

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - In - Flight

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 4

Editor, Bud Klint
5728 Walla Fort Worth, TX 76133

NOVEMBER, 1984

THE PREZ SEZ . . .

Special Report from Joe Vieira

38 members of the 303rd (including our ladies) attended the Mini-Reunion we held in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society in Los Angeles, October 3-7, 1984. We had our own Group meeting room and our Friday night dinner was served there. We all enjoyed the fellowship. This was the smallest 8th AF reunion that I have attended. Unofficially, advance registration was something over 900. I heard no count on the number of walk-ins.

The 303rd books were audited by three of our members present in L.A. As of July 31, 1984, we had \$5,351.52 in the checking account.

Gen. Lew Lyle was elected a Director of the 8th AFHS. I understand he received the most votes.

Be advised that the yearly dues for the 8th have been raised to \$10. Life membership dues were not changed: 56-60 years of age - \$110, 61-65 - \$90, 66-70 - \$70, 71 or older - \$45. When applying for life membership, be sure to indicate your present age.

We wish to welcome the following new members into our association:

427th Squadron

Louis P. Bourdon	Richard R. Holt
Lee F. Knedler	A. C. Steele
Edward E. Ross	Lloyd Tanner

William L. Clyatt, Jr.

444th Sub Depot

Duane A. Bush

358th Squadron

Hendric S. Hudson	Melvin A. Brown
Harry J. Hall	Neil C. Buie

359th Squadron

William C. Mulgrew	Murel A. Murphy
Daryl W. Davis	Douglas Van Weelden

360th Squadron

Robert I. Littlefield	Lloyd D. Griffin
George W. Luke, Jr.	John M. Hagar

Elmer R. Barkman, Jr.

I wish to thank all of our members who have assisted in locating and signing up these new members. Keep up the drive. Send me the names and addresses of prospective members or make copies of the application on the back page of this Newsletter and mail them to friends or members of your crew.

We have come up with a TENTATIVE agenda and cost per person for the Seattle Reunion, July 24-28, 1985.

EARLY BIRD PACKAGE — Includes all activities from registration on Wed., July 24 through check-out on Sun., July 28.

TENTATIVE Cost Per Person: \$88

WEEKEND PACKAGE — Includes all activities from registration on Thurs., July 25 through check-out on Sun., July 28.

TENTATIVE Cost Per Person: \$74

Your association has reserved 200 rooms at the Red Lion Inn in Bellevue, WA for this reunion. Members will be responsible for making their own room reservations and payment will be made directly to the Inn. The special reunion rate will be \$49 per night, single or double. This same rate

will be extended for additional days before or after the reunion. Hotel reservations must be made prior to July 1, 1985.

Shortly after the first of the year (perhaps even earlier) we will be mailing the reunion package to all members. This will include reservation forms, complete program and pricing information. Watch for yours. If you have not received complete information by March 1, 1985, please contact me. My address appears on the last page of every Newsletter.

We are now in the computer with our membership list. Please check your mailing label. Make certain that your name, address and Squadron number are correct. I should also have your correct telephone number and your wife's name (if any). If this information is complete on the current roster, plus amendments 1, 2, 3 and 4, no problem. If not, please send the correct info to me quickly. I plan to have a new roster printed the first of the year, cost to be determined later.

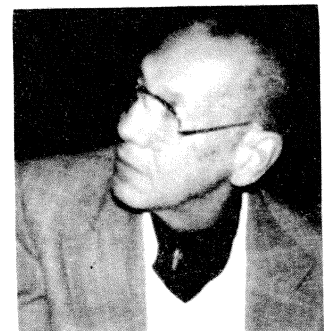
It's not too early to start getting publicity about our 1985 reunion. Please try to get notices in your local paper(s). Here's some suggested copy:

The 303rd Bomb Group Association will hold its sixth bi-annual reunion in Seattle, WA, July 24-28, 1985. The 303rd, known as "Hell's Angels" during WW II, was stationed at Molesworth, England from 1942 through 1945. The group was a part of the 8th Air Force and flew heavy bomber strikes into Germany and the occupied countries in B-17 Flying Fortresses.

1985 marks the 50th Anniversary of the rollout of the first B-17. To commemorate that important date in military aviation history, the Boeing Company will be hosting reunions for a number of WW II B-17 veteran's groups in Seattle. Further information on the 303rd Association and the 1985 reunion plans is available from the Association's president, Joseph Vieira, 6400 Park Street, Hollywood, FL 33024. (If the newspaper wants a local contact, have them add your name and address.)

THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Rev. Merritt O. Slawson



Life Is Full Of Surprises

Back in December, 1979, we had gone back to Florida where I conducted the funeral service for a very dear friend. She had been a nurse in the Everglades Hospital where our first child was born in 1941. Then came the war years. In September, 1942 I had just been transferred from an infantry unit to the Air Corps at MacDill with B-26s. One evening about six or seven o'clock, the phone rang. Surprise! This nurse had decided to marry the doctor who had delivered our son. They wanted me to perform their wed-

198 ceremony. They said they would arrive in Tampa about midnight and would have to return to the hospital immediately after the ceremony. Finding a church in a strange city for a midnight wedding was no surprise, but I was able to make the arrangements. This is just to illustrate that there are all kinds of surprises. Some may even change the course of our lives.

Some of you will recall the dark hours before dawn at Molesworth. Briefing over and all you wanted to do was fire-up, get it over with and get back in the sack. Surprise! You were floating down in a parachute or heading down for a crash landing behind enemy lines. Instead of the sack, you were in a prison camp for the duration!

Back again to December, 1979. After the service, we spent the night with friends. During the night, I was restless and decided to read. About four A.M. Mama found me slumped over in the chair. I had suffered a stroke. My left side felt queer and my left hand was as lifeless as a dead fish on the end of a pole. Fortunately, with Mama's help and good Air Force doctors, I regained a fairly good degree of normalcy.

As you examine your lives, you will find that you have had surprises you would like to forget, but, thank God, there also are those glad surprises. Take a minute, relax, and count your blessings. Even our Lord had surprises; some good, some bad. Perhaps His greatest surprise was finding faith in a least expected place. A Roman Centurian of all things! Read Luke's Gospel, chapter 7, verses 1-10. As we examine our lives, just what surprises have we given the Lord?

"Chappie" Slawson

Editor's Note: "Chappie" reports that both he and Mama are doing reasonably well and are looking forward to the reunion in Seattle next July.

NO COMPARISON

The following article is reprinted from the Kansas City TIMES/STAR. The story is by E. A. Torriero.

Those Hell's Angels riding around Missouri last week on their loud motorcycles and scaring people in the Ozarks, think they're tough.

But James Haney says the Hell's Angels of these days can't hold a candle to the first Hell's Angels. That was the outfit that flew 364 bombing missions in B-17s in World War II. They dropped more than 26,000 tons of bombs, mostly on Germany, and downed more than 378 German aircraft. Mr. Haney, of Kansas City, Kan., flew 17 of those missions from England. In 1943, his airman's suit short-circuited and caught fire. Mr. Haney survived for hours with minimal protection at a temperature of 60 degrees below zero in the gunners' bay of the plane.

"When I got back they said my veins had all but frozen up," he said.

Now that's enough to make a biker's blood curdle. That's why cantankerous Mr. Haney, 70, doesn't think highly of the new breed of Hell's Angels.

"We were tougher and rougher than they were," he said. "We would shoot our way in, that plane bouncing around, and barely make it out. These Hell's Angels today, they're nothing compared to the real outfit."



Haney sports 303rd patch

DUES REMINDER

As we approach the end of another year, please make sure your dues are paid. Check your 303rd membership card. It shows the date when your paid-up status ends. If you joined the association in 1979, your membership will expire on Dec. 31 unless you renew before then. Joe Vieira has notified all whose dues are due or who are already delinquent. If you didn't act when you received Joe's letter or if you don't recall the letter, but know your dues are due, PLEASE ACT NOW! Ten bucks for 5 years really is just a token payment. On top of that, it's tax deductible! This may be the last year you can get in on this bargain rate. Don't miss it! Don't let your membership become inactive. Remember, we are on computer now and the "monster" may spit your name out if your dues aren't current!

THE STERLING SCARE

By Nathan Smith

Long, wide piles of broken concrete adorned the Molesworth landscape adjacent to the 41st Combat Wing for many months after the old runways were replaced. The piles, left just as they had been dumped, formed about 20 adjoining rows that extended eastward to about the center of the site called home by the 427th Squadron. The large, picture windows of the 427th Nissen huts looked out on the "rock pile." From the side door of the 41st Combat Wing Building, the pile was about 30 feet dead ahead. Once, when it snowed, it almost looked pretty.

Late one afternoon I was doing some work on our target files in the intelligence section. General Travis came in and asked if I would be working that night. I said I would be there until 10 or 11 o'clock. The General said, "Good, we have a new Duty Officer tonight and you may be able to give him some help. He got into this war before we did as an American volunteer with the RAF. We have just commissioned him a First Lieutenant. Find out what you can about him and brief me when I get back tomorrow. I have to go to Bushey Park early in the morning." We went into the Duty Officer's room and, after introducing me to our new Lieutenant, the General left for his quarters.

The Lieutenant and I batted the breeze for a while. He had been flying Lancaster and told me about some of the missions he had flown. He said he always kept his wing and tail lights on over enemy territory because mid-air collisions were a much greater threat than German night fighters. He said there were many Poles, Norwegians, Danes, French and even some Germans flying for the RAF. Some of the foreign pilots had little RAF training and there was no system to their methods of approaching the targets. As a result the RAF was losing far more in mid-air collisions than they were to German fighters. The Lieutenant was from Oregon and had been a bush pilot in Alaska before the war.

