

# THE U.S. AIR FORCES ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY FALL 2008 *Communications*

Volume 20, No. 3

WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS 76307-2501

Sept. 11, 2008

## *Jim retrieved his 'Life-Saver'*

By **REV. JAMES (Jim)  
ARMSTRONG**  
Thomasville, Ga.

At the 2008 AFEES reunion in Savannah, a photo was taken of me and my daughter Alice Armstrong of Spartanburg, S.C., showing my brown WWII parachute pack. Stenciled on its cover in bold print is the name ARMSTRONG.

Discovery of the chute 60 years after I discarded it on a Normandy sugar-beet field on Sept. 6, 1943, is a remarkable story!

So here it is.

(1) The first step of discovery involves my co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Robert Stoner, who successfully parachuted some 200 yards from where I landed. He hid his chute and having observed my landing, crossed a stream to find me. But I had already fled in the opposite direction and hidden myself in the woods..

Seeing my chute on the ground, he gathered it up in his arms, crossed back over the stream and hid it with his chute.

(2) The second step was the appearance of a Frenchman who asked Stoner for his parachute and received mine also. Later in the day Stoner joined with my bombardier, 2nd Lt. Wilbert Yee, and top turret gunner, Sgt. Bruno Edmans.



*Alice Armstrong of Spartanburg, S.C., and her father, Life Member James Armstrong of Thomasville, Ga. showed Jim's pilot chute and chute pack at the 2008 AFEES Reunion in Savannah.*

*Sixty years after he bailed out, Jim recovered the items from the grandson of his French helper.*

The brave Frenchman fed and hid the three of them in a shed. They spent their first night in France sleeping on top of the hay.

Many years had gone by when our friends of the area learned the French helper was Alfred Mourlette, a WWI veteran. In battle, M. Mourlette lost his right eye and left arm.

(3) The third step came 60 years later in 2003, when crew member Wilbert Yee returned to

visit his Normandy helpers.

Alfred Mourlette was deceased, but Wilbert did mention him in talking to a newspaper reporter. Then the name "Alfred Mourlette" appeared in the newspaper article covering Yee's visit.

When a citizen of Provemont read the article and saw the name "Mourlette," he exclaimed, 'I'm a Mourlette and that must have been my grandfather!'

The son of Alfred Mourlette  
**(Continued on Page 3)**



## U.S. AIR FORCES ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY COMMUNICATIONS

<http://www.rafinfo.org.uk/rafescape/afees-usa.htm>

Volume 20, Number 3

Sept. 11, 2008

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

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

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

FALL 2008

## The Prez Sez

By Richard M. Smith

<afeesone@hotmail.com>

*Good Morning, Good Afternoon, or Good Evening from beautiful Ottertail Lake, Minn:*

I am somewhat nostalgic, apprehensive and saddened as I pen these notes for the September newsletter.

To date, I have not heard from anyone who was at Savannah planning for an AFEES SECOND GENERATION.

I am puzzled that no questions have been forth coming. Perhaps there have been questions to other board members. I hope so.

There is going to be no easy task replacing Frank Lashinsky, Yvonne Daley, Fran Weyland or Bob and Mary Sweatt.

I do not overlook Ralph Patton and all he has done, but I believe his working days are over. I don't pass over the Davids and the tireless work they have done, but like all of us, they are growing older.

Larry Grauerholz tells that he intends to publish the newsletter forever, and he may be right!

As if now, I do not know who to send to, or hand my letter of resignation to, if and when I make it to Dayton.

(Ed. Note: President Dick's term does not expire until 2010, so he is expected to serve at least that long. Dick, this is like the army, you don't get an Early Out without permission!)

Whatever happens, my 45 years with AFEES has been a wonderful experience and trip!

s/ RICHARD M. SMITH

**Jim retrieves his chute**

had died in an automobile accident much earlier and no one seemed to be aware of the grandson.

(4) The fourth step came when the grandson Albert contacted Mme. Jacque (Didi) Lavandier, informing her of his possession of a wooden box containing items he inherited from his father.

Didi (my special friend) is a French helper on our AFEES mailing list, and soon paid M. Mourlette a visit in Provemont.,

Excitedly, she wrote me a letter about contents of the box. She listed them as: one, Stoner's parachute pack, second was Edmans's, and the third was mine. Many chute panels and chutes

were also in the box.

(5) Fifth step came when friends Col. Joe Brown and his wife Theresa encouraged me to return to France and retrieve my parachute. The plan was for me and Col. Brown to go in June 2004.

He would attend the 60th anniversary celebration of the D-Day landing and I would go to Provemont and pick up my parachute.

All that was accomplished.

Now I can display my "Life-Saver" to interested audiences which my daughter Alice and I did at the AFEES Savannah reunion. (See photo, front page.)

**CONCLUSION**

When September rolls around, memories linger on about that time when I was 21, left a burning

B-17, escaped the flames with only minor burns, pulled the rip cord, then looked up to see the beautiful sight of a nylon canopy.

Now I marvel at having pieces of my *Life-Saver* to show interested people

But more than this, my survival gave me more time on earth to have many French friends and more time to come to know the Truth which has set me free.

At age 38, I heard the joyful sound from John 3:16. Now I have received my eternal Life-Saver, Jesus Christ.

=====

**James E. Armstrong, E&E 339, 384th BG, went down Sept. 6, 1943, near Gisor, France. He was evacuated from the coast of Brittany aboard the Brez Izel, arriving in the UK Jan. 23, 1944.**

**French airmen train at Luke**

**LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. (AFPN) --** Approximately 20 French air force aircrews, 60 maintainers and support personnel and four Rafale aircraft visited the base here to participate in an exercise July 28 to Aug. 8.

The major coalition exercise here provided a unique opportunity for the French Rafale pilots and Luke's F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots to familiarize themselves with combined operations.

Pilots from both countries took advantage of the opportunity to fly in an aircraft they were not accustomed to operating, and they got to see first-hand the capabilities of the other country's aircraft.

The Rafale is a twin-engine aircraft capable of carrying out a wide range of short- and long-range missions, including ground and sea attack, air defense and reconnaissance.



**Albert Mourlette (left), grandson of a French helper, and Life Member James Armstrong, pose with Jim's parachute pack which he used in 1943. Photo was taken at Provemont, near Etrepagny, Normandy.**



# Ralph had bail-out plan in mind

*Abstracted from Freedom Trail  
by author and historian*

*Adam Lynch*

*(Reprinted from March 2008  
issue of THE 8AF NEWS,  
Savannah, Ga.)*

A few moments after his stricken Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber tore apart, co-pilot Ralph Patton hurriedly put his bail-out plan into action.

He had carefully thought it over many times since going into combat. Get out of the seat on the flight deck. Drop down into the well between the pilot and co-pilot seats to the floor below.

From there, reach under the seat for the chute, securing it to the harness with the correct clips and rings. He saw that at least the

bombardier and navigator of the ten-man crew had already gone out.

Heavy flak over the target and vicious attacks by German fighters had combined to destroy the big ship. Their B-17, weakened and vibrating badly, had been unable to keep up with the group. Power had to be reduced, and as it slowly dropped behind, alone, German Focke Wulf-190 fighters came at it repeatedly. The uneven running battle ended dramatically when the entire tail section ripped away at 12,000 feet above the French countryside.

Fortunately the Flying Fortress, after briefly nosing up, stalled out straight and dropped into a flat spin before plunging down, giving Patton enough time to drop through the open nose. He learned later that the tail gunner, one waist gunner and the ball turret gunner had been killed, but

somehow seven men were able to bail out of the now uncontrollable and doomed bomber.

Patton's previous eight missions had taught him quickly a B-17 could explode in flames and roll over, trapping the crew inside. He bailed out, quickly pulling the ripcord at about 10,000 feet, and years later described the opening of his chute as "the greatest sensation in the world."

After a very long drop, he landed on French soil and repeated to himself, "I'm going to survive this war!"

The 23-year-old Second Lieutenant from Pittsburgh, Pa., had come down in the province of Brittany in the northwest section of France, not far from the English Channel. He knew the country was occupied by German forces and that his chances of avoiding a prisoner of war camp were slim, but he was determined to try.

German defenses were formidable, and four B-17s of the 94th Bomb Group were lost among the 11 bombers shot down. Patton's plane was first smashed hard with flak right after "bombs away." The horizontal stabilizer was in shreds.

For about a half-hour the crew fought for control, then the Focke Wulfs came in three separate, devastating attacks. For Patton and his crew, mission nine in the air ended when their plane broke apart. The fight to escape capture on the ground was about to begin.

The hedgerow Patton landed in was in the section of France where they spoke a Breton or Celtic tongue, but it mattered little since Patton spoke no French of any kind. Soon after the short co-pilot got out of his chute, Glenn Johnson, his tall 6'4" pilot, appeared. Johnson had bailed out right after Patton. Then, bombardier Jack McGough, who had also come down nearby, walked up. The trio stood in an open field, in enemy-occupied territory, trying to figure out what to do next.

After cautiously watching a



**Co-Founder/Chairman Ralph Patton at the microphone**



\*\*\*\*\*

**Ralph K. Patton (E&E 476, 94th BG,  
bailed out Jan. 5, 1944, on the  
mission to Bordeaux. As Co-  
Founder and Chairman of AFEES, he  
has dedicated his time and  
resources to developing our society  
as a unique military veterans'  
organization.**

\*\*\*\*\*

nearby stone farmhouse for a half-hour, they approached the door and knocked. Despite the very serious risk involved, farmer Desire Gerone took them in, offering wine, hot soup and a welcome, roaring fireplace. It was the kind of bravery and compassion the men would see often in the months to come.

Unsure of what to do with the Americans, and unable to communicate, Gerone led them to yet another farm-house some 200 yards away, owned by a Monsieur Denmat.

Denmat did not know anyone to contact either, but he allowed the weary men to stay there for the night on welcomed feather beds. After offering a breakfast of coffee and bread, he produced a map, and the three Americans struck out in the vague hope of reaching Spain. With no clear plan, walking mostly on the roads by night and hiding in the fields by day, they pressed onward.

The Shelbourne freedom line hid and moved Allied flyers through France to the English Channel, where they could be met by fast British gunboats. Shelbourne, along with the "Pat" line, working in France and Spain, and the "Comet" line, primarily in Belgium, helped close to 3,000 American airmen evade capture and eventually return to England during the war.

In 1944, Shelbourne alone accounted for 135 agents and airmen of that total, sent out in eight separate missions. The complex and daring system was created by MI-9, the Escape and Evasion section of British Military Intelligence, which worked

closely with its American Military Intelligence Section counter-part, MIS-X. It was a system born of necessity, for by the beginning of 1944, the air war waged by the British Royal Air Force and the American Eighth Air Force had grown into a massive effort.

Thousands of Allied aircraft were now regularly committed night and day to smashing Nazi industrial and military strength.

As a result, the number of British and American flyers who bailed out successfully over German-occupied European countries was growing. The brave citizens on the ground who wanted to hide these men from the Germans could not do it alone, so this behind-the-lines network was launched.

Everyday, those men and women risked execution or being thrown into concentration camps if they were caught. An unknown number of selfless, dedicated patriots paid that supreme sacrifice.

The German military worked day and night to discover, infiltrate, and destroy the freedom lines and the people who operated them. German soldiers who spoke English were dressed in American Eighth Air Force uniforms taken from dead airmen and sent into the countryside posing as bailed-out American flyers.

They would then ask for help, hoping to be taken in by the escape and evasion network. If successful, they moved along the line collecting names of those involved in the operation. Punishment was quick, and at least part of the line would

disappear.

Warnings threatening execution to those who protected Allied flyers were posted everywhere. In France, 10,000 francs were offered to anyone who revealed the names of men and women who sheltered an American flier. Unfortunately, a few did just that. On the other hand, the "Helpers," as they were called, had only the satisfaction of knowing they were playing a role in finally driving the hated Boche from their land.

Marie Antoinette Pirious, better known as "Toni," had a "Parisienne" style with a commanding presence and she spoke English. Now, up the hill and into the field where Patton's group was hiding, striding purposefully, came this woman of France dedicated to defending freedom.

Patton says that for weeks they had been aware that someone was organizing their movements, but the Americans had no knowledge of the complexity and size of the network in Europe nor its connection to British Intelligence. Briefings in England had not included that kind of information, and discussion among the operators in Europe was carefully guarded.

Patton and King moved again to a remote spot to meet a nighttime contact on a country road. It had been two months of hiding, watching, and moving. Patton and his group went with the flow, and they knew enough not to ask questions. Still, it was a tense and unsettling aspect of the war for which they were not really prepared. Ralph Patton had become "Rene Pailly," a mute identified as a "voyageur," and the others had similar fake identification papers to go with their legitimate French outfits.

