

The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



Supporting Units



324th SQDN



401st SQDN

Vol 30 No. 3.

91st Bombardment Group (H) Newsletter

July 1997

M/Sgt Jack Bowen Awarded Purple Heart—53 Years Later



M/Sgt Jack Bowen, USAF (Ret) left and Col. Jack Reeves, USAF (Ret.) right

Carthage, Texas—June 21, 1997 Fifty-three years after the fact, M/Sgt. Jack Bowen, 401st Squadron, was presented with the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in action while serving as a gunner with the 8th Air Force, 91st Bomb Group (H). Presenting the medal was Col. Jack Reeves, distinguished fighter pilot who served in Korea and Viet Nam. Bowen's B-17 Flying Fortress was shot down by enemy fighters on a mission to Gütersloh, Germany on February 21, 1944.

Bowen was taken prisoner of war and survived the infamous 800-mile death march from a prison in Poland westward toward the conquering Allied armies. Another resident of Carthage, John Howland, was present at the Ceremony. Howland was Navigator of another B-17 on the same raid to Gütersloh, February 21, 1944. Also present in spirit was Phil Mack, Editor of the R/I who also flew this mission.



Jack Bowen - 1943

S/Sgt Frank Annis Awarded Air Medal—52 Years Later



Former S/Sgt Frank Annis. Left, and Dutch Borchering, American Legion

Gerald, Missouri—June 18, 1997 Fifty two years ago former Staff Sergeant Frank Annis, 324th Squadron, was flying as an enlisted bombardier aboard the B-17 "Yankee Belle" on a combat mission to Berlin. The date was February 3, 1945. As they neared the target, Annis recalls, "it was just about time for 'bombs away' and the lead plane took a [flak] hit in the middle and completely cracked in half." The same burst "crippled us horribly. It took out our fourth engine, knocked out our controls and set us on fire."

The plane made a forced landing in a field 80 miles from Berlin. "We plowed this farmer's field for him," Annis continues. The civilians came after them with ropes and pitchforks but with his broken German, Annis asked a young boy in the uniform of a Hitler Youth to summon some German Soldiers who came and took them prisoner.

Annis was freed from Prisoner of War Camp three months later when on April 29, 1945, complete with TV cameras rolling, Gen. George Patton busted open the gates to the camp at Moorsburg and freed the captive soldiers.

Ed. Note: Both Bowen and Annis expressed appreciation for the efforts of Earl Pate on their behalf. If you think you are entitled to a medal that was never presented to you, please see Earl Pate's article, "Medals," for revised information.

The President's Corner

Dear Fellow Members:

Planning for the 1998 Savannah Reunion is on schedule thanks to the efforts of Earl Pate and Ace Johnson. In June, the Pates, Mary Elizabeth and Earl, and the Johnsons, Gloria and Ace, spent two days in Savannah visiting the tourist attractions, dining in the recommended restaurants, and inspecting our Reunion Headquarters, the Riverside Marriott Hotel. They completed their preflight inspection and announced that the 1998 Savannah Reunion is ready to fly. We thank them for the demands made on their time and exchequer.

Sherwood and Joan Wagner, Dusty and Caroline Hoffmann, and Dale Darling have volunteered to arrive early in Savannah to help with the registration and other activities. All those willing to volunteer to help at the Reunion, please, please, drop me a line or give me a buzz.

The 91st BGMA has tried to contact all of our members who live in North Dakota to inquire about their safety and well-being during the terrible floods which devastated that state. We heard from Ed Martin, Linez Folgen, Oscar Sandvik, Andy Schumacher, Stan Walaski, and Don Weiss, all of whom reported that they and their loved ones were safe and well, and on high ground.

Norris Guttu, who lives in Grand Forks, in the center of the flood area, reported a flooded basement and other damage to his house, but he and his family were safely evacuated, and they will return to their home after it is renovated. He has a true North Dakotan and 91st Bomb Group spirit—indomitable! Oscar Sandvik expressed appreciation of our association's concern, noting that within a period of a few days he had received a telephone call from Ace Johnson and letters from W. W. Hill and Paul Limm.

If disaster ever strikes your area, please let your Association know that you are safe and sound so that we can inform your 91st BGMA friends. WE CARE!

More on Medals

Editor's Note. A typing error appeared in the April issue of the R/I. The name of the Commander of the Unit to whom requests for medals were to have been directed is Brig. General Susan Pamerleau. A letter of apology has been sent to Gen. Pamerleau. All other names were printed correctly.

