

The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQUADRON



323rd SQUADRON



Supporting Units



324th SQUADRON



401st SQUADRON

Vol 31 No. 4

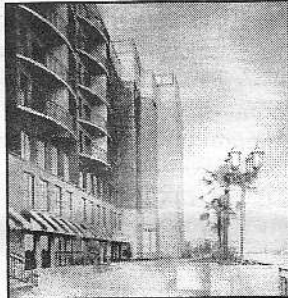
91st Bombardment Group (H)

October 1998

Savannah Revisited 1998

Savannah, Ga., Aug. 26-29, 1998. Three hundred and eighty-six members, wives, associates and guests, gathered together at the Marriott Riverfront Hotel for their biennial Reunion. This was one of the largest reunions in a number of years. In addition there were forty one who registered and had to cancel for various reasons such as illness and possible concern for the hurricane, Bonnie.

Bonnie favored the reunion by passing farther up the coast to wreak its havoc on the Carolinas. Other hurricane threats failed to materialize. Thus, in the warm weather of the deep South, the nearly 400 attendees adjusted their pace commensurate with the temperatures in the nineties.



Marriott Riverfront Hotel



Earl Pate, Asay and Gloria Johnson

After check-in, the next stop was the Reunion check-in. Co-Chairmen Earl Pate, Asay and Gloria Johnson were on hand and assisted by Joy Friedman. Each registrant received a ditty bag containing tickets, information pamphlets, souvenir pen, etc. Nearby, President Elect Bob Friedman opened his P-X and soon was sold out.

The first tour began on Thursday morning, Aug. 27, to the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum.

A second tour of the Museum was available for Friday morning.

Buses soon arrived to take the visitors a few miles out to the large site of the Museum.



Awaiting Buses to 8th AF Museum

Visit to The Mighty 8th Heritage Museum.



The Mighty 8th Heritage Museum
(Photo by Ed Kerrin)

The Museum is a large complex several miles outside of Savannah but easily accessible. It has an imposing entry with a large parking facilities. As one enters the building, one is immediately in a large rotunda. Centered in the rotunda are bronze busts of such notables as Generals Tooey Spaatz, Ira Eaker and Jimmy Doolittle,



Plan View

To the right is a large gift shop which did a large volume of business from the visitors. To the left is a large cafeteria area identified as the Canteen. Surrounding the walls of the Rotunda are plaques for each of the Units of the 8th Air force, grouped together by Air Division. There are several small theaters that show films of interest to visitors.

Continued on Page 3.....

The President's Corner

Being in a war is an extremely impressive experience, particularly to Americans who have been fortunate enough to be able to regard peace as the normal order of things and generally have first hand experience of war only once in a lifetime. Our war was peculiar in that it was very impersonal. During missions, we each carried out some technical function under hazardous conditions. Even in combat, the enemy appeared to be a machine and not a real person. Only once, for a fraction of a second, did I see the pilot of a fighter who, having made his pass at us, was banking to get away.

Bombing missions rapidly changed attitudes toward cause and effect. Most of us were very young and only shortly out of that artificial world created by parents and schools where there was a nearly one-to-one correspondence between what one did and the results which followed. If a student did his homework, he got a better grade than if he did not. Suddenly, that illusion was shattered by the exposure to the random world of aerial warfare.

A young man was awakened from a partially completed sound sleep to learn that he was to fly his first mission. He would rapidly perform his morning ablutions, skipping shaving, that being too hazardous for a nervous hand. Pulling on his flight suit, he would proceed to breakfast where he selected one egg over easy as a suitable tonic for a queasy stomach.

Twelve hours later he and his crew, each of them holding the issued quick restorative, a shot of straight whiskey, were awaiting the truck which would return them from the flight line. He reflected upon the traumatic events of the day, especially of the traverse of the seemingly impenetrable wall of flak between IP and target. Suddenly, he realized the surprising fact, that while not every plane had survived this gauntlet, his had.

He assumed, given what he had been taught from childhood, that he must have done something right. Consequently, in getting ready for his subsequent missions, his practices exactly duplicated in detail those of this first. He flew unshaven and had one egg over easy before each mission. The same flight suit was worn on all missions. The magic was never allowed to be washed out of it. You may recall the oft repeated comment on the base that some of these garments could be stood up in the corner of the room.

Most of us have, over the years, accommodated to the idea that some things happen because of what we do or do not do, while most other happenings are the result of random events. We learn to cheerfully roll with the unearned punches and enjoy the, usually less common, unearned prizes. Some people, fortunately very few, have found another explanation for everything which is unpleasant or goes wrong, and that is that somebody else is at fault, a conclusion which makes them very very angry.

This last phenomenon has drawn my attention because it showed up a couple of times in Savannah. In spite of the hard work of the planners, a few things went wrong. Those who exhibit blind furious rage in public must be totally unconscious of how their behavior appears to others. No one would consciously behave like that.

