

# THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322<sup>nd</sup> BS



323<sup>rd</sup> BS



Supporting Units



324<sup>th</sup> BS



401<sup>st</sup> BS

**2007  
DUES  
ARE  
DUE**

Vol. 40 No. 2

91<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H)

April 2007

## MAJOR GENERAL STANLEY T. WRAY



Our first Commanding Officer coined the term of endearment for  
The 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group

**"THE RAGGED IRREGULARS"**

He named it after his platoon at West Point-US Military Academy

## **Presidents Corner—Jim Shepherd**

For those whom have access to computers, the web page is on its way to being fixed. [www.91stbombgroup.com](http://www.91stbombgroup.com). You never know the importance of something until it's broken. I was always interested in the stories offered by the veterans that are on the web page. We even tell some of the stories to friends or acquaintances of what it really was like in England and Europe from 1942 to 1945. Some of the stories are humorous and some are very sad.

My favorites are "The Million Dollar Seat" by Edwin Ehret and the "Unauthorized D-Day Mission" by Jim McPartlin. Edwin writes how he had a million dollar seat to see the invasion, and Jim Tells how he was ordered to fly a general over the invasion and almost lost his seat.

John "Jake" Howland our "Historian" is really doing a terrific job. He is working with Lonna McKinley at National Museum of the United States Air Force, Wright-Paterson AFB and they have accepted his historic offerings. They are on CD's and offer the following information:

85 veteran stories from the web "Stories from the 91st".  
The Daily Reports for the 4 Squadrons  
Casualties Report (which is on the web page)

We must be careful not to send memorabilia to the National Museum of the United States Air Force, Wright-Paterson AFB. Jake should clear anything you might want to offer because he and Ed Gates is our liaison with the museum. If we send too many items, they might just be stored away and never seen. However, some items might be directed to the Planes of Fame Museum because we do have a Memorial there and their plans include a research center. My wife Suzi and I are making sure the Memorial is well done and we are working on getting a display case, just for the 91st items.

The 91<sup>st</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association is holding a Rally Round at Minot AFB in North Dakota from September 5 to 10, 2007. The 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA has been invited because we are the 1<sup>st</sup> Generation of the 91st. The 91<sup>st</sup> Space Wing (third generation) will have a "Northern Neighbors Day" that includes the "Air Force Thunderbirds". If you wish for more information, call or write me and I will mail the application to you.

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## Letters to the Editor and More:

### VEEPS VIEWS-from Vice President, Mick Hanou

#### **Preserving your legacy through stories and memorabilia.**

I was watching a Civil War program a few weeks ago and was impressed with the history being told. It came from stories handed down through generations and from artifacts, especially letters, preserved from that period. Amazingly, there are people alive today that were told first-hand about their grandfather's Civil War experiences. In this way, 140 years later, their history is preserved and not forgotten by today's generations. At Ellis Island, I was amazed by the display cases of luggage, passports, and other items collected from immigrants. But what amazed me more were the displays devoted to particular families that kept their history intact. Context is very important. Memorabilia without context are not nearly as valuable in relating history as when the memorabilia are kept intact.

My view is that you should assure that your stories and memorabilia are first passed down through your family. Find that grandkid with interest and relate your stories to him or her. Tell them the meaning behind the letters or artifacts you have from WWII so the context is preserved. If you don't have family, please make some arrangement so that your memorabilia, so important in passing on the legacy of the 91<sup>st</sup>, doesn't end up in a garage sale or with a dealer where the context will be lost forever. We are working with the Tower Museum in England and the Planes of Fame in Chino to preserve your history, and with the USAF Museum to preserve the 91<sup>st</sup>'s archives. In future newsletters, we'll advise of progress.

For historians - the important aspect is to keep the context. Please record your stories and document your memorabilia and tell your grandkids. Perhaps, in 2080, one of them can say "I remember granddad telling me about the 91<sup>st</sup>".

Regards, Mick Hanou.

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#### **This is the second part of a letter that was sent to the "RAGGED IRREGULAR" by Harry Friedman, and was previously omitted regarding the "Memphis Belle":**

In 1983, the USAFM sent a large block of equipment to be used in the restoration. In addition, several companies, and individuals donated parts and some were loaned over the years. Thus, about 60 to 70 percent or more of the onboard equipment had been obtained to replace the missing items. Not only did these items accompany the "Memphis Belle" to Dayton but a large number of the parts belonging to the MBMA also went with the airplane.

We all look forward to the fine work that the National Museum of the Air Force is noted for in picking up where the MBMA left off to restore the most important airplane of World War II.

Mr. Andy Pouncey, President, Memphis Belle Memorial Association, Inc.

