



More about Bombs

Despite built-in safeguards and the special care exercised around explosives, accidents did happen. Some were the result of overworked men trying to do too much in too little time, with safety precautions perhaps ignored or rushed through. But even when everything was done correctly, problems could still occur.

Fire and Explosions

At about 9pm on 4 Dec 1943, the 392nd BG was alerted for a mission to Cognac, France, the next morning. Take offs would begin at 7:55am.

At 12:30am, 12 500-pound M43 general purpose bombs were delivered to the 579th Sqdn's B-24 #42-7556, *Exterminator II*, in dispersal 41. Six were put under each wing. Sgt James D. Wyllie, Cpl Alvin Ottenstein, and another armorer then began installing the plane's ball turret guns.

That task accomplished,

Cpl Ottenstein re-fueled #556's Auxiliary Power Unit (APU, or *putt-putt*, which was used to provide power to the plane during pre-flight activities). Sgt Wyllie started the putt-putt and the men resumed getting #556 ready for its mission.

Cpl Allen C. Jacobs later recounted, "I was fireguard for the starting of #4 engine on Airplane 42-7529. After the engine started I walked around the plane [At about 1:30am], I was looking directly at Airplane 42-7556 when I saw flame come out of the left bomb bay and the waist window, and heard a rumbling explosion. The flame then enveloped the plane.

"I ran towards the plane and about 50 feet from it I met a man who was running from it and was on fire. I grabbed him and smothered the flames with my jacket. I then took him to a nearby hole full of water and completely extinguished his clothing." The man, Cpl Robert Shockley, had been in the left rear bomb bay when the fuel tanks exploded.

Three other men were also seen running from the plane, no doubt the three armorers.

Ten minutes later, the fuel tanks on the right side exploded; their detonation ignited a gas trailer and oil truck

parked about 35 yards away in dispersal 43.

Debris from the two explosions was scattered in all directions, damaging the a/c parked in dispersals 40 (#42-7510) and 41A (#42-7529) as well as nearby buildings and ground crew tents.

Crash Crew

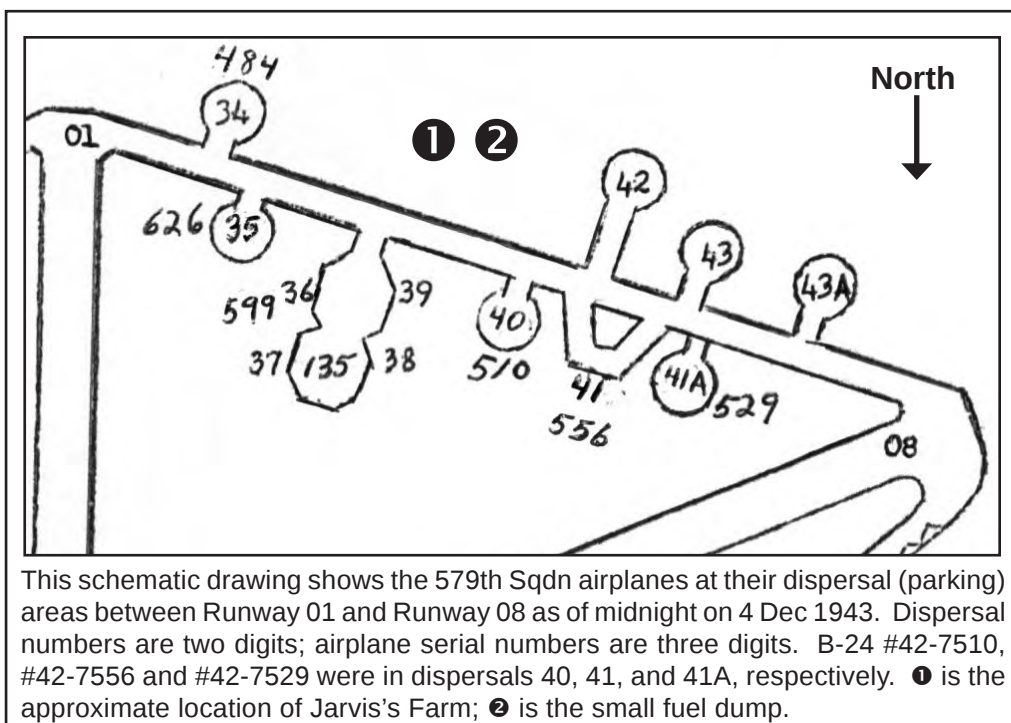
Sgt Lee A. Doolittle was a member of the 2101st

Engineer Fire

Fighting Platoon and part of that mission's crash crew, which was on standby every time planes took off or landed. When #42-7556 caught fire, his team quickly arrived with tankers, foam makers, and other gear. The heat was so intense, though, they had no chance of putting the fire out right away. Instead, their main objective was to keep the nearby planes from being further damaged.

When #42-7529 looked like it would catch fire, Doolittle took action. He boarded the a/c and worked to start the two inboard engines. He was soon joined by 578th Sqdn

See **BOMBS** on page 4





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FROM THE EDITOR

Folded Wings. We mourn the passing of 576th Sqdn armorer Tom Perry. He attended reunions for decades and enjoyed answering questions about “the way it was.” When I became editor of the newsletter in January 2008, I asked Tom if he would write a “Chaplain’s Column” for each issue. He agreed, and each column from March 2008 through September 2015 was filled with his faith and words of encouragement to our readers. He will be missed by all who knew him.

June Newsletter. After reading the article on bombs, 465th Sub Depot machinist Aubrey Burke emailed to say that “Yes, coke is hard to light. The two wax/paper protective rings, about 3” x 3” wide and thick that circled the standard 500-pounders, made great fuel for our hut’s space heater.”

