

Hell's Angels Newsletter

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.

August, 2005

REUNION IN DAYTON AUGUST 23-27; NEXT YEAR WE MEET IN SAN ANTONIO

THE 303RD BOMB GROUP'S DAYTON AND SAN ANTONIO reunion organizers relax between assignments. Left-to-right, Walt and Ruth Ferrari, Mary Lee and Eddie Deerfield.

The Ferrari's handled the Savannah (1998) and Baltimore (2001) reunions as well as Dayton this year. The Deerfield's managed Colorado Springs (1995), San Francisco (1996), Pittsburgh (1997) and Savannah (2004), and are planning and organizing the 2006 reunion in San Antonio.



Last call to register for the 303rd BGA's 2005 reunion!

It's not too late to sign up for the gathering in the nation's first home of flight—Dayton, Ohio. The reunion opens on Tuesday, August 23 and ends with a banquet on Saturday the 27th.

If you haven't received a registration packet and would like to attend, call Walt Ferrari, the Vice President for Reunions, at 803-648-5598.

The closing date for reservations at the Crowne Plaza Hotel is August 2. This newsletter was published and mailed earlier than usual so it would reach most members by that time.

Bulk mail delivery schedules are unpredictable. If you receive this edition on or before August 2 and plan to attend, call the hotel at 1-800-227-6963. After that, it's the hotel's decision on whether or not it will honor the Group rate.

Next year, the 303rd will gather in San Antonio, one of the top ten cities in the nation for its variety and number of attractions for visitors. Make a note in your "futures" file for September 12-16, 2006.

Planning began more than a year in advance, and the reunion is shaping up as potentially one of the most enjoyable in the long history of the 303rd Bomb Group Association.

Here's a preliminary look at some of the highlights—details will be published in later editions of the Hell's Angels Newsletter:

THE HOTEL

The Historic Menger Hotel is a famous landmark in San Antonio. It was built in 1859 in the heart of the city as a trail ride stop on the Texas frontier, and is now a modern 350-room hotel. The hotel has offered the 303rd an extremely reasonable rate of \$99 plus taxes for a single or double.

THE ALAMO

The state's most famous attraction, known as the "Shrine of Texas Liberty." All 189 defenders were killed in the battle against Mexican forces which ended on March 6, 1836.

THE RIVER WALK

The pride of the city, in the downtown section. A winding river, bordered on both sides by lush green foliage and numerous shops and restaurants. You can walk the three miles from one end to the other or take a comfortable guided tour on a cruise boat.

RANDOLPH AF BASE

The US Air Force installation was dedicated in 1930. The 303rd's 2006 reunion will feature a tour of the base, lunch at the Officers' Club, and a Memorial Service in the base chapel, one of the few such military facilities with original stained glass windows still intact.

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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. is a tax exempt organization under IRS Code 501(c)(19), chartered in 1977 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.

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

www.303rdBGA.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.

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Bernie Kastenbaum, on the left, came to Molesworth with the 358th Squadron, and was an HQ draftsman. He became good friends with Lou DeMalo of the 359th, an electrical specialist.

In March, 1945, Kastenbaum bet DeMalo that the war in Europe would be over by June 15. DeMalo wagered \$50 that it wouldn't happen by that date. Germany surrendered on May 7. But, the 303rd buddies went their separate ways and the bet was never paid off.

Then, Lou DeMalo saw a Molesworth Diary story by Bernie Kastenbaum in the November, 2001 *Hell's Angels Newsletter*, and they began communicating. They finally got together last March.

Bernie graciously refused to collect on the bet, so Lou took him and a lady friend out to dinner. At today's prices, that probably cost Lou more than \$50.



303rd Bomb Group Buddies Meet, Settle Bet Made 60 Years Earlier

(The following story by Alexi Howk was published in Treasure Coast Newspapers, with the photo by Alex Boerner)

VERO BEACH, FLORIDA — Bernie Kastenbaum made a bet with an old World War II buddy that the war would end by June 15, 1945.

He even went through the extra effort to type up the agreement and have it signed and laminated.

The bet partially read, "This is a wager. To the tune of approximately 50 bucks, I, S/Sgt Bernard M. Kastenbaum, on this 12th day of March, 1945, make the allegation that an official announcement of the cessation of organized German military opposition will come about on or before 15 June 1945."

But Lou DeMalo thought otherwise.

Now, 60 years later, it was time to pay the piper.

DeMalo and Kastenbaum reunited Saturday (March 26) for the first time in almost 50 years. Both served in the U.S. Army Air Force Intelligence Division, where they plotted targets for war planes to bomb.

The two met up at Kastenbaum's condominium in Grand Harbor, where Kastenbaum and his companion, Jocelyn Ross, frequently vacation. Kastenbaum lives in Richmond, VA, DeMalo in Pittsburgh, PA. DeMalo also happened to be in Florida on vacation.

The two lost track of each other after a brief visit in 1956 at Kastenbaum's home in Richmond. Neither realized the other had a vacation home in Vero Beach until DeMalo read an article Kastenbaum wrote about three

years ago in a Hells Angels newsletter to which they both subscribe.

After reading the article, DeMalo said he looked up Kastenbaum's contact information in the newsletter.

"I contacted Bernie, and when he picked up the phone I said 'Is this Kass?' He said 'Yes'."

Kastenbaum added, "I recognized his voice immediately. The two said they talked about Florida and that's how they found out about their Vero Beach connection.

Kastenbaum said he forgot about the bet until he recently found (the wager agreement) while sifting through some of his memoirs. Grabbing it off his dining room table, he held it up to DeMalo's face.

"So, who won the bet?"

"Ah, crap," DeMalo said after reading it and remembering the war ended in May 1945. "Doggone it, I forgot all about this. Wait a minute."

He pulled a \$100 bill out of his wallet and handed it to Kastenbaum.

"Do you have change for a hundred?" DeMalo asked.

Kastenbaum laughed and told him to put the money back.

"I'm going to make him pay me by taking me out to dinner tonight," Kastenbaum said.

Almost, but not quite, a spy thriller!

THE SECRET FLIGHT OF THE 427TH SQUADRON'S "*THE DEVIL HIMSELF*"

(Frank Mangan wrote a paper for his college history class based primarily on an interview with Jack Rolfson of the 303rd's 427th Squadron and documented sources. The Hell's Angels Newsletter editor checked the details with Rolfson, and he confirmed them. Mangan's story follows)

On December 4, 1942, Major Charles Sheridan, commanding officer of the 303rd Bomb Group's 427th Squadron, ordered Ralph Hayes and his crew on a secret mission.

They were to fly their B-17 to Northern Ireland to meet a P-38 Fighter Group and then fly on with the fighters, running fuel consumption tests, to a Casablanca base in North Africa. The mission was postponed a day due to poor weather. The next day they were ordered to take off at 12:30 even though the weather conditions were again unacceptable.

Co-pilot Jack Rolfson and Ralph were aboard the plane along with their navigator, Frederick Illgen, engineer Antoni Bednarchuk, and radio operator, Jesse Jessee.

The fact that the flight was canceled on the 4th due to inclement weather but was forced off the ground with more poor weather on the 5th is somewhat of an anomaly. One assumption was that the P-38s could not wait any longer for the fuel test run to North Africa.

The crew's situation in *The Devil Himself* proved to be difficult. On leaving England, Illgen was given codes to turn on a radio beacon at Eglinton airfield in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. The problem was that the codes were incorrect.

The plane had been ordered out of Molesworth without a clear backup if problems arose before landing in Eglinton. There was only enough daylight for a one-way trip at that time of the day. There was no point in trying to return to Molesworth in the dark because Illgen was not given the codes to activate any landing beacons in England.

Five American flyers were in the air somewhere near the north of Ireland faced with the prospect of finding a way to the ground soon.

The crew flew along the northwest coast of Ireland, all of which was part of the Free State of Eire, a neutral country during World War II. The standard procedure for a neutral country was to intern any belligerent flyers for the duration of the conflict, but Ireland was not a typically neutral country.

It was really in a difficult position, especially since the United States had entered the war. The Irish had no love for the British and as far as many were concerned, their best opportunity to reclaim the six counties of Northern Ireland was when Great Britain was preoccupied with World War II.

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill were unhappy with the Irish declaration of neutrality in September 1939. Just a year before, the British had returned the Treaty Ports in the Free State to Irish control. Churchill was against this at the time because these ports could have had a significant impact on Britain's North Atlantic shipping. Eamon DeValera, the Irish Prime Minister, protested the stationing of British and United States soldiers in Northern Ireland throughout the war.

