

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR



322nd BS



323rd BS



Supporting Units



324th BS



401st BS

Vol. 41 No. 3

91st Bombardment Group (H)

July 2008

2008 FULLERTON REUNION



Chino event participants pictured with B-17 *Fuddy Duddy* at John Wayne Airport.

It is hard to believe the 2008 91st BGMA reunion has come and gone! There were several exceptional events organized for the attendees, but the memory that will stay with me is the interaction between the veterans, their families and their friends.

There are many pieces to the history puzzle of the 91st Bomb Group. What sometimes seem to be random meetings provide some very personal stories and add pieces to that puzzle. There were several "small world" stories of people's intertwined paths evident at this

reunion. It was a privilege to listen and witness the stories play out.

If you were not able to attend, I hope you can see a bit of the magic in the following pages.

Please join me in a toast to all of you who served, those who did not make it home and those who have gone on before us. "Never Forgotten, Forever Honored"

Gary

President's Corner**Jim Shepherd**

The attendees for the 2008 Reunion were ready to enjoy the scheduled events. The hospitality room was being set up. One of the helpers was Bob Dickson (322nd) and in walked Will Hoff (322nd) who had not seen Bob since his Bob's plane went down December 1, 1943. Will thought Bob had died in the crash. The two men had a great reunion.

The next day, it was off to Catalina Island for a fun filled day. The weather was great and all enjoyed the trip. Catalina is like a European coastal village. Suzi was off with a group to the wine country. The bus provided was a party bus, with champagne and a pole for pole dancing. One of the ladies was very good with her pole dancing.

Thursday, 94 members were off to the Planes of Fame Museum in Chino California. Mick, your Vice President, and myself refer to the Museum as the '91st Museum of the West.' There is a display dedicated to the 91st along with a monument. Gary Hall, RI editor and Mick Hanou paid to fly in WWII warbirds. Gary picked the P-51 and Mick, a P-38. What a thrill for the group to see these planes up close, hear the powerful engines start-up and then see them fly over with the group on the ground waiving. The Museum was extremely helpful in setting up an area in the hanger, just for the group.

We then went to the John Wayne Airport. A special plane is parked there by the name of *Fuddy Duddy*. We were allowed to go through the plane and found that many of the associate members and dependants had never been this close to a B-17, much less be able to go inside to get the full feeling of the size of the plane. In fact, a few veterans also went inside the B-17 who had not been inside since they left England. Thanks to General Lyons and Mark Foster for allowing us to schedule this event.

That night we boarded the bus and off to Knott's Berry Farm for one of their famous Chicken Dinners. The first dish was special Rhubarb dish only made here. To everyone's surprise, the Knott's Berry Farm Saloon Girls were in the dining room making friends with the guys. All were happy to see them, but only Asay Johnson was so overwhelmed that he jumped up and grabbed both of them. They fought off his advances and escaped.

Friday was a day off, some relaxed by the pool or went on local trips. A reporter from the local paper interview several members for an article about the 91st BGMA. That night we were off to Down Town Disney, where there are many restaurants and entertainment.

We had visitors from Brittany. Yves Carnot and his wife Ann. Yves was told a story by his Grandfather about a B-17 that crashed into his barn. The plane was *The Black Swan* 324th and the co-pilot was Verne Woods, who was in attendance at the reunion. Yves made it his quest to have a monument erected for the 2 men that died in the crash, Stuart Mendelsohn and Richard Hensley. Each year, on December 31, Yves has a memorial to these men and last year over 300 attended. The final item was that Yves presented the dependants of Richard Hensley, Hensley's watch that was found later at the crash site.

The banquet was held Saturday night and we had 144 in attendance. The Los Angeles Air Force Base provided the color guard to start the event. We had four speakers for the banquet. The first was Yves Carnot who told his story about his Grandfather and the monument and this was very emotional for many, including Verne Woods. Next was Joe Harlick who has provided many pictures for everyone who has asked. He talk was about his first camera, which cost him 19 cents. He has provided many pictures for the 91st Ring of veterans and is responsible for the display of 91st photos at Minot Air Force base in North Dakota.

Lorinda Crow, wife of David Crow, for Friends of the 91st confirmed the Tower Museum will be upgraded and will not be removed from Bassingbourn. We do have friends in England that are willing to help us and receive up-to-date information about the museum.

