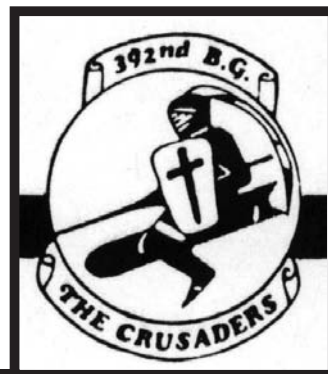




ANATOMY OF A MISSION, PART 4

After landing, crewmen deplaned and took off their flight gear at the hardstands. Gunners removed their weapons from the a/c; they were usually cleaned after interrogation. Engineers and pilots reported known mechanical problems and battle damage on Form 1A while other air and ground personnel made a visual inspection for additional damage.

Logs maintained by S27, German Voice Interpreters, were picked up at the hardstands for immediate transfer to 2AD. Photo lab technicians removed cameras from planes and began developing the film right away.

Interrogation

Trucks took the men to the briefing room, which was now set up for interrogation. Every crew was checked in by an S-2 clerk who verified each man's name and position. Any changes from the original crew load lists were reported on a "Sortie Record" to ensure that everyone got credit for

completing the mission. This report also named crews who would not get credit because they aborted.

Personal equipment (parachutes, flying suits, Mae Wests, escape kits and oxygen masks) was turned in, as were bombardier and navigator folders. Then, the exhausted airmen got refreshments, served by Red Cross personnel. Coffee, juice, donuts, sandwiches, and a shot of whiskey were available. Engineer Gerald Cross notes that the 577th Sqdn greeted its returning crews with 100 proof Pennsylvania bourbon served in glass tumblers. In his memoir, *Country Boy, Combat Bomber Pilot*, Robert H. Tays, 578th, recalled, "After each mission, we were served a double shot of straight bourbon for medicinal purposes. Not having eaten since early in the morning and with empty

stomachs, the effect was quite pronounced."

Aircrews first reported "hot news"—details on convoys, a/c in distress, etc.—that needed to be transmitted right away.

Crews were then thoroughly questioned. Using a pre-printed Interrogation Form, the debriefing officer noted crew comments about their bombing attack (time, altitude, heading, number of bombs dropped on target or jettisoned, and results, if seen); personnel injuries and plane damage; equipment malfunctions or failures; enemy a/c encounters (including tactics and unusual weapons used); friendly

fighter support (time, place and effectiveness); and locations and types of flak encountered.

579th navigator Red Sprowls notes, "It was always very important to know where and when the Group encountered flak since the Germans were using mobile guns mounted on rail cars and they continued to move their

guns. We knew that the major cities were well-protected but intelligence always wanted the extent or any changes in the intensity of the flak. This was of course used in plotting the future route in and out of targets. These flak areas were plotted on the lead navigator and Mickey operators' maps and were extremely important if the Group was forced off the plotted course due to weather or error."

After all crews had been questioned, their responses were compiled and Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) drafted.

Navigators turned in their logs and bombardiers completed bombing reports. Lead crew command pilots, navigators, and bombardiers wrote detailed accounts about what they did and why. If a tactical error had been made (such as bombing

See MISSION on page 6



Crews are interrogated on 16 Jul 1944 after their return from Saarbrücken.



392nd BGMA Officers

President

Jim Goar

1555 N. Main St., #106
Frankfort, IN 46061
goar@accs.net
(765) 654-4609



Vice-President

Bob Books

books@b24.net



Chairman, 392nd BG Memorial

Carroll W. Cheek



Secretary/Treasurer

Annette Tison

9107 Wood Pointe Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
dtison5401@aol.com
(703) 690-8540



PX Chairman

Bill McCutcheon

20620 Milton Ct.
Brookfield, WI 53045
billm@b24.net
(262) 784-5606



Editors

Annette Tison

Jim Goar

FROM THE EDITOR

It's Renewal Time! If there's a "12" on the mailing label after your name, it means your membership expires this month. Please renew as soon as possible. The form on page 4 has all the details.

Donations. Many thanks to everyone who has donated to the 392nd BGMA. We are grateful to Life Members who heeded Pres. Jim Goar's call to action.

8AFHS Reunion. The 8th Air Force Historical Society met in San Antonio, Texas, from 3-7 October 2012. About 250 people attended. From the 392nd were Eldon A. "Bud" Lindahl, David and Renee Greene, Tom Perry and Bob Books. During the business meeting, a motion to discontinue Life Memberships was approved.

A Familiar Name. While reading the editorial page of *The Washington Post* on 3 Nov 2012, I noticed that a columnist quoted Don E. Fehrenbacher to support his point. A well-known historian on America in the 19th century, Don taught American History at Stanford University from 1953-1984. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1979 and the Lincoln Prize (the highest American award for Civil War studies) in 1997. Before he did all that, though, he was a 577th Sqdn navigator on 1/Lt Philip Anundson's crew. Don completed his combat tour in August 1944, primarily aboard #42-95151, Monotonous Maggie.

Series Ends. This issue has the last installment of my "Anatomy of a Mission" series. If you have additional information, questions, or an anecdote to share, please let me know. Many thanks to Red Sprowls for suggesting I write about this topic.

PX Items. Perfect gifts for any Crusader!

●Cap—new design. 392nd BG Liberator embroidered on front, Crusader logo on back (see photo below). Velcro straps for easy size adjustment. Made in the USA. Khaki. \$25

●Jacket. White, nylon, with 392nd and Crusader patches. Only one left, size medium. \$20

●Book.* *The Liberators From Wendling*, by Col. Bob Vickers, \$35

●Book.* *Remembrance of the Missing*, by Col. Bob Vickers, \$35

●Book.* *My Combat Diary*, by 578th copilot Walt Cranson (autographed), \$10

●Book.* *Country Boy, Combat Bomber Pilot*, by 578th pilot Col. Bob Tays, \$10. Only two copies left.

