

# 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

Vol. 40 No. 4

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

October 2007

## Minot. North Dakota Reunion - Sept. 2007

L-R Ed Gates – Joe Harlick – Ted Skawinski - Bob Dickson – Jim Shepherd



## President's Corner \*\*\*\*\* Jim Shepherd

It was a pleasure to attend the 91<sup>st</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Group reunion in Minot North Dakota and especially the visit to Minot Air Force Base. We were very impressed with the young men and women in the 91<sup>st</sup> Space Wing. These young people have such a positive attitude and are extremely proud to be part of the Air Force, the 91<sup>st</sup> Space Wing and the defense of America. I wish all of you could have been there.

Jim Bard of the 91<sup>st</sup> Recon Group had everything well organized. It was a blending of members from WWII, Korea, The Cold War, and Vietnam. I can truly tell you, we are all ONE, with a common background as member of the Army Air Corp and the US Air Force. **Members of the 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA attending were:**

Shepherd, Jim (President) & Suzi  
Gates, Ed (323<sup>rd</sup> BS)  
Harlick, Joe (324<sup>th</sup> BS) & Jenny  
Dickson, Bob (322<sup>nd</sup> BS)  
Kelly, Jody (Bob's Daughter)  
Skawinski, Ted (323<sup>rd</sup> BS) & Olivia  
Hall, Fred (401<sup>st</sup> BS) & nephew Bob  
Bard, Jim (91<sup>st</sup> Recon) & Ruth

There was a Memorial Dedication on Friday at the Irwin A. Johnson – Professional Development Center on the base at Minot. There is now a memorial wall dedicated to the 91<sup>st</sup> BG. Joe Harlick and Ed Gates developed a number of photos from Joe's photo collection and the pictures are now on display. A special thanks to Dan DeForest, Wing Historian, for setting up the display and having the pictures framed. Colonel Marty Whalen, Commander, 91<sup>st</sup> Space Wing did the dedication. Doing the unveiling was Lt. Colonel Joseph Ogea, Commander, 5<sup>th</sup> Force Support Squadron.

After the dedication, there was a barbeque in a hanger, with food for the base personal and dependents. While we were eating our steak, a "Beautiful" young lady walked up and introduced herself. I noticed the logo on her jumpsuit, "Thunderbirds", and asked her what she did with the Thunderbirds. She advised us that she flew the "Right Wing Position, in the Diamond Formation". Just so you know, her name is "Major Nicol Malachowski".



**Suzi Shepherd &  
Major Nicol Malachowski**

### The 91<sup>st</sup> history, which started in 1942, remains active today with the following genealogy history:

91 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group (H)	(1942-1945)
91 <sup>st</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Group	(1947-1948)
91 <sup>st</sup> Bombardment Wing (Heavy)	(1962-1968)
91 <sup>st</sup> Space Wing	(1997-Present)

Also known as Missile Wing, Strategic Missile Wing, & Missile Group. Southern California is the location of the next reunion, the last week of June 2008. We will have many exciting places to go and see. Disneyland is around the corner, so plan on bringing the kids, grandkids or great-grandkids.

## **91<sup>st</sup> BGMA Officers**

### President

**Jim Shepherd**

20670 Via Augusto  
Yorba Linda, CA .92887  
[Jshep91@earthlink.net](mailto:Jshep91@earthlink.net)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

**Michiel Hanou**

2398 Sandpiper Way  
Pleasanton, CA. 94566  
[mhanou@comcast.net](mailto:mhanou@comcast.net)

### Secretary/Treasurer

**Asay B. Johnson**

590 Aloha Drive  
Lake Havasu City AZ  
86406-4559  
Tel: (928) 453-3114  
Cell (928) 715-1053  
[ace91bgma@rraz.net](mailto:ace91bgma@rraz.net)

### Historian

**Jake Howland**

191 Parker Lane  
Carthage, TX. 75633  
[howland5@sbcglobal.net](mailto:howland5@sbcglobal.net)

### Editor, Steve Perri

12750 Kelly Greens Blvd.  
Ft. Myers FL 33908  
Tel: (239) 454-5838  
[deltareb323@yahoo.com](mailto:deltareb323@yahoo.com)

### Asst. Editor-Gary Hall

651-260-2397  
[garyhall@att.net](mailto:garyhall@att.net)

Material for publication  
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**GARY HALL – EDITOR**  
Deadline for the RI is the  
15<sup>th</sup> of the previous month

91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Ring  
[B17Banta@aol.com](mailto:B17Banta@aol.com)

[www.91stbombgroup.com](http://www.91stbombgroup.com)  
[www.bombsqd323rd.com](http://www.bombsqd323rd.com)

Letters to the Editor and MoreVEEPS VIEWS by Mick Hanou

This summer I was able to visit England on my annual trip to the Duxford Air Show. My first stop was with Vince and Margaret Hemmings and I thank them for being such very gracious hosts. Vince (ALM 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA) is past curator of the Tower Museum, a role he left in the mid-1990s because of the distance he lives from Bassingbourn. However, he is still very active laying the wreath on Memorial Day as the UK Representative of the 91<sup>st</sup> BG at Madingly Cemetery each year. Vince and I traveled about Norfolk/Suffolk looking at the many WWII air bases crowded in that area. We also took a flight over 16 of the bases and I am amazed at how close these bases were and that there weren't more collisions in the sky!

