

The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



Supporting Units



324th SQDN



401st SQDN

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The Last Flight of "Old Standby"

The story begins with a B-25 in takeoff position at Mitchel Field, New York, Sept. 13, 1955. Lowell Getz, Associate Member, tells the story in his book, "Mary Ruth, Memories of Mobile," ©1997, reprinted in part with permission of the author. This story relates to "The Winter of 1944," cover story in the January 1998 issue of the *Ragged Irregular*, by Jack Paxson, former Crew Chief in the 322nd Squadron, in which he referred to Lt. Don Judy as one of his favorite aircraft commanders.

"The roar of the engines deepen. The B-25 begins lumbering down the runway, slowly accelerating in speed. Before reaching the end of the runway, it becomes airborne. The wheels fold back into the engine nacelles. Almost immediately the right engine cuts out. Major Judy radios the control tower: 'Judy making emergency landing. Prepare for emergency. Judy making emergency landing, Over.' He feathers the prop and turns to the southwest to return to the field. Then, the left engine begins sputtering and loses power. Unable to gain altitude, the plane limps along at 300 feet.

"Major Judy fights the controls attempting to keep the wobbling plane in the air as the tail droops. They pass low over Uniondale School No.2 and along the Southern State Parkway. Up ahead lies the Greenfield Cemetery, the open southeast corner of which is being developed for new grave sites. Beyond the cemetery are the Uniondale Grand Avenue, Franklin, Ludlum and Hempstead schools and the congested residential streets. The B-25 suddenly swerves downward as Major Judy steers the plane towards the open area in the cemetery."

[Cut to October 9, 1943. Lt. Judy is a B-17 Pilot-in-command in the 322nd Sq., 91st Bombardment Group (H) stationed at Bassingbourn, England.]

"On the 9th, the crew was assigned to #178, 'Old Standby.' This was the same plane in which Lt. Judy had flown his first combat mission, as copilot with James Baird's crew, back in July. On this day 2Lt John K. Carter filled in for Lt. Layn as copilot. Lt. Carter had only recently arrived at Bassingbourn and was flying his first combat mission. 'Old Standby' started our flying on the left wing of Lt. Gerald's plane #511, 'Wheel 'N Deal.' Lt. Gerald's plane was Lead of the Second Element of the Lead Squadron. 1Lt Charles B. Pinning's crew was in #711 of Lt. Gerald's right wing.



Crew of *My Prayer* Kneeling L-R: James "Don" Judy, pilot; Roger Layn, copilot; Edward DeCoster, navigator; Lewis M. Allen, bombardier. Standing L-R: Vincent P. Lala, left waist gunner; Paul F. Burton, tail gunner; Earl M. Cherry, flight engineer/top turret gunner; Ray C. Tarbell, right waist gunner; Charles A. Baiano, ball turret gunner; Virgil G. Faust, radio operator.

"The 91st was one of six Groups flying in the 1st Air Division that day. The target for the 1st Air Division was the Arado Flugzeugwerke at Anklam, 75 miles north of Berlin. This factory built component parts, primarily wing and tail assemblies, for the FW 190 German fighter. The Anklam strike force was a part of a three-mission maximum effort by VIII Bomber Command that day. The other two targets were Marienburg and Danzig/Gdynia. The mission was, in part, a diversionary effort to draw the German fighters from the other two forces that were striking farther east.

"The diversionary plan was a success. The 91st formation was attacked by more than 300 enemy aircraft, including Me-109s, FW 190s, Me-110s, Me-410s and Ju-88s, as soon as the planes crossed the Danish coast. The Me-110s fired off rockets into the bomber formation while the other planes, singles, pairs and flights of four, came roaring through the formation in head-on attacks. No. 711, the plane Judy and his crew had flown in five days earlier, took hits and dropped out of the formation. Lt. Pinning tried to make it to the safety of Sweden, but had to ditch in the Baltic. None of the 10 crewmen aboard survived.

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The President's Corner

Nearly all the attendees at the Savannah meeting visited the Heritage Museum there, which is dedicated to the 8th AAF. Several members expressed disappointment that we, unlike several other bomber groups, did not have a special memorial there for our Group. There are, of course, other memorials to the 91st.

What is familiarly called the Prop Memorial stands at the entrance to the base we used during WW2. It is currently looked after by the East Anglian Aviation Society. There is another memorial in Royston, which was erected by that community and is maintained by them. A third, which memorializes the 323rd Squadron, is on the Grounds of Wimpole Hall.

