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SURPRISE GIFT CAPS OFF JOHN'S REUNION

by Jerri Donohue

For evader John Nelson, an unexpected gift "capped off" the 2013 reunion. Margaret "Margy" Fricke presented the Tampa resident with a vintage AFEES hat that had belonged to her late father, long time AFEES member Charles Carlson.

A photo of John proudly holding the cap, which he had taken home and festooned with military pins, appeared in the *Tampa Bay Times* along with an article about the AFEES reunion.

During the annual banquet, Margy and other tablemates prodded John to relate some of his adventures as an aviator.

The fighter pilot was shot down in Yugoslavia in September 1944 while strafing a column of retreating Germans. John injured a leg when he crash-landed his Mustang, but he quickly joined the rush of fleeing refugees until he could slip into woods on the mountainside.



In pre-mission briefings, John had learned the Chetniks killed Allied airmen. His experience proved otherwise. Suffering from thirst, and hobbling on his swollen, throbbing leg, he approached a farm family in the middle of the night. They fed him and treated his injury. Before long, Chetnik soldiers arrived and hid the American elsewhere. Soon John was traveling with other evaders - sometimes on horse back - to an evacuation point. A few times he saw "a gray-haired old man on a white horse" who turned out to be General Draza Mihailovich, the Serbian leader.

Yugoslavia was mired in civil war, and although the pilot had dodged the

Nazis, he was lucky to survive a nightmarish shelling by Tito's partisans. On another occasion, the Chetniks taunted distant German soldiers by firing their guns in the air. The Serbs realized they were safely out of range.

After several weeks, John finally reached the makeshift airfield in Pranjani. He was picked up by a C-47 during the Halyard Mission. Like most other evacuees, he gave his shoes to the impoverished Serbs.

John completed his missions, and then his adventures continued Stateside. At Muroc Air Force Base (later named Edwards AFB), he chatted with Howard Hughes as Hughes tinkered with an experimental plane. Apparently the entrepreneur respected John for being a test pilot. From the beach, John watched Hughes fly the *Spruce Goose* just four or five feet above the water. The evader witnessed another bit of aviation history when Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier.

During the Korean War, John piloted a night fighter that suffered a serious mechanical failure during a thunderstorm. The radar man used his explosive seat to eject. John's canopy would not open, however. Trapped in the aircraft, he frantically beat his head against the canopy until it gave way. Reaching solid ground in friendly territory, John waited for daylight before approaching yet another farm house - this time on the other side of the globe. South Korean soldiers took him back to base.

A less harrowing adventure occurred soon after that. The Air Force assigned John to escort Marilyn Monroe

when she came to Pusan to entertain the troops.

"She was a pretty good-looking woman," John recalled. "But it was a long way from a date."

For more about John's evasion experience, and the 2013 reunion, read William Lesveque's article at:

www.tampabay.com/news/military/evaders-reunion-comes-to-tampa/2120449

FRENCH HELPERS ON-LINE

"The complete list of French helpers is now available online," wrote Bruce Bolinger. This list can be accessed by going to Bruce's website wwii-netherlands-escape-lines.com/.

Officially labeled as "Register of Helpers, IS9 (Awards Bureau) Paris," it is the official index to French helpers as compiled by Allied Military Intelligence after the Liberation.

It includes not only the name of the helper but also the names of other members of his or her family, occupation, address, monetary help from the Allies, award grade, and comments. John Howes at The National Archives at Kew, London photographed the list last year.

The list of French helpers joins the lists of Dutch, Belgian, and Luxembourg helpers that are already available on the website.

REUNION 2014 – Charleston, SC

by Lynn David

The Crowne Plaza Charleston will be hosting our May 7-11, 2014 reunion. The hotel opened in April 2009 and looks and feels very new. The hotel has received many awards for superior customer service.

Our room rate will be \$119.18 per night for one king or two doubles, which includes all taxes and free breakfast for two people per room. The room rate is also available three days before and after the reunion.

They have a wonderful breakfast buffet, which includes the ability to order eggs cooked any way you like them. The other great features of the hotel are:

- Free Wi-Fi in the rooms and throughout the hotel
- Totally nonsmoking
- Very nice pool and cabana area
- Free parking
- Free airport shuttle (8-10 minutes) (Taxi cost \$20)
- Shuttle Downtown (\$15 roundtrip)
- Excellent Business Center with two work stations
- Good exercise room
- Complimentary *USA Today* Newspaper in the Lobby
- Free shuttle to any location within 3 miles of the hotel
- Refrigerators will be available at no additional cost, but must be requested at the time your reservation is made

We were able to hold the cost for the Thursday Welcome Dinner at \$28 and the cost for the Saturday Banquet to \$37.

We hope the reasonable rates and many free items will encourage wonderful attendance at the reunion. Please call me with any questions at (314) 422-1567.

Please call me or send me an email at ldavid@airforceescape.com as soon as possible so I will know if you plan to attend the reunion. Thank you!

