

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd Bomb Sq.



323rd Bomb Sq.



Supporting Units



324th Bomb Sq.



401st Bomb Sq.

Vol. 39 No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H) July 2006



91ST BGMA REUNION

SEPTEMBER 13-16 2006

AT THE SHERATON HOTEL, COLORADO SPRINGS

Hotel Phone: 719-576-5900

WE HOPE THAT EVERYONE THAT CAN - WILL TRY TO ATTEND

IN OUR LAST ISSUE WE ENCLOSED THE INFORMATION FOR THE REUNION IN COLORADO SPRINGS. IF FOR SOME REASON YOU DID NOT RECEIVE IT OR WOULD LIKE ANOTHER COPY, PLEASE CONTACT:

ACE JOHNSON (1-928 453-3114)

AND HE WILL BE HAPPY TO SEND YOU ANOTHER COPY.

Each individual guest must make their own Hotel reservation by calling

1-719-576-5900 by Aug. 13, 2006. They must identify themselves as members of the 91st BG and all Reservations must be guaranteed and accompanied by a first night deposit or with a major credit card.

Deposits will be refunded only if notice is received by the hotel 24 hours prior to arrival date and you will be given a cancellation number.

NOTICE PX has REOPENED

PX Manager Marv Goldberg has returned from an extended trip and will be accepting orders from **5 July until 1 September**. All orders placed since 1 Oct 05 are believed to have been filled; if you placed one since that date and have neither received your order nor been advised by Marv that items are back-ordered, please contact Marv immediately at [<mmarvgold@aol.com>](mailto:mmarvgold@aol.com).

The PX will be closed as of 5 September as the PX Manager packs up and prepares to depart for the Reunion at Colorado Springs and until a new PX Manager is appointed and announced on the website and in The Ragged Irregular

Please do not submit orders after Sept. 1, 2006

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND MORE:

Distinguished Flying Cross Society - REUNION

www.dfcsociety.org Toll Free 1-866-332-6332

October 22-26 2006 Las Vegas Nevada

Mick Hanou is organizing the Hospitality Suite at our Colorado Springs Reunion and is looking for Volunteers to assist him at the bar etc.
mhanou@comcast.net

Letter to Ed Gates from Lt. Col Nigel Smith KINGS

Dear Colonel Ed:

It was a huge honour to welcome you back to the Base and we all greatly enjoyed your visit. Nothing but extreme respect and admiration. Your "fireside" talk was fascinating and we are all most grateful to you for sharing your rich experiences with us.

I am enormously grateful too, for the magnificent mementos you so generously gifted to the Base and Mess.

So sorry not to have said farewell in person following Memorial Day – but it was a little hectic with so many in attendance.

Always a very special place for the 91st BGMA.

Kind regards and much respect,

Nigel

N D S SMITH KINGS

LtCol

CO ATR Bassingbourn, 94657 4230

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To **ACE JOHNSON**
(with photo if possible)

Material for publication
should be sent to
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STORY'S from Mike Banta's Ring

Become a member of the ring by e-mailing Mike at B17banta@aol.com

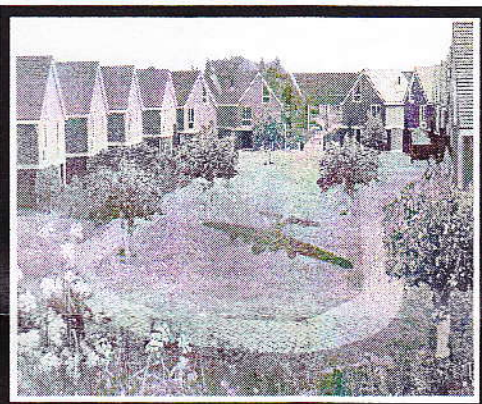
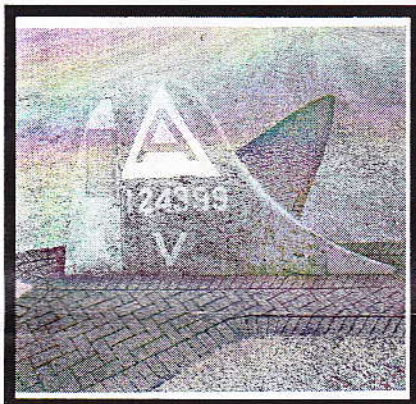
We have followed the kind and generous actions of the good people of Opijnen through many wonderful years as they honored our fallen comrades from the 91st Bomb Group. The methods of expressing their gratitude for the sacrifices of these fallen fliers year after year have demonstrated inspired creative thought by people grateful to be freed of Nazi tyranny.

This year's dedication of the three thousand five hundred bricks representing the shadow of a B-17 on McCammonplein; coupled with a monument in the form of the vertical stabilizer of a B-17 is truly an artistic masterpiece. This is certainly a fitting centerpiece for the adjacent housing project whose streets bear the names of all the members of the B-17 bomber that crashed nearby on July 30, 1943.

We are pleased that the 91st Bomb Group will be officially represented by Bonney Jean McCammon, widow of the pilot, Keene McCammon, as well as Co-pilot John Bruce.

On behalf of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association, we wish to express our thanks and deep appreciation to the people of Opijnen for their outstanding efforts.

From Edward C. Gates, President – John W. Howland Historian



The first two photos are of the "Unique vertical fin terrazzo monument", part of the 3,500 brick "shadow monument" of a B-17 designed by Dutch artist Joris Baudoin. The monument consists of 3,500 bricks forming the shadow of a B-17, plus the granite vertical stabilizer with bronze plaque on the rudder with the names of all ten crewmembers. This is a new housing development



John Bruce, Copilot



Bonnie Jean McCammon

near to where the plane "Man O War" fell. In 2004, all streets plus the community square were named for members of the crew. For example, the courtyard is called McCammonplein after Keene McCammon, the pilot who survived the crash along with co-pilot John Bruce, who also helped fund the monument.



More letters to the Editor:

My name is Barbara Drumm and my father, Lawrence "Zero" Ott, was the navigator on the "Eagle's Wrath". We lost my father a few years ago, but I frequently think of him. My mom forwarded this to me and with great pride, I have forwarded it on to my daughter. She is a junior in high school and they are studying WWII right now. With a tear in her eye, she promised to play it for her class. I'm not exactly sure why I felt I had to respond to all of you, but then, maybe I do – I just want to say THANK YOU. Thank you for all that you did and sacrificed. Fortunately, my dad and I had many talks about the war (usually late at night over a bottle of wine!) and I did have the opportunity to tell him how proud I am of him and his role. Now I just want to say the same to all of you. I will pass this on, and on, and on – we shall never forget! I want to know all that you can tell me – and then it will be in print and so much easier to keep FOREVER. I wish I had a record of all the conversations I had with my dad, but I don't and I sincerely regret that. Ah, the stories!

