

303rd Bomb Group (H) Association, Inc.

Might - In - Flight

"HELLS ANGELS" NEWSLETTER

VOLUME X NUMBER 1

Editor: Hal Susskind
2602 Deerfoot Tr., Austin, TX 78704

SEPTEMBER 1986

SLOW PROGRESS IN SIGNING UP NEW MEMBERS



Too close for comfort.

Progress in finding and signing up former members of the 303rd Bomb Group has fallen far short of the expectations of the Board whose goal for 1986 was 200 new members.

Since the reunion in Seattle in July 1985,

there have been only 28 new members and two associate members brought aboard even though considerable time and effort has been expended to locate former "buddies." One notable effort was taken by Anthony Kray who put an article in his local Putney, Vermont newspaper.

As of July 18, 1986 we have 1172 regular members, five honorary members, 42 associate members and 50 wives of former members who now can become regular members with their submission of dues. (They may now become life members in the same way that regular members can, by payment of dues based on the age of their spouse.)

When you consider that the 303rd Bomb Group was one of the first groups to set up operations in European Theatre and flew more missions than any other group, we should have many more members than we presently have.

Let's move our efforts into high gear and see if we can't locate and sign up more of our war time buddies.

MINI-REUNION HELD IN CALIFORNIA

Members of the 303rd Bomb Group Association living in Southern California met on April 5th at the Long Beach Naval Officer's Club for their first Reunion of 1986.

More than 120 invitations were sent out to members living as far north as Bakersfield and as far south as El Centro. There were 29 acceptances and the party, including wives and girl friends numbered 57 people.

Al Lehmann, our President, planned a wonderful dinner, and presented a slide show of "Europe in the 50's." Everyone enjoyed

themselves, in spite of a heavy rain that evening. Cocktails before dinner were mixed with "getting-acquainted" stories. For several members it was the first time they saw their buddies since 1944/45. Prisoners-of-war were especially pleased to see their flying crew-members again.

Of course, most of the discussion revolved around "what have you been up to since 1944" and "what have you been doing with yourself since you got out of the service?"

Ed Miller, Membership Chairman, brought along two full albums of pictures, copies of

operations orders, and other memorabilia that caused "recall" amongst the viewers. Marty McGuire presented an original oil painting of the "Hell's Angels" aircraft as done by Ronald Wong. Bob Finley won the admiration of everyone for looking like he "might just turn 50" next week.

When you looked around at all the "old choggers" there, one could only wonder how they were fortunate enough to have captured such "lovely companions." Surely, Jim Reeves wife, Sylvia, won the accolades as being the "beauty" among

(continued on page 2)

MINI REUNION (continued)
the "beauties."

In addition to those mentioned above, in attendance were Don and Elaine Beal; Lloyd and Lilian Bever; Vince and Anita Buonpane; Morris Dimonwitz; Richard and Tina Elkins; Gordon Farnham; Carl and Helen Frost; Kenneth Hawes; Bob and Rebecca Hurdle; Joe and Evelyn Islava; Jesse and Edith Jones; Bob and June Kidd; Guy and Naomi Lance; Yale Lasker; Paul and Pat Lemann; Leo and Elsie Meichtry; Art and

June Middlemas; John and Sybil Nazarian (who invited a bombardier friend from another Bomb Group to our party); Paul and Bonnie Robrock; David and Mary Schroll; Bill and Marie Schultz; Richard and Betty Smith; John and Dorothy St Julian; Angelo and Adelaide Tambe (who brought several original pictures of wartime action of the 303rd Hell's Angels); and a new comer to our Association, Bodie Fite.

Plans are being formulated for

another Mini-Reunion in the fall. Several members who declined the invitation in April, have expressed an interest in getting together later this year.

All in all, a very successful Mini-Reunion, thanks to efforts of Al and Sue Lehmann.

- Ed Miller

Ed. Note - I don't believe I've ever seen a picture of a control tower in England without Bodie Fite in it firing a flare.

Letters

Dear Hal,

Since our conversation the other day on the phone in regard to stories for the Newsletter I have come up with a request for any information about S/Sgt Forest "Pete" Norman, the man in the photo to the left. I interviewed him in 1978 at his home in Eaton, Colorado. He has since passed away and the tape of interview has been lost. His scrap book had photographs of "Sway Back" with a large hole in the side due to 20 mm flak, he had written on the photo "my ship." Also he had photo's of "Witches Tit." I believe he flew with the 303rd until his tour was over, he then went into the 2nd Repl. and Training, Squadron for a number of missions, then he went into the 9th, flying wounded and medical supplies to and from France, as a crewman. His position in the 303rd was as tailgunner and was twice wounded, once by 109's who shot up his arm and broke his guns but not before Pete had put enough .50 into him to shoot him down also. He landed in the channel after a raid to Vegasack, Germany on March 18, 1943. The German fighters shot them up badly, Sgt. Mistowski jumped over Germany. Lt. Strobel was lost (Navigator). Sgt. Norman had both legs broken and was in the hospital for six months. Returned and just in time to fly on October 19, 1943.

From notes of our conversation I find that he also flew as tailgunner and occasionally in the

ball. He was on the early missions to St. Nazzare, La Pallice, Lorient, Wilhelmshaven. Among his mementoes was a membership card in the Goldfish club, earned when he was fished out of the channel on June 6, 1944.

I found none of the names he mentioned to me to be in the 303rd roster, though everything points to him being in the 303rd.



