

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

August, 2003

BOARD TO VOTE ON DONATING 303RD BOMB GROUP ARCHIVES TO 8TH AF HERITAGE MUSEUM

Historian Gobrecht Estimates Cost At \$25,000 To \$50,000; Announces Intent To Resign

The Board of Directors of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, meeting in Portland, Oregon from August 7 to 11, 2003, will decide on the merits of a bold, comprehensive proposal to turn over all its historical records to The Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum near Savannah, Georgia.

Harry D. Gobrecht, the 303rd's historian since 1991, will submit his plan and request an estimated \$25,000 to \$50,000 from the Association's treasury to ship the collection and to purchase shelving, file cabinets, computers, microfilm and microfiche readers, TV monitors, copy machines, printers and other electronic equipment for the museum's library.

He explained, "All of this equipment is required to properly utilize our archives."

Gobrecht, who also serves on the Museum's Board of Directors, said in an announcement on 24 March 2003, "I plan to tender my resignation as 303rd BG (H) historian shortly after our reunion, having completed the task that I started in March, 1991, to create the best and most complete 8th AF Unit archive collection."

He said he met with the museum's Executive Committee on 20 March, and "All are very happy at the prospect of receiving the

303rd BG (H) archives that I now maintain, and will make sure that they are housed in a safe and protected room."

Gobrecht said the museum will determine the purchase cost of all the equipment that he felt it should have in order to properly handle the 303rd archives, which include thousands of photos of 303rd Bomb Group combat crews, B-17's, nose art and ground support personnel, as well as written records, documents and other artifacts detailing the history of the Hell's Angels bomb group.

He said he also plans to donate to the museum his personal collection of books, movies, video tapes, a Norden bombsight and other artifacts which he valued at many thousands of dollars.

Gobrecht said, "I will make a motion at our Board meeting in Portland in August to appropriate the funds necessary to transport the archives from my home in San Clemente, CA to the museum in Pooler, GA, plus the cost of the equipment. This will involve a 303rd BGA expenditure between \$25,000 and \$50,000."

He added, "In return for our donation of equipment, I have asked the museum to name the Library Research Equipment Room after the 303rd Bomb



THE 303RD BOMB GROUP'S EXHIBIT at The Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum displays an impressive array of artifacts.

Group (H)."

The actual shipment of the archives and the historian's personal collection would take place after the reunion in Portland and before the scheduled 2004 reunion in Savannah.

The historian's detailed proposal was sent to the 303rd BGA's Executive Committee and others on March 24 for "constructive comments or suggestions."

It was suggested that Gobrecht bring to the Board meeting a breakdown of the costs to ship the 303rd archives, the cost to ship his personal collection, and the costs of the pieces of equipment.

The historian was also asked to bring confirmation from the museum that it would name the new library room in honor of the 303rd Bomb Group (H), with details about the size and location of the plaque.

IN THIS ISSUE

Smith, Curry Awards by Joint Analysis Center at RAF Molesworth. Page 3.

Dawlish Museum exhibit in UK recalls pilot Oxrider's miracle landing. Page 4.

New Alresford's leaders set to honor Cogswell for saving town. Page 5.

Declaration of Independence document on historic road trip. Page 7.

Reflections by 303rd pilot Crawford on his first mission. Pages 8 & 9.

Gene McCutchan lauded by comrade for service in Vietnam after 35 missions in WWII. Pages 10 & 11.

Cartoonist Don Addis looks at D-Day "beach party." Page 12.



303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor--Eddie Deerfield

VOL XXVI, No. 3 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684 August, 2003

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

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

Membership years begin on the first day of January. The *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, published quarterly, will only be sent to members whose dues payments are current. Annual dues are \$25 in the US and \$30 for foreign addresses, \$60 for a veteran's life membership and \$150 for a family member's life membership.

Copyright 2003 by the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association Inc. Contents of the *Hell's Angels Newsletter* may not be reproduced in any form without the express written permission of the editor, Eddie Deerfield.

Editor Emeritus: Hal Susskind

ELECTED OFFICERS — EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

Walter J. Ferrari (Ruth)
5361 Belle Mead Drive
Aiken, SC 29803

TEL: (803) 648-5598 EM: Ferrariw@bellsouth.net

Vice President - Administration

Albert L. Dussliere (Lorene)
1901 5th Street
East Moline, IL 61244-2421
TEL: (309) 755-5339
EM: ald@derbytech.com

Vice President - Reunions

Walter J. Mayer
4109 Sunny Creek Circle
Spokane, WA 99224
TEL: (509) 456-0209

Editor, Hell's Angels Newsletter

Eddie Deerfield (Mary Lee)
3552 Landmark Trail
Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016
TEL: (727) 787-0332
EM: ED303fsra@aol.com

Secretary

Richard Bowler, Jr. (Catherine)
P. O. Box 3126
Burlington, VT 05401-3126
TEL: (802) 863-2784
EM: dickbowler@aol.com

Treasurer

William J. Roche (Doris)
1428 Gleneagles Drive
Venice, FL 34292-4306
TEL: (941) 485-5073
EM: dbroche2@aol.com

Past Presidents Chairman

Jack P. Rencher
P.O. Box 7927
Boise, ID 83707-1927
TEL: (208) 343-2265
EM: Jprencher@aol.com

ELECTED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

358th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Van R. White (Lore)
3156 La Ronda Place NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110-2631
TEL: (505) 881-8111

359th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Harold A. Susskind (Rae)
2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, TX 78704-2716
TEL: (512) 441-6475
EM: susskind@webtv.net

358th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Kenneth Clarke (Barbara)
3504 Plumb Street
Houston, TX 77005-2928
TEL: (713) 668-7404

359th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Roger K. Bates (Barbara)
961 Amstrutz Drive
San Jose, CA 95129-2219
TEL: (408) 252-7226

ELECTED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Continued)

360th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Edgar C. Miller (Jill)
44 N. Country Club Drive
Crystal River, FL 34429
TEL: (352) 563-1172
EM: emille7@tampabay.rr.com

427th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Edward W. Gardner, Jr (Sue)
P O Box 246
Interlochen, MI 49643-0246
TEL: (231) 276-7126
EM: EWG303nav@aol.com

HQ, 444th Air Depot Representative

Herry G. Johansen
8989 E. Escalante Rd., #78
Tucson, AZ 85730-2830
TEL: (520) 886-6093

Widow Member's Representative

Joanna M. Tressler
109 Mountain Road
Northumberland, PA 17857-9766
TEL: (570) 473-3816

360th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

John A. Coyne (Blanche)
61 Pillon Road
Milton, MA 02186-4329
TEL: (617) 698-3173

427th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Fred E. Reichel
553 Mallard Street
Rochester Hills, MI 48309-3431
TEL: (248) 852-2980

HQ, 444th Air Depot Alternate

Maurice J. Paulk (Opel)
205 West 12th Street
Wood River, NE 68883-9164
TEL: (308) 583-2583

Family & Associate Member Rep

Lance Stoner
11422 W. 70th Street
Shawnee, KS 66203-4026
TEL: (913) 269-1950

APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Membership & Roster

Dennis S. Smith (Marriane)
142 Vista Drive
Sonoma, CA 95476-3607
TEL: Residence (707) 938-0634
EM: Dal1smith@pacbell.net

PX Administrator

Charles R. Sykes (Vicki)
P. O. Box 33474
Phoenix, AZ 85067-3474
TEL: (602) 993-8015
EM: PX303BG@aol.com

Historian, 8thAFHS & 8thAF Museum Liaison

Harry D. Gobrecht (Barbara)
505 Via Deseo
San Clemente, CA 92672-2462
TEL: (949) 361-2662
EM: pilot8thaf@aol.com

Ways & Means, Lost Comrades

Edgar C. Miller
(See listing as 360th representative)

Audit Committee

Jack P. Rencher
(See listing as Past Presidents Chair)

Group Advisor

Lewis E. "Lew" Lyle (Betty)
205 St. Charles Circle
Hot Springs, AR 71901
TEL: (501) 321-1956

By-Laws Committee

William S. McLeod, Jr. (Alice)
1676 West Mesa
Fresno, CA 93711-1944
TEL: (559) 439-8922
EM: B17bomberbill@aol.com

Director of Internet Operations

Gary Moncur (Susan)
4483 Palmer Drive
West Valley City, UT 84120-5052
TEL: (801) 969-7639
EM: glm@xmission.com

World War II Awards

William H. Cox
441 Sandstone Drive
Vacaville, CA 95688
TEL: (707) 448-0571
EM: Coxbije@aol.com

United Kingdom Representatives

Robin & Sue Beeby
40 St. Catherine's Road, Kettering,
Northants, England NN15 5EN
TEL: USA 011-44-1536-516-423
EM: RJBeeby@aol.com

RAF Molesworth Representatives

Timothy Quilter, a US Navy reservist at the Joint Analysis Center, and Bruce Henninger, Head of Protocol, have offered to assist. Persons planning to visit the base, however, should contact UK Representative Robin Beeby and advise him of travel plans. Mr. Beeby will make the appropriate contacts and coordinate a visit to RAF Molesworth.

CHAPLAINS -- PROTESTANT

Rev. Everett A. Dasher (Helen), Rt#4 Box 425, Saluda, SC 29138-9159
Rev. Warren L. Hedrick (Alma), 3 Andrew Avenue, Sanford, ME 04073-3149
Rev. Robert L. Johnson (Mary), 2208 W. Granite St., Siloam Springs, AR 72761

CHAPLAIN -- CATHOLIC

Bishop Rene H. Gracida, P. O. Box 217, Tynan, TX 78391-0217

WINNERS OF THE SMITH AND CURRY AWARDS proudly display their plaques. The presentation was made by US Navy Captain Tony Cothron, commander of the Joint Analysis Center.

To his right is US Army Major Matthew P. Glunz, winner of the Carlton M. Smith Award. Lt Col Smith was a 303rd Bomb Group Intelligence Officer at Molesworth.

To his left is US Air Force Master Sergeant Dale A. Brandl, winner of the Peter Curry Award. Lt Curry was also in the 303rd's Intelligence Section during WWII.



JAC AWARDS NAMED FOR 303RD'S SMITH AND CURRY PRESENTED AT RAF MOLESWORTH

By Master Sergeant Chuck Hawman
US Joint Analysis Center, RAF Molesworth, United Kingdom

The Joint Analysis Center (JAC), RAF Molesworth, held its Annual Awards Banquet on 26 February 2003 at the Stuckely Inn on RAF Alconbury. Presentations included the annual Air Force Intelligence awards, the Air Force Communications and Information Professional of the Year, Airmen of the Year, Soldier of the Year, Sailor of the Year, and the JAC Service Member of the Year.

