



B-24 #42-94764, The Bad Penny

This lightly edited article by LtCol James R. Maris, with help from Vickie J. Maris, is reprinted from the Summer 2000 issue of the *Second Air Division Association Journal*.

2/Lt James R. Maris and crew flew aboard the 578th Sqdn's #42-94764, The Bad Penny, on 10 of their 31 missions. It's understandable, then, that they considered it "their" plane.

"Engineer to pilot, engineer to pilot: Our number one engine has been blown off the wing. Number three is stripped of its cowl and supercharger. There's a three-foot wide hole in the left wing between engines one and two. The bomb bay doors are crushed in. And we've got a bomb hung up on the shackles in the bomb bay."

This was the frantic report from my flight engineer, Milford "Fitz" Fitzgerald, who had been asked to assess the damage to our B-24, The Bad Penny. She had been badly damaged as we passed through heavy flak over Hamburg, Germany, on our 23rd mission. It was August 6, 1944.

"Lieutenant, I don't think she can get us home," says Fitz. "We'd better abort to Sweden."

But I still had faith in the Bad Penny. I checked the handling characteristics of our faithful war bird. Her controls were still responding, so I started a slow turn toward Sweden and asked the flight engineer to take a poll. I wanted the crew to decide if we should go to Sweden or fly back across the North Sea to our home base at Wendling.

Fitz left and returned promptly with the vote. The crew wanted me to fly her home.

I started the slow turn toward England and asked Fitz to organize the crew in an effort to dislodge the 500-pound bomb that was hung up in the bomb bay. They would also need to kick out the bad dent in the bomb bay doors so we could attempt to close them.

Acting quickly, Fitz attached several parachute harnesses end to end to form the life-line that would be fastened to

each airman before he crawled along the narrow catwalk and out into the open bomb bay. Each airman kicked until he was tired in an attempt to free the tenuously trapped bomb. After several attempts, the faulty shackle let go and the bomb fell free.

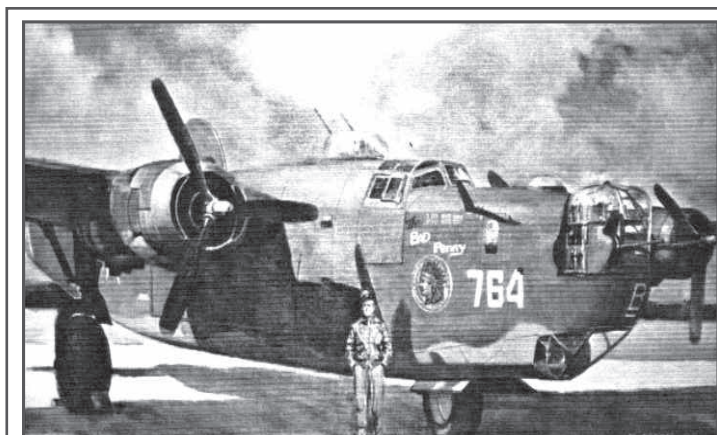
The next task was dealing with the badly dented doors. It took the tiresome efforts of several more crewmen to right this situation. As each man grew weary, he would crawl back up the catwalk and another would take his place. They eventually succeeded in closing the doors.

Meanwhile the navigator, Herbie Silverman, and I were feverishly comparing notes on position, rate of sink, distance across the water to England, and the general condition of our Bad Penny. She was not looking good. We also recalled the bad weather we had dealt with when we took off from the base. Would it be there when we returned?

When this mission started, the squadron clerk had opened the door of our Quonset hut at 0415 hours to call us to briefing. As we pedaled our bicycles to breakfast, the damp fog of this early British dawn cut through our uniforms.

During the briefing, we were warned of the flak barrage that we would encounter over our target, Hamburg. The reports stated that the flak was intense and highly accurate. We should expect a large number of casualties.

Our takeoff was at dawn in a light rain. We entered the heavy cloud overcast at 600 feet and immediately turned to a heading of 350 degrees. As soon as the gear retracted, we were careful to hold an accurate heading and constant rate of climb. We had to hold our spacing through the overcast because the sky around us was full of heavies all climbing to the assembly area. At half assembly altitude, plus 1,000 feet, we made a 180 degree instrument turn to head back to the assembly area over our base and followed



This post-war oil painting by Rick Moon and Eric Schuster portrays 2/Lt James R. Maris in front of #42-94764, The Bad Penny. Its nose art shows an Indian Head penny.



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FROM THE EDITOR

New Orleans Reunion Update. A third reunion hotel—the Holiday Inn Express—has been added to accommodate the record number of people expected to attend the reunion this year. Both The Higgins Hotel and the Hilton Garden Inn are now sold out, so this promises to be a really big and really exciting reunion.

To secure your hotel accommodations at the Holiday Inn Express, call 504-962-0900, or 800-439-4745 and give “AFS” for our group rate.

Updates to www.b24.net. Webmaster Bob Books has recently posted these additions to our website. You’ll learn a lot!

At <https://b24.net/Docs.htm> are: •How air supremacy was achieved and the results which followed: The Strategic Bombing Survey •Bombardier’s Ordnance Guide—2nd Air Division •Radio Counter Measures. Headquarters VIII Bomber Command, Subject: RCN—Window, dated 19 Dec 1943 •Loading Aircraft. HQ 8th Air Force Memo No. 55-8, “Standing Operating Procedure, Loading Charts and Bombing-up Procedure Involving Incendiary, Mixed and Unusual Bomb Loads on B-17 and B-24 Aircraft,” dated 23 Apr 1944 •WWII 8th Army Air Force Daily Operations: The Combat Chronological 1942–1945.

And in the “Training Videos” section of <https://b24.net/Videos.htm>: •How to Behave in Britain, 1943 •How to behave when visiting a British pub •Americans Learn About British Customs •Know Your Ally: Britain •Crew Chief B-24 pre-flight Inspection •B-24 Fifty Hour Inspection of Engines and Propellers •50 Hour Inspection: B-24 Hydraulics •B-24 Liberators Over Europe, 1942-1945 •How to fly the B-24 (1943 film).

William Engel, 578th Sqdn Ordnance Clerk, Remembers. “...one of the additional duties assigned to me was collecting all the armored flak suits from the equipment stores and delivering them to the combat crews out on the flight line prior to a mission, then collecting them after the group returned. Transporting all those heavy flak jackets, in all weathers, to and from the squadron’s hardstands presented a problem.

