

NEWS

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BATTLING THE WEATHER

The 392nd BG never turned back due to enemy action, but weather sometimes proved a foe impossible to overcome. One such mission occurred on 3 Mar 1944.

Mission Plan

The 8th Air Force Force was directed to attack military targets in the Berlin area with maximum force. Per the ensuing plan, B-17s would bomb a large ball bearing plant southeast of Berlin at Erkner and a facility in southwest Berlin that made electrical equipment for military vehicles and aircraft. B-24 targets were He-177 bomber manufacturing and assembly plants 15 miles north of Berlin at Oranienburg.

The 392nd BG would lead the 14th Combat Wing to the Ernst Heinkel plant at Anahof, 2.5 miles west of Oranienburg, where final assembly of He-177s was done.

Eleven B-17 Combat Wings, followed by the three B-24 Wings, were to fly the same course to near Berlin. After separating to bomb assigned targets, they would re-assemble for the trip back to England.

Bombing altitude was 21,000 feet—"as high as possible to minimize the effectiveness of anti-aircraft fire and at the same time remain below the altitude above which dense persistent contrails were predicted." After exiting Berlin, the formations were "to descend to 15,000 feet, cloud conditions permitting, to conserve fuel for the long return flight."

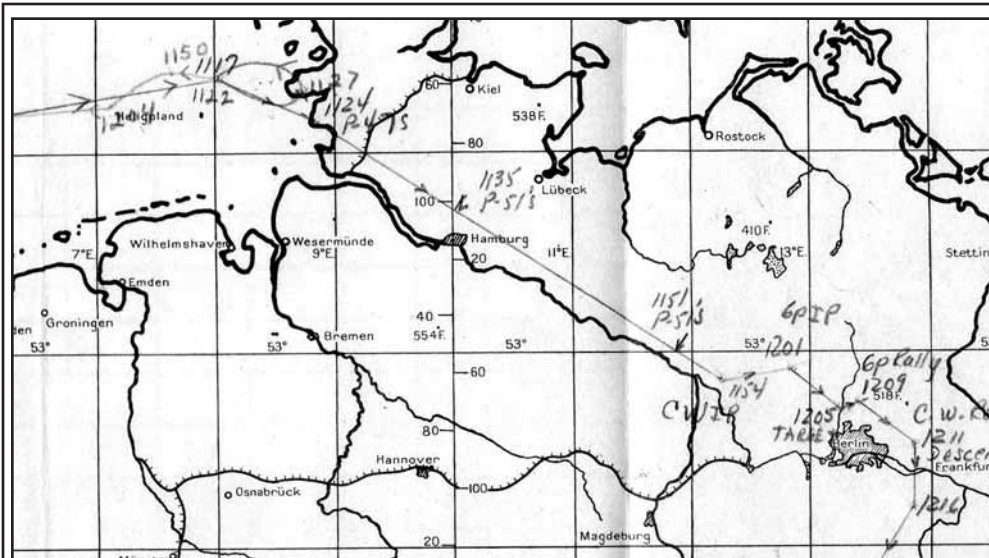
Predicted weather was for 6/10 to 8/10 cloud cover extending up to 20,000 feet over Germany with fewer clouds over France. All available Pathfinder Force aircraft were to be used to permit bombing through this undercast.

8AF Tactical Mission Report

The 8th's Tactical Mission Report noted that all of its

airborne Wings (453 B-17s and 295 B-24s) were affected by “steadily deteriorating weather conditions... Over the Jutland Peninsula cloud tops extended to 28,000 feet and, combined with dense persistent contrails, made formation flying virtually impossible. Consequently, decision was made by the Combat Wing leaders to abandon the operation at various points between the Jutland Coast and the Hamburg area. The bomber formations became widely dispersed

as they turned back, in one instance a Combat Wing of the lead formation approaching the second formation on a collision course with the result that no Combat Wing was intact during the withdrawal and units as small as Squadrons returned independently... All bomber units returned across



This map shows the 392nd's intended route to Oranienburg on 3 Mar 1944 and the point where the main formation turned back near Heligoland.

the North Sea, approximating the reciprocal of the outward route, but with Groups and Squadrons widely separated over a 60 to 70 mile front both north and south of this course."

Bombs were dropped on targets of opportunity by just 75 B-17s and four B-24s. Nine Fortresses and two Liberators were lost.

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392nd Reunion: Savannah in July

The 392nd BGMA will join the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the Heritage League in Savannah, Georgia, from July 22-26. Complete details and registration forms begin on page 8. We hope Crusaders of all ages will make an effort to attend, see old friends (and make new ones), and visit the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Correcting the Record. In the December 2008 and June 2012 issues, I reported that Maj Clinton Schoolmaster, 577th Sqdn CO, was transferred to 14th Combat Wing Headquarters in May 1944 and was killed three days later. His widow contacted me recently to set the record straight. Janet Schoolmaster Engelmann writes that Clint was transferred not to the 14th Wing but to the 95th Wing at Halesworth. In his last letter, dated 21 May 1944, he wrote Janet that a new Wing was being formed there under Col. Dent. Clint was to be Wing Operations Officer, a promotion he didn't want. He preferred to stay at Wendling, as he had served with some of its officers since January 1943, even before the unit was formally established as the 392nd BG. He had only nine missions left to complete his combat tour. Nonetheless, he went. He was Killed in the Line of Duty on 25 May.

Follow-Up. 576th waist gunner Oliver R. "Bud" Guillot became a POW on 29 Apr 1944, his 11th mission in 22 days. He emailed, "I sure enjoyed the March issue of the 392nd BG newsletter. The great coverage you gave about the ground operation and their tireless dedication and long hours keeping our airplanes flightworthy was very interesting. Most of us flight crews were with the 392nd BG such a short time and that time was mostly flying missions or sleeping; we knew little detail about them. We of course knew and appreciated the importance of their jobs but we did not have time to know them well.