A British gunboat had departed Dartmouth on the southern English coast and was now headed across the Channel for the Brittany coast of France.

What the Shelbourne line called *Operation Bonaparte* was approaching its climax. If successful, escape from occupied Europe for another group of men of the Eighth



Air Force was only hours away.

The times to depart had finally come, and almost a dozen men were loaded into a French helper's truck to head towards the pickup point.

Patton asked their driver, "Aren't you worried about transporting so many men in your truck at one time?" The reply was classic. "The penalty is the same for ten as it is for one." On this night, March 18, 1944, the Gicquel home was filling up. Several Shelbourne helpers, 26 Americans, one French colonel, and a Canadian sergeant major in the British Army were there. The Canadian was Lucien Dumais, the commanding officer of Shelbourne. Dumais had been captured in the disastrous raid on Dieppe. He had escaped, returned to England, and was later parachuted back into France along with radio operator Sergeant Ray to help organize the Shelbourne line.

There were two too many men in the group. In a slip-up, Patton and McGough had been picked up one

day early. Dumais asked, "How come we have 26 men, not 24?"

Aware that the Germans constantly tried to infiltrate the escape lines, Dumais began asking pointed questions. From the back of the room, an impatient American flier called out, "You don't have to give him anything but your name, rank, and serial number."

Dumais took out his .45-caliber automatic and said in a commanding voice, "Shut up. I am Captain Harrison of the British Intelligence Service and these two (Patton and McGough) are going back to England with or without holes in their stomachs depending on what they will tell me."

The questions came quickly. "When do you wear epaulets? Do you wear anklets? What was your last stopping point when you left the USA?" Patton and McGough stumbled a bit with their answers, which may have helped convince "Harrison" they were not trained German plants, but in fact just two

nervous and tired American airmen. The crisis passed as the "captain" quietly announced, "You are about to face the most difficult part of our journey. Do exactly as you are told!"

After successfully reaching what the French called Bonaparte Beach, the group of evaders, agents, and Shelbourne helpers, now numbering 35 people altogether, sat on large rocks at the foot of the cliff in the cold and waited and waited. With each passing wave the little band of flyers imagined they could see an approaching boat.

Finally, an hour and a half after reaching the beach, as quiet and the black of night returned, five plywood rowboats appeared out of the dark. It was about 3 AM, and each boat was manned by a British seaman.

After being turned away from several boats because they were full, Patton feared he was losing his chance to get away. He called it his worst moment. But moving quickly from one to another, he was finally



Ralph Patton with his crew

Patton



able to find a boat that would take him in.

After the boats had gone, the French patriots began their slow climb back up the cliff to prepare for the next mission the following night.

Almost three months had elapsed since Ralph Patton's crew had bailed out of their broken B-17. Pilot Glen Johnson, waist gunner Isadore Viola, and navigator Norm King would be included in the next night's departure on March 19.

Flight engineer Ralph Hall, who narrowly avoided capture during an earlier failed pickup at another location, did not manage to leave France until the area in which he was hiding was liberated.

Early the next morning, the Americans watched gratefully as Dartmouth, England, slowly came into view. Interrogation and debriefing would follow as the men began to unwind from their unexpected European adventure.

As for Patton and the other fliers, their combat days were over. The high command believed it was too dangerous to risk having successful evaders shot down and captured in the future. By early 1945, as American and British armies liberated one country after another, Allied flyers who had been hiding out were found, POW camps were opened up, and French, Belgian and Dutch civilians celebrated.

Those who had risked their lives in Shelbourne, Pat, and Comet again enjoyed the peace of their farms, schools, and shops. They remained relatively anonymous for years, and then, a few at a time, the Americans began to come back.

Men started seeking out their wartime benefactors, wanting to say thank you. Over the years, farmhouse meetings and formal reunions in both Europe and the United States have been filled with predictable emotion.

Those who offered and lost their lives are toasted, incredible stories are told and retold, and the grateful members of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society repeat their pledge to their now aging helpers: "We will never forget."

## B-24 gunner rescued by the Chinese

Most members of the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society qualified for membership by being forced down flying out of England or Italy for raids over the Continent.

We have a few evaders who flew with the 14th Air Force in the Far East. One of them is Lewis C. Schlotterbeck, now living in Bourne, Mass. This newspaper article from the Wakefield (Mass.)

Daily Item of late April or early May 1945, reports how he was rescued by friendly Chinese.

## Missing In China Since April 2, Sgt. Schlotterbeck Safe

### Bailed Out of Bomber Into Wild Country; Given Fine Care by the Chinese

Sgt. Lewis C. Schlotterbeck, who was reported by the War Department as missing in action in China since April 2, has written his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Schlotterbeck of 1 Vernon st, of his safe return to his air base. Sgt. Schlotterbeck is a gunner on a B-24 Liberator with the 14th Air Force.

It was not permissible to give full details of his adventure, but it is known that the crew was forced to bail out before their plane crashed, were picked up by friendly Chinese and made their way back to their base by horses, mules, truck and boat.

"It was an experience," writes Sgt. Schlotterbeck, "bailing out and watching our plane crash, that I will never forget and that I never want to repeat." "The Chinese," he says, "treated us like kings and had banquets and plays in our honor, and those 1000-year-old eggs you have read about aren't too bad, either."

Describing their return, he writes: "On the way back we came through the wildest and most rugged mountains I have ever seen. The road was so narrow and rough that the chassis scraped rocks on the bottom and hung over a 2000-foot drop on both sides in some places, and we were afraid we might have to bail out again from the truck. We also



Sgt. Lewis C. Schlotterbeck

came through some fine pheasant-hunting country. They were big, beautiful birds like few at home and as they had never been shot at, they stood still and we were able to shoot several with a carbine. We ate them and they were good."



## 'A lot of metallic noise'

# *Budd just felt a 'great big whump'*

From the Cleveland (Ohio) *PLAIN DEALER*  
August 3, 2008

By *BRIAN ALBRECHT*

On April 7, 1945, as W. Budd Wentz piloted his B-17 bomber to a targeted airfield in Germany ...

"I just felt this great big whump, and the airplane swayed back and forth, and there was a lot of metallic noise in the back. All four engines were functioning, the airplane was still flying OK, so I figured, well, we got hit by something, but everything seems OK.

"Then the [waist] gunner called and said, 'The tail turret's gone and shoved the tail gunner 10 feet up the fuselage. There's a lot of damage back there, and there are pieces flying off the airplane.' And the engineer climbed up into the top turret and said, 'You don't have any rudder anymore.'"

It wasn't until 58 years later that Wentz, now 83, of Shaker Heights, learned from an author writing a book about his bomb group that his plane was one of many B-17s deliberately rammed by enemy fighters that day.

The effort was part of a last, desperate bid by German Luftwaffe air forces in the waning months of World War II to bring down American bombers by any means possible. (Wentz and other bomber pilots hit by German fighters were featured in the History Channel's "Dogfight" TV series, titled "The Luftwaffe's Deadliest Mission.")

In one sense, that startling mission was a fitting cap to Wentz's combat flying career, which began just as colorfully.

Six months before the fighter hit his plane, Wentz was piloting his first bombing mission when, hit by anti-aircraft fire, he had to drop out of formation after one of the B-17's engines failed. He jettisoned the bombs to maintain altitude, then a second engine quit. The crew tossed machine guns, ammo and anything heavy overboard to keep their height up. A third engine sputtered just after Wentz ordered the crew to start bailing out.

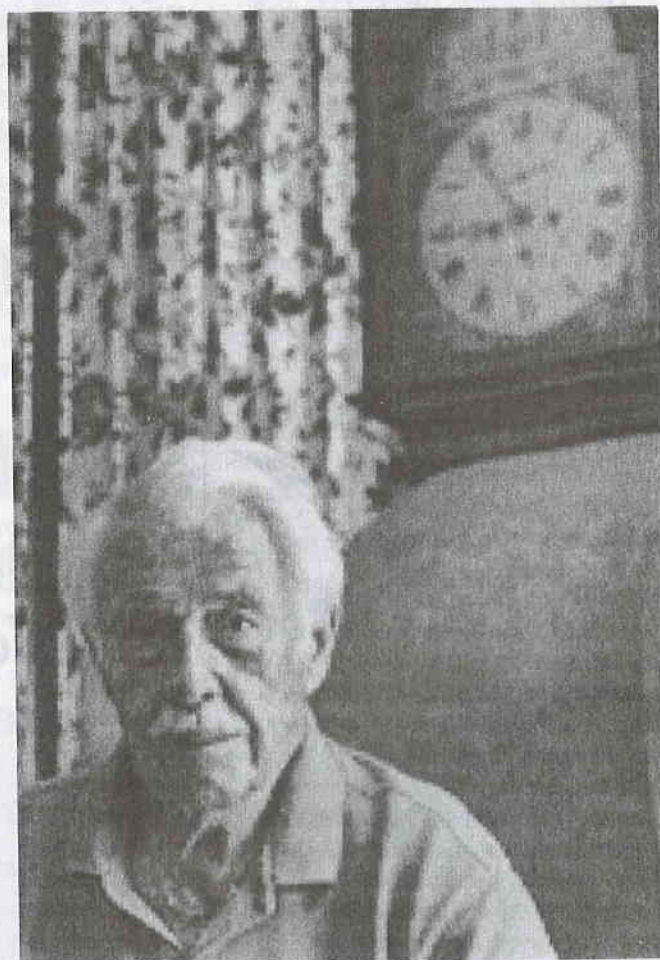
"Four engines are nice. Three's OK. Two, eh. One, you have to get on the ground. None, you're gonna get on the ground. A B-17 is not a glider," he recently said, recalling the mission.

The fourth engine quit just as Wentz landed the bomber in a Belgian pasture, behind enemy lines.

Fortunately they were immediately met by partisans, who escorted the bomber crew to safety after a few tense days spent hiding in a small village.

Wentz's initiation to war amply proved there was a lot more to combat aviation than flying.

The Philadelphia native had enlisted in the Army Air



***Dr. W. Budd Wentz of Shaker Heights, Ohio, piloted B-17s on 28 missions before his 21st birthday. He survived forced landings on both his first mission and last combat flight when his bomber was rammed by a German fighter.***

Corps rather than leave his fate to the vagaries of the draft. "I wanted to learn how to fly, and I thought that was the cheapest way to learn," he said.

He was attending the University of Pennsylvania when the war started, planning to become a doctor. (It was a goal he would accomplish after the war, attending medical school and serving as a professor at Case Western Reserve University's medical school until he retired in 1989. He's now a professor emeritus.)

In the service, Wentz initially trained to fly B-24 bombers but switched to B-17s when he went to England to fly with the 487th Bomber Group of the Eighth Air Force.

He soon learned the intense concentration, and risks, of flying in a tight formation of bombers committed to



following a straight and level course so the maximum number of bombs could be concentrated on a target.

In doing so, they flew directly into the sights of German fighters and anti-aircraft guns. "Predictable moving targets," as Wentz described the bombers' lot.

Anti-aircraft flak was worse than fighters, "because there was so much of it," Wentz added.

But it was a fighter that put Wentz on a white-knuckled path back home, while flying the bomber he had dubbed "My Best Bette" for his fiancée, who later became his wife of 63 years and mother of their three children.

Wentz said that after the fighter hit the tail of his B-17, he went through a familiar routine. Dropped out of formation, jettisoned his bombs, told his crew to don their parachutes and looked for a place to land the crippled aircraft.

Fortunately he found one -- the last one he'd ever need, as it turned out. Wentz recalled that following the ill-fated flight, his commanding officer told him that after 28 missions and two forced landings, the luck of the "My Best Bette" crew seemed to be wearing thin, so he was sending them home. Wentz got back to the United States the day Japan surrendered, ending World War II.

Though Wentz said he never doubted the Allies would ultimately win the war, he wasn't sure he'd be around to see it -- particularly as Eighth Air Force deaths soared to more than 26,000, about 10 percent of all Americans killed during the war.

"I didn't think I was going to make it. I was very pessimistic toward the end," he said. "Looking at the statistics, and knowing your chances weren't real good, what other way can you look at it?"

## CO of USTRANSCOM

# General McNabb gets back to Scott

**SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. (AFPN)** -- Gen. Duncan J. McNabb assumed command of U.S. Transportation Command here in a ceremony Sept. 5.

Secretary of Defense Dr. Robert M. Gates presided at the ceremony in which General McNabb became the ninth USTRANSCOM commander.

Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the first to speak at the ceremony and lauded the efforts of U.S. Transportation Command.

"Combat operations cannot succeed without secure, mature lines of logistics. And, if you ask any TRANSCOM professional, they'll tell you that they'll make it work, they get it, they live it every single day," the admiral said.