“Using any suitable building material from a variety of sources that I, together with a bunch of the boys from the 578th’s Ordnance Section, could either beg, borrow or steal, including wood from empty ammunition boxes, assorted equipment crates and sections of aluminum and steel from the dump where our scrapped planes were salvaged for spare parts, an elaborate and quite impressive weatherproof structure was built on one of the bomb trailers and hauled by a Dodge truck. This architectural gem was duly and ceremoniously named *The Flak Shack*. It was subsequently used, very effectively, for delivering and collecting flak suits, or anything else that was bulky and heavy, to and from the 578th Squadron aircraft as and when the need arose.



“The bomb trailers, which were used to carry the bombs from the bomb dump out to our 578th Sqdn aircraft on the flight line, were towed by Dodge trucks which were especially designed and manufactured for that purpose. The truck that hauled *The Flak Shack* was my personal truck and it was only used to tow *The Flak Shack*.

“The Ordnance Section line-shack was located beside one of the two large aircraft maintenance hangars on the base. When there was a mission scheduled, the night Charge of Quarters (CQ) would drive a bomb truck over to our barracks, pick us up and take us out to the line-shack. From there, we would drive the trucks and trailers over to the bomb dump, load the trailers with whatever size bombs were specified and required for that particular mission, then drive out to our squadron’s flight line and load the planes.

“As time passed, the different sections of the 392nd BG competed with each other in adorning their jeeps with additional fixtures

See EDITOR on page 3

President's Corner



Greetings Fellow Crusaders,

That you are members of the 392nd BGMA indicates you are someone for whom Memorial Day holds special meaning and significance. I hope that yours was just that.

I have been giving thought recently to the many memorials in England that have been established and maintained by individuals, churches, townships and villages. Listed below are some of the memorials to which I refer.

Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. Board member David Parnell personally maintains a beautiful memorial to the 2/LT John D. Ellis crew whose plane crashed near the villages of Cheshunt and Waltham Cross on August 12, 1944. Two plaques to the memory of the crew were funded by grateful townspeople soon after the crash, but the memorial that David has championed is a beautifully landscaped site.

North Tuddenham. In this small village, about 14 miles east of Beeston, there are two plaques dedicated to the memory of 8 crew members of the 2/LT Louis F. Bass crew who perished when their plane crashed April 21, 1944. One plaque was erected near the crash site through the efforts of Geoff and Pat Baldwin and the second is in St. Mary's church. The village flag designed by a young school girl, Esme Okan, depicts a B-24. See <https://b24.net/Newsletters/June-2010.pdf> for more info.

Wendling Village Hall. The village hall in Wendling houses some interesting artifacts and photographs pertaining to the 392nd Bomb Group. A beautiful mural, painted by Malcomb Cockell depicting the village and B-24s flying overhead, adorns one wall of the village hall. John Gilbert's sister-in-law, Doreen Gilbert, has always been on hand to give us access to the hall.

Margate, Kent. 2/Lt Jacob Weinheimer's crew crashed on 27 Apr 1944 near Margate, Kent. There's a plaque honoring them and a 446th BG crew near the seashore. It doesn't mention them by name, however. See <https://b24.net/Newsletters/June-2010.pdf> for more info.

Wrangle Common, Lincolnshire. 1/Lt Norman J. Hunt's crew crashed near Wrangle Common, Lincolnshire, on 13 July 1944 with all but one man killed. There was a big excavation of the crash site in the 1990s with several engines, props, etc. recovered. There is a plaque to the memory of the crew in St. Mary and St. Nicholas Church.

Upper Sheringham, Norfolk. A memorial to members of the 2/LT Colby Waugh crew whose plane crashed January 4, 1944 while returning from a combat mission to Kiel is located in All Saints Churchyard in Upper Sheringham. Due to severe aircraft damage Lt. Waugh was forced to attempt a crash landing just on the Northeastern coast of East Anglia. The ship hit some trees in the attempted landing and four crewmen were killed outright in the crash and a fifth died in a hospital at Cromer four days later. This memorial has been overseen by Doug and Celia Willies for many years and the Willies have hosted our group visits to

the site multiple times over the years.

I am sure there are other memorials that would be interesting to visit, along with other places and sites—some of which are fast disappearing and falling to development and deterioration. With that being said, I am making tentative plans for a return visit to the U.K. with a focus on visits to these private memorials and the other places that we need to see before they (or we) are gone. You youngsters ignore the parentheses. This would most likely be in September 2025. Expressions of interest, your thoughts and suggestions are all welcome.

As you may know, our annual Membership Meeting and Reunion will be in New Orleans, September 25–29 and will include a tour option of unlimited admission to The National World War II Museum during that time. At present, we have about 14 members registered to attend. We'd love to see you there if you haven't signed up yet. The membership meeting will be broadcast on Zoom on Friday, September 27th from 8:30am until 9:30am Central Time for anyone who can't be present in person.

Our quarterly Meet & Greet Zoom meeting will be Saturday, July 20, 2024, at 1:30pm Eastern Time. Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for an email invitation. We're getting more and more participants each time. Remember, these meetings are very informal and 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 interesting stories about the 392nd as well as current events. Hope to see you there.

Wishing you all the best,
Ralph

EDITOR from page 2

and fittings. Shiny aluminum side-panels, complete with windows and cushions, extra mirrors, ash trays, floor mats, arm rests, etc. Then one day an Inspector General showed up. You never saw so many 'optional extras' disappear into thin air so fast."

The 20 Jan 1945 photo of the 578th's *Flak Shack* on page 2, with its compartment full of flak aprons, was obviously taken after the Inspector General's visit!

April 2024 Meet and Greet

by Debbie Goar Beigh

There were 22 members at the April Meet & Greet, the highest number to date! Kudos to Philip Brazier and Peter Adriaans for braving the time difference and logging in from the U.K. and the Netherlands, respectively. Equally impressive is that we were joined by four first-time members:

Aaron Youst is the grandson of S/Sgt Kenneth E. Youst, waist gunner on the 576th's *Scarlata* and Hebron crews and interned in Switzerland on 18 Mar 1944. David Poppel's father was bombardier 1/Lt Samuel B. Poppel, 577th, also interned in Switzerland that day, but with 1/Lt George T. Haffermehl's crew. Kyle Cochran is the son of tail gunner

See MEET AND GREET on page 9



News from Across the Pond

Memorial Day at Cambridge American Cemetery

Trustees Jill Scott and Hugh Scott attended the Memorial Day service at Cambridge American Cemetery.

Jill writes, "The month did give us some wonderful May days. Warm, sunny, dry. Everything coming into bloom. The trees bursting into leaf and the birds singing their hearts out. It is leaving on a different note!

