

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

February, 2005

303RD'S McCRIGHT AWARDED LEGION OF MERIT FOR SECRET LEDGERS KEPT AS POW IN GERMANY

Nazi Captors Would Have Executed Him If Ledgers Had Been Discovered

(Following article compiled from reports by Melissa Nelson of The Associated Press, Rodney Bowers of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and other sources.)

Fourteen years after the death of the former 303rd Bomb Group bombardier and 61 years after his B-17 was downed over France during World War II, 2nd Lt. Ewell Ross McCright was honored with an award of the Legion of Merit, the military's seventh highest medal.

McCright was captured and taken to Germany's Stalag Luft III in what is now Zagan, Poland, after his plane was hit and went down over France on January 23, 1943. He remained a prisoner at a second POW camp until April 29, 1945, when Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army liberated camps on their advance.

Stalag Luft III was made famous in the 1963 movie *The Great Escape*, which chronicled the story of 76 Allied soldiers who escaped from the camp in March, 1944. Fifty were rounded up and executed on Hitler's orders. Another 23 were caught and returned to Stalag Luft III or sent to other camps. Only three—two Norwegians and a Dutchman—made it to safety.

During his internment, McCright secretly recorded the backgrounds and war injuries of 2,194 soldiers and other events in four ledgers which he hid under the floorboards in the POW camp. When he was transferred to Stalag Luft VII-A on a 34-mile forced march to a train



Lt. Ewell Ross McCright

depot, he smuggled out the records disguised as food in pants hung from his neck.

The ledgers, which also detailed gas chambers at Auschwitz, dogs tearing prisoners apart for sport and Nazi medical experiments on prisoners, were presented as evidence of war crimes against Nazi Germany's leaders at the post-war Nuremberg trials.

Mark Pryor, US Senator from Arkansas, who lobbied for the posthumous honor, spoke at a ceremony in Benton, AR, where the medal was presented to McCright's sister, Marie Hall.

He said, "Because of Lieutenant McCright's ledgers, veterans have found POW's, adult children have connected to their fathers' pasts and 11 former American prisoners have been awarded Purple Hearts."



MAJ. GEN. LEWIS E. LYLE, USAF RETIRED, presented the Legion of Merit medal to Marie Hall, Lt. Ewell McCright's sister. Lyle was on the 303rd Bomb Group mission to Lorient, France, when he saw McCright's B-17 go down.

Charles L. Roth, the 360th Squadron radio operator on McCright's plane, traveled with his wife from their home in Grand Junction, CO, to attend the ceremony. Roth, who was a POW at a different camp, said, "I just thought I should be here today."

He told reporters, "Lt. McCright helped to convict some Nazis for atrocities and gave evidence that they never would have had. If the Gestapo had known what he was doing, he wouldn't have lived."

Also present at the ceremony and instrumental in helping to secure the posthumous medal for McCright were retired USAF Maj. Gen. Lewis Lyle and military historian Arnold A. Wright.

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303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Hell's Angels Newsletter

Editor--Eddie Deerfield

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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 to the extent allowed by law. 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 and others related to regular members may become Family Members. Others 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 year begins on January 1. The *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, published quarterly, is sent to members whose dues payments are current. Annual dues are \$25 in the US and \$30 for foreign addresses. 303rd veterans are life members at age 78. A family member's life membership is \$100. Associate members may become life members for \$150. Veterans and family members have voting rights. The "Super Life" category has been eliminated.

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Editor Emeritus: Hal Susskind

ELECTED OFFICERS — EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

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

Vice President - Administration

Kenneth Clarke (Barbara)
3504 Plumb Street
Houston, TX 77005-2928
TEL: (713) 668-7404
EM: Zandzspapa@aol.com

Secretary

Harold "Red" Timm (Alice)
1200 Peak Court
Windsor, CO 80550-5763
TEL: (970) 686-7238
EM: Redtimmm@msn.com

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

Vice President - Reunions

Walter J. Ferrari (Ruth)
5361 Belle Mead Drive
Aiken, SC 29803
TEL: (803) 648-5598
EM: Ferrariw@bellsouth.net

Treasurer

William H. Cox (Jean)
441 Sandstone Drive
Vacaville, CA 95688
TEL: (707) 448-0571
EM: Pilotrb36@aol.com

Past Presidents Chairman

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

John W. Ford
4248 W. Colby
Springfield, MO 65802-5612
TEL: (417) 831-3919
EM: warrenburke@worldnet.att.net

358th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Rufus W. Grisham, Jr. (Nancy)
4417 89th Street
Lubbock, TX 79424-5108
TEL: (806) 794-7003
EM: RGrish20@aol.com

359th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Donald W. Stoullil
4200 Islemount Place
Robbinsdale, MN 55422-1577
TEL: (612) 537-0211

ELECTED TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Continued)

360th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Lee Faulkner
1114 Moffat Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80915-2221
TEL: (719) 596-2732

360th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Richard (Spider) Smith
790 Crenshaw Drive
Hemet, CA 92543-8044
TEL: (909) 652-4793

427th Bomb Sqd. Representative

Edward W. Gardner, Jr (Susan)
5764 Lakeview Drive, Box 246
Interlochen, MI 49643-0246
TEL: (231) 276-7126
EM: EWG303nav@aol.com

427th Bomb Sqd. Alternate

Fred E. Reichel
553 Mallard Street
Rochester Hills, MI 48309-3431
TEL: (248) 852-2021

HQ, 444th Air Depot Representative

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

HQ, 444th Air Depot Alternate

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

Widow Member's Representative

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

Family & Associate Member Rep

Lance Stoner (Trish)
809 E. 31st Street
Pittsburg, KS 66762
TEL: (620) 230-0847
EM: Lstoner@mobil.net

APPOINTED COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Membership & Roster

Dennis S. Smith (Marianne)
11156 E. Woodbridge Road
Acampo, CA 95220
TEL: (209) 369-2393
EM: ds111th@lodinet.com

Group Advisor

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

PX Administrator

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

By-Laws Committee

Fred E. Reichel
(See listing as 427th Squadron
Alternate)

Historian & 8thAF Museum Liaison

Harold A. Susskind (Rae)
2602 Deerfoot Trail
Austin, TX 78704-2716
TEL: (512) 441-6475
EM: hasusskind@hotmail.com

Director of Internet Operations

Gary Moncur (Susan)
4483 Palmer Drive
West Valley City, UT 84120-5052
TEL: (801) 969-7639
EM: glm@303rdBGA.com

For a visit to the highly
rated Website of the
303rd Bomb Group
Association, go
online at:

www.303rdBGA.com

World War II Awards

William H. Cox
(See listing as Treasurer)

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

Planning a trip to England and RAF Molesworth?

Persons planning to visit the base 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

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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



World War II, was presented to him at the 60th anniversary of the US 8th Air Force in ceremonies at the Heritage Museum near Savannah on 26 January 2002. Standing behind him are his daughter Ellen Marshall McBride, Heritage Museum president C. J. Roberts and retired AF Maj. Gen. Lewis Lyle who served at Molesworth as Stevens' deputy commander. In the photo on the right, Col. Stevens took part in ceremonies on 20 January 1944 as the B-17 *Hell's Angels* prepared for take-off on its return to the United States.

COLONEL KERMIT D. STEVENS, LONGEST SERVING 303RD COMMANDER, DEAD AT 96

Colonel Kermit D. Stevens, a military veteran with 30 years service and the longest serving commanding officer the 303rd Bomb Group during World War II, passed away on 21 November 2004 in San Mateo, CA. He was 96.

His last active duty assignment with the Air Force was as Deputy Commandant of the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio for seven years, 1957-1964.

Col. Stevens was a member of the original cadre sent to England in World War II to organize the Eighth Air Force in 1942. He established an almost legendary reputation as commander of the famed 303rd "Hells Angels" heavy bomb Group, resulting in a visit from King George and Queen Elizabeth.

A highly decorated command pilot, Col. Stevens was one of the courageous, determined leaders who demonstrated that daylight bombing was possible by their victories over the vaunted Luftwaffe and by the destruction of Hitler's vast production industries.

He personally led many of his 31 completed combat missions, including the historic August 17, 1943 raid over Schweinfurt, Germany--known as "one of the most savage battles in the history of warfare." Other missions included the initial raids of Hamburg, Bremen, Berlin, Cologne, and Wilhelmshaven.

Following his World War II tour in England, Col. Stevens commanded SAC bases in Omaha, Nebraska; Pratt, Kansas; Spokane, Washington; and Alamogordo, New Mexico. He was Deputy Commander of the 13th Air Force when stationed in the Philippines.

Born in 1908 and reared in Oregon, he received his B.S. degree in Economics from the University of Oregon in 1933, where he met Marion Bass who would become his wife in June 1938.

In 1935 he entered flight training at Randolph Field in Texas, receiving his wings a year later at Kelly Field. As a Flying Cadet, his first assignment was to Barksdale Field, Louisiana, with the 90th Attack Squadron; he became its commander in 1940. He was a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College

at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and the Jet Qualification Course at Selma, Alabama. Colonel Stevens also served as the Professor of Air Science at the University of Minnesota for four years..

Col. Stevens holds the Legion of Merit, The Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Royal Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

He was a founding member of The American Air Museum in Britain and a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity, the Air Force Association and the Retired Officers Association.

After he retired from the Air Force in 1964, Col. Stevens made his home in Davis, California, and for 10 years managed a sporting goods department there. An avid sportsman all of his life (he was a college letterman in both baseball and basketball) he continued to be an active participant in bowling and golf, attending numerous tournaments and competitions. In 1992, he moved to Medford, Oregon with his wife, Marion.

Col. Stevens was married to Dr. Marion Bass Stevens for 60 years; she died in September, 1998. His daughter Ellen Marshall McBride lives in Ventura, California and daughter Mary Stevens Porter resides in Redwood Shores, California.

Col. Stevens moved to San Mateo in September, 2002, and regularly attended San Francisco Giants games with his family.

At the family's request and responding to his wishes, the remains were cremated. A formal memorial ceremony with both daughters and numerous dignitaries in attendance is planned at The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in June. The museum lowered its American flag to half-staff on learning of the passing of Col. Stevens.

303rd Bomb Group veterans, family and Associate members who wish to honor Col. Kermit D. Stevens are encouraged to make donations to The Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum, PO Box 1992, Savannah, GA 31402. Mark checks "Colonel Stevens 303rd BG Memorial Fund."