He continued to say that missions during the last six years were accomplished only "because of the incredible support of this command and so many tens of thousands of people that make these operations possible."

Secretary Gates pointed out General McNabb's transportation and mobility background made him a natural choice to be the ninth commander of USTRANSCOM.

"With all these moving parts, and with the critical importance of every

single (USTRANSCOM) mission, there is little doubt that this command requires a special kind of leader -- one who can maintain a focus on details within the context of massive and myriad operations. General McNabb is the right person for this job."

Upon assuming command, General McNabb said he was pleased to be able to rekindle relationships with the many friends and community leaders he met during his previous tour here as the former commander of Air Mobility Command, also headquartered at Scott AFB.

"You all know how happy Linda and I are to be back and again privileged to be a part of this great community," General McNabb said.

In his remarks, the general emphasized the important role USTRANSCOM continues to play around the world, from emerging requirements in the Republic of Georgia, ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and support to FEMA and U.S. Northern Command for Hurricane Gustav and preparations for Hurricanes Hanna and Ike.

"It is clear our nation depends on us," General McNabb said. "Born in war, grown to maturity in times of peace, and again sustaining our

warfighters in war, the men and women of TRANSCOM will ensure that the promises made to our men and women in uniform, to the people of America, will always be promises kept."

His last assignment was as vice chief of staff of the Air Force at D.C. Prior to that, he commanded AMC, one of the three service commands comprising USTRANSCOM.


The others are the Army's Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, also headquartered at Scott AFB, and the Navy's Military Sealift Command, with headquarters at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

USTRANSCOM is one of the nine U.S. military combatant commands. It provides air, land and sea transportation for the Department of Defense and is supported by Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine and Coast Guard personnel. As new commander of USTRANSCOM, General McNabb is now the Department of Defense distribution process owner.

Former USTRANSCOM Commander Gen. Norton A. Schwartz was recently appointed chief of staff of the Air Force.



## A DATE IN DAYTON AWAITS

**AF Museum: Host for '09 reunion**


**NATIONAL MUSEUM  
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

*We are the  
Keepers  
of their  
Stories*

The World's Largest  
and Oldest Military  
Aviation Museum  
17 Acres of Exhibits

Over 300 Aircraft  
and Missiles  
FREE Museum  
Admission and Parking



*Retired Maj. Gen. Charles Metcalf (left), director of the National Museum of the United States Air Force, accepts hearing protection and communications technology from test pilot Pete Siebold of Scaled Composites, LLC.*

## **Advanced engine, hearing protection now on display**

**WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFPN)** -- The first aircraft to fly by pulsed-detonation engine power, along with associated hearing protection technology -- both developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory here -- became additions to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force during an Aug. 25 ceremony at the museum annex here.

Members of the AFRL's Propulsion Directorate developed the pulsed-detonation engine, which logged a record-breaking manned flight Jan. 31 at Mojave, Calif.

With test pilot Pete Siebold at the controls of the modified Long EZ aircraft manufactured by Scaled Composites, the pulsed-detonation engine, or PDE, achieved a speed of over 120 mph and 60 to 100 feet altitude, producing more than 200 pounds of thrust. It marked the first successful flight powered by pulse-detonation technology.

During the flight, Mr. Siebold wore an Attenuating Custom Communications Earpiece System, or ACCES, integrated with a standard military flight helmet for acoustic protection from noise generated by the engine.



# Museum again earns top rating

By Sarah Parke

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

**DAYTON, Ohio (AFPN)** -- The National Museum of the United States Air Force has again achieved accreditation by American Association of Museums officials. It is the highest national recognition a museum can receive.

Accreditation signifies excellence to the museum community, to governments, funders, outside agencies and to the museum-going public. The museum initially was accredited in 1998. All museums must undergo a reaccreditation review at least every ten years to maintain accredited status.

Of the nation's nearly 17,500 museums, about 775, or 4 percent, are currently accredited, and only about 2 percent of specialized museums, such as museums concentrating in aviation, hold this honor.

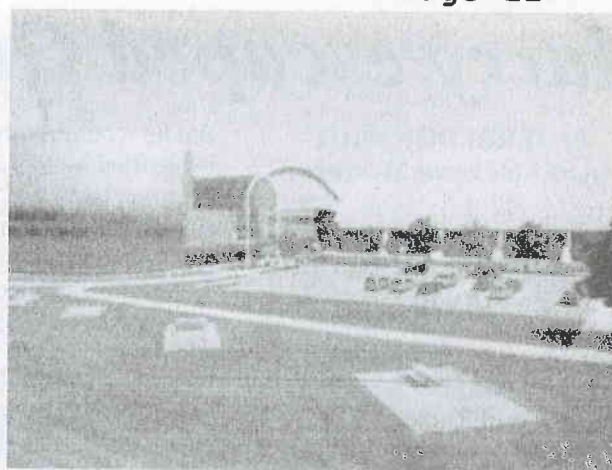
"Receiving reaccreditation further solidifies the Air Force's museum as one of national prominence and prestige," said museum director Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles D. Metcalf. "The commitment of the board, staff, volunteers and foundation to uphold the highest standards of the museum practice is shown with this award."

AAM accreditation brings national recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards and continued institutional improvement.

Developed and sustained by museum professionals for 35 years, AAM's museum accreditation program is the field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability.

Accreditation strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely and remain financially and ethically accountable in order to provide the best possible service to the public.

It is a very rigorous but highly rewarding process that examines all aspects of a museum's operations. To earn



## *National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.*

accreditation, museum officials first must conduct a year of self-study then undergo a site visit by a team of peer reviewers.

AAM's accreditation commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, consider the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation. While the time to complete the process varies by museum, it generally takes as much as three years.

Accreditation commission members commended the museum staff for their successful evolution of the commission's interpretation, since the last review, moving from technology-driven stories to those of individuals and their connections to aviation history.

The AAM has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 15,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future. For more information, visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

The National Museum of the United States Air Force is located on Springfield Street, six miles northeast of downtown Dayton.

Shoe





# Harry escaped Germans & Soviets

By JERRI DONAHUE  
AFEES Friend Member

When Sgt. Harry Guinther slipped away from German guards in the waning days of World War II, he didn't know that a more challenging escape was yet to come.

The radio operator from Cleveland, Ohio, parachuted from a burning B-26 Marauder near the Seine River on May 27, 1944. German soldiers quickly captured him and took him to Satrouville, the town whose bridge had just been bombed. While the Germans smoked cigarettes and watched, collaborators pummeled the handcuffed American.

Guinther's captors next drove into Paris and presented him to a German general who ordered them to remove the airman's handcuffs.

After dismissing the guards, he offered the astonished sergeant a glass of wine. Guinther declined. The general then advised the young airman to do nothing "foolish," predicting the war would soon end

and he would return to his family.

Baffled by this encounter, Guinther managed to learn from his guards that the mysterious officer was Karl von Stulpnagel.

Months later, von Stulpnagel was executed as a conspirator in the July attempt on Hitler's life. (Karl's cousin was General Otto von Stulpnagel, who infamously decreed the murder or deportation to concentration camps of French citizens who helped Allied fliers.)

Within weeks, Sgt. Guinther occupied a lice-infested barracks in northern Germany.

As the Red Army approached in February 1945, the Germans marched their prisoners toward the center of the Reich.

Undernourished for months, the men staggered through rain, sleet and snow. Each day the column stretched farther and farther. One morning, while rounding a bend in the road out of sight of the guards, Guinther impulsively dashed into the woods.

Unprepared for life on the run, he was

recaptured two days later when he asked Polish laborers for food; the "Poles" were farmers.

Guinther landed next in the international camp at Greifswald on the Baltic Sea, where he recognized work details as a chance to scrounge for food. The flier traded one of his dog tags with a Canadian private in order to work outside the camp.

Eventually, he managed to steal a cabbage. More importantly, he met Charlie and Eddie, Canadian infantrymen who planned to escape.

With the outcome of the war apparent, some guards relaxed discipline, and even allowed prisoners to converse with civilians. The trio befriended Maria, a young German. Perhaps hoping for better treatment at the surrender, she agreed to hide them until they could contact American troops. Late one afternoon, they slipped away from their work party and hurried to Maria's home.

That night German soldiers pounded on Maria's door, demanding a place to sleep. She put them in an adjacent room but this close call frightened the escaped POWs into leaving the next day.

For three weeks they trudged east, dodging refugees and passing through forests, fields, abandoned villages and bombed out towns that reeked of death. When they finally met a Soviet patrol, the Russians welcomed them with hugs, kisses, backslapping and shots of vodka all around.

During the subsequent six weeks, the North Americans grew accustomed to watching the Red troops sing, dance, and compete in somersaults and cartwheels accompanied by an accordion. The Russians often played practical jokes, even on their officers and they generously shared their best food and alcohol.

But these same good-natured individuals burdened Guinther with his most painful memories of the war, horrifying him with the violence they unleashed on the rural German populace. Sixty-three years later the



*Harry Guinther of Cleveland, Ohio, flew with the 8th Air Force until the 386th Bomb Group, became part of the 9th Air Force.*



veteran still cannot talk about the brutality he witnessed, savagery he was helpless to prevent and wishes to forget.

From the outset, the Soviets badgered Guinther and the Canadians to visit Mother Russia. Charlie agreed to go in early May but Guinther and Eddie moved to a Russian unit at Schwerin on the Oder River. They expected to rejoin their respective forces on the opposite bank. Instead, a sentry barred their way across the bridge.

Anxious days passed until Guinther learned that an American General was coming to meet with his Russian counterpart. When the U.S. contingent arrived, the airman was waiting.

A Master Sergeant listened to Guinther's predicament, and then directed him to wait with Eddie near the bridge when the meeting ended. As the American convoy departed, a truck slowed down long enough for them to clamber inside.

On the other side of the Oder, Eddie returned to the Canadians and Guinther was flown to Camp Lucky Strike. Sergeant Harry Guinther had escaped for the third and final time.



*AFEES Member Jim Frolking (left) of Shaker Heights, Ohio, (E&E 2614, 479th BG) and Huib van der Maas of Holland were first-time attendees at the Savannah reunion. When Jim was shot down on Oct. 7, 1944, between two Dutch islands, Huib's parents hid him for several weeks.*



*John Verbout of Neponset, Ill., got many members of his family together for the Savannah reunion. The group included John and Jo, Carma, Pauli, John Jr., Melanie, Jerry, Josh, Bobby and Stephanie McDaniel. SSgt John E. Verbout, E&E 1171, 397th BG, went down July 6, 1944, and was aided by members of the French Resistance.*



## Next generation set to take over leadership of *Comete*

By RALPH PATTON

*AFEES Co-Founder/Chairman*

The annual Comete weekend will be held as usual on the third week in October, but this will be the beginning of the next generation taking over. Brigitte D'oulreont, daughter of the well-known Count D'oulreont, who helped organize and operate the camp in the Forest of Freteval, is leader of The Comete Kinship, Belgium.

It appears that this is similar to what a group of sons and daughters of AFEES are trying to organize for 2010 and beyond.

The British "Escape Lines Memorial Society" is a next-generation group who have very successfully conducted commemorative walks along several WWII escape routes in Europe.

AFEES officers and directors have pledged cooperation with these proposed next-generation groups.

AFEES members have encouraged and participated in Pyrenees and Shelburne walks that have been so well organized by Roger Stanton, the prime mover behind the ELMS.

Most of your AFEES directors believe it is in the best interest of U.S. evaders to support overseas groups such as ELMS and Kinship Comete.



*Friend Member Dorothy Vadas of Eatonton, Ga., lights a candle during the memorial service conducted at the Chapel of the 8th AF Museum during the 2008 reunion. Dorothy is a sister of Susan Richter. They are daughters of the late 1st Lt. Alfred Richter, E&E 1036, 487th BG.*

*The Memorial Service at the Savannah reunion was conducted in the Chapel of the 8th AF Museum with a full house crowd present.*





**NEWS RELEASE**

(From Mighty Eighth AF Museum, April 2008)

# *Exhibit opening is a highlight of 2008 reunion*

POOLER, Ga. --It's an intense situation. A B-17 is hit by flak while flying over its enemy target in Ludwigshaven, Germany on December 30, 1943. Pilot Dick Smith is able to get the plane within 50 miles north of Paris when six German fighters attack. Three minutes later, the B-17 carrying Smith and his crew is "un-flyable."

Ten crew members jump into enemy-occupied France. Three crewmen are shot and fall into German hands and, ultimately, a POW camp. Smith and six others are more fortunate to fall into the helpful hands of the French Underground, also known as the Resistance and were scattered among several safe houses.