"I know things must have changed over time at the 392nd, but when we were flying missions, I never saw a Red Cross person on the base and there were no sandwiches being passed out after returning from a mission before debriefing. There was a doctor standing by the door of the debriefing room who gave each crew member two shots of scotch. Pilot Bill Kamenitsa and waist gunner Jack Krejci did not drink but they never turned down their portion of scotch. They would then carefully and equally divide their portion of scotch with their crew members.

"I only had one sandwich all the time I was in England. It was in a pub and it was an open face sardine sandwich, according to the sign. That's all the food they were serving that night. The sandwiches were already made and were sitting on the bar, uncovered. The recipe: Remove two sardines from the can. Equally space them on one slice of stale white bread. No ketchup or mustard necessary."

June Issue. I am gathering anecdotes about incidents involving bicycles, especially in conjunction with "low level missions" to nearby pubs. Can you help? For example, what's the farthest you ever biked? What pubs did you visit? Did anything unusual ever happen while you biked back to Station 118 after a pub visit?

Do you remember "the great race" in December 1944 when the officers and enlisted men celebrated their 200th mission? Please share your stories!

Folded Wings. Patty Andrews, lead singer in the Andrews Sisters trio and last surviving member, died 30 Jan 2013. They were the voice of the WWII generation. In their thirty-year career, the sisters recorded about 700 songs, sold over 90 million records, and earned nine Gold Records. The trio's classics included *Bei Mir Bist Du Schön*; *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B*; *Don't Fence Me In*; *I'll Be with You (In Apple Blossom Time)*; *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me)*; *Shoo-Shoo Baby*; *Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar*; *Rum and Coca Cola* and *Straighten Up and Fly Right*. According to Wikipedia, the trio had 113 Billboard hits, of which 46 reached Top 10 status—more than either Elvis Presley or The Beatles—and they starred in 17 Hollywood films, more than any other singing group in motion picture history. Older sisters LaVerne died in 1967 and Maxene in 1995.

Reunion. Regardless of whether you can attend the 392nd's reunion, don't be shy about displaying your Crusader heritage! A cap (far right) costs just \$25 for US shipment or \$30 for international mailing. 392nd BG Commemorative coins (left photos) are available for \$13 US shipping or \$15 for international mail. Send your check payable to "392nd BGMA" to Annette Tison, address in box at top left. You may also order via PayPal at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/lit.htm>.



President's Message



When the 392nd deployed to England in the summer of 1943, Maj. (then Lt. or Capt.) Schoolmaster was the Operations Officer for the 578th Sqdn. Later he commanded the 577th and was then promoted to the 95th Combat Wing. Sadly, he was MIA on the first day of duty there. He was lost, presumably over the Wash, while monitoring the morning mission's form-up.

His widow, Mrs. Janet Schoolmaster Engelmann, has been a long-time member of the 392BGMA and has made significant monetary contributions. When the last one arrived recently we decided to name it the Major Clinton Schoolmaster Fund and assign it to the website endowment. The website continues to reach hundreds, explaining in great detail what the men and machines of the 392nd accomplished in WWII. We felt that this assignment would do honor to Maj. Schoolmaster's sacrifice.

On a lighter note: Stan Zybert was a 577th aerial engineer, shot down over Germany and becoming POW. When alive, he was a Director of the 392BGMA and a faithful attendee of our reunions. We used to joke with him about how his name made it certain that he would be near the end of any list. If Stan was Z we have found A in the person of a new member who while not a Crusader is a friend of a couple. His name? Neil Aase.

Elsewhere in this issue will be found information about the 392nd's reunion at Savannah in July. The 2nd Air Division Heritage League, inheritors of the 2nd Air Division Association, is joining with the 8AF Historical Society in organizing their reunions and we are piggy-backing on them.

Please, Crusaders, get to this reunion. If you haven't seen the Mighty 8AF Museum at Savannah, you owe it to yourself. And for me, I'd sure like to see you.

Blue Skies,
Jim Goar

UPDATES FROM ENGLAND

David Parnell, Trustee, Administrator and Caretaker of the Liberator Memorial to 2/Lt John D. Ellis and crew in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, sends some wonderful news. Hertfordshire County Councillor Robert Gordon BEM recently awarded a £720 grant to install flagpoles at the site. David says, "The flagpoles will complete this wonderful monument perfectly and will enhance further our sincere gratitude to not only the ten very brave airmen who lost their lives here in Cheshunt but also to the American people who endured so much on our behalf during WWII."

The 392nd BGMA greatly appreciates Councillor Gordon's generosity and good will. Many thanks also for the kind help and support of his personal assistants Michelle Cowin and Susan Wright.

Doug Willies of Sheringham, Norfolk, emails, "Thank

you so much for the latest Newsletter. The comments on Page 3 are, indeed, appreciated. We were also particularly interested in our old friend George Michel's contribution! George had told the story to us some time ago. Before Celia & I went on holiday to Switzerland in 2006, we advised George that we would be staying in Interlaken. We could easily visit Wengen, if it would help in his quest to identify the family the internees had helped all those years earlier or pinpoint the location of the chalet where they lived. George was enthusiastic & gave us a Swiss contact in Wengen, Herr Lauener, who was already carrying out research to identify the family involved.

"To cut a long story short, we visited Wengen, met the wonderful Swiss gentleman contact who was most helpful & welcoming but who unfortunately had been unable to identify the family concerned in spite of extensive enquiries. However, we photographed various abodes that might have 'rung a bell' for George & also took numerous photos of the general area to remind him of his earlier times there! We took copies of various photos with us that George had supplied during the time we had known him & I gave a photo of George's crew to Herr Lauener (who was a young lad when the Americans were located in Wengen during the War) as I felt he would probably appreciate it. He held it in his hand for several moments & then quietly said, 'We owe them so much...' For a 'neutral' to react in that manner, we felt was deeply moving & also enlightening!

