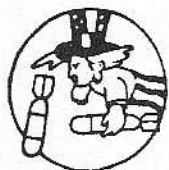


# The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQUADRON



323rd SQUADRON



Supporting Units



324th SQUADRON



401st SQUADRON

Vol. 32 No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H)

July 1999

## Operation One More Time in '99

**Pottstown, Pa., June 7, 1999.** Paul Chryst, Past President of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association, leader of many expeditions, in the air and on the ground, announces **"One More Time in '99."** Mailings have gone out to the membership of the 91st BGMA and many have already signed up. The dates are **October 5-12, 1999.** The itinerary is:

**Tues. Oct. 5—**Depart the U.S.A.

**Wed. Oct. 6—London.** Arrive Heathrow/Gatwick. Move to Hotels, rest. Enjoy evening **Reception, wine and cheese** offering, **briefing** by Tour Manager.

**Thurs. Oct. 7—London/Cambridge.** Begin with panoramic **city tour** of London, **East End, West End**, view **Kensington Palace, Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral**, and the famous **Winston Churchill War Rooms**. Continue to the medieval village of **Lavenham** for a delicious **lunch** in the **Swan Hotel**. Take a short walk to the **"crooked houses and Guildhall,"** then on to **Bury St. Edmunds** to visit the memorable **flower gardens** in the walled-in **Abbey**. Motor to **Cambridge**, check-in and **enjoy evening dinner** together.

**Friday, Oct. 8—Royston.** Informal "Welcome" with local Officials, visit the **Royston Museum, pre-historic caves**, the old **Village Church**, and assemble at the 91st BG **Stone Plinth Memorial in Priory Gardens** for a 10th Anniversary Memorial Dedication Service. After a lunch to be arranged, travel by coach to **Biggleswade** to see the **Shuttleworth Collection** of vintage airplanes, all flyable. Return to Cambridge to regroup for dinner together.

**Saturday, Oct. 9—Our Big Day!** Back to **Bassingbourn**, now a British Army Training Base, a reception in the lobby of the Officers' Club, a short service at the **Prop Memorial**, a visit to the **323rd Sq. Memorial** at the site of the former dispersal area now on the **Wimpole Hall Estate**, lunch back at the Base followed by a tour of the Base. After lunch, meet with the **East Anglian Aviation Society**, proprietors of the **Bassingbourn Tower Museum**. Briefing by the **EAAS Chairman** and by the **Curator of the Museum**. Depart for **Steeple Morden** to see the memorial to the 355th Fighter Group, one of the many **USAAF Groups** that provided escort for the **B-17s**. Return to Cambridge for dinner.

**Sunday, Oct. 10—Cambridge-Ely.** After breakfast, visit the **American Military Cemetery** at **Madingley**. A short remembrance service at the **Flagpole Gravesites** of the 91st B.G. View the **Wall of the Missing** and visit the **Chapel**

Continued next column.....

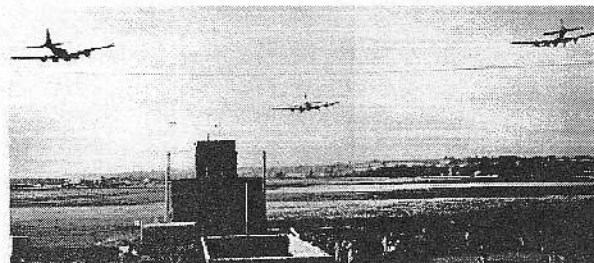
where the 91st BGMA Floral Bowl is displayed on the altar.

A brief travel to **Wimpole Hall** comes next. This is the old **Rudyard Kipling Estate** that hosted the **Avenue of Trees** well known to aircrews returning to **Bassingbourn**. An independent lunch is available from a new cafeteria on at the estate.

Next stop is at **Ely** to enjoy the 12th century **Cathedral Vesper services** and ancient monuments of stone carvings (or just sit in a pew to enjoy the magnificent organ and choir). Then back to **Cambridge** for dinner.

**Monday, October 11—American Air Museum at Duxford-London.** After a hearty breakfast and hotel checkout, travel is to **Duxford**, an old **RAF airfield** that was home to the **78th Fighter Group** in **WWII** and is now the site of the **American Air Museum** in **England** along with the **British Air Museum**. Flyable aircraft may be seen including a **B-17, P-51, P-47, Spitfire, Hurricane, a Lancaster**, and many other aircraft on static display. An independent lunch is available at the **Museum** after which there is the return to the **London Hotel**.

