think the aircraft went into a dive. Bob was behind me but I don't know if he had time to attach his chest pack before we started spinning. When I came to, I was nearing the ground. I popped my chute and hit the ground in a short time. My helmet, oxygen mask, gloves and flying boots had been torn off. I landed in a wheat field that had been recently harvested. There were small pieces of metal falling around me but I did not see our aircraft. I was captured immediately."

"They took me to an officer who spoke English. After interrogating me he took me to a hospital in LeMans. Here I learned that I had second and third degree burns on my hands and face and also scalp wounds. They kept me there for a week and then transferred me to a large hospital in Paris where I spent four weeks."

After this I was taken to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, Germany. There I had a rough time spending four weeks in solitary. As I had transferred from the Royal Canadian Air Force in England, the Germans had no information at all on me. Even my dog tags had been torn off in the accident."

Finally they gave up and sent me to Stalag Luft III. Upon arriving there I immediately looked for Lt. O'Connor. When I learned he was not there, I had hoped he had been

able to escape capture. It was not until much later that I learned he had been killed in the crash of "The Mugger."

"I didn't know that Bob had not been awarded the DFC. I just assumed that he had because he certainly should have been awarded the DFC and the Purple Heart."

Now here we are back in Malicorne, some 57 years later, surrounded by French friends and relatives reliving the last days of "The Mugger" and the sacrifices made by two American flyers and 32 French patriots on July 4, 1943.

In his remarks at the War Memorial dedicated to the French killed in WW II, the day's Master of Ceremonies had this to say. "I am overjoyed and moved at the same time to welcome you to Malicorne to commemorate July 4, 1943."

"That day, the mission of the Flying Fortress as we used to call them, was to bomb the factory Gnome et Rhone situated in LeMans. Attacked by a German squadron of FW-190s, the B-17, #42-5792 was touched and it caught fire. Thanks to the presence of mind and the courage of the pilot, the plane avoided our village in order to crash several hundred meters further. Eight crewmen managed to bail out. Lt. O'Connor and Lt. Peterson died during this attack."

"It is in honor of this sacrifice, and to remember this heroic act forever, that their names have been unveiled on our war memorial in the presence of the family of Lt. O'Connor, his brother, sister and nephews."

"This ceremony enables us to fortify the imperative obligation of memory that the act of these American people deserve."

And so the official, colorful celebration at Malicorne came to an end.

One of the many shortcomings of the military in World War II - and since - especially in the U.S. Army Air Forces, was its failure to recognize the heroic acts of its personnel, especially those who were shot down and were declared, "Missing in Action."

Since the 303rd Bomb Group lost 164 B-17s in combat between 1942-45 for a loss of approximately 1600 men - some dead, others POWs - it is entirely possible that there were more than 100 acts of bravery that went unreported and have still not been recognized by the U.S. military. (The writer is seeking '42 address of Lt. Peterson)

Almost Twenty Years After Dad's Death

DAUGHTER LOCATES 427TH NAVIGATOR'S 25-MISSION LOG

By Vicki Sharp

It wasn't until I packed up for a move from California to Washington about a year ago that I found Dad's flight log. Warren C. Kotz was a navigator in the 427th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group. The log is very detailed about each of his 25 missions, and has comments about incidents that happened to his crew. He passed away in 1983. The log has become a treasured family heirloom.

Dad didn't talk about the war much. In fact, I learned more about it from Tom Brokaw and Walter Cronkite. When he did talk about it, it was in an episodic story-telling fashion meant to please an adolescent daughter who did not have much interest in the subjects of battles and bloodshed, victories and losses.

He told entertaining tales with high praise for his fellow flyers, mentioning mostly his own crewmembers. It was a long time ago and he has been gone for 20 years, so I am sorry now I don't remember more of what he said about the individual men. In retrospect, his stories left out the nightmare-producing, realistic details of combat. Those memories he took with him when he died.

His most noticeable emotional connection to the war happened on Sunday eve-

nings when the TV show "The Twentieth Century" came on with the unmistakable voice of Walter Cronkite narrating. It seemed to the rest of the family to be a show of endless WWII film clips (I thought I had seen about 1,000 hours of B-17's lined up on runways, ready to take off). However, the show held Dad glued to his seat, and with some episodes he would clench the arms of his chair in a white-knuckled grip as he watched the B-17's in battle.

At the end of the show, he would be exhausted, but also exhilarated from re-living the events. Sometimes he would talk after the show, but mostly he would say something like he was so glad the war was over and we can't let it happen again.

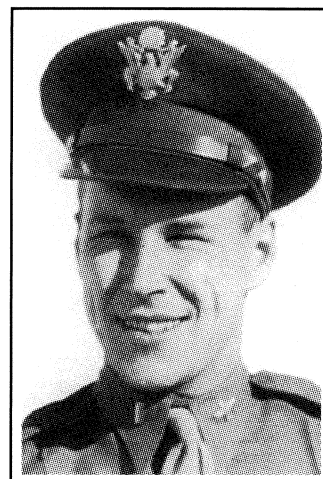
If he ever talked about the war, it was after one of those episodes of "The

Twentieth Century." A few of the stories he told seemed fantastic and more like something the flyers cooked up over a beer after a mission. Many of the tales he told me have turned out to be true.

One story involved a piece of flak lodged in a B-17 that was marked with the same number as the military serial number of a member of the crew. That story is true, and 303rd Bomb Group flyer Ed Lamme and I have exchanged correspondence on the subject. He is leaving the piece of flak, together with his name tags to a museum. He was in the same squadron, but not on the same crew as Dad.

Another story mentioned a big piece of flak lodged in a B-17 with that plane's serial number on it. The story is verified by one of the pilots, Capt. Strickland, and this B-17 was the plane Dad flew most frequently, the "Vicious Virgin."

An enemy shell shooting up through the floor of the fuselage behind the pilot and going through the roof to create nice round holes in the floor and ceiling was another "Oh yeah, right, Dad" stories he told. As written by Brian O'Neill in "Half a Wing, Three Engines and a Prayer", that exact incident happened and it happened to "Woodie"



Lt. Warren C. Kotz

Woddrop, one of Dad's pilots.

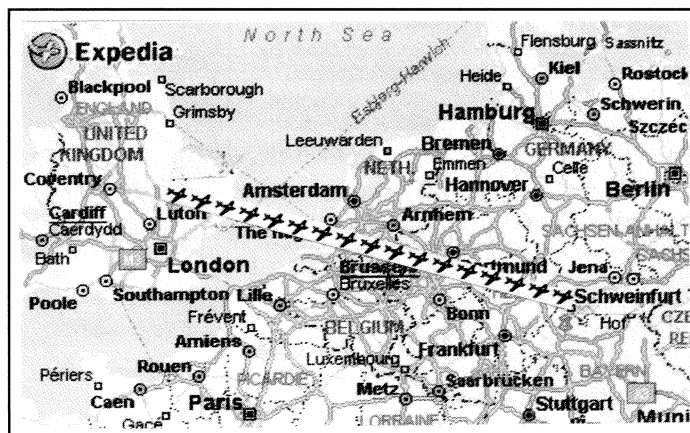
For me, the best war story he told was when he was wounded on the Hamburg mission. The plane was so cold and he was so busy, he did not know he had been hit. At some point he felt "wet" and realized he had a lap full of blood. His first thought was, "it's been shot off," but he quickly realized it was a thigh wound and he had other things to do before he attended to it.