AFEES 2014 REUNION RESERVATION FORM
Wednesday-Sunday, May 7-11, 2014
Crowne Plaza Charleston, North Charleston, South Carolina

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 Richard P. Shandor, P.O. Box 254, Cresson, PA 16630

HELPERS ONLY: Send both **Hotel Reservation Form** and **Reunion Reservation Form** to:
AFEES, c/o Richard P. Shandor, P.O. Box 254, Cresson, PA 16630

Please Indicate Your Choice of Events

_____	REUNION REGISTRATION FEE	@ \$25	\$ _____
_____	5/7/14 Wed 4:00-8:30pm Barhopping, Shopping, Sunset Tour	@ \$10*	\$ _____
_____	5/8/14 Thu 8:00am-12noon Fort Sumter Tour	@ \$35*	\$ _____
_____	5/8/14 Thu 6:00-8:00pm DINNER		
_____	Vegetarian	@ \$28	\$ _____
_____	Chicken	@ \$28	\$ _____
_____	5/9/14 Fri Dinner at T-Bonz Grill—buy your own meal	@ \$10*	\$ _____
_____	5/10/14 Sat 12noon-4:00pm LUNCH & tour at USS Yorktown	@ \$42*	\$ _____
_____	5/10/14 Sat 6:00-8:00pm BANQUET		
_____	Beef	@ \$37	\$ _____
_____	Chicken	@ \$37	\$ _____
_____	Fish	@ \$37	\$ _____
_____	Vegetarian	@ \$37	\$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

** includes \$10 transportation fee*

List names as you wish them to appear on your badge

Name (please print) _____

Service unit _____

Spouse's name _____

Guest's name _____

Street address _____

City, State, zip _____

Arrival method: plane _____ car _____ other _____ arrival date _____

Important Emergency contact information:

Emergency contact name _____ Telephone number _____

Any Special Needs: _____

50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ACTIVITIES!

by Mary Shier

Welcome to the activities of our 50th anniversary reunion! Charleston has a rich and diversified history. While you are here you may venture into the history of the Civil War, visit one of the many beautiful plantations that are open to the public, take a horse drawn carriage ride, visit historic churches, partake in the delicious fresh seafood (*Lynn David highly recommends you try the she-crab soup at Hank's Seafood Restaurant at 82 Queen St*), or even shop at the outlet mall across the street. With all the activities there are to do, I have selected just one activity per day that will last approximately four hours. I believe these activities are well worth the time and money.

A side note: During the last few years of activity planning, I neglected to add a transportation cost to our tickets—which unfortunately added to our deficit. This year a transportation charge of \$10.00 has been added to each ticket. I hope you understand why this cost has been added and that it won't prevent you from enjoying these great activities.

WEDNESDAY

BARHOPPING, SHOPPING AND SUNSET

Charleston is very unique old town. We will leave our hotel and head downtown. We'll park near the waterfront park where some of you may want to enjoy a libation or two. We'll provide a list of recommended drinking establishments that you might like to try. Other adventurers may want to do some shopping! Afterwards we'll rendezvous on the rooftop of the Vendue Inn to watch the sun set over the harbor. Dinner will be on your own.

THURSDAY

VISIT FT. SUMTER

Come and see where the first shot of the Civil War was fired. We'll take a ferry from the maritime museum on the harbor. After a half-hour ride, we will be greeted by a park service agent and have our own private tour (*thank Lynn David's brother, Jim, for the personal touch!*)

FRIDAY

MILITARY DAY: Details will be forthcoming. Stay tuned!

FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER at T-BONZ GILL & GRILL

Prices range from \$8.95-18.95 and there is a wide selection of beer and wine.

50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ACTIVITIES continued SATURDAY

VISIT THE U.S.S. YORKTOWN (www.patriotspoint.org)

Our group knows a lot about WWII Air Corps planes so I thought you might enjoy seeing an actual WWII aircraft carrier "up close and personal." I had the pleasure of visiting this fantastic ship trying to visualize what it would have been like during the war. We will eat lunch on board in the officer's mess using the same trays they used during the war. After lunch, we'll begin our stroll through the moving and informative hall of the Medal of Honor recipients. Then, we'll head to the flight deck to see the navy craft displayed. I think all of you will enjoy this look into our navy history.

** please note: There is an elevator to board the ship; however there are steps that must be taken to go up on deck.*

SUNDAY (THESE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT PART OF THE REUNION)

Kayaking or Canoeing with Nature Adventures Outfitters

www.kayakcharlestonsc.com

This group is the most highly rated one in the area. The 2pm departure time is right in the middle of low tide and high tide so we would get a better idea of the estuarial life that abounds in the salt marshes. This area is well known for sightings of alligators, manatees and dolphins, along with numerous species of shorebirds. It is also a breeding ground for many birds. We would have a choice of having a guided tour or go out on our own with a map. Would anyone like to join me? COST: \$39.00. Call Mary Shier at (810) 441-7932 if you are interested!

Visiting a Plantation

If enough people want to see a plantation I'd be willing to make the arrangements. Two highly recommended plantations are Magnolia Plantation and Gardens www.magnoliaplantation.com and Drayton Hall www.draytonhall.org. Pricing is separate for each section of the plantation. Call Mary Shier at (810) 441-7932 if you are interested.



TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

AFEES membership dues: \$25 per calendar year

(+ an additional \$15 for a total of \$40--to cover postage—if you would like to continue to receive a hard copy of the newsletter mailed to you)

\$100 Lifetime Membership for Evaders only

Address, phone number, or email changes and checks (**made payable to "AFEES"**) should be sent to:
Rich Shandor, PO Box 254, Cresson, PA 16630-2129. Phone (814) 886-2735 or email
rshandor@hotmail.com.

Name _____ Amount enclosed _____

Address _____

City and State _____ 9 digit zip code _____ - _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Emergency Contact Person and phone number

Are you an Evader? YES NO

Related to an Evader? YES NO

Relationship _____

Evader's name _____

Evader's Military unit _____

Are you a Veteran? YES NO If yes, what Military Branch _____

Calendar Date of Military Service _____

Do you wish to receive the email AFEES newsletter in place of the US Mail copy? YES NO

Other comments or reasons for joining:

Why not take a moment while making your year-end charitable contributions and consider sending an additional gift to AFEES? Thank you!

A REMARKABLE MEETING OF TWO FORMER FOES

by Heather Sherk

In 1942, Ray Sherk* was an RCAF Spitfire pilot with the 601 Squadron in the Western Desert (Egypt and Libya). During a long-range operation far behind the El Alamein front lines in late September, Ray encountered a German JU52 and shot it down in flames assuming there were no survivors.