"On our return, we passed on the photos & news to George. He was thrilled to view the photos, he felt that one front door of one of the chalets we had photographed 'rang a bell' but he couldn't be sure! For Celia & me it was a tremendously worthwhile, moving & humbling experience & one that we will never forget."

John Gilbert, 392nd BGMA Director and our representative in England, recently gave Ann Long (daughter of 578th copilot Jesse D. Long) and Mrs. Robin Eaton (widow of 2ADA Governor Thomas Eaton) a tour of the 392nd BG's base at Wendling. We are grateful to the landowners who permit John to escort visitors around their property as they trace their loved ones' footprints. We also appreciate the hospitality shown by John Rupp, Branch Director of Ben Burgess, Beeston, who has frequent visitors to the old Operations Building (where missions were briefed), and by Jagspares, site of the former Combat Officers Mess with its magnificent wall art.

Libby Morgan, Trust Librarian for the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich, writes that the Library would like to stay in contact with the former members of the 2nd Air Division Association. It would be too costly to mail a printed newsletter on a regular basis. However, "if you would like to be kept up to date with Library events, activities and future developments [such as plans for the 50th anniversary], and



receive an illustrated email newsletter from us from time to time, we'd be delighted to add you, or any of your friends and family members to our mailing list. Simply send an email to libby.morgan@norfolk.gov.uk."

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392nd Briefing

392nd crews were advised that their target, the Heinkel factory, "accounts for major share of total production" of He-177s and "represents new capacity." Much snow covered the ground. Balloons were known to be in the target area and a smoke screen was suspected. There was camouflage netting over all the aircraft shelters but five concrete runways would help bombardiers sight the target.

"Large numbers" of single and twin engine enemy aircraft were possible along the entire route and "especially" in the target area. Furthermore, "enemy aerial defenses along the route in are the most mighty and efficiently organized of any." Gunners were warned to "be alert for breaks in [friendly] fighter cover."

Crews were to depart the English coast at 0956 hours, hit the target at 1201 and return to Wendling about 1630, for a total of 6.5 hours on oxygen.

Into the Clouds

The 392nd took off as scheduled—28 aircraft strong—and assembled as directed. Then, their battles with the weather began. Group Bombardier Capt Joseph B. Whittaker later reported, "Upon the climb to altitude extreme temperatures were encountered, some crews reported as low as -55° centigrade [-67° Fahrenheit]. This resulted in many guns and turrets freezing, as well as other troubles brought on by the low temperatures, thus many aircraft were forced to abort. Aircraft were constantly aborting across North Sea and after crossing the enemy coast. Clouds caused some more aircraft to lose contact with main body and returned. The formation turned back at 1130. No enemy aircraft were seen but moderate flak was met over Heligoland."

392nd Air Executive Maj Lawrence Gilbert reported, "The abandon operations signal was given by W/T [Wireless

Transmission] by the formation commander and the proper flare signal was fired."

The Flak Report advised that "a/c did not go over Heligoland in tight formation; rather went over scattered, at various times and at varying altitudes—each and all getting flak from this island when they flew over or near it."

Twelve a/c aborted early due to weather. Their pilots' Abortive Aircraft on Operational Mission reports illustrate the problems caused by the extremely cold weather.

579th Sqdn. 1/Lt Paul F. Shea had frozen guns in the tail turret, oxygen out in the waist and tail, and the left waist gunner suffered frostbite when his heating unit burned out.

1/Lt Gordon L. Hammond: "Ball turret out, tail guns out; waist guns out; left nose gun out; ammunition won't fire." (The diary of navigator 2/Lt John J. Sullivan notes, "With only the top turret working properly, we had good enough reason to abort. We turned back one minute after Lt Shea did. My Dead Reckoning had us north of Heligoland, but Shea's navigator said they were inside the coast. They had a general, Gen Peck, on board, and that probably helped them get credit for the mission. They couldn't very well give them credit without giving us credit for it too. What was left of the group was recalled shortly before they reached Hamburg. They couldn't get over some clouds that went up to 27,000 feet. This kind of deal happened often, with usually no credit for a mission.")

1/Lt James W. Dickson: "Nose turret frozen up (guns & turret), tail turret same. Left ball gun frozen; right waist gun frozen."

576th Sqdn. 2/Lt Burrell M. Ellison Jr. reported that the nose and tail turret froze up while only one gun was working in both the ball and top turret.

1/Lt Edward F. Wittel: "No heating unit working in ball

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label. Your membership status is shown directly after your name. "13" means your membership expires in December 2013. LM means Life Member and FRND means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. You may also join or renew on-line at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/join.htm>.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial difficulty, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box. If you feel that you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, there is a provision for it below.

Name _____ Ground ☐ Air ☐ Sqdn/Unit _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

If a spouse, friend, or relative served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: _____

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

Hardship Waiver ☐

DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

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turret; gunner could not fit in with furs on. Four guns out; nose turret door sprung by slipstream."

577th Sqdn. 2/Lt George T. Haffermehl: "Both tail guns inoperative; one top turret gun inoperative."

1/Lt Lynn G. Peterson: "Right gun frozen, tail gunner's receptacle inoperative [so his electrically heated flying suit and shoes would not work]."

578th Sqdn. 1/Lt Hubert F. Morefield: "Ball turret had fire and burned out. Tail turret would not function."

Ultimately, only about half of the 392nd's crews received credit for the mission. All had been fired upon by enemy flak batteries at Heligoland.

No 392nd pilots reported any enemy opposition, but the weather claimed one 578th Sqdn crew. "Due to extreme weather," 1/Lt Richard E. Smith's crew "was last sighted at time of take-off from Station 118."