In the reality of World War II, however, neutrality was a difficult pill for Ireland to swallow. German pilots and crewmen who either crashed or were forced to land in Ireland were interned for the war. On the other hand, American soldiers were



ONLY FIVE MEMBERS OF THE HAYES CREW flew on the secret mission to Ireland. Pilot Ralph Hayes, Co-pilot Jack Rolfson and Navigator Fred Illgen are the first three, left to right, in the back row. Engineer Antonio Bednarchuk and Radio Operator Jesse Jessee are third and fourth from the left in the front row.

afforded the best consideration and hurried on their way home. Even British airmen in Ireland were dealt with on a less severe basis than were the Germans.

The two options left for Jack and the crew on *The Devil Himself* were to land or abandon the aircraft at a safe parachute altitude. As they skimmed along the coast, a beach was spotted clear of rocks and debris. The 4:30 PM beach landing at Mulaghmore, County Sligo, was successful and all aboard deplaned without a scratch. The only problem they encountered was loss of their number four engine while taxiing the plane up the beach to park it above high tide.

The Irish, always up for a good story, seem to have gotten a few facts mixed up at this point. Some eyewitness accounts only had four people coming off the plane. Because of Irish concerns over British violations of neutrality, when the number of the crew was revealed as five the missing fifth crewman somehow became a British spy.

Although it is easy to account for who was on board the plane, it is difficult to say who came off after their forced landing. Another issue was that Irish records of the inventory of the plane claim that parts were missing from the bombsight. The conclusion of the Irish was that the crew (possibly the spy) had thrown the parts into the Atlantic when they did their turn over the ocean before landing on the beach.

Local authorities were quickly on the scene and the crew was taken to Finner Army Camp, a local military outpost. The pilot, Ralph Hayes, was escorted to Commandant Powers, the Commanding General of northwest Ireland. He questioned Ralph on the nature of the mission. Hayes did the honorable thing of giving his name, rank and serial number.



Powers, a laidback Irishman, brushed that aside and inquired further as to Ralph's background. When he realized that Ralph was of Irish descent, it was made clear to Ralph a new engine was to be brought over the border and installed so the plane could fly back to the North of Ireland. The Irish Air Corps assigned Lt. Andy O'Shea as its liaison officer for the project.

By the ninth of December, the Irish decided that the distance between Finner Camp and *The Devil Himself* was too great to travel every day. The crew was relocated from the camp to Hannon Hotel in Mullaghmore.

During this time, a Royal Air Force lieutenant named Moore was coordinating movement of the replacement engine from Northern Ireland across the border. Also involved was a liaison officer in charge of relations between the Free State and the Allies—Flight Leader Henneker Heaton of British Intelligence. Ironically, it was his name that appeared as the "spy" who was left aboard *The Devil Himself* after the landing.

Flight Lieutenant Moore arrived on the ninth with a group of British mechanics to remove the old engine. The replacement engine arrived on Sunday the thirteenth and was ready to be tested the next afternoon. For the next eight days again, there were weather problems and other difficulties that prevented the plane from taking off.

The middle of December is a rough time to be on the west coast of Ireland. The wind howls, misty rain and spray from the ocean bites the skin and the days are very short. The only thing out of place in Mullaghmore was the large green bomber parked on the beach.

Jack and the crew of the Flying Fortress were undoubtedly well taken care of by the locals. Nothing could have been more fascinating for them than interrupting the dull winter with a bomber landing on the local beach.

The British, in all their infinite wisdom, brought the wrong Wright Cyclone engine for *The Devil Himself*. Theirs was for a different model of B-17. It made a scraping sound on the cowlings

when the blade was feathered.

Finally, on December 22 1942, the weather cooperated and the plane was cleared to fly. It was stripped of all armament and weapons to lighten its load. This helped to ensure a safe takeoff on the sandy beach.

Shortly before the takeoff, an argument broke out between the British and United States airmen over who would fly the plane off the beach. The British were emphatic as it would be flying into their airspace, while the Hayes crew insisted they should take care of their own plane.

The crew of *The Devil Himself* won the day and at approximately one o'clock in the afternoon the plane taxied and took off from the beach at Mullaghmore with a ten to twenty mile an hour crosswind.

Shortly after takeoff, *The Devil Himself* was spotted from Finner camp on the way over the border. After a quick 30-minute flight, the plane was back on the ground where it was fitted with the correct engine and flown back to Molesworth in the coming weeks. The crew stayed in Northern Ireland with the plane as it went through the replacement.

The reality of the British spy on board *The Devil Himself* does not hold up well to scrutiny. The United States records, both official and private, name all five airmen aboard. Irish records cannot disprove that without a doubt. The British intelligence officer Heaton existed, but not in the capacity of a spy against the Irish.

The generally good relations between the Irish military and the British allowed the engine replacement and take off to go smoothly. This was a common occurrence because almost two hundred Allied planes either crashed or made forced landings in the Free State. There are indications that an Irish government office, referred to as "The Agency", was specifically set up to assist downed Allied flyers.

The Agency was also listed as having paid the sum of two pounds to one Mr. Owen Mullaney because of damage done to his land by vehicles gaining access to the 303rd's B-17. Wooden planks were placed on some swampy land of Mr. Mullaney's to cross, while some vehicles slipped off and had to be dug out.

After its trip to Ireland and Northern Ireland, the crew had to get back to Molesworth, which meant returning to the war. Because the secret mission to Londonderry followed so quickly after arriving in England, Jack had still not made a combat mission. He sat in the co-pilot's seat for Ralph for the next thirteen combat missions, whereupon the crew was split up.

Jack went on to pilot the *Flak Wolf* and he and his crew were lucky enough to never come home with anything more than scrapes and cuts. Jack and Ralph have remained close friends to this day.

Jack returned to Ireland in 2002 for the first time since World War II. While there, he visited Finner Camp and the town of Mullaghmore. While in Mullaghmore he went back to Hannon's Hotel for a drink with the locals, smelled the salt air, and saw the beach that saved his day so many years ago. He even spoke to some of the locals who remembered the day *The Devil Himself* landed in their town.

A local paper carried an article on Jack's return but got the facts backwards. The paper could not decide whether to accept that there were four or five fliers aboard, so the article, at two different places, gives the two different numbers for the size of the crew.

By the end of the summer of 1943, Jack was lucky enough to have completed his 25th combat mission and was rotated back to the United States. He married that fall and celebrated his sixtieth wedding anniversary with his wife in 2003.

Today, Jack is quick to welcome you into his home; he is even faster to sit his guest down and fix him a drink.

The Berlin Mission of 24 December 1943

A REAL BATTLE PLAN OR PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE?

By Charles L. Coons

Even before we flew our very first mission, on 22 December 1943 to attack a railway at Osnabruck, Germany, we were in for a shock. The two aircrews who occupied the room beyond me went on missions and did not come back. All beds were empty right up to mine!

We thought that they might come in late if they had to make an emergency landing somewhere else in England. That was wistful thinking. It was a very eerie feeling, especially at night when the wind made the door creak like someone was coming in.

Bert Bordelon was our pilot, and I was his co-pilot. There was one mission in particular that caused us considerable anxiety, before we even got started on it.

We were roused out of our beds at about 0300 hours on 24 December for a mission. When we got to the briefing room, we found out that we were going to Berlin at an altitude of twenty thousand feet and the RAF, who normally flew at night, was going in at eighteen thousand feet. This would be the first strike on the German Capitol and it was to be a powerful one.

Actually we knew that to hit Berlin at those altitudes would be suicidal because of the accuracy of the German anti-aircraft guns, to say nothing of the intense attacks by the German fighters, and we would not have any fighters to protect us. They did not have enough range to get to Berlin and back.

For us, this is one bad scene! We are just Second Lieutenants, not long out of flying school, just recently arrived in England, and we are about to be thrown into a fight where there will be heavy losses. This is Christmas Eve and my bed might be empty tonight. What will my parents do?

After briefing, we went to the B-17 we were supposed to fly and got another shock. Our bomb load was twelve, five hundred pound, general purpose, bombs. With that load, we did not have enough fuel to get to Berlin and back. White Knuckle Time again!

Finally, time came to start engines. When the time came to start moving to the runway for takeoff, someone in the flight control tower fired a red rocket that told us the mission was scrubbed.

We were one bunch of relieved people! Trucks came to take us back to the Operations building. We were told to go get another mission breakfast and come back for another briefing. This time our target was construction works at Vacqueriette, France.