My next visit was with Steve and Alison Pena. They were very active for the years since Vince left. However, also because of a move out of the area due to business commitments, plus the increasing demands of their two young children, Steve has now resigned as curator of the Tower Museum. However, they both retain a keen interest and remain members of the museum and Steve and ALM of the 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA.

I then worked flight line security at the Duxford show and quite enjoyed the two days of show. Afterwards, I visited Bassingbourn barracks and the Tower Museum. For clarification, the official caretaker of the museum is now the Tower Museum Bassingbourn, which replaces the disbanded East Anglia Aviation Society.

I met with Chris Murphy, currently the person visitors should contact beforehand if they wish to see the Tower Museum.

The Museum is in great shape with some new displays and refurbishment. They have had some very successful fund-raising events and have good support from Col. Nigel Smith, CO of Bassingbourn Barracks. All in all, I had a wonderful visit with some of the key people whose mission has been to honor your past efforts and care for the Tower Museum over the past decades and I thank them for their past and current efforts.

I am glad that Vince submitted an article on the Prop Memorial in the last issue of the RI. Well-done "Friends of the 91<sup>st</sup>"

Mick Hanou, Vice President

**ANNOUNCEMENT FROM  
EDITOR STEVE PERRI**

I would like to take this time to announce that I have decided to end my career as Editor of The Ragged Irregular and have put that job in the capable hands of Gary Hall who has been helping us out by mailing out the last few issues and I'm sure will do an excellent job.

I would also like to thank Mike Banta at this time. If it weren't for the Ring, it would have been impossible to get all the information necessary to put out the Ragged Irregular. Thank you Mike.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to have been the Editor for the past six years but now its time to turn things over to this younger generation. I am approaching my 86<sup>th</sup> year in January and my memory, although good, is not what it use to be. Also, Nancy and I have plans to do some traveling and this will free us to do so. Thank you all for such a wonderful experience.

**Steve Perri**

**Outgoing Editor of the Ragged Irregular**

**From Bob Dickson - Minot Reunion**

I'm sure Jim Shepherd and Joe Harlick will send you some great photos from our get together with the 91st SRWA in Minot, North Dakota.

As for me, I spent my time getting acquainted with the natives.



**BOB DICKSON AND LESLIE REISS**

## A Note From Past President

### ED GATES

Dedication of photos in the Professional Development Center at Minot AFB, ND, was the culmination of a plan to which we had agreed in July 2006 during my visit last year. Col. Marty Whelan, current Commander of the 91st Space Wing - our great-grandchildren in the heritage line - had shown interest in following the planning of his two predecessors, Col. Mark Owen and Col. Dan Adams, to strengthen their recognition of their heritage to the 91st Bomb Group and the 91st Strategic Recon Wing of the 1950's. (Still no contact has been made with the 91st Bomb Wing of the Viet Nam era.) Mr. Dan DeForest, 91st SW historian, has been an avid leader of the effort.

President Jim Shepherd was kind enough to ask me to follow through on the project, so Joe Harlick and I worked with his wonderful collection of photography of the wartime exploits of the 91st BG. We selected 94 photos from over 1000 to best tell the story of the 91st with short narratives. We cleared the selections with the 91st BGMA Board of Directors. We chose 64 of them that would be included in the initial display on 7 Sep and suggested the others be used for occasional substitution and for display elsewhere on base, especially in the 15 Launch Control Center (LCC) ready-rooms where 91st SW personnel are on duty for 24-hour shifts.

Dan DeForest arranged for the framing and wall mounting. In a short period of time he did a monumental job of putting all 94 of them up, but did not have time to have the descriptions mounted, yet. The display does not have the photos in chronological order as we had hoped, but is subject to change. While not arranged that way for the dedication, a lithograph of *Nine-O-Nine* donated by W.W. Hill to the 91st Space Wing last year may be the centerpiece for the display.

The dedication ceremonies on 7 Sep were attended by the Commander of the 5th Bomb Wing, other key officers, a few hundred people and included members of the base dressed in WW II and subsequent Air Force uniforms.

The senior NCO of the 91<sup>st</sup> SW was dressed as a WW II Master Sergeant. Col. Whelan welcomed attendees and challenged the members of his command to live up to the heritage that has been set for them by the 91st Bomb Group and successor organizations. President Paul Kardian of the 91st Strategic Recon Wing spoke of the background of their unit as well as the 91st BG and of the planning that had been led by Jim Bard, Secretary of the 91st SRW, who attended our Reunion plus other n the DC area. Our President Jim Shepherd introduced members of the 91st BGMA who were present and presented your greetings.

I stressed our appreciation of their interest in us and noted that Col. Whelan's reference to their heritage was one in which we - and they - might be called "the first among equals" since only one group can bear the triangle "A." I also called attention to the fact that the Johnson Professional Development Center is named for North Dakota resident Col. Johnson who was with our fellow "Four Horsemen" unit, the 303rd BG. I noted that their heritage was one in which we had lost 887 KIA plus other deaths and had over 1000 POW's for a total of about 40% casualties among our aircrews. I mentioned that hitting the target was always our objective - just like theirs - and the tremendous evolution that the Air Force has achieved in accuracy from our 400 foot margin of error to, literally, pencil-point accuracy now. Finally, I applauded the "Team" approach that the USAF now stresses and noted that the 140 missions flown by *Nine-O-Nine* including an 8th Air Force record 124 without a mechanical abort was a true team effort involving ground crews, cooks, sheet metal, armament and a bit of good luck by air crew members (5 of my 35 missions were in *Nine-O-Nine*).

