

Hell's Angels Newsletter

613

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

MAY 1994

11th Reunion A Huge Success

The 11th reunion of the 303rd Bomb Group Association was a huge success according to a majority of the more than 550 people who made the journey to Savannah, Georgia, the birthplace of the 8th Air Force.

Credit for the successful reunion should go to Jim Taylor, V/P for Reunions and his committee of volunteers who outdid themselves in their efforts to make sure everyone had a great time.

It was successful for other reasons. Attendees at the Board of Directors, Squadrons and general membership meetings recommended some very important projects for the Association to undertake before the next reunion in Colorado Springs in September of 1995.

A capsule account of actions taken in Savannah follows:

In the general elections, J. Ford Kelley was elected President; Edgar C. "Ed" Miller, V/P for Administration; Eddie Deerfield, V/P for Reunions; Jack P. Rencher, Secretary and William J. Roche, Treasurer.

Bill Roche, treasurer, reported total assets of \$102,147.07 up from \$87,000 on 31 August 1992. Out of the \$102,000 President Bill McLeod presented a check for \$25,000 to Gen. E.G. Shuler, Jr., for the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Center.

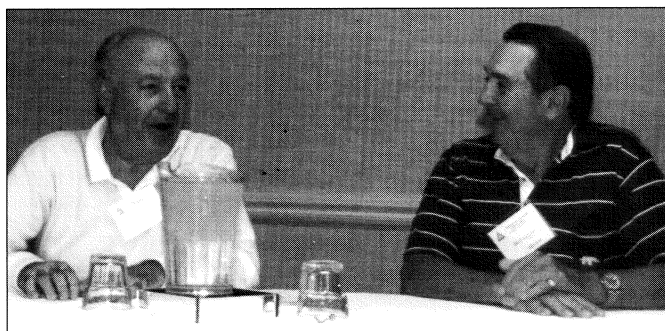
Carlton Smith, Membership and Roster Management Chairman reported a total of 2,199 members on the rolls.

Harry Gobrecht, Historian, gave a report on his hectic activities over the past 18 months in publishing the Diary. One of the big lapses in our information, he reported, is what happened to our "Missing-in-Action-Airmen." He has prepared a new report form that can be filled out on each MIA, to make sure the information gets recorded. All you MIAs are requested to contact Harry Gobrecht for a copy of the form. Harry also reported 905 books sold and only 95 left.

Lew Lyle indicated that the 303rd support of the Heritage Center was the best of any of the Bomb Groups.

Eddie Deerfield our new V/P for Reunions recommended that we explore the possibility of commissioning an artist to do a painting of some feature of the 303rd Bomb Group for our next reunion at which time we would offer prints to attendees at a nominal price. A committee was appointed to make recommendations on the subject matter of the "art work" which should include a tribute to the "ground support personnel."

Robin Beeby was made an Honorary Member of the Association and was also appointed as



F. Ford Kelley, newly elected president of the 303rd BC.P (left) in conversation with Bill Eisenhart, 359th Sqdn. representative during one of the meetings at the reunion.

our new United Kingdom Liaison for the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

Following considerable discussion about members of our Association who were seeking recognition and awards for acts performed during the war, Jack Rencher suggested we accumulate materials and documentation on those individuals and resubmit it to higher headquarters. Anyone who feels he is deserving of an award should contact Jack Rencher for further details.

A "Recognition and Awards Committee" has been set up to consider instances where members should be recognized and rewarded for services performed on behalf of the Association.

Walt and Bev Mayer, their daughter Kathy, and Bud and Mary Klint were praised by the Board of Directors for their hard work in getting all the materials packaged for the registration. These two couples,

who have been doing this for several years, contributed greatly towards the success of the Savannah Reunion.

Attending the reunion as a guest of the Association was **Erinrose O'Grady**, whose letter was carried in the January 1993 issue of the Newsletter. Erinrose, then 15 and now 16, was the young lady who fell in love with the B-17 aircraft after she saw the movie "Memphis Belle." Then she found out by reading the book "B-17 Flying Fortress in Color" that the 303rd had an aircraft called, "Sweet Rose O'Grady" which was featured in a painting "Alone No More" by William S. Phillips. It showed Sweet Rose O'Grady returning from a mission with one prop feathered escorted by two Spitfires. Mr. Phillips donated a print of the painting to the 303rd Bomb Group. It was presented to Erinrose at the Annual Banquet.

Thanks for the memories!

It's been my pleasure to play a small part in the planning and preparation for

Back-to-Boise, 1992

Return-to-Molesworth, 1993

Spring-in-Savannah, 1994

To those of you attending these functions "A Big Thanks" for making it happen, and to the many 303rd helpers—it wouldn't have happened without you. From everyone in the 303rd, "our sincere appreciation for all of your work!"

It's through these functions that I have become personally acquainted with members (not known previously) whom I now place among my best friends, providing a personal benefit far outweighing any time or effort spent on my part.

Under the leadership of V/P Eddie Deerfield (and wife Mary Lee) future 303rd functions can only grow in enjoyment for all. "You can count on it," so start now to plan for Colorado Springs in '95. Here's hoping to see all of you there.

Jim Taylor

Post Activities Director



"All aboard for Ft. Jackson Memorial Service."

Hell's Angels Forum

Your Chance to Sound Off!

Thank You!



Erinrose O'Grady

I loved Savannah, it was a beautiful city. The people of the 303rd are a special kind. Their kindness and generosity towards me was amazing. It was as if I was a princess for the weekend. I don't think I have ever felt so appreciated in my entire life. I felt like I had 500 grandparents. I just would like to thank you so much for the chance to attend the reunion, it was one of the most positive experiences of my entire life. In fact I enjoyed myself so much that I hope to attend the reunion in Colorado (I've already begun saving). I'm trying to write "thank" to as many people as I can because I am so grateful but since I can't I would like to let you know that I really appreciated everything.

Erinrose O'Grady
639 Roseland Avenue
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Lead crew named

In your November 1993 Newsletter in your article on Captain Kaiser, you showed a photo of the lead crew with only partial identification. On my photo I have the following identification: Mission to Merseburg, 30 Nov. 1944; Target Leuna Oil Works, 301 aircraft dispatched, eleven planes were lost for 3.7 percent; 298 sustained battle damage, four of them beyond repair.

Standing, (left to right) Lt. Gorham, Major Mackin, Capt. Jacobson, Lt. Lifshus and Capt. Bergeron. Kneeling, front row (left to right) Sgt. Bartian, T/Sgt La Perch, S/Sgt Nelson, Lt. Ross and Capt. Kaiser.

...and yes, it was a heck of a rough one!

W.K. La Perch
7200 Walnut Canyon Road
Moorpark, CA 93021

Looking for Sgt. Jones

The following is a translation of a letter that I recently received from a Frenchman who is looking for former S/Sgt Henry Jones.

On 17 Feb. '43, an aircraft of the U.S. Air Force was shot down in the region of St. Gilles-Les Bois in the department of "Cotes Du Nord" in Brittany. Three of the airmen parachuted. One of the three came to the community of "Pommerit Le Vicomte" where civilian clothes were given to him by the locals. He took off on his own trying to find a way to get to Spain. In the village of Pommerit Le Vicomte he met Jean Le Creurer, an apprentice carpenter.

This American was very tall and had red hair. His clothes were too small for him and he wore a beret. He was able to make Jean Le Creurer understand that he was an American and wanted to evade the Germans to go to Spain. By gestures Le Creurer indicated that he wanted Jones to hide in the neighboring woods until night when he would return with food. When Le Creurer returned Sgt. Jones was gone. The next day Sgt. Jones was taken prisoner by the Germans. The following name and address was given to Le Creurer by the American: S/Sgt. Henry Jones 136 4th Ave., N.E. St. Petersburg, Florida, USA

Official records indicate that six 3th AF aircraft were lost on a mission to St. Nazaire on 16 Feb. 1943. Two each from the 303rd, 305th and 306th Bomb Groups.

Any information regarding Sgt. Jones will be appreciated.

Ralph Patton
AFEEES
720 Valleyview Rd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15243

"Who downed whom?"

This is in reference to your note following Bill Miller's letter in the February Newsletter re: the Luftwaffe videotape. We, Lt. Shields crew, were leading the low flight in "Purple Heart Corner" that fateful day and Bill Miller was flying on our left wing. Bill sent me a copy of the tape. Frankly in my opinion, there is no way of telling which plane is being shot down... but you can decide for yourself.

Will Lee

P.O. Box 743
Orinda, CA 94563

Ed. Note: We will bring the tape to the Colorado Springs reunion in '95 and let you decide.

The Doomsday Book

Referring to my write-up reference Bob Cogswell and B-17 "Lady Luck" in the February 1944 issue of the Newsletter.

Since posting the article I have found some information on where the Doomsday Book was stored during WW II, and enclose photocopies of two pages from the book "Heritage of a Prison" by Francis Disney. The author, a former prison warder, has given permission for the copies to be taken and they may be used in a non-profit making publication, e.g. 'Hell's Angels Newsletter.'

The prison referred to is H.M.P. Shepton Mallet in Somerset. The prison dates back to 1610 and in 1942 it became 'The American 2912th Disciplinary Training Center.' Operated at first by 'The 6833rd Guardhouse Overhead Detachment,' it was later renamed as 'The Headquarters 2912 Disciplinary Training Center, APO 508 United States Army.' On June 30, 1944, 635 'General' prisoners were housed at Shepton Mallet, on Jan. 3, 1945 the number had increased to 768. Twenty-one American servicemen were executed by hanging in Shepton Mallet prison and a further three by firing squad. Locally it was described as "A Hell Hole," "A blot on the Army and the conscience of the country" and "a terror jail." The book entitled "The Dirty Dozen" bears a positive resemblance to the real-life American prisoners held at Shepton Mallet. An excerpt from an opening paragraph in the book reads "An aura of quaint country charm concealed the building within the limits of the old Somerset market town."

After the war the prison reverted back to a civilian prison and remains so to this day.

Iris Drinkwater
55 Adam Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset, TA8 1PQ
England

Ed. Note: The Doomsday Book (great and little) is a compilation of a survey made by William the Conqueror in 1096. These valuable documents were stored in secret at Shepton Mallet Prison from 1939 to 1945.

Mission No. 248

I'm glad I found out about your address. William F. Miller was so kind as to inform me where I could locate you. He did so on account of my letter that was published in Hell's Angels Newsletter of July 1993. I'm especially indebted to Harold A. Susskind who made it all possible.

But now to the date of September 28, 1944. I was an eye-witness when your B-17 exploded right over my hometown. The memory of that event has never left me and I would like to know more about it. I'm very much interested in the history of my hometown, and because of that I'd appreciate it very much if you could help me with my investigation. Do you know what happened to your crew after the plane was hit.

It was most difficult for me to glean information about the AAF serial number and other markings of your plane. I was still a boy in 1944 and like all boys, interested in technics and machinery. Although the plane was guarded I managed to "rescue" some parts, which are still in my possession today.

After quite some time I could even get some photos of the downed plane. In spite of it being strictly prohibited, some German Air Force soldiers dared to snap pictures. They could do so, because they were in charge of the wreckage and had to guard it. But even with the help of those photos it was not an easy task to identify the markings "GM" on the fuselage.

HQ USAF Historical Research Center, Research Division, Maxwell AFB, AL., were helpful in sending me a list of losses of September 28th. National Archives in Washington sent me the MACR on micro-fiche.

Further information came from the records of the cemeteries of the City of Salzgitter. The date of entry in the records was June 11, 1948. In the course of reburial work at Heerte cemetery the remains of six US airmen were unearthed. At that time nobody knew which plane they belonged to. I'm certain that they belonged to your crew. One man was badly burnt, possibly the co-pilot or the radio gunner. MACR 9405 says that nine men belonged to the crew. Back in 1944 I saw two parachutes. One of the parachutists was you. You landed to the north of Barum. The second man landed near a place called

Cramme. Who was the second man? If the six dead soldiers belonged to your crew, then one man is still unaccounted for.

Do you have any information where your dead crew members were laid to their last rest? Are their graves on US cemeteries in Holland or Belgium? From what cemeteries in Germany were they disinterred? If you don't happen to have that information, do you know who might know about these questions?

