

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

APRIL 1989

303rd and Molesworth Inactivated Again



The Royal Marine Band at Molesworth



Might in Flight cake at ceremonies

At about 11:15 a.m.; on Monday, 30th January 1989, the 303rd Tactical Missile Wing of the United States Air Force was inactivated by Major General Marcus A. Anderson Commander of the 3rd Air Force, United States Air Forces in Europe. For the second time in its history RAF Molesworth was bidding farewell to 303rders.

I was privileged to have been invited by the USAF to this ceremony and, as an Honorary Member of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, was proud to attend, with my wife Theresa, to represent you. Just as proud as we were to attend, on your behalf, the Activation Ceremony of the 303rd TMW on 23rd July 1987. I felt on that occasion that I really had no right to be there and admit to hav-

ing the same misgivings on this second visit.

Perhaps I was wrong to feel the way I did. Although I lived through the whole of the World War II, I was far too young to have ever served in the military. My affection for the US 8th Air Force, but the 303rd BG in particular, is as strong as ever. The privilege you extended to me when you made me an Honorary Member at the San Diego Reunion was one of the proudest moments of my life.

Well, as I say those were the mixed feelings I had; I would have much preferred it if 'real' 303rders could have attended this ceremony. In reality this was never on with the vast distance involved. Maybe my being there did have some justification; at least the

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association was represented.

No one is quite sure as to precisely what use the USAF will now have for the RAF Molesworth base. You only have to look at the permanent buildings, which have been erected over the past couple of years, to realize that they will almost certainly find some use for the old base; perhaps as something of an annex to the nearby USAF Base at RAF Alconbury.

Being something of a 'pushy' guy I took the opportunity, as you Americans say, of making a pitch at the Deputy CO of Alconbury, Lt. Col. Rust. As I did so I made sure I had the support at my elbow of Col. Kent Harbaugh, the former CO of the 303rd TMW. I asked Lt. Col. Rust, for the use of one of the

permanent buildings at RAF Molesworth to house a Museum to the 303rd Bomb Group and, hopefully, some of the other activities of the First Air Division of the 8th USAF.

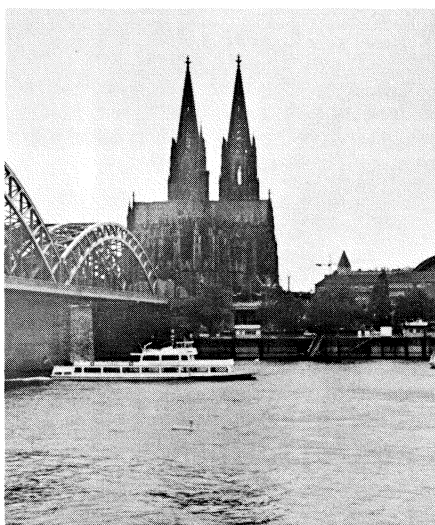
I hope I was speaking for all of you when I made this appeal? I would hate to see all that you did for us over here during those now distant war years forgotten. There is a whole new generation of young Britishers who know all too little about those important years in their nation's history.

Theresa and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Norfolk reunion in late September.

Ray Cossey
Norwich, England



Lull before the storm; photo section, Alamogordo, N.M., May 1942



Cologne, Germany, showing the busy Rhine River, the Cathedral and the railroad station.



"Bow-your-neck" Stevens and royalty pass in review.



303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC. "HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOL. XII, NO. 2 Editor: Hal Susskind
2602 Deerfoot Trail, Austin, TX 78704 APRIL 1989

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 Bomb Group and to provide opportunities for 303rders to meet and do things together.

Because you are helping to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group, your dues and/or donations to the 303rd Bomb Group Association are tax deductible.

The Association is open for membership to all persons assigned or attached to the 303rd Bomb Group, from its activation in 1942 in Boise, Idaho, throughout its war years at Molesworth Air Base in England to its deactivation in Casablanca in 1945. Spouses of 303rders may also become members. All other persons, interested in perpetuating the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and in furthering the aims of the Association, may apply for Associate status.

Membership years begin on the first day of January. In the future, the 303rd Bomb Group Newsletter will be sent only to paid up members. When you pay annual dues, the membership chairman will send you an updated membership card.

If you do not receive the 303rd Newsletter for a period of more than four months, it means you are delinquent in your dues for that calendar year.

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Small Outfits Did a Big Job

Here's the lineup of units, that collectively, made the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) such an outstanding organization.

303rd Bomb Group
358th Squadron
359th Squadron
360th Squadron
427th Squadron
444th Sub. Depot
3rd Station Complement Squadron
1681st Ordinance Company
1199th Military Police Company
863rd Chemical Company
18th Weather Squadron, Det. 107
2097 Engineers Fire-Fighting Platoon
1114th Quartermaster Company
202nd Finance Section.

The following commanders of the "small outfits which did such a fine job," are members of our Association: Roland M. Cowan, 3rd Station Complement; Walter J. Saucier, 18th Weather and Edwin Barry, 1114th Quartermaster Company. But where are the other commanders. And how many of their personnel are now members of the Association?

Hell's Angels Forum

Your Chance to Sound Off!

How Do You Feel?

I feel compelled to comment on your editorial in the January 1989 newsletter. You wrote: "My trip to Germany was fantastic. My stay with Rex Reichert, the former Luftwaffe pilot and presently a member of the 303rd was quite an interesting experience. I also met a former 'Abbeville Kid' Manfred Frey who claimed 18 kills, among them were four B-17s and four P-51s." You are shown in the photo between these two German pilots embracing them. I just cannot comprehend how you can brush away memories of the years when these two Germans were responsible for not only the untimely death of your comrades, but the immeasurable pain inflicted on their parents. I am aware that they too were carrying out orders, as our airmen were doing, but I cannot remove from my mind the jubilant scene at a German airfield when these pilots landed after shooting down four of our B-17s. WW II wasn't exactly a World Series ball game. I could never come face to face with a former German fighter pilot knowing that I might be looking into the eyes of the pilot who killed my brother Lt. Joe Palmer, and six members of his crew! I wonder how others in the 303rd feel.

Charles A. Palmer
Pittsburg, PA

Aside from my personal feelings as pointed out, I think you are doing a very commendable job with the newsletter. You are to be congratulated for a very worthy cause. I also feel that you edited my story effectively.

Ed. Note: Now read the following letters.

The letter below was sent to me as Editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter by a gentleman named Hans Busch from Munich, Germany. How Mr. Busch got my name and address is a mystery but it proves one fact, that the Hell's Angels Newsletter has an international reputation. I believe you will find the letter interesting even though it presents us with a monumental challenge in locating a lost navigator.

It was about the end of April or the first part of May 1944. I was a

pilot flying the single engine FW-190 in Night Fighter Wing 10, stationed at Werneuchen. (The City of Werneuchen is located about 35 km northeast of Berlin). Shortly before noon on that certain day, air raid sirens sounded. Cloud cover was 10/10, ceiling about 3000 feet.

Fifteen minutes later we heard overhead the sound of engines of a bomber formation in the direction northeast of our base. When the formation was about two km from the City of Weuneuchen, we suddenly heard a tremendous exchange of machine-gun fire, followed by the screaming sound of revved up engines.

Shortly thereafter, about eight or ten B-17s crashed in flames. None of the aircraft dropped any bombs and there were no bombs in the wreckage of the planes which indicated the planes were homebound from the target.

Then a B-17 came in a shallow dive through the cloud cover. When the aircraft was at an altitude of about 2,500 feet, the crew bailed out. Several minutes later many more parachutes drifted out of the clouds toward the city of Werneuchen.

That same day, about 2 p.m., I flew my FW-190 over the general area when I noticed a parachute in the branches of a tree. Immediately I thought, "I shall retrieve that for myself." After landing, I rode my bicycle to that forest, found the tree, climbed up and cut the tangled lines out of the branches. I had just stashed the parachute into my briefcase and was about to hop back on my bicycle when I heard someone say, "Hello."