Harry Friedman, MD, Vice President/Archivist, Memphis Belle Memorial Association, Inc.

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## **More "letters to the Editor and More"**

### **From Jack and Paul'la Allen:**

It was a great reunion and Paul'la and I enjoyed the whole event. It was quite a shock to see how Colorado Springs has grown since I was stationed at Ft. Carson back in the early 60's.

We are returning the check you sent us, as we enjoyed taking people with us. We were driving there anyway.

May you and yours have a wonderful Christmas and we will look forward to seeing you at the next event.

### **Letter from Phillip Collins:**

Received the check for transportation. If this procedure was practical, maybe it should be done at the next convention.

Quite a project of dedication, knowing that you have started on the 2008 reunion.

### **Letter from Bob Stevens:**

Thank you for the nice letter and transportation reimbursement check.

You people certainly put in a lot of effort to make the reunion a success, which is greatly appreciated by the members and guests. We were only too happy to assist in the transportation and certainly enjoyed the tours.

As a token of personal appreciation and as a Life Member of the association, I would prefer to contribute the \$40 to the Treasury.

### **From David Fodroci:**

Please find enclosed, the remains of your check. However, I can't accept it. There is no amount you can pay me for any service I might render for these fine veterans. Please understand, it is just such a little thing I can do for them considering the irreparable debt we all owe to them for the sacrifices they made for us – so that we might live free in a future where we can and should enjoy their stories and company. Please revert the funds remitted to me for the running of your fine organization. Thank you.

## **RALLY ROUND – MINOT AFB** **NORTH DAKOTA** **September 5 to 10 2007**

The 91<sup>st</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association is holding a Rally Round and the 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA has been invited because we are the 1<sup>st</sup> Generation of the 91<sup>st</sup>. The 91<sup>st</sup> Space Wing (3<sup>rd</sup> generation) will have a "Northern Neighbors Day" that includes the "Air Force Thunderbirds", a Hanger Party and many other tours that include Wine Testing, Casino Trip and a memorial service for all generations of the 91<sup>st</sup>.

Northwest Airlines flies into Minot or you can take Amtrak from Chicago or Seattle to Minot. If you wish more information, call or write me and I will mail you the application.

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**Editor:** The reason for the first page of this issue is the following letter:

**From James Scudder, 401<sup>st</sup> Squadron**

Dear Sirs:

All these years, every time I see the title "Ragged Irregular", it sends a rush of irritation through me and I now have to get it off my chest. To what or whom does this title refer – The publication – or the membership – or the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group that flew in World War II?

I spent my military career as a pilot and, in hindsight, I recall nothing either ragged or irregular about the "91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group". In the better part of a year that I spent in this outfit, this title strikes me as insulting.



**NEWS FROM ACROSS THE POND** by Vince Hemmings**2006 Veteran's Day Memorial Services****13th November 2006**

Gentlemen:

The run up to this year's the Memorial Services started much earlier than usual. At the beginning of October I was asked by a member of the staff at the American Military Cemetery, Arthur Brookes, if I was able to have lunch with Colonel Blake Lindner, 501st Combat Support Wing Commander at RAF Alconbury. The reason for the meeting was that Colonel Blake wished to hear from two representatives from an 8th Air Force Bomber and Fighter Groups based in England during World War II, with stories relating to these two Group activities. The Fighter Group's representative was David Crow from the 355th FG based at RAF Steeple Morden. The meeting took place on the 10th October at RAF Alconbury.

Sadly at 06.30 hours on the 10th October six lorries had collided on the A14 near Cambridge. I heard this news on the television and left much earlier. Firstly, I found a problem on the route I had chosen where a bridge was being repaired therefore blocked. I then met at the junction of the A10 from Cambridge to Ely the traffic coming off the A14. I eventually arrived over one hour late. The traffic problem affected others but they were able to arrive on time. Sitting around the dining room table was Colonel Lindner who had on his right hand David Crow, then a RAF Squadron Leader who I did not know, Captain Starr Longo, USAF, Keith Hill the official UK artist for the 8th Air Force in England, an American serviceman who had just returned from Iraq, Group Captain Nigel Beet, the CO of RAF Henlow, RAF Brampton and RAF Wyton, (I have met the Group Captain before) me and the Chief Master Sergeant Schwarthing, of the American Air Force, Bobby Bell, The Superintendent at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley and Joe Pearson, a US Navy veteran who had fought in the Vietnam war.

I had written to Colonel Lindner with a brief history of your Group and some related stories I pick up over the years. Normally, when one enters a Military base here in England it is a slow process for obvious reasons. On this occasion, as soon as I mentioned who I was, my car registration number was noted, given a pass and directed to the building where the lunch took place. Colonel Lindner and Captain Longo made me most welcome and were very understanding about my late arrival.

