

# NEWS



## 392nd BG Memorial Association

VOLUME 4

NOVEMBER, 1989

### WENDLING MEMORIAL REDEDICATED

#### U.S., BRITISH HEAR GILBERT EULOGIZE GROUP'S LOST 747

By Birdie Schmidt Larrick

Wendling, Norfolk, Oct. 7, 1989. It was a typical damp, cool, misty morning. There were 30 Veteran Representatives of the 392nd Bomb Group gathered along with their spouses and children, military and government people and local villagers totaling over a hundred to rededicate the refurbished memorial to the 747 killed in action and all who served at the Wendling base during WW II. You who were there in spirit and through your donations can be very proud of this memorial. As we were protected from the weather under a huge green and white striped tent, we were guided through the rededication ceremony by the Chairman of the Memorial Committee, Carrol W. Cheek. It was appropriately a British-American affair. There were greetings and expressions of gratitude for our past services to each other from H. M.'s Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk, Mr. Timothy Coleman; Vice Commander of the US Third Air Force, Col. Edward Chase; Chairman of the Norfolk County Council, Mr. John Birkbeck; North Norfolk Member of Parliament, Mr. Ralph Howell; US Air Force Attache of the American Embassy in London, Col. Robert Perry; and the Chairman of the Beeston with Bittering Parish Council, Mrs. Jill Scott, J.P.D.L.. Our own President of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial

Association and final Commanding Officer of the 392nd, Col. Lawrence G. Gilbert (Ret.), gave the inspiring dedicatory address eulogizing those who gave their lives for us, the living, and expressing our responsibility to those who died that they will not have died in vain. He received a standing ovation. All involved were emotionally touched by the ceremony.

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J. D. Long, Charles Dye, Myron Keilman, and Cecil Rothrock are shown, participating in the wreath-laying part of the ceremony at Wendling.

## WENDLING MEMORIAL REDEDICATED

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With the concluding dedicatory circle of veterans around the memorial, the laying of the dedication wreath at its base followed by a moment of silence, taps, the prayers of dedication and benediction by Canon Donal Munt and the Retirement of the Colors, eyes were misty along with the weather.

We needed that cheering cup of hot tea or coffee and sweets that the Beeston Women's Institute provided for us at the reception immediately following the ceremony. It was thoughtfully held in a nearby farm building with some heat provided where we could happily converse with our British hosts and friends. Later we were divided by Patty and Keith Roberts, our tour conductors, for lunch at two nearby pubs, the Ploughshare and the Rose Cottage.

The Rose Cottage was special to John and Peg Malloy for that is where they met when John was stationed at Wendling. On the way over to the Rose Cottage, the bus driver was kind enough to stop a moment as we passed Peg's grandparents' home. Then it was interesting to hear their comments about how things and the Rose Cottage had changed.

Speaking of things changing, of course, the base has. Turkeys are raised there now. Nissen huts are either gone or rusting away. What few bomb shelters remain are filled with water or dirt and overgrown. Some buildings are converted to other uses such as the Combat Officers' Club, which now houses used auto parts. A part of a mural of Liberators are still seen flying over a bricked-up door.

If you decide to visit the memorial, don't do it alone. That's the advice of Denis and Hilary Duffield, now formal tour directors for the 392nd at Wendling. Denis was a boy of 14 in 1943 involved in the grocery trade in East Dereham. He was captured by this air base and

through the years has collected memorabilia and compiled a huge scrapbook about it. He is still seeking information about the B-24 and its crew that came down at his front door about 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 31, 1944. He has various things that grateful crew members gave him for his help and he would like to know who they were. If any of who who are reading this identify with this incident, please contact Denis at Jubilee Cottage, Rushmeadow Road, Scarning, Dereham N R 192 N W, Norfolk, England. Those of you who want to visit the memorial please contact Denis and Hilary at the above address. They will be more than happy to welcome you and show you around.

The original obelisk memorial was conceived by Col. Joseph Bush, the Group Ground Executive Officer, and was erected at what was the entrance to the base shortly after the war, and was the first memorial erected at any of the 8th Air Force bases.

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Cecil Rothrock and Mary MacTavish inspect the new base of the renovated obelisk at Wendling.

## WENDLING MEMORIAL REDEDICATED

(continued from page 2)

Over the years, time took its toll, in spite of determined efforts of the villagers to maintain it.

The Memorial Association is indebted to Tom and Jill Scott for their generous donation of the expanded grounds and their unselfish dedication to the upgrading project.

We are grateful to the people of Kings Lynn for the guided walking tours of the city; to His Worship Mayor Leslie Daubney, Madam Mayoress Judith Daubney and Deputy Mayor Mrs. Dorothy Garwood for their warm welcoming reception and to our host Mr. Frank Shone, his wife Shelia and the staff at the Duke's Head for their hospitality.

