

The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



SUPPORTING UNITS



324th SQDN



401st SQDN

Vol. 22, No 2

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

April, 1989

"FRIENDS" INVITE 91sters TO ROYSTON CEREMONY

DEDICATION CEREMONIES OF THE NEW Royston Priory Gardens Memorial have been set for Saturday, July 15, 1989. Councillor Mrs Pate A Rule, a member of the Friends of the 91st, expressed delight in a letter to 91st BGMAers. Activities begin Friday, July 14th.

The new Royston memorial is a replacement for the original fountain commemorating the presence of the 91st BG(H) while stationed at Bassingbourn, England during WWII.

Members wishing to attend the affair will find more detailed, urgent information in 91st BGMA President Montalvo's column on page two of this issue.

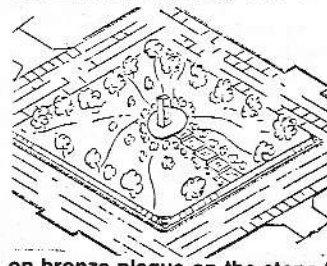
Whitmal W Hill, Jr, 91st BGMA Memorials Committee Chairman, requests that everyone planning to attend this historical event send him a card or letter stating so. His address is 4002 Braddock Rd, Alexandria, VA 22313. This information will be forwarded to the Friends of the 91st to assist them in final preparations.

It is anticipated most members attending will have to make their own travel and hotel arrangements inasmuch time does not permit organization of an Official Rally Round. Chairman Hill is attempting to assemble a list of available hotels and Bed & Breakfast Inns in the Royston area for those interested. Further information on this may be obtained by contacting him at the above address.

Past 91st BGMA President Paul Chryst has volunteered to conduct a fixed tour, of about seven days, which will include local travel, hotel arrangements, the Royston Priory Gardens Memorial Ceremonies and other points of interest in England. The planning of this tour depends

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THIS ROUGH SKETCH OF THE new Royston Priory Gardens Memorial was provided by the North Hertfordshire District Council. Descriptive literature accompanying it describes the Memorial as, "Balmoral granite memorial stone mounted on bottom tier of original fountain with steps leading up from paved surround to facilitate easy reading of inscription on bronze plaque on the stone."



BELATED SILVER STAR AWARDED 401st's JOHN ASKINS, JR.



JOHN S ASKINS, JR

THE 401st SQ's UNNAMED, silver "LL J," piloted by 1LT John S Askins, Jr, was probably the first of thirteen 91st BG(H) Forts to fall during the Nov 2, 1944 Merseburg, Germany raid.

On Jan 8, 1989, nearly 45 years later, Askins, now a Sunnyvale, CA resident, was awarded a Silver Star for

gallantry on that fateful day.

His award was made during Change of Command Ceremonies of the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, Naval Air Station, Moffet Field, CA. Col G Warren Hall, who made the award, told Askins he had never presented a Silver Star before and he considered the opportunity one of the highlights of his life.

Roger W Armstrong, Askins' radio operator when their plane fell flaming from formation, witnessed the ceremonies with his wife and reported them to the R/I. Armstrong has subsequently received a Purple Heart for wounds received the same day.

Armstrong summarizes Askins' citation text in the following manner:

"John was cited for bravery for remaining at his controls, which were shot out, setting up the auto pilot so the ship was guided out of formation to avoid collision with others and so it flew at an altitude allowing all crew members to bail out. With oxygen bottles exploding all around he put the fire out on Engineer Hilmer W Beicker's flight suit and parachute. Then (he) buckled the two snaps to one ring on Beicker's parachute harness, as one ring had burned off Beicker's harness. He then helped Beicker to the nose and out of the plane with complete disregard for his own safety."

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FLASH!

THE NEWLY ACTIVATED 91st BGMA Memorial Fund has received an initial boost from Memorials Committee Chairman W W Hill. He has made available Commemorative Caps honoring the new Royston Priory Gardens Memorial dedication. Members donating \$20 or more before July 31, 1989 will receive a "golf-style" cap. The caps are adjustable for size.

The serial number "071589 R" on a B17's rudder pictured on the caps records the date and locale of the pending Royston ceremonies, "July 15, '89, Royston."

To obtain the memorial caps donations must be sent to Hill, whose address appears elsewhere in this issue.



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY TONY MONTALVO

DON'T WAIT!

I AM HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT OUR Association has accepted an invitation for the 91st BGMA to participate in the dedication of the new Royston Priory Gardens Memorial on the 14th and 15th of July 1989. This memorial takes the place of the old Royston Memorial Fountain which became somewhat shopworn and in need of replacement. Mrs. Pate Rule, a member of the Friends of the 91st, included an ink drawing of the new memorial in her communication informing us of the upcoming Dedication. The drawing appears elsewhere in this issue.

Because of the short lead time involved, our Memorials and Rally Round Committee has concluded that there is not sufficient time available for the Association to plan and sponsor an Official Rally Round in England. However, we are asking all our members to consider the invitation and if they desire to attend the dedication to make their own arrangements for travel and lodging as necessary. To this extent, Paul Chryst, our past president, has volunteered to organize a group which he will accompany to Royston and for which he will agree to make all travel and lodging arrangements.