The highlight of the ceremony was the recognition of the JAC's top intelligence professionals with the presentation of awards named in honor of two 303rd Bomb Group veterans, Lt Col Carlton M. Smith and 1Lt Peter Curry. Both of this year's recipient's hard work and dedication were direct factors in the JAC's and European Command's mission success during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

The **Lt Col Carlton M. Smith Award** is bestowed on an Officer or Civilian Intelligence Professional who provided exceptional support to United States European Command warfighters. This year's winner was Army Major Matthew P. Glunz.

Major Glunz is a Plans Officer in the Strategic Plans and Initiatives Division. His responsibilities included leading the Balkans analytic section where he successfully analyzed a complicated and uncertain environment, producing timely, relevant and predictive assessments that led to timely and relevant US and UN actions in the troubled region.

One of the commander's highest priorities for transforming the command was implementation of the Common Intelligence Picture (CIP), which provides a common view of the battlespace to theater commands and operational forces. Major Glunz's aggressive leadership gave new life to an initiative that had lost its momentum. In the build up to Operation IRAQI

FREEDOM, he was challenged to design a mechanism to track the complex situation in Northern Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Israel. He was instrumental in the transition of the command to potential combat operations. As head of the Crisis Intelligence Center's intelligence assessments branch he built and led a team of experts in an area where few resources had been previously applied. In short order, his team became the most prolific producer of intelligence in the Theater.

The **1Lt Peter Curry Award** recognizes outstanding support provided by enlisted members of the JAC to European Command warfighters. This year's winner was Air Force Master Sergeant Dale A. Brandl.

Sergeant Brandl served as the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the Air and Air Defense Analysis branch of the Division of Analysis. His leadership and expertise ensured unparalleled, real-time support to 114 missions and 9 airstrikes in Northern Iraq during Operation NORTHERN WATCH, with 16 Iraqi targets destroyed with zero losses to US aircraft.

His exceptional organizational skills drove the on-time completion of the JAC's first ever Crisis Intelligence Center, a \$1.7 million state-of-the art intelligence production facility that ensures the JAC's ability to respond to crises throughout the 93-country area of responsibility. He was able to convert the JAC's leaderships' vision, intelligence analysts' desires, and Theater commanders' needs into computers, furniture, and communications equipment; he accomplished in four months what normally would have taken one year.

Additionally, Sergeant Brandl was instrumental in keeping the American military heritage at RAF Molesworth alive as the liaison to the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association. He skillfully briefed JAC newcomers and distinguished visitors on the wartime contributions and sacrifices of the 303rd and hosted Molesworth veterans during their visits to the JAC.

GEORGE OXRIDER AND HIS 358TH SQUADRON CREW were honored at the Dawlish Museum on the South Devon Coast of England by an exhibit featuring their "Miracle In The Sky" 60 years earlier.

On 23 January 1943, Oxrider brought the badly damaged B-17 *Werewolf* back to the English coast from a raid on the port at Lorient, France, ordered his crew to bail out, and then, on one engine, landed on the grounds of a psychiatric hospital.

His landing was so expert that the B-17 was repaired on the ground, a runway was constructed, and it was flown out a few weeks later to return to combat status.



DAWLISH MUSEUM IN U.K. MOUNTS ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT HONORING OXRIDER'S MIRACULOUS LANDING

By Andrew J. Jackson

Today, Dawlish is a very pleasant seaside town on the South Devon coast of England, popular with tourist visitors throughout the Summer months. On 23rd January 1943, a cold, wintry day, the Devon coast was a very welcome sight to pilot George Oxrider and the crew of his stricken B17F, *Werewolf*, as the aircraft struggled back to England, following a mission to bomb Lorient.

George Oxrider instructed his crew to bale out to safety over Dartmoor. Then, with just one engine on the aircraft still operating, he sought a place where he might attempt to land. The only possibility appeared to be a playing-field, in the grounds of a mental hospital, just above Dawlish, where a soccer match was being played. The players scattered as they realised that a landing was imminent and George Oxrider carried

off a truly remarkable landing, which was so successful that, after the aircraft had come to rest in front of a huge oak tree, he was able to walk from his B-17 unhurt, and some weeks later it could be flown off again on an improvised runway.

2003 marks the 60th Anniversary of *Werewolf's* landing and to mark the anniversary and as a tribute to George Oxrider and his crew, the Dawlish Museum has mounted an impressive new display about the landing. Devised and constructed by James Scott-Law, the Displays Supervisor at the museum, the display has a prominent position in the entrance foyer to the museum, where it catches the eye of visitors as they enter and can then be easily viewed by them.

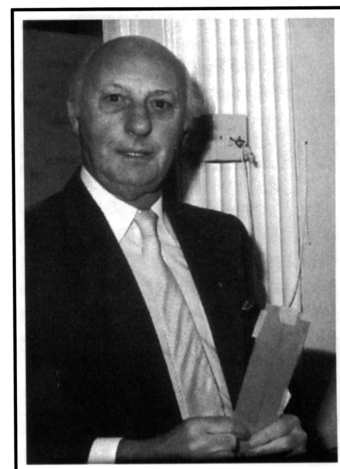
In a large, vertical glass case, a single B-17F can be seen descending, superimposed against the backdrop of a Stars and Stripes flag and a map of

the coastline in the area where *Werewolf* landed. The map gives an impression of the land that Oxrider and his colleagues would have been relieved to see beneath them.

Beside the glass case is a display giving photographic and printed details about the landing, positioned around the Dawlish coat of arms. There are pictures of the aircraft taken at the time, in the Langdon Hospital grounds, photographs of the crew, a front view of the eventual takeoff run of the aircraft from the temporary runway that had to be constructed, and a picture of George Oxrider himself, having received the Distinguished Flying Cross, surrounded by members of his crew. Also, there is a copy of a comprehensive newspaper account that appeared in the Exeter Express and Echo newspaper in January this year, written by Geoff Worrell, a senior journalist with the paper, to

commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the landing.

The Dawlish Museum collection is housed in Knowle House, an impressive gentleman's residence dating from 1805, situated in Barton Terrace in the town. 303rd BGA members, visiting the area, would receive a particularly warm welcome at the museum.



DISPLAYS SUPERVISOR JAMES SCOTT-LAW was the designer of the Dawlish Museum exhibit.

COUNCILLORS PLANNING TO HONOR MEMORY OF 303RD PILOT WHO SAVED TOWN FROM DISASTER

Captain Cogswell Kept B-17 With Bomb Load From Crashing Into British Town Of New Alresford on 26 September 1943

The sixtieth anniversary of an act of courage by a 303rd pilot who risked his own life to save an English town from death and destruction may finally witness recognition of his deed. The Town Council of New Alresford in the south of England is looking at that date to officially honor the American hero for the first time.

On 26 September 1943, aboard the 360th Squadron's B-17 *Lady Luck*, Captain Robert Cogswell heard the signal from headquarters to abandon a bombing mission on submarine pens at Nantes, France because of heavy cloud cover over the target. He turned north for Molesworth, but as he approached the English coast fire broke out in the number three engine and the wing began to show signs of buckling.

The pilot ordered the crew to bail out, but chose to stay with the stricken aircraft to make sure it wouldn't crash with its full bomb load into a populated area. New Alresford was on the flight path. Captain Cogswell steered the B-17 to a point beyond the town and then bailed out at the last second. He was falling at such a high rate of speed that when his parachute opened ligaments in his back were torn.

He was medically grounded for the rest of World War II, but returned home to train on B-29's and was lost on a combat mission during the Korean War.

The following story appeared in the *Alresford Advertiser* and *Alton Gazette and Herald*:

A US Air Force pilot who saved hundreds of Alresford lives during the Second World War should have a plaque to his memory erected in the town, according to a man who served with him.

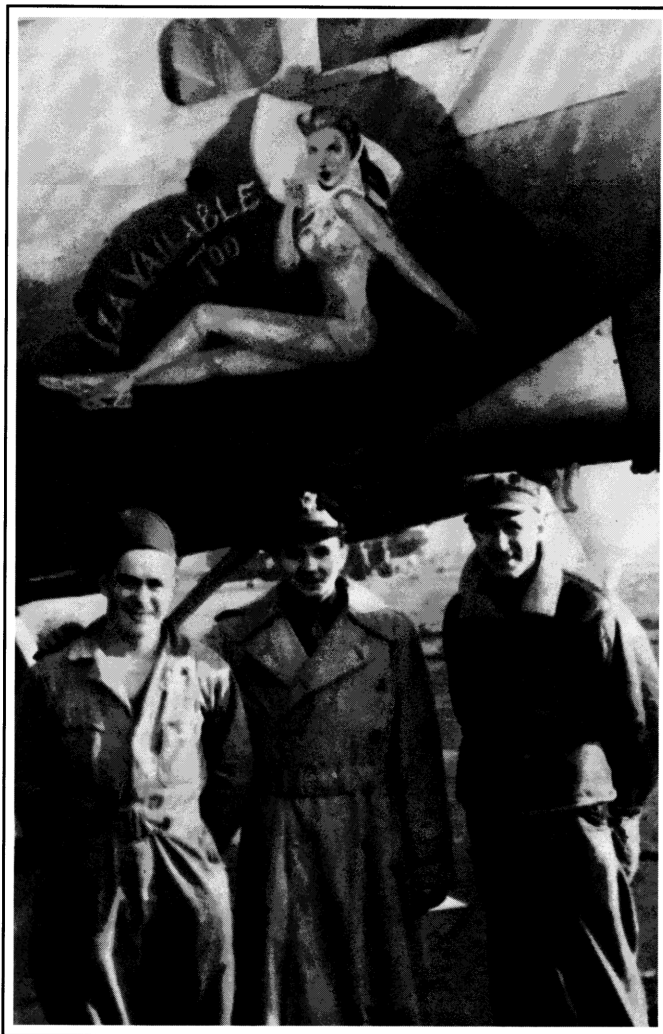
Eddie Deerfield, a member of the 303rd Bombardment Group of the US 8th Air Force, launched his campaign during a recent nostalgic visit to Alresford from his home in Florida.

On September 26, 1943, Eddie was flying in a B-17 named "Lady Luck", carrying ten 500-lb demolition bombs, all of them intended for the German submarine pens at Nantes, France. However, the mission was aborted and, on the return near the south coast of England, fire broke out in one of the plane's engines.