Bob Friedman

91st BGMA OFFICERS 1999-2000

PRESIDENT

Robert H. Friedman
6015 Valkeith
Houston TX 77096-3832
Tel: (713) 729-2255
bobnjoy@iapc.net

1st VICE PRESIDENT

Edward C. Gates
1311 16th Ave. CT. So.
Tacoma WA 98444
Tel: (253) 535-4246

2nd VICE PRESIDENT

Harold E. Johnson
2021 Porter Way
Stockton CA 95207-4035
Tel: (209) 477-0071
FAX: (209) 472-9569

HISTORIAN

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

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Assy B. Johnson
590 Aloha Dr
Lake Havasu City AZ 86406-4559
Tel: (520) 453-3114
FAX: (520) 453-6370
ace91bgma@interworldnet.net

R/I EDITOR

Phil Mack
17521 155th Ave SE
Renton WA 98058-9087
Tel: (425) 271-5277
FAX: (425) 227-8190
mackavco@worldnet.att.net

Editorial

What did we accomplish in Savannah? Some people will remember the heat. Some, the bus lines. Some, the trolley lines. Some the flap about seating at the Banquet. It wasn't perfect, but we set out to attend a reunion of members of the most famous and most formidable Heavy Bombardment Group in the 8th United States Air Force in World War II, the 91st. We met our comrades-in-arms. We chatted, laughed, shook hands, patted backs and swapped stories of hardship and valor. We visited the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum.

We enjoyed dining in some of Savannah's finest restaurants known for their exquisite and abundant sea foods. We visited Savannah's historic homes. We toured the Savannah River on a river boat and enjoyed a dinner along with the sights along the way.

While the ladies visited the Garden of Good and Evil, the members had their biennial business meeting. Paul Limm announced the election results. The new roster of officers is shown in the block above. We voted to hold the next reunion in the year 2000 in Texas and most likely in Galveston. New President Bob Friedman volunteered to Chair the event. New 1st Vice President, Ed Gates, volunteered to chair a reunion in Tacoma in 2002.

At the final banquet we were treated to a stirring patriotic recitation about the history of the flags of the United States of America. Reserved seating for the Officers went awry and that's what some people will remember. As for this Editor, the mix up afforded him the opportunity to join a random table that happened to include Bud Evers, past Unit Historian who has done so much to accumulate the history of the 91st Bomb Group, and his wife, and right next to them was Ed Kaiserski, former Navigator on Dalton's crew, a crew that paralleled his own crew's experiences in the same Squadron. These are the things this Editor will remember. What will you remember?

Phil Mack

Savannah

The Mighty 8th Air Force Museum (Cont.)

The Museum is still in the growing phase. Aircraft on display are very limited. Panel displays abound as indicated in the Plan View (Page 1).

Memorial Garden

In back of the main building is the Memorial Garden. Memorials of various sizes and type abound in this grassy complex. Individuals have been, and still are, invited to have a plaque listing their name and organization displayed with others on large adjoining panels. Other memorials are dedicated to crews, squadrons, units and associations. Donations are required for all memorials. Anyone interested may contact the Museum at: P. O. Box 1992, Savannah, GA, 31402, or visit their web site at:

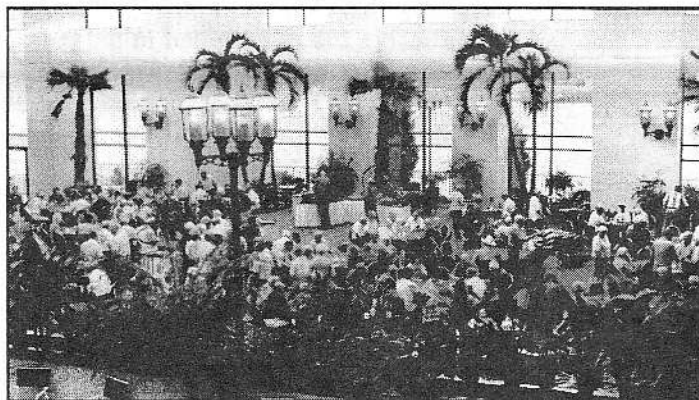
<http://www.mighty8thmuseum.com>

Historic Restored Homes

Many of the Reunion participants enjoyed a tour of the many historic homes that have been restored. Unlike other cities such as Atlanta that were virtually destroyed in the Civil War, Savannah's old homes survived and live on today.

Reception

A reception was held in the headquarters hotel on the first evening. It was well attended as indicated in the photo below. Each Attendee was on his own for dinner that evening and many took the opportunity to dine in any of the excellent restaurants along the river walk.

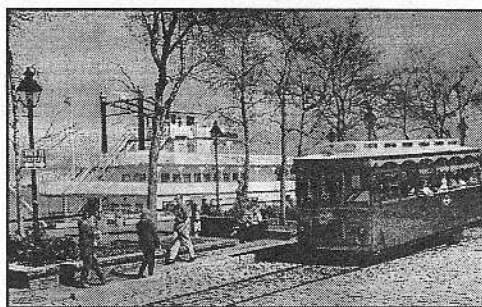


91st BGMA Reception—Marriott Hotel

Riverboat Cruise

Following the reception, attendees signed up for the river boat cruise up and down the Savannah River while enjoying dinner and great social conversations.

