

## "HELL'S ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 1V

NOVEMBER 1978

### 303rd TENDS 8<sup>th</sup> A. F. FEAST

Our own 303rd Association contributed generously to the 8<sup>th</sup> AF Historical Society's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion this past Oct. 19-22 in Washington, D.C.

It was a 4 day affair held at the Sherien Park Hotel with all the top service and accommodations to keep 1200 of us entertained and informed the entire week-end long.

The 8<sup>th</sup> afhs Board of Directors did a splendid job of scheduling, as did Banquet/Reunion Department of the Hotel which accounted for a very successful gathering.

Among the approximately 1600 in attendance, there were several nationally and internationally famous figures. We were able to meet and speak with Gen. "Jimmy" Doolittle and Ira Eaker and hear first-hand about their careers with the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Two Congressional Medal of Honor winners, Gen. Leon Johnson of the famous "Polesti" raid, and S/Sgt. Maynard "Snuffy" Smith of the 306<sup>th</sup> were also on hand.

#### SCHEDULE:

**Thursday:** For the early arrivals, the day was set aside to register for the great event. This day was mainly for getting settled and relaxing after traveling from near and far.

**Friday:** Early risers had breakfast

at 0730. Then registration for those who didn't arrive Thursday. At 0900 hours, several buses were waiting to take us on a trip around the wonderful city of Washington.

**Saturday:** A great day for most of us, boarding a bus and going to the Aero-Space Museum of the Smithsonian. Of course, the Banquet was quite unforgettable itself.

**Sunday:** There was a breakfast and good-byes were said---until next time.

The 303rd Bomb Group was well represented at this great festivity, boasting the third highest attendance of the reunions.

Mr. Kieth Ferris, the well known aviation artist and illustrator, was present and a guest of the "Hell's Angels" 303rd Bomb Group. As you all know, Mr. Ferris painted the mural depicting a scene from World War 11, the "Thunderbird" in all her glory. The mural covers an entire wall of the World War 11 room at the Smithsonian. It is a must on the "to see list" when on a trip to Washington, D.C.

The overall picture was one of pure pleasure. Our many thanks to the Board of Directors for a job well done.

303rd's at Various Times & Various Events of the 8<sup>th</sup> AF Reunion:  
left to right, top to bottom:

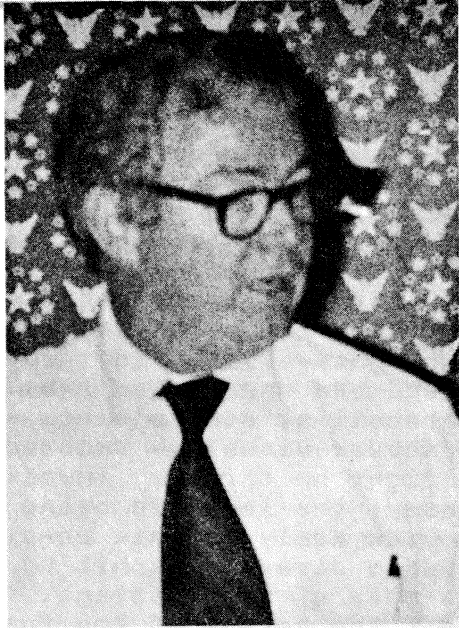
- #1 Jim Ferris, Kieth Ferris (artist), Van White
- #2 Harry Jenkins
- #3 Sgt. Thompson (crew chief-"Thunderbird")
- ROW 2:#4 Joe Vieira, Jim Ferris, Gen. Doolittle
- #5 Elmer & Jean Fessler
- #6 Joe Vieira
- ROW 3:#7 Dr. & Margarite Fyler
- #8 Fessler, Ferris, Thelma Vieira, Van White, Vieira  
Jean Fessler
- #9 Elmer Fessler, Bill Eisenhart, Jim Ferris,  
Dr. Fyler



## 303rd MINI REUNION

## Elmer Fessler Does it Again!

Thanks to Elmer, for his unrelenting effort to obtain Mr. Kieth Ferris, well known aviation artist, to be a guest of the 303rd Bomb Group Heavy at Washington, DC.