At first I was startled; then I saw under a tree, about 30 feet away, a man in a flight suit. He waved and pointed to his leg; apparently he was injured, but he had no open wound. He probably hurt himself landing with his parachute in the tree. Because I could speak no English and he spoke no German, we used sign language. Then he offered me a piece of chewing gum. I thought, "How do I get this guy back to my base?"

Somehow, I sat him on the bicycle seat and pushed him along the road towards our base. When we came to a village, we stopped at a Gasthaus where we both had a

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quick beer. From there I called my base and asked for an automobile. At first I had some difficulty convincing the base that I was not joking. After one half hour of waiting, when no car arrived I went outside to look.

To my surprise there were several people milling around with sticks and asking me to hand this flyer over to them. My reply, of course, was, "If you dare to come too close, I will shoot," pointing at my handgun on my belt. I told them, "I am a pilot too, and would not want to be mistreated by a bunch of civilians if I was shot down over enemy territory." I meant what I had said and fortunately no one interfered.

As still no vehicle was in sight, so I continued with my American on the bicycle. We had proceeded another kilometer when an open VW with driver and an English speaking meteorologist arrived. We had a brief conversation and I learned that my man was a navigator of a B-17 unit. I asked him if I could have his wings and he said he still needed them for proof of his identity. Then the car drove off.

I would appreciate it if you could publish this episode that touched the lives of two young men on opposite sides in WWII. I am hoping that this officer may still be alive and that perhaps I could get in touch with him. I would really like that. All these years I did not know how to go about making contact.

I am thanking you for your assistance.

Gerhard Walter
Stefanstrasse 6
8058 Erding
Germany
Tel: 08122/8335

Ed. Note: I believe Mr. Walter is referring to the April 29th mission to Berlin. I took part in the mission as a lead navigator with our PFF crew. We lost 63 bombers that day; 38 B-17s bit the dust as did 25 B-24s. If I remember correctly we usually bombed Berlin on a heading of 90 degrees and once we cleared the target area we turned north which would probably put us in the vicinity of Werneuchen. The 303rd lost two aircraft that day and a navigator of one of those crews wound up as a PW. Unfortunately he is not a member of our Association.

Your Hell's Angels Newsletter received this date was another marvel. Congratulations. There are three subjects that caught my eye and about which I'd like to comment. They are:

Lucille (Parker)
Jim "Tailwheel" Kaiser
The Two Luftwaffe pilots

I recall vividly the girl you noted as Lucille Parker, however for some reason I remember her as Lucille de Wolfe (or de Wolf). Do you know something I don't know or was her name then perhaps de Wolf and since changed due to marital or other status change? We spent many entertaining evenings in the O-Club at Site 7 and also were there the night someone put flares in the pot-belly stove and Mel Schulstad was taken to task because as the ranking officer present "he took no action to deter the perpetrators." We also one time decked Lucille out in complete flight gear and intended to smuggle her on a mission but were supposedly "caught" at the last moment so as to foil the attempt. But as I recall, she was ready to cross the channel with us on a mission.

Next, about "Tailwheel" Kaiser. You bet he was wearing the Silver Star when he came to Molesworth! I first met Tailwheel in Walla Walla, Washington when in B-17 crew school preparing to come overseas to the 303rd. I believe it was April of 1943. Tailwheel and I were great friends. He used to have a habit of "getting the puckers" after a few drinks. He'd stand there at the bar, intending to tell us something but his mouth just would not move. Whether this was a scam, all of us who knew him never knew. We thought it was something which happened to him in the Southwest Pacific where he was before he came to Walla Walla - and he had the Silver Star then! In fact he had quite a few rows of ribbons. There was a rumor he'd been with the famed 19th Bomb Group which first came under fire when the war started in the Pacific, but I do not know.

I have spent much time and a few cents also trying to locate Tailwheel. Even to the extent of pub-crawling in the Canton, Ohio area where Tailwheel was supposed to be from. From bar to bar

I went, thinking I'd run into someone, but always with no success. Also heard his family had been in the construction business in that area, so investigated that angle and again with no success. All I know is that I loved the man and when he came to Molesworth it was like a dream come true to see old "pucker" Tailwheel once again in the bar. I'll be looking forward to your story about him.

Lastly, the German Luftwaffe pilots. Especially the one who flew the Me 163. I had the pleasure of knowing Herr Zinram who had been an engineering pilot on the Me 163 during its testing days. He later was my instructor when I was with the post-war German Luftwaffe. I met and worked with many of the pilots against whom we flew in WW#2 and we've made some lasting friendships. I was a Captain for the German airline for a bit over 9 years beginning in 1956.

And in closing, let me give you a hint that I know the phantom who was the "lone eagle" in that famous B-17 which Mac McCoy wrote about in your most recent Newsletter. Great man! Great pilot! Great character! Great friend! I've got a brand new pressurized twin seven-seater and he can fly it anytime he wants...So there.

William Heller
Half Moon Bay, CA

I thought that I would shed a little light, on Abbott Smith's article in the Hell's Angels Forum, about how he had the opportunity to sit with a celebrity at the 303rd mission briefing, namely Clark Gable, and he mentioned that one of the squadrons had scheduled him to go on a mission as a top turret gunner, which I find as inaccurate. He did go on the mission but as a scheduled gunner and he manned the gun in the radio compartment.

I am enclosing a picture of the 8 Ball II, plane #142-639, and we had the pleasure of having two celebrities on board this craft, namely Gen. Travis and Capt. Gable, on the mission from that briefing to Antwerp, May 4, 1943. I was the engineer on board that 8 Ball, and would like to name the crew that went on that mission.

This photo was taken immediately after returning from the mission to Antwerp.

I have a number of interesting articles about the early days of the war, our ship was one of the first to fly in Nov. 1942. I also have a complete roster of every man that was ever assigned to the 359th squadron, and would be willing to make copies to send you if you would be interested in all of this.

Roman R. Zaorski
Pineville, LA



S/Gt. Mulgrew, William G. Asst. Radio Opr. — Ball Turret; Sgt. Fortunak, Richard C. Asst. Eng — Waist Gunner; T/Sgt. Zaorski, Roman R. Eng. — Top Turret Gunner; S/Sgt. Murphy, Murel Waist Gunner; Lt. Yonkman, Robert — Bombardier; Gen. Travis — Co-Pilot; Maj. Calhoun, William R. — Pilot; Lt. Strickland, Joseph — Navigator; T/Sgt. Terry, Charles — Radio Operator; S/Sgt. Stevens, Willard — Radio Operator; S/Sgt. Stevens, Willard — Tail Gunner and Capt. Gable, Clark — Gunner.

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Kaiser Was A Legend

Just read you were trying to locate "Tailwheel" Kaiser. Understand he became a big insurance man in Columbus, Ohio after the war. Was there last June, but forgot all about trying to find him.

As lead Bombaimer (358th B.S.-Apr. 44-Apr.45) I had the pleasure of flying several missions with him. He was sharp and the most relaxed navigator I ever saw. Of course he already had some 50 previous missions. (Africa, I think) On assembly he would throw his 50 mission crush over the drift-meter and apparently snooze. I always thought he roomed with Wilson Ford, another previous tour Bombaimer. Both were great with the bottle.

Supposedly, Tailwheel was in an overturned Jeep one night, and was reputed to quote: "V-for Victory, don't tell me any of your problems, I have enough of my own." And, again on a morning weather mission he was reputed to have called out, "Hello SABBO, where in the hell are we, I'm a navigator and I have a right to know." Hope half of this is true and you can find him. My crew was H.B. Johnson, 358th B.S.

Ray Gorham
Coronado, CA.

Ed. Note: I have 100 typewritten pages of things that Tailwheel said and did. "You ain't heard nothing yet."

Telling It Like It Is

The letters I sent you which were published in the newsletter have certainly brought me many contacts from people asking for information which I might have. I have had telephone calls from Florida and Texas and letters from Montana, Oregon and other places.

My last telephone call was from Dallas, Texas from the son of a crew member of Paul Flickinger's crew-one of the original crews of the 360th Sqdn-and he called to tell me why Flickinger's B-17 was named Wulfe Hound. He said his father had named the plane Wulfe Hound because it was used to hunt down FW-190s. On the nose of the ship was a painting of a large hound dog with a FW hang-

ing from its mouth. Now if someone would come forth with the names of Schulstad's and Adams' planes, I would have the names of all of the planes of the original 360th crews who flew them from the USA to England in 1942. Someone out there must have that information.

