The Ragged Irregular

322nd SQDN · 323rd SQDN · Supporting Units · 324th SQDN · 401st SQDN

Vol 34 No. 2 — **91st Bombardment Group (H)** — **April 2001**

Mission to Knaben, Norway

(Written by Phil Mack, Co-Pilot on this mission, in collaboration with Quentin Ellis, Navigator, based on personal experiences.)

November 16, 1943. For the only time during World War II, the 91st was scheduled to bomb a target in Norway. Norway had been invaded and defeated by Germany as part of their effort to secure their sources for critical materials needed in their war effort. British efforts to thwart this move proved to be inadequate and costly in terms of loss of capital ships, aircraft and personnel.



The report for mission 168 is brief describing the target only as "Knaben Industrial Areas." At briefing, Mack recalls the "industrial areas" as being a bauxite refinery making use of the abundant hydro-electric power to refine the ore into aluminum to support Germany's needs for its burgeoning aircraft production programs. Havelaar, in his book, "The Ragged Irregulars of Bassingbourn," describes the target as a molybdenum mine.

Still, there have been suggestions that Norway had been producing "heavy water" that was needed in connection with research and production of fissionable material. The U. S. Government report, "Atomic Energy for Military Purposes" by Henry D. Smyth, Princeton University Press, 1946, better known as "The Smyth Report," refers to French physicists who were sent to Britain at the fall of France in 1940 with "165 liters of 'heavy water'—practically the whole world stock of this material—which the French Government had brought from the Norsk Hydro Company just before the invasion of Norway."

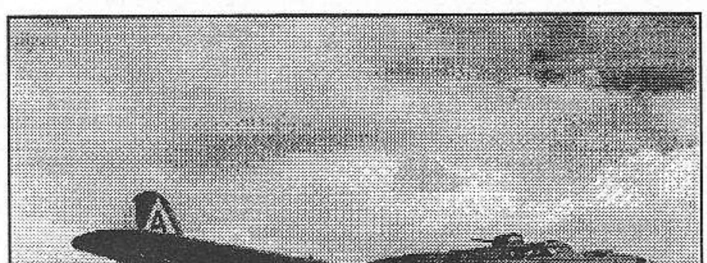
Whatever the facts of the target at Knaben, the mission was unsuccessful and is classified as an "Abortive Sortie." Group Leader was Major Gillespie, 401st Sq. with a total of 20 aircraft. The report states further: "A/C aborts: None. Losses: None." The aircraft circled the target area but were unable to identify it because of heavy snow cover. All crews received credit for a mission, except one. There was an abort. B-17F 42-29739, "The Village Flirt," a 323rd ship piloted by Capt. David A. Bramble, turned back about 50 miles short of the coast of Norway.

Still over water, in and out of broken clouds, and out of sight of land, the number one engine developed an oil leak. It was first noticed by the Ball Turret gunner, S/Sgt. C. Ray Ridings, who reported it to the pilot. Co-pilot Mack checked the oil pressure which had not yet shown a drop in pressure. It did shortly afterward. B-17Fs did not have an oil reserve for prop feathering. Once the oil was gone from the main reservoir, the prop could not be feathered. The prop would "windmill," not only increasing drag, but causing the engine to continue rotating. Eventually, the engine would get hot from lack of oil and seize. The prop might break free of the engine and strike the airplane causing additional damage, personnel injury, or even loss of the entire aircraft.

Bramble made the decision to abort and executed a "180." Co-Pilot, Mack said to Dave, "We're only 50 miles from the coast. Why don't we continue to the target, drop our bombs and then turn around." Dave said," Don't you remember at briefing, the Germans have a squadron of 109s here?" His decision was right for a number of reasons.

On our way back, we descended to a lower altitude and no longer had to use oxygen. We leveled off on top of cloud layer. The bombs were jettisoned into the North Sea. As we cruised along, it really was very beautiful above the fleecy white clouds below us. The sky was bright blue. Then the engine began to seize. The rpm dropped. The engine shuttered violently. There was a violent bang and the engine stopped. The prop then spun freely at maximum flat pitch.

Suddenly a German Ju-88 appeared off our left wing. Simultaneously, we and the JU-88 dove into the clouds.



We continued for some time flying on instruments. After a while we eased back up again and the enemy aircraft was no where to be seen. Continued on Page 3..................

The President's Corner

At the Galveston Reunion, the business meeting voted favorably on a motion by Tony Montalvo which specified that a committee be created to make a plan for the long term future of our organization. I am pleased to announce that

1) A **Committee for Long Range Planning** has been formed.

2) The three Senior members are:

MARVIN GOLDBERG. Chairman.
PAUL LIMM
"DUSTY" HOFFMANN

3) The three Associate Members of the Committee are:

LEONARD CONTRERAS
MICK HANOU
CHRIS JOHNSON

4) The membership of the 91st BGMA ought to make its feelings known and address its comments to a member of the Committee. Addresses are in the new Directory.

5) The Committee ought to be able to make a report by the next reunion.

6) A vote on the report has to include all the membership and not just that of the attendees.

.....Bob Friedman

Report of the Secretary Treasurer

Income & Expense Statement 02/27/00 through 02/27/01

Income	
Attendee Registration	30,069.00
Seed Money	5,000.00
Total Income	35,069.00
Expense	
Bank Charges	41.00
Bulletin	923.30
Dining	14,062.79
Entertainment	8,295.48
Office	49.85
Registration Refd	2,105.00
Reservation Deposit	3,500.00
Reunion Hotel Expense	407.48
Seed Money Refd.	5,000.00
Total Expense	34,384.10
Total Income less Expenses	684.10

Asay B. Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer

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Changes of Address

The following changes of address have been reported after release of the 2001 Membership Directory. Please make a note of them in your directories. If you have not received the 2001 Directory, please contact Asay B. Johnson, address given above.

Jerome Ahi 205 Slinger Rd Apt 214, Slinger WI 53066-9406
Daniel M. Bienz 23 Longfield Dr, Hillsborough NJ 08844
Will T Carter 23 Robindale Cir Convo TX 77384-4653
Victor Cignek, 11221 Ridgecrest Dr, Anchorage AK 99516
Douglas Gibson 3890 S Nellis Blvd, Las Vegas NV 89121-3116
Lois D. Gorby 944 Euclaire Ave Bexley, OH 43209
Roy Forsbacka 1430 Echo Mill Dr Powder Springs GA 30137
William Lyons 3851 4th St SW Mason City IA 50401-7339
Lyle Jones 414 S Morgan Shelbyville IL 62565
Mary P Moron 431 Orange Dr Apt 124 Altamonte Springs Fl 32701-5839
Frank Panek 37 W Maple Ave. Allendale NJ 07401
Anne Rubenfeld 10029 176th Ct N Jupiter FL 33476-4774
Harold Shelley 613 N Hart Blvd Orlando F 32818-6833
Jim Shepherd e-mail: augusto@earthlink.net.
Barbara Van Dyke 419B N Downey St West Branch IA 52358
John Wallin 96 Upper Sheep Pasture Rd E Setauket NY 11733

Welcome New Life Members

Sidney Barnsley 322nd
Stuart Gilbertson 322nd
Gary Hall Associate
Charles W. Joiner Associate
John O'Leary 401st
Robert G. Striegel Associate

Special Donations

We have received donations $100 from Alice Andolshek, AL, in memory of her late husband Andy; $200 from Robert Kleya, LM, in memory of his former Navigator Bill Leasure; and $100 from Mary Turner, AM. Thank you all for your thoughtfulness.