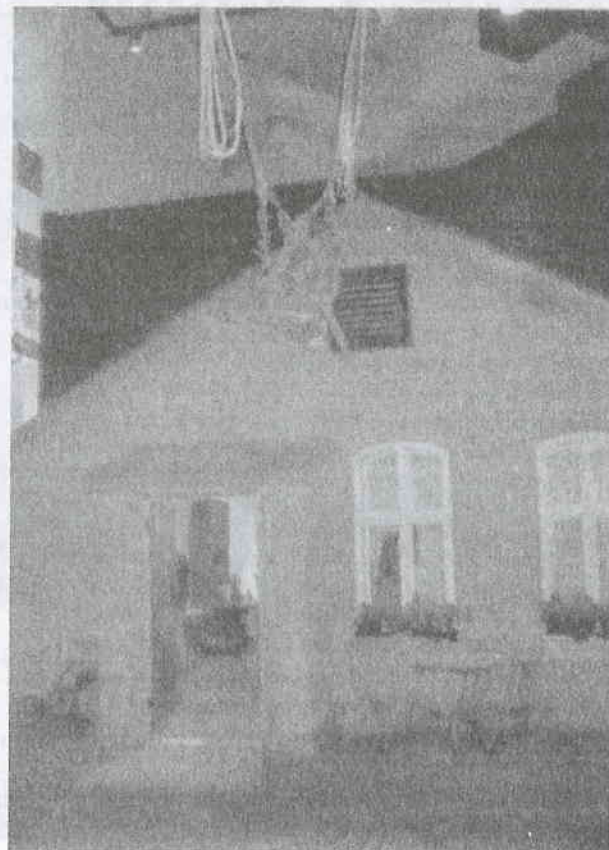
In the last week of April 2008, Smith and his helper will be reunited at the annual Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society (AFEES) reunion and the dedication of the new Escape and Evasion Exhibit at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum.

A number of other helpers as well as military veterans, are traveling here for the AFEES reunion and exhibit opening. Jim Armstrong will be reunited with one of the helpers—someone he hasn't seen since 1943. Jim is bringing his whole family to witness this. Another veteran—95 year-old Joe Walters—is also traveling with his family to meet a French helper, Roger Anthoine.

The new Escape and Evasion Exhibit at the museum is like something you've seen in a movie. Formed in 1964 in Niagara Falls, NY., AFEES has reunions every year and invites helpers (residents who helped US and British airmen evade and escape the enemy) to be AFEES guests. About 10-12 helpers attend each year. Helpers this year are coming from Serbia, Holland, Belgium, and France.

Now visitors to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum can get a taste of what it was like to evade the enemy by hiding airmen in their homes (and other methods) in Europe during World War II.

Activated in 1942 in Savannah, Ga., the Eighth Air Force was an important strike element in World War II and remains an active force today. The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum honors the Mighty Eighth's proud legacy by preserving the stories of courage, character and patriotism displayed by the men and women of the Eighth Air Force from World War II to the present.



***The SAFE HOUSE in the Afees Corner at  
the 8th AF Museum in Pooler, Ga.***

*--Photo by Edouard Reniere, Brussels*

Located minutes from Historic Savannah at 175 Bourne Avenue in Pooler, the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum is open daily from 0900-1700 hrs. except New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. For more information please visit [www.mightyeighth.org](http://www.mightyeighth.org) or call (912) 748-8888.

## **VA offering new service**

**SAN ANTONIO (AFPN)** -- The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering a new online service, My HealthVet, which is a gateway to veteran health benefits and services.

It provides access to trusted health information, links to federal and VA benefits and resources, the Personal Health Journal and online VA prescription refill service.

In the future, MHV registrants will be able to view appointments, co-pay balances and key portions of their VA medical records online.

My HealthVet is a powerful tool to help veterans better understand and manage their health, according to VA officials.

To visit the My HealthVet site, go to [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov).



# Helpers honored at 'The Corner'

Photographs and brief accounts of 26 World War II Helpers are displayed in the newly-dedicated AFEES Corner at the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum near Savannah, Ga. On these two pages are a representative showing of the helpers whose stories are recorded in the museum. Plans are to publish more in future issues of *Communications*.

--Photos and captions by courtesy of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, Pooler, Ga.

In 1943 the British MI 9 slipped Lucien Dumais and Ray LaBrosse into occupied France to set up an organization known as "Shelburne" to help Allied airmen escape from occupied Europe. With the assistance of the patriotic French, these two men arranged Operation Bonaparte.

Downed Allied fliers were gathered from all over France and sent to small towns on the Brittany coast. From here they rode in trucks and then walked across the beach to rendezvous with the British Motor Gun Boat 503 and then cross the English Channel to freedom.

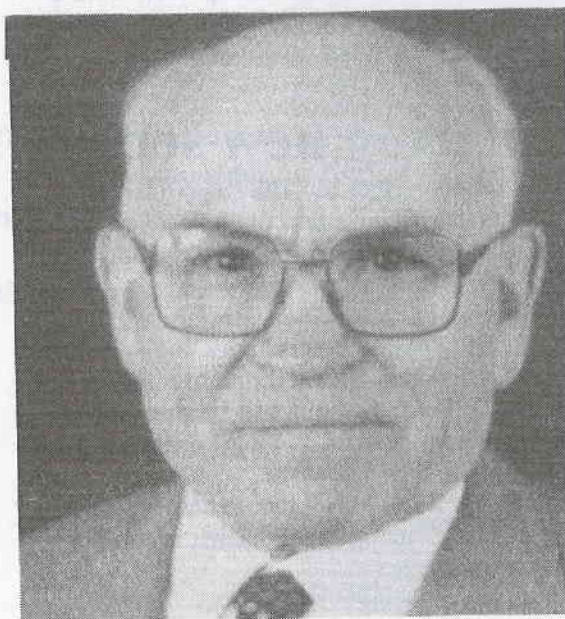
Lucien Dumais' assistant François LeCornec recruited Marie Thérèse Le Calvez and her widowed mother to assist with Operation Bonaparte. Together they operated a safe house for downed Allied airmen awaiting the British Naval rendezvous.

In addition, Marie Thérèse became one of the regular members of the beach party in all eight of the successful operations from Bonaparte Beach. Although only 18 years old, she impressed the men she guided over the rough cliffs and onto the beach with her courage and beauty.

She remained with them on the dark beach while they waited for the reassuring sound of oars from the approaching row boats that would take them to the British gunboat anchored offshore.



**Marie Thérèse Le Calvez**



**Father Robo Mathurin**

Father Robo Mathurin was a priest at the Congregation Du Saint-Esprit in Paris, France. On 26 February 1944 the Vichy police and the Gestapo began making arrests for the possession of "black market food".

This was a charge they could use to send people to prison if they found no evading airmen during their search. While Father Superior and the custodian of the Ecole Normale along with the custodian's wife were being arrested in one area of the compound and before he could be found and arrested, Father Robo alerted eight airmen hiding in the seminary to leave immediately.

Father Superior and the custodian of the school died in a concentration camp. The custodian's wife lived for only a short while after World War II ended.

Father Robo survived the Fresnes prison at Paris and the Neuengamme concentration camp in Germany. He returned to his congregation in 1945.



**Gabriel Nahas**

While a young medical student, Gabriel Nahas worked as an agent of the Dutch-Paris escape line.

He was in charge of the Pyrenees sector, using mountain guides to lead evaders and Jews over the Pyrenees to safety in Spain.

In addition, Gabriel also worked closely with Marie Louise Dissard, code-named Françoise, and Simone Calmes in Toulouse, France.

Françoise had become the leader of what earlier was known as the Pat O'Leary Line.

Code-named Georges Brantès, Gabriel Nahas once successfully eluded arrest by hiding in the home of Lil Vanwijhe in Capendu. Then on 20 May 1944, when the Nazis finally arrested him, Gabriel managed to escape.

After World War II, Gabriel emigrated to the United States and joined the faculty at Columbia University in New York, N.Y., teaching anesthesiology.

**Paul and Marie Michallet**

Pilot William Massey of the 401st Bomb Group was shot down while flying his 19th mission on 19 June 1944. The French Resistance in Bordeaux, France found him before the Germans did. Paul and Marie Michallet hid him in their home. William arrived back in England on 5 September 1944.

He never forgot this French family who befriended him while risking their own lives to help him.

This photograph shows Paul, Marie, and their son George enjoying coffee sent by William in December 1945.

### ***History Project wants vets to share stories***

**SAN ANTONIO (AFP)** -- The Veterans History Project collects and preserves the remembrances of American war veterans and civilian workers who supported them. These collections of first-hand accounts are archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for use by researchers and to serve as an inspiration for generations to come.

The program is designed to preserve the legacies of America's aging veterans who are dying at the rate of about 1,500 a day.

"Getting these oral histories now is important, because once (the veterans) are gone, their stories are gone forever," said Steve Hollingshead from the Department of Veterans Affairs' Media Services Division.

All Americans, including students and grandchildren, can participate in documenting the lives of the nation's war veterans, Mr. Hollingshead said.

The history project relies on volunteers throughout the nation to collect veterans' stories on behalf of the Library of Congress. These stories are made available to researchers and the general public, both at the library in Washington D.C. and via the **VHP Web site**.

Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000. The authorizing legislation -- Public Law 106-380 -- was sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives, and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate.



# WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society

## Andorra Freedom Trail 2008

By **KEITH JONES**  
**Escape Lines Memorial Society**  
 with **ELMS Chairman Boris Spence**

I started planning for Andorra 2008 quite soon after finishing Andorra 2007. The route out was a good one via Port de Siguer but the return by bus, train and 14 kilometre road march would have to be changed. The solution was simple -- walk back the way we came.

I had rejected that idea for 2007 since I wasn't sure I would be fit enough to make the return journey straight after the tough walk out, but last year's experience showed me the going wasn't as hard as I'd feared, and the return should be easier as it's mostly downhill.

Then I wondered if we could make Andorra 2008 a little more special.

The main route is the one that evaders W/Cdr John Embling, Sgt Cyril Penna, Sgt Eddy Canter, Sgt Henry Ord Robertson, F/O Prince Werner de Merode and F/Sgt Jack Dawson RAF, and Lt John Trost, Capt Richard Adams and 2/Lt Grady Roper USAAF, attempted in February 1943.

Conditions were so harsh that de Merode, Dawson and Grady turned back. The rest of the party carried on but Penna, Trost and Adams were so badly frost bitten that on arrival in Andorra, they had to be left in a farmhouse while the remainder of the party continued to Spain.

Penna, Robertson and de Merode later wrote books about their evasions, Penna (*Escape and Evasion*) and Robertson (*Dangerous Landing*) describing the horrific crossing in great detail with Robertson including the deaths of two other American airmen in the party.

De Merode and Jack Dawson later joined 'Cockleshell Heroes' Major Blondie Hasler and Marine Bill Sparks to cross the Pyrenees further east the following month courtesy of Pat O'Leary and the Ponzan-Vidal organisation.

Early in 2008 I published a copy of an account of three American airmen who had perished in their attempt to cross the Pyrenees to Andorra in October 1943. They had died close to the border at Port del Rat, and I knew where that was, having passed it on previous walks to Andorra via Port d'Arinsal.

Thanks to American researcher Warren Carah, I got very interested in the story of the three men and thought they should be remembered formally if possible. There

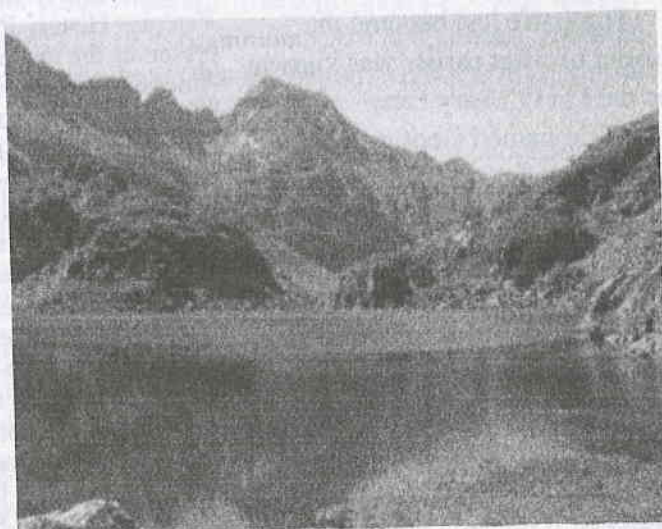
was just one problem -- Port del Rat is not on the route that we were going to walk this year.

Then I realised that we could do a third day walking up to Port del Rat, place our memorial and come back the same day. Usually Boris and I only have two days free to do our pre-Chemin walk but if we could arrive a day earlier, on the Friday, we could fit it all in and still get to St Giron on the Tuesday to join the other walkers for the Chemin.