Chryst has considerable experience in the travel business, knows the ins and outs, and should be able to make travel to Royston and attendance at the Dedication Ceremonies quite pleasant. You can contact him at his directory address or through his home phone: (215) 323-1877. However, feel free to make any travel arrangements you so desire. There are other agencies which can assist you in making travel arrangements.

A word of caution if you intend to attend the Dedication. The affair at Royston is a "No Host" affair. You should make sure that the Friends of the 91st know you are coming and be prepared to defray food and/or entertainment expenses while a guest of Royston and Bassingbourn Station. If you plan to attend please contact W W Hill at Area Code (703) 256-9165. He, as the Association's point of contact with the Friends of the 91st, can fill you in on the details and make sure that the folks at Royston know you are coming. I plan to attend with as large an Association contingent as I can muster and I find it a distinct pleasure to invite all BGMA past officers to join me as members of our official delegation to the Dedication.

One more thing. If you care to make a personal donation to assist in defraying the costs of construction of the new memorial, please send in your donation to Charles V. Welbes, our Treasurer. Welbes will accumulate the funds donated and the official delegation will present them to the Friends of the 91st at the Dedication Ceremonies. This presentation will include a proclamation containing the names of all individuals who donate funds for this purpose.

For your information our Committees are working on a plan to visit Bassingbourn in 1992 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Group's arrival in England during WWII. This information gives you visibility as to our future plans and may help in deciding whether you visit England this summer or in 1992...or both.

ROYSTON CEREMONY

(Continued from page 1)

upon the number of people interested. Those interested should write or phone Chryst as soon as possible so it can be determined if the tour is feasible. His address and phone number are: 1494 N Adams St., Pottstown PA 19464; Phone: (215) 323-1877.

Councillor Rule stated in her Feb 28, 1989 letter to President Montalvo that future maintenance of the new Royston Memorial will be paid for by the North Hertfordshire District Council. Members of the 91st BGMA may still make individual contributions to the Friends of the 91st to help them defray the considerable costs this project has entailed. Donations, designated for the Royston Priory Gardens Memorial, should be sent to 91st BGMA Treasurer Charles V Welbes, 210 Leatherwood Dr, Mountain Home, AR 72653.

Activities scheduled for the weekend are:

July 14, 1989, Friday - 11:30 AM Lunch at the Bassingbourn Officers' Club. (Luncheon guests must be prepared to pay for their meals.) Tour of Bassingbourn and Tower Museum after lunch.

July 15, 1989, Saturday - 10:30 AM Coffee in Royston Town Hall with Friends of the 91st and other dignitaries. 11:30 AM Memorial Dedication. 12:30 PM Lunch in Royston Town Hall with guest speakers and other dignitaries. (Guests must pay for their meals.) Tour of Royston, including pubs and environs after lunch.

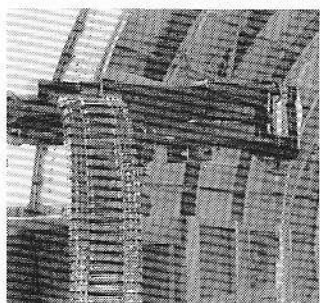
July 16, 1989, Sunday - No scheduled activities but visiting 91st BGMAers will be ideally based for visits to the Royal Imperial War Museum at Duxford, Wimpole Hall, Arrington, The American Cemetery, Cotton near Cambridge and other nostalgic sites.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

HEADQUARTERS VIII BOMBER COMMAND		:By authority :
ETO		:of CG, VIII BC :
APO 634		:Initials :
		:Date :
		(G)
GENERAL ORDERS)		19 October 1942
No. 26)		
1. The VOCC on 15 October 1942 as follows		
"The following named organisations will move on or about 16 October 1942 by rail, air and/or motor transportation to the places indicated for a permanent change of station:		
UNIT	FROM	TO
91st Bomb Gp (H)	Kimolton	Bassingbourn
17th Bomb Gp (M)	Bassingbourn	Kimolton
All organisational property and equipment will accompany these units.		
The provisions of paragraph 18, AR 345-800, 1 July 1942 are to be complied with by these organisations		
QMNT TON. FD 33 P99 A 0425-23."		
are hereby confirmed and made a matter of record.		
By command of Major General EAKER;		
		CHAS. B. B. BUBB.
		Colonel, G. S. C.
		Chief of Staff.
OFFICIAL:		
EDWARD B. TORO,		
Major, A. G. D.		
Adjutant General.		
DISTRIBUTION: "C" plus (5) CG, ETO.		

THE 91st BOMB Gp(H)'s FIRST "INVITATION" TO Bassingbourn, England on 19 Oct 1942 by command of Major General Eaker.

"WILD HARE" CREW CREDITS R/I FOR REUNION TURNOUT



WAIST GUNNER RECALLED

contact 44 years ago.

Though only four of Collins' crew were available to attend the Chicago National Convention it was a memorable time for them.

The Chicago reunion of Ah Tye and his wife, Blanche, with Collins and his wife, Nadine, was poignant. Both of the ladies had met in Kearney, NB in the spring of 1944 while Collins' crew was enroute overseas. During the Kearney layover overnight passes permitted the young families to meet. Mrs Collins was delighted to meet Judy, the Ah Tye's 14 mos old daughter - the first oriental baby she ever saw.