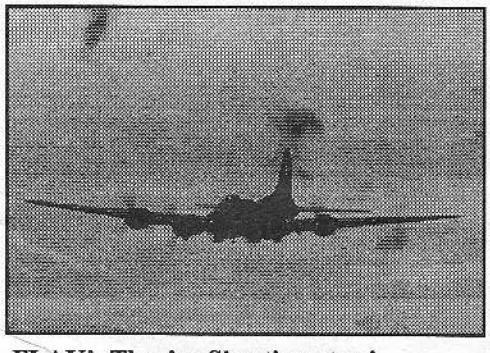
Mission to to Knaben

Continued from Page 1.....

The 91st Bomb Group's mission was frustrated by its inability to identify the target due to heavy ground coverage by snow and was forced to return to Bassingbourn. En route they salvoed their bombs over the North Sea. Unknown to the crew of the Village Flirt as they flew their crippled ship, slowed by loss of an engine and the drag of a propeller spinning freely, they were reported as "Missing in Action.."

The hapless crew of the Village Flirt was still cruising above the 10/10ths cloud layer over the North Sea at reduced speed. The Ju-88 had disappeared and was no longer an immediate threat. Somewhat relaxed, Co-Pilot Mack turned on the Radio Compass to the BBC that was playing, "Music While you Work," a popular daytime program intended to be played over the Tannoy (Public Address System) of the wartime factories. Now and again, they would drop lower to touch the top of the clouds and draw a complaint from the Ball Turret Gunner, Ray Ridings. "Hey, you guys! I'm on instruments."

Navigation was still a matter of concern for Ellis in the nose. The Gee box wasn't reliable at this distance and with threat of enemy jamming. Other means of homing were unsuitable. Navigation was by the oldest method known to man: Dead Reckoning.



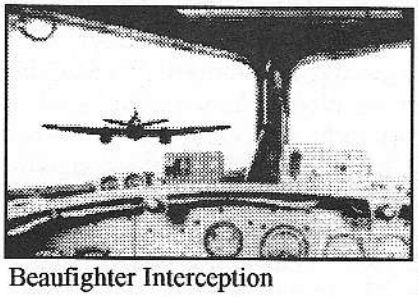
FLAK! They're Shooting at us!

Our position passing the coast of England in the vicinity of The Wash was soon confirmed by a navigational aid we didn't expect. Still flying above the clouds, black puffs of smoke surrounded us.

We called to Paul Zimmerman in the Radio Room, "Paul, check the IFF. Is it "On?" Paul came back quickly, "It is on." Whatever the problem was, it was no time to analyze it. We started taking evasive action.

We had just crossed the coast and were over England. It's possible that the IFF set had malfunctioned. The German's were known to have captured several B-17s that were still flyable. We understood that any aircraft approaching the coast that wasn't positively identified could expect to be shot at. Slowed by the windmilling prop and flying on only three engines, we were arriving well after the rest of the Group.

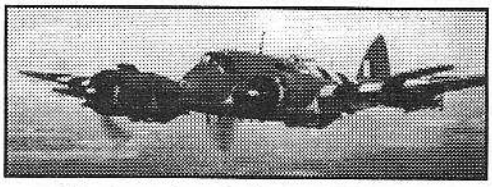
We were still above the clouds and couldn't be seen from the ground. We fired the "colors of the day" from the flare pistol, hoping the flares would continue to burn after passing through the clouds. It had no immediate effect. We continued our evasive action.



Beaufighter Interception

About the time we seemed to be out of the FLAK area, the next event occurred. An RAF Beaufighter, coming out of the clouds directly ahead of us, had his nose turned on us! We were now being intercepted by a hot-loaded twin-engine radar-equipped fighter-bomber!

The Beaufighter circled around us and took a position off the right wing. We assumed there was only a single pilot in the aircraft and he wouldn't be able to challenge us with an Aldis lamp or flare shot, so we gave him the Responses to what would have been a challenge for that hour of the day.



The Beaufighter gavc no indication of recognition or response. This was a deadly serious affair!

Having already been shot at by the flak batteries, we were not of the mood to sit there to be shot at by a "friendly." On the other hand, if our gunners began to take up defensive positions, the Beaufighter might have taken it as a hostile action. Our gunners were instructed to take NO action and to not even move their guns.

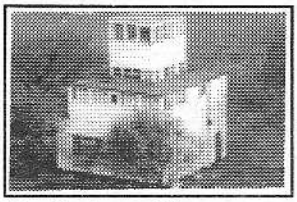
Resolutely, we continued our flight to Bassingbourn, and the Beaufighter never left us until we had our wheels firmly planted on the tarmac.

In retrospect, the mission was a failure. Unable to identify the target, the Group salvoed their bombs into the North Sea. According to the mission report, no enemy aircraft were seen. No anti-aircraft fire was reported. Of the 20 aircraft from the Group participating, 19 were credited with a mission. One was listed as an "abort."

We, the crew members of the one aircraft that aborted, were credited with 5.7 hours of "combat time." Our crippled B-17 was intercepted by an enemy aircraft over the North Sea and successfully evaded it. It was fired upon by British batteries of anti-aircraft guns as they past over the English Coast. It was intercepted by a potentially hostile Beaufighter. When Quentin Ellis, Navigator returned to his quarters, he found his personal belongings were being packed and removed. The crew had been listed as "Missing in Action." But neither he nor any of the crew of the Village Flirt was credited with a combat mission. They did not fly over enemy held territory nor were they fired upon by the enemy. But they lived to fight another day.

All the original crew members of the Village Flirt went on to complete their tours of 25 missions except the left waist Gunner, S/Sgt. Jerry Bernasconi, who filled in with another crew on his 25th mission and was shot down on the March 8, 1944 mission to Berlin.. Although injured in the bail out, he survived and remained a POW for the duration. For Mack, failure to get credit for the Norway mission resulted in his having to fly two additional missions: one in lieu of credit for the Norway mission and one because when the tour was increased to 30 missions, in proportion to the number of missions he had already completed, he had one additional mission.

Charles (Chuck) R. Giauque, Pilot of the "Eagle's Wrath," sent in a correction to the write-up on Lawrence "Zero" Ott that appeared in the January 2001 **Folded Wings** column on page 10, which had been sent in by Bill J. McCarthy. Giauque points out that Ott was assigned to his crew as Navigator on the "Eagle's Wrath"from the date of arrival in England and through all his missions. "Flying with McCarthy wouldn't have been bad," says Giauque, "but there's no way we would have given him up." He also corrects the house number of his address in the new directory from 827 to 716.


Bassingbourn Tower

Word from the Tower

Peter Roberts, Chairman of the East Anglian Aviation Society (EAAS), tells us in their Spring 2001 Report that they are continuing their pursuance of changing the current status of the EAAS as a 'Company Limited by Guarantee' to that of a 'Registered Charity.' Members are invited to submit their comments. Excerpts from his report are as follows.

"The 91st BGMA has invited the Society to join them in setting up a trust fund for the continuation of care and maintenance of their Propeller Memorial in the Barracks. Negotiations with the 91st are underway."

"News arrives from the USA that our old friend, Lt. Col. (Ret) Paul Chryst is being pressured to put together another 91st 'One More Time' return of Veterans to Bassingbourn this year. We look forward to it and offer our support and assistance.

"Work has begun to remove the wood and glass lantern structure from the top of the Control Tower. Thirty-three years of weathering have finally taken their toll, making it unstable and dangerous.

"We eagerly await the imminent announcement for the Grade 2 Listing of the Control Tower from the English Heritage. The prognosis seems favourable and the decision should incorporate the necessary work to bring the outside staircase up to the current national health and safety standards."

Mr. Roberts also announced with sadness the news that "Sheila Collins, wife of our President AVM Peter Collins, has passed away." We join him in expressing our condolence.

