

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

November, 2002



**WAVING AT THE CAMERA** are John Ford, left, who organized the reunion in Branson, and Marv Edwards, a resident of Branson, who served as local chairman. **LEADING THE GROUP'S MISSION INTO 2003** are the new Executive Committee members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association: **Walt Ferrari, President** (seated, center), **Al Dusliere, Vice President for Administration** (to his left) and **Walt Mayer, Vice President for Reunions** (to his right). Standing, left to right, are **Bill Roche, Treasurer**; **Eddie Deerfield, editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter**; **Dick Bowler, Secretary**, and **Jack Rencher, Chairman of Past Presidents Committee**.

## 347 "HELL'S ANGELS" ATTEND JOYFUL REUNION IN BRANSON

Branson, a small town in Missouri, welcomed a gathering of 347 members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association at its annual reunion from October 3rd to 8th. Why Branson? In terms of entertainment, the community is to the Ozark Mountains what Las Vegas is to the Nevada desert, with a notable difference--entertainment in the mountain town is decidedly "country music" with gospel overtones and there's not a slot machine or casino in sight.

Vice President for Reunions John Ford, a resident of nearby Springfield and former 359th Squadron master sergeant, made the arrangements for the gathering. Branson, with a census population of 6,000 catering to approximately seven million visitors a year, lived up to its reputation. The Hell's

Angels who attended--about 15% of the Association's membership--enjoyed a truly unique experience.

The better known performers on various stages during the reunion included Glen Campbell, Andy Williams, Mel Tillis, Yakov Smirnoff and Lawrence Welk's Lennon Sisters. But, the best of times was in the Hospitality Room of the Star Conference and Reunion Center. Here, 303rd veterans and their wives and family members socialized and took joy in each other's company.

The unsung hero of the Hospitality Room was Bill Beasley, 359th Squadron pilot, who stood behind the bar on his tired old legs hour after hour, day after day, serving the libations. The heroine was his wife, Joan, who smiled patiently and took it all in stride.

On a somber note, a memorial service was held in the Conference Center to honor those comrades who fell during the war and those who have since passed on. Marvin Edwards, who assisted John Ford in reunion preparations, arranged for a color guard and a bugler to sound "Taps." Bishop Rene H. Gracida delivered the invocation, followed by remarks and readings by Ed Miller, Dick Johnson, Al Dusliere, Bill Eisenhart, Harry Gobrecht and Dennis Smith. The Reverend Robert L. Johnson gave the benediction.

The farewell banquet was held in the stunning surroundings of The Chateau on the Lake. Presidential Heritage Award plaques were presented to Gary L. Moncur, son of Vernon Moncur, 359th

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

# Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor—Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXV, No. 4 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 November, 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 Moleworth, England, to its 1945 deactivation in Casablanca. Spouses, children & grandchildren of regular members may become Family Members. All other persons interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd and in furthering the aims of the Association may, with approval, become non-voting Associate Members.

Membership years begin on the first day of January. The *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, 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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Timothy Quilter, a US Navy reservist at the Joint Analysis Center, and Bruce Henninger, Head of Protocol, have offered to assist. Persons planning to visit the base, however, should first contact UK Representative Robin Beeby and advise him of travel plans. Mr Beeby will make the appropriate contacts and coordinate a visit to RAF Molesworth.

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## ***World War II Survivor Capt. Cogswell Killed in Korean War***

# **AIRMAN LAUNCHES CRUSADE TO HONOR COURAGE OF 303RD PILOT**

### **"Brave Pilot Who Saved Town From Disaster"**

**By Warwick Payne**

**Reprinted with permission of The Hampshire Chronicle, England, September 6, 2002**

Anxious residents of New Alresford look to the skies and see smoke streaming from a crippled US bomber as it homes in on their town.

The giant Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortress", laden with ten 500lb bombs, rapidly loses height. Suddenly, the unequal struggle is over and there's a huge explosion. The aircraft has crashed near Alresford Pond.

The date is Sunday, September 26th, 1943 and a possible major disaster has just been averted in the picturesque Georgian town.

Many people praise the heroic actions of US Army Air Force pilot, Captain Robert Cogswell, who stays at the controls to the last moment so his aircraft, Lady Luck, will not hit the town.

The "Fort" has been taking part in a bombing raid on German U-boat pens in Nantes, in western France. But the mission has been aborted over the Channel owing to bad weather.

Turning for home, Lady Luck develops a fault in engine number four, causing such severe vibration that the starboard wing begins to disintegrate.

The nine other crew bail out near Winchester, leaving Capt Cogswell, who tries to find a safe place to land his stricken aircraft.

Fast forward 59 years and the radio operator, 79-year-old Eddie Deerfield, has returned from the USA to campaign for official recognition for Robert Cogswell's gallant efforts.

"It seems to me only proper that the parish council consider erecting a plaque near the crash site, or elsewhere in the community.

"Present and future generations should know of the courage of an American pilot who, in 1943, prevented what might have been New Alresford's greatest tragedy of World War II."

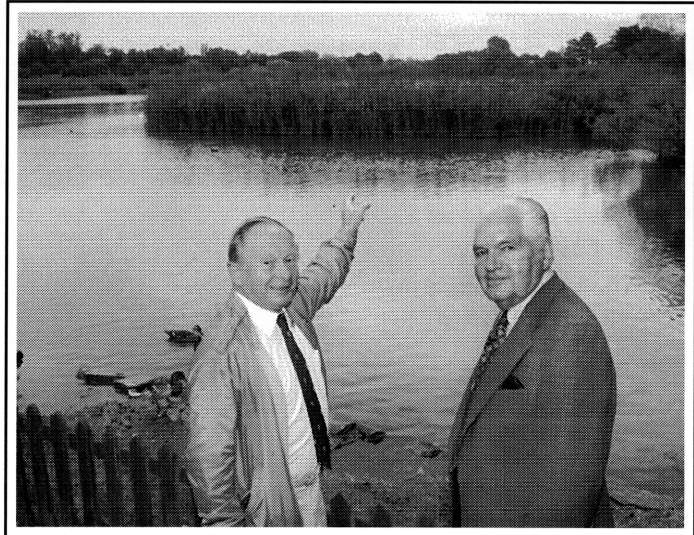
He says Capt. Cogswell's actions were recognised at the time, detailed in a letter to the Middle Wallop air base, by Mr A.H. Hasted, of Alresford Town Council.

But the only recognition is at the Globe on the Lake pub, where a small plaque with a spelling mistake recounts how the pilot saved "Arlesford".

Mr Deerfield visited the pub to meet town council leader, Simon Cook, who assured him the matter would be addressed.

Mr Deerfield also met B-17 buffs and residents who witnessed the final moments of Lady Luck. Nancy Farthing, who lived in Broad Street at the time, remembers the approach of the B-17.

"I thought: 'Gosh! It's going to hit the town.' It just



**OVER THERE—Bill Brixley (left) points out the site of the B-17 crash to Eddie Deerfield. Eddie was a wireless operator on the doomed USAAF bomber and Bill, 14 at the time, watched the plane's final minutes.**

**(Photograph: Frank Riddle.)**

skimmed over the rooftops of Broad Street and then there was this almighty crash."

Bill Brixley was 14 when Lady Luck was "lost in action".

He arrived at the crash site a few minutes after impact.

"It was like a scene from hell. It stands very vivid in my memories."

Incredibly, the crew of Lady Luck all came through unscathed, though Capt Cogswell sustained back injuries from bailing out at such low altitude.

A unit of Dutch soldiers recovered the plane's remains, including the bombs, shortly after she went in, but few other details of the incident are known owing to wartime censorship.

Indeed, such was the secrecy of the salvage operation that it was long rumoured the complete shell of the B-17 was submerged in Alresford Pond.

Robert Cogswell and Eddie Deerfield regularly exchanged letters after the war. Mr Deerfield says of his pilot:

"He saved my life on a number of occasions."

Their friendship ended tragically in 1951 when Cogswell was killed flying a Boeing B-29 "Superfortress" bomber in the Korean War.

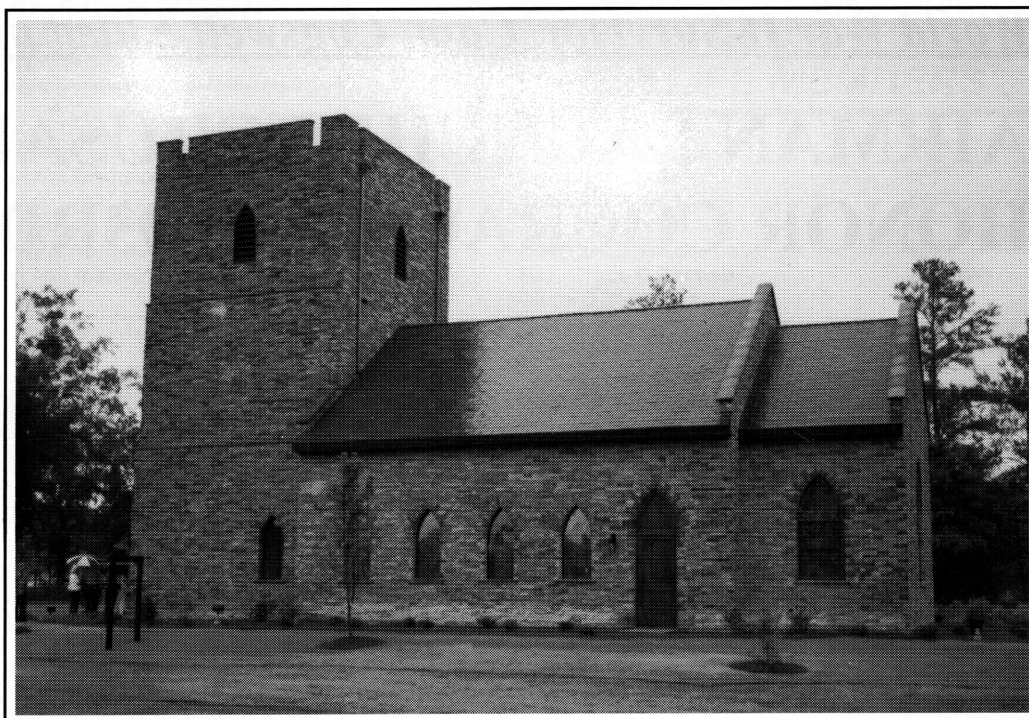
Mr Deerfield only found out when his last letter to his wartime colleague came back stamped "MIA" - Missing in Action.

Eddie Deerfield continued his military service, before moving to the US State Department, where he served as a diplomat in Pakistan, India, Canada, Nigeria, Uganda and Malawi. He retired in the mid-1980s with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.



## CHapel Of The Fallen Eagles

The new chapel in the Memorial Garden of the Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum is modeled on a typical East Anglican church in England.



# NEW CHAPEL AT HERITAGE MUSEUM DEDICATED TO 8TH AF VETERANS

Six years of planning and three years of fundraising have yielded an impressive new house of worship on the grounds of The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Pooler, near Savannah, Georgia. It was dedicated last May "to those who have served in the Eighth Air Force for the cause of freedom and liberty." Special emphasis was given to the memory of those airmen who gave their lives for their country.

