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Bringing a B-17 to Life

*Arizona volunteers keep
vintage plane airborne*

Volunteers keep vintage 17 flying

From HOMETOWN HEROES

Plauri Koski, 91, stands at the DeKalb, Ill., municipal airport listening to the four engines of a B-17 sputter, pop, spit smoke and rumble to life. Koski, a pilot during World War II, smiles as the 1944 bomber roars down the runway, the sun glinting off its aluminum sides.

Named *Sentimental Journey*, the vintage plane is one of only eight B-17s still operational, and flies thanks to dedicated members of the Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, based in Mesa. Rotating eight-man crews tend the aircraft during 60 appearances across the nation each May through September as a tribute to the iconic airplanes and the men who flew them.

"We love the World War II generation," says Don Raber, 60, of Fort Wayne, Ind. The Vietnam War veteran and his wife, Glenna, have volunteered with the B-17 since 2004, giving tours and manning the souvenir trailer. "We want to keep their history alive," Don says. "Bringing the plane to them is a way to share their stories."

About 350 Arizona Wing volunteers pay \$250 annual dues, raise money for the B-17's \$3,000-per-hour expenses, and restore other wartime aircraft. Of those, 100 volunteers crew with the plane on tour. Pilots and co-pilots must qualify with the Federal Aviation Administration to fly the historic plane, while other crewmembers must attend mechanic and crew chief ground schools in Mesa.

Crew chief Russ Kozimor got hooked five years ago and volunteers 1,000 hours annually. "In the beginning, it's all about the airplane -- get an

engine running and see it fly," says Kozimor, 52. "Once you meet the vets, it's all about them."

Seeing the restored B-17 took Koski back to 1944 when German flak blew a 5-foot hole in his bomber while flying his first mission over Polesti, Romania, severing the rudder and elevator controls. "It was touch and go," Koski says. "The engines brought us back."

Over the years, *Sentimental Journey* flew photo mapping and air-sea rescue missions in the Pacific, controlled drones over nuclear testing sites, and even fought forest fires. In 1978, the Arizona Wing acquired the stripped-down plane and spent four years restoring the craft to its military condition, complete with rare top turrets, a once secret Norden bomb sight, 13 machine guns, bomb bay, and classic Betty Grable nose art.

Of the 12,731 B-17s manufactured, only 50 remain, with *Sentimental Journey* being the most fully restored. More than 17,000 visitors see it annually at festivals and air shows, and another 22,000 visit the Arizona Wing museum during the off-season.

"I took pictures of the bombs, ball turret, and where the tail gunner sat," says Quentin O'Connell, 11, of DeKalb, touring the plane with his mother, Stephanie Kemp.

Others, especially military veterans, purchase a deafening 45-minute ride aboard the B-17 for their family members. Koski bought a ticket for his son's 55th birthday. "I got to stand behind the pilot's seat and pretend what it was like for him," Kevin Koski says. "It was like riding in a tin can. You realized how vulnerable you were -- even without people shooting at you."

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WINTER 2009-10
AFA honors
Doolittle Raiders

WASHINGTON (AFNS) --

Several members of the Doolittle Raiders and original Tuskegee Airmen were honored with Lifetime Achievement Awards from Air Force Association officials Sept. 16 at the National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Md.

During a special dinner at the 2009 Air Force Association Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition, AFA officials and more than 500 people in attendance paid tribute to two members who represented the 80 airmen who flew the first bombing mission on Japan, and three members representing the first 14,994 African-American airmen.

Retired Maj. Thomas Griffin and retired Lt. Col. Richard Cole received the Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of the Doolittle Raiders.

Sixteen B-25 Mitchell bombers took off from the USS Hornet hours before their scheduled time due to being spotted by a Japanese trawler, and knowing they may not have enough fuel to reach auxiliary fields in China. Major Griffin was a navigator on B-25 No. 9 during the April 1942 raid, and Colonel Cole was Gen. Jimmy Doolittle's co-pilot for the mission.

The planes found and bombed their targets April 18, 1942, just more than four months after the attack on Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Not one plane fell to the Japanese defenses, and all but one plane made it to China. Three of the raiders were lost on bailouts; eight were captured, tortured and spent the rest of the war in solitary cells; three were executed, and one died from malnutrition.

The only aircraft that survived had engine trouble and landed on Russian soil where the crew was interned and eventually escaped and returned to duty.

Of the 80 men on the 15 bombers, 64 of the Doolittle Raiders returned to America and only nine are alive today.

Tribute to an evader, POW, friend

From The Tribune-Democrat
(Johnstown, Pa.)

By BILL JONES

Retired Senior Writer

He seemed like a quiet, friendly guy and few of the people who knew or did business with Jim Law had any idea what he went through in World War II.

Law was drafted out of Manns Choice, Bedford County, in September 1942. He took an aviation cadet test and received his pilot wings. He and the other nine men in his crew went overseas on a Liberty ship in September 1943.

So far, his story was much like that of many other young men who went off to war, to do their duty and too many to die for their country. Law's crew was assigned to a B-17 bomber of the "Bloody 100th" Bombardment Group.

The group had earned its nickname because of its daring daylight bombing raids and the heavy losses it suffered.

On one raid, it sent out 21 planes and only one returned. Law's crew was a replacement for one of those lost.

It was Dec. 30, 1943. The "Bloody 100th" took off from its base near Ipswich, England, early in the morning to bomb a chemical plant at Ludwigshafen, Germany. It was Law's fifth mission. The target was hit, and the planes began their return trip but over occupied France they were met by a squadron of Focke-Wulf 190 fighters.

At that stage in the war, there were no American fighter planes with enough range to escort bombers to their targets in Germany. The big bombers had plenty of firepower, but still were more or less sitting ducks for the German fighter pilots.

"They hit us in the oxygen system and hit our flares, so we had to leave in kind of a hurry," Law said during a 1983 interview. "When I jumped, I saw a lot of parachutes, and I could only hope that some of them were from our group."



**James P. Law, E&E# 2029,
100th BG, of Johnstown, Pa.,
died May 5, 2008**

The B-17 became a ball of fire and crewmen jumped from 18,000 feet, over Challerange, France. Seven members of the crew escaped with the help of the Maquis, the French underground. Two were captured quickly and Law was captured later.

"I landed in a swamp and stayed overnight in 30-degree weather," Law wrote in a brief account of his adventures. "I slept in a tree on the edge of the swamp, and next morning a Frenchman and his son found me, fed me, exchanged my clothes, and arranged for me to catch a bus to Rheims, France, where, by accident, I met the leader of the Maquis and his sister, Robert and Germaine Froissart.

"I stayed in their home in Rheims for six weeks, recuperating from the accident to my foot, from my ordeal in the swamp. While I was with them, I interrogated other shot-down fliers to make sure they weren't Gestapo infiltrators.

"As I wanted to go over the Alps into Switzerland or the Pyrenees into Spain, they sent me by train to Sedan, France, where I lived with Madame 'Vin' and two daughters for approximately one month.

"Four other downed airmen and myself were sent in a covered pickup auto to Paris, where we were chased by Germans but escaped to stay overnight in a French motel.

"We were interviewed by a Frenchman (or Gestapo agent) who

'I landed in a swamp'

--Jim Law, 100th BG

tried to get me to reveal the Maquis members we had stayed with but all refused to tell. The next morning we took off for the Pyrenees Mountains, but ran into a German roadblock and were captured."

Law was imprisoned near Paris and was questioned daily by the Gestapo, who wanted the identities of Maquis members.

He said he was not tortured, although he was threatened with a firing squad. After about six weeks, he was sent by train to Frankfurt and kept in solitary confinement for several weeks.

Then he was interred in Stalag Luft III at Sagen, Germany, the camp that was the scene of the movie, "The Great Escape."

When Russian troops got close in 1945, the prisoners were marched across Germany in a foot of snow, to Nuremberg and then to Moosberg, near Munich, where they were liberated by the U.S. 14th Armored Division.

Law attended Penn State, majoring in engineering, but became interested in jewelry when he had a small jewelry sales business to help with expenses. He left Penn State to study gemology, and became certified in the Gemology Institute of America.

I first met Law in 1952 at Hardings Jewelry Store on Market Street. He sold me my wife's engagement ring and our wedding rings, as well as other things through the years. He married my next-door neighbor, Helen Erdley April 27, 1957.

About three years ago, Law's old ankle injury put an end to his golfing. Then he read a lot, worked crossword puzzles and followed the financial news.

Law has died at the age of 88. Although I hadn't seen him for several years, I feel the loss.

Dale busted his way out of prison

S/Sgt. Dale Lee (E&E # 152, 44th BG) bailed out of a B-24 (Southern Comfort #1) on Aug. 16, 1943, on a mission to Foggia. He now lives with his wife Alice in Sun Lakes, Ariz.

**By DALE V. LEE
506th Squadron, 44th BG**

Our last trip was the first Foggia mission and was probably the most successful mission you could ever want.

On our way out, we could see flashes of the ack-ack guns and just knew that a "beast" was on its way. Approximately 15 minutes after releasing our bomb, our plane looked like a newspaper with holes poked through with a pencil:

Our communications system was gone, so there was no way of knowing what was going on up front, but I knew it was time to do something. I poked Joe Worth and pointed to Glenn Hickerson in the tail -- I bailed out the left waist window.

We were approximately 25,000 feet and the cold air felt oh so good. I free-fell as far as I thought I should and about that time, I fell through a group of German fighters. I remembered the image of airmen shot in their chutes on the Ploesti mission, so I delayed opening my chute.

I remember floating on my back in what seemed a slow turn, watching our burning plane go down and though it seemed a long way to the ground, I finally pulled my chute open. I felt a jolt and right after that was another big jolt. I glanced over my left shoulder and discovered that I was on the ground. I was immediately surrounded by Italian civilians with guns and other weapons.

I was taken to a civilian jail. It had beautiful tiled floors, but there was at least six inches of human excrement in the entire two-cell jail. There was one other soldier there, and he a broken right arm.

I was taken to Bari for

interrogation and we were paraded through the streets. Absolutely no compassion was shown for the guys with broken bones, severe burns and wounds.

Some had eyes so badly swollen and bruised that they couldn't see. All the while, civilians were throwing stones at us, spitting on us along with their shouts and jeers of contempt.

From Bari, I was moved by train to Salmon, Italy, Concentration Camp #17. There were 20 Americans and the remaining 2500+ were British, many who showed the results of imprisonment -- both physical and mental abuse -- poor and inadequate food and fake propaganda.

We felt this could continue for a long time and felt it was necessary to make a break as soon as we saw the first chance. The camp was surrounded by an 8-foot cement block wall with jagged glass pieces imbedded on the top side.

Outside the wall was a 20-foot wide road, and beyond that there were electric high tension wires and beyond that was a large barbed wire entanglement. Of course, guard towers were manned 24 hours a day, so making an escape was no simple thing.

One day some important Nazi officers arrived at the camp (we later learned that we were to be moved to a camp in Germany the following day.) There was a big commotion at the main gate -- seems like every one in command was pretty excited.

The Italian guards left the guard towers to investigate the excitement. That's when we saw our chance. One of our English buddies had worked in the power house, so he knew that the power was off during daylight hours.

That was to our advantage. In one section of the cement wall was a small section of brick blocks, so with our crude tools, I busted a hole. Somehow we got through the power lines and entanglement and then we ran as far as we were able on that first night. When we could run no more, we slid down the slope of a steep



**DALE V. LEE
(Then and Now)**

mountain road. We caught brush, trees or whatever we could grab. We straddled the brush and leaned up against the bank in a sitting position and were able to rest and get a little sleep to renew our energy.

Military patrols were out looking for us all night, patrolling the road which was approximately 50 feet above us. It always bothered me that we weren't able to go further that first night.

(My wife and I returned to the area 40 years later, revisited the camp, rented a car and retraced, as nearly as possible, our escape route. I discovered that we had covered approximately 18 km. and had climbed about 4000 feet.)

There were six guys in our group - Ray Whilby, Joe Jett, Tom Percell, Wesley Zimmerman, an Englishman and myself. Our plans were to head for the high mountains as our chance of being seen would be in less populated areas. We would "observe" and plan by day and walk during the night. We used the North Star as our compass and headed for the boot of Italy.

We survived mostly on what we could steal -- figs, grapes, and garden stuff. Occasionally we were able to bargain for food. Joe Jett traded his jacket for a "hunk of cheese" -- it tasted so good, that is, until the next morning and it got light enough to see it -- it was full of big fat worms.

I had a lot of sores on my legs, probably from shrapnel wounds. These were infected and would

rupture and then re-infect again. They were painful and bothered me a great deal. Joe Jett said he had heard that garlic was a good "blood purifier" so the next garden we found I looked for the garlic, which I found.