"Tony" Montalvo heads our Committee on Memorials. He has divided his work into two parts. The first of these concerns possible erection of one of more memorials. Does our membership want a new memorial? If so, where would it be located? What kind of monument would we want? Membership input on these issues would help the Committee. Your letters on these questions should be addressed to Louis A. Montalvo, Col. USAF (Ret) at 4154 Clubhouse Rd., Lompac, CA, 93436-1334.

The second concern of the Committee is that of maintenance of the memorials which already exist as well as any which might be constructed. Fortunately, a monument, unlike a private home or a machine, does not require assiduous care. Monuments are constructed to endure. They are, however, expected to endure, if not forever, at least for a very long time.

You may recall that the Prop Memorial did, after nearly four decades, require repair. The only way that the maintenance problem can be addressed is to create some sort of fund in a relatively immortal financial institution which will provide the money when repairs are needed. This is all we can do about the maintenance problem. Actual management of maintenance is precluded both because all of the memorials are on properties owned by others and because the monuments will outlast anyone now alive.

Both problems are being studied by the Committee. What is obvious now is that either building something new or maintaining what already exists will require money. The amount will certainly exceed the total value of our organization's treasury. That fund, while it has been carefully nurtured by a diligent Treasurer, amounts in aggregate to about fifteen dollars per member. The source of funds for the memorials will have to be contributions from the membership. This letter is, quite frankly, written as a kind of softener. It is to let you know that, after the Committee has made its report and the membership has made its choices, we will all be asked to help pay the bills.

.....Bob Friedman

Time to Renew your Membership

Please note the enclosed membership renewal form. We need your support to keep this organization running. Thank you.

We hope you enjoyed the recent Holidays and wish you a Happy New Year in 1999—the start of the new millenium!

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Editorial

This issue marks the beginning of this Editor's third year. I want to thank all of you who have sent in articles and comments from time to time, much of which has been published and all of which is appreciated. Unfortunately, with each issue the backlog gets larger instead of smaller. If you have sent in material that has not been published, don't be discouraged.

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The Last Flight of "Old Standby"

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"At about 1000 hrs Sgt. Williams was killed by a single round of 7.9 mm machine gun fire. Just below the IP, #778, 'Green Fury,' piloted by 2Lt Alexander W. Stewart, flying on the left wing of the Group Lead, #804, 'Hells Halo,' with 1Lt LeRoy E. Everett, Jr., as copilot (the Group Leader, Maj. Don Sheeler, was flying as his copilot) went down. Lt. Judy moved 'Old Standby' up into his place to tighten up the formation. As the strike force approached Anklam, flak became heavy. An explosion below 'Old Standby' disabled the bomb bay doors such that they would not lower on the bomb run.

"Lt. Judy ordered that the doors not be cranked open and the bombs, three 1,000 pound GP bombs and five 100 pound incendiaries, be held. He was afraid that the doors could not be closed, which would cause the plane to drop behind the formation to become an easy target for the German fighters.

"On the way back from the target the formation was jumped by 200-300 fighters. Sgt. Williams was wounded by a 20mm cannon shell that left a gaping hole in his left leg. The right ball turret gun was knocked out of commission by a 7.9 mm armor piercing round; then the left gun ran out of ammunition. Sgt. Yatsko continued to operate the guns as a decoy.

"Within sight of the North Sea, another pass by the fighters put the top turret out of commission and started a fire. Sgt. Cherry put the fire out and remained in the turret calling out positions of fighter attacks to Lt. Judy. A minute or so later, at 1225, an 88 mm flak burst cut the control cables causing 'Old Standby' to go into a diving right turn. Lt. Judy switched on the automatic pilot to help in regaining partial control of the plane. Another fighter pass resulted in more 20mm hits in the cockpit causing an oxygen tank to explode, filling the cockpit with a flash fire and smoke. This fighter, a Me-110, was flown by Lt. Gunther Wegmann. Lt. Judy ordered the crew to bail out as he struggled to hold the plane level. Only after he presumed all the crew were out, did Lt. Judy jump.

"Sgt. Yatsko in the ball turret had not heard the bail out bell and remained in the turret moving the guns as if they were functional. As 'Old Standby' was spiraling down, the ball turret mechanism was hit by cannon shells causing it to rotate to the exit position. Sgt. Yatsko looked up into the plane and saw Sgt. Johnson bailing out and Sgts. Withers and Williams lying on the floor. He got out of the turret, put a chute on Sgt. Withers, who could not do so himself because of his wounds, and helped him jump. After seeing that Sgt. Williams was beyond help, Sgt. Yatsko jumped. A few seconds later, at 1230, 'Old Standby' went into the ground at a 45 degree angle and exploded. Sgt. Yatsko's chute opened just in time.