FORGED IDENTITY CARD A TICKET TO FREEDOM

Second Lieutenant Walter Hargrove, a 358th Squadron bombardier, became Marcel Croisille, a French deaf mute, as he traveled westward toward freedom in the care of French Resistance forces.

The forged ID card was prepared for Hargrove by the French Underground after he bailed out of the 303rd Bomb Group B-17 *Auger Head* on the mission to Amiens on 31 August 1943.

Four months later, with the help of two French families who placed their own lives in jeopardy, he returned to England to file his report on Escape and Evasion.



HOW FRENCH RESISTANCE RISKED THEIR LIVES TO LEAD DOWNED ALLIED AIRMEN TO FREEDOM

My father, Walter Hargrove, wrote an article in the August 2001 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter about his escape from German capture in 1943. In the several years since he passed away, I have learned more about the French families in the Resistance that led him and others to freedom. My principal sources were Laurent Viton of Goderville, France, and Ian LeSueur of Jersey in the Channel Islands. Thanks to them, the story can be told.

By James L. Hargrove

In 1943, 2nd Lt. Walter Hargrove celebrated the American Fourth of July "holiday" on his first combat mission by flying over occupied France as bombardier aboard the B-17 *Hell's Angels*. The battle-tested Flying Fortress had already flown over 25 sorties in the 303rd Bombardment Group. He had no idea that less than two months later he would be evading capture by German troops in France, spend Christmas as a guest of brave and distinguished families of the French Resistance, and would be back in England by New Year's Day.

Lt. Hargrove recalled, "When we arrived over Paris on the B-17 *Auger Head* on 31 August 1943, heavy clouds obscured our target, the air depot at Romilly-sur-Seine. We decided to bomb the marshalling yard at Amiens airfield. During our run, the number 4 engine sped up to 3000 rpm and we were unable to feather it. We kept on our run and dropped our bombs. Returning to England we were fighting a 60-knot head wind when we were attacked by five ME-109's and FW-190's at 30,000 feet. Our number 1 engine was knocked out and we had two small fires in the rear of the plane. By then we had lost a second engine and had been hit in the tail section, the radio room had a fire and our engineer had a neck and head wound. At 22,000 feet we were ordered to bailout."

Auger Head was the only 303rd Bomb Group B-17 missing that day. At about 7:30 pm, a French policeman reported the crash of a four-engine bomber in the hamlet called Brunville near the towns of Eu and Le Treport on the coast of France. Three parachutes had been seen and German soldiers quickly moved

into the area. Tail Gunner S/Sgt David Miller had been critically injured during the attack. His body was found near Abbeville 20 miles from the crash site. The rest of the crew landed along a westerly line between Amiens and Eu.

None of the American airmen on pilot W. J. Monahan's 358th Squadron crew spoke French or German, but each knew he would have to find help to evade capture. As Ian LeSueur explained, most French citizens tried to go on with their lives after the German occupation, and some actively collaborated with the enemy. The true patriots who began to resist the occupation knew that they and their families would be tortured and killed if they were caught. Waist gunner S/Sgt Jim Comer survived the crash, but his helpers were captured by the Gestapo and executed in front of him. Comer was imprisoned in Rouen. Later, a French policeman who sheltered Lt. Hargrove was reported to the Gestapo by a neighbor and killed.

Of the eleven man Monahan crew, which included a photographer, only four evaded capture, six became prisoners of war and one was killed in action. Lt. Hargrove was wounded in the right arm and leg just before he jumped. When he came out of the clouds, he was over a town but the wind was pushing his parachute into a wooded area. He landed safely in a tree, left his Mae West, boots and chute hanging in the foliage and crawled into a briar patch to spend the night.

He made his way past German troops and French farmers by traveling at night, living on green apples and raw vegetables. At daybreak of September 4th, coming out on a road, he saw a sign that read Abbeville, 40 km / Ballincourt, 31 km. "I now knew exactly where I was, and where I was going," he later wrote in the *Escape & Evasion* report.

He headed for the smaller town, knowing that Abbeville was heavily occupied. Coming to a small barn on the outskirts, he entered and waited for someone to come out of the farmhouse. The first person he saw was a young boy with a hay fork, perhaps 15, who asked him, "English?" "No, American." The boy went off to find his father, and Lt. Hargrove was soon invited to clean up,

have his wounds dressed, and have a meal. The next day, a doctor arrived, removed a shell fragment and bandaged the wounded arm. A young woman came in who spoke to him with the aid of a French-English dictionary. She arranged for him to receive civilian clothes and boots.

The Resistance prepared false identification papers using the photographs that each airman carried for this purpose. Lt. Hargrove's ID said he was a deaf-mute. Over the next four months, he was moved in a westerly direction by the Resistance from location to location in Auxi Le Chateau, Paris, Joigny, Vannes, Baden and Quimper. Then, in late November he was taken to Colonel Michel Scheidhauer's apartment in Brest on the Bay of Biscay. The French colonel had been taken prisoner by the Nazis in the 1940 occupation but was soon released. He and his family began to participate in Resistance networks to help Allied Airmen escape from France.

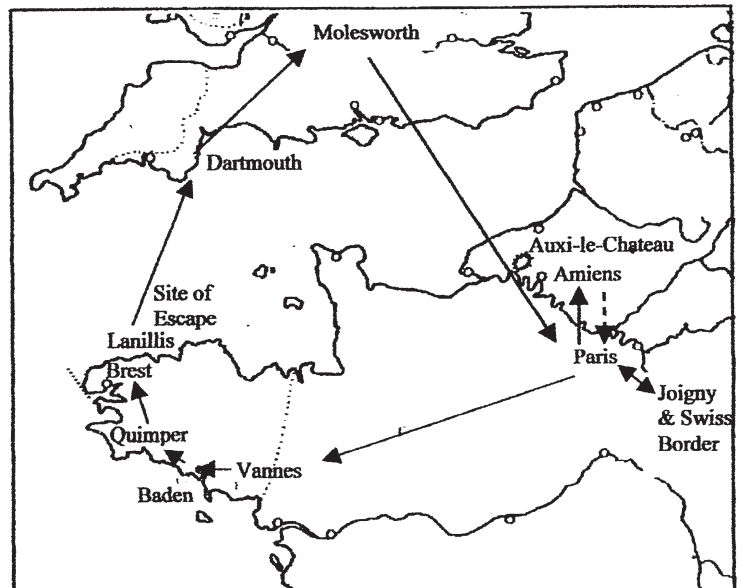
The Colonel and his wife sometimes sheltered six or more airmen in the cramped space. Because the toilets were outside on the landings, it was very difficult to conceal the coming and going of so many airmen. This was a time when every man over 18 was subject to conscription into the German army or labor camps, and it had become difficult to explain the presence of so many young "deaf-mutes". The Colonel discussed the situation with his friends, Dr. and Mme. de la Marniere. Their teen age daughters, Maryse and her three sisters, may have thought it was a wonderful opportunity to practice the jitterbug, and soon both families were fearlessly welcoming airmen. Safe houses were also arranged through the Scheidhauer's married daughters, Christiane and Ghislaine. Records show that these two families sheltered dozens of airmen and resistance workers during 1943-44. Imagine the logistics of providing not only for your family in the middle of a war, but also finding provisions for several grown men. Resistance workers sought food from any source that would not give away their secrecy.

Maryse later asked her father why he had put his family at such risk. He replied, "How else would I have found dancing partners for my beautiful daughters?" The de la Marniere girls played word games with the airmen, fixed snacks, and occasionally held dance parties. One dance was interrupted by a ringing doorbell and the record player was quickly turned off. "It was a Kraut," Maryse exclaimed. He was looking for another apartment and nothing came of it. However, the young ladies did much more than guard against boredom. They would guard against German spies by interrogating each new evadee about current slang and popular songs. The ribald "Roll me over in the clover" was quite popular.

When Lt. Hargrove arrived at the Scheidhauer's, several Frenchmen and an English Air Crew were in hiding with the family. After the war, he wrote: "The eldest daughter's husband had been conscripted and taken to Germany to do forced labor. The younger daughter, Ghislaine, had been taught to handle weapons and explosives, and we gathered that she had helped eliminate a German collaborator. Ghislaine spoke English well and did not mind talking about her escapades. The two women had several young children and knew the risks they were taking. Often, the children would be sent as messengers to other Resistance workers."

On a rather nasty winter's night Lt. Hargrove and three other evadees were taken by car to Lanillis to try to escape by boat from occupied France. The attempt failed, and they returned to the Colonel's place. This time there were about 12 to 14 people sleeping all over the floors in several rooms. The next day they all cleared out except for a British navigator. The Colonel and Ghislaine were gone one night and when they returned late, Ghislaine showed Lt. Hargrove a rucksack full of papers that were marked classified. It turned out they were secret German papers that gave a breakdown of all the Nazi forces in Brest, including diagrams of the submarine pens, lists of regiments that were present, and the location of tanks.

A few days later, word from Paris reached the family that the



FROM MOLESWORTH TO THE BAIL-OUT NEAR AMIENS, AND THE LONG ROAD BACK TO ENGLAND—Lt. Walter Hargrove was moved by the French Resistance westward to Brest on the coast of the Bay of Biscayne, and then, with the help of British commandos, by boat to England .

Gestapo were looking for Ghislaine. She moved to the apartment where Dr. de la Marniere lived with his wife and daughters, and the British navigator and American bombardier went with her.

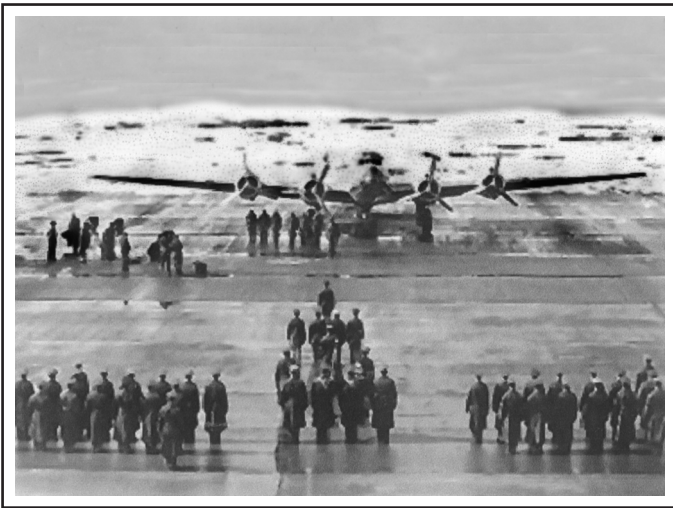
Lt. Hargrove later wrote, "On Christmas eve of 1943, the ladies requested our shoes. We thought maybe they wanted to make certain we didn't go wandering outside. On Christmas morning our shoes had been returned with a bottle of cognac in one and a number of small gifts in the other—leather cuff links and post card pictures of Brest.