After the war I obtained the headgear of top turret gunner Lisabeth, Hilaire A, Sgt. A former German Air Force soldier had picked it up after the crash. So I'm certain the fate of the downed plane had been cleared up.

The body of the badly burnt soldier was found lying close to two radio antennas in the wreck. The left wing of the plane was totally consumed by the fire. Several fuel tanks had fallen into the village of Barum. Remarkably none of the bombs, which had fallen out of the plane, exploded. All in all six bombs were found. Did your plane only carry six bombs that day? An oxygen tank had been hit.

I'd be much obliged if you could tell me more about your mission on September 28, 1944, your being able to get away from your stricken plane and your subsequent jump and captivity in Germany. Do you possibly have any pictures of your plane, crew or yourself in Molesworth.

After the crash a flag was found in your plane. It was attached to a wooden stick, consisted of red cloth and had a white round patch in its center. What was the flag good for and how was it used?

Have you ever found out who shot down your plane? William Miller says he was shot down by a German fighter plane piloted by Oberleutenant (1st Lt.) Haase.

I do very much hope to get an answer from you. Let me say again that I am really looking forward to your help.

Karl-Heinz Bartels
Harzstr. 47
38229 Salzgitter
Germany

Ed. Note: The above letter was sent to Charles G. Glasgow (427th) who piloted B-17 # 44-8335 on the mission to Magdeburg, Germany on Sept. 28, 1944. Eleven B-17Gs failed to return. They were lost to enemy

aircraft after a persistent attack of an estimated 40 FW-190s and ME-109s. Harry Gobrecht's recently published Daily Diary of the 303rd Bomb Group devotes quite a few pages to this very exciting mission. Lt. Charles C. "Glenn" Glasgow, presently not a member of our Association, was on his first combat mission. He was thrown out of the aircraft when it exploded. He was the only survivor. Lt. George 11. Ashford (CP) was killed when he was out of his seat ordering the crew to bail out. In 1948 a mass grave of 35 Russians were disinterred near Heerter Holz (Woods) SSE of Heerte. A hollow in the ground near the Russian grave proved to be another mass grave in which an American body was found. The U.S. Graves team then discovered seven additional remains of aircraft #44-8335. They were temporarily reburied at Nueville and later in European American Cemeteries or returned to the U.S.A.

Batman and Robin?

With reference to the photograph on Page 3 of the Newsletter for February 1994, I believe I can make positive identification of both gentlemen.

It is a snapshot of the Motorman and the Conductor of the legendary InterUrbans that ran in Southern California years ago. The Conductor would shout the destination of Anaheim!, Azusa! and Cucamonga! for all to hear.

No, that can't be right. It is a snapshot of the Chardonnay Kid with the Master Wine Taster to his right.

No, that is not right either. Seriously, it is a photograph of two veterans, one from the 360th BS and the other from the 359th BS. Both have known each other, come October of this year for some 52 Octobers. Warren Tashian, a Ball Turret Gunner is on the right and Frank Cueto, a Waist Gunner is on the left.

Thank you for publishing the photograph and I will make a point of writing to Eric, Stu and Jean Swain of Upper Norwood, England.

Frank Z. Cueto
8633 Datapoint Drive #206
San Antonio, Texas 78229-3253

Ed. Note: Thank you for your assistance in identifying Batman and Robin in the February issue. I believe the skit of the conductor

shouting the destinations of "Anaheim!, Azusa!, and Cucamonga!" took place on the Jack Benny radio show before and during World War II.

"Lady Luck"

I am always glad to receive the Newsletter and in the recent one of February 1994, I have some questions: On Page 12, concerning the Alresford plaque someone had printed in "LADY Luck" and I assume that was the B-17 instead of "Lucky Lady." "Lady Luck" was the name of our crew's plane and the plane number was 25434. Do you know if the plane in the article was the plane we flew?

Also on page 13 concerning the inactive roster, the third name was Richard M Albright, Lakeland, FL, 360th unit, zip 33813 plus 25434. I did not know him but wondered if the plus number was his airplane number. Maybe you have some more information on that such as did his crew get the plane after we finished?

I had heard our "Lady Luck" went down in Sept. of 1943 but I don't know if it was on a mission over enemy territory, crashed in England or what?

If my membership dues are not payed, please let me know. Any help you can give me on the above will be really appreciated. You are doing an excellent job and it is great that you do it.

Vernon E Schwartz
210 W. Jessup St.

Alvarado, Texas 76009-3234

Ed. Note: "Lady Luck" #42-5434 joined the 303rd BG in March of 1943. I am sure that is the aircraft you flew some missions in. Re: the number 25434 next to Albright's name, it was meant to be a four digit number and part of the zip code. It was coincidental that it was the same number as Lady Luck. On Sept. 26, 1943, "Lady Luck" took off on a mission to Nantes, France. The mission was recalled and while over England on its return the aircraft suffered a runaway prop and a fire in No. 3 engine. The pilot Lt. Robert Cogswell ordered his men to bail out at 10,000 feet. The 10 500 lb. bombs could not be jettisoned since they were over England. After all the crew were out Lt. Cogswell rode his B-17 down to a few thousand feet to make sure it would not crash in a populated area. Lady Luck crashed near

Medstead Airdrome in the vicinity of Winchester and the bombs did not explode. Dues notices are sent out by the membership chairman, Carlton Smith. If you pay yearly you should have received a notice by now but I believe you are a life member.

Unknown crew member identified!

The mystery of the unknown soldier has been solved. In the lead crew photo in the Tailwheel story in the February issue of the Newsletter, the officer standing to the right of Tailwheel in the photo is Lt. Kenneth Heiser who came to Molesworth in late 1944 as Navigator on the Jerome Millman crew. I have enclosed a photo of Lt. Millman's crew taken in Tampa, Florida.

They are: standing, (left to right) Robert J. Eygabroad, Neal W. Noble, William C. Ready, Raymond H. Fox and Jack W. Johnson. Front row, (left to right) Jerome Millman, Thomas A. Geile, Kenneth Heiser and Rex Chambers.

Jack W. Johnson
(Tail gunner)
3616 S. 132 East Avenue
Tulsa, OK 74134-5031

The Langendreer Mission

Congratulations for another super edition. This was my fifth copy and since I read each one from cover to cover I can honestly say it's by far the best of its type that I have ever read. If there are back copies available you might consider bringing them to Savannah to sell, raffle or auction off.

The thing that really prompted this letter was the invitation on page 4 of the February issue regarding the Langendreer raid on 2/16/45. I kept a very small and cryptic diary of my missions and was certain that even it would be found out and result in my court martial! This was my 20th mission and the first as deputy lead bombardier. I quote it in its entirety: "Bombed primary - oil target - Made GH run with visual assist, 20 x 250 dropped ok. Flew 2nd deputy with a new crew. Moderate inaccurate flak at target. Landed after breaking out at 800 feet. Beasley got hole in nose. The navigator was lost. We made one pass at our field, two at Kimbolton, one at a power line and finally landed."

While the memories of my tour

Forum

are not vivid, I do recall that as we approached the target, the cloud cover was about 40 percent and it seemed we may get a visual drop but did not. I feel sure my squadron (360th) dropped on the primary. My notes refer to several other times when we made a second pass but not this time. In any case, since it appeared the clouds were breaking up, there may have been a second run but the drop was clean; and our return to Molesworth was made more harrowing to us than the target. Incidentally, the reference to the "hole" was my regular crew and was due to a 50 cal. caseing, not flak; and the "new crew" was new to me, not the 360th.

Buddy Hight
1126 Rogeretta Dr.
Atlanta, GA 30329-3818

Ed. Note: I followed your suggestion and brought quite a few back issues of the newsletter to the reunion. I hope you were able to get some. If not I suggest you contact the Membership Chairman, Carlton Smith to see if he has any left.

The Ground Troops - The Silent Partners

During the years I have belonged to the Association, I eagerly look forward to the newsletter. I usually read it over and over to assure myself I have read everything in it. I have observed that the ground troops do not contribute. Most of the articles are about combat crews, and that is all right, they deserve it. I am sure there were more ground troops than combat crews and that they have worthwhile stories to tell. I am submitting to our newsletter several happenings that pertained to me and others.

In the booklet the "First Three Hundred" is a picture of a B-17 covered with foam, that was set afire by an accidental firing of an incendiary from a ball-turret gun across the field. Erwin Heins and I were on a cletrac with a tow bar, on the perimeter road. I can't recall why we were there when a jeep pulled up and yelled, they needed help. We followed them to the 360th parking area. A B-17 was covered with foam and fuel had been spilled on the ground all around it. The tow-bar was hooked up and we pulled the B-17 away from the area. I don't recall if the fuel was burning on the ground.

Do you remember the B-17 that came back and the right gear would

not fully retract down? It circled for some time, eventually it came in. Halfway down the runway, the gear collapsed. It skidded to the right and headed toward the main hangar. The troops that were watching really took off just like jack rabbits. After the aircraft finally came to rest, Major Melvin McCoy gave us the order to prepare to remove the plane. I noticed a Lieutenant standing in front of the navigators right hand gun. The navigator was removing the fifty calibre gun. I gave the observing Lt. a hard push, seconds later a round went off. I still remember the look on the Lt's face. I went around the back of the aircraft and there was a staff sergeant with a smoking cigarette in his hand. I yelled for him to haul his butt out of there since the wing was dripping fuel. Capt. Jones, C.O. of the M.P. Company then cleared the area of spectators.

I am including a photo of the band taken at the Drill Hall in Northampton where we played every Sunday night. Featherstone and I are looking for Bob Rabassa (358) from Hanover, N.H., and Harry Kendall (358) who was on piano. He came from Dalhart, Texas. If any one knows the whereabouts of these two, please contact me or Featherstone.

I am also presenting a picture of the engine crew that worked in the main hangar. Photo was taken by Tom Struck. He lives in Boring, Oregon. Saw Tom at the 50th in Boise, Idaho in 1992.

One more interesting story. At the 50th Reunion Friday Breakfast, my wife and I sat at a table with two handicapped ladies in wheelchairs, another was blind, plus their parents and a brother. Also at the table was a distinguished looking gentleman who said he was a Catholic priest. I asked him if he had a parish. He replied he did not have a parish because he was the Bishop of Corpus Christi, Texas. After Sunday mass I asked him, what was his connection with the 303rd Bomb Group. His answer was, "I was the top turret gunner on the Thunderbird and flew 32 missions." Thunderbird is the B-17 mural at the Smithsonian Museum painted by Keith Ferris. If anyone would like to know how to get a copy of the mural, let me know. It is 15 x 48 inches, suitable for framing.

I just received my copy of Harry Gobrecht's book "Night in Flight." Every member of the Association should procure one, it is well worth

the money. Lewis Lyle gives credit to the depot group and line maintenance troops on page five. There are two touching poems on page six.

So guys, I know you too have stories to tell, so sound off! Even though you think it is small incident, there is no doubt it is newsworthy.

Raymond A. Espinoza (444th)
223 Phlox Ave.
Redlands, CA 92373

Ed. Note: Ray Espinoza is correct. We are always looking for stories about the ground personnel. I am sure you all have interesting and amusing incidents to tell about. How about sharing those stories with all of the Association. In the meantime here's a photo of the 444th Engine Shop Crew. The family that Ray had breakfast with on that Friday morning was the Stafford family. We missed them at the reunion in Savannah. The Bishop was Rene Gracida. He missed this reunion because of his Holy Week duties. I have used photos of the band in past issues. Maybe we can get the Rhythm Pilots to play at the next reunion in Colorado Springs in 1995.

In Memoriam

My name is Dorothy Steele, the wife of Earl A. Steele who is a Life Member of the 303rd. I fully intended to write to you sooner to say Earl Passed away on May 29, 1993 after having two strokes in 13 months. He was so proud of his AF career and especially proud of his 303rd Bomb Group. We had attended two reunions and looked forward to others.