I ate three big ones -- the whole thing! Usually we walked single file and I was lead man. After my "garlic feast" the guys made me walk in the rear, so that they didn't have to endure my garlic breath.

One night we stopped at a farm house, a very well kept farm, and it looked quite prosperous. "Ma-Ma" was cooking spaghetti and it smelled so good, until I noticed that "Pa-Pa" was not around and I hadn't noticed when he left.

Instinct made me suspicious. I told the guys that I was getting "the hell out of there." It was hard to leave as we were really hungry, but we all left to a hiding place up the mountain. We saw Pa-Pa returning, accompanied by German soldiers.

We had a number of close calls. One night we came to a high railroad bridge and we debated whether to walk under the bridge, or retrace our steps and walk around it. It would mean about 10 or 15 miles further. We had watched this bridge for a day and had not seen any guards. So we decided to take our chances and walk under it. We were all tense and I was wondering if I'd hear the "shot that killed me".

Another time we came to a RR crossing. We had been skirting this track and there had been no trains, so as we were about ready to make the crossing, we were surprised to hear a train whistle -- sort of a quick tweet -- and a train came barreling around the corner. We all dropped to the train bed bank -- the train was loaded with German troops.

It stopped about 50 feet in front of us, unloaded two civilians and took off again. When all was quiet, we made a quick crossing.

We spent a few days in some brush on a steep hillside. There was an exchange of artillery from East to West and visa versa, and we didn't know who was firing on whom. We knew of a small village above us and

felt that perhaps we could get something to eat. There was a high wall leading around the city and up to the heart of the village. We followed this wall, with our back flat against the wall until we were directly under the bell tower of a church.

It was a really dark night. The village looked deserted. Not a light, not a person in sight, not even a stray dog or cat. Instinct again told us that it was too quiet, so we returned back to our hiding place still hungry.

The next day, there was a ruckus in the village above us. Soon three German soldiers came running from the village toward our hiding place. They were excited and each was loaded with side arms and carrying parts of a machine gun and tripod. They "set up" about 15 feet from us, deliberated a few minutes and then quickly moved further down the valley.

We got the feeling they were running away from something. We went up to the village to investigate and learned that the receding German soldiers had been stationed in the church bell tower the night before which accounted for the quiet of the village.

Soon a Jeep manned by two Canadians arrived in the village. We approached them and had a most welcome chat! They told us to "pile in" and they would take us to their camp, but to get there, we had to climb the steep slope with 6-8 inches of sloppy mud.

All the time during our slow progress, the Germans kept lobbing shells at us, but they all landed behind us. I was thinking, "My gosh, I bail out of a burning plane, escape from prison camp, walk through 300 miles of enemy territory, have been wet, cold and been damn near eaten up by insects and now to get this close to Allied lines only to get it going up my last hill." We did make it to camp, however, and they had food and hot coffee and it was

wonderful. We were so happy to be back and there was a lot of camaraderie with our new found friends.

The Canadian driver insisted that he would take us to a dry bed with sheets. It must have been at least a two-hour drive, raining all the way in an open vehicle. I've always respected Canadians as the result of sort of a Red Cross set-up. We even had a cot to sleep on and it was dry -- pure luxury.

We got a flight to Africa, close to Tunis. We had a difficult time convincing anyone of our identity and our story. We kept bugging a certain major, trying to convince him. He finally became irritated with us and said, "Well, I've got you now! Anyone on the Ploesti raid is to be awarded the DFC and I've got the list."

We said, "Dig it out!" He got his list and our names were on it. He decided that we were speaking the truth.

It was decided to have us decorated by Gen. Doolittle at 12th Air Force Hdqts, and have a picture taken. Prior to taking this picture, they said we'd have about five minutes to meet with him personally.

It turned out to be a 45-minute session. We asked him about his Tokyo raid and he replied, "That was nothing compared to your raid on Ploesti," and he wanted to know about it, our prison camp experience, our escape and what followed. It was an easy and friendly conversation.

Forty-three years later at the AFA convention at Las Vegas, Nev, Gen. Doolittle autographed my picture for me.

We returned to London for interrogation and spent some time there. Then we were sent to various camps to speak about our experiences behind enemy lines.

After this, we returned to the 44th Bomb Squadron at Shipdon, England, and from there to the U.S.A., and home for Christmas.

Frank jumped with a spilled chute

S/Sgt. Frank Schaeffer (E&E# 1369, 44th BG, B-24 engineer) went down Aug. 8, 1944, in the Marne north of Paris.

He evaded until liberated by the U.S. Army 2nd Division in September 1944.

*From the 44th BG Veterans' Association
8 BALL TALES, Fall 2000.*

The first mission of the Komasinski crew was on OLE COCK #42-110024. The target was Bremen, Germany, bombing by PFF. According to Frank Schaeffer, flight engineer and top turret gunner, the crew had eleven men. They called the eleventh man a Carpetbagger. He was in charge of the radar jamming equipment, located in the left rear corner of the flight deck.

Frank Schaeffer avoided the military draft by joining the Army Air Corps in 1942, but after his sixth mission from Shipdham, he found himself climbing into back rooms and hiding in pits to elude marauding Germans and wondering what was the difference. After enlisting, he had to wait six months before he was inducted. So he took the opportunity to take night school courses at the local vocational school along with flying lessons. When the call came to report, he rode the Northwestern R.R. through a snowstorm, to arrive on time at the 8th Street Theater in Chicago.

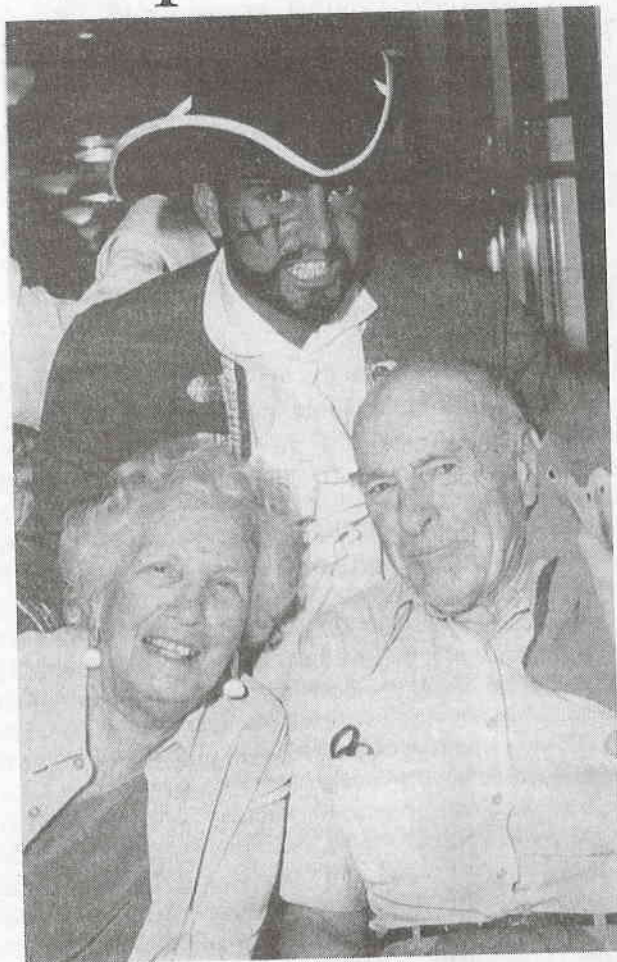
Unfortunately, his dream to be a pilot failed, and he was sent to Sheppard Field to study Airplane Mechanics, where the biggest irritant was the CQ who wakened them in the morning, "Drop your ---- and grab your socks. When he finished AM School, he went to Tyndall Field for Gunnery School; where he moved up to Buck Sergeant.

Soon attacks of pneumonia and rheumatic fever separated Schaeffer from his buddies. When he got back on his feet, he was assigned Engineer on Lt. B.J. Komasinski's crew. His memory of working with his new crew in Pueblo, Colo., was harrowing, exciting and coupled with bouts of air sickness--problems that passed when the serious business of war came to them. When their training was over, they set out for the trip on the Queen Elizabeth to the Firth of Clyde in Scotland.

From Shipham, Schaeffer flew in a succession of planes: *Ole Cock*, *Bar-P*, *Bar-L*, and *My Gal Sal*, each time getting safely, notwithstanding holes in the planes. (*My Gal Sal* crashed on take-off several weeks later, but Schaeffer was not on board.)

August 8, 1944 was a foggy morning, delaying take-off on the mission to the German airbase near L'Perthe, France. Komasinski's plane, *My Peach*, had a substitute gunner, Coley Richardson, who was on his last mission.

As it turned out, it was the last for all of them.



Agnes Jensen Mangerich, Albanian nurse evader, and Frank Schaeffer pose with a pirate and macaw aboard a cruise to the Bahamas in 2002.

Trouble Beginning

Until the plane reached the IP, Schaeffer remembers little flak activity. When they reached the bomb run to the target, #2 engine began to speed, and he could not bring it back to cruising speed with the synchronizing switch. The rpms increased, and he could not slow them.

"We had a runaway propellor!" he recalled. "She really howled and went to 4,500 rpm. Our co-pilot, W. Scott Gippert, operated the feathering button, and the throttle was closed, but the propeller refused to feather.

"Meanwhile I had gone into the forward end of the bomb bay to turn off the #2 fuel selector valve. The fuel booster pump switch was also turned off, as well as the generator for that engine; but with everything off, it continued to run wild. Lt. Gippert asked me to replace the feathering fuse, but I shouted 'No fuse. Circuit breakers here' and pointed to four little red buttons.

He pressed on the button, but that was useless because the breaker had not popped. Oil pressure was at zero, which probably made any further feathering efforts

useless."

By that time Schaeffer figured out that the freezing temperature had made the oil in the propeller spinner cold and thick, causing failure of the propeller to feather. Meanwhile the engine continued to howl and the cowlings shook so violently, he expected the propeller to come flying off, possibly into the fuselage. In desperation he tried to replace the supercharger amplifier, but didn't depress the retainer catch, so it would not come out of its receptacle.

With all this excitement going on, they reached the target and Charles Lain, bombardier, released the bombs, delaying a little, as the plane had fallen behind in their formation.

Jump?

At that point, Schaeffer released his flak suit, took off his oxygen mask, headset, throat mic, helmet and gloves, and unplugged the heated suit. He saw his co-pilot doing the same thing, so he signaled Nelson Brott, to come down from the top turret.

Standing on the catwalk, he suddenly realized that he had not been given the signal to jump, so he swung out and around the right side of the forward bomb rack, and back onto the catwalk behind it. Since he was wearing a chest pack parachute, he could not have gotten through the center of the bomb bay between the bomb racks. But in swinging around the rack, his parachute rip cord handle snagged on a bomb shackle and pulled out about 3/4 inch. Immediately he pushed it back in, but the damage was done. The chute began to spill while he was getting into position on the catwalk.

"Quickly I gathered the fold in my arms, but with so much air rushing through the open bays, more folds kept spilling, and I had my hands full gathering them together. It was all I could do to keep my arms around that bundle of silk. I recall seeing one of the fellows drop from the nose wheel door, and our pilot urging John McKee, radio operator, to get going.

Schaeffer took a minute to weigh his options, whether to change chutes or risk exiting in his disheveled pile of silk. Komaskinski, seeing his indecision, bailed out, leaving Schaeffer alone on the plane. He worked himself back to the front end of the rear bomb bay, crouched and rolled out.

The chute was pulled out of his arms with a jerk that jammed him painfully down in his harness, and he found himself swinging in 180 degree arcs, with the chute nearly collapsing with each swing. Watching *My Peach* from his billowing chute, he saw it follow the formation as though a pilot was still at the controls. (When the formation took a right turn, the plane continued forward until it was out of sight.)

Schaeffer could see other parachutes, but could not make voice contact. His hands were freezing cold, having jumped at 20,000 feet; his harness was cutting into his crotch; and the air was so thin, he just dangled weakly until the air got warmer.

Then he could look down and see the French

landscape, knowing he was coming into German occupied territory.

Meeting the Underground

A shot rang out and missed him, and soon he found himself surrounded by French people who seemed to want to help him. Some locals were so afraid of the Germans, they refused to permit him into their home. Others risked death to provide him with civilian clothing, food and transport into a wooded area where they hid him in a deep hole.

He was accompanied by different members of the FFI (French Underground) from time to time, leading him to an unknown destination which hopefully would provide safety. His companions did not speak English, and he did not know French. With no idea where they were headed, he followed them through woods, over hills, fields, swamps and dozens of barbed wire fences.

Ultimately he ended up at the Benier home at Orbais L'Abbaye, south of Reims. It was the residence of an elderly woman and her two adult children, who were kind enough to feel him and provide quarters where he could reside in relative safety.

