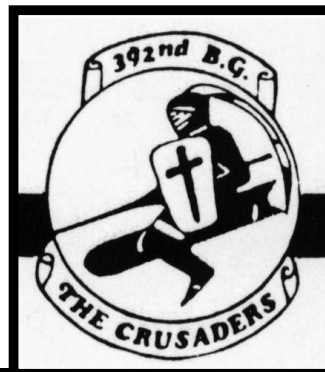




Operation Varsity: 24 March 1945

In its 19 May 1945 *Report of Operation Varsity*, Headquarters First Allied Airborne Army explained, "Operation Varsity was the airborne phase of the operation effecting the crossing of the lower Rhine River by the armies of Twenty-First Army Group on 24 Mar 1945.

"Operation Plunder was the overall operation executed ... in crossing the Rhine ... and it was the largest river crossing in military history Air power was used to the maximum in a softening-up offensive."

Varsity was the largest *single day, single location* airborne operation in history. This distinction is critical when comparing Varsity to the airborne component of Operation Market Garden on 18 Sep 1944 (as detailed in the March 2019 *News*). Although Market Garden was a larger operation, its drops were to three distinct areas and spread over several days.

During Varsity, para-troop and ground troops from the US, Britain, and Canada were delivered behind enemy lines by nearly 1,600 a/c and gliders. Dropped with them were equipment and supplies for immediate use, such as artillery, weapons and vehicles.

Just fifteen minutes later came 240 B-24s from the 2nd, 14th, and 20th Combat Wings; they dropped 4,356 bundles containing a one-day resupply of essential items. Half were for American and half for British use, with drop zones just four miles apart.

After Action Analysis

Per the *Report*, "... the drop to [the US] 17th Airborne Division was one hundred percent successful but intense flak was encountered in [the British] 6th Airborne Division area and only eighty five percent of its supplies were

dropped successfully. Of the remainder, ten percent was dropped in wooded area to the north and five percent was scattered and unlikely to be recovered. Fifteen aircraft of the total employed on this mission failed to return...

"A large measure of the success of operation Varsity is [due] to the intensity and thoroughness of the offensive carried on by the cooperating air forces in the area against which operations Plunder and Varsity were directed."

Aerial preparation for Plunder began on 21 Feb 1945 based on a plan to isolate the Ruhr and northwest Germany from the rest of the country. Bombing targets included:

- rail bridges and railway viaducts. RAF Bomber Command "used its new 22,000-lb bombs for the first time in attacks on bridges. Subsequent reconnaissance photos

showed that they were particularly effective against ... viaducts."

- enemy rail and road traffic, rail marshalling yards, and repair and maintenance centers.

- communication centers near the proposed battle area, enemy barracks, camps and known artillery and flak sites.

- German airfields (especially those with jet powered a/c), fuel dumps, and associated facilities.

And, on 24 Mar 1945, "more than 5,000 sorties were flown over the battlefield or in the immediate vicinity....

Those who took part in these historic crossings of the Rhine could well appreciate from the absence of enemy

fighters and the relative weakness of the enemy's ground defenses how effective were the measures taken by the Allied air commands."

A review of 392nd BG targets from 21 Feb – 24 Mar 1945

See VARSITY on page 5



This photo of parachutes and their bundles of supplies was taken at an altitude of 100 feet by someone in 2/Lt Alfred J. Cohn's crew, 577th Sqdn, aboard #42-50792, Bomb Boogie.



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FROM THE EDITOR

VE-Day. In the June 2020 *News*, I will have information about 8 May 1945, when Victory in Europe was achieved. Please contact me with your memories or the stories that your relatives told you about that historic day!! If a POW, where were you? If an airman at Wendling, how did you celebrate? If living near Station 118, how did things change? If you lived in the US at the time, what do you remember about local celebrations—and how long before your loved one actually got home?

For example, on the 392nd's Facebook page for 12 Apr 2019, John Donaldson, a radio operator in the 34th BG, posted *The Lights Go on Again*: "I flew on B-17 bombers with the 8th Air Force at Mendlesham Station in England. On the afternoon of May 7, 1945, I was in London on a two-day pass with several of our crew. There were rumors that the Germans were surrendering, and people packed the streets, train stations and pubs. We knew it was going to be a giant celebration, and we debated whether we should go back or stay in London. Being soldiers and under orders, we got on the train. And so we rocked along, somewhat drunk but not saying much because we were so disappointed at missing the big party.

"Then we saw the lights—little flares at first, here and there. We were mystified. It couldn't be antiaircraft or ground fire. So accustomed to blackout conditions, we didn't even recognize house lights spilling from windows. Then flames appeared on the horizon. Farmers were burning their haystacks, making huge, leaping bonfires. After six years of darkness, England just lit up in victory and celebration.

"You can always talk about the planes that went down or other terrible accidents. But that moment—knowing how happy those wonderful English people were, and how happy I was that I wouldn't be flying any more missions—has stayed with me.

"A very popular song in those days included the words: 'When the lights go on again all over the world.' I got back to London several times before I left England for home, but nothing could compare with that dark night on a train in East Anglia when the lights did indeed 'go on again all over the world.' And I was there."

Our Facebook page is named 392nd Bomb Group (H) Wendling ~ England 1943~1945 WWII. It is a private group but anyone with an interest can become a member after receiving approval from site administrators Bob Books, Greg Hatton or Ben Jones.

