

# AIR FORCES ESCAPE & EVASION SOCIETY



*Thank You Dinner*

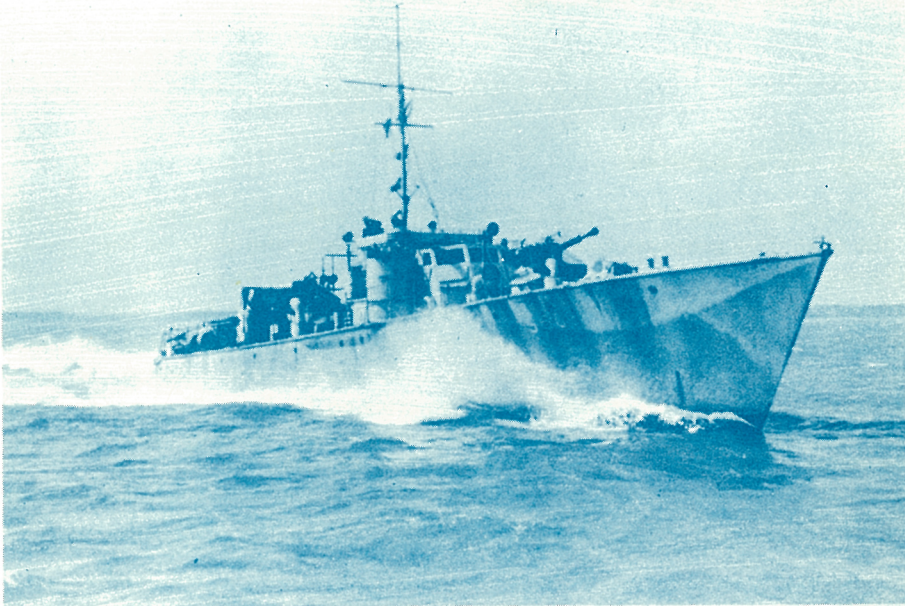
SEPTEMBER 16, 1967

NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y.



## *Operation Bonaparte . . . . .*

Most of us were picked up from the beach by small rowboats from the M.G.B. 503. The 503 boat was one of three identical boats operating at various parts of the coast; she normally carried out "Operation Bonaparte" missions. Boat 503 was about 120 feet long, and carried a crew of 36. Powered by three high speed diesel engines, she normally cruised at 33 knots but could go faster. Although never obliged to fight, she was well enough armed to have given a good account of herself. A 6 pdr. aft, twin turrets on either side and aft of the bridge, and a 2 pdr. forward. The 503 boat was under the command of Lt. Cdr. Mike Marshall D.S.C. during "Bonaparte" missions. She was lost with all hands immediately following V.E. day after hitting a mine in the North Sea.





## *We'll Never Forget . . . . .*

It was a diverse group that gathered on the American side of the Rainbow Bridge at 2:45 P. M. Saturday, September 16, to await the arrival of our honored guests. The Mayor of Niagara Falls, New York, E. Dent Lackey, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, resplendent in their red jackets, the Pretty Little Maid of the Mist, and 20 U. S. Evadees and wives perked up when promptly at 3:00 P. M. a charter bus came into view on the bridge. Customs clearance seemed agonizingly slow, but after twenty-five minutes, we were a cluster of old friends, new friends, official greeters, and willing conversationalists with a language problem.

## *Greetings . . . . .*

Forty one guests were greeted by our group of Americans; fourteen helpers from France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Italy and Greece, two wives, Miss Figgis, Secretary of the RAFES in London and twenty-four Canadian Evadees and wives.

## *Getting Acquainted . . . . .*

After a pleasant period of getting acquainted, we left for a trip on the Maid of the Mist. This pleasant twenty minute boat ride to the base of the Canadian Falls was thru the courtesy of James McGlynn, of the Maid of the Mist Company. As the boat pulled into the dock, we shed the black raincoats that protected us from the spray and with a buzz of excited conversation, headed back to our cars and the bus for the trip to our Hotel. With a police car leading the convoy, and a motorcycle patrolman cruising back and forth we headed down the expressway-red lights flashing and sirens wailing. We covered the five miles to the Treadway Inn in about five minutes.

## *The Treadway Inn . . . . .*

The Treadway was waiting for us, our honored guests were already checked in, and all we had to do was pass out keys. Our Canadian friends registered in and in about ten minutes all were settled down for an hour's rest.



