



# The Ragged Irregular

91st Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association Newsletter

Vol. 12 No. 2

July, 1979

## 1980 Reunion Set For California

The 1980 National Reunion will be held in San Diego from Tuesday, September 2, through Saturday, September 6, 1980. Reunion headquarters will be the Town and Country Hotel.

SMS John R. "Jack" Paget (Ret) is heading up the Reunion Committee.

The site selection committee considers the San Diego area an ideal spot to combine an exciting family vacation trip and a get together with old buddies, with the many varied activities and attractions close at hand.

Let's all begin planning and working right now to make this Reunion the biggest and best ever! Every member has an important part to play in its success. Contact your old buddies and crew members and see that they make it. Let's cooperate, coordinate, and car pool to make sure that EVERYBODY'S there!

## Western Area Rally Round Another Success

Another highly successful California Area Rally Round was enjoyed in Anaheim April 27-28-29 by 107 91sters & guests, despite the state-wide gas shortage that was at its height at the time. In addition to members from within the state 91sters attended from Washington, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, and Oklahoma.

Winner of the mug presented to the member coming the greatest distance to attend was Asay B. Johnson, of McGill, Nev., ex-324th squadron member and POW. Members attending from Colorado, Texas, and Oklahoma were not eligible since they were group officers or previous mug winners.

Former Western Division co-chairman (1972-78) M/Sgt. Eugene J. Letalien (Ret) was presented a plaque for outstanding service to the Group.

Life member Rocca J. Maiorca was recognized for having 10 family members present for the Rally Round dinner, repeating the record the Maiorca family set at last year's California Rally Round.

Bruce D. Moore was master of ceremonies for the affair.

LTC Daniel A. McGovern (Ret), ex-combat photographer for the Air Corps, was guest speaker for the dinner, explaining to 91sters how Air Corps training films and combat pictures were made. One little-known secret he revealed was the background on the making of "The Memphis Belle," and the fact that Air Corps photographers were simultaneously covering a number of different aircraft that might have wound up as the star of the movie. Col. McGovern also presented two films that dealt with the making of training films.

Mrs. Rosie Ortega and Mrs. Jackie Starcer handled registration for the Rally Round. Also lending a hand were the grandsons of two 91st members-- associate Life Member David L. Hohler, Jr., grandson of Marian and George Parks, and Raymond George, grandson of Life Members John and Delores Mikesell. They operated the movie projector for the films shown.

Five members attended for their first Rally Round-- Mr. & Mrs. Jack W. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. Walter R. Cameron, Mr. & Mrs. David R. Hettema, Maj. (Ret) & Mrs. Anthony A. Kalupy, and Elmer H. Frederickson and son John.

Members and guest attending were: David L. Hohler, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Jack W. Thompson, Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Wright, Mr. & Mrs. George W. Parks, Jr. and son Adam, M/Sgt & Mrs. George W. Parks (Ret), LTC Daniel A. McGovern (Ret), Col. Thomas H. Gunn (Ret), Mrs. Goldie J. Cahill, Mr. & Mrs. Walter R. Cameron, Mr. & Mrs. George Vender, Mr. & Mrs. John W. Mikesell, Raymond George, Mr. & Mrs. David R. Hettema, Mr. & Mrs. Glenn V. Boyce, Melvin R. Boyce, Ms. Bonnie Gooch, Virgil I. Mott, M/Sgt and Mrs. Eugene J. Letalien (Ret),

Mr. & Mrs. Raymond C. Ridings, Mr. & Mrs. Phillip R. Taylor, Mr. & Mrs. John D. Longaker, Maj. & Mrs. Anthony A. Kalupy (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Philip F. Lunt, Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Tomek.

Mr. & Mrs. John T. Wennerberg, LTC John R. McCombs (Ret), Rick Harrison, SMS John R. Paget (Ret), Mrs. Rosie Ortega, Maj. Edward P. Winslow (Ret), Ms. Mal Handley, LTC Ben Newby (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Arthur E. Thomsen, Mr. & Mrs. Asay B. Johnson, Roger Johnson, Mr. & Mrs. Robert J. Hanson, LTC & Mrs. Harold E. Hanson (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Robert N. Chumbler, Mr. & Mrs. Everett Kimback, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Gaffney, Mr. & Mrs. Aubin Pene, Mr. & Mrs. Robert H. Clapp, Mr. & Mrs. Anthony L. Starcer, M/Sgt and Mrs. Delmar E. Kaech (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Bill Kaech, CMS & Mrs. Charles W. Yaroshak (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Dick Whittington.

