

303rd Bomb Group

"HELL'S ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

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DUTCH TREAT

Lou finds WWII friends in Holland

by Si Cornell

For vacation, Lou Breitenbach went to Europe to find his WWII flying boots. He found them, but he didn't get them back.

Lou, 56, now is a Post printer. But on Feb. 22, 1944, he was engineer and top turret gunner on a B-17 bombing an aircraft factory at Ascherleben, Germany.

"Fighters got us," said Lou. "We were at 28,000 feet and 60 B-17s went down that day."

Goering's tough Checkertails, the Focke-Wulfs, came chitter-chattering with their machineguns through the slow bomber squadrons. So did the Messerschmitts, the ME-109s, once the world's fastest plane with an evil cannon firing through the propeller.

"There were 10 of us on the B-17, nobody hurt, but we knew our plane was done," said Lou. "We dropped down into the clouds to escape, but over Holland at about 600 feet we ran out of clouds and a lone Focke-Wulf came up to finish us off.

"That crash landing was rough," he said. "We were taking out fences and bouncing and dirt was coming up through the ball turret. The tail came off and stood straight up in the air.

"We wound up in a lake," said Lou. "I can remember pushing the bombardier out the pilot's window and then we walked across the wing to land. All 10 of us

lived through it. We agreed to split up and attempt escape on our own."

That's when Sgt. Breitenbach's troubles really began. He tried to jump a creek and didn't make it. He was wet, freezing and miserable when he watched from hiding as a truckload of German soldiers came to examine the crashed plane.

"I ran like hell and couldn't get anywhere," said Lou. "Couldn't get across the canals. Six or seven hours later, when it began to get dark, I headed for a little town called Wijk Bij Duurstede (pronounced Wike By Dursted)."

Two women rode by on bicycles. Lou hid behind a tree but they saw him because they came back with a note saying "If you're an American flier, wait." Lou hid under a dike's sluice gate until two men with guns came in the darkness, put him on a bicycle, and took him to a church.

"Our tail gunner, Jim Hensley, of Johnson City, Tenn., already was in the church," said Lou. "They led us to a house, and there were the same two women who had been on the bicycles. They were part of the Anti-Nazi underground, risking their lives for us."

Lou stripped off his flight gear and was given a suit, socks and shoes that fit fairly well. The underground tried to smuggle him out, but he was captured in Belgium and spent 11 months in a German prison camp in Poland.

"Those were great knee-length socks they gave me," said Lou. "I wore them a year—every time the bottoms wore out I'd take some yarn off the tops and fix the bottoms again."

So, after all the years, Lou went back with his wife, Anamae, and a son, Capt. Dan Breitenbach, 28, a West Pointer and commander of an artillery battery in Nurnburg, Germany.

"It was like old home week," said Lou. "The same two women- both now in their 70's were in the same house. They showed me where the plane had crashed, and where I hid, and the church where I was taken. They even took us out to dinner and it all had to be done by an interpreter."

One of the women- they were sisters- went to a hiding place and brought out Lou's flying boots, carefully wrapped in paper. Lou didn't take them.

"I had the feeling she wanted to keep them," said Lou. "Those people put their lives on the line for guys like me, and they remember everything as if it happened yesterday."

THE SAGA OF A B-17

Reprinted from The Stars and Stripes
June 13, 1968

In a mountainous realm of skylarks and peat bogs in northeast England a group of boys assembled around a modest memorial to commemorate a touching war-time rescue.

It was a tale of two countries, two shepherds, two dead American airmen and a heroic collie that unfolded on the Cheviot, a 2,600-foot-high peak in a bleak North-umberland grazing ground for sheep.

At a signal from New York, the memorial (a twisted aircraft propeller mounted in concrete) was unveiled and the British boys who built it talked by transatlantic telephone with survivors of the World War II plane it commemorates.

Events leading to the ceremony began in the summer of 1967 when boys from St. Michael's Church Chior Club in the village of Alnwick unearthed a B17 Flying Fortress that had crashed on Dec. 16, 1944.

The club was formed to provide a creative outlet for members. One club project was the investigation of the nearly 100 American, British and German bombers which crashed in the area during the war.

Two members of the U.S. Army Air Force B17 crew died in the crash in the Cheviots.

Seven were rescued and they were all on hand for a reunion in New York which was tied to the unveiling ceremony in North-umberland.