## *Motorcycle Escort . . . . .*

Our motorcycle escort was with us again at 7:30 for the fifteen minute trip from the Treadway Inn to the Air Base. For most of us this was the first trip thru a major city with the full VIP treatment. We were fortunate enough to catch most of the traffic lights red, so we were given the added thrill of going through red lights at 40 to 50 miles per hour with never a thought about getting a ticket. As one of our men remarked, "I feel like I should be waving to someone."

## *Cocktails & Dinner. . . . .*

Our arrival at the Base Officers Club was somewhat anticlimactic. The cocktail hour started somewhat slowly, but the members of the press helped get the ball rolling by asking questions in every corner of the room and by bringing helpers and helped together for interviews and picture taking. At approximately 8:30 P. M. we settled down to a typically American dinner; strip sirloin, baked potato, corn on the cob, and ice cream sundae. For most of our European guests this was their first experience with corn on the cob, the corn was tender and juicy, therefore a pleasant first for the most of them.

## *Presentation of Speakers . . . . .*

After dinner Ralph Patton acting as Master of Ceremonies, presented Mr. Paul Wright, representing Mayor E. Dent Lackey of Niagara Falls, New York. Mr. Wright expressed the Mayors regrets at being unable to be with us and welcomed our guests to the city. Col. Hubert W. Gainer, Commander - Niagara Falls A. F. B. followed Mr. Wright, and spoke glowingly of how much the activities of our guests meant to all members of the Air Force. He drew a contrast with the Korean and Vietnamese Wars where only a handful of fallen airmen have found helpers.

## *Relationship . . . . .*

Mr. Alf Martin, Chairman of the Canadian Branch of the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society, spoke for a few minutes on the relationship between their Escaping Society, and our American Escape and Evasion Society.

He expressed appreciation for our having invited them to Niagara Falls and for the activities of the afternoon and evening. Mr. Martin then expressed the hope that the past cooperation between our two groups would continue and in fact would increase to the point where we would be able to operate as two independent branches of one organization.



## *Thank You . . . . .*

Since Alf Martin was familiar with each of the fourteen honored guests and the work that they did, he was asked to introduce them individually so that Ralph Patton could present them with a small gift. One by one our fourteen helpers shyly came to the front of the room seemingly embarrassed by the recounting of their wartime exploits. Each was presented with a silver cigarette box boldly engraved on top with the words "Thank You", in smaller letters was engraved— AFE&ES, Niagara Falls, New York, September 16, 1967.

## *Dear Friend . . . . .*

Our dear friend, Lucien Dumais, was then introduced and took the opportunity to speak in French to our guests who did not speak English; a very thoughtful gesture much appreciated by our French helpers. Lucien, then introduced his helper Francine Belangier. As some of you may know Lucien was captured on the ill fated Dieppe raid in 1942, he jumped off of the P. O. W. train and with the help of Francine evaded capture and escaped France over the Pyrenees, via the Pat O'Leary reseau. He decided that if he could escape, others could too, therefore he agreed to go back into France to set up the reseau that many of us are familiar with "Shelbourne."

## *Dancing & Reminiscing . . . . .*

At midnight the caravan departed the Niagara Falls A. F. B. Officers Club for the Treadway Inn. Although it had been a long day for our guests, many of them stayed up until past 3:00 A. M. dancing and reminiscing.

## *Early Risers for Church . . . . .*

Twenty five early risers attended Church at 9:30 A. M., but it was difficult for some of the others to get up in time to meet the noon departure of the bus. It was a group of dear friends that took leave of each other at noon, they did not really know each other well, but there was a common bond that went far beyond the simple fact of a day spent together. There was a general feeling that this was not Goodby, but Au Revoir.





**Madame Anne Brusselmans, M.B.E. (Belgium)** was born at Liège and is now living at Brabant. She was involved in all kinds of resistance work, including a connection with MI9, British Intelligence and with Belgian Security. The "Comete" line, of which she was a member, returned 800 Airmen and Soldiers to the allied forces. Personally, she sheltered and aided 176 Canadians, Americans, Poles and Britons. This work was carried out between 1941 and 1944, whilst at the same time Mme. Brusselmans was working for the underground press "Libre Belgique" and passing information to "Marc", a Military Information Service. She is the holder of high decorations from Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States and Poland. Mme Brusselmans is the Society's representative in Belgium.

