



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 4 No. 4

July, 1971

New England Rally Round Set July 23-24

A big "Weak" End Rally Round at West Haven, Conn., has been scheduled for Friday and Saturday, July 23-24, at the West Haven Motor Inn. The mission is under the direction of Flight Leader John Perrone, who promises to show 91st-ers what real New England hospitality can be. Perrone, who flew with the 91st as an engineer, is now the West Haven City Clerk.

A Friday night Mixer Party will get the activities under way. On Saturday afternoon there will be a special assembly for the men to reminisce and swap stories while the ladies attend a special flower show.

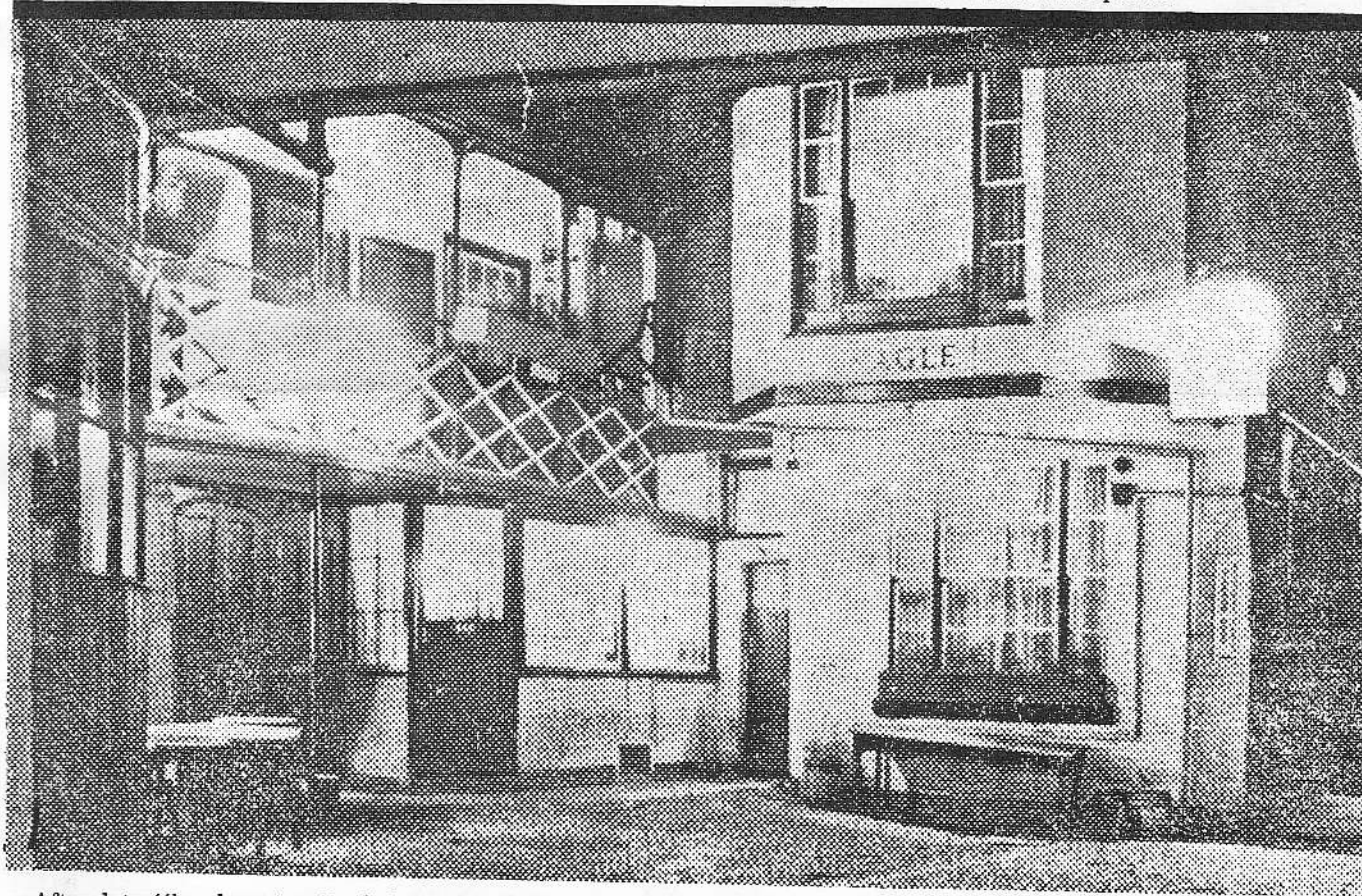
At 6:30 p.m. Saturday members will attend a cocktail hour in the Lancelot Room, followed by a Rally Round dinner of prime ribs of beef or baked stuffed shrimp at 7:30 in the Motor Inn Penthouse. After dinner there will

be dancing to Glen Miller tunes.

