

# The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



AND SUPPORTING UNITS



324th SQDN



401st SQDN

Vol. 20, No. 1

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

April 1987

## MAY DEDICATION FULFILLING DONOFRIO'S "BELLE" DREAM



"Memphis Belle's" original Crew Chief, Joe Giambrone (on ladder), adds the 25th mission bomb to Starcor's nose art to record a memorable event in this WWII photo.

Though returning participants of the "Back To Basingbourn Tour", set for May 5-13, 1987, will be tired, it's a safe bet that many of them won't be able to ignore the lure of another 91st BGMA activity set for May 15-17, 1987.

It's the gala affair arranged by 91st Associate Life Member Frank G. Donofrio in Memphis, Tenn. for the "Memphis Belle Memorial Dedication."

Donofrio, a one-time infantry officer who earned his pilots' license when he was 62, has spent 19 years restoring the 324th Sqd.'s "Memphis Belle," the first B-17 to complete 25 missions over German-occupied Europe.

The 91st's famous Lady was placed upon a pedestal at a National Guard Armory in Memphis after the war but vandals and the elements did more damage in the ensuing years to her than she ever suffered during the war.

Aroused by the deterioration, Donofrio's efforts finally made contact with the 91st BGMA.

"But for eight years," he recalls, "I was the sole member of the Memphis Belle Memorial Committee."

Since it is impossible to record even a small portion of the names of all those who helped "Belle" survive in those difficult years, it is certain no one will feel slighted if one benefactor besides Donofrio is singled out.

In an Oct. 1975 letter to *Frontier Magazine* Donofrio wrote:

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## Confederate Air Force Opens Dixie City's Festivities

Alexandria, LA has scheduled a Confederate Air Force show to begin its CENLABRATION on Sunday, May 31st. The air show will include numerous WWII airplanes. Among them are a B-17, Focke- Wulf, P-51, P-40, ME109 and a Zero.

The air activity will take place at the Esler Regional Airport (formerly Esler Army Air Field) where, after flight, the planes will be on view for the public.

Special banquets, activities and tours are scheduled for visiting former Air Force personnel. Family activities will be available daily during the week of CENLABRATION which concludes on June 5, 6 and 7 in fun and frolic in Alexandria's historic downtown area.

For particulars contact: Alexandria Re-Visited 1987, PO Box 1293, Alexandria, LA 71309.

## ROYAL NOSTALGIA ADDED TO BASSINGBOURN TOUR

Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother has increased the nostalgia awaiting the 91sters attending the Anglo-American Week in London, Cambridge and Royston areas from May 5 to May 13, 1987.

Her secretary replied to 91st BGMA's President Paul Chryst's announcement of the return of former Basingbourn personnel that Her Majesty "was very pleased" with the news and assured Chryst "Her Majesty still retains vivid memories of her visit to Basingbourn with The King in 1943."

The original letter will be donated to "The Memphis Belle Memorial Museum" during dedication ceremonies scheduled from May 15 through May 17, 1987.

The Berkshire Travel Agency, of Reading, PA, has announced that the guided tour scheduled by it is now completely filled. However, anyone traveling alone is welcome to join the activities scheduled for this memorable weekend.

It has been announced that no 91st BG member will be turned away from the gates of Basingbourn during the week's activities.

Should any member wish to participate on a "partial basis only," he is advised to contact the Berkshire Travel Agency, Inc. immediately to have his name placed upon the Official Visiting Member Listing.

Since a number of scheduled events involve cost factors due the Friends of the 91st for making the arrangements, it is important to understand them to avoid possible mutual embarrassment.

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## "BELLE" DREAM

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"In 1966, the rugged old plane began to yield to Mother Nature. The flaws went unnoticed by the public until David Pitts, a 13-year-old-boy from Pleasant Grove, Ala., protested in a letter to the Commercial Appeal Newsletter in Memphis for a new coat of paint for his favorite airplane. The letter sparked a complete new paint job by a crew from the Air National Guardsmen."

Things picked up by 1980. The "Memphis Belle" was moved to the International Airport where Air National Guard mechanics and an aviation technical school's students began restoration.

When "a permanent shelter" was made the bottom line for the retention of "Memphis Belle" in her hometown, Donofrio arose to the challenge again.

He sparked the fund-raising drive that eventually provided the funds for the "Memphis Belle Memorial." Its dedication will be celebrated by Memphis and many, many 91st BGMA members from May 15 to May 17.

