



Wil Hart's War Years

Wildrick "Wil" Hart, a 576th Sqdn pilot who flew 34 combat missions from 24 Jul-25 Nov 1944, wrote an account of his experiences titled *The War Years*. It was primarily intended for family and friends, because "most war stories have a big hero, performing great deeds of daring-do on an almost daily basis... But this war story has no such big hero."

However, "Winston Churchill once said, 'There is nothing more exhilarating than being shot at and missed!' I can say that the experience is also quite interesting. Since I was shot at and missed on a number of occasions ... I have assembled this ... summary of some of [my] more memorable events." A few of his accounts, as well as some of his explanatory details, are given below. They have been lightly edited to fit available space.

Flak

"Flak bursts could be classified three ways. If we just saw the burst, the probability of damage was remote. If we felt a thump, as if the airplane hit some turbulence, we could be fairly well assured that there were holes in the aircraft somewhere. Such bursts were fairly close but with sound not carrying well in the thin air at 20,000 ft, the noise of the engines to be overcome, and the noise deadening effect of our helmets and earphones, the sound of the bursts could not be heard.

If, however, we did hear a bang as the shell exploded, we could expect major damage."

Hart vividly remembered the dense cloud cover on the 30 Oct 1944 mission to Hamburg; he said "there was plenty of flak but we couldn't see it—so we didn't worry about it!"

Formations

"Each squadron would be called upon to put up 12 airplanes (later in the tour only 10) which would fly in a 'V' formation. The lead element of three aircraft flew at the assigned altitude, the right element flew slightly higher, the left

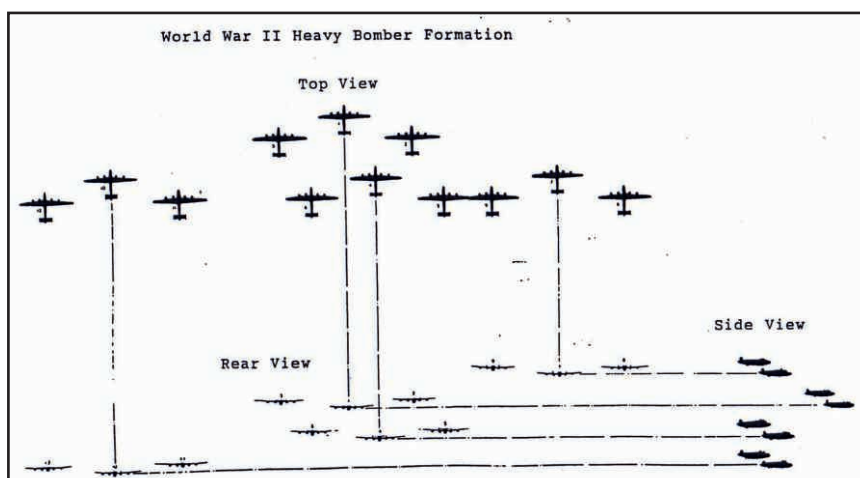
element flew slightly lower; hence the designations high right, low left, etc. Flying the right and left elements was the most demanding because of the need to slow down on the inside of the turns and to speed up when on the outside of the turns. Consequently, the rookies generally were assigned to the right and left elements.

"Each Group sent up either 3 or 4 squadrons which also flew in a 'V' formation; ie, lead, high right, low left and

low, low left squadrons if it happened to be a 4 squadron, maximum effort mission. The worst case was to draw the low left element in the low, low left squadron—that called for a lot of work to maintain position if many turns were called for."

RCM Personnel

Hart piloted B-24 #42-50432 on 10 of his 34 missions, so he knew it well. "It was **See HART on page 5**



Top photo: Flak during the 30 Oct 1944 mission. Bottom photo: Hart's diagram of what a formation looked like.



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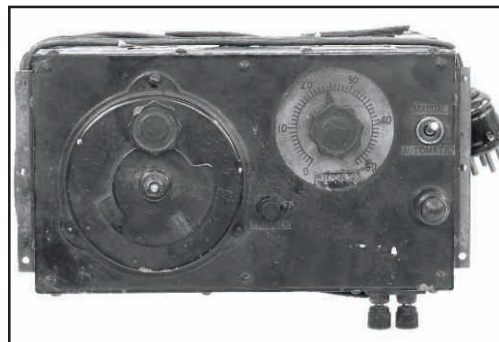
FROM THE EDITOR

Intervalometer. Wil Hart's *The War Years* frequently mentions the intervalometer. Part of the bombardier's Bomb Release Control, it allowed a bombardier to control the number of bombs dropped per release and the time interval between drops.

The photo at right shows the Type AN-B3 Bomb Release Control; the left dial selected

the spacing interval (note that word!) between bombs at a given airspeed, while the right dial selected the number of bombs to be released at a time. The bombing pattern could therefore be set up for carpet bombing over a long run (to destroy a large railroad marshalling yard, for example), or a more concentrated drop over a specific site such as a ball bearing factory.

<https://b24.net/Newsletters/LoadingCharts.pdf> has details about the procedures for "bombing up" a B-24 (or B-17) using either one type of bomb or a mixed load and what the impact pattern would look like based on the intervalometer settings.



General Curtis LeMay. Many of the aerial tactics that Wil Hart described were created by Gen Curtis LeMay. He commanded the 305th BG from October 1942 to September 1943, then the 3rd Bomb Division, before being transferred in July 1944 to the 20th Bomber Commander in the China-Burma-India Theater.

In *Air Force Spoken Here: General Ira Eaker & the Command of the Air*, author James Parton discusses LeMay's legacy as "an inspired innovator," including "the 'combat box' formation that became standard for the entire Eighth Air Force... LeMay evolved a group formation in which the lead squadron of six heavies would approach the target at, say, 24,000 feet with the second squadron slightly behind and to the right at 25,000 feet and the third squadron to the left and behind at 23,000 feet. In sharp turns away from the target after bombing, the entire group would pivot on the lead squadron while the other two crossed over from right to left and from left to right, corkscrew fashion. The next step was to stagger three such groups similarly into what became known as a 'combat wing box.' In addition to greater mobility it increased defensive strength by maintaining close formation at all times and providing clear fields of fire for the six gunners in each bomber.

