

# THE AIR FORCES ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY

## Winter 1999-2000 Communications

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WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS 76307-2501

DEC. 3, 1999

### A SECRET IN THE WOODS

## Entire B-17 crew hid by the Hakims

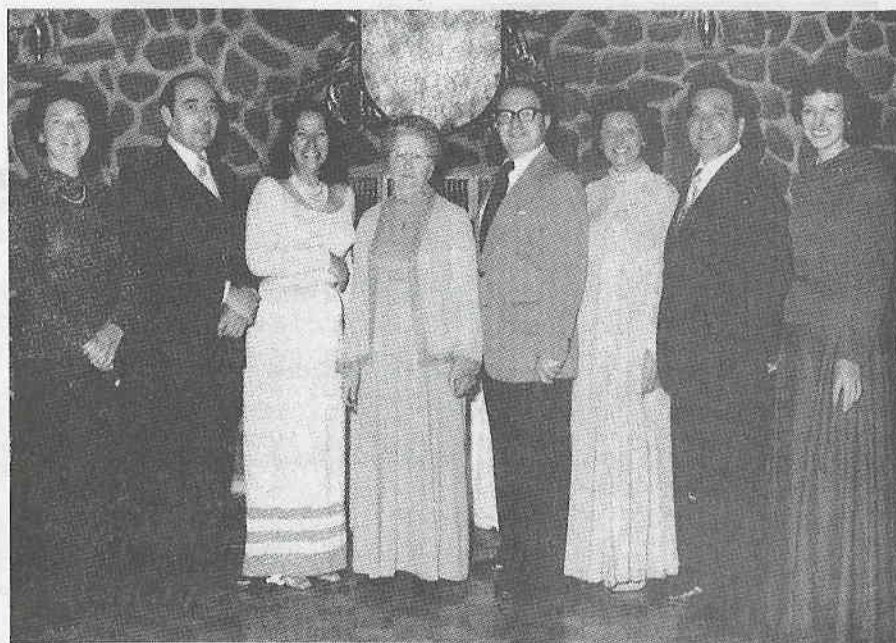
American Joseph Hakim and his Belgian wife, Jeanne, who was a concert pianist, and their seven children were living in Antwerp when the Germans invaded. They hid and fled to the village of Eprave. Once there, Joseph joined the Resistance.

Not long after the move to Eprave, the family witnessed a B-17 going down in the mountains near their village home. Their Resistance contact, whom they knew as "Shadow," also witnessed the plane going down. Shadow found the plane and contacted Joseph for help in hiding them. The two oldest Hakim children -- Pierre, 18, and Olga, 19 years old, helped.

The woods surrounding their village were very dense, so Joseph, Pierre and Olga took a huge tent which they had used for family vacations, and erected it in the woods for the Americans to live in.

They then had to wait for Shadow to contact them and let them know when a submarine would be available to pick up the crew. The Americans lived in the tent for several months, having to forage and steal food from neighboring farms. The Hakims also shared what they could of food and water, which wasn't much. The Hakim children all knew to keep their presence in the woods a secret, and no one ever told.

On one foray, the Americans raided the wine cellar of a good neighbor friend of the Hakims. Because the Americans would visit the Hakim house periodically, they wanted to give Joseph two bottles of the wine as a thank-you. Joseph did not know the wine was stolen from the good friend. Later, the Hakims invited this friend to Sunday dinner, and Joseph boasted to their guest of the two bottles of fine wine he had as a surprise. The neighbor



*Members of the family of the late Joseph Hakim, who saved the entire crew of a B-17 in Belgium during World War II.*

graciously drank the wine, and even though he recognized it as his own, didn't say a thing.

Daughter Nicole, who now is living in Columbia, Mo., and is married to Col. William "Bill" Reilly, remembers that one of the Americans was from New York City.

On another occasion, all 10 Americans were at the Hakim house when they heard the motorcars of German troops arriving. Because Joseph looked the American he was, he also looked Jewish. He always "disappeared" when the Germans came. The German colonel came to the door.

The Americans all hid in the Hakim's small bathroom. Because wife Jeanne Hakim's mother was German, she spoke the language, and invited the colonel in for tea. She talked with him, as he seemed

really sad and missed his family. The colonel left without ordering the usual search of the house.

Eventually, the entire 10-man crew made the two-day walk to the coast and were picked up by a submarine.

Joseph continued working with the Resistance, and saved a number of British and other soldiers. After the war, the Hakim family returned to Antwerp to reclaim their home, which had been appropriated by the Germans. Joseph Hakim died not long afterward.

Son Pierre went into the U.S. Army in Germany. Eventually, all the children came to the U.S. and all graduated from Columbia University -- Joseph's alma mater. Pierre is a member of AFEES.

The family believes that only two members of the B-17 crew are alive today.

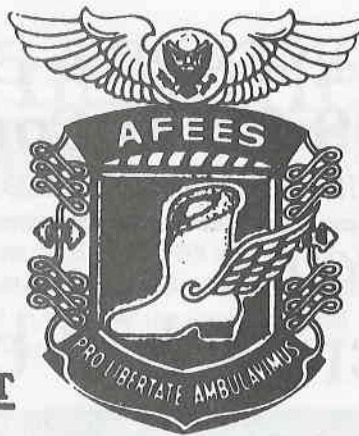


# U.S. AIR FORCES ESCAPE/EVASION SOCIETY

## Communications

*Published Quarterly*

**WE WILL NEVER FORGET**



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Dec. 3, 1999

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THE SOCIETY'S PURPOSE IS TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERS HELPED BY THE RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS OR PATRIOTIC NATIONALS TO CONTINUE EXISTING FRIENDSHIPS OR RENEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WHO HELPED THEM DURING THEIR ESCAPE OR EVASION.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIRES THAT ONE MUST HAVE BEEN A U.S. AIRMAN, HE MUST HAVE BEEN FORCED DOWN BEHIND ENEMY LINES AND AVOIDED CAPTIVITY, OR ESCAPED FROM CAPTIVITY TO RETURN TO ALLIED CONTROL.

IN ADDITION TO REGULAR MEMBERSHIP, OTHER CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP ARE HELPER MEMBERS, AND FRIEND MEMBERS.

## Yvonne Daley tells her story to Daedalians

From monthly newsletter,  
25th Flight Order of Daedalians,  
MacDill AFB, Fla.

Yvonne Daley Brusselmans started her presentation at the November meeting by stating that she intended to keep the legacy of her mother alive. Present for meeting at the MacDill Officer's Club were 51 members, 12 special guests and 11 Daedalian wives.

Yvonne's mother, Anne, and Yvonne will always be remembered by those in the audience and all other members of the 25th Flight. Yvonne explained that a TV picture showing a father pushing a wheelbarrow accompanied by two children and wife while fleeing Kosovo as refugees reminded her of the plight of her family during WW II.

That is how her family initially began their flight from Belgium to escape the advancing Nazis. Yvonne kept the audience spell-bound on what it was like to be a war refugee.

Yvonne's family left their home in Belgium with the intent of going to England. They were among almost 20% of the Belgian population on the road. The family didn't make it past the coast of France before being overtaken by German troops. The vehicles they were using were constantly being strafed by the Luftwaffe and many of the boats carrying refugees that did escape from the coast of France were sunk during strafing attacks.

Yvonne's family hid in a cellar for four nights and five nights with little water, one loaf of bread and lots of champagne before the Germans returned them to Belgium. They spent 41 days as refugees on the road.

It was after their return that Yvonne's family became involved with assisting many of the Allied airmen downed in Belgium. Her mother performed the key role but the rest of the family assisted.

Yvonne described the many actions taken to protect downed airmen from the Germans and the things the airmen were expected to do to help in their own survival. Such experiences are described in Yvonne's book, "Anne Brusselmans My Mother."



# AIR FORCES

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November 27, 1999

GREETINGS FROM SUNNY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA!

Margaret and I have left Minnesota, the land of sky-blue waters, high winds and mosquitoes, and arrived in the living desert with its clear sky, ants and traffic congestion. Nice to be here for the winter months -- I left the snow shovel at home.

Ralph Patton and I were fortunate enough to get to England last May for the International Reunion of Escapers and Evaders; saw many old friends among the Helpers who were there. The museum at Eden Camp is well organized. If you are in England, it is worth the train ride from London to York. Eden Camp is just out of York, and I'm sure that somebody in York would be delighted to take you to the camp.

We are well along with plans for the 2000 reunion. The folks in Columbia, Mo., really go all out to welcome military types at their annual Memorial Weekend celebration. Reunion hotel prices are the lowest ever, and the program ensures that there will never be a dull moment. In my opinion, the 2000 reunion is a must.

Information concerning the reunion agenda can be found in the center section of this issue of *Communications*. Total cost for the reunion events will be about \$175, not including the Saturday night Salute to Veterans dinner. Forms for making reunion reservations will be published in the Spring issue; the hotel reservation form and the Salute to Veterans reservation form are in this edition.

Concerning the reunion, we need several volunteers for the PX and Hospitality Room, and at least one female to help the Columbia people during registration. Please, come prepared to HELP!

AFES is a volunteer organization. That means we always need members who are willing to take on more responsibility to keep the wheels turning. If you have a suggestion for a member who would be willing and able to serve as director or officer, please let me know before the meeting.

If there is sufficient interest, we will plan a post-reunion bus trip to Branson in the Missouri Ozarks, the home of good clean family entertainment. And, it is not all country western! The more bus riders, the cheaper the trip. If you're interested, let me know ASAP so we can reserve the rooms and line up show tickets.

LET'S MEET IN MISSOURI AND SHOW 'EM!

Richard M. Smith  
President





*Standing in front of the shed in which Joe Walters was hidden after he was shot down in Belgium, 56 years ago, from left: Historian Luc Dewez, his wife Sophie and their daughter; Genevieve Tuts, and Viviane and her daughter. The buildings are scheduled to be torn down; Joe is thankful that he was able to see them once more before they were demolished.*

## Joe returns to Boirs, 56 years later

*Sgt. Joe Walters (381BG) bailed out of the B-17 "Chug-a-Lug" on the first Schweinfurt mission. He landed in an apple tree near Boirs, Belgium. He eventually crossed the Pyrenees and was flown back to Bristol, England, from Gibraltar on 4 December 43. Last summer, he and his daughter returned to the area where he was shot down.*

**By JOE WALTERS**  
West Mifflin, Pa.

In August 1995 I received a picture of Albert Tilkin, his father Lambert, and me. The photo showed them leading me away minutes after getting me out of the tree in which I had landed. One of Albert's workers snapped the picture. Somehow, the film survived, although the camera was destroyed at once.

When French author/helper Roger Anthoine was writing the first book published on the Aug. 17, 1943, Schweinfurt raid, he was given a copy of the photograph by Albert and used it in his book, "Fortresses Sur L Europe."

Roger and I met at the 1995 AFEES reunion in Toronto and he gave me a copy of the picture. He helped me locate Viviane, Albert's only surviving child. Viviane had been left a diary of how I had been hidden from the Germans.

After I was out of the apple tree, I was asked whether I wanted to surrender. When I said, "No," I was taken to the grandfather's house and given a glass of brandy. I was soon hoisted up into the loft of one of their box factory sheds and hidden under wooden crates from the German search party.

After leaving the loft, I spent the first night with Joseph Godin, a railroad conductor who lived nearby. Early next morning I left in a truck with a former New York City taxi driver, hopefully headed back to freedom.

Last August 11, my daughter Jo Ann Lydic and I left Atlanta for London, took the noon train to Brussels and started south in a rental car to Roger Anthoine's home, which is near Geneva. We spent a glorious day and half with Roger and Jeanine.

Then we went back up to Liege where Viviane, her daughter and friend Genevieve picked up me and Jo and drove us to her home about four miles from Boirs.

On Tuesday, Aug. 17 (56th anniversary of the day I went down), I went back to Boirs. With me was my daughter, Viviane, her daughter, and Genevieve. I had been corresponding with a Belgian, Luc Dewez, who has written books on the Kassel and Berlin raids. His wife Sophie and



infant came along.

Time takes its toll. The place has changed. The orchard where I landed is gone, as is the house where I had the brandy.

We tried to find Janine Adams' home, but that too had been torn down. She was the young student who came to Godin's house that first night to translate and tell me how I was going to be moved. She spoke English and last year in this publication was a most interesting article by her concerning that visit. Genevieve Tutz, a professor of physics at Brussels University, and Luc both spoke English.

Even tho some of the landmarks were gone, just coming back to the place where two complete strangers were willing to risk their lives in my behalf was a tremendous experience. Without their efforts, I could have spent years in prison. Being able to thank Albert personally would have been the ultimate thrill, but he died in an auto accident some years ago.

Viviane told me that her Dad was a member of the Resistance. We visited the Citadel Fortress, where Dad had been imprisoned twice and tortured, but escaped.

Later during my evasion, I stayed with a Belgian doctor, Charles Kremer, in Liege. Soon after I left his home, he was interrogated and shot, paying a terrible price.

Our trip last summer was fantastic; our hosts didn't seem to be able to do enough for us. We were treated like long-lost friends.



*Joe Walters is being led away from the tree in which he landed after being shot down on Aug. 17, 1943. On the left is Albert Tilkin; his father, Lambert, is on the right.*

W POLDZIE 41 802 /CZTERDZIESTU  
JEDEN TYSIACOM OSMISET DWOM/  
LOTNIKOM SIŁ POWIETRZNYCH  
STANÓW ZJEDNOCZONYCH, KTÓRZY  
ODDALI SWĘ ŻYCIE NIOSĄC WOLNOŚĆ  
OKUPOWANYM KRAJOM EUROPY.  
NISZCZĄC SKUTECZNIE POTENCJAŁ  
MILITARNY TRZECIEJ RZESZY

W DOWÓD WIDZIECZNOŚCI  
I PAMIĘCI POLACY

1942

1945

TO THE MEMORY OF 41802  
/FORTY-ONE THOUSAND EIGHT  
HUNDRED AND TWO/ARMEN OF  
THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR  
FORCE, WHO WERE KILLED  
BRINGING FREEDOM TO THE  
OCCUPIED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES  
AND DESTROYING SUCCESSFULLY  
THE THIRD REICH MILITARY  
POTENTIAL.

AS TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE  
AND COMMEMORATION  
OF THE POLISH PEOPLE

*Laser engraving, right side of rudder/fin element of monument erected by the Polish people in dedication to the 41,802 USAAF airmen who perished in WWII battles that resulted in the liberation of Occupied Europe, 1942 through 1945.*

## Poles erect monument honoring USAAF airmen

A B-17G nicknamed "BTO in the ETO" (452BG) went down in Poland on the first England-to-Russia shuttle raid on June 21, 1944. The crew parachuted; three were taken prisoner and seven were rescued by members of the 34th Regiment, Polish Home Army.

Now the Polish people have constructed a full-size replica of a B-17 tail section, which was exhibited at the Goraszka airport airshow and picnic last May 29.

The monument will be temporarily located near the airport entrance until sitework at the final location near the town of Woroniec, on Highway E 30 is completed.

See "Life with the Polish Home Army,"  
Fall 1997 Communications



**SECRET WAR:****Gunboat flotilla rescued airmen**

**From the *Western Morning News*, United Kingdom,  
Monday, May 24, 1999**

The village of Kingswear in South Devon played a vital role in the clandestine war against the Germans by acting as base for gunboats ferrying agents into occupied France and bringing out escaping Allied airmen.

COLIN BRADLEY tells how an 18 year-old Breton girl saved Guy Hamilton -- later a James Bond film director -- and two other sailors

\*\*\*\*\*

The moon was well hidden by a mass of storm clouds as the three French agents stepped from the Royal Navy surfboat which had silently rowed them ashore to the Brittany beach codenamed Bonaparte.

