

THE OUTER CIRCLE



359TH FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION
WORLD WAR II

STATION F133 - EAST WRETHAM, ENGLAND



VOLUME 16, No. 1

Cum Leone

JANUARY 2005

A Vision of Christmas Past

In 2002, **Char Baldrige** received a message from a Ms. Elizabeth Ann of Wretham House, West Wretham, Thetford, Norfolk, England. It had been forwarded from 359th life member **John Pidd** (resident of Wretham).

Ms. Elizabeth Ann had requested information about a Christmas event that happened in 1944. She wrote, "A television company is making a film about the Barnardo Boys orphan facility and they seem to think that on Christmas Day, 1944, a group were given lunch by the American airmen based at Wretham. I believe it must have been at Wretham Hall. I understand that you are Historian of the Air Force Group who were stationed here."

Upon receiving this note, Char referred to the hundreds of pages of histories transcribed for the 359th, from original histories written in 1943-1945. These accounts include the 359th Group Historian, Group Chaplain, Special Services, and Squadron Historians of that time. The event did indeed take place on Dec. 22, 1944. Orphans of the local Barnardo Home were invited to the station for an all-day party, "Fathers-for-a-Day." Excerpts from these different sources paint a picture of an unforgettable time in a terribly cold winter, when com-

passion, youth, and ingenuity came together for a rollicking Yuletide Party.

From the *History of 359th F.G., Dec., 1944*: "On the 22nd a bunch of British orphans, 200 strong, came to a party with "fathers-for-a-day." They had a sensational time eating, jeep-riding, eating, cinematizing, eating. When they left, their childish opinion of the entire affair was that they had a 'smashing' time and that the 'Yanks' had many nice things to eat!"



From the *Informal Report of the Morale of 359th F.G. (Chaplain's report)*: "...the children's party took place for two hundred children from the Barnardo Home in Thetford and from nearby towns. When the day ended the men

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Message from the President
Big Plans

From Tom Mettel

Greetings to all and Happy New Year!

My wife, Sandy, and I have been busy since the D.C. Reunion; we have news on a couple of fronts.

First, I can tell you that the Reunion will be held September 15-18, 2005. It doesn't look like we are going to lock in a hotel until after this issue goes to press. We are weighing the balance between having the Reunion in downtown Chicago versus having it in the Chicago suburbs. The Hilton Suites in Oak Brook Terrace is our current choice - everybody would get a beautiful suite, full breakfast, free parking, discounted rates to/from the airport and many other perks. I am still waiting to hear the details from another Chicago hotel which has a great location and plenty of history, but it would have to be a heck of a good deal to switch from Oak Brook.

Second, I would like to formally announce that we are expecting our first child. The doctor said the due date is July 4, 2005. We couldn't be happier, and I couldn't think of a better date! Sandy is doing very well, and she is continuing her running schedule for as long as she can. We have become extremely focused on things that need to be done and I can tell you this, I will be surprised if we don't have the complete 2005 Reunion schedule locked in by the April *Outer Circle*.

I would like to say that our thoughts and prayers go out to the **Chuck Staley** family. **Dorothy Turcotte** has been forwarding email updates of Chuck's condition and his recent hospitalization has been a real struggle for him and his family. Keep fighting Chuck! (See Prayer Requests, pg. 4.)

Meanwhile, we will try to make this year's Reunion an enjoyable and memorable event. ~Tom



2005 Reunion:
September 15-18
Chicago

The 359th Fighter Group ... in a Nutshell

From Char Baldrige & Gigi Paddock

This issue of the Outer Circle was mailed not only to its regular readers, but also to family members whose names were submitted on the fall Family Survey. Some readers may not be familiar with the air war over Europe during W.W. II, hence, this essay.

WHY WE WERE

When the Eighth Air Force began its assault on Germany the art of modern air combat was still in a state of flux. Thanks to the *Luftwaffe's* fighters it soon became evident that unescorted Allied bombers would sustain an unacceptable percentage of losses. The answer was, first, the P-47 Thunderbolt, sturdy, and able to sustain heavy damage; then, the P-51 Mustang, faster, more nimble, and able to fly for extended periods without failing. These aircraft gave the Allies the ability to penetrate deep into German territory, escorting bombers, taking on air combat, and destroying ground targets such as factories, fuel depots, trains, and supply lines.

