



303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - In - Flight

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME VII NUMBER 2

APRIL, 1983

D.C. In '83

303rd Bomb Group National Reunion - September 22-25, 1983! It's only about five months ahead. Have you blocked out the dates? Do you have your plans made to attend? The D. C. reunion will be an experience you'll never forget . . . be a part of it!

Our last National Reunion was in San Diego in '81. We had a record 288 at our banquet. We should DOUBLE that at D.C. in '83!

The Group Reunion presents a wonderful opportunity for you to meet old "Buddies", make new friends, share experiences, enjoy the fellowship of others who are bound together by a common bond, forged during one of the most critical periods in our nation's history and, certainly, one of the most eventful periods in any of our lives. It also is a chance for you to vacation in the historic Washington area. It doesn't matter how often you have visited our national capitol, there are new things to see, more points of interest to visit. You may want to plan to arrive early or stay on after the reunion to explore the historical, political, scientific, cultural and religious treasures of America which are concentrated in the area.

Complete information will be mailed

to all members in June or July. The program and registration forms will be included. When you receive this information, contact your local newspaper(s) and ask them to publish the dates and place of the 303rd National Reunion. Let's get all the publicity we can and let's make D.C. in '83 an event to be remembered!

303RD MINI-REUNION - HOUSTON, TX

The 8th Air Force Historical Society will hold its annual reunion in Houston, Texas, October 12-16, 1983. The 303rd will hold a mini-reunion in conjunction with the 8th. Many members will attend both our own D.C. reunion and the Houston mini. If you cannot make the D.C. bash, perhaps you can get to the Houston reunion in October. More details in our next issue.

EX-POW GET-TOGETHER

The 36th annual, National Convention of the AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR, INC. will be held in Cleveland, OH, July 20-22, 1983. Hosts will be the BARBEDWIRE BUCKEYES and headquarters will be Stouffers Inn on the Square. If you are an ex-POW and need additional information, contact:

American ex-POW 1983 Convention
P.O. Box 34083
Cleveland, OH 44134

"Never invest in anything that eats or needs repainting." - Billy Rose

THE BATTLE OF MOLESWORTH

As Recalled by Nathan Smith

When ground personnel of the 303rd arrived at Molesworth in 1942, Headquarters people were assigned a Nis-son hut a Site 6. I assigned every man a bunk only to find there was none left for me. I ended up with the men of the 359th Ordinance Section, a few feet from the northern perimeter fence of the base. They were a tough lot and demonstrated it almost daily.

Along about August or September of '42, the British Home Guard at Kettering asked permission of 8th AF Hdqrs. to stage an "attack" on three U.S. bases as training exercises for their over 60 and under 17 year-old members. They were to pick any three Air Bases and attack with infantry on unannounced week-ends. There would be no warning. The objective would be to capture the Headquarters unit. If successful, all Americans on that base would be denied passes for 60 days.

We pooh-pooed the idea and at once, semi-forgot it. About two weeks later, the Home Guard attacked Kimbolton and captured the Headquarters of red Triangle K. The very next week-end they hit Grafton-Underwood. They overran the base and red Triangle J suffered the consequences - no passes. That awakened us and a few of us in Group Intelligence guessed that we'd be next. We decided we wouldn't be so easy for the Home Guard.

My ordinance Buddies fixed me up with a rifle and a clip of blanks to use instead of the "Tommy Gun" I'd been issued. The next Saturday, we put on fatigues, tin hats and slung those damn gas mask bags over our shoulders. We set out northward from our perimeter fence. We passed through a hole in the first hedgerow. A few yards beyond was that 15 ft. wide, 6 ft. deep drainage ditch from the base sewage plant. The ditch ran East-West and was always full of very smelly water. A tree had fallen across it. We used the trunk as a foot bridge, with lots of chiding about slipping and falling

into that stuff.

We kept on north, across a field for about a quarter of a mile. Then all 15 of us climbed a big haystack; no easy job with a rifle, helmet, gas mask and G. I. shoes! We sat up there watching the countryside, smoking and flipping butts 15 to 20 ft. over the sides of the haystack.

About 9:30 six British lorries pulled into a woods beyond an East-West hedge about 800 ft. north of our position. I sent one of my men at once to Site 6 to phone Base Headquarters and tell them the British were coming. He was still in sight when eight more lorries pulled into the same woods. I sent a second runner, fast.

A few minutes later, a weapons carrier pulled up and stopped on the far side of the hedge. I got another runner going while the rest of us slid off the haystack and headed for the hedge. The weapons carrier was parked tight against the hedge on the side away from us. A British officer was standing on the seat, complete with swagger stick and a handful of pips on each shoulder. He kept shouting: "Gather around, Chaps." Then, sounding like he had a mouthful of mush, he dispatched the Home Guard in four groups.

