



MISSIONS TO NORWAY

By mid-November 1943, the 392nd had flown just seven diversion and eight combat missions. On the 16th and 18th, though, the Group would fly two of its longest sorties of the war—1,400 miles round-trip to Norway.

The 392nd acquitted itself well on both of these daunting missions.

16 Nov 1943: Rjukan

The primary target for the B-24s was the German airfield near Oslo at Kjeller, with the secondary a hydro-electric plant at Vemork near Rjukan. B-17s focused on a molybdenum mine at Knaben; the metal is used to harden steel and this mine was the only source still available to the Germans.

To conserve fuel, the bomb load was only ten 500-pounders per B-24 and the bombing altitude was lowered to 12,000 feet.

The 392nd dispatched 18 planes. Extremely poor weather and darkness made assembly difficult. Pilots were flying on instruments while trying to avoid icing up. Four 392nd planes aborted as they couldn't find the formation and one more turned back because of mechanical problems. The other 13 planes finally assembled at 20,000 feet and departed Cromer.

Eventually, 29 B-24s from the 93rd, 389th, 44th, and 392nd BGs established a composite formation.

The weather was clear but cold and the planes got to Norway without incident. However, as they neared Oslo, the cloud layer below built up so much that the formation had to divert to the secondary target.

"Heavy Water"

At the early morning briefing, 578th copilot 2/Lt Lou Stephens and tail gunner S/Sgt Joe McNiel remember

hearing that the assigned target was a heavy water plant. The hydro-electric facility near Rjukan, opened in 1911, produced nitrogen for use in the manufacture of fertilizer. A large hydrogen production plant nearby electrolyzed water as it created ammonia. Low-grade deuterium oxide ("heavy water") was a by-product.

In the early 1930s, scientists realized that heavy water was ideal for nuclear fission research. The plant was well-suited for the production of high-grade heavy water and in 1935 Norsk Hydro began supplying it to the world's scientific community.

When Germany invaded Norway on 9 Apr 1940, it was

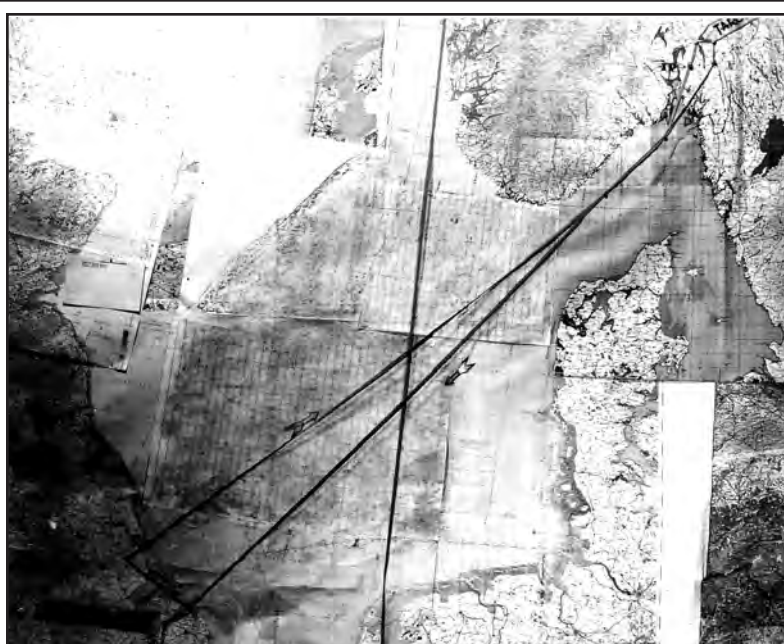
feared that the plant would soon produce enough heavy water to create an atomic bomb.

Valiant efforts in 1942 by Norwegian and British saboteurs did not destroy the plant; the damage caused by another attempt in early 1943 was quickly repaired. After that, German security was greatly improved and more commando-type raids seemed futile. A bombing mission was thought to be the only alternative.

The plant was a small target and in the fresh snow it was not easy to locate visually or in a bombsight.

Col Leon Johnson, commander of the 14th Combat Wing (to which the 44th and 392nd BGs belonged) later reported that his Wing followed the 2nd CW to the secondary. "As they made the second run, we made a wider swing to the east, lost them, and came back to the east and made a run on the target. Part of the time the target was obscure, and part of the time it was open. Bombardier lost it, then picked it up.

See NORWAY on page 4



It took several maps to show the complete route to Norway for the 18 Nov 1943 briefing.



392nd BGMA Officers

President

Jim Goar

1555 N. Main St., #106
Frankfort, IN 46061
goar@accs.net
(765) 652-0941



Vice-President

Bob Books

books@b24.net



Chairman, 392nd BG Memorial

Carroll W. Cheek



Secretary

Annette Tison



Treasurer

Bill McCutcheon

20620 Milton Ct.
Brookfield, WI 53045
billm@b24.net
(262) 784-5606



Editors

Annette Tison

9107 Wood Pointe Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
dtison5401@aol.com
(703) 690-8540

Jim Goar

FROM THE EDITOR

Follow-ups. Here are two follow-ups to the story in the June *News* about the end of the war. An article by Edward Dillon in the *New York Daily News* for 21 Jun 1945 gives a vivid description of the Queen Mary's return to the US: "The tongues of New York harbor were loosed in a wonderful welcome yesterday afternoon to a queen making her first voyage to the United States since the day of Victory in Europe."

"She was the stately Queen Mary, stately in spite of her battle gray and the scores of life rafts spotted over her superstructure. The 81,235-ton British vessel, one of the finest of luxury liners in peacetime, has carried only fighting men and persons important to the war since March 21, 1940..."

"By 2:30 P.M. she was abreast of 50th St., and an hour later she had been nudged into her berth at Pier 90 by eight shrill and fussy tugs. The whistles of every vessel in the harbor were tied down in raucous greeting..."

