

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd Bomb Sq.



323rd Bomb Sq.



Supporting Units



324th Bomb Sq.



401st Bomb Sq.

Vol. 36 No. 4

91st Bombardment Group (H)

October 2003

FATHER RAGAN

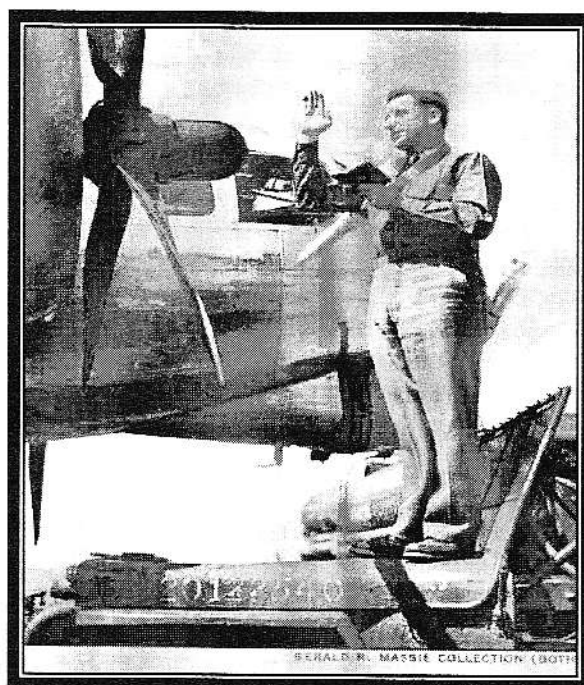
as recalled by Paul Chryst
I have no idea when Father Ragan arrived at the 91st BG, but I clearly recall that he was there to help everyone from my first day of arrival 15 July '44 to the day I shipped out, 26 Dec. 1944. On those mornings, after departing from the Briefing Room to prepare for another Mission. I often noticed 5 or 6 men kneeling around the Pot Belly coal stove near the exit door of the Quonset Hut. Before my exit, I also noted that this Catholic priest was fixing some of the color "scarfs" around his neck to prepare for some kind of religious service? So, off I went to find my B-17 and crew at the flight line wondering if I would have the boldness to join with this group - as a Protestant?

A few nights later, at the Bar of the Officers Club; I heard this voice behind me saying "Hello, my Son; how are you? There would be some loose conversation and then I heard the same question asked again, closer to where I was standing. In a few minutes, I felt a friendly hand placed on my shoulder and as I turned around; here was the good Father asking me the same question - "How are you, my son?" I said, "I'm fine Father, thank you for asking me. May I please talk to you privately in the corner for a few minutes. Seems that this kind of meeting is exactly what the Father had come for and wanted to find out from those who had returned from another mission a few hours before. We met in the corner of this large room. I began by saying "I am a Protestant who noticed the formation of dedicated Catholic crewmen who gather at the stove for an apparent prayer service; before they set out on another mission." "That's right, my son", he replied, "and why don't you come and join with us the next time?" This kinda took me by surprise; so I stayed silent for a brief moment and said, "OK!". Father Ragan smiled and countered with "I'll look for you next time". But, I still felt kinda out of place. Then, I blurted out proudly, "Father, I'm lucky that I recall about two years of Latin study in High School about 6 years ago, but, I don't know any of the prayers that you and the others repeat while kneeling around that stove before the Mission". He smiled again from ear to ear and in a soft voice

murmured, "you just kneel there with the rest, fold your hands together on your chest and move your lips quietly when the others begin to speak in Latin. After a few sessions like this, you'll have memorized our prayers, like the others; then you'll feel a lot stronger to get out there to fly your missions!"

He smiled, patted me on the shoulder for reassurance and I said, "OK Father, I'll be there from now on". As he began to walk away to the other men, I blurted out, "Oh, I do recall some of my Latin", to which he turned around and said, "What passage?" and I continued with, "Te cano Patria, pulchra est Libera te referret." "WOW", he said, "that's the (American) National Anthem, "My Country Tis of Thee!". Your right, I got another pat on the shoulder. Father Ragan had made me feel like I was reborn, a "new man" who never missed kneeling to pray after every Briefing.

(More on Father Ragan on page 7)



With hand raised to the heavens, Captain Michael S. Ragan, a Roman Catholic Priest and Chaplain for the 91st confers his blessings on a "Fort"

THE PRESIDENTS CORNER

As I write this on 7 Sep 03, I can't help remembering that just a year and a week ago just after midnight Jack Paxson and I were pushing a baggage cart full of booze and other items from the Hospitality Room through the parking lot of the La Quinta, Hotel. We were too tired to make sense so we were just laughing about how it would look in the Tacoma papers if a couple of senior citizens ran into somebody's car. But as many of you were kind enough to say, we did have a fun reunion in Tacoma, thanks to a lot of you who pitched in. As I read Steve Perri's great article in the July Ragged Irregular about the backgrounds of a typical ground crew, I was reminded that we are of a generation which came from deep "depression" to believing we could do anything.

We are just a bit slower about our accomplishments, now. That seems an appropriate lead-in to a report from your Board's most recent Conference Call on 23 Aug. Marv Goldberg has conquered the PX backlog and assures us that he will have a 7-10 day turnaround for any orders in the future. If any of you younger folks are looking for a way to help, you might want to consider volunteering for PX duty at the next Reunion. Let me know. While on the theme of monumental jobs, Jake Howland discussed with us his efforts to confirm accuracy in our records of our Honor Roll of deaths during combat; I discovered some discrepancies in working with the Turner book in spite of the wonderful work of Bud Evers and Curly Havelaar in the past. Jake now has 910 confirmed and accurate, but we believe there were as many as 997. Jake, Gordy Alton and others are working to make it a perfect record.

Ace Johnson reported that we have over \$27,000 in the Treasury but are gradually drawing down as our membership dues shrink. We also have nearly \$3,200 in the Memorial Maintenance Fund after the addition of a contribution from Cindy Hensley McCain of \$1,000 donated in honor of her Dad who flew with us. This fund will eventually convert to a Trust Fund.