Also on the program will be films of the Basingbourne, MacDill, Denver, and Memphis Reunions. Members are urged to bring along photo albums and scrapbooks for "show and tell."

91st-ers from as far away as Michigan and Tennessee have indicated that they will attend, and many other members from outside the New England area are expected to join the group.

The West Haven Motor Inn is reached by taking Exit 42 of the Connecticut Turnpike at Saw Mill Road. Members driving in to West Haven can take I-91, I-95, Merritt or Wilbur Cross Parkways. Flying in, use the Hartford-Springfield or New Haven Airports.



After duty "headquarters" of the 91st was unofficially the Eagle Pub, a part of the Eagle Inn, Cambridge's last "coaching inn." This picture, made in 1970, shows that the old friend is still there waiting for visiting

91st-ers. The Evan Zillmers, who spent May in Cambridge, report that the wartime candle writings are still on the Eagle's ceilings. They also report that the "Baron of Beef" still flourishes.

'Shoo Shoo Baby' Is Coming Home - At Long Last!

After several years of determined work on the part of concerned friends, the old 91st combat B-17 "Shoo Shoo Baby" is finally headed for a berth at the Air Force Museum in Dayton from her recent home at Creil airport in France.

Royal D. Frey, Chief of the Research Division of the Air Force Museum, has informed The Ragged Irregular that the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has notified them that "Shoo Shoo Baby" was at last being turned over to the USAF museum.

"Now we have to begin working on arrangements to dismantle, pack and crate, and move it to W-PAFB. This will require some time," Mr. Frey pointed out.

The plane began life with the 91st under pilot Paul McDuffee, who turned it over to Bob Guenther after his tour was completed.

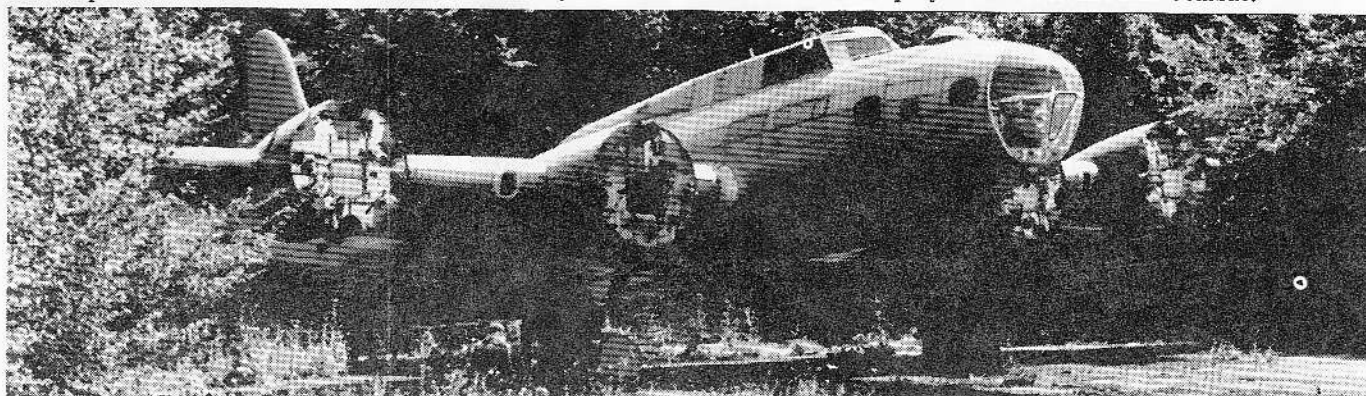
The plane forcedlanded in Sweden after the May 29, 1944

Posen raid. She was given to Sweden, where she was modified into a transport by SAAB. As a transport she later served also with Danish Air Lines and the Royal Danish Air Force.

She was bought by the Institute Geographique National in France in 1954, and served the group for a number of years. She has not been flown since 1961.

Steve Birdsall, the Australian air historian, tracked her down after years of diligent detective work. He brought the plane to the attention of the 91st B.G. Memorial Association and initiated efforts to save her from the scrap heap. As Birdsall points out, this veteran was the last combat B-17 to fly, and deserves a better fate.