"At the pier was the all-Negro 375th Army Service Forces Band, which started out conventionally enough with 'The Stars and Stripes Forever,' but then swung quickly into a jump tune called 'The Jersey Bounce,' and the thousands of fighting men, lining the decks and craning their heads from portholes, really went for that."

"Outside the pier hundreds of eager relatives of the returning men waited vainly for a glimpse of their kin. They were disappointed because the troops, after hours of waiting aboard ship, were marched to the front of the pier, placed on ferries, and taken across the river for transportation to either Camp Shanks, near Orangeburg, N.Y., or Camp Kilmer, near New Brunswick, N.J."

577th copilot Les Hadley writes, "There were many stories circulated among the Germans about how they bombed New York City. In 1946, on my way back to Europe, I was given the task of returning 1,492 Germans who had been POWs at various places in the states. As we sailed down New York Harbor aboard the Tusculum Victory, I permitted them to come up on the deck. Many of them were amazed at the condition of New York City as they had seen photographs of the city in shambles as the result of being bombed by the German Air Force. They could not believe that they had been lied to even while being held as POWs in the states. That view of New York City probably [made] them realize that they had ... truly lost the war." The doctored photos clearly showed New York City since "the harbor was recognizable as were some of the buildings. I suppose some [showed bombed European] cities overlaid onto ... New York City."

The Other Airmen. If you were one, or can add any information about the "other airmen" described in the article on pages 6 and 7, please contact me.

Photos. Since reunion information took four pages in the June *News*, I wasn't able to include all the photos I wanted. They're in this issue on pages 8 and 9.

The Legacy. An article on pages 10 and 11 describes how our website and our veterans help the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association "perpetuate the legacy." 2nd-generation members have a significant role in preserving the 392nd's history, too. For example, 392nd BGMA member Scott Conley recently provided 142 photos that his father brought home. Pvt John H. Conley Jr. was an airplane and engine mechanic in the 578th; a buddy in the photo section gave him the pictures. They show a wide range of subjects. For example, the photos below show (left to right) #42-50343, Tondeleyo, making a turn; #42-6982, Temperamental Duchess, one of the first B-24D Liberators assigned to the 392nd; and cooks for the Combat Officers Mess on 17 Apr 1944. Don't have a treasure-trove of photos to share? Start asking questions and writing down the answers. Remember what Don Mitchell points out in the article—it took a lot of questions from his daughters before he started talking...



President's Message



We've heard from Bill and Marge Braddock, the team that put our Anthology together. Bill was the radio operator on the 578th's #1 Cliff Edwards crew. Marge (who is much younger) reports that he is 94 and heading for 100, like his mother and grandmother.

For years they traveled back and forth between Texas and Minnesota, but now the very long

trip is too much for them and they have settled down in a retirement home in Minnesota.

Marge noted that they "regard the Anthology as one of our main accomplishments in retirement."

She's very lucid with the written word and signed off their letter thus: "our best to you and yours, and to all of those who are still carrying the message we all bear."

Annette Tison, that Secretary par excellence, has pulled together some interesting statistics on the Association: 390 total members.

37 Friends. Friends are people to whom we send the newsletter in order to keep our footprint alive both in the US and Europe.

37 veterans who were ground echelon.

132 veterans who were air echelon.

169 veterans total, comprising 36% of total members.

40 widows, comprising 10% of total members.

We have members in 5 foreign countries:

27 in England

1 in Belgium

1 in New Zealand

1 in Canada

1 in The Netherlands

So, we're down to 169 veterans, with that number decreasing rapidly. But the torch will still be lit and the succeeding generations can keep the 392nd alive as long as it is practical.

I had occasion lately to hear recited the venerable Irish Blessing. In view of the statistics above, I think it bears repeating here:

May the road rise to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back,

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

May the rains fall soft upon your fields,

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Blue Skies,
Jim Goar

New Tax Status Approved!

The IRS has approved our status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, effective 15 Dec 2010. Many thanks to vice-president Bob Books for spear-heading this effort and to treasurer Bill McCutcheon for providing the financial details needed.

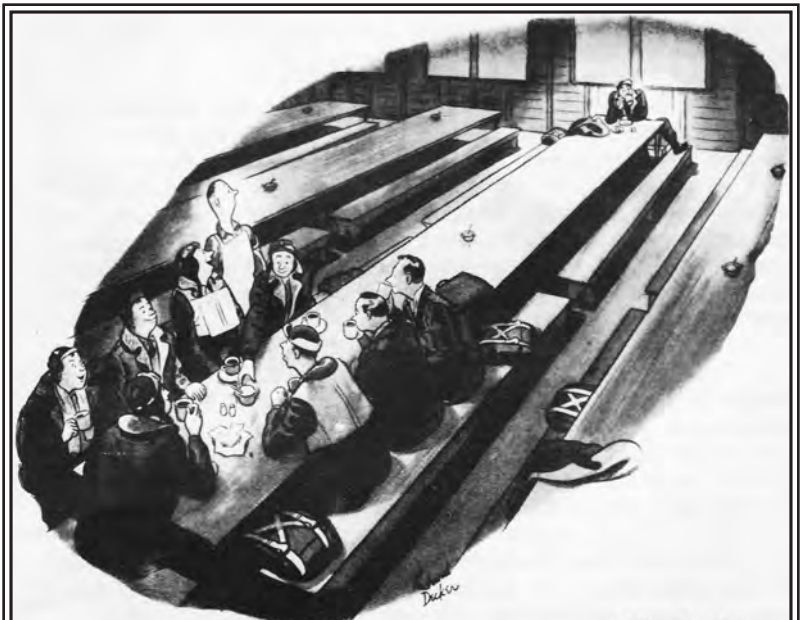
2011 REUNION

There might still be time to make reservations for the reunion in St. Louis from 11-16 Oct. Call Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. at (757) 625-6401 and the Sheraton Westport Hotel Lakeside Chalet at (888) 627-7066.