He could not leave the house, but sometimes sat in the backyard, which was surrounded by a high wall.

In time he learned that Richardson, gunner, was badly injured, and was under German control; and McKee, radio operator, became a POW. The rest of the crew hid in the woods and traveled at night, protected by the FFI.

A French spy called Shorty, working for the English, befriended Schaeffer and shared the same bed. He proudly displayed his working materials--batteries, weapons, and equipment for communicating across the Channel. Only a few trusted people knew that Shorty and Schaeffer were residing at the Beniers.

Sometimes Schaeffer would help Shorty with his radio transmissions. Other times he helped Andre pitch hay in the barn or helped care for the honey bees, which frequently stung him.

Cigarettes were \$3.60/pack, but Shorty solved the problem by buying a pound of black market tobacco in Paris; and in return for rolling them, Schaeffer had a regular supply for himself.

Looking out the family's front room, Schaeffer could see German convoys passing, trucks piled with straw, men riding the fenders, on motorcycles and afoot. German planes went over; and some days he could see American bombers in tight formations, too high to see what kind they were. From the radio, which the family played only once a day, they learned that the Americans were approaching Paris.

On August 28 the Patton's Third Army arrived at Orbais L'Abbaye. The townspeople brought out homemade flags greeting the soldiers and throwing flowers at the tanks. Every time the convoy stopped, someone would run out with a glass and bottle of wine and pass it to a soldier, who swallowed it with a gulp.



and returned the glass for the next soldier. This continued until the convoy moved on.

The FFI came out, wearing the Cross of Lorraine inside a V on their arm bands. The people of the town were delirious with delight. Coincidentally, on an effort to find someone called Bill, another evader who the family had come to know, Schaeffer passed his own crew who were already on trucks headed toward the coast, enroute to England.

Schaeffer returned with Bill, joining the family in a champagne party. He dug out his old clothes and shared them with Bill, so both had some semblance of a uniform. (Bill Weatherwax was a B-17 pilot who had lived with the Beniers, but later moved into the forest with the FFI.)

The next day was a day of revelry, traveling from home to home and celebrating with families that pulled out champagne that had been stashed away years before, awaiting their day of liberation.

Many Germans were hiding in the woods, more afraid of the FFI than of the Americans. American troops pressed forward at a rapid rate, taking no time to pick up lurking German soldiers, so the Underground sought them out, showing little consideration to the invaders who had been occupying the homeland.

On October 18, Schaeffer boarded a C-54 ATC in Scotland, and 18 hours later, was joyfully back in the USA. His work experience after the war was with a chemical laboratory; then with General Electric Company,

WINTER 2009-10

RAFES (Canadian Br.) NEWSLETTER

Roy Brown, Editor
Oakville, Ont.
(Excerpts)

In Memory:

Stan Lawrence passed away Feb. 26, 2009.
John Clifford Watkins passed away June 29, 2009.

PIERRE BAUSETT advises that Paul Cresson passed away May 14, 2009. Paul was the primary Helper in the rescue of Pat Brophy, tail gunner aboard the Mynarski Lanc and provided testimony in the award of Andy Mynarski's VC.

FROM RAY SHERK: Pierra Taddel passed away July 6, 2009, in Toronto. Sergio and Pierra attended several RAFES Christmas luncheons. Pierra and Sergio are from near Sulmona in Italy and moved to Toronto in the 1950s.

Both their parents were important helpers and provided succour for Ray Sherk and Don McLarty in September 1943 when they were hidden in a cave near Roccacasale for three weeks after they got away from prison camp.

Ray Sherk attended the AFEES reunion in Dayton, Ohio, in May. After the membership voted for AFEES to continue, a new slate of officers was selected. At the banquet Ray shared a table with Nadine Dumont and the Belgian Ambassador and his wife.

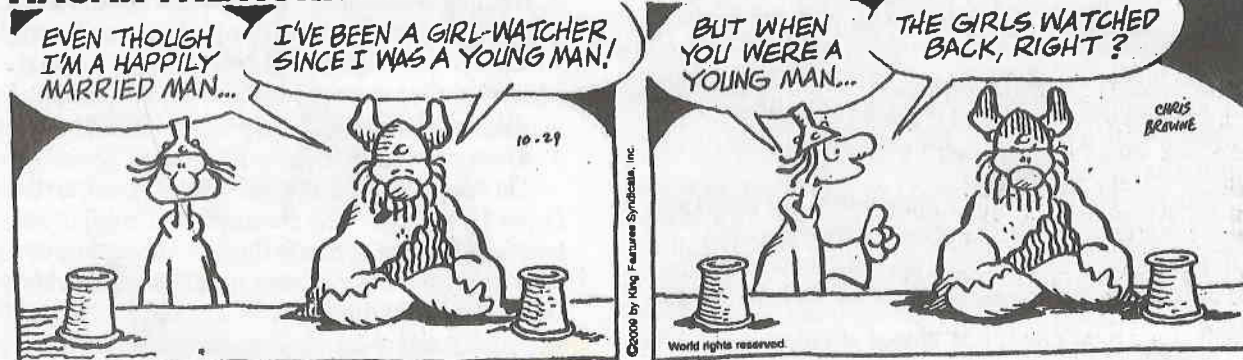
FROM JOHN NEAL: Somebody brought up the subject of Betty's Bar in York. During the war it was a hangout for aircrew members, especially Bomber Command. Several airmen scratched their initials on the mirror and they are still there today.

Someone on <www.bombercrew> made a list of the names who scratched the names and it is quite extensive.

Betty's gave up their liquor license after the war and now it's a quiet little cafe, with a mirror.

FROM THE TELEGRAPH: Anndree Peel, a French Resistance heroine, celebrated her 104th birthday. Mrs. Peel says, "I have saved 102 pilots before being arrested, interrogated and tortured. I suffer still from that, I still have the pain."

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



Son of Basque guide needs to find survivors of the Jim Burch family

By GEOFF WARREN
AFEES Friend Member
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Powell River, BC V8A 5A8
Tel. 604-485-8434
<marj-geoff@shaw.ca>

I am researching a lesser known escape route over the Pyrenees used by Comete in 1943 and 1944. Of the 288 evaders assisted by Comete to reach Spain, almost 125 Allied aviators used an 'unheralded' route, while the rest travelled the better known St. Jean de Luz route guided mostly by Dedee, Florentino and other Basque guides.

Of the seven crewmates of my uncle, George R.M. Warren, RCAF, who was killed in August '43 when his 10 RAF Squadron Halifax, JD368, was shot down over Belgium, all safely parachuted. One was captured after a 2-week evasion while the remaining six safely evaded and made it back to England. Two of the six used the route I am researching, including his navigator who is still alive in England and whom I had the honour to meet last April.

I have attended the ELMS reunion in York and returned in September from 2+ weeks in Belgium, Paris and Pays Basque furthering my "other" Comete route research. I was unable to attend Dayton but hope to make Colorado Springs next year.

During my recent trip I had the pleasure to locate and make acquaintance of families of some of the helpers who assisted my uncle's crewmates and many others as they travelled to southern France and over the mountains to Spain. I also met the son of one of the Basque guides who assisted Florentino on Comete's 'traditional' St. Jean de Luz route. It is because of that man, who I met at the ELMS commemorative Bidassoa River crossing last summer that I contact you. I didn't do the ELMS walk as I was researching the other route further east but wanted to say hello to some of the folks I'd met in York.

The son of the Basque guide was asking about Jim F. Burch, the USAAF evader who drowned in December 1943 while attempting to cross the Bidassoa River into Spain. The Belgian Count d'Ursel also drowned that night when crossing the river with Jean Francois 'Franco' Nothomb, other evaders and the guides. The father of the man I met was one of those guides.

A small stone monument was placed at the river crossing some years ago to honour the memory of Jim Burch,

Count d'Ursel and to remember their tragic deaths. When that monument was damaged by time and the river's torrent, a new monument was placed much higher up the embankment on the French side of the border. I am informed that the new monument mentions d'Ursel but makes no reference to Jim Burch. It is the wish of the man whom I met that the situation be rectified and a new monument be erected to commemorate Jim's sacrifice.

He asked if I could possibly assist in locating Jim Burch's surviving family, and I offered to do what I could to help. I don't know whether the Burch family has ever been involved with AFEES but hope that perhaps some of the members of the Society may have some suggestions or clues to help in my search. Perhaps any of those associated to or know about Comete or 385BG would know Jim's story and perhaps the whereabouts of his family.

Jim (and his family?) lived at 203 Dellis Street in Terrell, Tex., at the time he joined the USAAF. Jim was a 2/Lt. co-pilot with the 385BG/550BS. He was born 16 August 1917 and lost his life in the Bidassoa on the night of 22/23 December 1943.

I look forward to any assistance that AFEES readers may provide.



BERNHARDT

"MY MOTHER SAID HE WAS SENT FROM HEAVEN.
 THEY MUST HAVE WANTED SOME PEACE AND QUIET."

B-17 crew's relatives get together

From The Sacramento BEE,

Sunday, Aug. 16, 2009

BY ROBERT D. DAVILA

bdavila@sacbee.com

Paula Lorenzi arrived from Spokane, Wash. Denell Fischer drove from San Francisco. Dot Rosenthal Hershowitz appeared via an internet video call from Binghamton, N.Y. Dominique Lecomte came from France.

More than two dozen people met Saturday in Rancho Cordova to share an inspiring story of heroism and friendship in war and peace. The Americans are relatives of the crew of a B-17 plane that was shot down over France during World War II.

Lecomte is a descendant of French townspeople who risked their lives to rescue and harbor some of the airmen from German troops.

"It's so exciting to be here, learning about something from history that's also about our family," an emotional Fischer said. "It's a gift that's being given to all of us. It truly is."

Her father, William C. Fischer, served with the 730th Squadron, 452nd Bomber Group, 8th Air Force.

He was a gunner on a B-17 that participated in a bombing raid over Germany on Feb. 8, 1944. Hit by German flak, the plane crashed in northern France.

Fischer and four other airmen were captured on the spot by the Germans and spent the rest of the war in POW camps. Four crew members were

found and hidden by local residents and resistance fighters, who spent 40 days smuggling the Americans safely out of the country to England. One crew member died in the attack.

One of the rescued crewmen was the co-pilot, Robert L. Costello, (E&E 490) who settled in Rancho Cordova after the war and died in 1988.

THE B-17 CREW'S FATE

The crew members of the B-17 that crashed Feb. 8, 1944, near the village of Le Cardonnois, France:

Pilot: 2nd Lt. Robert O. Lorenzi of Spokane, Wash.

Co-pilot: 2nd Lt. Robert L. Costello of New York

Navigator: 2nd Lt. Paul R. Packer of Chicago

Bombardier: 2nd Lt. Abraham W. Rosenthal of Binghamton, N.Y.

Radio operator: Sgt. Donald E. Kirby of Columbus, Ohio

Top turret gunner/engineer: Staff Sgt. Edward J. Sweeney of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Ball turret gunner: Sgt. Raymond W. Lentz of Toledo, Ohio

Right waist gunner: Sgt. William C. Fischer of Anamosa, Iowa

Left waist gunner: Sgt. Clyde D. Tinker of Erwin, Tenn.

Tail gunner: Sgt. Rene P. Gilman of Chicago.

■ Lorenzi, Costello, Packer and Sweeney were rescued and sheltered by local villagers. French resistance fighters spent 40 days smuggling the American airmen through German-occupied towns to safety in England.

■ Kirby, Lentz, Fischer, Tinker and Gilman were captured by the Germans and spent the rest of the war in POW camps. They suffered poor treatment and were forced on evacuation marches as American and Russian troops advanced until they were liberated in 1945.



Dominique Lecomte, standing, talks to Tami Prentice, granddaughter of B-17 crewman Abraham Rosenthal. At left is Tami's mother, Gale Prentice. At right is Paula Lorenzi, widow of B-17 pilot Robert O. Lorenzi. Lecomte's great-aunt and other French villagers rescued four of the B-17's crew members.

His daughter, Nancy Scovill, organized and hosted the reunion at her Rancho Cordova home. She shared boxes of historic documents, including 500 letters and telegrams her parents exchanged with other crew members' relatives seeking information about their missing loved ones immediately after the plane crash.

"This is all an amazing story of loss, rescue and heroism," Scovill said. "It's a story like many others from that time that are in danger of being lost as these men and their generation die. It's a story that needs to be told."

The gathering was a deeply moving experience for the crewmen's wives, children and other relatives. They warmly embraced Lecomte, who spent years researching the story of how his great-aunt, Lucienne Mortier, and other residents saved four Americans whose plane crashed in a field near the village of Le Cardonnois.