**Signora Maria Carbona (Italy)** is now a housewife living in Naples. She has raised two sons, one a lawyer, the other a chemical engineer. During the war, she worked independently with other townspeople, giving shelter, food and clothes to escaping Canadians, Britons and Americans. Her work remained secret, even though she was interrogated. She remarks "My greatest reward was to learn that men safely reached their homes".



**Mlle Mabel Fraipont (Belgium)** is of Belgian and English parentage. She first made the acquaintance of Canadians when soldiers were billeted at her house during World War I. In World War II, she became a member of an organization in the Province of Liège to assist shot-down allied airmen to escape. As a guest at dinners for high-ranking German Officers, she obtained valuable information. Her father and mother were arrested and condemned. She continued to work against the Germans, visiting prisons to obtain information and assisting allied airmen to escape. Currently in semi-retirement.

**Johannes Bernodus ter Haar, B.E.M. (Holland)** was born in 1917 at Lichtenvoorde, Holland. An electrician by trade, he worked in the Dutch underground from 1940 to 1944. He assisted 70 Canadian and Allied airmen to escape from Holland, and approximately 350 Belgian and French prisoners of war. His decorations include the British Empire Medal, the Medal of Freedom and the Croix de Guerre. Currently he is an officer in the State Police.



**Kjell Harmens (Norway)** was born in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1922. He served in the Norwegian underground from May, 1944, until the end of the war. Acted as liaison man and interpreter for a group at Os, which sheltered the Canadian crew of a crashed Wellington bomber and returned them safely to Britain. He stresses that he is only a representative of the many Norwegian helpers.

Mr. Harmens is now employed at Bergen as a manager of purchasing.

**François Kerambrun (France)** was too old and had too large a family to be mobilized in World War II. His only chance to aid France was to work in the French Underground. He was involved in several organizations in Brittany, including the Shelburn Réseau (Operation Bonaparte) when he transported many allied airmen in his truck, as part of the escape. That operation returned 135 allied airmen to Britain by Motor Torpedo Boats. Decorations include the Croix de Guerre and the Medal of Freedom. He now operates a Service Station.



**Henri M. F. Mæzelle (France)** was born in Gironde in 1919. As a junior officer in the French Army, he was taken prisoner in June, 1940. In April, 1944, he and an Englishman escaped from a German prison camp. Upon returning to France, he operated in the underground and with his family helped allied airmen to evade capture. He guided these evaders from Lille through Paris to Lyon. Now married, he is a Champagne and Wine Merchant in Paris.



**Pierre Lucien Noyon (France)** was born in 1920, at Calais.

Whilst working on his father's farm in 1943, he encountered a downed Canadian bomber pilot, sheltered him for ten days and provided him with civilian clothing, false papers and money so that he could make his way to the Spanish border.

Mr. Noyon was later deported to a discipline camp in Austria. He is now a manufacturer.



**Mlle Claire Peters (Luxembourg)** was thrown out of school by the Nazis in 1941 and had to work in a factory for 2½ years. She conveyed escaping airmen to Brussels and supplied them with Belgian identity cards. Was betrayed whilst doing this work and had to flee to Belgium in 1943 and to Switzerland in 1944. After the war she studied law in Paris, worked as a Barrister and Public Prosecutor, and in 1966 was appointed a Judge at Luxembourg.

**Aksel Petersen (Denmark)** was born in Copenhagen in 1897. Now a Retired Police Inspector. He joined the "Speditorene" escape group in 1943, contacting and accommodating escaping airmen at Helsingør, passed them to Copenhagen and thence to Sweden. He was assisted in this work by two sons. One of the sons was sentenced to death and shot in April, 1945. Aksel and the other son had to flee to Sweden. He says "Have refused medals, I have only done what I had to do".



**Willem Poorterman (Holland)** was born at Weerden 44 years ago. He was a very young man at the outbreak of war, and went into hiding to avoid forced labour in Germany. As a member of the Dutch Inland Military forces, he was active in resistance work; helping many airmen to escape, in addition to Jews and forced labour escapees. He specialized in forging signatures for documents. His father was arrested, but later freed. He helped issue resistance newspaper "Trouw" (Faithful), which continued as a daily newspaper after the war. Still employed there as a sports reporter.

**Countess Geneviève De Poulpique (France)** gave shelter to a number of evading airmen, Canadian, British and American. She worked with the Pat O'Leary escape line and was connected with the "Shelburn/Operation Bonaparte" escapes. Visited by the Gestapo in March 1943, her husband was arrested, condemned to death, and died in a German prison in August, 1943. Now living in Paris where she has been doing welfare work, she possesses decorations from France, the United Kingdom and the United States.



