



91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

February, 1976

Florida Rally Round Outstanding Hit

The first Rally Round ever for the Orlando, Florida area October 7-8 brought more than 60 members and guests to a unique get-together at the Carlton House Resort Inn. Bob and Lora Lackey were hosts for the affair.

Receiving the English pewter mug for having traveled the greatest distance to attend was Charles Holman, of Hopkinton, Mass. Holman was pilot of the 324th sqdn. plane "Pistol Packin' Mama." He is currently and airline captain for Delta-Northeast on the Boston-Miami run. The engraved mug was donated by Jack Fearheller, 91st Flight Leader for the state of New Jersey.

Joining the ever-growing list of Life

Members was Paul McDuffee of Tampa, who donated \$100 in memory of former Group C.O. (Dec. 43-May 44) Col. Claude E. Putnam. McDuffee, who piloted "Shoo Shoo Baby," offered the memorial gift for Putnam's "tenacity and excellent performance of duties during his tenure in the 91st Bomb Group." Col. Putnam, a native of Jacksboro, Texas, died several years ago.

The Eastern Division committee members all attended the Rally Round: Paul Chryst, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Camelleri, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Gerstemeier, and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Giambrone.

Maj. Gen. Stanley T. Wray, Memorial Association president, attended from

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Attending the Orlando Rally Round were: Seated, Paul Chryst; Kneeling, George Cosgrove, Joe Giambrone, Nick Bankovsky, Sidney Maxwell, Joe Camelleri, Willis Stinson, Andy Manzano, Ed Haller, and John Ventura.

Center row, Bob Gerstemeier, Charles Kirkham, Paul McDuffee, W.W. Hill, Bob

Lackey, Gen. S.T. Wray, Bruce Bowles, Charles Hol, Frank Donofrio, Frank Kamyskowski, Bob Hare III.

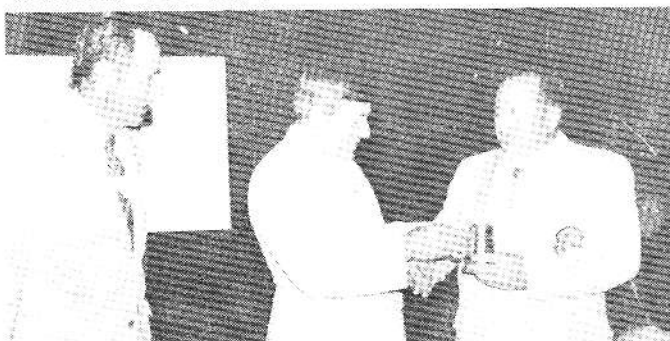
Back row, George Parks, Phil Garris, John Westberg, Howell Loper, Harry Hovermill, Dick Weitzenfeld, John Bruce, Paul Wahler, Garrett, Saunders.

Shalimar, Fla.

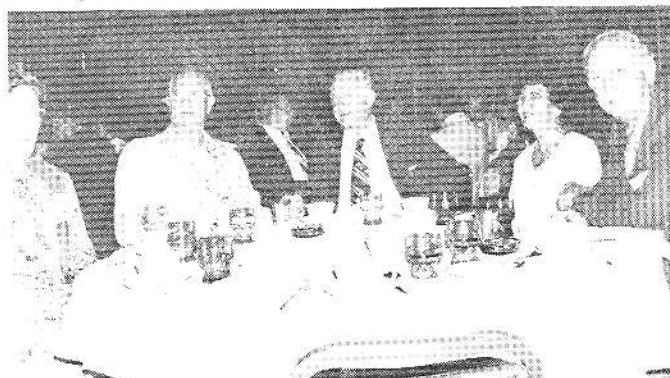
Representing the Western Division were Sec.-Treas. and Mrs. George Parks, of Vallejo, Calif.

The entire Eastern Division committee, Gen. Wray, George Parks and 20 others of the 91st went on to the first National Reunion of the 8th Air Force at Miami Beach on 10-12 October. "Lost" 91st-ers Al Brodsky, F. Pendergast, and M. Fountain joined the Memorial Association at the 8th A.F. Reunion.

