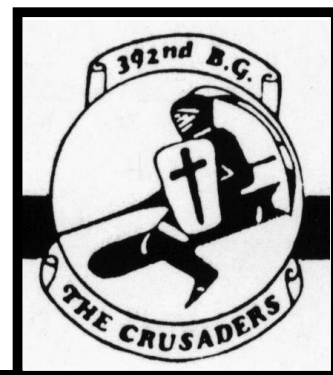


392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

NEWS

Volume 32

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392nd BG WAR PAINT

In his 1970 book *The Mighty Eighth: A History of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force* and his 1997 book, *The Mighty Eighth Warpaint and Heraldry* (which includes many color photos), historian Roger Freeman gives detailed information about the markings used on 8AF planes during WWII. He also explains the reasons for each.

Editor's note: Since the time-frame for this article ranges from August 1943 to May 1945, the terminology used for 8AF, its Divisions and Wings will be those from mid-1944, as they are most widely known.

National Insignia

An easily recognized symbol was necessary to indicate the plane belonged to the USA. By the time the 392nd BG arrived in Wendling, it was a white five-pointed star on a blue circle with white rectangular bars (outlined in blue) on either side of the blue circle. On Liberators, this emblem was painted on top of the left wing and on the bottom of the right wing and on both sides of the fuselage just in front of the waist windows.



Top: Olive Drab B-24 #42-7521, *Poop Deck Pappy*. She arrived at the 392nd on 18 Sep 1943 and was transferred to the 44th BG after flying three diversions and one combat mission. Bottom: Natural Metal Finish Liberator #42-95035, *Call Me Later*. Her first combat mission was on 31 May 1944; she crashed at Wendling due to battle damage on 29 Jun 1944.

Tulsa, the gray was in a wavy pattern.

By January 1944, B-24s were no longer being painted Olive Drab during the manufacturing process. Instead, they were left in their Natural Metal Finish (NMF), although OD planes arrived in England until about June 1944. (Regardless of how the planes were painted, warning markings—such

as to designate fire extinguisher panel doors and propeller tips—were still painted in traditional colors of red or yellow.)

The change was made for several reasons. Not having to paint a plane meant manufacturing times decreased significantly. By mid-1944, the assembly line at Willow Run could produce a NMF B-24 in just one hour.

Tests showed that unpainted planes flew faster and were lighter. [https://](https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/the-u-s-army-air-forces-strips-its-planes-of-paint/)

www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/the-u-s-army-air-forces-strips-its-planes-of-paint/ points out that "A B-17 has a surface area of 4,200 square feet and took about 35 gallons of paint to coat. If the paint weighed 10 pounds a gallon wet, after accounting for evaporation the weight

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Camouflage

In 8AF's early days, camouflage painting was used to make their a/c more difficult to spot, whether in the sky or while on the ground and especially vulnerable. The 392nd's first planes were dark Olive Drab (OD) on the top with the undersurfaces painted in Neutral Gray. If manufactured at San Diego, Fort Worth, or Dallas, the undercarriage was painted in a rectangle shape; if built at Willow Run or

UPDATE ON 2020 REUNION

Please see 392nd BGMA President Ralph Winter's column on page 3 for important information about our 2020 reunion!



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FROM THE EDITOR

Calling All Writers. If you've ever dreamed of becoming an internationally known author, I have an offer for you!

Many of you know stories your relatives or friends told about their service in the 392nd BG or its support units; others of you may have access to your loved ones' diaries, journals or photos.

Would you please transcribe the diaries, write down the stories, scan the photos, and email them to me at dtison5401@aol.com? Provide all the information you have about the photos. If you don't know who the people are, at least identify your loved one. If you don't know what the photo shows, send it anyway—there are many highly knowledgeable people in the 392nd BGMA who may be able to help!

I'll work with you to create an article for a future newsletter. Since we have members in the US, England, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany, you'll be able to tell your friends that you spent your time in quarantine or furlough becoming an author whose work is known across the globe!

Target Victory was a report "of, by and for combat flying personnel" in the 2nd Air Division. Here are articles from two of their issues.

21 Mar 1945: *Something Nice about Navigators!*

2AD's new bombing records have our bombardiers as cocky as Betty Grable in Iceland. The pilots always were that way anyway. Nobody much credits the navigator, unless a mission snafus. Then...!

In all justice, a major reason for this high-powered bombing accuracy is the elimination of gross errors, accomplished mainly through better target identification, making a perfectly coordinated run possible. The best bombardier is helpless unless the formation is perfectly headed toward the target before he takes over on the bombsight. This indispensable victory is being won by the navigators. It's a battle every mile of the mission.

