



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 6 No. 1

October 1972

3rd National Reunion 'Best One Yet!'

"Each one gets better than the last!" one member who has made all the national reunions exclaimed when the 3rd national get-together wound up in Anaheim July 15. And almost 300 91st-ers and guests who had attended were sure to agree—the event had been a real blast!

In addition to the pleasure of renewing old acquaintances and swapping recollections the group had been in the heart of the California tourist attraction area for a double-barrelled treat. Trips to Disneyland, the Queen Mary, Sea World, Warner Brothers Studios, and other fabulous sights made it a once-in-a-lifetime event.

A record number of new "Life Members"—five from the Western Division and one from the Eastern—were added to the Memorial Association "Honor Rolls." They included: William Wyler, HQ sqdn.; Lt. Col. John R. "Pinky" Bell (Ret), 323rd sqdn.; Neil Daniels, 401st sqdn.; Col. Thomas H. Gunn (Ret), 324th and 401st sqdns.; Joe Zimmerman, 322nd sqdn., and William "Bill" Thissell, 401st sqdn.

Movie director William Wyler, who made our own "The Memphis Belle" in addition to "Mrs. Miniver," "Ben Hur," "Funny Girl" and a multitude of other famous hits commented, "I'm prouder of this than of any of the Oscars I've won."

In addition to the usual gold card a big "Rigid Digit" trophy was awarded Life members. "Old" Life members given the award at the reunion were Col. Paul L. Fishburne (Ret), 322nd sqdn.; M/Sgt. George W. Parks (Ret), 324th and 401st sqdns.; Phillip R. Taylor, 323rd sqdn.; Col. Manny Klette (Ret), 324th sqdn., and Frank Donofrio, associate member.

Gen. S. T. Wray, association president, was presented with a very special Bowie knife by Super Associate Member Frank Donofrio. The \$250 hand made, engraved knife is No. 45 of a limited edition of 50 made by Jimmie Lile of Russellville, Ark. President Nixon has knife No. 1.

West Coast secretary-treasurer George Parks was presented a large plaque decorated with a sketch of his smiling face and a big THANK YOU in appreciation of his tremendous work in helping organize and run the affair.

In the business session ending the meeting the incumbent officers were reinstated for another term.

Annual dues were raised to \$5 per year starting with 1973. A new directory will be printed in 1973 and sent to each dues-paying member.

The next reunion, under the direction of the Eastern Division, is scheduled for July, 1974, for the Dayton, Ohio, area, hopefully to coincide with the restoration of "Shoo Shoo Baby" at the Air Force Museum.



Here are the "troops" shaped up to board the "Queen Mary" again after 30 years. This time, however, they didn't have to worry with "A" and "B"

bags, B-4s and submarines. Too bad we couldn't have gone on to Scotland this time, though.



Saturday night dinner-dance, with 222 members, wives, associate members and guests in the ball room of the Jolly Roger Inn.



Charles D. "Red" Booth took the Mug for coming all the way from Walpole, N. J., to attend. Charlie won the mug at the Tampa, Fla., rally round a couple of years ago, too.



Some of the wives at the banquet. L to r, Judy Taylor, Mary Jane Giambrone, Esther Wray, Stan Wray, Jr., Marian Parks.



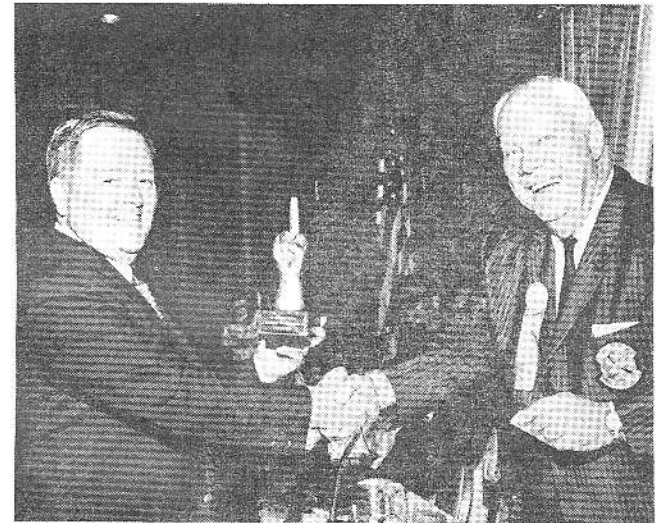
Frank Donofrio presents special engraved Bowie knife to Gen. Wray. This is one of a limited edition of 50 handmade knives.



