

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd Bomb Sq.



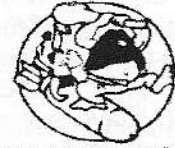
323rd Bomb Sq.



Supporting Units



324th Bomb Sq.



401st Bomb Sq.

Vol. 36 No. 1

91st Bombardment Group H

January 2003

BAD NEWS-GOOD NEWS

Major Paul D. Brown

In an apartment in Orange NJ, an attractive brunette was seated at a desk the day the United States bombers raided Vegesack, Germany for the first time. There were tears in her eyes and she was writing to her husband, Major Paul D. Brown. The major was leading the attack on Vegesack but she had no way of knowing it. All she had was unconfirmed reports that he was "missing in action" and before her were three touching letters of condolence she had received from friends. Not knowing what to think or what to believe, she had cabled her husband the day before

"HEARD REPORTS OF YOUR DEATH PLEASE CABLE"

Today she was writing "I got little sleep last night. I feel much better this morning although my eyes are so swollen I can hardly see and I am too weak to stand. If only the cable would come from you. I can't help but be worried and in doubt in spite of the facts and yet I know deep down inside that you're alright - otherwise I wouldn't be writing you this. The next day, Paul cabled her:

"LIVING FOR YOU"

Then a newspaper phoned telling of her husband's exploit.

"Your cable came through at last", she wrote. "I'm not ashamed to say I breathed the most thankful prayer of my life. Those words:

"LIVING FOR YOU"

are the sweetest music in the world for me." The raid her husband had led on the Premier Vulkan shipbuilding yards at Vegesack was a momentous one, so successful that it marked a turning point in the history of the Eighth Air Force. **The Eighth had come of Age.**

Winston Churchill sent his congratulations on the "effectiveness" of the attack.

Lt. Gen. Frank Andrews, Head of the ETO, declared that "Bombing such as that on Vegesack justified our faith in Strategic Air Action".

Brig. Gen. Newton Longfellow, of the Eighth Bomber Command wrote a letter commending the men for maintaining a sustained bombing offensive through the "trying months", and praising them for their development of new serial techniques and for making adaptations in equipment in order to increase effectiveness. To this Col. Wray added: "This was the best raid yet on Germany and the pictures show the Irregulars **"Smacked them in the eye again"**. If we can only continue the good work, there won't

be much pleasure in being a German within range of our ships, **KEEP IT UP!**

Probably the most significant statement came from square-jawed **Maj. Gen. Ira Eaker**, Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force. On March 24, 1943, he called the press into his office and in a dry dispassionate voice he said: "The raid on Vegesack last Friday will be historically recorded as the conclusion of the experiment. A new chapter is beginning in which it is our task to build up a force to join the RAF in a full-scale offensive against the German war machine. We know now that we can go to any Target in Germany and beat off the fighters on the way there and on the way back. (by 1st Lt. Carlton Brechler)

Col. Paul D. Brown, retired from the Air Force in ceremonies at Robbins AFB Georgia, January 31st 1968. He received the Silver Star for leading the first raid on Vegesack, Germany, March 18, 1943, and the Distinguished Flying Cross as Task Force Commander on the first Bremen Raid, April 11th 1943. Col. Brown was serving as Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans. Headquarters, Continental Air Command at the time of retirement.



Col. Wray and Major Paul D. Brown

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Happy New Year to All

I received a nice "Welcome Aboard" letter from Peter Roberts, Chairman of the East Anglia Aviation Society, who maintains the Tower Museum at Bassingbourn. Among other things, he reiterates their desire to work with us to preserve the memory of the 91st Bomb Group and specifically the Prop Memorial. I have responded to him as well as to some of our other friends in England. Our new Officers are off the taxiway - if not yet roaring down the runway at full throttle. We had our first telephone conference call on 9 November. At least I benefitted from the idea of sharing. Following are some of our priorities. As agreed in Tacoma, your officers are accepting written proposals for a:

2004 Reunion site until February 2003

Check the October Ragged Irregular - Page 8 - top of the right column for places you might consider as a reunion sight. We decided meeting with the 8th Air Force would not successfully continue with our comradery. If we have not received a viable proposal by 1 February 2003, we will probably invite Armed Forces Reunion, Inc. To manage it for us at one of the 20 or so sites where they offer services in the East. If you have a preference for: MILWAUKEE, BOSTON, DAYTON, PHILADELPHIA, WASHINGTON DC, NORFOLK, CHARLESTON SC OR PENSACOLA let me know by postcard by the 4th February 2003.

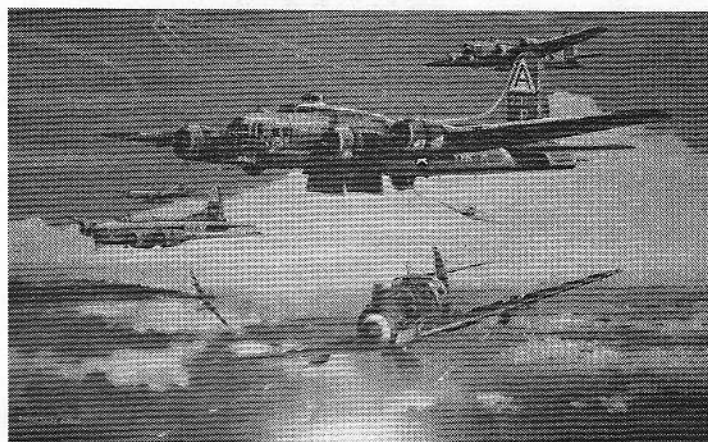
The long Range Planning Committee appointed by Past-President, Bob Friedman, gave us some thoughtful input at the Tacoma meeting of the new officers. We believe it was a worthwhile contribution. It is now up to us - your elected officers - to assume this responsibility. As noted in the October Ragged Irregular, we will be looking at possible By-Laws Revisions to further this.

