

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

NEWS

Volume 39

December 2023



2023 Reunion

The 49th annual reunion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society was held in Ontario, California, from 18-23 Oct 2023. There were about 225 attendees, including six WWII veterans (but none from the 392nd BG).

392nd BGMA Annual Membership Meeting

Nine Crusaders were present in person at our annual membership meeting and another 13 joined via Zoom.

President Ralph Winter welcomed everyone, declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order.

In unison, attendees recited the 392nd BG Prayer and then the *Pledge of Allegiance*. During the *Second Air Division Fanfare*, they also sang *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Ralph stated that the meeting was to fulfill the requirements of both our bylaws and IRS rules. He reminded in-person attendees that "the 392nd BGMA is a non-profit, non-political organization of US veterans, families, friends and supporters.

It is registered with the Internal Revenue Service under Tax Code Section 501(c)3. As such, certain income tax considerations apply to members in the performance of official 392nd BGMA duties. Your participation as a regular, voting member in today's annual business meeting as an official delegate is such a duty. The reasonable cost to such attendees is construed to be a charitable contribution and may be deductible by those who itemize deductions on their annual income tax returns. Members are advised to consult your tax advisor for more complete information."

Reports

The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports, distributed by email to all members in advance, were approved as written.

Director Don Carey read the names of the 11 veterans, spouses, members and Friends of the 392nd BGMA who had passed away since the last reunion, which was followed by a moment of silence.

Committee Reports

Secretary Debbie Beigh reported that our association has 215 members, with 18 new ones this year. Our WWII veterans are 578th Sqdn waist gunner Harvey Naber, 576th Sqdn tail gunner John Rumancik, and 578th Sqdn engineer Rupert Sutphin; Beverly Burke is the widow of 465th Sub Depot machinist Cpl Aubrey Burke.

We have 45 Friends. Of our overseas members and Friends, 37 are from the UK, 2 from the Netherlands and 1 each from Belgium, France and Germany.

Ron Pierre spoke on behalf of the ad hoc Membership Retention and Recruitment Committee. He said, "1. With regard to Retention and Recruitment—Retention is the first line of defense, as we already have some degree of involvement and previous relationship with the individuals who continue to support us financially thru their renewals.

"2. On the Recruitment front, we must start with our existing membership family contacts for obvious reasons. This should be the most fertile as well as the easiest and least costly ground to plow.

"3. Perhaps we could produce a 'simple script' describing the benefits and blessings of being involved in this great association, particularly for those who would need a bit of assistance here.

"4. Make this script available to all members with possibly a follow-up email, letter, note, etc. from one of our association officers after the contact is made and identified.

"5. An indirect side benefit of #3 would be to solidify continued membership (retention) while stimulating and at least ensuring involvement/commitment going forward.

"6. Perhaps the idea of offering multiple year (e.g., 3yr, 10yr) or even lifetime memberships. These 'scaled'

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At the Gala Banquet: L-R: Don and Audrey Carey, Don and Annette Tison, Ralph Winter, David Nowack and Lorraine Horn, Barb and Ron Pierre.



392nd BGMA Officers

As of 1 January 2024
President

Ralph Winter
2979 Delcourt Dr.
Decatur, GA 30033
(404) 354-7485
rewcts@gmail.com



1st Vice President

Greg Hatton
gregoryhatton1@gmail.com



2nd Vice President

Sue Giesing Williams
7600 Bay Meadow Dr.
Harbor Springs, MI 49740
(231) 242-4622
sneakypie@charter.net



Secretary

Debbie Goar Beigh
6284 Antler Ct.
Zionsville, IN 46077-9089
(317) 250-5586
dbeigh@aol.com



Treasurer

Joel Fleck
5606 Doolittle St.
Burke, VA 22015
jfleck47@gmail.com

Directors

PX Chair

Bill McCutcheon
20620 Milton Ct.
Brookfield, WI 53045
wjmcc392@earthlink.net
(262) 784-5606



News Editor

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



Bob Books
Don Carey
John Gilbert
Char Heim
Laurie Huntley
Jim Marsteller (emeritus)
David Parnell
Ron Pierre

FROM THE EDITOR

Crusader Stories on the Internet. 392nd BGMA webmaster Bob Books highlights a few items recently posted at <https://www.b24.net/wendlingStories.htm>. Excerpts from the journal kept by 579th Sqdn pilot Capt Robert V. Pardue and a letter written by 577th Sqdn Commander Maj Clinton F. Schoolmaster to his wife are featured in this issue.

Bob also suggests members look at the four videos at the bottom of <https://b24.net/Videos.htm> titled *Training Videos*. They instruct American soldiers on how to act while stationed in England and the customs unique to that country. The videos are very interesting to watch and give insight into what newly arrived Crusaders encountered as they explored the towns and villages surrounding their new home.

A Gaggle of Bombs by Carl A. Ott, bombardier on 1/Lt Kenneth W. Peifer's crew in the 576th Sqdn, was recently posted on the 392nd BGMA's Facebook page. It is reprinted here for those who don't "do" Facebook:

"Following assignment to the 8th Air Force, 392nd BG, our B-24 crew had completed 5 missions, the last on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Mission 6a on D-Day was aborted due to No. 3 engine blowing a cylinder head [after takeoff.] Returning to our base and landing with a full bomb load and gas was an omen of the future.

"Mission 6b began very early on June 8, 1944. The load was fifty-two 100 pound General Purpose bombs. Our aircraft was a B-24H. Each bomb bay held 3 triple slung bombs on the lower 3 stations, with the two remaining top stations having two double slung bombs. [The chart on the right—showing just the rear left and right bomb bays—illustrates the bomb loading that Ott described.]