When I received the November Hell's Angels Newsletter I was so pleased to see the article about Everett Dasher and the Werewolf. Earl was the Bombardier on the Werewolf and also bailed out over England. Earl had spoken to Everett on the phone over the years. A second article which interested me was a letter, "Testimonial" written by Troy Mulvaine of Dayton, Ohio. Troy is part of a group called "Living History." These young men are very interested in keeping alive the World War II history. Troy spent many evenings with Earl picking his brains on the facts and stories of the 303rd, and the 358th Sqdn. at Molesworth, England.

Earl retired from the USAF April 1, 1970 at Wright-Patterson AFB after 28 1/2 yrs in the AF. He and I both have worked as volunteers at

the AF Museum for over 15 years and take great pride in telling visitors the history of our Air Force.

I so enjoy the Hell's Angels Newsletter and hope that I will continue to receive the issues. Thank you for all the interesting articles.

Dorothy E. Steele
4188 Meadowsweet Dr.
Dayton, Ohio 45424

Ed. Note: As the widow of a deceased 303rd member you will automatically become a member of the Association and will continue to receive the newsletter as long as it is published.

Just a short note to inform you of the death of Murray Wade Jr. of W. Lafayette, IN. Murray passed away on Sunday, March 6, 1994. He and my husband, Robert Ludington, remained great friends over the years and we are very saddened over his death.

Mrs. Robert Ludington
2350 Case Ave.
Maplewood, MN 55119

Ed. Note: Thank you for notifying us of the death of one of our comrades. Our deepest sympathy goes out to the wives of these brave men. May they "Rest in Peace."

Wanted!

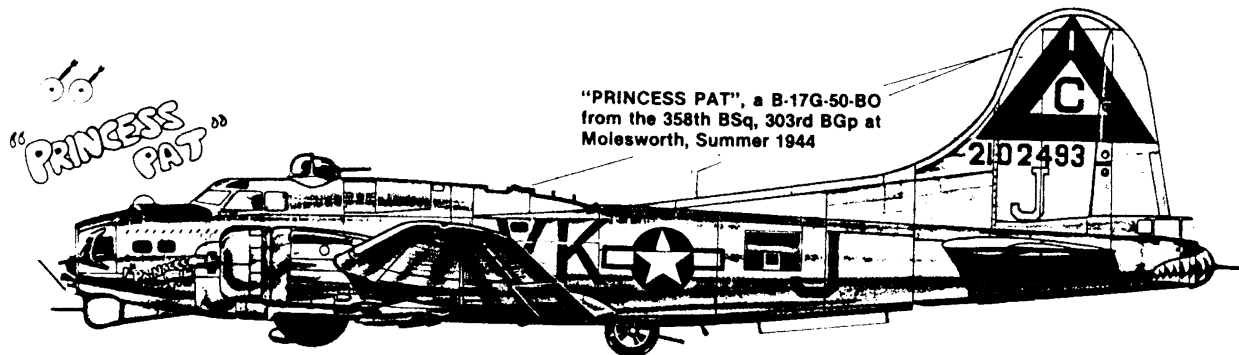
Oops...my membership in the 303rd is something I value most highly and one I would not give up. Enclosed is a check for \$10.00 for my dues. Could you please publish the following request in your next issue of the newsletter.

"Back at Molesworth the men in the propeller shop melted down damaged propellers and cast models of B-17s. Would love to buy one if you have one to sell. Please call me collect at (805) 529-0222."

Bill La Perch (358th)
7200 Walnut Canyon Rd.
Moorpark, CA 93021-9758

An old English friend reminisces

What a surprise I had when I saw my letter in the February Newsletter. I didn't expect it to be printed but I am pleased. I had four, lovely, interesting letters from four of the boys who were stationed at Molesworth; two of them were both in the 359th and I have answered them all, telling them about the different places they visited and one a family he visited in Old Weston. The Headquarters were at Old Weston so they would go out that way. The family he wrote about were well



known to us as my husband and I used to visit "The Black Swan" a lot before the war but not so much after the blackout but I am very happy to think of what the boys thought of English people. They were all very pleased with the way they were treated while they were here. Two of the boys done all their missions before they went home. I am sure they had some of the weather like we are having now; snow, rain and very windy, which always seem to be on the north. I know how cold it was on the base (during the war) but they were younger then and had those lovely lined jackets. I was sorry I didn't see any of the boys when they were in England. (last year). One told me he visited Titchmarsh and the Public House where he played darts, and the school and church. I am sure they had some nice memories for him. I enjoy reading their letters and all my old friends who remember the war years do too. Thank the boys once more for writing to me. I spend a lot of time alone now that my husband has died. I will always answer them. I have written to Iris Drinkwater and told her my good news. Kind regards.

Mrs Dolly Jolly
37 Islington
Titchmarsh Nr Kettering
Northants NN14 3CD
England

Ed. Note: During our reunion at Molesworth last year we were treated wonderfully by the English people. I think the stamp you put on your letter was very amusing.

"Princess Pat"

I just received the current issue of the "Hell's Angels Newsletter" today. On Page 12 is a photo which the caption says was sent by Tom Struck. It is a photo of the tail section of a B-17 with the J and serial number visible on the vertical stablizer – and the question below asking what is the name of this plane?

It sure looks like the "Princess Pat" of the 358th Sqdn. On 10/17/44 our crew flew that plane to Cologne on our 13th mission. It carried us back and forth a total of 17 times; completing mission 35 on 1/7/45 - a trip to Kall, Germany. After being assigned to that ship for the trip to Cologne in October, our crew considered it ours.

Rufus Grisham (P), Bill Cox (CP), Nick Celich (B), Ed Scheuermann (E), and myself (TG) are all members of the 303rd BGA. I enclose a copy of an artist's drawing that appears in a Squadron Signal Publication entitled "B-17s in action." It agrees with the photo except a #9 replaces the #5 in the serial number. Even an artist is entitled to a mistake.

Oh yes, Jack Rencher flew with us on a few occasions and I hope to see him at the reunion. I'll be interested in seeing who else responds; and with what information.

Arnold Willis
19666 Eagle Trace Ct.
N. Ft Myers, FL 33903

Ed. Note: Besides yourself, our historian Harry Gobrecht named the aircraft as well as our Czech members Martin and Jaromir Kohout. The also enclosed the same artist's drawing.

Evasion with style!

In December 1992 I received a letter from a French historian, Mr. Francis Cadic of Douarnenez, France, asking if I were the Charles Grice who was shot down over Brittany in January 1943. I responded in the affirmative and we have corresponded almost monthly since then. He has sent me many pictures and data on our 1943 adventure in Brittany. Last spring he sent me the French version (in French) of our adventure. My

daughter who lives in Canada, had it translated. Enclosed is a copy of the translation.

Also enclosed is a copy of my story written for and published a couple of years ago in the book "Through the Eye of the Needle." We were asked by the Stalag Luft III Former Prisoners of War organization to write our "There I Was" story, covering the period from the moment we left our base to the moment we arrived in Germany. Mine was one of those picked for publication.

In September of 1993 my wife and I made a journey to that area of France. We spent three days in the town of Quimper, a few miles north of Lorient, a town where the 303rd bombed the sub-pens many times and were bombing on Jan. 23, 1993. We were given a tour of the base which is still in operation. We were told that it would be closed in a couple of years and everything moved to Brest. We visited all of the homes where we were hidden at that time.

At every home I was treated like a returning hero. The champagne and wine were pulled out and we were toated many times, treated like long lost friends, not like a visitor. We visited with three of our 1943 helpers, Francois Moal, Georges Jouanjean and Marie-Anne Cuzon. All of them play a key role in the French story. They made both of us feel so good. We left France with a very warm wanted feeling. Also enclosed are photos taken on this trip.

I am including photos of our visit to the American Cemetery at St. James near Avranches. There I found the grave of Roy R. Moser, our bombardier. I finally got the opportunity to tell him "goodbye." That experience really tugs at ones feelings.

Charles R. Grice
#1 Mariner Court
Midland, Texas 79705

Ed. Note: We will print Charles Grice's story in the next issue of the newsletter after we get permission from the publishers.



The American Cemetery at St. James, near Avranches. Charles Grice kneels at gravesite of his Bombardier, Lt. Roy Moser who was shot down on Jan. 23, 1943. He was part of Harry Robey's crew.

MeetingsMeetings

→ The Board of Directors meeting was called to order by President William S. McLeod, at 9:00 A.M., 29 March 1994. The following members were present:

William S. McLeod, Jr., President;
J. Ford Kelley, V/P Administration;
Eddie Deerfield, V/P Reunions;
Edgar C. Miller, Secretary;
William J. Roche, Treasurer;
also Walter J. Mayer; William C. Heller; Sidney L. Larson; Henry C. Johanson; Harold A. Susskind; Carlton M. Smith; Lewis L. Lyle; Harry D. Gobrecht; Malcolm J. Magid; Frank C. DeCicco, Jr.; Robert P. Livingston; James B. Taylor; Charlie Sykes.

→ The agenda, as distributed by President McLeod, was approved.

→ The Secretary summarized the minutes of the Board Meeting in Boise, and passed out copies of the official minutes, to everyone present.

→ One correction was suggested ...on page 3, where the age for free membership in the organization was listed as "age 76", but should be "age 78."

→ The minutes were accepted with the above change.

→ Bill Roche, our Treasurer, provided everyone with a copy of his report, as of 28 February 1994. He reported: Total Assets of \$102,147.07, up from \$87,699.26 on 31 August 1992. The majority of this increase is due primarily to the \$13,400.00 of profits on the Boise Reunion.

→ Out of the \$102,000.00, President McLeod will present a check for \$25,000.00 to General Schuler for the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Center, on Saturday evening.

→ Discussion took place on how the money for the "life" and "super life" members would be handled. After some discussion, it was decided to mingle all funds received.

→ Frank DeCicco, our Audit Committee Chairman, presented his report, which was accepted.

→ Carlton Smith, Membership & Roster Management Committee Chairman, reported on membership as of 19 March 1994, with a total of 2,199 members on the rolls. He advised that the 106 members who were "in Arrears" would be moved to the "inactive file" at the next report.

→ The members were: 409 Annual

members; 681 Life members; 171 Super Life members; and 13 Volunteers, for a total of 1248 active members. There were 205 widows, 244 inactive, 366 deceased, and 132 Associate members.

→ Ed Miller made a motion that the Association purchase a CD-ROM disk with the names, phone numbers and addresses (like a telephone "reverse" directory) of the entire U.S., and we go to work attempting to locate "lost souls" of the 303rd. This motion was seconded, and the motion was approved.

→ It was then agreed that Associate Members would have the same "life membership" status as regular members and at the same scale, starting at \$75.00.

→ Hal Susskind reported on the Newsletter...which everyone agrees, is "the best Newsletter" of all 8th Air Force World War II organizations. He indicated that production costs and mailing costs are on the rise. He opted that we could go to three issues per year, however, he suggested we pay the increased cost and continue to put out four issues per year.

→ A motion was made that we continue with four issues per year and pay the extra cost. The motion was seconded, and approved.

→ Jim Taylor, our Savannah Reunion Committee Chairman, passed out a copy of the Reunion schedule. He introduced Ed Gardner, who has done all the computer work for the Reunion, and applauded him for his untiring efforts and fine work. He developed a software program to handle the registration for this Reunion. He is making a couple of changes which will work for Eddie Deerfield, in future reunions.

→ Jim also applauded Malcolm Magid for his efforts in receiving all the incoming mail and funds, and handling the finances.

→ Walt and Bev Mayer, their daughter Kathy, and Bud and Mary Klint were praised for their hard work in getting all the materials packaged for the registration. These two couples, who have been doing this for several years, were the outstanding contributors to any success that we will have here in Savannah.

→ Jim discussed the tours which are planned; the Fort Jackson Muster; the band concert; the Raffle; etc. A list of the raffle prizes, valuing at nearly \$9,000.00, was passed out.

→ Jim said a replica of the 'MIGHT IN FLIGHT' sign that will go in the new Headquarters Building at Molesworth, will be on display in the PX and Hospitality Room.

→ Jim covered the "Memorial Trip to England" in May of 1993, and remarked on how much we appreciated the efforts of Robin and Sue Beeby, our 303rd UK Liaison people. This trip was made by over 160 of our members, their wives, children and guests.

