



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 2 No. 1

October, 1968

Second National Reunion Scores 'Perfect Strike'

More than 250 members, families, and guests made the Denver reunion of the 91st a perfect strike for the second year in a row! And a program that kept the whole group interested, excited, and entranced, functioned with customary 91st efficiency.

Members began gathering at the Hyatt House headquarters as early as Saturday, and by the official registration day on Tuesday, July 23, the crowd was there in full force, keeping the Hyatt House and surrounding areas humming with talk and impromptu get-togethers. An informal cocktail party topped off the day.

On Wednesday morning the group gathered for the Squadrons Breakfast, and then went in five chartered buses for an all-day trip through the Air Force Academy, some 60 miles south near Colorado Springs. The 91st-ers were conducted on a tour of the Academy, briefed by members of the staff, and had lunch at the Academy officers club. A special showing at the base planetarium, and a visit to the famous Academy chapel were features of the trip.

Group representatives presented a plaque of 91st in-

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A highlight of the Air Force Academy visit was the presentation of a hand-painted plaque of the four squadron insignia and the 91st Group insignia, which will become part of the Academy Heritage Exhibit for the cadets. Shown accepting the plaque from M/Gen. Stanley T.

Wray is the Air Force Academy Chief of Staff, Col. Ralph C. Embrey. Members representing the Memorial Association are, 1 to r, John L. Dowrick, Joseph A. Camelleri, Paul Chryst, Paul C. Bumett, Phillip R. Taylor, Joseph M. Giambrone, and George Parks.

Second National Reunion...

signia to the Academy, to be kept as part of the Cadets' Heritage Exhibit.

The official Group luncheon was held on Thursday, and squadron photographs were made at this time. For the first time, a special get-together of ex-POWs was held, headed by Joe Rose.

Fifteen former members of the 98th Bomb Group, a B-24 outfit in the Middle East, were special guests of the 91st. They are in the process of organizing an association of ex-98th men.

In the business session Friday morning the group named Bassingbourn as the 1969 reunion site. It was also decided that reunions would be held at two-year intervals in the future.

The official name of the organization was changed from the 91st Bomb Group (H) Reunion Committees back to the name used in the early 1960s when the English

memorials were being prepared, the 91st Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association. Those contributors to group funds should note this change on their income tax records of contributions. The Association is registered as a non-profit, tax-deductible organization.

All officers of the Eastern Division were reelected to their posts. They are: Paul Chryst, chairman; Joseph A. Camelleri, co-chairman; Robert Gerstemeier, secretary, and Joseph M. Giambrone, treasurer.

From the Western Division two officials, co-chairman John J. Lacorazzo and treasurer Bob Racicot, resigned their posts due to the press of other duties. The new Western Division set-up is: Phillip R. Taylor, chairman; and M/Sgt. George W. Parks (Ret.) secretary-treasurer. Maj. Maurice J. Herman (Ret.) co-chairman, and M/Sgt. George W. Parks (Ret.) secretary-treasurer.

Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray, president of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association, continues in his post, as does Carlton Brechler, national publicity chairman, and Paul C. Burnett, editor and historian.



Former 322 squadron members attending the Denver reunion were: kneeling, left to right, Ray W. Schroeder, Erwin (Rudy) Steele, Paul C. Burnett, Howard N. Cole, Walter R. Laferty, and Gaylord Henryson. Second row,

Arnold W. Brown, Wilbur C. Duemler, Ernie Ciarletta, Col. Frank S. Kamykowski, Jerry Newquist, and Jack Fearheller, Backrow, William L. Corson, Vern Clabaugh, Col. Herb Egender, and Ted Janus.

Hantman Heads Legion of Valor

Maj. (Ret) Sidney Hantman, a former pilot with the 322 squadron, has been named the new National Commander of the Legion of Valor. The Legion includes holders of the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Air Force Cross and the Navy Cross.

Hantman was unable to attend the Denver reunion because the Legion of Valor convention was scheduled for the same time.

Sid received the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry on the Oct. 9, 1943, raid to Anklam. Though a pilot, he was flying as tail gunner in the lead ship to help direct the formation. Over Anklam, First Wing was attacked by rocket-equipped ME-110s, and lost more than 20 planes. One of the rockets struck his position, blowing his right arm off, tearing up his thigh, and blowing out part of his shin bone.