Steve Pena, Curator of the Tower Museum, presented a report on the 91st BGMA Year 2000 Reunion meeting in Galveston, TX, as written by Cliff Schultz, LM, 324th who is also a Life Member of the EAAS.

"Back to Bassingbourn"—Update

Tour Manager and Impresario Paul Chryst reports that as of Mar. 9, 2001, forty-five (45) persons have signed up for more detailed information on this final Group supported tour program to England scheduled for operation early October next. Tentative itinerary plans, from London, will include visits to Lavenham, Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge, Royston, Bassingbourn, Wimpole Hall, Ely, Duxford, Coventry, Stratford upon Avon, the Cotswolds, Bath, Bristol and return to London.

Request letters for permission to enter the British Barracks at Bassingbourn and their actual date selection; is forthcoming from the Army Training Regiment based there. The complete travel Registration Form is planned to be released to all applicants by July 1st.

Your early interest and all questions should be directed to: Paul Chryst, 1494 North Adams St., Pottstown, PA 19464, Tele: 610-323-1877, E mail: Paulnnance@aol.com. [Please note the corrected E mail address.]

91st Bomb Group Memorials


John "Jake" W. Howland

John W. Howland, LM, 324th, former Pathfinder Navigator, author and 91st BG Co-ordinator for European Affairs, has published a limited edition brochure identifying the several memorials and their locations in Europe and the names of individuals and organizations with whom our Association has worked to preserve and maintain these memorials and /or represent us by placing wreaths or other appropriate tokens of remembrance on such occasions as may be appropriate.

He has, in addition, made recommendations for preservation and maintenance of the several foreign memorials in the form of a Memorial Trust Fund. The final decisions will be a matter of concern of the Long Range Planning Committee, the 91st BGMA Officers, the General Membership and the fiduciary representative(s) at a future date.



"Combat He Wrote," a book by Lt. Col. Charles S. Hudson,© 1994 published by Airborne Publishing, 41605 Sutter Road, Coalinga, CA 93210, is currently being considered for being made into a movie or video for major showing. Details are not available but will be published as they are released.

Your Editor had the pleasure of reading an autographed copy of the book and can attest to its gripping action. Chapter one starts out, "Christ! That hurts!"

"I swore out loud that October 9, 1943, to anyone on the airplane who would listen. I could hear myself speaking over the howling of the wind blasting through the jagged hole in the skin and shattered nose cowling of the B-17 'Lightning Strikes.' Charlie Hudson never thought much about that kind of pain before, but I was hurting like hell. You could have shoved a silver dollar through the bloody, irregular hole in my left wrist where steel had ripped in one side and out the other, mangling the flesh and shattering the bone. My left shoulder was also throbbing with agonizing waves of pain and streaming blood where another hunk of Nazi iron had torn in. My right arm above my elbow had taken some shrapnel as well. I could see blood soaking through both sleeves of my leather flight jacket."

This was only the beginning. In time, Charlie was awarded, in addition to other medals, the second highest award this Nation offers: The Distinguished Service Cross.

A Tale of Two Cousins

William C. "Bill" Leasure (see "Folded Wings" p.11) and **John W. "Jake" Howland** were distant cousins dating back to the days of their French Huguenot ancestors who settled in the United States. Jake Howland's mother's maiden name was Leasure and traces back to the Huguenot settlement in Pennsylvania. Her grandfather, Zebediah Leasure, moved west in 1855 and settled in La Cygne, Kansas.

The advent of World War II brought Bill Leasure out of Pennsylvania and started him down a long road that would eventually lead to a reunion with his distant cousin, Howland in 1955. The tale of the paths followed by these two distant cousins is remarkable, almost unbelievably similar.

They both share the name "William:" Bill's first name and Jake's middle name. Both married girl's named Dorothy. When WWII came along, quite independently: both chose to enlist in the Army Air Corps, both man trained as a Celestial Navigators. Upon completion of training both were assigned to B-17 bombers. Both ended up in the 8th Air Force, 8th Bomber Command, 1st Air Division, 91st bomb Group, 324th Squadron.

Their tours did not overlap, but they both completed their tours in a time period when few did. As noted in Bill's obituary on Page 11, he and his crew were recalled after 11 missions to return to the United States to make direct reports on their experiences to the Senior Air Corps personnel in the Pentagon, including Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold.

Ironically, Bill Leasure and Jake Howland, distant cousins, met for the first time at a reunion of the 8th Air Force Society in St. Louis in 1995 and discovered the similarity in both their heritage and combat experiences.



Bill & Dorothy Leasure and Robert Kleya and Lillian Purdy (8th AF News, Nov. 1997)

Robert C. Kleyla, Pilot of "Jack the Ripper," 41-24490, on which Bill Leasure served as Navigator, sent the following note with his personal donation to the 91st BGMA on behalf of William C. Leasure, "He [Leasure] participated on the first raid over Germany 27 Jan 1943, as well as raids on 7, 8, and 9 November 1942. He also served with distinction in the Pacific later in the War. Bill also was Navigator on the first 91st B-17 to depart the U.S. for the U.K., 1942

[Ed Note: I had the pleasure of meeting Bill Leasure in Cambridge in August 1997 on the occasion of dedication of the American Air Museum in England at Duxford.]

Memory of Easter—1945

By Marion C. ("Carl") Hoffman

Easter time was approaching. A young man who flew in the 8th Air Force in Europe during World War II was shot down on his 25th mission and was listed Missing in Action or maybe dead. His mother had four out of eight sons in the Service. She had been contacting many Government agencies and officials from January 6 until Sunday, April 1, 1945 trying to get information about her son. She only knew that he and his crew were Missing in Action.

After three months of tireless exchanges of letters and still not knowing the status of her son, she was about to give up on the government contacts. In her mind, no knowledge meant her son was dead. But this mother would not give up. The faith she inherited from her ancestors who came to this country in 1854 kept her going.

A telegram came in to the telegraph office on Saturday night at 11:00 pm May 31, 1945, too late for postal delivery that day, Sam Anderson, the Postal deliveryman. knew where he could find the recipient of the telegram. Even though it was Sunday, April 1, he took the telegram to the Church in the small rural town where the family had worshiped faithfully. The telegraph was received and read before the entire congregation stating that this mother's son was alive and a Prisoner of War in Germany. There was much thanksgiving, elation, gratitude by the whole Church congregation.

What the family did not know at this Easter time was that their son and crew with 10,000 others had completed their last leg of 85 miles forced march from Stalag XIII-D at Nuremburg to Stalag VII-A at Moosburg, what turned out to be the end of their 345 mile forced march across Germany.

The story from this Easter continued on for another 28 days. On the last Sunday, April 29, 1945, the son was liberated at 11:00 am with 120,000 others of all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. The liberation was by American General George Patton's 3rd Army, 14th Armored Division.

Another telegram went out in early May sponsored by the U. S. Government on the son's behalf . He was able to state in his own words the joy of liberation and being back in the hands of the military.

There is an epilogue to this story. What an eventful year 1945 was! He was shot down on his 25th mission, January 6, taken prisoner and then liberated April 29, The war in Europe ended in May. The airman returned home June 14.
He was engaged to be married to his sweetheart on June 14. The war in the Pacific ended September 2.

This year will be the 56th Anniversary of this experience for Marion Carl Hoffman and on July 8, this will be his79th birthday.