●CD only. 392nd BG Anthology, *20th Century Crusaders*. CD includes the 8th AF chronology, European War Strategic Bombing Survey, and WWII posters, \$15.

●392nd BG photos, 73 minutes, available on DVD, \$10

●White 392nd BG patches, 3-4" diameter, only 4 available, \$10 each.

●Print, *Liberators from Wendling*, by Frederick T. Searle. Image size, 11.5"H x 16.5"W, total size 20.5"H x 21.5"W. Depicts five olive drab 392nd BG B-24s in flight, including #42-7478, P-Bar, The Flying Crusader. Although the caption says they are "En Route to Berlin, 18 March 1945," the planes are actually from several periods in the 392nd's history. Signed by the artist. \$20.

Prices include US postage; add \$5 for international mail. Due to limited quantities, items marked with an asterisk are available only to 392nd BGMA members or relatives. We also reserve the right to limit the number of books sold to any purchaser. For inventory questions, contact Bill McCutcheon. To order, send a check payable to 392nd BGMA to Annette Tison.

●Five DVDs: Three panels discussions on individual DVDs, filmed at the 1993 Albuquerque reunion: Ground Support Teams Prepare for a Mission; The Tough Missions (Bremen, Kiel, Gotha, Friedrichshafen, Politz, Berlin, Bernberg, Bingen and Wesel); The Early Days; The October 1989 Return to Wendling; and Highlights from the the Reunion. DVDs now sold individually for \$20 each, including US shipping and handling. For international shipping, add \$10 per order. For questions about the DVDs, contact Bob Books. To order, send a check payable to 392nd BGMA to Annette Tison.

●392nd BG Commemorative Coin, \$13.00. Send a check payable to 392nd BGMA to Annette Tison.

Contact information for Bill, Bob and Annette is in the box at the upper left of this page.



President's Message



When Jill Scott's photos of the Nov. 11 Remembrance Day celebration at Wendling arrived, I was gripped with nostalgia. I remembered the return visits, particularly the early ones when we learned that the Brits were as glad to see us then as they were in 1943 when we arrived. We were to be a part of the hammer that was to pound the German dream of world dominance into rubble.

Carroll Cheek, 578th pilot, witnessed the sure demise of the proud monument that had been established in the immediate post war, the brainchild of Col Joseph Bush, the 392nd's Ground Executive. It was slowly sinking into the rich Norfolk soil, without a foundation and a suitable park-like setting.

Carroll put both his means and his executive ability to work to create the magnificent edifice that memorializes our fallen comrades. He and the late Col Lawrence Gilbert, our last commander and CEO of the 392BGMA, successfully rallied the Crusaders to raise enough money to re-build the memorial and to create a trust fund to insure its maintenance.

Tom and Jill Scott, resident landowners and prominent farmers, donated land adjacent to the existing location and also furnished labor and supervision to the project. They and their family are the memorial's trustees.

One momentous visit was shortly after 9/11 when the 392nd again crossed the Atlantic in the face of the enemy. Osama Bin Laden and his bloodthirsty henchmen would have thought that our flight was the juiciest of targets. We were there to take part in the dedication of the new Norwich Central Library which also houses the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library. The Central Library had been destroyed by fire a few years earlier.

One incident during one of our visits stands out in my memory. We were all assembled at the Memorial, listening to the Reverend Jonathon Boston, Litcham church vicar, conduct the ceremony. A sudden rain storm arrived and all could clearly hear, above the din of the falling rain, Reverend Boston's voice delivering the closing prayer.

Annabelle and I wish all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Blue Skies,
Jim Goar

THE 392ND BG IS REMEMBERED

About 50 people attended the Remembrance Day service at the Group Memorial in Beeston. Jill Scott wrote that it was "A lovely morning for once! The 392nd wreath had some really deep red roses and was particularly good this time."

392nd BGMA President Jim Goar said, "It warms my heart to realize how much the memorial means to the Beeston community. And I also realize how much Tom and Jill Scott and family contributed and continues to contribute to the memory of our two-year stay in your midst."

David Parnell reports from Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, that "At 11am under clear blue skies, we observed two minutes



The Remembrance Day ceremony at the 392nd BG Memorial. Wendy Carter shows the wreath she had laid on behalf of the 392nd; two poppy wreaths were laid on behalf of the parish and the Rainbows and Brownies pack.

silence to remember each individual member of 2/Lt John D. Ellis's crew. A wreath, ten wooden crosses and a clutch of flowers were presented and laid in their honour." They crashed 12 Aug 1944, with everyone killed.

In Sheringham, Norfolk, Doug Willies "read out the names of the five men from 2/Lt Colby Waugh's crew who lost their lives on January 4, 1944. As ever, we placed a posy of red poppies on the Memorial along with a number of British Legion crosses on behalf of family members in the States—as has become customary. We also maintain two US flags either side of the Memorial and make sure that they are not forgotten."

John Gilbert represents us well in Norfolk. In September, he was invited to attend a ceremony at St. Nicholas Church, Dersingham (near Sandringham, the Queen's Estate) in honor of Norfolk men killed during the Battle of Gallipoli in WWI. John was asked to display his 392nd BG memorabilia in the village hall, where everyone met after the service. He was the only one given this singular privilege. In November, he took Lloyd Tate (son of 579th tail gunner S/Sgt George Tatelbaum) and family around Station 118. Lloyd said, "I have been imagining what [the base] was like since I was a kid, so to actually see and touch it was just out of this world." This month, John spoke about the 392nd BG at Brooke Village Hall in aid of the Seething WWII Control Tower (448th BG).

Heartfelt thanks to these individuals and to everyone who perpetuates the 392nd's legacy.



