



# The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 7 No. 2

January, 1974

## National Reunion, Overseas Tour Set For June

Despite the energy and fuel crisis, rising costs from inflation, etc., plans have been approved to hold the 1974 National Reunion for 91st Bomb Group members, families and guests at Valley Forge, Pa., from Saturday, June 22, through June 27, following the return from Operation: One More Time, the 91st sponsored 2-weeks trip to Europe and Basingbourn.

The proposed schedule includes a quiet, restful and informal week-end for those members who make the overseas trip and want to stay on for the reunion as a third week of vacation, plus those new arrivals from all the states.

Room assignments, Group registration, and a Committee "Welcome Aboard" party will be held.

Monday and Tuesday provides selected and guided bus tours into historic Phila-

delphia, and the battlefields, headquarters, and shrine memorials of Valley Forge.

Choices are offered to tour the Pennsylvania Dutch country of Lancaster county which includes a world famous lunch, home cooked, with seven sweets and seven sour.

Wednesday is your day to relax, shop at the world's largest mall, and get ready for the spectacular cocktail hour with dinner dance and a special tribute to Glenn Miller furnished by talent from the local area.

Thursday is the business meeting for the members, followed by farewell departures for home.

Operation: One More Time

There is no greater anticipation in life to most people than to relive pre-  
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Here's the site of the 1974 National Reunion at Valley Forge, Pa., June 22-27. The George Washington Lodge is at King of Prussia, Pa., a few minutes from Valley

Forge State Park, the Valley Forge Music Theater, and the world's largest shopping mall. The Lodge has its own golf course of championship calibre.

scious moments of the past - "just one more time." The fun and excitement of sharing again happy and sometimes even traumatic experiences captures the imagination. Regrettably, too often, it never happens or the anticipation is greater than the realization.

Still, we say, "One more time," knowing only too well that "one more time" is not possible. But for ex-91st men "one more time" will become a reality on June 7, 1974, the date we leave Philadelphia to return to Station 121 in Basingbourn and to Royston, England, to enjoy a tour through some of the most beautiful areas in Europe.

It has been an incredible 30 years since the great battles of World War II. Cities have been rebuilt, prosperity has returned to deprived peoples and a new generation of friendship and understanding has grown up.

Many 91st men and their families visited Europe in 1969 with our first trip; others have returned independently. But for the majority Basingbourn and Cambridge, England have seemed a long way off.

JOIN US this time! We'll visit scenic Bavaria, enjoy the Hofbrauhaus in Munich (one of the world's best kellers) and see some of the fabulous scenery featured in the film "The Sound of Music" in and around Salzburg, Austria. Bertchesgaden (Hitler's favorite mountain retreat), Heidelberg and the relaxing and beautiful Rhine River cruise are all on our route. And, of course, Cologne, Dusseldorf and Amsterdam add to the exciting program.

But the highlight of our trip will be our visits to Opijnen, Holland, where eight of our 91st-ers rest in the little Dutch cemetery, and to Basingbourn. Receptions and other special events are being planned with our English friends to make this an occasion you will not want to miss.

COME ALONG! Keep that promise to go back. We'll guarantee the Operation: One More Time will make believers of you that one more time can really happen.

Inclusive tour price has been announced at \$635 per person. This includes air transportation, ground transportation, hotels, meals, transfers, sightseeing, and tips and taxes.

A deposit of \$100 per person is re-

quired to effect reservations, and balance of payment is due when billed but not later than six weeks before departure. Checks should be made payable to the 91st Bomb. Group Memorial Assn. Inc. and mailed to Mr. Robert E. Gerstemeier, 930 Woodlawn Drive, Lansdale, Pa. 19446.

A complete flyer on the trip with a detailed description of each day's itinerary and reservations form has been mailed to each 91st-er. Questions regarding the trip should be sent to the Eastern Division secretary, Robert E. Gerstemeier.



Three members of the ground crew pose before the 401st plane "Liberty Run," LL-A 509. The plane made 32 missions under pilots Hanna and Martin. Shown are, l to r, Matt Pettera, assistant crew chief; Raymond Sumpter, mechanic, and Edward Pinkowski, crew chief.

