



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 5 No. 1

October, 1971

Wow, Bassingbourn Was Never Like This!

By Paul Chryst
Special Correspondent

Real New England Hospitality was on vivid display for the 91st members during their "weak-end" Rally Round in West Haven, Conn., July 23-25. General and Mrs. Wray checked in early the day before, to find that John Ventura had flown in from Detroit, Mich. John was later awarded the engraved pewter mug for having traveled the greatest distance to attend.

Solid pre-planning by Hosts John and Mary Perrone made welcome and registration easy enough to fill the motel lobby with happy and talkative 91st-ers by late afternoon on Friday. Surprises popped up from everywhere. Mayor Zarnowski presented the Key to the City to President Wray. Police Chief Harvey and several of his staff cornered Chief of Detectives Joe Gagliano, who several months ago had been named National Policeman of the

Month. Joe had come to West Haven from Memphis, Tenn.

After a quick toast to honor all of the members and guests a convoy of cars was formed at the motel entrance. More than 20 cars joined the police escorted parade through the city on a sightseeing tour to Stowe's Pilot House for dinner. Through the lobsters, clams, candlelight, glass walls and against the lighted New Haven Harbor one 91st-er remarked, "Man, Bassingbourn was never like this."

Later that evening everyone gathered in the Lancelot Room for an informal mixer party with some slides and movie film shown of past Rally Rounds. During the Saturday afternoon assembly the men attended a "de-briefing" exercise while the wives were entertained at a unique "Flowerland" demonstration.

Special plaudits were given to those members who were attending a 91st Rally for the first time since WW II. They

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Admiring the Commemorative Colt .45 presented to Joe Gagliano by the Colt Firearms Company for his outstanding police work as Chief of Detectives of Memphis are Association President Wray, West Haven Flight Leader John

Peronne, and Gagliano. Joe, who was named National Policeman of the Month last spring, flew up with his family to attend the West Haven Rally Round.



Attending the West Haven Rally Round July 23-25 were:
Seated, l to r, Ed Figler, La Verne McKelvy, John Ventura, Nick Bankovsky, George Odenwaller, Mike Swerko, Walt Limberger, and Bill Dinneen.

Kneeling, Joe Gagliano, Joe Giambro, Lou Montalvo, Phil Dewhurst, W. W. Hill, John Sweeney, Joe Camelleri, and Tom Dugan.

Standing, John Perrone, Jim Quinn, John Davis, Charles Phillips, Paul Chryst, Abe Homar, Charles Booth, Gen. Wray, Bob Gerstemeier, Bob DeGeorge, Nick Terfenko, Bob Ford, Jack Fearheller, Charles Busa, and Ernie Kiss.

All West Haven pictures taken by Ernie Kiss, ex-322nd radio operator for Jim Baird's crew.

Wow, Bassingbourn...

included Robert Ford, Carl Gundersen, John Davis, Charles Phillips, Michael Swerko, Edward Figler, Charles Busa, James Verinis, William Wheeler, John Sweeney, James Quinn, Thomas Dugan, and Louis Montalvo.

Former crew chief of the "Memphis Belle" Joe Giambrone was much surprised to re-meet another original crew member, Jim Verinis. P.O.W.'s Charles Phillips, Abe Homar, William Wheeler, and Oscar O'Neil swapped enough Stalag Luft stories to fill a good book. Oscar and Rene's daughter, Jennifer O'Neil, has the lead role in the current movie hit "Summer of 42."

The dinner gong sounded at 8 p.m. in the Penthouse Room where 74 were seated for a special choice of either English style prime rib of beef or baked shrimp with seafood stuffing. For the invocation the silent group listened to another surprise. Over the amplifier came the stereo recorder voice of a British announcer to describe the "cold and foggy Christmas morning in London (1943)," followed by the BBC broadcast of the mighty bells of Big Ben. It was a heavy moment.

Following the traditional hot apple pie and coffee President Wray announced the addition of another Life Member, Mrs. Ginny Fearheller, the first woman to become a Gold Card Associate. The \$100 donation was made by her husband Jack (322 sqdn.), who holds his own Gold Card, and their son John, also an associate Life Member.

