

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

NEWS

Volume 23

December 2008



TWO TOUGH MISSIONS: KIEL AND BINGEN

The raids to Kiel on 4 Jan 1944 and Bingen on 2 Dec 1944 serve as bookends for the 392nd's five worst missions. In between came Gotha on 24 Feb, Friedrichshafen on 18 March, and Berlin on 29 Apr. On these five missions, 211 men were killed, 151 became POWs, 26 were interned, and 1 evaded.

Kiel

On 4 Jan 1944, the target was Kiel's naval port, docks, and submarine pens. US fighter support from the enemy coast over the target was fair; intermittent 10/10 cloud cover limited the effectiveness of the bombing. From the target out, German fighters took advantage of weak US fighter support. About 30 e/a of all types (Me-109s, -110s, and -210s; Ju-88s; and FW-190s) attacked the 392nd, usually in pairs.

Flak on the way back was also a factor, being very accurate from the IP to the coast out. It was concentrated in the Group's altitude.

The combination of fighters and flak proved deadly. The 577th was hardest hit with three crews lost: 1/Lt Raymond P. Lambert (10 KIA); 2/Lt Clyde W. Rigby (10 KIA); 1/Lt Leander Page Jr. (10 interned in Sweden). Additionally, 1/Lt T.F. McNichol returned with gunner S/Sgt Albert J. MacPherson killed in action.

Other casualties were 1/Lt John R. Becker's crew from the 576th (4 KIA/6 POW) and 1/Lt Robert L. Hull's crew (10 KIA) from the 579th. 2/Lt Colby Waugh (578th Sqdn) nursed his badly crippled ship as far as Sheringham, Norfolk, with four men killed in the crash and a fifth who died later.

Those who flew this mission remember it well, especially the cold. Frigid temperatures affected both the airplanes and their crews.

2/Lt John J. Sullivan

It was the first mission for 579th Sqdn pilot 1/Lt Gordon L. Hammond and crew. Navigator 2/Lt John J. Sullivan recalled, "Kiel was to be the target, and since it would be covered with clouds, Pathfinders were to locate it for us. Twenty minutes off the English coast, number two turbo went out. The nose and tail guns were out completely, and the ball and upper turrets weren't functioning properly. We didn't want to abort on our first mission but we couldn't make the altitude of the 392nd. Hammond brought the plane into the middle of the low group (44th) and we bombed the target with them.

Shortly after we were inside the German coast, the flak and fighters hit us. We could see many planes getting hit,

but most of them seemed distant. I had a tough time trying to put the select lever into position. I struggled with it until we were over the target. Most of the bombs were toggled out all right, and Hammond salvoed the rest from the pilot's seat. He broke his finger doing it. After that strenuous workout I sat down to rest, and I must have passed out for over an hour. Next thing I knew my fingers were numb and cold. I took my electric gloves off and placed my hands in my crotch. I got them working all right, and then I found out we had been running on three engines for 1¼ hours. No other planes were in sight. I told Hammond to lean out his gas as much as possible and gave him a heading of 200°. About 1500 we landed at our home base O.K. The thermometer went to -50°C. I hope never to experience cold like that again."

Maj Clinton Schoolmaster

Maj Schoolmaster was the 577th's CO. He wrote his wife about the casualties that day: "I regret their loss tremendously. It sure is a tough lick to take—but we'll come back with twice the effort, of that I'm positive—in fact, we must! Tonight is a pretty sober and hard-hit 392nd."

Maj Schoolmaster was later transferred to 14th Combat Wing Headquarters. On the very first day of his duty there (25 May 1944), he was killed. He was lost piloting a P-47 while shepherding an outbound mission.

See MISSIONS on page 3

2ADA Reunion in Dallas

Oak Mackey, our Vice President for the 2nd Air Division Association, reports that everyone had a wonderful time at the 2ADA reunion in Dallas. The 170 attendees included eight Crusaders: Oak and Maxine Mackey, Bill and Renella Jurczyn, Perry and Jon Onstot, Charles Wheelwright, and Tom Perry. Joining them was friend John Bellaby, son-in-law of 2ADA Secretary Ray Strong.

A crisp salute to Charles and Tom, who attended both reunions this year!

The 2ADA is tentatively planning a 2009 reunion in the Chicago area, probably in July or September. Chicago's location in the mid-west, with non-stop flights from around the US, will hopefully make travel a bit easier.

A decision on the location of the official 392nd BG reunion next year will be announced in the March 2009 issue.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Winters in Wendling. This issue is devoted to the two winters that the 392nd spent in Wendling. I think you'll enjoy this look back. And as we look ahead to the new year, I hope that 2009 brings you good health and great happiness.

The "fine old boy" is identified. The September issue of the News included an email from an Englishman who spoke with a Crusader and his son during their visit to England in May. The conversation inspired him to look at our website and learn more about the 392nd BG. That "fine old boy," as the Englishman called him, has come forward. He is George J. Jackson of Halifax, MA. He joined the 392nd at Tucson in 1943 and flew as lead bombardier with 1/Lt Leonard J. Barnes' crew in the 576th. After completing his missions on 30 May 1944, he was reassigned to the 96th Combat Wing as Assistant Wing Bombardier. He retired from the USAF as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1964.

Honor flight to WWII Memorial. I was privileged to meet 579th Sqdn S-2 clerk Bob Harned at the World War II Memorial on 8 Oct 2008. He and about 500 other WWII veterans from eight states had been flown *at no cost* to Washington, DC, to see *their* memorial. The trip was arranged by the Honor Flight Network, a non-profit organization created solely to honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices. The veterans I saw wore t-shirts that said, "If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you can read it in English, thank a veteran." The Honor Flight Guardians (traveling companions, assistants, and wheelchair pushers) wore t-shirts with a quote from Will Rogers, "We can't all be heroes—some of us get to stand on the curb and clap as they go by." Honor Flight welcomes donations to support this worthy cause "from anyone EXCEPT WWII veterans. We feel WWII veterans have given enough. This is our way of saying 'Thank you!'" To learn more, to apply for a veterans honor flight, or to make a donation, see <http://www.honorflight.org/>.

