

CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

December 2012

Chartered: Nov. 1, 1985. **Past Presidents:** *Nelson Oats, *Harold Ballard, *W. O. Mullin, *Verle Oringderff, *Harold Trammell, *William Oakley, Frank Polenta, *S. L. Baker, *George Payne, *Harry Steinert, & *Al Clement. *deceased. **Current Officers:** President-Mike Pixler, phone contact: 817-929-1557, First Vice President-Jim Rau, phone contact: 817-367-3343, Second Vice president-Pat Mann, phone: [info later], Secretary/Treasurer-Blanche Howerton, phone: 817-578-6542, Sergeant at Arms-Troy Jones, Chaplain-Rev. James Pixler, Kitchen Committee, [Open], Historian-Ruby Pixler, Reporter at Large & Newsletter Editor-Bill Stallings, phone contact: 972-255-7237.

Monthly Meeting is held on the **second** Saturday of each month from 10:30 AM to 1PM at the North Side Multipurpose Center, 1801 Harrington [North], Fort Worth, TX 76106. Dues are \$10 a person annually and are effective from Oct. to Oct.

Directions: Interstate Hwy 30 runs east & west. It accesses the downtown Fort Worth area from the south. Exit north on Henderson St. After a couple of miles it crosses a fork of the Trinity River and becomes State Hwy 199 which goes to Lake Worth, and the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. When you reach the traffic light at the intersection of 18th St. NW, turn right [east] and go up the hill four blocks to Homan St. Turn left [north], and go a block to the Y. Stay right and continue into the Center's rear parking lot. Our meeting room door with the CCC sign is to the right as you approach the building. Bring a friend & enjoy fun, fellowship & food. Sign the register for you may win the \$10 door prize.

- WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES: U.J. & Dee King, Sudan, TX, 12/24 {#52}.
- HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Jake Brooks, 12/01 & Diane Brooks, 12/23, Stephenville, TX; Larka Tetens, 12/19, Arlington, TX; Claude Tyler, 12/14, Blossom, TX.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2012. Weather: Clear and in the 60's, Attendance: 17.

Pres. Mike Pixler opened the meeting at 11:00 AM. He read a joke from "Senior News." The Invocation was offered by Vice Pres. Jim Rau. Sgt.-at-Arms Troy Jones led the pledges to the flags.

Pres. Pixler made a motion to table the minutes for November and was seconded by V.P. Jim Rau, motion carried. Sec./Treas. Blanche Howerton gave the financial report. Motion to accept made by Tony Rodriguez and seconded by Troy Jones.

A poem from Jack Bragg was read by Bill Stallings. Larka Tetens, who was present, was our birthday lady – it was the first anniversary of her 30th birthday! We all sang happy birthday to her.

V.P. Jim Rau spoke about the pavers for Past Presidents Al Clement, Curtis Greer, and Willie Pixler. A donation for the pavers was received from V.P. Jim Rau.

Jim then asked about who had been naughty or nice. Of course, all present had been nice.[?]

The CCC will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2013. Preparations are being made as we speak. Everyone will be notified of the time and place. We urge everyone who can, to be present.

V.P. Jim Rau stepped in for Curtis Greer, deceased, to present the reading of "Twas The Night Before Christmas." Various members read parts of the story. We miss you Curtis, and LaVaughn is in our prayers.

Pres. Pixler's name was drawn for the \$10 door prize. He gave it to a children's charity fund. A wide selection of gifts from the drawing were given to others present. Then the group exchanged Christmas gifts.

At 12:23 PM Tony Rodriguez made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Steve Porter, motion carried. V.P. Jim Rau blessed the food, and a wonderful Christmas meal was enjoyed by all.

The President's Corner, 8 December, 2012

The subject of this corner is: It Must Be a Family Thing.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! That sounds a lot better to me than Happy Holidays. Anyway, December is a special time of the year for many of us as we celebrate Christmas, for Jesus is the reason for the season, and time to bring in a new year.

It's also a time to remember the passing of members of our CCC Legacy Chapter 123 family; Curtis Greer, Jim Lyde, Joy Rastall and Lillie Payne. Each one special to all of us; each one will be remembered by us. We will miss you all.

I know that does not seem like the holiday theme, however, it's also a time to be thankful for the friends we have made in the chapter, and ultimately have developed into our extended family. An example of our family coming together was at the Christmas Meeting. I don't know; it just happened. In November, as you know Jim Rau had the meeting. I was working the Veteran's Day Parade, anyway, Larka Tetens, Larkin Dilbeck's daughter, as I understand, teaches Mayan children in Mexico where she goes to enjoy diving. Larka shared the story of the children in her charge. Apparently, the children do not have much of a Christmas, or anything else, until this year. These kids were excited about a new pencil! As stated, it was our Christmas meeting and we were having the drawing following pass the can, and it just happened. Members of the chapter opened their hearts to these kids. The drawing held, the gift received and immediately the gift was passed to Larka for her kids. Then the next gift was won and given to her kids; and on, and on, and on. Everyone had won a gift and passed them on to Larka's kids; including the gifts that had not been won and the \$10 door prize. Merry Christmas, kids, from CCC Legacy Chapter 123, your extended family. Thanks Jim for letting us know about her library and for the gifts. The Mayan children's Christmas will be a bit better this year, because of our extended chapter family. It just makes you feel good. It must be a family thing.