If any 303rd member can give me any information at all no matter how little I would appreciate it very much.

Respectfully,
Glenn A. Stephens
Associate Member 02
2455 Cheviot Dr.
Fort Collins, Co 80526
(303) 482-6026

Dear Hal,

We are Going to Tampa, Florida on October 2-3-4-5 for the 92 Bomb Group Reunion.

I flew non stop to England with them August 17, 1942.

They shut down operations in November '42 and I was sent up to Molesworth to fly with the 358 Squadron.

Looking forward to the reunion in Fort Worth next summer.

The K. C. Haneys

I am seeking to contact members of the crew of the "Old Black Magic" that exploded on the 20th of April 1945, near the Czech border in Germany. All eight crew members landed near the crash site and were assisted by U.S. infantry of the 90th division of which I was on duty with that day. If you have information or were a member of the crew, please contact me. Thanks!

Vern Schmidt
3427 N. Orchard
Fresno, CA 93726

ATTENTION:
427TH Squadron Ground Crew-Members

A Mr. C. E. Stevenson, 619 N. Broadway, Walters, OK 73572 is most interested in hearing from any member, especially the Armament Section.

- Editor

Letters

Anyone having any information on the crash of the "CAT-0-9-TAILS," should get in touch with John T. Gell, 170 High Street, Riseley, Bedfordshire, Eng. He has located the crew, but would appreciate more information.

- Editor

"ATTENTION--Schweinfort Memorial Association Members"

I am looking for a roster of the Schweinfort Memorial Associa-

tion so I can locate any members of the 303rd who are not members of our Association. I understand there are two different groups--the first, and second raid. It would be a great help towards increasing our membership. I promise to return the roster as soon as I compare our roster with it.
Thanks!

Ed Miller
2116 Terraza Place
Fullerton, CA 92635

Taps

Hubert P. Miller (360th)

Lamont C. Ward (360th)

Henry U. Pittman

Louis P. Bourdon

303rd BOMB GROUP POTPOURRI

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Al Lehman

REMINDERS

EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER

We are showing signs of life. Some of those old address books have been found. The fire is lit, but the pot is just lukewarm. Let's turn the turbos up to 8. We need each member to sign up a new member.

CORRECTIONS TO ROSTER

Please help repair any mistakes in the Association Roster. When you put this down, check out your line. And remember-you are looking at the mailing list. If you have moved, or when you do move, or if we've goofed, send a correction to Ed Miller.

BUILDERS NEEDED

There are jobs open for members willing to participate in building and operating your Association. See page 4, April Newsletter. Contact Al Lehmann, 29844 Knoll View Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274. Tel. (213) 832-5830.

8th AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REUNION

The Mighty Eighth will form up on October 15 - 19, 1986 in Hollywood, Florida. See the cover and back page of the July issue of 8th AIR FORCE NEWS for the program and registration form. You must be a member. There will never be a better time to sign up. To join, contact our Ed Miller, 2116 Terraza Place, Fullerton, CA 92635. Tel (714) 525-6826. Join us for the

303rd MINI Reunion-same time, same place.

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

Dues for 1986 are payable now. The rate has been increased to \$10 a year. Credit may be taken for unearned dues paid at the old rate. For a complete explanation, including Life Membership, read page 3 of the April Newsletter. Only 20% of our members have paid. If you are holding out in silent protest, let us hear (or read) your complaint. At some point we'll have to conclude you wish to drop out. Send your dues to Ed Miller, 2116 Terraza Place, Fullerton, CA 92635.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Ed Miller

PROGRESS REPORT ON 1986 DUES

Members are slowly recognizing that a new "dues" structure was established at the last general meeting of all members in Seattle in July of 1985. So far, 42 members have signed up for their "Life Memberships," to bring the total

"Life Memberships" to 45. We had 3 Life Members from 1985; General Lyle, Joe Viera, and Bob Kidd.

Members paying "regular 1986 dues" now total 107. We expect that number to increase sharply, as a result of this newsletter which will re-emphasize the need for getting the "checks" in the mail.

Wives of Members who are now

deceased should be aware of the change in the By-Laws last year that allow the Wife to become a Regular Member of the Association (along with the distinction of "paying dues.") Heretofore, many of the Wives were treated as "Honorary Members" and not expected to pay dues. Under the revised By-Laws, we have only 5 "Honorary Members."

A LOOK AT THE 303RD 40 YEARS LATER

Members of the 303rd Bomb Group (H) Association now live all over the United States, with every state being represented with the exception of Alaska. One member lives in Canada, one in Portugal, and one in Grand Cayman Island, British West Indies.

California is called home by 149 members, Texas has 80 members, while 73 reside in Florida and 2 more call Florida their home during the winter months.

New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois have 44 members each.

Although the sunbelt is well represented, many of our members choose to accept the colder states: Ohio (35); Minnesota (30); Colorado (29); Missouri (27); Michigan (24); Indiana (24); Massachusetts

(23); New Jersey (22); Virginia (21); Wisconsin (20); Kansas (19); and Iowa (16).

Sunbelt states like Arizona with (20); North Carolina (19); Georgia (16) New Mexico (13); Oklahoma (13); Tennessee (15); Alabama (12); Mississippi (7); Louisiana (7); Arkansas (7); Nevada (8); and South Carolina with (8).

The states of Washington, Connecticut and Oregon (18), (13) and (13) respectively.