Website update. Robert Holland, James Shapely, Louis Stephens and Olen F. Levell Jr. have donated to the fundraiser for www.b24.net. A total of \$12,525 from 144 donors has now been received. Many thanks to all who have contributed! We are still far from our goal of \$30,000, however, so the fundraiser will be an on-going effort.

Our website now includes photos of 1,835 identified airmen and a roster (plus many photos) of 2,534 ground support personnel. More names and photos are added as we get them, so keep checking!

Membership renewals. It's time to renew memberships for 2009. To streamline the process, you can now pay by credit card or Paypal. Go to www.b24.net/join/, fill out the on-line form, and click where it says "Secure credit card payment via Paypal." Or, print out the form on page 4 of this issue and mail it with your check.

Mrs. Emma Jane Littleproud. Crusaders will remember Mrs. Littleproud's Wayside Cafe and B&B. Located at Little Fransham within easy walking or bicycling distance, the shop offered GIs a respite from the war. Mrs. Littleproud served no liquor but rather "tea and refreshments." She always knew someone who could mend clothing or do laundry. Her son, George, repaired shoes and bicycles. When 579th photo lab technician Harvey DeVoe had a pass, he would sometimes spend the night there just to "enjoy the bed, the solitude, and breakfast." In appreciation for Mrs. Littleproud's kindness to Harvey, his mother sent her a parcel. In a thank you letter, Mrs. Littleproud wrote, "I have tried to be kind to all the American boys whenever they come to our house, and have treated them as I'm sure the mothers in the States would treat ours." That sentiment no doubt motivated many English families and their thoughtfulness is remembered to this day by the GIs they befriended.

More about M/Sgt Howard F. Sinzinger. The September News reported that M/Sgt Sinzinger, 1825th Ordnance, won first place in the 8th AF's Victory Squadron War Bond Drive (held July-September 1944). Jack Teufel, 1825th CO, provided me a photo of Sinzinger in line to buy his winning ticket from Teufel. Charles Dye, Station Ammunition Officer, sent me a newspaper article about Sinzinger's prize, a telephone call to his parents. It said he ended his conversation by telling his mother, "This may be a little premature, but I want to wish you and dad a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."

These are fine examples of how the 392nd's history is enhanced when Crusaders share their memories, photographs, military orders, rosters, newspaper articles, and other memorabilia. Contact me to learn how to put your "stuff" to work for the Group.

President's Message

As your new President I want to "keep in touch." I'll be making random telephone calls to the membership and then reporting them in this space. And vice-versa, I welcome any and all calls, e-mails, or letters to me. My phone number at home is (765) 654-4609, my e-mail is goar@accs.net, and my mailing address is 1555 N. Main St. #106, Frankfort, IN 46041. Let me hear from you.

Col Gilbert: The Colonel and Margie are comfortable in a retirement home in Winter Park, FL. Locomotion is a slight problem, but a cane puts it right. I check signals with him about every two weeks.

Willard "Penny" Pennington: The 577th's Ground Executive, now a widower, is safe and sound in a retirement home in Houston. With his 96th birthday coming up December 10, he may be our senior member.

Kenneth "Paddy" Paddock: Our Group Navigator is at home with Brit bride Bridget in Sprucehead, ME. He also has a December birthday, 93rd on the 5th. I once asked him how he stood the Maine winters, and he said, "If you can't stand the winters, you don't deserve the summers."

Bob Lane: The 578th Ground Executive is in a retirement home in Melbourne, FL, having some dark days because he can't drive anymore and is "confined to quarters."

Carroll Cheek: 578th pilot. Annabelle and I visited Carroll and Mabel at their summer home in the mountains of North Carolina this Fall and found them to be functioning well. They are occasionally entertained by a bear that visits their deck, looking for free food.

Herman Canfield: The 577th's Operations Clerk lives with Norwich-born war bride Nora on a farm about 40 miles from where I live. He was pleased to hear about Penny Pennington.

John Buschman: 578th pilot, was shot down on one of our early diversion missions and consequently spent the rest of the war as POW. Now pretty badly disabled, he's in a VA facility. Wife Marge expects to have him home for Thanksgiving.

Gil Bambauer: The 10th Station Complement Sqdn Flying Equipment Specialist who kept things together for us in the 70's and 80's when the rest of us were otherwise engaged. Wife Martha had a little bout with a mild stroke, but now she's ok. They live in Oro Valley, AZ, which is near Tucson.

Bob Vickers: 578th pilot and author of our two definitive histories. Just as we go to press we heard through the ever-reliable 392nd grapevine that Bob is responding well to treatment and that his health is vastly improved.

Other "Poop From Group"

Soon, as soon as Annette and I can finish editing and correcting our Directory, I'll be sending a packet to all Directors and Officers. It will contain an updated By-Laws, a Directory, and the Minutes of the last meetings. I'll have a few more copies prepared over those needed for the above mailing, and we'll send a packet to anyone who wants one for the cost of printing and mailing. While they last, and we don't know the cost yet, but probably less than \$15.

Before the March newsletter, the Directors will decide where the 392nd's meeting for 2009 will be held: Cincinnati with the 8AFHS or Chicago with the 2ADA. Oak Mackey, our

vice-president for relations with 2ADA, pleaded with them to combine their meeting with 8AFHS, but to no avail.

