



**1993
DUES DUE!**

OOPS! THE R/I's 25th anniversary slipped by unacknowledged. A belated tribute is paid by using The Ragged Irregular's original masthead on this issue.

Vol 26 No 1

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

January, 1993

91st BGMA "REACH OUT" POLICY COSTLY

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE FROM AN UNIDENTIFIED service unit's memorial newsletter by an anonymous writer is head-lined with the hope that it will forestall future regret by many former 91st BG(H) members. (All current 91st BGMA members will concur with its content.) It is hoped others, after reading the President's Column on page two, will respond appropriately by re-joining those who shared and seek to preserve the 91st BG(H)'s proud past with them.

IT ISN'T FRIENDSHIP. WE ALL HAVE FRIENDS. YOU can go to a company picnic or a convention and you will not feel the same emotion as when you attend a veteran's reunion.

It is something beyond regular friendship. It is the knowledge that "you and they have been to Hell and back." It is a deep-rooted emotion that binds you together. It is the knowledge that when things were tough, you and your buddies stuck it out and lived through it. You can attend high school reunions, college reunions, company conventions... the whole civilian works, but there isn't the "band of brothers" feeling that is felt when service buddies get together!

You and your buddies may have less hair and a lot more inches around the beltline, but deep within all of you is the same comradeship that you had during those horrible days of war. Whether it is 10 or 40 years, when combat buddies meet it seems like yesterday! All of the memories assemble in your mind... memories you thought had been pushed back into the recesses of your memory bank. "What ever happened to..." and "Remember when..." You try not to let on that these old veterans mean a lot to you, but by the time Auld Lang Syne is played and the flag is furled and the station wagon is packed, there is a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye as you part company with the men who once lived and fought beside you.

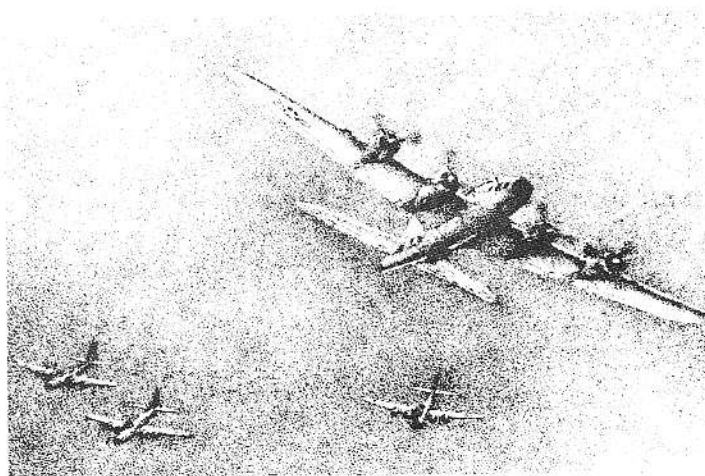
You tell your wife: "...Damn, it was good to see them again."

And it was! Ole Charley might have gained 50 or so pounds, but he sure could fire that machine gun. "Chief" looked almost as young and fit as he did when he crawled up and gave you first aid under fire. "Danny Boy" is now almost bald, but he was quite a sergeant in those days and "Jimmy the Pollock" gets around pretty good with one glass eye and one arm.

Yes, memories flood your mind as you head home. No one knows the feeling except those who were there. You wonder if you will ever see any of them again. Combat was Hell and you have bad memories but the memory of total

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FOLDED WINGS CARD TO HONOR DEPARTED



"... for the Airport of the Sun."

A QUIET, YEAR'S LONG PROJECT IS COMPLETED. Official 91st BGMA Sympathy Cards have been printed. Now, in addition to the listing deceased members receive in the FOLDED WINGS column, their immediate survivors will receive condolences from the association signed by the president.

The product of 91st BGMAers Don J Wellings, Friday Harbor, WA and W W Hill, Alexandria, VA, it is an appropriate tribute. A portion of its text rightly recognizes all deceased members' contribution to Freedom "At an important time of his life."

Hill, former 441ster, who provided the text and typographical layout, is well known for creative contributions to various association projects.

Wellings, who contributed the accompanying artwork, is not.

After 25 years in the AF Wellings used his GI Bill benefits getting a MA in Fine Arts. He writes he enjoyed the schooling with "kids" and now enjoys "the challenge of free-lance illustration."

Arriving at Bassingbourn in June 1944 with Hugh Donohue's crew, then-Navigator Wellings and Donohue, after six missions, became the 323rd Sq's lead crew. Their original Co-Pilot, Jerry Sweet, given his own crew at the same time, promptly completed his tour.

