



2023 Aubrey Award Winners

The 392nd BGMA is delighted to announce the winners of the second Aubrey Award essay contest! Nine entries were received; they amply responded to Beverly Burke's appeal to honor her late husband Aubrey's military service in the 465th Sub Depot, encourage young people to learn more about the 392nd BG and the greatest generation, and highlight the importance of education.

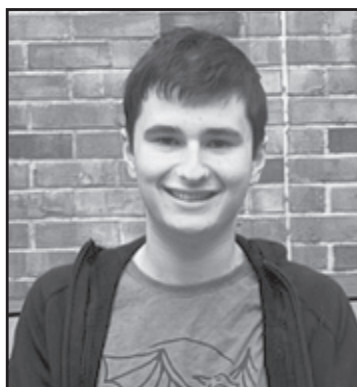
Each submission required two presentations by essay, PowerPoint or YouTube video. The major section had to respond to this prompt: *Consider how American bomber bases in England contributed to the successful outcome of WWII. Narrow your focus to one aspect of how the pilots, crews, and support personnel of the 392nd base at Wendling dealt with the challenges they had to face. Use www.b24.net as a principal source for your analysis. Give details about those challenges and explain how they were addressed productively. In what ways did local residents assist and encourage the war effort by the Americans? Do succeeding generations understand the significance of that contribution? End your presentation with a brief summary of what you have learned and how it mattered to England and the world.*

The second requirement was to tell what the author found most significant about the life of Aubrey Burke—not just a repeat of biographical facts, but thoughts, opinions and reflections on what shaped his personality and his service in the 465th Sub Depot, and what in his biography was most impressive.

The contest was open to all students ages 15 to 18 living in the USA, Canada, England, Belgium, France, Germany or the Netherlands. This year, eight contestants were American and one was English. Beverly again provided funding for the prizes—\$1,000 for first place, \$600 for second place, and \$400 for third place.

The winners have been notified and given certificates of accomplishment and their awards. Their entries are printed in this issue as written, but without bibliographies. Sincere thanks to all students who submitted essays. Without exception, their compositions were well-thought out, well-researched, and most especially reflected abundant time spent thinking about what young men, just a few years older than themselves, faced during service to their country in WWII.

First Place Winner: Holden Hankins



Holden, age 18, recently graduated from Zionsville Community High School in Zionsville, Indiana. He was encouraged to enter by 392nd BGMA member Debbie Beigh, who promoted the contest to her Advanced Composition students while she was doing extended substitute teaching.

Brothers in Arms: How the Bond Between Wendling and the 392nd Bomb Group Helped Win World War Two

It's the summer of 1943. Hundreds of men under the recently formed 392nd Bombardment Group have just arrived in Scotland, scared and seasick. As they travel across the cold, damp British countryside, their bodies struggling to adjust from the sun of their New Mexico

See FIRST PLACE on page 3

Second Place Winner: Blake Wilder



Blake, age 15, attends Fontainebleau High School in Mandeville, Louisiana. His great-grandmother is part of a group of former educators who live in Apple Valley, California, as does Beverly Burke. One of them knew about the contest and mentioned it to the group. Blake's great-grandmother then

sent him information about the Aubrey Award contest.

Wendling: Defense on the Home Front

The 392nd Bomb Group was established after a military order from the Air Force in January of 1943. The Group trained in New Mexico and Kansas before being assigned to the Wendling Base in Norfolk, England. Their mission was to keep the German Blitzkrieg bombers at bay while other regiments were making advancements in Germany.

See SECOND PLACE on page 7



392nd BGMA Officers

President

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



1st Vice President

Greg Hatton
gregoryhatton1@gmail.com



2nd Vice President

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



Secretary

Debbie Goar Beigh
6284 Antler Ct.
Zionsville, IN 46077-9089
landline: (317) 873-5586
cell: (317) 250-5586
dbeigh@aol.com



Treasurer / PX Chair

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



News Editor

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



Directors

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

FROM THE EDITOR

Reader comments. I got two emails about the March 2023 *News*. **David Buccigrossi**, son of 579th copilot Sam Buccigrossi, wrote, "It's interesting how Henry Kaiser is so poorly known in the United States. He was the richest man in the world for over 10 years. I retired from Kaiser Permanente down here in San Diego as a physician and quality Director."

Having read at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_J._Kaiser, about Henry Kaiser and his early involvement in so many things that still impact our lives, I asked David if the company made a big deal out of its beginnings in WWII. He replied, "Many would say they did not make a big *enough* deal of it. In his later years, Henry Kaiser said that what he was most proud of—and he thought would be his greatest legacy—was Kaiser Permanente."

"My Medical Director, Paul Bernstein, was totally into it, and I would have to say that he carried the torch more than anyone. He often went to other Kaisers, for example northern California and Hawaii, to give presentations on the history of Kaiser. This story will illustrate just how committed he was."

"Sydney Garfield was a newly minted doctor who set up a practice east of San Bernardino (near Palm Springs). Henry Kaiser was building the California aqueduct from the Colorado River to a large reservoir near Los Angeles. He was on a train going slowly, saw a relevant job site, and Henry jumped off the train, breaking his ankle (I think) and gashing his leg. This was in the 1930s and I'm not sure how you 'called an emergency doctor' in those days, but they managed to get Dr. Garfield on the phone. His ambulance was his station wagon. He picked Mr. Kaiser up, and as he drove him to his clinic, he suggested the idea of prepaid medical insurance for his workers. I believe it was \$5 per person per month. The rest is history."

"His shipyard workers had prepaid medical insurance, and in addition to all the women, there were many blacks as well. In some ways he was a pacesetter for work-based medical insurance, certainly prepaid medical insurance, and equality in the workplace. Extraordinary."

"By the way, I have been to the Rosie the Riveter National Park and it's well worth a visit."