Four members attended the Orlando Rally Round who were attending their first 91st function: John Bruce, George Cosgrove, Charles Kirkham, and John Westberg. Bruce and his wife Eunice attended to thank the 91st for its efforts to memorialize the gravesite where eight members of his crew are buried in Opijnen, Holland, after their plane went down on a raid to Kassel, Germany.



Eastern Division treasurer Joe Giambrone presents the English pewter mug to Charles Holman (right), pilot of "Pistol Packin' Mama" for having come the greatest distance to attend--from Hopkinton, Mass. Watching is Dick Weitzenfeld, former C.O. of the 324th sqdn. Joe was crew chief of Holman's plane after the "Memphis Belle" returned to the States.



Enjoying dinner at the Carlton House Inn are Mairian Parks, George Parks, Frank Kamykowski, Anne Kamykowski, and Phil Garriss.



Paul G. McDuffee, pilot of "Shoo Shoo Baby", whose crew flew the only single ship mission for the 91st on 9 April '44, to Marienburg, explains his Life Membership donation of \$100 to treasurer Joe Giambrone. McDuffee memorialized former 91st C.O. Col. Claude Putnam with the donation.



Col. Claude E. Putnam, former Group C.O., whose excellent performance of duties inspired McDuffee's donation to the Memorial Association.

Brief History of the 91st Bomb Group

Second Installment

The high altitude daylight missions which followed enabled the 91st Group to improve its precision bombing. On 18 March the submarine building yards at Vegasack were hit; strike photos brought back by combat crews indicated that not a bomb dropped by the 91st was wasted. Four days later the 91st, flying lead position of the 1st Bombardment Wing, attacked the pocket battleship Admiral Sheer and harbor installations at Wilhelmshaven. Although harassed by enemy fighters and accurate anti-aircraft fire, the Group completed its bomb run before being forced to take evasive action. No direct hit was reported on the battleship, but severe damage was inflicted on the harbor facilities. Nine of the twenty-one aircraft of the 91st sustained major battle damage, and the Group was officially credited with five enemy aircraft destroyed, one probably destroyed, and one known to have been damaged.

The 91st, flying lead position in a raid on the Focke-Wulf aircraft factory in Bremen on 17 April, inflicted major damage on the target. losing six aircraft in the action. Returning planes were damaged to the extent that the following day's mission was cancelled when it was found that sufficient aircraft could not become airborne in time.

By August, when the organization completed its first year of combat operations, 70 missions had been accomplished, although over 130 missions had been planned and briefed. Unfavorable weather hampered operations during the summer, but several missions were outstanding. On 22 June the 91st flew lead position for the VIII Bomber Command's strike on the synthetic rubber plant at Huls, Germany. This was the deepest penetration the unit had yet made into enemy territory. Enemy fighter and anti-aircraft fire were concentrated on the 91st Group, which lost five aircraft in the action. The unit was officially credited with nine enemy aircraft destroyed, two probably destroyed, and four damaged. Three days later, a mission to Hamburg was so hampered by adverse weather that neither the primary nor the secondary targets could be bombed, and the organization made its bomb run on Emden and a nearby airfield. It could not tell how effectual were the results for the target was completely obscured by clouds. During July ten missions were accomplished, one more than the 91st had previously flown in any month. During August several missions were below standard, but the one to Schweinfurt, Germany, on the 17th brought many commendations to the 91st Group. This deep penetration mission required the organization to spend more time over enemy territory than any previous mission. The VIII Bomber Command was attacked by an estimated 300 enemy fighters as it flew over the coast of the mainland and approached Antwerp. The attack continued in intermittent waves all the way to the target, and from the target all the way back to the English Channel. Ten of the nineteen planes sent out by the 91st failed to return. Bomb damage to the ball bearing works was extensive and direct hits were made on the factory proper, the power house, two machine shops, a large office building, several storage sheds, railroad sidings, and freight cars. Two days later, when another mission was assigned, the 91st had seven flyable planes, but ground crews worked all night and had another plane ready for the mission in the morning. The 381st Group, which had lost 11 aircraft in the Schweinfurt raid, joined the 91st in putting 15 planes up for the strike on an airdrome at Gilse Rijen.