(continued on following page)

### Veterans Day Memorial Service.

On 10th November the annual Veterans Day Memorial Service was held at the American Military Cemetery Madingley. Margaret and I left early just in case we met conflicting traffic but we had a good journey. We were met by the Cemeteries' Superintendent, Bobby Bell. Bobby had written to me a few days earlier informing me that he is moving to Normandy American Cemetery in France as Director of Cemetery Operations. Here he will have a staff of 32 as opposed to the 12 at Madingley. Bobby has been very kind to Margaret and I and we will miss him. I wish him well in his new appointment. He leaves on 10th December and in early January 2007. Mr. David Bedford will be taking up the post of Superintendent.

In the Cemeteries reception I met Colonel Lindner and was chatting to him and Bobby Bell when Major General Paul Fletcher came in. It was nice talking to them. The Master of Ceremonies was Major John Kenyon, Installation Chaplain, 423rd Air Base Group. Words of Remembrance were given by Group Captain Beet and Colonel Lindner. When Colonel Lindner gave his, he spoke of the experiences of the gentleman who had been in Iraq. He was asked to stand up to be honoured. Then he came to the data I have given him on the 91st BG (H). This included the number of missions made, number of aircraft missing, the number of aircrew who failed to return, the number of airmen on the Wall of the Missing and the number of 91sters buried in the Cemetery.

He then recorded the fact that as a teenager I was able to wave to the waist gunners as the B-17's flew low over our house at the start of their mission. I have often wondered if I was the last land bound person to wave to them. I was then asked to stand up. It is unusual in this country to clap during a Memorial Service. It was not about me but all those young American men and women who had made the supreme sacrifice. I was embarrassed. The same happened to David Crow representing the 355th FG at RAF Steeple Morden and a naval gentleman who had fought in Vietnam.

It was a new approach and one must applaud Colonel Lindner for the manner he brought home to the congregation the effects of war. Another new innovation during the Retiring of Colours was all the Military personnel from the American and British Armed Forces who were facing the Wall of the Missing were turned to face the graves, the Colours were dropped in salute and the Officers saluted. Who ever thought of that made the most potent moment that I have seen for a long long time. Well done to them. This year the numbers increased and more wreaths were laid. Apparently this part of this service was shown on local television. Gentlemen, I do believe that it may be time for your Group to lay a Royal British Legion wreath of poppies with your Groups' insignia in the middle of it at Madingley Service.

**Memorial Service at Bassingbourn Barracks.** On the 11th November, Margaret and I attended a Memorial Service at the Army Training Regiment at Bassingbourn Barracks by the Prop Memorial. David Crow had arranged this with the Barracks Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Smith, Kings. Army Padre Fava conducted the Service of Remembrance which gave us all the opportunity to remember all service personnel from the airfield and Barracks who had died on active service.

The ***Friends of the 91st*** purchased a Royal British Legion wreath of poppies that had as its centre piece your Memorial Association emblem. Colonel Peter Worthy, RA (Ret'd) and Squadron Leader Ray Leach, MBE, RAF, (Ret'd) laid the wreath on behalf of the Friends. David Crow read a wartime poem. Mr Chris Murphy laid a wreath on behalf of the East Anglian Aviation Society Ltd.. Although there were only eleven of us attending this Memorial Service it was well worth the journey.

On Sunday 12th November I laid the wreath on behalf of the Diss & District ProBus Club at the Memorial Service here in Diss. The church was full with people standing at the back. I mention this as it shows that in these troubled time's, more people are coming to Memorial Services, which include a good portion of the younger generation, to remember those who paid the supreme sacrifice. Gentlemen it is an honour and privilege to represent your Group.

Thank you, with kind regards: Vince Hemmings



## My Last Flight on "My Darling Also"

Story by: Dana Morse

On March 5, 1944, we were alerted at 6PM of a mission.

On March 6 – up at 3AM, with hardly any sleep, breakfast was at 4AM and then briefing. The Crew was taken to our plane "My Darling Also" (serial #4231578) for boarding. The target again was for Berlin, a nine-hour flight. We had made attempts before, in the early days of March, but had to abort. This time, everything went fairly smoothly until we reached the I.P. with light flack and some fighters sighted. At this time, the action became intense; the fighters came in on our group and tail-end Charlie was knocked out. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Bob Tibbets Jr. thought it best, with our experience over the crew or wingman that we should fill in the tail-end position, which we did. As I recall, enemy fighters were being called in from every position on our plane.