I just received a letter from Bill Heller and after reading it, I am very disturbed at a proposal which has been made to divide the 303rd Association into a ground echelon and a ground echelon. As I answered Bill, with all due respect to the person or persons who made this proposal, it is the most asinine idea I have ever heard and I have heard a lot in my lifetime. The air and ground echelons together, not separate, made up the 303rd Bomb Group (H). Together they fought and helped win the victory. Why now, after all these years, should they now be separated. Where would the air echelon have been without the ground echelon? The members of the air echelon may have gotten all the glory and the medals but the ground echelon made it possible. They did most of the dirty work, working long hours in miserable conditions, getting little praise when they helped bring success but lots of chaff when the "boss men" asked for more than was possible.

I hope that when and if the proposal comes up at a future convention the members of the Association will defeat it soundly. Personally I would like to see it pushed down the toilet and forgotten right now. I certainly will never cast a "yes" vote in favor of it.

I have found that I can reproduce the pictures I have in my album on a machine which my local bank has and the reproduction can be made without any charge. So if someone reading this letter — if it gets into the newsletter after my previous comments — want a copy of a picture I might have, I will make it and send it to them. I see you had a picture of the "Witches Tit" in the newsletter. Would anyone want a picture of the plane "Bow Your Neck" named for Col. Stevens? Unfortunately it got shot down on its first mission, as I recall.

I sure enjoy reading the newsletter. You are doing a super job and I know everyone appreciates what



Ground Crew of 360th Aircraft Thumper Again. (Back row l to r) Ralph Waler, Joe Donnelly, George Torrey and Larry McCabe, (front row l to r) Alex Bourque, Ray Gillie, Stan Fitterer and Hector Homaleski.

you are doing. I had a slight setback in early November when I had a minor heart attack. Recovery has been great and my cardiac nurse can't believe how quickly I have come back. But you can bet my lifestyle and diet has changed. One warning is enough.

Walter K. Shayler
Redlands, CA

Ed. Note: I do not censor any letters. I believe in people telling it like it is.

Molesworth In Retrospect

After many years as a non-member, the late Father Skoner with whom I worked, while at Molesworth, influenced me to become a member of the 303rd Association.

The interesting articles and photos contained in the newsletter recall many memories. As a member of the 360th Squadron ground crew it was gratifying to read Bill Heller's editorial in the August 1988 issue, in supporting the fact that all, both air and ground crews, be considered on an equal basis. The 303rd was successful only because everyone worked as a unit to achieve its goals.

As one who enlisted in December 1941, I became an original member of the 303rd at Gowen Field, Idaho in March of 1942. Initially I served as an armorer in the 360th Sqdn. Later in 1944, at Molesworth Father Skoner asked if I would work with him. I did so until the 303rd disbanded and was

sent to Casablanca. Father Skoner and I became close friends, and corresponded until his death. One of my eight children was named "Edmund" in his honor.

After returning to Hamilton Field, then Mather Field, California, my service records were lost or misplaced, delaying my discharge at Andrews Field, Washington, D.C. in October of 1945.

In retrospect my years with the 303rd, though my contributions were small, remain the most meaningful, the best years - for the Eighth Air Force did indeed save the future for our children.

Enclosed in a photo of ground crew (360th).

David "Stanley" Fitterer
East Orange, N.J.

What Happened to Major Calloway?

I have read all of your newsletters since I joined the association in 1986 and have not seen any reference to one of the 360th Sqdn. Commanders. He was Richard D. Callaway who was our Sqdn. Commander when we were in Alamogordo, Biggs, Kellogg and Gander. He is mentioned in the August 1988 letter where he is mentioned as being a passenger in one of our planes going to England in 1942. He is mentioned as Major Richard B. Calloway. I read in the May 1988 Air Force Times of a Lt. Col. Richard D. Calloway passing away in California. I am of the opinion that this is the same squadron commander of the 360th even though the middle initial was D. instead of B. I am

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enclosing the clipping concerning his demise. If this is the same squadron commander of the 360th I believe mention should be made of his demise in your next newsletter.

**R.J. Saiz
Eclectic, Al.**

Ed. Note: Does anyone know what happened to the Major Calloway, who accompanied the 360th overseas?

What Did You Do at Molesworth?

Just a note to say "thanks" to you and all those who help to get out those superb newsletters. They're great.

I was a combat crew member, radio operator/gunner on B-17 aircraft at Langley Field (1939-41). I qualified as expert aerial gunner on 10 Oct. 1939 which paid \$5.00 extra per month for one year; a welcome bit of change in those days. I was transferred in Aug. 1941 to Bangor, Maine where my outfit, the 43rd Bomb Group, opened the base. In January 1942, the combat crew and cadre were ordered to Gowen Field, Boise and the 303rd. Several months later, upon promotion to M/Sgt., I was removed from the combat crew and assigned as Chief, Radio Maintenance Section, 358th Sqdn., which job I had at Molesworth (1942-44).

Am looking forward to our next reunion in Norfolk. Should be the best ever. Would love to chat with some of the radio operators regarding their experiences with the equipment we maintained; also the gunners. It would be great if there were some simple way of identifying members at the meeting as to what their job was while stationed at Molesworth.

**Lee Dolan
Winchester, VA**

Ed. Note: We are working on some simple way of identifying the people who attend the reunion in Norfolk.

Proud To Be A Hell's Angels

Since I wrote you last concerning an associate membership in the 303rd Bomb Group Association and have been in touch with Jim Reeves, I was accepted for

membership in October last and paid my dues and received my membership card.

I have just recently found the colors of the 1943, 359th Sqdn. patch, this one was never official so it was not in the records. I found that the 359th had three different insignia during their stay at Molesworth and none were officially registered.

I'm sure proud to be a "Hell's Angel" and hope I can be of some use in the future.

**John T. Gell
170 High Street
Risely, Bedfordshire
England MK441DR**

Ed. Note: You have been a big help already. I didn't know that the 359th had three insignias, not one of which was official. By the way what were the colors of each patch? I was asked that question last week and didn't know the answer.

A vote for Boise in 1992

I first want to tell you that I personally feel that you are doing a terrific job, and that your efforts are appreciated.

Re: finding lost members of the 303rd who are not members I think that if all of our present members can get an insert in our local newspapers mentioning the reunion this September in Norfolk and also asking if any members of the 303rd are in the area and not members of the association. Our local Portland newspaper each week lists notices of all reunions and I feel sure that I can get our notice in.

About the 50th reunion - I strongly hope that it will be held in Boise. I have selfish reasons perhaps, as I met and married a Boise girl in 1942 (yes we are still married). I lived in Boise for 7 years just after the war ended, and still have friends in Boise. I would be happy to be of help in making arrangements for the 50th if held in Boise.

Even though I am a life member I feel that I should pay some dues each year so I enclose a check for \$10.00.

**Morton Luman
Portland, Oregon**

Down Memory Lane

This letter is to inform you of my husband's death. Joe Uhls died of a heart attack, December 21, 1987. I'm glad I continued to read the "Hell's Angels Newsletter" and read the letter from Jimmy Stewart of Rochester, WA (Jan. 1989) concerning the baseball team. My husband, Joe Uhls was the team captain. He was awarded the trophy and I still have it. It is silver, and over the years I've polished it a few times. Engraved on one side of the trophy is:

1st Bombardment Wing Baseball League
Championship Trophy
Presented by
C. Missinger of Bedford, England
Won by
303rd Bomb Group (H)
1943

On the other side of the trophy is:

THE CHAMPS
Capt. Leonard J. Wheeler, Athletic Officer
Cpl. Joe Uhls Team Captain

Cpl. Marion Lewis
Sgt. Joe Rundas
Sgt. William Craddock
T/Sgt. George Wright
Pvt. Ed Kumer
Pvt. Al Slakish
Sgt. Bill Hitt

S/Sgt. James Stewart
Sgt. Don Wiegand
Sgt. Lou Torretto
Sgt. Art Nilson
Cpl. Oscar Marble
Sgt. Gilbert Goor
Sgt. Lloyd Jones

During the past few years, Joe was in touch with or visited Marion Lewis, Al Slakish and Don Wiegand. He attempted to look up Craddock when we were at Newport News, VA a few years ago but had no luck.

