

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - In - Flight

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 3

Editor, Bud Klint
5728 Walla Fort Worth, TX 76133

AUGUST, 1984

THE PREZ SEZ . . .

Special Report From Joe Vieira

I am pleased and proud to report that a total of 184 of us (including our ladies and guests) had a very successful Reunion in England in June. This reunion will be remembered by me for the rest of my life. The trip to Molesworth and to the base was something very special. Lots of take-offs and landings were recalled as we stood there by the old hangars. The visit to the 359th area (now a junk yard) was especially emotional for me. Bill Eisenhart, Paul Tognetti and I tried to visualize the area as we remembered it and to locate specific landmarks. We did find the road to the mess hall and the road that led into the 359th area and the Squadron Commander's quarters. Except for the three hangars there were only traces of what used to be. Much of the base has been turned back into farm land. The RAF still maintains a presence there and in the near future, Cruise Missiles will be located there.

The ladies from the village of Molesworth were magnificent. In my heart, there will always be a warm spot for them. The Tea Party which they prepared and served at the Vicarage was outstanding. That was on Friday afternoon, June 22. Then, after our tour of the old base, we returned to the village for a Fish and Chips party in an old, 17th century barn. The only thing different was that the food was not served in newsprint.



303rders queue up for tea at the vicarage.

The original oil painting, "Hell's Angels", by Roger Brighton, was raffled off at 5 pounds per ticket. The lucky winner was Lloyd Holdcroft. We realized a total of 605 pounds from the raffle. After paying the artist and the cost of framing, we were able to donate 500 pounds to the Molesworth Village Hall restoration fund.

Editor's Note: Lloyd Holdcroft writes that he, Edna and "Hell's Angels" made it safely back to Tulsa on July 5. The painting now



Some of the "goodies" prepared by the ladies of Molesworth for the Friday tea party.

occupies a prominent spot on the wall of their living room. Lloyd dug out his old log book. It shows that he logged 8 hours and 20 minutes in "Hell's Angels" on 30 December, 1943. The target that day was Ludwigshafen.

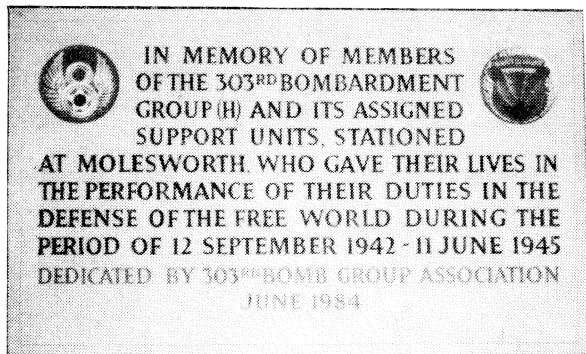
The ladies of Molesworth, Mrs. Jean Bent, Kay Ray, Misses Jean, June and Muriel Edmunds, were presented beautiful quartz mantel clocks in appreciation for all of their work on our behalf. We also gave a framed print of Roger Brighton's painting, "Come Straight In" to Mr. Robert Ward, owner of the barn. All of these folks contributed so much to the success of our reunion.

On Sunday, June 24, we dedicated a plaque in the Brington Church. This memorial is one of which we all can, and should, be proud. My participation in the dedication service and the unveiling of this plaque will remain a high point in my life. I must thank Rev. North, Vicar of the church, Rev. Skoner and our past President, Richard Waggoner for their efforts in getting the plaque made and

arranging the dedication service. It is a beautiful plaque in memory of our buddies who were less fortunate than we and did not return home after WW II.



Brington Church.



Text of the plaque dedicated at Brington Church.

After dedicating the memorial plaque, we had a cocktail hour and lunch at the RAF Alconbury Officers' Club which was turned over to our group. The officers who made this possible were, Col. Lawrence W. Foley, Col. Thomas C. Leson and Col. William Studer. We presented a framed print of "Come Straight In" and a copy of our First 300 book to Col. Studer. These we entrusted to his care until the re-activation of RAF Molesworth. We were well received by all personnel at the base. All efforts to make our visit perfect were extended and appreciated by all of us.

We cannot forget how much Theresa and Ray Cossey did for us. They took a holiday from their respective jobs to become our in-house hostess and host. If it weren't for these two lovely persons, I would have been completely lost. My gratitude goes out to them. I also wish to thank them for having me as their house guest before and after the reunion. Also, I must not forget RAF Squadron Leader Cris Nelson for his efforts in assuring a successful reunion. He opened all the necessary doors for us at Molesworth and Alconbury. He worked very closely with Ray Cossey. I will always be personally grateful to him for making our visit to RAF Molesworth possible.

Walter Mayer, Wilbur Klint and I worked on the program for the Seattle Reunion (now known as the Seattle Spectacular) while we were in London. A tentative program will be published in the January Newsletter. The final program and registration forms will

be mailed to all members shortly thereafter. Please keep me informed of your correct address. I must take a moment to thank Beverly Mayer for all the work she is doing with Walt on our Seattle Spectacular.

Thelma and I will be going to the 303rd Mini-Reunion in conjunction with the annual reunion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, October 3-7 in Los Angeles. We are already booked and hope to see many of you there. If you don't already know, be advised that Gen. Lew Lyle is running for a slot on the 8th AFHS Board of Directors. Let's show up and give him our full support. If you do not belong to the 8th AFHS, but want to attend the reunion, contact me for a brochure and registration form. You must join the 8th to attend. You can do this through our group. Dues are \$8 per year. make your check payable to the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association and mail it to me. If you are joining for the first time, we get to retain \$2 of your initial dues for our group treasury. Use the application form printed below at the end of the article.

Some members have already asked if we will be having another reunion in England. Let me know what you think. I am looking into the feasibility of another memorial in Molesworth. If enough of you express interest we might target for June, 1986. If I hear from enough of you, I will send out a survey in the near future to get your ideas.

We wish to welcome the following new members. These names will not appear in the 4th amendment to our membership roster.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1039/427 Robert Stewart | 1040/427 Leslie L. Latz |
| 1041/360 Robert A. Rowe | 1042/359 Chester L. Green |
| 1043/359 Edward J. Sexton | 1044/427 Elmer J. Schmidt |
| 1045/360 Jack O'Donnell | 1046/360 George Pearson |
| 1047/358 Marvin S. Boyce | 1048/359 William G. Mayer |
| 1049/358 Milton Hamill | 1050/358 Karl Arundale |
| | 1051/359 Harold J. Bach |

A reminder again to those in the classes of 1978 and 1979: DUES ARE DUE! Those who joined the Association in 1978 and who have not renewed their membership, have become delinquent! Class of 1979: Renewal dues for 5 years are due this year! Please send your check for \$10, today. Use the Membership Application form on the back of this Newsletter to send your renewal. Please let me know if we should include a Life Membership in our dues structure.

Thank you and stay well
Joseph Vieira

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Office Use Do Not Write Above This Line
8th AFHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____
First Initial Last

ADDRESS _____

8th AF _____ (Zip Code) _____
Unit

& Location _____ Not in 8th AF. Please
Dates of Service _____ sign me up as
an Associate

Dues \$8 calendar yr. (\$10 Foreign). Use this form (or copy) for initial applications.
 Mail with check or money order to Joe Vieira, 6400 Park St., Hollywood, FL. 33024.

