



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 4 No. 1

October, 1970

Super Rally Round Sets All-Time High

The Florida Super Rally Round of July 20-23 more than lived up to its designation of "Super," as previous Rally Round attendance records were decisively smashed and a number of historical "firsts" established.

For the first time a 91st Rally Round had an attendance topping the 100 mark—a total of 102 registered during the course of the 3-day affair.

For the first time a single group affair had THREE Life Members added to the rolls, one of whom was the first Associate Life Member and another who completed the first Father-Son life membership team.

There was even a first time "tie" for "the most distance travelled" award.

And for the first time a 91st Rally Round received color TV coverage, when Tampa Channel 13 did a color story on the affair.

All in all, the "mission" led by Col. Paul McDuffee and Howell Loper established a new high for area get-togethers.

Headquartered at the swank International Inn, the group made a tour of the unique Busch Gardens as special guests of the world famous attraction on Tuesday, July 21. That evening they enjoyed a showing of 91st films and slides, including pictures of "Operation Return" and other group reunions.

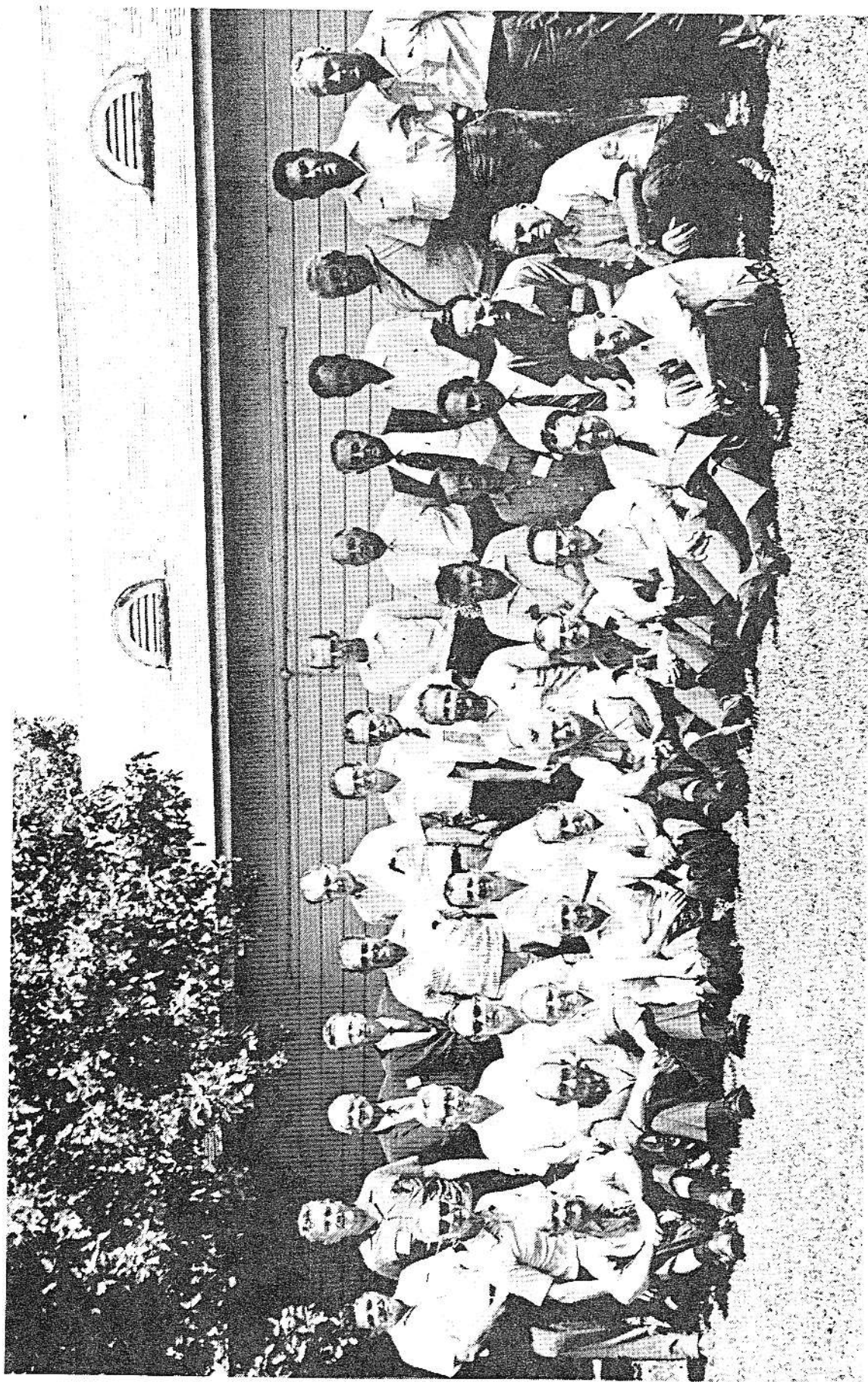
Wednesday the group visited McDill AFB, the original "home" of the 91st. After luncheon at the Officers Club they were given a guided tour of the base, highlighted by a flight line inspection of F-4 Phantom jets, the operational plane of the 15th TAC Fighter Wing.