If you live in the St. Louis area, please consider dropping by our hospitality room! And for all attendees, please bring your photos and your memoirs. They'll be scanned and returned to you promptly. Be ready to tell your stories!



This cartoon appeared in the September 1944 issue of *Short Bursts*, an 8th AF publication for gunners. The caption says, "That's the only way he can shoot—he's a ball turret gunner."



This cartoon was in the August 1944 issue of *Short Bursts* with the caption, "Oh, don't worry about Charlie—he's the tail gunner."

NORWAY from page 1

On analysis of photographs on return, however, it turned out to be the Nitrate Plant 3 miles east of the secondary. The bombing was excellent, and it was unfortunate it did not turn out to be the secondary."

The 392nd's lead bombardier had aligned his bombsight on a centrally-located building in the plant; it was later determined that the 392nd had dropped 37 percent of its bombs within 1,000 feet and 85 percent within 2,000 feet of that aiming point.

Although there was no allied fighter protection for either mission to Norway, the 392nd had no losses on the 16th.

The heavy water plant was not destroyed, but there was enough damage to convince the Germans that its destruction in future bombing missions was inevitable. The facility was therefore moved to Germany in 1944.

18 Nov 1943: Kjeller

The primary target once again was the German Air Force supply, repair and maintenance depot at Kjeller. With extensive shops for plane and engine overhaul, it was the main German aircraft repair center in Norway. There was no secondary target assigned.

392nd BG crews were awakened at 0200 hours with departure of 23 a/c at 0615; two later aborted. The weather at assembly was much improved. The 392nd not only delayed the takeoff (since less time was needed for assembly) but also used shorter take-off intervals between planes.

The Group arrived at the Initial Point about 15 minutes ahead of schedule. Since the lead Combat Wing was 20 or 30 miles to the right at the time, the 392nd bombed first while the lead Wing changed course to fall in behind.

Fresh snow and camouflage hampered identification of the target, but 19 a/c from the 392nd dropped 52.8 tons of bombs on target. About half were within 1,000 feet of

the aiming point and 85 percent were within 2,000 feet. An altitude of 12,000 feet helped ensure success.

1/Lt John J. Reade, 578th, and 1/Lt Robert L. Egan, 577th, and two planes from the 44th BG bombed the German airdrome at Rygge. They reported good results with scattered hits on the runways and buildings. (Reade crew navigator Milton Planche goes a step further and says they did a "dang good job" of hitting the airfield.)

German Fighters

On their way to Norway, Joe McNiel remembers a conversation with waist gunners S/Sgt Marvin L. Wukotich and S/Sgt John H. Osborne and ball turret gunner S/Sgt Michael A. Mancuso. They all hoped German fighters would not come out of Denmark and "do the same thing to us" that they did on the infamous diversion mission of 4 Oct 1943. During that sortie, three of the Group's planes were shot down. [See the September 2010 News for more information.]

Unfortunately, about 20-30 enemy fighters from Denmark and the lower tip of Norway attacked at 1245 hours on the return trip. They were mostly Me-109s and JU-88s but also FW-190s, Me-110s, and JU-87s. The 392nd slid over to join the other Groups for mutual protection. Some of the fighters stayed with the formation for an hour or more waiting for stragglers.

Many ships came back low on gas. Col Johnson explained that "in closing up and spreading out quite a bit more fuel was used." 392nd Air Executive LtCol Lorin Johnson later reported, "As soon as the English coast was sighted and we were in contact conditions I called on VHF that any planes low on fuel were free to break formation and go individually to the base." He was justifiably proud that "Even with our long flight and those instructions 11 planes

See NORWAY on page 5

392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label. Your membership status is shown directly after your name. "11" means your membership will **expire in December 2011** and you need to renew **promptly**. 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 Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045. 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 wish 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 \$ _____

NORWAY from page 4

made the airdrome in formation for landing.”

392nd Losses

578th pilot 2/Lt Teddy Dudziak and crew, aboard #42-7486, The Shark, were shot down over the North Sea on the return trip. Their names are recorded on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery.

Pilot 2/Lt David M. Fogarty, also 578th, diverted to Sweden shortly after bombing. In his Internee Report, 2/Lt Fogarty later said, “On our way to the target, we were attacked over the Skagerrak [strait] by enemy fighters. At the time we noticed no severe damage but as we reached the target we realized that our electrical equipment was burned out. We dropped most of our bombs too soon, so I circled the target again but this time we couldn’t release the rest of the bomb load. I then noticed that we had only 200 gallons of gasoline

dates for waist gunner S/Sgt William W. Smith and tail gunner S/Sgt Gus C. Kurkomelis are not known.

All resumed combat flying. Ott, Parish, Louizides, and Slama were killed in action on 25 Mar 1945.

After-Action

Lead navigator 1/Lt John E. Slowik concluded his official report, “In the future I believe the route home should be planned so as not to skirt the Danish coast for so long a period. At the expense of fuel a dog leg of some sort should be planned so as to take us out of enemy reach as soon as possible. I don’t believe German fighters like the idea of ditching at a distance from the coast.”

It was later learned the Germans were conducting maneuvers on the airfield as the Liberators approached. The *Stars & Stripes* for 29 Nov 1943 reported, “German trucks and armored cars were arriving on the airfield for exercises

when the American bombers struck in three waves. Eye-witnesses said one aircraft came in low and laid a circle of smoke around the target. Then the bombers dropped their explosives.

