

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd BS



323rd BS



Supporting Units



324th BS



401st BS

Vol. 44 No. 4

91st Bombardment Group (H)

October 2011



England – Keen eyes of Capt. Oscar O'Neill, skipper of *Invasion II*, peer out over the oxygen mask that high altitude combat forces every crew member to wear. O'Neill is the first man to see enemy aircraft getting "cocked" for a frontal attack. Over the intercom, through the sensitive mike around his neck he yells back to the rest of the crew: "Gunners alert! Focke-Wulfe 190 coming in high at 1:30...here we go..."

President's Corner**Jim Shepherd**

Soon it will be the 70th Anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the beginning of World War II. Less the one year after 7 December 1941, the 91st was assigned to the 8th Air Force and sent to England 12 September 1942. This was the beginning history of the 91st Bomb Group and the courageous young men that gave their life, were POW's, were in England for 2 1/2 years and the bomber crews that survived their assigned duties.

Each time I get a chance to talk to one of our veterans, I am also excited to be in their presence or on the phone. We should all listen to their stories and learn of their experiences. After 19 years of involvement with the 91st I have had the chance to talk to many of them and all have been complete gentlemen. My only regret is that I, like others, wish I had been involved sooner.

Planning has started on the 2012 Reunion and the election of new officers for the group. We have several new Full Members since the last election and I feel confident we will continue the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association for years to come. Members should talk to their children about getting involved and actually signing them up as full Life members.

For the first time, the program "SKYPE" was use for our quarterly board meeting conference call. Skype is a free call on the computer, so there is no charge to the association. Those in attendance were Mick Hanou, Jody Kelly, Chris and Amy Murphy from the Tower Museum and Christian Levauvre from France who has been very helpful. You can contact me on Skype, by checking your Skype setting or sending me an email in advance, giving me a time to be on the computer.

Memorial to 1st Lt Thomas Smith unveiled September 3rd

Submitted by Jean Francois Carbonnet



The town of Incarville, France dedicated a memorial to 1st Lt Thomas Smith of the 91st Bomb Group. Smith was piloting *Fifinella* when the plane was struck by flak over the target. With the plane on fire, Smith remained in formation for the bombing run and then circled Incarville allowing the crew to bail out. The memorial stone marks the site of *Fifinella's* crash which took Smith's life August 13, 1944.

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January R/I submissions need to be received by **December 15th**.

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Veeps Views

Mick Hanou

In July, I went to Duxford, England to help at the annual Flying Legends Air Show. My first stop was at the Cambridge Memorial to pay my respects and then on to the nearby Bassingbourn Memorial. At the Tower Museum I spoke with Chris Murphy and saw what a great job both the Murphys are doing with the museum (as many of you saw during the May Rally Round). The air show was "brilliant" as they say across the pond, being the best WWII vintage air show in Europe.

The great value of Air Shows, besides the entertainment of hundreds of thousands of people each year, is that they are the only opportunity to compare these vintage aircraft in their natural environment – FLYING! To attend a show where one can see a flying B-17 and then a Lancaster and be able to compare these two beautiful machines is a wonder to me. To see that B-17 escorted by two P-51 Mustangs in formation brings history alive 67 years later. Incredibly there were three ME-109s (Spanish version) flying together in formation, and then flying with gaggle of Spitfires. Being able to compare 7 Mustangs, a P-38, P-47, 8 Spitfires, Hurricane, 3 P-40s, 3 109s, Yaks, while they are flying, see their different characteristics, the way they turn, bank, or peel away, is not something a static museum can convey.

The other wonderful historical aspect of the show was that there was also a display of inter-war aircraft, reflecting the development from WW1 biplanes to the advanced machines of WWII. The Nieuport, Spad, and Fokker tri-plane represented the Great War. Such very rare types as the Demon, Gladiator, Hind, Fury, and Nimrod, showed the advances in technology in biplanes between the wars. Pre-WWII monoplane technology was represented by the Hawk, Morrain, P-40B, Lysander, Spitfire 1A, and Hurricane – the latter two actual veterans of the Battle of Britain.