Flying only when the 323rd led, it took Wellings six months to complete his 30 missions. During that time, two of his crewmates were lost. Bombardier Al Hillman went

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY CHARLES R HACKSTOCK

BACK TO BUSINESS

WHILE HOPING EVERYONE IS STILL SAVORING memories of the past Holiday Season, I write this "back-to-business" column with reluctance. The items discussed below, unfortunately, require the attention of everyone receiving this R/I.

1) For 25 years the 91st BGMA has generously mailed a Jan issue of The R/I to every former 91st BG(H) member for whom it has an address in an annual membership solicitation effort. That effort has been successful many times but the number of non-dues paying recipients for Jan R/Is has risen to 624. Rising printing and postage costs preclude continuation of free annual mailings to such a large number.*

Reluctantly it has been decided that automatic Jan R/I mailings to those delinquent more than two (2) years in dues payment will cease with the Jan 1994 issue.

It is hoped that this announcement will prevent contact loss with our many former dues paying association members and friends by reminding them of the importance of their dues. Also, it must be added, the 1995 91st BGMA Address Directory will not include the names and addresses of those whose dues are delinquent more than two (2) years. Their listing in the forthcoming 1993 Directory continues until then.

(2) Though many members have complied, the R/I still requires the corrected address of many others before its mailing lists contains the full Nine (9) Digit Zip Code number of everyone. Please check your address label on this issue and send your Nine (9) Digit Zip to Sec/Trea Assay B Johnson, 590 Aloha Dr, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403-4559 if it does not appear on your mailing. It will soon be required by the PO.

3) A list of deceased members continues to be compiled. If you know of anyone whose death has not appeared in the FOLDED WINGS column, let Sec/Trea Johnson know. Such information will help clear some of our non-dues payment problems.

4) If you are a Full Member (FM) or Associate Member (AM) paying dues annually, check the last two digits on the second line of your address label. It indicates the last year you paid dues. If you feel there is an error contact Sec/Trea Johnson so you can be properly credited.

5) Col Tom Ashinhurst (Ret) and those Oklahoma members supporting him deserve a sincere vote of Thanks for providing a site for the 1994 91st BGMA National Reunion. Oklahoma City was the only site to present a complete proposal for the affair. Our '96 Reunion is scheduled for the Western (Pacific) Sector - if a sponsor emerges no later than Jan '94, less than a year from now.

Why so soon? The reason is the increasing number of reunions. Hotels are booking as much as three (3) and four (4) years in advance. Therefore if we seek short-notice accommodations we flirt with deep disappointment: poor lodging - or none at all.

As I said in Memphis, if we do not have a Reunion sponsor by Jan '94 we may have to merge ours with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. The 8th AFHS holds an annual reunion usually in Oct. The large attendance insures the best accommodations, a broader selection of events and a well-known banquet keynote speaker.

That's the alternative if no Western Sector site provides an agenda for our '96 Reunion by Jan '94. Membership participation will decide this issue.

*Editor's Note: The Jan '68 R/I contained the following statement: "Members voted at the Memphis Reunion that non-dues payers would be removed from our active mailing list after February."

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MAY 1992 RRR TOUR

(Concluded from last R/I)

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED THE MAY 1992 91st BGMA RRR Tour. Space did not permit publication of their names in the Oct '92 R/I listing.

GUESTS

Armand, Steve; Borchert, Charles; Dent, Helen; Deye, Donald; Fisher, Bill & Margaret; Frankie, LTC Joseph; Kerwath, Florence; Leach, Cindy; Masterson, Van; Purdy, Lillian; Richards, Robert; Sheperd, James & Suzanne and Taylor, Zurline.

GEN "IKE" DATA STIRRED BY R/I "STAMP STORY"

SOMETIMES ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER - eventually. The Oct '91 R/I contained an article announcing Dr Joseph P Connolly's interest in Dwight D Eisenhower memorabilia. Dr Connolly, CN, a member of The Eisenhower Society, has a hobby of seeking autographs of people who had some connection with "Ike." Many 91sters were surprised when contacted by him and requested to sign "Eisenhower Centennial" First Day Covers because they flew on the 401st Sq's GENERAL IKE.

The source of Connolly's list of former GENERAL IKE crewmen is not known. It must be comprehensive because even the editor was requested to sign one of the envelopes. Since Col Lester F Rentmeester (Ret) 401st, FL, assured the editor he was part of his crew when GENERAL IKE was flown by him, the doctor's request will be honored ASAP. (That means when Connolly's original correspondence is found in the R/I "files.")

Recent digging into those "files" has only increased the editor's embarrassment. A letter to Dr Connolly, "C/O The R/I," was found. It indicates the doctor's comprehensive list of GENERAL IKE crewmen is not complete.

Will T Carter, Beaumont, TX, former deputy squadron leader of the 401st under Maj John D Davis, wrote the letter to Connolly, saying he enjoyed the R/I article concerning Connolly's hobby. His Nov 2, 1991 letter also adds to the GENERAL IKE story.

