



90th Bomb Group (H) (WWII)
The Best Damn Heavy Bomb Group in the World

“JOLLY ROGERS”

90TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION



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THE BEST OF THE BEST



Roarin Rosie

The Best Damn Heavy Bomb Group was not attached to the 90th Bomb Group without reason. For one, the 90th shot down more enemy planes than any other bomb group in the Fifth Air Force, 408. The 319th Squadron led the group with 122 confirmed enemy planes downed. Leading the 319th was the Alden Currie crew. Currie's crew were credited with downing 16 enemy planes. An example of this crew's missions is a photo recon of Ambon Harbor on March 18, 1943. As they approached the harbor they observed 9 or 10 enemy aircraft over the harbor. They maneuvered to permit the photographer to obtain excellent oblique views of the harbor and the shipping within. When the photos were taken and a course set for home the Zeros realized an attack on the harbor was not going to happen so they attacked. Initially they dropped aerial bombs which were evaded by Lt. Currie. The Zeros then proceeded to attack from all angles, pressing each pass closely and tenaciously. For one hour and twenty-five minutes they made pass after pass. Four Zeros were shot down by crew members Kenneth Strait, Bert Jordan, George Rice, and Dennard Bailey, with two others probably shot down and one damaged. One of the starboard engines was shot out early in the engagement, the hydraulic system

was also shot out with two trim tab cables and pulleys broken and an elevator cable damaged from enemy fire. Several small fires were started in the tail turret but they were extinguished. The nose gunner was wounded and the bombardier, James Case, took over the one nose gun that remained operational. Six of the planes eleven guns, including the tail turret guns, were out of action. Combat was broken off when Lt. Currie was able to climb into cloud cover. Currie displayed extreme skill as a pilot flying their severely damaged plane which on the flight home could not climb about 800 feet and was pierced by 300 machine gun and cannon shell holes. At Darwin he crash landed the plane with no other injury to the crew except for a small cut on the photographer's hand. The plane never flew again.

This mission was not an exception for this crew or the squadron. Previously, on another mission to Ambon on February 6, 1943, Rice, Bailey, Strait, and this time Ray Smeltzer, shot down four planes. George Rice was a squadron ace having shot down five enemy planes. Just behind the Currie crew was that of Roy Olsen. Olsen's crew shot down 15 enemy planes downing four on a mission to Ambon and three planes twice on missions to Bima and Wewak. The 319th's second ace, William Simon, was a member of the Olsen crew. The Olsen crew was lost on June 23, 1943, when an enemy fighter collided with their plane severing the wing.

Alden Currie was quoted in a hometown paper saying, "Liberators are in no particular danger from Zeros when there are three or more ships in your group." Unfortunately single missions were common. James Case, Currie's bombardier and last surviving member of the crew, passed away on January 29, 2009. Truly they were the best of the best. *(Bob Tupa)*

Jim Worley Remembers

I remember flying out of Tonopah, Nevada when the extreme cold went down to 60 below and all the flying was cancelled, however our radio was out and we never got the message that all flights were grounded. We stayed up on a high altitude mission until we became so cold that the crew couldn't hack it. When we returned to base, the meat wagon had to carry me to the post

hospital with frost bite on both feet for I could not walk. One pilot lost three of his left hand fingers because of the Nevada weather. Even with all this I fell in love with that part of the country, but for reasons known only to God I've never returned. I was trained in 85 degree weather in Mississippi and Florida but shipped to Nevada for advanced B-24 and overseas duty and ended up with the 90th Bomb Group until shot down on July 15, 1945 over Canton, China. (Jim Worley)

Air Force Historical Research Agency Maxwell Air Force Base

I recently received two CDs containing the 90th's records from a wonderful, but unfortunately retiring archivist, Anne O'Connor. For those that recall the spools of film that the records were previously on you will remember how poor and unreadable so many pages were. These are computer scans of the original documents and pictures so the quality is much better and you don't have to go to the library to view them on a microfilm reader. Unfortunately the documents, or lack of documents, are the same and many of those that were saved are disappointing due to their lack of relevance. They do make you appreciate the poor clerks that had to manually type them. I am currently cleaning up the files by deleting blank pages and rotating upside down ones. Space permitting I will try to include portions in the newsletter. If you know of anyone interested in a copy of these records have them contact me. *Bob Tupa*

From SECRET 321st Squadron records.

Capt. Samuel M. Hasell

"Senior ground officer of the unit marking his twenty-fourth birthday in April was Capt. Samuel M. Hasell, executive officer, whose military record was a running account of the travels of the squadron.