The Prop Memorial at Bassingbourn is in great shape thanks to the efforts of Vince Hemmings, David Crowe and the British Army. I have asked Peter Roberts, Chairman of the East Anglia Aviation Society, to keep us apprised of the status of the Tower Museum - perhaps elsewhere in The Ragged Irregular if he can get something to Steve Perri in time. We owe all of these friends a real vote of thanks for their untiring efforts to honor our heritage. I sent an e-mail to Peter, today, again expressing our appreciation as I had back in June. I'm sure any of these gentlemen would like to hear some kind words from any of you.

Plans for the 2004 Reunion are taking shape. We will have detailed articles about the hotel and available tours in the January Ragged Irregular.

Other upcoming events we discussed included the 8th Air Force Reunion in Colorado Springs later in October and the meeting of the Arizona Wing of the Confederate Air Force on 8-9 Nov at Falcon Field in Mesa, AZ. For any details on either, please contact Ace Johnson, our trusty Secretary/Treasurer. Jim and Suzy Shepherd - our valiant guardians of the Web Site - have exercised their rights to apply for "Full Member" status. Your Board has approved. Under the provisions of Art. III, Sec. 2 of our By-Laws an Associate Member in good standing may "become Full Members upon written request followed by three consecutive years as an Associate Member." Your Board interprets that to mean if they have been Associate Members for three consecutive years. So far, that and a dollar will buy a cup of coffee (except Starbucks) but not much else. However, it might encourage you to read carefully some proposed changes to the By-Laws coming up next year. With your good graces and a prayer or more, we will make it into 2004.

Ed Gates, President

Letter sent to:

Vince Hemmings from President Ed Gates

Dear Friends in Royston:

It is with mixed emotions that we express our sentiments on this occasion of the retirement of our long-time friend - Jane Vincent - for her service as Curator of the Royston Museum. She has been gracious to so many of our members and friends who have visited. Regrettably, when I visited Bassingbourn and Royston in 1977, I did not know of the existence of the museum and so many friends.

In the earlier days of the 91st, when there were fewer of us completing tours, it was the custom to celebrate by "Cutting Grass" - buzzing the airfield lower than good sense should have allowed. As the 25th mission was successfully completed, there was great joy that we could move on with our lives. There was also that mixed feeling of leaving behind very good friends in the 91st and among our British compatriots. One can be happy and have regrets at the same time. So, in behalf of the 91stBG, we thank you for all that you have done for us and wish the best for the future. We hope you enjoy your "Cutting Grass" ceremony and many happy days to follow.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND MORE

We would like to hear from more people who would like to expand on their experiences during WW II

From George Parks

A bit late with this but I just wanted to tell you that your doing a great job with the R/I. I read every issue before I file it with the other past issues - I have them all.
Best to you always.

From Harry Friedman, MD**Archivist/Board Member****Memphis Belle Memorial Association**

Thank you for the note and the July 2003 RI about the "Memphis Belle." I would like to make one minor correction and that is that the airplane is at the Millington Airport and not the Memphis Airport. We are already at work on the restoration of the airplane by an expert crew of mechanics and technicians. The hangar will be officially open soon for visitors and we invite all of our 91sters to come to Memphis to visit the "Memphis Belle"

To Editor Steve Perri

I'm writing to tell you I'm sending you a copy of my book , just off the press. Secondly I should tell you that I have several copies of the book for sale at \$15 each. This is a 59% reduction of the original cost. I've used a highly reliable binding and there are 70 pages including 70 pictures, 41 of which are in color.

There may be a reader of your next RI who may wish to purchase a copy. If there is , they can forward a check or money order to me and I will mail them a copy.

Thanks and best wishes, you're doing a great service by editing the RI which I know is enjoyed by all the "OLD" members of the 91st, but also the Associate Members.

Im an 84 year old, writing of my WWII experiences 58 years after the war!

Sincerely: Deane A. Turner, PHD

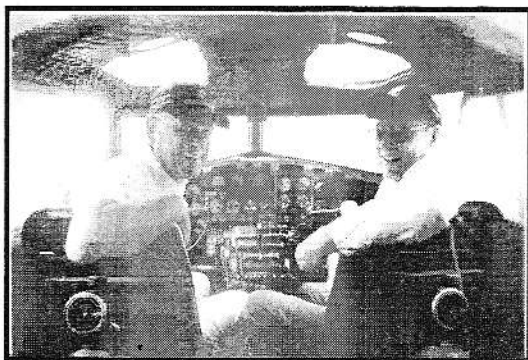
2925 Lincoln Dr. #709

Roseville MN 55113-1351

(Review of this book is on Page 4)

Oops

in our last issue we inadvertently renamed Mike Banta's co-pilot in their picture taken at the Chino Rally Round as Ray Ward. Instead of Ray Darling. We are very sorry about the mixup.



**Mike Banta and Ray Darling
Two Old Crewmates back on the
flight deck after 57 years.**

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TOWER MUSEUM Peter Roberts, Chairman EAAS

I had hoped that we might be able to joyously announce that the **Tower Museum** was again open, but sadly, this is not so. We learned that the supposed "hazardous" radiation problem has been cleared and a final analytical report is now being prepared by the MOD department which undertook the cleansing. A letter conforming the now "clean" condition of the building is to be forwarded to the ATR Command at Basingbourn which, we are told, could well be another two weeks. We are, of course, ever hopeful that we shall be "back in business" soon now. Our Society has had to curtail much of its normal activities for the past 10 months but nevertheless, we have still managed to entertain many visitors with a secondary collection of artefacts in our old 324th Squadron Office and hangar 3 buildings. This has been supplemented with guided tours of the base, supported by both film and slide presentations. Also, we still have a number of potential visitors to contact as soon as the Museum proper is open. The closure of the Tower Building has been a tad inconvenient but it has not dampened the enthusiasm of the members. Our worst disappointment was not having the Museum available for the May visit of Paul Chryst, but the ATR did give us their full support and generously made available alternative facilities for entertaining our honoured guests. The most gratifying thing to emerge from the Paul Chryst visit was the letters received from those on the tour, who said how much they enjoyed their visit with us, offering both their support and appreciation for what we are trying to achieve.

