

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - In - Flight

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME IX NUMBER 1

Editor: Bud Klint
5728 Walla Fort Worth, TX 76133

FEBRUARY, 1985

THE PREZ SEZ . . .

Special Report from Joe Vieira

We welcome these new members into our great association:

Headquarters

LeRoy Weston, Jr.

427th Squadron

Lloyd Coleman

Joseph P. Mickiewicz

444th Sub Depot

Maurice J. Paulk

358th Squadron

Eugene R. Stewart

Martin L. (Pete) Clark

Arni L. Samarlidason

359th Squadron

Marion D. Blackburn

Robert F. Jaouen

Al Ipsen

Galt L. McClurg

Theron S. Tupper

Everett E. Van Horn

360th Squadron

Marvin R. Edwards

Guy H. McClung

Robert A. Finley

Edgar W. Cole

Unit Unknown

Francis H. Dietrich

Floyd A. Sprague

I wish to thank all members who helped locate the above men. I must also thank Elmer and Jean Fessler for the fine work they do with the 8th AFHS Clearing House. Jean keeps me posted and has been a jewel in giving me names and addresses of 303rdrs she hears from or about. She also writes to many of them to let them know about our association. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK OF RECRUITMENT — WE ARE GROWING ALL THE TIME!

The only financing for the operation of our association is the dues that members pay. You'll have to agree that \$10 for 5 years is a minimal amount. That's why it is important that your dues are paid promptly when due. Please check your membership card to see if your dues are delinquent or will become due this year. Your card shows the period for which you have paid dues. If the expiration date has passed, or is coming up soon, please send your check today. If you don't know your status, contact me. My address appears in the Application for Membership which is printed on the back page of each issue of your Newsletter.

Everyone should have received a special Reunion mailing. If not, you should have it shortly. It includes the official program, hotel and reunion reservation forms for our 1985 reunion in Seattle, WA. If you don't get this packet by March 1, 1985, please get in touch with me. Please be advised that the DEADLINE DATES ARE FIRM. They are spelled out in the reunion brochure. Note them and adhere to them, please!!!

"Seattle Spectacular"

303rd 1985 Reunion July 24 - 28

50th Anniversary Party for the B-17

WEDNESDAY, 24 JULY, 1985

Early Bird registration. Dinner at Seattle Naval Station.

THURSDAY, 25 JULY

Registration (continues through Sat.). Afternoon and evening tour of Tillicum Village, Blake Island State Park. Dine in the "Longhouse" on famous Pacific Ocean Salmon baked, Indian style, around an open fire.

FRIDAY, 26 JULY

BOEING DAY — From 9 AM 'til 5 PM, Boeing will host World War II B-17 Groups at the new Museum of Flight on Boeing Field. It's part of a three-day celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the roll-out of the prototype of the famous B-17, Flying Fortress. There will be many special displays featuring the B-17 and its history. One or more flyable 17s are expected to be on hand along with other historic aircraft. Only Bomber Groups and units directly involved with the B-17 will be hosted on this, the opening day. Saturday is reserved for past and present Boeing employees and Sunday is a public open house.

SATURDAY, 27 JULY

Squadron Meetings and the General Membership Meeting will occupy the morning. The afternoon will be free for shopping, sightseeing, visiting or what-have-you. In the evening will be the gala, bi-annual Dinner Dance.

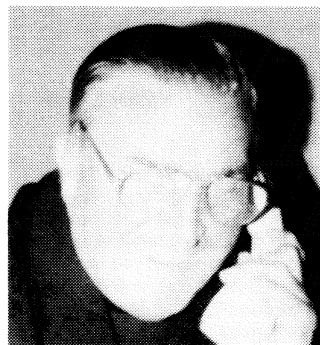
SUNDAY, 28 JULY

Farewell breakfast, Memorial Chapel Services conducted by Father Skoner and "Chappie" Slawson. Then, hugs and kisses all around (opposite sex, only!) and fond adieus until the next "gathering of the Angels" at Omaha in '87.

These are just the highlights! There will be plenty of time for renewing acquaintances, making new friends, swapping lies, and perhaps even raising a pint or two for old times' sake. We'll be staying at the Red Lion Inn, Bellevue. It's minutes from downtown Seattle and just a few blocks from Bellevue Square, the largest shopping center in the Northwest. Walt Mayer, and wife Beverly, have worked hard to complete the arrangements. They promise you'll be pleased with the Red Lion, one of the most dynamic hotels in the Northwest.

Complete details, including costs, are spelled out in the Reunion Packet mailed separately to all members by Joe Vieira. Advise Joe if yours does not arrive by March 1.

The "Seattle Spectacular" is going to be a real wing-ding. Let's make it our biggest yet! We had 313 at the WDC banquet in '83. Let's have more than 400 in Seattle. Be sure that you are in that number!



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Rev. Edmund J. Skoner

Memories

Our 303rd Newsletter is so important because of the memories it brings back. I am sure I speak for everyone when I say it is anxiously received and thoroughly enjoyed by air and ground personnel alike. I am thankful for this opportunity to write about some of my recollections.

For me the memories date back to Boise, Idaho where the 303rd Bomb Group was activated. Indeed, it was mostly civilians who reported to that Air Base. For many of us, it was our introduction to military life. The train-

206 ground personnel began right after assignment of quarters; marching, preparing to go overseas. Personally, I thank God for Bernie Kaiman, a Bostonian assigned to Headquarters Personnel. He took me under his wing and taught me all the military procedure I needed to know (and also a few "tricks of the trade").