The last speaker was Mike Banta. Mike is the Ring Master for the 91st BGMA and has over 105 veterans and historians on the internet to help answer questions from dependence of veterans and do research. The 91st is the only Bomb Group with this type of organization of using "Living History" (the veterans who were there) to answer questions. Mike has answered over 5,000 email questions. Connected to this is the web page for the 91st. There have been over 450,000 visitors to the web page in the past 9-½ years, and this indicates a great interest in the 91st Bomb Group.

The next reunion is scheduled in 2010 in Dayton Ohio, with a visit to the Wright Patterson Air Force Base and the *Memphis Belle*. The only 2 B-17's that saw combat and still exist are the *Memphis Belle* and *Shoo Shoo (Shoo) Baby*. Another B-17 is the *Nine O Nine* replica from the Collings Foundation that flies around the country offering rides. The 91st Bomb Group is well represented with existing aircraft.

Veeps Views**Mick Hanou**

Thank you to all who participated in the 2008 reunion in California. As you know, the reunion location rotates from east to central to west locations and it was just coincidence that your "Nexgen" officers are in California; the next reunion will be in the east – Dayton, Ohio in 2010. The 2008 reunion was the first in a very long time that was held during the summer months. The intent was to get a greater participation of young (who are off from school) and in that it succeeded. Many attended their first reunion, and a great amount of interest was shown by them in your history and stories. *Hopefully, this encourages preservation of your history in the first-person.* For the 2010 reunion, it will be up to you, the membership to decide if it will be held in the summer or in the off season.

The Hospitality Suite was very well attended during the event and accomplished beyond what I hoped it would – many attendees spent time there talking with veterans and hearing their experiences. Three great experiences brought tears to the eyes of all – Will Hoff meeting his pilot Bob Dickson and learning for the first time in 65 years that Bob was not killed during the war; Richard receiving his father's (KIA) watch from Yves, the grandson of the farmer who discovered the body; and one family who, after finding a box of material upon granddad's death, attended their first reunion to learn about him. Scrapbooks were a focus of discussions as were the numerous photos by Joe Harlick in the fine display. Of particular interest were the "living history" material (clothing) of George Bruckert, who attended the banquet in Class A uniform, and the B-17 controls provided by Mike Yamada. Many of you were at the controls display, learning first hand from Verne Woods what it takes to fly the B-17. *I considered it a fine focal point to generate interest.* Thanks to Herb, Cathy, and Chuck Egender for their frequent help and to Gary Hall, Jodi Kelly, Nancy Perri, and Tom Freer for pitching in when needed and helping me.

The visit to Chino Planes of Fame Museum was a popular event with 100 attendees. The docents who led the tour were knowledgeable and popular and much thanks to the staff for making the visit so enjoyable. The collection at the museum contains numerous unique examples of WWII aircraft and visitors had free time after tours to view planes in the other hangers. Many are in flying condition, as you witnessed in the flying portion of the day. Incidentally, to clarify some confusion – Mick donated funds for the P-38 flight and Gary donated for the P-51 flight so that the attendees could have the opportunity to view one of only four flying P-38 in the world doing a pair display with a P-51. *We did this for your enjoyment and no funds came from the 91st BGMA for these flights.*

During our flight, hanger discussion focused on the future of the 91st BG display and restoration of *Piccadilly Lily*. Also, although originally planned that one bus would return to the hotel, a vote was taken that reflected a keen interest by nearly everyone to visit the flyable B-17 *Fuddy Duddy*, especially as permission had been obtained for the buses to get on the airfield, eliminating a long walk. So, just ahead of schedule, we arrived at Lyons Air Museum and were able to tour the B-17. Though limited in access through the narrow bomb bay, everyone cooperated and most were able to see the position they or their father had occupied during the war. Many thanks to General Lyon and to Mark Foster for arranging the visit and making our trip so manageable.

I consider it a privilege to have served you and participated in this year's reunion in California and will help again in 2010 at Dayton.

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Please send obituaries to Jody Kelly.

Deadline for submissions to the RI is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

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A "Surprise" Reunion

In the summer of 1943 I was fresh out of B-17 pilot training and sent to Alexandria AAB in Louisiana for training with a crew. I was assigned a nice young man named Wilber Hoff as my co-pilot. We were one of 50 crews in a Provisional Group (a fancy name for replacements) that flew training missions in preparation for combat.

We shipped overseas on the Queen Mary, arriving in England the first of November. We and about a dozen of our crews were assigned to the 381st BG at Ridgewell. A few weeks later six of us were transferred to the 91st BG. It was the policy that the pilot would fly a few missions as co-pilot with an experienced crew before taking his own crew into "harms way".