**Tuesday, October 12—London-U.S.A.** Departure for the **United States**; or extend your stay.



**For Reservations, Contact Paul Chryst:**

**Berkshire Travel Agency**  
**812 Penn Street, Reading, PA 19602**  
**(800) 223-3884, FAX: (610) 372-6074**

**Residence:** **1494 N. Adams St.**  
**Pottstown, PA 19464**  
**(610) 323-1877**

## The President's Corner

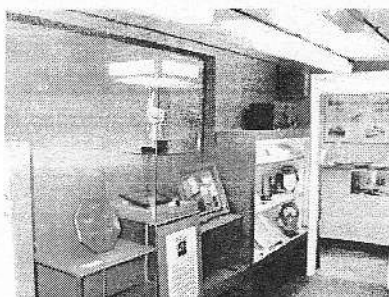
Yesterday, I sent the signed contract back to the **San Luis Resort**, our hotel for the biennial reunion next year. The hotel is the most elegant in **Galveston** and we got it at a price lower than we were offered by several accommodations of lower quality. All the rooms face the Gulf. The public rooms are first class. During the first week of November (meeting dates are **1-4 November 2000**) the expected weather is an extended Indian summer, free of both heat and hurricanes.

The program will include a visit to the Space Center, which is between Galveston and Houston. Currently our plan is to hold the Saturday night affair in the Flight Museum amongst the airplanes. Tentatively, the Ladies Program will include visits to three pre-flood mansions. A good deal of program planning still needs to be done, but, I think you will be pleased with the result.

All this is, as of this writing, about 16 months in the future. In the meantime, if you want to get together with 91sters this year, you might consider Paul Chryst's fin de siecle ("**One Last Time**") tour in October. When Joy and I took his 1993 trip, he said that one might be the last one he conducted. Fortunately, it wasn't, but this year's might be. Paul puts together a good trip. Traveling with him is a bit like joining the Air Force again. Once you have volunteered, somebody else does all the planning.

.....Bob Friedman

## Welcome New Life Member



Tower Museum Display, Basingbourn, by Steve Pena. Rigid Digit in Glass Case.

We wish to extend our welcome to the newest Life Member of the 91st BGMA, **Donald R. Patterson**, 401st. Said new Life Member is hereby registered in the Order of the Rigid Digit.

## Donor Recognition

We also wish to thank all of the members who made donations and supplementary contributions in addition to their dues payments. to the 91st BGMA . In addition we wish to give special recognition to the following:

<b>Robert Lovely, LM 322nd</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<b>Mrs. Raymond C. (Jean) Ridings</b>	<b>\$ 100*</b>
<b>James Thomas FM 322nd</b>	<b>\$ 60</b>

\* In Memory of husband S/Sgt. Ray Ridings, 323rd, Ball Turret Gunner, Crew of *The Village Flirt*.

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## Editorial

In 1997, this Editor traveled to England for the purpose of attending the dedication of the American Air Museum in England (Duxford) and, as a corollary, to attend the dedication of the 323rd Squadron Memorial at the site of the former dispersal area and to visit the Tower Museum and meet the people who have worked to perpetuate the memory of the 91st Group.

While in Cambridge, I heard from Vince Hemmings that Paul Chryst was conducting a tour for the 78th Fighter Group and was staying at a nearby hotel in Cambridge. I knew of him as one of the founders of the 91st BGMA and Chairman of the Eastern Division in the early days of the Association. I walked across the large green sward between the University Arms and his hotel and we met for the first time.



Seated, l.-r., George Parks, Paul Burnett, Paul Chryst. Standing, Maj. Gen.. Stanley Wray (from early cover of the Ragged Irregular.)

In our post-military lives, we have individually found our own niches. Paul's is undoubtedly in organizing and conducting tours. Between 1969 and 1998, he has conducted 37 tours, 9 of which were for the 91st BG! Moreover, he kindly sent me a copy of his video tape of the 1997 tour and I was duly impressed with both the subject matter and the technical aspects of the production.

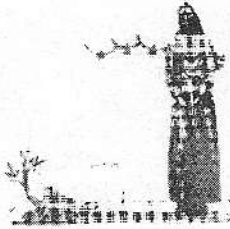
That much said, I hope many of you will seriously consider joining the 1999 tour, that I prefer to call, "One More Time in '99."

.....Phil Mack



## Memorial Day Observances Abroad

MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY  
MAY 31, 1999

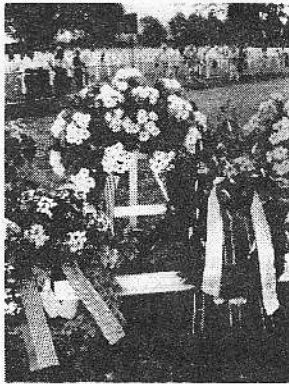


AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY  
MARGRATEN, THE NETHERLANDS

**Margraten, The Netherlands.** Ron W.M.A. Putz, Author and Airwar Historian, a resident of Heerlen, represented the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association this year at the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten. He reported: "We had beautiful weather and as usual, there was a large crowd attending the ceremonies. In the presence of



Ron Putz and escort at American Military Cemetery, Margraten, May 31, 1999



91st BGMA Wreath

many prominents such as The Honorable Cynthia P. Schneider, Ambassador of the United States of America, and Lt. Gen. Robert S. Coffey, Deputy Commander, United States Army-Europe, I had the honor of laying a wreath on behalf of the 91st BGMA. The 91st BGMA was the only Air Force Unit participating in the wreath laying ceremony. All other wreaths were of Army units."