Craig Sanders said he's "waited longingly for an article on weather for the 392nd BG, and you delivered exactly what I wanted. I printed the web articles you listed at the end of the Weather Men article, and what a trove of details!"

"My ancestors were Swedish. My 2nd cousin, copilot Richard Sporrey, of 1/Lt Douglas R. Steinmetz's crew was the son of Swedish immigrants. [Richard and his entire crew were killed on 5 Nov 1943 when their plane, #42-7490, *Big Ass Bird*, was shot down while returning from a mission to Munster, Germany.]

"So to be able to weave in some heritage of ours with that of Carl Rossby and Swerre Petterson who were Swedish and Norwegian pioneers in forecasting, I think will add some family smiles."

"I'm a retired National Weather Service meteorologist, and we studied both those gentlemen's pioneering work while in school."

More information about 8AF weather forecasting is on pages 10-11.

How the 392nd BGMA fulfills its mission. Our organization has three major ways to perpetuate the legacy of the men and planes who served the 392nd BG so well.

The first, of course, is the Memorial Association. The official announcement of its creation was mailed on 16 Dec 1985. Dues were \$10 a year. Almost 230 Crusaders attended the first reunion in 1987! Nearly 38 years later, we have 204 members and Friends—and dues are still extremely low (\$20 if you wish to receive the *News* by email or \$25 if you wish a printed copy).

The second, our website—www.b24.net—went on-line in May 1999. It continues to adapt to new technologies and expand with new material. For example, the POW section has been completely overhauled. It is the most popular page and a magnet that leads many viewers to discover the 392nd BG and its contributions to 8AF.

578th navigator 2/Lt William L. Thomas is featured in a recent addition at [https://](https://www.b24.net/stories/LAThomas.pdf)

www.b24.net/stories/LAThomas.pdf. The title of Laura Anne Thomas's manuscript—"The Scrapbook and the Interview: Two records of a P.O.W. Experience" says it all. Using her father's scrapbook and a 2011 interview, Laura describes her father's early life, his military training, marriage and WWII experiences, both as a navigator **See EDITOR on page 9**

President's Corner



Greetings everyone,
Having recently observed Memorial Day, I thought I'd share a personal story with you. When I'm organized enough, I have a get together with my friends and neighbors during the Memorial Day weekend and I set up a small display with some pictures of my father, some of his medals, his Purple Heart and other items. I do

this even if I don't have party. Some of the items have interesting stories behind them.

When my father's plane was shot down on November 13, 1943, he was one of the five crewmen who did not survive. During a visit to Germany in 2014, I learned that three of the crew were buried soon after the crash in a cemetery in Oldenburg, not far from Ahlhorn where the plane went in. However, two of the crew remained in the wreckage of the plane until 1950 when a humanitarian group excavated the wreckage and removed their remains, my father being one of them. Something that played a definitive role in identifying my father's remains was his wedding band



that was still with him. Engraved inside were my mother's initials, R.H. (Ruth Haston) along with his R.L. (Ralph Lamma). The ring was returned to mother and she in turn gave it to me when I

was older. The person I visited on that trip to Germany had received permission years later to excavate the site again and he found some parts of the plane and he gave me a few pieces which I also feel fortunate to have. They, too, are included in my Memorial Day display. I'm sure many of you have a way to observe this special day each year. This is my way of reminding people what Memorial Day is really about.

The contest for The Aubrey Awards drew a larger number of participants this year due to the efforts of our members to get the word out. We had entries from Georgia to California and points in between as well as one from England. You'll find the winning essays in this issue. Once again, we owe a debt of gratitude to Beverly Burke who endows the contest in memory of her husband, Aubrey.

Our quarterly Meet & Greet Zoom meeting will be Sunday, July 16, 2023 at 1:30pm Eastern Daylight Time. Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for an email invitation. We had a good turnout in April with a few new faces and some interesting conversation. These meetings are very informal where we chat about a variety of topics and just enjoy getting to know one another. It's a great opportunity to meet your fellow members and share stories about the 392nd as well as current events.

Best wishes to all of you,
Ralph

FIRST PLACE from page 1

training camps, a sense of dread begins to set in. These young men were taken away from everything they knew, shipped halfway across the world to a little town called Wendling, and told to single handedly cripple the Nazi war machine. It seemed like an impossible task that they had to complete alone. But unknown to them, the unlikeliest of allies were waiting for them.

It was no surprise to the United Kingdom that these new soldiers would feel daunted and out of place in East Anglia. So, it became a top priority to make the transition as painless as possible on the Americans. Documentaries such as *A Welcome to Britain* were produced by the UK's Ministry of Information throughout the war to help acclimate GIs with their new home. While it's impossible to know if the 392nd watched this exact documentary before going to their base in Wendling, it is almost certain a similar type of class was given. Traditional football pitches near bases were transformed into familiar gridiron fields. And when the Red Cross set up Aeroclubs to bring a slice of Americana to the soldiers, the locals would come to aid. As Birdie Schmidt, program director of the Aeroclub in Wendling would recount, "I shall never forget Angie, a 72-year-old English woman who cycled in each day to help with the chores in the club, or Nora, a plucky, young cockney surviving the war out of context up in Norfolk." These small actions would have a lasting impact on the soldiers and ground crew that they interacted with and would be vital in creating a "Little America" that the 392nd could call home.

