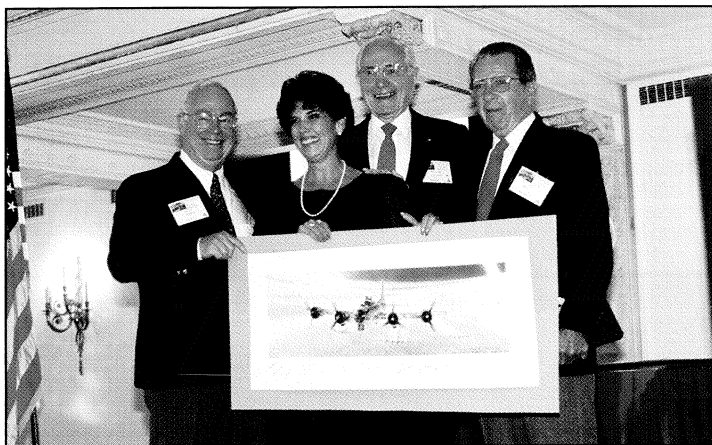
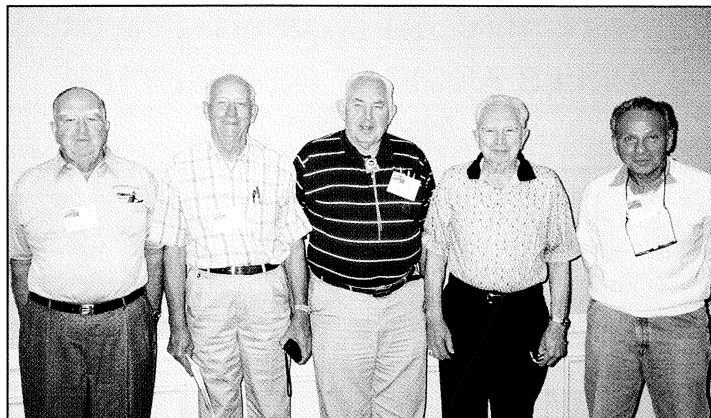


Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC. NOVEMBER 1997



"Bonnie B" - (l to r) Artist Keith Ferris, Mrs Kenton Ziegler nee Bech ("Bonnie"), crew chief, William Zachar and pilot G. Neil Bech celebrate their first get together in 53 years.



YOUR BOARD FOR 1997-98 - (l to r) Bill Roche, Treasurer; Dick Johnson, Secretary; Harry Gobrecht, V/P Administration; Hal Susskind, President and Walt Ferrari, V/P Reunions (Savannah 1998). Joe Fertitta is V/P for 1999 Reunion scheduled for someplace in Texas.

Pittsburgh reunion: Creative and enjoyable



Crew Chiefs Honored for 100 plus - Daughter Virginia Meil and grandson Patrick accept plaque on behalf of Oldrich Fojt; Robert B. Heiliger, ("Sack Time"); John Peterson, (Daddy's Delight); Albert Curtis Fox, (Neva and The Silver Lady"); and Blaine Ruark, (Old Black Magic).

Four hundred and fifty members of the Hell's Angels' family gathered in Pittsburgh in early September to fraternize, swap war stories, elect a new Board of Directors for 1998, honor crew chiefs whose aircraft flew 100 combat missions, present awards to 14 deserving members for service to the Association and to meet "Bonnie" for whom the B-17: Bonnie B" was named some 53 years ago. The bottom line is that Pittsburgh hosted a very enjoyable action packed reunion; thanks to the hard work of Eddie and Mary Lee Deerfield and their local committee of Jack and

Toni Gardner, John and Patricia Peters and Al Morton.

Officers elected for the 1997-98 term are: Hal Susskind, President; Harry Gobrecht, V/P for Administration; Walter J. Ferrari, V/P Reunions (1998); Joseph Fertitta, V/P Reunions (1999); Richard Johnson, Secretary and William Roche, Treasurer.

One of the highlights of the Gala Banquet was the introduction of Mrs Kenton Ziegler nee Bech (Bonnie) whose father G. Neil Bech, pilot in the 359th Sqdn. asked to have the B-17 he was fly-

(continued on pg 10)

The Sawicki Story

During World War II, acts of self-sacrifice and heroism often went unnoticed or unheralded in the intense heat of battle...such are the conditions of war. Driven to split-second decisions in the most explosive of emergencies the least likely soldiers have committed extreme acts of bravery towards their fellows in arms, often with their last ounce of strength, some never to be remembered or recognized. This is the story of one such person, a B-17 tail gunner named S/Sgt Joseph Sawicki of Detroit, Michigan.

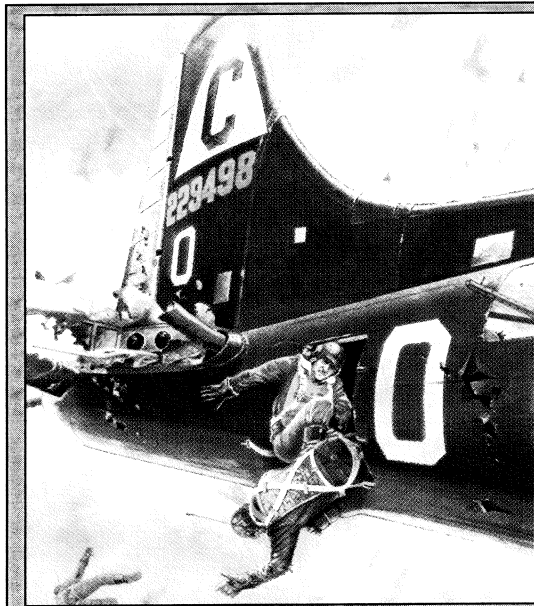
On November 29, 1943, an 8th Air Force B-17 Fortress #29498 "O" piloted by Lt. Carl Fyler was hit by intense flak and jumped by enemy fighters after releasing its bomb load on a target in Bremen, Germany. This mission was to be Fyler's 25th and final raid with the 303rd Bomb Group, 360th Squadron,

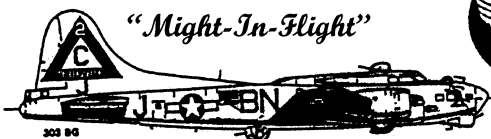
based at Molesworth, England. A burst of flak hit the plane, tearing off the right horizontal stabilizer, part of the right wing and killed both right engines. The controls went limp and Fyler used the Autopilot to steady the plane with slim results.

In the tail section, S/Sgt. Joseph Sawicki was struck by the flak burst that tore away his left arm below the elbow and that also inflicted mortal wounds to his midsection. Bleeding profusely and in unimaginable pain, he crawled forward to the waist section to find both waist gunners, Sgt. Fisher and S/Sgt. Marty Stachowiak, wounded and dazed on the floor of the aircraft. The had suffered multiple wounds and each had a broken arm.

With his last ounce of energy, he managed to buckle a chest pack chute on each and

(continued on page 12)





303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

Editor: Hal Susskind

VOL. XIX, NO. 3 2602 Deerfoot Trail, Austin, TX 78704 November 1997

The 303rd Bomb (H) Association, Inc. a tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501(c)(19), founded in 1975, is chartered in the State of Florida to perpetuate the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and to provide opportunities for 303rders to meet and do things together.

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

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

Membership years begin on the first day of January. In the future, the 303rd Bomb Group Newsletter will be sent only to paid up members. When you pay annual dues, the membership chairman will send you an updated membership card. Annual dues is \$10; \$15 for foreign addressees.

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Savannah 1998 Reunion

Committee Chairman
(Aug. 21-25 1998)
Walter J. Ferrari
Local Committeemen - TBA

Group Advisor

Lewis E. "Lew" Lyle

Chaplains:

Rom. Catholic:

Bishop Rene H. Gracida, 4126 Ocean Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78411

Protestant:

Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr., RR #2, Box 18, Greenville, NY 12083

Rev. Everett A. Dasher, Rt. #4, Box 425, Saluda, SC 29138
(Wife's name: Helen)

Rev. Warren L. Hedrick, 14 March Drive, New Durham, NH 03855
(Wife's name: Alma)

Chaplains Emeritus: Merritt Slawson, Charles Spencer

Hell's Angels Forum

Your Chance to Sound Off!

The Starr still shines

In the August 1997 issue of the Newsletter, in the Potpourri column, I am once again referred to as Ben Starr (Deceased). Although Gloria, my wife of over 47 years, is the first to admit that in certain areas I am dormant, even she agrees that I am not dead.

For years, you guys have buried me. But I was editorially resurrected by Jack Rencher and Bill Cox in time for Gloria and me to attend the reunion last year in San Francisco. My return to the living came about as follows:

One day, while staring into my computer waiting for inspiration to arrive, my office phone rang. It was Jack Rencher calling from Iowa to inquire if by any chance I was related to the "late" Ben Starr. It developed that Jack had received a photo of himself and Bill Cox and me standing in front of a B-17 parked at Molesworth. And sweet ol' Jack wanted to offer the photo to Ben Starr's heirs.

After a 20 minute conversation, Jack and I took a vote and concluded that it was possible that I might not be deceased. Shortly thereafter, I heard from Bill Cox. Next thing I know, Gloria and I are in San Francisco at the 303rd reunion.

It was terrific, meaningful and fun. And most of my own crew were there! Altogether a memorable experience spent reminiscing about our war experiences (some of which almost actually happened).

Now comes your August issue, and I am "deceased" again. Suggestion. Let's agree on a foolproof way to ascertain the state of my being. In the future, only refer to me as deceased if I personally call you and tell you I am dead.

Respectfully,

The "Late" Ben Starr
1506 So. Bentley #311
Los Angeles, CA 90025

P.S. If anyone knows where our bombardier Fred Kiesel is, I'd love to know.

Ed. Note: Ray Gorham's letter in the August issue of the newsletter reported Ben Starr as being deceased. This is one time the editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter is happy he was in error.

Who knew Warren C. Wood?

I can tell you about one member of your organization who would be 103 were he still alive. My father, Warren C. Wood (Capt), was a

mess officer, camouflage officer, etc., with the 303rd. At that time I was a radio-gunner on a B-25 in Italy with the 12th AF.

After my mother died in 1952, the old man went back to Old Weston, married Katherine White (farmer's daughter) who was 35 years his junior and retired there. She was employed by the RAF and they lived in quarters at Molesworth air base. I visited them there in Old Weston in 1960.

He had been a pilot-instructor in WW I, lied about his age and was taken into the Army Air Corps as a 1st Lt.. He was quite heavy-set, about 50 years of age and had some WW I ribbons.

After the war, he was stationed in Berlin for some time and was discharged in 1947. He died at the Old Soldiers' Home in Chelsea, Mass. in 1980.

Dave Wood
(909) 679-6637

Ed. Note: Warren C. Wood appears to have been quite a character. As a pilot-instructor did he fly combat in WW I? According to my math, he must have been born in 1894 which meant that he was 58 when he remarried and lived with his 23 year old wife at Old Weston. Since he died in Massachusetts in 1980: when did he leave Old Weston? The letter to Carlton Smith was written on Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas, stationery but the area code for his son appears to be in the Sun City area of California.

"Grapefruits for Cologne"

The experience cited by F.E. Bale (359) "Grapefruits for Cologne," August 1997 Newsletter, page 16, brought back an almost forgotten incident from my days with the 303rd BG. In September 1942, our crew from the 427th BS, was assigned TDY to Eglin AFB, FL. as part of a glide bombing test program. We flew to Olmstead Depot, PA, where external racks were attached to hold the wooden frames encompassing the bombs, and then on to Eglin where testing...or at least our part, lasted about a week or 10 days and consisted of precision flying to insure the release was made as precisely as possible. We then returned to our base, as I recall, Alamogordo, NM, and shortly on to England and Molesworth.

Since the outcome of the testing was never learned, the "Grapefruits for Cologne" item was of special interest. We were briefed at Eglin that

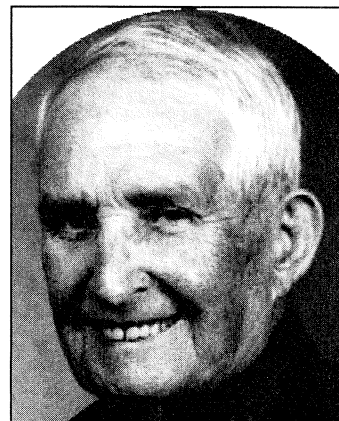
In Memoriam

The McCoy family wishes to thank the 303rd BG(H) Association family for all your support around the death of our patriarch, Melvin T. McCoy, earlier this year. Your individual and group sympathy and recognition of our loss was gratifying and deeply moving to all of us.

Last May, Mel was visiting his hometown of Butte, Montana, staying with his sister and their extended family when he received the Lord's call. Mel had just finished attending a four-day reunion of his college classmates from the 1937 graduating class of Montana Tech University in Butte. He'd had a happy and raucous week of revelry with old friends he'd not seen in decades.

He was filled with joy and warm college memories, in his favorite spot on earth, with four generations of his family living their delightful, daily chaos around him when he painlessly experienced a triple hemorrhagic cerebral stroke. Storytelling and joking with his nurses while holding his sister Mary Catherine's hand he slipped into a peaceful coma and passed within hours on Mother's Day morning.

The 303rd and today's Air Force were well represented at his memorial service in Butte. Ceremonies were held in St. John's Church in which he was an altar boy and went to grade school. The USAF honored him with a 21 gun salute on the lawn of the family home he grew up in - directly across the street from the church. His granddaughter Brittany McCoy, accepted the folded American flag presented by the commanding officer of the USAF honor guard "from a grateful nation." It was magic, Mel couldn't have choreographed it better himself. We were



all very proud. Later this summer, Mel's remains were interred at the National Cemetery at Eagle Point, Oregon.

Beginning over a decade ago when he joined the 303rd Association, you folks again (40+ years later) became Mel's second family. Sharing with Mel recent years with the 303rd taught us, in a very real way, how much he cared deeply for all of you. We came to realize how his dedication and passion for your success and safety in England and over Europe molded his life. And, through a father's caring and mentoring, came to mold our lives.

The McCoy family salutes the 303rd; you were important to Mel. He loved you all. Please treasure his memory with us.

Sincerely,

James M. McCoy -
for our family
303rd Associate Life Member
360 Menlo Oaks Drive
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 323-5607

P.S. Hope to see all of you in Savannah in '98!

the glide bombing was being developed to attack specific high priority, heavily defended areas, i.e., hydro-electric dams were mentioned.

Now my interest in the program is piqued by the article and the actual use of the bomb. I will attempt to gain more info concerning it.

I enjoy reading the newsletter and look forward to each issue. Please over look or correct any and all errors in typing and spelling. The machine is in need of repair, and the typist has possibly long since passed that point.

Mark L. McDermott
1127 Wentworth Cir.
Rockledge, FL 32955-2248



Paul Hogan (r) and friend, under the Eight Ball.

