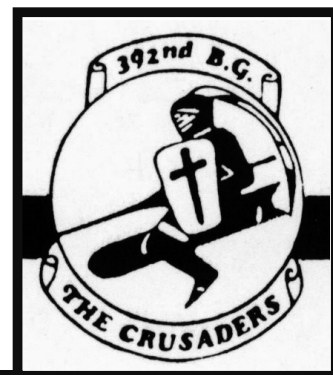




FRIEDRICHSHAFEN

In terms of men and planes lost, the missions to Friedrichshafen (18 Mar 1944), Gotha (24 Feb 1944), and Berlin (29 Apr 1944) were the worst of the 285 missions the 392nd flew: 29 planes were destroyed, 135 airmen were killed, 127 were captured (with two dying while POWs), 26 were interned and 1 successfully evaded capture.

The March 2011 News described Gotha; this issue focuses on Friedrichshafen. Berlin will be detailed in the next newsletter.

Much more information on these sorties is in the Missions and WWII Stories sections of www.b24.net; in the 392nd BG anthology, Twentieth Century Crusaders; and the book After the Liberators by William C. McGuire II.

8th Air Force

On 18 Mar 1944, 8AF dispatched 738 heavy bombers against eight airdromes and airplane component and assembly plants near Friedrichshafen and Munich, Germany. Per its Tactical Mission Report, "A common route over enemy territory to the general target areas was planned, with the three main forces separating to attack their respective targets and converging at the same points" for the return trip via the same route. "The route was essentially direct and was designed to

facilitate fighter support, outflank the largest concentration of enemy fighters and avoid the strongest ground defenses."

The 8th's Narrative of Operations (8NoA) noted, "Penetration, target and withdrawal escort was provided by 598 P-47s, 113 P-38s and 219 P-51s. Included in this figure are 139 P-47s and 33 P-51s which flew second sorties."

Bombing was visual except on Friedrichshafen where an effective smoke screen and haze meant bombing had to be by Path Finder Force (PFF) radar.

"Enemy air opposition," per 8NoA, "varied from weak to nil on most combat wings to very strong and determined on two wings. Encounters occurred principally in the target

area and on the initial phase of withdrawal. Extremely aggressive and well-coordinated enemy aircraft attacks were met by the 14th Combat Wing."

There was also "intense and accurate flak" at the target.

After the planes landed, 8AF compiled reports from participating bomb groups. From the 738 planes, 8 crew members were killed, 35 were wounded and 438 were missing.

2nd Bomb Division

The B-24s (225 ships) made up the third force. Targets were the Dornier Werke assembly plant and the Maybach Motorenbau, Light Metal Casting Works at Friedrichshafen. Five P-47 and two P-38 Groups escorted the Libs.

Nine Liberator Groups bombed Friedrichshafen over a 20-minute period. Ground defenses were extremely

effective, engaging every Group with accurate predictor controlled fire.

During the entire mission, only four to six enemy fighters were seen by the 2nd and 20th Combat Wings. The 14th CW was not so fortunate.

14th Combat Wing

The target for the 392nd and 44th BGs was the Dornier plant at Manzell, two miles west of Friedrichshafen.

There, Do-217 flying

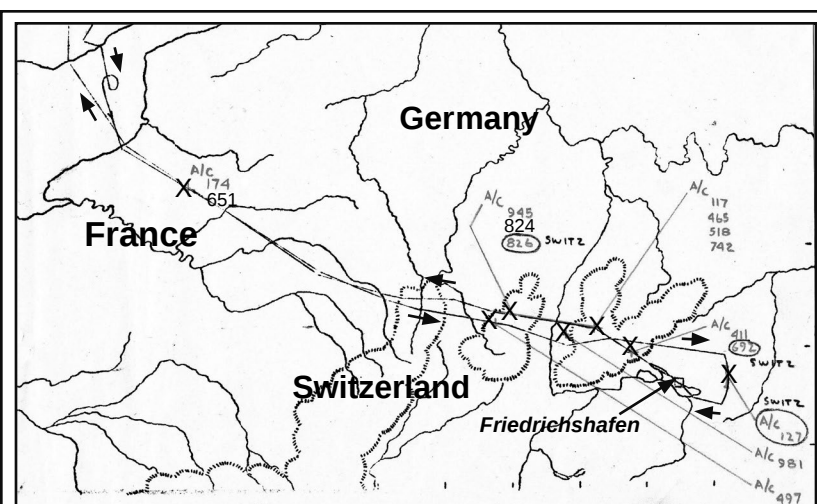
boats and seaplanes were manufactured and assembled; in addition, the plant made components for bombers and perhaps for FW-190 fighters as well. The factory was also thought to provide components for the production of pilotless aircraft. It employed 4-5,000 people.

Crews were warned that ninety flak guns were expected at Friedrichshafen.

The 44th was armed with 1,000-pound heavy explosive bombs while the 392nd carried 100-pound incendiaries.

Of 54 a/c dispatched by 14CW, only 37 bombed the primary target. Results were good. The machine assembly

See FRIEDRICHSHAFEN on page 4



This 392nd BG map shows the approximate locations where 14 planes left the formation. Arrows show the direction of flight.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Cover Story. My original intent was to include articles about both the Friedrichshafen mission on 18 Mar 1944 and the Berlin mission on 29 Apr 1944 in this issue. I soon realized that doing so would be an injustice to the crews who flew those missions and result in too little information presented about either mission. Therefore, this issue focuses on Friedrichshafen; Berlin will be described in the next newsletter.

My apologies. In my column in the June 2014 newsletter, I misspelled Harvey and Mark Naber's last name. I got it right in the body of my column but blew it in the photo caption. I am very sorry for my error.

Switzerland. On 18 Mar 1944, 26 airmen from the 392nd BG diverted to Switzerland. Throughout the entire war, about 1,500 American airmen headed to that country due to battle damage or mechanical problems. Once in Switzerland, though, they were in an uneasy position. Internees who patiently awaited repatriation at the end of the war could expect to be reasonably well treated. Doing nothing, however, was in direct conflict with an airman's responsibility to try and escape if captured.

Switzerland was surrounded by German-controlled territory. The Swiss thought that turning a blind eye to Allied escape attempts might pose a threat to their status as a neutral country. Furthermore, they felt that all internees were aware of their parole status and agreed to follow the rules of the parole and obey Swiss law. Anyone who tried to escape therefore violated the terms of that parole and voided their internee status. It was thus appropriate to send these persons and internees who broke Swiss criminal law via assault, drunk/disorderly conduct, theft, etc., to "punishment camps."

BrigGen Barnwell R. Legge was the Military Attache at the American Legation in Bern during the war. In a memo on 12 Dec 1944 to the US Chief of the Military Intelligence Service, he wrote, "All internees on arrival in Switzerland have been ordered not to attempt escape without the permission of the Military Attache. This policy was adopted because of the extreme danger of unplanned attempts, as is evidenced by the fact that all the internees who attempted escape before Allied forces reached the Swiss border were apprehended by the Swiss and placed in punishment camp except two who, on getting across the border, were promptly captured by the Germans.