Nor is it just fighters - commercial aircraft, converted to military use, such as the Dragon Rapide, Ju-52, C-47

Dakota, and UC-43 were there as were some trainer types. Naval aircraft included pre-war (Nimrod), a rare Swordfish torpedo bomber, 2 Corsairs, Hellcat, Bearcat, 3 Sea Fury and 3 Skyraiders. So one was able to view fighters, bombers, transports, and trainers and both land-based and carrier-based aircraft and compare them as they took to the air.

Unfortunately, Sunday was marred when during the last fly-bys ending the show, a Skyraider clipped the tail of a P-51 Mustang, which lost control and crashed in the fields. Fortunately, the pilot, Rob Davies, bailed out at ~250 feet and was unhurt. This was quite disconcerting and the flight home gave me pause to think about the dangers of my hobby. This was re-enforced when, in September, a P-51 Mustang lost control at the Reno air races and crashed, unfortunately this time near crowd line (exactly the spot I usually work security at shows), killing the pilot and 9 spectators and injuring scores more. I can only emphasize that, for us, safety is always FIRST at air shows. In 25 years of marshaling, running an air show, or volunteering as security at crowd line, we always focus on keeping propellers and people from close encounters. Plane crew maintain these aircraft as best they can, and pilots practice endlessly, have to be very qualified to fly formation, and take great care. However, humans being what we are, accidents do happen, sometimes tragically unfortunately.

But, in my opinion, that still needs to be balanced against the great amount of enjoyment and education that air shows bring to 100,000s of people around the world. In the sum of all my years at air shows, there has been far less risk to me than my current twice-weekly 4 hour commute on I-5 any week this past year. I hope generations to come can still enjoy and learn from these aircraft and that they continue to be a reminder of the sacrifices made generations ago to obtain/maintain freedom of those in Europe and elsewhere.



Duxford photos by Mick Hanou



Dear 91st BGMA Friends,

We are delighted to have been invited to make regular contributions to the "Ragged Irregular" newsletter and happy for this to be the first of many. We hope to bring you exciting news and updates from the **Tower Museum** regularly in the future.

As our 2011 season draws to a close (in October) this is the perfect time to reflect and tell you about the year we have had, which for me personally has to be one of the most memorable during my time with the Tower.



During the winter of 2010 - 2011 Chris, Ken and Tom undertook a number of refurbishment projects in the Tower, and through the cold nights, rain and snow, transformed some of the rooms inside our Tower from old and dated, to new, bright and clean. The Middle Room and the Cinema Room are now enjoyed and commented on by all our visitors.



We opened our doors for the first open day of the season on the 13 March, and each open day thereafter has seen an ever increasing and steady flow of visitors, which is a joy to us all.



In May, after many months of hard work and cross-Atlantic calls and emails with our dear friend Gary Hall, we welcomed the first visit from the BGMA since 2003 - it was without a doubt a **very happy occasion**.



And so on 29 May, a 10-day tour of the UK and France with our Bomb Group friends commenced. To commemorate and celebrate their return to Bassingbourn, our artist friend Steve Harper unveiled his specially commissioned painting "**Honouring the 91st**".



The 10-day tour consisted of the rededication of the Prop Memorial at Bassingbourn, attending the Memorial Day service at Maddingley, a visit to the USAF Base at Mildenhall, a memorial service at the 91BG memorial in Royston followed by lunch with the Town Mayor and a visit to the Old Bull Inn (a former "haunt" of BG crews) before we left for London; it was full on!



Our first evening in London was spent enjoying a wonderful river cruise dinner on a private boat sailing the River Thames – the evening could not have been more perfect.

A glorious English sunset lingered in the London skies as we all ate, drank and relished in the company of people who have become lifelong friends.

After a short stay in London, and a warm (but sad) farewell to our friends the "Murray Men" and the beautiful "Yavis" ladies, the party boarded our coach and headed for the seaside town of Portsmouth and a ferry to take us to Le Harve, France. The adventures started as soon as we arrived (in Portsmouth) with Chris taking some of the group to explore the old navy ships in port and a boat ride around the harbour ~ one boat ride is enough for me so I declined the invitation to join the others (ha ha ha) and sadly don't have any photos of that trip (but I'd love to see some if you have any you'd like to share)! It was a gloriously sunny day, everyone was in great spirits and we ended the afternoon with traditional fish and chips and - what was fast becoming the evening ritual - in a pub having a drink!!