Much of the funding for the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles came from the members of the 8th AF Historical Society. The structure, designed by Savannah architect Ken Spriggs, was modeled on typical rural churches in East Anglia, where most of the 8th Air Force bases during World War II were located. It is non-denominational, open daily to the public, and available for services and various events.

Within the chapel are numerous stained glass windows, impressive in their design and colors. Each is a work of art, unique in content and presentation, reflecting the wishes of donors. The dominant window in the chapel sanctuary, for example, is a replica of the wartime stained glass in Quidenham Church at Snetterton Heath near the 96th Bomb Group base.

Among the chapel's interior artifacts are an original ornate Anglican church lectern, four original choir benches, antique pews, replicas of English chandeliers and an antique chapel bell.

### *Dedication of The Chapel of the Fallen Eagles*

Prayer by Chaplain Martin Loyley:

Eternal God, let this Chapel of the Fallen Eagles, which we dedicate in your name, be a house of solace and peace; your inner peace that passes all understanding. Let each ceremony held in this hallowed place be touched by your presence and may the memories of those who gave their lives for our freedom be ever present in our minds as we worship, celebrate and meditate in this chapel.

Old Testament Reading by Rabbi Arnold Belzer:

1 Kings 8:22-30

New Testament Reading by Father Michael Travaglione:

1 Corinthians 3:9-17

Act of Dedication by Chaplain Loyley, Rabbi Belzer and Father Travaglione:

The prophet Isaiah tells us that "they that wait upon the lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles".... In memory of those members of the Eighth Air Force who gave their lives in the cause of freedom, who were lifted on eagles' wings to the presence of their Maker.... In gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice paid by Eighth Air Force personnel and in loving remembrance of those who have finished their life's course.... We dedicate this chapel.



## 303rd Group's Dead Among Those Honored at Cambridge Memorial Service in England

The weather was fine—sunny and warm—for the 58th annual memorial service to be held at the Cambridge American Cemetery at Madingley in the United Kingdom.

The official party arrived promptly at 1100 to the sound of a lone piper. The Honor Guard for the posting of the colors was from the Joint Analysis Center at RAF Molesworth. Among the fluttering American and British flags were the flags of the US Air Force, Army and Navy, along with the black-and-white flag of the POW/MIA Association.

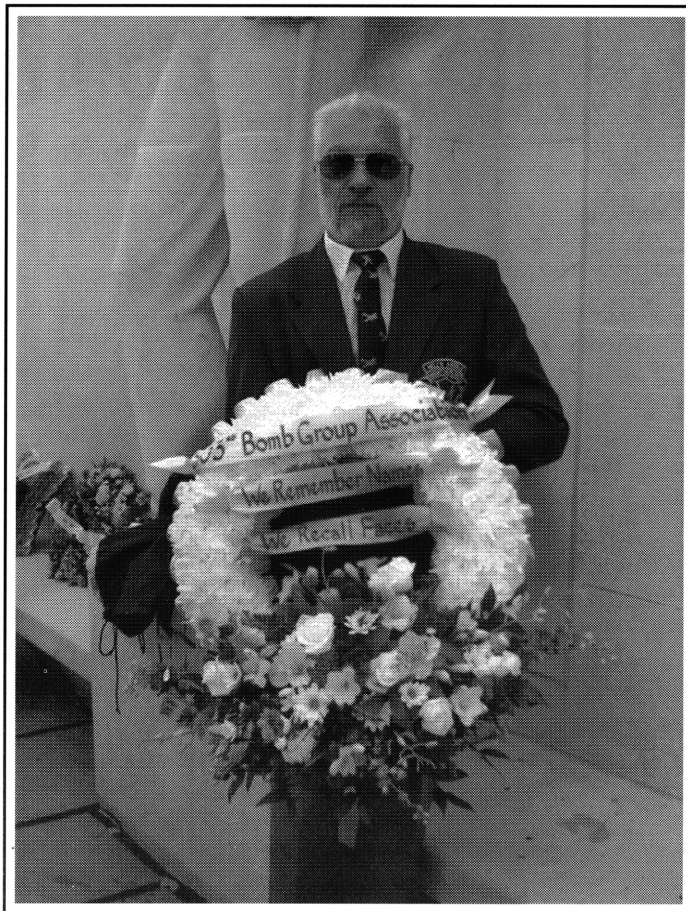
The service was to be the last attended by the retiring Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, James G. P. Crowden. He thanked the United States for standing by England throughout the years, and said, "The events of September 11th showed us how much we saw ourselves as needing to stand with you." He added, "There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. That is how we feel towards America."

Mr. Crowden remembered the young men who came to England during the Second World War. His father commanded the Home Guard at Peterborough at the time, and his mother worked in the Red Cross. He still has Clark Gable's autograph as a souvenir.

The keynote speech was given by Major General Kenneth W. Hess, Commander of the US Third Air Force. He said we owe the warriors buried here a great debt, and commented that it was humbling to be at the Cambridge American Cemetery in their presence. He remarked that in February, 1944, an aircraft from a base in East Anglia was shot down and the crew became POW's. His father was a member of that crew.

General Hess touched on the events of September 11, and said the Air Force had flown 31,000 sorties and 10,000 refueling missions since that tragic day. He added, "Although the loss of our people is our greatest sorrow, the men and women who serve are our greatest strength." He asked veterans present at the ceremony to stand and be saluted, and thanked them "on behalf of a grateful nation."

This year, there were more than a hundred wreaths laid along the Wall of the Missing. As has happened many times over the years, the 303rd Bomb Group Association's wreath was laid by Robin Beeby who, with his wife, Sue, serves as the Association's Representative in England. The Beebys



**ROBIN BEEBY, the 303rd Bomb Group Association's representative in England, laid the Group's wreath at this year's memorial service at the Cambridge American Cemetery at Madingley. Some of the 303rd's finest are buried there.**

live in nearby Kettering.

After a moment of silence, the firing of ceremonial volleys by a 48th Fighter Wing Honor Guard was heard, and the melancholy sound of Taps echoed across the graves. The bugler was from the US Air Forces in Europe Band. The quiet was broken by the sound of two fly-by's—F-15C Eagles from the 493rd Fighter Squadron based at RAF Lakenheath in the "missing man" formation and Royal Air Force GR-7 Harriers from 1 (F) Squadron at RAF Cottesmore.

As the ceremony drew to a close, the engines of the B-17 "Sally B" were heard. The veterans cheered as it made several low passes over the crowd. The Flying Fortress is based at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

The long ago words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower summed up the feelings of those who attended the ceremony:

"The Americans whose names here appear were part of the price that free men have been forced to pay to defend human liberty and rights. All who shall hereafter live in freedom will be here reminded that to these men and their comrades we owe a debt to be paid with grateful remembrances of their sacrifice and high resolve that the cause for which they died shall live eternally."



THE IRA EAKER THAT I KNEW

# Reminiscing about a special general

By Hal Susskind



**General Ira Eaker architect of the 8th Air Force**

An item in a recent issue of the San Angelo, Texas, "Standard Times," brought back memories of World War II, the Mighty Eighth Air Force and some rather hectic missions over Germany as part of Hell's Angels, the 303rd Bomb Group.

The article had to do with the efforts of a young lady named Carolyn Moody, President of the Eden Heritage Preservation Association who is in the process of raising money to erect signs proclaiming that Eden is the hometown of Gen. Ira Eaker, architect of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

"This is the way to honor him," said Moody. "It's time to do this before too many World War II veterans pass away. To date the association has raised about \$2,000, enough for two signs. The association is hoping to raise enough money for four signs, one at each highway point entering the town."

"Eventually the association wants to erect a Texas Historical Marker in honor of Eaker who died in 1987, but rules state that can't occur until 20 years after a person's death," said Moody.

While living the life of an Air Force Commander, Eaker never forgot his boyhood home of Eden and his love for Texas.

In a 1945 article celebrating his return home from the war, he said, "When I was a boy on the farm at Eden, I had a great ambition to visit the big city of San Angelo, but 45 miles seemed an impossible distance. If I had used our horse and buggy, it would have taken two whole days, so I never went. But today I flew from Eden to San Angelo in 10 minutes. Quite some progress fellows."

Seven years before his death, Eaker was awarded a special Congressional Gold Medal.

An avid reader of aviation stories in my youth, my first recollection of seeing the name of Ira Eaker occurred when he made aviation history by participating in the first Pan American Goodwill flight in 1927 from San Antonio, Texas around South America to Washington, D.C.

He was also one of the pilots of the "Question Mark," which in 1929 established an air endurance record of staying aloft for 150 hours, 40 minutes and 15 seconds. That was

the year I graduated from elementary school.

Although I spent 19 months in England flying more than 40 missions, mostly with the 303rd Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, I never got to meet Gen. Eaker. I heard a lot about him but was never afforded the opportunity of meeting him. I was too far down in the pecking order. Little did I know that 20 years later I would be given that opportunity. And I made the most of it.

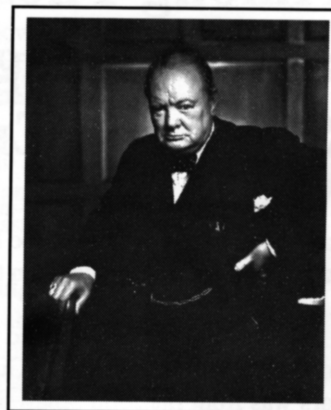
Separating from the Service in 1946, I was recalled in 1949 and was reunited once again with the B-17. Flying as a navigator with the Air Rescue Service in 1951, I found myself, on rescue missions, crisscrossing a million miles of the Atlantic Ocean which was our area of responsibility. Our B-17 escorted both Queen Elizabeth and President Eisenhower's aircraft to Bermuda for a conference.

In July of 1963 I began a tour of duty in Vietnam as Public Affairs Officer for the Air Force's Second Air Division. In May of 1964, I was awarded the Aviation Space Writers' Orville Wright Award for my work in Vietnam which may or may not have had an effect on my assignment to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. in July of 1964 as the Air Force Representative in the newly created office of "Special Assistant on Vietnam matters" to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. In simpler terms, I went to work for Mr. Arthur Sylvester, Secretary Robert McNamara's spokesman on the E Ring of the puzzle palace.

As a recent returnee from Vietnam I was soon giving talks to various groups visiting the Pentagon. Using slides I shot while in SVN, I soon designed and presented a 45 minute, "dog and pony" show. It got to be quite popular since the general public knew very little about South Vietnam at that time.

One day in September, Mr. Sylvester informed me that the USAF requested we send someone over to brief Gen. Ira Eaker who was going to SVN on a fact finding mission on behalf of the Air Force Chief of Staff. Since I was the Air Force representative, and a recent SVN returnee I was given the assignment.