With warmest regards and great respect - Barbara

Dear Mr. Johnson:

My husband, Edwin Whitten died February 23, 2005. He was proud of his military record and enjoyed his many years of membership with the group. I am enclosing a small donation to your Memorial fund. Sincerely, Helma Whitten

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please find enclosed a donation to the Memorial Fund on behalf of my father, Grant Bean Siddoway, who passed away January 23, 2006. The Bomb Group was so much a part of his life and a memory that he greatly treasured. He had so much fun going to the reunions and reminiscing about the "War Days". Please give our families best to all of your surviving members and let them know about our father.

Sincerely, Eileen Siddoway-Parker

A FISHERMAN'S PRAYER

God, grant that I may live to fish
Until my dying day,
And when it comes to my last cast,
I then most humbly pray
When in the Lord's soft landing net,
I'm peacefully asleep,
That in his mercy I may be judged
As big enough to keep

Sister's quilt commemorates record of B-17 gunner Andrew Schumacher

Andrew Schumacher of Linton was a ball turret gunner on a B-17 Bomber during WWII and he wanted to do something to display his memorabilia from the war. He asked his sister, Mary Ann Bickler if she would sew a quilt (quilting is her hobby and she has sewn over 150 quilts).

She worked off and on about three months. The quilt features a blue sky and white cloud background onto which computer adapted photos are stitched.



Folded Wings cont'd:

Due to erroneous information that we received, we are repeating the following obit:

★ **Robert Gerstemeier, 401st, Age 81**
Port St. Lucie, FL Jan. 06, 2006

As reported by his wife Trudy

I just received The Ragged Irregular and was disappointed in the information printed for Bob's obit. I hope I did not send that misinformation to you. I and my family have been devastated ever since we lost him, but I am sure Bob would want me to correct the mistakes. He was not wounded with stray flak. He lost his right leg in a mission over Brunswick, Germany, on January 30, 1944, by a 20 mm cannon shell fired into The Shamrock Special by a German fighter (Folke-wolf) which, after skimming the bombs in the bomb bay, took his leg and exited the fuselage on the port side. The crew continued on the mission and it was his navigator, Bernard Hart, who attended him during the flight back to base. It was not years later that Jack and Bob reunited. They knew each other before that mission on the base. Jack met the plane because he knew Bob was on it and took several pictures

Bob is also survived by five sons, Robert, Jr.; Richard, Karl, Steve, and Gary. And two daughters; Jacquelyn, and Debra and, of course, myself. There are 12 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. I am sure Bob would appreciate the correction. His family would be very disappointed if I were to show them the Ragged Irregular. Trudie

The Presidents Corner (Book):

(Photos contributed by Vince Hemmings)

I write with a bitter-sweet feeling on this, my last opportunity to share my views with you as your President; it has been an honor to be of service to you. On the return trip from Europe I savored the sweetness of being able to report to you how well regarded we are in many, many quarters and planned to start writing this over the past weekend. News of Earl Pate's death put other thoughts in the forefront. Earl and I exchanged three recent communications including two during my three-week absence in Europe. We shared immense respect for the 91st Bomb Group and the service that all of you provided 60 plus years ago to our fellowmen. Those of us who survive have lost a good friend and a stalwart supporter of the 91st BGMA. As many of you know from personal contact, Earl always went the extra mile to help anyone with matters relating to service in the 91st BG or support of the BGMA. God speed, good friend.

I'll briefly mention some of the items your officers covered in our quarterly Conference Call on 6 May 06. We are working towards establishing a location for the archives of the 91st Bomb Group; I have written to Gen. Metcalf at the National USAF Museum at WPAFB suggesting they would be the logical choice because of the presence of our B-17's *Shoo, Shoo, Shoo Baby* and - now - the *Memphis Belle*, and because of their exceptional capability (and assured funding) to provide for scholarly research and to manage archives. Other matters included our improved contacts with the 303rd BGMA and the 91st Space Wing at Minot with whom I will be visiting 6-8 July. Planning for the Colorado Springs Reunion seems to be going well; now you need to identify the events in which you would be interested so we can firm up transportation services. Make room reservations directly with the Sheraton. Let's make this another great Reunion.

In the rest of this Page, let me share with you some impressions of the high regard in which we are held in the areas I visited in Europe. I am well aware that the courtesies that were extended to me were not because of who I am, but rather in honor of you; I thanked our many gracious hosts in your behalf. The prestige of the 91st Bomb Group is alive and vibrant. I was especially reminded that those who pay their respects are not of my age group, but of a generation or two later. I usually wore my (Tacoma reunion) cap emblazoned with our emblem, reference to our arrival at Bassingbourn and that glorious B-17 stitched on the side. The trip did cost the BGMA a few wreaths and over \$500 of caps, patches, pins, etc. from the PX given to my hosts.

Fortunately, I had enough frequent flyer miles to cover most of the trip which permitted me to make a stop-over in Paris from where I drove out to the west coast of France. Figuring I would need a bit of rest after the flight I planned a two-hour drive down to Provins after landing at Paris. I expected to buy a bare-root Rose of Provins which is sold only by the Knights Templar store (forget Da Vinci code stuff) supposedly from stock brought back from Palestine in the 12th Century; that rose is on the coat of arms of the House of Lancaster. My grand plan was to give it to the Royston Town Council for the Memorial Garden in honor of our brotherhood with the Lancaster crews. Imagine my surprise when I learned they had only potted plants - a bit of a transport challenge. The rose is so sweet that they make candy and honey from the petals, so I settled for a pot of honey. It was easier to transport on a 2-day nostalgic trip along the Loire valley to La Baule near St. Nazaire, the train ride back to Paris and on subsequent flights.

As I wrote in April, Alain Charles was my host in western France. We visited memorials (see photo of Ed and Alain Charles sent by Alain Charles) at sites of downed B-17's including the 323rd's *Panhandle Dogie* and the Memorial to WW I and II American servicemen in St. Nazaire. We spent an afternoon with Michel Lugez who led the Committee which raised the equivalent of over \$500,000 to restore the Memorial which had been destroyed by the Germans in 1941. Michel, who had witnessed the crash of the 303rd BG's *Snap, Crackle, Pop*, then spent over 20 years of his life cataloguing data on crash sites in France of 777 Eighth Air Force B-17's plus over 300 other aircraft including personal interviews with eye-witnesses, crew identities and pictures in loose-leaf notebooks.