Transportation to and from the hotel was provided by trolleys of the type pictured below. Considering that



Riverboat and Trolley—Savannah River Front

approximately 400 attendees took part and each trolley carried 20 persons, the logistics became substantial particularly on the return trip when streets were packed full of cars, taxis and

pedestrians who were also out for the evening. Despite the crowds, the dinner and cruise were enjoyed.



L-R Steve Pena, John Howland, Phil Mack, Alison Pena and six-month old Rhys Pena (Photo by Randi Mack)

It was the pleasure of this Editor to share the table pictured left with Steve Pena, Curator of the Tower Museum at Basingbourn, and his lovely wife, Alison, and young son, Rhys. Also seated at the table was John Howland, author

of The Class of 43. A story about his experiences as a Navigator, Venezualen Vignettes, a story of his post war experiences with Mene Grande Oil Company, and currently completing a book, Serenade to the Big Bird, a story about Bert Stiles and his B-17 crew.

The Banquet

During the business meeting of the morning (covered elsewhere in this issue) some members took the tour called "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," covering the sites that provided background for the book of the same name. That evening, the main event of the Reunion entertainment took place in a large banquet room in the Marriott Hotel.

As people came to the anteroom outside the banquet room, refreshments were available. The room soon became very crowded and very warm. It seemed like a long time until the doors to the banquet room were opened.

When the doors opened, the crowd pushed to find tables so they could sit with friends or fellow crew members. One or two groups had made reservations for tables and rushed in and occupied the only tables with reserved signs. These were tables reserved for the newly elected officers, the Master of Ceremonies, wives, and for the ANG airmen who performed the brilliant color guard display and recitation. Reason failed to prevail and some shouting took place. There had been an unfortunate omission and the "other group" of reserved tables were not set up as such.

Apart from this, the event ended in a splendid evening. The Air National Guard with both display of the flags and a stirring recitation, traced the history of the flags of the United States from the first to the current flag, while covering the historic events identified with each.

Tony Monalvo served as Master of Ceremonies with his usual aplomb. The new or reelected officers were introduced, and Bob Friedman, who moved from the position of first Vice President to President took over the podium. Other officers were not new to the organization except for Edward Gates, who is the new first Vice President.

The evening ended on a pleasant note with dancing to the music of the '40s. Who said we were an aging group? You wouldn't have noticed it from the way these "youngsters" swung it.

On Sunday morning, August 30, 1998, The Biennial meeting of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association came to a close. Members in attendance, full of nostalgia and bursting with pride for what they had achieved some fifty plus years ago, now headed for home once again.

Report on Business Meeting - August 29, 1998

Past President Hal Johnson opened the meeting and introduced Paul Limm, Chairman of the Nominations Committee to report on the results of the election of Officers.

Election Results

Bob Friedman is President, Ed Gates, 1st Vice President, Hal Johnson, 2nd Vice President, Earl Pate, Historian, Asay Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer, and Phil Mack, Editor of *The Ragged Irregular*. The meeting was promptly turned over to new President Bob Friedman after a few words of thanks from Hal Johnson for the opportunity to have served the organization as its President and in other capacities over the years.

Treasurer's Report

A Treasurer's report was published in the July issue of the R/I. A new report will be published in the next issue after the accounting for the Reunion is complete. As an interim report, Johnson explains that the Reunion ended up in the red on account of 41 member cancellations after the deadline given by the Hotel. This alone resulted in a loss of \$2,961 to the hotel and \$4,746 in refunds to those members who canceled on account of sickness. A further unanticipated loss resulted from an admission fee charged by the 8th AF Museum of \$420. There were some items of income over budget that reduced the loss to a total of \$5,140. Although this was a disappointing result, the Treasurer assures us that the organization is solvent and this loss will be covered from the organization's surplus.

Bassingbourn Tower Recognized*

Mr. Steve Pena, Curator of the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn presented a paper, with a foreword by Mr. P.T.R. Roberts, Chairman the East Anglian Aviation Society (EAAS), explaining that the Tower has never had official recognition by the 91st BGMA as its representative in the United Kingdom. Other organizations claim to be such a representative when in fact they are not. After a review of the paper presented, it was agreed that such authority would be granted and President Friedman authorized the Secretary to send a letter to the Tower Museum confirming such authorization.

91st BG Memorial at 8th AF Museum

President Friedman authorized Tony Montalvo, Chairman of the Memorial Committee to investigate the idea of erecting a memorial in the Memorial Gardens of the 8th AF Heritage Museum and report back to the Staff in the near future.

