

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

*Might - In - Flight*

## "HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

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VOLUME VII

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JANUARY 1983

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# Happy New Year

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

During 1982, I was happy to see the installation of two plaques honoring our group; one at Wright-Patterson AFB and the other at the Air Force Academy. On behalf of the Association, I want to thank General Lyle, Father Skoner and Colonel John Barker (deceased), all of whom worked hard to make this possible. My thanks also to Joe Vieira who always is in there pitching and to Bud Klint who puts out a great newsletter. (Editor's note: He thinks he's going to con me into signing on for another hitch!)

It was a pleasure to meet and greet so many of our members at the 8th AF reunion in Cincinnati. I strongly urge you to attend our 303rd reunion in Washington, D.C. in September, 1983. Many people are working hard to make it a good one. In addition to tours already planned, Gene Girman has arranged for any interested members to tour Silver Hill, the aircraft restoration facility for the Smithsonian Institute. This unit is not open to the general public. I am planning to have Mr. Keith Ferris, the artist who recently painted the B-17 mural at the Smithsonian, give a presentation at our Sunday brunch.

I welcome your comments regarding the

possibility of a 303rd trip to Molesworth. Bill Eisenhart and Chris Christoff have written that the base no longer exists, but obviously there are many memories for all of us in the area. Plans are being made to dedicate a 303rd plaque on the City Hall of Molesworth. I have received two offers of assistance from England if we make the trip. Sam Minowitz, a retired Major, lives in England and has volunteered to help as has Ray Cossey. Here is part of Ray's letter:

"As, I believe, your only English honorary member, I hope you will feel able to accept the offer I made to Joe to act as your liaison on this side if the trip becomes a reality. I am more than willing to involve myself in arranging facilities and visits, utilizing the expertise and experience of a group you must have heard of called 'Friends of the Eighth'. They have been concerned with many similar group visits and can help in many ways. I hope you will feel able to place my offer of services before your Board of Directors. Please tell them I would feel honoured to volunteer my services as it would, in a small way, permit me to return to the 303rd some of the wonderful hospitality they extended to me at both the Dayton and San Diego reunions. They will never know how proud and privileged I felt, at San Diego, to be made Honorary Member No. 24 of your association."

Other places of interest indicated in your responses are: Blenheim Castle, Stratford on Avon, Cambridge Cemetery, Windsor Castle, North Hampton, Wales, Scotland, East Anglia, Edinborough, Ireland, Penzance, London, Bedford and even the Beach of Normandy. All will be considered in making plans. It may be best to plan on holding our 303rd reunion in Molesworth and environs and then allowing time for all to do "their own thing".

While attending the mini-reunion in Cincinnati, Alvin Morton approached me about designing a banner for the 303rd. He is now working on it. I'm sure it will be a great addition to our future meetings.

My wife, Barb, and I extend to each of you and your families our best wishes for a healthy, happy and prosperous 1983. We hope to see you in D.C.!

*Dick Waggoner*  
Dick Waggoner

#### MORE NEWS OF MOLESWORTH

"I joined the 303rd Bomb Group Association about a year ago.

I left Molesworth on the last 6x6 load of GIs going to Alconbury. From there we went to Casablanca where the Bomb Group was deactivated. We then became members of the Air Transport Command.

Since then, I have been back to visit our base, Molesworth and the adjoining villages of Old Weston and Brington, five times. I was married in the chapel in Old Weston just after our part in the war was over. There have been many changes through the years. Must be habit, but on each visit, I have an uncontrollable urge to cover the old base on a borrowed bicycle!

The RAF reclaimed the base from us in May, 1945. Later they turned it over to the Canadians. The USAF got it back at one point and operated a school for servicemen's children. This was set up at site 7 mess hall

and adjoining buildings. This part was newly constructed. Most of the buildings at site 1 and site 3 are gone, along with those across from Headquarters. The runways had been widened and lengthened soon after we left and a new hanger was built. The briefing room and adjoining buildings were left intact.