"Fortunately, the weather at Cambridge was not a return of last year's cold wind, but a relatively warm morning. Some sunshine, some cloud, and a mild breeze from the East. Before the arrival of the Official Guests there was an Overflight by three aircraft.

"Following the presentation and the laying of the 115 floral tributes/wreaths (including the one Hugh laid on behalf of the 392nd), there was the Moment of Silence, Firing of Volleys and Taps. Always a moving few minutes. Then the Benediction from the Chaplain.

"As all Memorial Services following wars, this was a reminder of the sacrifice of so many. Perhaps a poignant reminder in today's world."

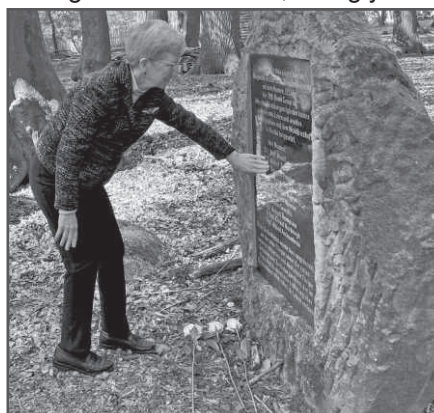
Dinklage, Germany

On 29 Apr 2024, Annette Tison, her husband Don, their daughter Jenny, son Dan, and 15 invited German guests were at the memorial to her uncle, navigator 2/Lt Douglas Franke, and his crew on the outskirts of Dinklage, Germany. The entire crew had been killed in action at about that same time in 1944, while aboard B-24 #42-7510, El Lobo.

Dan noted, "The Memorial Ceremony on April 29th, 2024 could not have been more different than the events that occurred on April 29th, 1944. The forest was extremely peaceful with a light breeze cooling everyone down on an unusually warm April day. Birdsong echoed throughout the peaceful woods; a stark contrast to the violent events 80 years ago that brought us to the location in the present.

"The ceremony began with Germans and Americans gathering as friends in front of the memorial stone, dedicated 20 years ago to the day. The turnout was rather impressive for such an intimate affair, with attendance by local dignitaries and family members. The memorial has changed in twenty years, with moss growing up the base, making the stone feel like it has belonged in the woods since time immemorial.

"Local German historian/researcher Markus Graw gave an opening statement to those assembled, laying out the schedule of events for the group in German. Annette then gave her remarks, fittingly wearing Douglas Franke's



Navigator Wings. She told the group the story of El Lobo's final flight, the background of the airmen lost that day, the story of Robert Franke's efforts decades ago to learn about what happened to his brother, and his efforts

to memorialize it. Fittingly, she used many sections of Robert Franke's speech from the Memorial Dedication,

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; "24" means your dues expire in December. If you get the *News* via email, you will receive an email in September and December advising if your dues are expiring. If you wish to join or renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Joel Fleck, 5606 Doolittle St., Burke, VA 22015 or join / renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/membership.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.

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NEWS from page 4

infusing the affair with his spirit. Annette was standing in a sunbeam throughout her remarks, almost as if Robert and Doug were with her.

"The group then left white roses at the Memorial, in tribute to each of the men whose lives were lost."

In the photo on page 4, Annette touches her uncle's name, moments after she had laid a white rose in his honor. [Photo by Heinrich Kaiser, *Oldenburgische Volkszeitung*.]

"Markus then spoke in German, telling the stories of how the Air War impacted the typically peaceful area of Dinklage and what eye witnesses had told him about the last moments of El Lobo. Following this, a trumpet sounded the somber notes of *Taps* and its German counterpart, *Ich Hatt' Einen Komraden (I Had a Comrade)*.

"The group then proceeded to the Vila Vita Burghotel for discussions and refreshments. This was a delightful affair with the gathering reviewing photos of El Lobo, the crew, and other historical photos and documents.

"This led to discussions both in English and German about the events on April 29, 1944. Even more fittingly, this was a tribute to the ties between America and Germany that sprang from the ashes of World War II.

"More so, it was a tribute to what Robert Franke tried to do with the Memorial, making it more expansive than just a dedication to one American crew, but rather to all lives lost due to the Air War in the local area.

"There were many fascinating conversations, most especially with the trumpeter. He spoke about how he put his whole heart and soul into *Taps* and *I Had a Comrade*. He had an older brother who died in a training accident with the Luftwaffe during WWII. Also as a very young child during the War, he and his mother were victims of a strafing attack by the RAF while walking down a country lane.

"The Ceremony could not have been more moving. The most beautiful part was Germans and Americans gathering together to honor the memory of the lives lost on April 29th, but also as a tribute to the sacrifices made by so many to make such an event possible."

In her speech, Annette wanted to give attendees a sense of who the 10 men named on the memorial were as well as the family connections many of them had to Germany:

"The pilot, **Bert Wyatt**, was just 20 years old. He was the only married man and learned that his wife was pregnant before he went overseas. Their son was born on September 13, 1944, just two days before his wife was notified that her husband was not missing, but had been killed.

"The copilot, **Aubert Tufts**, was the second oldest, at age 28. He was from a small family, with just one brother.

"My uncle, **Douglas Franke**, was 21 years old. His grandfather was born in Brandenburg, Prussia, and his grandmother in Pomerania. They and many other Franke family members came to America in the 1880s and settled in Minnesota, where his father was born. Doug, Dad and their two other brothers thus grew up with relatives who spoke German.

"My father saw his brother Doug for the last time on September 17, 1943, which was also Dad's 18th birthday. Dad was in the US Army Reserves, studying at the

University of Kansas, when his brother Doug unexpectedly walked into his room. Doug was in his Army Air Corps uniform and had been commissioned a Second Lieutenant and Navigator the day before. After this major milestone, he was granted ten days leave. While traveling from his training base in Texas to Minnesota to visit his parents, he made the detour to Kansas to see his brother.

"Dad vividly remembered how proud he was of his brother and how impressive he looked in his brand new officer's uniform with his navigator's wings and shiny Second Lieutenant insignia. This visit shows that Doug was a good big brother.

"Today, I am wearing navigator wings that belonged to Uncle Doug. They were among his belongings at Wendling that were returned to his family after his death. They may be the same ones Dad saw in 1943. [Annette admits that she teared up as she said this!]

"**Byron Hassett**, age 25, was the engineer. He was a substitute on the Wyatt crew and had not flown with them before.

"The other substitute was 22 year old nose gunner **William Womer**. On March 6th, while flying with his regular crew—2/Lt Dallas O. Books'—frostbite affected his hands. He was still recovering when they were shot down on March 18. Nine of the 10 men in the crew were killed, including the person who took *his* place that day. After his hands healed, William resumed flying combat missions as a substitute, including one other mission with the Wyatt crew.