French Legion of Honor. 579th Sqdn navigator Bob Cleverdon was recently presented the French Legion of Honour in recognition of his services during WWII to



help liberate France. The presentation was made by Arnaud Mentré, Consul General of France in Boston, Massachusetts, on July 14, when France celebrates its national day. For more information, see [https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/07/15/france-honored-bob-cleverdon-for-saving-from-nazis-honors-just-being-](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/07/15/france-honored-bob-cleverdon-for-saving-from-nazis-honors-just-being-bob/KKvOz4tiX8f3MXM8PKRnGL/story.html)

[bob/KKvOz4tiX8f3MXM8PKRnGL/story.html](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/07/15/france-honored-bob-cleverdon-for-saving-from-nazis-honors-just-being-bob/KKvOz4tiX8f3MXM8PKRnGL/story.html). These photos show 97 year-old Bob now and then.

Amendment to 392nd BGMA Bylaws. A proposed change to Article Nine of our bylaws will be presented at our annual business meeting in Norfolk. It is being submitted by President Bob Books with the required concurrence of three members. This article serves as the required 30-day notice of a pending amendment change. Per the bylaws, “An affirmative vote of a majority of those members in good standing

and voting shall be required for adoption of the proposed amendments.”

If you have questions about this proposal, please contact President Bob Books or VP Ralph Winter.

Current Paragraph A.: The Officers of this organization shall be: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Any one Director may serve in more than one office at the discretion of the Board of Directors. The officers will make up the Executive Committee.

Proposed Change to Paragraph A: The Officers of this organization shall be: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Any one Director may serve in more than one office at the discretion of the Board of Directors. The officers will make up the Executive Committee.

Current Paragraph E. The Vice President shall exercise the functions of the Office of the President, in the absence or upon the inability of the President to act. In these cases the Vice President will carry the rights and responsibilities of the duly-elected President. The Vice President will carry out special assignments from the President.

Proposed Change to Paragraph E: The 1st Vice President shall exercise the functions of the Office of the President, in the absence or upon the inability of the President to act. In these cases the 1st Vice President will carry the rights and responsibilities of the duly-elected President. The 1st Vice President will carry out special assignments from the President.

Proposed Addition of Paragraph F. The 2nd Vice President shall exercise the functions of the Office of the 1st Vice President, in the absence or upon the inability of the 1st Vice President to act. In the case where both the 1st Vice President and the President are unable to fulfill their duties, the 2nd Vice President will carry the rights and responsibilities of the duly-elected President. The 2nd Vice President will carry out special assignments from the President.

Subsequent paragraphs F and G will remain unchanged except to be re-designated paragraphs G and H respectively.

Heritage League Reunion. The Heritage League perpetuates the legacy of the Second Air Division and honors the efforts and sacrifices of its members during WWII. From 9-14 June 2019, they held a reunion in Norwich, England. Eleven Crusaders attended; a highlight for them was, of course, a visit to what’s left of Station 118 at Wendling and Beeston, expertly led by John Gilbert. A stop at the recently renovated Ploughshare Pub was an extra-special treat.

The pub was often visited by our airmen. Anthony Ferdinando, tail gunner on the 576th’s DePalma crew, recalled, “A crew member of ours decided that he was going to visit a pub, the Ploughshare, as I recall. **See EDITOR on page 3**

President's Thoughts



We will soon hold our annual meeting in Norfolk, VA. We have several items to bring before the membership and the election of officers at the directors meeting.

As noted on page 2, I will bring forth a motion to the membership to amend our bylaws to add another Vice President to the officers, raising the number of officers from 4 to 5. This is not new as the association always had two Vice Presidents prior to 2010. I believe it is good for the Association to have greater representation for decisions that come before the officers.

I have asked Bill McCutcheon to chair the nomination committee and to nominate members to the three expiring director terms in addition to the open terms of the late George Michel and Jack Rotzien. Per our bylaws, "Nominees must have been a paid-up member for the preceding twelve (12) months."

Following the election of directors at the membership meeting, the directors will meet and elect the President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer for the coming year. These executive positions direct our activities and business of the association, subject to and accountable to the directors.

The goal and purpose of the association are to perpetuate for future generations the legacy and history of the 8th Air Force, 392nd Bomb Group and the memory of lost comrades. At our membership meeting last year in England I announced that I would present a plan to the membership to consider the future of our 392nd BGMA archives. My main goal is to provide a resting place that will be available to future researchers and generations. I'm prepared to do that and I will also make suggestions regarding the preservation and future of our digital archives.

I'm looking forward to seeing old friends in Norfolk and meeting our first-time reunion attendees!

Bob

EDITOR from page 2

He had used his bicycle as transportation. Later, on his way back to the base, he noticed a couple of small lights coming his way. Thinking that they were two bicycles, he decided to go between them. To his chagrin, it was a jeep with its black-out lights on. His stop was very sudden, to say the least. He had to push the bike back to the base."

At the HL's Gala Banquet, John was presented a Certificate of Appreciation for "his selfless volunteer participation in important ceremonies for The League and the 392nd Bomb Group Association;" for being "stalwart in representing Second Air Division and British military organizations, while educating youth on history and being a conspicuous role model... Base guide, host to Yank visitors and memorial marker steward, we are honored as individuals and an organization to call him friend..."

For photos from the reunion, please see page 11.

When the USAAF Bombed Montana

Editor's note: A friend of mine sent me an internet article about this unusual bombing mission. I checked it out; Miles City residents and historians disagree about many of the details, but all concur that the event happened!