Blue Skies,
Jim Goar

ILLUSTRATOR LOUIS DARLING JR.

When the great-grandchildren visit and ask you to read them a story, see if you can find a book written by Beverly Cleary and illustrated by Louis Darling. They teamed up on such world-famous children's books as *Beezus and Ramona*, *Ramona the Pest*, *Henry Huggins*, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*, and many more. Darling enlisted in the Army Air Corps on 1 Sep 1942 and served as a photographer throughout the war. Evidence suggests that he was a member of the 392nd BG. Harvey DeVoe recalls that his photo lab friend Lou Darling (who "slept in the top bunk for all the time we spent in England") was from Connecticut and illustrated a children's book after the war. This matches the biographical data for Cleary's illustrator. Regardless of whether he was a Crusader, Louis Darling Jr. was definitely an Air Corps veteran—surely a good enough reason to read one of the books he illustrated. You (and your listening audience) will be glad you did. A photo of the 392nd's Lou Darling is on page 6.

MISSION from page 1

Bingen

Per the 2nd Air Division's teletype, Bingen's marshaling yards were on the direct supply lines to German ground forces in the area. Destroying the train yards there would 1) create "general grief in the German railway system"; 2) "slow down, hamper, and destroy" supplies and replacement troops moving to the front; and 3) force the Germans to move rail traffic onto a reduced number of lines, making them "profitable and vulnerable targets for fighter attack."

The 392nd put up 18 ships, 9 each from the 577th and 578th Sqdns. Just before the target, the low left squadron went through dense clouds up to 23,000 feet. When they emerged, the planes were widely scattered and not in formation. It was then that the vulnerable squadron was attacked by 40-50 enemy a/c. Six of our B-24s were shot down in about 15 minutes.

Lost from the 577th were the crews of 2/Lt Edward J. Cieply (9 KIA), Capt Howard D. Watkins (8 KIA/1 POW), 1/Lt Eugene L. Comeau Jr. (7 KIA/2 POW), 1/Lt William F. Davis (2 KIA/7 POW), and 2/Lt Glenn R. Billingsley (6 KIA/3 POW); lost from the 578th was 2/Lt Walter C. Buaas' crew (3 KIA/6 POW).

At the mission briefing, 392nd airmen had been warned that "Germans are using stool pigeons in American uniform extensively among prisoners en route to the first interrogation." They were also cautioned on the importance of radio security because "Enemy gets lots of information from careless chatter."

With the target only about 15 miles from US lines, airmen were strongly reminded to "Throw no chaff anywhere more than 75 miles behind bomb line; it confuses our defenses and may result in attack."

After the ships returned, the 392nd's enlisted men had their 200th mission party celebration.

MAIL CALL

The 586th Army Postal Unit was the lifeline that kept Crusaders connected to family and friends back home and serving throughout the world. This was especially true at holidays.



Christmas time in the mail room, 1944. Judging from their smiles, the 392nd's mail clerks didn't seem to mind the extra work the holidays brought. (photo from Mighty 8th AF Museum)

586th postmen were swamped with mail. In December 1944, they received 4,030 sacks and pouches of mail, almost 1,700 more than the monthly average for 1944. They sent out 1,837 sacks and pouches, 754 more than the monthly average. The 578th Sqdn history said mail clerk Cpl Johnny Taub "estimated he handled 28,000 pieces of mail during the month—about 7,000 packages, 3,000 newspapers, and 18,000 letters."

576th Sqdn navigator 1/Lt Everett "Ike" Isakson recalls that "Packages from Stateside arrived well in advance of the 1944 Christmas holiday. My family enclosed a Paisley scarf. (Now where could I wear that?) The wonderful cookies that my Aunt Millie sent, though well-packed, arrived in crumbles. The family of our bombardier, 1/Lt William C. Sexton, owned a large restaurant supply house in Chicago, so his Christmas package contained a full range of snack delicacies. Being as most of our crew finished the required 35 missions on 5 Jan 1945, there were still treats for a final gorging before we vacated our wartime home."

The Daily Bulletin warned station personnel to mail greeting cards for US recipients by 15 Nov to insure delivery by Christmas.

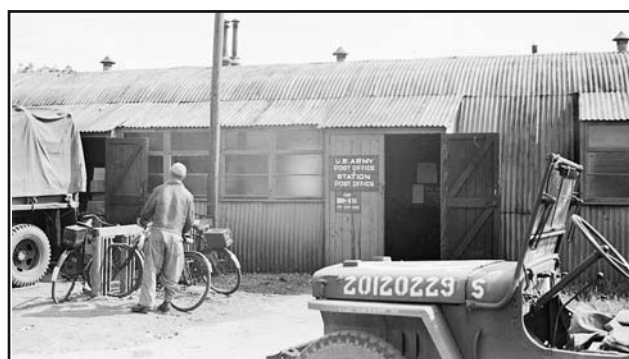
Censorship, AAF Style

Letters written by enlisted men had to be read and censored by an officer before they could be mailed. Officers were permitted to censor their own letters.

Charles Dye, Station Ammunition Officer, was one of four officers in the 1825th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co. He said each officer had "censor duty" one week a month. When it was his turn, the mail to be reviewed would be on his bunk when he returned to quarters in the evening.

"At first," he says, "I read each letter and used a sharp razor blade to cut out the parts that had to be censored. However, I soon learned that some men wanted their letters to be cut out, giving their parents, girlfriends, and other recipients an indication that they had a lot of 'military secrets.' Therefore, I started returning the letters to be rewritten. Soon they ceased to contain any prohibited information."

A memo from Gp HQ dated 1 Dec 1944 reminded censors not to "insert additions to nor make excerpts from communications which they censor, except as required for official purposes." They were also cautioned not to "repeat or discuss information contained in communications they censor except as required in the line of duty."



