

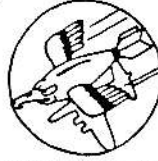
The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



SUPPORTING UNITS



324th SQDN



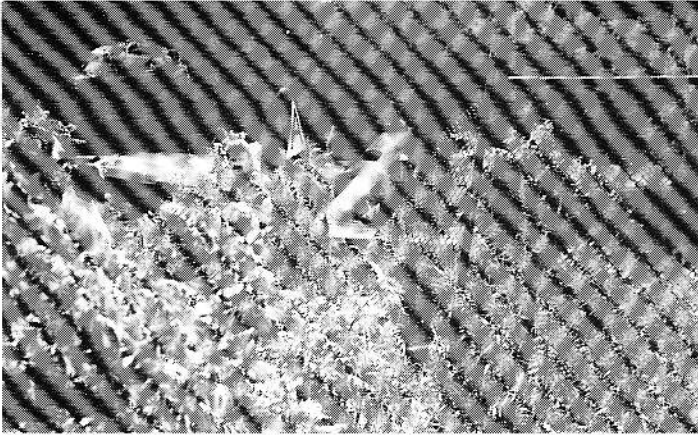
401st SQDN

Vol. 20, No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

October 1987

ILL WIND FELLS NINE-O-NINE'S NAMESAKE IN PA.



Nine O Nine's replica lies at the bottom of a hill after going off the runway at the Beaver Co. Airport Pa. (Photo by Robin Rombach and courtesy of the BEAVER COUNTY TIMES newspaper of Beaver, Pa.)



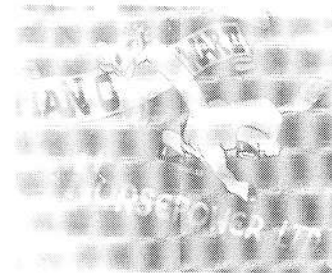
Preliminary salvage of 909's replica required partial dismantling to remove it from the gully in which it rested. (Photo by Sandy Giordana and courtesy of THE SATURDAY REVIEW newspaper of East Liverpool, Oh.)

THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION'S REPLICA OF THE 323rd Bomb Squadron's famous "Nine-O-Nine" B-17, which completed an unprecedented 140 missions without an abort, was to be part of a grand finale at the Aug 22-23 Beaver County Air Show near Pittsburgh, PA. However, as Pilot Ed Lawler, after completing a "mission" at the show was touching down at about 6:30 PM a sudden and powerful cross-wind gust lifted the right wing 12 to 15 feet.

The pilot maintained the direction of the plane as it was balanced upon the left wheel, successfully returned the right

Continued on Page 5

MERSEBURG RAID MEMORIES RECALLED BY PRES CHRYST



Two casualties of the Nov 2, 1944 Merseburg Raid were MAN-O-WAR and MISS SLIPSTREAM of the 322nd Sq. Detailed accounts of their downings will appear in the next R/I.

THE NOV 2, 1944 RAID ON ONE OF GERMANY'S most fiercely defended synthetic oil refineries at Merseburg was another "Black Thursday" for the 91st BG of the 1st Air Division. This Nov 2, 1987 marks the 43rd Anniversary of that terrible day. Many who survived the running battle with the Luftwaffe and intense flak are beginning to write us their vividly remembered stories.

Research by Historian Hilary "Bud" Evers and personal diary documentation by others of our Group reveals we lost thirteen B-17s, a third of the 37 launched on the mission by the 91st BG. Reports show we lost four B-17s to enemy fighters, two to

91st BGMA HISTORICAL PROJECT PROPELLED BY PROFESSIONALS

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN OBTAINED by our resourceful and persuasive Association Historian and 1st Vice President Hilary "Bud" Evers for the accumulation of 91st BG combat activities.

Historian Paul M Andrews, and former 401ster James A Wood Lt USAF (Ret), have volunteered to compile voluminous data from an abundantly rich collection of historical data.

Mr Andrews' long-held keen interest in air power in general and WWII strategic bombing in particular, has been responsible

Continued on Page 6

Continued on Page 2

MERESBURG RECALLED

Continued from Page 1

accurate flak, six to unknown causes and one that crash landed near Ipswich, England enroute to Bassingbourn. (This was a 401st Bomb Sq plane piloted by Lt Buchkannon)

Overall, 8th AF losses were 41 B-17s, and 11 "Little Friends". Luftwaffe losses were 208 fighters from an attacking force of an estimated 450 aircraft.