On 21 Mar 1944, residents of Miles City, Montana, awoke to find their quaint little town being overrun and submerged by the rising frozen waters of the Yellowstone River. Ice jams were building quickly, raising the water level over 16 feet. As the blocks of ice, slush and freezing waters flooded into the city, residents were forced to flee their homes for safer grounds.

Mayor Leighton Keye knew immediate action must be taken and brought in explosive experts from a nearby town. Three local pilots took a small aircraft over the river and dropped close to 12 boxes, or 1,500 pounds, of dynamite. The "shuddering blasts" created by the detonations were only partly successful in clearing the ice flows.

Mayor Keye then decided to do the unthinkable and placed an urgent request to the Governor's office. It was short and to the point: "Send in the bombers!"

At a USAAF base in Rapid City, South Dakota, a B-17 crew was quick to accept the unusual mission and preparations to bomb an American city were fast underway. The crew hastily began fusing and loading 250 pound bombs into the bomb bay of their Flying Fortress. Shortly thereafter, the loaded bomber and her crew took to the skies in a harsh blizzard and low ceilings.

The plan was to deliver the bombs to Miles City, where the load would be transferred to a waiting dive bomber that would execute the bomb delivery. As the B-17 neared Miles City, though, low clouds forced a change in the plans. Under a blanket of 1,000 foot overcast skies, the B-17 crew was ordered to handle the bombing run themselves.

At 7:30pm, in heavy snow, winds and cold, the bomber appeared over the river and executed two dummy bombing runs as crowds of locals watched in amazement. On the third pass, the B-17 released a test bomb that exploded precisely on target. Unsure of the affect, the crew brought their bomber around again, making two more passes and releasing another fourteen bombs.

The entire town, their homes and their families' future hung in the balance as hundreds of residents watched the bombs fall. Seconds later a huge plume of ice, mud and water exploded skyward from the frozen Yellowstone River.

The ice jam quickly broke apart and the frozen waters immediately began receding, saving the small town. The next morning, residents were thrilled to note that water levels had dropped a full 10 feet from the day before.

That night, the airmen were welcomed by the thankful and relieved citizens of Miles City who agreed with Mayor Keye that the mission was "in accordance with the best traditions" of the U. S. Military.

The entire crew got a well-deserved steak dinner and were put up at the local hotel.

The next morning, the crew departed. Their B-17 made a final victory pass over the town at 50 feet over the rooftops, rocking its wings as they flew back home to Rapid City ... the only time the continental United States was bombed.

BOMBS from page 1

pilot 1/Lt Robert E. Fletcher and they taxied the plane to dispersal 43A.

Another major concern was to keep a small fuel dump, about 800 yards to the southeast, from catching fire. That would cause even more damage than if the gas refueling truck exploded.

As the crash crew sprayed foam onto the refueling truck at 1:48am, some bombs near #556 exploded. Even though Doolittle was well over 6 feet tall, the concussion from the blast blew him down into the mud. Shrapnel whizzed just above his head, putting big holes in the top of the truck.

Flying Control personnel notified the base hospital and Group Operations and dispatched crash trucks. Men in the ordnance shop were told to go to the bomb shelter. 579th Sqdn Engineering Officer 1/Lt Walter Giesecke had a nearby oil truck and both Cletracs (high speed tractors with treads) driven away.

Over the next half hour, the gas truck fire was put out and an effort was made to keep the other bombs from exploding. 579th Sqdn Ordnance Officer 1/Lt Brooks Pendleton had the Control Tower announce that all personnel should remain at least 2,000 yards from the fire. He then returned to the fire site and had the guards on duty move everyone further back.

The bombs under a/c #42-7510 were moved by Group Ordnance Officer 1/Lt Wilbur Metz and the 579th's 1/Lt Pendleton, T/Sgt James Switzer and Sgt Jack Truesdell. As they worked, the fire near that dispersal was put out.

The rest of the bombs under #42-7556 exploded at 2:20am.

The Mission

Despite this sound and fury, 21 a/c took off as scheduled. The 579th put three of its remaining four ships aloft—#42-

7626, #42-7599, and #41-29135 in dispersals 35, 36 and 37 respectively. Ted A. Bailey, a 579th ground crew chief, said he was so busy getting his plane ready that he wasn't even aware of what was going on until later.

As the first plane flew away, ground support personnel were just minutes away from extinguishing all the fires.

The Investigation

It was believed that the first two explosions were fuel tanks while the other two explosions were the detonations of eleven bombs under #556's wings—incredibly, one bomb did not go off.

Since no fuzes were in or near the bombs, the investigating board decided that some gas had been spilled when the putt-putt was refueled, which was then ignited by sparks from the APU. This was despite Cpl Ottenstein's statement that "I put the fuel in the putt-putt, which was not running, and did not spill any." M/Sgt Glenn Engelhardt and M/Sgt Theodore Ritland also testified that they had been in and out of #556 several times before the explosion and neither had detected a gas leak or smelled gas fumes.

Recommendations: That "all possible precautions be taken not to spill fuel when servicing the auxiliary power unit, and if fuel is spilled, that power unit will not be operated until thoroughly dried and with fire extinguisher in hand."

Recollections

The explosions made 578th Sqdn tail gunner Joe McNiel think they were under attack. His barracks rapidly emptied as the occupants (including several women, per McNiel) ran for cover. Some newly-arrived crewmen didn't know the nearest bomb shelter was just an open trench and they jumped into two feet of cold water. Much yelling and cursing promptly followed.

576th Sqdn armorer Tom Perry was riding a bomb service

See BOMBS on page 5

392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; 19 and higher means your dues are up-to-date. If you wish to renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039 or join/ renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/memorialAssociation.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA.

