

971 RCAF Air MARSHAL SLEMON WING

Air Force association newsletter SEPTEMBER 2007



Rob Davis over Leicester Square on Harry's tunnel line and the memorial we built in 1944 to honour the 50 who were shot after the Great Escape, now preserved by the Poles. Stalag Luft III, June 2007. See pages 6 and 7.

Social Calendar

- Jun 30 54 of us had a most delightful evening at Buzz and Pat Wilder's (co-sponsored by Ron and Marlene Willard).
- Jul 01 52 of us joined in the Regular Force activities at the El Pomar Centre to commemorate Dominion Day (that some call Canada Day).
- Jul 21 It was an amazing evening for 37 of us who used to think that Doctor Who's telephone kiosk with its ever-expanding interior was fiction until we discovered it existed in the home of Peter and Nancy Rallis. Open the front door and you go from fountain to fountain and room to room filled with exotic world-wide items. In the backyard you really need GPS to guide you along endless garden pathways from one quaint abode to another, past waterfalls tumbling over dozens of Nancy-made rocks. Then you must climb up to Peter's observatory with sliding roof and a large computer-controlled telescope that brought the craters of the moon down to earth. Nancy cheerfully lied to us saying maintenance was no problem. Perhaps, because Peter does the cooking. It left us oldies marvelling at the energy of youth.
- Aug 18 Once more, well worth the drive to the ranch of Charlene and Bill Champion, 12612 Pommel Circle, Elbert. .
- Sep 16 Battle of Britain ceremony and brunch. Similar to last year at the Retired Enlisted Club. Arrive by 1030. East of Murray Blvd on Emory Circle (near the UPS building).

SICK PARADE:

Barry Simpson is at home again in Colo Springs after a several weeks trip to Winnipeg, Man. Barry is re-acclimatizing and soldiering, (aimaning just doesn't seem to fit), on.

Bill Edwards is doing well, (with some uncomfortable after effects), from surgery to correct a long time nasal obstruction.

Walter Kissinger Spent a couple of days in Hospital shortly after his return to Colorado, Genie says he's OK and coming along just fine.

The Editor's Corner

Battles of Britain

Each September we commemorate those who won the 1940 Battle of Britain for us. Since my first Wing newsletter in 1986, I have described numerous Battles of Britain, so I have little left to say. Here, then, is a scorecard:

Time	Invaders	Remarks
10,000 BC	Paleolithic People	Success - no human opposition as the ice retreated.
6,500 BC	The Sea	Rising sea levels make Britain an Island. Population 7,000.
5,000	Mediterranean People	Neolithic with domesticated plants and animals. Population 40,000.
3100-1100 BC		Stonehenge in use, one of 900 standing-stone sites in Britain, built using the common European megalithic yard (.83 metres)
2,000 BC	Beakers from the Rhine	Introduced bronze. Sophisticated 60-foot plank boats. Population 1 million.
1500 - 500 BC	Celts	Scythian Celts, via Egypt and Spain, then European Celts take over Ierne (Ireland) and Albion (Britain). Celts become Scotti in Ireland, Picts in Scotland, and Britons (Pythias called them Pritania in 324 BC) in England & Wales. Female gods prominent and women had equal rights and authority.
43 AD	Romans	Conquer England but not Celts in Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, or Ireland.
456	Angles, Saxons, Jutes	Conquer England.
793	Danes and other Vikings	Establish colonies in Ireland, Scotland, England. Eventually defeated.
1066	Normans	Conquer England, population 1.1 million. Spread to Ireland, Scotland.
1588	Spanish Armada	8,000 sailors and 18,000 soldiers defeated by weather and the Royal Navy.
1804	Napoleon	Amassed invasion barges, foiled by channel and RN Population 10 million.
1940	Luftwaffe	"Never in the history of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few." Population 55 million.