On December 1, 1943 I was flying co-pilot with John Wennerberg's crew in "Wheel 'N Deal" on a mission to bomb a chemical plant in Leverkusen in the heart of the Ruhr Valley. We were knocked out of formation by enemy fighters and shortly after were hit by flak, setting the left wing on fire. We bailed out over Düsseldorf – nine of us got out. Sadly, our tail gunner Sgt. William E. Roller was killed in the aircraft.

Through a mix-up in position assignments, when we gathered in formation over Bassingbourn, Lt. Leonard Anderson in A/C #794 was in the spot we were supposed to be in on the right side of the element leader. We took his position on the left side. After we left the formation Lt. Anderson's plane took a direct flak hit, the plane exploded, a wing came off and the plane went down. No one saw any parachutes. In briefing after the mission it was reported that it was our plane that had exploded with no survivors. My crew members, including Will Hoff were assigned a new pilot. They flew six missions with the 91st, and then were transferred to the 15th Air Force in Italy.

On June 24th, the first night at our Fullerton reunion, I'm nursing a beer in the Hospitality Room and here comes Will Hoff walking into the room. I introduced myself to him - he said "you're supposed to be dead!" We hugged and caught up on old times. We had not seen each other in 65 years - now that's a reunion!!

Bob Dickson
Former POW



Bob and Will meet at the reunion



April Correction – Flack or Flak Clock?

I received some flak regarding the Flak Clock in the April issue. The original copy of the Flak Clock was not readable and I accidentally typed "flack" instead of "flak" while cleaning it up.

Collings' Nine O Nine Schedule

- 7/11 - 7/14 Minneapolis, MN
Anoka County-Blaine Airport
- 7/14 - 7/16 Sheboygan, WI
Sheboygan County Memorial
- 7/16 - 7/18 Waukegan, IL
Waukegan Regional Airport
- 7/18 - 7/21 Chicago, IL
Chicago Executive Airport
- 7/21 - 7/23 Valparaiso, IN
Porter County Municipal Airport
- 7/23 - 7/25 Rockford, IL
Rockford International Airport
- 7/25 - 7/28 West Chicago, IL
Dupage Airport
- 7/28 - 7/30 Kankakee, IL
Greater Kankakee Airport
- 7/30 - 8/1 Bloomington, IN
Monroe County Airport
- 8/1 - 8/4 Indianapolis, IN
Mount Comfort Airport
- 8/4 - 8/6 Auburn, IN
De Kalb County Airport
- 8/6 - 8/8 Battle Creek, MI
W K Kellogg Airport
- 8/9 - 8/10 Detroit, MI
Willow Run Airport
- 8/11 - 8/13 Dayton, OH
Dayton-Wright Brothers Airport
- 8/13 - 8/15 TBD
- 8/15 - 8/18 Akron, OH
Akron-Canton Regional Airport
- 8/18 - 8/20 Pittsburgh, PA
Allegheny County Airport
- 8/20 - 8/22 Altoona, PA
Altoona-Blair County Airport
- 8/22 - 8/25 Lancaster, PA
Lancaster Airport
- 8/25 - 8/27 Wilmington, DE
New Castle Airport
- 8/27 - 8/29 Cape May, NJ
Cape May County Airport
- 8/29 - 9/1 Farmingdale, NY
Republic Field

8th Air Force Historical Society Annual Reunion – August 3rd – 8th - Late Notice!

The 8th Air Force Historical Society will hold their annual reunion August 3-8, 2008 at the Savannah Marriott Riverfront Hotel in Savannah.

A fun and interesting program of events has been planned including a trip to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, where they display, exhibit and portray all of the accomplishments of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Team.

The deadline for reservations was July 2nd, but there may still be rooms available. To make your hotel reservations, please call the Savannah Marriott

Riverfront at (800) 285-0398. *The Savannah Marriott is now sold out for Wednesday, August 6, 2008.* As of July 9th, you can still make reservations at this hotel for the other reunion nights.

To make reservations at the "Over Flow" hotel, the Mulberry Inn, please call (912) 238-1200 and mention the 8th Air Force Historical Society. The rate is \$119 per night (plus tax).