"'Old Standby' came down near the village of Kragstedt, on the Johannes Carstens' family farm,

whose eight year old son, Uwe, witnessed the crash." [Ed. Note: Uwe Carstens is today and has been for several years an Associate Member of the 91st BGMA.]

The surviving members of the crew eventually were taken prisoner and remained so until the end of the war.

[Cut back to September 15, 1955]

"The B-25 settles quickly to earth in the open space in the Cemetery, exploding upon impact with the ground. There is no fire, only twisted wreckage strewn about the cemetery.

"Just 1,500 feet away, the 500 students at the Uniondale Grand Avenue School continue their studies unaware of what had just happened. Although they may read about the plane crash in the evening newspapers, in the diverting excitement of their youthful lives, the students will never realize the magnitude of sacrifice made for them. The school bus stops. Twenty-seven giggling, pushing students skip happily to the front door. They are too young ever to comprehend fully the price that was paid to keep them out of harm's way. In the nearby homes the housewives continue their morning activities. The, too, will remain oblivious to the sacrifices that had been made to ensure their safety.

"Today, for the third time, Don Judy risked his own life that others might live. There was not the ear-shattering din of a multitude of bombers taking off on their missions of destruction. There were no red flashes of exploding anti-aircraft shells buffeting the plane about. There was no gravelly clatter of jagged flak tearing apart the aluminum skin of the plane. There were no screaming Focke-Wulf 190s or Messerschmidt 109s spitting out their deadly 20mm cannon shells in screaming head-on frontal attacks. There were no exploding oxygen tanks or fiery infernos incinerating the plane in flight. There was only the simple malfunctioning of an aging engine of a plane on a routine solitary flight. Today, was a pleasantly cool, sunny late summer morning with a balmy breeze blowing over a city at peace. That peace was broken by a gentle knock on a door—Yvonne Judy opened the door to two officers, one was a Chaplain.

Today was the final time Don Judy would be asked to risk his life that others might live."

Lowell Getz, PhD, University of Illinois, Champaign, IL, wrote the stories of several airplanes of the 91st Group in his book, "Mary Ruth' Memories of Mobile...We Still Remember." The information he presents is the result of extensive archival research for historical data and personal conversation with many of the individuals who survived. Copies are available from the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, GA.



Mission to Hamm, March 4, 1943.

The 91st Bomb Group (H) received two Distinguished Unit Citations the first of which was for the mission to Hamm. The target was the substantial railroad marshaling yards in the heart of the City which is located to the east of the northern reach of the heavy industrialized Ruhr Valley. For the 91st, this was their 22nd of the 340 missions eventually accredited to the Group. It took place in the "early days," well before most air crew members of the 91st Group had arrived on the scene.

The story has been written in the January 1974 edition of the R/I. It is retold here for the information of newer members of the Association and as a reminder of older members of "how it was" when the Mighty 8th Air Force was young. The following is contributed by former T/Sgt. Clyde R. Burdick, 322nd Sq., and waist gunner on "Motsie," piloted by 1st Lt. William D. Beasley.

"Hamm, adjacent to the Ruhr Valley and 160 miles inside the outer-ring of German Defenses, hosting the most flak batteries in Germany, a vast steel and arms producing industrial area, with very large railroad marshaling yards, important as they carried the eastbound traffic from the Ruhr. Yard capacity 10,000 cars in 24 hours as compared to a 3,000 car capacity of the medium size marshaling yards.

"In briefing the crews the 91st Group weather officer, 'sunshine' Atwell, told the crews that the weather would be passable for takeoff and assembly, but deteriorating over the English Channel. Once over the Dutch coast, the weather should improve, target visibility should be excellent, as a high pressure center was over mid-Germany.

"The Intelligence Officer briefed the crews as to what opposition they could expect. 'Large concentrations of flak and fighters, opposition would be heavy, the Germans could be expected to react violently to any bomber coming over the Reich.' When the crews heard that over 200 enemy fighters could be encountered, a sobering silence settled over the room. The pilots and aircrews knew that they would face resourceful, determined, courageous German pilots flying superb heavily armed fighters.

"This mission would be led by the 322nd Sq. Commander, Captain Paul Fishburne, a native of Montgomery, Alabama, who would be flying as command pilot in 'Chief Sly II' with pilot, Capt. Bruce D. Barton. Fishburne describes the action as follows.