From Earl Pate.....

We received information from the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio that requests for medals authorized but not presented should first be sent to: **Air Force Reference Branch, National Personnel Records Center, NPRC/NRPMF, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.** Combat and casualty reports may be requested from Earl Pate as before. Duplicate records have been discovered to replace those previously destroyed by fire.

91st BGMA OFFICERS 1997-1998

PRESIDENT
Harold E. Johnson
2021 Porter Way
Stockton, CA 95207-4035
Tel: (209) 477-0071

1st VICE PRESIDENT
Robert H. Friedman
6015 Valkeith
Houston TX 77096-3832
Tel: (713) 729-2225

2nd VICE PRESIDENT
Rudy Malkin
2438 Woodcroft Rd
Baltimore MD 21234-2836
Tel: (410) 668-3406

HISTORIAN
Earl Pate, Jr.
104 Skyview Dr
Hendersonville TN 37075
Tel: (615) 824-7909

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Asay B. Johnson
590 Alofa Dr
Lake Havasu City AZ 86406-4559
Tel: (520) 453-3114

R/I EDITOR
Phil Mack
17521 155th Ave SE
Renton WA 98058-9087
Tel: (206) 271-5277
FAX: (206) 227-8190
E-Mail: mackavco@worldnet.att.net

From Ace Johnson.....

Unfilled PX Orders

Anyone who has not received a PX Order previously paid for should let me know to get it straightened out. There are two unfilled orders because of the make up of the dues/PX order form. Since there is no place for a name if the PX order is detached from the dues notice, they can and unfortunately did get separated. Bob Friedman and I are working to come up with a better form for next year.

License plate holders were given to all attendees at the reunion in Tucson as part of the registration fee. There are about 100 holders available in the PX and were previously listed for sale at \$4.50 each. We would like to sell out the balance of these and have reduced the price to \$2.50 ea.

THE RAGGED IRREGULARS

Send your Order to Bob Friedman
6015 Valkeith
Fort Worth TX 77096-3832

91st BOMB GROUP MA

More About St. Nazaire

by Paul Limm. The April issue of the R/I carried the story that the Association du Memorial Americaine of the city of Saint Nazaire had donated \$1,000 to each of the original "Four Horsemen" of the 8th Air Force, the 91st, 303rd, 305th, and 306th Bomb Groups to honor both the gallantry of these bomb groups and the sacrifices of the people of the City of Saint Nazaire.

The four memorial associations have agreed to pool the four thousand dollars and establish a single memorial at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia. A large engraved copper alloy plaque (24"x 32") had been commissioned and will be placed on permanent display in the main exhibition hall of the museum this month.



IN MEMORY OF
THE BRAVE CITIZENS OF
SAINT NAZAIRE, FRANCE WHOSE EFFORTS,
SUFFERING AND SACRIFICES CONTRIBUTED
TO THE WORLD WAR II ALLIED VICTORY

- THIS MEMORIAL HONORS --
- ◊ THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE PIONEER "FOUR HORSEMEN" 91ST, 303RD, 305TH & 306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUPS WHOSE B-17 AIRCRAFT BOMBED THE SUBMARINE PENS IN SAINT NAZAIRE DURING 1942 & 1943
 - ◊ THE CITIZENS OF SAINT NAZAIRE WHO ENDURED ELEVEN BOMBINGS
- THE BOMBINGS RESULTED --
- ◊ IN THE LOSS OF 32 "FOUR HORSEMEN" BOMB GROUP, AND 16 OTHER BOMB GROUP, AIRCRAFT AND THEIR AIRCREWS
 - ◊ THE DESTRUCTION OF 90% OF THE SAINT NAZAIRE BUILDINGS. THE DEATH OF 163 YOUNG STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND WORKERS ON THE FIRST MISSION OF 9 NOVEMBER 1942 PLUS ADDITIONAL FRENCH CIVILIAN DEATHS ON THE OTHER TEN MISSIONS

IN SPITE OF THE BOMBING DEVASTATION, THE FRENCH PEOPLE HELPED FEED, SHELTER AND DRESS MANY DOWNED AMERICAN AIRMEN AND ASSISTED IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE CAPTURE AND CONTINUE THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

8TH AIR FORCE SAINT NAZAIRE BOMBING MISSIONS --
1942: NOV 9, 14, 17, 18 & 23
1943: JAN 3, FEB 16, MAY 1 & 29, JUNE 28 & DEC 5

ERECTED IN 1997 BY
ASSOCIATION DU M  MORIAL AMERICAIN - SAINT NAZAIRE, FRANCE

In addition to the contribution to each of the four Bomb Groups, Mr. Harry Gobrecht of the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum Board of Directors has informed us that the St. Nazaire Association du Memorial Americaine also made a contribution directly to the Museum of \$10,000 which is in addition to the contributions to each of the original four Bomb Groups.

