

The 20th and "Final" reunion of the 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron was held in Dothan, Alabama, September 19 to 23, 2007. Hosts for this meeting were **Frances and Selden Bailey**, assisted by **Jay Ashmore** and **Bill MacDermott**. Site for the get together was the same Comfort Inn at which we met in 1997.

**Attendance** - A marked increase in attendance over last year suggests that designation as a "final" meeting motivated many to assemble "one more time". There were 43 members of our "family" present **Jay and Margaret Ashmore**, **Bud Baden** and grandson **Joel Baden**, **Elsa Bacher**, **Selden and Frances Bailey**, **Brownie and Peggy Brownback**, **Tony and Mary Ellen Colafrancesco** and son **Rich and wife Gina Colafrancesco**, **Ed and Cathy Dahl**, **Jeanette Haak** and daughter **Cheryl Ziola**, **Rod and Marge Harris**, **Bill and Pat Leist**, **Ed Linn** and friend **Suzan Bright**, **Horace and Virginia Luton**, **Bill MacDermott** **Royal Miller** and son **Chuck Miller**, **Al Perry** and son **Keith Perry**, **Sqwecky and Freda Struchen**, **Liz (Kelly) Stumpf** and sister **Rose Kramer**, **Carl and Ann Wood** and daughter **Cindy Guidry** and grandson **Theo Guidry**, plus five special guests - **Juliette Hanks**, **Jim and Nina Hanks**, and **John and Beverly Hanks**. There were 15 returning veterans, the rest being wives, widows, children, grandchildren, and special guests.

### **Wednesday, Sept 19**

The tradition of early arrivals continued when **Ed and Cathy Dahl** arrived with a new member of their family, Tequila Not much later, **Sqwecky and Freda Struchen** pulled up in their passenger car equipped with a back-bumper mount for Sqwecky's motorized mobility chair. By early evening, a large group met for dinner at the local Cracker Barrel - **Bailey's, Ashmores, Leists, Lutons, Struchens**, and **Bill MacDermott**. After dinner conversations continued in the breakfast area of the motel.

### **Thursday, Sept. 20**

An extended Continental Breakfast was enjoyed by all as we prepared to meet the new arrivals throughout the day. Early in the morning, we met **Ed Linn** and his friend, **Suzan Bright**. Ed was in the 3rd ERS in Japan, 1945-1946, and has been on **Joe Horvath's** mailing list for years, but this was his first attendance at a reunion. He brought with him many new pictures of the 3rd ERS we had not seen and also an aged photo album of his father's from WW1. Considering its age, the picture quality was very good and the album attracted the attention of many of the men

Before noon, a reporting crew from the Dothan Eagle arrived and interviewed **Jay Ashmore** and **Bill MacDermott** for about 20 minutes, drawing from them impressions and recollections of the 3rd ERS in WWII. Early in the afternoon, the hospitality room was opened for our use. Late in the afternoon the five members of the **Hanks**, family arrived and this marked the first time at all our reunions that we were joined by people the Squadron had lifted out of harm's way during WWII. With the arrival of the **Brownbacks**, all were present except for **Bud and Joel Baden**, (flying in on Joel's airplane)

### **Friday, Sept. 21**

After early breakfast, we loaded into the Methodist Church bus and headed for Fort Rucker, a half-hour's drive to the west. Arrival at the US Army Aviation Museum was about a half-hour ahead of schedule, which gave ample opportunity for touring the displays in the building. Fort

Rucker had "rolled out the red carpet" for our Squadron. The 3rd Emergency Rescue Squadron Memorial Stone was displayed prominently on the stage, sandwiched between two panels of black-and-white 13x10 photographs of the Squadron in action during WWII. The stone was a thing of beauty, about 2 foot by 3 foot, polished black granite with lettering in gold (picture attached). The photos included several of the **Hanks'** family pickup from Culion Island in February of 1945. It was unfortunate that the two surviving members of our Catalina crew that day, Pilot **Dick Taggart** and Engineer, **Charley Cramer**, were not able to be present