Carter's letter reveals he is one of the prime sources for historical data pertaining to the 401st plane named after Eisenhower - despite the fact he received no signature request.

Then - Capt Carter flew GENERAL IKE on 22 of his 35 mission tour.

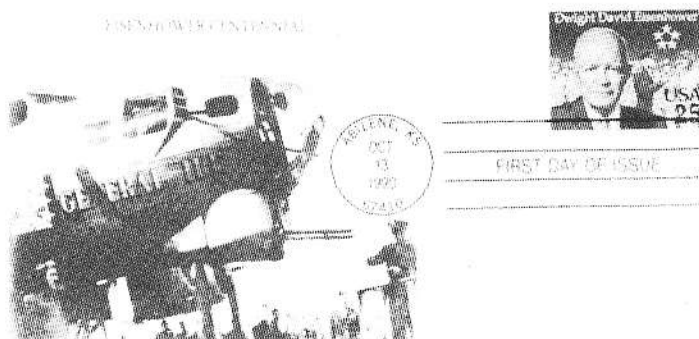
When Carter's first plane, LITTLE PATCHES, was retired after severe battle damage, he was assigned GENERAL IKE. He completed his missions with it with one exception. That time "IKE" got "stuck in the mud when the taxi strip caved in." Carter flew SSB as an alternate that day.

Included in Carter's letter is his memory of a completely successful maximum effort raid on the submarine yards at Hamburg led by the 401st's GENERAL IKE.

Carter and his crew still laugh about it when they get together (they've had three Mini-Reunions since 1981). They don't laugh about the seriousness of the mission or the fact that Carter's maritime insurance business activity since the war has permitted him to confirm that Hamburg's destroyed sub pens have never been rebuilt.

They laugh about the consternation a General displayed at the subsequent debriefing at Bassingbourn after the successful raid. The General's consternation came from the following:

The 401st, under Col Henry W Terry, was scheduled to lead the 8th AF and, because Maj Davis was ill, Carter and his GENERAL IKE crew were assigned deputy lead.



DR CONNALLY'S EISENHOWER CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE envelope depicts General Eisenhower christening GENERAL "IKE," the 401st plane named after him, on Apr 11, 1944.

Because of an oxygen leak over the Channel Terry turned the lead over to Carter, promising to be "right back." When Terry returned the formation had already passed the IP. Carter suggested to the still trailing Terry that he "tack on" because his bombardier had his cross hairs on the target and all was going well. Terry complied. The target was destroyed.

Carter recalls there were a lot of "Bird Cols" and perhaps at least one Brig Gen leading other Groups behind his GENERAL IKE that day.

The General in charge of debriefing was consequently completely taken aback when, asking the lead crew of the completely successful 8th AF raid to come forward, a 21-year old, 1/Lt (Carter) reported to him:

The only other command decision he recalls making that day arose when a Fort sought to join the formation without identifying itself with the colors of the day when challenged. Thinking it might be a German crew in a captured plane, Carter ordered it shot down if it did not respond correctly.

Carter would happily credit his bombardier and navigator for their part in destroying the world's largest submarine yards that day but, unfortunately, they were assigned from the pool - and memories fade.

It is certain Dr Connolly would treasure their signatures on one of his "Eisenhower Centennial" First Day Cover mailings.

Carter's letter to Dr Connolly provides him with names and addresses of his fellow GENERAL IKE crew members. As said earlier, sometimes one thing leads to another... His former co-pilot, Lewis B Ellis is a Baltimorean and near neighbor of the editor! A phoned contact has been made with him and a meeting is planned. The others are: John P Rumph, TT, WA; Bill Grimmert, NG, TX; Joe Kremer, R, MO; Walter Boenig, WG, TX, Jim Woolsey, BTG, MT and Arthur Jabara, TG, FL.

"REACH OUT"

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comraderie with men who shared that Hell will forever be embedded in your heart. There is no friendship like that of war-time buddies. It is something that lasts forever.

MAYBE "WE WERE ALL A LITTLE CRAZY"?

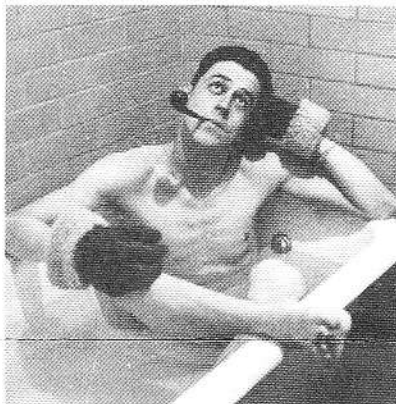
BY RUDY MALKIN

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article, written before the Sept 1992 Memphis, TN Reunion, was intended for publication in the Oct '92 R/I. It was withheld when, during conversations at Memphis, one member challenged the accuracy of one anecdote's contents. A revised version of the incident will be solicited. In the meantime the contested copy is published below. R/I readers are forewarned they may be reading a bit of 91st BG(H) "folklore" instead of history in the following copy.