"Following takeoff we were unable to locate our 392nd BG for assembly. This resulted in our becoming tail end Charlie behind ... the 44th BG.

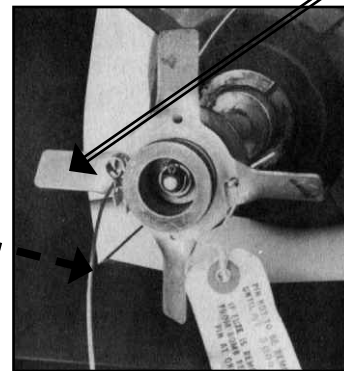
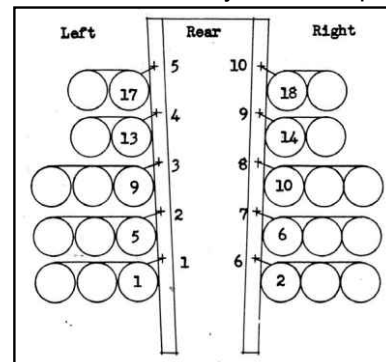
"The 44th's target was the marshaling yards at Angers, France. The formation crossed the coast on an East heading well above, and to the North, of Angers. Flying well past the city, the Group turned South on a new heading. When abeam of Angers the formation reached the Initial Point and turned West toward the marshaling yard on the bomb run.

"Bombs Away was quickly followed by the intercom requesting my presence in the bomb bays. The pilots had no working controls except the throttles, due to loose bombs jamming the [control] cables in three of the bomb bays. All stations on the fourth bay were empty. The remaining three bays with full loads of bombs were supported by the lower triple slung bombs that were hung up and could not be salvoed. The upper station's loose bombs, released from the safety wires, were busily arming themselves.

[The photo at right shows an AN-M 100A2 tail fuze. All bomb fuzes had arming vanes (that looked like small propeller blades) and arming wires as safety devices. While in the plane, the arming wire ran through the propeller blades and was attached to the bomb rack; this kept the vane from turning. When the bomb was dropped, the arming wire was pulled out, freeing the vane to rotate as it fell; when the required number of revolutions occurred—and the bomb a safe distance beneath the plane—the fuze was armed. In Ott's situation, the arming wires had been pulled loose, the vanes were spinning from the wind rushing through the open bomb bay doors, and bomb explosions seemed imminent.

"The good news: we were headed toward the French coast and home, no German Me-109s, no bursts of flak.

"With the assistance of a waist gunner [either Sgt Lloyd E. Nichols or Sgt James I. Parrish], the flight engineer [S/Sgt Robert R. Thornborrow] and myself tackled the dangerous job, minus parachutes, or an oxygen supply in the bomb bays. A descent from 18,000 feet to a lower altitude by use of throttles allowed easier breathing but our aircraft dropped back from the formation.



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President's Corner



Dear Crusaders,

I hope this finds each of you doing well and looking forward to an enjoyable holiday season.

Several members have recently expressed concern over what will happen to documents, photos, and other 392nd BG related material when—and for whatever reason—they are no longer willing or able to house the

items. The prime example of this is our very accomplished and knowledgeable historian, researcher and newsletter editor Annette Tison, whose basement is the depository for many, many boxes, scrapbooks, filing cabinets, books and other information about the 392nd BG and its airmen, plus numerous artifacts. She inherited most of the archive from Jim Goar, her long-time predecessor as *News* editor, but has added much more since she became editor in January 2008.

As empty nesters, she and Don are looking to downsize and move into smaller quarters with all the advantages that come with such a move.

We want this wealth of information to be available to interested researchers now and in the future.

For that reason, with the urging of Annette and others, I have recently formed a committee to look for a place to put our archival material as well as 392nd BG memorabilia and objects that need a home. The goal of the committee is to contact possible archival sites and assess their capabilities to meet our needs. This vetting process will take a lot of time and effort, but we have taken the first steps by forming the committee and stating our goals and the steps needed to meet those goals.

Bob Books is chairman of the committee as he has already explored some possibilities; he will be assisted by Annette, Greg Hatton, Ted Dudziak and myself. If you have any thoughts or ideas, or have 392nd BG items that you would like to see archived, please email Bob at books@b24.net.

We had a very special Meet & Greet on November 4th because we were joined by one of our veterans, Harvey Naber, whose son, Mark, facilitated his attendance. Harvey turned 105 on November 14th. To put that into perspective, Harvey was born three days after WWI ended.

Our next Meet & Greet will be Saturday, January 13th at 1:30pm Eastern Time. Please join us for an opportunity to visit and share your thoughts, news, and comments.

In closing I want to say:

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OF YOU!

HAPPY HANUKKAH! MERRY CHRISTMAS!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope you have enjoyable and safe holidays, and I pray that they be followed by a New Year with peace throughout the world and a brighter future for all.

Ralph

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"Jettisoning the loose bombs and working down from the top station was hazardous since the entire load of bombs could suddenly drop away, taking you along without a parachute.

"Carefully removing the fuses, we left a trail of bombs across the farm fields of France that ended over the English Channel. The bottom station of triple slung bombs in my bay, while resisting all my efforts, suddenly dropped away without warning. Soon the other two bays were also cleared of bombs.

"I could not have accomplished the task by myself without the assistance of the waist gunner and the flight engineer, whose strength and courage on the narrow catwalk was indeed commendable. In closing, if our bomb run had been toward Germany I fear there could have been a very different ending to our Mission."