On 10 Nov 2012, the municipal airport in Eureka, Kansas, was renamed in honor of 579th Sqdn pilot 2/Lt William M. Milliken, killed in action during the mission to Bernberg on 7 Jul 1944. He was born in nearby Wichita. About 80 people attended the ceremony.

A Christmas Story

by George Michel, 576th Sqdn radio operator



Little did I realize as we started out on our mission to Munich on 11 July 1944 that a Christmas gift would eventually be a part of it.

As I recall, a couple of hours into the mission, our pilot, 1/Lt Siegvart J. Robertson, was having problems with the #4 engine. The pitch of the prop could not be controlled and therefore it couldn't be feathered. As a result, the prop was windmilling and violently vibrating the entire plane.

He was able to keep up with the formation by pulling more power from the other three engines but we were using gas like crazy. We all agreed with Sig that we had to deliver our bombs. Flak was intense over the target and the #3 engine was hit, losing oil and overheating. It had to be shut down as well. We could not keep

up with the formation with only the #1 and #2 engines in operation. Control of the plane was also very difficult.

That's when we as a crew decided that, after what we had done to the Munich marshalling yards—and with 10/10 cloud cover beneath us—we had no idea into what we might be jumping other than very angry Germans. We hoped that Sig could somehow keep us in the air.

We then had to admit that we didn't have enough gas to get back to England and that the mechanical condition of the plane was so bad we wouldn't make it regardless.

Four P-51s, led by "Hurry Home Honey," answered our call for fighter cover and escorted us toward Switzerland as evidenced by the Alps poking through the cloud cover.

Sig made an almost miraculous wheels-down landing. The nose wheel collapsed almost immediately and the plane stopped about 200 meters from the Rhine River on a grass-covered glider field at Altenrhein. Soldiers in forest green uniforms surrounded us. Had we made it to Switzerland or were we in Germany?

As a precaution, navigator 2/Lt John S. Gates fired a couple of .45 rounds into the bombsight to destroy it. I hit the button that detonated the IFF radio over the bomb bay. It scared the devil out of the gunners as they were scrambling to get out of the plane.

The next thing that I had to do as radio operator was destroy my sheets of radio codes. Printed on rice paper, they were supposed to be chewed up and swallowed. I discovered that was easier said than done. I soon had a mouth full of "fiber" that just wouldn't go down and I had pages and pages yet to

See STORY on page 5

392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label. Your membership status is shown directly after your name. "12" means your membership expires in December 2012 and must be renewed as soon as possible. LM means Life Member and FRND means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. You may also join or renew on-line at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/join.htm>.

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

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

If a spouse, friend, or relative served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: _____

Dues: [] \$25/year if you want to receive the *News* by postal mail OR [] \$20/year for receipt by email
Please feel free to renew for multiple years! Just let us know what your wishes are.

Hardship Waiver []

DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

STORY from page 4

go. I tried to get the pilot to help me but he had things to do as well. So I started a fire to burn the remainder. Sig screamed at me to put out the d___ fire. His big boot came over my shoulder and immediately stomped it out. Then he told me to look past the bomb bay bulkhead, about two feet behind me.

There, to my surprise, high octane aviation gas was running out of leaks in the wing tanks as a result of our less-than-conventional landing. If fumes had gotten to my flight deck fire, we'd all have been blown to who knows where.

We were in Switzerland! The enlisted men were eventually moved to a camp at the village of Wengen, near Interlaken and in the area of the Jungfrau Mountain (made famous in the book *Heidi*). Incidentally, it is a thrill to hear alpine horns being played and the sound reverberating off the sides of the mountains. Wengen was a good place to keep internees (the term for POWs in a neutral country) as the only practical way in or out of the village was by cog railway.

As Christmas 1944 approached, we heard more and more about the tough economic conditions that many Swiss families were experiencing due to the lack of tourists, and Wengen was no exception. It suddenly dawned on me that normally around home at that time of the year, Christmas baskets were being put together for those in need. So, why not here in Wengen? After all, we were uninvited "guests" of the Swiss but better to be an Internee than a POW!

But, where to start? I was billeted in the Regina Hotel in Wengen. The Swiss, with a mind for using facilities and money wisely, had decided that rather than build barricades and stockades and basic housing for their internees—and knowing that the tourist business was pretty much at zero—simply picked a couple of out-of-the-way villages in ski country (Adelboden and Wengen) and designated some of their older, little-used hotels as "barracks." The US government was charged for our lodging.

I discussed the Christmas basket idea with buddies at the Regina and there was plenty of support. Knowing that, I went to see Herr Gertsch (who owned the local sport and ski equipment store) and explained what we wanted to do. He was very understanding, willing to help, and asked me to come back the next day by which time he would have selected a family from the several most in need in Wengen.

I hurried back to the Regina and before supper was served that evening, explained to the other internees what was on deck. With fellow internee George Hedrick helping me, then and there, the immediate response was a collection of enough Swiss Francs to make it a GO project which was a definite approval of the idea. (We were being paid in Swiss Francs while we were interned—and flight pay at that.)

I took the money to Herr Gertsch the next morning and he did a whale of a job using the collected funds. Well, let me put it this way: HE DID WONDERS! The gift was ready for delivery that evening, 23 Dec 1944, with the family selected and their address noted.

I contacted the Swiss Sergeant who was in charge of the guards who tried to make sure that we didn't escape. He promised to have a guard at the hotel at a given time to go with me and Joe Burdette (assistant engineer on our crew and a Georgia gentleman as was our pilot, Sig Robertson). It was all that Joe and I could do to lift this huge laundry

basket full of food and small presents.