A set of fine glassware was presented to the Perrones by the Divisional Committee for the fine detail work as Flight Leader hosts, followed by a standing ovation of approval.

Through the promotional work of Associate Life Member Frank Donofrio, who was unable to attend due to his wife's serious illness, Chief of Detectives Joe Gagliano was presented a chrome plated Colt Commemorative .45 calibre pistol for his outstanding police work in the city of Memphis. The gun, housed in a wooden case, is engraved on the slide with the famous battles of Europe during WW II and the grips are of birdseye maple. It was awarded by Charles Turner, public relations manager of the Colt Firearms Co., of Hartford, Conn.

Color newsreel cameramen filmed the presentation of awards and the results were viewed by 91st-ers at the 11 o'clock newscast.

Not to be outdone, Gagliano countered with a return gift to General Wray from the Mayor of Memphis in the form of a flowered ceramic jug engraved for the Sesqui-centennial in their city.

The members got their final surprise at the presentation of Lt. Wallace "Sand Bag" Bone, a 70-year-old WW I Bombing Military Aviator who graduated from Ellington Field U.S. Air Service in December, 1918. Fully equipped with his badges and awards, he kept the group's attention through an explanation of his original bombardier training. Lt. Bone is one of the few surviving members of the "Quiet Birdmen," a group formed by Col. Charles Lindbergh many years ago.

Everyone enjoyed the informal dancing that followed. "Miller for Music" in stereo brought back the memory years at Bassingbourn.

On Sunday morning a buffet brunch was served and slowly members began to depart for home base. Nearly 30 others retreated to the Perrone's home nearby for an old fashioned picnic. Horseshoes, badminton, card games, photo albums and all kinds of grilled foods kept elbows bending for the rest of the afternoon.

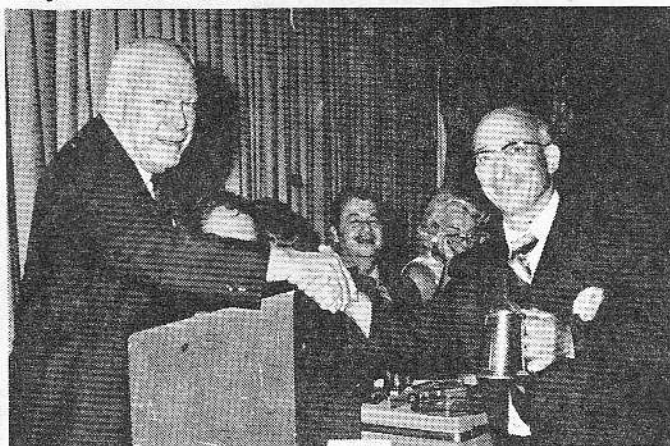
West Haven was truly an experience.

Attending were: John Ventura, Maj. Gen. and Mars Stanley T. Wray, Mr. and Mrs. John Perrone and Joe, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gagliano and Mary Jo and Gina, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Giambrone, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gerstemeier, Joseph Camelleri, William Dinneen, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Montalvo and Rick.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Dugan and son, Mr. and Mrs. George Odenwaller, Ernest Kiss, Charles Booth, Mr. and Mrs. Whitmal Hill, Edward Figler, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Chryst and Robin, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Fearheller, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Harvey, Michael Swerko, Mr. and Mrs. LaVerne McKelvy, Carl Gunderson, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Busa, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar O'Neill.

Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Dewhurst, Nicholas Terefenko, Mr. and Mrs. Robert DeGeroge, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Bankovsky, Mr. and Mrs. James Quinn, John and Paul Sweeney, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Limberger, Mr. and Mrs. William Merkert, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ford, Mr. and Mrs. Abe Homar, Carol and F. Persky Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. John Davis, Harvey Bonnel, D. Pfister, Mr. and Mrs. William Wheeler.

Vernon Dion, William Harris, Mr. and Mrs. James Verinis, Mr. and Mrs. Dik Hazirjian, Lt. and Mrs. Wallace Bone, Mayor Al Zarnowski.



Taking home the pewter mug awarded the member who has travelled the greatest distance to attend was John Ventura of Detroit. John has made some long trips to attend 91st Rally Rounds, including the 1970 affair at Tampa, Fla.