While Ott was attacking Angers, France, on 8 Jun 1944, the 392nd BG's target was the German airfield at LeMans, France. After takeoff at 4:45am, assembly weather proved so bad that 9 of the 35 a/c aborted and another 13 (including Ott's) tacked on to other Groups, leaving just 13 Crusader crews to bomb the assigned target, which they did with good results.

B-24 Liberator Ornament. Some of our B-24 Liberator ornaments are still available! They are perfect year-round gifts for any B-24 enthusiast. Small enough (3¾" wide x 2" high) to easily mail to relatives or friends, yet large enough to be immediately recognized as a Liberator. They're not just for Christmas, though—one will look great on a bookshelf or wherever you display your 392nd BG keepsakes. They're hand-crafted in America from fine pewter. \$20 each with free domestic shipping; \$30 (including postage) for international orders. To purchase, go to <https://b24.net/itemsForSale.htm>.



Please renew! The dues for over 70 members expire at the end of this month. If you're one of them and get a print version of the *News*, you'll see a "Please renew!" sticker on this page. If you get an on-line pdf, I'll notify you by email. Page 4 has all the details on how to renew. Dues have been the same price since December 2009!

Happy holidays! No matter if, how, or why you celebrate the many religious and secular holidays this time of year, I hope you find a reason to smile and enjoy this season of more-than-usual good cheer!



News from Across the Pond

Remembrance Day Services 2023

Beeston

An announcement from BBC News (at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd1p5jz447xo>) titled "Service for US airmen that died flying in WW2" had information about Remembrance Day events on 12 Nov 2023 at St. Mary Church and the 392nd BG Memorial. It also included a photo of B-24 #42-7486, *The Shark*, and 1/Lt Teddy Dudziak's crew, who were aboard that plane when it was attacked by German fighters on 18 Nov 1943 on the return trip from Kjeller, Norway. It never got back to Wendling.

Trustee Jill Scott provided these details about the Service at the Memorial: "How fortunate we were! Before the 12th and since we have had rain—too much, wind and the sun has been very shy. The 12th was different! No rain, no wind, bright and not too cold. A lovely November day.

"As always, the flagpoles had been washed and were

gleaming white. The old flags removed and newer ones given their second outing of the year. The grass had been freshly cut despite the wet. This year, for the first time but definitely not the last, two wooden soldiers (made by Jim Pitt, Chairman of the Beeston Parish Council) stood at either side of the Memorial, heads bowed, hands resting on their upturned rifles—this tribute to the fallen paid by soldiers since time immemorial. The soldiers were a poignant and a sharp reminder of why we remember the fallen each year.

"As usual, there was a large gathering of people, some having come on from the service at the church, others there for just this service. A small contingent of Rainbows and Brownies had come from the church with their (by now) usual handmade wreath. Every member had made one of the poppies.



"The Reverend Miriam Fife, who wanted to take the service, has been forced to take a prolonged rest. The Reverend Andrea Woods took her place. She had brought a recording of the *Last Post*; it adds so much to the service!

"At the start of the Service the Rainbows and Brownies, carrying their flags, approached the Memorial, stood either side of it and
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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you get the *News* in print format, your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; "23" means your dues expire THIS MONTH. If you get the *News* via email, you will receive an email in September and December advising if your dues are expiring. If you wish to join or renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Joel Fleck, 5606 Doolittle St., Burke, VA 22015 or join / renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/memorialAssociation.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial concerns, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box below. If you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, please indicate the amount in the space below.

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

Please provide the name and unit of your Crusader relative/friend: _____

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: I am renewing for _____ years.

Hardship Waiver [] DONATION \$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

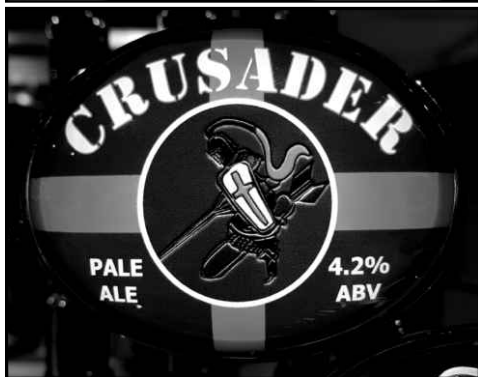
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lowered their flags. After the Two Minute Silence the Stars and Stripes and the Union (Jack) flags and those of the



Rainbows and Brownies were raised. Hugh Scott laid 'your' wreath, followed by ones on behalf of the Parish Council, the Ploughshare Pub and the Brownies and Guides. As always, the Service finished with the Collect written by Reverend Martin for the 392nd Bomb Group [see page 12] and George Washington's *Prayer for the Nation*.

"People are always happy to stay and talk and take photographs of the Memorial and the wreaths, unless it is a bitterly cold and or wet morning! Then we all retire to the Village Hall to enjoy the refreshments organized by the Parish Council. Always welcome and another opportunity to meet and talk, and sometimes to reminisce."



The Liberators from Wendling were very much a part of the social time at Beeston Village Hall.

Memorial Trustee Hugh Dennett has informed the 392nd BGMA that at The Ploughshare, "We have the new beer on! I hope all the 'Crusaders' approve of the branding for it. It's brewed by Beeston Brewery just for The Ploughshare. Before anyone asks ... I regret to say that it's not available in bottles and we can't export it!"

We'll just have

to visit in person to sample this historic brew!

Cheshunt, Hertfordshire

A ten-minute live interview between 392nd BGMA Director David Parnell and BBC Three Counties Radio (BBC 3CR) commentator Roberto Perrone was aired on 3 Nov 2023, the day before the Remembrance Service was held at the Liberator Memorial in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. That interview and photos are at <https://b24.net/CheshuntInterview.htm>; additional photos can be seen at <https://davidaff7.myportfolio.com/liberator-2023>.