→ Eddie Deerfield, our new V/P, Reunions, next covered the selection of sites for the 1995 Reunion, scheduled for 12-19 September. Five possible locations were reviewed: Little Rock, San Antonio, Colorado Springs, presented the best of the programs, and best value for the members' dollar. St. Louis was a close second. Galveston was too expensive and couldn't provide a hotel that would handle all of our members. The hotel would cost \$70.00 per night.

→ Eddie made a motion to approve the Colorado Springs site and dates of 12 to 19, September 1995. It was seconded and passed.

→ Walter Mayer, our 358th Squadron Representative, kicked off the Squadron reports. He is recovering from "angio-plasty" just three weeks ago. He had sent out over 300 letters to Squadron members asking for ideas, on how we can improve the Association. Only 24 responded, and nothing of significance was reported.

→ Bill Heller of the 360th Squadron advised the members that John Cosello, the 360th Squadron Operations Officer was in intensive care, in Cincinnati, and had been there for 15 days. Bill sends out "Dues Notices" to everyone in the Association, at his own expense and will continue to mail out these notices. Bill McLeod thanked Bill Heller for his long-standing efforts in helping the Association.

→ Harry Gobrecht, our Historian, provided an extensive written report on his hectic activities over the past 18 months. Harry reviewed the "report" for the benefit of all present. One of the big lapses in our information is "what happened to our missing-in-action airmen?" He has prepared a new report form that can be filled out on each, to make sure that the information gets recorded...if we can ever find any of "lost souls".

→ He has obtained prices, in case we opt for a second printing of the

History Book. He noted that 20 of "Special Presentation" books had been printed, and that 15 were in the hands of Bill McLeod, for future uses. Five have been presented to: Ray and Teresa Cossey, Robin and Sue Beeby, Colonel Glen D. Shafer, Major General, L. E. Lyle, and Harry Gobrecht.

→ The "Book Project" was covered in detail. He reported \$64,000 of income, with \$51,000 of expenses, and expects to have almost \$7,000 a provision for left over that will find its way into the Association general fund. This includes a provision for \$1,000 of unexpected expenses.

→ General Lyle advised that they would have over 50,000 square feet of available storage space in the Heritage Center, when it is completed. This was in response to a question by Harry, as to what should be done with all of the "archive". Harry made a motion that all of his material, archives, memorabilia, etc., be transferred to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Center. This was approved by the Board. He also asked for Board action on the fillure price of the "Book", which would be set at \$60 wholesale, \$75 for U. S., and \$78 for all other countries. This motion was approved.

→ Malcolm presented his "Nominating Chairman" report, with the following nominations for the 1994-1995 term of office:

J. Ford Kelley - President
Edgar C. "Ed" Miller - V/P,
Administration

Eddie Deerfield - V/P, Reunions
Jack P. Rencher - Secretary
William J. Roche - Treasurer

→ This slate was approved by the board.

→ The PX report was presented by Bill McLeod, in the absence of Morton Luman. His income since December 6, 1992, has been \$828.80, and his expenses have been \$766.41. Bill asked the Squadron Representatives to look for PX volunteers at their Squadron meetings.

→ Lou Lyle, our Group Advisor, gave his report, a copy of which was handed out. He indicated that the 303rd support of the Heritage Center was the best of any of the Bomb Groups. He asked a "key person" to work with the Center, as it is getting "off-the-ground."

→ Charlie Sykes, our Associate Member Representative spoke about the role of the Associate Members, and said he would be

.....and More Meetings

talking to as many members as he could, in an attempt to define what role the Associate members could play in "perpetuating" the organization. He needs some help from us...and asked for a "space" in the quarterly Newsletter.

OLD BUSINESS

→ The request of the 448th Bomb Group to purchase space on the Gowen Field Memorial, was discussed. The Board was in agreement that the "Memorial" remain the sole memorial of the "303rd Bomb Group Association."

→ Bill McLeod read a letter from one of our members, Mr. Hicks, who was very upset with the wording in the Gowen Field Memorial. After discussion, Bill McLeod named Harry Gobrecht Jack Rencher, Hal Susskind, Walt Mayer and Ed Miller as a committee to look into Mr. Hicks' recommendations. The committee was asked to determine what should be done at Gowen Field and report back to the Executive Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

→ Ford Kelley and Bill Roche presented their positions on the need for "liability insurance" for members of the Board and Committee Chairmen. A motion was made, seconded and approved by the Board, to immediately sign a contract for coverage by Poe and Brown Insurance Company of Sarasota, Florida. The terms of the contract, \$1,000,000 of coverage, at an annual cost of \$1,500.00. Bill McLeod signed the contract, that set the coverage in effect at that moment.

→ Robin Beeby was appointed by Bill McLeod, our President, to be our new United Kingdom Liaison for the 303rd Bomb Group Association, and to be made a Honorary Member of the Association. Both appointments were overwhelmingly approved by the Board. The Secretary will advise the 8th Air Force Historical Society of this new appointment.

→ William S. Phillips, an Aviation Artist, was named as a Honorary Member of the Association, at the suggestion of Walt Mayer, and was approved by the Board. The Secretary will prepare the necessary correspondence, to advise Mr. Phillips of his selection.

→ Hal Susskind moved that Mr. Uwe Benkel, the German citizen, who discovered the aircraft wreckage of Lt. Barrat and his crew, be named an Honorary Member. Hal pointed out the reasons for his motion, that Mr. Benkel was instru-

mental in getting the German town to construct the memorial to this crew. The motion was seconded and approved.

→ Robin Beeby will discuss with Keith Hill, the famed English Aviation Artist, as to whether he would be interested in being commissioned to do some art work which will honor our "Ground Support Personnel?". He will advise the incoming President of his discussions with Keith.

→ Bill McLeod asked for a motion that approved the concept of commissioning artists to do this kind of art. The motion was made, seconded, and approved. He asked that Hal Susskind chair a committee, with Walt Mayer, Eddie Deerfield and Bill McLeod, as members. They will make recommendations on the type and subject matter of the "art work" to be commissioned, and report back to the Executive Committee.

→ Harry Gobrecht offered a motion that the patches for the 303rd and Squadrons, as contained in the *Might in Flight History Book*, be made official. The motion was seconded and approved.

→ Lou Lyle thanked the 303rd and its members for their support of the Heritage Center. He has already received \$89,000.00 and had additional pledges up to \$139,000.00.

→ Following considerable discussion about members that were seeking recognition that may have dropped between the cracks, at Molesworth, Jack Rencher suggested that we select materials and documentation on those members of the 303rd who bring forth claims of bravery, etc. That many are deserving of awards, recognition and special decorations, but have been denied, or by-passed for some reasons.

→ Bill McLeod suggested that we should have a "Recognition and Awards Committee" to consider instances where members should be recognized. He asked for volunteers...for which Ed Miller, Hal Susskind, Walt Mayer and Bill McLeod volunteered. They would serve at the discretion of the President.

→ President McLeod closed the Board Meeting at 1:20 P.M. with a sincere "Thank you" to all the Board Members and Committee Chairman, for their help, advice and assistance during his term as President.

Edgar C. Miller, Secretary
303rd Bomb Group Association, Inc.

A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE 303RD BOMB GROUP (HD) ASSOCIATION March 30, 1994 Old Fort Jackson Savannah, Georgia 1800 Hours

Invocation

The Invocation written by Chaplain Slawson was delivered by Rev. Charles Rice:

Let us pray. Fifty years ago the 303rd Bomb Group was engaged in a conflict to defeat aggression. The victory was not without a great cost in life and health. We who remain gather today, in person or in spirit, to pay tribute to our comrades who have gone before us. We remember them with love, honor and eternal gratitude for their service and sacrifice. **Amen.**

Rev. Rice, also an Association Chaplain added the following:

We remember before thee, O Lord, all those veterans for whom the trumpets have sounded on the other side. Vouchsafe that they being cleansed from their sins, serve thee peacefully in thy heavenly kingdom. Their sacrifices helped to establish the freedom for which they died. May their great example be a consolation to those who mourn their loss.

We pray that thy sustaining love may ever surround them, and us, in the ever continuing faith that none of us may fall without thy knowledge and redeeming grace. **Amen.**

Eulogy

William C. Heller

This Eulogy was written by our own Mel Schulstad. He is unable to attend due to unavoidable personal commitments. I offered to deliver it in his stead. Therefore, I ask your indulgence if I must refer to the text more often than would our beloved Mel.

"A Time for Remembrance"

Honored Guests...Ladies and Gentlemen...Members of the 303rd "Hell's Angels" Bomb Group....Dear Families and Friends.

I am honored to have the privilege to come before you this day to offer this eulogy to honor the memory of...and to pay honorable tribute to ...those of our fellow airmen who gave their lives for our Country while serving with the 303rd Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force at Molesworth in England.

Here...today...as in Boise in 1992...we are again gathered at an historic place. At Boise...in 1992...we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the formation of our 303rd Bomb Group...there...at Gowen Field, in 1942. For us an historic event at an historic place.

Here...today...we are gathered in Old Fort Jackson, whose military records reach back into American History to the War of 1812...when American patriots were called here to defend our fledgling country against foreign invaders.

Here ...today...in this beautiful gracious historic City of Savannah, Georgia, we are in the place where history records the formation and activation of the Eighth Air Force...our parent Air Force...in January of 1942, a scant month after our country was attacked by surprise by a foreign power.

That Air Force...the mighty Eighth Air Force became the most formidable air armada, in the history of man...ever to go to war.

And the men we honor today were the **heart**...the **soul**...and the **strength** of that **Mighty Eighth!**

They were the men who gave to the Eighth its distinguished combat record of which we are all so justly proud!

They were the men, who with their fellow airmen, fought and won the greatest air war ever fought...There, in the skies over Europe from September of 1942 until a vanquished enemy surrendered unconditionally in May of 1945.

And now, Savannah...this gracious and noble city has welcomed to its hospitality heart...the Eighth Air Force Heritage Center...itself an inspiring and splendid memorial to our valiant dead.

Here...today...this place is indeed a fitting and proper place to come for this...A time of remembrance.

One thousand eight hundred airmen from our beloved 303rd "Hell's

Angels" Bomb Group gave their lives for our country, while serving from their Molesworth, England base. Many of them were husbands, brothers and fathers... and even grandfathers...of we, the living, gathered here today. With some...we became close friends and comrades. Others we got to know only as acquaintances as our combat losses mounted. And some...we never really got to know at all because their time with us was so short...a few missions...for some...and only one mission for others...and they were gone.

But they all gave their lives for the same great cause. The same cause for which their forefathers came to America, seeking Liberty and Justice and Freedom from tyranny. These are the Hallmarks of our America which each succeeding generation has had to preserve and defend, regardless of the cost in treasure, blood and lives.

And so it was for the preservation of America, for the preservation of our country, that they gave their lives. And deep in their hearts, **they knew and they understood that duty and obligation**...every time they lifted their thunderous B-17s off the runways of Molesworth into the unknown...of the combat skies.

When our 303rd "Hell's Angels" airmen gave their lives for their Nation and their posterity, they put their full faith and trust in us, to carry out for them...and in their names, the obligations, the burdens and the duty of sustaining and preserving our beloved America. **In this we must not fail them!**

Here... today...Let us be uplifted by their spirit of sacrifice, take strength from their courage...and renew...in their memory, our resolve to uphold those principles for which they fought and died.

And...as did they...let us pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor to our Country...one Nation under God...our Blessed United States of America.

Because we have received so many requests to do so, we will conclude our **Time For Remembrance** here today with the reading of a poem, "The Straggler" sent to us by Mrs Alex Czarny, who found it among his things after Alex died. The author of this poem is unknown but he knew whereof he wrote, because this poignant poem captures the fatal essence of Combat in the Air and of the heroic and noble spirit of the men we honor here today.

THE STRAGGLER

I saw a Fort knocked out of its Group
On fire and in despair
With Nazi fighters surrounding her,
As she flew alone back there.

The Messerschmitts came barreling thru,
throwing a hail of lead
At the crippled Fort that wouldn't quit
though two of its engines were dead.