Carrying the heavy basket between us, Joe and I went to the north end of the village where, in front of the old Bellevue Hotel, the guard started to carefully pick his way down the side of the slope toward the Latterbrunnen Valley. After what seemed like an eternity, he stopped by a chalet (not exactly the brilliant and beautiful kind that you see in tourist brochures about Switzerland) and knocked on the door with the butt of his rifle.

By now, it was totally dark and the man who answered the door only saw an armed soldier standing there. He was scared, to say the least. I moved up to the door. With the basic German that I had learned to help me when I was going to try to escape, I explained that we had some gifts for his family. He then motioned us to come in.

So far, so good. It was a very dark interior with a ceiling maybe seven feet high. Two oil lamps added what light they could to the room but much of the light was coming from a very cheerfully burning and crackling fire in the fireplace at the far end of the room. The air in the room also gave an indication that, in another part of the chalet, one or more animals (probably cows) were being kept.

The man who answered the door had calmed down and he seemed to understand my explanation of how we internees appreciated what the Swiss had done for us and how they were keeping us safe. We all wished him and his family a very Merry Christmas. He was certainly excited about the basket full of "things."

Suddenly, he walked toward the fireplace and motioned to us while saying "Bitte, kommen sie hier," as I remember it. There, in front of the fireplace where the warmth just radiated all around, was a manger (cattle feed box, very much in keeping with the animal smell that I had noticed when we came in) set up on a couple of small sawhorses.

Our new friend beckoned us to come even closer and then pointed into the manger. There, all wrapped up in blankets, on a bed of straw, was a new born baby boy.

I was unable to say anything for a few moments as I kept thinking, "But this is like baby Jesus in a manger so many years ago in Bethlehem." It was a thrilling and wonderful moment for Joe and me. No, we weren't Shepherds from the fields nor were we Wise Men from afar, but we had been given a "gift" that we would never forget.

FROM THE FILES

The 578th Sqdn history for February 1945: "...on the Feb. 26th raid to Berlin, Lieutenant Tokarsky, referred to by his friends as the 'Mad Roosian,' flew his bomber from coast-in to Berlin with one engine out, being heard to announce, 'I have three engines and I'll use them all up before I abort!' " His plane on that mission was #42-51205, Star Swinger."

392nd BG Memo of 13 Feb 1945: "Bicycles must not be ridden at night without being equipped with both front and rear lights which are operational. Two men must not ride on the same bicycle. Bicycles must be ridden single file at all times. Bicycles must not be ridden in a reckless manner. Bicycle riders must not hold onto vehicles which are in motion. Bicycle brakes must be in good working condition at all times. Owners name and bicycle registration number must be painted on rear fender of each bicycle."

MISSION from page 1

the wrong target), the process was especially intense.

Finally, crews were released to go to the mess hall or to their barracks. For men who had just returned from a mission and knew they faced many more, sleep was difficult.

Reports

Once the strike photos were developed, photo interpreters and intelligence personnel analyzed where the bombs impacted and likely damage caused. The information helped planners at 2AD and 8AF evaluate the mission's success.

A Telephone Flash Report (giving number of a/c airborne, dispatched, and attacking plus the number of a/c that did not bomb and why, personnel casualties, and number of planes with battle damage) was phoned to Division. Supporting details were sent by teletype to both Wing and Division as soon as possible. MACRs were finalized and submitted as was a detailed description of encounters with enemy aircraft and flak. Aircraft damage reports were prepared and photos taken.



1/Lt Sidney Cohen's crew, 578th, took this photo at 21,000 feet during the NoBall mission on 26 Mar 1944. The 392nd's Photo Interpreter labeled it "B24 Down." The photo may show 578th 1/Lt Robert E. Fletcher's crew leaving the formation after flak killed bombardier 1/Lt Garland W. Judd and wounded tail gunner S/Sgt Joseph McNiel. Capt Edwin Reed was the 392nd's Photo Interpreter until he was transferred to 2BD around May 1944; his replacement was T/Sgt Paul Wright.

S-2 personnel compiled the crews' reports and prepared a Formation Diagram at Assembly and Target and a list of turret and gun malfunctions for Group Operations. When all work was done, they returned target and map material to the S-2 Building.

1825th Ordnance Co. Commander Capt Jack Teufel reported the number of a/c departed, returned early, attacked target or were lost; the number of bombs loaded, expended on target, jettisoned, returned, or unaccounted for; the number of machine gun rounds expended by a/c that reached the target or aborted; and the quantity aboard a/c lost or missing.

The data reflected how bad the mission was. On 4 Jan 1944, the 23 Libs that reached the target expended 20,850 rounds against 50 attacking enemy a/c. On 13 Feb 1944,

the 24 ships bombing the target fired only 2,332 rounds.

Ground Crews

After the planes were at their hardstands, maintenance crew personnel swarmed around their assigned Liberators to identify and start repair work. The line chief notified his squadron Engineering Officer of major problems and together they decided which planes could not fly the next mission.



L-R: 578th Power Turret Specialists S/Sgt John L. Kocevar, Sgt Kenneth W. Lintz, S/Sgt Hortis D. Hanna, and Airplane Armorer Cpl Andrew Pedeski wait for the planes to return.

579th turret mechanic Bernard Sender wrote, "You started working as soon as the planes landed. Air mechanics, armorers, and radiomen all headed out about the same time and assembled on 'The Line' to wait. When the crews and planes touched down, we'd go over and talk to the gunners to see what problems they'd had with equipment: Were the guns jamming? Did the turret motors behave properly? And so on. When the B-24s started coming over with the Emerson turrets in the nose, you'd talk to the guys up front—the bombardier and navigator.



Pvt Rudy Santelli (2nd from left) and other 577th sheet metal workers with their repair shop, "The Hole Chasers." They moved it from plane to plane to patch holes caused by flak, bullets, and rockets. #42-95079, Puss 'N Boots, is in the background.