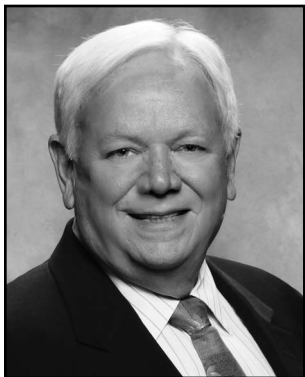
From our Members. I've heard from several members over the last few months. **Doug Ritter** is the son of 577th Sqdn tail gunner S/Sgt Clarence F. Huston (killed in action on 2 Dec 1944). He provided links to two videos from July 2019 that show a walk-through of a B-24J with commentary on what is being shown. The plane was flown by the RAF in the China-Burma-India theater during WWII, then by the Indian Air Force. It is definitely showing its age, but the videos are an exceptional way to get "up close and personal" to all areas of a B-24. Part 1 is at <https://www.facebook.com/KermitWeeks/videos/590013605157212/> with Part 2 at <https://www.facebook.com/KermitWeeks/videos/1825846064216128/>.

When I emailed the December 2019 *News*, I advised that the March issue would have an article about the low level supply mission on 24 Mar 1945. **Jeff Murray** responded, "My dad, 1/Lt Jack G. Murray, participated on that mission as the bombardier on the Beder crew in #44-50589. I sure wish I had been smart enough to ask him questions back in the day. That's the type of mission Army helicopters did in Vietnam but we were a bit slower and carried a lot less cargo." Jeff provided this photo taken during his time in Vietnam (1968-69) with the 281st Assault Helicopter Company. Jeff added, "Dad returned to the Air Force after college and I went to high school in Wiesbaden, Germany, where virtually every dad was a WWII vet."



Sharon Marcrander's father, Capt Robert E. Lane, was the 578th Sqdn Executive Officer. She emailed on 15 Dec 2019, "Today was Wreaths Across America at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. Bill and I and **See EDITOR on page 3**

President's Corner



Greetings Crusaders,

Spring is fast approaching and if you're like me, you're looking forward to warmer weather, trees leafing out and blooming flowers. When I look at my feeble attempt at gardening, I am reminded of the beautiful gardens that I've seen and enjoyed on my trips to England and more importantly of our many friends and supporters who live there.

We at the 392nd BGMA are truly fortunate to have such a devoted group of people in the Wendling/Beeston area who do so much to keep the memories of our servicemen alive and who demonstrate their appreciation of the sacrifice made by the Americans based there.

V-E Day, May 8, 2020, marks the 75th anniversary of the Allied victory in Europe and most, if not all of the observances in the U.K., including the ones which were mentioned in an email to our members in early February, have been cancelled.

As a result of this and the travel ban now in place, Annette and Don Tison and I will not be going over as originally planned. Five of our other members who live in the U.K. and Germany will no doubt cancel as well.

The good news is that through the efforts of our wonderful trustees, Jill Scott, son Hugh Scott, and Henry Dennett, a new plaque for the memorial has been cast. (See *News From Across the Pond* on page 4.) They worked hard to have it ready for our planned visit so that we could have a blessing ceremony while we were there. This will now take place at a later date to be determined.

Perhaps that new date will be convenient for more of you and we will have an even larger group in attendance.

As our nation and the rest of the world face the health challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, my thoughts and prayers are with you all. Please take precautions and stay healthy.

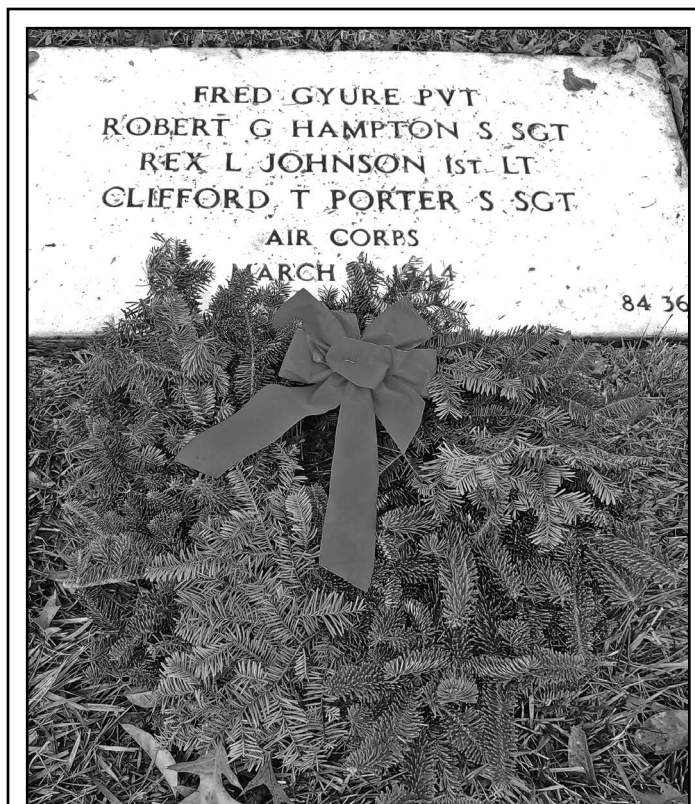
Ralph

EDITOR from page 2

our grandson John placed wreaths at several of the 392nd sites. Our grandson said it was his honor to pay tribute to these fallen aviators."

Due to its central location in St. Louis, Missouri, this Cemetery was often the chosen location for group burials of WWII casualties. These occurred when two or more deceased military personnel could be identified collectively (as being members of the same aircrew, patrol squad, etc.) but not individually. The five group graves where the Marcrauder family laid wreaths were for 23 of our airmen—from eight crews and all four squadrons—killed during missions on March 18, June 13, June 23, July 7, and September 11, 1944. Altogether, Jefferson Barracks has 11 graves in which 43 Crusaders are buried. 579th Sqdn copilot 2/Lt Frank A. Fisher, who was killed on 7 July

1944, is buried in a group grave with four men from the 492nd BG.