The first woman Associate Life Member joined the ranks of the 91st at West Haven. Making it the first family affair, Ginny Fearheller receives her Gold Card from Pres. Wray. Husband Jack and son John are both members.

Vallejo Mini-Rally Scores Big Success

A "Mini-Rally" that proved really big in results was held September 11 at the home of Western Division Secretary-Treasurer George Parks in Vallejo, Calif. in honor of a West Coast visit by association president Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray. Two of the 28 guests attending the get-together became Gold Card holders, bringing the Western Division total of life members to seven.

Joining the select group was Western Division Chairman Phillip R. Taylor, and associate member Brig. Gen. James A. Mangiapane. The \$100 Gold Cards were gifts from Judy Taylor and Judy Mangiapane to their respective husbands.

Also honored at the affair was Al Cardoza, sheriff of Solano county, who was presented an Associate Membership card by Gen. Wray. Sheriff Cardoza was with the 9th Air Force (B-26s) in WW II. He renewed Gen. Wray's Special Deputy's card.

A surprise birthday cake was presented to Gen. Wray and Phil Taylor commemorating their September birthdays.

A buffet supper was served by the Western Division Committee members wives, Mrs. Marian J. Parks, Mrs. Judy Taylor, and Mrs. Betty Herman.

Attending were Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray, Alexandria, Va.; Maj. and Mrs. Maurice J. Herman (Ret.), Santa Clara; SMS. and Mrs. Henry Cordes (Ret.), Alameda; M/Sgt. and Mrs. George W. Parks (Ret.), Vallejo; M/Sgt. Eugene J. Letalien (Ret.), Vacaville; Mr. and Mrs. Phillip R. Taylor, Alameda; Mr. Charles Newlin, Oakland; Mr. Robert Racicot, Vallejo.

Brig. Gen. and Mrs. James J. Mangiapane (Ret.), San Leandro; CMS and Mrs. Charles C. Yaroshak, Fairfield; S/Sgt. David Boksanski, Napa; Mr. Mack K. Wray, San Francisco; Mr. Larry Spooner, Vallejo; Mr. James Nelson, Vallejo; M/Sgt. Charles Paige (Ret.), Vallejo; Mrs. Virginia Gardiner, Mill Valley; Mr. Bill Parks, Fresno; Miss Kay Zimmerman, Fresno; Sheriff Al Cardoza, Vallejo; Mr. and Mrs. Neil Freshette, Benicia.



Engaged in a fivehanded "card" game at the Sept. 11 mini-Rally in Vallejo are Phillip R. Taylor, with Life Membership card, Brig. Gen. James J. Mangiapane, also holding a Gold Card, Maj. Gen. Wray presenting an Asso-

ciate Membership card to Solano County Sheriff Al Cardoza, Sheriff Cardoza presenting a Special Deputy's I.D. card to Gen. Wray, and Western Division Secretary-Treasurer and host, George Parks.

Dayton Area Rally Round Set Oct. 16-17

Aiming for an even greater turnout than last year's record-breaking 88, a Dayton Area Rally Round has been scheduled for Oct. 16-17. Headquarters will be the Imperial House North, on Interstate 75 and Needmore Road in Dayton, site of the May, 1970 area Rally Round.

Highlight of the affair will be a visit to the new Air Force Museum, which was dedicated on September 3 by President Nixon. Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray represented the 91st at the dedication. The new structure includes far more space for displays, including a promised "special 91st

Bomb Group corner." The museum has long been the number one tourist attraction in Ohio, and the new building further enhances its position.

Individual flyers announcing the details of the get-together have been mailed to members within several hundred miles of Dayton, but the Rally Round Committee believes that the event will attract members from many distant points.

Reservations should be made directly with the Imperial House North. The telephone number is 278-5711, area 513.

Klette Gets Honorary Degree From Gettysburg

Dr. (Col.) Immanuel J. Klette, who flew as a 324th squadron pilot on more than 90 combat missions, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Gettysburg College June 6.

Col. Klette is a research manager and senior fellow at the Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, Ohio, the largest independent research institute in the world.

He graduated from Gettysburg College with a B.A. in economics in 1939. In 1963 he received the Ph.D. degree in international relations from Georgetown University.