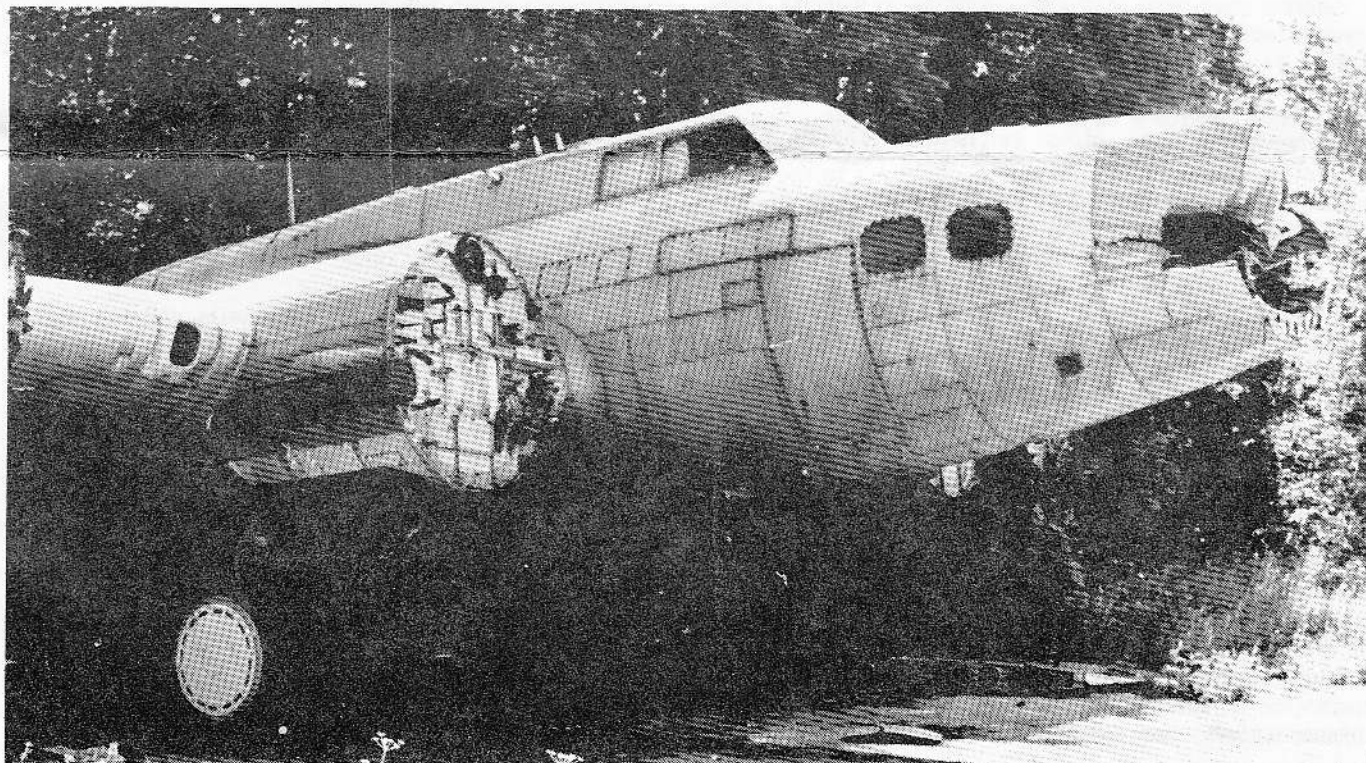
The Air Force Museum plans a complete restoration and permanent enshrinement in their new quarters. The B-17 now on display was never used in combat.



A "parking lot" has proven more dangerous to the veteran 91st plane "Shoo Shoo Baby" (or Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby," depending upon when you knew her) than did the flak-filled skies of Germany during WW II. Above, she is

shown in June, 1970, parked at the airfield at Criel, France.

Below is a picture taken in September, after injuries reportedly caused by a taxiing aircraft.



Life At Stalag Luft 1 - It Wasn't 'Hogan's Heroes'

By Frank S. Bolen (322nd Sqdn.)

Editor's Note: Frank S. Bolen was a bombardier with the 322nd squadron in 1944. He flew in "Chow Hound" and "The New Roxy." He had made 15 missions when he was shot down while bombing the I.G. Farben Chemical Plant at Ludwigshafen, Germany, on Sept. 9, 1944. Bolen was captured on Sept. 14 and held in Stalag Luft I, Barth, Germany, North Compound II. He was released May 15, 1945.

The following event took place in the Frankfort railway terminal during my transfer from the airfield where I had been held overnight. A guard, who was a German about 55 years old, had been assigned to take me to the Oberusel interrogation center about 15 miles out of Frankfort. We had boarded a small farm to market or commuter train at the airfield and made the trip of 40 miles to Frankfort.