The following morning we awoke (some of us slightly green) in Le Harve, France. Brian, our coach driver, negotiated the French roads with care and we all arrived safely in the small town of Paluel for the unveiling of the Cohen Crew Memorial. This part of the trip was especially significant for our fellow traveller and friend, Guy Bechtel and his daughter Kerri, who's Uncle (Guy's brother) had perished in a B17 close to the site of the Memorial. Our French hosts extended an amazingly warm welcome to us all



and laid on the most delicious lunch and afternoon canapés before we left for Normandy.

The journey from Paluel to Caen was lengthy, but as soon as the coach got underway Chris (the Museum's Director and Curator, and historian on the D-Day Beaches and Normandy campaign) began sharing his in-depth knowledge of places we would be visiting in Normandy and what had happened there during the Second World War. The few days spent in Normandy, under Chris's meticulously planned schedule, were amazing; we visited Omaha Beach, Utah Beach (where the US forces had come ashore on D-Day), Arromanches (where remnants from the famous Mulberry Harbour can still be seen), the Merville Battery, Pegasus Bridge, Ranville Cemetery (where most of the British Paratroopers who died during the very early hours of D-Day are laid) and many other places of significant and special interest. We all enjoyed fine food and sampled most of the hotel's bar supplies during our short stay in Normandy. All too soon our time in Normandy was over and a daytime ferry bought us back from Caen to Portsmouth.



I think I can speak for all of us at the Tower when I

say that when the coach delivered our BG friends to their hotel in London before their flight back to the States, we had heavy hearts, and I know I especially felt that I had met a group of strangers 10 days before, but was saying farewell to an extended family of people I will remain in touch with and close to for a very long time. We miss you!



Again, on behalf of us all at the Tower, I would like to say what a pleasure it was to work with Gary during the months leading up to the BG visit, and to say a massive thank you to him too for all his efforts, long hours and late nights in coordinating the Tour. We look forward to seeing all of our BG friends again soon and the next UK-bound "Rally Round"! Cheers Gary!

In the past few months since the BGMA visit, the small team here have taken on full responsibility for the Tower, relieving the MOD [UK Ministry of Defence] of their obligations, and are now embarking on a major international fundraising campaign, to raise the money needed to restore the Tower to its former war-time condition, as friends such as Don Murray and Mel Dart will remember.

The Control Tower and Museum here at Bassingbourn stand testament to a time when the fate of the free world hung in the balance, and stands as a memorial to honour those who were prepared to put their lives upon the alter of freedom to secure our way of life. The Museum is visited by people from all over the world who wish to pay their respects to those who gave so much, and visit a site well known for its war-time history. To this end, we hope that we can generate the support we will need in the coming months to raise the money needed to complete the project and fully restore the Tower to her former glory. If you would like to help and support us at this time, please do so via email (towermuseum.121@btinternet.com)

Over the summer months, we have welcomed a number of new members, and a volunteer member – Victoria – who will be integral to our restoration project, as she is a qualified Building Surveyor.

We have welcomed back veterans who have made the visit back to Bassingbourn and the UK and shared with us their memories and experiences of their “first” time here. In July, I stood on the airfield with a veteran who shed silent tears at the memories being here evoked in him, and I gave him a hug and felt him give to me more in that moment than I could ever possibly offer to him in return.

Next month we will be closing the doors of the Tower to the public for the winter, but before doing so we will be attending a two-day show to spread the word about the Tower and our plans for the future; we eagerly await the arrival of another veteran coming to visit us and a group of WWII vehicle owners and enthusiasts. And once our doors are closed, the behind-the-scenes work will really commence but that, I think, is another RI submission all together.

In closing, the BG visit to the UK has strengthened the friendship and connection between our organisations and long may that continue. Once again, our thanks to the BGMA officers for giving us the opportunity to “speak” with the BG through our submissions to the RI – we look forward to keeping you posted and would love to hear from any member of the BG should you wish to get in touch.