We had a display table at Northern Neighbors Day the following day and had the opportunity to talk with people about the 91st Bomb Group.

Joe Harlick, Bob Dickson and Jim Shepherd participated.

Hopefully, we helped touch a few people.

**More Letters:****Letter from Conrad Lohoefer:**

I was the flight engineer on M. M. (Skip) Borgeson's crew in the 401st BS, 91st BG, at Basingbourn from September '44 to May '45 and I flew most of my missions with him. On about our third or fourth mission, we were assigned the B-17#43-37887 LL-J and it had already been named "The Old Battleaxe" Being a new crew with thoughts of our own, we of course set about to immediately change the name, however we were alerted for a mission nearly every day in November of '44 when the weather permitted and we had no time to get a new name painted over "The Old Battleaxe". Skip put it up to the crew to choose a new name, but since only he, the co-pilot and our ball turret gunner were married, no one had any strong suggestions and lo and behold we flew two or three missions, got the H... shot out of us and "The Old Battleaxe" performed so fanatically when we got back to England, we all decided to leave that name be!

I don't know if Starcer painted the original nose job, but I assume he did, because after the war, my pilot, Skip, lived in Los Angeles and Starcer also lived somewhere in that area. Skip somehow got in contact with him and commissioned him to paint two paintings of a B-17 flying with the name "The Old Battleaxe" and the appropriate squadron and group letters visible on the aircraft, along with the red horizontal stabilizer and the triangle A.

Skip is long gone now and I have no idea what ever happened to his painting, but the one he gave to me, and I still have it, proudly displayed on my office wall. It is an original, signed by Tony Starcer.

**HEARTS VETERAN'S MUSEUM**

The Museum will receive a \$2 million dollar state grant for the construction of the new museum to be collocated with a planned Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) evacuation center in Walker County.

The State of Texas says thank you for the good work that the HEARTS Museum has done and will do in the future. The Museum strives to honor and recognize the men and women who have served our country in the armed forces and serves as a place of learning.

**BOOK REVIEW****One Pilot's Story: The Fabled 91<sup>st</sup> and Other 8th. Air Force Memoirs****By Dr. Andy Andersen****Forward by Senator John McCain**

As our greatest generation slowly recedes, and their tales of heroism are relegated to the pages of history, learning their stories takes on greater significance. I thank Dr. Andrew Andersen for taking the time to put his story on paper, so that it might be shared with future generations who will not have the privilege of knowing him.

The greatest generation was united not only by a common purpose, but by values- honor, courage, service, and, above all responsibility. Their lives and ours were forever changed by their struggles

Millions of Americans left everything they knew to fight against cruel and formidable enemy bent on world domination. They fought not just for themselves and their families but for love of an idea - that America stood for something greater than the sum of our individual interests.

Deep-seeded courage marched with the sons of a nation that believed in itself, in the justice of its cause, and in its magnificent destiny, Americans were armed against despair with the common conviction that their country believed it was worth their sacrifice.

As the members of the 91<sup>st</sup> know all too well, many paid the ultimate sacrifice. But an America worth dying for is worth living for, and those who returned home brought back an even deeper love of country, evidenced by the author's reflections.

Dr. Anderson's informal tone denotes the honesty and reality of his story. He gifts his readers a familiarity they might expect from a parent or grandparent, recalling their days off the coast of Japan or in the fields of Germany. History buffs will delight in the detail, and future generations will be grateful for another precious account from our greatest generation.

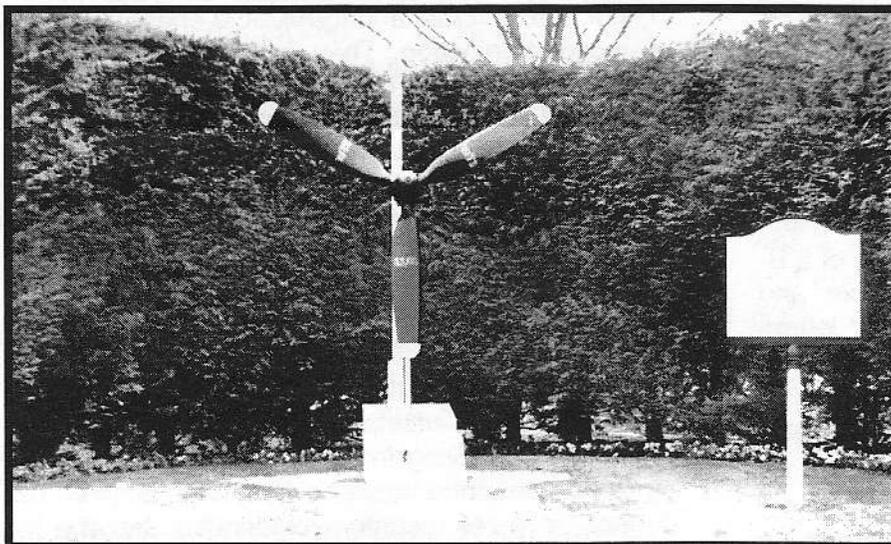
To Dr. Anderson, who reminds us, freedom is a blessing that must be defended, thank you.

