

## 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

# NEWS

Volume 24

March 2009



## TWO CREWS AFTER FRIEDRICHSHAFEN

*March 18, 2009 is the 65th anniversary of the mission to Friedrichshafen. It was the worst of the 285 missions flown by the 392nd BG—14 planes lost, 70 men killed, 49 captured, 25 interned, and 1 who evaded. This article focuses on 20 of these men.*

2/Lt Gerald M. Dalton's crew (577th Sqdn) was on its first mission. 1/Lt John E. Feran's crew (576th Sqdn) was more experienced, having completed 12 missions including Gotha on 24 Feb 1944. While over France en route to the target, their planes collided.

Dalton's ship hit near the village of Le Ployron, France. Feran's ship impacted about two miles away near the village of Domfront.

In his Escape and Evasion Report, waist gunner Sgt Charles F. Payne (in Dalton's crew) wrote that after the collision, he "threw off my flak suit, grabbed my parachute, and reached for the waist window. The plane lurched and I was thrown against the side. The plane broke in two where I was standing, and I fell into space at about 23,000 feet."

Payne was sure he was the only man still alive from either plane.

He landed safely and was quickly taken away by Frenchmen. They "ran me to the village and everybody turned out to greet me as if it were a parade." The men took Payne about a mile farther to a cement water tank 40 to 50 feet high. For the next eight hours, he clung to an iron ladder inside the tank. The French came back that evening, took him to a house and helped him until he was returned to England on 4 Jul 1944.

### French Eyewitness Account

In 1946, Roger Lavasseur of Le Ployron wrote a letter to the mother of Sgt Harner H. Hildebrand, the other waist gunner in Dalton's crew. Lavasseur had been a Lieutenant of the French Forces of the Interior and chief of the local resistance unit. Translated into English, the letter describes the collision and its aftermath:

"Saturday, March 18th, 1944, at one-thirty in the afternoon a large formation of Liberators passed over, flying very high in groups of six. Suddenly for an unknown reason, one of the planes detached itself and telescoped into the plane in which your son was flying. Immediately the two planes fell, rolling over each other. The rudders were torn off, the wings buckled and crushed by being struck by the propellers. One plane appeared to be about to crash on the village but in a last effort, the pilot, using full throttle, succeeded, for some

seconds, in maintaining altitude. But the plane, with its load of bombs and fuel, crashed into the ground at some distance from the town.

"The tanks exploded, the bombs blew up, the plane was cut to pieces, and immediately there arose an immense fire. The other plane crashed near the railroad, 150 meters from the little house where we live. The children and their mother, who were alone, were terrified by the fire and explosions of the bombs which were, fortunately not incendiary, which fact saved them from destruction.

"During this time Payne, who alone had had time to strap on his parachute, jumped.... Upon his arrival on the ground one of my young comrades in the Resistance Movement succeeded in getting him away ahead of the Germans, who arrived rapidly on the scene, and hid him in the water reservoir of the village where he remained until nightfall.

"The Commandant of the German Police Force ordered the Mayor of our village to have the victims buried near their planes. Interposing myself, I obtained, with the support of three young German pilots, a certificate at a nearby hospital which expressed clearly in French the right to bury them in the community cemetery. I obtained, also, upon our promise that all would be ready by one o'clock the following afternoon, the right to place them in coffins and immediately, with the aid of young comrades, we picked up the burned bodies, which we could nevertheless recognize. Only four gunners from the back...without parachutes, fell free of the planes, their bodies remaining intact and unburned. Your son was one of these four..."

See MISSION on page 4

## 392nd Charting Course for Cincinnati

The 392nd's Board of Directors has voted that the official Group reunion will be with the 8th Air Force Historical Society in Cincinnati, OH, from August 18-22.

Crusaders are also invited to attend the 2nd Air Division Association's reunion in Rosemont, IL (a suburb of Chicago), from September 4-7.

Details and registration forms will be posted on [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net) and printed in the June News.

This is a wonderful opportunity for Crusaders of all ages to reunite with old friends and make new ones. See you there!



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Jim Goar

## FROM THE EDITOR

**Please renew!!** When the News went to press, 115 of our members had not yet renewed for 2009. You can renew the old-fashioned way by mailing a check for \$20 and the completed form on page 5 to treasurer Bill McCutcheon. Or, click on the link on the main page of [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net) to renew on-line. You don't need a PayPal account; just follow the directions on the site to pay by credit card.

**Friedrichshafen Mission.** To learn more about the mission on 18 Mar 1944, please read *After the Liberators: A Father's Last Mission, A Son's Lifelong Journey* by William C. McGuire II. The book tells of McGuire's search to learn what happened to his father, navigator 2/Lt William C. McGuire, who was killed on that mission when Bill was not quite a year old. Col Lawrence Gilbert, 392nd CO, says, "McGuire gives a realistic blow-by-blow account of one of the key bombing raids of WWII. More important, ...his very personal story speaks to the legacy of our fighting men." *After the Liberators* was originally published in book form, but Bill has acquired the rights and is making it available in pdf format for just \$10. All proceeds will benefit our website fundraiser. Send your check, payable to 392nd BGMA, to Bill McCutcheon; be sure to provide the email address to which the pdf file should be sent.