YOU ARE INVITED
to
JOIN IN DEDICATING THE

WWII PEARL HARBOR FLYERS MEMORIAL
December 7, 2003 on the 62nd
Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor
Memorial to all Veterans

Spaces still available
Reserve your space below this Memorial
call 800-305-1738 or log on to:

www.warbirdcentral.com

A Lasting Legacy in Our Lifetime!
Sponsored by Groups Memorial Inc.
Of the Army Air Forces a 501(c)(3) non-profit
corp.

Dedication is at 1600 hours Dec. 7th at:
Hickham AAF Base, Honolulu Hawaii

A Thank You to Cindy Hensley McCain

Cindy Hensley McCain very kindly gave a donation to the Memorial fund in honor of her father, Jim Hensley who flew most of his missions with Don Bader's crew in #4482 "Heavyweight Annihilators".

Cindy is a native Arizonan and received her undergraduate degree in Education and her Masters in Special Education from the University of Southern California. In 1980, she married John Sidney McCain III now US Senator John McCain. They have 4 children, Meghan, Jack, Jimmy and Bridget.

Cindy is involved in many non profit organizations and currently serves as Chairman of her family's business, Hensley & Company. We feel very honored that she has thought of us with this Donation of \$1,000.



Lithos of the "Ruhr Valley Raiders"
are still available from Ed Gates (253-535-4246)
if any one is interested in perhaps
donating one to a school or local organization

BOOK REVIEWS

"One Day to be Remembered"

By Dr. Deane A. Turner & H. A. "Mac" McCrarey
Deane Turner and Mac McCrarey wrote this 69 page book as a tribute to the J-2 crew of the 91st Bomb Group, 323rd Squadron. It contains many interesting facts and pictures including the History of the Eighth Air Force and the "B-17 Flying Fortress."

It starts with pilot training, goes on to how the crew was assembled and their training for overseas duty. It also includes the 3 February 1945 Berlin Raid as recalled by the lead pilot Lew Lyle and the recollections of the authors on their Mission of March 22, 1945.

My wife and I found it to be a very easy read with a good number of really good pictures. The last 10 pages or so are devoted to "The Mighty Eight Air Force Heritage Museum" and Madingly Cemetery, Cambridge. It's a wonderful book for Children, Grandchildren and relatives to learn a great deal of what it was like during those days, and for us "old guys" it will bring back many memories.

Steve Perri, Editor

Book:

"Air Field Focus, Bassingborn Revisited

"NOW" available from the PX. The cost will be \$10.00. That includes shipping and handling.

Reviewed by Mike Banta, 91st Ring

This is a terrific book of the entire history of Bassingbourn as an air base from its opening on 2 May 1938 to its being transferred for other military purposes 20 February 1952. The booklet was written by Vince Hemmings and Graham Simons.

THE TURNER BOOK

Available through the PX at \$55 plus shipping

ITEM OF INTEREST - OCTOBER 10, 2003

HISTORY CHANNEL - 9:30 PM EST

Clyde Garrison of the 324th squadron and on the crew of the "Yankee Belle" along with Marion Havelar of the 401st squadron and the author of "The Ragged Irregulars of Bassingbourn", both fellow ball turret gunners, will be featured on the Heavy Metal program. I'm not sure of the content of the program but it does focus on the ball turret gunners of the B-17.

PIGGYBACK HERO A B-17 TALE

By Ralph Kinney Bennett

12 August 2003 Tomorrow morning they'll lay the remains of Glenn Rojohn to rest in the Peace Lutheran Cemetery in the little town of Greenock PA, just southeast of Pittsburgh. He was 81 and had been in the air conditioning and plumbing business in nearby McKeesport. If you had seen him on the street, he would probably have looked to you like so many other graying, bespectacled old WWII veterans whose names appear so often now on obituary pages. But, like so many of them, though he seldom talked about it, he could have told you one hell of a story. He won the DFC and the Purple Heart all in one fell swoop in the skies over Germany on Dec. 31, 1944.

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, of the 8th Air Force's 100th Bomb Group, was flying his B-17G Flying Fortress bomber on a raid over Hamburg. His formation had braved heavy flak to drop their bombs, then turned 180 degrees to head out over the North Sea. They had finally turned NE, headed back to England, when they were jumped by German fighters at 22,000 feet. The ME-109's pressed their attack so closely that Capt. Rojohn could see the faces of the German pilots.

He and other pilots fought to remain in formation so they could use each other's guns to defend the group. Rojohn saw a B-17 ahead of him burst into flames and slide sickeningly toward the earth. He gunned his ship forward to fill in the gap.

He felt a huge impact. The big bomber shuddered, felt suddenly very heavy and began losing altitude. Rojohn grasped almost immediately that he had collided with another plane. A B-17 below him, piloted by Lt. William G. McNab, had slammed the top of its fuselage into the bottom of Rojohn's. The top turret gun of McNab's plane was now locked in the belly of Rojohn's plane and the ball turret in the belly of Rojohn's had smashed through the top of McNab's. The two bombers were almost perfectly aligned - the tail of the lower plane was slightly to the left of Rojohn's tailpiece. They were stuck together as a crewman later recalled, "like mating dragon flies".

No one will ever know exactly how it happened. Perhaps both pilots had moved instinctively to fill the same gap in formation. Perhaps McNab's plane had hit an air pocket.

Three of the engines on the bottom plane were still running as were all four of Rojohn's. The fourth engine on the lower bomber was on fire and the flames were spreading to the rest of the aircraft. The two were losing altitude quickly. Rojohn tried several times to gun his engines and break free of the other plane. The two were inextricably locked together. Fearing a fire, Rojohn cut his engines and rang the bailout bell. If his crew had any chance of parachuting, he had to keep the plane under control somehow. The ball turret, hanging below the belly of the B-17, was considered by many to be a death trap - the worst station on the bomber. In this case, both ball turrets figured in a swift and terrible drama of life and death.

Staff Sgt. Edward L. Woodall, Jr., in the ball turret of the lower bomber, had felt the impact of the collision above him and saw shard of metal drop past him. Worse, he realized both electrical and hydraulic power was gone. Remembering escape drills, he grabbed the hand crank, released the clutch and cranked the turret and its guns until they were straight down, then turned and climbed out the back of the turret up into the fuselage.

