



# The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 2 No. 4

July, 1969

## 91st Dedicates Plaque at Royston Park



### Commemorates 1963 Construction of Memorial Fountain

This 24-pound bronze plaque was presented to the people of Royston during "Operation Return" to be installed at the Memorial Fountain in Priory Gardens, commemorating the fact that the fountain was built in 1963 with funds contributed by interested 91st-ers and Royston citizens.

It was designed by Eastern Division co-chairman Paul Chryst. The Boeing Aircraft Company of Seattle, build-

ers of the B-17, contributed \$100 toward the \$300 cost of the memorial. At an unveiling of the plaque at Kennedy Airport before departure for England an additional \$91 was contributed by members of Operation Return. Other members wishing to contribute may send their gifts to the Eastern Division treasurer.

Final resting place for the plaque will be atop one of the four stone columns which form the moat wall around the fountain.

# 'Operation Return' Rated "Smash Hit"!

By STEVE BIRDSALL

It would have been very difficult for the return to Bassingbourn to have been a failure, but things looked grim for a while as Major General Wray, George Parks and others of the spearhead sweated out a series of trans-Atlantic telephone calls which successively cut into the seventeen or eighteen hours remaining before the group's scheduled arrival at Station 121. Delay in preparation of the plane and slowdown of air controllers held departure up, and the group did not arrive at Gatwick airport until 3 a.m. July 17.

It was a long night in London, but around 10:00 a.m. Tuesday the three buses arrived at RAF Bassingbourn, and a surprisingly fit two-hundred and forty people stepped out into the watery sunlight. Both the BBC and independent Anglia TV networks were standing by, and interviews with General Wray, Paul Fishburne, Paul Chryst, George Parks, Colonel Raymond Johnson and Rev. Joseph Mazaika were screened in Tuesday and Wednesday evening news programs.

Once things had been partially organized the group moved along to an auditorium, where the Royal Air Force officially welcomed the returning 91st, and Wing Commander C. A. Pike presented a plaque to General

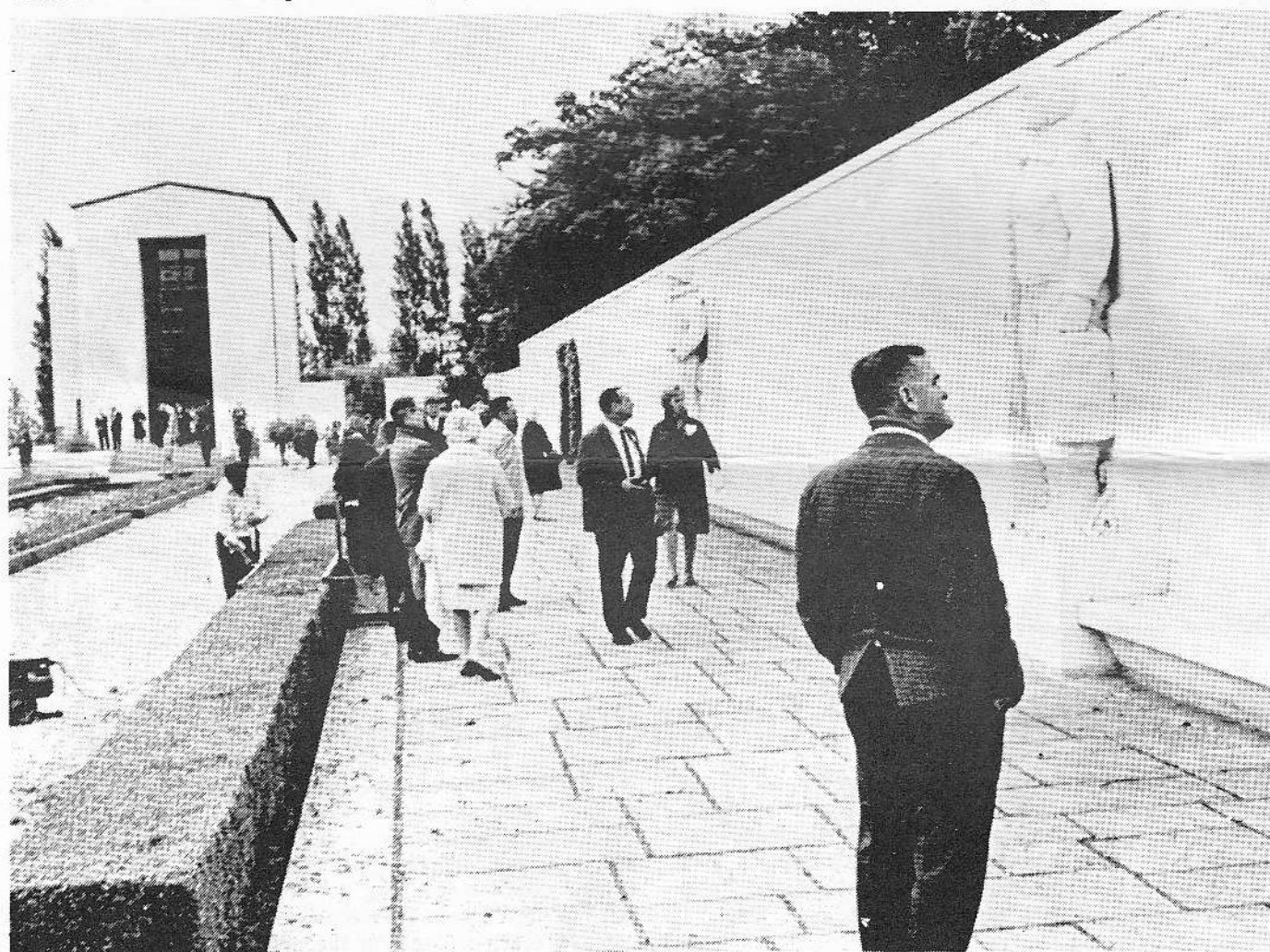
Wray on behalf of the East Anglian Aviation Society. After this ceremony there was time for another brief pint before the group moved to the three RAF messes. Another drink, then a very British lunch—roast beef with Yorkshire Pudding, and even a side plate of Spam for the adventurous.