**A Question.** My son Dan, a senior at Purdue University majoring in history, asked me to pose a question to our veterans. He wants to know what it was like to be an airman. He's interested in things that only a veteran can tell him: How noisy was it in a B-24? Could you hear flak or 20mm cannon shells explode? How hard was it to breathe with the oxygen mask? What did it smell like? Did your legs shake from the vibration of the plane after you returned from a long mission? In short, what were the sights, smells, sounds, and other sensations of your time in the air. If you can help educate Dan on "what it was like," please send your comments to me and I'll pass them along. If I get enough responses, I'll print an article to educate all our 2nd- and 3rd-generation readers.

**Email addresses.** It has been the policy to print email addresses of our members in the first News of the year. After much thought, I have decided not to do this, because our newsletter is sent to several libraries and museums and there is no way to guarantee the security of the email addresses. If you wish to get the email address of a member or would like a copy of the entire Email Directory, let me know and I'll email it to you.

**Upcoming Story.** I'd like to do a story on crews that had to ditch. If any readers ditched or remember a story told by someone who ditched, please contact me. I want to include first-hand accounts!

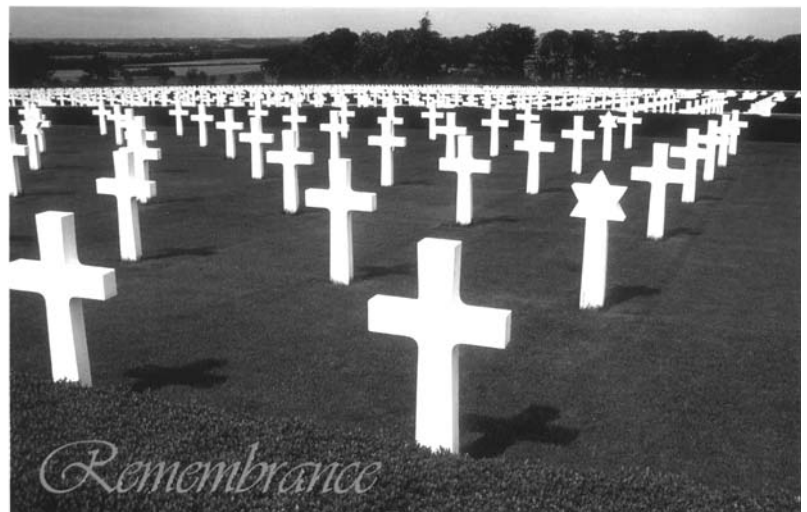
**John Gilbert.** Our representative in England, John wishes all Crusaders a happy new year. He is always very helpful in providing the English side of events, as

can be seen in the article on page 11.

**Memorial Day.** This issue includes several remembrances to fallen comrades.

While serving with the 392nd Bomb Group during World War II, over 870 men lost their lives. 392nd BG historian and 576th Sqdn pilot Col. Robert E. Vickers tried to put this number into some sort of perspective. He estimated that just over 20 percent of our combat airmen—that's one in every five flying Crusaders—lost their lives in combat-connected operations.

This newsletter and [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net) are but two ways that we seek to perpetuate the legacy of the 392nd Bomb Group. Your service to our country, and the sacrifice that so many made on our behalf, is remembered.



# President's Message

As I was collecting news for this message, I discovered something, learned in Church, that I didn't know: the phrase "Rise and Shine" is to be found in the book of Isaiah. I remember the many times in my Army career that I heard that yelled at me, early in the morning.

☆☆☆

What a magnificent feat of airmanship was performed by Chesley Sullenberger and Jeffrey Skiles last January when they successfully ditched an airliner in the Hudson River with no loss of life and no serious injuries. Without subtracting one iota from them, I can't help but note that our pilots made many of these crash landings in WWII. Sadly, they weren't always able to complete the landings without suffering casualties.

☆☆☆

Living in a retirement community, as a lot of us are, is somewhat akin to being in a combat unit in WWII. A person you had a meal with yesterday is gone today.

☆☆☆

I have a few extra copies of the packet recently sent to all Directors and Officers, consisting of updated By-Laws, Directory, and the Minutes of the last meetings. It cost \$15 for preparation and postage. If wanted, please let me know at (765) 652-0941 or 1555 N. Main St., Frankfort, IN 46041 or goar@accs.net. While they last.

## **This Issue's Trip Around the Perimeter:**

**Birdie Schmidt Larrick** is in a nursing home in Columbus, OH, being watched over by son Don and brother John. I spoke to John recently and he reported that Birdie, although now confined to a wheel chair, is comfortable. She recognizes him when he arrives to see her, but soon loses contact. The 392nd to a man loves and admires Birdie and remembers the tremendous service rendered by her at the Red Cross Club at Wendling.

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**Charley Dye, past president of 8th AFHS and 392nd BGMA**, quote from a recent letter: "Helen and I both feel that the 2nd gen are to be commended for their efforts and accomplishments. It is time for we 'old guard' to hand over the flag to the young ones and follow them."

\*\*\*

**Al Lishka (who has changed his name to Lester), 578th pilot:** Al and John Buschman are the only pilots left alive of the twelve 578th crews who deployed to England in July 1943. Al was recalled for Korea, retired as Major, acquired an engineering degree and had a career as an automotive sales manager.

\*\*\*

**Bruce McClellan, 578/9 pilot and noted scholar and educator**, died Oct. 31, 2008. Bruce literally found us on a street corner in York, PA, where he encountered Jim Marsteller, arrayed in his Crusader-emblazoned A-2 jacket.

