

# AIR FORCES ESCAPE AND EVASION SOCIETY



## COMMUNICATIONS SUMMER 1987

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Fellow Evaders:  
As we pause and reflect on the San Antonio reunion, it would be difficult not to conclude that this was the best reunion that AFEES ever had. There were the usual problems associated

with an undertaking of this magnitude, but there were very few major foul ups.

We were honored by the presence of twenty six Helpers representing Holland, Belgium, France, Poland, and Yugoslavia. This is undoubtedly the largest gathering of Helpers ever held in the United States. It is a tribute to all of you who attended our past reunions that so many of our Helpers have returned to the USA for a second and third visit with the AFEES.

We are especially pleased that thirty three members of the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society (Canadian Br.) traveled from Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Ottawa and points north to enjoy some good old Texas hospitality. I have the distinct impression that they liked what they saw. A sizeable contingent of AFEES members are planning to join our Canadian friends at their annual meeting to be held in Kingston, Ontario on September 18th and 19th. How about joining us? Canadian hospitality is as warm as the Texas sun.

We regret that Frank Dell, President of the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society was unable to join us but he was adequately represented by his charming copilot, Isabel. We hope they will both be with us in 1988 in Denver

Outstanding reunions don't just happen. They take a heck of a lot of work. We were very fortunate to have a lot of hard working Texians at work on the San Antonio meeting. Under the low keyed direction of chairman Jim Goebel the Texas committee put together a memorable program. My deep appreciation for a job well done to Jim Goebel, Harry Dolph, Jack Ilfrey, Gil Millar and Vic Ferrari.

At the annual meeting, held Wednesday morning May 27th, the membership unanimously reelected the present officers and directors for another one year term in office.

In addition they elected a new Director, Clayton David, thus increasing the Board of Directors by one member to a total of ten. Welcome aboard Clayton.

Once again our Auction was an artistic and financial success. Although we missed our friendly Canadian auctioneer, Ross Weins, our own Milt Goldfedder and Dick Smith managed to carry on successfully to the tune of \$2921.00. Thanks Milt and Dick and all the many wives and members who spent long hours working on this entertaining money-maker.

David O'Boyle has agreed to chair the next meeting to be held in Denver, Colorado next May 18th through the 21st, 1988. His target is to exceed the two hundred and thirty who were in attendance in San Antonio. Why not start planning to join us now?? Get a 1988 calender and block out these dates.

As we grow, the work load grows. Fortunately the pool of volunteer talent and workers also increases. Thanks to Hayward Spinks, AFEES is still alive. Thanks to Scotty David, AFEES is growing, and thanks to Harry Dolph along with Gil Millar our horizons and ability to communicate are growing. In addition, all of these dedicated people make my job a lot easier. THANKS Y' ALL...

RALPH PATTON,  
President



Who says Ellie Manion can't ride a horse?

THANK YOU 390TH

At our AFEES business meeting in San Antonio, the 390th Bomb Group (H) Association recognized Leslie Atkinson for his substantial help in locating helpers who participated in ceremonies in France during the 390th Group's trip to France. The AFEES thanks you for your courtesy.

Ed.

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DUTCH HELPER LOOKING FOR YOU!

Letter received by A.J.Horning, Ohio  
Bathmen, Holland  
December 28, 1986

It was in October 1943 when a man asked the way to Zutphen. My husband who in 1943 was 43 years old, was on his way to pick some apples. He showed you the direction. With your arms and legs you made clear to him that you came down in a parachute from an airplane. You made it clear that you were tired and hungry. My husband brought you to our house. You let us see your Air-Medal. Then you had food in our sitting room. On that evening we became friends. My husband made it clear to you you must not speak by holding up his fingers to his lips.

In the evening and in the night you slept in the barn in the hay. I gave you a few blankets. The next morning you had breakfast with us. You wanted some Dutch money so we traded it for your English money.

That morning, I gave you a bag in which you could take food, (apples, etc.) with you.

You did not give your address and also you would not take our address because it was too dangerous.

We offered to give you a hiding address, but that was not necessary you said. You would go to Zutphen and then on a train in the direction of Arnhem. Then you walked away.

With this letter I hope that you have enough information. If you were that airman, then I hope you write me.

Yours faithfully.

Z. BEUNK-TUITERK

Gorsselseweg 37,

7437 BE - Bathmen, Holland.

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Ed note - Al J. Horning was not the person involved. If the letter rings a bell, please contact this person. ASAP - Thanks...