"LeMay was also responsible for evolving another tactic that became standard operating procedure (SOP)—'salvo bombing' on radio signal from the lead bombardier instead of each plane dropping its bombs as its own bombardier thought best.

"And he demanded that formations fly straight and level during the tense final approach to the aiming point despite the great temptation to weave and thus, some thought, avoid flak. Before leading the 305th Bomb Group's first mission (against the U-boat pens at St. Nazaire on November 23, 1942) LeMay spent many hours studying an old ROTC artillery manual and basing his 'calculations on probability of hits from a French 75-millimeter cannon at a target the size of a B-17 at a range of 25,000 feet (four to five miles straight up) for the Jerry flak gunners with their roughly comparable 88-millimeter flak batteries. The answer came out to 273 rounds fired per hit on a B-17. By golly, I told myself, those are pretty good odds. I am going to fly straight and level on the bomb run even if it takes minutes instead of seconds. Otherwise, we might as well stay home... The bombs landed on target. No losses to flak. It worked...'"

Olympics. If you watched the Olympics as closely as I did, you undoubtedly saw some of the women's gymnastics competition on the 4-inch wide balance beam—and were amazed at the difficult routines the gymnasts executed on its narrow width.

But, did you remember that the catwalk in a B-24 bomb bay was only 9 inches wide? Hard enough to perform on a beam in an arena in a leotard, but how would you like to walk out on a catwalk, on a moving plane, at 20,000 feet, without a parachute, with only a portable oxygen bottle, dressed as 392nd BG

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President's Corner



Last month I had a family wedding in Charleston, SC, a few days after hurricane Debby passed through. Fortunately, the weather had cleared and there was very little sign of damage. I had decided that I would return home by way of Pooler, Georgia, and pay a visit to Scott Loehr, President and CEO of The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

Unfortunately, the museum was closed due to a problem with the air conditioning system, so we met for lunch at a nearby restaurant. We had a nice visit and he updated me on the planned addition to the museum where an airframe of a B-24 will eventually be housed.

Progress is being made on that acquisition and Scott informed me that groundbreaking has taken place on the addition to the museum. Construction will begin as soon as the sandy soil is amended to support the new building's foundation. Scott suggested I swing by the museum and take a look on my way home.



Here are a few pictures of the construction site on the south end of the museum. The one on the left shows the site and the one on the right shows I-beams waiting to be used. I'm glad I stopped by to see this very encouraging progress.

The date for our annual membership meeting and reunion is fast approaching. There has been a good response with 23 people signed up under the 392nd BGMA. Our hospitality suite is in the Higgins Hotel right across the street from The National WWII Museum. The other host hotels are short walks away.

Debra Kujawa has negotiated a special reduced rate for a museum membership for anyone who is not already a member. It will give unlimited access to the museum during the reunion, plus it's a regular membership good until December 31, 2025.

Given the tours and activities of the reunion, along with all of the other excitement New Orleans has to offer, it promises to be an enjoyable experience.

Our membership meeting will take place Friday, September 27, at 8:00am Central Time and for those not attending in person, you can join us virtually via Zoom. An invitation with a link will go out the week of the meeting, so mark your calendars now and plan to Zoom in!

And, speaking of Zooms, our next Meet & Greet will be held at 1:30pm Eastern Time on October 19, 2024. I hope to see you there!

Ralph

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Commander Col Lorin L. Johnson is in this photo and attempt to dislodge a hung-up bomb—with no tools except perhaps your feet or a screwdriver? And, your success or failure was not measured by a judge, but by whether (or not) you dislodged the bomb in time for your plane to successfully land...

392nd BG Facebook page.

Al Claiborne, one of our 364 FB members, recently posted a video tribute to his 576th Sqdn engineer S/Sgt Marion Thornton, his mother's first

cousin. He was tragically killed during a practice mission on 5 Jul 1944 when two 392nd planes collided. I highly recommend you watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1oIn3cqaZY> and learn more about this young American.

You can find us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563692720350729>.

The June 2024 News. Tom Miller, whose father was 576th pilot Capt Henry W. Miller, emailed, "The incredibly well-written story of *The Bad Penny* was amazing and reminded me of an account by gunner Theodore A. Rausch about my father piloting his heavy damaged B-24 back to England on his 9th mission, to Kiel, Germany, on January 4, 1944:

" 'This was our close one. Started out with our newly assigned ship, *The Flak Ducker* [#42-7598], everything going along fine till we miss our target and started for our No. 2 target. Got jumped by about 6 Ju88s and couple Me110. Attacks came from low at six o'clock. Jerry took advantage of the contrails. All I did was sweat as my guns and turret had frozen up before we left England. After fighter attacks stopped we tried to drop our bombs. No soap. Used pilot's salvo release then couldn't close bomb bay doors. Same time we lost two engines on right side and lost about 10,000 feet. Lt. Miller asked for heading for Sweden but we were just as far from England so we headed home and glad we did. Tossed out all ammunition and both waist guns, also all flak suits. Lt. Miller was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for a swell job of piloting. Everybody was more scared after it was all over than during the flight. Landed at a RAF Base (Lissett) about 130 miles north of home. Got back home the next day. Coldest I've ever been, minus 59°. 07:20 long.' "

PX Alert. We recently ordered a lot of 392nd BG apparel: hats (very similar to the old ones, but the color is called "stone"), men's polo shirts (in both Carolina blue and sport gray) and *for the very first time* polo shirts sized for women, in rich red. We hope to have them available for sale at the reunion; regardless, look for an email announcing sizes and prices once they're received!



News from Across the Pond

On June 6, Vivianne Trorey, daughter of long-time Friend Ernie Parke, emailed, "As I watch with pride the veterans and their families in Normandy today, may I on behalf of myself and my family send sincere thanks to all involved with the 392nd BGMA for theirs and their family's courage and resilience to ensure that we live a life of freedom today."

