

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

NEWS

Volume 32

June 2020



THE END: APRIL AND MAY 1945

Significant dates in 392nd history in April and May 1945:

On April 12, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died. He had been president since 4 Mar 1933.

Two days later, the 392nd observed "Salute the Ground Man Week." 14th Combat Wing CO Gen Leon Johnson addressed the men and presented several with awards.

April 16 saw a mission to the Royan area of France. At 4:51am, 578th B-24 #42-50446, J.C. Poolhall, crashed just after take-off. Pilot 2/Lt Charles W. Warner and six others in his crew were killed. Gunner S/Sgt Donald A. Kight survived but was badly injured, having been thrown clear of the burning bomber just after impact.

This was the last 392nd BG crew and plane lost in WWII.

Then, 26 planes lined up behind Warner had to fly over the burning wreckage — among them, pilot 1/Lt Robert E. Vickers'. His history of the 392nd BG, *The Liberators from Wendling*, is dedicated to Chuck Warner, "my close friend in the 578th."

Distinguished Unit Citation

On April 20, Adjutant Maj John Fritsche announced that the 392nd had been

awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation "for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy on 24 February 1944, when the group attacked and virtually destroyed their assigned target at Gotha, Germany, despite almost overwhelming odds of flak barrages and vicious attacks by approximately one hundred and fifty enemy fighters in a two and a half hour aerial battle."

He added that a "Distinguished Unit Badge may be worn as a permanent part of the uniform by all individuals who were assigned or directly attached" to the Group on that date. Furthermore, "individuals who are subsequently

assigned or attached may wear subject decoration as long as such assignment or attachment exists."

An April 24 *Information Bulletin* listed the amounts the 14 full-strength B-24 Groups had contributed to the Second Air Division Memorial Fund. The total 2AD collected was £20,916; the 392nd exceeded its quota of £1,600.

On April 25, 8AF Groups flew their last combat mission. The target was the train marshalling yard at Hallein, Austria.

The next day, the *Daily Bulletin* advised: "...Relaxation

of blackout regulations as announced by British Ministry of Home Security to be effective 23 April will not apply to stations or installations of Eighth AF. Blackout security will remain in effect as at present."

On April 29, 578th Sqdn gunner S/Sgt John E. McCormick became the last 392nd BG airman to be killed by the enemy.

His saga began on 22 Feb 1945, when he flew as a substitute with 1/Lt Joseph R. Walker Jr's crew. The nine men aboard B-24 #42-95241, *Jolly Duck*, were originally part of six different crews. It was the last mission for one man and the first mission for two others.

After bombing Northeim, Germany, the formation headed for England. When two engines quit, Walker made a rough landing near Zoeterwoude in the western Netherlands. Four men were captured almost immediately; four others evaded for the rest of the war.

S/Sgt McCormick also evaded but quickly decided he wanted to help the Dutch resistance group that had found him. He was an active participant in their efforts until about 20 German soldiers surrounded their hideout. He was killed in the ensuing firefight.

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This is the front page headline of *The Stars and Stripes*, London edition, for 8 May 1945. It was the "daily newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces in the European Theater of Operations."



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FROM THE EDITOR

VE Day. With 8 May 2020 the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, I think it pertinent to repeat one of George Barger's columns. He was a 577th Sqdn bombardier from 22 Sep 1944 to 20 Apr 1945 and ordained an Episcopal priest in 1948. His "Chaplain's Corner" appeared in the *News* from May 1995 to November 2007. This one is from November 1999: "Where are they now? There are certain occasions which trigger the question, and we wonder about our 392nd comrades: our flight crews, ground crews, support personnel—faces once familiar, now difficult even to recall. And the snack bar girls—I can't even think of their names. I see only smiles and hear the echo of friendly greetings. Where are they now? Others ask this about us, and wonder where we may be. Our 392nd Memorial Association offers some ties, but for the most part the answer must be, as it will come to be for all of us, 'They are in God's hands.' Come to think of it, not a bad remembrance."

The Thanks of a Grateful Nation. When my father was discharged after service in the US Army during WWII, he (and presumably all other WWII veterans) received a certificate from President Harry S. Truman. Its message, which still resonates:

"To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace."

Rationing. A key part of life on the homefront during WWII was rationing.

In the US, the Emergency Price Control Act of 30 Jan 1942 granted the Office of Price Administration (OPA) the authority to set price limits and to ration food and other commodities in order to discourage hoarding and ensure the equitable distribution of scarce resources.

Every American was entitled to a series of war ration books filled with removable stamps for certain rationed items like sugar, meat, cooking oil, and canned goods. The OPA determined the amount of points needed for each food item based on its availability. A person could not buy a rationed item without also giving the grocer the right ration stamp or stamps totaling the required number of points. Once a person's ration stamps were used up, he/she couldn't buy any more of that item until the next allotment of stamps was received.

Due to changes in the supply and demand of various goods, the OPA periodically adjusted point values, which often further complicated an already complex system that required home cooks to plan well in advance to prepare meals.

In January 1942, tires became the first item rationed by the US government; gas rationing followed in May. Food rationing began that same month, first with sugar. Coffee was added to the list in November, followed by meats, fats, canned fish, cheese, and canned milk in March 1943. Macaroni and cheese became a nationwide sensation because it was cheap, filling, and required very few ration points. Kraft sold some 50 million boxes of its macaroni and cheese product during the war. By the end of 1945, sugar was the only commodity still being rationed. That restriction

finally ended in June 1947. See <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/rationing> for more details.