BRINGTON DEDICATION - Joe Vieira's Speech

"Ladies and gentlemen of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and our distinguished English and American guests and friends: It should be recognized by everyone that in World War II, as part of the 8th Air Force, the 303rd played a significant role in the destruction of Germany and German occupied Europe. Molesworth Air Station was the launching site for the 303rd. The men of this group performed magnificently throughout the 364 missions flown against the enemy. They flew more missions than any

other group in the 8th Air Force; and two of their men were awarded the Medal of Honor, our country's highest award for valor. From 12 September, 1942 to 11 June, 1945, there were many American servicemen at Molesworth. Some came early and were assigned to the base as ground and support personnel for the duration of hostilities. Many, many more passed through as combat crewmembers, leaving after completing their assigned number of missions. Some of these men never came back to Molesworth to complete their tours. Some became prisoners of war and, of course, there were others who never came back and these were the casualties of the war.

It is the memory of these fine young men that we honor today. We must realize that they did not have the opportunity to be here today; did not have the opportunity to become President; did not have the opportunity to vote; did not have the opportunity to dissent and to offer something better for our country or the world; and they did not have the opportunity to love and to marry and to perpetuate their names.

It is completely fitting at this time to remember the fine English families of this area who gave up their land, and some, their sons and daughters to the war. The spirit of cooperation between the British and the Americans was of paramount importance to the final conclusion of the war. It is also particularly fitting to say a few words of thanks to all the men who didn't come back. We salute them and their families. We know that they must rest in peace.

Reverend Father North: Members of the 303rd Bombardment Group hold in proud and grateful memory those of their comrades who gave their lives in the defense of freedom during the second World War. In token thereof they have caused a tablet to be erected, which I now request you to receive into the care and custody of this church."

The Memorial Plaque was then unveiled by Mr. Bertie William Cooper. Mr. Cooper was a civilian employee on the base 40 years ago.



Father Skoner and Rev. North conducting dedication service.

FROM VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE

Joe Vieira received the following letter dated 24 June, 1984:

"On behalf of the Molesworth Village Hall Committee I would like to thank you all for the most generous donation to our Village Hall Restoration Fund. We were quite overwhelmed.

It was wonderful to meet you all and have the opportunity to talk to you. For our part it was a happy day and one which will long be remembered.

I hope you enjoy the remainder of your stay and have a safe journey home.

My sincere good wishes to you all."

Jean Edmunds

Chairman Village Hall Committee

RAF MUSEUM

Before touring this outstanding air museum at Hendon, we were escorted to the Bomber Command section for a brief ceremony in front of the B-17 which is on display there. Joe Vieira made the following remarks:

"Group Captain Ward, on behalf of the 303rd Bombardment Group of the American Eighth Air Force, I ask you to accept this donation to support the work of this fine museum.

Forty years ago your own Royal Air Force fought side by side with us to preserve our mutual freedom. Yesterday, back in the Molesworth area, we paid tribute to those fellow 303rd members who lost their lives. Today, we salute the men and women of your Air Force who also made the supreme sacrifice. Group Captain, we thank you for receiving us today and acknowledge the fine monument you have created here to your own gallant fliers."

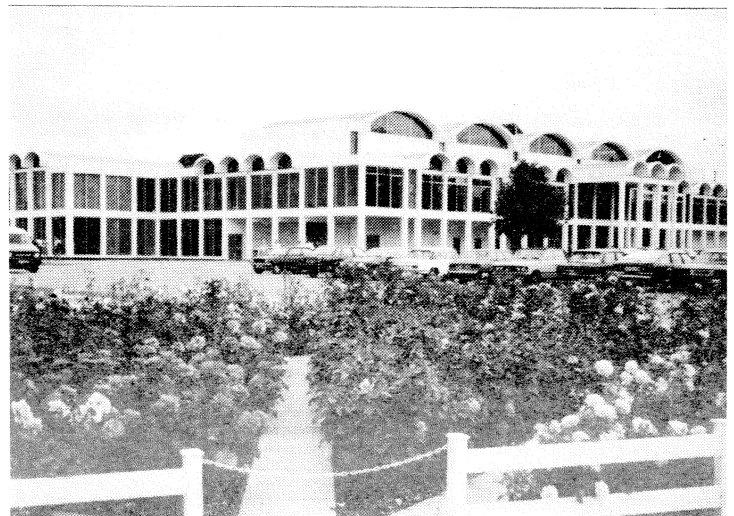


Some of the folks who participated in the Brington dedication: Joe Vieira is at left, between Jean Bent and Jean Edmunds of Molesworth. Between Father Skoner and Rev. North are Mr. and Mrs. Cooper. Mr. Cooper unveiled our plaque. To the right of Rev. North are Theresa and Ray Cossey.

CAN YOU HELP?

What do you know about the mysterious disappearance of Big Band leader, Glenn Miller on a flight from London to Paris in 1944? Do you have any newspaper clippings, first-hand accounts, recollections or even a peculiar rumor tucked away in your WW II treasures?

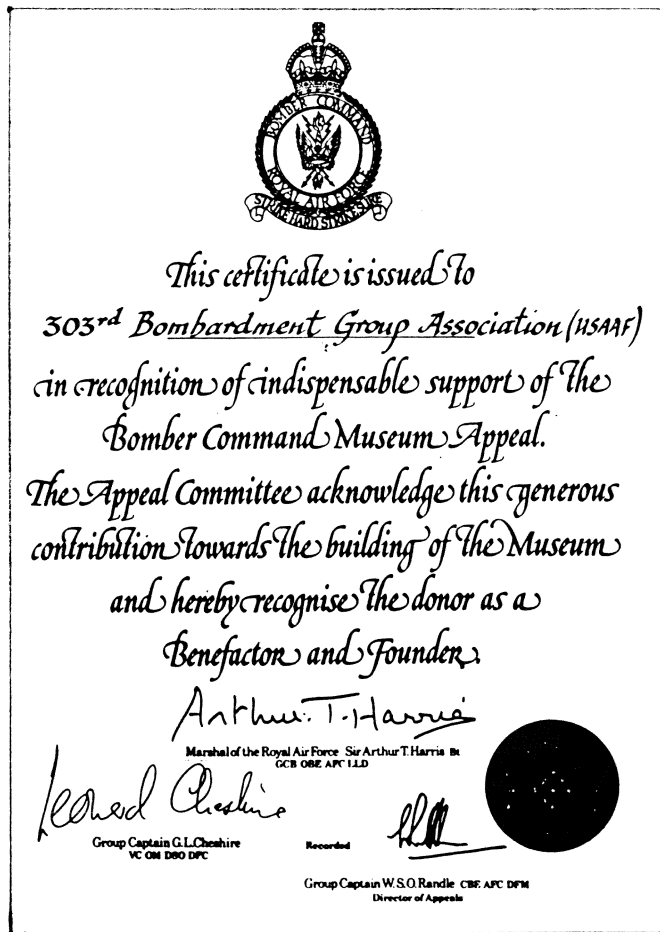
Dennis Kray, a friend of the 303rd, is doing some research involving Miller's disappearance. He has asked for our help and would be very grateful for any information you may come up with. If you can contribute anything to this effort, please write to: Denis Kray, Kray Auto Parts, 160 Seventh St., San Francisco, CA 94103.



RAF Museum, Hendon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In recognition of our contribution to the support of the Bomber Command portion of the RAF Museum the following certificate was presented to our group. (Reproduced 1/2 size.)