The 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association expresses its grateful appreciation for both the gifts which it has so generously bestowed.

Difficulties of The Early Sub-pen Missions

The 91st Group flew nine missions to attack the U-Boat installations at St. Nazaire, five of them in the month of November, 1942, without radar, few navigational aids, and very little fighter escort. The November 23rd mission is a tragic example of the difficulties of the air campaign in the early days of WWII. On the previous day, the 91st dispatched eighteen B-17s on a mission to bomb the sub pens in the Lorient area. Upon return to England, most of the airplanes had to land at other bases due to weather, and had not returned to Bassingbourn for the next morning's mission.

Ten Aircraft Dispatched, Five abort

The group managed to assemble a force of ten aircraft from all four squadrons, but five of them had to abort due to mechanical and other problems, and the remaining five missed the rendezvous with the other bomb groups. On a direct route to St. Nazaire over land instead of by sea, the five plane formation immediately encountered flak as it crossed the French coast. Shortly afterwards, a/c 479, "Sad Sack," flown by Major Victor Zienowicz, C.O. of the 323rd Squadron, turned back with an engine out and neither crew nor plane was ever found.

The target area was completely covered by clouds but the small group tenaciously tried to find a break in the overcast to drop its 2000 pound GPs. FW-190s were in the air and had shot down two B-17s from the other groups. Now, they concentrated on the 91st. The command pilot, Major Harold Smelser, C.O. of the 324th Squadron, was in "Pandora's Box," as were the Group Gunnery Officer, Capt. Wahl, the Group Bombardier, Lt. Baxler, and the Group Navigator, Lt. Hemingway. The FWs mortally wounded "Pandora's Box," knocking out two engines and the ball turret. The other B-17s tightened formation for defense but Major Smelser waved them on, and "Pandora's Box" was last seen headed out to sea, where presumably, all perished.

Group Strength Down to Three

The three surviving aircraft were all heavily damaged and only Lt. Charles "Red" Cliburn of the 324th managed to fly his B-17 back to Bassingbourn. The radio operator, S/Sgt. Curtis Pyrah, was so seriously injured that after long hospitalization was invalided out of the service. The co-pilot, the late Clyde DeBaun, then a First Lieutenant, was also wounded and later, the bombardier took over his position. Although wounded, "Red" Cliburn was still able to land his "Fort" in the soft dirt when his rudder controls wouldn't respond due to battle damage and the tail wheel wouldn't come down.

Captain Kenn Wallick of the 322nd wasn't certain if his shot-up B-17 could reach England, but he was

Continued on next page.....

Difficulties of the Early Sub-pen Missions

(Continued from previous page)

even more concerned about his badly wounded tail gunner. Fortunately, he found an RAF base where the gunner received immediate medical treatment.

Fate was not kind to the 324th on this day. Lt. Nathan Corman, flying the damaged "The Shiftless Skonk," was unable to reach Bassingbourn and attempting a strange field landing at Watford, hit a field pylon and crashed killing three crew members instantly. Two others died of their injuries and the engineer T/Sgt. Lloyd Martin broke his back.

70 Percent Casualty Rate

Of the fifty-two men who went into combat that morning (Maj. Smelser's crew had an extra gunner, and Maj. Sienowicz's crew had an additional navigator), twenty-seven were killed and nine injured, two grievously. The seventy percent casualty rate is the highest of all 91st Bomb Group missions.

The 91st Bomb Group knows its own worth and has no need of poets to sing of arms and the man, "Arma virumque cano." Indeed, the official six volume "Army Air Forces in WWII" makes no mention of the 91st Bomb Group. Still, it is heart warming to have the people of St. Nazaire, a city which truly knows the meaning of sacrifice and courage, remember and honor our bomb group and the other three "Horsemen." With the dedication of this new memorial at the Heritage Museum, we, in turn honor the citizens of St. Nazaire.