WHO WE WERE

The 359th F.G. was composed of nearly 2,000 Americans who, in civilian life, came from all walks of life, but who, in war, were forged into a springboard for fighter planes that played such a vital role in the air action over Europe in W.W. II.

The 359th, an American Fighter Group, along with its ground support team, formed a fighter station of the Eighth Air Force. The Group was based at East Wretham (Army Station 133), formerly a country estate in Norfolk County – one of about 130 bases in England. The Latin phrase on the insignia, *Cum Leone* (with lions), was adopted as the 359th was working closely with the R.A.F. (Royal Air Force).

The combat element was composed of three fighter squadrons; the 368th, 369th, and 370th; and a

headquarters section of staff and command. The ground-support team consisted of the 448th Air Service Group; the 824th Air Engineering Squadron; the 648th Air Material Squadron; and the Third Gunnery and Tow-Target Flight.

WHAT WE DID

The period of Group documentation spans 1943-1945; from activation at Westover Field, Massachusetts, to training at Grenier Field, New Hampshire, sailing cross the Atlantic to Liverpool, England, and finally settling in at the base in East Wretham, England.

First flying the P-47 Thunderbolt and then the P-51 Mustang, the 359th F.G. was sent on 346 missions from December 13, 1943, until April 20, 1945. Our “day job” was to escort and support the Flying Fortresses and Liberators as they dropped their deluge of bombs on the enemy, thus crippling Germany’s power to wage war. More than two-thirds of the time was spent furnishing close escort to bombers or providing protective support in sweeps along the bombers’ track and over the targets. In shepherding the bombers our pilots prowled over every major target area of Germany. We hunted out the *Luftwaffe* from the Baltic Sea to the Swiss Alps and from the North Sea eastward to Stettin on the Oder River. When hostilities in the E.T.O. (European Theater of Operations) ended on May 8, 1945, the 359th fighters had been officially credited with destroying 373 Nazi aircraft in aerial combat and strafing attacks; probable destruction of 23; and damage to 185. In the process, 20 of our pilots became “Fighter Aces.” ★

Sources: *Mustangs & Unicorns*, Jack H. Smith, 1997; *359th Fighter Group 1943-1945*/reprint.



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CO-FOUNDERS

Tony Chardella
Floyd Myers

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leon Levitt
Andrew Lemmens
John Baldrige
Lawrence Beaupre
Randall Jennings
Char Baldrige
Gigi Paddock

359TH F.G. PAST PRESIDENTS

Randall Jennings, 2004
Lawrence Beaupre, 2003
John Baldrige, 2002
Arvy Kysely, 2001
Andrew Lemmens, 2000
Leon Levitt, 1999
John McAleve, 1998
Tom Morris, 1997
Bill Stepp, 1996
Gene Surowiec, 1995
George Doersch, 1994
Andrew Lemmens, 1992/93
Earl Adkins, 1991
Jack Bateman, 1990
Martha Staley, 1989
Robert York, 1988
Larry Bouchard, 1987
Charles Morton, 1985/86
Joe Meisl, 1983/84
John Oliphint, 1981/82
Robert Gaines, 1979/80
William R. Rufe, 1977/78
Anthony Macari, 1975/76
Anthony Chardella, 1973/74
Floyd Myers, 1973/74

PRAYER REQUESTS

• for **Ryan Harmon**,
grandson of **Floyd Myers**
- Ryan is a Petty Officer in
the aviation division
aboard the John F.
Kennedy.

• for **"Wap" Harris**
- confronting family
illness and hurricane
damage.

• for **Leon Levitt**
- adjusting to a new
pacemaker.

• for **Tom & Sandy Mettel**
- expecting their first
child in July, 2005.

• for **Chuck Staley**
- heart attack/pneumonia
at Thanksgiving. Heart-
valve surgery in mid-
January. Notes can be
sent to his daughter:
c/o Lisa Elliott
4550 Carriage Hill Ln.
Columbus, OH 43220

(*Christmas Past*, cont. from first page)
were worn out, but unanimously decided they had had more fun than the children."