He tracked down and reached out to crew members and their families in letters, phone calls and e-mails. He escorted survivors who visited France to explore the crash site. He compiled a written history of the event and its aftermath, "Tail End Charlie," based on photographs, documents and interviews with local townspeople and the B-17 crew members.

Chief of staff visits Manas, celebrates Thanksgiving

TRANSIT CENTER AT MANAS, Kyrgyzstan (AFNS) --

The Air Force chief of staff met with deployed members and Airmen during a two-day visit to the Transit Center at Manas Nov. 26 and 27.

In his first visit here since becoming the Air Force's top officer, Gen. Norton Schwartz celebrated Thanksgiving with the men and women of the Transit Center during a dinner served at the dining facility here.

"What a thrill to be able to share Thanksgiving with you and our Kyrgyz hosts," General Schwartz said. "It is an honor to be here with you all."

He and his wife, Christine, brought gifts to the reunion, commemorative plaques with pieces of the downed plane for each family.

A 48-year-old railway worker living near Paris, Lecomte expressed appreciation for the American liberation of France during World War II. His research effort also was motivated by curiosity about the brave young men from small towns in New York, Ohio, Washington and other states who crossed an ocean and fought for strangers in another land.

"I wanted to know who these Americans were," Lecomte said. "I wanted to meet them and their families. We are all one big family now. We are friends forever."

The last surviving B-17 crew member, Donald E. Kirby of Ohio, was unable to attend. But the reunion drew widows, children and grandchildren who shared family stories, pored over albums and pledged to keep history alive.

Gale Prentice of Phoenix gently folded old telegrams reporting the death of her father, Abraham W. Rosenthal. The B-17 bombardier, he was the only crew member killed when German fighters attacked the plane.

"I'm just really proud to know that my father served his country," said Prentice, accompanied by her daughter, Tami. "I'm proud that someone recognized this story."

NOW HEAR THIS!

The AFEEES website <www.airforceescape.com> has been up and running several months now and has attracted much attention from persons interested in the history of our society.

Don Thorpe of Salt Lake City has done a great job of organizing and maintaining a colorful, attractive and useful data bank about the history of AFEEES. Don would like to remind members and friends that space is available on the site for special announcements or events that might be of common interest. He is especially interested in digital photos of past AFEEES reunions.

It is the place to post your new e-mail address and other changes in your life pattern. Of course, roster changes should be reported promptly to Richard Shandor, our membership chair.

The AFEEES site also includes links with several other WWII websites, including the 100th Bomb Group.

More and more publications are publishing an electronic version of their journal and such a move is being considered for AFEEES. It would represent a saving on postage and printing costs, as well as be a timely source of information.

Be assured, however, that long as Ol' Inky has a part in it, there will be a print version of the quarterly newsletter for those of us still mired in 20th Century technology!

Colorado Springs

INFORMATION ABOUT 2010 REUNION

Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society Reunion

May 6, 2010 – May 9, 2010 – Colorado Springs, Colorado

Wednesday, May 5, 2010	1:00 p.m.	Hospitality Suite Opens
Thursday, May 6, 2010	A.M.	Registration Opens
	P.M.	Tour Desk Opens
	1:00 p.m.	Colorado Springs City Tour (Optional)
	6:00 p.m.	Welcoming Dinner
Friday, May 7, 2010	9:00 a.m.	Board of Directors Meeting
	10:30 a.m.	Base Tour with lunch included (Optional)
Saturday, May 8, 2010	8:00 a.m.	Buses Depart Hotel for Air Force Academy
	9:00 a.m.	Memorial Service in Cadet Chapel
	10:30 a.m.	Visitors Center
	11:30 a.m.	Lunch at Officer Club
	2:30 p.m.	General Membership Meeting
	6:00 p.m.	Annual Banquet
Sunday, May 9, 2010	7:30 a.m.	Farewell Breakfast



CAN YOU MAKE ONE MORE MISSION?

By Col. Steve "Mac" Mac Isaac, USAF (Ret.)
6449 Coventry Hills Dr., NE
RIO RANCHO NM 87144
<colmacmac@mac.com>

Greetings from sunny, but brisk New Mexico! I am getting excited about being allowed to meet with you all next spring in Colorado Springs!

I need YOU evaders/escapers to do something very special, important to me, but also for our Nation. You see, we are not just going to Colorado Springs because it is beautiful, especially in the spring. A major reason for going to C-Springs is that – it is the home, heart, and future of your United States Air Force – The USAF Academy.

The date of your 'Mission' will be Friday, 07 May 2010. I want you all to volunteer one more time; I am working on putting one, maybe two of you (depending on how many of you sign-up) Heroes into the classroom with the cadets; probably in Military History, and/or Political Science Classes.

If coordination works as planned, your 'first' class will be around 0900Local, short break, second class around 1000Local, followed by attending lunch in Gen. Billy Mitchell Hall with the entire cadet wing.

Following lunch, our group will 'split'; those who wish to go back to the Crowne Plaza may do so at about 1330Local.

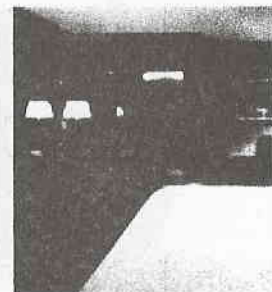
Those who wish to spend more time with the cadets in their cadet area, will be escorted by different squadrons – when you are ready to return to the hotel, someone from the squadron you are visiting will get you back.

Why is it important to accomplish the 'Mission'? You and today's cadets have a lot in common; you are both entering service during the time of global war, you both face/faced an uncertain future, you both decided to place your God and your Nation before yourself!

•There is no question in my mind that you can both mentor and motivate these young future air leaders – this is why this 'Mission' is a must!

Exact times/more details will be published in the AFEES Spring newsletter. If you can go 'one more for your Nation' – Wear your wings, wear your ribbons/decorations, wear any part of your uniform that you still have/fit! De-brief of the 'Mission' will be in the Hospitality Room at 1630Local – first 'round' on me!

REDISCOVER CROWNE PLAZA

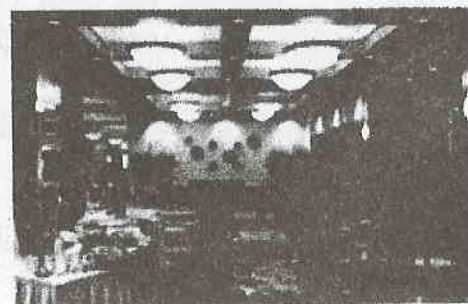


COLORADO SPRINGS

\$12 MILLION DOLLAR RENOVATION

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- **Colorado Springs Hotel Services.** Feel right at home in our entirely smoke-free hotel with everything from two swimming pools, fitness center, meeting rooms, a Marketplace, business service center, and complimentary local area shuttle within a 3 mile radius.
- **Cool Colorado Springs, CO Hotel Restaurants.** Great meals are as close as our lobby. Choose from two different restaurants for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Other equally excellent eateries are within a few minutes of our Colorado Springs hotel.

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CROWNE PLAZA**Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society Reunion****May 3-11, 2010****EARLY BIRD HOTEL RESERVATION FORM****Please complete this form and send to****The Crowne Plaza - Attention: Reservations****2886 South Circle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80906****Phone: 800-981-4012; Fax: 719-576-0507**

Crowne Plaza - Colorado Springs, CO - \$108.31 per night, inclusive
(Check room type)

One King _____ Two Queens _____

ROOM RATES APPLY THREE DAYS BEFORE AND THREE DAYS AFTER REUNION

Reunion Hotel Rates guaranteed only until April 4, 2010

HELPERS ONLY: Send both Hotel Reservation Form and Reunion Reservation Form to:
AFEES. c/o Lynn A. David, 225 S. Meramec, Suite 1232, St. Louis, MO 63105

Last Name: _____
First Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City/State/Zip Code: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Arrival Date:	Departure Date:
Number of Adults:	Smoking Preference:
PAYMENT METHOD	
Check Enclosed (Y or N)	
Visa Number:	
AMX Number:	
MC Number:	
Other CC Number:	

Name on Credit Card: _____
Expiration Date: _____
Signature: _____

25 REASONS WHY I OWE MY MOTHER:

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE... 'If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning.'
2. My mother taught me RELIGION... 'You better pray that will come out of the carpet.'
3. My mother taught me about TIME TRAVEL ... 'If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!'
4. My mother taught me LOGIC... 'Because I said so, that's why.'
5. My mother taught me MORE LOGIC... 'If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me.'
6. My mother taught me FORESIGHT... 'Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident.'
7. My mother taught me IRONY... 'Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about.'
8. My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS... 'Shut your mouth and eat your supper.'
9. My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM... 'Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!'
10. My mother taught me about STAMINA... 'You'll sit there until all that spinach is gone.'
11. My mother taught me about WEATHER... 'This room of yours looks like a tornado went through it.'
12. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY. 'If I told you once, I've told you a million times. Don't exaggerate!'
13. My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE... 'I brought you into this world, and I can take you out.'
14. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION... 'Stop acting like your father!'
15. My mother taught me about ENVY... 'There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do.'
16. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION... 'Just wait until we get home.'
17. My mother taught me about RECEIVING.. 'You are going to get it when you get home!'
18. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE ... 'If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to freeze that way.'
19. My mother taught me ESP... 'Put your sweater on; don't you think I know when you are cold?'
20. My mother taught me HUMOR... 'When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me.'
21. My mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT... 'If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up.'
22. My mother taught me GENETICS... 'You're just like your father'
23. My mother taught me about my ROOTS... 'Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?'
24. My mother taught me WISDOM... 'When you get to be my age, you'll understand.'
25. And my favorite: My mother taught me about JUSTICE... 'One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you.'

EARLY BIRD REUNION RESERVATION FORM**AIR FORCES ESCAPE AND EVASION SOCIETY****Thursday-Sunday, May 6-9, 2010****Crowne Plaza, Colorado Springs, Colorado****Please complete and return this form with check or money order (No Credit Cards.)****Your Check is your receipt.****MEMBERS: Make check payable to AFEES REUNION and mail to:****AFEES, c/o Lynn David, 225 South Meramec, Suite 1232, St. Louis, MO 63105****HELPERS ONLY: Send both Hotel Reservation Form and Reunion Reservation Form to.****AFEES, c/o Lynn A. David, 225 S. Meramec, Suite 1232, St. Louis, MO 63105****Please Indicate Your Choice of Events****Number**

_____	Registration Fee @ \$25 per person	\$_____
_____	5/6/10 Colorado Springs City Bus Tour, 1300-1630 hrs., \$____ per person	\$_____
_____	5/6/10 Thursday Night Dinner, \$32 per person	\$_____
_____	5/7/10 Air Force Academy Tour - 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. \$____ per person	\$_____
_____	5/8/10 Memorial Service and tour in Cadet Chapel \$_____ per person	\$_____
_____	5/8/10 Saturday Banquet, \$37.50 per person	\$_____
	Choice of Entrée: Beef _____ Chicken _____ Fish _____	
_____	5/9/10 Sunday Farewell Breakfast, \$16.60 per person	\$_____
	TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$_____

(Total of events listed (not including bus fare trips) is \$111.10 per person)**For Reunion information, contact Lynn David, 1 (314) 863-1954****Cell Phone (314) 422-1567, www.ldavid@airforceescape.com****NOTE: If you have a blue AFEES lanyard from a past reunion, please bring it for use at registration.****NAME BADGES: List names as you wish them to appear:****NAME (please print): _____ Service Unit _____****Spouse's Name: _____ Guest's Name _____****Mailing Address: _____****City, State, Zip Code: _____****IMPORTANT: Emergency Contact (Name and Phone Number):****Any Special Needs? _____**



Combat Points

By Stephan R. Quinn

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up,
In a "vino" shop in Rome.
Singing and cheering happily,
"Tomorrow we're going home.
The wine flowed free, the boys got soused,
And nobody noticed the heavy rain.
So "fill'em up Joe, give the boys a drink"
And I'll take the same, again.

The kid on the piano was beating a tune,
And the gang joined in on the song;
And nobody noticed the strange GI,
Who came in to join the throng.
Now he was as drunk as drunk can be,
On the stuff we got to drink.
I've forgotten most of the details.
But this is the story, I think.

The music had died down for a moment
As the drunk was heard to say,
"If the draft board had got me sooner,
I'd be going home today."
"Thirty-eight points for service,
And overseas thirty-one more.
Three battle stars for combat
Makes a total of eighty-four."

He crumpled the piece of paper
And tossed it on the floor
"I've figured them up a dozen times,
And I always get eighty-four.
Give me a drink bartender,
And set 'em up to the line.
You've heard sad tales in this war, my lad,
Will you listen a moment to mine?"