Madingly. This year Life Member Otto Meikus who served in the 91st BG during WWII asked to be excused from laying the wreath at the American Cemetery at Madingley for reason of health. We thank you, Otto, for this past service.

Vince Hemmings, former Curator of the Tower Museum generously rendered the service of laying the wreath on our behalf. He reported it was one of the best he had attended. The floral tributes stretched the length of the wall dedicated to those missing. A most impressive sight. Over 1000 people attended. It was gratifying that young people were becoming more involved.

A Mustang and a B-17 led the fly-by followed by an F-86 and finally four F15s. The weather was splendid. "I have sat there [in the past] and managed to get drenched," he said.

Mr. Hemmings asks former 91sters to help him compile a history of Bassingbourn as used by the RAF and the 91st by sending him recollections of their stay there. His address is: Maraden, 53 Malthouse Way, Barrington, Cambridgeshire, CB2 5RR, England.

More Medals—It Really works!

At the Madingley Memorial Service this year, Beverley White, AM, who resides in Norwich, England, was pleasantly surprised with the presentation of a framed collection of medals to which her father had been entitled but never received.



Beverly's father, S/Sgt. Rudy L. Olague, a gunner on Lt. Pinning's crew (322nd Sq.) was KIA on the mission to Anklam, October 9, 1943. She was introduced to Ed Kerrin, AM, in 1992 and learned that both their fathers were KIA on the same mission and on the same crew. Ed's father was Lt. Edward Tomer, co-pilot.

Beverley had seen the article in the R/I, July 1995, about presentation of the Air Medal to Ed's father and wrote him to find out if he could help her obtain her father's medals. In the next fourteen months, Kerrin pursued this with some help from Earl Pate. He eventually received the medals and mounted them in a custom-made shadow box.

Pictured above is Ed Kerrin presenting the collection including the Purple Heart, Air Medal, WWII Victory Medal, ETO medal, American Theater Medal, Good conduct Medal, and Presidential Unit Citation to a very surprised and happy Beverley White at the 1997 Madingley Memorial Ceremony. Kerrin writes, "Within a couple of minutes, Beverley was set upon by three newspapers and BBC TV."

Hoots Toots Groups—91st and 303rd

William Lester Hoots, 323rd Sq, completed twenty-five missions as Waist Gunner on Capt. Burl Dalton's crew in "Emeigh." He then volunteered for more missions



and was assigned to fly with the 303rd BG until he was shot down and became a POW at Stalag IV. Upon being liberated, he had to make the infamous "Black March" to freedom. Hoots is shown here donating books, *The Ragged*

Irregulars of Bassingbourn and *Might in Flight* (a book about the 303rd Group) to Roodhouse Librarian, Mrs. Sue Bradford as reported in the *Greene Prairie Press*, White Hall, Illinois, May 22, 1997.

Asay Johnson is Guest Speaker

91st BGMA Secretary-Treasurer "Ace" Johnson was invited and did speak at a "Forties Recognition Celebration" at the Ramada Express Hotel/Casino in Laughlin, Nevada, May 20, 1997. (Ed. Note: Pretty soft duty if you ask me.)

Letters to the Editor

Steve Pena, AL, from the Bassingbourn Tower, visited Holland to pick up some pieces of "Seattle Sleeper." He reports on 91BGMA visitors to the Tower: Robert Lawson and wife, 323rd, Walter Pickard and wife, 323rd, Clyde Garrison and Wife, 324nd, and Mrs. Florine Martin, widow of Lloyd Martin ("Shiftless Skonk"). Garrison and wife picked up a piece of runway from the spot where he hit a stalled bomb truck in the early hours of June 3, 1944 while flying "Evenin' Folks! How Y'all."

Pena also reports "countless visitors of all types: historians, enthusiasts, interested public, and many Army Recruits who come to learn the history of Bassingbourn. Pena thanks Don Wellings, George Odenwaller, and Bob Kelley for donations of artefacts and memorabilia.

Help is needed to obtain an original 324th Sq. patch, and especially flight suits and equipment to garb a life size mannequin in the dress of a crew member.

Chuck Silvernail, FM, 323rd, attended the 50th Anniversary of the B-17 in Seattle in 1985 and had a 91st BGMA name tag that included a short list of the Group's achievements. He asks if anyone has a copy of the information printed on the back of the name tag and would they send it to him. Chuck notes that he was a pilot who flew his 25 from February to August, 1943.