He reasoned that even though he saw what looked like a lot of blood, he was not weak or light-headed so he needed to complete his tasks. According to his navigator log, he fixed his gun, which wasn't working, and when the plane dropped altitude he attended to the wound.

Upon returning to base, he had surgery to remove several pieces of flak, a (Continued on page 13)



MOST COMBAT CREWS HAD A FAVORITE B-17, AND PRAYED THEY WOULD FLY IT EVERY MISSION. For David Shelhamer and his 427th Squadron crew, it was *Vicious Virgin*. Standing, from left to right, are Bombardier William E. Lewis, Navigator Warren C. Kotz, Co-Pilot Frederick W. Tucker and Pilot David P. Shelhamer. The kneeling enlisted men, whose names may not be in order, are John Willett, Warren Harvie, Joe Keaton, Robert Volz, John Micek and Coster Vateckas.



THE DREADED SCHWEINFURT MISSIONS of 17 August 1943 and 14 October 1943 were among the most devastating in the combat history of the Eighth Air Force. Warren Kotz felt sure his crew wasn't coming back. The loss of American airmen and aircraft on these two missions far exceeded the so-called "acceptable" loss rate.

IT HAPPENED ONE WEEK

in Washington, Annapolis & Baltimore



IN BALTIMORE AT THE AIRPORT MARRIOTT HOTEL, loyal ladies of the 303rd Bomb Group Association volunteered their time to welcome and register arrivals as the reunion opened on September 5. Logging in Jim Mussi of the 427th Squadron are Jean DeCicco, Rose Leal, Sue Gardner and Marjorie Johnson. The reunion, which ended on September 9, attracted 420 veterans and their family members. 427th Squadron pilot Walt Ferrari and his wife Ruth did a splendid job of organizing and managing the gathering.



AT THE OFFICERS AND FACULTY CLUB OF THE US NAVAL ACADEMY AT ANNAPOLIS, 303rd representatives made a unique presentation to the Academy's museum. Robert C. Umberger, 359th Squadron, on the left in the above photo, donated shell casings fired in final salute over the grave of Admiral George Dewey in 1917. They had been Umberger family possessions for five generations. The shells, an original letter commemorating the event, a newspaper clipping and brass narrative plate were mounted on a shield-shaped walnut plaque designed and put together by Richard Bowler (on the right) of the 427th Squadron. The formal presentation was made by Association president Dick Johnson (wearing the sports shirt) to Dr. J. Scott Harmon, Director, USNA Museum.

AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, ADJACENT TO WASHINGTON, DC, the 303rd Bomb Group Association laid a wreath with the Group's colors at the Tomb of the Unknowns. The honors were done by the 303rd's Senior Advisor Major General Lewis E. Lyle (USAF, Ret) and the outgoing Association President Richard R. Johnson, accompanied by a uniformed member of the Third US Infantry.

Prior to the ceremony, the assembled guests witnessed the traditional and impressive changing of the guard, and heard the somber sounding of the long notes of "Taps."

The tour of Washington also featured visits to the National Air and Space Museum and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial.





LTC CLAIRE M. SAUCIER PROUDLY DISPLAYS A PICTURE OF HER FATHER

USAF OFFICER FINDS HER ROOTS AT 303RD REUNION

When LTC Claire M. Saucier, Commander of the 22nd Intelligence Squadron based at Fort Meade, Maryland, heard that the 303rd Bomb Group Association was meeting in reunion at the BWI Marriott Hotel, she came out to learn more about her World War II roots. Her father, William E. Saucier, served in the 303rd as a Staff Sergeant in the Control Tower at Molesworth. LTC Saucier's most recent prior exposure to the 303rd had been a visit to RAF Molesworth during her 1998-2000 tour of duty with the National Security Agency of Great Britain at Cheltenham. Coincidentally, the 22nd Intelligence Squadron is under 8th Air Force command.

Bill Saucier passed away in 1982. He was a member of the Association and had attended several reunions. His supervisor while on duty at Molesworth was Flying Control Officer Robert L. Johnson who recalled with pleasure Saucier's dedication to duty. Johnson's post-war career was service to God as a minister of the church, and he served as the 303rd's chaplain at the 2001 reunion.

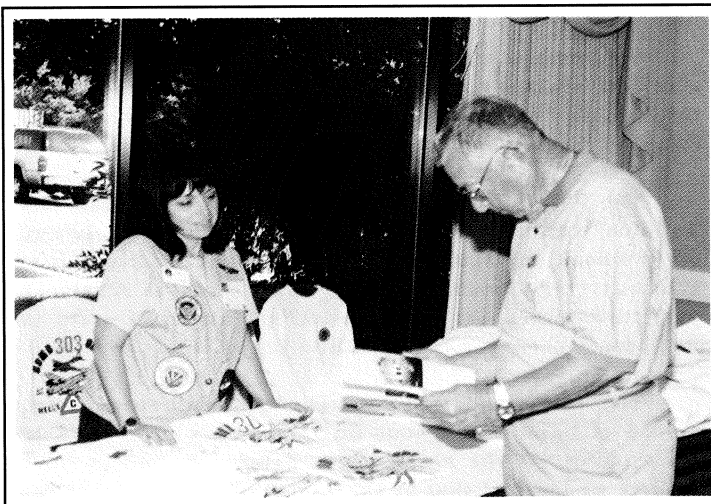
LTC Saucier's own special contribution to the reunion was to arrange for an Honor Guard from the 694th Intelligence Group at Fort Meade to participate in the 303rd's Memorial Service on Sunday, September 9.



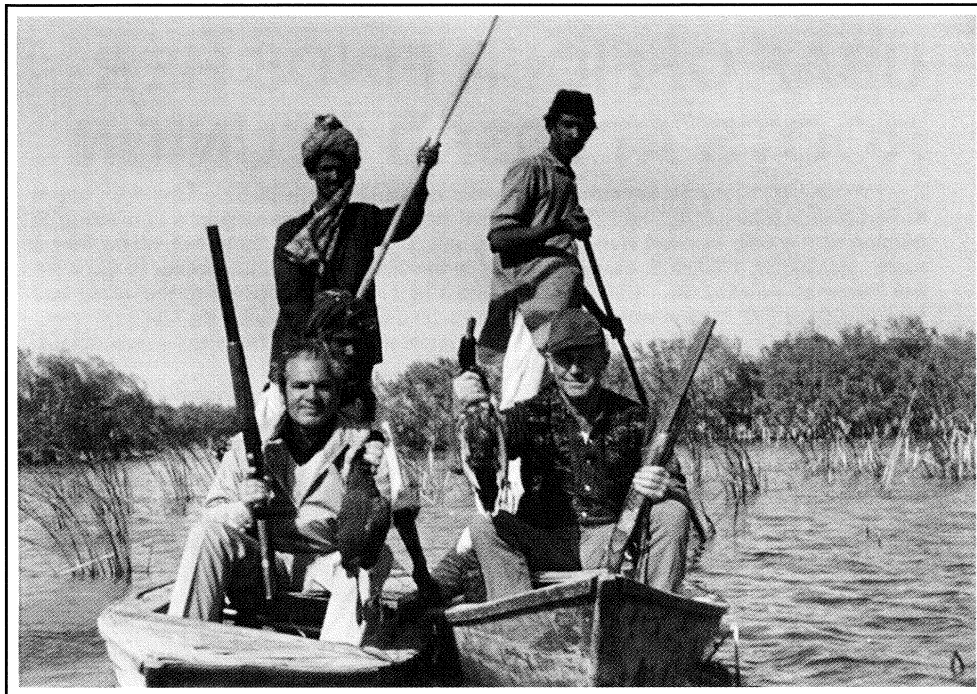
A CRUISE ON THE SCENIC SEVERN RIVER was on the reunion itinerary for many of those who attended the September 6 activities at the US Naval Academy. The "Harbor Queen" sailed out of docks in Annapolis. The weather was delightful as 303rd veterans and their family members crowded the decks for riverside views of perimeters of the Academy and other historic sights along the shoreline.