Meeting Gen. Eaker in his office in downtown Washington, I gave my



**Winston Churchill**

sanitized version of the "dog and pony show," plus a copy of my "end of tour report" from SVN. The briefing was strictly about SVN and when I finished my presentation, Gen. Eaker thanked me and said he would get in touch with me when he returned.

A few weeks later, I received a call from Gen. Eaker's office saying he would like to discuss his SVN trip with me. Sitting down in his office I was very pleased to hear him say that my briefing was right on the money. He then invited me to have lunch with him in one of the most exclusive clubs in Washington.

Sitting down in the club and after a whiskey sour, I said, "General, I flew with the 8th Air Force in WW II and at one time, because of some heavy losses, I know we were in danger of losing our daylight bombing mission. What or who saved us?"

With a smile, he replied, "I helped save it."

"I was given permission by Gen. Tooe Spaatz to go and talk to Winston Churchill. I explained to Mr. Churchill that with a few reinforcements and a little more experience we could bomb the enemy around the clock--The RAF at night and the U.S. Army Air Forces in the daytime. A few days later, Mr. Churchill send me a pass to attend a meeting of Parliament. Sitting in the balcony, I heard Mr. Churchill say, as he looked in my direction, "We will bomb the devils around the clock." Daylight bombing by the American Air Forces was saved."

That question cemented a friendship that lasted more than 20 years. During my five years in the Pentagon, I had lunch with Gen. Eaker at least once a month and on special occasions, more often, when we

had some very interesting items to discuss. None of my questions were ever ignored or went unanswered. Like the time I asked him who was the person who was involved in introducing the English female driver to Gen. Ike. He replied that he was the one that recommended that Ike get an English driver because they would know their way around London during a blackout. Continuing he said, "I had recently read a story about her rescuing some people from a burning building during an air raid; so I suggested he get her as a driver." Diplomatically, we didn't go any further on this subject.

Although we never discussed it, I always had the feeling that he would have liked to have stayed with the 8th Air Force until the end of the war instead of taking over the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces in Italy.

During my tour in the Pentagon, Gen Eaker was approached by a syndicate to do a series of columns on military affairs. But he had to submit six columns to get the project started. After he had completed the six columns he asked me to look them over and give him my opinion before he submitted them for approval. I liked four of them but was only luke warm on the other two. I approached his secretary and told her my predicament. She told me to be honest and tell him what I thought because he valued my opinion. I told him what I thought and he destroyed the two I

was only luke warm about and he wrote two others. I was flattered that he valued my opinion so highly. He had faith in his friends and I certainly valued his friendship.

On my infrequent passes to London while at Molesworth, during the war, I enjoyed going to the theatre. Two very popular actors that I enjoyed seeing were Ben Lyon and Bebe Daniels. Ben Lyon was the star of "Hell's Angels" a pre-war movie. One of the original pilots, Irl Baldwin, named one of the original B-17s after that movie. And eventually the 303rd Bomb Group also adopted the "Hell's Angels" as its slogan after it became the first B-17 in the ETO to complete 25 bombing missions over German occupied territory.

In 1969 I was transferred from the Pentagon to Airsouth in Naples, Italy. One of my most prized possessions is a handwritten note from Gen. Eaker, dated July 11, 1969 when I was departing the Pentagon for my assignment in Italy.

In June 1970, our family planned a week's leave from Naples to London, which ironically coincided with the 25th Anniversary of my leaving Molesworth to fly to North Africa to join the North African Division of ATC.

I got in touch with Gen. Eaker and asked him if I could say hello to anyone in London for him. He replied immediately giving me the address of Ben Lyon and Bebe Daniels. I spent a delightful afternoon visiting with these two charm-

Tel: Tate Gallery 1667

710 Keyes House  
Dolphin Square  
London S.W.1.

March 11th, 1971

Dear Col. Susskind,

Your letter with enclosure dated Feb 18th just received due to the Postal Strike and I want to thank you for sending the article of the B17 Hell's Angels. I remember the plane very well. I wanted to do a mission on it but was sent out on the General Ike B 17.

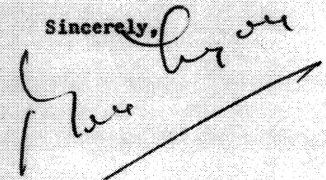
I haven't heard from the boss lately. Of course I refer to General Eaker. He is a great guy and one we owe so much to.

When do you expect to be in London again? If you should plan a trip do give me a call as we would love to see you again.

With every good wish,

I remain,

Sincerely,



ing people. It soon became apparent that after visiting with Ira Eaker's friends, his friends became your friends. After the visit I soon began corresponding with the Lyons. A letter from Ben Lyon is printed above.

Ben Lyon told me an amusing story involving Gen. Eaker. It happened at the Headquarters of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces in Italy. At that time L/C Ben Lyon was a Special Assistant to Gen. Eaker. For calisthenics they played tennis. One day in the heat of a hectic game, Lyon returned the general's serve catching the general on the head. The general, not having too much hair there, bawled out Lyon for his well placed return Ben Lyon smilingly, retorted with, "General there's no rank on the tennis court." Two days later when they returned to the court, Gen. Eaker followed by his aide was wearing a sports jacket. When the aide helped him remove his jacket there was the general with three stars painted on each shoulder. "Now there's rank on the court," said the General, smiling. And his head was no longer the target.

Even after I retired from the Air Force in 1973 to take a job as Director of Communications for the Austin, Texas, Chamber of Commerce, we corresponded frequently. One day a gentleman dropped into my office at the Chamber, and said, "my name is Steve McElroy, I just moved to Austin and General Eaker told me to drop in and say

hello." Actually Steve McElroy was B/G McElroy, USAF (Ret) who ironically was the endorsing officer of my ER when I was in Vietnam and he was the Vice Commander of the next higher headquarters in the Philippines. As I said before, Gen. Eaker's friends soon became your friends. Steve, a very talented artist and writer, and I became close friends until his death several years ago. Steve painted the first four color cover for the May 1988 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter.

Ira Eaker was promoted to full general in 1985, a promotion which was earned and well deserved. In 1987, the country lost a true patriot, and I lost a very good friend.



Bailing Out

Contributions to the "Eaker Sign Fund" can be mailed to the City of Eden, P.O. Box 915, Eden, TX. 76837

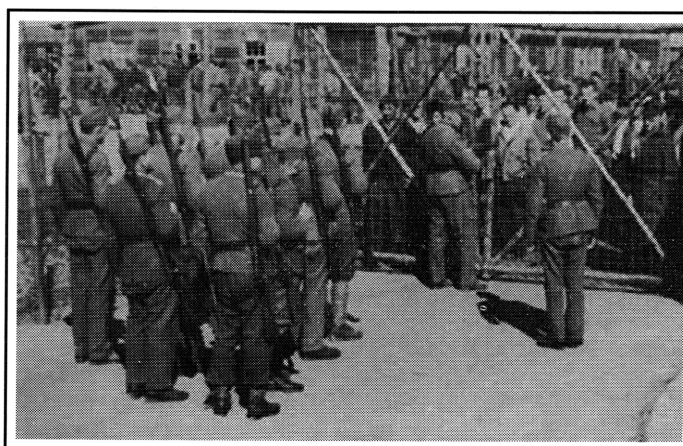
TIME OUT OF HAND

7-11-'69.

To Col. Susskind, with appreciation for his counsel, admiration for his professional qualities and skills and every good wish for his continued success in his career

Ira Eaker  
Lt Gen USAF (Ret)





**ONE OF THE MANY GUARD TOWERS** encircling the three compounds of Stalag Luft I. POW Charlie Johnson walked the perimeter of his compound several times a day for exercise and as a break in the boredom. **ALSO SEEN ARE GERMAN GUARDS PREPARING TO ENTER THE NORTH COMPOUND.** By early 1945, the younger guards had been transferred to combat units and replaced by old men.

# LIFE IN STALAG LUFT ONE AS THE WAR NEARS END

(In the August 2002 issue, 358th Squadron Navigator Charles P. Johnson told how German ME-262 jet fighters shot down his crew's B-17 on the 20 March 1945 mission to Hamburg. Three of the crewmembers were killed and seven became prisoners of war. Johnson continues his story with an account of life in Stalag Luft I.)

I was made most welcome by the other twenty-three men in my assigned room at Stalag Luft I. The room was approximately fifteen feet square and contained three tiers of shelf bunks on which we slept. Naturally, as the new man, I got a middle shelf as a bed. Each room in the barracks had a door to a corridor which led to a three-hole latrine and a trough urinal.

The prisoner-of-war camp was located near the city of Barth, adjacent to the North Sea and approximately sixty miles north of Berlin. Before the war Barth had been a resort city. The camp was probably about fifty acres, with four prisoner compounds, each holding approximately 2,500 Allied flying officers. I was assigned to North 3 Compound.

By March 1945 all of the guards were old men since the young soldiers had been transferred to combat units. The camp, however, was secured by double barbed wire fences, machine gun towers with search lights, and barracks built on piers about three feet off the ground.

The potable water distribution system required that each room in North 3 send one man to compound North 2 twice a day to fetch a bucket of drinking water. Once there on the morning run, he would give the bucket to someone who wished to visit North 3. This way, each carrier could spend five or six hours in the other's compound until the afternoon water run when the exchange was reversed. It was by this maneuver that I was able to contact others of my crew who were confined in North 2, and learned about the fate of our pilots Taub and Cooper and gunner McWilliams who were killed in the attack by the German jets.

Each day revolved around the three meals. Eating was a ritual. Each week every prisoner received one Red Cross box, weighing eleven pounds, which was immediately turned over to

the kitchen. The cooks then gave back to each individual the cigarettes and the candy in the boxes. Everything else stayed in the kitchen to prepare breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

Some of the best meals I have ever had came out of those Red Cross boxes. Eating was not the only obsession with food. Discussions regarding recipes, restaurants, dining specialties, ambiance and any other matters related to eating were the topics of choice. Breakfast generally consisted of one extremely thin slice of black bread and an equally thin covering of whatever preserve was in the Red Cross parcel and one cup of ersatz coffee. The bread and coffee were compliments of the Germans. Lunch was basically the same except that often there was cheese on the bread compliments of the Red Cross. Dinner was the big meal which included a meat dish, again from the parcel, and usually a canned or dried fruit dessert.

On rare occasions there was a vegetable furnished by the Germans. Once they gave us meat, but we learned later that it came from horses killed by American fighter planes. The meat turned out to be spoiled and most of us were very sick that night.

Because of the injury to my right hand and knee, my softball activity was very limited, but walking the fence was no problem. Each day I would walk the perimeter in a clockwise direction, with one or more men from my room, between breakfast and lunch, lunch and dinner, and again between dinner and lockup. It was amazing how quickly I would get to know my roommates and become attuned to prison life.

In the last days of April, we began to hear artillery fire some distance away from the east. Information from a clandestine radio in the camp which received BBC confirmed that the Russian Army was moving westward and that a great battle along a wide front was in progress. On the 30th of April we were informed that the Russians were quite close and that the German guard force was preparing to leave in order to avoid capture by the Russians. The speculation was that the German officers were going to head west where they hoped to surrender to the British Army. The old enlisted men were going to shed their uniforms and attempt to blend into the civilian society.