Those states with 6 or less members include: Kentucky (6); Nebraska (6); South Dakota (6); Montana (5); Rhode Island (5); Vermont (5); West Virginia (5); New Hampshire (4); Idaho (3); North Dakota (2); Utah (2); Wyoming (2); Delaware (1); Washington DC (1);

Hawaii (1) and Maine (1).

As expected, more of our members fell in love and married girls named "Mary" (40). "Betty" ran a close second with (34). And "Dorothy" was third with (16).

We have six of our members who ask that their mail be sent to two different places during the year. They have two different homesites to take advantage of better weather.

It would be very interesting to see who of our members lays claim to the largest number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. If you think you are in the "running" drop me a line.

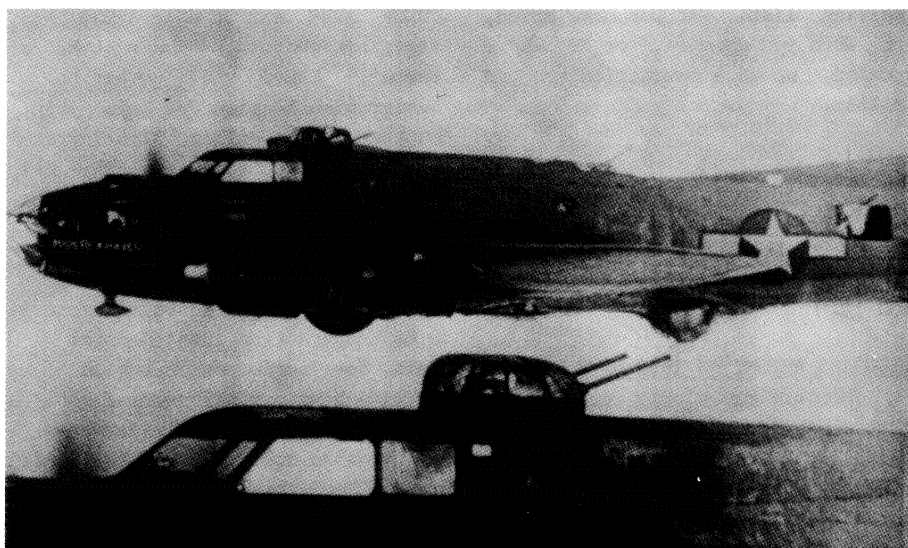
Any of you that have interesting stories are encouraged to send them along to "The Editor".

PAID-UP MEMBERS AS OF JULY 18, 1986

David Arnott; Clifford Bachman; Daniel Balint, Jr.; Cyrus C. Beck; Julian P. Bell, III; Peter Benigno; John L. Beringer; Marion E. Blackburn; Kurt Bochert; Millard A. Boren; Wesley A. Boyer; Robert P. Brud; Thelbert W. Butler; Anthony J. Cechini; Rufus S. Charlton; Christ M. Christoff; Orlyn D. Chunut; Cliff Fontaine; Theodore Cody; Clarence L. Cogdell; William H. Cox; Fred T. Crissman; John D. Crowley; James E. Cummins; Paul A. Curry; John Diel; J. Dewey Dorsett, Jr.; James T. Elovich; Stan Fisher; James F. Fowler; Earl C. Freinwald; Frank Furman; Billy Gaumer; James E. Geiger; Barry B. Gilkes; Harold E. Godwin; Lloyd E. Goff; Charles E. Grace, Jr.; Rev. Howard C. Gravrock; Nino Guiciardi; Maurice G. Hackler; Raymond D. Hammond; Thomas K. Harrelson, Jr.; Roy D. Harvey; Kenneth D. Hawes; William Higbee; Grady H. Hodges; Lloyd L. Holdcroft; Raymond E. Holland; Warren Hubley; Ward A. Hudson; Arthur J. Hybert; Allen L. Ipsen; Donald M. Johnston; Douglas L. Jones, Sr.; J. Ford Kelley; James D. Kelley; George Kepics; Frank M. Ketron; Leland Krumwiede; Kenneth J. Kuatenbach; Fay Lacquement; Leo

O. Laverty; Benjamin Losiewicz; Edward N. Lovelock; Malcolm J. Magid; J. J. Manina; Joseph A. Marini; William G. Mayer; Leo Mc Conaghy; Theodore Mc Devitt; Martin J. Mc Guire; Lawrence C. Merthan; Wm. G. Metsopoulos; Merlin D. Miller; Loy R. Norris; Robert J. O'Hearn; James H. Pleasant; Rayford E. Pullen; Robert R. Relford; Charles G. Rice, Jr.; Marvin G. Richeson, Jr.; Charles L. Roth; Reinhart E. Roth; Norman A.

Sampson; Glenn E. Sherwood; Benjamin Judge Smith; Richard L. Smith; A. C. Steele; Clifford Steinberg; Glenn A. Stephens; Harold Susskind; Alvin L. Taylor; George A. Torrey; Joanna M. Tressler; John W. Tulloss; George Turnisky; Edward J. Veigel; Lester J. Voth; Ralph Walder; William R. Weaver; Thomas L. Weems; Richard H. Wentworth; Albert R. Westfall, Jr.; Lawrence J. Whippo; Franklin F. York



Formation of the 359th SQDN

POTPOURRI--FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN (continued)

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Substantial savings are available to our members who wish to apply for Life Memberships. Already we have 45 Life Memberships (as of July 18, 1986), which are listed below. A few of our members have sent in money for 2 or even 3 years at the annual rate of \$10 per year. They should evaluate whether they might be able to save dollars by converting these prepayments to a Life Membership.