See MISSION on page 7

MISSION from page 6

"If it was three o'clock in the afternoon that the mission ended, you started immediately and worked right through the night. Let's say the dome on the top turret took some flak or it cracked... it had to be replaced. As winter drew near, the sun went down earlier. Let me tell you, it could



578th crew chief T/Sgt Lowell D. Hale paints bombs showing missions completed on #42-7624, Flying 8 Ball.

be bitter cold at night over there, and we did all our work outside. You couldn't put spotlights up either, because they never knew when Jerry was coming around.

"We didn't work by the clock ... we didn't belong to a union, all right. When the task was completed, you'd go back to the barracks to get some sleep. That might not be until eight o'clock in the morning. If the mission

was six hours, then we'd have to get back to the line when the planes returned that afternoon. To make things a little more efficient, they finally moved us to a farmhouse that was right on the line."

Pvt Rudy Santelli was a sheet metal worker in the 577th Sqdn. Many years later, he told his son that he saw "countless men pulled from B-24s shredded by enemy fire" and "the floors of some of the returning planes were running with blood."

Many ground crewmen felt the Libs belonged to them and were only "loaned" to the air crews. And, although air and ground crews rarely mingled, there was a special bond between crew chief and pilot.

T/Sgt Lowell D. Hale kept #42-100187, Pallas Athene (The GI Jane) in great condition for 578th pilot Neely Young and crew. According to Neely, Hale "was the best crew chief in the 8th Air Force" and "he knew the plane from nose to tail." The last thing Neely always saw as he left his revetment was T/Sgt Hale giving him a thumbs up; he was always standing at the revetment when they returned. Neely says simply, "My crew and I owe our lives to him."

576th Inspector Stanley White noted, "The most forlorn [ground] crew could be found at the empty parking area of a plane that did not return."

He also wrote, "The mechanical work on the line was basically a remove-and-replace operation. There were a number of specialists available such as electricians, instrument repairmen, sheet metal workers, propeller specialists, and armament workers. Major repairs were performed at the 465th Sub Depot."

2nd Bomb Division and 8th Air Force

Intelligence Officers analyzed strike photos and teletype reports from all their Groups. Questions or requests for more data were relayed to the Groups. A preliminary assessment was sent to 8AF with updates as new information was received.

8AF compiled all the data to determine how effective the bombing had been and whether another attack would be necessary. Details on enemy defenses were used to

update intelligence records. Analysis at the highest level continued even as the individual Groups and airmen were flying other missions.

The Weight of Command

Col Lawrence Gilbert, 392nd Operations Officer and eventually Commanding Officer, wrote, "We went over to England in 1943. I was a young 25-year-old with what might be considered a pretty heavy responsibility. At times I couldn't believe the decisions that were entrusted to me; then I'd look around at the upper echelon who were only a few years older than me. It was very sobering experience and it's very difficult to put into words what I felt when we lost crews. You didn't dare let it dwell in your mind for long; the chances are that by the time you found out you had lost six crews, you were well into planning for the next operation."

465th Sub Depot

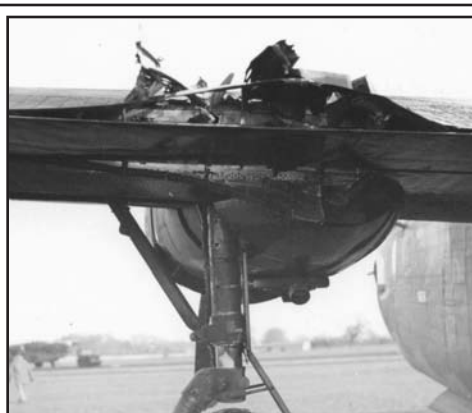
Modifications to a/c as required by higher authority and major repairs due to battle damage and crashes were done by the 465th Sub Depot. The unit history for January 1944 proudly proclaimed, "Twenty-one planes were transferred to the Sub Depot for major repair or modification during December and January. The Engineering Section, laboring twenty-four hours a day, made nineteen of these planes completely operational and transferred them back to the Bomb Group." In March 1944, the 465th, still working three

shifts, got 81 planes to repair and returned 69 to action.

Their history for February and April 1944 shows how they did it.

Repairing the Black Widow

"The boys in the hangar fell in love with a/c 42-7527, better known as the Black Widow. She went out



This photo shows the damage to #42-7527's left wing during the mission to Kiel on 4 Jan 1944 with the Clover crew aboard.

over Germany and stuck her poisonous mandibles into one of Germany's important fighter producing factories. Enemy opposition made it necessary for her to get religious and she came home on a wing and a prayer.

"Upon landing, a tire blew out which pulled her off the runway into the soft grass, stopping just short of a drainage ditch. Black Widow wiped the perspiration off her brow. After the tire was changed, she was towed carefully to Hangar No. 1 and given a diagnosis. The Inspector's diagnosis showed a direct hit by flak or cannon shell in the left trailing edge of the wing, ripping apart the flap, trailing edge, control cables to both flaps and ailerons, and the hydraulic lines to the landing

See SUB DEPOT on page 8

SUB DEPOT from page 7

gear. Cannon fire had scored two hits in the top of the wing and into Nos. 5 and 6 gas tanks. A hit in No. 1 engine had severed an oil line rendering the engine completely useless. Quick thinking and action by the co-pilot in feathering the prop saved the engine from further damage.

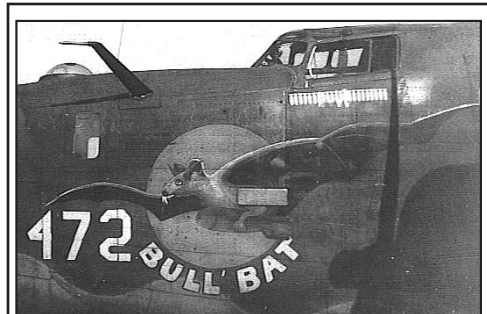
"After thirty days of hard labor, the hangar boys breathed a sigh of relief and satisfaction when Black Widow was discharged from the hangar. The Black Widow is at 'em again and woe to any fighter who gets caught in her web."