The captain, Bob Cogswell, ordered everyone else to bail out. He himself, knowing that the plane still carried a full bomb load, rode it down to a few thousand feet to make sure it wouldn't crash in a populated area. The populated area in question was New Alresford.

Cogswell's sacrifice came at a price. In bailing out so late and at a high rate of speed, when his parachute opened it tore ligaments in his back. He was medically grounded and didn't fly another mission during the war. Instead he returned home to the States to train on B-29 bombers, and, in 1951, was killed in a crash at sea during the Korean War.

At the time of the Alresford crash in 1943, the Parish Council was quick to offer its thanks to whomever saved the town from disaster. In the council's files there is a letter dated 28 September 1943 from chairman Mr. A. H. Hasted to the

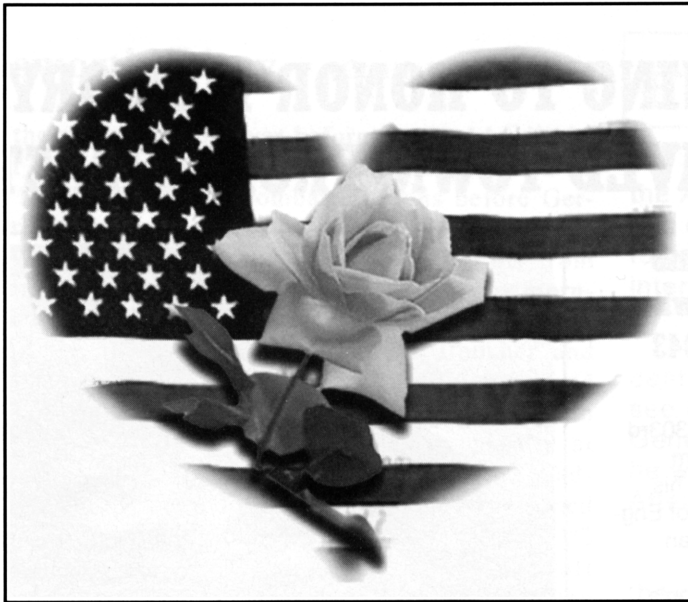


THE COGSWELL CREW WAS AMONG THE HARDEST HIT IN ITS FIRST 13 MISSIONS and then bailed out on what would have been the 14th when their B-17 *Lady Luck* was recalled from a raid on the submarine pens at Nantes on 26 September 1943. The aircraft suffered an engine fire while still carrying a full bomb load. Captain Robert Cogswell stayed with the plane until the last seconds to guide it away from crashing into the town of New Alresford near the coast of southern England. On 30 July, the Cogswell crew aboard *Upstairs Maid* had crashed in the North Sea. On 27 August their B-17 *Iza Vailable* barely made it to an emergency landing at RAF Manston with more than 200 flak holes in the fuselage.

Bob Cogswell is in the center in the above photo. To his right is his engineer Gilbert Bengsten and to his left his waist gunner Alvin "Pappy" Etheredge.

Commanding Officer of RAF Station Middle Wallop. It asks the name of the pilot and expresses the heartfelt thanks of the people of Alresford to that pilot for staying with the plane until the final seconds to avert its crash into the town.

Mr. Deerfield called upon the Town Council to set up, albeit belatedly, "official recognition of some kind so that present and future generations will know of the courage of an American pilot who in 1943 prevented what might have been New Alresford's greatest tragedy of World War II."



Our Flag Was My First Love, (And There Was Shirley Temple, Too)

**By Johnny Williams Psota
358th Squadron Toggler**

(As first published in the Salisbury MD Daily Times)

The first time I really noticed our flag, I fell in love with her. I was 8 or 9 at the time. Oh, I had a lot of loves to follow, but she was my first love. When I say "my first love," I mean besides Mom and Pop. My love for them was different.

On this particular day, the excitement of the occasion, I believe, had a lot to do with my feeling of seeing her for the first time. In school, I had seen her every day, all through first and second grade. But, now it was different.

On that hot Memorial Day afternoon in late May, 1935, my heart stopped for a moment. and I felt like I wasn't good enough or doing enough for her. I had heard older sisters and brothers say, "If you think you're not good enough for them, you're in love."

If I had been asked to describe love, it was like when I got choked up and couldn't talk, or, if I tried to talk, I would end up crying. Like when Mom was real proud of me because of something I did or accomplished. My eyes would fill up, and I knew that, if I went to say something, the tears would flow, and I didn't want to seem like a baby.

Sometimes, Pop would scold me for something I did that I shouldn't have done in the first place. I would stand there holding back the tears, sorry because he was cross with me. But I would listen and listen, wishing instead it would all end by receiving a big hug instead of a lecture.

Again, love.

As I held Mom's hand, I saw the flag go by again and I started to get that lightheaded feeling. Golly, the sun was hot.

I started filling up inside, almost reaching for air. My eyes were filling with joy and I tried to hold back tears, so people wouldn't see me crying.

At the movies when it happened, you could put your clinched fist up to your head and wipe a tear out of the corner of the eye while pretending you were leaning on your hand. I remember once when Shirley Temple was reunited with her grandfather, I would lean on one elbow and then the other, hoping all the while the lights wouldn't come on immediately at the end of the show.

Gosh, the flag was exceptionally beautiful today. Storytellers would write of blue seas, blue skies and a girl's blue eyes, but her blue was a blue all to itself.

At the moment, Mom was more interested in finding my father. Pop was the music teacher for the firemen's band. He always stayed in the last row, but everyone could see him. He wore white shoes, pants and jacket and had a lot of yellow braid on his cap. All the other marching firemen wore blue uniforms.

Right before he got to us, Pop's arms went up in the air and when he brought them down the band sounded out with John Phillip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever." There she was, passing by again, right in front of my father's band. A man in a blue uniform was carrying her way out in front of him. The blue was like I said, and the red and white was swaying and moving gently to and fro on this Memorial Day afternoon.

I felt a tear start down my cheek and I looked up at Mom to see if she would notice it. I tried to let go of her hand, but, she seemed to hold it tighter. And I noticed a big tear rolling down her sunburned face.

ORIGINAL COPY OF DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ON HISTORIC ROAD TRIP

Goal Is To Inspire Young People To Greater Civic Participation

A Dunlap broadside print of the original Declaration of Independence, valued at more than 8-million dollars, is on a cross-country tour, with the goal of inspiring young people to participate in civic activism, to exercise their rights and, above all, to vote.

On July 4, 1776 the Continental Congress, led by John Hancock, rendered official Thomas Jefferson's text of the Declaration. The manuscript was rushed to the shop of Philadelphia printer John Dunlap who typeset the document and created about 200 original "broadside" of the text. These were carried by riders on horseback throughout the colonies, read aloud to large groups, and printed in 24 colonial newspapers.

TV producer Norman Lear purchased the broadside three years ago, and is the driving force behind the national tour, a nonprofit, nonpartisan project housed in a huge truck trailer. As the Road Trip travels to cities and towns across the United States, it will creatively combine elements of education, entertainment and community outreach activities, featuring multimedia exhibitions and live theatrical shows with major young talent.

The 18 to 24-year-old generation is not apathetic. They volunteer in their communities in great numbers. Yet, little more than thirty percent of eligible voters ages 18 to 24 participate in national elections. By drawing on their idealism and concern, the Road Trip hopes to encourage young people to say "If I believe I matter, I will become involved in political and civic life and vote."

The first phase of the tour has been completed. The second phase—from July 2003 to November 2004—will bring a multi-faceted educational and theatrical experience to dozens of communities, urban and rural, across the country. By combining live events with public viewing of the Declaration, the Road Trip planners hope to bring together all sectors of local communities to engage their citizens, especially their young people, in civic activism and participation in the electoral process.

Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.

They signed and pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.

What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners; men of means, well-educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in



THE TRAILER AND ITS PATRIOTIC CARGO will cover thousands of miles on its journey throughout the United States.

the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken, and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers looted properties of Dillery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson Jr, noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such were the stories and sacrifices of the American Revolution. These were not wild-eyed, rabble-rousing ruffians. They were soft-spoken men of means and education. They had security, but they valued liberty more.

Standing tall, straight, and unwavering, they pledged: "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

DESTINATIONS FOR AUG-DEC, 2003

Aug 8	Bozeman, MT	Aug 10-13	Billings, MT
Aug 15-16	Coeur D'Alene, ID	Aug 23-31	Seattle, WA
Sep 10-11	New York, NY	Sep 20-28	Portland, OR
Oct 4-12	Phoenix, AZ	Oct 15-16	Santa Fe, NM
Oct 25-Nov 9	Austin, TX	Dec 6-14	Oklahoma City, OK

REFLECTIONS BY A PILOT ON HIS FIRST COMBAT MISSION

The Time Has Come — “Oh, My God! I Did Want It, Didn’t I?”

**By William C. Crawford
360th Squadron**

We’ve been assigned to the 303rd for over a week now. Our records show our background of experience to be adequate, and Warren “Doug” Kidd, my co-pilot, and I have flown the bird in practice missions with some of the veterans to prove we can fly the way the “Hell’s Angels” wants it done. And we’re still waiting for a combat call.

The group has flown six combat missions since we’ve been here. Each morning the alert man enters our barracks with his flashlight to rouse the men on his list. We’ve sweated him out but so far he has ignored us. At first we were gratified to have his light pass to the next bunk but now we’re wondering, “What the hell is wrong with them!”

It’s finally becoming evident that this is part of their scheme to dehumanize a fledgling crew, to make us aware of our importance, or lack of it. But, the beams of a flashlight are in my eyes. I’m being shaken gently, “Lieutenant Crawford, you’re flying today. Breakfast 0200, briefing 0300.” The date is 5 July 1944. Oh my God! I did want it, didn’t I?”

After a trip to the wash building for a cold shave we strike out to brave the quarter mile to the mess hall for our first combat breakfast. It isn’t even daylight yet! A combat breakfast is a little more acceptable than the

customary one but it doesn’t seem too appetizing as we glance around the table to take stock of the bogus joking and facial expressions that some of the veterans are feigning. They’re no more at ease than us green-horns! Breakfast is becoming more of a lump in the stomach today as we anticipate this strange business of combat.

A truck delivers us to our first combat briefing where we select two places on a wooden bench among the men who are going to attempt this thing today. The bouquet of cigarette smoke and rank flight gear around us doesn’t soothe my stomach any for our introduction to this predicament, either.