“LAST FLIGHT” - by Flight Lieutenant Harry Crease, RCAF

Harry was a 402 Squadron Hurricane pilot from Windsor, Ontario. He was shot down by flak 13 Oct 1941 on his 13th trip over occupied Europe while escorting 18 Blenheim bombers on a daylight raid. Captured, he was taken to a Luftwaffe base where he was treated royally. They even provided an English-speaking girl he could take to a dance in the officers' mess. The Gestapo learned of this and ordered the Luftwaffe to pack him off to a POW camp. I met him in Stalag Luft III where he composed numerous poems. Our friendship endured until his death in Port Hope, Ontario, 11 Jan 1990. His poem “Last Flight” is a tribute to all those young airmen, friend and foe, who perished:

Like migratory birds they soared aloft
 Making geometric plan in flight;
 And though the flesh within was warm and soft,
 The eyes that searched the sky were hard and bright.

But hate with hellish speed and guns that reek
 Can fool the quickest eye; and burning steel
 Soften the hardest heart, and make it weak -
 Warm flesh alone can know the pain to feel.

The eager youth, curling beneath the lash
 of hailing lead, borne on the breath of hell,
 Watched his bright dream become a blinding flash;
 And lifted up his head to say farewell.

Granted one glance before a flaming death,
 He traced the brilliant outline of the cloud;
 And knew then, as he vainly fought for breath
 The darkening pall of night would be his shroud.

THE LUNAR SOCIETY: This small group of eminent industrialists, scientists, and philosophers met over dinner once a month in Birmingham, England, in the late 1700s. Their meetings coincided with the full moon to make it safer for their carriages to return to their various towns in the Midlands. This, naturally, led to them being called "The Lunatic Society". They were a forerunner of the current Club of Rome which was founded in 1968, advocating a top-down approach to solving world problems: the top nations and men had a responsibility to encourage the interdependence of nations, the elimination of poverty, promoting birth control, and care for the environment.

WARRIORS OF THE NIGHT: While at the RCAF Museum in Trenton I bought a set of 2 VHS tapes on Bomber Command and a DVD disk on *The Halifax at War*. Made at the Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton they include comments by British, Canadian, and German survivors, some of whom I know.

Along with wartime footages of the carnage of battle are descriptions of the evolution of aircraft and navigational aids. The 88mm guns and their 10-man crews (including high school boys and girls) are described as well as radars, searchlights, and the German defence networks - a tremendous expenditure of people and resources..

A Luftwaffe night fighter, Peter Spoden, who shot down 24 of our bombers, flying Me110s and JU88s, explains the techniques and difficulties of finding and killing us at night. He was shot down himself four times, ending up with one leg two inches shorter than the other. Post war he flew commercially and has four sons whom he never wants to see engaged in warfare.

Over Lake Erie, a few years ago, he flew an A26 to simulate his JU88. He stalked and intercepted the Warplane Heritage Lancaster to demonstrate tactics.

These films emphasize the incredible courage, fear, folly, and inventiveness of humans. There are no hatreds or recriminations - it is not a story of those guilty for the tragedy but rather one of admiration and sadness for all those innocents, friend and foe, caught up in the madness that needs to be told and retold.

Also, while in Toronto, I attended the monthly luncheon of POW survivors - only 8 of us plus 2 wives, ageing remnants of a once-large group.

THE BOEING 787 DREAMLINER, due to commence commercial service in 2008 with 200-300 seats and a range of 8,500 miles, will use 20% less fuel than current jets. Flying at 35,000 feet it will be pressurized for 6,000 feet and will be less dry than the current pressurization which is restricted to 8,200 feet because of metal fatigue and moisture causing corrosion. Built of lighter, and stronger, composites, the 787 will be friendlier to the environment, nullified, of course, by the steady increase in the number of jets crowding our skies.

Those tiny winglets you now see on the tip of aircraft wings give a fuel saving of 3% by improving aerodynamic efficiency.

PADRE JOHN LARDIE was a Catholic priest and an RCAF Squadron Leader. From July 1944 to June 1945 he was the very popular padre for 419 and 428 Bomber Squadrons based at Middleton St. George (Darlington, Durham). He bought a motorcycle to replace his bicycle to permit him quicker access to crews at their dispersal points as they readied for operations. He was always on hand to greet returning crews and to write letters to the next-of-kin of those who failed to return. Against strict orders he persuaded two crews to take him along (to Kiel and Falaise). He admitted being thoroughly scared and with increased admiration for the boys who endured this strain night after night after night.