As a permanent memento of the 91st's part in the his-

(continued on page 4)



Col. J.S. Storer, of the 15th TAC Fighter Wing, receives a 91st insignia plaque from Association president Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray. The plaque, to be hung in the McDill Officers Club, carries this notation: "McDill Field-18 May 1942. WW II 340 Combat Missions. 91st B.G. (H) Memorial Assoc. Inc. 22 July 1970."



Gathered before one of the few 1942 buildings still remaining at McDill are: Sitting, r to l, George Elliott, Ed Haller, Bob Lackey, Andy Manzano, Joe Giambrone, Lloyd Guzek, R.C. Linn, Vernon Dion, Robert "Dusty" Hoffman, John Ventura.

Second row, kneeling, John Fearheller, Ed Peacock, Arnold Brown, John Perrone, Owen Cooper, Earl Mc-

Cullough, C.O. Pierce, Al Hudson, Dick Weitzenfeld, Al Gordon.

Third Row, Ken Hadler, Howell Loper, Paul McDuffee, Paul Burnett, Sal Giambrone, Nick Terrefenko, Roy Fratz, James Daley, Charles Booth, Frank G. Donofrio, Frank Kamykowski, Paul Chryst, John Bishop, Harold Kirby, Ford Cowherd.



Here's a corner of the crowd in the VIP room at Busch Gardens, Florida's No. 1 tourist attraction. Gardens officials turned this exclusive meeting room over to the 91st as well as providing beer "on the house."



On the flight line at McDill the group examines the F-4 Phantom jets. Quite a change from the 91st B-17Es that once graced this strip!

Super Rally Round...

tory of McDill, a plaque of the squadron and group insignias was presented to the Base during Wednesday's luncheon.

The official Rally Round banquet was held in the Grand Ballroom of the International Inn Wednesday night with 58 attending.

Frank G. Donofrio of Memphis, an associate member of the Memorial Association became the first Associate Life Member through his contribution of \$100 for a Gold Membership Card.

Another associate member, John Fearheller, Jr., became a Life Member to form the only Father-Son Life Membership team in the Association. His father was one of the first 91st-ers to become a Gold Card holder, at the Willow Grove, Pa., Rally Round in November, 1969.

Also joining the growing ranks of the Life Members was former Group Executive officer, Col. Robert P. Hare, III. Oldtimers may recall that Col. Hare in Special Orders 200 dated 7 April 1943 was appointed STATION MATERNITY OFFICER and MID-WIFE. This was a position unique in 8th Air Force annals.

Charles D. Booth of Walpole, N.H., and M/Sgt. Arnold Brown of Belton, Texas tied for having come the greatest distance to attend the affair. Brown was awarded the prize on the toss of a coin.

Registrants at the Super Rally Round were:

Leonard Ball, Mr. and Mrs. John Bishop, Jan and John Jr.; Charles D. Booth; J. Broderick; Arnold Brown; Col. and Mrs. Paul D. Brown; Mr. and Mrs. Paul C. Burnett and Jay; Joseph Camelleri; Mr. and Mrs. James Carden; M/Sgt. William C. Cardwell; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Chryst and Robin; Mr. and Mrs. Les Claville; Mr. and Mrs. O. Glen Cooper, David and Douglas.

Mr. and Mrs. Ford Cowherd and Gail; Mr. and Mrs. James Daley; Vernon Dion; Frank G. Donofrio; Mr. and Mrs. George Elliott; Jack Fearheller and John, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Roy Fratz; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gerstemeier; Joseph Giambrone; Sal Giambrone; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Godwin; Anyan A. Gordon; Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Guzek, Tom and Lloyd, Jr.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Hadler and daughter; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Haller; Col. Robert P. Hare, III; Peter Hirth; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hoffman and Jim; Mr. and Mrs. Al Hudson; Col. and Mrs. Frank Kamykowski; Mr. and Mrs. Glen Kessler, Letha and Glen, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Keszler; Harold Kirby; Henry Kundig; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lackey, Alan and Jim.