THE BORDELON CREW OF THE 360TH SQUADRON gets a shock preparing for its second mission—Berlin—or so they thought. Back row, l-to-r, Berton Bordelon, Charles Coons, Kenneth Nebhut, John Cottrell and Frederick Cromwell. Front row, Joseph Fontana, Joseph Harrington, Forrest Barker, Teddy Couch and Donald Adams.

Now we can haul those twelve, five hundred pound, bombs and have enough fuel to get there and back. Even though we know we are going to get shot at, this is in no way as bad as the mission to Berlin would have been if we had to attack at the altitudes for which we were briefed. We felt relieved.

We flew the second mission successfully, but there was this nagging question about the first mission that was scrubbed. Was the Eighth Air Force really serious about the Berlin Mission, or were we trying to scare the Germans.

We had always believed that the Germans knew our plans before we took off. The mission, as briefed, would have been a disaster for us as well as for the Germans. Then there was the load configuration for the aircraft. It was really set up for the short mission which we actually flew.

We had to suspect that we had just participated, unknowingly, in a psychological warfare exercise. Lieutenants were pretty far down on the chain of command so there was a lot of information we were not privy to. For we two Lieutenants, it had been quite a dilemma and probably contributed to my hair turning gray early.

“The ME-109 Is Nothing To Sneer At”

By William F. “Bill” Miller

The 303rd Bomb Group mission is going along about as nice as such things can be, when you figure the circumstances.

I mean even though we are at 28,000 feet and the temperature is 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and the airplane is much too cold for comfort, still, the formation has gotten deep into Germany, to the east of Berlin, and is driving smoothly along toward Brux, Czechoslovakia, where there is a synthetic fuel plant we're going to destroy.

The air is clear and there is no flak at the moment—not bad, all things considered.

The engines on our 359th Squadron B-17 are all running smoothly and all 12 airplanes are in formation where they should be, seeming to stand still while spewing big contrails out all the engine exhausts, and the only uncomfortable thing is the tedious-tense effort of flying a heavy, clumsy airplane in close formation for hours on end.

We are observing radio silence, of course. Unless the lead airplane says something to us, we keep dead silent. So far there hasn't been a peep since take-off.

Internally within our own airplane, of course, we have an intercom that we use for such plebeian efforts as oxygen checks to be sure everyone is alive and alert. Other than that, stillness, broken only by the steady drone of four engines all purring at the same steady speed.

Then in the far distance directly ahead of us, unannounced and silent, there are four tiny little black dots, hard to see at first. Nobody is supposed to be out there, so those dots have got to be enemy aircraft.

I see them first. I tap my copilot on the shoulder and just point to the dots. I am listening on the intercom but he is listening on the radio. Well, radio silence be damned, he presses his mike button and shouts at the top of his voice, “Start shootin' at those sonsabitches !”

The Messerschmidt 109 is nothing to sneer at. It is not big, like some of the American fighter aircraft, but it is fast. In fact, in 1939 it had set the absolute world's speed record of 435 miles per hour.

But its most effective military feature is its engine layout, a Daimler V-12 arranged so that a 20-mm cannon fires through the propeller shaft. That explosive 20-mm ammunition is much more destructive than the solid projectiles fired by any of the world's machine



guns, of which the ME-109 has two of its own, one in each wing.

The adrenaline pump overspeed warning light in my brain flashes on brightly as the little black dots come barreling toward us at a combined speed of well over 500 miles per hour.

There is no time to analyze anything. The dots become cigar-shaped things with thin wings, ever growing, and two of them are pointing exactly at my face. Very quickly little puffs of smoke start coming out of the propeller hubs and wings, and I know that those god-damn no-good bastards are shooting at me personally!

I am outraged. Irrational though it may be, my feeling is that it's not fair—after all, I am not shooting at them, so why don't they just leave me alone?

I drop the airplane down a few feet to throw off their aim. The head-on closing rate has brought the range down so fast to the point where the four cigars silently roll, ballet-like, to their left and disappear silently downward from my view.

Every machine gun in our formation that could bear on them for just those few seconds had been going noisily at it, but I don't see any damage or hear anyone call on the intercom that he had hit one of them. The engagement is over.

We continue. The Messerschmidt pilots were defending their homeland. We were destroying it. They were guys like us, dedicated to their jobs.

All is well except for the B-17 on my right. It rolls slowly, silently to the right, seeming to be all right, and all of its engines seem to be turning normally. There is no flame, no flying parts, no smoke, no sign of damage. That tells us that the pilot was hit, and hit badly, in that attack, because the airplane is clearly out of control.

As it continues to roll to the right, its nose drops slowly down as it turns, then two people are seen to jump out of it. No more. Two out but seven still in. A big airplane like that, upside down and rolling, is the ugliest sight the mind of man can imagine, makes you want to puke.

Then there is a big orange flash and the airplane is simply gone. No parts flying through the air, no nothing. And the formation, which has just been sitting still up to that point, squirting out contrails, stays right where it was, same altitude, same speed, same contrails, same everything. The injured B-17 has just disappeared. Along with seven men.

It might have been us. We're lucky. So far.

“I Almost Fell Down And Out Through The Radio Room Gun Port”

IMPACT OF BOMB STRIKE FROM ABOVE TURNS B-17 “*BEATS ME*” UPSIDE DOWN

By Charles L. Roth

Our last mission was on the 23rd of January, 1943. Molesworth to Lorient, France, to bomb submarine pens.

Our pilot this day was Lt. J. Haas, standing in for Lt. L. M. Schulstad, and another stand in was the bombardier, Lt. E. McCright for Lt. R. Saiz.

About 1:30 PM, on the bomb run, approaching target, our plane was hit in the tail section by a bomb from the plane above. The impact of the bomb turned the plane upside down. I almost fell out the top of the radio room gun port. I saw the bombs above us just before we were hit.

After Lt. Haas righted the plane, I got up from the floor and assisted the ball turret gunner, Sgt. P. Soria, out of the turret and put his chute on him. He headed for the rear escape door. I then noticed that the right waist gunner, Sgt. J. Sherman, was hanging outside the plane, I went to help him, but, as I reached for his leg, his body fell away from the plane. Surely, he was unconscious or dead.

I took over Sherman's gun position. Sgt. T. Dobbins, left waist gunner, handed me Sherman's oxygen mask. I took the hose, and then both Dobbins and I started firing at the enemy planes circling us. It seemed there were a half dozen of them,

I later found out there were two FW 190s. I saw some of my tracers hit one of the planes and I did see some smoke.

Before taking over the gun position, I looked down toward the tail and saw that the gunner, Sgt. W. Stevens was slumped over and one shoulder looked as if it was gone. I knew he was dead.

Our plane seemed to be losing more speed. I noticed our engineer, Sgt. A. Pacheco, in the bomb bay. I thought perhaps he was checking on us, but later found that he was salving the bombs to lighten the load.

It seems another seven to ten minutes lapsed and then *Beats Me* quit flying, nosed over and started straight down. I left the waist gun and with difficulty made my way to the rear escape door. Soria had either been hit or was unconscious.

The door handle had not been released. I pulled the handle and tried to get out. It seemed impossible. I was half in and half out when something came off the wing, probably part of the deicer boot, and hit me in the head, knocking and jerking me out.

I thought surely I must be close to the ground. I was spinning around very fast and pulled the rip cord, opening the chute too soon. The tremendous jerk broke a leg strap, and whipped off a boot and a shoe. Worst of all, a long tear appeared in the top of my chute. It was difficult to control.

A German fighter pilot circled me, and was close enough that I could see his face. As he circled the second time, I saluted him. He saluted back and flew off.

I watched our plane as it plunged toward earth. I kept hoping to see another chute.

One came out and opened just before *Beats Me* hit



CHARLES ROTH AND HIS WIFE, DONNA, attended a ceremony in Benton, Arkansas, which bestowed a posthumous Legion of Merit to Ewell McCright, the bombardier on the Lorient mission. McCright was honored for records he kept as a prisoner of war.

the ground. There was no one in it.

When the B-17 hit, it looked like a huge implosion. One wheel bounced back up from the ground to a tremendous height.

I feel I was at least eight or ten minutes reaching the ground. I landed three or four miles from the crash site. Ten or more Frenchmen had been gathering and were waiting for me to land. I almost landed in a deep hole. I was able to maneuver just enough to miss it and was in almost a free fall for about twenty feet. I hit hard.