## Pennsylvania Rally Round 'Good Show'

A Pennsylvania Area Rally Round was held at the Holiday House Motel, Monroeville, Pa., October 13. Twenty-four 91st members, wives and guests spent a great evening of scrapbook looking, reminiscing, and song-festing in addition to sharing a first-rate meal.

Evan and Doris Zillmer won the coveted pewter mug for having traveled the greatest distance to attend, more than 800 miles one way from Woodruff, Wisc. This is the second mug won by the Zillmers for travelling long distances to attend rally rounds.

Many ex-91st-ers will recall that Evan and Doris (who is a British girl)

were married near Basingbourn after Evan promised his Squadron Commander he would "volunteer" for a second tour of combat duty.

Attending were: Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray, Dr. Immanuel J. Klette, Dr. Victoria E. Fox (Maj. USAF Ret.), James H. Hopkins, Mr. and Mrs. Frank I. Varva, Mr. and Mrs. Howard C. Huffman, Mr. and Mrs. Evan J. Zillmer.

Mr. and Mrs. William A. McGavern, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Guzek, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Gerstemeier, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Chryst, Mr. and Mrs. Pat J. Amber and two guests.



Ex-91st-ers attending the Pennsylvania Rally Round in Monroeville, Pa., October 13 were:

Seated, l to r, Paul Chryst, Evan Zillmer, James H. Hopkins, Gen. S.T. Wray,

Bob Gerstemeier.

Standing, Lloyd Guzek, Howard Huffman, William McGavern, Joseph Giambrone, Dr. I. J. Klette, Frank Varva.

## New Birdsall Book Features 91st Planes

A new book by Australian Air historian Steve Birdsall that will greatly interest many 91st-ers has just been released by Squadron/Signal Publications. Titled "B-17 In Action," the booklet has 50 pages of text and pictures of the B-17 in combat operation.

The cover painting shows "Little Miss Mischief" of the 91st in action, and a vast majority of the pictures inside are of 91st aircraft.

91st planes shown include: Little Miss Mischief, The Careful Virgin, Yankee Doodle, Chennault's Pappy, Just Nothing, General Ike, The Bad Egg, Memphis Belle, Stormy Weather, Bomb Boogie, Miss Minnie, The Village Flirt, Shamrock Special, Hell's Belles, Miami Clipper, Fightin' Pappy, Wabash Cannonball.

Outhouse Mouse, Pistol Packin' Mama, Chow Hound, Lackin' Shackin, Nine O Nine, Little Patches, Times A-Wastin', Hey Daddy, Wee Willie, Hikin' For Home,

Man O War II, Mary Lou, Old Battle Axe, Priority Gal, Sweet 17, Blood 'n Guts, and Blonde Bomber.

There is an account in detail of how "Little Miss Mischief" was badly damaged in a mission to Cologne on October 15, 1944, and how the desperate efforts of the crew finally brought her back home to Bassingbourn. The ship was so badly damaged that Col. Frank Kamykowski and the 441st Sub Depot amputated the entire tail section aft the radio compartment and grafted on the rear section from an old B-17 salvage ship. From then until she later crashed Little Miss Mischief was half silver and half O.D., the front half built by Lockheed-Vega at Burbank, and the rear half by Boeing at Seattle.

The book may be ordered for \$3.95 from the publisher: Squadron/Signal Publications, 3515 E. Ten Mile Road, Warren, Michigan, 48091.



Evan Zillmer of Woodruff, Wisconsin, receives the pewter mug from Gen Wray for having travelled the greatest distance to attend the rally round. Evan and his wife Doris came more than 800 mile to participate.



Here is a recent shot of a Cambridge pub popular with the 91st in the earliest days, the Baron of Beef.

## Your '74 Dues Are Due!

## Mission To Hamm - First Battle Of Ruhr

Of all the raids made by the 91st, probably no mission matched the trip to Hamm, Germany, March 4, 1943, for audacity, determination, and sheer courage. The exploit received nationwide acclaim and a commendation from the War Department. Kate Smith told the story on her nationwide radion network program, and two years later, at the end of the Battle of the Ruhr, radion commentator Ted Malone devoted an entire broadcast on the "first Battle of the Ruhr" fought by the 91st at Hamm.