The Liberator Memorial commemorates 2/Lt John D. Ellis and his crew who crashed near Cheshunt on 12 Aug 1944 while embarking on a mission to bomb a German airfield at Juvencourt, France.

David had emailed the station a few days earlier, simply hoping that BBC 3CR would announce the annual Remembrance Service at the Liberator Memorial on the morning of November 4.

Instead, David says, "right out of the blue" he got a call "from a BBC employee who said, 'We have information about a Remembrance Service to ten American airmen killed in Cheshunt during WWII. Are you happy to speak with our presenter Roberto in the next few minutes?' Of course I said yes but this was to be broadcast live across our Counties of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and the best I could do was to ad lib out of the blue no script!"

"I tried to keep things as simple as possible avoiding technical speak. It was all about the boys of the Ellis crew, my friends at the Masonic Lodge Halsey Hall who do so much of the work in organising the service event and of course the incredible involvement of St Mary's School. To me I just try to look after the site and keep it in a manner the boys would appreciate."

The end of the interview is especially insightful as Perrone asks David if he thinks, as WWII recedes farther into the past, whether younger generations would be interested in keeping these memories alive. David replied that he really hopes so as "This is *our* history."

Perrone's closing comments will surely resonate with everyone associated with the 392nd BGMA as we work to perpetuate the legacy of our Crusaders—in our own ways, in our own neighborhoods and to our own young relatives and friends.



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memberships plans are used by many 501(c)3's and have proven to be quite effective.

"7. Possibly providing 'scholarship' memberships to young family members, children, grandchildren, et.al., who have a lineal connection to those who faithfully served. This will be more vital going forward as the average age of our current membership is most probably on the rise.

"8. Whatever plan we come to agree upon should be simple and achievable to avoid discouragement. If we can simply maintain and steadily increase current membership numbers we will have achieved our goal."

If you can help Ron create a list of talking points or have further suggestions, ideas or comments on how to maintain (and increase) membership in the 392nd BGMA, please contact him at rap@prodigy.net.

Old Business

Ralph reported that the 2023 Aubrey Award was very successful, thanks in large part to the members who "talked it up" to their eligible relatives and friends.

He said the July-August 2023 trip to England and France with the Heritage League was also a great success, with 19 Crusaders and 31 locals at the Ploughshare Friends luncheon. For those who did not attend that event, he advised that the old plaque on the Memorial has been mounted by the front door of the Ploughshare.

Ralph noted that the model of the 578th Sqdn's B-24 #42-51240, *Windy City Belle*, is now "flying" at the Ploughshare, above the Crusader Bar. He thanked Greg Hatton for all he did to facilitate its shipment to England.

New Business

The Nominating Committee (Annette Tison as chair, Debbie Beigh and David Nowack) presented the names of Laurie Huntley, Bill McCutcheon, Ron Pierre and Sue Williams for re-election as Directors; their terms expire in December. They also nominated Joel Fleck as a new Director. There being no nominations from the floor, it was moved, seconded, and approved to accept the entire slate.

Ralph then opened the floor for any other items. Mark Naber, joining by Zoom, noted that his father Harvey (also present on Zoom) would be turning 105 in about five weeks. There was a spontaneous round of applause for Harvey!!

The meeting ended after Ralph reminded everyone that the next reunion will be with the 8th AFHS in New Orleans, Louisiana, from 25-29 Sep 2024 with lodging at the Higgins Hotel, directly across the street from The National WWII Museum. He hopes there will be a large Crusader presence at this historic venue.

Details will be in the March 2024 *News*—but online room reservations can be made now at <https://group.curiocollection.com/zg61jf> or by calling The Higgins Hotel at (833) 357-1172 and referencing group code 928. See you all in the *Big Easy*!

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

2024 Officers

The Directors met after the general membership meeting and, by acclamation, elected Ralph Winter as President; Greg Hatton as 1st Vice President, Sue Williams as 2nd Vice President, Debbie Beigh as Secretary, and Joel Fleck as Treasurer.

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Upper Sheringham

Doug and Celia Willies emailed, "We were fortunate this year as the day turned out exactly as it should be from a weather point of view—not too cold and most importantly, dry with an almost clear sky. Very seasonable in fact. The Rev Frank Clarke took the Service and we congregated around the main War Memorial for the reading of the names—including of course, those from the Colby Waugh crew. Their Memorial was adorned with the now traditional ten poppy posy, crosses plus a US flag either side of the headstone. So, rest assured, they are Not Forgotten as ever." See <https://www.b24.net/MM010444.htm#cnl> for more information about the mission on 4 Jan 1944.

Decembers Overseas

How did 392nd BG airmen spend their Decembers?

ARC Aeroclub

The American Red Cross Aeroclub opened on 23 Dec 1943. It had a snack bar, library, game room, ping pong tables, and a lounge with a brick fireplace. Although specifically for the use of base enlisted personnel, officers could use the library anytime and the rest of the club on other occasions when guests of the enlisted men.



In the above photo from the grand opening, 578th Sqdn tail gunner S/Sgt Anthony F. Malavasic (on the accordion), 579th Sqdn gunner S/Sgt Nevin Geary (at the piano), and "Clyde" (with the guitar) accompanied the airmen as they sang *Me and My Gal*. Malavasic became a POW a week later. He then played the accordion in Stalag 17B's musical group, The Tabletoppers.

To learn more about the Aeroclub, see <https://www.b24.net/storiesBirdie.htm>.