KIETH FERRIS

Mr. Ferris, guest speaker, had an informal question and answer session on how the mural was conceived. The aircraft to be featured was selected and then the research began.

A very talented author, Jeff Ethel, assisted the artist in researching the plane "Thunderbird".

The Messerschmitt Bf 109 and the Focke Wulf FW 190 and their respective pilots that appear in the mural, were also researched from the German archives.

All of the information is accurate in every detail. Mr. Ferris gave a slide presentation along with his talk as to how he plans and then executes his ideas on canvas.

The program was very interesting and many members of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force attended.

Mr. Ferris thought it might be possible for him to attend and give his presentation at the 303rd Bomb Group Heavy at Dayton, Ohio August 22, 23, 24, and 25, 1979.



JEFF ETHELL

Thanks Elmer, for your wonderful efforts. I know that those of us that had the opportunity to see and hear Mr. Ferris enjoyed the presentation

HFJ  
editor

## HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Wishing you every happiness:  
 Charles J. McClain, president  
 William E. Eisenhart, vice-pres.  
 Carl A. Hokans, secretary  
 Joseph Vieira, treasurer  
 Van R. White, recruiting chairman  
 Harry F. Jenkins, publicity chairman  
 James H. Ferris, co-chairman  
 Richard E. Webster, reunion chairman  
 and to all... Happy Holidays!

## PERSONAL DIARIES

The following are passages from the diaries of two men from the 303rd written during World War II. The response to our request for stories was wonderful. We will be printing the stories as space allows.

Jim O'Leary - Nov. 26, 1944 Deputy Lead  
427<sup>th</sup> High Squadron

## Luftwaffe Up, Loses 130 Planes

For the first time in weeks the not-so-down-and-out Luftwaffe showed itself in great strength yesterday, and according to preliminary reports Eighth Air Force fighters set a new record for a one-day bag by shooting down 130 enemy craft. Another 25 Nazi planes were destroyed on the ground.

The last time the Luftwaffe came up en masse was Sept. 11, when Eighth fighters clipped all their previous single-day records by shooting down 116 enemy planes.

As many as 400 Jerries were encountered yesterday by more than 900 Thunderbolts and Mustangs, which escorted over 1,100 Fortresses and Liberators in their attack on synthetic-oil plants in the Ruhr and at Merseburg in central Germany, as well as rail facilities at Bielefeld and Rheine, and other targets in western Germany.

### Preddy's Men Get 24

The Mustang squadron led by Maj. George E. Preddy, of Greensboro, N.C., who is the top active Eighth fighter pilot in the ETO, shot down 24 Nazi craft to cop the day's squadron honors.

The 55th Fighter Group, a P51 outfit, led by Maj. Eugene E. Ryan, of Darien, Conn., tangled with over 75 single-engine Jerries which were "ganging up" on one bomber force over Merseburg, and claimed bagging 19 for the loss of one Mustang.

The heavies' gunners reported getting their share of additional "kills," shooting down 53.

Sgt. William E. Grose, of Hico, W. Va., ball-turret gunner on the Fort Little Chum, said: "I saw about eight FW190s sweep in toward the rear of our formation. I saw two of the Jerries go down."

2/Lt. Thomas Radonski, of Milwaukee, Wis., bombardier on the Fort That's All, Jack, reported: "As we were leaving the target area, three jet-propelled fighters broke out of a light haze in front of us. One, a light-green plane with black crosses, came in at us. At about 800 yards I opened fire. He was right in the middle of his turn, and seemed to be hanging in mid-air. That's where I got him."