“Alarm sirens failed to function, giving an all-clear signal instead of alert. The Germans therefore believed the planes were part of the maneuver and at first flak batteries remained silent. Later fighters from an airfield 12 miles north challenged the Americans, who downed seven.”

Several 392nd gunner claims were approved: S/Sgt Robert K. Stevens on the Gonseth crew was credited with destroying a JU-88, as was S/Sgt Thomas E. Johnson on the Everhart crew.

Credit for probably destroying enemy planes was given to S/Sgt Regos N. Theodore (Me-109) on the George crew; S/Sgt James M. Housteau (JU-88) on the McGregor crew, and S/Sgt James J. Osterheldt (JU-88) on the Breckenridge crew.

The cold wreaked havoc with electrical equipment. In his memoir, *Don’t Call Me Hero*, 579th pilot 2/Lt Jim McGregor wrote about the long mission, the frigid weather, and the “German fighters [who] kept poking at us all the way. The last straw was when three of our four generators went out. By this time we had heated suits to wear which made minus forty degrees easier to cope with. But we had to turn them off along with the gun turrets in order to save electricity for important things—like landing. I nearly froze. I couldn’t even stamp my feet because I had to fly the plane.”

Memorial

Group bombardier Joseph B. Whittaker went back to Kjeller on 18 Nov 1993 to help dedicate a memorial at Lillestrom, Norway. It honors the American airmen who were lost on the mission 50 years earlier and the courageous Norwegian allies who fought against Nazi tyranny.

Editor’s note: These were the last missions the Eighth Air Force flew to Norway during WWII.



This photo, taken at 12,000 feet above the target, shows 1) how difficult it must have been to find the target in the freshly-fallen snow and 2) smoke rising from the bomb bursts.

left and with the electrical system shot I could not switch to the emergency tanks, so I headed for Sweden.

“On the way to Sweden we destroyed our bombsight and the navigator destroyed his tables. We made a good landing in Orebro (a small civilian aerodrome with no facilities). Before landing, I circled the town and realized that the field on which the planes land was camouflaged with little trees (they bend under the weight of the plane and come up again). When we landed the population was waiting for us. We had no time to destroy our ship but we went back in it with the excuse of gathering our clothes and had time to switch the IFF on a battery and blow it up. We were taken to the local jail, put in the courtroom, and interrogated. We told them, when they asked where we were going, that we were on a North Sea search mission. From then on we were interned in Sweden.”

It took several months for the men to get back to the 392nd: 2/Lt Fogarty on 27 Mar 1944; copilot 2/Lt Robert S. Walker on 1 Apr 1944; navigator 2/Lt John W. Ott, bombardier 2/Lt John K. Parish, radio operator S/Sgt Solomon Louizides, nose gunner S/Sgt Charles Harrod Jr., and waist gunner T/Sgt Billy D. Haskins on 17 Sep 1944; and engineer T/Sgt Alex R. Slama on 28 Sep 1944. Return

THE OTHER AIRMEN

The typical B-24 crew had ten men: pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier, engineer, radio operator, and four gunners. It was not unusual, though, for crews to fly with extra personnel onboard. This article explains who they were.

The Lead Crews

By Fall 1944, experienced crews were completing their missions before lead crews could be selected and trained. As a result, bombing accuracy decreased. To address this problem, the 446th BG perfected a system of having specially-trained lead crews in one squadron; by September 1944, their bombing accuracy was the best in the 2BD.

In November, the 392nd was authorized to create its own lead crew squadron. The 579th, with commander Maj Myron Keilman, was the selected squadron. Four of the best lead crews in each squadron were assigned to him; also transferred were several potential lead crews who had flown 10 to 15 missions and had outstanding flying skills. The other crews in the 579th were then dispersed among the 576th, 577th, and 578th Squadrons.

The chosen lead crews were subjected to a rigorous course of ground and air training and countless practice missions.

The program worked. Thanks to the lead crew concept, Keilman said, the 392nd “attained and maintained one of the very best bombing accuracy records of the fifteen bombardment groups in the 2nd Air Division.”

Command Authority

In charge of the airborne formation was the Command Authority (CA). Usually senior pilots (group and deputy group commanders, group operations staff members, and squadron commanders/operations officers), they flew in the lead and deputy lead airplanes. They were responsible for the tactical disposition of their respective formations including division, wing, group and squadron leads. They were specifically charged with maintaining the integrity of the Division formations and insuring the success of the mission. They usually flew in the copilot seat, not only for easy viewing of the formation and bomber stream, but also to quickly take over control of the aircraft if warranted.

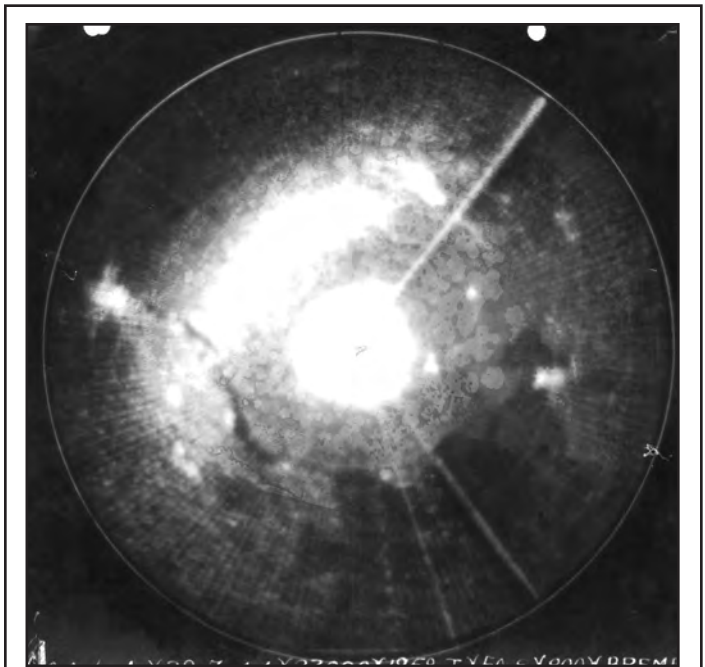
Extra Navigators

Lead crews carried three navigators. The dead-reckoning (DR) navigator directed the course of the formation according to the 8th AF/2AD field orders. One of his main responsibilities was ensuring that rendezvous points (with allied fighters, other bomb groups, and at the Initial Point for the bomb run) were made at the designated time. The DR navigator also kept the official log of all mission activities. He was the navigator-in-charge.