Chuck Galian, FM, 323rd, has written several letters containing all sorts of bits and pieces about life as a member of the ground crew all of which would fill about two issues of the R/I. After he received the January 1997 issue of the R/I, [this Editor's first issue] Chuck wrote, "[I] read it over three times. Your mentioning the names painted on the B-17s 'rang my chimes' loud and clear." Chuck explained that as a member of the ground crew, he took care of electrical and ignition problems of "our first nine aircraft which grew to eighteen before the war ended." Chuck also has a couple of stories to tell about Chaplains and Father Ragan in particular that we'll have to postpone.

George Parks, LM, 324th/401st, Veteran Member of the 91st BGMA and former Chairman of the Western Division, sent along some early history of the 91st as it transitioned out of Kimbolton into Bassingbourn. He also sent a poem written by James J. Cullen, LM, 323rd Sq. which unfortunately is too long for this issue. George himself says, "I'm doing O.K. and I try to keep busy around the house and yard (small jobs) in the mornings and by noon time I run out of 'full power' so it's gear down and locked and I hit the lazy boy chair and no one around to tell me what to do and I may add my late Marian never did tell me what to do. Many thanks for a great R/I." Good to hear from you, George.

Letters (Cont.)

Rosemary Newkirk, AM, 1755 230th St., Sergeant Bluff, IA. (712) 943-514, writes to ask if anyone has information they could give her about a mission to Emden, Sept. 27, 1943, on which her brother, Cleo C. Struble, was a crew member who was KIA on this, the first attempt at radar bombing. She had met and located Burdette Rausch two years earlier. He was a POW and now lives at 507 Chestnut, La Porte, IN 50651. Burdette reported that they were on their 15th mission and were shot down by an ME-109.

Katherine Daragan, Jim Daragan's wife writes on May 10, 1997 to tell us that he has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and has been placed in a nursing home. Their home is in Manlius, NY. Anyone wishing to contact Mrs. Daragan can get their address from Asay Johnson.

Michiel J. Hanou, AM, reports his new address is c/o Chevron Kuwait Pouch, P.O. Box 6046, C-1309, San Ramon, CA 94583-0746. "Mick" is a close friend of "Buzz" Birdsong, Delta Rebel II, and a full sponsor of Collings Foundation's reproduction of "909". He used to serve as a crew member when it was on the West Coast. He enjoyed a visit to the Tower Museum last year where Vic Lawson toured him around. Peter Roberts joined them for a beer at the Duxford Inn. He plans to attend the Duxford Airshow July 12.

Philip O. Swanson, FM, 322nd, sent this photo of two Red Cross "charmers," Joan Johnson (l) and Evelyn Richter (r), with the request that it be printed. He says, "The presence of these young attractive ladies made our stay at Bassingbourn less stressful and certainly improved the scenery."



Swanson was Navigator on Skunkface I and II. "Our 1st pilot, Jim Griffin, was perhaps the last 91st crew member to lose his life over there. I had finished my 25 and was back in the States when I learned of his accident. He was then a Major and Squadron Commander. We were very fortunate to have had him for a pilot for he was gifted at his job, resourceful, quick mentally with a memorable sense of humor. He would have gone far I'm sure."

George P. Birdsong, FM, 323rd, writes, "Congratulations on becoming the R/I's new Editor, and best wishes for becoming successful, rich and handsome. One out of three ain't bad." Witty, laconic, and omnipresent at reunions, Birdsong, author of the

Continued on next page.....

Letters to the Editor (Cont.)

Birdsong (Cont.).....book, *Stormy Weather*, a B-17, admits to having made a mistake in the first edition. "On page 47 in the Compendium, I said the 91st received a second Distinguished Unit Citation for the raid on Schweinfurt, 17 August 1943. This should have said the raid was on Oschersleben, 11 January 1944. This will be corrected in the second edition.

"Jerome Damron who flew some missions with 'Big John' Carroll of the 401st, called me and pointed out the discrepancy."

George expresses his belief that the 91st eventually will have to hold its biennial reunion with the 8th AF Historical Society like so many Groups are now doing. He concludes with these words of wisdom: "You know the old adage, Phil, that the good die young, so that must be the reason so many of us bad guys are still in the upright position, well, maybe semi-upright. The Lord is giving us extra time to show some good. So I guess, if one of you Baddies think it's the time to go 'BOOBS UP,' just start being good. You can't be too careful these days."