SPECIAL OFFER

Bud Klint,
Editor,
'Hells Angels' Newsletter,

5 Woodland Drive,
Thorpe End,
Norwich, Norfolk NR13 5BH

Dear Bud,

17th July 1984

On behalf of Theresa and myself may I say how much we enjoyed acting as hosts to those members and their wives who were able to make the London Reunion last month. Whilst not the best people to judge the success or otherwise of this get together it would seem, from all the kind sentiments expressed by the party members, that it was much enjoyed. The eighteen months of planning were all so worth while when we reflect back on the pleasure it obviously gave to so many members of the 303rd. It was our privilege and immense pleasure to have helped. We look forward to seeing you all again next year, in Seattle.

It might interest those unable to make the London get together to know that an oil painting of the 'Hells Angels' plane was raffled at the social evening in Molesworth and is now proudly owned by Lloyd Holdcroft. The painter is Roger Brighton, the artist who painted the earlier 'Come Straight In' canvas. The photographic reproduction of Roger's painting appears here.

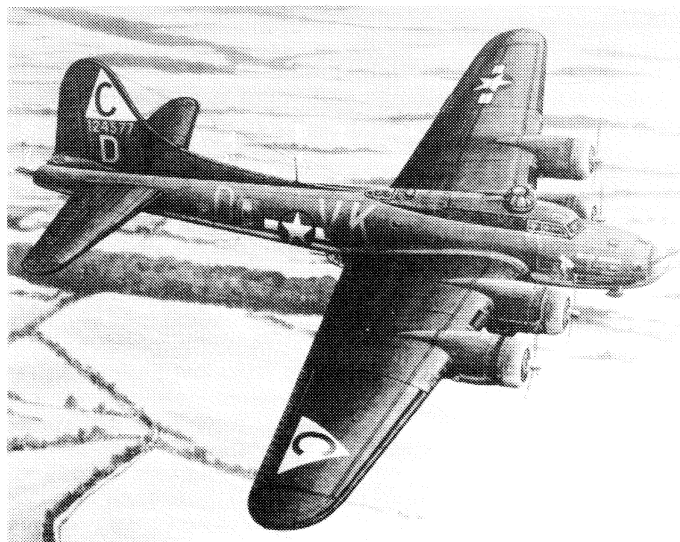
Before letting Lloyd 'export' the painting I took the precaution of taking a coloured photograph of it and professional, colour, 10" by 8" photographic prints are available from me if any member would like one. The price, including postage and packaging is \$5.00. If you would like to write to me at the above address, enclosing your check, I will promise to mail your print back to you by return of post. There will be one, or more, available for every member who wants one.

If you see me in Seattle remind me to tell you the story of Joe Vieira's historic flight in one of our 'Tiger Moth' bi-planes and how it crashed, and became a write-off, the day after Joe made his flight. What did you do to this historic aircraft of ours, Joseph? He survives 50+ wartime missions only to foul up an aircraft forty years later!

Yours sincerely,

Ray Cossey
Honorary Member # 24.

This is a reduced reproduction of the 8"x10" color print which Ray Cossey would like to send to you. It is suitable for framing and will make a nice addition to your collection of WW II memorabilia.



THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER

By Harley E. Cannon

There must be thousands of stories of the 303rd Bomb Group that will never be told. There is one that I believe should be heard before Father Time closes his journal on our group, so here goes: The story began on a late autumn day of 1944 when a combat replacement crew arrived at the Air Depot Base in Atlanta, GA, under command of Pilot Larry Poole, fresh from Avon Park's Combat Crew Training Center. I was assigned as Co-Pilot. Hardly knowing each other, somewhat unsure of our skills and apprehensive of the future, we had orders to pick up a new B-17, shake it out and be processed for departure to combat service in the E.T.O. We were assigned a plane and proceeded to check its flying characteristics.

After several days on the flight line, it became obvious our crew had increased by one! A small black and white terrier had attached himself to us. He seemed to have two obsessions: one, a love for all airmen and two, a passion for flying. Our crew adopted the waif and named him "Homer". During the following days, Homer became inseparable; eating and sleeping with us, trailing us everywhere.

Homer had a catalytic effect on our crew. A new bond and spirit of unity became apparent. Homer had become our talisman but his days were not without incident. He was dognapped twice by envious crews. Each time he was rescued by his loyal buddies.

The day finally arrived when we lifted off for Bangor, ME on the first leg of our overseas journey. After landing at Dow Field, we were grounded for 18 days due to weather over the Atlantic. The respite was welcome and served to lessen the tension that had been building. It also allowed us to relax and become closer in our relationships. "Homer's Luck" was working!

November 18 dawned clear and cold. We took off, bound for Labrador. Homer was on his way to war! Our landing at Goose Bay surprised us. There were snow drifts higher than our wing tips! After refueling, our dinner had to be postponed as we took off in a blinding snow storm, clearing the runway minutes before they closed the base.

Our flight to Iceland was memorable. During the pitch-black night we were suddenly aware of a red glow illuminating the cockpit. All our instruments were operating and we located no malfunction. Then we glanced overhead and found ourselves only feet below the belly light of another plane. That near miss was the only unusual incident until we landed in Wales the following day. There, things really hit the fan!

Rather than the brass band we anticipated, we were met by a consortium of U.S. M.P.s, the Town Constable and the Animal Warden. We were charged with violating the U.K.'s quarantine laws. In spite of our pleas, promises and even a veiled threat to bomb the town, Homer went to the slammer!

That night the crew tasted their first English beer. By the time they had gotten accustomed to it, they had held a council of war and elected an assault team. The dog pound was located and Homer was busted out! Loyalty knows no bounds!

The days that followed were crowded with processing, training and moving. They led to Molesworth, Station 107 and the 358th Squadron. Homer was finally on combat status! Determined that our buddy should not be grounded, but have the same chance for survival as every other airman, the crew contacted the hangar services. Through the cooperation of the parachute riggers, an oxygen mask and parachute pack were designed, produced and fitted to Homer. Estimated cost to the U.S. Government: \$3,000!

True to the heritage of the Air Corps, Homer eventually completed five combat sorties over Europe. Considering his exemplary conduct in the face of enemy action, it was decided he should have the same recognition other airmen received. Thanks to that marvelous cooperation found only in the N.C.O. ranks, the name "Airman Homer", complete with serial number, found its way onto a list of those to be awarded Air Medals! The list was certified by the C.O. and is officially recorded in the annals of the Mighty 8th: "for meritorious action against the enemy in the E.T.O."



Airman Homer, Serial Number 1102586(A), Air Corps, Unassigned.

Photographed "on duty" with the 358th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth, England, 1945.

Homer was awarded the Air Medal for participating in five combat missions:

- 1 Jan., 1945-Kassel
- 6 Jan., 1945-Cologne
- 7 Jan., 1945-Kalle
- 1 Feb., 1945-Mannheim
- 3 Feb., 1945-Berlin

The final days of March and April, 1945, saw one after another of our crew finish his tour and be reassigned. Our only tragedy; the loss of our Navigator, 2nd Lt. Harold S. Smith, who, while flying with another crew, was shot down over Orienburg-Berlin on April 10th.

Homer was offered a home and was left with a pub owner and family in Molesworth. While we, as individuals have prospered over the years, Homer's fate is unknown to us. However, with a firm Christian certainty of a hereafter, I know that somewhere in God's heaven there is a small black and white dog that walks a little taller and tilts his head a little cockier because, during the dark days of the winter of 1944-45, he pulled his tour with the men of the 358th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bombardment Group, "Hell's Angels" at Molesworth, England.