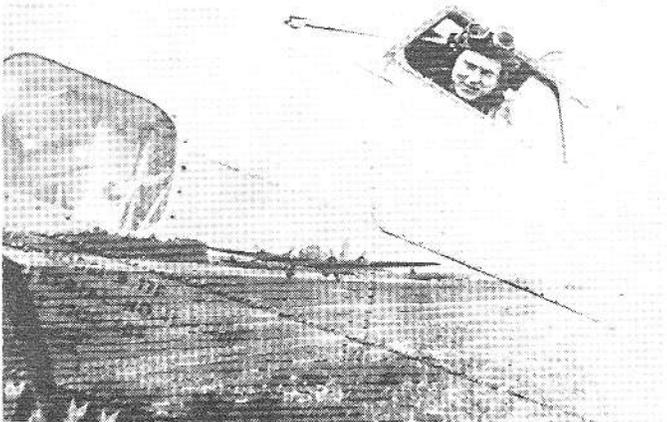
From the very beginning there was nothing ordinary or routine about the mission.

Hamm contained the largest marshaling yards in Germany, and it was felt that a blow here would be vital. Hamm also contained the heaviest and most concentrated flak batteries, and at the beginning of 1943 the Luftwaffe was at its peak of planes and pilots.

Fighter coverage was only in the dreaming stage at that time, and this would be the deepest penetration yet made into Germany.

Four groups were to make the attack, with the 91st joining the others over the channel.

The loading list for the day shows that 19 planes were originally scheduled for the mission. There were five planes from the 322nd sqdn. Group leader for the day was Maj. Paul Fishburne, flying in "Chief Sly II," Barton's plane, with Capt. Bruce Barton as co-pilot and a crew of Bulloch, Lindley, Hare, Haugen, Srsen,



This double exposure shows Red Cliburn at the controls of Bad Penny, 324th sqdn., and also shows the plane taking off at the start of a mission.



Royal Flush, 401st sqdn., and her crew had a busy day.

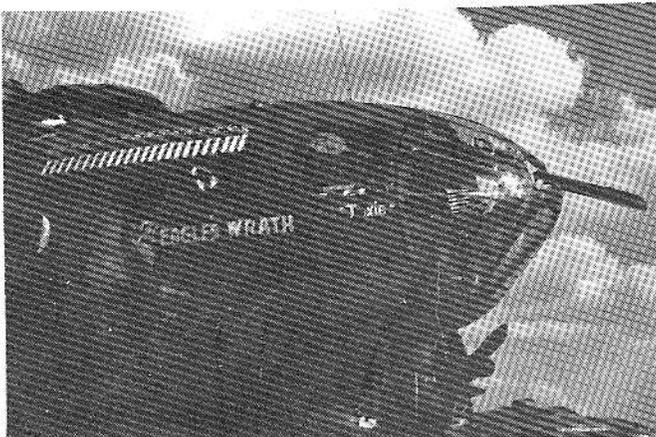
Mitchell, Snook, and Hansbury, with Lt. Col. Wheelock as guest. Other 322nd ships were: "Dame Satan," flown by Lt. William Beasley, with Green, Bowcock, Hubbard, Lammars, Barrett, Crossman, Gonzalez, Burdick, and Ehrhardt; "Mizpah," piloted by Lt. John Hardin, with Chima, Bennett, Beauchamp, Thompson, Palmer, Walloch, Rupp, Sheehan, and Greenlee; "Rose O'Day," piloted by Lt. Ralph Felton, with Kious, Toole, Hylton, Paul, Traverso, Larson, Griffin, Bliven, Burnett; and "Hell's Angels," piloted by Lt. James Baird, with Brodnax, Lalli, Bryant, Kiss, Buckholz, Privett, Mika, Pidgean, and Harrison.

Four ships from the 323rd sqdn. are listed: "Careful Virgin," piloted by Capt. William Clancy, with Gladstone, Ackerman, Fisher, Taiercio, Gilliam, Heron, Olexa, Conley, and Streets; "Delta Rebel II", piloted by Lt. George Birdsong, with Wiley, Miller, Thornton, Farrer, Rennemell, Perri, Kulchesky, Kosowski, and Carter; "Eagles Wrath," piloted by Lt. Charles Giauque, with Lethers, Ott, Butler, Carl, Sumergrad, Mahan, Brown, Koon, and Taylor; "Stupen Taket," piloted by Capt. Martin McCarty, with Hill, Bennett, Bell, Dumavent, McCormack, Cardin, Engle, Pereira, and Trent.