Reminder:

Material for publication in the Ragged Irregular should be in the hands of the Editor two weeks before the date of issue, e.g., June 15 for the July issue. Thank you. Phil Mack, Editor

Book Report



During the final days of World War II, he had to choose between his conscience or Hitler's direct orders. Could he permit the murder of his POW column by Gen. Dietrich's SS executioners or would this be for Osterman a *time of honor?*

This is a new novel written by 91st BGMA Life Member James J. Cullen, former 323rd Sq. Bombardier on Jerold Kethley's crew shot down Aug.12, 1943 in "Billie K" on a mission to Gelsenkirke. Cullen along with his crew was captured and incarcerated for the duration. He is publishing his novel through IUniverse, an Internet subsidiary of Barnes & Noble bookstores. Using print-on-demand technology, books can be printed or downloaded on a customer's order. For those of you on the Web, call up IUniverse.com/bookstore/book search-Osterman's War.

Letters to the Editor

Alderic L. Leger, FM, 322nd, writes as follows: "In the January, 2001 issue of the RI, I read E. Robert "Bob" Kelley's letter with interest. The letter is about "The Roxy Special" and its last mission to Ludwigshaven, in particular the part about S/Sgt. Charles Beebe.

"Beebe was a member of our original crew when we first came to England in March of 1944. He was our waist gunner and I was the tail gunner. When we went to a nine man crew, Beebe was the one who was dropped and became a spare gunner, filling in with other crews that needed a waist gunner.

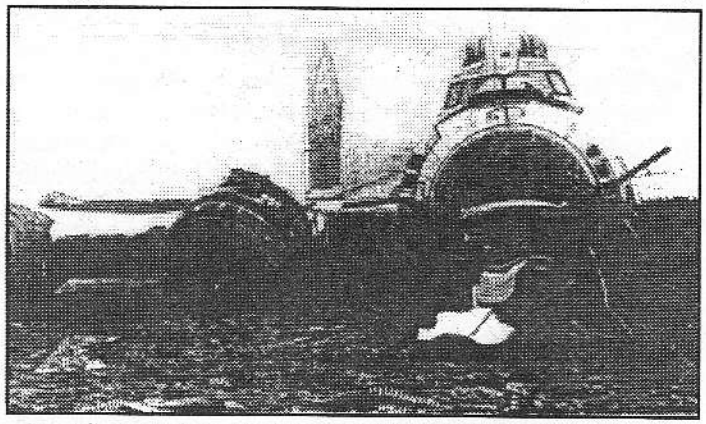
"I left the 91st in September having completed my tour, so I don't know much about how Beebe became a part of Lt. David McCarty's crew. Shortly after I heard the news, I was in contact with his sister. That was in 1945. Her name and address at that time was: Mrs. James D. Jensen, Duncan Mills, California. I haven't heard from her in many years, so I don't know if she is still at that address.


322nd Sq Members- Chas. Beebe on right

"Enclosed is a picture I had of a group of fellows in our barracks, Beebe is the one on the right of the five who are squatting down. I hope this information and picture may be what Richard Braun is looking for to complete his historical documentation." [See P. 7, January 2001 RI, "E. Robert Kelley," for story on Braun.]

Letters to the Editor (Continued)

Vince Hemmings, noted Aviation Historian and former Curator of the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn has sent in a report on the crash of a B-17, and tells us of his research begun three years ago on a B-17G, 43-38946, that crashed shortly after takeoff from Bassingbourn on Dec. 24, 1944. (Previous articles have been written on this and published in the *Ragged Irregular* in Nov. 1994 and continued Apr.1995.)


B-17G 43-38946 after crash shortly after takeoff, 24 Dec 44

After making contacts with people who remembered the crash, a Mr. Barnard was able to show Hemmings the location where the B-17 actually crashed, a place called West Hill, near a plantation on the road to Fowlmere. This was the home of the 339th Fighter Group to which former 91ster Lt. Bert Stiles, author of the wartime classic, "Serenade to the Big Bird," was assigned to fly the P-51,and from which he made his last and fatal flight.

The actual crash site was on a farm owned by a Mr. Debbin. He and one of his workers reached the crash site with 12 bore shotguns under their arms thinking the crashed aircraft was German.

The aircraft's pilot was led to a nearby village where he could use a telephone to call the base. People gathered around and the pilot mentioned that some of his people were injured. A Mr. Lowe, who was a market gardener with a weekly stall at Cambridge market, was the driver of the village's ambulance. Mr. Lowe was contacted and his ambulance arrived at the crash site and took two injured airmen back to Bassingbourn.

Earlier this year, a discussion took place on Mike Banta's internet ring regarding the Foxton crash. As a result, I received an e-mail from Clifford Schultz, a member of Mike's ring, who was the Radio Operator on the aircraft in question. Correspondence has passed between Clifford and me and a more detailed account has emerged. It was a remarkable escape with a full bomb load and fuel load and hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

To think that after some 56 years later this story has been brought into the public domain again, makes research like this so enjoyable. My sincere thanks to Clifford who has done a wonderful job in his research and will have shortly, I hope, a piece of his aircraft as a souvenir. Also to Mike Banta for his help.

Letters to the Editor (Continued)

Vince Hemmings, on another subject, asks if anyone knows or knew Fred Perrin, an American Officer assigned to work with a British Colonel Phillips in an office in Royston of the British "Claims Commission." This was an organization staffed mainly by legal people to evaluate the damage done by the military/enemy action to property and to arrive at a cost for this damage. In this area it mainly concerned damage to farm land when a crashed aircraft had to be recovered.

The Claims Commission office was located in the Royston Golf Club. If anyone has information about Fred Perrin, or any other American who may have been associated with the Claims Commission office, please contact Mr. Hemmings at: 53 Malthouse Way, Barrington, Cambridgeshire CB2 5RR, England, or by E-mail: <Station121@vhemmings.freeserve.co.uk>

Mike Banta, "ringmaster" has written, "The little E-mail Ring that we started with 17 names has grown to over 115 veterans and 91st BGMA associate members." Great work, Mike. All of us on the "Ring" appreciate what you are doing.

Lyle B. McCullough LM, 324th, writes: "Compliments on the Jan 2001 issue of the *Ragged Irregular*. The report on Galveston brought back memories of the great reunion events and the time spent with my surviving crew members of 'Lady Lucy.'

"I flew as Radio Operator with Pilot Hooper Maplesden, completing 35 missions with the 324th Squadron. We have five living crew embers and four of us with spouses were in attendance and are planning for Tacoma in 2002.

"The dedication of the B-17 sculpture planned for December 2001 at Hickam Field will be an event of great importance to many of us planning to attend. Do you know if plans are being made for: 1. Travel arrangements for group transportation from the West Coast. 2. Hotel accommodations in Hawaii. 3. Schedule of events. 4. Transportation from hotel to scheduled events.

"Those of us having a financial interest in support of the presentation and planning to attend will appreciate any information being published in the next *Ragged Irregular.*"

Signed: Lyle B. McCullough, LM 324th
1222 Vista Ct #3
Muscatine, IA 52761-4648

[Ed. Note: Lyle has been referred to:
James H. McPartlin
2301 Pebble Vale Dr Apt #1012
Plano, TX 75075-2565

Willard W. Wolfe, Jr., LM, would like to obtain a copy of Roger Freeman's book, "The Mighty 8th Air Force." If any one can help him, his address is:
58 Wade Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228-4636

[Ed Note: Roger, are you planning another issue?"]

David Lomasney, AL would like to get in touch with anyone who knew his father: T/Sgt James M. (Mack) Lomasney, 401st. He has already heard from a number of 91sters and says: "I've had some great conversations with some pretty great folks. The cornerstone of my search has been Jack Renskers who provided me with a whole list of 91sters who he thought might have known my Dad.

Continued top of next Column.....

David Lomasney (Continued)

Since September, I've sent out letters to each one, and received numerous additional contacts. I heard from John Evans, Doug Gibson, Faber Cripps, Whit Hill, Paul Limm and most recently Harold Mannon.