Memories remain clear to this day. Those who became POWs have reported accounts of comrades who were killed, or later died from injuries sustained, or unsuccessful parachute descents from disabled bombers.

The purpose of this and other articles in ensuing R/I issues is to accurately perpetuate the memory of those who did not return from their missions, and memorialize their bravery and supreme sacrifice.

Hopefully, we may inspire other members who played a direct role in this disastrous mission to search their recollections, notes and personal diaries for additional facts and detail. Such information will assist in the writing of the 91st's complete history. All who can should contribute to this long overdue project.

The following is from my (Paul Chryst) personal diary:

"Awakened - 0500 hours; Briefing - 0630; Stations - 0800; Engines - 0830; Taxi - 0835; Takeoff - 0850; Lv. Base - 9,000 ft-0950 with 401st Bomb Sq leading; ETR 1618 hrs. On oxygen for five hours for a total of 1150 nautical miles. Bomb load - 18 250lb GP which were dropped from 27,000 ft. Outside temperature - 41 deg C. The total Form 1 time was written at 825 hrs (LL-D Dog #42-102504)."

After interrogation I wrote in my diary: "Following Bombardier Briefing, I took serious Catholic Communion with Father Ragan and others while kneeling around the pot-bellied stove; then walked through the cold morning air to the equipment hut to get my flying clothes and four gun barrels for the Nose. Climbing and circling Bassingbourn in Deputy Lead position for an hour gave me time to reflect on the majestic vastness of the sky around us."

The steady droning of the engines on the long climb to cruising altitude almost put this Bombardier back to sleep. The bright morning sun warmed me and lifted my spirits to the point I felt a strong urge to write something. What could be more appropriate in such a sublime place than a prayer? Using an extra Navigator's log sheet, the words seemed to flow onto the paper with little effort. Approaching the coast of Holland, most of the writing was finished. But then disaster struck the formation.

A brand new, shiny 401st B-17 ahead of us, flown by Lts Askins and Archer,

suddenly broke into flames, burning from the base of the Top Turret. (We later learned that a spark from a shorted electrical connection at the base of the turret ignited raw oxygen leaking from a loose transfer section tube.) With horror, I watched the crew bail out of the plane which was held in level flight by the courageous pilots. My diary reads: "All nine of the crew got out OK and they floated down near to the German border; still on course to the target area."

Sgts Roger Armstrong (Radio Operator), and Roy Loyless (Tail Gunner) were among the crew members who benefited from Askins' bail-out order to delay opening chutes until they fell clear of the formation. Bombardier Paul Collier and Navigator Tony Dellaporta joined the others on the ground and became POWs. My prayer was set aside as we approached and turned on the Initial Point.

The lead bombardier made a long Path Finding Force run and we all dropped on his smoke marker at 100ft intervals, in train into the 10/10ths under-cast at 1243 hrs. The flak had stopped during the bomb run, but the 155mm guns fired at us just as we started a right turn away from the target area. "JUB JUB BIRD," flown by Lts Chouniard, Nirkola and crew, received a direct hit amidship and blew up in sight of the whole formation. Its #2 engine disintegrated and the prop spun through the air like a toy. Angry flames ate their way back to the tail section, no chutes were seen to emerge from the "JUB JUB BIRD'S" flaming wreckage.

Then, it seemed as though all hell had broken loose as Tex and Kermit struggled to level our tossing Fortress. Walt, in the Top Turret called out three ME-163 fighters at 5 O'clock high. Bobby Pride, in the tail, called out 10 to 15 more fighters coming in at 6 O'clock level. The Luftwaffe bore through the entire formation, slipping into new positions vacated by the B-17s being shot down at random. These attacks lasted more than 20 minutes. Single Luftwaffe fighters, in curved lines, made daring passes at smoking bombers trying to "hold formation position." White puffs of smoke from exploding 20 MM shells dotted the cold sky around us as our plane, No 504, held on miraculously. The evasive action we took while in formation felt like a grotesque ballet which would never end. The 323rd Sq, flying in the high position, sustained heavy losses.

We later learned at Interrogation that Sgt Joe Powers, waist gunner on Lt Dick Gibson's plane, shot down an ME-109 which had positioned itself right over our tail, just before it could knock us out of the sky.

