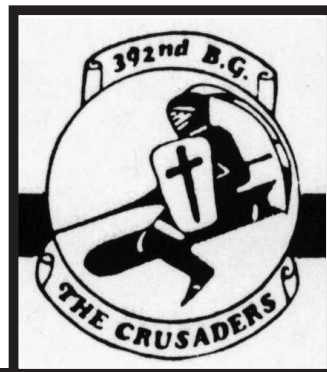




D-DAY

8AF historian Roger Freeman wrote that on 6 June 1944, "an estimated 11,000 aircraft were in the air over southern England." The 392nd BG certainly did its part—562 men (and 55 planes) flew at least one of our three missions that historic day, and 54 of those men (and 12 a/c) flew two. It was indeed a long day for the Group, as the first a/c took off at 1:55am and the last planes landed about 9pm.

8AF Planning, Spring 1944

Per the October 1944 report, *Historical Study of Air Support by the Eighth Air Force for the Land Invasion of Continental*

Europe, selection of targets specifically to support the invasion began several months before D-Day: enemy airframe and engine factories or assembly plants, ball-bearing and a/c accessory plants, and aircraft on the ground; strategic rail centers, including train repair or rail communication facilities (especially in Northern France, the Low Countries, and Western Germany); airfields, particularly those within 130 miles of

Normandy; and enemy coastal defense batteries.

Big Week

"Big Week" (19-25 Feb 1944) is often seen as the beginning of this campaign. During that one week, 579th Sqn Commander Myron Keilman later wrote, "General Doolittle had struck the Luftwaffe a devastating blow and had all but won the air war. The actual tonnage of bombs dropped by the 8th Air Force during those five days was 7,935; it exceeded the total dropped by our bombers during the whole of 1943."

He acknowledged the many Allied losses suffered, but

noted, "Our own losses could be, and were, replaced with new crews and new aircraft, by the vast training and manufacturing capability of America's industrial might, now geared up to full war production. For Nazi Germany, now fighting on three fronts, Russia, Italy and the constant round-the-clock bombing on its home front, the heavy losses of skilled and experienced fighter pilots, who defended the vital war industries, proved irreplaceable."

As D-Day Neared

In the 60 days prior to landings, 8AF targeted rail centers so

as to hamper enemy efforts to move troop and material reinforcements to Normandy and to force Germany to move supplies by road, which was slower, took more fuel, and was more vulnerable to air attack. These missions were spread over a wide area so as not to pinpoint the likely location of the invasion.

Attacks against German-manned coastal batteries were also made, aimed at reducing

enemy fire power opposing the assault. These, too, were widely dispersed, with the result that per the report, "only one-third of the effort expended would be devoted to the batteries threatening the area of the ground assault."

Attacks on German airfields near Caen, France, began three weeks before D-Day. The objectives were to destroy aircraft repair, maintenance and servicing facilities, render runways and landing areas unusable; and destroy planes on the ground.

Just before D-Day, 8AF attacks intensified and focused on

See D-Day on page 4



Ammunition is loaded into Ford's Folly, #42-7466, for the first mission on D-Day. Flown by the 578th's Capt Cliff Edwards crew and with Command Pilot LtCol Lawrence G. Gilbert aboard, it was the first 392nd BG plane to cross the Channel on 6 June 1944.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Reunion. As promised, an “economy plan” for the reunion is on page 3. Regardless of the meal choices you make, all attendees will be on their own for dinner on Wednesday night and Saturday lunch. Feel free to venture out and enjoy New Orleans cuisine! The article also gives options for joining your fellow Crusaders at these meals.

The 392nd BGMA is a non-profit, non-political organization registered with the Internal Revenue Service under Tax Code Section 501(c)(3). Therefore, all voting members at the annual membership meeting are considered official delegates. The reasonable cost to official delegates for attending is construed to be a charitable contribution and may be deductible by those who itemize deductions on their annual income tax returns.

Per our By-Laws, a voting member is defined as a person who is in “good standing” by having paid his/her annual dues for the current year.

The 392nd BGMA cannot provide advice on tax matters. Members are advised to seek their own professional advice as may be needed. Our Tax Identification Number is EIN 59-2644370.

Updates from England. Henry Dennett emailed, “We have been busy during January and February at the 392nd BGMA memorial planting the new hedge. The work was undertaken by Trustee Hugh Scott and his son Peter, my brother Ben, and me. Coffee and biscuits were supplied by Trustee Jill Scott and my wife Louise.”

These photos show Ben hard at work and the finished product. Henry says, “He came up from Essex one Saturday to help me as he feels passionate, like I do, about ensuring the respect for your countrymen is never forgotten or compromised. It’s the least we can do. After all; 747 men made the ultimate sacrifice from the Wendling base. We are a very fortunate generation (and our children) and owe so much to our parents and their generation to be able to live in a democratic



society. We might complain from time to time about whether it’s how we think it should be but at least we get the chance to change it every four or five years without going to war.”

Henry also says he and Hugh “were discussing the old Wendling airfield the other day (again) and we mentioned how extra ordinary it would be if there was any old cine film [home movies] still in existence with any of the families of 392nd members who served at Wendling. We wondered if you would be able to circulate a request through the newsletter to try and find out. It would be amazing if there were and then to have it transferred into CD or digital media so we could take a look here in Beeston.”

If you have any home movies taken during a visit to Wendling (especially during one of the 392nd BGMA’s reunions!), please let me know when the film was made and what format it is in. We’ll then figure out a way to get it converted to DVD format and sent to Henry and Hugh.

They are remembered. These two photos show that 392nd BG casualties are still remembered, both individually and collectively.

Past newsletters detailed what Roger Bean has done to memorialize 2/Lt John W. Reed IV, who on 29 Apr 1944 kept his badly damaged B-24 aloft from Berlin so that his crew could bail out over England. He then lost his life when the plane crashed near Walcott, Norfolk. The left photo shows a new sign renaming the street nearest the crash site in his honor.

