

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd BS



323rd BS



Supporting Units



324th BS



401st BS

Vol. 40 No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H)

July 2007



TONY STARGER'S FLYING ART GALLERY



Presidents Corner-Jim Shepherd

We are moving forward with the planning for the 2008 Reunion for the 91st BGMA. The location will be in Southern California and very likely around Disneyland. This could be the perfect time to bring your kids or the Grandkids to the reunion, because our schedule is for the end of June 2008. As the planning progresses, we have many options for interesting, fun events; The Nixon Library, The Huntington library, a major league baseball game with the California Angeles, lunch at the Plane of Fame Air Museum (where the 91st has a display), of course Disneyland and a trip along the California Coast.

John "Jake" Howland has been working diligently on the old boxes of 91st Historic items and has developed CD's with information about the 91stBG. The following is a list of the items covered:

CD of Daily reports of the:

322nd 323rd 324th & 401st Squadrons of the 91st.

CD of 85 stories written by the veterans, relating to the 91st BG.

CD Listing Casualties of the 91st Bomb Group.

CD Memoirs of a Pathfinder Navigator.

CD 114 pictures honoring fallen fliers, Opijnen, The Netherlands.

DVD Flying the Atlantic 1943 and D-Day Attack by the 8th Air Force.

DVD OBOE Describes World War II Blind Bombing Technique.

DVD Omaha Beach in Retrospect.

DVD Memorial Day Opijnen Holland - dedicating unique monument to fallen fliers (in Dutch).

The following is a list of some of the museums receiving the above items:

Mighty 8th Museum, Pooler, Georgia

Wright Patterson Museum, Dayton Ohio

Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs CO

Museum of Flight Library, Seattle WA

Loan Star Flight Museum, Galveston TX

Planes of Fame Air Museum - Chino CA

Bassingbourn Tower Museum (being delivered by Mick Hanou)

Base Library, McChord AFB, Tacoma WA.

If you would like to contact Jake Howland, his land address is listed under Historian under 91st BG Officers to the right of this column.

THE BIG EVENT THIS YEAR is at:

Minot Air Force Base in Minot North Dakota. From 5 -10 Sept. 2007.

The 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association is having their reunion and includes the 91st Space Wing and the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association. The Air Force "THUNDERBIRDS" and a host of other shows and demonstrations will be there for us to enjoy. There will be a display for the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association.

For an application or other information, please contact me or call me at

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Please send all obituaries

To **ACE JOHNSON**

(with photo if possible)

Material for publication
should be sent to

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Deadline for the RI is the
15th of the previous month

91st Bomb Group Ring

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www.91stbombgroup.com

www.bombsqd323rd.com

More "letters to the Editor and More"

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

The 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Association is holding a Rally Round and the 91st BGMA has been invited because we are the 1st Generation of the 91st. The 91st Space Wing (3rd 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 91st.

Northwest Airlines flies into Minot or you can take Amtrak from Chicago or Seattle to Minot. The established cutoff at the Grand International Hotel for our room rate is 15th of August. You need to make your reservation now and cancel later if you need to. If you cancel by August 15th you'll get a 100% refund. Keep in mind that the 10th of September is the gala dinner and so your departure should not be before the 11th of September.

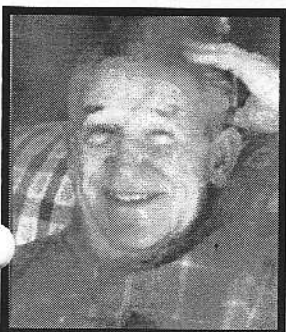
For an application or other information, please contact

President Jim Shepherd (714) 970-5540.

Jshep91@earthlink.net

Or Jim Bard (410) 549-1094

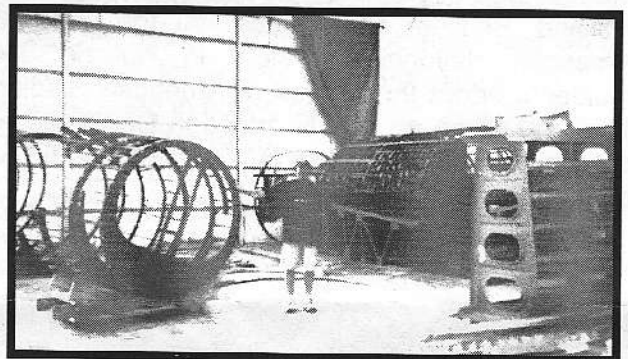
<http://91stsrw.microway.com>

Photo from Jacqueline Pene':**Folded Wings:**

We received this picture of Aubin Pene', 401st after the RI went to press - so we are including it in this issue. Aubin passed away January 21st 2007.