Following coffee the buses again loaded up, and the 91st next debarked at the American Memorial Cemetery at Madingley. The chapel, the memorial wall, and the crosses, are set against incredibly green, subtly undulating hills, that are, in Rupert Brooke's words, "forever England." Now they are also forever a part of the United States.

After General Wray's short speech had been heard by those in the chapel, (where if you raise your head you can see a flight of golden B-17s), a wreath was laid, and it was time to go into Royston. General Wray was expecting tea and strumpets, but it turned out to be tea and cakes.

The Royston Town Hall was bulging as the last of the group moved in out of the drizzling rain. With a few words, General Wray presented the heavy brass plaque to the town, and Royston's Mayor Smith received it with

(continued on page 3)



91st-ers View Memorial Wall at Madingley Cemetery

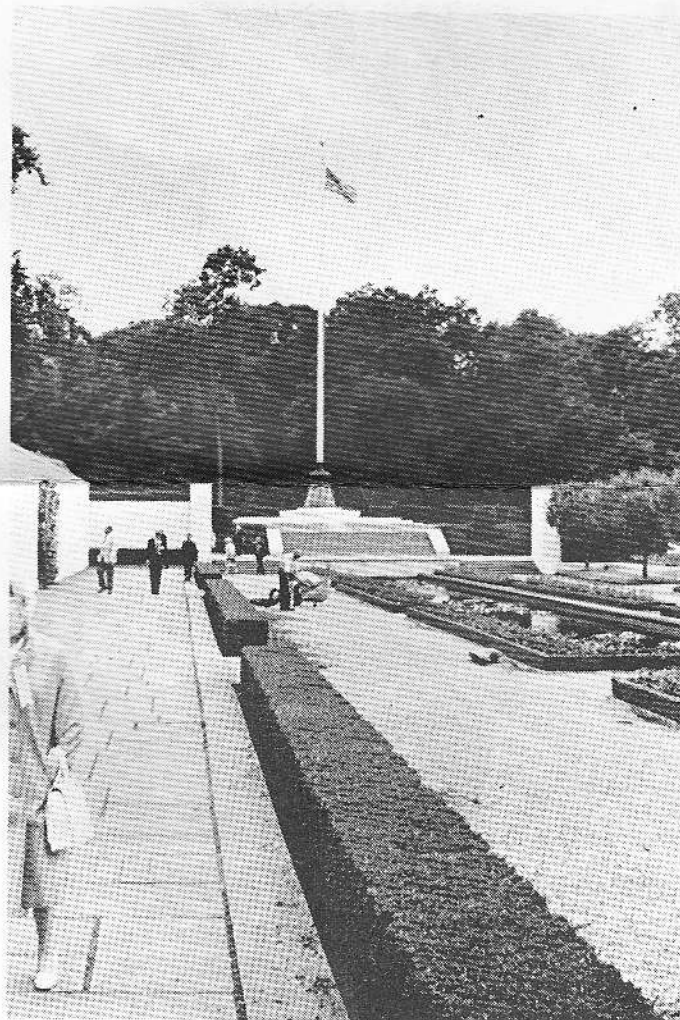


## 'Operation Return'...

a very moving acceptance speech. Although some of his words did not quite reach those of us at the far end of the hall, the sentiment was clear. Though at the time he had been only a boy, the Mayor recalled, he remembered those days vividly. "We would count you going out, and we would count you coming back, and there was always a difference." It was to those men who made up the difference that the plaque, soon to be placed on one of the cornerstones of the memorial fountain, was primarily dedicated.