\*\*\*

**Bill Braddock, RO on the 578th's No. 1 Cliff Edwards crew:** He and Marge are still able to migrate between Minnesota and Texas. Bill is the editor of our Anthology.

\*\*\*

I talked to **Lou Stephens, 578th pilot**, on his birthday Jan. 10. I could write a whole column about Lou, who volunteered for a second tour only to be shot down on #8 of the second. One of the more spectacular feats of his WWII career was a touch and go landing on the parade grounds of West Point. He barely cleared the Commandant's house on the climb-out, and the enraged Commandant got his plane's identity. Lou escaped court-martial by fleeing back to the ETO.

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**Dennis Rogers, 2nd gen Director**, had a bout with the surgeon's knife but now is recovered and sends thanks to all who kept him in their prayers.

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We've heard from **Luc Dewez, the 392nd's Belgian Friend**. Daughters Marie, 10, and Lisa, 5, are doing well in school and by their pictures will soon break many a young Belgian's heart. Luc is recovering well from a hip replacement. He has several books in process, including one about his still living father's "life from 1940 to 1946, a deep insight into Belgium in WWII."

\*\*\*

**John Rumancik, now deceased, was the tail gunner on the 576th's MacFarlane crew.** His son reports that his Dad and Mother went on a tour to Normandy. He wore his A-2 jacket with the Crusader emblem and was treated like royalty by the French in every little town they went through.

\*\*\*

**Harold Bandelier, Hq, was the Colonel's driver.** He lives in Florida and reports a recent pleasant visit with Colonel and Mrs. Gilbert. "He is looking good in spite of being a little older," Bandy says.

Blue Skies,  
Jim Goar

## **Patriot Guard Honors Those Who Served**

"Standing for those who stood for us" is the motto of the Patriot Guard. A national group of motorcycle riders, they honor military service members killed in action and deceased veterans.

Bob Books, son of 579th pilot 1/Lt Dallas O. Books (KIA 18 Mar 1944) and webmaster for [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net), is a member. He says the Patriot Guard seeks to show sincere respect for fallen heroes and veterans, their families, and their communities. Most often, this is done by attending the funerals and honoring the deceased with a flag line as the coffin is brought to and from the funeral service. A motorcycle formation then escorts the deceased to the burial site where Patriot Guard members help with honors there.

Books has attended dozens of missions, as they're called. "When I went on my first mission, there were only eight of us bikers. Now, we often have as many as 150 bikers forming a motorcycle escort over a mile long. Twice, we bikers were the only 'family' present at the funeral. At one of the funerals, we did the graveside honors in addition to the flag line and escort."

**See PATRIOT GUARD on page 9**

### The Burial

"The victims were then placed in the church, guarded by a moved and sympathetic crowd. During this time other comrades dug the grave, for we wished that all should be done by the hands of friends.

"A great crowd came from everywhere and pressed about the church. The Germans charged with the burial were furious. The officers forbade the priest to follow any religious service. The disgruntled soldiers made the crowd draw back, menacing them with their fists. Then they seemed satisfied in perceiving that we, ourselves, would do the burying and left rapidly.

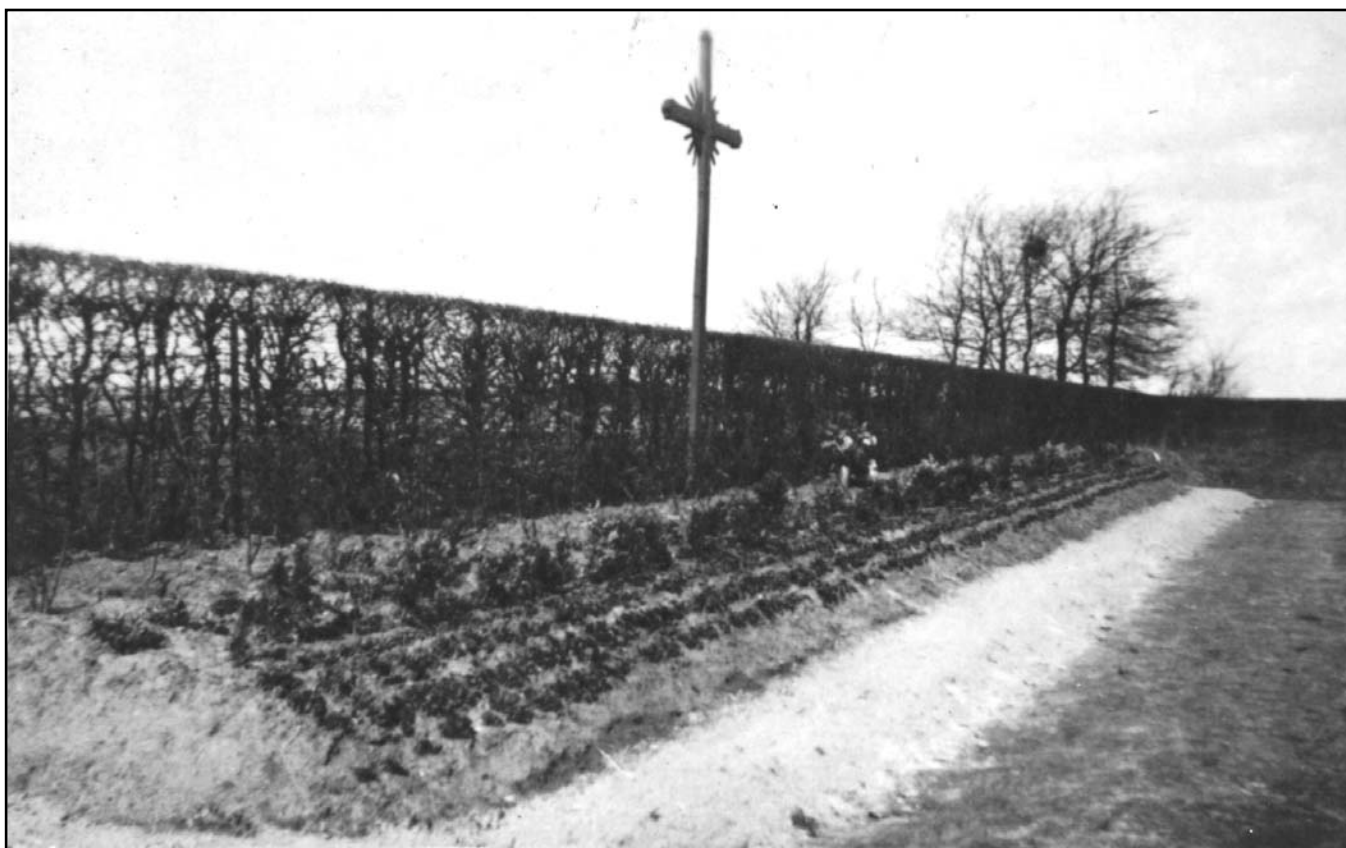
"Even though there were only nineteen victims, we buried twenty coffins. [The translator of the letter then wrote, 'He means to convey here two thoughts: one, the fact that, though wood was one of the scarcest items, they used the