'I was in the copilot's seat, my job was one of trying to control things, as well as flying the airplane. As the B-17s climbed, the weather began to deteriorate. We climbed through a whole bunch of overcast. At altitude, we got into a mist. It was not thick enough for instrument conditions, but you could not see more than a quarter of a mile. We could see our own group all right and we continued on our course.'

"As the 91st broke out of the mist at 22,000 ft.,

they found that they were crossing the enemy coast. None of the other three Groups of the first combat wing, were in sight. 'We were supposed to stay roughly in contact, but we got separated in the weather and we had radio silence, and I didn't know what the other three groups were doing.



Chief Sly II

"Two of the other Groups, discouraged by soupy weather near the enemy coast, bombed the shipyards at Rotterdam, Netherlands, and one group returned to base with their loads intact.

"As the 91st crossed the German border, the navigator checked their position. Fishburne debated what to do. He had no idea of what happened to the other three Groups. He also knew that he had to make a decision to continue toward the target or not.

'Where in the hell were the other groups? Should we go on? The weather was getting better now. I asked the tail gunner how many ships we had, 'eighteen, sir.' Eighteen Forts against the best defenses Germany had to offer. Should I risk those 180 boys' lives to bomb Hamm? It was an important target, but the other Groups had apparently gone to attack an alternate. Nothing would be said if I turned back. We went on.'

"The 91st continued on alone toward the target. The German fighter controllers apparently were confused by the various bomber trails, for the first fighter planes didn't appear until the B-17s were only a half hour from the objective.

"Neither the appearance of the Luftwaffe, nor the heavy flak barrage disrupted an excellent bomb run that planted the bombs of the 91st right on the rail yards, and subsequent reconnaissance photographs showed excellent concentration of bombs among the railway shops and marshaling trackage. Once the bombers turned for home, the German defense system was well alerted and fighter opposition, and flak barrages along the route in and out continued.

"For over an hour as they withdrew from the target, the B-17s of the 91st were subjected to relentless

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Mission to Hamm, March 4, 1943

(Continued from page 4).....

"German fighter attacks pressed home with great daring, accounting for four of the eighteen attacking planes. The Germans in addition to sending up their FW-190s and ME-109s, also used night fighters and others to stop the 91st, as one gunner put it, 'those fighters came closer than I've ever seen them in the movies. I could of shook hands with one of those fellows.' Claims of sixteen enemy fighters destroyed helped even the score.

"The decision of Capt. Paul Fishburne and his leadership of the attack, resulted in the Distinguished Flying Cross being awarded to this 22-year old Squadron Commander."

Aircraft and their Pilots completing the mission were:

"Chief Sly," Capt. Paul L. Fishburne and

Capt. Bruce Barton

"Hell's Angels," 1st Lt. James D. Baird

"Motsie," 1st Lt. William D. Beasley

"The Bearded Beauty—Mizpah," 1st Lt. John T. Hardin

"Bad Egg," Capt. John W. Carroll

"Invasion II," Capt. Oscar D. O'Neill

"Short Snorter III," 1st Lt. Nathan F. Lindsey

"Royal Flush," 1st Lt. Earl F. Riley

"The Careful Virgin," Capt. William E. Clancy

"The Eagle's Wrath," 1st Lt. Charles R. Giauque

"Our Gang," Capt. Edward D. Gaitley, Jr.

"Connecticut Yankee," Capt. A. Verinis

"The Bad Penny," 1st Lt. Charles E. Cliburn

"Stormy Weather," 1st Lt. George P. Birdsong

Aircraft not completing the mission were:

"Rose O'Day," 1st Lt. Ralph A. Felton, Jr. **KIA***

"DF-K," 1st Lt. Harold H. Henderson **KIA****

"Excalibur," 1st Lt. Allen Brill **KIA#**

"Stupentakit," Capt. Martin W. McCrary, Jr. **KIA##**

"Delta Rebel No. 2," 1st Lt. George P. Birdsong **ABT**

"Jersey Bounce," Capt. Robert K. Morgan **ABT**

*Lt. Felton and six of his crew were KIA; three became POWs.

**1st Lt. Henderson and eight others of his crew were KIA. One member, T/Sgt. Randall E. Nettles became a POW.

#1st Lt. Brill with heavy battle damage was forced to ditch in the North Sea and he, his copilot, 1st Lt. Allen W. Lowry, and S/Sgt. James E. Moran drowned. Seven of the crew survived.

##Capt. McCrary and eight of his crew were KIA. Two of his crew became POWs.