The Memorial Service itself started at 11:30, invocation by Army Chaplain, **Major Chad Maxey**, followed by the main memorial tribute given by the Base Chaplain, **Col. Barry Bowden**. During Col Bowden's tribute, many of our veterans reflected inwardly: "did we really do all that?" Over three hundred saved, including three members of the Hanks family seated with us. The proceedings were sandwiched in between Three beautiful musical renditions by **Mrs Becky Guthrie**: our "National Anthem", "America the Beautiful and " God Bless America". There followed a several minutes of absolute solemnity as **Selden Bailey** recited the names of those 23 of our comrades who perished in the service of the Squadron overseas in 1944-46, from New Guinea to Japan. The haunting strains of " Taps" were followed by a final benediction by Major Maxey and the tribute to the wartime service of the 3rd ERS was concluded. There followed 15 to 20 minutes of picture taking and meeting the Fort Rucker Garrison Commander, **Col. Scott Larese**, who appeared to be so very young for such responsibility.

The bus was reboarded for a short ride to the Warrant Officers Mess, where we joined active duty personnel for the lunch hour, preceded by a moving songfest by the graduating class of the day - a series of staccato military chants delivered with absolute precision and great volume. The lunch itself was cafeteria style, the quality being remarkably better than any of our veterans could remember for stateside mess halls of 1944. We were honored by the arrival of the Fort Rucker Base Commander, **Major General "Duz" Hackett**, a close friend of Seldens. Sharing lunch with a two-star general was an experience which still impressed our veterans, though we had doffed our own uniforms 62 years ago..

After the luncheon bill was paid, the bus was reloaded and returned to the Comfort Inn. After so much activity, many were sufficiently tired that a midday nap felt very good. We were soon joined by **Bud and Joel Baden**, whose plane had been forced down by bad weather. By late afternoon and early evening, the Hospitality Room was at full capacity and many ate there for the evening meal, sandwiches brought in from Winn-Dixie. Prominently on display was a promotional model for Corona Beer, an inflatable plastic airplane model bearing a great resemblance to a PB4Y, brought all the way from New Hampshire by **Royal Miller**.

### **Saturday, Sept. 22**

At breakfast, **Selden Bailey** distributed copies of the Dothan Eagle, with a front-page article on the 3rd ERS reunion, based on Thursday's interview of **Jay Ashmore** and **Bill MacDermott**. In addition, **Chuck Miller** was busy setting up his laptop computer in the Hospitality Room to show the video associated with the interview. The Eagle video crew had done a great job including many short clips of Catalinas landing and taking off and also a clip of a B-17H dropping one of the Higgins rescue lifeboats, a clip none had seen before. Although no organized sight-seeing was scheduled, several small groups struck out on their own to various

destinations. **Bud and Joel Bden** drove out to rescue their downed airplane.

Atmosphere in the Hospitality Room was rather nostalgic in the afternoon as attendees jointly realized that these pleasant meetings were coming to an end. At this 20th reunion, reminiscing was as much on the past reunions as on the events of 60 years ago. The room was emptied at 5 00 to permit the banquet caterer to set up tables with cloths and tableware. The Hospitality Room was just large enough to accommodate 45 people (43 3rd ERS's and the evening's speaker and wife); a serving line was set up in the breakfast area of the motel. Back in the rooms, ladies concentrated on dressing while men mixed dressing with checking on football games of the day, just winding up. Serving began at 6:30 and the line was long enough that those first in line were finishing their meals just as the tail-enders were sitting down to eat.

After a short break, **Bill MacDermott** gave the floor to **Jim Hanks** to deliver his remarks of gratitude to the 3rd ERS for its role in extracting them from the Japanese threat in February 1947. He shared many interesting details of their family life working at the Cullon lepers sanitarium during the occupation. The main speaker of the evening was **Jack Scott**, an employee of a Dothan firm doing business in the Mideast. He managed to present several areas of religious motivation by drawing parallels between these and the mission and achievements of the 3rd ERS during W WII.