precious material for separate coffins, which they did not do for their own dead, and secondly, that they even used extra wood for the twentieth coffin in order to cover up the escape of the one survivor, Payne.'] Then the crowd covered the tombs abundantly with flowers and after that they were carefully and reverently cared for and decorated by the young men and women of the village.

"...Hoping that my letter will be a source of precious comfort to you in knowing in detail the last moments of him who is dear to you, I ask you to accept, dear Madam, the assurance of my respect and devotion. R. Lavasqueur"

### The French People

Sgt Payne had one suggestion for future evadees: "Have patience and obey the French people absolutely." The villagers of Le Ployron certainly did everything they could for the two crews, both the living and the dead. They risked their lives to honor the Americans who had given theirs.



Twenty graves, lovingly prepared by the villagers of Le Ployron, France (photo from Edward Hildebrand)

## FROM THE HISTORIES

**392nd BG memo, 12 May 1944:** 100 octane gasoline is not to be used for the cleaning of clothing.

**Daily Bulletin, 18 June 1944:** Various quantities of ammunition have been found in rubbish being disposed of by trash details. This trash is being hauled off the station to a rubbish heap and burned and doing so constitutes a serious menace to those working at or within the vicinity of the dump. All personnel will take necessary action to prevent any further practices which allow ammunition to find its way into refuse dumps.

**578th:** On 15 Apr 1945, the ground crews loaded a new

incendiary in the bomb bays of the squadron's Libs. A jelly-like substance, it was carried in 75 gallon containers, generally used as auxilliary fuel tanks for our own fighters. They were carried by nine of the squadron's crews and flown to Royan, France, in the same general area as the day before. Because of the roly poly fashion in which they tumbled from the Libs, results were unobserved.

**577th:** At the close of April 1945, we were alerted and all set to fly food to the starving Dutch, dropping our parachute bundles near Amsterdam and Haarlem, but the missions were scrubbed at the last moment—possibly because the truce attempt with the German Commander could not be worked out.

## GROUND CREW DEATHS

Service in the ground crew was of course much safer than flying combat missions. However, several of the 392nd's support personnel were killed or died in the line of duty. This article details the known ground crew casualties, in order of their dates of death.

### Cpl Fred D. Mathews, 577th Sqdn

On 29 Jun 1943, four crews in the 577th Sqdn went up on a routine instrument calibration flight at Alamogordo. Cpl Mathews, an armorer, hitched a ride with 2/Lt Leander M. Sherman's crew. A powerful rain squall moved in, with gusts to 35 mph. With his plane rocked by extreme turbulence as he tried to land, 2/Lt Sherman lost control and crashed. Cpl Mathews and all but one crewman were killed.

### T/Sgt Walter F. Murray and T/Sgt Hyman Schwartz, 579th Sqdn

On 30 Aug 1943, T/Sgts Murphy and Schwartz were sent to the supply depot at Burtonwood, England, to crew a new B-24 being ferried to Wendling. Also onboard were 2/Lt Eugene V. Maloney of the 578th Sqdn who was serving as navigator and 2/Lt William M. McKnight, apparently on his way to the 392nd to report for duty. The rest of the crew and another passenger were from the 93rd Bomb Group. The B-24 crashed about 1½ miles northwest of Burtonwood, killing all nine men.

In an article in the September 1984 issue of the Second Air Division Association Journal, an unnamed author said Schwartz was from Philadelphia, "about 22, slim and tall and a great friendly smile." Murphy was "from New England, quiet, unsmiling, but congenial—an older man—as much as 26 or 27." After the crash, the article continued, "There was Sergeant Golub with tears in his eyes (he was much older—over thirty) repeating 'Our two best men; our two best men.'"

