

THE U.S. AIR FORCES ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY  
**WINTER 2016 Communications**  
[www.airforceescape.com](http://www.airforceescape.com)

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Visiting Hill Air Force Base, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Officer Delehanty and Joe Owens

**DOUBLE TREE by HILTON**  
Reid Park - Tucson, Arizona  
**Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society Reunion**  
**May 4-8, 2016**

**HOTEL RESERVATION FORM**

**Please complete this form and send to:**

Double Tree Hotel - Attention: Rebecca  
Direct phone # to Rebecca: (520) 323-5219  
445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, Arizona 85711

**Phone: (800) 222-8733; Fax: (520) 323-5223**

**\$93.88 per night, inclusive**

(Check room type) One King \_\_\_\_\_ Two Queens \_\_\_\_\_

ROOM RATES APPLY TWO DAYS BEFORE AND TWO DAYS AFTER REUNION

**Reunion Hotel Rates guaranteed only until April 13, 2016**

**\*Please Make Your Reservation As Soon As Possible\***

**HELPERS ONLY:** Send both Hotel Reservation Form and Reunion Reservation Form  
to:

**AFEES, c/o Richard Shandor, P.O. Box 254, Cresson, PA 16630**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name on Credit Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**REUNION RESERVATION FORM**  
**AIR FORCES ESCAPE AND EVASION SOCIETY**  
**Wednesday-Sunday, May 4-8, 2016**  
**DoubleTree Hotel, Tucson, Arizona**

**Please complete and return this form with check or money order  
(No Credit Cards.) Your Check is your receipt.**

**MEMBERS:** Make check payable to AFEES REUNION and mail to:  
AFEES, c/o Richard P. Shandor, P.O. Box 254, Cresson, PA 16630

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

Number			
_____	Registration Fee	\$35.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Wednesday 5/4: 2:00pm-4:30 pm El Presidio Historic District Old Town Artisans	*\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Wednesday 5/4: (Optional) 6:00pm Bar Hopping / Dinner at Thunder Canyon Brewery	*\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Thursday 5/5: 8:30am-2:00pm (without lunch) Pima Air Force & Space Museum & Boneyard	\$24.50 *\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Thursday 5/5: 6:00pm-8:00pm, DINNER	Chicken Marsala - \$35.00 Vegetarian - \$35.00	\$ _____
_____	Friday 5/6: 8:00am–2:00pm, MILITARY DAY (with lunch)	\$15.00 per person *\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Friday 5/6: (Optional) DINNER – (location to be determined)	*\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Saturday 5/7: 1:00pm-4:00pm, Arizona Sonora Desert Museum	\$13.50 *\$5.00 per person	\$ _____
_____	Saturday 5/7: 6:00pm-8:00pm BANQUET	Braised Short Ribs \$40.00 Salmon Filet \$40.00 Vegetarian \$40.00	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>			\$ _____
(* Transportation Cost)			

**Please Indicate Your Choice of Events**

For Reunion information, contact Richard Shandor, (814) 886-2735, e-mail: rshandor@hotmail.com

**NAME BADGES: List names as you wish them to appear:**

NAME (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Service Unit \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Guest's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ (Required)  
Arrival method: plane \_\_\_\_\_ car \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ arrival date \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT: Emergency Contact (Name and Phone Number):**

Any Special Needs? \_\_\_\_\_

**AFEES REUNION  
2016 EVENT SCHEDULE**

**WEDNESDAY**

<b>WED, MAY 4</b>	<b>1:00 P.M.</b>	<b>REGISTRATION OPENS (HOTEL LOBBY)</b>
<b>WED, MAY 4</b>	<b>1:00 P.M.</b>	<b>HOSPITALITY SUITE OPENS (PRESIDENT SUITE 9<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR)</b>
<b>WED, MAY 4</b>	<b>2:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.</b>	<b>TOUR OF EL PRESIDIO DISTRICT OLD TOWN ARTISANS</b>
<b>WED, MAY 4</b>	<b>6:00 P.M. (OPTIONAL)</b>	<b>BAR HOPPING/DINNER AT THUNDER CANYON BREWERY</b>

**THURSDAY**

<b>THURS, MAY 5</b>	<b>8:30 AM - 2:00 PM</b>	<b>TOUR PIMA AIR FORCE SPACE MUSEUM AND BONEYARD</b>
<b>THURS, MAY 5</b>	<b>3:30 PM - 5:00 PM</b>	<b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING (BOARD ROOM)</b>
<b>THURS. MAY 5</b>	<b>6:00 PM - 8:00 PM</b>	<b>WELCOME DINNER (BONSAI ROOM 1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR)</b>

**FRIDAY**

<b>FRIDAY, MAY 6</b>	<b>8:00 AM - 2:00 PM</b>	<b>MILITARY DAY - LUNCH ON DAVIS/MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE</b>
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**SATURDAY**

<b>SAT, MAY 7</b>	<b>9:00 AM - 9:45 AM</b>	<b>MEMORIAL SERVICE (BONSAI ROOM)</b>
<b>SAT, MAY 7</b>	<b>10:00 AM -11:00 AM</b>	<b>GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (BONSAI ROOM)</b>
<b>SAT, MAY 7</b>	<b>1:00 PM - 4:00 PM</b>	<b>ARIZONA SONORA DESERT MUSEUM</b>
<b>SAT, MAY 7</b>	<b>6:00 PM – 8:00 PM</b>	<b>ANNUAL BANQUET (BOOJUM ROOM)</b>

**SUNDAY**

<b>SUN, MAY 8</b>	<b>7:30 AM</b>	<b>FAREWELL BREAKFAST (CACTUS ROSE NORTH AND PATIO)</b>
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## AFEES REUNION IN TUCSON

by Lynn David

Arrangements have been made for the 2016 AFEES Reunion to be held at the Double Tree Hotel—Reid Park, Tucson. May 4-8, 2016. The hotel is directly across from Reid Park, featuring a zoo and golf course. It is four miles from downtown Tucson.

There is complimentary shuttle within a 3-mile radius of hotel, a refrigerator in all rooms, 100% non-smoking, heated outdoor pool, fitness center, three lighted tennis courts, free business center, high speed internet access throughout the hotel, free chocolate chip cookie, four in-hotel dining options, and the Presidential Suite on the 9th floor for our Hospitality Suite.

The hotel is approximately 15 minutes from the Tucson Airport and a free shuttle service will be available. Parking will be free at the hotel.

We are getting a very good room rate of \$93.88 inclusive of taxes. Our meal expenses will be a little higher than the last two years. Reservations can be made by calling the hotel at 520-323-5219 and ask for Rebecca. Breakfast will be included in the room rate. The hotel has a hot, All-American buffet breakfast.

We will be working with our friends from Angel Thunder to plan some truly special events. I look forward to seeing all of you!

## PHOTOS FROM THE SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH REUNION



Visiting the Olympic Village in Salt Lake City



Gabriel Sauer and Beverly Patton Wand



Jane Binnebose and granddaughter Emma Snodgrass



Beverly Patton Wand and Rich Shandor

**2015 SALT LAKE CITY REUNION**  
**ATTENDEES:** David Allison, Elise Andre, William Binnebose, Jane Binnebose, Emma Snodgrass, Bruce Bolinger, Charlotte Bolinger, Lenora "Scotty" David, Lynn David, Richard Fairlamb, Cynthia Forrester, Lois Hamilton, Brett Hartnett, June Hauer, Betty Hennessy, Bryan Kasmenn, Neil McCready, Elizabeth McDade, Joseph Owens (E), Gabriel Sauer (H), Dennis Scovill, Nancy Costello Scovill, Col. Charles “CB” Screws (E), Richard Shandor, Don Thorpe, Catherine Thorpe, Beverly Patton Wand, John White, Michelle White, and Mary Wofner



Gabriel Sauer and Lois Hamilton



Richard Fairlamb and Gabriel Sauer



Joe Owens and June Hauer



Joe Owens



Standing: Catherine Thorpe,  
Don Thorpe, Bryan  
Kasmann, John White  
Seated: Elise Andre, Gabriel  
Sauer, Michelle White



*Standing: Elizabeth McDade, Neil McCready,  
Emma Snodgrass, Jane Binnebose  
Seated: Richard Fairlamb, Nancy Costello Scovill,  
Dennis Scovill, Bill Binnebose*



*Lynn and Scotty David*



*Drinking “Inkys”!*



*Elizabeth McDade and Charles Screws*



*Michelle and John White*



*Gabriel Sauer and Betty Hennessey*



Standing: Mary Wofner, Betty Hennessey, Rich Shandor, Brett Hartnett  
Seated: Lynn David, Scotty David, June Hauer, Joe Owens



Standing: Lois Hamilton, Beverly Patton Wand, Cynthia Forrester, Charlotte Bolinger  
Seated: David Allison, Charles Screws, Bruce Bolinger



*Joe Owens, June Hauer, Jane Binnebose, Emma Snodgrass, Bill Binnebose*



*Richard Fairlamb, Joe Owens, Gabriel Sauer, Charles Screws*



Bryan Kasmenn, Neil McCready, and Brett Hartnett from Angel Thunder with Gabriel Sauer.

