

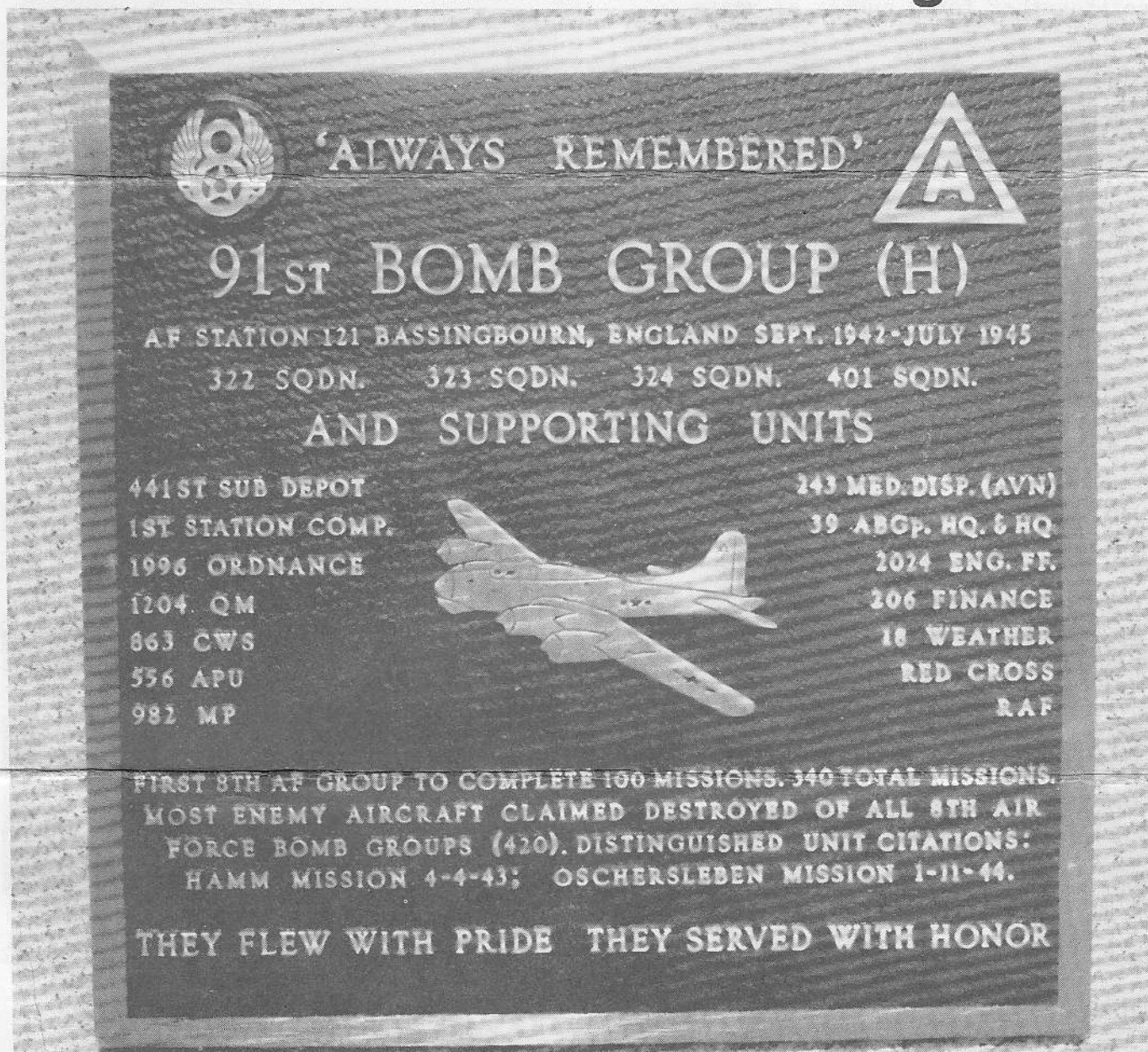


91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

Vol. 18 No. 1

April, 1985

Memorial Dedication Set August 16



Air Force Academy Memorial Plaque

A dedication of the 91st B.G. Memorial Plaque which has been installed on the Air Force Academy Memorial Wall will be the highlight of a two-day Rocky Mountain Rally Round in Colorado Springs August 16-17.