At the 1985 dedication of the RCAF memorial at Middleton St. George which is now Darlington's busy commercial airport, he wrote:

"One Day, when the history of the 20th century is finally written, it will be recorded that when human society stood at the crossroads and civilization itself was under siege, the Royal Canadian Air Force was there to fill the breach and help give humanity the victory. And those who had a part in it will have left to posterity a legacy of honour, of courage, and of valour that time can never despoil."

USAF FLYPASTS: Luke AFB is west of Phoenix and is rapidly being surrounded by civilization that complains about the noise from the base and its planes, forgetting that it was there long before they were.

An individual who lives near Luke AFB wrote the local paper complaining about a group of F-16s that disturbed his day at the mall:

"Last Wednesday, at precisely 9:11 a.m., a tight formation of four F-16 jets made a low pass over Arrowhead Mall at approximately 500 feet. Do the Tom Cruise-wannabes feel we need this wake-up call, or were they trying to impress the cashiers at Mervyns early bird special? Any response would be appreciated."

Lt.Col Scott Pleus, CO of 63 Squadron, replied: "Regarding 'A wake-up call from Luke's jets' On June 15, at precisely 9:12 a.m., a perfectly timed 4-ship flyby of F-16s from the 63rd Fighter Squadron at Luke flew over the grave of Capt. Jeremy Fresques, an Air Force officer from Luke who was killed in Iraq. Because of the jet noise, I'm sure you didn't hear the 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, or my words to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques as I gave them their son's flag on behalf of the President and all those veterans and servicemen and women who understand the sacrifices they have endured. A four-ship flyby is a display of respect the Air Force pays to those who give their lives. We are professional aviators and take our jobs seriously, and on June 15 what the letter writer witnessed was four officers lining up to pay their ultimate respects."

ARE WE BACKING THE WRONG HORSE?

Mahmoud Abbas, leader of Fatah and elected president of Palestine after Arafat's death, but now confined to those separated portions of the West Bank, controlled but not occupied by Israel, has a conciliatory attitude that has been preferred by Israel and the West over Ismail Haniyeh, elected prime minister and a Hamas leader. We just gave Abbas another \$190 million but how will this benefit the Palestinians when they and Abbas are so controlled? Abbas has failed to improve the lot of Palestinians who have endured poverty, humiliation, and restrictions under occupation. He inherited too much of the self-serving group of the old Palestinian Authority. One of these is Muhammed Dahlan, security chief, who has been guilty of the murder of Hamas opponents. Much of the money, donated by the West, has gone to provide expensive cars and posh homes for Fatah elite. By comparison Hamas has won the hearts of many by being honest and caring. Unfortunately, they have scared us by being too Islamic and by not recognizing Israel's right to exist on Palestinian soil.

The fragmented Arab world unites on one issue: The plight of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation. But Sunni dictatorial states fear the rise of Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood with their demands for reforms. What pains have we taken to open a dialogue with them? Their extreme Islamic stands could be all that is left to them. If Saudi Arabia, the home of over 50% of Al Qaida, can rehabilitate thousands of former Al Qaida members, then we can at least recognize that legitimate grievances exist and that, as Winston Churchill once said, "to jaw, jaw, is better than to war, war." Use the UK's Malaysian formula!

By isolating and refusing to negotiate with Hamas and the like we are driving them into the arms of Iran and Syria. It makes a farce of our boast of supporting democratically-elected regimes. Al Qaida is now urging support for Hamas which provoked an immediate response from Haniyeh that Al Qaida does not speak for Hamas. There are indications that, if given respect, Haniyeh may consider accepting Israel's pre-1967 borders. With its pre-emptive strike that destroyed the Egyptian Air Force, the Israelis were able to conquer vital lands from its neighbours and these, except for Sinai, 40 years later, are still under occupation with severe and humiliating restrictions on the natives.

Twenty recognized plus several more unrecognized religions exist in the small area made up of Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Israel. If not one country, this area at least needs to be one economic bloc with equal rights for all. With an enormous head start the Jews and a few factions in Beirut and Amman may dominate so Tony Blair's unenviable job will be to level the playing field. But, Tony, do negotiate with all players.