"I got my official greetings,
In March of forty-two.
And hit the coast of Africa
In November along with you.
I've fought my way from the desert
Right up to Hitler's door.
But eighty-five points will get you "out,"
And I have eighty-four."

My outfit is busted completely.
Some of the fellows gone home.
Some will head the Pacific way,
While I sweat it out in Rome.
You fellows will leave in the morning
And I, glad for you, you see.
I'd like to be going along with you,
But I guess that's not be."

"So wave to the girl in the Harbor,
Who's carrying the torch for me,
And have a drink on Broadway,
That's the spot I'm longing to see.
And if you have time when you get there
Stop by my mother's door.
Eighty-five points will get you home
And I hold just eighty-four."

*May the spirit of peace
live in our hearts
through this wonderful season
and always*



FROM THE MEMBERS
OF THE
AIR FORCE ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY

Ralph K. Patton, *Ralph K. Patton*
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Richard P. Shandor, *Richard P. Shandor*
MEMBERSHIP & CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Don Thorpe, *Don Thorpe*
WEB MASTER

*The annual AFEES season's greeting folders are in the post
to special friends around the world.*

About 300 names are on the list this year.

*For many years, Dorothy Kenney, widow of the late Paul
Kenney, has applied her artistic talents to designing the cards and
getting them printed. Thanks, Dorothy!*

*It is another way that we seek to maintain our relationship with
those overseas who made our evasion possible some 65 years ago.*

COLLINGS FOUNDATION

Wings of Freedom

1/15-1/18

Fort Lauderdale, FL

(B-17, B-24 & P-51)

Airport: Fort Lauderdale

Executive Airport

1/18-1/21

Stuart, FL

(B-17, B-24 & P-51)

Airport: Witham Field Airport

1/21-1/25

Boca Raton, FL

(B-17, B-24, & P-51)

Airport: Boca Raton Airport

1/25-1/27

Fort Myers, FL

(B-17, B-24 & P-51)

Airport: Page Field Airport

1/27-1/29

Venice, FL

(B-17, B-24, & P-51)

Airport: Venice Municipal Airport

1/29-2/1

St. Pete/Clearwater, FL

(B-17, B-24, & P-51)

St. Pete/Clearwater Intl. Airport

2/1-2/3

Leesburg, FL

B-17, B-24, & P-51

Leesburg Municipal Airport

2/3-2/5

Ocala, FL

B-17, B-24, & P-51

Ocala Regional/Jim Taylor Field

2/5-2/7

Jacksonville, FL

B-17, B-24 & P-51

Airport: Cecil Field Airport

Comete Tour Brussels, October 2009

Historic sites are visited

By EDOUARD RENIERE

Comete Sympathizer
Brussels, Belgium

A mini-bus tour of Comète-related places in Brussels was organized for a few visitors, some of them coming from far away. The itinerary followed that of the tour made in 2007 with a larger group.

Guiding the smaller group and making by turns the microphone commentaries were Victor Schutters and Edouard Renière. Victor is the grandson of Comète helper Victor Schutters, and prepared the basic text which Comète-sympathizer Edouard translated into English. Participants to this tour were :

* Madelaine MILLER and her daughter Sandra HANCOCK, from Florida, USA. Madelaine is the widow of 2nd Lt Julius "Dave" MILLER (E&E 736), co-pilot of B-17 42-31430 of 305th BG/366th BS shot down Feb. 20, 1944 on a mission to Leipzig - Comet A279 - <http://cometeline.org/fiche279.html>

* Kristine and Walter ZAVOLI, from California, USA. Kristine is the daughter of the late T/Sgt William "Bill" Francis CROWE (E&E 83), Engineer/Top Turret Gunner of B-26 41-34706 of 323rd BG/453rdBS shot down July 31, 1943 on a mission to Poix/Nord, France - Comet A123 - <http://cometeline.org/fiche123.html>

* Ian and Goffinet McLAREN, from South Carolina, USA. Goffinet's father was an Irish member of the RAF during the war and landed by parachute in Southern Belgium. He had not been helped in his evasion by the Comète Line but by many other brave Belgian and French people, reaching England via Southern France and Spain in July 1943.

* Scott and Judy GOODALL, from Saint-Girons, France. Scott is a Comète sympathizer and a member of the team which organizes the "Chemins de la Liberté" walks on some of the routes followed by evading airmen during the war.

(See <http://www.ariège.com/histoire/chemin.html>)

* Co and Louise de Swart, from the Netherlands. Co is a WW II Aviation researcher specializing in crashes in Holland.

* Ms Anne-Marie Theunissen, from Brussels, Comète-Kinship member.

OTHER COMETE VISITORS

* Mary HOCKADAY, from Australia, daughter of RAAF Comete evader Sgt Reginald J. COLLINS.

* John and Amanda COLLINS, Australians living in New Jersey, USA, for a few years. John is Mary Hockaday's brother, son of Reg Collins.



Rogier Square

The "Palace Hotel" on the Square, next to the since-demolished Gare du Nord (North Railway Station,) had been requisitioned by the Germans, as were many other buildings in Brussels, like the Shell Building; another on the Avenue Louise which was occupied by the Gestapo; the Belgian Bank for Africa where a German administration was in charge; the Kommandantur (German Military Command,) rue de la Loi. The hotel is now the "Crown Plaza."

* Laura CHAKLEY AND Jane SHEEHAN, from the U.S., daughters of USAAF Lt. Francis X. Harkins (E&E# 115)..

The German tribunal which was sitting at the Palace Hotel was made of members of the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force. The higher German authorities had decided to have members of their own Air Force there, to try Resistance members who had helped enemy airmen.

It was at the hotel that on July 26, 1944, six members of the Comet Line were put on trial. They were: Jean-François Nothomb with wartime alias Franco, Jacques le Grelle alias Jérôme, Jacques De Bruyn and his mother Albert Mattens alias Jean-Jacques and Raymond Itterbeek.

All six were sentenced to death after one day of trial.

Jean-François Nothomb had been sent to the South of France in order to help Andrée de Jongh (« Dédée ») - initiator and soul of the Comet Line - and to ensure a safe passage of the Pyrénées by the evaded airmen. After Dédée's arrest on Jan. 15, 1943, Franco, succeeding Dédée, took the direction of the Line. He had the Mediterranean type and that allowed him to go unnoticed among the local population.

Franco had to make many trips up North to Paris to attend to the efficient organization of the Line. In January 1944, Comet was infiltrated by the Belgian traitor Jacques Desoubrie and, sadly, quite a lot of arrests were made. Franco's turn came on Jan. 18, 1944 in Paris and he was subsequently brought to Brussels to be put on trial.

Such had also been the case for Jacques le Grelle, who had been arrested in Paris the day before. He was head of the Comet Paris sector and had put up three separate nets there, all three working for Comète.

He had organized the airmen's travelling by recruiting guides, had found places for them to be hidden by people who were ready to take the risk of lodging evaded airmen, he was seeing to obtaining civilian clothing for them as well as food and for the marks and stamps that were needed to make false papers to be used by the airmen as they travelled along. He had done a remarkable job and, when he was arrested, the Germans thought he was the organization's chief, due to his looks, similar to those of Franco, and he was horribly tortured.

In fact, although interrogated separately, Franco and Jerome had both had the reflex to tell the Germans that their chief was in fact Count Antoine d'Ursel - who was known under the pseudonym of Jacques Cartier - and who had indeed formerly been at the head of Comète, but who had drowned while crossing the Bidassoa river between France and Spain on Christmas Eve 1943.

Franco and Jerome knew fully well that the Germans could do no more harm to their lost friend. [American airman 2nd Lt Jim BURCH, 385th Bomber Group Co-Pilot drowned during the same crossing -- see <http://cometeline.org/fiche242.html>]

As for Albert Mattens, he, like other guides, was taking evaders from Brussels to Paris. He organized various transit points along the Belgian-French border and was coordinating the activities of the guides coming from Brussels and leaving for Paris. He too was arrested in January 1944.

Jacques De Bruyn was in charge of getting airmen from Brussels to the Belgian-French border. He also looked after the recruiting of guides and the organization of border crossings. His mother hid airmen in her Brussels house.

Raymond Itterbeek was the youngest of the six who had been sentenced to death. He was only 21 and his job was to find safe places and to guide airmen from Brussels to the border where he handed them over to "Monique."

Monique is Henriette Hanotte and she led evaders to

Paris. Raymond was arrested Jan. 3, 1944 on a train to Lille while travelling with two evaders. After their stay in the Saint-Gilles Prison, all six condemned were transferred on Aug. 22, 1944 to a prison in Cologne/Köln, Germany, then were sent to others in Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Amberg and ended up in the Bayreuth fortress where they were liberated on April 23, 1945 by American troops.

Due to the lack of food and bad weather conditions, life in German prison camps was extremely hard. The men's exemplary courage helped them to keep their dignity until their liberation.

At last year's Comète weekend, we had the pleasure to have with us, Jean-François (Franco)'s sister Colette Nothomb. She told us how she remembered having been on the Rogier Square at the time her brother and his companions were on trial. When her brother Franco, under guard, came out of the Hotel and saw his sister, he made a sign moving his hand along his throat, meaning he had been sentenced to death. He even let her understand that the tribunal had sat in a solemn setting and he even had the flourish to shout to her that it had been a "nice" trial.

Andrée de Jongh, herself known as Dédée, founder of the famous evasion line that at the time of its creation was not yet named Comète. It was first called "la Ligne" ("the Line") and it was only afterwards, when the RAF in England saw some of their men coming back as fast as comets in the sky, that the Line started to be officially known as "Comète".

Monsieur de Jongh had a house built at number 73 on the Avenue Emile Verhaeren.

An ardent upholder of French culture, he had created a review named "La Gaule" ("Gaul", the ancient name of a part of medieval Europe that would ultimately become France). That enterprise required capital and he was forced to sell his property, in which he and his family continued living, now as tenants only.

The family lived in the house until 1978.

At the beginning of the war, in May 1940, Dédée was working in the town of Malmédy, near the German border, as an advertising draftsman. It was in August 1941 that she created her own evasion line together with Arnold Deppé who was well-acquainted with the Southern region of France. On Aug. 19, 1941, during the second voyage both of them had planned, Dédée left with a group of six Belgian officers, while Arnold was in charge of two Belgian civilians and one Scottish soldier.

Arnold wanted to leave via the town of Lille in the Northeast of France, but Dédée, finding that route too risky because of the too numerous customs controls, opted for a passage through Quiévrain, 40km to the South and from there, take a streetcar to the French city of Valenciennes. As Arnold and his group had been arrested on their way, Dédée couldn't meet them at the planned rendezvous.

She learned afterwards that Arnold and his evaders

Plaque unveiled on Oct. 18, 2008

The text of the plaque is in French and Flemish and says:

"Here lived until 1978 the family of Frédéric and Alice de JONGH and their daughters Suzanne and Andrée.

Andrée (1916-2007), called "Dédée", was the initiator and the soul of the Evasion net "COMÈTE" which helped hundreds of Allied airmen and "burned" Résistants to reach Great-Britain, via France and Spain. She was seconded in this by her father Frédéric, who was executed by shooting by the Nazis in Paris in 1944, as well as by more than two thousand patriots."

had been betrayed, that she herself was actively searched for by the Germans and she decided then not to go back to Belgium any more. Her friend, Charles Morelle, then put his house in Valenciennes at her disposal. Frédéric de Jongh, Dédée's father, took his daughter's place by assuming the direction of Comète in Belgium. Eight people were at the time occupants of his family home himself and his wife Alice de Jongh, Dédée's mother ; their elder daughter, Suzanne Wittek, her husband and their three children; Aunt Ninie, sister of Frédéric.

At the end of April 1942, the enemy was looking for Dédée's father also, and he was forced to leave his house to go live in Paris and continue working for the Line from there. It was in Paris that he was arrested on July 7, 1943 and ultimately executed by shooting at the Mont Valérien in the French capital on March 28, 1944. He was 56 years old. Before and during the war, Frédéric had been the principal of the Elementary School located at the Rue Gaucheret in Schaerbeek. Many years after the war, a plaque in his honor has been affixed in the school's entrance hall. Every year on the date of his execution, the school holds a remembrance ceremony in his honor.

Andrée Dumon, Nadine for Comète, was working with Frédéric as an international guide, taking her directives from him in the organization of her trips by train with evaders from Brussels to Paris. Nadine was arrested in August 1942, deported the following year to Germany and sent to concentration camps in Ravensbrück and Mauthausen. She was freed in the spring of 1945.

The Maréchal family's house

On Nov. 19, 1942, a trusted guide arrived in Brussels with two "American airmen" (who were in reality German agents who had infiltrated the Line) and went to the Frère Orban Square, a usual rendezvous point where he thought he'd meet Miss Elsie Maréchal whose

particular role was to proceed to the identification of airmen.