**Madingley, Cambridgeshire, U.K.** The East Anglian Aviation Society (EAAS) once more laid a wreath at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley, near Cambridge on Memorial Day, 1999. Representing the EAAS was Tower Museum volunteer Annette Nightingale. Annette provided the following report:

"I had the honor and privilege to present the East Anglian Aviation Society's wreath at the American Cemetery on Memorial Day. The occasion was profoundly moving, dignified and poignant. Sitting in the open air beside the wall and seeing all the names of those young men from every corner of the U.S. brought a very large lump into

Continued next column.....

my throat. Each one was some mother's son, a brother, uncle, cousin, dad, etc. and I am pleased that they are still remembered and honoured today, not only by the Americans but also by the many British people who were there representing many organisations. To those of you who may not have visited the cemetery, let me tell you that it is a most beautiful and tranquil place. Set in the green and verdant country, close to the ancient and historical university town of Cambridge. The cemetery is an oasis of peace. You can feel the atmosphere when you arrive—peace and quiet, sadness, yes, but there could be no more beautiful place for the dead to be laid to rest.

"The chapel is beautiful, the wall, with its inscriptions, impressive, as is the cream stone from which it is made, glowing against the backdrop of large trees whose leaves are many shades of green, yellow and burgundy.

"The graves are snow white, each one with a small American and British flag placed by the headstone. The gardens that run alongside the long wall are planted with red roses and there is a line of pools; each with huge water lilies floating on the top. On Sunday, the day was overcast and quite chilly, so the clouds were reflected in the pools and the little frogs who normally hop about were hidden, as if signifying their respect for the ceremony going on in their domain.

"Almost 200 wreaths were laid and the colours of the flowers glowed brightly against the pale stone memorial wall. They came from near and far, from American and British organizations, families and societies. For the first time, the new memorial carillon was played out into the air. The sweet and gentle notes drifted above and around us, serenading your countrymen as they lay at peace. The carillon is to be played every evening throughout the year. What a wonderful sound for those who live close by and for those who will visit the cemetery in years to come.

"Thank you, Americans, for helping us when we needed you, and thank you for still being our friends."

Annette Nightingale

**Opijnen, The Netherlands.** Once again, Lucy R. Correll, President of the American Women's Club of Amsterdam, and others placed flowers on the graves of American crewmen who died returning from a mission, July 30, 1943. In appreciation for her continued kindness and the others who assist, 91st BGMA European coordinator, John W. "Jake" Howland presented her with a copies of "Serenade to the Big Bird" written by Bert Stiles and published posthumously by Howland. In his transmittal letter, he quoted the following passage.

*"It is summer and there is war all over the world...the war has spread from Normandy and Brittany and the American columns are swinging towards Paris. There is still plenty of war in Russia. The same war is still going on in the islands and in the sky over Japan.*

*I can only think about it in terms of moments and chunks and stretches of eternity measured in minutes... So far I've lived through it. So far the lady of luck has let me come through. There is hope as bright as the sun that it will end soon. I hope it does. I hope the hell it does. It will be a long time before I have made up my mind about this war.*

*I am an American. I was lucky enough to be born in the world and let it go at that. The trouble with me is, I don't know how to start to build my share of the one world. So, if I get through this, I will have to get on the ball and learn something about economics and people and things. If that is vague, it is because I do not know where to start to be specific.*

Continued on Page 4.....

## Memorial Day Observances

### Opijnen, The Netherlands (Continued from Page 3)

*"In the end it is only the people that count, all the people in the world. Any land is beautiful to someone. Any land is worth fighting for to someone. It isn't the land. It is the people."*

*That is what this war is all about, I think. Beyond that I can't go very far. So if we can get through with this war, I'll get started.*

Bert Stiles was twenty-three when he died."

### Home Again, Pinelawn National Cemetery, N.Y.

In the July 1998 issue of *The Ragged Irregular*, p.5, The story was told of the search by Gaspar Cangemi for his older brother, T/Sgt. John Cangemi, who was listed as missing in action from a raid on the synthetic oil refineries in Ludwigshafen, Sept. 8, 1944. After exhaustive inquiries, it was found that his remains had been removed from Germany and interred in the National Cemetery at Fort Snelling, MN. At Gaspar's request, some soil from the Minnesota site was to be sent to Long Island, New York, for reinterment at Pinelawn. This event took place on a cool wet day on Long Island, March 14, 1998.



T/Sgt. John Cangemi

In the company of Senator Alphonse D'Amato, Gaspar Cangemi attended a brief ceremony at Pinelawn. Mr. Cangemi kindly furnished photos of the occasion.

T/Sgt. John Cangemi was top turret gunner and engineer on Dave McCarty's crew on the mission to Ludwigshafen, Sept. 8, 1944 in "The Roxy Special." All crew members perished when the airplane crashed on Lutherstrasse in Ludwigshafen, except Frank Bolen, Bombardier, and Don Brazones, Navigator, who became POWs for the duration.



(Date of Death to be changed to Sept. 8, 1944.)



L-R Sen. A. D'Amato, NY, and Mr. Gaspar Cangemi.