The biggest contingent was from the 324th sqdn., with six planes listed: #069, piloted by Capt. E.D. Gaitley, with Fischer, Carr, Joslin, Simons, Harvey,

Warner, Rohn, Carse, and Jones; "Bad Penny," piloted by Lt. C.E. Cliburn, with Byington, Adkins, Cornwell, Current, Robbins, Cole, Kirkpatrick, Pope, and Nastel; "Excalibur," piloted by Lt. A. Brill, with Lowry, Ball, Brubaker, Wells, Dickson, Morgan, Woltington, Betchel, and Barber; #370, piloted by Lt. H.H. Henderson, with Zubiri, LaRoch, Simpson, Corrigan, Nettles, Phillips, Burton, Howoruoz, and Marx; "Memphis Belle," piloted by Capt. R.K. Morgan, with Freschauf, Leighton, Evans, Hanson, Loch, Scott, Winchell, Miller, and Quinlan; #970, piloted by Lt. Verinis, with Parker, Ehrenberg, Lundy, Blonshine, Murray, Smith, Radcliff, Nordland, and Burgan.

From the 401st sqdn. were four aircraft: "Invasion II," piloted by Capt. Oscar O'Neil, with Freihofer, Carmichael, Bush, Yelle, Goldstein, Borostowski, King, Lapp, and Youell; "Royal Flush,"



piloted by Lt. Earl F. Riley, with Fountain, Schwendiman, Ashinhurst, Lee, Schaeffer, Branch, Jedinak, Stewart, and Dobson; #337, piloted by Lt. N.E. Lindsey, with Slivkoff, Maiorca, Dobsa, Brandenburg, Scavello, Denefrio, Creason, Schipang, and Cagle; "Bad Egg," piloted by Capt. J. Carroll, with Frank, Brown, Bamber, Lancaster, Taylor, Sweeny, Clifton, Carter, and Davis.

As usual, weather at the take-off was bad, with heavy clouds covering the channel area and extending deep into Germany, though weather over the target was predicted to be open. Seventeen of the scheduled aircraft actually took off. Birdsong's crew took off in Delta Rebel II with a smoking engine, immediately landed and transferred to the standby plane, "Stormy Weather," and caught up with the group again at the channel. The Memphis Belle encountered engine trouble and

turned back, leaving 16 planes of the group making the mission.

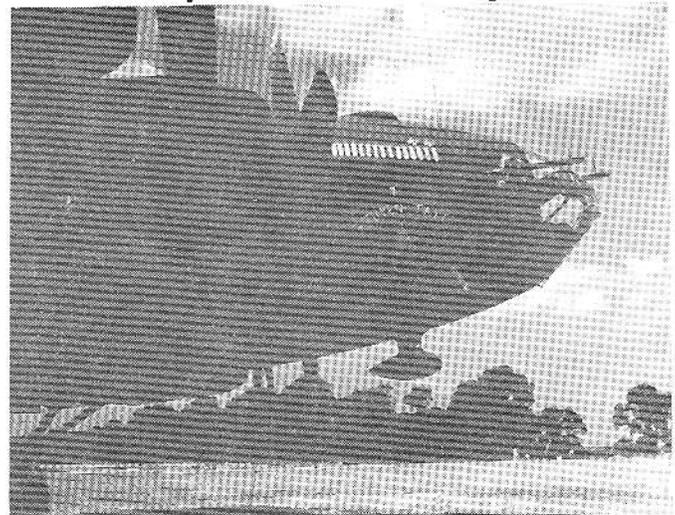
The 91st was supposed to rendezvous with the other three groups over the channel, but the weather was so bad that the groups never got together. One group turned back to base, and the other two groups dropped their bombs on the first target of opportunity and turned back also.

Reaching the coast alone, the 91st faced a difficult decision - should they try to carry out the mission alone or turn back to base? They had received no word at all on the other three groups supposed to accompany them.