"Radio operator **Robert Monroe** was the youngest man on the crew, being born 4 months after the pilot. Both of his father's parents were from Germany.

"Gunner **John Sorrells** celebrated his 21st birthday just eight days before his death.

"Waist gunner **Robert Thompson** was 23. He took a Bible with him on every mission. His older brother Conrad was killed in action on June 5th, 1944, while serving with the US Army in New Guinea. One of their grandmothers was from Germany.

"Gunner **David Harbaugh** was the oldest man in the crew, aged 29. His younger brother Wayne told me that David was an excellent shot and when he graduated from gunnery training in Harlingen, Texas, he had set a new record for the best scores ever achieved at that school.

"The tail gunner, **Alfred Archambeau**, was 22. His older brother John had become a Prisoner of War on November 23, 1943, while serving with the US Infantry in Italy. He was held at Stalag 2B, which was located near what was then Hammerstein, Pomerania."

The memorial's inscription is in German, but an English translation is, "On 29 April 1944, a Liberator bomber from the 392nd Bomb Group named 'El Lobo' crashed in the Castle Forest near here. All ten members died and were individually buried in the Forest Cemetery in Vechta.

[Their names are then listed]

"This memorial is placed here to honor those ten fliers and the many other Allied and German fliers, soldiers, and civilians who died in this area as a result of the air war over Germany 1939-1945."

See NEWS on page 9

BAD PENNY from page 1

the needle on the directional indicator to an accurate return heading of 170 degrees. At 5,500 feet, we broke through the clouds and marveled at the beauty of the early morning sun lighting the tops of the turbulent clouds.

After assembly, we headed our B-24s to the coastal departure point, making scheduled turns where other squadrons joined the long line of departing bombers. The B-24s tracked out over the North Sea passing Heligoland. Near Kiel we turned to the southeast assuming a heading toward Berlin. This turn was to throw the fighters off course and make them think the target for the day was Berlin. As we were making this turn, the Wings changed formation and split into squadrons in trail—sixteen B-24s per squadron. Soon after this maneuver, we made a turn to the northwest that put our airplanes on course to bomb the oil refineries at Hamburg.

The antiaircraft guns at Hamburg were not firing at individual aircraft, but instead were set up to fire in predetermined grid blocks over the target we were to bomb. They would wait until a complete squadron was overhead and fire into their assigned grid. This type of firing made a large block of smoke and fire over the target. For a moment, an entire squadron would vanish in the thick, black blanket of smoke.

But the moment didn't last long. Planes would disrupt the layer of smoke as they spun out of formation or blew up before us. With each squadron, we anxiously counted the B-24s that would fly free of the smoke on the other side of the target. Ten, eleven, maybe twelve planes from each squadron survived the flak barrage. The sky was filled with parachutes descending airmen into uncertainty. As many as 40 to 60 men per squadron made the jump.

[Despite this dire picture, only one 392nd BG crew was lost of the 26 that went over the target. 2/Lt James H. Beatty's crew was shot down; radio operator Sgt Earl J. Berquist bailed out, but was apparently killed in action. Engineer Sgt Stanley C. Zybort was badly injured in the aircraft and was taken to a POW hospital immediately after he was captured. In mid-November, doctors amputated his left leg due to gangrene they could not cure. He was repatriated to the US in February 1945.]

We now approached with a vivid picture of our near-certain destiny. I was so overcome by this skyline display of death and destruction that I vomited into my oxygen mask in the cockpit. My copilot had to take over for a few moments as I cleaned up the mess, repositioned my mask and steadied my nerves for the task ahead.

We entered the flak storm over our target and were immediately tossed by the severe turbulence created by the exploding 88-mm flak. The Bad Penny was bathed in brilliant flashes of light and peppered with exploding shells. She rocked and shuddered with the jarring impact of every burst.

The biggest jolt came when the number one engine was blown off. We rolled hard to the right and it was all that my copilot and I could do to right our B-24. Not long after, a second blast stripped the cowlings and supercharger off engine number three on our right wing. An engine oil fire created an expanding plume of white smoke that trailed

our aircraft.

But even at half-mast, our Bad Penny was determined to get us home. As the airmen had been dislodging the bomb and closing our bomb bay doors, Herbie and I had been carefully watching our descent. We had dropped from 22,000 feet to 18,000 in our recovery process. After calculating our ground speed and rate of sink, we estimated that we would probably cross the English coast at about 1,900 feet. This would allow us to go the remaining distance inland to Wendling—home.

There were a lot of "ifs" involved, though. Because of this, we decided to lighten the load and improve our chances. Anything loose was thrown out of the aircraft. Flak vests. Flak helmets. Machine guns. Ammunition. Cameras. Aircraft manuals. Bombardier James Taylor had a few choice words to say about his binoculars going overboard.

The Bad Penny strained to hold altitude while her engines—the two that had survived the attack—were running extremely hot. I continued to be amazed that our number three was hanging in there. She was running, but without cowlings and supercharger. Then, out of the blue, she kicked in with enough additional power for us to cross the English coast at 1,400 feet. I had never dreamed of flying a B-24 on two and a half engines and with a full crew across the North Sea.

When we identified our landfall, Herbie gave us a heading for Wendling. We broke out the red flares and were standing by to shoot them off as we neared the base.

Our problems were not over yet, though. Our electrical system and hydraulics were inoperative. This meant we had to manually lower the landing gear. If we lowered it too early, the gear would create too much drag and cause us to fall short of the landing field. So we worked out the timing as best we could and started to crank when the base came into view. Herbie and our bombardier unlatched the nose gear and with the help of Fitz, pushed the nose gear out. It fell in the locked position.

In the bomb bay, the flight engineer organized the gunners into a team to crank down the mains (landing gear). I put the gear handle in the down position and gunners took turns on the crank. Since the bomb bay doors weren't fully closed, they again used the parachute harness lifeline when lowering an airman into the bomb bay to turn the crank. When an airman would slip or be thrown off balance by the force of the wind blowing in through the doors, the others would pull him to safety with the makeshift line.

After many more turns than the 71 defined in the manual, the gear locked into place. We were at 500 feet on the downwind side of the runway. The airmen fired our red flares to announce our arrival.