John McCain United States Senator

(Book is available through Amazon.com)

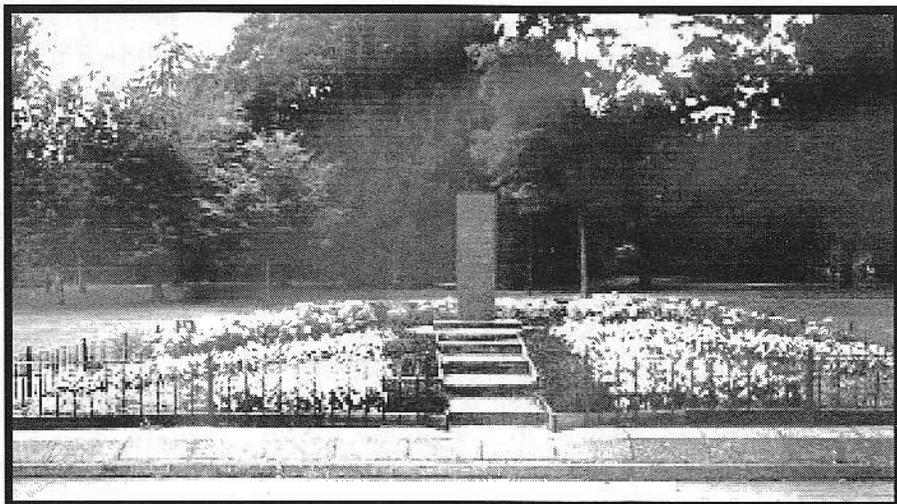
## ACROSS THE POND – From Vince Hemmings

During the past weeks, Friends of the 91<sup>st</sup> have been maintaining the Prop Memorial and the 441<sup>st</sup> Sub Depot Memorial Plaque in Bassingbourn Barracks. Up to recently, the rain we have had this summer has prevented cleaning to take place. General Stanley Wray's seat has been kept in store by kind permission of the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Smith, Kings. Apparently, this summer has been the wettest on record and it would have been counter productive to clean the Memorials or put the General Wray's seat on display. The attached photographs give the reader the condition of your Memorials, which is good. A bit of paintwork is needed on one propeller tip otherwise all is well. Since these photographs were taken in July, further work has been done to remove the staining on the Portland stone plinths. I have identified a solution, which claims to preserve gravestones and other stone paving. Trials are taking place and the stonemason has also been consulted for his opinion. Apparently it is applied yearly and prevents staining from occurring. A new brass plate is being commissioned for General Wray's seat and the path leading from the road to the Prop Memorial is to be re-laid. As you can see, the MOD's staff has planted flowers by the path leading up to the Memorial. May I mention on a personal note that the flowering cherry that Warren Hill and Nancy, the daughter of Colonel Frank S. Kamykowski, the Group's Engineering Officer planted, is flourishing. Well done Nancy and Warren.



You may wonder who finances this work. You have to thank one person, Paul Limm, who has yearly sent a cheque for \$200 to the Friends of the 91<sup>st</sup>. May I, on behalf of the Friends, Colonel Peter Worthy, Royal Anglian Regiment (Ret'd); Squadron Leader Ray Leach, MBE, RAF (Ret'd); David Crow and myself thank you Paul, for your kindness. You are indeed a true friend.

Another thank you must go to the wonderful people who have attended the Priority Gardens. The Gardens have been spectacular this year thanks to the many people who volunteer to maintain them. We are so lucky to have all these wonderful people who come to our aid in maintaining our monuments. Many thanks from the members of the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association.



## A STORY FROM JOE HARLICK

This past week I was on a four and a half hour, non-stop flight from Seattle, Washington to Atlanta, Georgia. In all my years of traveling, I have learned I have learned that each time a plane has the opportunity to stop, there is potential for unexpected challenges. Flight delays, weather and airline crews can create unanticipated challenges on any trip. Therefore, I always try to fly non-stop between my destinations.

About an hour into this particular flight, the Captain's voice rang over the intercom. He asked if there was a physician or nurse on the plane. If so, he asked them to identify themselves by ringing the flight attendant call button beside their seat.

I listened carefully but heard no one ring their bell. I immediately began to wonder what was happening. In a few minutes, the Captain informed us that there was a medical emergency onboard and asked again if there was a physician or a nurse who could help.

When there was no response, we were told that we were going to make an emergency stop in Denver, Colorado. He apologized but told us that there would be a medical emergency team waiting to meet us at the gate, and that we would probably only be delayed by about thirty minutes. Though it was necessary, we knew we would all be inconvenienced by the extra stop.

About half an hour later, we landed at Denver International Airport and the medical crew immediately came on board. However, everything took longer than had previously been expected. An elderly gentleman, about 85 years old, had suddenly taken ill. It was not clear whether he had experienced a stroke or a heart attack.

Even after the gentleman was carried off of the plane, we still sat there for quite a while. The original "short" stop turned into about an hour and a half. When we finally pushed back from the gate and were in the air, the pilot apologized profusely for the

unavoidable delay. He said that since the stop had taken longer than expected, those passengers who needed to make connections in Atlanta would miss their flights, but would automatically be booked on the next flight out.

You could almost hear the moans and groans throughout the airplane of everyone who was being inconvenienced by the unexpected stop. Then the pilot did one of the classiest things I have personally ever seen or heard anyone do. He spoke into the intercom and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I thought you might be interested in one bit of information. The elderly gentleman who was taken off the plane was a marine in WWII.