"Despite the fact that everything possible was being done, and that my orders

remained that internees should not escape without my permission, numerous of them attempted to do so nevertheless.

"The results—in my opinion, completely justifying my orders—were that: a) About 50% of those who attempted escape contrary to my orders (and hence without the assistance of my staff) were apprehended by the Swiss and sentenced to a very severe punishment camp for several months. b) Only about 2% of those who attempted escape in accordance with my orders were apprehended. c) Because of the flood of unauthorized escapes, the Swiss threw hundreds of guards around the camps (700 at Davos alone to guard about 250 internees), thereby immensely complicating the problem of arranging authorized escapes...."

George Michel, radio operator on 576th pilot 1/Lt Siegvart J. "Sig" Robertson's crew, was interned in Switzerland on 11 Jul 1944. Their #4 engine failed three hours into the mission to Munich; they lost prop control and all oil for that engine. The prop could not be feathered and spun wildly. The entire plane was shaking and the crew thought the prop might spin right off the plane. They had a difficult choice: abort, head toward England alone and almost certainly get shot down or, as Sig ultimately decided, "put our bombs on the target and *then* worry about what to do next." By applying more power to the other engines, they kept up with the Group. While dropping their eight 1,000 pound bombs on Munich, the #3 engine was hit by flak. With two engines now out of service, they began falling back. George remembers "the terrible feeling as the enormous formation pulled away toward the west without us.

"A group of P-51s guided our plane somewhat southwesterly toward Switzerland; we could see the Alps sticking up through the 10/10 cloud cover. It was difficult to know where we were. Suddenly, there was a hole in the clouds and, with the little control of the plane that Sig had, he got us through it, only to be met almost immediately with intense flak from Friedrichshafen directly below us. Right away, we put our wheels down as a sign of surrender. Sig managed to bank to the left out over Lake Constance, away from the flak, and kept managing to turn until the plane was now headed east to where the Rhine River entered the Lake. Over thousands of years, it has deposited two delta areas, one on the Austrian (German-occupied) side of the river and one on the Swiss side. There were glider fields on both sides.

"Sig somehow kept the plane in the air until it was just over the western edge of the Swiss glider field, where Sig put the plane down. The nose wheel collapsed, but luckily the ship did not flip over. The nose then skidded into and tore up a potato field which absorbed the energy of our crash but sure created one very irate farmer. As we crawled out of the plane, we could see and hear the German soldiers on the other side of the Rhine, still waving Swiss flags and yelling the German equivalent of 'come over here!' "

See SWITZERLAND on page 3

President's Message



When I received the Heritage League's *Herald* a few weeks ago about their reunion in England, it took my memory back to when the 392nd joined the 2nd Air Division Association's visits there. The *Herald* did a masterful job of covering all the events, 20 pages of it.

I remembered the warm feeling that Brits had for us. Often the usually reserved English stopped us on the street to shake hands with us. And Annabelle remembers the pageantry of the official events that only the Brits can put on... She especially liked the Lord Mayor's part, having been a Mayor once herself.

The Heritage League has assumed the mantle of the now-defunct 2AD's connection with the Memorial Library in that the League now has a seat on the Memorial Trust Governors. Beverly Baynes Tomb, League President, was elected to that post.

The 392nd was well represented with the 576th's Harvey Naber with his son Mark and associate members Ralph Winter and Doug Dovey.

The reach of the 392nd's website, www.b24.net, was demonstrated last month when the daughter of a 392nd crewman posted an inquiry to it. She was a lady in Maine inquiring about her father. He had passed away just after her 13th birthday and her knowledge of his WWII service was sketchy.

Much to her pleasure she received an e-mail from George Michel, the radio operator on the Robertson crew in the 576th squadron. George had read the lady's inquiry on the website and told her that her father, Gerald Landry, was the engineer and a fellow crewman on the Robertson crew. "We had the best engineer in Gerry," George said.

I'd like to see you all in Nashville.

Blue Skies,
Jim Goar

SWITZERLAND from page 2

While Swiss soldiers interrogated them next day, the ground shook and coffee cups on the table rattled from the impact of bombs being dropped on Munich, 95 miles away.

George notes, "Our instructions on every mission included an adamant reminder of our responsibility to try to evade capture if our plane went down or to try and escape from wherever we were 'detained.' Those of us in Switzerland were visited by BrigGen Legge. He came, in my case to Wengen, and emphasized that being caught while trying to escape meant going to the Swiss Wauwilermoos punishment prison." However, George doesn't remember being ordered *not* to try to escape.

"Some of us, with the help of many people and a bit of ingenuity on our part, found a way to escape. In January 1945, I made it back to the States but could no longer serve in Europe because of what I knew about the escape system. Because I had learned French while in Switzerland, I was sent to Selfridge Field, Michigan, to help train radio operators on French crews who were preparing for combat on B-26s."

Internees who were captured while trying to escape did not have such a happy ending. Daniel L. Culler, a 44th

BG flight engineer, was interned on 18 Mar 1944. In July 1944, he was caught while trying to escape and sent to Wauwilermoos prison. The brutality and abuse he suffered at the hands of the Swiss guards was worse than POWs endured in Germany.

George highly recommends Culler's book, *Black Hole of Wauwilermoos: An Airman's Story*. For book availability and to learn more about George's experiences in Switzerland, contact him at rogb24@wi.rr.com.

Other books about Swiss internees include *Shot from the Sky: American POWs in Switzerland* by Cathryn J. Prince; *Refuge from the Reich: American Airmen and Switzerland During World War II* by Stephen Tanner; and *Masters of the Air* by Donald L. Miller.

70 Years Later

by Ben Jones and Laurie Bedus

Ben is a 392nd BG historian. He grew up in Litcham, Norfolk, and frequently bicycled to Wendling to meet returning veterans. That whetted his interest in the 392nd. Years later, he moved to America, joined the US Air Force, and became a citizen. In 1996, he accompanied Jim Marsteller on a pilgrimage to Germany so Jim could learn all he could about the Friedrichshafen mission and especially where his uncle, Books crew engineer S/Sgt Everett N. Morris, crashed.

Laurie Bedus is the great niece of navigator Capt John E. Slowik, who flew with the Books crew on 18 Mar 1944.

They were in Germany at the Books crew crash site on 18 Mar 2014. This article describes their pilgrimage.

To read more about Jim and Ben's research into the Friedrichshafen mission and their visit to five of the crash sites, see <http://www.b24.net/search/index.htm>

For family members of the Books crew and 392nd BG researchers, March 18, 2014 was a date that for many years seemed in the distant future. Yet we all knew that we would do something to honor the 70th anniversary of the 392nd BG's mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany.

That anniversary was recently commemorated as 392nd BG researchers Laurie Bedus and Ben Jones gathered in Schramberg with German researchers and members of the local communities to remember and honor the crews downed so long ago.