In the photo at right, 392nd BGMA Director John Gilbert prepares to place a wreath for the 159 of our airmen either buried there or remembered on the Wall of the Missing during Memorial Day services at Cambridge American Cemetery.



Vice President's Thoughts



For the last five years or so, we have talked about when we would have to bring our 392nd BG website up to current technological standards.

With internet browsers upgrading their support to HTML5 and CSS3 and Google starting to penalize standings for websites that do not support mobile systems, the time had come to upgrade our outdated 1999 technology to the latest and greatest.

After over 17 years of building and updating www.b24.net, I didn't feel I had the gas in my tank to start over. Getting quotes to have it done from local web designer businesses here in Pensacola was an eye opener. Because of the size and complexity of the site, the best I could find was a *guess* of *at least* \$75,000 with a \$3,500 deposit to get a more accurate quote.

I then advertised at West Florida University that a grant to do website updates would be made available to a computer science student. After reviewing several responses, I chose Mercy Taylor. She is a computer science graduate and professional web designer who was looking for a part-time assignment. A perfect fit, plus she lives 5 miles from me on the Gulf so we could easily meet in person.

After requesting and receiving a grant from the 8th Air Force Historical Society (8AFHS), we began the rebuild in January 2017. Since then Mercy and I have both worked 20+ hours a week on this project.

On April 10th it was put online. We have improved site navigation by breaking it up into just six sections: the men, the missions, the aircraft, the base, the POW camps and the Association. Then, each section was further divided into specific areas. We also added an airmen search and aircraft search databases that show every airman, every mission flown, with all the details.

We are now, once again, on the cutting edge of technology and a front-runner of WWII websites. As far as I can tell, we are the only 8th AAF bomber or fighter website that is "responsive," meaning designed for use with small screen cell phones and tablets as well as desktop computers.

Although much of the site looks the same, it has a new engine that should carry us well into the future.

We continue, of course, updating the site with new material and photos as we receive them.

Register for the Reunion!

The time has come to register for our reunion, 27 Sep-1 Oct 2017 with the 8AFHS in New Orleans. Details, forms, etc, are at <http://www.b24.net/reunions.htm>. *If you tried to book a hotel room but were told none was available, please contact Annette immediately!! We may be able to help.*

Our hospitality suite and rendezvous dinner are the "real reason" we all gather to renew our friendship and common interest in the 392nd BGMA. Other events will include two days visiting the National WWII Museum, seminars, and the

8AFHS Gala Banquet.

Currently, 5 Veterans and 39 2nd Gens and friends have reserved rooms. Hope to see you in New Orleans!

PX Coordinator Bill McCutcheon is ready for the reunion. He has plenty of khaki hats as well as one blue hat. He also has 392nd BGMA polo shirts. New color—Pacific Blue: 2 small, 8 medium, 9 large, 9 extra-large and 5 extra-extra large. White polo shirts: 1 small, 1 medium, 1 large, and 2 extra-large. To see what the new shirts look like (and to order on-line) go to <http://www.b24.net/itemsForSale.htm>.

Bob

The Reunion Economy Plan

Bob Books has been to New Orleans, visited the reunion hotel, and checked on the availability of nearby restaurants. He reports that the hotel is literally across the street from the airport, in an industrial area with limited resources.

The hotel does have a restaurant but it has only 15 four-person tables, so you may have to wait to be served. The next nearest restaurant is about ¼ mile away and requires walking on a grassy area on the side of the road.

The two meal package options are \$232/person for four breakfasts / three dinners or \$162/person for three breakfasts / two dinners. If you have mobility issues, these are the best options.

The three dinners (including the Gala Banquet at the Museum on Saturday) can also be purchased separately.

If you have limited time and funds, we suggest you arrive Wednesday evening and depart Saturday. Pay separately for the Thursday dinner buffet (\$51), the Thursday and Friday trips to the WWII Museum (\$66 for WWII veterans and WWII Museum members; \$94/person for all others, including lunch both days), and the Friday 392nd BGMA rendezvous dinner (\$40). Buy breakfast at the hotel or the nearby restaurant.

However, this economy plan means you will miss the tours on Saturday, the 8AFHS general membership meeting (if you leave early morning), and Saturday night's Gala Dinner.

Ultimately, what meals you choose (and where and when), the tours you go on, and the meetings/seminars you attend are a matter of personal preference!

All attendees must, of course, pay the \$40/person registration fee.

ALL reunion attendees must make their own plans for dinner on Wednesday, 27 September, and lunch on Saturday, 30 September. The 392nd BGMA will be happy to make reservations at the nearby (walkable) restaurant for Wednesday, so if you will arrive at the hotel by 6pm that night and want to join us, please contact Annette so she can reserve a spot for you.

For Saturday lunch, please also let her know if you are interested in chipping in for pizza or sub sandwiches and beverages in our hospitality suite.

If there is enough interest for either of these meals, we will provide more information in the September newsletter.

Contact details for Annette and Bob are in the box in the upper left corner of page 2. Don't hesitate to get in touch with them if you have questions!

D-Day from page 1

key communication points, railroad bridges, radar stations and enemy reinforcement routes—but still distributed so as to not reveal the landing sites.

US fighter squadrons, meanwhile, were also preparing for the invasion. When they found no enemy a/c near a bomber stream, two-thirds of each fighter group was permitted to leave the formation and hunt for the enemy. Resulting dogfights “occurred in a wide area and from maximum altitudes to the deck,” so that German planes were widely scattered and often returned to their bases in small groups and at low altitudes—and thus, vulnerable. Many more German fighter planes were strafed and destroyed while on the ground.

Planning the Invasion

How naval, ground and air forces would interact and complement each other during the invasion was key.

To help the army, could the bombers destroy mine fields and underground communication cables? Yes, they could, but “bombs of 100 pounds and 500 pounds would have to be used with delayed fuses, which in turn would make craters. In many cases the ground forces desired the destruction but did not want craters which would prevent the passage of vehicles over certain areas.”