In Britain, war-time rationing began much sooner and ended much later. When war broke out in September 1939, petrol was the first commodity to be controlled. In January 1940, bacon, butter and sugar were rationed. Meat, tea, jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, cheese, eggs, lard, milk, canned and dried fruit were rationed subsequently but not all at once. Standing in long lines ("queueing") to collect one's rations became the norm.

War's end didn't mean an end to war's impact on their lives. Clothes rationing lasted until 1949 and food rationing didn't end completely until 1954. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationing_in_the_United_Kingdom for more information.

Memorial Day. For 70 years, Scout groups have placed American flags at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery graves for Memorial Day. Usually about 5,000 Scouts place flags on about 150,000 graves at Jefferson Barracks and about 7,000 flags on graves of veterans at Jewish cemeteries. Those tributes were canceled this year due to coronavirus concerns. So, Bill and Sharon Marcander placed flags on eight graves for 29 Crusaders at Jefferson Barracks.

Among them was 34-year old waist gunner S/Sgt Lowell I. Quick (he was born in 1909, not 1900 as his headstone says). On 7 Jul 1944, he and his crew were nearing their target at Bernberg, Germany,

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President's Corner



I hope this message finds you well and healthy and that you and your loved ones have been spared from the coronavirus. As I have followed the news of this deadly disease and the havoc that it has wreaked on our nation and the world, I have heard comparisons of certain situations as being "the worst since World War II." The toll this pandemic has taken on our daily lives, our

personal well-being and the economy has given us a real-life taste of what it must have been like when the need to defend our country and lend aid to Britain and our European Allies necessitated our entry into WWII. Difficult decisions were made by our leaders and immediate action was taken to meet the challenge. The American people accepted the harsh changes and sacrifices needed in order to fight and win the war. Many of the things that were used in everyday life suddenly were no longer available or severely rationed. We carried on then—and we will now. While there will be a "new normal," I am hopeful that it will be more normal and less new.

Here are few interesting contrasts and comparisons of the WWII era vs. 2020:

Gasoline—heavily rationed versus plenty and cheap, but travel is restricted.

Meat—rationed, restaurants offer meatless menus, macaroni & cheese becomes the new sensation versus meat and poultry limited and expensive, plant-based meat substitutes gain in popularity.

Automobile Factories—production changed to jeeps, ambulances, and tanks versus production changed to ventilators, medical-grade masks, CPAP machines.

Paper and paper products—some rationing and supply shortages versus check out the toilet paper and paper towel aisle at your grocery store!—need I say more?

Social life—not adversely affected, bridge games abound, big bands and dancing versus self-isolation, large gatherings prohibited and / or discouraged, masks and social distancing commonplace, virtual meetings and virtual cocktail parties (at least the booze isn't virtual).

Changing the subject, we are hopeful that the 8th AFHS reunion and our own annual reunion will take place in Memphis in October. I much prefer actual to virtual. The situation is being monitored carefully, please see Annette's column, *From the Editor*, for more details.

Best wishes to all of you. Please be safe and stay healthy.
Ralph

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their plane loaded with incendiary bombs.

Enemy cannon fire hit their a/c in the bomb bay. That quickly ignited the incendiaries and the ship immediately burst into flames. It dropped out of formation and exploded at 10,000 feet. Pilot 1/Lt Harold W. Prouse was able to escape the burning plane before it turned over and went



into a vertical dive. Quick and tail gunner S/Sgt George E. Whitlock bailed out of the rapidly disintegrating ship at about 5,000 feet.

The three were captured soon after they landed. All were

wounded in some manner with Quick the most severely injured—third degree burns about his hands and face. After being interrogated for ten days, he, Prouse and Whitlock were transferred to the Reserve Hospital for POWs at Obermassfeld, Germany. Quick contracted pneumonia and died on 3 Aug 1944, just as doctors were preparing him for skin grafts to his face.

Both 1/Lt Prouse and Quick's attending doctor said that he spoke often of his young wife and daughter back home in Missouri and that he was cheerful to the very end.

"When our sons were Scouts," Sharon says, "we were at JB every Memorial Day. When Bill and I were there this year, we were the only ones in the older WWII section. A couple other graves had flags but our eight were well represented. A car stopped to ask what we were doing and I told them about the 392nd BG. They said 'thank you for your service,' but it was our pleasure."

Reunions. From the 8th Air Force Historical Society: We are still moving forward with the reunion in Memphis from 21-25 Oct 2020. We will be watching and listening to recommendations, updates and advisories from local, state, and federal levels regarding attendees' safety and health, which will absolutely dictate our decisions.

Please book your hotel rooms ASAP—the hotel has a liberal cancellation policy—and be sure to register for the reunion and activities before the September 25 deadline. If you are flying to Memphis, check directly with your airline(s) on their refund policies due to cancellations, and/or consider purchasing flight cancellation insurance.

IF we are forced to cancel the Memphis reunion on-site, 8AFHS plans to run the programs virtually on Zoom, keeping much of the same schedule but adjusting the timing for various US time zones. We will host additional presentations or veteran panels in lieu of tours. Individual groups will be able to have their own Zoom meetings. You must still be an active 8AFHS member and have paid the registration fee to participate.

If the on-site reunion is canceled, we will notify everyone who has registered and refund monies for food & tours where possible. Canceling your hotel room does NOT cancel your reunion registration and vice versa!

8AFHS's 2021 reunion will be in Savannah, Georgia, from 27-31 October at the Marriott Savannah Riverfront. Please mark your calendars!!



News from Across the Pond

VE Day in England. This year, public ceremonies were cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, people were encouraged to watch or listen to the national events on their tvs or radios and have afternoon tea parties within their households.

