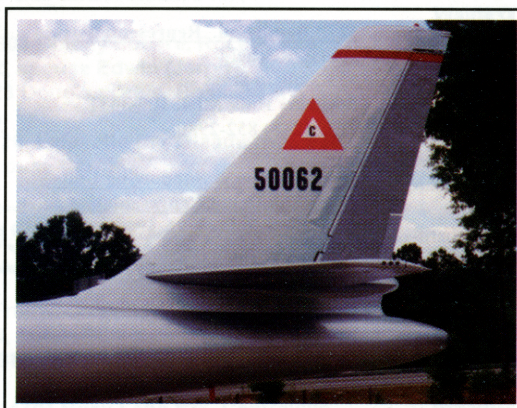


# Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

August, 2002

## WHALE OF A TAIL?



Red Triangle-C marking on restored B-47 at  
Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum.



303rd's red Triangle-C on B-17 *Thunderbird*  
at Lone Star Flight Museum in Galveston, TX.

## B-47 MAKES MUSEUM DEBUT IN 303RD'S B-17 TAIL SYMBOL

### \$40,000 in Donations Earn Triangle-C on SAC Aircraft

A B-47 bomber, restored to its original grandeur with the aid of \$40,000 in donations from the 303rd Bomb Group Association's treasury and members, was dedicated at the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum on May 18.

The B-47 "Stratojet's" tail was marked with a red Triangle-C, the symbol of the 303rd Bomb Group's famed B-17 Flying Fortresses, in recognition of the monetary support rendered by the Association.

The dedication was one of the highlights of a reunion by Strategic Air Command members at the Pooler, Georgia museum.

The B-47, America's first swept wing jet bomber, was the mainstay of U.S. nuclear deterrent forces in the 1950's and early 1960's. The "Stratojet" was phased

out in 1967.

The B-47 at the Heritage Museum was last exhibited as a static outdoor display at the Air and Missile Museum in Florence, South Carolina. The aircraft was badly weather-beaten when it was transferred to Pooler in 1998 after the Florence facility closed.

Historian Harry D. Gobrecht led the 303rd Bomb Group Association's drive to raise funds to restore the B-47. In the November 1998 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter, he wrote,

"The museum's memorial garden B-47 tail surface will have our WWII red triangle 'C.' The 303rd Bomb Wing flew B-47's and other aircraft from Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona from 1953-1964. Many of their aircraft used our tail insignia."

By May of 1999, the 303rd Bomb Group Association had donated \$40,126 toward the B-47 restoration project—\$10,000 from the treasury and the balance in contributions by members.

In a bizarre sequence of events in the month preceding the dedication ceremony, Gobrecht conceded he had made a mistake about the original markings on B-47's, saying he had confused them with markings on KC-97 tankers.

On April 9, 2002, by e-mail, the historian informed six members of the Executive Committee of the 303rd's Board of Directors and eight others that:

"In order for the museum to accurately display the B-47 markings, it has been decided not to apply the BG Red Triangle 'C' on the B-47's Horizontal Stabilizer."

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

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor—Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXV, No. 3 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 August, 2002

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

Because members are helping to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H), dues and/or donations to the Association are tax deductible. Regular Members include persons assigned or attached to the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) from its 1942 activation in Boise, ID, through its war years at Molesworth, England, to its 1945 deactivation in Casablanca. Spouses, children & grandchildren of regular members may become Family Members. All other persons interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd and in furthering the aims of the Association may, with approval, become non-voting Associate Members.

Membership years begin on the first day of January. The *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, 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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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.

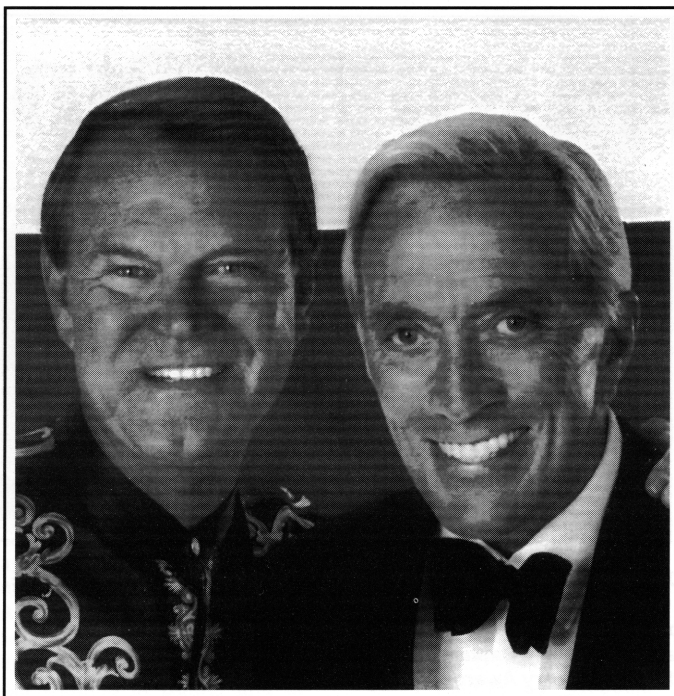
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**STARS ON PARADE IN BRANSON**—Guitarist Glen Campbell and singer Andy Williams will perform together on stage at the Moon River Theatre, while the cast of "Spirit of the Dance" struts its stuff at the Vinton Theatre.

# LAST CALL FOR 303RD REUNION IN BRANSON

**By John Ford**  
**Vice President for Reunions**

We're coming up fast on the 303rd Bomb Group Association's reunion in Branson, Missouri. The dates are from October 3 to 8, and there's still time to sign up. But, better get your registration forms in as soon as possible because there are only a limited number of rooms at the Guest House Inn and seats for the optional events. When those are gone, they're gone.

Among the theater options offered by the 303rd are:

- The Shoji Tabuchi Show, Branson's most popular show year after year, similar to a Las Vegas production.
- The Lawrence Welk Show, an evening of memories with the Lennon Sisters and Champagne music.
- The Yakov Smirnoff Show, with his unique brand of humor about everyday life.
- The Mel Tillis Show, featuring a wide variety of music and dancing.

In addition, the 303rd's registration form offers guests an opportunity to "Ride The Ducks," World War II amphibious vehicles; take a dinner cruise on the showboat "Branson Belle," a big paddlewheeler with a fabulous show, and visit the Veteran's Memorial Museum, over 10,000 square feet of memorabilia from three wars.

Molesworth veterans will be recognized and honored at

the theaters when we attend as a group. But, that doesn't mean that you can't go off on your own to any of the many performances in town. For example, there are four theaters with great shows within walking distance of the Guest House Inn. They are:

- The Andy Williams and Glen Campbell Show at the Moon River Theatre. No one sings like Andy and no one plays the guitar like Glen. Together on one stage, these legendary television and recording stars are the talk of Branson.
- "Spirit of the Dance" at the Vinton Theatre. Powerful Irish dance combines with passionate Latin rhythms of tango, flamenco and salsa in an entertaining blend of cultures.
- The Cracklin Rose Show at the Remington Theatre. A musical revue featuring the songs and music made famous by Neil Diamond.
- The Bobby Vinton Show at the Vinton Theatre. A variety revue with singing and dancing by a large cast in colorful costumes.

If you are interested in attending any of the above four performances please phone 1-888-714-4020 for tickets and show times prior to your arrival. Or you can take a chance and buy your tickets at the theater box office.

This will be a great reunion. If you have any questions call me at (417) 831-3919 or send an e-mail to me at — [warrenburke@worldnet.att.net](mailto:warrenburke@worldnet.att.net). LET'S ROLL!



TWO OF THE 303RD BOMB GROUP'S FINEST OFFICERS AT MOLESWORTH DURING WORLD WAR II ARE STILL HONORED AT THE BASE TODAY. The Joint Analysis Center, an American intelligence-gathering unit operating out of RAF Molesworth, England, has named two of its prestigious annual awards in their honor. Those awards went to two of JAC's finest last February. Above, left, US Air Force Major Jeffery Malcolm receives the *Carlton Smith Award* from the JAC commander, US Navy Captain Tony Cothron. Lt. Col. Smith was a 303rd Bomb Group Intelligence Officer. Above, right, Capt. Cothron presents the *Peter Curry Award* to Army Staff Sergeant Richard Falk. Lieutenant Curry was also in the 303rd's Intelligence Section. Both Carlton Smith and Peter Curry have passed away.

## JAC Presents Prestigious Annual Carlton Smith and Peter Curry Awards at RAF-Molesworth

By Sergeant Dale Brandl  
US Joint Analysis Center, Molesworth, England

The Joint Analysis Center, Molesworth, recognized its top performers at the Annual Awards Banquet held on February 26, 2002 at the Stuckely Inn on RAF-Alconbury. The awards salute stellar performance by soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, officers and civilian employees of the JAC. At the end of the banquet, the top intelligence professionals were recognized with the presentations of awards named in honor of two 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group veterans, Lt Col Carlton M. Smith and 1Lt Peter Curry.

The Lt Col Carlton M. Smith Award is bestowed on an Officer or Civilian Intelligence Professional who provided exceptional support to United States European Command warfighters. This year's winner was Air Force Major Jeffery Malcolm.