Beeston

Philip Brazier sent us several emails recently. One advised that The Beeston Ploughshare was named "District Pub of the year 2024" by Norwich & District CAMRA [Campaign for Real Ale]. CAMRA is one of the biggest consumer groups in the world, campaigning to promote real ale, the wonderful pubs it is served in, and the people who brew and serve it—in short, pubs, pints and people!



The Norwich & District Branch (with over 3,500 members!) is one of four that serve Norfolk. Branch members nominate pubs in their area which are then validated by CAMRA visits to check out beer quality, facilities, atmosphere and support for local "real ale" brewers. Members then score the pubs on the shortlist. The District Pub of the Year is the pub outside Norwich with the highest score.

In its announcement of winners, CAMRA said, "The Ploughshare is a community-owned pub dating back nearly 500 years. There has been an alehouse on the site since 1585. In 2016, villagers gathered together to rescue the pub from the brink of redevelopment, which they succeeded in doing three years later."

Hearty congratulations to the Ploughshare from Crusaders far and wide!!

Philip recently had to take his car for service at Payne's Business Park, across Dereham Road from the JagSpares building (formerly the Combat Officer's Mess). He looked



down and saw one of the bicycle racks—obviously still being used—that almost certainly were outside the Enlisted Men's Mess in that area.

How many other remnants of the 392nd BG's presence are just waiting for someone to

spot them?

On 18 August, Philip gave a presentation about the 392nd BG at American Air Power Day at West Raynham SHQ [Station Headquarters].

He wrote, "West Raynham was a 1930s 'Expansion Period' RAF station. It closed in the early 1990s and was then gradually sold off in the early 2000s. A new community is in the old married quarters, there are small businesses in the hangers and engineering workshops and the airfield/runways is now a solar farm.

"Veterans' Central is a charity that bought the old SHQ building and has been renovating it over the past five

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you get the *News* in print format, your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; "24" means your dues expire in December. If you get the *News* via email, you will receive an email in September and December advising if your dues are expiring. If you wish to join or renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Joel Fleck, 5606 Doolittle St., Burke, VA 22015 or join / renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/membership.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 concerns, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box below. If you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, please indicate the amount in the space below.

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

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Please provide the name and unit of your Crusader relative/friend: _____

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: I am renewing for _____ years.

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years. It is developing into a museum and veterans' drop-in centre. Scenes for Disney's 2023 Christmas movie 'The Shepherd' were filmed on the site."

Under 2Lt Wendling T. Bear's watchful eye, Philip promoted the virtues of the B-24 and told a few of the Group's stories. The two then rendezvoused at The Crusader Bar in The Beeston Ploughshare to celebrate a successful mission, with the model of B-24 #42-51240, *Windy City Belle*, flying overhead!

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fitted out with radar jamming transmitters. This meant that we carried an extra crewman to operate this equipment when it was our turn for jamming duty. This crewman came from a pool of operators who took turns as the jamming missions came up.

"The way this equipment functioned was this. On board were 6 radio transmitters and 1 receiver that operated at radar frequencies. The operator would scan through the range of radar frequencies until he heard a ground tracking station. He would then tune a transmitter to the same frequency as the ground station and turn it on. This would foul up the radar screen display on the ground, making it impossible for them to track the formation. Of course, it was necessary to check back regularly, for if the ground station had turned off their transmitter, they could then home in on our transmissions. Consequently, it was imperative that we got off of the air as soon as the tracking station shut down. The operator was kept real busy playing these games all the while that we were over enemy territory."

In the crew load lists shown on <https://www.b24.net/missionsSummary.htm>, this crew position was often listed as RCM, *Radio Counter Measures*.

Mission to Oranienburg/Heligoland, 27 Aug 1944

"The primary target was a Heinkel aircraft factory in a suburb of Berlin and was expected to be a really rough mission. However, at the weather briefing it was noted that a front was building up over the Danish peninsula which could present problems. The route in took us up over the North Sea and, as we approached Denmark, it was evident that the weather front was there—billowing cumulus clouds to over 30,000 ft as far as the eye could see from north to south. The interesting part of the mission was the air show as we approached the front. It looked like the entire 8th Air Force was milling around in front of this line of storms. As the Groups of 36 to 48 airplanes circled about looking for a passageway through the front, they would get strung out so that they looked like great swarms of bees silhouetted against the snow white clouds. There probably were more

than a thousand bombers that could be seen at one time.

"Since it was soon determined that we couldn't go to the primary target, an alternate was selected. In the North Sea is a small island—Heligoland—where the Germans had located a radar station to monitor the northern approaches to the continent. There were a few flak guns there to defend the installation. They always took some annoying pot shots at us if we came anywhere near the island on the way into North Germany. It was with considerable satisfaction that we dumped 12 x 500 pound bombs on them as repayment for the annoyance. It also gave us a legitimate right to log another mission to our credit."

Mission to Karlsruhe, 8 Sep 1944

"This one was Combat! Karlsruhe had been the target the day before but weather over the Continent had apparently reduced the accuracy to where a rerun was necessary. Bad weather persisted at the base and a stationary front was stuck over the Continent, but we took off anyway in heavy rain squalls. It had rained cats and dogs for three days and everything was well saturated.

"Forming up the Group over England had its problems because of the cloud formations. Nonetheless, we got shaped up and made our way over the Channel to France with everything in good order.

"The stationary front referred to above was located just east of Paris with clouds well above our usual bombing altitude of 20,000 ft. At altitude, the temperature was 40° below zero. Consequently, the clouds consisted of tiny ice particles instead of the usual water droplets. Under these conditions, visibility is good for several hundred yards and it was possible to keep the squadron flying in some sort of loose formation.

"For this mission, the Group had sent up three squadrons. In order for three squadrons flying together to penetrate a front, the drill was for the lead squadron to go straight through on the assigned heading. The right and left squadrons would each take 5° diverging courses until through the clouds. Then the three squadrons would come back together again into Group formation. We were in the low left squadron and, for some reason never to be known, our lead ship turned left—not 5° but 90°!!