Homer, God Bless!

Attested to by:

Capt. Lawrence Poole, Pilot	Col. Chas. Morrill, Ball
1 Lt. Harley Cannon, Co-Pilot	T/Sgt. Don Smith, Waist
T/Sgt. Ray Pullen, Engineer	T/Sgt. Hal Kinsland, Waist
M/Sgt. Marvin Hoke, Radio	T/Sgt. Beryl Kindred, Tail
Posthumously - 2 Lt. Harold Smith, Navigator	

Judge Ben Smith ¹⁸⁹ Receives WW 2 Purple Heart Medal

Forty years after being wounded during a World War II bombing mission in the European Theater of Operations, Judge Ben Smith Jr. of Waycross has been awarded the Purple Heart.

The recognition was given to Judge Smith at Hunter Field in Savannah on March 16 by his former commanding officer, Major General Lew Lyle. Attending the presentation ceremony were a number of relatives and friends.

The Purple Heart was awarded to Judge Smith for wounds received in action while serving with the Eighth Air Force in England.

Smith was a Radio Operator-Gunner on a B-17 crew which was returning from a bombing mission to Saarbrücken, Germany, on May 11, 1944. As it came over the Belgian coast at low level, their disabled aircraft came under heavy ground fire and four of the crew, including then Tech Sergeant Smith, were wounded.

The bomber later crash-landed at Southend, England. All of the crew survived.

An article which appeared in the Journal-Herald on June 13, 1944

noted, "There isn't any flak left in Germany — they threw it all at us," the crew of the B-17 Flying Fortress "Sweet Melody" reported recently after they had barely returned from a Nazi target.

"They brought the evidence back in the form of a sieved bomber that had to crash-land after getting back to friendly territory."

The article described how the aircraft, piloted by Lt. Anthony J. Cecchini of Poughkeepsie, N.Y. had its navigator's oxygen supply cut off by flak and its compass ruined. Later, ground fire knocked out two outboard engines and blew off one of the bomb bay doors.

With half the power gone, the crew struggled to maintain altitude. At 11,000 feet "enemy anti aircraft gunners" were making things too hot for comfort, so Lt. Cecchini dove the bomber toward the ground at 300 miles an hour.

"At his order, crewmen jettisoned all excess equipment to lighten the ship and climbed into the nose to maintain the ship's balance. Then, just above the grass, Cecchini and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Stanley

L. Fisher of Baltimore, Md., headed the bomber toward England."

Cecchini was wounded in both legs by the fire "but remained conscious by sheer will power knowing that the co-pilot couldn't fly alone and handle the engines at the same time.

"A friendly fighter field offered the first place to land," the Journal-Herald account said, but it was too short for the Big Fortress and, with hydraulic brakes shot out, the bomber was out of control on the ground and headed for an ammunition storehouse.

"By using the rudder, Cecchini and Fisher managed to squeeze between it and another building before the bomber hit a ditch, piloted around, and stopped."

Judge Smith has described this experience in his book "Chick's Crew," an account of his experiences in the Eighth Air Force based in England.

Smith is a Waycross attorney and judge of the State Court of Ware County. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

The above article appeared in the Waycross, GA JOURNAL-HERALD in March of this year. We understand that General Lyle personally went to Maxwell AFB and to Randolph AFB to make sure that Ben got his Purple Heart. Just one more example of the General's behind-the-scenes activity on behalf of the 303rd and its members.

The newspaper story mentions "Chick's Crew" the excellent account of life in the 303rd written by Ben Smith. The Saarbrücken mission for which Ben received the Purple Heart, is described on pages 71-76 of this book. If you don't have a copy of "Chick's Crew" in your library, you can get one by sending your check for \$12.95 to: Ben Smith, Jr., P.O. Box 1586, Waycross, GA 31502.

CREW REUNIONS

We are hearing more and more about individual crews getting together. All reports indicate that such reunions are great experiences. Following are a couple of such stories:

FOLEY'S CREW

Initial planning for the reunion began in November, 1983. Bob Rowe proposed to the six crew members that he knew about that they gather at his home in Lutz, FL in May, '84 for three or four

190 Two members were unable to attend. Harold Waltmier had a continuing commitment. "Rocky" (last name not included in report) missed because his wife, "Frosty" was unable to travel. The other four gathered for three days of golf, sightseeing, food fellowship and reminiscing.

They spent one evening tracing and locating other crew members. The four who were present were Rowe, Jim Conklin, Ed Snell and Vernelle Johnson. Bob Rowe reports their search: "We got on the phone and found Foley through his aunt in Taft, TX. He gave us Stewart's number. Stewart had found Foley through the 303rd Newsletter. We drew a blank on Gordley, the other surviving member of the crew. The merriment and excitement were intense and unbelievable. We thought this would be the absolute high of our reunion. We set up a conference call for the following evening. The girls (Katie Rowe and Mary Johnson) just sat back in amazement. We tried to recall Carl Sietz (deceased) and the things he had meant to each of us. It was a great day."

The next day, they had a high-powered golf Sweepstakes with \$1,000 per man for the winners! "Sneaky" Snell and "Straight

CALHOUN'S CREW

The following article is reprinted from the Alexandria, LA, DAILY TOWN TALK. It tells how one 303rder located six other crew members and how his search led to a great reunion in Kansas City last month.

By Sidney G. Williams
Town Talk Staff Writer

The newspaper article about the B-17 Flying Fortress brought a lump to Roman Zaorski's throat. He was flooded by memories of the bombers, of war buddies and of his days as a B-17 crew member during World War II.

He thought to himself, "Why can't I find my crew?"

It proved easier to say than to do, but during seven months of writing letters, making phone calls and waiting for answers, Zaorski located six of his crew. They will meet in Kansas City, Kan., July 12-15 to renew their friendships.

"It's going to be something fantastic after not seeing everybody for 42 years," said Zaorski, who lives at 611 Bayou Marie Road, Pineville.

The crew of the "Eight Ball" and the "Eight Ball II" was part of the 359th Bomb Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, U.S. Army Air Corps.

Zaorski contacted the Historical Society at Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Ala., and the 303 Bomb Group Association and was able to locate pilot William R. Calhoun in Fort Worth, Texas. Calhoun helped him find other crew members, as did Capt. Barry J. Johnson of Maxwell Air Force Base, who checked addresses through military records.

Merle Murphy, a gunner, and Robert Yonkman, the bombardier, are both living in Kansas. William G. Muigrew, former staff sergeant, is in Brooklyn, N.Y. The radio operator, Charles Terry, lives in South Dakota, and Willard Stephens, a tail gunner, is living in Bradenton, Fla.

Lt. James S. Nix, the co-pilot, is listed as missing in action. Joseph M. Strickland, the navigator, died in 1979. Zaorski is still looking for Richard C. Fortunak.

William Stephens, who had been a close friend during the war, almost fainted when he heard Zaorski's voice. Stephens had been trying to locate Zaorski and had been told Zaorski was dead.

They laughed about the false report.

Shooter" Johnson edged out "Steady" Conklin and "Chicken or Feathers" Rowe. Surely those nicknames must have great significance! The winners get \$1 per year for the next 1,000 years from the losers.

Bob continues his report: "The conference call was great. Afterward while we were exchanging more war stories and personal histories, we remembered that Stewart had mentioned that Gordley was from Pebbles, OH. We decided we had been so lucky with our telephone search we would give it another shot. We got a number from information, dialed it and when Gordley answered we couldn't believe it was him. He was stunned! We didn't think the excitement level could get higher than the night before, but this was almost more than we could stand. The circle of Foley's crew was once again complete. Surely Carl Seitz must have seen this and smiled!"