Their deaths were especially hard to take as "That was before the 579th took its first combat losses—not that there is any special significance in that—they came soon enough."

### Cpl Glynn E. Barker, 578th Sqdn

Cpl Barker, a gas truck driver, was killed on 22 Sep 1943. William A. Braddock, radio operator on the Edwards crew, recalls, "The ground crew was taxiing the airplane; the gas crew had parked their truck and were 'ambling along' on

their way across the field. The ground crew didn't realize how close he was to the walkers and Barker was hit by a propeller. It was getting dusk at the time, probably contributing to the incident."

### Cpl Nevin J. Johnson, 10th StaCompSqdn

Cpl Johnson found a unique way to celebrate his imminent transfer to the paratroops: On 18 Sep 1944, he took part in the re-supply mission to Holland. He was with 2/Lt Sewell's crew when they dropped supplies from an altitude of just 250 feet. About five minutes later, after being hit by German small arms fire, the #4 engine burst into flames. Sewell gave the order to bail out and pulled up to around 1,000 ft. Johnson jumped, as did most of the crew, but broke his leg when he landed. Due to intense enemy activity in the area, no one could reach him before he bled to death.

### Cpl Warren L. Brown, 576th Sqdn

On 21 Jan 1945, Cpl Brown was driving a bomb service truck while the planes were being prepared for a mission under blackout conditions. Due to freezing rain, the ground was icy. Brown drove in front of a B-24 whose crew chief was performing his engine run preflight checks. During this check, power was increased to the engines. What happened next is not known but it is thought that either the truck or plane (or both) slid on the icy tarmac. A propeller struck the windshield of the truck, instantly killing Cpl Brown.

### Capt John B. Byers, 577th Sqdn

The 577th Sqdn Medical Officer, Capt Byers suddenly became ill and died on 15 Dec 1944. He was buried in the U.S. Military Cemetery at Cambridge on 22 December.

### Cpl Edward D. Ferrell, Hq Transportation

During the evening of 3-4 Mar 1945, Cpl Ferrell was a duty driver for the Liberty Run. There had been a squadron party/dance that night and he was one of several drivers who transported women attendees to and from Kings Lynn and Station 118. At 0100 hours on 4 March while the convoy was returning to base via the Kings Lynn-Litcham Road, a twin-engine German intruder aircraft strafed the trucks in a single pass. Cpl Ferrell was killed and a 20mm shell went through the pants leg of 2/Lt Stanley P. Gessell, the Group's Technical Radar Officer. (See related story about strafing on page 8.)

Please look on the mailing label right after your name. *If the number is 08, you need to renew ASAP.* Just \$20 will ensure that you don't miss an issue and that you stay connected to fellow Crusaders.

If you feel that you are in a position to help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, there is a provision for it below.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial difficulty, so if you're in straitened circumstances check the Hardship Waiver box.

Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ground ☐ Air ☐ Unit or Sqdn \_\_\_\_\_

Assoc ☐ If you're joining or renewing because a relative or friend served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Your mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Do you prefer to get the News by email ☐ or by postal mail ☐? (Please check one.)

Hardship Waiver ☐ DONATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_

LIFE MEMBERSHIP  
Age 61-65 \$120 ☐  
Age 66-70 \$ 96 ☐  
Age 71 up \$ 78 ☐

# DO YOU



the Little Friends? These P47s are from the 56th Fighter Group. (photo from Ben Jones)



41-29552? Acquired from the 44th BG, she had been named in honor of legendary University of Minnesota and Chicago Bears football player Bronko Nagurski. Assigned to the 579th Sqdn, her nose wheel collapsed during take-off on 11 May 1944. Aboard that day were command pilot Maj Myron Keilman and 1/Lt Roy Lotterhos's lead crew. Bombardier 1/Lt John B. Rodriguez said she was loaded with 2,600 gallons of fuel and about 6,000 pounds of bombs. He "was the furthest down in the bottom of the nose, and the first one out the top escape hatch." Bronko never flew again. Top photo (from Jim Hammond): 579th pilot 1/Lt Gordon Hammond in front of #552's nose art; notice that Bronko is carrying a bomb instead of a football.



the thin mattresses on the bunks? S/Sgt Woodrow Adkins, 578th Sqdn Ordnance Crew Chief, shows why they were nicknamed "biscuits"—they were thin as an English cookie. (photo from Gary Adkins)



what a feathered prop looked like? This one belonged to 42-52415, Fairy Belle II, flown by 1/Lt Leon R. Pierson's crew, 577th. The European coast is visible beneath the prop. (photo from Lloyd Vandeventer)

# REMEMBER...



seeing Cpl John Taub, 578th postal clerk, do this? He was a circus performer in civilian life. (photo from John Gilbert)



trying to describe the mission to your crew chief?



10/10 undercast?



lining up to use the base telephone? (photo from John Gilbert)



# AIR RAID!

Engineer T/Sgt Gerald Cross recalls the air raid during which Cpl Ferrell was killed: "Our advance notice was the bull horn sounding AIR RAID BLACK AIR RAID BLACK followed by the rattle of gunfire. Everybody left the barracks; some jumped into the icy water of the air raid shelter. Some climbed a tree to see better but those ended up jumping all the way down when an enemy plane buzzed directly over the barracks (I think it was the plane that shot up the truck). S/Sgt John Turrst of Pope's crew and I jumped on our bikes and raced for the landing field. I got in the gun pit and Turrst went looking for another. One plane passed directly overhead but without search lights, it was just a glimpse."