For our initiation they’ve got Doug and me scheduled to be co-pilots on two separate B-17’s. We’ll be flying with strangers which will be a change.

I’m to be with Lt. Dale Bartholomew in B-17 number L-860, and Doug will be with Lt. Murdock McMillan in B-17, I-187. Our mission is regarded as a “milk-run,” an easy one, to bomb a German airdrome in Gilze Rijen, Holland. Our regular crew will not be flying today.

I meet Lieutenant Bartholomew before the ride out to the hardstand where L-860 is parked. The trip seems a little stressful with this bunch of unknowns but



“THE FIRST SIGHT OF FLAK IS APPALLING! Those black bursts reaching out for us are horrendous!” Bill Crawford’s own artistry recalls the horror.

we finally arrive at the aircraft and begin putting our gear aboard. We finish our pre-flights and begin the monotonous wait until “Start Engines” scheduled for 35 minutes later. I mention this to Bartholomew and he comments, “Today is a short wait. Normally we have about an hour of this. Once we get the engines running we’ll be OK.”

After run-ups the next wait is for the flare that will signal “Taxi” and at 0445 a green flare arches up; the mission is still on. We move L-860 out of the hardstand and join the long line of B-17’s to worm our way for-

ward. Finally it’s our turn and we get L-860 into the air at 0515 hours where we begin our arduous climb to assembly altitude of 19,000 ft.

Amazingly to me, Bartholomew identifies the coded flares being fired by the lead ship and he eases into position. The group continues to orbit until we depart Kimbolton at 0655. During this time Bartholomew allows me to get the feel of a heavily loaded B-17. From take-off to getting all the groups in position to depart on course was one hour and 40 minutes of formation flying. This is going to take
(Continued on page 9)

REFLECTIONS, from 8

some getting used to. This is a mission in itself.

The noise level in the cockpit is intense which makes use of the intercom necessary as Bartholomew mentions, "This mission is a short one but German flak can kill you just as dead on a milk run as if you are over the heart of Berlin."

The group finally reaches 25,000 ft. before we depart Great Yarmouth at 0746 for the short distance across the North Sea. The temperature on this balmy July day is now minus 25 degrees C (minus 13 degrees F) at our altitude.

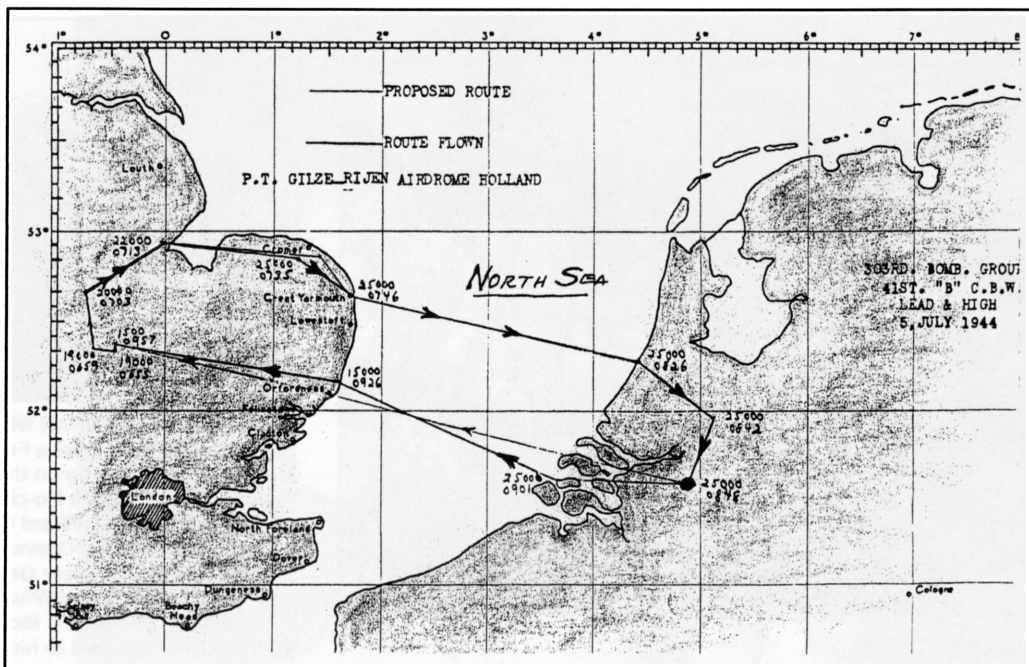
Over the water Bartholomew allows me to fly to see how a heavily loaded B-17 feels at altitude where smooth flying is absolutely necessary if you are going to maintain your position in the formation. And, I wonder if Doug is getting the same experience in the other B-17.

Over the North Sea our little friends, all P-51's, show up to escort the bombers, but we lose sight of them intermittently in the clouds.

Before we reach the coast just south of Haarlem, Bartholomew takes over, "OK! I've got it in case Der Fuhrer's boys are waiting for us." I respond, "Roger."

Our group has been putting out persistent contrails and we've run into fine freezing rain which cuts the visibility so that we can't see below us as we enter enemy territory over Holland at 0826 hours. We can't see the ground but instinctively I know that we're over enemy territory. My gut informs me of this. I pray that I won't fail. How am I going to react under fire?

We're approaching the I.P. {Initial Point} and the



weather has become almost a solid undercast beneath us. But that doesn't stop Jerry. The first sight of his flak is appalling! Here I am on my first combat mission with a strange crew and those black bursts that are reaching out for us are horrendous! We can hear the explosions, feel the concussions and can even smell some of it!

But there is never a question as to our commitment; we're going to plough right on through it come hell or whatever. This war is so resolved that the individual has lost his sense of self in it. The American inborn consciousness of success is so ingrained that there is only one logical conclusion to all of it.

But, as I look ahead and see what we are going to go through, this green-horn can't help the sensation of fear in this bizarre, cold, dismal segment of sky.

Our lead B-17 is making the run on GEE-H, radar bombing, which uses two British ground beacon beams to obtain a navigational fix at the target. Finally a rain of bombs leave the B-17's and our bombs are away at 0848 from 26,000

feet. L-860 leaps upward when our three tons of bombs are released. This is something I've never experienced before, and what a feeling of exhilaration to be free of the load! Yet the flak spatters the sky.

The group makes a sharp right turn off the target and maintains the same altitude back to the Dutch coast. We begin our let-down and Bartholomew turns the ship over to me. We're at 15,000 ft. when we reach the English coast and we continue our let-down towards Molesworth.

After several circuits of the base to wait our turn we touch L-860's wheels to the runway at 1022 hours. We have been airborne for just 5:07 hours for an easy one. Bartholomew exclaims, "Boy, you sure do know how to pick a good one for your introduction to combat."

When you're being shot at the tendency is to believe that the center of the war is right here in the cockpit, when actually we are only a minute part of the giant jig-saw puzzle, a small part of the effort. The Eighth had dispatched 233 heavies to attack three German airfields in Holland, two in Bel-

gium and three V-weapon sites in France, all supported, by 184 fighters.

Seventy B-17's would return from a shuttle mission (UK-USSR-Italy-UK) accompanied by 42 Eighth Fighter Command P-51's.

This has been a good day for us and we thank the Lord. All the B-17's returned and there were no casualties. Since our bombs dropped through a solid undercast the results of our efforts aren't known, but we have learned a lot.

Hopefully, tomorrow Doug and I will take our own crew on a combat mission for their initiation into this strange business. We won't be completely green and they will be able to experience some of what Doug and I learned today. We're confident that our crew will do just fine. They surely have been itching to have a go at it!

Exposure to the flak changed from cringing at the sight of it to fascination after it was over. I didn't see anything today that we can't handle.

But, of course, this was a milk-run.



EUGENE R. McCUTCHAN went from serving as a 360th Squadron pilot to eventual duty as a Forward Air Controller in Vietnam. McCutchan is kneeling on the left in the 303rd Bomb Group crew picture. To his left are Co-pilot Ole Lovold, Bombardier Gordon Bays and Navigator Willard Conard. Standing (l-to-r) Engineer Richard Kress, Radio Operator Alan Frey, Ball Turret Gunner Howard Scott, Waist Gunners George Pearson and Robert Clippinger and Tail Gunner Robert Wherry.

In the top photo, LTC McCutchan is at the Dalat base in South Vietnam in 1966. Next to him, wearing a red beret, is Sgt. Knaup.

303rd Pilot Gene McCutchan Lauded By Comrade For Service in Vietnam War

By Robert B. Green

Living in a relatively small community at the entrance to the "Northern Neck" area of Virginia, I was surprised one morning to see a 303rd Bomb Group license plate frame on a car in the parking lot at our local post office. Knowing that the 303rd was my uncle Alan Frey's old outfit, I decided to wait for the owner of this vehicle to show up. I knew there couldn't be too many folks in our community that served in the 303rd with the "Hell's Angels".

I didn't wait long when the owner appeared and I got out of my car to greet him. Well, the stranger turned out to be Uncle Alan! It seems he purchased a new car and I didn't recognize it. So much for the mystery.

Just as I was about to leave, Alan asked, "Bob, didn't you serve with the Forward Air Controllers in Vietnam?" I was somewhat surprised that he asked because most folks, even in our modern day Air Force, haven't a clue what a Forward Air Controller is. I responded proudly, "yes" and also mentioned that I was a Crew Chief assigned to the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron at Bien Hoa Air Base and occasionally I flew with the FACs, but mostly on functional check flights.

It was then that Alan asked me if I knew a Colonel Gene McCutchan from my days in Vietnam. I was sorry to say that I didn't. Alan pointed out that Gene McCutchan was his B-17 Pilot during World War II and that they had completed all 35 missions together, Alan as his radio operator. I soon recognized the name "McCutchan" as Uncle Alan sometimes spoke of him on those rare occasions when we talked about his days with the 303rd. However, Alan usually referred to him as "Mac" and that may have caused my confusion.

I informed Alan that I would check with my group, the

Forward Air Controllers Association, and try to locate Gene McCutchan. This turned out to be an unexpected revelation. When I inquired over the Internet with my group, I was flooded with e-mails. Apparently I exposed my limited knowledge and felt somewhat foolish for not knowing about a true legend in my outfit.