POW MEDAL TO BE GIVEN TO 140,000

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

A description of the circular medallion describes the eagle as standing "with pride and dignity, continually on the alert for the opportunity to seize hold of beloved freedom."

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

Congress established the POW medal in the fiscal 1986 Defense Authorization Act. It will be awarded to any military member who was taken prisoner after April 5, 1917.

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

The services will issue specific eligibility criteria for the decoration, DoD officials said.

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

DoD officials said it will be ready for distribution no sooner than the summer of 1987.

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Ed note. - Lt. Col. Clyde Childress feels we have some mutual interest in this matter. As head of the AMERICAN GUERRILLAS of MINDANAO he is of the opinion a similar medal should be cast for the AFEES so the benefits granted to the POW's would be mutual.



Andre Chareton can ride too

## REUNION AND MEETING NOTICES

100th Bomb Group WWII. The bloody 100th will hold a reunion SEPT.6-9, 1987 at the HYATT REGENCY HOTEL in LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA. For details, Please contact BOB WOLFF, 5074 CALVIN AVE., TARZANA, CALIFORNIA 91356 or phone (818) 343-5209.

SECOND BOMB GROUP (H) WWII making plans for 1987 reunion. For details, Contact C.P. HUNTINGTON, 721 CASCADE DRIVE, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA 95129.

449th BOMB GROUP "Flying Horsemen". The 716th, 717th, 718th, 719th BOMB SQDNS and the 348th AIR RESERVE SQDN. are holding their 3rd Annual reunion this SEPTEMBER 23-25th, 1987 at the CLARION HOTEL, COLORADO SPRINGS, COL. For details, contact: DICK DOWNEY, Secy. 4859 STANHOPE DR. ST LOUIS, MO. 63128, or phone (314) 892-4597.

ROYAL AIR FORCES ESCAPING SOCIETY, (Canadian Branch) are holding their annual reunion SEPTEMBER 18-19 at the HOLIDAY INN, 1 Princess Street, in Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 1A1. For details, contact: AL SPENCER, 8 MARSDEN PLACE, NEPEAN, ONTARIO K2H 5L5 CANADA.

95th BOMB GROUP (H) Reunion 1987  
The annual reunion of the 95th Bomb Group (H) Association (WWII) will be held at Colorado Springs, Co Sept. 14 to 19, 1987. For info: Joel A. Bunch, 8730 Guilford Ave, Indianapolis In. 46240.

461st & 484th BOMB GROUPS (WWII), in conjunction with the 15th Air Force Association will hold a reunion in Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 14-18, 1987. The 461st & 484th Bomb Groups will meet at the Clarion Hotel 2886 South Circle Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80906. Contact Bud Markel, 1122 Ysabel St., Redondo Beach, California 90277. Phone (213) 316-3330.

EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY will hold it's annual reunion in Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle at the Hilton Hotel from Oct.14th to 18th For Info: Bob Nolan, Registration Office, 2676 North Augusta Drive, Clearwater, Florida.

## LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

Brest, 3 June 1987

Dear Ralph and Bette:

From Brest where I arrived Tuesday 2 June at 1:00AM I wish to tell you again the joy that I had being with you in San Antonio and also at the ranch of Robert and Mary Sweat.

You have paid me a very high honor Ralph, all your expressions of sympathy have touched my heart- and I will retain an unforgettable memory. Thank you

Affectionately yours,

Mimi: (Marie Gicquel)

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Ploumagoar, Monday 8 June 1987

Dear Friends:

Once again we come to thank you for the marvelous moments spent with you. At each new voyage I believe that it is more enjoyable than the preceding one. We love the atmosphere that exists among you. It is "Formidable." The visit to the Air Base (Kelly Field) interested us very much, the ranch and the rodeo equally. One lone bad note---the mosquitos---oh! terrible.

Our trip to New York was super thanks to Ernest Hugonnet.

George Padgett is also "formidable." On Sunday he took us to Disneyland, also to Santa Barbara and to Logoing, a village with Dutch Mills and Danish houses. Everywhere we received a terrible reception; Andre had wine on the airplane offered by the Steward. At the airport in Los Angeles where we arrived before George Padgett, the airline employees twice offered us cartons of fruit juice. How would it be possible for us not to like America? Jim and Rosemary Wilschke, Keith Sutor, George Buckner, Ralph and Case Hanou all were very kind to us. And, David O'Boyle told us that it would not be a party without us.

Thank you very much. We have had a magnificent voyage.

ANNE & ANDRE CHARETON

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LIFE MEMBERSHIPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE. THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS URGE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO NEVER HAVE TO PAY DUES TO AFEES AGAIN. WE HOPE FOR ONE HUNDRED PERCENT PARTICIPATION.