But a couple of props kept straining away
And her guns were blazing too
as she stayed in the air in the hell back there
And fought like Fortresses do.

Four times a fighter belched fire and smoke
four times a fighter went down
and the Fortress kept on winging home
and the nerve of the crew stayed sound.

But time after time, the fighters came
and attacked the lagging plane
I knew she couldn't last for long
and my heart was touched with pain

But gunners fought a bitter fight
but now the guns were still
and a fighter, seeing the time was ripe
came in for the kill

A stream of lead ripped into a tank
and the Fort exploded in two,
and somewhere the Angels prepared a place
for a weary Fortress crew!

Benediction/Blessing of the Mess

Father Bernard Schumacher



"A Time fo Remembrance," Fort Jackson

Deceased Members Since the Boise Reunion

Robert App (360)	Howard Nardine (360)
Charles Box (358)	Sidney Newby (427)
Robert Chisholm (427)	Charles Patterson (360)
Harry Cook (358)	George Proper (427)
William Flesh (427)	William Rein (360)
Norment Foley (360)	Robert Retzlaff (427)
Clarence Fountain (358)	Eugene Romig (3549)
Lawrence Friedland (427)	Reinaldo Saiz (360)
Roland Gilcrease (359)	Elmer Schmidt (427)
Ralph Hayes (360)	William Schultz (HDQ)
Grover Henderson (427)	Russell Seaton (359)
Benjamin Hope (360)	Carlos Silva (359)
William Humphrey (359)	Earl Steele (353)
Felix Jara (359)	Harry Steinmetz (358)
James Kearney (358)	Jimmy Stewart (427)
Paul Long (360)	John Tulloss (359)
Edward Lovelock (359)	Robert Vastine (359)
David Matthews (358)	Jack Watson (358)
Robert Miller (358)	Robert Wentz (359)
Raymond Moessner (359)	James Whitaker (427)
Robert Moreman (359)	



Jim Taylor, Ed Jackson, Walt and Bev Mayer

Nineteen forty one was a momentous year for all of us who are veterans of WW II—if you were not yet in uniform, destiny had one waiting for you.

On June 21st of that year, Hitler launched a massive attack, using four million men, against the Soviet Union, confident that his elite synchronized forces would conquer the core of that big nation within four or five months. Three years later on that date the German Air Force would strike a crippling blow against 8th Air Force bombers parked on a Russian air field.

In the early months of 1944 with the Allied air armadas raiding targets on the continent day and night, Bomber Command activated a plan (frantic) to give the heavy bomber groups a longer reach.

About 250 – 8th Air Force personnel were assigned to establish three bases, one for bombers, two for fighter escorts, in the USSR. Approximately 30 of these men were from the 303rd Bomber Group. From the 427th Squadron came Sgts. C. M. Childers, Flannery, McKay, O'Brian and the writer, while the only name from other squadrons I can recall was Sgt. Joe Worthington of the 359th.

After a few days of briefing and orientation, the journey began with a takeoff from an air field on Lands End in southwest England. An overnight flight put us in Casablanca (lots of oranges and fresh eggs) and from there we proceeded to Teheran, Iran where we were detained for several weeks due to rains that kept the landing strips at our destination too mucky.

Finally the orders came to depart and we flew north between the rugged peaks of the Caucasus in a C-47, then out over the plains of the Ukraine where every village and town had been the scene of savage battles by the German and Russian armies not many months before. Our destination was the town of Poltava located about 100 miles southwest of the city of Karkov on a branch of the Dnieper River. Prior to the war it may have had a population of 15,000, most of whom fled the German advance.

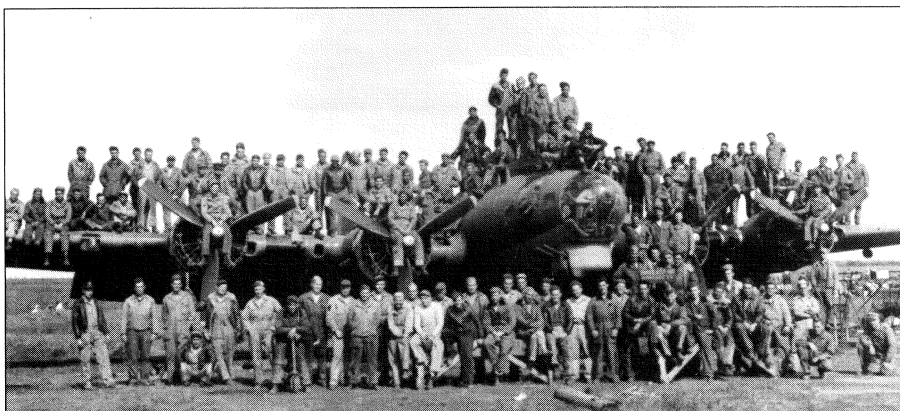
The runway was steel mats on a gravel base. Only a part of one building of pre-war vintage was standing on the base; the see-saw land battles had demolished all others. This was to be the bomber base. A half-hour flight to the west at the villages of Meergarad and Pereotin were the bases to accommodate the escort planes.

Preparations were started at once to welcome the arrival of flights from England and Italy. It was June 4, however, before the first shuttle flight arrived —about 60 B-17's from Italy led by the C.O. of the 15th Air Force. Avril Harriman, U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, came down for the occasion. The mission had been a success; no bombers were lost. Two days later, refueled and reloaded, the flyers from the 15th returned, via the day's target, to their home bases.

During the following two weeks, several more missions from the 15th and 8th Air Force's struck their targets in eastern Germany and Romania, then flew the short distance to Poltava rather than the longer, more dangerous journey back to home base. With the three USSR bases functioning, all the strategic Axis targets were within range of the B-17's and B-24's.

But on June 21st, 75 B-17's from the 8th Air Force, 3rd Division, arrived about 18:00. All the

The Poltava Incident



Poltava maintenance crew with one of the resurrected aircraft in August 1944.

planes had landed and were parked when the perimeter ack-ack batteries opened fire. High over the west end of the field a small plane made a U-turn and headed west. We did not suspect that it was a Luftwaffe recon aircraft that had followed the bombers to our base. Some five hours later after darkness had settled in, a sergeant from the communications unit dashed about the tent area blowing a whistle and announcing that unidentified aircraft were approaching. The message had been sent from the fighter support base at Meergarad.

Many 303rd members will recall that during our first few months at Molesworth in 1942 there were frequent air raid alerts (enemy aircraft approaching) causing all barracks dwellers to check the blackout curtains. So some of us "old timers," being callused to air alerts, did not respond immediately to the alert signal that night at Poltava.

Within a few minutes, though, when three chandelier flares lit up the field, we knew something big was on. A railroad ran parallel to our tent area and a quick sprint took us that far before the first bomb went off. It was a very vulnerable place to be for the next 90 minutes. In a short time bombs were falling rapidly and the Russian ack-ack gunners were firing staccato. Flames were soon rising from the plane parking area as 100-pound bombs, incendiaries and anti-personnel clusters "rained" down on the field. Within a half hour, the ack-ack ceased firing (they had depleted their ammo), then the Luftwaffe planes could be heard diving at targets probably firing incendiaries. We who lay there in the ditch fully expected bombs to start falling on the railroad cars or the tent area.

The raid went on for an hour or more while we huddled under our helmets. The glow of fires on the field increased as the light of the flares dimmed. Finally the firing and bomb bursts ceased as the Luftwaffe dropped the last of their explosives.

An eerie glow of colored flames rose from the plane parking area. With the dawn a very sad sight greeted us. Some planes were almost completely destroyed; most had serious damage—wings, stabilizers, or fuselages burned. Only six of the 75 planes escaped with minor damage. It

was one of the most devastating blows inflicted on any U.S. airdrome.

The following night the Luftwaffe made a visit to the fighter plane bases, but found no targets as all planes had been dispersed to other stations. The air crews from the bombers that were flyable returned to England via Teheran and Africa; the others were taken to home base by Air Transport.

For the next four months, the crew chiefs devoted their time to salvaging whatever was usable from the carnage—instruments, tires, engines, etc. We also reconstructed several planes, replacing wing sections, stabilizers, jobs usually done at an air depot. Initially each crew chief had been assigned three Russian helpers, two of whom were soldiers recuperating from battle wounds, plus one young man, 15 or 16, trained in aircraft maintenance. They were a jovial group despite the agony they had known, and taught us a great deal about their army and language. Most of them had no information as to what had befallen their families since the German invasion.

In August a flight of B-17's arrived after dropping supplies and weapons for the citizens of Warsaw who were revolting against their German captors. Summer passed quickly. By October 1944 our salvage operation was mostly complete. A tinge of the coming winter was in the air as we prepared to leave for the trip back to England. A skeleton crew was retained at Poltava to provide service for those crippled bombers of future missions needing a sanctuary.

Although the Luftwaffe raid on Poltava severely interrupted our function in the USSR, our bases there drew some of the German air power away from the western front, thus weakening their defenses at the time of the landings at Normandy.

If you ever go to the Smithsonian Institution, look for a plaque in the WW II aircraft section regarding the Luftwaffe raid on Poltava.

**Paul Winkleman, 427th Squadron
North 8720 Bruce Road, Spokane, WA 99207**

Possibly there may be others of the 303rd BG who participated in the shuttle operation that can add relevant material to this article.



When Your Aircraft Loses its Wings It's Time to Pray

by Leslie Black

On page 472 of Harry Gobrecht's excellent *Daily Diary of the 303rd Bomb Group* I was reading about the June 29, 1944, mission #194 to Heiterblick, Germany near Leipzig when the following paragraph caught my eye:

"Fortress #42-38051, 'My Yorkshire Dream,' crashed. it Was flying the No. 5 position, low squadron, lead group of the 41 CBW-B. Just before 'bombs away,' it received a direct flak hit at the waist windows. It broke in two, immediately went straight down, and blew up when reaching a lower altitude. No parachutes were seen. The MIA crewmen were:

1Lt. A.K. Roy	P	KIA
2Lt R.E. Quint	CP	KIA
2Lt H.E. Rafferty	N	KIA
1LT L.E. Weiss	B	KIA
Sgt L.C. Cook	E	KIA

S/Sgt G.H. Johnson	RAD	KIA
Sgt L.K. Black	BTG	POW
Sgt C.K. ON	WG	KIA
Sgt O.F. Kahnert, Jr.	TG	KIA

In quite a few cases, crews that dropped out of the formation and were reported simply as "missing in action" and written off by the authorities, surfaced after the close of hostilities, with unusual stories which uncovered acts of heroism that were never publicized or rewarded. Here is another prime example of what I have been talking about.

Of all the stories I have heard from other gunners and crew members, I have never heard one story even close to the way I became a guest of Nazi

Germany. It seems impossible and I get pretty upset even these days when I think about it.

On June 29, 1944, we were awakened at an unusual hour — 02:00. We ate breakfast and made ready for our mission for the day. With a full bomb load we took off for Germany. I test fire my twin "50" machine gun over the English Channel. They worked perfectly; but, ironically, I would never use them again.

It was an overcast sky and the weather did not clear up until we reached the French coastline. It was then the sky turned crystal clear, a good day for bombing and a better day for anti-aircraft fire. We were flying the "purple corner" at 24,000 feet. As we approached the Initial Point (I.P.), I could hear the heavy concentration of the flak and I prayed that after we got through the flak that the German fighter planes were not waiting for us after "bombs away." The bombay doors were opened and we were on our way to the target. It happened! We were hit hard. It felt like someone had hit me with a baseball bat from all directions. I just knew I was going to die. I was still in the ball turret. I came up out of the ball turret to find that the plane had been blown apart into three sections. I was in the section of the fuselage that had been blown apart at the rear of the radio room right before you get to the ball turret and right behind the waist door. The tail section was blown off completely just aft of the waist door. I saw the tail section but not the front part of the aircraft.

The fuselage was falling level but a rotating motion had developed. My parachute had slid to the tail section and the only obstacle between the gaping hole in the rear, where the tail gunner had been and my parachute wound up, was a

four inch high step. This step held my parachute in the plane. I knew if I could reach my parachute and get at least one hook snapped, I would have it made. My greatest concern was that I would upset the balance of the fuselage and find myself in mid-air without a parachute. I succeeded in getting to my parachute without upsetting the balance of the fuselage, as I hooked up and bailed out from the waist door. I made a free fall gliding away from my would-be coffin, the fuselage. I saw the fuselage below me and to my left. It was then I pulled the ripcord.