The good-natured South Carolinian had spent his entire term of active service as a 321st officer, joining the organization at Barksdale, La., in June 1942, a month



after receiving his B.S. degree and commission at Clemson A. & M., where he was a member of the college's ROTC unit. The fourth ground officer to join the squadron, in April Hasell was the only one of the quartet remaining and had an experience record that

included communications, supply-transportation, mess and adjutant offices in addition to his executive post

which he took over in February this year (44). In his nearly two years with the organization the little man of five feet, five inches and 127 pounds had become the hub of squadron affairs and both judge and friend of his men. With a thorough appreciation of squadron life born out of long experience with it he decided impartially and never was he indisposed to considering somebody's gripe. With them from the start, he was the friend particularly to the ground enlisted men, who didn't share with the flying men the prospect of going home after a definite overseas hitch. In his office or out, he was always ready to give counsel, an answer, grant a favor. In a post little conducive to popularity he had become one of the most popular officers of the unit. Evidence was in his election to the advisory office of the Enlisted Men's Club. Indeed he backed the formation of the club just as he backed any enlisted men's recreational activity. Volley ball courts and baseball diamonds came in the wake of his pushes. Nor was he indisposed to the disagreeable tasks in the life of an organization that periodically packs up and moves. Several times he headed the advance echelons, directing the setting up of camp and getting operations underway at their new scene. Perhaps his finest accomplishment was his ability to give orders without a sting. Where many another young officer might leave an older man burning under a command, Hasell negotiated the business smoothly, and with results. Hasell, who holds a permanent second lieutenant's commission in the Air Corps Reserve, received his first lieutenantcy a year ago when the organization was stationed at Port Moresby. He was promoted to captain in January this year at Dobodura. At Clemson, where he lived his four years in barracks, he ranked third scholastically among his 150 engineering classmates. He was named to Tau Beta Pi, honorary engineering fraternity for the upper third of a class."

William Barr Returns

Kenneth Sheats does a difficult task of checking on those members that have been out of touch with the Association. In the last issue we reported on the passing of William Barr. David and Jane Burns read the notice and called Dub Chumbley, also a friend of William, who called William and who assured Dub that he was very much OK. When Ken makes a mistake it is good news and it got William to pay up his back dues. I asked William for information that I could use in the newsletter and he replied, "I don't want to tell old war stories, however some other events really stand out...many, many years after WW2 I got a call from someone who asked if I was the Lt Barr in the 90th BG...after assuring him I was he said you probably don't remember me but you were the squadron ops officer while we were still on Ie Shima & I got the word that I could go home but the boat was leaving the next day from Naha (I think) and the navy would not have any

transport for him to get from Ie Shima to Naha before his boat would leave...he asked if I could do anything to help him....I found my copilot and engineer, called maintenance for an airplane and in about 30 minutes we had him in Naha...no big deal....and 20 or so years later I get a phone call thanking me for getting him home...pretty nice of him...those of us who were fortunate enough to help with the airlift of POWs out of Japan will never forget the poor shape some of those guys were in. I don't remember now how we did it but I think we laid 2x6s in the bomb bays for these guys to sit on....some were in very poor shape..."

Bena Bena

On April 30, 1943, Henry Chovanec and his crew were lost. Fifth Bomber Command sent an expedition to the crash site through hostile native and Japanese territory to determine the fate of the crew. If anyone has first hand knowledge or reports of the incident please contact the treasurer at the address above. 90th member and participant in the expedition Frank McLaughlin's recollections and a book on the loss by the leader of the expedition conflict as to the fate of possible survivors and I would like to resolve the issue. (*Bob Tupa*)

90th Bomb Group 2009 Annual Reunion Dayton, Ohio

October 28-November 1, 2009

The 2009 90th Bomb Group National Reunion will be held in the cradle of aviation, Dayton, Ohio. We will be touring Wright Brothers historic sites and revisiting history at the National Museum of the United States Air Force.



Room reservations should be made by calling Holiday Inn/Fairborn at 937-431-4613. Please request the group rate for the 90th Bomb Group and make your reservation before October 7, 2009. The nightly rate is \$99.00 (plus tax) for a room with two double beds, a king-sized bed, or a king bed and a sofa bed. Rollaway beds are available for \$10 per night but are limited. These rates are good three days before our reunion and three days after and include a full hot breakfast bar!

Travel to Dayton is easy through the James M. Cox Dayton International Airport (DAY). The Holiday Inn/Fairborn and the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau are teaming up to provide \$20 cab fares each way for airport transfers to and from Dayton International Airport on your arrival and departure dates. Note that this is \$20 per cab ride, not per person

but ONLY applies if reservations are made in advance. Reservations for airport transportation must be made through our Holiday Inn/Fairborn contact, Ms. Kris Davis, at 937-431-4603. You will need to provide arrival time, flight information and the number of guests. She will tell you where to meet the cab in the Baggage Claim Area. If there are last minute travel changes, please keep Kris informed by calling her number or the hotel directly at 937-426-7800 so that they can contact the cab company. The cab costs will be billed to your guest room.