However, in May 2010 William Norman, a British journalist, attended a veteran's reunion in Germany and met Horst Wilborn—the survivor and captain of the JU52 that Ray shot down. Horst asked if Bill could locate the spitfire. Bill was able to connect with Ray through the St. Catharine's Flying Club in Ontario.

In June 2013, Ray and I met Horst and his two brothers in Winnipeg, Manitoba (the Wilborn brothers were visiting Canada to celebrate a fourth brother's 90th birthday). The two old adversaries had much to talk about and enjoyed each other's company—turns out they are about the same age and had similar post-war careers.

Thanks to Bill's research, Ray and I now have a close and friendly relationship with Horst and his family. A remarkable meeting of two former foes!

* Ray Sherk is the Canadian representative to AFEES. To learn more about his escape and evasion in occupied France, please [click here](#).



Horst Wilborn and Ray Sherk



Horst, another pilot friend, and Ray

"OUR BAY BEE" DEDICATION CEREMONY

by Jane Binnebose

On Sept 17, 2013, family and friends of the crewmembers of the *Our Bay Bee* gathered in Pooler, GA at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the downing of this B-17 over Mol, Belgium. A plaque dedication and a memorial service were held in the Chapel on the Museum

grounds. The plane's 10 crewmembers all escaped the plane. Three of them evaded—2nd Lt. Martin Minnich, 2nd Lt. Henry (Hank) Sarnow, and S/Sgt John White. Anne Brusselmans rescued Minnich and Sarnow. Seven crew members were captured by the Germans and spent the balance of the war as POWs: S/Sgt William Binnebose Jr, 1st Lt. Walter Baker, 1st Lt. Cedric Nussbaum, T/Sgt Alvin Forney, T/Sgt Walter McDermott, S/Sgt James Alderman, and S/Sgt Albert Bergeron.

red roses for the POWs. Piper David Crompton performed *Amazing Grace* and *America the Beautiful*.



Plaques on the Memorial Wall, Bill and Jane and Bill Binnebose

Three generations of family members of 2nd Lt Sarnow, S/Sgt White, and S/Sgt Binnebose, and Dr. Vivian Rogers-Price, Director of Research at the Museum, participated in a very moving dedication and memorial service coordinated by William Binnebose III. Grandsons Jacob White and William Binnebose IV presented a floral arrangement of 10 roses commemorating the crew—three white roses for the evaders and seven



Plaques on the Memorial Wall, Robbie (Roberta Sarnow) and Ed Strom

Yvonne Brusselmans-Daley graciously provided a Belgian flag for display with the American flag. Yvonne introduced guest speaker Lt/Gen 'Buck' Shuler, CEO of the museum, and gave a guided tour of the museum highlighted by an enlightening and moving presentation at the "Safe House." The *Our Bay Bee* Kids wish to thank Lt/Gen Shuler, Dr. Rogers-Price, Yvonne Brusselmans-Daley, and the staff of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force for their gracious guidance and assistance in the preparation of this lovely tribute.

70th ANNIVERSARY OF FRETEVAL FOREST CAMPS

by Edouard Renière

On June 28-29, 2014, the towns of Villebout and Bellande will be honoring the 70th anniversary of the camps in the Fréteval Forest. More than a hundred Allied servicemen were hidden in these camps while awaiting liberation. The Mayor of Villebout and other local dignitaries extend an invitation to anyone who was hidden in the camps and/or their families, to attend this important event.

If anyone has information regarding American evaders who were either hidden in the Fréteval Forest camps or helped by the Marathon / Sherwood organization, please contact me, Edouard Renière, via email at riiren.belsuo@skynet.be. *Thank you!*

DE BILT HOLLAND MEMORIAL

by Co de Swart

On October 20th, as for the past decade, flowers were laid at the base of this monument in De Bilt, Holland to honor the five airmen who were killed when their B-17 (42-3439) crashed. In addition to three other crewmates, Lt. Donald O. Mills (E&E#279) parachuted out of the plane before the crash.

He successfully evaded capture by walking many miles until he reached Belgium. He stayed in the village of Hechtel with Albert Sols and his family for six days while his blistered feet

healed. Lt. Mills then travelled through Belgium and France with the help of the Comet organization.

Lt. Mills made the crossing over the Pyrenees with two RAF and one RCAF evader (F/O Johnson, S/L C.W. Passey, and F/O Roberts Clements) reaching Gibraltar, Spain on December 17th and returning to England on December 20, 1943.



Please remember to renew your AFEEES membership. Membership fees pay for the printing and mailing of the newsletter. If you are not an Evader or a Helper, you must be a current dues paying member to receive the newsletter.

Thank you!

RE-PUBLICATION OF *THE LITTLE CYCLONE*

by Rich Shandor

The secrets of the Comet Line are revealed in the republication of *The Little Cyclone*, Airey Neave's long-forgotten book celebrating the bravery of Belgians in the Resistance who rescued Allied airmen from the Nazis. Known to all as 'Dédée', Andrée de Jongh founded and organized the Comet Escape Line, the escape route from Belgium through France to Spain used by hundreds of Allied airmen to escape from Nazi-occupied Europe.

On September 16, 1942 RAF Sergeant Bob Frost landed in a field, buried his parachute, and set off southwest away from the burning wreckage of the plane, navigating via the North Pole Star. As dawn was breaking, he came to a village where the Cross of Lorraine and Morse code for V had been freshly painted on a wall. The symbols were Sgt. Frost's introduction to the Belgian Resistance and its escape route, the Comet Line, which saved more than 800 airmen and soldiers from captivity during World War Two. Five weeks and four days later, after being smuggled through Paris, via Brussels, over the Pyrenees and into Spain, he was flown out of Gibraltar with two others from his downed crew. Within a year, the escape route also returned the plane's navigator, Scottie Brazill, to England.