IT IS UNLIKELY ANY RETURNING FLIGHT CREW member escaped psychological evaluation at some State-side AAF Convalescent Center to determine the extent of his stability or "Combat Fatigue." The vast majority, after a week or so, were re-assigned to new responsibilities.

Only since 1986, when the present R/I editor was appointed, did the possibility that, perhaps, "We were all a little crazy," arise.

Former 401st pilot Hiliary "Bud" Evers, NC, who has devotedly dedicated years to assembling group history, planted the thought in the editor's head. Diffidently prodded occasionally on how he survived a mission total that would please many a college basketball coach, Evers jokingly opines it was a matter of "mindset" and says that, perhaps, "We were all a little crazy."



FORMER 401st BOMBARDIER Don Weiss' war-time portrait is "kinda-sorta" rationally explained later in this article.

Supporting his probably less than dead-serious theory, he recalls a late night base incident following considerable drinking. Two participants eventually disputed the power of their punches. Finally, it was decided to resolve their differing opinions by trading one punch each. As recalled, the bigger guy gentlemanly-like permitted the other the first punch. The bigger guy, though rocked, remained standing. After congratulating the smaller swinger's effort, the big guy decked him with a retaliatory blow.

The bet was "crazy" but the conclusion of it was even more, Evers says. After the decked guy got up off the floor and spit out two teeth, the two "contestants" stood shoulder to shoulder, laughing at the onlookers – still the best of friends!

Back in 1988 the R/I received a war-time photo of 401st Sq Bombardier Don Weiss, ND. Since it had been sent by another member, Weiss was contacted regarding the propriety of its use. Weiss, who completed 50 missions with Lt. Webber and Major Art Reaume's crews, replied in such a way that the R/I began its "Crazy File."

In regards to his photo Weiss said, "Print it!!! Have fun! You're right, we did some odd things in our time off. But then, maybe some of us were odd!! With the job we were doing you didn't have to be young – and you didn't have to be dumb. But it sure helped."

Weiss only speculates why his Jan 14, '44 bathtub shot was taken. "I guess it was 'Wild-Hair Time,'" he suggests. Addicted smokers can understand the presence of his pipe. But the gloves? Weiss explains them with, "You know how cold that bath water usually was!"

Col George P Birdsong (Ret), while recovering from an eye wound, recounts the time muscular medics tracked him down at Bassingbourn after he'd gone AWOL from a hospital, in his book, *STORMY WEATHER* a B-17. He says a docile return with them spared him the wearing of "a funny jacket" back.

Briefly placed in a Section 8 Ward, he asked the eye doctor, checking his eye for damage during his absence, if he thought he was crazy. The doctor replied, "Just like a betsy-bug."

"Hell," Birdsong writes concerning his recollection of the Section 8 Ward disabled during his brief encounter with them, "we were all a little flaky."

The DELTA REBEL's Ground Crew Chief Sgt Maurice Gole's conduct merits considerable attention in Birdsong's book and inclusion in this article. "According to his thinking, he owned the DELTA REBEL, and he went where it went," Birdsong recalls in his book. Articulate and armed with impressive statistics showing REBEL damage was more promptly completed on those missions he flew as a "stow away," Gole completed at least three missions on the REBEL before exasperated Birdsong sternly convinced him "Rules and Regulations" superseded "Gole Reasoning and Rhetoric."

Bob Abb, Birdsong's bombardier, who an irate Col Stanley T Wray once unjustifiably considered "some kind of a sadistic anarchist," according to Birdsong's book, wrote the following anecdote in 1970. Former 91st BGMA Historian Evers salvaged it as possible R/I filler material.

"Col Wray, 91st BG(H) C/O, ordered a dance and party at the Officer's Club when the group was given a 'Stand Down' after a particularly bad raid – probably the Feb 4, '43 Emden raid. In addition to our losses we had many walking wounded. Girls were brought on specially arranged military buses.

"About midnight the affair became a bit boisterous. Imagination on the part of some participants decreed that 'something different' was needed.

"A volunteer from among the girls was selected, certainly for her well shaped derriere, and somehow, lampblack was available. Before most knew what was happening the lady's drawers were dropped and one of the 'imaginative' revelers applied lampblack to her behind. In a blink she was lifted to four more revelers standing on a

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".... A LITTLE CRAZY"?

(Continued from Page 4)

table. Gently, but firmly, they pressed her against the ceiling – leaving a beautiful and accurate reproduction of her blackened bottom. She was then gently lowered and rushed to the powder room for clean up.