As it turned out, Boris had already decided to fly out rather than drive -- he was going to do Andorra and the Chemin before flying to Holland for the four day Nijmegen March (which started the following Tuesday) as a fund-raising triple event -- and the extra day wasn't a problem for him.

Then, to make it more special still, I noticed that another man I had written about, a New Zealand soldier who had been captured on Crete and later escaped from the German POW camp in Poland, had also died in a similar attempt at crossing to Andorra. His party used a different route again, via Collada de Juclar and we couldn't go there as well, but he had died on the same day as the three Americans. Now we had ample reasons for making that third day.

The three Americans who perished in the snow were 2/Lt Harold W Bailey (navigator of B-17 42-5827 Lakanuki) T/Sgt William B Plasket (radio operator of B-17 42-30163) and S/Sgt Francis E Owens (waist gunner of B-17 42-29928). All three airmen had bailed out over



Three hours walking and this is Etang de Peyregrand where we had our first break of the day



northern France and been helped, at least some of the way, by Georges Broussine's Bourgoyne escape network.

The New Zealand soldier was Driver Frederick Geoffrey Williamson RNZASC. Following his escape from Poland and Germany, he was helped by the Marie-Claire escape line.

This year I decided that we'd stay in a hotel in Tarascon. One reason was that veteran widow Dot Collins and her daughter and son-in-law would be staying there, and we'd already agreed to meet them for the Saturday evening meal.

The cost was only about 11 euros a night more than the hostel we would otherwise have used -- and it would save us a lot of driving. As a bonus, by starting in Tarascon, we had to pass the Boulangerie Saint Roch, our favourite café, to get to both start points, which meant we could pick up lunch on the way.

Accommodation for Saturday night in Andorra was a separate problem that our friend Claude Benet offered to solve for us. Most hotels at or near El Serrat are closed at that time of year and the nearest place I could find was several miles away, so Claude's kind offer was particularly welcome.

He booked us into the four-star Hotel El Serrat. In retrospect Andorra 2008 was an ambitious plan -- three hard days walking with just two days' rest before the Chemin de la Liberté was not something I would have considered a few years ago but somehow it seemed like a good idea to really push my luck this year.

What was the worst that could happen?

Well, for starters, we could get caught out by the weather. A couple of weeks before we were due to go, there were reports of heavy snow in the area and torrential rain. Despite advertising the walk on the ELMS website, there had been no interest so it would be just Boris and me this year but a small group has some advantages when it comes to travelling in bad weather. Assuming the routes were actually passable, it would simply be up to me to keep up.

We were up early on Saturday morning and, only pausing to pick up sandwiches and Coke, drove up to Bouychet to start the walk. The weather was fairly kind to us and we soon overtook the very few other walkers we saw that day. Three hours later and we'd gained a thousand metres to the Etang de Peyregrand where we had our first stop. Then it was on to the frontier.

Last year we had somehow missed the turning for the Port de Siguer, and this year we missed it again. So it was a hard climb to the top with several false crests before we finally made it to the border at about half past two. The weather was still warm and clear and so it was a fairly easy descent into the Principality.

Three hours walking and this is Etang de Peyregrand where we had our first break of the day.

Two and a half hours later, on the final climb to Port de Siguer, I paused just to take a picture

For some reason there was no water at the refuge at Rialb this year and we couldn't top up our supplies until



Looking back to France from Port de Siguer

almost at the road above El Serrat. We made it to the town at about five o'clock and settled into the nearest bar before walking down to our hotel, which is unfortunately quite a long way down from the village itself. However, it turned out to be worth it, with excellent rooms, brilliant buffet meals and very reasonable prices.

Next day we had a 40-minute road walk back to our start point before the ascent to Port de Siguer. It seemed quite steep, and I was still tired from the previous day, but in fact we made it to the border in about two and a half hours. From the top we could see the proper path back down into France and that turned out to be so much easier than the route we had used the previous day.

It came out at a crossing point on the Ruisseau de Peyregrand that runs all along the valley bottom but there seemed no safe way to cross without getting our feet wet - so we got wet feet. As we had descended, the clouds had come up to meet us so we were wet already, and there were several more boggy areas to wade through anyway. The rest of the walk was spent in mist and rain, making the final descent down the rocky path to Bouychet particularly unpleasant.

Half an hour down from the top and you can see the clouds moving up the valley.

We've just crossed the river and it's a good three hours to the finish -- we got soaked

Monday was to be the big day for me. We knew the route wouldn't be too hard, although I was still concerned about the final ascent. More sandwiches and Coke and we set off from the Etang de Soulcem at about nine o'clock.

Although we started in cloud and rain, this cleared as we rapidly gained altitude and the final climb to Port del Rat was not as bad as I had feared. We reached the top before noon and spent some time arranging the four ELMS crosses before holding a minute's silence for the men we had come to remember.

Just a few minutes from Monday's start point and you can see for yourself what the weather was like. The route to Port del Rat is marked but finding the way



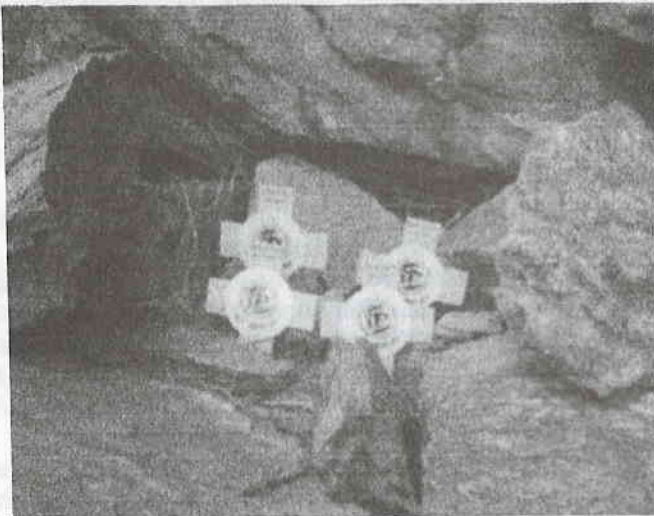
through mist and low cloud was not so easy

Climbing to Port del Rat you can see the route to Port d'Arinsal in the distance Port del Rat from the French side - we placed ELMS crosses on the other side of the cairn

Please remember that no matter how hard these walks were for us, war-time evaders would not have our advantages. Evaders would have been walking for several days through the heavily guarded zone interdite before the actual mountain ascent. Although mostly young men, they would not have been very fit after evading for weeks. They would have travelled by night, with poor rations and minimal protective clothing, and often in the winter months. The surprise is not so much that men died in these mountains -- but that many more did not.

Each ELMS cross has the man's details on the back. We put rocks around them to give some protection

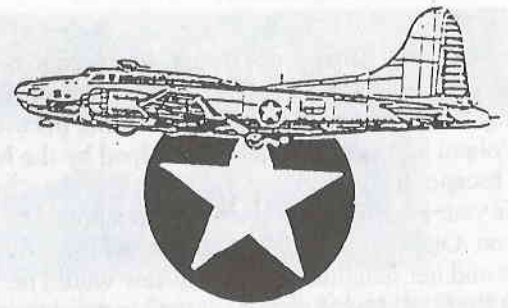
The crosses were placed on the Andorran side where we thought they would be better sheltered.



Each ELMS cross has the man's details on the back. We put rocks around them to give some protection



The crosses were placed on the Andorran side where we thought they would be better sheltered



## THE AIRMEN OF WORLD WAR II

Our nation's flyers fought for, died for and succeeded

In winning air-war supremacy wherever it was needed.

These men weren't depicted by Norman Rockwell artistries.

They were real men in a real time, fulfilling their destinies.

They came from happy homes. They came from broken homes.

But they came together determinedly, without moans and groans.

They were regular people like their past generational counterparts.

Those men mostly born between 1915 and 1925 came at that age,

Just in time to participate in that century's defining page.

The young men were screened and recruited into potential airmen.

Were honed and sharpened into the greatest air force times ten.

And they came home, some seared by the branding iron of war.

They came back to civilian life, sending their nightmares afar.

Our fathers, grandfathers and uncles came back to us in a hush.

And some of them who survived the wild skies, are still with us.

-Composed by Keith McLaren Abbott, 15th AF



# THE STOOGES

*by Keith Murray-China Airlift-  
The Hump Pilots Association*

I am the co-pilot,  
I sit on the right.  
I'm not important,  
Just part of the flight.  
I never talk back,  
Lest I have regrets.  
But I have to remember,  
What the pilot forgets.

I make out the flight plan,  
And study the weather,  
Pull up the gear,  
And stand by to feather.  
Make out the forms,  
And do the reporting,  
And fly the old crate,  
When the pilot's courting.

I take the readings,  
Adjust the power,  
Handle the flaps,  
And call the tower.  
Tell him where we are,  
On the darkest of nights,  
And do all the book work,  
Without any lights.

I call for my pilot,  
And buy him cokes,  
I always laugh  
At his corny jokes.  
And once in a while,  
When his landings are rusty,  
I come through with:  
"God, but it's gusty".

And all in all—  
I'm a general stooge,  
As I sit on the right,  
With a man I call Scrooge.  
I guess you may think,  
That is past understanding,  
But maybe some day,  
He'll give me a LANDING.



*Left to right: Mrs. Baire, Lisianne Derenne, Bobbie Ann Mason, Benoit Dorignaux, Fernand Fontesse, Ms. Snauwaert, Denise Siquiet and friend, Mr. and Mrs. Dehoux.*

## Bobbie Ann visits memorial where B-17 crashed in Belgium

In March, 2008, Friend member Bobbie Ann Mason visited Solre-Saint-Géry, Belgium, where Barney Rawlings, (E&E 671) her father-in-law, crash-landed Jan. 29, 1944. The B-17 "GI Sheets," piloted by James Fowler, was on a mission from the 303rd at Molesworth to Frankfurt.

The left waist gunner, Miller Jackson, was killed.

Rawlings, the co-pilot, made his way through France and over the Pyrenees with the help of several families and guides. His memoir, *OFF WE WENT*, tells this story. Several local people celebrated Ms. Mason's visit and paid tribute to the crew with flowers and a brief ceremony at the memorial, erected in 1987.

Ms. Baire, Ms. Snauwaert, and Mr. and Ms. Dehoux rushed to the field minutes following the crash-landing at the edge of the village of Solre-Saint-Géry.

Mr. Fontesse, 90, is now deceased. Ms. Siquiet designed the memorial. Ms. Derenne is the daughter of a Resistant, Arthur Derenne (deceased), and she is active in keeping the Belgian and American flags flying at the memorial and in providing floral tributes.

Mr. Dorignaux and Mr. Derenne were instrumental in helping gather and preserve history of the crash.

## NEW 'FRIEND' MEMBER

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# RAF cadets got a taste of Texas

Reprinted from *AIR MAIL*

By **FLT. LT. ALAN BRAMSON**  
Royal Air Force

When the balloon went up late in September 1939, I hot-footed to the recruiting office in my native Liverpool and told a smartly-dressed Flight Sergeant that I wanted to join and become a pilot. He explained that pilot training was yet to start but my quickest route was to join the RAF immediately, train as an airframe mechanic and re-muster for pilot training later.

He happened to be the biggest liar on Merseyside because it took me 13 applications, spread over two years, while I taught airframe mechanics at RAF Halton before I was accepted. After ground school training in Torquay, I was shunted to the RAF depot in Manchester and seven days later put on a train in the black of night along with several hundred others.

We steamed out, going north according to the stars and eventually came to a halt as dawn was emerging. One of the others in our carriage who could read stuck his head out of the window and said 'good Lord -it's bloody Greenock'. Few of us had heard of Greenock, bloody or otherwise, but we were ordered off the train, told to cross the platform and embarked on a number of small ferry boats.

In the distance we could see ships. One in particular was somewhat larger than the rest but the portholes were covered and the entire vessel was painted grey so there was no sense of scale. However, as we drew alongside embossed letters on the stern, partly hidden by grey paint, proclaimed that this was the Queen Mary.

With us on these ferry boats were several hundred German prisoners of war who had come out worst during the North African campaign and the QM seemed to be provoking some passion. Later we learned that a senior

Nazi had assured them that the Queen Mary and the even larger Queen Elizabeth had been sunk by the Luftwaffe.

I had reached the exalted rank of Corporal while instructing engineers at RAF Halton and since the QM was yet to be equipped for the thousands of Americans due to come over from the USA for the second front I was given a small cabin myself.

We waited at anchor while an army of carpenters beavered away near the sharp end of the ship. Rumors about who was joining us on the QM varied from Jo Stalin to the Pope but eventually Winston Churchill embarked along with several dozen politicians and the like. Later we learned that they were going over for 'how to finish the war' discussions with President Roosevelt in America.