Forum

Target: Merseberg "nuff said"

Read with interest the story written by Lt. Charles W. Ziesche (Pg.13) in the August 1997 issue of the newsletter. He made quite a few mistakes. Have him refer to Harry Gobrecht's book (Pg. 514) for a more accurate account of what happened on the 24 August '44 mission to Merseberg. Leave on Monday for Germany; going to retrace the four hospitals and four camps (POW) I was in as a prisoner.

Gene Gorman
8420 Parrish Place
Highland, IN 46322

Ed. Note: Since neither Harry Gobrecht or I flew on that particular mission who is to say that what Lt. Ziesche wrote, except for a few minor details, is not accurate. True you people bombed Merseberg at 25,000 feet. not 35,000 feet as originally written. But anyone who scheduled a mission to bomb Merseberg at 25,000 feet should have had his head examined. It is true that once on the mission you may go down to a lower altitude because of weather but why schedule it at 25,000. Harry's book makes no reference to the experiences of Lt. Ziesche's crew or the B-17 "Miss Lace" so I find no reason to dispute what he wrote. Harry Gobrecht did a wonderful job considering what he had to work with but sometimes the reports were not always 100 percent complete. I'm anxious to hear from others who flew on this particular mission.

Did you know James Burke?

I got your name from the Internet where I have been searching for information on the 303rd Bomb Group during World War II. My uncle, James Burke, was a tail gunner on the B-17 "Shangri-La-Lil," a/c #42-29754. I know the plane was shot down, and he was captured and was a POW until the end of the war. Uncle Jimmy stayed with my family upon his return from Germany, and I can't recall hearing much of his experiences during the war. Unfortunately, shortly after his return he was killed in an auto accident. His personal papers were collected and given to an Aunt for safe keeping, but a fire destroyed almost everything. I did manage to find a crew photo taken in front of "Shangri-La-Lil" and with the aid of the computer was able to enhance some of the writing to make out "303rd" and enough of the planes name to get a

response from the internet.

I would really appreciate any and all information you may have concerning my uncle, the aircraft, its missions, and when and where it was shot down. My family is writing a history and we would like to include more about Uncle Jimmy. I am also trying to find out if there are any surviving crew members from the "Shangri-La-Lil."

William C. Burke
202 Pin Oak Court
Sterling, VA 20164

Ed. Note: Since the letter above was addressed to Harry Gobrecht with an info copy to me for publishing in the newsletter I'm sure Harry will answer most of his questions. FYI Burke was with the 360th Sqdn. He was shot down on 27 August 1943 on a mission to Watten, France. Seven of the crew became POWs; unfortunately none are members of the Association.

Do you remember "The Wash?"

Researchers would like to hear from anyone who attended Station 172 - C.C.G.S. in 1943-44. Gunners, instructors or other capacity.

We are hoping to put together a display at some future date (in the locality) so few people are aware of their local history. It is important to keep the memories alive.

We are looking for books on U.S. G/Training (1943-45). If you know of anyone who has one they no longer wish to keep, we would appreciate borrowing it.

Please write to:

Brian Clipston/Sonia Giffkins
1 Pond Cottages
Pond Lane/Knapton
North Walsham, Norfolk
NR 28 0SE, U.K.

Ed. Note: Anyone who flew missions over Germany remembers the wash. It was always nice seeing it on the way home.

The famous English one-pound note

I received last week my issue of the "Hell's Angels Newsletter." As always, it made a very good reading. But the series of articles about the English one pound note was even more intriguing!

Perhaps do you remember that I've asked you for information about the 303rd BG's losses on the 20 October 1943? They were the Hendry's and Hartigan's crews. And some of the airmen who signed the English banknote are members of these two crews!

What is even more interesting is



LIBERATION AT MOOSBURG - April 25, 1945 - Gen. Patton in jeep liberates 303rd's, 21 year old, Gene Gorman (far right) with light pants and dark hair from POW camp.

that the widow of John W. Hendry wrote a letter which was published. It's a shame that her husband passed away a few years ago. I'd have liked so much to get in touch with him. I'd be very happy if you could give me her address, or give her mine if you prefer. I'm seeking pictures of his crew and of himself. I sent you a booklet about his loss over Valenciennes. I'd like to send a copy to Mrs Gloria Hendry.

Still on the banknote case, 2nd Lt. Goddard was the co-pilot of 2nd Lt. Hartigan. 2ndLt Webster was the bombardier of 1st Lt. Hendry. I suggest that the name Lope, given with interrogation marks in brackets, might be badly hand-written of 2nd Lt William B. Harper (O-799393) co-pilot of 1st Lt. Hendry.

I've succeeded in getting in touch with the sister-in-law of T/Sgt Louis Mooney Cowley, flight engineer and top-turret gunner in Lt. Eisele's crew, killed in action on 12th of June 1944 north of Cambrai. I've given her your address, so she might write to you.

Last but not least, I'm sending you a picture you may keep. On 17 August 1997, I went to the U.S Military Cemetery in Neuville-en-Condroz (south of Liege, in Belgium). I laid some flowers on the grave of Sgt. Robert Washburn, killed by the Germans while attempting to evade capture, on 1 December 1943. A member of my association has found a Frenchman who gave a little help to the skipper, Lt. George Luke, before he was captured.

I hope you'll be able to help me with Gloria D. Hendry's address. Do you know how I could get a copy of the "Buzz Blonde" picture in the last issue of the newsletter

Yours very sincerely,

Jocelyn LeClercq
51, route de Fromelles
59249 Aubers, FRANCE

Ed. Note: The above letter was sent to Harry Gobrecht for possible use in the newsletter. Re; the story on the English one pound note it all started with the original letter from Mrs Hendry. (page 3, August issue) I saw the possibilities in it making a very interesting story. and I queried her for more information which she so graciously supplied. But my question is still unanswered. "Who was the original owner of the one pound note?"

To Mr. LeClercq; "On behalf of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, I thank you very much for placing the flowers on the grave of Sgt. Robert Washburn. It is always nice to hear about someone honoring one of our fallen heroes, it is especially nice to have someone remember even though his passing took place some 50 years ago. Regarding your request for a photo of "Buzz Blonde, I'll have a copy made and get it into the mail to you very soon."

An open letter to the 303rd BGA!

I wish to tender my whole hearted thanks to the 303rd Bomb Group members and the Awards Committee for the very attractive desk organizer which I received in the mail. This will be my inspiration to clean off my desk - as my wife has wanted for the last year. I, like Roger Dangerfield, like recognition - Thank you!

In listing my self-satisfying accomplishments (locating and encouraging them to join) to one of the members I wasn't intending to brag or seek recognition. I did prepare a list of A/C Supply personnel and their jobs for Mel McCoy's his-

Forum

tory of the 328th-444th for the group historian. At the 1995 get-together in Grand Island, the three others that were there all added their input. An instance that is dim in one mind is clear in another. Mel organized and completed an accurate job of setting it to paper. To me, it was a work of art. In reading it through, I learned several things which I was not aware of while serving with the 444th. In fact I never knew that Mel existed. Mel and I became fast friends over the years. He also had relations here in Wood River.

Maurice J. Paulk
205 W 12th Street
Wood River, NE 68883-9164

Planes lost in Eastern France?

I received your "Hell's Angels Newsletter" in February and thank you very much. I think you found my address in another Group's Newsletter, and apologize for answering so late but I am very busy.

I try with some other researchers in France, to locate a maximum of WW II airplane crash sites. I live in East of France, close to the border with Germany and hundreds of planes crashed in this area. I go often to the mountains and the forests with my metal detector. On the crash sites we can still find a lot of small pieces that can help to identify the type and the nationality of the planes. Some inhabitants can remember the crash places and I correspond with many Americans in Great Britain and the United States.

I read with great interest the story of the B-17 "Susfu" in your newsletter. During 1994, we had a similar commemoration near Strasbourg where a B-24 from the 446th BG was shot down. Only one crew member could survive and after I have found this aviator in Michigan, he has been invited by the town council and came to France. A ceremony was organized and a memorial stone has been erected. Albert E. Forton died in December 1996. If you have information, or a list of planes that were downed in East of France, I would be very interested. I know of no plane of the 303rd BG that crashed in my area but maybe there are some that I missed

Francis Muller
95, rue de Bale
67100 Strasbourg
France

The Alan Magee story

When I read the story by Michel Lugez in the May 1997 issue, I went back to your February 1996 article about Alan Magee. I have shown the article to several people. Obviously they could hardly believe it. At the same time, they were very of complimentary of the looks and content of your newsletter. I share that thought also.

One of the persons I showed it to was my pastor at River Oaks Baptist Church. He was impressed and asked if anyone had followed up to see how it had affected the remainder of Alan's life or to find out what his thoughts about it are today.

I take this opportunity to ask if he would share this with the newsletter or with me, personally, in order that I might pass it on.

I realize that Alan's experience might be considered very personal but it is such a great testimony that I, and probably many, would enjoy hearing it.

Another interesting story might be what led Bishop Gracida to the ministry.?

Kenneth Clarke
3504 Plumb Street
Houston, TX 77005-2928

P.S. Let's have the '98 reunion in Houston, although, I would settle for Austin or San Antonio.

Ed. Note: The 1998 reunion is scheduled for Savannah in August 21-25. Joe Fertitta is the V/P for Reunions in 1999 and he is looking for someplace in Texas to hold it. Why not contact him and offer to help. Alan Magee has attended the last few reunions. He has cut a tape on his experiences. You can see it at the '98 reunion in Savannah or you may be able to borrow the rough cut. I'm sure Bishop Rene Gracida's story would be quite interesting as would several other 303rds who embraced the ministry after the war.

More grapefruits!

Seeing the picture of the B-17 "G.I. Sheets" in the May 1997 newsletter that showed her crashed in Belgium. This brought back many fond memories of her colorful past.

In the fall of 1943, the crew of Robert Sheets were assigned to a remote and obscure field in Brookville, Florida where we were known as the Iseman Group. This was a very secretive assignment whereas we practiced dropping external bombs (one under each wing) on a small island in the north-

ern Bahamas. Each bomb had a six foot wing with twin beams which included a gyro and rudder to maintain level flight. After the bombardier would engage the gyro and then release it, it would maintain the B-17s heading. These bombs were designed to be dropped in the Ruhr area from an I.P. of 25 or 30 miles and glide into the target area. Whether it undershot or overshot by a few miles was insignificant as anything hit in the Ruhr area would help the war effort. The operation had the code name of "Grapefruit."

After a full schedule of practice, these bombs flew with great accuracy. The let down airspeed of the plane was 190 miles per hour. Under that speed they were inclined to spin in.

After finishing the aforementioned training we were advised to prepare to go overseas. On the day of departure, there were four B-17s that got the jump on the remaining Iseman Group.

The pilots of these B-17s were Watson, Young, Wheeler and Robert Sheets. After a hurry up take off; I as the navigator realized that our flight plan was ignored, as all four planes immediately buzzed anything that moved on the ground. The "Buzz Campaign" included Florida, Georgia, Carolina's and Virginia. Besides mule drawn wagons and a sailboat to name a few, there were many others. I remember the sailboat as Lon Jackman took over the controls and blew over the small sailboat with prop wash.

After all this they now approached Washington, D.C. Which is when I approached Bob Sheets and told him that enough was enough and I didn't want to spend time in prison. Luckily for all of us, we were approached by a P-38 and advised to alter course. Fifteen minutes after he left they all turned back eastward towards New York. There was a game in progress (the World Series) and of course this warranted close security. The four B-17s buzzed the Yankee Stadium but the grand swoop was from Wheeler who flew directly over the stadium.

Upon landing in Presque Isle, Maine, we were all informed to report to Headquarters. All the other B-17s of the Iseman Group were ordered to land in New York by demand of Mayor LaGuardia.

The only thing that saved these four pilots was a notice from Washington to brief and release them as

they were on a "Special Assignment."

In conclusion as I looked at the picture of a grand old plane (G.I. Sheets) I think even though she was finished, she still had one helluva colorful life before her time came.

Lawrence A. Peacock
725 SE 27th Ln.
Homestead, FL 33033-5235

P.S. Bob Sheets co-pilot was Lon E. Jackman. He was killed on his 6th mission on Dec. 20, 1943 flying with a crew on their first mission

Two years - two questions

Two years ago, visited Most, Czech Republic, Mr. Leslie Latz, former radio operator of "Earthquake McGoon", B-17G #43-3797 427 BS, 303rd BG.

He spent the first two weeks of October 1995 in Most. He was a guest in my house. We did not switch on TV in the evening and that is why our night chats were very long. We discussed a lot of problems of this world, history, contemporary politics, and TV programs. We talked about nature, plants, snakes, and hurricanes in Florida also about the peculiarities of the Czech spelling.

One evening Mr. Latz surprised me by his two questions: Why are the Czechs so friendly to the USA? Why am I so interested in the fate of "Earthquake McGoon?"

It was quite easy to answer the first question and I could reply immediately. Because the USA professed the best relation to Czechoslovakia of all the great world powers in the past and at present; in 1918, the creation of an independent Czechoslovak state; in 1938, the Munich agreement; in 1948, the communist coup; in 1968, Soviet invasion and occupation.

The other question was much more difficult and I could not answer it at that time. Only now, after two years, I think I have found the right answer.

I was 12 years old when the Nazi troops entered Most and 19 years old when they finally left. For a boy it was seven long years of occupation, seven years of fear of the door bell ringing at night, fear that the Gestapo appears and I will say good-bye to this world. I witnessed the suffering of POWs from many nations. My girl friend of 17 was executed in Dresden. Many nights, many days of aircraft droning in the

From the President

Thank you members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association for doing me the great honor of electing me as your 14th president for the remainder of 1997 and running through August 1998.

The previous 13 presidents - going back to 1975 - have all made significant contributions towards making this organization the best military Association in the country as we head towards the 21st century.

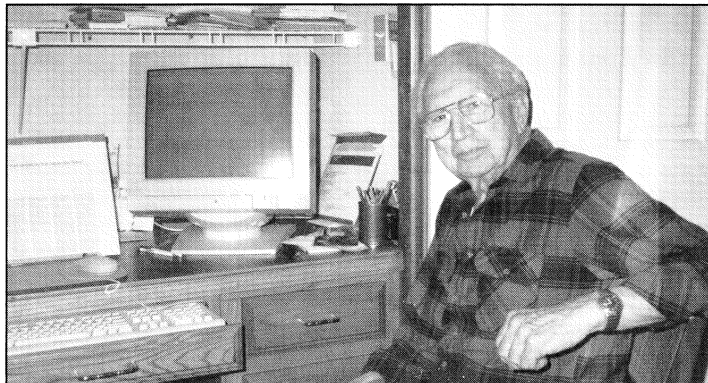
I know I have some big shoes to fill as Eddie Deerfield has done a great job as your leader for the 1996-97 period, and along with his wife Mary Lee he also completed three outstanding years as reunion chairman. He has done a classic job of managing the reunions at Colorado Springs, San Francisco and Pittsburgh.