Col. Richard Uppstrom, director of the U.S. Airforce Museum near Dayton, Ohio, was so impressed by the determination and enthusiasm of those involved in the Memorial fund-raising he extended the time required to raise \$500,000 for the permanent shelter three times. (If Donofrio's effort had failed to raise the required amount, the Air Force would have reclaimed "Belle.")

Donofrio's dream has come true. A steel-framed, oval dome with strong fabric covering will soon house a thoroughly restored "Memphis Belle." The dome will be about 124 feet wide and 154 feet long.

Four small exhibits will enable visitors to experience the "in-flight" positions of a waist gunner, turret gunner, bombardier and pilot and co-pilot without entering "Belle" herself. The arrangement will preclude inadvertent damage caused by tourist traffic through the plane itself.

An observation deck is planned along part of the dome's interior to permit a view of "Belle" from above.

About a year ago Col. Robert Morgan, who piloted "Belle" through 25 missions, attended a press conference relating to her. Also attending the press conference was Margaret Polk, the Memphis "Belle" Morgan had in mind when he named his plane.

At the press conference Morgan said, "It's very nostalgic to sit in the Belle. I kind of felt there were 11 of us - 10 crewmen and that wonderful airplane.

"She was very dear to us. As the bombardier once said, 'She could have been our coffin, and she turned out to be our savior.'"

The scheduled activities for the "Memphis Belle Memorial Dedication" ceremonies for May 15-17, 1987 are:

### MAY 15 -

Aircraft relocated to National Guard ramp. 6:30 PM - Cocktail party and buffet for crews and dignitaries at Sheraton Airport. 8:00 P.M. - Media reception.

### MAY 16 -

7:00 AM - Buffet Breakfast at Sheraton Airport. 8:30 AM - Private media arrangements and individual for flying for photo and promotion. 10:00 AM - Gates open to public. 12:45 AM - Ramp

cleared of public. 1:00 PM - Formation take off. Formation passes over airport, city and Mud Island for approximately one hour. 2:00 PM - Ramp reopens to public. Aircraft on display until one half hour after sunset. 6:30 PM - Dinner party and dance for crews and workers at the 91st Bomb Group Restaurant.

### MAY 17 -

7:00 AM - Breakfast buffet at Sheraton Airport. 9:00 AM - Gates open to the public. 1:30 PM - Ramp closed for formation take off. Airshow passes over airport. 2:00 PM - Overfly Mud Island

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## ROYAL NOSTALGIA

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Consequently, anyone intending to join the activities on his own is advised to write Berkshire and state their intentions in advance of their departure.

Those attending will represent the more than 2,000 proud members of the 91st BGMA today. While there they will participate in ceremonies honoring those with whom they served - the living and the dead.

Other ceremonies will pay tribute to The Friends of the 91st BG; acknowledge the complete refurbishing of the Prop Memorial and its landscaping; accept the gift of two Memory Benches; express the 91st's gratitude to the C.O., the Officers and Men of the Barracks for their vigilant maintenance of the Memorial; pay tribute to M/M David Crow for more than 20 years of faithful service and acknowledge the hard work and personal sacrifices by Vince Hemmings to maintain the Control Tower Museum.



CLARENCE HOUSE  
S.W. 1

17th February 1987

*Dear Colonel Chryst.*

I write to thank you for your letter of 6th February which I have handed to Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother.

Queen Elizabeth was very pleased to have news from one of those who flew combat sorties from Basingbourn between 1942 and 1945.

The Queen Mother asks me to convey to you and to the crew of "The Memphis Belle" her sincere good wishes, and I am to assure you that Her Majesty still retains vivid memories of her visit to Basingbourn with The King in 1943.

*For sincerely,  
Maxine Tillier.*

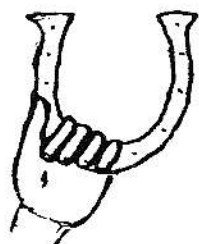
Private Secretary to  
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Chryst.

THE QUEEN MOTHER'S LETTER



# CHAPLAIN RAGAN BLESSED ALL — WITH A HORSESHOE!



Generally morning light was dim and mist often blurred object outlines when a green flare's signal started engines at war-time Basingbourn. Soon, more than a mile of 91st BG(H) B-17's lumbered around the perimeter, preparing to swing onto the runway and take off for another strike at Hitler's heartland.

Sometimes crew members, happening to look in the right direction while their plane began the take-off roll, blinked their eyes in a "double-take." There just beyond the wingtip, at the edge of the grass, stood a priest brandish-ing a horseshoe!