In our conference call, your officers voted unanimously to: **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUNDING AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PROP MEMORIAL AT BASSINGBOURN** which Paul Chryst, Peter Roberts of the EMS and many others have encouraged. Tony Montalvo regrets that his health will not permit him to continue with the Memorial Committee. I have asked Jake Howland to work with your officers in this matter along with coordinating cemetery presentations. IRS questions can be resolved by establishing a fund in the US from which payment for needed repairs can be made. We now have \$1,100 in the Memorial Fund to which about \$600 accrues annually (\$1 from dues) plus gifts which help defray the cost of Memorial Day Wreaths among other things. We have invited Paul Chryst to Contribute the money he has collected to this fund.

(continued in next column)

"The Ruhr Valley Raiders" that were donated to us by Bailey Art at the Tacoma Reunion offers us a terrific opportunity to use the proceeds from their sale to add to the Memorial Fund. Your officers decided to offer the lithos for \$85 for the unsigned litho and \$135 for those signed by 14 members of the 91st BG with brochure. (Both prices include shipping). You can order them from me with checks made to the "91 BGMA". If we are able to auction or raffle 6 of them and sell the others, we will raise about \$4,000. If you wish to add something to the purchase price of a "Ruhr Valley Raider's" litho, we would not reject it, or you can make a direct donation to the Memorial Fund by sending it to Ace Johnson. Before our brand new R.I. Editor, Steve Perri, goes into shock, I'll quit.

Ed Gates



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The Eighth Air Force Historical Society 2003 Reunion

October 14th through 19th at the Sheraton Hotel
Colorado Springs, CO

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society 2004 Reunion

October 5th through 10th at the Weston Crown Plaza
Kansas City, MO

WEB SITES: The following web sites are active:

WWW.91bombgroup.com

WWW.B17sam.com

WWW.bombsqd323rd.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR & MORE**Kudos to Phil Mack**

It's hard to believe that six years have raced by since you were elected editor of our newspaper. Probably not for you, with all the work you had to do, but for us veterans of the 91st who wait expectantly for the next quarterly issue of the excellent newspaper you so competently edit. When things go well because things are done well we tend to forget to tell those responsible how much we appreciate their efforts. Well, now is the time for all of us to let you know the admiration we have for you and the work you have done. Six years is a long time at our ages and each day we spend for our beloved 91st is a precious amount of the time we have left on this beautiful planet God has given us. You offered us six years of this priceless time freely and pleasantly in full measure, pressed down and flowing over. We pray for your good health and many more happy years. Thank you, thank you, thank you. **MIKE BANTA, 91ST RING MASTER**

To Phil Mack from Harold Kiouss

A "Thank You" is not a great reward for all of the time and work you have devoted to the post of R.I. Editor and for all of the pleasure and bittersweet memories you have recalled for so many of us "old" 91sters.

There are tears in my eyes as I write this and when I think of all the efforts you have exerted to cause us to remember when we had the honor to serve with the 91st and the honor to be a part of the battle to preserve peace and freedom for our country and the world.

As I have read the R.I. over the years, I also think of the thousands of brave young men who did not survive the battles and who gave all of their tomorrows so that we could have our todays and tomorrows. So, on behalf of a lot of "old" 91sters and for myself - **THANK YOU !!!**

From Clive D. Stevens-Suffolk, England:

It was with deep sorrow that I read Jack Gaffney's e-mail, telling of the "long last flight" of Nick Bankovsky and Harry Hovermill-Both 401st Bomb Squadron ground crew.

Although I never met Harry, I met with Nick and Mary on several occasions and always enjoyed his company very much. I spent 2 weeks with them in Florida in 1992 and we had some wonderful times.- something that as an 18 year old foreigner to the States, I will always remember with great affection. Nick was losing his eyesight back then and could no longer see pictures or read letters. Subsequently, he felt it appropriate that all his photographs from his time with the 91st should be entrusted to me so that they would not be lost among everything else when the time finally came. Well, sadly the time has finally come, and it only seems like yesterday that the news came through of Nick's wife, Mary, taking her long last flight as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer any veterans that may read this mail the opportunity to have copies of these original pictures made. They are nearly 200 in total and many, to my knowledge, never having been published. Although the bulk of the pics naturally show some of the 401st ground crews, there are other pics

concentrating on the nose arts of the 91st Fortresses.

I did copy many of the pictures for Ray Bowden some years ago. Anyway, if you think some of the pics will be of interest to you please let me know. I don't want to part with the collection but I would be happy to copy pictures. Incidentally, I am doing a talk on the 91st BG here in East Anglia in November, to raise funds for some WWII buildings to be restored. I will have all of my memorabilia etc. on show for the evening in question.

To conclude, Nick Bankovsky was a man who stood for everything the 91st BG represented. To my knowledge, he hardly ever missed a reunion, particularly in the early years. He was one of the first men to arrive at Bassingbourn and Kimbolton and amongst the last 16 men to leave the base in 1945. So long buddy, you will be sadly missed by all who knew you and Christmas will not be the same without the Bankovsky Christmas card above the fireplace.

E-mail address for Clive Stevens: B17clive@aol.com

To Steve Perri - From Vince Hemmings:

I cannot remember which year you and I met, certainly in the 1990's when we were looking at the Capt. Clark Gable photograph in the Museum and you told me that it was you standing next to him. Wonderful. May I congratulate you on your appointment as Editor of the R.I. and wish you every success.

RAY BOWDEN has a new web site at:

www.usaaf-noseart.co.uk

He's writing a new book,

"Tales to Noses over Mersberg Luana" and would like information from anyone who flew on any of these missions

For order form, click on website above

To Ace Johnson 11/26/02

Caroline and I have moved to Air Force Village II in San Antonio. We were residents of Charlotte NC for 32 years prior to the move. We departed Charlotte on 01 September. Work at both ends prevented us from attending the reunion in Tacoma. Asay, if it wasn't for you and a few like you including Paul Limm, our association would have folded years ago!! Here's a BIG THANK YOU!! Sincerely:

"Dusty" Hoffman

5100 John D. Ryan Blvd.Apt1510

San Antonio TX 78245-3506.

(Ace thought that many of Dusty's friends would like to know that he has moved.)