Welcome to our newest family member, Robbie McKee Warner, daughter of CCC Boy T.W. "Bill" McKee. Bill doesn't have the whole family as members yet, but he's working on it. Keep up the good work and thank you, Bill.

I hope to see you next year at the CCC Legacy Chapter 123 meeting on 12 January, 2012. Opps! That's 12 January, 2013; Civilian Conservation Corps' 80th Anniversary year! A lot of activities are planned for 2013. See you at the

meeting. If you have not paid dues for 2013, do so NOW - BEFORE 31 December, 2012!

Yours in Service,

Mike Pixler, President

CCC Legacy

A CORRECTION

In our November newsletter we failed to say that member T.W. "Bill" McKee's son Tom was visiting us from his home in Midlothian, Virginia. We apologize to Bill and Tom.

A French Connection

This past January, we received an email from CCC Legacy President Joan Sharpe forwarding a request from a gentleman in France. His request referred back to an article in our Newsletter of August 2009, that our then Newsletter Editor, Curtis Greer, had asked us to write about member and CCC Boy, Norbert Gebhard. First of all we were taken aback that an article we had emailed to our members back then, had floated around the world on the World Wide Web [WWW] and been seen by an interested party in France. In forwarding the request, Joan Sharpe had wondered if this person was legitimate, so we were careful in responding.

We will first remind you of what the article was about: It told Norbert's story from his CCC days in his home state of Wisconsin to his enlistment in the Army Air Corps just prior to WW II. He took pilot training and became a co-pilot on a B-24D bomber and wound up in North Africa and was on the first bombing mission to the Ploesti Oil Fields of Romania. This raid was one of the most important single missions of the war, and in many ways, one of the most tragic because of the great loss of crew members. Norbert's plane and crew were successful and survived the mission. His aircraft on this mission was called "Sack Time Sally." He then became a First Pilot with a different crew; now on a B-24 named "Scorpion." Later "Sack Time Sally" was shot down on a mission to Bremen, Germany, with the loss of six of the crew, and four became POWs. While Norbert was still flying out of North Africa and on returning from a bombing mission to Italy, "Scorpion" ran low on fuel, and he successfully made an emergency landing on a semi-dry lake bed on the Island of Sardinia with no injuries to the crew. They abandoned this aircraft there, but it was later repaired and flown out. Next Norbert was sent back to his original base of Hethel, England, and assigned a new crew and a new B-24H, named "Blunder Bus." When his allotted 25 combat missions ended February of 1944, he was eventually rotated back to the U.S. Norbert wound up in Fort Worth, married a local girl, and worked for and retired from General Dynamics. He and his wife Betty now live in Grandview, Texas. Here ends his part, but, as the saying goes, "Now for the rest of the story."

On Monday, Jan. 30, 2012, Mr. Benoit Grassin, in his somewhat halting English, emailed Joan Sharpe, identifying himself as a French historian doing research on a B-24 aircraft named "Blunder Bus" that had crashed in France. He knew this was originally the aircraft flown by Norbert Gebhard. He read of it in our August 2009 issue. Mr. Grassin asked if Mr. Gebhard could supply a good picture image of this aircraft. He went on to say that he was writing a history of this aircraft and its crew for the purpose of thanking the crew members who gave their lives to save the French from the Nazi soldiers. He further states he has found more than 12 witnesses in France,

contacted an American family, and found the reports of survivors. He needed the picture to illustrate his book. After hearing from Joan, we called Norbert and wife Betty, and sure enough they sent a good color picture of “Blunder Bus” which we forwarded to Mr. Grassin.

On February 1, 2012, Mr. Grassin emailed us with what he had learned of the last mission of “Blunder Bus”: It crashed on Jan. 7, 1944, at approximately 1330 hours, near the village of Fain madness[?] next to Voves in Eure et Loir about twenty kilometers from Chartres. It was shot down while on a mission to bomb the city of Ludwigshaven, Germany, by a dozen German FW-190 fighter planes. James Dillon, gunner, died in the attack. His body was left on the plane when it crashed, was recovered by the Germans, and buried in the Cemetery of Saint-Cheron at Chartres. The other crew members jumped. Francis Tackray,[position?] died during his escape in the Pyrenees Mountains because of an avalanche. The others were captured and were taken to a prison camp in Germany: Royce Smith, pilot, Robert Hirsch, co-pilot, Duane Strayer, browser [navigator?], and gunners William Donley, Relius Nobles, Edward Gilbert. The pilot Royce Smith saved others by digging for two to four hours and then released to free his comrades. Radio operator Revis Smith and bombardier Robert Hauger jumped after the others and with the help of the French, were able to escape and reach England. Thomas Burton, belly gunner, was wounded during the attack with a head injury, sent to a hospital and lost an eye, and then to a POW camp in Germany. Mr. Grassin says that he reconstituted this summary from U.S. mission reports and French information.