While in the railway terminal the air raid sirens sounded. We then went below to an underground shelter. There we met a Nazi storm trooper who had two English airmen with him as prisoners. After the raid, as we returned to the station, the black shirted Nazi did his best to convince my guard that I should be turned over to him. I was much afraid of this, but was greatly relieved when my guard flatly and emphatically told the storm trooper that he would not release me until his mission was completed. Knowing the reputation of avid Nazis, I was afraid that neither I nor the Englishmen would ever reach our destination. We did not see them again after that.

In the Oberusel interrogation center I stayed 3 days, was questioned repeatedly but refused to give anything but my name, rank and serial number. Various psychological subterfuges were used but no brutality. I was told later by other captive Americans that had I been wounded nothing would have been done to relieve pain until certain information had been given.

Another train trip took a group of us to Wetzlar, Germany, where we were processed and assigned—officers to different camps from enlisted. About a hundred American officers were in my group and we were put on board another train and for 5 days and nights 10 of us crammed into a train car compartment. At all times 2 of us had to lie in the baggage racks so all 10 could get in the compartment. We underwent 2 air raids while standing in railroad yards. Our guards took our belts and shoes, locked the train doors, and left us until the raids were over.

Finally we arrived at Barth on the Baltic, the location of Stalag Luft 1. We were escorted from the train to the camp, which was about a mile and a half from where we debarked, by our German guards and their trained police dogs who were also our guards. We were processed, given an issue of clothing and bedding, which was one blanket, one sheet and a pillow case. I was assigned to North II compound, Barracks 3, Room 13. In our room were 20 American flying officers. We were from both England and the 5th Air Force in Italy. We slept on bunks 3 tiers high. The bunks were 3 tiered so that we would have room left for our dining table. In one corner of the room was a small cook stove which also had to serve another room of 20 additional men.

Each barracks was organized. There was a barracks commander and vice-commander. Each room had a room commander who was selected by the occupants of that



Here is a "kitchen" where the Kreigies prepared their meals—one setup such as this for each two rooms, serving 40 men.

room. At all times during the day we pulled duty which we called "Goon Guard." That is, we had a roster of all the men in the barracks and for a period of one day an American was stationed at each end of the barracks inside the door. His duty was to watch for approaching Germans and then alert the barracks in a loud voice saying, "Goon up." This was a signal to hide any contraband articles or information that might be out. Strangely enough, the Germans allowed us this type of surveillance.

Each room sported a name on the door, after the fashion of the planes we had flown. Our room was Sack Shack. Others were Odor Pool, Les Miserables, Klim Inn, Chez Spam, Sleepy Hollow, Kregie Haven, Rumor Hall, Flop Inn, Clipped Wings, Ye Old Timers, Offensive Manor, Casa Manana, Club Saurkraut, and Come On Ike!

In our room we divided ourselves into teams of 2 for the duty roster. One team of 2 did the cooking for a week while another team of 2 did KP for a week at a time. Included in KP duties were, of course, sweeping out the room and our end of the hall in the barracks. Other duties consisted mainly of things we chose to do ourselves such as washing our clothes, taking straw mattresses outdoors, pulling it apart or fluffing it up and putting it back into the mattress cover and of course washing the bed clothes.

The majority of our kitchen utensils and the plates from which we ate were made by us. We made them from 1 lb. powdered milk cans, which were about the size of a 1 lb. coffee can. We took out the top and the bottom, opened it down the seam on the side, put these together in a V crimp, and formed whatever vessel we needed. Some of us were pretty good at making them really water tight.

Since I always liked a crease in my trousers, I fashioned a flat iron to do my pressing. I took a brick, shaped the front end of it, and joined a wooden handle to this. The iron worked so well it was usually in demand by other rooms in the barracks, so we kept it sitting on the back of the stove to keep it hot.

Sports were another activity that the Germans allowed us to engage in. We had a softball league in the compound

as well as volleyball and basketball teams. We also worked out on the bars for exercise.

Our daily routine began at 8 a.m. when the barrack doors were unlocked by the Germans and we formed in the quadrangle for roll call. We stood at roll call until the Germans had completely satisfied themselves that no one was missing. Sometimes this would take 10 to 15 minutes or as long as an hour. After roll call we returned to our barracks and prepared breakfast. It consisted of two pieces of Kreigie bread, which was black, heavy, and tasteless, but nourishing, oleo and/or jelly if Red Cross parcels were available. This was served with a cup of ersatz coffee. After the KP's completed their duties (this had to be done on the dining table) we were then free to play bridge, which we enjoyed, cribbage or other card games or any other activity we may wish to engage in until lunch time.