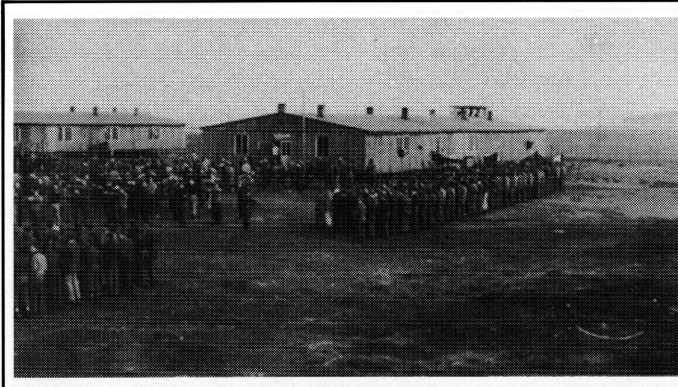
That evening, lock-up occurred as usual and we were left to speculate what tomorrow might bring. There was a routine within the compound that a phonograph along with a few well worn records, donated by the Red Cross, was passed around each day to a different room. This was our day to be the recipients. Because of the excitement generated by the rumors no one in our room, or probably any of the rooms in the camp, wanted to sleep, so we stayed up and played the records over and over with each man taking turns winding the machine.

Sometime after midnight we opened the window shutters a little at a time and waited for some reaction to this violation of camp rules. Getting none, we put the phono on the window sill, turned up the volume to the maximum and played Opus #1 by Tommy Dorsey over and over again. POW's in other rooms throughout the compound began opening windows and calling back and forth. Just before daybreak, two of our roommates climbed through the windows and jumped to the ground. When there was still no reaction from the German guards, we all began to shout and go out through the windows.

Within minutes the entire personnel of the camp were outside shouting, laughing, crying and hugging one another. The frustration of confinement was at least momentarily released. After breakfast, most of the now ex-Kriegies began to wander around the entire camp, from compound to compound. Five of us decided that we should see the surrounding area and started off for the main gate which led to the road to Barth outside of the camp. About half way to the gate we heard machine gun fire. Our first reaction was to head for cover, thinking that we were involved in a fire fight. We saw men running towards the road beyond the gate and concluded that we were apparently not in danger so we continued walking.

We then discovered the source of the firing. There was a magnificent coach drawn by two superb dapple Grey horses and driven by a very small, extremely young man wearing the most elaborate uniform we had ever seen. He was carrying a sub-machine gun and would periodically fire short bursts in the air. On either side of him were young, very pretty German girls who appeared to be enjoying the spectacle. As the carriage went by, at a fast gait, someone who understood German read the wording on the side and told us that it was owned by a funeral parlor. The man in the outlandish outfit was a Russian officer, in charge of the unit that had overrun the adjacent area, and he was blind drunk.

We proceeded to the road not knowing what to expect, but what we saw was incredible. There was a Russian horde of stupefied drunk, unkempt and unruly scavengers and pillagers. This rag-tag army, including many women, rode in expropriated old cars, which they could barely drive, or horse drawn carts piled high with loot taken from the Germans. The rest were



**POW'S EACH RECEIVED ONE RED CROSS FOOD BOX A WEEK.** Johnson said, "Some of the best meals I ever had came out of those Red Cross boxes. Eating was an obsession." **ANOTHER RITUAL WAS THE DAILY ROLL CALL and exercise formation, not an obsession but a camp requirement.** (The photos are courtesy of Website [www.merkki.com](http://www.merkki.com) created by the daughters of 398th Bomb Group Stalag Luft I POW Dick Williams, Jr.)

walking, barely. All were really drunk, disheveled and carrying weapons which appeared to be old single shot rifles although a few had sub-machine guns which they fired in the air for no reason. Later, we learned that these people were not Russian regular army, but rather "Terror Troops" whose mission was to subdue the German inhabitants

We decided that the most prudent course of action would be to return to the relative safety of the camp. Most of us went to bed, fatigued by lack of sleep and our experiences of the day. As I laid in my bunk space, I reflected on how uncivilized the world really had become.

The next morning was the beginning of a beautiful week weather-wise, and most of us went to the beach along the Baltic Sea, in the opposite direction of the previous day's journey. There we laid on the sand and soaked up the warm sun's rays while contemplating how wonderful it would be to return home. When we arrived back at the camp, we were informed that each of us was to collect two Red Cross parcels in order to keep them from the Russians and that the food was to be saved for the possibility of a forty mile trip west to the British lines.

After returning from the trip to the warehouse with the parcels, we stored them in our room where it was decided that two or three of us would remain on guard at all times on a rotating basis. Shortly after lunch, while we were standing around trying to comprehend the bits and pieces of information we had gotten and attempting to determine our available options, we saw a small group of British paratroopers entering the compound. Once inside they began handing out pieces of V-Mail writing paper and pencils with instructions to write letters home and they would mail them back to the United States. They also informed us to "stay put", that the U.S. Army knew we were there and was working on an agreement with the Russians to get us out intact. Their advice was, "Under no circumstances leave the camp with Russian Army units." This visit by the British restored our confidence that in due course we would be returned home.

Eight days transpired before an agreement could be negotiated with the Russians. By now, the war in Europe had ended. On the morning of our departure, every man in the camp made a determined effort to look his very best. The march through the camp, down the road and through Barth to the airfield was an exhilarating experience for all of us. It was a parade of celebration and victory. The lines were straight, every man in step and singing throughout the thirty minute march.

At the airfield there were B-17's waiting to shuttle the ex-Krieges out of Germany toward rail transportation which would take us to Camp Lucky Strike near Le Havre in France for processing. We were on our way home!



## *Happy Days In Reunion in the Ozarks*     *Photos by Marv Edwards*



**SENIOR ADVISOR LEW LYLE** made a brief overnight visit to Branson to renew long friendships with the men he served with at Molesworth. He's seen with Harvie Collins (back to camera).



**TEXAS CAME TO MISSOURI** with the arrival of former 303rd Bomb Group Association president Carl Dubose and his wife Angele. They're at the watering hole in the Hospitality Room, in the tender care of John Ford, acting bartender.



**THREE CHEERS FOR THE 303RD** say (left to right) Lori and Bob Hitchcock and Marie and George Mayberry.



**SNACK TIME BETWEEN RAFFLE SALES**—Marriane Smith, wife of Membership Chairman Dennis Smith, was an enthusiastic promoter of raffle ticket sales. Among the prizes were wood carvings, on the ledge behind her, by Bill Adams of England.

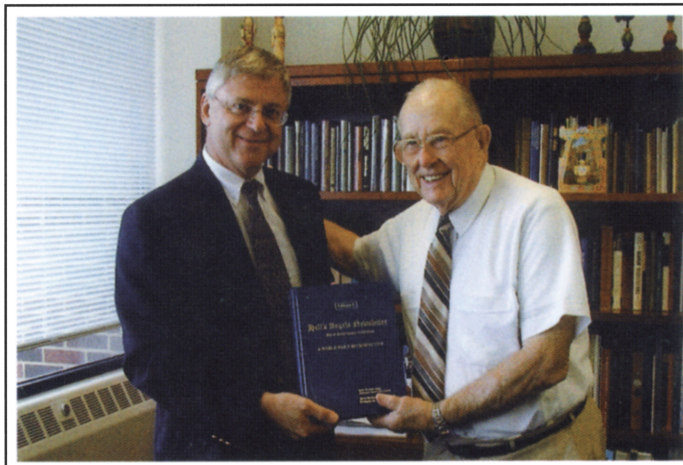


**TABLE FOR SEVEN, PLEASE**—Among the happy campers are (left to right) Dick Bowler, Henry Johansen, Bob Umberger, John Umberger, Frances Vogel, Glenna Prussman and Donna Prussman.





**MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA**—Lieutenant General Donald A. Lamontagne, Commander of the Air University, gave a “thumbs up” as he accepted the Hell’s Angels Newsletter books from Thomas Richardson (on the left), 427th Squadron pilot, and Clyde Bradley, former 360th pilot and now a retired colonel. General Lamontagne said the books would be placed in the Library Ready Reference Section for ease of availability to researchers.



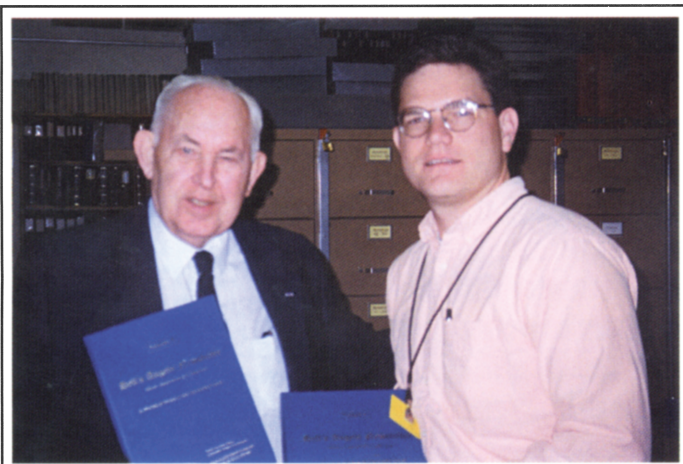
**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**—William A. Gosling (on the left), Director of the university’s libraries, was presented with a set of the Hell’s Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary books by Fred Reichel, 427th Squadron pilot and currently the squadron’s elected representative on the 303rd Bomb Group Association’s Board of Directors. Mr. Gosling said the books would be catalogued as part of the Graduate Library collection.



## SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE 303RD

Lisa Gerondale earns the applause of (right to left) Dr. Edward A. Scott, Director of Libraries at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, and Lee Faulkner, 303rd Bomb Group waist gunner. As a student at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, FL, Lisa worked through the summer and fall of 2001 to prepare the index for the two-volume Hell’s Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary Collection. The monumental task involved reading every sentence in 86 issues of the newsletter—spread over 1,300 pages. The index has been praised as a unique research tool. The USAFA presentation photo is on page 20.

**SAN DIEGO AEROSPACE MUSEUM**—Harry Gobrecht (on the left), 358th Squadron pilot, made the presentation to John H. Bolthouse, the museum’s archivist. The museum prides itself on chronicling the history and science of aviation and space flight. Nearly 100 aircraft and space vehicles are on display. Its Hall of Fame honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of aviation and space exploration.