Rummaging through the wreckage, buried under years of undergrowth and peat, the boys found two microswitches from the bombardier's panel.

The switches were sent to the Honeywell Microswitch Division, Freeport, Ill., where tests revealed one of them was still in working order.

In the meantime the boys in Alnwick- they call themselves the Reivers, an ancient name for border raiders- embarked on the arduous task of building a memorial.

Cement was carried up the rugged terrain to the site chosen for the memorial.

One propeller was freed from the wreckage and planted in the concrete- where it now points toward the grave of the buried bomber.

The inscription on the memorial reads: "Erected by the St. Michael's Church Chior Club The Reivers to the Men Of the U.S.A.A.F. who fought for our freedom, 1941-1945"

Buried beneath the peat with the slumbering Fort was a remarkable tale of civil and military heroism, which gradually has been sifted out on both sides of the Atlantic.

The B17, No. 44-6504 (it was too new to have a name), was on its third mission out of Molesworth, England, when it crashed in the snow and fog of the Cheviots.

The target was Ulm, Germany, and the weather was expected to clear over the continent.

Joining the 303rd Bomb Squadron and later the 303rd Bomb Group, the aircraft and its nine-man crew flew across the channel.

When the weather failed to clear by mid-morning the mission was recalled.

Following bad-weather procedure, the planes broke formation on their return route and were ordered to land separately at various bases to avoid midair collisions.

The planes were ordered to drop their bomb loads into the North Sea. B17 44-6504 was carrying a full load of a new explosive called RDX.

The aircraft commander, 2nd Lt. George A. Kyle, Staunton, VA, executed a 180-degree turn back toward England, at the same time beginning his descent. When he came through

the clouds, his aircraft was alone.

On several occasions he requested headings, only to discover the signals were coming from German transmitters. Twice he found himself headed toward France.

The weather became so heavy it was impossible to orient himself to drop the bombs. Snow flurries became a raging blizzard. Ice coated the wings of the plane. Kyle descended to 3,000 feet to find a hole in the clouds.

For several hours Kyle tried to contact homing beacons and to orient the Bl7 by sun or landmarks. At about 12:30 p.m.

radio operator Joel A. Berly, Clemson, SC, got a vague fix which indicated the plane was over northern England.

Ten minutes later he confirmed the fix and contacted Molesworth for a direction signal home.

Tension eased as the plane headed south toward Molesworth at 3,000 feet.

But at 1:15 p.m. the West Hill of the Cheviot, at 2,600 feet one of the highest points in England, suddenly loomed out of the snow.

Kyle jerked back on the stick. But it was too late. The Flying Fort struck.

The pilots instinctive gesture saved most of the crew. The big plane skidded across the bog that makes up the West Hill. The peat served as a cushion and absorbed the shock and filled the dangerous bomb bay.

The nose section crumpled on impact, instantly killing bombardier Frank R. Turner, Jr., Columbia, SC, and navigator Fred Holcombe, Swannanoa, NC.

Flames erupted in the bomb bay. Incendiary bombs exploded and touched off fluid from ruptured hydraulic and fuel lines. An engine on the right wing exploded in fire. But the super-sensitive RDX bombs did not go off. As they tumbled from their shackles they were buried in the peat.

Survivors remember hearing sporadic explosions of .50 caliber ammunition as they scrambled to escape.

Flight engineer and top-turret gunner Ernest Schieferstein, Forest Hills, NY, was in the radio compartment advising the crew to put on their parachutes when the plane struck.

His head struck a bulkhead and he was knocked out. When he recovered minutes

later he remembered crash procedure and crawled out the side door to the right wing to await other members of the crew.

Kyle, suffering a shattered jaw, and flight officer James H. Hardy, co-pilot, Snow Hill, NC, soon joined him. Hardy was later awarded the Soldier's Medal for dragging Kyle out of the plane with him.

At this point the three survivors assumed the other crew members were dead. There were no sounds of life and they expected the bombs to explode momentarily.

Wandering down the side of the Cheviot they found a farm house, but were nearly shot by a farmer who saw their green flying suits and took them to be German paratroopers.

The airmen quickly dispelled his fears and Hardy was given a ride on a motorbike in town to find help. An ambulance soon arrived at the farm house and Kyle, Hardy, and Schieferstein were taken to the Royal Air Force first aid station near Berwick.

Back at the Bl7, Berly had gone unnoticed as he tried to put out the bomb bay fire. In the process he jammed his foot through the plywood flooring and became entangled in a mass of peat.