Just when we thought we were home free, Mother Nature dished up one more challenge. Since the Bad Penny had been at high altitude for hours, her surfaces were extremely cold. This caused our forward glass on the nose and windshield to ice over during our descent through the moist air near the ground. I had to peer out the open side windows to judge height and direction. With some divine assistance, I was able to hold our aircraft steady as she settled onto the runway. With no hydraulics and

See BAD PENNY on page 7

BAD PENNY from page 6

consequently, no brakes, we rolled the entire length of the runway before the Bad Penny came to a stop.

I had ordered the crew into crash positions before landing. Everyone was somewhat dazed with the realization that we were safely on the ground. I had to shout to them to get them to quickly exit the aircraft and run to a safe distance. The Bad Penny was primed to blow at any minute.

According to procedure and to prevent imminent fire, the copilot and I shut down the cockpit and then scrambled down, through the front of the bomb bay and out onto the open tarmac under the right wing. There we found our entire crew, ignoring instructions to flee, waiting for us to make sure we could get out. Once again, I had to motivate them to hurry away from the aircraft!

They were off like a shot. The copilot and I were close behind. At a safe distance, we turned and looked at our Bad Penny. Her tires were flat. Gasoline was dripping from her battered fuselage and wings. Her pain fell to the tarmac with each drop of ice melting from her aluminum skin. Tubes, pipes, broken metal fairings hung down in tangled disarray. Her once overheated engines now crackled and popped as parts began to cool and shrink. This valiant bomber safely brought us home. But she would fly no more.

My crew was checked over at the infirmary and all were unharmed. I, on the other hand, had been wondering what I would find under my flight vest. I had tried to ignore the pain that was wildly spreading across my side during our return trip, but suddenly it seemed to grow more quickly now that we were on the ground.

After removing my flight suit and flight jacket, we found a piece of flak embedded in a steel plate in my flak jacket. It had bent the plate and severely bruised my side, but beyond that, I was uninjured. Today, touching that steel plate with its embedded flak is an instant reminder of all the events that attempted to end Mission 23 that day in August.

The following day, we returned to the Bad Penny to tell her goodbye. We counted 85 holes in her fuselage from nose to tail. Her number one engine was somewhere in Germany along with pieces of the number three. The hole in her left wing was large enough to lower a man through.

My crew and I always felt that the Bad Penny shed her own blood to save ours. We are certain that she was running with a power far greater than the lift in her wings to carry us safely home.

2/Lt H. Bruce McClellan's story of The Bad Penny

Note: Despite Maris's gloomy prediction, The Bad Penny was repaired and flew several more missions before finally being damaged beyond repair on 11 Sep 1944 with 2/Lt H. Bruce McClellan's crew onboard. His account follows; it has been lightly edited.

We took off shortly after 7:30am for Hannover, Germany, knowing that we were in for a tough day but not knowing that the Luftwaffe intended a major defensive effort. As navigator, [2/Lt Elmer E. Havel Jr] kept a detailed log. At 11:55 he noted, "fighters—ME-109s". At 11:56 he wrote, "Leaving formation—3 big planes spinning."

The Group's Combat Mission Diary reports: "From the

578th in #358, Lt. H.E. Jones' crew was last observed at 11:55 hours near Koblenz with a stabilizer and pilots' canopy shot away, peeling off with no chutes seen. In another 578th ship, Lt. C.A. Rudd in #466 "Ford's Folly" was last seen over Koblenz at 11:58, hit by fighters with #3 engine on fire after which the entire bomber was engulfed in flames, spinning in and crashing with no chutes. In aircraft #593 from the 579th, Lt. F.W. Haines was also seen at 11:55 under attack but no other information was known about the fate of his crew."

I am absolutely terrified. The attack is like the frightening burst of a sudden thunderbolt on a menacingly humid summer's day. From radio traffic I know that there are "bandits" in the area. Twenty to thirty ME-109s are probing the bomber stream for prey. We see nothing. Suddenly the waist and tail turret guns begin firing. The intercom jabbers with fear. Gunners scream directions to one another. Spent cartridges stream out of the other planes in our formation. We are under heavy fire from fighters.

In a curious way, which I do not in the least understand, my consciousness becomes what I can only describe as schizoid. Panic seizes the surface of my mind. The number two engine is hit and falters—RPM erratic—oil pressure wobbles. Prescribed procedure when losing an engine, feather it to prevent its acting like a brake, like going down a steep hill in low gear in a car. There, I've feathered it. What next?

Judson Markle calls from the waist to say that Bob Tollok has taken a 20mm shell in the rear turret. Wonderful, cheerful, happy Bob Tollok is in deep trouble. We take another hit on the trailing edge of the left wing. The flaps are torn up like a twisted cigarette package about to be discarded. At least the shell misses the wing fuel tanks.

And in another part of my mind, maybe it's time I make a bargain with my Maker. Save my life now, and I'll give the whole of it to You after this is all over. Those Old Testament pictures from the Sunday school book come to mind.

But you don't bargain with your Maker. That's beneath His dignity—and yours. Forget it and get on with it. The Lord helps those who help themselves. He asks you to be meek like a dove but also wise like a serpent. Get on with it. He doesn't seem to have much to do with all of this, anyway.

It's pure chance. Some get hit. Some don't. Who can tell if your name is on that piece of shrapnel or 20mm shell? Who can tell what control cable will fray and snap, what electrical circuit will short out. Why does that ME-109 pilot train his sights on this group, this squadron, this three plane element? Two of the three planes are already gone in the space of a few minutes. Jones peeling off, canopy gone and #3 engine on fire, no chutes. Rudd in flames. All like a newsreel seen from my own capsule of space and time. There's no way to make sense out of it all.

Jud reports that John Pearson, his companion at the waist guns has a bad leg wound. The attack is still on. With a staggering jolt the #1 engine breaks away from the wing. Left with only the two starboard engines at full power there's no way we can keep up with the formation. Again and again and again and again it has been drummed into

See BAD PENNY on page 8

BAD PENNY from page 7

us that a plane which leaves the bomber stream is a dead duck. A lone bomber cannot escape fighter attack, and the enemy is bound to pick off crippled planes limping out of Germany towards England.

Elmer's log notes: "11:56 Left Formation." I ask Elmer, "Pilot to navigator, what course home and how far is it?" Because we have lost our oxygen supply, we must lose altitude rapidly.

"Wait a minute," he replies, "I'll have to figure that out." His voice is calm; his response is matter of fact. Clutching that one straw of sanity and discipline I tell myself that my panic won't help anyone. For the moment we are not under attack. But what do we do now to limp our way back to England? Radio operator Don Kingston goes back to the waist to help Jud Markle cope with Bob and John. They pull Bob from his turret, give him morphine, and report that he has suffered a massive abdominal wound and is not likely to live. John's leg wound is serious but not life threatening, and a tourniquet stops the bleeding.