Her mother being English, Elsie had full mastery of the evaders' language. A problem with communications made it so that Elsie didn't show up. The guide started getting nervous and after awhile decided to go to Nelly Deceuninck's place as she was the only person from the Line in Brussels of whom he knew the address.

Nelly was not home and her parents, not knowing she was a member of an evasion net, gave the guide the address of the family Maréchal at 162, Avenue Voltaire. Arriving there with his two « evaders », the guide learned that the daughter Elsie was not there and so, her parents were those who welcomed him and the "airmen"

The two airmen's behavior seemed strange, as they only spoke in monosyllables and the English idioms they were using didn't sound familiar. Nevertheless, as up till then the guides and helpers had not been in contact with American evaders, they didn't pay too much attention. When Elsie finally arrived at her home, she was surprised by the presence of two aviators having come there without any preliminary identification having taken place.

She asked them to write down their names on a piece of paper, then left hurriedly to show it to Jean Greindl, alias Némo, who at the time was at the head of Comète, having his office at the Swedish Canteen in the Rue Ducale (see below.)

Némo found the handwriting rather suspect, certain characters reminding him of the Gothic ones used by Germans. He told Elsie to return home and to see to it that the airmen did not leave the house, while he would take all adequate dispositions to verify their alleged identity. In the meantime, during the absence of Elsie, the airmen had pretended they wanted to stretch their legs a bit and go outside. In reality, they went to warn the Gestapo and one of the false airmen later came back to the house accompanying the German policemen.

When Elsie got back home, she was arrested and that same night so were her parents and her younger brother, who found themselves brought to the GFP (Geheime Feld Polizei = Secret Field Police) in the Rue Traversière, uptown, for interrogation.

Thinking they could find the Line's chief, the Germans wanted to know to whom exactly Elsie had been bringing the paper that afternoon. She was atrociously tortured and as Némo didn't see Elsie coming back to the Canteen, he worried about her, being at a loss as to what had happened.

Twenty-six years old lawyer Victor Michiels, his assistant at the Swedish Canteen, suggested to Némo that he himself would go to the Maréchal's house. Némo, aware of the danger, first refused but ultimately agreed, and as night was falling, Victor left for the Avenue Voltaire.

After having observed the house from a distance, he finally decided to ring the bell. The door burst open and three German policemen confronted him with drawn revolvers.

Victor tried to run away down the street, but gunshots resounded and he was shot on the corner of the Avenue Voltaire and the Renan street. A plaque to his memory has been placed on the façade of the corner building.

The next day, anxiety was growing at the Swedish Canteen and Peggy Van Lier, Némó's secretary, was sent to the home of Victor Michiels to get some news.

There, she found Victor's parents, their daughter Josée and two German policemen. The policemen took Peggy away for interrogation, but she was later released, the Germans believing her when she told them she had been to the Michiels home to meet her friend Josée there. Peggy was then able to warn Némó about what had happened so he could decide what to do in those circumstances.

After their detention in the Saint-Gilles Prison, Elsie and her mother were deported to Germany, from where they came back in 1945.

Their respective father and husband, Georges Maréchal, was shot by gunfire at the Brussels Tir National (National Shooting Range) on Oct. 20, 1943.

He is buried at the Enclos des Fusillés (literally, "Enclosure for the executed by shooting »...) It's due to the fact that many such Comète members' shootings occurred during the month of October that year, that the month has been chosen for the Comète weekends.

The Tir National shooting range in the Commune of Schaerbeek was at first a large building erected in 1889 for use by the Belgian Army for shooting exercises. It was occupied by the Germans during the First World War and 35 civilians were executed by shooting there at the time.

The same happened to 330 patriots during the Second World War. The Tir National was torn down in 1959 to make room for the new headquarters of the Radio and Television.

Among the 365 graves are those of the 11 members of Comète who were executed here and whose names are : Eric de Menten, Georges Maréchal, Jean Ingels, Emile Delbruyère, Albert Marchal, Henri Rasquin, Ghislain Neybergh, Gaston Bidoul, Robert Roberts-Jones, Edouard Verpraet and Antoine Renaud.

In May 1940, Baron Jean Greindl alias Némó for Comète came back from the then Belgian Congo where he had created a coffee plantation. In Brussels, as early as 1941, helped by Gaston Bidoul, he took over the management of the Swedish Canteen, an organization belonging to the Red Cross and which devoted its activities to feeding needy children.

The Canteen had been founded by a Swede, Ms Scherling, and it was an ideal cover for clandestine operations, Sweden being a neutral country and the Germans not daring create a diplomatic incident by "invading" the premises.

On May 6, 1942, the Germans arrested Charles Morelle and Henri Michelli. Michelli had been appointed to take the succession of Frédéric de Jongh in Brussels when Frédéric left for Paris. Comète was thus deprived



La Cantine Suédoise
(The Swedish Canteen)

of its Brussels chief and Peggy Van Lier, Némó's secretary, managed to establish contact with Dédée, who came to Brussels to meet Némó. They quickly sympathized and Némó then undertook a complete reorganization of the Line's activities.

He recruited Georges and Edouard d'Oultremont as well as Eric de Menten for guiding evaders on the Brussels-Paris route. Similarly, he enrolled eighteen-year old Elsie Maréchal and gave her the job of guiding airmen, knowing that thanks to her language skills, she'd also be able to proceed to the interrogations as to their identities.

One day, the black limousine of Brussels-based German General Von Falkenhausen, the highest authority responsible for Belgium and the North of France, appeared unannounced at the Canteen and everybody wondered anxiously what was going on. The excitement dwindled down when it was learned that the General, who had befriended Ms Scherling, had thought that she was at the Canteen that day and he just wanted to pay her an impromptu visit. As Ms Scherling wasn't there, he left immediately and that was it.

Due to the events at the house of the Maréchals, Némó had deemed preferable to quit his function at the Swedish Canteen and desert his home in the suburb of Zellik, hesitating at the time about pursuing his work in Comète.

Made aware of this, Dédée was able to convince him to continue, telling him that the help given to downed airmen had an extremely positive impact on the morale of the members of Air Force Groups and Squadrons sent on missions over occupied Europe.

Némó finally agreed, but for the sake of their safety, he asked that Georges and Edouard d'Oultremont and

Peggy Van Lier leave Belgium and rejoin England via the Pyrénées mountains. All three crossed over into Spain on Dec. 6, 1942.

As for Némó, he was ultimately arrested on Feb. 6, 1943 and put in confinement in a cell at the State Police Barracks in Etterbeek. By a sad twist of history, he was be killed there in an Allied bombardment on Sept. 7, 1943. He was 38 years old.

In Brussels, according to the type of activity they had led, Résistance members were summoned or taken away for interrogation, either at the GFP in the rue Traversière, the Gestapo offices in the Avenue Louise or, for example, the Kommandantur at the rue de la Loi.

If the Germans decided for their arrest, they were then sent to the Saint-Gilles prison for further interrogation and detention.

Some underground people whom the Germans wanted to be isolated from other detainees, were put in confinement in Belgian State Police barracks in Etterbeek or Laeken. Many prisoners were not allowed trials worthy of the name and were considered as "Nacht und Nebel" ("Night and Mist") to be deported to



The Saint Giles Prison

Germany without a trace and without anybody knowing what became of them.

Others, after having been tried, were sent to concentration camps in Germany or in prison fortresses. Others still transited via the infamous Breendonck concentration camp, situated 25km North of Brussels, before being sent to Germany, at least those who had not perished in the camp.

Clay learned to eat blood pudding

T/Sgt. Clay W. Wilson, 423rd Sqn., 306th Grp., was engineer on the Warner crew which went down Feb. 16, 1943, on a mission to St. Nazaire.

He crossed the Spanish border on June 5, same year.

**By CLAY WILSON
E&E# 46
Sanford, N.C.**

Immediately after Pearl Harbor, I volunteered for the Army Air Force. I was 23 and single, so knew I would be drafted later.

On to Las Vegas gunnery school. Assigned to a crew at Wendover on B-17E as ball turret.

Flew to Westover Field, Mass., for a new plane. Arrived in Scotland early September 1942.

Our fourth mission was to St. Nazaire (Flack City.) We lost one engine and fell out of formation. Several fighters concentrated on us in a running battle.

We made it to the coast of England. Plane was never flown again; used for parts.

On Feb. 16, 1943, took off again



T/Sgt. CLAY W. WILSON

for St. Nazaire on 13th mission. I had moved from ball to top turret

The Germans had learned by then to attack us from frontal position, as we had no chin turrets.

The second fighter hit our pilot on the forehead and he fell across the controls.

We went into a dive and by the time the bombardier and I pulled him off we were again at their mercy. I

think we lost both waist gunners from one shell.

No. 3 engine started burning and the pilot was afraid it would spread to wing and rang the bailout bell.

We were down to about five or six thousand feet. I opened the waist hatch and went out after the radio operator, who was wounded in the leg. I fell about 1,000 feet and pulled the ripcord.

An enemy fighter circled me and waved. They thought they were winning the war. Later on, I heard they didn't hesitate to shoot.

It was about noon and a perfect day. I landed on my heels in soft dirt between trees. When I took my chute off there was blood on my face and arms. I think I was hit by flying shrapnel. Nothing serious.

First thing I did was to hide my chute under leaves so it would not be visible. There was a road nearby with a bridge and stream. I hid under there until dark.

Meantime, I opened my escape kit, took a tablet to purify the water.

The dime-sized compass showed me which way was south toward Spain.

For three nights I would travel at night and hide if I heard a noise.

On the fourth day, I approached a lone farm house early in the morning and found a young couple and a little girl were there.

I reviewed some high school French and my dog tag and canteen convinced them that I was an American and not a Nazi attempting to catch a member of the resistance.

They fed me and was I hungry!

We were about the same size and I changed clothes. He carried me to a school teacher who was a member of the resistance.

The teacher told me to be patient and he would contact other members. He took me several kilometers to a farm house with two brothers, John and Louis Manoch, aged 20 and 15, and their mother.

The boys had an old truck with a barrel on it that burned charcoal for fuel. I hid under straw in the body and was transported several miles to a chateau owned by a friendly count who was in Africa with the French army.

His wife, Countess Betty De Maudrit, was an American who had studied music in Paris and was also a member of the underground. There I met the chief of the underground unit, Georges Jouanjan.

The *Chief*, as we called him, arranged with a member in Paris to take us to Switzerland to be interned. We rode the train, partly filled with German military, to Paris. I played a deaf mute.

Our contact in Paris had been captured so I went back to the countryside near the French coast to wait for a high speed gunboat at night from England. It didn't come.

Then I was separated from others and taken to a Catholic monastery. The monks were dressed in black and belonged to the Trappist order.

While I was there, they killed hogs, boiled the blood and called it "pudding." I thought I couldn't eat that but I thought since they were risking their lives for me, that I should do anything I was told to do.

Later I was put on a train with a group of young French boys going to Spain to try to get to North Africa to join the French army.

We made it to Pau in southern France and were turned over to a smuggler to take us across the Pyrenees. It took three days over rough terrain. I had grown rather weak due to inactivity, but I was determined to keep going.

We were met at the border by a Spanish patrol who carried us to the famous bull-fighting city, Pamplona.

First thing they did was to shave our head. I am now bald, but then I had a lot of hair. They did it to get rid of vermin.

We were in prison for about two weeks until a staff member of the Barcelona Embassy came to interview us to make sure I was an American. He said he would return.

He checked me out and came back in a black 1942 Chevrolet station wagon. For three days, we rode through Madrid and other cities, on the way to Gibraltar. There I was inspected medically and otherwise for three days. Then I was flown back to Bristol, England, on a night flight and then by train to London to be interrogated at Brook Street.

Later, I was flown back to the U.S. and attached to Intelligence in Washington. I went by air and train around the nation to brief departing crews headed overseas.

I am now 91 and still enjoy life. For several years, I have telling my story to clubs, churches, retirement homes and school history classes.

FARM KID in the ARMY

Dear Ma and Pa,

I am well. Hope you are. Tell Brother Walt and Brother Elmer that the Army beats working for old man Minch by a mile. Tell them to join up quick before all of the places are filled.

I was restless at first because you get to stay in bed till nearly 6 a.m. But I am getting so I like to sleep late. Tell Walt and Elmer all you do before breakfast is smooth your cot, and shine some things. No hogs to slop, feed to pitch, mash to mix, wood to split, fire to lay. Practically nothing.