The crowd again divided into groups of threes and fours, many crossing the road to the Priory Gardens and the fountain, or just reminiscing. Due to the alacrity of the Anglia TV network, and some equally speedy organizing by author Roger Freeman and D. J. Walker of the Urban District Council of Royston, it was possible for the group to proceed upstairs to the Town Hall theater and see themselves, and clips from "Memphis Belle," on television.

Two days later it was almost impossible to locate a 91ster in the city of London, but although the visit was brief, the memory must last. And though Royston might have often been awakened at ungodly hours by cdrtain people running up 1200-horsepower engines, I got the distinct impression that the 91st would be welcomed back any time.

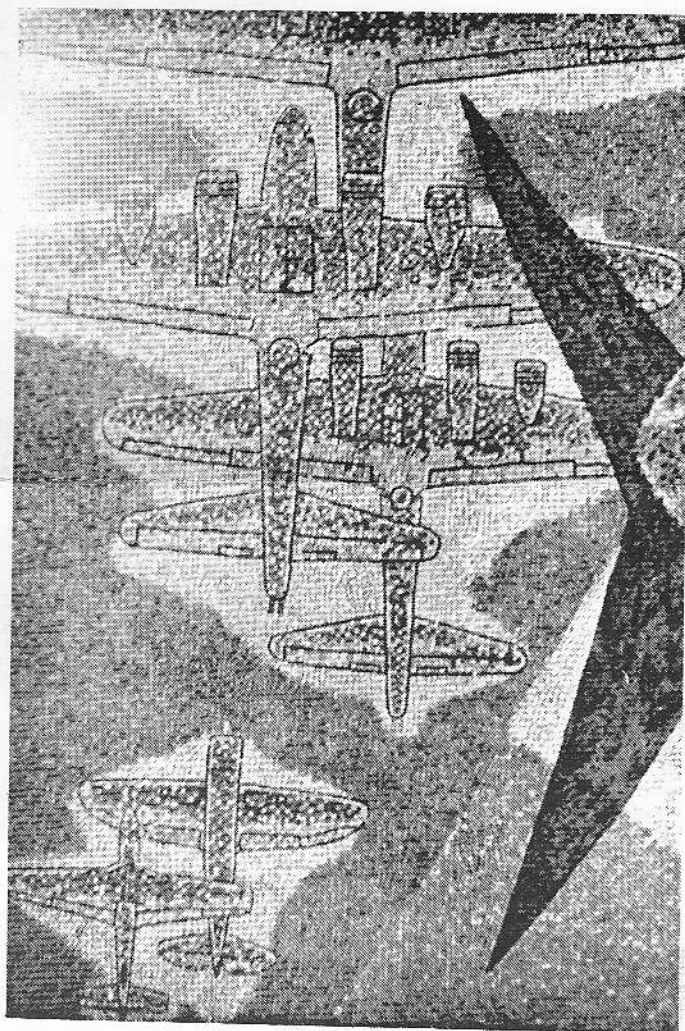


Another View of Chapel Grounds

## EAAS Reception

Ken Breckenridge was one of the half dozen or so on "Operation Return" able to take part in the reception given by the East Anglian Aviation Society at Bassingbourn College on June 25. A welcome note from him says: "It was a gathering of mostly the older people of the village to let us know that they had not forgotten us, with all our faults, etc. . . . They went all out to make us feel welcome, just as if we had only been gone a few weeks instead of 25 years. I doubt if they would have done more for President Nixon himself. And they all remembered someone whom they wished to know about, so it was really a question and answer night for all of us. Some of them found out about people who they were interested in, and I found out about some of them and their whereabouts and was able to look them up next day." Ken sent along the address of former 91st-er Harry Klein, who returned to England to live in 1950.

The East Anglian Aviation Society Ken refers to above is a recently formed group headquarter at the Village College, Bassingbourn. One of their objectives is research into the history of the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.A.F. units based in East Anglia during WWII. Wing Commander C. A. Pike is president, D. C. Crow, secretary, R. A. Beeton, assistant secretary, and Flt. Lt. J. Edwards, treasurer.