91st BGMA Position re *The Memphis Belle*

It has come to the attention of the 91st BGMA that the world famous original *Memphis Belle* B-17 is under the jurisdiction of the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, and no longer under the control of the City of Memphis, [See related article in the January 1998 issue of the R/I, page 6]. In response to competing organizations that would seek to move the *Memphis Belle* from its present home, President Friedman authorized a letter to be sent to the Chief of Staff of USAF expressing that our interest in the airplane is limited to assurance that the airplane is well-cared for and maintained properly and never again be allowed to deteriorate.

***Reminder** Memorabilia may be donated to the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn. Write Steve Pena at Bramble Cottage, Netherstones, Stotfold, Herts., UK SG5 4BX.

Letters to the Editor

John R. Parsons, Jr. FM, 401st, wrote a few months ago to inform us about a book, *American Eagles*, published as a 50th Anniversary volume of the United States Air Force. He says this may be the best book of its type. Written by Air Vice Marshal Ron Dick, CB, FRAeS, RAF (Ret.), Dick explains that he had been asked by the Air Force History Office to write a USAF history for publication in 1997. "To cut a long story short, the Air force ran out of money to complete the project on time, so my partner (Dan Patterson) and I decided to finish it ourselves. It was published in October [1997].

"The finished work is a massive volume of almost 500 pages, with 220,000 words and 630 illustrations, half of them in color. It covers U.S. air power history from before the Wright brothers to the threshold of the 21st century."

There are two versions, a Standard edition, available at Barnes & Noble for \$65, and a limited edition of only 1000 copies as an heriloom, for \$500 per copy, plus \$8.00 for shipping. The latter may be ordered from Dan Patterson, 6825 Peters Pike, Dayton, OH, 45414.

Larry Smelser, AM, had written earlier about an article in Ray Bowden's book about the crash of a B-17 on one of the early St. Nazaire missions. His father was MIA on a mission to St. Nazaire Nov. 23, 1942. Bowden, in his book, *Plane Names and Fancy Tales*, tells that Pandora's Box, flown on that mission by Maj. Harold, Smelser, C.O., 401st, was shot down and landed in the water about 30 miles northwest of St. Nazaire. Another B-17 that followed it down reported having seen a life raft tangled in the tail of the downed airplane. Smelser was seen to wave the other plane on. Only two bodies were recovered from the sea and Maj. Smelser is still carried as MIA.

Smelser concludes that there were "ugly events happening in France in the early part of the war. It is no secret that some fliers were found and betrayed to the Germans and did not go into proper military internment."

Paul Chryst, LM, 401st, wrote too late for publication in the July issue that a plan for eventual dissolution of the 91st BGMA should be developed and discussed at the business meeting in Savannah.

The subject did come up and there was some discussion about associate members carrying on the organization. It is this Editor's recollection that the prevailing opinion was that the organization should die with the last survivor. Further study of the matter is appropriate, but for the time being, reunions are being considered for the years 2000 and 2002.

Chryst always sends some piece of humor, one of which is a table of "AAF Pay Grades—1944." A Corporal made \$66/mo., a Tech Sgt. \$114/mo., a 1st Lt. made \$167/mo. plus \$60/mo. if single and not occupying govt. quarters. Get this: a four-star General made \$667/mo. Plus allowances. But he could get horse allowance.

Steve Pena, ALM, Tower Museum Curator and attendee at the Savannah Reunion with wife, Alison and baby son, Rhys, sent an e-mail message expressing to all the 91st BGMA his "gratitude for the warmth of the welcome, hospitality and support extended to us at the recent meeting." He reminds members of his interest in receiving memorabilia, photographs, and especially any movies, for the Tower Museum. Please see address in adjacent column. "Now that we are back in England, we are enjoying somewhat of an Indian Summer." [Hmmm. Would that be an American Indian or an Indian Indian summer?]

Letters to the Editor (Continued)

Mario Mattie, EM, 323rd, Best known as Crew chief of "Eagles Wrath," sent in the photo and explanation below.



L-R Leo "Red" Lyons, Wallace "Hoss" Lyons, Bill Hester, Marioun Darnell, Mario Mattie (with sun glasses), Emil Yezidimir and Whitmal Hill.

Mattie had this new B-17 assigned to him and had named it "Emeigh" after his home town in Pennsylvania. It was so new, it didn't have any tail identification.

"One day two flight crew members came down to our dispersal area. One of them was a replacement gunner just recently arrived from the United States. The other fellow asked me if it was alright to take the new guy through the plane.

"Sure", I said, "I'll go with you to answer any questions you may have. When we reached the radio room the fellow directing the tour pointed to the handle on the right

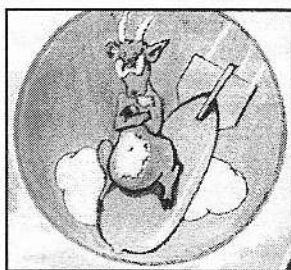
side near the fuselage. He said, 'this handle is for the emergency life raft. You just pull this handle....'

"Before I knew it, the new fellow reached up and pulled the handle. With a large explosive force, the life raft shot out into the air and landed fully inflated on the right wing of the airplane.