My descent was quiet. My prayers of thanks were the only sounds I could hear. A streaming parachute passed by me. I could see it was Charlie, my waist gunner. His chute had failed to open; my prayers became more intense but now the prayers were mostly for Charlie. To my right was an opened parachute. I found out later that it was my bombardier, Lt. Weiss. I saw him shortly after I landed. His left foot had been blown off just above the ankle. The Germans did nothing to stop the bleeding despite my frantic efforts to get them to administer medication and first aid. His Jewish features did him in, he died that evening. I then became the only survivor.

I landed between two anti-aircraft emplacements and was captured immediately. I was very fortunate in that respect because the civilians were headed toward me with pitchforks, hoes, rakes and guns, both on foot and on bicycles. My crewcut and blond hair saved me from being hung or shot or both. The German soldiers protected me from the mob. The German soldiers confiscated my wristwatch and other valuables. I was put on a truck that had the remains of our gear from the wreckage of our aircraft. The Germans took me to a small village

near Leipzig. The next morning I was taken to Frankfurt-on-Main for interrogation. They took my shoes and then put me in solitary confinement. I heard a lot of gunfire, just several rounds at a time and I began to wonder if I would ever see home again. A lot of things raced through my mind, were those shots, "the final solution"? "

A well dressed German officer came into my cell and motioned me to follow him and he led me to his office for more questioning. As so many times before at these interrogations, I only gave him my name, rank and serial number. This angered him and he began screaming at me and threatened to turn me over to the Gestapo. I knew then what those gunshots I heard earlier meant. The final solution for me was to be processed as a prisoner of war. I was issued one letter and one postcard form to write home. This is the only time I got to write home for the entire time I was a prisoner of war. I was issued a fork, spoon and a bowl. I often wondered why I was issued a bowl, I never had anything to put in it until I reached Stalag Luft IV.

Our barracks leader at Stalag Luft IV was Dave Garroway. I don't remember for sure, but he sure did look like Dave Garroway on the television show "Today." I found out just a few years ago that Dave Garroway was a P.O.W. He would give us what he called the "Red Star" news once a month.

Feb. 6, 1945 — The Death March!

I will never forget this date as the Germans moved our entire compound out at one time. They marched us to an outside warehouse and issued each man a full

Continued on page 12

Red Cross parcel. I do not remember getting that much food again during the entire march. We were soon on the road again heading West away from the Russians. The Germans set up machine guns along the road. The guards had sub-machine guns and the most vicious of the German police and Doberman dogs from their stock. These dogs were trained to kill.

It is difficult to describe misery, but if you went through it and survived, you sure as hell will remember what it is. I went three days without a drink of water and another time I only had a handful of raw wheat to last me for a day and a half. We marched six abreast for the first day. There were prisoners of war in front of us as far as we could see. That night we were split into small groups. The next day was not quite as bad as far as marching.

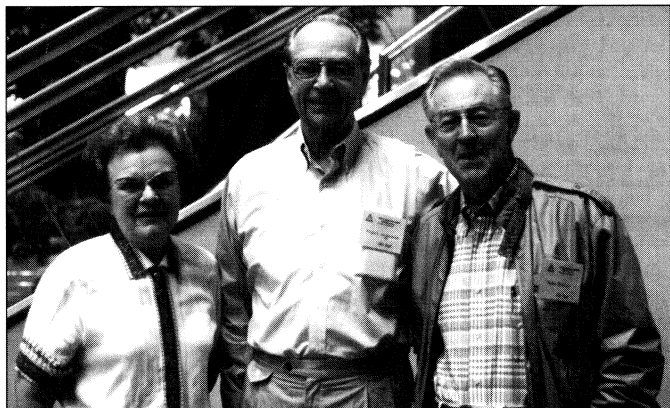
Dysentery and diarrhea prevailed and will forever be remembered as just one of our many miseries. Many of the barns we slept in were full to the rafters with straw. Some of the P.O.W.s would relieve themselves in the straw, nor realizing other P.O.W.s were beneath them. A lot of yelling and shouting fol-

lowed, but the damage was done. Another one of our miseries, and one of the saddest moments, was when one of the many small wagons would pass by us with some of the P.O.W.s feet sticking out. This was very hard on our morale. Was this to be our fate also?

I was liberated by the British on May 2, 1945 around Gubdow, Germany. I was flown to Brussels, Belgium, and finally went by train to Camp Lucky Strike, Le Havre, France. I went to London for two weeks and I left England on the "SS Argentina" from Southampton. We reached Newport News, Virginia, June 29, 1945. I never had a physical examination of any kind and no one asked any questions about my health. No wonder we Ex-P.O.W.s are having such a difficult time getting service connected disabilities from the Veteran's Administration.

→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → →

This unusual story was forwarded to me by LLOYD Dee Hester also from the 427th Sqdn. who was a Pall Bearer at Leslie Black's funeral in 1991.



Happy faces at the Savannah Reunion

Forum

INFO WANTED

I am writing to you in the hope that one of your 303rd Bombardment Group Association members may be able to help me regarding the loss of one of your Group aircraft which crashed near Bala, North Wales, on August 4, 1943.

The aircraft involved, a B-17F, serial #42-3124, letters GN-N, of the 427th Sqdn., 303rd BG, was on a "night cross country hop" from Molesworth, when it flew into the western side of the summit of Aarenig Fawr, a 2,800 ft. mountain near Bala. 1st Lt. James N. Pratt and his crew were instantly killed. The full crew were as follows:

1st Lt. James N. Pratt, Boise, Idaho
2nd Lt. Allan N. Boner, Tinley Park, Illinois
2nd Lt. William A. Bowling, Covington, Kentucky
T/Sgt. Frederic J. Royar, Queens Village, New York
S/Sgt. Walter J. Johnson, Payette, Ohio

Sgt. Walter B. Robinson, Sacramento, California

Sgt. Phillip Simonte, Highland Park, Michigan

Pfc. Alfred B. Van Dyke, Brookville, Penn.

A memorial plaque was erected on the summit soon after, and I enclose photographs of this, taken a few weeks ago - these may be of interest to you.

The aircraft itself was assigned to the 427th Sqdn. on June 2, 1943, the same date as another 427th aircraft 42-3158, GN-Y, named "Max." At the time of the accident, I believe, the squadron was standing down following "Blitz Week."

I would therefore, be very interested to hear from anyone who remembers the crew involved, the aircraft, any nickname carried on the aircraft, and, especially the whereabouts of any photographs of the aircraft and crew. I would also like to trace the whereabouts of (then) Major Glen Hagenbuch, who, I believe was the CO of the 427th at that time, and who flew a B-17 to RAF Llanbedr, a small airfield on the Welsh Coast, on the 4th of August and proceeded by car to view the crash site.

Ian Evans
Creigle, Craig-Y-Fron
Bala, Gwynedd
LL23 7UW
North Wales, Great Britain

Ed. Note: Harry Gobrecht in his reply informed Mr. Evans That Major Hagenbuch was killed during the war flying a P-40. Lt. Bierman, S/Sgt G.W. Allen, S/Sgt. J.J. Schuerer, S/Sgt. R.R. Humphrey and Sgt. S. Schilling who were regular members of Pratt's crew were not on the cross country flight nor are they members of the Association. A photo of the plaque is on page 225 of "Might in Flight."

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS IN SAVANNAH

We had 11 Associate members present at the reunion in Savannah. We all enjoyed spending time with the regular members. They all have interesting stories to tell and most are willing to tell them.

We had another successful meeting. Charlie Sykes was elected by those present to be the representative to the 303rd BGA Board of Directors and approval was given by the board. At that time, we had a 132 Associate members with a few in arrears on their dues. The 303rd membership chairman, Carlton Smith, will be deleting these members from the roster in May. Please send those dues in, we need to keep the Associate Membership going.

At the request of the board, Charlie and Vicki are going to oversee the PX for the Colorado Springs reunion, September 12-17, 1995. Again we are turning to you, the Associate members for help with this endeavor. If you have any experience with this type of operation, please contact us:

Charlie & Vicki Sykes
16281 N. 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85023-3008
(602) 993-8015

.....

ATTENTION!

No doubt they are going to raise the **postal rates** on us once again. This will mean at least \$200 to \$300 a year more that we will have to spend just to mail out membership cards and to reply to queries.

Please help us keep the unwanted expenses to a minimum. For future mailings please remember that Carlton Smith is the Membership Chairman and also the Roster Manager. Please send all: Dues payments, death notices, address changes, donations/memorials and membership applications to Carlton at:

12700 Red Maple Circle #54
Sonora, CA 95370-5269

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

At press time for this column there were still 78 unpaid 1994 dues. NOTE: This does not include widows. Our widows are not required to pay dues at any time. Please check your membership card for an expiration date. If you can't find your card, check the mailing label on this Newsletter. The line above your name shows 1) your membership number 2) your dues code; 3) your squadron designation. If your dues code contains a "3", your 1994 dues have not been paid. If we don't hear from you shortly, this may be your last Newsletter.

It has come to my attention through letters and phone conversations that some members do not realize that the 303-GA is not the same organization as the 8th Air Force Historical Society. They are sending dues to the 8th thinking it also covers the 303rd. We are two separate outfits and if you are a member of both, you'll need to pay two separate dues. Please check your records.

While at the Savannah Reunion we collected almost \$800 in back dues and new memberships. We also received the services of 14 volunteers to help me contact our inactive members in an effort to get them back into the family. These very much appreciated volunteers will contact the inactive in their home state and we are already seeing results. So far Jim Geiger has covered Montana, Gene McCutcheon has done it in Arizona and Neil Bech sent letters to all those in northern California. We are indebted to these members who demonstrated their tangible support of our organization.

The 1993-1994 Directory has now been in use for several months and becomes more outdated every day. Unfortunately, we cannot keep up with all the changes on a daily basis and we cannot afford to publish a new Directory more often than every three years or so. However, remember that your Newsletters are showing the changes on a quarterly basis. The following lists and those of previous Newsletters should be used as a supplement to your Directory. These following lists are current as of 1 May 1994.

CARLTON M. SMITH
12700 Red Maple Circle #54
Sonora, CA 95370-5269
209-533-4033

NEW MEMBERS

- A-220 Meqqin A. Monvette, Luneburger Strasse, 21614 Buxtehude, Germany
- 1822 Joseph F. Bauer, 3023 Shore Rd., Ocean View, NJ 08230 (Sqdn?)
- L1823 Kenneth W. Davey, 4008 Mt. Springs, Tampa, FL 33624-1824 (HDQ)
- 1824 Joseph C. Haider, 3840 Belcroft Dr., Florissant, MO 63034 (358)
- 1825 John L. Holloway, 6005 Brenner Dr., Jackson, MS 39211-2801 (360)
- A-221 J. David Spohn, P O Box 1864, Jonesboro, GA 30236
- 1826 Warren N. Linville, 217 W. North, Broadus, MT 59317 (Sqdn?)
- 1827 James E. Eubanks, 9 Pine Burr Dr., Kennesaw, GA 30144 (358)
- 1828 Robert E. Greene, 430 SE 3rd Place, Dania, FL 33004 (358)
- L1829 William J. Yepes, 89-38 187th St., Jamaica, NY 11423 (Sqdn?)
- 1830 James D. Mickle, Woodsedge Dr. D2, Harleyville, PA 19438 (359)
- L1831 Alan D. Chesney, P O Box 5521, Beverly Farms, MA 01915 (358)
- L1832 William L. Rohner, 10000 Laurelwood Dr., Tucson, AZ 85737-7953
- (427)
- 1833 Walter L. Lacy, 8449 Marys Creek Dr., Fort Worth, TX 76116
- (427)
- 1834 John J. Nicastro, Jr, 8303 Stone Rd., Independence, OH 44131 (358)
- 1835 Woodley O. Butler, Jr, 2248A Via Mariposa E, Laquna Hills, CA 92653-2179 (358)
- 1836 John J. Mulqueen, 461 N. Fulton Ave., Lindenhurst, NY 117573444 (360)
- A-222 Eric Swain, 24 Waddington Way, Upper Norwood SE19 3XJ, England
- LA-223 Robert A. Grimm, 1389 Ashbrook Dr., Lawrenceville, GA 30243
- A-224 Bernice S. Capasso, 1531 SE 25th St., Condo D, Ocala, FL 34471
- L1837 Raymond W. Lary, Rt 1, Box 388, DeSoto, WI 54624 (358)
- L1838 Oliver B. Larson, 10559 Hunters Way, Laurel, MD 20723-5723 (358)
- 1839 Matthew N. Polo, 26 Forest Ave., Greenfield, MA 01301 (360)