B-17 Mosaic in Madingley Chapel

## Poem Honors Bassingbourn Closing

This poem was written to commemorate the final closing of Bassingbourn. Copies were distributed to members of "Operation Return" at the luncheon in their honor. Issued on the occasion of the re-union visit to Royal Air Force, Bassingbourn, England, on the 17th June 1969.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION  
(BOMBER/STRIKE COMMAND)  
BASSINGBOURN, CAMBRIDGE  
28th MARCH 1938-19th MAY 1969

Across the skies of Bassingbourn,  
The Eagle will cease to fly.

The Crown and Laurel—and the Stag,  
Will fade and gently die.

The memories of their past exploits,  
Their deeds—and job well done,  
Will be engraved upon England's history,  
Like the going down of the sun.

Six years of bitter fighting,  
This Station indeed—played its part.  
In dazzling sunshine—inclement weather,  
They fought wearily—but strong at heart.

(continued on page 5)

## Here They Are - The First Stati



Front Row, l. to r.: Greenfelder, Ames, McGill, Geiger, K. W., Bryla, Jones, Benner, Dobranski, Dutra, Froncoso, Graham, Snyder, Staley, Bukovecky.

Second Row: Cooper, Gay, Thomas, McLucas, Lt. Ryel, Lt. Thompson, Capt. Gordon, Major Hughes, Capt. Burke, Capt. Schmidt, McArthur, Brust, Hamilton, Cana-

van, Russo, Daood, Briggs, R. W.

Third Row: Yancey, Kelly, Hodgin, Belovin, Peterman, Williams, Pettis, Gilhart, Kile, Lazarus, Finch, Wilkins, Malike, Rogers, Smith, W. P., Ligan, Novak, Cash.

Fourth Row: Hunter, Kunz, Bridier, Damschroder, Swank, Uskoski, Dickson, Pavoni, Racicot, Jarosinski,



With the aid of our American Ally,  
Bassingbourn richly achieved its fame.  
'Hell's Angels—Mizpah's—Yankee Doodle,  
These planes—Bassingbourn is proud to name.

Neath the Skies of Bassingbourn,  
Gallant Airmen—are in repose,  
The Crown and Laurel—and the Cross  
Are as one—with the English Rose.

Across the skies of Bassingbourn,  
The War clouds have passed away.  
The Canberra's and their pilots . . . are in flight,  
. . . This is the end of an historic day.