Baseball continued to be Joe's profession. He played some with a major league farm club, went to college, and for 35 years was a coach and teacher of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, MO. He or-

ganized the first baseball team on campus and coached it for 25 years before retiring in February, 1984 because of his heart condition, but he continued as an assistant baseball coach until his death.

I'm enclosing a picture of some of the team members. I don't know any except Joe and as he has written on the back, he is second from the right on the front row. If you have no use for it, would you please return it to me. Also, I would like to know if there is a museum or collection of memora-

bilia that might like to have this trophy - it is rather large. I would be glad to donate it for others to enjoy.

Incidentally, Joe and I were married in May 1950 and have three grown children - a daughter and two sons.

**Mrs. Joe (Inez) Uhls
Cape Girardeau, MO**

Ed. Note: Our deepest sympathy goes to you and your family on the death of Joe.



303rd Bomb Group's 1943 baseball team, 1st Bombardment Division Champions. Joe Uhls, team captain, is in front row, second from right.

My Forty-second Mission to Germany

September 21, 1988 was the start of a long planned vacation for my wife Rae and me. We were looking forward to touring the Germany that I had only seen from the nose of a B-17, Flying Fortress, more than 40 years ago but had talked about quite frequently over the years.

We were also accepting the invitation from Wolfgang Rex Reichert, a former German Air Force pilot with whom I had been corresponding for more than a year. Rex is a member of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and I as editor of their newsletter had run a photo of the first German jet that I had mistakenly referred to as a Me-262. Rex wrote a letter correcting my error and told me that it was a Me-163 "Komet" the Luftwaffe's first rocket aircraft and one that he had flown.

So here we were on American Airlines Flight 70, non-stop from Dallas, Texas to Frankfurt, Germany. As the pilot announced our approach to Frankfurt Airport, I couldn't help but think of the last time I was inbound to Frankfurt, some 40 odd years ago, March 2, 1944 to be exact.

That time I was on a round-robin, non-stop flight from Molesworth Air Base in England to Frankfurt and back to Molesworth. At least I was hoping for a non-stop flight but that day the German gunners were trying their best to cancel our flight plan before we reached our target, the railroad marshalling yards in Frankfurt.

Disembarking from the A/A jet we cleared customs at the massive Frankfurt Airport and boarded a train for the ride into the heart of the city. Arriving at the main railroad station, I was amazed at its size. Up close it seemed much bigger than the station and marshalling yards that had been one of our targets. The last time I had seen Frankfurt, it was leveled; not even one building was left standing. As I took a tour through Frankfurt I was astonished at the monumental accomplishments of the German people in transforming that pile of rubble into a very modern and industrious city.

That same night, although jet lag happy, we boarded a cruise ship for an overnight trip on the Rhine River to Cologne. I was anxious to visit Cologne, the birthplace of my grandparents and a city that I had bombed three times. I was also anxious to see the Dom, the famous Cologne Cathedral which we were instructed to avoid bombing, if possible. I was happy to see that although Cologne had been bombed at least 20 times, the Dom had suffered only minor damage which was a tribute to the accuracy of the Air Force bombardiers since it was situated only a few hundred yards away from the main railroad station which had often been a target.

From Cologne, it was off to Stuttgart aboard one of Germany's crack trains. The Germans' dedication to keeping their trains on schedule is almost fanatical. At some stops only one minute is allotted for passengers to get on and off. The Stuttgart station was the place where I was to meet my Luftwaffe friend, Rex Reichert. Unfortunately, neither of us knew what the other looked like, so Rex waited near the end of the platform with a baggage carrier with my name prominently displayed out on the front.



Manfred Frey, Hal Susskind and Rex Reichert

That night and far into the wee hours of the next morning, Rex and I, fortified by some good German white wine, refought the air battles of World War II. I explained that I joined the U.S. Army Air Force in 1942 through our Aviation Cadet program. I asked him how and when had he joined the Luftwaffe.

Rex told me of his early interest in aviation which began in 1939 when he was 14 years old which was the earliest legal age at which he could fly gliders. From 1939 through 1941 he flew gliders every chance he could. In high school, which was next to an airfield, every time the then new, shining DC-3 of the Swiss Airlines and the German tri-motored JU-52 flew over his building, his love for flying increased. He also flew quite often in a two-seat, open cockpit aircraft which belonged to a classmate's father who managed the Stuttgart Airport.

When he was 16, he was encouraged by German authorities to take some vocational courses. This was a subtle way of seeing that the youth got some military training. Upon completion of the courses, he got a radio operator's certificate and at the same time a top glider rating.

"I then volunteered for the Air Force, first, to become a pilot and second, to escape being conscripted by the SS. That was in 1942 and the SS had a drive on to get volunteers. They were having a rough time recruiting anyone since the word had gotten around what lousy bastards they were. Most parents, like mine, who lived in villages where religion was still quite strong, warned their children that if they volunteered for the SS, don't ever try to come home again. When I was accepted as an officer candidate, the SS stopped bothering me."

As in all branches of the military service, he had to go through basic military training. The primary objective of the German Command at that time was to make soldiers out of all the youth. Then followed the usual flight procedures, first basic, then advanced training. After completion of flight training and advanced navigation courses, he received his wings with the rank of sergeant. He was also authorized to wear a special insignia which showed he was an officer candidate.

Although he requested fighters, he was assigned to twin engine aircraft. His first combat assignment was to an airfield near Brussels,

Belgium, flying the new JU-188, a much sharper and faster version of the JU-88, one of the work-horses of the German Air Force.

"My missions included flights over the North Atlantic riding herd on the shipping lanes," he said. "We also flew missions against the British Fleet near the Firth of Forth on the English Coast. Those missions were usually hide and seek affairs with the British air defenses. For this reason we flew on nights when there was an overcast. One time I had to ditch my aircraft near Bodo, Norway, north of the Arctic Circle."

I then thought of the first letter he had written to me telling me he had flown the Me-163, the first German rocket aircraft, so I asked him about it.

He told me that in 1944 everyone with good glider experience was asked to volunteer to fly it. He volunteered because he thought it would be something different. They were told it was a hot aircraft but he didn't agree with their assessment. He said it was hot in one sense because once you ignited the rocket; you couldn't turn it off anymore; you were committed. He said you could climb almost straight up but you were very vulnerable when the rocket burned itself out and you had to come down.

"The takeoff in the Me-163 was fearful," he said. "When the rocket cut in, it was like getting kicked in the back by a horse. Then you went shooting down the field and lifted off the trolley which went shooting off into the bushes."

"Landing on its skids caused a lot of damage. Frequently the shock absorbers would explode and if some splinters went through the fuel tank, the vapors from the rocket fuel would explode. We lost a lot of people that way. Actually, in a way, the aircraft was still very much in its experimental stage."

I had seen my first German jet in 1944 on a mission to Merseburg, near Leipzig, so I asked him where they were based.

"Some were based at Leipzig and others on an airfield near Merseburg. They were stationed around synthetic fuel plants hoping that they could keep the B-17s from reaching the target or at least disrupt them when they were on their bomb run so that they would miss the target when they dropped their bombs."

According to Reichert, the "Komet" had a very short range and it couldn't stay up very long. The main idea for its use was to have them take off just before the B-17s arrived in the target area. Then the would take off and climb above the Flying Forts and then dive down into them making two passes. First you dove down at an excessive speed and came up under the B-17s firing at them as you climbed back up through their formation. You would then roll over and make another pass firing at them as you dove through their formation. By then you had lost so much speed that it was time to get the hell out of there.

"Flying the Me-163 was quite an experience. Unfortunately, the only successes they had with it was with the very seasoned fighter pilots, not with twin engine fellows like myself," Rex remarked.