We've received two photos from Norfolk.



In the above photo, Brian Parke has decorated his garden to celebrate VE Day 2020. His father, Ernie Parke, worked on the base from start to finish and in September 1945 he helped transport the stone for the first Memorial from the railroad station to the Memorial site.



In his front garden, 392nd BGMA Director John Gilbert followed along as the national moment of remembrance was broadcast on the radio.

After hoisting the British and American flags, he lowered them during the two minute silence, re-raised them, and saluted the two flags. In the photo on the left, he has

turned to salute the standard of the Royal Norfolk and Royal Anglian Regiment.

Discoveries. 392nd BG Memorial trustee Henry Dennett emailed of two recent discoveries: "In case you're wondering where the plaque on the original 392nd BG Memorial is, it was given to me about six months ago! Some of the work done on the 'new' memorial in 1989 was carried out by a local builder. He removed the old plaque, fitted the new one and kept the old one for posterity. About twenty years ago his son found it in a barn they were converting and put it in the back of his garage, again for safe keeping. A few

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; 20 and higher means your dues are up-to-date. If you wish to renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045 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 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 \$ _____

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weeks ago he was having a clear out, found it and gave it to me for safe keeping."

Henry then wrote, "My neighbour was doing some digging in his garden when his spade hit something hard. After clearing the soil away he found a manhole cover for an old sewer which is in line with one we have on our property and would have run to the old sewage works at Site 14 at the west side of the village."



The handmade inscription in the concrete (above photo) clearly shows "Co. A 861 ENG." An internet search reveals that the manhole cover and sewer might be the work of Co. A, 861st Engineer Aviation Battalion. They were part of IX Engineer Command, which "built and maintained airfields in England and on the European continent in support of the Allied forces during WWII."

Follow-up on Operation Market Garden. From Beeston, 392nd BGMA Friend Philip Brazier writes of a memorial to a 392nd BG crew that he recently saw in the Netherlands. "Thanks to having an MA in Military History, being a teacher and also Army Reservist with the Royal Engineers, I was asked to join the Committee of the Royal Engineers Historical Society. The committee works as guardians of the more than 300 years of Corps history and provides support for military education by Regular and Reserve Royal Engineer units.

"For a number of years I have worked as a Battlefield Guide for the Army, as well as private groups. As Operation MARKET GARDEN is a campaign that continues to attract a great deal of attention, I have led around ten tours to its Area of Operations (AO).

"My MA thesis covered the Scheldt Estuary campaign (Oct-Nov 1944), which was the operation to clear the land either side of the river that leads to the port of Antwerp, Belgium. The Corps now uses me as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) for battlefield studies there.

"In October 2019, as part of the 75th anniversary of the fighting, I guided a retired Colonel from the Corps around the battlefields that British and Canadian troops fought over, prior to representing the Royal Engineers at commemoration ceremonies in the local area.

"At the Bevrijdings (Liberation) Museum at Nieuwdorp, Zeeland, in the Netherlands, I saw a memorial to the Gerow

crew of 'Feathered Injun' which was mentioned in the March 2019 edition of the *News*. I thought that members of the Association might like to see that memorial."

Philip's photo (below) shows the propeller and two



machine guns from #42-94886. The caption on the interpretive signboard, written by 392nd BGMA Dutch Friend Mark van den Dries says (in Dutch and English), "On September 18th 1944 a fleet of 252 American B-24 Liberator bombers took off from the east of England. Their mission was to drop supplies for the paratroops taking part in Operation Market Garden, a military operation that had begun the day before.

"One of these Liberators was the Feathered Injun, under command of 23-year old pilot 2/Lt James Gerow. He and his crew were members of the 579th Bombardment Squadron, a unit within the 392nd Bombardment Group. The home base of this group was RAF Wendling in the U.K. When they flew over the Dutch former island Goeree-Overflakkee the crew was hit by enemy ground fire from anti/aircraft guns, which caused a failing engine (3 still working). After success dropping the supplies at Groesbeek, near the city of Nijmegen, they again caught some hits from ground fire, which caused a second engine to fall out. Back above the coastline James Gerow saw that they couldn't make it across the sea and gave orders to bail out. When 20-year old engineer S/Sgt Eugene Kieras couldn't get to his parachute because of the flames, he had to cling to the back of one of the gunners. After bailing out, he couldn't hold and fell to his death. This was the first mission for the 19-year old Pvt Edward Yensho [a dropmaster from the 2nd Air Cargo Resupply Detachment]. When he had to jump out of the burning plane, the inexperienced young man blocked and stayed behind. In panic he ran through the flames to the empty cockpit. While the bomber was losing height rapidly and almost scratched the church tower, the plane made a sharp turn to the left. Ed died when the bomber crashed into a pool called The Brilletjes and exploded. On the ground six crew members, including the pilot, were taken prisoner by German soldiers. The prisoners were transported to POW-camps in Germany and Poland and stayed there until their liberation at the end of April 1945. Two other men managed to hide in barns

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around Heinkenszand. With the aid of local underground helpers, they kept out of enemy hands until the Liberation of the area in October 1944. The propeller and the machine guns on display here, have been the property of the family Van 't Westeinde, who played a major role in helping the two evaded crew members."

Philip adds, "A colleague and I had to 'escape' from Normandy in March 2020. We were on a recce for a future battlefield study when the country went in 'lockdown'—only our vehicle and police vehicles were on the streets of Caen that first evening, it was like something out of a zombie movie. With the threat of a 300 Euro fine if the police found us outside without good reason (or the official government letter of explanation, we 'high-tailed' it back to the port of Calais and then to the UK.