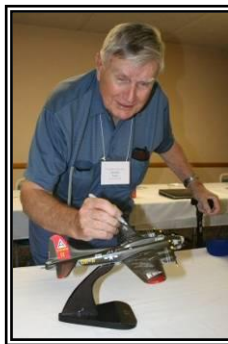
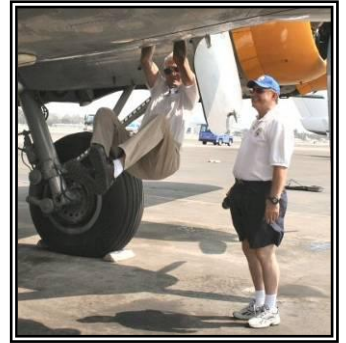
More information is available at www.8thafhs.org or by calling Armed Forces Reunions at (757) 625-6401.

91st BGMA Reunion Attendees

This is a "mostly" accurate list of reunion attendees. If we missed or misspelled your name, please accept my apologies. Drop a note to the RI if you wish to make any additions or corrections to this list for the October issue.

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Blanch Ah Tye | Andrew Caswell | Patricia Hensley | Bonnie Selje |
| Doreen Ah Tye | Mary Chartrand | Richard Hensley | Dean Selje |
| Gordon Ah Tye | Michael Clemens | Frank Hintze | Jim Shepherd |
| Judy Ah Tye | Mr & Mrs Phillip Collins | Will Hoff | Suzi Shepherd |
| Frank Annis | Neil Daniels | J.W. Howland | Betty Simin |
| Katie Annis | Melvin Dart | Asay Johnson | Laren Simin |
| Berneda Bailes | Chris Daymont | Hal Johnson | Leigh Ann Simin |
| Jim Bailes | Robert Dickson | Phylis Johnson | Mia Simin |
| Laurel Baird | Catherine Egender | Jody Kelly | Ralph Simin |
| Sharon Baird | Charles Egender | Frank Keneley | Randy Simin |
| Sydney Baird | Herbert Egender | Matilde Keneley | Riva Simin |
| Vernon Baird | Jeanne Finch | Janet Larocco | Rob Simin |
| Wayne Baird | Melanie Finch | Jeanie Limm | Susan Simin |
| Michelle Banta | Denise Freer | Paul Limm | Teresa Simin |
| Mike Banta | Donald Freer | Bruno Lombardi | Olivia Skawienski |
| Yvonne Banta | Mary Freer | Arnold Marabate | Ted Skawienski |
| Melinda Barnsley | Thomas Freer | Patricia Marabate | Donald Smith |
| Sydney Barnsley | Ed Gates | Don Murray | Mr & Mrs Kenneth Smith |
| Connie Baron | Joan Gates | Jo Murray | Virginia Smith |
| Thomas Baron | Gary Hall | Molly Perkins | Erwin Steele |
| Barbara Bergum | Allyssa Hanou | Nancy Perri | Sheila Striegel |
| Harold Bettinelli | Mandy Hanou | Steve Perri | Gregory Varhall |
| Karl Boye | Mardi Hanou | Mack Pryor | Sherwood Wagner |
| Kayla Boye | Mick Hanou | Edward Ristow | Jim White |
| Kristen Boye | Jenny Harlick | Patricia Ristow | Sharon White |
| Susan Boye | Joseph Harlick | Jacque Ruth | Laverne Woods |
| George Bruckert | Barbara Harness | Larry Ruth | Onie Woods |
| Anne Carnot | Vivian Harness | Bill Schilly | Mike Yamada |
| Yves Carnot | Susan Hayes | Willis Schilly Sr. | Sylvia Yamada |

Reunion Photos – Catalina, Winery, Chino, Knott's and Hospitality Suite



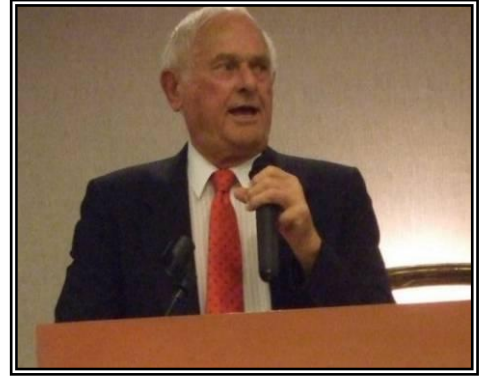
Reunion Photos - Banquet



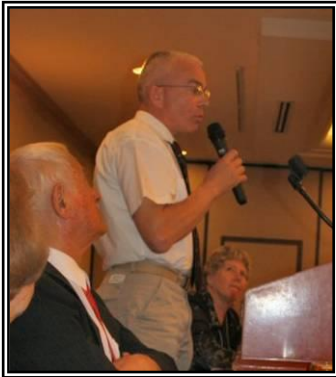
Joe Harlick



Lorinda Crow



Mike Banta



Yves Carnot



Color Guard



Former POWs



322nd



324th



323rd



401st

THE MORNING READ // Forever flyboys // Veterans relive their days as 'very alert 18-year-olds' aboard bombers in WWII. Part 1 of 2

By MICHAEL MELLO and CLAIRE ZHOU - Published 7/4/2008 – © The Orange County Register – used with permission

FULLERTON - They looked like any other senior citizens tour group in Orange County for a brief weekend. It's hard to believe the gentlemen with khaki pants and broad smiles used to spend their days raining hellfire over much of Europe.