When I was back for the second time, in 1964, I was made an honorary member of the base and enjoyed all the activities. The last time I was there, about five years ago, there was only a handful of personnel, most of whom lived in nearby villages. The runways were cracked with flowers and grass growing in them. Much of the land was to be reclaimed by the farmers. At present, it is primarily used for pasture land. Alconbury is a NATO base. Many of the other WW II bases have been bulldozed.

As for the three villages bordering our base, Molesworth has an auto wrecking yard; Brington is just the same as it was and Old Weston still boasts the famous Dirty Duck pub which was run by a man named Thatcher during our tour of duty. There is a new picture of a black swan out front and the place has a new paint job. A lot of remodeling has been done on the inside. You wouldn't recognize it. If you order a glass of Bitters now, they give you a funny look. They have all sorts of drinks I never heard of. Sure makes you realize we are from a bygone era.

We have had about eight people from Old Weston visit our ranch here in northern California in the last 15 years. We plan to visit Molesworth again in the summer of '84."

Lloyd Hanks  
Fort Bidwell, CA 96112

#### DUES NOTE

If your membership number is 406 or lower, check the expiration date on your 303rd card. If you haven't renewed, You're DELINQUENT! Nos. 407-514 joined in '78. Your dues are due in '83. PAY NOW - \$10 for 5 years!

More memories from NATHAN SMITH:"SULLY"

When the ground echelon of the 303rd arrived at Molesworth in 1942, we were provided with an RAF officer and one "other rank" in each Headquarters section. They were to assist us in adapting to the British system. I was a Master Sergeant and the NCOIC of Group Intelligence. We were assigned a "Leftenant" and a Corporal whose name was Sidney (Sully) West.

Sully was a godsend. He knew the answer to each of the dozens of minor problems that came up every day during that first month or so. If it hadn't been for him, I'm afraid we might have said, "To Hell with it" and told somebody to take their War and shove it!

The couple dozen boxes of equipment and supplies I had so laboriously packed in Alamogordo and at Biggs Field, Texas, had not arrived. This meant we had to make do with what had been left for us by the RAF and that was damned little!

We had one chair. It was quickly commandeered by an ex-lawyer Captain who refused to let anyone use "his chair". I learned to hate all lawyers after putting up with this one for a year. (If the good Captain is a member of our Association, I've gotten over it after 40 years.)

We had a battle-worn typewriter with pounds, shillings and pence symbols. It sounded like it was a year overdue for a valve, ring and bearing job. I hated it nearly as much as I did the Captain!

All envelopes that arrived with our official mail had from ten to twenty address labels, pasted one over the other. We re-used them to send our replies. Sully would open and sort our mail. He would carefully remove any staples, straighten them out and add them to his collection of reclaimed staples and straight pins which he kept in a small glass jar. When we needed to attach two

pieces of paper together, Sully dug out a used staple, stuck it through the sheets and hand-bent the points over to cinch it.

Sully wouldn't permit us to throw anything away. He gathered all scraps of paper and stuffed them into a canvas sack for future use. When I finally realized that this was going on at all RAF and other bases in England, I was really jolted and ready to take my hat off to the British. I guess that's when I began to learn what the "War effort" meant to them.

All letters arrived on short pieces of paper. In the first month, I never saw a complete sheet of paper arrive in any official mail. All sheets were cut off just below the last typed line. Some were only one inch from top to bottom.

All changes and amendments to the thousands of folders of Target Material arrived on half sheets of paper. These had to be cut in strips and pasted onto the sheets being changed. The folders were stored in rickety wooden file cabinets that looked like surplus WW I equipment. Sully had about a dozen jars of paste with brushes attached to the lids. I'm sure I used more paste that first month at Molesworth than I did when I attended kindergarten.

About two or three weeks after we arrived, I worked all day and then, after evening chow, returned to the paper war and that damned typewriter. There were several reports that some nut at Wing Headquarters wanted like yesterday! I finished them just as the Officer in Charge arrived for duty the next morning. He reviewed the reports and then we mutually agreed that I should go get some sack time.