"Naturally we had to replace it with a new raft from the supply depot. Our ground crew had fun with the life raft as you can see in the picture. I always had a camera with me." Ed. Note: Rub-a-dub-dub, seven men in a tub, six men were vets but one flubbed his dub.

Ed Kerrin, AM, sent in the photo of the 8th Heritage Museum shown on page one and commented, "....As far as the Reunion went, I had the best time I've ever had at the four that I have been to. I think this was mostly due to the fact that I wanted to and did get involved in the actual process instead of being a 'bystander.' I really think that Earl Pate and 'Ace' Johnson did one hell of a job in putting this reunion together. In talking to them and to others that have had first hand knowledge of this type of operation, 'It ain't easy.' Bonnie Ames who attended with me agrees."

Chuck Galian, FM 323rd tells a story of the 323rd Squadron mascot, "Amitol"—a goat. "My involvement with



323rd Squadron Insignia

the cellophane chewing beast occurred on one dreary typical English morning as three of us lads were on our way to the 323rd Dispersal area. It was just about 'preflight time' as we headed near the B Hangar to get on the taxi strip. Two of us walked as the third lad was on his bike. Out of the gloomy darkness echoed an odd noise that was not familiar to us. The noise turned out to be that billy goat's hooves pounding out a tattoo on the roadway and heading straight for us.

Continued next column.....

Since the damn goat had his horns bent down as though he was dead certain to try for a three point field goal, we took off in a starburst formation. The fellow on the bike took off one way with his bike set for 'digging in' while the second fellow made an unbelievable leap into the seat of the Cletrack to just miss a clear shot from horns. Since I decided to make a fast exit around the control tower building, I failed to remember that there was construction work in progress and wound up wearing a full scale version of a barbed wire gown. As luck would have it, I wasn't chased further by the goat; however, my sheepskin jacket was in need of major repairs. No Olympic records were set but later on we had a hearty laugh about that incident.



"Amitol" Mascot of the 323rd Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group (II) Bassingbourn, England 1943

Dr. James Scudder, FM, 401st, wrote after the January '98 issue of the R/I published the story of the Winter of '44/'45, "Reading the Christmas story reminded me how dim my memory has become! I haven't the faintest memory of snow at Bassingbourn at any time but I sure remember landing at Bury St. Edmunds. I had been in the 91st since April flying all my missions as a 'Togalier' with various crews and this had been my next to last mission. As I recall, few if any of the 94th returned home.

"Early on Christmas morning we were rousted out early and briefed for a 3-mission round robin. What a Christmas present! Hey, GI, you get you get to fly two extra missions! Needless to say, I sat in the B-17 ready for takeoff for quite some time before the mission was scrubbed. All of the personnel were loaded into trucks and taken back home.

"On Dec. 31, 1944, I flew my last mission, drank all the crew whiskey at the debriefing area and passed out in my room. Lessons learned. I turned in my 5 stripes and spent the rest of my 24 years service as a pilot."

Walter Reich, FM, 323rd, Tail Gunner on the "Village Flirt" wrote last March thanking this Editor for a copy of the book, "The B-17 Remembered." [See review in April '98 R/I, P. 6] "I have now finished the first reading. Please thank all the folks who put it together. They did a fine job." Walt and Molly are getting along well and enjoying some sunshine.

Howard Van Cleave, FM, 323rd, from Emmett, ID, telephoned this past January in response to a note this Editor had sent him. Van Cleave was an Armorer/Tail Gunner on the crew of L.C. Basinger. He flew his first mission on June 6, 1944 and finished on his 28th mission on August 16, 1944. He is retired, married, two daughters, and grandchildren.

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from Page 5)

Paul Limm, LM, 401st, informs us that at some time, the code name for the Basingbourn Tower was "Front Piece."
Luc Dewez, Announces birth of daughter "Marie" on Sept. 15, 1998. Mother and child are faring reasonably well. Luc is recovering from "radio therapy."

John W. Howland, sent in a new booklet, "Tales from the 91st Bomb Group; Basingbourn, England, 1942 to 1945," and a short item about "The Fastidious Mickey Operator."

Jack Paget, Writing a book about "Destiny's Child."

Clyde R. Burdick, Story about Hamm mission, Mar. 4, 1943, for which 91st received first Unit Citation..

E. Robert Kelley, Story about his escape and evasion with French aid, [See R/I Article on P.4 of July 1998 issue] attracted interest of French publication. Kelley sent his story translated by himself in French. C'est la bon Guerre.

Howard Van Cleave, Telephone conversation.

Jerry Bernasconi, Shot down over Berlin, Mar. 8, 1944, Jerry sent thanks for copy of book, "The B-17 Remembered."

Norm Stuckey & Otto Meikus, both sent a correction to a letter from **John Mullens**, published in July issue of the R/I. The error was not Mullens. In his letter, he did not identify the airplane in which he was shot down. The error was on the part of this Editor. There were four aircraft shot down on the mission to Bunde (Oschersleben) on Feb. 22, 1944. Mullens was in "Boston Bombshell", not "Jack the Ripper."