From the *Report of Christmas Activities, this station, for the year 1944*: "On Friday, 22 December, 200 children, orphans from the Barnardo School in Thetford, and school children from surrounding village, were our guests for the day at Christmas parties held by the various units. The day was complete with dayroom parties, where presents and candy were given to the kiddies; a matinee at the Theatre with a showing of about seven cartoons featuring, Supermouse, Popeye, and Donald Duck: a Christmas dinner at the Aero Club with cake, doughnuts, lots of ice cream, and complete even to Father Christmas. It is hard to judge who enjoyed the day most - the children or the 'Men of Wretham.' Albeit, it was a most joyous day for the children, one they shall remember and be grateful for for a long time; and perchance many of us shall long recall the happy smiles of the children and the warm feeling around our hearts, which we experienced that day, and which for a better name we lightly term the 'Spirit of Christmas.'

From the *Special Service Monthly History Report/31 Dec., 1944*: "The big events of December revolved around Christmas and New Year's. Station-133 really went all out for the holidays...followed by the annual party for British orphans, made possible by the joyful co-operation of all the men on the Station who made presents for the kiddies, took them in to a dinner and played 'Pop' to them all day. Special Service was really in there pitching, what with Christmas Trees, decorations (made by the ingenuity of the men), getting candy by contributions of PX rations and wrapping them in Christmas paper. Also, a special movie with five shorts; two Popeyes, two Disneys, and a Screen Snapshots. Finally, the climax (and a 'smashing' one it was) an ice cream-cake-and-coffee party

given to the children by the ARC and Special Service, with Father Christmas making his appearance just before the party ended. The teachers were profuse in their thanks, and all the men were enthusiastic about the way the entire party had been managed."

From *370th Fighter Squadron Office of the Historical Officer AAF Station F-133*: "Men of the entire Squadron gave liberally of their ration candy and added much of what had come to them in Christmas boxes from home to the children who were our holiday guests on December 22nd." ...and... "English children were the Christmas guests of Base and Squadron. They visited the Operations Shack and Parachute Shop, had dinner in the Mess Hall, were given gifts and candy in the Line Day Room, and attended a performance at the Station Theater. Squadron Committee: **S/Sgts. William B. Kirk, John E. Roberts, Mont. L. Woodward, Cpl. Robert E. Erickson, and Leo R. Shonitsky**. As holiday guests, these children proved pretty close to ideal."

Ms. Elizabeth Ann wrote her thanks for the information: "Dear Charlotte... Very many thanks. I will pass it on to the television company. So many young people are now getting interested in the 1939-1945 War. Afraid the world seems to be in the worst mess ever. We keep our fingers crossed that one day there will be peace in the war-torn countries." ★





Historian Activities Update

From Char Baldrige

Ted Damick, our History Team's research/data base expert, reports that he has completed the initial inputting of data into the Massed Flight List (MFL) for all three squadrons through December 1944. His data base list now contains about 13,000 entries and has taken him 3 months to compile. He tells me that on a good day he can input 4-6 missions. These entries were gleaned from the records that we all copied at the National Archives II while in D.C. for the 359th F.G. Reunion. In addition, he's cross-referenced this list with his many other sources. Many new and exciting details are being recovered. Ted is doing a phenomenal job.

Since Ted's completed the input of initial data, **John (Baldrige)** and I need to get back to the Ar-

chives pronto to copy the next 1000 +/- mission records for January-April 1945.

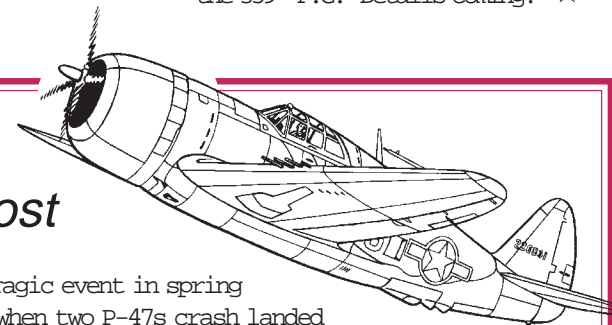
A very big *Thank You* to **Martha Staley** for a contribution of \$287.00 to the History Fund from the sale of T-shirts. It will certainly help pay for this next batch of copy work and associated costs.

Meanwhile, I began a 16mm film project to review, sort, and catalog several reels of original movie film of the 359th F.G. sent to me by **T.P. Smith's** son, **Tom Smith**. The goal is to have this film professionally restored, digitized, and recorded on DVD by **Steve Rhode** of Rare Aviation (see pg. 10 for more information).