First comment of Congressional Medal-winner Col "Killer" Kane after the Ploesti raid was to his navigator: "Damn fine navigation...you saved our skins and you're the hero of this ship."

Says international smile merchant Bob Hope, "Those navigators! Imagine hitting a little island in the middle of a great big body of water. I can't even find the soap in the bathtub...but a navigator can find anything. He just takes out some maps, shoots the sun, draws a circle on his map, trisects the circle, figures the number of degrees in each angle against his compass reading, cuts the cards, and before you know it he's located the only blonde in town."

Pleads GI Joe in the foxhole: "Show me the way to go home." You can do it, navigators. You are doing it!

Mar. 28, 1945: *First Jet Falls to 392nd Gunner*

S/Sgt John P. Malley, Philadelphia, Pa., became the first gunner in 2AD to shoot down a jet-propelled fighter. The 392nd Group nose gunner destroyed the "squirt" on a mission to Magdeburg [on 3 Mar 1945].

"The engineer called out that two bombers were going down," Malley related. "There was no flak then, so I figured it must have been enemy fighters, but I could not see any. I watched the two bombers fall and while doing that I saw a fighter following them down. I could identify it was an Me-262—a twin-engine job with a single fin.

"He broke away from the two bombers and came up to attack our formation. He was coming so fast it was hard to track him. I opened up at 2,000 yards and he began firing a few seconds later. My tracers went into one of his jets. Smoke and flames shot out, and he broke away. Our navigator saw him break up and go down."

Please renew! If you're spending a lot of time at home right now, why not take advantage of this free time and renew your membership in the 392nd BGMA? If the number after your name on the mailing label is "20," then your dues expire at the end of December. (I'll let our email members know by email if their dues are expiring.) Please see page 4 for instructions on how to renew your membership!

AmazonSmile. The 392 BGMA is now registered for AmazonSmile, which means that the 392nd BGMA will receive a donation from Amazon for every eligible purchase made at smile.amazon.com. This will **See EDITOR on page 3**

President's Corner



The time for our annual membership meeting is upon us. As we often do, we had planned to have our meeting in conjunction with the 8th AFHS reunion which was scheduled to be held in Memphis, Tennessee, in October.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic our executive board made the decision to hold our annual meeting virtually. Our thinking in making this decision

was that the 8th AFHS would probably cancel the meeting in Memphis anyway, and that even if they didn't, many of our members would be reluctant to attend while the pandemic was still a factor in many states—Tennessee included.

Shortly after our decision, the board of directors of the 8th AFHS did indeed cancel the reunion. They will have a virtual one-day event on Saturday, October 24th, and will be providing information on how to tune in for that.

So let me take this opportunity to invite you to attend our Annual Reunion and Membership Meeting to be held virtually, on Sunday, October 25, 2020 at 3:30pm Eastern Daylight Time (please remember to adjust for your own time zone).

We will be using Zoom technology which does not require any software or downloads on your part and you can sign in using a computer, iPad (or similar device) or smart phone. To "attend" the meeting you will need to RSVP to me at rewcts@gmail.com with "RSVP" as the subject field. Please provide the email address that you want us to use for you to access the meeting.

Two or three days before the meeting, you will receive an invitation at the email address you provided. It will contain a link that you can click on to join the meeting along with other instructions such as to how to ask questions, make motions, etc.

If you have already RSVP'd, there is no need to do so again. If you RSVP'd, but do not receive your invitational email by Friday, October 23rd, please re-send your RSVP to me.

If you are unfamiliar with the Zoom technology and would like to participate in a practice "dry run" session on Sunday, October 11th at 3:30pm Eastern Daylight Time, just email me any time before then at rewcts@gmail.com stating that you want to join in. Please put "Dry Run" in the subject field. Your email address in that request is the one I'll use to put you in the "meeting", unless you tell me otherwise.

I have asked Bob Books to chair the Nominating Committee and to nominate members to fill the positions of the three members whose terms are expiring. Additionally, at the direction of the Executive Committee, he will be nominating two more members to be added to the board. If you plan to nominate someone from the floor, please remember that per our bylaws, a nominee must have been a paid-up member for the preceding twelve months.

Following the election of directors at the membership meeting, these directors will meet and elect the President,

1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer for the coming year. These officers direct our activities and business of the association, subject to and accountable to the directors.

I hope you'll make plans to attend our annual meeting in this different and unique way. You won't be out the expense of travel, lodging, or meals and you can dress as casually as you please while sitting in the comfort of your own home—or wherever you happen to be.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me.

In the meantime, please embrace safe practices and stay healthy.