The memorial was first proposed by the 1984 Reunion Committee of Paul Jessop, Jim Fletcher, and Glenn Boyce, and was adopted at the reunion business meeting. Col. Jes-

sop was named memorial committee chairman.

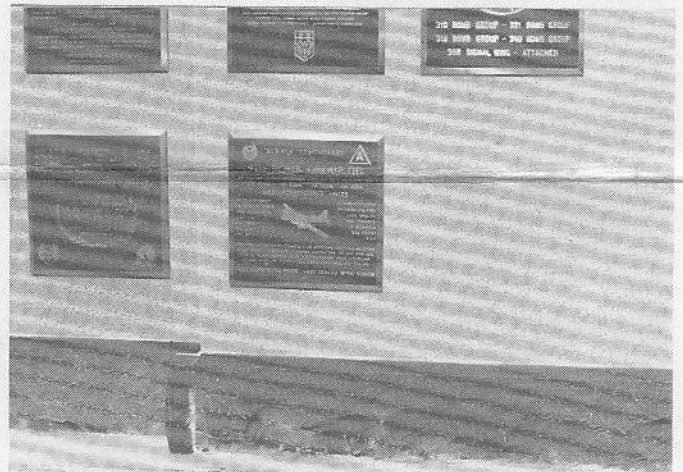
The Memorial Wall is located within the Academy cemetery, and now contains 23 unit memorials. Installation of the 91st plaque was completed on March 5, 1985. The plaque and installation costs were paid for from group treasury funds, with no solicitation of donations from members.

Dedication ceremonies have been scheduled for Friday afternoon, August 16. Air Force Academy personnel will take part in the activity in addition to the 91sters who will be present for the occasion.

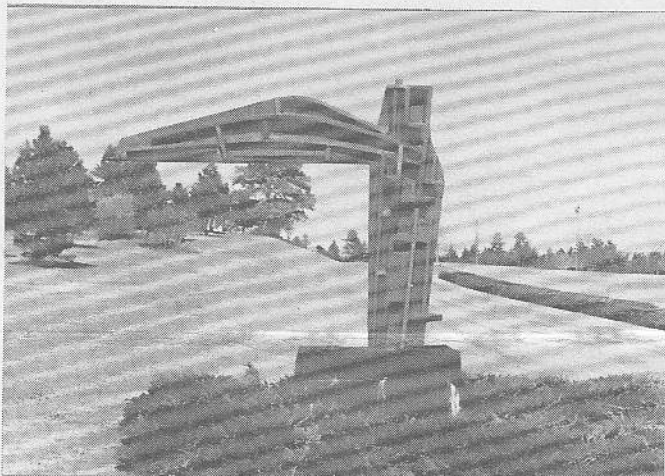
The annual Rally Round Banquet will be held on Saturday, August 17. Complete details of the dedication and rally round plans will be carried in the July Ragged Irregular. 1st vice-president Glenn Boyce has hosted the annual Rocky Mountain Area get-together for a number of years.



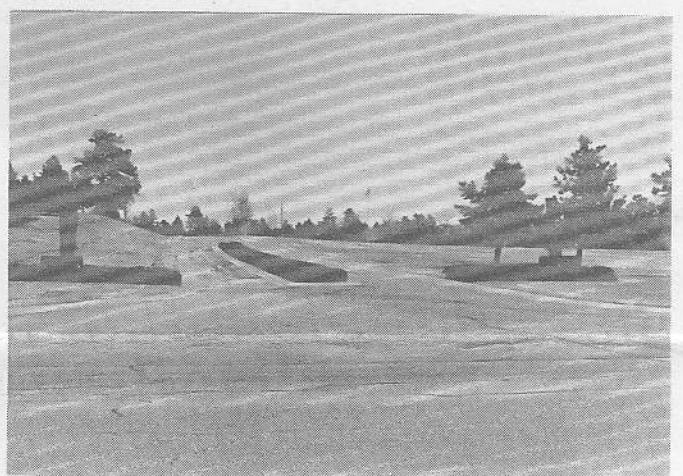
The black arrow shows the location of the 91st plaque on the Memorial Wall.



The 91st plaque as it appears on the Memorial Wall.



The "Broken Wing" symbols that flank the Academy Cemetery entrance.



The entrance and a panorama of the Air Force Academy Cemetery.