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

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

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

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

Hardship Waiver []

DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

BOMBS from page 4



Top: Not much was left of #42-7556, *Exterminator II*, after the fire. The bottom photo shows how close #42-7510, *El Lobo*, was to the fire and blast zone.

truck on his way to his planes when he saw the fire. He grabbed a fire extinguisher and ran toward the burning a/c. "Suddenly, there was the first explosion. I quickly executed a smart 'to the rear, march!' My first few steps after turning around were quite long due to the concussion of the blast pushing me away from the fire.

"At that point I felt helpless, and frankly, afraid of a 2nd explosion. We had our own [seven] planes to load and get ready for the takeoff of the mission, so went about our squadron activities. I was aware of the sound of some RAF Spitfires circling above and supposed they were there to protect us from any German aircraft attracted by the fire."

Per the 465th Sub Depot's history, "Our barracks are located along the perimeter track west and the gas dump is in the center of two sites and most of the men were sleeping when suddenly a terrific explosion rent the air, shaking the barracks somewhat. Some of the men got up to see what was happening but the second explosion which occurred several minutes later broke windows, split barracks' ends open and knocked articles off of the shelves. In no seconds flat the whole area was cleared by the men. Our men were dressed in 'long johns' on up. 465th Commander Major James W. Wall ordered all personnel to report to Mess No. 2 until the danger was over.

"The plane was not over one hundred yards away from the barracks and was completely demolished. The morning after found bomb fragments and sleepy men treading off to breakfast. This event took several days before its affect died down. "

Soldier's Medal

For their actions during this event, eleven men from the 392nd BG were awarded the Soldier's Medal "for heroism displayed at a bomber station in England, 5 December

1943." This award can be presented to any person who, while serving in any capacity with the army, displays heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy. It is a highly respected sign of personal bravery, usually indicating risk of life. Recipients were:

Sgt Lee A. Doolittle, 2101st Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon

1/Lt Robert E. Fletcher, 578th Sqdn pilot

Cpl Richard A. Holevoet, 2101st Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon

Cpl Allen C. Jacobs, 579th Sqdn

1/Lt Wilbur H. Metz, Group Ordnance Officer

Sgt Vernon L. Olson, 1825th Ordnance Co

1/Lt Brooks Pendleton, 579th Sqdn Ordnance Officer

PFC Emil J. Ribar, 10th Station Complement Sqdn

T/Sgt James W. Switzer, 579th Sqdn

Sgt Jack L. Truesdell, 579th Sqdn

T/5 Finney D. Voelkel, 1825th Ordnance Co

Resulting Damage

Damage was not limited to just the dispersal area. Beeston resident Ernie Parke recalled that when he and his father went to work the morning of December 5, they "cycled down and had a look at the devastation." About half the tiles on the roof of a barn just on the east side of the fuel dump and then owned by Mr. Jarvis had been broken by the blasts. Soon after, "the Yanks" replaced the tiles with sheets of corrugated metal, which stayed in place until 2008. At that time, work to convert the barn to a house began. Upon completion, the structure was named *Liberator Barn*.

Despite the fire and four rounds of explosions, just two men were injured. Sgt Wyllie sustained lacerations in his scalp and cheek and lost his left middle finger. Cpl Shockley suffered severe burns on his scalp and other parts of his body.

Although the fuselages of #42-7510 and #42-7529 were warped and their tail assemblies twisted, they were both speedily repaired. #510 returned to combat on December 20, followed two days later by #529.

Explosions at other locations had more grievous results.

Metfield, Suffolk

On 15 Jul 1944, a resupply convoy arrived at Metfield, Suffolk, home of the 491st BG, to deliver a load of 500 pound bombs. All the bomb dump personnel were at supper. Rather than wait for their return, five drivers apparently decided to unload the bombs themselves. The sixth, with a load of tail fins and fuzes, drove to his delivery location and then sat on the running board (with the truck between him and the bomb delivery trucks) while waiting for help to unload his cargo.

Based on the sounds he heard, this man thought that at least one driver aligned his load of bombs across the truck bed and parallel to the axles. Then, the "tailgate was dropped, the driver shifted into reverse and gunned his engine to achieve speed. When moving fast enough the driver would hit the brakes hard, causing a sharp stop. The momentum imparted to the bomb by fast backing would cause it to roll out the back of the truck when the truck stopped sharply."

See BOMBS on page 6

BOMBS from page 5

At some point, one bomb fell on another. A chain reaction of detonations occurred until approximately 1,200 tons of bombs had exploded. The five drivers were obliterated and (the reports vary) at least five and perhaps as many as 24 B-24s were damaged beyond repair.

The investigation revealed that the bombs had been filled with RDX, a compound known to be more volatile than TNT. None of them had the yellow stripe around the center, which would have alerted everyone to be more careful than usual.

Per the 1825th Ordnance Co. history for July 1944, "As a result of the Bomb Dump explosion at Metfield, the Ammunition Section realized that 'it can happen here,' particularly with the introduction of new and more sensitive explosives. Consequently, all safety regulations and precautions were thoroughly checked and tightened up. All of the men in the section and most of the men in the Company were given an opportunity to visit the scene of the explosion at Metfield. This was done to impress clearly and vividly on the minds of the men, just what results when even the slightest safety measures are discarded."

Metfield is approximately 45 miles from Wendling.

Read more at <http://googleearthcommunity.proboards.com/thread/187/massive-explosion-raf-metfield-1944#ixzz5rK0nVz27>.



These photos record the 1825th Ordnance Co's visit to Metfield. Clockwise from top left: the men walk past the crater; Station Ammunition Officer 1/Lt Charles Dye beside a destroyed truck; debris and bombs.