Christmas Eve Mission

On 24 Dec 1943, the 392nd flew a *No Ball* mission to France. These targets were enemy missile launchers, bivouac areas, field headquarters, enemy supply or logistic points in support of field operations and concentrated areas of troop and weapon marshalling.

S/Sgt Theodore R. Rausch, gunner in the 576th crew of 1/Lt Henry W. Miller, later wrote in his journal, "They sure picked a nice easy one for a Xmas present. No flak No fighters No Nothing, didn't even use oxygen. Bombed from 12,000 feet, hazy over target which I think we hit. Could take the rest of my tour on jobs like this."

1/Lt Harrison S. Cassell Jr

579th Sqdn pilot 1/Lt Harrison S. Cassell Jr celebrated his
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24th birthday by flying that same Christmas Eve mission, his seventh. In his journal, he wrote, "Everything including the weather was perfect... we had all of our bombs on the [target] and they will probably have a picture of them in the paper. The pattern was perfect... The 44th (BG) followed us in on our target and said there was no target left to hit when they got to it."

The next day, Cassell wrote his wife Sally "to tell you what a Christmas in the E.T.O. is like.

"To start off with no one on the post worked today—everything was dead. Not an airplane in the air all over England today. Everyone celebrated Christmas. We all slept 'til noon—then we had spam for dinner. This afternoon while Bill, Jack, and Ken were warming themselves by the fire I went out and caught up on painting the bombs on 'Sally Ann.' I was behind three, she gets them faster than I can paint them on. She has a row of 12 now.



This nose art photo of #42-7484, *Sally Ann*, was taken on 10 Nov 1943; it shows two bombs (for combat missions), six ducks (for diversion missions), and a swastika (for an enemy plane shot down). The officers are L-R, pilot 1/Lt Harrison S. Cassell Jr., copilot F/O John A. Colvin, bombardier 2/Lt William F. Cetin and navigator 2/Lt Kenneth F. Bevan.

"Our club was decorated with holly and pine trees. We even had white tablecloths for our turkey supper. Had fruit cocktail, turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, cauliflower, green beans, beets, and greens. For dessert we had cookies and pineapple cobbler. We faired alright for food today."

The next day, he wrote Sally, "Yes dear, I went to church this morning. Had to leave our heavy coats on as we had no fire in the place, but it is church, and it means more to me over here than it ever did in the states—because we are living so much closer to God, and we realize it, too...

"I am not going to be any more of an Englishman when I get back than when I left. I haven't changed any except I realize how important life is when it comes to winning a war and I am a very strong companion of the Lord."

[Editor's note: These excerpts are from the 592-page book *Lead Crew: The Boys of the Sally Ann*, by Cassell's son, Allen M. "Mac" Cassell. Available in Kindle and print format at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), it has detailed information about his father's missions and his crew, plus dozens of previously unpublished photos and letters/journal entries.

Maj Clinton F. Schoolmaster

On 26 Dec 1943, then-577th Sqdn Commander *Capt*

Clinton F. Schoolmaster wrote his wife Janet, "We didn't have such a bad Christmas—Christmas is a home and family affair, you just can't get away from and most of the boys felt it too! The best thing of all has been the weather these past few days—a regular 'pea souper.' Not even the birds are flying, much less the USAAF—thank God! That's what really made our Christmas what it was!"

Schoolmaster was a highly successful leader, so much so that on 22 May 1944, he joined the 95th Combat Wing as its Senior Controller.

Three days later, he took a P-47 up to help the Wing's aircraft form for an operational mission. He never returned. It was presumed he had crashed into the North Sea and been killed.

New Year's Eve, 1943

576th Sqdn airplane and engine mechanic Pvt Stanley L. White noted that he "Spent most of night changing generator & oxygen regulator. Planes came back late and had considerable difficulty in landing in the fog. The display of flares made a nice New Years Eve celebration."

This was the mission in which accordion player S/Sgt Anthony F. Malavasic became a POW. For details, see <https://www.b24.net/MM123143.htm>.

The Bleak Midwinter

At Station 118 during Christmas 1944 was 576th Sqdn navigator 2/Lt William A. Damerst.

He flew only three missions that month (and had to abort one due to poor conditions during assembly). That, however, gave him time to take two photos that perfectly captured the poor conditions outside.



Damerst's caption for the top photo was "the site on Christmas, frost, not snow." A large tree is barely visible behind the Nissen hut in the left center of the photo while a lone man can be seen working near a vehicle just to the

right of the telephone pole. The second photo is simply labeled "air raid shelter."

The 579th history confirms the inclement weather. "An unusually heavy frost provided the necessary accompaniment to make it a white Christmas. Gala celebrations were held in most of the barracks, mainly with

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the assistance of barrels of beer, chaff decorated trees, and an absolute superabundance of packages from home.”

Chaff looks remarkably like tinsel, but it was created



to confuse German flak radars about the altitude, location, speed and size of a bomber formation. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaff_\(countermeasure\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaff_(countermeasure)) for details.

It came in boxes and at the “drop” signal, an airman in designated plane(s)—usually lead ship(s)—would toss the chaff out by the handful, until the box(es) were empty.

Sometimes the process didn't go as planned. On the 25 Jul 1944 mission, 579th Sqdn gunner S/Sgt Marvin Graham was the designated chaff dispenser. Facing intense enemy fire, however, he expedited the process by throwing the entire box overboard!

Chaff prevented the loss of many bombers as it caused inaccurate targeting by German flak guns. Its inventors could not have imagined that their radar countermeasure would also adorn Christmas trees throughout the holidays!