Seattle Mission 'Right On Course'

Response to the 91st Super Rally Round in Seattle July 24-25-26, coinciding with Boeing's B-17 50th anniversary celebration, has been just great, according to committee chairman Bob Schuck. It promises to be one of the most exciting Rally Rounds held yet.

If you haven't sent in your registration form and room reservation card do so at once, since the deadline is May 15. Headquarters will be the Seattle Hilton. Says Bob, "We expect to have a very crowded city with 21 groups signed up so far. Many of you think we are the other side of Indian country, so you should plan extra time here to see the sights. Charlie Hackstock, 14224 SE 288, Kent, WA. is handling R/R reservations.

Notes From The President...

The "good guys" are again stepping forth and volunteering for an onerous mission, i.e., hosting a Memorial Association reunion. This despite that sage bit of service advice old-timers used to drum into the heads of recruits--"Never volunteer..." There is simply no way the Memorial Association can express its deep gratitude for what they have done, are doing, and will do. The extent of our recognition at reunions and in The Ragged Irregular seems inadequate, especially in the face of a single gripe overheard by these hardworking members. I think I can speak for all of us when I observe that never has a griping malcontent volunteered to do the job!

As of the first of April, three "east of the Mississippi" sites had been nominated for the 1986 Reunion by willing and devoted volunteers.

Col. Paul MacDuffee and Howell Loper offered to host the Group in Tampa, FL., with a number of other area volunteers eager to help. McDill Field in Tampa was the original home of the 91st, and many members of the Memorial Association began their careers with the group there. (Technically, the 91st began at Harding Field, in Baton Rouge, La., in April, 1942, with two members, Lt. Edward R. Eckert and Lt. Frank Kamykowski, but moved to McDill in May, 1942.) McDill is still a major Air Force base.

McDuffee and Loper hosted a super Super Rally Round in Tampa in July, 1970. It is centrally located near many of Florida's most popular vacation attractions. Florida has a very high concentration of 91st members.

LTC (Ret) Les Thompson has offered to host the group at Montgomery, AL., home of the Air University and Maxwell Field, where a number of our members have been assigned, either in WW II or the years since. He points out that the Air University would give us a tour, plus the use of the club facilities and two 18-hole golf courses. Montgomery is one of the most historic cities in the South - the Cradle of the Confederacy - and offers numerous attractions in the area for vacationers. Gulf beaches, Mobile, and Huntsville and the Space Center and Museum are only a couple of hours away. Excellent hotels are available at very moderate rates.

Les has had plenty of experience setting up conventions of up to 1500 people. A number of area 91sters are available to help with the event.

Charles T. Bell, of Potomac, MD., has suggested the Washington, D.C., area as our reunion site, and offered to help with a reunion there. Charlie points out the great popularity of the Washington area for vacationers, its proximity to numerous attractions, and to Dover, Del., home of "Shoo Shoo Baby," and to the considerable number of 91sters in the vicinity.

All three sites have positive attractions. Again, in the democratic process, we are asking you to vote your preference. Please advise our Secretary-Treasurer George Parks, 109 Wilshire Ave., Vallejo, CA. 94591 NOT LATER THAN May 31, 1985, so the selection can be announced in the July R/I.

The past year has been one of steady and significant growth for the Memorial Association. With the aging of our membership and the increasing frequency of death notices in the R/I many of us have assumed that the membership must be on a downhill slide. Quite the opposite is true! Each month sees the addition of new "lost" members to our rolls, 91sters who are finding out about the Memorial Association for the first time, and persons who have never bothered to join in years past, that more than outnumber those we lose. When we compare the membership report for March 31, 1984, and our latest report, March 31, 1985, significant increases show up. With the concerted help of our membership these increases will continue and multiply through 1985!

When you look at the numbers compiled by George Parks in his 1984 and 1985 reports the figures jump out. In every category the bottom line is a plus rather than a minus.

In March, 1984 the total number of firm addresses in our master files was 1658; in 1985 the number was 1721, a gain of +63. The number of Life Members went from 140 to 160, a gain of +20. In 1984 a total of 1046 members (excluding associates) paid membership dues; in 1985 1153 have already paid, a gain of +107. Paid associates have gained from 81 to 87.

May our March 31, 1986 report show an even greater increase! We need your help.