A spare bedroom was turned into a projection room, using my old portable 16mm Kodak Projector and a screen. Supplies, such as empty reels, splicing tape, and a splicer, came from eBay, the online auction company.

I've spent many interesting hours sorting and cataloging this unique film. The process yielded 4 good reels of combat film that are now itemized, and were sent to Steve Rhode. In addition, seven canisters of combat film from my 359th Film Archives will be delivered to him by **Tim Gagnon** this month. Work continues on the fun film (scenes around the base, Wretham Hall, recreation, a/c in flight, etc.). This should result in 5 or 6 more 7" reels of film footage of the 359th F.G. Details coming! ★

A Fiery Crash, and a Mystery Solved, Almost



Tony Chardella requested information regarding a tragic event in spring 1943 during training at Grenier Field, Manchester, NH, when two P-47s crash landed on the runway, one on top of the other. The pilot in the lower plane was unable to exit the plane and died. Tony sought the pilot's name and what state he was from.

From my records I found an entry in **Arlen (Dick) Baldrige's** diary from his OTU training days at Westover, Mass. Dick's entry for May 17, 1943: "Wilson was killed today when Jamison landed on top of him." Also, from Dick's 201 Personnel File a Special Orders Number 100 dated 11 April 1943: "The following named officers, 359th F.G. are relieved from DS...and will proceed by rail immediately from Westover Fld, Mass., to Grenier Fld, NH. Two of the names on that list were **2nd Lt. Russell C. Wilson, AC, 0-674431** and **2nd Lt. Gilbert L. Jamison, AC, 0-675704**. Both names appeared again on a 359th F.G. Roster of Pilots dated May 3, 1943, where they were listed as pilots with the 368th FS. I didn't find either of these names after that date in Dick's 201 file papers. We can reasonably assume this is the event Tony remembers, but from what I have the home states of these pilots can't be determined. **If you have your 201 Personnel File you might help us find this information. Please let us know!** ~Char Baldrige

The 359th Scholarship Fund

From Howard Higgins

The Group membership should be aware of the beginning of our association's Scholarship Fund, and the ongoing work involved in making sure it gets to its recipients; however, in case one's memory is as poor as mine, this is a brief explanation of its beginning and progress. Keep in mind the following will be in generalities as one might expect our memories might be a bit fussy.

During early reunions, actual starting date has slipped into obscurity, the membership agreed that a Memorial Fund should be started and used as a scholarship ("...to perpetuate the history of the 359th Fighter Group stationed at East Wretham during W.W. II."). This was our way of saying thanks by awarding deserving students in the Thetford, England, school district a small annual bursary.

Over a period of several years, through member contributions and auctions of donated items, the Fund grew to an amount sufficient to begin an annual award. The Fund was placed in **Larry Bouchard's** care. Larry invested the Fund and did a great job managing the Group's investment, sending a check annually to **Dr. Taylor**, Chief Officer, of the Norfolk County Schools, of which the Thetford Schools are part.

During the late 1980's and early '90's, some members questioned the administration of the scholarship program as we Group members were rapidly reaching our golden

years and may not be able to administer it in the future. We were not, at this time, aware that our children would be interested in taking an active role in our Association. How wrong we were - with the present President, past President, and our Treasurer, all second generation members.

During our 1993 reunion celebrating the 50-year anniversary of the Group's arrival in England, **Pop Doersch** and **Andy Lemmens** had a conversation with Dr. Taylor regarding the possibility of the school administering our Scholarship Fund. Dr. Taylor favored the idea and was of the opinion that the school would look favorable to it also - although, he was retired from

...the (359th Scholarship) Fund has a present value of \$19,220...

the school system at this time. During 1994, the idea of a transfer nurtured and spread. Andy, knowing that I was making annual trips to Norwich, inquired if during my next visit (1995), would I be willing to visit the County Education Department in an effort to determine if they would administer our Fund at no cost to us. A visit with Norfolk County Council Education and Financial Departments was received with favor and they agreed to our proposal of their administering our Fund.

Information received from Norfolk County Officials was presented to the 359th Association Board as well as members present at the 1995 annual meeting. After a lively discussion, a consensus was



reached to poll the full membership. Two hundred twenty (220) vote cards were mailed to members for a "yea or nay." One hundred seventy eight "yea" cards plus six "nay" cards were returned (as an added note, both **Tony Chardella** and **Floyd Myers**, co-founders, favored transferring funds). At the 1996 business meeting, members were made aware of the results of the voting and procedure of transferring funds.