Was Right on Target

by Hal Susskind

After this unique assignment, Rex was transformed back to his original combat wing flying Ju-188. At this time realizing that the invasion by the Allies was imminent, his wing was moved to Tours in southern France. After the breakthrough by the Allies they were moved back a little further to Orleans.

"That is where I lost my aircraft," said Rex. It was bombed while it was on the ground at Orleans Air Base. It was your outfit, the 303rd Bomb Group that made that attack on August 1, 1944.

After he lost his aircraft, he was assigned to the ground forces, so I asked him, "how come?"

"Oh, I guess I could have gone into twin engine night fighters but at that time it seemed hopeless," Rex reasoned. "We had been flying for a long time and every day we would see a stream of about 1000 bombers come over and even though we would shoot down 50 of them, the bombers stream would return the next day and it would be just as long. At this time the attrition rate of our fighter pilots was something fierce. Even the seasoned fellows, some with 120 to 150 victories got shot down because the law of averages was against them. Buzzing around between flights of B-17s and being chased by an overwhelming number of P-51s finally got to so many of them. I was glad I wasn't that experienced as a fighter pilot."

Rex explained that it was a logical decision for him to return to the ground forces and anti-aircraft duty since he had quite a lot of experience in that field. "During my high school days they trained us in the use of anti-aircraft weapons. Whole schools were transferred to the outskirts of some cities for training. We lived in barracks and our teachers were with us. We were trained in firing the guns so that the regular soldiers could be released from a/a responsibilities for duty at the front. Because of my previous experience with anti-aircraft weapons, I got a quick transfer to an a/a outfit."

"Our a/a crew was quite successful around Orleans. We even shot down 5 or 6, P-51s in one day but we soon had to pull back because the front was getting closer. It wasn't too long before Patton's tanks drove right past us. We were behind the lines for about 10 days, lying low during the day and walking past the American troops at nights as they were having a great time with the French girls."

"We eventually made it back to our outfit and made it to Koblenz, Germany after some fierce fighting while we had to retreat all the way to the Rhine River late in the fall of 1944. We lost about 75 percent of our unit."

"By this time a lot of Luftwaffe personnel were transferred to the SS because nobody volunteered for them anymore. The SS originally was entirely composed of volunteers until their true nature became apparent to most people."

"To prevent a transfer I volunteered for the infantry which was part of the Wehrmacht or regular army. They were glad to take me since their officers' corps by then was terribly decimated, mostly on the Eastern front against the Red Army."

"They sent me to a platoon leader school in

the Eastern part of Germany (now a part of Poland) until the end of December 1944. Although the Russians were getting mighty close, I and about seven of my class received a transfer to Italy to an Infantry Division stationed just south of Massa-Carrara where I became a Lieutenant after several commendations for bravery and after knocking down two Sherman tanks with bazookas. That was around April 10, 1945 and a few days later I was wounded in the left leg and became a POW, returning to my home town near Stuttgart about a year and a half later."

Since it was past 3 a.m. we decided to call a truce and refight the war some other day.

After a day of sightseeing in the hills around Esslingen, Rex decided to show us an airfield where he had trained as a glider pilot before the war. It was a grass strip at the base of some large hills near Kirchheim-Teck. I have never seen so many gliders at one place in my life and some of the large elaborate ones were in the \$150,000 class.

With Rex acting as interpreter he introduced me to a Manfred Frey telling him I was a navigator who had flown B-17s during WW II. Frey was acting as an air controller for the day clearing the light planes for takeoffs and landings. Rex told me that Frey was also an ex-Luftwaffe pilot, so I asked Rex to ask Frey where he had done most of his flying.

Now 64 and retired, Frey said he had been a flying corporal with the Luftwaffe. He said he was 19 years old when he finished flying training in October of 1943. I told him that was the time I joined the 303rd Bomb Group in England. He shot down his first aircraft on Dec. 24, 1943, the same day I flew my first mission over France. Stationed near Abbeville in France, Frey rung up 18 kills including four B-17s and four P-51s. I told Rex to tell him I had heard about his outfit and that our group referred to them as the "Abbeville Kids" and we respected them for their flying abilities. That remark made Frey feel good but he was surprised to find out that all the B-17s carried navigators, not just the lead aircraft. He said one of their tactics was to try and break up the formations then pick on the straggler who appeared to be lost.

The stay in Esslingen seemed much too short when Rex drove us to the Stuttgart railroad station so that we could continue on our tour of Germany and Austria. From Stuttgart we went to Rothenburg, then down the Romantic Road to see the castles in Fussen then back to Augsburg where we boarded the train for stops at Salzburg and Vienna in Austria. From Vienna we backtracked to Munich which had been the target for my roughest mission. Actually the target was Oberpfaffenhofen, a name I'll never forget how to spell. It was located a few miles north of Munich. Forty of our bombers failed to return from that mission on April 24, 1944.

Since the mission that day lasted more than 10 hours, in between fighter attacks, I had a long time to look over the countryside; partially because I wanted to know our exact location in case we had to bail out. I promised myself that some day I would return to this Bavarian

Capital just to see what they were trying to protect and also to see if it was as picturesque on the ground as it appeared from the air.

The visit to Munich offered me the opportunity to meet with another pen pal whom I had never met. As editor of our newspaper I had been answering questions posed by Mrs. Irma Permoser, a Munich University student who was working on a thesis for her PhD. Her thesis, still being written, covers the air attacks on Munich from 1939 through 1945.

Rae and I were quite happy to meet and talk with Mrs. Permoser who spoke English quite well. A tour guide when she is not attending classes, she shepherded us on a walking, evening tour of the city explaining the history of the Marienplatz with its famous Glockenspiel and other historic buildings. The tour even included a look at an air raid shelter which is still standing in good condition, even though it was built in the early forties.

After the tour she took us to her favorite gasthaus where over some food white wine and sausages, we spent hours discussing the air attacks on Munich in great detail. She told us that as a result of the air attacks 45 percent of the buildings were demolished and 6500 people were killed. We were amazed at her knowledge of the raids. She evidently did her homework well. Her research even included the night raids by the RAF, the types of bombs dropped and the tonnage. It was ironic that the only raid she had no knowledge of was the one I flew on April 24, 1944. She was quite interested in my account of the raid, because according to her it was a very dark day for Munich.

"That same night, a very devastating fire raid by RAF took place. A force of 260 aircraft including 234 Lancasters and 16 Mosquitos of Five Group and 10 Lancasters of One Group were dispatched. There were diversion raids on other targets and the German fighter pilots were deceived," she said. She even knew that the Mosquitos used a new marking method on that mission to mark the target. "The so called 'roof-level-marking' was very accurate and the bombs fell in the center of Munich," she added.

With promises to correspond regularly a very enjoyable evening came to an end. I hope one day to read her thesis. I'm sure I'm going to find out things about the air war that I never knew.

Munich, even if you do not visit it during Oktoberfest, is a very lively city. Like many other German cities it was practically destroyed during the war but it has since been rebuilt, and in most cases wherever possible, the buildings were restored to their pre-war state. Some of the buildings which look to be several hundred years old, are in reality only about 40 years old.

Germany today is quite different from the country I last saw in 1945. The people look and in most cases are prosperous. For me the return to Germany was most enjoyable. The meeting with my former air adversaries and the university student were delightful experiences that usually only happen in fiction.

My forty-second mission to Germany was right on target.

Forum

Down Memory Lane (cont'd)



"Queenie" crew (l to r) Harry Hayes, Emil Hokanson, Charlie Guerdon and Ted Peter

The Hell's Angels Newsletter has brought back many pleasant memories for me.

I was with the 13th Recon from Bangor, Maine when we united with the 38th Recon at Boise, Idaho to become the 303rd Bomb Group.

Your stories about the aircraft Hell's Angels and Vicious Virgin especially interest me, as I was Assistant Crew Chief on the Vicious Virgin before becoming crew chief on "Queenie." My crew consisted of, ass't. crew chief Harry Hayes, Emil Hokanson and Charlie Guedron. My good friend Eddie West was ass't. crew chief on Hell's Angels. I lost track of Eddie West when Hell's Angels returned to the States. If anyone has any news of him I would very much like hearing from them.