Could the bombers destroy pill boxes and other strong points lining the beaches? Maybe. “It was necessary from time to time to reiterate to the ground forces the remote probability of direct hits on pill boxes and strong points. It was pointed out that those with concrete ceilings of six feet or more could withstand a direct hit, while only those with ceilings of three feet or less could not. It was clearly stated, however, that only two percent of the bombs aimed would have a chance of hitting the gun positions.”

The “final compromise”: 1) 8AF bombs dropped on US

and British landing beaches would have “instantaneous fusing with some fragmentary bombs for the purpose of demoralizing and destroying enemy troops in the open...” The beaches were not to be cratered; and 2) 500-pound bombs with delayed fuses would be used against gun positions and pill boxes to the sides of the beaches that could lay down enfilading fire. These bombs would likely not destroy the pill boxes but perhaps would be able to “tip the guns to prevent accurate aiming, to smash those which had three-foot roofs and could be hit by chance, and to make craters nearby for close-attacking troops to find shelter.”

Another major point was proximity of GIs and sailors in ships and landing craft to falling bombs. “Beaches were considered as beginning with their high-water level and the bombing was to begin as close as possible to this line under the estimated skill of the bombardiers... The army was informed that as many as eight percent of the bombs might drop in the area of the assault boats and cause casualties... The army accepted this danger and in some cases desired to allow their troops to approach the beaches immediately upon cessation of the bombing. The Eighth Air Force representatives insisted upon a delimiting zone of 1,000 yards, with the touchdown on the beaches not to be made until five minutes after the bombing had been completed. Later, when it was determined that the non-visual bombing technique might have to be used, this time interval was increased to ten minutes.”

One of the “minor problems” discussed was “the question of the minimum height at which the heavy day bombers could reasonably operate.” If there was complete overcast (10/10 condition), could the bombers come in below the clouds? It was decided that bombing at 6,000 feet would be “suicide” for the heavy bombers but possible for medium

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label where your membership status is shown directly after your name. **“17” or higher means your membership is current.** LM means Life Member and FRIEND 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 \$ _____

D-Day from page 4

bombers of the Ninth Air Force, due to their additional speed and maneuverability.

It was also decided that the Ninth Air Force would cover Utah Beach and the Eighth, Omaha Beach. These areas were far enough apart that the bomber formations would neither overlap nor interfere with each other.

On D-Day morning, 1,200 heavy bombers would attack the beach targets. All other available bombers would have targets to the rear of the beaches such as enemy installations in Caen and enemy reserve forces in Foret de Cerisy.

Invasion Stripes

Mission planners greatly feared that the Luftwaffe had been holding aircraft and crews in reserve to launch when the invasion began. They expected massive dogfights between Allied crews and Luftwaffe foes. An even greater concern was casualties from friendly fire incidents.

On 25 May, all fighter aircraft were directed to be painted with black and white “invasion stripes.”

Per <https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/stripes-d-day>, “Tests showed that the stripes were easily visible on the ground and in the air—easier to see than the usual national markings that Allied aircraft bore, so a simple order—if it ain’t got stripes, shoot it down—could be given out to Allied gunners and pilots. For fear of the Luftwaffe getting wind of the scheme and confusing the issue by painting their own stripes, the plan was a closely guarded secret.

“On the first of June, a small flight bearing the invasion stripes overflew the Allied fleet to familiarize the crews with the markings. The orders to paint the stripes were finally issued—on June 3 for troop carrier units, and on June 4 to the fighter and bomber squadrons. The harried ground crewmen scrambled for paint and brushes while they prepared their aircraft for their missions.”

Generally speaking, all Allied planes that flew sorties on D-Day bore black and white invasion stripes—except the heavy, four-engine bombers. The Luftwaffe was not using four-engine bombers at the time and the Allies’ heavy bombers had distinct, easily-recognized silhouettes.

8AF Air Commitments

A report dated 15 Apr 1944 made it clear that “the air



This photo, from <https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/stripes-d-day>, shows P-38 Lightning fighters in flight. Their invasion stripes stand out.

attack by the heavy bombers was aimed primarily at the demoralization and stunning of the enemy forces. Any destruction of strong points, anti-tank obstacles, wire, and communications was considered solely as a fortunate bonus.”

Due to “the great number of planes assembling over the southern part of England” for the invasion and “the fact that the heavy night bombers of the RAF were returning from night bombing missions over the assault area, it was necessary to enforce rigid timing schedules and precise altitudes for all divisions. They were to assemble north of [a specified line] between the hours of 0155 and 0525 o’clock, 6 June 1944, and attain an altitude of 8,000 feet before crossing that line. Special time signals issued by the British Broadcasting Corporation were used for the synchronization of all watches used for timing. Attacks were to be made on the beach lines between 9,200 feet and 13,200 feet. The 1st BD was to attack at 0725, 2BD at 0630, and 3BD at 0725. All times were double British Summer Time.

“All crew briefings stressed the idea that special care was to be taken to prevent dropping of bombs on friendly troops who were held in a line 1,000 yards back from the beaches. Special briefing was given all H2X navigators and bombardiers several days before D-Day by a committee of three officers from Headquarters, 8AF. A special instruction booklet had been prepared to further aid them in blind bombing in case visual bombing could not be used.”

The B-24s were “to take off approximately one-half hour prior to the 1st and 3rd BDs and be routed north of the east-west line through 5235N by 0010E, thence south, remaining west of a corridor bounded on the east by a line from 5133N by 0148W to Selsey Bill. They were to depart the English Coast between Selsey Bill and Little Hampton and proceed direct to the targets. After bombing they were to proceed south to 4900N, turn right and withdraw south and west of Jersey and Guernsey Islands, returning to England at Portland Bill.”

Finally, the “bomber attacks were timed to commence as near H-Hour as possible, and still insure completion of bombing before assault troops were to land.”

Fine-Tuning the Plan

As D-Day neared, plans for both good and bad weather were adjusted. If the weather was not optimal, a “ten-minute interval between the time the last bombs were away and the troop touchdown” would be followed rather than the five-minute delay of the fair weather plan. It was reiterated that bombs would be fused so as to “avoid cratering” the beaches. If overcast skies resulted in H2X bombing, it would be “necessary for the bombers to approach from water side” instead of perpendicular to the beach “because of the contrast between land and water” that would be seen on the radar scope.