Duncdin  
1st June 1987

Dear Ralph,

Bravo! Once again, you and your countrymen made our visit to San Antonio a great success.

Each year we meet with long lost friends and although so many years have gone by it is always a great joy to meet them again.

The cowboy hats, silver belt buckles, rodeo, sheriff's riding their horses, last but not least, the "Hay Ride" reminded me of those old western films we used to enjoy. In our young years, where the good looking guys were always the winners!!

I am certain all of us appreciated the hard work this reunion entailed and for this and the warm welcome received in San Antonio, please accept my heartfelt thanks.

ANNE BRUSSELMANS

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#### RECOGNITION OVERDUE!

For close to twenty years I have been coresponding with a French woman who was in charge of French Resistance Fighters during WW2. She and the men and women in her resistance group saved many Air Force personnel that were shot down over France. Her name is Mme. Gabrielle Meunier. She was awarded the French Medal of Honor and I noticed she was ignored by our government. I wrote to the AFEES about this oversight against this brave dedicated French woman and received from them copies of a letter sent by the Society with an accompanying certificate of appreciation signed by President Ronald Reagan. Perhaps some of our own who were shot down remember this brave woman.

WALTER FARRAR (F1)

Ed. Note.

Upon receipt of Walter Farrar's letter to the AFEES, it was determined that Mme. Gabrielle Meunier was indeed involved in underground activities assisting Allied aircrews. As a result, the proper documents were prepared and forwarded to her quickly with copies going to Mr. Farrar. We thank him for bringing this to the attention of the AFEES. Thank you Mr. Farrar for the information.

Ed.

## She Saved His Life



**MEET AGAIN**—Howard Harris was shot down over France in World War II. Paulette Parron was involved in saving his life and led him to safety. The two visited with one another last week at the Harris residence in Wolcott.



Certificate sent to Gabrielle Meunier in recognition of her work with French Resistance Fighters. [Courtesy Walter Farrar.]

### 1.55TH ESCAPEE IN FRANCE

Bob Littlefield sent us a long story about his trials and tribulations when he was a temporary resident of the Chateau Le Matre in Yainville France. A fighter pilot, he was shot down by flak while strafing a train. He had many familiar experiences while living with Angele Creux Chavet and Henri Coutre, leader of the French resistance sistance in the area. Mme. Chavet recently passed away and Bob has been good enough to send her photo.



Mme. Angele Greux Chavet

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The AFEES awards this special citation to Lenora "Scotty" David for her tireless efforts in locating more than 200 lost evaders in 1986-1987. Her outstanding work has resulted in the happy reunion of a number of helpers with the American Airmen for whom they risked their lives during World War II Presented 27th of May, 1987

Ralph K. Patton, President

### BANQUET OFFICIEL MEMORIAL DE LA RESISTANCE

Ted Peterson, representing the AFEES and himself, wrote of his experiences in Plourhan on May 31, 1987. In part, here's what he wrote:

Dear Ralph: For me, this was one of the highlights of my life and for those of my family as well.

At the request of Mesrr. Batard, Chairman of the memorial committee, I was able to resurrect an old summer uniform and have it altered to fit me. I gave a two minute speech in French which I gave at the monument dedication. I signed over 200 autographs, participated in press and TV interviews, was photographed many times with various people of the area beside the monument.

250 people attended the \$25.00 a plate banquet and I was given a standing ovation. I presented to the Mayor a US Flag to fly over the monument on May 29th each year. I also presented Louis Batard a tie clip with a replica of a B-17. These presentations were made on behalf of myself and the AFEES.

Dignitaries representing the US and British Consulates as well as 40 Belgians who came by bus attended the ceremonies.

On May 29th, at 5:40PM, I stood on the exact spot where I landed in my parachute 44 years before. Then I was escorted by Henri Poulouin to my hiding place in a ravine. Henri was my helper in 1944 and my host in 1987.

The thrill of standing at attention in uniform, after 42 years, saluting the flags of the US and France while both National Anthems were played, is an emotional moment which I am sure you'll agree, and might bring a tear.



The monument in Plourhan, France

REPORT ON SAN ANTONIO REUNION HELD MAY 24TH TO 28TH, 1987

Somewhere between two hundred thirty and two hundred fifty AFEES from all over the United States, Holland, France, Belgium, Poland, Yugoslavia and thirty four of our good friends from the Dominion of Canada attended. The lobby and hospitality room quickly filled with old friends shaking hands, hugging, and kissing each other in gestures of genuine friendship. Those new to our organization soon joined in the spirit of things making new friends and finding old comrades they hadn't seen for forty five years or so. It was a heartwarming and wonderful experience.