"We could do nothing but follow the course that he had chosen. We were on this course for no more than a few minutes when through the clouds came another squadron of B-24s who were flying on the assigned heading and the two of us crossed at the same altitude on right angle courses. I suppose that you would have to say that we were the ones that ran the red light! Both formations were very loose which helped produce the miracle of no collisions even though we were within feet of each other going through this 'intersection.'

"This was enough for my element leader—I was flying his left wing—and he pulled out of the formation, starting a climb with the obvious intent of trying to get on top of the clouds. I tried to keep up for a few minutes but chose not to stress the engines to the extent required and dropped away from him. We kept on climbing on a heading that would take us to the target and broke out into the sunshine at 27,000 ft.

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"Looking around, we could see only a couple of other singles. Off in the distance ahead of us, slightly to the left of our course, was a Group of B-24s. Putting on a little extra power, it didn't take long to catch up with them. I guess we weren't surprised to find that it was the same group that flew through our formation. However, it was somewhat surprising to find our element leader flying along with them.

"So, I tucked us in on his right wing and we prepared to drop the bombs since the Group was already on the bomb run. The bomb bay doors were open and the navigator was ready to hit the intervalometer switch when we flew into a heavy flak area.

"At this point, we took the closest thing to a direct hit that we would encounter in the entire tour—no thumps or bumps this time—it sounded like a stick of dynamite going off. The burst was on the left side of the airplane, slightly above and ahead of us. Looking out of the left window I could see white smoke billowing out of the outboard engine with a little black smoke coming from the inboard engine. I immediately gave the order to feather #1 engine, which we did in a matter of seconds—no time for the checking routine drilled into us in training.

"As the propeller stopped turning the smoke stopped coming out of the cowling and that crisis was over for the moment. It turned out that the white smoke was either fuel and/or exhaust mixture from a hole in the induction system. Fortunately, there was no fire in the nacelle or this might have been another story.

"As this was happening, 'bombs away' time was upon us. The navigator hit the intervalometer switch—nothing happened. So he immediately tried to pull the salvo lever which would release all of the bombs at once—couldn't budge it! The three days of heavy rain and high humidity at the base prior to takeoff had so saturated the airplane that the linkages had frozen between the nose of the aircraft and the bomb bay.

"With only three engines going, we were losing altitude and we needed to get rid of those bombs (12 x 500 pound incendiaries). To do this it would be necessary for gunner Larry Griesbaum to climb out of the nose turret, put on a portable oxygen bottle, crawl back to the bomb bay and trip each shackle manually with a screw driver. So, I instructed the nose gunner to do this.

"Larry wasn't too agile to start with and being encumbered with a heavy flying suit and a portable oxygen outfit, getting back to the bomb bay was taking some time. In the meantime, we had dropped out of formation and took a westerly course—the shortest route to France and the Channel. Before any bombs could be released, the navigator called up and advised that his calculations had us positioned past the 'no bomb line.'

"This was a line past which bombs were not to be dropped except in extreme emergencies. Anything dropped west of this line might land on friendly troops or the liberated French. Karlsruhe is not too far inside Germany and Patton had his armies almost to the Rhine at this time. While self-preservation is the #1 priority, I decided to honor the request not to release, at least for the moment, and

sent Larry back to the nose turret. This was not a difficult decision to make since we still had a lot of air under us and we were supposed to be over friendly territory.

"It was obvious, however, that at the rate of descent we had to hold with only three engines, we would not be able to make it to the Channel. Someone would catch a load of incendiaries anyway if there wasn't a quick solution to the power problem.

"So, I decided to try to start up #1 engine and see what happened. We unfeathered the engine and was gratified to find that we could get about half power out of it without any smoke showing at the cowling. With this added power, the rate of descent was cut to 200-300 ft per minute. This calculated out as allowing us to get to the Channel at a reasonable altitude. If there wasn't much weather at the coast, we could then fly out over the Channel and salvo the bombs.

"There usually was a cloud bank where the prevailing westerly winds blew some moisture off of the Channel over the land. However, visibility was good at this point and it was not hard to find a clear area between clouds to fly through. We made it out over the Channel at about 4,000 ft. At this altitude, the temperature was well above freezing, so we were pretty well thawed out by this time. Scanning the Channel for shipping disclosed no ship traffic. So finally, it was open the bomb bay doors and 'bombs away.'

"Since the condition of #1 engine was still unknown, we feathered it once again—didn't want it to quit unannounced in the landing pattern or at some other critical time. The flight engineer, Vernon Shields, was kept busy transferring fuel all the rest of the way home since we were a little low having pulled a lot of extra power when climbing out of the clouds and when running on three engines. Once we got rid of the payload, however, things were pretty routine. It had even stopped raining at Wendling.

"Examination of the aircraft for damage after we landed showed some interesting things. On each side of the airplane at the cockpit was a piece of armor plate approximately 3 feet by 4 feet by 1/4 inch thick. There was a gouge about 6 inches long and about 1/4 inch deep made by a fairly large piece of flak. Had not the armor plate been there, it would have hit me about in the left hip!

"Luck was also on the side of the flight engineer in the top turret. At the time of the burst, Vern Shields had his turret aimed directly away from where the explosion occurred. The back of the seat in the turret was armor plate that came up almost to the top of his head. A good sized piece of flak had shattered the plexiglass turret cover and struck the armor plate at about his neck line. Had he, by chance, had his turret turned toward the burst, the shrapnel most assuredly would have taken his head off.

"Navigator Glen Berger also had good fortune on his side. His compartment in the nose of the aircraft was exposed to the blast as much or more than any area in the airplane. It had no protective armor plate. Remarkably, this area didn't have a single flak hole in it even though the rest of the airplane from 9 to 12 o'clock was pretty well peppered!

"This was the longest and most stressful mission to date.

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HART from page 6

The last entry for this date in my diary was 'Boy, ain't I tired!' "

Mission to Mainz, 9 Sep 1944

"The target this day was a marshalling yard just inside of the Siegfried Line in support of Patton's rapidly advancing troops. While we had what had come to be the usual weather problems forming up over England, the trip in was uneventful. On this mission, and on several subsequent missions, I flew in the #4 position; ie, leading the element directly behind the lead aircraft. Flak at the target was moderate; but, even so, a ship in the 578th Squadron—we were in the 576th—took a direct hit and went down in flames.