RAF Fauld

The absolute worst disaster, though, was at RAF Fauld in Staffordshire, where a 1930s-era mine was being used as an underground munitions storage depot. On 27 Nov 1944, between 3,500 and 4,000 tons of ordnance exploded, plus 500 million rounds of rifle ammunition. A nearby reservoir with 450,000 cubic meters of water simply disappeared.

It is believed that 70 to 90 people were killed, including 34

who drowned in the flooding. Also among the dead were RAF personnel, civilians and Italian prisoners of war who were working at the site.

Despite the massive explosion, much of the mine and stored ordnance survived and the facility continued to be used by the RAF until 1966.

In 1974, classified documents about the incident were released to the public. They revealed that the explosion was probably caused when a site worker used a brass chisel, rather than a wooden tool, to remove a detonator from a live bomb. A resulting spark ignited an explosion which then set off others.



Personnel stack bombs in a tunnel at RAF Fauld.

The blast still ranks as one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history.

See <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/instant-articles/hanbury-crater-4000-tons-of-bombs-million-rounds-britains-biggest-wwii-explosion.html> for more information.

Memories of an Ordnance Officer

Charles Dye was the Station Ammunition Officer. These stories, lightly edited for space, are from his memoirs.

Hazardous Work to Defuze a Bomb

"To 392nd BG support personnel, long hours and hard work in all weather was a way of life. Taking risks in dangerous circumstances came along if your job demanded it. On one occasion, a B-24 returned to base with a 500-pounder hung up on the bomb bay after every attempt to dislodge it over the sea proved futile.

"When all other aircraft had landed safely, the crash crews, the fire crews and the ambulance crews were all alerted of the emergency. Then the aircrew with the big problem on board approached the main runway. Despite an apparently smooth landing, the bomb broke loose as the wheels touched down. Out through the bomb bay doors came the bomb. It hit the concrete and came bouncing down the runway directly under the aircraft for about 125 yards, like a porpoise following a boat. It then skidded alongside the airplane, slid off the concrete runway onto the grassed area beside the runway and came to a rest.

"As Ammunition Officer, I had been notified of the emergency and watched the landing with my crew chief. When we approached the bomb, we saw that the tail fin

See BOMBS on page 7

BOMBS from page 6

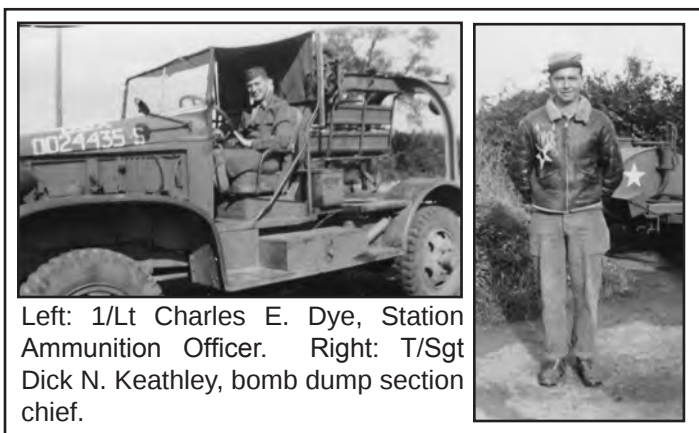
had protected the tail fuze and I removed it without much difficulty. However, the nose fuze was a different story because it was mashed against the nose of the bomb.

"After considering the situation thoroughly, I decided to chisel the fuze loose. Taking a hammer and chisel, I told Sgt Keathly, my section chief, to move back a little. His response, as I recall, was, 'Lieutenant, if that thing goes off, a few feet won't make a hell of a lot of difference.'

"After about 15 minutes, which seemed like 15 hours, I was able to free and remove the nose fuze from the bomb. It was then picked up with the Bomb Service Truck and returned to the Bomb Dump. The bomb was later inspected and loaded on another mission."

The Angel with the Wire Cutter

"Perhaps many 8th AF personnel will recall that immediately following an air attack, the Germans set to work with whatever equipment they had to repair the bomb damage, be it to an airfield, factory, etc. To counter this, the ordnance experts in the US developed a "long-



Left: 1/Lt Charles E. Dye, Station Ammunition Officer. Right: T/Sgt Dick N. Keathley, bomb dump section chief.

delay booby trap" fuze. This fuze could delay the bomb's detonation from 30 minutes to 72 hours.

"The Germans soon learned that a bomb could explode at any time; therefore, they were precluded from starting any repair work. Should the Germans locate one of these unexploded bombs and attempt to remove the fuze, the bomb would detonate. My section chief, T/Sgt Keathley, and I attended a special school and were the only personnel on our base authorized to handle these fuzes.

"When these long-delay fuzes were to be used, they were usually installed on two bombs in one or perhaps two aircraft. The bomb nose plug remained in place and this special fuze was installed in the tail. This fuze could be identified by the red impeller which came off during the bomb's fall.

"When this fuze was to be used, I was notified as to the fuze delay time and the aircraft number (and its location) that would carry these fuzes. T/Sgt Keathly and I would arrive at the aircraft about 15 minutes prior to taxi time and inspect the bombs. Just prior to taxi, I would install the fuzes, attach the arming wire, and cut the safety wire with a wire cutter. Once the fuze is installed, it cannot be removed.

"On one particular occasion, we were standing by ready to fuze the bombs when word came down that another

aircraft was to also carry these fuzes. We quickly headed for that ship. Since the perimeter was full of B-24s taxiing, we had to drive alongside the perimeter in order to reach the aircraft. We found the proper a/c and T/Sgt Keathley assisted in removing the regular fuzes and replacing the nose plug. I then installed a fuze in one bomb, attached the arming wire, and cut the safety wire with my wire cutter.