To the best of my knowledge, we had made the turn onto the I.P. when we were hit and knocked out of the formation. The intercom was out, so I moved my chute and put it back near the escape hatch. Later, a hole was blown in the spot where my chute had been laying. I went back to firing my gun at which I believe was a Messerschmidt 110 and could see my machine gun holes going down at least a third of its fuselage; he could not have been more than fifty yards away and came in from 9:00 low. Others were firing their guns and it reminded me of the first mission when we had to ditch into the North Sea and had to fire the guns to get rid of our ammunition.

A German FW 190, flown by Feldwebel Wahfeldt rammed our plane. S/Sgt. Walter J. Davis (tail gunner) survived the collision of this fighter that had aimed at the area between the tail assembly and the tail gunner. Being unable to shoot us down, the fighter was trained to ram. The fighter pilot survived to tell his story of the ramming of our plane. The plane was jarred and I was knocked from my gun and, at that time, my gun was shot out and I felt a burning sensation on my left thigh.

Sgt. Sydney A. Barratt, Jr., right waist Gunner, was holding his stomach and had been hit bad. I looked out the right waist window and saw that we were on fire and sliding off to our right and going down. I could see no one at all up through the plane due to the smoke and knew we were in deep trouble. I tried to arouse S/Sgt. Harold J. Rhode, the ball turret gunner, by banging on the turret with no results. Then I tried to help Sgt. Barratt, but he was out cold, so I tried to open the escape door, but the door was jammed. I was finally able to kick it out. I could see no movement from the ball turret coming up and the right waist gunner was still lying there, and I could not move him.

I took one look out of the escape door before jumping and saw the right horizontal elevator torn off near the fuselage and I could not see Sgt. Davis in the tail section. I jumped and waited some, but probably not long enough and I was jerked hard. The chute opened and I floated toward the west and I later confirmed, I heard a loud explosion and when I tried to locate our plane, I could not find it. At the same time, a fighter came in on me and it was an ME109. I was not sure at the time if it fired at me, but later, when I looked up at my chute, it had at least 25 to 50 holes in it. I drifted over one big town and several small towns. It seemed that the wind was strong and blowing me. I tried to steer the chute, as I was heading into the woods, and I don't know if I did any good, but I landed hard into some type of thorn bushes. People were coming in from all sides as I drifted down, so I just lay there. I had lost a lot of blood and had no more strength.

There were many civilians with guns pointed at me and they stripped me of my chute and anything else that they wanted. The German Army came up and knocked the guns out of the hands of the civilians. I guess they were thinking of shooting me, because of all of the loud talking. I learned later that Hitler had given orders to shoot all Allied Airmen. The Army then placed me in an oxcart and it was not long before Sgt. Davis came up and tried to give me some morphine, but they would not let him. By this time, I did not know if Sgt. Davis had gone. All I knew was that it took a long time and long ride. When I came to, I was in a building and on a stretcher and taken to a room where they held me down on a table. I thought that this was it, so I fought like hell. I came to sometime later in an old theater. It was in the town of Magdeburg Germany. I was later transported to be interrogated and sent to a POW camp 17-B.

(DANA MORSE TOOK HIS LAST FLIGHT MARCH 17, 2007 AT AGE 82 – SEE PAGE 11)

## **STANLEY TANNER WRAY**

Stanley Tanner Wray was a major general in the United States Air Force and the first Commanding Officer of the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group during the Second World War.

Borne in Muncie Indiana in 1907, he graduated from Muncie Central High School in 1923 and attended Earlham College on a Goddard Scholarship. After contracting typhoid fever, Wray was unable to continue further education until he entered the United States Military Academy on July 1, 1928, graduating second in a class of 259 in June, 1932.

Commissioned a second lieutenant, Corps of Engineers, he was immediately placed on leave without pay July 1, 1932, because of lack of funding during the Great Depression, so he reported to his first station in July 1932 as assistant to the district engineer at Rock Island, IL. After a short period of building brush and rock wing dams to maintain the six-foot channel in the Mississippi River, he took up progressively important assignments around Lock and Dam No. 15 and its attendant construction activities, going then as resident engineer for Lock and Dam No. 11 at Dubuque, Iowa in January 1934. In July 1934, he left Dubuque for Cornell University, where he received his Master of Science degree in civil engineering in June 1935.

In July 1935, he proceeded to the Panama Canal Zone, being promoted to first lieutenant enroute on the Army transport "Republic". He reported to Headquarters Squadron of the 11<sup>th</sup> Engineers at Corozal, Canal Zone. During the next two years, he performed all of the normal duties of a Company Officer on duty with troops and, in addition, coached the basketball team up from last place to first place on the Pacific side, and as the Post Athletic Officer, he was instrumental in winning the basketball and baseball championships in his final year.