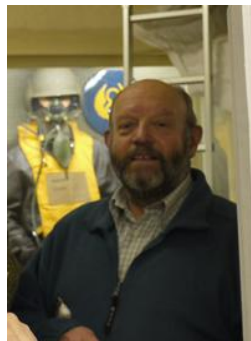
From a quiet corner of an English airfield, we send you our very best wishes,



Chris Murphy
Museum Director
& Curator



Amy Murphy
Company Secretary
& Webmaster



Ken Stapleton
Financial Director



Victoria Carter
Volunteer



Tom Gill
Honorary President

Written for and on behalf of the Tower Museum by Amy Murphy
(Company Secretary of the Tower Museum)

B17 44-6308 *Stinky* leaving Bassingbourn on another mission



U.S. SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ HONORS WWII VETERAN GEORGE CAMERON

Cameron presented with the NJ Distinguished Service Medal, the highest honor in the state

September 2nd, 2011-Menlo Park, NJ-Army Air Force Staff Sgt. George Cameron, who almost lost his life as a B-17 Ball Turret Gunner during one of 25 missions over Germany during World War II, was presented with the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal by U.S. Senator Robert Menendez. The medal is the highest military honor awarded by the State of New Jersey. Mr. Cameron, a native of Jersey City, was joined at the ceremony by his wife of 69 years, Muriel Cameron, as well as their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Also at the event was the Boy Scouts of America troop #110, who provided the color guard for the service.



Senator Robert Menendez (left) pins the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal on Army Air Force Staff Sgt. George Cameron for his heroism during WWII. The medal, which is the highest honor the state can bestow upon a member of the military, was presented to Mr. Cameron at a Ceremony at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home in Menlo Park, NJ on September 2, 2011.

"I'm here to honor one from our greatest generation for all that he has done for his country," said Senator Menendez. "We mustn't only [honor] our veterans at a Memorial Day ceremony, which we should, but every day to ensure that we provide the healthcare and the benefits that our men and women earned through their service. My office works closely with the G.I. Go Fund, who are among NJ's strongest advocates for our nations veterans, and we are all proud to work together to make days like this a success."

"It meant a lot to me to hear Senator Menendez's words; it was beautiful," said Mr. Cameron. "It was especially great to receive it here at the memorial home. This home does great work, taking care of me when I needed it most, and treating me and all of men and women who stay here with respect and honor. And

I was surprised when I was receiving this award to see so many veterans in the audience from so many American wars, which truly touched me. I felt like I was receiving this award on behalf of my entire *Pist'l Packin'* Crew and all those who have served this great country."

Staff Sgt. Cameron was assigned to the 324th Bombardment Squadron of the 91st Bomb Group (H) which was an air combat unit of the United States Army Air Forces during the Second World War. Classified as a heavy bombardment group, the 91st operated B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft and was known unofficially as "The Ragged Irregulars." The 91st Bomb Group is most noted as the unit in which the bomber *Memphis Belle* flew, and for having suffered the greatest number of losses of any heavy bomb group in World War II. The 91st Bomb Group conducted 340 bombing missions with the Eighth Air Force over Europe, operating out of Bassingbourn, England.

Cameron was 19 years old when he was the ball turret gunner of the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress nicknamed *The Pist'l Packin' Mama*. Flying over Germany and under heavy anti-aircraft fire, George Cameron found himself dangling in mid-air with only a harness protecting him from certain death. The aircraft suffered heavy damage; fire to the nose and right wing and damage to the left wing, but Cameron and the crew were able to land safely.



(From top-right to center) NJ Veterans Memorial Home CEO Joseph Brandspiegle, G.I. Go Fund Deputy Director Alexander Manis, G.I. Go Fund Executive Director Jack Fanous, and Senator Robert Menendez stand with the family of Army Air Force Staff Sgt. George Cameron after he was awarded the NJ Distinguished Service Medal, the state's highest military honor, for his heroism during WWII.

We Were Soldiers Once and Young

By Perry Giles. Originally printed in the Ellis County Press and Waxahachie Daily Light. Submitted by Chuck Dart. Author Perry Giles is raising funds for a WWII memorial in Ennis, Texas. To donate, please contact Perry by email: pdgiles@ectisp.net

We stand on the backs of their sacrifice. Their history is our tradition, as long as there are Americans to remember...