I didn't get very far. As I left the building, headed for the mud road to Site 6, Corporal West and about a dozen RAF Sergeants stopped me. They told me they had been challenged to a Cricket Match by the RAF chaps at another base and needed my help. It seemed our Motor Pool would not let

them have a Lorry to get them to the cricket field at Huntington to defend the honor of Molesworth unless a Yank NCO signed for it and went with them.

They finally convinced me that I was their only hope. They said they would drive and I only needed go for the ride. What a ride! The RAF Sergeant who drove scared Hell out of me. (I never did get used to driving on the wrong side of the road!) Sully West kept preaching to me: "Remember, to be right, keep left".

We arrived about the same time as the "home team". On one side of the cricket field there was a 6 by 8 foot hut under a line of big chestnut trees. There was a window-size opening on the side facing the field. Inside was a chair and a slanted table near the opening. This was the score-keeper's hut and they informed me that I was elected!

They placed a pad with lots of horizontal and vertical lines on the table. They attempted to explain the fine points of cricket to me: wickets, bails, runs, bowling crease and all that good stuff. Then they started the game, confident that I would keep score accurately. I promptly fell asleep and slept through the whole affair.

When both teams came and woke me up, the game was over and it was time for our guys to go back to base. Then the argument started and soon they were scuffling. The other team called me a "Bloody Dumb Yank". The Molesworth RAF defended me and we wound up fighting our way back to our lorry. Sully came out of it with a black eye! We never did settle who had won the match and I was never again asked to keep score for a cricket game!

Incidentally, the first thing I did when our boxes of supplies arrived was to locate the box I'd labeled: "Paper Clips, Acco Fasteners, Staplers, etc." I opened it, dug out a stapler and a box of staples. I handed them to Sully. Then I grabbed his jar of salvaged staples and pins, took it outside and threw it in the "dust bin"!

## ATTENTION, 360TH MEMBERS

We have a request from a Mr. Chris Richards of Wyton, England. He is involved with the Andrews Field Rebel Air Museum in Essex. They have a portion of a painting, on wood, found, "holding up the end of a chicken shed" on the site of our old base. Chris wants any information anyone can furnish about the sign. Who painted? Where used? Original colors? He asks: "If anyone has a photo of the complete painting, can we borrow it or have a copy. If not a photo, can anyone do a drawing of it?"

Chris tells of plans to start another air museum at Alconbury where he is employed. He will be curator and will move the 360th sign there. He also would like copies of any Molesworth photos for the new museum. He writes: "Alconbury now has a lot to do with Molesworth. In my work I go there a lot. There is not much of the base now. The hangers are there still, a few old buildings, that's about all. The runways and tower went a few months ago. Well I do hope you will be able to help with this. Please wish all the 303 BG members, all the very best for the future."

Yours faithfully,  
Chris Richards

9 Blenheim Caravan Park, Sawtry Way,  
Wyton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, Eng.

Note: If you write to Chris, please send a copy to Joe Vieira. Below is a picture of the sign, topping a display at the museum in Essex.



# Fyler finally to get flying medal

The U. S. Air Force will present the Distinguished Flying Cross to retired Maj. Carl J. Fyler on Saturday — 39 years late.

Fyler, a Topeka dentist, was pilot of a four-engine Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortress" during World War II. He was assigned to the 360th Sqdn., 93rd Heavy Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, flying from England against targets in Germany and occupied Europe.

During the summer and fall of 1943, Fyler flew combat missions against such strongly defended targets as Schweinfurt, Hamburg and the Ruhr Valley in Germany and a Norwegian heavy water plant.

He was shot down Nov. 29, 1943, in the 25th and last mission of his combat tour. He spent 18 months as a prisoner of war.

Fyler recalled that a flak (anti-aircraft cannon) burst tore off the right horizontal stabilizer and part of the right wing as he was coming off a bomb run in the Bremen area.

"I lasted 20 minutes after the tail came off. Then I lost three engines, and the fighters finished me off," he said.