The entire incident was completed quickly and discreetly – but the lady's 'impression,' a unique conversation piece, remained upon the ceiling for many months."

And then there was 1/Lt Neill E Oakley, identified by the late Bob Abb, DELTA REBEL bombardier, as being assigned to the 323rd Sq who served as Official 91st Photographic Officer with HQ's.

During the 1942 Christmas at Basingbourn "a few drinks of photographic elixir" at the base photo lab with Abb probably preceded

subsequent revelry. (Abb, in the Apr '73 R/I wrote he snapped the accompanying fun photo of Oakley at that time.)



Neill E Oakley

Oakley's simulated, depicted combat readiness does not qualify his inclusion in this article. Abb provided that "qualification" in his '73 R/I article. Abb wrote:

"In addition to his work in the Photo Lab where they processed bomb result pictures, etc, he also made several flights with the crews over enemy territory taking pictures of the targets and many aerial flights. During one of these unauthorized excursions, on Thursday, May 13, 1943, he was over Meaulte, France in Lt Jack Evan's plane. They were hit over the target and went down. He was never heard of again."

Data compiled by former Historian Hiliary "Bud" Evers contains the following: 1/Lt John T Evins was the Co-Pilot on the 322nd's VULGAR VIRGIN, A/C No 4229642, on the May 13, 1943 Meaulte, France raid. The Pilot was 1/Lt Lawrence J. Stark. Oakley, the eleventh man on the plane, is listed as "Observer."

The 91st Report pertaining to their fall says: "At 16:37, 21000 ft, A/C hit by fire from E/A just after target. Cockpit and #2 engine on fire. Slid into circular flight and exploded. 3 chutes seen."

Oakley was not among the three survivors – Tom W Bagwell, TT, Wallace L Mooney, R and Edward M Brummal, T.

Abb concluded his '73 R/I contact by acknowledging many "original" 91sters possess extensive photo collections because of Oakley's work and friendship.

This Oakley anecdote is included as a tribute to him and those other unnumbered Ground Crew members who unnecessarily risked their lives on unauthorized combat missions with Flight Crew friends. No medals awaited such

"a little crazy" participation – but promised Court Martials finally discouraged unofficial "tours."

Charles T Bell, former 322nd pilot, MD, while assisting the R/I in preparing some manuscripts by the late Col "Manny" T Klette, former 324th Sq C/O, for publication, wrote an introduction. Without intent he provided material for this article.

Bell, wondering why anyone would "volunteer over and over again to challenge the odds of combat survival as Col Klette did," feels part of Klette's determination was based on a sense of guilt. Klette, who completed 91 missions, was inconsolable when his favorite and most experienced crew was lost on the Feb 3 '45 Berlin raid while flying with LTC Marvin Lord. (Klette had agreed Lord could substitute for him in the unlikely event a mission was scheduled while Klette was on leave during a particularly dismal weather period.) Klette's writing reveals he believed, too many years later, the loss, caused by a direct flak hit, would not have occurred if he had flown that day.

Bell's sensitive speculation is supported by a slim book the editor recalled adding to his library shortly after the war. Titled, WAR NEUROSES, by Roy R Grinker, MD and John P Spiegel, MD, Medical Corp-Army Air Forces, a 1945 Blakiston Book, it deals with "operational fatigue" experienced by WWII personnel. It's Index suggests that even our best, like Col Klette, were vulnerable. Included in the book's Index, listing the varying symptoms encountered by the war-time psychiatrist-authors is "Guilt."

Lest anyone feel maligned by this particular collection of "little crazy" anecdotes, the R/I closes with one on its editor, Rudy Malkin.

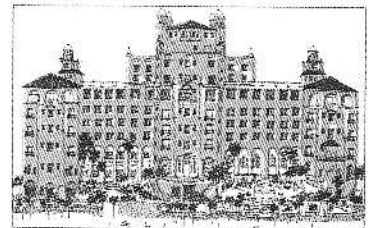
Sometime in '44, before D-Day, a thought plagued him. Like everyone, he had often been jocularly assured that if his parachute didn't work he could return it for another. Another more reasonable assurance was to go to where – ever the chutes were stored, request your chute and pull the Rip-Cord. If the Pilot Chute popped, you were assured it worked.

Late one night, before a mission, he pressed through an opaque fog to the proper place, requested his chute and pulled the Rip-Cord. The Pilot Chute popped out and the parachute people, watching warily from a distance, chorused, "See Sarge, it works!"

The editor's reassurance lasted until, about half way back to his barrack, another thought emerged. Another chute would be assigned him for the morrow's mission! What assurance was there that it would work?

He didn't go back to pop another chute because, reasoning correctly, he knew if he did the parachute people would think he "was a little crazy."