With your support I pledge to continue the great job my predecessors have done in keeping this the top military Association as we head towards the year 2000.

Since the attendance at Pittsburgh only numbered about 450, I realize this issue of the newsletter which carries the announcement of your new board, with me as your new president, is going to be news to quite a few of you - a majority of our membership to be exact.

In a way I guess this fact may be a good thing. Knowing that a majority of the membership didn't vote for me will certainly keep me on my toes in making any decisions that affects the entire membership.

Although I was co-sponsor of the first reunion of the 303rd BG in New York City back in 1948, my membership in the the present Association dates back to 1984 when I joined. I attended my first reunion of the Association in 1985 in Seattle when I "volunteered" to become editor of the newsletter. I've learned quite a bit about the 303rd BG and also the Association since then. Although I spent 18 months at Molesworth during WW II, I've learned more about the inner workings of the Hell's Angels unit since I've been editing the newsletter. It's been an enlightening experience. Some things I still don't understand, i.e., why we short changed so many people on awards? I've read hundreds of "Unusual Experiences" of our members before I published them in the newsletter. Practically everyone of them describes a heroic or unique act which went unrecognized or unrewarded and I come up with the same question. Why?



Starting on page one of this newsletter is the story of S/Sgt. Joseph Sawicki certainly a hero by any standards. But for 50 years we have been trying to get him the award he earned on the battlefield in the sky. A successful conclusion to this incident has eluded us for half a century. Is it because he was a member of the 303rd BG? Before he joined the 303rd, Sawicki flew 14 missions with the Polish RAF, for this he was awarded the Polish Cross of Honor and the Polish Legion of Merit. What awards did he get with the 303rd?

Another thing that upsets me is the run around some of our wounded members seem to be getting from the VA. The paperwork that would certify and justify the members claims was lost "due to a fire in the records center" or some other lame excuse. I think it took Richard Grimm some 40 years to win his case.

I didn't mean for this message to turn into a witch hunt but it points out that not everything was "wine and roses" during the war. We were a great "Combat Team" but appar-

ently lousy paper shufflers.

Over the past few years your Board of Directors have come up with some ideas to remedy some of shortcomings of the past. Under the Kelley and Miller administrations, we designed, printed and distributed the Distinguished Service Award for all those who served at Molesworth.

At the Pittsburgh reunion we designed and manufactured special plaques that were presented to the crew chiefs whose aircraft flew more than 100 missions during World War II. This was an honor well deserved and long overdue.

During the 1998 reunion in Savannah we hope to honor more individuals for heroism or outstanding service to the 303rd during their tour at Molesworth. I can't think of a more fitting place to honor these individuals than at the 8th AF Heritage Museum in Savannah.

Presently we have more than 1900 active members in the Association. I hope you take the word active literally and send in 1900 ideas on how this Association can better serve its members. ➔



BEASLEY'S CREW - Molesworth, February 1945. Kneeling, William Beasley, pilot. Crew (l to r) Jack W. Terrill (RO), Richard Rich (CP), Tom Harrigfeld (WG), David Thomas (LT), Jacob Gornto (E), Harry Welch (N), Henry Gracida (TG). Taking photo was George Mabary (B). *AKA Bishop Rene Gracida.

Forum

Continued from page 5

sky overhead, bombs falling, However the war itself was something distant, I did not see the armies in the battlefields.

There was only one event lasting only about a few minutes. In the sky above me I saw a formation of B-17s, one aircraft was hit and broke in the air. This is what I saw with my own eyes and I can still see it vividly in my inner sight, in my memory.

So I experienced together with the crew of "Earthquake McGoon," the worst moment in their lives - their being shot down. And that is why I have the feeling of belonging to them, that is why I feel close vicinity to them, that is why I am so keen on them and so deeply involved in their fate, so profoundly interested in them.

That is my answer to the second question of Mr. Latz

**Paul Uhlir
Prokopova 1244-23
Most 1 43401
Czech Republic**

"Lucious Lady"

Thank you for the fine newsletter of May 1997, the fine photo of Molesworth remembers, and our picture on page 11; my name was misspelled, however.

I was sorry to read that our crew chief Frank Furman had passed away. Back in October 1988, my wife and I flew out to Chicago to visit our son Bob and his family. During the visit we drove to Riddott, Illinois to visit Don Shockey and his wife. Don passed away later in 1990. He had been a ground crew mechanic in our squadron.

Going back in the past our ground crew had a fine record. The first plane that I was assigned to was "Lucious Lady," a B-17F with about 50 missions which was returned to the U.S. Our second plane was a B-17G, "Sweet Rosie O'Grady" with 134 missions and returned to the U.S. I am very thankful that both planes survived the war for the fine combat crews.

On May 10, 1945 our ground crew flew as guests on "Rosie O'Grady" on a very memorable flight over Brussels, Belgium; Cologne, Germany; down the Rhine River, and then over France to the beauty of Paris where we saw the Eiffel Tower and the fine memories. I was very thankful that the war in Europe was over, and the trip was fine. I was proud of Boeing's B-17s and the fine service of the 303rd Bomb Group and our good record.

**Charles W. Twesten, 3rd
300 Trinidad Blvd.
Williamstown, NJ 08094-3028**

The meeting was called to order at 0900 by President Eddie Deerfield with 22 members, committee heads and guests present.

The president thanked Henry Johansen for filling in for the late Mel McCoy of the 444th Support unit, as the elected alternate was unable to attend the reunion.

Eddie Deerfield noted that this Pittsburgh reunion is his third organizing effort, and he continues to learn. His estimate of the 1995 attendance at Colorado Springs was 550 and more than 700 attended. So, he estimated 625 for San Francisco in 1996, but only 545 registered. He then figured that 500 would attend this reunion, and it looks like the final figure will be about 450. He negotiated a 60 percent fill-rate for the rooms instead of the 80 percent, that the hotel usually requires, thus saving the Association about \$4,000, thus insuring that there will not be a financial loss for this reunion.

Deerfield noted that six ceremonies for the 303rd were held during the past year. Our 303rd liaison member in England, Robin Beeby, placed a wreath at the American Cemetery in Cambridge, England on Memorial Day. Our Hell's Angels' pilot, Irl Baldwin was honored at Molesworth on 14 May, Air Force Heritage Day. In Czechoslovakia, Leslie Latz, placed a wreath honoring two members of his crew, Lt T.F. Kahler and Sgt. T.R. Smith, who were killed on April 17, 1945. The pilot of the 427th Squadron B-17, "Black Swan," Bobby Sterling was honored at Pere-en-Retz by ceremonies conducted by French civilians and attended by his cousin, John Sterling. Ceremonies were held at Krimice, Czechoslovakia on May 7, honoring members of Lt. Mauger's crew who were killed on April 25, 1945. Several members of the Association attended the first Anniversary celebration of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum near Savannah in May 1997.

Walter Ferrari, V/P for Reunions gave a brief report on the reunion to be held in Savannah, August 21-25, 1998. The Marriott Hotel on the riverfront will accommodate the reunion there at the rate of \$83 per day, per room plus \$5.00 per day for parking. We will attend the Museum as a group on one of the days to include lunch, and arrangements have been made for individuals to attend on one of the free days. A shuttle bus will be set up to take you there and back as you desire. Harry Gobrecht, is making ar-

rangements for the Museum to have a display, during our visit, of wartime materials donated by 303rd members.

Hal Susskind, Newsletter Editor, told of the delays in getting the newsletter to the members even after it has been delivered to the post office. Even though it is mailed in his hometown, it sometimes takes two weeks to get his copy. Florida is a foreign country as far as the Postal System is concerned. It sometimes takes a month for Floridians to get their copy, if they get it at all.

Carlton Smith, Membership Chairman, says he is getting sufficient donations to pay for dues some of our members can't afford. This assures that they will get the newsletter. Our membership is still growing (up by 5) primarily because of increases in associate members. During the life of the Association, 581 have died. Seventy one died in 1997. There are presently 1317 regular members on the active roll. With the addition of widows and associates we are up to 1890. There are several hundred on the inactive rolls. Ed Miller asked if we could find out if any of our old comrades are in rest homes saying that they might be enthused by reading about their old outfit.

Carlton Smith said that his deteriorating health would necessitate his stepping out as membership chairman in the near future. He often spends about six hours a day using his own equipment. When the switch comes, the Association may buy the necessary equipment for use by the next chairman. Ed Miller volunteered to accept the responsibility when Carlton finally decides to vacate that post. (Ed filled that post back in 1985-86)

Harry Gobrecht, (Historian) reported that he has received 584 personal biographies- 784 when he counts the one page questionnaire put out previously. He sends copies of the "Unusual Experiences" to the newsletter editor for possible use. He told about a new program started by Brian McGuire at Molesworth. McGuire is producing a new lithograph each month called "Heroes of Molesworth." Each lithograph will be available for purchase at a nominal price. The originals will hang in the "Wall of Heroes" at RAF Molesworth. The original five were Distinguished Service Medal winners. To continue this series, McGuire needs inputs from members of the Association. If you know of a person or event that deserves to be honored please submit your

nominee to Harry Gobrecht.

The new commander of the Joint Analysis Center at Molesworth is Col. Fran Early, USAF. Her father was a Tail Gunner in B-17s with the 384th Bomb Group

Our 303rd history book, "Might in Flight" will hopefully be in the mail by October of this year. About 180 books have already been ordered. The book is already being advertised for sale in U.S. bookstores at \$90. We are selling them for \$75. There have been many changes and revisions and additions to the book.

A grant of \$500 was made to Bill Adams of England so that he could buy equipment and supplies to continue his wood carvings of 303rd subjects.

Jack Rencher is set up to take orders for mission reports. Frank DeCicco reported on his audit of the 303rd books. We are in good shape.

Ed Miller talked about the Distinguished Service Award and suggested that we generate more publicity for that award. He has received 45 new names for that certificate to add to the 2,167 he has already distributed.

Nominations for next years' Board of Directors are: for president, Hal Susskind; for V/P Administration, Harry Gobrecht; for V/P Reunions, Walter Ferrari; (V/P for Reunions for 1999, Joe Fertitta. He will have the responsibility for planning the 1999 reunion which is scheduled for Texas but no city has been chosen). Bill Roche will remain as Treasurer and Richard Johnson will remain as Secretary.

Lew Lyle talked about reunions and said that the reunions are said to be too long and have too many events. "There needs to be a place that has a large enough area so that members can have a place to talk and visit."

Eddie Deerfield did a further report on reunions and the member search campaign. Overall it was deemed that the effort was a great success and will continue.

A plaque at the Heritage Museum for past presidents of the 303rd BG Association was discussed. There are 13 names on the plaque and room for 17 more. It was decided to improve the base on which the plaque is mounted. It was also suggested that a small plaque be erected to honor the wartime commanding officers of the 303rd BG.

A considerable discussion ensued concerning the future of the 303rd Bomb Group Association as the members continue to grow old-

er and more infirm. "We must plan for the time when we have so few surviving members that a reunion cannot be planned and carried out. Will the Associates be able to take the reins, or will they lose interest after all the veterans are gone?" Bill Eisenhart prepared a proposal on this subject which was discussed by the Board and approved with changes. The document will be used as a plan of action for the future.

Bill Eisenhart's document with changes was discussed at the general membership meeting on 7 September. It will be covered in the minutes of the General Membership meeting printed elsewhere in this publication.

Walt Mayer was appointed to chair the Awards Committee. He will be aided by the Past Presidents Committee. Thirty-five awards have already been given and thirteen awards will be presented at the Gala Banquet. The Board decided it was time to think about giving awards to those in Europe who have been working to memorialize the 303rd Bomb Group. Also to thank the citizens of France and possibly Czechoslovakia who aided some of our downed flyers at the risk of their own lives during World War II Research is underway to discover names, places and events.

Eddie Deerfield discussed the computer program we have been agonizing over for several years. To have Arlo Bartsch of the 379th BG do the program would be extremely expensive plus he would keep full copyright. Deerfield after a meeting with Bartsch in May of 1997 decided to terminate further contact. Ed Gardner has been working on a program that would list all the veterans of the 303rd on a single line each. It would be an extensive undertaking even at that, since nearly nine thousand veterans served at Molesworth. After a demonstration of the Alpha software by Ed Gardner, the board decided to hold the program in abeyance. Ed said he would continue to work on the program for his own edification.

Members present at the meeting were: Eddie Deerfield, Dick Johnson, Walt Mayer, Jack Rencher, Bill Eisenhart, Bill Heller, Ed Gardner, Vern Stone, Joanna Tressler, Henry Johansen, Walter Ferrari, Ed Miller, Charlie Sykes, Bill Roche, Carlton Smith, Harold A. Susskind, Harry D. Gobrecht, Lew Lyle and Frank DeCicco

**Richard Johnson,
Secretary**

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association's
MEMORIAL SERVICES



Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall

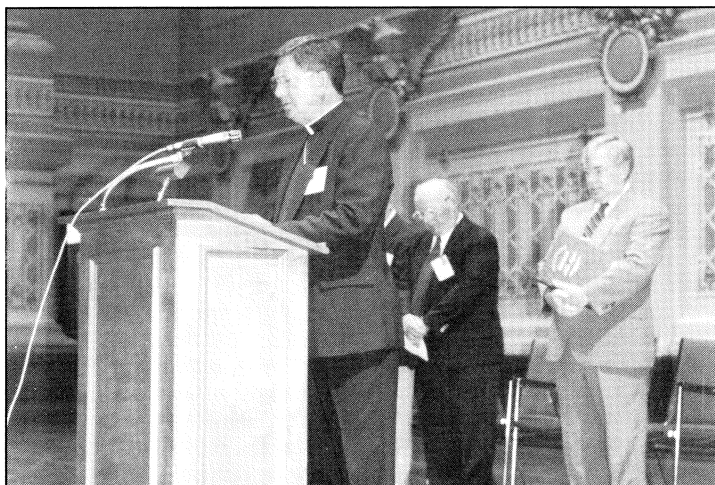
To honor the memories of our comrades
who fell during World War II and those
who have passed on since victory in 1945

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 7 September 1997

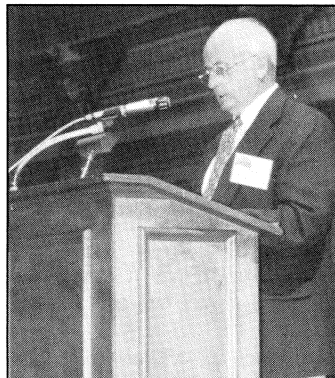
**Introductions by President Eddie Deerfield
Posting of the Colors**

**Welcoming remarks by David K. McMullin,
Chairman, Board of Managers, Soldiers &
Sailors Memorial Hall**

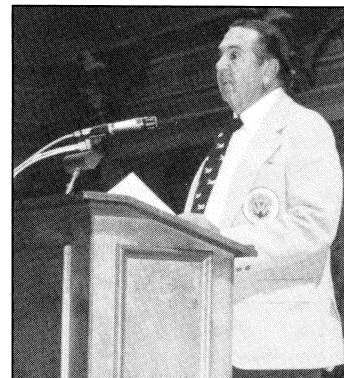
Invocation by Chaplain Bishop Rene Gracida



Chaplain Rene Gracida gives invocation at Memorial Services in Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall as Robert Heiliger and David McMullin bow their heads in prayer.