LIFE MEMBERS AS OF JULY 18, 1986

Vieira, Joseph
 Umberger, Robert C.
 Hedrick, Warren L. Rev.
 Moreman, Robert
 Neatherly, Ralph E.
 Mc Conagy, Leo R.
 Mainwaring, Charles O.
 O'Donnell, Robert E.
 Hayes, Ralph F.
 Reeves, Jim S.
 Coburn, Ralph F.
 McSween, William D.
 Bielski, Casimir Jr.
 Kowatch, Raymond J.
 Vogel, Cletus H.
 Danquard, Ernest G.

Jameson, Chet H. Jr.
 Lyle, Lewis E.
 Frohman, Howard J.
 Rawlings, Bernard W.
 Ruark, Blaine R.
 O'Leary, James W.
 Smith, Donald R.
 Johansen, Henry G.
 Homoleski, Hector
 Kray, Anthony R.
 Maas, Willard W.
 Holmberg, John F.
 Ford, John W.
 Eccleston, Edward F.
 Beckwith, Walter D.
 Lehmann, Elroy C.
 Durst, Melvin A.
 Fleming, Sam P.
 Mussi, James L.
 Barnes, Frederick E.
 Redmond, Robert L.
 Wiegand, Donald A.
 Henson, Walter C.
 Livingston, Robert P.
 Krohn, Robert W.
 Radar, William S.
 Long, Lloyd I.
 Kidd, Robert E.
 Stephens, Chad W.

NEW MEMBERS SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE ROSTER

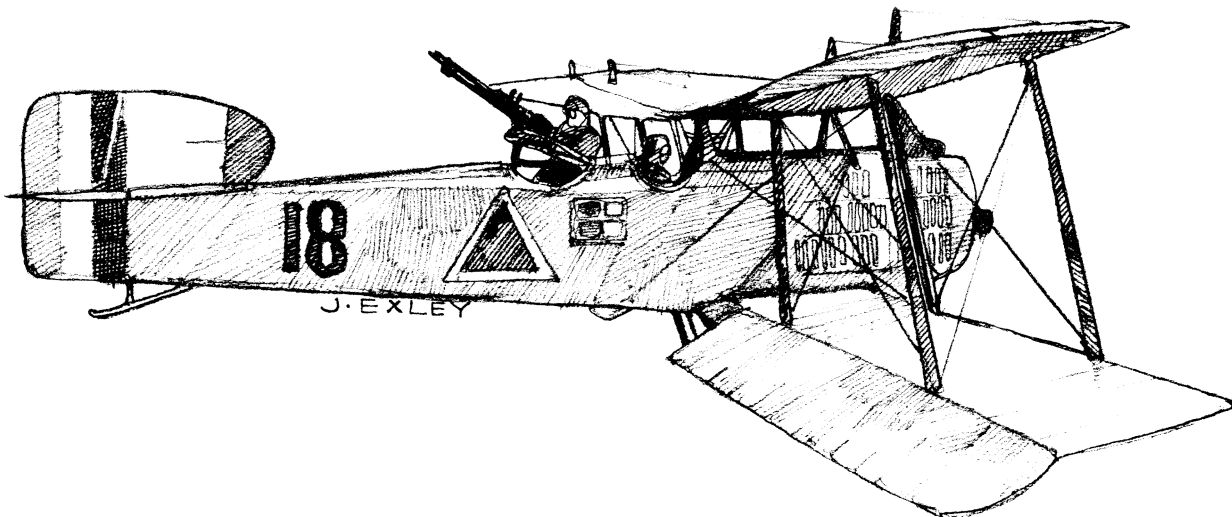
The following twelve members have been signed up since the publication of the new roster. They are: Martin J. Mc Guire; Marvin G. Richeson, Jr.; J. Dewey Dorsett, Jr.; James F. Fowler; William G. Metsopoulos; Earl C. Freinwald; Douglas L. Jones, Sr.; Robert R. Relford; Franklin F. York; Paul A. Curry; Norman A. Sampson; Leland Krumwiede; and John A. Thurmon.

If anyone wishes to contact any of these new members, please contact Ed Miller for their new address and/or phone number.

EVERY MEMBER

GET

A MEMBER!



A PROFILE OF COURAGE

I doubt if anyone can give me an accurate count of how many flight crews were assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group from its inception to its inactivation in Casablanca in 1945. I'm sure that the history of each crew would make wonderful reading. Unfortunately many of these will have to remain as the great untold stories of World War II. Unless through a stroke of fate they surface as the one outlined below did. Regrettably I do not have the name of the author.

The story was forwarded to me by J. Ford Kelley who flew with the 303rd in the early days. Kelley wrote, "Just prior to leaving for the Seattle Reunion last year, a Glen Mabie called me. His brother was killed while serving with the 303rd and he wondered if I would take the attached material to the Reunion to see if anyone knew more about his brother's crew. By the time he had the material copied and mailed,

I had left for the reunion."

Mabie in his letter wrote, "I'm enclosing a story that was sent to my mother by the tail gunner, to use as you see fit. I can't remember the name of the tail gunner, so I don't know how to handle it. By posting the picture of the crew at the reunion someone may identify the author and with his permission, it can be entered into the archives." His second letter along with a photo said, "My brother, Hilton C. Mabie is in the middle of the back row. The pilot's name was Dashiell which is the second man in from the left. The fourth man in is Tommy Southland from Suffren, N.Y. The tail gunner is bottom row, right. I don't remember any of the other names at this time. Please read the story and see if you can supply any information."

