



91st Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association Newsletter

Vol. 10 No. 1

April, 1977

Cal. State Rally Has Record Number

Carrying on their tradition of staging an annual February California State Rally Round at Anaheim, 119 ex-91st-ers and guests had another outstanding get-together February 5. Members from many parts of the country joined the California contingent.

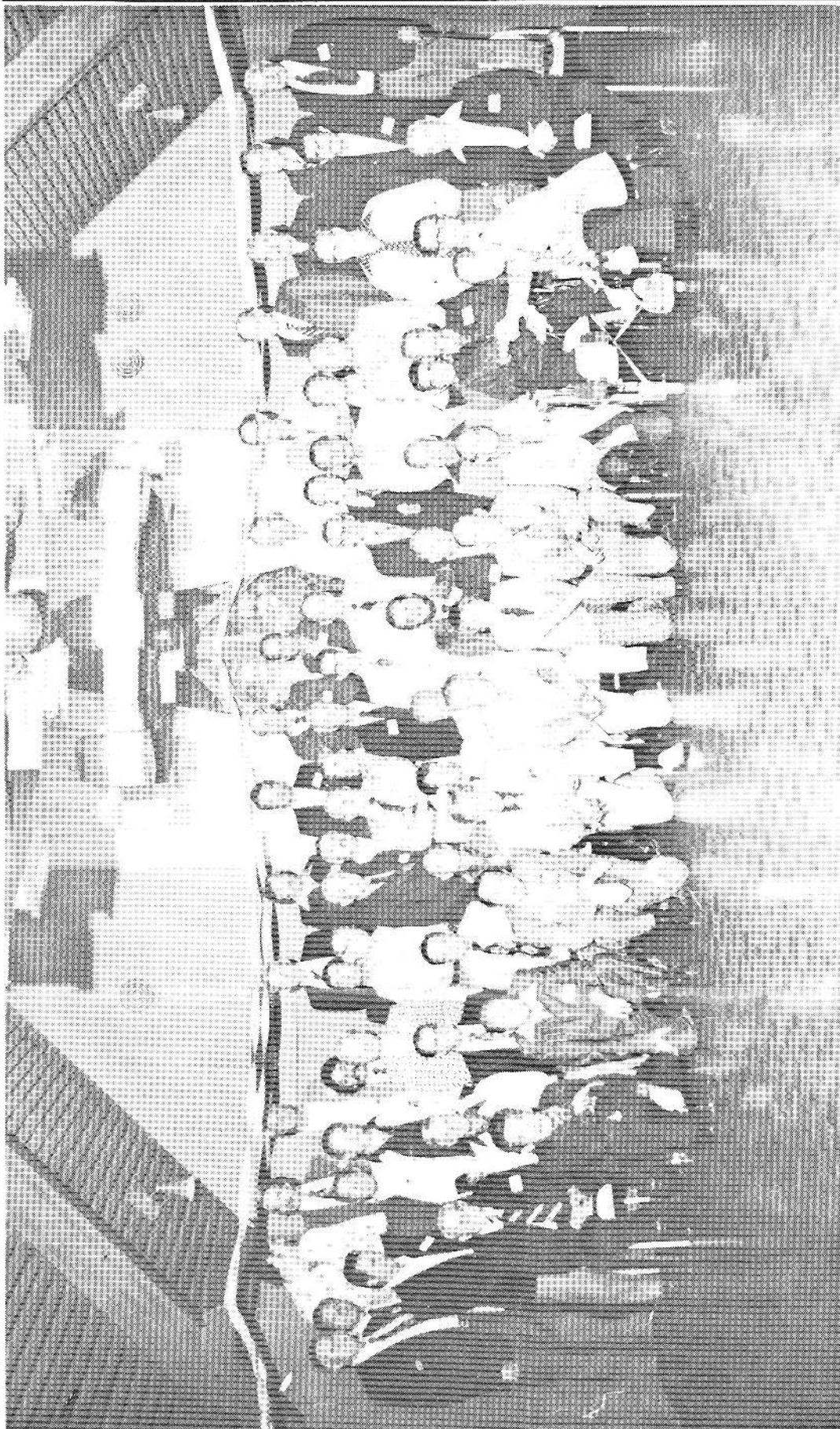
The affair got under way unofficially on Friday night when the host committee and a number of out-of-state members and early arrivals held an impromptu cocktail party in "Pene's Pub."