When the planes returned the same priest awaited their crews in Operations, offering support, encouragement, cocoa and any diversified, imaginative solace deemed suitable at the time. While the planes were away he had circulated throughout the hangars and hardstands with friendly, bolstering words for the ground crews burdened with endless workloads.

The 91st BG(H)'s Catholic Chaplain, Captain Michael S. Ragan of Ohio, was quite a guy! Easy going, informal friend to all, his life was an example of selfless dedication to others. It didn't matter to him whether you were Catholic, of another faith or "nothing at all." You were important.

Even animals flocked to his charisma. As he walked around the base he was usually accompanied by tailwagging dogs. His own personal grief was intense when "Redline," Basingbourn's mascot, became ill and the

Chaplain Captain Michael S. Ragan blesses a crew prior to its departure on a mission from Basingbourn in this Official Photo intended for stateside publications. A similar photo was published in the Sept. 10, 1944 Pictorial Magazine of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

401st Flight Surgeon, Captain Walker, regrettably determined the ailment was, "Terminal".

Hilary "Bud" Evers, of the 401st, remembers chancing upon Ragan on a base path leading to the No. 2 Club. There was a large congregation of birds, between 25 to 50, clustered before him. As Evers approached, it was apparent Ragan was talking to the birds.

When he finally noticed the somewhat discomfited Evers' presence Chaplain Ragan unabashedly said, "Goodbye!" to the birds. He then joined Evers, without a word of explanation, and chatted with him as the two continued together down the path.

Also recalled are the occasional "striptease" performances Chaplain Ragan performed. Those who attended received an education. Before his audience he divested himself of all his clerical raiment - one item at a time while explaining the significance of each piece. At the end of this "striptease" his exposure consisted of regulation U.S. Army attire.

After the war Chaplain Ragan returned to Avon, Ohio where he served his church until his death in a tragic 1949 auto accident. He is remembered in that area with affection.

He must have had kind words for all 91sters in the brief years he lived after the war. In 1952 the Knights of Colum-

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## CHAPLAIN RAGAN

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bus chartered Council 33269 and dedicated it to his memory. This K of C Council subsequently issued a standing invitation to all "Ragged Irregulars" to look them up when in the area. Anyone anticipating an opportunity of responding to the invitation should write, John Newlin, P.O. Box 224, Avon, Ohio 44012.

That such an invitation, in Chaplain Michael S. Ragan's name, still stands for all "Ragged Irregulars" after 35 years confirms all memories of his devoted, dedicated service to the men of the 91st BG(H).

—ALLAN CHAPMAN

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Though one of the nearly "nothing at all" religious category while at Basingbourn, this ex-G.I. was not untouched by Chaplain Ragan's presence.

The cherished memory consists of the occasions when he overtook pedestrians on the base while on his bicycle. Just before passing them from behind he'd announce his presence with a sudden, boisterous, "PEACE on you!"

As he passed the often startled walkers he looked back with such an impish but benign grin that you, though accustomed to the ribaldry present too often in G.I. vocabularies, knew he hadn't meant what you initially thought "PEACE on you!" might have meant!

## folded Wings

**DONOVAN, MICHAEL F.**, 401st Sqd., 30240 Rosebrier, St. Clair Shores, MI 48082; Sept., 1986. Reported by his daughter, Mary Ellen McCaffrey.

**HUFFMAN, HOWARD C.**, 401st Sqd., 281 N. Edgehill Dr., Youngstown, OH 44515; Dec. 18, 1986. He is survived by his wife, Helen; a son, Leslie H.; a sister, Mrs. Gertrude Alexander; and four brothers, Ezra, Ralph, James and Kenneth.

Mrs. Huffman wrote "Howard loved his Group and he loved receiving *The Ragged Irregular*."

**IRONS, DONALD E.**, MSGT (Ret), 323 Sqd., 3307 Taft St., Boise, ID 83703; Sept. 29, 1986. Irons was a POW in Stalag 17B. He retired from the Air Force after 28 years service.

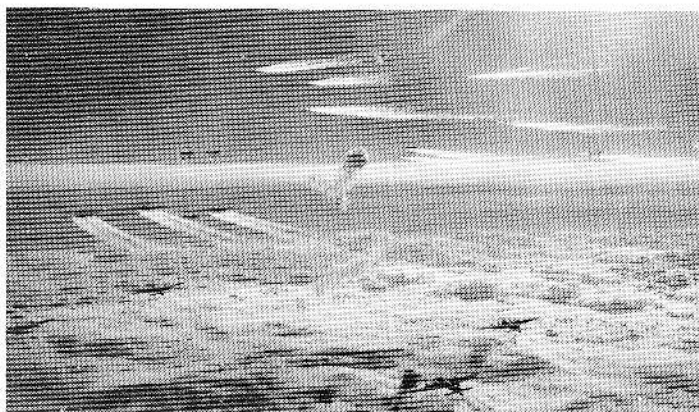
An avid reader and accomplished cook, his survivors include his wife, Georgia; two sons, Donald G. and John; a grandson, Donald Shane Irons; two brothers, Edwin H. and Clifford and a sister, Dorothy Foley.