After a brief humorous interlude by **Jay Ashmore**, **Selden Bailey** then presented certificates of his', appreciation to all of the veterans; who had served overseas with the Squadron, accompanied by a handshake and snappy salute. A quick vote was taken to present the 3rd ERS Squadron Banner to Selden, the Banner which had graced the hospitality room at most of our reunions. He had already accepted from **Royal Miller** the flying boat model which had been autographed by most of the men present. At this point it was deemed that the final reunion of the 3rd ERS had been accomplished and that future contacts would be maintained by the twice-yearly Newsletter, promised by **Bill MacDermott**, and perhaps, smaller-scale, regional meetings as personal circumstances allowed. **Peggy Brownback** got up in the midst of more than a few misty eyes and Said that she "didn't want it to end" She proposed holding one more meeting next year at Omaha, Nebraska, which she and Brownie would Host. A vote was taken to see how many people would try their best to be at such a meeting and, as far as could be seen, nearly every hand went up The Brownbacks were thanked for their support of the Squadron and wished well on whatever they might be able to do for another meeting next year. Thus ended the "final reunion of the 3rd ERS.

### **Sunday Sept. 23**

A departure breakfast was shared by all in the motel lobby. Bags of peanuts from **Frances Bailey's** brother were handed out. Those facing long road trips were up early and on the road before some of the others came to breakfast. The mood was distinctly upbeat, considering the possibility of meeting again in 2008, whether it will be considered an official reunion or simply a "family get-together"

## **Reunion Miscellany**

### **XXXX - Hanks Family**

In February, 1944, the 3rd ERS was assigned a mission to evacuate a family of Americans from the tiny island of Culion, in the Philippines near Mindoro. **Dr. John Hanks**, his wife and three children were living on Culion, where he was conducting research on leprosy at the sanitarium there. As American forces advanced in the Philippines, it was feared the Japanese would exact retribution against all foreigners, especially Americans still working in the Islands. General MacArthur directed the evacuation mission be accomplished. A detailed description of this mission is given in the 3rd ERS Unit History (pp.68-70). The evacuation was successfully carried out and freed Dr Hanks, his wife Julia, sons John age 13, Jim age 12, and infant daughter, Julliette, age 15 months. Mother and father passed away some years ago and it is John and wife Beverly, Jim and wife Nina, and little Juliette we have welcomed to our final reunion.

### **XXXX -3rd ERS Website**

Chuck Miller was so energized by the 3 days at Dothan that he promptly set up a website for the Squadron when he got home - [www.3rders.com](http://www.3rders.com). Since it is so new, it is riot yet very big -- the Dothan Eagle newspaper article on our reunion, the associated video, a 2-112 page summary history of the Squadron, and a series of photos taken at Dothan- There are several more items under consideration for posting after the first of the year. Also, Chuck purchased 100 E-Mail accounts with the domain name and these are available to anyone who would like a second E-mail address associated with the Sqdn. This can be used just like any other E-Mail account. He will set one up for anyone who will send him a desired "username" and password. Although the expense associated with this website is not astronomical, he was offered reimbursement out of Sqdn- funds, but graciously stated that this was just his "donation" to the 3rd ERS. Send requests to Chuck at [wcmiler@3rders.com](mailto:wcmiler@3rders.com).

### **XXXX - 3rd ERS Widows**

For several years we have been touched deeply by the attendance at our reunion of widows with whom we have become acquainted over the years. More than anything else, perhaps, this justifies our reference to ourselves as the 3rd ERS "family." This year, we welcomed to our midst **Elsa Bacher**, **Liz (Kelly) Stumpf**, and **Jeanette Haak**. Elsa made the long flight from California by commercial air, Liz and her sister, **Rose Kramer**, drove over from NC, and Jeanette was accompanied by her daughter, **Cheryl Ziota**, on the long drive down from Michigan.

### **XXXX - Ashmore Humor.**

We are all familiar with the way that **Jay Ashmore** can liven a lagging conversation with one of his many war tales. This year was no different. Anyone who hasn't heard his story of being sent to a salvage yard to obtain some parts from a junked Catalina, only to return to the Sqdn. with an entire airplane, have a special treat waiting.