Then came our first orders to move: onward to Alamogordo to prepare for the hardships of war-time living. Our next orders sent the 303rd to Biggs Field, Texas to make immediate preparations to leave the country. Then came the long cross-country train ride to New York where we boarded the Queen Mary and sailed for England. My strongest memory of that trip is thousands of troops sleeping everywhere; from blankets on the decks to hammocks in the hold. After five quick days without escort, we landed at Gourck, Scotland. From there we were trucked to Molesworth.

We settled into the Nissan huts which had been thrown up overnight, to wait for the air crews. They arrived very shortly and then, I recall the preparations for the start of bombing missions. What excitement! That first mission with the early rising, the briefings and the formations of planes heading for German occupied France is something I'll never forget. Indeed, for the Hell's Angels Group, the war now began in earnest.

Little did anyone think the ground personnel would remain at Molesworth almost four years. Mission after mission we waited and watched and counted the returning planes. At long last the final mission was over. We even got to see the return of some of our men who had been shot down and imprisoned for almost three years. At V-E day, everyone began to think of home . . . no such luck! The ground personnel were transferred to the Air Transport Command. Finally, Japan surrenders, the war is over and we're headed for home. What a thrill! Most men returned to the civilian life they had left, back to their families, jobs and friends.

It took us 30 years to get the 303rd BGA formed and our first reunion scheduled. That one was in Orlando. Then on to Colorado Springs, Dayton, San Diego and Washington D.C. What a thrill to meet again every two years to renew friendships and share our memories of the war and even of the visits by truck to Northampton, Bedford and other towns near the air base. No one who has attended any reunion has failed to renew friendships and acquaintances with old "Buddies". Even though our memories of faces and names may have faded, it's great to re-live experiences with others who shared in a most trying, most demanding period of our lives.

Of course, our most climatic reunion was the special one at Molesworth last year when almost 200 members, wives and guests returned to the old air base. We saw the airfield returned once again to its peacetime need — a huge farm. We also paid homage to our fellow airmen who made the supreme sacrifice with the dedication of a memorial at Brington church. That reminds me that, perhaps our most meaningful reunion was the one in San Diego when the 303rd Memorial Fund was established and where we collected almost five thousand dollars to get it started. Since then we have dedicated several plaques and living memorial trees to honor the memory of those who gave their lives in the service.

In conclusion, may I say once again how important the Newsletter is in stirring up the memories of all members of the 303rd Bomb Group. To the credit of the association, we have always placed first in our thoughts at our reunions those who were not so fortunate as we have been to be able to meet again and again to renew and strengthen our friendships. True, indeed, we have planted trees and consecrated plaques in their honor, but it is particularly at our reunions when they are with us in spirit, that we pledge our allegiance to them with the sincere promise that they shall never be forgotten. **MAY GOD BLESS THEM ALL AS WE REMINISCE!!!** God willing, let's meet again in Seattle next July!!!

Father Skoner

REUNION TRAVEL

It is vitally important that you decide how you are going to travel to Seattle and make reservations EARLY. We have it on good authority that ALL public transportation into the area will be saturated from 7/23-7/30. Boeing has invited all WW II B-17 Groups. We don't know how many have accepted, but there will be many. This is why it is imperative that you meet or BEAT the reservation deadlines in your Reunion Packet. It is strongly suggested that commercial airline reservations be completed by March 31 to take advantage of any discounts that may be available to you.

All major airlines are aware of the Seattle Reunions and most have made special deals with individual Groups. We have one with Eastern which is explained in your Reunion Packet. If you will be flying from a city not served by Eastern, we have an alternate offer through the 381st Bomb Group from American. This will permit us to use the 381st discount from points served by American, but not by Eastern. This is a dual-level discount. If you make reservations and buy your ticket 45 or more days before depar-

ture, the discount is 40%. From 14 to 44 days prior, 35%, but it is highly unlikely there will be any discounted space available during this latter period. There is no cancellation penalty connected with this offer. To take advantage of the American rates, you must be departing from a city not served by Eastern and you or your travel agent must contact American through this toll-free number: 1-800-433-1790. You must also mention the Star Number: S8618.

There may be other discounts available for plane, train or bus travel. Be sure to check with the carrier you select. 303rd member, George Knox, Altoona, PA sent a clipping from "The Retired Officer" about Greyhound's new plan for retired military personnel and dependents — a 50% discount. You can buy a 15 day, unlimited travel, Ameripass for \$124; 30 days for \$174. Proper military identification is required. Trailways has a comparable plan. In any case, ASK for military or Senior Citizen discounts and by all means, **MAKE YOUR TRAVEL RESERVATIONS EARLY!!!**

OUTSTANDING CREW CHIEFS

Thanks to all who attempted to identify some of the men pictured in the November issue. Ten men wrote or telephoned with suggestions as to who one or more of the men were. We have three positive identifications by men who recognized their own pictures. No one seems to know the man standing, second from right. Not one suggestion came in as to his identity. We have six names for the first man on the left. Here's the picture again, sorry it isn't sharper, with possible names. The men are numbered, left to right, back row first.



1. **Bob Heiliger 360th, Sgt. Rydell 359, Mike Osicki 359, Sgt. Howes 359, John Simpson 358. Buford Pafford 359 was named twice but he says that although it does look like him, he doesn't think it could be. Buford was Chief on the first 303rd B-17 to finish 75 missions, but it was then returned to the States. He returned Stateside in May '44 and doubts that Farman could have had 148 missions on an aircraft before that date. J. P. Thompson bears this out. His records date the photo, 2 May, 1945.**
2. **Pete Petersen 359 (3 votes), Sgt. Anders 359.**
3. **Frank Farman 427 (3 votes), Jim Westmoreland 359, Sgt. Perry 359.**
4. **Norman Cote 360.**
5. **Blaine (Pappy) Ruark 359 (3 votes). Morton Moon 359 also was mentioned, but Morton says, "Not me, that's Pappy Ruark!"**
6. **James Thompson 359. Everybody agreed on this one, including James who has the same photo in his scrapbook.**
7. **????**
8. **Alfred Banners 359, George Ham 358, Sgt. Rosen 359.**
9. **Don Lesh 359, Sgt. Corley 360, Sgt. Weiler 359, Howard Isaacson 427. 2 agreed on Isaacson, including Howard, and HE sent in the photo in the first place!**
10. **Van Sleet 359, Gus Gradovite 360.**
11. **Joe Trubella 359, Oldrich Fojt 427 - 2 votes. Oldrich confirmed.**

STRUCK A NERVE!