Major Malcolm was Chief, Operations Support Branch of the Systems and Support Directorate. He led 125 multi-service and civilian information technology experts supporting theater-wide USEUCOM intelligence production and dissemination. He directed hardware and software operations for a thirty million dollar information technology architecture at the JAC and seventeen remote sites, comprising three classification enclave networks, and driving 1150 workstations, 140 servers with over one hundred applications and fifty secure data circuits.

He was responsible for operating and maintaining the cutting-edge technology critical to the collection, processing, analysis, production and dissemination of critical intelligence data for headquarters planners and analysts, as well as for

United States and Allied operational forces, including combined and joint task forces in theater. Since the Smith Award was presented, Major Malcolm has moved into the position of Chief of Staff for the JAC.

This year was the first-time presentation of the 1Lt Peter Curry Award, to recognize outstanding support provided by an enlisted member to USEUCOM warfighters. This year's and first ever winner was Army Staff Sergeant Richard F. Falk.

Sergeant Falk is the Non-commissioned Officer in Charge of the JAC Operations Branch. He supervises and manages four eighteen-person multi-service member Watch Teams, which are responsible for production, editing, and review of time-sensitive threat warning reports, ad-hoc intelligence reports, daily Operational Summary messages, and coordination of Combat Search and Rescue Support.

As the Operation's NCOIC and as a Watch NCO, he composed, disseminated, and reviewed over 5,300 time-sensitive threat warning reports and over 600 Commander's Daily Intelligence Briefings. Sergeant Falk was key in the planning and execution of the renovation of the JAC Operations Center, a project costing just over one million dollars. He managed the installation of over 75 classified computer and communications systems during this seventeen-month-long construction and installation project. While the renovation took place, Sergeant Falk ensured the Alternate Operations Center was fully functional and the watch teams were able to execute their missions with no impact on support to the headquarters or forces in the field. Last June, Sergeant Falk was promoted to Sergeant First Class.



# MISSION IN 1944 EARNS DFC FOR GRISHAM IN 2002

By Eddie Deerfield

Let's put a reverse twist on an old saying, and make it "You can't see the trees because of the forest." Maybe this rationale would help explain the surge in awards for World War II veterans more than a half century after their heroic actions. Heroism was so much the norm in aerial combat against the German Luftwaffe and flak batteries that individual acts of great courage were often overlooked — like trees lost in a forest of heroic acts.

Take the case of 303rd Bomb Group pilot Rufus W. Grisham. His World War II Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded in 2002. Here's the text of the citation:

"First Lieutenant Rufus W. Grisham distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as Pilot, 358th Bombardment Squadron, 303rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), Molesworth, England, on 27 December 1944. During this period, Lieutenant Grisham's B-17 aircraft participated in "The Battle of the Bulge" by completing a combat bombing mission over the marshalling yards at Euskirchen, Germany. Lieutenant Grisham's aircraft encountered intense anti-aircraft fire that caused a complete loss of the number four engine, loss of three-quarters power of the number one and number two engines, and complete loss of the left tire on the landing gear. Despite these crippling effects to his aircraft, Lieutenant Grisham's superb airmanship, and quick thinking not only managed to miraculously fly his aircraft back to home station, but he saved the lives of all eight of his crewmen. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Grisham reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army Air Corps."

For bringing the heavily damaged B-17 and his crew safely back to Molesworth in December, 1944, Grisham was awarded the DFC in 2002, more than 58 years after the event. During the 364 missions that the 303rd Bomb Group flew from 1942 to 1945, there were scores if not hundreds of examples of the brand of heroism so capably displayed by Rufus Grisham. Too often, individual acts of courage in those tempestuous times went unrecognized.

Grisham credits Bill Cox, his co-pilot on the Euskirchen mission, with organizing the documentation which generated the award.

"There was an article in the Hell's Angels Newsletter telling us that the time limits had been waived for awards and decorations for WWII veterans," said Grisham. "Bill Cox called me to discuss this and wanted my permission to write a recommendation for a mission we flew to Euskirchen on Dec. 27, 1944. He told me he had all the documents and could contact all the senior officers that would be involved. I told Bill I had no objections and to proceed if he thought it



**TEXAS CONGRESSMAN LARRY COMBEST** congratulates 303rd Bomb Group pilot Rufus W. Grisham after presenting him with the Distinguished Flying Cross at a ceremony in Lubbock.

might be approved." Bill Cox is a US Air Force career officer who retired as a colonel with 10,000 flying hours to his credit.

"Bill thought we had a good chance for approval," Grisham said, "but warned me that it would take at least two years. Actually, it took two years and one month. Bill got the package put together in January, 2000 and I immediately sent it on to my Congressman, Larry Combest, in Washington. The first step requires his approval. After the Congressman approved the request, I don't know where it went, but finally it came before a Board in the awards and decorations section at Randolph AFB in San Antonio.

"I got a call from the Congressman's office that the DFC would be presented to me in his Lubbock, Texas office on February 21, 2002. I was certainly honored and pleased to accept this award and particularly because the recommendations came from members of my crew."

What did it take to finally gain the recognition Rufus Grisham should have received in 1944? In addition to the testimony of Bill Cox, supporting documents came from 303rd group and squadron officers and crew members. George T. Mackin, 358th Squadron commander, presented a "Narrative of Mission" describing in detail the damage to Grisham's B-17 and his "distinguished and professional piloting" and concern for his crew. Engineer and top turret gunner Edwin Scheuermann praised his pilot's skill "under the most nerve-racking conditions." All told, there were 27 pages of documentation.

**ALREADY DISPLAYING A COLORFUL ARRAY OF DECORATIONS, Edward Giering adds the Purple Heart. The award was presented to him by Brig. Gen. Robert Latiff at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts last January. Giering was a 427th Squadron radio operator/gunner.**



## PUNCHES BY GERMAN OFFICER WIN LATE PURPLE HEART FOR POW

**By Penelope Overton  
The Hartford Courant**

A local retired Army officer has been awarded a Purple Heart for a wound he received at the hands of his German captors more than a half-century ago.

Then a technical sergeant, Edward Giering was a 21-year-old radio operator with the 303rd Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, when his B-17 was shot down over Munster, Germany, on Feb. 16, 1945. He and six of the nine-man crew survived the crash.

German soldiers captured Giering and marched him away. They walked for five days, with little food or sleep, until they arrived in Frankfurt, which was under heavy attack, Giering said.

The prisoners were held in an air raid shelter during the attack. When they came out, Frankfurt was in flames, and German emotions were running high. Giering ran into trouble when his guards temporarily

left the group alone in a hotel lobby.

"This German captain burst into the hotel cursing in English," said Giering, who is president of the Connecticut state chapter of American Ex-Prisoners of War. "He singled me out. He marched up to me, got right in my face, and asked me a question in German. When I didn't answer, he punched me right in the face."

The German officer hit Giering two or three times in the face, knocking him to the floor. A Canadian prisoner who helped Giering up whispered in his ear, warning him against retaliation. That would give the German an excuse to shoot the prisoners.

"I had to take it, or we'd all die," Giering recalled. "So I took it on the chin."

The German captain stopped taunting Giering when the guards returned. Giering later learned that British and American crews

shot down during the Frankfurt battle had been hanged or burned to death.

Giering and his fellow prisoners eventually were interrogated and taken to a German prison camp that was liberated by the 14th Armored Division on April 29, 1945. Giering returned to America, but stayed in the Army until retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 1973.

His B-17 crew received the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1997 for being the only crew out of 39 to hit one of its targets on the Feb. 16 bombing run. Giering went on to serve in Korea and Vietnam, where he earned the Bronze Star for heroism.

Giering decided to apply for the Purple Heart last year, when he read a story in one of the military bulletins that poured into his Long Hill Road home (in Clinton, CT). The story said the Army wanted veterans to seek recognition for wounds received in captivity.

At the time of his cap-

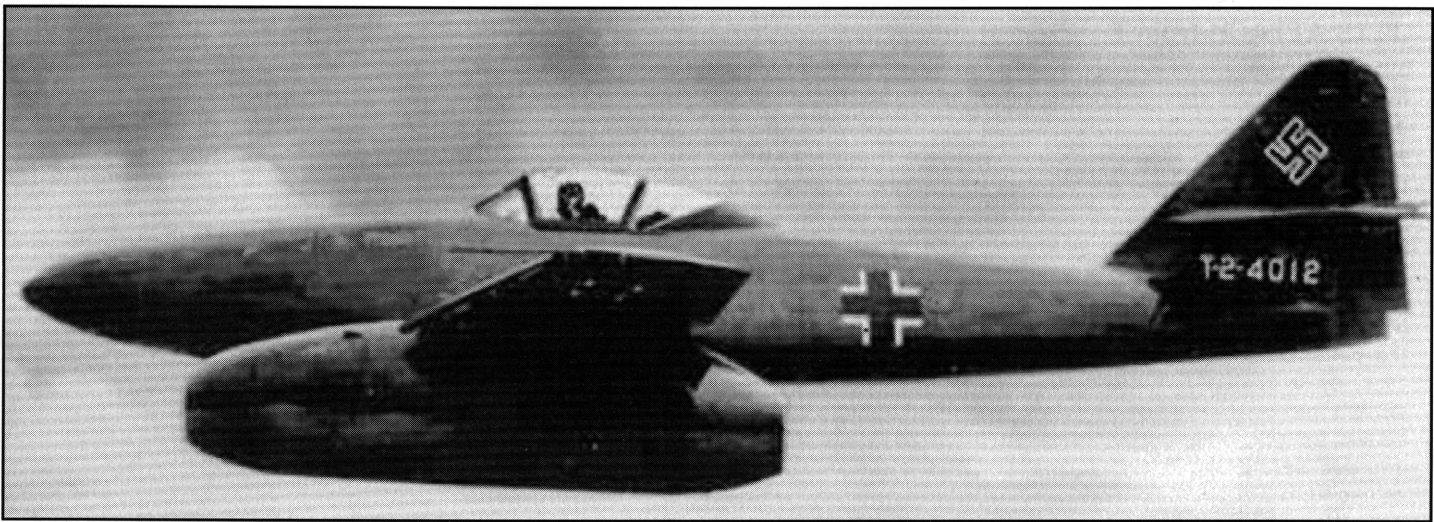
ture, the Army only awarded Purple Hearts to soldiers who could offer official proof—such as hospital records or field reports—that they were injured at the hands of the enemy. Prisoners of war, however, had no such records.