And, Tony, as your charm tamed Ian Paisley in Northern Ireland, Nasrallah, Haniyeh, Peres, Olmert, Abdullah, Abbas, Harper, and Bush should be minor challenges. Volatile nuclear Pakistan and millions of

refugees will be a bigger challenge.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER: One of the eight P-38s that force-landed on the Greenland ice cap en route to the UK, 15 July 1942 and that were, over the years, encased and buried in ice has been chipped out, restored at a cost of \$4 million, and sent off to complete the flight over the same Canada-Greenland-Iceland-England route. The last surviving member of the crews, who were rescued at the time, Col. Brad McManus, age 89, went along for part of the flight.

BEAUTIFUL BASTAR, INDIA: Our sound-byte media neglects so many down-trodden places on this earth of ours, especially when the country in question is loathe to air its dirty laundry.

Bastar, hilly and densely populated by tribal people in central India was, during British administration, an autonomous state under the benign rule of a prince who was the earthly representative of the goddess, Durga.

Today, Bastar is the centre of a war with Maoists, a movement formed in Naxalbari village, Bengal, in 1967. Disadvantaged Bastar's tribal people made easy converts to Maoism. 23% of them are illiterate and 50% live under the poverty line. India has failed to provide them with adequate healthcare, education and sanitation. Because they live atop valuable mineral deposits they are being dispossessed. They have been afforded little political power. Maoists, like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood, go out of their way to help, and preach to, the impoverished.

Like so much of the rest of the world, India is resorting to military force to combat the Maoists, thus perpetuating a festering wound.

GOOD MILEAGE: Canadians walk an average of 900 miles per year. They drink an average of 22 gallons of beer, so average 41 miles per gallon.

HALLOWE'EN & ALL SAINTS DAY: These date back well over 2,000 years to the Celtic festival, *Samain*, dedicated to all from the other world. Spirits of the dead came back to sit with their descendants, so it was customary to set food out for them. Christianity converted these to All Hallows' Eve and All Saints Day.

YOUR INPUTS ARE FAR FROM ADEQUATE: My repeated complaints about the paucity of Wing inputs go unchallenged. When they tell me that this 3-pound mass of gray and white matter in my cranium contains 100 billion neurons and that each one of them is blessed with inputs from 10,000 other neurons, making a million new connections each second, your scribe feels cheated in not being swamped with newsletter inputs from other craniums also loaded with neurons.

LIFE ON THE BOUNDING MAIN: Lewis Gordon Pugh from the UK completed a one-kilometre swim at the North Pole 15 July 07. Although an amazing accomplishment, Pugh claims it was a sad day for him as it is another confirmation of Global Warming.

FOR YOUR FILE OF FACTS:

1. 155 million humans are living uprooted by conflicts, natural disasters, or construction.
2. The oldest star found to date is HE1523-0901 on the outskirts of the Milky Way. It was born 13.2 billion years ago soon after the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago. A team using the Very Large Telescope in Chile found it.
3. Milkomeda is the name given by astronomers to the new galaxy that will be formed 5 billion years from now when the Milky Way and Andromeda collide. The European spaceship, *Gaia*, to be launched in 2011 should give us more precise measurements of Andromeda's path.
4. 90% of Atlantic hurricanes have been preceded by intense thunderstorms over East Africa. They create disturbances called African Easterly Waves that seed tropical storms.
5. German research indicates fruit flies have free will
6. From living bacteria, scientists in California have developed non-living minicells capable of delivering protein antigens to the human immune system.
7. Alone among religions, the Catholic Church maintains full diplomatic relations with 176 countries.

A CLIMATE OF FEAR - THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE: Entrepreneurial humans are creating a score of booming businesses milking the enduring climate of fear, most of which we have created by our own actions. Leading the parade are the Israelis who have now surpassed the UK to take over slot #4 among the world's largest exporter of arms with, in 2006, sales of \$3.4 billion. Most of this is in "homeland defence" armament. Using the Palestinians as guinea pigs they have so perfected high-tech walls that they are now teaming with Boeing in constructing a \$2.5 billion "virtual" fence along the Mexico-US border. Israeli Hermes 450 and 900 unmanned air vehicles, perfected in spying on, and bombing, the Palestinians, were stars at the Paris Air Show. Israeli biofeedback sensors, developed for use at its 576 check points to control the Palestinians, analyse body responses to questions and flag suspects.