Surrounding us were Royal Navy cruisers and battle ships and thus protected we pulled away from Greenock. By now we had learned our Morse code and on the way over one of the cruisers flashed 'feeling the strain' to the QM, possibly because the great Cunard liner could manage 30 knots or more if the need arose.

We had not been told our port of call but eventually the Statue of Liberty and a forest of skyscrapers convinced us that this was New York. However there was a strike in progress at the port and as we pulled in towards our berth a police motor launch met us. An officious gentleman with a loud hailer shouted 'Heave To' which provoked the response 'Stand Aside' from a crew member on the bridge of the QM.

That part of the river is not very wide so we could hardly believe when the skipper slowly turned us towards Cunard Line's Pier 90, pulled in and parked itself without any help from tugs.

We remained on board that night and some of us heard a few shots being fired. Next morning the Germans were marched down for breakfast by the Canadian guards and a number of prisoners had black eyes.

It transpired that the Germans in their quarters low down near the waterline had staged a sing-song to cover the noise being generated by two small but enterprising ex-Africa Corps members who were breaking a leg off one of the tables for use as a hammer. With it they opened the wing nuts on a porthole through which the two squeezed out.

The gunfire we heard was from some American guards who saw the two Germans swimming in the direction of a neutral ship.

When the shooting started they decided to make 'other arrangements' and allow others to fish them out of the water. Some of us had all the luck.

Early in the war it was rapidly recognised that Britain was no place for training. There was always the risk of being shot down by the Luftwaffe and the other risk of poor weather beyond the capabilities of trainee pilots in particular.

Prior to taking the train for the ship to America we had spent a week or so at RAF Park, Manchester. At that stage all we knew was they might be sending us for pilot training to Canada (the biggest training centre), South Africa, Rhodesia that was, or if we were lucky, the USA.

The kit issued to us varied according to where we were being sent and, when the crowd I was with marched to the stores, eyes widened as they gave us tropical uniform.

Soon after arriving in New York the majority departed to Canada and those of us with lightweight kit were ushered into a hangar where a Wing Commander shouted 'get yourselves sorted into six gangs of mates'. At that stage a young Flying Officer came to the mob who had followed me and said 'you are all going to Terrell, Texas.

The CO there is Wing Commander Moxham and he has told me to tell you that he is a bastard." I hasten to add that Moxham proved to be a highly regarded father figure.

The US of A is a big place and we



spent four days travelling south by train while the American civilian passengers thoroughly spoiled us.

Eventually we pulled into Terrell station, some 30 miles east of Dallas, Texas. We were poured into a fleet of coaches and driven to the nearby airfield, a single runway enterprise with gleaming white, air-conditioned blocks, a splendid lounge with a nice piano and a serve yourself dining room.

For the first time we learned that a small number of US Army Air Corps cadets were joining us on our course, number 16, the last to qualify at the end of the war being course 25. After that we were unable to keep the war going any longer.

Being first to open we were called Number 1 BFTS (ie. British Flying Training School). Other BFTSs were No 2 Lancaster (California), No 3 Miami (Oklahoma), No 4 (Arizona), NO 5 (Clewiston) (Florida) and Ponca City (Oklahoma) which was No 6. Number 7 BFTS only lasted a month, then the Americans wanted their airfield back.

Awaiting our arrival were 17 American cadets who were going to learn the RAF way. We immediately hit it off with our friends but it soon became obvious that their knowledge was confined to things US of A. During a conversation one lad from Boston said 'do you have radar' and I advised him that radar was invented by an Englishman named Watson Watt.

Another asked 'do you have Spitfires in the RAF' and one of the RAF lads said they were designed by a clever chap called Reginald Mitchell and were very successful. When one asked us if we had heard of the Flying Fortress patience was wearing thin and we told him that the RAF had a few of them but they were only used in training.

That said, we rapidly developed a warm regard for our US Army Corps mates and some friendships remain to this day.

The BFTSs were started in June 1941. America was yet to be involved in the war so, to remain legal, early courses wore grey flannel suits

instead of RAF uniform. However, in an act of lunacy Japan attacked Pearl Harbour without declaring war,

America put on the boxing gloves and we at the BFTSs changed into our RAF kit. The BFTSs were a remarkable concept in many ways. First all the instructors, ground and flying, were American civilians who wore a sort of uniform and a peaked hat with pseudo RAF wings. They trained us to the RAF syllabus and did an outstanding job.

Training was in three phases; primary when we flew Stearman biplanes powered by a 210 hp radial engines. The Stearman was, in fact, a Boeing aircraft, somewhat larger than a Tiger Moth but easier to fly accurately so the Tiger was in some respects a better trainer. We used to say the Stearman took off at 80, cruised at 80 and spun in at 80 but, in fact, it was a delightful bird to fly.

Irrespective of rank, NCOs had to remove their stripes on arrival at these schools and on the Primary course I was made a Cadet Sergeant. The next phase of training was called Basic and this involved conversion onto the AT6a advanced trainer built by North American Aviation and powered by a Pratt Whitney radial engine of 660 hp (derated to 550 hp).

We called them Harvards and they were great advanced trainers. At that stage a few of us were Cadet Flight Lieutenant rank and added two white shoulder bars to our uniforms.

Pilot training ended with the Advanced course, also flown on the AT6 but embracing aerobatics, night flying and navigation which terminated in a 2,000 mile cross country spread over two days. I must have done something right because they appointed me Cadet Wing Commander, an American was made a Cadet Squadron Leader and one of my mates became Cadet Adjutant.

All this was rewarding but if any of my colleagues misbehaved or was late returning to the airfield after dinner with friends in the town he was charged and I had to confine him to camp for a few days. Bearing in mind that, like everyone else, I had to pass the flying tests and ground school

## ***'Number 1 BFTS was a great experience;***

***we were lucky to have  
trained there.'***

***—Alan Bramson***

exams this was an 'honour' I could have done without. Failure rate varied but, at times, reached 50%. Along with the Americans there were 100 trainees on 16 Course, two RAF Cadets were killed in a flying accident and a few more were failed during training.

Fourteen of us were commissioned at the end of the course and the rest became sergeant pilots. Training ended with Wings Parade when we were all issued with our RAF brevet and the Americans wore metal wings on the left and RAF wings over the right, top pocket.

They were also issued a note signed by a US General proclaiming they had been trained by the RAF and entitled to wear the brevet.

### **About Terrell, Texas**

Terrell is a small town but its citizens went out of their way to entertain us in our spare time. We had to learn the language and get used to being greeted with the words 'Hi y'all' (or y'all both' when there were two of you).

They were proud of the fact that the RAF was training at their local airfield and many friendships remain to this day. The atom bombs ended the war so courses 26 and 27 ceased training at 1 BFTS.

During four and a half years RAF Terrell produced 2200 pilots, 19 of them were killed in flying accidents and another died from illness. The good folk of Terrell look after a small RAF cemetery and a service is held there whenever we hold a reunion. The airfield is now called Terrell Municipal Airport.

In 1983 Bert Allam and I founded 1 BFTS Association and at our peak we had 760 members. As you can



imagine, few of us are younger than 80 and one course mate of mine, who is still driving his car to reunions, is now 94.

Our 50th Anniversary was celebrated in October 1991 and in October of 1991 several hundred members crossed the Atlantic for a reunion in Dallas and Terrell.

It terminated in a final banquet for more than 400 people. Many of us

were made Hon. Texans and issued with imposing certificates carrying a massive gold seal and signed by the State Governor.

Over the years a few of us have fallen off the perch but, in the main, we are doing well.

It was while forming 1 BFTS Association that we got wind of someone who trained with one of the

last courses at Terrell.

He had just retired as Air Chief Marshal Sir John Gingell so we got him on parade as our President.

It has not been easy to trace with certainty how many Terrell trained pilots were awarded honours during World War 2 but we have found 6 Mentioned in Despatches, 3 Air Force Crosses, 4 Distinguished Flying X.

## A Young Boy and the "Good" War

© Edouard RENIÈRE

*With my heartfelt thanks to the late Paul GRISSO (1922-2003) – 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 442<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, Company G – POW 1944-1945 - for fine-editing the text.*

I was born in March 1938 in Brussels, Belgium. Toward the end of 1942, I, my parents and my brother, 4 years older than I, moved from a very small house to a fourteen unit apartment building above a movie theatre in the commune of Saint-Gilles. The building still stands but the cinema downstairs has been replaced some time ago by the Centre Culturel Jacques Franck.

My earliest childhood memories, naturally are of the World War Two period; not necessarily of the war itself, but rather of the conditions in which we, as children, had to live under German occupation. The adults, of course, understood the situation better than we children could.

### Food and ration stamps

One of the things I remember best is the long lines for bread we were sometimes subjected to. Once, in the dead winter of 1943, when my turn finally came in a long queue outside a bakery, the lady told me sadly that there wasn't any bread anymore, although I had the required bread stamps... Not only was I freezing but also a little bit uncertain about the reaction of my mother when I got home and told her there was no bread available... Happily for me, she understood and managed to bake a bread herself with some flour that my father had obtained through somebody who knew somebody who had relatives who had a farm in the countryside...

It was mostly, even for the bare

necessities, a question of finding a way to get more bread than the official maximum daily ration anyone was allowed to buy, in exchange for food stamps issued by the local authorities, under orders of the Germans... In August, 1940, the maximum daily ration of bread was 225 grams; butter: 35 gr; meat, if available: 90 gr, including 20% bones... These rations were often revised during the course of the war and, for example, in August, 1944, right before the liberation, the rations were: bread, 250 gr; flour, 185 gr; butter, 33,3 gr; meat: 20 gr (the maximum monthly ration of meat was a royal 600 gr...); potatoes, 400 gr.

One of my uncles had some connections and could obtain "extras": coal (to cook and to warm the apartment) and sometimes some flour, vegetables, potatoes, sausages ... so, our fare was slightly better than that of the average citizen. I don't remember having ever been hungry during the war, neither does my brother. Of course, we hadn't the same comparison criteria that our parents had. I'm sure they didn't always eat to their heart's content, although I never heard them complain...

Once, I went with my mother by tram outside Brussels to fetch vegetables, potatoes, etc., from some farmer. On the return trip, my mother was worrying about the possibility of a German round-up where they would stop the car and search everybody for forbidden goods... What she feared happened when some armed German



soldiers stopped the tram not far from the city limits and had everybody get out amidst shouts and a lot of commotion. They lined everybody up on the sidewalk and forced us to lift our hands above our heads. I remember a lady beside me who had a little dog, and when she lifted her arms up, she hoisted the little puppy yapping and wriggling at the end of its shortened leash way up high.

Luckily for us, the Germans stopped their search when they found a young man whose papers apparently weren't in order. They took him away and allowed everybody else to get back on the tram. I heard stories at the time of people having been rounded-up in similar circumstances, with the Germans getting their hands on all the forbidden goods, in order to serve themselves, and just letting the "culprits" go...

I once went with my father to the rue des Radis, a street in the poorest section of Brussels, where the biggest black market operations were going on. There you could find about everything anybody could dream of: butter, sugar, ham, chocolate (!), etc., but all at prohibitive prices. For example, un-roasted coffee was sold at a price amounting to a worker's monthly salary... All of this was strictly prohibited, of course, and there were look-outs posted on every street-corner to warn of any approaching German soldiers or Brussels-policemen... As I was strolling with my dad, looking at the wares laid out on blankets on the ground, there suddenly were shouts all over the place, with every merchant putting their goods in big jute bags and running away in something like panic trying to escape the approaching danger.

I never knew if it was a German patrol or policemen, but we got out of there in a hurry. In a few seconds it seemed to me, the street was empty as we also had taken a back-street. When the Germans ordered the Brussels policemen to make a round-up, most of the policemen warned the look-outs sufficiently in advance in order not to have to make arrests, but when the Germans themselves came, they really meant business. It was said that when merchants were caught, and many were, their possessions were taken and they were put in prison awaiting whatever fate the Germans decided upon.

#### Air-raid alerts

I remember the air-raid alerts and the sirens wailing. At the beginning of the war, we were bombed by the Germans. I have no recollection of that, of course, being really too young at the time. From August 1942 till the end of August 1944, approximately, there were British (at night) and American (in daytime) bombers attacking railway tracks and depots as well as German military installations. These last were rather far from where we lived, but there was a railway station and depot about four kilometers from our home and this was often targeted. The Germans forced Belgian railway workers to repair the damage each time after the frequent alerts.