This is one of the 392nd BG graves the Marcrauder family visited during the Wreaths Across America event at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. The four men were killed in action on 18 Mar 1944. Pvt Gyure was on 2/Lt Walter C. Raschke's crew, 578th; S/Sgt Hampton and S/Sgt Porter were members of 1/Lt Dallas Books' crew, 579th; and pilot 1/Lt Johnson was in the 578th.

The purpose of the *News* is to perpetuate the legacy of the men who served our country and the 392nd BG so well. We all can help do that—in our own ways, in our own communities. Please let me know what you do (or have done) so I can inform our other members—and maybe give them some new ideas!

Richard J. Harer. I reported Mr. Harer's death in the last issue. He was a copilot in the 576th Sqdn from 14 June-13 July 1944, then the crew was transferred to the 44th BG for training as a lead crew. They returned to the 392nd and began flying on 11 August as a lead crew in the 579th Sqdn. Lead crews flew just a few times a month so in mid-September (after just five missions during that time) he volunteered to fly as a copilot on any crew that needed one. He finished his combat tour on 26 Nov 1944.

One particularly stressful mission occurred on 23 June 1944; details can be found at <https://www.b24.net/Newsletters/June-2013.pdf>. Information about his post-WWII career as an Experimental Flight Test Pilot during the "Right Stuff" era—and a life-changing mission—is at <https://www.thisdayinaviation.com/tag/richard-james-harer/>.



News from Across the Pond

England

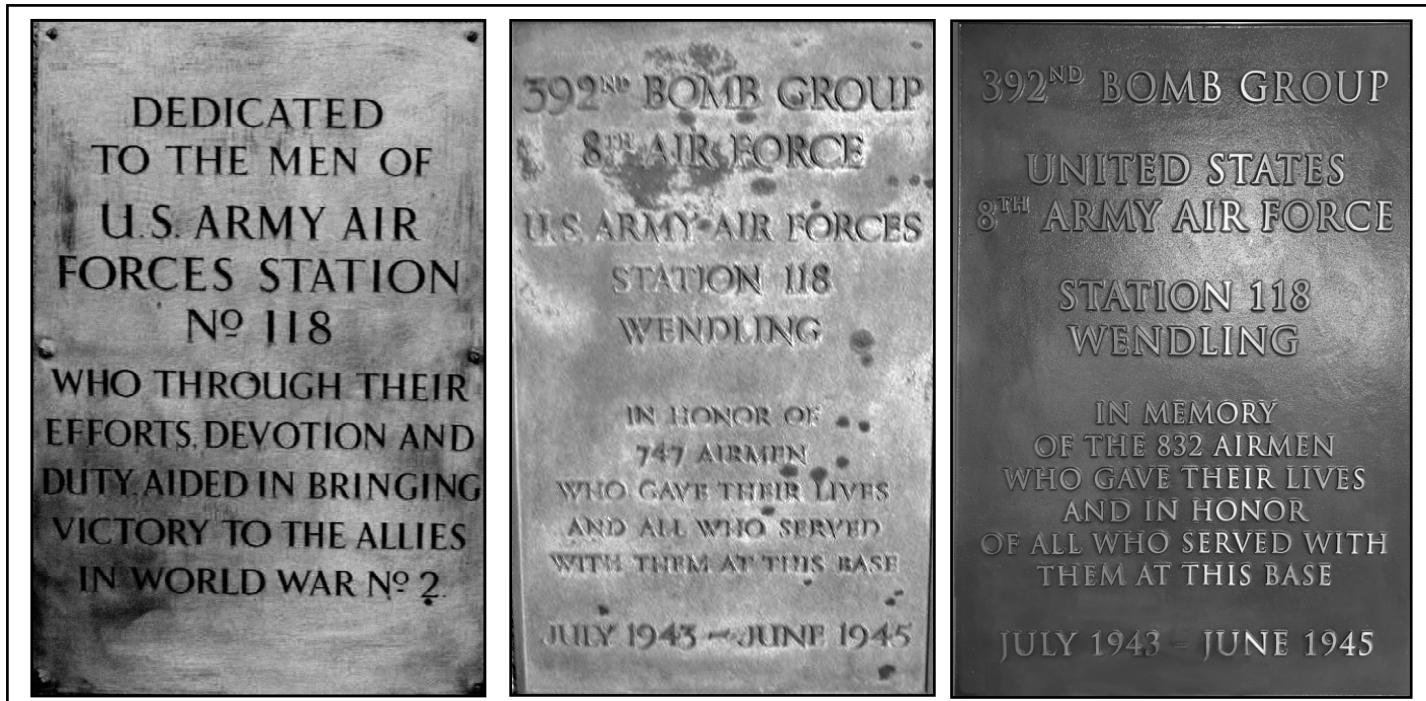
A new plaque for the 392nd BG Memorial, funded by the Association, was recently ordered and received by our Trustees. They have agreed to store it until we can be part

of a proper ceremony to commemorate its installation.

Shown below are the old and new plaques. The tablet on the left is from the original Memorial, which was dedicated on 2 Sep 1945. In the middle is the current plaque, from the completely refurbished Memorial and grounds dedicated on 7 Oct 1989. On the far right is the new plaque. It cites the number of casualties as 832 rather than 747. This number more accurately reflects the total losses suffered by the 392nd during its time in Wendling.

France

392nd Friend Bernard Ballenger emailed that tribute
See ACROSS THE POND on page 5



392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; 19 and higher means your dues are up-to-date. If you wish to renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045 or join/ renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/memorialAssociation.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA.

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

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

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

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

Hardship Waiver []

DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

ACROSS THE POND from page 4

was paid "at Montlieu la Garde and St Vivien to the 400 crews of the 8th Air Force who participated in the important mission of December 31, 1943 and more particularly that of Lt McKee, fallen near St Vivien."