They're now octogenarians or older, with faded hair, failing eyesight – and vivid memories. To them, the early 1940s are like early last week.

The day was July 8, 1943; the place, Long Branch, N.J., 20 miles south of New York.

Anyone in town that day would have noticed the throng in the city.

Long Branch was Tech. Sgt. Steve Perri's hometown, and 3,000 people came out to greet him, some taking to the rooftops of nearby buildings to listen and catch a glimpse as he was recognized.

Perri was the first member of the Army Air Corps' 91st Bomb Group to return home from Europe, having survived his tour of 25 sorties in a B-17 bomber over Nazi-occupied Europe.

"If you got past six, you're pretty lucky," he said.

From 1942 to 1945, the 91st and its B-17 Flying Fortresses crossed the English Channel, delivering more than 600,000 tons of high-explosive greeting cards to the Third Reich.

They often did so without the help of escorts. With smaller fuel tanks, fighter planes couldn't plunge deep into Europe like the B-17s did to reach their targets.

"We're unique in having the reputation for losing the most planes and flying the most sorties," said Asay "Ace" Johnson, then a lieutenant and now the outgoing secretary-treasurer of the 91st Bomb Group Memorial Association.

The Memphis Belle belonged to the 91st Bomb Group and gained her fame because she was the first to complete 25 missions during the war.

Members of the Memorial Association recently gathered at the Wyndham Hotel in Fullerton for their biennial reunion, coming from Arizona, Florida, Iowa – every corner of the country, just as they have for years.

The 91st Bomb Group's first reunion, in 1967, was held just up the road at Knott's Berry Farm.

In many ways, the event resembles a family reunion, with the crew members teasing one another, laughing heartily and slapping their buddies on the back.

And they do consider themselves family, pointing out that concentrated German fire can make even total strangers pull together in a matter of seconds.

It was that way for co-pilot Kenneth Smith, pilot Phillip Collins and navigator Andrew Caswell, who completed more than 30 missions onboard the Wild Hare, a plane with an unnaturally fierce-looking Bugs Bunny decorating its sides.

"We were very alert 18-year-olds," said Caswell, a resident of Clay Township, Mich. "You couldn't drive until you were 17, but you could learn how to fly."

They often were assigned to destroy railroad yards, which were vital shipping links, or refineries where the Nazis, desperate for fuel, converted coal into petroleum.

"Over the target, it was solid flak. You thought you'd never get through it," Caswell said. But, he added, the bombers were well-made: "It was remarkable how much those planes could take and still fly."

Everyone seemed to have a story about a plane landing without wheels, with flaming engines, or plowing through a befuddled farmer's brussels sprout patch.

Despite that, they said, they rarely broke a sweat while in the air.

"We weren't sweating much, because it was minus 50 up there" in the unpressurized B-17s, Caswell said.

After deployment, the 91st was based at the former Royal Air Force Base of Basingbourn, north of London, allowing crews to spend their R and R time in the big city.

Smith remembered the English ladies fondly.

"They were very good dancers," he said. "The girls were ... what's the right word? Patriotic."

The bombing crew members range in age from about 85 to 95, but they easily recall yesteryear.

Perri talks about his days in the 91st with the enthusiasm of a Little League pitcher recounting his last shutout. His 25 missions were in the plane Delta Rebel, which had a Confederate colonel painted on the nose.

He loves to show off a picture of the plane's crew and actor Clark Gable, who had joined the Army Air Corps. In the picture, Gable's bangs hang flopped over his forehead, in an unkempt-enough-to-be-fashionable way.

"He saw my hair," Perri recalled, "and said, 'I'm going to do mine just like that.' I told him, 'You just might get in the movies looking like that.'"

Perri spent his flights in the ball turret on the belly of the plane, a cramped space even for his 5-foot, 6-inch frame.