On Saturday the Rally Round officially began with sign in and the opening of Pene's Pub. At 6 p.m. a no host cocktail party gathered in the main ballroom of the Jolly Roger Inn.

One hundred eight attended the official dinner. Master of Ceremonies Bruce Moore presented a taped message from Association President Maj. Gen. S.T. Wray, and Association Vice-President Col. Tom Gunn spoke to the group.



Col. Tom Gunn presents ex-401ster John Mikesell with his Life Membership award, the "Rigid Digit Hand". Wife Delores, who surprised John with the gift, looks on with pleasure.



Attending the Rally Round at Anaheim Feb. 5 were: Front row, kneeling, Pene, Anderson, House, Giambrone, Letalien, Hohler, Powell, Claville, Mikesell, Packard. Second row, Prideaux, Baird, Thissell, Mott, Paget, Letalien, Kaech, Vender, Hurd, Winslow, Wright, Elroy, Christiansen. Third row: Sharkady, Standich, Puls, Clapp, Newby, Tomek, Mooney, Boyce, Gunn, Brechler, Gaffney, Rothermel, Marzo. Fourth row: McCombs, Burman, Maiorca, Keneley, Petzschler, Guldner, Thomsen, Coffey, Stevens, Moore, Munoz, Hudson, Jones, Parks. Fifth row: Thomas, S. Jones, Page, Newlin, Mel Boyce, Williams, Allen, Sink, McCauley, Starcer.

Eastern Division Treasurer Joe Giambrone told the members of a proposed new 91st memorial to be built at the Basingbourn main gate.

The "mug" for the member who travelled the greatest distance to attend went to Maj. and Mrs. Larry Baird USAF (Ret) who drove from Lynnwood, Wash., to attend. Past winners of the award who were present but not eligible were Bill Thissell of Charleston, Ill., and Virgil Mott of Tulsa, Okla. Joe Giambrone, of Glenside, Pa., was not eligible since he was an official of the Association.

The surprise of the evening was when the Order of the Rigid Digit for a Life Membership was presented to John Mikesell of Bapchule, Ariz., by Col. Gunn. John's wife Dolores donated the \$100 for his life membership.

Robert H. "Bob" Racicot (ex-441st Sub Depot) was presented with a desk pen set for his work with the Association since 1966 in printing of Rally Round and Reunion programs and flyers.

After dinner the group danced to music in the Glenn Miller style from a tape donated by associate member David Crow of Steeple Morden, England. The music was taped at the Million Airs Anniversary Concert at Royal Albert Hall in London.

Special thanks were given to Aubin R. Pene and Bob Letalien for their work in operation "Pene's Pub" and to Rosie and Debbie Ortega who ran the sign-in desk.

Attending were: (from out-of-state), Col. and Mrs. Thomas H. Gunn, Arlington, Texas; Mr. and Mrs. John Mikesell, Bapchule, Ariz.; Maj. and Mrs. Lawrence E. Baird (Ret), Lynnwood, Wash; Mr. and Mrs. Joe Giambrone, Glenside, Pa.; Mrs. Midge Babinski and Mrs. Elsie Green, Phoenix, Ariz.; Mr. and Mrs. Glenn V. Boyce, Lakewood, Colo.; Mr. and Mrs. William D. Thissell, Charleston, Ill.; Mr. Logan Page, Reno, Nev.; M/Sgt. and Mrs. Delmar Kaech (Ret), Prescott, Ariz.; Mr. Virgil Mott, Tulsa, Okla.; LTC. and Mrs. Charles M. Mooney (Ret), Tacoma, Wash., and Col. Merle Mitchell (Ret), Tacoma, Wash.

From California were: Mr. & Mrs. William E. Guldner, Mr. & Mrs. Horst Petzschler, Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Wright, Mr. & Mrs. A. Winfield Jones, Mrs. Rosie Ortega, Miss Ellen Ortega, Miss Debbie Ortega, Mr. & Mrs. Phillip R. Taylor, Mr. & Mrs. Raymond S. Blaich, Mr. & Mrs. Dick Anderson,



Wives attending the California State Rally Round were, Front row: Elroy, Starcer, Cahill, House, Giambrone, Baird, Vender, Kaech, Parks, Ortega, Mooney. Second row: Anderson, D. Ortega, McCombs, Paget, Maiorca, Burman, Boyce, Brechler, Babinski, Green, Wright, Christiansen

Third row: Moore, Marshall, Tomek, Allen, Gunn, Powell, Thomsen, Pene, Gaffney, Taylor, Blaich. Back row: Guldner, Thissell, Jones, Millie Jones.

