

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd BS



323rd BS



Supporting Units



324th BS



401st BS

Vol. 48 No. 4

91st Bombardment Group (H)

October 2015

Eighth Air Force Reunion – October 14 - 18, 2015 – Omaha, NE



The 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association held a Rally Round at the 2015 Eighth Air Force Historical Society Reunion in Omaha, NE. Veterans Ed Jackman and Don Freer [photo left] attended with 18 other 91st BGMA representatives.

The reunion was well attended by the many bomb groups within the Eighth Air Force. There were even a few little friends who showed up. Several excursions and events were available throughout the week, culminating with a Saturday night banquet.

The 91st Bomb Group maintained a hospitality suite for the event, but we also mingled with other groups. As usual, we were able to see old friends as well as make a few new ones. We even had a few familiar internet friends show up and meet face to face.

See pages 8 – 10 for more Rally Round photos.

President's Corner**Mick Hanou**

The 91st BGMA was warmly welcomed to the 8th Air Force Reunion in Omaha in October. They were pleased that we attended and have invited us back for their 2016 St Louis reunion. However, I advised them that, per our by-laws, our 2016 Reunion has to be in the East. The 91st BGMA Reunion will be in Charleston, SC sometime between September 21 and October 15, 2016. The reason for the month-long window is that I don't know hotel room availability and rates. In order to give me an idea of where to start negotiating the contract, I need your help – just as I did for the 2014 Reunion, which helped make it a success with a great hotel rate!

PLEASE email mhanou@comcast.net if you plan, hope, or may attend and how many rooms/people you may have. This isn't firm but it'll help me get started. I need this information as soon as possible.

Construction of the display for the 91st Bomb Group at Chino Planes of Fame has been started. They are making the back hanger wall look like the interior of the Bassingbourn hanger and hopefully will have some of the "hanger art" you provided on display. The cases will hold Memorabilia and tell your story. I am aware of two significant donations this past year. The family of Phil Mack (pilot) has donated fleece-lined flying pants and boots, a sheepskin-lined "Polar Parka", a flying jacket, Survival kit, and maps. We intend for this to go into a display on flying at altitude. Frank LaBlotier (ground crew, armorer) and his widow have provided his uniform and medals, numerous manuals on various gun types, a footlocker, flying helmet and goggles, and various commendations he pulled off the bulletin boards while at Bassingbourn. We hope these displays will be completed by next year's April show.

Update on the Tower "Operation Restoration" – As mentioned in previous RIs the Tower is in need of some significant repair (the collections are safe). The Board intends to utilize crowdfunding to affect this and will be working closely with Chris and Amy Murphy (curators) to achieve the goal – a rather significant amount! Though I have gotten few responses from veterans, many of the NextGen and Kayla Boye (Freer) have stepped forward to assist us in this effort. Feedback and assistance is welcomed; any other volunteers or ideas?

And a small request from the 8th Air Force Historical Society – if any of you have received the Legion of Merit from France would you please let me know when you got it. The 8th Air Force Historical Society is compiling a list of recipients. I laid out a number of applications at the 2014 Reunion and we published the application in the Ragged Irregular. I know Jake Howland got his in November 2014. If any of you are having difficulties, the 8th Air Force Historical Society would be glad to assist you through the process.

Last, but not least, I wish you a good Holiday Season and Best Health in the coming year.

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Please send Folded Wings information to Jody Kelly.

January Ragged Irregular submissions must be received by **December 15th**.

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91st on the Web

www.91stbombgroup.com
www.facebook.com/groups/91stBGMA

Bassingbourn Prop Memorial

David Crow, Friends of the 91st, has been working with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to alleviate any issues with visitors to Bassingbourn. Restrictions imposed during the training of Libyan soldiers are still in place, and there is no way around them as it is a military base

Visitors to the Prop Memorial are allowed at the front of the Memorial and are not allowed to wander around the site. The security guards are fully aware of this restriction and will impose these at all times.

Photographs may only be taken between the hours of 0900 - 1700, Monday to Friday. Photographs during the weekend, must be prearranged with David Crow, Peter Worthy, Ray Leach, or Malcolm Osborn and one of them must accompany you at all times. Photographs are only authorised for the Prop Memorial site.

Where Have All The Flowers Gone?

After WWII ended, our government built American Military Cemeteries in foreign countries where hundreds of thousands of our fallen soldiers are buried. Back then, a floral program was setup through the American Battle Monuments Commission, (ABMC) making it easy for American families to order flowers in remembrance of their loved ones. Family members could simply fill-in a form and mail it with payment.