Mick Hanou, Sent e-mail address: mhanou@ncc.moc.kw.

Carl Hoffman, Sent some interesting and introspective articles on Society's Advances, since the end of WWII. Anyone who is "on line" can see Hoffman's biography, at <http://members.aol.com.famjustin/Hoffmanbio.html>.

Benton Earl Lowry, son of Benton, Sr., T/Sgt in the 323rd, KIA Jan. 11, 1944, would like to receive information from anyone who knew his father and has personal remembrances of him. His Email address is Galah@AOL.com.

Robert G. Stevens, Report on Trip to Basingbourn, July 10th 1998, meeting with Steve Pena, Ray Jude and others of the Tower Museum. After tour of the base, they had dinner at the Hardwicke Arms in Royston, and did a little pub hopping in Cambridge.

Henry C. Jensen, sent in an article, "Small Talk," that he wrote in 1945 while awaiting shipment back home. It is hoped that this can be published in a future edition.

Mike Banta, Sent in a correction re April 1998 issue about Hal Johnson's wild ride home in B-17 "Little Patches." In the article, Johnson wrote that it was so badly damaged, it never flew again. Banta says, "With that excellent ground crew at the 91st, never say never." His crew flew it on Jan. 22, 1945 to Sterkgrade and it received major flak damage. Still, "Little Patches" completed 100+ missions before it was returned to the U.S.

Isaac Hantman, Seeks information on descendents of Capt. Sidney Hantman, 322nd Sq. He was critically wounded on mission Oct. 9, 1943, lost an arm and was hospitalized at or near Cambridge, and later at Walter Reed Hospital in D.C. He met his wife-to-be at Walter Reed and had one or more children. He worked for the National Park Service Natchez Parkway in MS in the '40s. Send info to Hantman at 4306 Rosedale Ave., Bethesda, MD, 20814, (301) 656-4306 or Email: ixh@cdrh.fda.gov. Request is made on behalf of William Turcott, 322nd, who has photos to send to Sidney's children. Isaac, himself is not related to Sydney.

Christer Gregot, Swedish Priest, history buff, and aviator has been in contact regarding aircraft that landed in Sweden.

Norman Thonpson, Attended the opening of the 8th AF Heritage Museum in May 1996 and was disappointed to find no mention of the 91st and offered some suggestion to rectify this situation. [See comments on Page 4, Report on Business Meeting, Memorial for 91st at 8th Museum.]

Paul Zimmerman, R/O, 323rd, Reported on his visit to Basingbourn and environs with his family, including wife, son, daughter-in-law, and grandson. It is hoped that details of this visit and photos can be published in a future issue of the R/I

Stefan Naef, A Swiss informed us that he had found pieces of a B-17 in the Alps and identified them as belonging to "Champagne Girl." He wrote an article on the history of the airplane and events of the crash that was published in a Swiss aviation magazine, "Cockpit." He sent a translation of the article and it is hoped to be published in a future issue of the R/I.

Michel Lugez, Head of the Association du Memorial Americain, thanked us for extra copies of the April issue of the R/I which he has sent to the Mayor of Noirmoutier on L'Ile, and to Doctor Louis Gourand at LaRoche. In turn, he forwarded a copy of a poem written by M. Antoine Richard "in homage to John H. Roten and his nine comrades deeds the 3rd January, 1943 for "long live liberty." We hope to publish a translation of the poem in a future issue.

Dan Frey, has asked for help from anyone who may have witnessed the attack of Feb. 22, 1944, on the Aircraft, "Skunkface," that was shot down returning from the target at Oschersleben. The crew included Ernest Kidd, P, Benjamin Beauclair, CP, Billy Huish, N, Charles Betzel, B, Ober Torvik, E, Theodore Mazor, R, Rex Wertman, BT, Billie Ramsey, WG, Ernest {Poncho} Serna, WG, and Francis Hentges TG.

He asks further, "Has an article ever been written about the execution of Billy Huish?" He was shot in Belgium with seven other American airmen while evading capture with the Underground. Frey's address is: 1606 Central Avenue, Bettendorf, IA, 52722-6039, Phone 319-359-6039.

We thank, and acknowledge receipt of correspondence with, the following individuals and regret we have simply run out of space in this issue. [Ed.]

Yves Carnot, Appreciation for "Black Swan" story, etc.

Annette Hedges, English lady sent letter of visit to Tower.

Jack Gibson, Submitted material for publication in R/I.

Dorothy Kirkham, Former RCAF, re "Outhouse Mouse."

Whitmal W. Hill, sent articles he has written/published.

Uwe Carstens, wrote of boyhood experience in WWII.

Walter M. Pickard, re Naef's article and own experiences.

Lucy Correll, Work in Holland re downed airmen.

Raymond Jones, Article on mission, July 20, 1944.