Maj. Paul Fishburne, leading the group in "Chief Sly II," made the agonizing decision to carry on - "the 91st doesn't turn back!" Sixteen planes facing the toughest fighter defense of the war, the heaviest flak area, on the deepest penetration yet into Germany!

The reception was immediate, with German fighters swarming to the attack, including the crack "yellow nosed bastards." Determined to stop the attack, the Me109s and the Focke-Wulf 190s pressed their fight so close the expressions on the pilots' faces could be seen. The sky was literally alive with German fighters all the way to the target, and the flight back was no easier.

Before the target area was reached Stormy Weather was hit by Me109 cannon fire, which shot out the oxygen system on the left side, the electrical system, and part of the instruments. The bombs could not be released at the target because the bomb bay doors would not open.



Stupen-Taket went down over Hamm on the mission.

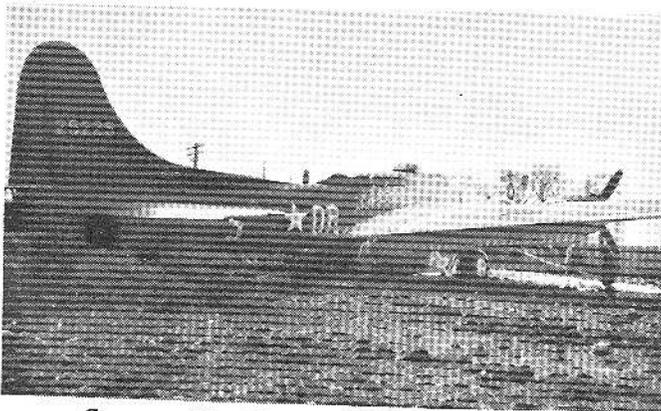
Three 91st planes went down over the target, including all the planes carrying bomb strike cameras.

Immediately after leaving the target area Stormy Weather was hit again by a salvo of 20mm. One engine was knocked out, the navigator injured, the cockpit windshield was blown out, and the co-pilot was hit and rendered unconscious. A piece of glass cut Birdsong's eye, filling it with blood and leaving him to fly with half sight. The hydraulic lines were cut and the plane limped back to Bassingbourn, landed without brakes, and wound up in a farmer's field across the road from the end of the runway.

All the remaining planes were similarly engaged, fighting desperately to stay alive. Under constant attack the thirteen struggled to the coast of the North Sea.

At that moment an Mell0 shot out the No.1 and No.3 engines of Excalibur, and No. 4 ran out of control. Out over a very stormy North Sea No. 4 quit and it was necessary to ditch into exceedingly high waves and intensely cold water. On ditching the plane broke in two at the bomb bays, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the crew was able to launch some of the life rafts and to survive the rough seas.

Three of the crew, the pilot Brill, the co-pilot Lowry, and the ball-turret gunner Morgan drowned in the six-hour battle against the North Sea, before RAF search planes located them and they were picked up by rescue boats. Five of the seven survivors returned to Bassingbourn next day; two were hospitalized.



Stormy Weather, 323rd sqdn., with hydraulic lines severed, rests in a farmer's field across the road past the end of the runway after returning from Hamm.

Badly shot up and carrying many wounded the remaining twelve staggered in to Bassingbourn, fully expecting severe reprimands for attempting such a hazardous single-group mission. Instead, Maj. Fishburne was greeted with a congratulatory message from Gen. Ira Eaker, 8th Air Force C.O., and awarded the DFC for his courageous leadership.

Capt. James Bulloch, who navigated the group through the impossible weather precisely on course and right over the target at Hamm, was awarded a DFC for his feat.

Though the photo ships had gone down over the target, a newsreel cameraman, Capt. J.R. "Tex" McCrary, of the Eighth Air Force public relations staff, who had planned to take pictures of fighter attacks and wound up firing one of the guns for a wounded crewman, got shots of the target bombing that confirmed the excellent bombing.

In the broadcast made in 1945 Ted Malone had traced the eventual fate of the men and ships that made the historic Hamm mission. Of the the 170 men who took off that day only 87 completed their combat tours and made it home. Only one of the aircraft, Careful Virgin, was still surviving two years later.