M/Sgt. & Mrs. George Parks (Ret), M/Sgt. & Mrs. Eugene Letalien (Ret).

Mrs. Joan Cochran, Mr. Melvin Boyce, Miss Cindy Marshall, Mr. Richard Munõz, Lt. & Mrs. Harry S. House (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Moore, LTC Harold Packard (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Thomsen, Mr. Charles E. Newlin, Mrs. Goldie Cahill, Mr. & Mrs. Rocco Maiorca, SMS & Mrs. John Paget (Ret), Mr. Dave Hohler Jr., Mrs. Marian M. Hohler, Mr. Melvin Andrews.

Mr. & Mrs. Robert S. Puls, Mr. & Mrs. Aubin Pene, LTC. & Mrs. John R. McCombs (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Jack Gaffney, Mr. & Mrs. C. Carlton Brechler, Mr. & Mrs. Stan Jones, Mr. Frank T. Keneley Jr., LTC. & Mrs. Robert M. Stevens (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Tomek, Mr. & Mrs. George Vender.

Mr. & Mrs. William D. Allen, Mr. John Hurd, Mr. & Mrs. Arvin McCauley, Maj. Edward P. Winslow (Ret), LTC & Mrs. Ben Newby (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Ammon Powell, Mr. & Mrs. Chris Christiansen, Mr. Thomas M. Coffey, Miss Anne Mullins, Mr. & Mrs. Kermit Burman, M/Sgt. Leslie Claville (Ret), Mr. Howard Williams, Mr. & Mrs. Tony Starcer, Mrs. Clara Smith, Miss Lois Scott.

Mr. Robert L. Marzo, Mr. Robert H. Clapp, CWO Gerald G. Rothermel (Ret), M/Sgt. Granville Prideaux (Ret), Mr. Robert Standish, Mr. John Thomas, Mr. Louis Sharkedy, Mr. & Mrs. George G. Sharp Jr., Mr. Charles S. Hudson, Mr. Aubrey H. Capps, Mr. & Mrs. Williams, Mr. Mario Dalessi, Mr. & Mrs. Robert G. Elroy.



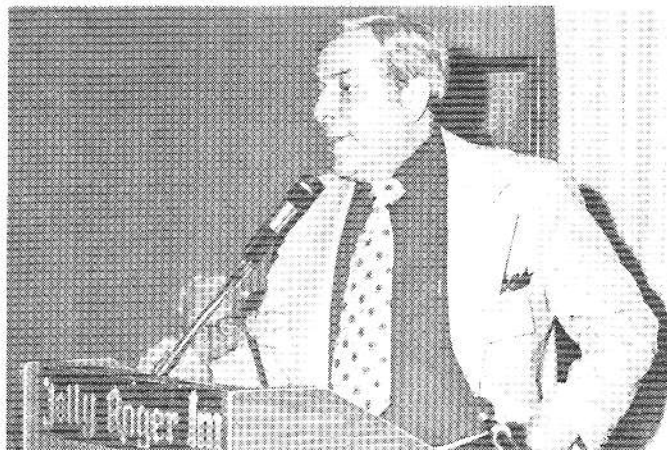
Col. Gunn presents Maj. Larry Baird (Ret) with the mug for coming the greatest distance to attend.



M.C. Bruce Moore addresses members. Col. Tom Gunn, Group vice-president, seated.



Bob Racicot receives a desk pen set from Western Division secretary George Parks for his services to the Group since 1966.



Eastern Division treasurer Joe Giambrone explains the proposed new Basingbourn memorial to the Rally Round audience.

Museum Redone; New Memorial Proposed

The 91st's stay at Bassingbourn during 1942-45 will be more prominently and permanently memorialized if present plans by Base Officials, the East Anglia Aviation Society and Memorial Association members are completed.

Already underway is a complete renovation and enlargement of the present 91st Control Tower Museum.

Col. C.D. Piggins, who was C.O. at Bassingbourn when the control tower was first set up as a museum and who hosted the 91st during "Operation One More Time" has been promoted to full colonel and posted away to the British Army on the Rhine in Germany.