These 303rders already are planning their next get-together. They hope to have nine members of the crew there. They may even have it in Seattle next July. How about your crew? What better time to get together than at Boeing's 50th Anniversary Party for the B-17?

Veteran Looking for WWII Crew

Zaorski, 69, who retired from the A.F. as M/Sergeant in 1961, said the research is a "real plaything." He has acquired a vast amount of material. He displayed several albums of pictures and has folders of reports and other records of the bomb group.

The crew flew 25 missions into Germany and France aboard the "Eight Ball" and the "Eight Ball II," both B-17 aircraft. They were stationed at Molesworth Air Base, England.

"The British didn't think we could do anything with daylight bombing, but we proved that we could," Zaorski said.

The crew always flew lead into foreign territory. It was one of five bomb crews of the 359th squadron. On its mission, the "Eight Ball's" No.1 engine was shot out by a 20mm cannon shell from a German FW-190 fighter.

Zaorski said he remembers looking out of the plane and seeing the "blue belly and yellow nose" of the German aircraft.

"It looked like a movie, but you knew it wasn't," he said. "It was a real shooting gallery."

The "Eight Ball" made it back to England. "That thing vibrated so bad," Zaorski said.

Everyone parachuted from the wounded plane except the pilot and co-pilot, who crash landed it.

The mission was a success. The military base the group bombed looked like it was flattened, according to reconnaissance reports.

Movie star Clark Gable, who had enlisted in the Air Corps, joined the crew on two missions. Zaorski said the actor was a morale officer, but flew with them on bombing missions.

As top turret gunner, Zaorski shot down two German aircraft and received five medals: the Distinguished Flying Cross, the first, second and third Oak Leaf Clusters and the Air Medal. He also served as the engineer of the crew.

"It has been fantastic research to me," Zaorski said of his efforts. He plans to continue his work.

He is now seeking official documentation of the 25 missions and he hopes to find photographs the Army might have taken of the "Eight Ball" and "Eight Ball II."

In his cover letter, sent with the newspaper, Roman Zaorski said: "It has been a hard research for me, but well worth the time and effort spent on search, search and more search. The reward is that the surviving members of the 8 Ball crew are about to have a little reunion of our own." He went on to say that he was sending the article with the hope that it might be of interest to other 303rd members and serve as an inspiration to some. "If it pans out that anyone would like to know how I went about my research, I'll be glad to tell them." (You can contact Roman Zaorski at P.O. Box 1071, Pineville, LA 71360.)

At the time of his letter, Roman had not located the Engineer, Richard Fortunak. He did find him before the reunion. Bill Mulgrew remembered Fortunak as "The Indiana Kid". There are five area codes in Indiana. Roman called information in each one and got them to run through all their directories. The last one turned up the missing Fortunak. He planned to join his crew-mates at the reunion, but a death in his family on the day he was to leave forced him to cancel.

The 8 Ball crew reunion was a tremendous success. Col. Calhoun reports that it was "The most enjoyable time I've had in years. We had such a ball that no one wanted to leave. We arrived on Wednesday and stayed through Saturday. Some folks even stayed over through Sunday. We had dinner at a local Air Base Officers' Club one night, but except for that, we hardly left the motel. Mostly, we just sat around and talked, swapped stories and enjoyed each other. It was great!" The crew hopes to get together again at the SEATTLE SPECTACULAR.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE?

By Art Lorentz

After the war I attended college and then joined Trans World Airlines as a pilot in 1951. After four years of flying domestic routes, I transferred to the International Division. On my first trip overseas, I was listed as an ACM (additional crew member) to observe the operations. The trip was New York to Frankfurt. On the approach to the Frankfurt airport, I sat by a window in the first class section of the plane, thinking I would look for some of the craters I had caused with the bombs we dropped in 1944.

The purser on the flight, Clint Zoeller, sat down beside me as we turned onto our final approach. He asked if this was my first trip to Frankfurt. I said, "Yes and no", explaining I had flown over it during the war, but never got on the ground, thank God! He then asked if I had been in the 8th Air Force. When I said yes, he informed me that he had been an ME 109 pilot during the war! After the war, he came to the States hoping to get a job as a pilot with TWA. He was not accepted as a pilot, so took the purser's job when it was offered to him.

I sat there thinking: "My God, if anyone had told me in 1944 that an ME 109 pilot, who tried to shoot me out of the sky over Germany, would, ten years later, be a fellow crew member, I certainly would have called him crazy!" Who would ever believe it? What odds would you give on my chances of becoming a purser with Lufthansa if we had lost the war?

Art sent the above story with his check to renew his 303rd membership. He said that since joining the Association, he has renewed contact with his co-pilot and radio operator. He reported about a recent visit with his radio man, Walter Ringen: "We flew each of our missions over again through the dairy Walt kept in 1944. He was our youngest crew member at 20, I was next at 21. The years have added some weight and grey hair, but during our visit, we felt as young at heart as we were 40 years earlier."

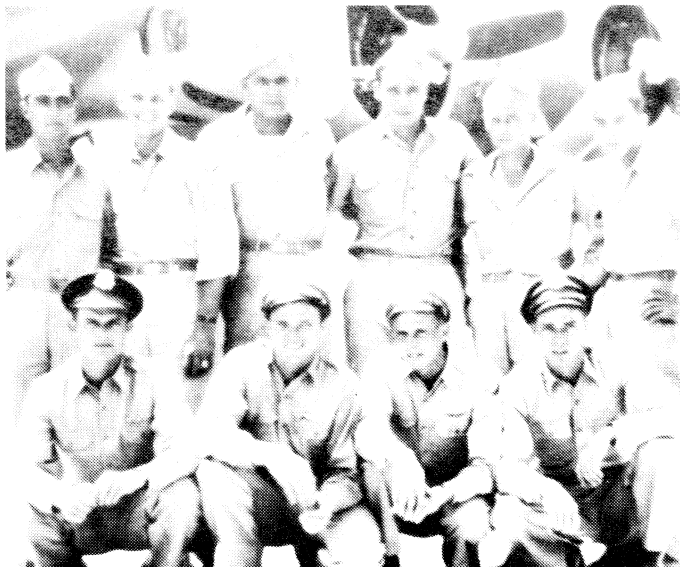
EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW . . .

The Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama 36112 probably has the most extensive collection of original materials on the history of US military aviation in existence. It is the principal repository of Air Force historical records with more than 42,000,000 pages of information. If you ever are interested in finding out about any unit, Air Force, Group, Squadron or individual crew, any combat mission or other activity, this is the place to go.

303rder, Ray Gorham of Coronado, CA, contacted the center early this year. He came up with a brief history of the 303rd Bombardment Group and each of its four Squadrons. Ray has turned this material over to our Group Historian. We appreciate Ray's effort.

During his research, Ray also found out how to obtain a copy of individual crew photos. While the Research Center at Maxwell has thousands of photographs in its files, it does not have facilities to copy them. All WW II ETO aircrew photos are recorded on video discs at the Air and Space Museum Library in Washington,

D.C. You must view the photo there and get the file number 191 any photo(s) you wish to order. Photo prints are ordered Defense Audio-visual Agency, Building 168, Naval District Washington, Washington, D.C. 20374. Ray identified a photo of his crew made at Drew Field, Tampa in June, '44, shortly before they were assigned to the 358th Squadron at Molesworth. Here is a copy of what he received. It isn't too sharp, but remember this print is now at least three steps from the original.



