

The Ragged Irregular



322nd SQDN



323rd SQDN



Supporting Units



324th SQDN



401st SQDN

Vol 35 No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H)

July 2002

Toot Toot Tacoma in 2002!!!

Ed Gates Report #4



Mount Tahoma* and Friend

Tacoma, WA. Your ground crew has been busily working to get ready for the 91st BGMA's August "mission." Sure hope we have a record somewhat reminiscent of *Nine-O-Nine*.

Pierce County Executive, **John W. Ladenburg**, writes, "It is with great pleasure that I welcome the 91st Bomb Group to Tacoma-Pierce County for their reunion. We feel honored to have such a group visiting our area.

"Pierce County is in the midst of one of the most spectacular settings in the Pacific Northwest. We are nestled between the magnificent 14,410 foot Mount Rainier and the blue waters of the Puget Sound. Along with the beauty of the area, we have been experiencing a re-growth of Tacoma/Peirce County's major city, and Washington State's third largest municipality.

"Tacoma/Pierce County is a center of rich history, cultural activities, numerous visitor attractions and recreation opportunities—including Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Lakewold Gardens, 1890's Ezra Meeker mansion, Foothills Trail, various museums, performing arts groups, concert performances, and one of the longest suspension bridges in the world. We also have a wealth of diverse communities that offer a wide array of interesting shops and fine restaurants to satisfy all preferences. Your stay here is sure to be a memorable one."

Tacoma's Mayor **Bill Bartsma** wrote to us on June 25th reiterating, "On behalf of the Tacoma City Council and the citizens of Tacoma, it gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the members and guests of the 91st Bomb Group Reunion."

* "Mt. Tahoma" is the aborigine name for Mt. Rainier.

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Lest We Forget

Memorial Day Report from John W. "Jake" Howland.

Once again, Memorial Day is recognized at places of deep significance to all patriotic Americans and especially to veterans of the 91st Bomb Group. Jake Howland has once again submitted a detailed report with many photos in color of the ceremonies that have taken place in Europe and the USA honoring the memory of 91sters who fought a common enemy and gave "their full measure of devotion."

It begins with a list of the Cemeteries, and for each the number of former 91st members buried or listed on the Wall of the Missing, and the total.

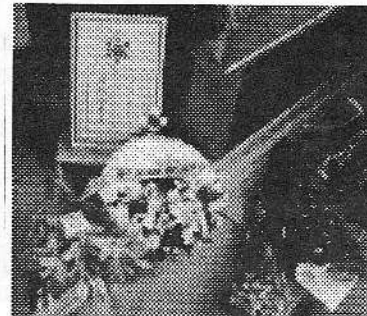
	B	WOM	TOTAL
Ardennes Cemetery, Belgium	114	0	114
Brittany, St James, France	4	21	25
Cambridge, England	36	67	103
Epinal Cemetery, France	2	1	3
Henri Chapelle Cemetery, Belgium	4	12	16
Lorraine, St Avoird, France	32	0	32
Luxembourg Cemetery, Luxembourg	14	4	18
Netherlands Cemetery, Holland	40	62	102
Normandy Cemetery, France	19	0	19
Opjuaen, The Netherlands	8	0	8
Rhone, Dragnignan, France	5	0	5
USA, family and military cemeteries	442	0	442
TOTAL	720	165	887

B=Buried, WOM=Wall of the Missing,

Maddingley -England



91st BG Wreath laid by
Vince Hemmings



EAAS Wreath Honoring 91st BG
laid by Peter Roberts

Traditional laying of wreaths: 91st BG's wreath laid by V. Hemmings at Wall of Missing. East Anglian Aviation Society wreath laid at the altar by Peter Roberts.

"Memorials" Continued. on page 4.....

The President's Corner

This has to be the last time that I get to write this column. After the Tacoma meeting, you will have a new president and vice presidents. May I thank you for letting me serve in both jobs these past eight years. I've appreciated the honor, but more, the actual doing of the job.

One of the satisfactions of being part of the employed world which is difficult to replace after retirement is the feeling of personal usefulness. That is not as easy to satisfy as one might think. For example, for three years, I was a docent at the local science museum. One day each week, I would be assigned a new group of fourth graders. The kids were fun and enthusiastic—also noisy. The hard walls of the museum reflected every sound several times and I would go home each time with a headache. Several other attempted volunteer activities also proved difficult or impossible. That hasn't been true for the offices I have held with the 91st BGMA. For one thing, one gets so much help. If someone calls or writes with a problem, there is always a perfect place to refer the problem. There's Earl Pate if the problem is one of Group history. There's Mike Banta and his eager band on the net for special problems and Paul Limm for sage advice or the fact that no one else remembers. Phil Mack has done a superb job with the Ragged Irregular. Our web site is maintained by its creators, Jim and Susie Shepherd. Jake Howland has coordinated our foreign activities. He has had lots of help from our European friends like Ron Putz, and Eric Dominicus in Holland, Michel Lugez in France, and Vince Hemmings. David Crow, and the EAAS in England. There are others I should mention, but my memory is not as good as Paul's.

To top that off, I've received many notes and letters of appreciation. Part of the reason for this is that our members are extremely polite. Part of the reason is that Ace Johnson is not only a great Secretary-Treasurer, but because of the nature of the job he has, fields all the complaints. All in all, the jobs I've had have much to recommend them. You might consider saying yes when next you are asked to run for office. Let me thank you again for giving me the opportunity.

Bob Friedman.....

Ed Gates Reports Status of the Turner Book

I was going to entitle this *mea culpa* in hopes that many of you would have forgotten your Latin, but Phil Mack assured me you never miss a beat. So here it is - confessions of a "perfectionist."

Those of you who sent materials, articles and info to Turner Publishing for the "History of the 91st" or pre-paid for copies have rightfully been concerned by the delay in getting the Book published. In defense of Turner, it seems they received contributions slowly and in less quantity than they had hoped. Phil Mack and I were asked to "proof" the first draft in late 2001 - and sign-off for the 91st BGMA. Phil got his comments out by the end of the year with some reservations.

From there on, I confess, it was my fault for adding a lot of text (increasing the size of the book by nearly 50%,

Continued next page.....

91ST BGMA OFFICERS 2001-2002

PRESIDENT
Robert H. Friedman
6015 Valkeith
Houston TX 77096-3832
Tel: (713) 729-2255
FAX: (713) 729-7380
<bobnjoy@iapc.net>

1st VICE PRESIDENT
Edward C. Gates
13311 16th Ave. Ct. S.
Tacoma WA 98444
Tel/FAX: (253) 535-4246

2nd VICE PRESIDENT
Harold E. Johnson
2021 Porter Way
Stockton CA 95207-4035
Tel: (209) 477-0071
FAX: (209) 472-9569
<hjnsn0005@aol.com>

HISTORIAN
Earl Pate, Jr.
104 Skyview Dr
Hendersonville TN 37075
Tel: (615) 824-7909
<ep91bg@mindspring.com>

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Asay B. Johnson
590 Aloha Dr
Lake Havasu City AZ 86406-4559
Tel: (928) 453-3114
FAX: (928) 453-6370
<ace91bgma@rraz.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>

Ed Gates Reports

Continued.....

ravaging a lot of duplicated photos, calling on Joe and Jennie Harlick for nearly 50 new photos for the Book, and drawing on some of your contributions to the 91st web site. Had it been sold as "Memoirs" of a few guys, I might not have been so concerned. To produce a "History" without properly crediting the work of "Bud" Evers, "Curly" Havelaar, and including at least something about missions, like Hamm, the two 1943 Schweinfurt raids and a few others, seemed absurd. You are welcome to verbally bop me for my choice to try to produce a more complex Book rather than sign-off and save a few months.