At the Chicago Reunion another less pleasant incident involving Ah Tye's heritage was recalled. A 91st BG(H) briefing officer had advised anyone shot down over France "to change to civilian clothes, mingle with the civilians and act dumb." Ah Tye asked for further advice, inasmuch as his Chinese heritage would make "mingling" difficult. The briefing officer studied him, scratched his head and finally mumbled, "Don't get shot down."

Ah Tye, fortunately, was able to obey the "order" while completing 35 missions.

The reunion with Andrew Caswell, the crew's navigator, was particularly gratifying. Forty four years earlier, while flying his 34th mission (with another crew) Caswell's plane exploded over Germany. Witnesses reported no parachutes from the plane.

Caswell's Chicago presence confirmed his successful

EDWARD AH TYE, ENGINEER of Capt Phil Collins' "Wild Hare" 324th Sq crew, credits the R/I with being his "most productive source" for locating fellow crew members. A paragraph in the July 1988 R/I announcing his search resulted in the location of two of the four with whom he had lost

parachuting from the plane before the explosion. German soldiers, he says, saved him from civilians who were furious over the incessant bombing causing them so much damage and death.

Other memories Ah Tye, Collins, Caswell and Co-Pilot Kenneth S Smith shared included the death of their 19 year old waist gunner and the 60 flak holes and other serious damage their substitute plane, "O RU", sustained during a mission to Cologne.

Smith also recalled the time a stricken B17, diving out of control, miraculously veered away just before crashing into them.

Ah Tye also recalled his consternation when, while trying to release a rack of hung 500 lb bombs, the toggler released them after having been told *not to touch anything* while Ah Tye worked in the bomb bay.

It was a scary experience, in as much as Ah Tye had removed his parachute to facilitate his work on the bomb shackles. At the convention Smith told Ah Tye he was not alone on the catwalk, at the time. He, Smith, was back there to, holding on to Ah Tye's leg to keep him from falling.

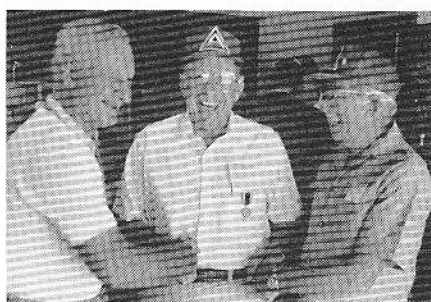
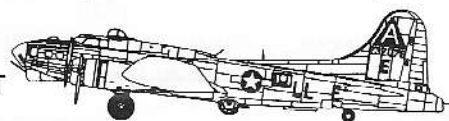
One of Collins' contributions to the crew's convention conversations was the time their plane was struck by lightning while they were ferrying it overseas. Their radio equipment knocked out, they force landed and were delayed for a week in the Midwest.

Convention sources provided the four re-united "WILD HARE" crew members with the information that their plane was later shot down on Nov 26, 1944 while flown by 1Lt Robert J Flint and his crew on the Altenbeken, Germany raid. Of the nine man crew, four survived.

Historical data provided by 91st Historian Evers provides the following account of "WILD HARE's" fall:

"Observed by Sgt T E Townsend 35293827 at 52:38N 07:30E at 20500 ft. About 5 minutes before IP approximately 75 E/A attacked. A/C was hit which set #3 engine on fire. Dropped behind formation losing altitude. I saw 1 (one) man leave the A/C and 3 chutes open. The A/C then nosed down, exploded and broke into pieces.

**PRESERVE
OUR PROUD PAST**



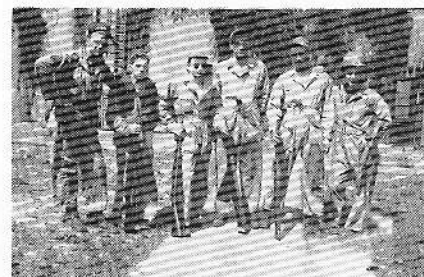
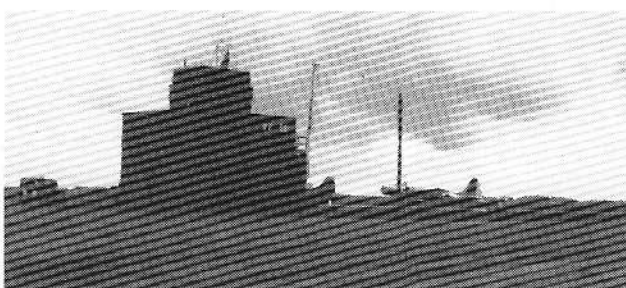
CHICAGO CONVENTION PHOTOS (Left Photo): EXCELLENT Chicago TV coverage unearthed a long lost 91ster, Rene A Chapus of Chicago. Chapus (center), former 322nd SQ Ball Turret Gunner, rushed to the Convention site immediately after seeing 5 minutes of TV coverage on it. Chapus, who had "never heard of the 91st BGMA before," joined immediately. Welcoming him are former 322nders Gerald L Ludwig and James Witter (l-r) who shared BT experiences with him. (Center Photo): The loss of a notebook makes identification of the honored (center) 91st BGMAer impossible. A former POW, he circulated

his newly received POW Medal at the Convention until "ordered" by Past President Paul Chryst (left) and newly elected President Tony Montalvo to wear it. Chryst and Montalvo pinned the proud award upon him in an impromptu ceremony. (Right Photo): Seated, (l-r) Mrs Askins, John S Askins and an unidentified 91st BGMAer study some of the voluminous 91st BG(H) historical data being assembled by Historian Hilary "Bud" Evers who explains some of its intricacies from the rear. Since the Convention Askins has been awarded a belated Silver Star for gallantry while with the 91st BG(H). Photos - R Malkin