Men got to shave but it is not so bad, there's warm water. Breakfast is strong on trimmings like fruit juice, cereal, eggs, bacon, etc., but kind of weak on chops, potatoes, ham, steak, fried egg-plant, pie and other regular food, but

tell Walt and Elmer you can always sit by the two city boys that live on coffee. Their food, plus yours, holds you until noon when you get fed again. It's no wonder these city boys can't walk much.

We go on 'route marches,' which the platoon sergeant says are long walks to harden us. If he thinks so, it's not my place to tell him different. A 'route march' is about as far as to our mailbox at home. Then the city guys get sore feet and we all ride back in trucks.

The sergeant is like a school teacher. He nags a lot. The Captain is like the school board. Majors and Colonels just ride around and frown. They don't bother you none.

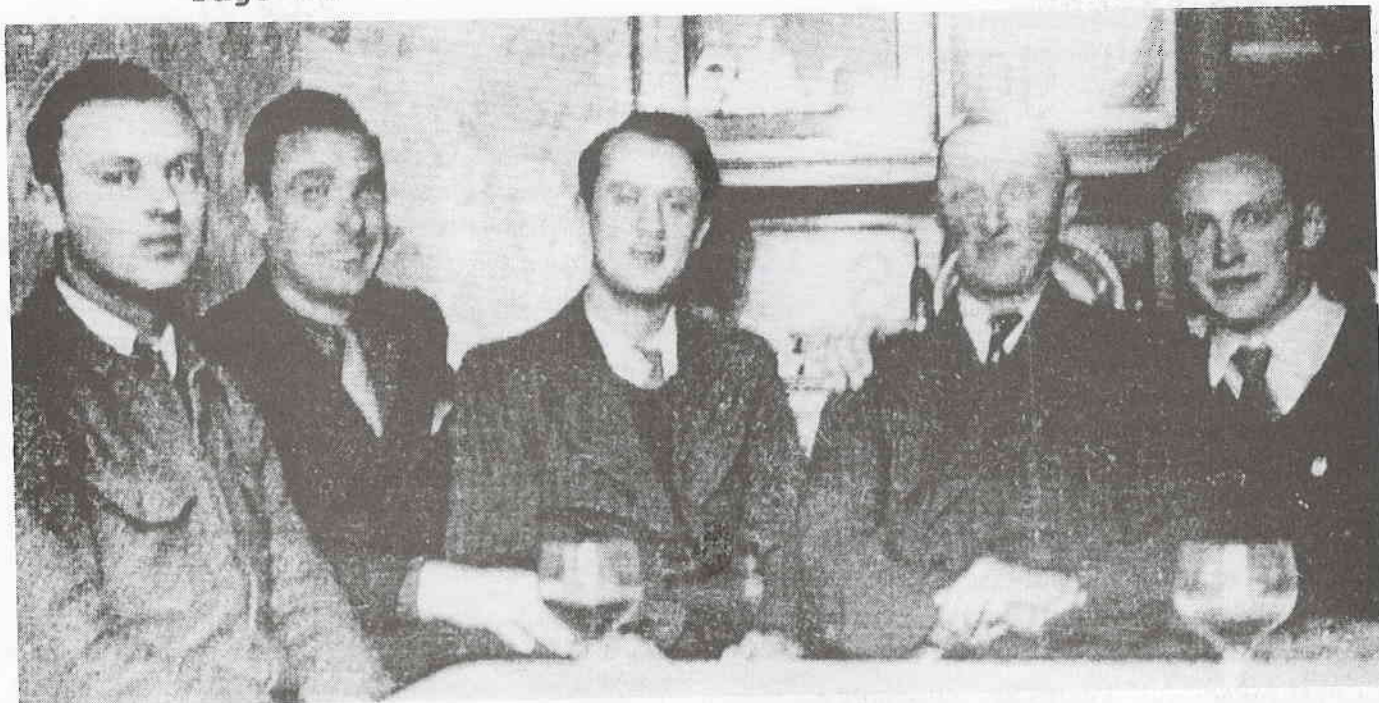
This next will kill Walt and Elmer with laughing. I keep getting medals for shooting. I don't know why. The bulls-eye is near as big as a chipmunk head

and don't move, and it ain't shooting at you like the Higgett boys at home. All you got to do is lie there all comfortable and hit it. You don't even load your own cartridges. They come in boxes.

Then we have what they call hand-to-hand combat training. You get to wrestle with them city boys. I have to be real careful though, they break real easy. It ain't like fighting with that ole bull at home. I'm about the best they got in this except for that Tug Jordan from over in Silver Lake. I only beat him once. He joined up the same time as me, but I'm only 5'6" and 130 pounds and he's 6'8" and near 300 pounds dry.

Be sure to tell Walt and Elmer to hurry and join before other fellers get onto this setup and come stampeding in.

Your loving daughter, Alice



This photo, taken in France in early 1943, includes two evaders and three members of the Resistance. From the left: Claiborne Wilson (E&E 46), Réseau Chief George Jouanjean, Bombardier Robert Kylius (E&E 45), Resistants Job Le Bec and Louis Le Manach. Clay and Robert were members of the Warner crew (306 BG), downed Feb. 16, 1943.

(See story beginning on Page 24.)

--Photo courtesy of Louis Le Manach, Carhaix, France

VA staffs office for our survivors

WASHINGTON (AFNS) (Oct. 15, 2009) -- To strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs programs for survivors of the nation's veterans and servicemembers, VA officials have staffed an office to serve as the their advocate, with a charter that includes creating or modifying programs, benefits and services.

"Taking care of survivors is as essential as taking care of our veterans and military personnel," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "By taking care of survivors, we are honoring a commitment made to our veterans and military members."

The office serves as the primary adviser to the secretary on all issues affecting the survivors and dependents of deceased veterans and servicemembers. It will monitor VA's delivery of benefits to survivors, make appropriate referrals to VA offices for survivors seeking benefits, and explore innovative ways of reaching survivors who are not receiving the VA benefits for which they are eligible.

VA benefits for eligible survivors include educational assistance, home-loan guaranties, health-care insurance, and dependency and indemnity compensation. Known as DIC, this is a monthly payment to the survivors of some people who die on active duty and some seriously disabled veterans.

More than 554,000 spouses, dependents and other survivors of veterans are receiving VA benefits.

The establishment of this office was authorized in the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2008. For more information, call 800-827-1000 or visit the VA Web site.

General McNabb speaks to Daedalians

Gen. Duncan McNabb, an honorary director of AFEES, was speaker at the July meeting of the 26th (Gateway) Flight of Daedalians at Scott AFB, Ill.

Some 65 members and guests were present.

General McNabb recognized five WWII airmen who were in attendance and emphasized the importance of their contribution, as well as that of later generations.

Daedalians pass a legacy of excellence in aviation, character, and values from generation to generation, he said.

The legacy is left by those who've gone before and paid the ultimate sacrifice for the country.

General McNabb compared the current effort in Afghanistan to the Berlin Airlift, again bringing the generations in the room together with a common mission.

Congress gets another chance to salute AFEES

By MICHAEL HAYES

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Rep. DeFazio has worked with Congressman Cliff Stearns of Florida to introduce a bill to honor members of AFEES and other personnel who have evaded or escaped enemy control.

Congressman Cliff Stearns had introduced a similar bill in the 103rd-105th Congress. This time around he worked with our office in putting together the bill, making it the bipartisan DeFazio/Stearns Resolution.

The DeFazio/Stearns resolution to honor downed aviators who subsequently evaded or escaped from enemy capture, accomplishes two things.

First, it states that the House of Representatives recognizes the meritorious accomplishment of Air Force Escapees (referred to in the bill as "aviators in the United States Armed Forces who were shot down over, or otherwise forced to land in hostile territory yet evaded enemy capture or were captured but subsequently escaped").

Second, it states that Secretaries of the military departments should consider these aviators for appropriate recognition within their branch of the Armed Forces.

Here is a list of our cosponsors thus far, including a short list of those on the Personnel subcommittee:

Cliff Stearns (R-FL), Susan Davis (D-CA.) -she is the personnel subcommittee chair, Eric Massa (D-NY), Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Jim Marshall (D-GA), Madeline Bordallo (Guam), Doug Lamborn (R-CO), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Robert Brady (D-PA), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), John Boccieri (D-OH), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Sam Farr (D-CA), Bob Filner (D-CA), Norm Dicks (D-WA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the meritorious service performed by aviators in the United States Armed Forces who were shot down over, or otherwise forced to land in, hostile territory yet evaded enemy capture or were captured but subsequently escaped.

Whereas aviators in the Armed Forces, including pilots, navigators, bombardiers, weapons control officers, and other aircraft crew members, have served the United States with great courage and distinction in every major conflict during the 20th and 21st centuries;

Whereas thousands of aviators in the Armed Forces have been forced down in hostile territory while performing their missions, either as a result of being shot down or because of mechanical problems with their aircraft;

Whereas many of these aviators overcame long odds and great hardships to return to their units and resume their service to the United States;

Whereas these aviators faced the added responsibility of maintaining the secrecy of their escape and evasion methods in order to protect the lives of people who assisted them and other aviators;

Whereas the need to maintain secrecy initially prevented these aviators from being recognized for their meritorious service in avoiding capture or in escaping from captivity; and

Whereas the Armed Forces still have not recognized these aviators for their meritorious accomplishment of avoiding capture or escaping from captivity: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) aviators in the United States Armed Forces
4 who were shot down over, or otherwise forced to
5 land in, hostile territory yet evaded enemy capture
6 or were captured but subsequently escaped to return
7 to their units and resume their service to the United
8 States should be recognized for their extraordinary
9 service; and

1 (2) the Secretaries of the military departments
2 should consider these aviators for appropriate rec-
3 ognition within their branch of the Armed Forces.

TED WAS HIDDEN 'TIL GERMANS LEFT...***A story of evasion and liberation!***

**By Tadeusz Skowronek, Lt., Army
Air Corps, E&E # 2486**

It was chilly and dark when I was awakened at about 4 in the morning on Aug. 25, 1944. I wasn't scheduled to fly that day, but another pilot couldn't make the mission and I was chosen to take his place.

The rest of my squadron was already taking off as I ran to my plane.

I was flying with the 354th Fighter Group, 355th Fighter Squadron from field A-2, near Cricqueville, France, close to Omaha Beach.

We were called the "Pioneer Mustangs."

After taking off in a P-51B, I played catch-up with the squadron. I finally caught them and was assigned wingman to element leader. As we approached the mission point my element leader aborted, leaving me alone.

Someone called in "Bogies" and the battle was on. I tried to stay with the balance of my flight but they were pulling away from me in the melee of the battle.

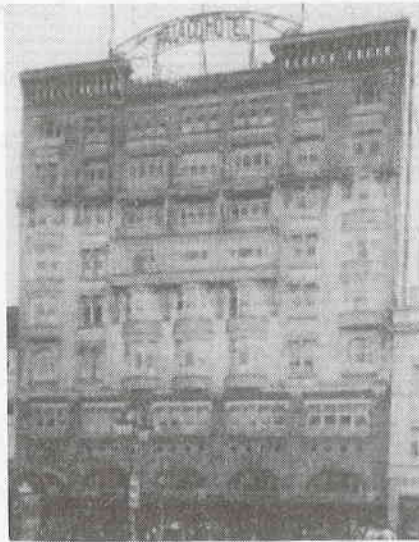
An FW-190 flew past me and I pursued it with both of us climbing towards the clouds.

I fired my guns and saw strikes on the FW-190. He dove for lower clouds with me still firing, and I could see strikes in him until he disappeared into the clouds.

As I turned away an explosion at my left wing flipped my plane into a dive.

The ground came up at me and I prepared to bail out, pulling back my canopy and releasing my seat belt. I tried the stick and the plane responded so I closed my canopy, fastened my seat belt and turned to a southwest heading, which was the closest point of the American front line.

I called my flight and told them of my trouble and got back a "Good luck!"



TED (Tadeuz) SKOWRONEK

After a short time the plane started losing altitude because I couldn't turn the prop pitch down and the propeller was running wild.

Flying over a large forest, I picked a field to land in and decided to come in wheels up.

The landing was great and I got out of the plane, threw two fire grenades into the cockpit, placed my chute on the wing and ran toward the trees.

I walked a few hundred yards till I heard barking dogs. I was in a swamp so I got into the bulrushes and lay on my back with only my nose and mouth exposed out of the water.

After I calmed down from the excitement of the landing, I got out of the swamp and started walking till I saw a farm. I found my way into a barn, went inside, lay down in the hay loft and fell asleep.

When I awoke, it was dark and chilly. I started out across a field that turned out to be a cabbage field where every step on the leaves sounded like fireworks.

Coming upon a railroad track I crawled across on my belly and continued across a rolling pasture with trees scattered around it.