As Paul Wolfowitz wrote in 1977, "We have a vital and growing stake in the Persian Gulf region because of our need for oil and because events there affect the Arab-Israeli conflict." Our stake has been costly and wobbly.

A THIEF IN PARIS decided to steal some paintings from the Louvre. After careful planning, he got past security, stole the paintings, and made it safely to his van. However, he was captured two blocks away when his van ran out of gas. When asked how he could mastermind such a crime and the make such an obvious error, he replied, "Monsieur, that is the reason I stole the Paintings. I had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh." And you thought I didn't have De Gaulle to send you this. Well, I have nothing Toulouse. (from Bill Carr)

AFRICA and MEA CULPA: Much of Africa is a mess. Corruption is endemic, AIDS is a cruel exterminator, deserts continue to grow, but the population continues to explode. And, some say, it is all our fault, so we forgive debts and pour billions of dollars into the continent to salve our guilty feelings. Do we deserve this blame? Romans, Arabs, Portugese, Dutch, British, French, Belgians, and Germans have all colonized parts of Africa. This occupation has varied from subjugation to enlightened imperialism interpreted as responsibility. Now, newer powers have encroached on the scene: Russia, China, and the United States. Africa is rich in what others want: diamonds, copper, gold, oil, not to mention cannon fodder. Millions of Africans have died in European wars. The Romans bestowed Roman citizenship on African soldiers after 25 years of loyal service. The French respected the graves of dead African soldiers with crosses inscribed "Mort pour la France". Askaris in East Africa, under German leadership, were the last German forces to surrender in WWI.

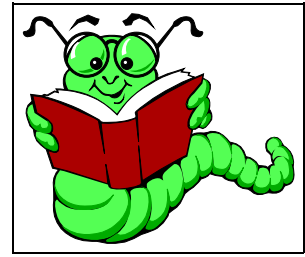
GUINEA-BISSAU: Wars and dictatorships have plagued this former Portugese colony. It is now a narco state with politicians and military officers supporting the flow of South American drugs into Europe.

KENYA: A pleasant country of 8 million when the British left in 1963, it is now 40 million in spite of the ravages of AIDS. Nairobi, that had 500,000 in 1963, now has 6 million in huge slums and urban sprawl. We pour money into family planning but negate it by insisting on abstinence rather than condoms. Government services are failing with police often guilty of crimes. Corruption is rife and politicians have secreted hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign aid in foreign bank accounts. No politician has ever been prosecuted. The official minimum wage is \$700 per year, but many earn less than \$200, while politicians can pocket \$120,000. British-built roads are deteriorating. The drive from Nairobi to Mombasa that used to take 4 hours now takes 8. There are 100,000 illegal guns and bandits terrorize the people. Yes, there is some progress and hope, but from individual groups often led by women. A free press and 47 private radio stations help, but there are still inequalities and frictions among tribes.

ZIMBABWE: This once proud, prosperous, and progressive country of Rhodesia under Ian Smith (WWII Spitfire pilot) has become, under Robert Mugabe, a failed state. He confiscated white farms, the backbone of the economy, and distributed them among his cronies who have let them go to ruin. Inflation is the world's highest and opposition activists are routinely beaten and jailed.

MORE? Many other examples have been cited in previous newsletters - enough to urge us to channel our money carefully - perhaps to those groups of African women who are courageous, capable, and deserving.

Book Review



LUFTWAFFE OVER AMERICA

By Manfred Griehl, Barnes & Noble, 2006, 256 pages

This is a translation of the original 2004 book that details German plans to attack the United States from 1897 to 1944. It contains 28 pages of pictures and 16 pages of drawings, mainly of WWII aircraft designed for long-range bombing. The ultimate beneficiaries of all this work were UK and US aircraft designers.

Much of this was, of course, simply war staffs exercising their imaginations to cover all possible scenarios. But, there is sufficient serious planning and initial steps to reveal Nazi dreams that could have been realized had the subjugation of the UK and the USSR been successful.

It was argued by Germans from 1897 that the United States posed the greatest threat to the world and, in 1941, the Luftwaffe's "Grossraum USA" showed that the US, with 120 million people compared to Europe's 450 million, controlled 60% of the world's oil and 56% of its rubber. It turned out 78% of the world's motor cars and cornered 40% of the world's lead, coal, copper, and zinc. Protected by two oceans it could dominate the world, so had to be contained. Even when fighting each other, this was a view shared by both Germany and the USSR.