We are at 13,500 feet, headed generally west and barely able to hold our altitude even though two of our three working engines are at take-off settings. How long will they last, I wonder? They're not built to take full manifold pressure and RPMs for long periods of time. We can only hope and reduce the strain on the engines by jettisoning everything movable. First of all, the bomb load. The ugly 250 pounders land without rhyme or reason somewhere in western Germany. Do they blow up pigpen, a Town Hall, or someone's lovely grandmother? We'll never know. Pure chance.

Pure chance again. Jud shouts from the waist that two fighters are diving towards us. We have been so preoccupied with taking care of the wounded and keeping the plane airborne that we have almost forgotten about combat. Now it is bomber against fighters—and we all know the odds. We are the likely losers.

The German pilot must aim his guns by establishing the trajectory of his plane on a path which makes us his target. Away from the formation, we can turn sharply towards him as he tries to set up a firing run. Even a pigeon is tough to catch if his flight path is unpredictably erratic. We evade several passes. Perhaps they were inexperienced pilots

or were just tired and on their way back to base without much fuel to fool around with. Jud Markle gets in some bursts from the waist guns, and Elmer Havel sees smoke pouring from one of the FW-190's engine nacelles. The enemy breaks off the engagement, and we get to claim a "probable."

We breathe a little easier because it is now 12:20 and the odds of making it back to England seem to be improving. But I worry about the engines. If the starboard engine quits, we shall have to bail out. Over the intercom I tell everyone to buckle on their chute packs as a precaution. If we lose power and the plane goes into a spin, centrifugal force may pin us down so that we will be unable to reach our chute packs. Only the pilots use seat parachutes.

John Pearson, drowsy from morphine and stretched out on his back in the waist, sees Jud reach for his chute and cringes with the thought that we may leave him on board an abandoned plane spinning down to a fiery crash. Sensing his desperation Jud puts his own pack down on the floor of the waist compartment and tells John that we won't leave without him.

The Channel is in sight. And then we spot Manston, an airfield with a jumbo runway perched on the coast of England for just such an emergency as ours. Hardly daring to believe that we're going to make it, we let down with great care. If we undershoot the runway, we won't have the power to pull up. If we overshoot, it will be impossible to go around for another try. Our straight-in final approach will be "final" in two senses. We have been losing altitude foot by foot for the last hour as we have nursed the engines along. I am certain that the plane will be "Category E," will never fly again. Flares tell the tower that we have wounded aboard. Because one of our tires is flat, we hobble to a stop.

Ambulances and fire engines race up beside us. As the medics climb into the waist to do what they must do for Bob and what they can do for Jud and John, ground personnel crowd about the fuselage peeking ghoulish looks through the gaping shrapnel and 20mm holes. I become irrationally angry and chase them away. Bob Tollok's mutilation and death, John Pearson's ripped up leg and Jud Markle's superficial wounds have created blood bonding which is very deep and very private. I want no gaping sightseers

to profane the experience we had shared. Our touch down had been at 14:16, almost seven hours after take off. An eternity—at least enough of an eternity for a lifetime.

Note: In its "Detailed and Evaluated Report of E/A [Enemy Aircraft] Encountered" teletype, the 392nd BG said, "Mention should be made of an unknown P-51 pilot who accompanied one of our crippled ships back (a/c 764), but ran out of gas and bailed out somewhere over the continent." It seems, then, McClellan *did* have help from above during his flight home...



This photo of #42-94764, The Bad Penny, taken at Manston, attests to the ferocity of the German fighter attack that resulted in Cpl Tollok's death.

NEWS from page 5

Normandy, France

On the 80th anniversary of D-Day, we honor those who never got to the beaches, those who never got off the beaches, and those who moved forward from the beaches. You are not forgotten.



Beeston

Brian Parke, son of Beeston's long-time witness to Crusader history Ernie Parke, recently emailed, "Around 2006 I restarted Beeston cricket club at Beeston playing field and we

nicknamed the club the Crusaders in honour of the airmen who flew from the airfield."

He then asked "if we could use the Crusader sitting on the bomb as part of our logo/badge as we are having a board put on the village hall, welcoming others to the home of Beeston cricket club and would love to be able to put the logo on it, as a lot of the players from our club were born in Beeston and know of the history behind it."

392nd BGMA President Ralph Winter gave a quick and enthusiastic yes. So, as you visit the Beeston Village Hall or attend a cricket match at the playing field, keep an eye out for this emblem. You'll be seeing the past connecting with both the present and the future!"

Several Friends and members let us know that the turkey sheds (originally installed by turkey king Bernard Matthews) have been removed from the runways. See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563692720350729/search/?q=turkey> for photos showing how wide the runways were!

MEET AND GREET from page 3

S/Sgt Gail D. Cochran on 2/Lt Ray D. Johnson's crew in the 576th. Jonathan Bobby's uncle, copilot 2/Lt Dwight L. Turner on 1/Lt William F. Usry's crew, was killed on 29 Jan 1944 when Usry's and 1/Lt James N. Taylor's planes collided during form-up. Taylor and his crew had flown

eight missions with the 392nd before being transferred to the 482nd BG sometime after 14 Oct 1943. Maj Clyde T. Gray, 576th Sqdn, was flying with Taylor's crew as Command Pilot. All ten men on Usry's crew were killed, as were eight of the 11 men in Taylor's plane.

Philip Brazier reported that the turkey sheds on the runways are being removed. He speculated that the runways will be broken up for aggregate.

In a discussion of how to find information on relatives who fought, Ted Dudziak said that <https://www.findagrave.com/> serves as a good source; there is a section for the 392nd Bomb Group.

What followed were random embarrassing stories of car rental/driving in England.

David Poppel reported on a personal project that is almost complete: he has gathered mission sheets from www.b24.net, and on the anniversary of each mission, sent a letter to each crew member with the intention to leave a record for their family. His father was interned in Switzerland; George Abbott White chimed in that the conditions of internment were not good. The Swiss shot down some US planes; the internees were housed in hotels/ski resorts. Dennis Harrell concurred; the Swiss did shoot at US planes, probably because they "accidentally" strayed over the border and dropped a few bombs. George continued that the Swiss were not as neutral as they claimed to be; a sewing machine factory in Zurich was reportedly retooled to make weapons for the Nazis. Someone mentioned that Myron Keilman wrote extensively on the website about the bombing of Switzerland (it's at <https://www.b24.net/stories/Keilman5.htm>).