The quality of lunch held at noon depended on the Red Cross parcels. The Red Cross parcels contained the following: 5 packages of cigarettes, 2 bars of soap, 2 bars chocolate "D" ration, 1 six oz. can of jam, 1 twelve oz. can Spam, 1 one pound can Klim powdered milk, 1 two oz. can soluble coffee, 1 one pound box of prunes, 1 one pound box of raisins, 1 eight oz. can cheddar cheese, 1 one pound can oleo, 1 twelve oz. can of meat and vegetables, 1 six oz. can pate or 1 eight oz. can peanut butter, 1 eight oz. can of salmon or 2 flat tins of sardines, 12 Vitamin C pills, 1 box of 12 "C" ration crackers, 1 box of 50 lumps of sugar. Sometimes the parcels had as alternates 1 eight oz. can of cocoa, a 12 oz. can of corned beef, or a 12 oz. box of ready mixed cereal.

For Christmas we got a special Red Cross parcel that contained this: 1 can "K" ration cheese, 1 can deviled ham, 1 can pressed turkey, 2 boxes 12 each bouillon cubes, 1 box dates, 1 can plum pudding, 1 can mixed candies, 3 packages of chewing gum, 5 packages of cigarettes, 1 game (chess, etc.), 1 washcloth, 1 can pure butter, 1 can honey, 1 package tea, 1 can cherries, 1 can jam, 1 can mixed nuts, 2 fruit bars, 1 can Vienna sausages, 1 pipe and 1 package of tobacco, 1 deck of cards and 2 pictures.

Though they were irregularly distributed it was the Red Cross parcels that kept us alive, as the German rations provided only from 1100-1500 calories a day. Our issue rations broke down this way: Meat, 4 oz. per man per week; Margarine, 4 1/2 oz. per man per week; barley, 1 1/3 oz. per man per week; sugar, 4 1/2 oz. per man per week; potatoes, (most often turnips, the potatoes were a

real luxury) 16 oz. per man per day; bread, 8 1/3 oz. per man per day; dried vegetables, 4 1/2 oz. per man per week; cheese, 2/3 oz. per man per week; Soup mix, 1 1/2 oz. per man per week, and ersatz coffee, 1 oz. per man per week.

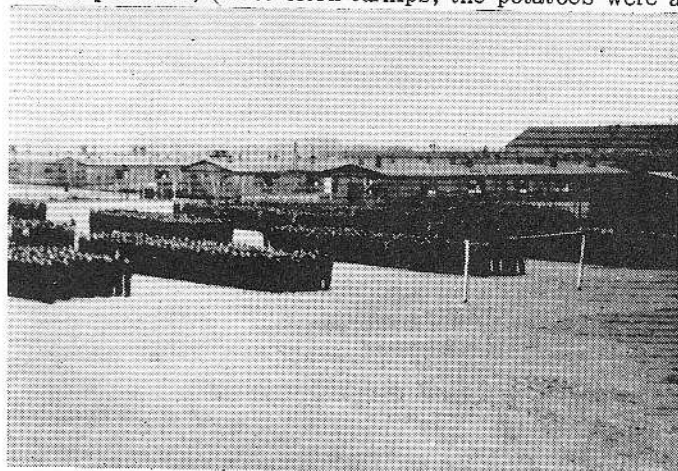


It was Red Cross parcels that kept the prisoners going. The basic German ration did not meet the caloric needs to keep the men healthy.

As you can imagine food occupied much of our thoughts, and we worked out many unusual recipes trying to get variety to the monotonous menu and the tasteless rations. One recipe I recall for chocolate pie (for 20 men) ran like this: 1 box prunes, 1/3 Klim can of sugar, 1/3 can Klim (milk), 1 1/2 boxes crackers (crust), 4 tablespoons cocoa, 1/2 bowl barley, 1 Klim can Kreigie bread (boiled) 1/3 can oleo. Delicious! Pancakes we made from 1 bowl of cooked oats, 1/2 can Klim, 2 boxes crackers, 1/2 can oleo, 1 teaspoon salt and 2 teaspoons sugar.

After lunch we turned out and walked the compound, or as we put it "measured the barb wire." Our path was a well beaten one next to the warning wire around the compound. Visits to other barracks in the compound were permitted, but we could not go outside the compound. One activity we enjoyed was the moulding of wings and insignias that said POW. The lead that we used to mould these was obtained from the bottom of corn beef cans from food parcels, which was used to seal the can. As you can see, it took some time to save up enough lead to mould a set of wings. On rare occasions we had a movie shown in the mess hall. Two were Deanna Durbin in "Springtime Parade" and "Andy Hardy's Double Life." The Kriegies of North 1 put on the play "The Man Who Came To Dinner" and did a great job of it.