While John Evans was the only one who knew my dad, all of the others have been incredibly helpful.. Harold Mannon really went the extra mile by writing a nine-page letter telling me all about life at Bassingbourn, and included copies of numerous photos. Then, on top of that, he arranged for Carl Clark to send me a copy of his story, "The Unforgettable Takeoff" by John Howland. What a great bunch of people!

If you've got a few extra lines available in a future issue of the R/I, I'd like to offer my thanks to those who have helped me, and once again plug how important it is that all veterans share their stories with families and loved ones. And in the meantime, I'll keep trying to track down some of the other leads that they've given me.

Roger A. Freeman, noted author of "The Mighty 8th Air Force" and other great books is seeking to compile a list of members of the 91st Bomb Group who were awarded the United States' second highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross. Anyone who can provide assistance, may contact him by E-mail at <RAFMAYBARN@aol.com> or by regular mail at: Mays Barn Dedham, Colchester, Essex, CO7 6EW, UK. [He already knows about Charlie Hudson and T. Ross Milton.]



Frank Donofrio, sent in a packet of information including a photo of his license plate. Frank, an Associate Member of the 91st BGMA, is well known to us as Founder of the Memphis Belle Memorial Association and Executive Director of the newly formed Memphis Belle War Memorial Foundation. Frank, along with Brent Perkins, Executive Director of the Foundation, were each presented with a Colonel Aide-de-Camp Proclamation by Maj. Gen James Dassham on behalf of Tennessee Gov. Don Sundquist.

Harry Friedman, President of the Memphis Belle Memorial Association adds his congratulations to both men on the honors they received for their efforts to preserve the Memphis Belle.

It is also reported by Donofrio that **John P. Quinlan**, Tail Gunner of the Memphis Belle's crew, died at age 81. (Date of death not given.) His death leaves five of the Memphis Belle still surviving. Quinlan was born in Nepera Park, NY. He became a skilled marksman from hunting as a teenager. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942 shortly before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"Johnny was the best tail gunner I have ever seen," said Bob Morgan, Pilot of the Memphis Belle, from his home in Asheville, NC.

Quinlan received both the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross as he participated in the European and CBI theaters of operations. He was honorably discharged in 1945 and became an operating engineer with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 137 in Briarcliff, N.Y. He retired in 1980. He is survived by his wife, Julia, five sons, a daughter, two sisters and 15 grandchildren.

The Memphis Belle was the first B-17 in the 8th Air Force in England to complete 25 combat missions. It is on display on Mud Island near Memphis. The Foundation is raising funds for an enclosed building for the airplane.

Letters to the Editor (Continued)



S/Sgt. Joseph E. Radecki

Thomas A. Price who lives at 8059 Marmion Dr, Pittsburgh, PA 15237-2315, is the nephew of the former S/Sgt Joseph E. Radecki, who was in the 324th Sq. and served in the UK from 25 May 1944 to 1 May 1945. He was a Ball Turret Gunner. Price has been in contact with Lowell Getz who has given him much information about having been wounded on a mission to Ostheim with Halstead Sherrill's crew on 15 Aug 1944, and the names of two surviving crewmen, Chester Mis and Frank Gilligan. Tom Price would like to hear from anyone who knew his uncle. His telephone number is: (412) 442-5468.

John L. Hatfield, who lives at 6115 Gold Court SW, Tumwater, WA, tells us that his name was misspelled in the January 2001 list of attendees at the Galveston Reunion. It was spelled Harfield. Although he wrote to Asay Johnson to tell him of the mistake, it looks suspiciously like a typo of the sort this Editor might have made. After all, R and T are both typed with the left hand index finger and the keys are less than a half inch apart. So, we'll absolve Asay from the egregious error and apologize. Moreover, Hatfield tells us of a worse error. The name of his wife was omitted. We're sorry also for the omission of her name, Betty.

Apart from that, Hatfield says, "Let us know as soon as you have the plans finalized for the 91st reunion in Tacoma, Washington. The Museum of Flight at Boeing Field is a wonderful place to tour when the group comes for the reunion.

He concludes with the adage: "Do anything to me but make sure you spell my name correctly." He lives in Tumwater, WA, adjacent to the State Capitol in Olympia. [Attention, Ed Gates, Chairman, 2002 Reunion.]

Bill J. McCarty is another victim of the computer age. His name and that of his wife failed to show up in the computer upon their arrival in Galveston. Eventually his problem was solved and he writes, "We thoroughly enjoyed the few days we attended. Our friends from the Eagle's Wrath and many new ones made it so enjoyable. But the error persisted. Their names were omitted from the List of Attendees in the January 2001 *Ragged Irregular*. It is hereby made a matter of record: **Mr. and Mrs. Bill McCarty attended the Galveston Reunion**. We'll look forward to seeing them in Tacoma in 2002.

George Parks' letter of January 5, arrived too late to make it in the January 2001 issue. It is quoted in part, "As for me, I had a very fine Christmas with the son, Bill and his wife Nora, home for three days. My daughter and husband did not make it down from Florence, OR. Weather was not good and neither one of Bill's kids came due to college work as Adam will finish with Fresno State U soon, and Allison is busy playing on the girl's basketball team at California State at Fullerton, CA. So life goes on and we all grow older and a bit slower.

Still cold as you-know-what down here with high heating and electricity bills. So, shut off the heater at night at bed time, shut off the lights when not needed and close the doors to rooms not used. All the best for 2001. George & kit Kat.

Norman L. Thompson, former crew member of B-17, "Short Snorter II," responded to an article appearing in the January 2001 issue of the *Ragged Irregular* in which Thomas J. Dobinsky asked for information about his brother who had been lost on a mission in the 401st Sq. Norman responded in part, "Your brother joined the war at a very bad time, losses were heavy, but then, losses were heavy throughout the war. So, there was really no good time to join the war, so to speak. I was replaced on that subject flight by an experienced crewman and I can only say that your brother fell a hero among heroes..

Norman recommends books available from the 91st PX, "Plane Names and Fancy Noses" by Jim Bowden and "The Ragged Irregulars of Bassingbourn," by Marion H. Havelaar.

John Marshall, has written to say, "I would like to contact anyone who may have known my father, Woody Marshall, Crew Chief: on "Red Alert," S/N 4238128, 324th Sq." According to Lowell Getz, No. 128, "Red Alert," renamed "Dear Becky," was shot down on a mission to Altenbeken, Germany, 26 Nov. 44. John Marshall's address is given as E-Mail only: <jomarshal@home.com>

William F. Morrison, FM, 323rd, writes from Cocoa Beach, FL, to say his Christmas card to Squadron Mate, Joseph A. Fragale was returned for incorrect address. The 2001 Directory shows Fragale at: 395 S Desperado Dr, Cottonwood, AZ 86326. Morrison also adds that he was recently awarded a fourth Oak Leaf Cluster in a ceremony last fall of the Florida Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. He adds, "Better late than Never."

Richard F. Hull, 3445 Don-Diablo Dr, Carlsbad, CA 2008, writes "I came to the 91st in the Fall of 1943 as Bombardier on the crew of Burl Dalton. We had trained as a crew. I flew five missions with Dalton, mainly get-acquainted runs into France. On the evening of Sept. 27, we were advised that we would stand down for the mission on Sept. 27 (which turned out to be Emden).

To my dismay, I was awakened early on the 27th to be told times, etc. I felt that wakeup call was a mistake so Promptly went back to sleep. Not for long, I was again awakened, was told it was no mistake, I was to fill in on another crew. At the very least I was highly ticked off and was by that time running late. Details from then until we were awaiting takeoff were and are very fuzzy. My memory is far from what it used to be. I am sure I met the crew. At least the officers, but I honestly didn't recall the pilot, John Perrott, until Bob Brubaker sent it to me from the R/I.