Col. Klette retired after 25 years as an Air Force officer. Before joining Battelle he had worked for the De-

partment of State in Washington, and was a research fellow for the Council of Foreign Relations in New York.

He flew to Gettysburg for the ceremony from an assignment in Tehran, where he was in charge of a large research project for the Iranian government.

Eastern Division committee members Joe Giambrone and Joe Camellerri joined Dr. Klette in Gettysburg for the ceremony.

Col. Klette, who flew more combat missions than any other 91st-er, is a Gold Card member of the Memorial Association and an enthusiastic participant in Rally Rounds and Reunions.



Col. I.J. Klette is shown here with well-wishers after receiving his honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Gettysburg College. Shown are, l to r, Eastern Division

co-chairman Joe Camellerri; Dr. Klette's father; Mary Jane Giambrone; Eastern Division treasurer Joe Giambrone, and "Manny" Klette.

'New' Bassingbourn Is British Army Training Center

As readers of The Ragged Irregular know, Bassingbourn was last year changed from an operational RAF station to an Army installation—the Depot of the Queen's Division, made up of the Queen's Regiment, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, and the Royal Anglian Regiment.

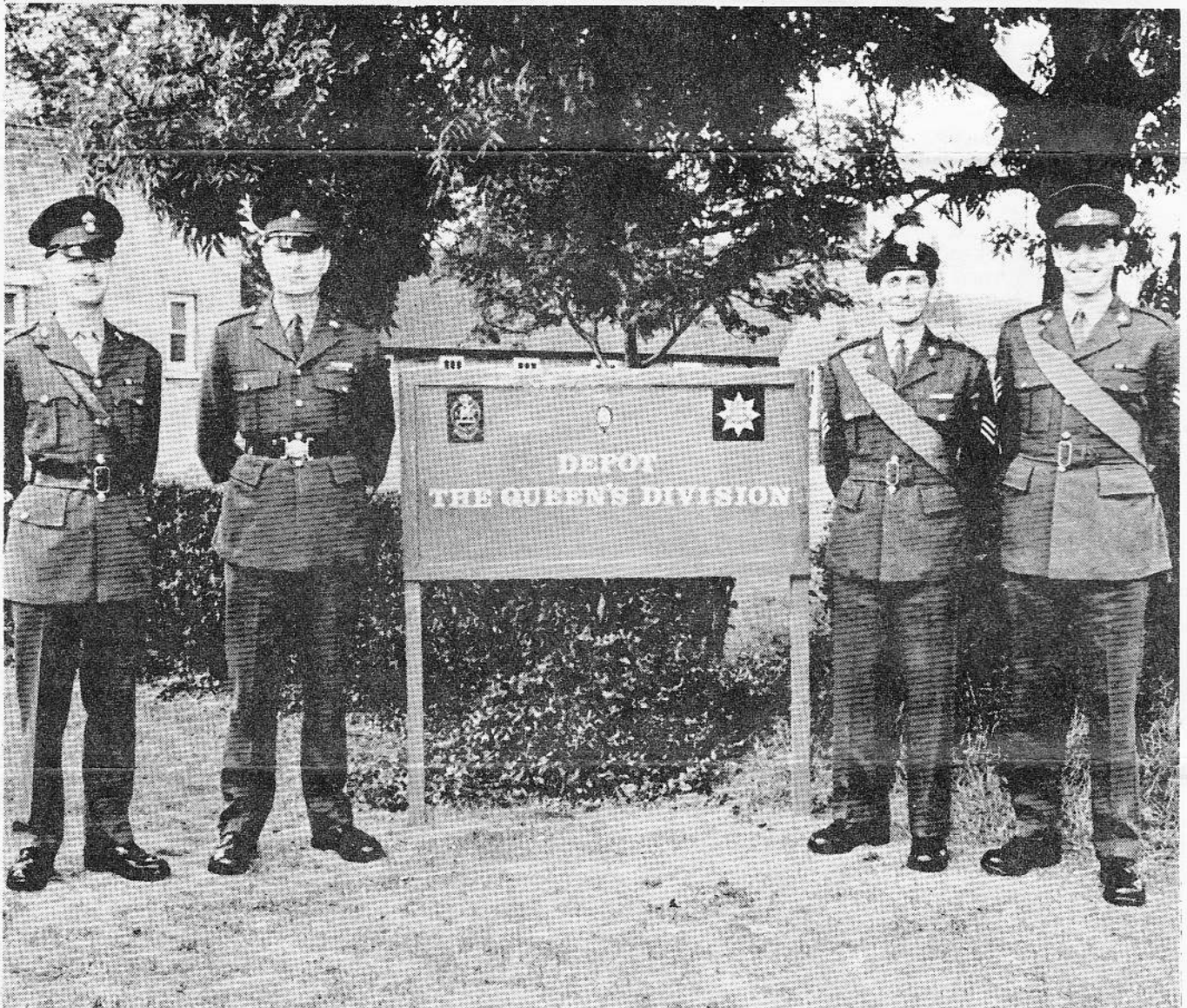
The Depot is responsible for the training of all recruits entering the Army from civilian life for the nine regular Battalions of the Division, and recruits for the three Territorial and Army Volunteer Battalions. Also trained at Bassingbourn are Junior Bandsmen, Drummers, and Infantrymen for the Division.

