



The Ragged Irregular

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

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Phoenix Rally Round Set Nov. 6-8

A big turnout is expected for the Southwestern Rally Round set for Phoenix, AZ. Nov. 6-7-8, and an attractive series of events will highlight the get-together, according to Chuck Hadd, sponsor. Members attending will have a variety of attractions in addition to renewing old friendships and swapping tall tales.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. Friday, Nov. 6, at Rally Round headquarters at the Rodeway Inn-Airport, next to the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. A trip to the Desert Museum in Tucson has been scheduled for that afternoon, and "Kaech's Pub" will open at noon. Movies will be shown in the evening.

Saturday morning a visit to the Fighter Museum at Falcon Field, Mesa, will highlight the day. A B-17 from the Confederate Air Force will be on hand. Assistant honcho Bob Hanson is also setting up a Saturday morning golfing session for interested golfers.

Saturday evening a prime ribs dinner will climax the Rally Round. Speaker for the affair will be Capt. John S. McCain, U.S. Navy Retired, who was six years a P.O.W. in Viet Nam. Capt. McCain has been awarded 2 Silver Stars, 2 Legions of Merit, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 3 Bronze Stars, 3 Purple Hearts, and numerous other campaign decorations including the Vietnamese Legion of Honor. His father and grandfather were both 4-star admirals. He is the son-in-law of 91st Life Member Jim Hensley of Phoenix.

Life Member John Mikesell will furnish Indian artifacts as a door prize for the dinner, and Jim Hensley, the Anheuser-Busch distributor for the Phoenix area, will furnish beer for the event.

Assisting Hadd with the Rally Round are Dan and Henrietta Goldstein of Phoenix and Life Member M/Sgt. (Ret) Del Kaech of Prescott.

Memorial Association President Tom Gunn of Arlington, Texas, and Secretary-Treasurer George Parks of Vallejo, CA., will be on hand. Aviation artist Glenn Bavousett, who did the recently unveiled painting of The Memphis Belle, is also planning to attend from Texas.

Registration for the Rally Round will be \$25 each, covering all events. Members wishing to attend should contact: Chuck Hadd, Telephone (602) 955-7031.

National Reunion Set For Dayton

The 1982 National Reunion has been scheduled for Dayton, Ohio, September 2-4 at the Imperial House North, on Interstate 75 and Needmore Road.

The Reunion Committee felt that this location would offer a chance to combine the Reunion with the dedication of the "Living Tree Memorial" and plaque at the Air Force Museum. Most members of the Association have not yet been able to tour the Air Force Museum and the Dayton site would give many a chance to see this unique attraction. It is geographically convenient for a high concentration of 91st members, and the Dayton location rates are much lower than in most other metropolitan areas considered.

The BAD 2 Association held their 1981 reunion at the Imperial House North the second week in September and were so impressed that many members have urged holding all future reunions at the same spot!

Honcho for the Reunion planning and preparations is M/Sgt. Charles H. Marrah, of Columbus, Ohio, who was with the 91st from the beginning in McDill in 1942 until the end of the war.

Klette Gets Belated Silver Star

It took 37 years, but the Air Force finally got around in July to presenting Col. Immanuel J. "Manny" Klette (Ret) with the military's third-highest award for gallantry, the Silver Star, for a mission he flew November 21, 1944, when he was C.O. of the 324th Bomb Squadron, 91st Bomb Group. At ceremonies at Plattsburgh (N.Y.) AFB (SAC) July 11, Col. Klette was presented the award by Col. Charles J. Searock, 380th Bomb Wing commander.

But the story behind the award is even more unusual than the very belated presentation.

Klette began his combat career 18 March 1943 with a mission to Vegasack, Germany. He was a member of the 369th Bomb Sqdn., 306th Bomb Group, stationed at Thurleigh. In rapid order followed missions to all the hotspots -- Wilhelmshaven, Bremen, Huls, the Ruhr Valley, the first Schweinfurt raid, etc. On his 25th mission August 24, 1943, to Villacoublay, France, he landed back at Thurleigh with three engines feathered and one operating, the first time that feat had been accomplished.