Mr. & Mrs. Perry E. Wofford, Maj. & Mrs. Charles F. Hadd (Ret), Elmer H. Fredrickson, John Fredrickson, Mr. & Mrs. Chris Christiansen, Mr. & Mrs. Bruce D. Moore, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Elroy, Paul J. Allison, LTC William T. Smith (Ret), Bob Stane, Mr. & Mrs. Rocca J. Maiorca, and the following Maiorca family members: Mr. & Mrs. Julian Disigio, Jr., Mrs. Susan Taylor, Mrs. Rose Kirk, Mr. & Mrs. Rocky Maiorca, Angela Maiorca, Mrs. Theresa Anderson, Sally Maiorca, Vincent Maiorca.



Ex-324th sqdn. member Asay B. Johnson receives the mug from Col. Tom Gunn for having come the greatest distance to attend the California Rally Round.



M/Sgt Eugene J. Letalien (Ret), co-chairman of the Western Division 1972-78, displays the plaque he received for service to the Group.



Rocco Maiorca (with mike) was recognized for having ten members of his family present for the second straight year.



Master of Ceremonies Bruce Moore kept the dinner group entertained in his usual fine way with his wide stock of jokes and quips.



# Big Birthday For 'Shoo Shoo Baby'

Several thousand persons took part in the first anniversary "birthday party" Saturday, April 28, at Dover, Del., commemorating the beginning of the restoration of Shoo Shoo Baby. The event was sponsored by the 512th Antique Aircraft Restoration Group of the 512th MAW to let the general public see the progress that was being made in the ship's restoral.

Besides getting a look at the restoration progress the crowds got to view several displays of 91st and WWII mementoes.

A 17-foot-long birthday cake (cut by Eastern Division chairman Whitmal W. Hill) and a big band playing 1940s hit tunes helped make the occasion even more festive.

91sters attending the party included Col. John R. Parsons, Jr., Dave Bramble, John Flinn, Joe Giambrone, Paul Chryst, Joe Camelleri, Bob Gerstemeier, and Whitmal W. Hill.



Shown above are the 91sters at the Shoo Shoo Baby birthday party. Clockwise, from lower left, Joe Camelleri, Bob Gerstemeier, Whitmal Hill, Col. John Parsons, Jr., Dave Bramble, John Flinn, Joe Giambrone, Paul Chryst.



W.W. Hill (in 91st blazer, center) cuts the 17-foot-long birthday cake. Several new members were added to the Memorial Association rolls when they found out about the current 91st organization from the wide publicity the event received.

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## Don't Put Off Sending In Your Dues!

# Rocky Mountain Rally Round

The annual Rocky Mountain Rally Round was held May 19 at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs. Western Division co-chairman Glenn Boyce and Col. Paul Jessop headed up the event.

Activities included an afternoon "get-together" at the Satellite Hotel and later driving in a caravan to the Peterson AFB Officer's Club for dinner.

Emmitt R. Wilson of Lead, South Dakota, was presented the mug for coming the greatest distance to attend.

Those attending were: Maj. Charles H. Bonner (Ret), Mr. & Mrs. Glenn V. Boyce, Mr. & Mrs. Walter S. Brown, LTC (Ret) & Mrs. James D. Fletcher, Col. (Ret) & Mrs. Paul D. Jessop, Mr. & Mrs. Lewis Simpson, Mr. & Mrs. Emmitt R. Wilson, and Mrs. Jean Derowitsch.



Members attending the Rocky Mountain Rally Round May 19 shown here are, front row, 1 to r: LTC James D. Fletcher (Ret), Glenn Boyce, Emmitt R. Wilson. Back row, Maj. Charles H. Bonner (Ret), Col. Paul D. Jessop (Ret), Lewis Simpson, Walter Brown.