The new commanding officer is Lt. Col. Hugh Du. V. Lohan. He is extremely keen on preserving the flying history of Bassingbourn, and has decided a more permanent museum must exist dedicated to the 91st Bomb Group. The whole control tower has now been approved for a museum complex, and it is being completely rewired, reroofed, new central heating added, redecorated to wartime colors (olive drab), new toilet facilities and wash basins added, and aluminum and glass display cases with spotlight points installed.

The East Anglian Aviation Society will continue and expand their handling of museum planning and exhibits. David Crow, secretary of EAAS, has received a number of photos and mementoes since the 1974 Bassingbourn reunion, but he points out that with the renovations there is firm assurance that items such as flight jackets, uniforms, decorations, clothing, personal memories, badges, etc., will be extremely secure and exhibited in a healthy even temperature for all to see.

"We aim to make this museum a showpiece of a WW2 Bomber Group and we can only do it with the help of you 91st-ers," Crow points out. "Any members who have material are urged to send it along. We would also like to receive items on a two or three-year loan basis."

An expert from the Imperial War Museum, Cyril McCann, will be the technical adviser. Among the exhibits will be a large model of Station 121 as it looked in 1944 complete with aircraft in their dispersals. A very experienced member of the EAAS has undertaken the project and he requests an aerial picture of Station 121 (with A/C on the ground if anyone in the Memorial Association has one).

91st-ers with material for the museum are asked to send them to:

David Crow
Company Secretary
East Anglian Aviation Society
Rutland House
Hay Street
Steeple Morden
Royston, Herts.
England

A grant of £2000 has been made for the renovation and improvement.

To further perpetuate the memory of the 91st a proposal for a permanent memorial with a stone marker to be erected on the grounds and close to the main gate at Bassingbourn is under consideration. Eastern Division Chairman Paul Chryst has done the preliminary planning of the memorial and attendant installation ceremonies. Final plans will be subject to Group approval.

The memorial would be undertaken jointly with the East Anglian Aviation Society, who have consented to handle the on-site details. Sec. David Crow of the EAAS and associate member of the 91st, is serving as British Liaison Officer for the Group.

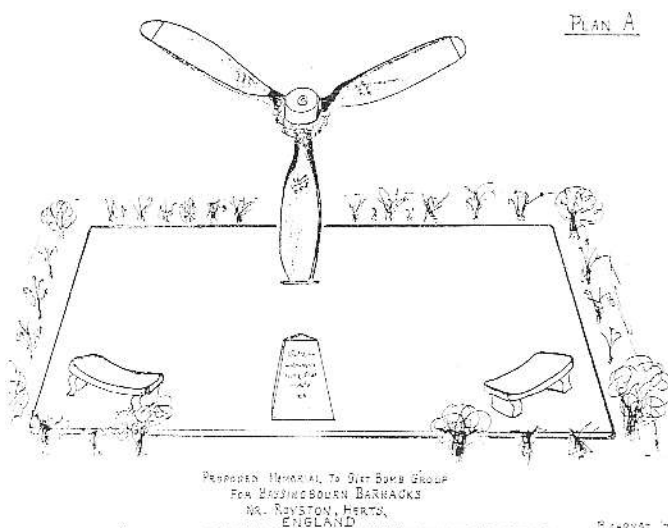
Permission for the erection of the memorial within the gates of Bassingbourn has been granted. Specific details on the exact design, costs of

the project, etc., have not yet been completed, but several plans have been examined. Proposed is a 20 by 20 concrete base, with a B-17 prop mounted on a stone post in the center, with a polished Cornish stone engraved marker. The site would be suitably landscaped.