Colonel McCutchan was referred to as "Redmarker" in the FAC community. He was instrumental in setting up the doctrine for close air support with the Vietnamese Airborne. One of the prerequisites for this assignment was to be "jump qualified". Not to let a little thing like that deter him, Gene entered Vietnamese Airborne jump school at the tender age of 46. Upon completion of jump school, he was awarded both his Vietnamese Parachute badge and his Red Beret.

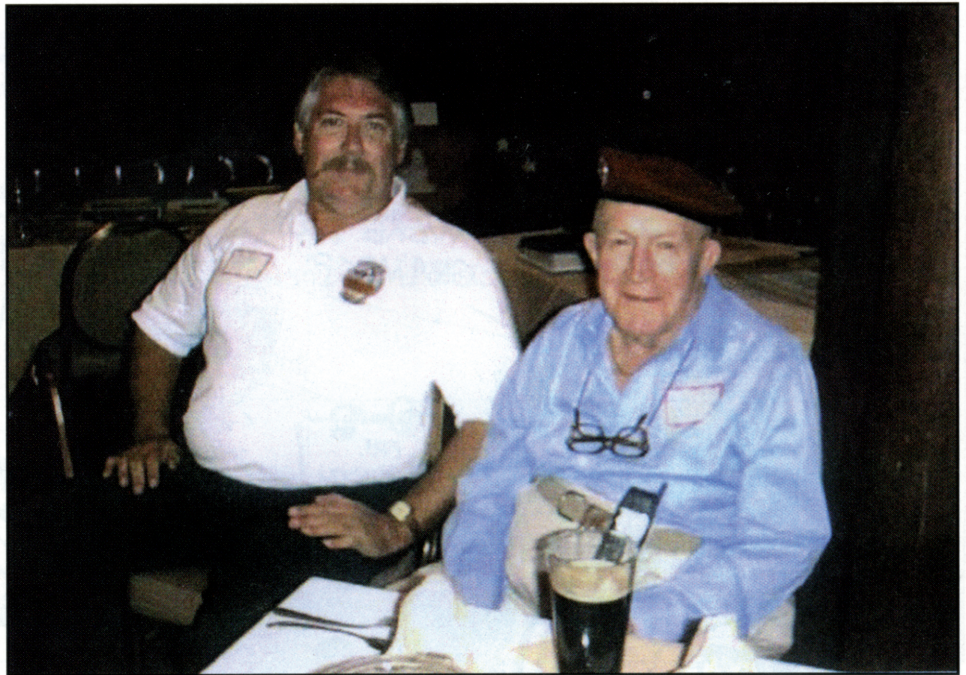
I finally started communicating with Colonel McCutchan and, over time, we developed a warm friendship. I had told him on one occasion had I known we were in Vietnam together, I would have requested a transfer to his outfit as his crew chief. I'm sure that would have made for some interesting conversation at my family reunions.

I was soon to learn the 303rd was planning on having their reunion in Baltimore in 2001 not too far from my home in Virginia. I immediately contacted Colonel McCutchan and asked if he would be attending. He was sorry to inform me that because of some health problems he could not make this reunion. Fortunately, I have some friends in the Phoenix, Arizona area where Gene lives, and suggested to my wife that we take our vacation in Arizona the following year. She agreed and the wheels were put into motion.

I notified Gene that my wife and I would be in Arizona and that I would like to meet him. He agreed, and also informed me that there were numerous Forward Air (See next page)

303rd B-17 PILOT AND VIETNAM WAR "REDMARKER", Gene McCutchan proudly wears his red beret as he sits with Bob Green, nephew of radio operator Alan Frey who flew on McCutchan's 360th Squadron crew.

Green and other Vietnam veterans honored the Hell's Angel pilot at ceremonies in Phoenix, AZ in October 2002.



Controllers and Crew Chiefs in the Phoenix area and suggested "why don't we plan a small reunion." This was more than I hoped for. Not only was I presented the opportunity to meet my uncle's pilot from his 8th Air Force days, but I now had the opportunity to reunite with my buddies from Vietnam.

All the planning and preparation for the "big mini reunion" had been made and all that was left was counting down the days. Finally, on October 8, 2002 I met Gene McCutchan at a dinner party. This wasn't only a meeting but a surprise gathering to bestow honor upon one of our nation's true heroes, a veteran of three wars: WW II, Korea and Vietnam.

Although Gene had completed Vietnamese Airborne Jump School and made numerous combat jumps, he was never

awarded the U.S. Parachutist Badge that he was authorized. The official records of his combat jumps were no longer available after the collapse of the South Vietnamese Government.

To correct this situation, in attendance at the dinner party were Lieutenant Colonel William Shelton, United States Army Special Forces (retired) and Major Joe Granducci, United States Air Force (retired). Joe had served as a "Redmarker FAC" in Vietnam with Colonel McCutchan. Bill Shelton and Joe Granducci presented Gene with an "unofficial" certificate and the U.S. Parachutist Badge attesting to his accomplishments.

To the veterans who served in World War II, I thank you for securing our freedom. My generation is eternally grateful for your sacrifices.

PLAQUE AND CASH GIFT HONOR WOOD CARVER BILL ADAMS

William F. "Bill" Adams, an Englishman who has been making wood carvings as gifts to World War II air combat groups and airmen for years despite a lingering illness, was honored by his friends with a marble plaque and cash award.

Funds were raised initially to cover the cost of a black marble plaque to be placed in the Memorial Garden of the The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. The plaque was decorated with both the 8th AF and 303rd "Might In Flight" symbols and conveyed a tribute to Adams which referred to him as "Master Wood Carver" and noted "His Carvings Are Treasured By Many."

The cost of the plaque was \$1,192.75. Collections that exceeded the actual cost of the plaque in the amount of approximately \$1,276 were converted to 750 British pounds and sent to Bill Adams in London as a gift.

The sponsors noted that Adams woodcarvings are regularly donated as raffle prizes at 303rd Bomb Group Association reunions, and have been received by many members.

In seeking donations, fundraisers said "Bill is in quite poor health and has been carving in severe pain. He is currently unable to do any woodcarving and is confined to bed."



BILL ADAMS AND HIS WIFE, JOYCE, in the garden of their London home, hold the gift check for 750 British pounds, about \$1,276. Bill wrote to thank 303rd Bomb Group Association donors, and commented that he was "overwhelmed." He said he didn't feel as well as he looked in the photo, and would use the money for a couple weeks of recovery by the seaside. "The air will do me a power of good," he added.



DON ADDIS IS EDITORIAL CARTOONIST FOR THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, the daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Florida. His cartoons often display a humorous sensitivity to the feelings of World War II veterans as the world changes around them. The 303rd Bomb Group flew three missions on D-Day, attacking bridges in France in support of the landings. Don has generously given blanket approval to publish his cartoons in the Hell's Angels Newsletter whenever they are of special interest to our veterans.

AS DEATH RATE RISES, VETERANS LOSE INFLUENCE

From the San Antonio Express News

Americans are likely to raise their flags in an outpouring of patriotism as US troops fight the war on terrorism and oppose continuing threats in Iraq. But, if the nation is rallying around the troops with an intensity not seen since World War II, America's dwindling corps of veterans might be on the verge of losing its once-powerful political punch.

The 2000 Census shows there are 26.4 million veterans (one million fewer than 10 years ago) or about nine per cent of the population. As time and nature stalk the veterans of World War II, demographics and budget realities are threatening to put old heroes on a final retreat.

Fewer troops fought in Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf combined than in World War II, and fewer than ever—about three million on active and reserve duty—are needed to fight today's battles.

"They're a shrinking species, with less and less influence," said Charles Moskos, a sociologist at Northwestern University and author of *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After The Cold War*.

Veterans have been a force in American politics since the end of the Revolutionary War when General George Washington organized the Order of Cincinnati. Groups have come and gone, growing after big conflicts such as the Civil War and World Wars I and II, then declining with the passing of time.

Moskos sees the cycle playing out again as World War II and Korean War veterans die. As the number of veterans dwindles, he said, fewer of them are in "elite circles" and they are harder to find in politics.

"I think you look at the decline of the GI Bill as an indication of how veterans' influence has declined," he said, adding that the buying power of GI Bill educational benefits today is roughly half of what it was under the old GI Bill.

Former Assistant Defense Secretary Lawrence Korb disagreed with Moskos' contention, noting that the old GI Bill was offered to veterans forced to serve in wartime while earning subsistence wages. He said veterans still have clout because many Americans feel guilty about not having served in the military.

Korb said the war on terrorism and other present and future US military actions will have the effect of amplifying those feelings.

303rd Newsletter Books Presented To University, USAF Base, Museum and Community Libraries



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES

Dr. Ellen Broidy (center) accepted the two volumes from Lavonne and Humphrey O'Leary as "welcome additions to the Library's Anglo-American History Collection." O'Leary, who commanded the 303rd's 1681st Ordnance Company at Molesworth, also alerted the Air Force and Army ROTC commanders at UCLA to the availability of the books.



SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE, TEXAS

Bud and Mary Klint made the presentation to Captain Robert M. Sharples, Deputy Commander, 82nd Mission Support Group in the Base Services Division. Bud, a pilot in the 427th Squadron, is a former 303rd BGA president, and served as editor of the Hell's Angels Newsletter from 1982 to 1985.



COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE MUSEUM

J. W. "Don" Johnson (on the right), Field Collections Officer for the West Houston, Texas Squadron of the CAF, and Frank DeCicco, 427th waist gunner, discuss the contents of the Hell's Angels Newsletter books. Johnson said later, "I found the information fascinating. The books will be a valuable resource on operations in East Anglia."



TOPEKA AND SHAWNEE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

One of the few community libraries to receive a gift set of the books is in Kansas. From the left are Special Collections Manager Susan Marchant, Executive Director David Leamon, Dr. Carl Fyler and his wife, Marguerite. Fyler, a 360th Squadron pilot, is a former prisoner of war and 303rd BGA president. He's an activist in preserving POW rights.



303rd's Pin-up Men of the Month



THE CREW THAT PLAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER — Pilot George Sirany's men of the 359th Squadron enjoy a day in town. From left to right, Tail Gunner Frank McPherson, Radio Operator Everett Van Horn, Ball Turret Gunner Gordon Bale and Engineer Cecil See.

COMBAT RADIO OPERATOR EDWARD "RED" DOUGHTY appears to be listening for signals from outer space as he perches on the B-17's wing outside his radio room. He flew with the 427th Squadron.

MAKING SURE HE WILL KEEP THE PLANE ON COURSE, Navigator Darrell Gust of the 358th Squadron works on his maps before take-off.