S. G. MATTHIEU

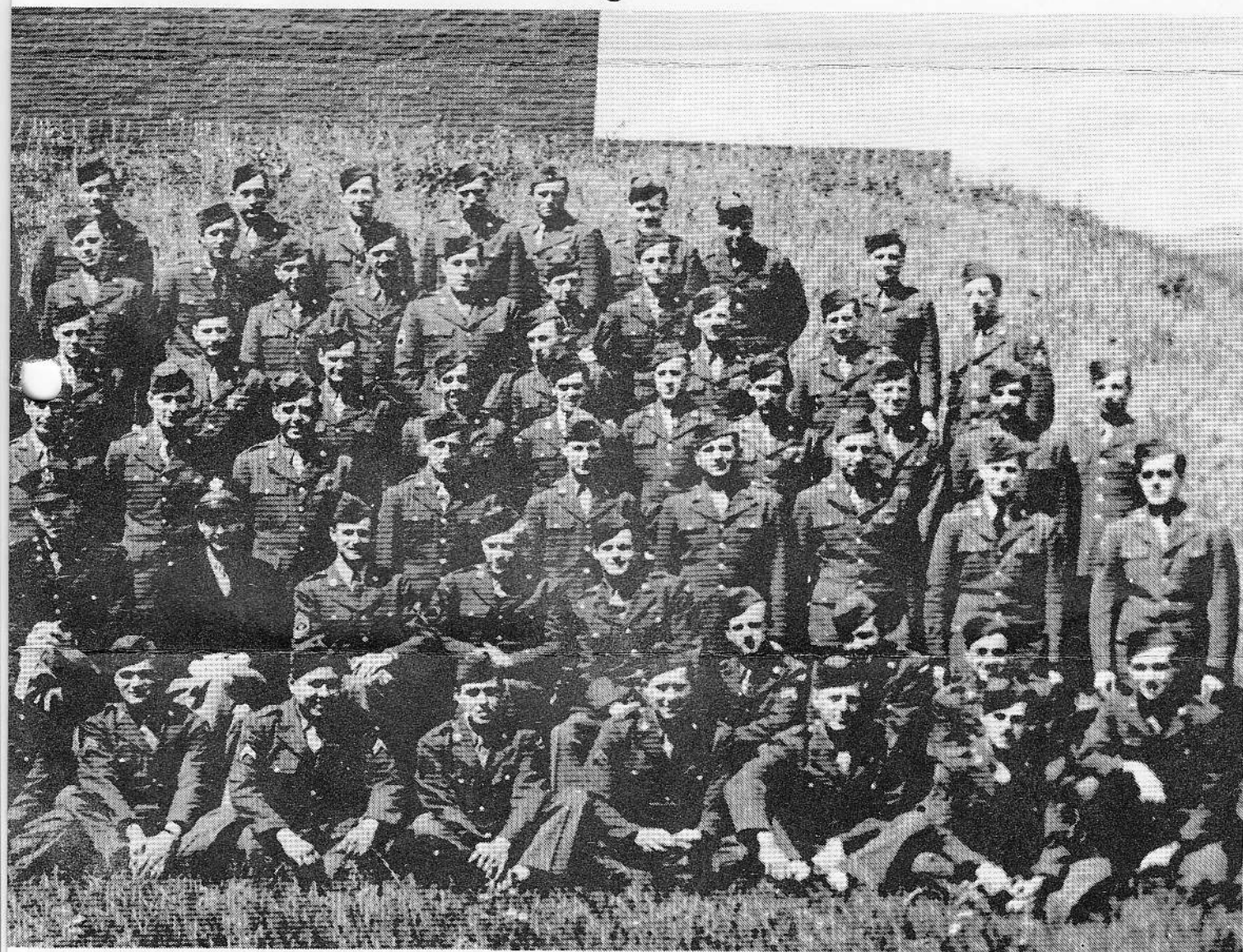
**If You Have Any Group Shots**

**Of Your Unit (with identification)**

**Please Send Them To The Editor**

**Box 909, Auburn, Alabama 36830**

## on Complement At Bassingbourn



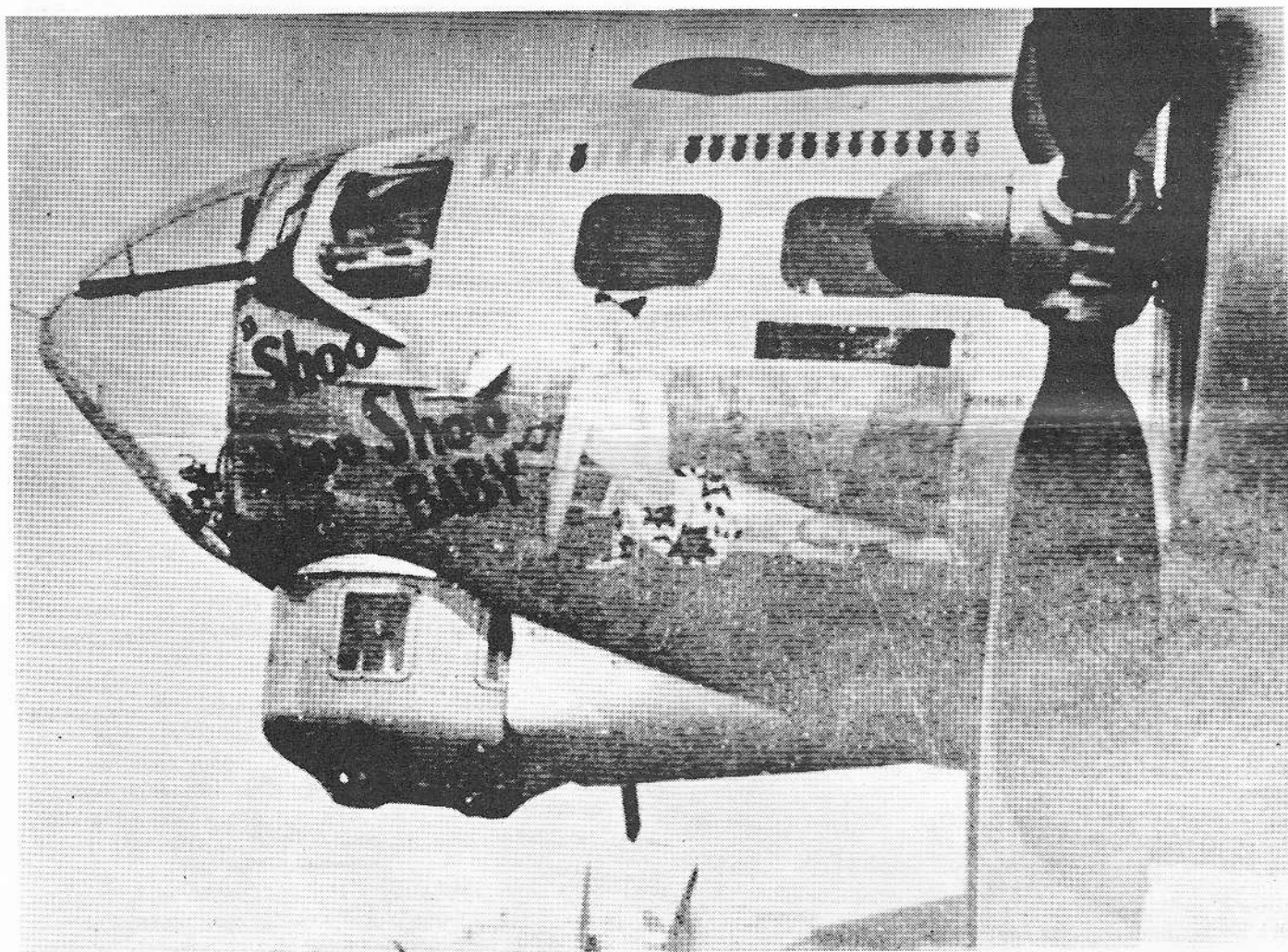
Ingmire, Chamberland, Smith, R. B., Johnson, A., Marsh,  
Doherty, Fleischer, Gilbert.