"Shortly after leaving the target, the Radio Operator, Bill Young, got on the intercom and said 'There's something wrong with the engineer. He's getting out of his turret.' Since Shields had disconnected his head set by then, I couldn't talk to him. So I asked Bill to watch him and keep me advised. Pretty soon I got a disturbing report from Bill, 'There's got to be something wrong with him. He's taking off all of his clothes!' At 40° below zero, one does not disrobe in a drafty B-24 unless a serious condition exists. Well, the serious condition was that Shields was wearing a one piece flying suit, had come up with a bad case of the 'Gl's' and chose to take a chance with frostbite on some critical body parts rather than 'brown out' and sit in a mess for the next three hours. We always hoped that that load landed on some key German installation.

"It didn't take long for Shields to make it back into his turret none the worse for wear and we motored on home to Wendling."

Mission to Hanover, 11 Sep 1944

"This was a day to remember! Among other things, I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant, but I wasn't aware of that until a few days later when the orders came through.

"The target was a munitions plant in Hanover. This city was always well defended because of a lot of heavy war industry in the area. Consequently, we expected plenty of flak at bombs away.

"Things went well until we crossed the Rhine River south of Cologne. We picked up some flak at this point including several bursts from one battery which exploded with red smoke instead of the usual black. This aroused my curiosity and I commented on it to copilot Don Crawford who couldn't see it from the right seat. The significance of this rather obvious signal became apparent in just a few minutes.

"The 392nd had not been under fighter attack since July 21, which was the mission just prior to the one where we became operational. Because of a severe shortage of planes and fuel, the Luftwaffe was not mounting much of an air attack in that period of time.

"When they did, their strategy was to wait until their very efficient ground observers found a group that was without fighter escort. They would then deploy whatever fighters they could muster—usually about 200—and assemble them in the area of the unfortunate group. They attacked by making head on passes with up to ten fighters flying abreast. Each fighter made only one pass and then left

for home. Their ME-109s had one 20mm cannon firing through the propeller hub and their FW-190s had two 20mm cannon in each wing. These were fired continuously on the pass at the formation. While they suffered some losses with this technique, the superior fire power of their cannons usually produced rather devastating results.

"To get back to September 11, shortly after the red marker flak appeared, our squadron swung wide in order to form up in line of squadrons to make the bomb run. Unfortunately, our P-51 fighter escort had had to leave for home and the P-47s that were to cover us on the next leg had not yet put in an appearance. It is speculated that a squadron of 20 to 30 ME-109s were on their way further north to where the Luftwaffe's major offensive was to be made that day. When it was determined that we had no fighter cover, they were diverted to us. The red flak was simply to help the fighter pilots pick out the right bomber squadron to attack.

"We had completed our turn and were flying straight and level when I sighted what I thought were the white, puffy smoke bursts of the 105mm antiaircraft guns rarely used by the Germans. Presumably, these bursts were over some distant target. I got a rude awakening when things were put in proper perspective. Instead of large white bursts over a distant city, they were small white bursts and they were between us and the deputy lead ship—again I was flying in the #4 position directly behind the lead ship. Apparently, one of the fighter pilots had throttled back behind us and was pumping cannon shells into the formation. Before I could say anything on the intercom, I felt the airplane tremble as the turrets and waist gunners opened fire with their 50 caliber machine guns.

"Being directly behind and slightly lower than the lead ship produced some problems and may have also had some benefits. When the lead ship's tail turret gunner started firing, the empty 50 caliber casings came streaming down directly at us. On a previous mission, we had incurred significant damage from spent casings when the gunners test fired their weapons on the way in to the target. And that was when only 10 or 20 rounds had been fired. Now there was a steady stream of empties coming at us.

"So the next few minutes, I was busy staying in my place in the formation when out the left window I could see a gaping hole in the #1 engine nacelle—shrapnel had wiped out the electrical system. So, it was 'Feather #1' time again. I pumped up the other three engines pretty good and stayed with what was left of the squadron—5 ships—until we reestablished ourselves in the bomber stream. Then I throttled back to a normal setting on the three engines and leapfrogged backwards, as it were, as other groups caught up and passed us.

"Since the possible presence of enemy fighters in the area was obvious, we also called in a P-47 to help with our return to the Channel.

"As we approached the coast of Holland, I had the engineer check our fuel supply and found it to be alarmingly low. Under these circumstances, the drill is to lighten the load. So, everything movable went out the waist windows and the bomb bay. This included the machine guns and ammunition—that P-47 looked real good as we flew along

See HART on page 8

HART from page 7

with no defenses. Of course the gunners thought this was a pretty good deal—they wouldn't have to clean their guns that night. You've got to look on the bright side of things, you know!

"One of the waist gunners, who shall remain unidentified, was not too swift. After all of the obvious stuff had been disposed of, I hear over the intercom 'OK, Young. Come on back and disconnect the radios so we can throw them out.' Of course, I put a quick stop to that for if we had to ditch or land elsewhere, the ability to communicate would have been a must.

"As it was, we made it back to Wendling with about 50 gallons of gas left, enough for about 15 more minutes of flying time.

"The official report by the Group had 4 ships and 3 complete aircrews lost with 'many others killed or wounded.' One B-24 ditched in the Channel with 2 crewmen killed in the ditching. For all of the action, we were again fortunate in that no one got a scratch."

Mission to Eindhoven (DZ Holland), 18 Sep 1944

"September was turning into an exciting month. On the 17th, it was announced that the next day we would be flying the first ever low level supply mission by B-24s. This mission would be in support of paratroopers and airborne infantry landing in Holland even as the announcement was made. The plan was to fly in at 1,000 ft, decrease altitude to 500 ft over the drop zone (DZ) and return at 1,000 ft. It was apparent that some low level formation flying practice was necessary, so two practice missions were flown on the 17th. This involved takeoff and forming up in the vicinity of Wendling, flying a short pattern around central England and making a simulated drop.