This issue marks the beginning of my first year as Editor. Its going to be hard to fill Phil and Rudy's shoes - I'm just a little guy, but I sure will try. I would appreciate any articles and comments you can send me. **Wish us Luck!!!**

Steve & Nancy Perri

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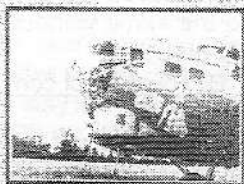
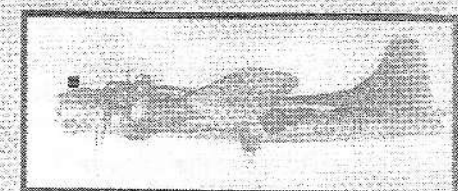
BOB KELLEY OFFERS POSTER OF "MY BABY"

Bob Kelley of the 322nd wrote us the following:

My navigator, Alton Koroli, who died several years ago, didn't talk about the war much to his family. Several months ago his son-in-law wrote me for information and pictures of our training and our being shot down in

"MY BABY" on September 5, 1944 and our evading, with the help of the French Underground. I supplied him with what he wanted.

Since he is a graphic artist, he created this 11" x 16" Poster. I've sent copies of it to survivors and family of the members of the underground and to the Mayors of various cities involved. Our crew was the 17th one to fly in "My Baby". If anyone who flew this aircraft or crewed it, (never located the ground



This is a 11" x 16" poster that I created for the 322nd BG. It is a tribute to the crew of the B-24 Liberator that was shot down on September 5, 1944. The poster is a tribute to the crew of the B-24 Liberator that was shot down on September 5, 1944. The poster is a tribute to the crew of the B-24 Liberator that was shot down on September 5, 1944.

Below is a list of the names of the crew members of the B-24 Liberator that was shot down on September 5, 1944. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position.

The names of the crew members of the B-24 Liberator that was shot down on September 5, 1944. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position. The names are listed in three columns: Name, Rank, and Position.



crew), I'll gladly send them a copy.

If interest write: **Bob Kelley** Phone 530-275-2828
4786 Vallecito St. Shasta Lake CA 96019-93

REUNIONS

If a viable proposal for the 2004 reunion is not received by February we will probably invite: "Armed Forces Reunions inc." to manage it for us at one of 20 or so sites in the East. (See "Presidents Corner Page 8). Below is a list of our past Reunion Sites - maybe these will stir up some good memories and ideas for 2004.

LIST OF OUR PAST 91 BG REUNIONS

1967	July	Memphis TN
1968	June	Denver CO
1972	July	Anaheim CA
1974	June	Valley Forge PA
1976	July	Colorado Springs CO
1978	July	Memphis TN
1980	September	San Diego CA
1982	September	Dayton OH
1984	September	Colorado Springs CO
1986	September	Tampa FL
1988	September	Chicago IL
1990	August	Seattle WA
1992	May	Memphis TN
1994	July	Oklahoma City OK
1996	August	Tucson AZ
1998	August	Savannah GA
2000	November	Galveston TX
2002	August	Tacoma WA

The Sign of the Bull

by Chuck Galian

The summer of 1940 stands out as a major change in my lifestyle. It was a revision from civilian times to barking commands of militaristic ways. My basic twenty one dollars pay per month, minus deductions, contained no elastic qualities to stretch over thirty day periods. Our essential sundries were normally purchased in the base PX store at payday. These supplies had to last until the next time the eagle made his next scheduled flight overhead. The habit of smoking used a fair percentage of our scarce dollars. There were always the few who managed to have shortages which resulted in "mooching" as we called this typical happening in the service.

One slight change in our supply slowed most of the scroungers, a few of us started to create our own cigarettes. We purchased small sacks of flaky material and practiced the art of rolling our needs. It took hour of patience to perfect a halfway decent looking facsimile of a LUCKY. I finally achieved my goal after many trials with the loss of most of the loose ingredients. The end product was not a picture of perfection, however, it was usable.

The insignia of a new roller showed on the dangling tag of the string on the cloth bag, usually in the breast pocket of the fatigue jacket. The paper trade mark picture of the then famous BULL DURHAM was distinctive. There was some question whether the product represented a strong tobacco or the animal responsible for manufacturing the habit forming weed This was of no consequence since it did produce smoke.

The weeks of marching, indoctrinations, tests and shots finally came to a halt with a possibility of a weekend pass to visit the folks. I looked forward to being involved in a real home-cooked meal once again, also to relay my experiences since leaving for the Air Force.

Upon finishing a huge Sunday dinner, I went out to the back porch swing with my Dad for a talk. Trying to act nonchalant, I went into my act of flaunting my mastery of creating a hand made smoke. Pop extended his hand and asked to look at my sack of "Bull". Slowly he took a leaf of paper and proceeded to twist the best looking item I had ever seen. This couldn't be! It had to be an illusion since he was a non-smoker. Questioning of this unknown talent revealed his ability to do the unbelievable. In his younger days, as a new immigrant, he rolled cigarettes for fellow boarders unable to perform this task. I left bragging to others in the future.

From Whit Hill:

Memories of explosion at the 92nd BG.

"I may be wrong, but there was a man in the Tower, Richard Basnaw, of the 92nd BG who was reading a book and eating from a box of Fig Newtons that night. A moment before the explosion, he accidentally knocked the box to the floor and, as he bent over to pick up the box, the tower glass was blown out. I believe he was unhurt.

He and I met at Chanute Field in 1942 and again, on the Queen Elizabeth on the way home after Germany fell.

MEMORIES FROM THE PAST



Sgt. Orlow Notstad's four children always knew their father had served his country during WWII and that he had been stationed in England and worked as a member of a ground crew that serviced B-17's at Bassingbourn. Jim, his son, now a pilot with Northwest, Barbara Bergum, the director of nursing at Mendota Mental Health Institute, Jeff, who runs the family dairy farm in Christiana and serves on

the Cambridge School Board and Bonnie Selje, a program assistant in the engineering department at Central Wisconsin Colony also recall their dad mentioning he had worked on the Memphis Belle.

What they didn't know until 2001, more than 20 years after their father's death, was that he had kept a small trunk filled with memorabilia from his four years in the Army's 8th Air Force.

After his enlistment in July of '41 he was sent to Scott Field IL for basic and then on to Newark NJ to the Casey Jones School of Aeronautics. He was in the same class as Steve Perri, ball turret gunner of the Delta Rebel #2 and now current editor of the Ragged Irregular.