Molesworth Diary

"ONE OF OUR BEST BUDDIES WAS KILLED"

Everybody talked about how bad the flak was at Merseburg. I was hoping it wasn't as bad as they said. On 24 August 1944, our third mission, I found out how bad it was. We crossed the German coast near Hamburg, skirted Berlin, and headed for the synthetic oil plant at Merseburg. Even before the target run, we encountered intense and very accurate flak. At first, from my position in the nose of the B-17 *Miss Umbriago*, I called out to our pilot, Frank Juns, where the flak concentrations were so we could keep away as much as possible. As we came closer to the target, this was useless because the flak was everywhere. The only thing you could do was fly through it and pray.

We were scared. We just couldn't see how anybody could get through that stuff. The closer we got to the target, the worse it was. Then there was a burst like a cannon going off right in front of the nose. I couldn't see how it had missed Warren Harding, our navigator, and me, but it had. When we reached the target we really plastered it, and turned for home. Most of the planes in our formation were badly riddled, and two never returned.

After we landed, I learned that John Rhyne, one of our best buddies, had been killed. He was the bombardier on Andy Virag's crew. He had been hit in the head by a piece of flak and, according to their navigator, Hertzell Harrison, died instantly. The Virag and Juns crews were like twins—we had gone through all the training in the States together. The men on both crews went to Rhyne's funeral in Cambridge. About three months later, the Virag crew was shot down on another mission to Merseburg.

Edward H. Thomas, Jr.
360th Squadron Bombardier

GETTING AWAY FROM THE AIR WAR

Sometimes we would get away from war duties on passes to London. After riding a train for 65 miles from the Molesworth base, a buddy and I would visit Hyde Park and enjoy the nice weather and company of friendly English women we met.

I especially remember going to Brighton Beach on the west coast of England where I renewed a friendship with a Royal Air Force girl we had met on a train. Betty Thompson was an aircraft gun corporal, and we continued to correspond even after the war. I enjoyed the *Punch* magazines she mailed to me. Our correspondence ended when she married an Englishman. I remember meeting Clark Gable, who flew a few missions with us, and a big guy from the Our Gang comedies who used to trade his candy bars for cigars. When I went to see the movie *Memphis Belle* not too long ago, I thought it was stupid.

A. D. Tilley
358th Squadron Crew Chief

TWO 303RD B-17'S COLLIDE OVER GERMANY

We took off in *Buzz Blonde* on January 10, 1945 to attack a target in Bonn, Germany. We were back in formation after "bombs away" when there was a loud bang. Another B-17, *Iza Vailable II*, came down on top of our plane, knocking off our nose cone and damaging our number three and four engines. Navigator Ed Gardner and Bombardier Fred Dohn were in the nose, and they bailed out. Our hydraulic system was gone and we fell out of formation. On intercom, crew members asked Grafton Smith, our pilot, if we should bail out. Smith gave us his okay, but said he and Co-pilot Mel Alderman were going to stay with the plane. We all said if that was good enough for them it was good enough for us.

As we came in for an emergency landing at an American fighter base in Luxembourg, with only two of the four engines operating, there was another problem as we were unable to lower our landing gear. Then, a P-47 cut in front of us on a dead stick landing, and our pilots had to pull *Buzz Blonde* up and turn for another approach. As we came down, a third engine failed. We made a belly landing and wiped out a couple of L-35 and L-45 planes. We landed safely with prayers and with the good Lord lending a guiding hand to Grafton Smith and Mel Alderman on the controls.

George F. Parker
427th Squadron Radio Operator

SMALL TOWN NEWSPAPER GETS CHICAGO LAUGH

Packages from home were always a happy occasion. Bill Kreutz got the best ball of bleu cheese I ever ate. One of the fellows received a can of pork and beans. He set the can on the stove to heat but forgot to punch holes in the lid. The can exploded, showering the ceiling with pork and beans. He had quite a time scraping them off.

I used to get the local paper each week from a small town in Nebraska. Junior Guenther, who was raised in Chicago, ran out of reading materials one evening and I offered him my local paper. I heard him roaring with laughter a few minutes later. I didn't think there was a comic section in the paper, so I asked him what was so funny. He said, "I never saw anything like it. So-and-so visited his uncle for dinner last Sunday. So-and-so's nephew stopped by to visit for a few hours. Is that what you call news?" I guess Junior was used to the blood-and-guts stories in the Chicago papers.

Maurice J. Paulk
444th Sub-Depot Supply

FOGGY DAYS BAD NEWS FOR TAKE-OFFS

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, I was learning to fly the B-17 at the Army Air Corps base at Roswell, New Mexico. When we heard the news of the invasion, we all

(Continued on page 16)

Molesworth Diary (Continued from 15)

thought the war would be over before we could join the 8th Air Force in England. We arrived in England on 31 January 1945 and flew 16 combat missions before Germany surrendered.

We were always apprehensive to take off from Molesworth with a plane full of bombs on a foggy morning. You would give her the throttle for take-off to the west with the radio compass set on the Buncher and climb at the rate of 500 feet per minute until you crossed the Buncher. Then you continued to climb, circling to the left until you broke out of the clouds, usually at about 8,000 feet. Then you would assemble into Squadrons and then into a Group and proceed to the assigned target in a continual column. The Groups were 2 1/2 minutes apart. What was scary even when you took off on a clear day was the B-17's buzzing around the Buncher like bees around a hive. Once over enemy territory, you changed headings every few minutes and threw out foil chaff to confuse German radar.

When you would return from a mission, the B-17's would peel off every 15 seconds into the fog which usually wasn't as thick as it had been for take-off. We would descend to 500 feet on a heading until you could see the railroad tracks usually first pointed out by the bombardier in the nose. After seeing the tracks, you followed them until you came to a ring of lights at the air base, and followed the lights to the runway. We never had to go around a second time. Once you learned the procedure, it worked.

Emerson H. Shields
360th Squadron Pilot

YB-40 SPECIALIST TOLD HE'S NOT NEEDED!

I was assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group as a YB-40 specialist, and arrived at Molesworth on August 6, 1943 on the *Tampa Tornado* with its advanced armor and gun mounts. The 359th Squadron Commander took the plane up with a co-pilot and me aboard. When we landed, he said he didn't need a YB-40 or a YB-40 specialist. I thought it would be nice if he just sent me back to the States, but apparently that was not an option. So, I stayed in the 359th as a fill-in on combat missions, sometimes as a waist or tail gunner but mostly as an engineer. The men of the squadron were exceptional people and professional airmen, and friends were made easily. The First Sergeant was one of the nicest men I had met, treating all of us like chicks in a brood.

The only wound I sustained was in London—no Purple Heart for that. One foggy night, after a sampling of scotch and stout in Piccadilly, I was crossing a street when a cab nicked me on the ankle. I guess I was so anesthetized by the alcohol that it didn't hurt much. A woman noticed that I was dripping blood on the pavement, and said something to the effect of "dumb Yank." She took me to her flat, which was quite nice, and dressed my ankle with such skill that I never bothered to have it treated further.

John F. Newman
359th Squadron YB-40 Specialist

FROM THE PRESIDENT

303BGA members, my term as president of the Association will end at the reunion in Portland this coming August and so this will be my last letter to you. I have to say it has been a busy and most interesting year.

As a member looking at the office of President, it appears to be a rather easy position. You see the President briefly at the reunion during the General Meeting and the farewell Banquet and hope he won't make a long speech on those occasions. After all we have been sitting long enough.

Actually for this past year that has not been the case. We are getting older, but not necessarily wiser. The problems come about in trying to get everyone to focus on the target --"perpetuation of the Association."

Each of us is an individual and each has an opinion that doesn't always agree with the opinion of other members, however to get to the target we, at times, have to compromise. We can disagree, but that doesn't mean we have to fight among ourselves. No one person or group should attempt to control the Association and attempt to run it to suit his/their desires. Amicable discussion of the differences and compromise will solve many problems.

Remember, "United we stand, divided we fall."

In conclusion, I was proud to serve as your President and my hopes and wishes for the Association are that it will continue to function as well as the 303rd BG(H) did and be a strong and vital organization when the family members are the only members.

Walter J. Ferrari

The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

FINANCIAL REPORT

(As of 1 May 2003)

Present Balance \$169,713.74

Last Year:

Income	\$83,183.90
Expenses	\$35,933.39

Year To Date:

\$57,008.10
\$30,212.43

William J. Roche
Treasurer

OPEN FORUM

READERS—THIS IS YOUR SPACE. LET'S HAVE YOUR COMMENTS ON THE WAY THINGS WERE OR THE WAY THINGS ARE. WRITE TO: EDITOR, HELL'S ANGELS NEWSLETTER, 3552 LANDMARK TRAIL, PALM HARBOR, FL 34684

REMEMBERING RUSSELL OF MOVIE AND AMVETS FAME

Your comments on page 20 of the May 2003 issue about the movie "The Best Years Of Our Lives" sent me on a search mission. When I was Commander of the East Moline-Silvis Amvets in 1947, Harold Russell, star of the film, visited us as National Commander of the Amvets. Attached is one of the photos taken during his visit. Can you guess which one is "Big Al"? (SEE PHOTO BELOW)

Albert L. Dussliere
427th Sqd Waist Gunner

"WHICH PICKLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO HIT?"

Thanks a lot for the great article on the Norden bombsight in the May 2003 issue. You sure made it interesting and informative. I particularly liked the way you ended the article with "Which pickle would you like to hit?" I think you knew quite a bit about the Norden bombsight even without the material I sent.

The Branson reunion was outstanding, but so was the Pittsburgh reunion which you and Mary Lee made such a success. My wife, Bernice, and I also attended the 351st Bomb Group reunion in Dayton, Ohio that same year. Bernice's brother, Everett Brannen, was with the 351st and was killed in action in a raid on the submarine pens at St. Nazaire in 1944.

Otis "Monte" White
359th Bombsight Maint.

AFTER 59 YEARS, A MINI-REUNION IN TAMPA

I was recently able to locate my pilot, Lt Henry Eich, who is living in Tampa, Florida. I had earlier located my engineer, Harry Lenson, who is living in Boynton Beach, Florida. A short time ago, Harry and I arranged to meet Lt Eich in his home in Tampa. We spent a few wonderful hours reminiscing. It had been 59 years that we hadn't seen each other.