The (Mis)Fortunes of War

The journal of 579th Sqdn pilot Capt Robert V. Pardue is a fascinating account by an airman who flew for two different bomb groups and experienced the (mis)fortunes of war with both. In these excerpts, he writes about three significant missions. They have been lightly edited for space, continuity and content.

#8, 22 Apr 1944 to Hamm, Germany. We took off about 1630 and weren't due back till after dark. It was an uneventful trip in. The sky was so clear that the smoke from preceding bombing was visible for close to 100 miles. In fact, the lead navigator thought we were much closer and carried us over the Ruhr. That means flak, lots of it.

“All the planes made it through O.K. though and didn't hit much more flak until we were close to the target. Then it was pretty thick. The planes ahead of us did a good job, their bombs were still bursting down there and there were great columns of smoke rising...”

“Out of the target about 20 minutes, the fighters hit. We saw them up high at 12:00, but kind of figured they were friendly. No one was watching too closely and then it happened. A 20mm shell exploded down between my feet and navigator 2/Lt Robert E. Semler's head!

“It cut the throttle cables on #1 and #2 engines, tore loose an aileron control brace, and scared us to death, almost. No one was hit. It seemed that every gun on that plane started shooting at once... It happened and was over in less than 10 seconds.

“1/Lt Wyeth C. Everhart, the lead ship, was on fire, and the men were bailing out. Two more planes had engines feathered. But we formed on the deputy leader pretty

quick and organized again.

“It was a long way back and we had a hard time keeping up with the power all messed up. It was sundown while we were still over the enemy coast... Soon as we were over mid channel we broke away and were going to try to get back before dark, but it just couldn't be made. The hydraulic lines were shot out, so engineer S/Sgt Lloyd “Mac” F. McCary had to crank the gear down and copilot 2/Lt William R. Jernigen was ready to turn the flaps down. Mac figured out the right cables to pull for more or less power as was needed and got on the interphone. We weren't sure of our brakes, so had the rest of the crew run back in the tail soon as we hit to drag it and kill the speed.

“Now we were ready to land. Everything was normal. I called Mac when I wanted the throttles off and it was O.K. all the way around. We did have some breaks tho' after all. It was one more nasty hole in the side of that plane. Everyone thought we did a good job.”

In late May 1944, Pardue's journal entry said, “All during these days we were flying almost every day as training for lead crews. That is, before this last mission. They figured we were pretty good in the ol' 392nd. Even Gen. Johnson, the wing commander, knew us well. On the whole it was a very rosy outlook...”

“But it was too good to last. Capt Charles C. Hollomon told us the night of the 23rd that we were to be transferred to the 489th Bomb Group as a lead crew. They had done all in their power to keep us, but to no avail. We moved over the next day and found it a new group not yet operational.”

On May 24, after reporting to the 489th BG, Pardue was very unhappy, writing, “It was plain to see that we weren't wanted very much. There were six of us new crews... We wound up not leading anymore... I'll make the most of it and let it go. I liked the lead at the other group but not here. Never!”

After an uneventful mission to Brussels, Belgium, on the 31st (just the second mission for the 489th BG but Pardue's 13th), the crew flew again.

#14, Paris, France, 2 June 1944. “Target for today was an airfield about 10 miles south of Paris and the secondary, a field about 30 miles north of Paris. Our takeoff time wasn't until 1640 which was a bad beginning, starting that late.

“We assembled at 12,000 ft and climbed to 20,000 ft on our way across during which time the other group of the wing joined us. Our crew was deputy for the low block. It was dangerous enough to fly in that formation without anyone shooting at us. They were so close together there was no room to overshoot.

“Before coming up to the coast, way ahead I saw 3 bursts of flak, like they were testing their guns. The bursts were right straight ahead and exactly at our altitude. Boy, did I sweat out the short time it took us to get in range. Then they started shooting in earnest. It was close too, but short and light.

“All the planes went through it O.K. No more opposition until the Initial Point [when we made the final turn to the target]. Then it came up moderate and very accurate. There was no evasive action taken either, and about that time one burst right under us with a loud explosion.

See (MIS)FORTUNES on page 9

(MIS)FORTUNES from page 8

"I looked at the instruments and saw #3 and #4 engines had been hit... Then radio operator S/Sgt William E. Evans and Semler, navigator, called up that they were hit. Jernigen got gunner Sgt Edward G. Lanning to help Evans, and Crowell helped Semler. He found that neither were seriously hurt.

"The target was just ahead, so we decided to hold the bombs. Then we discovered that the hydraulic system was out and couldn't get the bomb bay doors to open. McCary went back and tried to crank them open but didn't make much progress.

"At the target the doors were still closed, so we had nothing to worry about just then. Meantime flak was bursting all around. We circled Paris and headed for the secondary target with the flak still coming all the time.

"Our #3 began to smoke so that we decided to feather it, lest it catch fire. Then they got two doors open and Crowell kicked out 2 of the bombs. We were carrying three 2,000 lb bombs. We had already fallen out of formation and the group had dropped their bombs.

"Finally we decided to drop the other bomb through the door. We did. The door came off and went down like a leaf. We were below and to the right of the formation and we could see them being shot at. I saw 2 planes go down in flames.

"McCary shot flares for fighter assistance and shortly we had eight fighters around us. They really looked good!

"The main formation got flak all the way out, but we were able to dodge it until the coast. Then they were shooting everything at us. We were throwing that old plane around with evasive action too. That's about all that saved us. Anyway, we did make it.

"Semler told us the course to follow and we came back, letting down all the way. It was completely dark by the time we got to the field and we were unable to see it or contact them by radio. We saw a field lighted up and circled for a landing.