"All non-essential travel is now banned, which means that battlefield studies are 'at ease' for the moment."

Editor's note: For more information about the Gerow crew, conditions in the Netherlands during WWII, Dutch resistance efforts, and those who helped our two airmen evade capture, read *Holland Drop Zone* by Mark van den Dries (<https://www.amazon.com/Holland-Drop-Zone-American-bomber/dp/9461536062>).

The Netherlands

Several years ago, 392nd BGMA Dutch member Peter Adriaans adopted the grave of 579th Sqdn engineer S/Sgt Amos E. Doty at the Netherlands American Cemetery near Margraten. Amos was one of 29 airmen from the 392nd BG killed during the mission to Brunswick on 19 May 1944. Peter emailed, "We watched the Memorial Day service at Margraten via the television. We were not allowed to go to the cemetery due to the corona virus. Our King Willem Alexander and Pete Hoekstra, the Ambassador of the USA in the Netherlands, took part in the ceremony. I think in total 20 people were allowed to be present. Despite not being there, it was a Memorial Day we never will forget. So peaceful and quiet. The flyover of the planes with the missing man is always impressive. Before the flyover they passed our house at a very low height."

The Netherlands Carillon. Three new bells are being added to the Netherlands Carillon in Arlington, Virginia.

In 1954, the people of the Netherlands gave a 49-bell carillon to the people of the United States to thank us for our aid during and after WWII. In 1960, the bells were moved to their present site near Arlington National Cemetery and the US Marine Corps Memorial.

A 50th bell was dedicated on 5 May 1995, the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands in WWII.



Thousands of flowers, especially tulips, surround the carillon.

In October 2019, all 50 bells were sent back to the Netherlands to be refurbished; during their absence, the

127-foot-tall carillon is being restored.

Additionally, three new bells are being cast at the Dutch bell foundry Royal Eijsbouts. In a 5 May 2020 article, *The Washington Post* says, "A bell has a utilitarian function—to make noise. But the best bells—like these three—have a symbolic function, too." Per Dutch Ambassador to the US André Haspels, "We decided to name them after three persons who obviously have played a very important role in the last 75 years."

The largest bell, "a 7,595 pound behemoth nearly six feet in diameter" is "named in honor of Gen. George C. Marshall, architect of the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe. A 37½-pound bell is named in honor of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to celebrate the work King did for human rights and minority rights. A 26½-pound bell is named after Eleanor Roosevelt, whom the Dutch love not only for her work on women's rights but also because of her Dutch ancestry."

When the new bells are finished and the others renewed, they'll be shipped back to the US and rededicated in a ceremony in the first half of 2021.

The Embassy of the Netherlands in Washington, DC, marks Dutch Remembrance Day every May 4 by observing a moment of silence and placing a wreath at the base of the carillon.

Unlike other bells which are played with ropes, a carillon is played with a keyboard and pedals. To hear the Netherlands Carillon, visit <https://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm>.

Editor's note: The role the Allies played in the liberation of the Netherlands is well-documented. Perhaps less well known are Operations Manna, Chowhound and Faust.

For the three million Dutch under German control, the period from about September 1944 to May 1945 was known as the "hunger winter." Perhaps as many as 22,000 Dutch civilians died from malnutrition and starvation.

Even before the war ended, the Allies began humanitarian food drops to the Netherlands. Operation Manna was the RAF's effort from 29 Apr-7 May 1945 and Operation Chowhound was the 8AF's contribution from 1-8 May. Over 11,000 tons of food were dropped into the still-unliberated western part of the Netherlands, with the acquiescence of the occupying German forces.

When it became apparent that this was still not enough, Operation Faust was launched and on 2 May, 360 Allied trucks began making multiple round trips to deliver 9,000 tons of food and supplies to the city of Rhenen, which was behind German lines.

The air operation was considered one of the most dangerous of the war because of all the "unknowns." While Allied and German officials had reached an agreement that planes flying within specified corridors would not be fired upon, no one knew if the many German flak units and the 120,000 soldiers on the flight path would honor the truce.

They did. Although some bombers returned with bullet holes, none were shot down. Three were lost, two in a collision and one due to an engine fire.

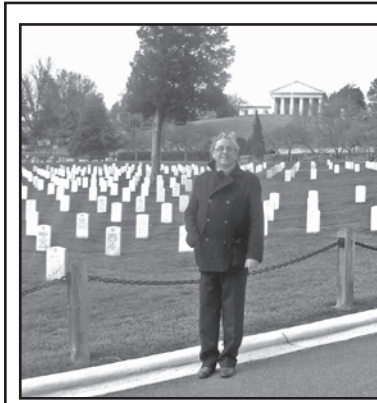
Peter Adriaans says, "Operations Manna and Chowhound do give a realistic picture of how little food there was in

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some areas of my country. To survive, some people had to eat tulip bulbs."

Peter came to the Washington, DC, area in 2009 for a



Peter Adriaans at Arlington National Cemetery in February 2009. It has over 400,000 interments; the Netherlands American Cemetery, which Peter visits often, is the burial site for 8,291 Americans with names of 1,722 more on its Wall of the Missing.

business meeting. During his free time, *News* editor Annette Tison took him on a tour of the monuments in the city, as well as the Netherlands Carillon, Arlington National Cemetery and the changing of the guard there, and the US Marine Corps Memorial.

While they were at the Netherlands Carillon, a fellow Dutchman came by and exchanged greetings in Dutch with Peter.

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He is buried in Zoetermeer, next to a Dutch resistance fighter killed in the same gun battle and two others killed by German gunfire on 5 May 1945. Their joint headstone has the epitaph *Hun Vaderland Getrouwe* which means *Faithful to Their Fatherland*.