While on a mission to bomb an airfield in southern France, 578th Sqdn 1/Lt Thomas R. McKee's plane was hit during a massive German fighter attack and exploded in the air. Only two men were able to bail out. As one was descending in his parachute, he was strafed and killed by

an enemy fighter; the other, tail gunner S/Sgt Anthony F. Malavasic, was captured.

Several pieces of the plane landed near the village of St. Vivien. A burning wing, with an engine still attached, fell on the home of Mrs. Yvonne Bourdejeau. She was badly burned and died on 20 Jan 1944.

The monument to the McKee crew was dedicated in 1947; annual ceremonies have been held ever since. It is close to where the bodies of five crewmen were recovered and about 300 meters from Mrs. Bourdejeau's home.



Clockwise from top left: The 2019 tribute began with Mass at the Chapel of St. Vivien, moved to Mrs. Bourdejeau's grave and finally to the McKee crew's monument, where WWII reenactors and military vehicles were present.

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shows that Crusaders did their part!

The Mighty Eighth

The entire 8AF was in action on 24 March 1945. Four task forces bombed airfields in west and northwest Germany, a fifth dropped supplies, and three more attacked other airfields. Most groups (including the 392nd) flew morning and afternoon missions.

This day shows why 8AF is rightly called *the Mighty Eighth*: 1,509 heavy bombers were sent on bombing missions, 240 more dropped supplies, and they were protected by 1,375 P-47 and P-51 fighters (many making multiple trips).

Second Air Division

Per 2AD's Field Order #638, issued on 22 March 1945:

- Supply bundles would be dropped from the bomb bays (using normal procedures) or pushed out of the hole where the ball turrets had formerly been and the emergency escape hatch near the tail.
- Combat airmen—not loadmasters—would deploy the bundles once the drop zone was spotted visually.

- Bundles would be dropped between 300 and 500 ft at no more than 150 mph indicated air speed lest their parachutes be destroyed and the supplies lost.
- Gunnery will be briefed not to fire at ground positions.
- Planes will not begin to climb until after crossing the Rhine; a/c withdrawing were to give way to units penetrating.
- If the troop carrier units were late to the target, the bombers "will either dog-leg or circle to the north" until their paths to the drop zones are clear.
- "Free drop bundles positioned at the emergency escape hatch should be dispatched prior to parachute equipped bundles at the same position. To the extent possible, all crew members concerned with the dispatch of bundles will carry sharpened sheath knives for clearing static lines and emergency use."
- For planes with British loads, "care should be exercised by combat crew members in moving around ball turret well to guard against premature release of the shackle supporting the load at the position. Crew member releasing ball turret

See VARSITY on page 6

Varsity from page 5

load must be cautioned and adequately protected against falling out of the well."

- For a/c with American loads, crews should "exercise care in moving around aircraft and handling bundles in order not to derange parachute packs or foul the lines. In all cases combat crews should be briefed to dispatch loads which have static lines in the aft position of the opening first, thereby eliminating static lines trailing across opening and hindering dispatch of subsequent bundles."
- Crews must be briefed on the use of the warning bell as a dispatch signal, not a jump signal.
- "Particular attention will be paid to tail heavy condition of aircraft on take-off and nose heavy condition of aircraft on landing, especially if ballast is placed in nose."
- "The best defense against flak after the drop was to fly as close to the deck as possible and to re-cross our own lines as quickly as possible. However, the turn back should not be made too sharply as an aircraft presents a larger target to the gunner when it is banking."
- "Probably our greatest danger will come from small arms fire from enemy troops although there is little doubt that the majority of these will be otherwise engaged at the time."

Mission Briefings

Briefings lasted nearly four hours at each of the nine B-24 Groups involved. Bomber crews were given intensive courses in loading and ejecting bundles.

Briefers stressed that crews had "20 seconds at most to get everything out. 15-30 seconds between squadrons" whose planes would all be flying level.

Drop Zone Wesel

The 44th BG led the 14th Combat Wing with 27 a/c carrying loads for US troops. The 491st (also 27 planes) flew in train with supplies for British troops. The 392nd split its force, with 13 planes assigned to both the 491st and the 44th. Its a/c that flew with the 491st had British bundles; of those who joined the 44th, 9 had British loads and 4 American loads.

392nd BG take-offs began at 9:30am. Since the a/c flew lower than 10,000 ft the entire mission, no one had to wear oxygen masks or the heavy flying suits needed for warmth at high altitudes.

Milk Run...

For some, it was a milk run. S/Sgt Lee Waggener, radio operator in Capt Robert K. Crowell's 577th Sqdn crew, wrote, "Today was the big day. We dropped supplies to the Sixth British Airborne Division which crossed near Wesel. We went in at about 30 ft with a ground speed of over 300 miles. When we crossed the river, we could see the ripples in the water made by the prop blasts. We didn't get a hole, but most of the ships caught hell... I rode in the waist from the I.P. on. Helped kick out the bags. Was so excited I forgot to wear my flak suits... I saw all of the war today that I ever want to see."

577th waist gunner Thomas H. Shrum, from 2/Lt Edwin E. Eyles' crew, recalled, "The low level mission was enjoyable because it was warm. I remember seeing a farmer plowing his field with one horse. All nice straight lines except—in the middle of the field was a burned out tank and the furrows circled around the tank. As we flew over him

the horse was scared and ran away. Looking back we could see the farmer waving his fists at us—and we could imagine the language. Our pilot stood that plane on a wing tip turning for home. At such a low altitude we were taking rifle fire from German troops. We lost one plane to ground fire that I saw."

Or Not a Milk Run

2/Lt John R. "Jack" Hummel and Crew

Per 576th copilot James E. Reynolds, "We took off and flew at around 500 feet to Wesel, Germany. We were to drop down to around 250 feet when we entered the drop zone. The supplies we were carrying were enclosed in pods and hung on racks in the bomb bay just like bombs.