Culture and History

The rich culture and history of the ancient lands fascinated them as they each embarked on adventures prior to their arrival in Schramberg. These few short days were filled with poignant, heartfelt moments.

In Belgium, Ben enjoyed the gracious hospitality of dear friend and fellow researcher Luc Dewez and his family, whose home is right in the heart of both WWI and WWII battlefields.

Laurie's first visit to Germany began with a private tour of the Dachau Concentration Camp and a trip to the site where her great uncle's plane crashed with her host and guide Carsten Kohlmann. They walked through the cemetery in Locherhoff where the remains of her great uncle and those

See PILGRIMAGE on page 10

FRIEDRICHSHAFEN from page 1

shop, seaplane assembly shop and metal shaping shop of the Dornier plant were severely damaged. The engineering offices and electrolysis shop were also damaged and the seaplane basin was breached by a direct hit.

Nine ships bombed targets of opportunity.

Per 2BD's Tactical Mission Report, the 14th CW neared the target with the 44th BG leading the 392nd. The 44th was "well on their bombing run without encountering any AA fire when they were baulked by another formation turning across their line of approach and were, therefore, compelled to turn away to the right and circle round to make another run.

"The 392nd Group was flying some distance behind the 44th and came in to attack by themselves. They encountered very intense and accurate predictor control fire which quickly succeeded in knocking out engines in both the lead and deputy lead a/c, thus causing the whole formation to reduce speed considerably. This Group emerged from the target area in a bad condition with many of their a/c damaged, and when they were attacked by enemy fighters about twenty minutes later they were fairly easy prey."

The 44th bombed soon after and also encountered very intense and accurate predictor control fire which seriously damaged many of their ships.

On this mission, 14th CW sent up just 24 percent of 2BD's planes but suffered 78 percent of 2BD's plane losses.

On 20 Mar 1944, 2AD's Commanding General and Division Staff met with the commanders of the 2nd, 14th, 96th, and 20th Combat Wings. One item discussed: "The fighters stated that the units were so separated it was impossible to cover it; that units were separated by 4000 feet in altitude; that while Group formations were fair, Groups were flying wide apart. Dense persistent contrails over Europe with some units not breaking into the clear until

eight minutes before the target, forced Groups to altitudes other than briefed. Combat Wing assemblies have been weak regarding altitudes and separation between Groups. This affects fighter support as well as the maneuver at the objective."

Resulting action required: "Groups within Combat Wings will fly as flat and as well-forward as possible. Combat Wings will maintain an interval of approximately three minutes. Leaders of Groups must make good designated Rally Points, otherwise there is no chance of catching up. Any changes in briefed route must be sent out on Channel B. (Aircraft standing-by on Channel C to relay changes in briefed route to fighters.) Combat Wings to reemphasize necessity for maintaining compact Combat Wing and Group formations. To be confirmed in 2BD Tactical Doctrine."

Missing from the report was how to effect this policy in the face of heavy, accurate flak and massive, aggressive enemy fighter attacks.

392nd BG

The pre-brief for lead crews was held at 4:45am, for gunners at 5:30, and the general briefing for 28 crews at 6:00. The first plane took off at 9:55. The Group rendezvoused with the 44th BG as scheduled and took its place flying low and left.

579th CO Maj Myron Keilman was Command Pilot, flying with **Capt Vernon Baumgart** and crew (also 579th). He later wrote, "The bomb run was so designed that we would fly eastward past our Friedrichshafen target, then circle to the right toward the initial point (IP) of our bomb run on the east end of Lake Constance—about twenty miles from 'bombs away.' After bomb-release, we would make a right turn to assemble the group, then head out-bound for home."

At 2:30pm, the 392nd uncovered for bombing and fell in trail of the 44th BG. "The bombardier was able to see the target

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label. Your membership status is shown directly after your name. "14" means your membership expires in December 2014; it can be renewed **NOW**. LM means Life Member and FRND means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. You may also join or renew on-line at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/join.htm>.

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

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

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FRIEDRICHSHAFEN from page 4

area and landmarks and a visual run was made. [Then] all hell broke loose! Flak started bursting right in the formation. Not up ahead, above or below—they had us zeroed in. The concussions made our airplane buck as chunks of jagged steel clanged into it; and with that the other airplanes of the formation went sailing by. I was stunned at the havoc.

“Vern Baumgart, with his eyes on the flight instruments flying the bomb run, quickly recognized that we had lost power on #4 engine and promptly feathered it, along with applying full power to the remaining three. But the formation had overrun us and was scattered—the bomb run was in disarray. Lead bombardier [1/Lt Edward I. White] did his best to adjust for the sudden change in air speed and loss of programmed altitude, but it was too late. Needless to say, we didn’t get our bombs on the target.

“A north heading was taken out of the target for two or three minutes and it appeared that the rest of the Wing and whole Division had cut short of the rally point and headed home. The formation turned... Leaving the target area, our airplanes closed back in formation. Flying on three engines, we were about 10 mph slower. The groups ahead pulled away from us in a very short time.

“Earlier, because our 14th CW leader, the 44th BG, had been forced out of its lead position by another group cutting in at the IP, the 44th then had to do a 360-degree turn and come in for a second bombing run. This maneuver had created a long gap in the bomber stream, both ahead and behind us, thereby leaving us isolated and vulnerable. It invited the ensuing fighter attacks...

“There they were, a whole ‘gaggle’ of [enemy fighters] in close formation, paralleling our course about a half-mile to our right and climbing.”

Vern Baumgart remembered “those fighters coming on the right side. When they came in, they came in five abreast. I don’t remember ever seeing that before. They were literally wing tip to wing tip, five of them at a time straight on in. And every time they came in, somebody got hit.”

When Group Intelligence Officer Maj Percy B. Calley phoned the 2BD at 11:50pm with the 392nd’s Mission

Narrative, he reported, “Flak at Friedrichshafen very intense and very accurate...chaff totally ineffective. Fighter cover was spotty and there was little fighter cover for a 30 minute period while group was under fierce attack. Enemy aircraft attacks came in waves with the planes attacking from head-on and above, going through our formation and then returning to attack from below and behind. About 50 Me-109s and FW-190s pressed the attacks energetically, but disappeared when P-38s came to our support, reappearing whenever the fighter protection was forced to go ahead of our bomber formation. Attacks began about 20 minutes after bombs away and continued for about a half hour—roughly from 2:50 until 3:30.”

Fourteen 392nd BG planes were lost with 70 men killed, 49 captured (with two dying while POWs), 26 interned in Switzerland, and one who successfully evaded. Claims against enemy fighters approved by 2BD were 23 destroyed, three probable, and two damaged.

The Crews

Pilots **1/Lt Sidney Cohen** (578th, in #42-109896, Gypsy Queen), **1/Lt Ward E. Mathias** (576th, in #42-50670) and **1/Lt Charles L. Neff** (576th, in #41-29433) aborted due to mechanical problems. All had flown far enough into enemy territory to get credit for the mission.