Luc Dewez, Associate Member from Belgium has written a lengthy letter to Asay Johnson describing his visit to America and attempt to attend several WWII bomb group reunions. He is collecting material for a book and asks, "If any 91st BG members have recollections about their wartime tour, whether they be funny, tragic or hair-raising, in the air or on the ground, combat or not, they are welcome." His address is: 8 Paul Pastur Street, 5190 Ham-sur-Sambre, Belgium.

Thorkil Jensen, FM, Overland Park, KS, sent his dues to Asay Johnson with a P.S., "I have a couple of stories relating to the loss of Klette's crew and others on the Berlin Mission. One you probably don't know regards the tail gunner on that mission. A couple of weeks before the mission, I met a pilot without a crew who had recently come to our base. I tried to get him to join me on a three-day pass to London. He refused saying that he had purchased a ticket to Liverpool. He had promised his wife that he'd buy some Irish linen for her and send it home.

After returning from London, I saw this young pilot again. He had purchased the Irish linen and showed me where he had placed it in his foot locker. He also asked me to send it along to his wife if something happened to him.

Two days later he was assigned to the tail-gunner-observer position as we were leading the mission to Berlin. As you know, he lost his life that day. When the supply sergeant came for his belongings, I made certain that the Irish linen was sent to his wife. I also sent her a short note but never heard from her. No more stories for this time."

Asay Johnson has the following comments to make regarding Thorkil Jensen's remarks.

Continued next column.....

"I was on the mission and witnessed the lead plane explode with the tail gunner, Lt. Schumacher, going down. We were then hit and fell out of formation. Lt. Schumacher bunked right next to me.

Coming: An E-mail Roster of 91st Members!

Steve Perri, FM, 323rd, who is also Secretary of the Florida Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, has been in contact with your Editor and others in the 91st BGMA including Larry Mahan, ball turret on Eagle's Wrath and Larry Ott, navigator also on Eagle's Wrath. He proposes compiling a roster of 91st members who have E-mail addresses. This thought was passed to Ace Johnson, Secretary of the 91st BGMA who says, "Sounds Good to me."

Members who have E-Mail addresses, please send them to Asay Johnson who is also compiling telephone numbers with the existing roster.

Ray Ward, FM, 322nd, wrote to ask about the letters that appear after members' names, i.e., FM, LM..... The meanings are, FM=Full Member, LM=Life Member, AM=Associate Member, AL=Associate Life Member..

Maurice F. Markway, FM, 323rd, came upon a record from the Commander of the First Air Division of names of individuals who had been authorized to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross. His name was on it and he sent it in to inform others who may be entitled to this decoration but never received it or knew about it. The following names (ranks omitted for reason of space) are listed for the DFC: Willis J. Taylor, Iver O. Tufty, Thomas M. Holmes, Robert D. Williams, Harold D. Johnson, Denver C. Marsh, Ferrall K. Goodrich, Robert F. Sullivan, Joseph M. McPhie, Robert M. Friedman, John J. Yavis, Darrel O. Butler, Leslie S. Thomson, Jr., Einer C. Holman, Kieth [sic] D. Quayle, Russell C. Curtis.

The following were listed for an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross: Karl W. Thompson, John D. Davis, John R. Simonson.

The following were awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal: William Huie, S/Sgt. Paul R. Holeman.

A copy of this list will be sent to Earl Pate, Unit Historian, who has been assisting individuals obtain medals to which they were entitled but never received or presented.

Freeman Municipal Airport, Ted Jordan, Airport Manager, wants to contact former Cadets and others who might be able to donate or loan items to their Museum. Write to Mr. Jordan at P. O. Box 702, Seymour, IN 47247, or call (812) 522-2031.

Letters to the Editor (Cont.)

Walter W. "Dutch" Reich, 323rd sent along an article about the Norden bombsight from *Air & Space*, Feb/Mar 1995, and a couple of pieces of the propaganda we used to throw overboard. One picture shows Goebbels shouting, "Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg?" [Do you want total war?] the answer below translated says, "A spirited 'yes' was the answer of the Nazi assembly. Today Germany knows what 'total war' means, better than Dr. Goebbels and his yes-shouters in the Sports Palace could have foreseen." (Ed. Note: Dutch has the Purple Heart, DFC and Air Medals as part of it. He got the first from flak over the Frisian Islands and the second from a 20 mm over Gütersloh.)