Waist gunner William R. Kaufmann, Chicago, regained consciousness in time to pull Berly free. He then helped ball turret gunner George P. Smith, Louisville, KY, from the plane. Kaufmann received the Soldier's Medal for rescuing Berly.

Outside the aircraft the three found tail gunner Howard F. Delaney, Watertown, NY, wandering around in the deep snow. He was bleeding from a severe head wound.

The four quickly decided to abandon the aircraft and they found shelter in a ditch 100 yards away. There, several hours later, Smith looked up to find a collie licking his face.

The dog's barking brought two shepherds, John Dagg and Frank Moscrop to the ditch. They had been searching in the storm with Dagg's collie Sheila for survivors.

She led the group through the blizzard to Dagg's cottage and just as they reached the door the plane blew up with a window shattering explosion.

Dagg's daughter ran two miles through the storm to the nearest telephone to summon help. Later in the night the four men were taken to the same RAF hospital that their crewmates had found earlier.

Kyle, the most seriously hurt, was transferred the next day to a larger RAF hospital in Newcastle.

Turner and Holcombe were buried at the American cemetery in Cambridge. The other six survivors convalesced until January when they reported to their squadron at Molesworth.

They were promptly given rest leave, but as they passed through London, Smith collapsed on the train platform with spinal meningitis.

During his stay at the 150th Station Hospital, another unusual drama unfolded. Smith "died" and was taken to the morgue.

The last doctor to examine him before an autopsy was a Major Hill, who noticed that Smith's tag indicated he was from Louisville, Hill's home town.

The doctor decided to listen to Smith's heart once more and detected a faint beat. He managed to revive him, and when the war ended Smith was on his way to the Pacific theatre.

After completing their rest leave, Schieferstein, Berly, Kaufmann, and Delaney returned to flying status and each flew another 10 or 11 missions. They participated in some of the first American encounters with German jet fighters.

Kyle was invalided back to the United States in April.

Hardy returned to flying and was determined to complete his combat tour in record time. He managed to fly 27 more times and became the only member of the crash crew to complete his 30 missions.

In one of the last major air strikes of the European war- to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, Hardy led the 8th Air Force planes to the target.

By February 1946 all seven surviving members of the crew had returned to civilian status. But their story was not over. That same year, Mrs. Frank R. Turner, Sr., bereaved mother of the dead bombardier, wrote Dagg to thank him and the dog for their efforts. She wrote that her son's death had come just three months before his only son was born at home in Columbia, SC. She asked that if the collie ever had puppies, she would like to buy one.

A few months later the Royal Air Force

flew Sheila's first puppy to South Carolina as a gift. Named Tibbie, the dog lived for 11 years as the adopted town pet in Columbia.

Dagg and Moscrop were awarded the British Empire Medal in July 1945 at ceremonies on the Cheviot- and Sheila became the first civilian dog ever awarded the Dickin Medal for animal heroism. Dagg's medal was his second for rescue efforts during the war.

It was Turner's son Roderick Turner Merritt, 23, in New York with the seven survivors and high-ranking military guests, who actually unveiled by remote control the memorial on the Cheviot.

By pressing the microswitch found by the boys, he set an impulse racing 3,500 miles to slip the blue and yellow drape from the memorial.

Among those participating in the trans-atlantic hookup from New York were retired Generals Carl A. Spaatz and Ira Eaker, Air Vice Marshal David Crowley-Milling, RAF Air attache in Washington, Honeywell vice president James S. Locke and members of the B17 crew.

High up in the Cheviots the dedication was pronounced by the Rev. Canon W. T. Hinkley, vicar at St. Michael's Church, Alnwick.

The choir boys who dug up the B17 and erected the monument then sang "Hills of the North Rejoice" and Reiver leader Bill Dunn read a tribute to U.S. airmen.

Last member of the B17 crew to speak from New York was plane commander Kyle, who turned over the microswitch to Turner's son for the remote unveiling.

On the Cheviot, Last Post was sounded on a bugle by a bare-headed Reiver as four F100 fighters from the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing at Wethersfield, England, streaked across the sky.

Then, as the planes faded from sight, the Reivers turned the monument-topped hill back to the wind and skylarks.