That great baseball team of the 303rd is well remembered and also my friend Jimmy Stewart who played for that team. I believe that Capt. Billy Southworth was also a member of that ball club. They were a "rag-tag" bunch that did not have the fancy uniforms like all those teams that they defeated. They finally got uniforms when they played for the theatre championship.

Thanks for the memories.

Ted N. Peter
Cincinnati, OH

Information Wanted

A friend of mine from Dayton, Ohio is interested in his uncle's WW II service. He knows little of his uncle's service since he was born after his uncle was shot down.

The remaining family members are vague about his service

because people who would have known him have died.

As 303rd Historian, I thought maybe you could help. We do know the man's name was Allan Horning, and he was a flight engineer with the 427th Sqdn., 303rd Bomb Group. From the true standpoint he must have been a replacement crew member rather than an original crew member.

He was reported missing in action around September 1943. Any help you could give us would be appreciated.

Earl A. Steele
Dayton, Ohio

Ed. Note: The Historian of the 303rd Bomb Groups is E.C. Al Lehmann, the 1985-87 president of the Association. The records of that period that I have are sketchy. The Honor Roll doesn't show us losing a plane in that period but the Mission Summary chart shows us ditching a 427 a/c around that time. Maybe some of our readers can help us on this one.

More About Pappy Flowers

My compliments on a great issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter for January 1989. Unlike me, it has no typos.

I noted the passing of Pappy Flowers this past fall. I was a bombardier on the original crew of Pappy's. We staged in beautiful Pyote, Texas and then proceeded to Kearney, Nebraska, then Grenier Field in New Hampshire, then (I think) Gander, and then, on a dark June night in 1944 we flew to Valley, Wales and ended up at Molesworth. I completed 35 missions with Pappy and others and returned to the U.S. at the end of 1944.

In your obit you mentioned that Chub's (the crew's name for Selwyn) son, Jim was trying to finish the work that Pappy had started. I, perhaps, could contribute some material (a posed picture of the original crew of Earthquake McGoon) and a few silly, simon-pure anecdotes about our early adventures in Molesworth, Bedford, and London. All expurgated.

Another item was the offering of a print of Miss Lace and Earthquake McGoon by Eagle Art Galleries. I wrote to them and asked for two — one for my winter home in Florida and one for my summer

home in Minnesota. I enclosed a stamped, addressed envelope to help the communication along. So far, no action. Are they still in business? Any help you could give me would be most appreciated.

Please offer my help to Jim Flowers if he is interested. And thank you for the very sizeable chunk of nostalgia you deliver to my mail box.

W.E. Olson
Sarasota FL 34238

... Always a Hell's Angel

A recent notice in a TROA magazine announced your next meeting to be held September 27th through October 1st at Norfolk, Virginia.

My husband, Frederick H. Mason, was co-pilot of a B-17 called Tiny Angel, one of the planes in the 303rd Bomb Group flying out of Molesworth. His plane flew fourteen successful missions, but on the 15th he was shot down on August 15th, 1944 and was taken prisoner. He was retired for injuries sustained when the war ended, and we have been living here in France for many years now.

Unfortunately, he died on his 68th birthday, November 18, 1983. He always said he was probably the oldest pilot of B-17's during the War, having signed up for training just two weeks before his 28th birthday. As far as I know there is probably one other member of the crew still alive (at least he was alive when I received his letter dated December 10, 1985), and that would be Lt. Ralph E. page (USAF Ret.) of 4515 Aspen Hill Road, Rockville, Maryland 20853. In his last letter to me he told me that "the crew flew overseas and entered combat with the 427th B.S., 303rd B.G. (Hell's Angels)... stationed at Molesworth, England. He was the navigator of the crew.

I have here an enlargement of the photo of the crew of Tiny Angel, with the members identified by name and rank. If you would like to have the copy to add to your artifacts, please let me know and I'll be pleased to send it to you.

We stopped in at Tucson in 1961, on the way back from a trip to Mexico, and learned that the Base there is considered the home of the 303rd, but we did not know that there was an Association

which arranged for conventions and meetings...or perhaps it had not then been formed. Certainly if he were still alive Fred would make a serious effort to attend your next convention. His love affair with the B-17 never really ended.

Mrs. Frederick H. Mason
Butterfly Field, Tilhomme 71128
Donzy-le-National FRANCE

Ed. Note: Please accept the condolences of the 303rd on your loss.

Radio Norfolk calling



Theresa and Ray Cossey.

Please find enclosed my contribution to your next edition of the "Hell's Angel's Newsletter"; I hope you will be able to find space to reproduce this perhaps with facsimiles of the enclosed mementos of a piece of Molesworth history.

Also enclosed please find 25 dollars which I would like to forward to the appropriate officer of the association. As an Honorary Member I am not asked for annual dues but I do appreciate that the association is involved in a cost in sending copies of the newsletter to me.

I very much look forward to meeting you at the Norfolk Reunion especially as I was born and bred in Norfolk, England. I am also a weekly contributor on our local BBC Station "Radio Norfolk" which has exactly the same name as the local Radio Station in Virginia. While I am there I hope to look up your same-named Radio Station to impart greetings from the people of Norfolk on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Ray Cossey
Norwich, England

"WWII Bombardiers 4th Annual Reunion will be held at Dayton, Ohio, May 11-14, 1989. For particulars write Bombardiers Inc., c/o Lee Schatzley, Reunion Chairman, 1442 Devoe Dr., Beavercreek, OH 43585-6717, Tel (513) 426-8558."

One of the purposes of the 303rd Bomb Group Association is to arrange for reunions at the pleasure of its membership. September 27th, the date of our next reunion is fast approaching. How many of you are planning to attend? Will you help to locate some of your former buddies who are still undiscovered?

Help Locate a 303rd

We would appreciate it greatly if each of you would send the following "Letter to the Editor" to the newspaper that serves your city be it either a weekly or a daily.

The highly decorated 303rd Bomb Group—two of its members won the Congressional Medal of Honor—a B-17 heavy bombardment group that flew 364 combat missions from Molesworth, England as part of the Eighth Air Force is trying to reach anyone who served with the outfit during the period from January 1942 through July 1945.

Ex-members formed the 303rd Bomb Group Associations in 1975 and have held reunions every two years since. The next get-together to celebrate the 47th Anniversary of the group is scheduled for Norfolk, Virginia, September 27 through October 1, 1989. There are about 1,500 registered members of the Association. It is estimated that 6,000 men served with the group during wartime with many coming from this area.

Anyone who served with the 303rd in any capacity during WWII is urged to contact, Mel McCoy, Reunion Chairman, 655 Rogue River Highway, Gold Hill, OR 97525.

Thank you for your cooperation.

*Sincerely,
Sign your name
and address*

Delta is ready

Delta Airlines, Inc., has been selected as the official air carrier for the "Norfolk-By-The-Sea" reunion.

Delta in cooperation with the 303rd Bomb Group is offering special rates which afford a 5 percent bonus off Delta's lowest published round-trip fares within the United States and San Juan, providing all rules and conditions of the airfares are met.

If special fares do not coincide with your travel dates, a 40 percent discount off Delta's unrestricted round-trip coach rates will be offered.

To take advantage of the discount call Delta on its toll-free number 1-800-241-6760 and refer to file number: N0012.

Reservations must be made through Delta's toll-free number and the file number must be mentioned to get these special discounts and so that the 303rd will get credit for the booking.



Gen. Lyle awarding POW medals at 8th AFHS reunion in Des Moines. Ex-POWs (l to r) unk., Truman Eldridge, Ed Giering and Anthony Zelnio.