The Comet Line members numbered more than a thousand across

occupied Belgium, even though the average time between signing up and being caught by Nazi spies was said to be just three months. When captured, members were condemned to death. This was the fate of the escape route's young founder, Andrée (Dedée) de Jongh, who accompanied Sgt. Frost over the Pyrenees. But she managed to survive the concentration camps.

The bravery of Dedée and the members of the Comet Line inspired a book by Airey Neave.

Neave himself had escaped from Colditz and was the co-coordinator of a London-based escape and evasion organization. His book, *Little Cyclone* was republished last month in the wake of growing interest in Belgium in the Comet Line. Today, only a handful of the resistance heroes are still alive to read it.

Elsie Maréchal tends her plants and watches the bullfinches and blue tits flit between the trees from her small cottage in the village of Rixensart, between Brussels and Namur. A clue to her former life lies in her address, Square de la Résistance and the fact that the 88-year-old widow can still recall the clang of heavy keys being dragged along prison bars.

Elsie was 16 when the war began, but became a key member of the resistance movement alongside her English mother, Elsie Bell, and Belgian father Georges. The family sheltered 14 servicemen at their Brussels home. A

chapter in Neave's book is devoted to the Maréchals.

Elsie's parents met when her mother "fell into her father's arms" during a bomb alert in London in the First World War. They married shortly afterwards and moved to Occupied Germany before being ordered back to Belgium in 1929. But the Maréchals insisted on Elsie and her younger brother Bobby speaking English at home.

"The first day of the occupation in 1940, my father woke us very early, shouting 'get up, there is war'," recounts Elsie. "You could hear shooting and see airplanes flying over the guns. The Germans arrived on motorbikes, armed to the teeth. There were hundreds of them, followed by tanks. Then I heard the boots of the marching troops."

With the German invasion, the Marechals fled to Dunkirk to try to escape to Great Britain, but they were brought back to Brussels by Nazi troops. At the end of that year, Elsie's aunt discussed the possibility of joining the Resistance. After running home and asking her parents, the reply from her mother was simple: "Anything for England." "We wanted freedom," Elsie says. "We were brought up to be patriots of England and Belgium. Under the Germans you lost your liberty and weren't allowed to do anything. We wanted to be free. It was very dangerous. If they even heard you listening to the BBC you were sent

directly to the camps. We had to muffle it up, but of course we still listened."

The Maréchals were visited by a member of the Resistance to assess the suitability of their house for hiding escapees. Then Dedée de Jongh knocked on the door. Elsie instantly idolized the 27-year-old. "I found her marvelous. She was very charismatic." The family was asked to shelter one traumatized soldier who claimed to be half Belgian and half Polish, then two Frenchmen. They also housed for seven months a Belgian teacher who had been imprisoned by the Nazis for being a spy and released by mistake.

Elsie would run errands and pass messages for the Resistance all over Brussels, skipping past the soldiers and Gestapo that thronged the streets. When she left school in July 1942, she began working from the Resistance's headquarters on the Rue Ducale--which escaped detection through being a feeding centre for poor children. Soon after her 18th birthday, she was promoted to visit outlying villages to expand the Comet network. Later, it was her job to question young airmen to check if they were spies. As her profile rose, so did the attention of the German intelligence services.

On November 18, 1942, the Nazis struck. Two police officers masquerading as American pilots knocked on the Maréchals' front door. Elsie and her mother were instantly suspicious of them, quizzing them over a lunch of cooked eggplant.

On her mother's instruction, she left to report the surprise arrival to the Resistance's headquarters. She returned home to find the front door ajar. "I walked in and suddenly I got a revolver in my stomach and was pushed against the wall," she says. "One of the false aviators shouted 'the game is up.' He pushed me into the sitting room where eight men in armchairs, their feet on the table, started howling at me. They were violent and told me it was the end of me and my head would come off. The sky fell in." Elsie was taken to the notorious Rue Traversière police station. During interrogations, she was slapped, beaten with belts, and knocked to the ground. But she refused to give away the resistance. She was then sent, along with her parents, to St Gilles Prison. Her brother was also imprisoned, but released after two months.

A year later, on October 20, 1943, Georges Maréchal was executed by firing squad alongside 10 other prisoners. Elsie and her mother were condemned to death and sent on a nightmare journey to Germany. Suffering from ill health, which included Elsie enduring a bout of scarlet fever that caused her hair to fall out and skin to peel off, the pair were herded across a network of camps that research published this month claims stretched to 42,500 institutions.

They ended up in Ravensbrück concentration camp, where tens of thousands of women died. "They didn't

shoot the women," Elsie says. "We were to die of misery, hunger and exhaustion. I felt that we had a horrible devil following us. But when we arrived at Ravensbrück, it was the worst. The first thing I saw was a cart with all the dead piled on it. Their arms and legs hanging out, and mouths and eyes wide open. They reduced us to nothing. We didn't even feel like we had the value of cattle. You worked and you died."

In 1945, with the Russian Army advancing near Ravensbrück, Elsie and her mother were transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. The death rate there was 200 a day. It was here, after spending a night in a gas chamber without the poison being turned on, that they were liberated by the Red Cross and returned to Belgium.

Just a few months after the liberation of Europe, Elsie was beginning to regain weight and come to terms with the trauma of the war. She had started a course in physiotherapy and, alongside her brother and grandparents, was helping nurse her mother back to health. It was then that Sgt. Frost visited Belgium to meet the members of the Comet Line who had helped smuggle him out, and he first came across the young woman who had given so much to the cause. From his home in Sandwich, Kent, the great-grandfather-of-three expresses the debt that he and hundreds of others owe: "We shall never be able to repay them."