I told the Lieutenant that I thought having anyone serve as Duty Officer was unnecessary. We always got alerts before sundown and nothing much ever happened at night. It was just another stupid tradition of the Army; make work, pick it up, salute it or paint it!

We must have talked for a couple of hours and I was really interested in some of his stories. Then, at about 10 PM, we were interrupted by the damndest racket I had ever heard. The Lieutenant said he had better stay by the telephone and asked if I would check out the noise.

I went charging out the side door into the dim light. As my eyes adjusted, I made out the silhouette of one hellish big airplane roosting on the pile of broken concrete. About the same time, a fire truck and a couple of other vehicles pulled up on the other side of the rock pile. In their lights, I could see a giant, Sterling bomber astride the pile of concrete chunks.

I dashed back into Combat Wing Headquarters and told the Lieutenant. He doused the lights and opened the blackout curtain. He said, "Cor Blimey, how did that thing get there? I'll bet they were coming back from a mission. Go see if they dropped their bombs. Those damn fools bring them back if they have to abort!"

I went out again. More trucks had arrived and had spotlights trained on the Sterling. Man, that was a big aircraft! It had four giant 12-cylinder Rolls Royce engines. The props were so big, it looked like only one of them could have pulled a B-17. The crew was climbing out so I climbed up on the busted concrete and asked if they had dropped their bombs. One of the crewmen said something I couldn't understand. I found later it was Polish. I kept saying "bombs." He finally replied "bombs" and began pointing to the underside of the huge wing. As he pointed to different positions he said, "50 kilo, 100 kilo, 500 kilo." He looked real pleased when I nodded and seemed to understand. Then he pointed to the junction of the wing and the fuselage and said, "2,000 kilo." He turned toward the other side of the airplane and started all over again; pointing and saying: "50 kilo, 100 kilo" and on and on. I left him in the middle of a sentence, picked my way off the concrete pile and hurried in to the new Lieutenant.

When I reported what I had heard, the Lieutenant said, "My God! Those damn fools brought their whole bomb load back! They use acid fuses as back-ups to the impact fuses. That thing may blow up any minute!" Beads of sweat started popping out on his forehead. He grabbed the telephone and got General Travis on the line. As he started telling what had happened, I left to see what was going on outside.

The trucks still had the Sterling and the rock pile pretty well lit up. The Polish crew was piling into a 6 by 6. It immediately left the area. I spotted an enlisted man who worked in the tower and asked him what had happened. He said the big Sterling had approached Molesworth on three

engines. The pilot was cleared to land on the east runway and the runway lights were turned on. He seemed to make a normal landing, but suddenly the big plane veered to the left, off the runway and headed straight for the 427th Nissen huts, filled with sleeping G.I.s.

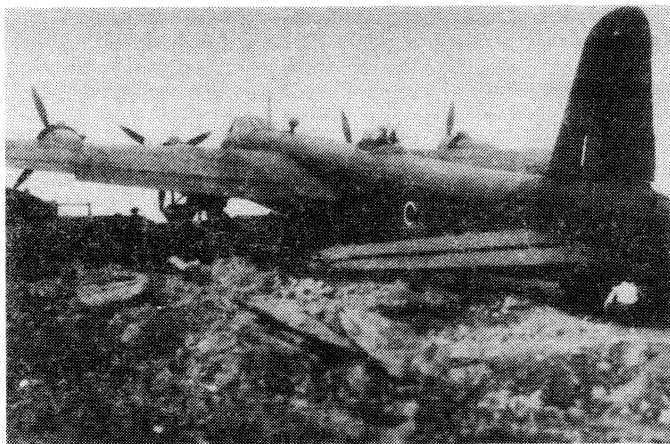
The Control Officer shouted at the pilot to turn hard left. He did, the plane hit the end of the concrete dump, bounced up on top and ran about two blocks down the rock pile before coming to a stop. He said if it hadn't hit the rock pile, it surely would have wiped out six or eight Nissen huts. He also told me there were no bombs on the Sterling.

I went back inside and couldn't believe my eyes. The Duty Officer was lying on the floor, soaked with sweat. He had found a two-wheel truck and had moved every file cabinet up against the wall. He had shoved the RAF mess hall tables that served as our desks against the file cabinets and even had several piled on top. He had created a barricade using everything in the place that could be moved.

General Travis had told him to stay on duty and man those telephones until 8 AM unless he was relieved by a superior officer. After he got off the phone, the General had called the control tower and found that the bombs had been dropped before the Sterling lost one engine. He didn't bother to tell the Lieutenant and neither did I. I went to my barracks at site 5 and got some sleep.