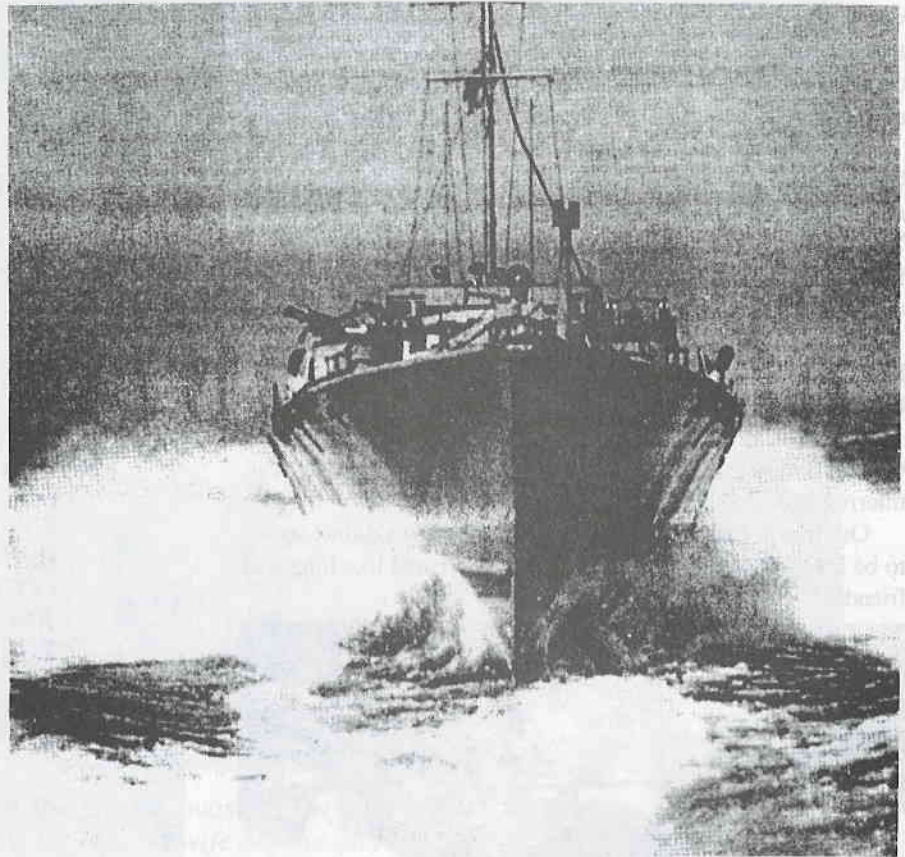
After a four-hour journey across the English Channel on a Kingswear-based gunboat from the 15th Flotilla, the agents were back on their native soil to carry out a secret mission to gather military intelligence and to help evacuate escaping downed Allied pilots.

Throughout the crossing they had never uttered a word about the impending ordeal which could cost them their lives, but as they clambered ashore near the village of Plouha with their suitcases crammed full of clothes, weapons, money and radio transmitters, they briefly exchanged whispers of "Bonne chance" to the three British oarsmen who had brought them -- and then disappeared into the blackness.

It was June 1944 -- just days after D Day -- and an Allied air raid was under way at St. Malo 25 miles to the south-east. But as the surfboat turned around and headed back out to sea for the three-quarter-of-a-mile "pull" to rendezvous back with the gunboat, the mission suddenly went wrong.

The gunboat's anchor dragged in the rough weather, its walkie-talkie link with the surfboat failed to work properly and the two vessels missed each other in the gloom.

With dawn rapidly approaching, neither could afford to be seen by German look-outs on the cliffs, so the gunboat

***Motor gunboats operated from South Devon village***

commander reluctantly gave the order to head the vessel back across the Channel to the safety of the River Dart.

Its specially quietened engines could still be faintly heard across the water by the crew of the surfboat as their colleagues retreated away and the frustrated rowers knew they had no chance of chasing after their 42-knot "mother" craft -- the fastest in the four-strong flotilla.

Instead they headed back to the beach, where, despite being exhausted, they hid their own weapons and sank the tiny craft by piling it full of rocks. In charge was Guy Hamilton, then the gunboat's first lieutenant and later to become a director of the James Bond films.

In his efforts to remove all trace of his surfboat he broke a finger while hacking holes into the craft's clinker-planked bottom with a knife.

The three had just enough energy left to clamber up the cliffs above the beach and hide in the gorse, but the next morning they found themselves right in

the middle of a German minefield.

They gingerly made their way out and, traveling by night, decided to try to make contact with the local Resistance while avoiding Germans patrols.

AT ONE point Hamilton, who had grown up in France and spoke the language fluently, met an old farm worker and told him about their plight. But instead of giving out any information about the Resistance, the man went to a nearby farmhouse and returned with a bottle of cider and pancakes -- and got offended when Hamilton offered him money.

After two nights, just as they were crossing a main road, a man who was working nearby warned the three men that the highway was a popular route for the Germans. So he led them to a pit in the middle of a nearby field where he hid them.

The man turned out to be a Resistance contact, but leaders of the local group,



## *Future James Bond director found himself in the middle of a real-life adventure*

hilarious, but I thought it was very unfunny."

Hamilton remembers that while the Resistance were suspicious about the surfboat crew, the sailors were just as suspicious of the French at first.

"We knew there were people about who were anti-Resistance and the buzz had got around that we were hiding in the pit in the field," he said. "The real turning point came for us when we saw the blackout curtains in the safe-house.

"They were made of rubberised canvas which we had used to wrap up the equipment we had delivered to the Resistance. When we saw the curtains we knew we were safe. Quite simply, if it was not for the Resistance I would not be alive today. I owed my life to Marie-Therese."

Despite her teen-age years, Marie-Therese, who worked at the local Ministry of Agriculture office in Plouha, had insisted on being involved from the beginning in the Shelburne escape line. She had joined it to gain revenge against the Germans after one of her five brothers, George, a pilot, had disappeared while returning from a bombing mission for the Free French.

She and her mother constantly hoped for news that he was still alive and her parting words to Hamilton as he left Bonaparte beach in July 1944 was a request to him to find out what had happened to George.

Hamilton returned on another mission weeks later and after spotting the tall officer in his surfboat, Marie-Therese ran into the sea to ask for news about George. Hamilton jumped out, lowered his head and as he held her shoulders he told her that her brother was dead.

Hamilton was awarded the DSC after completing eight missions to France on the gunboats and four to Norway. There were over 100 officers and men in the 15th Motor Gunboat Flotilla at Kingswear during 1943 and 1944 and over half of them went to Buckingham Palace to receive medals, which made them the most highly decorated unit in the Royal Navy.

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***Coming in the Next Issue:  
SECRET WAR, second part  
of the story of gunboats  
operating out of the South  
Devon village of Kingswear***

which operated the Shelburne escape line for fleeing Allied airmen, were deeply suspicious. They regarded the three men's unexpected arrival as a Gestapo trap.

But then up stepped Marie-Therese Le Calvez, who at only 18 was rapidly becoming one of the most influential members of the Resistance in the area.

She was already a veteran of five missions to get airmen out of the area after meeting them at her local railway station, taking them to safehouses, including her own home, and then later leading them through that cliff-top minefield to meet the returning Kingswear gunboats which she would always greet by wading into the sea with a torch to help guide in their surfboats.

She and her widowed mother Leonie helped more than 140 American and Canadian airmen, plus a string of escaping agents, and the pair were key members of the "Women of Shelburne".

Later decorated along with her mother by the French, British and the Americans for their bravery, she eventually became a nun. But before her death in 1991, she talked about her exploits, including her meeting with Hamilton.

She had brushed aside her fellow Resistance worker's fears about the British sailors and volunteered to go to the pit in the field to check them out.

"Hello, there," she said as she jumped down without waiting for a reply.

"I just managed to avoid them and they were very surprised. One of them said, 'Well done madame,' in French that was accentless. But what had I jumped into?

"The man who had spoken was a tall young chap with a ginger beard covering his cheeks. He had bright green eyes which showed no sign of any fear. There was something about him which stopped me from being anxious and I felt confident in him at once.

"I whispered into the officer's ear that my name was Marie-Therese. He did not let me go on. A great smile lit up his face as he explained 'I thought as much, you are well-known at Dartmouth in

England, you know.' "

After reporting back to her group, Marie-Therese returned to collect the sailors after nightfall and took them to her mother's home. Hamilton immediately agreed to follow her but his two crewmen were sceptical -- they thought their office was looking for romance, although they eventually agreed to go as well.

ON THE way the party heard an enemy patrol and the three men dived for cover into a 14-ft. deep anti-tank ditch. Hamilton added a broken nose to his already broken finger.

Later Marie-Therese was praised by her leaders in the Resistance group, who said she had saved the network. They told her that if the three sailors had been picked up by the Germans their presence would have proved that landings were being made at Plouha and there was an organization responsible for them.

"Our cause was won -- Shelburne had been saved," she recalled.

Later the three men were switched to stay at a deserted house to avoid the Germans before being put up at the home of Mme. Ann Ropers who kept them hidden for 20 days.

A message was sent back to England by the Resistance that the three were safe and the beach could still be used. After the coded message "your carrots are cooked" was sent out over the BBC, another Kingswear-based gunboat picked up the sailors, along with 15 escaping airmen.

But Hamilton's time in Plouha was not always spent in the safe-houses. Fed up with being locked inside, he got out as much as possible -- and even played at the bowling alleys at the Cafe Le Meur.

Hamilton, now 76 and living in Mallorca, said: "Three members of the Resistance took me, but the alleys were very popular with the Germans. We had to wait our turn to use them when we got there because the Germans were actually playing.

"I was horrified to see the Germans there, but the Resistance bought them a round of drinks. They thought it was



# Ken and Earl at home in Peronne

*From FAME'S FAVORED FEW,  
A WWII Flier Evades Capture in  
German-Occupied France.*

**CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE**  
(The author and his fellow evader  
had been directed to the French  
town of Peronne)

## Our New Home for the Next Twenty-Four Days

By KENNETH E. NEFF  
Atwater, Calif.

Earl (Broderick) and I located a spot on the hill with some bushes plus a clear view of the area. As early as it was, I didn't think we would be seeing many people moving around for a time. We had opened our escape kits to get the silk map, as well as the French phrase book.

Around noon of our second day in France, Earl and I saw a large convoy coming down the road we had used earlier in the day. There were cars, trucks, busses and even a tank. Right in the middle of the convoy was a long black limousine. We learned later than it was none other than der Fuhrer himself, Adolph Hitler, in the limo.

He had been on the French Coast, inspecting the defenses around Calais and was on his way back to Berlin.

Later in the afternoon, we saw some women and kids coming up the hill, picking flowers. We moved out of the bushes so they could see us. One of the women came to us and started talking. We did not know what she was saying. She looked at us and said, "Vous etes anglais?"

We shook our heads no. Then she said, "Vous Boche?" We knew what Boche meant so again we shook our heads. "American," I said, and her eyes got really big. She turned to the other women and one of the girls took off down the hill.

A half hour later, we saw two young men coming up the hill, pushing bicycles. When they reached us, they said something to the two French women who then left. One of the young men could speak English, which made things a lot easier.

We learned his name was Paul, at least when he was dealing with Allies on the run from the Germans.

He asked where we were from in the States, what kind of plane we flew, and

when we had been shot down. Paul finally told us that we would all stay where we were until dark, and then go down off the hill and make contact with the FFI. The Frenchmen asked if we had any food, so we opened up our duffel bags and got out the food a French family had given us the night before.

The four of us talked and munched on the food and washed it down with the wine until it got dark.

When Paul said it was time to go, we got up and started down the hill for our first meeting with the French Underground.

The Frenchman who spoke no English was called Eddie. He took the lead and the three of us followed him to the other side of town to what appeared to be a church. Paul said the Underground was to have someone meet us there at midnight. Midnight came and went and no one showed up. So Paul said they would take us to a place to hide.

Our home for the next day was a storeroom for garden tools. Every time someone came to get tools, they brought food, wine or beer. At last it was dark again and Paul and Eddie showed up and said it was time to go.

Earl and I finally learned the town was Peronne, located about 120 km from the coast and 65 km south of the Belgian border, on the north bank of the Somme River.

Back in England, the briefers would tell us what to do and not to do. Things not to do were to ask for help, names of helpers, or where we were going.

One Intelligence officer knew Germany like you know the back of your hand.

After he had said his bit about the target and its defenses, he would say, "Okay fellows, if you go down in this part of Germany, go to the southeast part of town as that is where the whore houses are. Watch the houses and see which one gets the most males in and out. Wait till it's dark, then go up and knock and tell the girl who answers the door that you are an American. She will get you into the Underground." The briefer went on to say the girls in the houses hated the Nazis because the Nazis wouldn't let them charge for their services, and because of this, they did everything they could to get back at them.

Most of us thought the briefer was just talking, but when some crews who had been shot down started coming back and who had done as he told them, we started listening a lot closer.

After leaving the tool shed, Paul and Eddie took Earl and me to a mill where wheat and corn were ground into flour. The man and wife who ran the mill had a nice home and a nice bed for us. We sat at the table with them to eat our meals.

We stayed with this friendly couple for



*Kenneth Neff with his damaged B-17 ball turret after a mission to Bordeaux on Dec. 31, 1943. The radio operator and tail gunner were killed. Ken was shot down April 29, 1944, on a later mission to Berlin.*



four days. Paul and Eddie came by every day and on the fourth day, told us that we were now celebrities. The Germans had posted the names, ranks and serial numbers of eight of our crew on the town bulletin board with notice of a reward for information leading to our capture. What amazed me and what I would like to know is where did the Germans get all the information on us in such a short time. There were individuals from four separate crews in our aircraft that went down. It was a surprise to learn how efficient German Intelligence was!

As it turned out, all eight of our crew who were not wounded made it to Peronne. Here we were to spend the next 24 days.

At the next home we stayed, when we got up in the morning and looked out, we found we were right across the street from a German airfield. The field was not being used right then, but the Germans had mockup planes parked to make it look like an operational field.

Earl and I told ourselves that it won't be long before we will be back in England. Every day we would ask Paul and Eddie when we were going to England. The answer was always, "Peu-etre demain," perhaps tomorrow.

We didn't know that Headquarters had decided to stop clandestine trips into German airfields. The invasion was on the planning board, so evaders could just stay put and wait for the liberating forces to come through.

About a week later, Paul and Eddie showed up and advised us that we were going to leave as soon as it got dark.

One day while we were waiting for Paul and Eddie to come for us, we heard the most awful racket. We both jumped up and ran outside to see what was going on. It was a flight of P-38s going over, right down on the deck with 500-pound bombs slung under each wing.

The pilots were making a run on a railroad trestle about 3 km from us. The bombs missed. A short time later we could hear more planes. This time it was B-26s at medium altitude trying to bomb the trestle the 38s had missed. Like the fighters, the 26s missed the trestle, but did a lot of damage to the area.

After a flight of B-24s had failed to knock out the trestle, one of the local Frenchmen got tired of American planes blowing up everything except what they were aiming for.

He located a 500-lb. bomb that had failed to go off, rolled it down under the trestle and took out the fuse. He inserted a stick of dynamite in the fuse hole and did real fast what our Army Air Forces had been trying to do all day.

Our little group was moved to a small town and stopped at a nice house. Grandpa slept in one bedroom, Grandma slept in another, Paul, Earl and I slept in the third. Outside was a tall fence around the back yard. Earl and I could go out there and walk, do some exercises, or whatever. It was a pleasant place.

Until this time, the Underground had not made us any passports as they said the photos the Army had made for us were no good. To make things difficult, the Germans would occasionally change the

type of photos they would accept. A day or so after we arrived at Grandma's, a photographer came to take our pictures and even brought the clothes we were to wear.