Two of the Frenchmen, young boys, helped me out of the chute and led me across some fields and hid me in the loft of a barn. One of the boys brought me cider about 4:30 that afternoon.

Around 6:30 I was taken into the house and given bread and wine. There were six or seven people sitting around the table. I knew they were friendly, but not being able to speak the language puts a new meaning into frustration and the feeling of "being lost" and wondering if they could help me. The English they knew "Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey and President Roosevelt."

At 7 o'clock, a truck load of Germans drove into the yard. They took me to a prison in the city of Vannes.

That day I had lost seven comrades. I was still alive, but had no idea what was in store for me.

After three days, during which I heard and saw through a small window French people being shot, and wondering if I was next, I was taken to a train station and sent to Dulag Luft on the Main.

I was joined on the train by Lt. John Embach, navigator, and Lt. Ewell McCright, our stand in bombardier. McCright had a foot wrapped and did no talking. I said very little to Lt. Embach as the Germans did not want us

conversing.

After three days of interrogation, proving to me that they knew more about me and my family than I did, I was sent to Stalag 8-B at Tesen, Poland, for the start of 27 months of captivity.

During one of the transfers between camps, two buddies, Clair "Rusty" Swarmer and Paul Giddens, and I climbed out the little window of a prison box car and jumped in the dark. Paul lasted two days. Rusty and I, with a few harrowing experiences, lasted for 10 days.

Rusty had pneumonia and I was not much better off. We turned ourselves in. Three nights in a good warm cell helped a lot, but 14 days on bread and water after being sent to Stalag 7-A made us wonder just what we did do.

From there we were sent to Stalag 17-B, my last camp.

Freedom came at the Innes River after approximately a three weeks march living as best we could. Everyone was without food. We foraged the countryside and had whatever the Germans would trade for tea or a shirt.

The first GI's we saw sure did look mighty good and the GI food was heaven. There are so many things that could be related. I can still hear the wonderful sound of our planes going over the camp and knowing that America was persevering.

Of my two fellow 360th crew POW's, Lt. McCright has passed away and Lt. Embach died in the Korean conflict.

I am sure that there will be an ongoing story until the day that I die. There are still so many more questions for which I would like to find answers.



J. E. HAAS, A 358TH SQUADRON PILOT, took over the 360th's Schulstad crew for the fateful mission which cost him and six other crew members their lives, all killed in action. The remaining three became prisoners of war.

Pictured is the original 360th crew. Back row, l-to-r, pilot Louis "Mel" Schulstad, co-pilot Roy Christianson (KIA), navigator John Embach (POW), bombardier Reinaldo Saiz (Ewell McCright flew in his place and became a POW.)

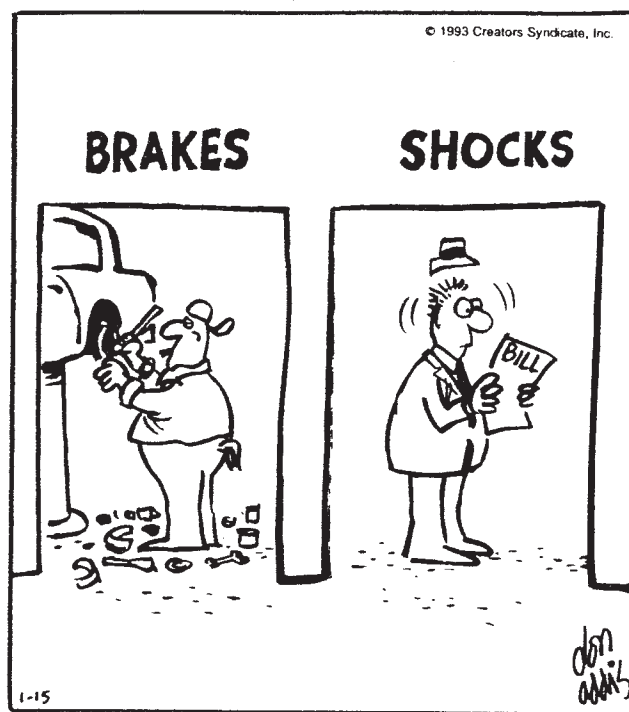
Front row, engineer Antone Pacheco (KIA), right waist gunner John Sherman (KIA), radio operator Charles Roth (POW), tail gunner Wayne Stevens (KIA) and ball turret gunner Peter Soria (KIA). Not pictured is left waist gunner Jerry Dobbins who was also killed in the action.

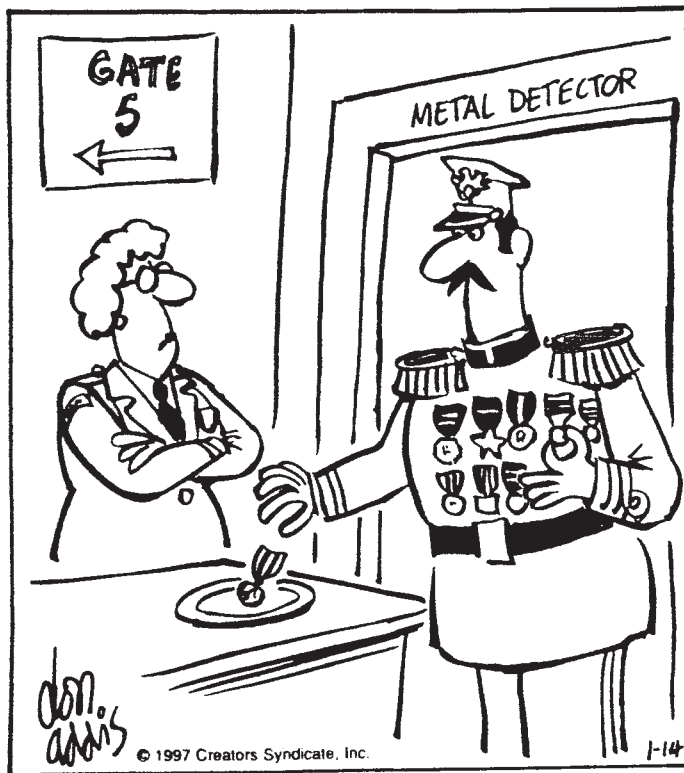


HERE'S A CREW THAT HAD A "REVOLVING DOOR" OF ASSIGNED PILOTS AT MOLESWORTH, so they never gathered for an official crew photo as did other crews. The above picture was taken in training in November, 1943, in Birmingham, Alabama. All we know, with some certainty, is that the first two officers standing at the left are pilot Frederick W. Sawyer and navigator George L. Arvanites. After the crew reached Molesworth, it was assigned to the 427th Squadron. But the crew flew its early missions with Alan Eckhart at the controls, then Sawyer returned for several missions, giving way to Grover Henderson, then to Charles Mars. The picture was sent to the Hell's Angels Newsletter by Barbara and George Arvanites, who wonder if anyone can identify the crew members. If you can help, contact the Editor at the address on page 2.

(By permission of Don Addis and Creators Syndicate, Inc.)

BANK OFFERINGS





EXCERPTS OF CHANGES IN THE BY-LAWS OF THE 303RD BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION APPROVED IN SAVANNAH ON 30 AUGUST 2004

ARTICLE III—Membership – Voting Rights

Regular Members are required to pay dues and may vote. Family Members are required to pay dues and may vote. Widowed Members will not be required to pay dues and may vote. Associate Members are required to pay dues but are not entitled to vote. Honorary members will not be required to pay dues and are not entitled to vote. Honorary Members who are Family Members shall have voting privileges.

ARTICLE IV—Meetings

A quorum shall be necessary to conduct the business of the Association. A simple majority of those present and voting shall carry the motion.

ARTICLE VI—Officers, Directors and Other Functions

After the 2005 Reunion the position of Vice-President For Reunion Planning is eliminated. The President shall appoint a Reunion Manager/Coordinator who in turn shall appoint his own committee. He shall attend all Board of Directors meetings. As an appointed member, he is expected to voice his opinions and recommendations but he has no voting rights. The operative effect is to reduce the Executive Committee membership by one.

After the position of Vice-President for Reunion Planning is abolished and drops out of the line of succession. The next in line of succession shall be the Chairman of the Past Presidents Advisory Committee. He shall only serve as President until such time as either the President or Vice President For Administration is no longer incapacitated or new elections are held. The Vice-President for Administration shall be the contact person and shall oversee the position and functions of (1) The Historian, (2) The Director of Internet Operations.