11/26/44

Our primary today was the railroad marshalling yard at Bielfeld, Germany, which, when we arrived over target, was obscured by clouds. Our squadron leader, Capt. Dick Healy, elected to bomb our secondary target, the railroad marshalling yard at Osnabruck, Germany. As we turned on our IP, the Luftwaffe met us on the way in. P-51 escort did a magnificent job of keeping the bandits away from our formation. Jameison, a 358<sup>th</sup> boy who was filling in the bucket in the 427<sup>th</sup> low-low element, was straggling- was picked off by ME-210 and ME-109. Saw many dogfights-- many fighters going down, both friend and enemy. Saw P-51 explode in orange fireball at 8:00 o'clock from us. Bombed Osnabruck visually- smacked the hell out of it- right on target. Immediately after bombs away, the leadship being flown by lead pilot Dick Healy and his co-pilot W.W. Wallace, received a direct flak hit on the underside of the nose of the fuselage. The explosion blew off the bottom of the fuselage from the chin turret back to the bulkhead directly behind the pilots. Dutch Spooner, the GH navigator, Slim Stewart, lead navigator, and Sandy Sandhagen, the lead bombardier, all fell out without their chutes. They tumbled out like tattered rag dolls- Sandhagen, to my horror, was blown forward through the Plexiglas nose and came back through the No. 3 fan, then rolled over the top of the wing- they must have all been dead. The hit had also knocked out Healy's No. 3 engine and the right main gear which swung down out of the No. 3 nacelle. The leadship then went into a steep climbing right turn, banking directly into us since we were flying Deputy on the lead's right wing. Lou (co-pilot Lou Reed) who was flying the bombrun jammed the wheel forward just in time to avoid colliding with the leadship which went over the top of our airplane. The leadship was apparently being flown when last sighted approximately 5 to 6 thousand feet below and an estimated 10 miles behind us- no chutes seen by my crew. Red Devaney, our radio operator, was hit in the

left leg by a flak fragment while in a kneeling position throwing out chaff. The piece of shell broke the small bone in his leg and went all the way through, creating large exit wound. Bob Lyda (bombardier) and Frank DeCicco (waist gunner) did a very good job of first aid on Red. I then took over the squadron lead and returned to Molesworth.

The sequel to this mission was a happy one except for those poor guys up front. The next day, Nov. 27, '44, we heard that Dick Healy and his prematurely grey-headed co-pilot, W.W. Wallace, had managed to land their shot-up ship on an advanced 9<sup>th</sup> AF P-47 base in Belgium. Two or three days later Dick and his surviving crew returned to Molesworth. Dick told me that when they were hit, the cockpit was filled with vapor and smoke from the shell burst- he never saw the near collision with my plane. Since the temperature was -60 degrees F. and they had lost their oxygen, Healy and Wallace had to force the nose down rapidly and lose several thousand feet of altitude before they passed out and/or froze to death. During the rapid descent, the side windows and inside of the windshield frosted over. Luckily, Healy's Nos. 1, 2, and 4 engines ran at full power. After flying at a very low altitude for a short while and looking out their side windows for reference, the windshield cleared up and they saw an airstrip directly ahead of them. Dick proceeded to make a straight-in wheel(s) up approach. The battered, smoking ship with a dangling right main gear bore down on the fighter strip and scared the bejusus out of the fighter ground personnel. At first they tried to wave off Healy, but when it was apparent that he was coming on, there was a frenzied exodus of "peashooter" folks. Dick said that if he hadn't

been so damned cold, he'd have enjoyed the sight.

By the way, the ship we were flying that day was "The Red Ass". As I recall there was a donkey painted red with both heels in the air on the nose of the plane and the tail of the fuselage was painted red also. The Red Ass' ground crew hated that airplane with an unswerving passion...they hated to see her come home. Those poor guys were always working on that flying machine. You'd see the lights on full blaze near their hardstand every night...they were the most embittered ground crew that I can ever remember having anything to do with. We were leery about flying her even to slow-time an engine (which was frequent) because we feared that the mechanics were tempted to sabotage it. It seems that someone told me later that the old rascal survived the war because he saw the plane sitting next to "Knock-Out Dropper" in the graveyard at Altus, Oklahoma in 1945.

Maj McSween- copied directly from his diary...