For more information and photos, see <https://www.b24.net/storiesMcCormick.htm>.

Future Plans

A May 2 memo from Jane H. Mallery, Acting Director of the American Red Cross Aeroclub at Wendling, noted that the future was still uncertain: We are "deep in plans for VE Day celebrations; tours to Sandringham—the King's summer home—for which the groundwork has already been laid; plans for the dance we are going to hold during May, which will be held in the Aero club instead of the NCO Club where they have been held all winter; and finally plans for a possible 300th Mission Party."

Luckily, the 392nd's combat mission count ended at 285.

VE Day

On 7 May 1945, the German High Command surrendered, to be effective at 11:01pm Central European Time the next day.

Per the Group's history, "The 8th of May, VE day, was the occasion for a big celebration. A large bonfire was built near flying control, many flares were shot off and it had all the appearance of a big 4th of July celebration back home. Later in the evening the Red Cross had a celebration with refreshments and entertainment and all in all the men had a good time."

Nora Norgate of Norwich, Norfolk, had married Sgt Herman Canfield (577th Sqdn Operations Clerk) in December 1944. She continued to live in Norwich and

Herman visited whenever he could.

She wrote, "8 May 1945... VE Day!! We went to work as usual that morning, but as soon as the joyous news came through on the wireless that the war in Europe was finally over, we all left the office and went home to prepare for the celebrations.

"Everyone was so very happy at the almost unbelievable and momentous news. People were clambering on cars, lorries and buses, singing such wartime songs as *We'll Meet Again*, *Bless 'em All*, *Lili Marlene*, etc.—everyone letting themselves enjoy the moment which we'd all been hoping and praying for during almost six long years of war with its deprivations, heartache and suffering.

"Herman, my GI husband, came over that night from Wendling and saw all the lights switched on in Norwich for the first time. All the principal buildings, County Hall, the big department stores, etc., were floodlit and searchlights swept the night sky, showing the "V for Victory" sign. There were bonfires and fireworks displays all over the city in joyful celebrations, which continued during the following day and night.

"We all realized, however, that although the war was finally over for us, there was still fighting, dying and much suffering in the Pacific theater. In fact, when the GIs left Wendling in June and July 1945, they all thought that after a brief rest in America, they would probably go to the Pacific, because we had no idea when that conflict would end. Little did we know that it would end, quite suddenly and terrifyingly, with the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945..."

Nora and Herman were reunited in Bloomingdale, Indiana, in February 1946.

392nd BGMA Friend David Hastings, also from Norwich, knew the 2nd Air Division as a schoolboy in the war. He joined the RAF as a National Serviceman and then served as a Governor of the 2nd Air Division USAAF Memorial Trust for 29 years.

He recalls, "May 8th was a holiday so no school. In the evening we had heard that the whole City was going to assemble in the Market Place. When it was getting dark my mother and I left our home on Colman Road to walk down to the City. Amazing on Unthank Road there were a few street lights on and none of the houses had their blackout curtains drawn, a sight we had not seen for six years. When we arrived at the Market Place it was packed, including British and American servicemen and women and some had climbed the lamp standards. Bands were playing, searchlights shone on the City Hall, the Castle and the Cathedral and aircraft were flying overhead firing coloured flares. Everyone was dancing, cheering, shaking hands and dancing the Conga.

"It was just unbelievable that the six years of war had come to an end, but for many people it was a time of sadness as our Royal Regiment had been captured at Singapore and were still prisoners of the Japanese.

"My mother had a hard job to get me to leave but I remember we sang all the way home."

It's Not Over Yet

On May 9, General Carl Spaatz, commander of U.S.

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A barrage balloon was a large unmanned balloon that was used as a defense against enemy aircraft attack. It was tethered by long steel cables that posed a risk to aircraft, making the attacker's approach more difficult. By 1944, nearly 3,000 were in use. This photo of one in Norwich was taken by Sgt Alvin Enlow, who worked in the Control Tower. David Hastings says this particular balloon "was on our school playing field. They were spread all around Norwich. I made friends with a balloon crew on Eaton Golf Course near our home." Note how weathered the balloon is, the bomb damage in the foreground, and the magnificent Norwich Cathedral in the distance.

Strategic Air Forces in Europe, directed that this teletype be sent to his units: "I have received this message from the Command General AAF.

'Quote: Today the might of the German Army collapsed when its leaders agreed to Allied terms of unconditional surrender. I am happy now to be able to send my congratulations to the Army Air Forces for pressing our attack to a smashing climax. We stand now at the peak of our offensive power. As this is written, plans already are in motion to divert an avalanche of military might against our only remaining enemy—Japan. The weapon that strikes home modern warfare is the airplane. In our growing offensive against the Japanese, the Army Air Forces will play a vital role. At the same time they must supply the punch to occupation forces throughout the world. Finally, they must maintain a network of supply and transport lines to all corners of the earth. A gigantic job remains to be done, and until it is done, no large-scale demobilization can take place in the AAF. Those few men who can be spared will be returned to civilian life as rapidly as possible. They will be released from the AAF under the same standards that govern release from the Army ground forces and the Army service forces. Our rotation system will be accelerated. But for most of us, let me make it plain: We are fighting men in a fighting organization, and just as long as a single Japanese ship, submarine, air squadron, or company of infantry remains to challenge us, our job is not done. We are in this fight to the finish. Unquote.'

"It gives me great pleasure to forward this message of congratulations with its reminder of the task that still lies

before us."