German plans were foiled by WWI and its aftermath and by the stubborn resistance of the British Commonwealth and the USSR in WWII. Nevertheless the dream of containing US power persisted. It would be necessary to occupy the Azores and Canary Islands. Aerial refuelling and trans-polar routes were studied. Twenty targets, mostly aluminum works, were selected in Canada and the US. It was realized that only nuisance raids against both coasts (using Japan for the west coast) would be possible but that these would be sufficient to panic the fear-prone US into diverting much of its war potential into needless air defence. The BV 238 could be refuelled by U-boats that could also provide the 22-kg magnesium incendiaries to spread along New York streets, preferably in Jewish areas.

Griehl describes numerous top-level meetings that attempted to decide among Dornier, Focke-Wulf, Junkers, Tank, Heinkel, Blohm & Voss, and Messerschmitt designs and the proposed engines that never came up to requirements. The 6-engine Me364 has a nose similar to the B-29. The dual Ju 290 had 8 BMW801 Stern engines.

Griehl also describes nuclear research and the co-operation between it and the Peenemunde rocket research. In 1942 Werner Heisenberg advised Speer that the problem had been solved in theory but it would be a race to beat the US whom he claimed would have an atomic bomb by 1944. Zinsser, a flak and rocket expert, while flying south of Lubeck in Oct 44, described a mushroom-type explosion. There were no qualms about radio-active fallout. In 1945 there were 2 test atomic explosions, one of which severely wounded 680 POWs and 20 SS guards. Speer opposed Hitler's plans to use such weapons in long-range warheads. Hitler, however, opposed plans for one-way and kamikaze attacks on the US.

ROB DAVIS VISITS STALAG LUFT III: As I have mentioned several times, Rob, of Telford, Shropshire, has been most useful to us with his extensive files of Bomber Command losses and other WWII research. He now reports:

"After many years' research, and frequent wishing, I was able in May 2007 to visit the site of the Great Escape at Zagan, Poland (then Sagan, Germany) by motorcycle. Exploring the Camp Site and walking the length of the tunnel "Harry" was a very profound experience and one I will never forget. Zagan, 35 miles or so from the German / Polish border, is a garrison town with enormous tracts of land used for military manoeuvres (as a look at Google Earth will reveal). Little now remains of the huge PoW Camp, but the tunnel line is clearly preserved with concrete edging and a gravel pathway. The halfway houses of "Piccadilly" and "Leicester Square" are identified, and although the Cooler - under which the tunnel ran - has gone, the Hospital Block is still explorable, its cellars reminiscent of darker days. Delving deeper into the woodland reveals the almost intact Fire Pool where swimming, sailing model boats or skating took place. Still deeper in the woods lie the ruins of the Theatre, trees growing through the concrete floors, the high stage area and slope of the tiered seating quite evident. Much of the sand from "Harry" was shovelled under the raked Theatre seats.

Even deeper now into the woods, and there are the tunnel lines for "Tom" and "Dick", the latter recently excavated for a UK TV documentary. The brilliantly concealed underwater trap for "Dick" was never found by the Germans but was discovered by the modern archaeologists and now resides, with similar PoW artefacts, in the Museum a short distance down the local road. Adjacent to the Hut bases for "Tom" and "Dick" is the Appel Ground, from which I collected some of Sagan's famous sand, which just like the books you read, smells pungently until dried out. No wonder that the Kriegies had to muster smoking parties in the Theatre whilst sand dispersal was

in progress! I also "liberated" the corner of a smashed wash-basin ... maybe some of your readers have used it for washing ... who knows?

The Museum has many fascinating exhibits and shows an English-language video of the Camp's history, which encompassed not just Luft III but the nearby Luft VIII and VIIC. No visit is complete without walking the sadly neglected railway platforms at Zagan station, contemplating the desperate time that the first batch of Escapers were hanging around at dawn, waiting for either recapture or a train out.

And finally, a while staring at the altar-like Memorial to the Fifty. My companion and I were deeply affected. We salute the endeavours of all Escapers and those who supported them in their efforts to "harass, confuse and confound the enemy" after capture. My web site covers the Great Escape in detail and includes photos taken during the May visit.