When the days were short, the barracks doors were locked at 5 in the afternoon, on longer days they stayed open till 6. After we were locked in each night, German guards let their police dogs patrol the inside of the compound. One of the favorite tricks of the Germans was a suspicion that one of us had escaped possibly during the night, or before the doors were shut. This brought on an identity parade which could take place anytime during the night, I recall one at 2 a.m. The Germans would come in, turn on all the lights, have us stand by our beds and while one shone a light in our faces, the other pulled our identification picture from a file he carried and compared it to our faces.



Morning roll call.

START PLANNING NOW FOR REUNION '72

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The Ragged Irregular



Morning wash-up time.

Another suspicion the Germans had was that we had a radio or contraband newspapers. Deciding this, the Germans would fling open the doors and freely but thoroughly search the barracks, interrogating as they searched. It should be said at this point that we did pass a little news sheet, called the Red Star, around quite regularly. This was done behind the German's back, and it contained unsalted news of the war's progress. The Red Star was typewritten, usually one sheet front and back, and I never learned its source or author.

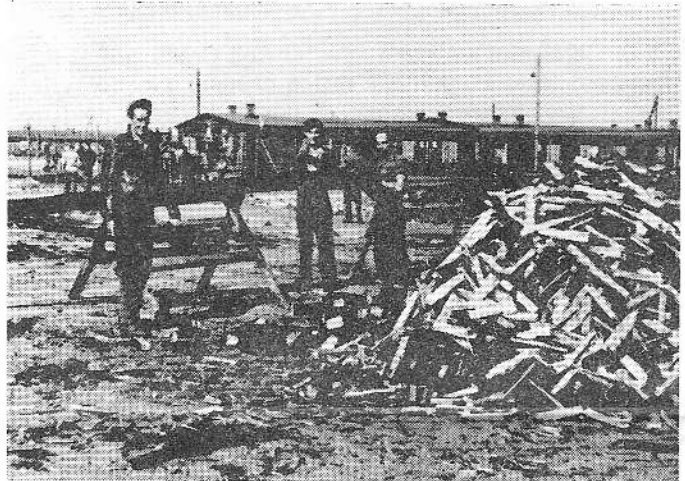
The bathroom facilities of a German Prison camp left much to be desired. There were two communal latrines in the compound, these were shared by 2,500 men. We bathed superficially as there was no shower here, washed our clothes and shaved. The lavatory was round with water coming from 6 faucets in the center. Each latrine had 10 commodes. These were in constant use during the day. At night we used a small makeshift bathroom in the end of each barrack. Once a week we were given a shower in the camp shower room. We were taken in parties of 50 each, to a large shower room. Here we stripped and stood expectantly under the overhead nozzle. The water was turned on for 15 seconds, then turned off while we soaped thoroughly (Red Cross soap), the water was then turned on again for 20 to 25 seconds. Then the weekly shower was complete.



The prisoners raised "victory" gardens to supplement the diet.

In order to keep the Germans interested we would at roll call sometimes fail to answer a name. This would cause them some great confusion until they were able to locate the silent voice.

In one of the rooms there was a removable plank in the floor. On one occasion we heard the guard's police dog underneath the plank. Having some hot water handy on the stove, the animal received the first hot bath he had had in months. He did not appreciate this gesture nor did his master who tore into the barracks and attempted to locate the villain. He failed to do this. When the Germans would decide that we had been particularly uncooperative or just plain ornery, our punishment was that only bread and water would enter the compound for a week. This somewhat strained our Red Cross food supply but we managed. In addition the Krauts would let no mail come in nor leave during these periods of discipline. Mail and packages from the states were received on an infrequent schedule, usually about once a month. Mail, however, did arrive more often than that, but there was no set mail call. During my 10 months stay I received two postcards, one letter, no packages—there were 4 boxes returned to my family and arrived after I came home. My first child was born the week after I was shot down, September 9, 1944. I learned of this blessed event in February, 1945. This came in my first communication from home. We wrote 2 letters and 3 postcards a month, my wife got 3.



As to escapes from the camp, it was necessary to go through a rather complicated procedure. If you had a plan to escape, you must appear before the compound escape committee and present the plan to them. They would not decide immediately as to its success or failure. They would study it and give a decision on it later. If they decided that the plan was worth trying, then the committee would set about supplying you with the proper clothes and papers necessary for life outside the prison fence. These, incidentally, were secured from German collaborators who were guards at our camp. During my stay no escape was made through the committee. One boy tried to escape on his own. The farthest he got was between the warning wire and the main barb wire fence. He was taken by the Germans to solitary confinement for a month.