Parades

David Hastings continues, "The City announced that it would hold a VE Day parade on the Sunday followed by a service of Thanksgiving in the Cathedral. The parade would start at the City Hall with the salute being taken by General Lord Ironside supported by the Lord Mayor, the Commanding Officer of RAF Coltishall and Colonel Albert Shower, CO of the 467th BG at Rackheath. Leading the parade would be contingents from the Army, RAF and Royal Navy followed by the 2nd Air Division led by Captain Lawson and the 3rd Strategic Air Depot from Watton. Then would follow the civilian groups including the Home Guard, Police, Fire Brigade, Wardens, Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the Scouts.

"We all marched that day, father with the Home Guard, mother with the Red Cross and me with the 8th Norwich Scout Group. Little did I think then that I would be asked to help organise the 50th Anniversary Parade!"

On May 13, the 392nd BG sent a contingent of more than 50 airmen to march in the VE Day parade in King's Lynn.



Top: Under Capt MacTavish's leadership, the 392nd BG is formed and ready. Bottom: Spectators (and an excited boy) watch them march past.

The officer in charge was Capt LeRoy MacTavish, 578th Sqdn Communications Officer.

On May 20, the final officers party was held. An all-day affair, it included an afternoon tea dance as well as a dance in the evening. A large enlisted men's party to celebrate

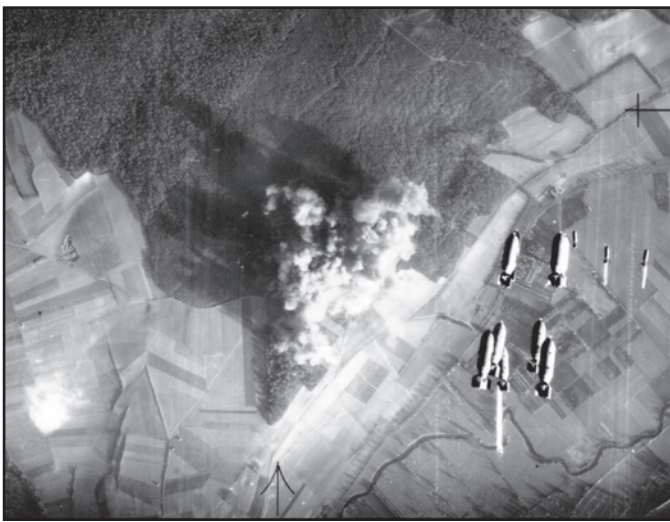
See THE END on page 9

THE END from page 8

VE Day was held on the 26th.

On May 27, Col Lorin L. Johnson was transferred and LtCol Lawrence G. Gilbert became the new CO. In his farewell memo, Johnson wrote, "It is with a deep feeling of regret that I have to leave my command. I am sincerely proud to have served with you and deeply appreciate your support in this command which is so highly rated among many others of its same type. Whatever your new assignment might be remember our successes with justifiable pride and carry on with the same effort and efficiency. To all responsible I can only say 'THANK YOU' and best of luck to each and every one of you."

He had led the 392nd BG since 21 Jun 1944.



This photo of an unidentified mission was sent by Col Fred R. Dent Jr (likely when Dent was CO of the 44th BG from 4 Dec 1943-29 Apr 1944) to the 392nd's first CO, Col Irvine "Bull" Rendle. On the back, Dent had written, "Bull—44th picture of 392nd pattern. Congratulations on the nice pattern designed to fit the spot. The beers are on me." It's a picture-perfect testimony to the 392nd's bombing accuracy from its earliest days.

On May 29, S/Sgt Kight succumbed to his injuries—the last 392nd BG fatality of WWII.

Editor's notes: A 25 Aug 1945 article in an unnamed newspaper announced, "After playing havoc with the Nazi war effort for 23 months, the 392nd Bombardment Group, B-24 Liberator outfit, is now being de-activated here at [Charleston Army Air Field in South Carolina]. The group is being processed and will be distributed to various bases throughout the Ferrying Division, with many of the returnees remaining at CAAF.

"Renowned as the victors of Gotha—rated as the most important single unit in Germany's twin-engine aircraft industry—the 392nd personnel hold more than 12,000 decorations and several unit citations."

"The group returned home under the leadership of LtCol Lawrence G. Gilbert ... Leaving the unit as it de-activated, [Gilbert] commended all personnel for the record established during its overseas service. He pointed out that the 392nd at the end of the war was still among the leaders in Division bombing results and operational maintenance and efficiency."

Per 1983's *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, at the end of WWII, "Officers and men were sent home. Bases were closed. Airplanes were stored or sold. And by July 1946 the Air Force had only 2 groups that were ready for combat, although 52 were carried on the list of active organizations."

POWs

Captured Allied aviators were primarily held in seven POW camps: Stalag Lufts 1, 3, 4, 6, 7a, 13d, and 17b. Most of these camps were in the northern and eastern parts of the German empire.

During the last months of the war, the Allies were steadily advancing toward these camps from the west. As the Russian army approached even faster from the east, the Germans decided to move the occupants of some of these POW camps farther west in order to prevent their liberation by the Russians.

The only air POWs not put on the move were those in Luft 1; it remained intact until liberated in May 1945.

Beginning in late January 1945, over 80,000 POWs were forced to march across Poland, Czechoslovakia and

See POWs 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 _____

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: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

POWs from page 9

Germany in temperatures well below freezing, in snow and rain with little food or clean water, little shelter from the cold, inadequate clothing and no sanitation.