Bull Bat

"You can't keep a good ship down, is what the boys say of Bull Bat [42-7472]. Bull Bat is a B24-H and squats in its dispersal suite which is right up against the barracks occupied by our men and it is rightfully looked upon as the 465th Sub Depot baby. Bull Bat has 37 missions to her credit and on the last mission was giving the other planes in the ground formation the 'Come On' glance over her outboard rudders.

"Over Germany her four engines were hit and her fuselage, wings and tail section were peppered worse than the dart board at the local pub, 'The Lord Nelson.' The hydraulic system pooped out and instrument needles made frantic and unprecedented moves. Bull Bat indeed was in a bad way, but the pilot coaxed her back and set her down on her tail at another field and tore stringers, bulkheads and formers from the belly turret. A repair crew was dispatched and they changed her engines and fixed her up so she could come home.

"Like bees around a cone, the Engineering men climbed, crawled and clambered all over Bull Bat, put four new engines on her, repaired the hydraulic and electrical system, patched her flak rounds, and put a new fuselage section



Bull Bat's impressive nose art

Bull Bat has flown three more missions to bring her total up to 40 missions in which she has spit in Hitler's eye."

Reclamation and Salvage

As squadron mechanics worked on their a/c, they sent all items that could be repaired to the Reclamation and Salvage section. Items thus "reclaimed" were installed in other planes as needed. Planes requiring extensive repairs were stripped of critical parts that were then installed in otherwise operational aircraft; the parts in the donor ship were replaced later in the repair process. A/c that could not be repaired were stripped of everything useful before being sent to the boneyard. By "robbing Peter to pay Paul," the 465th Sub Depot was able to keep many planes airborne that might have been grounded due to lack of vital parts or equipment.



465th Instrument Technician S/Sgt Richard Giesing stands in front of a veteran B-24 that would fly no more but could provide parts to keep other a/c in the air.

Sheet Metal Shop

According to the June 1944 history, the Sheet Metal Shop "under M/Sgt Donald Leahy is one of the busiest shops in our Sub Depot. No matter what time or day it is, whenever you go inside you can see men working and usually there is a lot of noise. Most of the work in

this department is patching up battle-damaged ships, flak holes causing most of the headaches. Sometimes a ship will make a tail skid landing and this usually tears up one to three bulkheads. In the last six months, this department has repaired twelve such ships. Four ships which landed on the nose were repaired.

"Near the end of May 1944, a B-24... landed lop-sidedly and consequently all the weight was put on the right landing gear. This ripped out the auxiliary spar and required replacing the whole spar assembly. The boys of the Sheet Metal Shop got to work and removed the broken spar and procured another spar from a salvaged wing. The removing of the spar entailed removing sixty rivets that were heat-treated in the factory and were impossible to get at this station. Consequently, the holes had to be reamed out most carefully to avoid having off-size holes for over-sized bolts. The bearing surface of the bolts had to be the same the whole way round or else the wear on the bolts in landing would soon cause the landing gear to collapse again. However, the boys took great pain to see that the complete assembly lined up and was as secure as the original one. It took the men four weeks to complete this ticklish job."

That same month, the Welding Shop "was snowed under an avalanche of steel helmets of new combat crews that needed to be modified before the crew member can wear his ear phones and modifications of pilot and co-pilot seats due to the arrival of new and transferred aircraft on this station."

A vital role was played by the Machine Shop. Simply put, if an item was needed but not available in Supply, they made it. For example, they manufactured 5,000 retaining rings and retaining wrenches required for incendiary bombs; without these parts, the incendiary bombs were not useable.

Gas Dump

No mission could be flown without fuel for the planes—and it took a lot. A report in May 1944 said 959,536 Imperial gallons of 100 octane fuel were consumed in 31 days, or about 31,000 Imperial gallons per day. [One Imperial gallon is about 1.2 US gallons.]

The August 1944 history noted that "No gasoline is
See SUB DEPOT on page 9

SUB DEPOT from page 8

manufactured in the British Isles so every drop of this precious stuff is shipped [here] ... and then transported by rail ... to carefully selected and strategically-located petrol storage depots. Great Massingham is the depot that serves this field in addition to many other air stations in Norfolk County." Station 118 had two gas dumps with a total capacity of 144,000 Imperial gallons.

"Since D-Day, 6 June 1944, Sgt Harvey Moss and his staff,



#42-51235, Lassie Come Home, is refueled.

consisting of Cpl Joshua Chase (who incidentally was three days out to sea during the last war when the Armistice was declared and is the oldest man in the outfit at the ripe old age of 49 years), Cpl Murl Pearson, Pfc Carwin Thomason and Pvt Jack Hinton, have handled 3,249,000 Imperial gallons. In doing this, they have emptied 1,624 British lorries and refueled 1,015 American refueling units which hold 4,000 gallons. This flood of gasoline has enabled 1,533 Liberators to take off and carry their lethal loads to target Germany."

Bombsight Maintenance

Bombsight mechanic George Pearson says, "The bombsights were removed after every mission by men in the Line shop. Over on the edge of the field, it was manned by several bombsight mechanics from each flying squadron and a couple from the Sub Depot. If there was any complaint they were tagged and brought to the Bombsight Shop to be checked. After a number of missions (and I am not clear on how many), the sight was brought in to be recalibrated and checked out. We also took care of auto pilot problems as they worked with the sights."

"Late in the war," George continues, "planes came in with an electronically controlled super charger system. As there was no shop set up for this new job we took it on. Sgt Lou Richards took charge of that and built a complicated test

panel for testing the super charger system."