"It was a festive day with overtones of urgency. We had a hot dinner, lots of wine, cider, cognac and champagne. About 3 pm we were to listen to the British Broadcasting Company, and the coded message was 'Get your fannies out to the coast, we are coming for you.' We headed for the ocean again just before midnight, were ferried out to a gunboat by British commandos. About noon the next day, with a huge sense of relief, we pulled into a port on the south coast of England."

The Christmas rescue mission picked up about 32 people. The manifest included US airmen, members of the Royal Navy, airmen from the RAF, several French men and two women. One of the women was Madame Ghislaine Niox, the Colonel's youngest daughter. Madame Niox carried the plans of the German fortifications at Poulmic. One of the Americans was carrying the rucksack with information that Ghislaine and her father had obtained. For her work assisting the Allied causes, Ghislaine Niox was awarded the Order of the British Empire.

The Colonel's work in the Resistance long remained a secret from the occupiers. He was appointed director of Civil Defense for Brest. In this role, he maintained blackouts and met with the Germans to plan passive defense measures, no doubt passing the information along to the Resistance! However, in March, 1944, when the Colonel learned that the Gestapo was about to search his apartment he moved to Paris and was there when Allied forces freed the city.

My father returned stateside and was promoted to Captain. He finished his service but could not find civilian employment after the war, so he rejoined the Air Force and completed a 20-year hitch in the Office of Special Investigation. He and his wife, Catherine, had six children, three of whom served in the US Air Force. Walter Hargrove died at 82 and is buried in the Tahoma National Military Cemetery near Seattle.



THE B-17 WAS KNOWN AS "ANDREWS' FOLLY" in the decade before the United States entered World War II, and was almost scrapped. Here, in 1937, a Boeing Flying Fortress arrives at Langley Field, Air Force GHQ and home to the 2nd Wing.



SIX YEARS LATER, GENERAL ANDREWS VISITED THE 303RD BOMB GROUP to congratulate air crews on their combat record on B-17 bombers. A few months after his visit to Molesworth in March, 1943, he died in a B-24 crash on a mountaintop in Iceland.

He Paved The Way For The B-17 And Rise of American Air Power

THE INFLUENCE OF FRANK ANDREWS

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In early 1943, Lt. Gen. Frank M. Andrews was killed in the crash of his B-24 Liberator just as he stood on the threshold of playing a key role in the Allied victory in Europe. Andrews, at the time of his death, was commander of the United States forces in the European Theater of Operations and as such was in charge of the overall direction of the US strategic bombing campaign as well as planning for the invasion of the Continent.

The death of Andrews was a major blow. Even before the war ended Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, renamed the Army Air Field at Camp Springs, Md., for the fallen airman. For decades Andrews Air Force Base has been the "gateway to the capital" for Presidents and foreign leaders, and today it is far more famous than the person for whom it was named. Most are unaware that Andrews was one of the founding fathers of the Air Force.

The significance of his career does not revolve around the circumstances of his death or what "might have been" had he lived longer. It rests instead on the unique role he actually played during his military service. He was responsible for orchestrating sweeping changes to the prewar Army Air Corps. He prepared the way for the wartime Army Air Forces and postwar US Air Force.

Andrews was commissioned in 1906 at West Point and served in the cavalry until 1917. He transferred to aviation as a major during World War I and earned his pilot's wings in 1918. Later, he served in Air Service staff and command billets at home and overseas, as well as on the War Department General Staff. In 1928, he finished the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Va., and, unlike most airmen, graduated from both the Army Command and General Staff School and the Army War College.

The court-martial in December 1925 and resignation in February 1926 of Army Brig. Gen. William L. "Billy" Mitchell was a turning point for the Army air arm. In the wake of that episode, experienced Army airmen such as Majors Andrews and Arnold concluded that the overall goal of building a separate Air Force—Mitchell's goal and theirs—could be achieved only by means of

an evolutionary process from within the War Department. Andrews was to play a leading role.

Following World War I, centralized command of Army air combat units was the subject of a major debate. In the interwar period, a series of outside blue-ribbon advisory panels studied this issue for the Secretary of War. The work culminated in 1934 when the Baker Board recommended the consolidation of the Air Corps combat units under a single air officer. The proposed combat air command would be the GHQ Air Force.

The Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur, approved this concept with its implied acknowledgment that the "air force" had a legitimate interest in conducting independent operations quite apart from support for land forces. MacArthur activated GHQ Air Force on March 1, 1935, with Andrews as commander, a move that brought Andrews a double promotion to the temporary grade of brigadier general.

Amid all of the bureaucratic shuffling (in military command leadership), Andrews faced a major problem: He had no truly effective long-range, heavy bombers to carry out the kinds of independent air missions fundamental to the GHQ Air Force concept. Solving that problem was one of his most pressing tasks, and it was only because of the persistence and tenacity of Andrews and his chief of staff that Boeing's new, four-engine B-17 bomber reached full deployment status. It was a fight that nearly ended his career.

The first B-17 Flying Fortresses were assigned in 1937 to the 2nd Bomb Group at Langley, led by Lt. Col. Robert Olds. The 2nd BG served, in effect, as the operational test bed for this important weapons system. One of Olds's operations officers, 1st Lt. Curtis E. LeMay, was not only a pilot but also an expert navigator and bombardier.

Andrews was fond of demonstrating the capabilities of the big bomber. For instance, in February 1938, six B-17s from the 2nd BG under Olds's command made a 5,225-mile Goodwill Flight that included stops from Miami to Buenos Aires and the return to Langley. Later, on May 12, 1938, during Army-Navy war games, Andrews proved that a B-17 could intercept an "enemy aircraft carrier" (the role was played by an Italian ocean liner) when three of the bombers located the ship more than



LIEUTENANT GENERAL FRANK M. ANDREWS

700 miles offshore in the Atlantic. Lead navigator was LeMay.

By the summer of 1938, however, the B-17 was in trouble, with the War Department threatening to shut down production in a cost-cutting effort. Senior Army officers believed that larger numbers of short and medium range, twin-engine bombers could do a better job than smaller numbers of large, expensive, long-range bombers with four engines.

Andrews, now a temporary major general, invited Brig. Gen. George C. Marshall, new chief of war plans on the General Staff, for an all-day briefing at his Langley Field headquarters. Marshall accepted and was favorably impressed.

Shortly afterward, Marshall accompanied Andrews on an extended inspection trip to GHQ Air Force combat units across the country, as well as visits to Air Corps support installations and several aircraft manufacturing plants. A crucial stop came at the Boeing plant in Seattle, where Marshall was allowed to see firsthand the B-17 production line. Marshall became convinced that the aircraft was not only useful but critical to US defenses. Marshall's opinion eventually went a long way toward saving the controversial aircraft, which Army officers derided as "Andrews's Folly." Moreover, Marshall's trip with Andrews marked the beginning of a professional relationship between the two that would be of great importance to the future of the Army air arm.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt would pass over scores of more senior generals to reach down and select Marshall to become the new Army Chief of Staff. One of his first actions was to recall Andrews to Washington as the assistant chief of staff for operations and training, the G-3 of the entire Army.

In that key post, Andrews was able to formulate Army-wide policy on important issues of concern to the air arm, such as doctrine for close air support of ground forces. And, for the first time, air officers were assigned in significant numbers to the War Department General Staff. Andrews was also able to advise Marshall on a whole range of issues regarding further development of the nation's airpower, as it became increasingly evident that the United States would not be able to avoid involvement in the war.

Late in 1941, on the eve of America's entry into World War II, Marshall took two steps to enhance further the standing of the air arm within the War Department. First, he advanced Andrews to lieutenant general and reassigned him as commander of Caribbean Defense Command, making him the first airman to head a unified theater command overseas. Andrews's pioneering work as a joint forces commander estab-



THE LIBRARY AT ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE has the 303rd Bomb Group's *Hell's Angels Newsletter 25th Anniversary* set. The books were presented to Heidi Meyers, the Base Director of Library Operations, by Eddie Deerfield, editor of the two-volume World War II air combat retrospective.

lished valuable precedents both for directing theater commands overseas in wartime and for integrating air forces in such commands. Second, Marshall approved a plan to reorganize the War Department so as to give the Army Air Forces parity with ground components.

Arnold's post as deputy chief of staff of the Army for air put the Army Air Forces on a level different from the other two components in the War Department. Consequently, Marshall arranged for the AAF to have a seat at both the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff and US Joint Chiefs of Staff. It rested on the perceptive understanding Marshall had of airpower, fostered by his close association with Andrews.

Late in 1942, Marshall moved Andrews from Caribbean Defense Command to leadership of US forces in the Middle East. Andrews was in that post for only a short time but he established Ninth Air Force within his Middle East command, the first "tactical" air force to drop bombs in Europe.

Early in 1943, at the Casablanca Conference, Marshall nominated Andrews as commander of the US European Theater of Operations, to direct the American aerial bombing campaign against Germany and plan for the eventual land invasion of the European continent.

GHQ Air Force had indeed, as Arnold recognized, been the forerunner of the Army Air Forces, laying the foundation for its success in wartime. During World War II he wrote, "Today, when American bombers fly a successful mission in any theater of war, their achievement goes back to the blueprints of the General Headquarters Air Force. Our operations were based on the needs and problems of our own hemisphere, with its vast seas, huge land areas, great distances, and varying terrains and climates. If we could fly here, we could fly anywhere, and such has proved to be the case."

Andrews's dream of a separate Air Force needed four more years to come to fruition, but his contemporaries knew well the importance of the role he had played. In July 1947, President Harry Truman signed the National Security Act authorizing a separate Air Force within a unified National Military Establishment. That bill transferred the dormant statutory functions of the Commanding General of GHQ Air Force to the Chief of Staff of the new US Air Force.