Vernon W. Stone



William E. Eisenhart

A reading of "The B-17"

by Vernon W. Stone Jr., 427th Squadron

She's a veritable "Flying Fortress"
And referred to as "The Queen,"
Revered by many a pilot and crew
The Boeing B-17

She first took to the air in '35.
An even gamble at best
No one was sure how she would perform
Or how well she'd withstand the test.
Just for a moment, try if you will,
To let your mind listen and see
If you can picture just what it was like
One morning in '43

Sitting in the mist of an English morn,
At airfields across the land,
A thousand Fortresses await their crews
For the mission that is planned.
One by one, propellers begin turning,
With a whine then a bark,
Hundreds of engines explode into life
Thundering loud in the dark,

Their checklists are finished, now they must wait,
As they watch for the green flare,
Heavily laden they begin their roll,
And gracefully take to the air.
The target is deep within Germany,
The fighters will take their toll,
Many planes and crew will go down today,
Only a few return whole.

The fighters are vicious, the flak is thick,
As the bombers thunder through,
The men are tired, they sweat in the cold,
But they have a job to do.
Bombs away! We're turning and headed home,
A few more hours to go,
Then suddenly a wing erupts in flame,
Will she make it? We don't know.

The flight crew struggles to retain control,
As they plummet toward the ground,
Then, as if lifted by a giant hand,
The big bomber comes around.
The straggler limps home across the channel,
And crosses the English shore,
She bellies in and breaks her back, we think
She'll take to the skies no more.

The bomber's flying days are finished, and
The war is in the books,
But the Fortress still stands the test of time,
With her sleek and graceful looks.

Today there aren't many 17s left,
Very few still actually fly;
But when they're seen, men silently recall,
When the Fortress ruled the sky...

By Robin A. Mitchell

A reading of "The Target is Berlin"

by William E. Eisenhart, 359th Squadron

The briefing room grows quiet and still
As the C. O. enters in....
"The target for today, he says
"Is the city of Berlin."
The laughter gone, a somber quiet
Now settles in the room...
As many men now contemplate
Today may spell their doom.

The preparation now is over
For the mission for today,
The gas and bombs are all aboard,
They'll soon be on their way.
The Flying Forts now lift their noses
And point them to the sky....
How many will return today?
How many men will die?

Four hundred planes were sent aloft
From the English countryside,
All were from The Mighty Eighth
Where they belong with pride.
Above the Channel now at dawn
The gunners clear their guns,
They know that it will not be long....
They'll be firing at the Huns.

As Rotterdam comes into view
The crews are in suspense,
For it can only be a little while
"til flak burst will commence.
They make it through the Netherlands
And across the German lines.
The dreaded puffs of smoke ahead
Are the first resistant signs.

The flak bursts now are all around
And begin to take their toll...
Now one, now two, three Forts go down
And a fourth is in a roll.
As Hanover comes to view ahead,
Many Flying Forts are gone
From flak and German fighter planes
But the bombers still go on

The Bombardier now in his sight
Has the city of Berlin...
In spite of all the hell he sees
He now can force a grin.
With bombs away its homeward bound
For the planes which now remain...
From friend and foe the bullets fly
As thick as heavy rain.

The homeward trip seems very long
As flak shells now return...
Another bomber takes a hit
And now begins to burn.
The German border far behind,
The battle now is over
For those who made it to return,
They see the cliffs of Dover.

Planes now landing one by one,
The flares go out ahead
To warn of wounded men aboard...
Some are wounded, many dead.
Another mission now behind,
The groups count up the cost...
Seven hundred men and seventy planes
Were on this mission lost.
The crews debriefed, now get some rest
For tomorrow without warning...
Another mission must be flown,
It is Frankfurt in the morning.

By Justin A. Parrish, 305th BG

A reading of "A Crew Chief's Lament"

by Robert Heiliger, 360th Squadron

I watched those men, those 10 brave men,
As they drove up in their jeeps,
With flying suits and parachutes
And things they left for me to keep.
There was no talk, just a confident walk
To the B-17 we called "Sack Time,"
As they gathered there in the morning air,
With the target - Dresden - on their mind.

The captain asked "Is the Sack OK?
Will she bring us back alive?"
He knew I'd be sitting on an ammunition crate,
Anxiously waiting for them to arrive.
As they climbed so high in the morning sky,
I felt like shouting to the clouds,
"War is hell, we all know that,
But, Hitler left us no way out."

I worked away the hours in the English chill,
Passing the time by any means,
When suddenly, they began to return
In their battered and crippled B-17s.
I scanned the sky with my naked eye
But "Sack Time" was not in sight;
I kept the virgil into the evening hours
Then gave up long into the night.

Come cry with me,
Cause war is hell,
It takes a deadly toll
Today.... my buddies fell.

Memorial Roll Call by Carlton Smith

The following are the comrades we lost since our last reunion in August 1996:

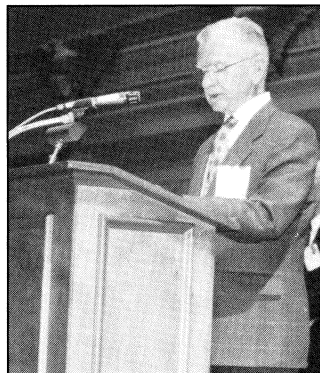
Charles J. Abeyta, George Aldous, George E. Anthony, Frederick E. Barnes, James H. Batton, Joseph A. Bennett, Charles J. Bonn, Louis H. Bourgeault, Joseph E. Bradbury, Morris Dimowitz, James A. Drewry, Truman K. Eldridge, Jesse H. Elliott, Paul R. Ellis, Lawrence E. Furey, Lester C. Hansen, Harry W. Haynes, Jr., James C. Hensley, Lloyd L. Holdcroft, J. Ford Kelley, Wilmer A. Knutson, Anthony R. Kray, Morton Luman, John J. McCarthy, Melvin T. McCoy, Bonnar P. McMahan, Arthur P. Middlemas, H. Cecil Miller, William D. Murphy, John P.D. Nothstein, Gerald M. Palmer, Marvin G. Richeson, Jr., Allan Ritchie, Bernard Schumacher, Albert C. Steele, Arthur M. Stoy, John m. Tinklenberg, Donald W. Torley, Robert E. Wade, Ernest A. Whitsall.

May they rest in peace.

Benediction

Taps

Retirement of colors



Carlton Smith



Robert B. Heiliger

Pittsburgh Reunion

(continued from page 1)

ing named after her when after her when she was six months old. The Flying Fortress was thus named the "Bonnie B" which completed 93 successful missions and aborted just seven times. The presentation of a book of "WW II Memories" was made to Mrs Ziegler by former M/Sgt William P. Zachar, crew chief of "Bonnie B." This was the first time that the pilot, the crew chief and Bonnie had gotten together in 53 years.

Bonnie who presently works in the Pentagon for General Joseph Ralston, USAF, Vice Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff brought letters of congratulations to members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association from General Ralston and also one from Lt. Gen. David L. Vesely, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force.

Another highlight of the Banquet was the awarding of specially designed and manufactured plaques to: Blaine R. Ruark whose B-17 "old Black Magic" flew 129 missions; Albert Curtis Fox, "Neva and The Silver Lady," flew 126 missions; John L. Peterson, "Daddy's Delight, flew 110 missions; Rober B. Heiliger, "Sack Time," flew 110 missions and Oldrich Fojt, unnamed B-17, flew 130 missions. Since Mr. Fojt was deceased the award was presented to family members present, i.e., his son, LTC Alan Fojt, USA (Ret), his daughter Virginia

and his grandson, Patrick Meil.

Also honored at the Banquet for their years of service to the Association were: Christ M. Christoff, Jack Gardner, Eugene E. Girman, Quentin W. Hargrove, Richard R. Johnson, Betty Kelley, James W. O'Leary Sr., Maurice J. Paulk, William J. Simpkins, Van R. White, and David C. Manning for his years of liaison work between the Joint Analysis Center at Molesworth and the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

In between the opening remarks by Eddie Deerfield and the awards for service to the Association, Betty Kelley, wife of our deceased Past President Ford Kelley, led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance and Chaplain Rev. Everett Dasher gave the invocation.

Taking the podium with gavel in hand, President Hal Susskind said, "It is my unpleasnt duty to call an end to one of the most enjoyable reunions of the past few years. We can all look forward to a very exciting and enjoyable reunion in Savannah on August 21-25, 1998.

Walt Ferrari is busy working on an exciting schedule including multi-visits to the fantastic 8th AF Heritage Museum. Start planning your trip as soon as you get home.

Reluctantly I must bang the gavel and call this the 14th reunion of the 303rd Bomb Group Association closed."

Other highlights of Pittsburgh reunion

One hundred missions plus awards were mailed to crew chiefs: Howard E. Isaacson, "Shoo Shoo Baby" (427) 112 missions and Normam A. Cote, "Idaliza" (360) 105 missions. Deceased crew chiefs awards were mailed to families of: Frank R. Furman, "Sweet Rosie O'Grady (427) and James P. Thompson, "Thunderbird" (359). Awards are being held for George W. Ham, (deceased) "The Floose" (358) and Wesley F. Gradeville, (360) whose whereabouts are unknown.... **AWARDS** were also presented to Walter and Bev Mayer and their daughter Kathy by Jack Rencher for outstanding support to the Association over the years....**OUR ACE** photographer Coleman Sanders did his usual outstanding job in shooting more than 100 photos which you will see scattered throughout this issue and the next....**QUENTIN HARGROVE** who presided over the awards to the "100 plus" crew chiefs, gave a stellar performance in his presentation of his poem entitled "The Forgotten Man." It merited a standing ovation - which he got.



The Forgotten Man

Through the history of world aviation

Many names have come to the fore
Great deeds of the past in our memory
The heroes of many a war.

The pilot was everyone's idol,
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand
As he stood by his battered B-17
With his helmet and goggles in hand.

But for each of our flying heroes
There were thousands of little renown
These were the men who worked on the planes
But kept their feet on the ground
We all know the name of Lindbergh
And we've read of his flight into fame
But think, if you can, of his maintenance man
Can you remember his name?

And think of our Molesworth heroes
Who flew The Thunderbird, Iza Vailable & Bad Penny
Can you tell me the name of their crew chiefs,
A thousand to one you couldn't name any.
Now, combat crews are highly trained people
And silver wings are not simply a trifle,
But without the work of the maintenance man
They would be in the infantry carrying a rifle.

So when you think of the mighty B-17s
As they marked their path through the air
Remember the grease stained man with the wrench in his hand
He's the one who put them there.

by Quentin Hargrove

Quentin Hargrove read the poem above when he awarded the plaques to the deserving crew chiefs whose aircraft flew 100 missions plus.



VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20318-9999

5 September 1997

President
303rd Bomber Group Reunion
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

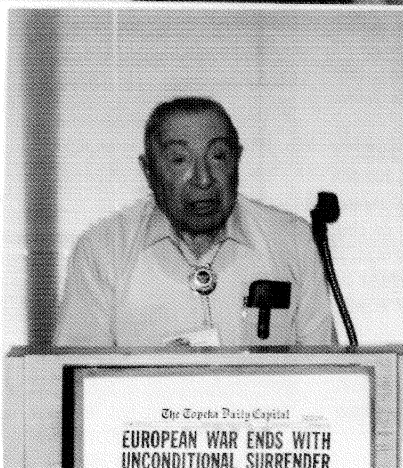
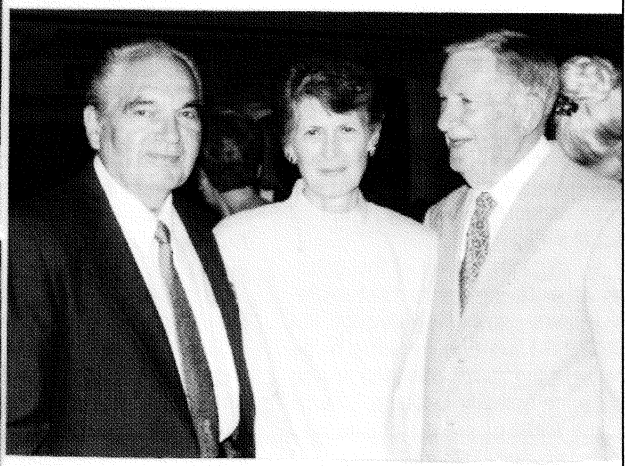
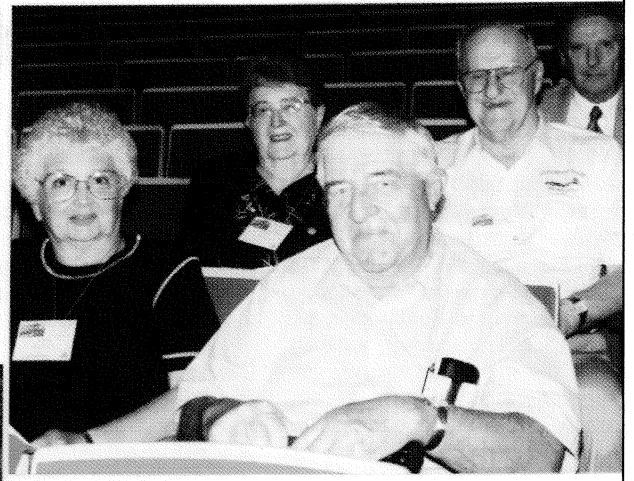
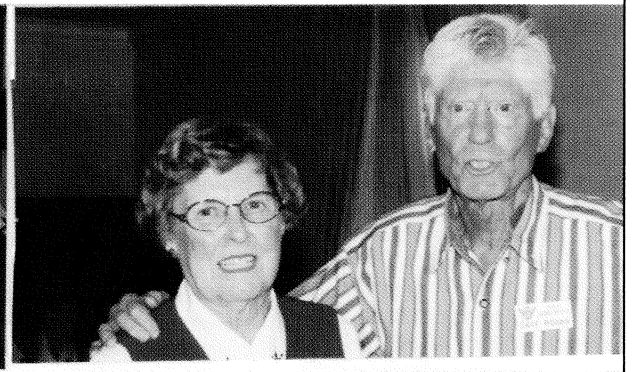
Dear Members of the 303rd Bomber Group,

As you celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the 303rd Bomber Group, I want to personally thank you for your unsurpassed dedication to our Nation during times of great peril. Flying the famous B-17 Flying Fortress, you committed yourselves without reserve to winning freedom for those oppressed. Your willingness to risk your lives to secure peace for others continues America's long and distinguished tradition as a Nation of compassion and honor.