Sherwood A. Wagner, LM, 401st, wrote to Paul Limm who shared some of the information with this Editor. Among other things he commented about an article in *British Heritage* which reported there were 122 American airfields in Great Britain by 1944, most in East Anglia. Thank you, Sherwood.

Robert Martyr, is seeking to obtain information about aircrews that landed or crashed in Switzerland during WWII. Anyone wishing to assist him may write to: 120 Brendon, Basildon, Laindon, Essex, SS15 5XN.

Andy Hartles, AM from England asks if any member can provide information about two B-17Fs that landed at Whitchurch Airfield near Bristol on 23 Sept. 1943, LL-A, "Lightening Strikes," 401st and LG-V, 322nd, name unknown, returning from a mission to Nantes. Contact Hartles as: 97 Cranwell Grove, Whitchurch, Bristol BS14 9QR, England.

Vince Hemmings, AL, asks if anyone recalls an RAF B-17 painted black landing at Bassingbourn on the night of 14/15 March 1945 with only the pilot on board. Please contact Vince at 53 Malthouse Way, Barrington, Cambridgeshire, CB2 5RR. He is compiling a history of Bassingbourn. The above incident was exceptional since the entire crew except the pilot had bailed out.

Olwyne Wilkins, AM from England, sent a postcard while on holiday in Tampa, Florida, and was returning to Thornton Heath, London, about the end of May. She has attended reunions of the 91st BGMA at Memphis and Oklahoma City.

Jack Paxson, FM, 322nd, sent a letter he had received from **Willis McQuain** that included a full page story, *A Day in the Life of the Ground Crew*. It is a good story and a true representation of the life of a member of the ground crew. It is a little too long for this issue but we hope to use it in a future issue. Thanks, Jack.

Folded Wings

(Continued from Page 8)

• **UMLOR, LESTER F.** (Cont.) Bud is survived by two sons. His wife died in 1983 after 34 years of marriage. Bud had been seriously ill with Scleroderma, a condition involving the intestines, kidneys and lungs. He received a medical retirement from Ford Motor Company. In spite of his health, Bud devoted much of his time the past ten years to his membership in the "Yankee Air Force" organization at Willow Run Airport in Belleville, Michigan, and its project of restoring the B-17 "Yankee Lady" (381st BG) to flying condition. He was promised a ride on its maiden flight. When the time came in 1995, he was too ill to fly—a major disappointment in his life.

• **WOOLARD, GORDON A.**, LM, 324th, Encino, California, June, 1995. Reported by his wife, Irene.

Late Report.....

• **MITCHAMORE, HAROLD N.**, LM, 323rd, Kingwood, Texas, June 2, 1997, after a six month stay in the hospital. He is survived by his wife, Bertha Mae, six children and four grandchildren, brother Calvin and sister Kay Fischer. He was Line Inspector in the 323rd Sq. After service in the Air Force he was co-owner of several drive-in theaters in Houston and Kerrville, TX. Reported by Howell B. Loper of Tampa, Florida who writes "Mitch and I had been friends since 1942 when we were assigned to the 91st BG at MacDill Air Base. I was pall bearer and gave the obituary. This was hard."

Welcome New Life Members

Asay Johnson reports the following new Life Members:

Gil Crotte	323rd Sq.
Donald Wellings	323rd Sq.
John A. Wallace	322nd Sq.
John A. Parsons	401st Sq.
Frank Annis	324th Sq.
John C. Pullen	324th Sq.
Jesse V. Ziccarello	322nd Sq.
David J. Lomasney	Associate
Stephen Pena*	Associate

*Steve Pena is Curator of the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn and a great supporter of the 91st BGMA. Congratulations once again. Keep the flares burning.

The Tower Museum is managed by the East Anglian Aviation Society, chaired by Peter Roberts of Cambridge. As reported in the April issue of *The Ragged Irregular*, Steve Pena replaces long time Curator Vince Hemmings. Far from "retiring," Vince has assured us of his continued interest in aviation, the history of Bassingbourn and other pursuits of an historical nature.