H.O. Malone was an aviation cadet and flew F-86 Sabres in Europe. He taught European history at Texas Christian University and spent 21 years in the Department of Defense, retiring in 1994 as chief historian, Army Training and Doctrine Command. Above are excerpts of his first article for Air Force Magazine.



THE LEGION OF MERIT AWARD CEREMONY honoring Lt. Ewell Ross McCright was attended by nearly a hundred dignitaries, 303rd Bomb Group veterans and family members. Above, l-to-r, are Mark Pryor, US Senator from Arkansas; Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reporter Mary Hargrove who wrote a two-part series on the McCright saga; Arnold Wright, World War II author and historian, and Griffin Smith, Executive Editor of the Democrat-Gazette.

McCRIGHT from page 1

Lyle was a captain in the 303rd Bomb Group and commanded the 360th Squadron at the time Ewell McCright's plane went down. He flew the same mission and saw the incident when a falling bomb from a B-17 at a higher elevation struck and crippled the aircraft.

In presenting the Legion of Merit medal to McCright's sister, Marie Hall, Lyle said, "It's the routine in the military that a man's commander presents him with the medal. He risked his life. That's as tough a thing as you can do."

The retired general, who has presented hundreds of medals through the years, said this ceremony was among his most special.

Lyle, an Arkansas native, credited another Arkansan, Arnold Wright, for the efforts which culminated in the posthumous award to McCright.

"He was really the fireball who got this started," said Lyle. "I'm absolutely amazed at the work Arnold has done and the recent publications by the Democrat-Gazette that have got the whole United States interested in this story."

After the war, the ledgers were copied by the US War Department and returned to McCright. When

the former POW died in 1990, his ledgers were given to Wright, a local author and historian, who transcribed them into a 1994 book, *Behind The Wire: Stalag Luft III, South Compound*.

He noted in his book that after the closing of Stalag Luft III, McCright and the other prisoners were transferred to Stalag VII-A, about 20 miles northeast of Munich.

When they reached the new camp, a German guard found the ledgers, but McCright convinced him that they just contained the names and addresses of his US air force comrades who had died in the war. The

guard returned the records to McCright without looking at them more carefully.

"Later on," Wright wrote, "the ledgers were found in another search, but after presenting several packages of cigarettes to the guards, they were returned."

Although uncertain about how the 360th Squadron bombardier managed to get all four books out Stalag Luft III, Wright said he later learned that another POW, Arkansan Marvin Hogue, helped smuggle out one of the ledgers in the lining of his jacket.

In his remarks at the medal presentation ceremony, Arnold Wright said,

"We are here to honor not only one of our own, but all the World War II veterans who gave us a precious gift. That gift being the free soil we walk upon and the freedom we enjoy."

"In August of 2003, Lew Lyle and I approached Sen. Mark Pryor's office with letters from six World War II generals requesting that the Legion of Merit be awarded to the late Ewell Ross McCright. The senator's aide, Mike Fangue, started the all rolling, and the ball stopped rolling today!"

In a letter after the war, McCright wrote about his years as a prisoner of war.

"I learned to stifle the pangs of hunger as I watched my comrades wasting away around me. I saw my youth pass away in a German prison camp. I returned to this country very mixed up."

McCright earned a law degree, and served in the Arkansas House of Representatives from 1951 to 1953. He was 72 when he died in the Veterans Hospital in Little Rock in 1990.

In 1946, Kenneth Joseph Kurtenbach, another 303rd POW also from the 360th Squadron, was awarded the Legion of Merit for serving as "Man Of Confidence," interceding with the German staff at Stalag Luft XVII-B to better the lives of 4,000 American prisoners.



CHARLES ROTH AND HIS WIFE, DONNA, traveled from their home in Grand Junction, Colorado, to attend the ceremony in Benton, Arkansas. Roth was radio operator on McCright's 360th Squadron B-17. Both bailed out on the Lorient mission and became prisoners of war.

DAYTON REUNION DATES CHANGED TO HOLD FAREWELL BANQUET ON SATURDAY

In response to requests from 303rd BGA members to end the next reunion on a Saturday rather than on a Monday, Reunion Vice President Walter Ferrari was able to change the dates with the Crown Plaza Hotel in Dayton. The new schedule is from Tuesday, August 23 to Saturday, August 27. There were also requests to shorten the reunion from five days to four days, but Ferrari had contracted for five days and the hotel committed itself to numerous complimentary services which would have been lost in a shorter time span.

The reunion VP is working on a full program of activities for those members attending the Dayton meeting. Details will be available in the next issue of the newsletter.

The likely highlight of events away from the hotel is the visit to the National Museum of the U. S. Air Force, formerly known as the USAF Museum, at Wright-Patterson AF Base. Officials said the museum's new name underscores its status as the trustee of the Air Force story, confirms the museum's national character and world class collection, and signals its rapidly growing facilities and global visibility. At ceremonies marking the name change last October, USAF Chief of Staff John P. Jumper said "The Air Force Museum is a national treasure. It tells the story of our proud legacy and preserves our unique heritage so that all can learn about the history, mission and capabilities of America's air force."

Ex-Historian Clashes With 303rd BGA In Dispute Over Who Owned Archives Donated to Museum

Harry D. Gobrecht, former 303rd Bomb Group Association historian, is claiming that the archival collection donated to the 8th AF Heritage Museum in Pooler, Georgia by majority vote of the 303rd's Board of Directors was his personal property and did not belong to the Association and the veterans it represents.

In an email message to the Board's Executive Committee on December 17, he wrote, "I have legal advice that almost all of the 303rd BG (H) archive collection is my personal property—not that of the 303rd BGA, although I have always referred to the entire collection as the 303rd BG (H) Archive Collection." Gobrecht added, "Bill Cox (William H. Cox, 303rd BGA Treasurer) examined the Archive Collection before it was shipped to the 8th AF Museum and can attest to the above." Cox, however, disputed the former historian's claim of ownership.

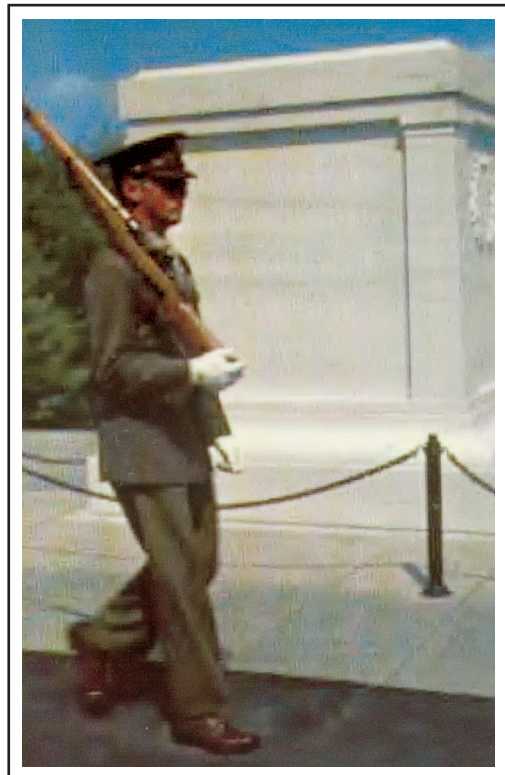
Last June, the 303rd treasurer was asked by incumbent President Albert L. Dussliere to inspect the collection at Gobrecht's home. Cox made the physical inspection and obtained a detailed index of the archival holdings. In a message to the 303rd's Executive Committee on August 4, Cox wrote, "All items in the (23-page) Index I gave out to each member of the EC belong to the 303rd BGA." The Association's treasurer gave Gobrecht a check for \$3,536.67 to pay for shipment to the Heritage Museum of archives believed to be the property of the 303rd BGA. The archives reached the Museum on October 15. After Gobrecht's unexpected claim, Cox reaffirmed that he stood by his earlier statement, that the archives were the property of the 303rd BGA.

It's not known why Gobrecht didn't advise the 303rd Board of his claim of ownership of the archives before the vote on a repository and the physical transfer out of 303rd BGA possession. For several years, the Board has been debating when to release the archives and to which museum. In addition to the Heritage Museum, the US Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton and the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs expressed interest in the 303rd's archival collection. If Gobrecht had claimed and proved legal title, there would have been no need for extended debate by the Board, bids by the three museums, a meeting in Savannah of 303rd Board members with Heritage Museum officials, and a vote by the Board on the choice of a repository.

An article in the December 2004 issue of the "8th AF News," published by the 8th AF Historical Society, credited the collection to Gobrecht. Past Presidents Committee Chairman Dussliere wrote to editor Walter E. Brown stating that "at no time did our organization authorize the naming of our archives and collection in his name." Harold A. Susskind, who succeeded Gobrecht as 303rd BGA Historian, wrote to W. C. Rawson, president of the Historical Society, asserting that during the time Gobrecht served as Historian he was "the custodian, not the owner" of the 303rd Bomb Group Association's archives. Executive Committee member Eddie Deerfield wrote to C. J. Roberts, President and CEO of the 8th AF Heritage Museum, requesting assurance that when those items listed in the 23-page Index are made available to the public, they will be identified as the "303rd Bombardment Group (H) Archival Collection" donated to the Museum by the Association.

The outcome of these efforts will be reported in the next issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



How many steps does the guard take during his walk by the Tomb of the Unknowns? Why?

21 steps. Like the 21-gun salute, it's the highest honor given military and foreign dignitaries.



How long does he hesitate after his "about face" to begin his return walk? Why?

21 seconds, same purpose, to render the highest honor given.

Guards must commit to two years service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. They live in a barracks under the tomb. They cannot drink alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives. They cannot disgrace the uniform or the tomb in any way.

During the first six months of duty, a guard is forbidden to talk to anyone or watch television. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable persons laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred.

Their shoes are specially made with thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make a loud click as they come to a halt. Guards dress for duty in front of a full length mirror. There must be no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform.



The guard's gloves look wet. Are they?

His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.