Phil and I received the corrected page proofs on 28 Jun 02 from Turner. We reviewed it on the 29th and sent the corrections off to Herb Banks, editor (since Feb 02) for Turner the following week. Herb believes that they will have the Book in your hands and in our PX before the Reunion. We hope it is a volume you will be proud to show to your friends and family. We did our best!

Edditorial

The following is quoted in part from a Command & General Staff College 2001 graduate currently deployed with forward elements of CENTCOM HQ in Kuwait at a formal military service honoring three fallen comrades:

"As the bugler slowly played TAPs, and as we stood there at rigid attention rendering crisp salutes to our fallen comrades, I could not help but reflect on the steep price that those three gentlemen paid to secure our freedom.

"We paid tribute in a moment of silence to remember the 9/11 victims. We saluted the American flag flying at half-mast while the national anthem played. Standing amongst brothers-in-arms, like the ancient Greeks, the Minutemen of the American Revolution, and the citizen soldiers of World War II before me, I realized that I too have been called to serve the nation in her time of peril to defend a righteous cause. We have been attacked without provocation; the mission now is to defend our homeland against those who seek to do us harm."

[We combat veterans of the 91st understand this and are proud to be included in honoring our fallen brethren.]

Toot Toot Tacoma in 2002 Cont. from Page 1

The International Museum of Glass will hold its grand opening on July 4-6 and has agreed to stay open until 6:30 pm on Friday, Aug. 30th, especially for us in connection with our "Nite on the Town." We think our town will let you know that we enjoy having you here! Our welcome will be 'warm' only in the sense of affection—remember evening temperatures in the last week in August will be in the 50s. We expect day time in the high 70s, low humidity and little likelihood of rain—in short, a typically gorgeous Great Northwest week.

Unfortunately, we had a few glitches in our pre-Reunion info, as you may have noted. Memorial wine glasses will have Bassingbourn spelled correctly—I hope. If you tried to reserve discount fares on Alaska Airlines (with new non-stop flights to SeaTac from Boston and Washington, DC) you realize the ID Code in the Bulletin was wrong. The R. I. had it correct at CMR 5679. I managed to goof-up the telephone number for the Best Western Executive Inn which should be 253-922-0080 and I should have listed local numbers for the Day's Inn Fife 253-922-3500, if you cannot get into the LQ.

If you decide to live it up and go to Victoria, Canada, before the Reunion, the local number for the Day's Inn is 250-386-3451 and the price of rooms at Paul's Motor Inn 250-382-9231 which is 12 blocks from the waterfront is \$39 U.S. plus tax, not \$139, if you have an Entertainment Book. Gordy Alton has arranged for a carriage ride on Monday afternoon when you arrive and we will have a special evening at the Blethering Place for you at a very reasonable price with terrific food and ambiance.

Kent Ramsey and Boeing's Sandee Baker have laid on some special events at the Museum of Flight on Wednesday which should stir some nostalgia, get a nice lunch and still keep the price down. We plan our not so gala (but free) reception in our Hospitality Room at the La Quinta for Wednesday under the guidance of one of our many 91st BGMA professional experts.

As for the train trip along Mt. Tahoma (aka Mt. Rainier) foothills on Thursday, the Salmon Bake will be on Mineral Lake which is described as "the last undeveloped lake in the region." Plan for the cool evening. So far, it appears that about half of you intend to do the whole thing (visit McChord AFB's Air Mobility Command, picnic on Mt. Tahoma and do the train trip), while the others come back from McChord for a bit of rest and/or Hospitality Room, and then go to the scenic train trip and Salmon Bake.

After doing the LeMay Antique Auto, (etc.) Show on Saturday, we hope you will be able to party really late at the Reception—maybe even after 9 pm. Wow! We will have dinner music from the 1940s by the Blue Jays, a 4-piece combo. There will be a cash bar. We still have not firmed up our "program," but expect to have a speaker, followed by music for an hour or so for your listening and/or dancing pleasure.

You all come! Bring friends and sign up some new 91st BGMA members.

Reunion Agenda Summary

Mon. 26 Aug Pre-Reunion Trip to Canada. Depart La Quinta Hotel at 9:00 am. Special Registration open 08:00-08:45 am, La Quinta Lobby.

Tues. 27 Aug Regular Registration, 3:00pm-7:00pm. La Quinta Lobby, Wed thru Fri, 28-30 Aug, 2:00pm-5:00pm as required..

Continued next Column.....

Wed. 28 Aug 9:00am-4:00pm. Visit Museum of Flight, 2:00pm-5:00pm. Free shuttle from LaQuinta through the port area to downtown Tacoma. 2:00pm-4:00pm Visit 91st Hospitality Suite, La Quinta (Oak Room) free snacks and wine tasting by Hoodsport Winery and whatever from the bar. Dining is on your own, however, the La Quinta will have a special menu for 91sters. Limited shuttle service between hotel and dock area food services and the Ruston Way restored waterfront and park. Native American operated Riverboat Casino also available with transportation offered by the Casino. The 91st Hospitality Suite will reopen after dinner.

Thurs. 29 Aug 9:00am-1:00pm McChord AFB, Command Briefing, Tour C-17 transport and automated freight loading system. Possibly visiting B-1 bomber. 1:00 pm Return to Hotel or visit Mt. Rainier Nat'l Park. 6:00pm Mt. Rainier scenic railway dinner train or dinner on your own.

Friday, 30 Aug Morning: Business Meeting. or Ladies visit Lakewold Gardens.

Business Meeting starts at 9:00am. Members who attend the meeting will receive a \$5 coupon for food or drink at the LaQuinta.

Lakewold Gardens Our ladies and others may leave La Quinta at 9:15 am to tour Lakewold's "stunning formal gardens, woodlands area, aquatic displays, waterfalls and gardens galore including rock, alpine, knot, kitchen, shade rose and fern. Lakewold features rolling lawns, topiary, statuary, formal parterre beds and a 230 foot herringbone pattern brick walkway which leads to the Tea House." Wagner House "is a splended example of noted landscape architect Thomas Church's residential designs." Lunch will be at the restored Procter District or Reston Way waterfront. (\$25/person for bus, tour and lunch.)

Buffet lunch at La Quinta (\$8.00/person)

SQUADRON & MERSEBURG MISSION PICTURES - 1:00-3:00 PM (Prints will be available by mail at \$5.75 for 5"x7" or \$6.50 for 8"x10" plus \$1.00 S&H. Either color or black and white. Order at the Reunion.)