[Ed. Note: In correspondence with Mr. Cangemi, this Editor remarked that both his mother and father were buried at Pinelawn, each in their own right as members of the U.S. Army in 1917-1918. Mr. Cangemi kindly placed a remembrance on their grave site and sent photos of the occasion. The extent of his appreciation for this kindness cannot be expressed in words.]

## Mission to Big B—22 March 1944

**Plumville, Pa.** 22 March 1999. Marion E. Painter, Msg. USAF (Ret) writes to correct information about the mission to Berlin in 22 March 1944.

"I was the Engineer/Top Turret on the Crew of Capt. Charles R. Phillips, 401st Sq, shot down 22 March 1944. Nearly all of my missions were made with Phillips and that would have been my 21st mission. This date was one for me to remember. [Ed. Note: That was my 25th mission and I flew adjacent to Phillips that day. I, too, remember it well.]

"Sometime ago, I was filing my Jan. 99 issue of the R/I when I discovered that I would need a larger folder. During the transfer of the R/Is into a new folder, I was reviewing some old issues and found an error that bothers me some. I don't know how I overlooked this item at the time of the R/I issue. Probably filed it intending to read it at a later time.

"The errors are in the January 1990 issue, page 7, regarding Folded Wings of Charles R. Phillips and reported by Whit Breed, former ground crew of the 401st. The first thing that is not correct in this report is the fact that we were not in the 'Buccaneer' on this mission. The 'Buccaneer', B-17F 425729, was retired on 15 March 1944 to AFSC, Walnut Ridge, AR. The aircraft that we were in on 22 March 1944 was a new unpainted B-17G, 429125, too new to be named and with the same ground crew chief and call letters of LL E. The call letters were painted on the new aircraft but no nose art as yet.

"The second error in the report, was in regard to Dempsey and a broken leg. Dempsey didn't have a broken leg. With all of the times that I visited and reminisced our fall with Charley Phillips, he never mentioned having to carry Dempsey. The worst injury was to Joe Wellman, which was a dislocated shoulder. Wellman was a substitute Bombardier on the crew. [Ed. Note: After the war, Wellman wrote this Editor to say he hit the bomb bay door on bailout and 'half tore his arm off.'] The waist gunners had some small shrapnel wounds, but nothing to prevent mobility. I had a knee injured and managed to move around, but with a lot of pain. Charley Phillips also had a knee injury and complained of his neck when we were united after capture. There was just a very light covering of snow and lots of mud. The mud was a good cushion, too.

"Regarding the April 1990 issue on page 6, Phillips' fall, had I known and responded to this item, I could have answered the questions and cleared this bit of 91st history.

"In recent years, I have learned many facts about our experience on 22 March 1944. I have met with Roy Griesbach at 91st reunions and he has filled me in on some thing that I didn't have knowledge of. I have obtained MACR [Missing Aircraft Report] from the National Archives. Upon capture, I was taken to a small village where the Germans had the navigator, Henry Yockey. I asked him where we were and he said "About thirty miles north of Berlin." The German reports in the MACR state that we were captured at Genthin, near Magdeburg. How in the world did we get from Berlin to Magdeburg? All of these years, I have been telling people I was captured thirty miles north of Berlin.

"In a short while the Germans brought in Wellman. He was in great pain with his shoulder and he asked me to give him a shot of morphine. He still had his parachute harness on with a small first aid pack attached. I gave him a shot and it sent the Germans into a wild rage, but in a short while

Continued on Page 5.....



## Mission to Big-B

Continued from page 4.....

Wellman was at ease. They took us to a larger village where they had the remainder of the crew. They loaded us on a truck and took us to a large Air Base. Here they took Wellman and me to a room with a doctor. They took me because I was the largest on the crew to hold Wellman down on a table while the doctor pulled Wellman's arm into place.

"They then took us by train to a Research Center near Frankfurt called West Oberursel on the Taunus mountains. That day Frankfurt was being bombed and they didn't take us to Dulag Luft to be interrogated. We never had the experience of Dulag Luft. We were interrogated at Oberursel. Then on to the Stalag Lufts."

### Editor Comments on Joe Wellman.

On the mission described above, I flew the "Merry Widow" with a new crew on their first mission. Our position in the formation was No. 2 in the low flight. My recollection is that Phillips was No. 6 in the lead flight. That put us wing tip to wing tip in the formation. When Phillips' ship was hit over Berlin, he came in our direction out of control. I had to pull up and out of formation to avoid a collision.

The flak was heavy and accurate. One flak shell exploded above the cockpit and some shrapnel came down through the co-pilot's top window striking him on his helmet and me on my right thigh. The particles were spent so there were no injuries, but on landing at Bassingbourn, the tail wheel collapsed. A piece of flak was lodged in the retracting actuator and prevented full extension. I counted twenty-five flak holes on the left side of the airplane and estimated there were as many on the other side.

Wellman was a good friend of the bombardier on my former crew, Bob Singer, and they roomed next door in the Combat Mess. Those two guys were the coolest heads I have ever met. I spent most of my leisure time with them and a few others playing snooker, ping pong and putting away a few beers. We would go on a pass to Cambridge or Baldock, joined sometimes by the Navigator of my former crew, Quentin Ellis.