It was known as the Comet Line. It was the greatest escape route in the Resistance Movement and in its three years of life it saved over 800 airmen and soldiers from captivity. Andrée de Jongh, dubbed the "Little Cyclone", was the young Belgian girl who created the fastest escape route for stranded soldiers in mainland Europe—from Brussels to Bilbao.

Originally published in 1954, the 2013 republication of *The Little Cyclone: The Girl Who Started The Comet Line* is available through Amazon.com and at other bookstores.

BOOK REVIEW

TAKING FIRE—SAVING CAPTAIN AIKMAN: A STORY OF THE VIETNAM AIR WAR

by Kevin O'Rourke and Joe Peters, 216 pages, \$32.95, published by Casemate, 908 Darby Road, Havertown, PA 19083, www.casematepublishing.com

During the Vietnam War, Americans stranded behind enemy lines received no help from local people. Civilians wielding hoes and axes sometimes attacked downed airmen. Evaders depended on other Americans, especially trained pararescuemen ("PJs"), to help them.

On June 27, 1972, four fliers were forced to eject from two damaged F-4 Phantoms as they returned from a combat mission. The men, who landed about 80 miles west of Hanoi, struggled to steer their parachutes away from villages and fields. Communist soldiers

promptly captured a man hiding in elephant grass as he contacted rescuers by radio. Hearing American aircraft overhead, a second airman also attempted to radio his whereabouts. The enemy immediately found him. (Months later, the two prisoners crossed paths in the notorious Hanoi Hilton. Because most of the men flying that ill-fated mission were strangers, neither POW recognized the other.)

As bullets whizzed by him, a third American managed to reach the hoist line of a hovering helicopter and was spirited to safety.

The fourth man, Captain Lynn Aikman, suffered serious injuries. The pilot had blacked out when he ejected from his jet traveling at 460 mph. His parachute deployed automatically, and Aikman soon found himself on a steep, woody hillside, drifting in and out of consciousness. Because of his broken jaw and dazed state, would-be rescuers barely could understand him when he contacted them for help. Aikman also had broken an elbow and dislocated a knee, and he accidentally stabbed his own hand when he tried to punch a hole in a can of water.

The pilot's fate remained iffy even after Sgt. Chuck McGrath, a PJ, descended on a hoist from a helicopter to find him and arrange his rescue from a steep, narrow ravine. The helicopter ("Jolly Green") that brought McGrath sustained damage and withdrew. Enemy soldiers riddled the second helicopter with bullets. Americans

flying A-1 Skyraiders strafed the area, but Aikman still was shot in the ankle as he ascended to the Jolly Green. A PJ on the helicopter also was shot, underscoring the danger to everyone involved in rescue operations. Aikman spent the next year in hospitals.

The authors quote extensively many of the participants, spotlighting the experiences of pilots who provided protective cover during the rescue as well as PJs. Some of the interviews took place within 10 years of Aikman's rescue, when memories were still fresh. The book concludes with an update on the post-Vietnam lives of the principal players. Numerous photos illustrate the text.

A European friend complains about the tendency of Americans to abbreviate everything or else call it by a nickname. As I read *Taking Fire*, I finally empathized with her confusion. The book is peppered with Air Force jargon and abbreviations (WSO? FAC? Jolly Greens? Sandys?) For readers without a military background, the authors provide a helpful glossary, and I often turned to it.

This well-researched account will appeal to anyone with an interest in the Vietnam War, as well as those of us who appreciate an exciting rescue story. (Jerri Donohue)

"Give me golf clubs, fresh air and a beautiful partner...and you can keep the clubs and the fresh air."

—Jack Benny



FOLDED WINGS

(by Rich Shandor unless otherwise noted)

Sgt. George F. Messick, tail gunner, 15th AAF, 376th Bomb Group, 512th Bomb Squadron, San Pancrazio, Italy: folded his wings on 28 May 2009. On July 2, 1944 his B-24 Liberator experienced mechanical failure over Yugoslavia. After jettisoning the bomb load over Hungary, the crew attempted a return to Italy. As the bomber was not flyable they had to bailout over Yugoslavia.

George evaded capture and, after a few days on the ground, was picked up and sheltered by the Chetniks under Draza Mihailovic. George was rescued in Operation Halyard, the rescue of over 500 airmen.

Sgt. Messick and three crewmembers, John Granger, Patrick Carroll, and Charles Johnstone were on the last plane to leave Pranjani, Yugoslavia on

August 10, 1944. Two other crewmen also evaded but four were captured. George returned to flight duty and finished his tour with a total of 27 missions.

Jeannette Harper Holscher: folded her wings on 2 February 2013. She was married to evader Franz Holscher (15th AAF) for 69 years. Jeannette had attended Mars Hill College and then graduated from the Rocky Mount School of Commerce. She was a long-standing member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Mrs. Holscher had served as President of the Lutheran Church Women, as a Sunday school teacher and on various other church committees. Mrs. Holscher was active within the community where she was a Past President of the Sans Souci Book Club, Past President of the Spade and Trowel Garden Club, member of the Thursday Bridge Club, the Tender Loving Care Luncheon Club, the Schiele Museum and Stowe Botanical Gardens. Most of all, Mrs. Holscher was a homemaker and loving matriarch who took great pride in her family.

E&E#466 T/Sgt. William C. Lessig, flight engineer/top turret gunner, 8th AAF, 379th Bomb Group, 525th Bomb Squadron, Kimbolton, England: folded his wings on 27 July 2009. On 8 February 1944 the 379th Bomb Group's target was an engine component plant at Frankfurt, Germany. A German fighter hit his B-17 #42-29633 at about 1100 hours, before it had reached the target. The bomber had a big hole in its nose, the left horizontal stabilizer was missing, and the oxygen system and number two engine were on fire.