Charles F. Busa, Nose art artist sent article.

Anonymous, Poem "Tribute to Men of the 8th...."

Jan Harkema, Article on crash of "Seattle Sleeper."

Bob Lindsay, Concern over a/c markings.

George W. Parks, Info re American Air Museum Duxford.

Joseph Weinstock, Article on Dec. 24, 1944 mission.

Jack Gibson, Also an Article on Dec. 24, 1944 mission.

Dan Frey, Seeking info on "Skunkface," survivors, etc.

Braxton Bradford, Seeking info on Sgt. Luigi L. Lentini.

Paul Chryst, Sent "Never Forgotten, Forever Honored."

J-Yves Besselièvre, "Bombing of Brest."

Lowell L. Getz, Author of "Mary Ruth' Memories of Mobile...We Still Remember. Stories of the 91st B.G."

Pist'l Packin' Mama



Pist'l Packin' Mama and Friends

by Artist A. Ric Druet

The picture above, *Pist'l Packin' Mama*, accompanied by other aircraft of the 91st, *Mary Kay*, *Just Nothin'*, *Lady Luck* and *Sad Sack*, was commissioned by Scott Holman, ALM, as a tribute to his father, Charles Holman, Pilot, 324th Sq. The following is quoted from Ray Bowden's book, *Plane Names and Fancy Tales*.

Holman recalled that the crew chief, Joe Giamborne, and his crew named the aircraft. This title has to rank amongst one of the most popular of all for aircraft nose art and originated from a 1942 song made famous by Al Dexter and his Troopers. Phil Stack wrote one of his short verses to accompany the March 1944 Varga gatefold which further promoted the title and enhanced its popularity. Varga's beautifully outfitted, gun-toting girl was also destined to be one of the most popular images to be selected by nose art painters. But Tony Starcer chose his own version of a cowgirl on this occasion,— with a greater emphasis on the girl rather than her outfit!

In a letter to this Editor dated March, 1998, Scott expressed interest in particular on the events of a mission flown by Dad Charles on Feb. 4, 1994. He is referred again to Bowden's book, page 170, which is quoted in part:

"Over Frankfurt...., the plane again sustained major damage from flak and Holman was forced to jettison the bomb load near Koblenz to stay with the formation. Strong cross winds had pushed the group off course to pass over heavily defended Ruhr Valley where flak damaged two engines and also forced the group lead plane to fall from the formation. In spite of the damage, Holman took over and led the 60-plane formation back towards England with his No. 1 engine feathered. Over Texel Island the No. 2 engine was also lost and *Pist'l Packin' Mama* was forced to drop from the formation and go it alone."

Copies of the above picture in color are available for purchase from the artist, A. Ric Druet, L&R Publishing Co., 7008 Firethorn Drive, Riverbank, CA, 95367, Tel: (209) 869-5037. Price: \$50.00.

[Ed. Note: Charles, Carolyn, Scott and Vicki Holman are listed among the attendees at the Reunion in Savannah. In addition to Bowden's book, Scott is also referred to Earl Pate, 92st BGMA Historian, for more details of the mission of Feb. 4, 1944 and other missions.]

Golded Wings

(Continued from Page 8)

● **James F. Unger**, 324th, FM, McCook, NE, July 7, 1998, Age 78. He was a Ball Turret Gunner on "The Sky Queen" and completed 19 missions. He died of complications during an open heart surgery. He is survived by his wife, Florence, to whom he was married for 53 years, 9 children, 24 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. He was active in the Elks, DAV, St. Patrick's Church and Knights of Columbus in which he served as Grand Knight, 1961-65.

● **Donald T. Weiss**, FM, 401st, Valley City, ND, June 16, 1998, Age 78. Don served two combat tours finishing on "Destiny's Child", according to an obituary sent in by his surviving wife, Ardyce, of 55 years. Don graduated from Valley City State University in 1946 and Received a Master's degree from University of North Dakota and taught high school until 1984. He was buried in Memory Gardens, Valley City, with military honors provided by VFW Post 2764,

Hail and Farewell

New Life Members

We welcome the following new Life Members:

Melvin E. Coupe, Ball Turret Gunner, "The Ruptured Duck", 324th

Clyde Garrison, Ball Turret Gunner, "Yankee Belle, 324th

Michiel Hanou, Associate Life Member.

Lyle B. McCullough, 324th.

AAFM

Association of Air Force Missileers

The 91st Lives on!

Many famous units of the 8th Air Force died out at the end of World War II as the mission of the Air Force subsequently changed. But the 91st lives on today as the **91st Space Wing**. Charlie Simpson, Executive Director of the Association of Air Force Missileers, has kindly provided, initially, information that the name of the unit bearing our number was changed to "Space Wing" to reflect the changing mission of the Air Force. We have progressed beyond the realm of being a missile wing. Many things can be inferred from that and it will be left to the reader to speculate.