He spent many months recovering in Walter Reed Hospital. The Ted Malone national broadcast of July 24, 1944, honoring the 91st (which is often replayed at local Rally Rounds) was dedicated to him.

Sid is now a resident of Silver Springs, Md., and active in the Washington flight of the Memorial Association.

Steve Birdsall Seeks Help

Steve Birdsall, author of "The B-17," well known to many 91st-ers, is presently working on a broad pictorial history of the 8th Air Force for Random House, and is seeking our help.

Several chapters in the book deal specifically with the 91st, and the group is strongly represented throughout.

Steve says, "I'd particularly like to hear from men who flew the group's first mission, or last mission, or the turning-point trip to Halls in June '43. Then there's January 27, 1943, the bloody week of October 8-14, 1943, the D-Day missions, and the January, 1945 to VE Day missions. And 91st alumni can be of tremendous help if they can put me in touch with other 8th Air Force men—from B-24, P-38, P-47 and P-51 outfits."

One chapter deals with the artistic work of Cpl. Starcer on the noses of 91st planes. Birdsall is eager to contact Starcer (if anyone knows his whereabouts) and to hear from those who flew in Starcer-decorated planes.

His address is:

Steve Birdsall
4/11 Premier
Neutral Bay 2089
Sydney, Australia



From the 323 squadron were: kneeling, l to r, Dave Bramble, William L. Hoots, Lloyd J. Mahan, Mike N. Kunrod, William A. Reynolds, Col. John R. (Pinkie) Bell, and Willis C. Stinson. Standing, W. Burl Dalton,

Earl Hon, Emil Yezdimir, Harold N. Mitchamore, Howell B. Loper, Joe Franke, Keith Beanblossom, Jack Hobson, and Phillip R. Taylor.

Let's Go Back To Bassingbourn

'Back To Bassingbourn' Scheduled For 1969 Reunion

Firm plans for "Operation Return," a trip back to Bassingbourn and the two memorials established at Madingley and Royston, have been announced by the Flight Committee. Tentative moves for the overseas reunion were made first at the Memphis reunion 1967, and further developed at the Denver get-together in July.

"Operation Return" will make it possible for dues-paying members of the 91st and their families and guests to make the trip to England economically by chartered aircraft.

The Flight Committee has scheduled the firm departure date on the evening of Sunday, June 15, 1969, from John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, and a return to JFK about noon on Sunday, June 29. This two-week period is out of the peak tourist travel season and favors a timely return to Bassingbourn RAF station, which has been ordered to close permanently during the summer of 1969.