Capt Leslie Caplan, MD

Marching with one group of airmen from Stalag Luft 4 was Capt Leslie Caplan, a flight surgeon in the 449th BG. Captured on 13 Oct 1944, he asked to be taken to Luft 4—for enlisted men—rather than to an officers' camp, as he felt his medical services would be more needed there.

In December 1947, he testified to the American War Crimes Office about the mistreatment of POWs at Stalag 4 and especially during the forced march.

"On 6 Feb 1945 about 6,000 prisoners were ordered to leave the camp on foot after only a few hours notice. We left in three separate sections: A, C, and D. I marched with Section C which had approximately 2500 men. It was a march of great hardship. For 53 days we marched long distance in bitter weather and on starvation rations. We lived in filth and slept in open fields or barns. Clothing, medical facilities and sanitary facilities were utterly inadequate. Hundreds of men suffered from malnutrition, exposure, trench foot, exhaustion, dysentery, tuberculosis, and other diseases. No doubt many men are still suffering today as a result of that ordeal...

"From the very start large numbers of men began to fall behind. Blisters became infected and many men collapsed from hunger, fear, malnutrition, exhaustion, or disease. We organized groups of men to aid the hundreds of stragglers. It was common for men to drag themselves along in spite of intense suffering. Many men marched along with large abscesses on their feet or frostbite of extremities. Many others marched with temperatures as high as 105 degrees Fahrenheit. I personally slept with men suffering from Erysipelas, Diphtheria, Pneumonia, Malaria, Dysentery and other diseases.

"The most common disease was dysentery for this was an inevitable consequence of the filth we lived in and the unsanitary water we drank. This was so common and so severe, that all ordinary rules of decency were meaningless. Hundreds of men on this march suffered so severely from dysentery that they lost control of their bowel movements because of severe cramps and soiled themselves. Wherever our column went, there was a trail of bloody movements and discarded underwear (which was sorely needed for warmth).

"At times the Germans gave us a few small farm wagons to carry our sick. The most these wagons ever accommodated was 35 men but we had hundreds of men on the verge of collapse. It was our practice to load the wagon. As a man would collapse he would be put on the wagon and some sick man on the wagon would be taken off the wagon to make way for his exhausted comrade. When our column would near a permanent PW camp we were never allowed to leave all of our sick. I do not know what happened to most of the sick men that were left at various places along the march."

S/Sgt Edward B. Coleman

Among those who died on the march was S/Sgt Edward B. Coleman. Tail gunner on 1/Lt Gilbert O. Eisermann's

crew in the 578th, he became a POW on 29 May 1944.

"On 13 April 1945 while on the march in Germany," Caplan stated, "Edward B. Coleman collapsed from severe abdominal pain and weakness. I made a diagnosis of an acute abdominal emergency superimposed on a previously weakened condition which was the result of malnutrition and dysentery. He was hospitalized but according to the records of the Adjutant General, he died 15 April 1945. He had had both legs amputated because of gangrene secondary to frostbite."

Liberation

576th Sqdn waist gunner Oliver "Bud" Guillot was one of the lucky ones who survived the march.

"VE Day?" he says. "I remember it well. I was in Braunau, Austria, Adolf Hitler's birth place.

"A year earlier my crew, The Kamenitsa Crew, 392nd BG, had been shot down on the April 29, 1944 Berlin bombing mission and we were being held in Stalag 17b, which was near Krems, Austria.

"Nearly a year later, the advancing Russian Armies were in Austria and nearing the camp. The Germans made the decision to hike all physically mobile prisoners westerly into Germany and we ended up in Braunau, Austria.

"Early the first morning in Braunau, about sunup, I heard the unmistakable sound of the old reliable American jeep coming up the road from American-held German real estate. There were two American soldiers in the jeep—one driver and one guard who was standing erect. Both of their rifles were stored in the gun racks near them. A total of four American jeep crews circled our camp area in the forest. The only guns I saw touched that day were the Germans guns being removed, by them, from their holsters and thrown on the ground.

"The American jeep crews saluted us and headed back down the road from whence they came with the air of 'it's been taken care of.'

About 15 minutes later we hear another jeep coming up the road. Same thing, driver with his rifle in the gun rack and a gunner standing. But instead it was General George Patton, standing with his favorite side arms on each hip. The General made a short, to the point speech that he would have airplanes in within days to fly us to Camp Lucky Strike, in France, and then ship us home.

"And he did."

Editor's note: To learn more about the POW camps, see <https://www.b24.net/powCamps.htm>; for more information and first-hand accounts of the march, see <https://www.b24.net/powMarch.htm>.

Camp Lucky Strike was one of the many Army camps near Le Havre, France, that were named for cigarette brands. (Others were Philip Morris, Chesterfield, Old Gold and Pall Mall.) They were first used as staging areas for Allied troops arriving after D-Day. By war's end, however, all of the cigarette camps were devoted to detainees. Many processed liberated American POWs before they were returned to the US. In some camps, underfed and malnourished GIs found themselves being served by German POWs who were well-fed because they had worked in the American mess halls for a few months. See <http://www.skylighters.org/special/cigcamps/cigintro.html>.

Don't Get Around Much Any More

In his article of the same title in the December 1977 issue of the Second Air Division Association News Letter, copilot Robert J. Levin gave this account of his first mission, on 21 Jan 1945. The title is a jazz standard written by composer Duke Ellington and first recorded by him and his orchestra on 4 May 1940. It became a hit after Bob Russell wrote its lyrics in 1942.

There's little connection between a popular fox trot and nine men's lives, but our crew of [B-24 #42-95079] *Puss 'N Boots* will be only too glad to trace the simile for you.