(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

Alain, his successor as President of the Association, is striving to put it all on the web in French and English; the technical part is basically completed and about half of the aircraft are entered, but translation and entry costs are high and I will seek help from other sources like the Museum at WPAFB, the 8th AF Historical Society and some of the BGMA's. Alain spent more than two days escorting me around the "Love Coast." (The Cote d'Amour is a play on words adopted in 1911 after southern France called themselves the Cote d'Azur.) We visited the St. Nazaire sub-pens which cost many 91st lives. What particularly impressed me was the honor that the citizens of the area have paid to us since we killed more than 100 French men, women and children in our efforts to destroy the sub-pens. You might want to remember that the next time someone makes a snide remark about France or some self-appointed authority decries "collateral damage." Surprise !! People do value freedom.

My next stop in your behalf after France was at Bassingbourn where I was (to my surprise) the guest of the Army Training Regiment for four days. (I remembered more about the bike rides I took to Letchworth and beyond - perhaps to "get away" - than about the Base.) The Base is now redecorating some rooms in honor of the 91st thanks to the inspiration of former base commander Lt.Col. Nick Richardson supported by our faithful friend Vince Hemmings; Nick was kind enough to come up from London (where he is assigned to Ministry of Defence) to say "Hello." I met with Maj. Hamish MacPherson, the President of the Mess Council (PMC), and his predecessor, Maj. Louise Mallin, who was the initial project officer, and presented some photos contributed by Joe Harlick, videos from Jake Howland, some patches and pins from our PX, a couple of lithographs and other items; in July Mick Hanou will take a copy of "Curly" Havelaar's fine history of the 91st to them for the Mess library. There are numerous memorabilia about the 91st decorating Mess walls particularly in the Bar. Even in the VIP suite there is a picture of *Nine-O-Nine* to which I contributed some explanatory info about the exemplary efforts of MSgt Rollin Davis and his crew. Our trusty Editor of The Ragged Irregular - Steve Perri in case you had forgotten - still graces the wall of the bar next to some fellow named Clark Gable. I was asked to speak to the officers and ladies about "Combat and Leadership" and showed some flak and 20 mm shells that Rudy

Steele had given to me; I pointed out that in the bar they have a picture of Rudy in review before Gen. Eisenhower in front of *Yankee Doodle*. The Prop Memorial looks great after the refurbishing arranged by David Crow last year. The old Nissan hut is still being used as a Chapel and I attended on Sunday. Major Hamish MacPherson (he's of Scotch ancestry, did you guess?), my host as the PMC, provided a well-organized, cordial and generous reception to me as your representative. Lt.Col. Nigel Smith who had just taken over command two months before my arrival made me extremely welcome; hopefully we established a rapport which will enable our future Presidents of the BGMA to stay in contact.

A visit to Duxford Air Museum which I had asked Vince Hemmings to arrange in hopes I could mention the hopes of the 91st BGMA that the Bassingbourn Tower could be supported grew into much more. Some (as yet unknown to me) person arranged for a local flying club to provide an aircraft in which a volunteer RAF pilot flew me from Bassingbourn with a few turns around the area to Duxford. TV coverage started at the Tower and continued at Duxford sitting in the *Sally B*, the only airworthy B-17 in the UK; it provided an opportunity to encourage attendance at the Tower Museum while talking about your contributions to victory in WW II. Because it was a Bank Holiday weekend I did not have much chance to discuss cooperation with the Duxford Air Museum, but I did have a thoroughly enjoyable tour in the company of Air Commodore Peter Thorn (a contemporary of ours) and Duxford Associate Keith Boswell.

The Bassingbourn Tower museum is open but attendance is limited for various reasons. I had a frank discussion with EAAS Chairman Ray Jude, Vice-Chair Chris Murphy and Secretary Mike Killaspy. Your Board will be discussing in our next Conference Call on August 12th how we might help and I will be reporting at the Colorado Springs Reunion. More on that in a later issue of The Ragged Irregular. Exhibits are attractive and in good condition, the radiation problem has been solved and the Museum has been designated as an historical preserved site. While Ray says they have only six active members of EAAS, there is hope. Chris Murphy was especially helpful; he met me in a base staff car at London airport for the drive to Bassingbourn, toured Bassingbourn and our monuments, and at Royston showed a

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(continued from page 6)

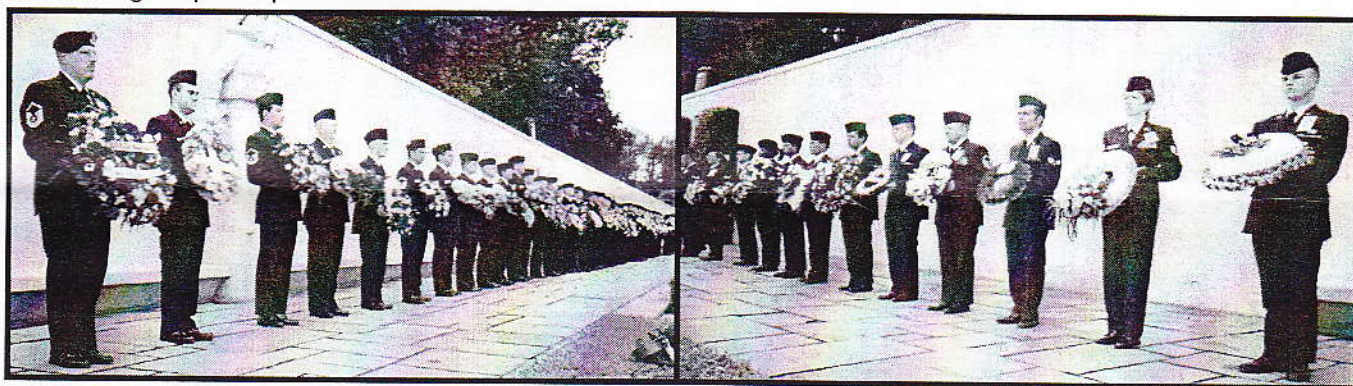
film that he has produced on Bassingbourn and two nearby bases. Chris hopes to attend our Reunion and I have asked him to bring the film with him. (We'll find an hour to show it for it is very well done; if you had not planned to attend, this may push you to make the effort.)

Vince Hemmings had arranged a visit with the Royston Town Council with interviews by the local media. The newly elected Mayor, Lin Berry, honored the 91st BG in her first public ceremony. Paul Limm had provided a lovely floral display for Celia Walpole, the retiring Clerk of the Royston Council, who has rendered many services for us over the years. I presented her with a 91st pin and that pot of honey from the Rose of Province - "sweets for the sweet." We must have done good because I noted a bit of moisture in her eyes; the Royston fog hangs around, you know. I was joined by fellow-91sters Chris Goodwin and John Bunch in laying our wreath at the memorial marker in the Garden.

Laying the wreath at Madingley Cemetery on Memorial Day was a moving experience.