Darnell crew

Navigator Alvin J. Stasney, now 92, has vivid memories of this mission. "My crew encountered the thick bank of icy clouds beginning over the North Sea. Unable to see in any direction, our plane crossed another's prop wash and pilot 1/Lt Joseph F. Darnell struggled to regain control, pulling his Liberator out of a steep dive. After this, we became separated from the formation, but continued on towards Oranienburg. Our radio was not working, the result perhaps of temperatures which now plummeted well below the gauge dial limit of -60° F.

"Exposure to these temperatures also began to take a real toll on the crew. One of the complaints about the B24H was the ineffectual padding in the powered nose turret which allowed icy drafts to enter into the crew compartments. Bombardier 2/Lt Frank Richardson manned the nose gun. Noticing that he was not responding to an oxygen check, I pulled him up to the flight deck unconscious, with ice and frost covering his face. My heated flying suit was also malfunctioning and my feet were frozen.

"Nearing the primary target just north of Berlin, Joe found about 500 feet of clear air sandwiched between two levels of clouds. As we looked around, there was not another aircraft to be seen. The entire 8th AF bomber force had been recalled, but we hadn't got the message due to the radio problems.

"At this point we decided to abort the mission and set course for return while descending to a less frigid altitude, taking refuge within those same dense clouds we had previously been cursing. We encountered some flak near Heligoland but safely returned to Wendling—to the surprise of many who assumed we were MIA.

"Upon landing, Richardson and I were immediately transported to the hospital by ambulance. Our crew was not debriefed, so nothing was ever entered into the 392nd Group official records regarding this first American heavy bomber over Berlin.

"We both flew the next two Berlin missions on March 6 and 8. Frank rejoined 1/Lt William G. Sharpe's crew and was killed in action on March 18 in the mission over Friedrichshafen."

2nd Bomb Division

Wing Commanders met later at 2BD Headquarters to

critique the mission. One item discussed was the "prerogative of Group Commanders to scrub a mission in the event of impossible weather conditions at take-off time."

It was decided that "Group commanders have the right to scrub only when in their estimation actual conditions at take-off time are beyond the training and capabilities of their crews. The conditions must be those actually existing at the time, and not anticipated probabilities. Group Commanders will report to this Headquarters by teletype immediately upon taking action to scrub a mission. The report will include details of the facts and circumstance must not be exaggerated but must conform in all respects with records showing conditions which existed at that time. This Headquarters will issue appropriate instructions to Groups.

"Eighth Air Force has agreed to state in the Field Order the relative importance of the mission, in order to give the Group Commander a basis upon which to make a decision in border-line cases as to the degree of risk which must be undertaken."

2BD also commented, "Many [equipment] failures noted due to freezing of condensed moisture in moving parts at high altitude. These failures corrected themselves upon return. No answer to problem of moisture condensation on electrical instruments has been developed."

Editor's note: Alvin can be reached at P.O. Box 379, Crosby, TX 77532, phone: 281-324-3769.

An Almost Routine Mission

This 392nd press release describes one crew during the mission to Bremen on 16 Dec 1943:

"Courage, coolness and skill" are words most frequently used in official citations to describe meritorious action in air battles. Very often this action is of a spectacular sort and deserves all the public acclaim that attended it. But there are, as every airman knows, other actions which though less sensational deserve the same praise. One of these was recently performed by 1/Lt Guy D. Carnine, pilot of the Liberator *Hard to Get* [42-7518]. His story is not, perhaps, the stuff of which most headlines are made, but it is an example of valor, level-headedness and leadership; and it has earned Lt Carnine the recommendation for a Distinguished Flying Cross.

The action occurred on the AAF's recent raid on Bremen. *Hard to Get* fought its way in formation through what seemed to be an impenetrable barrage of flak. It battled off wave after wave of attacks by German fighters. Its bombardier, 2/Lt Wayne E. Byers, knocked down an FW-190. *Hard to Get* cleared the target and headed home.

The crew is one of those well-trained units which functions by routine. Each man took an estimate of his particular situation. The pilot called them to check in. Nobody wounded. No flak holes. Okay—just another mission. No, not quite. The ship's engineer, T/Sgt Nick A. Hopson, reported on the fuel consumption. *Hard to Get* was bucking a 125 mph headwind. The gas was getting low. T/Sgt

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Bail Out and Barbed Wire

Engineer/waist gunner in the 577's Eloranta crew, Dale J. Stephens describes his only combat mission and subsequent time as a prisoner of war.

The Mission

Contrails blazed a path in the sky for miles behind us. The heavy bomber formation was on its way to Brunswick, a tough, heavily defended target deep into Germany. It was 8 Apr 1944 and this was a maximum effort mission!

Our altitude was 22,000 feet and the IP [Initial Point] at Salzwedel where we would begin our bomb run was in sight. Suddenly, we were attacked by about 75 single- and twin-engine fighters, in one-, two- and three-plane head-on passes.

Our ship received extreme battle damage from three Me-109s. A Lib on our right blew up completely—no chutes. I understand it was reported as our plane and we were listed as dead for about six months. [That plane was #42-7599, Mack's Sack III, with 579th 1/Lt James W. Dickson and crew aboard. Ten men were killed, one became a POW.]

Our B-24 shuddered and shook from the recoil of our guns. We were literally shot to pieces with only the #2 engine pulling full power—#1 had taken a direct hit and #3 and #4 were on fire. There was fire on the flight deck, the radio was gone and the bomb release went when the nose turret was hit. Bombardier 1/Lt Henry J. Varela and radio operator S/Sgt Charles E. Bennett dropped the bombs by hand from the bomb bay. With four wounded on board and our plane in danger of blowing up, we bailed out at about 13,500 feet while still under attack.