## ANGEL THUNDER

Brett Hartnett, Neil McCready, and Bryan Kasmenn, three members of Angel Thunder, joined AFEES in Salt Lake City. Located at the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Angel Thunder is the world's largest, annual, personnel recovery exercise in the world, crafted and executed by rescue professionals for rescue personnel. They lead “escape and evasion” scenarios, based on real-life examples, the military and civilian agencies are likely to experience. The “exercise” takes place every year and features several thousand personnel from the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, civilian agencies and international partners, with one hundred ships and aircraft. Past exercises have included combat scenarios and simulated natural disasters spread over three states. AFEES members Ed & Marguerite Brouard Miller have served as consultants to Angel Thunder.

Brett Hartnett, a retired rescue pilot and technical manager and co-director of Angel Thunder, says it “started as an exercise for just the Air Force combat search and rescue community, before becoming the Air Combat Command official search and rescue exercise. Eventually, it was certified by the

Air Force- and then Defense Department-wide in 2006.”

As everyone in AFEES knows, the Air Force started training rescue specialists during World War II, with the primary mission of retrieving its own downed fliers. Prior to Angel Thunder, combat search and rescue had mostly been folded into other military training exercises, which meant it was often treated as an after-thought. Here it's the sole focus, and it's Brett Hartnett's job to bring the whole event to life.

At Angel Thunder, search-and-rescue missions are reactive, with just hours or less to plan and new information constantly flooding in. Angel Thunder must be tightly choreographed for safety—helicopters, jet fighters, refueling tankers, and civilian planes all share the same airspace—yet it must feel seat-of-the-pants believable to its most experienced participants. By the time it commences, Hartnett and his team of a half-dozen organizers have spent months working out Angel Thunder's logistics, locating the best areas to conduct missions, coordinating with local law enforcement, and writing the elaborate script, based on actual events, that makes it all seem real.

Hartnett says no hiccups are planned, they just appear like inevitable problems during real-world missions, and he's pleased when participants stumble and recover. “Things going wrong is actually good. It forces you to find solutions,” he says. “If nothing had gone wrong, they wouldn't have learned as much.” Angel Thunder is honored to host the 2016 AFEES Reunion and looks forward to learning more from our Helpers and Evaders—the escape and evasion experts. (Original source materials: [www.airforcetimes.com](http://www.airforcetimes.com), [www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net), and [www.outsideonline.com](http://www.outsideonline.com))

## MONTE SAN MARTINO TRUST

In September 1943, after the Italian Army had laid down its arms, PoWs in prison camps all over Italy received orders from London to ‘stay put’ in their camps and await release by the advancing Allied forces. Many felt that this risked capture by the Germans, and decided instead to make a break for it. They set off in all directions, singly and in small groups, hoping to reach safety before the enemy picked them up.

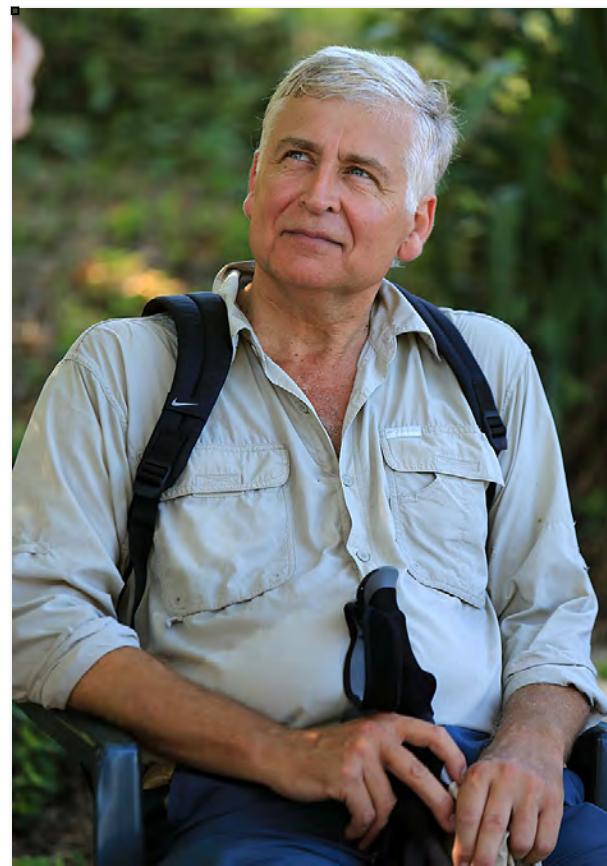
One of these prisoners was Keith Killby, who had been captured in Sardinia in July 1943 and imprisoned in the Servigliano Camp, from which he escaped via a hole in the wall in September of that year. Like many of the escapers, as he hiked through the hilly Italian countryside, he relied for shelter, food and security on the generosity of poor Italian farming families, who hid him in their barns and bedrooms, and guided him on the next stage of his journey. In so doing, they were risking not only their own liberty but their lives as well – the penalty for helping an Allied escaper was death.

Keith in fact was recaptured, and spent the rest of the War in a prison camp in Germany, but so moved had he been by the kindness of the Italians who helped him that in 1989, with a number of other escapers, he set up The Monte San Martino Trust, in recognition of the courage and sacrifice of the Italian country people. The Trust (which is named after the village where Keith spent his first night of freedom) is a registered charity in the UK, and is supported by former PoWs, and their children and grandchildren, many of whom research their ancestors’ stories and keep in touch with Italian families who gave refuge to the escapers.

The Trust awards English-language study bursaries to Italians aged 18 to 25 for four weeks’ study at language schools in Oxford and London. The students come from schools in Italian regions where prisoners were on the run. The Trust relies entirely on donations to fund these bursaries, and is

currently running a £1m Appeal to secure its long-term funding. With £900,000 raised so far, the Appeal has embarked on its final leg – though still with some way to go. (All donations gratefully received!)

The Trust also supports Freedom Trail walks in Italy, such as the annual Tenna Valley Trail in the Marche, eastern Italy, co-hosted with the WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society.



*Sir Nicholas Young (Chairman of the San Martino Trust) is the Chief Executive of British Red Cross and was knighted for services to cancer care. He is the son of Fontanellato escaper Major Leslie Young, who got through Allied Lines near Anzio.*

This year, the **Tenna Valley Freedom Trail** takes place May 11-16, 2016. Please contact Roger Stanton, Director of the WWII Escape Lines Memorial Society, at [rogerstanton.elms@tpiz.co.uk](mailto:rogerstanton.elms@tpiz.co.uk) if you are interested in participating. There are also regular trails in the Rossano Valley on the borders of Liguria and Tuscany. The Trust’s trails all run along routes taken by escaping

prisoners aiming to reach Allied armies in south Italy, or neutral Switzerland. The Trust has strong ties with the town of Fontanellato, near Parma, and holds an annual Fontanellato lunch, commemorating the escape of 600 officers from the town's POW camp.

There is an annual newsletter, and the Trust's unique archive contains more than 300 books and manuscripts written by those who were "on the run". It is now exploring ways of ensuring that his archive can be made accessible to future generations of families and researchers.

For more information, please visit the Monte San Martino Trust website [www.msmtrust.org.uk](http://www.msmtrust.org.uk) which has latest news and original escape accounts. The Trust is keen to be in contact with other Allied escapers from prison camps in Italy, and to hear their stories, so do please get in touch via the website.

## **WEBSITE UPDATES, EVADE! and the SEARCH FOR MISSING NEWSLETTERS**

We are very grateful to Bruce Bollinger, who has been extremely busy updating the AFEES website and adding all kinds of material that will be interesting to evaders, families, and invaluable to researchers. Special thanks to Arthur Bond for his assistance with a few technical details that made the website easier to navigate and information easier to access.

New additions and updates to the website include: a page on past AFEES reunions (<http://airforceescape.org/past-reunions/>), a list of 500 HELPERS (<http://airforceescape.org/1993-list-of-helpers/>), Newsletters and links to other Escape and Evasion organizations, Air Force Academy Library Holdings, as well as a counter so we can view how many visitors come to our website.

A very exciting addition to the website is the one-hour documentary, *EVADE!*

Co-produced by The Friends of the Air Force Academy Library and AFEES, *EVADE!* features the escape and evasion experiences of Ralph Patton, founder of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society, as well as interviews with Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans and Marguerite Brouard-Miller who re-live their most frightening moments and share why they risked everything to help Allied airmen. It also tells the story of how AFEES was founded and how hundreds of Allied evaders and helpers from all over the world were able to find each other more than two decades after the war, and form a bond that has lasted ever since. Told in their own words, the stories of these true American heroes come to life through footage of actual shoot-downs and through the artifacts of the Ralph Patton Collection of the United States Air Force Academy.