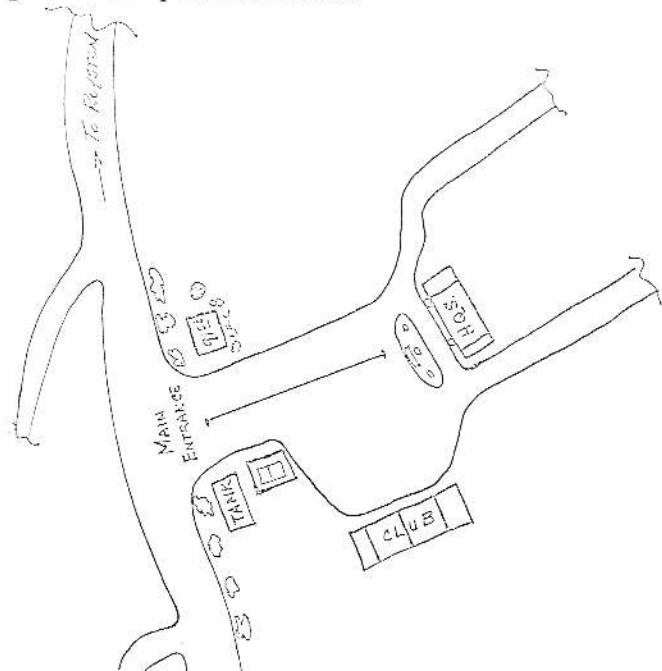
Since 1977 is the Queen's Silver Jubilee the station will be too busy this year to take on the dedication of the 91st memorial so a tentative date of May 1, 1978 has been proposed for dedication if the plan is adopted by the Group.

A one-week charter flight to the dedication ceremonies is also being considered. On-base activities being planned include a tribute concert to Glenn Miller in the old 324th Sqdn. hangar and an airshow by the famous "Red Arrows" of the RAF demonstration team.

Complete details on plans and costs of the proposed project will be presented to Group members as soon as they are complete.



A memorial similar to this has been proposed for Bassingbourn. The approved design provides that the prop will be mounted on a stone post for easy maintenance and greater permanence.



Rocky Mountain Rally Set

A Rocky Mountain Rally Round has been set for Saturday, May 7, at Cheyenne, Wyo. The event, honchoed by Colorado Flt. Leader Glenn Boyce, will be held at Holding's Little America, at the junction of Interstates 80 and 25.

The Rally Round will officially get under way at 6 p.m. with a cocktail party in the Rouge Room, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Films and visiting with old buddies will follow dinner.

This is a family affair and children are welcome. The registration fee is \$7.50 per person inclusive. Dress is informal.

Persons planning to attend should contact Glenn Boyce not later than April 22 for reservations. His address is 1874 South Hoyt St., Lakewood Col. 80226. Phone area code 303 986-8040.

Memphis Rally Announced

A southern states Rally Round is on tap in Memphis, Tenn., July 1-2-3, headed by Life Member Frank Donofrio.

Details of the event are not yet complete, but as members who attended our first national reunion there in 1967 know, the area offers a real treat. Memphis will also be the site of the 1978 National Reunion.

Flyers will be sent to area members with details of the meeting, but others who wish to attend should contact Frank Donofrio, P.O. Box 13252, Memphis, Tenn., 38113 for information.

'Low & Slow,' But Bad News for Nazis

A bullet-shattered Flying Fortress, struggling back from Germany on two engines, roared down the main streets of German towns and used trees for cover from pursuing fighters as it limped along sometimes at less than tree-top height.

Two Messerschmitts which tackled the Fortress deep inside Germany hung on until the coast was reached. Between attacks they flew like an escort on either side of the bomber, about 1000 yards away.

When the Fortress, "Spirit of '44," crossed the coast it was so low that the gunners on flak towers had to shoot down at it.

But the bomber, which had taken part in the great raid on the Messerschmitt plant at Oschersleben, got back to England-- with all its crew uninjured and ten German fighters to its credit.

Over the target fighters had shot out two of the engines and "killed" the oxygen system. A 20mm. shell had exploded in the wings and the bomb bay doors, which had been hit, were partly open. Then began the chase between crippled bomber and Me.s, a race that lasted for an hour and a half and spread over 200 miles.

The pilot, First Lieutenant E.V. Greer, alternately dived, climbed, then dived again to skim along the ground, barely avoiding electric cables.

"Whenever possible we flew below tree-top level, alongside a wooded area," he said. "Every time we saw a village, we pulled over and flew down the streets, so that fighters would have to shoot into their own houses to shoot at us."

Three times the exhausted crew prepared for a crash landing inside enemy territory. The bombardier smashed his precious bomb-sight. The gunners took off flying boots and put on field shoes, and divided up their cigarettes. But the "Spirit of 44" kept going.

On the way to Oschersleben, the bomber fought its way through the greatest air battle in history.

The bombardier, Second Lieutenant L.R. Dobbs, firing from the new Fortress "chin" turret, claimed the destruction of three F.W. 190s. Technical Sergeant C.W. Lekowski also claimed three planes. Sergeant Muller, the tail gunner, destroyed two.