"Night on the Town" - (well, until 9:00pm - Mom won't let us be out after dark). Great opportunity to visit the Washington State Museum, the Tacoma Art Museum, the brand new International Museum of Glass and the glass bridge, Grassi's Café and the merchants who are working with us. Shuttle downtown from 2-9pm. **Wine tasting and Buffet** at Harmon's Brewery with a cash bar for our own 91st BG labeled beers, may be on a revolving basis (100 capacity). Be sure to count the steps on the way up so you don't crash land on the way down - we're not accustomed to being "bombees." (\$15/person for shuttle & Buffet). LaQuinta will have a 91st BG "special" Pork Loin with Kalua Sauce if you want to dine in plus the menu.

SATURDAY, 31 AUG - LEMAY ANTIQUE CAR SHOW AND BANQUET.

NOSTALGIA BREAKFAST - Chow line from 7:30-9:00am. Like old times you can relish chipped beef on toast (aka s-o-s), dried eggs, dried milk, orange marmalade, etc; especially for Permanent Party who had to eat their own cache of real eggs or you who wonder how good we had it. L.Q. declines to serve on metal trays so purists bring your own mess kit (\$6/person) Complaining is OK. From here it will be uphill.

LE MAY ANTIQUE AUTO SHOW - Shuttle buses begin at 08:30 so you can stay as long as you want; you can easily spend 8 hours for the cars, other vehicles and numerous buildings of other antiques. It has the largest collection of antique autos in the world and a couple of London double-decker buses.

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Hoot Toot Tacoma

Cont. from Page 3

There are numerous recreated antique decorated offices and shops like printing, auto repair, gas station, doctor, dentist, etc. Sort of like a poor-man's Williamsburg of the 19th-20th century. Also steam vehicles. (\$8.00/person) (Travel on your own will require a separate admission charge and difficult parking.)

SHUTTLE - 2-5pm: Free shuttle service will go from L.Q. thru the Port area to downtown.

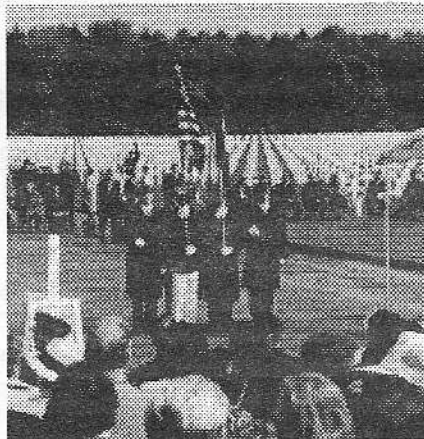
BANQUET - ETD from LaQuinta at 6:30 pm for the Sheraton Hotel Conference Center. Cash bar in the Conference Center lobby. Dinner offers choice of Prime Rib of Beef au jus, Chicken Oscar (Washington chicken breast topped with Dungeness Crab meat and Bernaise sauce) or Baked King Salmon in lemon cream sauce. All meals include side dishes, dessert, choice of red or white wine, monogrammed 91st BG wine glasses and all tips and taxes. Please be sure to make your selections on the *Registration Form*. (\$36/person for transport, dinner and wine; special handicapped access will be arranged. Individual travel is not recommended because of limited and inconvenient parking.)

MEMORIALS

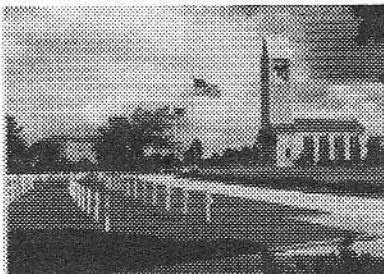
Lest We Forget

Continued from Page 1

Ardennes—Belgium. Eric and Inge Dominicus volunteer to look after the interests of the 91st BGMA at the U. S. Military Cemetery at Ardennes, Belgium, have once again provided an extensive photo-graphic report of the 2002 Memorial Day service. In this cemetery, 114 airmen from the 91st BG are buried. Space in this publication does not permit the display of the full set of outstanding photographs that have been sent to us.



U.S. Color Guard at Ardennes-2002

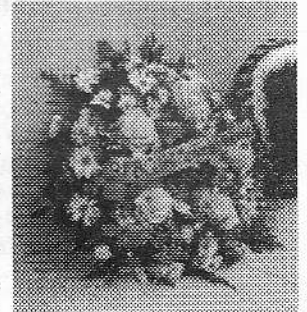


Brittany, St James, France

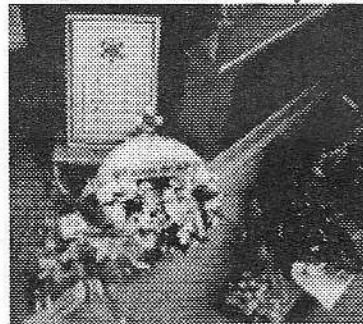
Britanny—France. In the small community of St. James, northeast of Rennes, on the eastern end of the Brittany Peninsula, and south of the Cherbourg Peninsula, four airmen are buried and the names of 21 airmen are listed on the Wall of Missing.

Memorials Continued next Column.....

Cambridge—England It has been the practice for many years that a wreath be placed at the American Military Cemetery at Maddingley, near Cambridge on behalf of the 91st BGMA. For many years this service was faithfully performed by 91st veteran Otto Meikus who remained in England after WWII. In declining health, more recently asked that someone else place the traditional wreath in his stead. Vince Hemmings has taken on that duty for Otto in recent years.



91st BGMA Wreath



EAAS Wreath

In addition, the East Anglian Aviation Society, which retains a close relationship with the 91st BGMA through its operation of the Basingbourn Control Tower Museum, from their own funds, also honor the 336 former members of the 91st who are interred and the 67 former members who are listed on the Wall of Missing by the placing of a wreath at Maddingley. We thank them for their fidelity.

Margraten—Holland. 40 airmen are buried here and 62 are listed on the Wall of Missing.



Ron Putz presents 91st BGMA wreath at Margraten



Mourning Woman of Margraen

Opijnen—The Netherlands. Eight crewmen lie buried in a small cemetery in the village of Opijnen. They were shot down on a mission to Kassel on 30 July 1943 flying "Man-O-War," OR V. Eight of the crew who bailed out were fired upon by the fighters that shot down the airplane and were killed. The pilot and Co-Pilot landed some distance away and survived.

Each year the small group attend a ceremony honoring the dead airmen. This year they included the Mayor, the Vice-Consul of America in Amsterdam, Lucy Corell of the American Womens' Club of Amsterdam and Messrs. Devries, DeKock and Van Arkel, eyewitnesses of the crash. Eric Dominicus also attended representing the 91st BG.

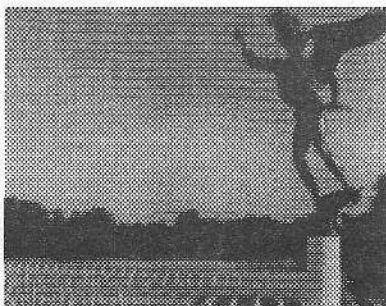
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Memorials

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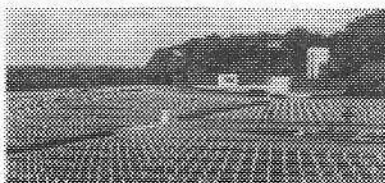
Epinal—France. Epinal is a small town in northwestern France, about 45 miles southeast of the city of Nancy. Two airmen are buried here and one is named on the Wall of Missing. No photo available.