Bruce is scanning all of the AFEES newsletters and making them available on the website. He is also beginning the difficult process of indexing the newsletters—all of which will be of enormous benefit to anyone doing research. To that end, Bruce is looking for the following printed copies of the newsletter. He will borrow them, scan them, and return the printed copies to you. Please contact Bruce directly at (530) 273-6442 or by email: [bcbolinger@comcast.net](mailto:bcbolinger@comcast.net) if you have any of the following newsletters:

Any newsletters prior to 1986; All of 1986; Spring and Summer of 1987; All of 1988; Spring 1989; Spring 1992. Thank you.

## HELPER FILES DIGITIZED

Last year, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, DC asked for feedback on file digitization priorities. The public demand for digitizing **Helper Files** ([Record Group 498, Records of Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army WWII](#)) was so great that those records were immediately added to the list.

A press release issued by NARA stated, “Public feedback—and public use of our records—was an important factor in determining what was included in the agency-wide digitization priority list. Many of the topics and broad themes that were publicly suggested are evident in the list, representing a broad range of materials that will enable NARA to further engage with our researchers online. We are excited about...increasing the online availability of our holdings over the next few years.”

The Archive staff has already begun to digitize Record Group 498. NARA expects the files will be available in the National Archives Catalog in a few months, if not sooner. For more information, please go to: <http://narations.blogs.archives.gov/2015/10/02/announcing-naras-digitization-priorities/>.

## THE NAZI'S PHANTOM TRAIN

On September 2, 1944, a number of American airmen were pushed on board a train bound for a concentration camp.

It is believed there were almost thirty US airmen among the passenger cargo of an estimated 1,400 people.

All were saved from reaching Germany by the actions of Belgian railway workers who delayed, diverted and sabotaged the train until the Allied forces arrived to liberate the area.

Author Greg Lewis is appealing for relatives of the airmen to get in touch to have their stories mentioned in his forthcoming book, working title “The Nazi’s Phantom

Train.” The book is being produced with the support and help of Belgian historian, Walter Verstraeten. Greg is the author of *Airman Missing*, the story RAF escaper John Evans, an honorary member of AFEES, who is now 96.

The story of one of the men on the train, 1/Lt William D Grosvenor, was featured in a documentary *Last Best Hope—A True Story of Escape, Evasion, and Remembrance*.

According to research by Keith Janes, the following Americans were also on the train: 1/Lt John J Bradley, 1/Lt William G Ryckman, T/Sgt James R Dykes, Sgt Hugh C Bomar, S/Sgt Ray Smith, 2/Lt Alfred M L Sanders, 2/Lt Thomas P Smith, 1/Lt Jack Terzian, 2/Lt John W Brown, S/Sgt William R Muse, 2/Lt J H Singleton, 2/Lt James G Levey, Sgt Harry J Blair, S/Sgt Cecil D Spence, T/Sgt Kenneth P Holcomb, S/Sgt Donald H Swanson, S/Sgt Charles C Hillis, Sgt Ralph J Lynch, S/Sgt James M Wagner, 1/Lt Henry W Wolcott III, 2/Lt Ford W Babcock, 1/Lt Robert F Auda, 2/Lt Wallis O Cozzens, T/Sgt Dale S Louks, T/Sgt Robert J Piarote, 2/Lt Theodore H Kleinman, and S/Sgt Royce F McGillvary.

Please contact Greg Lewis at [greg\\_lewis@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:greg_lewis@hotmail.co.uk) or by mail at: 12a Lansdowne Avenue West, Canton, Cardiff CF11 8FS, United Kingdom. Thank you!

## AGENT ROSE

A major figure in the French Resistance during WWII, Andrée Peel, was one of the most highly decorated women to survive the war. Known as "Agent Rose," she helped save countless lives, including over 100 British and American pilots shot down over France.

When France was occupied in 1940, Andrée Virot, as she was known then, was running a beauty salon in Brest and joined the resistance movement after the city was occupied. In her role as Agent Rose, she began circulating an underground newspaper,

passed on information to the Allies on German shipping and troop movements, and guided Allied planes to secret nighttime landing strips by torchlight. She is most famously remembered for running an under-section of the resistance that rescued 102 Allied pilots over a three year period, ferrying them through a series of safe houses to isolated Brest beaches for transport to England.



When the Gestapo learned of her involvement with the resistance, she fled to Paris but was arrested shortly after D-Day on June 6, 1944. She was sent to the Ravensbrück and Buchenwald concentration camps where she was tortured. In her most harrowing moment, she narrowly escaped death when American troops arrived to liberate Buchenwald just as Peel was being lined up to be shot by a Nazi firing squad.

In discussing her wartime experience, Peel stated, "I was born with courage. I did not allow cruel people to find in me a person they could torture. I saved 102 pilots before being arrested, interrogated and tortured. I suffer still from that. I still have the pain... At that time we were all putting our lives in danger but we did it because we were fighting for freedom... It was a terrible time but looking back I am so proud of what I did and I'm glad to have helped defend the freedom of our future generations."

Following the war, Peel received many commendations including the Croix de Guerre

(with palm), the Croix de Guerre (silver star), the Cross of the Voluntary Fighter, the Medal of the Resistance, the Liberation Cross – all French awards, as well as the Medal of Freedom by the United States and the King's Commendation for Brave Conduct by Britain. At age 99, she was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, France's highest honor. She eventually married Englishman, John Peel, and settled in Bristol, England. In 2010, the heroic "Agent Rose" passed away at the age of 105. Andrée Peel is one of 26 incredible women featured in the excellent book *Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue*.

## LOOKING FOR ROBERT G. NEIL

Barbara Wojcik of White Bear Lake, Minnesota contacted AFEES regarding her uncle James Spencer Wilschke's story of escape and evasion.

Jim was shot down on May 17, 1943 over France. The story of this crash is documented in several places and there is a roadside memorial in France.

Jim and the radio operator, Robert Neil, were missing in action for 6 months. They traveled together, making their way to Perpignan where they crossed the Pyrenees on foot, crossing into Spain November 17, 1943.

Barbara is hoping to connect with the family of Robert G. Neil. If you have any information about the six months that Robert and Jim were MIA, please contact her at (651) 247-3639 or [barbara1760@gmail.com](mailto:barbara1760@gmail.com).



Roadside memorial for J. Wilschke and R. Neil

## OCCUPIED NETHERLANDS 1940-45, BERT AND CASE HANOU

By Col. John Crump and Col. Mick Hanou,  
[www.goldengatewing.org](http://www.goldengatewing.org)

Bert and Case Hanou spoke of their combined ten years of experiences during the occupation of the Netherlands, at the Golden Gate Wing's October meeting.

Germany's invasion of the Netherlands was swift and decisive. On the morning of May 10, 1940, Bert Hanou recalls waking up about 6:30. "I saw the German Stuka dive bombers, bombing the Schipol air field. It only took about 35 minutes to destroy the airplanes and all the facilities. They also, at the same time, bombed all the oil tanks near Amsterdam harbor."

The occupation of Amsterdam came quickly. Then the Germans bombed Rotterdam. Though the Dutch had made some military preparations, they were unable to withstand the onslaught of the German armed forces. The invasion of the Netherlands, a neutral country that had hoped not to be invaded, lasted but five days. With the military occupation, Dutch Nazis took over most of the roles of government.



Case Hanou was then Case Van Graafeiland, and lived in Middelburg on Walcheren Island in the south. Walcheren Island was a strategic point, guarding the north bank of the Schelde estuary, the entrance to the port of Antwerp. Her father had a thriving touring business with a small fleet of taxis and buses. When the Germans attacked Walcheren Island, Middelburg was a direct target for Luftwaffe bombs. The town center, including her father's business, was completely destroyed by explosions and the ensuing fire. What wasn't destroyed was taken by the Germans to hasten their advance into Belgium and then France. "We lost seven taxis and six or seven buses, both by fire and by confiscation by the Germans," says Case.

One thing that particularly rankled Case was that her family had taken out "war insurance" prior to the bombing. The insurance company refused to pay on their claim because the policy only covered a direct hit by a bomb and Case's family couldn't prove that it wasn't the neighbor's house that got bombed and caused the Van Graafeiland home to catch fire. "We fled on two bicycles, mother and I did. We had made a plan beforehand."

Bombed out of their home, they were forced to move into an attic in the unburned fringes of the town. Case recalls the Swedish Government provided emergency shops, small five-meter by ten-meter boxes, set up on the canal banks to help re-establish businesses. The remnants of the family business, and the

family itself, moved into one of these temporary shelters. When Middelburg's elderly were moved to the mainland, one older woman who was befriended by Case's family was forced to move. She asked the family to care for her house, giving them a proper place to live. Later, the old woman returned to die in her home and then sold it to Case's family, and they lived there for the war's duration.