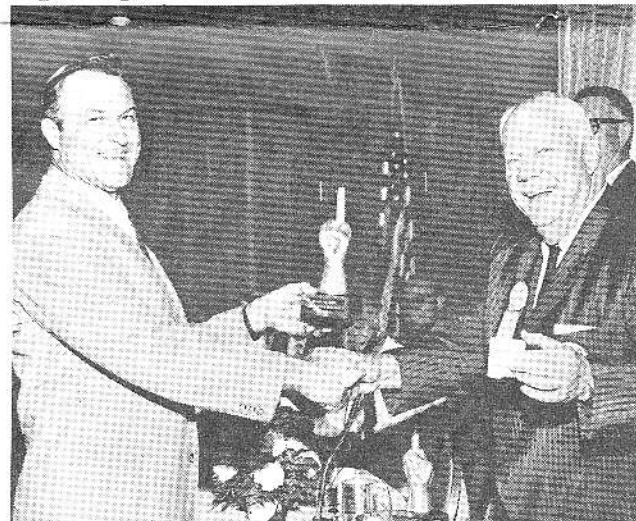
Paul Chryst, Eastern Division chairman, presents to Lt. Col. Clyde DeBaun (Ret), ex-324th sqdn., a copy of "High Flight" won at the banquet raffle.



Col. Paul L. Fishburne gets his "Order of the Rigid Digit" trophy from Gen. Wray. Wording on the trophy reads, "My God, Am I Right?" "Order of the Rigid Digit" Life Member.



Neil Daniels has something for the mantel back home now, as well as life membership in the Memorial Association.



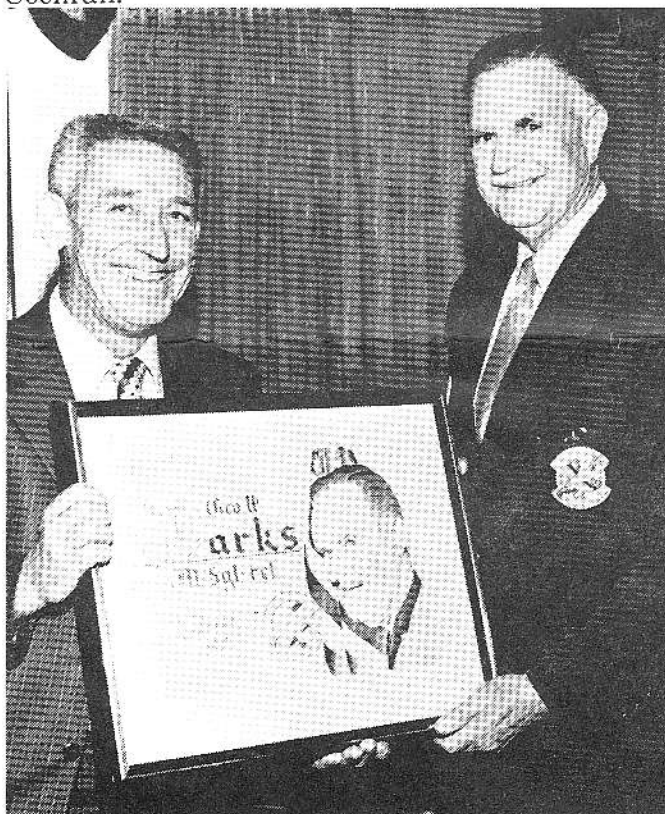
Joe Zimmerman, ex-M/Sgt. 322nd sqdn., gets his memento of Life Membership.



Headquarters Squadron Members—Lt. Col. Elbert G. Sandoz, M/Gen. S. T. Wray, Ken Cochran.