"Home" for the 586th Army Postal Unit

❖ RE-UP FOR 2009 ❖

In these times of economic turmoil, the 392nd stands firm—dues remain just \$20. Your payment status can be found right after your name on the mailing label. LM means Life Member and Frnd means that you receive the News with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. If the number is 09 or higher, your dues are current; otherwise, please renew ASAP.

If you feel that you are in a position to help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, there is a provision for it below.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial difficulty, so if you're in straitened circumstances check the Hardship Waiver box.

Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045

Name _____ Ground [] Air [] Unit or Sqdn _____

Assoc [] If you're joining (or already a member) because a relative or friend served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: _____

Your mailing address _____

Email address _____

Do you prefer to get the News by email [] or by postal mail []? (Please check one.)

Hardship Waiver [] DONATION \$ _____

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Age 61-65 \$120 []

Age 66-70 \$ 96 []

Age 71 up \$ 78 []



FOOTBALL, AMERICAN STYLE

Cold weather and American football go hand-in-hand. This was certainly true at Station 118. The Wendling Raiders played in the 2nd Air Division's Western League, facing teams from Horsham, Shipdham, Rackheath, Attlebridge, North Pickenham, and Ketteringham Hall.

During the 1944 season, the team won two, tied three, and lost two games. On 27 Nov 1944, the 392nd played Tibbenham for the Division football championship. The Raiders lost 7-6 with 2/Lt Walker making the team's lone touchdown.

On 6 Dec, there was a banquet for the Raiders. The program reported that "Dick Couch, center and team captain, was the only man who played every minute of every game." He was the 465th Sub Depot Engineering Officer.

The coach was 1/Lt Joseph P. Siegfried, "former assistant to Alonzo Stagg of the College of the Pacific" and the Group's Athletic Director.

577/9th pilot Robert Tuchel recalls how rough the games were. "There was always an ambulance or two available and lots of guys got hurt." About halfway through the season, he says, combat air personnel were taken off the team because the likelihood of injury was so high.

The Team

Centers—Capt R. Couch (captain) and Sgt E. Woyden; *backs*—1/Lt J.P. Siegfried, Cpl W. Preston, Cpl J. Lavery, 1/Lt R. Boetcher, Sgt R. Valasquez, Sgt L. Brown, Sgt P. Moorehouse, 2/Lt J. Walker, Sgt N. Fisher, Sgt H. Campbell, Capt A. Alexander, Sgt G. Grant, 2/Lt G. Hay; *ends*—Sgt C. Kalschultz, 2/Lt S. Buccigrossi, Sgt R. Schweers, Pvt C. Baglin, Sgt C. Perkins, Sgt P. Jones, S/Sgt R. Postema, 1/Lt R. Tuchel; *tackles*—Pfc C. Hall, Sgt R. Katula, Sgt C. McRae, Sgt M. Martin; *guards*—Sgt L. Grant, Pvt A. Weeder, Cpl P. Hart, Pfc R. Blodgit.



On 27 Nov 1944, a large crowd watched Wendling play Tibbenham for the 2nd Air Division football championship.

TRANSFERS TO THE INFANTRY

During the winter of 1944-45, the 8th Air Force was ordered to provide men for the infantry. Airmen under age 31 who met the physical requirements were eligible. Those in the Regular Army Air Corps could only volunteer; they could not be "drafted." Anyone above buck sergeant would be reduced to that grade when transferred.

The 578th Sqdn history says volunteers were sought, but there was no guarantee they would be allowed to go; "that will have to be worked out with your section heads." And, in typical military fashion, "some of you may be selected to go, even though you have not volunteered."

At the end of January 1945, 118 men from ground units throughout the base left Wendling for infantry refresher training at the 12th Reinforcement Depot. Among them were cooks, aircraft armorers, truck drivers, munition workers, and laborers. Soon after their departure, "non-key" and then "key" personnel were ordered to get medical exams. Although poor vision and bad feet disqualified some candidates, most were found physically fit for infantry duty.

10th Station Complement Sqdn

The 10th's history describes this period of uncertainty, with "some desiring to go and others reluctant to leave their friends." Concurrently, infantry veterans were being assigned to the 392nd; they no doubt spoke freely about what life was like in the foxholes and front lines.

In February 1945, the 392nd was visited by a War Manpower Board (two colonels and a major). Per the 10th, "The prevalent rumor was that anyone found idle or with not enough work to keep him busy was a suitable candidate for the infantry. During their three-day stay, attendance at the Red Cross Aeroclub was practically non-existent. It was shortly after they left that the chosen few were picked for the Infantry. (The word 'shanghaied' will be substituted upon request.)"

The 10th's Utilities Section was hard-hit by February's "draft." It was therefore augmented by combat gunners who had flown "anywhere from 2 to 22 missions over Hitler's terrain." They were put on Detached Service with Utilities for about a month.

465th Sub Depot

On 13 Feb 1945, the 465th was tasked to furnish ten men for transfer. "Having been cut to rock bottom by last month's losses," their history says, "this new call-up posed a serious problem for the Commander. After lengthy consultations with department heads, ten men were chosen. It was with considerable reluctance that the Sub Depot submitted their names, but we all feel certain that they will give as good an account of themselves as Infantrymen as they did as Air Corps Specialists."

Cpl Carwin A. Thomason, a 465th Special Vehicle Operator, volunteered. His widow Henriette says that he wanted to see what our bombers had done to Germany. Despite being exposed to more dangerous situations, he told Henriette that the hardest thing for him to face was the sight of children begging for a piece of chocolate. Although his first love was always the Air Force, he did not regret his decision to transfer to the Infantry.

The final call-ups were in March 1945.