In July of 1937, he returned to the United States as a student at the Company Officers Course at the Engineers School at Fort Belvoir, VA. At the conclusion of this course in 1938, he was appointed the assistant professor of military science and tactics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA. In July 1939, he was detailed to the Air Corps for three months and proceeded to pilot training at Tuscaloosa AL. Although ordered on to basic training at Randolph Field in September, he was re-ordered by the Adjutant General back to Cambridge for another year as Assistant Professor of MS&T at MIT. Apparently, the only thing wrong with being an Officer in the Corps of Engineers, was that particular branch did not have any airplanes, so in August 1940 he reported back to Tuscaloosa for a quick 20-hour refresher in PT aircraft, and on Sept. 1, entered basic flying at Maxwell Field AL. Graduating from Advanced on Feb. 1, 1941, he was transferred to the Air Corps and ordered to the 29<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group at MacDill Field FL. In the 29<sup>th</sup>, which was an expanding unit, he served in each of the three bomb squadrons and commanded the Headquarters Squadron before he was appointed executive office of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group, which formed by splitting the 29<sup>th</sup>. On May 15, 1942, he was appointed the Commander of the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group at MacDill, and began receiving pilots and ground personnel the following day. He thus formed the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, then trained it through its three stages of combat training, with the second stage at Walla Walla WA, and the third at Bangor ME.

He led the first element of his Group to England in late September 1942, landing at Kimbolton in Bedfordshire. In early October, the group was moved to Bassingbourne, a permanent Royal Air Force station, where the final squadron of the 91<sup>st</sup> arrived in mid-October. Colonel Wray commanded the group until May 1943 and during this period earned the Silver Star, the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart, numerous commendations and, as the leader of the famous low-level raid over St. Nazaire in B-17's, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross of the Royal Air Force. From May until August, he commanded the 103<sup>rd</sup> Combat Wing and trained it for it's early missions over the continent. In August 1943, he reported to Headquarters, Eighth Bomber Command where his experience was put on paper as "tactics and techniques of heavy bombers."

In September 1943, he returned to the United States where he became chief of the Officers Branch, Military Personnel Division, Headquarters Army Air Force. In February 1946, he reported to Fort Leavenworth Kansas where he was a member of the Second Command Class until August 1, when he returned to Headquarter U.S. Air Force.



**MIKE BANTA'S RING: B17banta@aol.com**

Hi 91sters, My column for this issue shows how an airman's "last full measure" remained a tragedy for a full generation after his untimely loss.

**Harold Smelser – 324<sup>th</sup> CO - A Hero's Sacrifice is also a Son's Sacrifice**

**Thank you Larry, there is nothing we can add to your beautifully written, touching essay of the son of one of our brother airmen who made the supreme sacrifice to keep the world free.**

Major Harold Smelser, 324<sup>th</sup>, was leading the mission of 11/23/42 to the submarine base at St. Nazaire, France. He was flying in "Pandora's Box" with the Jones' crew. The group dispatched ten B-17's for the mission but by the time they passed the coast, six were forced to return to base after being hit by twelve FW190's. Major Smelser was leading the four remaining B-17's in "Pandora's Box". On the bomb run to the target, the four-ship formation was attacked in head-on attacks by Luftwaffe's Gruppe II of Jagdgeschwader 2. "Pandora's Box" was hit hard and smoke and oil poured from #3 engine. As she continued down, another Fort's crew observed that the life raft had deployed and was entangled with the tail. "Pandora's Box" was last observed in the Atlantic, about 30 miles NW of St. Nazaire, France. "Sad Sack", with McCormick and his crew aboard, and Major Zienowicz as copilot, was also MIA. These two B-17's and their crews had the unwanted distinction of being the first two of the "197" 91stB-17's that were to be missing in action.

While browsing at Barnes and Noble, as I sometimes do, I noticed a book, "Masters of the Air" by Donald L. Miller". I sought out the pages dealing with the early days of the war – and there it was – Nov. 23, 1942 – the day my father's B-17 went down off the coast of France, south of Brittany, a plane dragging its life raft, caught on the tail, two engines gone, fire, the ball turret a mass of blood. The pilot waved the other planes on as his plane slowly fell behind – disappeared into the ocean's mystery – were there rescues? Were bodies found? Were some sent off to German camps, betrayed by collaborators (photos in Life were too blurred) – but then, back home. The carefully bland letters arrived...Missing in Action...the few possessions not auctioned off...and rumors...always rumors...but the war went on and we won it.

As a child, my first military memory was of my mother taking me out to an army hospital...she was a volunteer (they were called gray ladies) then a smiling man looked out at me from an album mixed with newspaper clippings...this man lived in a story in a war comic book...and I was in there too...writing him a letter...sending him love. Finally, I knew he was dead because my mother began to see other men, sometimes pilots, but they slipped away.