"BATTLE OF BASSINGBOURN" DATA UNEARTHED

THE BASSINGBOURN

Control Tower (r) was easily captured by glider troops of the British Home Guard during the "Battle of Basingbourn" on Mar 28, 1943. Al Ciarimboli, of the 4001st Sq Inst & Elect Shop, participated in the maneuvers which revealed Basingbourn's vulnerability to surprise attacks. In the far right photo he and fellow 91st base defenders pose - before or after the "battle." L-r are : Rathermel, Codyer, Sharp, Thompson, Martin and



Ciarimboli. (Photo - Courtesy A Ciarimboli)

HISTORIAN HILIARY "BUD" EVERS' CONTINUING research into the microfilmed war-time files of the 91st BG(H) has unearthed and made available a wealth of material. The following verbatim report, by an unknown writer, records a bit of Basingbourn history which occurred fairly early in the 91st's career. It is quite possible many, assigned to AAF Station 121 later, never heard of it.

Aside from the injuries incurred by a number of 91sters, Mar 28, 1943 was probably later recalled mostly as a "fun day" and the writer so recorded it. In doing so, it is certain another report of the day dampened his spirits while he wrote - as well as it did all others on the base.

The other report, which appears in other data unearthed by Evers, is a "Missing Aircraft Crew Report" (MACR) filed after the Rouen/Sotteville MY, France raid on 28/3/43. The 324th Sq's Fort, No 4229537, L DF, piloted by 1Lt John A Coen, was lost that day. The MACR states: "A/C" seen to hit the water and explode one mile north of Fe Camp. Five chutes seen to open over land. Destroyed by fighters." All of the crew are listed in Evers' data as "MIAs."

The less depressing activities occurring back at the base at the time follow:

"BASSINGBOURN, ENGLAND- 91st BG - MARCH 28, 1943

"While our planes were attacking the marshalling yards at Rouen, France the field came under attack from enemy ground forces. The home of the 91st was defended by the rather large detachment of the Royal Air Force stationed there. They were supported by various defense detachments from the 91st and its supporting units. Some of the interesting and too often amusing incidents are recorded here.

"A glider landed on the field and, unchallenged and almost unnoticed, its crew walked over and captured the Control Tower."

"Kneesworth Hall was lost, and then our forces recaptured it. After securing the hall, they advanced up the road as stragglers. No precautions or cover were taken. You guessed it, they walked into an ambush and all 200 of this force was 'killed or captured.'"

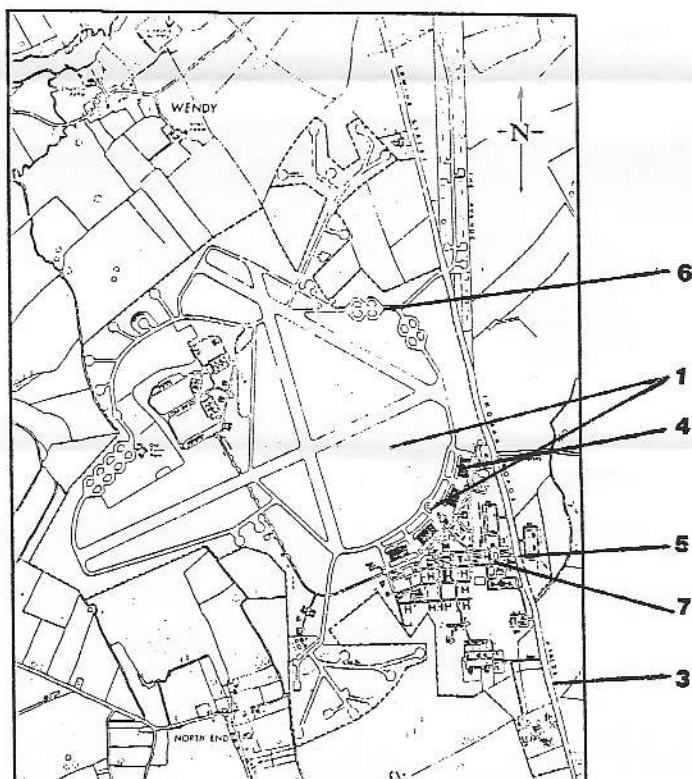
"The most serious blow was the destruction of our four hangars by 'Fifth Columnists.' Then one whole dispersal area was captured by the 'enemy.'"

"About an hour after the 'enemy' (the British Home Guard) attacked a whole truck load of 'enemy forces' entered the Main Gate without receiving a challenge from the guards."

"One serious accident did mar the otherwise humorous capture of our base. While repelling a counter attack at 11:00 hours, Sgt Ambrosio L Martinez had a faulty hand grenade explode close to him. He received wounds on the face, right hand and leg. Lt Frank Milkey, Pvt Gordon Tye and Pvt Harold Hunter were also wounded by the grenade."