Finally, in early June it was determined that once the invasion was initiated, it “should go forward without the support of the bombers” if weather conditions proved too severe for them to operate or confidently hit their targets.

Last-Minute Changes

“During the night of 5/6 June, a re-examination of the schedules of the naval forces in the assault areas” led to

See D-Day on page 6

D-Day from page 5

a change in bombing procedures. To avoid bombs falling on ships or assault craft nearing the beach, it "was agreed that a delay of from five to thirty seconds would be imposed upon the bomb release moment for all heavy bombardment formations using Pathfinder or blind bombing technique."

This meant that bombardiers "would not release their bombs until the specified number of seconds had passed after they had reached what would have been ordinarily the normal bomb release point." For formations attacking just before H-Hour, the mandated delay was 30 seconds. From 16,000 feet, this meant "that the main point of impact of the bomb pattern would be moved back approximately one to two miles from the assault beaches."

Additionally, at the combat crew briefings, "everyone was warned not to release their bombs prematurely" so as to avoid hitting assault craft carrying GIs to the beaches. "This stipulation...had the effect of producing an overcautious attitude in the minds of most of the bombardiers and H2X blind bombing operators."

8AF Heavy Bomber Missions

B-24s and B-17s flew four missions on D-Day.

First Mission. In direct support of the assault forces, 1,077 heavy bombers attacked the beaches just before the landing craft reached the shore line. "Weather conditions were very unfavorable and all bombs were dropped on Pathfinder indicators through a 10/10 overcast." Most of the bombs "seem to have landed in the area immediately behind the beaches. If nothing else were accomplished, the attack

disrupted enemy lines of communication, demoralized the German troops facing the beach head, and disorganized the reserve strength which was stationed within two miles of the shore line."

The 392nd's target was identified as being both "Coastal Batteries E & F" and "St. Laurent sur Mer/Colleville" (about one mile inland from Omaha Beach). Crews were warned the "absolute deadline for any bombing on primaries is 06:28. Flights arriving after 0628 will bomb secondary [Foret de Cerisy] or last resort [Vire]."

This mission was, coincidentally, the Group's 100th.

Per the 2BD Field Order, they were also cautioned that "troops will be 400 yards to one mile off shore during attack" so "insure that all bombing range errors are overages due to danger of shortages causing loss of allied lives and damage to landing points." No second runs were allowed.

Any a/c needing to return to base "will make decision to abort before departing English coast. All a/c returning over the Channel thru 1st, 2nd or 3rd BD corridors will be fired on regardless."

Navigators were advised, "A string of searchlights will be exposed between Worchester and Swindon to mark 2BD western boundary. The line between the 2BD and 1BD will be marked by a cluster of 6 lights just southeast of Leicester and a string of single lights running north and south and ending in a cluster of 6 at Wallingford."

Crews "not making rendezvous with flight formations will proceed to the target joining formations and bombing if practical; if not, individual a/c will bomb the secondary targets making an independent sighting operation."

Additionally, "Normal air sea rescue procedures will be in effect [but] only boats or ships heading toward the UK will stop to pick up crew members of ditched a/c."

Even if "Naval shelling may be taking place on targets assigned Eighth Air Force—units will attack as scheduled regardless."

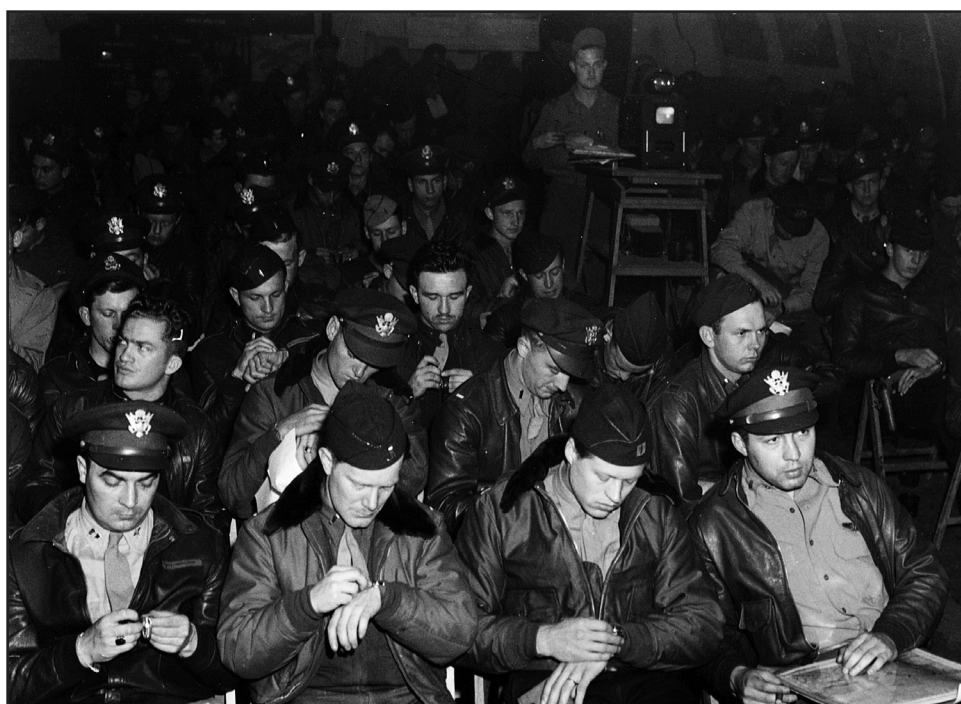
Acting Air Executive LtCol Lawrence Gilbert, 392nd command pilot for the mission, took off at 0251, followed by 35 more planes from the 576th, 578th, and 579th Sqdns (three of which aborted).

"Indelibly stamped in my memory," he later recalled, "is the difficulty we encountered in assembling our formations in total darkness, then attempting to merge with the main bomber stream enroute to the Normandy beaches..."