Recruits train an average of 17 weeks at Bassingbourn.

A recent decision by the Ministry of Defense in London is to take up all the runways, leaving only the perimeter tracks. The airfield is to be developed as an infantry training area.

"Monty's" tank is now parked outside the station to make complete the demise of Bassingbourn as an airfield.

But the welcome mat to the station is still out for former 91st-ers who might want to revisit the old station. A number of recent visitors there have reported that they were royally welcomed and given the "grand tour."



Few old Bassingbourners would recognize Air Force Station 121 from this new sign outside. The base is now Army rather than Royal Air Force, and this temporary

sign, flanked by the four Sargeant Majors of the Depot, dramatize the change. A more elaborate identification has been erected since this picture was made.

Dont Miss Our Big National Reunion '72

See You At Long Beach Next Summer!

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, AL 36830

Steve Birdsall, the Australian air historian, reports that his book about the 91st is in the final stages at long last, but he is determined to try to make it as interesting as it can possibly be, and is looking for photos of a couple of rare birds. First is one of the gunship YB-40s, LL-Y of the 401st for a time, number 761 and called "Guardian Angel"... does anyone have a photo to lend briefly? Second is a final plea for any shots of Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby, LL-A, 232076, soon to be brought home from France... any photos will not only add to the book, but will be put at the Air Force Museum's disposal during restoration of this aircraft to her original state. And finally, Steve has this tidbit from another 91st-er... he wrote of "a stripped B-17E or B-17F... all white, covered with different colored polka-dots, with a black triangle with white A on fin"... Does anybody recall anything of such an aircraft? Steve's address is: 5/53 Wycombe Road, Neutral Bay 2089, Sydney, Australia.

Long Beach Flight Leader Doug Gibson, who is heading up 1972 Reunion plans, passes along the sad news that Albert K. "Redline" Tucker died of a heart attack last February. Tucker and Gibson were co-owners of the famous 91st mascot, "Redline."

91st-er Raymond Marseilles of New Orleans has donated a big collection of Stars and Stripes and Yank Magazines to the Air Force Museum, a gift that was really appreciated by the museum staff since it helped to complete their collections of these publications.

In a recent Irregular we carried a story about Jim Hensley of Phoenix, Ariz., contributing \$100 to the Western Division to help keep the 91st flying. He and his family have since made a return visit to England, where they visited Basingbourn, Royston, Cambridge, and other familiar spots. Jim was one of the original members of the 91st, joining the group in Walla Walla, where he became bombardier for Don Bader's crew in the "Heavyweight Annihilators" of the 322nd squadron. If memory serves me right Jim was one of half a dozen 91st-ers that took part in one of the big "put-ons" of the early days.

In the first months of combat the 91st operated in a rather informal way, and we always had a few "cripples" around—members who had been shot up and hospitalized but who had been "recued" from the hospitals as soon as they were ambulatory and returned to the base to recuperate among friends, even though still in casts or on crutches or whatever. In order to get in their 4-hour monthly flying time the "crips" were always grabbing rides in local flights, slow-timing jobs and ferry assignments, since combat was verboten.