The pilotage navigator (PN) flew in the nose turret and when visibility permitted, called out landmarks—cities, lakes, rivers, railroads, etc.—to the DR navigator.

The third navigator operated the H2X ground-scanning radar equipment. Its rotating antenna, installed in the ball turret well, could scan a 100-mile-wide area of the terrain and transmit a map-like display to a radar scope (cathode-ray tube). This radar operator was called a Mickey navigator (MN) as the device was considered a “Mickey Mouse contraption.”

Planes and crews thus equipped were called the Pathfinder Force, or PFF. Bombing by means of the radar set, when



This photo is the H2X scan for the mission on 29 Jul 1944. Built up areas show as white; after proper training, the H2X navigator could distinguish mountains, towns, and other physical landmarks on plots such as this.

clouds obscured the target, was called “bombing by PFF.”

According to Keilman, “The radar navigator worked with the dead-reckoning navigator and bombardier in a highly coordinated manner. He and his “mickey-set” made it easier to make the timing at turning points good, routes flown more accurately, avoid flak areas, and to bring the formation from the IP (initial point) to the target on the precise course. Thus, if the target could be identified and bombed visually the bombardier would ‘take-over’ and lay the Norden or Sperry bombsight cross-hairs on the point of impact, kill the drift, and release the bombs. Otherwise, the bombs of the whole formation were released through the bombsight by the radar navigator calling course corrections and distance from the target (rate) to the bombardier.”

Due to their extra responsibilities, lead crews generally did not fly as often as “regular” crews.

S27 German Voice Interpreters

The RAF’s “Y” Service was involved in the interception of German radio transmissions via secret listening stations at tactical positions in the UK. They also provided information to the fledgling 8th AF. In the fall of 1943, Gen Ira Eaker, 8th AF commander, was asked if the 8th AF would establish its own “Y” service to supplement the RAF’s. He replied on 13 Oct 1943 that “use of a receiver for recording enemy [radio] traffic during operational missions should give us useful knowledge of the disposition, tactics and control of the enemy fighter force.”

He asked the RAF to install the special receivers in 8th AF bombers. In the cold at high altitudes, however, these mechanical receivers often broke down. It was eventually realized that German-speaking airmen were needed to do the intercept work.

See AIRMEN on page 7

AIRMEN from page 6

The program did not become widespread in the 2BD until the spring of 1944. Although officially called the Airborne "Y" Service, most GIs called it the "S27 program." The term comes not from its affiliation with S-2, Intelligence, but from the radio equipment used. The Hallicrafters Model S-27 receiver was the best available for the task, as it could be quickly and precisely tuned to the frequencies used by the GAF (Luftwaffe). The receiver thus gave its name to the airborne program that used it.

The first two S27 operators assigned to the 392nd were S/Sgt Rudolph W. Salus in April 1944 and T/5 Ernest O. Asseln in May.

A 2BD memo dated 26 Aug 1944 significantly expanded the S27 program. It required each Group to have eight enlisted men with Military Occupational Specialty 538 (Voice Interpreter) who were trained to speak and transcribe the German language and to operate the S-27 VHF communications receiver. Each Group was also required to have eight aircraft fitted for the S-27 receivers.

However, each Group initially received just three S-27 sets each, likely due to the scarcity of equipment.

As S27 personnel flew over enemy territory, they constantly tuned the radio dial, searching for German-speaking voices within the spectrum known to be used by the GAF. After picking up a transmission, they wrote it down verbatim in German. Upon return, they prepared four copies of their intercept logs. Classified as Secret, the logs were carried by the strike photo courier in a double-sealed envelope to 2BD Headquarters and then to 8th AF Headquarters.

Later, all Groups were connected by dedicated TWX circuit so these intercept reports could be quickly scanned for information that could be used immediately by the USAAF and RAF. It was hoped that further analysis of the transcripts would reveal German tactics and the location of enemy fighter groups.

More than 34 men were assigned as S-27 operators with

the 392nd. Six were killed in action—S/Sgt Creighton E. Schaefer, 9 Sep 1944; S/Sgt Albert L. Kielblock, 7 Oct 1944; S/Sgt Gunther Schaumberg, 28 Dec 1944; S/Sgt Frank G. Bleickhardt, 28 Jan 1945; S/Sgt Vernon H. Simpson, 25 Mar 1945; and T/Sgt Phillip Allen, 14 Apr 1945. Another, S/Sgt Herbert M. Halpern, became a POW on 2 Mar 1945.

Radio Counter Measures (RCM)

German flak batteries used radar to locate the bomber formations and obtain firing data for their guns. In the early days, the most widely-used option against this radar was chaff, strips of aluminum that looked like Christmas tree tinsel. Chaff would be dropped from selected planes in the formation. One unit of properly-dispersed chaff made the same reflection on the flak battery's radar screen as a bomber. It was hoped the radar would thus direct the flak to where the chaff was and ignore the bombers.

A cartoon shown on the 36th Bomb Sqdn's website (<http://36rcm.com/images/chaffbit.gif>) reminded airmen that "Chaff does not prevent Jerry shooting at you but it does help you deceive him as to your height, speed and exact position."