I got back to the Combat Wing about 10 AM next morning. All of the furniture was back in place. A lot of the concrete rubble had been hauled away and G.I.s were carefully moving some of the larger chunks near the wheels of the big Sterling. Finally, the plane was eased forward and off its perch. It sure was big! The tires were at least seven feet in diameter. A British ground crew had arrived. They found a wire had come loose on the dead engine. There were big sheets of tin fastened flat against the huge wheel supports. The wheels retracted back and up into large wells in the wings. The flat sheets of metal were the covers for the wheel wells. They took off and landed with those big, flat pieces of metal square to the wind! I watched them taxi from in front of hanger No. 1 to the end of the east runway. They turned onto the runway and took off. Boy, it was big!

Later that day, General Travis asked me about our new, ex-RAF Lieutenant. I told him where he was from and about his distrust of foreign aircrews. I ended the conversation: "He sure sweats a lot!"



The giant Sterling perched atop the concrete rubble

SAME AIRPLANE, DIFFERENT TALE

The picture was sent in by Howard E. Isaacson, a former 427th Squadron crew chief. It unmistakably is a Short Sterling sitting on a pile of rubble and Howard attests that the barracks of the 427th maintenance personnel were just beyond the nose of the big plane. Here's how he recalls that night:

Late one night, during my stay at Molesworth, we heard an aircraft coming in. While our group didn't do much night flying, there were occasional night landings and we usually paid little attention to the roar of aircraft engines, but this one was different! The noise was louder than it should have been and it kept getting closer and closer instead of farther and farther.

One of the guys in our barracks jumped off his bunk and ran to the door. As he threw it open, we heard a screaming of brakes. We all ran out and there, not very far from the end of our barracks, sat a giant aircraft with RAF markings.

It turned out that a student pilot, a New Zealander, was attempting to do a practice landing. He mistook our taxi strip for a runway and set the Sterling down on it. He soon ran out of strip and tried to brake, but it was too late and he and the airplane wound up on the rock pile. **199**

WHAT'S YOUR VERSION?

How many of you remember that night when the Sterling paid Molesworth an unexpected visit? What do you recall about the circumstances? Do you agree with Nathan's version, Howard's version, or do you have a story of your own about this incident? Let me hear from you and I'll print your comments in the next issue.

OUTSTANDING CREW CHIEFS



Here's another picture sent in by Howard Isaacson and about which he writes:

I have something of interest to all our members who worked in the rain and the dark at Molesworth. It is a picture of some of the outstanding crew chiefs of the 303rd. Most, if not all, of these guys had a hundred or more missions on their aircraft. M/Sgt. Farman (third from left, standing) had 148 missions on his plane, Rose O'Grady.

Farman was the only one in the picture that Howard identified. If you recognize yourself, or any of the other chiefs in this picture, let me know. If we get enough of them identified, I'll run the picture again with the names.

CREW REUNIONS

This note from Chas. Dando:

"Our crew has held a reunion every 2 years since '73. 1973 Lake Tahoe, CA, '75 Vail, CO, '77 Lake Lure, NC, '79 Lake Tahoe, CA, '81 Jackson Hole, WY, '83 Shawnee-on-Delaware, PA. For '85 we are looking at Carmel, CA or Seattle, WA. All original crew members are alive and well except our navigator, Lt. Harrison K. Beder who was killed in action, October 15, 1944 over Cologne.

Pilot: Charles D. Hayes
Co-Pilot: Galt L. McClurg
Bombardier: Charles A. Dando
Engineer: Elliott Sherrill
Armorer: Al Ipsen
Radio: Oscar Deen
Ball: Paul Freese
Tail: Bob Rich

All of our wives attend these reunions also. We usually spend 5 or 6 days golfing, sightseeing and re-living our experiences at Molesworth."

Thanks, Charles for the update. Crew reunions are wonderful experiences. More of us should be holding them on a regular basis. If my roster is accurate, all but McClurg and Ipsen are current members of our association. How about enlisting them and all of you coming to Seattle next July? You'd set a new record for most members of one crew to attend a 303rd reunion!

"Seattle Sepectacular"

303rd 1985 Reunion July 24 - 28

200 WAS I A SURVIVOR? The story of Robert J. Sorenson

November 11, 1944, Armistice Day . . . but, for us it was just another fighting day to get the blasted war over so we could all go home. We were stationed at Molesworth, England, part of the famous 303rd, "Hell's Angels," B-17 Bomb Group. I was the Waist Gunner on the crew of Lt. Paul Stephan. Other crew members were: Lt. John Clinger, Co-pilot; Lt. Harold Lewis, Navigator; Sgt. Tom Tapley, Toggaler; Sgt. Dwight Phillips, Engineer; Sgt. Ray Ladurini, Radio; Sgt. Ed Harris, Tail and Sgt. Stan Keyes, Ball.

The whistle blew at 3:30 AM. "Breakfast at 4, briefing at 4:30." It was a typical English morning. The fog was so thick, our clothes were damp by the time we reached the mess hall. We talked as we ate: "I'll bet we hit Berlin today, better eat all we can." "I hope it's a milk run." "With this fog, we'll be back in the sack by 6 AM."