**JONES, MORREL E.** (A); 1101 N. Biting, Wichita, KS 77203; Nov. 2, 1986.

**SCHOVAN, WILLIAM C.**, 401st Sqd., 24301 Marigold, Warren, MI 48089; May, 1986. He is survived by his wife, Barbara.

**TAYLOR, MONROE P.**, 323rd Sqd., P.O. Box 67, Rhome, TX 76078; Jan. 22, 1987. Reported by his wife, Sara. She wrote her husband, a former Navigator, "always still felt (he was) a part of his squadron."

## MUTUAL COOPERATION REQUIRED TO PRESERVE A PROUD PAST



The 91st BG(H) over Germany in February, 1944.

Courageous men comprised the 91st BG(H). These Regular and Civilian soldiers, both airmen and ground-men, did not falter in battle. They did not despair in the face of often hopeless odds. They set their minds and wills, their strength and stamina to contribute to the goal - VICTORY.

Those of us who were lucky enough to survive organized a Memorial Association to honor 91sters, both living and dead. Our purpose is pure. Gallant men deserve to be memorialized. They and their exploits deserve to be remembered. For they were and are our brothers — were and are our comrades. In heart and mind we survivors know our survival depended upon the skill, dedication and devotion of those with whom we flew and those who kept us flying.

There were leaders among us who loved enough to establish our Association. Other leaders nurtured its growth. To these dedicated and unselfish men we owe much.

It is now 1987. Forty-two years have passed. Recently we elected new leaders. Adopted new By-Laws. Let's get going and proceed with vigor to carry out the mandate of our Association.

In the past there have been disagreements brought about principally by lack of communication. We can and will forget these. With everyone's cooperation we must look to the future to preserve our proud past.

All the members appreciate and honor our past leaders and trust our new leaders will do well. The men of the 91st will rally round if we commit ourselves to an open and democratic association dedicated to our purposes.

For positive results we must think and act positive. To make ours the best and most active memorial group of all is our goal!

—Hilary "Bud" Evers, 1st V.P., 91st BGMA

## ATTENTION!

Now that we have your attention: The 1987 91st BGMA's \$5.00 Annual Membership dues are due! Please send check to Treasurer Charles R. Hackstock, 14224 S. E. 288th St., Kent, WA 98042.

• The 91st BGMA's 1st Vice President Hilary "Bud" Evers has accepted the additional duty of the Historian post. Help him preserve our past. Send your favorite story to the R/I.



# THE "MISS OUACHITA" - OSTERBERG TALE

2nd Lt. Spencer K. Osterberg's career as a pilot in the 323rd Sqd., 91st BG(H) was brief. It began Dec., 1943. Arriving as the pilot of a Replacement Crew, he flew his first mission on January 29, 1944 as a Co-Pilot.

Five missions later, on February 21, he and his crew were assigned their own plane, "Miss Ouachita," a B17F with the serial number 42-3040.

"Someone else had named her," he recalls along with the fact that he and his crew never had a chance to practice fly her.

Their first mission and flight in her was their last.

The target on Feb. 21 was an airport near Munster, Germany. Osterberg flew wing to Lt. Ward who led the Spare Element. Sometime before the target was reached the Spare Element turned to the left while the main formation turned to the right.

"By the time I had recovered," Osterberg recalls, "and returned to the main formation, fighters had hit us hard. I lost the Top Turret and Engineer-Gunner T/Sgt Lambert T. Brostrom and the Tail Guns. One left engine was out, another damaged - the Radio Room was afire and our oxygen system was destroyed."

Without oxygen it was impossible to maintain the high altitude at which the main formation continued toward the target. Cutting power, Osterberg headed for cloud cover below. During the descent fighters hit "Miss Ouachita" again.

Soon after reaching cloud cover his plane iced up badly. Battle damage now included loss of vacuum for his flight instruments. Consequently he depended upon the needle-ball and air speed to maintain level flight until the ice cleared from the windshield.

Emerging from the cloud cover, he flew "just off the deck for quite a while".