What many Americans don't realize is in October of this year the ABMC dropped the floral program. It is affecting war orphans and other family members, who want to continue honoring their fallen with flowers--as this is all they have. The reasons given for dropping this program is that when they started it there was no internet; and they want to re-appropriate the funds to collect the stories of our fallen soldiers, enhancing the cemeteries for all, who visit them.

If our government can budget to build our cemeteries, why can't they do the same for the new program they have started, making a permanent record of our soldier's stories? Just how much money do they feel it costs to email a requested floral form, and process it? Why does a new program have to be put on the backs of war orphans and other family members, who are comforted by being able to easily place flowers on the graves of their soldiers buried overseas?

It shouldn't be about taking something away; instead it should be about giving back. Although the stories serve as an important documentation of our soldiers, I can't help but wonder if our fallen could speak what would be more important to them, their children or the stories of war?

When ordering floral arrangements for overseas, the floral selections are very limited; and there are additional fees added to the order. When a loved one is buried in a country where the people do not speak English, as I experienced with Luxembourg this year, it is frustrating and impossible to place a direct order. I designed a wreath for my dad's grave, and after four months of struggle and the help of several people, I finally made a connection with a resident of Luxembourg, who was able to help me with a simple floral wreath. I brought the banner and ribbons with me to Luxembourg, and was able to finish the embellishments at the florist's shop the morning of the Memorial Day Ceremony at the cemetery. A florist anywhere in the world could have done a white wreath with red roses however; the language barrier was a major problem. Also, I ordered a red, white, and blue arrangement for the Tail Gunner in dad's crew, as he has no family left and I wanted to honor and remember him as well.

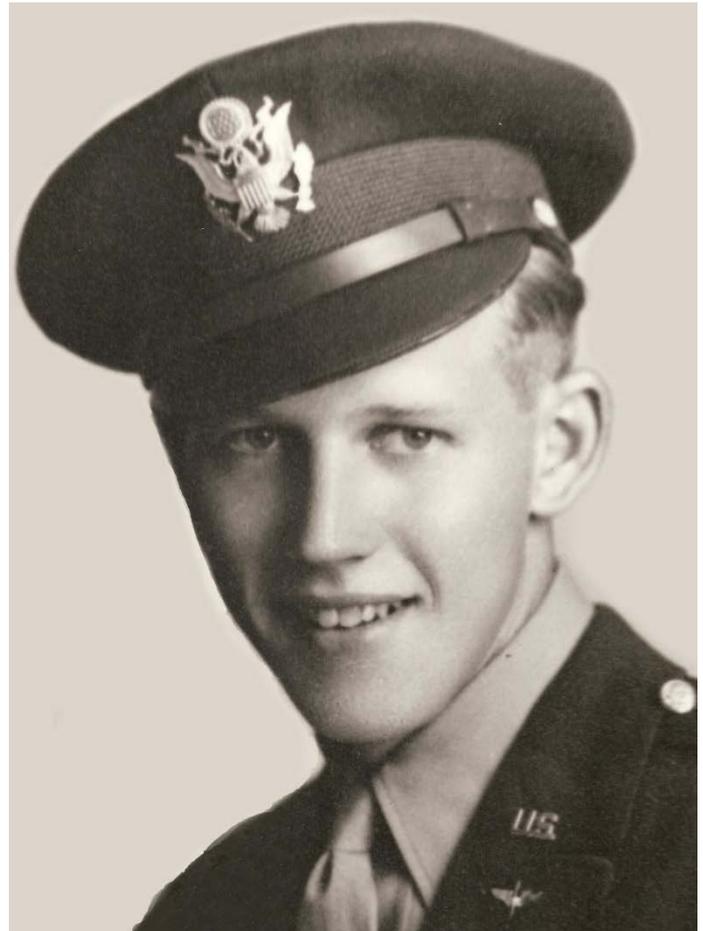
Many war orphans, to say the least, are greatly disappointed in the decision to discontinue the floral

program. A good number of us have written to the American Battle Monuments Commission, our Congressmen, Senators, State Representatives, and even The White House and not received any reply.

Our soldiers went through hell serving our country, and defending the rights of all men. The freedoms we experience today didn't just happen, and the hundreds of thousands buried in our military cemeteries are a testament to this. Those of you, who lived through war are our heroes too, and deserve to be honored. Today it came to my attention that you, our veterans (those, who fought and lived) might not know about the closing of the floral program. You fought alongside those, who cover the countryside in white crosses both here in America and in lands across the sea. How is it that we as a nation want to do away with what should be a privilege, honor, and an ongoing act of thanks to our American Soldiers and their families? It is my hope that you have something to say about this and will speak-out about it.