I can supply some. Oschersleben was a very rough mission.

- Editor's Note -

THE STORY OF CREW 20

The following is the story of our crew and my recollection of our adventure as best as I can recall.

With our preliminary training in the States completed, we finally took off from an east coast port for our flight across the ocean, an uneventful trip concluded by our landing in Scotland. After several days in the British Isles, we finally landed at our permanent base located in Molesworth, England, a typically English rural countryside, an area dotted with landing strips and barracks, repair depots, and aid stations.

We were assigned our barracks and a place on the field to park our ship, very matter of course, we were just another combat crew that had come here to do a job.

After a day or so, we were assigned a combat instructor, Lt. Kyes, the officer in the left rear of our picture. He had flying experience around England and the Continent, so for a period of a few weeks he flew with us, teaching us the intricacies of flying over a strange land. (He was subsequently

killed while on a mission over Germany).

Our first narrow escape: We had been in England only a few days when we were ordered to fly to the southern part of the island to pick up some emergency plane repair parts. On a trip like this we could get flying time and practice, as well as serve a useful purpose.

Arriving at the field we found it to be on the very edge of the ocean practically on the beach. We landed the ship, all climbed out, and started across the field to the hangars. Out over the ocean, flying swiftly and scarcely 50 feet above the water we saw nine fighter aircraft approaching the field, and in less time than it would take to tell, they were now near enough to see clearly - they were Messerschmitts.

We threw ourselves to the ground and they roared overhead, their guns blazing as they strafed the field from end to end. Miraculously we escaped being hit, why I'll never know, but with all that

lead flying around no one was even scratched. Others on the field were not so lucky, there were 11 British Women's Army corps killed and 23 wounded. Several planes and hangars were set afire, but these were soon extinguished, the dead and the wounded were cared for, and the activity continued as before. Thus, at first glance we saw some of the vaunted Luftwaffe.

After flying daily for about a month we were now considered ready to go on a mission, so on November 25, 1943 (Thanksgiving Day) we were notified that the next day we were to have our first combat mission to Bremen in northwest Germany.

None of us slept much that night, we were nervous and maybe a little scared, frightened at the realization that at last we were ready. Up to now we had been pretty cocky, we had travelled extensively in comparative safety, but this was something different.

We arose before dawn the next day, dressed and hurried over to the briefing room. Here we learned



CREW 20

all the pertinent facts of time and course, altitude and target. We were told how the weather would be and where to expect the opposition. The details over, we returned for breakfast - I think mine consisted solely of coffee, I'm sure I couldn't have eaten anything.

Now the time had arrived, we hurried out to the ship, (Yardbird) climbed aboard, and made hasty last minute checks of our gear. Guns in order, ammunition stowed properly, instruments in working order, all stations on the intercommunications system O.K., and a myriad of other details. The tenseness abated somewhat as everyone busied himself with his appointed tasks.

The first ships were now taking off and now came our order from the control tower; we taxied down the runway, lifted gently into the air and were off. We circled around with the other planes gaining

altitude and getting into position in the formation and when everything was in order we headed for the Channel and Germany.

This trip wasn't just uneventful. The flak was intense and the Jerries fought savagely, but we arrived over the target, dropped our bombs and headed back home safe and sound - a few holes in the ship but everyone on board safe and feeling quite elated over our success. Our first one was over. Some of the other ships failed to return, but we were O.K. and for the moment that was all that mattered.

Second Mission - Bremen - November 29, 1943; This mission followed the same pattern as the first one before with a few exceptions. The flak was more intense and there was a considerably greater number of enemy fighters. They dove in furiously, firing their guns and only pulling out of

the dive soon enough to avert a collision. Our ship was struck repeatedly by flak, machine gun and cannon fire. A lucky hit knocked our oxygen system out of commission and shortly all six gunners had lost consciousness from lack of oxygen.

When Dashiell, the pilot, found he couldn't raise anyone on the intercom he directed DeLaura, the bombardier to go back into the ship and see what was wrong. He immediately discovered the cause and hurriedly took the emergency oxygen bottles and hooked them to our masks. There weren't enough oxygen bottles to go around so that meant reviving one and then taking his oxygen bottle from him to revive another.

The enemy planes sensed that something was wrong because none of the guns were firing and several

(continued)

The Story of Crew 20

(continued)

Messerschmitts converged upon us and raked the ship from nose to tail. During the ensuing evasive action by the pilot, we lost altitude and soon were hopelessly separated from the formation and an easy prey for the enemy. The engineer started to fire flares to summon aid and presently three P-47's were dispatched to aid us. They succeeded in driving off the enemy and protected us until we got over the target, dropped our bombs and headed home.

As soon as it was safely possible, we dropped to a lower altitude where we no longer needed oxygen and the gunners were then able to maintain consciousness. We limped back to the base and when we climbed out of that and saw the condition of it we could then agree with others who previously had said, "It's a dam good airplane."

The ship was so badly damaged that it was first decided it would have to be scrapped, but upon further examination they decided it could be repaired. Those repairs took five weeks. The tail wheel had been shot away, the vertical stabilizer on the tail had a hole in it big enough to drive a car

through, and the control cables had been shot away. The hydraulic and oxygen systems had to be replaced, new wing gasoline tanks were installed, and she was patched from stem to stern. She really took a beating on that trip, but she brought us back safe and sound.