James Lemley, Mr. and Mrs. Rice Linn, Mr. and Mrs. Howell Loper, Andrew Manzano; Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Maxwell; Mr. and Mrs. Earl McCullough; Mr. and Mrs. Paul McDuffee; Lawrence W. Murray; Edward Peacock; Donald Peck; Mr. and Mrs. John Perrone; C.O. Pierce; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Roper; Nick Terefenko; John Ventura; Mr. and Mrs. Dick Weitzenfeld; Maj. Gen. and Mrs. Stanley T. Wray.

'Mighty Eighth' Is Great Book

For anyone who was ever a part of the 8th Air Force, Roger Freeman's new book, "The Mighty Eighth," is an invaluable and indispensable publication, an encyclopedia of every aspect of the Eighth's history—the units, the men, the machines.

Freeman began researching the subject and collecting every scrap of information available on the 8th just after the war ended, and the 25 years of effort have produced a 250,000-word volume that far outdistances any other book on the subject.

The book traces the history of the 8th and details its operations against the Luftwaffe from July 1942 until V-E day. Hundreds of pictures of the planes and personnel are included. A great many 91st planes and men are pictured.

One section has color drawings showing the identification patterns and letters for every group and for every type of aircraft used, and a write-up of the aircraft camouflage and markings of every unit.

There is also a unit reference section, listing all the unit C.O.'s and a condensed history of the unit's achievements.

The book is splendidly indexed, and contains a wealth of information unavailable in the usual books on WW II aerial warfare.

Published by Doubleday and Company, Inc., of Garden City, N.Y., the work sells for \$14.95. At that price it is by all odds the biggest bargain in the field, for it contains dozens of times more solid, factual information than the typical \$6 or \$7 volume.

Don't miss it! The British historian has done a magnificent job!



Roger Freeman

Bassingbourn's 'Airborne' Infantry - Part 2

Community relations, so important anywhere, naturally were a bit ragged in the early days in a provincial area where there were three foreign airbases (Nuthamstead and Steeple Morden as well as Bassinbourn). The natives did not at first understand us or we their customs, and a bit of give and take on both sides was necessary before wholehearted mutual respect was accomplished. A few incidents to illustrate:

In November '42, the local population was feeling the impact of US troops—many of the natives were apprehensive, which to us was puzzling. The only cinema in Royston ran double features, one usually a "western" and the other a "gangster" film. Inquiries revealed that these Grade B movies had been the only education the local folk had had for years about the Average American. The appearance of our men smoking a good five-cent cigar did not detract from the cinema image.

Adjacent to the Royston cinema was a restaurant called the Green Plunge. Food was, of course, rationed, but it was possible to obtain a snack in the early evening. One 91st PFC, at loose ends for the moment, with the good five-cent cigar, was overheard trying to make an impression on a young woman and three teen-aged girls. Part of his line included the idea that his father was a Texas millionaire. The girls listened attentively, and the young woman encouraged his discourse. At the conclusion of the "tea" the girls got up, the young woman thanked him for his hospitality, and remarked that it was nice to meet the son of a Texas millionaire and left. The waitress then presented the Texas stalwart with the bill for his tea and four suppers.

About the middle of November, Royston Police Sergeant Capon, about 250 lbs. of typical provincial policeman, advised of complaints by local citizens that the licensee of a certain Public House was excluding local customers so that he could accommodate more Americans, whom the Sergeant alleged were being charged two and three times the correct price. The Brewery owning the Pub had been contacted, but were disinclined to take any action. ETO procedures for dealing with incidents like this had not yet been published, so we handled it on our own.

Two large MPs were put outside the entrance each evening to turn away all GI customers. On the fourth day the Sergeant phoned to say that the Brewers had assured him that the landlord would in the future charge only the correct price for beer and spirits. I felt we had set an example for tradespeople blatantly trying to take our men for mugs, as well as prevented bad feelings with more responsible members of the civilian community.