A second strafing attack occurred about two weeks later. Per the 392nd's history, "It commenced about 2115 and lasted for approximately 20 minutes. There were about four twin-engine aircraft in the vicinity, three passes by one of the a/c during which time fragmentation bombs were dropped and 200-300 rounds of 20mm ammunition were fired. Fortunately, only one person was injured, he receiving a slight skin abrasion. However, 8 B-24 a/c, 7 belonging to the 577th, were damaged. Fourteen bomb bay tanks were destroyed by burning and one gasoline truck was slightly damaged."

The 2101st Engineer Aviation Fire Fighting Platoon, under the direction of Sgt Paul E. Turner, extinguished the flames in about 15 minutes.

42-95151 (Monotonous Maggie) was badly damaged, 42-50390 and 42-95040 (Silver Streak) were reduced almost to salvage, and 42-50901 (Wimpy's Queen) and 42-51238 (Little Joe) were slightly damaged.

T/Sgt Cross said there was more warning of this attack, as the bull horn blared AIR RAID YELLOW. "They beat us to the line the first pass but some of us got into the armament shack which was on fire and filled with smoke. The distant rattle of guns meant we were next. The planes dropped a flare parachute and it was followed by frag bombs. Not making it to my own plane, #040, was lucky as it was all shot up with a baseball-size hole through the back of my turret seal. It was badly damaged and out of commission for about three weeks."

The 579th's history adds that "The surprise element of these attacks resulted in alerting the Station several times during the night, and gave some of us our first view of an enemy plane."



Top photo, the damage to #390 is obvious. Bottom photo, the pilot's side window on #040 was cracked and several bullet holes show in her fuselage. Both planes were repaired and flown back to the US in June 1945.

## FOLDED WINGS REPORT

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

Name of deceased \_\_\_\_\_ Unit/Sqdn \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of death \_\_\_\_\_ Survivors \_\_\_\_\_

Reported by \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The 392nd BGMA is presently engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net). The website contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater memorial to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Jim Goar, 1555 N. Main St. #106, Frankfort, IN 46041

## PATRIOT GUARD from page 3

"Every veteran deserves to be honored," Books says, "and this is one way the motorcycle community shows its appreciation and respect for the veteran's service to our country."

The Patriot Guard stands ready to provide support, but serve only if asked by the family of the deceased. To learn more or to request the presence of the Patriot Guard, see [www.patriotguard.org](http://www.patriotguard.org).

The Patriot Guard began in October 2005 as a way to shield mourning families and friends from protestors.



Top photo, Patriot Guard members provide honors at a funeral. Bottom photo, Bob Books after a recent mission. (photos from Bob Books)

with 30 calibres and the two coming on left fired rockets, one of which put a 2 ft hole in left wing." It was probably during one of these attacks that S/Sgt MacPherson was killed.

Tail gunner S/Sgt William A. Lloyd got credit for destroying one of the fighters. His daughter, Doris Larsen, recently contacted [www.b24.net](http://www.b24.net) and said he was another casualty of the mission. "A phosphorous shell hit him, and the plane lost oxygen. He didn't bleed to death because of the freezing temperatures. His left leg was later amputated above the knee. As you might expect, my Dad's experiences changed his life forever."

### Children's Christmas Party

John Gilbert, the 392nd's representative in England, was one of the "extra" children at the 1944 Christmas party. He says, "The children who didn't receive a gift were told to wait near the Christmas tree. We were a bit worried because we could see there were no more gifts left to give out. After a short while, though, Santa appeared with more gifts in his sack. Our names were called and we went home very happy and with our bellies full. Joy Hammond, who still lives in Beeston, was one of the invited children at the party. She still remembers what a lovely time she had."

## 2nd Bomb Division Instruction 55-5

*Titled "Reports of Combat Missions" and dated 8 Apr 1944, the instruction gave details on the reports that had to be submitted for each mission and when they were due.*

Definitions used in required reports:

Aircraft Taking Off. An aircraft which takes off on any type of combat mission.

Dispatched Aircraft. Any aircraft ordered on an operational mission which crosses a point midway between the point of departure on the English Coast and the projected point of entry into enemy occupied territory will be considered as an aircraft dispatched.

Aircraft Attacking. An aircraft is considered to have attacked a target when it has released one or more armed bombs, or markers, in an effort to destroy or mark it. Lost aircraft unless definitely known to have been lost before reaching the target are to be considered as attacking.

Aircraft Not Attacking. Any aircraft which, having taken off, does not release any armed bombs, or markers, over a target in an effort to destroy or mark it.

Sortie. An airplane sortie is deemed to have taken place when an airplane, ordered on an operational mission, and in the performance of that mission, has entered an area where enemy anti-aircraft fire may be effective or where usual fighter patrols occur; or when the airplane in any way is subjected to enemy attack. Aircraft leaving the formation and returning early to base will not be given sortie credit except upon written approval of the Group Commander. Sortie credit will not be given on diversions unless the formation was actually attacked by enemy aircraft or enemy surface defenses.