Years later, in July of 2001, Bonnie was "playing around" with the computer and came across a website for the 91st BG and left a message asking if anyone remembered Orlow Notstad. She received 8 hits one of which was Paul Chryst saying he remembered her dad and suggesting that she go along with a group he was taking back to England "for the last time". Bonnie and her husband decided to go and while getting ready asked her sister and brothers for more information about their dad's war experiences. Jeff pointed to the locked trunk and a locksmith was called and the trunk opened.

Treasures from years past were brought forth. The trunk has been left intact, as things are removed they are copied and replaced. Bonnie took copies of photos (35 of them) along on the trip. A couple of months ago Barbara and Bonnie went to Tacoma for a reunion of their dad's 322nd Squadron. So far they've met eight member's of their Dad's unit.

Each of the siblings recalled their dad sharing stories of a few of his wartime experiences, now they each wished they'd asked more questions. If you are reading this, and knew Orlow, could you contact Steve Perri and he will connect us with you.

Bonnie & Barbara Selje

"BASSINGBOURN" ONE FINAL TIME

91st BGMA Past President, Paul Chryst, who has directed 12 group tours back to our former Base since 1963; states that he will lead one more in May 2003. Have YOU ever thought about returning? Well: join the growing list of 62 persons who await these future announcements.

Early travel plans have been submitted for confirmed hotel reservations, a private Coach, pre-arranged meals, and total costs per person to be developed. We await acknowledgments from the British Army on Base and from the Royston Town Council to celebrate this momentous occasion - "ONE FINAL TIME" in 2003.

Our group will form in London to relax and visit the sights. By private coach we'll travel on to Winchester, Bournemouth, Dorset, Corfe Castle, Stratford, Bath, Coventry, Stoke (Wedgewood China), Cambridge, Ely, Lavenham, Bury St. Edmonds, Duxford and London for return to the USA (or extend on own).

Travel dates have been requested for May 9-20, 2003. This gives us a 12 day, 10 hotel nights, slow paced Tour with fun time to relax and enjoy. Detailed informational brochures will be mailed out to "early-bird" sign-ups first. If YOU want to be included or have any questions, contact:

PAUL CHRYST
1494 NORTH ADAMS STREET
POTTSTOWN PA 19464
Telephone: 610-323-1877
Email: Paulnnance@aol.com

Previous Bassingbourn trips by Paul Chryst

1963-1969-1974-1978-1983-1987
1989-1992-1993-1995-1999-2001



BROTHERS

During armed conflict it is possible for brothers and sisters to be in the Services. On occasions some even serve at the same place. RAF Bassingbourn has been no exception. The first recorded brothers on the airfield were twins who served in the Officers Mess in 1941/2.

The BLOODGOOD BROTHERS

While the 91st BG(H), United States Army Air Corps occupied

the airfield, 1st Lt. William D. Bloodgood, a pilot with the 401st BS was "Missing in Action" on the 30th December 1942 on the mission to Lorient. Later, his brother, 1st Lt. Elwyn L. Bloodgood, also a pilot joined the 401st BS. Left is a picture of he and his wife outside the Tower Museum. He said that when he first arrived, people thought it was his brother who had returned.



THE CHIMA BROTHERS

As remembered by C.P. Chima

I was one of 18 co-pilots who graduated from flight school on August 24, 1942 and was assigned to the 91st BG 322nd Sqd. I flew to England as a copilot the second time I was ever in a B-17. As you know, our losses were very heavy and it was not long before I was first pilot, flight leader, squadron leader, group lead and 8th AF lead. By the time I had flown 22 missions,

August 1943 I received a V mail from my brother Nick who was a navigator and arrived as a replacement crew at Burtonwood (Replacement Depot). I spoke with Col. Wray, CO of the 91st, who requested my brothers crew. They were assigned to the 324th Squadron. Nick thought it would be great if he flew his first mission with me which, stupidly, I arranged. I say stupidly because we encountered some pretty heavy attacks and suffered heavy damage. Nick was credited with one ME109 destroyed. He flew approximately 18 missions with the 91st flying his last six missions as lead crew.

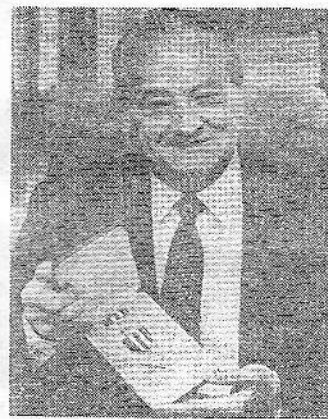
In July 1944, my youngest brother, Virgil came over as a pilot in the 445th Bomb Group commanded by Jimmy Stewart. The last time I saw him, he was still in High School. He was shot down and killed on his 18th mission, September 22, 1944.

My fourth brother, George, also signed up for the Air Force but before he was sworn in he was drafted by the Army and also arrived in England in August 1944. In October he was badly wounded in Germany and spent almost a year in and out of hospitals.

Since my three brothers came to England, I volunteered for extra missions and was subsequently transferred to the First Combat Bomb Wing in Operations, where I continued flying. As a member of the operations team we would plan the missions, often brief the crews and then I would go to the fighter group stationed at Steeple Morton and fly escort missions in P-47's.