Case became a secretary for the Philips Company, a famous firm mostly known for its light bulbs and electronics. Phillips had other interests, including a technique to extract vitamins from sea fish—cockles, mussels, and the like. Case's job was to ensure this patented technology remained a secret from the Germans.

Her job also led to Case's introduction to the Resistance. Because she worked in the food industry, she had special travel privileges, and could take a train from her job in Amsterdam to her home in the southern Netherlands. This led to her becoming a courier for envelopes she would carry on the train. "It was risky, because if you were caught, you'd had it," Case says, recalling that she never knew what was in those envelopes. "Later, I thought they may have been ration coupons or false I-Ds... anything." Never looking at the documents inside the envelopes, she would deliver them at some pre-selected spot, usually at the Haarlem station. "I would drop them at the cashier's station, or at the newspaper stand or a waiting-room bench."

In 1943, Dutch train workers went on strike, in one of three major labor actions by which the populace as a whole showed its resistance to the Germans. Case was warned just before the rail strike to get out of Amsterdam. She did not go back to her room but caught the first southbound train, which turned out to be the last train out of the north before the bridges were closed. It later proved to be very fortunate as northern Holland was still occupied at the war's end.

In Amsterdam, Bert lived under the terms of the occupation from 1940 to 1943. He described occupation as "routine"—if one

could call "routine" the presence of occupying soldiers and a host of restrictive regulations.

"We could not shine any lights out of the house," remembers Bert. "All windows had to be darkened at night, either by curtains or cardboard." There was also a curfew, restrictions on movement and food rationing. Obtaining food became increasingly difficult, leading to a black market where a person could try to get goods that were in short supply.

By mid 1943, Germany was facing an increasingly severe manpower shortage as a result of all the men being called up as soldiers. To maintain factory production, the Germans began forcing workers from occupied countries to fill jobs in Germany and elsewhere.

In the office where Bert worked, two of the four workers were deemed surplus. Bert got notice one day he was to be interviewed for a job. He ignored this first notice, hoping the issue would go away. The Germans eventually sent him another notice. "I finally decided that I didn't have any choice, because the alternative was to go totally into hiding, go underground. You wouldn't get any coupons and you would become a burden to your family... all at the risk of being caught. And if you were caught, you'd be sentenced to hard labor."

Such hard labor could be working on the Atlantic Wall defenses, and further resistance could result in prison or a concentration camp. Bert says his job interview was quite "routine." The Germans were very pleased to find someone who could speak German, and a week later he boarded a train to Jena, Germany, home of the famous Zeiss Optics factory. Upon arrival, he was given indoctrination to the factory and his responsibilities—to maintain inventory of all the screws in the factory, some 3,000 different types of screws!

The screws were used to assemble binoculars, range finders, trench periscopes and gun sights. There was much humor in Bert's description of the various screws he had

to care for, and assure there were no "loose screws" in the factory.

Life in Jena was also "routine." Bert was paid for his work and used the money to buy food, clothes, transportation and daily necessities, while his dormitory room was free. He made the acquaintance of five other Dutchmen and finding food became their main preoccupation.

Shortages were beginning to occur in Germany by this time in the war. Bert and his compatriots sometimes got food from the local university cafeteria. But more often they became regulars at a particular restaurant, coming to know the proprietor and his family. They felt welcome in this small town where there were no undue hardships other than shortages of food, clothes and many other items. Relatively free to move about the nearby area, they would visit local farms and help with chores in exchange for food.

Food was also a major pre-occupation for Case. In Middelburg, food was also becoming increasingly scarce and ration coupons were needed for everything—a few ounces of meat or fat, cheese, bread or coal, even for 20 grams of spaghetti, about six dry strands. Case said they would just nibble uncooked spaghetti, like candy, as this relieved some of their hunger pains.

Dandelions, sugar beets and even worms became fair game. Case said she'd brush the dirt off worms and fry them a bit before eating them. "Then we had what we used to call 'sliding sausage.' We would put a slice of salami on a piece of bread and then slide off the salami while we ate the bread, and then reuse the salami on another piece of bread."

Case also told of an accidental food drop during the Market Garden airborne offensive. There were containers of Crisco in the drop, and civilians ate it, figuring it was just a foodstuff they hadn't seen before. They got terribly sick. Also dropped was peanut butter, in glass jars that broke when the packages hit the ground. Case recalled they

were so hungry, they licked the peanut butter off of the broken glass.

Bert read an example from a Dutch newspaper of November 1943 about special rations for a pregnant woman—"Pregnant women are entitled to the following items, provided they are 1) having her first child or 2) have no children below the age of five. The thinking was that if you have a child from one to five years old, most likely you have enough left for the new baby." The list included one pound of knitting yarn, 12 cloth diapers with only 12 safety pins, and three sweaters.

Other examples from the newspaper involved coal rations for a given time period, requisition criteria that were date-stamped. They reflected the hard fact that just because you had ration coupons didn't mean sufficient coal was available for the old coupons to be used.

One of the roles Case held with the Resistance was providing information for an underground newspaper, which she helped distribute. A farmer in Grijpskerke, on the island, who was in radio communication with the English Government, received information the resistance needed. Case would bicycle news back to Middelburg and give it to an English teacher who would print it. "The paper was no bigger than one sheet, sometimes two sheets, and it was stenciled. Everybody in Middelburg got involved in distributing...of course, if you got caught with one or more papers you had had it. My father always burned it right away after he read it." One can only imagine punishment the Germans would have given a courier.

Case also took Resistance information back to Grijpskerke to be radioed to England. The Germans knew there was a radio in the area, and would send a small white truck with a radio direction finder antenna on its roof. When the Resistance saw the truck, all activity shut down and, as Case said, "You kept on pedaling, as far away as possible!"

Another method of signaling was done with windmills. The Dutch would set the windmill vanes so the amount of sail

displayed would mean different things. The Germans never caught on to this means of communication.

Walcheren Island was a key navigation point for Allied bombers, both by day and by night, and Case saw them fly over regularly. Case says they bombed Flushing airfield once, on August 19, 1943, her father's birthday.

Case kept track of where bombers crashed, where airmen parachuted and where some aircrew were buried. Airmen who survived became evaders—Case explaining that the escape route out of the Netherlands was a zigzag path east and west as the Resistance moved airmen south.

In one escape/evasion a tall pilot was dressed as part of a team travelling to a sporting event. Case says that even though the Dutch are generally tall, there was a challenge finding a sports uniform to fit him. "He was well over six feet tall and we had to find clothes for him. It was almost impossible. We took him on the bike with the other team members riding around him, but the legs of his pants only came to his calves."

Added to that was a need to escort the pilot on the ferry across the Schelde River to Breskens, a strategic, heavily guarded location. In spite of the dangers, this passage proved successful.

Because the Schelde Estuary was so critical to the Allied opening of the port of Antwerp, Walcheren Island was liberated before the rest of the Netherlands. The campaign began with the bombing of the dikes at Westkapelle in October, 1944. At least 12,000 German defenders held pillboxes and bunkers on the island, and rather than initiate a Normandy-hedgerow type battle, the Allies flooded the land. (The long-term effect of this brought great hardship because farmland was saturated with salt and unusable for years).

On November 2, 1944, the 52nd Lowland Division—The Scottish Highlanders Brigade—made an amphibious landing at Flushing, and Middelburg was liberated four days later. Due to the artillery shelling, people in Middelburg had taken refuge in the

cellars of their homes. Case recalls hearing someone walking by in boots. After more than four years of occupation, she recognized the sound of German boots, distinctive because of the steel nails in them.

These footsteps sounded different and the difference was confirmed when she heard a man whistling "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." Case says her family streamed from the cellar in excitement—and were lucky they weren't shot, as they scared the soldier badly!

Case says a German general refused to surrender the island to anyone lower in rank than a colonel, so a Highlander Lieutenant impersonated a colonel to effect a prompt surrender, apparently without the German ever discovering! Walcheren's early liberation was fortunate. The rest of the Netherlands suffered terribly from food and heating shortages during Europe's harsh winter of 1944-45, and wasn't liberated until the war ended.

Bert's liberation was quite different. He and his compatriot workers tried to fend off the frigid nights in their dorm by sleeping with their coats on. They were still cold. By day, increasing shortages were among the key indicators the war was going badly for the Germans.

One day Bert saw a thousand-plane bombing raid fly overhead. "I saw 1,080 bombers coming over. If you want to see a sight, you should see 108 bombers in one formation! There were ten groups of 108! Each had three groups of 36 planes, and each of those had three groups of twelve planes in four groups of three! What an emotional sight; they were as far as the eye could see. We all watched them go over for an hour." Bert surmised that because the raid flew over Jena, Berlin was probably the target that day.