One day, the postman brought a small package from the government. Inside were bright medals in cardboard boxes...but there was no one to wear them...and in a drawer was a short stick called a swagger stick...it had carvings of Japanese ships, not German submarines...because my father had flown to Java at the beginning of the war to try to delay the Japanese...and then I was taken out to the local Air-Force base where a General, who looked like my dad, pinned the Air Medal on me...and the photo went all over the country, but I didn't understand...and I didn't understand why there was no one to go fishing with or how to tie a tie...and there was no grave, so maybe he wasn't dead...maybe he somehow lived in France...maybe I could find him.

But reality took hold and I knew it was not to be...but I wanted him to have a cross to mark his grave. So, later, as a young man, I took a freighter to Europe and, in an early Fall morning, as the ship entered the English Channel, I let a crucifix slip into the sea, as near as I could get it to where I guessed his plane and his crew might be lying...but it was miles away.

The men from his unit went on with their lives...raised their families...began to have reunions...German pilots became their honored guests...we were all in it now against Russia, see. Years passed. One day I heard that a B-17 was going to fly to our airport...its roar reawakened a desire to know and talk with these men who had been there to try and find out who my father was...what was he like...took a while, but they had an association, a newsletter, so, I made phone calls...tried to find out what had happened that day, that November 23, 1942...but the stories seemed mixed...unsettling...where had what happened...it was like shifting mirages. Again, long after, on a trip to Europe, I took a train up from London to Basingstoke, the old airfield. It is a British army base now, but the runways are still there and there's a little museum in the tower...and my father's name is still faintly legible on the wall of the squadron that he commanded...one of the museum volunteers drove me down a runway...faster, faster, I said, knowing that this was the last bit of earth that his plane from long ago had touched. The men of 1942 from the 91<sup>st</sup> BG are a precious few these days...in their late eighties or early nineties...some of the hang together through e-mail...answering questions, clearing up details before they take that long last flight...and the runway of memory is left silent until I happen to be browsing in a bookstore...

***Note: Larry Smelser plans to expand these thoughts for future publication.***

## *Folded Wings (continued)*

### ★ **Mathias (Matt) G. Pettera, 401<sup>st</sup> Age 88** **Wauzeka WI, Dec. 22, 2006**



As reported by his wife and children

Matt was born in Neillsville WI and his family moved to a farm near Wauzeka where he continued to farm until he bid this world farewell.

When he was 22 years old, he enlisted and was shipped on the Queen Mary to Bassingbourn where he served as an airplane mechanic and

Assistant Crew Chief for the B-17 bomber "Anxious Angel". Matt often shared his war stories recalling how the crew would work through the night to inspect the planes and change the engines quickly if something went wrong. He remembered once, changing an engine 3 times before the plane could return to the air. He could not ever remember any of his planes that were turned back due to engine failure. One small claim to fame for Matt was being featured for a few seconds refueling the B-17 in the 1944 version of "The Memphis Belle".

At the end of WWII, Matt chose to return to the US on the cruise ship, the Queen Elizabeth since he was skeptical of ever flying on someone else's airplane. He returned to Wauzeka on July 3, 1945 and maintained the family farm for the rest of his life. He also worked for the Wauzeka School District for 18 years role modeling for "his kids" as a bus driver.

He married Margaret (Crowley) Dremse on June 7, 1985 and now "Filled his bus" with 13 children, 50 grandchildren, 39 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Matt often joked to help people remember the pronunciation of his name by telling them that once Margaret said "I do" she became "Petrified". The day that she became petrified, none of her children realized the impact that decision would have on each and every one of them. Matt not only helped fill the void in Margaret's life, he also filled the void in everyone of her children's' lives by blessing each one as a super Step Dad and Grandpa who became a mentor and provided guidance in a number of ways. Likewise, I am not sure if Matt realized the impact Margaret and her children would have on him.

In the early days of their marriage, Matt and Margaret spend many Sunday evenings dancing, but as health issues started to affect Matt's legs, dancing was no longer an option and the days began to be blessed with other activities like fishing, which they both enjoyed and treasured. Visits to Matt's farm and "Petrified Forest" became a part of Mom and Matt's routine.