Letter from Norm Burmaster

My dad flew in the 91st from May thru Sept. 1944. I live in Bellefontaine, Ohio and the airport south of me in Urbana is in the process of restoring a B17 to flying condition. They started in Jan. of 2006, if you wish you can visit the web site www.B17project.com you can see the progress. A local cameraman is documenting the progress of the project and they have invited any veteran that would like to be part of it to come up and tell their experience. For the past year, it has been a thrill to listen to the different veterans that have showed up and some have brought up pictures when they were in the service. It would be neat



if any 91st member could come up and be part of this.

If anybody has any questions, they can get a hold of me @ 937-599-1989. The hanger number is 937-652-4710. Someone is there Mon thru Sat. and it is open to the public.

Thanks for your support.- Norm Burmaster

Letter from Paulette Hutton:

My husband, Joseph E. Hutton, deceased Feb. 17, 2005 (see Folded Wings July 2005) was a member of the 91st BG, 401st Squadron. He was a tail gunner on the B-17 "Broadminded". The Pilot was William (Bill) Bateman.

I would like to make my son William K. Hutton, a life member in the memory of his father. Enclosed is a check of \$100.

I have always been a regular reader of "The Ragged Irregular" as was my husband.

My sincerest regards, Paulette R. Hutton

MIKE BANTA'S RING: B17banta@aol.com

Memorial Day, Our European Friends Do Remember the 91st

You have read in my previous columns how the Ring corresponds with friends of the 91st all over Europe. Each year our friends who live near an American National Cemetery send us E-mails and pictures of their honoring the men of the 91st who gave their last full measure as well as the wreaths that were laid in honor of our 91st airmen.

Each year a wreath is laid at the Maddingly American National Cemetery near Cambridge for the 91st airmen who lay at rest there.

We've chosen a few E-mails and from our friends near American National Cemeteries in Holland, Belgium and France. At the Margraten American National Cemetery in Holland, local residents adopt the graves of American Soldiers. They are given an official Adoption Certificate and personally tend the graves putting flags and flowers on them on Memorial Day.

Hello Mister Mike Banta:

Hereby I'm sending you our Certificates of Adoption of the grave of Garner Walters.

I hope I don't ask too much of your time asking for information about Garner Walters and of you. I have a lot of questions I want to ask you but I don't want to take too much of your time, unless you are willing to answer them.

Sincerely Peter Walters

Hi Peter and 91sters.

Thank you, Peter, for sending the Adoption Certificate for Garner Walters Jr. I'm embedding it in this E-mail being sent to all Ring participants. We have the fondest affection for those who are tending the grave sites in Margraten of our brothers who gave their last full measure to keep the world free. Today is Memorial Day in the United States where we honor all of our brothers who gave their lives to save our freedom. Garner reminds us that Freedom Is Not Free. It's been paid for by all the brave men who died in all the wars that gave us our freedom.

We will be delighted to answer any question that you may have regarding Garner Walters if we have the answers. Garner Walters is in our thoughts and prayers this memorial day for giving his very young life to keep us free.


Mike Banta, 91st Ring

Peter Walters writes:

Hello mister Mike Banta

Sunday the 27 of May Memorial Day was held at the Cemetery here in Margraten. Unfortunately we could not make it on time for the ceremony, a friend's youngest child did her 1st Holy Communion. We arrived just after the ceremony was over. We specially visited the graves of Garner Walters and graves of 3 other servicemen: Frank W. Desimone, 82nd Recon Bn, 2nd Arm'd Div. Daniel B. Nazzarett, 376th Fighter Sq, 361st FG Donald R. Link, 256th Field Artillery Bn

These graves are adopted by people which we don't know but we do know some family of these soldiers, my wife's uncle, he is the priest here in Margraten, and he met family members a long time ago and he goes, almost every year, on holiday to the USA and at the end of his trip he always visits a sister of Daniel B. Nazzarett, West Seneca, Buffalo, NY. When these family members come over to Margraten we also spent time with them and we go to visit Bastogne, the Ardennes battle field etc. I was very emotional to see a brother of Frank W. Desimone for the first time visiting the grave of his brother. (continued on next page)



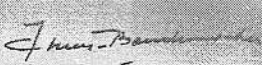

Amerikaanse Begraafplaats Margraten

Certificaat van adoptie

NAAM SOLDAAT:	WALTERS GARNER JR
VAK, RIJ, GRAP:	E - 15 - 23
RANG:	T SGT
REGISTRATIENUMMER:	12095645
EENHEID:	322 BOMB SQ 91 BOMB GP/H
DATUM VAN SNEUVELEN:	22 FEB 44
STAAT:	NEW JERSEY
ADOPTANT:	Dhr. en Mevr. Walters - Conjarts Bernhardlaan 9 A 6269 CW Margraten

Namens de Stichting Adoptie Graven Amerikaanse Begraafplaats Margraten.