"The British Home Guard (the 'enemy') dictated the surrender terms in the Headquarters Building."

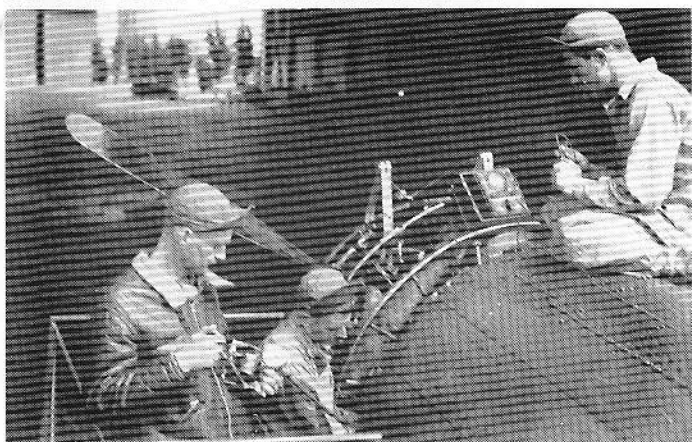
"The exercise proved beyond any question that a small but well organized force could capture Basingbourn without too much difficulty. It was a sham battle in more ways than one."



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THE BATTLE OF BASSINGBOURN - 1) Glider troops land and capture Control Tower; 2) Kneesworth Hall (not on map) lost and recaptured; 3) Defense forces, straggling north on Roman Rd after Kneesworth Hall re-captured, ambushed and annihilated; 4) Hangars destroyed by "Fifth Columnists," 5) Main Gate, entry point of unchallenged truck load of "enemy forces," 6) Dispersal area captured by "enemy" and 7) Headquarters Building where surrender of Base was concluded. (Editor's Note: Corrections to this speculative reconstruction are welcome.)

FAR-RANGING GROUND CREW CREATIVITY RECALLED



401st Sq GROUND CREWMEN THOMPSON, CODYER AND Ciarimboli at work. (Photo - Courtesy A Ciarimboli)

MATT PETTERA, FORMER 401STER, REMEMBERS well many of his experiences in the generally unpublicized phase of 91st BG(H) history. In fact, his personal recollections range from pre-Bassingbourn times to embarkation for home after the war.

Pettera was an Assistant Crew Chief. A fact filled, single spaced typed two page letter of his adds immensely to the still meager material available pertaining to those who kept the planes aloft.

He remembers crossing the Atlantic on the "Queen Mary." The first night out he had to sleep on deck. Having only two GI blankets "to cushion and cover with" revealed the hardness of the deck. The next night the added discomfort of cold compelled better billeting. Arrangements provided for alternating sleeping in a cabin and the passageways. Rough sea and the ship's zig-zagging kept him sliding from one side to the other while bunking in the passageways. The two meals provided daily had to be restrained from similar sliding on the tables, of course. Rumors regarding the ship's dodging Nazi subs prevailed.

Disembarked at Gourock, train transport to him and the other 91sters to Kimbolton, another station and, finally, trucks.

"Being a Sgt I was allowed to ride in the front seat of our truck. It was a scary ride. It was night. The truck drivers drove fast despite the fact that the trucks only used blackout lights and only 40 or 50 feet separated the vehicles. I wished I had a brake pedal on my side," he says.

After surviving the officially condoned Tail-Gate-ing he recalls a brief stay at Kimbolton: "Nissen huts, one little coal stove in the middle and outdoor plumbing."

Then the final move to Bassingbourn, the "Country Club."

"We had made it," he recalls as he lists the amenities, such as sidewalks and steam heated barracks with showers and tubs, awaiting them. He recalls that the weather was such that coverall sleeves could only be rolled comfortably for about three weeks of the year. Such "balmy" weather encouraged "Pub" running. Buddies would mount their bikes and "fly formation" to the target - a pub. Often one cyclist's front wheel caught

up with the rear wheel of the bike ahead with disastrous results.

He recalls that during his first winter at Bassingbourn the plane his crew serviced was parked near a Nissen hut. It was a cold winter so the hut was a welcome refuge after their work was done and they waited for the Flight Crew to appear and take-over the next phase of 91st business.

"While waiting one day I was curious to see if a throat mike and headset would work if a couple of flashlight batteries were hooked up in series. It did. Once that was determined a communication system between 401st hardstands was developed. Later the communication system was energized by our battery carts. It was duly noted that the mike would get hot if left on very long," he says.

Later he and his crew were moved to another hardstand which had no nearby refuge from the cold. They improvised. In his words:

"We found some canvas engine covers which were sent over with our planes but never used. We cut them up and made a little shelter."

"Later more elaborate shelters were made. One was a frame and canvas cover from the back of a truck - then someone started taking ammunition boxes apart and making shacks out of them. With welding, small drums soon provided stoves and heat!"

"Unfortunately in one of these warm havens, while one crew played cards with another, an industrious individual went about cleaning his uniform with 100 octane.

"It got hot in those huts. The amateur dry cleaning efforts set the gas off and burned the hut down. Having fires in the huts was outlawed after that."