The November Newsletter carried a crew picture sent in by Bob Huck. He asked for help in locating his crewmates. Bob's wife, La Verne writes: "Lt. Ed Davis saw the picture. He immediately called Bob from Florida. They had a good chat. Lt. Davis is a Dolphin fan and was hoping they would make the Super Bowl. They did, and Bob and Ed made plans to meet at the Hyatt-Regency, Oakland the night before the game. It was such a joyous reunion! I was truly thrilled to be a part of it. Boy, the stories and memories came rushing in. We had a super time and I took a lot of pictures."

The airplane is a Stirling, not Sterling. I'm sure most of you noted that error in the last issue, but it took a letter from an overseas member to bring it to your editor's attention. The following account is from Curtis M. Olsen, Major, USAF, Ret., who now lives in Algarve, PORTUGAL.

I enjoyed the November edition of the Newsletter, as I do all of them, but this one brought back a most graphic memory. The unexpected Stirling landing at Molesworth will remain impressed on my memory for the rest of my life.

The night it happened, July of '43 I believe, was also the night of a Group party. As always, the officers outnumbered the invited girls and I was in the forefront of those trying to claim the sole attentions of any one of the guests. To my great surprise and elation, I managed to talk one young lady, an Irish nurse, into visiting the hut I shared with 427th C.O., "Buck" Hagenbuck. That hut was right off the taxiway.

Through the most urgent, passionate and imaginative (?) pleading/cajoling/coaxing (ad nauseum, I'm sure), I managed to get the partially undressed nurse into my bunk and was attempting to get better acquainted. She was adamant that she had gone as far as she was about to venture; repeating, "God will find out". I was understanding of her concern, but desperately trying to find a way around it.

No matter what I said, the answer was, "God will know". Finally, I resorted to that old argument, "It is all part of His scheme of affairs for men and women" — when CRASH! BANG! THUD! CRUNCH!!! — followed by her, "I told you He'd know!!!" At her words, a hunk of plasterboard fell from the ceiling atop the bed. We both leapt to the floor, me groping for a flashlight, she groping for her uniform.

Needless to say, the big Stirling had come to rest on the rock pile near my hut. Its right wingtip had grazed the roof enough to punch a hole in it. I can't confirm or refute Nathan Smith's story since I wasn't really concentrating on the aspect of live bombs, having bombed in my attempt to score one for the Group, or whatever. The worst part of the episode was that I had to load the young lady on my bike and pedal her back to the Officer's Club where the party was still in full swing, but SANS liquor.

'Tis a sad, sad tale I've spun that I've never spun in print before, but one that brings back memories of that spring and summer and of the camaraderie of the 427th Squadron. The saddest part of the summer was Buck's death flying, I believe, a P-40. The best part was the completion of the full tour by the crew "Strick's Vicious Virgin".

I finished my tour with the Watten raid on 27 Aug. '43, having left Strick's crew for my own. I then went to Bovington as an instructor. I finished the War in B-29s and flew commercially until retirement in 1976.

We have had one crew reunion and I hope to have more, but it is a long way from here, where we've lived since 1969, to anywhere in the States. Besides, summer is the best time of the year here and that, naturally, is the time when all the AF reunions take place.

I don't give up hope, however, and one day I might make a reunion, although I cannot believe my present wife would relish meeting so many people she doesn't know. Besides, she saw the War, as a child, from the other side and does not have the same gay memories I have.

I will await further Newsletters to see how other ex-427th members describe that crazy night. For me it is one of the stronger memories.

DONATION WORKING

You'll recall that we made a donation to the Molesworth Village Hall restoration fund during our Reunion in Britain last June. A letter from Betty Steel of Yew Tree Farm reports this progress: "The Village Hall is progressing and the shell of the new kitchen and toilets is completed. We are hoping to progress more in 1985. Being a small community, it takes a while to get things going." Her letter was dated Jan. 4, 1985.

A WULF(E) BY ANY OTHER NAME

The Daniel Gilmore story in our August, 1944 issue mentioned the Germans capturing a downed B-17 named Wulf Hound. Jerry Lee Fegette wrote to correct the spelling; the name was Wulfe Hound. Jerry has a picture of the crew that went down with the plane on Dec. 12, 1942 and the nose art is clearly visible. Even without that, Jerry should know . . . His dad, Lee Fegette named the plane and was radio operator when Wulfe Hound went down over occupied France.

NEW LAPEL PIN SIZE

Joe Vieira, President, Secretary, Treasurer, Information Officer, Ramrod, Quartermaster and Supply Sergeant has a new supply of 303rd lapel pins. The old model was 1-1/4" in diameter, the new one is a more discreet, 7/8". Use the Membership Application/Order Form on the back page to order this, or any other supplies listed.

Ann Terri Quill who has attended several 303rd reunions with Chuck Morrill is compiling information for a new book devoted exclusively to 303rd war-time experiences. She writes to each member of the 303rd: "I would like to have your own personal account of your experiences, both good and bad, humorous or otherwise. The most interesting, enjoyable, and most unbelievable stories are what I am looking for.