The several villages in our end of Cambridgeshire were policed by resident constables supervised by a Sergeant at Melbourn. Sgt. Dean called one day with official documents from County Police Headquarters at Cambridge charging a case of attempted rape by a gunner

upon a married woman, between 1400 and 1500 one afternoon while the husband was in the garden picking potatoes. Sounded a bit fishy, so we called upon the woman. After 40 minutes or so of rough questioning she became confused, broke down and admitted that it was not true. The local law then prosecuted her under some regulation for making false representations.

At midnight each night the 156th ran a collection service out of Royston for all strays in US uniform, bunking them in the 91st Guardhouse until 0400, when they were awakened with strong coffee, identified, and sent off to their respective units. Col. Elliott Roosevelt's Photo Mapping Group at Steeple Morden gave us enough trade to provide a Major (permanent night duty officer, I guess) to arrive each morning at 0445 with a truck, unless we called first to advise that no Steeple Morden troops were in custody.

Came January, '43, and the 2nd Bn 156th was due to reform as a combat unit and after brief reconditioning to get our legs in shape, ship to North Africa. Capt. Pauling's 982nd Avn MP Co. was due to relieve us but didn't arrive. At Col. Wray's request we delayed our departure three days until 16 January, before quietly slipping away in the middle of the night.

Not very exciting reading, but support and service duty rarely is. We tried to do our bit, and Col. Wray wrote our Battalion Commander on 20 Jan. 43 thanking him for the services we had preformed for the 91st.

I think each of us was satisfied that we had contributed something to the 91st and to the mission of the Army Air Forces in the ETO.

Florida 'Purple Heart' For Cooper

Owen G. Cooper of Baltimore is one 91st-er who is convinced that his 25 missions in the skies over Germany of the 1940s were not as dangerous as the lobby of a Florida motel in 1970!

Returning home from the Tampa Rally Round July 23 he walked into the middle of a hold-up of the Howard Johnson motel on I-75-U.S. 27 near Ocala, Fla., and was shot three times by one of the robbers.

Three men, one brandishing a pistol, had removed the money from the cash register and were attempting to force the manager to open the safe when Cooper walked into the lobby, unaware of what was taking place. As he entered, the gunman fired, striking him in the face. When he turned to flee he was shot twice more in the upper right shoulder.

Glenn has recovered from the shooting and is already planning to attend the 1972 national reunion in California, where he is no doubt hoping for a less "exciting" visit.

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...

By Paul C. Burnett

Box 909, Auburn, Ala. 36830

Attending a 91st get together is always a great experience, as everyone who has taken part in one will agree. I was especially reminded of this again at the Tampa Rally Round. It was really great to renew old friendships and to meet for the first time some 91st-ers who were with the group at a different time. Anyone who misses a chance to take part in one of these events is really missing something.

One of the most impressive things about the visit was the tremendous job of organizing and planning that Flight Leader Paul McDuffee and Howell Loper had done. It was fantastic.

George Park's adventure with the Mini-Rallies should inspire others to similar aims. It is the quality and not the quantity that counts, and nobody can out-do the 91st in the matter of quality.

Apparently we have at last "laid the ghost" on the story of the Phantom Fortress that Harold DeBolt and crew abandoned over Belgium, only to have it make a perfect belly landing in a farmer's field. We have been trying to find the name of the plane without success, though Australian writer Steve Birdsall finally tracked down the serial number in Air Force archives. A note from 91st-er Alfred Peters, 216 West Main St., Gowanda, N.Y. 14070, says this: "This plane was a brand new one. I was a ground crew member. Our old plane had been shot down and we got a brand new plane to replace it. We had no time to give it a name before it went on its first mission and did not return. Later, when the crew returned to England, I remember them telling about the plane being shot up and they put it on automatic pilot, and that the plane made a real good landing by itself. It was a 401st sqdn. plane, and I believe that either Renz or Pierce was the crew chief."

Upcoming in the January issue will be one of the most interesting and unusual stories we have run across in a long time—the return of Orlo Natvig and Norman Eater to Holland where their plane "Local Girl" was shot down, and finding the fellow who fished them from the sea. Dutch writer Ab Jansen escorted them on their stay in Holland.

Also upcoming is an account of the champion 91st plane "909," illustrated by a painting of the ship in action. The painting is by Texas artist Jerry Groh, who illustrated Steve Birdsall's book on the B-17.

(continued on page 8)

Idaho 'Mini-Rally Rounds' Highly Successful

While the headlines of the Ragged Irregular keep bringing news of record-breaking Rally Rounds, each "bigger and better," the original concept of a Rally Round envisioned any get-together of old 91st-ers to renew old friendships and share past experiences.