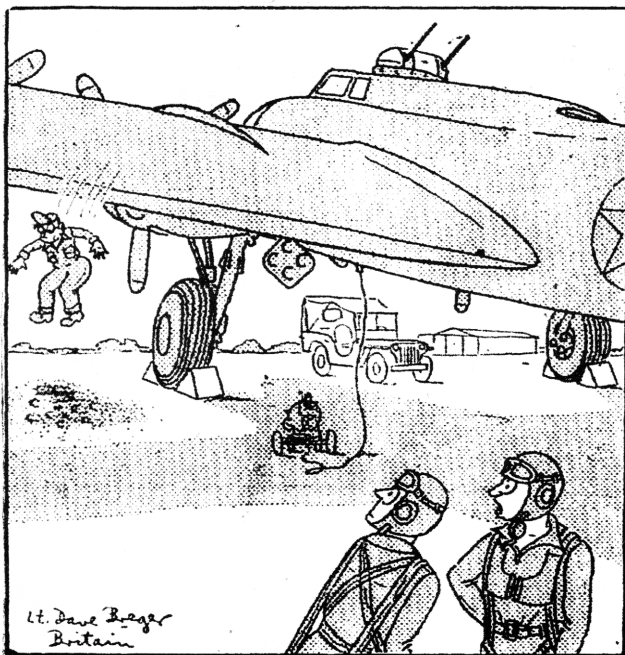
**MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA**—Lieutenant Colonel Patrick A. Dunn, 6th Services Squadron Commander, and William F. Foster (to his right), the Director of Libraries, expressed gratitude for the Hell’s Angels Newsletter books. The presentation was made by Mary and Bill Eisenhart. Mary was a nurse at the 303rd Station Hospital while Bill flew missions as a 359th Squadron pilot. MacDill AFB is home to Central Command, a key player in the war on terrorism.







THREE OF THE 359th SQUADRON'S BEST KNOWN B-17's are easily identified in this combat formation on the mission to attack the Friedrichstrasse railway station in Berlin on 7 May 1944. In the foreground is *Duchess' Daughter* (297272) piloted by Charles Hanselman. In upper left is *Old Black Magic* (107206) with Bill Eisenhart at the controls. *Heller's Angel* (102484) is center right, with pilot Elmer Young. No enemy aircraft were encountered, but flak was intense and accurate at the target. All 303rd aircraft returned to Molesworth.



He's writing an article called, "One Hundred Jumps From a Flying Fortress!"

## LAST CALL FOR HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER BOOKS OFFERING

Out of 500 sets of the Hell's Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary Collection printed earlier this year, less than 40 sets remain for sale. If you still haven't purchased this 303rd Bomb Group family heirloom, do it now. Contact Charlie Sykes at the PX to place your order.



**602-993-8015**  
Fax: 602-942-3198  
PX303BG@aol.com  
www.303rdbga.com

# LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT RECORDS LIVING MEMORIES OF WAR VETERANS

## 8th Air Force Heritage Museum "Official Partner" In Enterprise

There are 19 million war veterans living in the United States today, but every day 1,500 of them pass away. Motivated by a desire to honor our nation's war veterans for their service and to collect their stories and experiences while they are still among us, the U S Congress created the Veterans History Project.

The legislation calls upon the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve audio and video-taped oral histories, along with documents such as letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and home movies, of America's war veterans and those who served in support of them during World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars.

The goals of the project are:

*.....To stimulate public learning, by inviting, advising, and supporting individuals and groups as participants in the Veterans History Project.*

*.....To engage veterans associations, military organizations, institutions of higher learning, historical societies, civic groups, and ongoing veterans oral history projects as partners in the effort to identify, interview, and collect documents from war veterans and those who served in support of them.*

*.....To preserve and present the collected materials to the public, through the National Digital Library Program, exhibitions, pub-*

*lications, and public programs.*

*.....To identify existing and ongoing veterans oral history programs and archives, and recognize and work with them to expand the Library's Veterans History Project initiative.*

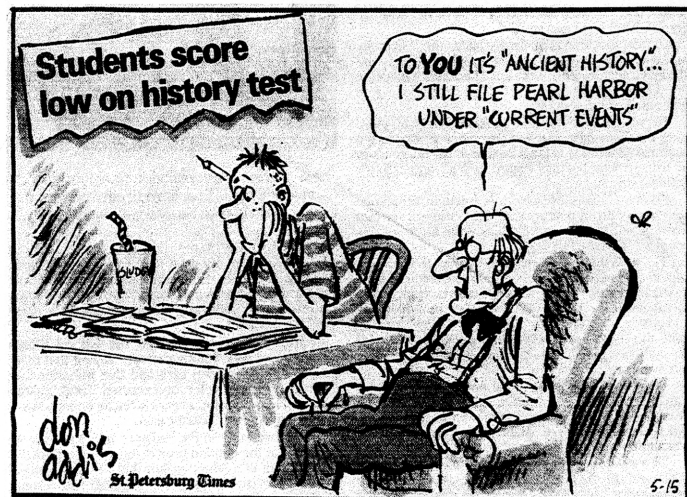
*.....To create a comprehensive, searchable national catalog of all oral histories and other documentation collected as a result of this project.*

**Maj. Gen. Lewis E. Lyle**, USAF Ret., Vice Chairman of The Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum near Savannah, GA, said the museum is an "official partner" of the Library of Congress in collecting the oral histories of war veterans. He urged those who haven't been interviewed to get in touch with Dr. Vivian Rogers-Price, the oral history project coordinator at the museum. She can be reached at (912) 748-8888, extension 108.

"We owe our wartime veterans a profound appreciation for their sacrifice and service to our nation and its future," said Librarian of Congress **James H. Billington**. "Together, with the help of all Americans, we can honor our war veterans and create a lasting body of documentary materials that will inform and educate in the decades ahead."

Project manager **Peter Bartis** said coordinators are increasingly conscious of the need to document stories of other conflicts such as the Cold War and smaller campaigns, but they are challenged to meet the initial objectives.

"Down the line, and with guidance from Con-



Cartoon by Don Addis, courtesy of St. Petersburg Times of Florida

gress, we'll eventually get to that stage," he said. "We're working one step at a time."

In addition to collecting material for the project, planners also hope to engage groups like veterans organizations, military associations, historical societies and civic groups as partners; identify existing and ongoing veterans oral history programs and archives; and create a comprehensive, searchable national catalog of all histories and documents collected through the project.

General guidelines include:

Only one recording, not to exceed 90 minutes, accepted for each veteran.

Consider creating a transcript of each interview.

Photographs, wartime letters and diaries, maps, charts and wartime "home" movies are welcome.

Interviews and related documentation need not be preserved and housed at the Library of Congress. Materials donated to official partner organizations are still part of the Veterans History Project.

So far, the project has met with success. "We haven't put any limits on the amount of material we'll ac-

cept," said **Ellen McCulloch - Lovell**, director of the project. "We're creating a framework so that we can handle a lot. We expect thousands."

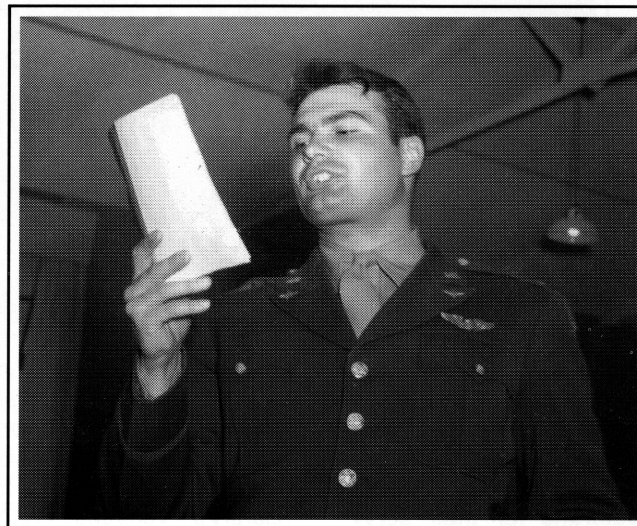
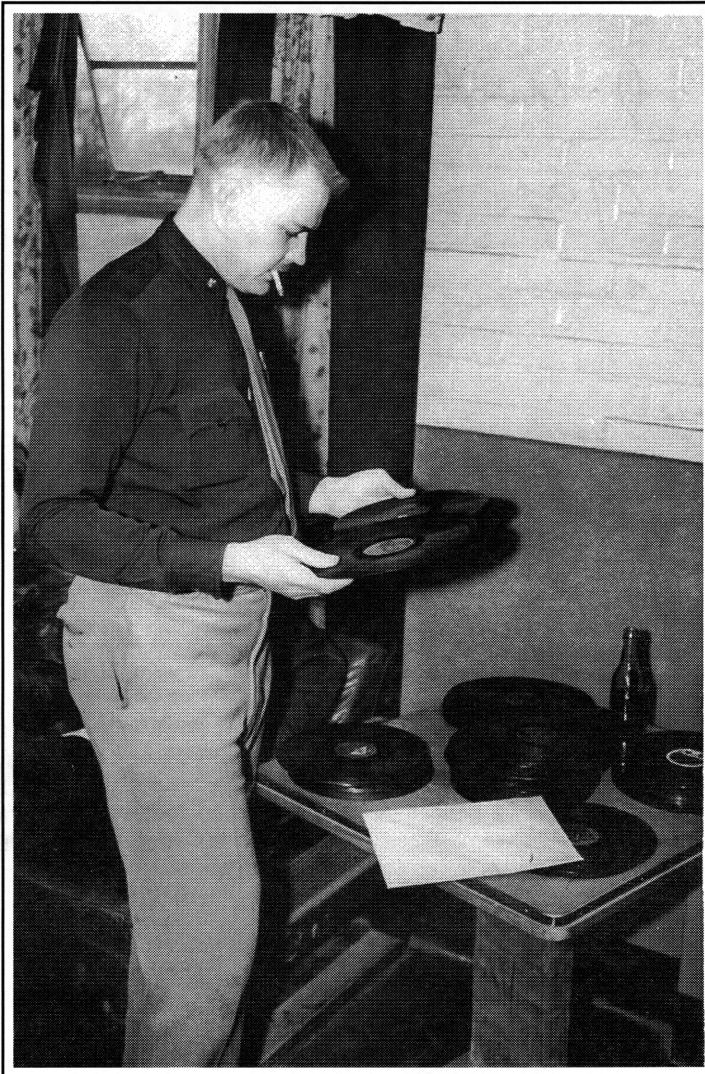
The videos are a distinctive contribution. "It's nice to be able to see the person, to catch all of the nuances in their voices," Bartis said. "Hearing that tells you even more than the written word can."

In the Army Times, **Sen. John Warner** (R-Va.) recalled a U.S. helicopter crash in Pakistan that injured troops. "We were so concerned about one helicopter crash," he said. "In World War II, there were 500,000 who gave their lives and another 500,000-plus who were injured. In Korea there were about 50,000, and in Vietnam about 50,000. Those numbers are incomprehensible to this generation."

So, the Times summarized, "These histories not only honor the veterans and those who supported them, but also offer a perspective on the current conflict, the war on terrorism."