Henri Chapelle Cemetery—Belgium. Four American airmen are buried here and twelve others are listed on the Wall of Missing.



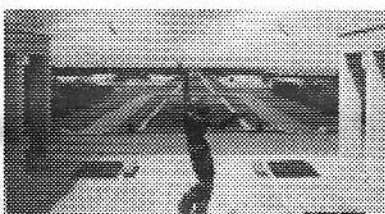
Henri Chapelle Cemetery

Lorraine, St Avoird—France. A small town northeast of Nancy and close to the Saar River. Thirty-two airmen are buried here.

Duchy of Luxembourg.

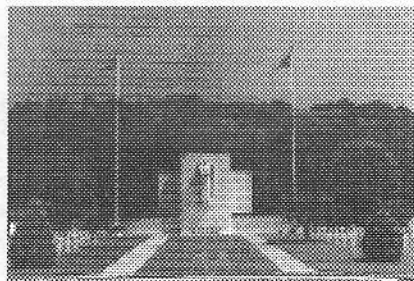
Luxembourg Cemetery

Buried here are fourteen American airmen. Four more airmen are listed on the Wall of Missing.



Normandy Cemetery

Normandy, France. Nineteen American airmen are buried here.



Rhone, Draguignan, France

Rhone—France.

Five airmen are buried in this cemetery located in southern France west of Nice near the Cote d'Azur.

Marianne de Guerre—Godmother of War

Ariane Georges-Villers is a Belgian lady who tends the grave of a dead American Lieutenant, John W. Wilson, Pilot of "Hellspoppin," who was KIA 17 April 1943 and is buried at Ardennes American Cemetery and Memorial at B-4121 Neuville-en-Condrus. She made contact with Mike Banta, keeper of the "91st Ring" who sent out word of her interest in finding any of Wilson's family. Soon, that tiger of research in the arcane world of military records, Lowell Getz, responded to her request which is presented here, not just because it makes an interesting story, but to pay tribute to both Ariane Georges-Villers for her selfless devotion and to Lowell in appreciation for his outstanding support.

Continued next column.....

Marianne de Guerre

Continued.....

"Hello Ariane:

In going through my "out files" I came across this msg with an indicator it had not been sent. It was sent off on 11 November [2001]. I was having problems with my computer then but assumed it had been sent. The computer finally died the next week and I just now have my new one up and running—thus, found this. Did a version come through? If not, sorry for the problem. Hopefully, my new system will be more explicit as to whether a msg has been sent or was hung up in the server.
/signed/ Lowell"

I will attempt to locate the family of John Wilson. However, may be impossible task as we have no record of his home town, only that, as you said in you msg, he was from Iowa. I will search additional records to see if any have his home town listed.

I talked to a pilot from his squadron today. He was shot down on the same mission. However, he said that since Wilson's crew had just arrived at Bassingbourn, he actually had not met him prior to briefing that morning. Oscar was very upset at the time, and still is, that the squadron sent out four new crews with almost no combat experience on that mission. Three of them were shot down. However, three others from the same squadron that were experienced completed the mission and returned to Bassingbourn.

What follow is the sequence of events involving planes of the 401st Squadron as the Group fought its way from Bremen back to the safety of the North Sea.

The Low Ssquadron

No. 070, "Invasion 2nd"

While over the target "invasion 2nd" took flak hits and was attacked by German fighters. Three fighters came in head-on at 1200 o'clock level. They shot off completely the front of the No. 2 engine. The left wing and fuselage were also hit, turning the bomber into a fiery inferno. "Invasion 2nd" was on her way down.

Cpt. O'Neil rang the bail-out bell and called out over the intercom for the crew to leave the aircraft. The ball turret gunner, T/Sgt Benedict B. Borostowski, came up into the fuselage from the ball turret and went to the partly open waist door. The door was jammed and would not open further. The waist gunners, S/Sgt. William B. King left waist, and Eldon R. Lapp, right waist, were sitting in front of the door, unable to squeeze out. Sgt. Borostowski stepped up and one at a time put a foot between their shoulders, and in turn, pushed both gunners through the narrow opening.

The others in the rear of the aircraft had already left. The tail gunner, S/Sgt. Aaron S. Youell, dropped through his tail escape hatch. The radio operator, S/Sgt. Charles J. Melchiondo, and the flight engineer, T/Sgt Harry Goldstein, went out through the bomb bay. There was no one left to push Sgt. Borowski out. So, he went to the tail escape hatch and dropped out. The rest of the crew, including Capt. O'Neil and the Co-Pilot, 1st Lt. Robert W. Freihofer, bailed out through the nose hatch. The bombardier, Cpt. Edwin R. Bush, detached the Norden bombsight and tossed it out the escape hatch before following the Navigator, Cpt Edwin M. Carmichael, through the opening. "Invasion 2nd" crashed landed itself in an almost perfect landing on the ground near Oldenburg. Five planes were left in the low squadron.

Continued on Page 6.....

Marianne de Guerre

Continued from Page 5....

No. 459, "Hellsapoppin" (John W. Wilson, pilot)

The next 401st Low Squadron plane to go down was "Hellsapoppin." Three or four minutes after the target there was a very hard jolt under the left side of the plane, close in to the fuselage. An anti-aircraft shell had exploded just under "Hellsapoppin." Flak ripped into the left front side of the aircraft, flaking off chunks of metal from the fuselage and throwing them through the interior of the plane. At the same time, three feet of the right wing tip was blown off by a flak burst. A one and one-half foot hole appeared in the nose compartment and all the nose window Plexiglas blew out. There was fire in the left wing and nose compartment. The radio room became engulfed in fire from broken oxygen lines.

The pilot, Lt. Wilson, was wounded in the head and the co-pilot, 1Lt. Arthur A. Bushnell, in the right eye, both legs, left arm and right hand by flying aluminum. In the nose, the bombardier, 1Lt. Harold Romm, was hit in the left leg by flak. Earlier, before the target, Lt. Romm had been hit in the same leg by a machine gun bullet during an attack by an FW 190.

In the top turret, the flight engineer, T/Sgt Norman L. Thompson, felt the jolt when he looked out, saw the left wing on fire. He had just seen a fighter off the left wing going after a plane below and was afraid it would come back up at "Hellsapoppin." The enemy fighter was about 15 feet too low for Sgt. Thompson to deflect his top turret guns to get off a burst. Since the intercom was shot out, Sgt. Thompson was not certain what was happening to the plane. He stepped down from the turret and went into the cockpit. There he saw both pilots with their oxygen masks off and blood pouring out from under their helmets. He assumed both were dead. Sgt. Thompson had not heard any firing from the gunners since "Hellsapoppin" had left the target. He figured they either had been killed by flak and fighters or were too seriously injured to move. From the intensity of the fire, he knew "Hellsapoppin" could explode any second. Sgt. Thompson took a final glance at the instruments to ensure the plane was still in level flight. He went back to the bomb bay and opened the doors, which still operated.