MARY LEE DEERFIELD (SEATED ON THE LEFT), WHO MANAGED BANQUET TABLE SEATING AT THE REUNION, pauses for some "hangar flying" with Betty Lyle (also seated) and Betty Kelley.



303RD POST EXCHANGE CO-MANAGER VICKI SYKES PREPARES TO RING UP A SALE as Ed Praplaski of the 359th Squadron ponders over which of the many items he wants to buy.



TWO EIGHTH AIR FORCE COMBAT VETERANS TRADE MACHINE GUNS FOR SHOTGUNS 25 YEARS AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Brigadier General Chuck Yaeger, on the right in this 1970 photo, flew P-51 Mustangs in the European Theater of Operations. He is seen with the 303rd's Eddie Deerfield on a duck shoot in Pakistan. Both were in service at the American Embassy in Islamabad, Yaeger as Air Attache and Deerfield as Press Attache. In 1947, Gen. Yaeger became the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound.

(SCHWEINFURT, from page 5)

Within minutes, we were under attack by swarms of enemy fighters. There were the deadly ME-109's and FW-190's, joined by relatively cumbersome ME-110's and JU-88s. The Germans were throwing everything at us. A .20 millimeter shell plowed through our right wing, missing the gas tank by inches. The bombardier called out .30 caliber holes in the cowling of the number two engine. We were still about an hour from the target.

The box formations to our far left and far right seemed to be drawing the brunt of the attack. Fortresses were falling everywhere. As they dropped out of the protective formations, enemy fighters roared in for the kills. Parachutes began peppering the sky as American airmen jumped from burning B-17's. At least they stood a chance of surviving in German POW camps. What sickened me to the point of tears were the Fortresses that were exploding in the air with no hope of their crews' escape.

We bombed the ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt in excellent weather at 3:11 PM, and made the turn for home three hours away. From the fires and smoke on the ground it looked like the bombers had devastated the target.

The FW-190's and ME-109's swooped in again. "Iza Vailable" suffered no hits on the return trip, but B-17's in other formations were being pounded unmercifully. It was a bloody reenactment of the inbound flight as American parachutes filled the air and B-17's plunged to earth in their death throes or exploded into fireballs.

The surviving aircraft, many with injured aboard, landed at bases throughout England about six o'clock in the evening. At the post-mission debriefing and in later reports we learned that of the 230 bombers scheduled for the mission 36 had aborted due to equipment failures even before leaving England. Of the 194 B-17's that crossed the enemy coast, another 36 were shot down with the loss of 360 crew members. The 8th Air Force's so-called

"acceptable loss rate" was five per cent. The Schweinfurt mission loss rate was almost twenty per cent.

General "Hap" Arnold hailed the mission as a "triumphant vindication" of daylight precision bombing as a potent weapon against Nazi Germany. "American bombers encountered the most intense fighter opposition so far met over Europe," said General Arnold, "but in a period of a few hours, we invaded Germany to a depth of 500 miles and crippled one of her most vital enterprises. We did it in daylight with the precision and accuracy of a marksman firing a rifle." Brigadier General Frederick Anderson, chief of Bomber Command, added, "We expected our losses to be heavy and they were. But the damage done to the enemy was much greater."

Schweinfurt was my ninth mission. Six weeks later, while returning from the submarine pens at Nantes, France, an engine on our B-17 "Lady Luck" burst into flame and we bailed out over the south coast of England, landing on rooftops, in trees, and in farmer's fields. On 6 March 1944, I was in the air over Germany as the introduction of long range P-51 "Mustang" fighters enabled the 8th Air Force to make the first heavy daylight raid against targets in Berlin. I went on to complete my 30th and final mission on 11 May 1944, suffering a face wound from a flak burst on the flight back from an attack on railway marshalling yards in Saarbrücken, Germany.

I was 19 when I flew the Schweinfurt mission. I'm 78 now. When I think back to those 30 missions, the first vision is of burning and exploding American bombers and of B-17 crewmen dangling helplessly from falling parachutes. I don't know if the bombing of the Schweinfurt ball-bearing factories shortened the conflict by six months. The target was described as 40% destroyed. With a war to win and an air power theory to prove, the Generals needed their assessment of the first Schweinfurt raid as a "triumphant vindication" of daylight bombing.

(Published in 8th AF News; edited for Hell's Angels Newsletter)

NAVIGATOR from page 9

piece of which remained in his "butt" as he referred to it, until he died. The remaining piece of flak was "too close to the bone" to be removed. Over the years, that piece of flak gave him problems and his doctor told him it was because periodically it moved.

The only story that remains a mystery and may be a fantasy tale after all was the following: A B-17 was hit mid-fuselage and the tail separated from the plane. The front end of the plane plummeted to earth and the tail was caught in an air current and floated down like a leaf. The tail gunner lived to tell it. I have been unable to find any confirmation of this story, and it sounds way too farfetched, but that's what I thought about the serial number stories.

Dad kept in touch with Bill Lewis, the bombardier and Fred Tucker, the copilot, after the war. He had phone conversations off and on with Dave Shelhamer, the pilot. While they were overseas, he spent most of his off hours with Lewis and Tucker and Warren Harvie, the radio operator.

After the war, he did get together with Bill Lewis many times and Fred Tucker at least once. I got the impression from Dad that at times they all just wanted to forget the war and get on with life. At times, when Lewis would call Dad, they would talk for hours, other times they would just say hello to keep in touch and neither one of them wanted to talk about the war.

Dad was always proud of being part of that crew. He felt they were a real team. He mentioned that Coster Vateckas, their tail gunner, was "a Greek guy, a real character". He described Woodie Woddrop as their squadron's "crazy" pilot, but Dad was not afraid to fly with him.

The good teamwork and a good pilot in Dave Shelhamer he felt made a huge difference in their ability to survive and do their jobs. He was unnerved when he was wounded and realized his crew would be doing missions without him and he would have to fly with other

crews. I know he had stories about all his crewmembers, but, unfortunately, he didn't write most of them down and I don't remember them.

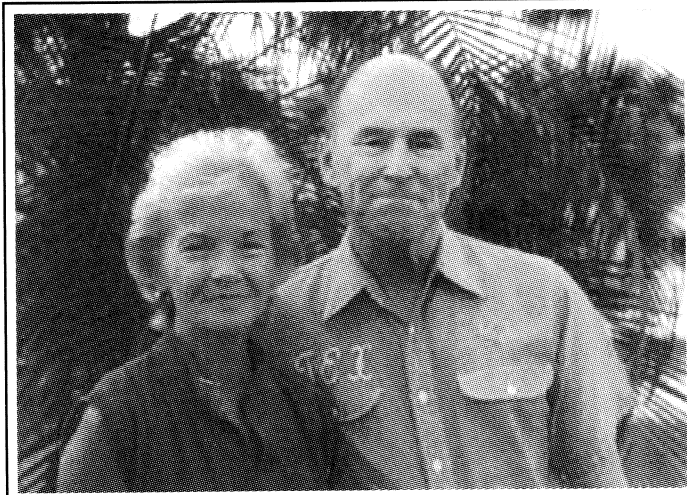
He loved the B-17 and flying in it. He would have gotten such a kick out of knowing his daughter and son-in-law recently rode in one. How did he ever use navigational instruments bouncing around in that plane? How did he and the bombardier ever concentrate on what they were doing while so exposed in the nose to frontal attacks?