For enemy aircraft encounters, the category Destroyed "will cover cases (whether or not confirmation from a second source is available) when (1) The airplane is seen to hit the

**See INSTRUCTION on page 11**

## Follow-ups to the December Issue

### Kiel

The article about the mission to Kiel reported that 1/Lt Thomas F. McNichol's crew returned with gunner S/Sgt MacPherson killed in action. When interrogated, the crew said they had been attacked by four Me-110s that "followed along in rear in contrails until close enough and then peeled off and attacked." These enemy fighters "riddled our a/c

# Tributes to Fallen Crusaders

## TRAGIC ACCIDENT CLAIMS 8 LIVES

On 22 Mar 1945, an experienced crew was involved in a tragic accident. Command Pilot Maj Leonard J. Barnes and Capt Robert B. Grettum, 579th, had led 29 crews on a very successful bombing mission to Schwabish Hall. About 93 percent of the 1,366 bombs dropped had impacted within 2,000 feet of the target. Maj Barnes had reason to celebrate, as the mission was the last one in his second combat tour—43 missions successfully completed so far.

On this day, though, his luck ran out. As they neared the English coast, navigator Capt Robert E. Good readied the flare pistol that would be fired as they approached Station 118. Somehow, the pistol fell from its mount and fired when it hit the deck. That ignited a bag of flares that started other fires. In seconds, the entire forward part of the ship was aflame and the flight deck was filled with dense smoke.

Only 4 of the 12 men aboard managed to bail out before the a/c crashed at Whitehouse Farm, Horstead, England. Barnes and Grettum were among those killed. Another was S/Sgt Gale A. Chatterton, originally the tail gunner on 1/Lt Arthur L. Benson's crew in the 576th.

On 28 Mar 1945, 392nd BG Chaplain Capt Donald B. Clark wrote S/Sgt Chatterton's mother. That late in the war, Clark had undoubtedly written many letters to grieving families.

### The Chaplain's Letter

"I knew Gale quite well and can easily understand your sorrow and loss. He is buried in a cemetery, a quiet, beautiful spot, here in England. I officiated at his funeral... It was a military one and Gale was given full honors. The services

held were Protestant and many of his friends attended.

"I know only too well that words are futile at a time like this, but let me express the sympathy that is in the hearts of all of us who knew him. Sometimes, when grief is shared, it seems to become less intense as it is thinned out among many. This is the case with Gale, as he had many friends here.

"Your son was highly thought of by all in the Group who knew him. Your loss is ours as well.

May your faith be as strong

as I know his was, and may God bring comfort and peace to your heart in this knowledge.

"He served his country and fellow men well, and you have every reason to be proud of him and to cherish his memory as a fine man."

On 17 Apr 1947, Mrs. Chatterton signed the document directing that her son's body be returned to Stillwater, MN,

for reburial. Sadly, she died in June 1948, a month before her son was returned home.

## REMEMBERING A BUDDY

T/Sgt Claiborne R. Maynard was the engineer on 1/Lt Charles R. Rudd's crew in the 578th Sqdn. He was from Durham, NC, and a student in the University of North Carolina when he enlisted in the Air Corps. On 11 Sep 1944, during a mission to Hanover, his plane was shot down. The only survivors were waist gunner S/Sgt Odell F. Dobson and radio operator T/Sgt Roger E.E. Clapp Jr.

They spent the rest of the war as POWs. After his return to the US in 1945, Dobson wrote the relatives of the eight crewmen who had been killed and visited as many of them as he could. His letter to T/Sgt Maynard's family was printed in a Durham newspaper in August 1945.

### Last Mission

Dobson wrote, "We were going northeast toward the target when we were attacked by enemy fighters. Early in the ensuing fight our plane was hit in vital spots, and lost speed and altitude, thereby losing the formation and protection of the guns on the other planes. Finally, with all our control cables shot away, our plane went into a spin and hit the earth, taking to their deaths eight men. Among them was your son Claiborne. He was unconscious when the plane hit the ground."

### Why We Fight

The letter, as printed in the newspaper, ended with this homage to T/Sgt Maynard: "Your son died fighting. No amount of money or praise could have caused him to do the job he did. Some people call it patriotism, but I call it self-respect. He realized that he was fighting for right, for God, for principles

good and true, trying to make your world and mine a better place in which to live...you and I will remember him as an individual, but he has an honored place in history as one of many who made the supreme sacrifice that we and those who come after us might enjoy the rights, privileges, and freedoms of a free people in a land truly blessed of God. No greater tribute can be paid any man."

Dobson says Butch (as they called him) was "always in high spirits. He had a lovely voice, easily as good as Bing Crosby, and could have been a world-famous singer. He especially enjoyed Dinah Shore's music. We'd often be coming back from a mission and someone would say, 'Butch, sing us a song.' Before you knew it, the rest of us would be singing or humming along."



This photo of T/Sgt Maynard was printed in the Durham, NC, newspaper. (article from Larry O'Quinn)



S/Sgt Gale A. Chatterton  
(photo from Mike Collins)

## INSTRUCTION from page 9

ground or sea. (2) The airplane is seen to break up in the air or to descend enveloped in flames. (3) The enemy airplane is forced to descend and is captured. (4) The pilot of a single-seater airplane is seen to bail out."

Probably Destroyed means "believed to have been destroyed" and covers cases "in which the enemy airplane is seen to break off combat under circumstances which lead to the conclusion that it must be a loss, although it is not actually seen to crash."