The next raid was December 1, 1943 to the city of Solingen in the Ruhr Valley. As the result of the extensive damage to our regular ship, for this raid we were assigned a battle scarred veteran of 46 raids named the "Hells Angels." This ship had been flown by various crews and was soon due to be retired from service. It was a mass of patches externally, but on the whole it was mechanically O.K.

This raid on Solingen was quite the same as the previous two, the flak was more intense, in fact so thick that returning pilots stated that they could have lowered their landing gear and taxied over it.

This city is of vital interest to Germany in that here is manufactured a great amount of the steel that is needed for war. For this reason, this area is very ably protected by anti-aircraft fire as well as fighter aircraft. Despite the difficulties, however, we were able to reach our target and drop

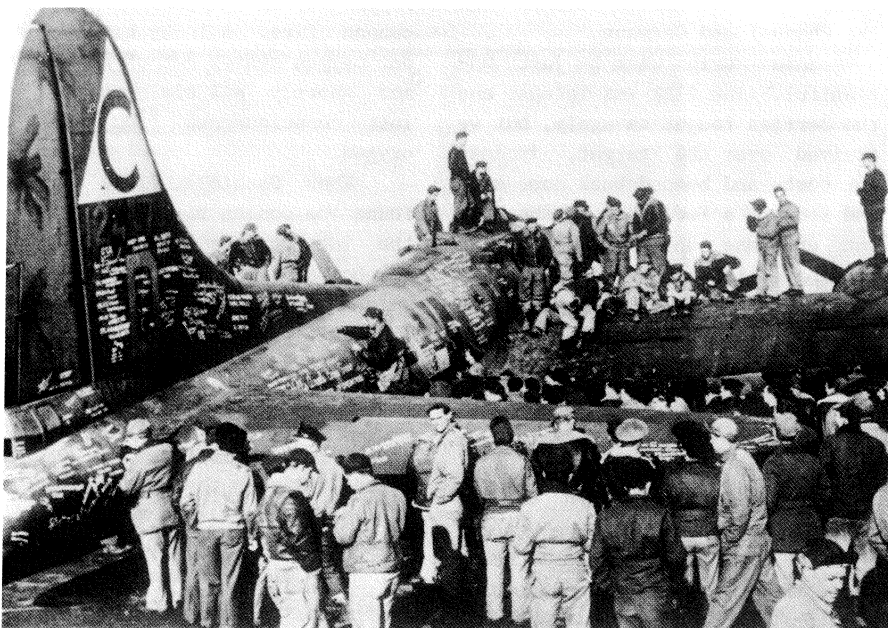
our bombs, wheel around and head for home. We returned to our base safe and sound and considering ourselves very lucky to be still in the fight.

To adequately paint a word picture of the utter confusion that exists over the target is almost beyond the realm of possibility. The noise of the anti-aircraft shells, the roar of motors of the fighters and bombers, the chatter of our guns, smoke of burning planes and exploding shells. The air becomes filled with debris from ships that explode, parts of wings or tails that are blown off, falling and burning fighters of ours and the enemy, the parachutes of airmen forced to bail out. All these contribute toward making the scene one of general pandemonium.

The next raid was to Bremen on December 16, 1943. I was not on this raid as I was grounded due to illness. Parker occupied my position in the tail. As I recall, the boys told me that this flight compared favorably with those that had preceded it. They used the "Hells Angels" again and on her return she had some new holes to be patched. By now the repair crews were putting patches on the patches. As it had been decided to return this ship to the States for use in a war bond drive, and as she had been pretty badly battered in her last few raids, she was retired after this mission, rehabilitated and sent back home (see photo at left).

No one up to now had been injured although there had been narrow escapes. We had seen so much action in this short time that we were beginning to wonder at times just how long this thing could last. The crews usually felt apprehensive when they returned from a raid, but after a few days they were anxious to get started on the next one.

Six days later, on December 22, 1943, they made another flight, this time to Osnabruck, another raid on which I was forced to remain at base. The anxiety of awaiting their return is almost as much strain as actually going along. On this raid too, Parker



G.I.s autographing "Hell's Angel," the famous Flying Fortress—which had made 49 missions over hostile territory—before it returned to America from a British base.

substituted for me. As the "Hells Angels" had been grounded they used another fortress of the same type but in apparently better shape. They returned again O.K., with the usual number of flak and bullet holes, the usual tenseness and exhaustion of mind and body.

Since I had now missed two raids and felt again as though I could get back to action, I requested that I be returned to duty. The doctor examined me and declared me fit for service, so on December 28, 1943, I was notified that I was to serve as a substitute gunner aboard another ship (my crew was not scheduled for this one.) I was glad of this opportunity to make up these two lost raids so that I would be even with my crew and we could all finish our 25 missions together. Before this raid came off however, I was removed from the list because my crew was scheduled for a raid on the next day and I was to fly with them and another gunner was substituted for me for the raid of the 29th. When that plane returned, that substitute gunner was taken out of the tail position - dead. As I look back now, I see that fate had already started to intercede for me.

The raid of December 30, 1943 and the next one of January 7, 1944, also to Ludwigshafen followed the pattern of those before, the usual intense flak and attack by enemy fighters. On the raid of the 7th, the tail of our ship was hit several times by 20mm. cannon fire, the explosion of one of these shells throwing me out of my seat and slightly injuring my back. Upon returning to base I had to see the doctor again, and once more I was grounded. By now I was beginning to believe everything was working against me. My injury wasn't serious, but as the doctor had decided for me there was nothing else I could do.