- 1840 Carroll W. Jacobs, 1004 Kewin Rd., Knoxville, TN 37923 (427)
- 1841 Edwin Munn, 1405 82nd Ave., #210, Vero Beach, FL 32966 (359)
- LA-225 James Miller, 10222 Gray Eagle Dr., Orlando, FL 32821
- LA-226 David Miller, 13640 Norton Ave., Chino, CA 92740
- 1842 Wallace Brown, 10419 Londonderry, Houston, TX 77043-3219 (360)
- 1843 George Hiebeler, 20105 McShepard Rd., Georgetown, TX 7862 (360)
- 1844 Raymond Kasper, 849 Park Ave., Whitefish, MT 59937 (Sqdn?)
- 1845 Stanley Mikulich, 1223 Airbrake Ave., Turtle Creek, PA 15145 (Sqdn?)
- 1846 William W. Gray, Jr, 2090 Holman Way, Sparks, NV 89431 (Sqdn?)
- L1847 Thomas A. Duncan, 710 E 23rd Ave., Spokane, WA 99203-3325 (427)
- 1848 Kenneth G. Hildebrand, 968 Carlisle Ave., Columbus, OH 43224 (358)
- L1849 James Ross, 2439 Western Ave., Waukegan, IL 60087 (360)
- L1850 Joseph C. Sassone, 32932 Barque Way, Dana Point, CA 92629 (359)
- H-06 Robin J. Beeby, 40 St Catherine's Rd., Kettering, Northants NN8 5EN England
- H-07 William S. Phillips, 923 Garden Way, Ashland, OR 97520
- H-08 Uwe Bankel, 86 SS, PSC 01, Box 1805, APO AE, 09009
- A-227 James R. Briarton, 5270 Del Paz Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80918
- A-228 Roger Craven, 6102 Winnebago St., Grove City, OH 42123
- A-229 Edith Jobe, P O Box 9916, Truckee, CA 96162
- A-230 Susan R. Taylor, 2895 Pennyroyal Dr., Chico, CA 95928
- LA-231 Virginia Kelley, 3012 N. Trinidad St., Arlington, VA 22213
- LA-232 Michael J. Kelley, 12811 Teaberry Rd., Silver Spring, MD 20906

UPGRADE TO LIFE OR SUPER LIFE MEMBERSHIP

- S835 Ray Alexander (359)
- L1800 Thomas J. Amici (427)
- L1318 George W. Ashworth (427)
- L1245 Cliff O. Bachman (360)
- S1203 Bill Beasley (359)
- L1794 Rollin J. Bender (358)
- L497 Thelbert W. Butler (359)
- L1596 Frank J. Caporusso (358)
- L1433 William D. Cargil (359)
- L307 Edward K. Carter (359)
- L1510 Clyde J. Cottle, Jr (427)
- L1374 John DeSousa (359)
- S182 Clyde L. DeWald
- L1476 Frank Doherty (HDQ)
- L867 Myron Elling (427)
- L1586 Jack B. Fawcett (360)
- L1679 Harold Fulghum (HDQ)
- L717 Charles R. Grice (427)
- L1432 Thomas R. Griffith (427)
- L1127 Robert H. Hitchcock (427)
- S1778 Charles P. Johnson (358)
- L1286 Willard R. LaPlant (427)
- S1481 Charles W. Latta (427)
- LA-152 James M. McCoy
- L1371 James E. McNutt (360)
- L1032 Ralph E. Page (427)
- L938 Henry Pratten (1114)
- L147 Jack G. Rolfson (427)
- L315 Samuel R. Sapienza (359)
- L1464 Harry A. Schwaebie (358)
- L183 Robert W. Sheets (427)
- L174 Lawrence W. Tichenor (427)
- LA-153 Brandon Voz
- LA-142 Elmer W. Wilson, Jr

DONATIONS/MEMORIALS

- L1530 James E. Aberdeen (358)
- Widow Mrs Adeline Czarny Adams - Two

Sibley M. Andriessen (427)
 A-103 Martin Ashley
 Widow Mrs Dorothy Ashlock
 L713 Francis H. Ayers (427)
 Widow Mrs Melicent M. Bailey
 L401 Mr E. Baldwin (358)
 Joseph G. Barrat
 L1804 Herb Bauer (360)
 A-125 Robert C. Bejna
 L1627 Robert C. Boqert (Sqdn?)
 S377 George V. Broderick (359)
 L128 Curtis Brooke (358)
 Widow Mrs Dorothy W. Brown - Memorial to Howard T. Brown
 L497 Thelbert Butler (359)
 Widow Mrs Virginia Calhoun - Memorial to William R. Calhoun
 L335 Robert C. Campbell
 Widow Mrs Ruth Cannon - Memorial to Harley Cannon
 L1596 Frank J. Caporusso (358) - Two
 L407 Anthony J. Cecchini (360)
 L1621 Jimmie W. Clark (444)
 L1771 Wayne Cope (358)
 L1422 George H. Counts, Jr (359)
 Widow Mrs Eva Cozzo - Memorial to Lawrence Coz20
 5178 Charles A. Dando (359)
 L1823 Kenneth W. Davey (HDQ)
 S990 Frank C. DeCicco (427)
 L1491 Raymond A. Espinoza (444) - Memorial to Frank Intersimone and
 Carino Colenchecco
 Widow Mrs Rosalie Ferris
 S1194 Philip G. Fleming (360)
 5543 John W. Ford (359) - Memorial to Russell D. Seaton
 L140 William C. Fort, Jr (358)
 Widow Mrs Dorothy Friedland (427) - Memorial to Lawrence Freidland
 L1679 Harold Fulghum (HDQ)
 L1741 Frank O. Garrett (427)
 Widow Mrs. Katherine Garriott - Memorial to John Garriott
 S087 Edward J. Giering (427)
 L888 Dwight W. Gonser (359)
 L717 Charles R. Grice (427)
 H-05 Susan D. Hamilton
 Widow Mrs Catherine W. Haynes - Memorial to Charles Haynes
 L169 Willard L. Heckman (359)
 LA-175 James L. Herring
 L1364 Alfred K. Hollitt (427) - Memorial to our Deceased Comrades
 Widow Mrs. Jean Hullar - Memorial to Robert J. Hullar
 Widow Mrs Rosa Jacobs - Memorial to Michael T. Jacobs
 5152 John I. Jenkins (427)
 L1123 Walter N. Jones (359)
 LA-79 Franklin R. Joy - Two
 Widow Mrs Frances M. Kasik (358)
 Widow Mrs Kathleen D. Keely
 L1515 Clarence Kelley (1681)
 L470 Conrad J. Kersch (427)
 Widow Mrs Sarah G. Kindig- Memorial to Paul B. Kindig
 L1701 Matt Kremer (358)
 L078 Harold Lanigan (358) - Memorial to our Deceased Comrades
 L1418 Ray T. Leal (427)
 L819 Mike Levin (360) - Memorial to Doal (Red) Yocum
 A-193 Patricia O. Little
 L1375 Robert B. Lubbers (427) - Memorial to the Cureton crew
 L372 Andrew P. Lynch (HDQ)
 L300 LeRoy Mace (359)
 L914 Jack R. Magee (360)
 557 Verle Maxewell (358)
 Widow Mrs Mary McConaghy - Memorial to Leo R. McConaghy
 1030 Leo R. Meichtry (S~dn?)
 995 H. Cecil Miller, Jr (360)
 L1380 Robert C. Mitchell (359)
 Family of Raymond J. Moessner - Memorial to Raymond J. Moessner
 L1401 Joseph R. Monyok (427)
 S476 Alvin L. Morton (359) - Memorial to Russell D. Seaton
 S692 James Mussi (427)

L852 John F. Newman (359)
 L037 Norbert Noah (427)
 1045 John J. O'Donnell (360)
 L1583 Maurice E. Oqborn (359)
 L1750 Art Pentz (359)
 L1725 David W. Plewes (359)
 L938 Henry Pratten (1114)
 Widow Mrs Glenna Prussman - Memorial to Henry G. Prussman
 S604 Louis H. Redhage (359)
 L454 George Redhead (358)
 492 B.B. Reese (359)
 1458 Rudolph T. Rendon (1199)
 L809 Milton S. Riley
 S1121 Charles S. Schmeltzer (358)
 S645 Milo R. Schultz (360)
 1464 Harry Schwaeb (358)
 S1762 Robert B. Smith (360)
 L360 Harley D. Snider (358)
 Widow Mrs Hildreth Stewart - Memorial to Jimmy Stewart
 S890 Vernon Stone (427)
 S814 Jonathan S. Swift (358)
 A-129 Vicki C. Sykes - Memorial to David Miller
 A-135 Charles R. Sykes
 A-184 Ken Tashian
 L174 Lawrence W. Tichenor (427)
 L871 Richard E. Wakefield (427)
 Widow Mrs Virginia Wentz
 S1092 Robert E. Wherry (360)
 1774 Otis M. White (359)
 1594 Rowland C. Witters (427)
 A-121 Jack D. Woodul
 L1829 William J. Yepes (Sqdn?)

ADDRESS CHANGES

1102 Ben Aqrifoqlio, 19234 E. American Ave., Reedley, CA 93654
 L622 Warren T. Allen, 1000 Fountain Terr., Suite 414, Lewistown, MT
 59457
 256 James S. Andrus, 110 Londonderry Circle, Columbia, SC 29210-
 6057
 L-490 Arthur L. Bailey, 4620 La Verne Ave., Santa Maria, CA 93455
 L1169 Deane L. Barnes, P O Box 6016, Kent, WA 98064-6016
 009 Norwood Borrer, Rt 2, Box 143, Keyser, WV 26726
 Widow Mrs Dorothy W. Brown, 913 Plantation Blvd., Ft Pierce, FL 34982
 479 James F. Brown, 3003 W. Broadway #51, Tucson, AZ 85745
 1397 Rex Chambers, 2500 Harris SW, Albuquerque, NM 87105
 L1403 Nyle Cotner, 4925 Heth-Washington Rd. SW, Central, IN 47110
 S053 D. Ray Davis, 6110 Pleasant Ridge Rd. #3000, Arlington, TX
 76016
 1075 Marvin R. Edwards, 179 Old Glory Rd., Branson, MO 65616
 874 Orall R. Gustafson, 23962 Caravel Ln., Laquna Niquel, CA 92677
 L247 Fletcher Helton, 2820 County Rd L, Emporia, KS 66801-7906
 599 Kenneth W. Jencks, 7 Melody Lane, Cumberland, R.I. 02864
 1656 Tom Keese, 421 Tiffany Trail, Richardson, TX 75081
 Widow Mrs Phyllis Kelley, 1600 N 14th St., Apr 319, DeKalb, IL 60115-2449
 A-53 Ralph C. Littge, P O Box 124, Altenburg, MO 63732-0124
 L1162 Robert F. Vail, 103 NW 2nd St., Kasson, MN 55944-1442
 A-205 T/Sgt Brian E. McIntosh, PSC 46, Box 1105, APO AE 09469
 L1791 Bill Means, 17200 Dell Rd. #12, Surprise, AZ 85374 - Winter
 229 William S. Moody, 1313 4th St. NW, Hickory, NC 28601
 A-182 Robert A. Pratten, 110 N Sharon, Mahomet, IL 61853
 A-98 Jeff Quiggle, 9047 Chilson Rd., Brighton, MI 48116
 L608 Robert D. Quiggle, 50 Turquoise Way, Eustis, FL 32726-6718
 L454 George Redhead, 770 Juan Tabo Bl NE, Apt 120, Albuquerque, NM
 87123-1401
 L147 Jack G. Rolfson, 5910 Rainbow Springs Dr., Chattanooga, TN
 37416-1055
 1343 Ralph A. Roseland, P O Box 4094, Bergheim, TX 78004-4094
 L917 Anthony J Savastano, 55 Montauk Ave., Central Islip, NY 11722
 A-183 Carol P. Smith, 1097 Pinrun Dr., St. Louis, MO 63011
 709 Gordon A. Winkler, 7826 Griswold Loop, New Port Richey, FL
 34655-2745
 1594 Rowland C. Witters, IS61 Lenz Lane, Boise, ID 83712

"Twenty Five Milk Runs, and a Few Others"⁶²⁷

Fifty years later, Count down to D-Day.