However, there were individuals who looked to exploit the naivety of the Americans. Pub owners would sometimes charge exorbitant prices to soldiers who were unfamiliar with the pound. Others would steal uniforms and other personal items from the 392nd, only to sell them back without them ever realizing it was theirs to begin with. The GIs themselves weren't exempt from controversy either. They would take over towns, often outnumbering the local inhabitants. GIs were also known to cause trouble in pubs and streets, and even at times imparted their segregationist views onto East Anglia. This meant that any way to break the animosity between the GIs and Wendling residents was critical. One of the most impactful forms of this was the aforementioned Red Cross Aeroclub at Wendling. It allowed for the English to see their new neighbors in an environment the Americans felt more comfortable with. It also provided a way for the English to experience how out of place the 392nd felt, helping them empathies with each other. However, the biggest contribution to releasing tension between the two groups were the friendships made between soldiers and citizens. People like Mr. Bowman, a baker at the Wendling Village bakery, who was loved by soldiers for his fresh loafs, Margaret Meen-Parker, a young schoolgirl that the soldiers would drive home from school or John Gilbert, a kid from Norwich who the 392nd let live on their base after his family's home was destroyed. These small interactions reverberated through both the town and bomb group, helping them realize that these were people too, all trying to deal with the war unfolding around them.

It's impossible to deny that war is hell. The constant

See FIRST PLACE on page 6



News from Across the Pond

Memorial Day 2023 at Cambridge American Cemetery

Trustees Jill Scott and Hugh Scott attended the Memorial Day service at Cambridge American Cemetery. Below at left, Hugh Scott prepares to lay a wreath on behalf of the 392nd BGMA; at right, the American flag at half-mast.

Jill writes, "After a few days of belated warm, sunny, spring-like weather, Monday, 29th May was grey and cold with what the forecasters, and I am sure your 'weather men' would have agreed, described as a moderate breeze. What



I called a cold wind from the NE! Of course, the weather did not deter the people attending; the over-flow car park was in use before 10am.

"This year the Service commemorated the United States Coast Guard. The front cover of the programme depicted one of their vessels breaking through the ice. Vice Admiral Kevin Lunday, US Coast Guard-Commander Atlantic Area, and Mr. Benjamyn Damazer, H.M.'s Vice Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, both spoke movingly of the essential and so often life-saving service given by the Coast Guard during times of conflict, and especially during World War II. ABMC Commissioner Daniel Woodward during his Welcome and Master of Ceremonies Suzie Harrison related some of the often very dangerous exploits of the Coast Guards during that war, and of their close links with the other services.

"The Flyover before the Service (the clouds being high enough) was led by a MC-130J, followed by a KC-135R escorted by two F15-Es. Then the arrival of the Official Party led, as always, by a Piper from a Scottish Regiment. A solemn moment, as is the Presentation of the Wreaths. 117 laid against that long wall with those so very many names inscribed on it. Followed by a Moment of Silence, then the Firing of Volleys from the steps leading to the Flag flying at half-mast. The Lament played by the Piper as he slow-marched alone back beside the long Wall was a reminder of why we were all there that day."

The Dutch Remember

From Dutch member Peter Adriaans: "Every year during the National Remembrance Day on May 4, we reflect on the victims of the Second World War and of war situations and peacekeeping operations afterwards. At 8 p.m. it will be silent for two minutes throughout the Netherlands.

"The National Remembrance Day takes place at the National Monument on Dam Square in Amsterdam. In

See NEWS on page 5

392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you get the *News* in print format, your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; "23" and later means your dues are valid for 2023. If you get the *News* via email, the email you receive with the pdf attachment will state the names of members whose dues expired in December. If you wish to join or 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 concerns, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box below. If you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, please indicate the amount in the space below.

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

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

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

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



this photo, King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima lay a wreath on behalf of the entire Dutch population, and children and grandchildren lay wreaths on behalf of survivors for various groups of war victims. Prior to the ceremony on Dam Square, there will be a memorial service in De Nieuwe Kerk.

“Commemorations of various groups of war victims are held throughout the year. During the National Remembrance Day on May 4, we commemorate all victims together. A memorial is organized in almost every municipality.

“On May 5th we celebrate the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945 and that we have been living in freedom ever since. On that day we also reflect on the value of freedom, democracy and human rights.

“In the night of 4 to 5 May, the mayor of Wageningen ignites the Liberation fire (shown below) in front of the historic Hotel de Wereld during the ceremony. The Liberation Fire is the symbol for national unity and for living in peace and freedom. On May 5, 1945, the orders for the execution of the document for surrender were signed there. From this historic location, walking groups set off into the country to spread the fire. The Liberation Fire is lit at the 14 Liberation Festivals, among others. It is an important moment for the Netherlands in the transition from the commemoration on May 4 and the celebration of the obtained freedom on May 5. The arrival of the Liberation Fire in their own municipality heralds the local 5 May activities.



“Many activities are organized on Liberation Day. The National Celebration of Liberation starts each year in a different province with a program around the 5 May Lecture. Liberation Festivals and other festivities in the country, including Freedom Meals are organized. The May

5 concert on the Amstel in Amsterdam closes Liberation Day in a festive way.

“The National Remembrance Capitulations 1945 takes place every year at the National Liberation Monument on the 5 May Square in Wageningen. This international commemoration contains several traditional elements. A new thread was added to this in 2021, to also give youth and therefore our future a place. A special letter campaign has been set up for this purpose. Students of the Pantarijn School Community in Wageningen, Montessori College Arnhem and Nijmegen have written personal letters to more than 500 WWII veterans, spread over eight allied countries. A letter of thanks for the personal involvement of the veteran in question during the Second World War. And so a word of thanks for what the veteran has meant for our future and freedom. Two of these portraits were filmed; from writing the letter (student) to the arrival at the veteran and his personal story. These films will be shown during the commemoration, as a common thread through the programme. In addition, a student recites his/her letter during the ceremony.

“*Adopt a Monument* is a national education project in which pupils of groups 7 and/or 8 adopt a war memorial in their own hometown. In Wageningen, 9 war memorials have been adopted. An intensive collaboration with the relevant primary schools and sports associations to ensure that these commemorations and adoption transfers take place in an appropriate manner. Through this project, children learn more about the local history of the Second World War and the tradition of commemoration. The pupils attend a commemoration at the monument at a time suitable for the school. They themselves are active with poems and stories and sometimes music.