Once inside the plane's belly, Woodall saw a chilling sight, the ball turret of the other bomber, protruding through the top of the fuselage. In that turret, hopelessly trapped, was Staff Sgt. Joseph Russo. Several crew members on Rojohn's plane tried frantically to crank Russo's turret around so he could escape. But, jammed into the fuselage of the lower plane, the turret would not budge. Aware of his plight, but possibly unaware that his voice was going out over the intercom of his plane, Sgt. Russo began reciting his Hail Marys.

Up in the cockpit, Capt. Rojohn and his copilot, 2nd Lt. William G. Leek, Jr., had propped their feet against the instrument panel so they could pull back on their controls with all their strength, trying to prevent their plane from going into a spinning dive that would prevent the crew from jumping out. Capt. Rojohn motioned left and the two managed to wheel the grotesque, collision b-born hybrid of a plane back toward the German coast. Rojohn, immediately grasping that the crew could not exit from the bottom of his plane, ordered his top turret gunner and his radio operator, Tech. Sgt's. Orville Elkin and Edward G. Heuhaus to make their way to the back of the fuselage and out the waist door behind the left wing. Then he got his navigator, 2nd Lt. Robert Washington, and his bombardier, Sgt. James Shirley to follow them. As Rojohn and Leek somehow held the plane steady, these four men, as well as waist gunner Sgt. Roy Little and tail gunner Staff Sgt. Francis Chase were able to bail out.

Now the plane locked below them was aflame. Fire pured over Rojohn's left wing. He could feel the heat from the plane below and hear the sound of .50 cal. Machine-gun ammo "cooking off" in the flames. He ordered Lt. Leek to bail out. Leek knew that without him helping to keep the controls back, the plane would drop in a flaming spiral and the centrifugal force would prevent Rojohn from bailing - he refused the order.

Meanwhile, German soldiers and civilians on the ground that afternoon looked up in wonder. Some of them thought they were seeing a new Allied secret weapon-a strange eight-engined double bomber.

Suspended in his parachute in the cold December sky, Bob Washington watched with deadly fascination as the mated bombers, trailing black smoke, fell to earth about three miles away, their downward trip ending in an ugly boiling blossom of fire. In the cockpit, Rojohn and Leek held firmly to the controls trying to ride a falling rock. Lee tersely recalled, "The ground came up faster and faster. Praying was allowed. We gave it one last effort and slammed into the ground. The McNab plane on the bottom exploded, vaulting the other B-17 upward and forward. It hit the ground and slid along until its left wing slammed through a wooden building and the smoldering mass of aluminum came to a stop.

Rojohn and Leek were still seated in their cockpit. The nose of the plane was relatively intact, but everything from the B-17's massive wings back was destroyed. They looked at each other incredulously, neither was badly injured. Leek crawled out through a huge hole behind the cockpit, felt for the familiar pack in his uniform pocket and pulled out a cigarette. He placed it in his mouth and was about to light it. Then he noticed a young German soldier pointing a rifle at him, he looked scared and annoyed and he grabbed the cigarette out of Leek's mouth and pointed down to the gasoline pouring out over the wing from a ruptured fuel tank. Two of the six men who parachuted from Rojohn's plane did not survive the jump but the other four and, amazingly, four men from the other bomber, including ball turret gunner Woodall survived. All were taken prisoner.

Rojohn, typically, didn't talk much about his DFC. Of Leek, he said, "In all fairness to my copilot, he's the reason I'm alive today". Like so many veterans, Rojohn got back to life unsentimentally after the war, marrying and raising a son and daughter. For many years, though, he tried to link back up with Leek. It took him 40 years, but in 1986, he found the number of Leek's mother, in Washington State. Yes, her son Bill was visiting from California, would Rojohn like to speak with him. Two old men on a phone line, trying to pick up some familiar timbre of youth in each other's voice. One can imagine. A year later, the two were reunited at a reunion of the 100th BG, Bill Leek died the following year.

KUDOS to the GROUND CREW

THE EAGLES WRATH

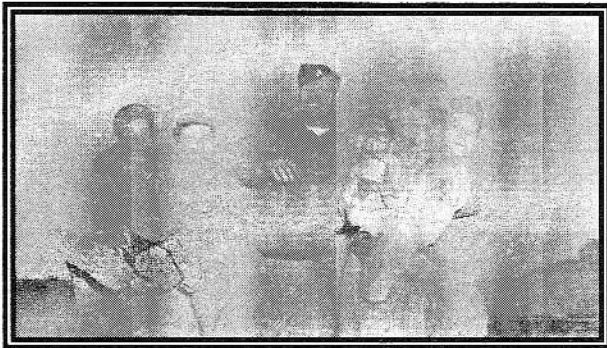
The "*Eagles Wrath*" was one of the first original B'17s to arrive in England in November 1942. It was stationed at Bassingbourn with the 323rd Squadron. M/Sgt. Mario Mattie was the crew chief of the "*Eagles Wrath*" which had an illustration of an Eagle in a white cloud background on the nose of the ship.

Mario Mattie's ground crew members were a close knit group... They were funloving but his crew chief said they were a serious, conscientious bunch when it came to keeping the fortress in tip-top flying condition. That was the goal of all the mechanics who worked on the engines and airplanes. When it was time to fly over Europe, the plane was always ready.

The toughest part of the mission for ground crew members was to sweat out the return of their plane wondering if the ship will come back safely. Mario Mattie said, "I would go off by myself somewhere and pray for the flight crew to get back safely."



M/Sgt. Mario Mattie



Hester, Darnell, Lincoln, Southard, Kardos

The "*Eagles Wrath*" flight crew, whose pilot was Captain Charles Giauque, completed their 25 missions in May 1943. It was a happy thing to see the "*Eagles Wrath*" buzz the hangar when it returned on its 25th mission. After the plane landed, the ground crew celebrated the event. They took Captain Giauque and dunked him in a pool of water.

It was a sad occasion when it was certain that the *Eagles Wrath* would not return on August 17th, 1943. The mission had been to Schweinfurt, Germany...It was its 33rd. I had a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. It felt like my Mom or Dad had died," said Mario.