Back: Robert Carter, Joseph Blinbury, Harold Beck, George Reimche, Eugene Edwards, Eugene Remolde. Front: Hugh Johnson, pilot, Harry Seidel, co-pilot, George Weber, Navigator, Ray Gorham Bombardier.

NEW GROUP HISTORIAN

E. C. Lehmann has accepted the post of 303rd Group Historian. All files have been turned over to him. If you have any material relating to the 303rd which you would like to have become a part of our official Association history, send it to: E. C. Lehmann, 29844 Knoll View Dr., Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274. If you have items you want returned, Al will copy them and return your originals.

Our thanks to Jim Ferris, our first Group Historian. Jim was appointed after our last reunion and served diligently until E. C. agreed to take over this important post.

TAPS

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of these former members of the 303rd who have passed away recently.

BRYANT MINTZ, 359th Squadron
Rt. #1, Box 45
Ash, NC 28420

WALTER A. GEYER, 360th Squadron
Box 33
Sheldon, ND 58068

"Seattle Spectacular"

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50th Anniversary Party for the B-17



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Be There! Reserve the dates now!

World War II allies reunited 40 years later by mail

BENSON — Dave Parker and Joseph Monnier have seen each other only once and then only briefly. They didn't have time to speak.

But what happened to Parker and Monnier on May 1, 1943, has stayed in their memories for 40 years. Both remember vividly what happened about 11 a.m. in a plowed field on the west coast of France.

It is those memories of a time when Parker was 25 and Monnier was 19 that have bound them together for four decades, even though until this year they never learned the outcome of that brief encounter long ago.

Parker was the bombardier on a B-17 Flying Fortress, making his third combat mission from his base in Molesworth, England.

Early on May 1, 1943, his plane and 17 others took off for St. Nazaire, France, heading for the heavily fortified German submarine pens there. Each plane in the mission carried only two bombs, but they were huge 2,000-pounders to crack the 4-foot-thick fortifications protecting the German submarines.

They were 15 miles from St. Nazaire and directly over the head of 19-year-old French farmboy Joseph Monnier when Parker's B-17 was hit.

The number three engine was knocked out, causing the plane to fall behind the formation. That's when the German fighters jumped them.

"We were at 20,000 feet, and the windows were iced over," Parker said. "About 25 planes jumped us. The plane started shaking, and it sounded like glass shattering everywhere. That's when I knew it was getting uncomfortable. Those people didn't like us."

The crew fought back until the ship died and began to fall out of the sky.

"I looked at the escape hatch and saw two pair of feet trying to get out of it," Parker said. "I knew I had to wait for my turn, so I kept

firing the machine gun. I waited too long."

The plane began spinning to the ground. Parker fought repeatedly to get to the escape hatch but the tumbling of the plane made it impossible.

"I was wondering how long it was going to take to hit," he said. "There was no way to get out."

Suddenly, the huge plane exploded in midair.

"The next thing I knew I was falling," Parker said. "The plane exploding and not killing me was the only possible way I could have gotten out. I should have been killed in the explosion if not the crash."

Parker pulled his parachute rip cord and floated to the ground.

"A German fighter circled me on the way down, but he didn't shoot me," Parker said. "I've always thought that all the Germans weren't bad. He would have been in his rights to shoot me."

Parker landed in a freshly plowed field. He rolled up his parachute and hid it in a nearby ditch.

Then he saw Joseph Monnier.

"There were some people working in the field, and one of them pointed in the direction I should go," Parker said. "And I took off."

Parker hid out in the woods for the rest of that day and night. The next morning, wet, cold and 300 miles from safety, he took the chance of approaching a French farmhouse.

"We had been told that the French would either help us or send us away, but they wouldn't turn us in," Parker said. "I walked up to the man and asked for help. He went inside for a moment and then came back out and motioned me in. I gave him \$20 in French money. He gave me wine and let me stand by the fire."

"Five minutes later, two Gestapo agents arrived and took me prisoner."

Parker spent the next two years as a prisoner of war, most of it in Stalag Luft Three, the POW camp from which the war's greatest escape took place. (The movie "The Great Escape" was based on the

incident, but Parker was not one of the 100 escapees.)

"I always wondered who that man in the field was who had helped me by pointing the way I should go," Parker said. "I wondered what happened to him."

The son of Parker's friend and navigator, Harry Roach, gave him the answer this summer. Lt. Roach also survived the crash — four crewmen survived and six died — and he also was helped by Monnier. Roach eventually escaped from occupied France and brought back Monnier's name with him to England.

Roach's son found his father's records and wrote to Monnier, also giving him Parker's name and address.

"One day, I got a letter from France," Parker said. "I had no idea who I knew in France."

He had the letter translated and found that it was from the young man who had pointed the way to safety 40 years ago.

In his letter, Monnier wrote that he was then a member of the French Resistance but was afraid to help Parker further that day because he was with other men apparently not members of the underground. Later, he found Roach and helped him escape from France.

Monnier was given a citation by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower for his efforts to aid downed Allied flyers during the war.

"He remembered what happened, even that I was only wearing one boot when I landed," Parker said. "We've been writing back and forth, exchanging information about that day, things that I didn't know about."

There was another man Parker wondered about, the man who had turned him in.

"I wrote Monnier that I was not mad at him," Parker said. "I had no hard feelings at all and I wanted him to tell him that for me."

But the man died several years ago.

"I'd like to go back to see Monnier," Parker said. "I'd like to see where it happened and shake his hand."

This article was written by Dennis Rogers and appeared in the Raleigh, NC NEWS AND OBSERVER. It is reprinted with their kind permission.

'Lost' Allied Planes Nazi Secret Weapon

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The author, a UPI Washington correspondent, served on U.S. Air Force combat missions in B-17 bombers over Europe during World War II.

By DANIEL F. GILMORE

WASHINGTON (UPI) — In 1943, the 303rd Bomb Group of the U.S. 8th Air Force near Molesworth, England, was told to watch for suspicious B-17s over Nazi-occupied Europe "as they may be hostile."

The Flying Fortress crews had heard weird reports or encountered "unfriendly" B-17s and strange "Allied" fighter planes, but we never got the whole story.

It was not until very recently that it became possible to discover that one part of the story of KG 200 — the Luftwaffe's secret "spook plane" operation — began at our base at Molesworth.

Molesworth was a tiny town with one ancient pub and a cluster of metal huts and makeshift hangars perched in the mud 70 miles north of London. As many as 30 heavily laden Forts would lumber out almost every day for eight-to-10 hour bombing missions over Europe.

Wulf Hound left Molesworth in the early dark of Dec. 12, 1942, with 10 men aboard. Headed to bomb freight yards in France, Wulf Hound never returned.

Recently released British and American intelligence documents and a new book reveal that Wulf Hound was hit but landed intact in occupied France.

It became the first of the B-17s of KG 200 — a Luftwaffe "Kampfgeschwader," or combat squadron of American, British and even Soviet bombers and fighters which were turned against the Allies.

So guarded were the operations of KG 200, that most Luftwaffe veterans today still do not know about its existence. The full story may not yet have been told.

British author Jack Fishman, writing under the name of J.D. Gilman, and actor John Clive have just published a fictionalized version of KG 200 in the United States.