“The Netherlands American Cemetery is located along the Rijksweg Maastricht-Vaals in the municipality of Eijsden-Margraten. It is one of the largest cemeteries in



the world and the only American cemetery in the Netherlands. No less than 8301 American liberators are buried there [including 31 Crusaders]. The white marble crosses and Stars of David remind us of these often young soldiers, who gave their lives for our freedom during the Second World War.

“The cemetery is still visited annually by more than 250,000 interested people. The specific arrangement of the crosses and

their location in the beautiful, sloping landscape make this cemetery particularly atmospheric.

“The names of 1722 missing from the land and air forces

See NEWS on page 6

NEWS from page 5

[with 53 Crusaders listed] are carved into the marble stone walls of the Square of Honor. A rosette next to a name indicates that the remains of this fallen liberator were found at a later date. Flowers decorate many graves in



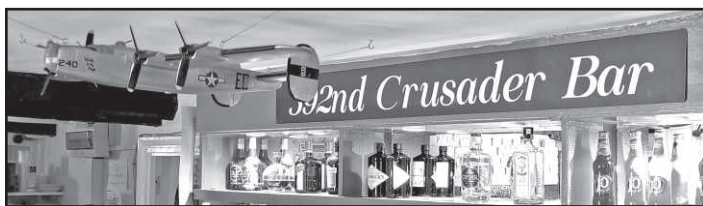
the cemetery, laid by people who have adopted the grave of these liberators and want to show their gratitude to the fallen and their relatives. At regular intervals, the carillon plays the American and Dutch national anthem.

"This is S/Sgt Amos E. Doty, killed May 19, 1944, whose grave my wife Ton and I adopted.

"We honor our heroes."

The Beeston Ploughshare

The model of B-24 #42-51240, *Windy City Belle*, has completed its transatlantic journey and now flies proudly at the 392nd Crusader Bar in the Ploughshare. Many thanks to Director Greg Hatton who refurbished the model and made its shipping box and to the Ploughshare for giving this model of a 60-mission veteran a fitting home.



FIRST PLACE from page 3

fighting, taking of human life, ever present risk of death, and loss of friends and even family takes its toll on the human body. This was especially true at Wendling. While the US military estimated that soldiers on the front line could break in as soon as 60 days, some GIs were stationed in Wendling for close to a year. This meant that the soldiers needed anything to take their mind off the war. The previously mentioned pubs and Aeroclub provided a great way of breaking the tension of war. It allowed soldiers a temporary break from the war to relax and socialize. Another way soldiers got breaks from the action were passes. Soldiers would be offered three or seven day passes to leave the base. These would be trips to the more scenic parts of Britain, such as London or Edenborough, collaborating with the UK to make these trips happen. The two nations also worked together to form American football leagues, like the 2nd Air Division Western League, which the Wendling Raiders would participate in. These varying ways of relieving some of the stress of war would go to preserve the sanity of those in the group and wouldn't have been possible without the British government and civilians.

The Friendly Invasion is one of the most forgotten aspects of the Second World War, yet one of its most impactful. The combined efforts of British and Americans soldiers and civilians was critical to weakening the Reich for the infamous Normandy landings and liberation of Western Europe. The ability for these vastly different groups to work together to overcome homesickness, loneliness, maliciousness, and

the everyday horrors of war is nothing short of incredible. The bond between towns like Wendling and their American neighbors like the 392nd has changed both countries forever, drawing them even closer together, which makes it even more tragic that its legacy is being forgotten. The bond that heavily contributed to the successful formation of NATO and the halting of Soviet expansion is slowly being replaced with animosity. Despite the unbreakable alliance that led to the fall of Germany, as those who remember it die out, we risk losing that bond to the sands of time. But by spreading stories like those of Margaret Meen-Parker, Angie, and the entirety of the 392nd, we can preserve the legacy of the war and brotherhood of these two nations.

Aubrey Burke: The 392nd's Silent Hero

There is an old adage that says while soldiers win battles, logistics win wars. But in the face of the greatest evil the world has ever seen, the 392nd Bomb Group needed a little bit of both. And perhaps no one did more for the 392nd away from the battlefield than Aubrey Burke. A personification of the Greatest Generation's resourcefulness and perseverance in the face of adversity, he would have a silent yet profound effect on the group. While his story may be little known to the public, it is nevertheless nothing short of remarkable.

Born in El Dorado, Arkansas, Burke would spend his formative years in Depression stricken America without a father and with barely a dollar to his family's name. These grim teenage years helped shape the person he would become, teaching him persistence, resourcefulness, and self-reliance. As his wife Beverly told the Victorville Daily Press, "Someone else might order a fence—Aubrey ordered wood—and literally made each slat that went into that fence—as only Burke could ever do it." These skills would become invaluable when in late 1942, Burke enlisted in the Army Air Force. Due to his background as a mechanist and poor eyesight, he would be stationed at the 465th Sub Depot in Wendling, Norfolk. There, he and 255 other men would be tasked with repairing B-24 Liberators for the 392nd Bomb Group. In these circumstances, Burke's innate talent for engineering and incredible shined through. Not only would he become one of the best at his job, but he would use his spare time making equipment to improve the lives of his fellow soldiers. He created communion cups out of bullets, a bread slicer, and an electric dental drill, something that wouldn't become mainstream until after the war. Burke's constant drive to use his unique skillset to go above and beyond made him loved by everyone at the 465th Sub Depot.