Staying with Grandma, Grandpa and Earl was really enjoyable. But it was not

It was about the first of June 1944 when Paul said to us, "The Underground has decided it is time for you to leave the Peronne area and head south."

A member of the Underground briefed Earl and me about what was going to happen the next day. We were going on our first train ride. Now that we had identity papers, we could ride the rails.

### In the next Communications: KEN AND EARL TAKE THEIR FIRST TRAIN RIDE

## Greetings are in the mail!

Messages expressing sentiments of the Holiday Season from the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society are now on their way to some 625 homes in 20 different nations.

This promise to our Helpers, We Will Never Forget, is repeated in a special way.

Every effort has been made over the years to maintain the names and current addresses of living Helpers, as reported by members. Ralph Patton and Francis Lashinsky, on their computers, keep information, which the late Gil Millar initiated, up-to-date with the cooperation of Clayton and Scotty David.

Dorothy Kenney is the artist who creates a new card each year and has it ready for printing with attention to style and a total weight not to exceed 1/2 oz. for overseas airmail delivery. Paul Kenney has the cards printed and ready for President Dick Smith by mid-November.

By that time, Ralph Patton has printed out the labels and sends them to Scotty for any late corrections or additions.

The home address of the Davids is used for the greetings and for the AFEES newsletter. They devote many hours in an effort to keep the membership and helper addresses current.

Dick Smith and whatever family help he can enlist apply the labels and stamp the envelopes to prepare them for the post office.

### SEASONS GREETINGS Cards for 1999

Albania . . . . .	1
Austria . . . . .	1
Australia . . . . .	5
Belgium . . . . .	98
Canada . . . . .	10
Czechoslovakia . . . . .	2
Denmark . . . . .	12
France . . . . .	304
Germany . . . . .	1
Greece . . . . .	1
Holland . . . . .	117
Italy . . . . .	5
Luxembourg . . . . .	1
Slovenia . . . . .	1
Slovakia . . . . .	8
Spain . . . . .	1
Switzerland . . . . .	1
United Kingdom . . . . .	9
United States . . . . .	40
Yugoslavia . . . . .	7

(Figures compiled by Scotty David,  
Nov. 15, 1999)

Evidence that the cards are appreciated comes in the form of replies received by the Davids. The responses usually are acknowledged in the Spring issue of the AFEES newsletter.

The Greetings messages are one way our Helpers and Friends around the world are reminded again that **WE WILL NEVER FORGET!**



# Chetniks help pilot fly again

*Lt. John Nelson, 31FG, was downed Sept. 2, 1944, in Yugoslavia while strafing a German truck convoy. He crossed 500 miles of mountains to reach the Adriatic Sea.*

By JOHN T. NELSON  
Tampa, Fla.

The exploding black cloud in front of my P-51 Mustang obscured my vision. The plane lurched violently and I gained vision just in time to avoid hitting a power line pole.

I was to lose the shootout against German gun trucks. That was the beginning of my story of being shot down and engulfed in a civil war between Chetnik Serbs and Partisan Serbs.

Mushing into a right turn with power fading, the plane's tail broke away on a water dam. I spun and skidded to a stop.

German trucks and vehicles were within 50 yards of my crash site. I tried to hide in a shallow corn row.

Minutes later, a lone steam engine approached on tracks less than 50 feet from my hiding place. Just as the engine came close, Mustangs came strafing and the engine exploded. Men on the engine were running and so did I, hoping to appear as one of them.

In trying for distance from the Germans, my thirst became unbearable. Coming upon a remote farm house, with words I motioned like drinking from a glass. I was accepted as an Americansky, placed in a straw bed and given a pleasing alcohol rub on my injured leg by a mother and daughter.

Suddenly, the door of the farmhouse burst open. Three large, heavily bearded men pointed long-barreled guns at me. The fourth man with his pistol at my head spoke unknown words. I finally asked, "You Russian Partisan?" He very angrily said, "Na-na, Me Chetnik!"

My heart sank. The mission briefer



## *John Nelson flew Spitfires and Mustangs in combat*

had told us, "If you go down in Yugoslavia, avoid the Chetniks. We have recent word they kill American airmen on the spot." (I now know this was Russian-backed Partisan propaganda.)

With little choice, I stated "Me Americansky." The leader smiled and gave me a welcome bear hug.

I was escorted and hidden in the brush until late the next day. For the next 10 days the Chetniks helped me, moving always westward toward Allied forces. My plan was to travel to the Adriatic Sea.

Walking westward, two armed Chetnik horsemen approached, motioning that I mount the third saddled horse. One of them scouted ahead, returned, and signaled, "Let's go!"

We moved on to inspect a band of Chetnik soldiers having no uniforms, few shoes or ammunition. I then learned my companions were a general and his aide under Yugoslav Chetnik leader General Mihailovich. As we sat mounted before the troops, through my first interpreter, I stated, "We Americans are helping you fight the Germans and we are winning." The general, his aide and I moved on to a small house, where I had food and was given a bed in a small neat room.

Dawn brought a young handsome Chetnik and we walked westward toward a distant guiding mountain top. Time went on and I spent a night in the home of a lady named Invechth. She was about

25, and knew some English; her husband had been killed.

My new young Chetnik protector and I walked on westward. He was about 18, spoke perfect English and was worried that the Germans would miss him from their forced workers. His father was dead; he said his mother and family could be killed for his absence.

One night, knocking on a door, he received a woman's vicious tongue lashing. I asked, "What caused that?" "I just tried to get a bed for you," was the answer. We shared another haystack with the body lice I had learned to live with.

We arrived at a group of Chetniks and there stood Arnold (Moon) Mullins, one of my squadron's pilots shot down on the mission I went down on. Chetniks had prevented his capture and now we were a group of Chetnik and American airmen. A U.S. sergeant was there with a radio and some C-ration food.

Moon and I soon joined Chetnik leader Gen. Mihailovich and his staff. A civil war engulfed us as Russian-backed Partisan Serbs attacked with mortar shells. The better-armed Partisans were getting supplies dropped by American C-47s. We Americans knew the Partisans would protect us but being with the Chetniks and dressed like them made our survival doubtful.

In April 1999 (54 years later), I met a U.S. citizen, Miladin Djordjevic of Largo, Fla. As a member of General



Mihailovich's staff, he was wounded in this attack. After the war, he escaped his homeland to avoid the Partisan firing squad that killed the General.

Suddenly, Moon and I and a bomber pilot were appointed to choose a landing spot for a C-47 rescue. We chose a mountain plateau with a slight uphill landing roll. The Morse code brought two C-47s to our smoke signals.

Actions were at fever pitch with word the Germans were about to reach us. We Americans, as the planes departed, tossed our shoes and everything possible to our Chetnik protectors.

The takeoff into a blind canyon is one I will never forget! When airborne, seeing the protecting Mustangs criss-crossing above in battle formation seemed comforting beyond belief.

Arrival in Italy brought debriefing, delousing and return to my squadron to rejoin the air war in Europe.

*Note: Moon Mullins later died in a P-80 jet fighter crash.*



*Howard Harris (left) and Jean Ray were crew members (100BG) on the "Torchy II" which went down Sept. 3, 1943, on the Renault raid. They got together after 56 years recently at the Harris home in Wolcott, N.Y., for an emotional reunion. Howard evaded through Gibraltar; Jean, now living in Colfax, Iowa, was captured and became a POW.*



*An Army Jeep, formerly property of the 82nd Airborne Division, is one of many WWII vehicles restored by the Dutch society, "Keep Them Rolling." Here the Jeep is parked outside the WWII exhibit hall at Leimuiden, the Netherlands. It led a 45-vehicle motorized parade on May 5, 1995, the 50th anniversary of the Liberation. The parade passed through three villages southwest of Amsterdam. Shown, from left: Richard Stones, ball turret gunner; Bertus Uyttewaal, Dutch interpreter; Ashley Ivey, navigator; John Carmichael, Australian Spitfire pilot; Leonard Pogue, bombardier; and Piet Van Veen, Dutch Underground helper and AFEES associate.*





*Michael Mauritz holds a wartime portrait of himself as a young second lieutenant fighter pilot in this April 9, 1998, photo at his home near Pittsburgh, Pa. Michael returned to Italy 54 years after he was captured by Germans during World War II. He later escaped.*

## P-40 is raised from a watery grave

From the Pittsburgh (Pa.)  
Tribune-Review, Sept. 21, 1998

Story by Jason Toyger

Both Lt. Michael Mauritz and the Curtiss P-40L Warhawk he was flying were presumed missing forever when the crippled plane splashed into the Mediterranean Sea off Anzio, Italy, in 1944.

Relatives back home in Turtle Creek didn't know the Army Air Corps pilot swam to shore, where he was captured by the Germans, only to escape later from a POW camp and flee across the Apennines mountains to freedom.

Now, 53 years after Mauritz surprised his friends by returning home, an Italian businessman has surprised historians by raising the Warhawk from its watery grave. He plans to make it the centerpiece of an exhibit of World War II artifacts in his private museum in Latina, south of Rome.

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**See:  
'Pilot and his P-40'  
Summer 1998  
Communications,  
Pages 18-19**

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"You can't imagine what he has constructed -- it's incredible to see," said Mauritz, 77, who recently returned from a weeklong celebration at Mariano De Pasquale's Piana delle Orme, a sprawling collection of dioramas.

The plane was little more than a hazard to boats entering the harbor at Anzio until divers hired by De Pasquale recovered it from the sea floor in January. It now rests in a tank of fresh water at De Pasquale's museum, where conservationists are working to stem the corrosion by sea salt of the P-40L's aluminum

skin.

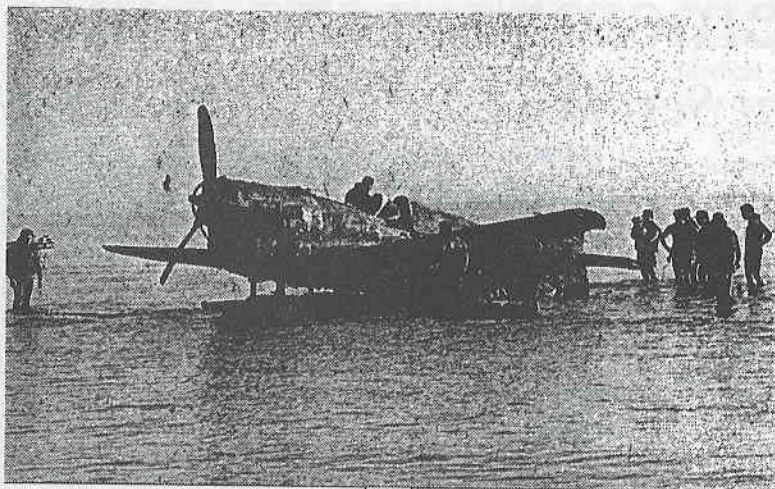
Mauritz has thought little of the plane until he was contacted in March by an Italian historian, Ferdinando D'Amico, who had tracked down his address via the Internet. D'Amico now is writing a book about Mauritz's experiences.

The retired Westinghouse Electric employee and his family flew to Italy Sept. 2 as guests of De Pasquale, a wealthy exporter. De Pasquale even arranged a brief audience at the Vatican with Pope John Paul II for Mauritz, who granted dozens of interviews and signed thousands of souvenirs.

"They asked me, 'What was my first impression when I saw the place?'" Mauritz said last week. "I told them it represents to me, now, how young people have to learn from our past mistakes. We and our leaders make mistakes sometimes, and we pay for it in a tragic way."

One headline in the Italian newspaper





**The Curtiss P-40L, named "Skipper" by members of Michael Mauritz' 86th Fighter Squadron, 79th Fighter Group, is pulled from the Mediterranean Sea off Anzio, Italy, in January 1998 by divers.**

Il Tempo lauded Mauritz as an "ambasciatore di pace" -- an ambassador of peace.

"The impact Mr. Mauritz had on everyone was very strong," said John Blasi, a former professor at the University of Naples who works for De Pasquale.

Blasi, speaking by phone from a relative's home in Providence, R.I., said Italians were touched by Mauritz' modesty and lack of pretension. "He thought he didn't deserve the limelight," Blasi said.

A near constant companion of Mauritz at Piana delle Orme was 77-year-old Umberto Coppola, who fought with the Italian army before being captured by American soldiers near Salerno. Coppola later cooperated with the Allies as an Italian partisan.

Mauritz met Coppola by accident "and asked him to come with him to all of the main events," Blasi said. "Even though there were high-ranking officials there from the Navy, the Air Force, NATO, he

chose this simple Italian cooperator.

"In this situation, Mr. Mauritz was probably the best ambassador the United States could ever have."

Mauritz, who said he "didn't particularly care for getting all this attention," called his experiences during World War II the opposite of the brutality shown in the movie "Saving Private Ryan."

"Even the Germans, when I was captured, they didn't shoot me. They gave me a loaf of bread and a blanket," he said. "Out of war comes compassionate deeds. People who are supposedly civilized can become brutal, but even brutal people can become compassionate."

*A book describing the loss of "Skipper" and its recovery 54 years later is being prepared for publication. Research indicates that the plane was sabotaged by pieces of parachutes stuffed into the cooling system.*



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*All correspondence should be sent  
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### Hagar





# OSS captain remembers the general

## *Nick Lalich speaks at Serbian Day in Niagara Falls*

From *Voice of the Canadian Serbs*,  
Thursday, July 25, 1996

1996 was the 50th anniversary of the death of General Draza Mihailovic at the hands of Tito's Communists who have spent decades presenting a negative picture of anti-Communist leaders and supporters. Captain Nick Lalich, an American of Serbian heritage, was the last OSS officer to see Draza alive. At Serbian Day he presented this positive image of a man and his people who did everything they possibly could for their American allies.

By **NICK LALICH**

When all Europe lay under the boots of the Nazis, when all Europe was enslaved, its citizens forced to submit to the rule of the German Nazis, one people, one nation rose to defy the mighty war machine of the Axis. On May 8, 1941, a soldier of the people called the people to bear arms against the invader. He was Colonel Dragoljub Mihailovic. His message of hope was heard around the world. I can speak for my birth place, America, which was over-whelmed with admiration and joy that the human spirit was alive and well in the mountains of Serbia. America could not do enough for the Serbs. There was love, generosity and respect for the Serbs everywhere. General Eisenhower, Commander of all the Allied Forces, called Draza Mihailovic "the first fighter and guerrilla of Europe" and hailed the fighting spirit of the Serbs.

It was in this atmosphere that I was asked to join a military unit, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), that would help Draza and his fighters coordinate the evacuation of American airmen. In July 1944 my big moment came! I was chosen to go into Pranjani, Yugoslavia to join Captain George Musulin, Mike Rajacich and radio operator Arthur Jibilian to join the commander of the Halyard Mission. Our task was to evacuate hundreds of American airmen and Allies who had been saved by the Serbian 'narod' and the Serbian Chetniks of Draza Mihailovic. These American airmen, at an average age of about 25, had taken off from Italy and with cargoes of bombs flew to Ploesti, the main target, an oil-producing center in Romania which was very heavily defended by the Germans. For days the skies were full of planes and many were destroyed or damaged. As they returned to their base, many faltered and the crews were forced to parachute to the ground. General Mihailovic gave orders that every American and Allied airman was to be protected and cared for.

To this day these airmen cannot forget the way the poor peasants in the villages and mountains of Serbia and Bosnia fed, clothed and cared for them. They moved out of their homes to provide beds; they themselves would sleep in the barns on straw. What food they had they shared, making certain that these young airmen were well taken care of -- as if they were part of their own family. When German patrols appeared looking for the airmen, the Serbian peasants hid them in the woods, always ready to give their lives for their guests. Quickly and expeditiously under the supervision of Major



**Kapetan Lalich & General Mihailovich**

Zvonko Vuckovic, Commander of the First Rayna Gora Corps, the peasants and Chetniks constructed a temporary airstrip at Pranjani.