Seeking to avoid a town ahead, his effort inadvertently took them over a German fighter base which spewed fighters like bees from a hive. These fighters immediately began making more runs on "Miss Ouachita" whose only remaining defense was the Left Waist Gun.

As more fighters made their runs his Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Van John E. Beran, was killed and Osterberg, wounded, was no longer able to evade their fire.

Because they were now defenseless and surviving further pending attacks was impossible, Osterberg looked for "a spot to set 'Miss Ouachita' down." He selected and bellied in on "a couple of small pastures."

Six of the crew of the downed "Miss Ouachita" walked away. All the survivors became P.O.W.'s for the next 15 months.

In addition to the deaths of his Co-Pilot and Engineer and his own wounding, three other crew members were wounded. They were Radio-Operator T/Sgt Harold L. Klein, Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt Samuel P. Aldridge and Tail Gunner S/Sgt Jay J. Milewski.

2nd Lts Navigator Morris J. Roy and Bombardier George J. Zebrowski, Jr. and S/Sgts Waist Gunner Clayton E. Morningstar and A. W. Siatkowski escaped injury.

Osterberg and the other officers were sent to Stalag Luft No. 1 at Barth, Germany and remained there until the

advance of Russian troops and diplomacy permitted the 91st to fly them out.

The waiting for 91st transportation provided Osterberg, his Bombardier Zebrowski and another pilot, Gene Senfield, with another memorable memory.

With the Russians in control of the area, the three decided to explore a road leading from Stalag Luft No. 1. Osterberg found an abandoned bicycle which he used to ride ahead of his walking friends. Rounding a bend in the road he came upon two Russians trying to right an auto laying on its side. With the help of Osterberg and his friends the Americans and two Russians righted the vehicle.

However, though the vehicle was righted, the Russians weren't able to start the motor. Osterberg, looking under the hood, found and corrected the malfunction - a loose coil wire.

When the vehicle was operative, one of the Russians, an officer, motioned for Osterberg and his friends to get in. Subsequently, Bombardier Zebrowski's recollections of childhood learned Polish established a semblance of verbal communication between the Americans and the Russians. The Russian officer was a Major who was responsible for a town further ahead on the road where he was using the Mayor's home for his headquarters.

Once at the Russians' headquarters Osterberg and the others waited while the Major was immersed in paper work. Bored, they were ready to return to Stalag No. 1 before night-fall when food was provided. Then bottles of liberated Danish "booze" appeared; "alien" musical instruments, music and singing soon produced a lively party. During the party, Osterberg recalls field-stripping the sub-machine gun belonging to the soldier responsible for the Russian Major's life.

But that mutual trust and camaraderie was limited, he

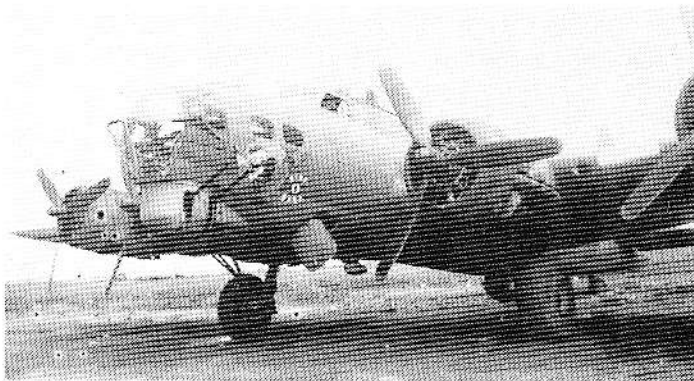
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**STORY BEHIND A STORY:** The 323rd Sqd.'s Spencer K. Osterberg attended the recent Tampa reunion alone. Among the new friends he made were former members of (then Capt.) Col. Lester F. Rentmeester's (Ret.) 401st crew. Meeting him at PENE'S PUB, Rentmeester's crew members insisted Osterberg join them for a reunion dinner completely subsidized by Rentmeester who, regretfully, could not attend the Tampa Reunion. During dinner talk Osterberg's story emerged.

Seated at the table are the following members of Rentmeester's crew, their wives and Osterberg. Reading from left to right, foreground, are: Mrs. Diethorn, Engineer Elmer A. Diethorn, Mrs. Simonson and Radio Operator Ward Simonson. Rear, left to right, are: Waist Gunner Gordon A. Wiggett, Mrs. Wiggett, Mrs. Ashby, Osterberg and Bombardier Joseph T. Ashby.