"The 'Trucking Missions' in the past had been the responsibility of the Troop Carrier Groups and their C-47s. The problem there was that a C-47 could only carry four 500 pound parapacks—bundles with 500 pounds of munitions, food, or whatever, that were dropped by parachute. The B-24s were rigged to carry 12 parapacks on the bomb racks, with 8 more parapacks to be dumped out of various openings.

"For this operation, the cover plate where the ball turret normally was located had been removed. At the DZ, the intervalometer would be triggered which then sequenced the parapacks off of the bomb racks and everyone else was trying to heave the rest of the packs out of the bomb bay and the turret opening before we overflew the drop area. A dropmaster from the Army Quartermaster Corps flew with us to help out with this duty.

"There was one problem with using the B-24 in this service. At normal flying speed, the parachutes would have been stripped from the packs when they hit the airstream. Consequently, we had to put down half flaps and stagger along at 140-145 mph to make a successful drop. With a full load, this condition put us uncomfortably close to stalling speed.

"On the 18th, we were actually briefed to drop at Ramagen, but as we were getting the aircraft ready for takeoff, a Jeep rushed up with some new maps and the news that we had the load for Eindhoven.

"From the pilot's point of view, the mission went well. We flew in at 1,000 ft, giving us a nice view of the countryside—something of a lark. I could even see what probably were German troops standing in the streets of various cities watching us go by.

"At the DZ, we went down to 500 ft and got the parapacks off well within the limits of the drop area. In this case the DZ was the glider park where the airborne infantry had landed the day before. This was a sight to see. Those gliders, and there were hundreds of them, were parked as close to each other as the cars in the average shopping mall! It must have taken a lot of practice to make such efficient use of every square foot of their landing zone.

"The airspace got a little cluttered over the DZ—it seemed as though everyone got there at the same time. After avoiding some other squadrons that were muscling their way into a relatively small target, my wingmen and I pulled away to find most of the rest of the squadron following us. With the job done, formation flying was not a necessity and the trip home was made in a rather informal manner.

"Upon landing and talking to the crew, I found that the mission was not the milk run that I had supposed. There was no 88mm flak to contend with since tracking a bomber at 1,000 ft with a big gun was not practical. However, we were pretty well riddled with small arms and light cannon fire, most of which didn't make itself evident on the way through the airplane.

"One rifle bullet had hit an oxygen bottle and the stream of oxygen had impinged on a nearby rag which caught fire. This happened just before the DZ. Everyone was so busy with the drop that they just put out the fire and kept on with their duties. I learned about the fire when we got home.

"In retrospect, I had to conclude that some of those ground troops that I saw on the way in really had to be German. This type of duty (low altitude formation flying) was hard physical labor. As a result of the two practice missions and the run in to Eindhoven, I found my left hand—the control wheel hand—had a number of blisters on it. Of course, no one ever said that the B-24 was light on the controls.

"The Group recap of the mission showed some rather surprising statistics. Three aircraft were lost and 26 casualties were reported. One ship from our squadron, the 576th, crash landed in Belgium with some crew injuries.

"This was an interesting mission because of the novelty of the low level flying. Some additional resupply missions were flown after I finished my tour. In a way, I was just as happy to stick to the high altitude stuff for which we had trained."

July 2024 Meet and Greet

Fourteen 392nd BGMA members attended the July 2024 Zoom meeting.

Laurie Huntley (great-niece of 579th Sqdn navigator Capt John Slowik) mentioned that she and her 7-year old son RJ gave a presentation in May for his class about Capt Slowik which really engaged the children.

David Parnell, who maintains the memorial for 2/Lt John D. Ellis in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, advised that the

See ZOOM on page 9

ZOOM from page 8

memorial is just outside a school with 1,400 students—and that “youngsters take more on board than we realize.”

He spoke with John Gilbert recently. While John uses a walker now, he is doing very well. As David aptly commented, “John is a walking piece of 392nd BG history!”

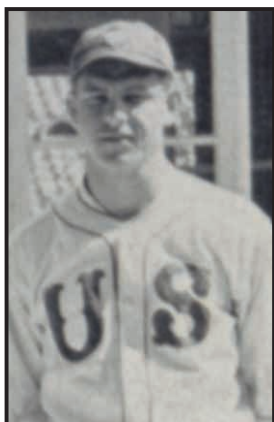
Philip Brazier noted that the old turkey sheds have been removed from the runways but are being replaced with newer versions—still better than being replaced by houses!

David Poppel, son of 577th Sqdn navigator Samuel B. Poppel, asked if the bombardier ever manned the nose turret guns. There were many ideas, but no one knew for sure. If you have the answer, please let Annette know!

Crusaders and the Summer Olympics

What follows is an updated and expanded version of an article originally published in the June 2008 *News*. It highlights our Crusader connections to the summer Olympics: one participated, one probably would have, and one used his moment in the Olympic spotlight to focus on lost comrades.

Capt Emmett W. Fore Jr



Emmett W. “Tex” Fore Jr played baseball in the 1936 summer Olympics. By April 1943, he was in the 392nd BG, first as Special Service Officer (to supervise and coordinate activities for the 392nd BG’s morale, welfare

and recreation program), 1944 Voting Officer and then Assistant Group S-1 Information-Education Officer.

Station Ammunition Officer Charles Dye recalled that “while pub hopping was the most-used form of relaxation, there was plenty of organized athletics during the off-duty hours. Many of the Squadrons, companies and Sections had organized teams of softball, basketball and touch football. In addition, there was a base football, basketball and baseball team.

“The Unit softball games started with one ball, one glove and one bat. The glove was reserved for the catcher. Later, the Special Service Officer [Capt Emmett W. Fore Jr] was able to obtain more equipment and the inter-Squadron games flourished.”

Olympics Baseball

Baseball has been called “America’s pastime” since 1856. It didn’t make its way to the Olympics, however, until 1912. Then, an American team played one demonstration game against a team from Sweden, the host nation. The US won 13-3.