As there will be many pictures included with this story, I would appreciate snapshots taken during the time you spent in service if they relate to any part of your personal experiences. I will also need the approximate dates, times and places.

Please include any change of address and your present telephone number. I also would like to know what has been happening in your life; a brief summary of what you have been doing since the war.

I thank you for what you have done for this country and for the world. Being a woman, I have never had the opportunity to fight for my country. With your help, I have the chance to do something worthwhile for my country and for the courageous men who honor me by allowing me to write this most worthwhile and historic book.

Thank you for your cooperation. I am anxiously awaiting your letters."

Very sincerely,
Ann Terri Quill

Time is of the essence to comply with Ann Terri's request. She is hopeful that she can have her book published before the Seattle reunion. Send your material to:

Ann Terri Quill, 85 Brown Ave. #9
Hampton Beach, NH 03842

"ALBERT DE GROOTE"



Conrad Kersch,
April 1984 at his
Stagecoach, NV home

Conrad J. Kersch began his Army career as an Infantryman in 1935. After one hitch, he re-enlisted in the Army Air Corps, completed mechanic's school and went to work on Curtiss Jennies. He quickly graduated to more modern aircraft and was associated with the Boeing line from the YB-17 through the B-17G. He went through gunnery school, became a turret specialist and flew 50 bombing missions in the South Pacific before winding up in the Osborne Provisional Group and heading for the ETO in November, 1943. On arrival, he was assigned to Molesworth, 303rd Bomb Group, 427th Squadron as a replacement flight engineer. At 28, he was one of the "old men" of the Group. After a few missions, he was checked out as a Bombardier. Shot down on his sixth mission, he successfully evaded for nearly a year, operating as a member of the French Underground.

Now, some 40 years later, he has recorded his experiences and hopes to have them published in a book titled "The Albert De Groote Story". Here is an excerpt from the opening chapters of his rough manuscript. This portion begins near the close of the first chapter.

Only 12 bombers from our base were to hit this day's target, long range rocket emplacements located in a small forest near Vizerne, Nord, France. The day, 26 March, 1944, was clear and the target would be easy to find having been pinpointed by resistance forces in the area. The bombing altitude was 22 to 24 thousand feet. Even though the sky was sunny, the outside temperature gage registered minus 30°F. We crossed the English Channel quickly and were soon welcomed with scattered, inaccurate bursts of flak from coastal defenses. We had crossed the French coast in the vicinity of Dunkirk. Soon we passed our IP and turned onto the bomb run. I opened the bomb-bay doors. As if on cue, flak bursts appeared in front of us at our exact altitude. It was obvious that we would fly through that spot in the sky. The flak was "walking" toward us in bursts of four, closely spaced. I called for a check of crew positions, relayed it to the pilot and then concentrated on the lead bomber for the bomb release. Even though I had braced against the expected flak, I was shocked by its arrival.

208 Jed as though someone had thrown a large handful of gravel at the plexiglass nose. I was seated in a bent-forward position and the burst, coming from below, through the chin turret, hit me in the stomach, chest and face. Fortunately, my flak vest took most of the impact. Its fabric was shredded and my eyes and oxygen mask were clogged with debris. The blow had lifted me a couple of feet upward. Somehow I regained my seat. The wind was shrieking into the nose compartment through the many holes torn by the shrapnel.

The Navigator was pounding on my back for attention and blood seemed to be everywhere. I thought, "Surely, I'm dying!" As those old WW I veterans had told me, "If you're wounded and feel it, you're okay, but if you're hit and don't feel it, you've bought the farm!" My chest hurt, but I didn't feel that the loss of blood would be that great. I looked at the Navigator and saw that the blood was mostly his. He had taken some flak up into his mouth from under his jaw.

I looked to the right and then to the left. The number 2 engine was dead and the prop feathered; number 3 was burning fiercely. We were dropping out of formation, but we trailed along to finish our bomb run. The formation released their bombs. I delayed momentarily as we were trailing by perhaps a quarter of a mile. As soon as I called, "Bombs away!", the pilot rang the alarm bell and hollered, "Bail out!" over the intercom.

The nose was filled with smoke by now. I took a parachute to the Navigator and helped him snap it onto his harness. After adjusting his harness, I shoved a first aid kit down inside his flight jacket and led him to the escape hatch. Putting his hand on the rip-cord handle and motioning him out, I rushed back to my position, discarding the remains of my flak vest. I removed my oxygen mask gingerly for there were numerous flak splinters pinning it to my face. My chest hurt and the wound in my neck was bleeding freely, but I had no time to examine the extent of my wounds. I turned to the hatch as I slipped into my parachute harness and clipped the chestpack in place. Before I could adjust the harness straps, the pilot appeared in the hatchway. The plane was flying on auto-pilot and the fire appeared to have progressed through the wing into the fuselage. I had no time to retrieve my shoes, pistol or other personal items. I sat down with my feet hanging out of the hatch and stared at the distant landscape, still not believing our predicament. "My first bail out! After having flown since 1936, it has finally happened!" I thought. Suddenly, I was aware of the pilot's hands on my back, urging me to exit. Grasping the loops of my flight boots with my right hand and holding onto my chestpack with my left, I fell out with both eyes tightly closed.

The blast of air and violent tumbling action tried to undo my effort to stay in a balled-up position. My arms and legs were being pried apart. As soon as my forward speed subsided, the turbulence ceased and the feeling of falling was gone. I opened my eyes a little at first and then discovered it was almost pleasant to look around. Parts of our disintegrated bomber fell past me and the air seemed filled with aluminum flakes, evidently caused by the fire. Another B-17 was going down and I caught glimpses of airmen bailing out. There were parachutes above me, but I delayed opening mine as we had been told at briefings to wait as long as possible since that might aid in avoiding capture.