The ball turret gunner, S/Sergeant E.J. Kroger, claimed one F.W. 190, and the tenth fighter was claimed by S/Sergeant J. E. Purton, the waist gunner.

When the "Spirit of '44" landed there were 250 bullet holes criss-crossing all through the craft. The nose was shot away, and there was a hole eighteen inches in diameter in the radio room.

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, AL 36830

Latest 91st-er to become a Life Member is Bob Lackey, of Orlando, Fla. Bob was a teletype operator with the 322nd sqdn. 1942-45. He and his wife Lora hosted the Orlando Rally Round of October, 1975, and have made all the national reunions.

A new national television series titled "The World at Peace" features the 91st as part of its first show. The 13-week non-commercial

program will interview former soldiers, sailors and airmen who have taken an active role toward memorializing the battles fought and won in the effort to preserve peace since 1917.

Paul Chryst, Eastern Division chairman, ex-401st bombardier on "Time's A'Wastin'", was interviewed in the initial show and describes the objectives of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association, shows color prints and slides of the memorials built in England, and talks briefly on the various crew responsibilities aboard a B-17 during com-

bat operations. Short color film clips are shown of the "Memphis Belle's" raid on Wilhelmshaven, supplemented by other color slides taken on combat missions during 1944. The Memorial Fountain at Royston and the 91st's silver altar bowl at Maddingley are shown.

Chryst also appears on the second show entitled "Holland," where he tells of the gravesite memorial to eight 91st-ers at Opijnen.

More than 130 UHF stations will carry the shows starting this spring, so check your local TV schedule.

During the West Haven, Conn., Rally Round in 1971, the members were surprised by a visit from a 70-year-old WWI Bombing Military Aviator who graduated from Ellington Field in 1918. Lt. Wallace "Sandbag" Bone was fully equipped with his badges and awards to keep the audience of 91st-ers attention. He talked and joked with the members for more than an hour, describing his early training as a "bombardier" who dropped sandbags on moving trains. Lt. Bone was a life member of the "Quiet Birdmen" club organized by Col. Charles Lindberg.

Although nearly blind, he often wrote letters to his "Friends in the 91st" until his death in 1976. In his will he bequeathed \$750 to the Eastern Division of the Memorial Association. This donation has been recently received.

HELP WANTED-- Last July during the film night at the National Reunion a 91st-er borrowed a reel of movie film that belongs to the Eastern Division. The metal reel can is enclosed in a sturdy mailing box secured by two cross straps. The subject matter on this film contains a BBC interview with Gen. Wray, Paul Fishburne and others who attended the Bassingbourn reunion in 1969. It was purchased by the 91st at great expense and it cannot be replaced. The balance of the story is in color without sound and shows the crew of "Time's A'Wastin'" during 1944. It is very important that this 16 mm. reel be returned to our film library as

soon as possible. Please telephone, collect, area code 215-323-1877 if you know where the film is or who might have it.

John Mikesell, shown on page one receiving a Life Membership Rigid Digit award, made his first 91st get-together ever at the Feb. California State Rally Round. He writes... "We both had such a good time at the Rally Round we can hardly wait for the next one. It was just so nice to be back with the old gang... Though I served with several Groups, to me the 91st is the greatest group of combat airmen ever assembled by any country on earth." Mikesell, who is confined to a wheelchair from war wounds, flew in "Gen. Ike" of the 401st sqdn.

Harry A. Cannary, former 401st pilot and operations officer, died recently at Galveston County Memorial Hospital, Texas City, Texas, after an illness of several years. Harry was a retired groceryman.

Rex E. Jacobs, an original member of the 401st sqdn., died of a heart attack on February 25. Rex had been the water superintendent in Lexington, Ill., for the last 25 years. His wife, Mrs. Beth Jacobs, lives at 108 West Greenwich St., Lexington, Ill. 61753.

Howard N. Cole, of Rt. 1, Gering, Neb., passed away December 23 of a combination of the results of a car accident and cancer. His wife, Mrs. Howard N. Cole, lives at Rt. 1, Box 138, Gering, Neb. 69341.

Ex-91st-er Henry A. Schwarz, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Illinois, died of a heart attack on February 21. Schwarz had earned a national reputation for fighting corruption in East St. Louis and St. Clair county during the eight years he served as U.S. attorney.

Don't Put Off Sending In Your Dues