Each pod had a parachute attached to it; a static line was attached to the airplane that would pull the static lines attached to the bomb racks. When the pods were dropped, the static line attached to the airplane would pull the parachute open and break the free fall of the pod. After the pods were dropped someone from the crew would go into the bomb bay and pull the static lines attached to the bomb rack back into the airplane so the bomb bay doors could be closed. Since there is little space walking the catwalk in the bomb bay, the person pulling the static lines back in could not wear a parachute.

"As we approached the drop area, we saw considerable smoke or haze covering the area and could hear small arms fire hitting the plane. Radio operator James Deaton stood at the entrance of the bomb bay waiting for the drop, so he could enter and pull the static lines. After the drop, James entered the bomb bay and that is when we started receiving intense ground fire from 20mm and 30mm shells.

"Jack was flying the plane at the time, and I kept glancing at the instrument panel for any signs of engine trouble. Shells kept hitting the aircraft and suddenly I noticed fire coming from #3 engine. I hollered at Jack and told him #3 was on fire and I was going to shut it down.

"I feathered the engine, cut off its gasoline supply, closed the cowl flaps and cut the electrical switches. The fire continued to burn. Jack hollered that #2 engine had been hit and oil pressure was dropping.

"We had slowed our air speed for the drop and with 2 engines out we could not gain altitude. Jack used what air speed we had to pull the airplane up to around 500 feet and hit the alarm bell button for everyone to bail out. He and I both knew there was no way we could get out before the plane crashed. I remember saying a short prayer, 'Lord, it is all up to you now.'

"Jack picked out the first field he could find so we could make a controlled crash. The fire on #3 continued to burn and just before we crashed Jack hollered for me to get on the rudders with him so I never saw the fire go out.

"I have no recollection of events just after the plane touched down. The first thing I remember was Jack asking me if I was hurt. I replied, 'I didn't get a scratch' and he replied, 'Oh, yes you did.' I then realized blood was running down in my face and the front of my flight suit was bloody.

"The crash had torn a large hole in the plane on my side of the cockpit. I crawled out through it and Jack followed. We stood about 20 feet from the plane and examined each

See Varsity on page 7

VARSITY from page 6

other's wounds. Jack had a bad cut on the back of his head that was bleeding and I had a cut on my forehead that was still bleeding. As we stood there, we noticed the ground kicking up about us and heard gunfire, but we did not realize we were being shot at.

"We then heard voices coming from behind and realized, for the first time, that the crew had not bailed out. We saw gunners Hollis Powell and Paul Keagle and engineer Herb Finney standing beside what was left of the plane. Gunner Elmer Milchak was leaning out the waist window. They had all been in the back of the plane.

"We were getting rifle fire from German soldiers that were walking toward us. The firing stopped after one of the crew opened a parachute and waved it at the soldiers.

"We walked over to the crew and found out that Elmer had been killed as he was coming out the waist window. Our concern then was about navigator Barney Knudson and nose gunner Ellis Morse in the nose of the aircraft, for there was no way they could have survived the crash. Nor James Deaton who had been in the bomb bay.

"About this time, the German soldiers arrived and Elmer's body was removed from the plane. The plane burned up soon after we got away. As best we could determine, the three missing crewmen were not in the plane.

"Before the soldiers led us away, I said the 23rd Psalm over Elmer's body.

"The soldiers that captured us led us across a field to a Chateau. After a few minutes, a soldier came over and led me into a room where there were two German soldiers, a captain and a corporal. The corporal did the talking. First he wanted to know my name, etc. I gave him my name, rank and Army serial number.

"The corporal asked if I spoke German and I said, 'No.' He asked what language I spoke and I said, 'Only English.' He then said, 'You are an officer in the American army and can speak only one language, and I am a corporal in the German Army and I can speak five languages fluently.' He then asked, 'What do American schools teach?'

"He kept asking questions and I kept giving name, rank and serial number. Finally, he said, 'We have ways of making people talk.' Then the captain spoke to the corporal in German. The corporal left and the Captain said to me in English, 'Lieutenant, he is not going to harm you.' Soon after, a German soldier came in and, after the captain spoke to him, he led me to a room filled with dozens of wounded Nazis. There, a German medic told me that if captured by Allies, he wanted to be sent to the United States.

"Other Germans were rushing about operating radio equipment. One soldier was peddling a stationary bicycle attached to a generator that provided electricity. Soldiers began to burn military papers in a large metal barrel. A Nazi commander told me and Hummel that the Germans were leaving. He asked us to tell the Americans that the crew had been treated well and requested that we reciprocate by telling our superiors to care for the German wounded that were being left in the farmhouse.

"I soon heard American voices and I shouted, 'There are G.I.s in here!' as I had seen in many movies where they threw a hand grenade into the room before checking it out.



Someone in the 513th Paratroop Division took this photo showing pilot Jack Hummel (left) and copilot Jim Reynolds (right). One of the paratroopers

is lying on the ground in front of Hummel. The people at the top are German prisoners, apparently listening to someone giving instructions.

"Next morning, Hummel and I were put to use guarding German POWs. We later crossed the River Rhine on a boat and my wounds were attended to at a hospital. I eventually got transportation to Brussels and to Wendling.

"Once home, I soon found out that my buddies had given us up for dead and drank a few rounds in our memory which they charged to my account—but I refused to pay for the drinks!"

It was later learned that Denton had either fallen out or been hit by rifle fire as he waited to gather the static lines. Morse said he and Knudson bailed out but "his chute did not open and by the grace of God mine did as my feet touched the ground." In a 1988 letter, he wrote, "I have often wondered if I survived the lowest free fall parachute jump ever completed by anyone."