To make a long story short and not bore you with war stories [Ed. Note: Not to worry; that's all I write about] I bailed out of a burning airplane and landed in the North Sea off Langou, an Island off the Dutch/German border. My capture, interrogation and subsequent arrival at StalagLuft III,is a whole other story. I'm sure you have enough war stories.

I now reside in Carlsbad, CA, a mobile home complex, have a wonderful wife of 55 years, and reasonably good health. I have been asked if I would agree to be placed on a speakers list to talk to high school seniors from local high schools, about my POW experience. Bob Brubaker gave me your name as a possible contact point I'm looking for information about the 27 Sept. raid on Emden, number of aircraft, flight altitudes, losses, any info on that mission. I was assigned to the 323rd Sq.

If you can steer me toward a source or if you have access to such info, I would be very grateful.

Early on, I was a member of the 91st BGMA and a

Continued top on next page.....

Letters to the Editor Continued.....

Russell F. Hull (Cont. from P. 8) subscriber to the *Ragged Irregular*. I fell by the wayside and would appreciate info on rejoining, dues, etc. [Attn: Asay Johnson]

I didn't mean to drag this out so long but will appreciate any help you provide. Thanks so much.
[Hull's E-Mail address is <powhull@juno.com> and telephone: (760) 804-0708]

Eleanor Ehret, widow of the late Edwin R. Ehret [Reported in Folded Wings, p.12, January 2001] has assembled a loose leaf collection of the drawings and diary writings of her late husband. Ehret, as a spare radio operator, completed a tour of 29 missions: Jan. 30-Jun. 24, 1944. Samples of Ehret's art work are presented below.



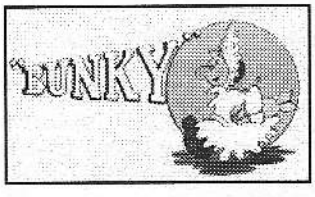
S/Sgt. Edwin R. Ehret



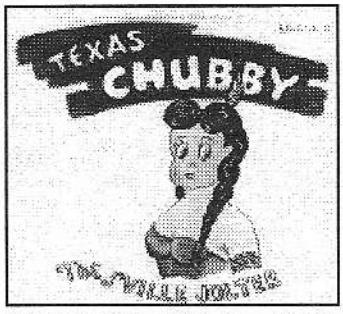
Brochure Cover Page



Front Row, L-R Lt. Pingel-P, Lt. Bender (CP), Lt. Marsh (N), Lt. Gettis, (B)
Back Row, Harold Humm (BT), Lad Kunst (WG), Fred Gascogne (TG),
"Razziea" Richardson (AG), Edwin Ehret (RO), David Jacoby, (FE).



B-17G 42-31542, OR T, "Bunky"



B-17G 42-31634 LG O, Texas Chubby

Bunky" was lost on 17 Jul 44 on a mission to Lechfield, when it collided with "Champagne Girl." There were no survivors. "Texas Chubby" was lost on 16 Aug 44 on a mission to Halle. Four men survived, five men died including Pilot Halstead Sherrill.

Jim Shepherd, AM, Keeper (with his wife Suzy) of the 91st BG web site, sent an E-Mail message to the "Ring" (91sters with E-Mail addresses) expressing his sentiment about the absence of a 91st banner in the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah (hereinafter referred to as "The 8th AF Museum"). **John Bruce**, FM 323rd, received a message from the 8th AF Museum and passed it on to **Mike Banta**, FM 324th, keeper of the Ring, The message reads as follows: "Good afternoon. The banners hanging in the 8th AF Museum are in recognition of giving of $5,000 or more to the general operating fund of the Museum. We would love to create a banner for the 91st BG upon receipt of such a gift. This is our fiftieth anniversary and plans are in the works for a great day on Saturday, May 12. Visitorship is growing, our education programs and student tours are popular. I don't know what speculation you have heard but I would love to hear from you again. Signed **Judy Walker, Director of Development, 8th Air Force Museum**."

John Bruce comments, "So its true....it's about money."

Shepherd's response is: "Now we know the cost. **Let's band together and get 200 members to donate $25.00 each and get the banner.** You should contact your friends and family and ask them for a DONATION to the "91st Bomb Group" Banner for the 8th AF Museum. Let's have some action. All the other Bomb Groups have a banner and the 91st should have a Banner proudly hanging in the museum. **Any donation for the Banner should be sent to Asay Johnson**. I will be mailing my check tomorrow."

Jim Shepherd is looking for the names of crew members of Miss Ouchita, a 323rd ship, that was shot down over Germany Feb. 21, 1944. He already has the name of the pilot on that flight but would like to know the other crew members and other crews that may have flown the aircraft previously. He is working on this project on behalf of Erik Lind whose address has not been provided to us. Lind is building a model of the aircraft and wants to make contact with as many people as possible who may have flown in it or were members of its ground crew.

Eric Mombeek os a Belgian author who has written books about some of the Luftwaffe Units. On March 29 this year, he informed us of the publication of his next book, **"Eismeerjaeger, Zur Geschichte des Jagdgeschwaders 5" Band 1:Zerstoererstaffel und Jabo staffel.**

This three-volume history of JG5, the German fighter unit which operated in the far north of Europe, will feature, in war diary format, nearly 1,200 photos (most of them unpublished before), many first-hand accounts (200 former pilots, ground crews and their families have assisted me), a comparison of claims and losses with /from Russian archives as well as information on the major aces who flew with this unit.

Although this book is published in German, the Luftwaffe enthusiast should easily be able to understand it; also the 400 pictures in this, the first volume, speak for themselves.

There will not be an English version published for several years. If you are interested, please send me a message; I will forward you details for orders.

Mit freundlichen Grüssen, Erik Mombeek.

[Ed. Note: Was ist ein "Jabo" as in Jabo staffel?]

Jim Shepherd, keeper of the 91st web site, writes, "We are adding another section to the web page. It will feature the Books written by members of the 91st Bomb Group. Since several of the members sell their books individually, we willdirect the interested party to contact the member directly. Anyone who wants his book(s) listed should contact Jim at <augusto@earthlink.net or write to his street address.

The Ring

To devotees of Grand Opera, "The Ring" has only one meaning: "Der Ring des Niebelungen"—the four-opera series by Richard Wagner. But to members of the 91st BGMA who are "on line," it has only one meaning: The names and E-Mail addresses of members who can send and receive E-Mail messages. The "Keeper of the Ring" is Mike Banta. At the push of the "Enter" key, Mike can send a single message to all members "on-line."

This means of rapid communication has many advantages. Here is an example of one of them: How to obtain information about a person, aircraft, mission, etc., in the shortest time. The following message had to do with a search for information about a Captain Ivor O. Tufty on behalf of his son, Craig Tufty. Banta was the first to respond:

"Hi Craig,

"We are the participants in the 91st BG E-mail Ring (115 91st Bomb Group veterans and 91st BGMA associate members) who answer questions for searches put in the guest book of our web site [91stBombGroup.com]. We represent all periods of time that the 91st was active and so some of us can answer almost any question.

"Your Dad and my tours overlapped and thus I knew your Dad as one of the first pilots who flew some of his missions while I was flying mine. Some of the planes that he and his crew flew were new B-17s that hadn't been named yet.