Continued on Page 3

MERESBURG RECALLED

Continued from Page 2

Flying the lead position did not allow us to look back at what was happening to the three squadrons we had left Bassingbourn with that morning. The radio stayed silent on both A and B channels for nearly 30 minutes. Our navigator, Johnny Allen, found that an error was made on the course heading after the fighter attack on the lead ship. We broke the radio silence to advise Lead of the error, which they acknowledged, and corrected it from 330 deg back to 290 deg to avoid Hamburg and its guns. The Lead reported their magnetic compasses were knocked out and many of the remaining Forts were carrying seriously wounded aboard. God bless the P-51s who stayed with us all the way back to England... "Home at last."

During the slow let-down enroute to Bassingbourn the "Prayer to an American Airman" was completed. How can I explain our survival that terrible day? Tribute must be paid to the sturdy Flying Fortress, the skillful pilots, accurate gunners and the entire team of airmen who worked and prayed to survive to fly another day. Why were we spared? What happened to those who bailed out? That was my 26th mission, and I still had nine more to "sweat out." Perhaps writing that Prayer helped us all?

The intervening years since that fateful date and mission have uncovered some good news to the above. Periodically we learn of comrades who survived the dreaded POW camps and were finally released to return to their loved ones in the "land of round doorknobs." Our Treas, Charlie Hackstock, John Bunch, and Charles Hitchcock of the 322nd's downed "MISS SLIPSTREAM" returned home OK. Many were not so lucky.

Bob Sponsel, one of the original Association members, lost most of his right arm on the mission, and wound up as a POW. He praises and credits the German doctors who performed the surgery on his mangled arm with saving his life. Bob made the first "Return to Bassingbourn" trip in 1963 to dedicate the Silver Bowl the Association donated for the altar at the US Military Cemetery, Coton, near Cambridge, England.

We know there are many who shared similar experiences during the ill-fated Nov 2, 1944 Meresburg mission. Hopefully, as we probe the past to write a full and accurate history more members, will send recollections forward to the Ragged Irregular and/or our Historian. Our objective is not to rekindle unpleasant memories, but to remember and honor those "who did not return from their missions." The help and cooperation of those who can contribute to this objective is solicited.

The Prayer I wrote appears in this issue at the request of those who heard it

read by LtC Peter W Brooke, Chaplain, USAF, as he presided over the Rededication Service held at the Bassingbourn Prop Memorial in May 1987.

Other accounts dedicated to those who participated in or contributed to the memorable day, Nov 2, 1944, Meresberg mission, will follow. Those articles will also be dedicated to those who did not return, were wounded, or became POWs.

PRAYER of an AMERICAN AIRMAN

Dear God, listen while I begin my prayer to you. As I start, I do not find it difficult to express my thoughts. Phrases of truth, constructed in my mind, easily find their way through my heart and on to you.

Bless us, Lord and Savior, not only we men in this bomber; but every man up here in your cold blue backyard of clouds. We're climbing now; higher and higher to the sun - feeling more and more, your Holy presence.

Slowly, but steadily, we continue to approach enemy territory. Here we ask for safe guidance - as well as forgiveness. Please, dear God, help steer us through the flak-filled course in and out. Protect us in this vast sky en route and from the enemy fighters who lie in wait, like unto the tiger stalking his prey in the jungle.

Forgive us also, for what we are about to do; the spreading of death, horror, and destruction among a people - forced by crazed leaders to continue a war of bloodshed, hunger, disease and continual strife.

God grant, through Thy loving kindness and grace, that someday soon - we may all return to our homes and loved ones. Those who are single, to their girls and sweethearts; those of us who are married - to our wives, waiting in anxiety and impatience. Those who have neither, but yearn for the guardian love of a mother or a father. Those who have no parents or friends, but yearn, fight, and die for a Nation that will live forever for freedom, justice and equality.

Some of us, it is true, may not be so fortunate to come back. But we who are still left to carry on the struggle, know that they have not died in vain - that their souls and spirits will shine brightly in the heavens at night - watching over us who remain to lead the struggle onward toward final victory.

Humble and insignificant as we may appear now, high in this unfriendly sky above the crazy patch quilt of enemy soil below us, we do solemnly ask that Thou grant us this prayer of an American airman.

Amen.