Lt. Birdsong first tookoff in "Delta Rebel No.2" but had to abort. He returned to the base and with his crew, made a second takeoff in "Stormy Weather" in time to catch up with the Group. His aircraft was so badly damaged, with wounded copilot, navigator and waist gunner, and himself badly wounded, he landed the airplane with full bomb load and had to ground loop it to bring it to a stop.

Anyone seeking more information about this mission are referred to *The Ragged Irregulars of Bassingbourn*, Marion Havelaar, available from the 91st BGMA PX, and *Stormy Weather*, George P. Birdsong, Jr., Colonel, USAF Ret.

Seasonal Greetings from the Tower Museum, Bassingbourn, UK.



East Anglian Aviation Society Members: L-R Standing: Maurice Smythe, Volunteer, Vic Lawson,* Treasurer, Mac Hale, Volunteer, Peter Roberts,* Chairman. Seated, Ray Jude,* Volunteer, Steve Penaa,* Curator.
* Denotes membership on the EAAS Executive Committee.

Paul Zimmerman & Family Visit the Tower

Paul Zimmerman, former Radio Operator on Capt. Bramble's crew of the *Village Flirt*, 323rd Sq., and his wife, Bette, accepted an invitation of their son, Paul R. and his wife Lori and their two children to visit Europe including a stop at Bassingbourn. Paul and Bette wrote:

"We had a beautiful day driving up from London through the countryside to Bassingbourn, Royston and Cambridge. Steve Pena met us at the base and showed us the sights and sounds of the Museum; saw the barracks the memorial to the 91st, part of the old airstrip where the *Village Flirt* had been kept, the row of trees that we were told you pilots looked for when you were returning from a mission to know you were in sight of the airfield.



Steve Pena & Paul Zimmerman

We had lunch at the Hardwick Arms. Steve and his wife, Alison and their very young son, Rhys, and Peter Roberts, Chairman of the EAAS, joined us and we enjoyed some fish and chips and English beer with them.

Peter lead the way to Cambridge and stopped at the American Cemetery at Maddingley. That would bring a tear to anyone's eye to see the wall inscribed with the name, unit and state of those killed. The Memorial Chapel is quite lovely, and Peter told us about the Memorial Services held each Memorial Day for those Americans buried there.

We drove into Cambridge. Our granddaughter, 17, said to her Dad, "Can I come over here to college?" The campus is lovely indeed. So we had a great day with Steve and Peter, and "Paul L." [Dad], felt a lot of nostalgia as he told war stories all the way back to London."



Grandson Paul R. tries on Flak suit as Pena watches.



"Champagne Girl" Goes to Switzerland

Mr. Stefan Naef, a Swiss citizen, found some pieces of a B-17 in the Swiss Alps in 1993. He managed to identify the airplane, contact the surviving members of the crew who had bailed out. Following is an excerpt of an article he wrote that was first published in the Swiss aviation magazine, "Cockpit," "The adventurous journey of a Flying Fortress to the Vorder Rhine Valley," and translated by him for our benefit. A shortened version is presented below.

In July 1944, almost all of the fifty aircraft that landed in Switzerland were American. Switzerland was a haven for heavily damaged aircraft. In the morning of July 19, 1944, the people at the small town of Obersaxen in the Canton of Graubünden, a Flying Fortress passed low over their heads. A few moments later it crashed into a mountain side at the Inneralp.

July 19, 1944 at the air base of the 91st Bomb Group began just like most of the other missions. Early wakeup, breakfast and briefing. The target was the German aircraft plant at Lechfeld. 1,000 heavy American bombers would take off from England, and with the protection from over 700 fighters, proceed to bomb targets in southern Germany.

It was the 13th mission for the nine crew members of B-17 serial number 42-107075 and the number four to Germany. For the last few days they had not flown a mission while their ship, *Champagne Girl*, was fitted with brand new engines. Today they would fly squadron lead.

The first aircraft took off at 0500 Hrs., assembled with other units, and headed for the Netherlands to start their penetration into Germany. They flew an indirect course to avoid the heavy flak areas and to keep the enemy guessing about the target as long as possible. At 8,000 meters (26,000 ft.) just before reaching Kempten, the formation turned toward Munich. However, this time, the target would not be the Bavarian capital, but Lechfeld airfield south of Augsburg which was the home of the Me-262 jet fighter trial squadron.

Fighter attack preparations

The *Champagne Girl's* bomb bay doors had already given crew trouble on earlier missions. To make sure they would be functioning before reaching the target, the doors were opened and closed about 50 Km (25 mi.) before reaching the target. Shortly after the doors were closed, the crew smelled smoke coming from the bomb bay. The bomb bay door motor had shorted and caught fire.