Capture

As I descended, I glanced up at my chute. An Me-109 buzzed me and spilled my chute. I was saying my last prayers when it opened back up on one side and then the other. Nearing the ground, I saw I was to be greeted by the local Gestapo with a pistol in hand. As workers in the potato field surrounded me, the Gestapo man ordered me to gather up my chute and flying gear and head for the road.

There was a small canal next to where I came down. In a last defiant gesture, I turned and threw everything into the canal. He exploded with rage! The bore of the 9mm pistol in front of my face looked like a 105mm cannon. I was never any closer to being killed than at that moment.

Captured airmen were picked up by military trucks, taken to a nearby Luftwaffe base and placed in solitary confinement. Following an interrogation by an officer and two enlisted men designed to "soften us up," I was returned to my cell with a broken nose. The next morning, we were moved by train to the Luftwaffe Intelligence Evaluation Center, about 12km northwest of Frankfurt. There we were interrogated by real professionals.

A few days later, the officers were sent to Luft I on the Baltic at Barth, Germany, and the sergeants to Stalag 17B at Krems, Austria. We spent four days standing up in a box car, with the badly wounded sitting on the floor with their backs against the wall. The guards took half the space. We had no food, no water, not even a bucket for sanitation.

When we arrived at Stalag 17B, I met a classmate I had known since the first grade in Iowa. Radio man on a B-17,

he was shot down about nine months before we were. He showed me how to survive in this old concentration camp.

Living conditions were appalling. It was separated from the main concentration camp by eight feet high double barbed wire fences. It was old, dirty and full of vermin. It was nothing like the movie *Stalag 17!* The inspecting International Red Cross listed it as one of the worst POW camps holding Americans, based on the number killed while trying to escape and the terrible living conditions.

Several months later, wounds had healed and we had made the difficult adjustment to slow starvation and survival as prisoners of war. The dreary routine included roll-call formations, rain and mud, dust, vermin, dysentery, heat in the summer, freezing cold and snow in the winter, and poor sanitation. We dreamed of food, girls and escape—all on about 600 calories a day. We planned and evaluated ideas and discussed scenarios that might enable us to escape.

An Escape Attempt

One warm, sunny afternoon, the German soldiers in the guard towers daydreamed as they gazed over the POW compounds below. Charley Bennett and I were walking and jogging around and around our compound. We were trying to maintain endurance, which would be needed if we ever had an opportunity to escape.

We watched a detail of Russian POWs carrying some bodies to the burial ground. Russian and Serbian POWs died at an alarming rate from typhus, malnutrition, and brutal treatment. The bodies were always rolled in brown paper and two prisoners carried each one outside the main fences, past our American compound to a tree-covered area about 300 yards distant, for burial. In front and behind the detail were the usual accompanying guards.

Thankfully, we Americans had been inoculated against typhus, which was transmitted by bites from the fleas carried on the ever-present rats.

I soon noticed three Russian prisoners in their ragged coats working on the fence which divided our compound from the next. Russian POWs were commonly used on maintenance work details.

Charley and I began to jog. As we approached the work detail, I was shocked when I recognized one of the men. "Charley," I blurted, "They aren't Russians; they're our guys! What are they up to?"

The men picked up their ladder. Carrying it between them, they moved toward the warning wire and main outside fences, working and hammering staples all the while.

"No doubt about it," Charley replied under his breath, "It's an escape! Keep jogging, but let's be sure we're not in the line of fire!"

In the last attempted escape, two American POWs planned to cut their way through the fences at night, avoiding the searchlights while covered with white cloth to camouflage themselves against the snow-covered ground. They were detected. Both walking guards and tower guards opened fire and cut them down. While they lay there wounded, calling out, "Don't shoot, Kamerade," one of the guards shot them several more times with his pistol. Another POW sleeping in his bunk was severely wounded when a tower guard fired through the barracks. Eight more men in that barracks were

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savagely beaten by guards. Consequently, most escape attempts were by tunneling.

The warning wire had signs reading, "Anyone touching or crossing the warning wire will be shot without warning."

One man crossed the twenty-foot space to the first main fence and began to hammer while the other two men crossed. Prisoners in the open area of the compound seemed unaware of what was transpiring.

Two of the men picked up the ladder, positioned it against a post, and began to work on the top wires of the first fence. Soon they had all climbed over and were working in between the two main fences. They hammered staples and repositioned the tin cans piled along the bottom of the fences as noise makers, should anyone try to cut their way through the barbed wire.

Slowly they worked their way along the fence to where they were almost under the corner guard tower. Placing the ladder against the second main fence, they climbed over. All three men were now outside!

Hoping the tower guard had been lulled into disregarding them, they shouldered the ladder. Carrying their tools, the POWs walked single file down the path from the corner guard tower toward the shelter of the trees surrounding the burial ground.

Still no challenge from the tower guard. I started to mentally pray, "God, please help them." They were now about one hundred feet from the camp when an ear-piercing blast from the guard's whistle shattered the tranquility. The three men froze.

The German in the tower yelled at them, "Where is your guard?" I prayed again, "Please God, don't let him shoot!" Three other guards came running and took them into custody.

As they were taken away, I started to breathe normally again. "Well, it was a nice try," Charley commented. "They'll probably get thirty days in the 'cooler' on bread and water."

I replied, "I hope that's all. That was really one clever idea, but it took real guts to carry it out."

The March

On 8 Apr 1945, we left the camp and began a forced march 287 miles west to evade a Russian offensive which would over-run the area. The march was very difficult. One guard died on the way. Our ball turret gunner, Sgt William A. Rush, and two other POWs managed to escape with the

guards shooting at them.

We had almost no food and had water only at the pumps in the villages we passed through. Starvation, exposure to the elements, dysentery and other illnesses took their toll. If someone fell behind, we heard the shots after the column had passed.