Article in Akron Beacon Journal 6-19-80

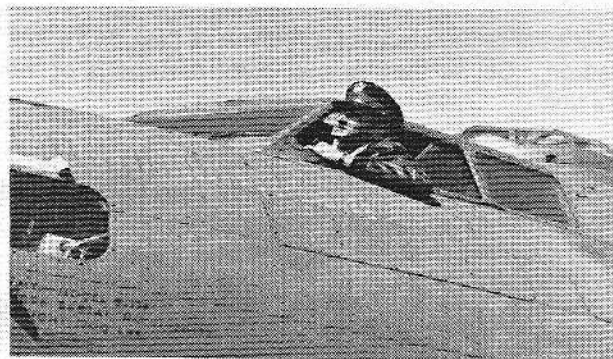
The green of spring was beginning to cover some of the raw scars of war. Army Air Corps 1st Lt. Cornelius P. Chima of Akron stood at attention before a superior officer at the US bomber base in Bassingbourn, England. "You broke formation", the superior barked, "You will be court-martialed. Instead of a court martial, Chima, received the Silver Star medal for gallantry, 37 years later. Chima was in trouble at the base on May 19, 1943 because of his performance after a bombing mission that day. He and the other flyers in the 91st had dropped their deadly cargo on the Kiel Canal in Germany, then headed home over the North Sea. German fighters intercepted. The right wingman's B-17 was hit and fell behind. Like a wolf pack, 10 fighters closed in on the faltering bomber. Chima broke formation and an iron-clad rule to drop back and help the pilot of the crippled Flying Fortress in the battle. Two Nazi planes were shot down and the others were driven off. Both Chima and the wingman were able to return to base. Despite the success of his action, Chima acknowledges the merits of the rule he violated. "It usually meant you lost two planes instead of one." But a week after he was threatened with a Court Martial, the brass had second thoughts. "They've changed their minds", he was told. "They're going to recommend you for a Silver Star." After a while though, when nothing happened one way or the other, Chima assumed the incident was just going to be ignored - and it was - for 37 years.



Beacon Journal photo by Bill Wade

Cornelius Chima and his Silver Star

First Lt. Cornelius Chima in cockpit of his B-17 in 1943



Brothers continued -

Upper Left- George Chima
Top - Nick & C.P. Chima
Left-Virgil - Chima

Mizpah Crew



THE MACK BROTHERS

as remembered by Phil Mack

My brother had been in the National Guard, Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft, and had been activated for "one year" before we got into the war. He was on maneuvers in NC in "41 guarding a bridgehead with a wooden replica of a 37 mm anti-aircraft cannon. P-40s were dropping paper bags containing flour to simulate bombs. He was firing simulated bullets that didn't even contain flour. He decided that he would rather be up there than down here. Shortly afterward, the 2 year college requirement was dropped and the age limit was lowered from 21 to 18. Art was just 21 and signed up at Langley Field VA. I had just finished 1st year at college and signed up at Langley Field a bit later.

I elected to await my orders to Cadet training by going on active duty in the grade of Private. Actually I was assigned to work in Base Headquarters at the Cadet Examining Board (kind of a cushy assignment). They accepted my

one year of ROTC (Infantry) in lieu of recruit training. My brother was also working as a Corporal at Base Headquarters but had married a girl from Norfolk and was spending his off duty time at her home. He shipped out for Cadets a couple of weeks after I arrived on the scene. Two months later, I was on my way.

Here a funny thing happened. A lot of new primary schools were opening up and some schools that had been training RAF Cadets had completed that obligation and could now accept US Aviation Cadets. So, more cadets were needed than were coming out of the existing Pre-Flight School at Maxwell. The Army filled these slots with "Prior Service Airmen", mostly NCOs who like myself were awaiting Cadet assignments. Although I was only a two-month Private, I also got caught up with this group.

After Nashville Classification, we moved to Maxwell where we found we would be taking a condensed Pre-Flight program taking about three weeks instead of the usual nine weeks. We were immediately made Upperclassmen but with Underclassmen privileges. This way, I ended up in the same class with my brother.

We didn't get to see each other at Pre-Flight but we did spend one Sunday together. I remember going to church in Montgomery and had our photos taken together in Cadet uniforms. All too soon we were shipped off to different Primary Schools and then different basic schools. Finally we got together at Advanced (Twin-Engine) at Blytheville Arbut, even so, we were assigned to different training squadrons. Art wanted to fly heavies and I wanted to fly light bombers. We alternated between the flight line and ground school. Upon graduation, Art was sent to Lockbourne OH for B-17 transition and I was sent to Ephrata WA with orders reading "recommended for Twin Engine Instructor" When I got to Ephrata, I learned I would be a Co-Pilot on a B-17. What a blast for a "hot pilot"! There was no honorable way out. The "exigencies" of the service got me! That explains how I got to England three months ahead of my brother and, of course, I finished three months ahead of him.

I was home on leave on Long Island, NY (not far from Mitchel Field) when my mother told me she had received a telegram from "Arthur" and he would be coming home in about a week. She asked if there was something in the food line that we missed while in England that I thought Arthur would like. Without hesitation I said, "SPAM". I spent the rest of the day chuckling to myself about Art coming in for lunch or dinner and sitting down to a plateful of SPAM. The next day, Mom called me in for lunch and I sat down and was opening my napkin when I glanced down at my plate. In horror I cried out, "What the hell is that?" Mom was visibly shocked at my reaction and said, "It's SPAM! I thought that if Arthur missed it so much you would have missed it too." Oh well, that best laid plans of mice and men "aft gang agley".



Phil and Art Mack, Hossingbourn
December 25, 1943

EAST ANGLIA AVIATION SOCIETY

Exerpts from: Chairman Peter Robert's Report

The need for volunteers to help in the operation of your Society is still a very pressing need. I'm ever grateful to those who do give both time and effort, more volunteers would be most welcome. Over this past year our UK membership numbers have again risen slightly (36UK and 22 overseas).

The year began with a promising potential of activities but, unfortunately, as the year progressed some of these activities did not materialize. Much of this was due to the apprehension left from last years September 11th tragedy.

In February the Society met with the Bedford Borough Council's Tourist Board to help formulate plans to promote WWII military and aviation history for the purpose of attracting tourists to the area. Bedford WWII Airfield Trail was chosen as the theme a 25 mile radius and which would, of course, include Bassingbourn. The promotion was eventually launched the end of Sept. With some thirty thousand copies of the "Trail" guide being produced and distributed.. Bedford is also working in conjunction with other councils for the production of similar guides and recently the Cambridge City Tour Guide Department has contacted us to discuss proposals for tour visits to the Tower Museum.

April saw a change in the roll of the Bassingbourn A TR. New recruits are now drawn from schoolleavers with basic training taking between 17 to 27 weeks. Sadly, Wray Co. Has now been renamed Templar Co.

On the May Bank Holiday Monday, your Chairman and Mike Killaspy (Hon. Sec.) Attended the Commemoration Service at the American Cemetery, Madingley. This year the Society wreath was laid on our behalf by Mr. Paul Street whose Grandfather flew with the 915t BG and was Navigator of B-17 "Great Speckled Bird". The Street family was visiting from the USA and was pleased to represent the Society.