After briefing for a mission, we would go back to the Combat Mess to attend to personal matters and gather in Wellman's room. On an old Victrola he would play Harry James' "Two O'clock Jump" and Spike Jones classic, "Der Fuehrer's Face." Then we'd laugh like hell and head back to the equipment room to go on our mission.

It was very sad when Wellman failed to return. By this time, most of my friends had been shot down. I had one more mission to go and finished the next day, Mar. 23, 1944, on the mission to Hamm. Suddenly it was all over.

.....Phil Mack

## B-17 (Wieder) Über Obersaxen

[A brief article about "Champagne Girl's" last mission appeared in the January 1998 R/I and a more complete story was published in the January 1999 issue. Walter Pickard, Colonel, USAF Ret., who led this mission for the 91st, and for whom it was his 24th mission, submitted additional information in January 1998. Space has not permitted its publication until now.]

19 July '44 Augsburg, Germany - Lechfeld Airfield.

Three days later we were back in the neighborhood to strike at an airfield on the outskirts of Augsburg, about 35 miles west of Munich. Lechfeld airfield was thought to be a development/testing base for another jet fighter, the Me-262. Group records show that I led the low group; mine show that I was flying high group lead. I believe mine are correct. It makes a difference on a 9-plus hour flight when the high leader had to fly from the right seat, and fly the entire flight by himself. The guy in the left seat could not see down onto the lead group to maintain position in the formation.

Here's what the official record shows of this mission: "Mission Summary: Patchy clouds covered the entire route. Heavy escort all the way. The Luftwaffe was up to challenge the formations. Flak was very heavy and accurate. Visual bombing of the airfield and aircraft plant, results were good, hits observed in the target area. Losses: 2 B-17s MIA." "2nd Lt. Braund & crew, 323rd Sq. (Landed in Switzerland)."

Except for the mention of the loss of two aircraft to MIA status, sounds pretty much like a routine mission. Well, it wasn't for me and my Group. Two bad mishaps threatened to spoil the whole afternoon for me.

Both were caused by break-down of air discipline. The first incident happened almost over the target and in order to understand this, I'll have to explain tactics:

The final 'bomb run' onto a target was always started from a designated Initial Point (IP). The IP would be an easily spotted landmark such as a lake, a railroad/highway intersection, and the like. It would be 20-30 miles from the target and always to the east. Why? The prevailing winds are from the west and at our bombing altitudes were often 75-100 mph. An east to west bomb run slowed the planes' ground speed giving the bombardier more time to capture and track the aiming point in his bomb sight. 'Course, this also gave the enemy gunners more time to track us. Shudder.

When approaching the IP, the three group leaders separated and spaced their groups so as to leave the IP in trail, without interfering with the ground track of the other two.

The group leader had already made sure that his C-1 Auto Pilot was switched on, warmed up and adjusted. Unlike the modern, one-throw auto pilot switch (think automobile cruise control device), our auto pilot had a multitude of controls: separate engaging switch for elevator, rudder and aileron controls; 9 trim adjusting knobs; and three sensitivity adjusting controls. Getting that early auto pilot working right was more of an art than a skill. Yet, a well maintained, and properly "tuned" auto pilot flew the airplane as smooth as silk.

This was vital. On the final few minutes of the bomb run the bomb aimer was flying the airplane through the servo switches that connected his bomb sight to the auto pilot.

Continued on page 6.....

### Hot Seat on a Bomber— New Video Tape



The late Ken Stone flew 25 missions as a Ball Turret Gunner 381st Group. His widow, Florice Stone, sent a copy of the tape

made by Ken before he died, describing the B-17 and crew functions. He also describes his experiences on the first Schweinfurt mission. The last 14 minutes are Official films of this mission. This is an excellent production. It sells for \$22.00 incl. S&H. Contact:

Florice Stone 12112 Arkley Dr., Garden Grove, CA 92840.

## B-17 (Wieder) Über Obersaxon—Continued

The bombardier wanted to have control of the plane as long as possible as that made his job easier and more precise. On the other hand, the pilot wanted to retain control of the plane as long as possible, as he flew the plane through evasive maneuvers with the auto pilot. Flak was always heaviest near the target. A really sharp bombardier, if given control of the plane for 3-4 minutes before bomb drop, would hit. A more cautious (or slower) one, needed 6-8 minutes—an interminable time when the flak is whistling around.

Now you have all you need to know to put yourself back up there with me at 26,000 feet approaching Lechfeld airfield on our run-in from the IP.

That is when things got dicey. I was fortunate in having a young, very sharp bombardier named Cusick on board. If you gave that guy 3 minutes on the auto pilot, he'd hit. I was still flying the plane, taking fairly intensive evasive action to throw off the flak gunners and all was going well. Then to my utter dismay, I saw the group ahead of me miss its bomb release point, turn south, make a 180° turn back to the north and start another bomb run directly across my path. Given more time and distance, I could have made wide S turns to slow our forward progress to let that guy get out of the way. We were too close for this.