In time, other techniques emerged. One was the Radio Counter Measures (RCM) program. A receiver and three transmitters were mounted behind the pilot in select aircraft. As the planes moved into enemy territory, the RCM operator tuned the receiver until he picked up the unique audio signal emitted by a flak battery. He then tuned a transmitter to that frequency and jammed the signal, preventing the battery from honing in on the bombers. Three flak batteries could be jammed simultaneously.

Each Group had two or three planes with jamming equipment plus an RCM officer, equipment maintenance personnel and 15 enlisted men on flight status.

1/Lt Weems Estelle was the 392nd's RCM Officer. He admitted that it was not a perfect system but said if hundreds of planes threw out chaff and several others jammed the radar, the odds increased that most planes would get through the danger zone.

Four 392nd RCM men were killed in action—Sgt Robert M. Vandervort, 8 Apr 1944; S/Sgt Jay V. Cable, 12 Aug 1944; S/Sgt Earl J. Propst, 13 Sep 1944; and S/Sgt Theodore J. Hill, 25 Mar 1945.

Editor's Note: Details about lead crews came from an article by Myron Keilman in the 2nd Air Division Association Journal for June 1985. David and Sylvia Strahan researched the S27 program as Sylvia's uncle, S/Sgt Frank G. Bleickhardt, was an operator. Information from Weems Estelle was the basis for the Radio Counter Measures section.

FROM THE FILES

392nd BG memo, 17 Oct 1943: "Due to the acute supply situation with regard to coal and coke in the United Kingdom, it is imperative that all activities exercise the strictest economy in the consumption of solid fuel. The following regulation will be observed and any infractions will result in disciplinary action being taken: a. Other than hospitals, no room will be heated above 65 degrees Fahrenheit. b. No warehouse will be heated above 55 degrees Fahrenheit. c. No fires will be started before 1630 hours. The only exception will be when a man is marked 'quarters' by the Station Surgeon."



The 36th Bomb Squadron was the only unit in the 8th AF completely dedicated to Radio Counter Measures (RCM). This photo shows their S-27 radio equipment, which typically had more components than what the voice interpreters used. Photo from <http://www.36rcm.com/equipment/equipment.htm>

FROM THE 392nd ARCHIVES:



These photos show 392nd BG personnel getting ready for the black widow flights, intended to determine how many men and how much luggage could be taken back to the US on a B-24. The photo above was taken on 4 May 1945 when 577th Sqdn commander Maj Harley Sather and 53 passengers took a 10-hour test hop. The date of the photo at left, which demonstrates how tightly-packed a B-24 was with all those men, is not known.

This photo shows #42-95151, Monotonous Maggie, in Valley, Wales, the first stop on her trip back to the US. Pilot 1/Lt Robert Steck is in the center wearing the A-2 jacket. Oddly, she was a 577th Sqdn plane with a 576th Sqdn pilot flying under orders issued by the 579th Sqdn. Other men who flew home in Maggie: The crew was 1/Lt Edward J. Quinn, 1/Lt Elmer C. Jost, 1/Lt Earl B. Gross, S/Sgt Murray M. Lewis, T/Sgt Russell M. Parker Jr., S/Sgt Champney R. Jacobson, S/Sgt William J. Thompson, S/Sgt Robert P. Peters Jr., and S/Sgt Raymond N. Bell. Passengers were S/Sgt Paul C. MacDonald, Sgt Arnold Allnutt, Sgt Ralph P. Mansolillo, Cpl Edward C. Batenich, Cpl Harry G. Taylor, Cpl Louis Heller, Cpl John N. Lopez, Cpl Leo G. Stroyer, and Cpl Harvey B. DeVoe Jr.



PHOTOS FROM MAY AND JUNE 1945



Left: Men from the 392nd BG are formed and ready to march in the VE Day parade in Kings Lynn on 13 May 1945. The officer in charge was Capt LeRoy MacTavish, 578th Sqdn Communications Officer. The photo on the right shows that the 50-plus members represented the 392nd very well.



This photo, taken in Bangor, Maine, shows the crew and passengers brought home by #44-50542, Agony Wagon. The crew was 1/Lt Thomas M. Sisson, 2/Lt Walter N. Cranson, 2/Lt Donald J. Greening, S/Sgt Edwin D. White, T/Sgt James C. Robinson, T/Sgt Robert L. Strausbaugh, S/Sgt Cleo C. VanAmburg, S/Sgt Melvin R. Jones, S/Sgt Elmer K. Kruse, and S/Sgt Philip C. Souther. Passengers were M/Sgt Arthur H. Knipe Jr., Pfc Howard B. Bard, Cpl Harry C. Kruse, Sgt Wesley C. Archer, Pfc Alexis Gougnin Jr., Cpl Andrew J. Fields, Sgt William S. Hall, Sgt James L. McVay, Cpl Charles R. Stephan, and Sgt Irvin F.

Wolfe. In *My Combat Diary 26 Jan - 6 June 1945*, Cranson wrote that on 6 Jun 1945, they "Circled the crew Chief's hometown (Haverhill Mass.) and the boys threw out 5 rolls of toilet paper in various forms... he really went wild when he saw his house... yelled like mad.... Sure glad we could do it for him—he enjoyed it—and naturally I did!"

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

PERPETUATING THE LEGACY

The purpose of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association, as stated in our by-laws, is "To perpetuate for future generations the legacy and history of the 8th Air Force, 392nd Bomb Group and the memory of lost comrades. Through the work of its members and other entities it supports, the 392nd BGMA promotes educational, social, cultural and commemorative activities which compellingly present its rich history to succeeding generations." This article addresses some of the ways the 392nd BGMA accomplishes this mission. Be assured, though, that perpetuating the legacy is a Group endeavor.

www.b24.net

Our website is a tribute to the men and planes who served the 392nd BG so well. It has information about every diversion and combat mission flown by the Group and every Crusader who was killed in the line of duty. It includes a roster of 2,335 airmen, each with at least one photo. Names of more than 3,000 ground crew personnel (with over 700 photos) are also given, along with many unit histories and stories written by and about our veterans.