By now I was falling headfirst in a slow spin. My legs were extended with my toes curled to keep my boots on my feet. This freed my right hand to check my chute pack and harness. The harness was quite loose, but I thought it would be safe enough. Looking down it seemed it would take almost forever to reach the ground. The houses, roads, rivers and canals appeared so far away. My mind wandered: "Would I be captured? What will happen if I do evade? Am I going to die of my wounds?" Then I was shocked to reality! The ground was rushing at me and objects were becoming more distinct. I jerked the release. To my horror, the only thing that happened was the harness straps came off my shoulders! I quickly pulled them back and, holding them with my left hand, pulled the pins of the chestpack one-by-one, with my right. Gratefully, I watched the chute and shroud lines snake upward between my legs. The canopy blossomed! The harness jerk was almost gentle and quickly, I found myself drifting below the tree tops in a nearby forest.

The landing was perfect for as I lit, I rolled forward toward the collapsed canopy. As I gathered the chute and stuffed it under a pile of brush, I looked about surveying my surroundings. A short distance away, perhaps 150 yards, a troop-laden German truck was pulling to a stop on a narrow road. They obviously had been watching the descending parachutes. I saw the soldiers jump out of the truck and start to run toward me. I almost panicked as they pointed their weapons toward me, but, without hesitation, I fled into the woods.

Being March, the trees, fields and hedges were bare, so I scurried from tree trunk to tree trunk, using them as shields. As I came out of the small forest, I saw some peasants standing near a cottage. I ran toward them, gesturing for a change of clothes. I couldn't hear as my speedy free-fall combined with a head cold caused the rupture of both ear drums. The peasants ran away, but I spotted another cottage not too far away. I entered it, but the occupants dashed out the other door in fright. I was almost in tears. We had been briefed to expect help from the local people.

Suddenly I realized I was like a hunted animal without hope of help, so I began to regain my calm.

First, I had to get beyond the field of vision of those pursuing Germans and find a good hiding place. Out the back door of the cottage I could detect 8 to 10 soldiers emerging from the barren forest. I ran out the front door, surveying possible escape routes as I went. It appeared that the hedges lining the fields would be best to use as the German soldiers were encumbered with equipment and weapons. I jumped over some, clawed my way over others while the Germans had to find openings or gates. Before long I couldn't see them any more so I began to look for a hiding place.

A shallow gully filled with dead leaves beside a hedge row was the best I could find. After burrowing into the leaves as deep as possible, I covered myself up and relaxed. A wave of exhaustion washed over me. Feeling that I was about to doze off, I stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth so snoring wouldn't give me away.

After what seemed a very short time, I was awakened by someone shaking me quite firmly. I froze in fear, anticipating the worst. As I opened my eyes I was surprised to find that it was dark. The sun had been shining brightly when I buried myself in the gully. Looking up I could make out four silhouettes. Since I couldn't hear, we used gestures to communicate. They had some French farm clothes and, unmindful of the young lady in the group, I stripped off my flying suit and boots. Even though it was still winter and the middle of the night, the situation was so exhilarating I actually felt a warm glow.

As soon as I had changed clothes we staggered across the plowed fields in complete silence, occasionally stopping while someone ran ahead to scout. Only hand signals were used for directions. Finally we halted at a low fence. Without too much delay we were waved into a farm cottage on the other side of the fence. Our eyes were accustomed to the darkness, so even the dim kerosene lamp light hurt our eyes at first. We stood in a tight circle for a time, scrutinizing each other. Suddenly the French peasants broke into laughter and chatter with much embracing. I gestured that I couldn't hear and explained my problem in German since I did not speak any French.

The lady of the house soon had a welcome plate of eggs, hash and bread before me, complimented by a large glass of wine. Through gestures and penciled sketches, I found that the German troops had captured all the parachutists except me. Also, that they had done much shooting in my direction during the chase. This farm family had been in the area during my descent from the falling bomber. They had observed my course during the chase, all the way to my hiding place. They said the troops had searched all houses in the area until dark, offering a generous reward for my capture. While we sat around the table enjoying some more wine, the lady of the house examined and dressed my wounds. They were found to be minor. Only the throat wound required the removal of a large piece of flak shrapnel.

Editor's note: After a trip to St. Omer and a couple more encounters with German soldiers, Conrad was transferred to another house by his underground friends. It was here that he received his papers that were to serve him well in the coming months. We pick up his tale:

One evening after 20 hundred hours, the underground chief entered the house after the usual coded knock on the door. Marie (the Flemish hausfrau) interpreted what he had to say. He handed me my I.D. card and occupation (work) card. My alias on the I.D. was "Albert De Groot" and my work card classified me as a farmer. I learned that farmer was the usual occupation given to most evadees. They explained that children of French farmers seldom attended school beyond the elementary level, so were considered to be of below average intelligence. This often came in handy when instructed to play dumb in encounters with Germans.

Editor's note: Now you know the reason for the title. Without giving away the whole book, we'll try to print a couple more "teaser" excerpts in future issues of the Newsletter.