One of the most outstanding examples of precision bombing during the war occurred on 9 October, when the 91st Group almost completely destroyed the Focke-Wulf factory at Anklam. Clouds of smoke from raging fires were reported rising to 20,000 feet. As a result of continuous and vicious attacks by enemy fighters and accurate and intense flak, five of the 91st's planes failed to return and the rest of the Group's planes which took part in the mission were damaged severely. Schweinfurt's ball bearing factories were hard hit again on 14 October, 1943, when many direct strikes caused major fires in the factory area. The 91st lost one plane and destroyed three enemy

aircraft. Throughout the fall and winter months the 91st ranged over France and deep into Germany to bomb submarine bases, airdromes, industrial installations, marshalling yards, and port facilities.

On 5 January the 91st Group attacked Tours, France, and claimed it was the first bombardment group in the European Theater of Operations to complete 100 missions. Adverse weather conditions, so prevalent throughout most of 1943, continued to hamper operations. Of the 16 missions for which the Group became airborne, only 8 were completed. The outstanding mission of the period occurred on 11 January 1944, when the 91st's B-17s hit and extensively damaged the Focke-Wulf plant at Oschersleben, Germany. Enemy fighter action was aggressively persistent; four of the B-17s were shot down on the flight to the target, and one more B-17 was lost over the target. Out of the 210 enemy aircraft destroyed on this strike made by the 1st Bombardment Division, the 91st was officially credited with 38. The Group shared the Presidential Unit Citation awarded to the Division for the action.

Not until March did weather improve, and with better weather the bombardment groups went into all-out action. The 91st participated in 15 missions, the greatest number yet accomplished during any month of its combat operations. On 3 March the Group set out to strike Berlin for the first time, but the attack had to be abandoned because of the weather, and Wilhelmshaven was bombed with unseen results. On 4 March the weather again caused the cancellation of the scheduled Berlin strike, and bombs were dropped on Cologne. Not until 22 March was Berlin bombed by the 91st Group.

Early in June 1944 the 91st Group was assigned tactical targets for the first time. On 2, 3, 4, and 5 June it hit gun emplacements and troop concentrations in the Cherbourg area. On D-Day, 6 June, 36 aircraft of the 91st bombed gun positions at La Riveria, knocking out many of the batteries that otherwise would have concentrated firepower on the troops making the beachhead landings. On 22 June the Eighth and Fifteenth Airforce used all available aircraft--2,000 bombers--in the heaviest daylight assault yet made on Berlin. By the end of the month the 91st Group had completed 22 missions, the top monthly record for the 91st to this time.

On 19 July 1944 the 91st Group flew its 200th mission, a strike on the airdrome at Lechfeld. In a mission to Leipzig the following day, the 91st inflicted serious damage on enemy installations but lost eight of its B-17s. On 24 and 25 July it flew tactical missions in support of ground troops in the St. Lo sector, bombing enemy troop positions designated by the pilot of a low-flying Piper Cub which belonged to the artillery unit the 91st was assigned to support.

During August, as in May, the 91st flew 19 missions; the most outstanding being the strike on 16 August, when the Group's excellent precision bombing literally flattened the aircraft factory at Halle. Six aircraft, all from the 324th squadron, were lost on this raid. Only on one other mission had the losses been from one squadron--the 401st had lost six aircraft in the strike against the Focke-Wulf airplane factory at Bremen on 17 April 1943. By the end of the month the 91st Group had completed 11 raids over Berlin.

The 91st Group dropped propaganda leaflets for the first time on 3 September, when five aircraft dropped leaflets over Karlsruhe, Saarbrücken, Neunkirchen, Hamburg, Mainz, Speyer, Mannheim, Frankenthal, Luxembourg, and Trier. Other targets assigned during September, October, and November were airfields, factories, marshalling yards, and oil facilities. As weather worsened, bombing was accomplished by PFF (Pathfinder Force); during November 1944 only one out of 11 missions was visual. On 3 November the Group struck what was then considered the toughest target--the synthetic oil facilities at Merseburg. Although the precision bombing was superb and resulted in extensive and severe damage, the raid was disastrous for the 91st. The Group lost 15 aircraft and 14 crews--its greatest loss in a single mission during World War II.