At the same time, I did not want to make a second pass over the target—that's really asking for it. I said to Cusick, "I'll make a very tight 360° turn, out here on the run-in leg if you can pick up the target and hit it like that." Good ole Cusick, said: "piece of cake!" It wasn't and I knew it. He did a magnificent recovery and put the bomb right on target—and I have the strike photos to prove it!

However, in those few minutes when Cusick had control of the plane, and I had nothing better to do than sit there having bad thoughts, I was struck by the certainly that in the next moment we were going to take a direct flak burst and go down in flames. This, I had never felt before or since.

There is a sequel to this tale. Many years later, swapping war stories with other pilots, I talked about this strong premonition of disaster. One guy said: "Nah. You have it all backwards. If you had continued your initial bomb run, you would have had it. The second try saved your bacon." Could be.

The thrills and chills of the day were not yet over. As the mission summary states, we lost two planes that day. Both were out of the group I was leading. Both losses were due to poor pilot judgment.

The second run put us badly out of proper position on the wing leader. I was using extra power to make up the lost time and my formation might have gotten a little loose. One pilot apparently thought his squadron lead was not close enough to the lead squadron. He pulled out of formation, flew out to one side, then up and over his leader, to try to slide into the slot behind me. He hit the prop wash of my wingman and lost control. His plane dropped and he 'sat down' on the right wing of a plane beneath him. The impact and the scything action of that guy's props cut off his tail section. He went down in an uncontrollable spin.

"Stormy," manning the top turret and facing aft saw the entire debacle, and lost his cool for one of the few times I saw him 'shook.' It went something like this: "Good God. That idiot is going to hit us, or somebody. Jesus, he's sitting

Continued next column.....

down on the other guy! Oh, sh--, there goes his tail!" I finally told him to pipe down and stay calm. But then, I could not see how close that idiot came to hitting us, could I? Easy for me to say keep your cool.

The 'sat upon' airplane was also in bad shape. He had to shut down both his starboard engines. He could not have flown back to England in that condition. Fortunately, we were only about 100 miles from Switzerland and Lt. Braund was able to divert to that sanctuary safely, saving his crew and plane.

Switzerland, like Sweden, remained neutral all during the war, and also like Sweden, received many American and British airmen in distress. But, you had better be in genuine trouble if you did go there. I'm sure that Lt. Braund passed this test with no trouble.

.....Walter M. Pickard

## Book Reviews

DIARY OF A PATHFINDER NAVIGATOR



John W. Howland

381st Bomb Group  
535th Squadron  
Ridgewell

91st Bomb Group  
314th Squadron PFF  
Basingstoke

### Diary of a Pathfinder Navigator

by John W. Howland, 91st BG/381st BG. Howland is an excellent writer and this is a book that gives you an in-depth education on what Navigation is all about, mission by mission. It is printed comb-bound with soft cover and is available from its author, at: 191 Parker Lane, Carthage, TX, 75633

**And Three Came Home** by Burdette H. Rausch, 91st BG, 322nd Sq., Tail Gunner. A remarkable story. Easy to read. Crew was split up initially for indoctrination. During this phase, the Pilot was shot down. The Bombardier was shot down. Engineer asked to be taken off flight status. Next pilot aborted nine times in a row. He survived the Aug. 17, 1943 Schweinfurt mission only to be shot down on Sept. 27, 1943 on the Emden mission. Remained a POW for the duration. Available from author at: 507 Chestnut St., La Port City, IA, 50651.



### The Best Seat in the House



John Robert Parsons

**The Best Seat in the House** by John R. Parsons, 91st BG, 401st Sq. Soft cover book tells Parsons' story in four sections: Wartime service, related pictures, POW survival, and life after the war, including remembrances by his wife, Mai. John passed away April 2, 1998 as reported in the July 1998 R.I.

John was Top Turret Gunner on the crew of W. F. Gibbons, in "Ramblin' Wreck," 401st. "All the thirteen mission I flew on were bad, but some were worse than others." The worst one was his last. His airplane was shot down Feb. 21, 1944 on the mission to Gütersloh (Achmer). He was in the high flight of the high (Composite) Group. [Ed.Note: I joined this flight when my element leader and right wingman were shot down and can attest to John's experience.] A great book. Contact: Mrs. Mai Parsons, 3504 S. 100 E, Lafayette, IN, 47905.



## Letters to the Editor

The following people have sent in material for publication which due to space limitation, we will not be able to publish in this issue.

**Dorice Lindsey** was a 14-year old girl living near Paris in occupied France during WWII.

**Robert F. Brubaker**, FM 324th- a long story about a ditching.

**Joseph Weinstock**, LM 324th, his own story, "Twas the night before Christmas- 1944."

**Ferd Koch**, FM, 323rd, mission report for Eshwegen, Apr. 19, 1944. Also can't remember how he got in and out of the BT 33 times.