While the flight engineer was busy extinguishing the fire in the bomb bay, the formation change their heading for a last time to start the bomb run onto Lechfeld. During this

maneuver, the B-17 *Bunky* flying to the lower right of them got out of control for unknown reasons and was closing in rapidly. The copilot saw the aircraft at the last moment and could not avoid the collision. From the force of the impact, the complete tail section of *Bunky* broke off and the two halves of the aircraft disappeared spinning in the clouds. None of the crew managed to bail out. Meanwhile, *Champagne Girl* went into a spin headed toward the earth. Some of the crew members tried to bail out without success. The centrifugal force nailed them to the floor so that they couldn't reach the exits. A spin was normally a death sentence for a B-17 with a full bomb load, but somehow the two pilots, standing with both feet on the left rudder pedals, managed to recover the aircraft after about five turns at 6,000 meters (17,000 ft.).

Damaged Towards Switzerland

The right wing was damaged badly. No. 4 engine was lost. No. 3 was turning only with half power and a bent prop. The leading edge almost completely gone and a big portion of the aileron was missing. There was no chance to reach England again. The crew decided to try for neutral Switzerland. The navigator gave the pilot the heading of 240 degrees. While the other aircraft continued their mission, *Champagne Girl* salvaged the bombs and threw everything out that was not needed to lighten the plane. Still, the ship continued losing altitude. Efforts to drop the ball turret failed, and additional altitude was lost during the attempt.

At 0917 hrs they were observed by the Swiss Army entering Switzerland near Altstätten. Since the crew did not have a clear picture of the border line between Germany and Switzerland they followed the river Rhine towards south as far as they could. Constantly losing altitude, they soon found themselves flying between the mountains. When the pilot saw there was no chance to make it over the next ridge he gave the order to bail out. It was the first jump for everybody on board. After all had left the plane it was the pilot's turn to jump. While hanging on the chute he could watch his B-17 crash into a mountain side at the Inneralp above Obersaxen. The crew landed in the Vorder Rhine Valley and were soon picked up by the military and brought to Ilanz.

Internment in Switzerland

After the usual interrogations at Dübendorf and two weeks at a quarantine camp at Chaumont, the officers of the *Champagne Girl* were sent to Davos and the enlisted men to Wengen for internment.

Despite the safe stay in Switzerland, the crew's urge to return to their units was big. While the engineer and the radio operator were caught in an attempt to escape from Switzerland, a few months later, the pilot and the bombardier managed to escape through occupied France back to the allied lines.



L-R Lt. Jack Sykes, CP. Lt. Kenneth Boltz, N, Cyril Braund, P of "Champagne Girl"

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B-17 Über Obersaxon (Continued from Page 6)**Reunion**

Today, the American airmen who were interned in Switzerland during World War II have formed an association in the United States. During the Reunion of the Swiss Internees Association in the United States at San Antonio, Texas in September 1995, Pilot Cyril Braund, his copilot Jack Sykes, engineer Don McBey and radio operator Bill Bridges reunited for the first time after their adventurous trip to Switzerland. The engineer took this opportunity to express appreciation for the pilot's skill which gave all of them extra 51 years of their lives.

Letters to the Editor

Walter Pickard, LM 323rd, was leading the Group the day the action in the foregoing article took place. He has written a very interesting letter on the subject and it deserves to be published. It will have to wait for the next issue, however, due to the length of the other articles.

Raymond Jones, LM, 401st, sent in an article about a mission on 20 July 44, the day after the Lechfeld mission above. As is frequently the case, it will have to wait for the next issue.

Charlie Busa, LM 324th, sent in some material for a future article that won't fit in this issue. We'll try again, Charlie.

George Odenwaller, LM 323rd, Ball turret gunner on "Out-house Mouse" describes getting ready for a mission. After he gets all set in the ball turret, oxygen checked, guns fired, he swings the turret around and says to himself, "My God, what am I doing up here?" Good story, George.

Yves Carnot, notre ami Francais, sent his greetings for the season, "joyeux Noël et Meilleurs Voeux pour la Noouveau Année 1999."

Peter J. Fermia, a private individual, seeks pictures of A-2 Jacket art work including unit insignia. His address is 15 Baker Ct, Clifton, NJ, 07011-1009, Tele: 973-478-3442.

Raven International is looking for WWII Veterans and civilians who worked at the Miami Air Depot or Miami 36th Street Airport. They are conducting research on the activities there during the war. Address: 965 Nob Hill Rd, Ste 303, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33324. Tele: 1-800-719-1626.