"Just as we started turning on the final approach, all 3 engines cut out. We yelled, *crash landing!* and tried to head the thing around toward the field. Thought we were all going to die when that plane went down below the tree

tops. I'll never forget those few seconds.

"We hit once and the force bounced us back up in the air, and for the next few seconds we went tearing our way through the countryside until we came to a stop on the runway—of all places!

"By the time I could get out of the plane the flight deck was already clear. I think they were out before it stopped. We ran far enough to see that it wasn't going to explode and to see that we weren't all there.

Lanning and I ran to the waist and found ball gunner Sgt Charles B. Holley unconscious and tail gunner Sgt Raymond C. Thornburg badly hurt. The ambulances were there in a minute or two and the boys were soon in the hospital.

"By the time we could get there, Thornburg was close to death. He died at 3:00am with a broken back, broken arm and severe shock. Holley had a skull fracture and is still unconscious 4 days later. Evans had his heel cut deeply by flak. Semler got a small flak wound in the arm.

"It's pretty bad losing those boys, but it's the game we are in. The only thing we figured was wrong with the engines was a vapor lock due to a hole somewhere in the line. After seeing what we went through, I'm thankful to God that no more of us were hurt.

3 June 1944. "Today we got the good news that we were going back to the 392nd! Sure was wonderful for us. We got busy, closed things up around that place, and were ready to come back on the 4th."

Writing on or after 13 July 44, Pardue notes, "I've discovered some statistics that are rather alarming: My 579th squadron has lost 30 crews and 5 have finished their missions. And has flown 126 missions. The 492nd became operational about 2 months ago with 77 crews. Since then 55 have gone down! Some life this is. A guy has one chance in a hundred!

#21 Corbie, France, 2 August 44. "In today's mission Jernigen was killed—by far the best friend I've ever had. It's plenty hard to take, a boy you've lived even closer to than a brother and to see him go in a second's time. I've always hesitated to make close friends over here, so it wouldn't be so hard to take if they were shot down.

See (MIS)FORTUNE on page 10

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 _____

Our website, www.b24.net, 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. Please send this report to: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

(MIS)FORTUNE from page 9

Jernigen was the one man I figured would last as long as I, so I turned myself loose. We were about as close as friends could be. I shared little things with him that I had never told anyone else, and he did the same with me. But he is gone now and I'll never allow myself to become as close to anyone else as long as I remain in the army.

"[During the mission] ... the flak got bad too... and all of a sudden they turned on us with the first burst hitting us badly. Evidently, our #3 and #4 tanks were hit for gas was spraying all over the place. I figured we were going to blow up, but Lanning turned off the generators and Sibert got the radio off. I had everyone get ready to bail out, but warned them not to jump.

"We cut out everything except VHF. Gas was saturating everything. #3 engine had to be feathered. Fitz [extra navigator 2/Lt Robert E. Fitzsimmons] had our position and gave us a heading for a flak free route to the Dover area. We went as fast as possible for fear we might run out of gas and have to ditch.

"The cross-feed seemed to be shot up. All over that part of the world seemed to be covered with clouds. About the time Semler figured we were over land, #4 engine quit. That made two out on one side. We held it for a little longer and gave the word for everyone to jump.

"Everyone got out in a hurry including me. By the time I left, tho, the plane was down in the clouds. Always thought I'd hesitate when the time came to jump, but now, bet I broke a record for speed. I pulled the rip cord as soon as I hit the slip stream and got a terrific jerk, but it just did open in time. I figure maybe Jernigen waited a little too long to pull his.

"The plane crashed and burned about a mile from where I landed. All and all, a very bad mission.

"Only on this mission did I realize the great responsibility on the pilot. It was up to me to decide whether or not to bail out over France or try to make England with the risk of it exploding at a lower altitude or maybe ditching in the channel and then whether to bail out or risk a crash landing. I figure we did the best thing as ordinarily no one would have been killed in the bail out. Of course, Jernigen might have lived had he had a greater distance to fall."

Capt Pardue's last mission was on 11 Nov 1944 to Bottrop, Germany, the 392nd's 200th combat mission.



The Pardue crew. Standing L-R, Crowell, Semler, Jernigen, Pardue; kneeling L-R: Holley, McCary, Thornburg, Koroluck, Evans, and Lanning.

Photos from Station 118

An Artist

The 392nd BG's personnel roster included several talented artists. Among them was 578th airplane and engine mechanic Pvt Arthur H. Olson. The photos below attest to his skill at painting both walls and planes!



Top: On 29 May 1944, Pvt Arthur H. Olson works on a mural somewhere at Station 118. Bottom: One of Olson's more creative efforts was for B-24 #42-7486, *The Shark*. He finished his paint job between 11 and 17 Sep 1943, when #486 was grounded with leaky fuel cells. Sadly, the plane was lost on 18 Nov 1943, its 9th mission, with 1/Lt Teddy Dudziak's crew aboard.

586th Army Postal Unit

The 586th Army Postal Unit had a staff of one First Lieutenant and several enlisted postal clerks. One of them was Cpl John J. Taub, who did not spend all his time handling mail. An unnamed newspaper (but likely the *Stars and Stripes*) noted that "he claims to be in a class by himself—the only member of the U.S. armed forces who can balance a bicycle on his chin.

"A vaudeville acrobat for 13 years, Taub entered the army with the idea of combat. He applied for the paratroops—no go. He tried for aerial gunnery—eyesight wasn't good enough. He threatened to do a handstand on the chapel cupola until accepted by the examining officer. 'I won't

See PHOTOS on page 11

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look at you,' said the astounded officer in self-defense.