Instead of the usual dunking and "25th mission celebration" and a trip home he kept on flying missions, until a fateful raid to Nantes, France, September 23, 1943, mission No. 28. (Another first had occurred a week earlier -- first pilot to fly more than 25 missions.) On mission 28 Klette landed his shot-up B-17 on instruments at night in a British forest, with the entire crew surviving.



Col. "Manny" Klette (right) is congratulated by Col. Charles J. Searock, C.O. 380th Bomb Wing, on the awarding July 11 of his Silver Star for the Merseburg mission.

Due to injuries Klette was hospitalized and then assigned to a job at Strategic Air Force Headquarters in Europe for about a year. While there he studied all the potential targets and learned about enemy defenses, and also briefed important leaders, such as Gen. Dwight Eisenhower.

He came to the 91st in July, 1944, as Squadron C.O. for the 324th, and flew mission 29 to Brandenburg, Germany 6 August, as Combat Wing Lead, and other missions followed in quick order.

Mission No. 50 (two full combat tours) November 21, 1944, was the mission for which his Silver Star was awarded. Major Klette led the entire 8th AF complement of 1000 bombers and 900 fighters in an attack on the world's largest synthetic oil plant at Merseberg, Germany. The plant, which used coal to manufacture aviation fuel, was the primary supplier of fuel for the German Luftwaffe and the most heavily guarded fortress in all of enemy-occupied Europe. Despite intense and extremely accurate anti-aircraft fire and with the help of a last-minute break in the cloud cover Klette was able to lead the bombers directly to the assigned targets, and the resulting devastation had a material effect in shortening the war.

Following the highly successful mission Group C.O. Col. Henry W. Terry and Gen. Gross ordered that a recommendation for the Distinguished Service Cross for Klette be submitted. Capt. Bob Crego was tasked to write up the recommendation. Klette asked Crego to hold up the recommendation since he didn't want the crews to feel he was flying all those missions for the decorations that went with them. After the war ended the recommendation was submitted to Division Headquarters, but in the shuffle the paperwork was lost and the award overlooked.

In 1980 associates revived the recommendation and reconstructed the paperwork. Col. Terry added his thought that the heroic action merited the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The Air Force Personnel Council at Randolph AFB reviewed the matter and recommended the awarding of the Silver Star to join the 47 other decorations and awards that Klette had received.



Major Klette at Bassingbourn

He continued to fly combat missions regularly until April 25, 1945, when he had accumulated 91, the greatest number flown by any officer in WW II. He had more than 689 hours of combat flying, and had flown in a lead position 73 times. He served as Group C.O. from June, 1945 until September.

Following the war his career with the military and since retirement has been equally distinguished. Among other achievements he was Chief of Policy for NATO in Southern Europe, Director of Plans for the U.S. Military Command in Latin America, and Director of U.S. Military Aviation Activities in Latin America. He earned a PhD in International Relations from Georgetown University, and was a graduate of the Air War College and the National War College.

For 8 years he was a research leader, senior fellow, and manager with the Battelle Memorial Institute. He served as Science and Technology Advisor to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Having recently retired from "retirement" he and his wife Marguerite live on a large farm near Lovettsville, Virginia.

START PLANNING NOW FOR THE 1982 REUNION SEPTEMBER 2-4. IT WAS SEPTEMBER 2, 1942, THAT THE FIRST UNITS WENT ABOARD THE QUEEN MARY FOR THE TRIP OVERSEAS, SO THIS REUNION REPRESENTS THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF OUR COMBAT DAYS.

Fisher Finds Flaksuit Fashionable

By Lt. Col. Jack C. Fisher (Ret)

Editor's Note: When the 91st and the other pioneer groups began combat in the fall of 1942 it was a case of learning, and adapting equipment to the job at hand from day to day. Each plane and each crew made adjustments of their own, and in some cases some rather weird solutions developed. Twin fifties welded in the waist, etc. Personal safety also became a matter of great concern, especially after an initiation to flak and fighters. One of the first adaptations was the wearing of infantry steel helmets over the conventional leather helmets which some adopted. Several 91sters were undoubtedly saved by this in the early months.