He particularly was fond of "their" plane, the "*Vicious Virgin*." He said as time went by they started to get superstitious about "her" and were not thrilled with being assigned to other planes. And not without reason, since 9 of the 14 planes he flew in during his 25 missions were eventually shot down. "She" did make it through 50 missions before being retired as war weary. Dad said they would return to base shot full of holes and amazingly the plane would still be flying.

If he talked at all about the missions, he talked about the first raid on Schweinfurt. He was certain he was not coming back from that one and didn't believe they actually lived through it until they were back on the ground. Crewmembers were injured, the nose was severely damaged, there was a fire in the cockpit and his navigational equipment was shot up. To top things off, the mission lasted all day. And then they had to do Schweinfurt again two months later. When they took off on the second Schweinfurt, he was really certain he would not make it back. He thought he used up all his luck on the first one.

Another mission that bothered him was Hanover, but for different reasons. His mother was born there. He knew he had cousins there, but had never been in touch with them. After the First World War, my grandmother had returned to Hanover (she had left as a baby) to visit her cousins. So many years had passed that the German Grandma had learned at home in the U.S. was so different from what they were speaking in Hanover that she could hardly communicate.

The outbreak of WWII



WARREN "TEX" KOTZ AND HIS WIFE, ELAINE, (NICKNAMED "ENY") IN A 1980 PHOTO. They were high school sweethearts and were married in Appleton, Wisconsin, in January, 1944, two months after Kotz finished his 25th and last combat mission.

ended the family contacts with Germany. Dad said it still bothered him to be bombing the place. One of the crew reminded him that he could possibly be closer to his cousins than he thought—they might be pilots in the FW-190's or ME-109's!

Even though Dad rarely spoke of anything about the war except his crew and the plane, he had an individual story to tell. In 1941, he was an engineering student at the University of Wisconsin where he was essentially partying it up, getting fair grades, dropping a lot of classes and royally aggravating his father with his cavalier attitude toward responsibility. His father had insisted on an engineering course for Warren since it was the hot high tech career of the 1930's and Warren had no career goals at the time. Somehow, Dad ended up in the Army in 1941, and apparently happy about it.

At this time Warren was pretty much a cocky, spoiled only-child guy who was used to getting whatever he wanted. He decided he was going to be a pilot. While in training, he said that he learned to fly all right, but he wasn't yet ready for dealing with authority. When he was supposed to be making equidistant arcs along a country road in his training plane, he decided to buzz a farmer instead. I believe there were more "pranks" and he washed out of pilot's school.

He said it was a sobering

experience. It was probably the first time he didn't get what he wanted. He had no idea of an alternative choice. He said he was "given the option of navigation school or carrying a gun, so I took navigation school." He loved it. Warren spent the rest of his working life after the war as an engineer at Wright Patterson Air Force Base working on navigational systems and guidance systems for missiles and rockets.

"So, Dad," I asked him many years ago, "Do you think God kept you alive through the war?"

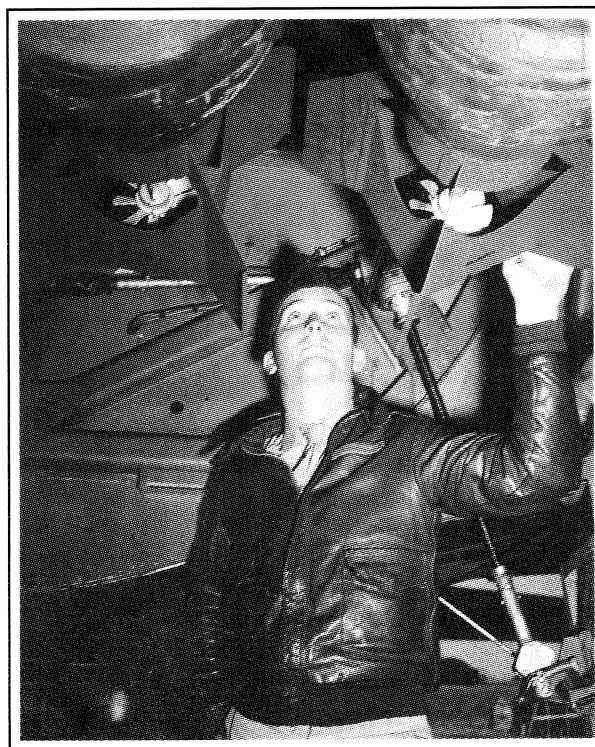
"No" was the surprising answer. It sounded too "arrogant" to him to feel he had been chosen over others who had died. He said there were really good men who suffered a great deal. "Everyone said things like 'Thank God I made it through that one' but I don't believe that God deserted the men who didn't make it." Warren said he, of course, didn't have the answer, but he couldn't believe a selection process had happened. "We all said 'Thank God we made it through that one' no matter what we believed."

Of the 47 men that Dad flew with on missions, 14 died in battle, almost 30%. That's close to the estimated one third who didn't return. Only three of his missions were flown with crews other than his original crew, and he felt his team was the main reason they made it, along with a lot of luck in dodging fighters and flak.



THE STALWART MEN OF THE 444TH SUB DEPOT gather for a "family portrait" outside the back door of their barracks at Molesworth. The men had the primary responsibility for the 303rd Bomb Group's aircraft repair and supply functions. Sitting in front, left-to-right, are Robert Quigley, Leo Michalski and Olen Obar. In the middle row, Henry Paeper, Richard Woolfe, Maurice Paulk, Harry Guenther and George Quailey. Standing at the rear, Theodore Essock, Wayne Baker, Leonard Butler, Daniel Mullaney and Albert Wagle.

303rd's Pin-Up Men Of The Month



ABOVE, 358TH PILOT IRL BALDWIN INSPECTS *HELL'S ANGELS* BOMB BAY before the mission to Kiel, Germany on 14 May 1943. It was Baldwin's 25th and last mission. The B-17F *Hell's Angels* had already completed its record-setting 25th mission.

ON THE LEFT, FEEDING THE PIGEONS IN LONDON WHILE ON A 48-HOUR PASS are Jack Terrill, radio operator/gunner, and Jacob Gornto, engineer, of the 359th Squadron.

Molesworth Diary

303RD HITCHHIKER RIDES WITH ROYALTY

I got my first 48-hour pass from Molesworth in November of 1942 and was bound for London to meet up with Johnny Kosilla of the B-17 *Hell's Angels* ground crew. There were no vehicles leaving the base to give me a lift to the train station at Thrapston 10 miles away, so I was hitchhiking. There were five GI's already on the road looking for a ride to Thrapston. Over the hill behind us came this magnificent limousine. It drove past us, and then stopped about 30 yards down the road. A liveried chauffeur and footman sat up front. The footman stepped out and called, "We can take one." The others declined to separate, so I got into car. In the rear seat were two British WAAF officers with lots of "scrambled eggs" on the visors of their caps. I knew I was in important company, but had no idea who they were. One the ladies asked how I liked England. I answered with my best New York City style fast-talking jokes and had them laughing all the way to Thrapston where they took me directly to the train station.