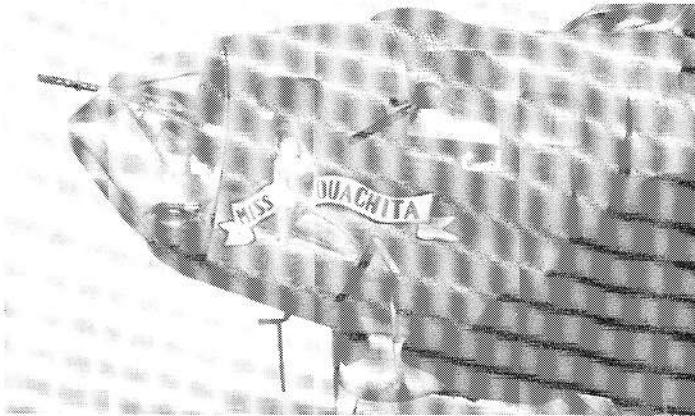
By Paul Chryst

1Lt Bombardier,
B-17 91st Bomb Group (H)
8th Air Force
Somewhere Over England
Nov 2, 1944.

FLYING CONTROL TOWER OPERATORS WANTED

THE FLYING CONTROL VETS ASSN IS searching for former Flying Control Tower Operators from the 91st Bomb Group. Over the period at Bassingbourn, there were about 50 assigned to the function. Those interested should write: Flying Control Vets Assn, Lou Dubnow, 1189 Galesmoore Court, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

"OUACHITA-OSTERBERG TALE" RESPONSE ADDS DATA



In addition to pretty nose-art, "Miss Ouchita" had, what seems to be "Carol," painted beneath one of the navigator's gun positions.

"THE 'MISS OUACHITA' - OSTERBERG TALE" IN the April 1987 R/I brought forth new information and stirred questions.

Spencer K Osterberg, pilot of the downed 323rd Bomb Sq's B-17 "MISS OUACHITA", SN 42-3040, which he and his crew only flew once, seeks further information. His questions include: Who named her, and why "MISS OUACHITA?" He recalls the plane did not carry the 323rd Sqdn markings "OR" or identifying letters. "The aircraft code was 'Q' but it had no Squadron code," he says.

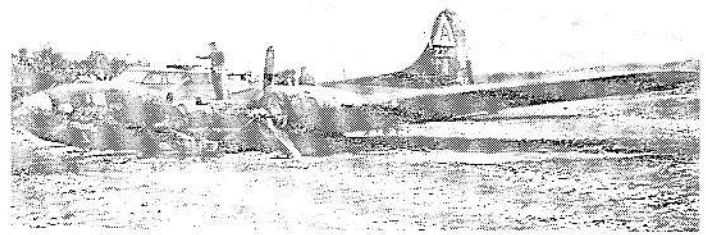
"You did a good job on the story of her last flight," he wrote. "I am sure other members of the crew, when they read it, will find things their memory says were different. There was one error that I saw. The name of my Radio Operator is Harold Klem. My poor printing probably made it look like 'Klien.'" (The R/I welcomes opportunities to correct errors.)

Anyone able to provide Osterberg with any additional information pertaining to his plane should write to: Spencer K Osterberg, 4915 Emerson Av, N Minneapolis, MN 55430.

When the "OUACHITA-OSTERBERG TALE" surfaced a memory bell rang in the 91st BGMA's Pres Paul Chryst's head. Subsequent digging into his photo files produced a "MISS OUACHITA" nose-art photo and a photo of her after her downing. Those photos illustrate this article.

Readers of Osterberg's account will recall he said he "bellied her in." The photo of her resting in one of the "two pastures" he hurriedly chose adds a thousand words to his account. Though wounded, he made a beautiful landing. Pres Chryst says too many years have passed for him to identify the publication in which this photo appeared.

Obviously a German war-time photo, the interest is increased because the caption credits the Luftwaffe Ace Major Heinz



Luftwaffe ace Major Heinz Baer studies "Miss Ouachita" after downing her on 22 Feb 44. He was credited with 220 victories.

Baer with downing "MISS OUACHITA."

Major Baer was shot down no less than 18 times between Sep 1939 and Apr 1945. "MISS OUACHITA" was one of the 220 victories for which he received official credit. It is not known if he survived the war.

Member Alfred M Myers (324th) added related material to the "OUACHITA-OSTERBERG TALE" by sending a 1950 TACOMA NEWS TRIBUNE article regarding the release of Americans held at the Barth POW camp where Osterberg was held. Myers says he knew Col Harry P Cain, who was responsible for the release of the Barth POWs, when Cain was Mayor of Tacoma, WA.