The bulletin reported that the Army would accept eye-witness accounts as proof, opening the door to prisoners of war to apply for the Purple Heart. So Giering, now 77, tracked down a few of his war buddies and asked for their help.

He received his Purple Heart in a small ceremony on Jan. 25, 2002, at Hanscom Air Force Base, MA. He said he applied for the medal because he thinks a veteran should be recognized for all the sacrifices made in the name of freedom.

(Lt. Col. Giering came out of retirement for one month during Operation Desert Storm to serve as a contracting officer at Fort Meade, MD.)





THE GERMAN LUFTWAFFE'S DREADED JET FIGHTER, the Messerschmitt 262, downed two of the 303rd's B-17's on the Hamburg mission of 20 March 1945, despite an escort of P-51 propeller-driven Mustangs which outnumbered the jets by four to one. Three 358th Squadron and five 359th Squadron crewmen died and the rest became prisoners of war.

## **“TREMENDOUS JOLTS” ROCK TAUB’S B-17 AS GERMAN ME-262 JETS ATTACK**

By Charles P. Johnson

The date was March 20, 1945. My pilot Francis Taub and copilot John Cooper and I were at the base post exchange browsing the merchandise when the announcement came over the loud speaker, "All flying personnel return to their squadron operation rooms immediately."

About an hour or so later, we were met on the bomber hardstand by an enthusiastic ground crew that extolled the virtue of an almost brand new B-17 (Aircraft No. 42-39160-G). This aircraft had flown less than five missions and appeared to be just off the assembly line, complete with carpet throughout and the latest technology including state of the art heaters. This was quite a contrast to the older aircraft that we had been flying, some with well over one hundred missions. As we prepared for takeoff, the crew chief said, "Bring her back in the same condition as you got her." Regrettably, that was not going to happen.

The target was Hamburg, Germany. The mission was uneventful across the Channel and over France, with only light flak. As we approached Hamburg, the flak became more intense, but we were able to drop our bombs on the lead plane's signal. We began the race home.

When we were beyond the limits of heavy flak the group turned out to the North Sea and back to Molesworth. While in the process of the turn, which left our aircraft exposed on the outside of the formation, all hell broke loose. About half way through the turning maneuver there was a tremendous jolt throughout the plane. As I looked to the right from my navigator position in the nose, I glimpsed a German fighter going past our plane at a tremendous rate of speed. In an instant I realized that I had just seen my first German jet fighter.

Jim Spencer, our tail gunner, yelled on interphone that there was extensive damage to the tail section. Francis Taub, the pilot, then came on to say that he was having trouble controlling the plane and that the crew should prepare to bail out. I responded that if we bailed out now we would be captured by

the people we had just bombed and that our prospects of remaining alive would probably be slim or none. I suggested that we continue to fly in a northerly direction to reach a less hostile area, possibly Denmark or Sweden. Taub agreed.

A minute or two later, there were two almost simultaneous jolts and both wings on our new B-17 were shredded and two engines destroyed. This time there was no debating the order to bail out.

I buckled on my chute and moved to the escape hatch where I saw the engineer, Warren Chrisman, trying to jettison the hatch door. The door was not going to come off. Chrisman began to work his way out, feet first, but got stuck so pushed him through. When he broke free, I attempted the same maneuver and after some desperate efforts finally managed to clear the door.

(Some time later, the togglier, Mike Dugan, told me that an instant after I was clear of the plane it exploded and the nose section separated from the fuselage at the escape hatch. Dugan said he escaped by jumping from the nose section and parachuting to safety.)

When I realized that I was out of the plane, I instinctively pulled the rip cord; but when the pilot chute released I grabbed it because I was still a long way from the ground. After what seemed like an eternity of free-fall I could clearly see a farm house below me. I then released the pilot chute and the main chute opened with a jerk. I misjudged the distance to the ground and was not ready for the impact. I landed on my right leg and arm, both of which sustained injury.

My next endeavor was not any more successful than the jump because every time I attempted to spill air from the chute to collapse it, a gust of wind would cause it to fill and drag me across the plowed fields. Finally, the wind subsided momentarily and I somehow managed to unbuckle my harness. The wind again came up and the chute and harness became airborne and blew away.

I was still in a field, although a considerable distance from

**See JETS ATTACK on 8**

## JETS ATTACK from 7

the farm house. I saw what I believed to be a forested area in the opposite direction from the house, and concluded that's where I should head. I limped along, holding my right arm with my left hand. As I approached the woods, it became evident it was no sanctuary. What had appeared to be a forest was a grove of young trees planted in rows with no foliage lower than 10 feet. The trees were only four or five inches in diameter.

I made myself as inconspicuous as possible and waited for darkness. I felt that the further I could get from Hamburg, the better off I would be if captured. Using Polaris (the North Star) as a guide, I walked through farm land along a large stream into the area of another tree farm. As the night faded, I settled for concealment in a small depression which at least afforded safety from anyone seeing me at a distance. I fell asleep from exhaustion brought on no doubt from shock.

When I awoke in the early afternoon, I could hear voices and sensed commotion around me. I opened my eyes and saw eight to ten mostly elderly men with shot guns or pitchforks looking down at me. I knew instantly for me "the war was over."

After searching me and taking my gun, knife, escape kit, and money, I was led to a small village and turned over to some bureaucrat in a uniform. I was then directed to sit in the back of an old pickup truck with two armed guards pointing guns at me while the driver bounced across dirt farm roads. We reached what appeared to be a small town where I was incarcerated in the town jail.

In the morning two elderly Wehrmacht soldiers came to my cell to escort me by train to a POW facility. The younger of the two, about 55, had lived in New York as ticket manager for the Hamburg-American Shipping Lines and spoke fluent English. The three of us walked to the Bad Segeburg railway baggage station and waited in a small room. There appeared to be some commotion outside. The younger guard left and returned with a dozen Wehrmacht soldiers who were armed and promptly fixed bayonets to their rifles. Approximately thirty Hitler Youths were being led to the station by a fat old man obviously trying to stir them up. The Wehrmacht soldiers went outside and formed a cordon around the building, menacing the boys with their bayonets until they backed off and dispersed.

I boarded the train with the same two Wehrmacht guards. We had to leave the railway car at the Newmunster southeast station and walk to the next station because a bombing raid the day before had damaged the tracks and left the town a smoking ruin. When civilians, mostly older women and young children, realized that I was a captured American airman they started to converge on us. The younger of my two guards shouted for us to make a run for it. I took off with him in spite of my bad leg. The older guard had fallen behind and was being pelted by sticks and stones.

We finally reached the southwest station in about twenty to thirty minutes. I was placed in a guardhouse at the station, manned by four teenage soldiers. They seemed delighted to see me and we discussed, in broken English, people and places in the United States. They were interested in Babe Ruth, Joe Louis and Benny Goodman and in the cities of Chicago and New York City, for the most part.

The next leg of the train journey was relatively short, not more than one-half hour, to Pinneburg, a suburb of Hamburg. The railroad station there was a round building, perhaps 60 feet in diameter, with high windows almost all the way around. When we arrived, my two guards and the station commander cleared out everyone, including station personnel, locked the doors and went outside to speak to Wehrmacht soldiers milling around the building. I circled the inside of the station, stepping up on benches to peek out the windows. About fifty to a hun-



**THREE MEN WERE KILLED IN ACTION ON THE 358TH'S TAUB CREW, the rest taken prisoner. Standing, l-to-r, pilot Francis Taub, KIA; co-pilot John Cooper, KIA; navigator Charles Johnson, POW. Kneeling, engineer Warren Chrisman, POW; tail gunner James Spencer, POW; ball turret gunner James Hollowell, POW; radio operator Chester Maluchnik, POW; togglier Michael Dugan, POW, and waist gunner Elmer McWilliams, KIA.**

dred Wehrmacht soldiers, with fixed bayonets, had surrounded the building and were holding off what seemed to be hundreds of angry civilians who shouted and surged forward, only to be driven back.