The Treasurer shall not open any accounts or make investments of the Association's monies that would restrict the control of said accounts or investments from being transferred to a new Treasurer immediately on taking office. The Treasurer shall surrender all records and supporting documents of the Association's accounts upon leaving office.

The Membership and Roster Chairman shall update the Association Directory upon the request and with the consent of the Executive Committee. He shall turn over to the Treasurer all monies received from dues and all other contributions or donations made to the Association in a timely manner together with requisite documentation.

The President with the advice and consent of the Board of

Directors shall appoint a Reunion Manager/Coordinator, a Historian and a Director of Internet Operations to serve under the oversight of the Vice President for Administration.

The Vice President for Administration shall be the liaison person between the 303rd Bomb Group Association and other organizations. When directed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Executive Committee, he shall attend the national reunion of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and shall be the representative of the Association to the Unit Advisory Council of that organization.

The Director of Internet Operations shall have the responsibility to make all Internet decisions utilizing the advice of an Internet Committee appointed by him with the advice and consent of the President and Board of Directors.

ARTICLE IX—Combat Squadron Representatives

At the Board of Directors meeting, only the attending Squadron Representative votes. The Alternate votes only in the absence of the Squadron Representative. The Alternate may attend as a non-voting observer and may voice his opinions and recommendations.

ARTICLE X—Salaries and Compensation

Detailed records of all monies received on behalf of the Association are to be maintained and turned over to the Association Treasurer, with the receipts. Documentation supporting all funds disbursed is to be kept and submitted to the Treasurer for reimbursement. This can be done at the end of the project or intermittently, if the project covers a long period of time and the expenditures are sizeable, or create a hardship. Advance money (seed money) must be documented in the same manner as all other disbursements. All receipts are to be turned over to the Treasurer, with reimbursement for expenses paid by the Treasurer. Under no circumstances is reimbursement for expenses to be taken out of receipts by the Officer/Director or Project Chairperson. A final Financial Report is required upon completion of any project that involves money. The Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting approves a budget for the Hell's Angels Newsletter. The Treasurer shall provide in advance quarterly, or as appropriate due to economic constraints, allocations of the budget to the Editor to cover printing, mailing and incidental expenses for each issue. The Editor shall provide to the Treasurer all documentation supporting the funds he has disbursed and received after each issue of the "Hell's Angels Newsletter".

I hereby certify that the By-law changes initiated by the Board of Directors and myself were duly approved by vote of the General Membership meeting in Savannah, GA. August 30, 2004. The help given me by Bill McLeod and the present Executive Committee of our beloved Association is gratefully acknowledged.

Fred E. Reichel
Chairman, Constitution and By-Laws Committee

WORLD WAR II VETERANS *By The Numbers*

Historic Perspective

Approximately 16.5 million men and women served in the armed forces during the World War II period, September 16, 1940 through July 25, 1947.

These participants represented one-third of the then male population 15 years and older.

Among the more than 16 million WW II service men and women, 70% served in the Army (including Army air forces), 26% in the Navy, and 4% in the Marines.

Approximately 73% of WW II military personnel served overseas.

Approximately 407,000 American service men and women died while in service during WW II, including 292,000 battle deaths and 115,000 other deaths. The total death number includes 79,000 who were lost in combat and never recovered. Another 672,000 suffered non-fatal wounds.

Among males 15 years of age or older in each state and the District of Columbia, the percentage of WW II participants was highest in the District of Columbia and Nevada (43% each), followed by Utah (41%), New Mexico (39%), Arizona (38%), and California (37%).

There were 464 WW II Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, of whom 50 were still living as of mid-April 2004. Their branches of service were 286 Army, 82 Marine Corps, 57 Navy, 38 Army Air Corps, and one Coast Guard.

There were 130,201 WW II POWs, of whom 14,072 died while they were POWs. Approximately 33,050 were estimated to be living at the end of 2003.

World War II Veterans Today

In 2003, there were 4,370,000 living WW II veterans. WWII veterans accounted for 17% of the total 2003 veteran population of 25,179,000.

For 90 percent of WWII veterans, WWII was the only war in which they served.

In 2003, the median age of WW II veterans was 80.1 years: there were 1,946,000 under age 80; 1,689,000 age 80 to 84; 607,000 age 85 to 89; 113,000 age 90 to 94; and 15,000 age 95 and over.

There were 4,173,000 male and 197,000 female WW II veterans in 2003.

WW II veterans are estimated to be dying at a rate of slightly more than 1,000 per day.

Tomorrow's World War II Veterans—Projections

The WW II veteran population is projected to decline to less than 3.7 million by Mid-August 2005, the 60-year anniversary of Japanese acceptance of Allied peace terms.

In 2005, WW II veterans are projected to make up 15

percent of the total veteran population and have a median age of 81.8 years. By 2020, WW II veterans are projected to make up one percent of all veterans and have a median age of 94.2.

Among all males aged 75 or over in 2005, 50 percent will be WW II veterans, while 1.5 percent of all women of that age will be WW II veterans.

Where Do World War II Veterans Live?

In 2003, the five states with the largest number of WW II veterans were California (434,600), Florida (405,000), New York (257,800), Pennsylvania (256,600) and Texas (244,200).

In 2003, the five states with the smallest number of WW II veterans were Alaska (4,400), Wyoming (8,100), North Dakota (9,200), Vermont (9,600), and South Dakota (12,100).

The state with the highest percentage of WW II veterans among all veterans in the state was New Jersey with 23 percent; the state with the lowest percentage of WW II veterans was Alaska, with 7 percent.

Major Socio-Demographic Characteristics

According to the 2000 census, 93 percent of WW II veterans were white, five percent were black, and two percent were of other races.

The 2000 census showed approximately 73 percent of WW II veterans were married at that time, 1 percent were separated, 3 percent had never married, 6 percent were divorced, and 17 percent were widowed.

According to the 2000 census, 40 percent of WW II veterans had at least some college education. More than half the WW II veterans who attended college earned at least a bachelor's degree.

Compensation/Pension, Education, and Home Loans

As of September 30, 2003, there were 413,689 WW II veterans receiving service-connected compensation payments and 132,105 who were receiving non-service-connected pension payments. According to the 2001 Survey of Veterans, about 32 percent of WW II veterans have used VA to finance a home loan.

About 7.8 million WW II veterans used the GI Bill for education or training purposes, about one-half of those eligible. These included 2.2 million college-level trainees and 3.5 million who trained in other schools. There were 690,000 farm trainees and 1.4 million on-job trainees.

(The numbers reported on this page were based on data collected by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs.)

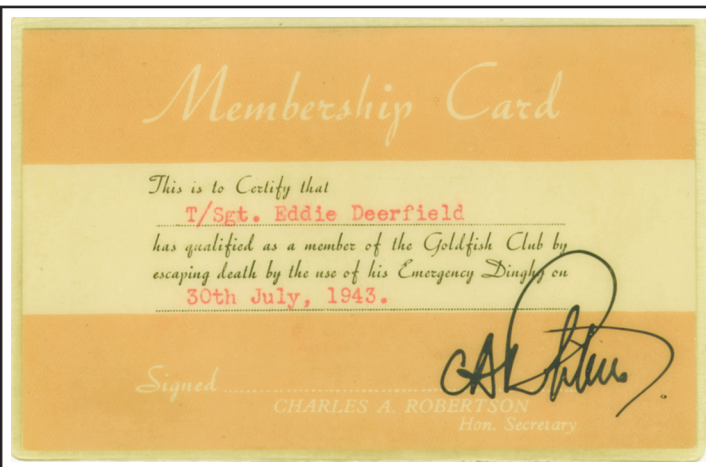
Nine Of the 303rd's Best Pin-ups



THE DAY AFTER THEIR B-17 *THE OLD SQUAW* CRASHED IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, the weary but jubilant 427th Squadron crew returns to base. From left-to-right are D. W. Rice, engineer; E. L. Brown, navigator; W. Klint, co-pilot; C. Fullen, left waist gunner; R. J. Hullar, pilot; N. A. Sampson, ball turret gunner; M. D. Miller, tail gunner; F. G. Hoyt, radio operator, and J. E. McCormack, bombardier. C. H. Marson, the right waist gunner, is not pictured. On the return from the mission to Stuttgart, Germany, on 6 September 1943, their bomber ran out of fuel and came down about six miles off the English coast. The entire crew escaped the sinking plane into two dinghies, and they were picked up by a British Air-Sea Rescue boat about 10 minutes later.