### **XXXX - Contrasting Flights -**

**Jay Ashmore** and **Bud Baden** both planned to fly in to Dothan in private airplanes. Jay and Margaret came in on Monday in near-perfect weather, but Bud had a problem- His grandson, Joel, picked him up in Wichita in his Grumman Cheetah four-passenger airplane- On the last leg of their flight from Wichita on Friday, weather began to deteriorate as they

approached Southeast Alabama. Angry rain clouds got lower and lower the nearer they got to Dothan and finally they made the wise decision to land on an airstrip outside Abbeville, 25 miles from Napier Field- the strip was literally deserted. A mobile home was present, but there was no answer to their knock on the door. No problem in this day and age - Bud simply got' on his cell phone and summoned a rental car from Napier Field and they arrived at the Comfort Inn in the early afternoon. Unfortunately, they had missed the 3rd ERS Memorial Ceremony at Fort Rucker, but visited there the next morning

#### **XXXX - DVD of Memorial Ceremony**

The Fort Rucker PIO produced a DVD of Friday's ceremony at the Aviation Museum. Copies were provided for the veterans who were present. Anyone else who would like to have a copy can order one through **Bill MacDermott**, 203 Regwood, Tullahoma, TN 37388, price not yet determined.

#### **General News Items XXXX**

Pete Archer has taken the dive into the computer and Internet world. Early in the year, he ventured onto a computer at a local library, was hooked, and has made great strides since then. In fact, he has acquired his own laptop and has been surfing through the many Catalina websites that can be found, including, of course, <http://www.3rders.com> .

**XXXX** - After the reunion, **Jay and Margaret Ashmore** had planned a Mediterranean cruise, Nov- 20-Dec 20. Three days before departure, Margaret down with extreme abdominal pains, which marked the start of a series of ER visits in Paris, one scheduled operation which was canceled in mid procedure, administration of morphine for pain, and several trips to a large hospital in Houston, where eventually she submitted to an operation for intestinal blockage and removal of her gall bladder and appendix. She will be recuperating at home for several months and has decreed - "we will plan no more European trips (they had gone through a similar cancellation last year).

**XXXX** - After' four years and 50,000 miles driving his 2004 Toyota Prius Hybrid, **Bud Baden** reports great satisfaction and that, indeed, he enjoys nearly 41 mpg in town and 50 on the highway. A50 kw electric motor, supplemented by a 61hp 4-cyl- gasoline engine gives him a total of 120 hp, adequate for the conservative driving style appropriate for a WWII veteran. In a recent visit to a grocery store in Wichita, **Bud** and **Jo** ran into a meat cutter who turned out to be **Charley and Golda Cramer's** grandson. Bud's e mail address has been changed to – [budjobaden@cox.net](mailto:budjobaden@cox.net) . Jo sends out an invitation for any of the 3rd ERS gang to visit them if ever in the vicinity of Wichita.

**XXXX** - After the reunion, **Selden and Frances Bailey** flew to Boston and spent six days in a rented car touring New England and the fall colors, more spectacular than in Alabama. They passed through Kennebunk. Maine, and Salem Massachusetts. It was the longest trip they had been on since Selden's operations four years ago. Selden recently returned to Fort Rucker and saw the 3rd ERS memorial plaque, now mounted on a wall in a prime location in the Aviation Museum - right at the top of the stairs to the second floor.

**XXXX** - **Charley and Golda Cramer** had 79 people covering four generations at a

Thanksgiving Day Dinner. The group included Charley's, his brother J. L.'s, and a sister's family. It was held in the Mound Valley Community Bldg. Charley is getting used to his replacement knee joint, but it does "go out" on him from time to time. Ever faithful after 63 years of marriage, Golda has given up her late-in-life career as an exotic dancer in the local night club to be with Charley around -the-clock.