Ralph

EDITOR from page 2

NOT increase your cost; the purchase prices remain the same.

To participate, use the 392nd BGMA's unique charity link <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-2644370> the next time you want to shop at Amazon. You'll be asked if you want to support the 392nd BGMA. Click on "start shopping" and then log into your Amazon account with your username and password. If you don't have an account, create one.

If you already participate in AmazonSmile and have designated another charity, you may change it to the 392nd BGMA if you desire. We are listed on their website as "392 Bomb Group Memorial Association Inc."

Please keep AmazonSmile in mind as you do your day-to-day "pandemic shopping" and then begin your holiday shopping. Please encourage your family and friends to participate as well.

I'll give periodic updates about how much your purchases have contributed to the 392nd BGMA's treasury.

From The Daily Bulletin

15 Sep 1944. "Friday of each week is designated as Gas Alert Day, throughout which all personnel will have their mask immediately available. At some previously unannounced time during that day a gas alert will be sounded, accompanied by the use of such training munitions as CNB, CN Candles, CN-DM grenades, small amounts of mustard gas and various smokes. The gas mask will be worn by all personnel for a minimum of thirty (30) minutes during this alert."

16 Sep 1944. "The practice of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians using the runways will be discontinued by all concerned, immediately."

26 Sep 1944. "Personnel are cautioned against disposing of live ammunition by placing it in trash containers. All personnel are cautioned against the practice of bringing back from the continent or having in their possession any type of enemy ammunition. Accidents caused by personnel having in their possession, or attempting to disassemble, such ammunition are considered not in the line of duty. All enemy ammunition will be turned in to Station Ordnance for disposition."



News from Across the Pond

These photos in the 392nd BG archives were recently sent to John Gilbert for review. His information follows.



This photo shows the Chapel. The 392nd BG was served by Protestant chaplain Capt Donald B. Clark and Catholic priest Capt Paul A. McDonough.

The structure at the back right, a water tower, served the entire base, including the farmers whose land was within the base at Sites 6, 7, 8, and 9. Nearby was one of the enlisted men's mess halls.

Above the sidewalk is an electric or telephone wire.

The second photo shows the nose art for #42-7479,



War Horse. Under the nose turret is another name — *Marcy*. She was 9 year old Margaret M e e n [Parker] who lived

near Honey Pot Wood. She frequently walked over to chat with the airmen, who then immortalized her, and their friendship, in paint.



This photo was taken at Site 4, located 3/4 of a mile west of the main airfield. These adjoining buildings made up the Red Cross facilities for enlisted men. They included a small game or card room (with card tables and chairs), a larger game room with two ping-pong tables, a library and a lounge with a big brick fireplace. Letter writers abounded here! The men were probably waiting for the Red Cross Aero Club to open.

392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; 20 and higher means your dues are up-to-date. If you wish to renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Bill McCutcheon, 20620 Milton Ct., Brookfield, WI 53045 or join/ renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/memorialAssociation.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA.

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

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

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

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

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

Hardship Waiver [] DONATION \$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

WAR PAINT from page 1

would be roughly 300 pounds.” Eliminating the weight of paint meant that bombers could carry that weight in more bombs or fly to farther targets.

And finally, the Allies were achieving air superiority and the need for camouflage was reduced.

As “silver” planes arrived in England and were placed in combat, many crews worried about being targeted by



In this 10 Mar 1945 photo, OD B-24 #41-28772, *EI Capitan* (front) flies with NMF plane #42-50446, *Is This Trip Necessary*, to Bielefeld, Germany.

German fighters because those planes were so visible. Their fears proved groundless, and OD and NMF bombers flew together for the rest of the war.

Individual Plane Identifiers

Each ship had unique identification numbers, chief among them an Airplane Serial Number (ASN). The first two digits (41 through 45) indicated the fiscal year in which the government order for the a/c was placed, followed by a hyphen and a generally sequential number related to that year. Thus, ASN 42-7510 shows that the order for the plane was placed in fiscal year 1942 while -7510 gives its position in the manufacturing sequence for that year. The entire serial number was unique to a particular type of plane (i.e., no two B-24s would have the same ASN).

At time of manufacture, the complete ASN was stenciled (in black characters on both OD and NMF planes) as part of a data panel on the left fuselage forward of the cockpit. Also included on the data panel was the ship's aircraft type and model, crew weights and fuel grade required.

To help with identification in the air, the plane's ASN, less the initial digit 4 (for example, 27510), was painted on a B-24's outer tail fins. Large yellow numbers were used on OD ships and black numbers on NMF a/c.