Other 465th sections

The 465th's impact extended far beyond aircraft repair. For example, the Power Plant Repair Shop maintained putt-putts, compressors, and rivet guns; the Paint Shop made signs for use by the entire base, painted murals on many walls, and painted registration numbers on bicycles (285 in November 1944 alone); the Parachute Shop repaired parachutes and re-packed every chute monthly; and the Dope and Fabric Shop changed the Group designation on the outboard rudders of all Libs from the "circle D" to the white stripe on a silver background.

The February 1944 history of the 465th Sub Depot stated, "Although the men are working long hard hours, their morale is good, because they can see the results of their work in the daily formations above the field on their way to deal death and destruction to the enemy." That can-do attitude kept their five officers and over 250 enlisted men going strong throughout the war.

A Hung-up Bomb

Anthony Ferdinando, tail gunner on the 579th's DePalma crew, relates this incident: "On one mission, two 500-pound bombs got hung up. Our plane was losing altitude and we were all alone. Although I was the armorer, I called the radio operator and asked him to work on the bombs so I could stay at my guns. Just like a mother, I reminded him to 'be sure to put your oxygen mask and your silk gloves on.'

"A few minutes later, he called back, 'Tony, I can't do it!' So, I put on a portable oxygen bottle and walked the catwalk from the tail. Using a screwdriver, I got the bombs to fall.

"What I hadn't expected was that the plane must have lifted 15 feet due to the weight loss when the first bomb fell. As the plane suddenly rose, I went down to my knees. I was holding on tight when the second bomb dropped! The radio operator and engineer were watching from the front of the plane. I motioned for them to close the bomb bay doors, which they did. They were just made of aluminum, but it sure made a difference in how safe I felt walking back to my turret."

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 engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. It contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute 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: Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039



BICYCLES

Most airmen got a bike at Wendling, only to discover they had to re-learn how to ride. 579th Sqdn Intelligence Officer Capt Laurence Gram wrote about bicycles in several articles published in the West Allis [Wisconsin] Star in March 1945. He joined the 392nd in July 1943 but was transferred to the 96th Combat Wing in January 1944.

"The flying field was a busy place. Bikes were issued, and those not initiated to the garden variety of English bikes, had some sorry lessons to learn, what with no pavement upon which to practice riding—and falling.

"Some days we couldn't [use them] because the mud was too thick. And besides, some of the boys were not too sure of themselves, and sometimes fell in the mud. Talk about slapstick comedy, we really had it. But then we needed a few laughs now and then.

"Maybe you would like to know something about the English bike. They have a completely different system of brakes. They have the kind used on some American racing bikes, little rubber shoes that exert pressure on the rim of the cycle wheel, sort of rubbing the bike to a stop.

"The brakes operate by means of little levers along the bottom side of the handlebars, so you must become accustomed to steering the cycle and exert proper pressure on the brakes at one and the same time.

"Remember, too, that there are both front and rear brakes, and that if you exert uneven pressure strange things may happen. If you exert too much pressure, such as in an emergency, you may pitch yourself over the handlebars and probably into a ditch.

"Many were the tales of sad accidents. The roads are narrow and the ditches deep and wet, with the bordering hedges of the thorny variety. Raspberries are common and very uncomfortable as a landing place....

"Should the weather turn cold the roads and paths become very slippery. Ice may form in a short time and then it may start to rain again. Only the very intrepid souls dare to ride their bicycles under such conditions. But there is an old saying, 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'

"We distinctly remember many occasions when the

announcement 'All planes are grounded due to weather' was followed by an order 'All bicycles are grounded until further notice.' Then later in the day these words, 'Bicycles may now be used.'

"On one of those days the ban came too late for your correspondent. I started from quarters nicely enough unaware of the ice under wheel. I arrived at a slight incline in the road munching an apple and came to grief.

"The bike scooted out from under its rider (all 180 pounds of him) and ended up on the other side of the road. The principal damage was suffered by the bike. One pedal and arm was simply amputated from the sprocket and bike, necessitating a walk the rest of the distance to work and to mess. Later we paid a visit to the 'bike doctor' of which there is one at most American air bases.

"There was no serious damage to the person of the rider, except that his dignity as an officer and a gentleman was slightly ruffled, but even this was not too bad for there were no witnesses."

Gram notes that bikes, like cars, had to be ridden on the "wrong" side of the road, also contributing to accidents.

On 8 Jan 1944, Gram got off duty at 6pm. After returning to the barracks, he heard that there was to be a party of the squadron officers, including CO Maj Myron Keilman. There was plenty of food and beer. Gram later wrote his wife that "The usual antics were indulged in; and you would be surprised what a good time all the boys had without any females." Then he told of their specific activities that night:

"One of the boys thought it would be clever to ride a bike into the barracks...He picked on my bike unfortunately. Then [579th Sqdn Adjutant 2/Lt Peter A. Zahn] thought it would be well to let the air out of the tires, and did so. Then they decided that the bike was a bomber, Maj Keilman the pilot. [579th Ordnance Officer 1/Lt Brooks Pendleton] was the tail gunner, sitting on the rear fender with a bottle of beer for a gun, and Zahn was the bombardier, carrying a couple of overshoes as bombs, and sitting on the front fender. Then they got a plank for wings, and another plank in the rear for the tail. And so they were off for Berlin. It was quite funny. And the conversation was all about take-off, fighters, etc. It was mostly ground officers but some combat officers too. Everyone had many big laughs and lots of fun."



Left photo: Bikes parked outside the Combat Officers Mess. Right photo: T/Sgt Rupert C. Sutphin, engineer on Capt Ben Alexander's crew (578/9th), with his pipe and bike. Riding in that snow and mud would have been difficult.