Margraten, december 2005

De Voorzitter,	De Secretaris
	
J.A.M. Opreij-Bendermacher	J.P.M.M. Aussems

(Continued from page 4)

My grandparents met, while on holiday in Buffalo, a sister of Donald R. Link. And she asked if they would visit her brother's grave. So this is why we go to all the graves. I sent some pictures of Memorial Day with this mail. There's some pictures taken from the 91st BGMA floral wreath.

I have a question about the fact that there were two B-17s named the "Boston Bombshell," looking at the serial numbers they were two different aircrafts. My question is: was the second aircraft named after the first after it was lost or did these aircrafts fly at the same time? Do you know if there are still veterans alive who knew and who flew with Garner Walters.

Best wishes Peter Walters

Hi Peter

It's good to hear from you again. We are so grateful to you and all the others who have adopted graves in Margraten American Cemetery of our brothers in the 91st Bomb Group who gave their last full measure to keep the world free. Thank you for honoring Richard Macully and Michael LaMedica by decorating their grave sites with flowers on Memorial Day.

Mike Banta, 91st Ring

From Verne and Onie Woods: Hi, Mike

Yves Carnot, in Brittany, has erected a small monument on the site where my plane, "The Black Swan," crashed into his grandfather's barn, killing my engineer, Richard Hensley, and my pilot, Stuart Mendelsohn. Each year on Memorial day, Carnot visits their grave sites at the St. James Military Cemetery in Normandy. Yesterday, I received an e-mail from him informing me of this year's visit with his family. Here it is:

Dear Verne and Onie

A short message to inform you today morning I and my wife Anne will go to the American Military cemetery in St James, Normandy, located at 300km from Rosporden, in order to participate in the Memorial Ceremony, like every year, to pray for the memory of Richard Georges Hensely and Stuart B. Mendelsohn who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Keep in touch and keep well.

God Bless you & America **Yves, Anne & Sam**

Hi Verne and 91sters,

Thanks, Verne for sharing this Memorial day tribute by Yves, Anne & Sam to the memory of your two crew members Richard Georges Hensley and Stuart B. Mendelsohn who were KIA when the Black Swan was lost. God bless them for remembering.

Mike Banta, 91st Ring

We are amazed at the respect our friends in Europe have for the last full measure given by so many of the best of our generation. Why do they understand our Memorial Day better than most of us do at home? Maybe because they felt the terror of living under the Nazi jack boot. Totalitarianism is impossible to live under after living as free men but, as the Dutch and Belgium people know, freedom never was and never will be free. Someone has to pay the price and we who survived know the price our young men who were killed in action paid.

Mike Banta, 91st Ring.

FROM THE 91ST WEB SITE:

Greetings: My name is Bob Norment. I wanted you to know that we buried my second cousin, Julia Faye Rader Neel today in Lockhart Texas. She was 93 and passed on Dec. 21, 2006. She was the widow of Lt. Fred Neel of Menard Texas. She never remarried. I simply googled Lt. Neel's name and came up with your site. I was hoping to find out more about this man and the unit and plane he flew. I take serious interest in WWII as I am a WWII reenactor here in Texas. We are dedicated to the memory of all of these Veterans.

(The Reverend Grerot has already e-mailed Bob with much information about Lt. Neel)

WELCOME TO THE NEWEST LIFE MEMBERS OF THE 91ST BGMA

David Calvert	G. Paul Lynch
Thomas Freer	Bill McCarty
John Frencho	Ehud Merkel
Peter Fullerton	Carrol Thomas
Charles Galian	Mrs. John Thompson*
Chuck Huesser	Edward B. Williams

*(in memory of her husband)

WE THANK YOU ALL!