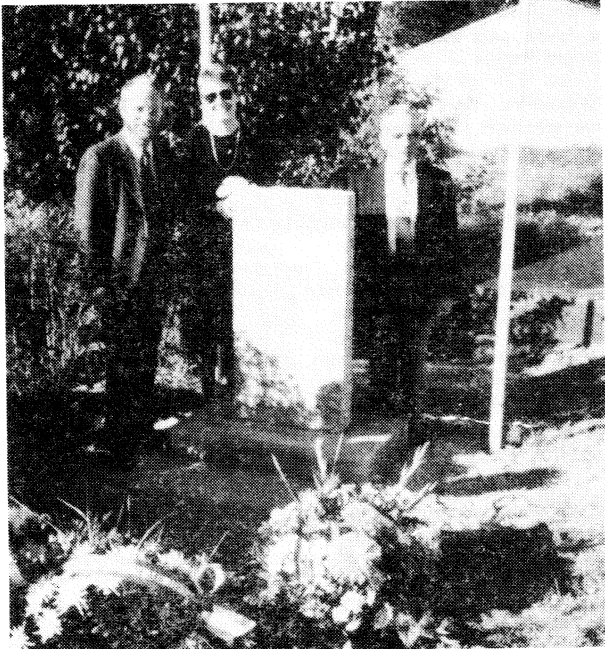
Kersch and wife, Doris, with their three sons between them, pictured with some of the people who helped Kersch during his evasion. The sons are Keith, Kurt and Kris. The picture was made after the war while Kersch was stationed in Germany.

FRENCH MONUMENT TO 303RD CREW By Harry E. Roach, III

On a mission to bomb the U-boat pens at St. Nazaire, 1 May, 1943, two B-17s of the 427th Squadron were shot down just short of the target. The navigator of one, Lt. Harry E. Roach, Jr., was my father. The story of his bail-out, evasion and escape appeared in the July, '83 issue of the Hell's Angels Newsletter. Major Roach died in an air crash while on active duty in 1954.

On a visit to Europe in October 1984, my wife, Jane and I had the opportunity to meet with many of the French men and women who helped my father, and to visit the actual site where the B-17 crashed.

Before leaving the States, our French contact wrote that there would be a "petite reception" for us. Imagine our surprise to find over 300 people awaiting us near the small village of St. Pere-en-Retz, including a band, a French congressman and Major John Pease, USAF Deputy Air Attache from our embassy in Paris. The occasion for the gathering was the unveiling of a beautiful stone monument to the crew of the ill-fated B-17, #42-5780. The name of each crewman is incised in the stone — the six who died and the four who survived. The unveiling was followed by several moving speeches and the posthumous presentation of the town's commemorative medal to my father.



Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Roach (left) and Joseph Monnier beside French monument dedicated 17 Oct., 1984

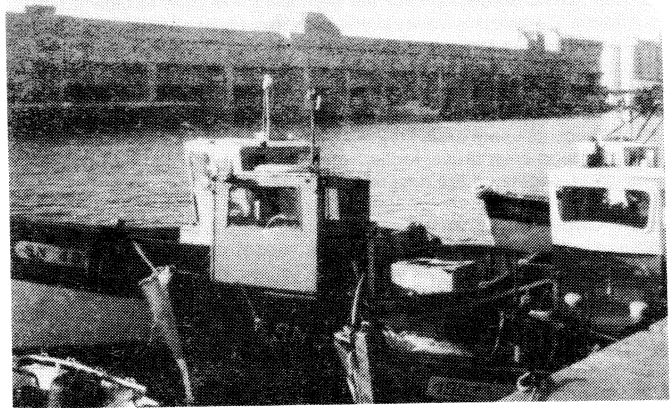
At a reception following the dedication, we were presented several items. Mr. Rene Brideau, on whose father's farm Lt. Roach landed, gave us my dad's leather flight jacket. It showed much wear, but in the pocket we found some of Lt. Roach's papers, including a receipt for a ten shilling donation to the Red Cross. Mr. Brideau presented us with a piece of my father's parachute, serial #42-98238, made in September, 1942 by Switlik Parachute Co., Trenton, NJ. Brideau said most of the chute had been cut up for "chemises" during the war.

Mr. Jean Perousse, a nephew of the priest who hid Lt. Roach his first three nights in France, presented us with the lieutenant's white silk scarf. The priest, l'Abbe Serot, was an active member of the French Resistance. He sheltered Roach in the rectory at Chauve until his back was healed sufficiently to attempt the journey to Spain. Roach had given the scarf to Father Serot's cook, Marie. When she died, it passed to her cousin, Mr. Perousse. When my father arrived at the back door of the priest's house, Mr. Perousse had been in the kitchen. He delighted in telling us what he remembered of the airman's visit.

Mr. Charles Baud gave us a navigator's instrument, a USAAF "Computer, Aerial, Dead Reckoning", which had been found in a field. It was presumed to have belonged to Lt. Roach.

Mr. Joseph Monnier, who had provided Lt. Roach with French clothing, brandy and directions to the priest's house in Chauve, showed us his farmhouse where my father had hidden briefly. We shared a good laugh over the bed under which the lieutenant had crawled when German motorcyclists passed by the house. Had the Krauts come inside, Roach surely would have been captured, for he had left his uniform on top of the bed! My wife and I were overwhelmed by the generous hospitality, emotional warmth, and outspoken patriotism of the French. They let us know clearly how much they appreciated the sacrifices of American airmen in WW II. In

turn, we assured them of our gratitude for their courage in assisting our
ed fliers, and my father in particular. It was a visit we shall never forg **209**



Sub pens at St. Nazaire, 1984

Information, Please

Harry Roach, III is in the process of writing a book about his father's escape. He would like to know how to go about identifying the German flak crew or fighter pilot credited with downing this particular B-17. If you can help, contact Harry at 205 W. Miner St., West Chester, PA 19382. Phone: (215) 436-9763.

EVADERS/ESCAPERS

303rd member Clayton David baled out over enemy territory, Jan. 11, 1944. Thanks to 63 brave people, he evaded capture and returned to England, May 25, 1944. Some of those who aided him were killed or died in concentration camps. He has located 12 and expects to find others.

Clayton, and wife, Scotty, are actively recruiting members for the Air Force Escape & Evasion Society. Of more than 3,000 airmen who escaped or evaded only 250 have joined the AFEES. The purpose of the society is to encourage those who received aid from resistance organizations or individuals to maintain or establish contact with those who risked their own lives to help. Clayton says any contact that lets the helpers know the results of their efforts and that they have not been forgotten is needed and appreciated.