With the Society relying on revenue from its sales and donations, both from air shows and Museum visitors, it seems obvious that the lifeblood of our Society stems from the people it attracts. Better public awareness has and continues to be addressed by your Committee and this past year has shown a huge increase of public awareness with visitor numbers having doubled from last year.

In creating this awareness, the Society itself must also be aware, that by openly inviting and permitting members of the public to visit the Tower Museum, it is also inviting them to enter a secure military base. We must make every effort to ensure our vigilance in maintaining that the security of the barracks is upheld and that we do not put in jeopardy or in any other way embarrass our hitherto superb relationship with our "Landlords".

Finally, please allow me to thank you, the Members, for your support, especially those who regularly attend the Museum's needs as well as those who operated the Sales Stall at the many venues come rain or come shine and

both inside and out. Also, my thanks go to my fellow Committee members for all their hard work, council and support over the Society year.

MEMORIAL DAY

AT MADINGLEY CEMETARY

By Vince Hemmings

Last Monday, 11th November, Margaret and I attended the Memorial Service at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley. I think I am right in saying that not as many were in attendance as last year. I think the reason was that it was a working day and last year people came because of terrorist attacks in America. Having said that, there were a lot of people there. The weather had been atrocious on the Sunday but the sun shone which made photography practically impossible as we stood facing it. Chaplain Gary Ziccardi has been coming for a while now and has become a favorite with those attending.

I believe it was Lt. Col. William Renfroe who said that those who are buried at the Cemetery and mentioned on the Wall of the Missing have never known the freedom that we have today, therefore, it is our duty to protect that freedom. He is based at nearby RAF Lakenheath and they have recently had F117 Night Hawks and F51's belonging to the 48th FG at the base on exercise.



**B-17 Flying
over Madingley
Cemetery
Memorial Day
2002**

Honor Guard at Madingly Cemetery Memorial Day 2002



**YOUR OFFICERS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ACCEPT
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUNDING & MAINTENANCE
OF THE PROP MEMORIAL AT BASSINGBOURN WHICH
PAUL CHRYST, PETER ROBERTS AND MANY OTHERS
HAVE ENCOURAGED.(SEE PRESIDENTS REPORT Pg2)**

CLIVE STEVENS - LECTURE:

(See letters to the editor page 3 for more)

It was with much trepidation that last Thursday I embarked on my first ever illustrated talk on the 91st BG in England. In fact, if I had not been asked to do the talk in the first place but, alas, I duly accepted the invitation from the 95th Bomb Group Heritage Association UK who are desperately trying to raise the finance to preserve one of the very few buildings left at their old airfield at Horham, East Anglia. The original officers club, known as the Red Feather Club, and housed in no more than a small NISSEN HUT amongst the farmland THAT SURROUNDED THE B-17 BASE AT Horham has been derelict and overgrown since WWII.

In recent years, a small band of volunteers have decided to embark and restore this building to its former glory, to honor the men of the 95th, who like the 91st, saw extensive action over the war torn skies of Europe throughout 1943-1945. In fact the 95th were the first B-17's over Berlin, as the group (claimed) never to have received the recall to base that the rest of the 8th AF received. Subsequently, the 95th bombed Berlin alone in early March 1944, and again, along with the rest of the 8th AF a few days later. The publicity officers of the 8th had a field day when they found out! Only the American PRO's could turn a story on its heels with such brilliance. Rather than making a big deal about the 95th's mistake in carrying on alone, they heralded this as a major coo, and the Square B's of the 95th went down in history as the first USAF bombers over the German Capital - and rightfully so!

Nearly 100 members of the public crowded into the small village hall at Denham on a very miserable and cold Thursday night to hear what I had to say and show. Vince Hemmings, retired curator of the Tower Museum, was also due to attend, but sadly he was feeling a little under the weather. I didn't blame him at all for not turning out in the wind and rain, to drive the back roads of Suffolk! However, with a packed Village Hall. I started by showing some of the veteran's interviews that we shot at the 1997 91st BGMA Tucson Reunion. This was followed by some original color footage filmed at the base in 1944 by Past President, Paul Chryst. Everyone enjoyed Paul's humor as he has voiced a commentary over the 12 minute film when he visited with me in Wiltshire in 1995.

After a break for the customary English tea and biscuits, the second half began with more original color film shot by our very own Mike Banta (Web Master) at Bassingbourn in 1945. Amongst other shots, this film shows Father Ragan throwing horseshoes into the air at the end of the runway as B-17's from the 91st takeoff missions in early 1945. Some more excellent Color footage showing 401st B-17's LL-G buzzing the tower and trying to knock the windsock down. This caused even more amusement to the crowd! I continued the talk with a reading from Mike Banta's book, where he tells of a very narrow escape during a mid-air collision he encountered shortly after take-off from Bassingbourn, flying through the soup.

To end, my very good friend, Jim Harlow, of the 322nd, who sadly took his long last flight in March, 1997, had recorded a 2 hour audio tape telling of his experiences of ditching in the North Sea on Sept. 6, 1943, on the way home from Stuttgart, and showed a slide show of pictures from Jim's albums over the audio narration. This was very moving, and a wonderful way to finish the evening's talk. Afterwards, people were invited to view the 91st BG Memorabilia display and archive photo albums.

Over 300 pounds were raised for the 95th BG restoration appeal, and I refused my 25 pound donation, as I did this talk in honor of the men of the 91st Bomb Group and not for the financial gain on my part. Unknown to me, there were a number of curators in the audience from other 8th AF Airfield Museums. Two of them (One from Debach Airfield and one from Seething Airfield) came up to me afterwards and were so impressed that they have asked me to do similar talks on the 91st at their respective museum control towers in East Anglia. Therefore, the history of the 91st BG will continue to gain a wider audience, and this is what "Keeping the Memory Alive" is all about.

To conclude, I would like to thank the following 91st Veterans both alive and dead and two Englishmen, who have all been so supportive, generous and helpful throughout my 10 year quest for information on the 91st. Without these men, there would have been no talk and no display. One way or another the proud memory of the 91st lives on and on.