"One crew member, looking down into the bomb bay, called to me that the aircraft was going to start to taxi. Since I still had one fuze to install, I walked, in the bomb bay, with the taxiing aircraft. It may appear a B-24 taxis slowly, but when one is walking with it, the pace is far from slow.

"As the aircraft taxied and I walked, I installed the fuze in the second bomb, attached the arming wire, and prepared to cut the safety wire. As I removed the wire cutter from my pocket, I dropped it. There was no way I could retrieve it. The aircraft was moving too fast and another B-24 was directly behind.

"By this time the aircraft was approaching the runway ready for takeoff. Somehow, I was able to break the safety wire with my fingers. I quickly ducked out of the bomb bay and the bomb bay doors closed. At this time the aircraft was second in line for takeoff.

"When T/Sgt Keathley and I returned to the Bomb Dump, I took another fuze and tried to break the safety wire with my fingers. I also had several of the men from my section try; none could break the wire.

"Truly there must have been an angel with a wire cutter sitting on my shoulder."

Buzz Bombs

On 13 Oct 1944, V-1 rockets were heard over Wendling. They were called "buzz bombs" because they were powered by a pulsejet engine with rapid, intermittent combustion that created a very loud buzzing sound. (The silence after the noise stopped was even more terrifying, because it meant that the weapon had begun its final dive to the target.)

The V-1 is considered the world's first operational cruise missile. Their launch sites on the continent were frequently bombed by the 392nd BG in operations called "Noball" missions.

The Wehrmacht first launched the V-1 to target London on 13 June 1944, one week after (and prompted by) the successful Allied landings in Europe. At peak, more than one hundred V-1s a day were fired at southeast England, 9,521 in all.

Buzz bombs killed more than 6,000 people in Britain and injured tens of thousands more. The bombs also caused extensive damage and often set fire to buildings.

Buzz Bombs in the Histories

Per the 465th Sub Depot's history for October 1944, "The nemesis of Friday the 13th held true as far as this unit is concerned. Approximately 9:30pm a loud roar was audible from the barracks all over the station. At first general opinion concluded that it was an aircraft coming in for a crash landing. However, when the missile was overhead, people who had experienced buzz bombs in London informed station habitants that same was a buzz

See BOMBS on page 8

BOMBS from page 7

bomb. For the majority, this was the first encounter with Adolf's V-1. Of all men on the station each man was ready to swear that the bomb flew directly over his head. First one to land fell at Little Fransham near the outer perimeter lights. Only casualties of this particular bomb were one field mouse and one rabbit.

"Rumors flew around fast and heavy as to the exact number of missiles that passed over this section of the country, varying from three to five. However, after conversing with Civil Defense officials on the following day, they revealed that there were three—one falling at Little Fransham, one near Watton and the last near March, constituting all of the buzz bomb activity in this vicinity for the night of the 13th.

"Through this minor encounter, the people of London gained the respect of all Joes in this outfit. Since then no buzz bombs have come over this area but the men still perk their ears at all sounds which they are not familiar with."

The 10th Station Complement Sqdn history has other details: "The first buzz bomb, according to the flying control personnel in the tower, could have made a perfect landing on our main and longest runway and that at the time it crossed the field it was lower than the second story of the flying control building which would make it about 15 or more feet off the ground. Completely too low for comfort for one of those babies. There was no alert sounded because these buzz bombs came so fast that there was not enough time to summon an officer to announce an alert.

"The first buzz bomb went parallel to the squadron site at a still low altitude and the boys watching it only hoped that the motor would keep going and not cut out which it didn't but drove itself into the ground and an explosion in a pond just outside of Longham about two miles from camp. About the only damage it did was to deepen the pond and water the surrounding territory.

"The second one was much farther away from the camp and all that was seen was the explosion flash, but the third one went right over the squadron latrine about 100 feet in the air and the men in the area at the time had for most of them their first look at a buzz bomb. The bomb landed in



This damage was caused on 13 Oct 1944 when a buzz bomb blew up just after it passed this house in Little Fransham. A woman was injured when the roof collapsed; she was later treated by a 392nd BG doctor.

the suburbs of Wisbisch about 35 or 40 miles away.

"This was the first time some of the fellows had ever been close to a buzz bomb and its results and they really did gain a lot of respect for them. In fact most of the men thought that the first one was the RAF going out or coming back low as the dickens until someone shouted 'buzz bomb' and then the fellows rushed out to see the flash and hear the explosion."

Collision

Problems in English skies of course affected those below.

On 25 Mar 1945, the 392nd BG was forming up for a mission to Hitzoeker, Germany. They had just completed the Group assembly and were flying to the Wing assembly point when their 20 a/c entered the clouds. A B-24 piloted by the 578th's 2/Lt Phillip W. Kaiser collided with one flown by 1/Lt Clifford O. Markuson in the 576th. The doomed

See BOMBS on page 10

Memorial Days 2019

England. 392nd BGMA Director John Gilbert laid a wreath on our behalf at the annual Memorial Day ceremony at Cambridge American Cemetery.

In Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, David Parnell added ten small American flags to the memorial to 2/Lt John D. Ellis and



Top: David Parnell at the memorial to 2/Lt John D. Ellis and crew in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, England. Left: Peter and Ton Adriaans at the grave of 579th Sqdn engineer S/Sgt Amos E. Doty at Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten.

crew. With "loads of walkers exploring the area and many showing an interest in the memorial," he also included "an

See DAYS on page 9

DAYS from page 8

appendage explaining the significance of Memorial Day."

He says, "I raised the flags on July 4th just after 6.00am on a glorious morning here. The day was well and truly marked much to the delight of all the parents dropping off and collecting their children at the St Mary's School. The boys' memorial looked an absolute picture!"