Now fast forward to November 5, 2012, when we next hear from Mr. Grassin, in which he apologizes for not contacting us earlier, because he had a lot of work in the school where he works. He mentions doing examinations, training, and other duties, so apparently he is an instructor or maybe similar to our principals. He goes on to say that he has finished the book on the crash of “Blunder Bus” and thanks us for our help. He says he has located the family of crew member James Dillon, but not the family members of James Thackray [Francis Tackray?], Royce Smith, Revis Smith, Thomas Burton, Robert Hauger, Robert Hirsh, Duane Strayer, William Donley, Relius Nobles or Edward Gilbert; all crew members of “Blunder Bus” of the 389th Bomb Group, 565th Squadron.

Mr. Grassin says that he is organizing a ceremony in September 2013, and is inviting the families of the crew members to honor them and requests further help in locating these families.

Latest info re above:

We sent this recent communication from Mr. Grassin to Betty & Nobert Gebhard and received a brief note back from them naming the crew of the “Blunder Bus” before Norbert came off combat status. They were: N.N. Gebhard – pilot –from Wisc.; L. Peterson – co-pilot, Wisc.; T.R. Knights – navigator, Tex; G.J. Makin – bombardier, Maryland; P.A. Swetz – engineer, Penn.; B.P. Greeley - radio operator, Mass.; L.S. Smith –belly gunner, Tex.; J.J. Nally –tail gunner, Wash.; Schattles and Garigus – both waist gunners [no other info].

Obviously these men are different than the ones that Mr. Grassin says went down with the ship. Either they also finished their tours of duty as had Norbert, or, as often happened, the crews were shuffled due to aircraft availability, etc. The Gebhards say they will try to find more info after Christmas. So, that’s all for now.

WE HEAR FROM OUR POET LAUREATE

We have had a note from our Jack Bragg who has been out of commission for some time. He writes:

“I want to wish all you folks with CCC #123 a very Happy and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I am doing some better. I miss you all very much.” He attached the following poem:

TIT FOR TAT

THE RAT AND THE CAT WENT TIT FOR TAT
BLOW FOR BLOW THE CAT WOULD NOT SCAT
NEITHER WOULD THE FAT RAT
BITING, CLAWING, AND ALL OF THAT.

A SCOWL WILL SIGNAL FEAR
THE HISSING MIGHT BOTHER YOUR EAR
WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT GET NEAR
THESE TWO, NEVER FRIENDS IN ANY YEAR.

BILLY BULLDOG SHOWED HIS FACE
SAID I AM IN CHARGE OF THIS SPACE
I GUARD AND PROTECT THIS PLACE
YOU TWO STOP - YOU ARE A DISGRACE.

THE RAT AND CAT LAUGHED AT THAT
THEY GAVE BILLY BULLDOG A LITTLE PAT
THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE THAT
YOU CAN SAY GOODBYE TO THE RAT AND CAT.

SINCERELY,
JACK BRAGG

A note regarding the mention in the President’s Message of member Larka Tetens and her establishing a library for children in Mexico: We hope to have her give a presentation on how this all came about at one of our next meetings.

A CHRISTMAS POEM

This poem was written by Mr. Edward W. Mondroski of Mosinee, Wisconsin. He was a CCC Boy, years 1937 to 1939. Ed writes: Since I am 91 years old, this is my answer to the Christmas story [‘Twas the Night Before Christmas].

“It was the morning of Christmas, and all through the house,
Not a person was stirring, not even a spouse.

I know Santa didn't come by me
Because there wasn't one present under the tree.
I asked him for a nice little spouse,
Who could help with the dishes and clean the house.
I didn't get that either, I know
'Cause all he left me was a driveway full of snow.

I went to the garage to start the snowblower,
But the darn thing wouldn't roll - over.
So, I took a shovel and to my surprise
Under all that snow was nothing but ice.
The ice was so slippery and very shiny
And I thought, for sure, I would fall on my hiney.

I know there's a Santa, Virginia Dear
But he sure as heck didn't come over here.
Virginia called back and said, "Quit your complaining,
It's not that big a loss -
Your problem is, you are older than Santa Clause!"

We thank Joan Sharpe, President of CCC Legacy, for passing this little ditty along to us.

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**A FINAL REMINDER THAT DECEMBER 31, 2012, IS THE LAST DAY FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS
FOR 2013. IT'S ONLY \$10, SO GET THOSE CHECKS IN THE MAIL!**

**MAIL TO: BLANCHE HOWERTON
3011 INDIAN GAP ST.
WEATHERFORD, TX 76087**

The Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy is a non-profit organization dedicated to research, preservation, and education to promote better understanding of the CCC and its continuing contribution to American life and culture. *"I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, more important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work."*

--FDR, 1933

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