Almost immediately after Sgt. Thompson bailed out, the plane broke in two at the radio room. Four others somehow or other managed to escape the aircraft, Lts. Bushnell, Bardon and Romm and the radio operator, T/Sgt. Howard A. Earney. All were wounded. The rest of the crew remained trapped in the falling aircraft. "Hellsapoppin" crashed 20 miles south of Bremen. Four planes were left in the Low Squadron.

* * * * *

No. 172, "Thunderbird"

"Thunderbird" also was hit hard by flak over the target and limped along only a few minutes longer than did "Hellsapoppin."

Thunderbird took two direct hits on the No. 3 and 4 engines. The right wing was set ablaze immediately with burning oil. There was also fire in the radio room and bomb bay. Lt. Beasley hit the fire extinguisher switch. Nothing.

The ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. James L. Branch, looked up into all the fire and knew "Thunderbird" was in serious trouble. He figured it was time to get out. Sgt. Branch had been hit in the corner of an eye with a piece of shrapnel and blood covered the eye. He called Lt. Beasley over the intercom and asked if he could come up into the fuselage. Lt. Beasley told him he could. After getting out of the turret, Sgt. Branch grabbed a fire extinguisher and went up to the radio room and bomb bay, but could not extinguish the fires. Lt. Beasley then asked Sgt. Branch to go to the rear

Continued next column.....

of the plane to see if everyone was out. He had already rung the bail-out bell. Sgt. Branch went to the rear of the fuselage and saw that the tail gunner, S/Sgt Johnnie Cagle had bailed out through the tail hatch. He then told the waist gunners "to get back there" to the waist hatch, and went up and told the radio operator, T/Sgt. Jay M. Franklin, "get your ass back there and bail out." Sgt. Franklin started back, but passed out in the door of the radio compartment, apparently from lack of oxygen. Sgt. Branch and the right waist gunner, S/Sgt. Everell L. Creason, picked him up and threw him out, assuming he would come to and open his chute when he fell to where the oxygen was adequate. He did. Sgt. Creason bailed out and Sgt. Branch called up to the pilot to tell him everyone else was out and he was leaving. After leaving the aircraft, Sgt. Branch opened his chute and looked up. He saw "Thunderbird" rise up on its back, turn up on its nose and go straight down to the ground.

While all this was going on in the rear of the aircraft, the flight engineer, T/Sgt Mark L. Schaefer, came down from the top turret and stood in back of the pilot and copilot to assist them in getting control of the aircraft. He saw Lt. Beasley push the control column all the way forward and then pull it all the way back. No response! The controls were shot out. Lt. Beasley and the copilot, Lt. McCain, were getting ready to get out of their seats and snap on their chutes as Sgt. Schaefer went down to the nose hatch and bailed out.

As the action had begun to develop, the bombardier, 2Lt. Mathew Michaels, who was on his first mission, saw puffs of black around the aircraft. He thought to himself, "This must be what they had told us about." Just then, "Thunderbird" took direct hits in the right wing. Lt. Beasley rang the bail-out bell, which Lt. Michaels mistakenly took to be only a warning. While Lt. Michaels was waiting for the second bail-out bell to ring, the navigator, 1Lt. Harry D. Sipe, headed for the nose hatch and bailed out. At that time a fighter appeared along side the bomber. Lt. Michaels fired at him with the side gun but missed. "Thunderbird" immediately afterwards started spinning downward. A case of .50 caliber machine gun ammunition pinned Lt. Michaels to the top of the nose compartment. He heard glass breaking as his head crunched against one of the windows. A fighter came in on "Thunderbird" from head on, blowing away part of the nose with 20mm cannon fire. The next thing Lt. Michaels knew he was floating free of the plane. Either he had been blown out the nose when the 20mm cannon shells hit or was stunned by the explosion and did not remember going out the nose hatch. He was still fairly high up and pulled his rip cord in time to float safely to the ground.

Lts. Beasley and McCain must have been locked into the plane as it nosed over and dived downward. Their bodies were discovered by the Germans in the wreckage of "Thunderbird." "Thunderbird" crashed about 20 miles southwest of Bremen. Three planes were left in the Low Squadron.

* * * * *

No. 574 "Sky Wolf"

Although "Sky Wolf" had been hit hard on the bomb run and the No. 1 engine was on fire, Lt. Stoffel kept her in position over the target. The bombardier, Lt. Coppage, toggled the bombs with the rest of the Squadron. As soon as the Group turned off the target and was just beyond the edge of the flak barrage, more enemy aircraft jumped "Sky Wolf." Another 20mm shell hit the nose throwing Plexiglas into the face of Lt. Coppage, causing severe, profusely bleeding wounds.

Continued on Page 7.....

Marianne de Guerre Continued from Page 6.....

The navigator, 1Lt. John F. Segrest, Jr., who had also suffered wounds in both legs and his shoulder, told Lt. Coppage he needed immediate medical attention and should bail out. He then helped Lt. Coppage out the nose hatch. Although alive when he left the aircraft, Lt. Coppage did not survive.

Lt. Segrest then went up into the cockpit to help Lt. Stoffel fly the plane. They flew along for about five minutes when more fighters came at them. "Sky Wolf" took a direct 20 mm cannon shell hit that knocked out all the controls. Lt. Stoffel rang the bail-out bell and said to Lt. Segrest, "Let's go." Both officers went down to the nose hatch and bailed out.

The electrical system to the ball turret was not active and the gunner, Sgt. Carl H. Quist, could not rotate around to get out. He remained trapped in the falling aircraft. The tail gunner, Sgt. Matthew C. Medina, had not been heard over the intercom for some time. He apparently was either dead or so badly injured he could not bail out. Sgt. Medina also went down with "Sky Wolf."

"Sky Wolf" crashed 10 miles south of Aurich, in Ostfriesland, Germany. Two planes were left in the Low Squadron.

* * * * *

No. 391, "Rain of Terror"

"Rain of Terror" was hit by flak as well as by Me 109 and FW 190 fighter cannon fire over the target, setting the aircraft afire. The bombs had just dropped and the toggler, Sgt. Zedoneck, was turning the plane back over to the pilot, Lt. Walker, when more flak hit the aircraft. The bomb bay doors were still open. Lt. Walker and the copilot, F/O Robert A. Vetter, managed to keep the plane with the formation in spite of the fire. On the way to the coast, a fighter made a pass over the top of the bomber, wounding the top turret gunner, T/Sgt. Robert Flanagan. The tail gunner, S/Sgt Nick Sandoff, most likely was killed during this attack. The radio operator, T/Sgt Gust E. Collias, saw him slumped over in the tail.

As "Rain of Terror" continued towards the North Sea, the fires became more intense and Lt. Walker and R/O Vetter no longer could keep her in the air. Lt. Walker told Sgt. Collias that there was fire in the cockpit and for the crew to leave the aircraft. The aft crew bailed out, Sgt. Collias going out through the bomb bay. Sgt. Collias did not see the left waist gunner, S/Sgt Donald J. Snell, in the plane when he bailed out. He assumed Sgt. Snell had already gone out the waist door. Whatever the circumstances, Sgt. Snell did not survive. The ball turret gunner, S/Sgt Raymond C. Ottman, came up from the turret and went out the waist hatch. He had been hit in the buttocks and back during the fighter attacks.