**XXXX** - With heavy heart, **Mel Garbe** has written us that **Marjorie**, his wife of over 60 years, passed away the last week of September. Mel and Marjorie attended our first two reunions in Grand Island and Prairie du Chien. From then on, Marjorie's increasing physical problems precluded travel, but Mel continued as one of our family with correspondence over the next 18 years. Just this year, Marjorie suffered a broken hip to add to macular degeneration of many years and a substantial amount of dementia. Mel himself went through a series of heart problems two years ago, including a pacemaker implant. He has been unable to drive since then. The Garbes had one daughter, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Mel is one of our original Pensacola-trained Catalina pilots. His original crew included **F/O Frank Sieber** and **Navigator Bill Hannah**, neither of whom were located after the war. Mel rose to Captain in Flight D and was serving as Squadron Commander when he headed for home from Ie Shima, October 1945.

**XXXX** - Jeanette Haak recently visited the **Hauglies**. Darwin, like many others, has had stents emplaced and also has to cope with encroaching cataracts, since any further invasive surgery has been vetoed by physicians. He did enjoy the reunion description by Jeanette and also, as best he could, the pictures she brought back. Jeanette herself recently went through a 4-hour "outpatient" surgery by a plastic surgeon for removal of excess tissue in her arms. She expects the stitches to be taken out the week before Xmas.

**XXXX** - **Joe and Alice Horvath** returned to Largo, Florida, early in November. During the spring and summer, Joe suffered a series of problems - gout, cellulitis, and arthritis in one knee, which problems combined to keep him from the reunion. Also, Alice had a knee replacement in June, from which recuperation has been slow. As usual, they expect to winter at Largo before returning north in April. We have recently learned something new about Joe - many years ago he had tried playing golf. He has asked that **Everette Tuggle** be informed that he could hit the ball a mile, but from there on, his game went downhill. He still holds the record for the most "near" holes in one in the Toledo- area golf courses.

**XXXX** - **Bill Leist** continues to work on the Memphis Belle at the USAF Museum, but with only volunteers working at this stage, progress is slow. A staff of paid workers will soon be assigned, but even so, Bill feels it may take 7-11 years to finish the restoration.

**XXXX** - **Bill MacDermott** has been working on several articles for addition to the 3rd ERS website, one on the history of the (three) squadron insignias, with lineage running through **Bill Hannah**, **Walt Disney**, **Horace Luton**, and **Joel Wareing**

**XXXX** - We were alarmed to hear that **Troy Morris** recently experienced serious heart problems. Bypass surgery was ruled out because of his age, so four stents were inserted. Before a fifth could be emplaced, his heart stopped beating for 12 seconds and, under critical conditions, he was given a pacemaker. He now feels "pieced together, but still functioning. All of this came

after daughter Paola 's June wedding, a huge affair with number of guests beyond counting. The ceremony is to repeated in Argentina this month, for the benefit of her many friends and relatives down there

**XXXX - Sandy Sanzenbacher** reports his macular degeneration remains about the same. He did, however, have a recent scare when the intraocular pressure in one of his eyes jumped to an alarmingly high level. Faced with the possibility of glaucoma on top of MD, he gladly shelled out for medication at \$120 a dose and the pressure subsided to a normal level. Beth also has eye problems, but at a much less severe level. She continues to do the driving for the two of them - only about 2000 miles a year for grocery stores, Dr offices, etc-, but they "shut down" after dark. Glenn, who will be 84 in February, was reminded in a recent phone conversation with **Charley Cramer** that it was Charley who presented Glenn with the Silver Star decoration he had received for being a volunteer on the Lingayen Gulf Mission in 1945 (Unit History, pp 64-66). The presentation occurred in Manila on their way home. Sandy told Charley he had forgotten about it, - possibly because Charley had not rendered the traditional kiss on the cheek for such an occasion

**XXXX - Jean Wareing** had a recent bout with pneumonia which required hospitalization. Now recuperating at home, she and Joel are fortunate their daughter, Cynthia, lives close enough that she can take care of the two of them. Joel fell on one his knees several years ago and the replacement joint was "split three ways". This required an unnatural gait which, for a time, led to some hip problems. These have now been worked out and Joel feels he is in pretty good Shape - "for the long haul". Although he doesn't brag about it (except to fellow oldsters), he feels that Tom Brokaw "hit the nail on the head" with his "Greatest Generation".