During 1996, the County Senior Education Officer was again contacted to verify the offer to administer an interest free account at no cost to the 359th Association. Also, at this time, we verified their requirements from us. Receiving their confirmation, an effort was begun to transfer money from the Scholarship Chairman to the Group Treasurer. Transfer of \$13,443.88 was received and invested into a CD. At this time, Scholarship Chairman Bouchard reported that he had not sent a check to England for the past two years.

The process of putting together a set of instructions as to our desires of how the fund should be administered began and a final draft having been approved by our Judge Advocate, **Vernon Judkins**, was mailed to Norfolk County Council. In May 1997, the Judge Advocate was advised a transfer of the funds was legal and should go forward. President **Tom Morris**

(continued next page)



issued a letter authorizing a transfer of funds to the Norfolk County Council.

A transfer of \$13,919.00 was completed June 1997. An agreement was signed Norfolk County Council Financial Officer **Paul Fisher** and myself, **Howard Higgins**, as Treasurer of the 359th F.G. Association. At the time of transfer, a \$500.00 check was given for a scholarship to be awarded in the 1997/98 school year. This resulted in a capital investment of \$13,419.00 in the Norfolk County Trust Fund. The Fund has a present value of \$19,220.00 based on the current dollar value against the British pound.

The Trust Fund was administered successfully with two or three students per year during 1997-2000 and again in 2002. Due to a complete change of county education personnel, no awards were given in 2001 or 2003. It is unfortunate that during these personnel changes, information regarding the existence of a Scholarship Trust Fund, and its administration, was not passed on to replacement personnel and the program came to a halt.

After professional consultation, considerable correspondence efforts, plus threats of hiring a lawyer, contact has been reestablished. We now have assurance that the program will be reinitiated and every effort will be made to have a name/names of scholarship recipients before the year end. ★

Howard Higgins

2408 Dutch Lane. Terre Haute, IN, 47802

Sunrise Serenade

From Tony Chardella

pg. 7

On March 26, 1944, the "Sunrise Serenade," a B-17G bomber of the 452nd Bomb Group, buzzed the 359th base at Wretham and dropped a message in a bottle attached to a parachute made from a handkerchief. The message read:

"To the P-47 Boys... To you who fly and keep them flying, the P-47s. Many thanks for the wonderful work you are up here in the big ones. You are to all of us a million-dollar sight when you help us on every mission. Again we, the boys of this Fort 'Sunrise Serenade,' want to thank each and every one of you for your protection to us as we make each mission. Thanks a million. Signed: The crew of the 'Sunrise Serenade.' "

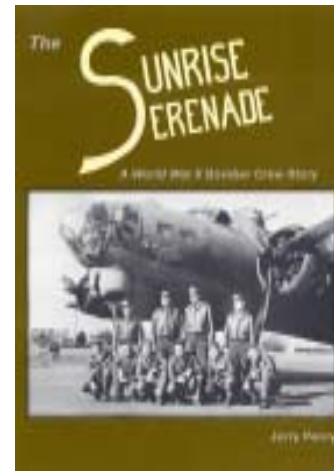
Five weeks later, while returning from a mission on May 1, the bomber crashed near Brussels, Belgium, from flak fire. Pilot **Francis Smedley** was killed on this mission and the surviving crew members were taken as prisoners of war.

In his book, *The Sunrise Serenade, A W.W. II Bomber Crew Story*, **Jerry Penry** recounts the gesture of gratitude dropped from the air, and paints a picture of base life for a young bomber crew of the 8th Air Force. Quoting the author, the "crew doesn't stand out as having experienced the war any

differently than any other bomber crew. Each man left his home and family to train and commit his knowledge...to help win the war." Ordinary guys doing extraordinary jobs - a legacy the 359th shares. For information on Penry's book, contact Blue Mound Press, P.O. Bx 150, Milford, Nebraska, 68405; or call 1-402-761-3670. Cost: \$25.00.

Tony Chardella

511 Cresthaven Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15239



P.S. At the 2000 Reunion in Ft. Myers (Andy Lemmens, host) one of the 452nd "boys" dropped in to say "Thank You," upon discovering the 359th was in town. ★



SEND DUES TODAY!