Some of us enjoyed a historical trip to nearby Blickling Hall. Others became acquainted with the Memorial Library of the Second Air Division in Norwich. Librarians Phyllis Hunt and Tony North warmly welcomed us.

On Sunday, October 8, a clear, sunny, windy day, we made a poignant tour of the American Cemetery at Madingly. There Howard Ebersole, John Conrad, Joe Whittaker and others led a fitting tribute to those of the 392nd who are interred there or whose names are inscribed on the Memorial Wall.

To those of you who will be attending the 2 AD Association's 42nd Annual Convention at Hilton Head Island, S. C., November 2-5, look for Ben Jones. Ben is a young Denis Duffield who is very knowledgeable about the 392nd. He will be the guest of J. D. and Emily Long. You will be delighted and amazed by this 17-year-old. He had quite a display about the 392nd at the Plowshare. Make yourself acquainted with him; it will be your gain.

The 392nd Bomb Group had three commanders during WWII: Col. Irvine A. Rendle, Col. Lorin L. Johnson, and Lt.Col. Lawrence G. Gilbert.

## B-24 MEMORIAL AT DAYTON

Dec. 7 is "Pearl Harbor Day" to us, and on this coming Dec. 7, a memorial will be dedicated to all those who flew and supported the B-24.

It will be held at the Air Force Museum, Dayton, Ohio, at 1030 at the Museum theater. At 1100, a tree and stone in the park outside the museum will be dedicated.

Bob Vickers, a 392nd member and author of the definitive history, "The Liberators From Wendling", is in charge.

The 392nd has its own tree and stone at the Memorial Park, dedicated in 1985 after an effort led by Bob Lane.

All 392nd personnel within travel distance please show up for this formation.

(The 8 AF NEWS, just out, has this on the 9th, but a check with Bob Vickers reveals that the 7th is the correct date.)

## 392nd MEETINGS

The regular meetings of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association are held in conjunction with the regular meetings of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the 2nd Air Division Association.

The 392nd always has a Group dinner and a hospitality room at these gatherings.

In addition, the Association from time to time schedules other reunions, as the stand-alone one at Tulsa in 1987 and at Fort Worth during the 50th anniversary celebration of the B-24 at Fort Worth in 1989.

1989 is history, but 392nd people could start now to plan for 1990. 2 AD meets at Norwich 25-31 July, and there is now a waiting list. 8 AF meets 30 Sept.-4 Oct. at Las Vegas. Watch this newsletter and those of 2 AD and 8 AF for further particulars.

The 392nd was formed at Fort George Wright, Washington, on 26 January 1942.

## WENDLING REVISITED

There are only a few traces left of the old base at Wendling. The memorial, refurbished and rededicated now, is of course of the most interest to returning 392nd veterans.



The combat officers' mess, shown above, now serves as the home of a concern that salvages automobile engines, mostly of the large and powerful type.



Only a few Nissen huts survive, and these are thought to be the 576th's combat officers quarters. They are presently being used for farm storage purposes.

The runways are there, now serving as a floor for huge barns housing turkeys. The old bomb dump is there, largely unchanged. The English are thinking of making a park out of it.



A few years ago, a wall in the former combat officers' mess was taken down, which revealed the old fireplace and the decorated wall. (Ed. Anybody know who painted this?)



The latrines, those cold, nonflushable necessities. MacTavish used to take off the seat on a cold night and put it behind the stove in the barracks, so that it would be warm in the morning.

## 8 AF, DENVER

Some 1800 were in attendance at the 8 AF Historical Society's annual convention held Oct, 4-9 in Denver, reports Cliff Peterson, 392nd's vice president for 8 AF affairs.

An impressive ceremony was held at the Air Force Academy, and a flower and wreath were laid in memory of lost 392nd personnel by Bob Egan.

392nd representation was not heavy because several were at the Wendling Memorial rededication, but the following were present and accounted for: Cliff Peterson, Bob Egan, A. B. Alexander, W. F. Davis, E. F. Bassett, T. G. Hester, O. F. Dobson, S. J. Maloukis, and Bob Vickers.

### TWICE-TOLD TALES

or, The Legends of the 392nd  
As told to Jim Goar  
by J. D. Long

There was this first pilot, Group, Squadron, and crew forever unnamed, who, when the flak was heavy or enemy fighters were in the vicinity, would turn the aircraft over to the co-pilot and go stand in the bomb bay, ready to evacuate the aircraft.

Naturally, the crew took a dim view of this, and set about finding a way of correcting the situation.