The following summer at Molesworth we had a Class-A uniform parade inspection by some heavy brass from 8th Air Force Headquarters. Much to my surprise, the two ladies from my ride to Thrapston were with them. It turned out that one was the Duchess of Gloucester, King George's daughter-in-law, and the other was the commanding officer of the WAAF's. Not one flicker of recognition brightened their faces as they passed me while I stood ramrod straight at attention. Which proved only one thing—my dismal record with women was still intact.

Bernie Kastenbaum
358th Squadron S-2 Staff

AS B-17'S ASSEMBLE FOR MISSION, B-24 CRASHES

It was November 27, 1944. The 303rd's B-17's were assembling in the air over England for an attack on the railway marshalling yard at Offenbug, Germany. I was in the nose of the aircraft piloted by Marvin Fink. Dick Albright, already in the ball turret, called out on the intercom, "There's a B-24 in some sort of trouble below us. It's throwing smoke from the port inboard engine." The pilot called out, "Get a fix on the guy and we'll radio in his position." He was referring to getting an exact location by using the G-box radar device on the navigator's table. Seconds later, the Liberator bomber must have struck the ground and exploded. The cloud cover below us was disrupted by an enormous shock wave, like a rock hitting a milky pond. We were flying at 9,000 feet and felt the concussion pound us with a resounding "whump." A brilliant fireball pushed its way up, coloring the cloud mass with a red-orange glow, with a pall of black smoke in its core. I called to the ball turret gunner, "Did anybody get out." Dick answered, "Didn't see any chutes, but they were so near the clouds that anyone hitting

the silk would have dropped out of sight." We flew on to strike the rail yards at Offenbug and were back at Molesworth after seven hours and fifteen minutes in the air. Flak was moderate and no enemy aircraft were observed.

Robert A. Hand
360th Squadron Bombardier

AN AIRMAN DEFENDS HIS COMBAT RECORD

The day following the Allied invasion on the Normandy beaches, we were on a mission to hit road junctions in France. The flak was fierce. I had a sudden terrific pain in my head, and thought I must have been hit by a shell fragment. Later, when I felt my head, there was a trace of blood on my hands. I didn't want to be pulled out of combat, so I didn't report it to the flight surgeon when the mission was over. That was a dumb move on my part.

On a mission to Berlin two weeks later, I began to have hallucinations, I guess from a concussion to my head. We were under attack by enemy fighters when an angel appeared and told me if I didn't shoot down any German fighters she would help end the war. I did what the angel asked. When we landed back at Molesworth, my pilot really gave me a rough dressing down. He knew I had flown combat missions with the RAF and had been an instructor in gunnery. I told him I couldn't fire during the mission because my guns had mechanical problems. His dressing down hurt, but I didn't want to tell him I had a conversation with an angel. After all these years, I just want to set the record straight.

Charles P. Eberly
427th Squadron Top Turret Gunner

RAIL TRACKS ARE TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY

We were aboard *Scorchy* heading for Frankfurt, Germany on February 11, 1944. Before we reached the target, flak knocked out two engines and a wing fuel tank. We dropped out of formation and turned for home. We decided to do something worthwhile with our bomb load. Our pilot, Howard Dahleen, took us over a rail line and Ray Gauthier, the bombardier, laid down a string of 500-pound bombs making a real mess of about a quarter-mile of track. Our air speed was only about 90 knots when two German fighters came up, looked us over, and for whatever reason went back down. Our fuel was so low that we made preparations to ditch in the channel. Once we reached the Belgium coast, Howard decided to try to make it to England and an RAF Spitfire base at Shoreham. We landed, but our hydraulics were gone and our brakes failed. *Scorchy* crashed into a building and an anti-aircraft gun emplacement and broke in half at the radio compartment, with the tail section ending up behind the left wing. Cliff Swanson, our radio operator,

(Continued on page 16)

DIARY from page 15

went tumbling onto the ground, shaken up but not seriously hurt. Our engineer, Orrick Malcolm, suffered a separated shoulder. Other crew members had minor cuts and bruises. Minor, that is, when you figure it was a crash none of us might have walked away from.

Russell S. Klingensmith
359th Squadron Navigator

NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHEVIOT DISASTER

On December 16, 1944, the 303rd was to bomb the railroad yards at Ulm, Germany. After we were in the air, orders came recalling the mission because of severe blizzard conditions. Our B-17 became separated from the Group formation. Radio contact was difficult because of the weather and enemy interference. Blizzard conditions were so bad we couldn't tell visually whether we were over water or land. I left the top turret and went to the rear of the aircraft to tell the crew to prepare for a possible crash-landing or bail-out. I stopped in the radio room to discuss our situation with Joel Berly. The radio fix he had received put us in the area of the Cheviot Hills, some reaching a height of 3,000 feet, in Northern England. I stepped into the bomb bay to return to the cockpit. My next recollection was standing outside the plane with snow blowing in my face. We had hit the top of a hill, crushing the nose section and killing both the navigator Fred Holcombe and the toggler Frank Turner.

Moments later, James Hardy, our co-pilot, appeared through the blowing snow leading George Kyle, our pilot, who was severely injured. I asked Hardy about the other men, but he said he couldn't account for them because they might have escaped from the rear of the aircraft. Slowly, Kyle, Hardy and I worked our way down the steep hillside, eventually arriving at a small farmhouse. The farmer and his wife greeted us with a shotgun and a pitchfork. They thought we were Germans. We convinced them we were Americans and needed help. They put us up in the stable and got in touch with the RAF base at Milfield. In time, an ambulance arrived and picked us up. The rest of the crew had been rescued by shepherds and their dog, and we were reunited at the hospital.

Ernest G. Schieferstein
360th Squadron Engineer

TRIANGLE-C IS WELCOME SIGHT TO LOST B-17

Minutes after we took off from Molesworth on a mission our radio compass failed. When we broke out of the clouds at 16,000 feet, we couldn't find the 303rd formation. The visibility on the ground at base was zero because of heavy fog, so we found another bomber Group, joined them, and flew their mission. We left them when we crossed the English coast on the return, and, without a radio compass, began to look for Molesworth. We saw another cluster of B-17's in the distance and moved toward them for a closer look. As we approached, we saw the C in the triangle. We tacked on and flew home.

Ernest Paul Boat
358th Squadron Co-Pilot

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Walt and Ruth Ferrari, congratulations and a big 303rd THANKS to you and your staff of volunteers for the joyful BWI reunion. Life is made a joy by our pleasant association with longtime dear friends and neighbors. What could be more joyful than spending a few days with those who shared with you, so closely, in creating The Greatest Generation?

Branson, Missouri is no doubt the entertainment capitol of our USA. John Ford has already been at work for months to make our 2002 reunion there another great and unique one. All he needs now is for you to be there. Branson is centrally located so no one will have to travel too far. Start making plans now for you and your family to join us October 3, 2002. What a wonderful opportunity for a family vacation of fun and fellowship.

As your past treasurer, I am pleased to report that your 303rd Bomb Group Association is in sound financial condition, thanks to your generous support of our continuing Benefactor Program and sales of "The Molesworth Story" on CD-ROM's. If you or any of your family served in the 303rd, your name and record may be found in the CD-ROM for you and the world to see. Lots of pictures, too.