TOM GUNN

Back By 'Taxi' Across The Channel

"Getting back" from any combat mission was a feat to be treasured, no matter how it might be done. But Bill Turcotte, ex-322nd sqdn. navigator and the crew he was flying his first mission with did it the hard and unusual way-- they crossed much of the North Sea by 'taxi'.

As Bill tells the story, the crew he flew with in the U.S. came to the 91st via Iceland, Prestwick, and Bovington, and reached Bassingbourn the second week in July, 1943, assigned to the 322nd. The next couple of weeks went the usual route -- check-out flights to acquaint the crew with local conditions and generally to get them familiar with procedures.

Their first combat experience came on July 26, a mission to bomb the synthetic rubber works at Hanover. As was the usual practice, the new crew was split up to fly their first mission with crews having five or more combat missions. "Si Simons (bombardier) and I were assigned to fly with Lts. Hargis and Smith. We were a 'spare' plane to fill in any position aborted by one of our group's planes. We were in 'Destiny's Tot,' which was somewhat the worse for wear and tear in combat, and reputed to be an oil burner.

"There was some confusion among the groups in formation assembly at altitude, but none of the 91st planes appeared to have aborted and our 'spare' ship followed the formation to the coastline. Hargis spotted a vacant slot in another group and we filled the position before reaching the enemy coast. Going in to the target there was some 'bogey' action behind us and a heavy flak barrage over the target. One nearby B-17 was hit and disintegrated, and a couple more went down after we left the target, but we got through o.k. Except for a 'mouthful of cotton' I even felt rather cheerful when we reached the North Sea.

"However, we were startled to hear the pilot say 'prepare for ditching' soon after we left the coast. At first we thought it was just a drill, but by the time we reached the radio room we could see the wave patterns and realized something was truly amiss. It had not been possible to switch gas tanks and we were running on empty!

"There was a jolt as the ball turret hit the water first. The plane bounced up and came down again and thrust us forward tight against the wall and each other in stunned, momentary silence. We recovered quickly and climbed out by the gun mount opening above the radio room. The dinghy releases were pulled and the two of them popped out on the wings. The pilots crawled out through the cockpit windows. We pushed the inflated dinghys to the end of each wing and hopped in, five in each, and shoved off. Fortunately the sea was fairly calm, without whitecaps, and the weather was clear and mild but the water was cold. We hardly got our feet wet. Within a few minutes the plane had sunk enough so that the stabilizer was below the water surface. The weight of the engines on the front and the water weight above the stabilizer at the tail caused the ship to break in two at the mid-section. We heard crunching sounds, then the plane sank forward as it broke in the middle.

"The radio operator had sent 'May-Day' signals before we ditched. Our dinghy had a hand-cranked S.O.S. sender in it and one of the crew started cranking it. We threw out the sea anchor and some green dye. Rescue was not long in coming. At first, two Spitfires buzzed us and kept circling. Then a converted Lockheed Hudson bomber appeared, made a large circle approaching the wind and dropped a large dinghy which landed close to us and we paddled over to it and tied up. Shortly afterward two 'Walrus' single engine pusher-type amphibians landed and each one taxied up to our two dinghys. Five of the others loaded into one and took off. Five of us got into the second 'Walrus' and we prepared to take off, but by then the wind had picked up considerably and waves were white capping. The pilot made a take-off run with us sandwiched in the rear compartment. The old bird was sadly over-loaded and despite the most valiant efforts of the RAF pilot and radio-operator-co-pilot we jolted along but could not get airborne in the choppy sea.

"The radio operator operator had an epileptic seizure during the take-off trial. We pulled him back with us and stuffed a piece of cloth in his mouth while he came out

from the seizure. They tried to make a take-off again but the results were even more disastrous. The plane bounced along and finally hit into a jolting wave that broke the tail stabilizer. There was nothing left to do but taxi toward England, about 40 miles from our position, and hope for the best! At a very slow pace we chugged for home.

Just before dark an Air-Sea Rescue launch found us, and with the damaged Walrus taxiing behind we proceeded to port, arriving about midnight. We spent the night in RAF quarters and the next morning returned to Bassingbourn in a stripped-down B-17 that came for us at a nearby Martin B-26 base. As was the practice at the time we were sent to 'Flak City', a R and R home north of Southampton for a brief period to recover from our experience.