My name is Harry O. Green. I grew up on a small farm a few miles south of Zephyr, Texas. My parents, Robert and Beulah, raised three sons on that dry-land rocky farm. There was Bert the oldest, Joe Ray the youngest, and myself in the middle.

We raised cotton, corn, oats, and wheat whenever we had enough rain. Otherwise we depended on our cattle, chickens, and large vegetable garden to get through the tough times. We didn't have money, but I don't remember going without.

Each day my brothers and I walked two miles to the Beard Hill Schoolhouse. There were two teachers there, and I very much enjoyed going to school. My favorite pastimes were always reading and studying. My brothers said that I was the diligent thinker of the family.

After graduating high school at Zephyr, I went on to college in Brownwood where I worked a part-time job at the local soda fountain. Mostly I cleaned up, sold candy, and served as the soda jerk. A job is a job, I was proud to have it and it put me through college.

After graduating from Howard Payne University, I moved to Forreton to take a teaching job at the high school. There weren't many jobs available then and the teaching position suited me just fine. I taught mathematics and science, and made many new friends in the Forreton area.

There was this one girl in the area that I really liked. Maybe things will work out for us someday. Time will tell, no need to rush... And I really liked my new job. Life was good there.

But after the big shock on December 7th, 1941, I just didn't feel right teaching anymore. I truly felt as though I needed to do my part for the country. So I resigned my job during the Christmas break, said my farewells to the good people in Forreton and volunteered for the Army Air Corps.

I took my training at Randolph Field in San Antonio, and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, with a pay scale of \$1800 a year. I was assigned to a B-17 bomber group and sent to Gowen Air Field at Boise,

Idaho for more training. I really enjoyed the flying; there was just something inside me that wanted to reach for the skies.



On 24 August 1942 we received orders to deploy overseas. We flew our planes in pairs, making many stops on our way to Dow Army Air Force Base in Maine. We got all set to cross the North Atlantic flying in squadrons and in late September, we flew from Maine to Gandor, Newfoundland. From there we took off on the North Ferry Route flying nonstop to Scotland.

As we approached the Irish coast, there was a heavy fog and one of the planes in our squadron crashed onto a hillside. Finally arriving at Prestwick, Scotland, we settled down for a few days rest. It had been quite an adventure crossing the Atlantic, sobering and costly, as we found out

that eight crewmembers and a flight surgeon had been killed in that crash.

On October the 6th we flew south to a new airfield, RAF Kimbolton, at Huntingdonshire, England. It was a wartime construction and was definitely not a Class A airfield. After about three days of practice missions, it was determined that these runways were not suitable for our heavy bombers. Our commanding officer, Colonel Wray, decided to move our group to a better airfield in Bassingbourn, which was a few miles northeast of London. He did this without permission and it made him truly popular with the men.

Bassingbourn was an old Royal Air Force base that the RAF had vacated and made available for us. It had permanent buildings and was a nice base, all things considered. We were surrounded on all sides by country farms, which they farmed right up to the edge of the runways. We were now set up at our first assignment. It was October 11, 1942.

Sometimes we were bombed at night. We watched the Germans come over on their bombing runs. We could see the anti-aircraft searchlights fix on a German plane and the anti-aircraft batteries would blast away. But they rarely hit anything.

I was with the 401st Bomber Squadron of the 91st Bomber Group, part of the 8th Air Force. The "Mighty 8th Air Force", as we called it. They promoted me to 1st Lieutenant with a pay scale of \$2000 a year.

We flew in bomber number 41-24447. The name of our plane was the "Kickapoo". Our pilot was Captain Johnny Swain from Colorado. There was Ralston the navigator, Cassius the bombardier, Wally the engineer and top turret gunner, Everett the radio operator, Artie the ball turret gunner, Bobby and Gregg the waist gunners, Herbie the tail gunner, and myself the co-pilot.

We were one of the first four groups of B-17s sent to England and one of our jobs was to help create doctrine and tactics as we pioneered the concept of strategic bombing by daylight, something that the British said couldn't be done.

We began combat operations in November of 1942, and we experimented with a variety of flying formations that would give us the maximum protection against the enemy fighters. For the first few months we concentrated on the German U-boat pens in French ports, and then the U-boat construction yards in Germany.