"A certain amount of confusion and navigational error was inevitable. Clouds in the assembly area broke up several formations and near-miss collisions were numerous..."

"From several miles out we could

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The room was packed for the first briefing on D-Day. In this photo, the airmen synchronize their watches. Front row, L-R: Capt Harold F. Weiland, Group Bombardier; 1/Lt Kenneth S. Bevan, 579th navigator; Capt Leonard F. Untiedt, 578th Sqdn navigator; Capt Walter F. Joachim, 578th bombardier. 2nd row, L-R: unknown, 2/Lt John J. Mason, 576th copilot; 1/Lt William E. Meighen, 576th pilot, unknown. 3rd row, L-R: unknown, 1/Lt Ben Alexander, 578th pilot; 2/Lt Thomas G. Kirkwood Jr., 578th navigator; possibly 2/Lt Presley C. Broussard, 578th copilot. At the projector is S/Sgt Harold W. Buirkle, 576th S-2.

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see the beach but as we came closer, well before bomb release point, cloud cover intervened, preventing visual bomb sighting. We dropped our bomb load on the smoke flares of the Pathfinder aircraft [but “11 failed to bomb because of cloud cover in the target area.”]

Another seven a/c could not find their formation and bombed with other Groups.

All 392nd planes landed safely by about 0900.

Second Mission. Weather conditions were again unfavorable and only one formation of 37 B-24s (out of 400 launched) dropped bombs just inland from the beach head area.

The 392nd's efforts, 12 planes from the 577th against enemy reserves at Foret de Cerisy, was led by CO Col Irvine A. Rendle. Weather enroute was overcast all over the Channel and the target was completely overcast, with clouds reaching from 3,000 to 8,000 feet. No bombs were dropped due to this 10/10 cloud cover.

Planes took off about 0600 and returned about noon.

Third Mission. The 392nd did not participate in this mission of 73 B-24s against Caen.

Fourth Mission. The last 8AF mission on D-Day saw 709 aircraft dispatched against 20 tactical targets. The 14th Combat Wing was led by LtCol Lorin L. Johnson, on detached duty from the 392nd BG. Assembly was at 24,000 feet due to weather. Two squadrons of 392nd ships bombed choke points at Vire via H2X with results unobserved.

Take-offs began about 1640 and planes returned in heavy rain about 2100.

After Thoughts

578th Sqdn pilot Roland Sabourin had clear memories of that first mission. “We took off and picked up a heading to a buncher [a navigational aid] over in the middle of England. Our take-off interval was less than a minute apart. There was no attempt to get a 6-ship element together and then depart Wendling. This would have been catastrophic; no one that I know of had flown night formation.

“Anyway, the a/c were in trail and every tail gunner had an Aldis Lamp and was flashing a coded letter. We kept that Aldis Lamp dead in front of us. We then went into the clouds and never saw each other again.

[The 392nd had been directed to send up six flights of six a/c each, all flashing the letter “D” in Morse code via Aldis lamp. Each individual flight was assigned a color to use, either amber, red or green.]

“I circled the rendezvous buncher until departure time and never saw another 392nd a/c or any other flying object. It was another case of ‘where did everybody go?’

“We departed the buncher on time and took up the prescribed course. Flying in and out of the clouds gave us a lonely feeling. Was Sabourin's crew going to annihilate the enemy all by ourselves? We never did see the ground searchlights that were set to show the designated route for each Bomb Division.

“We proceeded on the flight and it started to lighten up as dawn approached. As we were nearing the southern coast of England we spotted a lone PFF a/c and tacked onto him. Meanwhile, the weather had cleared somewhat and you could look down and see some activity on the Channel. In

fact, you could look ahead and see the coast of France.

“We figured we were going to pulverize our target, only to be disillusioned as we drew closer, as a cloud layer was over the target. Another a/c joined us and we dropped our bombs off the PFF a/c.

“This was a disappointment, as I felt that we had completely overflown the beachhead. I really felt that the 8AF had let the troops down on that day and that mission. What a difference we could have made if we could have pulverized those beaches.”

Final Analysis

Weather and extreme caution kept the 8th AF from making the powerful blow in support of Allied troops that it wanted. However, its work had already been done in the weeks leading up to D-Day.

For example, the 8th's report noted that analysts “believed that the enemy had planned to have 5,000 aircraft available to prevent an Allied invasion.” By 6 June 1944, though, “The German Air Force had simply been fought off its feet and had been cut off from all hope of adequate replacements by the fighting and bombing during the months preceding operation Overlord.”

On D-Day, it was later reported, German soldiers joked bitterly that the American planes were gray, the British planes black, and the Luftwaffe planes invisible.

The final judgment rests with Overlord commander Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower. Air Force historian Richard P. Hallion writes in *D-Day 1944, Air Power Over the Normandy Beaches and Beyond*, “In June 1944, John S.D. Eisenhower, Ike's son, graduated from West Point—ironically on the same day that Allied forces stormed ashore at Normandy. June 24 found the new lieutenant riding through Normandy with his father, observing the aftermath of the invasion:

“The roads we traversed were dusty and crowded. Vehicles moved slowly, bumper to bumper. Fresh out of West Point, with all its courses in conventional procedures, I was offended at this jamming up of traffic. It wasn't according to the book. Leaning over Dad's shoulder, I remarked, ‘You'd never get away with this if you didn't have air supremacy.’ I received an impatient snort:

‘If I didn't have air supremacy, I wouldn't be here.’”

More Information about D-Day

In *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-1945*, Rick Atkinson describes the average American GI in 1944. His information has been lightly edited.

“Just over 8 million men had been inducted into the U.S. Army and Navy during the past two years—11,000 every day. The average GI was 26, born the year that the war to end all wars ended, but manpower demands in this global struggle meant the force was growing younger: henceforth nearly half of all American troops arriving to fight in Europe in 1944 would be teenagers. One in three GIs had only a grade school education, one in four held a high school diploma, and slightly more than one in ten had attended college for at least a semester. War Department Pamphlet 21-13 would assure them that they were ‘the world's best paid soldiers.’ A private earned \$50 a month, a staff sergeant \$96. Any

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valiant GI awarded the Medal of Honor would receive an extra \$2 each month.