"After returning to Bassingbourn, I attended a small class in intelligence communications in the event we were shot down over enemy territory. The instruction proved helpful later and served to help the cause of our P.O.W.s in Germany."

(Editor's note: Bill's crew was shot down later and he spent the remainder of the war as a guest at Stalag Luft III.)



With some still wearing the dry clothing given by Air-Sea Rescue, the crew poses for photos following their long 'taxi' ride. Kneeling, front row, 1 to r: Smith, Hargis, Simon, and Turcotte. Unfortunately the standing members in our photo were not identified, but some of you R/I readers may recognize yourself or friends. Let us know.

From The Editor's Desk...

Paul C. Burnett Box 909 Auburn, Al. 36830

In 1984 we had 27 members who donated \$100 each to become Memorial Association Life Members, the largest number ever. Since the January issue of the R/I an additional eight have become "Lifers," plus the donation of \$100 as a memorial to a former member.

New Life Members include: Michael Rheam, ex-401st sqdn., Lewisburg, PA., who also enrolled Charles Hudson, ex-401st, Lemoore, CA. Dec. 27, 1984.

T/Sgt. Edward P. McDaniel (Ret), ex-322nd sqdn., Valdosta, GA. Jan. 1, 1985.

Col. Louis A. Montalvo (Ret), ex-401st and 324th sqdn., Lompoc, CA. Feb. 1.

George P.E. Jacobs, ex-324th sqdn.,

Silver Springs, MD. Feb. 5.

Thomas A. Bottomley, ex-324th sqdn., Berkeley Heights, N.J. Feb. 12.

Eugene L. Cruse, ex-322, 323, 324th sqdns., Detroit, MI. March 23.

Gerald J. Bradley, ex-324th sqdn., Reading, PA. April 5.

Mrs. Kathryn Hackwith, North Highlands, CA., made a \$100 gift to the Memorial Association in memory of her late husband T/Sgt. Oliver J. Hackwith (Ret), ex-322nd sqdn., who died in an automobile accident June 6, 1981.

The April issue of the R/I, which carries a heavy load of good news each year in the secretary-treasurer's report of membership growth and new Life Members also is usually the issue informing us of the passing of more of our members than any other issue of the year. All members listed in our directory, whether active or not, get the January R/I each year, and the post office returns to us those addressed to deceased persons, and family members also are more likely to inform us of the passing of our members. This issue is no exception. The following deaths have been reported to us:

James A. Ballard, 323rd sqdn.

Bryce F. Barrett, 441st Sub/Depot.

Clifford Billington, 982nd M.P. 12-12-84

James A. Carlino, 324th sqdn. 1-1-85.

Cecil G. Ferry, 323rd sqdn. 12-25-84.

Russell A. Kirkland

Joseph D. Donahue, Hqs. 91st. 1984.

Frank Brines. 8-5-83.

Joseph M. Ralston, 401st sqdn. 7-7-84.

LTC Fred Peterman, 324th sqdn. 1-6-85.

Donald Schwab, 401st sqdn. 12-29-84.

Carl O. Ducklinsky, 401st sqdn. 2-84.

From time to time a few old buddies from the 91st get together for a mini-rally of their own, to relive memories of their service together and to share mutual good times. One California group that does this on a regular quarterly basis got together at the mobile home of Jack and Jan Gaffney in Sunnymead, CA., on January 26 to celebrate the 39th wedding anniversary of Art and Phylis Thomson, Alhambra, CA. They were the Gaffneys (ex-401st), the Thomsens (ex-401st), Aubin and Jackie Pene, Brea, (ex-401st); Faber and Mary Faith Cripps, Palm Springs, (ex-401st & 441st S.D.), and Tony and Jackie Starcer, of Hacienda Heights (ex-322nd).

After an early meeting for reminiscing the group enjoyed a superb Mexican dinner at the El Serape Restaurant, and then Jackie Pene's anniversary cake honoring the Thomsens, with champagne toasts.

Gaffney is retired from Mayfair Markets, Starcer is retired from the May Co., Thomson is retired from his own sheet metal company, Cripps is retired from the Maytag Corp., and Pene is employed by TWA.



Seated, l to r: Faber Cripps, Aubin Pene. Standing: Tony Starcer, Jack Gaffney, Art Thomsen.