I am holding in my hand a copy of the Congressional Medal of Honor that was awarded to him and signed by President Harry Truman in 1945." The pilot went on to say, "I realize that we have all been inconvenienced today. However, in light of the fact that this gentleman was a war hero and was inconvenienced for four years of his life in order that we might experience the freedoms that we enjoy today, I thought you all should know that. Immediately, the airplane was filled with applause. Everyone was cheering and so pleased to know that the gentleman had been cared for in a way that was fitting and appropriate. As we continued to fly, I thought to myself, "Isn't that interesting? We were concerned that we were inconvenienced for a couple of hours, and yet this gentleman's entire life was interrupted and inconvenienced for over four years while he went and fought in a war to protect the freedoms and values that we love and hold dear in this country today."

I breathed a prayer for the gentleman and asked God to bless him for all he had done to help us understand what freedom is all about.

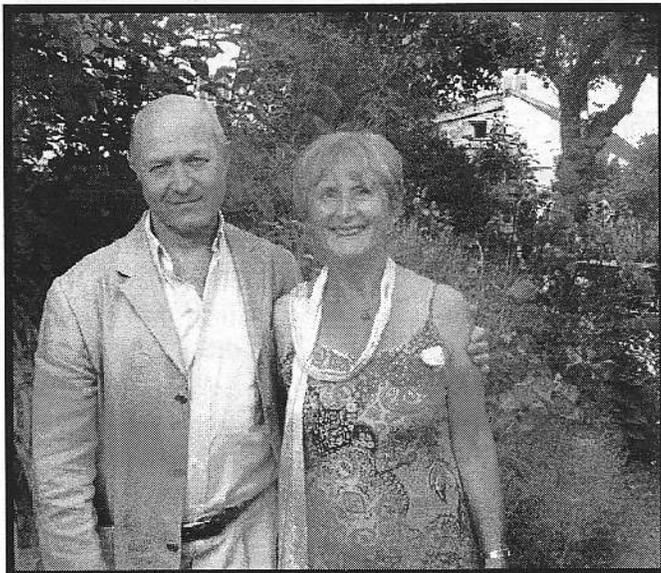
**From: JOE HARLICK**

During my years as Editor I found that I was constantly referring to Ray Bowden's wonderful books. I would like to personally thank him for all his work; it is invaluable to the history of the 91<sup>st</sup>.

Steve Perri

### RAY BOWDEN

Ray Bowden is a successful graphic designer with a freelance practice in London, which has a wide variety of commercial and institutional clients. Working on packaging and corporate design projects as well as literature and advertising, he is also an accomplished artist having achieved considerable acclaim for a number of commissions undertaken for various regiments of the British Army. Known internationally for his research work on nose art and named aircraft of the USAAF, he is an associate of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and a member of the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group (H) Memorial Association. In an attempt to extend the knowledge available on nose art and to ensure a fuller documentation of its artists and the stories of the individual airplanes and their crews, he established the USAAF Nose Art Research Project. Since 1988 he has communicated with thousands of veterans of units of the USAAF, from all theatres of operation, collecting their stories and information.

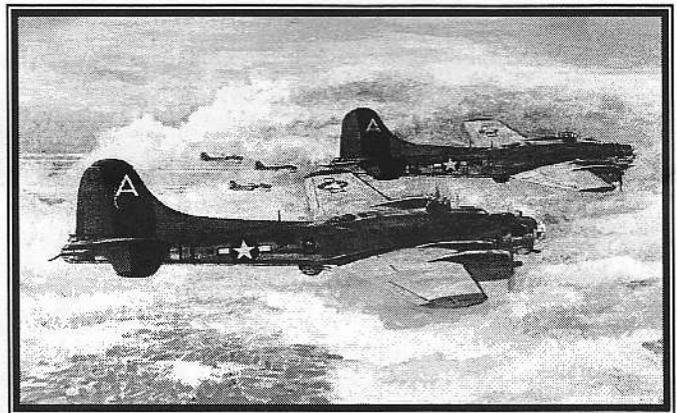


Mr. & Mrs. Ray Bowden

### NEW BOOK - HOW YOU CAN HELP

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who flew on any of the 8AF daylight missions to Merseburg Leuna, or who has information, photos, diary notes, official records or documents relating to any of those raids. Forced labourers and POWs were put to work at the plant and were on the receiving end of those devastating raids -- their perspective is also sought, as are the recollections of any of the defenders, both fighter pilots and flak gunners. Please contact Ray Bowden at:

**USAAF Nose Art Research Project**  
 98 West Bay Road, Bridport, Dorset DT6  
 4AX, England



#### **"Plane Names & Fancy Noses"**

A limited edition of 1000 copies of a fine art print of the cover painting has been prepared and is available from the publishers. Individually signed and numbered, this beautiful full colour print measures 11 x 17 ½ inches and portrays two Fortresses of the 91<sup>st</sup> BG flying on Mission 183 to Berlin, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1944. Depicted in the painting is one of the group's most famous B-17's "General Ike" accompanied by "The Peacemaker". Each print comes with a numbered authentication certificate complete with historical details relating to the mission and the B-17's depicted.

The following story is the property of the author and may not be reproduced without the author's consent.

## A TALE OF 2 DAUGHTERS

Written by Paul Limm

Psychologists have a term, "need," usually divided into primary need and secondary, or social, need. The latter is flexible enough to describe almost all psychological and emotional requisites. Included are the "need" to remember departed loved ones and the "need" to seek or know our roots.