Lt. Col. Nigel Smith and his wife, Laura, invited me to join them on the trip over since he was also laying one of the 141 wreaths.

Vince had obtained seats for us directly in front of the spot at which we were to lay the wreath at the Wall of the Missing close to the names of three of our former comrades; I did not have very far to hobble and Chris Goodwin again participated.



Memorial services included some excellent thoughts by the U.S. Ambassador and a military Chaplain, a missing-man formation and flyovers of a Spitfire, C-47 and the *Sally B*. At her request, I had the opportunity to have a delightful chat with Mrs. Ellinore Sallingboe (in case you wondered where "*Sally B*" came from), the owner of the B-17, and presented her with a 91st patch and a 324th pin since the right side nose art on her aircraft is still that of the *Memphis Belle* from the movie making. (I shared with her that not everybody is lucky enough to be in the 323rd).

My last stop in your behalf was in Innsbruck, Austria, to thank Dr. Jakob Mayer for his research for a memorial that was dedicated last year to Lt. Henry Supchak's crew from the 323rd that avoided a village when crashing *Priority Gal* nearby on 31 Jul 44. The village of Neustift had long honored the crew and a local mountain guide and hotel owner, Mr. Haas, had many items including some damaged parts from the B-17 in a "hut" where he had been staying with his grandmother when *Priority Gal* crashed nearby. He was 10 years old at the time and still has scars on his leg from debris and vivid memories of the burning wreckage on the mountain stream. The memorial erected by him last year was reported on the "Ring." Oh yes, that "hut" in which he lived during the summer to watch the cows and goats which were pastured at higher altitude, is now a lovely rest stop on a mountain hiking trail with a couple of suites and rooms and a dining room in which he served us a huge buffet. He offered us rooms for the night at \$30 when we were paying over \$100 at Garmisch; there was a lot of "eating your heart out" going on and my son called his wife that night in hopes they could visit later. The next day a friend of Jakob's, the Austrian consul in Philadelphia, told us that the Stubai Valley province (where Neustift is) was the only one in Austria to vote overwhelmingly against annexation by Hitler in the 1930's.

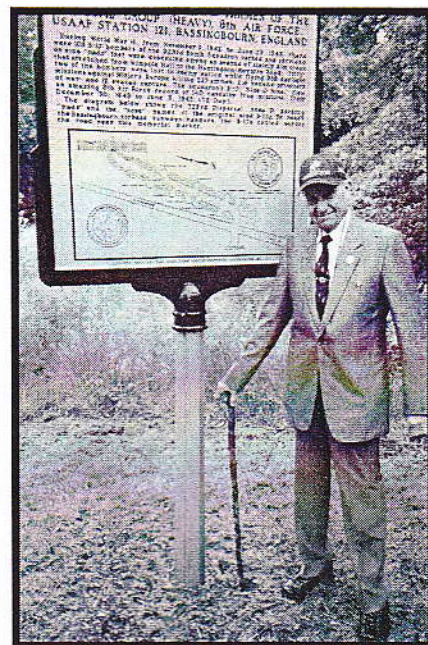
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Then there were those incidents brought on by seeing my cap. The lady in Paris who insisted that I go ahead of her in line for a cab. Two Brits at London/Stansted airport who asked about the B-17 and chatted about what we did for them; they were on holiday to visit a former prison camp in Germany. A US soldier we met on the bus at Stuttgart insisted that my grandson, Steven, call him if I needed anything. An Air Force Colonel Rick Modell, son of 323rd member Bob Modell said – sign him up as a member after we chatted at Stuttgart. Young people who want to remember!! It inspires me to continue a vibrant 91st BGMA as the best “living memorial” around.

To you of the next generations, Mick Hanou has specifically asked you to contact him if you would like to help at the Hospitality Room or in any other way at the Colorado Springs Reunion. The old crews are going home; we need new ones to continue the missions.

There are so very many people to thank – especially Vince Hemmings – who honored your service and made my trip a delight. Thank you for the opportunity to represent the 91st BGMA. See you in Colorado Springs.

Your President Ed Gates



Photograph taken in front of the 91st BG(H) Memorial in Priority Gardens, Royston
Mrs. & Mrs. Chris Goodwin.- Councillor Lin Berry, Mayor – Col. Ed Gates – John
Bunch, Jr. – John Smith – Col Eric Gates USAF – Town Councillor Phillip Mayne
Photo taken by V. Hemmings.

From Across the Pond**Visit to the UK by Lt. Col. Ed Gates - 25-29 May 2006**

by Vince Hemmings

Ed arrived at Stanstead Airport Thursday evening and stayed in Bassingbourn Barracks by kind permission of the Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Nigel D. S. Smith KINGS. On Friday morning (26), I had arranged for Ed to meet Air Commodore Peter Thome, AFC, RAF, (Ret'd) and Keith Boswell, both Duxford Associates at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Before leaving for Duxford, he was interviewed by one of our television companies and was then flown, yes flown from Bassingbourn Barracks to Duxford, and was taken into the only flyable Boeing B-17G in the country, "Sally B". No doubt, sitting in the left hand seat brought back many memories for Ed. In the evening, Ed was the guest at a "Ladies Evening" in the Officers' Mess after which he gave a talk on leadership during his time at RAF Bassingbourn. In attendance was Mr. & Mrs. David Crow, Squadron Leader and Mrs. Ray Leach, MBE, RAF and member of the East Anglian Aviation Society Ltd, and their wives.

On Saturday morning I walked into the Officers Mess at 09.15 hours and Ed was still having his breakfast, with two young ladies. Margaret and I were introduced and later joined by the pilot who had flown Ed to Duxford on the Friday morning later, we left for Royston Town Hall and there we met Councillor Lin Berry, Royston new Mayor, in fact meeting Ed was her first public engagement. She did very well. Also in attendance were District Councillor John Smith and Town Councillor Phillip Mayne. Other Councillors were on official business elsewhere. After a short speech of welcome the whole party left for the Priory Gardens where we met 91sters Mr Mrs Chris Goodwin, John Bunch Jr. and Ed's son Lieutenant Colonel Eric Gates, USAF, his wife Pam and their children Patrica and Steven. At this time of the year the winter flowers had been removed and the summer flowers had not been planted. We have had so much mud, it has been impossible to put the plants in. The rain fall for the country has been the four highest since records were kept. I recorded 4 inches for May in my garden. On the Saturday it rained most of the day. The 91st BG(H) MA wreath was laid by Ed, Chris and John, Councillor Berry laid a wreath on behalf of Royston and Mr. Chris Murphy lay his on behalf of the Royal Air Force Association. The party returned to the Town Hall for refreshments and presentation of a bouquet to Celia Walpole, Clerk to Royston's Town Councillor. Celia has organized many visits of 91sters over the years always working quietly in the background. Susan Thorton-Bjork her deputy was given a box of chocolates. Celia and Susan had been busy with local elections at the beginning of the month and then had auditors in yet they coped admirably Both these gifts came from a generous donation from 91ster Paul Limm. Ed also gave Celia a pot of his local honey. Col Ed brought with him a letter of appreciation for Mr Brown. This gentleman cuts the grass around the 323rd BS Marker leading and in his absence David Crow received the letter on his behalf. David Crow presented an aerial photograph of RAF Bassingbourn to Mayor Berry

Then we saw part of a 3 hour film made by Mr. Chris Murphy and Mr John Harwood. This related to Royston during World War II. The part we were shown related to the 355th FG at RAF Steeple Morden, 398th BG(H) at RAF Nuthamstead and the 91st BG(H) at RAF Bassingbourn. It took an hour and was excellent.