The other reason why Aubrey Burke's story is so incredible is that time and time again, he would find ways to create something from nothing. While this of course relates to his engineering prowess, it even more connects to his ability to turn the cards he was dealt into one of the greatest stories of the Greatest Generation. After his father left, with no father figure to learn from, he would spend his days just tinkering in local junkyards. This would allow him to enter the mechanist NYA program and find a career, most likely saving his life. When grounded by the AAC, he wouldn't declare it as a defeat, but as an opportunity to make the unique impact that only he could. And while

See FIRST PLACE on page 7

FIRST PLACE from page 6

many find returning to civilian life after the military to be an impossible task, Burke thrived, getting a degree and a sustaining job. There was nothing that he couldn't come back from, he just "had to learn to change my way of life." That's not an easy feat to do, but Burke time and time again showed resilience and resolve, pushing through things that would have broken anyone else. To him, there was only one person that could make the world around him better, and that was Burke.

Aubrey Burke was one of a kind. An incredible person that remained resilient in the face of adversity and humble in the face of success. He spent his time using his unique gifts in craftsmanship and engineering to not just make the lives of those around him better, but to save those of the pilots and by proxy countless men and women living in Nazi occupied Europe. He used war not as a vessel of destruction, but as a way of saving those most never thought about. He is some that everyone should aspire to be; an incredible, hardworking, and kind embodiment of the American spirit. A reminder of the ideals and personnel that both on and off the battlefield, ended the greatest evil this world has ever known.

SECOND PLACE from page 1

Along the way, the 392nd was faced with unfathomable challenges, got to know the locals, and contributed to the Allied victory. Their bravery and mindblowing feats in the push against Nazism must be communicated effectively, so history fails to repeat itself. Because of the iron-forged bond the crewmembers possessed, they were able to cope with poor living conditions and the difficult handling of Liberators.

When the 392nd arrived at Wendling, mud and swampy conditions plagued the land. The 392nd Group was assigned with creating infrastructure including airstrips to make the base operational. Sinks were drained through pipes connected to collection pails, chemical toilets were utilized for lack of a natural sewage system, and the crews dwelled in miniature huts crammed with men. The homes, known as Nissen huts, were made out of semi-cylindrical metal sheets with dirt floors and average insulation. Water was obtained from tanker trucks outside their living quarters, and they had to count on it being present. The crew's love for their families and brotherly bond ushered them through an arduous season. Bernie Weisberg, one of the repairmen on the B-24 aircraft, reflected on his time with the 10th Station Complement Squadron as pleasurable because they assumed the role of older brothers and watched out for him during his time at the base. It takes a dynamic group of people to produce a consistent flow of results. Major Johnson of the Air Executive elaborated that multiple crews were required to man a single aircraft, since consecutive missions would wear at their physiological dexterity, so multiple crews had to cycle in order to preserve energy. The B-24's controls were heavy and stiff, some going as far to dub it "the flying coffin." Even though the pilots and men on the ground

were faced with the circling hawk of the Luftwaft, it was the selflessness of men like Alber J. Novik that saved lives. His Liberator was pummeled by bombs from an enemy aircraft, and he wrestled with the stubborn controls for an eye-watering four and a half hours. Novik ordered his men to evacuate the craft before he attempted to escape. The maneuver was extremely dangerous because it was narrow on the catwalk, and one misstep could lead to one falling through the sensitive bomb bay doors without a parachute. Because of his kindness towards his men, it gave them ample time to escape from the plane. By a change in the Liberator's descent, Novik was able to heave himself out of the bomb bay to safety. His actions preserved numerous lives that day. These men came into the military as boys, but they gained the experience, quick-witted thinking, and an iron bond with their crew members that enabled them to contribute to the Allied Victory.

It can be assumed from some of the historical photos on the 392nd Bomber Group's website that the locals provided vegetables and eggs for the crewmembers of the division. Initially, many of the locals were suspicious of the GIs, but it quickly vanished when they got to know the crew. The Americans introduced coke, gum, and peanut butter to the local Norfolks. Many friendships were created, and they often danced together during free time. It can be inferred that the bond between the soldiers and people instilled a sense of patriotism and refocused their perspective on the war. They were fighting to dethrone a tyrant, to maintain domestic tranquility, end unrighteous prejudice, and ensure that the voices of the minority would never remain echoing in a gas chamber.

While it is unclear how newer generations comprehend the impact that both civilians and the 392nd Bomb Group had during World War II, it appears to be minimal. In a study orchestrated by The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, studies show that one in ten young Americans deny the Holocaust ever took place and nearly half of those surveyed were unable to name a single concentration camp. Because a vast majority of those interviewed possessed little background on the most glaring atrocities of World War II, it can be reasonably inferred that a large percentage of those people have a slim idea of the contributions of those in and around the Wendling Base. Generations succeeding the greatest generation have become increasingly disinterested in studying our nation's fascinating history. A short article on *Youth Voices* describes the fact that students' grades in history classes have been dropping because they are not enthralled by the lesson. It should beg the attention of instructors of World War II, who need to interview students about what captivates them. Folks are more prone to seek information on their devices, so it calls for reform in the way World War II and information about the Wendling base is communicated to ensure it is not lost in time.

From my studies, I learned that the 392nd Bomb Group dealt with substandard living conditions, coped with uncooperating Liberators, and built relationships with the locals that boosted their morale. The Wendling Base was able to defend England from Blitzkrieg attacks and

See SECOND PLACE on page 8

SECOND PLACE from page 7

propelled the world into a new era of peace.