# RESTORED REPLICA HONORS 323RD'S "909"



Above: The Original "909" of the 323rd Sqd. at Bassingbourn during the war. Right: Some original crew members while training at Pyote, Texas. Left to right are: Co-Pilot Clem W. Rider, Radio Operator Jack R. Grosh, Ball Turret Gunner Homer J. Luke, Pilot Arthur A. Klinger, Navigator William A. Young, Engineer John B. Reash, Left Waist Gunner Larry Sierpin and Tail Gunner Richard E. Murphy.

She deserved a better fate than the scrapping awaiting her in an Arizona "boneyard" after the war.

She flew more missions than any other 8th Air Force B-17. In a bit more than a year, four complete crews made 140 missions with her without a turnback or injury to any of her crew members. Eighteen of those missions were over Berlin.

She was the 323rd Sqd., 91st BG(H)'s unforgettable, "909". The Jan., 1971 issue of the R/I devoted a full page tribute to her memory which is also referred to in more enduring textbooks.

Known as the "Lucky Ship" during her combat service, her spirit survived her scrapping. One pilot, Tom Reilly, operating his own business selling vintage airplane parts and restoring old war planes in Kissimmee, Florida, was instrumental in restoring a facsimile of this famous "Big Friend".

The restored Fort, now proudly sporting "909's" insignia and 91st BG(H) markings is owned by Bob Collings of Barton Road, Stow, Mass. A large hanger on his property is the intended site of a Warbird Museum - the final resting place for the "living monument" he and Reilly have created in "909's" honor.

While attending the Sept. 10-13 Tampa National Reunion, members of "909's" original crew heard her replica would be at the Manchester, New Hampshire Logan Airport on Sept. 27-28, 1986.

Former crew members Richard E. Murphy of Lynn, MA, Samuel J. Cipolla of Chicago, IL, Robert R. Mefford of Valparaiso, IN and Armando J. Sinibaldo of Lisle, IL quickly arranged to meet at the Logan Airfield and fly in "909" again.

They did.

Bob Collings, the plane's owner who enjoys wearing an original "909" flight jacket that sports the "909" nose art on it's back, welcomed them.

"What an experience after all these years," Murphy said. "We flew in formation with another B-17 from a Rheinbeck, NY museum escorted by two P-51's and two P-47's!"

Aside from meeting Sinibaldo at Tampa a few weeks earlier, Murphy had only seen one of his crewmates since the war. He was Radio-Operator Jack Grosh, since deceased, whose creativity sparked "909's" nose art.

Just like "old times" at Bassingbourn, rumors circulated at the Logan Airfield where Murphy and his friends flew in "909's" replica. The big rumor was the P-51's and P-47's might escort "Shoo-Shoo Baby" to the AF Museum when her restoration is completed at the Dover AFB.

Asked for recollections regarding memorable times while flying his tour in "909", Murphy remembers laconically:

"First mission to Marienburg ... 11 hours and 55 minutes ... Had to land on English airfield on one mission ... not enough fuel to make it to Bassingbourn ... Saw jet fighters."

Asked if he felt "909" was a "Lucky Ship" while flying his tour, which began March 2, 1944, he says, "Yes".

Late last year "909's" replica returned to Florida for additional restoration by Tom Reilly. A top turret and tail guns are scheduled for it.

Murphy was not questioned how it felt to fly again in "909's" replica for a half an hour at an altitude of "about 500 to 1,000 feet". His obvious answer would have been, "Safe".

The original crew of "909", according to available information, consisted of: Arthur A. Klinger, Pilot, Elizabethville, PA; Clem W. Rider, Co-Pilot, Saginaw, MI; William A. Young, Navigator, Redlands, CA; Henry R. Stiles, Bombardier, Kingston, WI; John B. Reash, Engineer, Alva, FL; Jack R. Grosh, Radio-Operator, Columbus, OH; Larry Sierpin, Left Waist Gunner, Cleveland, OH; David J. Bolner, Right Waist Gunner, Del Rio, TX; Homer J. Luke, Ball Turret Gunner, Vancouver, WA and Richard E. Murphy, Tail Gunner, Lynn, MA.

## NOTICE!

Mr. Robert Collings, of the Collings Foundation which reconstructed the replica of "909", seeks contact with former flight and ground crew members of the original 140-mission ship. He wishes to record their WWII experiences. The replica of "909" will eventually be displayed at Stowe, Mass. To contact Mr. Collings, write: The Collings Foundation, River Hill Farms, Stowe, MA 01775.

Additional information regarding "909's" replica will appear in future R/I issues. The R/I solicited the info too late for inclusion in this issue. Correspondence from "909ers" is invited!