TACOMA REUNION MEMORIAL CAPS FOR SALE

They are stitched in four colors with our emblem on the front, 60th Anniversary and a B-17 (Nine-O-Nine) on the side. See enclosed flyer.

Available for \$10.00 through our PX.

MEMORIAL WINE GLASSES

Available for \$2.50 each plus \$5 mailing four or less in US through Ed Gates

(Make checks payable to 91st BGMA)

AIR & SPACE MUSEUM AT DULLES AIRPORT

by Tom Hobis, AM, Fairfax VA

News on the complex is its about 75% completed and will be dedicated on time in 2003. The main building looks like a huge WWII hanger. A movie center and observation tower will be part of the complex. The downtown DCAS Museum can only hold 10% of the restored aircraft in the Museum's inventory. The restoration center will move to the Dulles Complex.

SEND ARTICLES FOR THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

to: Steve Perri Phone 239-454-5838
12750 Kelly Woods Drive,
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E-mail: deltareb@aol.com

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Biography- WILLIAM WHEELER

William Wheeler was born and raised in Scarsdale, NY. In July 1942, after completing pilot training, he was commissioned in the US Army Air Corp. In March 1943, he flew overseas and joined the 91st Bomb Group at Basingbourn England. He was shot down on his twenty-fourth mission over Schweinfurt, Germany in August 1943 and held as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III. He was liberated on 29 April 1945 at a POW camp near Mossberg, Germany by an advance tank company of the American Seventh Army.

Captain Wheeler returned to London in May 1945 and married Mary Chapman. He and Mary and their two sons, Anthony and Peter enjoyed many interesting assignments during his twenty-five years in the US Air Force. Most notable, after serving with the 17th Bomb Wing in Korea, he elected to stay in the Far East where his family joined him at Yokota AFB in Japan. From there they traveled directly to England for a most memorable four year tour with the Third Air Force. In July 1961, Colonel Wheeler was assigned as Deputy Wing Commander of the 100th Bomb Wing at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire where he later retired from the United States Air Force in September 1965.

In March 1966 Wheeler accepted a position with General Electric's Naval Ordnance Division in Pittsfield, MA. He retired from GE in July 1981 and the family moved back to New Castle NH where he began to write. Mary and Bill have two sons and four grandchildren and they now reside in Fairfax VA. He is the author of two books: "Bomber Pilot" and "Shootdown".

An Editorial Review of these books follows:

Excerpts from an Editorial Review by: "Walter J. Boyne
Crew of Eager Beaver



Woodward-B-Cobb-RO-McGovern-WG-Woodbury-CoP Wheeler-P
McBride-TG-Newberry-N-Thomas-BTG-Scurlock-FE-Gillett-WG

BOMBER PILOT-Covers all the mission flown in Eager Beaver

A realistic and touching love story, skillfully evokes the atmosphere of London in 1943, as the stalwart Brits maintain a cheery bravado while bombs bring death and destruction to their magnificent city. In Bomber Pilot, the author, draws on his own experience to create an original novel that is heartfelt and moving.

(Cost for autographed, hardback copy \$20 plus \$3 S&H)

SHOOTDOWN

Shootdown brings the story of Wheeler and his crew to life as they are forced to abandon their blazing Fortress after failing to extinguish a fire caused by enemy action. Describing the first horrible days of lost freedom, the author gives a vivid look at the despair and depression of captivity. He suffers the lonely wretchedness of solitary confinement, the relentless interrogation, and the trauma of being locked in a body-packed boxcar for three days. Determined to escape from the moment he hit the ground in Germany, Wheeler becomes involved in several escape attempts. In April of 1944, the author joined a cadre of officers to set up a new POW compound where he was selected to be a block commander responsible for 150 officers. This experience became the cost challenging, yet rewarding experience of his military career. His real test of leadership began on a cold wintry night in January 1945 when the Germans hurriedly evacuated 12,000 Allied POW's within the sound of the Russian guns.

(For an autographed paperback copy contact author at a discounted price of \$12 plus \$2 S&H for 91sters)

3711 Freehill Lane, Fairfax VA 22033 or

(Wheelby@aol.com)

BY THE NUMBERS - A WWII MEMOIR

Review of James Cullins new book

By Vince Hemmings

A few weeks ago I finished reading one of the best wartime books I have ever read. It is the best account I have read relating to the marches made by POW's in camps in Eastern Europe to avoid the advancing Russians. The hardship they all must have endured is unimaginable.

The part where James was hung up in the escape hatch of his aircraft by his foot was more than a little hairy but I suppose it happened all so quickly that he had little time to react. The other part that I found exciting is when the German guard was at the point of shooting him. All moments gave me goose pimples on the back of my neck. His account of manning the front gun is, can I say, interesting. There is so much in this book from a historical point that future generations will enjoy reading it and be thankful that he put it in print. It was, for me, a privilege.

DESTINY'S CHILD by Jack Paget

Jack Paget, tailgunner on "Destiny's Child" starts at his induction into the service and ends on his return home. It has 5 parts encompassing 31 Chapters and 30 pictures, news items and drawings. Focuses mainly on his 29 combat missions and experiences as a POW especially the Black March (Death March).

Sells for \$21 + \$5 mailing envelope & 1st Class postage
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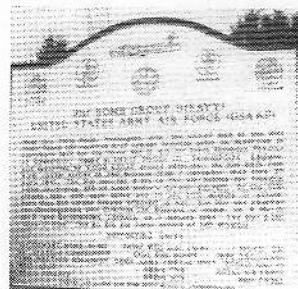
WALLA WALLA TODAY

Written by Larry Smelser

Yesterday, November 18, 2002, is a long way from 1942 but I was passing through Walla Walla for the first time and wanted to see the Memorial Marker for the 91st at the airport. It was installed by the Memorial Committee through the effort of W. W. Hill. Just 60 years before, my father, Maj. Harold Smelser, Commanding Officer of the 324th Bomb Squadron and a host of young guys had arrived here and trained here.

Driving in the snowy Blue Mountains looking down on a town now surrounded by vineyards, the pre-Thanksgiving bustle was in the air. The wind seemed to be driving the clouds in formations and, beyond the town was the airport, part bustling and part heavy with the past.