"The typical soldier stood five feet eight inches tall and weighed 144 pounds, but physical standards had been lowered to accept defects that once would have kept many young men out of uniform. A man with 20/400 vision could now be conscripted if his sight was correctable to at least 20/40 in one eye; toward that end, the armed forces would make 2.3 million pairs of eyeglasses for the troops. The old jest that the Army no longer examined eyes but instead just counted them had come true. A man could be drafted if he had only one eye, or was completely deaf in one ear, or had lost both external ears, or was missing a thumb or three fingers on either hand, including a trigger finger. Earlier in the war a draftee had had to possess at least 12 of his original 32 teeth, but now he could be utterly toothless. After all, the government had drafted a third of all the civilian dentists in the United States; collectively they would extract 15 million teeth, fill 68 million more, and make 2.5 million sets of dentures, enabling each GI to meet the minimum requirement of 'masticating the Army ration.'"

"By the tens of thousands, souls in olive drab continued to pour into Britain. Since January [1944] the number of GIs had doubled, to 1.5 million, a far cry from the first paltry ... 4,000 in early 1942. Of the U.S. Army's 89 divisions, 20 now could be found in the United Kingdom, with 37 more either en route or earmarked for the European theater. Through Liverpool they arrived, and through Swansea, Cardiff, Belfast, Avonmouth, Newport. But most came into Glasgow and adjacent Greenock, more than 100,000 in April alone, 15,000 at a time on the two Queens—Elizabeth and Mary—each of which could haul an entire division and outrun German U-boats to make the crossing from New York in five days."

Worries about Unconventional Warfare

"As the invasion drew nearer, anxieties multiplied. One intelligence source warned that German pilots planned to drop thousands of rats infected with bubonic plague on English cities; Allied authorities now offered a bounty on rat carcasses to test for signs of infection. Another agent, in France, claimed that German scientists were producing botulinum toxin in a converted Norman sugar-beet plant, as part of a biological warfare plot. An officer recently sent to London by General Marshall informed Eisenhower of both the top secret Manhattan Project to build an atom bomb and of new fears that Germany could use 'radioactive poisons' against Overlord. SHAEF consequently stockpiled Geiger counters in London; earlier in May, military doctors were told to report 'photographic or X-ray film fogged or blackened without apparent cause' and to watch for 'an epidemic disease...of unknown [origin],' with symptoms that included nausea and a sharp drop in white blood cell counts."

"'Everybody gets more and more on edge,' Eisenhower had recently written a friend in Washington. 'A sense of humor and a great faith, or else a complete lack of imagination, are essential to the project.'"

Anticipated D-Day Losses

"British Empire casualties in the war now exceeded half a million; the 16 divisions to be committed under Montgomery,

including Canadians and Poles, amounted to Churchill's last troop reserves. British casualty forecasts, calculated under a formula known as Evetts' Rates, projected three levels of combat: Quiet, Normal, and Intense. But the anticipated carnage in Normandy had led planners to add a new level: Double Intense. According to a British study, enemy fire sweeping a 200- by 400-yard swatch of beach for two minutes would inflict casualties above 40 percent on an assault battalion, a bloodletting comparable to the Somme in 1916.

"American casualties, projected with an elaborate formula called Love's Tables, would likely reach 12 percent of the assault force on D-Day, or higher if gas warfare erupted. The 1st Infantry Division, the point of the spear on Omaha Beach, estimated that under 'maximum' conditions, casualties would reach 25 percent, of whom almost a third would be killed, captured, or missing. The admiral commanding bombardment forces at Utah Beach told his captains that 'we might expect to lose one-third to one-half of our ships.' Projected U.S. combat drownings in June, exclusive of paratroopers, had been calculated at a grimly precise 16,726."

D-Day Weather

"More than 500 weather stations were scattered across the United Kingdom, most reporting hourly... Each Allied invasion constituent had particular weather demands. Amphibious forces needed offshore surface winds not greater than Force 4 (13 to 18 miles per hour) for three consecutive days, as well as apposite tides. Pilots wanted a cloud ceiling of at least 2,500 feet for transport planes, with visibility of no less than three miles, and, for heavy bombers, no overcast thicker than the partly cloudy condition designated 5/10. Paratroopers required surface winds below 20 miles an hour, without gusts, and illumination of not less than a half moon at a 39 degree altitude. The odds against such conditions aligning on the Norman coast for 72 hours in June were placed at 13 to 1."

Conditions were not favorable for June 5 so the invasion was postponed. However, the forecast did improve, so on June 5, Gen Eisenhower—often smoking 80 Camel cigarettes a day to combat the stress—issued the order to go.

D-Day, 6 June 1944

Per Atkinson, "Allied bombing had intensified at midnight... More than a thousand British heavy bombers struck coastal batteries and inland targets in the small hours, gouging gaping craters along the Norman seaboard... Behind the British came virtually the entire American bomber fleet of 1,635 planes. B-26 Marauder crews, aware that paratroopers in the Cotentin were pressing toward the causeways on the peninsula's eastern lip, flew parallel to the shoreline below 6,000 feet to drop 4,414 bombs with commendable accuracy along Utah Beach.

"Less precise was the main American force, the 1,350 B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators of the Eighth Air Force, funneled from England in a roaring corridor ten miles wide and led by pathfinder planes flipping out flares at one-mile intervals like burning bread crumbs. Their targets included forty-five coastal fortifications, mostly within rifle range of the high-water mark from Sword Beach in the

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east to Omaha in the west. Given the imprecision of heavy bombers at 16,000 feet—under perfect conditions, less than half their bombs were likely to fall within a quarter mile of an air point—the primary intent was not to pulverize enemy defenses but to demoralize German defenders beneath the weight of metal.