My level of fear and expectation of falling into the hands of the mob was so severe that to this day I cannot remember how I got from the station to the interrogation center. The two guards who had been with me the entire time were now preparing to leave. The one who had lived in New York asked if he could have the flight wings off of my shirt collar as a memento. I readily and thankfully gave him the insignia. To me he was both a hero and a savior who could have abandoned me to the mob at any time.

For the first seven days, I was alone in a small cell about five feet by nine feet with a bed of sorts and a three-legged stool. I could hear the voices of American prisoners in adjacent cells. On the eighth day I was taken to interrogation. Although I feared the worse, it never transpired. On the contrary, the officer interrogator spent most of the time talking about the fact that he believed the war would be over in four weeks and what might then happen.

The next day I joined 25 other American airmen in a room where an officer told us that we were to be transported to a POW camp. He said he could only assign six guards to defend us against civilians on the march to the train. He advised us not to create a confrontational situation regardless of what happened. We did have to endure insults, taunts, spitting, and threats, but refrained from any retorts and arrived safely at the train.

We left in the afternoon, but before long the train was pulled onto a siding. We could see German soldiers being loaded onto a train going east, ostensibly to the Russian front. Except for some officers, they were all boys of twelve to fifteen years of age. The flower of Germany's next generation being sent to slaughter for a cause long since lost. Of all the experiences during my service, this was and is my single, most poignant and saddest recollection.

**(Charlie Johnson will continue his saga in the November issue with an account of prison life in Stalag Luft One)**



# Churchill's Tribute To US And British Bomber Crews

Winston S. Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain during the years of the Second World War, was an outstanding historian and prodigious writer. Among his most notable accomplishments in the literary field was a series of six books which began with "The Gathering Storm" published in 1948. It took readers from war to war — 1919 to 1939. He continued with "Their Finest Hour," describing the valor of the British people as they fought, virtually alone, to stave off the onslaught of German tyranny.

In his 1951 work, "Closing The Ring," Mr. Churchill paid a memorable tribute to the Allied bomber crews of World War II. The following is an excerpt from his book:

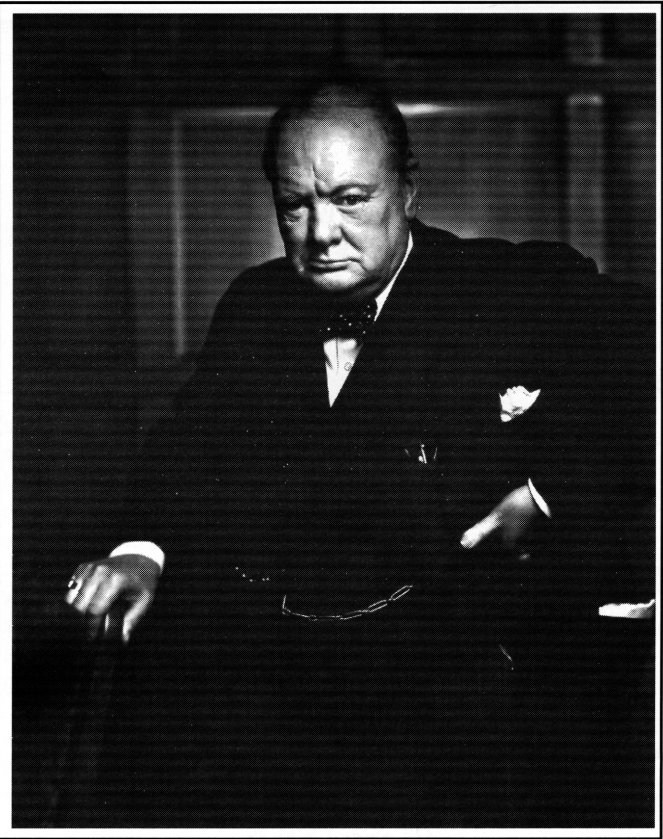
**We need to pay our tribute of respect and admiration to the officers and men who fought and died in the fearful battle of the air, the like of which had never before been known, or even with any precision, imagined. The moral test to which the crew of a bomber were subjected reached the limits of human valour and sacrifice. Here chance was carried to its most extreme and violent degree above all else.**

**There was a rule that no one should go on more than 30 raids without a break. But many who entered on their last dozen wild adventures felt that the odds against them were increasing. How can one be lucky thirty times running in a world of averages and machinery?**

**Detective-Constable McSweeney, one of the Scotland Yard officers who looked after me during the early days of the war, was determined to fight in a bomber. I saw him several times during his training and his fighting. One day, gay and jaunty as ever but with a thoughtful look, he said, "My next will be my twenty-ninth." It was his last.**

**Not only our hearts and admiration, but our minds in strong comprehension of those ordeals must go out to these heroic men whose duty to their country and cause sustained them in superhuman trials.**

**I have mentioned facts like, "the Americans**



WINSTON CHURCHILL, as photographed by Yousuf Karsh in 1941 in Canada. The Prime Minister had not been forewarned about the portrait session, and bristled into the studio with a cigar clenched between his teeth. A second before Karsh squeezed the shutter release on his camera, he removed the cigar from Mr. Churchill's mouth. The result: the eyes blazing, jaw-clenching portrait of the world leader, which soon appeared on the cover of LIFE magazine. (Photo courtesy of The World War II Veterans Committee and The Churchill Center © Yousuf Karsh)

**had 60 of their large Fortress aircraft destroyed out of 291," and on another occasion, "out of 795 aircraft dispatched by British Bomber Command against Nuremberg, 94 did not return." The American Fortresses carried a crew of ten men, and the British night bombers seven. Here we have each time six or seven hundred of these skilled, highly trained warriors lost in an hour. This was indeed ordeal by fire.**

**In the British and American bombing of Germany and Italy during the war, the casualties were over a hundred and forty thousand, and in the period with which this chapter deals there were more British and American aircrews casualties than there were killed and wounded in the great operation of crossing the Channel. These heroes never flinched or failed. It is to their devotion that in no small measure we owe our victory. Let us give them our salute.**

PROGRAM

303rd BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
— U.S.A.A.F. —



Commemorating the  
Second Anniversary  
IN  
England

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th, 1944

*The second anniversary of the arrival of the 303rd at Molesworth was celebrated in fine style throughout the base in September, 1944 as the above program pamphlet demonstrates. There was a smaller, but interesting, first anniversary celebration a year earlier.*

It was on 12 September 1942 that the first officers and enlisted men of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) Ground Echelon reached Molesworth after crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary. Their assignment was to prepare the base for the incoming Air Echelon and the beginning of combat operations. On that very same date a year later, officers gathered to celebrate the first anniversary of the 303rd's arrival at Molesworth.

After welcoming remarks by the new base commander, **Kermit Stevens**, Public Relations Officer **Walter Donnelly** who was a member of the original ground echelon took the microphone. Here's what he had to say:

Hello, all you old bastards. Well, I guess you all know why we're here today. It's the first anniversary of the capture of Molesworth by the American forces. We don't propose to bore you with statistical information concerning our record of which we are justly proud, but we thought we might delve into this past year and beyond, just a little, to bring out some of the incidents which have taken place. To give a little background, it might be

## Order of Battle.

- From* - - - The Old Man.  
*To* - - - Hell's Angels.  
*Target* - - PRIMARY — One helluva good time.  
SECONDARY — One heckuva good time.  
LAST RESORT — Shouldn't happen to a dog.
- Strength of Force* - Maximum effort.
- Bomb Load* - Spam—Sprouts—Marrows—and other Palatable Delicacies.
- Fuel Load* - - Beer, Beer, Beer, Beer, and more Beer. All tanks loaded to capacity.
- Fighter Support* - None—every man for himself.
- Time Schedule* - Start engines at 1400 hours. Take-off will follow immediately thereafter to the various assembly points.
- THEATER—Continuous performance.  
EM BAR, OFFICER'S CLUBS, NAAFI, AERO CLUB, AND MESS HALLS—Continuous performance.
- MAIN HANGAR—Groups will reassemble for the big blow-off at 1930 hours.
- BASEBALL—Hell's Angels Champs vs a bunch of bums from another station. (Field behind HQ's.) 1430 hours.
- CARNIVAL—Merry-go-round, ferris wheel and other whirligigs.
- Scouting Force* - Should be recognizable by their long fuzzy ears.
- Route* - - - Choose your own but be sure you hit all the control points.
- Spares* - - - Plenty. Any Slick Chick unattached.
- Call Sign* - - - Fill 'em up!
- Abortives* - - - None anticipated.
- Air Commander* - In the absence of the big boss, Colonel Stevens, Lt.-Colonel Lyle will rule the roost.

well to mention how we progressed since our activation at Boise, Idaho, a year ago last February.

Some of the gang left Boise for a temporary vacation in the beautiful lake country in sunny California, better known as Muroc Air Base, where they settled down for a short while to enjoy life by crawling out of the sack under a sandstorm or basking in temperatures upwards of 120 degrees. When they returned, the group got ready to leave Boise again, and, according to Army plan, things got pretty well screwed up because nobody could seem to make up his mind whether it was to be Pendleton Field, Oregon, or that glamorous spot in New Mexico, the Alamogordo Air Base. After things became untangled and those that started for Pendleton were turned back and sent to Alamogordo, training proceeded according to schedule.