"He could talk loud and be very convincing. They couldn't have picked a better man to go to Barth," Myers says of Col Cain who later served in the US Senate until 1953 and died March 3, 1979.

The story of Col Cain's contribution to the release of Osterberg and thousands of other American POWs at Barth follows:

CAIN SAVED 10,000 POWs

HIGH TRIBUTE TO US SENATOR HARRY P CAIN is paid by Bruce Barton, nationally known newspaper columnist, in a statement Thursday, in which he told of Cain's efforts to get 10,000 American prisoners of war repatriated. He said:

"I am a 'foreigner' had have no business meddling in Washington's politics, but I am a personal friend of Sen. Harry Cain and thought a little story of World War II might be of interest.

"There were 10,000 American prisoners in one POW camp - they had been on starvation rations, sleeping on sawdust mattresses in unheated houses - some of them for six months and some for three years.

"When our brave Russian allies finally arrived everyone was tense with excitement and hope. The Russian commanders at first seemed completely cooperative, and the American prisoners, who were only a few miles from the American lines, were expecting to be back with their comrades in a matter of hours.

"Suddenly came the staggering news that they were not to be repatriated across the

Continued on Page 5

"OUACHITA-OSTERBERG TALE"

Continued from Page 4

lines, but through Odessa, a seaport nearly 1500 miles to the south. That 1500 mile trip would have to be made by foot and would take weeks, and many prisoners would die on the way.

"At the hour when things looked darkest the news spread around that an American Colonel had arrived to talk to the Russian authorities and that he was the kind of spokesman whose words were loud, vigorous and could not be misunderstood.

"The result of his talk was that enough Flying Fortresses arrived immediately at Barth Airport, Germany, and before the Russians had time to object further, the prisoners were loaded and well on their way to France and England.

"Needless to say, the American Colonel was Harry Cain."

NAMESAKE FELLED

Continued from Page 1

wheel to the ground and resumed braking. Unfortunately the space required to regain complete control consumed too much of the runway length.

Though slowed, the B-17 barreled over the runway end, crossed grass, went through a chain-link fence, and down a hillside for about 100 feet to the bottom of a gully. In doing so one of its engines sheared a utility pole.

Robert F. Collings of The Collings Foundation, Stow MA, credits the Flying Fortress' structure with protecting the crew and nine passengers from serious injury. Though all nine passengers were injured, only three were hospitalized. The three were released within a week and reportedly are doing fine.

The three hospitalized passengers, all WWII veterans, have reacted to the mishap with real esprit de corps. Sam Holland, former B-17 Navigator, is heading up a "909" fund raising activity in Beaver Falls, site of the mishap, and Dick Greco, former B-24 pilot, is supporting the effort. Charles Kurella, former B-17 Bombardier who survived two other previous B-17 crashes, returned to Whiting, IN, after his hospitalization with the comment, "When she's ready to fly, I'll want to be with her."

Plans are underway to restore the replica. According to Collings the original restoration took more than 20,000 man-hours. Repair of the damage incurred during the Air Show mishap is estimated to take two years and cost \$150,000. The plane's value is set at \$1 million.

Volunteer assistance in the preliminary preparations to restore the plane have been phenomenal. In addition to many

individuals, forty US AIR personnel have already assisted immensely in dismantling the plane. US AIR itself is supporting the project, as well as other corporations.

Though there is no record of any former 91sters being on board at the time of the crash, the R/I has received considerable information from alert and intensely interested members.

Ernie Purton, (322nd POW) had seen and "toured" the plane two weeks earlier while it participated in the Allegheny, PA Air Show. A photo he took of his wartime position (Waist Gunner) appeared in THE SATURDAY REVIEW of East Liverpool, Ohio's comprehensive account of the planned restoration efforts.

William A. McGavern (323rd Life Member) also saw the plane at the Allegheny PA Airport. He reports that when Collings Foundation representatives learned he had flown two of his missions on the real "909" they waived the admission fees for him and his grandchild to board it while it stood open for paid public inspection. His, Purton's and other members' clippings of the crash will contribute to future coverage of the restoration story.

According to Collings the following is a rough summary of the plane's damage: Destroyed - All four props, No 3 nacelle, left wing tip, chin turret, and nose glass. Damaged (some, badly) - Most "QEC's", bottom of nose, tail cone, both landing gears, bomb bay doors, and lower inboard wing surfaces. Overhauling - All four engines.