The plane was in a steep dive before the flight crew was able to level it out. Sgt. Lessig bailed out at about 10,000 feet and opened his chute at 1,000 feet. He landed about three kilometers west of a German airfield near Compiègne, France.

He hid his equipment and headed west through a swamp. After he entered a field, he saw three ME 109s and he dove to the ground. He then headed south until about 1700 hours when he hid in some bushes for the evening. He left the next day at dawn and was able to make contact with a Frenchman at about noon. The man asked him if he was an American. When William said yes, the man said good. The man then asked him if he was hungry. Lessig nodded and then the man pointed to four o'clock on his watch and towards the woods behind him. Lessig then hid in the woods.

At 4 PM the Frenchman returned with food and a bandage for Lessig's left foot, which had been hit by shrapnel. Lessig's helper signaled him to wait there until 6 PM.

A different man arrived with civilian clothes at that time and took Lessig to a big barn where he met the first man again. He slept in the hayloft until 2030 hours.

The two men returned with an older woman and a young girl. They took him to a house, where Lt. Dean Tate, his bombardier, had stayed the previous night. His helpers gave Lessig supper there. At 2200 hours the two men led him to a farmhouse where he joined Lt. Tate (E&E#467) and Sgt. Carl Mielke (E&E#465). Mielke had been shot down on the same day.

The three Americans were eventually taken in by the "Shelburne

Line" and sheltered in Paris. Then they were taken to Brittany for departure by water. On the evening of 16 March 1944, they and 21 other airmen gathered at the Maison d'Alphonse and waited to be evacuated. The 24 airmen boarded the British MGB#503 and arrived in England on the morning of March 17th.

The outcome for the rest of his crew had been one killed, five were captured and two more had evaded.

Some of Helpers were: Maurice DuVall, his son, Andre and his grandchildren, Pierre and Rolande; Rene Loiseaux; and Clarissa Goodliver and her sister and two brothers.

Alma D. Lessig: folded her wings on 24 January 2006. Alma was married to William Lessig (E&E#466) for 66 years. They were married before William enlisted in the U. S. Army. For many years she owned and operated an antique business in eastern Pennsylvania. She also had enjoyed cooking and golfing.

Arthur Mattson, (15AF 455 BG), a "life" member of AFEES who attended many reunions, died September 29, 2012. Art enlisted in the army in November 1940. He tested for the Air Corps, and eventually trained as a B-24 gunner. An ear infection prevented Art from shipping out with his original crew—all but one of whom later died in the skies above Europe.

Assigned to a different crew, Art arrived in Italy on May 26, 1944. He participated in missions to Austria, Romania and Hungary before he was shot down on June 9 after bombing Munich.

A frightened Italian teenager stashed Art and another crewman in a wheat field and summoned farmers who gave them food and civilian clothing and

reunited them with two other crewmembers. The Fascists captured three men from Art's crew. According to civilians, they murdered a fourth, Sgt. Lycan, who had been injured in landing.

The underground moved the evaders 15 miles by bicycle and then led them from farm to farm at night until they reached an area populated with partisans. During this exodus, a doctor in Mussolini's army gave them a feast; he was a spy for the underground.

Art initially lived with a partisan unit who put him to work preparing homemade landmines. He also encountered escaped prisoners from the Netherlands, France, Russia, Canada and England.

During a German raid, the men fled, lived off the land and searched for help. At one point their only food consisted of blueberries that gave Art severe diarrhea.

Finally, in the primitive village of Febio, Art and other evaders found lasting shelter with Mrs. Italia Bertini. Some of Art's crew left for other partisan groups, but he and Lt. Paurice, the co-pilot, remained in Febio. As the months passed, Art helped the local folks to shear and butcher sheep, tie and stack rye and wheat and dig potatoes. Everybody was hungry. Art occasionally worked for a farmwoman whose son was a well-fed prisoner of war in the United States.

One day a guide arrived, claiming he would escort the area's evaders and escapees to Allied lines. Over a dozen villagers gathered in the parish rectory to interrogate the guide until they were convinced he was not a spy. The women then gave "Arturo" a sweater made from wool of sheep he had sheared. He

appreciated this gift, especially when he had to hike in sleet and sleep outdoors during the ensuing 4-day trek.

Art and 16 other escaped prisoners and evaders survived an Allied artillery barrage, dodged German patrols and accepted the hospitality of two poor hermits. On October 22, 1944 the group reached a British outpost.

The Brits greeted them with shots of whiskey but the Americans who later picked up Art and Lt. Paurice treated them with suspicion. In Florence, these two evaders were confined to the stockade until their stories could be confirmed. Art and Paurice protested vehemently until they were released whereupon Art shed the lice-infested clothes he had worn for 135 days and donned a new uniform.

Art was born in Montana, but his father owned a farm in Alberta, Canada and Art returned there on Christmas Eve 1944. His family's joy was short-lived. Just two months later, Art's brother died in a military accident while serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force. \(*Jerri Donohue*)

Betty Jo "JoJo" Starks folded her wings on 2 October 2013. She was accidentally born in Toledo, Ohio after her mother slipped in the bathtub while visiting family. JoJo graduated from high school at the age of 15. She graduated from the University of Kentucky, where she was a devoted member of the Alpha Delta Pi Sorority.

She married George Starks in 1948, whom she had met in high school. In 1952 after George returned from the Korean War, they moved to Jacksonville, where he established his dental practice. After moving to Orlando she organized and was

instrumental in founding the Orange County Dental Auxiliary and served as its first president for two years. Later she served as President of the State Dental Auxiliary. She was active as a "Pink Lady" at Orange Memorial Hospital.