Life in Alamogordo was most pleasant. Restaurants and drinking joints were declared out of bounds, and if you weren't picking scorpions out of your shoes, you were kicking rattlesnakes from under your bed. Reports were continually coming in from 2nd Air Crew Headquarters that the 303rd Bomb Group was about to go to Plum. It was rather questionable whether we were going to Plum or whether we were going to seed. The Group was the proud possessor of approximately five shiny B-17's, although never more than three of them could fly at any given time. However, despite these vicious handicaps, we managed to carry on. Our next move turned out to be Biggs



Field, El Paso, Texas.

A few of us will remember the days at Biggs Field preparing to leave the country. **Ben Ramsey** was trying to organize his supply line and because of his extreme efficiency, he was damn-near shipped to the port of embarkation in one of his own boxes. Old Ben had been missing ten hours. The CQ reported that he had heard a faint knocking inside of one of the large packing boxes, and, when people went out to investigate, found it was the good captain who, while checking the contents of said packing box, had been nailed firmly in same. You see, his men had been working on assembly-line principles, and just hammered the lid on and let it go at that.

Things were definitely in a turmoil. **Bernie Kalman** almost had a Section 8 trying to bring the personnel of the Group up to the TO. However, the ground echelon finally got under way and pulled out of Biggs Field, heading for the staging area, under the command of **Charles Marion**, who was famed as the owner of the finest head of skin in the Army Air Forces. When we arrived at Fort Dix, it was rumored that we could settle down peacefully for probably a period of several weeks before hopping the scow to go abroad. A few took off, including the boss himself, who found that life in New York was more pleasant than hanging around the Jersey swamp land. However, not many hours later, **Frank Doherty**, our group adjutant, was sitting at his desk nursing a terrific hangover when the phone rang. It seems that there was a captain from the staging area administration section on the other end of the line who was looking for a mess officer. He stated that this officer must be at least a major.

Frank explained to the captain that he was very sorry that he couldn't help him out, but that the only major that we had in the place was Charles Marion and he was the Group Commanding Officer. The captain, however, was not one to give up so easily and, after threatening dire consequences, explained that, CO or no CO, Major Marion was to be the mess officer on the boat going overseas. Frank Doherty, when last seen, was muttering to himself in an exasperated voice, "My God, the CO's in New York."

Chuck Marion got back with about half a second to spare, not knowing yet that he was to take over control of the slum-gullion on the boat. Things turned into a madhouse because the 359th Squadron, as a whole, plus several other officers, were given about two hours' notice to get on the train and head for the port of embarkation. We sat on the damn boat for four days waiting for the others to come aboard. If you tried to sneak down the gang plank, you were approached by a grisly-looking MP who definitely questioned your intentions. Some of us had bridal suites which were really sumptuous. The only thing wrong was that there were about 90 other guys in the same suite—and no bride.

Life aboard the old tub was rather pleasant; once we got underway—outside of the fact that reports kept coming in via the latrine that hundred of subs were waiting for us and that we had been sunk, or, if we hadn't been, we were about to be.

Poor Chuck was really having his troubles. There were so many men on the boat that only two meals could be served in a day. Even with only the two meals, the men were standing in line practically 24 hours a day. They were divided into eight shifts per meal, and each man was supposed to wear a large, colored button with a number on it representing his shift. Chuck and his two assistants, Lieutenants **Charles Miller** and **Johnny Nunn**, were between the frying pan and the fire constantly.

To make a long story short, we debarked at Glasgow on 11 September and we finally got to Molesworth just a year ago today and prepared to sweat out the air echelon. After



sending out a few patrols to capture some nearby pubs, we settled down to a steady diet of sprouts, lamb, and spam. Major Marion parceled out jobs that were to be done in this manner: "Lieutenant **John Simms**, old boy, as you know, we are having to operate the base on our short complement of officer personnel. Now, in addition to your other duties, you will be in charge of VD packet demonstration, mail censor, mud control officer, war bonds officer, agricultural assistant and, in your spare time, you will meet all trains and lend a general helping hand on other equally important duties."

Finally, the air echelon, led by Colonel **Eugene Romig**, shows up after having set the remarkable record of being the first heavy bombardment group to bring all their aircraft overseas to the UK intact. Of course, for the first week they continually gave us the needle about how, after leaving us, Colonel **James Wallace** gave them all kinds of passes, both at Kellogg Field and at Dow, in Bangor. Stories about the Sky Club in Battle Creek and the wild escapades in the BOQ at Bangor made even such old diehards as **Ben Stone** and **Elmer Nichols** blush beneath the mud. Finally, on the 16th of November, the first field order came through and the 303rd was to begin operations. From that moment on, things began to happen, and what I mean, really happen. Colonel Wallace was immediately notified and the base was closed up like a clam. No one was allowed on the field and no one was allowed off the field that was already on, and no telephone calls were to be put through.

Excitement was rampant. People were running around having no idea where they were running to. Even the adjutant was trying to figure out the score. Ben Ramsey, who endeavors to keep track at all times of which airplanes are going to fly and which ones won't, came in so many times to change the formation that I doubt if anyone ever did know what airplanes took off.

Cletracs were backing into propellers; airplanes were getting stuck in the mud, waist gunners were shooting off horizontal stabilizers—only to mention a few. A farmer called up to ask if it were possible for the aircraft to take off north to south instead of east to west so we wouldn't scare his cattle. Half the British WPA were still on the field and couldn't get off to go home. At this point, **Benjamin Stone**, the Ground Exec, entered, asking if it were possible to call the mission off as he was having a practice gas alert and would rather not have any interruptions. He was utterly amazed when Colonel Wallace, without answering, threw the phone at him. When last seen, Ben was heard to mutter to himself, "My goodness, I wonder what's eating him."

Believe it or not, the airplanes did take off in an attempt to bomb St. Nazaire. Ten minutes after they took off, Colonel Wallace entered the operations room screaming: "Where is that armament guy **Marion Niemants**? There were no bombs or ammunition in my airplane."

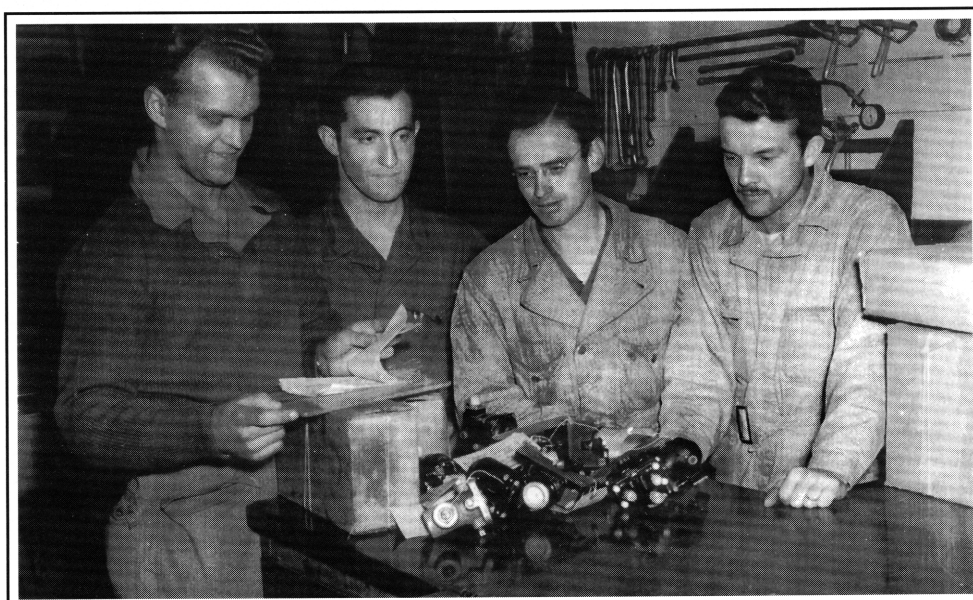
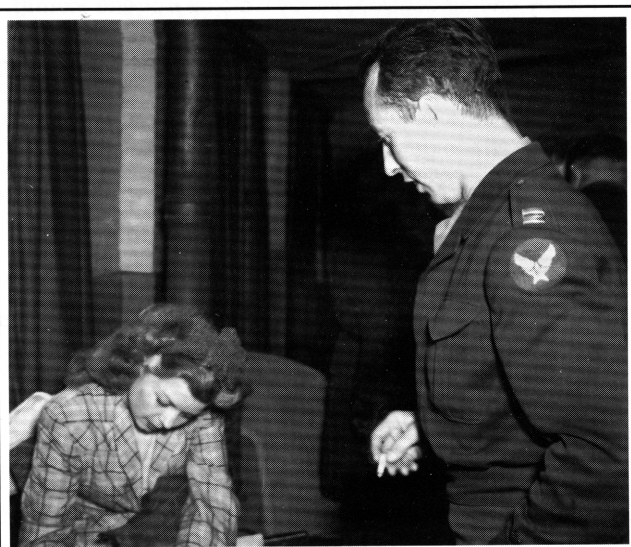


## 303rd's Pin-up Men of The Month

**TOP** — Imagine Clark Gable firing a B-17 radio room gun against incoming enemy aircraft. It happened on the 303rd's mission to Antwerp on 4 May 1943, with Capt. Gable aboard as an observer. The 359th Squadron crew was (l-to-r) W. C. Mulgrew (BT), R. C. Fortunak (WG), R. R. Zaorski (E), M. A. Murphy (WG), R. J. Yonkman (B), W. A. Hatcher (CP), W. R. Calhoun (P), J. M. Strickland (N), C. R. Terry (R) and W. W. Stephen (TG).