Folded Wings

● **PAUL F. BURTON**, FM, 322nd, Palm Coast, FL, February 1, 1996. As reported in the EX-POW BULLETIN, April 1997, Burton was a tail gunner on a B-17 during an August 1943 raid over Schweinfurt. After his plane, "My Prayer" was hit, the crew parachuted over enemy territory. He was captured and sent to Stalag XVII-B, Krems, Austria, where he remained for 21 months. Reported by the County Veteran's Service Officer of Plano, Texas.

● **CARTER, ORVILLE T.**, FM, 324th, Cleveland, OK, April 8, 1996. Reported by his wife, Roberta J. Carter.

● **CUSICK, CHARLES A.**, 323rd, Palm Harbor, FL.

● **ERICKSON, RICHARD E.**, St. Charles, IL., January 27, 1997 of Alzheimers and other complications. Reported by his wife, Mary Ann Erickson.

● **HARLOW, JAMES E.**, FM, 322nd, Merritt Island, FL, March 1, 1997. Retired at the rank of Lt. Col., he was a member of the Missile, Space and Range Pioneers at Patrick AFB. In addition to his service in the 91st BG, he served in missile operations during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Reported by his wife, Mary Lou Harlow.

● **HELE, ARTHUR E.**, FM, 401st, Alamo, TX, November 13, 1996 of complications of diabetes at age 78. Art was inducted into the Service at Fort Snelling, MN, December 31, 1941. He was assigned to the 401st Sq. at MacDill Field, FL, as a Maintenance Technician. He served

● **HUGHES, BURNETT**, LM, 324th, Jackson, MI, Dec. 21, 1996. Reported by Sister Mainelle Bettendorf.

● **JOHNSON, EARL H.**, FM 401st, Potomac, MD, January 1996. Reported by friends Eleanor and Bud Maart.

● **MRS. MARY MCDUFFEE**, ALM, April 1997, widow of the late Paul McDuffee, 401st, "Shoo Shoo Baby. An avid reader of the Ragged Irregular, she donated a complete collection of the publication to the 91st BGMA a few years ago. Reported by son, Paul McDuffee, Jr. to Gene Letalien.

● **RUBENFELD, JACK**, FM, 401st, Clarks Summit, PA., March 30, 1997. Former Radio Operator of "The Old Battleaxe," he flew most of his tour, 35 missions, with Pilot M.M. "Skip" Borgeson. He started flying missions in November, 1944 and completed his 35th just a few days prior to V-E Day in Europe. After returning to civilian life, he earned a law degree and practiced in the Clarks Summit and Scranton, PA, area. He is survived by his wife, Ann Rubenfeld. Reported by Skip Borgeson and Conrad L. Lohoefer, Crew Engineer.

● **STEINER, HERMAN J.**, FM, 324th, Berwyn Hgts, MD, April 20, 1997. He was a waist gunner in a B-17 called "Bunky." Reported by his wife, Hilda Steiner, who said, "We enjoyed many of the reunions until my husband had a few strokes."

● **TEMPLE, JOHN B.**, FM, 322nd, Atlanta, GA, April 1996. Reported by Pilot Bob Roach who said Temple flew with his crew [as co-pilot] for 34 missions, and stayed after the war ended and flew observation and POW flights.

91st BG Memorial Assn.
590 Aloha Dr.
Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

FIRST CLASS MAIL

**FORWARDING AND ADDRESS
CORRECTION REQUESTED.**

LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU MOVE!

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

These Newsletters are published quarterly. October, January, September and July are the 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 of those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121 in Bassingbourn, England from 1942-1945.

Material for publication should be sent to the Editor, Phil Mack, 17521 155th Ave. SE, Renton, WA 98058-9087. "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.

as Ground Crew Chief for three years in England. In addition to service medals, he was awarded the Bronze Star for developing a means of defrosting the bombardier's viewing window. During the height of the bombing offensive in preparation for D-Day, Hele's B-17 made 48 long distance missions without a mechanical failure. Reported by Vernon Dion with information provided by his wife, Mae.

● **UMLOR, LESTER F.** "Bud", FM, 401st, Garden City, MI, March 11, 1997. R. R. Goldsmith, lead pilot in the 401st, reported that Bud was a Ball Turret Gunner on his original crew, performing his functions in an outstanding manner. When the ball turret was replaced by radome, Bud flew with other crews and completed at least 35 missions. He received the Air Medal with one silver and five Oak Leaf Clusters.

Continued next column.....

Continued on Page 7.....