The legacy of your service in the 303rd Bomber Group is one in which you can take great pride. On this special occasion, I salute your patriotism and wish you peace and happiness in the years ahead.

Most sincerely,

Joe Ralston
JOSEPH W. RALSTON
General, USAF



The Sawicki Story

Continued from page 1—

drag them to the waist door. Pulling the hinge-pin cable, he kicked out the door and wrestled both gunners to the exit, literally booting them out of the faltering aircraft into the minus 50 C air outside. They were able to pull their own ripcords and safely parachuted into enemy territory. Sgt. Sawicki collapsed from his wounds and went down with the flaming Fortress.

Repeated attacks by Focke-Wulf 190 fighters sent 20mm cannon shells tearing through the Fortress. Lt. Fyler was wounded and his co-pilot Lt. Bob Ward was hit in the face and lost an eye. The engineer, T/Sgt. Bill Addison, in the top turret, was blasted out of his position with a torn leg. The navigator, Lt. George Molnar was wounded in the back, but the Bombardier, Lt. Jom Petrolino miraculously escaped injury. The ship turned violently with part of the right wing and two engines dead. A hail of cannon fire from the attacking fighters flamed another engine and after a futile, 20 minute struggle to control the stricken aircraft, the pilot gave the order to bail out. The forward crew members escaped through the open bombay. Fyler snapped on his chest pack chute and dove to the hatch below and seeing that the nose section was empty, dropped out of the plane.

Yet another sweep of the determined Luftwaffe pilots sent explosive shells screaming through the B-17s midsection, leaving huge holes in the radio room and ripping open the bombay fuselage. Caught in the midst of the explosions was radioman Sgt. O'Connell.

With split seconds to spare, he made his way forward to the open bombay and along with NPS Egge, the wounded photographer, dropped from the crippled Fortress. Sgt. Ray Ford was dead in the disabled ball turret and his body went down with the aircraft.

S/Sgt. Sawicki's remains were buried near Bremen and were later disinterred and moved to a state-side burial ground in Detroit, Michigan. Sawicki flew 14 missions in 1942 with the Polish RAF and wore the Polish Cross of Honor and the Polish Legion of Merit.

Of the heroic crew of 11 that day, ten were wounded and four died immediately and three succumbed later to POW mistreatment. Lt. Fyler was repatriated at the War's end in 1945, promoted to Captain and lat-

er Major. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with clusters. He is now a retired dentist living in Topeka, Kansas and is president of his local POW Chapter. His book, "Staying Alive" tells of this and other incredible wartime experiences.

Story and artwork by:

Robert A. Hand, Sr.
6197 97th Court South
Boynton Beach, FL 33437

Ed. Note: Carl Fyler's account of the November 29, 1943 mission to Bremen was first published under the title "Staying Alive" in the July 1989 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter.

In that story, Fyler related how he was liberated from the POW camp in May 1945 and later met up with Sgt Stachowiack in the hospital at Camp Lucky Strike in France. It was in that conversation that Fyler heard about Sgt. Sawicki's heroic act. After hearing Sgt. Stachowiack's hospital-bed story, Capt. Fyler, at RAMPS Camp Lucky Strike, France in July 1945 wrote up a narrative recommending Sgt. Sawicki for a posthumous award of the Congressional Medal of honor. Another recommendation was made in 1947. Both were lost and no action taken. Fyler is continuing his attempt to get the award Sgt. Sawicki deserves..

In 1945 I wrote a letter to the then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. Colin Powell. seeking his support in getting the award for Sgt. Sawicki. Unfortunately my letter which started at the top found its way back down to a Major in the US Army who in a lot of gobbledegook essentially said that we would need a person who witnessed the act of heroism to verify that the act had actually happened the way it is described. Since Stachowiack died in 1975 and Fisher much earlier, our quest to right a wrong has temporarily hit a roadblock.

But to be successful in getting Sgt. Sawicki the recognition he so rightfully deserves, we will need the support of all members of the Association. If we tell the story enough times and in a variety of places, maybe someone will finally listen to us.

In keeping with the motto of the 303rd Bomb Group, "We were never turned back;" we will continue the fight. →

IN MEMORIAM

On Wednesday, October 8, 1997, my father LTC (Ret.) Merritt O. Slawson (Chappie) was buried with full military honors in Fort Sam Houston Military Cemetery. He died in Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center on the preceding Monday. He had been in poor health for the past few years and did not have the strength to make it through this last crisis.

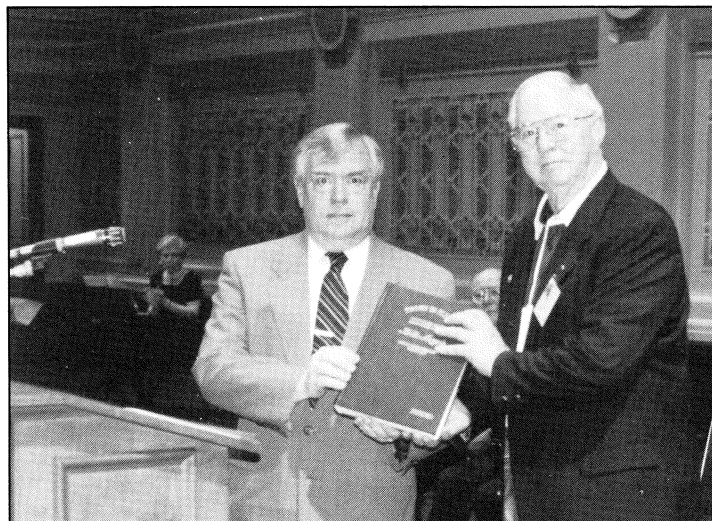
Several months ago he asked me to write something for him as crippling arthritis in his fingers prevented him from doing so himself. He knew that I understood how he felt and wanted me to convey this to his many friends from the 303rd. Obviously I didn't get this done in time for him to see it but I think the spirit of his intent will be conveyed.

Through the years it became obvious to me that approximately April 1943 to April 1945 was the defining period in my father's life. That was the time he was assigned as Protestant chaplain with the 303rd at Molesworth. The days with the 303rd frequently came up over the years and it was obvious that there was a strong emotional attachment to the people and experiences there. I recall he once recounted that he was counselling a young airman and stated to him that "I know what you are going through." To which the young man replied, "No sir, you don't." I am given to understand that shortly thereafter, Chappie took it upon himself to find out just what the young man, and his contemporaries, really were going through. Details of some of this are a bit "vague," but he did state to me that he flew on "several" combat missions in addition to a lot of local flights with various crews. His lifelong love of aviation started

when he saw his first airplane. He got his chance to fly while at Molesworth and apparently could handle a B-17 fairly well. He continued to get air time throughout his military career and was also a licensed private pilot, owning several airplanes over the years. He could always come up with a story to tell about the days with the 303rd. And he was always proud of his membership in the Association and status as chaplain for the organization. When we were going over the funeral arrangements we found instructions that he had left for his service. These included reference to his affiliation with the 303rd during the war and with the association later. I participated in his funeral service and implemented his wishes. I included the above in my presentation as well as telling the story of the English pennies he gave to crewmen, inscribed with their name, prior to missions with instructions to bring them back. I was able to personalize this story for I have one of these pennies that flew over 30 missions out of Molesworth during the war. My father gave it to me when I went into the service and it went back to war in Vietnam. I returned safely and never fly or travel without it.

To his many friends from the 303rd I can say that my father always cherished the days he spent with you at Molesworth and later with the Association. I think it can be said that he flew with every crew on every mission, in spirit if not in fact.

Jack M. Slawson (A-85)
6619 Seegers Trail Dr.
Houston, TX 77066
(281) 0440-1084



Past President Ed Miller(r) presents a copy of "Might in Flight-Daily Diary of the 303rd" to David McMullin, Chairman, Board of Managers, Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall at Memorial Services, 7 Sept. 1997.

My most unusual 303rd experience

"O' you picked the wrong one today!"

My first experience was on my third or fourth raid which was over St. Nazaire. I was in the ball turret flying with Lt. Castle. We were on the right wing of the lead ship "Old Soljer" in the heavy flak. I saw it hit "Old Soljer." Soon after, I saw someone parachute from the nose of the lead ship. (Holy Mackerel) It scared the hell out of me. This was 23 November 1942.. On 23 Jan. 1943, on my sixth raid, we were bombing Lorient, France in the "Thumper." We were hit by flak coming off the target. We fought fighters until Lt. Castle brought the plane down close to the water, which kept the fighters from diving down at us. I was stuck in the ball turret, because of so many empty 50 cal. shells were ground up in my turret track. Castle ordered us to bail out over land. Somehow with the help of Craft, one of the waist gunners, he got me out of the turret. When I went to bail out someone noticed my chute was full of holes. I thought, well, I'll stay with the pilot and crash land. But he insisted I take his chute and he rode it down. Sgt. Yannie was hit in the forehead but his Army helmet saved him. The tail gunner Sgt. Billy Staner was killed when his parachute failed to open at low altitude. Sgt. Yannie was badly wounded also from the fall. Sgt Craft and I both landed in the trees that broke our fall. We were both also wounded. (For further accounts of this mission of the "Thumper, see the August 1996 issue of the newsletter).

After a stay in the hospital, I began to catch up on my raids. By March 1943, there were no full crews left of the original flight crews. I went from one plane to another when there was a shortage of gunners. I flew most of my remaining raids in the "Old Soljer. On March 4, 1943 at the last moment I switched from Old Soljer" to the "Yardbird." When I returned to my barracks, I heard that the "Old Soljer" crashed in flight formation and all were killed except the tail gunner, Sgt. Balcombe. My hut buddies, very embarrassed, returned my belongings to me. On my last raid on May 29,

1943, a ground crewman said, "Semonick, I think you picked the wrong one today." He was right, and I have thought about it many times since.

Ed. Note: Sgt. Semonick, flying in "Yardbird" was shot down over St. Nazaire. Hit by flak over the target, it was finished off by attacking FW-190s and Me-109s. Eight parachutes were seen The C/P Lt. T.S. Vaughn was killed and the rest of the crew became POWs.

Martin Semonick (360)
Ball Turret gunner

A day at the beach!

Wheels up - crash landing on coast at Rye, England.

Damaged right wing area and leak in right wing fuel tank after bomb run over Berlin, 28 March 1945. Left formation to locate landing strip on coast - fuel ran out. Weather ground zero on coast. Flew along coast to locate possible open beach area. Fortunately at Rye, there was an opening and set plane down with wheels up. Sloping beach caused plane to slide forward and right. Ended up in four feet of channel water. All crewmen OK. Spent night in jail at Rye - only place available. Returned to Molesworth next day. Plane was #43-38451 - D (Dog) No other markings. Crew Chief, Willis Meyer, Bryan, Ohio. Our engineer, Norm Hammel did fine job of transferring fuel during return.

Robert E. Edmunds (360)
Pilot.

Ed. Note: According to "Might-in-Flight" (page 687) this magnificent piece of flying was credited to Lt. R.E. Edwards but the questionnaire from which this copy was taken was signed by Robert E. Edmunds. It was one of two B-17s, low on fuel in miserable weather which made wheels up landings in southeast England. Both planes were salvaged and no crew members were injured in either incident

"The last mission!"

On my last mission #35, on March 20, 1945, we bombed the submarine pens at Hamburg, Germany. Flak was very heavy. During the bomb run I saw gasoline streaming off our wing and thought

we had been hit. Actually, fuel was being transferred and overflowed one tank. As we left the target we were attacked by Me-262, jets, the first we had seen in the war. They shot off the stabilizer of the ship flying next to us; then shot it down. On the next pass, we shot down the ship attacking us. It broke in two just ahead of the tail. I put in a claim, but there were many guns firing and I don't know who was credited with the kill.

On February 22, 1945, I had a surprise visit from my cousin, Glen Walling, whom I had not seen since we were boys in our early teens. He was in our group, in the 359th squadron, and happened to see my name in a Red Cross Register. We had a great visit, talking about his family's visit to our Oklahoma farm in the mid 1930s.

Not long after his visit, I completed my missions and returned home. I did not learn until after the war's end that he was killed on the 303rd's last mission of the war. His plane was shot down near Pilsen, Czechoslovakia on April 25, 1945.

James M. Walling (358)
Ball Turret Gunner

Ed. Note: Your cousin's sacrifice was not forgotten by the citizens of the Village of Krimice, Czechoslovakia. On May 7, 1996 a memorial honoring the deceased members of Lt. Mauger's crew was designed, erected and dedicated by the citizens of that village. Mr. Zdenek Prosek, Mayor of Pilsen and the Mayor of Krimice along with Air Force Colonel David E. Potts, Air Attache at the U.S.Embassy in Pil-



Molesworth snow - (l to r) Pete Kearns, Harry Heller and Charles Hendershott, S4 Group aircraft inspectors.

sen said a few words at the ceremony. (See page 14 of the May 1997 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter).

"Whoops-Bombs Away!"

On one of our missions we were attacked by a German fighter. Fortunately, his shot only tore into the top of our wing instead of our gas tank. This was probably due to the evasive action taken by our pilot. But the evasive action shook all of the 500 pound bombs off of the bomb racks. The bomb bay doors could not be opened except manually. So after our flight engineer, John Mason had refilled six oxygen walk-around bottles, I went into the bomb bay and got the doors opened over France.

I never did brag about my ability as a bombardier but "Gee" my target on this mission was in Germany and I hit France.

Harold L. Scott (360)
Bombardier

Ed. Note: Let's look on the bright side. Since you dropped you bombs before D-Day, France was in enemy territory. Who knows, you might have been fortunate enough to wipe out a German garrison of occupying troops. and shortened the war?

Can you top this?

Whether or not this is unusual or not, I would like to know if any and how many others that flew three different aircraft in the same war - as gunner - these aircraft were B-17, A-20 and B-26.

Bill B. Tipton (359)
Right waist gunner

Upgrade to Life Membership

L1874 Norman A. Cote
LA-319 Charles W. Doctor

Total Active Members

Regular	1317
Associate	255
Honorary	9
Widows	311

Total active 1892
as of 30 August 1997

Experiences were varied and came in different packages

Sweating out take-offs

I would like to comment on one aspect of each mission which I have found to be largely overlooked. I can recall seeing only one mention of it in all of the material I have read.

While each mission was an "adventure," one of the most frightening parts was the "take-off" and the feeling of apprehension (for me) grew with each successive mission.

During our tour, I estimate that at least 50 percent of the time visibility down the runway could be as little as 100 feet to 100 yards. The fact that we had a short runway and were always overloaded added to the feeling of dread as the throttles were advanced against the brakes.

On our third mission we had to abort our take-off because of an inoperative "air speed indicator" and it was only the skill of our pilots that prevented a tragedy.