We said our goodbyes and Ed was very keen to go to Letchworth. Apparently he cycled from RAF Bassingbourn to Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin. That was some ride. So we set off for Letchworth and the prime target was the railway station. In December 1944 Ed and his three fellow officers in his crew were on their way back to RAF Bassingbourn after leave and when they got to Letchworth Station all the passengers had to get off because the line was blocked at Ashwell by snow. They phoned the base and were told they were unable to get out of Bassingbourn. A couple heard of their plight and took them home and gave them beds for the night. I tried to find them but never got any reply to my request.

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9)

Ed photographed the telephone box that was still in the same place but had been replaced by a modern one. A quick tour of the centre of Letchworth and then we traced our route back through the villages going through Ashwell, Steeple Morden where we met David Crow and his wife Lorinda putting carnations on the 355th FG Memorial. Through Litlington into Bassingbourn village. I thought Ed was tired so I took him back to the Officers Mess. Sadly we had to miss Royston Museum. I called in to see Anstey the deputy Curator and apologize. The Museum had lain out a superb display of 91st BG(H) memorabilia with the late Dale Darlings hat with photographs of his crew on, as the centre piece.

On Saturday evening The Friends of the 91st invited Col Ed and Lt Col Nigel Smith and his wife Major Laura to a meal at the Jester, Odsey, which is near Ashwell Station. This very enjoyable evening was arranged by David Crow.

Monday morning Margaret and I left for the Annual Memorial Service at the American Cemetery at Maddingley. The weather forecast was not good, heavy showers with possible thunder. This unfortunate forecast reduced the numbers attending however it did not rain. I arrived early and reserved two rows of chairs where I guessed the airman carrying the 91st BG(H) MA wreath might stop. It proved to be just right, as I was able to get some good photographs. Lt Col Nigel Smith, KINGS, kindly brought Ed from the Barracks. Lt Col & Mrs. Eric Gates and two children joined us. All the Veterans were invited to stand by Chaplain Calvin Dixon, 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath and received a very generous applause. Several groups were represented. It is always a pleasure to see them. It must have been a joy for Ed's two grandchildren see their grandfather and Chris Goodwin lay the wreath on behalf of your Group. Sadly Otto Meikus was unable to join us. His wife is not to well. I wonder if Ed and Chris saw the names of two 91sters inscribed on the Wall of the Missing just above where they laid their wreath, Captain Herbert. W. Hampy, 322nd Sqn. and 1st Lt. John S. Hemingway, 324th. We were privileged to have Mr. Robert H. Tuttle, the American Ambassador to the Court of St James with us, who along with Mr. Hugh Duberly, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire addressed the congregation. In the flyby this year we had F-15E Strikes Eagles from the 492nd Fighter Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, a Douglas C-47 Dakota III and Supermarine Spitfire PR XIX from the RAF Battle of Britain Flight and of course B-17 Sally. We were all invited to the VIP refreshment tent after the service where I was able to introduce Ed to Ellinor Sallingboe, who is Chairman of the Trustees that operate Sally B. She and her team do a wonderful job in keeping this aircraft in the air despite the efforts of the European Community Government. Andrew Langsley, CBE the Member for Parliament for South Cambridgeshire, Beverley White the daughter of 91ster S/Sgt Rudy Olague 322nd BS who is listed on the Wall of the Missing, Cliff Bishop the author of Fortresses of the Big Triangle First and other books on the 8th Air Force and many others. Ed was soon surrounded by 8th AF buffs and how they enjoyed hearing first hand about his time with the 91st BG(H).

Sadly it was time to say good-bye but not before we met Arthur Booth, English gentleman who works in the Cemeteries office. I was unable to find Cemeteries Superintendent Bobby Bell who was no doubt busy with the Ambassador.

So ended, for Margaret and myself, a wonderful weekend. I do hope I have not left anyone out. In Conclusion may I say that Colonel Ed was a wonderful Ambassador for your Group.

Kind Regards,

Vince Hemmings

LETTER FROM:
Lt. COLONEL RICHARDSON
TO OUR PRESIDENT, ED GATES

Dear Colonel Ed

I thought that as my time in command at the Army Training Regiment Basingbourn (ATR(B)) comes to a close after two and a half years it was



right and appropriate that I submit something for the Ragged Irregular which may be of interest to the readers.

As many will be aware ATR(B) is now a training establishment for 16/17 year old recruits of all the capbadges of the

British Army and they undertake courses that are generally 17 weeks long. We have in the past year started training some platoons of the older recruits (17-29 years old) and have also started more recently training Territorial Army recruits or Reservists in your parlance. The Regiment trains both male and female recruits (about 8-10%) and has both female and male instructors of which the majorities are capbadge to the Infantry. The majority of the recruits are also capbadged infantry with large numbers of Royal Logistic Corps soldiers and lesser numbers of Royal Signals and Royal Engineers in training plus others from the other 40 plus capbadges of the British Army. The recruits come from all over UK and we also train small numbers of Foreign and Commonwealth recruits joining the British Army. ATR(B) is designated as a Phase 1 training unit thus delivering basic soldier skills before sending the recruits to the Phase 2 units around the UK to learn the so called capbadge or trade skills. That course can last from 8 weeks to over a year and it is of note that many of the ex ATR(B) recruits have now served in Iraq and my

fellow Commanding Officers are very complimentary of the performance of the young soldiers that they receive from us.