### Evacuations Begin

On August 9, 1944 at 10 o'clock in the evening four C-47 transport planes loaded 12 wounded American airmen in each plane. That night all 48 wounded airmen were returned safely to Bari, Italy.

On the 10th of August at 8:30 a.m. six C-47s landed and we loaded 20 airmen in each plane. The whole process was repeated at 10 a.m. with 20 more airmen. All 240 airmen were returned safely to Bari.. Evacuated that day on one of the air cargo planes was your Canadian flyer Norman L. Reid, Pilot Officer Royal Canadian Air Force (Ret.). He lives on Vancouver Island, B.C. During World War II he was transferred to the RAF where he was a navigator on a Wellington Mark 10 Bomber which was shot down by the Germans over Serbia. Yes, the Serbian peasants saved him, took care of him and hid him from the Germans. He did meet Draza Mihailovic. On Feb. 5, 1996 he gave a beautiful presentation in Toronto.

During the August 10th daylight evacuation we had a security cover of twenty-five P-51 fighter planes protecting us. In addition, approximately 8,000 Chetniks under the command of Major Aca Milosevic, who now lives in Windsor with his wife Vera, protected the outlying areas of Rayna Gora and the Pranjani airstrip. The P-51s buzzed the nearby German occupied strongholds. The people (peasants) crowded the airfield turning their eyes upward. Disbelief on their faces--they cheered! They waved! They pounded each other on their backs--so full of emotion! That was the greatest show on earth. What a beautiful performance by our American Air



Force. These hundreds of Serbian peasants rushed the field to say goodbye to the flyers. Flowers were thrust into the hands of the Americans who in turn took off their jackets, shoes--anything--throwing them to the peasants. The people were so overcome with tears; they knew these men were returning to their families.

The people were all dressed up and carrying flowers. The crowds in the town were getting bigger by the hour. Captain Kalabic (Ole Cika Pero) was on hand with thousands of troops, a motley crew, barefoot, almost naked, and many without guns--but what morale! Our OSS photographer J. B. Allin took pictures. Chicha Draza and Col. McDowell arrived to be buried under flowers. The people were crying, they were so happy. After the troop review and church services, we went off to Popovi Polje to eat, drink and listen to Chicha's speech.

### Leaving Pranjani

We got word that afternoon to get ready to move from Pranjani in case the Partisans broke through from the Maljen Planina. We decided to hide all of our landing equipment, lamps, etc. Because our flyers were injured, we put them on horses while we struck out on foot. Partisans came around on our left flank and started to push on toward our positions, so we kept moving. We got to Brajici then decided to push on to Suvobor Mountain and over the Suvoborski Put, a real grind, and on to Mionica. All this while Chika Pero and Major Racic were protecting General Mihailovic forces flank and rear.

At Koceljevo we evacuated 25 airmen plus Dr. Mitrani and his two aides, Col. Doc Carpenter and our OSS photographer J. B. Allin. It was a daylight evacuation with two DC-3s and a cover of 15 P-51 fighter planes. The rescue of American airmen continued for approximately three more months. From Pranjani to Koceljevo in Macva to Badovinci across the Drina River over to Bosnia. Our overall evacuations at the time also included a number of Allies--Italians, Russians, British, French plus Americans of Serbian descent who had escaped from Belgrade.

After crossing the Drina at Badovinci under extreme hardship (it was raining very heavily making it difficult to cross into Bosnia) we finally moved to Bjeljina. We then crossed northwestern Bosnia on to the Trebavac Mountains where we met the famous Chetnik warrior Pop Sava. From the Trebavac Mountain we continued south along the Bosna River to Osjecani and Srpska Grapska. Near Doboj from the mountain top we could look down at the German stronghold there. Moving southeast along the Spreca River, we crossed the Boljanic where we built another airstrip. We then crossed the Ozren Mountains and headed down to the village of Okruglice not too far from Sarajevo, Draza's new headquarters.

Before reaching Okruglice at Kakmuz, Col. McDowell and the ranger mission were recalled to Bari with Capt. John Milodragovich, Mirko Rajacich and radio operator Mike Divjak, plus 9 American airmen. They were evacuated at the Boljanic airstrip on Nov. 1, 1944. I was told to stay on to pick up 16 more airmen who were held up at Visegrad. Instead, those airmen were brought to Okruglice.

### Halyard Mission recalled

During early December the Halyard Mission was recalled to Bari. They proposed three possible ways out of Bosnia: 1) to Bugojno over the Bosna River; 2) via Sandzak to Crna Gora ;

or 3) turn ourselves over to the Partisans near Tuzla. Answer by message: "You sent us in -- you'll come and get us!" Medical situation of the flyers: "Horses are upset--we're eating their oats!"

I lived with Draza for almost 5 months. He was a man of down-to-earth simplicity, a symbol of the simple, sturdy Serbian peasant resistant to tyranny, foreign and domestic. He believed in and loved his Church and wore the bosiljak (basil) on his right jacket pocket. He loved his soldiers and shared their hardships. He was truly a great man with honesty, integrity and straight forwardness. His Chetniks treated the American airmen like free men and allies. Draza had no political ambitions. All he wanted was a fair shake. He wanted a little touch of America in his own land. Remember also that in 1941 he got together with the opposition, the Communists. An understanding to cooperate was in the offing by Draza, but it was evident that the Communist doctrine was one that they would not accept.

Before leaving Draza, I told him that OSS headquarters had received permission from our American government to bring Draza out of Yugoslavia if he cared to leave. He said: "No, I will stay and share the fate of my people whatever that may be."

We left Draza on Dec. 11, 1944, with the American flyers from Okruglice, not far from Sarajevo. There in the dawn, during a heavy snowfall, Draza assembled 2,000 Chetniks for a farewell salute to the 16 American flyers of the Halyard Mission. In front of his troops, we kissed Draza goodbye, Jibby, my radio operator and I. Draza then had his sergeant tear off the patch from his jacket he had worn for 4 years and gave it to me. On it was written: Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava (Only with unity will the Serbs survive.)

In turn, I gave Draza my American carbine, the strap of which I put over his head upon his shoulder.

For our trip back to Boljanic airstrip near Doboj, Draza gave us 40 Chetniks led by the champion skier of Serbia, Major Blagojevic as my liaison officer and two blind Serbian officers Draza asked me to take back to Bari.

### Nine More Americans

When we stopped at Boljanic, there were nine more Americans waiting for us. On Dec. 27, two C-47s landed on our strip along along the Speca River. Evacuated: 25 airmen, the two blind Serbian officers, Bobby Marjanovich, my radio operator Jibby and I -- 30 in all. It was a daylight operation with the cover of 17 P-51 fighter planes, the famous Black Squadron (Afro-American pilots, graduates of Tuskegee University).

The Halyard Mission was now evacuated! Yes, I was the last American out and the last American officer of the OSS to see General Draza Mihailovic alive.

In closing, I would like to relate a message sent to the Allies by Draza in 1944: "The army and Serbian people are naked, barefoot and hungry. Unless help is given, all the Serbs will perish. In what way did the innocent Serbian people sin against God and against their Allies that they should be so punished? Is there nowhere a friend who will raise his voice? The Serbs would rather perish than submit to a Communist command or embrace communism."



# Claude has another look at the P-38

By JEFF OWENS  
DAILY NEWS-SUN  
SUN CITY, ARIZ.

Sept. 18-19, 1999

In his flight jacket, Sun City's Claude Murray stood underneath the wing of the sleek, vintage double-fuselage fighter

plane nearly identical to the one he used to fly. Old memories came flying back.

"Boy, I tell you, I feel like getting in and going," Murray said. "I'm ready to go. To take off."

The plane was a 1940s Lockheed P-38L in a hangar at east Mesa's Champlin

Fighter Museum. With its fearsome quartet of .50-caliber machine guns and single 20 mm. cannon jutting from the nose, the fast and agile P-38 Lightning was the scourge of the skies above Europe in the latter days of World War II.

"Just devastating armament on a plane," marveled James Walker, Champlin docent and close friend of Murray.

Both men were fighter jocks of different eras -- World War II in Murray's case and post-Korean War for Walker.

Even after 55 years, Murray wondered if he still had the right stuff.

"You really wonder if you got in the cockpit if it all would come back to you," he said. "All the various procedures to get the thing off the ground -- I just wonder. I think probably if you did a little studying, looked at the manual a little bit and so forth, a lot would come back to you. It was an easy plane to fly."

As a pilot with the U.S. 8th Air Force 7th Photo Recon Group, the only thing Murray ever shot from his warbird was film, not bullets.

Don't think that didn't lessen the danger, though: In October 1944, two months after arriving in Europe and on his fourth mission, Murray's P-38 was shot out from under him by Nazi fighters, menacing examples of which also rest at Champlin.

Murray was picked up by the Dutch Resistance. Instructed by British Intelligence to keep him rather than smuggle him out of Occupied Europe agents turned 22-year-old Claude Murray of Cheney, Wash., into Jan Smit, a salesman who was deaf, dumb and Dutch.

He hid this way for the remaining seven months of the war.

After the war, Murray founded the P-38 National Association and helped publish an exhaustive history of the 7th Photo Recon Group.

He and Walker love those airplanes. "It's quite a collection, isn't it?" Murray said.

It surely is. Champlin is a world-famous museum which houses 16 fighters of World War I, World War II and a few Korean War-era jets. All are in flying condition.



Harvey Hewit (center) poses with Ferenc Koller (left) and Janos Eisenberger, both teen-agers in 1944 when Harvey's plane was shot down on a raid to an oil refinery at Ordeta, Romania.

## A return to Eastern Europe

Harvey Hewit and his wife of Haverford, Pa., were in Eastern Europe last summer, visiting Warsaw, Krakow, Prague and Budapest. While in Budapest, they traveled 35 km south to Adony, where a local official arranged for two men to meet with them. Janos Eisenberger and Ferenc Koller were 19 and 14 years old, respectively, in December 1944, when the Bill Richards crew went down in the area.

Their B-24 had been hit by flak over the target, the oil refinery at Ordeta, lost an engine and was trying to make it back to base at Cerignola, Italy when they were jumped by three fighters. Near Budapest, a 20mm. exploded in the plane, fire enveloped a wing and the crew bailed out.

They landed near the front lines and were picked up by a Russian advance patrol.

Eisenberger and Koller remember the funeral of the co-pilot, who was killed when his chute failed to open.

Several crew members were injured and stayed in a Russian hospital a few days, then traveled with Russian escort through Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania, picking up other downed crewmen (mostly in Yugoslavia) on the way. They arrived in Bucharest with about 70 American airmen on Dec. 29, 1944, and reported to the U.S. mission that was opened by the Americans after the Russians captured Bucharest.

Harvey was flown back to his base in Italy, rejoined his squadron and completed his tour of 35 missions.





***Ted Peterson with his family and Mr. and Mrs. Poulouin spend a few minutes by the memorial erected in remembrance on the town square.***

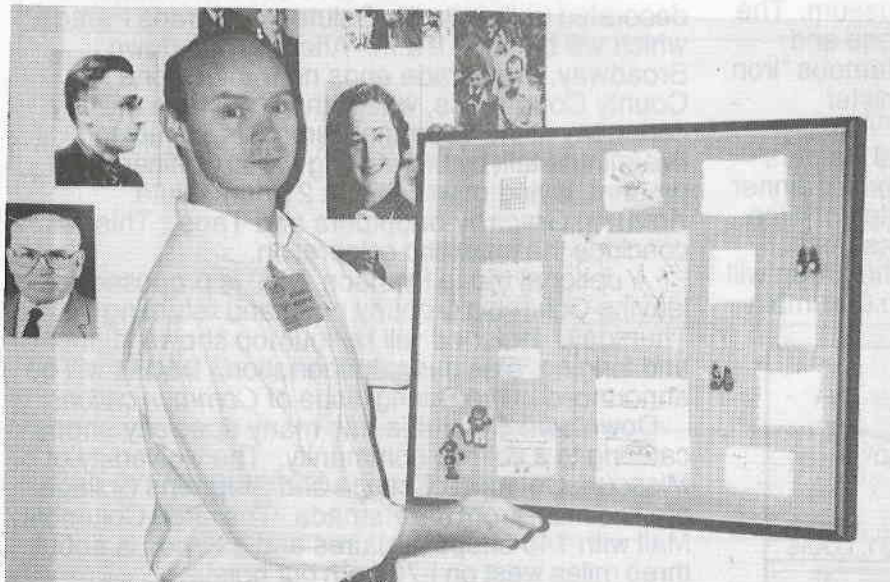
## ***Ted Peterson's visit to the Memorial***

**From Ouest-France, Plourhan, Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1999**

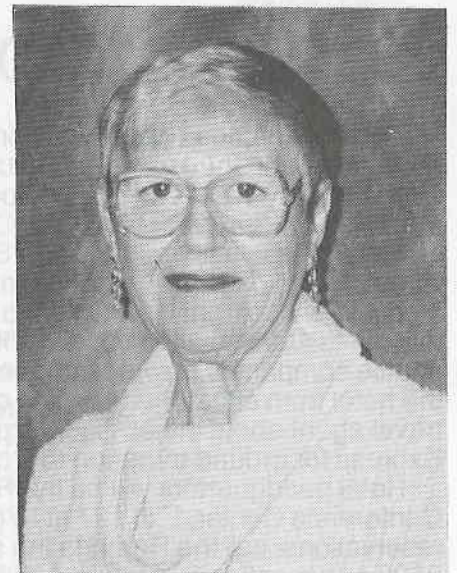
In June 1943, Ted Peterson, American airman, bails out as his plane crashes in the neighborhood of Plourhan. He is rescued by Henri Poulouin. Many years have elapsed but the bond between the two men remains strong. They often correspond.

Ted Peterson came to spend a few days at the home of his friend and took time to visit the memorial erected on the town square. Before enjoying the traditional "friendship" drink in the City Auditorium, several patriotic associations laid a wreath at the monument site.

*Ted Peterson (E&E 69) lives in Bountiful, Utah. With the 379BG at Kimbolton, Lt. Peterson was downed while bombing the submarine pens at St. Nazaire on May 29, 1943. He evaded via Paris, Toulouse, Foix, Barcelona, Madrid and Gibraltar.*



***Darrell Westberry shows framed items which Charlotte Ambach, a Belgian helper now living in Green Valley, Ariz., made while a prisoner in WWII. Behind is part of the The Wall of Honor in the E&E exhibit at the Heritage Museum in Savannah, Ga. Darrell is a staff member at the museum. Reports indicate that the E&E exhibit is extremely popular with museum visitors.***



**MAITA FLOYD BRANQUET**

## ***Stolen Years tells the story of occupation***

Maita Floyd, a Friend member of AFEES, was involved with the French/Basque escape route, Réseau d'Ossau.

Her brother, Michel Branquet, an escaped French prisoner, spent four years of German occupation in hiding on a farm deep in the Pyrenees Mountains, two miles from the Spanish border. In 1942, due to the shortage of food in the city, his family moved to their country house near the farm.

In 1943, Michel was recruited as a link in the Réseau d'Ossau. That year, Maita began commuting to town five miles away on her bicycle to attend French Red Cross nursing classes. In her, Michel found a valuable courier for his Underground messages.

In her book, *Stolen Years in my little corner of the world*, Maita describes her life during the German occupation.

In his review, Clayton David said: "If you want clear understanding of why we Americans had to be there -- and why freedom is worth the price, this easy-to-read book is a must for you."

This book is available to AFEES members for \$8.00, postpaid, a 50 percent discount from the regular price. The author can be reached at PO Box 50266, Phoenix, AZ 85076-0266. Her e-mail address: eskuald@trendsnet.com



# Columbia prepares us a 2000 salute

The Air Forces Escape/Evasion Society will be honored during the year 2000 Salute to Veterans Memorial Day Weekend celebration in Columbia, Mo., May 25-29.