## BASE'S "BURMA ROADS" LED TO LOCAL PUBS

Remember Bassingbourn's "Burma Roads"? They were the paths which led from holes in the surrounding barbed wire to local pubs like the "Wagon and Horses" on Royston Road, the "Carpenter's Arms" in lower Bassingbourn and to the back door of the "Hoops" in Bassingborn proper. By using "Burma Roads" a guy could get a quick pint or two sans an authorized pass.

Though the existence of the "Burma Roads" was known to base authorities, little effort was made to control the traffic.

In the early days when the 91st was scheduled to fly it was "Top Secret Information". As soon as a mission was scheduled the Base perimeters were sealed and no one was allowed to leave until the planes were on their way the following morning.

The fact that missions were often scheduled after "pub-opening" time created a problem. By the time Alert Lists were posted, many 91sters were already in their favorite local pub depleting its' stock of Mild and Bitters.

Base authorities dealt with theoretical "AWOL-ers" pragmatically. Whenever an Alert was posted, Squadrons and Units posted regular Stand-by Guards outside each "Burma Road" barbed wire hole. These guards had orders not to allow anyone to leave but to allow everyone to return -- whenever they decided to come "home".

The blind-eye approach the base authorities adopted regarding the "Burma Roads" traffic worked. Sometimes my Mild and Bitter thirst was thwarted when I tried to use a "Burma Road" after an Alert. And when I was one of the guards, I dutifully admitted the returning patrons of the "Waggon and Horses," "The Carpenter's Arms," "Hoops," etc.

Occasionally while assigned to such guard duties, it was apparent that some of the late returning revelers would breakfast on pure oxygen in their planes prior to participating in the 91st's scheduled, perilous business of the day.

We took care of our own as best we could.

—WHITMAL W. HILL, Sec. 91st BGMA

## "BELLE" DREAM

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for dedication ceremony. Aircraft then free to return home or Memphis Aero North. 4:00 PM - Survivors party for workers.

The following Memphis hotels offer special rates to 91st BGMAers only on a first-come, first served basis. The BGMA takes no responsibility regarding reservations. You must make your own.

**THE RIVER PLACE**, 100 N. Front at Adams, Memphis, TN 38103 - \$49 sgl/dbl - 91st BGMA Hqs.

**SHERATON MEMPHIS**, 300 N. Second St., Memphis, TN 38105 - \$55 sgl/dbl - nearby.

**PEABODY HOTEL**, 149 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN 38103 - \$70 sgl, \$90 dbl - downtown.

• Correction! The Nov. 1986 issue of The R/I erroneously listed the Asso.'s membership as 1,451 and total dues paying membership as 1,123. The correct number of members is 1,859 and the correct number of dues paying members is 1,323.

## POTPOURRI

### ENGLAND

• **ROYSTON:** Harold Loch and Robert Hanson, 324th Sqd., will be particularly honored guests if they participate in the May Bassingbourn tour of the 91st BG(H) Mem. Asso. They are remembered by Mrs. Peggy Chapman for being very kind to her parents, both of whom have since died. She looks forward to thanking them personally when they return.

• **ARRINGTON:** Former T/Sgt Melvin J. Penner is asked to contact David C. Crow, Rutland House, Hay St., Steeple Morden, SG8-OPD, England, regarding his hospitalization near Wimpole Hall. His last visit in 1951/52 is remembered by the granddaughter of the lady who cared for his injuries.

• **LTC Peter Worthy (Ret)** was the C/O of the first British Army unit assigned to Bassingbourn when the RAF left. Participants in Bassingbourn Tour will be guests at a private dinner party on May 12 at the historical Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London which Worthy now manages.

### U.S.A.

• **Amateur Radio Operator Glen Kessier, MSGT, USAF, (Ret.),** former 322nd Sqd. Radio-Gunner, is interested in contacting all FCC Licensed Amateur Radio Operators (HAMS) who are 91st BG(H) Mem. Asso. members. His call number is KA4VML. His address is 3654 N.W. 163rd Ct., Okeechobee, FL 33472. He cites his Bassingbourn time as, "May, 1942."

• **Mrs. Georgette DeGeorge**, recently deceased member Robert L.'s widow, sent a \$200 memorial donation to the Friends of the 91st in England for placement in that group's Maintenance Fund.

Contributing to the gift were Matt Templeton, Deanne Turner and Bill Green, former members of DeGeorge's crew, and co-workers from his former place of employment.