He often hung there for up to seven hours during missions. In a piece for Yankee Wings magazine, he insisted his post wasn't all that uncomfortable, describing it as "like an easy chair" ... with 50 mm cannons.

A closer look at the photos shows seven swastikas painted on the plane's fuselage, along with depictions of two dozen bombs signifying completed missions.

"All those swastikas belong to me," Perri said. "I shot down seven German planes," an accomplishment he admits was less about skill and more about survival.

"I was told I had a job to do, and I did it."

Like many young men, Edward Kaiserski enlisted in the service a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was deployed to Bassingbourn from September 1943 to the first part of May 1944.

On his first mission in October 1943, Kaiserski, who was the bombardier, sat in the front of the aircraft, the plane's navigator behind him. A Messerschmitt 109, a German fighter aircraft, shot off the navigator's left arm on that mission.

THE MORNING READ // The Black Swan's last flight // A Frenchman seeks out the survivors of a downed B-17. Part 2 of 2

By MICHAEL MELLO - Published 7/5/2008 – © The Orange County Register – used with permission

Yves Carnot was the only grandchild who listened intently to the story his grand-père told many times, the one about the American plane, the Black Swan.

The Swan came crashing into his family's history on New Year's Eve 1943, when it plowed into the family farm in northwestern France after it was shot down by two German fighters.

Carnot often admired the metal plate surrounded by horseshoes his grandfather had mounted in his barn. The plate, pressed in a Detroit factory, stated simply, "B-17" and "Boeing," along with the plane's serial number.

Corners of the barn held jagged pieces of metal that also caught Carnot's attention. His grandfather's tale about a

He said the greatest thing for him was coming back from the war to a young lady, Ruth, from Minnesota whom he had met while he was in cadet school in Santa Ana. Kaiserski, now a Canoga Park resident, married her upon his return and they had five children together.

The idea of coming back to Ruth, he said, kept him going during his service.

He also enjoys getting together with his compatriots at their reunions. The next one in 2010 will be in Dayton, Ohio, where the Memphis Belle now resides.

"It's nice to go to a different place and meet people who went through the war experience," Kaiserski said. "To live through the war and still be living today – I thank the Lord for that."

One plane that often came up in conversation at the reunion was a bomber dubbed the Black Swan.

The crew took off on New Year's Eve in 1943, bound for the Bordeaux-Cognac region of France on a mission that, despite a predicted length of 11 hours, was supposed to be a "milk run."

Instead, they met heavy flak. The crew dumped their bombs harmlessly over the Bay of Biscay in a desperate attempt to save fuel and make it back to England. The crippled plane fell out of formation from the rest of the B-17s.

That's when two German fighters appeared.

(Continued in the next article)

burning plane falling from the sky was only the first chapter of a much deeper story.

The plate, and what it represented, would become a passion that would drive Carnot from farm to farm asking strange questions in Brittany. Eventually, it would result in a journey across the Atlantic Ocean to meet men his grandfather never knew but admired greatly.

...

Most of the crew members aboard the Swan, part of the Army Air Corps' 91st Bomb Group, normally flew in a plane called the Duke of Paducah. But that plane still had large holes in it from an encounter with German forces, so they took to the air in the Black Swan instead.

The crew members' superiors had called the mission to the Bordeaux region in southern France a "milk run," despite a prediction the trip would take 11 hours.

When they arrived, "extremely accurate flak (German anti-aircraft fire) came up and knocked out an engine and a supercharger," remembered Verne Woods of Lexington, Mass., who was piloting the doomed plane. The mission was his 13th.

The crew dropped the plane's bombs harmlessly over the Bay of Biscay off France's west coast and turned back toward England. The rest of the B-17 formation continued on course for Bordeaux.

"We were all alone."

Two German fighters appeared as the Black Swan passed over Brittany. The German who brought down the plane was an ace, Adolf Glunz. By the end of the war, Glunz would have claimed more than 50 Allied aircraft. Two of the crew perished in the Swan's crash. Eight others survived, but six were captured by the Germans.

Woods, after setting the battered plane on autopilot, parachuted out before the Germans fired again and the plane finally came down.

As he was trained, after he landed he quickly hid his parachute, which would be the first thing the Germans would look for. He hid all night in the countryside.

"We were told to avoid the roads," he recalled. Still, New Year's Day found him wandering hungry and tired down a road. There, he said, a French farmer found him and, recognizing his U.S.-issued flight suit, gave Woods some civilian clothing and a room to stay the night.