The strongest punishment that I recall was given to our compound commander, Col. John R. Spicer for a speech which he made to us, after a four day harassment by the Germans. The words which I remember were, "Men,

if we stay here 'til every German is dead and rotted it will be worth every day of it." After this reasonable speech, Col. Spicer was spirited away to solitary confinement where he remained for 6 months. He was released when the Russians came.



When the Germans decided to fight to the bitter end the prisoners dug foxholes in the compound for some protection.

Treatment by the German Luftwaffe who were in charge of our camp until February, 1945, was fair and equal. Then the German Wehrmacht took over and we were treated the same as infantrymen in the Army. They made life harder. They did not permit any fraternization between the guards and prisoners. They had us stand in the snow for an hour at roll call. In other words, we toed the mark for them. The slightest infraction of their rules would bring restrictions to the compound or camp. The Wehrmacht was in charge of our camp when we received no food parcels and we always believed they kept them for private use. This was a particularly lean time when we did not have enough food to keep us active. Stomach pains and prostrate on the sack were the order of the day. However, one month before our liberation, we received a shipment of food parcels.

On May 10th, 1945, the Russians arrived at Stalag Luft I and thus affected our liberation. I should state here



"Liberated" by the Russians. The Americans were not released until swapped for Russian prisoners held by the Germans.

however, that we were not released by the Russians immediately. We were flown out by the 8th Air Force only after an equal number of Russian prisoners held by the Germans had been flown in. Actually we were swapped for Russian prisoners.

I believe that one of the saddest sights that I have ever witnessed was that of the German people of the little city of Barth, on the day we marched through on the way to the landing field where our B-17's awaited us. The inhabitants had lined the streets to watch us march by and tears streamed down their faces as they watched us go. They realized that with the departure of the last American from their soil, they were at the mercy of the Russians who hated them.

Jim Hensley Newest 'Gold Carder'

A former 322nd squadron bombardier, James W. Hensley, who flew with Don Bader's crew in "Heavyweight Annihilators," has become Number 15 in the list of Gold Card Lifetime members of the 91st B.G. Memorial Association.

Jim, who is now with Hensley & Co., Phoenix, Ariz., distributors of Budweiser and Michelob, donated \$100 to the Western Division treasury to help keep the ol' 91st flying.

Hensley was one of the original members of Wray's Ragged Irregulars, joining the group in pre-combat training at Walla Walla, Wash., and flying over to England in September, 1942.

Members of the crew of "Heavyweight Annihilators" were: Don C. Bader, pilot; Bert W. Humphries, co-pilot; Henry L. Adkins, navigator; James W. Hensley, bombardier; Ernest L. Piepho, engineer; Glenn Kessler, radio operator; William D. Taylor, ball turret; William C. Gray, waist gunner; Henry C. Mika, and T.J. Hansbury, tail gunner.

Gold Card holders now include: Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray (Ret.), Col. Immanuel J. Klette (Ret.), John L. Dowrick, Lt. Col. Willis C. Stinson (Ret.), John A. Fearheller, Harry A. Dooley, Robert D. Iiams, David A. Bramble, Vincent B. Evans, Col. Paul L. Fishburne (Ret.), John C. Bishop, John Fearheller Jr., Frank G. Donofrio, George Parks, and Hensley.

Air Pictorial Runs Article On 91st

British air historian Roger Freeman, author of the epic "The Mighty Eighth," has written a brief history of the 91st Bomb Group for the May issue of the British magazine "Air Pictorial," the journal of the Air League.

The article, titled "The Ragged Irregulars," traces the story of the 91st from its creation through WWII and to the present 91st Strategic Missile Wing at Minot, North Dakota, though most of the details relate to the war years.

Many of the combat actions of the Group are related, including the Nov. 23, 1942 mission to St. Nazaire, when two squadron C.O.'s were lost, the 20 Dec. '42 mission to Romilly Sur Seine, the 4 March '43 mission to Hamm, the 20 July '44 mission to Leipzig and the 2 Nov. '44 mission to Merseburg. Also mentioned is the 1969 Memorial Association return to Bassingbourn.

Copies of the May, 1971 Air Pictorial can be ordered from: Air Pictorial, Seymour Press Ltd. 334 Brixton Road, London, S.W. 9. Price is 85 cents postpaid, money with order, check or international money order.

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909, Auburn, Ala. 36830

Western Division member Ken Cochran of El Segundo, Calif., suffered a stroke May 28 and will be disbaled for six to eight weeks. Ken is out of the hospital now and back home, where wife Joan reports he is mending steadily. Buddies can drop a "get well" card to him at 640 West Imperial Ave., Apt. #3, El Segundo, Calif. 90245.