Matt was a self-taught scholar who had a wealth of knowledge because of the hours he would spend reading on a huge variety of subjects. Many evenings you could drive up Marietta Valley Road and see Matt with the light on reading at the table. Matt was a loving and gentle man, full of witty phrases. He had a quiet presence about him. Once he started to tell a story, you knew you were going to be with him for awhile as he filled you in on the history of the subject using his hands and many facial expressions. Matt was a man who would never hurt a soul. He cared for his animals with the gentleness of a mother with her young. As we look around his homes, we laugh at the many gadgets he has built; everything had a purpose. He shared his decorations, miniature airplanes and windmills to name a few. Every tin and aluminum can, plastic lid, cardboard, wheel or whatever piece of material he found was put to use, crafted by Matt's own ingenuity to make someone's life a little easier.

We have many times thanked God for bringing this man into our mother's life. He cared for her by making sure the house stayed warm, building handrails, recovering chairs for comfort, making sure there was more light for their tired eyes to read and crafting the many gadgets to make it easier in some way around the home. He shared his love of the blessed virgin with Margaret and built shrines at both homes to honor her, something that brought comfort and peace to them both. He was so proud of the kneeler he crafted, with padding to support their sore and worn knees that have toiled over the years.

And, finally, Matt was a man of strong convictions. He held God, Family and the Legion close to his heart. His strong belief in all three made him the man he was. One of his greatest missions and passions in life was to teach the importance of prayer. Matt believed it, he lived it and he taught the importance of prayer. This was modeled in many ways, but one of the most impressionable in this unsettled world was watching Mom and Matt pray a daily rosary. In the end we were allowed to honor him in that way. And so on December 22, 2006, with broken hearts and rosary beads in hand, we sent a wonderful man home. We were reassured that God had opened the door for him on that gloomy day as he sent one crack of thunder and a bright flash of lightening followed by a ray of sunshine to announce his arrival.

I was honored to receive my first salute from Matt when I entered the Air Force and in June, Matt traveled the long journey to Texas with my family to give me my last salute as I retired. And so, as we bid you farewell Matt, I would like to return the honor of giving you your last salute as we retire you.

(In sorrow and with love for Mom and Matt by daughters Lt.Col. Theresa Brewer(Ret.) and Lori Hines)



## **Folded Wings (continued)**

### ★ **Quilla Dee Reed, 323<sup>rd</sup> Age 84** **Decatur IL, Dec. 7, 2006**

As reported by his wife Elizabeth  
He was born in Mount Hope, July 8, 1922 and he served in the USAAC receiving the DFC. At 21 years old, he parachuted out of his B-17 and was picked up by the Dutch resistance where he survived for nine months.

He loved sharing his experiences with school and civic groups.

His first wife, Esther, sons David and John and grandson Quilla preceded him in death.

He is survived by his wife of 19 years, Elizabeth, son Robert and his wife Joan, daughter Mary and her husband Howard Nixon, stepdaughters, Elizabeth and her husband Kerry Steeno and Jane Lee, stepson Frank Hollan, Jr.; sister Rachel, 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

### ★ **Frank S. Dojka, 324<sup>th</sup>, Age 87** **Thorndike MA, Oct. 23, 2006**

As reported by his nephew  
Frank served in the AAC during WWII at Basingbourn. He was always proud of his service and time in England. He had a sign made that said "Basingbourn" which he put with him for his eternal rest.

After the war Frank returned to Massachusetts and worked as a wire cutter for Colorado Fuel and iron in his hometown. Frank never married, instead caring for a disabled younger sister with great devotion. He left behind a sister Victoria and several nieces and nephews including Patricia Ford Yirhunias, his niece and caretaker. Frank was a member of the St. Joseph's society in Thorndike, a communicant of Sts. Peter and Paul and a member of the American Legion and Amvets..

### ★ **Abraham(Roke)Lieberman324<sup>th</sup> Age 97** **Wilmington DE, Jan. 6, 2007**

As reported by his wife Rosalyn  
At the time he was inducted into the service, he was among the oldest recruits. His last mission was on Dec. 31, 1943 when his B-17 was shot down and crashed in the Village of Keriquel Terbalay in South Finistere, Brittany, France. He bailed out of the plane and was rescued by a farmer who hid him in a farmhouse and he evaded capture for a few days. However, an informant notified the Germans, and Roke became a POW and was eventually taken to Krems, Austria where he was interned in Stalag 17B until May, 1945 when he was liberated by Patton's Army.

His wife of 30 years, 2 children and 5 stepchildren and their spouses and 10 grandchildren survive him.

### ★ **Emmet (Bud) McCabe, 323<sup>rd</sup> Age 84** **Bloomfield Twnshp MI Nov. 19, 2006**



As reported by his son Michael  
Bud was born and raised in Detroit and attended the University before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1943. He flew as co-pilot on 20 bombing missions over Europe. His crew was assigned as the last crew to fly the "Sweet 17/The Spirit of Saint Louis", which survived 84 bombing missions. At the wars end, he volunteered and flew two more missions into Stalag One to bring back our boys.