**LEFT** — Walter Donnelly, the 303rd's Public Relations Officer, gets an autograph from singer Frances Langford at Molesworth with the Bob Hope troupe in July, 1943. Capt. Donnelly was the main speaker at the 303rd's first anniversary celebration two months later. (Story on pages 10-11)

**BELOW** — Technical Supply was one of the essential support elements at Molesworth. Manning the 358th operation are (l-to-r) PFC George Gerlak, PFC John Zerr, Sgt. Clifford Smith and T/Sgt. Clarence Anderson.







**THE 8TH AIR FORCE HERITAGE MUSEUM'S B-47 was beautifully restored by Darrell Lowell and a team of volunteers. It is positioned in the museum's Memorial Garden, and can be seen from vehicles passing on Interstate-95.**

## B-47 from 1

There was an immediate reaction by several Board members urging that the original understanding which generated the donations be honored.

On April 15, Gobrecht reversed his announcement of a week earlier, sending an e-mail message to 27 addressees advising, "A final decision has been made to place the 303rd BG (H) Red Triangle 'C' insignia on both sides of the Museum's B-47 tail surfaces."

In the message, he explained, "When the museum agreed to put our Red Triangle 'C' on the B-47's tail we had photos of this insignia on the 303rd Bomb Wing's KC-97 aerial tankers and other aircraft. We then believed that it was also on the B-47's which was later found to be in error.

"While having the Red Triangle 'C' on the B-47 is not historically correct (which was determined after our donations were made) it is now felt that the Museum's obligation to 303rd BG (H) members who donated to the B-47 restoration project on the basis that the Red Triangle 'C' would appear on the B-47 overrides the historical factor."

In his remarks at the

museum's B-47 dedication ceremony, the 303rd historian said,

"The red Triangle 'C' insignia, that you can observe on the tail of the B-47, did not appear on any SAC Bomb Wing B-47. It was placed on this B-47 as a symbol of the historic tie between World War II and post-World War II bomber units, combat crews and aircraft.

"It also recognizes the generosity of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, and its members, who raised over \$40,000 following its 1998 reunion in Savannah. The 303rd Bomb Group Association donations made the B-47 restoration financially possible"

According to reports, the reaction of SAC veterans to a marking they had never seen on active duty B-47's was not critical. The text on the wayside sign adjacent to the plane seemed to satisfy their curiosity.

The concluding paragraph reads, "This particular aircraft is painted to represent a B-47 assigned to the 303rd Bomb Wing. It stands as a tribute to the World War II Eighth Air Force veterans of the 303rd Bomb Group, Molesworth Air Base, in England, whose generosity made the resto-

ration of this aircraft possible. The red triangle 'C' depicted on the vertical fin did not appear on the original aircraft. This World War II tail insignia symbolizes the historic tie between World War II and post-World War II bomber units and aircraft."

The red Triangle-C on the tail of the B-47 is substantially smaller, only one-third the size of the marking carried into combat over

Germany and Occupied Europe by 303rd Bomb Group B-17's.

While there was no specific reference during the fund drive to the eventual dimensions of the Triangle-C marking on the B-47, the presumption was that the size would be nearer the original rather than merely a symbolic "historic tie."

The marking does, however, fulfil the museum's commitment to place a Triangle-C on the B-47's tail.



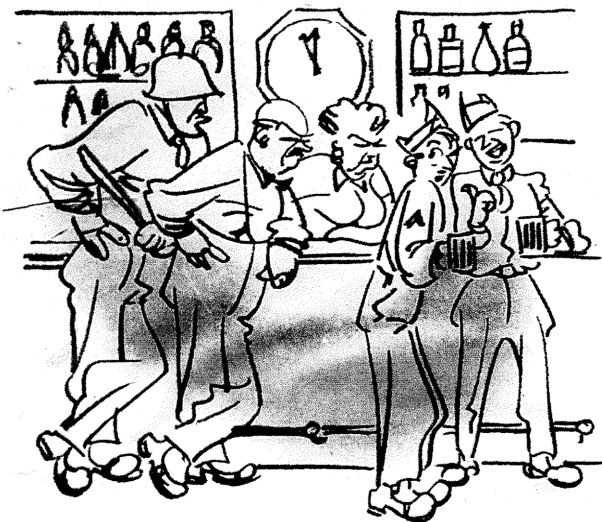
**THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE B-47 DEDICATION CEREMONY was 303rd BGA Historian Harry D. Gobrecht. The nose art bears a resemblance to the 303rd's "Might in Flight" shield.**

"OFF THE BEAM" by CAPT. WILLIAM T. LENT

# London Leave



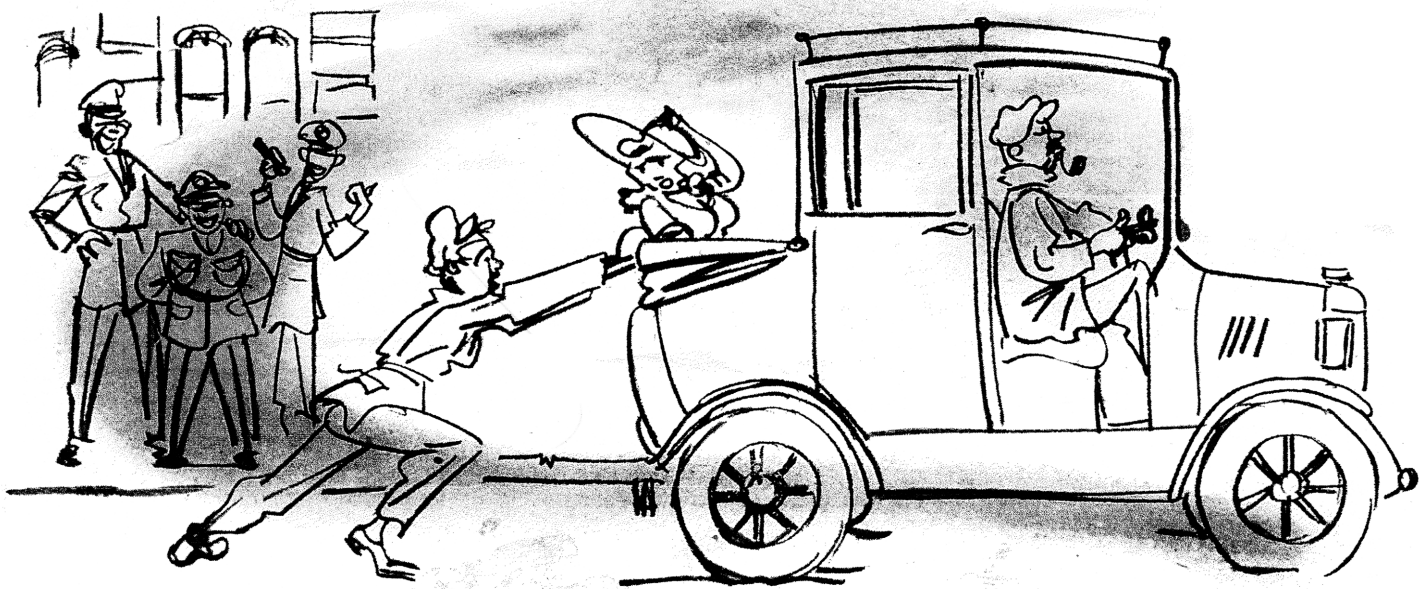
"Pink elephants, snakes, gremlins  
and now British tea!"



"No, it isn't your mustache, Malcolm, it's just closing time."



"I don't know whether it's a restaurant or  
theater. I've been in line only an hour."



"I can remember when it was fun to run out of gas on a date."

# Molesworth Diary

## ONE KILLED, FOUR EVADED, FIVE CAPTURED

My crew manned B-17F 41-24603, and we called it *Green Hornet*. We went down on January 23, 1943 after dropping our bombs on the submarine pens at Lorient in France. Flak got us first, knocking out one engine. We fell out of formation and were attacked by FW-190's. They came at us from 12 o'clock—not high, but straight on toward the nose cone. Sandy (E. J. Sanderson) and Dale (H. D. Bowman), our pilot and co-pilot, did a great job of evasive action but it wasn't enough. After the rest of us bailed out, they stayed with the B-17 because they only had a single parachute for the two of them. They crash landed on a hillside near Paule, and were taken prisoner by the Germans. Three others on the crew were also captured soon after they hit the ground. Our tail gunner, J. L. Markiewicz, managed to bail out also, but he was so badly wounded he didn't survive. Four of us were able to evade the enemy and get back to England from France. I was the last to jump. Sid Deyers, our engineer and top turret gunner, came down near me and we evaded together. The 303rd put up about 20 planes that day, and we lost five.