The 91st's Memorial Marker stands watch not far from several large, aging hangars. But what a scene that must have been 60 years ago! I could only stand silent before the memorial.



As always in my family, November is bittersweet. A plane named "PANDORA'S BOX" went down off St. Nazaire on November 23rd, 1942, and our lives were changed forever.

WE ARE VERY PROUD.

FOUR ORIGINAL CO'S OF THE 91ST BG
322ND SQ. MAJ. VICTOR ZIENOWICZ
323RD SQ. MAJ. PAUL D. BROWN
324TH SQ. MAJ. HAROLD C. SMELSER
401ST SQ. MAJ. EDWARD MEYERS.

They were all Captains when they left the USA. Three of the Four were lost between Nov. 11th and Dec. 3rd of 1942.

Zienowicz and Meyers were KIA, Smelser was MIA and only Maj. Paul D. Brown finished his tour.

"Pandora's Box" was the victim of the Luftwaffe's Gruppe III of Jagdgeschwader 2, led by Oberstleutnant Egon Mayer - the man credited with developing the deadly head-on attacks. The 91st was to pay a heavy price that day. Not only were two of its Fortresses lost, including "Pandora's Box", but also listed missing were two Squadron Commanders as well as the Group Navigator, Bombardier and Gunnery Officers. A third Fort from the group was to end its career by crashlanding a Leavesden.

(excerpt taken from Ray Bowden's "Plane Names and Fancy Noses".)

Folded Wings (continued)

●**Donald Wellings LM 323rd**

Friday Harbor WA October 23, 2002

Don passed away after a long battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Martha and son and daughter-in-law Susie. He was a most useful member of our organization and we were able to make great use of his skills which he gave generously. Last year he did the painting that we donated to the Air Museum in Chino CA. When I wanted some lithos of his pictures to sell for the PX, Don supplied them. When I wanted a drawing of a 91st B-17 to use on playing card backs, Don did that as well as the sympathy notes for the group.

Family obligations kept him from attending all reunions thus we personally never met again after the days when he was Squadron Navigator of the 323rd.

As reported by Bob Friedman

●**Anthony Gaeta 323rd**

Kirkwood NY, Nov. 16, 2000, Age 77

He was an Army Air Corps Veteran of WWII serving as Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner flying in "Texas Bronco". His plane was shot down February 1943 and he was a prisoner of war in Germany for 27 months and was awarded the Air Medal.

He was also a member of the American Legion Post 357, Hallstead PA.

He is survived by his wife, Traute (Trudy) Gaeta, three daughters and spouses, Kathleen & John Tjokas, Maine NY, Susan and David Blau, Atlanta GA, Monika and Clint Oteri, Poughkeepsie NY as well as brothers and sisters and their spouses, three grandchildren and three great grandchildren and his former spouse, Hildred (DeeDee) Carpenter, Maine, NY.

●**John D. Mullens LM 322nd**

Monroe LA, August 10, 2001

He is survived by two sons, John and Michael and a daughter Marjorie. No other information given.

Please send OBITUARY notices to:

Assay B. Johnson, Sec'y/Treas. 91st BGMA
590 Aloha Drive, Lake Havasu City AZ 86406

Time to Renew Your Membership

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

WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY & HEALTHY 2003

Folded Wings

●Raymond L. Howard FM 324th

Liverpool NY, Sept. 16, 2002, Age 83

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps at the start of WWII and was stationed at Bassingbourn as an airplane mechanic from 1942-45. He was married in England to Iris Treby and they had 58 wonderful years together. He worked as a barber and is survived by his wife, two sons, Duane Raymond and Alan Lee, 6 Grandchildren and two great Grandchildren.

●Robert Margolis FM 324th

Allentown PA, June 26, 2002 Age 77

Margolis was navigator on Hooper Maplesden's crew. A replacement crew, they flew 21 missions in No. 220, "Lady Lois".

He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Barbara, sons, Dr. Jim K. Of Allentown, Andrew K. Of Greenfield NH, sister Audrey Schoff and three grandchildren.

He was counsel with the law firm of Mosebach, Funt, Dayton and Duckworth and a CPA affiliated with Concanon, Gallagher, Miller and Co. He was a former trustee and on the board of many charitable organizations.

●Dudley Buckner Mathers, Jr. FM 322nd

Dallas TX, October 12, 2002 Age 78

A B-17 pilot in the 91st during WWII he flew 34 missions receiving the rank of Captain. He was recalled to military service and flew C-46's with the 443rd Troop Carrier Group in Japan and Korea.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Bette Jean, son Bill, daughter and son-in-law Cay and John Thorn, granddaughter Katy and husband Don Myers and grandson Jonathan Thorn and a half sister Mary Thuss Cheney of Houston.

●Charles (Chuck) Silvernail FM 323rd

San Antonio TX, October 21, 2002 Age 81

Chuck was the first pilot of the B-17 Bomber "Man O War", the first replacement crew of the 323rd Bomb Squadron and one of the youngest Pilots to have achieved the rank of Captain in the Air Force up to that time during WWII.

He is survived by his wife Kathy of San Antonio; three sons residing in Colorado and Kathy's two children as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren.

As reported by Roy and Louis Fratz

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 RI's purpose is to keep alive the spirit of the 91st Bombardment Group (H) and to maintain the fellowship of those who fought together in World War II from AF Station 121 in Bassingbourn, England from 1942-1945. Material for publication should be sent to the Editor, Steve Perri 12750 Kelly Greens Blvd., Ft. Myers FL 33908. "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 RI issues.

●Harry Hovermill FM 401st

California MD April 20, 2002

A member of the 401st Ground Crew, he passed away at Washington Hospital Center from a massive hemorrhage in the Brain, after a week in a coma.

He is survived by 5 sons and 1 daughter - Earl J., Michael J., Stephen S., William C., & Gerald V. Hovemill and Patricia M. Christesson.

●Nicholas Bankowsky LM 401st

Palm Bay FL October 2002

A member of the 401st Ground Crew, he was one of the first to arrive at Bassingbourn and one of the last 16 to leave. Preceded in death by his wife Mary. Survived by a daughter. (See Clive Stevens remembrance page 3)

(More Folded Wings on page 11)