At night, when the alert sounded, I was almost always the last one with my mother to reach the cellar and its passageways four levels below, where all the inhabitants of the block were gathered, most of them hastily clad in bathrobes or with coats over their nightgowns or pajamas. Nobody talked much most of the time. Everybody was listening to the sounds of the overhead bombers and the distant explosions. Sometimes these were not so distant when the bombers missed their target. Luckily, none of these stray bombs ever fell on our immediate neighborhood, but there always was the fear, that I sensed in everybody around me in the beginning and which I personally began to feel myself after a while.

At first, it had been like some sort of annoying ritual to have to get down to the cellar, but after a while I realized this was a reaction to a very real danger of having the whole building falling on our heads... It took me several years after the war to get out of the habit, when planes were overhead, of ducking and looking for a nearby shelter. Sirens are sounded for checks every first Thursday of the month at noon and even now, more than sixty years later, I still can't suppress the millisecond burst of some deep-planted feeling of fear.

My mother's nerves took a serious beating during those times and she never fully re-gained a real peace of mind, even after the liberation, always worrying about something or another. A lady neighbor suffered also from nervous complaints due to the stress and anxiety of those times, so much so that for a very long time after the war, in fact for as long as I knew her, whenever there was a thunder-storm, she



felt jumpy and ducked under her table waiting for the storm to pass. This was not hearsay, as I personally saw her many times cowering in fear under her table. When fireworks were planned in the Commune or in the City, she often went to another Commune or even to the countryside to "escape" the loud cracking noise. Even the sound of the air rifles at the shooting gallery that was set up each year on the temporary fairground less than a kilometer from our building always put her on edge.

When there was an air-raid alert during the day, my reaction was always to seek shelter, wherever there was any. If I was on the street either alone or with my mother (my father was at work in an office), we had to decide what we should do: either run to the cellar in our building, or if we were too far away, to our nearest assigned public shelter on the corner of a street not far from where we lived. As we never wandered too far from home, most of the time we went to that shelter, everybody running like mad from all directions hoping to reach it in time. The door of the shelter was rather narrow and there was often shoving and cursing because people couldn't get inside fast enough. Once inside, everybody was cramped standing in the small quarters, most barely speaking to each other, some nervously trying to evacuate the fear by joking about the whole matter... Each and every time, I sensed the air full of fear and anxiety as we all listened, listened..., awaiting the siren sounding the end of the raid.

Sometimes the alert lasted ten minutes, sometimes an hour or more, but somehow people came to get used to that way of life. There was nothing else they could do, and since no bomb ever fell in our immediate vicinity, a certain type of fatalism seemed to prevail. From time to time, we heard news that people had died or had been wounded in a bombardment in the suburbs of Brussels or in other cities around the country, either because the bombs had missed their targets, or because the civilians were employed in one or another Nazi-occupied building or installation on forced labor or service for the Germans.

I remember a few times that the alert sounded when I was at school. As there was no shelter nor cellar in our school and our "personal" air-raid shelter was too far away,

all the teacher could tell us was to duck under our desks and wait. We sometimes saw groups of bombers high up in the sky and didn't realize at the time that they were friendly (American) planes...

#### A daring attack on the Gestapo

One event which struck me as the first real heroic action I ever heard of happened in the winter of 1943. Jean de Sélys-Longchamp, a Belgian born in 1911 had, like many others, left the country after the capitulation on May, 28, 1940 (the King, leader of the Army, had decided to avoid unnecessary added bloodshed) to continue the fight. He had reached England and volunteered for military service. He chose the Air Force and earned his wings in a Belgian squadron attached to the Royal Air Force (RAF). On Wednesday, January, 20, 1943, he and another pilot left the airfield of Manston, England, on a strafing mission to Belgium. They attacked locomotives in the vicinity of Ghent, in Northern Belgium. The mission accomplished, only the other pilot flew back to Manston, not knowing that de Sélys, flying alone in the direction of Brussels, had other plans.

The young pilot's plan was to strafe a Gestapo (German military police) installation in Brussels, but he had received no answer, neither positive nor negative, from his superiors upon his request to risk such an adventure. So he took it on his own to get on with his daring enterprise. Flying very low to evade German radar, he flew his Typhoon above Brussels and approached his objective, a 12-story building on the Avenue Louise. In a deafening noise, he fired his cannons and saw the shells mounting up the façade of the building, with glass and concrete flying everywhere. He threw two flags, one of Belgium, the other of the United Kingdom, before zooming upwards above the building and taking altitude to get out as soon as possible. Twenty-five minutes later, after having flown low over hilly Flemish countryside, the seashore and the sea, escaping detection by radar and anti-aircraft guns, he landed safely in Manston.

Four Germans had been killed in the raid, amongst them one of the highest officers of the Gestapo in Brussels, Muller. A dozen were wounded, and the building was in shambles. The news spread all over Brussels and the people rejoiced at the kick in the butt that raid meant for the Germans



who made life harsher and harsher everyday for the hungry, un-free population. The Germans were raving mad and arrested many innocent civilians as a retaliatory measure, but that courageous gesture from one of ours, fighting on despite a seeming German invincibility, lifted the spirits of a whole country.

When my father came home in the afternoon, he excitedly told us the news of the daring attack that the whole city was spreading around. He listened as usual to the BBC that evening and got more details about the pilot and his "forbidden" mission. The following day, like hundreds of inhabitants of Brussels, we went to take a look at the site, but were pushed back by angry soldiers. All I could see were shattered windows and bullet marks all over the façade.

de Sélys saw his rank reduced, but at the same time he was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross for his gallant action... He died on a mission above Ostend in August, 1943. The building he strafed is still standing on n° 453 of the Avenue Louise, and a plaque on the façade recalls the incident, as does a memorial nearby.

#### « Le faux SOIR »

The Germans invaded Belgium on May, 10, 1940, and they quickly occupied the whole of the country after a capitulation that was deemed inevitable by the King, hoping to avert useless bloodshed. All newspapers and other media were progressively requisitioned by the German Military Government. In Brussels, publishing freely till the last moment, some newspaper owners voluntarily ceased publication as a patriotic gesture. They dismantled presses and machines and put them away in various secret places, together with reserves of printing paper. Others were forced to continue publishing under the same banner, as the occupying forces wanted to spread information that suited their purposes.

The main Brussels-daily, "Le SOIR" ("the EVENING") had continued publishing scathing articles denouncing the German invasion of our neutral country but had to cease publication on May, 18. From the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, the paper restarted publication under German orders, with the help of some of the staff and journalists who had chosen to not resist the usurpation of the

paper nor the censorship. Nor did some traitors in the staff hesitate afterwards to solicit denunciations from the population in order to "please" the occupant.

The stolen "Le SOIR" printed articles dictated by the occupying forces and was evidently a propaganda tool. Despite this negative aspect, most people in Brussels still bought it because it was the only source of any news they had and most didn't believe everything that was printed anyway. Some of the news was in fact practical and useful, information about places and distribution times of ration stamps, free missing-person notices that the publishers adroitly offered people to help them find relatives, etc., the main purpose of course being that this meant more papers sold.

In October 1943, a member of the Résistance hit upon a daring idea: Why didn't they try to publish a false "SOIR"? On October 20, he talked about it with the head of another Résistance movement and they both agreed it was a wonderful idea, despite the many risks and problems involved. Money, a lot of money, was needed, as was a very good printing press capable of issuing a perfect look-alike of the usurped "official" paper. People were needed, not only to write the text and print it, but also to distribute the false papers in the few dozens of kiosks and booksellers disseminated in the city. In utmost secrecy, with the help of the Resistance and some other trusted plain citizens, the "journalists" wrote articles and passed the proofs around to compare texts; printing paper was cunningly redistributed from official newspaper printing plants to secret caches; carefully selected workers distributed the type; a master-printer agreed to print the 50,000 copies that were deemed necessary to make a sufficient impact; others planned the simultaneous distribution of some 5,000 papers in the kiosks, the other 45,000 issues to be sold clandestinely afterwards. All this feverous, underground activity went on for 20 days. It was a time full of secret meetings at well chosen cafés, of contacts with printing workers employed at the "official Le Soir" newspaper who were forced to work there and with the constant fear of being denounced and arrested, or of seeing the project abort for some reason or other.

The publishing date was set for Tuesday,



November 9, 1943. In the few days preceding that date, the papers were printed, packed in parcels of 50 copies to be distributed by truck to pre-arranged meeting places, mostly in cafés, because if the Germans found anything out in any of those places, the owner of the café could always tell them that it happened often that people forgot parcels in their watering holes. In the cafés, the parcels were taken up by those who had to carry them on foot or on bicycle, each to his designated kiosk. Copies traveled well outside Brussels to supply other groups in the country, but these were not sold in kiosks, only sold on the quiet. The benefits from the sales were destined to help Résistance groups and needy townspeople whose homes had been destroyed in bombardments.

The group of patriots had asked via secret coded messages that London send a few RAF fighters to fly above Brussels at an appropriate time on November 9 in order to facilitate the operations during "a specified alert" (London did indeed send planes, but they came one day late.) In another side operation, meant to distract the enemy and retard the distribution of the usurped official "Le SOIR", the group had planned putting delivery trucks on fire on the morning of the great day in order to disrupt the normal delivery agenda of the "stolen SOIR" (this daring operation succeeded only partly as one of the trucks was put on fire by incendiary handmade bombs, the young resistance men having been seen by a passer-by who alerted the newspaper staff.)

November 9, 1943, around 4:15 pm. already, the first customers are waiting for their newspaper at their usual kiosk. Normally, "Le SOIR" reached most newsstands at 4:30. Around the city, the "carriers" walked or rode towards their delivery points, gave their parcel to the vendor. They told them that the reason of their early delivery and of the minimal quantity of papers was because there had been a failure at the printing plant and that the rest of the papers would arrive at 6:00 pm. Each parcel was bound with rope and had a red label with a note about the printing failure. Some papers were sold to customers who simply walked away, their paper folded under an arm, or put in a briefcase or bag. But others started reading the paper right away... and began to smile, some to laugh, not for long however, as they feared being caught laughing at a

photo of a sorry-looking Hitler, or reading the caption above the photo of a B-17 US bomber : "In full action".

In fact, all the texts of the two page paper, made a mockery of the Reich propaganda; the Belgian traitors and collaborators and the rationing. The obituary section printed the names of known collaborators. There was an advertisement section full of wisecracks on the everyday life of the occupied country. One article announced that the bread ration would reach 500 grams on November 11, 1918, date of the WW1 armistice when Germany had been vanquished. The movie theater announcements told of films with such titles as "OLYMPIAD - Part 1 : the Marathon from El Alamein to Sidi Barani" with (Field Marshall) Rommel in his greatest role; "The UNSINKABLE" with the whole of the British Navy; "The WITHDRAWAL", a unique documentary on the new uses of the rubber band; "OLYMPIAD - Part 2", the Marathon from Sidi Barani to the Coast, with Rommel in a custom made role; "WHERE IS THE EDITOR ?", a detective film, with Himmler and the Gestapo... and so on and so on.

Soon, the whole city was laughing and talking about the extraordinary, unbelievable feat. The first thing I knew about that event is seeing my father coming home that evening, very excited, waving a paper in his hand. My mother told us afterwards that she had been worried something was wrong because my father's eyes were moist, but at the same time, that funny, secretive expression in the same eyes had immediately reassured her. Dad then told us to be patient, that he'd explain, that he'd read the "special" paper to all of us after dinner. All he agreed to tell us was that "C'est un faux SOIR !" ("It's a false SOIR !") We ate rather quickly and he then began to read. Of course, I didn't really understand what it was all about, but I laughed just as the rest of them, mostly because every now and then my parents broke into irresistible laughter and my father had to take his breath to get on with his reading. He didn't read all of it that evening, but the juiciest parts only. My mother, who was laughing her head off, abruptly stopped laughing and got a strange look in her eyes that I didn't understand then but that she explained afterwards as coming from some kind of fear of being caught laughing at something



terribly secret and forbidden... As for my brother, he was laughing more heartily than I could, because, lucky guy, he understood almost everything, especially the (for the times) dirty words.

The next day, people who had missed buying the "false" paper, tried frantically to obtain one, from a neighbor or from a friend or acquaintance, and, if that didn't succeed, "would somebody, please, read it to me?" Some people made money by selling their copy, with sums reaching one thousand francs, a fortune at the time, the price of one kilo of butter on the black market. Imagine: photostats of the paper were sent secretly to London and soon there were reprints, about 10,000 of which were sent to agents all over occupied Europe.