Since this was the first and only time this situation occurred, it was unique in that we really weren't ready for it. I believe it was through repetition in training that enabled us to survive unscathed. We were able to recognize that the needle was inert when movement should have been detected. The final result was that we ran off the end of the runway and just managed to stop about 10 feet from a draining ditch. I estimated that we had reached about 70 mph when corrective measures were initiated.

Herbert Shanker (359)

Flight engineer

Ed. Note: I believe the writer has a valid point. With the transfer of Gen. Ira Eaker to Italy, I don't believe that many of the "brass" at Hdq. in London ever experienced a fully loaded, zero visibility takeoff, in a B-17.

"To bomb or not to bomb?"

There were many incidents during World War II that will continue to be in my memory forever.

1. Prior to my assignment with the 303rd, we were flying a new B-17 on the northern route to England, and were five hours overdue going into Meeks Field, Iceland from Goose Bay. It was a result of radio malfunction and unfriendly winds. With the help of a star-shooting navigator, a radio operator who just the day before had heard of "QDM," P-40 pilots who searched for us, and the radar operator at Meeks Field, we finally made it, but landed with less than thirty-five minutes

of gas. I will always remember those icebergs, large waves, and cold waters where survival could only have lasted for minutes.

2. On a mission to Berlin, 7 May 1944, we had heavy flak but no apparent damage until we entered the traffic pattern at Molesworth. At 500 feet, No. 2 engine caught on fire. We were too low to jump, so we rode "Iza Vailable Too" in, expecting the plane to blow up any second. We landed and all the crew got out. The fire truck crew was magnificent, and the fire was extinguished, but "Iza Vailable Too" was sent to the salvage yard. The fire was caused by flak damage to the fuel line which burst when the booster pumps were turned on. This was my first mission.

3. Having lived through the raid on Saarbrücken where a second run on the target resulted in a great loss of men and planes, I said as a lead bombardier, I would never make a second run over the target. On 10 June 1944, I was the lead bombardier flying with General Travis. Our mission was to bomb the marshalling yards at Paris, France. Clouds obscured the target to such an extent that neither I nor the navigator could identify the target. I closed the bomb bay doors and announced to the cockpit that we were going to the secondary target at Nantes, France. We made a successful run which was accomplished without any losses. I did not want to go down in history as the bombardier, nor did I feel that Gen. Travis would want to be known as the General who bombed the Champs Elysses, the Arc de Triomphe or the Eiffel Tower. Upon returning to Molesworth, I mentioned this to General Travis. He heartily agreed with my decision.

Ralph M Sudderth (360)
Bombardier

Sixty-two days in the blue!

Of the 24 combat missions that I was part of an excellent crew, there were seven that stood out in my mind. We were given a brand new plane called "Iza Vailable Too." Our first mission was Easter Sunday, April 9, 1944 to Marienburg, East Prussia. It was a beautiful day; you could see Sweden in the distance. The mission was flown six months to the day that the 8th AF bombed the Focke-Wulf plant that was de-



M.P.s from 1199th Company check passes at Fox Pub. Clarence Davis is sitting under dart board. Checking passes are Sgt. Fisher and Sam Frumm. Sitting at table is Pvt. Montano.

scribed by Gen. Hap Arnold as the best job of precision bombing to that day. With much curiosity as a newcomer, I saw the bombs from the group ahead hit the buildings that had been built up in the past six months. The 303rd followed and dropped right on target. It was a beautiful sight and was the longest (11 hours, 38 minutes) of the 364 missions that the 303rd flew.

Our third mission was to dreaded Schweinfurt. The 8th AF had a fetish for bombing approximately six months to the day (Oct. 14, 1943 - Black Thursday). Gen. Doolittle commanded we bomb at 19,000 feet. As we entered Germany, I looked out the window and noted the 384th Bomb Group flying high group. All of a sudden enemy fighters came out of the contrails from above and hit them hard. I saw four or five B-17s go down at once, some spinning, one blazing from wing tip to wing tip and nose to tail. I didn't notice any chutes because our group got hit at the same time. The flak was very intense and accurate as we dropped our bombs on target. We were lucky. The 384th lost more planes to flak and the last time I saw them flying along side of us, they had only four planes left out of a formation of 18 or 20. The 8th AF lost 60 plus bombers that day. I had a hard time eating steak served to us that evening.

Our seventh mission was April 24, 1944 to Oberpfaffenhofen. We were passing near Chartres, France when I looked out and saw two Me-109s flying parallel to us at about 150 yards. I called the pilot Don Johnston and he saw them too. All of a sudden, they peeled off at 10 o'clock and I started firing my

50 cal. mounted over my desk. Since we were flying "Purple Heart Corner," we could maneuver easily without fear of colliding. Don kept a close eye on the 109s and as soon as they started firing he pulled back on the stick. I was thrown to the floor with gun pointing straight up and my finger still on the trigger firing away. Paul Pesetsky, ball turret operator, said the 20mm fire burst below us. It was the only time I was able to fire my guns on 24 missions. Later near Munich, Paul said he shot down a camouflage painted Me-109 that tried to sneak up on us from below. The worst thing I remember about the mission is that Lt. Stewart's plane was hit by flak and tried to get to Switzerland. They didn't make it and seven of the ten were KIA, three POWs. Our crews were good friends because we trained together in the States.

Our 11th mission was very memorable. It was May 7, 1944 to Big B - Berlin. Nothing happened on the way except the usual apprehension about fighter attacks or concentrated flak over the target. Being a big city, there was a lot of flak; but it was scattered and we were able to avoid much of it. However, on the way back we had to pass through the narrow corridor of flak at Dummer Lake. Our #4 engine must have been hit by a piece of flak because as we were approaching the end of the runway on landing at Molesworth, fire in #4 was streaming all the way back to the stabilizer. With a fire of that magnitude, it doesn't take long for a B-17 to blow up. With the usual great skill of our pilot, Don Johnston, he ran the plane off the runway and ground-looped it so B-17s behind us would face a clear runway. He cut the engines and then the fire was not very

The unexpected experiences are the ones that you relive

large. Needless to say we exited the plane in record time. The fire crews immediately jumped on the wing and sprayed foam to put the fire out. Our new B-17G, "Iza Vailable Too" had all of nine missions completed. No more, for it was scrapped for spare parts. After that our crew flew in old B-17Fs and new B-17Gs.

One of our most memorable missions was our 13th to Saarbrücken, May 11, 1944. It was a lousy mission in many ways. First of all, we took off after 3 p.m. in the afternoon. There must have been high priority rolling stock in these marshalling yards that had to be destroyed. We took off in an old B-17F but it got us there and back. Secondly, we made one bomb run through intense and accurate flak in late afternoon when smoke and haze were blowing down from the Ruhr Valley making it impossible to see the target. We did not change altitude and made a successful second bomb run through more intense flak. All but two aircraft sustained major or minor flak damage. Worst of all, the 303rd, 360th Squadron lost Capt. John Long on his last mission. He and six of his crew were KIA. I did not know him too well but he did live in our hut. We landed in the dark after 9 p.m.

Our 21st was the big one - "D Day our rendezvous with destiny. When we were awakened at 0200, we had the feeling, this was it. The briefing was short. Col. Stevens said, "This is D-Day. This is the day we have all been waiting for. Make 'em know it." We took off about 0730. Apparently, our crew was part of the second morning mission because about halfway across the Channel, the undercast became 10/10, completely obscuring the target. There was no PFF aircraft flying in our group, so we had to bring our bombs back - the only time. It was a sickening feeling to know that thousands of men were dying down there on the beach. We did not see the beach until two days later on June 8th on the way to bomb Orleans.

My most memorable mission was the 24th and last with the 360th Sqdn., 303rd Bomb Group (H), 8th AF and Donald Johnston's crew. It was June 10 1944. It was a day when everything seemed to go wrong. First, our crew was not scheduled to fly that day; but since another crew could not make it for whatever reason, we felt it was a good time to get in a short mission after D-Day. Many of these short missions after D-Day were flown

without any opposition. Our Bombardier Ralph Sudderth was lead bombardier flying with B/Gen. Travis. Second, we had an older plane with mechanical problems but not enough to keep us from flying. Two days before we had a brand new B-17G with 1/4 inch armor plate on the floor at the navigator's table. I later found out that many navigators spread flak vests on the floor. I had never thought of that. Flight was uneventful until Nantes, France. Our target was reached at 23,000 feet. It was about 0820. I was relaxed and I don't remember if it was just before bombs away or just after; a burst of flak below us made my left leg kick. I looked down and saw blood streaming from my boot and flowing down the catwalk. There was no pain, just numbness. I called Don on the intercom and notified him that I had been hit and he sent the engineer down to help put a tourniquet on and give me a shot of morphine to stop any shock setting in. The temperature was about 28 degrees thereby freezing blood on the catwalk. I had a hard time to keep from sliding in it. Heading home I had to release the tourniquet every so often, and the morphine worked wonders. Approaching Molesworth, Don shot off the customary red flare to denote wounded aboard. I was operated on at about 1620 at the station hospital and, after 3 more operations and 15 months in various hospitals in the USA, the war ended. The rest of our crew finished their 30 missions and went their ways.

**Milo R. Schultz (360)
Navigator**

Poltava seemed safe—until!

In February 1944 an order came to the 303rd Bomb Group that was

to provide about 30 group members a most unique and interesting period of their military service. A few members from each squadron (5 from the 427th) were assigned to go to the USSR to establish temporary bases for shuttle bombers and fighters. Some of us made the trip by plane via The Air Transport Command.

After a week of orientation and preparation we arrived in the Ukraine at the town of Poltava which was to be the main bomber base. About 100 men were to work there. To each crew chief, three or four Russian helpers were provided. Some were boys 15 or 16 who had received aircraft maintenance training. Others were veterans who were recovering from battle wounds. Many of these men had fought in the bloody vicious battles with the Germans there on the Eastern Front in the previous two years where life expectancy was very short. We learned a sufficient vocabulary of their language to engage in a basic conversation and explain duties. Some of us even achieved an elementary reading level despite the strange alphabet.

We found their soldiers to be fun loving and humorous. Nearly all of them had lost some or all of their family from war causes in the past three years. One of my crew, Peter, an infantryman from the Vladivostok area of Siberia, had been wounded seven times, once in the throat so he could speak barely above a whisper. As one looked at the scars on the land and villages of the Ukrainian countryside caused by the titanic battles of the two great armies as they struggled on this small sector of the 1500 mile front, one realized that there in the USSR was where Hitler and his Wehrmacht lost their hope of expansion.

Our bases at and near Poltava seemed safe - the Nazi Army was retreating toward Poland in the summer of '44 but the Luftwaffe displayed their strength with a devastating attack on the night of June 21 when 75 B-17s from the 8th AF-3rd Division, were parked on the field after arriving from England

It was near midnight when the Nazi lead plane came over the field releasing three large chandelier flares that lit up most of the air-drome. In a few minutes the bombers arrived dropping their incendiary, 100 pounders and anti-personnel devices. The raid went on for an hour and a half, fighters planes were strafing. Fortunately, no attempt was made to strike personnel, many of whom took refuge in a ditch along a railroad track.

It was a sad sight that greeted us as the first light of dawn came. Some planes were still burning. An acrid pall of smoke hung over the area. Remaining parts of aircraft lay in grotesque patterns. The tally of damage showed 68 planes affected, most of them seriously.. Only six craft could be air ready in one day.

The raid on the Poltava field no doubt caused the worst destruction inflicted on any Air Force bomber base during the war. The losses had a very depressing effect on all of us crew chiefs as we considered the B-17 the best plane of our bomber fleet.

Salvaging usable parts and repairing the repairable occupied the following months. In October, with a touch of winter in the air, most of the staff returned to England, except for a skeleton crew left to provide emergency aid to crippled aircraft.

**Paul Winkleman (427)
Assistant Crew Chief**

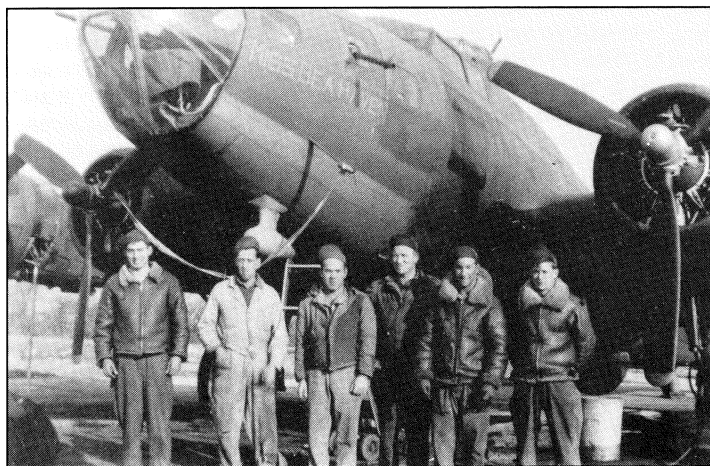
A P-51 tale

On mission #25, (July 8, '44) we lost No. 4 engine, finally feathered it.

On mission #30, (18 July '44) as we turned at the IP and started our bomb run, we had a P-51 on our left wing and he flew the bomb run with us. He slowed to our air speed, rolled his canopy back and waved to us.

**Russell Ney (358)
Bombardier/Navigator**

Ed. Note: According to "Might in Flight," Russell Ney finished his tour of 35 missions on 24 July 1944. The 303rd flew 19 missions in July 1944. Who in the 303rd holds the record for flying 35 missions in the least amount of time?



Ground crew of 359th Sqdn. aircraft "Miss Bea Haven. The aircraft was assigned to the 303rd on 19 Feb. 1943 it was still around 20/2/44.

Now is the time to document your exciting experiences!



The official date inked in on bottom of photo said, "17 April '45, lead team Royan." Royan was bombed on the 14th and 15th. Lt. Young (N), Maj. McCormick (B) and Maj. Heller (P) in photo, bombed Straubing on 16, April. Which is correct?

"There's a bomb on the wing!"

On my third mission to Bremen, Germany - 26 November 1943, while over the target and "bombs away" a plane flown by Lt. Bob Sheets left the formation and came across the top of our plane and one 100 lb. incendiary bomb hit our port wing about 8 feet from the fuselage, inflicting a hole about 2 1/2 feet long and 10 inches wide. This was an awesome sight looking up from my top turret into the bombay as the bombs were being dropped. Lt Eckert was our pilot and he managed to shake the bomb off the wing.

On my fourth mission and Lt. Eckert's last one to Solingen, Germany, we encountered a lot of flak and while on the bomb run number three engine ran out of gas due to fuel tank getting hit by flak. We managed to get back over the English Channel and pretty close to England before we ran completely out of gas and had to ditch. The seas were pretty rough and the water was pretty cold considering this was December 1st. All of the crew safely got out into dinghys and floated around for about two hours before being picked up by an English PT boat. We were taken to shore where we got rid of our wet clothes and given some RAF uniforms to wear. We returned to Molesworth the next afternoon.

Frank X. Neuner (427)
Flight engineer

Ed. Note: What ever happened to Lt. Eckert's crew? I see no further mention of it in the "Daily Diary." Did they ever get to mission number five?