IN MEMORIUM

Kenneth Otto, Jr. TSGT/R
1603 So. 13th East
Salt lake City UT 84105

"KRIEGIE CORNER"

Any ex-POW having problems in dealing with the VA should contact:

Dr. Carl J. Fyler
510 Mills Bldg.
Topeka KS 66612

Dr. Fyler is one of the Nat'l Directors of the South Central Region and can help in directing you to proper authorities or to congressmen who are sympathetic.
POW National Convention will be held in Orlando, FL, July 17-22, Sheraton Twin Towers.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC.

2620 North Dundee St., Tampa, Fla. 33609

Enclosed find membership dues for 19____ which includes subscription to the XPW Bulletin.

() Husband and wife \$10 () Single member \$7

Nickname while interned, if any _____

Name (print) _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please State Your Status (where a POW) _____

Military Unit when taken prisoner _____

What camps were you in _____

303rd BOMB GROUP (H) COMMEMORATIVE T-SHIRTS

Dear Harry,

This letter arrives to you after our 2nd Reunion-August 25-28th at Colorado Springs. We were impressed with the spirit and comradeship shown at the Reunion.

My flying buddy and I wore imprinted shirts throughout the meeting and we were overwhelmed with requests as to how to get them.

I am not in the shirt business, but I inquired from my source and the shirts of the same fine quality (not imported) are still available.



Imprinted with the Bomb Group Designation on the back and your Squadron on the front in light blue with dark blue trim would be \$8.95 delivered to you. (If you prefer another color, mention your preference and we will see what we can do.) The adult shirts come in regular sizes 38-40 and 42-44. If you are a special size, make a note and we will try to get it for you. Children's sizes are also available, please state size. If interested, contact:

Maj. Murray W. Wade, Jr. USAF/R
P.O. Box 2064 (1200 Oakhurst Dr.)
West Lafayette, IN 47906

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES AND LAPEL PINS

Two plaques are still available for those members who would like to order one or both of them. The following information is required: during your assignment with the 303rd Bomb Group, Name, rank, squadron, and month and year of arrival and departure. Also available is a lapel pin of the 303rd Bomb Group "Hell's Angels" in full color. Send check or money order;

303rd Bomb Group Association, P.O. Box 8531, Pembroke Pines Branch, Hollywood, FL, 33024 Prices are as follows:

7 x 9 plaque \$15.75

3 x 5 plaque \$ 4.75

pin 1 1/4" in diameter \$ 1.50

Make checks payable to 303rd Bomb Group Association.

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Since so few of us flew at the same time or on the same missions, it seems to me that one way to get to know each other better would be to have a directory with a short biographical sketch of each member. They could be printed on a 5-1/2" x 8" sheet and kept in a loose-leaf binder so that as new members join, they could be included. As a by-product, those of us in business would enjoy dealing with fellow 303rd'ers in areas of mutual interest.

The hypothetical biography below will give you an idea of what information to include in the form on the preceding page.

JONES, JOHN T.

1657 W. 3rd St., Norwalk, Conn., 07456
Tel: (718) 653-4567

With 303rd from April '43 until Oct. '43
358th Bomb Squadron, Bombardier with Al
Smith's crew. Discharged October '45. DFC,
Air Medal with 5 clusters, Purple Heart,
Captain.

Most memorable event was a deep penetration
raid on the Brattwurst pickling plant at
Ludwigshafen on May 17, 1943. Heavy fight-
er opposition knocked out 7 planes from
the high group, but we dropped our bombs
directly on target, destroying the entire
Brattwurst output for the Luftwaffe,
shortening the war. Personally destroyed
18 fighters on the way in and 37 on the
way out.

After leaving the service, started a pic-
colo factory in Norwalk which immediately
captured a major share of the market, and
now have three piccolo factories and a
flute factory.

Major interests are cameras and gun col-
lecting.

Wife's name is Joan, have three children,
John, Jr., with me in the business; Rose-
mary, a housewife in Miami, FLA; and
Richard, still in collage.