Col. Malcolm C. Grow, chief surgeon of the 8th AF, became very much interested in the development of protective equipment after early data showed that 75 per cent of the injuries were caused by relatively low-velocity fragments from flak and 20 mm cannons. Col. Grow drew up plans for a flak jacket lined with plates of manganese steel that protected the front and back of the wearer. Made by Wilkinson Swords of England the early experimental models were hot and heavy (from personal experience the editor can testify that your legs bowed when one was donned) but as evidence proved they saved lives they became more popular and at the same time more comfortable and wearable. The big problem was getting persons to use them. Chief salesman for the effectiveness of the jacket was Jack Fisher of the 91st, who went from group to group demonstrating the value of the protective vest. Fisher was the bombardier for Bill Clancy's crew on The Careful Virgin. Here is his story:

I joined the 91st in Walla Walla, where John Gladstone, co-pilot, and Harry Ackerman, navigator, and I became members of Bill Clancy's crew. We arrived in the U.K. October '42, took the name "The Careful Virgin" for our B-17 and with little ceremony began combat.

As with most of us "neophyte fledglings" after climbing aboard for missions we tossed our chutes in the hatchway and possibly with more guts than brains settled down with a "milkrun" attitude. However on our third mission (over St. Nazaire) I got a new perspective as to how long that hatchway was. Shortly after turning on the I.P. we received plenty of unwanted company and very quickly found out that they were both unfriendly and accurate. I was hit in the right calf, which immobilized the leg and left me with an instant clear realization that if we got out of the situation I would never get much farther than an inch away from my parachute again. Fortunately we got back without further incident.

I spent approximately a month in the hospital and several weeks convalescing before going back to "work", but when I did it was a "new Me." I always thereafter wore a steel helmet over my flying one, my parachute, and one of Dr. Grow's first flak suits. I can clearly remember that at times I cussed a blue streak at the weight and inconvenience, but I remained an unwavering believer, nevertheless.

My 16th mission, on May 21, 1943, was the real "dinger." We were the lead aircraft of the lead group on the raid to Wilhelmshaven and Emden. As best I can recall, we went in from fairly far north, presumably to allow all the following groups more time to turn and line up for the run. On our way to the I.P. we could see a number of German fighters at some distance away, with none of them making any attempt to close with us. However, after we negotiated the I.P. and started our run it became a different story and all hell broke loose. In fact, it took us very little time to realize we were the most popular aircraft in the sky, with seemingly every one of the fighters vying for the honor of blasting us back to our maker. About halfway down the run the "Luftwaffe Brotherhood" gained the advantage, firing in force from numerous headings, while Bill did his best to hold a steady P.D.I. until we could reach the bomb release point. Unfortunately this all changed very quickly when we sustained a direct 20 mm hit through the left side of the navigator/bombardier section which left

a gaping hole in the fuselage, loss of oxygen, the immediate jettisoning of our bombs, turning the lead over to the alternate, and making a hasty descent to low altitude.

The explosion made quite a shambles of the compartment with, as you might expect, some serious injuries. The group navigator, Charlie Maas, who was flying with us in view of the lead position, was bleeding profusely from one eye. At the time it looked like a bloody hole where the eye should be, but fortunately it ultimately healed with, I believe, only limited impairment. Harry was the most fortunate since, though he was no more endowed with "Christian Spirit" than Charlie or I, came through the incident unscathed. He was of great help to both of us!

In my case I can say with personal conviction the moment of success of Dr. Grow's fabulous flak suit had arrived. The concussion from the exploding shell no more than a couple of feet away left me with a semi-conscious impression of having been flipped in a complete somersault and landing flat on the walkway. My first clear recollection was of feeling a numb pain in the head, and upon removing the steel helmet I found a hole through it about the size of my little finger. As for the flak suit, the concussion and fragments of the shell hit it with what felt to me like an enormous force from above and behind. The canvas-like cover of the back was ripped to shreds, and though the edges of one or two of the loosened manganese steel squares cut into my back, none of the fragments of the 20 mm shell penetrated the suit, an immense blessing to me in view of the fact that the back injuries were in a direct line with my heart. The suit undoubtedly prevented a forceful penetration into the heart and my very possible demise.