"Strangely, one of these, #43-38936, No Name, DF-Z, ended up being an albatross around my neck.. The story starts 30 November 1944, four days before my crew arrived at Bassingbourn. The mission was to a synthetic oil plant at Zeitz. Your Dad was flying in a brand new B-17 with the serial number and call letters shown above. He was flying left wingman off the lead ship in the rear element. This day the 324th was flying with 13 aircraft instead of the normal 12 so,flying in the slot of the rear element, was Lt. Stolz in #43-38742, also a brand new B-17. A battery of flak bursts exploded in the right rear portion of the rear element just at bombs away. Stolz' aircraft was hit and pulled out of formation and fell behind. It was seen to explode. Your Dad's B-17 was also hit and he, his Co-Pilot and Tail Gunner were wounded and two engines were knocked out. He managed to keep the B-17 airborne by having the crew throw surplus material overboard. He managed to get to allied occupied France where he made a crash landing. The brand new B-17 was flown back to Bassingbourn where it was declared salvage becoming a 'Hanger Queen' from which parts were taken to repair other damaged B-17s. How this affected me, I'll tell you a little later on.

"When I started flying my tour in December, your Dad was still recovering from the flak wound to the calf of his right leg. February 19, 1945, I was hit in the right hand with a piece of flak and was stood down from flying status until the hand healed. During this time your Dad was put back on flying status and was one of the 324th first pilots when I returned. He had been checked out as a lead pilot and I flew as his left wingman 30 March 1945 to rail center in Sinsen. That day I and my crew were flying Skunkface III which later had the dubious distinction of being the last B-17 lost to enemy action by the 91st Bomb Group and one of the two last B-17s lost by the First Air Division in air-to-air combat. Your Dad was flying the B-17 he had named after your mother, "Lorraine."

To be Continued in July 2001 Issue.

Folded Wings

Continued from Page 11.....

Late Reports

Donald R. Bird, FM, 401st, Oswego, NY, Mar.16, 2001, Age 81. He was a graduate of Oswego High School and retired in 1981 as a vice president after 17 years with Marine Midland Bank. He was a former member and second post president of the Oswego Country Club and a member of the Lions Club. He retired in 1964 as a Major after 22 years in the Air Force and was a veteran of World War II. He is survived by his wife, the former Marie Czirr, a son, Donald II of Massachusetts, a brother, Edward of Scotia, five grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Robert E. Buck, FM, 324th, Bar Harbor, M/E, Feb. 12, 2001, No other information provided.

Walter J. Davis, FM, 401st, Tucson, AZ, October 22, 2000, Age 77. Mr. Davis was honorably discharged from the U. S. Army. He is survived by his wife, Kay, children James M. and Peter S., sisters Helen Burian and Harriet Petersen. He is interred in the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona.

James W. Hensley, LM, 322nd, Phoenix, AZ, 2000 (exact date not stated). He is survived by his daughter, Cindy Hensley McCain, 7110 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85020. Sent in by Valerie VanAuker, Executive Assistant, Hensley & Co.

Milton H. Russam, FM, 323rd, Watertown, NY, Nov. 21, 2000, Age 77. He was a graduate of Lowville Free Academy and attended Union College in Schnectady before enlisting in the Army Air Corps during World War II. Serving at the rank of Captain, he flew 35 missions in B-17 bombers with the 91st Bomb Group. He returned to college and earned a degree in retail business management from Utica College. He was a communicant of the Church of our Lady of the Sacred Heart and a charter member of the Lowville Lions Club. He was also very active with the Boy Scouts of America. He is survived by his wife of fifty-five years, Louise Thisse Russam, sons Dan C. and Mark C., daughter Barbara L. Russam, brother Joseph A. Russam, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

France to Honor U. S. Airmen

The Ambassador of France to the United Sates, H.E. Francois Bujon de l'Estang, has informed acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs, The Honorable Hershel W. Gober, that the French authorities are issuing a certificate to recognize the participation of all American and allied soldiers who took part in the Normandy landing and contributed to the liberation of France.

The 91st BGMA has been informed that this includes airmen who participated in the Liberation at any time during World War II, in effect, anyone who served in the 91st on the ground or in the air, both before and after the invasion of Normandy.

If you would like to receive this Certificate, complete the application enclosed with this issue of the RI and send it with a copy of your discharge or Form 214 to Asay B. Johnson, whose name and address are preprinted on the reverse side of the application form. The French Embassy asked that they be submitted as a package by the veteran's organization and not sent individually. Merci beaucoup.

Remember these words*?

I am an American	Je suis un Americain
If you please	Sil vous plait
Thank you	Merci
My friend is hurt	Mon ami est blesse
Bring the doctor	Appelez-moi le medicin
Can you help me?	Pouvez vous m'aidre?

Ed. Note: *From a yellow-aged paper carried on every mission.

Folded Wings

Continued from Page 12.....


Wallace James Duffy

● **Wallace J. Duffy**, FM 401st, Hawthorne, CA, Feb. 14, 2001, Age 76. Submitted by Joyce H. Duffy. Accompanying the notice was an Irish Blessing:

"May the roads rise to meet you.
May the winds be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand."

● **Milton Lazarus, DDS**, LM 323rd, White Oak, PA, date and circumstances unknown.

● **William C. (Bill) Leasure,** LM, 324th, Houston, TX, Jan. 16, 2001, Age 82. Bill was Navigator on "Jack the Ripper" and crew of Capt. W. J. Crumm. The crew was the first crew in the 91st to fly to England in 1942 where they landed at Kimbolton and subsequently moved to Bassingbourn.

They flew on the Group's first mission, Nov. 7, 1942 to Brest, and then Nov 8th and 9th to Abbeville and St. Nazaire, respectively. Their ship was severely damaged and required extensive repairs. And they resumed flying another eight missions in December 1942 and January 1943. They flew their 11th mission to Emden, February 4, 1943, after which they were ordered back to the United States. At that time, they had the highest number of missions of any crew in the 8th Air Force. They were selected to brief Hq., USAAF and other units on their "front line" experiences. All individuals who flew combat missions in Bombers of the 8th Air Force can be thankful for the information Bill Leasure and his crewmates gave to General Arnold, his staff, and thousands of others still in operational training.


Bill Leasure

Bill attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania and in his later years was a generous supporter of its foundation. After his military career that included a tour on B-29s in the Pacific Theater, he was a successful businessman with manufacturing, ranching and energy-related concerns in both Texas and Pennsylvania. He was holder of 25 U.S. patents and 100 Foreign patents in the packaging industry. He served many years as a Director of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Dorothy (Holmes) Leasure, two daughters, three grandsons, a sister, and an aunt and cousins in Indiana County PA. [A contribution to the 91st BGMA was made by Robert L. Kleya, Sr., Lt. Col. USAF (RET), Bombardier on "Jack the Ripper," in honor of Bill Leasure.]

● **Marshall L. Pilert,** FM, 324th, Old Greenwich, CT, Sept. 14, 2000, Age 79, of complications after surgery. Born in Catonsville, MD, he attended Johns Hopkins University. He served as a B-17 Pilot and was shot down over Germany and became a POW for almost two years in Stalag Luft III.

Upon returning to civilian life, he worked for many years in direct mail advertising at Dun & Bradstreet and retired in 1984. He served as a Warden and Vestryman at St. Saviour's Church. He was Past President of the Lucas Point Association, a member of the Yacht Club, Duck's Unlimited and was an avid sailor.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, the former Helen Lederer, daughters Anne and Barbara Lee, and son Michael.

" continued top of next column.....

● **Vincent "Rich" Richard**, FM. 322nd, Spring Lakes Hts., NJ, Mar. 7, 2001, Age 84, while vacationing in Florida. He is survived by his wife, Helen, and daughters Donna and Suanne. Reported by Don Sheeler who adds, "Rich was Executive Officer [of the 322nd] during the time I was Squadron Commander."

● **Russell R. Ruth**, AM 401st, Willow Grove, PA. Mar. 10, 2001. Reported by his wife.

● **Samuel L. Sommers**, FM 401st, Pensacola, FL, December 15, 2000, Age 79. He was born in Tulsa, OK. During World War II, he was with the Army Air Corps and was shot down over Germany, captured and was a POW in Stalag 17B. After the war, he continued with the USAF and retired as a Master Sergeant, with 25 years of service.