The toggler, Sgt. Zedoneck, and the navigator, 1Lt. Roy W. Scott, bailed out the nose hatch. Sgt. Zedoneck landed in a tree, severely straining his back. German farmers spotted him and turned him over to the military. Lt. Scott fell softly to the ground about two miles SW of Bremen. The two pilots remained with the plane in spite of the increasing intensity of fire within the aircraft. "Rain of Terror" continued losing altitude. The pilots finally made a crash-landing on the beach north of Norden. They both survived to become POWs.

All 401st planes were gone now from the Low Squadron. Only the 323rd aircraft, No. 399, "Man-O-War", flown by the 91st Bomb Group crew, was left. Lt. Walker formed up with another Squadron for protection. The Low Squadron was no more.

91st BG Gunner Awarded DFC

—58 years Later

Frank Farr sent in the following write-up that was distributed on the 91st BG E-Mail Ring.

On vacation in my old stomping grounds in Central California, I came across this item in the Modesto "Bee" and thought some of you might find it interesting, especially if the "Destiny's Child" referred to was our "Destiny's Child."



Destiny's Child—Shot Down July 20, 1944

During a bombing raid over Germany July 20, 1944, Sgt. Anson Riley stayed in the crippled B-17 bomber and kept shooting at enemy fighters so his comrades could parachute to safety. Riley broke both legs when he finally jumped and spent months in prisoner of war hospitals.

The four crewmen who survived with Riley always said he was the hero of that mission. Thursday, [June 16, 2002] he received an overdue honor when the military gave him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The 77-year old Lathrop man, who has cancer, accepted the medal from Maj. Gen. Ganiel [sic] J. Gibson at the California National Guard facility at Stockton Metropolitan Airport. About 100 relatives, friends and military personnel attended the ceremony.

The award recognizes acts of heroism or extraordinary achievement in the air. It is ranked just below the Air Force Cross and the Medal of Honor.

A prior attempt to secure the award for Riley in 1968 went nowhere when the paperwork apparently was destroyed in a fire.

About a year ago, with Riley's health failing, close friend Dena Leonardo of Manteca decided to give it another try. She looked up two fellow crewmen who flew in the B-17, known as Destiny's Child and gathered letters that Riley had written to his mother from prison camps.

She filed the application through Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Tracy. Later she also sought help from Chief Warrant Officer Arleen I. Wattel of the California National Guard, who assists aging veterans in getting honors they deserve.

Wattel said she spent months tracking down the paperwork, finally learning that it had been given to the Army, passed to the Air Force and then lost in the "black hole" of bureaucracy.

In April, a frustrated Wattel told Riley's story to Brig. Gen. Dennis M. Kenneally of the California National Guard headquarters. Kenneally appealed directly to the Pentagon

Continued on Page 8.....

Letters to the Editor

Continued from Page 7

and the award was approved within weeks.

"I promised Anson that we would get this medal, and I promised his crew that he would not be forgotten," Wattel said at the ceremony.

Riley said he accepted the cross on behalf of his buddies, living and dead.

"You never find a relationship in your life with a man or a woman that you have with your military comrades," he said. "When you know someone is willing to die to keep you alive, there are not too many people like that."

During the air war against Nazi Germany, the B-17 Flying Fortress crews had a life expectancy of 15 missions and, during the fiercest fighting of the war, only 18 percent of the planes returned to their bases in England.

The squadron was approaching targets over Leipzig, Germany, when 50 to 60 enemy fighters attacked. Enemy fire knocked out two engines, set the bomb bays on fire and killed two crew members.

Although the aircraft was severely damaged, Riley remained at his station, firing his machine guns at the swirling fighters, destroying at least two of them, his citation reads.

As the other seven crew members parachuted, Riley continued to lay on protective fire.

Only after the others were safely out did Riley leave his station and strap on a parachute. As he jumped from the rear, the plane went into a dive and he struck a spinning piece of the tail, breaking his legs.

Five of the crew landed safely on the ground and soon were captured.

Taken to a POW hospital, Riley was placed in a body cast from his neck to his ankles. Then he was liberated in April 1945. He weighed 102 pounds.

"If you got a piece of black bread with lard on it, you were lucky," Riley said, but he added that he held no grudges toward his captors. "I felt I was being treated as fair as anybody. I knew they didn't have food to give themselves, so how could I condemn them for that?"

Riley was born in Buffalo, N.Y., stayed in the military for three more tours of duty. He was married for six years, with no children, while serving in postwar Europe. He left the service in 1957 and moved to Lathrop, where his mother had settled.

Leonardo said she has talked with two of the surviving crew members, and they think the award is well deserved. "They both thought he should have gotten it back then," she said.

Her son, Buck Leonardo, believes Riley's tenacity to keep fighting that day is part of his character. "He is real interesting to talk to," Buck Leonardo said after the ceremony. "He is talking to all those people. He's loving it."

[Ed Note: We add our congratulations for a long overdue award. Thank you for your dedication.]

Fourth of July Greetings

From Mike Banta: God Bless the U. S. A. Happy 4th in one nation "under God." There were no atheists among us in B-17s under attack.

From Harold and Dot Lasch: Greetings 91st Bomb Group Heroes and friends. We Salute each one of you for your sacrifices and the contributions you have made to keep our beloved nation free..... We remember those of our group who did not make it back with the rest of us and we humbly pray and ask God to "hold them in the palm of His hand." Let us celebrate the birth of our country and taking a bit of the text from 2 famous quotations, we reiterate those words again, "under God, with liberty and justice for all" and "this government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."



Along the street there comes
A blast of Bugle
and a roll of Drums
Hats off, the flag is passing by

From Joe and Jenny Harlick:

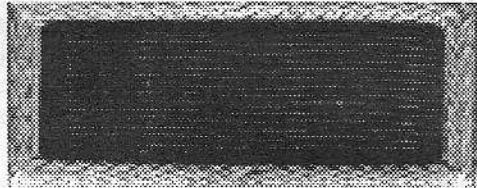
From George Parks

George Parks, founding member of the 91st BGMA and former head of the Western Division when the organization was split East and West, sent in a page from the 8th AFHS Doolittle Chapter publication dated March 2002. It is a warning about DD214 that should be of concern to all retired military personnel.

Briefly, the concern is that military records that are filed with the local County Court Houses are not private, but they are public information accessible to just about anyone. One retiree's identification had been stolen. It was then used to cash a check made out to a Muslim/Arabic sounding name. The thief was a lawyer with access to several thousand names, IDs, etc..

Distinguished Unit Citations

The 91st Bombardment Group (H) was awarded two Distinguished Unit Citations, the first presented below for the mission to Hamm, Germany, on 4 March 1943 and the second on Page 10 for the mission to Central Germany [Oschersleben] on January 11, 1944. The former citation is taken from an e-mail message on the 91st Ring of Mike Banta as submitted by Gordon Alton, Saltspring, BC, Canada. The second was a copy of the original order as found in the archives of the Editor of the RI.