Two planes collided before reaching the target. **2/Lt John E. Feran’s** plane (#41-28651, 576th) was seen falling back. Behind him, **2/Lt Gerald M. Dalton** (#42-29174, Amblin’ Oakie, from the 577th) appeared to be caught in violent prop wash from Feran’s a/c. The planes collided, with Dalton’s cutting off the tail turret and tail assembly of Feran’s plane. The ships fell apart, collided again on the way down, blew up in sheets of flame and crashed.

Everyone in Feran’s plane was killed. Nine men in Dalton’s crew were killed, but waist gunner Sgt Charles F. Payne, who landed near Le Ployron, France, evaded with the help of the French underground.

He later wrote, “On the way to Friedrichshafen tail-end Charlie of our squadron peeled off and, since we were flying spare, we moved up into his position. Later he must have changed his mind, for he started back into France and he came back toward us and in about 15 minutes he was in formation on our left wing.

“I reported this move to the pilot, but he did not answer me. I could not figure out why neither he nor the co-pilot answered. The plane flew on our wing for a minute or so and then went under us.

“I began to get scared and called the pilot continually but still got no answer. The other plane started up as if to let us fly on his wing. Just before he hit us the bombardier called the pilot to pull up, and someone else called. The pilot still did not answer.

“The rudder of the other plane hit our right wing between the outboard engine and the wing tip, breaking the rudder and our wing. Our plane went up. I threw off my flak suit, grabbed my parachute, and reached for the waist window. The plane lurched and I was thrown against the side. The plane broke in two where I was standing, and I fell out at about 23,000 feet. I heard the other waist gunner scream. I felt for my parachute and found it was there.”

See FRIEDRICHSHAFEN on page 6



This photo, taken by 1/Lt John E. Muldoon’s crew, shows bomb bursts at Friedrichshafen as well as some of the flak batteries that were so costly to 392nd ships.

FRIEDRICHSHAFEN from page 5

Payne also said that on its return from Friedrichshafen, his formation was above Le Ployron around 3:30 or 4:00pm. "By that time the Germans had lined up flak trucks on the road near the town. The formation seemed to turn right over this position. There were about 20 heavy guns."

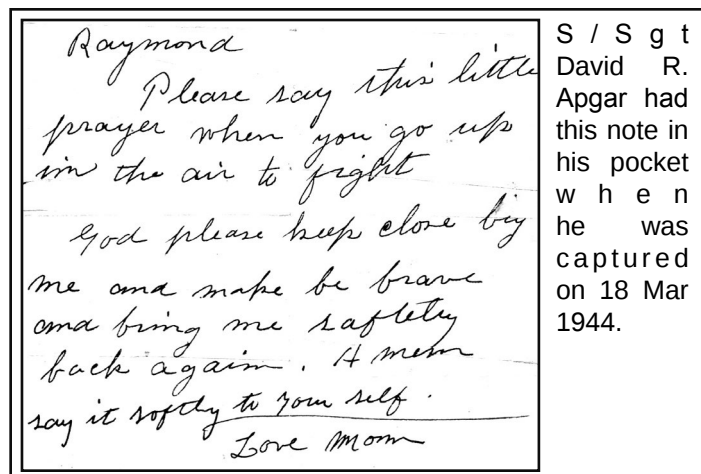
To avoid being hit by pieces from the two falling planes, **2/Lt Burrell M. Ellison** (576th) made what he called a "screaming dive" in #42-7560, Blain's Baby/Little Joe, leveling off 2,000 feet below the formation. Unable to rejoin the formation because his #4 supercharger was out, he aborted. He was given credit for the sortie.

Leaving the Target

German fighter attacks began soon after bombing. Every gunner was literally fighting for survival so not much eyewitness information is available about the lost crews.

The 577th Sqdn's **1/Lt Lynn G. Peterson** crew, aboard #42-7497, Old Daddy, was seen with one outboard motor on fire. It circled to the left, spun down and crashed. Three men were killed, seven were captured.

Ball turret gunner S/Sgt David R. Apgar later wrote his sister Emily from Stalag 3. He said, "...I am a prisoner of war in Germany. Our bomber got shot down, but I bailed out just in time before she blew up. I am wounded in the right arm, they got me on the second pass. But I'll be all right in time, I am in a German hospital now and they treat us mighty fine. Don't tell mom what happened if you can help it, just tell her I am fine."



579th Sqdn **1/Lt William A. Kale** and crew were on their first mission. After the #1 engine failed on the way to the target and the #2 engine had to be feathered a few minutes later, they diverted to Switzerland and were interned.

576th Sqdn pilot **1/Lt Donald K. Clover** had lost one engine to flak but was staying in formation. After receiving several solid hits during the enemy fighters' third pass, #42-52411 caught fire. When the bailout order was given, all eleven men left the plane. It exploded almost immediately after. Everyone made it down safely and became POWs.

After the fighter attacks, the #3 engine on 41-28692 smoked, the right wing tank was leaking gasoline and the hydraulic system had failed. After taking violent action to avoid a collision, 576th pilot **1/Lt Walter T. Hebron Jr.** could not regain the formation. He diverted to Switzerland, where the crew was interned, and was later awarded the

Distinguished Flying Cross for getting his badly damaged plane to a neutral country.

Flak and German fighters set 579th **2/Lt Dallas O. Books'** plane on fire and caused severe damage. The blast from an exploding oxygen tank pushed the only survivor out of the plane. #41-28742, Old Glory, exploded in the air soon after.

#42-7518, Hard to Get, was flown by 578th pilot **1/Lt Walter C. Raschke**. It made a complete outside loop, went straight down and crashed. Eight men were killed outright. The other two were captured; S/Sgt Roy W. Davis succumbed to his injuries later that day in a German hospital.

578th pilot **1/Lt Bruce L. Sooy**, aboard #42-99945, Pink Lady, was on the left wing of **1/Lt Rex L. Johnson**, also 578th. He says Johnson, flying #42-52465, "either stalled or was hit with flak. His right wing went down then he nosed down sharply and passed under me like he was heading for Switzerland. That's the last I saw of him."

The crew did not make it to Switzerland. Only two men were able to bail out; the other eight men went down with the plane.

1/Lt William G. Sharpe, 579, and copilot 2/Lt Norbert A. Bandura were wounded in a fighter attack and were heard over the interphone discussing which one would (or could) fly the aircraft, #42-100117 (named Delayed Action or Sinister Minister or both). The plane crashed with seven men killed, including both pilots. Three men were captured.

By zigging and zagging, 578th pilot **1/Lt Clifford L. Peterson** kept from getting hit on the first two enemy fighter attacks. On their third pass, though, #42-99981, B.T.O., was hit on the right side of the cockpit, blowing out the entire side. Peterson rang the bail-out bell. While he tried to control the ship, engineer T/Sgt Malcolm Hinshaw shot "pieces of fuselage as big as card tables" off a fighter. The enemy plane then skimmed over the top of the B-24 and collided with its two vertical stabilizers. The Lib went into a spinning, near-vertical power dive. Five men successfully bailed out from about 1,000 feet and were captured. Only Hinshaw escaped serious injury.