THE DON CESAR IN St Petersburg, FL was a war-time convalescence center for battle-fatigued airmen. Returned to private enterprise, it remains a "big pink palace" where people still go to "feel relaxed and happy."



RAGGED IRREGULAR BOOK REQUIRES BASE DATA

IT IS JULY 1943. THE LIVES OF A VETERAN AND A newly assigned bombardier to the 324th Sq, 91st BG(H) intertwine as the rookie bombardier gets to know his crew and the base personnel before the rookie flies his first mission.

Details pertaining to the two 324thers' inter-action already has 500 written pages devoted to it. Final authenticity, however, requires participation by former 91st BG(H) members and probably many more pages, according to Cheryl A Pula, a New York Mills, NY writer.

The working title of Pula's book, which he hopes to complete within the next year, is "The Ragged Irregulars."

It is fiction - based on fact.

Pula's project came to the R/I's attention when he recently requested if anyone could join the 91st BGMA and added he is "very much interested in joining."

While writing his book, Pula, a member of the Memphis Belle Memorial Asso, the 8th AFHS, Bombardiers, Inc, Friends of the US AF Museum and the American Air Museum, Duxford, England, has been corresponding with

ex-bombardiers throughout the country in order to assure the accuracy of his writing.

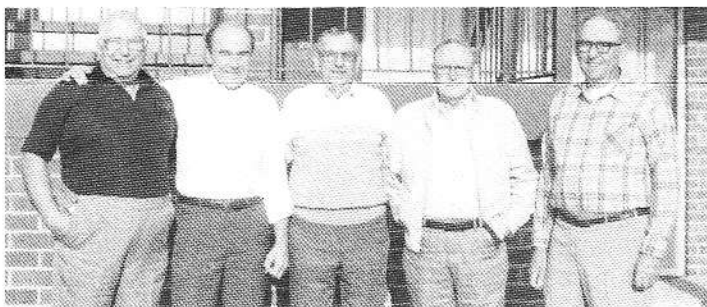
How, during three years of research and writing, the existence of the 91st BGMA eluded him is unexplained in his letter. Nevertheless, his obvious penchant for historical correctness led him to write, "... I need more information about the base. The physical layout, etc., etc."

Pula will be sent a Membership Form. In the meantime the R/I requests those readers, who are able, to supply him with as much information about the 91st BG(H)'s Basingbourn Base, Station 121, as possible.

Documentary books pertaining to the 91st BG(H), though not plentiful, are mounting. Pula's fictionalized account, however, breaks ground in a new area. Those able should contribute to the authenticity of "The Ragged Irregulars" and their envied Country Club Base, Basingbourn.

Pula's address is: 57 New Harford St, New York Mills, NY 13417.

INSIDE BELLE TOUR GIVEN ACK ACK ANNIE CREW



CREW MEMBERS OF THE 322nd SQ's ACK ACK ANNIE ENJOYED a Mini-Reunion in Memphis, TN in Apr 1992. L-R are: Phil Gail, Bud Laedtke, Lorcey Sonnier, Dale Maginess and Henry Hall. Their unscheduled visit permitted an "inside tour" of the MEMPHIS BELLE.

TRAVEL AND WORK SCHEDULES OF FIVE 322nd Sq ACK ACK ANNIE crew members permitted a Memphis, TN Mini-Reunion on Apr 2-5, 1992.

Col E C Laedtke, Ret, pilot, reports crew members from the East, Central and West US sectors present.

Frank G Donofrio, MEMPHIS BELLE Memorial Association president, saved the group from deep disappointment. Finding access to the BELLE exhibit was not scheduled to open til May 1st, Laedtke's group called him.

Donofrio promptly arranged a private showing "... second to none." Meeting them at the site with keys, including one to the BELLE's waistdoor, he said, "It's yours, folks, enjoy yourselves - but be careful."

The 322nd Sq veterans promptly boarded the BELLE, settled in their war-time positions and remembered more hectic times.

"It's different to be able to get inside a museum display

and touch, feel, sit and recall by-gone days," Laedtke says.

With Laedtke were N Phil Gail and wife, Sis; TG Lorcey Sonnier and wife, Annie; BT Dale Maginess and wife, Betty and WG Henry Hall and wife, Betty.

The ladies were included in the "inside" tour and Mrs Gail was even "checked out" on the once Top Secret Norden Bomb sight.

According to Laedtke's account of the group's Mini-Reunion, the only thing they missed in Memphis was the comraderie of all those attending the Big-Reunion months later.

POTPOURRI

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exhibit (at which Royalty is expected) and Royston, Basingbourn Barracks and Cambridge returns. For complete details contact: Linda Morgan, 175 Lakeshore Dr, Asheville, NC 28804. Phone: 704-258-2593.