On one occasion five or six of us got a chance to fly down to a base in southwest England, in what was undoubtedly the most moth-eaten, war-weary, delapidated B17E that ever got off the ground—perhaps old "Yankee Doodle" that had been transferred to the 91st when the 92nd went to Africa. Flying pilot was Bob Shaw, who had just gotten out of Second Evac hospital after weeks of recovery from the explosion of a 20 mm shell between the pilot's and co-pilot's heads, a blow that critically

injured first pilot Joe Yuravich and left Bob to fly the plane home (with the valiant assistance of bombardier "Pinky" Bell) hardly able to see and with one arm completely riddled and useless. He was still in a cast above his elbow.

I was flying navigator—unable to walk except with crutches, from a machine gun slug through the upper thigh picked up on a raid to Rommily sur Seine. Bob and I had adjoining beds at Second Evac, and later I put in 13 months in assorted hospitals getting back something like full use of the limb.

Hensley was bombardier, with a cast up to his knee from flak he had picked up in a flight. Memory fails me as to the other crew members, but they were every bit as decrepit.

When we landed at the base we taxied up to a hangar with wings drooping, patches everywhere, paint peeled off in great scabs, and the old plane seemingly just waiting to collapse completely. Waiting to greet us was a contingent of fresh new faces—the first 8th AF replacements sent overseas to fill the great gaps caused by the heavy early losses. This was when we had calculated that the last 91st plane with the last crew would take off sometime about the middle of April, 1943. They had landed just a few hours before, and this was the first COMBAT plane or crew they had seen, and they couldn't wait to find out what it was all about.

The derelict old bird shook them up, but when the door opened and out stepped the pilot with arm in cast their eyes bugged. Then out clumped Hensley with the knee length cast, and three others looking like the "Spirit of '76." Their jaws dropped to their chests. Finally the little door in the nose opened and out came a pair of crutches; then I swung very carefully to the ground, unable to move till the crutches were recovered and I could "four leg" off. The waiting group crowded close and I spied several familiar faces from flying school days in the States.

Immediately the whole crew of us went into the old familiar "Ragging the Recruit" act—you remember, the old "Rookie this is COMBAT" and "You're in the Big Leagues now, Buddy," pitch. When one of them finally managed to croak out "Man, what ARE you all doing?" we sort of sneered and answered "We're flying an airplane—what the hell else? They don't let you off duty over here just because your nose is running!"

As we left a short while later the No. 4 engine streamed fire just before we reached takeoff speed. Shaw screeched to a halt, doing a ground loop at the end of the runway. The engineer jumped out, squirted the engine with a fire extinguisher, and then we revved up and took off the opposite way, downwind.

Rumor has it that there was a mass prayer meeting among the new arrivals as the plane disappeared in the distance. For a fact, orders soon came down from headquarters for the "vets" to quit scaring the replacements!

**We really would like to run
more news items about members.**

**So don't be shy,
send us a note about your doings!**

91st Bomb Group (H) Financial Report

INCOME AND EXPENSES

January 1, 1970 - December 31, 1970

INCOME

Balance: January 1, 1970, Eastern Division	\$ 543.48	
Balance: January 1, 1970, Western Division	166.23	
	<hr/>	\$ 709.71
Dues - Directory - Gifts, Eastern Division	1,630.81	
Dues - Directory - Gifts, Western Division	2,103.50	
	<hr/>	3,734.31
Rally Rounds: Dayton and Tampa		1,824.68
		<hr/>
Total Income:		\$ 6,268.70

EXPENSES

Eastern Division: Printing, Stationery, Postage	\$ 1,552.65	
Western Division: Printing, Stationery, Postage	1,938.88	
	<hr/>	\$ 3,491.53
Rally Round Expenses		1,744.14
Retained Earnings Unappropriated:		
Eastern Division (cash balance)	\$ 702.18	
Western Division (cash balance)	330.85	
	<hr/>	\$ 1,033.03
Total Expenses:		\$ 6,268.70

STATEMENT OF ASSETS

Bank Balance: Eastern Division	\$ 702.18	
Bank Balance: Western Division	330.85	
	<hr/>	\$ 1,033.03
Total Assets:		\$ 1,033.03

Joseph M. Giambrone

Joseph M. Giambrone, Treasurer

8 MAR '71