WINTERS IN



On 25 Dec 1944, Santa and helpers from the 392nd BG provided Christmas cheer to children from Dr. Barnardo's Home for Boys and Holm Hale Village School. Full story on page 9.



On 21 Jan 1945, S/Sgt William Miller (1825th Ordnance Co.) wrote a hopeful message in a very cold bomb dump.



Men in the 579th Sqdn ground crew huddle around the only stove in their barracks. Clockwise from lower left: Joe Cannon, John Kucta, Elmer Goler, Lou Darling and Harvey B. DeVoe Jr. (photo from Harvey DeVoe Jr.)



This photo was taken on 23 Dec 1943 during the Red Cross Aeroclub's grand opening. S/Sgt Tony Malavasic (on the accordion), S/Sgt Nevin Geary (at the piano), and "Clyde" (with the guitar) provided the music while the boys sang "Me and My Gal." Malavasic became a POW a few days later, on 31 Dec. He then played the accordion in Stalag 17B's musical group, The Tabletoppers.



Christmas trees decorated with chaff were a popular backdrop for group photos. Names of the men in the left photo are not known. The photo on the right shows 576th Sqdn officers; the roster is on page 10.

WENDLING



It did snow in England.



Bombsight mechanic T/Sgt George E. Pearson. The ornaments included failed amplifier tubes that the technicians had painted different colors. (Photo from George Pearson)



What the well-dressed combat airman was wearing in December 1943. (photo from Mrs. Carl Schwabel)



Rah, Rah, Wendling! No football game is complete without cheerleaders. These are Capt Clair Burtner, Gp Armament Officer (front) and Capt Bill Metz, Gp Ordnance Officer (back).



Unloading the Christmas mail, 1 Nov 1944



Having fun in the snow...working hard in the snow. The turret was attached to a cart that was towed around the field while the gunner practiced shooting.



A lot of work had to be done in the winter before the planes could fly. Photo at left, Pvt Theron Harding and Sgt Edward H. Ivey Jr. sweep snow off a plane's wings. Middle and right photos, machines and men clear the runways of snow and ice.

PX ITEMS

Anthology, <i>20th Century Crusaders</i> (hard cover book)	\$36.50	\$
Anthology, <i>20th Century Crusaders</i> (CD)	\$15.00	\$
Book, <i>Remembrance of the Missing</i> , by Col. Bob Vickers,	\$37.00	\$
Book, <i>The Liberators From Wendling</i> , by Col. Bob Vickers,	\$35.00	\$
Book, <i>Country Boy Combat Bomber Pilot</i> , by Col. Bob Tays,	\$13.50	\$
Book, <i>My Combat Diary</i> , by Walt Cranson (autographed),	\$13.50	\$
Cap, black, 392nd Bomb Group with gold braid, summer,	\$10.50	\$
Jacket, white nylon, with 392 Bomb Group and Crusader patches,	\$29.00	\$
(only 3 left, size Medium only)		\$
Print, "The Flying Crusader", reduced to	\$16.50	\$
Video from Albuquerque Reunion Symposium, The Early Days,	\$17.50	\$
Symposium Video, Ground Support Teams Prepare For A Mission,	\$17.50	\$
Symposium Video, The Tough Missions, Pt 1: Bremen, Keil, Gotha, Friedrichshafen; Pt 2:		
Politz, Berlin, Bernberg, Bingen, Wesel, both parts	\$27.50	\$
Postage (price includes U.S. postage; add \$5 for international mail)		\$
Total		\$

Send check payable to 392nd BGMA to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045

392nd BG Commemorative Coin (shown at right), \$13.00. Send check payable to 392nd BGMA to Bob Books, 1432 Little Creek Dr., Pensacola, FL 32506

Books available from Amazon.com:

- *After The Liberators, A Father's Last Mission, A Son's Lifelong Journey* by Bill McGuire, son of 579th navigator Bill McGuire Sr., who was KIA on 18 Mar 1944
- *Stalag 17B, Prisoner of War*, by LtCol Richard H. Hoffman (USAF, Ret), 579th ball turret gunner, POW 5 Nov 1943
- *Don't Call Me Hero* by Jim McGregor, 579th pilot
- *The Stardusters* by Jim Cassity, 579th copilot



Front and back of the Crusader coin. 1.75 inches round, hand-painted and gold-plated.

To the Officers and Men of AAF Station 118:

I extend to you my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, together with my heartfelt appreciation for the splendid manner in which you have performed your assignments during this last difficult year.

At the time and under these circumstances it would be folly to expect the high merriment and full happiness that in time of peace would normally attend on this occasion. The war is not over; the future holds out to us yet much pain and sacrifice.

But I think that there is no doubt in our minds that over and beyond that pain and sacrifice, the future has for us large rewards in store. It is for us in the coming year to put forth that added amount of effort in our work, that courage surpassing even what we have known before, toward the goal of victory for which so many, with those same hopes in their hearts, have already given the last full measure of devotion.

We can be merry in the knowledge that we have completed a year of service fully worthy of the people and the country we represent; we can be happy in the prospect of the grand prize that lies beyond the hard test of the final round of the conflict. But we must give out with more than we have before. We are prepared for the last, most crucial battles.

I wish you all safety, good health, and a multitude of military successes during the coming year.

LORIN L. JOHNSON, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding
December 1944

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member or spouse and provide a copy of the newspaper obituary if possible.

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The 392nd BGMA is presently engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. The website contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater memorial to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Jim Goar, 1555 N. Main St. #106, Frankfort, IN 46041

THE RED CROSS AEROCLUB

The articles below are from The Way It Was, Reminiscences About the ARC Aeroclub at Wendling by Birdie Schmidt Larrick. She was the Program Director at the Aeroclub from December 1943 to February 1945. Everyone on base benefited from her hard work. Birdie's complete story, including dozens of photos, is posted on www.b24.net.