In the briefing room we were told this was to be a quickie; a short run to the Ruhr Valley. That was good news. If we did get off, we'd be back by noon. It was the eleventh mission for our crew; another reason for optimism. It seemed that if a crew got past 10 missions, they were riding a lucky star and had a good chance of finishing their tour.

We picked up our flying equipment and piled into the truck which hauled us to the hardstand where the ground crew was getting our plane, "Duffy's Tavern," ready to go. By 5 AM we were loaded with four tons of bombs, the crew had checked all of their equipment and we were just waiting for the signal to start engines and taxi into take-off position. The fog hung on, so we sat and sweated it out. Waiting like that, it seemed that time almost stopped. Finally, at 5:30, we got the green flare. The fog had lifted enough for us to take off. The mission was "Go."

As our turn came and the pilot gunned "Duffey's Tavern" down the runway, the visibility didn't seem to be that great. As we left the ground and, almost before the wheels were retracted, we were into the "soup." Shortly, Lt. Stephan told us we would be on instruments until we cleared 18,000 ft. That made everyone a bit jittery. We chatted over the intercom to ease the tension.

About 45 minutes later, the pilot announced we were at 14,000 ft. and told me to arm the bombs. I usually did that when we were over the Channel, but today, we would be on oxygen before we cleared the overcast so I pulled the "safety pins" early.

"Pilot to Waist: Are all pins pulled?" "Waist to Pilot: Yes, Sir." "Pilot to crew: We are at 14,700 feet. Put on oxygen masks." Those were the last words I heard over the intercom. About 10 minutes later, we must have been at about 17,000 ft., I noticed a bright red glow out the left waist window. Thinking we were breaking through the clouds and the glow was the sun, I stood up to look out. That was no sun! There was a ten-foot tail of flame coming from the No. 1 engine!

I started to holler over the intercom: "No. 1 engine on fire!" but I don't think the pilot ever heard me because, almost at the same instant, the plane flipped over, went into a spin and then exploded.

Sgt. Keyes had been sitting in the waist area near me. His parachute pack lay beside him. Mine was by the rear exit door. I started for it as I gave the alarm over the intercom, but I never reached it.

As the plane flipped, I was thrown against the floor with such force that I couldn't move a muscle. It probably was only a split second, but it seemed like a long time. Then came the terrible explosion which blew me out through the fuselage head first. I remember my hips getting caught between some of the heavier steel ribs of the plane and I had to twist my body before going through.

Once in the air, everything seemed to be floating and there was a terrific ball of fire. All at once, out of the debris, came a parachute pack. It fell right into my arms. I was conscious at the time and snapped the chest pack onto my harness.

I had no fear of dying. I wasn't scared and knew I must keep my head. I may have blacked out for a few seconds for the next thing I knew, I was floating free. There was no debris around me and the fireball was gone.

I remembered our instruction to count to ten before pulling the ripcord. I counted fast and pulled the ring. Nothing happened. I looked at my hand. I was holding the ring, but there was no cord attached to it. I shook my hand and thought I threw the ring away, then started clawing at the pack. There was no sensation of falling, but I knew I had to get that chute open.

I passed out. My complete life went through my mind; every good thing and every bad thing. I even saw my grandparents. It was almost like meeting them in a new world. They had been dead for 15 years, but they seemed as real as they were when I was a kid on their farm.

When I regained consciousness, I started tearing at the pack again. Finally it opened partially, but I was tangled in the cords. As I struggled, I noticed



The crew of Duffy's Tavern: Back - Phillips, Stephan, Clinger and Lewis. Front - Ladurini, Harris, Tapley, Sorenson and Keyes.

that part of the chute was burned and hung above me like a tattered rag.

I prayed all the way down. I must have passed out three or four times. It seemed like I'd never get to the ground. The last thing I remembered was seeing a large tree coming at me very fast.

The Fortress crashed in flames on the road between the villages of Much Wenlock and Bourton, but wreckage was strewn over a four-mile area. Part of the cockpit and a wing section landed in front of the Much Wenlock post office. Miraculously, no one on the ground was injured.

The nearest residence was that of Mr. Tom Craig of Westwood Farm. He recalls that fateful morning: "It was so wet and foggy, I decided to stay in and put up the wages (make out the payroll), before going to have a look at the cattle, else I might have been in the direct path of the falling bomber. Hearing the roaring of engines and several explosions, I rushed from the house in the direction of the crash. There was wreckage everywhere. What was left of the fuselage was an inferno with ammo and bombs exploding. It was useless to get close to the site so I ran back to the house and rang up the police and fire brigade."

Sorenson didn't learn many of the details of that morning until 15 years later when he was able to establish contact with the two men who found him and probably were responsible for saving his life. They were neighbors and members of the Wenlock Home Guard.