Once a B-24 arrived at its assigned combat group, the last three digits of the ASN (510) were usually painted on both sides of the nose to assist in identification on the ground. As a/c were typically parked on hardstands facing towards the perimeter track, nose numbers helped truck drivers delivering men or equipment to a particular aircraft.

At the 392nd, the three digits were usually painted about

15-18 inches high and about three feet above the nose wheel door. Yellow numbers were put on OD planes and black numbers on bare metal.

The last three digits of the ASN became the short way to refer to a plane. In fact, the list of 392nd BG planes at <https://www.b24.net/aircraftListings.htm> is in numerical order by last three digits. The last three digits are also the numbers cited on crew load lists to designate the plane in which each crew would fly.

Unfortunately, while no two planes had the same ASN, several could have the same last three digits. Therefore, other identifiers were also used to tell planes apart.

Radio Call Signs

When it arrived in the UK, 8AF adopted the British air communication and control system in which all a/c in an operational unit were given a radio call sign, which also served as a means of visual identification in the air. By August 1943, when the 392nd arrived, the call signs were painted on tail fins in yellow, with the letter 24-28 inches high and 12 inches wide.

Call signs were determined by the squadron to which the plane was assigned. Generally, after May 1944:

- 576th Sqdn. A – M, but not I
- 577th Sqdn. N – Z, followed by a plus sign (+)
- 578th Sqdn. N – Z with a bar (_) below the letter
- 579th Sqdn. A – M with a bar above the letter

This method was not perfect. As the 392nd BG expanded, reorganized, and moved planes between squadrons, it grew harder to maintain the system. It was also difficult to



At some point—perhaps to help identify planes as they lined up for take-off—the call sign was also painted between the nose turret and the bombardier's window. C+ is B-24 #42-95151, *Monotonous Maggie*.

type a bar above the letter so the typed documents were not always absolutely correct.

Division, Wing, Group and Squadron Identifiers

Early on, 8AF mandated that identifiers be used to show the Division and Group to which the plane was assigned. Effective July 1943—and first used on 392nd BG planes when they arrived the next month—2nd Bomb Division Liberators had a white, 72 inch diameter disc painted on the upper halves of their vertical tails and on top of the right wing. Later, the wing circle was black on NMF planes.

The symbol for B-17 units was a triangle in the 1st Division and a square or rectangle for the 3rd Division.

Painted in insignia blue on the B-24's white circle was a letter to show its Group. The letter was assigned alphabetically based on the numeric order of the Groups' numbers. The 392nd was thus D, after the 44th (A), the 93rd (B), and the 389th (C).

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In *Warpaint and Heraldry*, Freeman says, "...in late March 1944 the 2nd Bomb Division devised high-visibility colour markings for all its Groups. Owing to the close proximity of its B-24 bases and the spread of its assembly area, this Division had been particularly troubled by aircraft from one Group joining the formation of another in the half light of dawn. This was not critical when the whole Division was briefed for the same target, but with the veritable flood of new Groups reaching the Division during the early months of 1944 the force was large enough to be given several different targets for one mission. If aircraft from one Group mistakenly joined a formation briefed for another target a difficult situation could arise. The letter within the Division's white disc marking was often difficult to distinguish in the early morning light, where shade and glare predominated because of the low angle of the sun."

On 1 May 1944, 2BD issued new instructions. "Combat Wings were to be identified by a basic colour painted on the outboard surfaces of the fin and rudder. Groups were to be identified by a distinctive stripe superimposed on the basic colour. To facilitate association with Group numbers and identification stripes, Groups within a Combat Wing were to be marked as follows: the lowest number Group—vertical stripe; next lowest number—horizontal stripe; third lowest number—diagonal stripe. The diagonal stripe was to be placed with its top forward on both port and starboard surfaces."

2BD B-24s thus had their tail fins re-painted. In the 14th Combat Wing, 44th BG planes now had a black vertical stripe across the white circle, 392nd ships a horizontal black stripe, and 492nd a/c a diagonal stripe.

For OD and already assigned NMF planes, it was generally easier to repaint the entire tail fin white, rather than remove the existing paintwork. As new NMF planes arrived, they were painted with the new colors. The Circle D marking on the upper surface of the right wing continued to be applied to all aircraft assigned to the 392nd.

Additionally, the radio call sign letter was now painted in the center of the stripe. The tail number, removed or painted over on the outboard surface, was re-painted on the inboard surfaces of B-24 fins.

These new markings "proved highly successful" according to Freeman and "could often be distinguished at distances of five miles."

Due to the 392nd's operational tempo, it likely took several weeks for all its planes to be repainted. Generally, though, a photo of a 392nd BG plane can be dated as before and after May 1944 based on how the tail is painted.