The long day spent at Rio Cibola ranch, the bus ride to Kelly Air Force Base and the tour of the base were memorable as well as the luncheon served so well in the Officer's mess hall. We all got a look at our old aircraft, the B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-24 Liberator as well as the various fighters you "little brothers" piloted so well escorting the bombers. The days spent on the River Walk and visiting the Alamo will not soon be forgotten.

The final day, holding our business meeting, having lunch with our ladies, and the financially profitable auction (almost \$3,000.00) in the afternoon and the excellent cuisine served at dinner on the final night, was like putting icing on the cake.

Each of us should pat our selves on the back for making the reunion so successful, for if we didn't share the comradery we do, it would just be another convention and it would soon be forgotten.

Several of our overseas guests were invited to the homes of our members and were given a taste of the "American way of life." We had a wonderful time with them and they enjoyed themselves tremendously.

Plans for the reunion were made by Jim Goebel and Harry Dolph who flew to San Antonio on different occasions in Jim's little Grumman American. Met there by Jack Ilfrey, the three of them then made all the reunion arrangements. Vic Fararri took care of the publicity. The pins for the ladies were donated by another Texan, David Schoss. Last, but not least, Gil Millar, not feeling in tip-top shape, gave plenty of constructive suggestions which made the job a lot easier.

Saying goodbye to loved ones was a sad occasion, but it's only for a year. We'll see you all in Denver for another joyous reunion.

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PLEASE - YOUR ASSISTANCE ON A VITAL NEW PROJECT IS NEEDED

The AFEES is setting up a computerized file of all our membership as well as non-members who qualified to be called AFEES. This is a tremendous undertaking and will require one hundred percent cooperation in order to get the job done. Even though you're well known to the AFEES Organization, please take the time to fill out the following questionnaire. Thank you.

Rank _____	Name _____	Address _____	Zip Code _____
Phone - Area code _____	Group _____	Squadron _____	Date Shot down _____
Bailed out - Crashed _____			
Country - Near what city _____	Method of return _____	1. Airplane 2. Submarine 3. Miscellaneous Boats 4. Operation Boneparte 5. Crossed Pyranees into Spain 6. Crossed Pyranees into Andora 7. Helped by Comete Line 8. Interned in Switzerland 9. Waited for allied lines 10. Waited out the war 11. Other	
List Helpers - Country _____			
_____			
_____			
_____			
Reunions attended	Europe 1985 <input type="checkbox"/>		
Atlanta 1986 <input type="checkbox"/>	San Antonio 1987 <input type="checkbox"/>		
AFEES dues paid	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	no <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Freedom _____
Send to: Gil Millar, 2514 Talina Way, Houston, Texas 77080 - Phone (713) 462-2852			



AFES at the Alamo. Helpers from France, Holland and Belgium represented.



Helpers from France



Isabel Dell from England and Pat Dolph



Helpers from Belgium



Bob Laux and Jack Ilfrey



Helpers from Holland





Roger and Mrs. Blake - Mrs Claude Murray - Joke Folmer - Claud Murray



L to R Peter v.d. Hurk - Jean Ferrari - Mimi v.d. Burk - Vic Ferrari



Front Row: Loren Zimmer, Bernard Rawlings, Donald Dinwiddie, and James Fowler  
 ALL FROM THE SAME CREW!  
 Second Row: Ira Walter, Robert Mays, James Carlisle Hensley, Robert Ward,  
 Louis Breitenbach and Clayton C. David



Paul Grabowski (Polish Helper) and member Al Lee



L to R Roy Scott-Peter Hurk - Ethelene Martin - Ellie Manion - Elsie Griscit  
Hank and Lorraine Gladys - Joke Polmer - Isabel Dell - Mimi Hurk



Bob and David Laux, "Bartenders Supreme!"



Leslie Atkinson



His Honor, the Mayor  
Proclamation naming Ralph Patton "Alacade" of the original San Antonio



Mimi v.d. Hurk

## A LETTER WORTH REPEATING

Dear Ralph:

Received your letter, membership app. and article about the late Geo. Musulin. Do appreciate and thanks a lot....etc.