In 1964 they moved to Florida's Seminole County. There she taught school at South Seminole Junior High, first as a substitute, then as a full time English teacher and then she started the first Individual Development Study Program in the county, guiding gifted students. She earned teacher of the year at South Seminole Middle School. After retiring she was called back to help expand the program for the whole county as the Dividends Programs. JoJo was involved with several theatrical groups.

Always a rock in times of trouble, she would help anyone that needed it. The first to arrive and the last to leave, she made sure nothing was left undone. The neighborhood first aid lady, she could run a trout line, clean a fish, or kill a giant rattlesnake during the day and dress for a formal affair in the evening. She was a long time member of St Albans Anglican Cathedral. She traveled the country and the world with George, always with graciousness and kindness. She was the quintessential Southern Lady.

E&E#416 Sgt. Russell N. Jevons, Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner, 8th AAF, 381st Bomb Group, 535th Bomb Squadron, Ridgeway, England: folded his wings on 17 February 2012. Sgt. Jevons's third mission was a German airfield in Bordeaux, France on 31 December 1943. His B-17 #42-39910 had sustained damage on the way to target. German fighters had knocked out number

two and number three engines and damaged the hydraulic system.

In an effort to keep up with the bomber formation, the crew salvoed the bomb-load. Despite this, the plane dropped behind the formation and lost altitude. The pilot turned towards Spain and gave the bailout order to his crew.

Russell parachuted out at about 4000 feet. After his landing he walked some distance away and hid his chute in some weeds. When he headed for a lone building, he ran into three Frenchmen.

They told him they were comrades and entered the building with him. It wasn't too long until he was furnished with rubber boots, pants, a coat and a beret. A Capt. Renault took him on bicycle to Toulouse, where two old women sheltered him.

Two days later the Captain took him to meet a man and a girl who drove him to the other side of the city. There a Russian man with a French wife and two children hid him.

On January 9th, he was teamed up with Sgt. Joseph Balesh (POW) and Lt. Glen McCabe (E&E#445) both from his crew. Other group members were Lt. Reuben Eckharpt (E&E#443), Sgt. Arthur Enders (E&E#414), a RAF airman, two Dutch men and six Frenchmen. A man named Gilbert was to guide the group to Spain.

When they reached Lannemezan, France, Sgt. Balesh remained there because he physically could not go any further. The group arrived in Spain on 16 January 1944, where the Americans were put into a Spanish prison. Jevons arrived in Gibraltar on February 23rd.

The fate of his crew had been three evaded and seven had eventually become

POWs. Some of his other Helpers were: an unknown older woman, Andre (?), Francois (?) and Theresa (?).

"THEY NEVER FORGET"

"Tour guides at the American cemetery in Normandy, France, had been telling the story for years: a widow of a World War II airman who, on occasion, still visited her husband's grave. But after weeks of digging through documents and talking with family, Steve Hartman learned Peggy Harris' devotion was only a small part of the story."

Revisit a wonderful story from 2012 about an aviator, a widow, and a town in France where they never forget... Please click here to view a new report on the anniversary of D-Day from CBS Evening News:

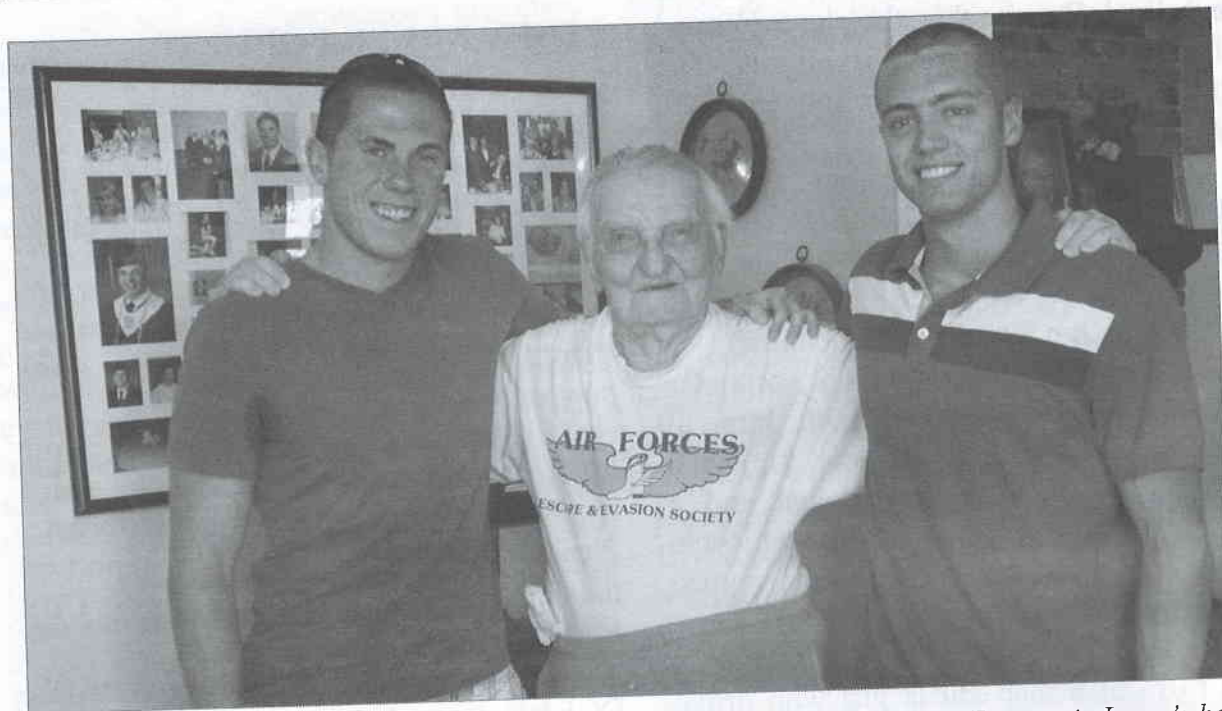
www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_AWe0GW_DCE&feature=youtu.be

My grandfather is a meat and potatoes guy. Once, while getting dinner ready, I asked how he liked his vegetables prepared. He said, "Fed to a cow, so they'll turn into steak."