Bob Books mentioned that one-third of the airmen were casualties of some sort; either KIA or POW, regarding the question of how many survived 35 missions. He also mentioned that anyone interned in Switzerland and escaped to Allied territory was not allowed to fly again because of knowing the escape routes.

New Orleans reunion information in September was reviewed.

Each M&G is unique. There are always first-timers, old timers, and conversations that go in many interesting directions. Please join us on Saturday, July 20, at 1:30pm EDT. Ralph will email the Zoom link a few days in advance.

Hope to see you there!

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member, spouse or Friend 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

In Retrospect: Fortress vs Liberator

This article by noted aviation expert and 8th AF historian Allan G. Blue is reprinted in its entirety from the Spring 2000 issue of the Second Air Division Association Journal. The "editor's notes" are Journal editor Ray Pytel's. While it will not settle the question of which heavy bomber was better, it does provide an unbiased analysis of their wartime performance.

The following appeared in the *American Aviation Historical Society Journal* in 1963. In seeking permission to reprint it in the *2ADA Journal*, we asked the author if he felt any changes should be made for the year 2000. The reply was, "Not a word."

The much-debated question of which was the better airplane will probably never be settled—nor is this article directed toward that issue. Rather, the following data have been compiled to allow a side-by-side comparison of the tangible contributions of each airplane toward the victory over Japan and Germany.

The record of the Liberator when thus displayed is, perhaps, of considerably greater magnitude than generally believed. There are several reasons for this. First, the B-17 was world-famous before the war. Caught right in the middle of an internal old Air Corps doctrinal dispute as well as the inter-service struggle for Congressional appropriations during the late 1930s, the plane literally rose to the occasion. Non-stop "mass" flights¹ to South America, plus new speed, load and altitude records during the 1938-39 period made "Flying Fortress" a household word while winning important friends for strategic bombardment aviation.

In fact, the continuing pre-war effort to sell the B-17 was to prove embarrassingly successful. By 1941, probably no other single weapons in the U.S. arsenal had achieved greater public identification as a symbol of American war power. Thus when the conflict did come, all eyes were on the Fortress, expecting miracles. The miracles came, of course—a few at first (some fact, some fiction) and many more later on. Without question the B-17 ultimately repaid the public in full measure for the loan of its confidence. But the Air Force (and Boeing) had gambled and won with the B-17, and it is understandable that those who had opposed the airplane so bitterly were not allowed to forget it for the duration.

Finally, B-17 predominance in the public eye was perpetuated by a great deal of post-war literature aimed at a rather strange human characteristic—i.e., we seem to prefer reading about our country fighting against heavy odds, possibly losing, rather than vice versa. And without question the Fortress had the major role during the somber days of 1942 and, at least against Germany, much of 1943.

The Liberator, on the other hand, went through no such pre-war love affair with the public. By the time of its operational debut, there was no longer a need to glamorize the four-engined long-range bomber, no restriction on the availability of dollars to buy them. In perfect complement with the B-17, the B-24 was built, flown and fought with a minimum of fanfare. And with the exception of Ploesti, its wartime record—which includes some of the classic missions of all time—has remained remarkably unreported

in popular print.

By an interesting coincidence, the ratio of the B-24 to B-17 production was very nearly the same as their model designations: 24 to 17. However, Liberator deliveries to the USN and the United Kingdom reduced considerably the availability of this plane to the USAAF, so that the average monthly wartime inventory of the first-line aircraft was a relatively close 9:8 in favor of the B-24 (3016 to 2672).² On the average, however, 43.6% of all available first-line B-24s were assigned to combat theaters while the equivalent B-17 figure was a somewhat lower 41.5% so that in 86 months of enemy-opposed operations (41 vs Germany, 45 vs Japan) Liberators represented 53.7% of all AAF heavy bombers committed to combat, Fortresses 46.3%.³

The operational records of the two aircraft in the European war are readily available, including the number of sorties airborne and the tons of bombs dropped by each.⁴ Evidently similar data were not kept for the campaign against Japan; at least none have been located to date by this writer. However, comparable figures have been approximated from available data as follows. For each month in each of the four Pacific combat theaters⁵, the ratio of first-line B-17s to B-24s (known figure) was applied to the number of sorties airborne (known) and the tonnage of bombs dropped by heavy bombers (also known). Although this represents a theoretical total of several hundred calculations, the required figure is much less in as much as B-17s operated in only three Pacific theaters in 1942, two in 1943 and none thereafter. Actually, although it is believed that the obvious errors introduced by this method (e.g., it assumes equal bomb loads for both planes and equal utilization of aircraft on hand) are largely offsetting, they are in fact reduced to insignificance by the size of the 1944 and 1945 totals—all allocated to the B-24 without opposition. The results are shown below.

HEAVY BOMBER SORTIES				% OF TOTALS	
	Total	B-17	B-24	B-17	B-24
Airborne	608,606	295,641	312,965	48.6	51.4
vs Germany	518,283	291,508	226,775	56.2	43.8
vs Japan	90,323	4,133	86,190	4.6	95.4
BOMB TONNAGE DROPPED					
	1,279,413	648,589	630,824	50.7	49.3
vs Germany	1,092,544	640,036	452,508	58.6	41.4
vs Japan	186,869	8,553	178,316	4.6	95.4

The honors could hardly be more evenly divided—the B-24 with a slight percentage edge in sorties and the B-17 with an even smaller lead in bomb tonnage. (The latter difference of 17,765 tons, in fact, is equal to only four days of heavy bomber operations at the March 1945 rate.)³

Another way of measuring the USAAF utilization of the two types is in terms of trained fighting units, capable of engaging the enemy. During World War II, this basic unit was the combat group. Using this index, we find that heavy bomber groups equipped with B-17s were operational a

See RETROSPECT on page 11

RETROSPECT from page 10

total of 746½ months, Liberator equipped heavy bomber groups 807½ months. Again the honors are practically even at 48% B-17, 52% B-24.

The discussion thus far has dealt only with the USAAF usage of the Fortress and the Liberator as heavy bombers. Any overall comparison must also consider the following⁶:

Antisubmarine Operations. Early in 1942 it was recognized that "... the long range B-24 was especially well suited to the demands of antisubmarine warfare, and in September the [antisubmarine] command received the first of the planes that would thereafter become the principal reliance in the AAF's antisubmarine effort."⁷

The Navy evidently agreed, assigning a large percentage of the B-24s (PB4Y-1s) it received to similar duties after the USN assumed responsibility for antisubmarine operations in 1943.

Editor's Note: A total of 95 U-boats were sunk by B-24s.