Aubrey Burke: A Renewed Perspective

Aubrey Burke was born into poverty. Just like many of the machines and materials he tinkered with, Burke was broken initially. The machines he worked with were worn and fettered to a degree that most rendered unusable. When the Great Depression hit, it was almost as if the world was saying that it found Aubrey simply unusable. His father abandoned him, his family was left deconstructed, and he was cursed to roam the streets. Most folks would take that as a sign to give up. Aubrey did not. He rose to the occasion and took on the mentality that if the world did want to use him, he would use the world. Burke became a salesman, scurrying around his town in El Dorado to find merchandise and a buyer willing to pay the price. He also roamed around machine shops to gain insight on practical knowledge. It wasn't until he enlisted in the Air Force in 1942, however, that his talent in machinery began to shine. One of the most fascinating aspects of Aubrey Burke beside the natural drive in him was that he had the mind of a brilliant visionary. He used the tools at his disposal to fabricate something beautiful out of ashes. At first glance, damaged shell casings and a damaged propeller are items one would throw away, but Burke transformed them into Communion cups. Not only is it reflective of his personal ingenuity, but it also displays Burke's humor. Many folks these days do not recognize the power of laughter, that it can put people at ease and grasp the attention of a room. He may have made a comment like, "The wine in these cups will *blow* you away!" Beyond his innovation and humor, Burke was well-qualified in all fields of mechanics, but it led to a sense of insecurity over whether he was the reason a plane went down. Burke deeply cared about his comrades and had this sense of perfectionism instilled in him, that he could never fail like his father did to him. After the GI bill was instated, Burke was able to switch his profession to the field of psychology and counseling. It is heartwarming to me that Aubrey Burke was able to take the hole in his life of being fatherless and without a functional family to being a father figure to others, devoting love to others when he had been deprived of it himself. Aubrey Burke's drive, level-head, light-heartedness, and selflessness all contributed to his success; he deserves to be remembered.



Third Place Winner: Riley Fleck

Riley, age 17, attends La Costa Canyon High School in Carlsbad, California. He was encouraged to enter by his grandfather, 392nd BGMA member Joel Fleck, whose father was 579th Sqdn bombardier 1/Lt Ernest R. Fleck. In the photo, Riley is holding his Aubrey Award certificate and wearing his great-grandfather's bomber jacket.

Factors of Success and Impact of the 392nd Bomb Group

In May of 1942, the first aircrews of the United States Army Air Force were rooted at RAF Grafton Underwood in Northamptonshire. At the height of the bombing campaigns in 1944, 500,000 service servicemen of the USAAF were stationed in England. Through the efforts of the pilots, crew members, support personnel, and local residents, U.S. bombers sustained almost constant raids on German troops, critical infrastructure, and manufacturing plants in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. The proximity of the English bases to these targets allowed for thousands of successful raids and reconnaissance missions that were crucial to land operations.

The 392nd Bomb Group, located at Wendling Air Force Base flew 291 missions from June 1943 to May 1945. It contained 5,000 airmen and 4,000 support personnel. Supporting roles included mechanics, repairmen, cooks, drivers, and others. The high operational tempo placed great strain on all members of the 392nd and other bomb groups. Between the many missions, this miraculous machine managed to repair aircraft, replenish ammunition, and prepare plans for the following raids. Airmen needed to be rested, medically treated, briefed, and fed. To accomplish this, operations on the base were organized to ensure maximum efficiency. Colonel Lawrence Gilbert, Deputy Group Commander at the time, explains, "If we were flying every day, we had to rely on more than one crew to man an aircraft. Seven consecutive combat missions would tax a crew's stamina quite heavily, so we had to account for sickness and rest leave, as well as replacements for injured crewmen." Support personnel faced the challenge in a similar fashion, as described by Tom Perry, an armorer in the 576th Squadron, "Using the winch took too much time, so we usually loaded the bombs by hand...a team worked on each side of the same bomb bay. There was a beehive of activity at the planes before the crews arrived!" The dedication and skill displayed by officers, airmen, and support personnel in the organization and execution of these tasks in large quantities and limited time, is an often unappreciated factor in the success of the USAAF.

Another aspect in the background of the American war effort in England was the relationship between American soldiers and British citizens. Thousands of U.S. military personnel arrived in England, quickly commanding RAF installations, constructing new airfields, and taking over various buildings to be used as hospitals and storage areas. The soldiers made up significant portions of the population in some counties, crowding many pubs in their downtime. Of course, there were some instances of arguments and resentment. Tommy Trinder, a popular wartime British comedian teased that Americans were "overpaid, over-sexed and over here". The official War Department pamphlet containing instructions for conduct with locals advised soldiers that arguing politics in these regions "might be called a national sport" and to avoid it at all costs. But the relationship was overwhelmingly positive. Locals supplied Americans with food, medical care,

See THIRD PLACE on page 9

THIRD PLACE from page 8

sermons, and companionship that raised spirits in a time of war. These deeds were valuable to the many soldiers stationed there, and not forgotten. My grandparents took a trip to Wendling last year along with other relatives of the 392nd to retrace the steps of my great-grandfather, Ernest Fleck. They spoke with residents who still carry enormous gratitude and respect for the actions of American airmen 80 years ago. The special connection that persists to this day was strengthened by the relationship between American soldiers and local residents during the war.

Through this project, I have learned many things about the overlooked contributions of support personnel. In any conflict, many understand the major operations and stories of combat. But behind all of them are dedicated and skilled servicemen, also responsible for any victory. I have a greater understanding of the amount of danger the aircrews of World War Two went into time and time again. Surprising to me was the fact that 34 percent of 392nd airmen were killed or became a prisoner of war. I have even greater respect for my great-grandfather, who was a bombardier in the 392nd. We still have his medals and flight jacket.

Also of importance is the awareness younger age groups should have of "The Greatest Generation". They may read about the sacrifice of millions of Americans decades ago in a history textbook, but never fully appreciate it. Many Americans and citizens of other nations will find that they had one or more family members with an active role in the war. Education about our warfighters foments a more supportive nation for current and future veterans, an area our people and government can improve in. Hopefully, programs such as this one bring about this change and preserve the legacy of the airmen and soldiers of World War Two.