NORFOLK-BY-THE-SEA REUNION

Omni International Hotel

September 26 - October 1, 1989

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tues:		Arrival of Board Members/Officers
9/26		Board of Directors/Officers Meeting - As scheduled by Pres. Carl Fyler
		Preparations for Registration
Wed:	EARLY BIRD PACKAGE	
9/27	0800	Registration Omni Hotel Mezzanine (0800-1200 and 1300-1600)
		Board of Directors/Officers Meeting as scheduled
		Free time
	1245	Board buses for War Memorial Museum of Virginia and Mariners' Museum Tours — Return to hotel at 1645
	1700	Omni Hotel Welcome Reception for 303rd BGA (1700-1900)
	2000	Hospitality Room open till 2300
Thur:	0800	Board buses for Williamsburg — Coffee and rolls on bus — Guided Tour (0915-1215)
9/28	0900	Registration open (0900-1200 and 1300-1700)
	1215	Lunch (pay as you go) and free afternoon at Williamsburg
	1515	Board buses for return to Omni Hotel
		Free evening
	1900	Hospitality Room open till 2300
Fri:	WEEK END PACKAGE	
9/29	0745	Breakfast Buffet at Omni Hotel (0745-0900)
	0900	Registration open if needed till 1200
	0900	Squadron Meetings (0900-1000)
	1015	GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (1015-1200)
		Free time
	1400	Ground Crews Meeting
	1530	Hospitality Room open till 1700
	1730	Board "New Spirit" for dinner cruises, entertainment, dancing (1800-2100)
Sat:	0945	Walk to MacArthur Square for Memorial Service
		Transportation available for handicapped
		Free afternoon
	1400	Hospitality Room open till 1630
	1800	Cash Bar - Ballroom Area
	1900	GALA REUNION BANQUET for "Hell's Angels" — Ballroom
Sun:	0830	Sitdown Breakfast — Omni Hotel (0830-1000)
10/1	1000	Chapel Services

Distinguished pilot recalls crash of plane. . . that never was.

In the January issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter we ran a mystery story entitled "Who Done It?" It was the story of an unnamed pilot who on a balmy fourth of July evening celebrated by belly landing "The Scarlet Harlot" on the main runway at Molesworth. Now almost 45 years later we are happy to bring you an interview with that intrepid pilot. This story has an "R" rating and should not be read by anyone under 17 years of age unless accompanied by an ex-303rd.

What we seem to have today is a war story, but I wouldn't want you to flinch. Most war stories, I grant you, are usually downers full of sadness and landscaped with grieving widows, but this one has - well, you might say, a happy ending.

You see, I had dinner the other night with this retired Air Force colonel. His name is Mel Schulstad. He was a B-17 pilot stationed with the 303rd bomb group in a place called Molesworth, in central England. Anyone who was over there - this was in 1944 - can tell you those raids over Germany had very little in common with a picnic.

"We did a fair amount of partying between raids," Mel Schulstad was saying. "In fact our closing hours were when the bartender said he'd poured all the booze and it was time to go home.

"Our flight surgeon called it 'therapeutic drinking.' Anyway, we had a party to celebrate July Fourth, 1944. We invited some fighter pilots over from a nearby base about 10 miles from Molesworth."

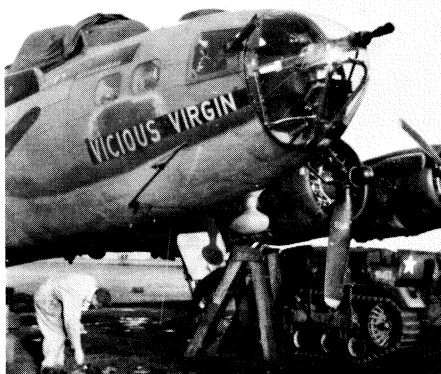
Retired Col. Schulstad said there was a special relationship between bomber groups and fighter pilots. While the bomber boys ribbed the fighters a lot, they felt a kinship because of the protection fighter planes gave B-17s. "We called them 'our little friends,'" he said.

So on this night of July 4, 1944, the 303rd invited their little friends over for some therapeutic little blast. But along about 2 a.m. a number of his little friends were snookered to the eyeballs. They were in no shape to drive back to their own base.

A word here about Schulstad. He was then only 26 years old, but the boys of the 303rd would tell you that when he walked down the street he listed slightly to port. This was not because of drinking. It was because his left chest was weighted down with medals and decorations, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses and six Air Medals.

He had been flying combat for 24 months and he had 40 missions, the last 20 of which were in the lead position for the 303rd.

So, even at age 26, it was no surprise



Vicious Virgin aka The Scarlet Harlot.

that Schulstad was operations officer for the base. It was also no surprise that he had authority to call down to the hangar at 2 a.m. and say, "Fire up that B-17, I'm going to taxi my little friends home."

Schulstad said: "The B-17 was very special to us. We had an almost mystical affection for those planes. No matter how bad they got shot up, they usually got you home. And this particular B-17 had a lot of battle damage.

"It was sort of re-created, you might say. The ground crews would cannibalize parts - a wing, an elevator, a landing gear, whatever, anything to make it flyable. We used it for training and sort of as a lead plane to get the others organized on bombing missions. We called it 'Old Faithful.'"

Anyway, Schulstad loaded all his pot- ted little friends aboard for their 10-mile "taxi ride" home. "I didn't have a co-pilot who could stand up," he said, "so I put our weather officer in the co-pilot's seat and I told him, 'Put your feet here and your hands in your lap and don't TOUCH anything!'"

"Now I've taken on quite a load of therapy myself and I am saying to myself, 'You are the world's best B-17 pilot, but because of all that therapy, you better be super-careful.'"

Old Faithful took off on a beautiful moonlit morning. Mel's co-pilot followed instructions by falling asleep. Mel makes a nice landing and unloads his little friends and takes off for the return trip to Molesworth.

"On the downwind leg, I drop the landing gear and the light come on to prove I've done it. Only trouble is, the green shade on the gear light is off, and all I'm getting is a bright bare light in my eyes. So I unscrew the little light and put it in my pocket.

On base leg, Mel began to milk the flaps down a little. He remembers thinking this was going to be the smoothest B-17 landing in the history of recorded aeronautics; he is going to touch Old Faithful on the runway like a butterfly with sore feet.

Bam! Crunch! Varoom!

All four propellers are chewing into the concrete.

Somehow, in the process of milking the flaps down he had inadvertently raised the landing gear. There was no light to warn him. Instead of the smoothest B-17 landing ever, Mel had arrived in a clatter of metal and a shower of sparks. Fortunately, nothing caught fire, but Old Faithful was a goner.

The next 10 days of Mel's life were pure hell. He took an enormous ribbing from his buddies. Here was Mr. Safety himself pulling that dumb stunt. But worse, if you have an accident you have to go before an investigating board. His whole military career was in ruins.

As it happened, Schulstad's roommate was a man named Mel McCoy, also a major. He was the 303rd's engineering officer. He was the guy who supervised all the mechanics and ground crews; he decided what planes should be cannibalized and what should be scrapped.

"I think I've got a way out of this," McCoy said. "I'll go talk to the group commander." As McCoy confided his plan, Schulstad brightened - any faint hope was a candle in the dark.

So McCoy went before the group commander, who would be in charge of the investigation. He said something like this:

"Sir, I think I can make a case that this B-17 never came off the Boeing assembly line. It was a patched-up creation of cannibalized parts from other B-17s. Furthermore, we never placed that plane on our supply list. It has no official status."

After a moment's pondering, the group commander said: "What you're trying to tell me is that the airplane doesn't exist."

"You could look at it that way, sir."

"Well," said the commander, "you can't possibly have an accident with an airplane that doesn't exist. And if there was no accident, there is nothing to investigate."

Schulstad smiled as he finished his story. "And that is exactly what happened," he said. "I retired as colonel in 1965. Nothing on my record shows there ever was an accident. And I guess the good Lord's been looking after me ever since."

By Emmett Watson

Reprinted from June 9, 1988 edition of Seattle Times

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

*Might - in - Flight******
APPLICATION FOR ☐ MEMBERSHIP FOR ☐ LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR ☐ ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

See Below

Name _____ Military Grade _____ Spouse's Name _____
Street Address _____ Apt. # _____ City _____
State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone (_____) _____ Bus. Phone (_____) _____ ext. _____
Crew and/or Duty _____ Squadron _____ Pilot's Name _____ Retired Military Grade, If Any _____
PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION**MEMBERSHIP DUES/\$10.00 FOR CALENDAR YEAR**

LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES SCHEDULE

60-64 years	\$75
65-69	60
70-74	45
75-77	30
78 years, or older	Free

Substantial savings are available to our members who wish to apply for Life Memberships. A few of our members have sent in money for 2 or even 3 years at the annual rate of \$10 per year. They should evaluate whether they might be able to save dollars by converting these prepayments to a Life Membership.

DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE MAIL!
Make Check or Money Order payable to:
303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Mail to: Jim Reeves
28101 Tefir
Mission Viejo, CA 92692

Goals of 303rd Bomb Gp. Association

As a non-profit tax free patriotic corporation, our stated goals are to perpetuate the contributions our unit made in WWII in preserving peace and to memorialize those who gave their lives in the struggle. Just as important is to pay tribute to all those members who participated and lived to enjoy the fruits of victory.

Our Reunions serve a dual purpose. First, to renew our membership, develop an esprit de corps, and to confirm our resolve to perpetuate the 303rd's patriotic role in the world's largest and most vicious aerial combat.

As survivors, it is our responsibility to see that we and the generations to follow never forget. Time is running out and we need to pay more attention to what we are going to leave in the way of records, memorabilia, and the history of what we did. Each member is due some recognition as all jobs were important.

Our rosters indicate that no more than 20 percent of those survivors have ever been located. Although a more aggressive program by the Group's leaders is needed, without the help of each of us,

our ranks are bound to be thinner in a few years.

Running this corporation is a big job and we owe a lot to those who have volunteered their time and money. A president, working with volunteers and with little or no money or administrative assistance and with infrequent contact even with the key officers and Board of Directors, has a tough time. The Reunion volunteers have done an outstanding job and we have all enjoyed these tremendous successes and they are not a financial burden on the organization.

Our Historian and the team that is working on our records and trying to put our history together are making good progress and you will be vitally interested and gratified by what you will see at the Norfolk Reunion.

The Eighth Air Force Association is working hard to come up with a suitable site for the Mighty Eighth unit's home and I believe they will have a place for us by our 50th anniversary in 1992.

The most important tool for holding this organization together is our newsletter. It will

be even more critical as we take on some important tasks that require members' understanding and support. Your editor, Hal Susskind, is a real professional and puts in full time editing and publishing what I think is the best newsletter around. He is the glue that binds us together between reunions. The more support he gets, the better off our association will be. Now I am issuing a challenge to our Board to do their homework, identify the critical jobs ahead and raise the money to insure we leave something behind that is a fitting memorial to 303rd.

Money is not the problem! A clear statement as to what we are going to do will gain the necessary support and we who are able and interested will come up with the funding.

To tell all of you the truth, I'm tired of hearing about being broke. Let's quit bitching about a minority who won't or can't pay their way and get on with the show. Bill Heller's proposal to personally pay for widow's newsletters is the kind of attitude I'm convinced will get us on the plus side of our financial needs.

From the Editor's Scratchpad!

Starting with the July issue of the newsletter we will make some changes in the format to include in-depth coverage of what the Association's Board of Directors have been working on for the past year or so as outlined in their quarterly reports to the president. With the cooperation of the secretary, I will try to bring you up to date on some of the items which have been discussed to date and which in all probability will appear on the agenda at the reunion in September.

President Carl Fyler has been designated as the Association's unit contact person. He is presently liaison person between the 8th AFHS and for all other inter-organizational purposes. He and Gen. Lew Lyle were elected to the Board of Directors of the 8th AFHS at their meeting in Des Moines.

President Fyler reminds us that for every member of the 303rd who signs up for membership in the 8th AFHS, half of the first year's dues reverts back to the 303rd. We also get a \$5 rebate for everyone in the 303rd who attends their annual reunion. The next one is scheduled for October in Denver. If you need help in applying contact Jim Reeves.

Gen. Lyle is still busily working on finding a future home for the 8th AFHS. "Criteria for a location depends to a large extent on whether or not we can develop and depend on long term viability. We are talking about a living organization dedicated to our history and its perpetuation." He's confident that we will see action this year and be able to occupy the facility by 1992. More on this in the July newsletter.

Walt Mayer, Bud Klint and Mel McCoy have put together a great package for the September reunion in Norfolk. The reunion kit will go into the mail in early June. Be on the lookout for it.

Vice President Harley Cannon is looking into the possibility of having the 1991 reunion in Chicago. He will make a presentation on Chicago at the reunion. Other members also have the opportunity to make presentations on cities of their choosing for 1991.

Space did not permit me to bring you up to date on the experiences of Rex Reichert after the conclusion of WWII. I will cover that interesting chapter in the July issue of the newsletter.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

The 23rd Psalm (You all walked that route)

"Where To From There?"

Crazy? I can imagine if you have already read the above title for a Devotion you are wondering if I really am not crazy. But crazy things do happen. In 1941 I had the misfortune to be in a British Hospital at the height of the German bombing raids on the coast of England. Strange and unexplainable things happened to that bomb racked hospital room. The ceiling plaster was cracked into thousands of visible cracks running in every direction like the lines on a map indicating roads and highways.

That ceiling did in fact become a map. I was where I did not want to be and so I traveled in imagination from where I was to there. What was THERE? There was HOME—But strange things happened in that room. I was dying and had given up—In that moment "Mama" and my father came into that room and sat down beside the bed—I reached out and touched them. I said, "You can not come over here there is a war going on". They replied, "You needed us so we came". God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. Of course it was their love and prayers reaching out to me and God transformed those elements into visible form to do for me what medical skill had not been able to do. With that vision I fought back to recovery and a transfer. The road ended up at Molesworth and the 303rd. Thank God. I only hope I was able to fulfill my mission to you wonderful guys.

It breaks my heart that in all probability we will be unable to attend any more Reunions. Mama has developed a heart condition and spent some time in the Cardiac Intensive Care Unit at Lackland and I have not had a good year. Keep us in your prayers as I have kept you in mine. Maybe I need a "Penny". We love you and God bless you all. Should we meet again so much the better.

"Chappie" Slawson
San Antonio, Texas

ADDRESS CHANGES

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Roche, William J., 30317 Ednil Rd., Cleveland, OH 44140
Turner, Duane, 3105 Stillwater Dr., Billings, MT 59102

NEW MEMBERS

Bowen, Richard R., (359th) Rt. 9, Box 251 B, Canyon Lake, TX 78133
Cantor, Milton, (359th) 800 Trenton Rd. #65, Langhorne, PA 19047
Doyle, Bruce B., (A) 2881 S.E. 20th Ave., Gainesville, FL 32601
Fitzsimmons, E. Lee (A) 22153 Lassen View Dr., Palo Cedro, CA 96073
Fleming, William W. (427th) 1051 Millbrook Dr., Fremont, OH 43420
Hetzel, Herman H., (427th) 505 N. Division, Guthrie, OK 74044
Kunde, David (A) 3729 N. 75th St., Milwaukee, WI 53216
Leonhirth, Junius (358th) 6 Stradley Terr., Greenville, SC 29609-2622
Miller, Lester (A) 93 Emerald, Eustis, FL 32726
Peterson, Norman O. (427th) 850 Snead Dr., Fairfield Glade, TN 38555

IN MEMORIAM

Joseph J. Kalafut, waist gunner and 2nd engineer with the 359th Sqdn. died on Dec. 26th, 1988 at Whippany, N.J. He is survived by his wife Ann.

Simeon Oxendine, aircraft

mechanic and aerial gunner with the 360th Sqdn. completed 25 missions, including first Schweinfurt Raid with 303rd President Dr. Carl Fyler. Died Dec. 28, 1988 at Pembroke, NC. Survived by wife, Dolores, son Rodney and daughter Mrs. Jill Chavis.

Chad W. Stephens, (358th) died Oct. 1, 1988 at 64 years of age. Survived by wife Christina.

Harry A. Boreen, (360th) died of a coronary attack following an accident. He was a farmer in Flom, MN.

Mary Hernan, wife of the late Howard Hernan, 359th Sqdn, died recently in Creve Coeur, IL. She is survived by her daughter Mary Janeen Hernan.

Louise Mason, wife of John Mason an engineer with the 360th died recently in East Alton, IL.

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

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