One of those men, Mr. Edward Townsend, told this story: "Harry Murdoch and I rushed to the crash site to try to lend a hand. When we got out of town, Burt Luscott, another of the Home Guard, was stopping traffic from Much Wenlock since the road ahead was blocked by flaming wreckage. Murdoch and I set off across the marshy fields to search for any survivors. It was misty and we couldn't see too far, but in the second field from the road, we thought we heard a faint 'Help.' We set off in the direction indicated and shortly came upon an airman leaning over some wooden rails in the hedgerow. He looked in a very bad state and was only half conscious. He apparently had walked or crawled 60 or 70 yards from a large oak tree where we later found the burnt and torn remains of a parachute. He was still holding the metal grip of the parachute ripcord. Two more local

men came up and together, we placed the injured airman on an iron hut (gate) from the hedge and carried him to the road. Shortly an ambulance arrived and took him off to the hospital. I often wondered about him and didn't know he had survived until he contacted me in 1959."

Sorenson picks up the story: The next thing I was aware of was two days later when I woke up in the hospital. They told me I had a concussion, was missing a few teeth, my spine was crushed, my neck broken in two places and I had a blood clot in my left eye.

I was pleased to find that Sgt. Phillips, our engineer was in the next bed. They had found him eleven miles from where I landed. His back was broken in several places. He told me that we were the only survivors.

No one will ever know just what happened or why. Much Wenlock was about 200 miles off the course we should have taken that morning. Many theories have been advanced but no definite conclusions were ever reached.

On November 11, 1948, the town of Much Wenlock unveiled a memorial clock mounted on an old oak panel and affixed to the wall of the town Guildhall. It bears the wings of the USAAF and the RAF along with this inscription: "In honour of the sacrifices in the cause of freedom made by those members of the Allied Air Forces who lost their lives in the Borough of Wenlock, 1939-1945." Below that are the names of seven of Sorenson's crew mates, three other American and six British airmen who lost their lives in that area.

In concluding the story of his experiences, Sorenson shakes his head in bewilderment. "On this ill-fated mission, two out of nine survived. Why? The Lord, alone, knows the answer."

Robert J. Sorenson returned to his native Michigan after the war. He has since retired and lives with his wife, Mary Jane, in the Rio Grande valley of Texas at Edinburg. The other survivor, Dwight A. Phillips, Jr. is a truck driver. He and his wife, Ellore, live in Riverdale, GA. Perhaps one day Dwight will send us his personal tale of terror in the skies over Much Wenlock, England on Armistice Day, 1944.



Unveiling of the Wenlock Memorial. RAF Air Marshall the Hon. Sir Ralph A. Cochrane, USAAF Capt. Willis R. Loehr, the Mayor and Mayoress, other borough officials and dignitaries attended the ceremony in the Guildhall at Much Wenlock in 1948.

202 BOOTS — BOUND FOR HISTORY

By Sunny Weathers

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The boots that kept Victor Smith's feet warm while he bombed Berlin are going to the Smithsonian. When World War II was over, Victor Smith decided to save his brown combat boots. He had them resoled and put them away. Although Smith and his wife lived all over the world during the next 20 years, he always kept the old brown boots.

Then, while thumbing through an issue of the 8th Air Force Newsletter, Smith saw a notice that the Smithsonian was looking for brown combat boots. Two letters later, the Smithsonian Institute had sent Smith a postage-paid mailing label and asked for the boots to be sent as soon as possible. Once in the museum, Smith's boots would be used to complete a display of a World War II uniformed soldier.

When he was 14, Smith joined the Merchant Marines as a "mess boy." In 1940, before war broke out, he joined the Army Air Corps. In Molesworth, England, Smith worked as an aircraft engineer, repairing the planes that took young pilots and their crews on bombing runs. Losses were heavy and soon there was trouble filling the big bombers.

"We lost so many people that me, big guy, I volunteered to go," Smith said. "I had already been to gunnery school." That was how Smith, and his brown combat boots, came to be hanging in a ball turret under the belly of the B-17, shooting at approaching aircraft.

Smith's first two missions were over Berlin.

Those missions, along with 33 others, are painted on the back of his leather flying jacket along with a representation of the B-17 the crew called Hell's Angels.

The shortest mission Smith flew in his cramped turret was six hours. The longest was 10. From his vantage point under the plane, Smith said he could see all the action — too much of the action at times. "You'd start seeing a plane fall out of the sky right next to you," he said. "One minute you see them and one minute you don't. You don't have time to get scared."

Just in case the crews had to bail out, and just in case they lived to hit the ground, Smith and the others were given a survival kit. It included several kinds of European money and a tiny compass to help point the way back to friendly territory. Smith still has that compass, barely bigger than a fingertip. He keeps it in a glass case with the Distinguished Flying Cross he received. Someplace is the Oak Leaf Cluster the young Smith also received.