During December 1944 the 91st Group struck 10 different targets in 11 raids ranging from strategic attacks on marshalling yards and oil centers to tactical attacks on communications centers in support of the Allied armies engaged in the Battle of the

Bulge. Cologne was hit four times during January 1945. On 3 February the Allied air forces concentrated its air power on an all-out onslaught against Berlin. At one time during the day, bombers stretched all the way from the Dutch frontier to Berlin, 300 miles away. The preceding night the RAF had used 1,000 heavy bombers against troop concentrations at Weisbaden, Karlsruhe, Mannheim, and Magdeburg and the synthetic oil plant at Wanne-Erekel in the Ruhr sector; and Russian forces had struck Germany from the East.

Concentrated attacks of the Allied Forces on 22 February were aimed at covering all secondary rail systems in the hope of completely disrupting German rail traffic. The 91st's target was the rail center at Stendal. More than 6,000 aircraft of the Eighth, Ninth, Fifteenth, and Second Tactical Air Forces, and the United Kingdom's RAF co-operated in the effort. The heavy and medium bombers dumped tons of high explosives on rail facilities and bridges, while Allied fighter planes flew the deck strafing every moving means of transportation from motor convoys and bicycles to row boats.

During March the 91st Group equaled its Kune 1944 record of 22 missions, hitting targets both strategic and tactical. The latter, flown in support of the Allied push across the Rhine, hit bridges, rail systems, and airfields. On 24 March the 91st flew two missions in support of the actual Rhine crossing.

Fifteen strikes were made between 1 and 25 April: eight hits on rail communications, six against airfields, two on ordnance depots, one against an underground oil depot, and one on a heavily defended area near Royan on the Gironde River. The Group's last offensive mission--its 340th--was flown on 25 April against Pilsen. In May the 91st flew four missions to evacuate 2,454 prisoners of war from Linz and Barth airdromes.

Alerted for early redeployment to the United States and later reassignment to the Pacific Theater of Operations, the 91st Group sailed aboard the Queen Elizabeth on 25 June and docked at New York City five days later. The organization moved to Drew Field, Tampa, Florida, for a period of retraining, which came to an end with the cessation of hostilities in the Pacific. On 7 November 1945 the 91st Bombardment Group was inactivated.

Redesignated the 91st Reconnaissance Group, the unit was activated and organized as a Very Long Range, Photo organization on 1 July 1947 at Andrews Field, Maryland. Just over a year later the 91st Group, still a record unit of one officer and one airman, was transferred to McGuire Field, New Jersey. Personnel for group headquarters were assigned from the 16th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, Special, an organization attached to the 91st Group.

A training program, approved in December 1947, went into operation on 2 October 1948, when the Group began to train other units in electronics countermeasures. The first unit instructed by the 324th squadron graduated from the electronics course by the end of the month. By the end of the year additional groups had been trained.

In 1950 the organization was still understrength and unable to meet all its assigned reconnaissance projects. Group headquarters and the 323d Squadron had no capability for reconnaissance photography, while the 324th, which did, was committed to the training of students. Consequently the projects had to be carried out by the 7th Geodetic Squadron, which accomplished many prior to its inactivation on 6 July. Activated at the same time, the 322d Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Mapping, took over the personnel and many of the duties previously assigned to the Geodetic unit. During the summer months transition flying training to jet aircraft was completed, and during September 1950 the 323d Squadron was equipped with RB-45 jet aircraft. Late in 1950 the headquarters of the 91st Wing and 91st Group were consolidated and in February 1951 the Group returned to record status of 1 officer and 1 airman. Tactical squadrons, previously operating under group authority, were placed directly under the control of Wing headquarters. Just over a year later, on 28 May 1952, the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Group was inactivated at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio

Would You Believe Flying Ice Worms?

By Paul G. McDuffee

Editor's Note: One of the regular features at every Rally Round and Reunion is the "tall tales contest," when members try to top each other with unusual true experiences. Here is the winner at the Orlando Rally Round, narrated by Col. Paul G. McDuffee, who flew "Shoo Shoo Baby" for the 91st. Before joining the 91st McDuffee flew with the RAF.