Become a member of the
359th Fighter Group Association

\$60 - Life Member • \$15 - Annual Member

Please make check payable to: 359th F.G. Association. Mail to **Charlie Levitt**, 5796 Rockport Ln, Ft. Worth, TX 76137.

Daddy's Girl Visits Daddy's Girl

From Tim Gagnon



Ray Wetmore

*Tim Gagnon, KY Air National Guard, recently caught up with the mustang decorated in the colors of 370th Fighter Squadron Capt. **Ray Wetmore**. In the previous Outer Circle he described its return to the skies over Danville, Illinois. Here, he shares a special family reunion.*

As some of you know, **Ray Wetmore's** wartime mount "Daddy's Girl" was resurrected in a beautifully restored P-51D. Returned to the skies by Midwest Aero Restorations of Danville, Illinois, a green-nosed Mustang was once again freed from earth's grasp, joining the windswept halls of air. What you may not know is that two Daddy's Girls met in August '04 in Flagstaff, Arizona.

As soon as I heard that the airplane's owner would be taking the plane home to California, I wondered if Ray's family knew about the airplane adorned with Ray's colors.

After some searching and help from **Char Baldridge**, I located **Dona Van Dyke**, one of Ray's daughters. Quite excited to give her the news, I called one evening saying there was now a Mustang restored to represent her father's airplane! I apologized for my timing (she lost her husband recently to cancer). We spoke for almost an hour and I learned a great deal about Ray and his life. I learned about his other children, two other daughters and a son. Dona said Ray's grandson, **Blue Van Dyke**, was the spitting image of Ray, a fact I would later totally agree with.

Some time passed and I arranged with Alan Rockey (airplane owners' chief pilot accompanying the plane home to California) to stop in Flagstaff. The plane had been in Oshkosh where it won Reserve Grand Champion, then was returned to Danville for more preparations for the trip to Sacramento.

I called Dona and told her more good news: "Daddy's Girl" was coming to Flagstaff for a visit! She was very excited and set into motion what was to be an absolutely amazing reunion of sorts.

Dona called her entire family and told them the news. Knowing a great personal interest story when she sees one, she also called the local media. My wife Donna and I sped to Arizona ourselves. After a breathtaking drive into Flagstaff, we arrived at Dona's home in the Arizona high country.

That afternoon we perused her father's belongings and dug through boxes that revealed a treasure trove of personal things from Ray's wartime service in addition to his time after the war. One item that brought home the tragic events of his death was the wallet recovered

from the wreckage. It was wrapped in a plain white undershirt. It still had a few dollars in it as well as his library card. I began to sift through the mound of items which included photos, official documents, and letters. Dona's family began to arrive; the only family not there was Ray's youngest, his son **Larry**. When Blue arrived, I immediately saw the resemblance and it is uncanny.

At the airport we were joined by family, friends, and media. Then came the unmistakable sound of a Merlin. It was soon joined by the graceful lines of shining green-nosed P-51 Mustang! Randy Bailey (co-

(continued next page)



Diane Knuppenburg

pilot) came in low and fast past the crowd which broke into applause and emotion that was heart warming. Randy then put the Mustang down in a perfect landing. Once the massive prop stopped and the canopy slid back, **Diane Knuppenburg**, Ray's first child and the airplane's namesake, approached the pilots proudly proclaiming "I am Daddy's Girl!"



Many questions, compliments, and thanks were passed along to Alan and Randy for bringing her in. Alan told me they'd give rides and offered me a seat. I said it wasn't my day and that a family member should go up (yeah, I passed up a ride in a P-51 and it had a green nose! I am going to California this year to remedy that). Ray's daughter Diane and grandson Blue were the chosen passengers.

Diane was beaming as the plane climbed into the setting Arizona sun for what had to be a beautiful flight. Later "Daddy's Girl" lifted off again with Blue, the grandson of Major Ray Wetmore. The flight was something Blue won't soon forget as Randy put the airplane through its paces. Loops, rolls and a few G's gave Blue a glimpse into what it was like when Ray was up there. I cannot imagine what Blue felt knowing he was in an airplane that represented the grandfather he never knew but idolized. They returned shortly and the feeling was quite apparent as Randy slid the canopy back and Blue emerged smiling from ear to ear. He recounted the flight with the excitement of a kid on Christmas morning.

The next day I stopped by Dona's home and picked up some of Ray's personal belongings with the promise of a return visit. My parting words were, "When Diane was flying yesterday, Ray was up there with her, once again with his beloved Daddy's Girls."