• THE AIR FORCE GUNNERS ASSOCIATION HAS scheduled its 4th Biennial Reunion for July 15-19, 1993 at the Holiday Inn, Bethesda, MD. Organized in 1986, the non-profit association is composed of Enlisted Aerial Gunners of the USAAF or the USAF who flew on any type of Bomber Aircraft as a Gunner - including Radio Operators and Flight Engineers.

The group's membership nears 1300. Those interested in attending the Reunion or joining should contact: Jay E Ingle, Membership Chairman, 35469 Colossians Way, Shingletown, CA 96088 or: AFGA, PO Box 844, Denair, CA 95316-0844.

• • REUNION • •

THE 1994 REUNION OF THE 91st BGMA WILL BE held in Oklahoma City, OK.

Former 401ster, Col Tom Ashinhurst, Ret, OKC, OK, heads the Convention Committee.

DIRECTORY LISTING

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Wash,' set the AFCS on a North Sea course and abandon the plane. A vehicle would be dispatched immediately to the area for his return to Bassingbourn, Wray assured him.

"The bombardier replied his pilot was dead and seriously wounded crew members could not survive parachuting. He asked Wray to help him land the plane.

"Wray consequently told him to circle the base until emergency personnel and vehicles were positioned. Movie cameras were also set up to record the landing.

"After preparations were complete the bombardier was told he'd be guided in to a 'Wheels-Up' landing on the grassy area parallel to the main runway beyond the runway. After lining him up on the designated area and establishing a glide path, Wray instructed the bombardier to maintain flying speed while descending and calling off altitude and airspeed. As the plane neared the ground Wray ordered 'level off and power reduction.' Responding to its novice pilot's guidance, the plane continued straight and level to an initial tender-touch with the ground.

"Subsequent skidding noisily shredded parts from it. After the screeching skid stopped emergency crews raced to the site to remove the wounded and the dead pilot.

"There was no fire - thanks to Wray's instructions and the bombardier's ability to absorb them under extreme stress."

Again, Steele, a Victorville AAF Base 42-09 Bombardier Classmate of the 324th's Palmer, believes that Palmer was credited with the memorable, film recorded, "Wheels-Up" landing described above. Confirmation and further details are welcomed by him and the R/I. Steele's address is: 4188 Meadowsweet Dr, Dayton, OH 45424.

FOLDED WINGS CARD

(Continued from Page 1)

down Jan 6, '45 over Cologne and Radio Operator John Cardiff was killed by a direct flak hit on Nov 7, '44 over Harburg while flying with Wellings.

Included among his other indelible memories is his last mission, Feb 22, '45 on a FW 190 plant at Stendal. He recalls Charlie Hudson got a "shack" from 12,000 ft and Harry Dooley and he "had an easy day of navigation - it was VFR all the way." Reinforcing that recall was his subsequent Mar 22, '45 marriage to 2Lt Martha Ann Viola, a surgical nurse with the 163rd General Hospital. The two went on their honeymoon in PEACE OR BUST, B17 G OR-A 338939, which was "conveniently stood down from a mission to Dorsten that day."

He recalls his wife helped to remove flak from the 401st's Ralph Danekas and the 323rd's Joe Cannon.

Pilot schooling, following his state-side return, resulted in assignment to the 56th Fighter Gp in which he flew P51s and P80s. Following service assignments included two Pentagon tours and stints in Hawaii, Alaska and England.

The R/I reproduces his excellent artwork so that surviving association members may enjoy and frame it now

- in memory of all those, living and dead, who shared "...an important time..." of their lives with them.

Mrs. Earl W Donley, PA, one of the first recipients of the new 91st BGMA Sympathy Cards, acknowledged it with a letter. She said:

"Thank you for the beautiful card of sympathy which depicts B17s in flight. It was a fitting tribute to my husband who died, very peacefully, in his sleep, Oct 15, 1992."

Wellings' artwork, it seems, could have been inspired by the late Paul G McDuffee, former SSB pilot. A brutally condensed version of his "An Airman's Hymn," published in an R/I after his death, follows: "When the last long flight is over/... I'll open her up and let her zoom/for the Airport of the Sun."

Folded Wings

• BOUCHARD, WILFORD A, 322nd, 4900 Colonel Contree Pl, Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772, Dec 14, 1992. Reported by W W Hill.

• DONLEY, EARL W, 324th, 518 W. FREDERICK ST, Lancaster, PA 17603, Oct 1992, unexpectedly. Donley, a bombardier and navigator, was the sole survivor when his plane was downed Aug 16, '44 while he was flying his 14th mission. Wounded, he was a POW until Apr 27, '45.

A charter member of a chapter of the American Ex-POWs, he was named Commander of the POW Chapter of the Lancaster VFW Post 1690 shortly after his July '45 discharge.

A 45-year member of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, his varied interests and achievements included co-creation of the American Wonderland, a Denver miniature railroad display; acclaim for his hand-carved totem poles and scholastic and Little League umpire and referee service - among numerous other civic activities.