Seven of the 10 crew members of "Dalton's Devils" of the 323rd squadron recently staged a crew reunion at Mountain Home (Idaho) Air Force Base. The crew flew together from August, '43 till March, '44. Some memorable missions included the Schweinfurt raid in October, '43, Kiel, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Bremerhaven, and Wilhelmshaven.

Present for the formation were: Burl Dalton, pilot, now a senior pilot for United Airlines; Phillip Taylor, waist



Emmitt R. Wilson, of Lead, South Dakota, (right), was presented the mug for coming the greatest distance to attend by Col. Paul Jessop.



Ladies attending included, front row, 1 to r, Mrs. Jean Derowitsch, Mrs. Paul Jessop, Mrs. Glenn Boyce. Back row, Mrs. Lewis Simpson, Mrs. Walter Brown, Mrs. James Fletcher, Mrs. Emmitt Wilson.

gunner, now an auditor for the First National Bank in Alameda, Calif.; Richard Hull, bombardier, now a hospital administrator in Highland, Calif.; Glen Jensen, engineer, now a civilian master maintenance mechanic supervisor for the Air Force at Ogden, Utah; Lester Hoots, waist gunner, a farmer from Patterson, Ill.; John Wallin, tail gunner, New York print shop manager; Thomas Dugan, radio operator, now a sales representative for McGregor Sporting Goods Co.



EDITOR'S NOTE: In this issue of the Ragged Irregular I am breaking a long-standing policy-- that the editor should not write about his own experiences. But early in June I received a note and a manuscript from Roger Freeman from a unique and interesting point of view.

Some months ago Roger got a letter from a man asking if he (Roger) could tell him anything about the crash of a B-17 that he had witnessed as a boy during World War II. He gave no information other than the fact that it occurred at a place called Fletching. Roger says "there were literally thousands of aircraft crashes in the UK during WW II but for some reason the name Fletching rang a bell in my head. Sure enough after a bit of searching I found what I was looking for (a story written several years ago for a British aviation magazine) and realized that by a thousand to one chance I would be able to put the man in touch with somebody who was in that very Fortress. We both know the meaning of "A small world" now."

His correspondent had witnessed the crash of "Chief Sly" following a raid on Romilly-Sur-Seine December 22, 1942. The newspaper story (right) by Pulitzer prize-winning war correspondent Relman Morin tells the events leading up to the crash, with minor distortions dictated by military censorship. Chief Sly did not "land safely at the first airdrome," and there was one casualty not named besides the sheep and rabbit-- the navigator with a machine gun bullet through his upper thigh from an FW-190.

Here is the crash as described by Nicholas Hardinge, The White House, Fingringhoe, Colchester, Essex.

DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS OF 1942 I was home from Boarding School, aged 14. We lived at Clinton Lodge in the village of Fletching in Sussex. I cannot be sure of the exact date (ed.'s note-- it was Dec. 22) but the day that the Fortress crashed was dull, overcast, cold and raining. There had been no aerial activity that day until around mid-day, when I heard a lone aircraft overhead. It sounded in distress with one or more engines mis-firing.

## TWO FORTRESSES PICK OFF 11 NAZI PLANES IN RAID ON FRANCE

By RELMAN MORIN.

London, Dec. 24 (AP).—Two Flying Fortresses were badly chewed by bullets and shells but they still were good enough to knock down 11 German fighters in a fancy double play and both returned to tell the tale.

Details of the encounter, which occurred during last Sunday's shattering assault upon Romilly-Sur-Seine, France, were disclosed today by the Eighth United States Air Force headquarters.

One of the fortresses, Chief Sly, made an emergency landing on a strange airport in the south of England. Chief Sly looked more like a sieve than a bomber when she fluttered to earth. Two of her four engines were dead, the aileron jammed, the fuselage was full of holes and there was a gash in the tail fin near the rudder post "so big you could jump through it with your eyes shut."

The other fortress, Rose O'Day, was in reasonably good shape, except for a collection of wounds, one of which caused the landing gear to drag.