"The next day, I stole a bicycle and rode to the South of France," Woods said, a trip that took him more than a week. Each night kindly French patriots never hesitated to offer him food and a bed.

The Germans finally caught up with him on the 10th day. He spent time in a Paris prison before being transferred to Stalag Luft I near Germany's Baltic coast. Gen. George Patton's troops freed Woods and thousands of other Allied prisoners of war in spring 1945.

...

The Black Swan, aflame, fell to earth 300 feet from where Carnot's grandfather stood, its remnants scattering across the countryside. Carnot was born in 1957 and made frequent trips to the family farm, each time hearing again about the Black Swan.

"It's the story of my life," Carnot said.

Carnot recounted his tale late last month, at a reunion of the 91st Bomb Group at the Wyndham Hotel in Fullerton. The veterans brought Carnot from France as their honored guest.

In 1993, Carnot began his "search," a term barely adequate to describe the endeavor. He spoke with French authorities about the crash. He interviewed 40 people who watched the Black Swan come down. Some helped Carnot retrieve pieces of the warplane, which the earth had reclaimed over the years, like a scar healing. One farmer used part of a wing to straighten his apple trees.

Carnot spoke to another farmer, pointing out that the metal door affixed to a rabbit hutch was the Swan's escape hatch. Upon learning this, the farmer immediately ripped it off and handed it over.

"The rabbits escaped and ran everywhere," Carnot said, to the farmer's apparent indifference.

In 1998, Carnot had a memorial erected at the site of the crash. Men who had flown on the doomed mission attended after the Frenchman's efforts led him to get in touch with them.

Woods said he was surprised to receive a letter from France in 1998. It was from Carnot, inviting Woods to the memorial service. At first, Woods admitted, he thought the letter might be a scam, "but it sounded so sincere, so I answered it."

"I found (Carnot) to be a truly magnificent person. He's dedicated his life to remembering the Black Swan. Each year he has a memorial service on the date the plane went down."

At a meeting with three of the Black Swan's survivors in Washington, D.C., Carnot presented them with the plane's escape hatch. He said Black Swan radio operator Jimmy Quinn recognized the panel as the one that afforded him safety on that day 55 years before.

...

Through his time at the Fullerton reunion, Carnot got plenty of attention, which he received with his customary modesty.

Mingling with his grandfather's heroes, he said softly, "is very moving."

Carnot's grandfather, despite his obvious reverence for the U.S. airmen, never searched for them.

"I don't know why," he said. "I think my grandfather had no time to do it. I think he made me his messenger."

91st BGMA Donations

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Gary Hall | \$500 |
| TCF Financial matching fund | \$500 |
| Ed Williams | \$50 |
| Exxon matching fund | \$50 |
| Ellen Miller | \$50 |
| Marc Tipermas | \$50 |

For the "still working" crowd: If you make a donation to the 91st BGMA, or any non-profit for that matter, please check with your employer and see if they offer a matching donation. It is a great way to stretch your donation dollars!

Folded Wings (continued from page 12)

☛ **John J. Lacorazza 401st Age 86**

Vallejo, CA May 10, 2008

Reported by George Parks

John was born in Chicago, IL and soon after moved to Long Island, NY where he grew up. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. After his discharge John relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area where he met his wife of 63 years, Joy.

John is survived by his loving wife Joy; his daughter Maria Boele and her husband Michael; his sisters, Toni Leonardi and Margie Furio of Long Island, NY; his brother Michael Lacorazza of Orange County; several nieces & nephews and grand-nieces & grand-nephews.

☛ **Paul L. Zimmerman 323rd Age 88**

Prospect Heights, IL, May 4, 2008

Reported by his wife Bette Zimmerman



Paul L. Zimmerman, born December 21, 1919 in Hamilton, OH, died May 4, 2008.

He served in the US Army Air Corps, enlisting on December 5, 1942. He attended Radio Operations School at Sioux Falls, SD and Aerial Gunnery School at Laredo, TX before being assigned to a B-17 crew (*The Village Flirt*, pilot David Bramble, co-pilot Phil Mack, navigator Quent Ellis, bombardier Bob Singer, engineer John Williams, tail gunner Walter Reich, ball turret gunner Ray Ridings and waist gunners Jerry Bernasconi and Rocco Poppa). Paul completed a 25 mission combat tour with the Eighth Air Force from September 16, 1943 to March 9, 1944, out of Basingbourn, England. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt., Communications Officer and served as a training officer in charge of instruction for radio and navigation procedures at Molesworth, and

was transferred to the Air Transport Command in Casablanca where he served as Priority and Traffic Officer before being honorably discharged from the service in October 1945. Paul was awarded the European-African Mid-Eastern campaign ribbon with 6 battle stars; the Presidential Unit citation; Air Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters; and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