Liberation finally came April 11th, 1945. Bert says there had been distant rumbling of artillery in days prior, and on about the ninth of the month the German units withdrew through the town. "The next morning we saw the first American soldiers coming in, walking in single file on either side

of the street. They stopped and I got to talking one of the fellows. I didn't know they were called 'GIs'... He was very friendly and he said 'the one thing I would love to have is some hot water for a shave.'"

"Now, in German towns, the houses are right up to the street. There is no more than a 2-foot sidewalk. I banged loudly on a big green door, and when the lady came to the door, I said in a very authoritative tone, 'Hot water for this soldier!'" The woman quickly filled Bert's request. Bert then told the GIs the Hitler Jugend (Youth) had fortified a park near the bridge about a mile down the road. That information brought Bert face to face with the unit commander, and he was soon known well to the liberating Allies.

Liberation brought an answer to Bert's hunger pangs. He and five other Dutchmen, who had worked in the factory, went to the American camp, where they were disturbed to see food being wasted by the GIs. The soldiers shoved food scraps into a bin, scraps which would have been welcomed to the undernourished Dutch. Bert and the others were soon able to sit in a mess hall and eat thick slices of liver and other food, which made them sick because their stomachs couldn't handle the richness or quantity of food after years of minimal diet.

Liberation brought on an 'organized chaos,' as thousands of displaced workers were collected at the barracks of an old German army camp. The United Nations Relief Administration (UNRA) handled the processing—sending the workers back to their home countries—and employed Bert and five of his fellow Dutchmen who spoke multiple languages (Dutch, German, English and French) to be interpreters. Loudspeakers blared constantly with announcements directing thousands of Norwegians, Dutch, French, Belgian, Danes and many others where they needed to be in the camp.

For transportation, UNRA used the same cattle cars that had carried people to concentration camps. But Bert says that since folks were going home, they didn't mind as

much. Bert recalls, he was eating a meal one day when a two-star general stopped to thank him for his efforts. Only after a nice, informal talk did Bert realize he'd been speaking with someone of such a high rank.

Having helped UNRA with translating, Bert and his fellow Dutchmen were asked to join teams responsible for disarming the German Air Force. The 404th Fighter Group of the 9th Air Force, based outside Jena, assembled teams of four in jeeps—a 1st Lieutenant, a driver, technician and civilian interpreter. These teams were assigned to areas with small villages where military equipment and light manufacturing were found. Bert says the Lieutenant would interview a town's officials while Bert silently observed. The Germans might comment about keeping war materiel from the Americans, and if they did, Bert would tell the lieutenant what the Germans were saying. Then the Germans, realizing they'd been found out, would give up all the goods.

Bert says the teams found much industrial equipment—beautiful lathes and drill presses—that were all hauled away and destroyed to keep it from Russians who would eventually occupy the area.

At one factory Bert's team found 100 brand-new motorcycles. When they informed headquarters, trucks were immediately dispatched to retrieve them. Anyone present back at camp, including Bert, got a brand new motorcycle to ride for a while.

In May, the Americans were rushed out of the Russian zone and Bert went to Berneck, where he stayed in a hotel once used by Hitler. He continued in efforts to locate material with the 404th. In August of that year the work was taken over by the 485th Air Service Group, and when that unit went to Bremerhaven, Bert helped it 'commandeer' a neighborhood of nice homes to billet troops. Eventually, Bert was released from "duty" and he worked his way back to the Netherlands.

Back in the home country, Case worked for two years for a British military "Mayor" in charge of civil affairs, before

encountering an officer of the Missing Research and Inquiry unit of the RAF. This unit was charged with locating the graves of RAF airmen in the Netherlands. She joined them and returned to Middelburg.

Notes she had kept during the war on aircraft crashes and airmen's graves proved very useful in locating them. They found all the graves to be very well maintained by the locals. In many cases, identification was made by dental records. Case would also interview locals for information on the crash site and physical evidence to help establish identity. Sometimes the smallest item could lead to the identification of an entire crew.

Case was later recognized by the 8th Air Force Escape and Evacuation Society and has a Certificate of Honor signed by President Reagan. She has also been recognized by Great Britain, Canada and the other Commonwealth countries, and by the Royal House for her efforts in assisting flyers and in locating graves after the war.

After the war, Bert applied for a US Immigration visa but, at the time, the quota for Dutchmen was 2,200 per year. Given that he was 13,000th on the list, he worked instead on ships transporting immigrants to the USA and Canada. On one of these trips he met a person who eventually would sponsor him for immigration. In 1950, Bert and Case ended up working on the same ship—the "Oranje"—transporting people from the former Dutch colony of Indonesia back to the Netherlands. Bert recalled, when they first reported on board, speaking to a lady sitting in front of him. Little did she know Bert was to be her boss as chief purser on the ship.

They were married on Valentine's Day, 1952 and immigrated to Denver, Colorado, where they resided until Case's death in 2010. Bert and Case expressed their deep appreciation to all the WWII veterans for liberating them.

## DOCUMENTARY RETRACES SERVICEMAN'S FATAL TREK THROUGH THE PYRENEES

*By Torsten Ove / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 2015*

Francis “Bud” Owens, a brave young man from Pittsburgh, died in 1943 in the snowy Pyrenees Mountains at the end of a desperate trek to escape occupied France into Spain after being shot down over Normandy.

The B-17 gunner’s remains are buried in the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium under a white cross, one among thousands marking the graves of Americans who helped liberate Europe from Hitler’s war machine.

His is another of the millions of sad war stories from that time, but he has not been forgotten—in France or in America.

Earlier this month, Staff Sgt. Owens’ great-niece, Hayley Hulbert, 19, of Bethel Park, and her aunt, Colleen Brennan, 63, of Plum, joined a French team of guides and an American documentary maker to retrace his journey with the French resistance from Normandy to a forbidding mountain pass in the Pyrenees where he died of exposure and exhaustion with two other airmen.

Ms. Hulbert, a student at the University of Pittsburgh studying to become a teacher, had never been on a plane before, let alone a mission to recreate history or an 11-hour hike into the mountains. “It was kind of the best vacation I’ve ever had,” she said.

But it was more than a vacation. She wanted to honor Francis “Bud” Owens of Lawrenceville—who, at 21, was just a couple of years older than she is—and try to understand what he and other downed airmen endured in the dark years of World War II. “Before, I didn’t really know the whole story,” she said. “Now there’s a new appreciation for all they went through.”

Ms. Brennan, whose father, Jim Owens, is Bud’s brother, had grown up with the story, but she now had the chance to see where it happened. “To me, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” she said.

The excursion, headed by Normandy battlefield guide Geert Van den Bogaert and filmed by Wisconsin filmmaker Jed Henry of Recon Productions, was called “In the Footsteps of Bud Owens” and set up as a nonprofit enterprise with the idea of preparing a documentary to sell to a museum, to websites, to gift shops or possibly to a television outlet.

The organizers said they hoped to give young people like Ms. Hulbert an appreciation of the “tremendous fortitude and courage” of the World War II generation and a connection to the past. In addition to Ms. Hulbert, the team included a young Frenchman, Louis Hatet, whose great-grandfather, Andre Rougeyron, was a resistance leader in Normandy, and two airmen from the 381st Training Group at Vandenburg Air Force Base in California, where a training facility was named for Sgt. Owens in 2012.

With money raised through Gofundme, the team traveled by trains, plains and automobiles—and a lot on foot—across France, visiting the old stone barn where the resistance hid Sgt. Owens for months, then a series of former safe houses in Paris and finally the mountains before ending the journey at the Belgian cemetery. The most arduous part was the last day of the three-day mountain hike.

Ms. Brennan rode in a support vehicle, but the rest made their way up to Arinsal in La Massana, some 9,000 feet in the peaks of remote Andorra. Ms. Hulbert, a star soccer player, said the climb was tough despite her soccer conditioning and her training hikes in South Park carrying a 25-pound pack.

“Today we mounted Port d’Arinsal [part of La Massana],” the team wrote on the project’s Facebook page. “It was a very challenging hike (11 hours!) and one can easily understand why Bud Owens and two of his fellow evaders did not make it in 1943, seeing the conditions they faced. Plenty of time for our group to contemplate and meditate before receiving a wonderful welcome by the people of La Massana.”

Bud Owens was one of 10 children growing up on Calvin Street in Lawrenceville, graduating from Schenley High School and enlisting in the Army after Pearl Harbor. By May 1943, he was in England as a B-17 gunner with the 381st Bomb Group.

He quickly distinguished himself with an act of courage in June. As his unit was preparing for a bombing run to France, a bomb being loaded on a plane blew up, leading to a cascade of explosions. Sgt. Owens, who had been cleaning the machine guns on his own plane, risked his life to pull an injured man to safety. Twenty-three others died.

He flew several missions as a waist gunner, and on July 4, 1943, his unit attacked an aircraft engine factory in Le Mans, France. As the formation approached the target, an anti-aircraft shell burst below his plane’s radio room, killing three of the 10 crew members and cutting the oxygen lines to the back of the ship. The pilot descended to 21,000 feet and headed back to England, but German fighters shot up the plane and Lt. Olaf Ballinger gave the order to bail.