The creativity of the ground crew members was far-ranging he recalls. Electricians of the 401st rigged up a three wheeled motor scooter to transport their equipment; one caste an aluminum pulley to motorize his bike with an English battery cart engine. His own ingenuity provided a bit of "trivia" for 91st statistical history. By rigging a discarded jeep speedometer to the front wheel of his bike he determined his pedaling from his barrack to the plane and back several times a day totaled about 10 miles.

A rough running engine defied his crew once. The electricians checked all the wiring and even removed the prop to check its balance. Peterra finally found the problem, a bad spark plug. (Earlier they had put in some new plugs but because of the supply shortage they couldn't replace all.)

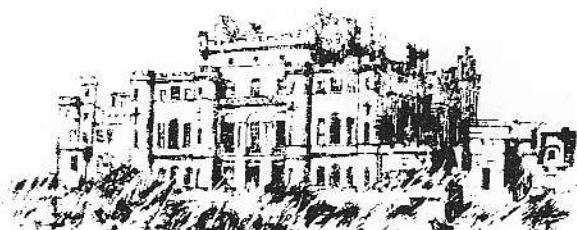
"As for flying," he says, "I didn't care much about it unless I went up as Flight Engineer to slow time engines. At one time in 1944 enlisted men were allowed to fly as co-pilots on local flights. I went as one with our pilot, Lt Dick Gibson. When we were above the clouds at 10,000 feet I asked if I could fly the plane. He let me - but not for long. The artificial horizon kept going the wrong way for me. I would have had us flying upside down in minutes.

When we made our landing approach the wind had changed and we were headed for the wrong runway. Gibson was a good pilot so I guessed it was "old hat" for him to deal with the cross-wind as we made a go-around to land on the other runway. But, from the co-pilot's seat I could see the skill and strength required.

After the war I returned home on the "Queen Elizabeth," I didn't want to fly back."

POTPOURRI

SCOTLAND



CULZEAN CASTLE

• A YEAR AGO, JOHN FLEMING, PRESENTLY THE 91st BGMA'S most visible Scottish friend, requested 91st BG(H) nose art photos for display in the General Eisenhower Rooms in Culzean Castle, a historical site in Scotland.

Hoot Mon! It appears 91st BGMAers have been more than a bit frugal in sending photos to enhance the memorabilia display at the historical site whose patron is Her Majesty, The Queen Mother.

Fleming, who had planned a Christmas 1988 presentation to Michael L Tebutt, administrator of Culzean Castle, continues diligently, through private correspondence, in his efforts to make the museum display, dedicated to the "Yanks who did so much," an impressive one.

He recently wrote "WILD HARE" crew member Edward Ah Tye and thanked him profusely for sending a photo of his plane and crew member's names. He also pleaded for assistance in locating other nose art.

Allan Morey, former 401st pilot, after sending Fleming photos earlier, received a similar response. Fleming's letters are not mere "Thank Yous," they are long, chatty, typed affairs from a new found friend who is dedicating his retirement years to preserving our proud past in a Scottish Museum.

A veteran of two years in the Malayan jungle during World War II, Fleming was partially disabled by a stroke in 1980. In his letter to Ah Tye he recalls "a lot of 8th AF crews came to Scotland on leave and enjoyed it!" Scots, he needlessly adds, are very hospitable. A member of the "Murray" Clan, he adds that Clan's Chief is Lord Atholl who has his own Private Army of Highlanders called the "Atholl," the only Private Army in the UK. He also says numerous US Tourists make it a point to see the Edinburgh Tattoo (Military) in which over 100 Highland Regiment Pipers and Drummers march.

Inasmuch as many 91st BGMAers will attend the Royston Priory Gardens Memorial Dedication in July, the R/I thinks it proper to give Fleming's project another, bigger boost. Perhaps some, after the Royston ceremonies, will consider renewing Scottish memories while in the area. And it is hoped, they'll include Culzean and Fleming's display being assembled there.

For those able to contribute nose art photos or other memorabilia, his address: 40 Munro AV, Bonnyton, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland KA1 2NT. Tele: (0563) 42031.

PRESERVE OUR PROUD PAST

U.S.A.

• JOSEPH A CRESS (322nd), MUNSTER, IN, BY contacting the R/I for information regarding the 322nd Sq's "HIKING FOR HOME," added a bit to 91st BGMA's historical data.

Cress writes he was flying with 1LT John M Hamilton's Crew when they were downed during the Meresburg, Germany raid on Nov 2, 1944. Hamilton and his crew, he says, were flying "WABASH CANNON BALL II" that day because their assigned plane, "HIKING FOR HOME," was undergoing repairs.

A check of 91st historical data found two differences in the fresh information provided. The "Missing Aircraft Crew Report" in the 91st historical records lists Hamilton's fallen plane as "CANNON BALL TOO" but, since Cress's listing of his four crew members who lost their lives coincides precisely with that MACR report, it is certain "CANNON BALL TOO" and "WABASH CANNON BALL II" were the same plane.

The other difference which emerged may help some old friends of Cress to locate him. "Joseph A Cress" is not listed on the fallen "CANNON BALL TOO" crew roster. But a "Joseph A Ceresweski, Radio Operator," is. It seems obvious a name change has occurred since the war and the two "Joseph A's" are one and the same. Cress' address is in the new, June 1988 91st BGMA Directory.

Since no data is available regarding the fate of "HIKING FOR HOME," any member with such knowledge is urged to write Cress or Cereszweski - or the R/I.