After not eating for about three days, we were taking a rest break. One of the guards was eating a rye cracker. He was older than the other guards and might have had children my age. I don't know why he did it, but the guard broke his cracker in half and handed it to me. I have never forgotten that act of kindness.

When we finally stopped near Braunau, Austria, there was no real camp, just the trees and some slit trenches for sanitation purposes. It was snowing when we arrived and there was a light rain almost every day thereafter. Everything was wet. Some men built fires to try to keep warm and dry out as much as possible. We had no food! We got water from the Inn River nearby. One day we got some small, spoiled potatoes, two per man and a pinch of salt. Men almost turned into skeletons from fever and dysentery. I don't think we could have survived another month.

Set Free!

Then one day, we heard the sound of US tanks across the river. Unaware of any POWs in the area, they thought we were Germans and planned to shell us. One hardy POW swam the quarter mile wide Inn River and soldiers from General Patton's Third Army, 13th Armored Division, fished him out when it looked like he was not going to make it. So, instead of shelling us, they found a dam some miles downriver on which to cross as all bridges had been blown.

Several Jeeps came to a sliding halt on the road at the edge of the forest. A little shooting took place and then the guards were taken prisoner.

Since Patton's Army was five days ahead of the infantry, they had no provisions or medical supplies to give us. We were liberated, but on our own. About a week or two later, we were trucked to an airfield and flown out to Le Havre, France (Camp Lucky Strike), where we were deloused, cleaned up, medically treated and fed a special diet to transition us to regular food for the trip home to the US by ship.

I was a POW for 13 months. Transferred to Intelligence, my unit interrogated ex-POWs from both European and South Pacific Theaters of war and compiled information for the War Crimes Tribunal. I received a direct commission as

an Air Combat Intelligence Officer. With service in the Air Force Reserve, I retired in 1983.

This article will give you an idea of what it was like to be a POW, but I left out many of the more gruesome details.



Left to right: Sgt Dale Stephens during training in 1943, as a POW in 1944 when he entered Stalag 17B, after being freed in 1945, and in 1960. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1983.

MISSION from page 5

Hopson had already made the transfers from the wing tanks. Things looked bad. "We're not going to make it," he reported.

Lt Carnine summed up the chances. He ordered the crew to stand by for ditching. His navigator, 2/Lt Victor Mastron, gave him the position of the handiest landing strip, which happened to be a fighter field just over the English coast. Meanwhile, the pilot cut back on the throttles and went into a controlled glide, abandoning the protection of the formation. He wanted to miser the remaining gas and to get down to lower altitude where he knew (for he had not forgotten his briefing) there would be less wind. He dropped from 22,000 to 2,500 feet at which height he made landfall. He was now certain, upon the advice of his engineer, that he couldn't make the fighter field and he was keeping the bail-out orders as a last resort.

Then he spotted an unfinished airfield. There were barricades of tile, pile and reinforcing steel mats across the runway. He picked a section that was fairly clear and put the nose down. Just then all four engines quit.

"There was the damndest silence a man ever heard," said Lt Byers in describing the descent. "We were all braced for a crash landing. It seemed a good year while we sat there—sweating."

But Lt Carnine hadn't given up. He couldn't get into the section of runway he had picked, but he got into another—a much shorter section. He made a dead stick landing. The plane rolled to a stop. The amazed crew got out and, arm in arm, paced off the distance. It was exactly 434 steps where the plane touched down to where it stopped rolling. There wasn't a single item of damage to the ship. Next day, gassed up and jubilant, the crew flew back to the home station. Meanwhile their safe landing had been telephoned by a police sergeant who permitted himself this much British Excitement: "A remarkably fine job, I might say, sir—considering that the aircraft was completely out of petrol."

Editor's note: Flying from 26 Sept 1943 to 5 Mar 1944, the Carnine crew became the first in the 392nd BG to complete a combat tour (then

25 missions). Thankfully, they had received mission credit for the 3 Mar 1944 sortie to Oranienburg. Carnine later said, "The last two missions were kind of bad because you figured you might have a chance. Before that, we just figured we didn't."



On 5 Mar 1944, the Carnine crew had just landed after their last combat mission. The top photo shows their celebration upon landing; the bottom photo, their ceremonial trip around the perimeter track aboard the fire engine. Seated left to right: copilot 2/Lt Kermit E. Spears and bombardier 2/Lt Wayne E. Byers. Back row left to right: engineer T/Sgt Nick A. Hopson, navigator 2/Lt Victor Mastron, gunner S/Sgt Louis B. Ostroski, pilot 1/Lt Guy D. Carnine, gunner S/Sgt Merle W. Norby, radio operator T/Sgt Boyce B. Barbee, and gunners S/Sgt George R. Knies and S/Sgt Nick Kwasnycia. Col Irvine A. Rendle, Group CO, is standing at the right.

8th AFHS & Heritage League Reunion

July 22-26, 2013 in Savannah, Georgia

Monday, July 22

1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration open
2:00pm– Memorabilia/Gathering Room open
2:00pm– 8AFHS Board Meeting
5:00pm– 6:00pm Welcome Reception (hosted by the Birthplace Chapter)

Tuesday, July 23

7:30am– 8:30am Full Breakfast Buffet

8:00am–10:00am Reunion Registration open
9:00am–10:00am Unit Advisory and Chapter & Unit Development Meeting
9:00am–12:00pm CITY TOUR
12:30pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration open
1:30pm– 5:30pm MIGHTY 8TH AIR FORCE MUSEUM / B17 COMMEMORATION CEREMONY
See 8AFHS REUNION on page 9