I was given another Fortress to care for. It was in the hangar and it had just arrived from the United States. It had not been assigned to a flight crew as yet. I asked the Engineer Officer if I could name the plane. I

decided to name this Fort after my home town in Pennsylvania "*EMEIGH*" (pronounced Amy). Amy is a girl's name, thought Mario, so I thought I had better get a pretty girl painted on the nose. I took the drawing of a young woman with beautiful legs from a magazine. The sweater was white and the skirt was navy blue.



"*Emeigh*" lasted about five months before going down on her 23rd mission to Oschersleben on the 22nd February, 1944. It was Ken Sutherland's first mission in "*Emeigh*" and it would be his, and the aircraft's last. Seven men died, three survived.



The ground crew members of Mattie's crew were Wallace Southard, Marion Darnell, Joe Kardos, Bill Hester, Leo Lyons and Edward Lincoln. Only Mattie and Ed Lincoln are still alive.

MORE ON FATHER RAGAN:**FATHER RAGAN, his Bicycle and Dog**

by Whitmal W. Hill

Fr. Ragan was well known on the Basingbourn Air Base of the 91st BG. He went out of his way to be nice to everyone, especially the combat crews who were flying on a wing and a prayer in B-17s. This morning the Group airplanes had gathered and took off on a mission to a target in Europe. Rarely did the ground crews know where the target was. This was followed by a sudden silence over the base. Though it was a beautiful morning, the ground crews left by the mission bound bombers, silently returned to their quarters. Others worked to restore battle-damaged aircraft to operational readiness.

Father Reagan, however, had a bicycle and a medium sized dog that followed him as he road hither and yon on the base. Father Ragan, with dog, would ride out to the Squadron dispersal areas and have a friendly chat with the few ground crews who were around.

This particular day, the weather was excellent for a bike ride, so Father Ragan and dog rode over to what was an ex-RAF hospital turned into quarters for the 441st Sub Depot, first three graders (S/Sgt, T/Sgt, and M/Sgt.'s.) We called the area Consumption Junction as the dirt paths out to the quarters were usually full of rain water and mud puddles. Our barracks were close to the NCO Club. Somehow or other a raggedy, ungroomed, white poodle named Rags adopted us. No one knew where he came from, where he went during the day or where he slept during the night or who fed him but, he always greeted us at the close of the regular duty work day. Rags would greet us on the path to the barracks and would show his pleasure by wagging his tail and follow us into the barracks. He wouldn't stay long and after a bit of patting and stroking he would go out to greet the next 441st NCO arriving "home" from work.

Rags was a happy little dog who enjoyed having a tug of war with anyone who had an old rag. When he got control of the rag, he would shake it so hard that it would make popping sounds, thus the name Rags. I have never seen another dog shake a rag so hard that it would POP. This day several of us were home cleaning up the place, washing the bathtubs, toilets and windows. Dusting off the wall closets, shining our extra pair of dress shoes that we kept under the bed, washed the bath tubs, sinks, toilets and filled the toilet paper boxes with paper. We cleaned out the hot water furnace and insured that there was enough coal available to keep the water hot. We had finished up, the weather was warm enough to step outside wearing only a pair of pants to get a "sun tan". That day was the one day of summer that England use to have each year.

We were finished and sitting outside on the front steps when up rode Father Ragan with his dog. As usual, he stopped to chat with the troops and all was going well. Suddenly Rags showed up, and he went over to give Father Ragan's dog a friendly sniff. Well, the Father's dog didn't take too friendly with Rags and he started growling and standing all stiff legged. Rags faced the Father's dog, but held his ground as they glared at each other. Father Ragan in a jest said to his dog "go get him" and he lunged at Rags but, rags was fast. He made a quick circle and then grabbed the Father's dog by the back, just forward of his tail, lifted his back feet off the ground and shook the dog as though he was another rag. The Father quickly rushed to stop the fray. He pushed his bicycle between the dogs and they separated. Rags backed off while Father Ragan and his dog rode off into the late afternoon. He was never seen in that area again. I have often

wondered about Rags, and what he thought when he showed up at the Barracks the day we returned to the U.S. and no-one was there.

Father Ragan excerpt from Deane A. Turner's Book "One Day to be Remembered" (Reviewed on Pag 4)

Ragan stood beside the runway and blessed each plane as it taxied for takeoff.

While the planes were on their missions, Ragan circulated among over-worked ground crews to boost morale. When flight crews returned, he offered hot chocolate and solace. He enlivened a Sunday Mass by explaining his vestments as he removed them one by one. To cries of "Take it all off" he ended by revealing his regulation Army attire.

My Favorite Memory of Father Ragan

as recalled by Mike Banta
My Favorite memory was when he threw the multi-colored Horseshoe into the air as each pilot went to full power on take-off. I thought, "how thoughtful he was to use a horseshoe

instead of a crucifix so as not to offend our Jewish brothers". Yet we all knew that he was blessing each plane and all of us were searching for any lucky omen we could lean on. When I was stood down for the flak wound to my right hand, I went to the flight line one morning and fortunately caught in my camera a picture of the good Father throwing the horseshoe into the air as "Little Miss Mischief" was starting its take off roll. He was quite a guy.



PAPS STORY T/Sgt THOMAS ALAN (Pap) RICKMAN

By Nephew, Ken J. White

When I was a boy in the 1960s - I lived with my grandmother - I used to love to watch "12 O'Clock High" which was in black and white reruns on Saturday afternoons. My grandmother told me that her brother-in-law, whom we called "Uncle Pap", had flown with the big 8th Air Force bombers during the war. I asked her for details but she couldn't give me any and warned me that Uncle Pap did not like to talk about the War at all. Nevertheless, I tried in my childish way, to raise the topic with him a couple of times at family holiday dinners but got nowhere. Somewhere along the way someone explained to me that Uncle Pap probably felt guilty just to be alive.

The way the story was told to me, was that Uncle Pap went overseas with the crew he had trained with in the States. They had flown a few missions when Uncle Pap got a pass to London. While he was in London, there was an air raid alert, and he started into the subway for shelter, but fell on the steps and was trampled. Uncle Pap was hospitalized several weeks and had to have plastic surgery on his face. Meanwhile his crew flew their next mission (2/20/44) with a replacement in his top turret, and ALL were lost with no survivors. So when Pap was again fit for duty he was put with a new crew, who had gotten to England and then somehow lost their engineer/top turret gunner.