(Sources—Library of Congress and article by **Shannon Hanson** in VFW Magazine)





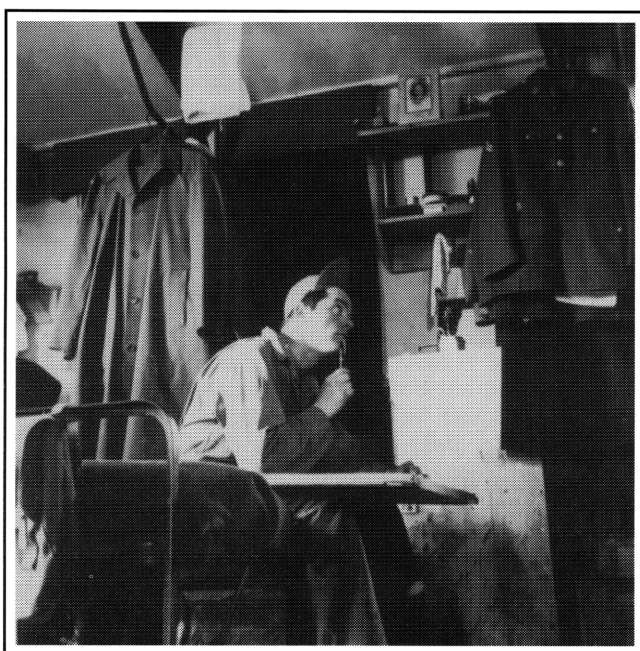
## 303rd Pin-ups Of The Month

UPPER LEFT—Clemens Wurzbach, commander of the 358th Squadron, looks over phonograph records to find music suitable to his mood.

UPPER RIGHT—George Stallings, one the 360th Squadron's eminent pilots, took on added duties in May 1943 as master of ceremonies at a Red Cross quiz program.

LOWER LEFT—Charles Vardy, of the 359th Squadron Maintenance and Engineering Section, gives careful thought to writing a letter home.

LOWER RIGHT—Arnold Siegel, 427th Squadron aircraft refueling operator, puts "Recon" through its paces. The mascot's chief rival was the 358th's "Homer."



# Molesworth Diary

## HARD CHOICE—LAND ON ONE WHEEL OR BELLY?

My co-pilot, Jim Moody, and I had gone past the six-month time limit since being tested for instrument flying so a senior pilot, Captain Don Gamble, was assigned to check us. In addition to most of my regular crew, we also had on board other personnel with various assignments concerned with equipment and flight procedures. Everything went as planned, but when we came back to land the right landing gear would not come down. The recommended procedure was to belly land a plane with that problem. I had never seen a belly landing, but expected it to be very rough. Because of the extra men on board and no safe place for them, I asked the captain if he thought it would be better for some of the crew to bail out. He agreed, but said it was my crew so I should handle it. I told Jim Moody that Don Gamble would bring the plane down and I would be his co-pilot, so if Jim and the others wanted to bail out they could do so. I went back to talk to the others.

Capt. Gamble took us up to 3,500 feet and informed the tower of our problem. An area west of the field was chosen for the jump. Moody was the first to bail out. As soon as the others saw his chute open, one by one they all followed until only myself, my engineer, and Capt. Gamble were left. When I got back to the co-pilot seat, Capt. Gamble asked if I had ever seen a plane land on one wheel before. It so happened that when I was in advanced training I saw an instructor land a twin-engine Curtiss training plane that way. He asked me how much the plane was damaged. I told him I could only see damage to the wing that hit the ground.

The captain then called the tower and asked if they thought a one wheel landing would be better than a belly landing. They told him to use his own judgment. He advised the tower that we would land on one wheel. He then came in and made a perfect landing with the left wheel just on the edge of the pavement, and kept it in line and held the right wing up as long as he could. There was enough time for me to turn off all four engines and the electric power switch. When the wing hit the ground, the loop was only about 90 degrees. The only damage was to the right wing tip, aileron, flap and one blade on the number 4 engine. What Capt. Don Gamble did that day made him a hero to me. He could have followed procedure and made a belly landing, but he thought there was a better way, and proved it. As far as I knew then, Don Gamble was the first pilot to land a B-17 on one wheel. The landing was so safe that it showed that the bail outs were not necessary, but that was by hindsight. Each of the men who bailed out came down safely.

**Wendell Ferguson**  
358th Squadron Pilot

## CREW CHIEF HUGGED BY GRATEFUL PILOT

I was lying on my bunk thinking about my brother Bill who I heard had been shot down on a mission. I was wondering if he was dead or a prisoner of war, when the door opened and an officer came in. My first thought was that he had come

to tell me Bill had been killed in action. Then, I saw that it was George Stallings, one of our squadron pilots. He told me that he had gone to see Major Walter Shayler, the squadron CO, to tell him how pleased he had been with the mechanical condition of *Quinine—Bitter Dose*, the B-17 he had been flying. Shayler said, "Tell it to the crew chief."

Stallings hugged me and gave me a kiss on the cheek. He was emotional. I was real proud. When he finished his combat tour, he gave a party for all the men in the ground crews of the B-17's he had flown on missions. One swell guy!

**Willis Meyer**  
360th Squadron Crew Chief

## "WHEN BOMB DROPPED, IT TOOK MY WATCH"

Because my position in the B-17 was closest to the bomb bay, it was my job after we left the target to make sure that the bombs had all dropped. On one mission it was my unhappy fate to see that one bomb had hung up. I was supposed to go into the bomb bay to physically dislodge it. The bomb bay doors were still open, and I had to walk from the radio room onto a very narrow catwalk. I unplugged my electrically heated suit, put on a portable oxygen tank and mask, and, numb with cold and fear, stepped out onto the narrow beam. If I would slip, there was nothing between me and the ground thousands of feet below. I had about eight minutes before the oxygen supply would be depleted. By then, I would probably be too frozen to function anyway.

As I wrestled with the bomb, I was unaware that its arming wire had crept up inside my sleeve and under the band of my brand new wrist watch. When I finally shook the bomb loose, away it went taking my wrist watch with it. It's a miracle that the bomb didn't take me along with the watch.

**Robert H. Hitchcock**  
427th Squadron Radio Operator

## BITTERSWEET MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

Even though our experiences pale in comparison to the quiet heroism of every air crew member, we were all cogs in the same wheel. We did our jobs, sweated out our planes and lived fairly comfortable lives. I remember "dry cleaning" my class A's at the hardstand with aviation fuel prior to being trucked into our leave town, Northampton, where we played for dances at the local NAFFI, a canteen and hostel for enlisted men run by the British. And the "hospitality rations" we would take to local families who invited us to dinner. Butter, Spam, cigarettes, chocolate and old GI shoes were most highly prized. I remember London, Piccadilly, darts, warm beer, fish and chips in a newspaper funnel and that strange question they used to ask us at the hotel, "What time do you want to be knocked up in the morning?"

I remember playing trumpet in the squadron dance band on Saturday nights when the local girls would arrive by  
(See DIARY on 16)



**(DIARY from 15)**

truck. One night, I shook with shock and anger when our lead alto saxophone player, a pilot and personal friend, didn't show up. I was told, "The Germans got him." A number of the air and ground people at Molesworth were fine musicians. Rehearsals were very unmilitary. Rank was left at the door. The officers in the band just loved to play good music. And those hanger dances sure boosted morale.

A day or so after the surrender I went on a low-level flight over the Ruhr valley. We came back through Paris and buzzed the Eiffel tower. I made the trip in the ball turret. A most emotional moment came a few months later when personnel of the entire 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group came together for a final "dress formation" at Molesworth. The band played "Retreat" as the flag came down, and then "The Air Corps" song as B-17 after B-17 flew by, not 30 feet over our heads.

**Jack Amram**  
**359th Squadron Radar Mechanic**

**SHOT DOWN ON 2ND TOUR—POW FOR A MONTH**

After our first two missions to Frankfurt and Bremen in October of 1943, we were not quite ready for our third mission—the disastrous "Black Thursday" raid of October 14 to attack the ball-bearings plant at Schweinfurt. We came through it, but Bill Heller, our pilot, deserves much of the credit for getting us to the English coast for a landing at a RAF field. I completed 26 missions, was sent back to the States, and then returned to the 303<sup>rd</sup> to begin my second tour. In mid-April of 1945, flak set our plane on fire. Three of us were captured together, put in a camp at Luckenwalde, and liberated in May by the Russian army. We were on our own, walked to the Elbe River, and met up with US troops.

**Leo Lanier**  
**360th Squadron Ball Turret Gunner**

**ONE UNLUCKY LEAP WITHOUT A PARACHUTE**

We were the enlisted men on the R. J. Lutz crew. Between missions we would often go out at night through the back gate to the little town of Titchmarsh to our favorite pub. We called it "Ma Brown's" after the name of the owner. We always parked our bikes in the back and came in through the kitchen. One night, three of us, after already having had "a few" on the base, headed toward town. We stopped on a bridge over a small stream. One of us, who shall remain nameless, got up on the rail, and said, "See that large boulder? I can jump from here, land on it, and never get a drop of water on me." There was a chorus of "do it!", and off the guy went in a mighty leap. That night at the pub, his uniform hung wet and steaming by the fire while he sat at the bar in his underwear consuming half-and-half.

I bailed out of our burning B-17 on the 13 January 1945 mission to Mannheim, Germany, and this jump was successful. I kept the parachute and gave a piece of it to Ma Brown who made a scarf for me. Years later, I learned that the pub's name was "The Wheatsheaf," but it will always be "Ma Brown's" to me.

**Roger Bates**  
**359th Squadron Waist Gunner**

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Three score years ago, the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group, the greatest B-17 combat group to serve in World War II, was formed.

We, the survivors, have now closed another reunion where we celebrated the deeds of the past, renewed acquaintances and friendships, and remembered those no longer with us.

We owe a vote of thanks to John Ford and those who assisted him for the hard work and long hours they devoted to making the reunion so successful and pleasant. I know it was not an easy task.

I also want to thank our outgoing president Jack Rencher for leading us through the past year, and for his help in getting me started in my job as your president for the next year. President!!! When J. Ford Kelley recruited me as a member, I had no thoughts or aspirations of becoming president. Ford told me to get involved in the Association and saw to it that I did.

I want to say sincerely that I consider it an honor to be president of this Association, and hope to continue the work of all the past presidents who have made this the best bomb group organization in the world.

This can only be accomplished with the help of all members. Think about volunteering your time and talent to the Association, or, at least, contributing your ideas on how the workings of the Association can be improved. We are getting older, and need to keep moving the torch forward.

Our next reunion will take place in Portland, Oregon, from August 7th through 11th, 2003, at the Double Tree Hotel.

Take care, and, God willing, we will meet again.  
God bless America.

**Walter J. Ferrari**

**REUNION IN BRANSON (From page 1)**

Squadron pilot; Eddie Deerfield, 360th Squadron radio operator/gunner; Edgar C. Miller, 360th Squadron pilot, and Harry D. Gobrecht, 358th Squadron pilot, "in recognition and appreciation for helping to preserve the heritage of the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group (H) based at Molesworth, England during 1942 to 1945.

The Association's annual Might In Flight awards were made to Walter J. Ferrari, 427th Squadron pilot; John W. Ford, 359th Squadron headquarters master sergeant; Jack P. Rencher, 358th Squadron pilot and James B. Taylor, 358th Squadron pilot.