My father kept his own genuine paper for long years after the war, but somehow, someday he had to come to the conclusion that he had lost it. We never learned what had happened to that journalistic rarity. My mother consistently swore she never would have used it to peel her potatoes... Anyway, years afterward, there were copies printed as souvenir and it was only then, when I could read and understand all the articles, that I really appreciated the humor and the danger that hung above every participant to the daring act and the anger of the Germans. I still have got that copy and I cherish it as a memento of another event that I lived uncomprehendingly through. The Germans searched for the

perpetrators of this farce at their expense, and in February, 1944, the Gestapo discovered the presses and arrested four of the patriots. Later, they arrested 10 other members of the faux SOIR team. They were all convicted, from four months to fifteen years in prison. Four of them were sent to camps in Germany, two never came back: the master-printer Fernand WELLENS, who took the risk of printing all issues in his own printing-works; and Théo MULLIER, who had supplied a flong (typing-mold) with the "Le SOIR" banner, the list of the kiosks and sellers who were directly furnished by the paper, as well as the quantities distributed and time of delivery at each selling point.

#### The Germans in our midst

I have very few recollections of any contact with the Germans themselves, except the sight of occasional groups of soldiers who marched through the streets of the city or of our Commune and neither I nor my brother nor my parents ever had to directly suffer from any German soldier. There were German flags hanging on every public building, red and white and black, with the black swastika in the middle. Sometimes, from our window, we could see Germans patrolling the streets at night to check if the curfew was well respected.

\*\*\*\*\*

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE

### THE COMING INVASION

## *Changes/corrections for membership directory*

(Changes are Underscored.)

1. Mr. Stephen Bachar "H", Gassville Nursing Center, 203 Cotter Rd., Gassville, AR 726385.
2. Mr. Michael Carpenter "FFL", 2321 Whiting Bay Cts. NW, Kennesaw, GA 30152-6727 (PO)
3. Mr. Paul K. Courtad, 260 Duck Pond Rd., Upper Sandusky, OH 43351-9603 (PO)
4. L/C. Michael L. Downs "F", PSC 3 BOX 8355, APO AP 96266-0177 (PO)
5. Mr. Kenneth P. Dunaway "L", 13875 W. 11115th TR, Apt. 2604, Olathe, KS 66062.
6. L/C. Roger Files, 618 Springer Ter., Los Altos Hills, CA 94024-3152 (PO)
7. Mr. John A. Kupsick "L", 705 SW Mawcrest Dr., Gresham, OR 97080-6547 (PO)
8. L/C. Pat N. Mann "L", 765 Chandler Heights Cir., Alto, GA 30510-3436 (PO)
9. Mr. James R. Murray "L", 18 Laurelhurst Dr., Brick, NJ 08724-3644 (PO)
10. Mr. Joseph F. Quirk, Jr., 907 E Park Sq., Prospect Park, PA 19076-2211 (PO)
11. L/C. Ernest C. Skorheim, 4477 Edison Ave., Sacramento, CA 95821-3367 (PO)
12. L/C. Jay H. Williams "L", 5314 W. 121st Ter, Apt. 210, Overland Park, KS 66209-3568 (PO)
13. Mrs. Grace Mulrooney, 3 Millview, North Park Rd., Westvale Kirby, Liverpool L32 2DD, ENGLAND



# **-FOLDED WINGS-**

## MEMBERS

#2059 Robert Atkins "L", Huntington Sta., N.Y.,  
452nd BG, Jan. 27, 2008

15th AF Albert E. Beauchemin, Adams, Mass., 455th BG,  
June 18, 2008

12th AF James L. Jared, Keizer, Ore., 310th BG,  
May 20, 2007

#2029 James P. Law, Johnstown, Pa., 100th BG,  
May 21, 2008

#689 Milton J. Mills "L", Barboursville, W.V., 379th BG,  
April 15, 2008

#1275 William E. Mountain "L", Duncansville, Pa., 401st BG,  
Feb. 17, 2007

#1075 Walter R. Williams "L", Rugby, N.D., 381st BG, April 1,  
April 1, 2008

## HELPERS

De Heer Rik CRAEGHS, Brussels, Belgium, Aug. 15, 2008

Richard van NUNEN, Veghel, Holland, Aug. 25, 2008

## Philip J. Fink

**From the Buffalo (N.Y.) NEWS, July 10, 2008**

Philip J. Fink (E&E 113, 384th BG) whose escape from enemy soldiers during World War II is documented in the Library of Congress, died March 14. He was 87.

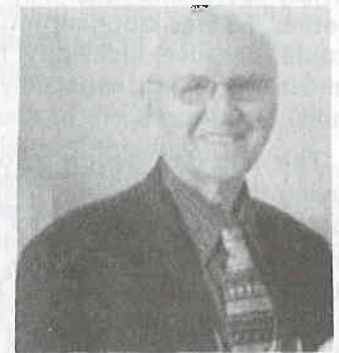
Born in Lancaster, N.Y., Philip graduated from high school in 1939 and took up his father's profession, becoming a printer.

As radio operator on a B-17 nicknamed "Miss Carriage," he was shot down June 26, 1943, in Normandy, France. He crossed the Pyrenees to Andorra.

"Like sharks drawn by blood, enemy fighters attacked the crippled aircraft, igniting her left wing and killing the navigator, tail gunner and one waist gunner," Jerri Donohue wrote in *Western New York Heritage* magazine, in an article about how Philip evaded capture.

Mme. Janine Giles, active in the French Resistance, hid Philip after he landed by parachute on the farm of Paul Gueroult near Caen. In 1986, he returned to the place where he had been helped.

Survivors include two daughters, Eileen Hudack and Annette Pfister.



ALVIN RAYMOND KUBLY

## **Ray Kubly wounded in his parachute**

**From the Wisconsin Journal,  
June 6, 2008**

WATERTOWN -- Alvin Raymond "Ray" Kubly, 84, of Watertown, Wisc., passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family on June 4, 2008.

His parents emigrated from Switzerland to the United States in 1910. Ray graduated from Watertown High School in 1942. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps on Oct. 7, 1942, and served as a B-17 bombardier with the 8th Air Force stationed in England.

He bailed out when his plane was shot down on Oct. 7, 1944, on a mission to the oil refinery at Meresburg. He was fired on by German marksmen and wounded in the calf of his leg. He was taken to a hospital where he met Jack Murrell, a C-47 pilot, and they escaped on Oct. 26 by crawling through the heating ducts.

After the war, Ray returned to Watertown and married Ruth Wegwart in 1948. They have four children and seven grandchildren.

Ray graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1952 and worked for Cargill Hybrid Seed Division for seven years. Then he joined Dairyland Seed Co., as sales manager and 35 years later, retired as vice president of sales.

*Ray Kubly, E&E 2864, was a  
Lifetime member of AFEES and a  
member of the Board of Directors.*



## **Albert Beauchemin** ***B-24 gunner*** ***shot down twice***

Albert Beauchemin of Adams, Mass., died June 18, 2008. He served as an armorer gunner on a B-24 in the 15th Air Force, 455th BG, 740th Sqdn.

Flying out of San Giovanni airfield, Cerignola, Italy, he flew 25 missions.

He parachuted behind enemy lines into Bosnia on his sixth mission. Evading capture with aid of Tito's Partisans, he returned to resume combat.

He and his crew survived a direct hit by a flak shell during an attack on marshalling yards in Vienna. He became a POW on his 25th mission, parachuting from the plane in Hungary.

After returning to civilian life, he was employed as a pharmacist.

He is survived by his wife Dolores, a son, a daughter, and three grandchildren.

## ***'Pete' Hoyt had some marvelous stories, all true, to tell his friends***

From ***THE PLAIN DEALER***  
**Cleveland, Ohio**  
**Thursday, June 5, 2008**

Elton "Pete" Hoyt III escaped occupied France during World War II and returned to Cleveland to become one of the city's most prominent business leaders.

Hoyt, 88, retired president and chief executive officer of a mining and shipping firm, died Sunday, June 1, in his Kirkland Hills home.

Hoyt (E&E #409) mesmerized friends with his story of avoiding German soldiers who hunted him and other airmen across the French countryside in September 1943.

He had nothing but praise for the French people and their underground patriots who put themselves in danger by helping the airmen. Hoyt, pilot of a B-17 (379th BG), named the plane

the Battlin' Bobbie, after his wife.

His crew bailed out before the plane crashed, and were protected by the underground. Before they left Messac, a town near the crash, Hoyt gave his wallet, his watch, a belt and a mechanical pencil to a farmer for safekeeping.

Hoyt and the other airmen, armed with false papers, walked, biked and rode by train to safety over the Pyrenees to neutral Spain.

Nearly 60 years later, Hoyt returned to Messac. Families who had helped the airmen escape hosted a luncheon in 2002 for the Battlin' Bobbie crew. Hoyt was surprised when the same farmer he had given his wallet and personal items returned them to him.

The citizens of Messac dedicated a monument to the Battlin' Bobbie crew near the site where the B-17 crashed. "They are honoring us when we should be honoring them," he told the *Plain Dealer* at the time.

He was an avid fisherman and boater. He and his wife had had a winter home in Boca Grande, Fla., since 1966. They had a boat moored in Boca Grande and another in Cleveland.

His wife said, "He told some marvelous stories, all true, and had a contagious laugh."

## **AFEES reunion**

Thursday-Saturday, May 7-9, 2009

Holiday Inn

Dayton-Fairborn, Ohio

*Registration forms will be in next issue of Communications*

***New address? New phone? Clayton needs to know!***

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

***Send payments and changes to Clayton C. David, AFEES Membership Chair,  
19 Oak Ridge Pond, Hannibal, MO 63401-6539, U.S.A. <davidafe@adams.net>***

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ CITY & STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_



# The editor has the last word

By LARRY GRAUERHOLZ  
<afees44@hotmail.com>

OR

<archerco@wf.quik.com>

WICHITA FALLS, Tex.--Time moves on, and our society needs to decide what kind of future we will have. The subject will be an important part of the 2009 reunion at Dayton next spring.

In the meantime, if you have suggestions, please contact our president, Richard Smith, or any other member of the Board of Directors.

The shift to Second Generaters has already begun. Clayton David, past president and membership chair, feels that it is time to pass along some of the duties to Richard Shandor and Sandy Comstock.

Several young folk signed up for a transition team at Savannah, and I feel that there is ample interest and talent to maintain our legacy for some time to come.

Our Superfriend General Duncan McNabb has made it back to his beloved Cornfield Country.

In the recent shakeup at the Pentagon, Duncan was promoted from vice chief of staff to commander of the Airlift Command, headquartered at Scott AFB, Ill. (See story on Page 9.)

Duncan, while stationed at Scott in 2007, "pulled out all the stops" for our reunion there that year.

I hear that nearly 100 people are expected to attend the Oct. 17-19 meeting of the *Comete* Kinship Belgium Association. The group was organized shortly after the war to keep alive the memory of the *Comete* Evasion Line.

Chairman Ralph has some comments about *Comete* on Page 14. To learn more, open their website: <cometeline.org>

William R. LaForce and Stanley A. Plytinski were members of the

Kempton crew shot down on Jan. 5, 1944.

Both men froze their feet in crossing the Pyrenees and Stanley had both feet amputated. They were hospitalized in Spain and then flown back to the U.S.

Now, a French woman who helped them to evade would like to make contact with a family member or friend. If you can help, please contact Ye Ed.

<claudy.winant> a Belgian researcher, is seeking information about James C. Sherwood, member of the Fitzpatrick Carpetbagger crew, (492 BG), who went down over Belgium. At one time, James lived in Arlington, Va.

Bob Horsley, secretary of the RAFES (Australia), says that a memorial to honor Andree De Jongh in Scherbeek, Brussels, is planned.

Bob recalls that Dedee took him from Paris to Spain in June 1942.

## MORE SAGE ADVICE

Before you criticize anyone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

AND, Never, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night.

From  
AFEES Publications  
19 Oak Ridge Pond  
HANNIBAL MO 63401-6539  
U.S.A.

## Change Service Requested

Mr Bruce Bollinger  
12704 Butterfly Dr  
Nevada City, CA 95959

*This one is from AFEES Friend and barkeep Steve McIsaac.*

The teacher told the students to get their parents to tell them a story with a moral at the end of it. The next day the kids came back and one by one began to tell their stories.

There were all the regular type stuff, spilled milk and pennies saved. But then teacher realized, much to her dismay, that only Ernie was left.

"Ernie, do you have a story to share?"

"Yes ma'am. My daddy told a story about my Aunt Karen.

"She was a pilot in Desert Storm and her plane got hit.

"She had to bail out over enemy territory and all she had was a flask of whiskey, a pistol and a survival knife.

"She drank the whiskey on the way down so the bottle wouldn't break and then her parachute landed right in the middle of 20 enemy troops.

"She shot 15 of them with the gun until she ran out of bullets, killed four more with the knife, till the blade broke, and then she killed the last enemy with her bare hands."

"Good Heavens" said the horrified teacher. "What kind of moral did your daddy tell you from this horrible story?"

"Stay the hell away from Aunt Karen when she's been drinking."

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