They were in formation when attacked by enemy fighters as they crossed the channel. Chief Sly got one Focke-Wulf in a two-minute battle, but the real action was still to come. Both fortresses planted their bombs on a Romilly airfield, watched them flower into smoke and destruction, then headed for home.

### Swarmed By Nazis.

Rose O'Day was flying in No. 1 position with Chief Sly back in No. 2. Rose, piloted by Capt. Kenneth K. Wallick of Wrightsville, Pa., slowed when the damaged landing gear dropped and Chief's pilot, Lt. Bruce Barton of Greenville, S. C., eased his throttles and dropped back to cover his lagging pal. That was the moment when a cloud of Focke-Wulfs swarmed in for what looked like easy pickings.

Bombardier Lt. J. H. Lindley Jr. of Gatesville, Tex., admitted it was pretty hot inside then.

"Ice was forming on the windows and nose of the ship but I was dripping sweat," he said.

The Chief staggered, quivering from stem to stern, as a 20-mm. cannon shell cut through the rudder fin. It splintered the tail gunner, Staff Sgt. Irving C. Elmendorf, of

Cleveland, O., and probably saved his life. During a moment of unconsciousness he slumped backward and a stream of machine gun bullets ripped through the space he normally occupied while working the the gun. Recovering quickly, Stanczyk returned to his post.

The top turret gunner, Technical Sgt. Richard L. Hare of Grand Falls, Tex., was having a busy time, too. He got two F-W's the hard way. His turret jammed and he was able to move only to the left.

Germans were coming from the right so Hare had to swing the turret in a complete circle to bring his guns to bear. He got the leading German in his sights and shot him out of the sky. Then he had to make another complete circle to the right to follow the second F-W as it passed. A little dizzy from all the whirling around, he got the enemy craft nevertheless.

### Many Germans Downed.

Rose O'Day was having trouble, too. The Germans came in from all sides, above and below. Her guns sent five of the enemy reeling earthward. Singles were credited to Bombardier First Lt. John Hawkins of Houston, Tex., Technical Sgt. Jarvis Hall of Dallas, Tex., Technical Sgt. Daniel Goldstein of Brooklyn, Sgt. Vito Pugliese of Coopers-town, N. Y., and Sgt. Delbert Staffans of Stockton, Ill.

The plane's co-pilot was Lt. Edwin L. Bailey of Tyler, Tex.; navigator, Lt. Robert H. Bortock of San Francisco, and assistant engineer, Staff Sgt. Bernard A. Steelbarn, Indianapolis.

Besides the two Germans racked up by Hare, the Chief's other four victims were credited to Second Lt. Paul C. Russell of Marshall, Tex., the navigator; Staff Sgt. Myron C. Larsen of Cleveland, O.; Staff Sgt. J. H. Mitchell of Mahanef, Pa.; and Sgt. Lester Snook of Everett, Mass. The Chief's co-pilot was Second Lt. Arthur J. Reynolds of Camas, Wash., who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force 10 months before transferring to the United States Air Forces.

The fortresses came home in the safety of a fog bank. Rose O'Day made home base but the Chief got down on the first airdrome in sight. The only casualties were two sheep and a rabbit which darted into the path of the Chief on the landing field.

I ran to the highest part of the garden in time to see a B-17 break through the cloud base at about 500 feet. The aircraft with its undercarriage up and losing height rapidly turned east in a shallow bank and vanished behind high trees and Fletching church steeple. The pilot was obviously attempting a crash-landing. A few seconds later the engines cut and for that awful moment I waited for the expected crash and explosion. Only silence.

It must have landed somewhere in the direction of Haywards Farm, about three-fourths mile away. I got onto my bike and near the Church I was passed by two Jeeps and an ambulance going in the same direction. A large detachment of Canadian troops was stationed at nearby Sheffield Park. They and an Army lorry turned down Haywards Farm Lane. Leaving my bike I continued on foot to where the aircraft had crash-landed in time to see a military ambulance load a stretcher and drive off. Someone said that it was the dead tail gunner. (ed.'s note-- it was the wounded navigator, the only casualty.) The last two crew members to leave the aircraft passed a few yards from where I stood. One had a large canvas hold-all under one arm, and between them they carried a square box in a canvas sling. This was probably the bombsight. In their bulky flying suits and boots they staggered over the ploughed field to be helped into a waiting Jeep. I remember distinctly how pale and obviously shocked they were. The excited talk, the accent, they were the first Americans I had ever seen.