What downed this B-17?

The date: 26 Nov. 1944; the place, Osnabruck. Our number one

engine caught fire. We were ordered to bail-out. As ball-turret operator I was number one to jump. Right wing tip blew off as I was coming down and I lost a shoe. Then a German fighter fired on me—I saw the paint marks in the chute canopy. Our fighters chased off the German fighters. Coming down into a river with ice flows, I knew I didn't have much of a chance to live so I pulled down on the risers and the canopy collapsed. I might have gone unconscious because I had come through a roof; hanging some three feet off the floor I had come down through. I was surrounded by German soldiers. I was taken to where some of my crew were in a motorcycle. I was transferred to a touring type automobile and taken to a civilian type police station. There I was interrogated then sent to a transient camp, then Luft four. Many happenings from transient camp to Luft four. From Luft four to Luft five at Nurnburg 80 to box car; nearly died from no water. At Nurnburg food was so lean that I got down to 90 lbs. Forced march from Nurnburg to Moosburg 7A - terrible conditions. Liberated by The American 14th Armored Division, April 29, 1945

Rollin J. Bender (358)
Ball Turret Gunner

P.S. There's a conflict among crew about what brought our B-17 down. At this point in time; just what difference does it make? "None!" But the others??

Merry Christmas

Watched a B-17 from another group take a direct hit in its bombay from an "88" anti-aircraft gun on a raid to Ludwigshaven (Mann-

heim) on Dec. 11, 1944. Just pieces of aluminum foil floating in the sky at 20,000 feet. Returned from that raid with some 80 holes in our fuselage but no one was injured.

We didn't make it back to Molesworth from the continent on Dec. 24, 1944. Had to land at Gravelly, a Royal Air Force Lancaster base and spent Christmas eve and Christmas day with the British. Had a lively celebration.

Walter Dennis (360)
Navigator

"Luck be a lady tonight"

I guess that one of the hairiest incidents during my combat tour occurred on my 24th mission which was to Wilhelmshaven on Feb. 3, 1944. I was flying low sqdn. lead and was supposed to fire red/red when the group leader (a PFF plane replacing Col. Stevens for the bomb run) dropped his bombs.

Normally the engineer would ready the flare gun for firing but since he and the others were busy on their guns and the flare gun was not very accessible to the C/P, I turned the controls over to the C/P (Sam Bass) and tried to lock the flaregun into its holder, but just as I did the plane made a violet jerk and the gun fell from its holder.

When I hit the floor, it fired with the flares coming to rest under the oxygen tanks behind the pilot's seat. The bright red glare and smoke was something else. Since the bombay doors were open, most of the smoke was sucked out or we would be blinded. I jerked my oxygen loose, went to the nose for an extinguisher and tried to put the fire out but it seemed that I could not get the extinguisher to work and felt as if I was passing out. So I tried to reach across my seat for my oxygen. The next thing I knew was that some one of the crew was helping me into my seat and the flare was out. I asked who had done it and was told that I had but was apparently so far gone from the lack of oxygen that I didn't realize it. I thank the crew members that probably saved my life and the plane.

I flew overseas as C/P on the Monahan crew and flew my first eight missions with them. While I was hospitalized on Aug. 31, '44, the crew had to fly with a sub C/P and they were shot down. Subsequently, I flew as sub C/P on three missions with Lt. Sumaridason and three with Lt. Campbell. John Lemon checked me out as first pilot

and I took over as combat check-out pilot with Lt. Jack Watson's crew on their first two missions and then finished my tour as combat checkout pilot with the Lt. Sam Bass crew. Before I could clear the base, four of the five crews that I had flown with had been shot down, but there was never so much as a purple heart for anyone when I was aboard and I never had to land without all four fans turning. I feel that I had much more than my share of luck all the way through.

M.L. (Pete) Clark (358)
Co-pilot/Pilot

An unusual incident or was it?

On the Stuttgart raid on Feb. 2, 1944, the pilot noticed that our fuel supply was low and so he lagged back so that we would make Molesworth. About 45 minutes from the French Coast we were jumped by a lone Me-109. He stayed behind firing his 20mm guns. The pilot took evasive action and the bandit finally took off. Ten minutes before we hit the coast our fuel warning light came on and our pilot called "May Day" and we were instructed to land at the British Spitfire base at Brighton on the south coast of England. We glided over the channel and landed on the mesh runway at Brighton. While the British were trying to figure out how to put fuel in our aircraft an air inspector looked over our B-17 and said even if we were fueled up, we couldn't take off because our left wing main strut had a 20 mm cannon slug in it. We stayed there overnight until a truck came and carried us back to Molesworth three days later.

When we got back to Molesworth, from my foot locker was missing: my 45 cal., my binoculars, fifty one dollar bills and two pair of ebony handled Sheffield straight razors which I had purchased a week before in Sheffield. One pair I was going to give to the pilot when he finished his missions. These items were never recovered.

Keith W. Clapp (427)
Bombardier

"Bring it back?"

It was the 27th of August 1944 and my 23rd mission. The original target was Berlin. This was the 233 mission of the 303rd BG. The take-off and assembly went as scheduled. Upon arriving at the enemy coast, the cloud cover was quite high. The Group flew up and down

Experiences were fantastic and bizarre but never dull!

Denmark trying to gain altitude for primary target. At 1432 hours, the order was given to abort the primary target and pick a target of opportunity. This was Esbjaerg Airfield, Denmark. The initial run was aborted and a 360 degree turn was made. The squadron on second run was at same heading, same altitude and same airspeed. Over the target a/c # A629 (Lt. Yarnell) received a direct hit and went down over the target. Aircraft #D841 (Lt. Hallum) managed to get back to English coast and crew bailed out. Our aircraft received extensive damage (O-781). We lost #2 and #4 engines at the target area. We could not keep up with formation now could we maintain 20,000 feet altitude. Anything loose went overboard, including the Norden bombsight. We managed to level off and maintain 11,000' altitude back to England. Our radio operator was able to contact the Air Sea Rescue unit with the command set. The rest of the flight was made without further incident. When the aircraft was parked at the hard stand and the two remaining engines shut off, the #3 engine lost the rest of the remaining oil. The oil line had been ruptured by flak. Needless to say, the crew chief was not happy with

our bringing this much damaged aircraft back

Harry F. Jenkins (359)
Pilot

Flew over the White House!

Last week in June 1942, took off from Bolling Field, Washington, D.C., in B-17 #19125 "Prowler," lost two engines and made emergency landing back at Bolling Field. Got "chewed out roundly" by operations officer, as we had flown over the Capitol and the White House which was restricted. Glad to land successfully.

The good part was that we got to eat at mess at Bolling Field which was excellent. Saw Eleanor Roosevelt as she met Maxim Litvinov, Russian Foreign Minister. Talked with Russian Crew that flew the Foreign Minister direct from Moscow to Washington, D.C.

As indicated flew 1st mission of Heavy Bombers in 8th Air Force on August 17, 1942. (Then attached to 97th Bomb Group, 342nd Squadron.)

Willard L. Heckman (359)
Navigator

I was lucky on my 35th mission - I didn't fly

I flew 34 missions with the 359th

and on 19 April 1945 was transferred to the 427th Sqdn. I flew no combat missions with the 427th. I was scheduled to fly one on 25 April 1945. As I recall I had just returned from a pass to London and was alerted that I was to fly with Lt. Mauger on that mission. A navigator, with 10 missions, named Knox came and asked if he could fly in my place on the evening of April 24. He was eager to fly missions because his father was ill in the U.S. and he wanted to get home quickly. I told him if he could square it with the squadron it would be fine with me. He arranged it and flew in my place to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia on what would have been my 35th mission. Lt. Mauger and the crew were shot down. Lt. Knox apparently survived but the bombardier, Lt. Moss was KIA.

My most unusual experience was not going on what was to be the last mission the 8th AF flew in Europe and not being shot down on my 35th Mission.

Glenn V. Hudson (359)
Navigator

Oranges and boots!

On January 12, 1943 we arrived in England from N. Africa, out of gas after being lost over occupied

France. We landed wheels up on a golf course in southern England. I can still see the long-legged grounds keeper, come running out with coat-tails flying and holding onto his cap to complain about his golf course being dug up. The British anti-aircraft crew nearby came running out to gather up the oranges that spewed from the nose of our new B-17. It didn't matter if we were hurt or the plane demolished - welcome to England.

Our crew (Lt. Burch) was the 303rds first replacement crew. I no sooner walked into the nearby empty 427th sqdn, barracks than my gaucho boots, that I purchased in Brazil on the way over, were spotted by a Sgt. Karensen. After asking the size, he announced to the rest of the barracks that he was "sweating out" my boots. Shortly after I left on a mission; he, on a "whiskey run" to Ireland with my boots. That's how it was in early '43

One of my roughest missions - Kiel, Germany, May 14, '43. In a dogfight including B-24s, B-17s and German fighters, I will never forget all the planes that were falling - theirs, and ours. A JU-88 was going down so close that I could see the rear gunners face. He looked as scared as I was.

George W. Ashworth (427)
Radio operator

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The Second Edition of our 928 page 303rd BG(H) history is now ready for shipment. The First Edition, was acclaimed as the best and most complete Group history ever compiled. The Second Edition has been further improved with numerous changes and additions. The 1993 price has been maintained. Only 500 copies were printed - There will no more available after these have been sold. Will make an excellent gift for your family members and friends and enable them to share in your participation with the Eighth Air Force's most distinguished Bomb Group.

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After calling the meeting to order at 1015, President Eddie Deerfield gave an account of the past year, detailing all the awards and commendations. He reviewed the past three reunions that he worked on and gave statistics on attendance at those reunions, and said that he continues to learn from each one. He talked of five ceremonies during the past year and talked of the first anniversary celebration of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah.

In our search for lost members, Eddie mentioned that we ran ads in four senior citizen and fraternal and military publications with circulation of several million. We placed a long piece on the Internet about the 303rd and sent news releases to all the members for placement in their local papers. The response was gratifying as many new members were signed up.

Regarding Bill Eisenhart's document on the future of the organization (see minutes of Sept 4, Board Meeting on page 7) Eddie Deerfield gave a summary report on the Board's recommendation concerning the future of the Association. He stated, "The Board is agreed that at an appropriate time in the future, to be determined by then prevailing conditions, the incumbent 303rd's World War II veterans, sitting as the

elected Officers and Board of the Association, shall convey to the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum all the 303rd Bomb Group Association's monetary funds, inventories, records and equipment. At such a time, the Officers and Board shall have the option to dissolve the Association and terminate reunions and, if appropriate, to allocate a limited amount of funds to the Associate members to sustain an organization which would succeed the present veterans Association."

Executive board members gave their reports and project chairman reported in turn. Hal Susskind told of the problems of getting out a newsletter and the sluggish mail delivery system. He noted that the newsletter is "The glue that binds us together."

Carlton gave a rundown on membership and told how attrition is reducing our numbers. Veteran membership is declining while Associate membership helps maintain the rolls.

Harry Gobrecht asked for artifacts and photos of WW II which will be deposited in the museum in the not too distant future. Send them to Harry first and he will see that they get to the museum.

He gave a review of the changes to the Book "Might in Flight" that has been revised and

upgraded. Of the 500 copies printed, 180 copies have been ordered. Harry also reported that he has only received 710 Personal Biography Questionnaires. These will be deposited with the Heritage Museum. He also gave a pitch for the Museum and the outstanding 303rd presence there.

Ed Gardner talked about the history database that he has been working on and said that he will continue on his own, with more results for the Savannah reunion.

Jack Rencher reported on By-law revisions that are in the works.

Ed Miller talked about the Past Presidents Committee and told of Ford Kelley's passing. He gave an account of the duties of his committee and the problems that are thrust upon them and asked for support of the membership in finding information. "We are looking for some new faces to help with reunions and other duties." Distinguished Service Awards have been sent to 2127 303rd veterans, and we are still seeking names of deserving members.

The Past Presidents Committee, responsible for nominations for the top offices in the Association; nominated: Hal Susskind for President; Harry Gobrecht for VP for Administration; Joe Fertitta will replace Walt Ferrari as VP for Reunions in 1999.

Ed mentioned that the 1999 reunion will be in Texas if a suitable place can be found, an advantage for Joe who lives in Beaumont, Texas. Bill Roche will remain as Treasurer, a position he has held "for awhile." Dick Johnson will stay on as Secretary for another year.

There being no nominations from the floor, the vote of the membership was unanimous and the candidates were elected as nominated.

Lew Lyle addressed the assemblage and lauded the board and talked of leadership roles as provided by the dedicated people of the 303rd Bomb Group, which he called one of the finest groups in the 8th AF. He said that one of his prime goals was to get recognition for those who served in the 303rd and to find those who have not been located so that they can be honored.

Eddie asked those who were attending their first reunion to stand so they could be recognized. There were quite a few, and they were welcomed by the membership. He urged all members to attend the memorial service.

After the acceptance of a \$500. donation to the Heritage Museum from Richard C. Grimm in the memory of his son, Robert A. Grimm, the meeting was adjourned at 1040.

Richard R. Johnson
Secretary

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

With great reluctance I submit this column copy to Hal. It is my last. Because of deteriorating health I must give up this job of Membership Chairman/Roster Manager. I'm sorry to do so because I've enjoyed the position in which I have had so many pleasant contacts with my buddies these past seven plus years. I'm also sorry because there is bound to be confusion in the mails for awhile. Just when we get everyone pretty well trained to send dues, donations, memorials, address changes and death notices to a Smith in California we now ask that you send it all to a Miller, in Oklahoma.

Your new Membership Chair-

man/Roster Manager is Past President Ed Miller at 422 South Walnut Avenue, Temple, Oklahoma 73568. His phone number is (405) 342-5119. Ed is no stranger to the job as he held the position about ten years ago and the transition between the two of us is going very smoothly.

I'll still be involved on the sideline and I still plan to get to the reunions as long as the good Lord gives me the green flare.