When I settled down, I continued up the hill and came to a village. A

street ran in the direction I wanted to go in so I continued down the road. Shortly, I saw two figures about a block away coming in my direction so I turned left and left the town for the forest.

I came upon some thick bushes and decided to rest. The moon came out so I checked my escape kit.

It had two linen maps of the French country each about three feet square, two tiny compasses, fishing tackle, civilian pictures, a package of Charms, and a signaling mirror. Putting the two maps under my shirt for warmth, I fell asleep.

I awakened to the sound of wood being chopped. I approached and saw a man, so I attempted to communicate with him but it seemed foolish so I went back to the bushes and fell asleep.

Awakening, I heard more chopping and approached the same man. He looked up and said, "Moment, moment." and motioned to a house 500 feet away. He left and returned with a young lady who could speak English.

She told me to follow her and we went to the house and entered. They fed me eggs; toast and a glass of wine, gave me some blue hobby jeans and a shirt and took my clothes.

The young lady, who was a teacher, and I got on bicycles and took off toward a nearby town.

As we peddled toward the town that I was to stay in, we came upon a small stone bridge that crossed a creek. Sitting on the bridge were two German soldiers with rifles.

As we rode across the bridge, the soldiers made some comments in German to the young lady who was escorting me. I was absolutely petrified with fear, but she calmly answered them, and we continued on our way!

MET A P-38 PILOT

When we got to the town we

stopped at a house where I met a P-38 pilot who was in bed with many wounds from shrapnel. We continued on to another home, stopping behind the rear fence.

My teacher friend told me to stay down as she had to check if it was safe to come in. She came out and said, "Hurry!" and we ran inside where I went up to a second floor bedroom.

Two young girls and their parents lived there. The girls, Jacqueline and Jeannette Dumarquez, spoke some English and they said I must be very quiet as two young German soldiers who were clerks in the army lived downstairs. I was in Frieres-Faillouel (Aisne) France, they told me.

I stayed in the room for a week; eating, sleeping, using a bucket for a toilet, and watching German trucks moving towards the front lines and coming back carrying wounded.

Finally one day the family sent me into the attic and told me to lie between the joists because the Germans were retreating and the family feared that the Germans would commandeer the house.

GERMANS SAID 'GOODBYE'

Later the two German clerks from downstairs came up to the top of the stairs to say goodbye to the family and thank them, saying also that they were sorry for the war.

They left the house and later that night the girls took me to the nearby forest where there were Frenchmen, British flight crews, and American crewmen, totaling about 25 men, living in trenches.

Women brought us food in baskets. I watched our P-47s dive bombing and strafing over our heads.

A week passed and the women

who had been bringing us food told us that the Germans were all gone.

We walked out of the forest and onto a road. Coming around a curve in the road about a quarter of a mile from us was an American Jeep with a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on it.

More troops followed and stopped by us.

We were **LIBERATED!**

*(Edited by Gavin Poole
and Paul Cornell 2009)*



Col. Mac Isaac, USAF, Retired



The Francois Dumarques family hid Ted Showronek (with the white scarf) in their home northeast of Paris. Their daughters were Jacqueline (20) and Jeannette (18). German soldiers were billeted on the first floor in the same house while Ted was hidden on the second floor. The home was in Frieres Failouel, Aisne.

--Picture taken September 1944

Col. Richard (Steve) Mac Isaac, a director of AFEES and a familiar figure in the hospitality room at AFEES annual reunions, entered the Air Force after graduating from the AF Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo., in 1970.

He began his career as a pilot with the 18th Special Operations Squadron and flew 171 combat missions over Laos, Cambodia, and North and South Vietnam.

He has served as squadron commander, operations officer, systems program manager, flight test director, director of operations, joint command air liaison and joint command deputy air component commander.

He is rated as a Command Pilot with 4,800 flight hours.

He has flown the AC-119K, the C-5A and B.

*Thanks, Mac, for all you have
done for our country
and for AFEES!*

-FOLDED WINGS-

E&E#2964 Robert W. Harrington died on Oct. 9, 2009. He was B-24 pilot with the 466th Bomb Group's 787th Bomb Squadron of the 8th Air Force. On Aug. 15, 1944 he flew in place of a pilot who had not returned from London. He didn't know the names of anyone manning the plane. After leaving the target, German fighters shot out engine #4 and damaged the rudder controls, leaving Bob with no choice but to hit the bailout button. After parachuting, Robert landed in Holland and made contact with the Dutch Resistance. He was with them for eight months. During this time one of the Dutchmen insisted on trading booze and meat for Robert's A-11 Army Air Force watch. Bob told him the watch could get him in trouble and not to show it to anyone. Three days later the Dutchman was executed by a German firing squad. Robert was finally liberated by 2nd Canadian Army.

E&E#405 Louis E. DelGuidice died Nov. 12, 2009. Louie was a B-24 radio operator with the 8th Army Air Force's 328th Bomb Squadron of the 93rd Bomb Group. On Jan. 7, 1944, his 10th combat mission, the 93rd was bombing the Krupp factories in Mannheim, Germany. While returning from there, his B-24 "On The Ball" was heavily damaged by an attacking ME-109. Louis and six crewmembers bailed out over Brou, France; the other three were killed in the attack. On the ground the Germans captured two men. The French aided him and the other four. Carl Hite and Louis were hid by the Milliroux family in Juvisy et Siene. Eventually the Burgundy Escape Line moved them to the base of the Pyrenees where they joined up with two more crewmates and ten Europeans, and then crossed the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. In Spain Carl and Louis were imprisoned for a couple weeks before they were turned over to Allied Forces. Louis, his wife Alberta and daughter Sandy Comstock were faithful AFEES reunion attendees. He had made two trips back to France to meet with his Helpers and was very appreciative of the French who had helped his crew.

E&E#236 Clarence W. Strandberg passed away on Sept. 23, 2009. He served as radio operator on a B-24 assigned to the 68th Bomb Squadron of the 44th Bomb Group. During the summer of 1943, the 44th Bomb Group was temporarily with the 9th Army Air Force stationed in North Africa. While there, he was always hungry and was quoted as saying even, "Sand On A Shingle" tasted good. On Aug. 16, 1943 after bombing Foggia, Italy, his plane came under enemy fighter attack. Three men were killed and seven bailed out over Italy. He was wounded in his right leg and was captured and became a POW at Sulmona, Italy. On Sept. 12, 1943 he escaped and lived in the hills with the help of Italian farm people until he made contact with the Allies. After hospitalization he returned to the United States on Dec. 26, 1943. He was one of the first POWs to escape and return home.

E&E#1372 Herbert Brill left the world on April 17, 2009. Herb was a B-17 navigator with the 92nd Bomb Group of the 8th Army Air Force. On Dec. 31, 1943 his plane made a forced landing in southwestern France. Herb and the pilot Coleman Goldstein walked 80kms and then made contact with the French Resistance thru Roland Mapas. There was fear that the Americans were German spies because of Herb's blue eyes and the fact that the Americans refused to drink wine. For nine months Herbert helped the Underground commit sabotage against the Germans. In 2005 he was awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest honor. He was a former AFEES director and along with his wife was instrumental in representing AFEES in France. They also attended many reunions.

Holiday message from Gwen Holt

Dear AFEES Friends:

Hope you are all well, on the run up to Christmas. It is turning cold here in the U.K. but it is nice to see the trees changing colour for winter. Thank you for sending me the AFEES newspaper, I enjoy it.

This time last year I had a major heart opp. I am recovering from that. Regretably, the breast cancer I had two years ago, has spread to my liver and bones, but I am ok, and still get out and about.

Next year in April I am looking forward to having my first great grandchild.

Just want to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and New Year.

Lots of love, Gwen Holt.

(Note: Gwen can be contacted at:

26 Shorehan Drive, Penketh
Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2HY
U.K.)

'Only One Returned'

About a year ago Kay Christenson Janiszewski submitted an article about a book she wrote entitled *Only One Returned*. It encompassed her father's World War II experience. Due to the editor's goof, Kay's website failed to show up in the issue and the result was that she could not be contacted.

Here is an update.

By Kay Christenson Janiszewski

Lt. Richard Christenson (E&E 356) was a B-17 pilot, flying with the 92nd Group from Alconbury. It was on his eighth mission on Sept. 6, 1943, that he had to land his disabled *Rosie Redskin* in a farmer's field near Versailles, France.

Then began four and half months of escape and evasion until he finally climbed the Pyrenees and reached Spain and home. It also is a story of what the whole family experienced during pilot training and living on the road with a baby.

Kay had a very successful first printing and is now in her second printing. She submits some favorable comments from readers.

"The day it came in the mail, I sat down and began to read it, and did not put it down until I was finished."

"A story is more than just words; it has an existence of its own, a soul and presence that must be experienced and felt, as did yours."

"I was reading slowly because I didn't want it to end."

"Anytime you can reduce a tough guy like me to tears, you hit the mark."

"From the grandson of one of the Resistance helpers -- Our daddies and granddaddies were fighting for freedom -- one with a giant flying machine, the other by rescuing American pilots. This is a very sensitive work you did, and you did it well."

Kay can be contacted at 2604 Clarion Court, Apt. 302, Odenton MD 21113; her website is onlyonereturned.com

Please send roster changes to Richard Shandor!

AFEES membership dues are \$20 per year; \$50 for three years.

Changes of address a/o telephone # and checks (payable to AFEES) should be sent to

Richard Shandor, PO Box 254, Cresson PA 16630-0254;

Phone: 814-886-2735; <rshandor@hotmail.com>

Name _____ Amount enclosed _____

Street address or other _____

City and State _____ 9 digit zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____ at _____

Related to Evader? Yes ___ No ___ Relationship _____ Evader's name _____

Are you a Veteran? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, what Branch _____ Years _____

Prefer to receive *Communications* electronically -- Yes ___ No ___

Other comments _____

The editor has the last word

By **LARRY GRAUERHOLZ**
<afees44@hotmail.com>

WICHITA FALLS, Tex. -- In the center section of this issue, you will find the skinny on the 2010 AFEES reunion, slated May 6-9 in Colo. Springs.

For you Early Birds, there is a reunion reservation form on Page 17. But Houston, we have a small problem.

Reunion Coordinator Lynn David is still dealing with the bus transportation problem and prices for visits to the AF Academy are not yet fixed.

So, if you use the form in this issue, the overall price will be \$111.10. Any adjustment will be handled at registration time at the Crowne Plaza.

Tom Danaher, WWII Marine pilot who served in the Pacific, is known around Wichita Falls as Mister Aviation.

Now, Tom, who has delivered crop dusters all over the globe for Air Tractor Co., is flying the Curtiss Jenny, a biplane similar to those used as trainers in World War I at Call Field in Wichita Falls. The other day, he gave Brig. Gen. O.G. Mannon of Sheppard AFB, a ride in the Jenny at the local Military History Museum.

Tom is a longtime friend and neighbor of ours and has his own collection of souvenirs gathered from around the world. I call it the Bowman Museum, named after our rural community.

Never give up! Evaders felt ignored when our U.S. Congress gave recognition to the POWs, the Tuskegee Airmen and the Womens Air Force Service Pilots.



Now, Congressmen Peter DeFazio of Oregon and Cliff Stearns of Florida have introduced House Resolution 925 to honor those who fulfilled their military duty by evading capture after being downed in enemy territory.

The story is on Page 27. Let me suggest that if you are a constituent of a member of the Personnel Subcommittee listed, you let him or her know how you feel about the matter.

Many times, it is a matter of how much support an issue gains.

AFEES Superfriend Steve Mac Isaac was keynote speaker at the 2009 MIA/POW Memorial Day observance at Sheppard AFB here last Sept. 18.

He told the airmen and veterans present that "Nobody, nobody does what we do. We will not leave a soldier behind on the battlefield, and we will spend great national resources to recover our MIAs and POWs. Our nation puts a premium on our service members and that is a sacred honor."

The next generation refueling tanker issue is still on the grill. The debate is between Boeing and Airbus, which is the best plane for the buck?

The Air Force will take delivery

of 15 tankers a year beginning in 2015.

A Belgian public television and radio channel is producing a new tv program, "Publick Geheim." One episode tells the story of the escape line between Holland and Belgium in WW2. They have been looking for an evader who escaped through the caves of the St. Pieters Mountain.

If you can help, contact:
<Jan.BRUYNDONCKX@VTY.BE>

THE OL' FARMER SAYS:
"If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try ordering somebody else's dog around."

I like this one:

Little Johnny and family were having Thanksgiving dinner at Grandma's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When little Johnny received his plate, he started eating right away. His mother said, "Johnny, wait until we say our prayer."

"I don't have to," the boy replied. "Of course you do," his mother insisted. "We say a prayer at our house."

"That's our house," Johnny explained. "But this is Grandma's house and she knows how to cook."

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