"Now at an Eighth Air Force bomber station, Cpl Johnny does his rounds as squadron mail-clerk on a bicycle, whenever he can get away from an audience begging him to balance it on his chin."

This photo of Taub amazing his GI friends was taken on 19 Sep 1943.

Taub was more than a talented acrobat, though. According to Group Transportation Officer Capt Jim Goar, at some point Taub had "an altercation" with an RAF airman. They decided to settle their dispute in the gentlemanly way, with a duel. In the fuzzy photos below, Taub and 578th Sqdn truck driver Pvt Angelo Radice are practicing for the ensuing confrontation. The results of the duel are not known.



Charge of Quarters

Among other duties, the Charge of Quarters had the unhappy job of waking up his squadron's chosen combat crews for each mission. In the photos below and at the upper right, dated 14 Jun 1944, 578th Sqdn's Charge of Quarters S/Sgt Buddy Khoury is summoning the officers in 1/Lt Nealy Young's crew. Note the flashlight attached to his belt! It is not known if these photos were posed or taken "live." Regardless, on that day briefings for the combat crews were held at 12:30am and 2:30am so the four officers—pilot 1/Lt Nealy Young, copilot 1/Lt John J. Goodwin, bombardier 1/Lt John J. Cunningham (at left in both photos) and navigator 1/Lt Raymond J. Dunphy (yawning)—would have been awakened very early indeed.



November 2023 Meet & Greet

The November 2023 Zoom meeting was interesting and informative, with great conversation between more than 16 attendees.

First timer Mark Naber announced that his father, Harvey (a waist gunner in 2/Lt Albert W. Evans' 576th Sqdn crew), would soon celebrate his 105th birthday. As the Zoomers called "happy birthday" to Harvey, he waved to them from his easy chair.

It was also the first Meet & Greet for Mark Stasney, son of 579th Sqdn navigator 1/Lt Alvis J. Stasney.

Ralph opened the meeting by announcing the formation of a new committee to investigate potential sites to put our 392nd BG "stuff." More information is in Ralph's column on page 3.

Ralph then pointed out what Director David Parnell has done to commemorate 2/Lt John D. Ellis and crew who crashed in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, on 12 Aug 1944 with everyone killed. David has spent many years researching the men and what happened to them above the clouds that day, even traveling to the US to interview 576/9th pilot Carl D. Scharf; he saw Ellis's plane flipped around when it flew into the horizontal tornado-like vectors created by the propellers of the planes ahead of it in the formation. Scharf watched Ellis's B-24 spin out of control until it disappeared into the clouds.

David regularly gives talks to local groups about the crew, including a 50 minute presentation to 60 members of a nearby Masonic Lodge. He starts with why so many American airmen were in Britain and where their bases were. He then shares details about the ten men on the Ellis crew. He punctuates the talk by showing artifacts like .50 caliber rounds he has found at the crash site and other items about the crew.

David said he was interviewed by BBC Radio about his work on the Liberator Memorial. [Page 5 has details.] He also chatted recently with John Gilbert, who sends his best wishes to all Crusaders.

Philip Brazier commented that the airfield at Shipdham (site of the 44th BG) is about to be or already has been closed. The airfield at Rackheath (site of the 467th BG) has been sold for houses.

Time is speeding on, so we must act fast to preserve our history, both on-line and physically.

The next Zoom M&G will be on Saturday, January 13th at 1:30pm Eastern Time. Ralph will email the link to everyone a few days in advance. Hope to see you there!

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

daughter of Charles E. Dye, 1825th Ordnance Co.

I had a very dear friend that I lost touch with over a decade ago. Our lives went in different directions, our goals and attitudes changed, and our friendship seemed to become difficult. Over the years and the differences in our lifestyles, I never thought we would reconnect again and as our lives evolved separately, that seemed okay.

For reasons I will never understand, strong thoughts of her recently became intense.

Without much thought, I randomly reached out to her by phone. I don't know if this connection was by the Grace of God or due to some other power. I only know that I found this very dear friend, at the time of my call, to be going through the most tragic and heartbreaking time of her life and she has been alone.

I have to wonder at this particular time, why did I feel the need to reach out to her? Was this luck, coincidence, fate, divine guidance or something deep in our minds and souls that connects us to those we care about even through time and distance?

Please always listen to your heart and know that there is someone who needs you and you have an ability to make a meaningful impact on their sorrows, tragedies, successes and achievements.

There is so much tragic conflict on our planet as we move into the holidays. Maybe we need to take care of our own small worlds and care for those we know, those we will meet at some point and become endeared to; we need to bless these special people with our kindness, time and commitment.

Happy Holiday and please spread peace, kindness and acceptance to family, friends and friends we have yet to meet.

**The 392nd BG Memorial
Remembrance Sunday
November 12, 2023**



392nd Bomb Group Memorial Assoc.
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 late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

No recent deaths of Crusaders have been reported, but information about a 1947 death was just discovered:

William L. Pilcher, 577th, December 9, 1947

2/Lt William L. Pilcher flew 15 combat missions (21 Jan - 16 Apr 1945) as navigator on 2/Lt William L. Prater's crew.

He remained in the Army Air Force after WWII. On 9 Dec 1947, he was aboard C-54 Skymaster #42-72572, when it crashed shortly after takeoff from Goose Bay Airport, Newfoundland, Canada.

Snow falling at the time of the accident was a factor.

Of the 29 personnel onboard, 1 crewman and 22 passengers were killed. It is not known what Pilcher's role on the aircraft was.