"Whenever three 91st-ers get together we have an official Rally Round," Maj. Gen. Wray declared when the Memorial Association was first getting under way.

Western Division secretary-treasurer George Parks demonstrated this again for us most effectively when he combined a vacation to Idaho to "see the old folks" with a couple of mini-Rally Rounds in Pocatello and Boise that were memorable affairs for all involved.

At Pocatello, George, Harold DeBolt (401st pilot), Denver Woodward (401st bombardier), "Buck" Bailey (322nd bombardier) and their wives had a get-together that included a steak dinner, a color slide show of "Operation Return" and past reunions, and story-swapping that continued "into the wee hours." "They all plan to at-



At Pocatello, Idaho, Harold DeBolt, 401st pilot; Buck Bailey, 322nd bombardier, and Denver Woodward, 401st bombardier, hold another mini-Rally with Sec.-Treas. Parks.



Here Curt Pyrah, a crew member of the 324th ship "Quitchurbitchin," and Dr. Paul Miner, ex-322nd flight surgeon, reminisce with M/Sgt. George Parks, Western Division secretary-treasurer, at the mini-Rally Round in Boise, Idaho.

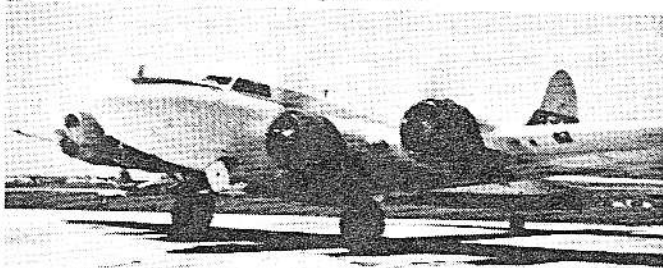
tend the 1972 national reunion in California," George reports.

At Boise the party included Mr. and Mrs. Curt Pyrah (324th radio operator), Dr. and Mrs. Paul Miner (322 flight surgeon) and the Parks. After another fine dinner and slide show the reminiscing went on "until all hours," Curt and George made a two-man expedition to Boise airport to inspect some still-flying B-17Gs used for forest fire control.

"The sound of those engines running up and the smell of the exhausts really brought out the old goose bumps," according to George.

Also at stops along the way in Utah George located "lost" 91st-ers Neil C. Jorgenson, William H. Golightly, and Glenn L. Jensen.

So you other 91st-ers take note! It doesn't take a crowd to make a Rally Round—two or three old buddies sharing 91st memories can have a great one!



At Boise, where the 91st picked up new planes on the way to combat in 1942, a number of B-17s are still flying, bombing forest fires with slurry. Here is one being pre-flighted prior to a mission.



Unable to resist temptation, Curt Pyrah (l) and George Parks (r) examine a fire-fighter B17-G as a guest of the pilot, George T. Burnett (c).

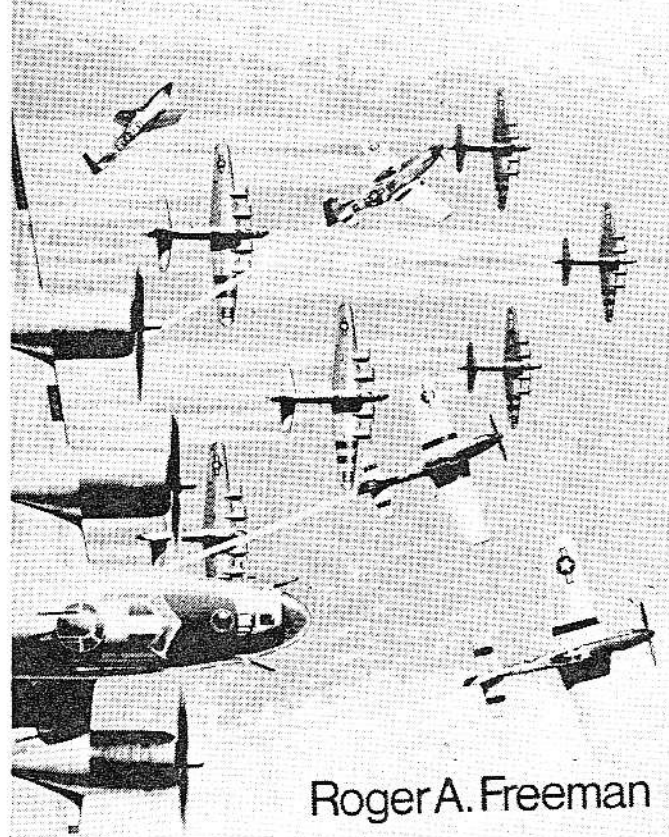
From The Editor's Desk...