The next raid was on January 11, 1944 to Oschersleben. On this raid I was still grounded as a result of the previous raid. I attempted to have the doctor release me for duty but he advised that I would have to remain at home

- a decision which probably saved my life.

On the morning of the 11th, we were routed out of bed about 4:30. It was a chilly, foggy morning, the ground covered with frost. I arose with the rest of the boys, had breakfast with them, went to the briefing, and before the take-off I helped them dress. They were all lighthearted and in a good mood, doing the usual kidding and fooling around. I walked out to the ship with them, saw them go aboard and wished them God speed and a safe return. Parker again occupied my position in the tail and there was a substitute bombardier in the nose. DeLaura, our regular bombardier had been chosen to be the lead bombardier for the entire squadron, his duty being to locate the target in his sights and then signal the rest of the planes in the squadron, all of them then dropping their bombs at precisely the same moment, thus laying a pattern over the entire target.

After they left, then began my worst part of the trip, sweating out their return. I went back to the barracks, made up the beds, hung up their clothes, and tried to stay busy so that the time would pass more quickly.

Came the time of the afternoon when they should return, so I hurried down to the end of the field so that I could spot them the instant they hove into view. Soon there was the drone of planes in the distance and they started to come back home. Plane after plane came in, nearly all of them firing flares to signal wounded men aboard or requesting special landing instructions due to being partially disabled.

Finally, I spotted one from my squadron and as soon as it had rolled to a stop I ran over to see what had happened. I asked the pilot of this ship where my ship was and he pointed in the direction from whence he came and said "Out there." "They got every plane in our squadron but ours." "Your ship was flying directly in front of me and they received a direct hit just as they were going over the tar-

get." "They fell out of formation and started down in a long glide, but the confusion of battle was so great we couldn't watch to see if any chutes left the ship." "From the way they looked when we last saw them, they could have gotten out."

That was the end of my world - the war to me was over. From then on I lost interest in planes and bombing.

Our barracks housed 12 men, the non-commissioned members of two crews. Neither of those crews returned that day and I alone was left in the barracks that night - a night that was the longest and the loneliest of any I hope I ever must have. The next day I packed their belongings and saw to it that they were properly taken care of. Later that day I was moved to the hospital. I was finally moved to an evacuation hospital in the north of England and later embarked for the States in a hospital ship, arriving here on March 27, 1944.

I was sent to the Deshon General Hospital in Butler, Pa. only 30 miles from my home. My folks were able to visit me there and during my stay I had a three day pass at home. Being so close to home really was a tonic and soon I was improving. I was then moved to the hospital at Mitchel Field, New York. After two weeks I came home for a 21 day furlough, then returned to Atlantic City to spend a refreshing two weeks in the Ambassador Hotel. I was reassigned and sent to Avon Park, Florida where I am now employed as an instructor in the operation of the Caliber .50 machine gun.

I am well again, but shall never forget the grandest guys it was ever my great fortune to meet. I still pray that those reported missing will turn up and to those who died, you may be sure they died as heroes, every one.

I hope this will give you some insight as to what we went through and will answer some of your questions you have asked. Maybe it will assuage your grief and give added hope that good news may still be forthcoming.

NEW MEDAL DESIGNED FOR POWs

The image of an eagle surrounded by barbed wire and bayonet points has been selected as the main design for a new medal for U.S. prisoners of war.

Defense Department officials said the medal could go to more than 140,000 service members and next of kin, but it will not be ready for distribution for at least a year.

The final design was selected in June by a joint-service panel from among 323 proposals. It was designed by Jay C. Morris, a civilian employee of the Army's adjutant general's center in Washington.

A description of the circular medallion details an eagle standing "with pride and dignity, continually on the alert for the

opportunity to seize hold of beloved freedom."

The back of the medal has a space in which the recipient's name would be engraved. It also contains the inscription: "For honorable service while a prisoner of war."

Congress created the medal as part of the fiscal 1986 Defense Authorization Act. It will be awarded to any military member who was taken prisoner after April 5, 1917.

DoD officials estimate more than 142,000 service members were taken captive in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, with at least 17,000 dying in captivity.

The services will issue speci-

fic eligibility criteria, DoD officials said. The bill authorizing the medal, however, permits next of kin to receive posthumous awards and permits only personnel with honorable service as POWs to receive it.

The new medal is rated as the highest decoration for service. That places it behind decorations for valor and for achievement.

The Army's Institute of Heraldry oversaw the competitive design process and will supervise the contracts for its manufacture. DoD officials said it will not be ready for distribution before next summer.

From: Air Force Times
Sent By: James E. Haney

EDITOR'S NOTES

There's nothing worse than getting to deadline time for the newsletter with two pages of copy and eight pages to fill. That's what happened to me with this issue until someone heard my pleas and the copy came pouring in. This is your newsletter, we want to hear from you and about you. For your information London is still a great city. They cleaned up the underground station at Picadilly Circus and the Regents Palace Hotel is still there. If you manage to get to England don't miss the RAF

Museum in Hendon Centre which can be reached by the underground; also Duxford has airshows several times during the year. I believe they may now have a flyable B-17. Their static display is tremendous. It can be reached by bus.