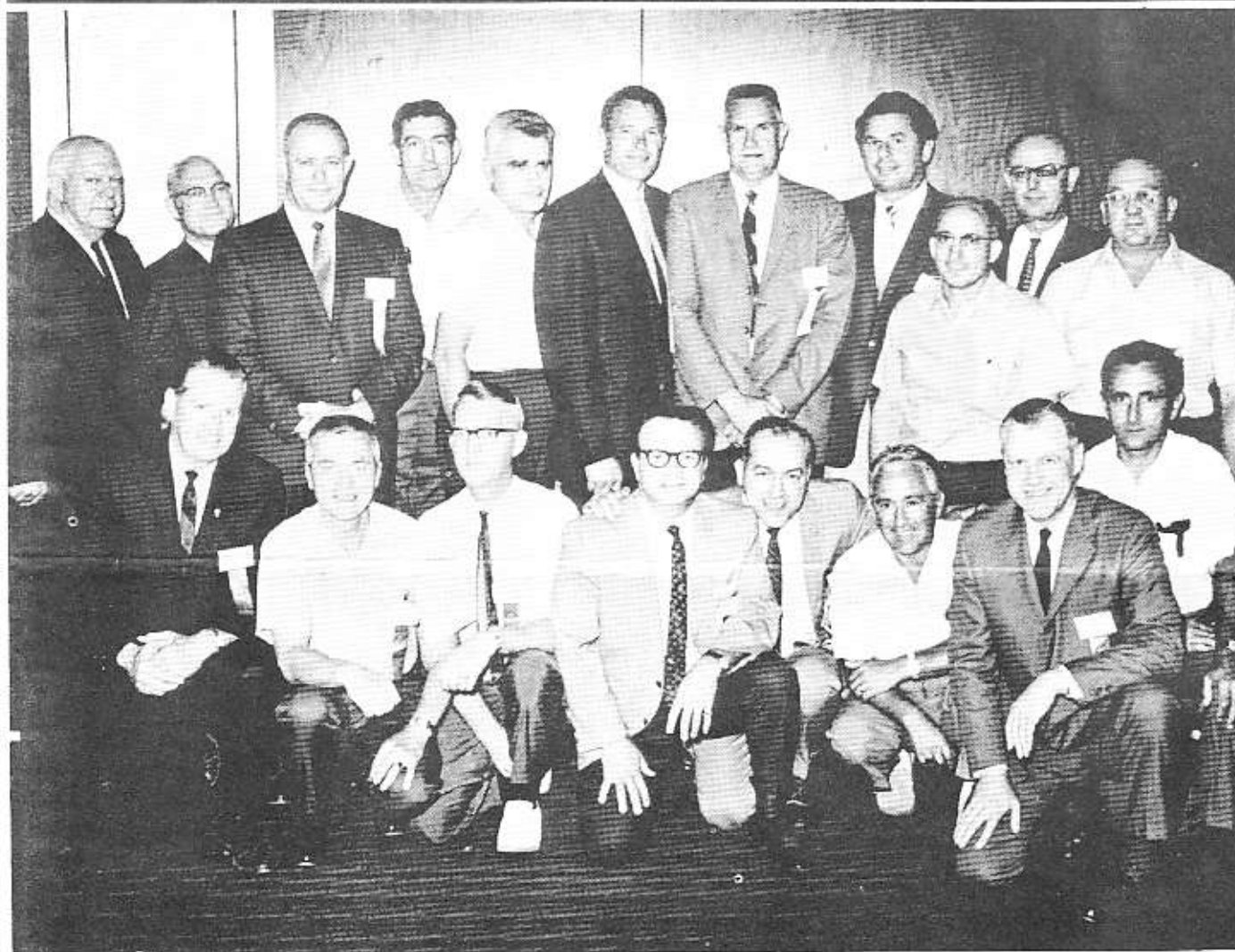
The carrier will be TransInternational Airlines, which has been in the air charter business for 20 years. Travel will be in a new DC-8 jet.

Plans call for a group arrival at London Airport Monday morning, June 16, with charter bus transportation directly to reserved rooms at a first class hotel. The entire day and evening will be free for individual activities.

Tuesday morning, June 17, the members will go by chartered bus to Bassingbourn, to the U.S. Military Cemetery at Madingley, and to ceremonies at Royston Park that afternoon. The bus will return to the hotel by early evening.

For the ten-day period from June 18 to June 27 members will be on their own, free to travel wherever they wish. Travel, room reservations, etc., during this period will be the responsibility of the individual. A firm hotel

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Members of the 324 squadron were: kneeling, l to r, Bruce Bowles, Freeman C. Beasley, Jerry Peters, Joe Camelleri, Joe Giambrone, Andy Manzano, Col. Manny Klette, Rudy Moretti. Standing, Maj. Gen. Stanley T.

Wray, Curt Q. Pyrah, Bob Hanson, Thomas Llewellyn, Lloyd Guzek, Lt. Col. Haley Aycock, M/Sgt. George Parks, Joseph Weinstock, John B. Ventura, E. Lee Nichols, Jr., and Norman E. Wittman.

Back To Bassingbourn...

reservation will be made by the committee for each member for his return to London on Saturday, June 28, the day before departure to the U.S.A.

The round trip jet fare, the bus transportation, three nights at the hotel in London (with rates based on double occupancy), the Group visits and two departure parties will have a package price of \$225 per person.

Reservations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. Member reservations will be accepted with deposit immediately. Guests and friends who make application for the trip will be considered on a temporary standby basis only, until February 1. This rule was adopted to give members first chance at the available seats.

Payment for each fare may be made in full at the time of application, or split into three equal payments of \$75 with the initial reservation, \$75 due not later than January 31, and \$75 by April 8. Checks should be made payable to the 91st B.G. Memorial Assoc., Inc., and mailed to Robert E. Gerstemeier, Kerr Road RD #1, Lansdale, Pa. 19446.

Cancellations will be accepted for legitimate reasons only, and money will be refunded up to but not later than 30 days before departure date, except for a \$25 handling fee.