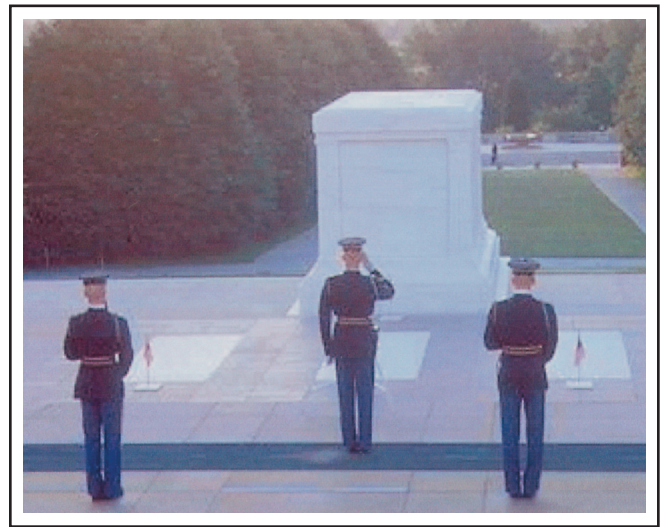
Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time? If not, why not?

No, he carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.



How often are the guards changed?

Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.



What are the limits on the physical traits?

For a person to apply for guard duty, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30 inches.

SUMMARY OF THE MINUTES OF THE 303RD BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING IN SAVANNAH ON 26 AUGUST 2004

Treasurer Bill Cox said the Association will suffer a deficit in the future at the current rate of expenses over income, and recommended action. He also submitted a proposed budget for the next fiscal year. A motion to accept the Treasurer's report was approved.

Newsletter editor Eddie Deerfield said the cost of printing, handling and mailing each of the quarterly issues ranges from \$5,500 to \$6,500. Last year the newsletter budget was \$26,000. The Board approved the newsletter report as presented.

Past Presidents Committee Chairman Walt Ferrari reported a slate of Association officers to serve as the Executive Committee if elected at the General Meeting. He named:

Dick Bowler, president
Walt Ferrari, vice president for reunions
Ken Clarke, vice president for administration
Harold Timm, secretary
Bill Cox, treasurer
Eddie Deerfield, newsletter editor
Al Dussliere, chairman of past presidents committee

The slate carried unanimously.

Membership Chairman Dennis Smith was unable to attend the reunion, but submitted a written detailed report. Many veterans have reached the age of "Life Members" and are dues exempt. He said this indicates a need for financial support of some form. Our total current membership by roster count is 1,740 members.

Web site manager Gary Moncur's written report noted the number of hits (people looking at this site) for this year as phenomenal, and visits increase every year.

By-laws Chairman Fred Reichel reports that changes requested by Board members were worked out in an orderly fashion. President Al Dussliere commented that the Association was fortunate that Reichel had a lifetime background in the legal profession and expertise in this process, and asked for any questions by the Board concerning the changes. A motion to accept the By-law changes and bring them before the General meeting was approved.

Historian and AF Museum Liaison Chairman Hal Susskind was not present, but sent word that has been working on his book which is three-quarters finished, and will contact the Association president when ready to go to press.

World War II Awards: Bill Cox reported that DFC awards came through for Rufus Grisham, Tom Hardin, Walt Mayer and Ben Starr.

United Kingdom Representatives Robin and Sue Beeby came from England for this reunion and reported being busy hosting several visits to Molesworth by veterans, family members, children and grandchildren, and representing the 303rd BGA at the laying of commemorative wreaths. Robin's report was voted on and carried unanimously.

Lew Lyle commented on the Heritage Museum's on-going plan to provide a closer relationship with the American Museum at Duxford in England.

Unfinished Business: Regarding the reunion location choice for 2006, Al Dussliere suggested Albuquerque, NM because of its strategic geographic location. Another suggestion is San Antonio, TX.

2005 Reunion Report by Walt Ferrari: The Dayton Reunion is scheduled for September 8th through 12th. The Hotel is the Crown Plaza. There is free parking and registration, with rates for the 303rd at \$89.00 plus tax. More information will follow in the newsletter.

303rd Archives and Artifacts:: Eddie Deerfield reported that the US Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio and the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs had each asked to be considered as the final repository for the Group's extensive collection of archives and artifacts. The Heritage Museum had already expressed an interest.

In the discussion period which followed, Senior Advisor Lew Lyle commented on his attempt to build a home for the 8th Air Force at the Heritage Museum and that he counted on the 303rd Bomb Group to provide its archival support as part of the Museum's growth.

Deerfield concurred, but contended that there was no reference in the Association's constitution or by-laws naming a specific repository for the archives, and that each of the three interested institutions should be given a fair hearing.

Motion by Deerfield: "That the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors be authorized to conduct a poll among all the veterans in our membership to give them a voice in deciding the final resting place for the 303rd Bomb Group Archives and Artifacts."

Fred Reichel, Al Dussliere and Bill Cox spoke in favor of the Heritage Museum. Dussliere asked for a vote on the motion to give veterans among the membership as a whole a voice in selecting a repository. The motion was defeated.

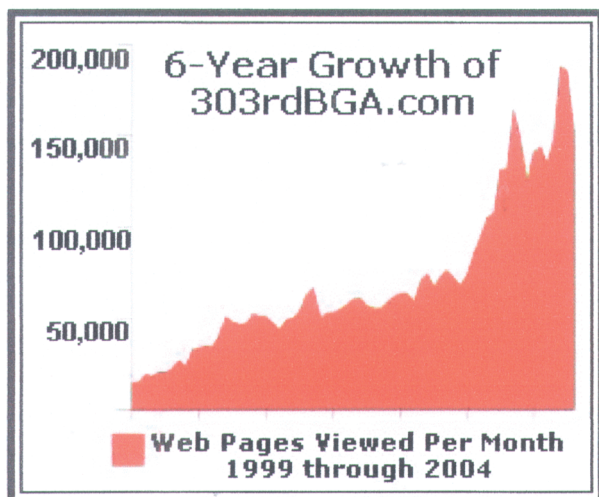
Dick Smith moved that the 303rd's archives and artifacts go to the 8th AF Heritage Museum. Walt Ferrari questioned the legitimacy of the motion at this time prior to a scheduled meeting later that morning with Heritage Museum officers. Smith withdrew his motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Bowler for
Kenneth Clarke, Secretary

303rd BOMB GROUP ON THE WEB

By Gary L. Moncur, Webmaster and Director of Internet Operations

Our internet website, **www.303rdBGA.com**, stands alone as the most comprehensive and popular Military Group website in the world. We continue to be Google's highest rated Military Association website and the top ranked website in all major internet search engines for all relevant search terms. From our official launch seven years ago, our internet presence and popularity have increased each year. Constant attention and updates to the website keep it fresh and interesting to returning visitors.



Website statistics are an educated guess at best, but the general trends are clear. Here are some selected current statistics:

1500-2500	Distinct visitors access 303rdBGA.com each day
4500-12,000	Total web pages viewed daily by our visitors
50,000+	Hits per day (common statistic that means little)
320+	Megabytes of information available to the world
600+	Megabytes of information downloaded daily
1640+	Separate web pages on the website
7000+	Total files on the website (web pages + photos)
8500+	Estimated number of printed pages
1,078,000+	Total Word Count on the Website
41,200+	Total Unique Words Indexed

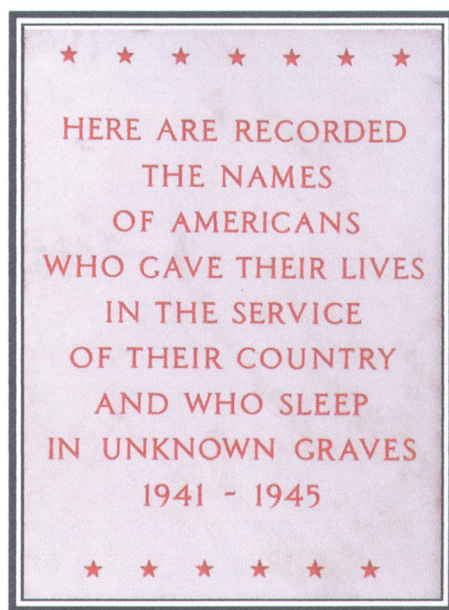
The Website Committee consists of **Gary L. Moncur** (Chairman), **Harry D. Gobrecht** (Advisor), **William E. Jones III**, **Mark C. Forlow** and **Jack P. Rencher**.

The request for volunteers to photograph the graves and names in the ten separate overseas cemeteries received an immediate and overwhelming response.

Two new committee members were added in 2004. Bill Jones, son of 360th Pilot William E. Jones, Jr., administers our 303rd-Talk Forum and Mark Forlow, a WWII photograph and memorabilia collector, is our photograph consultant. Both men are a big asset to the Committee.

Historian Harry D. Gobrecht and I continue to work daily to improve the historic content and quality of our website. Recent emphasis has been on adding historic information to the over 560 individual Combat Crew pages. Harry Gobrecht has spent many hours researching the crews.

My latest project has been the addition of photos of each and every grave and name listed on the walls of missing for the 469 303rd Bomb Group servicemen who are Missing in Action or interred in overseas cemeteries.



Brittany American Cemetery
St James, France

Though it was not planned, it was fitting that the Overseas Cemeteries Project was completed on Veteran's Day of 2004.

We have already heard from family members who have now seen the grave of their loved one for the first time. We are the only military organization who has an archive like this and are not aware of anyone who has attempted a similar project.

The Website Committee remains dedicated to preserving the history of the 303rd Bomb Group and making that history available to our veterans, their families, and the entire world for many years to come.

If you have not yet visited us online, please drop in and say hello. We'd love to meet you and are always there to help in any way we can.



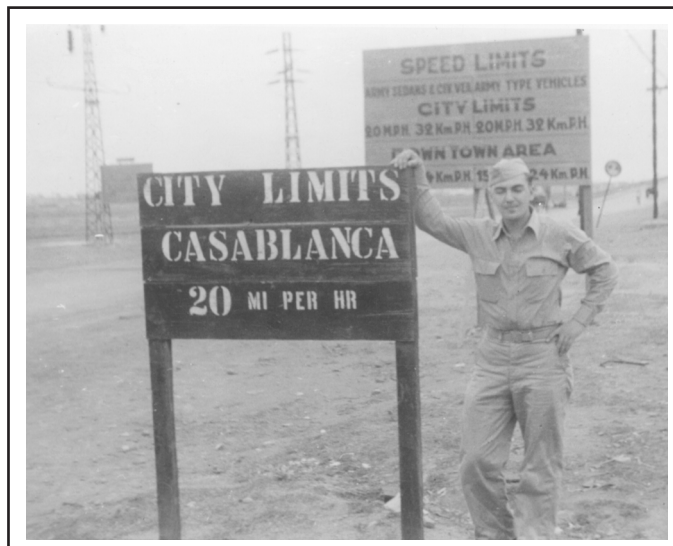
303rd Pin-ups

UPPER LEFT—M/Sgt Thomas G. Fennel, at ease between duties as the NCO in charge of Tech Supply in the 444th Air Depot.