**John W. Spence**  
359th Squadron Navigator

## REPATRIATED POW PRAISED BY ROOSEVELT

I lost my left eye on the mission to Duren, Germany on October 20, 1943. It was my seventh and last mission. We were flying *Charley Horse*, and were hit by ME-109's. I was in the top turret when it exploded, and the plane began going down. We bailed out. The German Messerschmitts buzzed me, trying to suck the air out of my parachute. I came down in a Belgium forest, and was able to stay hidden for nine days before I was caught and sent to Stalag Luft 17-B. Fifteen months later, on January 16, 1945, because of my eye wound, I was freed to return to the U.S. as part of a prisoner of war exchange.

Among my prized possessions is a letter on White House stationery signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The letter says "It gives me special pleasure to welcome you back to your native shores, and to express, on behalf of the people of the United States, the joy we feel at your deliverance from the hands of the enemy. It is a source of profound satisfaction that our efforts to accomplish your return have been successful. You have fought valiantly in foreign lands and have suffered greatly. As your Commander in Chief, I take pride in your services in combat and your steadfastness while a prisoner of war. May God grant you happiness and an early return to health."

**Clement J. Resto**  
358th Squadron Engineer

## DEEP SENSE OF SATISFACTION IN TOWER

My experiences at Molesworth may appear uneventful or hardly worthy of note compared to the combat crews who were almost daily putting their lives on the line. But, I usually had a deep sense of satisfaction in the Control Tower when I was able to assist pilots and crews to get back safely on the ground in spite of miserable weather much of the time, injured crew members and crippled aircraft. While making a physical inspection by Jeep of our main runway early one morning in limited visibility, I discovered a truck loaded with bombs at the intersection of our two runways. The truck had a flat tire. The driver had not reported the incident to the tower, nor had he asked permission to cross the runway in the darkness. I immediately returned to the tower and put the field on "Red" until the necessary repairs were made and the truck removed. I later "discussed" the incident with the Motor Pool Officer and the driver of the truck.

One day while two P-51's were flying low over Molesworth and buzzing the tower, one of the Mustangs hit the ground with the tips of the prop blades and the air scoop. The pilot had enough speed to pull up, lower his wheels and make a safe landing. The tips of all four blades were bent backwards and the air scoop flattened. The fighter pilot came to the tower, called his Commanding Officer and very meekly explained that he had been slow-timing the engine when the mishap occurred. I never heard whether he was disciplined or given a medal for not crashing.

**Robert L. Johnson**  
Flying Control Officer  
3rd Station Complement

## "I WAS MOST FRIGHTENED ON FIRST MISSION"

Our mission on 28 February 1944 was a "Crossbow" target at Bois Coqueral in the Pas De Calais area of France. We were bombing by squadrons. There were no enemy fighters but a lot of flak. At first, the flak didn't bother me but we made nine bomb runs. The bombardier in the lead ship could not get the target in his sight. The lower clouds were kind of like ploughed furrows and we made our runs perpendicular to the furrows. The flak was pretty heavy, at least for a first timer over a target getting shot at by someone who wanted to kill us. I remember the flak hitting our B-17 and was surprised that no one on the crew was wounded. At the briefing before we took off from Molesworth, a pilot sitting right behind me said he was happy it was going to be a milk run to the French coast. He was a First Lieutenant named Shoup, and he was killed when a

**See DIARY on 16**



## DIARY from 15

flak burst ripped off his B-17's right wing. The irony of it all was that we returned to Molesworth with our bombs still hanging in the bomb bay.

I was shot down on my 10th mission, again to a "Crossbow" target in the Pas De Calais area, about a month later and was a prisoner of war for 14 months.

**William J. Dallas**  
427th Squadron Co-Pilot

## BUZZES TOWER TWICE AFTER 25TH MISSION

My first three missions were on three days in a row—August 15, 16 and 17, 1943. The target on the 17th was the ball-bearing plant at Schweinfurt, Germany, and it was very rough, about the worst of the war so far. My twelfth mission was back to Schweinfurt on 14 October 1943, called "Black Thursday" because of the heavy loss of aircraft and crews. My 25th and last mission of the combat tour was on 18 March 1944 to Oberpfaffen, Germany. My co-pilot was Col. William Travis, brother of the General. We were leading the Group. When we neared Molesworth on the return trip, I called the number two man in the formation and said, "Take over. I'm going to buzz the tower." Colonel Travis said, "You can't do that." I said, "I know it," but I was so happy to have finished my combat tour that I gave the tower two passes and then followed the last plane in for a landing.

After R & R in Miami Beach, Florida, the Army Air Corps assigned me to continue training on B-17's even though I already had a total of 1,200 hours of flight time. In August I was sent overseas and assigned to—the 303rd Bomb Group again! I kept flying combat until the war ended, finishing up with a total of 53 missions.

**Willard "Bill" Bergeron**  
360th Squadron Pilot

## TAUGHT FLYING CREWS HOW TO DITCH B-17

I joined the 303rd in El Paso in August, 1942 as an Engineering Officer. After reaching Molesworth in September, it took us a couple months to prepare the base for the first mission. We soon discovered that we needed officers to be in charge of flying equipment and to teach air-sea rescue to combat crews. We were sent to the RAF Air-Sea Rescue School at Blackpool, a peacetime resort on the Black Sea. We stayed in private homes and attended classes for two weeks. After getting back to Molesworth, we taught air crews how to ditch their B-17's. When a crew would be saved and return to base, the men often came around to see us and to praise the training. Once, as part of our equipment responsibility, several of us were sent to a location in southern England where a B-17 had crash-landed. Our assignment was to retrieve the Norden bomb sight before it fell into the wrong hands.

**Thomas F. Miller**  
358th Squadron Equipment Officer

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Last week, personally delivered to my house was a big handmade card. It was beautifully done and when unfolded measured 22 x 28 inches. On it were about 150 notes and signatures from the students and teachers of four classes of history students from Nampa Idaho Junior High School. Over the past few years I have received several such cards, but none as large as this one.

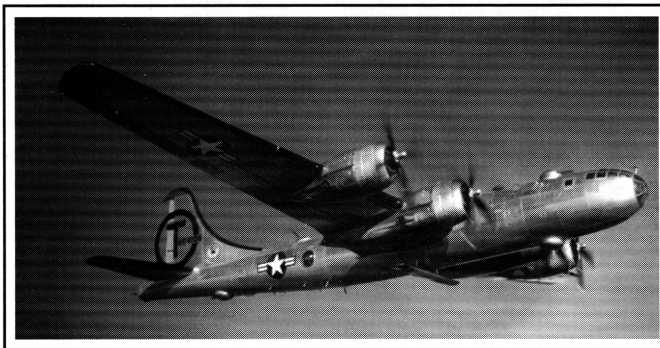
For the past several years, I have talked to students from elementary school 5th grade, to junior high, high school and college students. I have found them to be very interested, polite and full of questions about our war. To supplement their reading in their books, they want to learn about American history from someone who helped make it.

Be encouraged to make yourself available if you feel you would like to. It is a rewarding experience. You do not need to be a big hero. They want to know what you ate, where you slept, what was your job, were you afraid, how old you were (I told the 7th graders I was 8 years older than you are now. They called me the "old man" over there.) Take a few pictures or piece of uniform etc. if you have any. Tell them about your outfit, what it did, what your job was, describe your job and training, your housing, the mess hall, what you did for recreation if you had time off, a few tales about some of the characters you knew in your outfit. Take about the last 15 minutes for questions. That will use an hour class time.

Call the schools and talk to their history department or history teachers. Tell them who you are and that you are available to take an hour class if they want you. You made history. Let's keep it alive while we still are.

If you haven't registered for the Branson Reunion, get with it now! We need you to be there and you need to be there with us. We were all lucky to have been assigned to the 303rd and lucky to still be here to attend our 2002 reunion.

**Jack P. Rencher**



## 303RD BOMB WING'S CIRCLE-T TAIL MARK

I was assigned to the 359th Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Wing as a "lowly left-gunner scanner" in a SAC B-29 from 1950 to 1953. All my tour was stateside except for 18 months TDY in Morocco. The aircraft we flew had a Circle-T on the tail with the SAC insignia on the nose and the Hell's Angels logo just below it. I figure I was on flying status for two years flying about 200 hours per year. Leaving the Air Force, I received my commercial pilots license and spent 46 years flying crop dusters, now referred to as "Agricultural Aerial Applicators." I now have 39,000 flight hours.

**Billie Miles**  
Greers Ferry Lake, AR

# 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**

## PHOTO OF B-17 SKY WOLF TRIGGERS FOND MEMORIES

The photo and then the story of pilot Don Gamble in the May issue caught my eye because of the plane behind the officers in the picture. I flew in *Sky Wolf* as the original flight engineer. We had that wonderful plane from the beginning. We flew it over to Molesworth and it took us through a lot. My pilot was Carl Morales. He has passed away. I am one of the original members of the Hell's Angels group. I was sorry to read about Irl Baldwin passing away. I knew him from our training in Boise, and at Molesworth. He and my pilot were good friends.

**Francis Hinds**  
358th Squadron Engineer

## BROTHER'S DEATH IN AIR COMBAT DELINEATED

My sincere thanks for the very prompt reply to my inquiry about the death of my brother, Lawrence Burgeson, on the 303rd Bomb Group's mission to Magdeburg, Germany on September 28, 1944. Your letter delineates the details of his last flight and certainly puts things into perspective for me. It makes me further appreciate the fabulous job that the Eighth Air Force did during World War II.