P.S. I want to offer some personal thoughts in the form of a testimonial. Early on in life, the expression, "Proud to be an American," took on a special meaning for me. My first encounter with stranded American airmen was in Jan, 1944. The happening occurred in Yugoslavia. By that time I was already a seasoned guerilla, age 20. (going on 40.) I laud all of the remarkable men of the Army Air Corps in WWII. Especially those who were forced to abandon their stricken aircraft, and bail out over enemy territory. To me, these airmen were amazing. The officers were but only 21-24 years old and the rest of the crew members were just mere teen-agers, 18-19 years old, most being non-coms flying those bombers over dangerous enemy targets. These men have always been special to me. The men I knew found themselves in a strange foreign country occupied by the Nazis. To say the least, the environment was very primitive and sometimes hostile. Food was meager and limited. Rampant diarrhea, no shortage of lice, and hygiene almost non-existent. Constantly on the move, traveling goat paths on foot for days, weeks and many miles over rugged, almost forbidden mountain terrain, to stay out of reach of the enemy and avoid capture. For us guerillas, this kind of existence had long before became a way of life. But for the young airmen, to say it was rough, would be a gross understatement. In my own small way, during those adverse and uncertain times, as another stranded American, I saw to their well being and tried to make the guys feel as comfortable as possible to the surroundings and also feel relatively safe. One cannot imagine how proud I was of these men. Three separate groups of airmen, at different times in 1944, at different locations. They all conducted themselves the same. They took their fate in stride and adapted well to the situations. Along the way, there were close calls which they handled admirably. The exploits of the airmen and myself could fill a book on how we endured

and survived various crisis together I reminisce about those times and believe me these valiant stranded airmen felt in their hearts that their fate dictated that there was a price to pay for their well being, safety and ultimate evacuation from foreign soil. Pay they did. Physically, emotionally, unwincingly and unperplexed. Yes indeed Ralph, I am proud to be an American and especially proud of a bunch or extraordinary guys that I had the honor and privilege of rubbing shoulders with under unusual circumstances. I am now in my declining years, but still hope, that again some day, I may meet with one or more of those who broke bread with me in Yugoslavia, chaff and all. It would be interesting to compare thoughts and feelings about those harrowing days of yesteryear. Last, but not least, my lasting thoughts and prayers will always include the guerillas in Yugoslavia, under the command of Gen. Mihailovich. Truly a great ally, who was foresaken because of politics. F.D.R. and Churchill were afraid to step on brother Joe's toes. What a shame, what a mistake! Mihailovich's "Chetniks" made many sacrifices in order that I and many other Americans could make it safely out of the country. If Mihailovich and his guerillas were collaborators, as some wish to perceive, I would not be here today writing this, nor would be hundreds of American airmen who made it back safely to the bosom of their own country and freedom.

Respectfully, BOB MARJAN



Ralph Patton and Bob Marjan

OPERATION BONAPARTE



Madame MARIE GICQUEL is surrounded by twelve grateful AFEES members who passed through her house on their way to a rendezvous with a British Motor Gunboat in early 1944.

As members of Reseau Shelburn's Operation Bonaparte, Madame Gicquel and her husband Jean lived in a small farmhouse which served as the last rendezvous in France for Airmen and Agents on their way back to England. Approximately a hundred and thirty five men passed safely through the Gicquel home and returned to England.

Suspicious of the activity taking place around the Gicquel house, the Germans burned it down in July of 1944. Madame Gicquel and her infant daughter took to the Maquis on learning of the German interest in their home and shortly thereafter were taken to England. Jean Gicquel remained in France and fought with the Maquis until the liberation of France. He died of natural causes in 1978.

The Gicquel house had become famous throughout Western France as "The House of Alphonse." This was the code word from the BBC announcing to the French that the Gunboat was leaving England and a mission was on. A monument has been erected on the former site of the Gicquel home. A wall, built from the stones of the original farmhouse holds a plaque announcing to the world the role that this unpretentious Breton dwelling played in history.

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LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

Schiermonnikoog, Friesland

Dear Ralf.

5 July 87

Surviving an avalanche, getting home two weeks ago, I really cannot wait longer to thank you again for the real Texan reunion in San Antonio. How nice it was to meet before, during and after the happening with so many old friends. And, as this Dutch loves traveling, coming from an island that rides at anchor and is moored, as an English poet said, I'm looking forward to "board" for Denver in 1988. So near to my foster brother in Colorado Springs.