Fitzsimons Hospital Thanks 91st

At the close of the Denver reunion the 91st donated a number of B-17 models of the former group plane "Lady Luck" to Fitzsimons General Hospital to be distributed to patients recovering from Viet Nam battle wounds.

West Coast chairman Phil Taylor has received the following letter from the hospital:

"We certainly appreciate your fine gesture and gift of model planes. These will be distributed to the patients and I am sure many hours of boredom will be dissipated because of your kindness.

"I am sorry I was not present when the planes were delivered, and again on behalf of the Commanding General and the patients of Fitzsimons, thank you for a fine gift. Sincerely, Mitchell S. Ponikiski, Chief, Welfare & Recreation Branch, Fitzsimons General Hospital."



With the biggest group of all, the 401 squadron members were: kneeling, 1 to r, Stan Waslaski, Paul G. McDuffie, Neil A. Daniels, Thomas J. Capparelli, John E. Blackowiak, Nicholas Bankovsky, Col. Thomas E. Ashinhurst, James F. Daley, Robert J. Powers, Joe Rose, Arthur E. Hele, Doug Gibson, First row standing,

Robert F. Atterbury, Paul Chryst, Charlie Hudson, Robert Gerstemeier, Glenn Selter, Louis M. Holland, Vernon L. Dion, C.O. Pierce, Glenn Boyce, Back row, standing, M.E. Painter, A.R. Pene, Jack P. Gaffney, Al Marcus, Haley Aycock, George Parks, Sam Newton, Harold R. DeBolt, Lt. Col. John R. Parsons, Jr.

'Serenade To The Big Bird' Available Again

A new edition of Bert Stiles "Serenade To The Big Bird," the WW II classic of his tour as a co-pilot with the 91st Bomb Group during 1944, has been announced by Ballantine Books.

Stiles came to Bassingbourn in March, 1944, as co-pilot on Sam Newton's crew. Other members of the crew included Donald M. Bird, Grant H. Benson, William F. Lewis, Edwin C. Ross, Gilbert D. Spaugh, Gordon E. Beach, Basile J. Crone, and Edward L. Sharpe. They flew first in "Cool Papa," and when that plane went down with another crew, were given "Time's A'Wastin'," our honor plane for July. Stiles finished 35 missions, winning the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross, and then transferred to flying fighters. On November 26, 1944, he was killed flying a P-51 on an escort mission to Hanover.

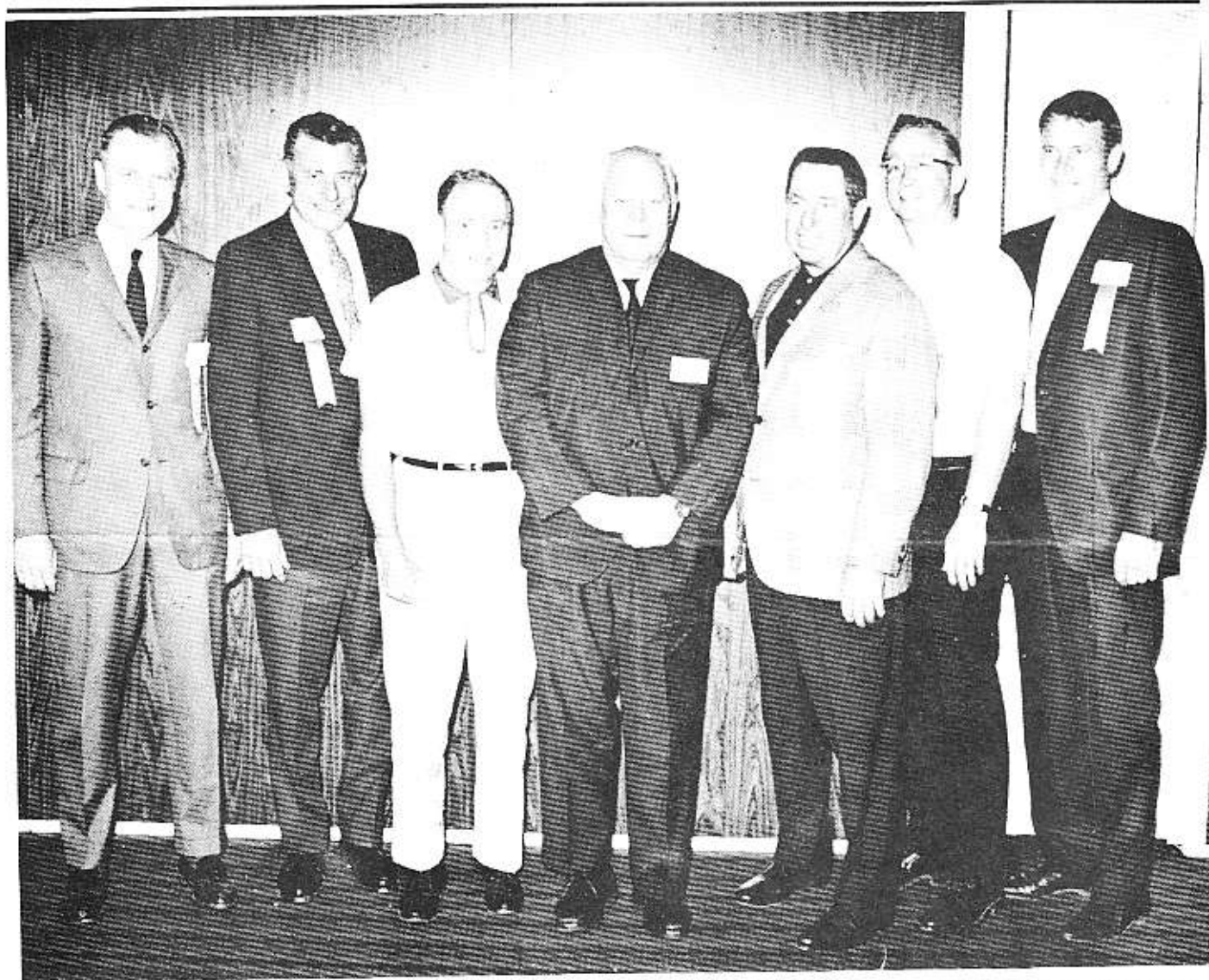
The Philadelphia Inquirer calls "Serenade" a "book