Thoughts on the Life of Aubrey Burke

Although unfortunate, I found it interesting how the absence of his father at a young age contributed to Burke's resourcefulness. He was selling and tinkering with things independently at the age of 12. This was clearly beneficial later when his creativity was put to use in the machine shop at Wendling. Also impressive was the fact that although he

was exempt from the draft due to his work, he still enlisted. This speaks volumes about his patriotism and selflessness. I am not sure how many young men today would do the same if given the opportunity. I also liked the remarks at the end from Beverly Burke, saying if "someone else ordered a fence—Aubrey ordered wood". This resonates with me because I see many people my age that lack the patience to make something themselves or do their own work. I hope I learn to be more like Burke in that way.

EDITOR from page 2

and a POW. Copyrighted © 2020 by Laura Anne Thomas, the article was published originally by the San Antonio Genealogical and Historical Society in *Our Heritage*, Vol. 61, Nos. 3&4, 2020, pages 7-16.

Take a look at <https://b24.net/targetVictory.htm>, where you'll find all 32 issues of *Target Victory*. Each was a "report of, by and for Combat Flying personnel" of the fourteen B-24 Liberator Groups and the five Fighter Groups in the 2nd Air Division.

Published every week from 16 Jul 1944 to 16 May 1945 by HQ, 2AD, the booklets highlight 2AD accomplishments from D-Day to V.E. Day. They include combat strike photographs, bombing accuracy reports, significant achievements by air/ground personnel and commentaries on the overall results achieved during air operations.

If you ever wondered how the 392nd BG's bombing accuracy compared to other Liberator Groups, here's where you'll find the answer!

The third platform is our Facebook page. Launched on 16 Feb 2018, it currently has 265 members. All have an interest in history, Liberators, and the 392nd BG. Search for 392nd Bomb Group (H) Wendling~England 1943~1945 WWII or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563692720350729>.

Moderator Greg Hatton frequently posts videos, photos, articles, and interviews that generate a lot of comments. The other FB members often post as well.

In March 2023, for example, Dino Santelli (son of 577th Sqdn sheet metal worker Rudolph Santelli) uploaded

See EDITOR on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

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

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Our website, www.b24.net, contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial. Please send this report to: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

EDITOR from page 9

about 100 of his father's WWII photos. Rudy was a proud "Hole Chaser" whose job was to patch bullet and flak holes in 577th Sqdn planes. Many of the photos show Rudy, his coworkers, and their mobile workshop. There are several photos of 577th Sqdn planes, perhaps the very ones that Rudy had fixed in order to keep 'em flying.



This photo is one of my favorites. I'd love to know more about the man wearing the helmet—and not much else! Rudy is at the bottom right.

Please visit the 392nd's Facebook page. It will be time well spent.

April 2023 Zoom Meet & Greet

Attending the April Zoom meeting were 21 Crusaders, including 5 first-timers: **Brian Allen**, son of 577th gunner S/Sgt Alexander W. Allen on 1/Lt Roy A. Bay's crew; **Mac Cassell**, son of 579th lead pilot Maj Harrison S. Cassell Jr; **John Marx**, nephew of control tower clerk Sgt Wilbur S. Stanford Jr; **Ron Sichau**, son of 577th Sqdn radio operator T/Sgt Walter R. Sichau on 1/Lt Dexter Tiefenthal's crew (POW on 18 Apr 1944); and **Dan Vasconcellos**, nephew of navigator 1/Lt Harry M. Vasconcellos on the Garcia and Teipel crews (578th/579th).

Ralph Winter said he had recently spoken with John Gilbert. Several Zoomers then commented about John's phenomenal memory of people, places and events; his willingness to share what he knows; his endless supply of anecdotes and, above all, his friendliness!

Ron showed the Camp Regulations sign that his father had brought home from Stalag Luft 17B. That, and more of T/Sgt Sichau's keepsakes, are at <https://b24.net/Newsletters/March-2011.pdf>.

There was a major discussion about what to do with our 392nd BG memorabilia. Everyone wants to donate their "stuff" to a good museum that will display it. That, unfortunately, is a very rare outcome. When most museums "accept" a donation, it then becomes their property—meaning, if they already have a lot of what you donated, they might sell yours and use the funds to buy something they want but don't already have.

We agreed that this topic needs to be explored further, both in regard to 392nd BGMA memorabilia/archives and also personal/family treasures. If you have ideas, please share them with us at the July 16th Zoom meeting.

More about Weather

Why was accurate weather forecasting so important? At its simplest, imagine a 392nd BG formation of 30+ planes fighting its way to the target—and perhaps losing planes en route—only to find their objective totally obscured by clouds. In the early days, that meant bombs could not/should not be dropped. The crews would have to make their way back to England with the grim likelihood that they would be returning to that target in the future.



"Where's the target?" This December 1943 photo shows the 392nd BG flying over a blanket of clouds en route to drop bombs on enemy installations, likely near Ludwigshafen, Germany.

Or, just as bad, returning to Station 118 to find its weather so dismal that they had to divert to another field, sometimes with badly injured men aboard and critically low on fuel.

Correct weather forecasts would, hopefully, minimize both scenarios.

Of course, the Luftwaffe had its own weather men. As <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AAF/VII/AAF-VII-11.html> points out, "...the heavy concentration of enemy fighters encountered by the Eighth Air Force attacking Schweinfurt on 14 October 1943 was a direct result of accurate forecasting by the German weather services. Because this target lay in the only part of Germany in which daylight bombing seemed to be possible under prevailing weather conditions, the Germans massed their fighters in such a way as to inflict on the Eighth Air Force the highest percentage of loss it had suffered to date."

Conflicting Data

The landings at Normandy occurred on 6 Jun 1944 because of very accurate Allied weather forecasting. German meteorologists were also trying to predict the weather in that region, expecting that an invasion was imminent. They created weather maps using observations from on land, British communications, and reports from U-Boats scattered around the Atlantic. Their weather men ultimately thought that gale-force winds would arrive on June 5 and continue for several days, making an Allied landing for a few days unlikely, and, in turn, contributing to German unreadiness on D-Day.