FROM 23 NOVEMBER 1942 TO 23 JULY 1944, there were 24 ditchings of 303rd B-17's — seven from the 358th Squadron, five from the 359th, seven from the 360th and five from the 427th. In the course of these crashes at sea, 138 men were killed, 27 survived but became prisoners of war, 72 were rescued at sea or bailed out before their planes crashed.

Five weeks before the 427th's Huller crew went down, the Robert Cogswell crew suffered a similar fate on the return from a mission to Kassel, Germany. The B-17 exhausted its fuel on the return from the target and became a glider over the North Sea. It crashed about 22 miles out from Felixstowe on the coast of England. Crew members carried the badly injured navigator into one of the dinghies. They cleared the plane *Upstairs Maid* in about 30 seconds, and the aircraft went under in little more than a minute. British Air Sea Rescue boat Number 2562, commanded by John Shanahan, picked up the crew about 35 minutes later. Below is a photo of the rescue vessel and a Goldfish Club Membership Card awarded to all those who escaped death by use of their emergency dinghies.



Molesworth Diary

CREW ARRESTED FOR LANDING ON ROYAL FIELD

I was assigned to the 303rd at Gowen Field, Idaho in 1942. It was a cold, wet night in October of that year flying the B-17 *One O'Clock Jump* from Gander Field, Newfoundland across the Atlantic to Prestwick, Scotland, but we got there along with other planes in our squadron. All of us were hastily told to move out of Prestwick to an airport on Solway Firth.

After a night at Solway Firth, I was taxiing to take off for Molesworth the following afternoon when we ran a single wheel off the runway and ended hub deep in the mud. The rest of the planes in our squadron were taking off, and we were told to follow as soon as possible. We took off about an hour later, and my crew's navigator soon learned that the English countryside was one similarity after another.

We were flying south and on seeing the barrage balloons over London we knew we were lost. It was already dark, and I dreaded turning eastward toward Dover on the coast. On intercom I asked the crew if anyone knew of an airport in the area. Croydon was recommended, so I contacted their tower by radio on an emergency number and was cleared to land. We came in on a short lighted runway, and were ordered to follow a jeep to a pad near the control tower.

As the crew left the plane, we were told "Identify yourselves. You're under arrest. Only the King's plane can land here at Croydon." There we were, lost and cold, being arrested for our efforts to save England. A priority call to Molesworth saved the day, followed by a wild night with a Canadian unit stationed at Croydon. They sawed off our irons!

William N. Frost
358th Squadron Pilot

B-17 PROP CARTWHEELS THROUGH TAIL SECTION

After being shot up, we started home from the raid, but only on two of the four engines. One of the two "bad" engines was windmilling, and our pilot, Gene Frazier, couldn't feather it. Consequently, it created quite a drag and vibration as we flew across the English channel just above the waves. Since it was the number two engine that would not feather, our bombardier, Dick Barlow and I left the nose of the plane as we were concerned that the propeller might come off and cut through the nose of the plane at our normal station. Once we hit the British coast, I had to low-level navigate across the hedgerows of England for about a hundred miles. As we landed at Molesworth, when our wheels touched down, the number two prop came off and cartwheeled back through our tail section. Tex McCullough, our tail gunner, was back safely in the waist section at the time.

Tex's voice was normally slow and with a drawl. I remember one mission, though, when he looked behind him and saw two big holes, one in the floor and one

above his head, apparently a German 105mm shell had gone through without exploding. When Tex reported the hit to the crew on intercom, his voice came through fast and with a higher pitch.

Ray Charron, our ball turret gunner, had his own special scare on another mission. Some electrical and hydraulic controls had been shot away. He couldn't rotate the ball to get out of the turret and back into the waist. If the battle damage prevented us from getting the landing gear down, a crash landing would crush the ball turret. Engineer Gil Borges, waist gunner Eston Anderson and radio operator Don Trainor teamed up to manually hand-crank the ball into position to get Ray out. The landing gear did come down, so all was well.

Andrew Goettman
359th Squadron Navigator

ENGINEER SHOWED "EXCEPTIONAL COURAGE"

On one mission over the Ruhr our bombs did not release on "bombs away." We wanted to get rid of them as soon as possible, so William Mitchell, my flight engineer, took a big gulp of oxygen and went out on the bomb bay catwalk with the bomb bay doors open and released a couple of the bombs manually. He returned to the cabin, sucked up some more oxygen, and went out on the catwalk again. As I recall, he manually released two 500-pound bombs on each trip. He made five trips to clear the bomb bay.

We visualized some old farmers down below watching the stream of B-17's passing overhead. Since it took several minutes in several stages to release all the bombs, we must have scared the hell out of at least five German farm families.

I felt that our engineer showed exceptional courage in walking out on that narrow catwalk over the open bomb bay to release the bombs. I recommended him for an award to no avail.

John D. St. Julien
360th Squadron Pilot

SEATON PRAISED FOR HELPING ENLISTED MEN

In my opinion, Major Russell D. Seaton, first as Adjutant and then as Executive Officer of the 359th Squadron, did more for the morale of the enlisted personnel in the 303rd Bomb Group than any other officer on the base. He set up the Enlisted Man Club with the long bar, two different movie theaters, and a uniform cleaning and laundry establishment. He organized the celebrations after the 303rd's 100th, 200th and 300th bombing missions, and many other ventures.

The squadron had a problem rotating enlisted personnel for kitchen police, latrine orderly and charge of quarters duties. So, Seaton, the Adjutant at the time, and First Sergeant Gerson Nadell came up with an idea. Why not solicit personnel to volunteer permanently for

these positions for additional pay. They offered the KP's and the LO's the rank of Corporal and the rank of Sergeant for the CQ's, plus an extra ten British pounds per month for each volunteer. To pay for the bonus, each man would donate five to ten shillings on payday. This worked out very well, and everybody was happy. This system remained in effect throughout the war.

Major Seaton did not get the recognition he deserved. He was tough, but was well respected by all those under his leadership.

John W. Ford
359th Squadron Personnel Sergeant Major

LEARNS OF HIS CREW'S FATE LONG AFTER WAR

We trained in the States as a 10-man crew. Our pilot was Ernest C. Price. After arriving at Molesworth, as a "green" gunner, I was assigned to fly my first two missions with an experienced crew before rejoining the Price crew. But, on that second mission, October 11, 1944, to Wesseling, Germany, my original crew was shot down. I never knew what happened to them, if they were killed or captured. I flew with many other crews, finished 36 missions and came home.

After the war and a college degree, I worked my way up to vice president of a bank in Vista, California. A bank customer saw the picture of my original crew, and through a friend of his I learned that my pilot was now a retired colonel living in Florida. We corresponded, and he informed me that the entire crew survived the mission, but were taken prisoner by the Germans. I don't know if the others are even still alive after all these years.

Keith E. Day
358th Squadron Gunner

GERMAN ME-262 JETS DOWN TWO 303RD B-17'S

It was Tuesday, March 20, 1945, and we were attacking an oil refinery on the edge of the city of Hamburg, Germany. The flak was intense and accurate. We were attacked by German jet ME-262's immediately after dropping our bombs. They came in on the formation from the tail, level at the 6 o'clock position. The first and closest attack passed right through our element. We were flying on *Thunderbird* with William Beasley at the controls.

There had been a problem getting the bomb bay doors open before the bomb run, and I had to crank them open manually. Now, I was cranking them closed when the German fighters hit us. I left the bomb bay and climbed back into the top turret. I fired on the first wave of jets and then continued firing on the three attacks that followed.

We lost two ships and their crews. *G For George* of the 358th Squadron, piloted by Francis Taub, and no-name B-17G number 767 of the 359th Squadron with Thomas Moore at the controls. I saw only one chute open as the planes went down. My buddy Joe Ogurchak was on Moore's crew. I later learned Joe and the pilot and co-pilot survived as prisoners of war, but the other five men on the crew died when the plane crashed.

Jacob R. Gornto
359th Squadron Engineer

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Little did we realize that it would be necessary to utilize the line of succession for the office of President as prescribed in our by-laws. During the temporary absence of our President Richard Bowler and Vice President for Administration Kenneth Clarke, as the Immediate Past President it has become my responsibility to exercise the functions of the President. We earnestly hope that both of these gentlemen will be back with us soon and able to carry out the duties of their respective offices.

We eagerly look forward to our reunion August 23 – 27, 2005 in Dayton, Ohio. It is our hope that this central location will encourage many more of our members to attend this year. Reunion Chairman Walt Ferrari and his wife Ruth promise excellent hotel accommodations and a wonderful program of events.