Fifth Row: Rose, Naville, Vincent, Moberg, Olenick,  
J. W., Pacyga, Dixon, Dawson, Breckenridge, Stearns,  
C. M., Wickes, Quinn, Boudreau, Bonnel, Berryman,  
Stephens, Cox, Kulis, Malcolm.

Sixth Row: Johnson, H., Hamamjian, Goings, Olenick,  
N. P., Yocuis, Collins, Everson, Boasen, Wagner, Cor-  
bin, Huntley, Jordan, Geiger, D. F., Christensen, J. S.,  
Knutson, Martin, A. J., Hussey, Brink, Jensky.

(Photo from Stuart McArthur)

# 'Shoo Shoo Baby' Homecoming Plans Under Way



By STEVE BIRDSALL

En route to Bassingbourn, Major General Wray side-tripped to Creil, outside Paris, to inspect the 91st's veteran B-17G, 42-32076, "Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby." Today she stands in a revetment amongst the trees, much as she would have stood at Bassingbourn exactly a quarter of a century ago, thoroughly stripped, but recognizable. Engineless, turretless, gunless, but still Fortress. A foot or more has to be removed from the extended nose, but with a little work the original airframe can be refurbished, and every "progressive" modification of the past twenty-five years soon forgotten.

At the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, research chief Royal Frey shared with me the latest news on the negotiations to acquire her. The French see no obstacles regarding her return to the States, on agreeable terms. Evidently, this usually means an airplane "swap" . . . for the museum's similarly acquired B-26 Marauder the price was a C-47. Frey hopes to get a better deal this time, as gunship and other Vietnam usage of the C-47 have made them difficult to come by.

There seems good reason to be optimistic, and Royal Frey hinted that once the airframe had been returned, the museum's current non-combat B-17 might yield certain

necessary equipment. As the present display aircraft carries chin turret, ball turret and a full set of GR-1820s, and as the Air Force Museum has an enthusiastic and thorough restoration staff led by Charlie Beghardt, (an old B-17 man), things look very good.

So, with a little luck there should be yet another memorable reunion in store for the 91st . . . at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, to unveil "Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby," the last combat B-17 to fly—not surprisingly a 91st Bomb Group aircraft.

## Swedish Writer Seeks Info...

A Swedish TV producer who had made a documentary film about the allied aircraft that landed in Sweden during WW II is now doing a book on the same subject. If any of you can pass along any information on the subject please write to:

Torbjorn Olausson  
Sveriges Radio  
Postadress 105 10  
Stockholm, Sweden

Don't Forget -- Send Your Dues Now!



## 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.

## Membership Data Forms

We need data forms on ALL former 91st-ers. If you haven't sent

one in, please do so today. If you need the data form,

contact your division secretary.

**NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE**

## From The Editor's Desk...

A week's visit by Australian writer Steve Birdsall and his lovely wife Sandra has been the highlight of 1969 at The Ragged Irregular headquarters. Steve had been with the 91st "Operation Return" in England and passed along a first-hand account of activities there. As you can see from the by-lines in this issue, Steve had to "sing for his supper" while visiting.