ACROSS THE POND-BASSINGBOURN as it is NOW

**By Captain Liam Purbrick
Of The Yorkshire Regiment – A serving British
Army Infantry Platoon Commander instructor
at the British Army Training Regiment
Bassingbourn.**

Now halved to 800 yards, part of the main runway remains. To its south the airfield is still flat, groomed, and immaculate; to the north and west, Nature has returned with tangled hawthorns, deer, pheasants and, rumour says, wild boar. Aircraft still land here: mostly RAF support helicopters which touch down for a few minutes before droning off over the Cambridgeshire wheat country. Air power is still the back drop of Bassingbourn Air Station, but its focus is now Land based. Army Training Regiment Bassingbourn is one of five training establishments which provide basic (Phase One) training for Army recruits of the British Army. When running at maximum capacity of 24 platoons the Regiment has up to 1056 recruits within its gates. There are a variety of courses run here with three key flavours: The Junior Entry course currently occupies most of the training staff. This is a 20 week programme for sixteen year olds, both male and female, which give a foundation for military life and also includes a good deal of basic academic education. Secondly, there are Standard Entry platoons filled with recruits aged 17 or over, including a few 'old men' up to their early thirties. Finally the Regiment often hosts two-week Territorial Army courses. These, our equivalent of the National Guard, are part-time soldiers who are often highly intelligent graduates with 'proper' civilian jobs. The training teams generally get two weeks off after these periods to recover from the non-stop fortnight and the many hard to answer questions. After completing their respective course at Bassingbourn, all recruits go on to specialized training with whichever Arm or Service of the Army they belong to.

What is life like at Bassingbourn in 2007? It is, like all militaries today, youthful with current recruits born during the first Gulf War. It is busy, usually filled with platoons marching this way and that drilling, running, firing weapons, shouting, being shouted at, being inspected. It is almost a

small town with the recruits led by 250 officers and non-commissioned officers and nearly as many civilian staff with around 150 families living in married quarters. It is, in appearance, perhaps much as the 91st left it. Three of the four great hangars still dominate the site, one housing an excellent gym filled with grunting, sweating green t-shirt clad recruits. Regimental HQ's is in the old HQ building and most of the wartime structures remain in use.

Once they have convinced their platoon sergeants they are not too much of a public nuisance, the recruits are allowed to sign out of camp for a few hours on Saturday and Sunday and visit the delights, as perhaps some readers once did, of Royston, Bassingbourn Village and Cambridge.

For the permanent staff a stint at Bassingbourn is generally a welcome prospect. Most arrive having been on operational tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, or both, in the previous year or two and here there is a chance for stability, especially for those with families, which is increasingly rare in an extremely busy Army. There is genuine pride in training the next generation of soldier – young soldiers who are certainly in demand.

Before their mile and half fitness test run recruits jog to warm up, their route passing a modest brass plaque behind Hangar One. It mentions, in small type, '2,012 Courageous Airmen'. The recruits surge off around the runway, between the airfield and the woods, and off to the new wars. They depart well prepared and hugely inspired by the deeds of previous generations and those of the 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy) in particular. We are reminded of you daily and we salute you.



DESTINED TO MEET

By William Wheeler

We arrived at Bassingbourn on 28 April 1943, as a replacement crew, and were assigned to the 401st where we were met by a very solemn and gloomy group of young men. The despair was caused by the loss of six crews from the squadron. The flight was led by Captain Oscar O'Neill on a raid to Bremen on 17 April 1943. He was a very popular and likeable guy. It was his twenty-fourth mission and his crew was being groomed as the first crew in the Eighth Air Force to complete 25 missions.

During my short stay in England I met my future wife, Mary Chapman. She shared my grief over comrades lost, the excitement and anxiety of combat and, most of all, the joy of being alive and in love.

As a crew we managed to survive until 17 August when we were shot down on the first Schweinfurt raid. It was my twenty-fourth mission. All my crew survived. I was interned in the Center Compound at Stalag III. In April 1944 I was one of a cadre of thirty officers moved to the newly constructed West compound to assist Colonel Darr Alkire in settling in and organizing a large group of POWs that he had brought up from a temporary camp in Frankfurt. Oscar O'Neill arrived with a similar cadre from the South compound. We met there and became good friends. He told me he had left a girl in London – as I did. We had that, among other things, in common. We were separated somewhat during the confused evacuation of Stalag III in January 1945. I missed seeing Oscar in the short time we were at Stalag VII in Moosberg where we were liberated. I left the camp about two weeks later for Camp Lucky Strike to be processed back into the American army. The first guy I recognized among thousands of POWs was Oscar. He had left Germany soon after our liberation and spent some time in Paris with an uncle who was assigned there to the American Embassy. He had just arrived at the camp and said after checking in, he was going to LeBourget in the morning and hitch a flight to RAF Northholt and asked if I wanted to come along. I responded "sure." We arrived in London the next day, checked into a hotel and he left to meet Renee, and I to find Mary.