## Long Beach Rally Round

Flt. Leader Doug Gibson of Long Beach is hosting another in the series of fabulous Southern California Rally Rounds Saturday, February 23.

The evening of reminiscing, fellowship, and good eating will be held at the Jolly Roger Inn, 640 West Katella, Anaheim, a familiar spot to area 91st-ers.

Flt. Leader Gibson can be contacted at 2740 Knoxville Ave., Long Beach, Cal. 90815. Phone area code 213-425-6163.

## IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!

With the great increases in printing, postage, and all other costs we need the support of every 91st-er now more than ever before! So send your \$5 for 1974 to

Eastern Division

Joe Giambrone 303 Brookdale Avenue  
Glenside, Pa. 19038

Western Division

George Parks 109 Wilshire Avenue  
Vallejo, Cal. 94590

## From the Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett

Box 909 Auburn, Al. 36830

Maj. Gen. Wray has moved from his home in Alexandria, Va., to the "sunny south" in the pan-handle region of Florida, near Pensacola and Eglin Air Force Base. His new address is 14 Country Club Drive, Shalimar, Fla., 32579.

Flt. Lt. E.M.C. Rowe of the RAF, who is doing a complete history of the 91st, would like to hear from bombardiers and Mickey operators, and from anyone who knows about the YB-40 "Old Ironsides," especially from any crew members. Rowe says that he has been getting excellent help from former 91sters and also from official sources. He has contacted a number of former 91st members who did not yet know of the Memorial Association, and has put them in touch with us. Robert Crego, who has retired and is on an extended stay in the British Isles, visited Rowe in October. Flt. Lt. Rowe's address is:

3 Canberra Avenue  
Lindholme  
Doncaster  
Yorkshire  
DN7 6DL  
England

Bob Racicot, former Western Division treasurer, was hospitalized during December with a heart attack. Bob, who is an elementary school principal, will be off from work for at least two months.

Eastern Division committeeman Joe Camelleri, who spends many hours trying to locate "lost" 91st-ers, has added a new name to the Memorial Association rolls. He is ex-S/Sgt. Thomas R. Giordano, a former ball-turret gunner with the 91st, who was awarded the Silver Star for "unremitting devotion to duty at great personal risk." A story in the March 8, 1945 Stars and Stripes tells his story like this:

Hanging out of a Fortress five miles above Germany in sub-zero weather, held only by a thin safety belt and suffering intense pain from severe wounds, S/Sgt. Thomas R. Giordano, gunner from Nutley, N.J., continued firing his one undamaged

.50-caliber machine, driving off attacking German fighters. He destroyed one.

Just after bombs away over Merseburg, 50 Mel09s swarmed in to attack his bomber formation. As Giordano opened fire a cannon shell ripped into his ball turret, shredding the interior, wounding him, tearing the back off the turret, and damaging one of his guns.

Held in place only by his safety strap, he continued to pump lead from his one good gun.

"At the time," Giordano recalled, "I didn't realize I was hanging out over Germany. My big worry was the attacking Jerries. I framed one in my sights and let him have a couple of bursts. He went up in a puff of smoke."

His oxygen lines had been severed by the blast and he was growing faint. Pulling himself into the plane's interior, he seized one of the guns on the waist and continued firing. Not until his formation was well out of enemy territory did Giordano submit to first-aid treatment.

The October issue of Air Classics magazine had an account of the 91st aircraft Shoo Shoo Baby and her return to the Air Museum to be restored, as we reported to you in the last issue of the Irregular. The February issue has an interesting letter from Christian Peterson of Rissjov, Denmark, who knew the old baby when she belonged to the Royal Danish Air Force, and he relates her Danish history.

The Swedes presented Shoo Shoo Baby to the Danish airline carrier DDL, and she got the registration letters OY-DFA and the name STIG VIKING. In DDL livery she flew mostly on the Africa routes, all the way south to Johannesburg.

In April, 1948, she was sold to the Royal Danish Air Force and got the serial number 672 and a new name, The Great Bear. The plane was assigned to the 721st sqdn., which had and still has transport and various utility jobs to perform for the RDAF. She took part in a geographical survey of Greenland providing new maps for the Geodetic Institute. She was so popular with her crew and with the RDAF, Peterson relates, that they considered finding her a mate!