of terrific impact. Perhaps the best book to come out of World War II." Critic Brooks Atkinson says... "Like everybody else I have read a number of books about the war. But it seems to me I never read one that was more straightforward...I can well believe that his book is the absolute truth of life in the Air Force based in England."

For ex-91st-ers who cannot find copies at their local book stores the book can be ordered directly from the publishers. Address:

Cash Sales Department
Ballantine Books, Inc.
101 Fifth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10003

Cost of the book is 50 cents, plus ten cents additional for postage. Be sure to inclose payment with an order containing the book's title and the name and address of the sender.

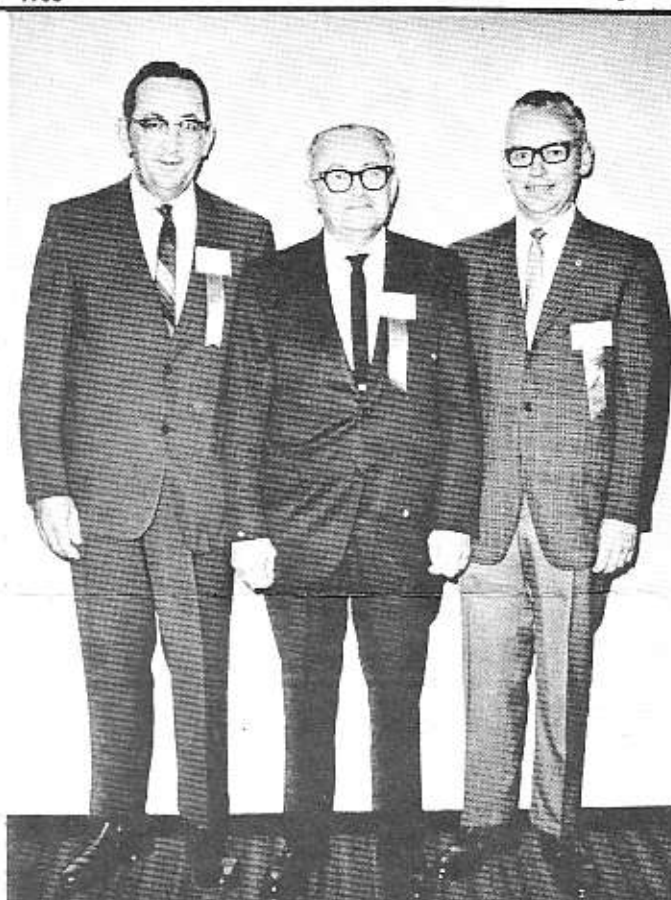


Headquarters squadron was represented by Col. I.J. Klette, Col. H.W. Terry, M/Sgt. Malcolm Coubrough,

Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray, Charlie Hudson, John Renskers, and Lt. Col. Haley Aycock.