My wife and I spent three weeks visiting England, Ireland and Scotland in early spring and almost froze to death. It was the first time I had seen Ireland since we (Don Stoullil's crew) flew the ocean in October of 1943 and landed at Nutt's Corner outside Belfast. I

wonder if they ever dug that plane out of the mud?

By the way congrats to Ben Losiewicz and Robert Relford and their crew for holding a reunion in New Albany, Indiana recently. First time Ben and Bob had seen each other in 41 years.

I'm planning on a 12 page newsletter for December so get those news items in early.

We are also working on an in-depth story of Jack Mathis. If you have additional information send it along.

REUNION NOTES

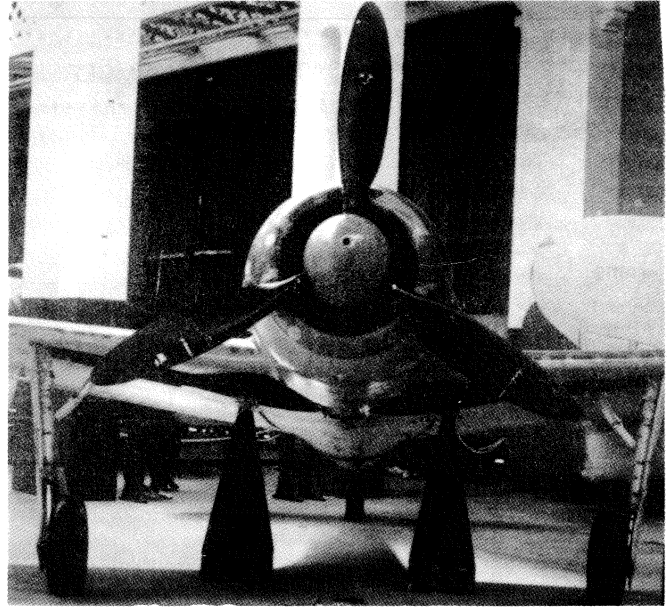
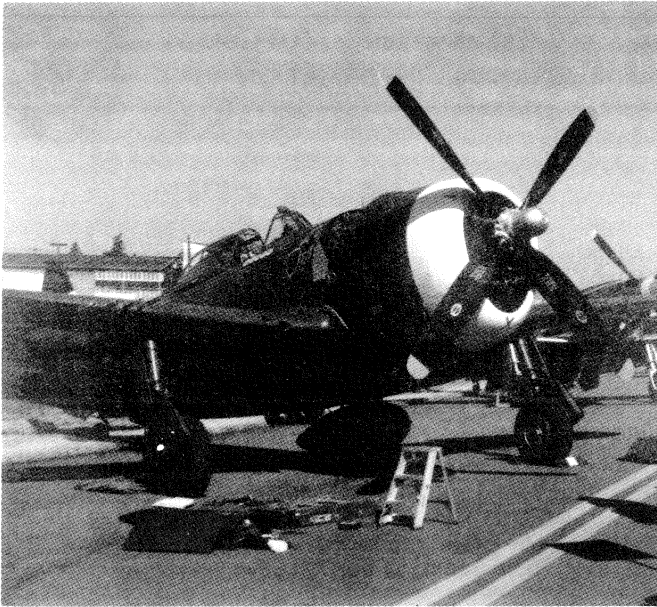
Plans for the 1987 reunion in Fort Worth, Texas on June 3-7, 1987 are proceeding on schedule. Bud Klint and his committee have blocked out 275 rooms at the Ft. Worth Hilton. Rate will be \$55, single or double.

The committee is meeting again on September 18th to finalize a lot

of the details so this is just a reminder to mark your calendar with the dates, time and place. Several airlines have asked to be the reunion carrier which usually means a slightly lower fare. All the details will be carried in the December issue of the newsletter so make sure we have your correct

address. My mailman is getting a little testy about bringing me all those returned newsletters and waiting around to collect his 30 cents postage due for each return.

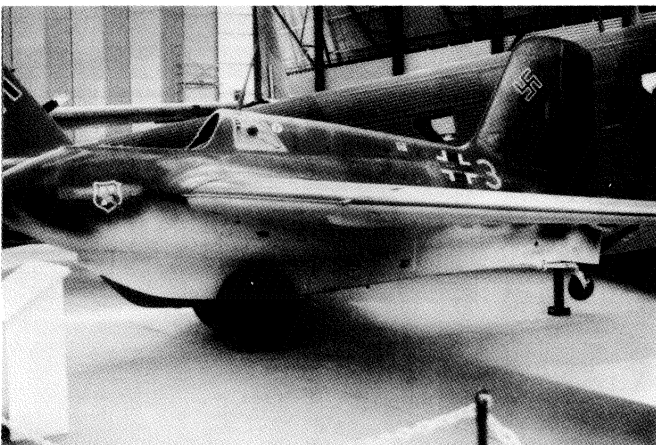
By the way for all you hackers, George Miller (427th) has suggested a golf tournament.



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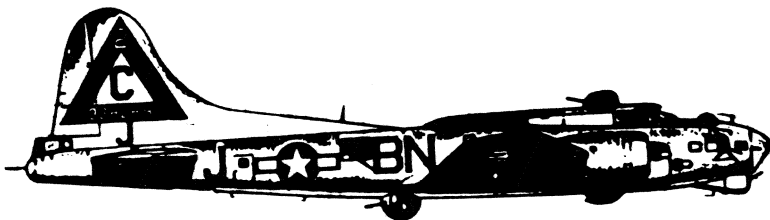
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