He was in one of the first railway cars taking prisoners to a new camp north of Berlin. The camp held 9,700

allied airmen "and one doctor" by the time advancing Russian troops liberated them May 14, 1945.

The navigator on Fyler's crew remained on active duty after the war and received his DFC 12 years later.

"I saw him about four years ago," said Fyler, and in the course of the conversation Fyler was asked if he had received his medal. After Fyler said he hadn't, the ex-navigator began a flurry of correspondence that soon involved two general officers and the military historical records center at St. Louis. As a result, Fyler will receive his medal in a 3 p.m. ceremony Saturday in the pilot's briefing room of the 190th Air Refueling Group at Forbes Field.

The presentation will be made by retired Maj. Gen. Lew Lyle, USAF, Fyler's wartime commanding officer and one of the first pilots to complete 25 combat missions with the 8th Air Force.

Fyler, laughing, reported there was another result of the records search. Since 1945, he believed he'd been discharged as a captain — another error.

"They promoted me, believe it or not, to the rank of major in 1945, which I didn't know about 'til now!" he said.



—Staff/Charlie Riedel

Retired Maj. Carl J. Fyler took delight at receiving his Distinguished Flying Cross 39 years late in a U.S. Air Force ceremony Saturday at Forbes Field. Fyler, right, a Topeka dentist, was presented the honor by retired Maj. Gen. Lewis Lyle, left, who was Fyler's wartime commanding officer.

Reprinted from the TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL of Friday, January 7, 1983

What the above article doesn't say is that Dr. Carl Fyler has worked hard for four years to get his service records straightened out, corrected and updated. After 2½ years, he almost threw in the towel. It was then he contacted Gen. Lyle. Lew has worked on the problem for the past 18 months. From the look on Carl's face in the photo, all the effort was worthwhile! Dr. Fyler says he also appreciates the help he received from his navigator, Col. Geo. Molnar, operations officer, Col. G. Shumake, Gen. John Huston and S/Sgt. Bill Addison.

## TAPS

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of these 303rders who have answered their final roll call:

JOSEPH T. McLANE, 5004 Aurura Drive, Kinsington, MD 20795 360th Sqdn.  
(Chairman of the Board of Directors, 303rd BGA)

HENRY McMANUS, 6861 Placita Caribe, Tucson, AZ 85710 359th Sqdn.

MALCOLM M. FOUTS, 303 Frazer St., Apt. F, Findlay, OH 45840 358th Sqdn.

LEONARD E. RATLIFF, P.O. Box 10, Fort Cobb, OK 73038 427th Sqdn.

ENGLISH "SHORT SNORTER"???

The following request appeared in the Winter, 1982 issue of AIR MAIL, the journal of the Royal Air Forces Association:

"A 1 pound note on which is handwritten: 'October 1943 303 Bomb Group' also bears signatures with surnames Goddard, McElwain, Webster, Ficouich, Hendry (or Mendry?), Lope(?), McCambell, Johnston, Lemmon, Maker and, on reverse, Hartigan(?), 2nd Lt. ETO. Any information to Jack H. L. Hamblin DFC, 16 Sunnydown Road, Oliver's Battery, Winchester SO22 4LD."

This was sent to Joe Vieira by Eric Smith an RAF ex with the hope that some member of our Association could identify this note and some of the names in question. Eric suggests that "2nd Lt. ETO" is a misreading of 2nd Lt. ETO. Eric's address is: 17 Granton Avenue, Upminster, Essex RM14 2RU, England.

If you think you may be able to furnish any information about this note, the men whose names appear on it or its origin, write to either or both Mr. Hamblin and Mr. Smith. If you do, please send a copy to Joe Vieira for Association files.

BOMBER COMMAND MUSEUM APPEAL

"We are building the Bomber Command Museum to stand alongside the Royal Air Force and Battle of Britain Museums here at Hendon. This new Museum will trace the history of the Bomber from its inception during World War I up to the present day. More importantly, it will stand as a permanent memorial to the 57,000 members of Bomber Command and 65,000 members of the United States 8th and 9th Air Forces who lost their lives during the strategic bombing offensive of World War II. The major part of the Museum will be devoted to the history of the bombing campaign of the last war and therefore the enormous American contribution will be fully remembered."