Front two: Jackie Pene, Phylis Thomsen. Rear: Mary Faith Cripps, Jan Gaffney, Jackie Starcer.

One of the most complete listings of 91st Bomb Group aircraft yet assembled has been put together by historian Paul M. Andrews, entitled "Seventeen Bits and Pieces of the Ragged Irregulars During the Second World War," has been published in the Fall, 1984 issue of the Journal of the American Aviation Historical Society.

This is a most significant contribution to the history of the 91st, and is a valuable addition to the files of all group members. Copies of the Journal, Vol. 29, No.3, can be ordered for \$2.50 postpaid from: The American Aviation Historical Society, 2333 Ottis Street, Santa Ana, CA. 92704.

A note from Matt Pettera, Wauzeka, WI., ex-401st sqdn., informs all his old buddies that he is getting married on June 7 to Margaret Crowley Dremse. The event will take place at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Bascobel, WI.

A number of ex-91st POWs will be attending the reunion of guests of Stalag Luft III May 2-4 at the Marriott Southeast Hotel in Denver. About 1000 Luft III members are expected. Robert L. Weinberg (tel. # 312-432-5972) is handling information on the get-together.

A book covering the experiences of the POWs in Stalag Luft III, "Clipped Wings," is available for \$14.95 a copy from: Stalag Luft III Ex-Prisoners of War, P.O. Box 787, Highland Park, IL. 60035.

Another in the series of Roger Freeman's books on the Eighth Air Force is now available, "Mighty Eighth War Manual." The book describes the procedures involved in the execution of particular types of operations and how these were amended to meet changing circumstances and new requirements. Copies can be ordered for \$29.95 plus \$1.75 postage and packing from: Jane's Publishing Inc., Dept. Me85, 13th Floor, 135 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10020.

A mini-reunion of WW II Swedish internees is planned as part of the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion in Wichita, KS., October 17-20. Any 91ster who is eligible and interested in getting together with other Swedish internees at that time should contact Ernest J. Richardson, 10491 Marcia Lane, South Lyon, MI. 48178. Tel. (313) 437-0140.



Only 120 SHOO SHOO SHOO BABY T-Shirts Left

Fawn "Shoo Shoo Baby" Hall says, "Don't Go To Seattle Without One." Money is still needed to restore our B-17 Bomber, Shoo Shoo Baby. For each \$15 donation, contributors will receive one of our unique T-Shirts. Proceeds will go to the 512th Antique Restoration Group at Dover, DE. Send your shirt size (S,M,L,XL), return address, and \$15 check or money order made out to Shoo Shoo Baby to W.W. Hill, 4002 Braddock Rd., Alexandria, VA. 22312. Any checks received after the supply of SSSB T-Shirts is exhausted will be promptly returned.

The 11th Annual Reunion of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society has been set for October 17-20, 1985, at Wichita, KS., and will have as its central theme the 50th anniversary of the B-17. Wichita, the "Air Capitol of the World," is the site of McConnell Air Force Base (part of the present-day 8th AF), SAC, Boeing Military Airplane Co., Beech, Cessna, and

Lear Aircraft.

For more information write John H. Woolnough, 8AFHS Operations Manager, P.O. Box 3556, Hollywood, FL. 33083.

The massed Bands, Pipes and Drums of the Regiments of the Queen's Division (the Depot now stationed at Basingstoke) will be Beating Retreat on Horse Guards Parade in London on 11, 12, 13 June. Former 91sters who may be visiting England at this time shouldn't miss this musical spectacular.

Maj. A.M.F. Jelf, who is in charge of the program, states that "the traditional musical programme will we hope evoke many memories and suit every taste. We are fortunate in having distinguished members of the Royal Family to take the Salute on the 12th and 13th of June, and the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to take the Salute on the 11th."

A beautifully carved wooden plaque of the 8th Air Force emblem has been presented to the 91st Tower Museum at Basingstoke by Bill Adams, a London wood carver. Adams was given a pair of wings by an American airman when he was a child in a London air raid shelter, and the plaque is a mark of his appreciation and interest in the U.S. Air Force that has continued ever since.

Vince Hemmings, curator for the Museum, accepted the gift for the 91st. Also on hand at the presentation were 91st members Bob and Pam Christman, ex-323rd sqdn., of Erie, PA., and Bob's brother-in-law, Fred Sole.