GIVING THANKS

Thanksgiving was the 23rd of November in 1944. For many of us it was our 2nd Thanksgiving in the ETO. In light of the daily problems we faced, being miles from home, missing loved ones, the loss by death and those MIA around us and the visible destruction of war in England, what did we have for which to be thankful? Upon reflection, we weren't suffering on the Continent in some prison or refugee camp; we had enough to eat, clothes to wear, ways to keep warm; our loved ones and our country were not being ravaged by evil, power-hungry madmen. All we had to do was look around this England and see the legacies of war, be thankful this was not happening at home, be thankful to the English and other allies for standing up to dictators, be thankful we had the equipment and support from those at home, be thankful we had committed men and women to pull our weight in this struggle and be thankful for all those who had already given their lives in this conflict so that we could enjoy the freedom we had. In that atmosphere Thanksgiving was celebrated that night in the Aeroclub with free buffets set up in the Lounge, Card Room and Snack Bar.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

We woke up to a white Christmas day as a heavy hoar frost covered the ground. The fog that went with it caused the mission scheduled to be cancelled. A party had been planned originally for 130 orphans and refugees from Dr. Barnardo's Home for Boys in Lexham and the Holm Hale Village School children as well as those of our staff. The men on the base acted as hosts. The party was under Jane Mallory's supervision and in her report she related how it happened:

After picking up all the children in the nearby villages they were taken down to the perimeter where they all had the opportunity of seeing the inside of a Liberator. This in itself was quite a thrill; for most of them it was their first real closeup view of an aeroplane. At this point the GI's really had their hands full in keeping order among 160 very eager kids.

The children were then piled back in the trucks and brought back to the theater which is right next door to the Aeroclub. Here they were greeted by the base orchestra which rendered several appropriate numbers. Then the children put on a program of their own consisting of country dances, songs and recitations and this really brought the house down. They did an excellent job and to see some of the smaller children, age 5 and 6, breaking forth in song and dance, was a sight to behold.

The children were then shown several movie cartoons of POPEYE and MICKEY MOUSE, which they just loved. Throughout all this program, the children were climbing all over the laps of the GI's themselves, and it tugged at my heart to see the expressions on the faces of the GI's. Perhaps it being my first Christmas with the GI's I didn't really know what to expect—but it certainly did move me greatly to see their reactions to these underprivileged children.

After the movies were over, the children were brought over to the Aeroclub and seated at long tables in the Snack Bar—which incidentally was very attractively decorated with packages of candy wrapped up in red paper and holly and Christmas greens placed along the tables. For refreshments, we served tea, cakes and fruit jello. We had planned to have ice cream, but at the last minute the freezing unit broke down.

As it was late in the afternoon by this time, we drew the blackout curtains and lighted up the candles and at the psychological moment Santa Claus came bursting into the room—much to the glee and shouts of the youngsters. One of the GI's acted as our Father Christmas and did an excellent job of it.

After passing up and down the tables talking to all the children, he went up onto the stage where the Christmas tree was and piles of presents stacked up all around it. These presents were bought by money donated voluntarily by the GI's who insisted upon such a donation. There was a present for each individual child with his or her name on it.

Incidentally, this required a great deal of work before hand, purchasing 130 presents for the children that had been invited. I say 130 children because that was the original list that had been planned on—but when the children actually arrived we counted 160-odd noses. For a short while we were rather at a loss as to what to do about the present situation but after much scurrying around we hastily wrapped up enough extra packages of presents and candy for those that hadn't received any. So in the end it turned out all right and every child received an individual gift.

Santa Claus read out the name on each present and that child raised his hand and the package was taken to him by the GI's acting as hosts. It all ran off very smoothly and the children were very well behaved. With full stomachs and full of Christmas spirit the children were piled back into the trucks and taken home.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT

After a day like that, how did we follow it with a meaningful night in the Aeroclub? Jane's report continues:

On Christmas night, with the club filled to capacity, we had expected to have a show. However, at the last minute they disappointed us. So instead we played the recording of Dickens' CHRISTMAS CAROL with Ronald Colman. This was also a free food night in the Snack Bar. Plum pudding with rum sauce, fudge, nuts and apples were served. As I wandered around the club that night, I frequently came across small groups of GI's singing Christmas carols and appearing very happy. So many of them told me that it was the best Christmas they had ever spent away from home. That in itself was very gratifying and certainly more than enough compensation for all the work we had in preparing for it.

Battle of the Bulge

by Annette Tison

The 392nd flew no missions between 13 and 22 Dec 1944. Briefings were held almost every day but each sortie was scrubbed because of weather. During that time, the Battle of the Bulge began. My father, Pfc Robert H. Franke, was then in Büllingen, Belgium, with Service Battery, 776th Field Artillery Battalion. When the German army poured in, some of his buddies were captured; Dad was luckier and escaped. He still remembers those desperate times in the early days of the Bulge. Equally vivid in his memory is the morning "when the skies cleared up, there was bright sunshine, and high above us were the contrails of US bombers heading east. It was a tremendous boost to the morale of everyone on the ground." Dad says the sight of US bombers on that day still ranks as one of the best Christmas presents he ever got.