"SHOO SHOO BABY" RESTORERS HONORED



THE FOUR MEMBERS OF THE 512th ANTIQUE AIRCRAFT Restoration Sq of Dover AFB, DE, who contributed the lion's share of the restoration work on the 91st BG(H)'s "Shoo Shoo Baby," were honored at a recent quarterly meeting/dinner of the MD Chapter of the 8th AFHS at Andrews AFB Officers' Club in MD.

The highlight of the affair was the viewing of video tapes which recorded the anxieties that accompanied the first engine tests, slow and high speed taxiing tests and "Shoo Shoo Baby's" first flight after restoration.

Five 91st BGMAers attended the affair and proudly posed for a photo with "Shoo Shoo Baby's" restorers. Reading from l-r, first row, are antique aircraft restorers Sgts Ray McCloskey, Vic Rosica, Tom Corbeil and Dan Vasey. In the Rear, l-r, are 91st BGMAers Owen Cooper, Ray Harding, William Dietrich, John Parsons and W W Hill. (Photo - Courtesy O Cooper)

A SORT OF KIND OF BOOK REVIEW AND MAGAZINE ARTICLE PREVIEW

"NOSE ART" BOOK NOW AVAILABLE: STILES "BIO" IN APRIL "WINGS"

• E ROBERT KELLY, 322nd Sq, NOW RESIDING IN Central City, CA has good news - particularly for those 91st BGMAers at the Chicago Convention who were deeply disappointed when he told them the book, "VINTAGE AIRCRAFT NOSE ART" by Gary Valant, was out of print.

Kelly displayed a copy of the book, which contains a photo of the nose of his plane, "MY BABY," and many other 91st nose art photos, at the convention. In a recent communication he announces the book is again available.

An advertisement by ZB Zenith Books, the present distributor, describes the book in the following manner:

"VINTAGE AIRCRAFT NOSE ART, Valant. A unique and interesting collection of color photos depicting a variety of warbird nose art. Over 1,000 color photos show you the artwork close-up with explanation of the art, the aircraft, and the pilots, and why they go together. The only book of its kind. Hdbd., 10 1/4" x 11 3/4", 208 pgs., 880 b&w ill., 120 in color...\$39.95"

To obtain the book write ZB Zenith Books, PO Box 1, Osceola, WI 54020. Specify the quantity, the item number (which is 112114AP) and the title. The firm's Toll-Free number is: 1-800-826-6600 - if further information is desired. No C.O.D. orders are accepted.

• 2LT BERT STILES, 401ST CO-PILOT, WHILE completing his tour, would, during leisure time, sometimes cycle beyond Bassingbourn's dispersal areas to lay on the grass and talk to a friendly horse for whom he saved sugar. Also, during free-time, he wrote a book, "Serenade to The Big Bird," in which he expressed the feelings young men then, and others later, felt but could not express.

His book was a huge success when published in the early '50's, after World War II and his death on Nov 26, 1944. (Having volunteered for a second tour as a P-51 fighter pilot, he was killed while helping escort 1,137 "Big Birds.")

Stiles, while flying with the 401st, was the co-pilot on 91st BGMAer Life Member Sam Newton's crew. Newton was the pilot. Stiles wrote a bit about their relationship in his book. Stiles said, "Somehow Sam and I never worked out very well in the air...We wore on each other in the air. The strange part of it was we never carried it over to the ground. Once we got back on the ground we were okay..."

Newton, who was a college fraternity brother of Stiles, has alerted the R/I that a biographical article on his friend Stiles is slated to appear in the April issue of "Wings" magazine, published by Joe Mizrahi at Sentry Books, 10718 White Oak Av, Granada Hills, CA 91344.

The writer of the article, Mike Minnick of Toronto, Canada, wrote Newton that he feels it "...is one of the best magazine articles I've ever written."

"Wings," the magazine in which Minnick's article will appear, is widely distributed to newsstands, bookstores and probably magazine racks in large self-serve food and drugstores. The edition containing the Bert Stiles story is probably presently available.

According to Minnick's letter, which Newton shared with the R/I, Newton an other 91st sources contributed data to the article which sounds like a big chapter from the 91st BG(H)'s past that all history-hungry 91st BGMAers will treasure.

BELATED SILVER STAR AWARDED

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The MACR provided by 91st Historian Evers' research describes Askins' plane's fall in the following manner:

"Observed by Lt B F Allison 0706105, 52:35N 07:45E, 27,000 ft. A/C nosed down, fell behind our position with fire in top turret. A/C brought under control and 9 chutes came from the plane. Then went in a wide spiral and later blew up."

All but Co-Pilot, 2Lt Randall H Archer, survived.

Armstrong's other notes pertaining to Askins' award credit CA Congressman Robert Dorman's intervention regarding "statute of limitations" with making the belated award possible. Also, he says, 19 members of the six squadrons comprising the 129th ARRG received other awards and decorations including the Airman's Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal and others during the same ceremony.

Pilots of the 129th ARRG have honored Askins further with a standing invitation to fly with them on any of the group's planes anytime. Also, those who know restored B17 owners suggested arrangements could be made for him to fly one again in the future, if he desires to do so.