The hard-working Reunion Committee takes a moment off during an outstanding job of running the affair. Sitting, Doug Gibson and Aubin Pene. Standing, Jack Gaffney, Tony Starcer, Faber Crips, Ken Cochran.



Aubin Pene, ex-401st sqdn., and Reunion Committee member, presents George Parks with a plaque signed by members attending in appreciation of George's fine work.

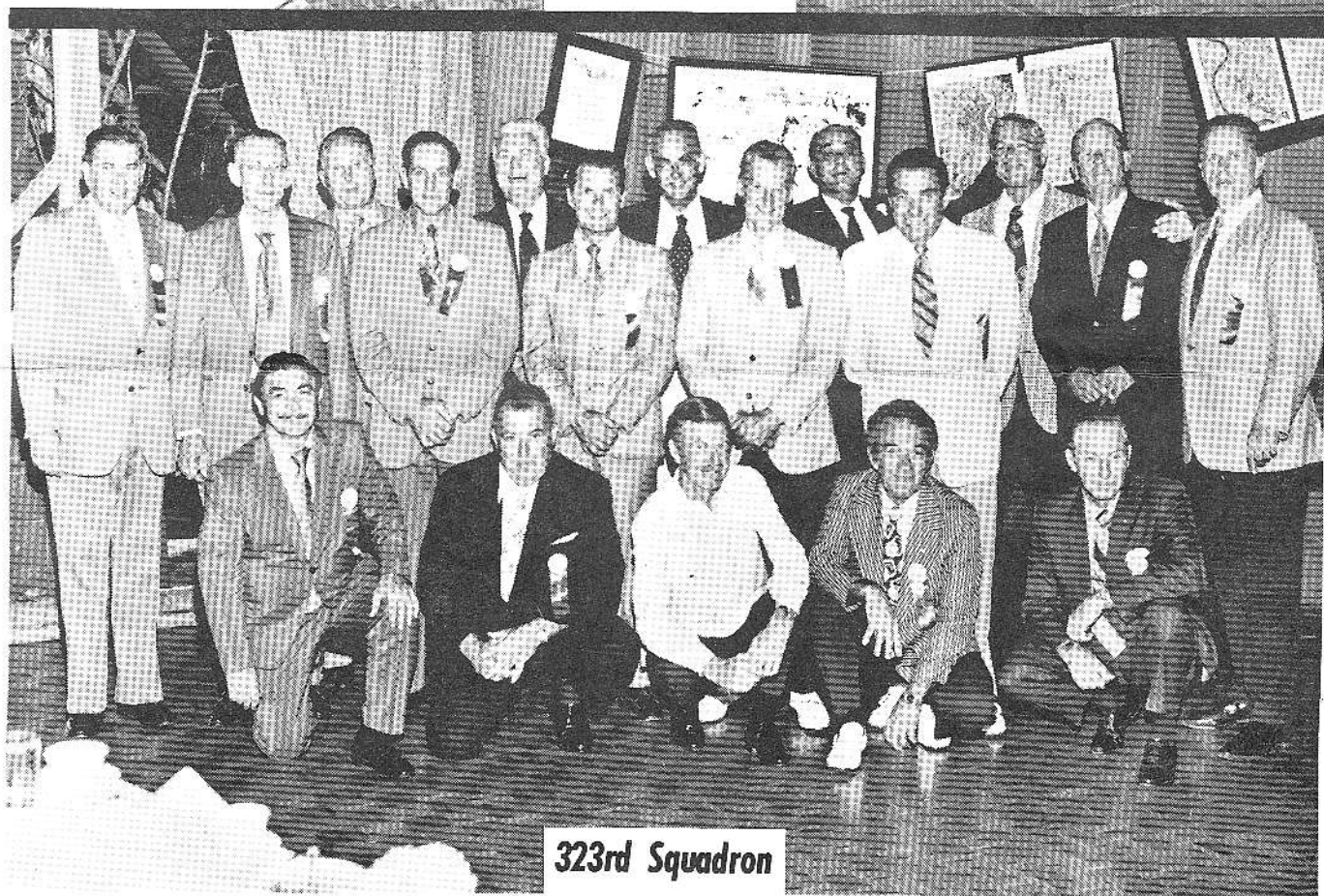