Columbia is midway between St. Louis and Kansas City, on I-70. Ozark Airlines provides non-stop jet service from both Chicago and Dallas directly to Columbia Regional Airport. Two van shuttle companies provide transportation directly to the hotel from either the St. Louis or KC airports (ask travel agent about either Tiger Express or MO-X Express for ground transport to Columbia).

Hotel headquarters will be the Ramada Inn Conference Center, Exit 127 at I-70. For room reservations, call the Ramada Inn at 1-800-228-2828 and mention that you are with AFEES. Rates are \$40 a night, tax included, for a double, and includes a hot breakfast buffet daily. Be sure to ask for a first-floor room if that is your preference. A limited number of suites are available. A lift is available, but it is not conveniently located.

AFEES registration will begin in the North Lobby on Thursday, May 25. Thursday evening will be the welcoming buffet at the Ramada at about 6 p.m. for about \$25-\$28 per person. It will be barbecue chuckwagon with two bottles of wine at each table. A cash bar will be open.

For Friday, May 26, an optional day trip is planned to Fulton, Mo. Included will be lunch at the Westminster College campus, a tour of the Winston Churchill Memorial and re-assembled 12th Century Christopher Wren Church of St. Mary the Virgin of Aldermanbury, plus a trip to Backer's Antique Car and Military Memorabilia Museum. The church was brought in pieces from England and rebuilt at the site of Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946 on the Westminster College campus.

Friday night is reserved for the annual Helpers' banquet at the Ramada. This will be a buffet dinner (stuffed chicken/roast beef and two bottles of wine per table) for about \$25 per person. Cash bar.

Saturday, May 27, at about 9 a.m., the group will board our own buses for the short trip to Columbia

Regional Airport and the Salute to Veterans Air Show, which runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. AFEES will have our own private air-conditioned meeting room and restrooms at the airport, where we can gather and visit. Lunch can be purchased from any of the many vendors at the airshow.

AFEES members will be honored in a brief parade at noon and will be introduced to the crowd at Stage Central -- both days of the airshow.

Saturday evening is reserved for the Salute to Veterans Honored Guests and Volunteers banquet at Hearn Arena on Stadium Boulevard. **Make your reservations separately** for this event by sending a check made out to "Salute to Veterans," \$30 per person. Send checks for this banquet to: Don Landers, CPA, 33 East Broadway, Suite 190 Columbia, MO 65203. On the check memo,

indicate how many persons and mention AFEES. We will be seated in a group for this occasion. Dinner is prime rib buffet, with wines at each table, a stage show and auction of military memorabilia.

Sunday, May 28, is a repeat of Saturday at the airshow. We can see a spectacular show, plus meet distinguished military men and women, including the Tuskegee Airmen, WASP and other reunion groups.

Sunday night is set aside for the private AFEES banquet at the Ramada Inn, about \$35 per person. It will be a plated dinner with filet mignon and salmon or shrimp, plus two bottles of wine per table. Cash bar available.

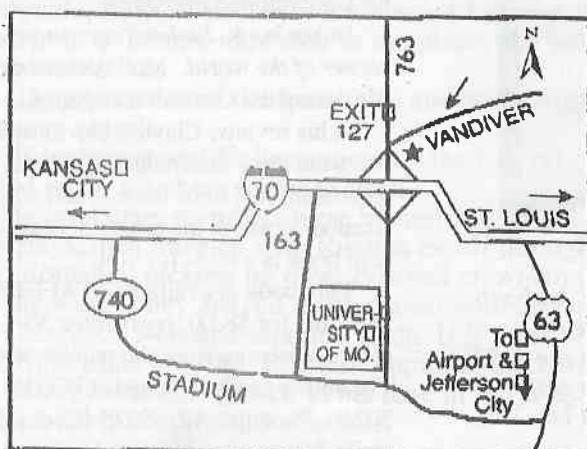
Monday, May 29, we board buses to downtown Columbia, where we will have our own float(s) or decorated trolleys in the Salute to Veterans Parade, which will begin at 9 a.m. After the trip down Broadway, the parade ends near the Boone County Courthouse, where there will be a military ceremony at the Veterans Memorials, including a five-minute talk by the ranking military officer present, laying of wreaths, a 21-gun salute, *Amazing Grace* by bagpipers and Taps. This will conclude the weekend celebration.

An optional trip to Branson, Mo., is proposed, leaving Columbia Monday noon and returning on Thursday. Included will be four top shows, dinner and lodging, plus bus transportation. Details will be announced in the Spring issue of *Communications*.

Downtown Columbia has many specialty shops catering to a college community. The University of Missouri, Columbia College and Stephens College are two miles from the Ramada. The large Columbia Mall with 140 shops, theatres and eateries is about three miles west on I-70 from our hotel.

West of Columbia about 20 miles is the spectacular Les Bourgeois Vineyards, winery and restaurant on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River.

**For current information on the weekend celebration and Salute to Veterans Airshows, call the Airshow hot line number: 573-443-2651.**







# Memorial Day Weekend

Salute to Veterans Corporation

Columbia, Missouri

May 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 2000

1. Make your own hotel reservations by calling the Ramada Inn Conference Center at 1-800-228-2828 and mention you are with the AFEES.
2. For reservations to the Saturday night Salute to Veterans Honored Guests and Volunteers Banquet (\$30.00 per person) send check made out to "Salute to Veterans" to:  
Don Landers, CPA 33 East Broadway, Suite 190 Columbia, MO 65203.

3. This form is for our records. Please fill out this form and return to:

Mary McCleary Posner  
303 West Boulevard South  
Columbia, Missouri 65203  
PH: (573) 449-6520  
Fax: (573) 443-7117

REUNION GROUP: AFEES

Your Name:

Address:

Telephone:

FAX:

Arrival Date and Time:

Number of rooms needed:  
(double/double or king size)

\_\_\_ WEDNESDAY, MAY 24  
\_\_\_ THURSDAY, MAY 25  
\_\_\_ FRIDAY, MAY 26  
\_\_\_ SATURDAY, MAY 27  
\_\_\_ SUNDAY, MAY 28

Number of Banquet Tickets needed:

Full names of others in your party:

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# HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

## AIR FORCES ESCAPE AND EVASION SOCIETY

**REUNION RATE: \$40, tax and breakfast included**

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday,  
May 24-29, 2000

# Please Print

Please Reserve \_\_\_\_\_ Room(s) for \_\_\_\_\_ People

Arrival \_\_\_\_\_ Departure \_\_\_\_\_

Please Indicate Number of Rooms Requested by each of the Following Types:

\_\_\_\_ King Smoking    \_\_\_\_ King Non-Smoking    \_\_\_\_ 2 Doubles, Smoking  
  2 Doubles, Non-Smoking

Estimated time of arrival

[illegible]

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number for Guarantee \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(One Night's Deposit or Credit Card Required with Reservation)*

***Reservations subject to availability if received later than Monday, May 15, 2000***

***Please mail this form directly to hotel***

**(or call 1-800-228-2828 and mention AFEES)**

**RAMADA INN, Columbia Centre**  
**1100 Vandiver Drive**  
**Columbia, MO 65202**  
**573-449-0051**  
**Fax: 573-874-8963**



**HOTEL RESERVATION FORM**

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***(Hotel Reservation Form for Reunion on Other Side)***

RAMADA INN Columbia Centre  
1100 Vandiver Drive  
Columbia, MO 65202  
673-449-0051  
Fax: 673-674-8863



## Former pilots make donation to French church

From *The Dallas Morning News*,  
Sunday, Nov. 21, 1999

By the Associated Press

REMY, France -- In the quiet medieval church, former U.S. fighter pilot Roy Blaha gestured upward at the clear plate windows that stood out starkly among the brilliant panes of stained glass.

Fifty-five years ago, Mr. Blaha's 383rd Fighter Squadron had swooped over the town of Remy on a mission to strafe a German munitions train. The train exploded, shattering nearly all the town's windows—including some in the 13th-century church. The blast also killed many Germans and a local boy.

"The explosion damaged so much here," said Mr. Blaha, 78, of Homestead, Fla.

In the tight years after World War II, the people of Remy could afford no luxuries, least of all restoring the seven lost windows in the Church of St. Denis.

Clear glass filled the empty spaces.

On Saturday, so many years after that Aug. 2, 1944, mission, Mr. Blaha and two of his surviving squadron buddies, Manuel Casagrande of Alamo, Calif., and Gordon McCoy of Linden, Calif., returned to Remy. Their mission: to replace the windows again, this time with stained glass.

The former members of the squadron and volunteers raised \$200,000 for the project as a way to thank the townspeople who risked their lives during the war by defying the Nazi occupiers.

The blast that shattered the stained glass also killed 22-year-old Lt. Houston Lee Braly Jr.

Page 23  
And curiously, though U.S. forces all but destroyed Remy, the townspeople were never bitter toward the Americans, only grateful.

After the members of the 383rd began a fund-raising campaign in 1994, letters began trickling in. Organizers received about 4,000 donations, most of only a few dollars, from people who had lost fathers or husbands in the war, from children's bake sales and from people who read the story and were touched.

The town chose a modern abstract -- design to replace the lost windows.

*Gordon McCoy is a Friend member of AFEES.*



*Caught on camera during the 8th Air Force Historical Society meeting in Savannah recently: Richard Smith and Clayton David, kneeling; standing, from left, Paul Kenney, Louis Del Guidice, Ralph Patton, Clement Dowler and Ashley Ivey.*

## NEW MEMBERS

**WILLARD J. ADAMS**

5563 Carson Way  
Denver, CO 80239  
Ph.: 303-373-9828

E&E # 1869, 8AF, 486BG

Wife: Josephine

**EDGAR M. DEMEL**

12922 Butterfly Lane  
Houston, TX 77024  
Ph.: 713-488-2193

15AF, 460BG

Wife: Martha

**GLENN C. HICKERSON**

117 Twilight Drive  
Waco, TX 76705-1718  
Ph.: 254-798-6503

E&E # 147, 8AF, 44BG

Wife: Laura

**WARREN MAUGER**

212 Laurelcrest Circle  
Valrico, FL 33594-3212  
Ph.: 813-681-9368

8AF, 303BG

Wife: Lovina

## E&E exhibit attracts interest

Several AFEES members were in Savannah, Ga., in late October for the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion and ground-breaking ceremony for the chapel in the Memorial Gardens.

At the reunion, AFEES members were pleased to learn from the museum staff that the Escape and Evasion exhibit attracts great interest from school groups who tour the museum. They find our experiences intriguing and exciting, like a TV or movie thriller.

At the same time, many members see room for improvement in the exhibit, improvements that may require financial support.

*AFEES members and friends are reminded that, when they make contributions at this time of year to favorite charities or other causes, the Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum at Savannah deserves consideration. To avoid confusion, such contributions should be clearly marked for credit to the Escape & Evasion Society.*





# The warrior left tracks

From *THE BLADE*, Toledo, Ohio  
Sunday, August 1, 1999

By **ART BELTRONE**

*Special to The Blade*

SAINT-GIRONS, France -- High in the French Pyrenees mountains, the story of an American officer's heroic escape from the enemy during World War II was relived first-hand last month by the aviator's 22-year-old Toledo granddaughter.

During the process she learned more than she expected.

Sarah Ross, a 1999 Kenyon College graduate, traveled to the picturesque French village of Saint-Girons. Accompanied by her 52-year-old father, William Ross Jr., sales manager with Progressive Industries in Northwood, they were among 26 Americans who made the journey representing the U.S. Air Force Escape & Evasion Society.

The American group and about 125

other hikers from France, England, Ireland, Belgium, and Holland participated in a four-day climb over "Le Chemin de la Liberte," The Freedom Trail. It was the fifth year of the commemorative hike, but the first ever with American participation.

The trail commemorates Americans and others who safely evaded German forces in occupied France during World War II by crossing the Pyrenees into neutral Spain. In 1944 Bill Ross' father and Sarah's grandfather---1st Lt. William O. Ross was one of those.

The senior Mr. Ross died in 1997 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He told his family very little about what he had done during the war.

The family, who lives in South Toledo, knew he had served in the United States Army Air Corps and had been shot down during a mission. Somehow, he evaded capture, was assisted by the French,

underground, and returned to Allied lines.

Sarah and her father knew the senior Mr. Ross had crossed the Pyrenees to gain freedom. They decided to make the 50-mile-long trek as a remembrance to the aviator and as Sarah explained, to "his generation as a whole."

They also wanted to walk in his shoes, to experience what he had endured.

As the aviator's son explained, "I suppose it's trying to get an understanding and appreciation for what my father went through because he never talked about this." He thought for a moment. "In fact," he added, "he was very silent about the whole war."

The father-daughter team was at the Memorial Bridge over the River Salat in Saint-Girons as wreaths were placed and martial music played. As the official start sounded, they walked off with the others on the first 16-mile long stretch.

That day they picked their way



through wooded areas, often without the benefit of delineated trails, sometimes through rocky, dry streambeds, canopied by high trees and filled with moss-covered boulders. This very area was used by many Allied evaders and Frenchmen fleeing the Germans. The route, with its thick foliage, had been carefully chosen then because the cover that it provided an evader and his guide. It was difficult for the Germans to see them from land or air.

In March 1944, French peasants witnessed Lieutenant Ross' bomber being attacked by eight German ME-109 fighters near the Fontenay Airport. Cannon rounds set the B-24 Liberator's tail section afire. Flames covered the right wing.

Lieutenant Ross sounded the abandonment alarm and left the spinning aircraft at 12,000 feet. Dazed in the process, he later could not remember pulling his parachute's ripcord. His descent was watched from the ground by a number of peasants, and upon landing, they quickly put him on a bicycle and he rode off with one of the Frenchmen.

At a nearby house he was given civilian clothing and moved to another location to join another crew member. Both men were in civilian clothing and each on a bicycle at one point cycling through a German patrol headed to the aircraft crash site. They hid in a house for two days, then moved to a farm when the Germans learned the identity of the man who had guided them by bicycle.

"This quick action saved us," Lieutenant Ross wrote later in his official escape and evasion report. "The Germans finally arrested the local mayor and sent him to a concentration camp, because he had not reported parachutists in his area. In spite of all this persecution the French patriots continued to shelter us."

When the German vigilance relaxed the report concluded, "the rest of our journey was arranged."

Day one of the mountain journey continued for Sarah and her dad. Just after noon the hikers reached Lartigues Pass, where a ceremony was held in front of a small stone barn used during the war by evaders to rest during the mountain crossing.

It was here, in September 1943, that a French guide, Louis Barrau, was killed by German troops. Mr. Barrau, in his early 20s, waited in the barn for a group of

evaders he expected to take over the mountains. Instead, a traitor brought the German military. Mr. Barrau refused to surrender and was killed by rifle fire as he tried to escape.

That night father and daughter, along with the other hikers, spent the evening at a dormitory-like rest house in the hamlet of Aunac. The real walk into the Pyrenees was about to begin.

As the group readied to set off the next day, Sarah Ross continued to think about her grandfather.

"I wondered if my grandfather had taken the same steps," she questioned, whether he too, had experienced the muscle pain and fatigue she was encountering.

The group left Aunac and by lunchtime had reached Le Col de la Core, site of a monument to local passeurs or guides who assisted American airmen and others through the mountains. The mountains loomed in the background, their beauty masked by their overbearing presence. Patches of late snow were evident. A guide, who had accompanied the group, called to the reclining hikers.

"Can I ask you first a simple question?" the guide, Heere Van den Engle, said. "Who is tired?"



There was subdued laughter.