This photo of #42-50430, *Old Standby*, was taken after it snapped its landing gear while returning from the mission on 18 Sep 1944. It shows the black Circle D on the right wing and the new design for the tail fins.

Initially, 8AF had no squadron identifiers on its planes. It soon adopted the RAF's method of squadron code letters and the 392nd was assigned these:

- 576th Sqdn. CI
- 577th Sqdn. DC
- 578th Sqdn. EC
- 579th Sqdn. GC

The codes were painted on the rear fuselage, aft of the waist gun windows. They were grey on OD ships, black on NMF a/c, and painted 48 inches high.

Nose Art

Freeman notes that the majority of 8AF combat aircraft were named. Although it's difficult to imagine WWII aircraft without names and nose art, this tradition became highly censored after a November 1943 incident.

Murder, Inc.

On 31 Jan 1944, a memo from 8AF Headquarters was sent to commanders of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Bomb Divisions and to VIII Fighter Command. It read:

"1. The German Press recently displayed photographs and descriptions of a United States Airman, allegedly captured during the 26 November [1943] attack on Bremen, who displayed on the back of his flying suit the words "Murder, Inc." This incident provided the German Propaganda Ministry with an opportunity to bolster the morale of their people, to infuse them with hatred, and to paint the American airmen as 'gangsters and murderers'.

"2. To prevent a repetition of such incidents, it is desired that unofficial airplane, aircrew and equipment insignia which have a 'murder' or 'terror' connotation be eliminated, and that all insignia be reviewed to the end that no names or insignia are included which can be used advantageously by the Axis for propaganda purposes.

"3. A recent check of unofficial names of operational aircraft also showed that certain names now in use are offensive to decency and morals. Without decreasing the youthful exuberance and esprit de corps which is responsible for such names, it should be pointed out to combat crews that such names are not representative of the Army Air Forces. Names which include the words 'bastard', 'bitch', 'ass,' 'vulture', 'abortion', or of the type of ... "Grave Diggers", ... and 'Crud Wagon' are examples of a distorted sense of the appropriate.

"4. Most of the unofficial names given operational airplanes have been excellent in that they reflect American history or ideals, a pride in the section of the country from which the pilot or the crew originates, or have some heraldic or military significance. The use of such names should be fostered so that the combat crews and the group personnel will take pride in the accomplishment of these aircraft.

"5. So much of par. 2 of 1st Indorsement (D-F-22), File 452.1 of letter 'Naming of Aircraft' of 23 December 1943 from Hq. Eighth Air Force, APO 633, which requires that 'thereafter all new names which may be added as the result of changes, arrival of replacements or of incoming units, be forwarded to the Headquarters as expeditiously as practicable' is rescinded.

"6. It is the responsibility of Fighter Command,

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Bombardment Division and Group commanders to censor or approve the unofficial names of aircraft, and to inspect aircrew jackets and other equipment in order that the spirit and intent of this letter be carried out."

[Editor's note: To learn more about the US airman whose jacket created such a furor, see <http://www.merkki.com/murderinc.htm>. Bombardier 2/Lt Kenneth D. Williams, 351st BG, was aboard B-17 #42-29858, *Murder Inc.* on 16 Nov 1943, his first mission. When he was shot down (on his second mission), he was wearing his *Murder, Inc.* flight jacket but was aboard a plane named *Aristocrap*, which would probably not have passed 8AF's new decency test.]

392nd BG Nose Art Descriptions

In response, the 392nd BG submitted several letters to 8AF with the serial numbers, names, and descriptions of its planes' nose art.

Notwithstanding the guidance in section 4 of 8AF's memo, Freeman estimates "some 70 percent [of nose art] featured the female form." Their inspiration was often drawings of "pin-up" girls by Alberto Vargas and Gil Evgren. (It would be interesting to know if wives, girlfriends, and acquaintances knew exactly how they were immortalized!)



The same pin-up was the inspiration for the nose art on these two planes. Top: 578/7th a/c #42-99979, *Kentucky Baby* ("Esquire flying lady in pink swim suit trailing air corps insignia"). Bottom: 579th ship #41-29127, *Li'l Gypsy*.



The 392nd BG provided these descriptions of three 579th Sqdn planes: #42-109814, *Jive Bomber*, was "female jitterbug on bomb." #42-7469, *Rose of Juarez*, was simply "nude woman." #42-100308, *Our Gal*, was "female donning lingerie."



Top: #42-73505, *Fairy Belle*, was "woman in abbreviated bathing suit." Bottom: *Fairy Belle II*, #42-52415, obviously had a different pin-up as its model!

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Some Libs were named after loved ones or friends.