As my reward for executing an 88 degree bank at slightly less than 100 feet altitude, with throttles almost completely retarded, while trying to turn on "final" with the "stage commander" as my passenger, I washed out of Class 40-A, U.S. Army Air Corps Flying Cadets, with a total of 13 hours and 12 minutes of dual instruction. Licking my wounds I fled to Canada after a short period of self-pity and allied myself with those stalwart RCAF men determined to succeed.

During training I was fortunate to meet and spend substantial time with some of the men of the Royal Norwegian Air Force who were training on Star Island near Toronto. One of these was Bernt Balchen, long famous as an arctic flyer of vast experience. It was he who first told me about "ICE Worms"! His stories about his encounters with these infrequently seen and strange creatures were so amazing that were it not of his unimpeachable integrity I would not have believed at all.

Little pink colored creatures, actual worms, about one-half to three-fourths of an inch long, and about as big around as a silk worm, or what we call a measuring worm. Found only in extremely cold, frigid climates, (U.S. Arctic and Canada), they are believed to have originally entered this continent from Russia and Tibet (in the Karakoram and Kun Lun ranges). It is believed that they were carried by the jet streams, sucked into these currents from the winds aloft screaming through and among the crags of these 25 to 30-thousand foot peaks, and deposited similarly in the Arctic and Canada. They subsist on lichens and various kinds of frozen vegetation, and are unable to survive at temperatures above freezing or below zero, preferring 28 to 32 degrees. They burrow 20 to 30 into glaciers to keep warm.

Pilot Balchen told of seeing them on the leading edge of his wings and propeller bosses in ice build-up thereon in conditions of extreme icing.

For my part of the story, I have only encountered them once, while flying an RAF Lancaster back from a middle of winter raid supposed to Mulhausen. Blown widely south of course by unpredicted winds aloft, we jettisoned bombs over the peaks of the Penine Alps and headed for home. Encountering heavy icing, there was build-up on several parts of the aircraft. In our defrosting operations one great chunk of ice broke off of the prop boss and in some way lodged inside the bottom of the nacelle of the engine, where the slip-stream and refrigeration process plus the winter temperature maintained it with minimal to no melting.

Upon landing and taxiing to the hardstanding area, lack of slipstream and increased engine heat melted the chunk, allowing it to drop out of the nacelle at the feet of "Chiefie Pike," the crew chief. Observing it in detail, and incredulous, he called to me, "Hey Mac, look here at what's the hell's this?" Lo and behold, there in this blob of ice about the size of a softball were about eight or ten little pink worms, wiggling as if in their death throes in their little spaces. "ICE WORMS"!! How amazing, how utterly amazing! Balchen was right! His story was real after all!

What to do? How to preserve them? Nothing on the airdrome open at this time of the morning, no refrigeration, nowhere to save them. Chiefie stuck them in an old pail and packed snow around them, but with the ground temperature at 35 or 36, he said they were all disappeared next morning, nothing but water and some little white balls floating around in it. No worms! I haven't seen any since, but "flying ice worms" do exist, as Bernt Balchen and I know from experience!

Plan Now--Pike's Peak Or Bust July 7

What promises to be one of the largest National Reunions yet is gathering momentum daily as more reservations are pouring in following distribution of information flyers to all listed former 91sters.

The 1976 National Reunion Committee, headed up by Glenn V. Boyce and Col. Paul D. Jessop USAF (Ret) has worked up a truly outstanding program to make the event a memorable occasion. The Colorado scenery alone is enough to make a trip there a unique vacation.

Registration day, Wednesday, July 7, will feature "Pene's Pub" and an evening social hour. Members registering are reminded to bring their 1976 membership cards since they will be needed for signing in.

A tour of the Air Force Academy with lunch at the Officers Open Mess is set for Thursday. In the evening the Group will have a Western Barbecue Dinner at the Flying W Guest Ranch, and tour Old West Town.

On Friday there will be a tour of the North American Air Defense Command.

Friday night movies of the 91st B.G. in action will be shown.