He is researching for a series of articles and a book on the 91st. While here he and the editor made a run over to Montgomery to borrow scrapbooks and records from Col. Frank Kamykowski, former C.O. of the 441st Sub Depot. You'll be seeing some pictures and stories of that group in upcoming issues of the R/I.

We're running behind the regular schedule for the R/I with this July issue to bring you an account of the 1969 reunion at Bassingbourne. To cover the event and to bring along a few pictures of activities there we've had to go three or four weeks past the usual deadline, but we'll be back again on time for the October issue, along with additional picture coverage of "Operation Return."

Please . . . Please . . . Please . . . Doesn't **SOME-BODY** have copies of the 323rd and 401st squadron orders for the overseas flight from Gander to Prestwick, Scotland. We need copies for the upcoming book "Wray's Ragged Irregulars."

Speaking of the book, steady progress is being made and publication should take place before the end of the year. If you want to be sure to get a copy from our first printing drop a note to the editor at Box 909, Auburn, Ala. 36830. Those who have already reserved a copy need not write again, as your order is on file.

West Coast co-chairman Phil Taylor, who had moved to the San Diego area some months ago has returned to the San Francisco area, so the old triumverate of Taylor, Maury Herman and George Parks will be able to get together regularly now to keep the Western Division flourishing.

Roger Freeman, the British aviation writer, has completed his book on the history of the Eighth Air Force, and "The Mighty Eighth" should be available from the publishers, Doubleday, very soon now. Roger has an upcoming article on the 91st Bomb Group in the magazine Air Pictorial.

The official history of the Royal Air Force at Bassingbourne has been published, and in its six chapters is one devoted to the stay of the 91st there in 1942-45. One comment in particular sums up the relationship between the 91st and the surrounding countryside: "They were missed for a variety of reasons by a variety of people; most suffered a genuine sense of loss at the parting of good friends."

We also have a note from the Dutch writer Ab. A. Jansen thanking those who contacted him following the notice in the April R/I. He had heard from Tony Gaeta, Howard Dunham, Orlo G. Natvig, and one of the crew members of Bomb Boogie.

# Log of Missions - The Fourth Installment

Here is the continuation of the mission log begun in the July, 1968 issue. The left-hand numbers represent completed missions; the next row represents the alerts, and then the date is shown, by day and month.