Murle Webb, who's name does not show up in the 1998 Directory, sent a photo of himself and Capt. Milza standing in front of the "BIGGEST Bird," (post-sanitization). He was ex-322nd Sq.

Jane Vincent, B.A., M.A.H., H dip Ed. (hons), Curator, Royston and District Museum, reminds us that the Royston Town Council continues to maintain the garden around the 91st War Monument, "with loving care." Royston Museum does have a small collection of material from the 91st. "We are proud of the U.S. flag which your organization so kindly sent us via the good offices of Lt. Col Walshaw. It is on permanent display as is the 48 star flag given us by the relations of Cody Wolf, who was killed in 1944.

"Another poignant memory is standing in the Priory Gardens during the Memorial service [in 1992], singing your National Anthem. Many of the Gentlemen present were ill and really should not have been out in that weather, but you were, and you stood there as brave as lions, and as strong and upright as the young men you were in 1942.

Continued next column.....

Thank you, Gentlemen, for these wonderful memories. I will remember you personally, as long as I live. God bless America." [Ed. Note. We thank you, Jane, for your years of devotion to the memory of the men who served in the 91st and joined together with your fellow countrymen in a common cause.]

Nelvin F. Coupe, New Life Member asks for help in locating his former copilot, Robert G. Stevens, 324th. Nelvin also is a new life member to the Association. Please note the correct spelling of his name which was misspelled in the October R/I.

Curtis Pyrah, LM, 324th, writes to correct an error in the October issue. Major Larry Smelser was C.O. of the 324th Sq, not the 401st. He says, "I was dere Scharlie," on Lt. Cliburn's plane!"

Don Hayes, Major, UAF Ret., President of the B-17 Flying Fortress Association, sent in a photo of the 91st Group Memorial in Walla Walla, Washington. He would like to remind people that memberships are open. Please write: Don Hayes, 1640 Cambridge Dr., Walla Walla, WA 99362.

Joan Kirwan AM, Royston. Expressed thanks for a copy of the October issue of the R/I which she missed. She reported that her husband, Alan is recovering from surgery. "When the surgeon said he thinks he is a brave stoic man, I replied, Of course he is. He was in the 2nd Batt. Parachute Reg. And served abroad. He always lays a wreath on Memorial Day at Maddingley from his Paratrooper Association for the 92nd and 101st American Paratroopers."

Dale Darling, LM, 324th, made a video tape in Savannah and kindly sent a copy to this Editor. Wish I could use some of the pics. Maybe in another year or so, the technology will allow this to happen. Thanks again Dale.

Mark S. Robinson, AM, seeks help from anyone who knew his uncle, T/Sgt. Fred A. Snively, RO, shot down on mission of April 22, 1944 in "Just Nothin." [Havelaar's book, "Ragged Irregulars of Basingbourn" show he was a POW and returned to the U.S.]

Mike and Yvonne Banta, FM, 324th, reports in their Christmas letter from Lahaina, Maui, "It's not easy sweating over a hot golf ball or sitting at the computer writing Mike's current book." [We know who is "sweating over the golf ball"]. Mike is writing a book about his ancestors and others from the Netherlands who settled in America.

Bob Kelley, LM, 322nd, is recovering from radiation treatment. "Not too bad, but not a walk in the park." He tells about a German, Richard Braun, who wrote the 8th AF Memorial Assn. About a B-17 that crashed near Ludwigshaven, Sept. 8, 1944. He responded that it was "Rox's Special" Several years ago, Frank Bolen went to Ludwigshaven as Braun's guest and was feted by the City! [We wish you well, Bob.]

Mick Hanou, ALM, sent an earlier message told of his visit to England last August. He visited the Tower Museum and with Steve Pena attended the Duxford Air Show. Mick made a significant contribution to the 91st BGMA and has become a new life member. He sends his regards to George Birdsong and Hal Johnson.

Luc Dewez, our man in Belgium, with his wife, Sophia, announced the arrival of baby Marie circa November 12.. Congratulations!

Braxton Bradford, 4513 S. Oak Dr. #Q 72, Tampa, FL, 33611, wrote some time ago to ask if anyone can give him information about T/Sgt. Luigi L. Lentini. This Editor's records show he was shot down on a mission to Munich, July 31, 1944, became a POW and was returned to the U.S.

Folded Wings

● **William F. Adams, FM, 322nd, Pasadena, TX, July 16, 1998, age 76.** Former member of the crew of Shoo Shoo Baby. Reported by his son.