For the present, it is sufficient to know that the 91st Space Wing is located at Minot, North Dakota.. The Commander is Colonel Ronald J. Haekel and the address is 91SW/CC, 300 Minuteman Dr., Suite 101, Minot AFB, ND 58705-6016.

The Executive Director also has told us that other units of the World War II era, such as ours, have established a correspondence with the active units of their namesakes. Let's hear from you. What do you think?

[Your Editor in a member of the AF Missileer having served as Test Pilot and Operations Officer of the Special Weapons Field Test Unit, Air Materiel Command. After finishing a combat tour in '43-'44 in B-17s and witnessing the carnage of daylight bombardment, the idea of firing a missile from the ZI to a remote target intrigued me greatly.]

Folded Wings

● **Hugh W. Brooks**, LM, 401st, Yakima, WA, January, 1998 Age 80. Reported by R. R. "Dick" Goldsmith, "Hugh flew 30 missions with me as Lead Navigator and performed his duties in an outstanding manner. His otherwise calm and efficient demeanor was put to a test on one mission when flak ripped a hole in his map.

"Hugh died after a sudden heart attack. He had retired after a successful career with Tacoma City Light. He also retired as an active participant in the Air Force Reserve during which time he maintained his flying status. He is survived by his wife, Daphne."

● **Jesse Craghead**, 322nd. Date unknown. Mail returned, "Deceased."

● **Ernest F. (Doc) Ellington**, 322nd, FM, Richmond, VA, June 22, 1998. His wife, Dorothy, reports with great sorrow, "He was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while serving as Waist Gunner of a B-17 airplane, 'Lassie Come Home' with the 8th Air Force on 31 Bombardment missions over enemy occupied continental Europe.

"He was also awarded the European, African and Middle East Theater Campaign Medals with three Battle Stars, The Distinguished Unit Badge, and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters."

● **Bruce J. Johnson**, 323rd, FM, Rockford, IL, June 29, 1998. Reported by his widow, Faye Johnson, "He looked forward to your paper every issue."

time the crew of 'The Bloody Bucket' was recognized as being 100% in attendance. He stayed in close contact with his surviving crew members for whom he had great respect and friendship. We will miss him greatly in any future planning." Kenneth is survived by his wife of fifty years, Virginia. He is interred in the Snelling National Cemetery.

● **Victor Maguire Jr.**, 322nd, October 31, 1997 of Parkinson's disease. He had been employed by Mickcon Gas Co. As supervisor of meter repairs. Reported by Harry Kool.

● **John R. Parsons**, 401st, LM, Lafayette, IN, August 2, 1998, in St. Elizabeth Medical Center following a lengthy illness. John served in the Army Air Force as a Technical Sergeant Flight Engineer and top turret gunner on a B-17 bomber. He was shot down Feb. 13, 1944 after flying 13 missions. He was taken prisoner and held captive until the end of the war. He was recalled for service during the Korean War. He authored a book, "The Best Seat in the House," a recollection of his war experiences.

● **Cyril J. Powers**, FM, 401st, Waterloo, IA, August 22, 1998, Age 76, at Cedar Falls Lutheran Home, of natural causes. He was an English teacher with the Waterloo Public School system, teaching Bunger Junior High School. He is survived by 2 sons, 2 daughters, 5 grandchildren, and a sister, Bernadette Smiley of Cedar Falls. Services were held at St. Edward's Catholic Church in Waterloo, with burial in Mount Olivet Cemetery. Flag folding rites were conducted by Waterloo AMVETS Post 19 and Evansdale AMVETS Post 31. Reported by Robert C. Reeves, 322nd, FM.

● **Walter Lee Ray**, FM, 441st, May 19, 1998, Age 78, San Angelo, TX., repored by his widow, Jean. He had a massive heart attack followed by a massive stroke in February. He passed away in his sleep peacefully. He lived

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. January, April, July and October are the publication months. The RT'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

● **Kenneth F. Larson**, 322nd/324th, FM, Minneapolis, MN, January 13, 1998, Age 75, after a long illness. Fellow crew member, Paul W. McElroy, Jr., writes, "Ken was a waist gunner on Joseph F. Bilotta's crew of 'The Bloody bucket' and completed 32 missions from March to August 1944. He is the fifth member of our crew to die since the war.

'He was very active in the five crew reunions of 'The Bloody Bucket' and 'Hiking for Home' that were held in Waynesville, NC, Pensacola, FL, and Charleston, SC. He also attended the 91st BGMA reunion in Seattle, WA, at which

Continued next column.....

in Fort Sumner for 11 years before he retired from the Government in 1986. He was also Superintendent of Sumner Dam. In addition to his wife, he is survived by a daughter and son, both married, and four grandchildren and numerous other relatives and friends.

● **James "Winnie" Thress**, 324th FM, Lancaster, OH, April 23, 1998, Age 76, after a 6 year bout with cancer.. He served as a mechanic for "Shoo Shoo Baby." He is survived by his wife, Patricia, 3 children and 5 grandchildren. Submitted by Patricia.

Continued on Page 7.....