2/Lt Herchel E. Proctor's crew

Per 576th Sqdn copilot Carroll Russell, "Our B-24 had been altered by removing the floor panel where the belly gun turret would have been. This left a gaping hole just back of the bomb bay section of the plane. Around this hole were the crates of supplies. Waist gunners George Kouzes and Jessie Gill were to push them out over the target area.

"We made a low level flight over the North Sea to the drop zone. I remember the scene clearly because we were so low. It was like a scene in the movies with much smoke and with the ground littered with parachutes and gliders askew. Some gliders were upside down, others were missing wings.

"With our load out, we turned back immediately, but one doesn't turn a B-24 around quickly. The beachhead was small and we necessarily flew over German held territory as we turned. At our low altitude we were an easy mark for German ground fire and we were hit immediately. One engine quit and as soon as I could feather the propeller, we were hit again back in George's area of the plane. I called back for a damage report but got no answer. I feared everyone was dead.

"I tried several times before Jessie answered and reported that they had been fighting fires and too busy to answer. There were no injuries. Meanwhile, Proctor had asked

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navigator Stanley Plagenhoef for a heading to the nearest airstrip. Stan found one some twenty minutes away.

"Just then a second engine died from fuel starvation due to the ruptured lines from the shots. We could not gain altitude with one engine gone, and with two out we were not able to maintain what we had. Proctor called for more power and I shoved the throttles through the safety wire into and past the red line. It didn't help.

"Obviously, we were not going to reach the airstrip, so we both began searching the ground for an opening—any clearing in the woods. Mind you we were just a hundred meters or so above the trees. I notified the crew to assume their crash positions. None of them, other than the flight engineer on the deck with us, had any idea of our situation.

"Proctor spotted a field just ahead and ordered the wheels down. I questioned him, believing a belly landing might be safer. He repeated his order and down went the landing gear and then the flaps. In this low-level ride, perhaps thirty minutes in all, I don't remember seeing a town or even a house; but, we were pretty busy and not sightseeing.

"As we came to a clearing I spotted a rock wall we had to clear before reaching the field. I used that wall as my benchmark to pass over before I threw the crash bar (a switch to kill all circuits to lessen the chance of fire). We then touched down with as nice a landing as Proctor ever made. The ground was soft which slowed and shortened our roll. I remember a brick house at the far end of the field, which was looming larger by the second. Then the nose wheel broke back and we stopped abruptly, some good distance from the house.

"We gathered away from the plane and ministered to radio operator Denver Kerfoot who suffered a broken leg when he was thrown out through the cargo hole."

George Kouzes recalled, "Many people gathered by their homes and our plane. We were within 75 to 100 yards of going into the houses if we hadn't stopped! Then many gathered out around the plane. Among them a 3 to 4 year old boy and his mother. The boy was crying because our radio operator lay on the ground hurt badly. The boy's mother could not speak English, but managed to tell us the boy was crying for our crewman that was hurt so bad."

Thankfully, their Liberator had gotten them to Allied-controlled Belgium.

One More Casualty

After receiving heavy ground fire and with radio operator S/Sgt Hervy V. Latour and waist gunner S/Sgt Raymond Hamment wounded, 576th pilot 2/Lt Lester Frazier landed at a U.S. airfield at Sint-Truiden, Belgium. He later said the bottom of the B-24 looked like a sieve from all the gunfire.

Both injured airmen were treated at a field hospital but S/Sgt Hamment died of his injuries later that day at 298th General Hospital in Liege, Belgium.

Returning Planes

The 577th's #41-28875 overshot the runway due to brake failure. 2/Lt Campbell McKellar's ship had received small arms fire that wounded radio operator Sgt Nicholas Bova and waist gunner Sgt Theodore Hodge. The aircraft was salvaged at Wendling.

The other 392nd bombers returned around 3pm, with

nine having been hit by small arms fire.

Target: Stormede

The 392nd's second mission of the day was against a German airfield at Stormede used by night fighters. Per the 392nd BG's main briefing, "This type of a/c is used tactically for attacks on bridges; in view of this morning's mission, it is vital to keep communications over the river."

Briefings were held at 11:30am and ten planes took off at 1:50pm. A total of 440 100-pound General Purpose bombs were dropped with excellent results. No fighters were engaged and flak was meager. Returning planes, none damaged, landed at Wendling around 8:00pm.



Top: This photo of B-24 #42-50650, with 2/Lt Robert K. Crowell and crew aboard, was taken by someone in #42-28916, 2/Lt William E. Smith's 576th Sqdn crew. Bottom: gliders as far as the eye can see.

8th AFHS Reunion October 21 - 25, 2020 Memphis, Tennessee

Wednesday, October 21

1:00pm— 6:00pm Reunion Registration open
6:00pm— 7:00pm Complimentary Welcome Reception,
followed by dinner on your own

See REUNION on page 9

REUNION from page 8

7:00pm– 9:00pm 8AFHS Board Meeting
7:00pm– until 392nd BGMA Hospitality Suite open

Thursday, October 22

7:30am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast
8:00am– 12:00pm Reunion Registration Open
9:15am– 1:30pm Historic Memphis (City Tour)
1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration Open
2:00pm– 3:00pm Curator's Corner
3:15pm– 5:00pm "Honoring the Memories"
6:00pm– 9:00pm Cash Bar Open
7:00pm– 9:00pm Buffet dinner and program: Legacy of the 8th—8th AF Commander

Friday, October 23

7:30am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast
8:00am– 12:00pm Reunion Registration Open
8:00am– 9:15am **392nd BGMA Membership Meeting**
9:30am– 12:30pm Ye Olde Pub—B-17 (Olive Branch Airport)
1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration Open
1:45pm– 3:00pm Downed Behind Enemy Lines—Escape & Evasion—Lynn David
3:15pm– 4:30pm Q & A WWII Vets
6:00pm– 9:00pm Cash Bar Open
7:00pm– 9:00pm **392nd BGMA Rendezvous Dinner**