The Reunion Banquet will be held Saturday night, July 10.

Members who expect to attend and who have not yet sent in their registration forms are reminded to do this as soon as possible to Glenn V. Boyce, 1874 South Hoyt St., Lakewood, Co. 80226.

Room reservations must be made directly to the Four Seasons Motor Inn, 2886 S. Circle Drive, Colorado Springs, Colo., not later than June 15.

Continental Airlines is offering 91st members special group rates for flights to Colorado Springs for the National Reunion. Groups of 10 or more can get round trip rates of: Chicago, \$137; Seattle, \$157; Portland \$151; Albuquerque \$64; Los Angeles \$129; El Paso \$93; San Antonio \$117; Houston \$124. Independent returns are allowed. Continental has more flights to Colorado Springs than any other airline.



This shot of Bassingbourn was made in 1968 by an RAF Canberra. Since then the long leg of one runway had been removed.



Members of the Red Cross staff at the Bull in Cambridge are Meredith Smith, Knoxville, Tenn., Phoebe Kilner, Bury St. Edmunds, Elsie Stevens, New York City, Blanche Cook, Bennington, Vt., and Eugenia Horton, White Plains, N.Y.

From the Editor's Desk...

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

Response to the query to Eastern Division members about The Ragged Irregular mailing system was very light. Only 15 cards were sent to Gen. Wray, of which one-third were dissatisfied and the others content. Most dissatisfaction was directed at the short time lead for Rally Round announcements rather than actual delivery time of the R/I.

Among the many notes received about the upcoming National Reunion was one from Lumir Tomanek, of Truscott, Texas. Lumir lost a foot in an accident on his ranch in 1975, but he says "I'm looking forward to seeing my old buddies in Colorado Springs." In the meantime Lumir would appreciate hearing from his many friends. His address is P.O. Box 331, Truscott, Texas 79260.

We have learned that 91st-er Lester C. Pierce died at his home in Centerville, Tenn., Sunday, Nov. 16, of a heart attack. Lester operated at radio and TV repair shop and was a farmer. Mrs. Pierce resides at 111 West End St., Centerville, Tenn. 37033.

Last issue we featured the new Monogram model kit of the 322nd sqdn. plane "Chowhound." The kit led to finding a new Memorial Association member, Roland R. Michel, of Moorhead, Minn. Roland was tail gunner for Jerry Newquist on the plane but had not heard anything of his old pilot since the war. His son bought a kit, Roland saw from the inclosed write-up that Jerry was living in Seattle and called him the next morning. Jerry told Roland about the Memorial Association and we located another "lost one."

A British model aircraft builder, Barrie J. Railton, of 46, Foxwarren, Claygate, Surrey KT10 0JZ, England, is building a six-foot, six-inch wing span flying scale model of the 323rd sqdn. bomber "Outhouse Mouse" and has written to the Memorial Association for details of the plane. Any of you who flew or worked on "Outhouse Mouse" might drop Barrie a note. A photo of a similar model

he sent could easily pass for the real thing.

Former 91st tail gunner Gail R. Garner died of a heart attack Friday, Sept. 5, at the Charleston, Il., Community Memorial Hospital. Gail had been president of the Charleston Production Credit Association since 1960. His wife lives at 730 Tenth St., Charleston, Il. 61920.

Members of the 96th Bomb Group, who were stationed at Snetterton Heath, are attempting to rejuvenate the 96th Bomb Group Assn. (H). If any 91st-ers know former members of this group tell them to contact: Robert W. Owens, 900 S. Western Ave. 2, Chicago, Ill. 60612.

Memorial Association Plaque Available



An outstanding plaque featuring the 91st Bomb Group medallion in full color is available from member George Odenwaller, who flew in the well-known "Outhouse Mouse" of the 323rd sqdn.

The medallion, is of three-dimensional molded plastic in brilliant color, mounted on a walnut base.

A number of 91st-ers already have the plaques proudly hanging on their walls as a memento of the Association. Members desiring plaques can obtain them directly from Odenwaller. The price is \$20. His address is: George H. Odenwaller, 5 Forrest Drive, Hillsdale, N.J. 07642.