"The good news," says Collings, "is Nine-O-Nine is repairable and will fly again. The bad news is we need a lot of resources to accomplish it."

Two options are open to those wishing to contribute to the restoration. First, anyone having any parts to donate is requested to do so. Second, Tax Deductible Donations may be made. A special "Sponsors Category" has been set up for donors of \$100 or more. A possible third option is open to B-17 buffs in the area. One 70-plus Volunteer as been reported elated to be able to hand tools to skilled technicians. All sorts of help is needed and welcomed.

All donations should be sent to The Collings Foundation, River Hill Farm, Stow, MA 01775. Telephone numbers are: The Foundation - (617) 562-9182; Collings' - (617) 568-8924.

One viewer of the damaged plane, Dick Ellingwood, was quoted as saying, "It flew in here with dignity and it should fly out with dignity." That sentiment, Collings says, was shared by all. And, it is certain, the Collings Foundation is now dedicated to the re-restoration of the "Nine-o-Nine" replica.

R/I THIRD CLASS MAILING STILL NOT "PREFECT"

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR HAS RESORTED TO Third Class mailing in an effort to save money. Considerable time and effort was expended to master the postal procedures requiring grouping addresses according to ZIP codes. The fourteen cents difference between Third Class and First Class rates was considered worth the effort.

An unforeseen situation, however, is diluting the expected savings. The last R/I mailings revealed many 91st BGMA members maintain winter and summer addresses. So, when they change residences the Third Class R/I is returned by the Postal Service to the R/I Editor with the member's new address.

That's fine. We like to know where we can reach you. But, because the Postal Service charges thirty cents for each address change, we have diluted our purpose to economize. In addition, the Third Class mailings are not forwarded unless the postal patrons indicate they will pay for all such forwardings. In those instances where members write for a copy to replace the "missing" issue, we must now pay the First Class rate of twenty-two cents. As a result our postal costs have soared from the original eight cents to sixty cents on many copies!

Therefore, to insure your R/I goes to the correct address the first time, please send appropriate and timely temporary change of address notices to either our Sec W W Hill, 4002 Braddock Rd, Alexandria, VA 22312, or to Trea Charles E Hackstock, 14224 SE 288th St, Kent, WA 98042. Of course, if you're in no hurry to see your R/I, simply ask the Postal Service to hold all your Third Class mail until you return.

We are now becoming computerized. Trea Hackstock and Sec Hill are using computers to establish membership listings and a detailed Directory. Sec Hill managed to get an Epsom FX 80 Data Printer donated to the Association by Mr M Nichols of Falls Church, VA. In addition Sec Hill donated a Commodore 64 computer, disk drive, monitor, associated connecting/tie lines, and soft ware to our Association.

The new R/I address labels tell recipients whether their dues are paid. All labels will consist of the following information: Your name; Rank (if any); Basingbourn Unit; Membership Type; FM - Full Member, AL - Associate Life, and AM - Associate Member and the last year for which dues were paid; Address, City, State, and ZIP; Country (other than USA). A sample label follows:

Peter Rol D'Astroturf
Col USAF (Ret) 323 FM 86
1604 Lateral Ln
Touch Down PA 19100.

Note: As the second line in his address does not end with an "87" he should be reminded his dues are due.

Remember, when you pay your \$5.00 Annual Dues, they are for the current year only. You are not required to pay past dues. A good way to keep up to date and not miss an R/I is to become a Life Member by sending Trea Hackstock your check for \$100.

HISTORICAL PROJECT PROPELLED

Continued from Page 1

for the printing of extensive articles in the AMERICAN AVIATION SOCIETY JOURNAL, and has provided research assistance to authors of books on those subjects.

"THE SCHWEINFURT-REGENSBURG MISSION" by Martin Middlebrook, and "MUNSTER: THE WAY IT WAS" by Ian Hawkin are included among the fact-filled books which utilized Andrews research. His 1984 article, "SEVENTEEN BITS AND PIECES OF THE RAGGED IRREGULARS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR," in the JOURNAL AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY is a basic, reliable reference for many members and the R/I.

Currently involved in other similar projects, Mr Andrews' generous offer to help do a big chunk of data accumulation has jolted the Association's history project from planning to production. (A similar project for the 95th BG by Andrews entailed the use of nearly 10,000 document pages from the Maxwell AFB, AL files and nearly 130 cubic feet of related National Archive documents.)