Saturday, October 24

7:30am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast
8:00am– 12:00pm Reunion Registration Open
8:45am– 10:15am 8AFHS General Membership Meeting
12:00pm– 4:00pm 8AFHS Board Meeting
12:00pm– 4:00pm Graceland Tour
1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration open
6:00pm– 9:00pm Cash Bar Open
7:00pm– 10:00pm Veterans Photo/Gala Dinner/Program

Sunday, October 25

7:30am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast

Registration Instructions

Please see the information about the hotel on page 10 and make your reservations immediately. The hotel has a liberal cancellation policy—in the event you are unable to attend the reunion, you will be able to cancel

your reservation without penalty within 48 hours of your scheduled check-in time. However, if you wait until the last minute to book your room you may not receive the reunion rate or rooms may no longer be available. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that our vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee.

Canceling your hotel reservation does NOT cancel your reunion activities.

Once your hotel reservation is confirmed, proceed with activity registration and completely fill out the registration form on page 11.

Fill out your name as you wish it to be on your name tag—and for any others registering with you. The principal attendee **MUST** be a current member of the Society to register for the reunion. You may JOIN and/or RENEW directly on the registration form. *If you are a WWII veteran, and/or affiliated with the 392nd BG, please say so at the appropriate places on the form.*

ALL lunches and dinner meals are priced separately. Breakfast buffet is complimentary from October 21-25. Be sure to select your entree if you plan to attend the Saturday evening gala.

There are three tour options. Please read the information below and then make your selection(s) on the form.

Once you have completed your registration form, please total up the amount owed and include a check or money order (payable to **8th AFHS**) or complete the credit card information on the form and mail to:

8th AFHS
68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143-4769

If paying by credit card, you may scan the registration form and email it to: ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org.

ALL registration forms **MUST** be received by Sept. 25, 2020 in order to guarantee your place. If you have any questions or encounter problems, please contact 8th AFHS Managing Director Debra Kujawa at (912) 748-8884 or ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org.

All reunion information and forms are available at 8thAFHS.org and <https://www.b24.net/reunions.htm>.

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

REUNION from page 9

TOUR OPTIONS. Driver and Staff gratuities are included in the tour prices. All tours require a minimum of 45 participants. Please be at the bus boarding area at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled departure time.

HISTORICAL MEMPHIS (CITY TOUR), THURSDAY, OCT 21, 2020. The tour of historical Memphis begins with a driving tour on an enlightening, eye-opening journey. We will explore the city of Memphis and see many of these sites: the Lorraine Motel; the Peabody Hotel; Victorian Village; Orpheum Theater; St. Jude Children's Research Hospital; Redbird Stadium; Historic Cotton Row; Court Square, the heart of 19th Century Memphis; Hotel Chisca, where DJ Dewey Phillips played Elvis for the first time; and Sun Studios.

Enjoy time to explore the pedestrian areas of downtown Memphis with its quaint shops and restaurants, including the Historic South Main Arts District OR Beale Street at your leisure.

9:15am board bus, 1:30pm back at hotel
\$46/Person includes bus, guide and gratuities
Lunch on your own

B-17 YE OLDE PUB AT OLIVE BRANCH AIRPORT FRIDAY, OCT 22, 2020. We are excited to welcome *Ye Olde Pub* back to Olive Branch Airport and to our 2020 reunion in Memphis! This B-17 has been painted in the colors and markings of the 379th BG, home to the original *Pub*. *A Higher Call*, by Adam Makos and Larry Alexander, tells the story of American pilot Charles "Charlie" Brown, and battle-hardened German pilot Franz Stigler, who had flown over 480 missions. On 20 Dec 1943, after a bombing run on Bremen, Germany, Brown's *Ye Olde Pub* was severely damaged by ground fire and Stigler was dispatched to shoot it down—but instead risked his own life by making a different decision. If you are unfamiliar with the details, this experience will fill in all the blanks of this incredible true story.

9:30am board bus, 12:30pm back at hotel
\$26/Person includes bus, guide and gratuities
Lunch on your own

GRACELAND, SATURDAY, 24 OCT 2020. Today, we will experience Elvis! Graceland is now one of the first historic homes in the US to offer an interactive iPad tour that provides a fully immersive experience to guests. As tour participants pull into Graceland, you will each be handed a pair of gold Elvis-style sunglasses to keep as souvenirs. Today's iPad tour is narrated by celebrated actor and Elvis fan John Stamos.

Visitors will take a multimedia tour of the iconic music landmark while exploring content and hot spots which, when activated, allow users to dive deeper into the story of Elvis's life through unique archival audio, video and photo elements.

The journey through the mansion includes the decorated funky styles of the Jungle Room, racquetball court and Meditation Garden—where Elvis rests. Guests will have the opportunity to explore the mansion upon arrival.

After the mansion tour, guests will visit the newly completed entertainment plaza, *Elvis Presley's Memphis*. This \$45 million addition enables music fans, pop culture enthusiasts and Memphis visitors to follow the path that Elvis took, surrounding themselves with the things that he loved, and experience the sights and sounds of the city that inspired him. We will become fully immersed in Elvis's life and career like never before.

We will walk among some of Elvis's favorite automobiles, including his iconic Pink Cadillac, Stutz Blackhawk, 1956 Cadillac Eldorado, Dino Ferrari, Mercedes Benz limousine, Rolls Royce sedans and more.

Elvis's time in the US Army is well-chronicled and the journey is a fascinating one! There are several food choices in the entertainment plaza.