Super Associate Member Frank Donofrie has struck again! His latest big boost for his adopted group is the distribution of thousands of color post cards containing the plaque of the group and squadron insignias of the 91st to Air Force bases. The cards give a pitch about the 91st and the Memorial Association and urge anyone who ever served with the Group to contact headquarters and become an active member.

Maybe one of you can help a "bugged" buddy solve a problem that has been bothering him for several years now. One of our Western Division members, Maj. John K. Carter (Ret.), a pilot for Golden Pacific Airlines, came to the 91st with his crew on October 6, 1943. On October 9 they were shot down over Anklan. Being with the group only three days, he can't remember which squadron he was assigned to, and hopes that perhaps one of his former crew members or someone who was with him then can set him straight about his squadron. His address is 2310 St. Francis Dr., Palo Alto, Calif. 94303.

Lamond J. (Buck) Bailey, of Pocatello, Idaho, ex-bombardier with the 322nd squadron, who took part in the Idahomini-Rally Rounds last summer, has been named agricultural representative for Idaho Bank & Trust Co. Buck has been running the family ranch in Arbon Valley.

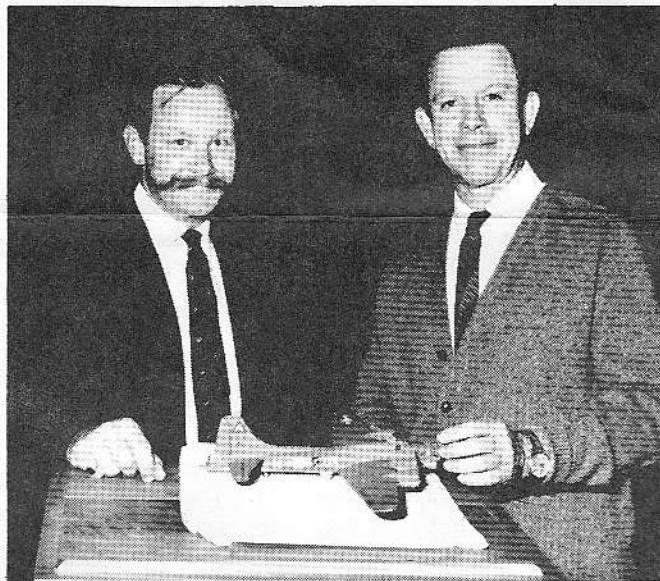
Thanks to Dave Williams, William R. Nesbitt, and former Group Adjutant Nathan Roberts the members of the 1943 "Consumption Junction" Christmas greeting run in the January R/I have been identified. That has been one of the toughest jobs for the editor—getting identification! We have hundreds of pictures in our files, most without any sort of identification at all. Many of these same pictures are in members' scrapbooks with names, dates, etc. If some of you would send copies with the identification it would be a tremendous help. We hate to run pictures without names.

News from England is that Roger Freeman's book "The Mighty Eighth" is a complete sell-out and that a reprint is on the way. Any 91st-er who hasn't a copy should get one at the earliest opportunity. Incidentally, if you have a friend in England you can save several dollars by ordering it from there. It sold for 75 shillings there, but with the new decimal currency I don't know how it's priced.

The piece in this issue about "Shoo Shoo Baby" brings to mind a complaint from ex-crew chief Hank Cordes. Says Hank, "Sure I spent a lot of hours working on that bird to get her ready for the next mission, but there were three other men who did as much or more than I did, and I think our group should know about it. Newell Rodewall, Rex Jacobs, and Paul Limm were the team that kept Shoo Shoo on the line when I moved on to become a supervisor in maintenance."

Western Division co-chairman Philip R. Taylor has donated his 91st B. G. A-2 jacket and scarf to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson. The Air Force Museum is constantly expanding their collection of WW II mementoes and were delighted with Phil's contribution.

Former 91st-er William C. Piper died of a heart attack on March 17, the Irregular has learned. His wife, Mrs. William C. Piper, lives at 7059 Pasadena Ave., Dallas, Texas 75214.



The RAF Liaison Officer for the East Anglian Aviation Society, Flt. Lt. Leach, presents Col. Robert W. Harris a model of "Outhouse Mouse" just before Col. Harris left his British station to return to the States. Col. Harris and CMS Joe Totusek were made honorary members of the Society for all their help and encouragement.

Distribution of the 1971 Memorial Association Directory is under way. All members who have contributed at least \$1 in addition to their dues will receive a copy.

Others wanting copies send \$1 to:

Eastern Division
Joseph M. Giambrone
303 Brookdale Ave.
Glenside, Pa. 19038

Western Division
George W. Parks
109 Wilshire Ave.
Vallejo, Calif. 94590

You Will Be Glad You Did!