At the General Meeting, members elected the team that will lead the Association in 2002-2003: Walt Ferrari as President, Al Dussliere as Vice President for Administration, Walt Mayer as Vice President for Reunions, Dick Bowler as Secretary and Bill Roche as Treasurer. Eddie Deerfield was reconfirmed as editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter and Jack Rencher became Chairman of the Past Presidents Committee.

Summaries of the minutes of the Board meetings and General meeting will appear in future issues of the newsletter.

# 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**

## "FRANKLY, MY DEAR, I DON'T GIVE A DAMN"

As a member of the great unwashed, those who flew their missions not only after D-Day but relatively long after D-Day, I am responding to the request in the last newsletter for opinions on the awarding of the DFC. I looked up the DFC in my Webster's New World Dictionary of the English Language. The good book says "A decoration awarded to members of the U.S. armed forces for heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight".

It seems to me that the people who made the decision about awarding the DFC took the position that missions flown after D-day were not "extraordinary achievement." In effect, we did nothing to shorten the war nor did we contribute to the final victory. The only thing this decision accomplished was to divide combat crews into two groups—the "extraordinary" and the "not so extraordinary."

I certainly am not in any way ignoring the fact that the pre D-Day crews had a lot more trouble with enemy fighters than we did. However, crews were being shot down well after D-day.

It was essentially two different types of combat. I believe we flew longer missions, made more pre-dawn take-offs and formed larger formations while orbiting over a low frequency beacon in the dark than did our predecessors.

Did the army give a different medal for heroism to those troops that landed on D-Day +1 or +2 or +3 and then fought in the hedgerows from the medal given to those that actually went ashore on D-Day? I don't think so. In spite of the lack of lots of fighter opposition, going to Merseberg in the fall of 1944 improved your religion in hurry.

To give a short and sweet answer to the question, at my advanced age, I'll use Margaret Mitchell's lan-

guage for Rhett Butler in "Gone With The Wind"—"Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

I know that I and my fellow airmen did demonstrate "extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight." None of us have to hang our heads in shame because we don't have a DFC. We helped to win the war. There's honor and no shame in that.

**Walter J. Ferrari  
427th Squadron Pilot**

## RULES NOT FAIR TO MEN WHO FLEW 35 MISSIONS

The newsletter of August 2002 asked for comments about the awarding of the DFC. Our crew and so many others flew 35 missions after the invasion of June 6, 1944. Were we denied the DFC because targets such as Berlin, Merseberg, Peenemunde and Schweinfurt were not tough enough? Or was it that commanders thought they were giving out too many medals? Where is the fairness? The rules for awarding the DFC during those dangerous times should be reconsidered.

We were shot down near Frankfurt, Germany, about six months after D-Day and were prisoners-of-war until May, 1945.

**Albert Miller  
359th Sqd Radio Operator**

## ABOARD B-17 DOWNED BY GERMAN ME-262 JETS

I read with great interest the article by navigator Charles Johnson in the August issue about being shot down by German jet fighters on March 20, 1945. I was a member of the crew on that aircraft.

It was not a normal scheduled flight. By that I mean that only the pilots and the navigator were briefed, not the entire crew. We figured it would be a breeze, a short run to Hamburg, Germany. We were wrong. The ME-262's saw to that.

When the pilot, Francis Taub, gave the order to bail out, Jim Hollowell, our ball turret gunner, opened the

waist door and away he went. I followed him, and, after counting to about seven, opened my chute. Parts of the B-17 were falling all around us. I had a hard landing, got out of my chute, was picked up by two German civilians on a horse-drawn wagon and later turned over to some soldiers. They took me to Lubeck for interrogation. From there, I was taken to an airfield, and placed in a cell with Hollowell. What a relief to see a familiar face! From there, it was on to Stalag Luft One.

**Chester Maluchnik  
358th Sqd Radio Operator**

## GLIDE BOMBS—SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

After receiving my Hell's Angels Newsletter books—the Silver Anniversary Collection—I have spent many pleasurable hours reading those issues that were published before 1989, when I joined the Association. Since I was directly involved with glide bombs starting in 1942, I want to correct some misconceptions about the "grapefruit" project that appeared in articles in early newsletters and again in the 303rd Bomb Group's "Night in Flight" daily diary.

The 303rd first became associated with the "grapefruit" project as early as September, 1942. That's when the 427th Squadron's H. A. Robey crew, flying the B-17 *Susfu*, participated in a glide bomb testing program at the Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. Four months later, *Susfu* was shot down over Brest, France, and Lt. Robey was killed in action.

Intense German anti-aircraft fire defense of its prime targets raised the glide bomb to an immediate use status. A 50-man Special Weapons Section was hastily trained and sent to England. I was among the 19 assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group.

Contrary to published reports, the 444th Sub-Depot was not responsible for any work associated with the glide bomb. This was done by our Special Weapons Sec-

tion. The first planned use of those bombs was against Nazi U-boat ports on the Atlantic coast of France. Eventually, Cologne was selected as the first and only glide bomb target. The inexperience of bomber crews with the techniques of aiming the bomb to glide to the target was probably the main reason for the disappointing results.

**Bob Brassil  
Special Weapons Section**

**(EDITOR'S NOTE—An article by Bob Brassil "to set the record straight" about the often maligned project code-named "Grapefruit" will appear in the February 2003 issue.)**

## WIDOW GRATEFUL FOR JAC HONOR TO HUSBAND

I was delighted with the lovely news in the August issue that an award has been established at the Joint Analysis Center in the name of my late husband, Judge Peter Michael Curry. I can think of nothing that would have made him prouder than to have his name linked each year to an award for the JAC's outstanding enlisted person at Molesworth. We are all deeply moved to know of this award.

Peter passed away on December 15, 2001. He was an intelligence officer with the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth. With great fondness he recalled the friends who were part of his life then. He became so enamored of England that he later named our country home for the little village that had been his second home—Molesworth.

We had the special pleasure of taking two daughters and a grandson to the reunion at Molesworth in the summer of 2000. It was a time none of us will ever forget. It was the last trip Peter made to Molesworth, and the honor done the veterans of the 303rd by the British never failed to bring tears to his (and to our) eyes.

**Marthe Downing Curry  
San Antonio, Texas**



## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

To much information to put into to few pages. This copy of "From the Membership Chairman" was submitted before the reunion, which was held in October at Branson, MO.

As it looks right now, there is no room to add any address changes to this issue. But this might work out fine as a new membership roster will be printed and mailed out right after the first of the new year.

Dennis Smith  
Membership/Roster Chairman

## IN MEMORIAM

James E Aberdeen	358 <sup>th</sup>	1/9/2002
Alexander Alex	427 <sup>th</sup>	1/24/2002
John H Austin	359 <sup>th</sup>	12/13/1963
Paul J Barnak	359 <sup>th</sup>	12/10/1998
Dale E Bartholomew	360 <sup>th</sup>	4/30/2002
Joseph J Biernacki	360 <sup>th</sup>	3/27/2002
Loren W P Bohle	358 <sup>th</sup>	4/24/2002
Raymond F Buckley	444 A/D	3/25/1982
James C Buckner	358 <sup>th</sup>	5/30/1996
Robert T Clarkson	427 <sup>th</sup>	3/15/1990
Mrs Beryl Coburn	358 <sup>th</sup> (W)	
John F Cross Jr.	360 <sup>th</sup>	4/26/2001
Darius R Davis	360 <sup>th</sup>	3/15/2002
Fred J Dioquardo	360 <sup>th</sup>	7/25/1970
Kenneth C Edwards	359 <sup>th</sup>	11/9/1997
John H Embach	360 <sup>th</sup>	2/16/1987
Sam S Faraone	360 <sup>th</sup>	3/7/2002
James C Flemmons	360 <sup>th</sup>	8/21/1996
Dennis E Foreman Jr.	358 <sup>th</sup>	8/12/2002
William C Fort Jr.	358 <sup>th</sup>	5/31/2002
Robert T Franklin	444 A/D	1/27/1998
Donald F Genessy	358 <sup>th</sup>	4/25/2002
John M Hagar	360 <sup>th</sup>	2/28/2002
Charles G Hammons	359 <sup>th</sup>	7/24/1974
Lester C Hansen	359 <sup>th</sup>	8/12/1997
Robert B Heiliger	360 <sup>th</sup>	6/25/2002
Charles L Herman	427 <sup>th</sup>	6/15/2002
James W Hughes	360 <sup>th</sup>	8/28/2002
Arthur J Hybert	359 <sup>th</sup>	March 1999
Harold L Hyman	303 <sup>rd</sup>	10/12/1987
Wallis S Ivy Jr.	358 <sup>th</sup>	3/6/2002
John Kesarich	427 <sup>th</sup>	2/5/2002
Henrick F Komendecki	360 <sup>th</sup>	1/3/2001
John V Lemmon	358 <sup>th</sup>	4/14/2002
Willard L Lewis Jr.	427 <sup>th</sup>	8/5/1998
Rudolph S Lopez	358 <sup>th</sup>	2/16/1999
William D Mahaffey	359 <sup>th</sup>	5/11/2001
James E McNutt	360 <sup>th</sup>	4/22/2002
Gordon D Miller	427 <sup>th</sup>	10/4/1997
Ennis L "Buck" Rogers	427 <sup>th</sup>	12/22/1997
Sebastian J Scilla	360 <sup>th</sup>	5/18/1994
Lloyd A Shirley	427 <sup>th</sup>	10/28/2000
Merritt O Slawson	303 <sup>rd</sup>	10/6/1997
Arthur L Smith	303 <sup>rd</sup>	2/28/1988
Lawrence S Smith	358 <sup>th</sup>	1/11/2002
Mrs. Katherine Slawson	303 <sup>rd</sup> (W)	11/7/2000
Joseph "Jack" Stevens	360 <sup>th</sup>	7/3/2002
Roy M Stevens	358 <sup>th</sup>	4/30/1987
Thomas E Summers	358 <sup>th</sup>	6/26/2002
Donald N Thayer	427 <sup>th</sup>	4/8/1998
Joseph A Trudniak	360 <sup>th</sup>	4/15/2002
Howard E Tulos	1199 MP	6/26/2002
Robert F Vail	360 <sup>th</sup>	12/9/1997
Irving Wort	359 <sup>th</sup>	12/7/2001

Keith E Yandon  
Charles E Zipfel

303<sup>rd</sup> 5/9/2000  
427<sup>th</sup> 9/24/1994

## SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

Anthony J Boland	358 <sup>th</sup>
Donald H Conle	360 <sup>th</sup>
James E Jeter Jr.	359 <sup>th</sup>
John K Nazarian	427 <sup>th</sup>
George C Newton	427 <sup>th</sup>
Mrs. Grace C Sachau	358 <sup>th</sup> (W)
Clifford Steinberg	427 <sup>th</sup>
Jack A Strahs	359 <sup>th</sup>