Sgt. Owens, realizing that no one had heard from the radio operator, John Lane, made his way to the radio room, found Sgt. Lane unconscious, revived him with oxygen, helped him into a parachute and held the door while he jumped. Then Sgt. Owens bailed, too.

The plane crashed near the village of La Coulonche in Normandy. Sgt. Owens and four others parachuted into the French countryside, where they were taken in by the French resistance and sheltered in barns and farmhouses.

Sgt. Owens landed in a field, where a farmer took him to a local teacher, who in turn took him to another home where he met up with Lt. Ballinger. From there, they walked 4 miles to Saint-Opportune, where they were taken in by Andre Geslin and housed in a stone barn. They remained there for three months, hiding from German patrols and only coming out at night.

Ms. Hulbert, Ms. Brennan and the other members of the team who visited this month met with Mr. Geslin's daughter, Jeanine Gandeboeuf, who was 3 at the time of the crash. Her family still owns the property, although the barn is empty now.

“They had a reception for us and everything,” Ms. Brennan said. “She cried when we left.” After three months in the barn, the resistance members, orchestrated by Mr. Rougeyron, moved Sgt. Owens and Lt. Ballinger to a post office in Champsecret, and from there to a series of safe houses in Paris, where they met with other downed airmen and French officers trying to get to neutral Spain.

Food was in short supply, and clothing a constant problem. Sgt. Owens was 6 feet 3 inches, huge by French standards, and Lt. Ballinger was big, too. Old photos show Sgt. Owens in an ill-fitting French jacket.

From Paris, the resistance put the men on the night train to Toulouse and then to Giron, and from there they walked to the town of Suc, where they would begin their ascent into the Pyrenees. The climb would be a challenge for healthy hikers, as Ms. Hulbert discovered, but nearly impossible for malnourished airmen who had been hiding from the Germans for months. Lt. Ballinger dropped out because of leg cramps, but the others forged on.

One airman, Harold Bailey, became sick and collapsed after taking too many Benzedrine tablets in an attempt to generate enough energy to make the climb. Sgt. Owens and another airman, William Plasket, had to drag him through the snow. Their attempt to save him probably sealed their fate.

“Owens and Plasket had been dragging Bailey for approximately eight hours, and were themselves almost completely exhausted,” a 1950 Army report says. “At this point the party was at an altitude of approximately 1,800 meters. The snow was about three feet in depth. The garments of the men were thin, and they had no underwear or overcoats. Due to an insufficient food supply

over a period of weeks, their physical condition was very poor.”

One of the French guides, Emile Delpy, drew his gun and said he'd shoot them if they didn't get up. They didn't respond and he fired a shot into the snow, but they still didn't move. The party left them behind and moved on.



The gravesite of Francis "Bud" Owens in Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium

No one knows for sure, but the three men likely died of exposure in late October. The bodies, devoid of any identification, were discovered the following spring by an Andorran mountain patrol and buried in a local cemetery.

An Army mortuary unit tracked the missing airmen to the cemetery in 1950. At the request of his family, Sgt. Owens' remains were removed and interred at the Ardennes cemetery on Oct. 1, 1951. That morning in Pittsburgh, his family attended a requiem high Mass at St. Mary Church.

This July 11, near the end of their European adventure, Ms. Brennan and Ms. Hulbert held their own ceremony at the Ardennes grave.

Among the field of crosses, they stood arm in arm and silently paid tribute to a young warrior who died before his life really began.



## FOLDED WINGS

**William C. McGinley (E&E #1874)** age 93, of Sardis, passed away on October 2, 2015. He was born August 21, 1922 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Mr. McGinley served in the U.S. Army Air Force. He was a Staff Sgt on a B24 as a tail gunner that was shot down over Brussels Belgium and had to stay underground for 9 months with the help of Mrs. Brusselmen until she could get him to safety. Mr. McGinley was a member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the Sardis United Methodist Church. He retired from the Insurance Business. Mr. McGinley was preceded in death by his parents, Connel and Lily McGinley; son, William “Billy” McGinley, Jr.; brother, Harold McGinley and a sister, Shirley McGinley Evans. He is survived by his wife, Bonnie McGinley; daughter, Susan McGinley Sheldon (AL); sister, Maxine Wine (Ed) and several cousins, nieces and nephews.

**Eugene “Gene” Hodge (15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 460 Bomb Group)** died July 8, 2012.

While bombing Vienna on December 11, 1944, Gene’s B-24 sustained severe

damage from an 88-shell. Pilot William Geer flew toward Russia, but it became obvious that the plane was mortally wounded. Geer ordered his crew to jump over mountains in Slovakia.

German soldiers shot at Gene as he floated earthward. Once he reached the ground, the 19-year old tail gunner followed railroad tracks until he met Jaroslav Trnka. The Slovak forester was searching for the downed Americans. This helper walked Gene eight miles to the home of Jan and Alberta Repka and their young daughters in the village of Upper Stvernik.

Gene’s evasion drama quickly became entwined with that of several other American airmen. Gordon Follas fetched him from the Repkas after five days. Follas, a New Zealander, had joined the partisans after escaping from a POW camp elsewhere in Czechoslovakia. He led Gene to the hamlet of Dankov where Gene found Lt. John “Zeb” Zebrowski, his crew’s co-pilot, and Zeb’s rescuer, Stefan Bachar. The group hiked to a nearby village to meet with eight other American evaders, including Gene’s crewmates, Wilfred Tritz and Lt. Robert Wicks. Bachar next placed Gene and Zeb in the home of his uncle, Jan Bzdusek.

Despite deep snow, 11 American evaders and five partisans gathered to share a meal on Christmas Day at the Bachars’ home. They recorded the moment with a group photo that included two small Jewish children hiding with the Bachar family.

Apparently influenced by Russians who had joined his band, Communist partisan leader Jan Repta insisted the Americans move to his camp on December 27. Attempts to transform the fliers into foot soldiers failed miserably, however. Exiled briefly to an Americans-only camp, the Yanks panicked and almost opened fire on Slovak partisans they mistook for Germans.

On New Year’s Day, the Russians ramped up the Americans’ anxiety when they celebrated by tossing small hand grenades.

Zeb, who spoke fluent Polish, communicated well with the Slovaks. He argued that the fliers would be shot as spies if captured with weapons and wearing civilian clothing. On January 5, Gene nervously stood dawn sentry duty. The following day, Repta sent all of the Americans back to the villages. This move was fortuitous: the next day, Germans attacked the partisan stronghold, killing or capturing several men. In the home of his new helper, Jan Danek, Gene listened to the gunfire.

In mid-January, Stefan Bachar relocated Gene and Zeb, to the home of Martin Jorik in the village of Upper Paseky. Two weeks later, Bachar learned that the Germans planned a house-to-house search. He led the men to the medieval town of Prietz and stashed them in the freezing cellar of a tavern. They shivered all day; especially in the late afternoon when they heard the German search party laughing above them. After the enemy departed, Bachar returned his charges to the Jorik family.

Before long, Bachar moved Gene (without Zeb) to Lower Paseky where he joined Lt. Walter Newbury in the home of Martin Zucsik. Because he lived right beside the road, Zucsik hustled the two Americans to a shed when a column of enemy infantrymen approached. Just six feet away, the airmen listened to the Germans talking as they passed.

Forced to move yet again, Gene lived with Jan and Zuzana Dobias in Lower Paseky. During his two weeks with them, Gene sliced his shin while chopping firewood but Mrs. Dobias successfully treated the wound. A co-pilot from another crew, Owen “Sully” Sullivan, eventually joined Gene. Sully’s pilot, Ernest Appleby was the only crewmember unable to leave their plane before it crashed on November 20, 1944. On Christmas Eve, Hlinka Guards (Slovak Nazis) apprehended James Kirchoff, Sully’s bombardier. A Slovak woman had betrayed Kirchoff and two of his helpers. All three were tortured and then executed.

On Valentine’s Day, Gene and Sully heard German burp guns firing nearby. They soon learned that the enemy had captured Zeb as well as Sully’s crewmates Tony Scardino, Leonard “Chick” Chekirda, and Gus Chakos.

Although clearly losing the war in late March 1945, the Germans wasted manpower on a dragnet intended to snare Jews, partisans and Allied airmen. By then, Sully was staying elsewhere. Gene feared for the Dobias family, and over their objections, he fled to the Bachar home. There he discovered that the Gestapo had arrested the evaders’ steadfast helper, Stefan. Lawrence Baumgarten, a gunner from Sully’s crew, already had sought refuge with the Bachars. The following day Sully joined them.

Despite the tearful pleas of the Bachars to stay, the three Americans decided to run toward advancing Russian forces. They first stopped at the home of Anna Brozek to pick up Larry Cardwell, a gunner from Sully’s crew. Cardwell rejected their plan and remained behind.