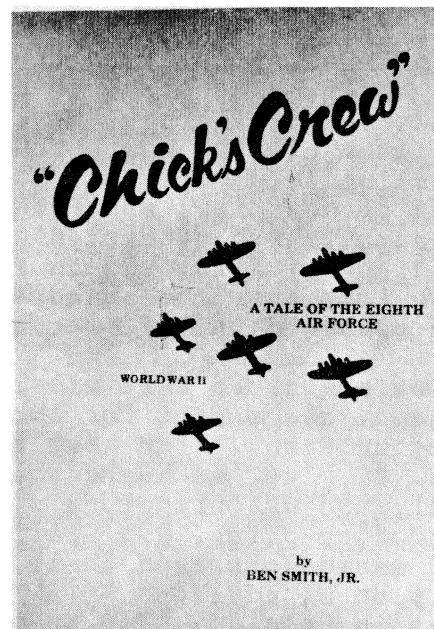
#23 Ludwigshaven Jan. 7  
(chemical works) PFF

Pos.-Lead, lead sqdn, lead group  
My second time to lead a group and first time to lead a wing. Nathstein (nav.) flew with me (it's a two man job and then some). TO and assembly O.K.; left base 2 mins. late, but made it up later. Made all pts. over Eng. good. I messed up climb by reading Av. Alt. on Field Order- so had 7,000' to climb in 23 mins. The maj. (Maj. Kirk Mitchell- 41st wing) was plenty sore. Had to climb at 140 IAS over N. Sea. Made DR pt. at Overflakes Is.- computed wind-checked close to meters- used GS over N. Sea to compute next turning pt. also had leveled out at 25,000' and IAS was 150. Overshot IP by 3 min. course lay between Koln and Aachen over Duren. Overshooting

put me 10 mins. left of course. Solid undercast up to Koln- I gave Nathstein a DR pos. to pick us up in map. I could see Aachen thought I was on course. Maj. said "What is this big town under us?" I looked over left- Koln- He turned formation hard right but we got flacked-nobody hurt, thank goodness- all my fault. PFF took over 20 mins. before target -made bomb run and dropped (John was PFF nav) We DR'd briefed course out. Other wings flew to right of course- maj. wanted to know why- I said we were O.K.- maj. moved over to them for protection purposes. Later they moved over to us and followed out (one wing ahead of us) Made course good on way out- no fighters sighted- flak over target nil- fighter support good- nobody lost- Wally got oxygen system shot out. Flew in 0865-G had only 3 good engines from enemy coast in. The major drives a hard bargain- I was made sqdn. nav. yesterday- orders dated Jan. 1...



7 Jan 44 Lead Crew Ludwigshaven  
Rear Row L to R:  
Lt. Burns, tail gun.; Lt. Campbell, CP; Maj. Mitchell, P (CO); Lt. Sweet, B; Lt. Nathstein, co N; Lt. Mc Sween, N;  
Front Row L to R:  
Sgt's Moy, Brooks, Backiel, Wisniewski, and Zeller.



#### BOOK SHELF

Chick's Crew, by Ben Smith, Jr., 1978, 8½x11, paperback, 66 pages, \$5.00 postpaid. Order from the author: 107 Albany Ave., Waycross, GA 31501

In this little booklet, Ben Smith, 303rd BG gunner, shares his combat experiences with his readers. He illustrates the booklet with drawings he made in WWII. Though the scope goes little beyond the horizon of one crew, Houn' Dawg Smith does transmit feelings shared by many 8<sup>th</sup> AFers.

#### COMMEMORATIVE PLQS AND LAPEL PINS

Still available, we require your name, rank, squadron, and month and year of arrival and departure while with the 303rd. for the plaques. A lapel pin of the 303rd's "Hell's Angels" is also available. Make checks or money orders payable to: 303rd. Bomb Group Assoc., and send to - P.O. Box 8531, Pembroke Pines Branch, Hollywood, FL 33024  
Prices: 7x9 plq., \$15.75; 3x5 plq., \$4.75; pin 1½ dia., \$1.50.

# 358<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



WITH 300 MISSIONS under their belts, members of the 358th Squadron can look back on a great many occasions and things that stand out in the making of those 300 missions.

The Squadron's first claim to fame was the possession of the famous old Fortress "Hell's Angels," from which the group took its name. "Hell's Angels" and the "Sky Wolf" and "Jersey Bounce" and the men who flew them set examples of heroism, dependability and stamina that were an inspiration to the group and the Eighth Air Force in the early days in the E.T.O. They were a **matter of pride** to the men on the ground as well as the **combat men**, and it was with the pride of possession that the 358th boys would say "Yep. That's *our* plane," when the names came up in NAAFI or Red Cross bull sessions.