I would be pleased to hear from former "guests of the Reich" who spent time there."

Rob has sent me a bottle of sand from my old compound, that was my Alma Mater, 12 photographs, and an excellent DVD disk of the trip to bring back so many memories. Thanks. Rob.

A BIT OF WIT FROM THE UK, VIA DOWN UNDER: Brian Walley sends us this from Western Australia:

"Here's a genuine letter that was sent, 16 May 2007, to the UK's Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. One in the eye for The Common Agricultural Policy."

Dear Secretary of State,

My friend, who is in farming at the moment, recently received a cheque for £3,000 from the Rural Payments Agency for not rearing pigs. I would now like to join the "not rearing pigs" business.

In your opinion, what is the best kind of farm not to rear pigs on, and which is the best breed of pigs not to rear? I want to be sure I approach this endeavour in keeping with all governmental policies, as dictated by the EU under the Common Agricultural Policy. I would prefer not to rear bacon pigs, but if this is not the type you want not rearing, I will just as gladly not rear porkers. Are there any advantages in not rearing rare breeds such as Saddlebacks or Gloucester Old Spots, or are there too many people already not rearing these?

As I see it, the hardest part of this programme will be keeping an accurate record of how many pigs I haven't reared. Are there any Government or Local Authority courses on this?

My friend is very satisfied with this business. He has been rearing pigs for forty years or so, and the best he ever made on them was £1,422 in 1968. That is - until this year, when he received a cheque for not rearing any.

If I get £3,000 for not rearing 50 pigs, will I get £6,000 for not rearing 100? I plan to operate on a small scale at first, holding myself down to about 4,000 pigs not raised, which will mean about £240,000 for the first year. As I become more expert in not rearing pigs, I plan to be more ambitious, perhaps increasing to, say, 40,000 pigs not reared in my second year, for which I should expect about £2.4 million from your department. Incidentally, I wonder if I would be eligible to receive tradeable carbon credits for all these pigs not producing harmful and polluting methane gases?

Another point: These pigs that I plan to not rear will not eat 2,000 tonnes of cereals. I understand that you also pay farmers for not growing crops. Will I qualify for payments for not growing cereals to not feed the pigs I don't rear?

I am also considering the "not milking cows" business, so please send any information you have on that too. Please could you also include the current DEFRA advice on set-aside fields? Can this be done on an e-commerce basis with virtual fields (of which I seem to have several thousand hectares)?

In view of the above you will realise that I will be totally unemployed, and will therefore qualify for unemployment benefits.

I will be voting for your party in the next general election.

Brian Walley's story was written up in the Jan 2002 newsletter, but for the benefit of new members here is a repeat.

Brian Walley: On 09 Nov 1941, Brian was on his 5th operation with 51 RAF Squadron, piloting a Whitley, one of 350 bombers headed for Berlin. The crew consisted of 3 RAF and 2 RCAF. The weather was atrocious and, near Kiel, they were hit by flak, so jettisoned their bombs on Kiel, and turned for a long glide home but severe icing forced them below the cloud base at 1500 feet. They lightened the plane by throwing out all they could. They did contact base and locked the key. One hundred miles from land they pancaked on the crest of a wave in the malevolent sea, slid down the trough, crashed through the next wave and came to a shuddering stop. The aircraft disintegrated leaving Brian trapped with much of the wreckage wrapped around his legs. He managed to break free and was pulled into the dingy already reached by the other four, but then had difficulty severing the umbilical cord that was attached to the rapidly-sinking aircraft. Soon, with stomachs full of ice-cold salt water, they all vomited.

Dawn brought 20-foot grey, ugly waves, one of which flung all five into the sea and only 3 made it back to

the dingy. Sgts Carpenter, RAF, and Chambers of Rouleau, Saskatchewan, drowned. The wave had swept the dingy clean and they had to rely on lung power to work the pump. The next night the navigator, Dave Simpson of Edmonton, froze to death. The next afternoon the other pilot died, leaving Brian all alone. Just before dark, after drifting 100 miles to the Frisian Islands, a Heinkel 59 seaplane spotted the dingy, and plucked him out of the sea. Five kindly German doctors patched him up and the Squadron commander, Karl Born, commiserated with him, trying to soothe him with "For you the war is over."