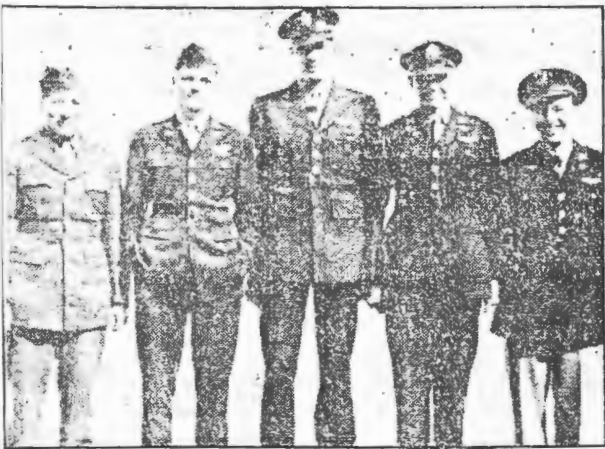
Love, Joke Folmer



Elsie Griscit (UK) & Roy Scott (Can.)



EXPRESS-NEWS, San Antonio, Texas, Monday, May 25, 1987



Ralph K. Patton (right) is shown with four other members of the 94th Bombardment Group brought out of France by a resistance network, Operation Bonaparte. Others (left to right) are Isadore Viola, Norman R. King, Gien B. Johnson and Jack McGough.

## Heroes of WW II meet at reunion

By JAMES COBURN  
Express-News Staff Writer

American airmen who escaped to freedom after being shot down in World War II are holding a four-day reunion here this week to honor Europeans who risked death to help them.

Members of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society personally help defray expenses of their benefactors in bringing them to the reunion from all over the world, the society president said.

"The whole reason (for the reunion) is we do not want to let them think for one minute that we have forgotten what they did for us," said Ralph K. Patton of Pittsburgh, Pa., society president since he organized the group in the early 1960s.

Retired Col. Vic Ferrari of San Antonio will be with his benefactor, Peter Van Der Hurk, a former member of the Dutch underground. Resistance fighters rescued Van Der Hurk from a German prison after he was captured helping airmen.

Patton said society members have had at least 10 get-togethers with their benefactors either in America or in Europe. The reunion, which started with registration Sunday at the Marriott Hotel on the River Walk and continues through Wednesday, is the society's first meeting in San Antonio.

About 22 people who aided the airmen, including several who endured torture and narrowly escaped death by firing squads for their efforts, will be receiving emotional tributes here from more than 100 Allied airmen they helped to freedom, Patton said.

Patton will be reuniting with Marie Jicquel. Her home about a mile from the beach near Plouha, France, was the final rendezvous of a Resistance network's escape route for airmen taken to England on gunboats.

Code-named Operation Bonaparte, this escape-by-sea plan took 128 airmen to safety.

Patton, now 66, received his pre-flight training in 1942 at the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center that was at Lackland AFB. He was a 23-year-old second lieutenant and co-pilot of a B-17 when he was shot down over Brittany after bombing Bordeaux on Jan. 4, 1944. He and his bombardier, Jack McGough of Marshall, hid in Western France for 1½ months.

**“The Comet Escape Line that helped airmen through France into Spain lost 216 agents who died or were executed in captivity.”**

— Ralph K. Patton

Escape networks and individuals were responsible for rescuing 2,000 downed American airmen and nearly 3,000 British, Canadian, Australian, Polish and South African airmen and ground forces, Patton said.

Hundreds paid for their heroism with their lives, he said. "The Comet Escape Line that helped airmen through France into Spain lost 216 agents who died or were executed in captivity."

A leader of that line, 82-year-old Anne Brusselmanns, will be a special guest of honor along with John Henry Weidner during a noon luncheon Wednesday. Mayor Henry Cisneros has been invited to give a welcoming talk at the luncheon.

Weidner, now a resident of Pasadena, Calif., was the leader of the Dutch-Paris Underground whose exploits were chronicled in Herbert Ford's book "Flee the Captor."

Weidner's escape network helped more than 100 Allied airmen to safety and also saved more than 800 Jews from the Holocaust by helping them to reach neutral Switzerland.

## WWII airman reunited with Belgian benefactor

By ISABEL VALLE  
Express-News Staff Writer

Forty-five years ago Ronald Pearce spent a week in a small apartment in Brussels hiding from German troops, waiting to return to France through an "underground railroad."

The apartment belonged to Anne Brusselmanns who fed, clothed and hid him from the German soldiers during the fury of World War II.

Through the efforts of Brusselmanns, Pearce and more than 200 American and Allied airmen returned to England via the "Comet Escape Line."

Pearce and Brusselmanns were reunited this week during the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society reunion held at the Marriott Hotel downtown.

They both saw each other last year for the first time since 1942 at a reunion in Atlanta. This week they were given the opportunity to visit once again.

"It's just absolutely fabulous to see her," Pearce said with an ear-to-ear grin. "She is a remarkable lady."