Citation

The 1st bombardment Division (H) is cited for extraordinary heroism, determination, and esprit de corps in action against the enemy on 4 March 1943. On this date, the 91st Bombardment Group (H) took off from home base in England, as scheduled, to attack the railroad marshalling yards located at Hamm, Germany, in one of the first operations conducted by heavy bombardment units against targets within Germany. This unit departed the English coast on course and a few miles out over the English Channel encountered thick haze, high cloud, and icing conditions reducing conditions continued to deteriorate to such an extent that only the determination and skill of each pilot in maintaining formation was responsible for the negotiation of the flight across the English Channel. Three other bombardment group comprising the force engaged in this military operation were forced to abandon the mission because of the adverse weather encountered. Over enemy-occupied Holland, weather conditions improved and the 91st Bombardment Group (U), consisting of sixteen B-17 aircraft, continued on toward the assigned objective. Vigorous attacks by enemy fighters began almost immediately. In the face of vicious opposition from an estimated 50 to 75 fighter airplanes of the German Air Force, this unit demonstrated the utmost courage and determination, fighting doggedly to maintain course and position en route to the target. Although four B-17 aircraft were lost to enemy action and heavy anti-aircraft was met from enemy ground installations, the 91st Bombardment Group (H) successfully reached the marshalling yards at Hamm, Germany. In the face of opposition from enemy ground defenses, this unit tenaciously maintained the bomb run and bombs were dropped, inflicting extensive damage on the German installations. The 12 surviving aircraft, having successfully completed their primary assignment and having destroyed 13 enemy fighters probably destroyed 3, and damaged 4, continued to maintain formation integrity and completed the return flight to home base. The conspicuous courage and esprit de corps exhibited by the 91st Bombardment Group (H) in the face of extremely adverse weather conditions and opposition from the enemy, which resulted in casualties consisting of 1 killed, 5 seriously wounded, and 40 missing in action, were responsible for the successful bombardment of one of the first high priority objectives assigned to bombardment forces in the European Theater of Operations. The actions of this unit reflect the highest credit on the 91st Bombardment Group (H) in the European Theater of Operations. The actions of this unit reflect the highest credit on the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and the armed forces of the United States.

Continued next page.

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 50)

WAR DEPARTMENT

Washington 25, D.C. 17 June 1944

E X T R A C T

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XI...BATTLE HONORS: 1. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (sec.I, Bull. 22, WD, 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (Sec. III, Bull 11, bull. 22, WD, 1942), citation of the following unit by the Commanding General, Eighth Air Force, in General Orders No. 355, 11 Ma 1944, under the provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, is confirmed. The citation reads as follows:

The 91st BOMBARDMENT DIVISION (H), id cited for extraordinary heroism, determination, and esprit de corps in action against the enemy on 11 January 1944. On this occasion the 1st BOMBARDMENT DIVISION led the entire Eighth Air Force penetration into central Germany to attack vital aircraft factories. After assembly was accomplished and the formation was proceeding toward Germany, adverse weather conditions were encountered which prevented effective fighter cover from reaching the 1st BOMBARDMENT DIVISION. Taking full advantage of the relative vulnerability of the lead division, the enemy concentrated powerful forces against it. The scale of the enemy attack is graphically indicated by the fact that 400 encounters with the enemy aircraft were recorded by units of the 1st BOMBARDMENT DIVISION. The gunners met these continuous attacks with accurate fire, and the division continued toward the targets as briefed where bombs were dropped with excellent results. On the return trip the enemy continued to concentrate his efforts on the 1st BOMBARDMENT DIVISION. Figures of enemy aircraft claimed by our gunners indicate that the heroism of the division inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in the air as well as on the ground. Two hundred and ten enemy aircraft the largest number ever claimed by a division of the Eighth Air Force for any one mission, were confirmed as destroyed, 43 probably destroyed and 84 damaged. The division lost 42 heavy bombers and many of those which returned were heavily damaged. Four hundred and thirty officers and enlisted men failed to return, 2 were killed, and 32 others wounded. The extraordinary heroism and tenacious fighting spirit demonstrated by the 1st Bombardment Division in accomplishing its assigned task under exceptionally difficult conditions reflect highest credit on this organization, the Army Air Forces, and the armed forces of the United States.

By order of the SECRETARY OF WAR:

G. C. Marshall
Chief of Staff.

Official:

J. A. ULIO,
Major, General
The Adjutant General.

CERTIFIED TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

Richard H. Harris
WOJG, USA

Frank Donofrio aka Mr. Memphis Belle

[The following information was provided by Dr. Harry Friedman, Immediate Past President of the Memphis Belle Association, as published April 14, 2001 in the Memphis Commercial Appeal written by Deborah M. Chubb.]

On a bright blue day in November, despite having use of only one arm, following a stroke, Frank Donofrio raised the American flag over the future home of the Memphis Belle.

After 33 years of campaigning to preserve the historic B-17 bomber, Donofrio was assured it would have a proper permanent home in a new museum on 10 acres in southeast Shelby County.

Donofrio, founder in 1967 of what became the Memphis Belle Memorial Association, died Friday night in the Houston care home where he had moved last month to be near his daughter, Marilyn Harden. He was 87.

"Frank Donofrio has been called 'Mr. Memphis Belle' said Belle Assn. President Dr. Harry Friedman. "It is

through his efforts over the years that the Belle has been memorialized not only as a historic aircraft but more importantly as a symbol of the sacrifices made by thousands of young men fighting in World War II."

Col. Robert Morgan, pilot of the Memphis Belle, said "I consider Frank to be a crew member of the Memphis Belle. He was truly one of my very best friends. Frank saved her for Memphis, and it's up to the good people there to see that his dream continues to flourish."

Donofrio was born in Passaic, NJ and grew up in Rockford, IL, the son of Italian immigrants. He dropped out of high school, married Mary Minelly in 1936 and learned metallurgy while working for a company that in 1947 transferred him to Memphis.

In the 1950s, with used equipment, he founded his own metal processing businesses—Mid-South Stamping and Engineering Co. on Presidents Island.

Donofrio himself exempt from military service in WWII had two brothers who served, one, Art, died in the invasion of Iwo Jima.

It was the memory of Art's sacrifice that prodded Donofrio for years as he drove past the forlorn Belle, parked at the corner of Central and Hollywood.

He founded the Memphis Belle organization that helped raise more than \$400,000 to "Save the Belle" by building it a permanent home in 1987, an open-air hard-fabric canopy on Mud Island.

"He'd talk to perfect strangers about the Belle, pull out a brochure," his son Harden said. "I'd say, 'Dad, you don't even know these people.' He was always down there, trying to sell the Belle. He did a really great education job."

In 1973, at age 59, Donofrio earned his pilot's license. He was one of President George Bush's Thousand Points of Light and was appointed by Gov. Don Sundquist as a Tennessee Colonel-Aide de Camp.

Continued bottom of next column.....



Col. Morgan and Frank Donofrio, 1997

Golden Wings Continued from Page 12

● Leslie E. Halcott (continued)

All survived but remained Prisoners of War until the end of the war in Europe. Les is survived by his widow, Ann Halcott and their only son Brian Halcott. Submitted by Tom Heller, FM 322nd, Kansas City, MO, who adds: "Please comment that he was one fine Pilot, a fine officer and a friend to the crew, especially the Ball Turret gunner."

● **Warren J. King**, FM 401st, Ellwood City, PA, February 23, 2002. He was Radio Operator on the crew of Millard H. Jewett. He flew in late 1943 and completed 25 missions.