Clayton tells of a French woman who hid 32 airmen in her home, but has not found even one. The Germans treated her badly. She says, "My freedom in America has been my reward, but I'd love to find just one of my airmen."

Joke Folmer, secretary of the Dutch Aircrew Helpers visited Clayton and Scotty last fall. She helped 120 allied airmen before she was arrested by the Gestapo in April '44. She knows the frustration of searching and not finding, but also the joy of being reunited with some airmen after 40 years.

The AFEES has a terrific trip to Europe planned for June to help our friends in Holland, France and Belgium celebrate their Liberation Days. It is hoped that a large group will go and say "Thanks" in person to their helpers. The next best thing is to take messages and information on how they can contact one of their airmen.

If you are eligible for membership in the AFEES, please contact: Clayton David, 215 Dennis Lane, St. Clairsville, OH 43950. Phone: (614) 695-0093.

STRANGE COINCIDENCE!

Here's part of a letter from Donald Johnston, Philmont, NY.

I decided to order an A2 jacket, a Christmas gift from my wife. Remembering an ad in the Newsletter for Bradley Associates, I dropped Col. Bradley a request for current prices and delivery date. Since he had also been with the 360th, I gave him the dates of my tour and the name of our ship, "Iza Vailable Too".

Brad's reply amazed me. We both had flown the same ship. Serial #42-97254 appears in a photo I have and also in one he sent, dated April '44. Our crew's tour started March 26 and was completed June 20, 1944. Brad said he was shot down April 18 over Berlin on his 30th mission. That was number 5 for me. Brad was a POW for 1 year, 11 days, 2 hours, 15 minutes. He also flew the first "Iza Vailable", #42-2973.

I wrote back to Brad and told him that on May 7, 1944 we flew our 11th mission to Berlin. On our return we took a few flak hits while letting down over

210 annel Islands. We didn't see any damage at the time. g into Molesworth, on our landing check everyone could smell gas fumes. At about 200 feet, on the final, Bob, my co-pilot noticed #4 engine on fire with flames spreading over the right wing. We tried to blow it out and feathered the prop as we touched down. Needless to say, we all expected exploding gas tanks any second. As soon as we had lost a little speed, we headed for the grass to clear the runway for other ships. By the time "Iza Vailable Too" stopped, I was the only one left on board. I scrambled through the small cockpit window. #42-97254 became spare parts that day, with only 10 missions on her side. Later, our ground crew presented us with a piece of flak that had hit the gas line on #4 engine on the final leg of the trip home.

Note: Col. Clyde Bradley, Jr., USAF Ret. is still in the A-2 jacket business. If interested, write to Bradley Associates, 2019 Vaughn Lane, Montgomery, AL 36106.



Ground crew of Iza Vailable Too inspects fire damage that knocked her out of the war in May '44

"MUNSTER: THE WAY IT WAS"

This is the title of a new book by English author, Ian Hawkins. It is 392 pages (126 pages of photos) of action. It covers "Black Week", 8 October through 14 October, 1943 . . . Bremen/Vegesack . . . Anklam/Marienburg/Gdyna/Danzig . . . Munster . . . Schweinfurt, but, as the title indicates, concentrates on the Munster raid on Sunday, 10 October. This was a devastating mission for the 13th Combat Wing (95th, 100th, 390th Groups), 25 of the 30 B-17s lost that day came from these three Groups with the "Bloody Hundredth" losing 12 of the 14 it dispatched.

For the 303rd, Munster was pretty much a "milk run". Our biggest problem came when the 384th Group got off course and led our wing up the Ruhr Valley. We never did get oriented after that and dropped our bombs on Coesfeld, a small town west of the primary target.

This is an excellent account of a vicious air battle. It consists largely of first person accounts gathered during five years of research and interwoven with official reports. It is the story of ground personnel, U.S. bomber crews, fighter pilots on both sides and civilians on the ground in the target area. Whether or not you were involved in the Munster raid, this book is one that will stir many memories.

The publisher has made "Munster: The Way It Was" available through our association at a discounted price of \$20, plus \$1.50 postage. (Regular price is \$25.) In addition, he will rebate \$5 per order to our association. Order from:

Robinson Typographics, 1614 Clementine Street
Anaheim, CA 92802

Be sure to include "303rd BGA" on your order so we will get the \$5 rebate.

BLACK THURSDAY

"In My Book You're All Heroes" is another newly published book you will want to read. It's about the Second Schweinfurt mission, 14 October, 1943 which culminated "Black Week". The book is a compilation of first person accounts by U.S. aircrew members who participated in what has been called the greatest air battle of all time. Mission 115 has been well documented by military historians and a number of books have preceded this one. The thing that makes this book unique is that it consists of more than 80 vignettes written by the men who experienced "Black Thursday". Some accounts are a single paragraph, some several pages. Some are

copied from war-time diaries, some are recollections, still vivid, forty years after the fact. There are accounts from each of the 16 groups that participated with 7 reports from 303rdrs.

The book was put together by Bob O'Hearn of the 96th Bomb Group. It is 170 pages, spiral bound. The price is \$10.50 including postage. (Californians add 59¢ tax.) Limited supply. Order from:
Bob O'Hearn, 2919 Renegade Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93306 Phone: (805) 871-4785

THE OTHER SURVIVOR

Our last issue carried Robert Sorenson's story of the crash of "Duffy's Tavern" near Much Wenlock, England, 11 November, 1944. Sorenson, a waist gunner and Dwight Phillips, flight engineer were the only two to survive. By coincidence, a story about Dwight appeared in the Johnson City, TN, PRESS CHRONICLE on Sunday, November 25, soon after our Newsletter was published. With permission of the editor, we reprint this, the other half of the Sorenson/Phillips survival story. The story was written by Sandy Hodson of the P-C staff. The staff photo was by Alan Broyles.