Uncle Pap finished his tour with this second crew, but the rest of that crew still had missions to fly. So they got a new man to replace Pap, and the next mission, they too were lost with all hands - at least that's what I'm told. Several years back I joined the 91st BG Memorial Association, hoping to find anyone who might remember Pap from the war, but had no luck. I wasn't really surprised, because, if I'd been told the story accurately, Pap was the only man from those two crews to get home. And, to the extent I've been able to substantiate any of this story, it seems to be true. After Pap died I wrote and got copies of what they had of his records, and he was hospitalized after the fall in London on Valentine's Day of 1944, in a civilian hospital for a couple of days at first and then in an Air Corps Hospital (so he missed "Big Week" due to his fall). By this time I understood that Uncle Pap had flown with the 91st BG (H), upon which "12 O'Clock High" was based, and that there was another 91st man from our town who got a lot more attention - Colonel Morgan of the Memphis Belle was also from Asheville.

Pap was married to my grandmother's next oldest sister, and during the War she kept a scrapbook. Pap died on 3/31/1989, and six weeks later she had an incapacitating stroke, and died a few years ago. When she died, I came into possession of her scrapbook. In this scrapbook there was a picture of a B-17 named "Fifinella", with the note that Pap had flown about 15 missions in her, including the first mission "Fifinella" went on. (Pap had returned to duty around 3/20/44 and must have met "Fifinella" after that). In the picture, it looks like "Fifinella" had flown 25+ missions - whether that means that Pap's second crew did NOT die when he left them, I can't say... I think the guys called Uncle Pap "Rick" while he was with the 91st. It was also at Pap's wake that I first heard any purported details of Uncle Pap's service, from his brother, also an Air Corps man but who never left Texas during the War. He told me that right after the War, maybe at a little reunion party and celebration, that

Pap had spoken of being in his turret, traversing a little bit of hostile sky, when flak exploded first the B-17 on their right in the formation, and seconds later the B-17 on the other side also exploded in mid-air, from flak. And Pap also told of watching a fellow crewman whose gun had jammed during an enemy attack grow frantic to clear his weapon, which caused him to jerk off his glove and beat on the machine gun, with the result that his fingers, which had quickly frozen, were broken off. Those two images via Pap's brother are all I know of Pap's actual combat, but that pretty well conveys the horror.

Pap's brother also told how later that same evening, he missed his brother and found him on the porch, crying, and so far as I know, after that night, Pap never spoke of the War again for the rest of his life. I can say though that if fate were to put me in a position where I had a combat mission I had to fly, I'd feel better if I could have Pap Rickman along with me.

Pap and my Aunt had no children, but my son was born the day after his funeral, and is in part named for him. I have a "crew loading" form that Uncle Pap sent his wife with names and a note that this was his crew at that time. But, after that he went to gunnery school at Wendover, and I don't know if he rejoined that bunch for deployment or not. And, if he did, they would be the "first" crew, all lost while Pap was hospitalized. And I have pictures from a pass in London of "Rick" and a few guys, and I also have a picture entitled "His Crew" - and the names seems different in each group. I think this is the original Fifinella crew (which would have been Pap's second crew), at least the picture was taken under Fifinella's nose, but written on the back is "January 1944" which was before Pap was hurt and the first crew was reportedly lost.

Your members may know more, and I'd be interested to learn. I'll try to make better sense of what information I have and keep you updated. Of course I would love to hear from anyone who might recall my Uncle.

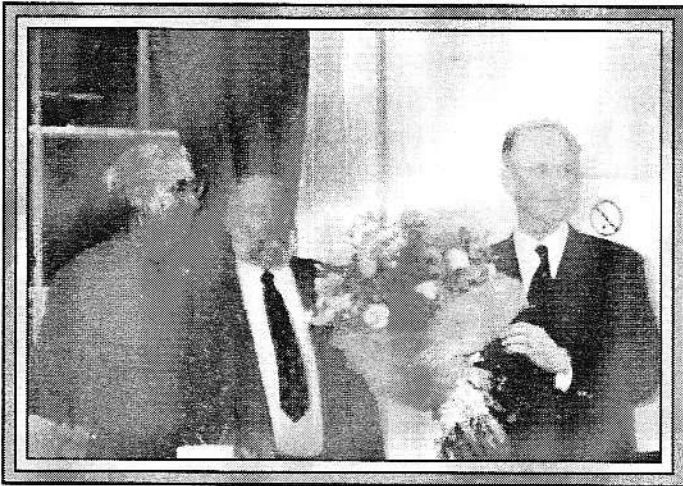
The names listed in my Aunt's scrapbook for the of Fifinella Crew are:

Joseph Green, Pilot
 Bruce Geiger, Co-pilot
 William H. Marsh Jr., Navigator
 William J. Carlson Bombardier
 Alan Rickman (Uncle Pap) Top Turret
 Berchel L. Shope Radio
 Clarence Sparks, Waist Gunner
 Karl Dziadular, Waist Gunner
 Fred A. Cascone, Tail Gunner,
 Sidney D. Martin, Ball Turret,

As long as I live I will never get over my sense of awe at the way average Americans rose to the challenge of those awful times, and I pray that God Bless all these men and their families.

Ken posted this on the Ring and is looking for any information that anyone can provide regarding his uncle.

We will forward any information to him

JANE VINCENTS RETIREMENT PARTY

L-R Jane Vincent, Tony (Janes Husband), Vince Hemmings

On Thursday night (25th September) Margaret and I attended the retirement party of Mrs Jane Vincent, MA (Hon) in Royston Town Hall with approximately 50 other people. Jane was the Curator of Royston Museum.

The Mayor of Royston, Councillor Peter Lill, opened the proceedings highlighting Jane's many achievements during her time as Curator. He presented her with a cheque on behalf of the Royston Town Council and the people of Royston. He was followed by Peter Ketteringham representing the Museum's Trustee's, who gave a very witty resume of the Jane's work as seen from the eyes of the Trustee's. He presented a book of commendations to Jane.