The next time the pilot went into his act, one of the crew opened the bomb bay doors, and another hit the bail-out button.

The pilot jumped, the crew closed the bomb bay doors, and the aircraft proceeded to the target and returned to base.

### TWICE-TOLD TALES

Or, The Legends of the 392nd  
As told to Jim Goar  
By Lawrence G. Gilbert

The deputy commander's mission on D-Day was to take a P -47, scout the target and monitor the bomber stream.

This entailed getting up very early, and several cups of coffee

were consumed before take-off.

After a couple of hours, the mission was accomplished, and the deputy commander suddenly felt a great need. While familiar with the pilotage requirements of the P -47, he did not know the domestic plumbing system and could not find the relief tube.

Heading back for England at full throttle, he landed at the first field that came into view, which happened to be an RAF base. He pulled the aircraft off the runway as soon as he could, and proceeded immediately to take care of the great need.

Suddenly aware of a presence, he looked up into the eyes of a WAAF who had brought her jeep to lead him to a parking spot.

"Feeling better, Colonel?", she asked.

### PROFILE

Capt. Carrol W. Cheek was a first pilot assigned to the 578th, arriving at Wendling in April, 1944, and returning to the US after 33 missions in October.

Re-entering college after being released from the Service in 1945, he earned a bachelor's degree at Bowling Green and an MBA from the University of Michigan.

He practiced as a CPA, and founded several businesses; banking, lumber, and several in the food business. He is a Director-Trustee of Hanover College in Indiana.

Carrol is known to the Memorial Association as the indefatigable leader of the drive to refurbish the memorial at Wendling. He made innumerable trips to England and the Continent, lobbied the Memorial cause at Washington, and rallied the help and participation of the Wendling neighbors.

He and wife Mabel live at 415 Bayview Drive, Belleair, FL 34616, and have a son and two daughters and six grandchildren.

The 392nd flew 7,404 sorties and dropped 17,393 tons of bombs in WWII.

## PROFILES

John M. "Molly" Malloy was M/Sgt. Malloy when he was the 578th's aircraft inspector at Wendling. A member of the original cadre, Molly joined the 392nd at Davis-Monthan Field.

Having met a lovely English lass, Peg, at the Olde Crown pub at Fransham, Molly married her in 1946.

Staying with aviation work, he was with two helicopter companies, retiring in 1983 as senior engineer in charge of research and development at Boeing Helicopter Company.

They live at 244 Cherry Street, Sharon Hill, PA 19079, and have three sons.

Willard T. Pennington was Major Pennington at Wendling, the ground executive of the 577th.

He joined the Group at Alamogordo in June 1943 and was with it the 23 months it was overseas at Wendling.

He was active in the AF reserve, retiring as Lt. Col.

An employee of Scott Paper Company before the war, he returned to it in 1945 and served in several executive positions, retiring at Houston in 1977 as Division Sales Manager.

He and wife Ruth live at 5313 Green Tree, Houston TX 77056, and have one daughter and one grandchild.

Sgt. Harold Bandelier was the Group Commander's driver, chauffeuring Col.'s Rendle, Johnson, and Gilbert. He joined the 392nd early, at Biggs Field in March 1943. He cheerfully drove whatever staff car that was available, be it British or American.

After the war he returned to Indiana and entered the carpenter trade. He established his own construction company, and retired from it in 1984.

He lives with wife Marcella at 14622 Harper Road, New Haven, IN 36774. They spend winters at Haines, City, Fl. They have five children.

Harry M. Vasconcellos was 1st Lt. Vasconcellos when he joined the Group in Sept. 1944 as a Mickey operator. He flew with the 578th and the 579th squadrons. After the war, he became a registered pharmacist and managed a drug store for 23 years.

His address, along with that of wife Edythe's, is 1955 W. Greenbriar Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85023. They have two sons and three grandchildren.

Jerome K. Jones was mayor of Oceanside, Calif. 1960-61. While not serving his fellow citizens as a public servant, he is in the furniture business at Solana Beach, Calif.

He joined the 392nd at Wendling in Oct. 1944, a S/Sgt. upper turret gunner in the 576th Squadron.

He is married to Elizabeth, and their address is P. O. Box 8224, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067. They have two children.

Col. Robert M. Berger, US Army (Ret) was 2nd Lt. Berger, co-pilot of the Clover crew when he joined the 392nd, 576th Sqdn, in July 1943.

Berger was shot down on the Fredrichshaven mission Mar. 18, 1944, when 15 aircraft of the 392nd failed to return, the heaviest losses of the war. He, with the rest of the crew, parachuted from their burning aircraft, and Berger spent the rest of the war as a POW.