He told them to follow a North-South hedge to the base, keeping to the East of it. As they formed lines and started off, I counted 120 men, each carrying an ancient Enfield rifle. Each rifle had a cluster of firecracker size tubes tied near the tip of the barrel, with a string back to the trigger guard. The string looped from one tube to the next at the tip of the barrel. The men would point the old Enfields, then yank the string and a cap in the tube would make a report about as loud as a lady-finger. Every tenth man had a brown canvass bag full of dummy hand grenades. There was some sort of firecracker inside a baseball size paper case filled with raw cement. I dispatched all but two of my Ordinance Buddies to head for the base and spread the news.

One of those who stayed was a buck Sergeant. He said he would crawl

under the hedge, then under the vehicle, jump up and capture the Home Guard C.O., deliver him to Base Headquarters and maybe get promoted to Staff. While we were debating the merits of his plan, another lorry arrived with fourteen men. They were mortar crews. Four were carrying mortar tubes and bases. The others carried skinny cases of mortar smoke shells. This group was dispatched to follow a second North-South hedge to the West of us with: "Hurry along, Chaps. You'll be needed, soon." I sent another man to the base.

The buck Sergeant got down and wormed his way under the hedge, sliding his rifle along. He got under the vehicle and promptly cut a deep gash in the ball of his hand on a jagged chunk of a bottle. He wrapped his handkerchief around his hand and wiggled back under the hedge. I tied up his hand as best I could and we decided to abandon our position.

The two of us got on the opposite side of the hedge from the mortar crew and caught up with them. They were moving at a fast clip and we fell in step with them on the other side of the hedge. Finally they reached a gap. We heard their lead man say: "Let's go through here, Chaps." We ducked back and sank into the side of the hedge.

They came through single file and as they turned toward the base, they began singing "I've Got Sixpence". We fell in behind the last man and began singing, too. They never once looked behind.

About that time, we spotted a couple dozen G.I.s with rifles at a large gap in an East-West hedge. We made all kinds of motions for them to head for the junction of their hedge and ours. They finally got the message and we saw them start in that direction.

When the mortar crew reached the "T" junction of the two hedges, the lead man said: "Follow me, Chaps". He got down on his hands and knees and crawled through a hole. He was welcomed on the other side by twenty or

so G.I.s with fingers to lips and their rifles pointed at his head. Each one got the same treatment as he came through the hedge. The last man, instead of submitting to capture, backed through the hedge fast, stood up, whirled around and then saw me standing a few feet from him and still singing, "I've Got Sixpence". He spun and climbed right over the hedge. As he did, he dropped his case of mortar shells. I jumped back to the opening in the hedge in time to see him dash across the dirt road to a five-board fence on the other side. I yelled "Halt" twice and then fired a blank just as he reached the top board. He stopped, reached behind and rubbed his back where the wad from the blank had hit him. Then he jumped on over the fence and took off running, cross country, toward Kettering, eighteen miles away.

I picked up the case of mortar shells, crawled through the hedge and joined the G.I.s with their mortar crew captives. One of the G.I.s was a 1st Lt. He told the mortar crew to lay down a smoke screen in front of the Home Guard beyond the other hedge. They didn't like the idea but, finally did as they were told. We were promptly showered with dummy hand grenades and coated from helmets to shoes with grey powdered cement. A referee declared us all "dead". We told him where he could go and finally got him to agree that he was mistaken and that we could rejoin our units.

About that time the Home Guard began calling: "Mortars to the front!" I had a case of their shells, we were going the same way, so I went along with them. I fell in step with a Home Guard Officer. He asked: "Are you a prisoner?" I told him: "Hell no. I caused one of your men to go home early and I'm just carrying these shells as a favor." We walked on toward the base until he spotted the sewer ditch up ahead. He turned to me and asked; "Is there a way across that stream?" I told him there were two places. One, a wood bridge for vehicles, just beyond the western hedge. Beyond it were eight or ten rifle pits, probably manned by several

hundred G.I.s. The other way across the "stream" was the fallen tree which was in sight to our left. I didn't tell him what was in the ditch. Nor did I tell him that I could see dozens of G.I.s peering from under the hedge just beyond the ditch. Every G.I. face I could see under that hedge had been blackened with burnt cork and each had a large rubber knife gripped in his teeth. The knives had been cut from old inner tubes for main landing gear tires. The boys in the hanger had made them and dipped the "blades" in aluminum paint. I had a hunch about what was coming, so I did a fast fading act and got to a vantage point where I could watch the show.

Our boys let two or three dozen of the Home Guards get across the bridge before they moved. Then they came roaring out from under the hedge. They would grab the nearest Guard, begin "stabbing" him and let out shrieks and yells that could be heard for miles. Home Guardsmen began jumping into that stinking water in droves, with rifles, dish-pan helmets, full battle dress and all.

The battle didn't last long. A referee appeared on the scene, took one look (and a short sniff) at the Home Guard and that was it. He declared the battle over and the Guard defeated. Then the poor guys began fishing Enfield rifles and other equipment out of the ditch with their feet. Once recovered, they would swish the articles around a bit to get some of the black ooze from the bottom of the ditch off.

We let over a hundred of the Guardsmen take showers at Site 6. They showered in full battle dress, with helmets and rifles. What a sight! After their showers, they dripped the three-quarters of a mile back to their lorries for the trip home to Kettering.