"Daddy's Girl" was recently featured in *Warbird Digest*. Access the website www.warbirddigest.com for more information. ★

Tim Gagnon

5149 Sherry Lane • Fairfield, Ohio 45014



UNCLE SAM WANTS YOU

... to send in your wartime photos. This is an appeal for ALL who served in the 359th to send service pictures to **Char**, Group Historian (when sending group shots try to identify individuals therein). Your Group History will benefit, the Outer Circle will benefit, related web sites will benefit. Char's address is on page 2. Officers and enlisted, this means you!

pg. 9

Salute to the Ground Crew

*"Being a pilot is not all
flying and dogfighting –
just a fair portion.
When not in the air, a
pilot has to face THE
most formidable and
determined force in
the known galaxy –
the Crew Chief.*

*A pilot does not own
the fighter he flies,
or any part of it.
The plane belongs
to the Crew Chief
and his dedicated
team of technicians
who clean it
and repair it
every time
it comes home.
The pilot merely
'borrows' it for
the mission.*

*We to the pilot
who forgets the care
and effort that his
ground crew puts
into his bird."*

*(From the 510th Tactical
Combat Wing web site)*

Rare Aviation

from Tim Gagnon

New Members

Glenn & Trish Montague

4501 Ermit Dr.
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-231-8839
(son of **Bert & Inez Montague, 369th**)

Jill & Don Ownsby

22602 S. 214 Way
Queen Creek, AZ 85242
480-888-9330
(daughter of **Bob & Trudy Gaines, 369th**)

Michael S. Powell

wife, Roxie
7799 Folsomville Road
Tennyson, IN 47637
812-567-4515
(son of **Rex & Ruth Powell, 369th**)

Dr. David W. Powell DFM

wife, Melanie
10800 Altheide Road
Mt. Vernon, IN 47620
812-935-3269
(son of **Rex & Ruth Powell, 369th**)

E-Mail Address

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Steven M. Francis

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Molly Barnett Francis

mollybee32@aol.com

Tim Gagnon

fightergroup@msn.com

Dick & Sherry Irwin

randsirwin@verizon.net

In the deep recesses of the attic, behind the Christmas decorations, tucked away in a worn footlocker or random box, may reside another portion of the history of the 359th Fighter Group. For years you have kept letters from home, official documents, photos, journals, and for the lucky few, a roll of gun camera film. Well, it is time to grab a flashlight, climb the ladder leading to this dusty vault, and retrieve the mementos of your wartime service. Find a comfortable spot in the living room and sort through everything. Hopefully you will find some gunnery or combat film.

Some of you met **Steve Rhode** at the 2004 Reunion in D.C. He was hesitant to attend without **Donna** and me, but I assured him that he would not find a finer group of people, and that the Group would welcome him.

Steve is a film archivist, a historian of a different sort. His Rare Aviation enterprise is much more than an online store for aviation enthusiasts.

The primary role of Rare Aviation is to archive, preserve, and make available unique aviation-related materials. He has accumulated a substantial collection of World War II gun camera film, restored, and transferred to DVD. He has performed what can only be described as miracles on film once thought lost – a lengthy and expensive process. Many W.W. II pilots have sent Steve their film including our very own **Bob Guggemos**, whose film was in rough shape but is now being meticulously restored. When Steve is finished with the film, the original cans will be returned to Bob with a copy of his film on DVD!

To recover some restoration and production costs, Steve sells the restored film copies to aviation enthusiasts, historians, television, and

anyone who has the desire to be in the "pilot's seat" during the air battles of W.W. II.

So what can you do to help save our 359th film history? If **Char Baldrige**, Group Historian, does not already have control of your film and you have films in your possession, send to her (address on pg. 2) or to Steve (address below). If you send directly to him, please be sure to request that he not only provide you with your DVD of the finished product, but that he add it to a Master DVD for the 359th F.G. to be sent to Char, for our own film history archives.

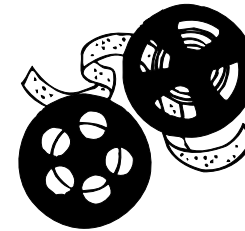
Steve's offer is simple: lend him your film, he will professionally clean and care for it, fix any splices that

need repair, and transfer your film to DVD free of charge! He will return the film and DVD to you when completed. After Steve cares for the film it will be stored in its can with molecular sieves that slow the degeneration of the film. The resulting DVD can be easily watched and shared

with family and friends. What Steve gets in return is that he keeps a copy of the film for his work. It seems like a pretty fair deal! And, of course, the 359th benefits from such meticulous treatment of its records.