577th pilot **2/Lt Ellsworth F. Anderson** and crew were attacked about 30 minutes after bombs away. During the melee, the plane's flight controls were knocked out. Seven men were killed and three became POWs when #42-109824, The Arsenal, went down.

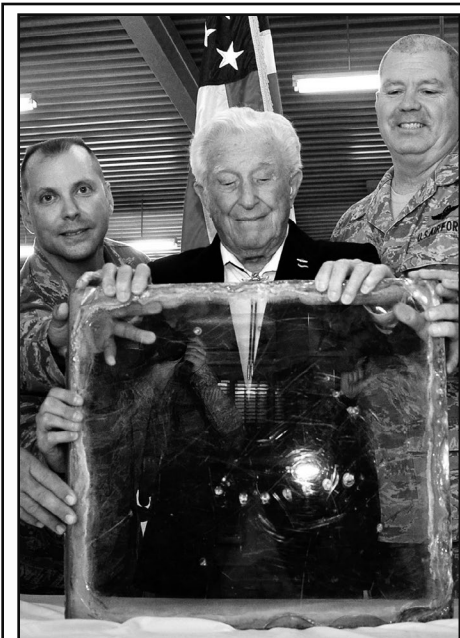
#42-109826, Late Date II, was flown by 577th pilot **1/Lt George T. Haffermehl**. It was badly damaged by fighters—bullets shot up the #1 engine, the oxygen system, and hydraulics. After ringing the bail-out bell, he and four men abandoned ship. One was killed when his chute failed to open; the others became POWs. Copilot 2/Lt Donald H. MacMullen got the plane to Diessenhofen, Switzerland, where he and the four remaining crewmen were interned.

Bruce L. Sooy, now 97, says the Friedrichshafen mission "is on his mind like it happened yesterday." When the lead planes each lost an engine, his speed went from 192 mph to 130 mph. "Aircraft were scattering like quail, some going down. Flak was so heavy and accurate it looked like a heavy rain cloud. Then, the FW-190s hit us. They came across in elements of five. We took heavy hits on the first pass losing #2, 3 and 4 engines and my right rudder. If the fighter pilot

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FRIEDRICHSHAFEN from page 6

had fired a fraction of a second sooner everything would have come through the cockpit and I wouldn't be here. We were lucky. Everyone got out safely, all the chutes worked."



On 8 Apr 2014, members of the 70th and 79th Air Refueling Sqdns at Travis AFB in California presented a piece of his windshield to 578th pilot Bruce Sooy. Bullet marks from 18 Mar 1944 are still visible. The Travis AFB Heritage Center arranged for an airman at Ramstein Air Base in Germany to pick it up from Karl H. Matt, who grew

up near Sooy's crash site. After seeing the windshield in a friend's barn, Karl convinced him "that it would be better to have the windscreen on display in a museum than to be hidden in a barn." It was flown to California by a crew from Travis, where it will soon be on display at the Heritage Center. *Photo by SSgt Cindy G. Alejandre, 349th Public Affairs*

Stars & Stripes

An article in the 19 Mar 1944 issue of *Stars & Stripes* described the mission. "Friedrichshafen, just across Lake Constance from Switzerland, was hit by United States heavies.... It has aircraft industries and a big radio location plant. Liberator crewmen upon their return told of encountering much savage opposition."

2/Lt James E. Muldoon, 578th, recounted that "his formation of 12 bombers was attacked head-on by about 75 enemy fighters. His own escort had pulled ahead when the Liberator formation slowed down to protect two crippled planes.

"This was the chance the enemy was waiting for. They hit us in a solid mass. A 20-millimeter shell came through the co-pilot's window and set off the abandon ship bell. Smoke and flames filled the nose of the ship. I saw several Liberators go down."

Hearing the alarm, two of his men parachuted out of #42-100100, Double Trouble, and became POWs. Muldoon successfully nursed the plane back to Wendling. Waist gunner S/Sgt Stephen A. Bednarcik was later credited with destroying two Me-109s.

Returning Planes

Other crews who limped back to Wendling also described fierce gun battles.

Tiefenthal Crew

What 577th pilot **1/Lt Dexter E. Tiefenthal** and crew endured was later described in a 392nd BG press release:

"Pierced in 2,500 (correct) places by bullets, shells and flak, carrying five wounded gunners and credited with destruction of four fighters and a probable, the Liberator [#42-99989] Son of Satan limped back from Germany recently, its destination the scrap heap. The story of the bomber's battle with enemy fighters is an epic of heroism and achievement in one of the fiercest air battles in this Liberator Group's annals.

With 25 shell-holes more than a foot and a half in diameter, the Son of Satan was so badly damaged it will never fly again. Dismantled, the parts of the Liberator that can be used will be salvaged. The rest will be junked.

Forty Me-109s and FW-190s attacked the Liberator formation as it made its way back from bombing targets in southwestern Germany. Sweeping in with a mass attack on the aircraft, they killed one waist gunner on Son of Satan almost immediately, fatally wounding another. For a moment the waist positions were defenseless. As the enemy closed in for another attack, the ball gunner, unable to stay in his belly turret due to an oxygen leak, took over in the waist, manning first one gun and then the other, moving from side to side as the fighters pressed in. The pilot was taking violent evasive action. "I saw Libs maneuvering in a fashion I never expected," the copilot said. "One seemed to be doing an inside loop while another stood almost upright on its tail."

In the top turret, the radio operator was hit. He had just climbed into the turret ordinarily occupied by the engineer as the latter checked the transfer of fuel from reserve tanks. Wiping the blood from his eyes with one hand, the radio operator fired the guns with the other. For 15 minutes, he remained in the turret warding off the attacks of the fighters. Later when the danger had passed, he acted as a communications link between the flight deck and other sections of the bomber, replacing the shot-out interphone. Meanwhile, he refused to leave the turret.

In the waist, the ball gunner was hit several times in the legs and back in the enemy's second assault. Unable to stand, he continued to fire from his knees.

The tail gunner was flying in that position for the first time. Too big to wear a flak suit, he had thrown the back of the suit over his shoulders. In the first attack, an Me-109 cut it right off his back. The flak suit was ripped to ribbons, but the gunner was unhurt. "I spotted a fighter cutting across in front of me just about that time," the tail gunner said, "and I let him have it. He blew up. Then they gathered for another attack, this time coming in from the tail of the formation," he continued. "I thought there were about 40 of them all headed for the Son of Satan. I fired at one only, and saw him explode."

Close on the destruction of the second fighter, a second 20-millimeter shell burst inside the tail turret, knocking the sergeant out of position. Bruised and dazed, he began to climb back to his turret when another 20-millimeter tore through, tearing metal, splintering glass and ricocheting past his head. Slightly stunned, he looked across the 10 feet of space between him and the waist gun positions. He found the ball gunner on his knees, trying to raise himself to the guns, the two waist gunners at his feet. Stumbling past the waist gunners, the Sergeant gently lifted the ball gunner away from the guns and forced him to lie down. Picking up

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extra flak suits, he placed them over the two men still alive.