His survivors are his wife of 61 years, Bette; two sons Paul Robert (Lori) and Gary Michael (Mary); six grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

☛ **John K. Carter 322nd Age 87**

Oxford, MS, February 15, 2008

Reported by his nephew Tommy Carter



John Keith Carter, Major, USAF (Ret.), died at 1900 hours CST of heart complications with his wife Carolyn at his side in Oxford, Mississippi.

John was born in Valdosta, Georgia December 28, 1920 and was commissioned 2nd Lt. through Air Cadet Program 25 March 1943. Shot down during Raid on Anklam / Marienberg, October 9, 1943, his first mission, John survived Stalag Luft III and Mooseburg. He was in Theater at out break of Korean War and flew combat missions for the duration. John retired as LtCol (Sel) after 20 years of service.

"Uncle" is survived with a large, adoring, extended family including sister, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, nieces, and nephews, and friends the world over – absolutely unique, John is dearly missed...

☛ **Kenneth L. Blackburn 323rd Age 88**

Niles, MI, June 21, 2008

Reported by Lucille Harrell

Kenneth was born October 20, 1919 in Niles, MI. He died Saturday, June 21, 2008, following an extended illness.

Blackburn was a World War II veteran, serving in the U.S.. Air Force 91st Bomb Group, completing 35 combat missions. He was a member of the Disabled American Veterans.

He is survived by his wife Anna P. (Royer) Blackburn, a daughter, Celia (Gary) Whittaker; a granddaughter; a grandson; two brothers, Eldon and Dwain Blackburn; and many nieces and nephews.

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LET US KNOW BEFORE YOU MOVE

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

July 2008

THE RAGGED IRREGULAR

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Folded Wings:

✪ Louis Gramesty 401st Age 85

Stratford, CT, February 21, 2008



Reported by his wife Eleanor Gramesty Lou entered into eternal rest Thursday, February 21, 2008. For more than five years, he battled lymphoma with the same tenacity and valor that he had shown in aerial combat during World War II as a ball turret gunner aboard B-17 Flying Fortresses.

Born September 8, 1922 and raised in Bridgeport, Lou graduated from Central High School in 1940 and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. After air crew training, he joined the 8th Air Force in England where he was assigned to the 401st Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group. Lou flew eight missions over Germany before his B-17, the Buccaneer, was shot down over the North Sea in August, 1943. With just his life jacket to keep him afloat, Lou hung onto the small dingy that had room for only half the crew at a time. The men took turns in and out of the dingy to warm up. He floated in the cold sea for a day and a half before he was picked up and taken prisoner by the Germans. He was interned for three months in Stalag 7-A near Munich, Germany, then transported to Stalag 17-B in Krems, Austria where he was held until liberation by Allied troops in June 1945.

In retirement, Lou joined other World War II veterans in speaking to students in area schools about his wartime experiences and was recognized by the office of Congressman Christopher Shays for his contribution to the oral history of that period. He regularly attended the annual reunions of former Stalag 17 POWs and

cherished the shared memories and the strong bonds of friendships that had endured for decades.

Lou leaves behind his loving wife of 62 years, Eleanor White Gramesty; a son, John Gramesty and his wife, Helen; and a daughter, Adele G. Marrash and her husband, Richard; four grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.

✪ Albert R. Kuehl 323rd Age 89

Mart, TX, February 27, 2008



Reported by his daughter Colleen Kuehl Sweeney

Albert was born on April 12, 1918, on a farm near Riesel, TX. He graduated from Riesel High School in 1936 and attended Texas A & M and Baylor Universities before enlisting in the Army Air Corp in 1941. During World War II he was a B-17 pilot based in England. After the war he attained his law degree from Baylor University in 1948 and re-entered the Air Force, where he served as a JAG officer until his retirement as Lt. Col. in 1964. He also served a year in Korea and three years at Ruislip, England during that time.

He never tired of recalling his war experiences, and after much prodding from his wife, wrote a memoir for his family and friends. He was a proud member of "The Greatest Generation" as portrayed by Tom Brokaw.

Albert is survived by his wife of 62 years, Rheba Rhodes Kuehl, a son, two daughters, four grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews and friends.

Folded Wings continued on page 11