Fighting for the right,

Marilynn Rustand Lieurance, Proud daughter of
1st Lt. Hanford "Rusty" James Rustand
8th AAF, 91st BG, 323rd Squadron
KIA 2 November 1944, Libehna, Germany



Restoring The *Memphis Belle*: A 2015 Update

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Memphis Belle Undergoing Restoration, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, USA, July, 2015

In July, 2015, I visited Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio for an update on the painstaking process of restoring the iconic World War II heavy bomber *Memphis Belle* to its appearance, almost three-quarters of a century ago, when it became the first American bomber to complete 25 missions over occupied Europe and return with its crew to the United States.

As I explained in an earlier essay, I have a personal interest in this particular aircraft: my father, Eugene Kern (1914-2010), narrated a 1944 documentary about the airplane and its crew by the acclaimed Hollywood director William Wyler. The motion picture, titled *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*, is considered a classic of its genre. It was shown in theaters throughout the United States, and provided an important boost to public morale at a time when the war wasn't going well in either Europe or Asia for the United States and its allies.

In the six years since my previous visit, the restoration staff of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force completed most of the work on the airframe. The four massive radial engines have been overhauled and reinstalled on the wings, their propellers still unmounted but resting on platforms nearby, and the wings have been reattached to the fuselage. The airplane is now supported by its landing gear, and is positioned much as it would have been in 1943 when it was sitting on a hardstand at its wartime base in England. The B-17 was a "tail-dragger"—the main landing gear held up the wings and a small tail wheel kept the back of the airplane just barely off the ground, pitching the nose up at a rakish angle.

The restorers still have considerable work to do on the interior. The airplane was stripped of many of its flight instruments and other removable parts by souvenir hunters and vandals in the years before the Air Force reacquired possession of it in 2005. Research is required to identify these missing components—a process complicated by the repeated modifications made to wartime bombers before, during and after their period of combat service - and contemporaneous substitutes need to be acquired or, when necessary, visually-identical facsimiles manufactured.



Bomb Bay, Looking Toward Flight Deck

Jeff Duford, the curator of the Air Force Museum, described to me the fastidious efforts by the museum's

research and restoration staff to ensure the historical authenticity of the aircraft. The *Belle's* wartime maintenance logs somehow survived, and have been closely scrutinized to identify every repair of combat damage and field modification made while it was flying missions over Europe. The museum staff also has reviewed the intelligence debriefings of the *Belle's* aircrew that followed each mission, as well as other available contemporaneous records that might shed light on its precise configuration during the eight months it was based in England. Modifications made following its return to the United States are being identified and backed out. To the extent possible, the airplane that eventually is installed in one of the museum's exhibition galleries will exactly match the airplane that returned from its 25th combat mission

over Kiel, Germany, on May 19, 1943. (This attention to detail is not unique to the *Memphis Belle*; all the other artifacts on display at the museum that require restoration receive similar treatment).

Robert Hanson, the radio operator of the *Memphis Belle* and the last survivor of the ten crewmen who returned to the United States in 1943 after completing 25 missions, died in October, 2005, the same month the *Belle* arrived at the Air Force museum to begin its restoration. But the restored airplane will serve as a durable reminder of the many young men - hardly adults, really - who risked and often lost their lives almost 75 years ago in the hostile skies over Europe.

View Slideshow: www.chriskern.net/belle2015/



Central Control Panel [above] Inauthentic Nose Art from Earlier Restoration Effort [below]



Memphis Belle™ pilot's instrument panel donated to NMUSAF

By Sarah Swan, National Museum of the U.S. Air Force / Published September 25, 2015

DAYTON, Ohio -- Officials from the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force donated the pilot's instrument panel from the Boeing B-17F *Memphis Belle* to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force during a ceremony today.



Memphis Belle and the pilot's instrument panel. (USAF photo)

The *Memphis Belle* is one of the most famous aircraft in World War II history. In May 1943 it became the first U.S. Army Air Forces heavy bomber to complete 25 missions over Europe and return to the United States.

Several decades later in October 2005, the historic aircraft arrived at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, near Dayton, Ohio, where staff began a careful, multi-year conservation and restoration effort – including corrosion treatment, the full outfitting of missing equipment and accurate markings – to bring the aircraft back to pristine condition.

One of those missing parts was the pilot's instrument panel, which was in the possession of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Ga. During today's program in the Air Force museum's restoration hangar, Henry Skipper, president/CEO of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force, said his museum is happy to assist in the restoration of the historic aircraft.

"It's not every day you get to help piece together such a large part of World War II history," Skipper said. "The *Memphis Belle* and her crew were the first bomber and crew to complete their missions and return to the U.S., and we're very honored to be a part of making this famous airplane whole again."