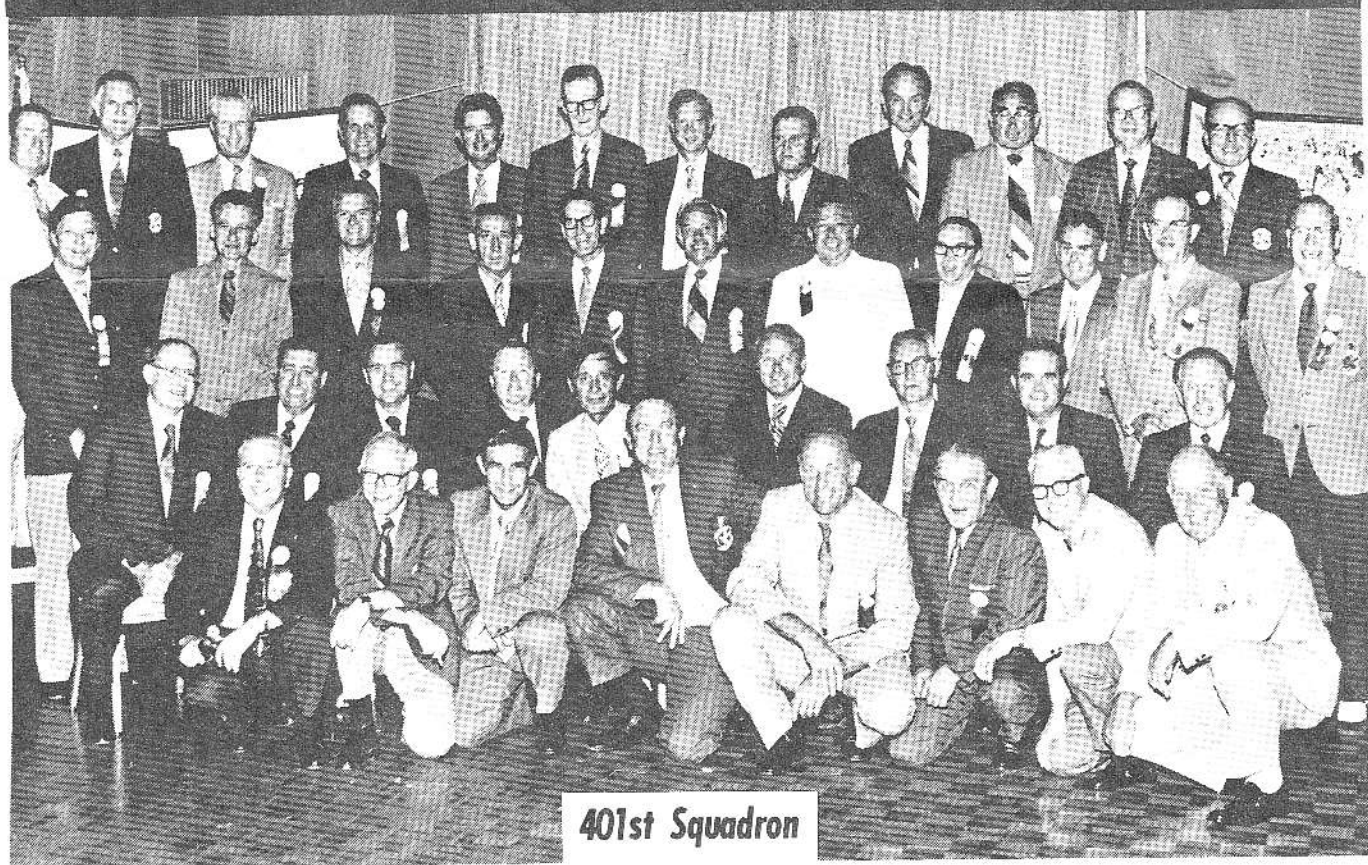
A couple of goodies from the Anaheim reunion can be had by 91st-ers who couldn't make the "big one" in July. Souvenir plates decorated with the 91st emblem and "3rd National Reunion, 13-15 July, Anaheim, Calif." were given to each reunion registrant. A few of these plates are still available from division headquarters for \$2 each to cover costs and mailing.