Remnant of crash more than 'door'

It's just a 2-by-2 old piece of metal, but for a former Unicoi resident, it means a lot more. Forty years ago, on Nov. 11, 1944, Dwight Phillips, Jr. was a sergeant with the U.S. Air Force stationed at Molesworth, England. He and eight other men had just started for Germany on their 11th bombing mission. The pilot flew to 9,000 feet to get over the fog. Phillips said, when another plane was spotted. The plane got caught in an airstream caused by the other plane. The force of the slipstream flipped the plane and sent it into a tailspin. As the pilot tried to pull the plane out of the spin, Phillips said, the American B-17 bomber broke in two. Phillips, the top turret gunner, tried to open the latch on the escape door, but it was jammed. He had to remove the hinge pins from the bottom.



Dwight Phillips, Jr. holds door from broken plane

Phillips, Sgt. Robert Sorenson and another crewman managed to get out of the plane. Phillips and Sorenson made it to the ground, but the third man had forgotten to fasten the leg straps of his parachute and was killed in the fall, Phillips said.

The plane and men hit ground near Wenlock, England. The fire department and townspeople came out to assist in the rescue and put out the fire in the broken plane, Phillips said. The fire was caused by two of the 18 bombs exploding.

Suffering from a compression fracture of his back, Phillips was taken to a local hospital. Within a month he was home. For him the war was over.

Forty years later, Phillips learned from an Englishman with whom he corresponded that the town of Wenlock was planning a re-dedication service, honoring American and English airmen who died during the war.

Phillips decided to attend the services. While there, a farmer gave him a piece of the airplane he had found in a field 40 years ago.

Phillips, who now lives in Atlanta, was a member of the 360th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group, known as Hell's Angels.



Enlisted men's dance, Boise, ID. Airman in left foreground is Raymond Winters. He joined a flight crew and was shot down. Directly above Ray is Morton Moon who sent in the picture.

TAPS

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

BERNARD THOMPSON, Group Headquarters
Rt. 1
Cumberland, WI 54829

SAMUEL ANDERSON, 360th Squadron
810 N.E. Sutton Place
Bremerton, WA 98310

DALE W. RICE, 427th Squadron
1143 Elm Terrace
Rahway, NJ 07065

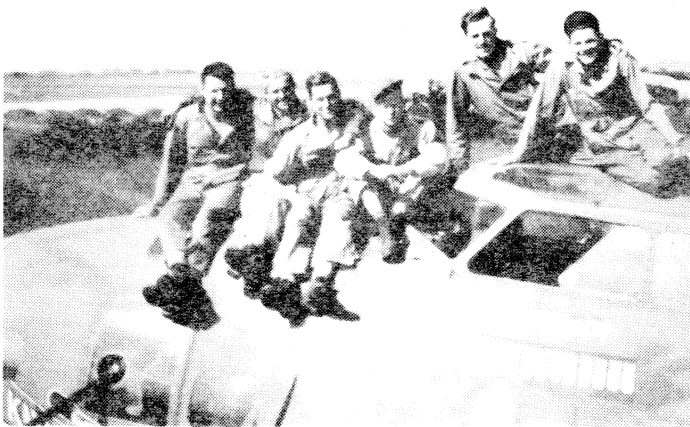
GEORGE E. SCHWARTZ, 427th Squadron
1014 North State Street
New Ulm, MN 56073

George passed away in May, 1983. Sorry we didn't know about it earlier. If any of you know about the death of any of our members, please notify Joe Vieira promptly.

You mean we called this "HOME"?



Loy Tingley found this photo while trying to identify the Outstanding Crew Chiefs. He says these sad-sacks are: Peterson, Turner, Thompson, Tingley, Borglin, Green and Osiecki



McShane, (unknown), Pafford, Moon, Strasburg, Trent. Ground crew on Knockout Dropper after its 25th mission



Capt. Roller, Lt. Cline, Lt. Shoup, Lt. Henson, Sergeants Marcalonis, Williams, Ketrn, Gonsalveues, Burnham



303rd group photo at the 8th AFHS reunion in L.A. last October. Courtesy Coleman Sanders.

IMPORTANT REUNION NOTE: "No Smoking" and "Handicapped" rooms are available at the Red Lion. Specify on your room reservation form. In any correspondence or phone contact with the Red Lion, be sure to mention: "303rd BGA Reunion".



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



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

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 Street Address _____ Apt # _____ City _____
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 Crew and/or Duty _____ Squadron _____ Pilot's Name _____ Retired Military Grade, If Any _____

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- _____ \$1.00 Membership Roster
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- _____ \$5.00 First 300 Mission Book (Includes Decal)

DO NOT SEND CASH THROUGH THE MAIL!
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303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

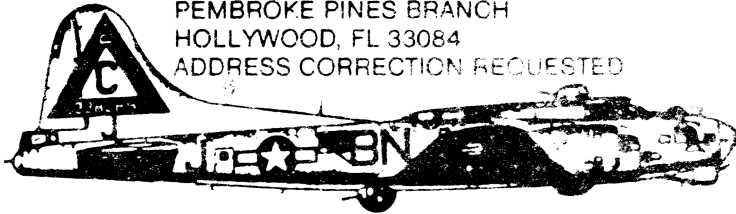
Mail to:
JOSEPH VIEIRA
6400 Park Street
Hollywood, FL 33024

If you are already a member of the Association,
please pass this application along to another
303rder who is not a member. Thank you.

Signature _____ Date _____ Amount Paid \$ _____

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