We all met the following May at the Deanry for lunch and they announced that they were going to get married. Oscar said, he was going to the American Consul to get permission to marry and asked me if I wanted to come along. I looked at Mary and after a slight hesitation said, "Why don't you, Bill." I too hesitated and finally replied, "Okay." On the way back from the Embassy I asked Oscar when he was getting married and he said, "Saturday" and I shot back, "That Soon?" and then added, "Oh, I guess I will too - if Mary wants me." So, we all got married four days later.

We had a difficult time getting our wives to America but I managed to get Mary on a Pam clipper out of Lisbon about a month later and Oscar got Renee on a North Atlantic flight soon after. The first night we met in New York City for dinner, Renee arrived in an identical plain black silk dress that Mary was wearing that she had bought that day at Best & Company. They didn't seem to mind but they sure were a beautiful look-a-like pair.

We stayed somewhat in touch over the years but lost contact when the O'Neill's moved to California in the eighties.

At the 1995 91st reunion in Cincinnati, I got on the bus after attending the memorial at Wright Pat. And found a seat in the back. A guy in the seat in front and across from me turned and said "Bill Wheeler?" It was Oscar. It was a great reunion. They were, as we were, still happily married.

WILLIAM H. WHEELER
Colonel USAF (ret)



From L-R Mary-Oscar Oneill – Renee

PS: I was asked to write this article at the reunion we had at New London CT. A little late but here it is – hope you like it.

TONY STARCER'S FLYING ART GALLERY

By T.H.Ashford

Taken from an October 1996 issue of
Air Classics MagazineSent to us by Henry & Betty Hall of the 322nd

In the summer of 1944, the 8th Air Force of the United States Army Air Force had some 40 groups of heavy strategic bombers at its disposal. Of this fighting force, the 91st Bomb Group stands in a class by itself. Known by those stationed in Bassingbourn, England as "The Ragged Irregulars," the flyboys in this outfit were led into battle by the sexiest group of ladies to grace the sky.

They were portraits of feminine perfection. Transcending today's "10" by virtue of their innocent sensuality, these babes were inspired by the painting of Albert Vargas. They sported such names as "Ack Ack Annie", "Mount'N Ride", "The Careful Virgin", and "Dame Satan" and they decorated the noses of many a Flying Fortress.

Tony Starcer, then a corporal with the 91st Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, was the man behind the ladies on the front of the planes. Stationed in Bassingbourn from 1942 through 1945, Tony began his tour of duty designing insignia for combat aircraft. He was part of the support crew for the first eleven B-17 bombers to arrive in England at the beginning of the American participation in World War Two, proving that daylight bombing of Germany was possible. These early bombers laid the groundwork for the thousands of B-17's that came to England during the course of the war. Nicknamed "The Flying Fortress" by a reporter who was present for the rollout of the Boeing B-299 prototype at Boeing's Seattle plant in 1935, the B-17 is probably the most famous WWII combat aircraft and Tony Starcer's contribution to "The Flying Fortress" captured the romantic in us all.

"It all happened more or less by accident," said Tony in a 1985 interview. On his way to the Officer's Club in Bassingbourn, he passed a man painting a mural. Surveying the man's work, Tony commented that there was too much blue in the painting.

A bit peeved, the guy told Tony – "If he thought he could do better, go ahead and do it," so Tony took up the brush, finished the mural and, during his three-year stint with the Army Air Forces, applied his talent to canvasses the likes of which the Old Masters had never dreamed of. "Hell", said Tony, "it got me out of basic training!"

Starting with painting cartoon characters in ashtrays, Tony's palette brought personality to some 130 B-17s. His first was "The Careful Virgin". which could have had the seemingly unattainable 25 missions without a casualty before the "Memphis Belle", but, because of her risqué name, the Air Force couldn't publicize the Virgin's accomplishments. Named after Margaret Polk, a Southern sweetheart of pilot Captain Robert Morgan, the "Memphis Belle" is the most famous of Tony's ladies aloft. A little recognized fact about the lady who flew on the nose of this plane and inspired her crew to victory is that on one side of the plane her outfit is red and on the other side its blue. When asked by he painted her different, Tony sighed and stated simply, "I ran out of red paint."

In those days, Tony painted with ordinary house paint of which he had red, yellow, blue, black and white. He mixed these basic colors into the shades necessary to bring his characters to life.