UPPER RIGHT—Climbing the ladder to success are six of the original crew of Hell's Angels. Top to bottom, Irl Baldwin, Donald Bone, Russell Warren, James Rodriguez, Harold Godwin and Fred Meddaugh of the 358th Squadron.

LOWER LEFT—Clarence S. Coomes, 427th Squadron waist gunner on the Donald Stockton crew, checks the barrel of his 50-cal. machine gun before a mission.

LOWER RIGHT—In July, 1945, the 303rd Bomb Group was inactivated. John Oleksa, 358th Squadron B-17 mechanic, left Molesworth with other 303rd troops for Casablanca.



Molesworth Diary

CAPTURED NEAR GRANDFATHER'S BIRTHPLACE

Our crew flew eight missions before we were shot down returning from Weisbaden, Germany on August 15, 1944. When forming over Molesworth for the mission, our plane was late and we were not in our position in the box. We became "tail-end Charlie," with no other Groups behind us in the 41st Wing. We reached our target, bombing the airfield at Weisbaden.

Upon returning home, I spotted German fighters coming around a column of clouds about 5,000 feet below us and about a mile and a half back. I called the pilot, Alfred Smith, from the ball turret and informed him they were coming at us in a wedge. I started shooting at 600 yards. I saw one FW-190 in such close range that I could see the pilot's helmet and goggles. I fired on him, and he peeled away. But, we had been hit and flames were pouring from the number one engine.

An urgent order came from the cockpit, "Bail out!" I climbed out of the turret. It looked like the waist gunner was dead and there was no trace of the tail gunner. I jumped right behind Swanson, our radio man. I counted to 10 and pulled. Nothing happened. I looked down and saw I had pulled the parachute strap, not the rip cord. This time I remembered "delay opening," so I came down in a free fall to about 1,500 feet and then pulled the rip cord handle.

When I looked up at my chute, it seemed damaged, and I hit the ground wrong hurting my back and ankle. I felt as if all my strength was gone. I have never been so tired. Forcing my fingers to remove my chute, I crawled about 50 yards across a field to the woods. I had come down close to the French border, so after four days of hard traveling by night and hiding by day, I stopped at a farm house hoping for help from the French underground. Wrong decision. I was still in Germany.

The farm family fed me a slice of bread and jelly, and then called the local police. An old man with a pistol came out to get me, pointing it at my chest all the way into town. We stopped at a schoolhouse where a teacher spoke English. She looked at my dog tags and saw my name. "Why do you bomb your homeland," she asked. I was less than 40 miles from where my grandfather was born.

A German soldier escorted me to the Dulag Luft at Frankfurt for interrogation. From there I was transported by train to Wetzlar, where I had a bath, meal, clothes and a Red Cross parcel. Then, 21 of us were shipped to St. Wendal, the second Stalag Luft 6 in addi-

tion to Heydekrug. A week and a half later, we were sent to Stalag Luft 4. We were a large group—about 150 men. It was from there, on February 6, 1945, that we began the 86-day, 600-mile death march north. The British Second Army liberated us on May 2, 1945.

Jack A. Fischer

358th Squadron Ball Turret Gunner

356 HOLES IN B-17, AND NO ONE WOUNDED!

I arrived at Molesworth in September, 1944, as a member of Captain Callahan's crew. Then, I lost in a straw draw and was transferred to a spare gunner pool. I flew with various crews. My most vivid combat recollections include my first mission to Merseburg, Germany and the Berlin missions. After returning from Merseburg, the ground crew counted 356 holes in our aircraft, but no one sustained as much as a scratch.

During basic training at Buckley Field, Colorado, I met a fellow named Gerry Campbell from my home town of Seattle. We became good friends. I went to Las Vegas for gunnery training, and Gerry was sent to a different gunnery school. I lost track of him until I arrived at Molesworth. After depositing my gear on my bunk, I went outside. And there he was, standing on the steps of the next barracks. We have remained friends ever since.

William A. Sears

427th Squadron Waist Gunner

OLD B-17'S SPARK MEMORIES OF MOLESWORTH

I have a memory of an experience I had stateside in 1945 after leaving England. I flew into the Oklahoma City depot, and noticed a lot of B-17's parked around the hangar. I saw Billy Southworth's *S For Sugar*, so I decided to look around for more 303rd planes. I saw this bird that looked like everyone in the 8th Air Force had put their names on it. As I got closer, I saw a "C" on the vertical stabilizer and the letters "BN" on the fuselage. I walked toward the nose, and it was *Knockout Dropper*, the name my original crew and I had painted on the plane when passing through Dow Field, Maine. We had picked it up at Kellogg Field in Michigan. Our nicknames were still legible at our crew positions—"Smiling Jack," "Wild Bill," "Shack Rat"....

I crawled up in the cockpit and sat for at least 30 minutes. It was a thoughtful experience.

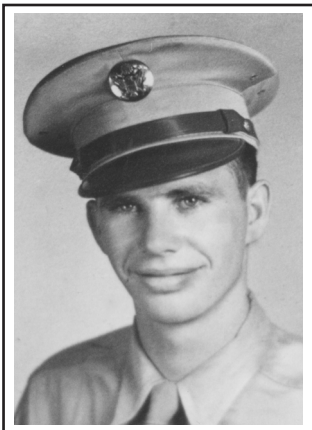
William J. Cline

359th Squadron Pilot

303RD MP HAS DRIVING PRIVILEGES REVOKED

One night during the winter of 1944, I was assigned the duty to change the Guard. I admired the fast way my corporal drove at night with black out lights, so I thought I could do the same. I was driving a weapons

(Continued on page 16)



Molesworth Diary (Continued from 15)

carrier with four or five MP's in the back of the vehicle. I was going down hill kind of fast when I came to a curve in the road. All of a sudden I hit a patch of black ice and we slid off the road into a ditch. A culvert stopped us. We didn't turn over and nobody was hurt, just shook up good. A fog light that was hung under the front bumper broke off. They sent a wrecker from the motor pool and pulled the weapons carrier out. They didn't let me drive after that.

Arthur Akers
1199th Military Police Company

MONKEY BUSINESS CAUSES PAIN AT MOLESWORTH

Jocko was the name of my monkey. I bought him from a British sailor while on a pass to London, and brought him back to Molesworth. I kept him in the Nissan hut in a bomb box that I reworked and stood on end. That was his home while we flew missions. I would let him out when we returned. Most of the guys in the hut liked to play, and chased him from bed to bed. He later became destructive in his play, and was causing me pain.

I had to hide him when one of our squadron's officers came looking for the monkey. On a trip out of our hut, Jocko had climbed through the window of the officers' quarters and left a smelly deposit on the officer's bed. As it turned out, this was right about the time I finished my tour of 30 missions in April, 1944. I had volunteered to fly extra missions and was being transferred to another base to fly on B-17's responsible for relaying messages to fighters flying ground strikes for the invasion. I sold the monkey to a ground support officer at my next station.

Marvin R. Edwards
360th Squadron Tail Gunner

"MURPHY'S LAW" MAKES MESS OF MISSION

On the mission to Coulanges, France on 25 June 1944, everything went wrong. We were assigned deputy Group lead, and were in the forming area when the lead ship aborted. As new leader, we continued to orbit, but because of poor visibility no other 303rd aircraft found us. We decided to fly the briefed route, hoping that stragglers would find us along the way. They didn't, so we went to the target area alone, trailing an unidentified Group. In the area, we separated from the others, probably a dumb thing to do, to bomb a bridge assigned to the 303rd. We made three runs at the target, each time failing to release the bombs because of a bomb-rack malfunction. Fortunately, there was no enemy action.

We flew back to England by ourselves, and got lost in socked-in weather when the navigation G-system failed. Letting down through the clouds to get a visual bearing, we broke out at 2,000 feet into an area of barrage balloons over the middle of London. Luckily, no one shot at us. Maybe our Identification Friend or Foe system was working.

Charles F. Coe
358th Squadron Navigator

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Isn't it unique that in our American sports activities at the professional level most actions are guided by some method of secret code. During the Football season the offensive huddle language is a scramble of limited words derived of numbers and words "left, right, center etc". In Baseball coded gestures such as saluting left or right, wringing the sweat from a balding head, or the scratching of the knee or thigh. If one violates the rules of Hockey the on-ice officials send the violators to the "box" leaving their team short one or more men during cool off time. All of this diversity portends the need for excellence in coaching and team management because the "team" always wants to be a winner.

Now this. The greatest team I was ever on has requested me to be their captain. Please note—the acceptance of this Presidency by me is not without the knowledge that a great slate of Board membership is the team and we will work to continue the excellence of those that came before us that made this wonderful Association what it is today. Thank you all for your support and encouragement. We are here to represent the membership and achieve decisions in your interests.

As you have read in November's Newsletter my inquiry with all supporting documents including the three repository mission statements were sent to each member of the Board of Directors in early September requesting a return vote as to which repository each felt best represented the interests of the Association members as to a final repository selection. By mid September a very high majority of votes were returned in favor of the Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum in Pooler, Georgia. Historian Emeritus Harry Gobrecht was directed to immediately send all material in his possession to this selected repository for safe keeping, exhibition and information retrieval processing for all requests and viewing far into the future. The issue of a final resting place for our collection of Archives and Artifacts has now been settled.

At our Board of Directors meeting, August 30, '04 in Savannah, Treasurer Bill Cox having oversight of our current Budget for 2004/2005 together with monies carried forward as spendable assets showed an unfavorable rate of serious financial decline over the next few years. This comes about principally as a result of a heavy decline of aging veterans as dues paying participants and the consequence of the ultimate call from above. The Benefactor Program the Board adopted by unanimous vote was to occur for only this year. Because of Ed Miller's experience of past similar programs and of his willingness to accept the role he was appointed as Chairman of the Benefactor Program during this period which ended in early December '04.