Transport & Cargo Operations. Caught woefully short of long-range, high-capacity transport aircraft at war's beginning, the AAF again turned to the Liberator and found it "... unusually well suited for transport work. . ."⁸

The plane served in this role throughout the war in a variety of configurations, hauling men and supplies in all theaters. There was only incidental use of the Fortress for similar purposes and, of course, no B-17 production counterpart of the C-87 or C-109.

Photo Reconnaissance. As the F-7 the Liberator ranged throughout the Pacific. Until the arrival of the F-13 (B-29) late in the war, it was the mainstay of a campaign that had become a "seek out and destroy" operation. The Fortress equivalent, the F-9, saw relatively limited use in Europe.

Emergency Rescue. The AAF experimented with a variety

of aircraft for this role, including Navy Catalinas, British Warwicks, Liberators, Fortresses, and Superfortresses. Each type had its advantages, but on balance the range and rugged dependability of the B-24 made it the best plane available. Most emergency rescue crews eventually converted to Liberators.⁹

To sum up, the USAAF had two basically similar aircraft with which to accomplish its WWII strategic bombing mission. It used the two in virtually equal proportion in doing so. In addition it found that one of them—the B-24—was uniquely suited to a variety of other vital roles. In retrospect, it appears that the Liberator was second to the Fortress only in the public relations department.

NOTES:

¹ "Mass" during this era meant six to ten aircraft. It is interesting to recall that it was August 1942 before the AAF was able to put more than ten B-17s simultaneously over an enemy target.

² All Inventory data has been taken from the *Army Air Forces Statistical Digest* (WWII Edition), published in December 1945 by the Hqts AAF Office of Statistical Control.

³ All figures in this article exclude B-29 operations.

⁴ *Flight* magazine, September 1945.

⁵ FEAF [Far East Air Force], CBI [China, Burma, India], Pacific Ocean Areas and Alaska.

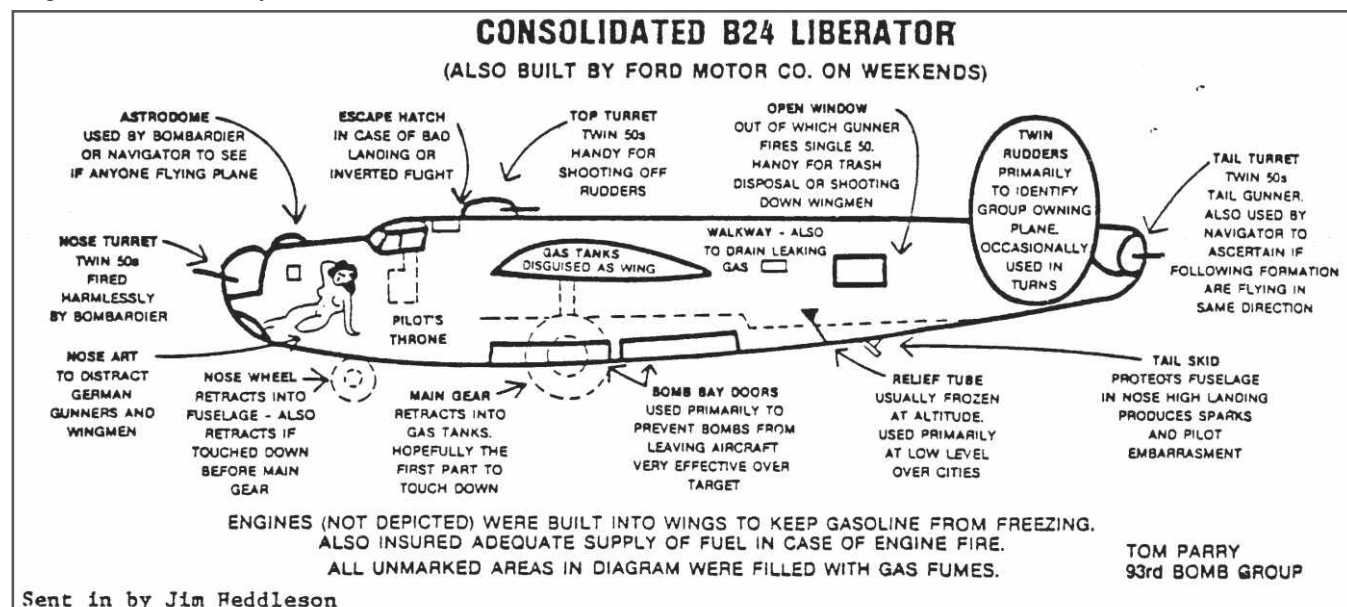
⁶ The YB-40/XB-41 "Bomber Escort" experiment is best excluded; certainly this ill-starred affair added nothing to the reputation of either aircraft.

⁷ Craven & Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. 1, pg. 537.

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. VII, p. 28.

⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. VII, p. 493.

A paper copy of this cartoon was in the 392nd BG's archives folder for the 1995 reunion in Norwich, Norfolk, England. Presumably, it was distributed to attendees there.



This sketch 'lifted' from the September 1991 edition of the Carpetbagger, quarterly newsletter of the 801st/492nd Bombardment Group Association. Our thanks to proper officials of those organizations, plus kudos to Tom Parry, 93rd Bomb Gp, who is presumed mastermind behind the whole humorous drawing.

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

As I write this column on Memorial Day 2024, I see so many tributes to veterans. Some soldiers from WWII are gratefully still with us. Many more are Vietnam and Middle East conflict veterans. All served their country and preserved our freedom and the concept of democracy.

As I understand history, American democracy began as an experiment. The definition of democracy is government by the people and rule of the majority.

This was a unique platform at the time of our forefathers. It was meant to preserve the rights and equality of the poor, the wealthy, the common and the privileged.

Today, the concept and interpretation of democracy is murky and being tested.

We are a young country, but the world still looks to America for guidance and leadership. Are we responding in an informed way and showing a path to equality, freedom and peace?

Hopefully, we will set an example where money and power do not rule, but where the primary focus is on human value... where wealth, arrogance and political gain does not control the will of the majority.

Look to history, as it is very likely to be repeated.

God's Blessings to everyone and enjoy your summer.

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



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

Almighty God, Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in Your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence there to rejoice Eternally. Amen. — Composed by 576th pilot the late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Having received no information about any Crusader who has folded his/her wings since the last issue, this question is asked (and answered):

Do You Know the Difference?

Armed Forces Day, celebrated the third Saturday in May, is to honor those who currently wear the uniform.

Memorial Day, celebrated the last Monday in May, is to honor those who never took off the uniform.

Veterans Day, celebrated on November 11th, is to honor those who used to wear the uniform.