The society held the four-day reunion this week to honor European benefactors who risked death to help American and Allied airmen escape to freedom after being shot down over enemy-occupied territory.

Some 300 people attended the reunion. Members of the society helped defray expenses of their benefactors in bringing them to San Antonio from all around the world.

Brusselmanns and John Henry Weidner were honored at the society's luncheon Friday.

Brusselmanns, 82, was honored for her part in the escape of the Allied soldiers through the "Comet Escape Line."

She outwitted the Gestapo nu-



PHOTO BY ISABEL VALLE

**Ronald Pearce and Anne Brusselmanns are reunited for the second time after 44 years. Brusselmanns helped Pearce escape enemy-occupied territory after his plane was shot down during World War II.**

merous times by pretending to be a "loose woman" gathering clothes to outfit her lovers, and she kept Gestapo agents from finding a downed pilot hiding in a bedroom by saying her child had typhoid.

Weidner worked with the World Council of Churches during the war to move Jewish refugees and Allied airmen out of Holland, France and Belgium into Switzerland.

Weidner finally had to escape over the French mountains into Switzerland himself.

"It is always wonderful to be reunited with these men," Brusselmanns said. "What I enjoy most is seeing these men that were quite young at the time, between 18 and 20, all grown up with their own families."

From 1941-1945, at the age of 35, Brusselmanns hid about 139 Americans, Britons, and Australians from German soldiers.

"We never thought of it as placing our lives in danger," she said. "These men came to our country because we were in trouble, so of course, we felt we had to help them."

"Our country was occupied by the enemy and our only thought was to get them out and these men were helping us in that way," she recalled.

Pearce, a native of Sidney, Australia, now living in Atlanta, was assigned to Canadian Squadron 405 in 1942. During that year he was shot down in Belgium.

"After I hit the ground, I started walking until I came to a farm house. The family that lived there kept me for about three days before introducing me to Anne," Pearce said, adding that he never got to know the family's name. "I stayed with Anne for about one week before getting on a train from Brussels to Paris."

During his stay with Brusselmanns, Pearce, who was 21 at the time, spent "time sleeping, washing dishes and "messing around."

Brusselmanns, now 82, said she remembers the first day Pearce stepped into her house.

"The first thing he did was ask me if I knew how to bake apple strudel," she said laughing. "He loved my apple strudel."

EXPRESS-NEWS, San Antonio, Texas, Thursday, April 9, 1987

## Wartime heroes were not all men

Eleanor "Pat" Cheramy, who died the other day in her native England at age 80, was one of many heroic women who helped defeat Nazi Germany in World War II.

Cheramy, married to a Frenchman and living in the South of France, gave sanctuary to an escaping Royal Air Force pilot in 1942. After that, she and her husband, Charles, became involved in the famous Pat O'Leary underground escape line.

Before the Gestapo arrested them in 1943, they helped more than 200 Allied airmen flee across the Pyrenees to Spain.

Cheramy was told that unless she revealed the names of her escape-line contacts, her infant son would be shot. She courageously told her captors to shoot, and to kill her, too.

The baby was spared, but his parents were sent to concentration camps. For two years, the Gestapo subjected Pat Cheramy to fearful beatings and other tortures in an unsuccessful attempt to elicit information.

She weighed less than 50 pounds when she was freed by U.S. troops in 1945. She never fully recovered from brain damage and loss of limb movement brought about by the beatings but, despite her disabilities, she played golf and bridge. She was awarded the Croix de Guerre, the American Medal of Freedom and the British Empire Medal.

Like many others, she began the war as a bystander but ended up sacrificing her health and much of her future for what she believed in.

EXPRESS-NEWS, San Antonio, TX

## Women who aided fliers plan to visit

Sir: Your editorial "Wartime heroes were not all men" is well taken.

It was most appropriate to pay tribute to Eleanor "Pat" Cheramy. Her experiences depict the courage and sacrifice members of the underground accepted as a price to free themselves and their countries from inhuman Nazi rule.

At least two prominent women who served in the underground will visit San Antonio for a reunion sponsored by the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society, May 24-27.

Johanna Marie Folmer helped more than 200 American airmen to escape capture during World War II prior to her own imprisonment by the Gestapo. She was condemned to death. Death never caught up with her because, somehow, her execution papers were lost.

Explaining her willingness to jeopardize her life to assist downed airmen she said, "If we hadn't done anything about it, we didn't deserve to become a free nation again."