| Alert |     | 1944 |                   |           |      |      |       |                      |           |
|-------|-----|------|-------------------|-----------|------|------|-------|----------------------|-----------|
|       | 246 | 21-4 | Merseberg         | Recalled  | 296  | 19-6 | Crepy | Scrubbed             |           |
| 140.  | 247 | 22-4 | Hamm              | Completed | 182. | 297  | 20-6  | Hamburg              | Completed |
|       | 248 | 23-4 | Merseberg         | Cancelled | 183. | 298  | 21-6  | Berlin               | Completed |
| 141.  | 249 | 24-4 | Erding            | Completed | 184. | 299  | 22-6  | Maxingarbe           |           |
| 142.  | 250 | 25-4 | Meta/Frescaty     | Completed |      |      |       | Pont A Vendon        | Completed |
| 143.  | 251 | 26-4 | Brunswick         | Completed | 185. | 300  | 23-6  | Fleury               | Abt. Sort |
| 144.  | 252 | 27-4 | La Glacerie       | Completed | 186. | 301  | 24-6  | Distre               | Completed |
| 145.  | 253 | 28-4 | Avord A/D         | Completed | 187. | 302  | 25-6  | Toulouse             | Completed |
| 146.  | 254 | 29-4 | Berlin            | Completed |      | 303  | 26-6  | Munich               | Scrubbed  |
| 147.  | 255 | 30-4 | Iyons/Bron        | Completed | 188. | 304  | 28-6  | Anizy                | Completed |
| 148.  | 256 | 1-5  | Troyes            | Completed |      | 305  | 29-6  | Leipzig              | Recalled  |
|       | 257 | 4-5  | Berlin            | Recalled  | 189. | 306  | 4-7   | Tours                | Abt. Sort |
| 149.  | 258 | 6-5  | Sottevast         | Abt. Sort | 190. | 307  | 6-7   | Aire                 | Completed |
| 150.  | 259 | 7-5  | Berlin            | Completed | 191. | 308  | 7-7   | "A" Koleda           |           |
| 151.  | 260 | 8-5  | Berlin            | Completed |      |      |       | "B" Leipzig          | Completed |
| 152.  | 261 | 9-5  | St. Dizier        | Completed | 192. | 309  | 8-7   | Etaples              | Completed |
|       | 262 | 10-5 | Rotenburg         | Recalled  | 193. | 310  | 9-7   | "B" Crepicul         |           |
| 153.  | 263 | 11-5 | Konz Kartous      | Completed |      |      |       | "C" Fleury           | Abt. Sort |
| 154.  | 264 | 12-5 | Lutzkendorf       | Completed |      | 311  | 10-7  | "D" Cauchie D'Ecques |           |
| 155.  | 265 | 13-5 | Stralsund         | Completed |      |      |       | "E" Flers            | Scrubbed  |
|       | 266 | 15-5 | Orly              | Scrubbed  |      | 312  | 10-7  | "A" Cauchie D'Ecques |           |
|       | 267 | 16-5 | Orly              | Scrubbed  |      |      |       | "B" Erny/St Julien   | Scrubbed  |
|       | 268 | 17-5 | Rotenburg         | Scrubbed  | 194. | 313  | 11-7  | Munich               | Completed |
| 156.  | 269 | 19-5 | Berlin            | Completed | 195. | 314  | 12-7  | Munich               | Completed |
| 157.  | 270 | 20-5 | Villa Coublay     | Completed | 196. | 315  | 13-7  | Munich               | Completed |
| 158.  | 271 | 22-5 | Kiel              | Completed |      | 316  | 15-7  | Merseburg            | Cancelled |
| 159.  | 272 | 23-5 | Saarbrucken       | Completed | 197. | 317  | 16-7  | Augsburg             | Completed |
| 160.  | 273 | 24-5 | Berlin            | Completed | 198. | 318  | 18-7  | Peenemunde           | Completed |
| 161.  | 274 | 25-5 | Nancy/Essey       | Completed | 199. | 319  | 19-7  | Lechfeld             | Completed |
|       | 275 | 27-5 | Ludwigshaven      | Completed | 200. | 320  | 20-7  | Leipzig              | Completed |
| 162.  | 276 | 28-5 | Dessau            | Completed | 201. | 321  | 24-7  | N.W. St Lo           | Completed |
| 163.  | 277 | 29-5 | Posen             | Completed | 202. | 322  | 25-7  | N.W. St Lo           | Completed |
| 164.  | 278 | 30-5 | Dessau            | Completed |      | 323  | 27-7  | Munich               | Scrubbed  |
| 165.  | 279 | 31-5 | Mulhouse          | Abt. Sort | 203. | 324  | 28-7  | Merseburg Taucha     | Completed |
| 166.  | 280 | 2-6  | Boulogne          | Completed | 204. | 325  | 29-7  | Merseburg            | Completed |
| 167.  | 281 | 2-6  | Massy-Palaiseau   | Completed | 205. | 326  | 31-7  | Munich               | Completed |
| 168.  | 282 | 3-6  | Hardelot          | Completed | 206. | 327  | 1-8   | Chartres             | Completed |
| 169.  | 283 | 4-6  | Hardelot          | Completed |      | 328  | 2-8   | Lens                 | Scrubbed  |
| 170.  | 284 | 5-6  | Houlgate          | Completed | 207. | 329  | 3-8   | Mulhouse             |           |
| 171.  | 285 | 6-6  | La Riviera        | Completed |      |      |       | Toul/Croix           |           |
| 172.  | 286 | 7-6  | Kerlin-Bastard    | Completed |      |      |       | de Metz              | Completed |
| 173.  | 287 | 8-6  | Tours             | Completed | 208. | 330  | 4-8   | Peenemunde           | Completed |
| 174.  | 288 | 10-6 | Boulogne Area     | Completed | 209. | 331  | 5-8   | Nienburg             | Completed |
| 175.  | 289 | 11-6 | Beaumont Le Roger | Completed | 210. | 332  | 6-8   | Brandenburg          | Completed |
| 176.  | 290 | 12-6 | Cambrai/Niergnies | Completed | 211. | 333  | 7-8   | "B" Sens             |           |
| 177.  | 291 | 13-6 | Beaumont Sur Cise | Completed |      |      |       | "C" Baurron-         |           |
| 178.  | 292 | 15-6 | Bordeaux A/D      | Completed |      |      |       | Marlotte             | Completed |
| 179.  | 293 | 17-6 | Amiens            | Scrubbed  | 212. | 334  | 8-8   | S.E. of Bretteville  |           |
|       | 294 | 18-6 | Hamburg           | Completed |      |      |       | Sur Iaize            | Completed |
| 180.  | 295 | 19-6 | Bordeaux          | Completed | 213. | 335  | 9-8   | Elsenborn            | Completed |
| 181.  |     |      |                   |           | 214. | 336  | 11-8  | Brest                | Completed |