After our descent to low altitude over the North Sea and with no further pursuit by enemy aircraft we were able to make a safe return to Bassingbourn. Charlie and I were subsequently hospitalized, with Charlie undergoing eye surgery and I, thanks to the effectiveness of Dr. Grow's flak suit, having only head surgery to undergo.

In a final episode, while I was recuperating in the hospital, I was pleasantly surprised one day by a visit from Dr. Grow. While he was quite interested in hearing about my experiences, I was equally interested in praising the effectiveness of his equipment. The end result was that after my release from the hospital I was sent on a tour to a number of other groups, "preaching" to the aircrews the value of wearing rather than ignoring the flak suits -- a small but sincere testimonial of my appreciation to the good Doctor.

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, Al. 36830

Gen. and Mrs. S.T. Wray have moved from their home in Shalimar, Fla., to a new home in San Antonio, Texas. Their new address is:

Maj. Gen. & Mrs. Stanley T. Wray
4917 Ravenswood Dr., Apt. 1784
San Antonio, Texas 78227

John T. Hardin, one of the original 91sters, who flew "Mizpah" in the 322nd Squadron, and his wife Peg were among the number of ex-91 members who went back to the old base this summer. They were luckier than most, however, for the day they toured the base the East Anglian Aviation Society were meeting in the Tower Museum for a wine and sandwich party and took them in as honored guests.

Tyse retired as an Eastern Airlines pilot last December.



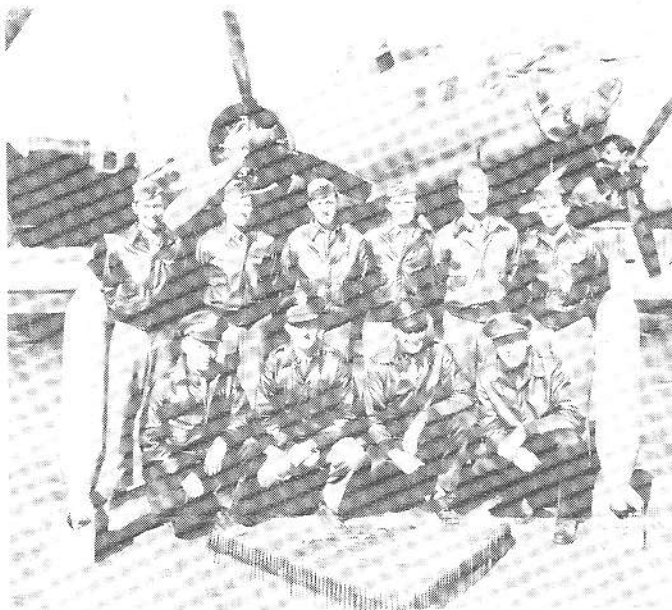
This outstanding model of the 91st plane "General Ike" has been donated to the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn by Roy Hadley, owner of Exeter Models in Exeter, England.

Roy is an associate member of the 91st and his interest in the association led to the unique gift.

In the April issue of the R/I we ran the story of the return of "Nine O Nine" to the States after the war in Europe ended. Nine O Nine had the distinction of being the top plane in the 91st and the 8th AF for the most total missions -140- without an abort.

The account really touched association member Jack Grosh, who was radio operator on the first crew and had the distinction of naming the plane and designing the nose art - Christopher Columbus riding a bomb and thumbing his nose at the enemy.

His crew flew the ship from April 9, 1944 until the end of June. The original crew was: Art Klinger, pilot; Clem Rider, co-pilot; William Young, navigator; Henry Stiles, bombardier; Jack Grosh, radio operator; John Reash, engineer; Lawrence Seroin, assistant engineer; Richard Murphy, first armorer; Homer Luke, second armorer, David Bolner, assistant radio operator.