It does cost a bit of money to sustain our many Association projects, such as our outstanding newsletter, annual reunions, the award-winning Web Page and other top notch activities which must be kept up to high 303rd standards. The next big project is the Silver Anniversary Collection of the Hell's Angels Newsletter—25 years of issues in a two-volume set. Don't fail to buy a set when you get the order form in the mail.

For now, thank you for being an active part of your 303rd. Stay happy and healthy. See you in Branson come next October. John Ford says the reunion will run from October 3rd to 8th. He says the registration forms will be mailed on March 1, 2002.

Dear friends, best wishes in all your ventures.

Jack Rencher

IF YOU PLAN TO VISIT RAF-MOLESWORTH

Brian McGuire, contract employee at the Joint Analysis Center at RAF-Molesworth, has been the 303rd Bomb Group's contact in making arrangements to visit the base. He has also facilitated the shipment to members of wood carvings by Englishman Bill Adams. With McGuire's departure last June, new procedures were established. Members planning to visit Molesworth should first get in touch with Robin Beeby, our representative in England. He will coordinate the visit with Bruce Henninger, Chief of Protocol at the JAC. Robin's address and telephone number are on page 2. Timothy Quilter, a Naval Reservist on duty at the JAC, has volunteered to assist Bill Adams in shipping carvings.

MOVING? DIDN'T GET THE NEWSLETTER?

Please DO NOT send change of address or requests for back issues of the newsletter to the editor. Dennis Smith, the Membership Chairman, prepares the mailing list for the newsletter, records changes in addresses, and, while his supply lasts, sends missed copies of the newsletter to those who request it. You'll find his address and telephone number on page 2.

OPEN FORUM

AUGUST 2001 NEWSLETTER PART OF VET'S MEMORIAL

I am writing from my parent's home in Auburn, Washington, and dislike passing on sad news but wish to temper it. My father, Walter Hargrove, looked forward very much to reading the article you printed in the August 2001 issue. Knowing it would appear kept his spirits up. I sent a copy to Mom immediately after receiving it. She affirmed that Dad was determined to hang on until the story came out. She read the entire issue to him. He has now slipped away, just last night, so the date will be recorded as August 8, 2001. He came around enough to whisper and wave goodbye.

Dad loved the Hell's Angels Group and always regarded his service as one of the proudest parts of his life. You conveyed this beautifully in the story you printed. What you did means a lot to our family, and we are going to display the newsletter at the memorial service.

James L. Hargrove
Athens, GA.

LONGEST SERVING 303RD COMMANDER LAUDS TROOPS

Great people do great things, and this is what made the 303rd "Hell's Angels" Bomb Group the greatest fighting unit in the greatest fighting force ever created—The Mighty Eighth! I'm proud to have had the privilege of being the 303rd's commander the longest. Congratulations to you and all who contribute to the Hell's Angels Newsletter. I have enjoyed it so much.

Kermit D. Stevens
Colonel, USAF (Ret)

LATER GENERATION SALUTES "GREATEST GENERATION"

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the 303rd, here and gone, for their gallant efforts in the Second World War. These contributions by those who found themselves laboring in the cause of humanity have farther reaching effects than too many people appreciate today. I became interested in WWII many years ago when it was a topic of a report I gave in high school. I have been a

student of history since then and have devoted many hours to reading the accounts of death and survival of the generation who indeed saved the world. Let it be known to all of you who may read this that there are a lot of us later generations that realize that a debt of their very existence is owed to you.

Josh Goodale
Park City, Utah

DAUGHTER SEEKS DATA ON NURSE WHO HELPED DAD

My dad, Wesley Brouillette, passed away 20 years ago. He was a firefighter in the 359th Squadron. I remember him telling me about a nurse at the 303rd Station Hospital who took such good care of him while he was ill. I'd like to know more about her. I can't remember her name, but Dad had her picture in his World War II files.



I read the article about the hospital by Mary Eisenhart in the Hell's Angels Newsletter and wonder if she knew the nurse.

Pat Schultes
Manning, IA

EDITOR'S NOTE — Here's what we learned from Mary Eisenhart:

"The name of the nurse in the photo is Martha Zych. We were both members of the 303rd Station Hospital and shared a room with four other nurses in Lilford Hall. Martha was a very caring person, quiet and unassuming and dedicated to her profession. Her untimely death in

January 1945 from a liver ailment was a great loss to all who knew her. She was buried in the American Cemetery near Cambridge, England."

FOLLOW-UP ON HEROYA, NORWAY MISSION ARTICLE

Regarding your article in the last issue about the mission to Heroya in Norway on July 24, 1943, I like what I saw. Here I sit 58 years and four days after flying on that 2,000 mile mission and have been pondering all the events that led up to what appears in the article. It has been a long trail, from the mission itself to the visit to Heroya in 1993 for the radio broadcast.

I am sending copies of the issue to Tom Andersen at the Hydro plant in Heroya.

Charles S. Schmeltzer
358th Squadron Gunner

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR ASKS "WHERE'S MY STORY"

My compliments on your fine newsletter. I look forward to each one—they certainly bring back memories. In response to your request, several months ago I sent you two pages of some of my more interesting experiences while serving in the 303rd. I was wondering when I might see them in print as a part of the newsletter. Again, compliments on your good work with the newsletter and your years of service to the Association.

Russ Klingensmith
359th Squadron Navigator

EDITOR'S REPLY—The response to my request for story materials when I took over as editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter three years ago was overwhelming. I have more than a hundred excellent items, some with potential for articles and others for the Molesworth Diary pages. It's a blessing in disguise, because it may be months or years before writers see their contributions in print. Some may never appear. I try to achieve an editorial balance between what I think our veterans and their family members are interested in reading, while at the

same time spreading the story credits among as many of the air and ground elements of the 303rd Bomb Group as possible. Sometimes this seems like an impossible goal, but I do the best I can.

JOURNALIST CALLS 303RD NEWSLETTER "IMPRESSIVE"

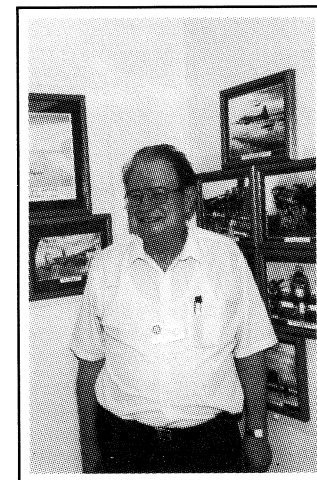
Thank you for sending me a copy of your August 2001 newsletter with my column about Ray Hills and Bob Umberger. I was pleased with the play you gave it. Your newsletter is a most impressive production, and I have read it from cover to cover. Lots of interesting material for this old World War II buff to contemplate. Keep up the good work!

Kent Ward
Bangor (ME) Daily News

POW SPECIALIST SETS UP NEW EXHIBITS IN KANSAS

I just completed arranging new photo exhibits at Forbes Air Base and the Topeka Veterans Hospital. The pictures feature the 303rd B-17 *Thunderbird*, a formation of B-17's returning from the first Schweinfurt mission on August 17, 1943, Sgt Joseph Sawicki's act of heroism, the prisoner of war camps Stalag Luft I and II and other memorable scenes. I continue to work with fellow POW's as an officer and advisor in the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association.