He returned to the service in 1950, with the 45th Infantry Division in Korea. He served at various US bases, with the airborne artillery in Europe, Army advisor Thailand, and Army advisor California National Guard, retiring in 1969.

After retirement, he earned a college degree and taught at American River Junior college for five years.

He lives with wife Jean at 5600 Jolly Court, Fair Oaks, CA 95628, and they have three children and five grandchildren.

## PROFILES

Lt. Don Clover's crew was among the very first of the replacements that reached the 392nd at Wendling. On the same orders from Topeka Air Base were crews commanded by Alfred Scarlata, James Roper, Andrew Champion, Henry LoPresto, Leonard Barnes, Charles Lowell, and John Becker. Also on these orders were (then) Capt. Vance "Pappy" Cornelius, Group Engineering Officer, and (then) Major Lorin Johnson, later to become Group Commander.

Clover's 22nd was the infamous Fredrichshafen mission on March 18, 1944. 15 aircraft and crews did not return to Wendling, the heaviest loss sustained by the 392nd in the war.

Clover's aircraft was on fire and retardants had been exhausted, so the crew bailed out and all made it to the ground. Clover was a POW until April 29, 1945, when Patton's Third Army took the stalag at Moosburg. Patton himself came charging into the compound, an event Clover will never forget.

After the war, Don was in sales, ending his career in the travel trailer business, from which he retired in 1977.

Don and wife Anne live at 3012 California Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608. They have three children and three grandchildren.

Cpl. Edward Batenick was in the 577th and 579th squadrons. He joined the Group in March 1943 at Biggs Field.

After the war, he was an aircraft flight line mechanic at Greater Pittsburgh airport in the Air National Guard, retiring as M/Sgt.

He and spouse Irene live at 616 Lafayette Drive, Clairton, PA 15025, and have two daughters and three grandchildren.

William Edward Smith was a 2nd Lt. and first pilot when he joined the Group at Wendling Dec. 20, 1944. Assigned to the 576th, he flew 26 missions, including the last one flown by the 8th AF on April 25, 1945.

He was on active duty in Korea and Japan, and was in the Reserves until 1982, retiring as Lt. Col. In 19 years of military flying, he amassed 3400 hours and is a Command Pilot.

In civilian life, he became vice-president of an insurance company, retiring in 1985.

He is married to Mary Aletta Smith, and they live at 3022 Talisman Dr., Dallas, TX 75229. They have two sons and four grandchildren.

S/Sgt. Arthur E. Egan was a tail gunner on the Charles Bell crew, joining the 392nd at Wendling in March 1944. He was shot down on his 23rd mission and was interned in Sweden.

He re-enlisted in 1946, and was stationed in Panama and Perrin Field, Texas. During the Korean war he went to Japan as a gunner in the 3rd Bomb Group, and was severely wounded on his second mission. He spent the next four years at Letterman and Walter Reed hospitals.

Recovered, he re-entered civilian life and earned the B. S. and Master's degrees and then taught elementary education for 20 years.

He and wife Vivian live at 2619 LaFayette Ave., Winter Park, FL 32789-1372, and have two children.

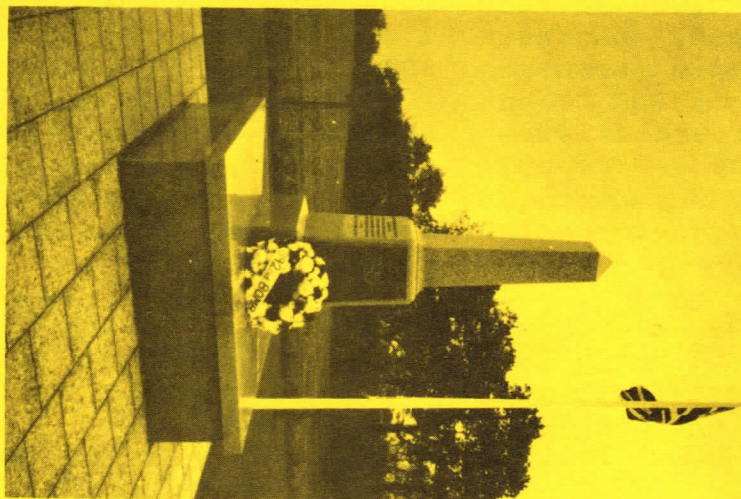
### FOLDED WINGS

Rudolph H. Dixon, 579  
Kenneth Fahrenbruch, 578  
Emmett W. Fore, Hq.  
George E. Graham, 577  
Michael J. McBride, Hq.  
John D. Turney, 578

# NEWS



392nd BG Memorial Association



THE REFURBISHED MEMORIAL AT WENDLING

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