T/Sgt Gerald H. Cross

When the 392nd was able to fly, weather still had an impact. T/Sgt Gerald H. Cross, engineer on 2/Lt Cohn's crew in the 577th, says that one of the scariest episodes of the war happened during the Battle of the Bulge. "The weather was bad all the way and worse when we got to Wendling. The whole Group wandered around looking for the runway. We glimpsed it once but it was too late to break up to land. We assumed that the lead squadron had found it and proceeded to form up for landing. We also assumed that the low left had gone on through in regular procedure. We made a wide swing intending to land behind the low left. Somewhere some of the assumptions went away. Right in the middle of a mass of dense clouds there was a silent "whoom." Two big shadows burst, one on one side and one on the other, just for a split second. Then everyone started talking, 'Those were planes!!' Apparently ten ships going one way and ten ships going the other way in a cloud bank at about 1500 ft altitude had narrowly missed one another. It was unbelievable. The aftermath and afterthought left most of us a little weakened."

1/Lt Everett Isakson

576th Sqdn navigator 1/Lt Ike Isakson has another weather-related memory of the Bulge: "Each crew member had been issued a pile-lined parka which was never used on missions. After the first cold snap we resorted to wearing the parkas around the base. It was not long before the order came out that parkas would not be worn around the base. Then it was back to wearing the less warm and protective leather A-2 jackets. During the Battle of the Bulge, our second wool blanket was seized for troops battling on the snow-covered ground. It was then the parkas came into use as an extra cot cover."

Cpl Tom Perry

576th armorer Cpl Tom Perry remembers those days for a different reason. "During the Battle of the Bulge, we were alerted (for about 11 or 12 days) to load anti-personnel fragmentation bombs. This load consisted of 52 clusters of 6 bombs each, weighing about 150 pounds per cluster. They were to be dropped on enemy troops in very close proximity to our own GIs, so there could be no cloud cover at the target area. As the frags were already fused in their crates, they had to be handled very carefully. We carried them

to the bombers on our trailers in packing crates, removed them from the crates, attached shackles to them and hooked the shackles to the bomb racks in the bomb bay. When the mission was scrubbed, the process was reversed and we removed them from the planes, repacked them in their crates, and returned them to the bomb dump. So we unloaded, repacked, and returned them to the dump day after day until at last there was good visibility and to the relief of our aching backs the planes took off and dropped them."

578th Sqdn History

The 578th Sqdn history for December 1944 provides a good summary of the contrasts that month—cold weather and holiday warmth, Christmas cheer and bad war news:

"Christmas was white. For several days, the temperature was low enough to cover the ground, barracks, huts, and shrubbery with hoar frost. Several coats were applied, garnishing Site Six in the habit of the holiday from time immemorial.

For soldiers undergoing their second Christmas in the European Theater, the occasion was full of cheer. Gift packages in record number provided centerpieces for gastronomic orgies. Out of their November pay, the men contributed several pounds to an American Red Cross party for children from nearby orphanages and schools. In T/Sgt John Lutz's EM Mess One, Christmas dinner was served to the ground personnel by officers, from Major George C. Player Jr. down, and the first three enlisted grades. For once the tables were covered with cloths. Candlelight, chaff—substituting for traditional icicles—and a huge Christmas tree provided color.

Communiques from the front telling of German successes and atrocities during December resulted in a new determination among the men. The approaching holiday season somehow heightened it. The contrast between the conditions at the front and the comparative comforts of a well-established air base quelled gripes and complaints. Combat crews and ground personnel both voiced regret when, on Christmas Day, a mission was scrubbed."

Roster for photo of 576th Sqdn officers (page 6):

Standing left to right: Lt Caruso, Asst Operations Officer; 1/Lt Robert E. Nichols, Supply Officer; 1/Lt Robert S. Littleton, Engineering Officer; 1/Lt Robert W. Foos, Turret Officer; 2/Lt Charles H. Potts Jr., Communications Officer; Capt Olen F. Levell Jr., Operations Officer (and later 576th CO); Capt Edwin T. Wood, Intelligence Officer; 1/Lt Raymond Bianucci, PFF Officer; 1/Lt Jack H. Whittle, Ordnance Officer; 2/Lt Walter Neustadt Jr., Asst Intelligence Officer. Kneeling L-R: 2/Lt Karl R. Scott, Navigation Officer; Capt Milton Lerman, Adjutant; 2/Lt Donald H. Robins, Technical Supply Officer; Maj Edmund R. Dilworth, Executive Officer; Lt Freeman, Asst Navigation Officer; Lt Pennypacker, Training Officer; 2/Lt Joseph E. Micksch Jr., then 576th Armament Officer, later 578th Bombsight Maintenance Officer.

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Mervyn Jones, father of 392nd BG researcher Ben Jones, extends best wishes to Crusaders and their families during this holiday season.



## Back in 1944...

This item from the 10th Station Complement Squadron history for November 1944 shows how different life was then:

"This month has seen the morale of the personnel of the Squadron fluctuate with the rise and fall of Christmas parcels from friends and relatives back in the good old U.S.A. One of the big differences this year, however, in the facial and mental expressions of the men as they opened their packages was the whoops of joy and festivity when they would come upon a carton of cigarettes or spare packages of them. Brand and favorite brands of cigarettes were of no object as it is now an impossibility for a ground crew member to purchase fags through the Post Exchange and the English type of cigarette are definitely not up to the standards of Camels or Chesterfields or the likes. In fact if the boys went to town and spent a half crown a pack for Players or Woodbines they would be dead broke in no time.

This situation of 'no smokes' for the ground crew men is really becoming acute. It is fairly difficult for a man who has smoked for the past 20 years or less to just all of a sudden stop smoking and break away from the nicotine habit (although there is no doubt that is the best road to long wind and good health). Some of the more heavy type of smokers are already showing their nerves etc because of the lack of a weed. At any rate this cigarette shortage has really brought out the pipes and all types, varieties and models are floating around the station.