After 3½ years of POW life, Brian returned to farming in Wales, then spent a few years back in the RAF, before emigrating to Australia. He had thought of Canada, found it charming but, after his North Sea experience, thought the winters would be too cold for him.

Still wanting to thank those who saved his life, Brian used POW contacts to find Karl Tubbessing, the Norderney Search & Rescue navigator who still remembered him and who invited Brian, and his wife, Mair, to spend a couple of weeks with them at Idar-Oberstein in 1995. They then met Karl Born, now in a wheel chair, and two ex members of the ASR Sqn, Fritz Becket and Werner Schultz and their wives. They remarked that, of all the people they had saved, friend and foe, only Brian had returned to thank them. S/L Dickerson and F/O Simpson had been buried with full military honours.

AFGHANISTAN: If you relate combat deaths in Afghanistan to population, Canada leads in sacrifice with 2 per million people, followed by the US with 1.35, the UK with 1.04, Spain with .52, the Netherlands .48, Germany .26, Italy .16, and France .14. (From Keith Greenaway).

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT THE PERSIANS (IRANIANS)? Having supported Greek colonies in Asia Minor against Persia, the world's only super power, Themistocles was worried about Persian reactions so he persuaded Athenians to spend their new-found wealth from silver mines on building hundreds of triremes, knowing Persia had 1,200. He then cleverly used his at Salamis to defeat the invasion of the great King Xerxes in 480 BC, saving for us Athenian democracy. Themistocles was rewarded with political treachery that ostracized him, forcing him to defect to the Persians who permitted him to rule a province. To retain power at home, the successors of Xerxes used repression and religious intolerance to solidify the empire which prompted numerous revolts. From 359 to 338 BC Artaxerxes III ruthlessly rebuilt the Persian empire only to have it destroyed by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It has been relatively peaceful since.

Today, Iran is a country of 71 million people, up from 31 million in 1975. About 66% are under 30 years of age and endure high unemployment. Many lean towards Western values which frightens the older ruling clerics and military. There are 30 provinces, 9 ethnic groupings, the majority Persian, and 6 religions, the majority Shi'a. Iran takes part in 49 international organizations. There is universal suffrage, but candidates are restricted to those approved by the clerics. About 5 pressure groups support the cleric-military rule while about 10 are in opposition, some completely repressed. There remains considerable internal political and economic dissension and we have been guilty of supporting such groups which can be the kiss of death. Nationalism remains a strong force everywhere and foreign intervention simply unifies quarrelling groups. We have not been forgiven for toppling Mossadegh, installing the Shah, and supporting Saddam in his invasion of Iran. We should never interfere with an enemy, real or imagined, bent on self destruction.

Iran, once the world's superpower, is now surrounded by nations with nuclear arms: Pakistan, Israel, India, Russia, and the US with so much military power next door. Pressuring Iran to halt nuclear progress while doing nothing to lessen the arsenals of others only increases resentments and hatreds and hobbles the majority of Iranians, as in all nations, who prefer to just co-exist. For us, Pakistan can be much more of a headache. Alexander the Great could not tame its tribal warriors and no one since has. Wars, today, are fought on the internet and those we call cruel savages have been most adept at using it. We must be more subtle and more innovative while promoting world, rather than just our own, aims.

ALL ABOARD! Better hurry. 80,000 hopefuls from 120 countries are now queuing up for Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic 2008 space flights for a mere \$200,000 each. Pratt & Whitney will provide the PW308 engines from its Mississauga, Ontario, plant for White Knight II, the aircraft that will carry the underslung Space Ship II, California built, which will be launched from an altitude above 15 km.

NEWSLETTER MAILING PREFERENCES: We have continued to mail out 130 copies of the newsletter which, with the substantial increase in postage rates, is expensive. The newsletter is now on a web site (www.971WingAFAC.com). We would like to hear from you as to your preference: (1) Continue to receive it via regular mail, (2) Via e-mail, or (3) To download it from the internet. Please advise gswearor@pcisys.net.

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD: After 8 years, 5 as president, of excellent and most-appreciated service to the Wing, Art Nielsen has stepped down as president. At our meeting 21 August, Paul Ellis was elevated from vice president to president while Joan Peterson returned to the role of vice president.