From the memoirs of Richard R. Johnson.

Here are excerpts from Richard Johnson's memoirs starting with his first mission flown on May 15, 1944. Since the 50th anniversary of D-Day is practically upon us, I thought I would also bring you his impressions of his D-Day missions which were numbers 10 and 11 on his hit parade.

Most readers of WWII history are aware of the V-1, "Buzz Bomb" and the V-2, sub-orbital rocket. What most people don't realize is that Hitler had under way, a V-3. This was the so called "London Gun" being installed in western France, at Mimoyecques, near Calais. It was to consist of two batteries of twenty five guns each. The barrels of these guns were each 416 feet long. Installed along a steep incline, they would be capable of firing a 55 pound shell into the city of London. If the Allies had allowed this weapon to be completed, it would have eclipsed the damage done by the V-1. The range and direction would have been altered by the explosive propellant so that the entire city of London could be targeted.

Unfortunately for the Germans, the earth removal scars caught the attention of Allied reconnaissance planes, and the site was periodically bombed. My first combat mission on May 15, 1944 was to finish off that German project.

I had been assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group, known as the "Hells Angels". My job was to fly co-pilot on the crew of 2nd Lt. Theodore R. Beiser. However, all new crews are taken on their first mission by an experienced co-pilot—turned instructor. As Beiser's co-pilot, I flew with 1st Lt. P. O'Hare who was nearly finished with his tour of duty. 1st Lt. Bastean flew as Beiser's pilot for his first mission. This policy of flying experienced pilots with new crews was necessary in order to teach the "green" crews how to get into formation. After this first mission, the new crews was re-united for subsequent missions.

Our bombardier, Lt. Ed Cooper had the job of arming the six, 1000 pound bombs after we were in the air. Each bomb had an eight inch vane, or propeller on the nose, which was prevented from turning, by a cotter pin through a hole. Each cotter pin had a bomb tag with

warnings. As the pin was removed, a wire attached to the bomb was inserted through the cotter pin hole. When the bombs were dropped, they slid off the arming wire which allowed the propeller to turn in the wind. After falling about five hundred feet, the propeller wound itself off the bomb which was then armed, and would explode upon contact.

As he removed the bomb tags, Lt. Cooper walked through the aircraft and gave each member one to use as a souvenir. I kept my mission diary on mine. On this first mission each B-17 carried seventeen hundred gallons of gas, and six 1000 pound bombs. The bombs were fused at one tenth second at the nose, and one fortieth second at the tail. One fortieth second would allow the bomb to penetrate a roof before exploding, and the one tenth second fuse would assure that the bomb would explode before deep penetration.

This day's mission started with a 4:00 A.M. wake-up call. Breakfast and briefing followed quickly, and we were in our plane with the engines running by 6:00 A.M. The lead plane took off at 6:15 and all twenty B-17s were over the field and in formation, at twenty thousand feet at 7:40. Our squadron, the 427th, was assigned the high position, behind and to the right of the lead squadron, the 358th. The 359th squadron was low-left. The 360th squadron did not fly this mission. Each squadron furnished seven B-17s to the group formation, except the lead, which had six. Our squadron also furnished two spares that were to take up any position that might be left empty by an abort. They were to return to base before reaching enemy territory, and if there was an abort later, the other B-17s moved into the empty slots, leaving the tail position empty. On this day, there were no aborts, and the spares returned to the base. Lt. O'Hare's position in the squadron was number seven, —"Tail End Charlie."

"Tail End Charlie" is one of the most vulnerable positions in the formation. "Purple Heart Corner" is the next plane on the outside of the formation. There was an undercast at the target and we bombed by radar. The lead plane was equipped with this system, and all following planes dropped at first appearance

of bombs from the lead plane.

Just after "Bombs Away" from about twenty five thousand feet, we encountered some flak. However, it was light and inaccurate, the nearest burst being at least a quarter mile away. The German gunners may not have had their radar working, and so were shooting at the noise of our engines. None of our aircraft sustained damage and all planes returned to base and landed before 10:30 A.M. Total flight time was just over 4 hours. We were over enemy territory barely seven minutes.

My first combat mission was truly a "Milk Run," so called because it was no more dangerous than delivering milk.

My second mission on May 19 was not so uneventful, as the target was "Big B," — Berlin!

Mission #10 D-Day! June 6, 1944

"Today is D-Day," the briefing officer announced. "The invasion has already started, and we are going to try to prevent the Germans from bringing up reinforcements. The weather is very bad, and we may bomb by radar," he said.

Each B-17 was loaded with twelve, 500 pound, and two 1,000 pound bombs, and we were off at 06:00 hours with 34 aircraft from the 303rd Bomb Group. Two aircraft aborted due to mechanical problems. This was Lt. Bailie of the 358th squadron, and Lt. Fackler of the 359th squadron. This was my tenth mission with the 427th squadron and Col. Ed Snyder, the commander, led the low flight.

We were to bomb a bridge near the invasion coast, but the cloud cover at the target was total, so we were to bomb by PFF (radar). Sixteen aircraft of the lead group dropped 192 x 500 GP (general purpose) bombs and 30 x 1,000 GP bombs on the target with unobserved results. We flew our bombs back to base and made ready for our second mission of the day.

Since we tried to bomb, and went over enemy territory for 30 minutes, we got credit for a mission.

Afternoon, June 6, 1944 Mission #11, same target as this morning.

Our target near the invasion coast this afternoon was a bridge near Caen, France, that we were

unable to bomb because of an equipment failure on the lead aircraft. We saw flak again, at a distance, but were not affected. The weather over the French coast was bad with five tenths cloud cover, but we could see bits of the invasion activity. To prevent being fired upon by our own gunners, the fighters and medium bombers had a wide, white stripe painted across one wing. The heavies didn't bother with this, as we were too high to be seen.

We had achieved the desired mastery of the air by this time, and the Germans had a bitter joke amongst themselves.

"If you see a camouflaged airplane, it's British. If you see a shiny, unpainted airplane, it's American. If you don't see any airplane at all, it's German."

Much of our mission at this stage of the war was the attrition of experienced German fighter pilots. As they rose up to defend their country, our fighter pilots shot them down. With their shortage of fuel and fewer good pilots, they had large numbers of new airplanes that couldn't be flown. I saw several of their jet propelled, Me 262s in unarmed training flights, but it was too little too late.

The rocket propelled Me 163 Komet which was developed by the Germans in the late 1930s did not see service against our bombers until July 28, 1944, while I was still flying missions. I never encountered one, however, and I heard that they killed more German pilots, than American, since they often blew up on landing on skids which punctured their gas tanks.

On the first day of the invasion, one hundred and fifty thousand Allied troops landed on the beaches. A week later the total was a half million men. Six weeks later the total had reached two million men, and a quarter million vehicles. (See "The Longest Day," by Cornelius Ryan).

And so, on this day, the destruction of Hitler's Third Reich began in earnest, and the outcome is in the history of Earth's greatest war.

Ed. Note: For me being part of the air armada on the D-Day invasion of the French coast was exciting. For our crew the excitement started late in the afternoon of June 5th when we were notified to report to

the 422nd Sqdn. Operation, 305th bomb Group at Chelveston Air base. We were the 303rd Bomb Group's crew which had been assigned to duty at Chelveston in March 1944 when they started the PFF pool of radar equipped aircraft. We had flown 17 missions when we were "selected" for this duty. That was 11 missions ago.

We figured "something special" was up since we were never alerted this early for the next day's mission. Usually we were alerted late at night and proceeded to a 41st CBW Group in the wee hours of the morning. When we were notified of the invasion we figured it was going to be quite a secret to keep until it was announced at the following morning's briefing. It was twice as exciting for me because it was to be my last mission. What a way to finish a tour.

After a 2:00 wake-up and a simple "This is D-Day" message from Col. Kermit Stevens at the 03:30 briefing, it was out to the aircraft for a 06:00 take-off. The 303rd target was a bridge at Caen, France. Our crew led by Capt. Don Stouil Davis, was supplemented with Major G.G. Shumake as air commander; Capt. G. T. Orvis as bombardier and Capt. D. R. Davis as lead navigator. Our copilot Lt. E. F. Callahan as tail gunner to observe the formation. Unfortunately, the invasion fleet and the target were both obscured by clouds, so we bombed by radar. Coming off the target we dropped down quite a few thousand feet and were able to see part of the invasion fleet. Landing back at Molesworth at 11:00 hours, I exited the aircraft and kissed the ground. My combat tour was over.

With my crew scheduled for another mission, I decided to stick around until I watched them take-off. When they started walking out

to their aircraft, I decided to join them. After all this was the crew I had flown with since Ephrata, Washington almost a year before. For this mission we would have brass aboard. Gen. Robert Travis would be flying in the co-pilot seat as the air commander. Lt. Callahan would be flying in the tail position as he had done in the morning mission. Lt. Rickey was the new bombardier and Lt. Counts was the lead navigator. I took my place in the nose as I had done on 29 previous missions. Rounding out the crew like they had done for the past year were: Sgts. Romer, Owens, Brown and Greene. Take-off was uneventful but forming up was anything but. In spite of almost a box full of flares fired in response to Gen. Travis' requests we still had difficulty in getting anyone to form on us. Eventually, we "gathered our flock" in formation and departed for the English and eventually the French coast. Although the weather had improved somewhat since the morning mission, there were plenty of clouds in the target area. Second bomb runs were "verboden" and bombing at the assigned times was critical so we bombed a target of opportunity, the crossroads in the city of Vire. Clouds prevented observation of the results.

Letting down to a much lower altitude after bombing at 15,000 feet, we were able to get a good look at the invasion fleet on our way back to Molesworth.

We landed at 22:38. It had been a very long day.

But the 303rd's efforts since they started bombing Fortress Europe on Nov. 18, 1942 really paid off for we had achieved "air superiority" over the battlefield but the price was steep, we had lost 95 aircraft in the 172 missions flown.

IN MEMORIAM

Leslie K. Black (427) - 1991
Millard A. Boren (360) - 29 April 1993
Charles M. Box ~358) - 5 January 1994
John Cornyn (Sqdn?) - 25 March 1989
James Donovan (359) - 1 March 1994
Everett L. Frieze (360) - 15 May 1989
Felix M. Jara (359) - December 1993
Clifford J. Jensen (360) - 9 January 1993
Raymond J. Moessner (359) - 23 January 1994
Howard Nardine (360) - 1994
Anthony J. Peklinski (427) - 4 October 1993
William E. Rein (360) - 13 February 1994
J. William Schultz (HDQ) - 1 January 1994
Jimmy Stewart (427) - 10 November 1993
Murray W. Wade, Jr (358) - 6 March 1994
James Watson (360)
Doal L. Yocum (360) - March 1993



44th Engine Shop Crew. Front row (left to right) Hogan, Miglerim, Espinoza, unk, and Frickel. Back row (left to right) unk, unk, ShopChief Sam Masinton, Jack Rake, rest are unknown. Can anyone name the unknowns?



Lt. Millman's crew (left to right) are;standing: R.J. Eygabroad, N.W. Noble, W.C. Ready, R.H. Fox and J.W. Johnson. Front row (left to right) J. Millman, T.A. Geile, K. Heiser and R. Chambers.

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