This is part of a letter from Flight Lieutenant A. St. J. Stevens, Royal

Air Force Museum, Aerodrome Road, Hendon, London NW9 5LL, England. He says an Appeal has been launched to raise five million dollars for the project. Lt. Stevens is responsible for coordinating fund raising efforts in the U. S. He explains: "We are looking to surviving members of that great campaign to help us in any way possible and I hope, therefore, that I can rely on you to publicize our efforts to the members of your association. We feel that it is to individuals that we must look to raise a large proportion of the finance and so publicity of the Appeal is vital."

GREEN FLAK OVER PLOESTI

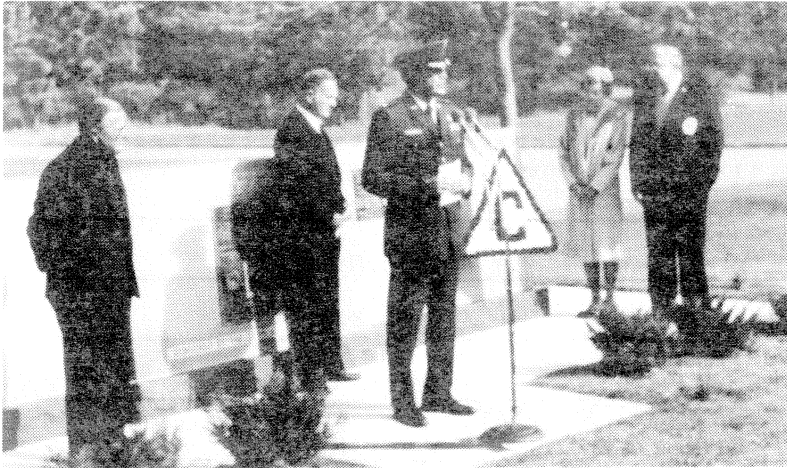
That's the title of a new book to be released this spring. (Presidio Press, Navato, CA.) The book, written by Leroy W. Newby, is a first-hand account of some of the most vicious air battles of World War II as seen through the eyes of a 23 year old B-24 Bombar-dier. Much of the action centers around Ploesti, Munich and Bucharest, and the book tells of the 8th Air Force involvement in those "flak holes".

According to reviewers, Newby does a good job of presenting the close view while weaving in the long view - the overview of POINTBLANK - the joint 8th and 15th Air Forces campaign in the summer of 1944. If you want more information, contact the author at: 810 North Terrace Drive, Webster City, IA 50595.

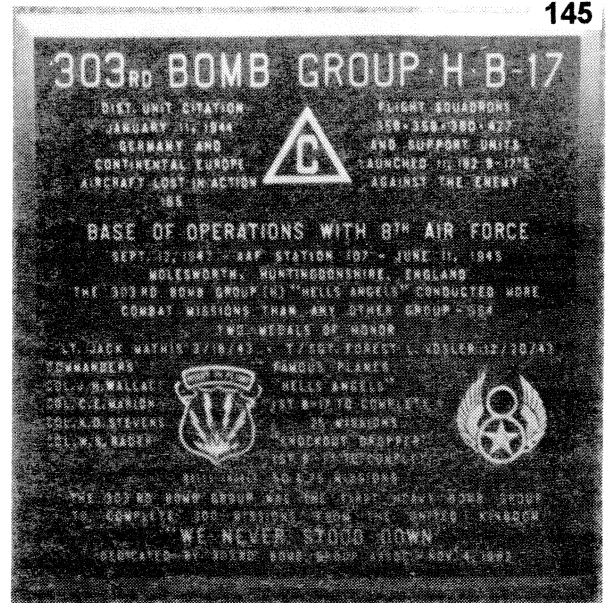
WANTED! 358/359 SQUADRON INSIGNIA

In our last issue, we asked for a copy of the official Squadron insignia for each of our four Squadrons to be sent to Joe Vieira. He has received them for the 360th and 427th. How about you members of the 358th and 359th? Please send one of your Squadron patches to Joe. If you don't have a spare, send him a photo-copy or a drawing. If you send a copy, it is important that the colors be indicated clearly and accurately. Joe's address is on the back page of this Newsletter.