While at ATR(B) we invest time and effort into educating the recruits about the history and culture. This, for example, involves them going on a 2-day professionally run tour of the WW I battlefield sites at Ypres and Somme. Despite their young age they are absolutely captivated by the stories and do understand what our forefathers, such as those the 91st went through. They are also lectured by the custodians of the Tower Museum who explain what actually happened at Basingbourn in WW II and they explain about the exploits and bravery of the 91st Bombardment Group. With the airfield at Duxford just down the road we still occasionally see the Sally B fly over which is the only flying B-17 in UK. That happened one day when I was stood chatting to some recruits who were on a break from rifle lessons. I asked if anybody knew what the plane was. One recruit proudly and confidently said in a broad Northern accent It was a Lancashire Sir!! Myself and my Regimental Sergeant Major smiled inwardly and then patiently explained that he probably meant Lancaster and that in actual fact it was a B-17 and we explained a bit about it and the history of Basingbourn. The youth of today!!

It is of note that nearly 80% of those that start training finish it successfully. Of the 20% that don't the vast majority opt to leave, which is their right from the 4 week point, and it is only about 5% that are discharged because they are not of the right quality. The instructors, to their immense credit, work phenomenally hard to get every recruit through training and no effort is spared. There are no quotas but there are very firm lines drawn in respect of the fact that the recruits must make the required standards and pass the summative tests before they will be allowed to progress from here to Phase 2. I am immensely proud of the achievements of the staff at ATR(B) because all the recruits are challenged by what they encounter and quite a number bring their own baggage with them in terms of educational, domestic and social difficulties which does not make it any easier for them or for their instructors.

(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11)

The camp has no doubt changed immensely since readers of The Ragged Irregular were based here but the Hangars 1 to 3 still remain and many of the other original buildings and features. Parts of the main runway and the N-S runway remain to their intersection plus all the dispersal areas and perimeter track. The quarters remain in the main and I was interested to receive a picture from Vince Hemmings recently of a US serviceman holding the door open to a staff car with a big white star on the back door outside my Married Quarter which is 3 Oxford Close - the house still looks the same after 60 years!! If anybody has any further photos of 3 Oxford Close or the quarters I would welcome copies of them.

The Officers' Mess has recently had a great deal of redecoration done in it and readers will also be interested to hear that I have instigated a plan to name a number of guest rooms in the Officers' Mess after the squadrons of the 91st. I have been in contact with Vince Hemmings who is very kindly supplying us with some memorabilia to display in the rooms. This will take a little while to complete but Major Louise Mallin who is one of the Company Commanders is running with this plan. The Regiment and Bassingbourn Station is confirmed as safe and secure for the foreseeable future and I have been pushing hard in my time as Commanding Officer to move the camp and its facilities into the 21st century while still, as effectively as possible, remembering the events of the 20th century. If any readers of the journal have anything that they would like to donate to the rooms we would be delighted to hear from them and I would welcome being the initial point of contact.

Readers will also be interested to hear that for my farewell on 10 March after 2 years in command, the Adjutant and Regimental Sergeant Major had arranged for me to depart from the camp in a formation of three Bulldog 2 seater light aircraft utilizing what remains of the main runway. We circled back round to allow the other aircraft to break off and then my aircraft did a low pass over the Tower area where the 600 recruits and all the

Permanent Staff and Civil Servants were gathered to wave me farewell - a truly memorable moment for me.

I am delighted to hear that you will be coming over for Memorial Day and I hope to meet you then; perhaps at the fireside chat you have kindly agreed to give to the members of the Officers Mess to explain a little about what happened here at Bassingbourn 65 years ago. While I have handed over command I think I can safely say that the new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Smith from the Kings Regiment which is an infantry unit, would welcome any visits by members of the 91st or their families if they are visiting UK. I am now based at the Ministry of Defense in London working in the Press Office but will continue to live at Bassingbourn with my wife and three children until the summer. I can be contacted at home or at work if I can be of assistance to anybody.

I hope the readers of the "Ragged Irregular" find this small contribution interesting and informative and my best wishes go to them all.

Nick Richardson

From Across the Pond,

Vince Hemmings

It is with much sadness that I have to report that "Mack" Hale passed away last Tuesday 25th April. "Mack" was one of the original members of the EAAS Ltd and did much for the Tower Museum from its inception. He was the Societies Membership Secretary for many years. He brought many good ideas to the Tower Museum and then having suggested a display he then set about the task to bring it into fruition. He was an excellent guide in the Museum when we had 91sters visiting and managed to get many stories that we would have lost. When I was having problems in 1994 with some protagonists within EAAS Ltd, "Mack" was of the few that realized what they were trying to do. With his help and others, we were able to overcome these problems and the Tower Museum was saved. It was support that I have never forgotten. He will be sadly missed. "Mack" headed up a group of designers at British Aero.

A TRIBUTE TO COL. ROBERT (DUSTY) HOFFMAN, USAF (RET)

By Paul Limm



Colonel Robert "Dusty" Hoffmann, USAF (Retired), passed away on March 16, 2006 in San Antonio, Texas, of Lou Gehrig's Disease. He rests at Arlington National Cemetery.

A San Francisco native, he was a midshipman for two years in the Navy ROTC at Berkeley before becoming an Aviation Cadet in the Army AC, graduating as a navigator three months after Pearl Harbor. Assigned to the Ferrying Group of the ATC, Dusty helped pioneer the air routes. For his skill in organizing and planning of a mass flight to Khartoum via Ascension Island, Dusty was awarded the Army Commendation Medal

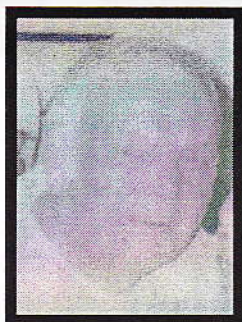
Entering pilot training in 1943, Dusty met Charles Leighton, former navigator of the Memphis Belle, who convinced him that the 91st BG was the first among equals of the bomb groups in the Eighth Air Force, if not the first above all. As a senior 1st Lt., Dusty was given his choice of bomb groups, and was assigned to the 323rd BS where he was able to use his navigation background to improve the training of replacement crews. In 1945 he was appointed AOO and promoted to Captain. Although this curtailed his opportunities to fly missions, he still managed to complete thirty-three combat missions.

After WW II, he enrolled in the Weather Officers School at Chanute Field and immediately after graduation, took command of a flight of three WB-17 weather recon aircraft at Harmon Field, Newfoundland. His B-17 experience and navigation background served him well as a weather recon officer, particularly when flying out of Bermuda, chasing hurricanes, and flying into the eye of the hurricane at 500 feet. His "weather" experience not only gained Dusty another commendation, but also an appointment to study meteorology at UCLA, where he received his degree in that field in 1950. As a professional meteorologist, Dusty had many challenging assignments in his twenty-eight year Air Force career. During the Korean War, he was awarded the Bronze Star for his services as the weather briefing officer to the Commander, 5th Air Force, Gen. Glenn Barcus; he was the first director of the Joint Typhoon Warning Center on Guam (Navy/Air Force); five years as the chief weather forecaster and Commander of the 15th Air Force Weather Center.