Within five minutes of setting out, the evaders saw Germans traveling on the road. Unnerved, Baumgarten immediately turned back. (The Red Army liberated him and Cardwell two weeks later.)

After another scary encounter with an enemy soldier, and passing dangerously close to a German garrison, Gene and Sully realized they could not map their route alone. They trudged to the home of Gene’s early helpers, the Repkas in Upper Stvernik. The Germans had picked up Jan that morning for forced labor. Mrs. Repka consulted women in the village who decided a 16-year old girl, Judita Bzduskova, should escort the airmen to Brezova, population 3,000. The threesome passed several German soldiers and arrived safely at the home of Underground members Betka and Stefan Papanek, strangers to the two Americans.

Mrs. Papanek welcomed the men, but Stefan was not home. He appeared later—with a German soldier he had invited for dinner! (Entertaining an occasional German was a

ploy the underground used to deflect suspicion.) The evaders waited silently for their meal at a table separate from the German, who did not speak to them. As he was leaving, however, the soldier paused to stare coldly at the two Americans. Unfortunately, Gene fought his impulse to run, and the Gestapo arrested him and Sully moments later.

In the days that followed, the Germans placed the two in a series of cold jails, fed them little and threatened to shoot them. Sometimes they were housed together; occasionally the Germans separated them. Both men refused to disclose more than name, rank and serial number. One day when their spirits flagged, Gene pulled out his GI Bible and read aloud the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm and other passages to comfort them. Gene's evasion experience made him a religious man for the rest of his life.

On March 28, 1945, the SS chained the two Americans together and transported them by boxcar from Senica to Bratislava. Sully's hand turned blue because his wrist was too tightly bound. In Bratislava, the Gestapo again interrogated them, after which they were taken to a prison run by the SS and separated. Certain the Germans would execute him, Gene wrote a final letter to his parents on three blank pages inside his Bible. Then the teenager sang hymns.

After a week, SS officers took Gene and Sully to an Aerodrome outside the city. Two Luftwaffe non-coms picked them up and walked them back through Bratislava to an air force base. By this point in the war, Allied bombing had reduced many German cities to rubble. An English-speaking Luftwaffe colonel asked the two Americans why they killed women and children, to which Sully replied with another question: why did the Luftwaffe kill women and children in Rotterdam and London? The German punched Sully, almost knocking him off his feet.

Once again the SS appeared. On foot and by horse-drawn wagon, they escorted the Americans across the Danube and into Austria

and turned them over to the Gestapo in a small town. Gene suffered a huge loss when a guard confiscated his Bible. Chained together the next morning, the evaders traveled by passenger train and trolley to Vienna where an English-speaking SS man told them the war would end soon and that he hoped to be a prisoner of the Americans. He also informed them that they were listed as saboteurs, not airmen. If they were to survive, they must provide an account of their movements and helpers since being shot down. Although he claimed that the Russians already had liberated their area of Slovakia, Gene and Sully fabricated names and places. The SS man sat across from them and allowed them to work together on this fiction. As a result, there were no contradictions in their statements.

On April 5, 1945 the two Americans joined Slavic prisoners wearing striped uniforms in a courtyard. Noting that bullet holes pocked the brick walls around them, Gene expected the burp-gun toting guards to shoot them. Instead, Luftwaffe men led the group on a forced march, sometimes among throngs of frantic Austrians fleeing the Soviet advance. During an artillery barrage, guards and prisoners alike cowered in a ditch.

After days of marching, and little food, Gene and other prisoners fell sick. Gene watched in horror as a Luftwaffe man shot a Slavic prisoner too weak to walk. Already miserable with dysentery, Gene now suffered from influenza, too. He later credited Sully for keeping him alive.

By mid-April, the Germans were marching their prisoners all over Europe. One day Gene and Sully were transferred to a column of Aussies and Brits. Their treatment immediately improved since they no longer traveled with a group the Nazis labeled “sub-human.” The route, however, took the Anglo prisoners right through Mauthausen concentration camp. Guards claimed it offered a short cut. As the column marched through an equipment room, an SS man yanked Gene out of the line and pulled his hair.

Gene trudged another eight miles after exiting the camp, but he collapsed on the outskirts of Linz. An SS officer who had lived in Texas took pity on Gene. He told Sully that Gene must be hospitalized. Unconscious, Gene traveled by wagon to a collection point for sick prisoners, joining about a dozen Russians in a carport, not a hospital. Buildings were nearby, but the men were abandoned outdoors in the cold for hours. Gene climbed into one of the parked vehicles, even though another prisoner tried to stop him. Spiking a fever, Gene fell asleep on the back seat. A furious SS man pulled him from the car at daybreak and tossed him on the ground.

The buildings Gene had observed the day before were the barracks of a POW camp just 12 miles from Linz. The only other American there, an airman named Reid, informed Gene that Brits and Russians occupied the camp. Gene received aspirin and part of a Red Cross package, and he slowly began to recover.

On April 30, the camp authorities separated Gene and Reid and sent Gene on another forced march. Again, he was the only American. The Germans gathered more Russians along the way. On May 2, they housed the motley group in a brick factory in Ried im Innkreis.

The following day, a prisoner sighted American tankers and gleefully reported this news to the others. Their euphoria ended with the arrival of a squad of SS soldiers. In the afternoon, a firefight took place and P-51 Mustangs strafed German positions. Soon Gene saw white flags appear on buildings in the town. Since his guards had gone elsewhere to surrender, Gene ran toward the lone GI who approached his building. His liberator, a corporal from Georgia, took Gene to Lt. John Tripp. After the infantryman heard some of Gene's story, he handed him a submachine gun and pointed to high-ranking German officers nearby. For several moments, Gene terrorized the Nazis as he brandished the

weapon and shouted insults at them in fractured German.

The next day, an African-American NCO drove Gene to Nuremburg where he joined other ex-POWs, all of whom were Poles, Russians and Slavs. On May 7, Gene was taken to an airport to fly with Americans to Camp Lucky Strike in Le Havre, France. American intelligence personnel interviewed Gene there, and he enjoyed the luxury of hot showers and hot meals. He shucked his lice-infested clothes and donned a clean uniform.

When he sailed for home five days later, he discovered Sully aboard the same liberty ship. Back in Arkansas, he learned that Stefan Bachar had survived the war—he escaped when his father bribed a guard. Gordon Follas also survived and returned to New Zealand. Gene wrote to several of his friends in Slovakia, sending CARE packages to a few. Their correspondence ended in 1948 when Communists tightened their grip on Czechoslovakia.

In the 1970s, however, Gene reconnected with surviving helpers and evaders. He learned some of the Slovaks had immigrated to America—Stefan Bachar lived in Gene's native Arkansas. In 1977, Gene traveled to Europe to see others, but he was denied entrance to Czechoslovakia. Undeterred, he persisted and in 1979, he visited many of them, including partisan leader Jan Repta.

Back home, he and other veterans held several reunions with their Slovak helpers residing in the States. Meanwhile, some of the men also returned to Slovakia, including Leonard Chekirda. Larry Cardwell traveled there twice, and Sully made the trip three times during the 1980s. Gene, Zeb, Sully and Chekirda returned for a Grand Reunion in 1998.

Like evaders in France, Belgium and Holland, their love for their helpers never wavered. (Jerri Donohue)



Frank Schaeffer in New Mexico, 2012

Longtime AFEES member **Frank Schaeffer** (E&E #1369) died September 12, 2015.

S/Sgt. Frank Schaeffer flew out of Shipdam, England with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group on pilot Bernard “Komo” Komaskinski’s crew. The men flew their first mission on July 29, 1944, and their last (#7) on August 8.

A flight engineer, Frank had been informed that the plane assigned to them that day had a faulty prop governor on the engine. On the bomb run, one of the engines began to speed. Frank and co-pilot Scott Gippert tried various means to reduce it to cruising speed, but all efforts failed. Despite its runaway propeller, the B-24 dropped its bombs on the intended target, the airdrome near La Perthe, France. By this time, the engine howled and its cowling vibrated violently. Frank and the rest of the crew feared the propeller would break loose and slam into the fuselage. They decided to jump.

On the narrow catwalk, Frank’s ripcord caught on a bomb shackle and his chute began to deploy. Through the years, Frank named this disaster and the ensuing descent as his most terrifying wartime experience. Wrapping his arms around the “spilled” silk, he squatted and rolled out of the

doomed plane. The wind immediately ripped the parachute from his arms, and yanked the harness around his crotch. Frank became light-headed from lack of oxygen, and his bare hands and head stung from the cold. He estimated it took him 20 minutes to reach the ground, during which time he knew he would make an easy target for any Germans watching. When his descent quickened, he feared his torn chute would deflate and he would plummet to his death.