We were shot down on the infamous January 11, 1944 raid that cost the 303rd eleven aircraft. There were 110 men lost on that one. Lt Eich went to Oflag 1 while Harry and I were sent to Stalag 17-B. Harry only stayed for a short while and was then repatriated. Lt Eich and I were interned for 16 months. We took a picture at our mini-reunion. (SEE PHOTO BELOW)

Ed Maggia
359th Sqd Waist Gunner

POINTS OUT A "VITAL" OMISSION" IN 303RD MAP

I liked very much your two-page display of maps of the Molesworth base in the May 2003 newsletter. However, I would like to point out a vital omission in the World War II map from an Ordnance point of view! It does not include the Ordnance Bomb Area Number 2 on the western side of the airfield. This was where the large munitions were in outdoor storage, whereas items requiring indoor storage

were located in Ordnance Bomb Storage Area 1 which was on the south side of the airfield.

Humphrey O'Leary
1681st Ordnance Company

WAS DAD IN PHOTO WITH PRINCESS ELIZABETH?



I am writing with a question related to a photo which appeared on page 10 of the May, 2003 newsletter (SEE PHOTO ABOVE). My father, Whitney Haskell, served in the 303rd. My mother, Virginia, receives the newsletter and we both enjoy it. My dad passed away in 1991.

The picture entitled "Colonel Kermit Stevens and the Future Queen of England" is of particular interest to us. We remember Dad's stories of meeting Princess Elizabeth while stationed in Molesworth. The crewman without the hat in the picture looks very much like Dad.

We wonder if there is information available that may help to identify that airman.

My father was in the 358th Squadron, and his original crew was led by pilot Sam Oliver. The B-17 in the picture has the initials VK and Dad always said that it brought him good luck because his future wife's, my mother's, initials were VK.

Jan Haskell
Portland, Maine

BOOK REVIEW: LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR COMBAT VET

Did you ever think you knew almost everything to know about a subject, then read a book about it and find how little you knew? After reading Brian O'Neill's book "303rd Bombardment Group" in the Osprey Publishing Limited series, that's the feeling I have.

His book, written in narrative form, puts the reader in the story, the many stories of missions to prime targets in 1943 and 1944 when the German Air Force was a force to be reckoned with. He has interviewed many of the founding cadre, giving their experiences and unexpected insight into combat operations. Their experiences were vital to replacement crews and to establishing Standard Operating Procedures.

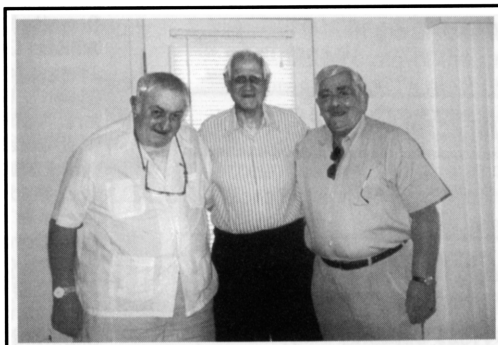
You will be riveted to the story line and feel reluctant to put the book down. Of course, it will bring back many personal memories.

Of special note are the B-17 illustrations of some of the more famous and less famous B-17's assigned to the group. They are outstanding and the illustrator, Mark Styling, deserves high praise for his work. This book deserves to be in the library of every veteran of the 303rd Bombardment Group and the other groups of the Eighth Air Force from WWII. It is a book that is hard to put down. You will get more than your money back in memories and personal recollections.

William S. McLeod, Jr.
358th Squadron Pilot



AL DUSSLIERE is second from the right. War veteran, movie star and Amvet Commander Harold Russell is in the center.



THE JOYFUL REUNION IN TAMPA after a 59-year separation brought together (l-to-r) Ed Maggia, Henry Eich and Harry Lenson.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Believe it or not, all of the members which made contributions to the association have now been listed. I know that it has taken some time in order to list everyone, but I had to fit as much information into these two pages.

I plan on taking a number of the 2003 Membership Directories to the Portland, OR, reunion and offer them for sale through the PX. Any left over copies, which I still have plenty of, can still be requested through me for only \$10.00. Ask me for more details.

Now what are we to do about the future. I receive information about the men that made up the "Hell's Angels", from e-mail's and phone calls. A number of missing comrades are being found as having passed away. I also receive information about current members of the association which have also passed away..

This association, in order to stay strong and alive, must recruit the next generation. Not only to keep the history of what you all went through, but also about the years after the war. Yes, the war years were hell for all sides, but the years after the war are a part history. You as the members of the greatest generation now known, have to keep history alive. Keep that history alive by getting you children, grand children and maybe even any great-grand children interested in the association

Dennis Smith
Membership/Roster

IN MEMORIAM

Robert C Blake	358 th	Unknown
Norman A Bunney	358 th	1/10/03
Albert V H Carroll	358 th	Unknown
Julian R Cassino	359 th	7/10/96
James E Cavagnaro	358 th	5/12/03
John DeSousa JR.	360 th	2001
Cyrus Galley SR.	1681 ORD	9/4/88
Alva E Hodges	360 th	11/10/99
Earl F Ingalls	359 th	4/1/03
Elmer P Israelson	358 th	10/30/02
Robert L Mattison	359 th	8/27/96
Charles J McClain	359 th	5/22/03
Mike C Milliff	359 th	8/13/71
Glenn H Neely	358 th	2/17/83
Charles E Prudhoe	358 th	1/14/97
Carmen W Root	359 th	8/9/02
Arthur S Stevens	360 th	3/3/03
Calvin A Swaffer	358 th	5/17/98
Ernst A Wichmann	1681 ORD	8/21/95
Frank E Zasadil	358 th	Unknown

SUPERLIFE MEMBERS

Peter L M Packard 358th

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Joseph V Leach (358th), 11820 Caramay Way, Auburn, CA 95602-7702, (530) 823-7104, spouse Florence
Eugene A Romer (359th), 8572 North Main Street, Canastota, NY 13032-3240 (315) 697-9105, spouse Vera Louise

NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Richard L Clark, 132 Rayna St., Hurley, NY 12443-5222, (845) 338-3790, spouse Ruth

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Andrew "Andy" J Jackson, 23 Lockwood Bank, Epworth, Doncaster, DN9 1JH, England, phone 01427-875387 (a ground crew member of the "Sally B")

DONATIONS

(A special note, donations made to the association not only include money but time)

To those that have donated their time,

The Elected Officers – Executive Committee
The Representative of the different groups
The Appointed Committee Chairmen

The family's of everyone above who put up with the time which we spent doing work on the associations behalf.

BENEFACTOR PROGRAM

Bruce E Arnold, Deane L Barnes, Robert C Bejna, Arthur Bluethenthal, Marvin S Boyce, George M Carroll, William L Clayatt Jr., Clayton C David (358th), Victor H Davis, Robert N Defeis, Charles R Doback Sr. (358th), Daniel M Dunn, Leroy Faulkner (360th), Fabian S Folmer (358th), Billy A Gaumer, Wallace Goldfarb (358th), Raymond H Gorham, Jeanne M Horstick, Jack W Johnson, Eugene J Kelly (303rd Family), George A Kyle Jr., Warren E Mauger, Charles J McClain, William S McLeod Jr., Sterling L Morrison, Ralph E Page, Mrs. Glenna E Prussman. Ollice Z Rowe Jr., Jack Silver, John D St.Julien, Anthony D Zelnio (359th)

IN MEMORY OF DONATIONS

Mrs. Eva Cozzo, in memory of Lawrence Cozzo (360th)
Gerald J Cramsie, in memory of William J Cramsie (360th)
Charles R Doback Sr. (358th), in memory of Donald DeCamp & William Hambree (both of the 358th)
Barbara I Donnelly, in memory of John J McGarry (427th)
Philip D Eisenwinter, in memory of Richard Waggoner (427th)
Mrs. Rosalie L Ferris, in memory of James H Ferris (358th)
Clifford F Fontaine (427th), in memory of his wife Priscilla
Mrs. Helen Gilkes, in memory of Beresford B Gilkes (427th)
Arthur L Goss (358th), in memory of Floyd Sprague (358th)
Leonard C Greig Jr., in memory of Frederick E Barnes (359th)
Quentin W Hargrove (358th), in memory of William J Neff
William G Hendon (359th), in memory of Howard L Abney (358th)
Jeanne M Horstick, in memory of William T Werner (427th)
Glenn V Hudson, in memory of Gale F Muchmore (359th)
Mrs. Mabel Kearney, in memory of James W Kearney (358th)
Mrs. Sarah Kindig, in memory of Paul B Kindig (427th)
Frank Kulesa (360th), in memory of his wife Ruth
Mrs. Mildred LaPerch, in memory of William J LaPerch (358th)
Josep M Lazzara, in memory of John M Lazzara (358th)
Mrs. Dorothy Levandoski, in memory of Edward S Levandoski (& Willis G Meyer (360th)
James D Kelley, in memory of Charis F Miller (427th)
Donavan B Manifold (358th), in memory of Mrs. Inez Linda Manifold
Stephen & Marjorie Meek, in memory of Edward G Cooper (427th)

Continued on page 19

Mrs. Frances E Miller, in memory of George D Miller (427th)
 Mrs. Mary Norris, in memory of Loy R Norris (360th)
 Claire O'Brien, in memory of Vera A Wood (427th)
 Mrs. Bernadette O'Donnell, in memory of John J O'Donnell (358th)
 Humphrey P O'Leary, in memory of all deceased members of the 1681 ORD Co.
 Nathalie B Oates, in memory of Ross C Bales (359th)
 Ralph E Page, in memory of Harry S Cook (427th)
 Kristy L Park (358th Family), in memory of Beverly Mayer
 Elana S Pfeffer, in memory of John Ercegovich (359th)
 Mrs. Glenna E Prussman, in memory of Henry G Prussman (359th)
 Edward E Ross, in memory of Richard C Waggoner (427th)

Mrs. Norma Russell, in memory of Edwin C Russell (444 A/D) & John J Casello (360th)
 Anthony J Sacco (359th), in memory of his wife Anna
 Milo R Schultz (360th), in memory of departed members of Donald Johnston's crew
 Don J Schwatzenbach, in memory of Limur Schultz (358th)
 Vicki Sharp, in memory of Warren C Kotz (427th)
 Col. Albert B Skarsten, in memory of Ingvald M Iverson (427th)
 Jack M Slawson, in memory of Merritt O Slawson (303rd)
 Jeri J Steele, in memory of Albert C "Al" Steele Jr. (427th)
 Fate L Thomas, in memory of Edward H Thomas Jr. (360th)
 George A Torrey (360th), in memory of Ed Levandoski (360th)
 Mrs. Hazel L Tupper, in memory of Theron S Tupper (359th)
 Ralph Walder & Willis G Meyer (360th)
 Mrs. Barbara Woolpert, in memory of John C Woolpert (360th)

APPEAL FOR MISSING COMBAT CREW PHOTOS

It's never too late to fill the gaps in the photo files of the 303rd Bomb Group. There were a total of 552 303rd B-17 crews who flew combat missions from Molesworth between 17 November 1942 and 25 April 1945. At last report, the Association's files included 456 crew photos, leaving 96 unaccounted for. Below are listed the pilots on the missing crew photos and the dates they were assigned to the Group's four squadrons. If you have one of the missing photos, please try to provide a left-to-right identification of the crew members and their positions. Mail to Hell's Angels Newsletter Editor, 3552 Landmark Trail, Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016. The editor will share the photos with the 303rd BGA's web site and then pass them into the Archives.