Best of all, it is easily updated. For example, the B-24 Dispositions page now lists the serial numbers of the Libs flown in Alamogordo and the dates most planes were placed in and out of the Group's inventory. There are links to the planes' final missions, crashes, and other significant events in their history. Photos of maps shown at briefings or maps of the actual routes flown are being added to the Missions pages.

The website gets over 20,000 visits a month, often from people who want to learn what a relative did with the 392nd.

After reviewing the information on www.b24.net, relatives of 579th gunner S/Sgt Edward L. Buchheit, killed 4 Oct 1943, wrote: "This research and your B-24 website have been invaluable to us. It's been just like stepping back in history to days of WWII. We have also enjoyed so much, reading the stories and diaries of those who served with the 392nd. We have a renewed respect and admiration for those brave young men who so selflessly served so that we can enjoy the freedoms that we find so easy to take for granted today."

A relative of 579th Sqdn pilot 1/Lt John F. Menard wrote: "I found your website through a Google search, trying to gather info about my Grandpa and his time as a POW. I would just like to thank you so much for the information you have on your site. It is such a neat thing to go through and show this great piece of family history to my kids, and to show what a great sacrifice was made by their Great Grandpa and many other heroes listed. Thank you for providing us with these great memories!"

Another tribute comes from the nephew of 578th engineer T/Sgt Arlie Grout on 1/Lt Jack Bilz's crew: "What a marvelous web site! Thank you for keeping all this information alive and easily accessible. The search engine is fantastic. I used the target locations from the missions that my Uncle flew on and placed them into Google Earth. This gives a fascinating perspective on locations and distances that these extraordinary men endured. After the war my Uncle left the service and moved to Kansas City, Missouri. He never set foot in a plane again. He even drove all the way to Alaska just to go fishing!"

Our POW section, researched by 2nd gen Greg Hatton, is

an outstanding reference for all POWs, not just those in the 392nd. Here is a recent acknowledgement of its impact: "My uncle was ... not from your group but was a POW at Stalag Luft IV. I've been typing up his memoirs and keep coming back to your website because it is so rich with information. I just wanted to thank you for all the research you've done!! It's a tribute to our WWII heroes! Thank you!"

Living History: Sgt Donald F. Mitchell

Our veterans are our greatest asset. Their stories and accounts tell today's generation about the *real* WWII, not the one they see on TV or in the movies. 576th waist gunner Sgt Donald F. Mitchell, on 1/Lt Tennie W. Peterson's crew, recently had an opportunity to speak out.

For 34 years, the town of Boulder, Colorado, has sponsored the Bolder Boulder 10km race, followed by a big Memorial Day event during which two WWII veterans are recognized. Mitchell was one of this year's honorees.



576th waist gunner Donald F. Mitchell, now 87, still looks good in his Eisenhower jacket. He was honored for his WWII service during Boulder, Colorado's 2011 Bolder Boulder Memorial Day race and patriotic program.

Over 54,000 runners, walkers, and wheelchair racers participated in the race, placing it among the top ten largest races in the world. After finishing the race in the University of Colorado's Folsom Field, they remain for a program including skydivers, an enormous American flag, and a patriotic show complete with an F-16 flyover. It is one of the largest Memorial Day gatherings in the US.

Mitchell wore his Eisenhower jacket for the event. He was especially proud to be on the reviewing stand to see his 10-year old granddaughter finish the race in less than an hour.

Earlier, he was featured in an article in a local newspaper, the *Daily Camera*. Mitchell told the reporter that his first mission with the 392nd Bomb Group was on 8 Sep 1944. "I was scared as hell," he said. "We weren't doing it to be heroes, we were doing it for the United States of America. We wanted to fight over there to make sure Hitler and Mussolini didn't come over here."

He recalled 1/Lt Clifford O. Markuson's crew, whose enlisted men lived in his hut. On 25 Mar 1945, "They were going on their last mission. We had breakfast with them. They never came back. They would have been

See LEGACY on page 11

LEGACY from page 10

back in the States in three days.”

It was an especially hard blow as a member of Mitchell's crew had been killed the previous day while flying as a substitute. S/Sgt Raymond E. Hamment was serving as the left waist gunner on 2/Lt Lester Frazier's crew. Hit by small arms fire during the low-level resupply mission to Wesel, he died in a Belgian hospital. The back-to-back tragedies just devastated him, Mitchell says.

He couldn't talk about his experiences for a very long time. His daughters kept asking him, though, and he finally forced himself to answer their questions. It's gotten easier over time and now he regularly visits local schools to describe what being a Liberator crewman in WWII was like.

T/Sgt Robert D. Davis

Bob Davis, 578th Sqdn radio operator on 1/Lt Gilbert O. Eisermann's crew, recently donated a copy of his new book, *Before I Forget* (also available at amazon.com). It tells about radio school in Chicago, the men in his crew, their assignment to the 392nd, and missions flown in April and May 1944.

Davis describes being shot down on 29 May 1944 and how “At the time I bailed out, I had a total of 395 hours flying time logged in a B-24, of which, 195 were combat hours. Let anyone shoot at you for that many hours, and sooner or later they're bound to get lucky. And yes, it was my first parachute jump.”

He learned about D-Day while standing on a railroad platform on his way to Dulag Luft, the POW interrogation center. After noticing several groups of Germans glaring at the POWs, Davis asked a guard what was going on. He replied, “I can't tell you, but the thing the world has been waiting for, happened this morning.”