Please send your completed forms to:

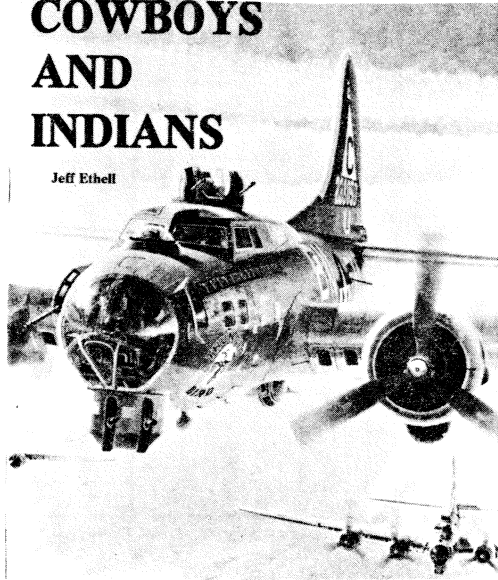
William J. La Perch
3807 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 534
Los Angeles CA 90010

THANK YOU

We would like to thank Joe Bob Johnston
and Roger L. Kuykendall, both of Lubbock,
TX, for that fine reproduction of the
Molesworth Airdrome which appeared in our
last newsletter. A special thanks to you
both for a fine effort and the memory.

COWBOYS AND INDIANS

Jeff Ethell



BOOK SHELF

Written by Jeff Ethell, *Cowboys and
Indians* relates the story and researching
behind the mural in the Smithsonian as
recreated by Kieth Ferris. Mr. Ethell
takes us through the actual sequence of
events on 15 Aug. 1944 with the crews who
took part in the air battle, to the final
brush strokes on the Thunderbird at the
Smithsonian. The booklet is available by
sending \$1.35 to:

Jeff Ethell
2403 Sunnybrook Rd.
Richmond, Va. 23229

A SPECIAL REQUEST

Since this is your newsletter, we would
like to request that you take a few mo-
ments to jot down any stories you might
have concerning your tour of duty with the
303rd. We all have a story or two that
would be of interest to others, so let us
begin to share them:

Harry F. Jenkins, editor
P.O. Box 33072
Granada Hills CA 91344

WASHINGTON/PUERTO RICO

EIGHTH AIR FORCE REUNION RESERVATION FORM

PLEASE PRINT

NAME(S) _____ WWII GROUP _____

(PLEASE PRINT NAMES AS THEY SHOULD APPEAR ON NAME TAGS)

ADDRESS _____

TEL. () _____ BAFHS MEMBERSHIP # _____ EXP. DATE _____

ADVANCE RESERVATION FORM (must be received in Hallandale, Florida before 1 October 1978)

A. ADVANCE REGISTRATION FEE (over 18 yrs) \$5 per person (non-refundable) \$ _____

NOTE: Reg. Fee \$7 per person after 30 September.

B. 'EARLY BIRD RALLY PACKAGE' (Thursday arrival)

Includes hotel room, 19 Oct., meals & events for Thurs. evening, Fri. morning & afternoon as listed in program, page 11. Prices incl. 8% city tax, 16% waiter tip, and sightseeing tax & tip

One Person (Single Room) \$ 60.00 \$ _____

Two Persons (Twin Room) (\$45 x 2) \$ 90.00 \$ _____

C. 'REUNION PROGRAM PACKAGE' (Begins Friday Evening)

Includes hotel room, 20 & 21 Oct., meals & events for Friday evening, Sat. & Sun. as listed in program page 11. Price incl. 8% city tax, 16% waiter tip, and sightseeing tax & tip.

One Person (Single Room) \$ 139.00 \$ _____

Two Persons (Twin Room) (\$109 x 2) \$ 218.00 \$ _____

TOTAL WASHINGTON ACCOUNT (Full payment due with Reservation form) \$ =====

PUERTO RICO FRIENDSHIP HOLIDAY (22-26 Oct. '78)

Includes round-trip, economy class airfare Baltimore/San Juan (Note: \$164 airfare per person incl. in package) *, Four nights/Five days. All services, events & hotel room as listed in program, page 12.

One Person (Single Room) \$ 364.00 \$ _____

Two Persons (Twin Room) (\$298 x 2) \$ 596.00 \$ _____

Three Persons (Twin Room) (\$287 x 3) \$ 861.00 \$ _____

U.S. Exit Tax \$3 + \$2.20 San Juan Fuel Surcharge:-- \$ 5.20 per person

* Airfare subject to change.

PUERTO RICO TOUR COST

DEPOSIT PER PERSON \$50 x _____ Persons \$ _____

AMOUNT DUE NOT LATER THAN 22 SEPTEMBER 1978 \$ _____

SEND PAYMENTS & COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM TO: EIGHTH AIR FORCE REUNION / P. O. BOX 1304 / HALLANDALE, FLORIDA 33009.

Return address:

Harry F. Jenkins, LTC,R
P.O. Box 33072
Granada Hills CA 91344