358th BS Crews

126 Web Page Photos
 25 Missing Photos
 151 Combat Crews

Charles W. Austim (10 Feb 45)
 Philip O. Benham (10 Apr 45)
 C.C. Bliss (03 Apr 44)
 John L. Cathey (25 Jul 44)
 Alfred B. Clumpner (04 May 44)
 James R. Dunn (22 Feb 43)
 ★Aubrey L. Emerson (07 Jul 43)
 Clarence M. Fountain (27 Mar 45)
 Charles E. Garrett (25 Nov 44)
 Glenn H. Gillespie (17 Aug 44)
 William R. Hartigan (14 Sep 43)
 ★Robert A. Kennard (16 Apr 45)
 William P. Lay (17 Aug 44)
 William C. McKimmie (2 Feb 45)
 John McConnell (13 Jun 44)
 Sam Oliver (25 Apr 44)
 Harry A. Schwaebe (11 Jan 43)
 Allen R. Sims (25 Dec 44)
 Marshall L. Smith (14 Nov 43)
 John W. Struerner (14 Nov 43)
 James R. Taulfin (14 Jul 44)
 John A. Thompson (02 Oct 44)
 ★Walter W. Troppman (26 Nov 43)
 Franklin F. White (15 Jul 44)
 Gerald A. White (16 Jan 44)

359th BS Crews

103 Web Page Photos
 23 Missing Photos
 126 Combat Crews

Georhe H. Blossom (21 Jul 43)
 ★Harold S. Bolsover (26 May 43)
 Raymond A. Boulter (23 Oct 44)
 ★Amedeo E. Capuano (16 Apr 45)
 Arthur G. Carpenter, Jr. (11 May 44)
 Richard L. Clemenson (29 Aug 44)
 Howard S. Dahleen (26 Nov 43)
 Edmund W. Gaines (07 Aug 44)
 Cecil J. Gates (26 Oct 44)
 Roland M. Haines (15 Apr 44)
 Alfred M. Holmes (14 Nov 44)
 ★Anthony C. Jannuzzo (17 Apr 45)
 ★John C. Kichman (17 Apr 45)
 Andrew L. Lux (15 Mar 44)
 ★Henry McManus (29 Nov 43)
 Noel N. Newell (02 Apr 44)
 Robert C. Peterson (15 Feb 45)
 ★Robert L. Phelps, Jr. (04 May 43)
 Charles F. Scott, Jr. (07 Apr 45)
 Jack E. Stocks (01 Dec 44)
 John W. Tulloss (11 Apr 44)
 Garland M. Whitlock (15 Jul 44)
 Oroville C. Witt (15 Sep 42)

360th BS Crews

123 Web Page Photos
 14 Missing Photos
 137 Combat Crews

Arlrey L. Atwell (06 Jan 44)
 ★Eugene L. Baker (25 Apr 45)
 A.F. Bilek (30 Jan 43)
 ★Joe E. Bradbury (20 Mar 43)
 ★Richard D. Duffield (14 Mar 44)
 Harold C. Farthing (13 Jun 44)
 ★David F. Hicks (27 Oct 43)
 ★Victor L. Howard (11 Jun 44)
 ★Leo B. McGrath (06 Dec 43)
 John A. Matheson (21 Aug 44)
 Martin E. Plocher (09 Feb 43)
 ★Joseph E. Trajan (22 Jul 42)
 Samuel L. Tyler (04 Feb 45)
 James A. Wall (07 Apr 45)

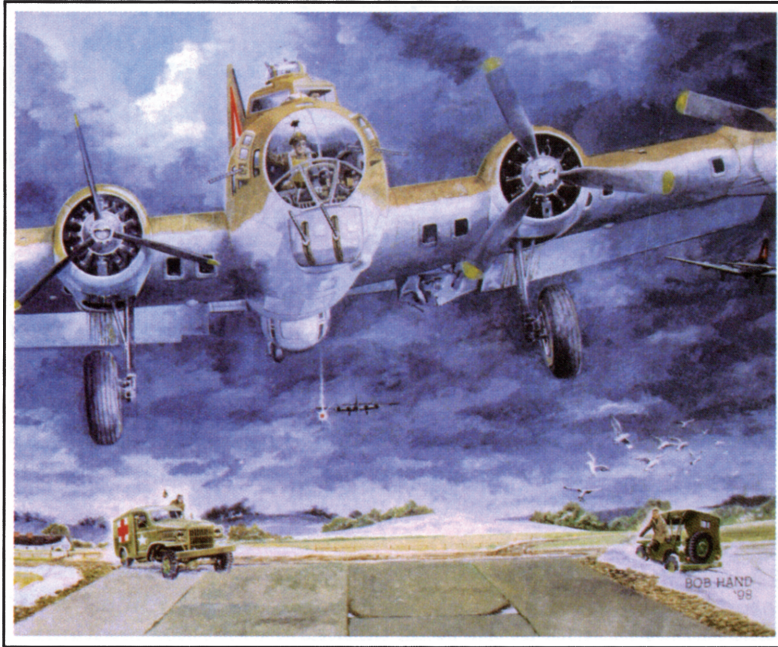
✦ - Flew no combat missions
 ★ - Upgraded from Co-Pilot To Pilot

427th BS Crews

104 Web Page Photos
 34 Missing Photos
 138 Combat Crews

Donald C. Aageson (11 Nov 44)
 Charles R. Allen (28 Apr 44)
 Mitchell T. Arcy (02 Apr 45)
 Silas B. Ashwell (06 Jul 43)
 ★John C. Barker (26 Jul 43)
 Frederick L. Breyer (01 Apr 45)
 ★Alexander J. Catich (17 Apr 45)
 ★Burt J. Cardwell (09 Feb 43)
 John W. Carothers (16 Nov 43)
 Bernard J. Clifford (03 Sep 43)
 Malcolm F. Damon (01 Apr 45)
 Robert W. Davis (15 Jul 44)
 ★Oliver T. Eisenhart (02 Oct 44)
 William R. Flesh (20 Jan 44)
 Carl A. Fredrickson (25 Jan 45)
 John W. Gallagher, Jr. (08 May 44)
 Dale C. Headlee (16 Jan 44)
 Glenn F. Hagenbach (01 May 42)
 ★Grover C. Henderson (23 Aug 43)
 Donald I. Hewitt (12 Nov 44)
 Roman M. Ley (27 Mar 45)
 Franklin Leve (27 Oct 43)
 Henry W. McCullough (25 Dec 44)
 Fred E. Mitchell (21 Apr 44)
 ★Curtiss M. Olsen (20 Mar 43)
 Chester N. Oranges (02 Apr 44)
 Stanley E. Pursel (04 Oct 44)
 Lauren H. Quillen (06 Jul 43)
 George K. Richter (25 Nov 44)
 Gilbert T. Savage (17 Mar 44)
 Frederick W. Sawyer (16 Nov 43)
 Earl A. Shaeffer (09 Feb 43)
 Thomas L. Simmons (16 Nov 43)
 Ralph E. Whitcomb (17 Sep 43)





THE ARTIST IS BOB HAND, a bombardier in the 303rd Bomb Group. He flew his missions with the 360th Squadron.

He calls this "*Not A Moment Too Soon*," meaning the B-17G with the feathered engine and flak damage barely made it back to base at Molesworth.

Bob explained that his painting is "generic," meaning it could have been the return from any mission. He points out, though, that he took the liberty of painting himself into the nose.

THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

Let's say you're a contestant on a quiz show and you're asked, "What was the safest position on a B-17 bomber during aerial combat in World War Two?" Believe it or not, if you didn't answer, "Ball turret gunner," you would be wrong! A detailed analysis of air crew casualties in the Eighth Air Force over a three month period in 1944 showed conclusively that the ball turret gunner position was the safest. Most dangerous slot, from a casualty point of view, was the bombardier's.

The analysis was reported in "Wound Ballistics," an Army Medical Department publication. A total of 1,117 air battle casualties were tabulated. They covered heavy bombardment groups of the Eighth Air Force flying B-17's and B-24's. There were 110 men killed and 1,007 wounded during the survey period. The statistics included only crews of planes which returned to their bases in England. It was not possible to accurately tabulate statistics for crews on bombers which were shot down.

In the overall casualty figures, 196 bombardiers were killed or wounded. Numerically, there were more waist gunner casualties (233), but this figure was adjusted downward to compensate for the fact that there were two waist gunners on most aircraft. Tail gunners were next highest with 140, followed by navigators with 136. There were 95 radio operators and 94 top turret gunners killed or wounded. Pilot casualty total was 83 and co-pilots 74. Ball turret gunner casualties fell to a surprising 66, the safest position on the bomber statistically speaking.

If fatalities only are considered, there's a shift in the order. Tail gunners were the most likely to be killed, followed by bombardiers. Co-pilots were the least likely to suffer a fatal wound, with ball turret gunners only slightly less safe.

A distribution of the battle casualties by the type of bomber showed that the risk of being killed or wounded was approximately two-thirds greater to B-17 crews than it was for men flying on B-24's.

If asked that question on a quiz show, the men who flew combat missions during WWII would most likely answer that there was no such thing as a "safe" position on a bomber buffeted by flak and under attack by FW-109's and ME-109's. It was not a game of trivial pursuit. The November 2003 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter will carry a detailed account of the findings.

Eddie Deerfield

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
Hell's Angels Newsletter
Eddie Deerfield, Editor
3552 Landmark Trail
Palm Harbor, FL 34684-5016

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PALM HARBOR, FL.
PERMIT NUMBER 303