Three years ago (2001), Mrs. Brooks Rhinehart wrote a letter to Bob Friedman, then- President of our association, seeking information about her father, Lt. Glenn U. . Brooks, a pilot in the 92nd Bomb Group, who, with his crew, was training for combat with the 91st Bomb Group. This poignant letter mentioned that she was born on the very day that her father was missing in action, March 22, 1943. Her family's oral history also emphasized the fact that the instructor pilot of the B-17 on which her father was lost, Captain Haskell McClellan, 324th BS, 91<sup>st</sup> BG, had become a father of a daughter a few months prior to this fateful mission. Plaintively, Mrs. Rhinehart asked if anyone in the 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA remembered her father, and if there was any way she could contact Captain McClellan's daughter

The 91<sup>st</sup> BG was the premier bomb group in the Eighth Air Force, and with the 303rd, 305th, and 306th Bomb Groups, collectively known as the "Four Horsemen," carried the air war to the enemy in the desperate early months of 1943. The price of freedom has always been high, and the 91<sup>st</sup> BG suffered the highest aircraft losses in the Eighth Air Force. The group's gain, experience, and combat excellence, forged in battle, explain why it was chosen to train aircrews from other groups, including Lt Glenn Brooks' 92nd BG. This excellence continues even unto this day in the 91st BG. Mrs. Rhinehart had obtained President Bob Friedman's address from the award-winning 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Web Site, run by Jim and Suzi Shepherd. Dr Friedman then contacted Mike Banta, the Ring Master of the celebrated "Banta's Ring," which has about a hundred 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA members who engage in a continuous open forum on the internet, answering questions technical, military, and arcane, questions from all over the world" Poland the Netherlands, France, and Germany. The Ring is successful because it is able to call on many experts. When Mike posted Mrs. Rhinehart's letter on the Ring, Lowell Getz, Professor Emeritus, using his Holmesian techniques, honed in scientific research, scanned census data, Social Security information, even high school yearbooks and other open sources, and found Captain McClellan's daughter, now Mrs. Clarette Rook. Dr Getz took cautious, deliberate steps to introduce Mrs. Rhinehart to Mrs. Hook. He needed not have worried: the women were pleased with this bittersweet coda to a tragic event that happened more than half a century ago.

Philip Mack, then-Editor of the Ragged Irregular, wrote a sensitive, heart-warming story, "Tale of Two Daughters," describing the mission to Wilhelmshaven, German) the air battle, and the loss of the 324th "Liberty Belle" and her crew, including the fathers of infant girls. Phil Mack related in detail the search for Mrs. Hook, and how the magical contact was made. " A Tale of Two Daughters" deserves a greater audience, and may, one day, be in anthologies.

Ace Johnson, our Secretary-Treasurer, has long been an advocate of sending the Ragged Irregular to institutions and organizations as a public relations policy. One of the recipients is the American Military Cemetery in Madingley, Cambridge, England. Mr. Michael Heath, a staff member at the Cemetery, read the story of the "two daughters," and was so moved that he decided to send Mrs. Hook and Mrs. Rhinehart information that the Cemetery had about their fathers. Mr. Heath consulted Vince Hemmings, the 91<sup>st</sup> BGMA liaison with the Cemetery, who agreed warmly. Vince Hemmings was aware that whatever information the Cemetery had would be limited, usually name, rank, serial number, date of death, and grave location. Vince realized that to preserve the history of the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group airmen buried at Madingley, and listed on the Wall of the Missing, would require considerable research into 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group history. He decided to write a unique book

There are thirty-eight 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group members buried at Madingley, and on the Wall of the Missing are the names of one hundred and eleven 91<sup>st</sup> airmen. In his book, Vince has included photographs of all the gravestones, and every 91<sup>st</sup> name on the Wall of the Missing. From the Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs), Vince has described how each heroic battle was fought. He added the Eighth Air Force Mission Reports, which give the overall picture of the strategy of the combat mission. Vince even includes the names of the cherished, but doomed, aircraft that carried these warriors to battle; names that are saucy, defiant, and irreverent.

There is a "need" to remember our loved ones. There is a "need" to seek and know our roots. The 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association is, by definition, dedicated to remembering and honoring our fallen brothers; our Association has its roots in the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group. Thanks to the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Web Site, Banta's Ring, the Ragged Irregular, and now, Vince Hemming's book, "Members of the 91<sup>st</sup> BG (H) Who Are Buried or Listed On the Wall of the Missing at Madingley, Cambridge, England"; these "needs" or requisites, are more easily fulfilled, for us and for those who follow after us.

## FROM MIKE BANTA'S RING:

From Lowell Getz in answer to a question on the ring from relatives of Charles E. Reidy:

Below I am attaching an account of the final mission for Reidy, August 17, 1943. The main information was given me by the pilot the only Survivor, Eugene Cook, who died a year or so ago. This was taken from my story regarding the fate of the aircraft that flew with the Memphis Belle on her last mission. If you want to read all the stories in that collection, log onto:

<https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/184> and

<https://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/183>

For the Schweinfurt mission, "Frank's Nightmare" and five other 91<sup>st</sup> bombers were assigned to a Composite Group along with six, each, aircraft from the 351<sup>st</sup> and 381<sup>st</sup> Bomb Groups. "Frank's Nightmare" was No. 3 Lead Element of the Low Squadron led by 1/Lt William H. Wheeler in No. 069, "Our Gang." The Strike Force was subject to continuous fighter attacks from the time it crossed over the enemy coast. In addition, the bombers were hit by flak as they passed over anti-aircraft defense zones. "Frank's Nightmare" was hit by flak at Woenschrecht, Belgium, knocking out the No. 4 engine. An 88mm shell went up through the engine, not exploding until several hundred feet above the aircraft. But, it took out the engine as it passed through. Soon afterwards, a Me109 came in on "Frank's Nightmare", knocking out the No. 1 engine. Another 88mm shell came up through the fuselage directly behind the pilots' seat, exiting in front of the top turret position. It, too, exploded above the aircraft. This shell cut control cables as it passed through the bomber. Everything was out--no throttle control, no prop control, flight control surface cables gone, as were aileron, rudder and elevator controls. Lt. Cook set the autopilot, but that did no good. "Frank's Nightmare" was simply wallowing along in the sky. Just before the shell came up through the fuselage, a 20mm cannon shell had hit the top turret, wounding the gunner, T/Sgt. Charles E. Reidy, in the left hand. Lt. Eugene D. Cook sent him back to the radio room to get first aid. He had barely cleared the bomb bay when the shell came through the fuselage. Sgt. Reidy called up to the pilots to tell them he was OK. Unfortunately, the top turret mechanism was frozen in a position such that no one could get past it. During one of the fighter passes, the oxygen line to the ball turret was shot out. Because of all the fighter action, the other gunners could not leave their

positions to try to save the ball gunner, S/Sgt. Joseph D. Hall. He died from anoxia.

Lts.' Cook and Weieneth saw that they had no control. They were going down. Lt. Weieneth said to Lt Cook "Let's get out of here." Lt. Cook tried to contact the crew over the intercom, but it was out. He then tried to ring the bailout bell, but he could not tell if it was working. The pilots made their way to the nose compartment where the navigator, 2/Lt Clarence H. Blackmon, and the bombardier, 2/Lt William J. Warose, were standing by the closed nose hatch, shell-shocked from all the flak and fighter action. Lt Cook got down on his hands and knees and opened the escape hatch. He started to back up so as to drop through when someone put a foot in his back he was floating in the air about 5,000 feet from the ground with his chute open. "Frank's Nightmare" snapped upward out of the formation and half fell into a tight spin, the spin becoming tighter and tighter as she fell to the ground. No other chutes appeared from the falling aircraft. Lt Cook landed in shrubs next to a road with woods on the opposite side. He started to cross the road when two German soldiers on motorcycles stopped him. He put up his hands as they approached with pistols drawn. One asked if he were an American. When Lt Cook said, "Yes", the soldier shot him in the hip and abdomen, got on his cycle and took off. The other soldier came over to see if had a weapon and finding none, also drove away. Lt. Cook was left bleeding on the ground beside the road. Several civilians arrived and stood around looking at him, but did nothing for his wounds. A fire marshal in uniform drove up and told Lt. Cook he had to go to a fire, but would be back for him. He appeared about three hours later. Lt Cook was still lying beside the road. He was put on a stretcher and taken to a small village where he was paraded up and down the street with civilians spitting and throwing gravel on him.

Eventually the civilians put him in a dentist's office. Later a truck with five or six other wounded American flyers came by and picked up Lt. Cook. The first hospital they stopped at would not take the airmen. At another, a Catholic Sister came out and gave Lt. Cook, who was drifting in and out of consciousness, a pain killer shot. He passed out completely, awaking the next day in a hospital bed. None of the other nine crewmen on "Frank's Nightmare" survived.

**Folded Wings (continued)**

Below are two obits sent to us by Ed Gates, these are the last two of his crew – his Navigator and his Radio Operator.

★ **Lauri Kivimaki, 323<sup>rd</sup> Age 82**  
**Seattle WA, July 12, 2007**

"Kivi" was a wonderfully meticulous navigator - a nice attribute to have. He always had vectors plotted for home along the route to the target. Especially on the missions to Poland or eastern Germany his route maps would show vectors to Sweden seemingly every few miles; if you turned them upside down they looked like a porcupine from a Sweden-eye view.

I was honored to participate in Memorial Services for "Kivi." Gave me an opportunity to mention our visits to the village green at Bovingdon where we went for combat crew orientation prior to being assigned to Bassingbourn. Fond memories of watching the RAF "Spitfire" pilot trying to flip the wing of a V-1 buzz bomb to get it to crash in an open field. Also some thoughts on our effort to cement Anglo-American relations with the charming English girls who also enjoyed the village green. We kept in touch after the war while I was in Paris and he had a bout with TB, but he did a oneupmanship; while I was extolling the joys of Paris, "Kivi" bragged that one of his nurses was a lovely Finnish - yes, Finnish like himself - lady named Kertu whom he later married. Good times.

★ **Emil DeQuardo, 323<sup>rd</sup> Age 81**  
**Walkesha WI, August 14, 2007**

"Deke" was our contact with the outer world - our 19-year-old radio operator. That made him even younger than our Navigator, Lauri Kivimaki, or myself - both aged 20 when we arrived at Bassingbourn. Deke learned his trade extremely well and was always an asset to our crew. Recognition followed because "Deke" - the youngest - and our senior member, "Pop" Griswold, our flight engineer, were the first two to be selected as Tech Sgt. It was a joy to chat with "Deke" (Emil to his family) at Reunions and the holidays. Bon Voyage good friend. Hope we meet again.