To keep morale high and create a greater sense of camaraderie, Tony would also paint the leather jackets, belonging to the flight crew, to match their plane. Talking about this stirred up some bittersweet memories for Tony. "After the guys would decide on a design and name, the crew would leave their jackets with me to paint. Then they'd go off on a mission. There were lots of times when the guys never made it back. It was heart-wrenching; I had hundreds of those A-2 jackets." Having put the unclaimed jackets in storage, Tony gave them to members of the plane's ground crew after the war. "There's nobody who loves a plane like its ground crew," he said.

Cpl. Anthony L. Starcer
91st BG (H) Bassingbourn England



Tony Starcer is probably the best know and most prolific nose art painter of WWII but his talents were discovered by chance when, during training, he entered the Officers' Club at the USAAF base at Sheppard Field TX. Starcer watched a man painting a wall mural and criticized his use of color. Challenged to do better, he set about doing just that by finishing the mural.

After arriving in England and being posted to Bassingbourn with the 91st BG, Starcer was assigned to the task of painting official markings, squadron letters and aircraft codes, etc., onto the group's B17s. By popular demand, this quickly expanded into an astounding array of nose art. As Starcer's skill developed, his reputation spread and the 91st soon sported some of the finest examples of nose art to be seen in England. Working with whatever paint he could find, mostly house paint, he

drained off surplus oil and then added linseed oil to thin it again and make it workable. The subtle flesh tones he achieved on many of his later pin-up figures amazed everyone, especially those who knew only too well the difficulties of his working environment. Although the rainstorms, biting winds and the numbing cold of English weather worked against him, Starcer produced a dazzling wealth of imagery in spite of it all. Working almost ceaselessly, he could paint the nose art on a B-17 in a day or less and then set about painting smaller similar designs onto the jackets of the crewmen. These were left with him to paint in the evenings and in more conducive surroundings and when the crewmen did not return from a mission to claim their A-2 jackets, they were given to the ground crew. Such was the demand for Starcer's time and skill that he was often assisted by others who would paint leather jacket patches or the titling on the nose and allows him to concentrate on the illustrative imagery.

Tony Starcer painted more than 130 nose art designs on B-17s and countless crewmen's jackets. Some of the most famous Flying Forts carried his artwork. "Shoo Shoo Baby" and "Memphis Belle" are two which survived to this day – renovated and restored for future generations. Starcer drew his subjects from a wide range of contemporary sources, not least – the ever-popular Vargas, Petty and Elvgren girls. The cover from "TIME" magazine was used to create the artwork for "General Ike" – a B-17G christened (somewhat reluctantly) by "Ike" himself when he visited Bassingbourn.

Other superb examples of his mastery were "Sleepy Time Gal," "Sugar Blues," "Red Alert," "Bride of Mars." Not all of his designs included pin-ups: "Outhouse Mouse," "Man O War," "Paper Dolly" and "Spirit of 44," brought refreshing variety to the ranks of B-17's lining the runways at Bassingbourn.

At war's end, Starcer laid down his paint brush and for 23 years had little time for painting. In the 1970's interest grew about wartime nose art and he began to paint renditions of his former works. When "Shoo Shoo Baby" was brought back to Dover AFB for restoration, Starcer was the obvious person to repaint its nose art and, in 1981, he proved he had lost none of his former skills when he completed the restoration of a design he had spawned 37 years earlier.

(From Web page – www.usaf-noseart.co.uk/starcer-tony.htm)

SPECIAL FOLDED WINGS:

General Olds, Legendary Pilot

Air Force News - June 20, 2007

U.S.A.F ACADEMY, Colo. (AFPN)



Legendary fighter pilot, retired Brig. Gen. Robin Olds, took his last flight June 14, 2007 from congestive heart failure one month short of his 85th birthday. He became an ace with 12 aerial victories during WWII, flying P-38 Lightnings and P-51 Mustangs

Throughout his career, he was a staunch advocate for better fighters, better pilot training and new tactics, culminating in the war-winning air-to-air tactics and doctrine of surgical precision bombing we use today. Brigadier General Olds' courageous life stands as a timeless example of the power of faith and the strength of the human spirit. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his devoted family as they mourn his loss, a loss we feel as well. America and our Air Force are eternally grateful for his leadership and accomplishments, and will remember him always," He graduated in 1943 as a second lieutenant. Following graduation from pilot training in 1943, General Olds was assigned to the European Theater at the end of World War II, where he flew 107 combat missions. He was assigned to the first jet P-80 squadron in 1946; was a member of the first jet Aerial Acrobatic Demonstration Team;

He was a squadron commander of Royal Air Force No.1 Fighter Squadron, Sussex, England, during an exchange tour in 1948. General Olds' military decorations include the Air Force Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star with three oak leaf clusters, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak leaf clusters, Air Medal with 39 oak leaf clusters, British Distinguished Flying Cross, French Croix de Guerre, Vietnam Air Force Distinguished Service Order, Vietnam Air Gallantry Medal with gold wings, and Vietnam Air Service Medal. After his duty in Vietnam, General Olds was named commandant of cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy from 1967 to 1971. His last assignment

before retiring from the Air Force in 1973 was as director of safety for the Air Force.