The aircraft had come to rest in the middle of a ploughed field, facing north up a gentle slope. The B-17 seemed intact although the fuselage looked badly distorted. With the departure of the crew and military vehicles only a few sightseers remained. The local police had not yet arrived. Walking around the B-17 I was stunned by the sheer size of the machine. The matt green surface of the wings and fuselage were riddled with holes and tears although none seemed very large. I remember that the engines with their bent back propeller blades was still hot to the touch. At the time I thought the name Chief Sly and the cartoon character painted on the starboard side of the nose was rather small and disappointing.

For a few minutes the aircraft was quite empty. The main fuselage door hung open. The inside was a complete shambles. Spent .50 calibre cartridge cases and links were scattered everywhere. Boots, a flying helmet, discarded bloodstained dressings, empty ammunition boxes littered the waist. Near the tailwheel housing the Elsan lavatory had unshipped on impact, adding its contents to the general chaos. No waist guns, I noticed. Had the just been removed by the gunners, or jetisoned to save height? (ed.'s note-- we had dumped everything we could, flying fifty feet above the channel and expecting to ditch any moment). Going forward I got as far as the cat-walk over the empty bomb-bay, but on hearing someone entering the aircraft through the nose-hatch I departed in haste, filling my pockets with spent .50 calibre cartridge cases on the way.

The next day I returned with my friend, the local doctor's son. The aircraft was now guarded, and all sightseers were turned away. At the gate leading to the B-17's field our local Police Sergeant was having an argument with a photographer. We made a lengthy detour around the field and made toward the aircraft along its final approach path. We found the marks where the propeller tips had first cut into the turf (this was a sheep pasture). Following the progressively more violent scars of the touchdown, we reached the point where the B-17 had smashed through a low hedge dividing the sheep-pasture from the plough. There in the hedge were the mangled remains of several sheep caught by the propellers. Shattered perspex and aluminium fragments were embedded in the low bank from which the hedge grew. We imagined that the ball turret had taken the full impact but it seemed odd to us that there were no guns or shell cases. Reaching the tail section (I can't remember that there was any distinctive identification letter on the tail-fin) (ed.'s note-- the triangle A had not yet been adopted for identification). We then watched the policeman remove the film from the protesting photographer's camera. The Canadian sentry was sheltering under the port wing tip. It was still cold and raining.

Once inside the same door we were able to work our way quietly forward to the cockpit. In the Radio Room daylight filtered through jagged holes in the skin. More damage from splinters or shells in the bomb-bay. On reaching the cockpit in great excitement we sat at the controls in the pilot and co-pilot's seat. What an incredible experience! After a brief visit to the mid-upper turret (the guns had by now been removed) we reluctantly departed, this time via a small hatch near the tail turret.



After that day Chief Sly was constantly guarded, and it was impossible to get anywhere near the aircraft. In due course the B-17 was dismantled and removed piece by piece by U.S. personnel. (ed.'s note-- this was a 322nd crew under the direction of Maj. Frank Kamykowski, at that time engineering officer for the squadron, before taking over the 441st Sub Depot.)

Several souvenirs were acquired by villagers from the crash, and for many years I had the starboard wingtip light, a main landing light, assorted .50 cases and links, and the Very Pistol. The Very Pistol alone remains as a reminder of that far off day when Chief Sly came down at Fletching.



The crew aboard Chief Sly on the occasion described above are shown here in front of their replacement plane "Chief Sly II." No pictures were ever made of the original Chief Sly.

Shown are, standing, left to right, Sgt. Marshall Haugen, radio operator; Sgt. Myron Srsen, ball turret gunner; Sgt. Richard Hare, engineer; Lt. Paul C. Burnett, navigator; Sgt. Norbert Dryja, crew chief; Capt. Bruce Barton, pilot; Lt. Arthur Reynolds, co-pilot.