"To be clear about the situation," the guide continued, "until now it was children's work. After tonight, we start with the real serious work. And this is more or less a point of no return." Then the hikers headed off toward Subera, at 4,947 feet altitude. That night they would sleep here in the "rough." During the first day of the hike, and especially into the second, Bill Ross Jr. had begun to experience pain in one knee. He had suffered a broken ankle a year earlier. He knew he was in trouble. He had to decide whether to continue.

Fifty years earlier, while being assisted by the French underground, Bill's dad joined up with another American, Howard Joe Turlington. Mr. Turlington was a sergeant and top turret gunner on a B-17 bomber. German fighters shot his plane down near Nantes. They, along with four other evaders and three French escorts, were headed for Toulouse and the trip to the Pyrenees foothills in an automobile.

A short train ride took the evaders from Toulouse to another safe house. From there they were again transported by car to the Pyrenees foothills, where Lieutenant Ross, Sergeant Turlington, and about 18 other evaders were turned over to a number of guides.

Bill and Sarah spent the second night of the hike in Subera, a location similar to where Lieutenant Ross and the other evaders had rested before their dangerous trek through the mountains.

Morning came with bright sunshine at Subera. Bill Ross Jr., had actually made his difficult decision the previous afternoon.

"We walked about half an hour and I could tell then that my knee was going to give me serious problems," he explained. "It got a little better as I walked up, but I could tell my knee probably wouldn't work. It was very painful."

Not wanting to hold back the other hikers, he told Sarah he would return to Saint-Girons.

This was to be the hardest day, as the trail climbed steeply toward the Pic de Lampau and on the Col de Craberous, elevation 7,860 feet. Six of the 19 Americans who started the walk had now returned to Saint-Girons. Thirteen, including Sarah, remained on the trail.

Sarah Ross, blonde and blue-eyed,



thought at first that she too should remain behind at Subera. "I felt horrible for my and and felt I should stay with him. I didn't want him to lose confidence in himself or think that his father wouldn't be proud.

"I knew how much he was hurting," she continued, tears in her eyes. "The next morning we all left but he was still sitting there. I was climbing up this ridge and looking back at him, seeing him wave. And that just did it for me. Because I knew how much he was hurting. Because he couldn't continue."

A variety of thoughts and emotions filled her mind. But in the end Sarah realized there was only one thing for her to do. And that was to continue hiking. "This was even more incentive for me to do it and finish. There was no question. And once I really got that thought in my head I turned around and said, "This is the reason to do it. Because I'm doing this for my whole family."

Sarah's grandfather must have felt that same determination as he and the others began their journey through the same mountains. His hiking-mate, Howard Turlington, later recalled Lieutenant Ross as being very calm and level-headed. "I knew were in some close (dangerous)

places but it didn't seem to get him excited at all."

For three days and two nights, the group of evaders hiked toward the Spanish border. Because the group was so large and more conspicuous, the guides kept them moving almost constantly, with little or no rest. "Climbing those mountains at night," Mr. Turlington recalled, "we held on to each other."

They hiked through a freezing rainstorm one night, moving carefully across terrain filled with rocks and boulders.

"Those rocks would slip and start rolling," Mr. Turlington remembered, "and you could hear them coming but you didn't know which way to duck. Because you couldn't see, you just sweated it out. It was really dangerous."

At one point Mr. Turlington lost his footing and slid down about 300 feet of hillside without being injured. "We were so tired we started throwing everything away we had on us," he reported. Even his small 32-caliber pistol, because he recalled, it "got too heavy and I just dropped it."

As Sarah and the others continued the hike, there was little contact with those below in Saint-Girons. Professionals--

## Winter 1999-2000

the Gendarmerie Mountain Rescue Team, supplemented volunteer guides--men with rescue training in high elevations. A helicopter was on standby to provide emergency help, and it was called on the morning of the last day. A French hiker stumbled, injuring her leg.

The hikers continued up a steep ascent to a ridge of rock known as Les Clots, at 5,514 feet. At times, safety ropes were laid out along the rock face to provide hikers with some measure of security. They could steady themselves somewhat along the climb. From there, the route continued sharply upward to a snow-filled gully leading to the windswept Col de Craberous, altitude 7,860 feet. Next, a steep scramble with the help of more safety ropes straight down to La Cabanades Eapuges.

From there, Sarah and the other hikers climbed yet another difficult ascent to the refuge of Estagnous, just below the crest of Mont Valier, with its altitude of 9,200 feet. Here they camped for the night and made ready for the next day's hike into Spain.

The fourth and final day of the hike brought the hikers down a rugged slope, before ascending the long gully below. The gully continued to the border between France and Spain, and reached the ridge known as the Col de la Pale de la Claire.

The ridge was the border. The same ridge that Lieutenant Ross crossed to freedom more than 50 years earlier.

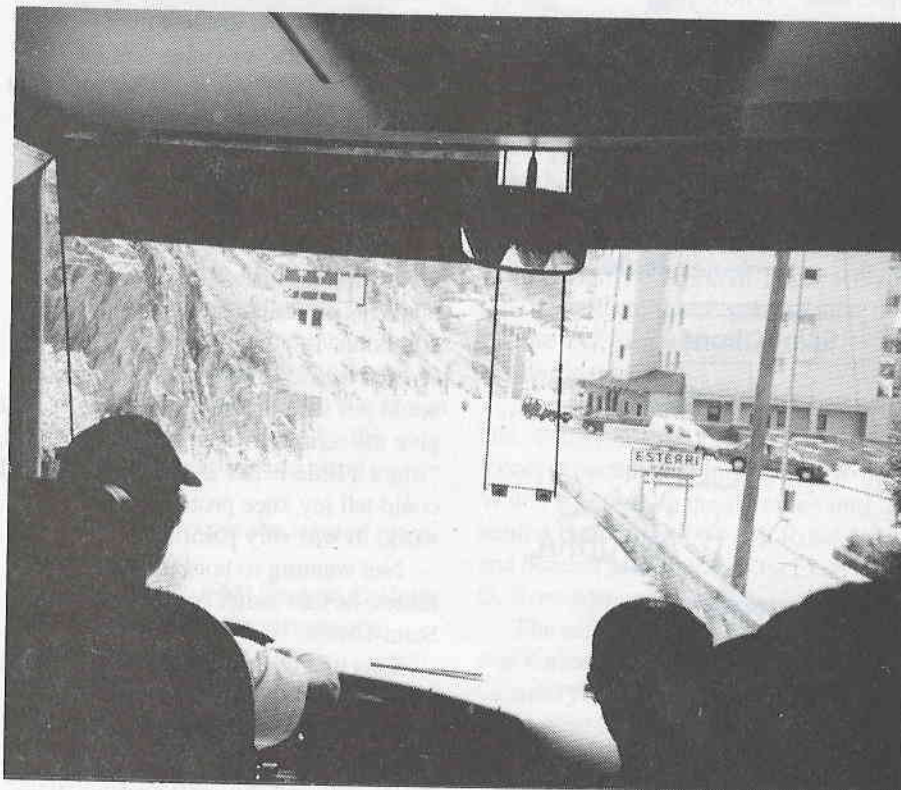
In the Spanish town of Esterri d'Aneu, family members of the hikers waited anxiously. Bill Ross looked toward the mountain's crest. He was nervous, expectant.

By mid-afternoon the hikers reached the valley floor and 4-wheel-drive vehicles carried them the rest of the way to Esterri d'Aneu and a reception with Spanish and French officials. When Sarah arrived, her father hugged her tightly.

"I don't think there will be a day from now on that I won't think about this," she said, "that I don't think about what my grandfather and his generation did."

Her father smiled.

"I've got another family hero," her father said with an admiring gaze.



**ENTERING ESTERRI d'ANEU, SPAIN**  
(A view from the non-hikers' bus)

*Art Beltrone is a free-lance writer living in Keswick, Va. He and his wife, Lee, were part of the American contingent on the 1999 Freedom Trail.*





CHRISTOPHE ENA/Associated Press

***Members of French patriotic organizations and former U.S. World War II airmen and their families paused during the Freedom Trail hike on July 8 for a ceremony near the Pyrenees town of Saint-Girons, France, to pay tribute to Louis Barrau, a Resistance fighter killed by the Germans in 1943, and others who helped Allied fliers evade capture.***



# A family pays tribute to Resistance

From the *South County Times*,  
Fenton, Mo., Aug. 27, 1999  
Story by Don Corrigan

World War II airman Clayton David, who bailed out of his burning B-17 over the Netherlands in January 1944, returned last month to Europe to pay tribute to French Resistance fighters who helped him escape from the clutches of the Nazis.

The 80-year-old Hannibal resident was accompanied by his 50-year-old son, Lynn David of Sunset Hills, and his 11-year-old grandson, Jonathan, who completed Truman Elementary School this spring.

"I hiked the path known as 'Freedom Trail' through the Pyrenees from France to Spain to experience a little bit of what Dad went through," said Lynn David. "And Jonathan got to meet some of the men with the Resistance who made his grandfather's escape possible.

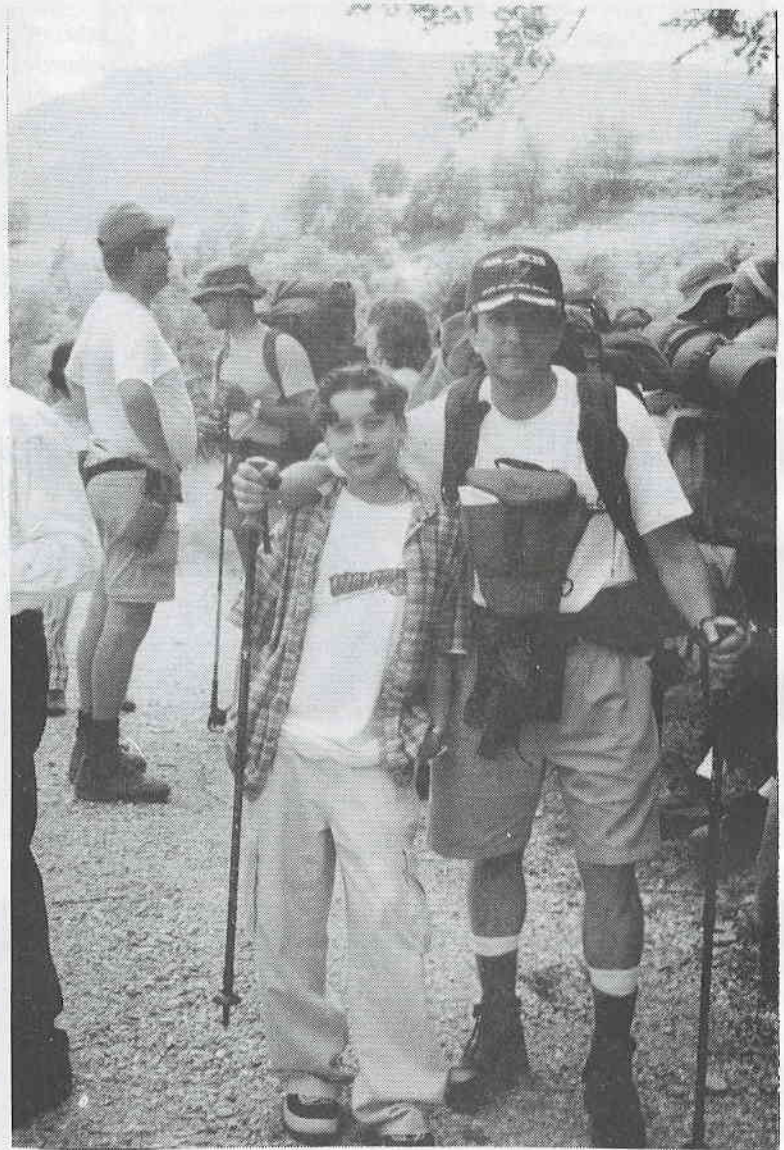
"It was quite a July for us in Europe," added Lynn David. "I did a lot of hiking to prepare for the trail walk. My son and I both went to see a Confederate Air Force event in Bethalto (Ill.) about three weeks before we left. We had a chance to go through a B-17 and see the small escape hatch dad went through to get out of the plane."

Clayton David jumped from his B-17 on the way back from a bombing mission over Germany 55 years ago. He was sheltered by the French Resistance and later guided by a network of agents who risked their lives to get Allied pilots safely back to freedom.

Today, Clayton David is a member of the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society (AFEES). This summer the society helped bring World War II airmen and their families together with the Resistance fighters who helped save them.

Lynn David of Sunset Hills was among 26 Americans who gathered in July in the Pyrenees town of Saint-Girons to retrace the "Freedom Trail," 60 miles south of Toulouse. Unable to make the hike because of advanced age, most veterans and young family members traveled by car and met up with the hikers at several points on the 5-day trek.

The hike ended when participants



**ON THE TRAIL --** Lynn David and his son Jonathan, in the Pyrenees Mountains. Last July, Lynn retraced one of the escape routes which Allied airmen took across the mountains into Spain in World War II.

crossed an 8,626-foot pass and descended into Spain. An estimated 1,000 Allied airmen crossed the mountain range a half-century ago into Spain where they were shuttled to Gibraltar and onto London. Many U.S. servicemen returned to British bases to continue the war effort.

"The trail my dad took was some miles away from the 'Freedom Trail' and I don't think it's ever been completely retraced," explained Lynn David. "The hike wasn't easy and only 18 Americans made it. I wouldn't have made it without special blister pads that I used to make it.

"What amazed me was the two or three feet of snow we encountered at

times in July. I had special boots for the hike, my dad didn't have the boots 55 years ago," continued David. "And there was a lot more snow in those mountains when he crossed in early spring."

Weather was only part of the ordeal for the escaping airmen and their helpers with the Resistance. Hitler's forces were constantly on the lookout for the flyers and offered bounties for the pilots. Resistance helpers were often executed on the spot when caught in the act of helping escapees.

"Many of the Allied airmen made it all the way to Spain only to be turned over to the Nazis by the Spanish



# Mont Valier

*By John and Judy Pena*

## ON THE FIRST DAY,

The sun was hot,  
The sun was high;  
Our mouths were dry,  
Our skin was not;  
On the First Day,  
**WE CRIED!**

## ON THE SECOND DAY,

Some were gone,  
Our body was memory;  
Pain was none.  
Our lot so sorry.  
On the Second Day,  
**SOME SAID GOODBYE!**

## ON THE THIRD DAY,

Shadows in the sun,  
Our soul now so numb.  
For the best of us all,  
May God have mercy  
on our guide Goodall!  
On the Third Day,  
**OUR END WAS IN SIGHT!**

## ON THE FOURTH DAY,

Some were in Heaven;  
We are in hell.  
But for them,  
We shall ring the bell.  
On the Fourth Day,  
**WE HAD CARRIED THEIR  
ETERNAL LIGHT!**

"Fascists," said Lynn David. "My dad was lucky because he turned himself over to some Spanish people who were exchanging escaped pilots for petrol or gasoline from the British.

"My son didn't do the hike, but he saw enough of the trail to be amazed at what his grandpa did," added Lynn David. "He also got to meet some of the Resistance fighters who helped his grandfather and I think that's given him a piece of history."

While in the Netherlands, the Davids visited with Joke Folmer and Jacques Vrij, who risked their lives to help Clayton David traverse through the Netherlands to Belgium, France, Spain and on to Gibraltar. In Durgerdam on the outskirts of Amsterdam, Jonathan saw where his grandfather landed on a narrow strip of land beside the Zuider Zee when he parachuted from his damaged B-17.

"It was great to have my son and grandson along to share this part of my past," Clayton David told the Times in a phone interview from Hannibal. "They didn't see it all, but they saw enough of what I went through to know it was pretty darn rough. Our casualty rate was pretty high. The Nazis were determined that they didn't want to see us flying again.

"The society that got this event all together is not very old," added Clayton David. "Each and every one of us who went through the escape were sworn to secrecy about it for 25 years. We began talking and networking after that."