Under the guidance of Jane a group of embroiderer's have been busy at work for a number of years producing a tapestry relating to the history of Royston. Some 91sters may have seen it during recent visits. The embroiderer's presented Jane with an embroidered covered box.

I was then asked to speak on behalf of the 91st BG(H) Memorial Association, (I had been contacted by Paul Limm, Ed Gates and Ace Johnson) and I was able to place in a retirement card their splendid tributes to Jane from the 91st BG(H) Memorial Association, with your Group's Emblem secured inside the front cover. Ace also asked me to purchase a bouquet on behalf of your Group. It was much to Jane's surprise when Celia Wallpole, the Town Clerk, brought on the bouquet. In my short speech I mentioned the fact that the Royston Museum is now housed in the former Red Cross Club which was visited by many 91sters during World war II. The Royston Museum is small, yet Jane has found space to display artefacts

relating to the 91st BG(H) which is greatly appreciated. In the years that I ran a Museum, Jane often gave me freely her advice, a true professional helping an amateur.

It was a privilege to attend this special moment in Jane's life. She has always contributed enthusiastically to the splendid relationship existing between the people of Royston and the 91st Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association.

Jane and her husband Tony will be retiring to Cornwall when he retires from his job at the Science Museum next year.

Jane's successor is her deputy Carol Kaszak, an excellent choice.

May I mention that if any 91sters have any recollections or photographs of the Red Cross Club or life in Royston during the time at RAF Bassingbourn, Carol will be delighted to have them. Please pass them on to me and I will forward them on to Carol.

Kind regards to all,

Vince Hemmings

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Gates,

Tonight, Vince Hemmings came all the way from Diss in Norfolk to present me with the most beautiful bouquet of flowers I have ever received. It was most undeserved, but most welcome. Thank you and thanks to the 91st Bomb Group who I have known and loved since 1992.

My "cutting grass" party went well with a lot of really kind and generous people turning up to wish me well. These last twelve years have been wonderful and I can truly say I enjoyed every day I went to work.

I would like also to thank perhaps for the last time, all you wonderful

airmen of the 91st. It has been a privilege meeting you, and one of my most poignant memories is standing with "Westy" Westwood at the memorial in 1992, singing the U.S. National Anthem in the rain. I hope one day to visit the States and sing it again, for it is my generation of babies born during World War II who have to thank you.

You sent vitamins and medicines as well as your young men and women. For all of these gifts if I lived to be 100 I could never thank you all enough.

A heart operation that saved my life was pioneered in Philadelphia, and one of the happiest years of my son's schooldays was in American School in sixth grade. I think he learned more that year and enjoyed it more than any other school he ever attended.

So Lieutenant Colonel Gates, I am in your debt and I thank you and the 91st Bomb group for your kindness and generosity.

With my love and good wishes to you all

Yours sincerely

Jane Vincent,

Curator, Royston and District Museum

FOLDED WINGS CONT'D FROM PAGE 11★ **Joseph J. Anthony, FM 401st, Age 78****Derby KS, June 23, 2003**

as reported by his daughter Barbara Bulger
 He was a Major, USAAF, Retired. He was born on April 12, 1925 in Pittsburgh PA. He volunteered for enlistment into the Army Aviation Cadet program on April 1, 1943. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant as a Navigator/Bombardier on a B-17 Flying Fortress in 1944 and finally got into the war in February 1945. He flew 3 combat missions and was discharged from Brooks Army Air Field, San Antonio, TX on Oct. 15, 1945 and immediately affiliated with the reserves until his recall to active duty in March-1953. Upon his recall he was commission a 2nd Lieutenant and received his Navigator wings on B-47 Strato Jet Bombers. He was assigned to the Strategic Air Command where he earned his Master Navigator Wings. He remained in the Air Force until his retirement on November 30, 1970. He accumulated over 3800 flight hours as a Navigator/Bombardier and served honorably for 28 years.

He is survived by his daughters and sons-in-law, Barbara and Michael Bulger, Elizabeth and Kenneth Williams, Patricia Anthony, Francie and Warren Potter, Theresa and Steve Hearn, Margaret and Kevin Butler, Susanna Anthony; sons, George and Mark, sister, Katherine Stidle, 17 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren.

**PLEASE SEND ALL OBITUARIES
 (INCLUDING PHOTO IF POSSIBLE)**

to

ACE JOHNSON, Secretary**590 Aloha Drive****Lake Havasu City AZ 86406-4559**★ **Ray B. Odom, LM, 324th****Kinder, LA, Veterans Day 2003**

as reported by his grandson Bryan James
 My grandfather was a crew member (a ball turret gunner) on "*Little Miss Mischief*" under Lt. Moyer. He is survived by his wife and other family members.

★ **George Phillip Ward, 322nd, Age 87**
Arlington TX, August 8, 2003

as reported by his brother Ray
 George Phillip Ward, was a career officer retiring from active duty in 1967. During WWII, he served as a B-17 navigator flying over 25 combat missions from Basingbourn until April of 1944. He later flew B-36s out of Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth.

**Ray & George Ward**

He was assigned to the National Security Agency and was posted to numerous stations. His awards included the Joint Services Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal,

Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Med, Purple Heart, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal and the American Defense Medal.

Lt. Col. Ward was also a master Mason of more than 50 years service, achieving the 32nd degree.

He is survived by his wife Ruth, son, Dr. Gordon P. Ward and his wife Jane, daughters, Georgia Self and Rena Harris and her husband Dr. John Ewing. Stepdaughters Betty Ellis and husband Robert and Carol Rogers and husband Guy. He is also survived by his brother Ray R. Ward also a member of the 91st BG, 323rd Squadron, his 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Burial was at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.

DID YOU KNOW???

**First KIA was: Lt. Louis B. Briglia,
 on a mission to St. Nazaire, France**

A shell exploded in the Bombardiers compartment of Lt. Mcarty's ship. Vertigo fatally wounding Lt. Briglia, the Bombardier

Your Editor, Steve Perri, was flying in the same formation on this mission November 9, 1942

Folded Wings (Continued from Page 12)

★ **Faber Cripps, LM, 401st, Age 82**
Palm Springs CA, August 4, 2003

as reported by his wife Mary Faith
 Faber Cripps was born April 28, 1921 in Ft. Dodge Iowa and graduated Ft. Dodge Junior College in 1941, and the University of Iowa in 1947. He enlisted in USAAC March 15, 1942 and was based at Bassingbourn Sept. 1942-June 1945 as a sheet metal Crew Chief for the 401st BS and the 441st sub-depot. His crew built 2 portable sheet metal shops on bomb trailer beds which would go under B-17 wings both with black out covering, air compressor, work



bench and 110V energizer so they could work in the dispersal areas day and night. He was discharged Honorably, Oct. 10, 1945 as a Staff Sergeant.