As it turned out, Frank landed hard on his rump in a field. Waiting French farmers hurried him away. Like many smart airmen, he had tied his GI shoes to his parachute. He kept the footwear but tossed his parachute and his Mae West under bushes. Someone shot at Frank as he did so.

Shortly afterward, Frank and the civilians reached a house at a crossroads, but the homeowner refused to hide him. The Frenchmen took Frank to a second house, stripped him of his flight suit and dressed him in civilian clothes. A woman fed Frank bread, butter and cognac. His helpers then directed Frank to lie on the bottom of a small horse-drawn cart. Frank reported that the animal “spit horse apples on me” as they drove a mile into the forest.

Their destination proved to be a straw-lined hole in the ground. After Frank settled into it, the Frenchmen covered his hiding place with brush. They retrieved him at nightfall. For several hours, a series of helpers relayed Frank—on foot—in the dark through woods and fields to the town of Orbais l’Abbaye. There the widow Bénier and her two adult children, Lucienne and André, sheltered Frank in a back bedroom. At night, Louis “Shorty” Guyomard joined him. A French agent working for the Brits, Guyomard spoke English and operated a clandestine radio. Frank learned that the Béniers earlier had hidden William Weatherwax, a B-17 pilot. Unfortunately, too many outsiders became aware of Weatherwax’s presence, and so he was now living in the forest.

Frank said his grandparents came from “Bohemia and Austria,” and he did not speak English as his first language. His slight accent apparently puzzled the French. His initial helpers interrogated him to establish his nationality and they quizzed him about the rest of the crew. The French knew that the Germans had captured two men but the other crewmembers were hiding elsewhere. These evaders confirmed Frank’s identity and sent him notes through the French.

“I was sleeping in a featherbed where some of our crew were out in the woods, in the rain,” Frank recalled decades later.

During the day, the Bénier family’s trusted friends came to gawk at their American. Unable to communicate with anyone, he resorted to endless games of solitaire, or played with the family’s cats. He also rolled cigarettes for Shorty. Frank sometimes worked in the back garden, which was enclosed by a high stone wall, and he even separated honey from the comb despite numerous bee stings. At night, he listened to the BBC with the Béniers, and helped them fashion an American flag to celebrate the predicted liberation.

Within three weeks, retreating Germans appeared on the road outside the Bénier house. Frank spied on them through the curtains. Most enemy soldiers rode in vehicles, but one traveling on foot stopped to ask for water. Frank fled to the bedroom.

On August 28, a relative burst into the Bénier home during lunch and announced that Americans had arrived in town. In their excitement, the family rushed away, abandoning Frank, who hadn’t understood the news. Before long, one of the Béniers returned for him. When he met the grubby, bearded GIs, his fellow Americans lavished candy and cigarettes on Frank. The evader then accompanied a member of the Underground to fetch Weatherwax. Frank learned that four of his crewmates had been with Weatherwax, but they already had left with the American liberators. Frank and Weatherwax stayed with the Béniers for a couple of days, making wine-

sodden farewell visits to their friends in the village. English evaders joined in the revelry.

The group eventually made its way to Paris for more celebrating until the Army flew the airmen to England. Frank returned to the States in October 1944.

In post-war years, Frank contacted several of his helpers and located his crewmates. (Fellow evader Bill Weatherwax was murdered in 1971.) Frank loved AFEES reunions, and his all-time favorite was the Toronto reunion held jointly with Canadian evaders. During annual memorial services, Frank paid tribute to his deceased AFEES friends. Late in life, he continued to drive great distances to reunions from his home in Wisconsin—alone and without a GPS. In 2014, when he was 92 years old, Frank lost his way in Charleston, but a kind-hearted South Carolinian drove ahead of him to lead him to our hotel. Only Frank’s sudden illness prevented him from attending last year’s gathering in Salt Lake City.

In addition to the Bénier family, Frank’s helpers were: Charles Dupuis, Jean Perault, Henri Meysonet, and Jean Piquet.  
*(Jerri Donohue)*

## AFEES OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: John Katsaros, phone: (978) 869-3035, email: [jkatsaros3@comcast.net](mailto:jkatsaros3@comcast.net)

VICE PRESIDENT: Beverly Wand, phone: (973) 377-3103, email: [wandbandj@aol.com](mailto:wandbandj@aol.com)

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT: Lynn David, phone: (314) 422-1567, email: [ldavid@airforceescape.com](mailto:ldavid@airforceescape.com)

TREASURER: John White, phone: (210) 416-0292, email: [jwhite@swri.org](mailto:jwhite@swri.org)

MEMBERSHIP AND CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: Richard Shandor, phone: (814) 886-2735, email: [rshandor@hotmail.com](mailto:rshandor@hotmail.com)

RECORDING SECRETARY: Jane Binnebose, phone (608) 769-6761, email: [jbinnebose@charter.net](mailto:jbinnebose@charter.net)

HONORARY DIRECTORS: Gen. Duncan McNabb (USAF Ret.), email: [duncanjmnenabb@gmail.com](mailto:duncanjmnenabb@gmail.com)

Col. Steve MacIsaac (USAF Ret.), phone: (302) 249-1499, email: [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com)

WEB MASTER: Bruce Bolinger, phone: (530) 273-6442, email: [bcbolinger@comcast.net](mailto:bcbolinger@comcast.net)

## OTHER DIRECTORS:

Margaret Fricke, phone: (763) 571-4840, email: [frickej@comcast.net](mailto:frickej@comcast.net)

Elizabeth McDade, phone: (585) 576-3130, email: [afeesnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:afeesnewsletter@gmail.com)

Joe Owens, phone: (863) 421-6986, email: [owenzelli@msn.com](mailto:owenzelli@msn.com)

Mary Shier, phone: (810) 793-4286, email: [spwheel357@gmail.com](mailto:spwheel357@gmail.com)

Robert Wilson, phone: (309) 243-5567, email: [robertandsharonwilson@gmail.com](mailto:robertandsharonwilson@gmail.com)

Betty Hennessy, phone: (562) 921-1494, email: [bcjhennessey@verizon.net](mailto:bcjhennessey@verizon.net)

## CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE:

Raymond Sherk, Ontario, Canada

## THE PREZ SEZ

*By John Katsaros (EE #755)*

**The search for the missing silver palm citation:** Recently, I visited one of my helpers, Genevieve Soulie Camus and her husband Jean Camus, at the Paris Invalides. I was fortunate to have my friend Jerry Evers travel with us. He is a translator and researcher.

During our conversation Genevieve's husband told us, "We have been trying unsuccessfully for several years to obtain any type of proof for Genevieve's **Silver Palm Citation**, but keep running into roadblocks." He asked, "Would you and Jerry help us?" I tried for many months to help Genevieve but I also ran into roadblocks.

They were similar to the obstacles many WWII veterans, and combat wounded, shot down AFEES Escapees and Evaders who finally, may receive recognition at an old age, or after they are deceased and/or forgotten, receiving no recognition whatsoever.

After my attempts failed, Jerry wrote me, "Genevieve's Soulie Camus' husband Jean Camus wrote to me that 'He has run out of options. His letters to the Executive Office in Washington, DC and the U.S. Embassy had gone unanswered. Jerry was the last resort to help locate "the proof" of Genevieve having been awarded the President Medal of Freedom with Silver Palm. Jerry Evers was kind enough to take up the challenge.

The President Medal of Freedom without the accompanying Silver Palm Citation was worthless. The Silver Palm Citation apparently was lost years ago and Jean wanted to pass it down to their sons with the "proof."

Jerry Evers wrote that after a several months of diligent research, with multiple emails and phone calls he tracked down a lead at the National Archives in Washington.

Filed away in pre-presidential papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower and SHAEF HQ were the files, recounting Genevieve's aid to the U.S. Government against a foreign enemy

in wartime, the pre-requisite for the Presidential Medal with Silver Palm.

Jerry was able to receive copies of both the Medal of Freedom with the Silver Palm from the U.S. National Achieves.

Jerry is a crewmember with US Airways assigned to the Charlotte-Paris routes. When Jerry makes his next flight arrives in Paris, he plans to visit Genevieve and Jean, with the copies that they have waited 70 years to receive.

Can you imagine Genevieve and Jean's looks, when he personally presents them with the long awaited copy, especially the **Silver Palm Citation**? I wish I could be there!

They are so many untold stories, stories that have to be told. Thanks to AFEES Member and Newsletter Editor, Elizabeth McDade and to Jerry Evers, this wonderful ending may never have been told, but just another, that would be **Forgotten!**

*Editor's note: I had the privilege of meeting Genevieve and Jean Camus when I traveled to Paris in 2011. They are truly wonderful people. Thank you John and Jerry for all of your hard work on behalf of Genevieve and Jean! Here is a photo of just a few of Genevieve's medals and a portrait of her in the Louvre, just in front of the Mona Lisa.*



*A few of Genevieve's honors.*



*Genevieve Soulie Camus at the Louvre, January 2011.*

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