Clayton David not only began talking and networking; he and his wife, Scotty, began assembling scrapbooks of information about the downed airmen and their helpers in the Resistance. More than a decade of effort resulted in 18 newspaper-sized scrapbooks of material on this aspect of the battle against the Nazis.

"My dad was the only one of 109 men Missing in Action (MIA) from his bomb group that January day in 1944 who made it back to the Allies before the war ended," noted Lynn David. "All the other survivors came back after they were released from POW camps.

"My dad wrote a book about all of this about 10 years ago entitled, 'They Helped Me Escape.' It's now out of print," said Lynn David. "I'm trying to get him to update it for a reprint. He's learned so much more about what happened and who helped the airmen since he first wrote the book."

Clayton David is one of a number of airmen in Missouri who may well owe their lives to the Resistance in Europe. Airmen Earl Woodard of Kirkwood and Howard Turlington of South County are among those who were helped by the brave fighters in occupied Europe who resisted Hitler's war machine.

"I hope the involvement of the next generations, like my son and my grandson, will keep a link to the sons and daughters of those 'helpers' in foreign countries," said Clayton David. "It's a way to keep an important part of the past alive."



*Before the Freedom Trail walk began, Sherri Ottis (left) and her mother, Claudette Naggs, posed at Parc de Paletes in Saint-Girons with the Pyrenees Mountains in the background.*



# The British challenge the Pyrenees

By TIM LEWIS

(Condé Nast Company, United Kingdom)

(For British Edition, GQ magazine)

(Reprint permission granted)

When it comes to not mentioning the war, the British deserve a medal. Aside from V-E Day and Sunday afternoon screenings of *The Guns of Navarone*, it's almost as if the most important event of the 20th century never happened. In marked contrast, the French show no such reticence.

Their calendar is filled with ceremonies and acknowledgements of the conflict. In fact, stick a group of older-generation French together and within an hour you'll have a flag-waving procession with speeches from local dignitaries, a wine and cheese reception and a load of back-slapping for the indomitable Resistance.

One of these celebrations is the annual *Le Chemin de la Liberte* (or *The Freedom Trail*). It is a four-day trek starting in Saint-Girons, a small town in southwest France, and following one of the hardest escape routes across the Pyrenees into Spain. During the war, it is thought that 33,000 French and 12,500 Allied servicemen evaded the Nazis by routes such as these. A more sobering statistic, however, is that for every person who escaped, five were caught and imprisoned or killed by the Germans.

The Chemin starts at daybreak on a Thursday morning in July. A decent crowd has turned out to see off the 40 (mainly foreign) walkers. Saint-Girons is proud of its reputation as a passionate centre of Resistance activity during the war and its witchhunt of Nazi sympathizers after the liberation is legendary. For the last two days of the trek (the Saturday and Sunday) we will be joined by about a hundred locals for the final push into Spain.

Since the escape route was re-opened in 1994, this has become an unshakeable tradition (apart from last year when the walk clashed with the World Cup final and only seven people turned up. Even the French draw the line somewhere).

Before we are allowed to escape, there are some speeches. In the background stand veterans, their blazers smattered with medals, who actually escaped along the route during the war. These men, who are in their seventies at least, are viewed as local heroes. Many of them escaped when the Nazi authorities introduced the STO (*Service du Travail Obligatoire*) decree in 1943. The STO legislation involved the deportation to German labour camps of all able-bodied males over the age of 20. By escaping over the Pyrenees, they could join up with the Free French forces in North Africa.

The thousands of Allies who escaped across the Pyrenees were a diverse mix of nationalities and motivations. Airmen shot down anywhere over Nazi-occupied Europe might have been passed over the Pyrenees. Several escape lines were in operation throughout the war (such as the *Comete* line, which started in Belgium and the *Pat O'Leary* line, which *Le Chemin* was part of, had its origins in Marseilles) and in each case the



**TIM LEWIS**

## With the British on the Freedom Trail

procedure was the same. Evading airmen were passed from link to link in the chain by a succession of local helpers, who clothed, fed and hid them. Having reached the mountains, the men were taken across the Spanish border by guides (known as *passeurs*). This is the way that James Coburn got away from the Nazis in *The Great Escape*.

The modern-day walkers are as much of a patchwork of nationalities as the men 50 years ago. There are a handful of British people, a smattering of Irish and group of Dutch (who wear orange baseball caps and generally indulge in a lot of crazy behaviour which they find significantly more amusing than anyone else). There are also eight members of the Belgian Airforce, who are using the trip as an opportunity to test out equipment and particularly sleeping bags that will be fitted in the ejector seats of their planes.

There is also a contingent of Americans, most of whom are part of the Airforces Escape and Evasion Society, which was established to help World War II airmen stay in touch with the Resistance members who helped to save them. One member of this group spent the whole trip with his eyes glued to the viewfinder of a video camera. Every time you went near him he would be shooting footage of a staggering mundane scene and commenting, "This is a rock...and that over there is a tree of some description." After three days my curiosity got the better of me. Who would want to watch the hours and hours of film he was taking?

"Actually, my father escaped over this route in 1944 after spending eight months on the run from the Nazis," he answered without breaking step. "He can't walk so good now but he said it would make him really happy to see what the



route is like now." Good answer.

The father of another walker was the navigator on a B-17 bomber (the famous Flying Fortress) that was shot down in early 1944. Two of his crew died but he completed the walk in a slipper on one foot and a sandal on the other. It was winter and the mountains were deep in snow, and they were forced to walk at night to avoid detection.

The modern hiker has several advantages over the wartime escapee: not least daylight, specialised boots, energy bars and toilet roll. However, it is still a demanding trek. Every year since the inauguration in 1994, someone has broken down on the mountains and needed a helicopter to take them to hospital. The first day is regarded as relatively straightforward, but someone had given up within an hour and a further six retired at lunch. At the end of the trip, a woman who had completed four marathons said that the walk was the toughest thing she'd ever done.

The difficulty comes from the diversity of terrain. The first day is spent in forest that looks like it could be in any county in Britain. By day three you are walking across deep snow and faced by dicey footing and a drop of thousands of feet. The walk takes you almost to the top of Mont Valier, which at 2838m is the second highest peak in the Pyrenees and double the height of Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Great Britain. The temperature during the day hovers around the mid-twenties (C) and at night falls to near zero.

The first candidate for the airlift is a big Dutch guy, who loses it completely after a slip on a steep climb on the second day. He takes out his anger on the organiser. "How can you do this to me? This is completely irresponsible," he says in that passable Sean Connery impression that all Dutch people seem to have. "I have a wife and two kids." Eventually he is placated and keeps on walking. The helicopter is needed eventually, but only when a French woman injures herself.

Quitting is not an option when you see people three-times your age completing the walk with ease. One of the regulars on Le Chemin de la Liberte is a 76-year-old Frenchman called Paul Barrau. He was a passeur during the war, and now completes large sections of the walk wearing green wellies and having drunk a bottle of red wine at lunch. The walk has special significance to Barrau as he lost his father, uncle and brother--all of whom were passeurs--to the Nazis in the war. Lunch on the first day is spent at the barn where his brother, nineteen-year-old Louis, was ambushed by a German patrol during the night of September 12, 1943, as he waited for a party to take over to Spain.

Paul Barrau cannot remember how many men he helped escape, but thinks that his family were responsible for several hundred. "It was impossible to make daily trips to the frontier so we had to wait until refugees were collected into groups of up to 30 or more, before a crossing attempt could be made," he says. "This meant hiding and feeding them in isolated mountain huts and barns. The ascent to the border was always made at night, and I was terrified of meeting a German patrol. Although I myself knew the mountains well and might have been able to slip away and escape, I knew the refugees wouldn't stand a chance."

During the remembrance for his brother, everyone stands for a minute's silence except Paul who sits down and loudly

curses his errant mongrel with about every French swear word I'm aware of. He is renowned for being a cantankerous man. There is a rumour that he has never paid any taxes because he thinks that he has already given enough to the French state.

Historical sites are scattered throughout the walk and every pass you walk on seems to have an escape story attached to it. On the Saturday, we reach wreckage and a monument to a British Halifax bomber that crashed into the Pyrenees in July 1945. On a cross-country training flight to the south of France, the plane drifted more than 50 miles off its intended course. All seven members of the crew died on impact and a memorial stone bearing their names now marks the spot where their lives ended.

This was the major commemoration for the British contingent and I was allowed to unveil the plaque to the seven men during a minute's silence. This was silence in name only as a couple of groups of French (who had now joined us to add their distinguished capacity for organisation to a project that had previously been running smoothly) talked the whole way through it. Had you shown anything other than complete respect during one of their ceremonies, of course the full forces of hell would have been unleashed on you.

A few words about the French are probably appropriate. For a start, they walk like they drive. The Saturday section of the walk went through two large snow gullies, which required everyone to walk in single file and put their boots in the imprints of the person in front of you. This seemed a reasonable safety-minded consideration to most people. The French, however, were constantly trying to overtake and push in. If you showed any resistance to this, they would raise their arms, look away and mutter incomprehensibly about you.

In fact, our generally harmonious European detente was showing signs of cracking by this stage, as the walk degenerated into the kind of bickering that Mrs. Thatcher talked so passionately about. The British got on well with the Belgians but hated just about everyone else. The Belgians and the Dutch disliked each other, dating back to a military conflict in the late nineteenth century. And everyone hated the French. At times like this, you long to have the Germans around. Had they been here, everyone would have disliked them and it would have been fine.

The final day took us across the border into Spain at about midday. During the war, this meant that the escapees were now in neutral territory, that they had fled from the Nazis and, in the case of the Allies, that they would probably be returning home.

For the walkers, the border signifies that the worst is over and that it will be downhill all the way into Esterri D'Aneu, a Spanish town where a fiesta is held in celebration. It also means toilets, no more boil-in-the-bag food and mattresses. However, if you had seen this sorry collection of city slickers as we hugged, shook hands and screamed our heads off, you would have been forgiven for thinking our struggle had been just as great as the men more than 50 years ago.

For more information on Le Chemin de la Liberte, write to Scott Goodall, L'Escrabiche, Lescure, 09420 Rimont, France. His book, "The Freedom Trail; following one of the hardest escape routes across the central Pyrenees," will be published in the New Year.





**THE GOING DUTCH** -- The Dutch contingent on the Freedom Trail hike last July gathered for a reunion near Amsterdam a few weeks later. Standing, from the left: Gert Overeem, Mary Jonker, Ben Rijkenberg, Scott Goodall (the British organizer), Ellen van Gilst and Jaap Overeem. Kneeling, same order: Jan-Piet Rijkenberg and Ab Schaafstra.

# ‘Ik wil nog niet dood’

(‘I DON’T WANT TO DIE YET’)

From *De Polder Express*, the Netherlands,  
September 2, 1999  
(Translation from the Dutch)

By Bart van der Voort

A cry of pain and frustration sounds in the thin air of the immense Pyrenees, the chain of mountains that separates France from Spain.

*I don't want to die yet!*

Moaning, a group of Dutch drag along without making use of a road or a trail. On the initiative of Ellen van Gilst (from Kwadijk) they walk the escape line used by many British and American pilots during WWII in order to return to England. A grim trip.

To stay hidden from the Germans, the trip leads through the rough mountains across roads that were very difficult to take. The escape line was one of the few ways to escape from the occupied countries to free Spain and in most of the cases, to England. Many people from the Resistance, people from the Underground and shot-down pilots found their way through this inhospitable country, very often still covered with snow.

## \* FIRST TEAM

This was the sixth time that the hike, made by so many during the war, was made. Ellen van Gilst (55) wrote an article about the trip in the travel magazine of the paper (*De Telegraaf* in Amsterdam) she is working for. She tried to get people interested in this trip. From her plea, a group of enthusiastic people formed the first official Dutch team that was going to make this trip, together with other nationalities.

## \* CRIES OF DISTRESS

Ellen didn't walk the hike herself. "I don't have any condition at all, this trip is too heavy for me." As she wanted, besides the organization, to be useful for others, she drove while the team was walking, a bus with veterans. According to Ellen, they wanted to attend the emotional and impressive memorial service.

That the trip was very heavy (also for people who claimed to have a perfect condition) one could hear from the cries sometimes uttered. Ellen: "Some were



really at the end of their wits and cries, why did I make this trip; I don't want to die yet!"

The trip is really very heavy. One pilot (Clayton David) shot down of January 11, 1944, near Amsterdam, walked the route and arrived in England May 25.

### \*HARDSHIPS

During a reunion at Ellen's place it appeared however that the experience was outweighed by the hardships. Ellen: "Everybody thought it unforgettable and said that they would not have wanted to miss it for all the gold in the world, including the hardships.

"We received quite some letters from the United States telling us that the Dutch team was the fun team."

It was also the Orange team that carried the backpack of the 78-year-old wife (Bette Patton) of a pilot that never walked this trip. She was accompanied by her 11-year-old granddaughter. And this fact is actually a very important message: youngsters have to make this trip in order not to forget what happened.

And Ellen herself? They are pushing me to walk this trip. I don't know yet. Perhaps I will start training next January.



**ALONG THE FREEDOM TRAIL --** *"I am a dog of the Pyrenees Mountains, called Patou. I look after the security of the flock. My role is to keep all foreigners away from the animals that I protect. Thanks for keeping your dog at your side."*



**OLD GLORY AT THE BORDER --** *When they reached the Spanish border on July 11, some Americans on the Freedom Trail commemorative walk unfurled the Stars and Stripes. From left, Lynn David, who captured the walk on video, Mary Grauerholz, Sue Ellison and Sarah Ross.*





*Freedom Trail hikers and non-hikers were entertained in Esterri d'Aneu at the conclusion of the walk on Sunday, July 11. Flags of nations represented on the walk were suspended from the ceiling of the gymnasium.*

## FOLDED WINGS HELPERS

Mme. Janina SZUMSKI, Quillebeuf, France, Sept. 27, 1999

Mrs. Gre LOMMERSE, Heemstede, Holland, Aug. 29, 1999

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Winter 1999-2000

# Evaders can help project

By JOHN A. KUPSICK

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Most AFEES members realize that every effort to obtain official government recognition for evaders has failed. While some individual members have been awarded medals, usually a commendation medal and on a rare occasion, the Bronze Star, those awards have been issued for a specific act performed during the time of evasion.

Things might be changing for the better.

This year, at the direction of his commanding officer, Lt. Cdr. David L. Spriggs, USNR, has taken on a project researching our situation in an attempt to determine whether evaders should receive official recognition from the Dept. of Defense.

LCDR Spriggs recently completed two weeks active duty at the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) at Ft. Belvoir, Va.

He reviewed about 600 declassified E&E reports and other documents.

AFEES members can lend assistance to the project. Spriggs needs copies of Summary of Actions and/or citations from any member who has been awarded a Legion of Merit, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service and/or Commendation Medals. That information will be used to review E&E reports and perhaps demonstrate that evaders have met or exceeded actions for which medals have been issued.

If you have documentation that might be useful in preparation of the final report, please contact LCDR David L. Spriggs, USNR, 79100 Quail Loop, Cottage Grove, OR 97424; phone 541-942-5679; e-mail [dspriggs@oip.net](mailto:dspriggs@oip.net)

The report will be forwarded through military channels to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



6B ■ Saturday, September 25, 1999

# Wichita Falls Times Record News



## LETTERS



**The Airman statue in the Wall of the Missing at Madingley Cemetery, Cambridge, U.K.**

It seems to me that often citizens of the Wichita Falls area do not fully appreciate what the military people stationed at Sheppard AFB contribute to the community. It is much more than the economic impact.

Besides the millions of dollars poured into the local economy, which plays a major role in our prosperity, SAFB personnel play a significant role in our social, religious and cultural life. That, too, is only part of the contribution.