## REPEAT SUPER LIFE MEMBERS

Carl J Fyler	360 <sup>th</sup>
Richard D Green	358 <sup>th</sup>
Lloyd D Hester	427 <sup>th</sup>
Horace S Kenney Jr.	427 <sup>th</sup>
Brian S McGuire	Honor
Richard G Naylor	358 <sup>th</sup>
Claude W Sherwin	1199 MP
Van R White	358 <sup>th</sup>

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Cyrus C Beck, (360<sup>th</sup>)  
Neal W Burdette Jr. (360<sup>th</sup>), 736 W Huebert Ave., Lancaster, OH 43130-4520, (740) 653-3381, spouse Jean  
Robert M Cooney, (427<sup>th</sup>)  
Ira Friedman, (427<sup>th</sup>)  
Billy Gaumer Sr. (359<sup>th</sup>), 3306 State St. NW, Greentown, OH 44630-0172, spouse Gwen  
Norman Genter (358<sup>th</sup>)  
William R George (358<sup>th</sup>)  
Joseph R Germaine (360<sup>th</sup>)  
Joe R Gray (427<sup>th</sup>)  
Robert A Hand (360<sup>th</sup>)  
Tracy W Lawson (358<sup>th</sup>)  
Frank Magyar (358<sup>th</sup>), 13992 W Willard Dr., Novelty, OH 44072-9731  
Chester S Maluchnik (358<sup>th</sup>), 13521 Nicollet Ln, Burnsville, MN 55337-2716, (612) 894-2147, spouse Gene  
Granville A Pence (360<sup>th</sup>), 6209 E McKellips Rd., Lot 430, Mesa, AZ 85215-2858  
John E Phillips (427<sup>th</sup>)  
Robert B Phillips (358<sup>th</sup>)  
James M Pierce (358<sup>th</sup>)  
Wilbert F Pohlman (359<sup>th</sup>), 4350 Maroon Ct., St. Louis, MO 63123-6714, (314) 631-7426, spouse Connie  
John W Psota (358<sup>th</sup>)  
Carl K Shumar, (427<sup>th</sup>)  
Charles D Wagner Jr. (0834-FL) (427<sup>th</sup> (F)), Route 4 Box 104-A, Pikeville, TN 37367-9218, (423) 881-4059, spouse Brenda  
Stuart K Wood (359<sup>th</sup>)  
John E Zabelicky (427<sup>th</sup>)

## NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

George H Fielder, (427<sup>th</sup>), 911 W. Camino Guarina, Green Valley, AZ 85614-2007, (520) 625-8035, spouse Elsie  
Wilbert L Ketner, (359<sup>th</sup>), 5021 Sunset Dr., Harrisburg, PA 17112-2168, (717) 657-8215

## NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Philip S Bartholomew, 1488 Brookfield Rd., Yardley, PA 19067-3930, (215) 579-1195, spouse Christine  
 Mary Reed Foreman, 416 Southshore Pkwy., Durham, NC 27703-3917, (919) 598-8877, spouse Dallas  
 Stephen N Gornito 359<sup>th</sup> (F)  
 Susan Perry Juhl, PO Box 1394, Melbourne, FL 32902-1394, (321) 777-0325  
 Robert G Luke, 6272 N Steamboat Way, New Market, MD 21774-6300, (301) 865-8255, spouse Joy  
 Wilbur E Meyer, 322 Prince Dr., New Braunfels, TX 78130-5354, (830) 629-6022  
 Denise S Neal, 16391 N 109<sup>th</sup> St., Scottsdale, AZ 85255-9090, (480) 473-4555, spouse Jeffrey J  
 Steven Pence, 17839 N 51<sup>st</sup> Way, Scottsdale, AZ 85254-7619  
 Sharon A Peyton, 5291 State Route 37, Malta, OH 43758-9047, (740) 962-3977, spouse Joseph  
 Elana S Pfeifer, 3015 Miller Trunk Rd., Eveleth, MN 55734-9502, spouse Brian, (218) 744-2891  
 Jeri J Steele, 3309 Sam Rayburn Run, Carrollton, TX 75007-3216, (972) 306-1596, spouse Bill Dow  
 Arthur D Tobkin, RR3 Box 151, Bagley, MN 56621-9723, (218) 694-6205, spouse Leona M  
 Shane M Wilkinson, 1526 N Bernice Dr., Fayetteville, AR 72703-6260, (479) 571-4814, spouse Keri

## NEW FRIENDS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Steve Gray, 58 Lacey St., Whyalla, S.A., Australia 56-00  
 John E Soito, 23 Dearborn Dr., Riverside, RI 02915-1415, (401) 433-2372

## DONATIONS

Colonel Kermit D Stevens, to the Hell's Angels Newsletter Book Project.  
 Mrs. Agnes R Johnson (359<sup>th</sup>) (W)  
 John W Psota (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 John W Spence, (359<sup>th</sup>)  
 Jean Wright, daughter of Alexander Kosta (358<sup>th</sup>)

## BENEFACTOR PROGRAM

Lucius E "Lou" Arnold...Roger K Bates...J Anderson Berly III  
 Mark "Mickey" Blake...Robert W Blythe Jr...Fayette H Botts  
 Mrs. Clara C Butler...Kenneth R Carnahan...Edward K Carter  
 Anthony J Cecchini...Loren M Clark...William L Clyatt Jr...Harvie L Collins...M C Compton...Donald H Conley...Kenneth W Davey...Dominick De Lorenzo...Vincent J Denisi...Clyde L Dewald...Charles R Doback Sr...Lee E Dolan Jr...Mark E Donnelly...Earl B Douglass Jr...Willis A Duffey...Albert L Dussliere...James T Elovich...George H Emerson...Lendell L Farrell...Mrs. Antone Ficovich...Walter J Ferrari...George H Fielder...Philip G Fleming...Richard C Fortunak...Carlyle A Frost...Richard E Gable...Joseph R Gansher...Edward W Gardner Jr...Mrs. Helen Gilkes...Harry D Gobrecht...Andrew T Goettman...Mrs. Anne E Grant...Alexander W Gray...Joe R Gray...Elwood A Griffith...Rufus W Grisham Jr...Harold J Hall Robert W Hanson...Martin M Harbarger...William C Heller Donna Q Hendel...Paul W Herschner...James A Hickey  
 George E Hiebeler Jr...Mrs. Maxine Holper...Jeanne M Horstick  
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 Wayne Jeglum...Milton L Jobe...Hugh B Johnson  
 Lawrence G Johnson...Wilfred B Johnson...Eugene J Kelly...Virginia K Kelley...Robert P Kerr...Mrs. Sarah Kindig...Russell S Klingensmith...Lee F Knedler...Russell A

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## IN MEMORY OF DONATIONS

Philip S Bartholomew, in memory of Dale E Bartholomew (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Albert T Beavers (358<sup>th</sup>), in memory of Clayton R Bagwell (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Sonia Bonn, in memory of Charles J Bonn (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Curtis O Brooke (358<sup>th</sup>), in memory of William T Hembree (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 David W Bruce, in memory of William F Dohm (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Ray & Theresa Cossey, in memory of Merle W Eckert (359<sup>th</sup>)  
 Charles R Doback Sr., in memory of Donald F De Camp & William T Hembree (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Donald H Foulk (358<sup>th</sup>), in memory of James E Aberdeen (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Katherine Garriott, in memory of John A Garriott (359<sup>th</sup>)  
 Edward K Giering, (427<sup>th</sup>), in memory of Ralph Warne & Kenneth Bennett, both of the 427<sup>th</sup>  
 Mrs. Helen Gilkes, (427<sup>th</sup> (W)), in memory of Barry Gilkes (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Lillie N Gutter, (444 A/D (W)), in memory of Daniel Gutter (444 A/D)  
 Mrs. Catherine Hargrove, in memory of Walter Hargrove (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Russell S Klingensmith (359<sup>th</sup>), in memory of all of the deceased members of H. Dahleen's crew  
 Iris Knight, in memory of Eugene & Phyllis Blum (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Frank E Kulesa (360<sup>th</sup>), in memory of the George C Stallings crew members  
 H Duane Litwiller, in memory of Dale E Bartholomew  
 Mary P Maier, in memory of LTC Henry Pratten Jr.  
 Jay P Morrison, in memory of Irl Baldwin (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Sterling L Morrison, in memory of Dr. Thomas H Morrison (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Dorothy Nardine, in memory of Howard H Nardine (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Mary Norris, in memory of Loy R Norris (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Humphrey P O'Leary (303<sup>rd</sup>), in memory of Felix Cioffi (1681 ORD)  
 Mrs. Arlys W Olson, in memory of John L Olson (358<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Glenna E Prussman, in memory of Henry G Prussman (359<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Roxana Quiggle, in memory of Robert D Quiggle (359<sup>th</sup>)  
 Edward E Ross, in memory of Richard C Waggoner (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Marjorie Schlemmer, in memory of Darrel S Schlemmer (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Milo R Schultz (360<sup>th</sup>), in memory of the departed Donald Johnston's crew  
 Grafton N Smith, in memory of William F Dohm (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Maxine Toth, in memory of Ernest Toth (427<sup>th</sup>)  
 Mrs. Lois Untiedt, in memory of Allan R (Whitey) Untiedt (444 A/D)  
 Mrs. Doris M Vail, in memory of Robert F Vail (360<sup>th</sup>)  
 Joseph Vieira (359<sup>th</sup>), in memory of Thelma F Vieira  
 Mrs. Donna Volmer, in memory of Lawrence O Volmer (427<sup>th</sup>)





THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY IN COLORADO was recently presented with a set of the Hell's Angels Newsletter silver anniversary books. Harold "Red" Timm, on the right, 360th Squadron tail gunner, shows the opening pages in Volume I to Dr. Edward A. Scott, Director of Academy Libraries. Looking on are Lee Faulkner, 360th waist gunner, and Lisa Gerondale, who spent the summer and fall of 2001 preparing an index for the books while still a student at Eckerd College in Florida. She was applauded at the US Air Force Academy presentation ceremony for her outstanding effort in producing an index covering 86 newsletter issues and 1,300 pages. (Photo by Kathy Timm Schaubert)

## THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

Walter J. Ferrari, 427th Squadron pilot and the newly elected president of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, tells the story about an unsettling event that happened to him years ago at the first reunion of the Association that he attended. He was in a conversation with another veteran pilot who asked, "When did you fly your missions?" Walt replied that his crew became operational in November, 1944. Whereupon the other fellow, who had flown his missions before D-Day, said, "Oh, you guys had it easy!" Walt said that he was so insulted by this remark that he was tempted to quit the Association. The membership should be thankful that he had second thoughts and recognized the remark as insensitive and thoughtless. Any one mission in the air over enemy territory before or after the land invasion could have been a crew's final fatal mission.

Congratulations to Walt Ferrari, Al Dussliere, Walt Mayer, Bill Roche and Dick Bowler. Our veterans, their family members and friends of the 303rd can be assured of capable leadership in the year ahead.

**EDDIE DEERFIELD**

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