Up to a few months prior to his illness he was frequently called upon as guest speaker and lecturer for his inspirational and motivational talks.

Rita Wong: Age 95

The nurse who cared for Tigers

The death of a Second World War hero has saddened many in China.

Clifford Coonan recalls her touching tale in the China Daily - June 8, 2007

"The story of Rita Wong, the only Chinese nurse at the hospital for the Flying Tigers, could be one of the most touching tales of the Second World War," the China Daily wrote of her in a tribute. Born in Guangdong in southern China in 1912, Ms Wong, also known by her Chinese name Huang Huanxiao, decided to buck tradition and get an education and a job. She took a course in nursing, graduating in 1941, and had just started her internship at a hospital in Hong Kong when the Japanese military attacked and took over the former Crown colony on Christmas Day, 1941.

She was sent to a concentration camp along with the foreign staff of the hospital, and the Japanese made it a rule that no doctors or nurses were to leave Hong Kong. Anyone caught doing so would be killed.

The plucky nurse escaped on a small sampan with her brother to Macau. On hearing that her classmates were working at the American hospital in Chongqing, which was the wartime capital of China and base for the Kuomintang chief, Chiang Kai-shek, she decided to attempt the phenomenally dangerous 600-mile journey to the south-western city.

"Once there she went to the headquarters of Allied Forces, showed her nursing certificate and applied for a job. She was told that English-speaking nurses were badly needed in Yunnan and was sent the next day to a hospital in Kunming, capital of the province," The hospital belonged to the US 14th Air Force and for her work in saving the lives of those who just made it over the "Hump", she became known as the "Hump Angel". In her final years, she was visited by former "Flying Tigers and their descendants from the United States.

Folded Wings (continued)

★ **William John Auth, 324th Age 84** **Citrus Heights, March 3, 2007**

As reported by his wife & Lowell Getz



He was born August 15, 1923 and was a four-year honor student at Cathedral Latin, Silver Jubilee Class of 1941. He interrupted college to join the USAAAC as a pilot cadet in February 1943 and flew 22 combat missions his final on 25 April 1945 over Pilsen, pilot of the low squadron lead plane – No. 588.

His "unbiased view of what was happening" provided research material to the author of "The Forgotten Final Mission" by L. Getz, Aviation History.

Bill graduated from Case Institute of Technology, BS Chemical Engineering with Honors in 1948. He earned a Master of Science in Nuclear Chemistry from the Ohio State University in 1953. An Air Force Regular Officer and Command Pilot, he was Deputy Chief of Operations' Squadron at McClellan AFB at the time of his retirement in 1968.

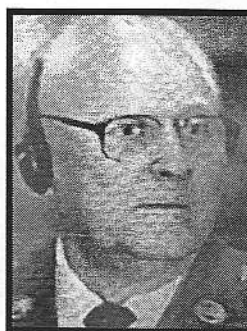
Bill was an avid golfer, getting a Hole in One in 1972 and still played golf until recently. He was a Bronze Master with the American Contract Bridge League, active community volunteer, famous for hand-tied fishing flies, ham & bean soup and smoked salmon pate'. He loved Jazz and Big Band music, leaving us while listening to Glenn Miller. His "favorite place" was in Alaska fishing with Bill, Jr. a summer trip together all but one of the last 15 years.

Left with loving memories are the four children he raised after the death of his wife Virginia in 1967 – Pat (Jeff) Proulx, Nancy (Ed) Kerns, William (Debra) Auth, Jr. Sheila (John) Taylor, Grandpa to Jessica, Jeffrey, Christine, Patrick Kelsey and Hogan. Honorary Grandpa for Megan and Robert Loving companion of eleven years and favorite bridge partner of Dorothy Young.

He will always be remembered by those who loved him, but not missed by fish anywhere.