Davis talks about life in Stalag Luft IV, the forced march in February-March 1945 to Stalag Xlb at Fallingbomel and then, after just a few days' rest, the second part of the march. During the march, he saw “E.B. Coleman, our tail gunner, for what turned out to be the last time. That would have been April 12th. We were being put into a barn for the night when we spotted each other. He looked the same as the rest of us, and other than, ‘Hello,’ there wasn't much to talk about. That was my last contact with E.B.” Coleman died in a hospital near Ebbsdorf three days later after suffering severe abdominal pain.

Davis writes movingly about the events of early May 1945 when “down the road, came three or four Jeeps with a big American flag flying on the front Jeep, followed about a quarter-mile behind them, tank after tank after tank. There must have been thirty or forty tanks. It really was over. We were free. That flag was absolutely glorious. So beautiful. I will never forget that moment. There might be a combination of words to describe my feelings; I simply don't know what they are. We all cried tears of joy. Proud tears.

“The lead jeep stopped, and we ran up yelling like we were nuts—asking what took them so long—we'd been waiting for a year. The Colonel and his driver both got hugged, and then he said, ‘You must be Air Force, no discipline.’ But he was grinning as he said it.”

F/O John C. Kenyon

Kim Kenyon donated a copy of her late husband's memoir. F/O John C. Kenyon was copilot on 2/Lt Gene O.

Hubbarts' crew, 576th. He writes about going to the plane on 15 Feb 1945 for his first mission. On the starboard nose a big red cross was painted and on the other side, “a gal's face about four feet high with the name ‘Birdie Schmidt’ under it. None of us had the slightest idea who in hell Birdie Schmidt was but figured that we'd find out when we returned that afternoon.”

Prop governor problems in the #2 engine caused them to take off late. As soon as they got airborne, the electrical instruments “started going haywire.” The #2 engine ran away, a sign the prop governor was acting up again.

Things then settled down. Navigator F/O Calvin J. Carter Jr. plotted a course to intersect the Group and they did catch up. After crossing the enemy coast, a burst of flak under the left wing caused them to lose power in the #1 and #2 engines. They feathered #1 but could do nothing about the other prop, which continued to windmill.

With no other options, the crew bailed out. They were reunited that night in a prison cell in Nordhausen. Nose gunner Cpl Paul S. Glassman had been shot, Carter had been badly beaten and engineer Cpl Loren G. Smith had broken his leg when he landed in a tree.

It took five weeks for Kenyon to get to the interrogation center at Dulag Luft. Then, after a ten-day detour to a German POW hospital due to an abdominal problem, he was sent to a permanent POW camp near Nurnberg—an overnight trip in a crowded boxcar followed by a 180-mile hike—only to find it had been evacuated. So, off to Munich via train.

While on a rest break, the POWs watched nine P-47s overhead. On parallel tracks next to them was a train with two 88mm flak guns. Those guns fired at the P-47s which promptly moved into attack formation. With his head burrowed into a nearby hill, Kenyon listened as the fighters exchanged machine gun and rocket fire with the flak gunners. After a 10 to 15 minute gun battle, both flak batteries were completely destroyed. No POWs were injured, which he attributes solely to the pilots' skill.

After being freed on 29 Apr 1945, Kenyon developed “an appreciation of all things edible [that] has been ever present in my ramblings through life. So I have no problem doing the grocery shopping!”

Kenyon ended his memoir with a tribute to pilot 1/Lt Walter B. Sherwood. Six years older, Sherwood lived just a block away when they were growing up and their families were quite close. He became a B-24 pilot and was sent to England. Soon after starting pilot training, Kenyon heard that Sherwood had been killed on 11 Apr 1944. When he visited Sherwood's parents in 1945, he was astonished to learn that his friend had been assigned to the 579th Sqdn.

How to Help

Please help us preserve the legacy! If you (or your 392nd relative) wrote about WWII or brought back photos, please send a copy to Annette Tison by email or postal mail (she'll scan and return them promptly). If you're thinking “Who cares about what happened to me?” remember that your experiences likely also involved the other men in your crew, hut or line shack, too, and they may not have talked about the war to anyone. *Your* account, then, can help *their* relatives. Annette's contact information is on page 2.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Tom Perry, 576th Sqdn Armorer

We have lost many of our 392nd Bomb Group Comrades in the last few years. We have known many of them intimately, having served with them side by side, others we knew by reputation and also in the chain of command and in our recent history became good friends and associates in our 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association. These losses have caused me to think more fervently about the question, "Where will you spend eternity?" Each of us should personally consider this question for our self. I am certain that each of us would want the answer to be "In Heaven, with The Lord." The Bible tells us that being admitted into heaven is not dependent on what we have done, but what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. The book of John, Chapter 3, verse 36 says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." I ask you to search the Scriptures.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail



**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

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

John J. Margarones, 579/6, Nov. 15, 2010
Harry A. White, Jr., 579, Jan. 27, 2011
John Marchuk, 577, Jan. 27, 2011
Keith E. Roberts, 578, June 21, 2011
Albert A. Aloia, 576, June 29, 2011
William C. Jensen, 579, Apr. 24, 2011
Harry Reel, 577, Mar. 4, 2011
Frank A. Gillett, 579, May 24, 2011
Vernon A. Baumgart, 579, May 19, 2011
J. Frank Whitt, Assoc, June 19, 2011
Warren W. Van Pelt, 578, July 13, 2011
Wendell G. Anderson, 578, April 28, 2010
Russell V. Logue, 577/9, July 25, 2011
Ardon B. Iverson, 577, Aug. 26, 2011
Everette W. Faucette, 578, Feb. 26, 2011
Buel E. Ridge, 578, Nov. 29, 2007