L to r: Fred Sole, Norma Pointer, Bill Adams, Vince Hemmings, Pam Christman, Bob Christman.

Shoo Shoo Baby Progress

Ray McClosky, Project Director for the restoration of Shoo Shoo Baby by the 512 Antique Aircraft Restoration Group, has passed along this update of the progress this far:

"We have had all the flight controls recovered, installed on the plane, and the cable systems rigged. We recently completed the installation of the right wing trailing edge, and installed the remainder of the right wing plumbing.

The wiring of the cockpit electrical panels is complete and ready for installation as soon as we get to this area. We will be installing the flaps shortly.

Hopefully the engines will be delivered by the summer, but they still remain a question mark. The Air Force Museum had found some surplus Navy engines with zero time since overhaul but they wouldn't fit the original engine mounts. So the search is on again.

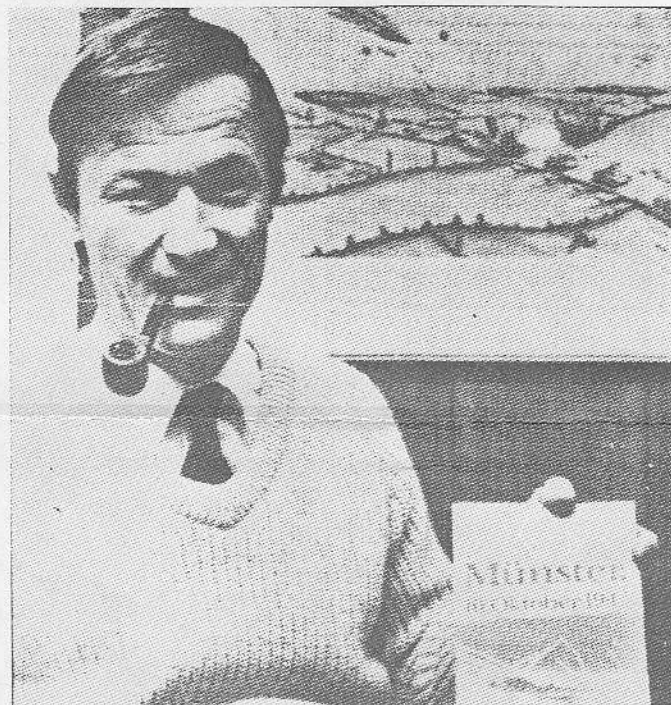
Our only other problem is the main and nose gear struts. They still leak and it looks like we'll have to have seals made for them."

As of now it does not appear that the restoration project will be complete until sometime later than the 1986 reunion. As is usual with unique projects of this sort trying to predict progress is next to impossible because of a multitude of unforeseen problems that crop up.

An outstanding new book "Munster: The Way it Was," by British associate 91ster Ian Hawkins, has become available in an English edition (published earlier in German) and is a truly worthwhile addition to any member's bookshelves, especially those who made that Oct. 10, 1943 mission. The book is the result of five years of exhaustive research and interviews with over 200 participants, and contains 278 pictures and 431 pages.

Hawkins has approached the book from the experiences of those who participated: the bomber crews, fighter pilots, German air defenders, and those who bore the brunt of the bombs. It has been hailed as "probably the finest portrayal of an 8th AF mission yet..."

Copies can be ordered for \$20 plus \$1.50 postage from Robinson Typographics, 1614 So. Clementine St., Anaheim, CA. 92802 if you mention your membership in the 91st, \$3.50 less than the usual price.



Associate 91ster Ian Hawkins with a copy of his excellent new book "Munster: The Way It Was." Ian will attend the Seattle B-17 50th Anniversary.

With his thumb, a hitch-hiker says: "You furnish the car, gas, attend to the repairs and upkeep, supply the insurance, and I'll ride with you...but if you have an accident I'll sue you for damages!" It sounds pretty one-sided, but one wonders how many "hitch-hikers" there are in many organizations and associations about the country.

A few number of members seem to say, "You go to the meetings, serve on the board and the committees, do the paper work, study the issues, and I'll be there for the Good Times. However, I'll make a concerted effort to criticize and complain at every opportunity, and then probably get out and hitch-hike to another group. I will not support the Association or any of its projects unless I like them or they are my idea...HITCH-HIKER OR DRIVER, which one are you?"

Please Vote On The '86 Reunion Site