8AFHS REUNION from page 8

6:30pm– 7:00pm 8AFHS Cash Bar Reception

7:00pm– 9:00pm Dinner Buffet

Wednesday, July 24

7:30am– 8:30am Full Breakfast Buffet

8:00am–10:00am Reunion Registration open

8:30am–10:00am Individual Group Meetings

10:30am–12:00pm Next Generation Meeting

12:00pm– 2:00pm Heritage League Business Meeting
and Luncheon

1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration open

2:00pm– 3:30pm Prof. Larry Foley & “The Lost Squadron”

4:00pm– 5:30pm WWII Q&A SESSION

6:30pm– 7:00pm 8AFHS Cash Bar Reception

7:00pm– 9:30pm Rendezvous Dinners

Thursday, July 25

7:30am– 8:30am Full Breakfast Buffet

8:30am–10:00am 8AFHS General Membership Meeting

11:00am– 4:00pm 8AFHS Board Meeting

1:00pm– 4:30pm MIGHTY 8TH AIR FORCE MUSEUM

1:30pm– 4:30pm ISLAND, BEACH, AND FORT TOUR

5:00pm– 5:30pm Reunion Registration Open

6:00pm– 7:00pm 8AFHS Cash Bar Reception

7:00pm– Banquet Dinner and guest speaker

Friday, July 26

7:00am– 8:30am Full Breakfast Buffet

Farewell until October 2014 in Nashville, Tennessee!

Registration Instructions. Complete the Registration Form on page 11. For “WWII GROUP,” please put “392nd BG.” This information will be used to tally totals for each group, nametags, and seating arrangements. If you prefer to sit with a different group, please give that information too. Remit by mail with check or money order payable to Armed Forces Reunions by June 20, 2013. You may also register and pay with credit card online at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2013. A 3% convenience fee will be added to online credit card reservations. Forms received after June 20, 2013 will be accepted on a space available basis only. Hotel reservations should also be made by June 20.

Cancellation Policy. For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions,

Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$5 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR’s vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9am until 4pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation doesn’t cancel your reunion activities.

Meals/Event Choices

PACKAGE #1, \$212. Includes all 7 hotel functions (4 breakfasts, 3 dinners)

PACKAGE #2, \$148. Includes 5 hotel food functions starting with breakfast on Wednesday (3 breakfasts, 2 dinners).

The breakfast buffets include juice, fruit, cereals/milk, eggs, meat, potatoes, assorted breakfast breads, coffee and tea.

INDIVIDUAL MEALS. Wednesday Rendezvous Dinner at \$44 and Thursday Banquet at \$45 can be purchased separately, but are included in both packages above.

TOUR OPTIONS. Prices are listed on the registration form (page 11). Driver and guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices. Please be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time. All buses for tours and trips will be air-conditioned.

CITY TOUR, Tuesday, July 23. Savannah has always been a city rich in history and culture. On this tour, you will explore America’s finest “living” collection of 18th and 19th century buildings in one of our nation’s largest National Historic Landmark Districts. Beautiful streets and squares reveal more than 250 years of history, displayed eloquently in exquisite ironwork, ancient cobblestones, splendid mansions and picturesque cottages. Discover Savannah’s garden-like public squares, the crown jewels of General Oglethorpe’s planned city. On the picturesque waterfront you will discover cobblestone-paved Factors Walk and River Street, where old cotton warehouses have been converted into shops, taverns, restaurants and museums. This tour also includes admission into one of the historic homes or museums. 9:00am board bus, 12:00pm back at hotel. \$39/ Person includes bus, guide and admission.

See 8AFHS REUNION on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

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

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The 392nd BGMA is engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. It contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039

8AFHS REUNION from page 9

MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM / B-17 COMMEMORATION CEREMONY, Tuesday, July 23 and Thursday, July 25. Located minutes from downtown Savannah, where the Eighth Air Force was activated in 1942, the Museum features over 90,000 square feet of exhibits, interactive displays, historical artifacts and a magnificent collection of aviation art. See a visually realistic mission experience, the Research Center and beautiful Memorial Gardens. Gather for a commemoration ceremony at the World War II B-17 Flying Fortress, City of Savannah. It is undergoing a complete restoration inside the Museum's Combat Gallery. Then, you'll have a couple hours to tour this world-renowned museum. Notes: Admission is waived for our group on Tuesday, if arriving on bus with our group. Thursday's trip to the museum includes free time at the museum; no ceremony. If you are a member of the museum, please show your membership card at the reunion registration desk. The admission portion of Thursday's tour price will be refunded to MUSEUM members if your museum membership card is shown at reunion registration. Tuesday: 1:30pm board bus, 5:30pm back at hotel. \$35/Person includes bus and escort. Thursday: 1:00pm board bus, 4:30pm back at hotel. \$43/Person includes bus, escort and admission.

RENDEZVOUS DINNERS, Wednesday, July 24. Units with about 40 or more people in attendance will have a private room. Smaller groups will be combined. Think of this as your "reunion within the reunion." Dinner features Chicken Picatta. 6:30pm Cash Bar Reception, 7:00pm Dinner. Cost is included in both meal packages or \$44 separately.

ISLAND, TYBEE BEACH AND FORT TOUR, Thursday, July 25. Relax...your 18 mile marshland journey will guide you through more than 270 years of Savannah's coastal heritage. Not just for the historian, everyone will enjoy the refreshing ocean breezes while viewing the natural beauty and coastal wildlife. Your group will enjoy a visit through one of Savannah's Coastal Fortresses. Then, it is off to historic Tybee Island, Savannah's quiet beach community. While on Tybee, we will stop and visit the Tybee Island Lighthouse and Museum. 1:30pm board bus, 4:30pm back at hotel. \$46/Person includes bus, guide and admissions.