These different weather forecasts changed history!

English Weather

In his book, *The Mighty Eighth War Manual*, renowned 8AF historian Roger A. Freeman notes, "Many American servicemen returned home after service in England with the conviction that the island was set in an intermittent

See WEATHER on page 11

WEATHER from page 10

downpour... Changeable [English] weather with a preponderance of damp was to leave an indelible mark on the memories of those Americans forced to live in poorly heated Nissen huts or perform difficult maintenance work in a steady drizzle. British weather can be delightful but it was the more unpleasant aspects that were remembered. However, even those who persistently 'bitched' about the English climate would concede that the United Kingdom was a good place to be stationed if one had to fight a war.

"While the weather may have been slightly demoralizing for personnel, its effect on the air offensive was critical. Weather conditions were a major factor influencing both the rate of combat operations and their success. Indeed, the northern European weather proved to be the biggest obstacle to accurate daylight bombing as practiced by the 8th Air Force."

18th Weather Squadron

When 8AF arrived in England in February 1942, it relied on the RAF's meteorological service and facilities. It didn't take long, however, before the differences in forecasting requirements for night bombing by individual ships (UK) and multi-plane daylight bombing (US) became evident. It was therefore essential that 8AF develop its own reporting and forecasting system.

The first 18th Weather Sqdn (WS) personnel arrived in the UK in July 1942, with 12 detachments formed the next month. By April 1944, 18thWS had 106 detachments with 330 officers and 977 enlisted men.

Usually, Freeman says, "The authorized strength of a combat airfield detachment was three officers and eight men [with] the senior officer being termed the Station Weather Officer.... A three shift per 24-hours rota was normally worked so that the weather station was constantly manned. At hourly intervals—and more often in adverse conditions—local weather information would be collected by observers and consisted of total cloud amount, wind direction and speed, visibility, present and past weather, sea level pressure, temperature, cloud extents and heights, dew point temperature, barometric characteristics and tendency."

Bomb Groups transmitted data up the chain of command, and it ultimately made its way to 8AF HQ, which "after preparing forecasts transmitted them direct to operational station weather detachments so that all units would have the same material to work with."

At the Base Level

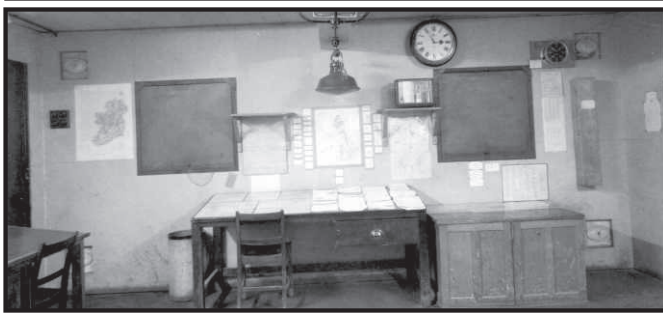
Equipment for recording local conditions was usually close to the control tower. A mounted theodolite—a precision optical instrument for measuring angles between designated visible points in the horizontal and vertical planes—was indispensable. A balloon would be released in front of the theodolite and its position precisely tracked, usually once a minute, to plot wind speed and direction. The 392nd's theodolite was shown in the upper right photo on page 1 of the March 2023 *News*.

The 392nd BG's weather men included 2/Lt John R. Borchert, 2/Lt Raphael M. Braga, 2/Lt Delia, 2/Lt Jay E. Folkert, 2/Lt George A. Guy, 2/Lt George E. McClelland, 2/Lt Paul J. Morehead, 2/Lt Dara R. Ness, Sgt Lucian G.

Becquart, Cpl Breitenfeld, M/Sgt Donald O. Myers, T/Sgt John J. O'Connor, Cpl Harold I. "Alka" Seltzer, Sgt Charles E. Trout Jr, and S/Sgt Wallace.



Left photo: On 27 Apr 1944, the 392nd's Weather Officer collects weather data. The shelter housed a psychrometer, to get relative humidity readings, and thermometers for recording high and low temperatures. The bottom photos, taken 27 Dec 1943, show the workrooms where the data was analyzed and forecasts prepared.



Weather Reconnaissance

Other weather data came from specially equipped Fortresses, Mosquitos, and Mustangs. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_Weather_Reconnaissance_Squadron, <http://www.wwiiaircraftperformance.org/mustang> and [scouting-force.html](http://www.scouting-force.html) for more information. A history of the Army Air Forces Weather Service is at <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AAF/VII/AAF-VII-11.html>.

Accuracy

Per Freeman, "An analysis of weather factors prepared for the US Strategic Bombing Survey shows that the 8th Air Force weather services had an overall accuracy at forecasting operational or non-operational days of 75 per cent at the daily 1600 hours Headquarters conference, and 87 percent at the 2200 hours conference."

Over the course of the war, "25 per cent of all days during the 8th Air Force's campaign were non-operational because of weather... Aircraft airborne on operations that were abortive or recalled because of weather averaged over 15 per cent in the first year, decreasing to 5.8 per cent in 1945.... At this later date RAF Bomber Command [rate of aborts or recalls was] 1.3 per cent, which can probably be attributed to aircraft flying singly and not in formation."

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

As I watch the news, I am made aware of so much conflict in our world. Ukraine remains war-torn, Sudan is at war with itself, China continues to threaten Taiwan while North Korea builds its military capabilities.

I don't fully understand the purpose and politics of these conflicts but know they are continued examples of man's inhumanity to man.

Pray for our service people and for the wisdom of world leaders to keep us safe. Take comfort in a meaningful quote attributed to Marilyn Monroe: "Sometimes things fall apart so that better things can fall together."



**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∞

Bruce L. Sooy, 578th, May 13, 2023

Allen P. Holtman, Friend, February 8, 2023