Last year we donated our 303rd Bomb Group Association Archives to the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Pooler, GA. This was a long and tedious process but it is another effort by your Association to preserve the history and memory of our Group. This year the Board of Directors voted to move the second set of Mission Reports, now in the custody of Jack Rencher, to Gary Moncur for a period of up to ten years. Gary will be able to use these records for further research and provide answers to questions directed to our website. Within 10 years the Mission Reports will be donated to a research and information location.

There are so many unselfish efforts performed over the years by many of our members. One of the most outstanding was that performed by a small group of volunteers who in 1987 began the gigantic task of retrieving and copying all of the information available about the 364 missions of the 303rd Bomb Group during World War 2. This project funded with more than \$5,000 from our Association required more than two years to complete.

These Mission Records form the basis of our history including the 303rd BGA Archives, Harry Gobrecht's wonderful history "Might In Flight", our two CD ROM's "Fly With Hell's Angels" and "Molesworth Story" as well as the 303rd website, the best military aviation site on the internet.

We honor the following members who did the work and their unselfish contribution to our history: Ralph B. Adams, Cass Bielski, William F. Dohm, James F. Donnelly, Robert J. Evans, Richard R. Johnson, E.C. (Al) Lehman, Lewis E. Lyle, Gerson (Gus) Nadell, John Sanda, George V. Stallings and Loy E. Tingly. Additionally we honor Dave and June Mathews and Jack P. Rencher who preserved these records and provided countless copies for special requests by members.

Another group of distinguished members are those that met in 1975 in Miami and decided to form the 303rd Bomb Group Association, Inc. and then got it started. The 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association was organized in Florida in 1977. The first elected officers were Charles J. McClain (President), William E. Eisenhart (1st VP), Richard C. Waggoner (2nd VP), Carl A. Hokans (Secretary), and Joseph Vieira (Treasurer). First Chairmen were Van R. White (Recruiting), Harry F. Jenkins (Publicity), Richard E. Webster (Reunions), and Joseph T. McLane (Directors). Members under McLane's chairmanship were Robert Morman, Walter J. Mayer, Louis "Mel" Schulstad, Don Harrison and Harry A. Heller.

It has been heard repeatedly from the "old timers" that Joe Vieira was the driving force, the George Washington of the 303rd BGA. To paraphrase a quote by Winston Churchill – Never before has so much owed by so many to so few.

Albert L. Dussliere, Acting President

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

INTERVIEW WITH 303RD VET FASCINATING EXPERIENCE

My name is Marc Goldman. I am a graduate nurse from Harrisburg Area Community College in Harrisburg, PA. As a senior, one of my assignments was to interview a WWII veteran.

The interesting thing about this interview was that it wasn't for historical purposes. It was more from a psychological standpoint, i.e. "How did the war affect you as a person?" I had the pleasure of interviewing a member of the 303rd Bomb Group. The interview I had with him for a little more than an hour is the reason why I am writing you.

His name is Russell S Klingensmith. He became a Navigator for the B-17's, and was eventually transferred to the 303rd at Molesworth. He participated in his first bombing runs at the beginning of November, 1943. He was a member of the 359th Bomb Squadron. He finished his combat tour in April of 1944 with at least 27 successful missions.

He was then asked to become Asst. Group Navigator and was asked to train incoming new Navigators, which he accepted, and was so until March of 1945.

This was just a small biography of such a truly extraordinary individual. Being a WWII enthusiast and especially the B-17's, I couldn't believe I was actually interviewing someone who had been through that period of time, and the experiences he had.

I am of the Jewish faith. My family on my father's side is from Poland. I had come to learn at a very early age that I had a relative who died in Auschwitz,

and had several family friends at Dachau and Treblinka to name a few. To hear this man talk, in great detail mind you, was quite possibly the most fascinating experience I have ever encountered.

I have tremendous pride and respect for each and every one of you who served and gave your lives for my freedom. The only proper way that I saw fit to thank Mr. Klingensmith was to donate to his old Bomb Group, and I'm doing so in his honor.

He confided in me that it's getting tougher each year to attend the annual meetings, and all the contact he keeps is because of your newsletter. It is a vital link for him to hold onto a very important part of his past.

Marc E. Goldman
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

CEREMONY IN FRANCE TO HONOR 360TH EISELE CREW

I've been asked to organize a memorial and ceremony in the village of Eswars, where, on the morning of June 12, 1944, B-17G 42-107048 of 360th BS crashed, after being hit by flak, on the bombing run against Cambrai-Epinoy airfield.

There was only one survivor in the 10 men crew of 1st Roy Eisele, tail gunner Edward J. Vallee.

Dedication of this memorial was scheduled to take place on Sunday 12 June 2005, with a display about the crew, the plane, 303rd BG, B-17, etc, in the village hall.

The village will also say a kind of farewell to a bridge on the canal, which was erected in 1948, and which is an element from the artificial port in Arromanches, which was built in June 1944 in the days

following the Normandy landing.

This historical piece is going to be removed in the second half of June and will be taken to a local museum. A new bridge will be installed during the summer holidays.

Joss Leclercq
Aubers, France

"THOSE WHO ARE GONE WILL BE IN OUR HEARTS"

How kind of you to send me a copy of the 303rd news with John's pictures. In the eyes of his family he was a great man and we do miss him. He was always so sad when he learned of the death of one of his comrades. The ranks are quite thin, but those who are gone will always be in our hearts.

Maxine Shoup
Pratt, Kansas

MEMBER SINCE 1992 FOND OF NEWSLETTER

I just received the May issue, and we want to thank you for the nice article you put together. I'm very flattered and surprised. I've been a member since 1992, and have always enjoyed the newsletter. You are doing a super job, and I know it must not be easy.

George & Edmee Emerson
Todos Santos, Mexico

BOOK "A NOBLE SPIRIT" REPORTED DOING WELL

In the fourth anniversary year of my book *A Noble Spirit*, it is gratifying to report that cumulative performance for the four years ending October 31, 2004, reflects tremendous accomplishments. Those years in this venture have been an incredible explanatory hands-on experience, inclusive of road blocks. A long winding road. This challenge keeps us young in our faith, self-

confidence, hope and to stay focused on our ultimate goals.

It's been an honor to be emissaries "spreading the word" about the great traditions of the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth, England. How different the world would be today if evil and tyranny gained victory in World War II. Our nation can't afford to be complacent about a deep belief in liberty and freedom.

Alvin L. Morton
359th Sqdn Administration

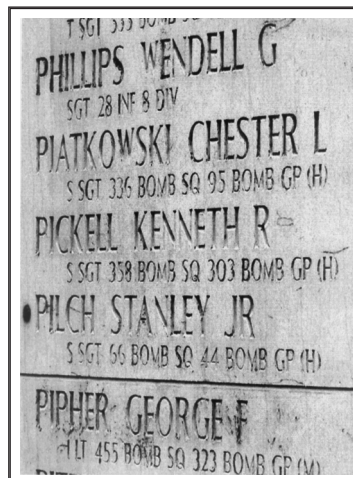
BUSINESS ASSOCIATE SENDS PHOTO OF KIN'S MEMORIAL

Kenneth R. Pickell, a 358th Squadron flight engineer, was killed in action on the mission to Berlin on May 24, 1944. He's my great uncle. Although his body was never found, I had learned that his name was inscribed on a memorial wall at the Margraten Cemetery in the Netherlands.

My company does business with DHL, which is headquartered in Germany and the Netherlands. I asked Rick Stark, a DHL VP for Sales in the U.S., to ask his home office for the favor of a photo.

They were happy to help, as shown below.

Bill Luttrell
Luxottica Retail, Atlanta, GA



HISTORIC WORLD WAR II DATES

>>>THREE MONTHS AT A TIME<<<
(Entries from Bomber Legends Magazine,
2005 Calendar, used with permission)

AUGUST

- 3 (1937) US Army Air Corps places order for 10 B-17B's.
- 4 (1944) Radio-controlled bombers first used against German V-1 sites.
- 6 (1944) 76 B-17's fly shuttle mission to Russia, then to Italy, and return to England.
- 8 (1942) Invasion of Guadalcanal: B-17's hit Rabaul, Solomon's, to divert Japanese.
- 10 (1939) US Army Air Corps places order for 38 B-17C's.
- 17 (1942) First American B-17 mission over occupied Europe (97th BG).
(1943) 376 B-17's attack Schweinfurt/Regensburg
- 20 (1942) 12th Air Force activated in preparation for North Africa invasion.
- 28 (1941) Douglas receives orders to build 600 B-17F-DL's.
- 30 (1940) B-17E ordered into production.