Jack's wife Judy sent along this poem describing her reactions the day The Ragged Irregular arrived:

The Trunk
The Air Force clothing
Has been put away
In an old trunk upstairs
Where it fights decay

Nearly forgotten
All these thirty-odd years
In among picture
Notebooks and other souvenirs

The medals are tarnished
The insignia still bright
The material strong
As was the fight

The war is long over
The hard battle fought
Old newspaper clippings yellowed
With news of the war they brought

Aerial pictures of targets
Scrap books and note pads
The old trunk holds memories
Of me and my comrades



Col. H.W. Terry presents a trophy to the 1944 Bassingbourn basketball champs at the 441st Sub-Depot Squadron Party. Standing on the podium from left to right are: T/Sgt L.W. Jarzenbovich, Col. Terry, Cpl. Jack Luci, Sgt. Albert H. Preble, S/Sgt. Lawrence F. Welborn, and S/Sgt. Homer S. Gamber. The surprised spectator in the foreground is Sgt. Bernard J. Stroll.

The 91st B.G. Memorial Association lost a distinguished alumnus July 27 with the death of Life Member William Wyler at age 79. Wyler was one of America's most honored movie directors, and the guiding hand in the making of "The Memphis Belle."

During the making of that film in 1942-1943 he and his crew were stationed at Bassingbourn, and Wyler flew a number of combat missions with the group during the filming. He was affected in later years with deafness caused by ear troubles from the high altitude flying. He received an Oscar for the war-time documentary.

Wyler received 14 Academy Awards nominations during his long career, won four Oscars and was honored with the Academy's

Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award. His "Ben Hur" collected a record 11 Oscars and still stands as the all-time Academy Award winner.

Some of his other outstanding movies included "Dead End," "Jezebel," "Wuthering Heights," "The Little Foxes," "Mrs. Miniver," "The Best Years of Our Lives," "Detective Story," "Roman Holiday," "The Desperate Hours" and "Funny Girl."

The Memphis Mini-Rally, held August 28-29 in conjunction with the unveiling of Glenn Bavousett's painting of "The Memphis Belle" attracted a number of 91sters and guests to the event. Hosts were Frank Donofrio, Mary Gagliano, and Madeline Enders.

The Memphis Belle Association sponsored the activities surrounding the unveiling of the picture for Memphis townspeople as well as for 91st members.

91sters and guests attending were:

Joe & Mary Jane Giambrone, Harold & Exie Loch, Charles & Jane Leighton, Clarence, Laura & Jackie Winchell, James, Marie & Jamie Verinis, Robert & Irene Hanson, Robert & Elizabeth Morgan, Casimer, Doris & Frank Nastal, Peggy & Winnie Evans, Charles & Dorothy Kirkham, Frank & Anne Kamykowski.

James, Betty & Linda Bedwell, Charles & Mary Jane Cliburn, Maury & Betty Herman, George Kemnitz, Robert E. O'Bannon, Mr. & Mrs. Bob Westbrook, H.Y. Quarles, Reese & Sarah Mullins, Bill & Dorothy Turcotte, and Ned & Eleanor Rooks, 379th B.G.

Dawn Patrol

And it came to pass that before the sun was risen, the squadron c.q. went forth, out of his place to the abode of the birdmen and roused them each in his turn.

And he said, "Tis the fourth hour and briefing comes before the dawn."

And he retreated in haste for he was wise in the ways of the birdmen.

And the birdmen cursed him loud and long, for his tidings were of no great joy. For the Sweep cometh they know, and only the keen were glad.

And the keen were few.

And the keen grew fewer at the fourth hour of each day.

And there was much weeping and gnashing of teeth and great unhappiness in that place.

And a fear for their commissions was in them.

And they went. And as they went there cometh unto them he of the great intellect, who was known as the I.O. But he was known by other names also.

And one of the birdmen said unto him, "What is this thou has done unto me? Wherefore hast thou beguiled me?"

And the I.O. said, "Thus it is done in our country."