● **Eugene Letalien**, 401st, Dec. 26, 2001. He was Right Waist Gunner on Lt. Howard Weber's crew, on "Destiny's Child." He completed his first tour of 30 missions and was on his 2nd tour when the war ended. He is survived by a son and daughter. Submitted by Jack Paget who adds, "My crew of 'Destiny's Child' lost 3 crew members within 6 months time. They were Russell Ruth, Ball Turret Gunner, Letalien, Right Waist Gunner, and Howard Weber, Pilot, in that order." [Paget was Tail Gunner.]

● **James T. Lundy**, 324th, Philip Palmer, 324th, informs us that Lundy passed away. He was a Bombardier on Don Garret's crew and went overseas in 1942 from Walla Walla WA.

● **Dr. Jim T. McKenzie**, Mar. 22, 2002, Fayetteville, AR. J. Addison Bartush, 324th Sq. sent in the obituary for Dr. McKenzie. He was a personal friend of Bartush and his wife. Dr. McKenzie, a graduate of the University of Arkansas and Tulane University where he received his MD, saw service as a flight surgeon for the 91s BG in WWII. He was an Elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Hope, and a member of Kiwanis International for over 50 years, having perfect attendance for 37 years.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Mary Wood Ross McKenzie. He is survived by daughter Janet Nix, two sons, David L. and William L., four granddaughters, three grandsons, and eight great grandchildren.

● **Harry F. Smith**, 324th Sq., Mar. 20, 2002, Los Angeles, CA, after a long battle with Alzheimer's and emphysema. His nephew, Steve Smith of Las Cruces, NM, writes: "He flew in the mission lead plane over Schweinfurt, Aug. 17, 1943. He told me that after they came off the target, they were flying alone. Looking at the diagrams of the formation, I can see he was right. I wonder how they got through."

"Most of his missions were aboard 'Oklahoma Okie' (Schweinfurt) and the 'Black Swan,' though his picture on the website is with 'Lady Luck,' a plane they only flew once or twice. His pilots were Weitzenfelt and Maurice A. Berg. He was my favorite Uncle. He always had an interesting story to tell, and I loved to listen to them all. Born and raised in Wheeling, WV, he went on to become an electrician in a can factory in Los Angeles. He gave me a place to stay until I found a job in L.A. I visited him whenever I could."

● **Andrew D. Suppo**, FM 322nd, Mar. 9, 2002, Denville, NJ, Age 79. He was a Radio Operator in the 91st on a lead crew. He completed 30 missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In civilian life he was a quality control coordinator for Walter Kidde Co. for 38 years before retiring. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth H., daughters Susan Vankan and Jennifer McGowan, a step-daughter Betsy Cox, a brother Stephen, a sister Betty Yuhas and four grandchildren. He was interred in the Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

(Cont. from previous page.) Donofrio was sure that a new organization, called the Memphis Belle War Memorial Foundation, headed by executive director Brent Perkins, could raise funds for the new Memphis Belle Memorial Park for Second World War, Harden said.

Golded Wings

● **Jerome Ahl**, FM 401st, Slinger, WI. No other information given.

● **David Gaston Alford**, Hq., 91st BG, San Antonio, TX, May 20, 2002. Lt. Col. Alford was known to many combat crews for his pre-mission briefings until he was shot down returning from a mission to Frankfurt, Feb. 4, 1944. Information provided by Earl Shaefer at the request of Mrs. Alford.

● **Whitman G. Breed**, FM 401st, Norristown, PA, Feb. 20, 2002. Friend Robert Moore of Harleysville, PA, reports that "Whit," who had been living at Spring City Veterans Home, died of emphysema complicated by pneumonia. His ashes will be interred June 22, 2002 in Adams, MA.

His second wife, Marie A. passed away Dec. 7, 2001. For further information, Moore can be reached at: 305 Stormfield Dr., Harleysville, PA 1938., <moore@geinet.net>, or by phone at (215) 256-4236.

● **Stanley W. Burmaster**, 401st, Circleville, OH, Feb. 23, 2002, Age 83. The obituary, sent in by his son, Norm, reports that he was credited with 25 missions and received the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters and the Presidential Unit Citation. He kept in touch with his Co-Pilot, Harry Neumann, of Glen Rock, NJ. A Group picture was sent to the 91st web site. He is survived by his sons Wayne and Norm, three grandchildren, a brother.

● **Robert B. Compton**, LM 322nd, Levelland, TX, Mar. 30, 2002, of degenerative heart failure. Reported by his cousin, Ms. Margaret McLain, Hart, TX.

and he also assisted the University of Texas Paleontology Department on a volunteer basis.

His wife of 56 years, Martha, preceded him in death. He is survived by his four daughters, Ranie Gran, Jane Jett, Marni Dunn, and Kacy Crans, RN; six grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. Information was sent in by fellow crew member Walter S. Carpenter, FM 324th.

● **Frank Donofrio**, AL, Memphis, TN, April 12, 2002. Donofrio was the founder of what became the Memphis Belle Association. Please see related article on Page 10.

A memorial service was held on Memorial Day weekend on Mud Island River Park, site of the Memphis Belle Museum.

Frank's wife died in 1973. He also leaves his son, Tom, of Nashville, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

● **Paul Fishburne**, LM 322nd, Palos Verdes Estates, CA, May 19, 2002 of pneumonia. The following was submitted by Paul's grandson, Justin Bowen of Redondo Beach, CA. "Paul was a pilot and squadron commander of the 322nd during WWII. He recalls flying "Chief Sly," although as squadron commander he had no regular plane. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross three times, once for leading a raid on Hamm, Germany, that is detailed in Lowell Getz book about the 91st, and won the unit its first Presidential Citation. [Ed. Note: The mission is also well-documented in Havelaar's book, "The Ragged Irregulars of Bassingbourn," and in the April 1999 and January 1999 issues of the *Ragged Irregular*.]

"Fishburne remained in the Air Force after the war, serving as an advisor to the Taiwanese Air Force before returning to the States. He served as a test pilot at Edwards Air Force Base in California, and an Aeronautical Engineer at Los Angeles Air Force Base. He retired from the military in 1963 after 23 years of service at the rank of Colonel. He

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

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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.

● **Robert E. Crans**, 324th, Austin, TX, May 4, 2002, Age 80. Crans entered the Army Air Corps in 1943, flew 30 combat missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He remained in the Air Force for a full career of 30 years, including being shot down over Soviet territory in 1958 and held in a Communist prison until later released. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his service in Viet Nam and retired at the grade of Lt. Colonel.

In Austin, Crans was active in the University Hills Optimist Club. He introduced beep-ball programs for the blind,
Continued top of next column.....

then had ten years with the Douglas Aircraft Company in the Los Angeles area.

"He is survived by his two daughters, Beth and Brenda, and two grandchildren, Justin and Kristen, who all miss him very much. Colonel Fishburne was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on June 14, 2002."

● **Leslie E. Halcott**, 322nd, April 25, 2002, Age 79. He was Co-Pilot on unnamed B-17, 42-97483 on the 8th Air Force's first mission to Berlin. His ship was shot down by fighters at the IP. The crew bailed out at 23,000 ft.

Continued on Page 11.....