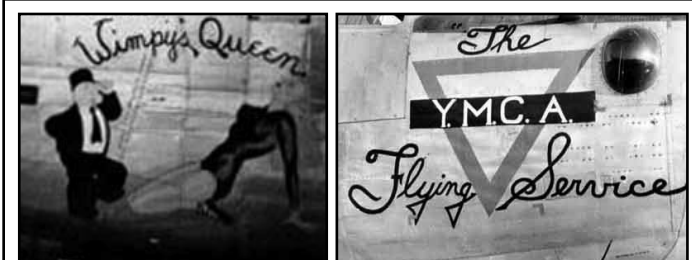
#42-7493, the 577th's *Gregory the Great*, was named after the infant son of its bombardier, 2/Lt William L. Yarbrough Jr (standing, 2nd from left). He and the other men in 1/Lt Henry P. Bolick's crew were shot down and killed in action on 26 Nov 1943.



576th plane #41-29433, *Able Dot*, was named for the wives of pilot 2/Lt Albert W. Evans (Doris) and navigator 2/Lt Robert W. Schoenberger

(Dorothy). When a steel plate was installed under the copilot's window for added protection from German bullets and flak, much of the name was covered up.

A few planes had two names, including #42-50901. Per copilot 1/Lt Lawrence W. Bachman, "When we taxied our new ship to our hardstand, our crew chief, Harold Detty, informed us that he would reserve the copilot's side of the plane for The YMCA FLYING SERVICE insignia to honor his special English girl friend, Peggy, who manned the "Tea Cart" that went about the base to bring hot tea and scones and other goodies to the crews who maintained and flew



Left: the pilot's side of #42-50901. Right: the copilot's side.

the planes. He said we could put anything we chose on the other side.

"We readily agreed and proceeded to put our own art on the pilot's side. Pilot B. Ray Shaw was short and stout and had lived with the nickname "Wimpy" for several years. He had a pet name for his wife, "Queenie", so it was only a short step to come up with the name WIMPY'S QUEEN. Completed 42 missions, in spite of battle damage that grounded her for several days while repairs were completed and engines were changed, three at one time. Not only did we complete our missions in her, we also flew her back to the States after the European war ended."



#42-95151, *Monotonous Maggie*, was named after an annoying childhood acquaintance of 2/Lt William Scott, bombardier on 2/Lt Phillip Anundson's 577th crew. The name and figure were painted on both their plane and A-2 jackets. Copilot Les Hadley said that before he returned to the US, he added a two-piece bikini to his jacket's portrayal of Maggie as his parents would not have approved of the naked woman!

Other names and nose art were more prosaic.



#42-100187, *Pallas Athene, the GI Jane*, was christened on 2 Feb 1944 by a "bevy of WACs [Women's Army Corps members]" from 2AD Headquarters. Here, Hazel Bliss adjusts Jane's make up. Per *Stars & Stripes*, 14 Feb 1944, she was "The first heavy bomber in the ETO to be named in honor of the WACs." *Jane* was declared War Weary on 18 Sep 1944 and transferred to Greencastle, Northern Ireland.

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#41-29552 was named in honor of (and with the permission of) legendary University of Minnesota and Chicago Bears football player Bronko Nagurski. The crew who named it and flew the plane to England was sent to the 44th BG while the plane went to the 392nd!

Mission Identifiers: Ducks and Bombs

Special symbols, usually painted on the fuselage near the three-digit ASN, reveal a bit of the plane's history. Typically, a duck represented each diversion mission flown by the plane while a bomb indicated a completed combat mission by the a/c.

579th Sqdn commander Myron Keilman explained that in its early days in England, "the 392nd was relegated to flying diversion missions for the B-17 groups. That is, flying attack patterns to Emden, Bremen, etc., from the North Sea as far as [the Heligoland archipelago]. They drew German fighters from the main strike forces—the B-17s. We carried full bomb loads to drop on any convoys to Norway that we may come across."

The 392nd's diversion missions were on September 6, 23, 26, and 27 and October 14, 18 and 20, 1943. They were attempts to fool German fighters into attacking a decoy formation and thus allow the "real" formation to fly unmolested to their target.

If the Germans were not fooled and did not attack the decoys, those crews would not get credit for flying a combat mission but a duck could be painted on the plane.

Sometimes, though, a diversion mission worked all too well. The 392nd's mission on 4 Oct 1943 began as a diversion. However, the Germans attacked in force and three B-24s were shot down. It was therefore counted as a combat mission for the surviving crewmen and their a/c.



The 392nd had four a/c named Alfred after the cartoons in *Collier's* magazine of a none-too-smart swabbie. This one, #42-7546, *Alfred II*, displays both ducks for diversion missions and bombs for combat missions.