It is a common sight now to see a man riding a bicycle in a cloud of blue smoke with a pipe clenched firmly between his teeth. It is a wonder that some of the enlisted personnel haven't landed in the hospital due to sighting an officer at the last moment and then saluting with the right hand and grabbing his pipe from his mouth with the left hand while the bicycle rolls merrily along its way caring neither for the officer or the enlisted man and his pipe.

The two men from the 10th who are assigned to the Station Post Exchange have really put in a trying period of time listening to the complaints of the men due to the cigarette shortage. About the only answer they have is to tell the beefers to go see the Chaplain and as an oddity the Chaplain is the Post Exchange Officer. The T.S. tickets are practically all punched out by now."

Cpl Charles McEver and Pfc Frank Christian were the 10th's harassed Post Exchange workers. "Charlie vows that if he ever hears the name 'Camels' or 'Luckies' on civvy street he will haul off and maim the offender. It seems that these two very difficult brands of cigarettes are the most wanted by enlisted men of this base. It's rough in the ETO."

The 10th's history for January 1945 brought the happy news that "cigarette rations were increased from the five-pack-a-week plan to the old seven-pack plan."

### Other Units

The 578th Sqdn history for November 1944 noted that 1/Lt Robert C. Williams, Technical Supply Officer, had

constructed a cigarette roller "as a contribution toward eliminating the butt shortage."

Cigarettes were part of parties and celebrations since the earliest days in Wendling. The 465th Sub Depot history notes that on Christmas Day 1943, "The turkey dinner was served in the elaborately-decorated mess hall on which each table was a burning candle and Christmas tree, mimeographed menu, candy and cigarettes."

Similar decorations were found at the Combat Officers Mess. 579th Sqdn pilot 1/Lt Harrison Cassell wrote in his journal for that day, "We had our club decorated with Holly, which is quite plentiful around here. Also some pine trees. Had turkey for supper with fruit cocktail, mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy, cookies and pineapple pie. They gave us all a package of cig's and then charged us 5 shillings when we went out the door."

Histories for both the 1287th Ordnance Company and the 1217th Quartermaster Service Company mention parties where cigarettes were served as part of the refreshments.

How times have changed.

## Odds and Ends

**From the Group's History:** In late 1944, the 392nd decided to have all its lead crews in one squadron. (Heretofore, each squadron had its own lead crews.) On 19 Nov, the lead crews of all squadrons were transferred into the 579th Sqdn, which then divided its non-lead crews among the 576th, 577th, and 578th Squadns.

### Per 2AD Instruction No. 35-13 dated 21 January 1945:

Relief of combat crew personnel will be the responsibility of Group Commanders. Combat crew personnel will be eligible for relief from immediate further combat duty upon the completion of sorties or hours as follows:

|                                        |            |
|----------------------------------------|------------|
| Lead crew members                      | 30 sorties |
| Radar Counter Measures (RCM) operators | 30 sorties |
| All other crew members                 | 35 sorties |
| Fighter pilots                         | 300 hours  |

**From the 576th Sqdn History:** S/Sgt Kenneth B. Smith was awarded the Silver Star for remaining in his tail turret, with both hands frozen and operating his guns over the target of Bremen, 13 Nov 1943, and on the route back. As a result of this incident, one finger was amputated and he lost the use of one entire hand thus requiring his removal from combat flying service. He was flying with 1/Lt Alfred Scarlata and crew.

**From the 577th Sqdn History:** On Christmas Eve 1944, some of the communication men roused out Capt William T. Booth, the Sqdn Communication Officer, about 2 a.m. and literally dragged him over to their barracks. He tried to play possum but to no avail. However, he proved he had a strong stomach by putting beer on top of scotch whiskey without any ill effects.

**From the 578th Sqdn History:** On 8 Jan 1945, the station celebrated the third anniversary of the Eighth Air Force. An Honor Guard, commanded by Maj Robert E. Lane, was drawn up in formation in front of Gp HQ as personnel stood at attention for the Star Spangled Banner, played over the public address system, followed by two minutes of silence.



## THE 392ND MEMORIAL AT WENDLING

November 9, 2008

Mervyn Jones took these photos during this year's Remembrance Day ceremony at our Memorial. Representing the 392nd were Kathy Milby and husband Jim. Kathy, the daughter of Carroll and Mabel Cheek, laid a wreath on behalf of the Group. Also present were Tom and Jill Scott, Trustees of the 392nd's Memorial Fund. Clockwise from upper left: Lay-Reader Tom Butler-Stoney leads the service. Jim Milby raises the US flag at the end of the ceremony while Tom Scott looks on. Royal British Legion Standard Bearer Stephen Lynn salutes the Memorial. L-R, Jim Milby, Jill Scott, Kathy Milby, and Tom Scott. Ernie Parke, who lived just outside the base when the 392nd was there.



## CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Tom Perry,  
576th Sqdn Armorer

I remember as a teenager singing Christmas carols with a group of friends. Each Christmas Eve we would go around the neighborhood to the homes of sick and elderly people and sing in front of their homes. (I had a different definition of "elderly" at that time.)

Still at this season of the year, we rejoice as we celebrate the birth of Christ the Savior, the baby of Bethlehem who was born in a manger.

Many times His birth was predicted in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah said, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

To those of you of the Hebrew faith, I wish you a joyous Hanukkah.

My prayer and wish for you all is that you have a merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous New Year.

*Almighty God, Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in Your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence there to rejoice Eternally. Amen. — Composed by 576th pilot the Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, retired Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.*

## ∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Joseph E. Pyle, 576, Sept 29, 2000  
Dr. Harry A. Kalionzes, 576, April 18, 2007  
Woodrow R. Adkins, 578, Nov. 21, 2001  
Annunzio Legato, 577, Nov. 18, 2004  
Peter Mamukari/Karis, 578, Nov. 21, 2007

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Fairfax Station, VA 22039

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