Damaged means "the enemy airplane is obviously considerably damaged as a result of the attack by our airplane, e.g. cases in which the undercarriage is dropped or engines stopped, or airplane parts are shot away. Damage may be claimed if explosive ammunition is seen to enter the enemy aircraft even though no parts appear to be shot away. Damage will also be admitted if cannon strikes are seen, even though there is no other evidence than that of the strikes."

One word was not defined. "Because of the confusion resulting from the use of the term Abortive, it has been excluded from these instructions."

The directive also required that a report be made of Aircraft Not Attacking. The Groups had to provide a "Detailed description of the reason or reasons why the aircraft did not attack. Where possible, trace the failure back to one or more of the following causes: (a) Materiel or equipment failure; (b) Personnel failure; (c) Circumstances outside the control of the Group, such as weather, enemy action, recall, etc.

Furthermore, "Group Commanders will appoint a board of officers to investigate and report on all aircraft failing to attack. The board will be alerted during missions, ready to meet aircraft returning early and determine immediately the cause of the failure. It will include one of each of the following: Flying Officer, Engineering Officer, Armament Officer and Flight Surgeon. The board will be responsible for thorough investigation and diagnosis of the causes of each failure and the fixation of responsibility therefor. It will recommend to the Commanding Officer the corrective action to be taken in all cases where circumstances of failure were not outside the control of the group."

## CLOSE CALL AT STATION 118

*The story you're about to read is true; names of the Americans have been omitted to protect the guilty.*

On 11 Nov 1943, a 579th Sqdn pilot in a/c 42-7556 was checking his copilot on landings. With the copilot at the wheel, they neared Runway 28, making a short, low approach. Those onboard felt a slight lurch and heard a dull thud in the a/c. The engineer saw no damage to the landing gear, so they circled the field and then successfully set down.

Only then did they learn just how low their approach had been.

English lads David Scottow and Jim Baines had stopped their bikes on the Wendling Road to watch planes land. One spot in the road was directly under the flight path for

returning planes, but the a/c were usually about 50 feet up when they passed above the road.

#556's wheels were virtually touching the ground.

The boys dived in the ditch. "There was a roar as the plane went over us," Jim recalls. "When all was silent again, we raised our heads and surveyed the chaos in front of us. There were two large gaps in the hedge where the landing gear had broken through, wheel marks on the grass border between the ditch and road and about 50 yards of the barbed wire perimeter fence were missing."

They noticed indentations on the ground where the main wheels had hit the ditch bank. The nose wheel apparently went between the boys and they had been neatly straddled by the two main wheels.

They also saw an RAF lorry parked nearby. The English driver, W.R. Beavis, had not seen the plane. He'd stopped his truck only because he saw the boys jump in the ditch. The #4 prop sliced the cab roof on either side of where his shoulders had been.

Both men have vivid memories of their brush with death. Scottow, in particular, often wonders, "What if Jim and I had been in a different position by a matter of a few inches... surely we would have been blots on the landscape. What if



Top photo—The Lib's #4 propeller slashed the truck's roof and did other damage as well. Left photo—David Scottow in 1944. The US military repaired his bike and bought Jim a new one. (Top photo from Kelsey McMillan; left photo from David Scottow)

the lorry had not stopped....he might have seriously impacted the plane, possibly with horrendous consequences. What if the props had been rotating at a different speed...the driver would not have stood a chance. A miracle or just good luck? I have no doubt which it was."



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL  
AT WENDLING**

**But we...shall be remember'd;**



**We few, we happy few,  
we band of brothers.**



**For he to-day that sheds  
his blood with me  
Shall be my brother...**

**William Shakespeare  
Henry VI**

## **CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**

by Tom Perry,  
576th Sqdn Armorer

I have been thinking about the words spoken by Jesus Christ and the following are some of those that have come to be meaningful.

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

"Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7)

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." (John 14:6)

I hope these are meaningful to each of you. God bless you.

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

## **∞FOLDED WINGS∞**

James W. Meyers, 578/7, Sept. 23, 2008

Frank R. Spencer, 579, Nov. 2, 1996

Wiley S. Noble, 3SAD (Watton), Oct. 29, 2008

William J. Wall, Hq, Sept. 27, 2008

Thomas Andrew Damuth, 578, Nov. 30, 1986

Louise A. Bachman, May 21, 2008

wife of Larry Bachman, 577

Anne Collins Mooney Barbee, RAF (Ret), Jan. 20, 2009

wife of Boyce Barbee, 578

John J. Goodwin, 576, Oct. 8, 2008

Henry F. Jurgens, 577, Apr. 24, 2008

Theodore Evans, 577, Dec. 27, 2008

Walter S. "Bud" Brunn, 579, Feb. 13, 2009

Max Desonne, 577, Oct. 31, 2008

Walter S. Meister, 576, Oct. 7, 2007

Robert S. Gardner, 577, Oct. 15, 2008

Alfred P. Rinke, 579, Dec. 10, 2008

H. Bruce McClellan, 578/9, Oct. 31, 2008

Frank S. King, 578, Apr. 23, 1999

Irene Ferdinando, Dec. 25, 2004

wife of Anthony Ferdinando, 576

Joseph J. Amato, 579

Salvatore Traina, 579

Leonard S. Shaw, 577, Jan. 8, 1970

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