Last week (Sept. 17) it was my distinct privilege to have a part in the

Sheppard celebration arranged by the 82nd Training Wing to honor Americans who have been reported as Missing in Action and the Prisoners of War from all the wars and conflicts in which the U.S. has been involved. At the morning parade, it was most inspirational to witness some 3,000 airmen, many of them recently arrived from basic training at Lackland AFB, ring the parade field and join in honoring the Americans who answered their country's call in time of crisis.

Many of those MIA still are unaccounted for and should remain in our prayers.

The Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society has a motto that reads: WE WILL NEVER FORGET. That commitment applies to members of the Resistance, mostly in Belgium, Holland and France, who risked everything, their lives included, to prevent Allied airmen from being captured after being shot down over occupied territory in World War II.

The theme for the annual POW/MIA memorial observance at Sheppard is "You are not forgotten." The folks at the base are doing their best to keep that spirit of remembrance alive. They are to be congratulated for arranging a ceremony that continues to remind us of the sacrifices made by many Americans and the military heritage that has protected our freedom for more than two centuries.

Most of the credit for arranging the memorable event should go to Brig. Gen. Kris Cook and members of her staff, including Sgt. Cricket McDuffie, Capt. Tim Moore, Sgt. Robert Butler and Sgt. Pat Lausier. They sweated out the threatening weather and made the good things happen.

---Larry Grauerholz  
(Former MIA, World War II)



*Among Honored Guests recognized at the national convention of The Order of Daedalians in Colorado Springs, Colo., last summer was Yvonne deRidder Files of Riverside, Calif. During WWII, Yvonne was a member of the Belgian underground where she was extensively involved in espionage and sabotage activities against the Germans in Occupied Belgium. She aided in the sheltering and escape of many down Allied airmen. Her husband Roger is shown applauding at the right. Yvonne and Roger attended the 1999 AFEES meeting in Mesa, Ariz.*

--Photo courtesy of the Daedalus Flyer



## Two years of research finally pay off for historians

From *Le Telegramme*,  
Saturday, April 3, 1999  
(A Translation)

On June 28, 1943, a USAF B-17 bomber the "High Ball" is shot down over d'Ambon by a German fighter plane. It was on a mission to St. Nazaire. On board, ten crew members.

Four are killed, six bail out. Of the six, four are taken prisoners and two eventually made their way back to Great Britain.

One of the two men, Second Lieutenant Joseph Normile lands in Noyal-Muzillac. Nearby residents come to his aid, providing him with food and clothing. He travels across Brittany then Tours, Vierzon, Toulouse before reaching Gibraltar and finally England.

A trek of 43 days. Joseph Normile never returned to Brittany. Efforts by the *Ailes Anciennes d'Armorique* will remedy this next April 6th. This organization headquartered at

Vannes Airfield, gathers fans deeply interested in the preservation of Brittany's aeronautics inheritance.

For several years, with the help of the *Conservatoire Aeronautique de Cornouailles*, Les Ailes Anciennes have carried out research on the History of Aviation in Brittany, and more particularly on the WWII years which were rich in aerial events.

Interviews with witnesses of the crash, residents of d'Ambon and Muzillac, the organizations undertake an investigation into the crash of the bomber shot down 50 years ago. After two years of research in the United States, they finally track down Joseph Normile, navigator aboard *High Ball*.

*Joseph P. Normile, who now lives in North Bethesda, Md., was a navigator with the 351BG.*

## 56 years after the crash, Joe returns

From *Le Telegramme*,  
Wednesday, April 7, 1999  
By A. S. AUDRAN  
(A Translation)

On June 28th, 1943, the B-17 bomber with Joseph Normile as navigator is shot down down over d'Ambon. Thanks to an investigation led by fans of historic aerial events, the American airman is back -- 56 years later.

"I feel like I am living a dream." Joseph Normile cannot get over the welcome he received from the residents of d'Ambon and Muzillac. His sojourn in Morbihan in 1943 was brief, nevertheless it left a great impact on people's minds. Everyone still remembers the crash of his bomber in the fields.

Fifty-six years later, at the invitation of the *Ailes Anciennes d'Armorique* and *le Conservatoire Aeronautique de Cornouailles*, the American airman is back on Brittany soil for the first time. Throngs of people are present in Muzillac for the reunion of witnesses. Each of them has a personal recollection of the crash and is eager to share it with the hero of the day.

Several anecdotes bring a smile to the airman. "You clothed my whole family," utters Odette Tatar. "Your parachute was used to make my sister's dresses for my wedding and my brother wore your jacket for years."

### QUITE A SURPRISE

Other reunions are more moving,



From left: Claude Le Diguou, mayor of Muzillac, with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Normile, Franck Bernard and Francois Cadic.

such as meeting Jeanne Le Pallec, 16 years old in 1943. Her family was the first to take in and hide Joseph Normile. They had not seen each other since then. "You saved my life," says Joseph Normile, in his wavering French.

An investigation by the Ailes Anciennes d'Armorique and the Conservatoire Aeronautique de Cornouailles, both in France and in the U.S., lasted two years. "We located the police report detailing the crash. We cross referenced our information with that of USAF files and in the end, found

Joseph Normile," says Franck Bernard, president of the Ailes Anciennes.

The American airman is baffled. "I had no names, no addresses for the people who helped me. I had never talked about my adventure in Brittany and I am delighted to be reunited with all of them today."

Joseph Normile was received at the townhall of Muzillac yesterday. He will be welcomed today at the townhall of Vannes and will spend the afternoon at the headquarters of the Ailes Anciennes at the Meucon airfield.



# War while the general was at dinner

From *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*,  
Wednesday, March 17, 1999

By Dave Budinger, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

From an almost forgotten war comes a nearly forgotten story that would have slipped between the pages of history if not for the dogged efforts of a Castle Shannon veteran.

It's about a heroic fighter pilot in a unheralded war who goes against the grain to save the day—and possibly thousands of lives.

Lou Cain, a Bethel Park resident for 25 years who is now retired and living in Castle Shannon, is a Korean War vet. A paragraph in a book about the Korean air war caught his eye and fired his imagination.

It was about a fighter-bomber action behind enemy lines that Cain and others believe played a key role in bringing the war to an end just weeks later. Yet, it captured little more than a footnote in the history books.

Why?

Cain learned it was because the air action—a night raid that involved 120 Sabre jet sorties and up to 60 tons of bombs—was never authorized by U.S. 5th Air Force Command. A young pilot recovering from bail-out injuries and temporarily assigned to a ground duty pulled the trigger on what turned out to be a major air assault.

The Air Force couldn't officially recognize the success of the mission without admitting it was the work of a junior officer who had absolutely no authority to order such action. The officer, in fact, narrowly escaped a court martial.

What made it even more fascinating for Cain is that the raid originated from K-55, a large air base near Osan in South Korea, where Cain was stationed as a noncommissioned officer in the personnel section of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing. He was there when the unauthorized raid was launched on June 15, 1953, but was totally unaware of its significance, or of the controversy that swirled around it. To his recollection, he never met Capt. Flamm D. "Dee" Harper, the officer who "stuck his butt out" and ordered the Sabres into the air.

Caught up by the tale, Cain has spent the past three years researching the incident. He became convinced Harper was a hero and should be honored for what he did almost 46 years ago. His research turned into a campaign, writing articles for veterans' magazines and firing off letters to senators, Pentagon officials and even the president of the Republic of Korea to gain recognition for Harper.

He's accumulated a small mountain of correspondence, and some success in his campaign. And the story is being told, in published articles, (mostly in veterans' and military history magazines) and, in classrooms at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Harper, now 79 and living in Las Vegas, retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel. But on

June 15, 1953, he was a captain with a "spot" promotion to major while serving as acting group operations officer for the 18th FBW at K-55.

At that time, peace talks were underway in Panmunjom. While United Nations forces were largely committed to maintaining the status quo, the North Koreans were mounting a major offensive to gain ground and advantage at the peace talks. The fighter-bombers were assigned to daylight sweeps of combat areas in search of enemy targets.

Just before the end-of-day operations, a flight near the front found about 100 railroad boxcars in a marshaling yard. Dropping their bombs, the pilots reported huge explosions from the boxcars, indicating they were filled with ammunition. Another nearby yard was also loaded with boxcars.

Certain that the munitions would be dispersed overnight, Harper ordered up continued attacks, and then sought to get retroactive approval from higher command. But, through a quirk of fate, no higher command was available. The base's wing and group commanders were at a conference in Tokyo. Harper had to go up the ladder to Combat Operations Center at 5th Air Force Headquarters in Taegu in the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula. The commanding general was at a dinner and duty officers did not want to disturb him.

Harper repeatedly messaged for command approval as he continued to direct the combat sorties and ultimately involved virtually every aircraft and support group on the base. Two jets were shot down during the attack. One pilot was rescued. The other was lost.

Writing in an article for Sabre Jet Classics, Harper said he decided to keep quiet about the lack of authority. "I was the only one on the base who knew that none of this had been authorized or directed by 5th Air Force," he said. "I made the personal decision to remain silent about the authority. There was no need for anyone else to be open for court martial."

By dawn, the entire valley that held the marshaling yards was in flames and the munitions cars had been destroyed. The sorties were called off. And still, no authority came down the line.

"In my opinion, the response [to the target] had been so fast and of such magnitude that after the general completed his dinner, no one wanted to tell him he missed the war," Harper wrote.

Harper was still recovering from injuries suffered when he had to bail out of his crippled Sabre just weeks before when it was shot down over North Korea. He went to bed tired, sore and convinced he was facing a court martial.

The next day, Harper's commanding officer, Col. Maurice Martin, walked into his office, fresh from the Tokyo conference and straight from an ordered stopover at 5th Air Force Headquarters. Instead of a dressing down, however, Martin told Harper it had been learned the munitions the air group destroyed

*(Continued on next page)*



were intended for a major "million man offensive" the North Koreans were planning. Because of Harper's action, that offensive was crippled and was never launched.

The truce that ended the war was signed July 27, six weeks after the air strike. Harper escaped a court martial, but at the same time, he was told he would never see a decoration or a citation for his action.

Cain hopes to change that. One of his letters landed on the desk of Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman, then Air Force Chief of Staff at the Pentagon. "It wasn't until I reached him that things started to happen," Cain said.

Through Fogleman's office, the Air Force and its History Support Office officially confirmed the story, and recommendations for a unit citation for the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing have been submitted. Also, the raid and Harper's initiative in directing it despite the lack of command has been incorporated into a lesson plan at the Air Force Academy.

Cain is pleased, but he's not done. First, he'd like to meet Harper. The two have never crossed paths, and hope to meet at a veterans association convention soon. And Cain believes Harper should be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Harper, however, is a reluctant hero. "I've tried to call him off two or three times on that Medal of Honor," he said with a chuckle in a phone conversation from his Las Vegas home. "I was just sitting there in my office. The first and second lieutenants out there in the black night doing their job; they were the real heroes."

*Dee Harper is a double evader, having successfully avoided capture in both World War II and in Korea after being downed behind enemy lines and aided by friends.*

## AFEES on Web

Information on AFEES, including a membership list, can be accessed by downloading:

<http://www.cbiinfo.com/afeeslis.htm>

*Much of this information has been recently added. Give it a try!*

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# Updates to AFEES 1996 Membership Directory (Changes are in **BOLDFACE** Type)

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## **FRIENDS AND WIDOWS**

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 Pamela Lincoln Senfield, Olean, NY; Ph. **716-372-7309**

## **2K is coming!**

Unless you are a Life Member, a Widow, or a Friend, please check your membership card. If it does not show that your dues are paid to 1/1/2001, it is time to use the form at the bottom of this page to send in \$20 for a year's dues, or \$100 for a Life Membership to help AFEES pay the bills.

Life Membership is a simple way to meet your obligation and forget about dues for the duration. You will receive a membership card that can be carried to indicate pride in an organization that is unique among U.S. veterans' groups.

AFEES operates on a calendar-year basis; we do not send out renewal notices unless so requested.

The same form can be used to notify Clayton and Scotty David, the membership committee, about changes in address, Zip codes or phone numbers, including area codes.

A new membership roster is in the works, intended to incorporate the many changes that have occurred since publication of the 1996 directory. Every effort will be made to ensure the accuracy of membership listings.

Because of printing and postal costs, the new roster will be mailed only to paid-up members.

Clayton and Scotty need to hear from you! If you have a Fax or e-mail address you wish to have listed, you can include that on the bottom line of the form.

\*\*\*\*\*

## ***Just a reminder: Year-end dues are due!***

**Please complete and clip or copy this form to send dues or to report changes**

**(Dues are \$20 per year. Life Membership is \$100. Make check payable to AFEES)**

**Send checks and changes to Clayton David, 19 Oak Ridge Pond, Hannibal, MO 63401-6539.**

**Phone: 573-221-0441**

***All dues or contributions are acknowledged! We are concerned about you, your phone number, and your well being.***

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# The editor has the last word

By LARRY GRAUERHOLZ  
afees44@hotmail.com

WICHITA FALLS, Tex. -- Somehow, I get the feeling that the folks up at Columbia, Mo., are going to take good care of us at the May 2000 reunion.

Just for openers, how does a \$40 hotel room with tax and breakfast included, grab your checkbook? And then there will be a full agenda of events geared to our age group. Just FYI, prices of events listed in this issue are only approximate, as final arrangements have not been nailed down. However, President Dick Smith says the total reunion fee should be in the neighborhood of \$175. The reunion reservation form will be included in the Spring issue.

The Salute to Veterans committee encourages AFEES members to come to Columbia early and speak at schools about their experiences, beginning Wednesday noon, May 24. They would also like to arrange radio and/or tv interviews.

If you have questions, call the hotline number listed on Page 18.

Scott O'Grady, the F-16 pilot shot down in Bosnia in June 1995, was in Wichita Falls recently on a book signing and speaking tour. After being downed by a SAM, he managed to stay alive in enemy territory for almost a week before

being picked up.

Scott left active duty in October 1995 but joined the Reserves and continues to fly the F-16 out of Hill AFB, Utah. A recent assignment took him to Fairchild AFB to work for the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency.

Our COB, Ralph Patton, and wife Bette were honored at the 3rd annual Serbian Night on August 14 at the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center. Several airmen in the group were saved by the late Gen. Draza Mihailovich and his Serbian Chetniks during the war and appreciate the efforts and dangers faced by the Serbian people in Yugoslavia to help the Americans.

Dorice Lindsey, an AFEES friend member, would like to learn more about Rudolph Richer, 96BG, E&E 255, who was shot down Sept. 15, 1943, near Paris. A radio operator, he was the only survivor of his crew and landed near where Dorice lived at the time.

The Air Force Gunners Association is a new one to me. You can get all the information by contacting Eugene D. Steele, 117 Johnson, Fort Worth, TX 76126-3612. The e-mail is [edsteele@iuno.com](mailto:edsteele@iuno.com). The association has a quarterly publication called, what else,

"Short Bursts."

As I recall, a "short burst" was anything less than 500 rounds.

There may be a new way to save those personal histories. A publisher is working with veterans' groups to gather 1200-word stories of heroism, humor, comradeship and combat closeness for a volume to be called *Chicken Soup for the Veterans' Soul*.

There will be compensation for accepted stories, so get that memory on its way to Chicken Soup etc, 607 W. Broadway, Fairfield, Iowa 52556. Guidelines and information are available by calling 888-387-6373.

Dec. 31 is the deadline for submissions.

**You are from a small town if:**

- \* You can name everyone in your graduating class.
- \* You know what 4-H is.
- \* You ever went to a party in a pasture or in a barn.
- \* You thought all golf courses have only nine holes.
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- \* When someone gets pulled over, the whole town drives by to stare; everyone else hears it on their scanner.

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