Dusty and Caroline, his wife of 62 years, attended almost all the 91st BGMA Reunions for the past quarter century. In spite of his grave affliction, he and Caroline, assisted by their charming daughter, Sharon, graced our 2004 Reunion in Washington, D.C. and attended all the activities. We now know he was saying farewell.

A TRIBUTE TO DALE JASPER DARLING

By Lowell Getz, Champaign, Illinois



A very special resident of Cincinnati, Dale Jasper Darling passed away. A modest person, he requested that there be no memorial service and no obituary, Dale should not go so quietly. He was born 2 February 1924 in Lawrenceburg IN one of three siblings including a brother and sister. Early in WWII he enlisted in the AAC becoming a B-17 radio operator assigned to the 324th BG and completed 35 combat missions.

After the war he was hired by the Howard Hughes Corp. as an electronics engineer and, A prime example of his concern for others was the reason he left Hughes Corp. Dale made it clear that he and his Dad did not get along well and his Dad had essentially nothing to do with him all the time he was growing up. However, as his Dad's health deteriorated, Dale willing gave up a very responsible position and lucrative salary and moved to Cincinnati to care for his

Dad during his final years.

He later held a variety of positions involving electronics and was proficient in many aspects of the field. Earlier in his life, Dale was an enthusiastic rock hunter and accumulated an extensive rock collection.

It was not all of his professional accomplishments that made him special it was his interpersonal interactions that set him apart from others, his sole purpose in life was to help people, make them happy and to boost their morale. Even when you knew such not to be true, Dale was so convincing that you went away feeling that maybe you were that good. Although he never married, he went out of his way to make women of every age feel special. If married, he jokingly tried to talk them into leaving their husbands for him and he always had to have "just one more hug." He spent most of his years following retirement helping those in need whether with financial assistance, furnishing transportation to and from appointment or editing and compiling video tapes and DVDs for others. It was understood that he would not be home to take phone calls until late in the day when "all the widows had been cared for"

In my last phone conversation with him (less than two weeks before his passing), he told me he said he had cheated death numerous times on many of his 35 combat mission, a time in an earthquake in California when the building he was in crumbled down upon him, a tornado in Ohio that blew away the house he was in. He said there had to be a time to go and when it finally came he would go readily.

It is so often said of a person "the world is a better place that she or he was here" that the compliment has become almost trite. In regard to Dale Darling, however, there is nothing trite about such a statement. Although saddened by his passing, we know his "36th" and final "mission" was a "milk run" – no fighters along the way, no flak and now, in the radio protocol of his day we simply say "Roger..Out" and whisper softly, "Sleep well Old Buddy".

Folded Wings Cont'd

★ **Lt. Col Donald E. Sheeler, 322nd Age 88**

Sun City West, AZ, April 12, 2006



As reported by his wife Patty He was a B-17 pilot in the US Army Air Corp, flying 35 missions in the European theatre from 1941 to 1945. Among his medals were the DFC, Air Medal, and the French Croix de Guerre for rescuing French prisoners of war. He returned to the base in

Bassingborn, England, twice, the second time donating memorabilia from his time in the service. He was once contacted by National Geographic to verify information on bomb runs over Cologne for an article, The Wings of War, on the Eighth Air Force.

Born on July 12, 1917 in Michigan City, Indiana, Lt. Col Sheeler graduated from Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, in 1941. After completing his service in World War II, he headed west to Whitter, California with his wife, Marian (Reed), who preceded him in death in 1989. He graduated from the University of Southern California with a master's degree in business administration. Retiring from East Whittier City Schools in 1977 after a distinguished teaching and administrative career, that included service as an elementary and secondary teacher, principal, and district assistant superintendent and business manager.

Throughout his life and especially in retirement, he was an active volunteer for numerous charitable organizations.

He is survived by his wife of 15 years, Patty, his son Stuart and daughter Susan, and grandchildren Lindsay and Brice.

★ **James O. Akers, 401st, Age 86**

Colorado Springs CO, January 18, 2006



He was born in Lewiston ID and joined the USAAC in 1941 where he was assigned to a B-17 bomber as a flight engineer and top-turret gunner. His plane was shot down over Germany and he spent nearly two years as a POW until the war ended. After serving in Japan during the

Korean War, Jim was stationed at Ft. Carson in 1953 and retired from the Army in 1962.

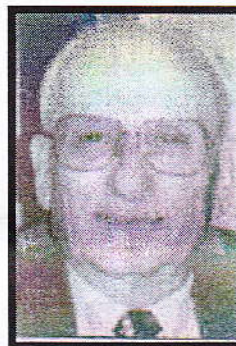
After retirement he started and sold several small businesses and in 1969 went to work for the US Postal Service retiring in 1983. He spent much of the next 17 years on the golf course until his heart was weakened by a late-life battle with cancer.

Jim is survived by his wife of 61 years, Esther; son, Jack of Colorado Springs, daughter July Moran of Stuart FL and sister Maxine Buck as well as five grand-children.

His battles are finally over and he will be dearly missed.

★ **David Ira Ryan, 324th, 401st Age 84**

Bellaire, TX, May 23, 2006



The great-great grandson of John Jacob Ryan the "father of Lake Charles". He died peacefully after a brief illness. He grew up in Lake Charles and after high school there he enlisted in the AAC where he acquired certified ratings to fly the B-17, & B-29. As a distinguished combat pilot

he flew 35 combat missions in 75 days, a record for the 91st BG in the European Theater out of Bassingbourn. He flew in the D-Day invasion in Normandy and also served in the Pacific Theater with the 316th BG out of Okinawa, Japan retiring from the Air Force in 1980.

He was a founding Charter member of the Air Force Memorial Foundation, Washington, DC, a member of American Legion post 1, He was a 32nd degree Mason and charter member of the Habibi Temple and many other organizations.

He founded Ryan Realty, Inc. with his wife Polly. He was a devoted, kind and loving father who loved to cook for his family on Sundays, was an avid fisherman and hunter and was passionate about golf and loved to sing and dance to the music of the big band era.

He is survived by his son David and his three sons, Drew, Graham and Parker and his daughter, Patricia and her husband Dr. G. Kelton and their two children, Daniel and Julie and two great-grandchildren, Isabella and Harrison.

★ **Charlie Busa, 324th, Age 86**

Lewisville NC, April 20, 2006

As reported by his son.

During WWII, he served as a member of the 91st BG and became well respected, to this day, for his contributions to the airplane nose art that personalized the aircraft for the crew. Tony Starcer's coworker for over 2 ½ years. you may remember, Charlie was originally a ground crewman. When the King and Queen came for the Memphis Belle thing, Charlie sneaked over the fence and got in line with the ground crewmen, and it was in front of Charlie that the Queen stopped long enough that the PR photo people got a shot of her talking to Charlie. This was one of the photos that was shown around England and the US. Charlie's CO was unimpressed. He said it cost him getting a stripe.