On any day there was a mission; those crews that were flying that day were roused from sleep at about 3:00 a.m. We would go to the mess hall for breakfast, but nervous stomachs interfered with many an appetite. After some coffee and toast, we reported to the squadron operations office to dress in our flight suits.

From there, we would go the group briefing to get the mission overview. After that, there were individual briefings for pilots, navigators, bombardiers, gunners, and radiomen. Then finally we were trucked from the barracks area to our airplanes. The tension was heavy on us, but nobody wanted to show it.

It was early in the war, and once we crossed over the Channel, we had no fighter protection. When those German fighter planes spotted us, they would turn and barrel roll right through our formation, blasting away at us with each pass.

Usually they came at us from the front and we would call them out for our gunners. But as strange as it sounds for me to say, watching those German fighters in action was a thing of beauty. Those Jerry's were very brave and they were very good.

A mission might have a flight time ranging from six to twelve hours. The noise, the fatigue, the cold, and the terror of aerial combat, it all mounted up on us. The strain was just tremendous and it sapped more out of me than I realized.

We were in a lot of rough fighting in those early days of the war. Many of our planes came back shredded with bullet holes and flak damage; full of wounded and dead crewmembers, men with frostbite, men with a leg blown off, men with steel splinters all in their face. Just about every medical horror you can imagine, some of it worse than I care to describe.

After these missions, I found myself to be a bit wobbly-kneed when I first stepped back on solid earth. The urge was there to get down and kiss the ground, but I abstained from doing such a thing in front of the men. By this point in my war, I just knew that every mission flown was one step closer to home.

Our 91st Bomb Group was dubbed "The Ragged Irregulars" because we were often shot up so badly, many times we could not put a full group into combat. Often times, we had to fill in with other units to make up a full bombing formation. Our ground crews were constantly patching holes, replacing propellers, replacing engines, tail sections and wings, many times working tirelessly around the clock. We would have never made it into the air without those guys.

Many days were spent flying practice missions and going to ground school training classes. The gunners spent a lot of time out at the gunnery range shooting skeet. And it wasn't at all unusual to get totally prepared for a mission and have it cancelled on us just before takeoff. That was something that really hurt the morale of the men.

When we had a liberty, Cambridge was one of our favorite places to go. Many of the officers and men made friends with the families there, and looked forward from week to week for their day off when they were able to ride over to Cambridge and escape this war to enjoy a little civilian leisure.

February 16th was a typical mission for us. Our target was the U-boat base at St. Nazaire, France. Our combat wing put 51 bombers over the target that day and we all carried five 1000-pound bombs. Our altitude at target was 24,000 feet. There was intense flak over the target, but our bomb pattern was good and concentrated, with many bombs hitting on target.

After the bomb run, at least fifty enemy fighters attacked us, like hungry dogs on prey. Our gunners worked furiously to keep them off of us, firing burst after burst. There was so much firing and brass shell casings flying around inside the plane that you couldn't hear. They attacked us at all angles and pressed home their attacks, flying through our formation again and again. I looked one German pilot right in the face as he passed just by our cockpit, and I tell you he had blue eyes.

Our combat wing shot down six enemy fighters that day, but also lost six of our fortresses. That was 60 of our boys lost on this one mission. My group made it back unscathed, we were the lucky ones today... That was mission No. 16 for me.

All the guys tried their best to put on a brave front. Nobody wanted to be the one to let down the crew. Everyone wants to do their part, but every time we took off on a mission, we knew the score. On just about every mission some of our planes didn't make it back.

Truthfully, our chances of surviving twenty-five missions seemed hopeless, but we just did the best we could. Sometimes I wondered if the folks back home knew what we were going through.

It was just sickening to watch your buddies shot down, one after another. At night in the barracks, it was hard enough to sleep with all the worries and stress. I would lay awake and listen to the nightmares of the other airmen. Some would scream out, and brave men sometimes cried in their sleep... Just nine more missions and I'm done with this.