Dr. Carl J. Fyler
360th Squadron Pilot



**Dr. Carl J. Fyler and the exhibit
in the Topeka VA Hospital.**

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

It's hard to believe that a year has passed. Now that we have returned home from the Baltimore reunion it is time to get back to work.

This is my first full year as your membership chairman. I must say that in this role, I have found it to be most interesting and time consuming. The time that I now spend in this role is most gratifying.

For those of you that ordered the 2001 Membership Directory will notice that it is smaller in size than the 1999 issue. This is due to the fact that I did not put a section sorted by ZIP code. If you are looking for members that were with your unit, within your ZIP code or phone area code, please contact me. I will be able to supply you with that information.

If you have not order a directory but wish to, you still can. The cost is only \$10.00 with your check made payable to 303rd BGA and mailed to my attention. I will insure that you receive a copy.

As of 9/1/2001, active membership by type is as follows,

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Molesworth veterans | 1234 |
| Widows | 132 |
| Family | 314 |
| Friends | 83 |
| Honor members | 11 |
| Pending memberships | 33 |

Total Active Members 1754

I'm sure that if the association sends out another request for donations like it did last year, that the February 2002 issue will be full of names.

Dennis Smith
Membership/Roster Chairman

IN MEMORIAM

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ray Alexander, 5/2001 | 359 th |
| Hower E Bitler Jr., 3/19/00 | 359 th |
| Gilbert C Borges, 2/4/2000 | 359 th |
| Mrs. Dorothy Brouillette, 4/25/2001 | 359 th (W) |
| Martin L Clark, 8/4/2001 | 358 th |
| Ted Couch, 8/3/2000 | 360 th |
| Paul A Curry, 4/25/2000 | 360 th |
| William Eason, 5/2001 | 360 th |
| Merle Eckert, 9/2001 | 359 th |
| George B Engleman, 4/18/2000 | 360 th |
| William W Fleming, 9/10/1998 | 427 th |
| William D Foster, 6/14/2001 | 358 th |
| Walter Hargrove, 8/8/2001 | 358 th |

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| John D Haynie, 8/8/2000 | 360 th |
| William J Herod, 8/2/2001 | 427 th |
| Walter L Hustus, 5/27/1999 | 360 th |
| R. A. "Boots" Knight, 8/2/2001 | 358 th |
| Eugene W Lavalleur, 5/19/2001 | 360 th |
| Edward S Levandoski, 8/13/2001 | 360 th |
| Steve Ligino, 1/31/2001 | 427 th |
| Robert S McCall, 11/9/1997 | 427 th |
| Arthur S Middleton, 4/17/2001 | 359 th |
| Benjamin L O'Dell, 11/2000 | 359 th |
| Vernon Parrish, 4/20/2001 | 359 th |
| William M Preston, 6/27/2001 | 360 th |
| Robert A Reich, 11/13/1999 | 360 th |
| S. E. Rosser, 5/13/2001 | 358 th |
| Robert A Shaw, 6/13/2000 | 427 th |
| Elvin F Webbink, 12/20/99 | 360 th |
| Rollin L Wentz, 10/9/2000 | 360 th |
| Lamar H Whittier, 6/24/2001 | 358 th |

SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Carville J Brian | 360 th |
| Christopher Tarnava Jr. | 359 th |

REPEAT SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Kenneth "Dick" Hawes | 358 th |
|----------------------|-------------------|

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Jack R Allerton | 359 th |
| Theodore R Bader | Family |
| James Bates | Family |
| Robert L Bates | 359 th |
| Eugene A Black | 444 th |
| *Guy W Collier | 360 th |
| Donald H Conley | 360 th |
| George Coughlin | 427 th |
| Robert De Feis | 360 th |
| *Theodore Del George | 360 th |
| Louis Fish | 359 th |
| John T Goslin | 358 th |
| James A Harwick | 358 th |
| Paul W Hershner | 358 th |
| *Milton L Jobe | 358 th |
| *David L Kennedy | 359 th |
| Richard M Ketner | Family |
| William I Kever | 358 th |
| *Leo Lanier Jr., | 360 th |
| Vincent J Malisse | 359 th |
| Ellis D Mowery | 359 th |
| *Norbert M Philson | 358 th |
| James H Pleasant | 358 th |
| *Louis J Prudhoe | 359 th |
| *Orphus Smith Jr. | 427 th |
| *Roy L Taylor | 303 rd |
| *Anthony Tronolone | 444 th |
| Sidney L Underdown | 359 th |
| Barbara King Wallace | Family |
| Judson F Watson Jr. | 360 th |
| *Charles M Webster | 358 th |
| Frederick G Wolf | Family |
| Lewis L Zimmerman | 360 th |

*Found during the Lost Member search

NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

****Eugene A Black, 444th, 6649 West 6th Street, Rio Linda, CA 95673-3116, (916) 991-5213, spouse Ireta**
****Vito J Brunale, 358th, 459 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708-1102, (914) 337-7170, spouse Joan**
****Robert D Bur, 359th, 300 Swiss Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54302-4327, (920) 468-0863, spouse Charlotte**
****Guy W Collier, 360th, 1016 Dixie Street, Blytheville, AR 72315-1919**
Donald H Conley, 360th, 1414 Simpson Ferry Rd, New Cumberland, PA 17070-1567, (717) 774-4354, spouse Julie A
***George Coughlin, 427th, PO Box 96, Chelsea, NY 12512-0096, (845) 831-0999**
Victor M Craig, 358th, 310 S Lincoln St, Dixon, CA 95620-3214, 707-678-4714, spouse Betty L
****Louis Fish, 359th, 378 Timberline Dr., Joliet, IL 60431-4827, (815) 741-1010, spouse Shirley**
****Milton L Jobe, 358th, 4800 Fillmore Ave., #1257, Alexandria, VA 22311-5077, (703) 379-9492**
John R Johnston, 358th, 602 Lake Como Cir., Orlando, FL 32803-6620, (407) 894-6456, spouse Elizabeth
****David L Kennedy, 359th, 125 E Club Drive, Thomasville, GA 31792-7402, (229) 226-8047, spouse Mary Frances**
Jack B Kennedy, 359th, 1041 Academy Drive, Youngstown, OH 44505-1619 (330) 759-9733. Spouse Kathryn(Kitty)
****Vincent J Malisse, 359th, 6061 Montgomery Bend, San Jose, CA 95135-1429, (408) 223-9407**
Ellis D Mowery, 359th, 9444 Via Segovia, New Port Richey, FL 34655-1282, (727) 372-9337, spouse Theresa
***Joseph W Savoy, 65th, 5965 47th Ave N, St Petersburg, FL 33709-5120, spouse Ina**
****Orphus Smith Jr., 427th, 1170 Sherman Dr., Greenwood, IN 46143-1040, (317) 882-8436, spouse Dorothy**
***Christopher Tarnava Jr., 223 Taft Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78225-1137, (210) 226-8785**
****Judson F Watson Jr., 2325 Eaton Rd., Charlotte, NC 28205-7422, (704) 567-1753**
***Found as a result of "Lost 303rd Comrade Search Project"**
**** Found as a result of the "Lost 303rd Comrade Search, not in the 2001 Membership Directory**

NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Theodore R Bader, 204 W Teek Street, Parkston, SD, 57366-2211, (605) 928-7380, Spouse Vernetta
Alexander L Blondeau, 419 Myrtle Hill Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70810-4214, (225) 769-2675, spouse Claudine
Diane L (Cathey) Bourdet, 145 Crossbow Way, Ben Lomond, CA 95005-9300, spouse Reid
James F (Jim) Kelley, 3706 N Rosser Apt 202, Alexandria, VA 22311-3752 (703) 671-0039
Bernard J Mahan Jr., 3038 Sonja Court, Oceanside, CA 92056-3123, spouse Marlene
Glenda J McGee, 13195 Trails End Ct., Manassas, VA 20112-3698, (703) 791-6463, spouse Jim
Donald Ririe, 134 Pleasant Valley Blvd., Belle Vernon, PA 15012-4004, (412) 929-7532, spouse Rita
David W Tooley, 153 Coolidge Ave, Libertyville, IL 60048-3205, (847) 680-4045, spouse Kathy

NEW FRIENDS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Kerri Zwicky, 8908 Wyoming Court, Apt B, Clovis, NM 88101-9297

Joey Cadwell, P O Box 2213, Carefree, AZ 85377-2213 (480) 575-0475, spouse Bess

DONATIONS

Kermit D Stevens, donation for the "Hell's Angels Newsletter"

Julian E Dennis (359th), for the membership directory

Janice A Baldwin for Mrs. Joan Hogue, general donation
Mrs. Helen Branham, general donation
Mrs. Charlotte Jaouen, general donation
Mrs. Frances Kasik, general donation
Mrs. Mildred La Perch, general donation
Mrs. Billy McDonald, general donation
Mrs. Roxana Quiggle, general donation
Mrs. Lynn Seelock, general donation
Harold R "Red" Timm, (360th), general donation
Mrs. Barbara E Woolpert, general donation

BENEFACTOR PROGRAM

Eugene E Gillette
Mrs. Estelle G Watson
Win Boutelle (359th)
Bernard Rawlings (427th)
Kenneth "Dick" Hawes (358th)

IN MEMORY OF DONATIONS

Michael Crandell, in memory of SSgt. Victou Paul Crandell & the "Old Glory Crew"
Eula Casello, in memory of John Casello (360th)
Mrs. Dorothy Borges, in memory of Gilbert C Borges (359th)
Win Boutelle, in memory of Claude W Campbell (359th)
Mrs. Melicent M Bailey, in memory of Jack W Bailey (359th)

ADDRESS CHANGES

Bruce E Arnold, 1232 Park Place, Sherman, TX 75092-3336
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THE EDITOR COMMENTS

It was bound to happen sooner or later—the Board of Directors' epic decision to publish all past issues of the Hell's Angels Newsletter in a single collection. It's a monumental undertaking, with the dual purposes of producing an impressive historical document as well as a family heirloom to be treasured as it passes from a veteran's generation to future generations.

The 303rd Bomb Group Association's newsletter has been acclaimed since April of 1976 when the first issue reached the mailboxes of members. It has been described as the glue that holds the Association together and has proved to be the post-war's most effective means of rekindling the bond between Molesworth veterans. Without the Hell's Angels Newsletter, it is doubtful that the Association would have matured into the vibrant, effective organization it is today.

Al Martel, 427th Squadron waist gunner, was the first editor with his inaugural single issue in 1976. He was followed by Harry Jenkins, a 359th Squadron pilot, who published 12 issues from November 1977 to July 1981. Then came Bud Klint, a 427th pilot, with 14 issues from January 1982 to May 1985. He was succeeded by Hal Susskind, 359th navigator, who held the reins from December 1985 to May 1998, turning out 46 issues. My first edition was November 1998 and I've produced 13 issues. My Molesworth pedigree is 360th radio operator/gunner.

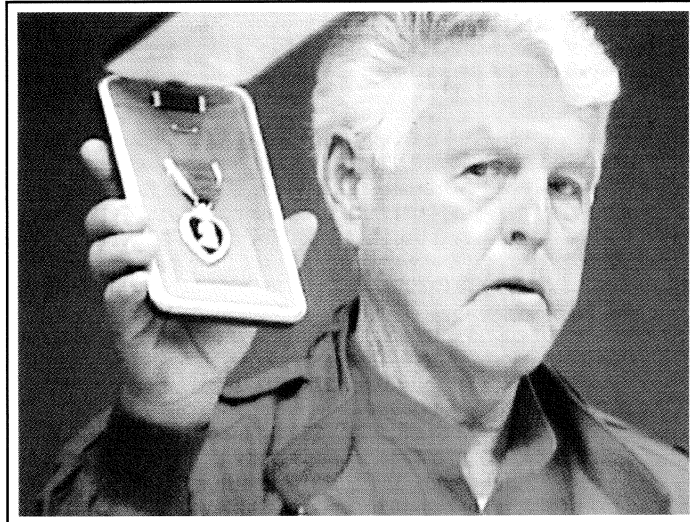
Since the birth of the Hell's Angels Newsletter 25 years ago, 86 issues have been published with a total of 1,175 pages. In the early years, from 1976 to 1985, there were rarely more than eight pages in an issue. The number of pages jumped to 12 and then 16 over the next 10 years. Ever since the November 1996 edition, the Hell's Angels Newsletter has remained at a consistent 20 pages, published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

To create the Silver Anniversary Collection, every one of those 1,175 pages will be reproduced in black, tint or color as it appeared in the original issue. Page size will be maintained at a constant 8 1/2 by 11 inches. Publication will be in a two-volume set.

The Collection will have the essential added benefit of a detailed index to enable readers to find what they're looking for with relative ease. There will be thousands of entries referring to personnel, places, missions, aircraft, awards, military units, memorials, POW's and reunions, as well as references leading to hundreds of articles and photos. It's estimated that the index alone will add another 100 pages to the publication.

Members will soon receive in the mail full details about the Silver Anniversary Collection of the Hell's Angels Newsletter, along with an order form. The number of books published will depend on advance orders. Only one print run is planned. Those not ordering will not have a second chance.

Eddie Deerfield



Mission's Miracle Survivor Finally Awarded Purple Heart

George H. Emerson didn't bail out on the mission to Lutzkendorf, Germany on 9 February 1945. He fell out of the tail section at 25,000 feet when it was ripped away in a collision with another B-17. The rest of his nine-man crew perished. Here's his story:

I was flying in my usual tail gunner position on the 427th Squadron's Barrat crew. Just a few minutes before bombs away, I felt a tremendous impact. I was being thrown about so wildly that I believe I became semi-conscious. I had my parachute on because three weeks earlier I had seen a B-17 getting the tail assembly shot off. From then on, I wore mine hooked to only one of the two rings on the harness so it wouldn't interfere with handling the tail guns. I remember falling through a hole, probably where the tail was severed from the aircraft. When I recovered consciousness some time later, the parachute was open, still hooked to one ring, but I can't remember pulling the ripcord. I was taken prisoner soon after landing. I was bleeding from lacerations to my face and head. The Germans let me wash off the blood, but no treatment was given. I was liberated about three months later.

A few years after the war, my father pursued the Purple Heart award for me. It was denied because the wounds were presumed to be due to pilot error and not enemy action. In 1996, Harry Schultz, the navigator on *Pogue-Ma-Hone*, the other B-17 involved in the collision, testified that his aircraft was hit by flak causing it to veer into our plane. Out of their crew of nine, only Schultz and three others survived. The pilot, A. K. Nemer, was among the dead.

On July 30, 2001, some 56 years after the tragic wartime incident, I was presented with the Purple Heart at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 63 in Garden City, Idaho.

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