● **Levi G. Dillon, LM 324th, Providence For, VA, Dec. 11th, 1998.** He was interred in his full uniform with full military honors at Blue Ridge Memorial Gardens, Roanoke, VA., Dec. 14, 1998. He was the first Top Turret Gunner on the crew of the "Memphis Belle." Condolences may be e-mailed to his family at ocpz@roanoke.infi.net. Reported by Bob Morgan, Pilot of the Memphis Belle.

● **William E. Gladitsch, DVM, FM, 324nd, Bloomer, WI, October 30, 1998.** He served as a Pilot in "Queenie" and later in "Sure Shot." After the war he continued his flying completing extended trips to Alaska, the Bahamas, and Mexico. As a Doctor of Veterinarian Medicine, he specialized in large animals. With his first mate of 53 years, Elaine, he was well-known as the Skipper of his 28-foot sailing vessel in the ports of Lake Superior. Bill and Elaine were parents of five children and grandparents of nine grandchildren. Reported by Earl Pate.

● **Herschel Y. "HY" Quarles, FM, 401st, Columbus, MS, May 24, 1998, age 76.** As a crewman in the 91st, he was seriously wounded in a bombing mission over Germany in December 1943. After the war, he continued his lifelong association with the Air Force as a civilian employee at Columbus AFB, MS. He retired as Human Resources Manager after 37 years service. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Myron Cruthirds Quarles, and a daughter, Lydia

● **John P. Stipe, FM, 324th, Lancaster, PA, Nov. 1998, age 78.** Former member of the crew of "Jack the Ripper" was shot down on a mission to Bunde, Feb. 22, 1944 as part of "Big Week." He became a POW and joined the "Death March." Stipe had a remarkable career in Art Education. He earned a doctorate in fine arts at Academia Florencia, Italy. He received his bachelor of arts degree, master of arts degree, and bachelor of science and education degree from Tyler School of Art at Temple University.

Stipe taught art at Upper Dublin High School, Fort Washington, PA, for 27 years and also at Montgomery County Community Council. He was a contributing member of the Disabled American Veterans, past commander of Conestoga chapter of Prisoners of War and a member of Manheim Veterans of Foreign Wars Post and the Caterpillar Club.

He is survived by is widow of 53 years, Rose A. Harbison Stipe, son Joseph P, and a grandson and two sisters. Submitted by W. W. Hill.

● **Milton J. Verla, LM, 322nd, Andale, KS, age 73, after a three year battle with cancer.** He served as a B-17G Pilot/CoPilot, on LG R, flying his first mission March 7, 1945 and his 20th and last mission April 25th, 1945 to Pilsen.

His daughter, Lu Ann Allen of Wichita, KS, has provided the following information. "Dad loved to tell stories of the war while we watched old videos of actual footage or looked through history books of WWII. He told of the cold cockpits and camaraderie among the men. He overcame fear and wore out a rosary or two. Hailing from Ennis, TX, he earned the lifelong nickname, 'Tex.' We attended many air shows where he would give us cockpit tours thanks to the restored work done by the Confederate Air Force.

"After the war, he performed peacekeeping missions in the Philippines. He met and married a Kansas native, Mary Ann Breitenbach. After separation, he worked for

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THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

This Newsletter is published quarterly: January, April, July and October. The R/I's purpose is 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 AAF Station 121 at Bassingbourn, England, 1942-1945. Send articles for publication to the Editor, Phil Mack, 17521 155th Ave. SE, Renton, WA 98058-9087. Send changes of address and notices of Folded Wings to Asay B. Johnson, Sec'y/Treas., 590 Aloha Dr., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403.

Margaret Quarles, a Judge with the Workers' Compensation Commission in Jackson, and her husband, James R. Mozingo. In a letter to Asay Johnson, 91st BGMA Secretary/Treasurer, Mrs. Quarles tells, "How much he enjoyed the reunions. He loved the guys."

Norman L. Thompson, fellow crew member of H.Y. adds that the mission on which he was wounded was over Lorient, Dec. 30, 1943. "He faced his Maker twice that day, as his aircraft veered from the runway and crashed upon returning to base."

Southwestern Bell Telephone almost 40 years as a Communications Tech. He joined the Air Force Reserve and retired as Lt. Col. He was a Telephone Pioneer, member of the Knights of Columbus and the VFW. His hobbies were polka dancing and farming at his 80 acre alfalfa farm outside Andale. He is survived by his wife, Mary Ann, four daughters, four grandchildren, one sister and a brother. We're forever grateful for his unselfish service and sacrifice he and others made for our country."