On Thursday the 25th, we got up early and made all preparations for a mission to attack the marshaling yards at Abbeville, but the plan was changed at the last minute. Now, we were to bomb a commerce raider that had been spotted at Dunkirk. This delayed our take-off time by hours, as our ordinance had to be unloading and changed out for different size bombs. Plus all of our briefings and mission plans had to be undone and started over again from scratch.

Finally after all this exertion, we proceeded to our aircraft, started the engines and warmed them up, ready to taxi to the end of the runway, and then the order came down that the entire mission was cancelled. This would have been a milk run for us, and after all this, we were cancelled. No mission today after being all keyed up and focused for one. Our disappointment was very keen, and needless to say, the ground school classes received very little attention for the rest of the day. Such was the way our days went... We were totally frustrated and upset.

Late that afternoon we all gathered together in the gymnasium for a special memorial service. A Catholic chaplain led it, and there was a huge overflow crowd on hand, over 700 present I figured. The service, which began at 1730 hours, was in memory of all our personnel of the group that had been killed or who were missing in action... We needed that. It helped me a lot. I think it helped us all.

The next morning, they woke us at 0230 for another mission. After a very quick breakfast there was a briefing at 0315 hours. Today's target was the naval construction yards at Bremen, with the port of Wilhelmshaven as the alternate target. Our bomb load was ten 500-pounders and we were to bomb today at 25,000 feet. We were at our stations by 0730 ready to go. It was cold and breezy. We taxied to the end of the runway and waited for the flair signal, and then we were rolling and airborne by 0800 hours. The weather was clear, the crew was in good spirits, and from all indications it would be a routine mission... It was the 26th of February. This would be my 17th.

Flying east toward Germany over the North Sea, the lead navigator had miscalculated the wind speed, and the strong winds blew us off course. Our group passed right over the German anti-aircraft positions on the Frisian Islands. Several aircraft took flak damage from this mistake, one fortress had to turn back, but we continued on. As we approached Bremen, it was decided to abort the primary target due to the weather, and we turned north toward the naval yards at Wilhelmshaven.

As we approached the target, nerves tensed up, you could see the flak exploding in black puffs just ahead, but we flew right straight into it. The plane jolted and bounced about, but we flew on, following our leader as best we could... Just eight more and I'm done with this.

Our bomb run was fairly good with a heavy pattern on the Reich docks and U-boat lairs. After "Bombs Away" there was a sense of relief, but our work was not over, now we were flying for ourselves. The flak was rather intense but nothing we hadn't lived through before. But once clear of the flak, we were hounded by six twin-engine JU88's and about twenty-four FW190 fighters. They followed us out over the North Sea and the chase was on.

We gave it full throttle and turned for England. Our gunners were firing away, short burst after short burst, lots of frantic chatter on the intercom, and then I heard it... Gunfire tearing through our wing! I shouted to Johnny, "Our No. 4 engine is on fire! The flaps are all shot up! We are losing fuel and losing it fast!"

It was very clear to us that we weren't going to make it back to England. So we turned the plane back and tried to make a run for some dry land, any land. I turned around and took one last look at our group as they flew away from us over the sea.

It was a Friday, and I was 23 years old.

They never found us. My name is on the Tablets of the Missing at the American Cemetery in Cambridge, England.

We were Airmen once, and young... Remember us, all ten of us.

**On several missions flown by the crew of the "Kickapoo", including their last mission, they were accompanied in wing formation by the 324th Bomb Squadron and the crew of Captain Robert K. Morgan flying in the "Memphis Belle". Just a couple of months after Lt. Harry Green and crew were lost; the "Memphis Belle" completed its 25th mission on May 17, 1943 and returned to the states to a triumphant welcome.*



323rd veteran Chuck Corson with *Nine-O-Nine* in Cape May, NJ. Chuck flew the original *Nine-O-Nine* on March 28, 1945.

Wings of Freedom Tour

The Collings Foundation is wrapping up their 2011 tour. For information, call 978-562-9182 or visit them on the web at www.collingsfoundation.org.

- 10/17 – 10/19 White Plains, NY
Westchester County Airport
- 10/19 – 10/21 Cape May, NJ
Cape May County Airport
- 10/21 – 10/24 Belmar, NJ
Monmouth Executive Airport

91st BGMA Donations

Verne and Onie Woods	500
Chevron	250
Donation match for Mick Hanou	
Roberta & Ed Teitelbaum	20
In memory of Armando Sinibaldo	



Our symbol standing guard at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis. Photo by Frank Glick as it appeared in the Minneapolis StarTribune 2011.