In civilian life, he went to work for the civil service retiring again in 1985 and moved to Diamond City, AR where he lived until1999. He moved to Pensacola to be near his son, Sam and family.

Sam was a member of the American Ex-POW Stalag 17B Kriegl, St. Joseph Lodge No. 78 AF&AM, Elks Club, VFW, American Legion and the 91st BGMA. In addition to his wife, Lillian, he is survived by son Sam, and his wife, Jeanie, their children and grandchildren.

● **Willis C. Stinson**, LM 323rd, Madeira Beach, FL., Jan. 6, 1992. Late report sent in by Mrs. Laura Stinson, wife of the late Willis Stinson.

● **Howell D. Thomas,** FM, 324th, Binghamton, NY, Oct. 2, 2000, of congestive heart failure. He enlisted in the Army Air Force in August, 1942, and was assigned to the 324th Squadron. He completed 19 missions as Tail Gunner on "Lil Miss Mischief" until October 15, 1944 and 16 missions on many other aircraft as Radio Operator, completing a total of 35 missions.

He retired as Accountant/Auditor from the City of Binghamton, NY. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Lois, and his son and daughter as well as five grandchildren.

● **Andrew J. Toland**, FM 323rd, Collingdale, PA, July 24th, 2000. Son David writes: He was in the 91st Bomb Group at Bassingbourn, England. He met my mother [Kaye] over there and married. I was born there during the war. My father is survived by his wife, and daughter, Colleen Young and myself. My father could not wait for your publication to come so he could go through it thoroughly. Signed: David, whose address is 2629 Colonial Drive E, Boothwyn, PA, 19061-2227.

● **Joe C. Trayler**, LM, 324th, Houston, TX, June 1999 after a bout with cancer. This information is submitted by fellow crew member, Paul W. McElroy, former Navigator who is still keeping the crew log. "Joe Traylor was Tail Gunner and completed 33 missions by summer of 1944, returned to the ZI and went with B-29s.

Following WWII, McElroy believes Traylor became a Geologist with AMOCO Oil Company in the Houston area and retired in that capacity. He continues: "Joe never missed a reunion, attended several Rally Rounds. He was the type of guy who would pick up the phone and give you a call just to see how you were doing."

● **Stanley Waslaski**, LM 401st, Langdon, ND, Jan. 2, 2001, Age 77, of a massive heart attack. He enlisted in the Army Apr. 29, 1942 and separated Sept. 11, 1945. He married Luella Nowatzki in 1953. From 1954 until retiring in 1983, he worked for Cavalier County Rural Electric Association as a lineman. He is survived by two brothers, a sister and sister-in-law. He was preceded in death by his wife, seven brothers and two sisters. Submiitted by Jean Abernathy, sister-in-law.

Hail and Farewell

Folded Wings

● **Edmund Abdo, Sr.** , FM 324th, Moscow, PA, Jan. 27, 2001, Age 79, of congestive heart failure. He served as Ball Turret Gunner on the crew of "Little Miss Mischief," and was wounded from a direct hit on the ball turret from flak on his 21st mission, Oct. 15, 1944. The damage to the aircraft is pictured in the Squadron/Signal Publication, "B-17 in Action, Aircraft No. 12." He was awarded the Air Medal with two clusters, the European Campaign Medal with three battle stars, the Good Conduct Medal and the Purple Heart.

He owned and operated a retail paint business for thirty years prior to retirement.. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Alice Golod Abdo, children Edmund, Jr., Robert, Garry, and Larry, and five grandchildren. Submitted by Ed., Jr. of Mountain Top, PA.

● **Donald Merle Alton**, 323rd, Salt Springs, BC, Canada, Jan. 2, 2001, Age 83. He was born in Empress, Alberta, Canada, in 1917, to American immigrants. After finishing high school, he rode in rodeos, worked with horses, while residing in California and Alberta, throughout the '30s. He volunteered for the Canadian Army in 1941 and later transferred to the American forces where he was given his choice of service. He picked the USAAF. Upon completion of training, he was shipped to England and assigned to the 91st BG, 323rd Sq. He was shot down on a mission to Frankfurt on Oct. 4, 1943 and was interned in Stalag XVIIB, Krems, Austria until his release from a temporary camp near Braunau, Austria, after a forced march ahead of the Russians on May 3, 1945. Upon return to the U.S. he was given an honorable discharge and returned to Canada where his mother still resided. He bought a horse and raised Pintos and later, Appaloosas. He established a construction company, Alton Homes, in Red Deer until his retirement in 1980. Submitted by his son, Gordon, who expresses thanks to all who helped him gather information on his father's military history with photos, maps, records and eye-witness reports.

● **Robert F. "Red" Atterbury**, 401st, Jan. 24, 2001. He was an original member of the 401st and worked in the

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bombsight unit. He rotated home in 1944 and remained in the U.S. Army for 21 years. He left one daughter. Reported by Doug Gibson and his wife of Edmonds, Washington, with whom he visited in summers while in the Northwest.

● **Clifford H. Benoit**, FM 401st, Braintree, MA, In a letter dated March 1, 2001, Paul C. Benoit, son, reports the death of his father, a very proud veteran of WWII, the USAAF and particularly the 91st Bomb Group. My Dad was part of the 401st Squadron and looked forward to receiving the Ragged Irregular.

Like most Veterans I have met, my Dad did not like to speak of his three years in England...only when I begged him to tell me stories did I understand the full impact of flying off from Bassingbourn on a mission and making it back when many of his buddies did not. At my father's funeral service, the Priest mentioned Tom Brokaw's book that my father (and you all) were part of the "Greatest Generation. I do believe this is true... and I would certainly salute you all.

● **Roy Bertrand**, FM 324th, Mamou, LA, Jan. 8, 2001, Age 75. Fellow crewman, Carl Schultz, informs us that Roy passed away at his home of cancer. He was BTG on Lt. Frank Adams crew of "Rhapsody in Red." He completed 35 missions and was credited with one enemy a/c destroyed. Roy and his entire crew survived a crash on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1944.

In civilian life, Roy served as a fireman and Fire Chief for nearly 30 years and also served two terms as City councilman in Mamou. He is survived by his wife Helen of 54 years, son Karl (Pat), daughter Susan, two grandchildren and three great grandchildren. The crew along with his family will miss him. [Ed. Note: Thank you for the contribution to the 91st BGMA on behalf of your late father.]

● **Charles Clare (C.C.) CARTER**, LM 323rd, Giddings,TX, Dec. 6, 2000, Age 77, following a brief illness. He was born Feb.21, 1923 at Fort Worth, TX, and served in WWII in the Army Air Corps. His 91st BG buddy, Claude E. Cantrell writes that "CC" was best man at his wedding and "was there to help us celebrate our 50th. We all lost a dear friend, one who always had a smile on his face."

Mr. Carter retired from Southwestern Bell Telephone after more than 30 years of service. He was preceded in death by his late wife, Juanita McCaskill, his parents, two brothers, a nephew, and a great niece. He is survived by a sister, nephew, and many great nieces and great nephews.

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THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

These Newsletters are published quarterly: January, April, July and October. The R/I's purpose is to keep alive the spirit of the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and to maintain the fellowship of all of those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121 in Bassingbourn, England from 1942-1945.

Material for publication should be sent to the Editor, Phil Mack, 17521 155th Ave. SE. Renton, WA 98058-9087. "Time-value" items must be received on or before the fifteenth day preceding the month of publication to permit necessary priority consideration for inclusion in that issue. Every effort will be made to utilize other submitted material in the scheduled or later R/I issues.