**Miss Alexandra Poumpoura, M.B.E. (Greece)** was a law student when war broke out in Greece. She joined the Greek Red Cross as a volunteer nurse in 1940 and later served at hospitals housing British prisoners of war. She assisted prisoners to escape from hospital, provided shelter and means of escape from the country. In all, she helped 100 Allied servicemen to escape. She and her brother were imprisoned and ill-treated by the enemy. She was awarded the M.B.E. by King George VI. Still with the Greek Red Cross, she was recently on a mission to Jordan.

Miss Poumpoura is the Society's representative in Greece.

**Mme Rosine Witton, B.E.M. (France)** of Wimereux, Pas De Calais; was born near Arras. She started helping Allied troops left behind from Dunkirk and was connected with the O'Leary and Comete escape lines. She conveyed airmen from Arras to Paris, and when warned of impending arrest, continued to help between Paris and Bordeaux. Arrested January, 1944, she was sent to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp and liberated in May, 1945. She was married to a British subject who was deported to Germany in 1940. He returned to England in 1945 in poor health. Mme Witton joined him in London before his death in August, 1945. She now lives alone on a pension.





# VOTE OF THANKS

The talents of many people are necessary to insure the success of a project of this magnitude. The following are a few of those without whom we could not have properly thanked our fourteen helpers.

Mr. Wm. Murphy ..... Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce  
 Mr. Sal. Devivo ..... Niagara Falls Gazette  
 Mr. Ken Ranchill ..... Treadway Inn  
 Col. Hubert Gainer ..... C. O. Niagara Falls A. F. B.  
 Lt. Harry Sunderland ..... Information Officer Niagara Falls A. F. B.  
 A.F.C. Robert J. Mahiques ..... Photographer—Niagara Falls AFB.  
 Officer Sullivan ..... Niagara Falls Police Dept.  
 Patrick J. Sullivan, V. Pres. .... General Dynamics Corp.  
 W. R. Wilson, Vice Pres. .... Lockheed Aircraft Corp.  
 Francis D. Tappaan, Vice Pres. .... North American Aviation  
 J. Stanford Smith, Vice Pres. .... General Electric Corp.

A special vote of thanks to the many members of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society who, although unable to attend, were generous in their moral and financial support.







L. to R. Johannes Bernordus Ter Haar, Holland; Miss Figgis Secy. R.A.F.E.S. London, England; Francois Kera-  
mbrun Guingamp, France; Willem Poorterman, Holland;  
Miss Claire Peters, Luxembourg; Maria Carbona,  
Naples, Italy; Kjell Harmens, Lillehammer, Norway;  
Countess Genevieve De Poulpiquet, Paris, France;  
Colonel Hubert Gainer, C.O. Niagara Falls AFB; Pierre  
Lucien Noyon, Paris, France; Mrs. Rosine Witton,  
Wimereux, France; Henri M. F. Maezelle, Paris, France;  
Mrs. Anne Brusselmans, Brabant, Belgium; Mrs. Hubert  
W. Gainer; Miss Mabel Fraipont, Belgium; Mr. and Mrs.  
Axel Petersen, Denmark; Miss Alexandra Poupoura,  
Greece.



MR. ALF MARTIN Chairman, Royal Air Forces Escaping  
Society, Canadian Branch introduced our fourteen  
honored guests so that we could present them with  
an engraved cigarette box in appreciation of their help  
during World War II and as a souvenir of their visit  
to the United States.





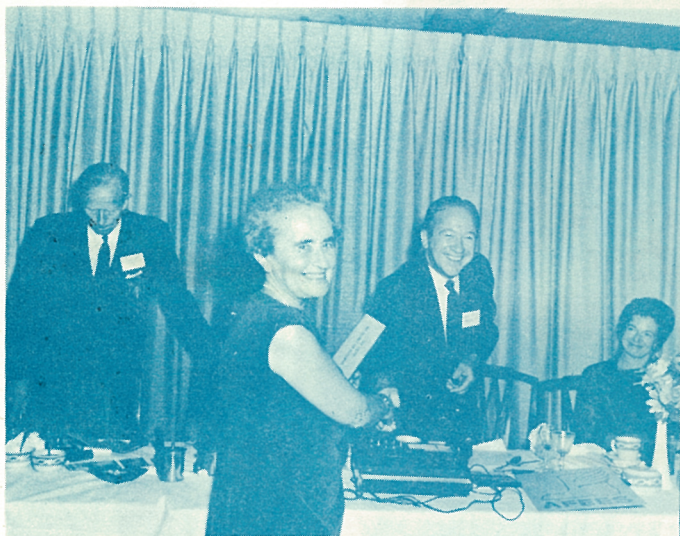
MRS. ANNE BRUSSELMANS holds her engraved gift up for everyone to see.