Seated in Jeep, Sgt. Lester Snook, waist gunner. Seated on hood, Sgt. Bruno Stanczyk, tail gunner; Sgt. John Marshall, waist gunner. Not shown is the bombardier,

Lt. Steve Lindley.

Chief Sly II was the plane that led the 91st on the Hamm raid in March, 1943, for which the group was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. It was lost on the first Schweinfurt raid in August, 1943, with a new crew.

After the Romilly raid the navigator was hospitalized for several months and returned to the group (on crutches) as assistant squadron adjutant for the 322nd under Maj. Stewart McClintic. Lt. Michael Lalli took over as navigator for the crew.

Reynolds did not finish his tour with the crew and transferred to a Pathfinder Unit. He was killed in a crash on takeoff.

## From The Editor's Desk...

**Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, Al. 36830**

The 91st Bomb Group Prop Memorial flag obtained through the good efforts of Eastern Division chairman W.W. Hill has been sent to Bassingbourn to fly over the memorial on appropriate occasions. The flag flew over the United States Capitol on May 7, 1979 at the request of Senator Henry Bellmon of Oklahoma.

The British Broadcasting Corporation presented a unique color TV show titled "Bombers" on June 12 that combined film footage of raids by an RAF Lancaster "V-Victor" and the 91st B-17 "Memphis Belle" into a unit that graphically portrayed what "maximum effort" raids were like for the men that flew them.

It was produced by Brian Johnson, who attended the National Reunion in Memphis in 1978 gathering information for the show. He also had video tape copies made of the Memorial Association's copy of "The Memphis Belle," since the British Museum copy was faded and of poor quality.

The weekly BBC magazine "Radio Times" flew Bob Morgan, "Belle" pilot, to London to meet with the pilot of "V-Victor," Bob Chandler, for a tour of the RAF Museum at Hendon, the Imperial War Museum at Duxford and Bassingbourn. The June 9-15 issue of the magazine carries a long feature article about the program and the meeting of the two pilots.

A new Western Division Life Member is LTC John R. Westwood (Ret), of Spokane, Wash. John came to the 91st from the RAF, first with the 324th sqdn. and later with the 401st.

The Memorial Association provided a wreath and flowers for the altar bowl at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley for a special observance of American Memorial Day held June 3.

A new Life Member has been added to the Eastern Division rolls-- Louis H. Magee, Bogue Chitto Woods, Tylertown, Miss.

In the April issue of Air Force magazine the following letter appeared. Can any 91ster help?

"In studies concerning my dwelling place, Holten, Netherlands, during WWII, I discovered that on December 10, 1943, at 1528 hours, a B-17 crashed in Holten, which is twelve miles east of Deventer. I believe it was with the 91st Bomber Group, and Muenster, Germany, the target.

"Two of the crew, T.M. Ennis and L.M. Kasi, were killed, five became POW's, and three escaped. To the best of my knowledge the names of those who survived were: James L. Lohrmann, Richard Jackson, Robert L. Richards, 2nd pilot Whitlow, gunner John T. Ashcraft, Collem(?), Flintofft (?), and John Jembowsky (?).

"Corrections, completions, and further information would be most welcome; also information on colors, markings, and number of the aircraft."

M.J. G. Hols

Boschkampsstraat 21

7451 GB Holten, Netherlands

Ed's note: According to 91st records the group did not fly on Dec. 10, 1943. On Dec. 11 they went to Emden. On November 10, 1943 the group raided Muenster.

We have learned of the passing of four former 91sters recently: Maj. Lawrence E. Baird (Ret), ex-323rd sqdn., Lynnwood, Wash., George V. Barnett, ex-322nd sqdn., Dallas, Texas; CMS(Ret) Maurice P. LaCasse, Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Robert Wilson, Pasadena, Md.

By all odds the most important factor in making a Reunion memorable and enjoyable is the getting together with those old friends who were with you during your tour with the group. And the more the merrier!

The way to ensure that the 1980 National Reunion is that sort of event is to get busy now. Contact your crew members and buddies and persuade them to meet you at San Diego. Especially work on those who've never made a get-together and don't know what they're missing. But it takes work and time to do a good job of promotion, so get busy now! Don't depend on luck.