Thus was fought, and thus ended the Battle of Molesworth. It's all true. This is the way it happened. Damn, I was tired, but I kept wondering and still wonder if the bloke I hit with the wad from the blank ever stopped running or ever found Kettering!

THANK YOU, NATHAN

The stories which Nathan Smith has sent to be reprinted in your Newsletter are a real help. They add interest and humor. Even though you may not have shared Nathan's experiences at the time, each new story must stir memories of Molesworth in each of us.

I hope you appreciate, as your editor does, the time and effort that Nathan has put into each of these accounts. There are more of Nathan Smith's experiences which will appear in future issues, but what about some of YOUR experiences?

Other 303rds would like to read about YOUR memories of Molesworth, or YOUR adventures in London, or things that happened to you elsewhere in the service, or things that happened to you since Molesworth . . . even some interesting things you may be doing today! You don't have to write a story, but God bless you, if you do! Just send a few pertinent details about anything you think would be of interest. Remember too, photos are welcome.

Send any information - stories - news items - photos - tall tales - etc. to:
 Bud Klint
 5728 Walla
 Ft. Worth, TX 76133

CORRECTION

The January issue carried a photo taken at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs. It was made during ceremonies dedicating the 303rd plaque which was placed on the Memorial Wall in the Academy cemetery last November.

The lady in the photo is not Thelma Vieira. It is Mary Barker, widow of John C. Barker. The editor apologizes to both of these lovely ladies for the "goof-up".

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Our last issue carried a notice about a book to be published in the fall.

The title was given as GREEN FLAK OVER PLOESTI. We have received word from the author, Leroy W. Newby, that the title for the book has been changed to TARGET PLOESTI: View From The Bombsight.

The book is due for release in September. It will be hardcover, 288 pages with 20 photos. It will sell for \$15.95. Mr. Newby has promised to keep us posted on further developments and to let us know when and where the book is available.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE 359TH?

We may have to re-name it the LOST SQUADRON. In the last two issues of the Newsletter, we have asked for copies of Squadron Insignia to be sent to Joe Vieira. He has received response from the 358th, 360th and 427th, but nothing from the 359th.

Joe needs a copy of the official insignia of each of the Squadrons that was assigned to Molesworth. 359th members, please note! If you have an extra copy of your insignia, send it on to Joe. If you have only one, send a photo-copy or a drawing. Be sure that colors are indicated clearly and accurately on any drawing.

Joe's mailing address appears on the back page of every Newsletter!

MOLESWORTH MEMORIAL

Plans are progressing for the dedication of a 303rd Memorial in England in 1984. Ray Cossey, our honorary member in England is helping to coordinate arrangements there. Ray plans to attend our D.C. reunion and will brief the membership on what progress has been made at that time.

We are still interested in hearing from members regarding a reunion at Molesworth in '84. Let your Board of Directors know how you feel about the idea. Would you plan to go if we can arrange a charter flight? How long would you like to stay? What places would you like to see?

Send your comments, suggestions and

all complaints to our president:

Richard Waggoner
10728 Stargate Lane
Cincinnati, OH 45240

MEMBERSHIP

Joe Vieira, 1st Vice President and Treasurer of the 303rd reports that he has signed up member No. 972. This breaks down as follows:

Regular Members	905
Honorary	39
Associate	28
Total	<u>972</u>

Wouldn't it be nice to break 1,000 before our September reunion? We're only 28 members short, so it should be easy if we all expend a little effort.

How about your crew-mates? Your barracks-mates? Have they joined the 303rd BG Association? Why not take time to contact those who haven't? Urge them to send ten bucks to Joe for 5 years' membership dues and to meet you in D.C. in '83!

While you're at it, check your own membership card to be sure your dues are current.

LONDON DAILY EXPRESS, Oct. 15, 1943

It was, alas, easy to tell yesterday where the hearts of the British people turned in regard to America. To the homes of the lost airmen from Maine to California, to the forests and the prairies, the city apartment blocks and the homesteads of the clearings. The loss of 60 Flying Forts over Schweinfurt struck us as if it were our own. Wherefore came these gallant crews among us, led by the magnificent soldier-airman Gen. Ira C. Eaker? Why did they wing their way to our side? These splendid young Americans flew in aid of the common cause of basic decency in the world, just as their soldiers stand alongside ours in Italy or in the Solomons - for no other purpose. They came on a rendezvous with us to rid the earth of Nazi terror, as we shall be found shoulder to shoulder with them cleansing it of the Jap horror. That is what lasts.

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

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

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

- ___ \$10.00-Membership Dues (5 years)
- ___ \$1.00-Membership Roster
- ___ \$2.50-Official 303rd Patch
- ___ \$1.50-303rd Pin
- ___ \$1.00-Official 303rd Decal
- ___ \$5.00-300 Mission Book with Decal

DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE MAIL!
 Make check or Money Order Payable to:
 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
 Mail to:
 JOSEPH VIEIRA
 6400 Park street
 Hollywood, FL 33024
 If you are a member, please pass this
 application on to another 303rder who
 is not a member. Thank You.

Signature _____ Date _____ Amount paid: \$ _____

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