After retiring from a 30-year career with Pitney-Bowes, Inc in 1981 he worked part time until his death. Surviving are his wife, Jeanne Marie, seven children, 12 grandchildren and a sister.

• POWERS, JOHN E, 322nd 3210 Curtice Rd, Northwood, OH 43619, Dec 3, 1992. Reported by his wife, Jean, who writes she and he enjoyed the R/I for "many years" and she will continue the subscription by becoming an Associate Member. Powers, in poor health for 18 years, is also survived by a son, four daughters and 13 grandchildren.

• TEMPLETON, MATTHEW J, 323RD, 9330 Medowbrier, Houston, TX 77063, June 30, 1992. Deane Turner, MN, Templeton's former Co-Pilot, writes the two arrived at Bassingbourn in Feb '45. They were shot down Mar 22nd. Turner spent the remainder of his AAF time hospitalized in Belgium, England and the US.

Templeton, 69 at his death, was an independent oil company owner, Templeton Oil, Inc and a life-long rancher. He is survived by his wife Reda, two daughters, two sons, four grandchildren and numerous other family members.

DIRECTORY LISTING REUNITES FRIENDS

(MAYBE)

OVER 25 YEARS AGO (OCT 1967) THE FIRST EDITION of the R/I contained the following statement:

"These newsletters are published ... in an effort to keep alive the spirit of the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and to maintain the fellowship of those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121, Bassingbourn, England, 1942-1945."

The following article, though sparked by a non-member who never served in the 91st, hopefully continues the R/I's commitment to nurturing the WWII fellowships 91sters formed.

IT SHOULD SURVIVE AS A MOMENT OF THE 91st BG (H)'s proud past for many.

Earl A Steele, Dayton, OH, a bombardier, remembers it. A friend of his, then-1Lt Philip T Palmer of the 324th Sq, may have been the bombardier who distinguished himself before camera coverage and tensely watching 91st personnel during the Group's rough 1943 spring operations.

Steele says, since he only saw the filmed drama while

assigned to the 8th Bomber Command, his data is sketchy. He hopes on-the-spot witnesses can supply more detail and, perhaps someone in the 91st BGMA can tell him what happened to his friend, Palmer.

The R/I, upon recently receiving his forwarded Apr '92 query, has happily located the address of a Phillip T Palmer, Ingram, TX, in the 91st BGMA 1991 Directory.

It seems certain that a war-time friendship will be renewed because Steele, while reminiscing about the past, contacted the 91st BGMA and Palmer's continued membership in it kept his current address available.

If the above is so, it is another reason to celebrate, even a bit belatedly, the 25th Anniversary of the publication of The R/I.

Steele's recollection of a part of the 91st's Proud Past follows:

"Following a mission to Germany (between Mar and May 1943) 91st BG(H) personnel 'sweated out' the return of a plane in which, I believe, Palmer flew.

"Nearly overdue, the relief the plane's eventual appearance over the base brought was short-lived.

"A call from the badly damaged plane revealed it was being flown by its bombardier.

"Col Stanley T Wray, in the Control Tower, instructed him to tell the crew to bail out over the field, fly to 'The

(Continued on Page 7)

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.

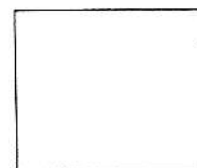
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POTPOURRI

ATTENTION! THE 91st BGMA IS NOT OFFICIALLY INVOLVED IN THE "TOUR" announcements listed below. Interested members must personally contact the cited information sources for full details. Prompt contact with those sources is urged since an Apr '93 R/I announcement of these "Tours" is impractical due to the early May departures.

• FLASH! THE BERKSHIRE TRAVEL AGENCY'S MAY 3-12, 1993 "Bassingbourn-Royston Part II Tour" announced in the Oct '92 R/I will include an "Open House at The Queen's Depot" on Sat, May 8th. The cooperation of LTC Jerome Church, Bassingbourn C/O, added the new "VE Day Celebration" attraction to the tour itinerary which includes coverage of 91st BG(H) and English historical sites. For complete details contact: Berkshire Travel Agency, 812 Penn St, Reading, PA 19602. Phone: 800-223-3884. Or: Paul Chryst, 1494 N Adams St, Pottstown,

PA 19464. Phone: 215-323-1877.

• FLASH! THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAY 17, 1943 25th mission of the 324th Sq's MEMPHIS BELLE will be commemorated during a May 10-18, 1993 return to England tour. Headed by BELLE pilot Col Robert Morgan (Ret) and his wife, Linda, the tour includes Picadilly RAF Club cocktails and dinner, attendance at the Opening Celebration of the RAF Museum's 621st (Dambuster) Sq

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