“Conditions were far from perfect. Overcast shrouded the coast as the formations made landfall, six squadrons abreast on a course perpendicular to the beaches. Eisenhower a week earlier had agreed to permit clumsy ‘blind bombing’ if necessary, using H2X radar to pick out the shoreline and approximate target locations. On the night of June 5, he authorized another abrupt change requested by Eighth Air Force: to avoid accidentally hitting the approaching invasion flotillas, bombardiers would delay dumping their payloads for an additional five to thirty seconds beyond the normal release point.

“For an hour and a half, 3,000 tons of bombs gouged the Norman landscape in a paroxysm of hellfire and turned earth. Minefields, phone wires, and rocket pits inland were obliterated, but less than 2 percent of all bombs fell in the assault areas, and virtually none hit the shoreline or beach fortifications. Repeated warnings against fratricide ‘had the effect of producing an overcautious attitude in the minds of most of the bombardiers,’ 8AF analysis later concluded; some added ‘many seconds’ to the half-minute ‘bombs away’ delay already imposed. Nearly all payloads tumbled a mile or two from the coast, and some fell farther. Many thousands of bombs were wasted: no defenders had been ejected from their concrete lairs. Whether they felt demoralized by the flame and apocalyptic noise behind them would only be discerned when the first invasion troops touched shore.”

“Not until that fantastic armada materialized from the mist had the truth struck home [to the enemy]. In subsequent hours the German navy remained supine; so too the air force. Luftwaffe pilots were supposed to fly up to five daily sorties each to disrupt the invasion, but German aircraft losses in the past five months exceeded 13,000 planes, more than half from accidents and other noncombat causes. Air Fleet Three, responsible for western France, had just

319 serviceable planes facing nearly 13,000 Allied aircraft; on D-Day, they would fly one sortie for every 37 flown by their adversaries. Of the mere dozen fighter-bombers that reached the invasion zone, ten dropped their bombs prematurely.”

Masters of the Air

Per Donald L. Miller's *Masters of the Air*, “On the eve of the invasion, General Eisenhower had assured his troops: ‘If you see fighting aircraft over you, they will be ours.’ Neither he nor any other Allied commanders gave voice to his deepest concern—that Hitler had been husbanding hundreds of fighters inside the Reich for a furious effort to hurl the invaders back into the sea. Even Carl Spaatz [Commander, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe], who was confident his forces had grievously damaged the Luftwaffe, expected—as Eisenhower did—‘lively air opposition.’ ”

In the sky was Gen Laurence S. Kuter, “on temporary assignment as the personal observer of D-Day operations” for Gen Hap Arnold [Commander, U.S. Army Air Forces]. He recalled thinking, “...if I were the German operations officer and Providence had [allowed] me to select the weather in which to make my defense, these were the conditions I would have chosen. A solid bank of overcast covered the Normandy coast and extended to mid-Channel....Here was perfect concealment for German airmen. They could dive out of the dense cloud upon the packed Channel below, bomb or strafe any ship and climb back into the protecting clouds in a matter of seconds. They could come and go before a gun was brought to bear or our thousands of fighters were able to intercept. I was apprehensive—more than I would care to admit. The cloudbank could be swarming with Germans. Where was there ever such a target—4,000 ships on a front 18 miles broad...”

“As the landing boats carrying the troops headed toward the beaches in the heavy chop, General Kuter’s concern disappeared. The air was full of Allied fighters and ‘columns of Flying Fortresses stretched back to England as far as the eye could follow.’ There were no signs of German fighters. The ‘Hun never showed up,’ Kuter wrote later. ‘He couldn’t because he had nothing left.’

“On this world-turning day, the Luftwaffe flew fewer than

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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

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250 sorties against the most powerful invasion force ever assembled to that time. The infantry battle...would not be won for another seven weeks, but command of the sky had already been secured in six weeks of withering aerial combat."

In the months leading up to D-Day, the Eighth suffered major losses, but men and planes could be replaced relatively quickly. "This is where the Americans had the advantage, in men even more than machines. Albert Speer's hidden plants continued to pour out planes, but a despairing Adolf Galland did not have enough qualified men to fly them. In March alone, he lost 20 percent of his experienced pilots. In that month the Eighth destroyed more than twice as many enemy planes as it had in 1942 and 1943 combined."

D-Day

"There was no glory that day for the bomber boys. That morning, they had appeared suddenly and spectacularly over the enemy's coastal defenses just before the first landing boats came ashore. Hampered by thick cloud cover and concerned about hitting their own troops, the lead bombardiers, using radar bombsights, delayed their releases. Five thousand tons of explosives fell harmlessly behind German coastal positions. The heavies flew other missions that day against enemy fortifications and key transportation junctures just off the beaches, in the hope of disrupting German efforts to bring up reinforcements, but their air support was not as effective as that provided by Thunderbolts, Mustangs, and low-flying B-26 Marauders. The two-engine Marauders decimated German defenses on Utah Beach, guaranteeing the American assault forces in the sector an unexpectedly easy landing."

"But the Eighth Air Force had already done its indispensable duty. In the five-month battle for the air supremacy that made the invasion possible, the American Air Forces in Europe lost over 2,600 heavy bombers and 980 fighter planes and suffered 18,400 casualties, including 10,000 combat deaths, over half as many men as the Eighth lost in all of 1942 and 1943. These airmen deserve an equal place in the national memory with the approximately 6,000 American soldiers killed, wounded, or missing in action in the amphibious and airborne assault on D-Day."

An ALLIED Effort

As <http://www.cnn.com/2014/06/05/opinion/opinion-d-day-myth-reality/> points out, "June 6 1944, D-Day was not a predominantly American effort. Rather, it was an Allied effort with, if anything, Britain taking the lead. Yes, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, was American, but his deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder was British, as were all three service chiefs. Air Marshal Sir Arthur "Mary" Coningham, commander of the tactical air forces, was also British. The plan for Operation Overlord—as D-Day was codenamed—was largely that of Gen. Bernard Montgomery, the land force commander. The Royal Navy had overall responsibility for Operation Neptune, the naval plan. Of the 1,213 warships involved, 200 were American and 892 were British; of the 4,126 landing craft involved, 805 were American and 3,261 were British.