The 441st Sub Depot was represented by James E. Thomas, Norman E. Wittman, Col. Frank S. Kanykowski and J.O. Bedwell.



Keeping things orderly at the reunion were these members from the 982 MP squadron: Robert L. Dorcy, Meyer L. London, and Robert H. Deuterman.



In the first get-together since they were special guests at assorted Stalags were members of the prisoner of war flight of the 91st. Front row, holding the Group welcome

sign are William Reynolds, Joe Rose, and Glenn Selter. Back row, Dave Cochran, William Hoots, William Corson, John Bell, and Herb Egender.



In June, Missouri 91 st-ers got together at the home of Joe Franke in Columbia for a Show-Me State Rally Round. Capping the evening of reminiscing and fellowship was dinner at Hathman House. Shown above around the dinner table are, 1 to r, M/Sgt. Del Kaech, Maj. James Humph-

rey, Ielene Kaech, Lu Duemler, Phyllis Humphrey, Alberta Franke, Henrietta Massie, Wilbur Duemler, Joe Franke. The vacant chair belongs to Gerald Massie, ex-Group photographer, who was making the shot, and like most photographers seldom getting in the picture himself.



Special guests of the 91 st at the reunion were former members of the 98th Bomb Group, who are in the process of organizing a memorial association of their own. Above are, kneeling, Ray Stulting, Robert Howard, Davis C. Cochran, Harry Baker, Ed Albus, Floyd Pleasant, Law-

rence L. Scholl. Back row, Royden Lebrecht, John A. Fornwalt, Norman R. Thomas, A.V. Freeman, Jr., Oscar C. Stone, Eldred Chance, Frank Pintabone, and Rudolph Schmeichel.

Let's Go Back To Bassingbourn

The Ragged Irregular

These news letters are published quarterly in October, January, April, and July, in an effort to keep alive the spirit of the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and to maintain the fellowship of those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121, Bassingbourne, England, 1942-1945.

Material for publication should be sent to the editor, Paul C. Burnett, Box 909, Auburn, Alabama 36830, not later than two weeks before the first day of the month of publication.

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Dues are \$3 per year, payable to the Division Treasurer. Get Your Buddies Back With Us. Send current addresses of former 91st-ers to the proper Division Secretary.

From The Editor's Desk...

For the second time the ol' 91st got together in a national reunion, and it was a dilly! Ex-members from every corner of the United States (and Canada, counting Haley Aycock) made the trek to Denver and has a whale of a time seeing old friends and making new ones, and taking in the Colorado sights. The visit to the Air Force Academy for an all-day conducted tour was a tremendous experience. The Western Division went all-out to make it the great success it was, and the Denver committee of Sam Newton, Jack Hobson, Col. Henry Terry, and Col. Herb Egender did a magnificent job of setting things up. Those of you who didn't make it really missed something!

The return to Bassingbourne for the 1969 reunion certainly represents the most ambitious undertaking to date by the 91st BG Memorial Association. By joining forces and chartering a jet, members will be able to take an overseas vacation at a fraction of the usual cost! Taking part in "Operation Return" means that ex-91st-ers can go to Europe for about the same cost as taking a domestic vacation. After all, transportation makes the big cost difference, and at the rate set it is too big a bargain to pass up!

One of the big side advantages of the national reunion is that the widespread publicity in magazines and newspapers all over the country always brings in a multitude of "lost" members. They see a reunion notice, learn of the 91st organization, and write in to report. Often they know of the whereabouts of several other missing 91st-ers, and the list of new members continues to grow by leaps and bounds. So much so that another directory supplement is on tap...If you have current addresses of ex-91st-ers that are not in our records please pass them along to division secretaries.

One thing that holds back many local rally rounds is the feeling that you need to get big groups together in an elaborate set-up to do a good job. But a few 91st-ers getting together for dinner and a few hours of fellowship can be terrific, as witness the Missouri Rally Round pictured elsewhere in this issue. So you flight leaders get busy, and round up the faithful in your area!