★ **Robert Megchelsen, 322<sup>nd</sup>**  
**Washington IA, August 1, 2007**



As reported by Vince Hemmings He was a tail gunner of Lt. Low La Hood's crew fling Black Magic and Lassie Come Home and also on Captain William S. Burt's crew.

Robert had emphysema for several years which affected his energy level and since the first of

this year he became increasingly forgetful and confused and had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. We have know for the past 3-4 years that he had a very large aneurysm but was considered a poor surgical risk. We knew it could rupture and that is what happened.

He is survived by his wife, Lila and three children. In the photograph of the B-17 "Man O War" which had crashed landed on the airfield at RAF Bassingbourn, Robert is the gentleman on the far right.

★ **Long John Parsons, 401<sup>st</sup>, Age 92**  
**Washington DC, Sept. 27, 2007**

As reported by Whitmal & Jacque Hill John was born in Oakland CA on February 21, 1916. Following graduation from the University of California he was drafted into the US Army. Taking advise from a friend, he was able to resign from the Army and immediately re-enlist in the US Army Air Corp. He graduated Officers Candidate School as a 2/Lt. His first assignment was as the Adjutant to the 401<sup>st</sup> BS, 91<sup>st</sup> BG. As Squadron Adjutant, he became a top assistant to the 91<sup>st</sup> Group Commander, Col. Stanley T. Wray.

After the war, John remained in the Air Force and was transferred as Adjutant to the US Air Corps Air Weather Service unit in Paris. His next assignment was a tour of duty in NYC followed by duty in Korea during the Korean conflict. His last assignment was in the Office of the Inspector General, USAF, Pentagon from which he retired in 1962 but continued to work in that office as a civilian until he retired again in 1984. While in Korea he met and married Chung Oak.

His wife, their son Johnny and stepdaughter Chan Soon as well as a brother Robert and nephews Gary, Bob and Randy., survives him.

91<sup>st</sup> 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 91<sup>st</sup> 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

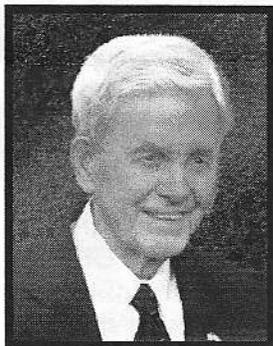
October 2007

## Folded Wings:

★ **John P. Bruce 323<sup>rd</sup> Age 85**

**Orlando FL, August 1, 2007**

As reported by his children and Eric Dominicus



It is with sadness that I inform you of the passing of our dear father. He suffered a massive stroke. In our hearts, we believe he was in no pain and passed on to the Lord's land in peace and tranquility.

Dad is finally back with our dear mother and all those

who went before him. To our friends in Holland, we believe he is also with his fallen crew members that so bravely lost their lives 64 years ago, in the village of Opijnen. We will continue a now family tradition of making our pilgrimage to Opijnen to celebrate those who gave their lives so willingly to help free them from oppression. As Dad always said, "Freedom is not free".

We would appreciate hearing from anyone who would like to contact us and share a story or two.

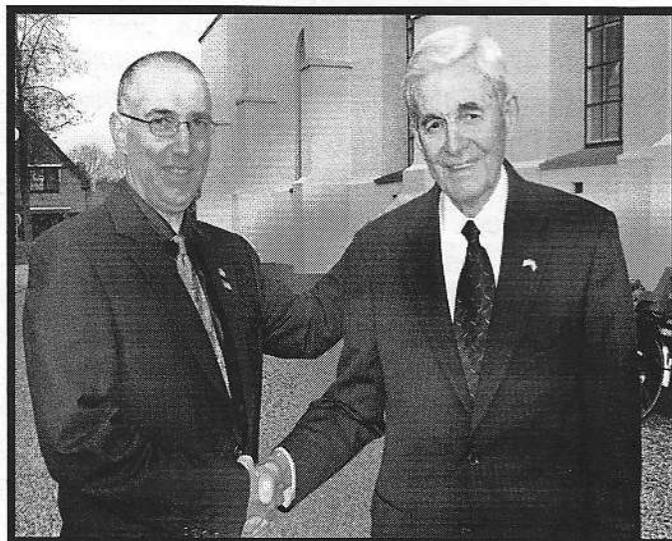
Cheri Nichol, [cbnichol@cfl.rr.com](mailto:cbnichol@cfl.rr.com); Kelly Bruce, [kellybruce@assist2sell.com](mailto:kellybruce@assist2sell.com) and Greg Bruce, [gregory.bruce@lmco.com](mailto:gregory.bruce@lmco.com).

Note: From Jake Howland to Cheri:

It is with deep sadness that I received the news of the passing of my friend, and colleague, John Bruce. I am so very thankful that he was able to attend the ceremonies in Holland honoring him and his crewmembers. I am also thankful that I have the CDs

and DVDs recording these events. As historian for the 91st Bomb Group I have forwarded these to many different libraries and museums in the United States and England including the Library of Congress, USA. Additional copies are available for you, your family and friends. Just let me know how many copies you want and I will forward them immediately.

John Bruce and his crewmembers are an important part of the history of this great country, and their deeds are recorded for historians to review in the centuries to come. I know these are difficult and sad times for you and your family, but please share with me the joy and pride I have experienced in my personal relationships with a great American, your father, John Bruce.



Eric Dominicus with John Bruce in Opijnen