Roger Deere, chief of the Restoration Division at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, is excited to install the missing piece into the full instrument panel.

"The museum's restoration crews have been working long and hard to see that the *Memphis Belle* is restored as a national icon," Deere said. "We've been working on the Belle for nearly 10 years, and every step brings us closer to getting it on display where all of our visitors can see the aircraft."

Current plans call for the aircraft to go on display in the museum's World War II Gallery in May 2018. Once on display, the *Memphis Belle* will join one of the world's best collections of aircraft and memorabilia from the World War II era.

This comprehensive restoration process is fitting for this storied aircraft. Pilot Robert Morgan named the aircraft after his wartime girlfriend, Margaret Polk, of Memphis, Tenn. Morgan chose the artwork from a 1941 George Petty illustration in *Esquire* magazine.

The crew and the aircraft beat the odds by completing 25 combat missions, and upon their return to the United States in June 1943, they flew the aircraft across the country on a three-month war bond and morale boosting tour. With the bond tour and the 1944 William Wyler documentary film titled *The Memphis Belle* -- depicting actual combat footage -- the aircraft and its crew became widely known and celebrated. In 1990 a major motion picture of the same name added to their fame.

"The *Memphis Belle* became a national icon, and its crew represented the thousands of Army Air Forces Airmen who were taking the war to the enemy in Europe," said Jeff Duford, a curator at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. "There is enormous significance having the *Memphis Belle* at the Air Force's national museum -- it gives our visitors a better understanding and appreciation of the service and sacrifice of our military members during World War II."

For more information, photos and videos of the *Memphis Belle*, visit tinyurl.com/bellerestoration.

Visitors can see the *Memphis Belle* as it undergoes restoration by participating in the museum's Behind the Scenes Tours, which are offered every Friday (some exceptions). More information and registration for those tours is available at tinyurl.com/nmusaftours.

The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, is the world's largest military aviation museum. With free admission and parking, the museum features more than 360 aerospace vehicles and missiles and thousands of artifacts amid more than 17 acres of indoor exhibit space. Each year about one million visitors from around the world come to the museum. For more information, visit www.nationalmuseum.af.mil.

Construction of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Wall is underway in Chino, CA



Jim Shepherd shared these pictures of the progress on the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Wall at the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Chino, CA. Display cases will soon be built to house 91st Bomb Group artifacts on loan to the museum. The wall will also feature pictures and paintings related to the 91st Bomb Group. Look for more pictures of the project in future issues of *The Ragged Irregular*.

Nearly \$2,500 in donations received by the 91st BGMA in the 3rd quarter of 2015!

In Memory of

Lt E G (Bud) McCabe (323rd)
Michael McCabe

Vernon Baird
Jerry and Grace Kilmer

James L Waymire
Christopher Waymire

John J Ondrovic (401st)
Kathleen Ondrovic

The crew of Pist'l Packin Mama
Capt. Charles Holman - pilot
S/Sgt George Cameron -ball turret
Mrs (Muriel) George Cameron Sr
George Cameron Jr

In Honor of

Bobbie Cohen on their 68th anniversary
Myron Cohen

Mrs Marian Breckenridge
Donald Freer

Thomas Guzek
Janice Haring
Roy Loyless
Arnold and Patricia Marabate
Mara Redden
Richard Senffner
James Sikich
Steve Smith
Morris Spielberg
Peter Van Bommel
Patrick Milward
US Bank

8th Air Force / 91st Rally Round Pictures



Ed Jackman, Wes Lundsberg, Don Freer, and Jeff Converse chatting in the 91st BG hospitality suite.



[back row] Kristen Boye, Susan Boye, Tom Freer, Mary Freer, Dean Seljie, Don Freer, Karl Boye, Kayla Boye, and Bonnie Selje. [front row] Mick Hanou, Gary Hall, and Rochelle Treziok.



Don Freer interviewed with the Strategic Air and Space Museum's B-70 in the background.



Mick Hanou, Don Freer, and Richard Barnes.



Bonnie Selje, Janet Larocco, and Dean Seljie.



[back row] Kent Stafford, Gary Hall, and Rochelle Treziok.
[front row] Frank Drake and Nellie Hubbard.



Kayla and Kristen Boye.



Ed and Dorothy Jackman.



Rochelle Treziok with Earl Wasson of the 466th BG.



Dean and Bonnie Selje



40st Squadron's Lonesome Polecat and Hairless Joe.



Bob Striegel.



Mick Hanou and Janet Larocco



[back row] Gary Hall with Tim Bivens from the Dyersburg Army Air Base Memorial Association. [front row] Frank Drake and Ed Jackman.