The listings that follow are current as of 9 October 1997:

Carlton M. Smith
12700 Red Maple Circle #54
Senora, CA 95370-5269
(209) 533-4033

NEW MEMBERS

- L2027 Albert A. Foster, 811 East Parkway Dr., Stuart, FL 34996-2206 (359)
2028 Patrick Pecchia, 2057 Cambridge C, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442-3248 (358)
L2029 William J. Herod, 549 Kensington Ave., Morgantown, WV 26505-2039 (unk)
L2030 Paul K. Flink, 24661 Winona, Dearborn, MI 48124-1553 (1114)
L2031 Richard Bowler, Jr., PO Box 3126, Burlington, VT 05401-3126 (427)
A-464 Anita R. Moon, 4 Rebecca Ct., Helena, MT 59601
A-465 Emma V. Amaral, 42 Manning Dr., Riverside, RI 02915-3006
LA-466 Geraldine Iannaconi, 76 Liberty Pl., Palisades Park, NJ 07650
LA-467 Edward Mussi, 9145 Yorkshire Dr., Saline, MI 48176-9444
LA-468 James Mussi III, 47 Mountain Cir. N, West Milford, NJ 07480-3217
A-469 Kevin L. Haakonsen, 3412 S. Patton, San Pedro, CA 90731-6030
A-470 Ed Bates, 10 Pewter Ct., Dover, DE 19904-7614
L2032 John Peterson, 2187 Pantages Cir., Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-2458 (359)
2033 James R. Durfee, PO Box 664, Mountain Home, ID 83647-0664 (360)
A-471 John F. Donnelly, 2231 East 3225 North, Layton, UT 84040-8449
A-472 John N. Dinsmore, 4747 Ave. G, Kearney, NE 68847-8405
A-473 Bonnie M. Ziegler, 9411 Odyssey Ct., Burke, VA 22015-1910

NEW MEMBERS

- L2022 Kenneth R. Camahan, 380 Maple Dr., Satellite Beach, FL 32937-3221 (358)
A-462 William D. Cox, PO Box 6222, Chandler, AZ 85246-6222
2023 Robert M. Cooney, 23001 Marine View Dr #A301, Des Moines, WA 98198-8426 (427)
A-463 Thomas B. Latta, Jr., 4213 Old Weaver Trl, Creednor, NC 27522
L2024 Arlis F. Warburton, 2905 W 36th St., Tucson, AZ 85713-3082 (427)2
2025 E. Michael Gerhardstein, 1221 W. Bauer Rd., Maperville, IL 60563 (358)

ADDRESS CHANGES

- S1314 Richard C. Fortunak, 1649 Stanton Ave., Whiting, IN 46394-1207
L1575 John D. Hill Jr., 801 N County Line Rd., Tuttle, OK 73089-8202
L1694 Thomas D. Lardie, PO Box 1629 Cedar Ridge, CA 95924-1629
S812 Robert P. Livingston, PO Box 1236, Marble Falls, TX 78654-1236
A-384 William S. McLeod III, 900 N Rural Road, Apt 2082, Chandler, AZ 85226
L626 William E. Meleski, 6000 Ocean Blvd., Apt 5D, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308-2350 (sole address-no longer resident of Amsterdam, NY)
L1032 Ralph E. Page, 810 Griggins Lansing Rd., Lancaster, VA 22503-9269

New President Hal Susskind opened the meeting at 0900 with 22 members, committee heads and guests present.

Expenses incurred by committees were discussed by Treasurer Bill Roche. PX inventory will go up to about \$6,000 in the coming year according to Charlie Sykes, Chairman. Membership dues have been declining for some years and are now down to about \$7,500 per year due to attrition. Eddie Deerfield reported that there might be a return of \$2,000 from this reunion. The total excess for the past three reunions should be about \$10,000 over expenses. The size (75 pages) and the weight of the new directory was discussed. Including the postage and printing expenses, it should cost about \$5,000. Voluntary donations for the 1995 came to \$1,500. Because of the postage expense, no directories will be sent to foreign addressees unless it is necessary.

Expenses for updating of "Might in Flight" was discussed. It is slated to go into the mail in late October. Historian's expenses are declining each year.

The software program was discussed again. Ed Gardner has not asked for funds and will explore the program further on his own expense.

The search for new members will continue at a reduced budget with the same rate of activity.

The Past Presidents Committee will use less than \$300 of their expenses for postage and incidentals. They will work with Walt Mayer, Chairman of the Awards Committee, to ascertain the need for awards.

The Joint Analysis Center at Molesworth was lauded for their effort to perpetuate the memory of the 303rd. The Molesworth lithograph program set up by Brian McGuire with fiscal accountability of same was assigned to the Past Presidents Committee. Lew Lyle said that we must not offend the people doing the work in England, and Eddie Deerfield said that he only wanted to see the fiscal accountability in writing. It is a JAC project that is funded in that local area for their "Hall of Heroes" displays. "Who are the unsung heroes of the 303rd who should be brought to their notice? Anything we can do to expedite their request for information should be handled as expeditiously as possible." (Lyle)

There was a brief discussion about "missing awards" for those crews who flew their missions during the end of the war. Not too many DFCs were awarded after July 1944. Why?

We need to recognize those European people who came to the aid of our downed flyers and who have done so much to memorialize the heroes of the 303rd. The Past Presidents Committee will work on this project.

Under new business it was observed that some people don't go into the hospitality room because alcohol is served there. At future reunions there will be an area set aside where those people can meet to converse, drink coffee or tea, or play bridge without alcohol being served.

In the past, board meetings have been scheduled a day in advance of the reunion thus causing board members to stay an extra day or two at the hotel. In Savannah this will amount to \$83 per night. In the future, depending upon circumstances, the first board meeting will be held on the first day of the reunion.

Walt Ferrari said that there are always some people who will nit-pick about various things and that these burdens should not be laid on the reunion chairman.

Bill Heller talked about the habit of some members who nit-pick, but will say nothing in a public forum when their concerns could be addressed.

"This is one of the best orga-

nized reunions that I have ever attended" said past president Bill McLeod who led a round of applause for Eddie Deerfield for his work on this reunion.

Bill Eisenhart was applauded for his efforts concerning the future of the 303rd and its eventual dissolution which was discussed at the meeting of September 3rd and the general meeting on September 7. Ed Miller talked about the membership search and will do a "New Hit" to continue the effort. It was noted we are on the internet at the world wide web.

Henry Johansen said that he didn't see enough notices of our reunions. It was pointed out that often editors choose not to run them. All we can do is send out the notices.

Lew Lyle talked about the museum's need for information on members and talked about the display honoring the 303rd. They have hundreds of tapes that he has been acquiring.

Our president, Hal Susskind thanked the board and chairmen for their past support and hopes to work with them just as well in the future.

Meeting was adjourned at 1052.

Richard R. Johnson
Secretary

→ → → → →

ADDRESS CHANGES

L971 Charles A. Swanson, c/o J. Crossettst, 2 S Main St., Liberty, MO 64068-2323
907 Joseph W. Szudlo, 719 W. Westcott Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85027
S1092 Robert E. Wherry, 9475 N 111th Ave., Sun City, AZ 85351-4637 (1 Oct - 1 Apr)

DONATIONS/MEMORIALS

L796 Roger K. Bates (359)
S377 George V. Broderick (359)
L1434 Gordon C. Doctor (360)
L974 Raymond E. Haakonsen (427)
L410 Quentin W. Hargrove (HDQ) Memorial to J. Ford Kelley
L1418 Raymond T. Leal (427)
L1401 Joseph R. Monyok (427)
S692 James L. Mussi, Jr. (427)
L1012 Angelo Petix (358)
---- Roy & Laura Real - Memorial to Henry Pratton
1783 Robert N. Stauffer (359)
S890 Vernon W. Stone, Jr. (427)
S005 Joseph Vieira (359)
1504 Elvin F. Webbink (360)

IN MEMORIAM

L961 Charles J. Abeyta (427) - 21 Sep 1996
--- Robert Berkmer - unk
1129 Elmer L. Brown, Jr. - August 1997
331 Nicholas Celich (358) - June 1997
L646 Edwin F. Deegan (360) unk
L752 Truman K. Eldridge (359) 12 July 1997
L023 Lester C. Hansen (359) - 12 August 1997
--- Thomas B. Latta, Sr., (427) 26 Dec 1983-

IN MEMORIAM

---- Edward Meixner - unk
L1053 William C. Mulgrew (359) unk
331 Nicholas Selich - unk
777 Thomas J. Woodward (358) 17 May 1997



Walt and Beverly were planning on celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary on November 5th.

Memorial contributions can be sent to St. Anne's Catholic Church Landscaping Fund, PO Box 124, Medical Lake, WA 99022

Dear Friends of the 303rd Bomb Group,

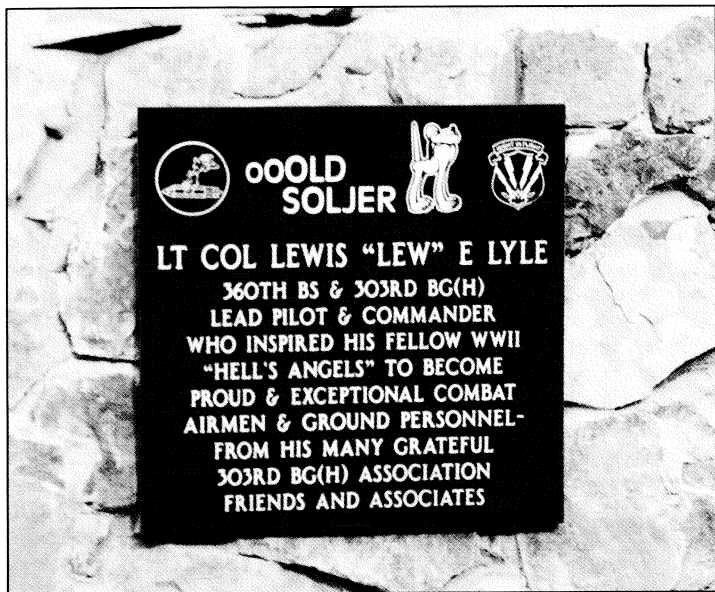
We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for your generous gifts of the beautiful plaques we received at the Pittsburgh reunion in September. We have always enjoyed working for the good of the Association and look forward to the reunion gatherings, to be with all of you friends. These nice awards came as a complete surprise, and very timely remembrances of the good times we've had in your company. We look forward to continuing our tasks in the Association, and we'll (Dad and I) see you in Savannah in 1998. God Willing!

Love & Blessings,
Walt & Bev Mayer
Kathy Johnson

On October 10, 1997, the 303rd Bomb Group Association lost a devoted supporter and volunteer when Beverly A. Mayer, wife of our Awards Committee Chairman, Walt Mayer, passed on at the Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane, WA

Walt, Bev and their daughter Kathy Johnson have been very active in the affairs of the Association since the reunion in Seattle, Washington in 1985.

It's Savannah and 8th AF Museum in '98



Memorial Gardens tribute to Lew Lyle from 303rd Bomb Group Ass'n.

The 303rd Bomb Group Association will gather in Savannah, Georgia, August 21-25, 1998 celebrating their 15th Reunion in the city where the Mighty Eighth Air Force was formed in 1942. Unlike the visit in 1994, the main attraction this time will be multi-visits to the two year old \$12 million Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum at Pooler, Georgia.

Walt Ferrari, V/P for Reunions is busy working out a schedule guaranteed to satisfy and entertain the estimated 500 members of our WWII group who are expected to attend.

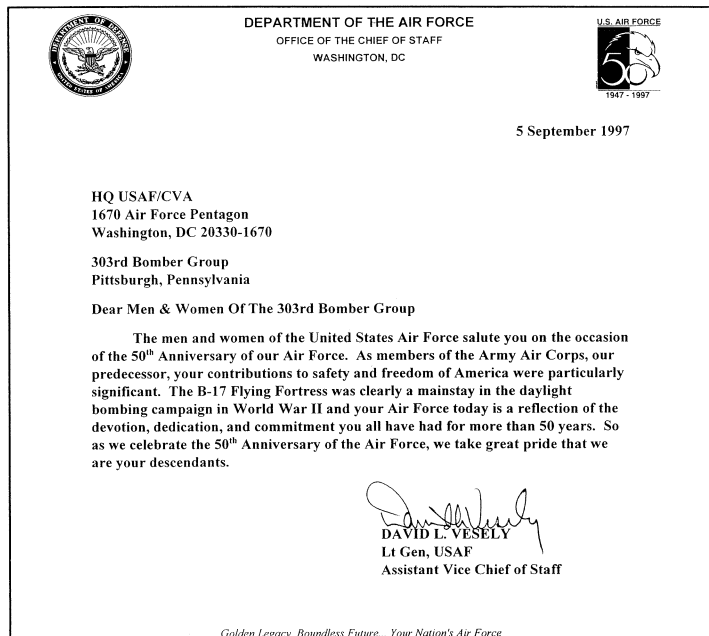
On this visit our headquarters will be at the Marriott Hotel on the riverfront, at a rate of \$83 per day. We will attend the Museum as a group on one of the days to include lunch. Because there is so much to see arrangements are being made for individuals to return on one of the free days. A shuttle bus will be set up to take you there and back as you desire. A visit to the Memorial Gardens at the Museum will once

again allow you to walk on Molesworth soil. At the opening of the Museum in May 1996, Brian McGuire brought over some soil from Molesworth and sprinkled it near the 303rd exhibits in the Gardens.

The museum highlight is the "Mission Experience Theatre." It starts in a Quonset Hut briefing room where a film shows an actual mission briefing with many 303rd scenes. You then move to another theatre where you go on a combat mission. Through the use of many screens and realistic sound effects you actually experience what it felt like to go on a mission, including watching the bomb bay doors open and the cold air rushing in.

While in Savannah, experience the city's charm through one of the many tours available. Savannah has one of the largest urban historic districts and is one of the top ten walking cities in the country. More details on the reunion will be carried in the February newsletter.

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
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2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, Texas 78704-2716



Letter of Congratulations from USAF's Assistant Vice Chief of Staff

IN THIS ISSUE.....We tried to give you a blow by blow report of the happenings at the Association's 14th reunion in Pittsburgh. Included are the minutes of three Board of Directors meetings, an account of the memorial services at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, and a look see at the Gala Banquet where we met a charming lady named Bonnie, honored five crew chiefs, one posthumously, for keeping their B-17s in the air for more than 100 missions and recognized 11 members for outstanding service to the organization. All in all it was a wonderful reunion; the war stories have gotten better and the Group's spirit improves with age. Featured on page one is "The Sawicki Story" complete with the author and artist Robert A Hand's conception of the heroic act. Maybe one of these days the 303rd will be able to boast of three Medal of Honor winners. As usual "My most unusual experiences" is a must to read. Last but not least, our 1998 reunion will be held in Savannah, GA and will be highlighted with multi-visits to the 8th AF Heritage Museum. Start making your plans to attend now.**ALSO DISCUSSED** at one of the Board Meetings was a project known as "Wright Flight." Currently running in three states: Arizona, Florida and Kansas, the program uses aviation to motivate the students to stay in school and to get better grades. Spearheading the non-profit program named after Wilbur and Orville Wright is teacher, Robin Stoddard of Tucson, Arizona, an ex-Air Force pilot who flew A-10s while stationed at RAF Bentwaters in England. To earn the right to fly, a youngster must fulfill the Wright Flight contract; pass the Wright Flight history-of-aviation exam and do better in at least one subject in school. Lesson number seven is, "The Schweinfurt Air Battle; A Titanic Struggle of Airpower." *To donate or learn more about the program contact: Robin Stoddard, 7075 South Plumer, #14, Tucson, AZ 85706.* To participate in the program organizations are asked to contribute \$1903. (That's the date the Wrights first flew.)

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