And holding up a ribbon of blue and gold, he spake, "Fulfill this week and we will give thee this, also for the service which thou shalt serve us another seven years." But the birdman trundleth off saying, "What manner of poppycock is this whereof he speaketh. The law of averages getteth us all in the end. So be it." "Verily, verily," sayeth the others, "Amen." For they were not happy in the service that day and the pouches of their eyes giveth witness.

And they went to the Holy of Holies called Briefing Room.

And as they entered therein, each in his turn looketh upon the wall, which hath the map.

And behold, they looketh upon the handwriting on the wall, for such it is.

And after each looketh at the lines thereon they sayeth one to another, "This cannot be." But soon one cometh among them known as Walnut, who sayeth, "It is so."

And all is quiet as the tomb of the prophet.

And he gathereth his flock unto his bosom and speaketh earnestly of courses and times and of D for dinghy damn you!

And they looketh upon his countenance but comprehendeth him not. But he is wise and comprehendeth for them all. Then he sayeth, pointing to the map, "Behold this heap and this pillar which I have cast between thee and the Forts. This heap be witness and this pillar be witness that I shall not pass over this heap to them lest the petrol giveth out. For the A.S.R. maketh not light of early reveille."

And all that were there waggle their heads with gusto, saying "Verily, it is so!"
And then the Walnut sendeth messengers before him to his brother Prune in the land
of RAF. "Forsooth," sayeth he, "The Spits will be welcome 'ere the sun setteth
this day."
And it came to pass that he knew whereof he spake.
And the Walnut telleth them "Begone, for the hour of pressing draws nigh."
And thus they goeth to the Jeeps and the Jeeps to the dispersals.
And some goeth to the small house in panic.
And others goeth to the big house in greater panic.
And the head birdman chooseth his flock for the day and some he husbandeth for yet
another day.
And some which he leaveth behind secretly rejoiceth and praise the Lord.
And those who goeth are called one's and two's and are given colors by which they
knoweth the other.
And the number one shareth his coffee with number two saying, "The Lord watch between
me and thee while we are absent one from another."
And thus they drank saying "Cheers" one to another.
And it came to pass that each of the birdmen went forth to his bird and was amazed at
what was contained therein. But at the hour of pressing, each of the winged
monsters draweth the breath of life and thundereth forth in power and majesty,
save one which goeth not.
And the birdman there beateth it with his hands and kicketh it with his feet but it
goeth not. Thus he stayeth home and writeth the necessary forms. But all else
go to the proper place to fly away and he of the checkered flag sendeth them off.
And all flyeth off save one who prangeth for lack of revs. "Woe betide he who prang-
eth," sayeth the words of the prophet, "For he curseth himself, and his children
and his children's children."
And the birds went on their journey and came to the land of the people of the east and
all was serene.
And he who is known as Pickaxe talketh to Walnut of ten plus and twenty plus. But the
others ignore him thinking, "He speaketh of the balloon barrage," and chuckleth
each to himself.
And it came to pass that the Forts were clobbered beyond the heap, as was the custom
in those days. But all was serene with our birdmen.
And someone sayeth, "Thou hast a Focke-Wulf on thy tail."
And each of the birdmen goeth this way and that way to see whereof he speaketh and
each is lost unto the others.
And one sayeth, "Where art thou, Blue Two?"
And the other replyeth, "Lo, I spinneth out and am lost unto thee."
And another sayeth, "Whither goest thou, Red One?"
And Red One answereth "Home, for my cockpit hath smoke."
And yet another talketh of homing.
And the Walnut sayeth, "Whence be ye? For 'tis time the big friends (for as such
they were known in those days) be gathered together and shepherded to the waters."
But the others heareth him not, or heedeth him not, for each thinketh only of
getting the hell out of that place.
And they goeth home by diverse routes.
And again they gathereth unto the Holy of Holies where the Walnut telleth them of the
bad show.
And he giveth them hell in general.
So be it.

WE WISH ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE 91st BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION A MOST
HAPPY THANKSGIVING, A MERRY CHRISTMAS, AND A JOYFUL NEW YEAR, AND WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR FINE SUPPORT OF THE GROUP.

Tom Gunn, Joe Frankie, Sam Cipolla, Cliff Burnett, and George Parks