Fishman claims that 80 percent of his novel is factual, but doesn't believe the full story has been disclosed. After studying "all available" material from U.S. Air Force archives, this reporter agrees.

Original Luftwaffe documents about KG 200 are said to have been "lost" or "destroyed." But the missions carried out by the organization as early as 1942 remain innovative enough to arouse suspicion that the techniques of KG 200 might still be operative.

The U.S. Air Force's secret squadron of Soviet MIG fighters is one indication that "spook planes" may not be just a memory of an old war.

Fishman traced KG 200's bizarre activities beyond its fleet of B-17s, British

Wellington and Stirling night bombers and Allied fighters to far-ranging espionage, sabotage and assassination plots, including a reported plan to kill President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington.

Our crew never tangled with KG 200 B-17s, but we did see one Fort shoot down an RAF-marked Spitfire over Belgium. The question still persists: Which was American and which was British? Were both Allied? Or neither?

It got so in 1943 that Americans were downing their own B-17s which wandered into wrong formations; felled Royal Air Force fighters trying to help; or downed escorting fighters who came too close.

The word had gone out on identification: "If it points its nose at you, shoot it down."

Some quotations from declassified reports of Allied crews returning from missions in 1943:

"Photographic cover of the German Air Force experimental engineering station at Rechlin, 60 miles north of Berlin, shows many salvaged Allied aircraft . . . several (British) Wellingtons, a Stirling and a B-17 of this command. There have been two engagements and three encounters during RAF raids this month with aircraft identified as Wellingtons and a Halifax . . ."

"An unidentified B-17 was observed by one crew of the 91st Group flying at 22,000 feet, 20 miles off St. Nazaire (France) . . . This aircraft flew around our formation. Enemy fighters did not attack this lone B-17."

"Four P-47s with enemy markings jumped a P-47 of ours."

"At 0730 hours, (7:30 a.m.) an unidentified B-17 was observed joining the formation of one group . . . it took the number two position of the lead element and was seen to leave the formation in the London area . . ."

"Fourth Wing reports two unidentified B-17s (over Northwest Germany). One was painted jet black."

There are no cumulative figures of Allied aircraft used by KG 200. The total may have been enormous, given the thousand-plane raids which were customary in 1944 and 1945. However, historians point out that the Germans had a shortage of pilots after 1943.

One document obtained by Fishman shows that a single salvage battalion in the period from April to June 1944 — up to D-Day — salvaged and put back into flying service 324 German aircraft and 495 Allied aircraft.

Some of the reports, gained from captured Luftwaffe crews, described the dropping of spies and a "suicide squadron" which went astray because the volunteers were supplied with wine, women and song while awaiting missions.

"The highest number of agents dropped was about 260 in July 1944," a 1945 British report said. "From mid-June 1944 to the end of March 1945, the total was about 600, including five to 10 women . . . Agents were sometimes reluctant to jump, in which case they were persuaded with small quantities of alcohol or even . . . thrown out bodily."

KG 200 used a system of placing up to three spies, including women, in plywood containers and parachuting them to earth so the team could stay together. A report said: "The personenabwurfgerat (containers for dropping personnel) were being made at the rate of 100 a month in Wiener-Neustadt . . ."

Another report told of an ungrateful agent who, just before going out an aircraft door over Russia, hurled back a hand grenade.

Other missions "which were discussed but not attempted" included "flights to America; flights to Japan; flights to area north of Singapore."

Fishman said the American flight was to have been made by a captured B-17 which was to have dropped agents to assassinate Roosevelt.

Perhaps it was just as well that most of even the limited information Allied intelligence had on KG 200 did not filter down to the air crews. The knowledge of so many "Trojan Horses" in the skies could have caused havoc.

And we did have plenty of other problems.

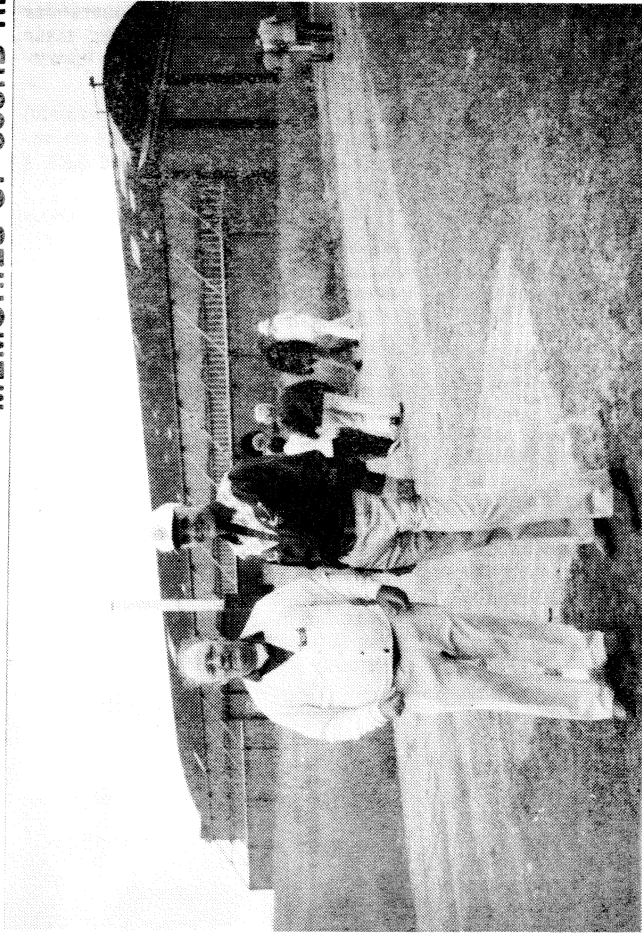
At 2 p.m. March 2, 1944, our B-17 was shot down over Belgium by what certainly looked like the real McCoy — blunt-nosed, Focke-Wulf-190s wearing the black cross of the Luftwaffe.

Reprinted with permission of 303rd

member and UPI correspondent,

Daniel F. Gilmore.

MEMORIES OF 303RD REUNION IN BRITAIN '84



Dale Rice and Bud Klint at RAF Molesworth. Remember that hangar?



A few of the lovely people of Molesworth: Robert Ward (hidden), Terry Ray, Susan Robinson, Betty Steel, James Steel, Janice Bent, George Ray, Jean Edmunds and Kay Ray, photographed at the Barn Party.

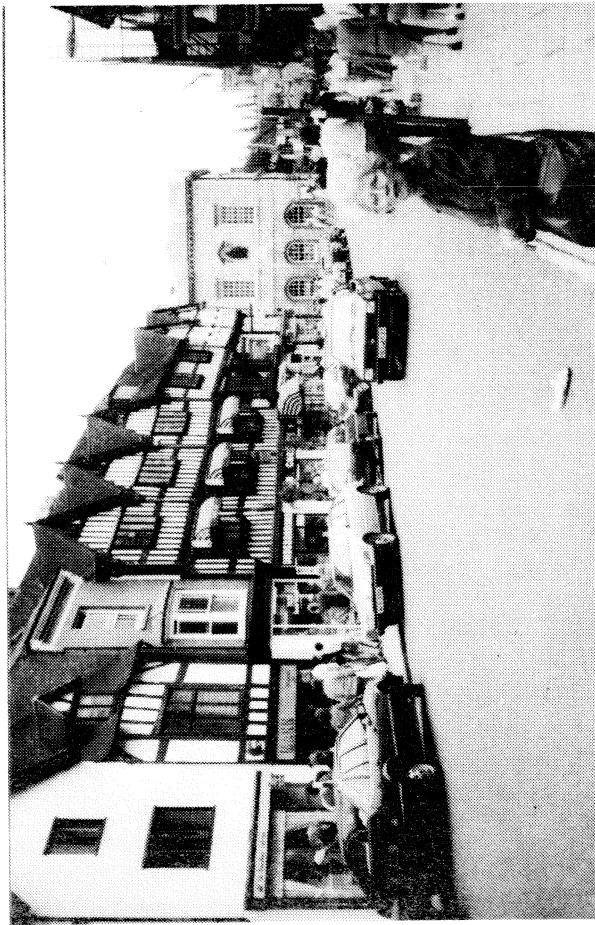


Joe Vieira presenting check to Group Captain Ward at RAF Museum.