I was in U.S. Army Ordnance during the war doing tank retrieving and repair, along with artillery and fire control maintenance. I was in France when I received word from my father that my brother had been killed in combat. I never knew the true facts. After the war, my career was in engineering flight test and development work on military and commercial engines, and I helped modify several aircraft.

**Donald R. Burgeson**  
Lancaster, CA

## 20 ANTIQUE CADILLACS IN VET'S FUNERAL CORTEGE

Richard "Dick" Dimick, 359th Squadron tail gunner on *Old Black Magic*, the Tarvid crew, died on May 8th. Dick was an avid outdoorsman and mechanic. He loved

hunting big game, and with his wife, Jody, as cameraman hunted the world over. He restored old cars—rag top Cadillac's with fins. Starting with old rusted hulks or frames, he made beautiful cars. At last count he had over 20, all running, registered, insured and gleaming like new. The Caddies were driven by members of his Old Car Club in the funeral procession. We will miss him.

**Louis Grandwilliams**  
359th Squadron Pilot

## DFC'S URGED FOR ALL WHO COMPLETED 30+ MISSIONS

I believe our Association should recommend that the Distinguished Flying Cross be awarded to all 303rd Bomb Group crewmembers who completed 30 combat missions prior to June 6, 1944 and to all crewmembers who completed 35 missions after D-Day. Prior to April 1, 1944, the DFC was awarded automatically to aircrew members after the completion of 25 missions, and then the requirement was raised incrementally to 30 until it was phased out on June 6, 1944. This obviously was based on what appears to have been a high percentage of losses during this time period. There is no argument that the medal was earned by those crewmembers. The argument is for those who flew after D-Day and endured as many as 35 or more combat missions. The remaining missions did not prove to be "milk runs." The decision to change the rules effective with the invasion was wrong.

I recommend that the Association bring to light the reasons why and how every crewmember deserved the DFC. A formal recommendation should be prepared, signed by Squadron, Group and Wing commanders, and sent to the Chairman of the Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate for action.

**William H. Cox**  
Colonel (USAF Ret)

**(Editor's Note — Should we urge "blanket" recognition or**

push ahead with individual nominations? Let's hear from our 303rd air combat vets. Comments will appear in the November issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter.

Hal Susskind, our emeritus editor, says, "It is my honest opinion that the present command of the USAF will not do anything unless requested to do so. Our proposals to the Congressmen will have to be well researched and documented. Unfortunately, we don't have too many commanders left.")

## PRESIDENTIAL GREETING FOR BALTIMORE REUNION

President George W. Bush sent greetings to those of us who gathered in Baltimore for last year's reunion. As a 303rd veteran, I thought our members might be interested in the message from the Commander-in-Chief:

"I am delighted to send warm greetings to all those gathered in Baltimore, Maryland for the reunion of the 303rd Bomb Group (H), 8th Air Force.

"The soldiers, sailors and airmen who fought for America in World War II served our Nation with honor and distinction. Your service and sacrifice protected the

democratic ideals that make our Nation strong and secure; your heroism is an example for us and for future generations. We must always remember that our country remained free because of men and women who were willing to fight and die in the name of patriotic duty.

"Best wishes for a reunion filled with friendship and memories."

The letter was on White House stationery and signed by the president.

**Samuel W. Smith**  
360th Squadron Pilot

## VISITING BERLIN? HERE'S A HELPFUL CONTACT

A good friend of mine is an English-speaking German who would be pleased to help anyone who is thinking of visiting Berlin. Her name is Rosemary Bonnin, e-mail address is:

rosemarybonnin@arcor.de  
Until she retired, Rosemarie worked as a personal assistant to the manager of the Berliner Bank. She has lived in Berlin for all of her life so she has a good knowledge of the city.

**Iris Knight**  
Cornwall, England



Above is a photo of a recent presentation of the "Might in Flight" book, 1st Edition, to the Stillwater Airport Memorial Museum at Stillwater, OK. It was at this airport, then known as Searcy Field, where 303rd B-17's *Hell's Angels*, *Knockout Dropper*, *Wabash Cannonball*, *Yankee Doodle* and *Flying Bitch* were stored after the war before being scrapped. In the photo, l-to-r, are Bob Vincent, former B-24 pilot; Woody Harris, Museum Director; Ed Miller, 303rd pilot, and Roscoe Rouse, B-17 navigator.

**Harry Gobrecht**  
303rd Bomb Group (H) Association Historian



## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

I can only fill two pages in the newsletter, so if I have missed anyone please let be to known that your donation or contribution to the association will be duly noted in the next issue.

Dennis Smith  
Membership/Roster

## IN MEMORIAM

Clayton R Bagwell (358 <sup>th</sup> )	8/6/2001
Joseph F Bauer (359 <sup>th</sup> )	10/13/2001
Edwin W Bjorn (427 <sup>th</sup> )	10/6/2001
Mrs Helen Brahman (427 <sup>th</sup> ) (W)	2/8/2002
Peter Michael Curry (359 <sup>th</sup> )	12/15/2001
Mac Chesney Desmond (427 <sup>th</sup> )	2/8/2001
William W Duggan (427 <sup>th</sup> )	1/2001
Thomas A Duncan (427 <sup>th</sup> )	10/31/2000
Merle W Eckert (359 <sup>th</sup> )	9/18/2001
Raymond A Espinoza (444 <sup>th</sup> )	11/20/2001
Isadore Gepner (427 <sup>th</sup> )	1/18/2002
Arthur H Hawkinson (358 <sup>th</sup> )	4/7/2002
Ingvald "Ive" Iverson (427 <sup>th</sup> )	12/13/2001
James P Miller (358 <sup>th</sup> )	12/7/2001
Roger D Miller (427 <sup>th</sup> )	unknown
George Molnar (360 <sup>th</sup> )	4/19/2002
Adolphus J Oltremari (359 <sup>th</sup> )	11/24/2001
Mrs. Lucy Ratliff (427 <sup>th</sup> ) (W)	2/1984
R. Clifton Sanders (358 <sup>th</sup> )	2/2/2002
Harry A Schwaebe (358 <sup>th</sup> )	2/26/2002
John E Tevis (427 <sup>th</sup> )	1/5/2002
Robert W Thoma (HDQ)	11/16/2000
James J Traban (359 <sup>th</sup> )	2/7/2002
Allen R (Whitey) Untiedt (444 <sup>th</sup> )	11/2/2001
Lawrence O Volmer (427 <sup>th</sup> )	7/14/2001
Charles D Wagner (427 <sup>th</sup> )	1/7/2000

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H Ronald Welsh

359<sup>th</sup> (F)

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## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS FIRST TO RECEIVE HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER SILVER ANNIVERSARY BOOK COLLECTION

The first of 40 two-volume book sets of the Hell's Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary Collection designated for government, military, museum, university and public libraries was presented to the US Library of Congress.

Editor Eddie Deerfield and his wife, Mary Lee, made the presentation to Elena Zahirpour (center), US Acquisitions Specialist, on July 8.

Later in the month, presentations were made to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, the General George C. Marshall Museum in Virginia and the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Georgia.



## THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

Reactions by readers to the Hell's Angels Newsletter books have been pouring in, and I'm most grateful for the comments. Preparing the Silver Anniversary Collection for publication has been one of the most difficult assignments I've had as an editor for the 303rd Bomb Group Association. Neither I nor any of my predecessors as editors of the newsletter through the years has ever been paid for our services. Compensation is in a personal feeling of pride and accomplishment in serving our fellow veterans and their families. So, when readers of the books responded with such comments as "magnificent masterpiece," "terrific books," "masterful job," "a treasure," "they are grrrreeaaattt" and "without a doubt professional," I felt I was well paid, indeed.

For those who haven't seen the two-volume sets, the Introduction was written by **Lew Lyle** and the Dedication by **Kermit Stevens**. Lew is a retired USAF major general who flew 57 combat missions with the 303rd before taking command of the 379th Bomb Group. Kermit, the longest serving commander of the 303rd, retired as a colonel. In his introduction, General Lyle wrote, "I believe that the publication of these newsletters in a single collection will prove to be an even more valuable tool to keep our legacy alive. These newsletters tell the untold stories that reveal what many of our veterans did during the war and add a personal touch about not only the war, but what so many of our people have done in the last 56 years." Colonel Stevens wrote, "The greatest group of people I ever had the privilege of commanding in my whole life was the famous 303rd Bomb Group, the Hell's Angels. Today, the history of the trials and tribulations, the joys and despairs of our time in World War Two is being recorded for posterity....on the pages of the unparalleled Hell's Angels Newsletter."

Thinking back to the early hectic days before the successful culmination of this highly complex project, a single discordant note rings loudest. **Jack Rencher**, the Association's venerable president, cancelled his order for the books and asked for his money back. In a message to me, the Board's Executive Committee and others he wrote, "I have several rules I try to live by. One is: Never ride a dead horse. I think this horse is dead."

The moral of the story—if you go to the track, don't ask Jack for a tip on the horses.

**EDDIE DEERFIELD**

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.  
Hell's Angels Newsletter  
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