An item that was very popular with reunion members were B-17 tie tacks and tie bars in a special 91st package. These are of diecast pewter, buffed and lacquered, and will last for years. They are available from Eastern Division co-chairman Paul Chryst, for \$5. Orders should state the member's preference for tack or clip-on bar type. (Hey, wives, these would make a fine Christman gift!)

Western Division members should order from:
George W. Parks
109 Wilshire Ave.
Vallejo, Calif. 94590

Eastern orders go to:
Paul Chryst
1494 N. Adams St.
Pottstown, Pa. 19464





Bob Guenther, 'Old Friend' Meet In Dayton

Bob Guenther, who was piloting "Shoo Shoo Baby" when she sat down in Sweden and started the long chain of events that led to her recent arrival for display at the Air Force Museum, stopped by Dayton on his vacation to see his old ship. Writer William G. Holder took him on a tour of the museum and wrote the following story about the event for the WPAFB "The Skywriter."

"Boy, she sure looks small," was the first thing Bob Guenther said when he saw the old B-17 for the first time in 29 years. Bob had been its last pilot who had taken the vintage "fort" into Sweden after being hit on a bombing raid over Europe.

The trim ex-aircraft commander brought along his whole family from Scottsdale, Arizona. It seemed his wife and son were more excited as Bob walked slowly about the pieces of metal which represented the most exciting time of his youth.

"She was a tough old bird. Got us through 13 missions without a scratch," Bob commented.

The "Shoo Shoo Baby" was returned to the Air Force Museum here to be restored. She was located by the Australian Air Historian, Steve Birdsall, after years of searching. He found her engineless and parked on the ramp at Creil, France, in a very battered condition.

He then brought the plane to the attention of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association and initiated efforts to have her returned. As Birdsall pointed out, "This veteran was the last B-17 to fight, and she deserves a better fate."

Bob recalled that final mission. "It was our 13th. The mission was to Poznan, Poland, which approached the capacity of the B-17. The mission length was approximately 1,450 miles. I asked the navigator if he knew the way to Sweden because I was afraid they might run out of gas."

There was some trouble on take-off with a full gas

and bomb load. The supercharger on number three engine overheated, but after the take-off was operational. After forming up with many other forts over the English Channel, the course led toward Berlin and Poznan where the bombs were dropped.

"Soon after we crossed the German border we lost the number three engine," Bob recalled. "We couldn't get it to feather, but it spun with no vibration."

When a second engine was lost, the course was set for Sweden, since making it back to England then became impossible. All loose equipment, including machine guns and radio equipment, were thrown overboard to lighten the ship.

"But we finally made it to Sweden with nobody on board injured. We landed behind a B-24 which was also in trouble. Once on the ground we were removed from the plane by Swedish soldiers. None of us ever saw the girl again." That was, until this past Monday.

One could think of how many World War II B-17 pilots could today sit in the cockpit of their war-time forts. The number could be counted on one hand out of the thousands of forts that fought in the west.

"When I think of those days, it seems like a nightmare," Guenther said. And for just a few minutes a grey-haired middle-aged man was taken back to those days when he was a cocky shavetail piloting a flying fort called the "Shoo Shoo Baby."



441st Sub-Depot, Col. Frank Kamykowski and troops.



Reminiscing around the bar are M/Sgt. Bob "Red" Atterbury (Ret), Col. Immanuel J. Klette (Ret), and Lt. Col. John R. Parsons.

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, Al. 36830

New chairmen for the Western Division are Lt. Col. John R. McCombs (Ret.), Martinez, Calif., and M/Sgt. (Ret.) Eugene J. Letalien, Vacaville, Calif.

The posts became vacant when Maj. Maurice J. Herman left California for a new job in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and Philip J. Taylor resigned because of heavy pressure from his work as a bank examiner and because of health problems.