NOTE: As President of this Association I can tell you the Program was a magnificent success. The participation was World wide and it was very evident that a large number of member contributors showed a love and respect for this their Association, their History, their care for family and the future of the greatness that comes together when need arises. There are those of our membership that may not have been able to make personal contribution for whatever reasons. You are equally embraced and accorded the same gratitude. I and our entire Board of Directors thank all of you Members very much,

In my opening remarks as President at our Savannah Reunion Banquet, I spoke briefly of launching a Research project entitled "Where do we go from here?" This will be a project that hopefully will interest the younger 303rd members and enable your leadership to access real time options to provide our 303rd Association with continued success in a very worthwhile venue that will have its effects on children and parents everywhere. Something like this has great merit built on the ethic of what this grand Association has meant to so many." Where do we go from here" could be facing us two or three years down the road. Who knows? I will report more details in my next newsletter column.

Dick Bowler
President
303rd BG Association

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

GOBRECHT CUSTODIAN OF ARCHIVES, NOT OWNER

As a 21-year member of both the 303rd Bomb Group Association and the 8th AF Historical Society, I had questions about an article in the December 2004 issue of their publication, the "8th AF News," and wrote to C. R. Rawson, the Society's president for answers.

I pointed out that the 303rd BGA archives were formally donated to the museum by the 303rd's Board of Directors which even paid the freight to move them from California to Georgia.

Once the shipment was received in the museum, according to the story in the "8th AF News," it was renamed the "Harry Gobrecht/303rd BG archives." Harry Gobrecht was a long time Historian of the 303rd BGA. As such he was the compiler and custodian of the 303rd's archives collection, not the owner.

I also asked if the Shuler award was an 8th AFHS award or a Heritage Museum sponsored award. Harry Gobrecht, this year's awardee, received it for his contributions to the Heritage Museum. Last year's winners received it for contributions to the 8th AFHS. Who is eligible? Who votes on the award: officials of the 8th AFHS or Heritage Museum?

Further, Gen. Lew Lyle, one of the original members of the 303rd BG, was a two-week acting commander of the 303rd awaiting the arrival of Gen. Raper. Gen. Lyle was the wartime commander of the 379th Bomb Group, not the 303rd BG as stated in the article.

Harold A. Susskind
Editor Emeritus & Historian

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON CITES STEVENS BOOK GIFT

The University of Oregon Libraries gratefully acknowledges the gift of the two-volume 1,300 page anthology *Hell's Angels Newsletter Silver Anniversary Collection—A World War II Retrospective*. The university is fortunate to have alumni and

friends who generously donate their collections to the library in support of scholarship. Gifts such as these are welcome enhancements.

We will place a bookplate in each volume that reads "Gift of the 303rd Bomb Group Association In Honor Of Col. Kermit D. Stevens, Class of 1933."

Deborah A. Carver
Knight University Librarian
University of Oregon

THE "KNOCKOUT DROPPER NEWSLETTER?" NOT BAD!

In your Editor Comments in the August 2004 issue about the B-17 *Hell's Angels*, you asked, "What is in a name?" Definitely a lot. Not only in the name of an aircraft, but also the name of the pilot. As crew chief of the *Knockout Dropper*, I think the Stars and Stripes can verify that the unofficial race for the first B-17 to complete 25 missions was 25 to 23 in favor of *Knockout Dropper* over *Hell's Angels*. I do think it's correct, though, that the *Hell's Angels* pilot was the first to fly 25 missions.

Knockout Dropper would not be a very good name for the newsletter, or would it?

Buford Pafford
359th Squadron Crew Chief

ANOTHER 303RD ATTENDEE AT MEMORIAL DEDICATION

Reference the article in the August 2004 newsletter on the 303rd guys attending the World War II memorial dedication in Washington, DC, I was there with the American ex-POW bunch. We sat in the bright sun from around nine in the morning until the President and the former Presidents arrived in the afternoon. By then, my face had turned bright red to match my maroon POW hat and jacket.

Edward J. Giering
427th Sqd Radio Operator

LORD HAW-HAW'S WORLD NETWORK OF NAZI SPIES

I was especially interested in the story in the November 2004 Molesworth Diary about Lord Haw-Haw. There have been many theo-

ries on how he managed to be "spot on" with his reports. He must have had spies all over the world. His brother was known to live in the English village of Brent Knoll. What appeared to be signal lights were frequently seen at night from the top of the Knoll, but no one was ever caught in the act.

When two jettisoned German bombs dropped in the vicinity of the town of Burnham On Sea, killing one man, Haw Haw was on the radio the following day and named the man who had been killed.

Iris Knight Rowe
Liskeard, England

NEWS CORP CHIEF WILL TREASURE 303RD SIGNED ART

Your print (Fortresses Under Fire, by artist Keith Ferris) arrived safely, and I will have it framed for my office. I was touched by the fact that your veterans took the trouble to sign it for me and will treasure it always.

With my best wishes to you and the members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

Rupert Murdoch
News Corporation
(Editor's Note—Mr. Murdoch, who is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of News Corporation, sent VHS cassettes of the film *12 O'Clock High* as gifts to veterans and family members attending the film's showing at the Savannah reunion.)

REUNION'S WWII FILM EPIC LEADS TO MARINE EVENT

After the reunion in Savannah, as outgoing 303rd BGA president, I sent each of the Stearman pilots the August 2004 copy of the *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, along with a note of thanks from the Association for their wonderful contribution to our reunion. In addition I sent each of them copies of pictures I took of their formation flying over the Heritage Museum.

I would like to share with you part of one of the replies received from Larry Taylor. Larry has two sons who are pilots, one in the Navy and

the other in the Marines. He wrote "Just wanted you to know that my son, Ben, will be taking my VHS copy of *12 O'Clock High* with him on board the "Harry S. Truman." It will be watched in the Marine ready room by the F-18 "Silver Eagles."

Al Dussliere
427th Squadron Waist Gunner

MOST MEMORABLE SINGLE MOMENT ON COMBAT MISSION

The story on page 6 of the November 2004 issue involved the experiences of ball turret gunner Ricky Reider of the Richard Tasker crew and his reference to the January 26, 1945 mission. That event was the single most memorable moment during my entire military duty in World War II.

Reider was not on that mission, but related that Tasker's B-17 was in a mid-air collision with the loss of the entire crew (I believe that one crew member did, indeed, survive). I was flying on Tasker's left wing. My co-pilot, Pete Ogburn, and I were in the best position to witness this event at the instant of impact.

A main landing gear wheel from one of the aircraft that collided and began to fall apart narrowly missed my right wing. Although I have lived for over 80 years now, nothing has startled and frightened me as much as seeing that wheel come flying at us.

John S. Proffitt, Jr.
359th Squadron Pilot

COMMENTS BY 91st BGA PRESIDENT ON "FIRST 25"

Thought you might be interested in the Letter to the Editor I sent to AFA Magazine recently. In the first paragraph, I wrote:

"We of the 91st Bomb Group share Col. Cook's concern for correctly stating the credit that was often lost for *Hell's Angels* versus our own *Memphis Belle*. Our Group Historian Emeritus, Hilary "Bud" Evers, repeatedly stated the correct credit from 1984 to the 1990's, and

(Continued on page 18)

FORUM, from page 17

it is so reported in "Curley" Havelaar's fine history of the 91st.

"In fact, in contributing to the 2002 Turner Publications book 'Memoirs of the 91st Bomb Group,' I wrote, 'On the 91st's 39th mission—15 May 1943—the *Memphis Belle* completed 25 missions...and was touted by Army Air Corps publicity as the first. Unfortunately for the 303rd BG's *Hells Angels*, public relations had filmed prior missions on the *Memphis Belle*, enjoyed nice quarters for the film crews, and co-locations with the 1st Bomb Wing."

Ed Gates, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
President, 91st BG Assn.

WHO KNEW DANIELS IN TRAINING ON RAPER CREW?

I'm the nephew of Lt. Foster Glenn Daniels, the bombardier on William Raper's crew in the 360th Squadron during training in the U.S. The crew didn't go to Molesworth with the 303rd. Instead, they served in the Pacific and were then assigned to the 306th Bomb Group in the European Theater. My uncle was killed on the Wilhelmshaven mission on May 21, 1943.

I wonder if any of the newsletter readers remember him from training or possibly from Hickham Field in Hawaii. Please let me know.

Arthur Blake Castle III
340 NW 119th Street
Miami, FL 33168

AMERICAN GI'S VIEW ON ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

I found an article from Stars and Stripes in a box of my father's memorabilia from when he was the Ground Executive Officer of the 303rd in 1943-44. It was an American GI's first impressions after arriving in England during the war.

One of the paragraphs in the article he saved said, "Most of us, at first, notice the smallness of things. You don't tell the people of England that their roads are too thin and winding, their autos midgets, their factories small and their warm beer terrible to taste. Because if you do, you're ridiculing their way of life, but you're really not. It's just that what we have is so sprawling and out of proportion that you forget there are

other proportions. And a little later, you find that the beer is all right, too, if you give it a chance."

Howard E. Norris, Jr.
Lt Col USAF (Ret)

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO THE REVEREND DASHER

I was honored to be a pallbearer at the funeral of Everett A. Dasher last September. We were on the same crew in the 358th Squadron in the 303rd Bomb Group, and didn't live very far from each other recently.

Everett was 85 when he passed away. He was the radio operator on the George Oxider crew. I was a gunner—both waist and ball turret. We bailed out over England in January, 1943 after our B-17 was hit on a mission to Lorient, France. He was wounded on a mission we flew together to Kiel, Germany in May 1943, and was not given medical clearance to fly combat after that.

I think he always wanted to be a minister, and he entered the Lutheran Seminary soon after being discharged. He was a fine man and a good friend.

Sam Maxwell
358th Squadron Gunner

FOLLOW-UP ON OFFICIAL PRESENTATION OF DFC

Pictures of Congressman Henry Waxman and me were taken when he presented the DFC. He's on the left.

Ben Starr
358th Squadron Navigator



URGENT CALL—THREE WOOD CARVING WINNERS

There were five winners of wood carvings by drawing at the reunion in Savannah. Two were Ralph Page and Walt Mayer. The other three are not known. Bill Adams, the wood carver, is anxious to learn their names. We ask them to contact the Editor at his mailing or email address or telephone on page 2.