There have been many outstanding "characters" in the squadron. All of the old-timers remember Lt. Robert S. O'Connor who always flew into battle wearing the English bobby's helmet presented to him by the local constable. It was his good luck piece, but his luck finally wore out and he went down over the continent. Captain Jack Watson made the headlines when he flew the "Meat Hound" back from Germany alone in the plane after the crew had bailed out. When he landed in Southern England only two engines were still turning

over and one of them was blazing so fiercely that it took crash crews two hours to extinguish the flames.

Men of the 358th have had their share of honors in the war. The nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, went to T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler, radio operator, who fought from his radio gun position when wounded and nearly blinded and then begged to be thrown overboard to save weight on the battered bomber. The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to Lt. Charles W. Spencer, bombardier, after he nearly lost his life in the blown-open nose of a Fort from frost-bite and wounds. The Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals won in the early days by 358th flyers are too numerous to count.

Ground crewmen, too, have distinguished themselves. Legions of Merit have been awarded to M/Sgt. Carino Colancecco, M/Sgt. Fabian S. Folmer, M/Sgt. Everett W. Emery and M/Sgt. William C. Woodman for their outstanding jobs of getting Fortresses in the air when they were needed so badly. Several other men have won the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service after putting in long hours in all kinds of weather to make certain that their airplanes could fly when the need arose.

The 358th need not take a back seat to any other outfit for flying ability and leadership. Their crews have always been ready to fly any place, any time and in any position. Their Forts have led the way to Berlin, Merseburg, Aschersleben and the other "toughies," and have been in the roughest fighting to claim their share of enemy fighters.

Morale has never sagged. Even after the Oscherleben mission when the 358th took the brunt of the losses, the remaining crews were ready to go again the next day. Sixty empty beds might have wrecked the morale of a lesser outfit. It just made the crews of the 358th a little madder. As a matter of fact, more than a score of ground men have left the comparative safety of line jobs to volunteer for service as gunners.

The 358th has done all right for itself in the matter of squadron commanders. First was Major (now Colonel) Clemens K. Wurzbach, a tall, easy-going Texan. Succeeding him was Major Kirk R. Mitchell from Oklahoma City, who led the 358th on some of its roughest bombing missions. Present commander is Major George T. Mackin of Portland, Oregon, who has been with the group since its arrival in England.

Commanding Officer,  
MAJOR GEORGE T. MACKIN  
Portland, Oregon

Major Mackin is one of the old-timers in the 303rd, joining the group at Boise, Idaho. On the first of April, 1944, Major Kirk R. Mitchell, the 358th's C.O., finished his operational tour and returned to the United States. Captain Mackin was appointed squadron commander and received his gold leaves shortly thereafter. Major Mackin has consistently instilled the



spirit of complete co-operation and a high spirit of *esprit de corps* in the squadron which has resulted in an excellent combat record.

Major Mackin graduated from the University of Oregon in 1941, with an R.O.T.C. commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry. Resigning his commission, he transferred to the Air Corps, graduating as a pilot in February, 1942. He arrived in the E.T.O. a 2nd Lt., but rose rapidly to 1st Lt. and Captain because of his ability to handle operations procedure and men.

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

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  
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Please check your status:       Ex-POW, Southeast Asia     

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Next of Kin       Ex-Civilian Internee     

Is this a renewal?       Ex-POW, Europe     

Military Unit when taken prisoner? \_\_\_\_\_

What Camps were you in? \_\_\_\_\_

# WHERE ARE THEY?

KREIGIE KORNER

44,000 Officers and Airmen were lost over enemy territory. 8th Air Force- of the crews that were lost over Germany, 40% were captured by the Germans. These men should join the national organization "American Ex-Prisoners Of War, Inc.", to find out about their 1970 Public Law 91-376... as it pertains to them. Wives and widows can be members, can hold offices, and have voting power.

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 National Directors of the South Central Region and can help in directing you to the proper authorities or to congressmen who are sympathetic. Remember, we can't help you or your families unless you help yourself. Join us today.