The Netherlands. In May 2004, Peter and Ton Adriaans adopted the grave of 579th Sqdn engineer S/Sgt Amos E. Doty at the Netherlands American Cemetery; he was killed in action on 19 May 1944 along with his entire crew. They placed flowers at his grave as a symbol of how grateful they, and all of the Netherlands, are for his sacrifice while liberating their country.

Savannah, Georgia. Jim Pearson, nephew of S/Sgt Bryan Taswell Pearson, 576th Sqdn, emailed A "*Sentimental Journey*" to Honor Fallen Crusaders:

"Sunday, 19 May 2019, was the 75th anniversary of the death of my uncle, S/Sgt Bryan Taswell Pearson. My brother's and my family visited the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Savannah to honor his sacrifice.

"My uncle was a ball turret gunner in 2/Lt Donald D. Prell's crew. He and 27 more 392nd BG airmen were killed on a mission to Brunswick, Germany. According to reports, his aircraft was shot down by Nazi fighters. Uncle Taswell (like many other southern boys, he was known by his middle name) parachuted safely along with eight others. The aircraft crashed, with at least two of the crew's bodies found in the plane.

"Taswell and some other crewmen were taken to the city hall in the hamlet of Illfeld (near Locturn, Germany). Later, a German Gestapo Captain and some SS soldiers came and took them, ostensibly to escort them to a nearby prisoner of war facility. Instead, they executed all of them.

"My father, nearly five years younger than my uncle, left to join the Navy in June 1944, the same month that my uncle's widow (Ellen Hanrahan Pearson) received her first of two telegrams from the US government. While I visited my Uncle's grave in the family plot in Gulfport, Mississippi, as I grew up, neither my father nor I was familiar with the specifics of his service nor the circumstances of his death.

"It wasn't until we began researching the 8th Air Force

while I was a student at the Army's Command and General Staff College that I learned about his service in the 392nd Bomb Group. Later, when my Dad joined the 392nd BGMA, we learned much more, especially from correspondence and assistance from the amazingly helpful Annette Tison. In 1993 I was assigned to Fort Stewart, Georgia, southwest of Savannah, and we began to visit the nearby Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum soon after it opened and met the Chief Researcher Dr. Vivian Rogers-Price.

"For the 75th anniversary commemoration, I contacted the Museum's staff and asked permission to place a wreath at the 392nd BG's memorial there. I also requested that we be able to see my uncle's name on their 'Roll of Honor,' a re-creation of the book in St. Paul's Cathedral in London."



S/Sgt Bryan Taswell Pearson, 576th Sqdn ball turret gunner, was remembered by his nephews and their families on 19 May 2019.

Dr. Rogers-Price says, "The Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial Exhibit at the Museum reminds all of the price that free men paid in defense of liberty during WWII. The staggering losses associated with WWII left an indelible mark upon the world. The Eighth Air Force alone suffered an estimated 26,000 combat fatalities.

See DAYS on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

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

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

DAYS from page 9

Personal artifacts of KIA members remind visitors that each casualty statistic represents an individual. The room, with photographic murals of the WWII Cambridge American Cemetery and frosted acrylic panels printed with appropriate quotations, culminates in a marble case displaying a printed Roll of Honor. Listed here are the names of all 8th AF personnel who died between 1942 and 1945. Although inspired by the Roll of Honour in the American Chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Roll of Honor at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force is unique in that it holds only names of those assigned to the 8th AF during those years. This Roll of Honor begins with 2/Lt C.A. Aaberg (Clarence A. Aaberg) and ends with 2/Lt A.P. Zychowski (Albin P. Zychowski)."

Jim continues, "The Museum's response to my requests was overwhelming. Upon our arrival we met our 'personal tour guide,' volunteer Ray Marvin. Mr. Marvin escorted us to the Memorial in the Museum's gardens where we had a brief wreath laying ceremony with a Gold Star wreath that my daughter, Maggie, had created. Then we read Uncle Taswell's name in the Roll of Honor.

"Mr. Marvin showed us (and especially my grandsons) the ball turret on the B-17 *City of Savannah*, which is similar to that of a B-24. I gained a true appreciation for fighting for hours in a frozen fish bowl of a turret hanging out of the bottom of the aircraft. He also showed my grandsons inert .50 caliber, 20mm and 30mm rounds, so that they could understand how large the ordnance being used by the aircraft involved was and the threat to our airmen.

"I recommend that we all commemorate our loved one's service in the 392nd in some way with our families. Unlike World War II, when the majority of men served, today only an estimated 1% of our population has a family member in the service. Our commemoration serves the civic good by teaching service to the next generation as well as emphasizing the high cost of our precious freedoms.

"I've learned a lot from the 392nd BGMA, visiting the Mighty Eighth, the Air Force, and other museums, reading dozens of books, visiting one of the few flying B-24s, *Witchcraft*, at a local airport, and other forums.

"There is still much to learn and do. I'd love to visit Wendling and talk with an actual B-24 crew member. As a retired US Army soldier, I am in awe of the bravery and tenacity of the men of the 392nd. They truly were the greatest generation."

BOMBS from page 8

aircraft came down about three miles apart, Kaiser's at Skeyton and Markuson's at nearby Buxton Lamas.

There were just two survivors from each plane. One was Markuson crew co-pilot 2/Lt Harold Hutchcroft.

Harold later recalled taking off on instruments because the fog was so thick. "We thought it would clear once we got off the ground, but it did not—we were still flying blind at 12,000 feet.

"We and [another plane] were searching for our lead aircraft, when we found each other and flew close side by side. Then there was a thump, and I looked out to see part of our wing and one engine missing—our wing tips

had hit."