303RD BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL STATEMENT JULY 1, 2004 — NOVEMBER 30, 2004

OPENING BALANCE

Newsletter Advance	\$10,421.72
Reunion Advance	\$ 2,489.36
PX Inventory	<u>\$10,739.41</u>
Total Non-Spendable Assets	\$23,650.49
Available cash assets	<u>\$125,382.77</u>
Total Assets	\$149,033.26

INCOME

Dues	\$12,580.00
Donations	\$ 1,625.00
Rosters	\$ 230.00
Benefactors	\$ 9,085.00
Memorial Donations	\$ 8,921.00
PX Sales	\$ 7,912.00
Interest	\$ 425.64
Reunion	\$ 7,558.10
Reunion Advance Returned	<u>\$ 3,800.00</u>
Total Income	\$52,136.74

EXPENSES

Administration (Officers)	\$ 26.17
Award Plaques	\$ 363.64
Benefactor Program	\$ 1,230.24
Memorial	\$ 500.00
Newsletter	\$13,780.77
PX Inventory	\$ 3,717.87
PX Administration	\$ 235.89
Shipment of Archives	\$ 3,536.67
Web Site	<u>\$ 232.28</u>
Total Expenses	\$23,623.53

TOTAL AVAILABLE CASH ASSETS	\$164,894.97
NEWSLETTER BALANCE	\$ 3,640.95
PX INVENTORY	<u>\$ 9,115.30</u>
NON-SPENDABLE ASSETS	\$ 12,756.25

TOTAL ASSETS \$177,651.22

CRAWFORD HONORED BY "MISSING MAN" FORMATION

I received word that William C. Crawford, pilot in the 360th Squadron, passed away December 9. He had been a patient for a short time in the Kennestone Hospital in Marietta, GA. He was buried with military honors Sunday, December 12 in Marietta. David Bruce and his fellow Stearman Pilots who performed the flyover during our reunion in Savannah this year honored Bill with a similar tribute. It included the "missing man" formation.

"Pinky", a nickname Bill received from his crew, is author of the book, "Angels over the Reich". The forward to his book includes, "The following is an account of one B-17 flight crew's experiences during this war for the period July to November, 1944. We flew as member of the prestigious Hell's Angels Group, hence the title of this book. At squadron level we were not concerned with mission planning. We were, as someone said, 'A combat crew, the lowest and most important element of bombardment aviation'."

Albert L. Dussliere

IN MEMORIAM

Harmon E. Amos	358 th	7/27/04
Wilbur R. Arnold	360 th	7/15/02
Ira B. Baker	359 th	11/21/03
Louis H. Breitenbach	360 th	10/10/04
Charles W. Bradley, Jr.	360 th	5/28/04
Lawrence J. Briody	359 th	11/22/04
George W. Buske	358 th	12/7/03
James E. Cavagnaro	358 th	5/12/03
Guy W. Collier	360 th	2/15/04
Frederick A. Corbin	359 th	6/20/04
Victor M. Craig	358 th	3/20/04
William C. Crawford	360 th	12/9/04
Harvey G. Cuckler	360 th	11/2/04
Everett A. Dasher	358 th	9/15/04
Frank C. DeCicco, Jr.	427 th	12/10/04
David S. Donaldson	427 th	10/29/04
Thomas A. Duncan	427 th	10/31/00
Henry E. Ebner	359 th	3/28/03
James H. Fisher	360 th	3/11/04
Peter J. Fleck	358 th	3/11/04
Charles R. Foell	427 th	12/3/04
Dennis E. Foreman	358 th	8/12/02
Richard C. Fortunak, Sr.	359 th	9/4/04
Paul D. Freese	359 th	8/14/03
Richard E. Gable	427 th	7/26/03
Donald Gamble	358 th	8/19/04
Walter C. Henson	359 th	4/ 2003
John C. Hill, Jr.	444 th AD	8/14/01
Glenn V. Hudson	359 th	9/19/04
La Verne Hudson	359 th (W)	9/19/04
E. Frank Ingalls	359 th	4/1/03
Richard O. Johnson	359 th	9/30/04
Harold A. Lanigan	358 th	10/8 04
James M. Lemon, Jr.	360 th	1/18/02
Gordon B. Loftquist	360 th	5/3/04
John H. Magner, Jr.	360 th	5/14/02
Albert E. Martel, Jr.	427 th	12/23/03
Mark L. McDermott	427 th	3/15/04
Alice McLeod	358 th (W)	7/14/04
Albert Miller	358 th	5/12/03
John C. Miller, Jr.	444 th	8/14/01
John M. Minoff	427 th	11/15/04
Richard M. Newell	360 th	11/4/03
Delbert S. Nivens	427 th	1/1/03
Robert G. Parrott	444 th	1/14/04
Robert C. Peter	360 th	5/24/04
Chester Petrosky	359 th	3/19/04
Leslie C. Pratt	358 th	5/26/01
Rayford E. Pullen, Sr	358 th	4/30/04
Elmer E. Prusha	427 th	4/22/02
Kenneth C. Rhodes	358 th	12/23/03
Robert B. Robinson	360 th	12/20/02
Jack Roller	359 th	3/31/03
Josrph F. Rundus	427 th	2/6/04
George Sabine	427 th	12/8/04
Harvey M. Salk	359 th	9/7/97
Donald L. Spruner	427 th	3/23/04
Kermit D. Stevens	Hdqs	11/21/04
Royce C. Tate	358 th	1/13/03
Joseph B. Taylor	444 th AD	6/16/04
Alois R. Voepel	358 th	11/6/03
Vester W. Warner	427 th	4/10/04
Eugene L. Zawaski	359 th	2/11/04

Letters sent to the following were returned as "Undeliverable—Cannot Forward" If you have a new address, please contact Dennis Smith, 11156 E. Woodbridge Rd, Acampo, CA 95220, email address: ds111th@lodinet.com

Mrs Pearl B. Anderson	359 th	Widow
Lance G. Baldwin	358 th	Family
Fred T. Clark	360 th	Member
George E. Copeland	358 th	Member
Charles W. Dunlap, Jr.	427 th	Member
Judy Ann Frederick	360 th	Family
Thomas H. Gano	427 th	Family
Vernon E. Gant	358 th	Member
Susan D. Hamilton	Honorary	Member
William A. Henrie	427 th	Member
Herman H. Hetzel	427 th	Member
Michael S. Hlastala	360 th	Member
Melvin Howell	427 th	Member
Henry R. Legge	360 th	Member
Mrs Chris Madsen	358 th	Widow
Guy H. Mc Clung	360 th	Member
Neil A. Montone	359 th	Member
John B. Moore	359 th	Family
John W. O'Hara, Jr.	360 th	Family
Bernard M. Parker	444 th	Member
Verlin C. Pauling	427 th	Member
Lawrence C. Pierson	360 th	Member
Bernard W. Rawlings	427 th	Member
Dale E. Schneider	360 th	Member
Clifford L. J. Seigmeiser	Hdqs	Member
Benjamin H. Smith, Jr.	360 th	Member
Allan J. Tarvid	359 th	Family
William J. Werner	358 th	Family
John Wilson	358 th	Family

NEW MEMBERS

Bruce R. Anderson, 2500 Honolulu Ave, Montrose, CA 91020-1881 (818) 248-5097 – Brother, Dale R. Anderson

Pat Brehmer, 817 Milligan Ave, Wabasha, MN 55981-1628, (650)565-3355 – Spouse, Leonard – Brother, William H. Cox

Marguerite J. Clarke, 609 William St, River Forest, IL 60305-1923, (708)366-7330 – Spouse, Ralph – Brother, Dale R. Anderson

Douglas O. Cox, 807 Suffolk St, Winters, CA 95694-2211, (510)745-2343 – Spouse, Theresa – Father, William H. Cox

Dale R. Ferris, 5552 Ardmore Ave, Chicago, IL 60646-6505, (773)631-3527 – Spouse, Ronald – Brother, Dale R. Anderson

Anne Mendes, 199 Hemlock St., Vacaville, CA 95688-2726, (707)446-2959 – Spouse, Albert – Father, William H. Cox

Bret Miller, 608 W. Pelton, Sherman, TX 75092-2944 Associate Member

Debra L. Olson, 1220 1st St, Hudson, WI 54016-1207, (715)386-5595 – Spouse Steve, Brother, Dale R. Anderson

Victoria Watson, 661 Beaver Pond Ridge, Troy, VA 22974-3882, (734)923-0181 – Associate Member

The next issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter will carry a complete listing of the names of all members who have made donations to the 303rd Bomb Group Association since the last list was published on the Membership Page of the August 2004 issue.



~~~ Editorial cartoon by 303rd Bomb Group veteran Jack Gardner of Pittsburgh, PA. ~~~

## THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

Was it the right thing to do—sending an S-O-S letter to all our veterans pleading for donations at a time when the 303rd Bomb Group Association had total assets of \$152,554.56 in our treasury? When is enough really enough? There is no black and white answer to that question, but a lot of gray. The rationale was that current annual expenses exceed anticipated annual income. So, understandably, the 303rd's Board of Directors at its meeting in Savannah last August approved a fundraising campaign. Fair enough. What was disturbing was the text of the fundraising letter itself. It was misleading and compounded the distortion by repeatedly using the *Hell's Angels Newsletter* as a soliciting tool. The letter was not submitted in draft for review by the Board's Executive Committee. If it had been, the following changes might have been in order:

State clearly and honestly the assets in the Association's treasury, and then explain fully to our members why additional funds are being sought at this time. While there was no mention in the letter of the treasury balance, there was a reference to the money needed to print and mail the newsletter, leaving the impression that without donations the newsletter would soon have to cease publication. In reality, by a conservative estimate even without monies collected in the "benefactor" campaign, the treasury would have had sufficient capital to publish the newsletter four times a year, 20 pages in color, well into 2007.

Delete the sentences, "Like in previous years, your donation will be recognized in our *Hells Angels Newsletter*. But we want all of you to know that you should make a donation only if you can. We will continue to love you and cherish you as members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, if your situation is not as plentiful as some of our other members." That phrasing is patronizing and degrading. Is it really necessary to give this promise of love to our veterans who are less fortunate financially?

Finally, some of those categories in the "benefactor" letter are nothing more than confusing devices to solicit money. We have never really required such phony titles as "Super Life" and "Repeat Super Life." Eliminate them. One of our 303rd BGA past presidents later wrote urging the Board "to awaken to other methods of financing the Association besides continuously asking for the many categories of donations." Whenever there's a legitimate 303rd Bomb Group need for funds and we ask our veterans for support they rush to the rescue without the honorifics. Respect them—don't insult their intelligence.

Eddie Deerfield

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

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