At that point, two fighters made another pass at the left waist gun position. The tail gunner manned this gun, opening fire at 800 yards. One fighter burst into flames, going down in a spin; the other had enough and peeled off without pushing his attack. The wounded men demanded attention. Bandaging their wounds, the tail gunner reassured them, making them as comfortable as possible.

Up in the nose of the bomber, the fight had been equally fierce. Two head-on attacks had given the nose gunner all he could handle. Both guns were hot from almost continuous fire as he forced the enemy to keep a safe distance. Two more aggressive fighters had come in closer than was safe, however. Seared by the 50-caliber bullets from the nose turret, they had exploded, breaking into pieces as they hurtled down out of control. [Nose gunner S/Sgt James J. Osterheldt was later credited with destroying 2 FW-190s and probably destroying another.]

The enemy left. The pilot and copilot, trimming the damaged bomber as best they could, checked on the injuries to the aircraft. Son of Satan's tail and fuselage had more holes than solid surface, the engineer reported. By masterful work at the controls, the pilots kept the bomber in formation until they crossed the coast of England. Heading for the nearest base [Gravesend, Kent], the pilot found the landing gear would not go down. He instructed the engineer to let the gear down with the emergency hand crank. By this means, the right wheel was let down, but the engineer found the cable for the left wheel had been shot away.

Ordering the nose wheel kicked down, the pilot decided to land on the nose and right wheels, hoping to keep the left wing off the ground until speed was lost. Setting the bomber down gently, the pilot guided the aircraft to the far end of the runway, before the left wing began to lower. As the wing tip touched earth, ground crews watched breathlessly, breaking the tension when the big Liberator came to a stop, slewing around in the opposite direction."

Brauer Crew

577th pilot **1/Lt George M. Brauer** was flying #42-73505, Fairy Belle. In his diary, engineer T/Sgt Emilian W. Larue wrote of seeing "about 75 Me-109s coming in for attack. I knew then I had flown my last mission. Strangely I was not afraid of death, the ship is quiet and the ack-ack sounds like hell in my turret."

Larue continued, "Lt. [Lynn G.] Peterson flying our left wing is hit bad. His #1 engine on fire. At this point Lt. Peterson tried to gain protection from us by flying close to us so we could give him coverage with our guns." But, "We could hardly handle ourselves. He saw he was going to set us afire if he blew up. So he rocked his wings showing he was dropping out. Eight chutes going out. The ship went into a sharp dive, three Me-109s jumped him and finish[ed] him off. Our guns were going to beat hell.

"We knew it was our last. Jerries concentrated attack on our ship. Tail gunner shot one down, waist gunner got another. I look in my ammunition cans and started to sweat, my ammunition about gone. My ear cut bad and blood keeps getting in my eyes and on my goggles. I missed a fighter coming in at six o'clock, my tail gunner nailed him.

We were under attack for an hour.

"Over France, our P-38s, P-47s and P-51s came in and gave these damn jerries hell. They shot down nine I could see. I got out of my turret and checked my ship. Crew ok. A 20mm hole in left [side], a few bullet holes and flak holes, oil leaks and shot up rudder. We got past Paris and ack-ack gave us hell again. Finally hit Channel. We finally hit home."

Tail gunner S/Sgt Wilbur W. Rachell later received credit for destroying two Me-109s.

Darnell Crew

579th Sqdn bombardier 2/Lt Robert C. Lory was in the nose turret of #42-109814, Jive Bomber, flown by **2/Lt Joseph F. Darnell Jr.** He "saw FW-190s; they looked like a P-47. They attacked us from 12 o'clock high, and moved through us, five abreast tracking the group.

"They began sharpshooting us down. Fortunate for me, on that first pass I was able to fire at one of the planes. Anyway, after that first pass, my turret stopped. The guns, instead of moving, were now parallel to the wings of the aircraft and I couldn't get it to move, so I just sat there and was a spectator. I saw them line up again and make another pass through our group. They knocked down more airplanes.

"By that time I looked around and said, 'Oh my God, we're losing everybody. We're going to get shot down.' Then they lined up for a third pass, and about that time we were hollering, 'Mayday! Mayday! Where are our fighters?' And all of a sudden, out of nowhere, come these P-38s. Boy, were we glad to see them. They tangled with the German fighters and broke it up.

"In the meantime we got out of there. As we went out there were eight of us leaving the combat area. Somewhere along the line one of the eight disappeared. When we got to England and crossed the coast, there was a landing strip there. That other plane that was left with us, crash landed down there. So there were only six that got back to the base. When we got back everyone was saying, 'Where's the rest of them?' We kept pointing back East, they're back there somewhere."

576th plane #42-100371, Doodle Bug, had been crippled by flak even before the first fighter attack. Despite having at least one engine out, pilot **2/Lt William E. Meighen** got the plane back to England, landing at an RAF fighter base at Biggin Hill, Kent.

No accounts are known of what **1/Lt George Spartage** and

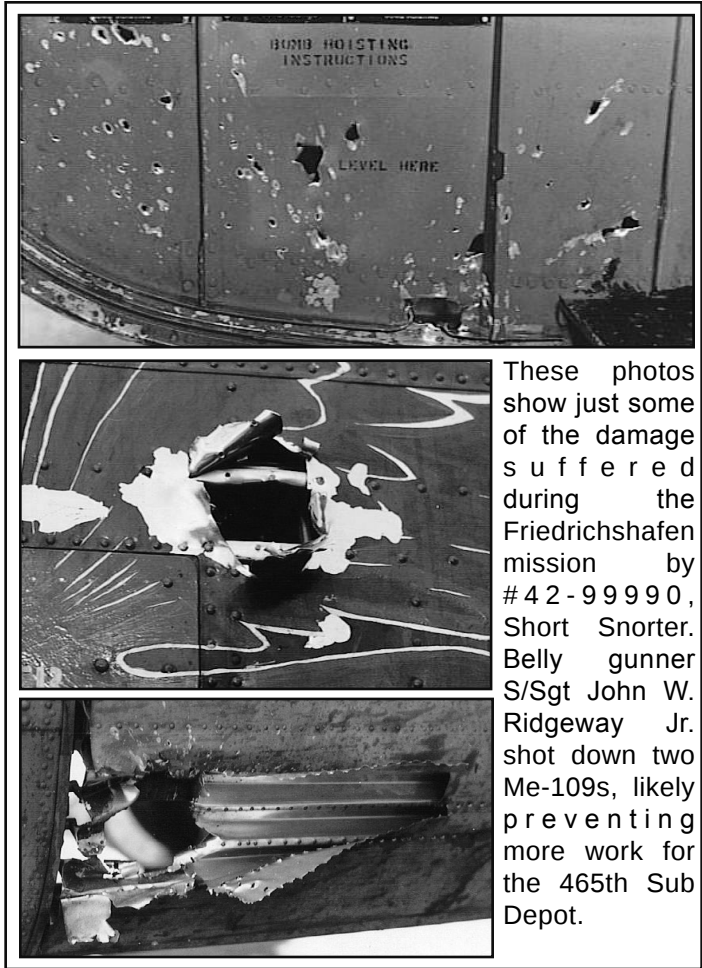


This photo shows the nose turret of #42-100432, flown by 577th pilot **2/Lt Gilbert W. Abell**. It is not surprising that the navigator, bombardier and radio operator were wounded during this or other attacks.