SEPTEMBER

- 2 (1943) 2,300 B-17F's built to date.
- 4 (1943) First B-17G delivered to USAAF.
- 5 (1941) First flight of the B-17E.
- 9 (1943) Italy surrenders after Allied invasion.
- 11 (1944) Final *Frantic* shuttle mission begins.
- 18 (1944) 117 B-17's drop ammo, guns and supplies to Poles in Warsaw. Most captured by Germans.
- 26 (1934) Boeing agrees to build bomber Model 299, forerunner of the B-17.
- 27 (1943) P-47's escorting B-17's on raid over Germany set distance record over 600 miles.

OCTOBER

- 1 (1943) 15th Air Force begins bombing of Germany and Austria from air bases in Italy.
- 14 (1943) 2nd Schweinfurt raid; 291 B-17's.
- 20 (1942) Eighth Bomber Command targets U-boat bases.
- 27 (1941) Second Bomb Group B-17B's attack German U-boat off Newfoundland.
- 30 (1935) Boeing Model 299 crashes. Pilot error blamed.



NOTES FROM THE MEMBERSHIP/ROSTER CHAIRMAN

This issue of the HANL will list the balance of those which made "In Honor of Donations."

The reason it has taken so long to acknowledge everyone who made donations to the association is the size of our newsletter. Our outstanding Editor has more items to print in each issue than space allows. He has to pick what is best for each issue of the newsletter.

Remember that even though there will no longer be a request to the membership for donations, that you can all ways make any donation at any time.

Please send any and all mailing address changes to me, not to the Editor. I maintain the 303rd's BGA's master mailing list. My address is always on page 2 of the newsletter.

Dennis Smith
Membership/Roster

IN MEMORIAM

Robert E Black	360 th	unknown
Stanley M Block	444 th	4/2003
George H Blossom	359 th	unknown
Flake S Dyson	427 th	3/15/05
Lorin W Hamann	360 th	7/4/96
Alfred K Hollritt	427 th	5/17/05
John W Protzman	359 th	5/14/05
Edward J Sexton	359 th	2/27/05
Robert C Stone	359 th	7/22/03
Elmer A Wilson	427 th	unknown
Joseph W. Szudlo	360 th	4/8/05

DONATIONS

William E Eisenhart, Carolyn A Guertin, William D Keane, Nathelle B Oates, Jean R Simpkins

NEW 2005 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY NOW READY FOR ORDERING:

The colorful and complete 2005 roster of all members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association, in large and easy to read type, is ready for ordering and mailing. To order, send a check for \$15 payable to the 303rd BGA to Charlie Sykes, 303rd PX Manager, P.O. Box 33474, Phoenix, AZ 85067.

"IN HONOR" DONATIONS

Carolyn A Guertin for her husband Donald J Guertin (34th Bomb Goup)
 J Andersen "Andy" Berby III for Joel A Barby Jr
 Jack M Slawson for Lt.Col. Merritt O Slawson
 James "Jim" W O'Leary Sr for Ed Matz
 James A Davis for Jake T Davis
 James D Kelley for Lt. Charles F Miller
 Jeanne Horstick for Sgt. William T Werner
 John V Jones for Gilbert T Girant
 Joseph Vieira for Gene Gurman
 Kenneth R Cornahan for Marvin Heckendorf
 Mary Maier for Henry Pratten
 Maurice G Hackler for Sgt. Donald Christ
 Maurice Paulk for William Kruetz
 Miles Henselman for "Moose" Oberone's crew
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 Mrs Geraldine W Torley for Donald W Torley
 Mrs Glenna E Prussman for Henry Prussman
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 Mrs Mabel Kearney for James Kearney
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 Nolan F Strange for Lt. William H. Karraker
 Norman Hammel for Gordon Farnham & G Lofquist
 Orall Gustafson for Kermit Stevens
 Orlyn D Chonat for Leroy "Pappy" Glass Crew
 P S Bartholomew for Dale E "Bart" Bartholomew
 Pamela Cooper Gulley for E G Cooper
 Pat Saiz for Reinaldo J Saiz
 Paul M Thomas for Richard R Rowling
 Paul O Harmon for Paul C Harmon Jr
 Philip D "Phil" Eisenwinter for V W "Bill" Werner Crew
 Ralph C Brehl Jr for Lt David S Donalson
 Ralph E Page for Harry S Cook
 Richard Bartholomy for Frank Bartholomy

Richard F Cody for Alfred E Union
 Robert A Rettinhouse for Edwin H Assenheimer
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 Robert W Cribley for Lt Emil J Vukovich
 Roger K Bates for Richard "Dick" Lutz
 Russell L Ney for Ted Lappo
 Samuel B Blanchard Jr for S B Blanchard-Harry
 Jenkins Crew
 Samuel W Smith for Arthur S C Shanafelt
 Sharon Claire O'Brien for Claire O'Brien
 Stephon H Mudge for Lehman W Rahn
 The family of Clair B O'Brien for Clair B O'Brien
 & Vere Wood
 Theodore J Holen for Edwin Katz
 Vicke Sharp for Warren C Kotz
 Virginia K Kelley for Ford Kelley
 Walter Mayer for Raymond Ganoll
 Warren J Allen for Lee Knedler
 William A Denison for Donald W O'Hearn
 William C "Curley" Byerly: Niva Silver Lady Crew
 William H Cox: William R & Dennis L Cox (sons)
 William S McLeod Jr for Alice B McLeod,
 Colonel Kermit Stevens and Frank DeCicco
 Ron and Cindy Olander of Phil Olander
 Foundation, for all 303rd veterans

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 W M "Mac" Balkcom, 4475 Shilon Ridge Trl., Snellville, GA 30039-7371
 Harry Lenson, 7325 Kahana Dr., Boynton Beach, FL 33437-8100
 Michael Faley, 12400 Ventura Blvd., # 113, Studio City, CA 91604-2406
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 James O Fulks, 433 W Main St., Bradford, IL 61421-0365
 Kimberly Shope, 2338 Cowan Rd., Piffard, NY 14533-9728
 SMSgt Charles P Hawman, 1384 Redwood Cir., La Plata, MD 20646

NEW MEMBERS

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 Ben M. Agrifoglio, 19234 E American Ave, Reedley, CA 93654
 Rosemary Turner, 820 Clover Park Dr, Arlington, TX 76013-1433



THE EDITOR COMMENTS....

At first glance, it looks like a B-17G nightmare, a Flying Fortress with a Pinocchio nose on a fifth engine with a four-bladed propeller. Where's the dignified chin turret? Are the navigator and the bombardier stretched out in the snout? It couldn't be that the B-17 was telling lies, which was the puppet's problem. During the 303rd Bomb Group's time at Molesworth, the bombers never lied to the combat or ground crews. They told it as it was. So, the long proboscis was not a result of World War II combat.

No, it all happened after the end of the war. The aircraft shown above was originally B17G serial number 44-85734, and its construction was completed in 1946. The immediate need for heavy bombers had ceased to exist. So, it was purchased by the Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Company for experimental purposes at a cost of \$2,700. The air-worthiness certificate issued by the Federal Aviation Authority read, *"This aircraft is certified for experimental and evaluation of flight testing of new power plants and associated systems under development for civil and military use."* It was named Boeing Model 299Z. Although the original Model 299 crashed on a test flight in 1935, the plane was always considered as the first authentic version of the B-17 series.

The new 299Z was fitted with a dummy nose. A PT-2/T-34 turboprop engine was installed. The other four engines remained as originally constructed. In 1950, with Chief Test Pilot Harold Archer at the controls, the plane took off from a field in East Hartford, Connecticut. Take-offs and landing were routine with four engines operating. At test altitude, the PT-2 was fired up and the other engines modulated as needed for running the various tests.

For almost 20 years, the 299Z served with distinction to flight test Pratt & Whitney engines, Hamilton propellers and navigational equipment for Norden. It was also a relatively inexpensive method of exploring jet engine development. The aircraft accumulated more than 1,100 flight test hours at altitudes up to 40,000 feet before it was retired in the mid-1960's.

My thanks to Bill Hooper, Research Volunteer at the New England Air Museum, and to the CAHA Newsletter for sharing the data on how, from the disaster of the Boeing Model 299 to the heroic World War II achievements of the B-17's to the contributions of the Model 299Z, the Flying Fortress lived on.

Eddie Deerfield

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
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Eddie Deerfield, Editor
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