**Luc Dewez**, AL, Easter Greeting from Belgium.

**Mic Hanou**, AM, Discussion on Nose Guns in B-17F.

**Robert Lammers**, FM, 322nd. Fantastic story of shooting down 10 FWs in :15 from the Radio Room gun.

**Steve Pena**, AL, Tower Museum, info re Scouting forces Plaque, and photo of new display case.

**Jim & Suzi Shephard**, AM, re 91st BGMA web site.

**Gordy Alton** from BC, Canada, seeking info about his father, Conald Merle Alton, TG, 323rd, Sept/Oct '43. Gordy's e-mail address is: <gordy@saltspring.com>

**Rosemary Struble Newkirk**, sister of Lt. Cleo C. Struble, KIA on mission to Emden, Sept. 27, 1943. Seeking information. Address is 1755 230th St., Sgt. Bluff, Iowa 51054.

**Norman L. Thompson**, FM, 401st, gives Editor ten lashes for giving wrong date on which he received serious wounds. The correct date is Dec. 30, 1942!!!! (You better be right, Norm.)

**Eric Dominicus**, AM, Belgium, laid some flowers on the grave of Bert Stiles, author of "Serenade to the Big Bird," at the American Military Cemetery at Neupre, Belgium.

**Everett Montgomery**, FM, 324th, sent in crew picture of Mike Banta's crew for publication in the R/I. Sorry, Ev, it wouldn't print.

**Carl Hoffman**, LM, 323rd, AKA "HoffCarl," was joyous as a C-47 lifted off the Middletown airfield on Apr. 29, 1999, the 54th anniversary of his liberation from Moosburg. Yes, he was flown out in a C-47!

**American Air Museum News**, advises their B-24 will be airlifted to Duxford on a C-5A. (I always knew it couldn't fly.)

**Roger W. Armstrong**, raconteur, author of "U.S.A. the Hardway," tells of recovery in a pond in Germany of a part from the last B-17 shot down in WWII believed to be a waist panel. (Be sure you spelled that correctly.)

**Chuck Galian**, FM, 323rd, now nearing his 55th anniversary of marriage, Chuck sent an aging newspaper clipping telling a wonderful story of how the 16-year old sister of his English wife-to-be, came to Royston to invite him to their home in London to "meet the family." Congratulations Chuck and Connie. That's a great story.

**Dr. Jim Scudder**, FM, 401st, wrote to correct the spelling of Navigator's name shown in the April 1999 issue of the R/I on the crew of "Winnie, Frank and Joe." It should be Manley W. Darsnek. He also asks if anyone know anything about pilots Ray T. Cable or John Werthman. Jim's address is P. O. Box 246, Troutdale, OR 97060.

**Arnold C. Hughes**, FM, 324th, writes to correct his squadron designation. The 324th is correct; not the 401st.

Continued next column.....

## Golded Wings

Continued from Page 8.....

● **Walter L. Ray**, FM, 441st, San Angelo, TX, May 18, 1998.

● **Harold R. Shelley**, FM, 323rd, Daytona, Beach, FL, April 26, 1999. Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on Paul Bull's Crew. He flew 36 missions, one more than required, in order to accompany his former Co-pilot, Tony Theis, on his first mission as First Pilot. He is survived by his wife, Evelyn.. Reported by A. W. "Tony" Theis.

● **James W. Thress**, FM, 324th, Lancaster, OH, April 23, 1998.

● **H. D. "Van" Van Cleave**, FM, 323rd, Emmett, ID, April 15, 1999 at the VA Hospital in Boise, ID. He fought a long and courageous battle against a horrible disease of emphysema. He is survived by his wife, Lois, two daughters and their husbands: Sherrill and Daryle Story of Eureka, CA, and Gary and Kay Lewis of Meridian, ID; five grandsons, five great grandchildren, two brothers and one sister. Reported by Gary and Kay Lewis.

## Hail and Farewell

### Letters to the Editor—Continued

**Earl Pate**, 91st BGMA Historian, asks if there is anyone who has information about two aircraft: 29711, LG-V, no nose art, no name, and 23073, "Lightning Strikes." They were part of the force attacking Nantes, Fr., 23 Sept '43 and the reason they landed at Bristol, England. Please contact Earl Pate directly.

**Henry C. Jensen**, FM, 324th, sent in a well-written article of what a person may be thinking after he has completed his combat tour while waiting for relocation assignment. I've read this piece and recall my own thoughts under the same circumstances. It is a good piece and worthy of publishing. It is still in the list of material for future publication.

**Mark Phillips** seeks information about his great-uncle, T/Sgt. Bill J. Wheeler who served in the 323 Sq. and is listed as MIA on Feb. 4, 1943, Emden. Wheeler is shown in Bowden's book, "Plane Names and Fancy Tales," to have been one of two survivors to have landed in the Zuider Zee. The aircraft was named "Pennsylvania Polka."

**Herbert Rickards**, formerly an EM in the Engineering Department of the 322nd Sq. recently found out about the 91st BGMA. He would like to hear from old friends and asked specifically about Hansel, Henryson, G. B. Moore, Gaylord and others. Address is 1101 Lincoln Blvd. North Cape May, NJ 98204, Tele: 609-889-143.

**Donald J. McBey**, FM, 323rd, was the Engineer and survivor on "Champagne Girl" that was the subject of an article in the January 1999 issue of the R/I. The airplane crash landed in Switzerland.