Two of the 129th ARRG Sq C/Os were influenced by Armstrong's presence. Undecided about ordering the new USAF A-2 jackets, they studied Armstrong's WWII A-2 Jacket (replete with 91st patches), questioned him thoroughly and then announced they would order the new, similar A-2 jackets for their Air Crews immediately.

Armstrong, a dedicated collector of 91st memorabilia and relevant data, added that Askins' Silver Star is not the first in the Askins family. His father possesses one with an Oak Leaf Cluster. One was for saving his Colonel's life.

FREE ADDRESS LABELS OFFERED

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National Warplane Museum at Genesco, NY annually, etc are used as a base for a 91st BGMA contingent gathering.

The mailing labels may be obtained by writing Paul J Limm, Rally Round Committee Chairman, 601 Calle de Soto, San Clemente, CA 92672 or Secretary Charles R Hackstock, 14224 SE 288th St, Kent, WA 98042.

Folded Wings

• EBERLY, WILLIAM E, 401st, 1753 Linwood Av, Lancaster, PA 17603; July 15, 1988 after a long bout with bone cancer. Reported by his family.

• JORGENSON, VERNON, 401st, 1132-9th St North, Fargo, ND 58102; June 22, 1988. Reported by Stanley F. Waslaski, a friend, who kept in contact with him since the war. Waslaski recalls Jorgenson "hailed fuel to the planes."

• SATTERFIELD, EARL R, 324th, 1260 Pleasant Valley Rd, Fairmount, W VA 26554; May 1988. Satterfield served as a power turret mechanic. Reported by his wife Alma.

"RIGID DIGIT" PART OF 91st "FAME," TOWER MUSEUM BOOKLET SAYS

91st BGMA MEMBERSHIP DATA FORMS requesting information for possible use in "future publications, books, etc." close with the cryptic question, "Member of Rigid Digit Club?"

A recent bulky mailing from Vincent A Hemmings, Curator of the Tower Museum at Basingbourn, England included a copy of "The Tower Museum Guide." This excellent booklet, published by the East Anglian Aviation Society, contains a condensed history of the 91st BG(H) which lists the "Order of the Rigid Digit" as part of the 91st's "claim to fame."

This bit of information prodded perusal of readily available Membership Data Forms for member comments pertaining to it. The "study" revealed the vast majority of members ignored the question; a few took time to write "N/A" or place a question mark in the allotted space. One member wrote, "What the H___ is it?" One exultantly scrawled, "Never caught me!"

The only possible conclusion to be drawn is that this fascinating facet of 91st fame is fading from members' memories. Therefore a brief review of its background follows. (A complete account appears in the Jan 1977 R/I edited by Paul C Burnett.)

The "Order of the Rigid Digit" was the inspiration of then-Col Stanley T Wray during the darkest days of the 91st BG(H). In its early operations there were no replacement crews or aircraft-even though losses per mission often reached 10 per cent. Statistics then indicated such attrition rates would result in the last crew and plane being lost on Apr 19, 1943.

Col Wray, wrestling with the morale problem, initiated the "Order of the Rigid Digit," a humorous award for "goofing up." Landing with wheels up, getting lost, etc were some qualifications for the round, four inches in diameter, sterling silver medal hung from a baby blue ribbon. The face of the medal contained a fist, clenched, with the exception of one finger; the back contained the engraved names of the recipients, one of whom was Col Wray. The medals were awarded with proper pomposity.

According to the Jan 1977 R/I ten miniature copies

were made, all at Wray's expense, to be permanently kept by recipients. Gen Ira C Eaker, 8th AF Commander, having received every other ETO ribbon, requested a "Rigid Digit Award" for himself. Wray commissioned another for him.

Today the message imparted by the "clenched fist," which added humor to those grim days past, is still available on the discreet RIGID DIGIT TIE TAC which can be ordered from the 91st BGMA P-X ITEMS for \$2.50 from Trea Charles V Welbes, 210 Leatherwood Dr, Mountain Home, AR 72653.

FREE ADDRESS LABELS OFFERED FOR 91st RALLY ROUNDS

FREE ADHESIVE BACKED LABELS IMPRINTED with the names and addresses of 91st BGMA members within a 200 mile radius of any locale in the U.S. can be supplied to any member desiring to spark a local 91st BGMA Rally Round. The labels are easily attached to postcards or envelopes.

Members interested in such an undertaking will be responsible for all costs incurred in such mailings. The R/I will, if notified, publicize the source of the mailings so that appreciative recipients may, if they wish, help the mailer defray the costs.

Beyond the preparation and mailing costs such Local Rally Rounds would require no further effort or expenditures by the initiator if functions sponsored by other organizations such as the VFW, The American Legion, Lions, The Bombardiers, Inc, 8th AAF Historical Society, Local Air Shows such as that sponsored by the

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8th AFHS' "15th" - DENVER, OCT 1989

THE 8th AF HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 15th ANNUAL Reunion will be held Oct 4-9, 1989 in Denver, CO. 91st BGMA members of the group are urged to make early reservations so arrangements can be made for a 91st Rally Round Room and "dining together" at the banquets. Because over 400 91st BGMAers are 8th AFHS members, the Denver occasion is viewed as an excellent 91st BGMA Rally Round opportunity.

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 Basingbourn, 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.

210 Leatherwood Dr.
Mountain Home, AR 72653

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