"Be true to your word, your work, and your friend."  
Thoreau



Dedication at USAF Academy - Nov. 4, 1982. Rev. Skoner, Gen. Lyle, the AF Academy Chief of Staff, Thelma and Joe Vieira in front of Memorial Wall. 303rd plaque is behind right elbow of Academy Officer.



Text of 303rd Memorial Plaque.

### DO YOU REMEMBER?

Following is an article by Andrew A. Rooney which appeared in STARS AND STRIPES, January 20, 1944.

#### Paradise Regained

Fort Hell's Angels Flies Home,  
Six Happy Mechanics Go, Too

Second American Bomber Leaves ETO for U.S. After Completing 48 Missions; She and Crew Will Star at Rallies to Sell War Bonds

A FORTRESS BASE, Jan 20 - Twelve men and Hell's Angels, one of the Eighth Air Force's most famous Fortresses, took off for home today under an archway of flares fired by the boys they left behind.

The second B-17 to return to the States from this theater to take part in War Bond drives and workers' rallies, Hell's Angels is the first to take back her ground crew. Of the dozen men who left here today, six were mechanics who established an almost incredible record for this theater by servicing the bomber through 40 consecutive missions without a turnback due to mechanical difficulty - in air force lingo an abortion. Angels has completed 48 missions in all, and the proudest boast of men at this field is that no man who flew in

the ship ever won a Purple Heart. The homeward-bound bomber departed with hundreds of names scrawled in white enamel all over its fuselage following a brief farewell ceremony attended by Brig. Gens. Robert Travis of Savannah, Ga., and Robert B. Williams of Albany, Tex., and Lt. Col. Ben Lyon. Col. Lyon, present in his capacity as a radio public-relations officer, spoke to the boys, after someone recalled that years ago he starred in the movie "Hell's Angels." Other Fortresses which flew side by side with Hell's Angels droned overhead in giving her a rousing sendoff. Although the ship has flown her last mission in this theater, she left something behind for the ETO to remember her by. It was announced that the group from which she operated henceforth would be known as the Hell's Angels group.

### WRITE TO THE PRES.

If you didn't complete the questionnaire in the last issue, Dick Waggoner still would like to hear from you. Let him know if you're interested in a reunion at Molesworth, when you would prefer to go and what you would like to do while in England. Dick's address is:

10728 Stargate Ln.  
Cincinnati, OH 45240

303rd BOMB GROUP(H)ASSOCIATION, INC.  
MIGHT-IN-FLIGHT

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION  
\*\*\*\*\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Military Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Business Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Ext: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Crew and/or Duty \_\_\_\_\_ Retired Military \_\_\_\_\_ Pilot's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sqd. \_\_\_\_\_ Grade if Any \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00-Dues (5yrs) \_\_\_\_\_ \$2.50-Patch \_\_\_\_\_ \$1.50-Pin \_\_\_\_\_ \$1.00-Roster  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00-First 300 Mission Book (Includes 303rd Decal) \_\_\_\_\_ \$1.00-Official 303rd Decal

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Amount paid: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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DO NOT SEND CASH THRU THE POSTAL SERVICE: IF you are a member, please pass this application on to another 303rder that is not a member, THANK YOU.  
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MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: 303rd Bomb Group(H)Association, INC., and Mail to:

JOSEPH VIEIRA  
6400 Park Street  
Hollywood, FL 33024

303rd BOMB GROUP(H)ASSOCIATION, INC  
P. O. Box 8531  
PEMBROKE PINES BRANCH  
HOLLYWOOD, FL 33084  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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