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crew, 579th, endured. However, #42-99990, Short Snorter, was so badly damaged that it didn't fly again until early May. Ball turret gunner S/Sgt John W. Ridgeway Jr. was credited with destroying two Me-109s.



These photos show just some of the damage suffered during the Friedrichshafen mission by #42-99990, Short Snorter. Belly gunner S/Sgt John W. Ridgeway Jr. shot down two Me-109s, likely preventing more work for the 465th Sub Depot.

Morefield Crew

2/Lt Hubert F. Morefield and crew (578th) were flying at the rear of the formation in #42-50604. When three FW-190s attacked simultaneously, tail gunner S/Sgt John H. Blekken drove two away and destroyed a third. Waist gunner Sgt Herman A. Breithaupt later summed up

the mission: "We really got the shit shot out of us today. About fifty fighters jumped us after we left the target. We were hit several times but none very serious except the one that started the fire in the tail end of the plane [causing first and second degree burns on Blekken's face and neck]. I got the fire out and we came on home."

Deputy Lead **Capt Wyeth C. Everhart** and crew, 579th, were aboard #42-52605. In his Lead Navigator's Narrative, 2/Lt Harold C. Kornman wrote, "On approaching the target area we swung wide on the right turn into the target and at 2:15pm we started throwing chaff to disguise the turn. We stayed outside of the briefed circle into the I.P. and made a visual run on the target... Flak over the target was very heavy and very accurate. The lead ship was hit near the target and the air speed dropped to 135 and 140 mph. Bombs were dropped at 2:38pm at 19,000 feet and at 2:40 our #3 engine was feathered. We made a right turn at the target... and then headed [to base]. At 2:57 we encountered 30 enemy fighters which stayed with us until 3:27. At 3:15 the lead ship dropped back and we (the deputy lead) took the lead." They landed at 6:10pm.

Flying on three engines, the last plane to get back to Station 118 that day was #42-7510, El Lobo, with Command Pilot Maj Keilman and pilot 1/Lt Baumgart. The Lib had been hit in the left wing and lost a lot of fuel. Keilman and the engineer debated whether there was enough gas left to get them back to England or if they would have to divert to Switzerland. Finally, Keilman decided "that we could reach the White Cliffs of Dover, then we would worry about a place to land—or bail out."

Keilman said, "Nine hours after take off, our safe landing was an event that was as welcome as any in my life." It was especially momentous for the Baumgart crew, as Friedrichshafen was the 25th and final mission of their combat tour.

After

577th Sqdn armorer S.J. "Sandy" Elden, who had loaded bombs on the planes that morning, said, "Our saddest day was undoubtedly the Friedrichshafen raid. Very few aircraft returned and total disbelief permeated the entire base. There was a profound silence throughout all quarters."

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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

FRIEDRICHSHAFEN from page 9

578th Sqdn Intelligence Officer Capt Holmes Alexander echoed those comments. March 19, 1944, he wrote, was a "bright Sunday" but there was "an air of hushed and sober depression everywhere."

A two-day stand down for the Group was ordered. On 21 March, just thirteen crews flew a No Ball mission to Watten, France. That same day, nineteen replacement crews were ordered to the 392nd.

Sandy continued, "As a result of this tragedy, the workload of almost all the ground support sections reduced dramatically. We had virtually no aircraft to service and several weeks passed before we were back to full strength. Replacement aircraft were no longer camouflaged. All our new B-24s were bare metal, a bright silver color."

Group Graves

Even before the war ended, US Army Graves Registration units moved throughout Europe to find the burial places of American military personnel, establish their identities, and ultimately bury them per their next of kin's wishes.

By late 1951, the Army was able to identify all but eight of the 392nd BG's casualties from the Friedrichshafen mission. By process of elimination, they knew who the men most likely were but could not identify them individually.

They were thus buried in group graves at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri. In one grave were the remains of Feran crew navigator 2/Lt Francis J. Cummings, radio operator T/Sgt Thaddeus S. Dmoch, bombardier 2/Lt Donald R. Greene and Dalton crew navigator 2/Lt Phillip Sherman.

In three graves, but sharing a single headstone, were pilot 1/Lt Rex L. Johnson, Raschke crew tail gunner Pvt Fred Gyure, and Books crew gunners Sgt Robert G. Hampton and S/Sgt Clifford T. Porter.

Final Thought

Many years later, Command Pilot Myron Keilman said, "The consoling after-thoughts of the 392nd's most disastrous mission are that several 2AD B-24 bombardment groups made devastating hits on the primary objective, and Friedrichshafen was never re-scheduled as a target" for the 392nd.

PILGRIMAGE from page 3

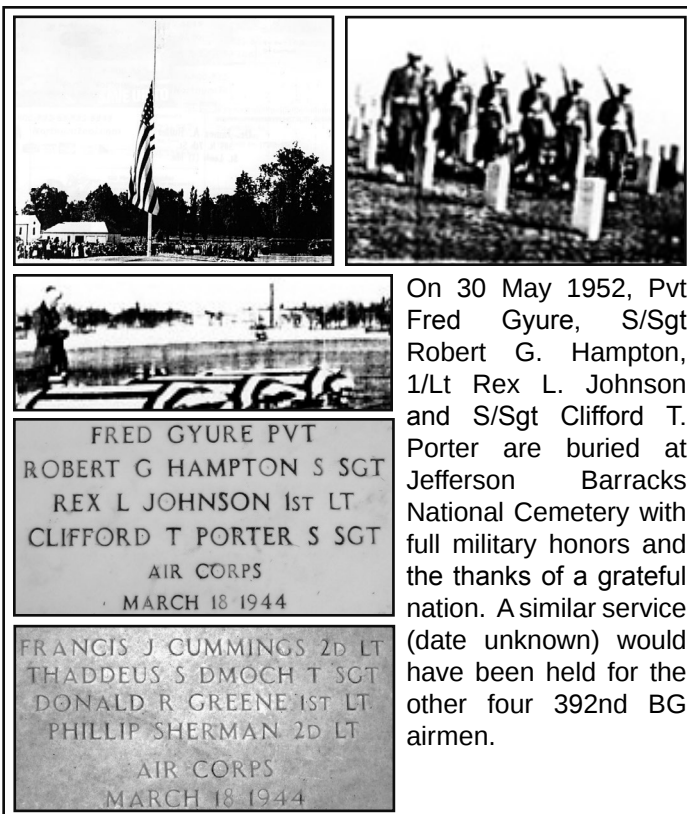
of 30 other men from the 392nd BG were initially interred.