Noticed on the September 10 Associated Press wire a story about Sheriff R.W. Weitzenfeld of Bradenton, Fla., capturing a man wanted for armed robbery and recovering \$22,500 in stolen jewels and a stolen Lincoln Continental. This is the same Dick Weitzenfeld of the 91st who flew a B-17 back to Basingbourn from Germany with a horizontal stabilizer completely gone, wiped out by bombs falling from an overhead B-17. A picture of the plane is shown in Roger Freeman's "The Mighty Eighth." Dick and his lovely wife Phyllis attended the Tampa Rally Round in July.

Many 91st-ers had been in several units before joining our old group, but few can match the transfer career of M/Sgt. R. R. Atterbury 10309 N.E. 68th, Kirkland, Wash. 98033. Stationed at McCord Field, Wash., in 1942, he was transferred to the 92nd B.G. at McDill, Fla., then to the 95th B.G., then to the 29th B.G., and finally to the 91st. The most unusual thing is that Ray never left his barracks or bunk area during the whole series of moves—it was all a series of paper transfers. Ray was with the 401st doing bobmsight maintenance and armament work.

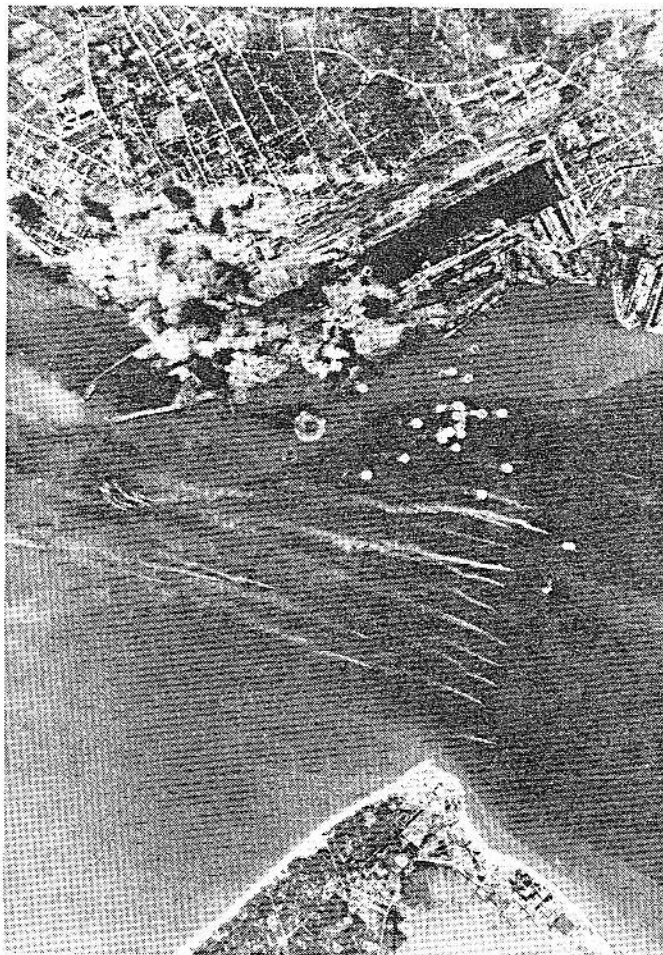
The Mighty Eighth

A History of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force



Roger A. Freeman

Members wanting photos of the group shot or other pictures made during the Tampa Rally Round should contact Ken Hadler, 117 N. Oxalis Drive, Orlando, Fla. 32807. He can furnish 8 x 10s for \$1.50; 5 x 7s at \$1.25. Ken really did a terrific job of providing photo coverage of the event, and he has many, many shots we didn't have room to print.



This innocent looking spot gave the 91st, especially during its early days, some of the roughest moments of the war. On Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 23, 1942, the Group lost two squadron C.O.'s here. Of 5 planes from the 324th making the raid, 4 went down over the target. This little beauty is the St. Nazaire sub pen area.

LOOK!

A thousand of you 91st-ers have stories to share.

Don't be so shy - send them along to the editor.

They sure make our job easier.

(and better)