Mr Andrews, who will serve as 91st BGMA Consultant, holds a Master of Arts degree in History from McGill University, Canada. A native of Rome, NY, he now resides in VA, and is an analyst for the USAF Office of Special Investigations.

James A Wood, Lt USAF (Ret) and Association member will serve as the Director of the 91st BGMA Research Team. Enlisting in the Army in 1938 he first served with the 7th Calvary at Ft Bliss, TX. In 1939 he transferred to the Army Air Corps and arrived in England in March 1943.

A Flight Engineer, he served with the 303rd, 305th and the 91st BGs. He flew with the 401st Sq until completing his missions in July 1944. Subsequent service before his retirement in 1964 included assignments in the USAF Training Command, and SAC in England and Japan.

Following his retirement, Wood taught at the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics, and for the past 21 years has been a Senior Specialist with the US Navy campus field office. He and his wife reside in Suitland, MD.

Future R/Is will attempt to clarify the type of data Andrews' and Wood's work will record.

POTPOURRI

ENGLAND

• REX POULTON'S RESEARCH REGARDING THE Southern England, June 1944 crash of OLD FAITHFUL (42-37958), 401st, and the deaths of all her crew continues. An excellent account of OLD FAITHFUL's crash appeared in the Jan 85 R/I. Poulton, who resides in Salisbury, England, recently submitted photos which may be of the plane's crew. A future R/I will publish them in hopes they can be confirmed by someone. In the meantime his query on OLD FAITHFUL is being sent to Historian Bud Evers, in hopes that our increasing historical files can provide new and valuable information.

FRANCE

• ASSOCIATE LIFE MEMBER LEON CROULEBOIS, Paris, France wrote Pres Paul Chryst that on May 30, 1987 he (Croulebois) was scheduled to make a short flight from Creil Airport near Paris, in the INSTITUTE GEOGRAPHIQUE NATIONAL's last B-17. He wrote he believes that at least 95% of the plane is a veteran of the 91st BG.

He promised to try to obtain its US serial numbers and a photo of her. Scheduled to accompany him on the 20 minute flight were retired French Naval officers.

After 42 years he calls his opportunity to fly in a 91st plane a "great honor" and "Fantastic!" The R/I hopes Croulebois got his ride and keeps his promise to send an article and a photo of the IGN's B-17.

USA

• AN OPPORTUNITY HAS ARISEN WHEREBY THREE serious collectors can contribute to the operation of the Bassingbourn Tower Museum and at the same time obtain pictures of that famous Fort Nine-O-Nine.

Theodore Wyzkoski (323rd) has three (3) 16 x 20 inch color prints of Nine-O-Nine as she flies over Bassingbourn Airdrome, by English artist Wilf Hardy.

Ted requests a \$10 donation for each print, and promises to send the money to the Bassingbourn Tower Museum for the good work being done there. As only three are available, the offer is on a "first come - first served basis". Send your \$10 to Theodore Wyzkoski, 153 Schwitter Ave #210, Pittsburgh PA 15229.

R/I READINGS OFFERED VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

Sec W W Hill, who records books for the Northern Virginia Recording Service for the Visually Handicapped says he will gladly record the Ragged Irregular for any one who cannot read because of eye problems. Just send a cassette with your name and return address to Whit Hill, 4002 Braddock Rd, Alexandria VA 22312.

folded Wings

BEDWELL, JAMES O, Life Member, 441st Sub Depot Rt 2, BOX 1770C 12, Quinlan TX 75474; Sep 18, 1987. Betty, his wife writes that "Jim enjoyed his association with the 91st Bomb Group and cherished the friendships made through the Association. Our last trip together was to Memphis for the dedication of "The Belle." Jim loved being with those of you who attended the ceremony and missed each of you who could not be present."

MITCHELL, LUTHER H Sr, 322nd, 13255 Allisonville Rd, Noblesville IN 46060; Feb 29, 1987. His wife writes: "Luther was very dedicated to the 91st."

1986 Convention Photos Available

THERE IS NO TIME LIMIT SET ON THE availability of 8x10 full color Tampa, FL, Reunion photos from Simon's Studio, 6302 Benjamin Rd, Suite 410, Tampa FL 33634. The costs per picture including handling and mailing is \$10.