War Weary

A War Weary aircraft was one which was still flyable but not up to the standards necessary for combat. These planes were used for practice missions and other non-combat duties. At the 392nd, War Weary planes were identified by the large letters "W.W." painted on the front fuselage.

It was often in war weary planes that Maj Glenn Miller and his bands were picked up and flown out of airfields at Thurleigh and Twinwood Farm to the 71 live concerts they performed—before nearly 250,000 military and civilian listeners in England.

It's been estimated that Miller and his men had about 600 hours of flight time while they were in England, more than some combat airmen.

Ironically, Miller hated to fly. The non-pressurized aircraft caused ringing in his ears, often lasting a day or more. He experienced near misses when planes carrying his 62 band members and their gear started to land just as a combat formation was taking off.

See WAR PAINT on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

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

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The 392nd BGMA is engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. It contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

WAR PAINT from page 9

Maj Miller was also concerned about the airworthiness of the planes—often war weary—in which he and his bands flew. 2/Lt Don Haynes, Miller's manager/administrative officer, said Miller frequently asked the brass, "How can you risk the lives of all those musicians? Aren't they more important than some of the bombs you carry on the good planes?"

At least one war weary plane was used to bring Maj Miller and his bands to Wendling for their performance on 25 Aug 1944.



B-24 #42-50284, *Shoo! Shoo! Baby* was declared War Weary on 30 Jul 1944. On 25 Aug 1944, she was dispatched to pick up Maj Glenn Miller and his band for a performance at the 392nd BG. In this photo, Maj Miller (left) and 392nd commander Col Lorin Johnson chat before the show.

Assembly Ships

Each bomb group had a gaudily painted assembly ship. It would fly to the designated formation point for that group and serve as a visual guide for ships trying to find their formation.

According to Myron Keilman, "B-24D #41-23689, was assigned to the 392nd BG in August 1943. It had been classified "war weary" as later model airplanes became available and it was no longer suitable for combat operations.

"With its distinguished markings, its new mission was to lead the group in assembling the large formations for combat missions. While firing the designated colored flares, it orbited the radio beacon at the assigned assembly altitude until all airplanes were assembled in their assigned position and it was time for the group to depart for the Wing rendezvous.

"No doubt the distinguished paint job was an experiment by some 'always thinking' person—the idea being that the three silhouettes would make the real airplane difficult to discern and cause confusion to German fighter pilots as they dived their Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs at our bombing formations. To say the least, the idea 'never caught on'—689 was one of a kind."



#41-23689 was originally assigned to the 93rd BG, where she was named *Minerva*. After becoming war weary, she was transferred to the 392nd BG as its assembly ship.

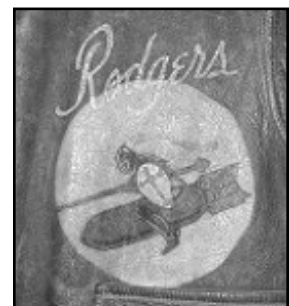
392nd BG Insignia

Most 8AF bomb and fighter groups had unit patches; many also had distinct patches for each squadron. The 392nd had a Group patch but no squadron insignia.

The *Daily Bulletin* for 25 Apr 1944 announced that "A prize of five pounds will be offered by the Station Commander to any member of the station who can design a prize-winning group insignia for the 392nd Bombardment Group (H)."

The number of entries submitted is not known, but credit for the adopted design is generally given to 576th Sqdn intelligence clerk Cpl Tommy Mullins.

The "flying Crusader" emblem was widely painted directly on bomber jackets, on patches, and on signs throughout the base. Although a common design was used, artistic variations abounded!



Clockwise from top: Cpl Mullins recreates his inspiration for the patch in a photo taken 20 Feb 1945. The design painted on 579th Sqdn engineer T/Sgt Boyd A. Rodgers' A-2 jacket. The patch on 577th sheet metal worker Pvt Rudolph Santelli's jacket.

Tributes to a Bombardier

2/Lt Donald T. Overman was the bombardier on 2/Lt Jack J. Bilz's crew in the 578th. They flew 35 combat missions between 25 Sep 1944 and 20 Apr 1945. *Your First Anniversary* was written and sent to him by his mother, Nell Overman. The names mentioned are Don, the pilot, copilot 2/Lt Dale W. Slayter Jr. and navigator 2/Lt Joseph M. Barnes.