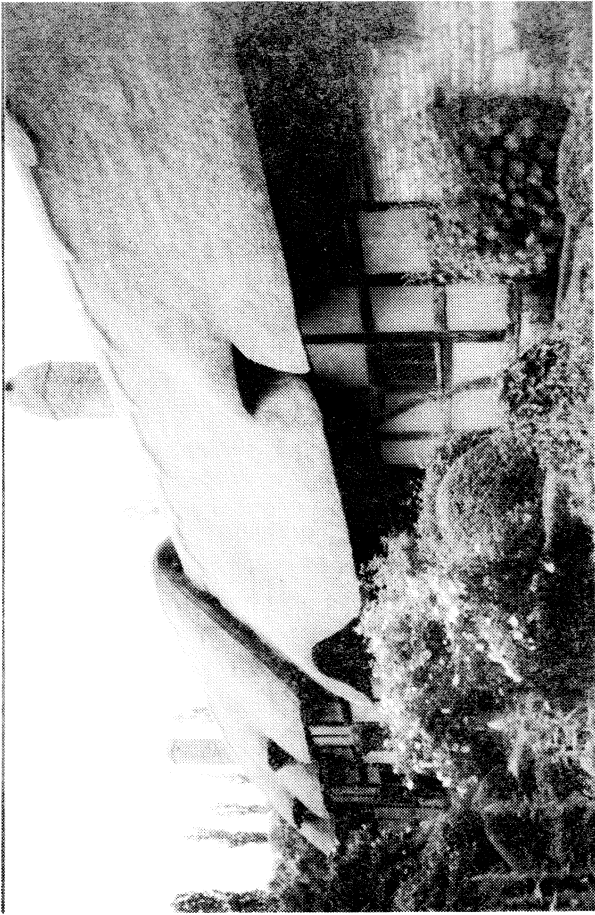


Head table at farewell banquet. Gen. William Raper, Joe Vieira, Father Skoner, Walt and Beverly Mayer, Ray and Theresa Cossey.

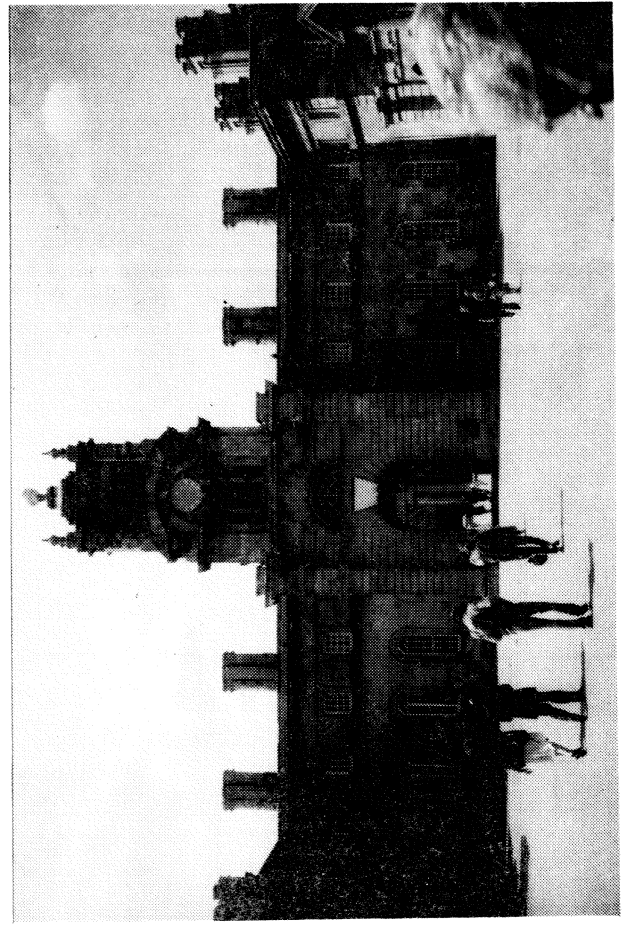
MORE MEMORIES OF 303RD REUNION IN BRITAIN '84



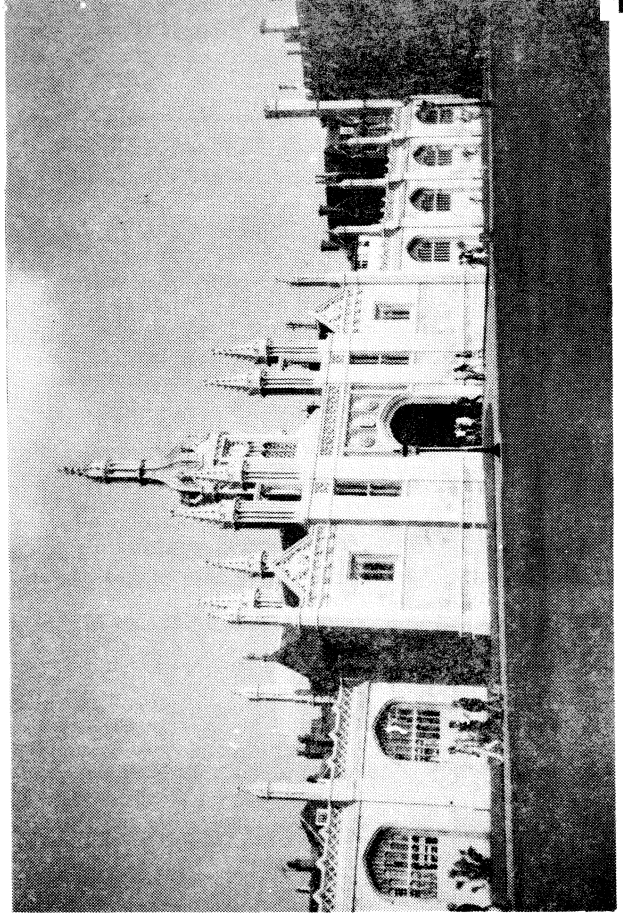
Stratford-upon-Avon. Mary Klint, right foreground.



Tour stop at Anne Hathaway's cottage, Shotton.



Entrance to Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Winston Churchill.



One of the many lovely buildings at Cambridge.



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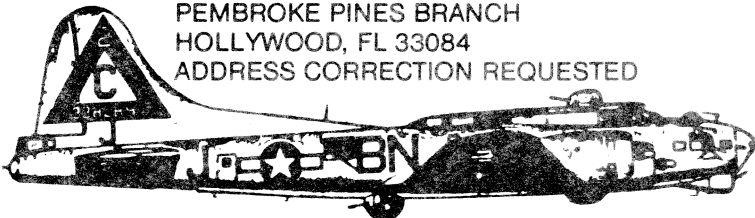
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