To expedite orders specify the studio's "File Number 3527" which is the same for all photos. Individual selections are identified by the numbers "1," thru "11", and are as follows: #1 - 441st & Hq Ladies; #2 - 401st Ladies; #3 - 323rd Ladies; #4 - 324th Ladies; #5 - 322nd Ladies; #6 - 441st & Hq Men; #7 - POWs; #8 - 401st Men; #9 - 324th Men; #10 - 323rd Men; and #11 - 322nd Men. A typical order example would be "1 print each of 3527 - 3 and 10."

The studio will include captions identifying those in the photographs. Christmas is coming. These photos are excellent gifts for anyone who cherishes the memory of good times past!

A Request for Data AIRPLANES OF THE 91st

We are endeavoring to gather more information about planes which 91st BG crews flew during WWII. We need more input from everyone involved. Please complete all data that you can on this coupon or a reproduced copy if necessary. Use other copies or paper to include any additional aircraft with which you may have had contact and add any anecdotes that you can

Name of plane _____ Plane # _____

Model: F G Sqd Assignment _____ Tail Letter _____

Crew Chief(s) _____

Pilot(s) assigned more or less permanently _____

If you have a good picture of this plane, would you copy it, or loan it to be copied?

Return this coupon to: Hilary "Bud" Evers, 91st BGMA Historian
21 Barony Lane
Hilton Head SC 29928

RARE, OLD B-17E'S SALVAGING FROM NEW GUINEA SWAMP SET

PREPARATIONS ARE UNDERWAY FOR RESTORING the third-oldest B-17 in existence that was built by Boeing. The "SWAMP GHOST," B-17E, SN 41-2246, accepted by the Army Air Corps on Dec 6, 1941, crash landed in the Agaiambo swamp on the north coast of New Guinea after the first raid on Rabaul on Feb 23, 1942.

Because of the tall kunai grass, the plane suffered minimal damage. The crew, after a six-week ordeal, made it back to civilization.

The Travis Historical Society of the Travis AFB, CA, is deeply committed to returning the historically significant plane to the States. The Society's negotiations and arrangements involving the Papua, New Guinea government, the Royal Australian Air Force and the US Air Force may, at this writing, be complete.

An earlier retrieval date was scrubbed as the new government of PNG requires artifacts leaving the country to be carefully screened and all negotiations completed through government channels.

According to Robert N Gonzales, Project Manager B-17, Travis AFB Museum, "Swamp Ghost" remained undisturbed until 1972, when the RAAF found it in a remarkably well preserved condition. The plane, he adds, is the only remaining B-17E with a remotely operated lower (ball) turret.

"The whole project from start to having a restored B-17E at Travis AFB Museum will cost at least half a million dollars," Gonzales says. This estimated cost includes plans to have all restoration work done on a volunteer basis.

Donations to the project are welcomed and a plaque listing all donations is planned for display beside the "SWAMP GHOST" in 1988 at the Travis AFB Museum.

The address of the Travis AFB Museum is PO Box 1257, Travis AFB, CA 94535. The telephone number is (707) 438-5605/5598. Mr Gonzales' address is 2700 Waltrip Ln, Concord, CA 94518.

It is certain many 91st BGMA members will be assisting this exciting new project to restore a "Queen of the Skies" which flew and fell before the first 91st mission on Nov 7, 1942.

Convenient Chicago Convention Site; Sam Cipolla Chosen Chairman

CONVENIENT CHICAGO, IL, IS THE SITE, AND early September is the month selected for the 1988 Fall Reunion of the 91st BGMA.

Former 323rd and Life Member Sam Cipolla is the Reunion Chairman. Those wishing to assist him to prepare for and conduct the fun-filled, three day affair are requested to contact him - Sam Cipolla, 6818 N Dowagiac Ave, Chicago IL 60646.

Early planning has ensured a variety of new events will be available to attending members and their families.

Data concerning hotel locations, room rates and the planned events will be published in the Jan 1988 issue of the R/I.

Leslie Walshaw, Life Member, 8245 Waldenwoods Wy, Loomis CA 95650-9165, has been appointed by Pres Paul Chryst as the Chairman of the 1988 Nominations/Elections Committee, as required in Section 1, of Article VII of the 91BGMA By-Laws.

Nominees for office, voting in person at the next National Reunion Business Meeting and approved procedures for the use of Absentee Ballots are clearly explained under Article VI. Those members who desire a copy of our by-laws should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Sec W W Hill, 4002 Braddock Rd, Alexandria, VA 22312.

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.
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