A recent but unexpected visitor to the Irregular Office was Robert H. "Bob" Bennett, of Fort Worth, Texas. On his way back from a trip to the east coast of Georgia he had stopped off in Atlanta to see John T. Hardin, his old pilot on "Mizpah." Since I-85 back to Texas passes within a couple of miles of my house Bob stopped by for several hours, the first time two old 322 squadron navigators had seen each other since July, 1943.

The best excuse I've run across for not making the Denver reunion was that of Bob Abb, who used to be bomb-aimer for George Birdsong on "Delta Rebel." He and Col. Tom Ashinburst, who made the Memphis reunion together, were all set for this one. At the last minute Abb, who is a sporting goods distributor for the Southwest, was invited to an expense-paid fishing safari into the far wilds of Alaska by one of the tackle manufacturers. Abb will be remembered for his half-ownership in the 323rd goat "Amitol." Among a group of old photos sent in recently was a picture of "Amitol" with the notation penciled on the back, "I don't know whose goat this is, but half of squadron supply is in his stomach!"

Goodies for next time...This is primarily a reunion issue of The Ragged Irregular, and the pictures of the squadrons, our activities, etc., take up most of our usual space reserved for regular features. In January we'll be back again, heavy on Bassingbourne features and personalities, plane-of-the-quarter, and, of course, all the current poop of Association going-ons.

(Continued on page 10)

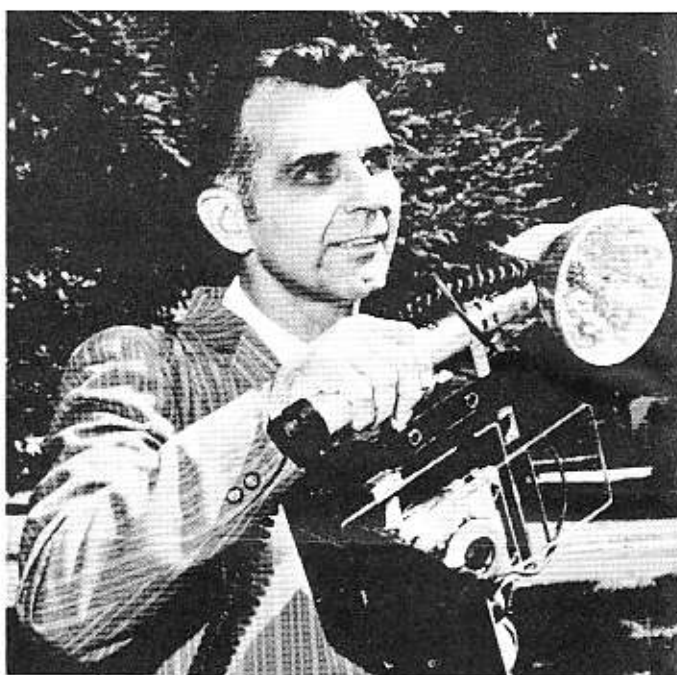
Editor Kenn C. Rust, of Aero Album magazine, has written for info about the 91st BG Memorial Association, and will have a write-up concerning our activities in the winter issue of his publication. He hopes to do a photo story of the group in one of the upcoming issues.

Handling photographic chores for the reunion was an original 91st-er, ex-radio operator Ernest J. Kiss, of Allendale, N.J.

Kiss, a 322 squadron member, joined the group at Walla Walla. He flew with the crew of James D. Baird's "Hell's Angels," finishing up his tour in the spring of 1943. Ernie is currently connected with Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Co.

Members desiring copies of their squadron photographs can order these directly from Kiss. Prices, including handling and mailing are: one print, \$2; three prints, \$5; four prints, \$7; five prints, \$9. Be sure to include your name and address, and the squadron numbers of the prints desired.

Kiss' address is: 128 W. Crescent Ave., Allendale, N.J. 07401.



Ernest J. Kiss



This plaque of the 91st and squadron insignia in beautiful color, a duplicate of the one donated to the Air Force Academy, can be obtained from the Western Division co-chairman, Maurice J. Herman. Maury has arranged for 8 x 10 full color prints, which can be obtained for

\$2.50, including postage and handling. Anyone wishing a print can contact him at 2821 Pruneridge Ave., Santa Clara, Calif. 95051. The one hanging on The Irregular office wall looks great!

Let's Go Back To Bassingbourn