To learn more about Rare Aviation, access the website at www.rareaviation.com. If you know of others interested, please pass the information along.

Preservation work is always appreciated. Preservation with integrity is invaluable. ★



RARE AVIATION

310 Watkins Pond Blvd.

Rockville, MD 20850

tel: 1-888-538-6447



UNICORN TALES

The Outer Circle wants your vignettes/stories – anecdotes of friendships shared, pranks, inspirations, lighthearted moments. Enjoy these examples and keep a notebook handy. Memories can trigger more memories.

From **Al Swiren**:

On returning from one of the early Group missions on which **Pop Doersch** had been appointed **Col. Tacon's** wingman, Col Tacon reported that after taking repeated violent evasive reactions to enemy fire he found Pop right on his wing every time, and that he wanted Pop as his permanent wingman. Col. Tacon's air code name was "Wallpaint." Pop's fellow pilots assigned Pop the name "Floorpaint."



Col A. Tacon

Also from **Al**:

After the liberation of France, pilots often touched down at Orly Airport, near Paris, purportedly to refuel, but usually for a quick visit to Paris. **Pop** reported to us one evening that he had stopped and bought a bottle of men's cologne. A few evenings later, as we sat around the table in our room at Wretham Hall, Pop flicked his Zippo lighter to ignite his after-dinner cigar. The flame was about eight inches of wavering lavender with a flowery aroma. Pop stated that he did not like the cologne so he added it to his lighter fluid.



George "Pop" Doersch

From **Leon Levitt**:

Rex Powell, a Staff Sergeant in the 369th, had one of the most important jobs in all the 359th. He was a CQ (Charge of Quarters) at Wretham Hall, and it was his job to rouse sleepy head pilots and see that they got on the bus to the briefing room, hopefully, early enough to get a bite of breakfast before leaving. He says that he used to bang on the doors, then "run like Hell"!



Rex Powell

Also from **Leon**:

Most of the pilots were awakened very early by the sound of the bombers getting in formation over East Anglia. It would take hours for them to get in line, and their sound overhead was the signal to the pilots that we would be flying a mission that day. We would get up, eat breakfast, go to briefing, take off, get in formation, and rendezvous with the bombers before they got across the Channel.



Leon Levitt

Address Changes

Earl D. Adkins
25 W. Lincoln Avenue #18
Woodland, CA 95695

Arthur Fritzsche, Jr.
1891 Augusta Blvd.
Fairfield, OH 45014

Walter H. Hetherwick,
The Oaks Care Center
50 Pinecrest Drive
Pineville, IA 71360

Warner Jennings
7777 E. 23rd Ave. #402
Denver, CO 80238
ph: 303-393-1668

Earl L. Kanyok
13805 Stoneridge Drive
Hudson, FL 34669

Ralph J. Testa
355 N. Park Drive #111
Rochester, NY 14609



(Photos not available)

Charles A. Fell
369th - 10/07/04

John T. Poljak
Hqs - 2/17/04

Janet Morton
wife of Charles
368th - 10/24/04

Lighten the Load

REFLECTIONS

from
Bob Hope



On turning 70: "You still chase women, but only downhill."

On turning 80: "That's the time of your life when even your birthday suit needs pressing."

On turning 90: "You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake."

On turning 100: "I don't feel old. In fact I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap."

On sailors: "They spend the first six days of each week sowing their wild oats, then they go to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure."

On golf: "Golf is my profession. Show business is just to pay the green fees."

On presidents: "I have performed for 12 presidents and entertained only six."

On choosing show-biz for a career: "When I was born, the doctor said to my mother, 'Congratulations. You have an eight-pound ham.'"

On his family's early poverty: "Four of us slept in the one bed. When it got cold, mom threw on another brother."

On going to heaven: "Oh yes, I've done benefits for ALL religions. I'd hate to blow the hereafter on a technicality."

359th Fighter Group Association

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Gigi Doersch Paddock
7567 Vincent Drive
Toano, Virginia 23168

Address Correction Requested

Next issue:
APRIL '05