As she stood in the small creek at the back of the property belonging to the Family Kopp, Laurie imagined what it must have looked like seventy years ago, and for the first time, began to comprehend the magnitude of the losses suffered by the German locals and the American airmen. Though the sky over the Black Forest was crystalline blue and cloudless, she pictured it as gray and cold; that streaks of white vapor trails left by the invading bombers zigzagged all over. In front of her, she imagined a heavy bomber named Old Glory, the B-24 belonging to the Books crew, smashing into the ground and the utter devastation that followed.

As Ben made his way to Germany from Belgium, his eyes scanned the blue skies as he tried to envisage the mass of bomber formations heading southwest to Friedrichshafen. He anticipated his reunion with Carsten Kohlmann, a dear friend. "It's hard to believe that it'd been nearly twenty years since Jim and I had first met Carsten on the 50th anniversary of the Books crew crash. Then, he was a history student at a local university; today, he is the head archivist and historian for the town of Schramberg and surrounding area. What a great reunion it will be!"

As Ben pulled up to Carsten's office, he was greeted by his dear friends standing behind three small flags: one US, one German and one British—a simple but powerful symbol that signified the importance of their years of research, collaboration and friendship.

Over the years, the researchers of the 392nd BG have had experiences that can only be explained by luck, divine intervention or fate, and this trip was no exception. While



Carsten Kohlmann describes Jim Marsteller's visit in 1996, shown in the photo projected on the wall. On the table are photos of the ten men in the Books crew.

walking to a grocery store across the street from Carsten's office, a magazine on display caught Ben's eye. On the cover of *Flugzeug Classic* were a couple of images relating to the Consolidated B-24. He stopped for a few minutes to glance through its pages. To his great surprise, there were multiple photos and a drawing of some 392nd aircraft. To find this particular magazine featuring many 392nd aircraft at this time and place was quite a good sign of the next few

See PILGRIMAGE on page 11

PILGRIMAGE from page 10

days to come.

The morning of March 18, 2014, Laurie and Ben met Carsten and his assistant historian before heading to the small town of Hardt, where they were greeted by Mayor Herbert Halder, who had provided key support to Ben and Jim twenty years earlier. Mayor Halder had organized a ceremony in the town hall.



A newly-found photo of Old Glory's crash site.

As the group climbed the stairs to the third floor, they weren't prepared for what awaited them. On a long table were ten photographs, one of each member of the Books crew, and a slideshow rotating through various photos of the fateful day in 1944. Food and drinks were provided for the guests and as the start time grew closer, so many people had come that extra chairs had to be brought in to seat everyone. The audience included members of all ages from the Hardt community and the surrounding towns, including eyewitnesses to the crashes who were just children at the time, and even a former Luftwaffe pilot. It was hard not to be touched by the outpouring of support and interest from the small communities whose fates were altered by the events of World War II.

The ceremony was opened by Mayor Halder, followed by Carsten Kohlmann, then Ben and Laurie. Each spoke of the importance of keeping history alive and relevant for future generations. For Laurie, the only family member of the Books crew present on this important anniversary, it was humbling and emotional to spend time with so many people whose lives had been changed so completely when her great uncle John's plane crashed in their back yards and fields, leaving a debris field a mile wide.

After the ceremony, Ben and Laurie mingled with the audience. Several brought artifacts, newspaper clippings and even some never-before-seen photographs. A few weeks earlier, Carsten had been given the photos which had recently been discovered in the basement of a former



L-R: Laurie Bedus, a German eyewitness, Mayor Halder, and Ben Jones at the Books crew crash site.

photographic shop in Schramberg. They were images taken at the Books crew crash site shortly after their plane hit, but which had remained undisturbed for close to 70 years. Perhaps they were meant to be found for this commemoration ceremony.

That afternoon, the researchers followed Mayor Halder to an area called the Tischneck, where the main fuselage and cockpit section of Old Glory came to rest. They wandered through the field to the exact spot on the edge of the dense forest where some of the photographs of the wreckage had been taken in 1944. They placed flowers at the spot in a moment of solemn remembrance as the sun began to settle in the distance, darkening the sky and creating shadows.

It was so peaceful, yet they all knew 70 years before the air was filled with the sounds of aircraft above coming and going to the target, being chased by German fighters, flak batteries firing off their weapons and then the impact of the aircraft and subsequent fires, ammunition exploding everywhere and lives ended. This night, though, was quiet; the only sounds heard were the sticks breaking under the shoes of the group as they explored and paid homage and finally, said goodbye.

The next day, Laurie and Ben went to the other sites connected to the crash, including the cemetery in Locherhof and the Kopp family farm where the tail section and some engines landed. With the newly discovered photos, Ben was able to pinpoint where one of the engines had been, in part of the yard now used as a chicken pen. Ben and Laurie were reminded of John's letter to his family where he teased them about being chicken farmers. The irony was not lost on them when fate stepped in yet again, guiding Laurie to some small fragments of the wreckage just beyond the wire pen; a breathtaking moment.

After this last trip to the Books crew sites, Laurie and Ben said their goodbyes. Ben made his way back to Belgium while Laurie had another week to explore the beautiful bucolic towns in Bavaria.

A few days later, a local woman who had read about the commemoration ceremony in the local paper contacted Mayor Halder's office saying she had pieces of the plane she wanted to give to Laurie.

As Laurie waited anxiously in Mayor Halder's office, Mrs. Uta Doldt and her children brought in a pair of headphones from Old Glory and a speaker from one of the other 392nd BG planes. Laurie was again overwhelmed by the generosity of the Germans she had met during her visit and this link to the men with whom her great uncle flew 70 years earlier.



L-R: Mrs. Uta Doldt and Laurie Bedus model the headphones used by a crewman on Old Glory.

As Laurie drove away on her last day, rain and snow limited the visibility. But she could see clearly for the first time in many years as she said goodbye to Germany, feeling closer than ever to her great uncle; knowing that he had been with her and Ben the whole time.

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

There has been an increase in international tensions and conflicts recently. The Russian-Ukraine border dispute, al-Qaeda activities and the grisly propaganda videos released by ISIS Islamist terrorists of the executions of American hostages is calculated to intimidate the terrorist groups' enemies and incite attacks against the United States.

The following Prayer is my heartfelt Prayer for your comfort and encouragement at this time. It is taken from Numbers, Chapter 6:

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you PEACE.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

But we...shall be remember'd;

~

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

~

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

William Shakespeare
Henry V

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Charles Bolstridge, 579, April 14, 2014
Rosemary Gerrard Komar, Assoc., February 15, 2014
Frank Koza, 577/579, May 31, 2014
Charlotte B. Christman, widow of Harold, 578, December 29, 2013
John H. "Jack" Adams, 579th, July 8, 2014
Landon H. Brent Sr., 578, August 7, 2014
Jessie B. Gill Jr., 576, April 1, 2014
Francis J. Nagle, 578, August 15, 2014
Maclovio Olivas, 577, June 21, 2014
Wilbert G. Schulz, 577, June 22, 2014