★ **Louis R. Holland, 401st, Age 93** **Lancaster CA, April 14, 2007**

As reported by his daughter Carol Cotton



He was drafted into military serviced in 1942 and served with the Strategic Air Command in Europe. By May 1944, he had completed 30 combat missions. Three of those missions were literally completed on a wing and a prayer. He was awarded the DFC, the Air Medal and

three Oak Leaf clusters. He returned to the US and was assigned to the Officers' Combat Crew Training Center at Gowen Field, Idaho as a radio instructor. He was discharged in 1945 and reenlisted on June 29, 1946, and that very evening he met his wife of 55 years.

After serving in Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Idaho and California, he also served tours in Japan, England, North Africa, Korea and Guam. His final assignment was the SR-71/F12 Test Force at Edwards AFB. A severe heart attack led to his giving up his sales job. He then focused on volunteering for the local Someone Cares Program. Lou was a great testimony to his Christian faith and an admirable example of how to grow old gracefully. He will be missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by daughters Gela Rae Koehler and Carol Sue Cotton, 8 grandchildren, 10 great Grandchildren and 4 great-great-grandchildren.

★ **Peter F. DeBoy .324th Age 88** **Catonsville MD, May 21, 2007**

As reported by his family

He was a radio operator on "Jack the Ripper" He is survived by his wife Thelma, daughter Pat, two grandchildren, Stephanie and Chad and his brothers Robert and William.

★ **Charles Guinn, 401st** **Coolidge AZ, May 31, 2006**

As reported by his stepson Pete Cockrill

I'm sorry to inform the "Group" that he really loved his friends of the 91st.. Charlie passed on. I'm sure that he will miss you all. He didn't suffer. He was a super guy.

91st Bomb Group Memorial Association
1054 Sunrise Drive
Woodbury, MN. 55125

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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

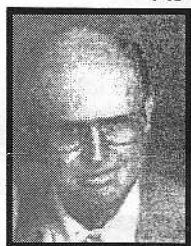
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The Ragged Irregular

July 2007

Folded Wings:

★ **John "Johnny" Thompson 322nd Age 85** **Taylor Texas, June 16, 2006**



As reported by his wife Alvina "Boots" Schultz

He served his country during WWII by training as Radio Operator and flying two years in a B-17 over Europe for 25 combat missions. His last year in the Army Air Corp was spent giving speeches in the St. Louis area. In 1955, John was discharged, hitchhiked to Texas to

visit his sister Ruth and never left Texas. The next 45-50 years were spent in construction – building houses, grain elevators and feed mills all over Texas. He also built commercial buildings and small shopping centers in central Texas. From 1951 to 1983 he ran an egg farm that at one time had 8000 laying hens. He moved closer into town and spent the last few years in his workshop doing wood and metal work. He was instrumental in creating the Christmas decorations at Heritage Square in Taylor.

He is survived by his beloved wife Boots, daughter Sharon Bland and Husband Robert, grandchildren Laura, Stephanie and John, great-grandchildren Ashlyn and Alec and sister Ruby.

★ **John Courtland Conway, 401st Age 86** **Mitchell ND, 2007,**

As reported by his son John

John was born and grew up in Aberdeen In 1938 he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and worked as a forester in the Black Hills. He married Elsie Fratzke and in 1943 entered the USAAC. He was a Radio Operator and tail gunner flying B-17's for 22 missions.

After the war he worked for Northwestern Public Service retiring in 1983. He married Gertrude Mehlhaff in 1967.

He enjoyed hunting, fishing and woodworking and was the founder of the Whitetail Bowmen Archery Club and active on many church committees. In 1999 he moved to Mitchell to be near his family. He had been member of VFW and the American Legion.

John is survived by one son John and his wife Segunda, a daughter Carol Radel and husband Donald two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

★ **John Lloyd Hatfield, 324th Age 83** **Olympia WA, May 6, 2007**

As reported by his wife.



He joined the USAAC, 91st BG, May 17, 1943 as a B-17 pilot and flew 23 missions in the European Theater and two more missions to pick up POW's after peace was declared. He married Dorothy Safley in 1945 and had a daughter Linda. He married Betty Merrill in 1963 and they were married for 41 years.

John worked for Sears & Roebuck as an outside service technician for 32 years and retired to Turnwater WA in 1979.

John kept in touch with all of his crewmembers through the 91st BG website and through reunions.

He is survived by his wife Betty, daughter Linda, stepdaughters Donna Clark and Daisy (Don) Kounce; grandsons Trent (Saboumech) and Travis Williams and great-grandson, Daniel Williams.