Ode to the Bombardier, a well-known poem in WWII (at least among bombardiers!), was read at Don's funeral on 5 Feb 2019. Bombardier trainees practiced bombing a target that had a group of concentric circles with known radii, with a common center. This center usually had a structure on it (called the "shack") that was the aiming point for the practice bombing. The circles allowed the impact of the bombs to be judged for distance from the aiming point (shack).



The duties and responsibilities of a bombardier are listed at http://www.merkki.com/bombardiers_of_usaaf_in_world_war_ii.htm. A training film about the Norden bombsight (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rbtmb_JrX2g) demonstrates the skills required to be a bombardier. The questions (40 in all) are from a 392nd BG exam to assess those skills.

Your First Anniversary

If I were writing History of
World War number two,
My book would be quite different
As to when and where, and who.

The beginning would be February
Of nineteen forty-three,
When you went down to Florida
For the Air Corps and Flight "D".

You'd read of Jackson, Tennessee,
Of Texas East and West,
Of Idaho, of Louisiana
And "Big Springs" with the rest.

For there in March of forty-four
Silver wings, to you they gave.
On August tenth you boarded ship
And left the U.S.A.

I'd mention every time you flew
Off in the 'Sweat'in Duck"
Knowing if you dodged the flak
It only would be luck.

I'd mention "Ike" and Patton,
McArthur and Franklin "D",
But Slater, Don, and Jack and Joe,
Is mostly what you'd see.

I'd end my book in April
Of nineteen forty-five,
When missions were completed
And you were yet alive.

If every cloud has a silver lining,
As the poets always say,
Mine surely came by cable,
That you were safe that day.

Ode to the Bombardier

On a lonely road through a cold, black night,
A grizzled old man trudged into sight;
And the people whispered over their beers,
"There goes the last of the Bombardiers."

What is a Bombardier? — No reply;
The men turned silent, the women sighed,
As a death like silence filled the place,
With that gaunt grey ghost of a long lost race.

It's hard to explain, that catch of the breath,
As they seemed to sense the approach of death.
Furtive glances from ceiling to floor,
As someone or something opened the door.

The bravest hearts turned cold with fear,
The thing at the door was a Bombardier.
His hands were boney, his hair was thin,
His back was curved like an old bent pin.

His eyes were two empty rings of black,
And he vaguely murmured, "Shack, Shack,
Shack."

This ancient relic of the Second World War,
Crept cross the room and slouched to the bar.

No one spoke, but they watched in the glass,
As the old man showed a worn Bombsight pass,
And with hollow tones from his sunken chest
Demanded a drink—and only the best.

With glass to his lips they heard him say,
The bomb bay open, bombs away.
Without another word he sneaked through the
door,
And the last of the Bombardiers was seen no
more.

People still wonder at the strange last words,
'Twas the strangest phrase they'd ever heard,
But all through time the phrase has stuck,
And when they say Bombardier, they say—
HA-ARD LUCK!!

392nd BG Bombardier's Examination questions:

- When full extended vision is rolled into the M-7 or M-9 sight, the telescope quadrant will move
 - 20 degrees
 - 90 degrees
 - 0 degrees
 - 70 degrees
 - 10 degrees
- The rotor of a horizontal gyro spins in what plane:
 - vertical
 - horizontal
- The conversion factor for changing MPH to FT/SEC is
 - 3.1416
 - 1.47
 - .62
- The formula for actual range is
 - $AR = GS (FT/SEC) \times ATF$ - Trail
 - $GS (FT/SEC) \times ATF - T$ divided by ALT
- The correct method of returning the pilot turn control pointer when a bank is no longer desired is to
 - Rotate the turn control pointer quickly back to zero.
 - Slowly rotate the turn control pointer back to zero.
 - Quickly rotate it to center (detent).
 - Rotate it slowly to zero, wait until the wings level out, then turn to detent.

Answers: 1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. d.

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

"All human wisdom is summed up in two words: WAIT and HOPE"—Alexander Dumas.

These words apply so significantly to the challenges we all currently face.

There is conflicting information from our leaders and medical experts about the Coronavirus. We have all been affected in some ways: business closures, lost income, rising prices, quarantine and more.

The future is unknown and this can be frightening. We need reassurance of knowing we will be guided safely and responsibly until this crisis is resolved: WAIT and HOPE.

We also have the upcoming responsibility of electing a president. WAIT: become informed of the issues and the candidates. HOPE: that the country's choice is in the best interests of all people, regardless of income, skin color or gender and that our choice will provide leadership, sincerity and compassion.

God bless America and the heroes that have fought to keep her free.



**THE 392ND MEMORIAL
AT WENDLING**

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

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

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

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Margaret Ann "Midge" Cranson, widow of Walt, 578,
June 22, 2020
Robert L. Leinweber, 577/8, May 12, 2020