He was a proud member of the Teamsters for 35 years, a retired US Postal Service employee and a resitred First National Bakery employee and was also an active member of the VGW.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Betty, daughter Elizabeth and two sons, Joseph and Charles, Jr., a brother, James, three grandchildren, a stepgrandchild and two great-grandchildren.

★ **Stuart Carter Fitzgerald, 323rd**
Richmond VA, Feb. 18, 2006

As reported by his wife Harriot Fitzgerald

Stuart was a bombardier an B-17's and flew 35 missions from 1943-1944. Please advise his friends of this. Thankyou.

★ **David Bullen, 324th, Age 84**

Logan, Utah, October 27, 2005

He grew up in Logan and Salt Lake City with his three brothers and one sister and graduated from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

He was a veteran of WWII serving as a B-17 pilot and completing 35 missions over Germany.

His loving brother Charles, his sons and daughters-in-law, Brett and Joy Bullen and Scott and Leah Bullen and his five grandchildren, Blair, Brooke, Lauren, Rachel and Ryan, survives him.

★ **Carl Rizer, 323rd**
Greenbrae CA, October 4, 2004

★ **James Witter, 322nd**
Homosassa FL, March 15, 2006

★ **Lt.Col. Hubert F. Donohue, 323rd, Age 84**
Dayton, Washington, March, 2006

As reported by his friend Ralph Danekas



Lt. Col. Donohue was born Sept. 24, 1921 on the family farm. near Dayton WA

He enlisted Feb. 1942 and completd B-17 training in Roswell NM. In July he was assigned to the 323rd BS and completed 30 missions on Feb. 30, 1945 as a Pilot. He served in the Washington State Senate

from 1968-11980. At the age of 84, he was still boss at the family farm. One hell of a good guy.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, four sons; Randal, Timothy, Ryan and Kelly; brother Patrick, 3 sisters, Janis, Sharon and Dwyla, 11 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren.

★ **Grant Bean Siddoway, 322nd, Age 83**
Teton City, Idaho, January 23, 2006

As reported by his daughter Elileen Siddoway Parker



He was born in Teton City and graduated from Madison HS in 1940 and received a bachelor's degree in premed from the University of Idaho.

July 28th 1942 he entered the military and served as a gunner in the 215th AAR and was discharged in 1945 as a staff sergeant.

He married Donnetta in 1957 and they raised their family and were later divorced. After college he farmed first with his brother and a friend, then on his own, and then with his sons retiring in the mid 1980's.

He loved to fish and enjoyed 91st BG reunions, playing cards and visiting friends and family.

He is survived by his children Eileen (Louis) Parker, Paul (Susn and Alan (Lisa) Sidoway, Treena (John) Caverhill and Terry Drew Clark; a brother Theodore, sister Diana Richman, 13 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

★ **John Edward Evans, 324th, Age 86**
Fargo, ND, March 14, 2006

As reported by his daughter Jeanette

He was in the Army Air Corp from June 1941 thru October 1945. He went to air mechanics school at Chanute Field Illinois and was stationed at Bassingbourn, England. He was always so proud that he served in the military.

LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU MOVE

Published quarterly, January, April, July and October. The purpose of the Newsletter, THE RAGGED IRREGULAR, is to keep alive the Spirit of the 91st Bomb 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. Editor Steve Perri

Page 16

The Ragged Irregular

July 2006

Folded Wings:

★ **Frank Haddick, 322nd, Age 86**
Parma, Ohio, May 2006



As reported by Paul McElroy Haddick, the son of a coal miner, was born in Ohio and grew up there along with his seven siblings.

Frank was the pilot of the crew of "The Bloody Bucket" for the last part of their tour. He was shot down over Berline 21 June 1944 flying with the crew of Lt. Joseph Paskvan. He served as a pilot in WWII and was on his 23rd mission in June of 1944

when his B-17 was downed by German fighter planes. He parachuted and landed in unfriendly territory where a mob of angry villagers seemed determined to lynch the American pilot or beat him to death. The German Gestapo rescued him taking him away and sending him to Stalag Luft III. In January of '45 he and his fellow POWs were taken to Stalag 7A in Bavaria where they were liberated on April 29, 1945. After the war, he moved around for a few years before taking a job with Republic Steel Corp. in Cleveland in the early fifties, marrying a secretary named Helen Manuel and started a family. He retired in 1984.

Frank attended five or six of our "Bloody Bucket"/"Hiking for Home" reunions as well as a number of 91st BG Reunions. He belonged to the Barbed Wire Buckeyes and several other veterans and POW groups. Over the years he kept in touch with Stalag 7A friends including two Tuskegee Airmen – Alexander Jefferson and Richard Macon. Although he talked openly about his wartime experiences among friends, he was too shy to speak about the war in public or allow relatives to videotape his informal dissertations.

A voracious reader, he filled his home with WW11 literature. During the war, he read more than 100 books that were donated to the POW libraries by American social service agencies. He took home the book he was reading when he gained his freedom: "American Faith" by Ernest Sutherland Bates.

At an air show in Defiance, Ohio in 1998, Haddick's son Jeffrey treated him to a ride on the Yankee Lady, a wartime B-17. "He was able to take one last flight in a B-17 without having to bail out," his son said.

He is survived by his wife, Helen; sons, Jeffrey and Scott, two grandchildren and three sisters.

We are very sorry to report the passing of one of our officers and one of our favorite people:

★ **BG Earl Graves Pate Jr., 324**
Hendersonville TN, June 9, 2006

Earl Pate was a B-17 pilot in stationed in Bassingbourn, England during WWII. He flew 12 missions on "Yankee Gal" including the 91st's last mission of the war on April 25, 1945 to Pilsen.



General Pate became one of the original cadre of pilots to form the 105th Squadron of the Tennessee Air National Guard in 1949. He saw active duty during the Korean War and also flew missions to Vietnam during the course of his Guard service. In 1969, Gen. Pate was appointed Tennessee National Guard Adjutant

General for Air, a post which he held until his retirement in 1985.

An active member of the 91st BGMA he served as First Vice President until his sudden passing. Gen. Pate served as a 50-plus year member of various local chapters of the International Lions Club, long-time volunteer at Nashville Memorial and Skyline Hospitals, General Pate is survived by his wife of 56 years, Mary Elizabeth Pate; daughter, Melinda Anne Pate (Mrs. Walter L. Baker III); son, Earl Graves Pate III (Frances); granddaughter, Perry Elizabeth.; brother, Lloyd; and sister, Frieda Jean Pate Martin,