AFEES Communications is the official journal of the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society. AFEES is a tax-exempt veteran's organization under IRS Code 501 (c) (19). It was founded in 1964. The Society's purpose is to encourage members helped by resistance organizations, or patriotic nationals, to continue existing friendships or renew relationships with those who helped them during their escape or evasion. Eligibility requires that one must have been a U.S.

Airman, must have been forced down behind enemy lines and avoided captivity, or escaped from captivity to return to allied control. In addition to regular membership, other categories of membership are Helper Members and Friend Members.

France. Yannick assures Larry that he has taught his own children the story of the *Lucky Lady* and its crew.



Left to right: 2d Lt Cameron Jones, Larry "Inky" Grauerholz, and 2d Lt Kevin Hanigan in Larry's home in Wichita Falls, TX.

LARRY AND THE LADS

Larry Grauerholz, longtime *AFEES* Communications editor, continues to educate the younger generation about escape and evasion. Two airmen stationed in Wichita Falls are frequent visitors to the Grauerholz home. Larry, who calls them "The Lads," has shared his own evasion adventure with 2d Lt Kevin Hanigan and 2d Lt Cameron Jones.

Larry is not neglecting younger folks on the other side of the ocean, either. He corresponds with Yannick Marchandise, a French *gendarme* whose grandmother aided Larry when he was on the run in German-occupied

"My doctor told me that jogging could add years to my life. He was right, I feel 10 years older already." —Milton Berle

A drill instructor was near the end of his rope—an airman's ineptitude was driving him crazy. Getting in the airman's face, he demanded, "Whoever told you to join the Air Force?!" Snapping to attention the airman proclaimed, "The Navy recruiter, Sir."

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THE PREZ SEZ

by John Katsaros (EE #755)

A review of past attempts to get the US Congress to give recognition to all the living and deceased members of the US Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society, Escapees and Evaders has met with no success.

At the AFEES annual reunion at Tampa, Florida in May 2013, both the Board of Directors, and the Members at their membership meeting, approved, by unanimous vote, to pursue the US Congress for an affirmative vote of AFEES recognition.

It is well noted that this action by the full Membership and Directors, may possibly be a final attempt.

We applaud the U.S. Congress and the President of the United States for authorizing a Congressional Gold Medal and giving recognition to the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPS), the Tuskegee Airmen (Black P-51 Fighter Pilots--Red Tails), Native American "Code Talkers", and American Ex-Prisoners of War.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest and most distinguished award Congress can award to a civilian. Since the American Revolution Congress has commissioned the gold medal as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. It is AFEES time to be so recognized.

Attempts were made to obtain Congressional Recognition in 1985, 1993, and 2003 without success.

Our Past Newsletter Editor Larry "Inky" Grauerholz, in the June 2010 issue of *Communications*, printed a News Release dated March 22, 2010 from Rep. Peter DeFazio 4th District Oregon that the U.S. House approved a Recognition Resolution inspired by Don Fisher of Eugene, Oregon.

I have sent a thank you letter to Representative DeFazio for his past efforts with a request from all the AFEES membership to continue through his important position with recommendations to receive a vote of approval by the US Congress.

Your President has sent letters to our U.S. Senators and Representatives, to General Charles Elwood "Chuck" Yeager (Evader), and to the Boston and Haverhill, Massachusetts Chapters of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

Ken Kooyman, the newly elected Commonwealth of Massachusetts DAV Commander and I met at the Haverhill DAV Chapter #20 and promised to help.

Sgt/Major Mike Ingham USAF (Ret.) Iraq Combat Veteran, the newly elected Haverhill DAV Chapter #20 Commander and the Director of the Haverhill Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and I met, at his invitation, and promised to help.

Sgt. Gerry Boucher US Marines (Ret.) a Viet Nam combat wounded, blind advocate, the Immediate Past Commander of the Haverhill DAV sent me copies of letters to the two newly

elected Massachusetts U.S. Senators Edward J. Markey and Elizabeth Warren and to our US Representative Niki Tsongas.

Colonel Steve Chirigotis USAAF (Ret.) WWII B-24 Bomber Combat Airman and a noted Editor of WWII USAAF books, has been of great assistance.

After speaking with the influential Immediate Past and Present Supreme Presidents of the National and International American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), they promised to place this on their 2013-14 agenda. Follow up letters have been sent to both.

All members of AFEES who have contacted their Senators, Representatives, friends and organizations, please send me copies of your letters and any responses you may have received.

Every AFEES member that is in the process to help our cause, please do likewise. We need your help to succeed. Your participation is paramount!

***A note from your Editors:
Wishing everyone a joyful holiday
season and the very happiest and
healthiest of new years!***

December 2013
"We Will Never Forget"

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AFEES CAPS AND T-SHIRTS (As a courtesy to AFEES members, Mary Shier had the following items printed. Please note this is not an AFEES fundraiser.)

AFEES caps are available in 2 styles: winged boot and parachute (blue caps w/yellow trim). Cost: \$13 plus \$3 shipping.

Mary also has **AFEES t-shirts** featuring the AFEES logo on the left chest and the words "WE WALKED FOR FREEDOM" on the back. Cost: \$15 plus \$5 shipping.

T-SHIRT SIZE: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____

CAP: WINGED BOOT _____ PARACHUTES _____

Questions? Please contact Mary at (810) 441-7932 or via email spwheel357@gmail.com. To order a cap or t-shirt, please fill in the form below and send to: Mary Shier, 267 W. Barnes Lake Rd., Columbiaville, MI, 48421. Please make your check payable to "Mary Shier."

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