After the war he Married his wife of 57 years Gloria and had four sons that he was very proud of: Mark, Michael, Martin and Matthew.

Bud was the former Detroit District Supervisor for Dun & Bradstreet and then later formed his own collection company, National Mercantile Credit. He and Gloria took a trip back to England after his retirement.

When we were growing up he never spoke of the war but once he retired he finally started opening up to us and spoke so vividly of his experiences and how proud he was to have served his country in a time of need. He spoke so very often of those who never made it back and he considered himself blessed that he and his crewmates did.

### ★ **Dana Morse 401<sup>st</sup> Age 82** **Lithia FL, March 17, 2007**

As reported by Steve Holland, son-in-law  
He was a veteran of the USAAC, member of the 91<sup>st</sup> BG, life member of American Ex-Prisoners of War, Stalag 17B, local American Legion and Dis-abled American Veterans posts and an avid camper.

He is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Laura; son, James, daughter Barbara Holland, grand-children: Michael, Jennifer and Andrea, great-grand-daughter, Madilyn and brothers Lynn and Robert.

We had a beautiful Military Funeral. Dana was truly a Soldier that loved to have had the ability to serve his Country and Flag and never regretted being a POW as bad as it was.

### ★ **Charles L. Ross, 401<sup>st</sup> Age 84** **Newcastle VA, August 17, 2006**

As reported by his wife Ella  
He served in the AAC during WWII where he received many medals and honors including the Purple Heart. He retired as a Forest Warden for the Virginia Forestry Service. He was Elder Emeritus of Craig Healing Springs Christian Church. and was President of Farmers and Merchants Bank for 34 years. His wife of 61 years, Ella, one daughter and so-in- law Sandra and Don, Grandson Dean and wife Dana and great grandson Gage survive him.

91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association  
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The Ragged Irregular

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## ***Folded Wings:***

### ★ **Charles Clark, 401<sup>st</sup> Age 82** **Youngstown OH, Nov 19, 2006**

As reported by his wife Irene

He joined the Air Corps shortly after graduating from High School and was graduated in an airplane mechanics course at Seymour Johnson Field, NC and later graduated from gunnery school at Fort Myers FL. Aboard the Flying Fortress "My Darling", Sergeant Clark and nine other crewmembers were returning from their first mission over Bremen when they were forced to make a crash landing in the North Sea, 20 miles off the English coast. They were rescued by a British minesweeper in less than half an hour. Just before they dropped their bombs on Bremen, an engine on the left side of the bomber was knocked out by flak. A few minutes later, after leaving the target, an engine on the right side stopped and one of the bullet-riddled fuel tanks began leaking and the Fortress began losing altitude and speed. Sergeant Clark, who has since been awarded the Air Medal was credited with bringing down one Nazi plane that day. When the gas gave out finally, the bomber crashed into the sea, sinking within four minutes and the 10 men were left with one inflated rubber dinghy. Five crewmembers rode in it and the other five clung to it, their bodies in the freezing water. The minesweeper had spied the Fortress in distress and reached the scene of the sinking in about 15 minutes. The crewmembers were treated "royally" by the minesweeper's crew who gave them food, drink, clothing and cigarettes. A ball turret gunner, he was again shot down over Germany and was a POW for 12 months at Stalag 17B.

He returned home and Married Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> 1946.

He is survived by his wife of almost 60 years, Irene, one daughter, one granddaughter and three great-grandchildren.

### ★ **Ray R. Ward, 322<sup>nd</sup> Age 85** **Pidcoke, TX, October 2, 2006**

As reported by D. P. Fodroci



He was born in Rusk, TX and served as a 1/Lt. In the USAAC during WWII where he piloted B-17 Flying Fortresses one of which was "Texas Chubby, The J'Ville Joleter" in honor of his wife. In one of his 26 combat missions he flew the lead plane of the high squadron during the first daylight

bombing of Berlin.

Returning from the war, he finished his education graduating magna cum laude from the University of Texas and went on to complete his Master's of Psychology at Purdue.

He was the founding Manager of the Gatesville Savings and Loan and was President of S & L in Orange and Arlington TX.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years Lallia, their sons Ray Jr. and John and daughters Janet Hernandez and Cynthia Hunt, and their spouses and grandchildren: Robert, Seth, Amanda and Hannah.

### ★ **Albin Pene, 401<sup>st</sup> Age 83** **Brea CA 2006**

As reported by Jack and Jan Gaffney

Jack was a 401<sup>st</sup> Mechanic serving on the ground crew of C.O. Pierce on the "Bad Egg".

For many reunions, he was in charge of "Pene's Pub" and I am sure lots of you will remember him – we have lost a good friend.