12:00pm board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel
\$98/Person includes bus, guide, and gratuities
Lunch/snacks on your own

Holiday Inn Memphis Airport & Conference Center 2240 Democrat Road, Memphis, TN 38132 (800) 465-4329 or (901) 332-1130 for Front Desk

The hotel features the *Corridor Restaurant*, a full service bar, and a sundry shop for snacks and necessities. It is located just 2 miles from Elvis Presley's iconic Graceland, 7 miles from the North Mississippi Shopping District, 6.5 miles to Downtown Memphis and famous Beale St., and 12 miles from West Memphis Arkansas's Southland Gaming and Dog Racing. It is a short drive from the Cooper Young and Overton Square nightlife district and fine restaurants. The Staxx Museum, National Civil Rights Museum, Orpheum Theatre, and Bass Pro's Pyramid are all within an 8 mile drive. The Memphis Zoo is just 10 minutes away; the Brooks Art Museum and Botanical Gardens are a *must* see during your visit to Memphis!

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Call the hotel numbers above to make your reservation.
GROUP NAME: **AFH**, 8th Air Force Historical Society
DATES: October 21-25, 2020
RATE: \$110 + 8.5% tax + \$2.00. Rates are offered 3 days prior and 3 days post reunion based on availability.
CUT OFF DATE: September 15, 2020.
CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or attendee will be charged one night room rate plus tax.

SHUTTLE SERVICE: If flying into Memphis, there is a complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport and the hotel. After collecting your bags, go to **Pole 16** just outside; the shuttle runs every half hour. You may call the hotel directly regarding the shuttle, at (901) 332-1130.

UPSCALE AMENITIES: Enjoy complimentary wireless High Speed Internet in all public areas, plus signature amenities you'll only find at Holiday Inn. Wake up energized after a restful night's sleep in our recently refurbished rooms; stay connected in our lobby's business center; stay fit with a visit to our well-equipped fitness center. **Parking is always complimentary.**

WHEELCHAIR RENTAL. Please call ScootAround at (888) 441-7575 or visit www.ScootAround.com for more information or to make reservations.



REGISTRATION FORM

46th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

Holiday Inn Memphis Airport, Memphis, TN
October 21-25, 2020

REGISTRATION CUT-OFF DATE IS September 30, 2020	Price p/p	# of People	TOTAL
<u>DUES</u> The principal attendee <i>MUST</i> be a member of the 8th AFHS to register for this reunion. If you are NOT a CURRENT member, please pay your yearly dues here:	\$ 40	#	\$
<u>REGISTRATION FEE</u>	\$ 45	#	\$
Registration fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel:	\$ 30	#	\$
<u>BOX LUNCHES</u> Box lunches will be available from the hotel to attendees on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. You MUST PREORDER THEM HERE! Please indicate # of each kind of sandwich per day: HAM or TURKEY Thurs: Ham ___ or Turkey ___ Fri: Ham ___ or Turkey ___ Sat: Ham ___ or Turkey ___	\$ 18	#	\$
<u>DINNERS</u>			
Thursday, Oct 22 — EVENING DINNER BUFFET Memphis Style favorites	\$ 27	#	\$
Friday, Oct 23—RENDEZVOUS DINNER Chicken Marsala	\$ 29	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 24—GALA BANQUET (Please select ONE entrée)			
Sliced London Broil with Bordelaise Sauce	\$ 34	#	\$
Pan Seared Salmon with White Wine Beurre Blanc	\$ 34	#	\$
Vegetarian plate(s) Please indicate [X]: Thurs ___ # ___ Fri ___ # ___ Sat ___ # ___	\$ 29	#	\$
TOUR OPTIONS:			
Thursday, Oct 22: Historic Memphis Tour—Lunch on your own	\$ 46	#	\$
Friday, Oct 23: Tour of “Ye Olde Pub” B17—Lunch on your own	\$ 26	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 24: Graceland Tour—Lunch on your own	\$ 98	#	\$
Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS			\$

Please PRINT. If registering a WWII veteran here, please list their name first.

MEMBER NAME (for name tag): _____

WWII Veteran _____ BG/FG Affiliation (for Rendezvous Dinner seating): _____ POW: _____ (Korea, Vietnam, etc.): _____

SPOUSE or PERSON attending: _____

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

DAYTIME PH #: _____ EMAIL: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____ PH #: _____

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PHYSICAL OR DIETARY RESTRICTIONS: _____

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD — M/C; VISA; or AmEx (**a 3% convenience fee will be added**):

CARD #: _____ EXP. DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ *Your contact information will only be shared with attendees.*

MAIL completed form with check or credit card info to: 8th AFHS ~ 68 Kimberlys Way ~ Jasper, GA 30143-4769

IF paying by credit card, you may SCAN and email form to: ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you've really stopped to look fear in the face."

God bless our service veterans who found the courage to put their fears, weaknesses and uncertainty behind them and faced the real fear of evil in our world. What a different world we would all live in if they had not mustered the confidence to complete their missions and follow their orders. Truly, they chose to put their lives at risk for an unknown outcome. We should all be grateful for their courage and strength, as our world is better for their sacrifices. We have the freedom to choose our life pathway, to travel and move about uninhibited and to agree and disagree with our appointed leaders. We may not agree with some of the course of our nation but we still maintain the right to support or deny. As we move through the politics, elections and difficulty that exist in our nation at this time, let us not forget that this freedom was earned and continues to be earned by the sacrifices of our service people.

It does not have to be Veterans Day, D-Day or Presidents' Day to consider this. Their sacrifices are a part of our daily life and lifestyle. Let's be patient through the political process that comes with an election year as we aspire to find leaders with strength, courage and confidence.

God Bless America.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

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

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Gay R. Hyre, 579, November 20, 2018
Louis E. Nika, 578, June 4, 2019
Robert L. Mitchell, 578, January 17, 2020
Meredith M. Church, 578, December 11, 2019