He was a member of United Methodist Church of Palm Springs, the American Legion, the Elks, the Masons and the 91st BGMA. He served as a volunteer at the Palm Springs Air Museum.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Faith, two daughters, Mare and Joe Ellen, his sister, Carol Rierson, brother, Walter and two grandchildren.

★ **William R. "Bill" Steiner, FM 324th, Age 78**
Bethlehem PA, May 9, 2003

as submitted by his pilot, Joe Bessolo
 He was a graduate of Penn State University and worked for Bethlehem Steel Corp. For 35 years. He was the Navigator on Joe Bessolo's Crew

"Little Miss Mischief".

He is survived by his wife Ruth, four sons, one daughter and 11 grandchildren.



MARK YOU CALENDER
for the
2004 REUNION Sept. 30 - Oct. 4
in
WASHINGTON D.C.

★ **Frederick Foster, FM 401st, Age 79**
Chicago, Illinois, May 28, 2003



as reported by his wife Arline
 Fred Foster, a WWII B-17 pilot and an innovator in the advertising industry for over 45 years died Wed. May 28th of advanced cancer. He flew 35 missions as a B-17 pilot and received the DFC, Air Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters, Distinguished Unit Citation and European-African-Middle Eastern Citation with 3 Battle Stars. After his service in

WWII, Fred flew in the Berlin Airlift, was on General Eisenhower's NATO alliance staff, and was on President Truman's Pentagon staff at the outbreak of the Korean War. During the early months of the Korean conflict, he aired a weekly radio address nationwide live from Tokyo. After the Korean War, he joined the Veteran's Air Express, flying farm animals and produce from the U.S. to Europe as part of the Marshal Plan reconstruction.

After leaving the AF in 1956 he joined Fred Niles Productions in Chicago and thus began a 45-year career in the television commercial production industry spanning Chicago, NY and Hollywood.

Fred is survived by his wife of 48 years, Arline, a daughter, Ann, a son, Ken and his wife Nina, a brother, Warren and a sister, Dorothy.

★ **Louis V. Hansen, FM, 401st, Age 87**
Ashkum, Illinois, July 13, 2003

as reported by his wife Rowena
 He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II and was a member of the Elks, Moose and VFW and the Clifton American Legion.

He was born Aug. 29, 1915 and was a lifelong farmer in Chebanse. He was also the longtime co-owner of Clifton Grain and Hansen Bros. Grain.

Surviving are his wife Rowena, whom he married in 1978, two sons and one daughter-in-law; Bruce, and Arlene & Laurie; three daughters and sons-in-law, Vicki and Levern Denault, Valerie and Douglas Enz, Rhonda & Charles Cobb; two stepsons and step-daughters-in-law, Larry & Jackie Davis, John and Jill Davis; three brothers and three sisters-in-law, Virgil & Darlene Hansen, Laverne & Helen Hansen and Julia Hansen; 15 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren and seven step-grandchildren and 13 step-great grandchildren.

(Obituaries Continued on Page 10)

Folded Wings

★ Harry (Kulchesky) Kool, FM, 323rd Age 83 Daytona Beach Shores FL, Aug. 1, 2003



as reported by his wife Paula He served as a waist gunner on the Delta Rebel No. 2 along with this editor and completed 25 missions over Europe. He was born November 22, 1919 in California PA and retired from the Fire Department of Hamtramck Michigan in 1973 as Chief of Apparatus. He and his wife Paula then moved to Florida. He was a member of VFW Post 3282, and the Florida Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association.

He is survived by his wife of almost 60 years, Paula, his son, Les and his wife Katie and two granddaughters Meg

and her husband Rob Dunn and Karen and her husband, Eric Bode as well as three great-grandchildren, Nathan Paul, Anna and Naomi. His family's favorite memories of him were sitting around the dining room table and listening to stories of his childhood antics and his war stories.

There was a Funeral Mass with military honors following the Mass and Internment was at Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell.

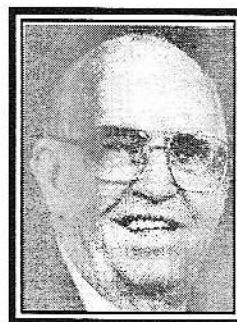
This Editor and his wife Nancy will surely miss their friendship.

★ Louis R. (Casey) Cassese, 323rd Age 81 Middletown RI, May 28, 1997

as reported by his son
Born December 22, 1915. He was a member of the 91st BG stationed at Bassingbourn. He joined April 23, 1942 - date of separation from service was September 21, 1945. He was a Staff Sergeant/Intelligence Spec.631.

He was a painter for the Gallagher Construction Co. And the Newport Housing Authority and was a parishioner at St. Lucy's Church, Middletown RI. He is survived by 9 children, 12 Grandchildren and 7 Great Grandchildren. He is survived by a sister Anita Dodge of Topeka KS and a brother Peter of Stoney Brook NY.

★ Amos Jack Stack, 323rd, Age 82 Charlotte NC, June 27, 2003



Amos was born in Charlotte on February 10, 1921. He served in the 8th Army Air Corps during World War II with the 91st Bomb Group and the Korean War. He retired from Eastern Airlines after 32 years of service.

He is Survived by his wife of 57 years, Georgia, children Gloria, Jenn Brencht and husband Les, Jack Stack and his wife Rebecca, sister, Ann Stack, nephew Kevin Ray and his wife Jennifer and their children Mackenzie and Trevor.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

COLORADO SPRINGS EIGHTH AIR FORCE
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*Will the circle remain unbroken
Bye and bye Lord, bye and bye
Will our crew be all together
In the sky Lord, in the sky.....✈*

(More obituaries of page 11)