Mrs. DeGeorge visited Bassingbourn with her husband in 1983 and was "...so impressed with the beautiful Prop Memorial..." that a gift in his memory ensued. The 91st Mem. Asso. gratefully accepts and acknowledges the tribute.

## "MISS OUACHITA"

Continued from page 5

admits. He remained overnight with his congenial hosts because he didn't think it wise to venture forth at night. It was obvious the guards along the road were mostly of Asiatic origin. Despite Bombardier Zebrowski's remarkable recall of State-side learned Polish, Osterberg doubted it would be sufficient defense against the still tense trigger-fingers of the Russian sentries.

Among Osterberg's memorabilia is data concerning his crew members. The serial number of his Co-Pilot Van John E. Brown was 0687284 and his hometown was Madison, Wis. The other crew member who was killed, Engineer Lambert T. Brostom, was from "somewhere in Nebraska." His serial number was 17055655. Osterberg has the same data on the rest of his crew members but probably they all did not have enough time together to know one another real well.

PRESERVE OUR PROUD PAST

## TAX DEDUCTIONS

The possibility of Itemized deductions for expenses incurred while participating at scheduled 91st BGMA functions was raised at the 1986 National Reunion. The following material, quoted from IRS Publication 526 (Revised Nov. 85) is copied from the 306th BG Newsletter, "ECHOES."

The IRS underlined selected items pertinent to such organizations as the 91st BGMA, Inc. non-profit -within the meaning of Sec 501(c)(19) of the IRS Revenue Code of 1954. The following, therefore, is passed on to the members who individually, must determine their own qualifications for such deductions. An attorney and/or Tax consultant should be helpful in such decisions. The 91st BGMA cannot counsel anyone on this matter.

### Qualified Organizations

You may deduct a contribution made to, or for use of, "a war veteran organization." You may also deduct reasonable payments for necessary meals and lodging while away from home overnight; giving your services to such an organization.

If you are a chosen representative, attending a convention of a qualified organization, you may deduct unreimbursed expenses for travel and transportation. You may also deduct a reasonable amount for meals and lodging while away from home overnight in connection with the convention.

You may NOT deduct personal expenses for sightseeing, fishing parties, theater, or night club entertainment. Nor may you deduct travel, meals, lodging and other expenses for your spouse or children.

### PHOTOGRAPHER WANTED!

A video tape was made of many Tampa Reunion activities. Pres. Paul Chryst requests from the photographer a copy of one VHS tape for viewing and promises safe return of same. Pres. Chryst's address is: 1494 N. Adams St., Pottstown, PA 19464. He also requests members' opinions regarding the purchase of a Video Camera for the 91st BGMA as well as suggestions regarding make and model.

## "LADY HELEN OF WIMPOLE" DATA SOUGHT BY TRUSTEES



A highlight of the "Back to Bassingbourn" tour is a visit to Wimpole Hall, the former Kipling Estate and site of the Avenue of Trees. Wimpole Hall was also the site of North Hospital where most of the more seriously wounded flight crewmen recuperated.

Pictured above is a U.S. Army Nurse christening a new B17G named, "LADY HELEN of WIMPOLE."

The Trustees of Wimpole Hall would like to obtain as much of the following information pertaining to the picture as possible:

1. Who named this ship and why was the name chosen?
2. To what Squadron was it assigned?
3. What were "LADY HELEN's" serial numbers?
4. What were the names of her Pilot and Crew members?
5. When did she fly her missions?
6. Approximate date of photo.
7. The name of the Nurse and Officer appearing on the photo.
8. What happened to "LADY HELEN of WIMPOLE"?

Please send any information to the R/I with your name, address and other volunteered identification, to be forwarded to the Trustees of Wimpole Hall.

• There is no time limit set on the availability of Tampa Reunion photos from Simon's Studio, 6302 Benjamin Rd., Suite 410, Tampa, FL 33634. Publication of the "Ladies' Photos" is planned for future R/Is.

## THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

These newsletters are published quarterly. October, January, April and July are the scheduled publication months. The R/I's purpose is to keep alive the spirit of the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and to maintain the fellowship of all those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121 in Bassingbourn, England from 1942 to 1945.

Material for publication should be sent to the Editor, Rudy Malkin, 1643 Thetford Rd., Balto., Md. 21204. "Time-Value" items must be received three weeks before the first day of the month of publication to permit necessary priority consideration for inclusion in that issue. Every effort will be made to utilize other submitted material in the scheduled or later R/I issues.

91st BG Memorial Assn.  
1643 Thetford Road  
Balto. MD 21204

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