Markuson gave the bail out order. "I was lucky to survive," says Hutchcroft. (At a 1995 reunion, he told 392nd BGMA Friends Doug and Celia Willies that he escaped the plane "sitting astride a bomb.")

After parachuting into a field a mile from Coltishall, his "immediate reaction was to try and get to my plane and see if I could help any of my crew, but two local farmers persuaded me there was nothing I could do. They took me into their farmhouse and gave me some tea, but I could hardly hold the cup and saucer, I was shaking so much."

Jack Loveday had been a 19-year old serving at RAF Station Coltishall, a Spitfire and Mosquito fighter base. His 25 Mar 1945 diary entry says, "At breakfast time, 7:40 to be precise, two Liberators collided in mid-air complete with full bomb load only half a mile or so from camp. There was a terrific noise as one plane dived straight into the ground and exploded. The other one had its tail piece cut off and also exploded. I watched a tail float down and also one of the crew who had I believe bailed out of the tail. Several of the bombs went off a matter of minutes after the crash."

Doug's WWII historian and researcher friend, Bob Collis, provided the log kept by HQ Norfolk Civil Defence. At 9:19am, "USAAF and police on spot. Planes on fire and bombs exploded.... No civilian casualties or damage."

As more reports came in, though, the picture changed drastically. There was an unexploded bomb to be dealt with and evidence of several camouflages. (These occur when a bomb explodes under the ground, sometimes producing little or no surface disruption. Bomb Disposal personnel had to be extra wary of these situations as the cavity so produced sometimes contained lethal amounts of carbon monoxide gas.)

One bank of Kings Beck, a nearby river, had been struck by a bomb. Neighboring Swanton Abbot suffered damage to the "Hall, 2 farms, chapel, rectory, school and 11 dwelling houses." At Skeyton, 3 public houses, 2 farms, 1 shop and 11 houses had also been affected.

There was one civilian casualty. Per the log's entry at 8:26pm, it was reported that "Mrs. Spinks, 85 years, died from shock."

Editor's note: Six members of the Kaiser crew had an interesting history. Bombardier 2/Lt John K. Parish, navigator 1/Lt John W. Ott, radio operator T/Sgt Solomon Louizides, engineer T/Sgt Alex R. Slama, gunner S/Sgt Billy D. Haskins, and gunner S/Sgt William W. Smith had originally been members of Capt David M. Fogarty's crew. They were initially assigned to the 93rd Bomb Group and sent to Africa to be part of the Ploesti mission. However, the crew became surplus and they were transferred back to England and assigned to the 392nd in September 1943.

The Fogarty crew flew to Kjeller, Norway, on 18 Nov 1943. After suffering battle damage from German fighters, they were forced to divert to Sweden due to mechanical problems with their aircraft.

They were interned in Sweden until September 1944, when they were returned to the 392nd BG. They resumed flying missions on 30 Oct 1944.

Surviving the 25 Mar 1945 mission were S/Sgt Haskins and S/Sgt William W. Smith.

Photos from the Heritage League Reunion in Norfolk, England



This photo of 392nd BG attendees at the Heritage League reunion was taken in the Wendling Village Hall. Front row, L-R: Sharon Marcrander, daughter of 578th Executive Officer Capt Robert Lane; Joel Fleck, son of 579th bombardier 1/Lt Ernest R. Fleck; Gloria McCutcheon. Middle row L-R: Robert Marcrander, Ralph Winter, son of 579th pilot 1/Lt Ralph E. Lamma; Connie Fleck; Diane McGovern, daughter of 576th navigator 1/Lt James McCutcheon; Bill McCutcheon, son of 576th navigator 1/Lt James McCutcheon, John Gilbert, 392nd BGMA Director and tour guide. Back row L-R: Doug Dovey, son of 579th lead navigator 1/Lt Arnold J. Dovey; Robert McGovern.



Heritage League Vice President for Volunteers Brian Mahoney presents John Gilbert with a Certificate of Appreciation for his "selfless volunteer participation" in events for the League and 392nd BGMA.



Parts of the Ploughshare date back to about 1620, but it looks wonderful after its recent renovation by Beeston Community Enterprises!



Despite the cold, damp weather, Joel and Connie Fleck were thrilled to see the 392nd BG Memorial for the first time.



Drinks at the Ploughshare Pub were enjoyed by all. Foreground: Memorial Trustee Jill Scott and Sharon Marcrander chat about Beeston St. Mary Church, where Sharon's parents (Capt Robert E. Lane and Army Flight Nurse 1/Lt Marilyn Haglund) were married on 11 May 1945.



Doug Dovey's father, Capt Arnold J. Dovey, was originally assigned to the 44th BG, so he took advantage of his time at the Second Air Division Memorial Library to learn more about that unit.

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

"America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."

—Harry Truman

This thought expressed by an American President should be heeded. Our nation, again, seems to be striding quickly into another difficult chapter. Elections are in the forefront, the words "indictment" and "impeachment" are in the news and the poor as well as middle class Americans continue to be challenged.

If we are not afraid, then we need to be determined to do the job at hand. Our veterans have made that sacrifice already. Let's support them by ensuring our nation stays strong, unbeatable and free.

God bless America and all who continue to make her strong.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL AT THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE
MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE
with a Gold Star wreath made by
Maggie Pearson, great-niece of
S/Sgt Bryan Taswell Pearson
Killed in Action
19 May 1944**

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Thomas H. Perry, 576, June 17, 2019
Robert W. Brennan, 576, July 13, 2019
Robert C. Costes, 578, May 12, 2019
Nell Metz, widow of Wilbur Metz, 578/Group HQ,
May 14, 2019