577th Sqdn pilot Willis K. Prater, with myself as copilot, gave the throttle to 30 tons of Liberator and a short ton of unseasoned crewmen. This was our first mission and we were going to Heilbronn—sprawling marshalling yards far into southern Germany. Oldtimers warned us to nurse the gas and spare the horses.

Trouble

All went well on the long climb over the Channel until the formation turned sharply towards the enemy coast preparatory to making the crossing over southern France. The waist gunners, James Healy and Stanley D. Kegler, were first to notice it—a steady bubbling of oil that was blown over the engine, coating the tail a syrupy black. We were notified immediately and we promised the crew that we would watch all instruments carefully.

Five minutes of flying were punctuated by the tail gunner, Daniel DeShantz, telling us that the oil had covered the tail and was even dripping off the back.

Oil pressure—first sign of engine failure—had dropped 10 points. *Puss 'N Boots* responded sluggishly to her controls. Lester J. Lawrence, engineer, boosted power on the remaining three engines—at a terrific cost of gas—in order to prevent the plane from straggling out of formation over enemy territory.

And More Trouble

Trouble really came in bunches with “bombs away.”

After crossing the Rhine, the gas gauges showed barely enough for two hours flying. Upon attempting to notify the lead plane of our decision to drop out of formation and land for refueling in France, the radio transmitter was found to be inoperative. Our navigator, William L. Pilcher, was asked to get a fix so that the plane could be flown to the nearest field. He reported that his position finder was not working—attributing that mishap to the same gremlin that had fouled the radio—and directed us to let down slowly on our present course until we broke through the cloud layer.

While we nursed the plane through thousands of feet of snowstorm Pilcher was consulting his area maps for ground elevation figures and making an attempt to repair his equipment.

During this interval, the flight compass, unknown to us, had frozen on a wrong heading and we were going back into Germany—easy prey for alert flak gunners. There we were—in the middle of a snowstorm, couldn't see the ground, couldn't get a course to steer, low on gas and didn't know how long we had been flying over Germany just waiting for the Jerries to lob up some firecrackers.

By the time the navigator had noticed the course change he was forced to tell us, “I'm not sure of my position.” His radio equipment did not work, we had been off course for an unknown time and no ground checkpoints could be seen, through the snow. He steered us by another compass through an “about face” over the interphone while we descended. Everyone on the crew wasn't ashamed to admit that they felt for their parachutes.

Lost and Low on Gas

Lawrence, fearful of alarming the rest of the crew, came up to the flight deck to inform us that the gas supply would last another 40 minutes—if the gauges were correct. The navigator advised us to keep above 500 feet in order to clear high hills in the area. At 700 feet we broke through the storm a bare 200 feet above a bluff which was on the course.

In the descent the cockpit windows had frosted and flying had to be done from side windows with the aid of the nose gunner, Louis C. Venuti, who was warned to guide the pilots around all obstructions. Picture four men flying a plane: navigator calling out directions, nose gunner calling out altitude and pilots on the controls with our heads out the window praying for a field to appear. With gas levels dropping right along and no large town for reference we alerted the crew for a crash landing. *Puss 'N Boots* would be flown on the last cupful of gasoline and then set down in the flattest field possible.

The radio operator, Chester Killian, asked us to make another attempt to pick up a homing station with our radio compass and follow it to a landing field, but code signals would fade before identification could be made and checked with the navigator. Heavy static was sandwiched between faint station signals.

In desperation we turned the plane towards the only station indicated on the compass which, oddly enough, was transmitting music and not code. With each reverberation of the engines the melody of a popular song came in clearer and clearer. Quickly quarterbacking, guided by the “fix” taken on the musical notes, we descended below the storm's level.

Call it luck or attribute it to Providence, but like a fairy book ending or a Hollywood climax the most beautiful city imaginable could be seen through the fringe of the storm—Rheims. Along with the city went an airfield complete with hangars, runways and somebody shooting flares. A heaven on earth.

No time was wasted in landing. When the brakes were locked the engineer informed us that we had 15 minutes worth of gas sloshing in the tanks.

We were down safe, but none too steady. Like the song *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*, which had loreid us to safety, we would stay where we were for the night.

Editor's note: The Prater crew completed another 15 missions, with their last on 16 Apr 1945. They flew for home on #42-51958, under orders “to proceed on or about 28 May 1945 via Valley Airdrome [in Wales] by best available air route to Bradley Field, Windsor Locks, Connecticut, thence to Camp Miles Standish, Boston.... AAF personnel are being returned for the purpose of authorized Temporary Duty for rest and recuperation and further assignment.”

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

- Never let your head hang down.
- Never give up and sit down and grieve.
- Find another way.
- And don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines.

—Leroy Satchel Paige

Hope and determination come from within. No matter the trials of recent months, hope is a human bond that we need to preserve, nurture and share. Hope is more than bravery, it is more than courage. Hope is determination and preservation. Much like our veterans, who accepted the battles they were assigned, we must fight this new enemy with hope and confidence.

Pray when it rains, pray when the sun shines, as every day will present new challenges.

To those who have been personally affected by this virus, God bless you. To those who have not been personally affected, God bless you also. We are in this together.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

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

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

392nd Bomb Group Memorial 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∞

Russell B. Williams, 577, January 21, 2020
Armistead W. Garrett, 577, August 30, 2016
Lloyd Vandeventer, 577, November 5, 2019
Garfield L. Sewell, 1825th Ordnance, July 10, 2017
Harry M. Evans, 579, December 6, 2019
Harold H. Carson, 578, February 9, 2018
George J. Trigilio, 577, January 31, 2020
Robert L. Leinweber, 578, May 12, 2020