V-Mail

During WWII, millions of letters were written to, from and between military personnel serving around the world. Limited cargo space on ships and planes was needed to transport war supplies, but letters were vital to morale. "Victory Mail" (commonly called "V-Mail") was the innovative solution.

According to the National Postal Museum, "A person who wanted to send a letter by ... V-Mail would obtain the standard, pre-printed form from the local post office.... The form contained space for a letter of about 100 to 300 words, the address of the [recipient], the address of the sender, and a circular area for the censor's stamp of approval.

[Editor's note: All correspondence by military men and women had to be censored to ensure no classified or sensitive information was revealed. Officers could censor their own mail but letters written by enlisted personnel had to be read by an officer. His signature in the censor's block showed the letter was approved for transmittal.]

"Once the message was written, the form was to be folded and sealed. It then made its way to a processing center where the form was re-opened and fed through a machine that photographed the letters on 16mm film.... When the V-Mail reached the destination, it was sent to a local processing facility that reversed the process, printing photographs of the letters [that were] sent to the intended recipient in a three inch by four inch envelope." The original V-Mail form was about 7 x 9 inches; what the recipient got was about 4 x 5 inches.

"V-mail ensured that thousands of tons of shipping space could be reserved for war materials. The 37 mail bags required to carry 150,000 one-page letters could be replaced by a single mail sack. The weight of that same amount of mail was reduced dramatically from 2,575 pounds to a mere 45."

Letter-writers could still mail real letters. In 1944, regular mail took a three cent stamp. Air mail stamps started at six cents. Military personnel serving in a combat zone paid no postage to send their letters home.

V-Mail was used between 15 Jun 1942 and 1 Apr 1945.

Letters between 579th Intelligence Officer Capt Laurence Gram and his wife Isabel often debated the arrival speed of air mail versus V-Mail. After analyzing their correspondence, son-in-law Howard Thompson concluded that air mail tended to be faster if there was space on a plane going from England to the US. But if there was not enough room to carry mail pouches, such a letter would be delayed. V-Mail would beat an air mail letter in those times since rolls of microfilm could always be fitted in. Air mail delays in departure and delays in filming and printing V-Mails were trade-offs that periodically changed over the course of the war.

At right: Pre-printed V-Mail forms were available for special occasions. These Christmas V-Mails were sent by S/Sgt Cliff Poshadlo to his future wife, Sandy Danowski. Cliff and his cousin S/Sgt Raymond Poshadlo were both Administrative Non-Commissioned Officers in the 465th Sub Depot. The 1943 V-Mail was censored by then 1/Lt William L. Roberts, Group Equipment Officer while the 1944 V-Mail was reviewed by Warrant Officer Morris M. Feys, 465th Sub Depot Supply Officer.



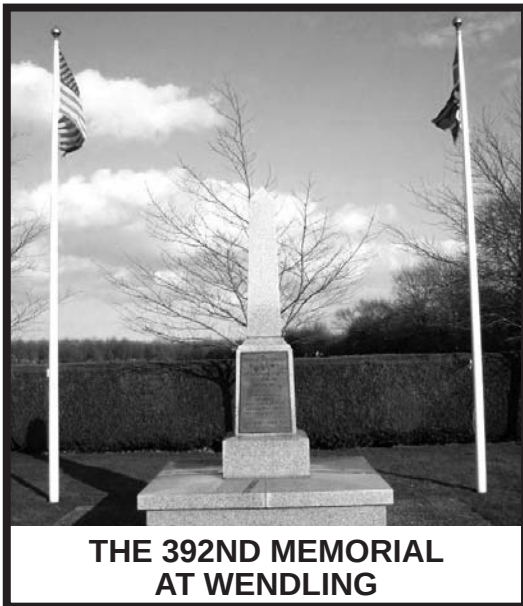
CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Otis N. Croy provides this issue's Chaplain's Corner. A Cherokee Indian, he was radio operator on 2/Lt Philip E. Rose's crew, 578th.

Looking Forward in a Rearview Mirror

The one step I take to cross the horizon, where you will see me no more. I'll be with the "Man" that left His foot prints on the sea and on the shore. "He" said it's time to fly with me and my last time down the runway, I will fold my wings and be with the "Man" that left his foot prints on the land and on the sea. Looking back in the rearview mirror, I see things I should have done, but the fork in the road led me to the "Man" they call "His Son." The "Book" with the folding leaves, tells about "HIS" past and the syllabary was invented to record our paths. Never stray from the white path that leads to peace and purity, because the black path is corruption and dishonesty. The "Man" that left footprints in the sea and on the shore has called me Home forever, to the land of peace and joy. I will follow "Him" forever and study "His" family tree and I will see friends and family in the land called Eternity.

Otis writes, "In my rearview mirror the reflections are when I was 18 years old and in the Air Corps. I traveled to England in a large convoy of ships. I could see the ships go beyond the horizon. While there in England, flying combat missions, I had friends that did not make it home and we referred to that as they folded their wings. Sequoya, a [Cherokee] saw missionaries reading the Bible and referred to it as the folding leaves and he invented an [alphabet] syllabary to record Cherokee paths. Prior to his syllabary, beaded belts were used to record the history."



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

But we...shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few,
we band of brothers.
For he to-day that sheds
his blood with me
Shall be my brother...

William Shakespeare
Henry V

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association
9107 Wood Pointe Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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∞

Mary Rothrock, widow of Rocky, Assoc., October 8, 2012
Geraldine A. Hart, wife of Wildrick, 576, May 17, 2012
Betty Jane Petersen, wife of James V., 576, May 21, 2012
Alfred Hersh, 578, March 30, 2012
Marvin Schlossberg, 577, November 16, 2012
Robert L. Gale, 577/10th SCS, December 5, 2012