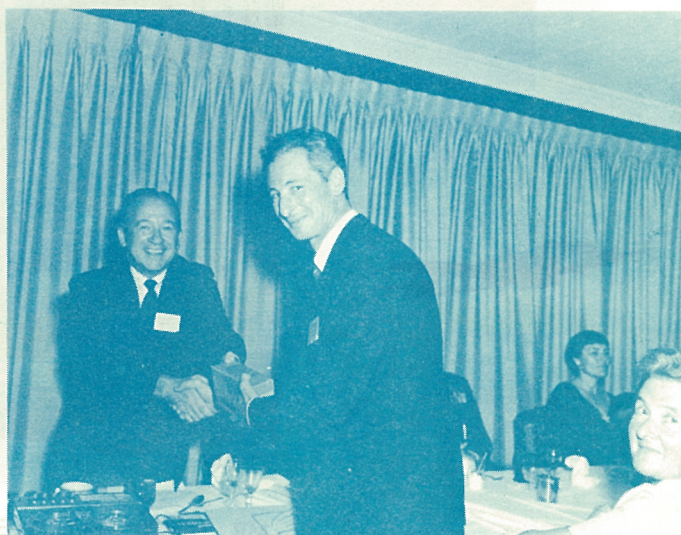
FRANCOIS KERAMBRUN receives his souvenir gift from Ralph Patton, one of the many men that he transported from Guingamp to Plouha while working for RESEAU SHELburn's "Operation Bonaparte"







COUNTESS GENEVIEVE DE POULPIQUET, Paris, France, worked for the PAT O'LEARY, VAL WILLIAMS, and SHELburn RESEAU'S. She helped men who escaped via the Comete Line and Operation Bonaparte.



PIERRE NOYON now living in Paris, spent time in a German discipline camp in Austria for his work in The Resistance.





MRS. ROSINE WITTON of Wimereux Pas De Calais France, helped ALF MARTIN Chairman of the R.A.F.E.S. Canadian Branch, and Mr. Douglas Hoehn of Chicago both of whom were there to personally say "Thank You."



MR. HENRI MAEZELLE was a POW from June 1940 until he escaped in April 1944. He was active in the French underground and with his family he sheltered allied airmen and guided them from Lille to Paris then on to Lyon, he is now a wine merchant in Paris.





JOHN AMERY, Thurmont, Md.,--FRANCOIS KERAMBRUN, Guin-  
gamp, France---LUCIEN DUMAIS, Montreal, Quebec, Canada---  
RALPH PATTON, Rochester, N. Y.



offer "American Signposts" After the war,  
the United States was commended to General Eisenhower and was  
of the Freedom Medal.

...with people "looking out" ...  
...the glory ...





ERNIE TROTTIER, Toronto, Ontario, Canada--RALPH PATTON, Rochester, N. Y.--COUNTESS GENEVIEVE DE POULPIQUET, France---LT. COLONEL RAYMOND LABROSSE, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada---FRANCOIS KERAMBRUN, Guingamp, France.



MR. KERAMBRUN was a POW from June 1940 until he escaped in April 1944. He was active in the French underground and with his family he sheltered allied airmen and guided them from Lille to Paris then on to Lyon. he is now a wine merchant in Paris.





In this space, imprinted in large type, were the names:  
 RAY LA BROSSSE, LUCIEN A. DUMAIS, DESIRE LECREN, RENE LECREN,  
 M. BRANCHOUX, ANITA LEMONNIER (HARTMAN), MARCEL COLA.