Ken Blackburn passes along the news about a recent book that will interest 91sters. "Komet," a book about the German jet fighter, written by Jeffrey Ethell, portrays on the cover the mission of August 16, 1944, to Halle, when the 91st plane "Outhouse Mouse" became the first bomber to be attacked by the ME-163 rocket-propelled "flying wing." The Komet was shot down by U.S. Mustangs without inflicting any damage to the Fortress. The crew of "Outhouse Mouse" that day was: W. Reese Mullins, pilot; F. B. Drewery, co-pilot; John O'Conner, navigator; O. V. Chaney, bombardier; C. A. Dickson, engineer; Jim Knaub, radio; Ken Blackburn, ball turret; Joe V. Cullen, waist; Robert D. Loomis, waist; and M. D. Barker, tail.

Those interested in getting a copy of the book should write to John W. Coler, 7506 Clybourn, Sun Valley, Calif. 91352.

A newly found member for the Eastern Division is John M. Webb, a 30-mission gunner with the 401st squadron. John had one of the most unusual experiences of the war when his plane caught fire over England and he had to bail out with his parachute aflame at 2300 feet. The smoking chute slowed his descent effectively, though, and he came down to land astride a horse grazing in a field. The startled horse reared, dumping T/Sgt. Webb to the ground uninjured.

Another newly found member, John R. Simonson, of Tarzana, Calif., also was part of another curious 'chute story. Dick is a senior engineer with Irvin Industries in California specializing in design and project management of spacecraft recovery and personnel escape systems. In late 1944 his roommate, Lt. Don Weiss, a bombardier on his second tour, returned to quarters in a highly disheveled state. He had been out on a test flight with his crew when an emergency arose and the pilot ordered the crew to bail out. Lt. Weiss parachuted into a brussels sprout field. As he was picking up his chute a little English car approached. The driver got out and asked if he could be of any assistance. He informed Weiss that he owned a nearby factory in Letchworth and that a call to the base for transportation could be made from there. Weiss accepted the offer but as they were pulling up in front of the plant a jeep full of MP's arrived and rather brusquely invited the bombardier to accompany them back to the base. The only thing that Weiss learned about his host was that his name was Irvin and that the plant was engaged in the manufacture

of parachutes.

In 1953 when Simonson retired from the Air Force and took his first civilian job it was with Irvin Air Chute in Glendale, Calif. Shortly thereafter when he met the owner, Leslie Irvin, he discovered that Irvin had formerly owned a 'chute company in England during the war. Sure enough, his new boss was the same English gentleman who had picked up Weiss in 1944. His plan had been to escort Weiss on a plant tour, introducing him to the employees as living evidence of their work. "But," Irvin exploded, "those bloody MP's spoiled the day!"

Simonson, a 401st navigator, flew in The Jub Jub Bird, Tennessee Tess, Duke of Paducah, The Heat's On, Rambling Wreck, Buckeye Boomerang, Shoo Shoo Baby, Mah Ideal, and Jezebel.

Maj. Maurice Herman, former West Coast co-chairman who left California for a new job in Mississippi a few months ago, has a new permanent address he wants to pass along. Maury is now at 104 White Ave., Ocean Springs, Miss. 39564.

No details available at press time, but an article on "Shoo Shoo Baby" will appear in the Air University Review in the near future.

Our thanks to those members who have sent in pictures, items, etc., to help out the poor editor. If you haven't seen YOUR bunch or crew or whatever, it's because we don't have copies or don't have identification. We can't print what we ain't got! Matt Pettera has passed along some we'll be running in the January issue.

Can anyone help one of our "little friends?" Dick McGuinn, who was a tower operator at Steeple Morden (P-51s) just off the end of the long runway at Basingbourn, sent along this message: "Tower Operator Porter of Basingbourn, please contact by mail Tower Operator McGuinn of Steeple Morden. Object—to talk over old times and maybe hoist a warm one!" Dick McGuinn, Hallett, Okla. 74034.



Old crew members from "Time's A Wastin" meet at Anaheim. L to r, Harry Garner, pilot; Kermit Burman, co-pilot; Paul Chryst, bombardier.