In 1930, the U.S.A. Baseball Congress (U.S.A.B.C.), which promoted amateur baseball on both the national and international level, realized that amateur baseball players needed a “Jerusalem Star” to aim for, as the pinnacle of success. It then embarked on the steps necessary for baseball to become an official Olympic sport.

Their efforts were too late for the 1932 games in Los Angeles. Only two demonstration sports were allowed at each Olympics and football and lacrosse had already been selected. So, they aimed for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

In 1935, Japan invited All American Amateur All Stars, as selected by the U.S.A.B.C., to play a series of exhibition games. After accepting the challenge, the U.S.A.B.C. “launched one of the greatest nation-wide programs ever to be conducted” to select the players, with the reward being an all-expenses-paid trip to Japan.

Among those chosen was outfielder Emmett W. Fore Jr, then playing baseball at the University of Texas. The team—called the “Wheaties All-Americans” since they were sponsored by General Mills, Inc.—sailed for Japan on 25 Sep 1935.

See OLYMPICS on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member, spouse or Friend 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 _____

Our website, www.b24.net, 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. Please send this report to: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

OLYMPICS from page 9

In the middle of the first game, at Meiji Stadium in Tokyo, volcanic ash started to fall on the players, driven by wind from the erupting Mount Asama, some 90 miles to the north. The Americans lost 5-4, but what a great excuse!!

The Wheaties All-Stars won five of the eight games played. Unfortunately, attendance was so poor that General Mills canceled its sponsorship and US major league baseball teams decided not to support the amateur baseball concept. The All-Stars were disbanded soon after returning to the US.

1936 Summer Olympics

A few months later, the situation changed dramatically. Germany, the host country, decided that baseball would be one of their demonstration games, with teams from Japan and the US as opponents. However, Japan chose not to compete in baseball (although it did participate in other Olympic sports) and it was then decided that two American teams would compete against each other.

U.S.A.B.C. assumed complete responsibility for financing and selecting two complete teams, which was quite an accomplishment. Tryouts took place in Baltimore, Maryland, from 1-12 July 1936. On the 15th, the entire US delegation set sail for Berlin, including 21 American baseball players: 11 players as the *World Champions* and 10—including left fielder Emmett Fore—as the *Olympics*.

The *American Olympic Committee Report* later said that as over 5,300 athletes from 51 nations entered the Berlin stadium for the opening ceremony, most of them “gave the Olympic salute as they passed the reviewing stand (right arm stretched out sideways from shoulder). The American team turned eyes right and placed their straw hats over their hearts as they marched by.”

More than 100,000 spectators crowded the Olympic Stadium on 12 Aug 1936 to watch baseball—at a time when the New York Yankees led the major league with average attendance of just 12,687 fans! The game was played on the grass at the end of the stadium where the high jump competition had been held. Foul lines and base paths were marked with two-inch white tape; there were no outfield walls or other marked boundaries.

The *Report* describes the teams' dramatic entrance: “... the stadium was darkened and two huge searchlights spotted one team at one end of the stadium entering the field in a military single file column and at the same time the other team entering from the other end of the stadium under another huge searchlight. The white uniforms loomed up like diamonds—and as both teams proceeded to the center of the field where two American flags had been erected on poles, the officials came up from the rear and as each team stopped at their respective flag, the officials stood between the two flags—all players and officials gave the official Olympic salute. This salute was executed with military precision. It was truly a picture. The lights of the entire stadium were then turned on and the players divided and went to their respective sides and the warming up and infield practice was gone through. All the time a German announcer was giving a detailed description of what was going on, over a loud speaking system reaching everyone in the stadium.”

Conditions were not ideal; Peter Cava in *Citius, Altius, Fortius* (the journal of Olympic history) writes, “The game was played at night on a makeshift diamond with no mound and bad lighting.” A player later said, “I think they had one 20-watt bulb in centerfield.”

Cava reports that “German fans, seeing baseball for the first time, loved it—but for the wrong reasons.” He quotes a team member who told how the fans cheered wildly as a man ran down to first base on a pop-up, but “Belt one out beyond second base and go for extra bases and there was no reaction at all.” An inside-the-park home run in the first inning put Fore's team ahead 2-0. “After the homer,” Cava wrote, “there was a big pause. Then there was an announcement in German that ... hitting a home run was a big deal. So, everybody cheered.”

Fore's team scored in the top of the seventh (and last) inning to tie the game 5-5. The *World Champions* then got a home run and won 6-5.

At the end of the game, the *World Champions* went to third base and cheered for their opponents while the *Olympics* did the same from first base. Then, said the *Report*, “both teams went to the center of the field and gave a cheer ending their nine Raahs with ‘Germany, Germany, Germany.’”

Dr. Carl Diem, Secretary General of the German Organizing Committee, met with both teams. He told them, “I have come officially to advise you that this has been the finest demonstration of any sport that any nation has ever put on at any Olympic Games. We congratulate you—and speaking for my people, you have made over 100,000 friends here tonight and as they go home America's baseball players' praises will be sung by all.”

The Olympic torch relay, now an integral part of the Games, was originated by Dr. Diem and first performed at the 1936 Olympics.

Baseball at Later Olympics

Baseball was supposed to be included in the 1940 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. Obviously, neither those nor the 1944 London games happened. The sport also wasn't included in the 1948 London games.

But finally, in the 1952 games in Helsinki, Finland, baseball returned to the Olympics as a demonstration sport. The US team (made up of players from the US soccer team) beat a Finnish team 19 to 1.

Baseball was a exhibition sport at the 1956 Melbourne, Australia, games. The US team, comprised of servicemen from the U.S. Far East Command, beat Australia 11 to 5.

At the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, a team of US collegiate all-stars (including eight future major-leaguers) beat the Japanese team 6 to 2.

Baseball did not return to the Olympics until 1984. Then, teams from Korea, Italy, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Canada and the US competed in Los Angeles as a demonstration sport. The U.S. lost for the first time in Olympic history, to Japan.

The 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea, was the last time that baseball was a demonstration sport. This time, the US defeated Japan.