Folded Wings (continued from page 12)

✪ **Chester P Lawless 323rd Age 69**

Picayune, MS, January 24, 1993



Reported by his daughter Linda
A native of Birmingham, AL, Chester served with the 91st Bomb Group as a gunner and assistant radio operator. His crew was shot down near Rotterdam, Holland on July 30, 1943.

He is survived by his wife Sue; daughter Linda Malone; and one grandson.

✪ **Jack S Gaffney 401st Age 92**

Palm Desert, CA, July 17, 2011



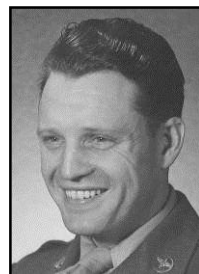
Reported by his son Jeff
Jack was born October 16, 1918 in East Aurora, NY. Early in his life, his family moved to Southern California. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941 and became a Crew Chief in the 91st Bomb Group. Reaching the rank of Master Sergeant, Jack was awarded the Bronze Star, and gained notoriety as a "Nose Artist" who painted the

B-17's with unique artwork. A true "Renaissance Man", Jack was also an artist and an entertainer. He sang and danced professionally during Vaudeville and during Army Air Corps entertaining the 91st in "Red Hot and Blue". After the war he continued his art work in water color and his specialty, scratchboard art, a difficult and demanding medium. Jack also wrote a number of contributions for the 91st web page and was very active member who will be missed.

Jack is survived by his two sons and their wives, Dr. Jeff Gaffney and Dr. Nancy Marley and Jon Gaffney and Dr. Dianne Gaffney. He is also survived by five grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

✪ **Olon K Leathers 323rd Age 95**

Tucson, AZ, August 8, 2011



Reported by his grandson Kevin
Olon proudly served 30 years in the Army Air Corp and the United States Air Force. He was a veteran of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam.

Olon was preceded in death by his wife, Donelda (Biddle) Leathers and his son, William Olon Brady. He is survived by his daughter-in-law, Katherine Brady; stepdaughter, Victoria Pangotacos; three grandchildren, Lori Kuhns, Cynthia Peterson and Kevin Brady and three great-grandchildren.

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR is published quarterly in January, April, July and October. The purpose of the newsletter 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 Gary Hall

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Folded Wings:

✪ **Charles S Hudson 401st Age 95**

Niles, MI, August, 20, 2011



Reported by his son Steve

Lt. Col. Charles S. Hudson, (Ret.), born on Sept 4, 1915, in Taft, CA, passed away two weeks short of his 96th birthday.

Charlie flew 37 missions during two tours in WWII and became the most highly decorated bombardier in the European Theater. He earned 17 medals, including the Distinguished Service Cross; the Distinguished Flying Cross with three Oak Leaf Clusters; and the Air Medal with two clusters. He retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel unheard of for a bombardier. His experiences are well documented in the book he wrote called "Combat He Wrote".

He was preceded in death by his wife Mary (Sims) Hudson, and his son Terry Hudson. He is survived by his son Stephen (Noreen Tripp) Hudson, daughter-in-law Sherry Hudson, 6 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

✪ **Paul D Jessop 322nd Age 90**

Indian Harbour Beach, FL, September 5, 2011



Reported by crewmember Larry O'Neill

Colonel Paul D. Jessop, (Ret.), served his country for more than 30 years in the United States Air Force. Paul was born on February 25, 1921 in Castlewood, PA. He entered the service in 1942 and retired in 1973. He served in England during World War II, Japan during the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam War.

He was a decorated pilot and communications expert. Paul married Mary Jo Bryson on November 7, 1946. Mary Jo passed away in July of 2000.

Colonel Jessop is survived by his loving children: Michelle (Jim) Morrow; and Michael (Maria) Jessop. He is also survived by his beloved sisters: Naomi McCoy and Eleanor (William) Orr. Paul has two wonderful grandchildren and one great-grandchild.