"The cross was for outstanding achievement in combat against the enemy," Smith said. You had to have 35 missions to get it. The second was for extraordinary achievement. What that extraordinary achievement was, I don't know."

They wanted to give Smith a Purple Heart, too, he said. A piece of flak from anti-aircraft guns once creased his forehead. He turned down the medal, he said, fearing people would laugh at him.

Smith was in the Air Force 21 years altogether, retiring in 1961. Through the years, he kept many of his World War II mementoes. The boots, jacket, compass and a letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt all have had a place in Smith's home.

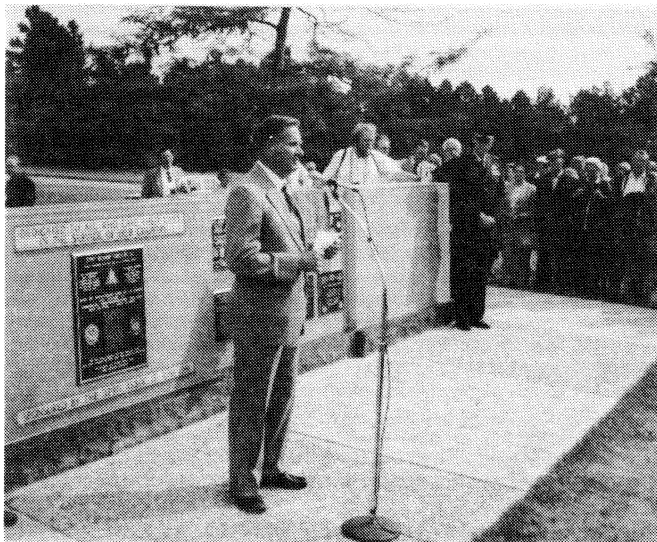
But today, the boots are flying their last mission, making their way to the Smithsonian where all the world can see what it took to keep American forces in the air during World War II. "Those were the best shoes they ever made," Smith said, looking at the boots. "They were really good."

THE RIGHT STUFF

Bob Taylor, 303rd member and former bombardier in the 360th Squadron is a proud uncle these days. Bob reports that his nephew, Capt. John W. Robinson, has been selected to fly the Number One wingman slot with the 1985 Thunderbird Aerial Demonstration Team. Capt. Robinson's father was a WW II navigator. By coincidence, Charles Prosser, who was a maintenance crewman on Bob's B-17, "Lady Luck", lives in Hot Springs, Montana. That also is the hometown of Lt. Col. Stellmon, leader of the Thunderbird team.

SSMA DEDICATION

In September, the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association held a reunion with the 379th Bomb Group in Colorado Springs. Members of both groups gathered at the Air Force Academy on Tuesday, September 11 for a dual dedication ceremony. You will recall that the 379th erected the Memorial Wall in the Academy Cemetery in 1982. On November 4 of that year, the 303rd dedicated the first plaque (aside from the 379th donor plaque) to be placed on that wall. In less than 2 years, all available space on the wall had been committed to 16 different unit plaques. The 379th was there to dedicate two additional wings. One of those new wings can be seen in the photo of Gen. Lyle as he made the dedicatory remarks for the 379th.



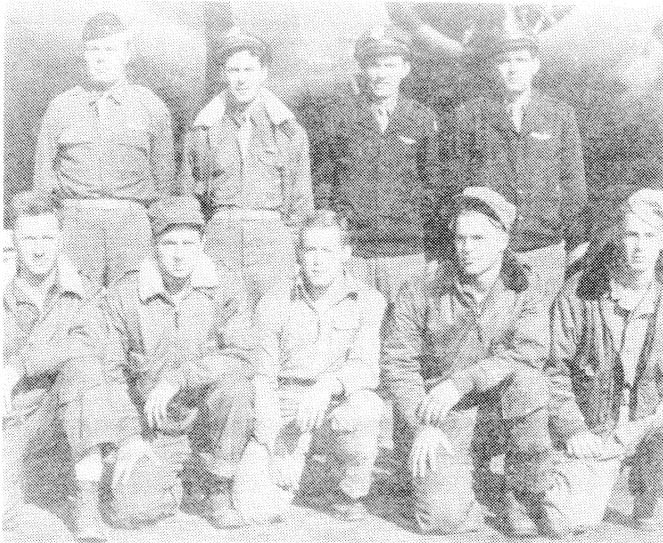
The SSMA plaque pictured below was dedicated by Jim Vaughter, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.), President of the Association and by General J. Kemp McLaughlin, USAF (Ret.) who flew in the lead ship on Black Thursday. This was the fourth plaque dedicated by the SSMA. Others are at Wright Patterson USAF Air Museum, USAF Chief of Staff Office in the Pentagon and at Arlington National Cemetery.



The 303rd played an important role in Mission 115, the second Schweinfurt raid, on October 14, 1943. Those of you who participated should be members of the SSMA. Many already are. Those who are not may join by sending \$10 for 1 year, \$20 for 2 years or \$100 for a life membership to George Roberts, Treasurer, SSMA, 49-30th Street, Gulfport, MS 39501.