"Indeed, 31% of all U.S. supplies used during D-Day came directly from Britain, while two-thirds of the 12,000 aircraft

involved were also British, as were two-thirds of those that landed in occupied France. Despite the initial slaughter at Omaha, casualties across the American and British beaches were much the same. This is not to belittle the U.S. effort but rather to add context and a wider, 360-degree view."

US Casualties

For an analysis of the actual number of US casualties on D-Day, see <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-challenge-of-counting-d-days-dead/>.

The 100th Mission Party

A memo dated 13 June 1944 from Group CO Col Rendle to "All Concerned" announced:

1. Officer representatives from all units on this station have unanimously voted to postpone the officers' dance in favor of the enlisted men dance to be held at Hangar #1 on Saturday, 17 June 1944.

2. All beer and food will be donated by officers of this station.

3. Efforts are being made to bring the carnival now at Norwich to this station. It will be located near Hangar #1 and open at 1600 hours. Two bands will play for the dancing which will begin at 1900 hours.

4. The Red Cross will serve food and coffee. The EM Mess staffs will serve hot dogs.

5. The dance will be for Enlisted Personnel and guests only. Officers attending will be members of a committee made up for all units. Enlisted Personnel are encouraged to invite their lady guests. Transportation will be provided from Kings Lynn, Norwich, and Dereham. Contact Special Services for transportation needs from other points. Only members of the Officers Committee will accompany guest convoys.

6. Class A Uniforms will be worn. Weapons will not be carried by personnel attending the dance. Personnel will carry their own canteen cups for beverages.

7. Guests will be transported to Hangar #1 where they must remain until the dance closes at 2400 hours. Except for the immediate area around the hangar the tech site and airdrome proper will be considered off limits for guests. MPs and the Officer Committee will prohibit guests from leaving the hangar area.

Per the Group History, "Officers took over all but a few tasks around the post, while all enlisted men were allowed to attend [the party]. Civilian girls, WACS, WAFS and ATS girls from neighboring towns and camps were brought by truck to help enliven the occasion. A small carnival from Norwich, with merry-go-round, and booths of the usual nature was set up outside Hangar No. 1. Beer was supplied free in abundance. Ice cream and cones were served without charge, as were cookies, cake, and hot dogs—all inside the Hangar. One end of the hangar was reserved for dancing, and two military bands supplied the music. The enlisted men universally proclaimed it an excellent party. The general understanding was that our Group would be stood down for the night and the following morning. Nevertheless, at 1900 hours we were alerted, and certain enlisted men had to be summoned to duty. At about 2315 the hangar had

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to be cleared, and the carnival and other civilians had to be cleared away.

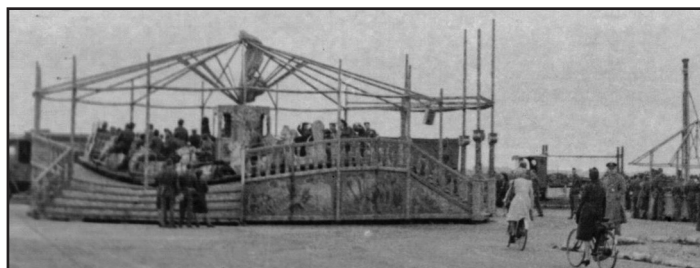
"While the merry-making was subsiding, the preparations were under way for a mission to Luneburg AF [in Germany]. 36 a/c were to go—quite a surprise after having expected to have a little time to recuperate from the party. Briefings were held 0030 to 0200, and around 0500 the ships took off. 32 a/c completed the mission, but due to heavy undercast they were unable to bomb the primary. Instead, all dropped their 500 pound bombs on Wesermunde and the port of Bremerhaven. All returned safely as no e/a were encountered, and flak was negligible. Interrogations were completed by 1400."

The 578th Sqdn history adds, "Plans had been underway for weeks for EM's and officers' parties. Colonel Rendle brought in a carnival from the Norwich road for the EM affair

on June 17. The carnival owners, with their booths and 'roundabout' made enough money to retire for the rest of the summer. Inside Hangar One, Captain Lane, Lieutenants Macauley, Romska, Micksch, and McCammond had donned white caps and coats to serve beer and refreshments 'on the house.' The way some of these British girls lined up in front of the bar and stands, they must have been saving up for the blow-out for weeks."



Photos below and right: 392nd BG enlisted personnel enjoy the rides and booths provided by D. Gray's. The food and beer were also greatly appreciated. In the #1 Hangar, beer kegs lined the walls, replacing the airplane engines usually housed there.



IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

We have all recently celebrated Memorial Day 2017 in whatever way is traditional for each of us. That might include military parades, family gatherings, community picnics and so on.

I thought I should investigate the history, beginnings and meaning of Memorial Day before I sat to write my thoughts and insight.

I realized, then, that this is a very personal holiday to be observed in a very personal manner.

While we will all remember and offer our gratefulness for the sacrifices of our military souls, this is also a time to reflect on our individual and private losses. Most of us, no doubt, have experienced the passing of someone significant in our lives. Some of us are also dealing with our own imminent mortality. Let us remember and revere those who have left us, whether on the battlefield, the hospital bed or simply as part of the greater plan which we might not always grasp.

Celebrate your loved ones, past and present, and remember: Keep your head up, your spirit strong, and support by your side.

God bless your families, friends and all of America.



**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 late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Margaret Jensen, widow of Aldon H., 577, January 11, 2017
Adolph J. Betterini, 576, September 26, 2016
Leo Ruvolis, 579, December 10, 2016
Ronald G. Rogers, Associate, March 18, 2017
Suzan Brice, Associate, May 24, 2016
Kenneth T. Lockhart, 578, October 22, 2016
Temple H. Hill, 579, April 19, 2017
Oak Mackey, 578, March 11, 2017
Francis A. Nashwinter, 578, May 11, 2017
James M. Conley, 576, March 26, 2017
Muriel Desonne, widow of Max, 577, January 20, 2017
Thomas H. Shrum 577, May 13, 2017