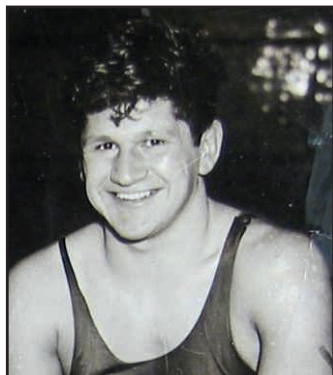
At the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, baseball
See OLYMPICS on page 11

OLYMPICS from page 10

finally became an official sport, with Cuba winning the gold medal; they won again in 1996 and 2004. Other baseball gold medals have been earned by the USA (2000); South Korea (2008); and Japan (2020/played in 2021).

Baseball was not part of the 2012, 2016, or 2024 Olympics (<https://seamsup.com/blog/why-were-baseball-and-softball-removed-from-the-olympics> has reasons why) but might be played at the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028. Let's hope so!

Capt John E. Slowik



579th Sqdn navigator Capt John E. Slowik would undoubtedly have competed for a spot on the 1940 Olympic swim team. He had broken records for the back and breast strokes in high school and then at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. In 1938, he was not only Trinity's most prolific scorer in relays, backstroke, breast stroke and distance events but was also elected team captain.

Slowik's Olympic chance never came. The 1940 Games were cancelled; by the time the 1944 Olympics should have been held, he was dead, killed in action on 18 Mar 1944 during the infamous Friedrichshafen mission.

His swimming legacy lives on, however. In 1950, fellow Trinity swimmer (and B-17 airman) David Tyler established the John E. Slowik Most Valuable Swimmer Award. Awarded annually in memory of John E. Slowik, Class of 1939, it is presented to the most valuable member of the varsity men's swimming and diving team considering ability, conscientiousness in the observance of all rules of practice and training, and qualities of leadership. The recipient is chosen by his teammates and coach and his name is inscribed on a wooden plaque in Trinity's Ferris Athletic Center.

Great-niece and 392nd BGMA member Laurie Huntley says, "This year, I teamed up with Hannah Hagy, head coach for Trinity Swimming and Diving, to change the narrative around the MVP award and to use it to inform the narrative on team building, perseverance, and grit. I gave this year's recipient, Matthew Brown, a 392nd challenge coin and spoke to the teams about the contributions of the Group to the war effort."

Sgt Joe B. Maloy Jr

A 577th Sqdn ball turret gunner, Sgt Maloy became a POW on 29 Apr 1944—just his third mission.

His plane was hit by flak over Berlin, damaged still more by an enemy fighter, then finished off by an Me-109.

In his account, *Mooning Frankfurt* [sic], navigator Patrick

J. Ryan says that after he had bailed out and landed, "Joe



Maloy saw my chute from above and came hotfooting it across the field just as I was hiding my chute in a bush. There were a lot of people chasing him and by the time he got to me he was gasping and wheezing, blood was streaming down his face and I thought he might be seriously wounded. In the minute or so it took to convince me that his wounds were slight, the German people were on us...

"We were surrounded by people from a nearby village. A young boy was acting as interpreter. The first question he asked was 'Do you want to go to Berlin?' We said 'Hell, no, we just came from there.' That was probably not a good thing to say because they immediately shook a few pitch forks at us. We were taken to the little village hall. [Gunners Sgt Thomas L. Hampton, Sgt Frank A. Bennett, and Sgt Robert W. Wilcox] were already there."

While in the jail cell, Maloy found ten more wounds on his right side from waist to shoulder. He and Ryan used a small knife to dig out most of the 20mm shrapnel.

On that mission, the 392nd lost 8 planes, with 44 men killed in action and 27 taken prisoner. Among those killed were Maloy's pilot, 2/Lt Fred C. Shere Jr.; his copilot, F/O Milan R. Zeman; and the crew's radio operator, S/Sgt Fonzy M. Wilson.

In 1996, Joe Maloy was chosen by sponsor Coca-Cola to carry the Olympic torch in honor of World War II veterans while it was enroute to Atlanta, Georgia.



In this photo, Maloy is preparing to light the Olympic torch in Peachtree City, Georgia, his hometown. Before this momentous event, Maloy had taped to his right hand a list of his crew members, boyhood friends who served in the military, some POW pals, and four men from his home town who were with him in Stalag 17B.

The *Atlanta Constitution* reported, "Before surviving one year as a prisoner in an Austrian war camp in World War II, Joe Maloy's biggest fear was that the war might end before he had the chance to fight. As Maloy, 72, bears the torch today, he feels just as grateful for the opportunity to serve his country again, now that the Games have come to his backyard. After competing in the Peachtree 10K road race last year, the decorated air force veteran is definitely up to running a one-kilometer stretch.

"I would consider it a privilege to carry the Olympic torch in remembrance of those who fought with us," said Maloy "As I run I expect to think of them, both the living and the dead, having their hands on the torch with mine, our last hoorah."

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

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

What is the measure of a life? Is it wealth, professional success, or an abundance of “things”? I believe the real measurement lies in the kindness shown to others, the sacrifices made for family and friends and a clear conscience bringing peace of mind.

I cannot remember the last wedding or birth I attended, but I have many thoughts of recent memorials. There is a life span to everything. Children become adults and make their own path in life. Friends move on. We retire from our professions and explore different lifestyles.

“Who wants to justify their whole life?” (*Oppenheimer*—2023). I am gripped by this theme.

Rich, poor, famous or self-defined “average”; at some point as we age, we look back on our life which was determined by the choices we made or were made for us. There will always be regrets in our life... “I should have; I could have; I wish I did it differently.”

Have no regrets. If you did even one kind gesture to someone in need, you have had a successful, complete life. Respect yourself and be content.

Editor's note: Char has advised that the December 2024 News will be her last column. We have enjoyed and appreciated her insights and inspiration since December 2015!!!

If you've always wanted to become an internationally-read columnist, this is your chance! Please contact Annette by October 15 and she'll be glad to give you all the details.

The 392nd BG Memorial Remembrance Sunday November 12, 2023



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

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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∞

There have been no Folded Wings reported since the last newsletter.