8AFHS ANNUAL BANQUET, Thursday, July 25. Assemble in the ballroom for the Posting of the Colors and Memorial Service. Dinner will be a choice of Filet Cut Sirloin Steak or Panco-Crusted Baked Tilapia and the usual accompaniments. After dinner, our guest speaker will be Scott Reda. 6:00pm Cash Bar Reception, 7:00pm Banquet. Cost is included in both meal packages or \$45 separately.

Savannah Marriott Riverfront—Savannah, GA (912) 233-7722 or (800) 285-0398

The Savannah Marriott Riverfront is located at 100 General McIntosh Blvd., Savannah, GA 31401. It is approximately 10 miles away from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV). The hotel is located on the Historic Riverfront connected to world-famous River Street via the Riverwalk and ferries. River Street offers over 90 unique shops, taverns, and restaurants. The Savannah Marriott Riverfront guests can easily walk throughout the Historic District and

enjoy the beautiful squares, historic house museums, art galleries and antique shops.

The Savannah Marriott Riverfront offers 391 guest rooms. Handicapped rooms are subject to availability; please request these special accommodations when making reservations. The Marriott is a non-smoking hotel. All rooms feature hairdryer, coffee makers, iron/ironing board and high-speed internet access for a fee. Guests can also enjoy access to the Atrium & outdoor pool, fitness center, and gift shop. Check-in is at 4pm and check-out is at 11am. Self parking at the hotel for registered group guest is currently \$5 per vehicle per day. Valet parking is not available. *Blue A Savannah Bistro & Bar* serves American cuisine for breakfast, lunch and dinner. *Atrium Bar* offers guests a place to enjoy appetizers and drinks. Room service is available.

Hospitality "Parlors" are available to rent for individual unit hospitalities. *They will be assigned based on the number in the bomb group attending—so please register early!*

The hotel DOES NOT provide shuttle service to and from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport. The hotel recommends using K-Shuttle. Please call (877) 243-2050 for more information and reservations. Currently, their rates are \$40 per person round trip. After retrieving your luggage at baggage claim, proceed to the Visitor Information area where your driver will be waiting with a sign.

For RV hookup service, call Bellaire Woods Campground at (912) 748-4000 or Savannah South KOA at (912) 756-3396. Ask for information, reservations, and directions to determine which is the most convenient for you.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll-free number at (888) 441-7575.

HOTEL RESERVATION INFORMATION

Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, Georgia

Please call the hotel's toll-free line, 1-800-285-0398, to make your reservations. Be prepared to give the following information:

- ≈ Name (and if sharing room, with whom)
- ≈ Address and email address, if applicable
- ≈ Telephone number
- ≈ Arrival and departure dates/confirm the number of nights
- ≈ Number of rooms & the number of people in each room
- ≈ Do you require handicap accessible room(s)?
- ≈ King bed or two double beds? (Limited availability on double bed rooms)

RATE: \$109 + taxes (currently 13%) + \$1 city occupancy fee. Reservations must be guaranteed by credit card.

CUTOFF DATE: June 20, 2013. Reservations received after this date will be processed on space and rate availability.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled 24 hours prior to date of arrival.

RESERVATION GUARANTEE: Must provide a credit card number with expiration date to reservation agent.

ONLINE RESERVATIONS: <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/savrf-savannah-marriott-riverfront>

Use Group Code EAFEFA

See 8AFHS REUNION on page 11

8th AFHS ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2013 (3% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before June 20, 2013. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 6/20/13

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE			
Includes meeting expenses and other reunion expenses.	\$40		
Reg. Fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$25		
MEAL PACKAGES			
Package #1 includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Tuesday.	\$212		\$
Package #2 includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Wednesday	\$148		\$
Please select your entrée choice(s) for the Banquet:			
Filet Cut Sirloin Steak		#	
Panco-Crusted Baked Tilapia		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)			
Wednesday: Rendezvous Dinner (Chicken Picatta)	\$44		\$
Thursday: Banquet (please select your entrée)			
Filet Cut Sirloin Steak	\$45		\$
Panco-Crusted Baked Tilapia	\$45		\$
TOURS			
Tuesday: City Tour	\$39		\$
Tuesday: Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum / B-17 Commemoration	\$35		\$
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Thursday: Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum	\$43		\$
Thursday: Island, Tybee Beach and Fort Tour	\$46		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

Please Print

MEMBER NAME (for nametag) _____

☐ VET ☐ NEXT GEN ☐ HERITAGE LEAGUE ☐ 2ND AD ☐ OTHER WWII GROUP _____

SPOUSE NAME (if attending) _____

 GUEST NAMES _____ ☐ NEXT GEN ☐ HERITAGE LEAGUE ☐ 2ND AD ☐ OTHER

PHONE # (____) _____ - _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____ @ _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

Register Online at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2013

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER
by Tom Perry, 576th Sqdn Armorer

A great portion of the population of the USA is very worried about the future security and prosperity of our nation. We have removed the Bible, prayer and God from our public schools. While I do not advocate the state departments of education or local boards of education legislating religious education, when students want to have Bible clubs and prayer groups, then these activities should be permitted and encouraged.

These conditions and circumstances remind me of the time King Solomon dedicated the temple He built for the Lord in Jerusalem for the people of Israel, that when they forsake the Lord and are punished for their actions, the Lord answered Solomon and told him He heard his prayer. The Lord said, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, And turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." This is recorded in the Old Testament, 2nd Chronicles chapters 6 & 7.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

But we...shall be remember'd;



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



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

William Shakespeare
Henry V

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Walter J. Mateski, 579, December 13, 2012
Bill Braddock, 578, January 8, 2013
James A. Gerow, 579, December 21, 2011
Robert J. Beatson, 577, January 7, 2013
William J. Dykes, 577, December 26, 2012
Betty Jo Denton, widow of Winfield, September 5, 2012
Russell H. Huff, 578, January 30, 2013
Arthur W. Olson, 579, January 28, 2013