**NAMES AND DATE OF ESCAPE  
 OF U. S. AIR FORCE PERSONNEL:**

Escaped 29 January 1944

James A. King  
 Fred T. Schmitt  
 John L. Sullivan, Jr.  
 Andrew F. Hathaway  
 Donald J. Heshett  
 Walter J. Sanfakski  
 Richard M. Smith  
 William H. Boosher  
 Alphonse M. Mele  
 Jerry Eschus  
 Marlon B. Shapiro  
 Walter E. Dickerman  
 Sidney Cadden

Escaped 27 February 1944

Louis Feingold  
 W. C. Terkington  
 Harry L. Minar  
 John Semach  
 Milton L. Church  
 Kenneth Blye  
 Ernest H. Hugonnet  
 Donald D. McLeod  
 Marion A. Hall  
 Harold O. Gilley  
 Robert A. Schwartzburg  
 Robert C. Southers  
 Mike Olynik  
 James A. Schneider  
 James N. Quinn  
 Lee C. Gordon

Escaped 17 March 1944

Manuel M. Rogoff  
 Shirley D. Barry  
 Harold R. Wines  
 Russell L. Paquin  
 Philip A. Cape  
 Edward J. Donaldson  
 Neelan B. Parker  
 Robert K. Fruth  
 Everett E. Stump  
 Carlyle A. VanSelus  
 Carl W. Mielke  
 William C. Lessig  
 Dean W. Tate  
 Charles B. Winkelman  
 John T. Amery  
 Charles W. Cragger  
 Joseph A. Birdwell  
 Kenneth P. Christian

William T. Campbell  
 Frank J. Meast  
 Jack McGough  
 Ralph Patton  
 William H. Spinning  
 Earl J. Wolf, Jr.  
 Leonard F. Bergeron  
 Robert O. Lorenzi  
 Robert L. Costello  
 Paul R. Packer  
 Edward J. Sweeney  
 Glenn B. Johnson  
 Norman R. King  
 Isadore C. Viola  
 Francis P. Hennessey  
 Clyde C. Richardson  
 Elmer D. Risch  
 Richard F. Scholer  
 Paul F. Dickan  
 William J. Scanlon  
 John A. McGlynn

Escaped 23 March 1944

Thomas J. Glennan  
 Abe A. Helfgott  
 Rudolph Cutina  
 Richard C. Hamilton  
 Milton V. Schavetich  
 James M. Thomson  
 Francis C. Wall  
 William A. Hoffman, III  
 William B. Lock  
 Charlie H. Mullins  
 Robert J. Rujewitz  
 Robert H. Sweett  
 Keith W. Sutor  
 John F. Bernier  
 David G. Halseal  
 George P. Buckner  
 David Warner  
 Shirley V. Casey

Escaped 13 July 1944

Richard J. Gordon  
 Frank L. Lee, Jr.  
 William C. Hawkins  
 Joseph A. Lilly

Escaped 24 July 1944

William A. Jones  
 Milton L. Ransblott  
 Robert V. Leus  
 Phelmon T. Wright

"It takes little imagination to understand the sublime quality of the courage that, during Hitler's occupation of France, dedicated French citizens displayed in undertaking to rescue Allied fliers downed over France. They undertook the work deliberately and with the certain knowledge that they were risking not only their own lives but those of all they held dear. This they did far from the excitement and frenzy of the battlefield; their inspiration was their patriotism, the determination to see their beloved country freed from the domination of the hated Nazis and by their ideals of liberty and justice that they shared with the Allied fliers who were risking their own lives each time they made a sortie into Europe.

The loss of every Allied plane that was shot down over Europe was a tragedy—every member of a crew that was found and saved and sent back to us throughout "Operation Bonaparte" brought joy to all his comrades. To every Frenchman who joined in this great work and to each member of his family and to all who shared, in those days, his risks and dangers I send assurances of my deep and lasting gratitude."

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

**OPERATION BONAPARTE**

In the Fall of 1943 two Canadians, Captain Lucian A. Dumas and Lt. Ray La Brosse were slipped into German-occupied France to organize one of the most daring rescue operations of World War II. With the French Underground and the aid of the British Navy, Allied fighting men were smuggled through the heavily fortified Nazi invasion wall to the rugged coast of Brittany. There, under the cover of darkness, Gunboat #503 made eight trips over a period of six months to bring out 307 men. 94 were members of the U. S. Air Force. Against staggering odds and at the risk of death to themselves and their families, the Underground accomplished a near impossible assignment.

Military records call this effort "Operation Bonaparte". After the war, these Underground leaders were commended by General Eisenhower and awarded the Freedom Medal.

*We of America can never repay these noble people. Nothing can ever balance the score, and nothing will ever dull the glory. In greatest humility we say, "We'll never forget. God bless you."*