Rose Clark sent a picture of *The Careful Virgin* ground crew. Her father Sgt Earl Brooks (far right) was a mechanic and instrument specialist. Can anyone identify the other men in the photo? You can contact Rose via email: bizzygirl1212@gmail.com.

For The Veterans

By Rose Clark

I saw a proud sailor today
 I barely noticed his hair was all gray
 In his uniform he stood straight and tall
 His uniform of years past still fit and we smiled in awe
 In church the priest asked the veterans to stand
 In Humility, in pride they shook each other's hand
 A brotherhood no others could know
 We had not been where they had to go
 In my daily prayers I give Thanks
 I ask always to remember their sacrifice
 I cannot know, nor realize
 The understanding I saw in their eyes
 I know they feel blessed to have survived
 In their hearts they remember those no longer alive
 My eyes well up and tears overflow
 because of them
 of war, first hand I don't have to know

Folded Wings (continued from page 12)

✪ Kenneth S Smith 324th Age 91

September 30, 2015, San Antonio, TX



Reported by his son Ken Jr.

Ken earned his pilot wings in Class 44A, in Jan 1944. He completed 35 missions in the B-17 as a copilot and aircraft commander with most of his missions in the *Old Battle Axe* and *The Wild Hare*. His aircraft was badly damaged during his last mission. Flying on three engines with one of the remaining engines on fire, he and his crew managed to nurse the aircraft to

allied territory in Brussels. The closest runway was a fighter aircraft base. The control tower refused to give him permission to land as they did not want a huge, burning B-17 blocking the runway. Ken said, "To Hell with those fighter guys," and promptly landed the stricken aircraft, thus blocking their active runway for half of a day.

Ken remained in the Air Force flying the B-25, B-36, B-47, B-50, and B-52 amassing over 12,000 flying hours. He also flew 150 combat missions in Vietnam in 1968 - 69 in the FB-57 Canberra. After serving nearly 35 years, he retired with the rank of Colonel in 1977. He was awarded 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and 12 Air Medals, among many others.

Ken is survived by his bride of 70 years, Virginia Rutledge Smith, his four children, Virginia, Karen, Ken Jr., and Douglas. He also greatly enjoyed his eleven grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren.

✪ John J Ondrovic 401st Age 94

June 15, 2015, Spokane WA

Reported by his niece Kathy

John proudly served his country in WWII as a B-17 pilot in the 91st Bomb Group.

He was preceded in death by his wife Alice and his son, John, Jr. He is survived by his daughter Althea Daly and his daughter Altari Sunra (Doug) Peterson, two grandsons, and one great-granddaughter.

From the Editor

I have to apologize to the group on the tardiness of the October newsletter. As many of you know, I was involved in a motorcycle accident in June. If anyone would have told me the effort it was going to take to get back to a "normal" life, I would never have believed them. While the healing process is slow, I should fully recover with time.

As this newsletter goes to print, I am also working on the January *Ragged Irregular*. With a little luck, the next issue will actually come out in the month intended. I want to thank everyone for your patience!

I hope you have a great Christmas and New Year with your friends and family.

Gary

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

Ragged Irregular
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Folded Wings:

☛ **Armando H Battista 322nd Age 94**

November 24, 2014, Spring Hill, FL

Reported by his wife Peggy

During World War II, he served as an aerial gunner and was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters for heroism under extreme and difficult battle conditions; European Theater Operations Ribbon; European Air Offensive Medal and a Western Europe Air Offensive Medal.

He is survived by his loving family: his wife, Peggy; two sons; Paul and Carmen Battista; a daughter, Laura Lothridge; nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

☛ **Julius D Cobb 401st Age 94**

June 4, 2014, Wheatley Heights, NY

Bombardier in the 8th Air Force during WWII. Beloved husband of the late Joan. Loving father of Patricia (James), Daniel (Joan), Richard (Celeste), Timothy (Yan), and Virginia (David). Cherished grandfather of nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

☛ **Harry E "Ed" Garner 401st Age 94**

August 30, 2015, Keizer, OR

Reported by his daughter Carole



Ed enlisted in the Army Air Corps in early 1943 and was commissioned as a pilot in late 1943. He trained as a pilot to fly the B-17 Bomber, and subsequently flew 35 missions as the Deputy Squadron Lead over Europe, beginning shortly after D-Day. Medals awarded included the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 6 Clusters. He was decommissioned from the Air Force Reserve with the rank of Captain.

Ed was a loving husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Tommy Jean; daughter Carole (Al McCann); son Robert (Mary); six grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Folded Wings continued on page 11