WANTED . . .

Information about any of these men:



Back: Lt. Holm, Pilot; Lt. Davis, Bombardier; F/O Fletcher, Co-Pilot; Lt. Howard, Navigator. Front: Bob Huck, Waist; Sgt. Dale, Radio; Sgt. Ebert, Ball; Sgt. Compton, Engineer; Sgt. Copland, Tail.

Bob Huck is a relatively new member of the 303rd BGA. He has lost touch with other members of his 358th Squadron crew. If you know anything about any of the men in the crew picture, please get in touch with Bob at 741 Bamboo Terrace, San Rafael, CA 94903 (415) 479-8149.

Bob and wife, LaVerne made the reunion in Britain. They say, "The tour was terrific!"

GLAD YOU ENJOYED IT

The last issue of the Newsletter elicited more letters and compliments than it deserved, both from members who attended the Reunion in Britain and from those who missed it. Here's one of the latest, written in late October:

"I was very interested in reading the last copy of the Newsletter about the Reunion in England. My wife, Dorothy, and I just returned from a trip to Europe and England and we also made a visit to the old 303rd base at Molesworth which we enjoyed very much.

In reading Ben Smith's book 'Chick's Crew' before we left on our trip, I found the exact location where my crew went down, near Saarbrucken, Germany. I was not with Pilot John Long and the rest of the crew because I

"Seattle Sepectacular"

303rd 1985 Reunion July 24 - 28

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Be There! Reserve the dates now!

TAKE TIME

- Take time to think, It is the source of power
- Take time to play, It is the secret of perpetual youth
- Take time to read, It is the fountain of wisdom
- Take time to pray, It is the greatest power on earth
- Take time to love and be loved, It is a God-given privilege
- Take time to be friendly, It is the road to happiness
- Take time to laugh, It is the music of the soul
- Take time to give, It is too short a day to be selfish
- Take time to work, It is the price of success.

-- From Squibb Nurses' Notes

had been selected to fly lead Navigator on the mission.

With the help of some very nice 'natives' in Saarbrucken, we found our way to a Forest Camp ten km. north of town. This was very close to where the plane crashed. When visiting the American Military Cemetery at Madingly on our return to England, I learned that Capt. Long was buried in an American Cemetery near Ardennes, France.

In closing, I would like to urge everyone who can do so to come to the 303rd Seattle Spectacular in 1985."

George M. Carroll, 360th Sqdn.

TAPS

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

GENE F. BRADY, 360th Squadron
SW 510 Drive, 3-20
Nineveh, IN 46164

ROBERT HULLAR, 427th Squadron
131 Horseshoe Trail
Ormond Beach, FL 32074

As editor of your Newsletter, I dislike this "TAPS" section. It is so simple and cold to merely note the passing of one of our number. Yet, I generally have no more information than that shown above. I realize that all those whose names appear in this section were very special people and certainly deserve more than a mere listing. Still, I feel that all should be treated equally. In spite of this, I must make an exception in the case of Bob Hullar.

I joined Bob's crew in Walla Walla, WA in June, 1943 as his Co-pilot. For the next nine months, our lives were obviously very closely intertwined. We joined the 427th Squadron in August, 1943, just in time to make the first trip to Schweinfurt our second mission.

Bob stayed on at Molesworth after his tour and served as Operations Officer. As such, he touched the lives of a great many of you. He helped close up the operation at Molesworth when hostilities ceased. He remained in the Air Force and retired as a Colonel. In recent years, he was in the real estate business in Florida.

Bob attended our WDC reunion in Sept., '83 and was elected to the Board of Directors. In January of '84, cancer was discovered in his hip. He had extensive surgery which was quite successful in itself, but the cancer began to pop up in other areas. He died on October 29 when a blood clot stopped his heart suddenly.

Many of us will feel a gap as we always do when we lose someone who has played an important role in our lives. Everyone who knew him, will miss Bob Hullar. We all join in a prayer of condolence for Bob's wife, Jean, for their children and grandchildren.





303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.
Might - In - Flight



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- _____ \$1.50 303rd Pin
- _____ \$1.00 303rd Decal
- _____ \$5.00 First 300 Mission Book (Includes Decal)

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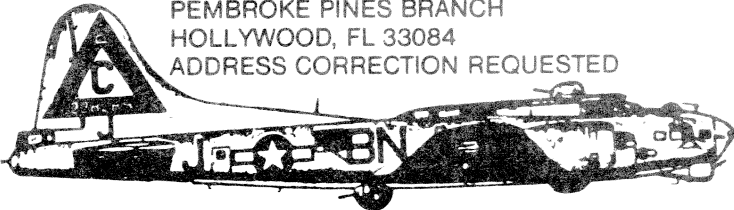
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