Also expected to attend this meeting is Anne Brusselmanns, who was associated with the Comet Escape Line. She personally helped save more than 200 airmen shot down in German occupied Belgium.

Even as a mother of two small children she didn't hesitate to hide Allied fliers from the Germans. She recalls regretfully that many of the Comet membership disappeared permanently. Indeed, "Wartime heroes were not all men."

Victor J. Ferrari

April 23, 1987

LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

Dear Mr. Patton:

I wish to thank you for the marvelous reception AFEES organized in San Antonio and the hearty welcome that was given us. In spite of the fact that I always feel kind of troubled by the lasting gratefulness you still dedicate to us for things done so many years ago and which we found quite natural to be done. I have been happy to have been with you - to meet my friends again and be a few hours with those men, who did so much for us.

God bless you all.

FRANK CAUBERGH

\* \* \* \* \*



ASSOCIATION DES MEMBRES  
DE L'ARMÉE DE L'AIR  
QUI ONT ÉCHAPPÉ À L'ENNEMI.

DÉCERNE CETTE CITATION DU SOUVENIR A

pour avoir fait preuve d'un courage exceptionnel en venant en aide aux aviateurs américains entre 1942 et 1945.

*Nous ne pourrions jamais vous remercier assez, mais nous n'oublierons jamais.*

Président - AFEES

Je suis très honoré de me joindre à l'Association des Membres de l'Armée de l'Air qui ont échappé à l'ennemi, pour rendre hommage aux courageux partisans de la Résistance européenne qui ont aidé les aviateurs américains pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Les Etats-Unis n'oublieront jamais la bravoure, la force d'âme et l'amour de la liberté qui ont animé les hommes et les femmes en de si nombreuses occasions. Au péril de votre vie, vous avez affronté un ennemi impitoyable. Je suis fier de vous saluer et de vous envoyer les salutations chaleureuses et les vœux de gratitude du peuple américain tout entier. Que Dieu vous garde!

Ronald Reagan

FRENCH TRANSLATION OF AFEES CITATION  
OF REMEMBRANCE AVAILABLE

Courtesy of Bob Littlefield, we now have a French translation of our Citation of Remembrance. This translation is not perceived as a replacement for the English language citation, but is available to our French Recipients who would like to have a French language version. Ralph Patton will supply citations for presentation to your Helpers on request, a French language version will be included if requested.

DUTCH HELPERS GIVE MEMORIAL PITCHER

Our Dutch Helpers presented an engraved pitcher to the AFEES organization in San Antonio. It was presented by Mr. Pieter J v.d. Hurk and Joke Folmer. It was a gift from both the Essape and the A.A.H. organizations. We thank both representatives. Only one thing Pieter. How'd you manage to get it here without breaking it?



LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS

May 1987 - Plouha, France

Dear Friend Ralph:

I have received your telegram and I am touched by your expression of sympathy and thank you very much. Excuse me for waiting so long to reply but I have been in a state of utter confusion and helplessness. I still cannot make myself believe it is true. Yves was so dynamic and had such a strong personality. I cannot remember which French poet said -

"One man you miss and the whole world is empty." It is true.

....

Love to you dear friend and also to Madame Betty.

Claire Le Picard

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*Deussdie  
1st June 1987*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the A.F.E.S, not forgetting their wives, who wrote to their Senators and Congressmen on my behalf.*

*Your combined efforts, which lasted for over three years, has now been successful and I therefore want you to know how grateful I am to you all for your wonderful support*

*With best wishes,*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Ann Brusselmans*

Letter from Ann Brusselmans



Ann Brusselmans & Midge Dechambre



Roger Blake, Ralph Patton and Ann Brusselmans radio interview

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

In San Antonio, the Membership approved a Life Membership Program. The fee for such a membership is \$100.00 (U.S. Currency) with the idea these monies can be invested to earn the equivalent of our present dues. This is a "From this day forward" program. Previous payments are not considered.

Our present program of offering a widow a membership as a friend, will be continued regardless of the type of membership of the deceased. Any time we receive notice of the death of a member, we offer his widow status as a friend at no cost.

Please fill out the form below and send with your check. A Life Membership card and certificate will be forwarded when available. WE ARE LOOKING FOR an 100% PARTICIPATION, sooner or later. Better SOONER!

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DUTY INFORMATION: Air Force - Group - Sqdn - Crew Pos. - Type Plane, etc.

Names and addresses of crew members and/or other potential AFEES members.

Enclose \$100.00 TAX DEDUCTIBLE contribution for paid up dues for life and send to: Heyward C. Spinks, P.O.Box 844, Beaufort, S.C. 29901  
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