### Unpublished Submittals

The newsletter is first the medium of communication among the Staff, the membership at large, and the several other organizations and persons with whom the 91st BGMA is associated. The publication of articles or other media must defer to this prior requirement. Please do not despair if you have submitted material for publication and it has not been published. The backlog increases with each new edition. This is just as frustrating to the Editor as it must be for you.

## ***Folded Wings***

● **William T. Clark**, FM, 324th, Columbus, OH, Feb. 8, 1999, age 73. He was a retired Attorney for Nationwide Insurance with 37 years of service. In WW II, he served as Navigator in the 324th Sq. In a note to Asay Johnson, 91st BGMA Secretary/Treasurer, his wife, Jean, wrote, "He truly enjoyed the *Ragged Irregular* and was so glad to hear from you and all the veterans of the 91st Bomb Group. We were married 52½ years and have 3 grown sons, 3 grandsons and 1 grand daughter. We had a wonderful life together and I will miss him terribly." They met in 1946 at Moore General Hospital, Swannanoa, NC, where Jean was a therapeutic dietician in the Army Medical Corps and Clark was a patient. She closes with "Good luck with your 2000 reunion in Galveston."

● **John Gill**, FM, 324th, Brooklyn Park, MN, Nov. 13, 1998. Reported by his wife.

● **Richard D. Hallberg, Sr.**, FM, 323rd, N. Muskegon, MN, Aug. 6, 1998, age 74, after a long illness. He was married to the former Barbara Dausy in 1944. After the war, he worked as a Production Control Manager at Dresser Industries for 44 years, retiring in 1986. He was a member of VFW Post #446 and the American Amateur Radio Club. He is survived by his wife, 2 sons, 3 daughters, 3 brothers, 9 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

● **Edward Hofferber, Jr.**, FM, 322nd, Ryderwood, WA, April 12, 1998. Reported by his wife, Eileen, "he had been ill for quite a while and passed away peacefully."

He had served on the Boards of both Bellevue and Northgate Schools as President. He was a charter member and Past Treasurer of the Northgate Golden Flames, Past President of the Avalon-Bellevue Kiwanis Club, and an Elder, Deacon, Trustee and Treasurer of the Northminster Presbyterian Church. For his and Betty, his wife's, service to the community they received many awards and recognition including the naming of the Lincoln Elementary School playground, "Lancaster Playgorund."

For his service in WW II, he was awarded the DFC, Air Medal with 3 OLCs, and the Bronze Star. He was a member of VFW Post 2754, West View, PA. Reported by his son, William F. Lancaster, Jr., who added, "My father always looked forward to reading your Newsletter and was proud to have served with your Group."

● **Donald P. Marks**, FM, 401st, Countryside, IL, March 11, 1999, of lung cancer. Reported by his wife, Vivianne, "He was extremely proud of having served with the 8th Air Force, Bassingbourn, England, during WW II. He is buried at Fort Custer National Cemetery, Battle Creek, MI."

● **Donald A. McCarthy**, FM, HQ, Fair Oaks, CA, Feb. 28, 1999, age 74. McCarthy was Navigator on George Shoups' crew on "Skipper." His tour began November 1944 and continued to the end of the war. He remained in service for 22 years after undergoing Pilot Training and flew C-117s including a tour in Viet Nam, retiring as a Lt. Colonel. His death was attributed to Parkinson's disease. He is survived by his wife, Lorraine, of 53 years. Submitted by Jerome F. Ahl, Major, USAF (Ret), FM, 401st, of Westfield, WI.

● **Eli L. Muller**, FM, 323rd, Greenbay, WI, Mar. 11, 1999. He served on "909" and completed 35 missions between 1943-1945. He retired from the Greenbay Police Dept. after 35 years. He is survived by his wife, Maureen,

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

### **FIRST CLASS MAIL**

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### **LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU MOVE!**

#### **THE RAGGED IRREGULAR**

These Newsletters are 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 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 on or before the fifteenth day preceding 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.

● **Harry Klein**, 401st, Bassingbourn, England, November 17, 1998. As reported by Otto Meikus, Harry worked in the Combat Mess when he was with the 91st. He married while stationed at Bassingbourn and made the village his home. He leaves a loving wife, Nora, and two children, Liz and Geoff.

● **William F. Lancaster, Sr.**, FM, 401st, Bellevue, PA, August 15, 1998, age 81. He was the Assistant Vice President and Manager of the Trust Division's Tax Dept. of Pittsburgh National Bank from where he retired in 1980.

Continued next column.....

5 children, 9 grandchildren and 5 great grand children. Submitted by his wife, Maureen.

● **Francis ("Frank") E. Plyer**, FM, 323rd, Milwaukee, WI, Nov. 27, 1998, age 81. He graduated from University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and was an accountant formerly for Wisconsin Leather and retired from the City of Milwaukee. He belonged to the National Association of Accountants and the Teamsters International. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Ruth, 1 son, 3 daughters, 8 grandchildren, and special nephew and niece, Keith and Laura Carlson.

"Folded Wings" continued on Page 7.....