The tours of the Wright Brothers sites on Thursday will operate on a strict schedule, with everyone traveling together. The tour of the National Museum of the United States Air Force on Friday will be more self-paced, with the buses making multiple trips between the hotel and the museum. Although everyone will be able to participate in most of the tour, a special visit to the restoration of the famous B-17 Memphis Belle and the museum's collection of Presidential aircraft will be limited to the first 110 guests, so sign up early if you want to enjoy these exhibits. Photo ID is REQUIRED for these tours, so please make sure you have yours. If you would rather enjoy the rest of the museum's expansive collection at your own pace, or just catch up with old friends, please do not sign up for the restoration tour in order to save space for someone else. We will ensure that everyone will be able to spend as much time as they would like at the Air Force Museum.

We will have a hospitality suite at the hotel with snacks and drinks available, starting Wednesday afternoon. Additionally, the hotel will be welcoming with a reception Wednesday evening starting at 5:00 pm. We are planning a relaxed pace for the whole event to leave plenty of time for reminiscing and spending time together.

Dinner Wednesday and Thursday night will be on your own. The hotel restaurant, McKenna's, has a full menu and reasonable prices, and there are numerous other restaurants within a short distance. Friday night we will have a banquet-style dinner and dancing at the hotel, and Saturday night we will have a banquet in the Air Force Museum among the historic aircraft.

We anticipate a great event and look forward to welcoming you all to Dayton this fall! If you have any questions, please write or e-mail me at:

Colonel Jeff Smith
2929 Myers Road
Springfield, Ohio 45502
tintinkerouac@earthlink.net



REGISTRATION

90th Bomb Group National Reunion October 28 - November 1, 2009



(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Last _____ First _____

Spouse, guests: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ Squadron: _____

Wednesday, October 28

12:00-10:00 p.m. Registration - Hospitality Suite open
5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Reception (fruit, cheese, crackers, punch, coffee)

Thursday, October 29

9:00 a.m. **Wright Brothers Sites Tour** # _____ @ \$35.00= _____
12:00 p.m. Buses to Wright Cycle Company Complex
Lunch at Young's Jersey Dairy Farm
_____ fried chicken breast # _____ bacon wrapped pork chop
2:30 p.m. Huffman Prairie Flying Field and Interpretive Center
3:30 p.m. Bus returns to Holiday Inn

Friday, October 30

9:00/9:30 a.m. **NMUSAF Tour**
Buses to National Museum of the U.S. Air Force # _____ @ \$20.00= _____
Special Tour -- Restoration of the *Memphis Belle* # _____ (included)
NOTE: PHOTO ID REQUIRED FOR RESTORATION TOUR
Lunch **on your own** at the museum
3:30 p.m. Bus returns to Holiday Inn
6:00 p.m. Banquet/Dance (at hotel) # _____ @ \$35.00= _____
_____ prime rib # _____ salmon # _____ chicken

Saturday, October 31

10:00 a.m. General Meeting
Free time
11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Hospitality Suite open
5:30/6:00 p.m. Buses to National Museum of the U.S. Air Force
6:00-9:00 p.m. *Banquet under the Wings* (chicken/beef combo) # _____ @ \$45.00= _____

ANNUAL DUES: # _____ @ \$10.00= _____

TOTAL: _____

Please send registration and check (payable to the 90th Bomb Group Association) by September 15 to:
Colonel Jeff Smith, 2929 Myers Road, Springfield, OH 45502

Eastern Mini-Reunion

Cliff and Jean Smith reported that the Eastern Mini Reunion was a mini mini with only nine people attending. Those that attended had a wonderful time, however, and described the activities as great. They toured Gettysburg battlefield in a 1937 Ford bus and viewed the fabulous cyclorama of the three day battle. It has recently been restored to its original beauty after about three years and, we believe \$18 million. They also toured President Eisenhower's farm. Sadly there was some rain everyday but the group weathered the storm as the rain was little more than a nuisance. The group decided to discontinue formal minis in the future but some hope to still make it to the national reunions. They are also going to make a donation to the WW11 D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA in honor of Jerry Rosenbaum who died shortly before the reunion. (*Grace Van Elderen*)

Western Mini-Reunion

Bob Hanley, with the help of his wonderful family put on a great event. The Angels game at Anaheim Stadium was a perfect afternoon game that went 12 innings with the Angels beating the Red Sox. The Bower's Museum was wonderful, however, the docent was a little uncomfortable after our tour of the 'Art of the Samurai' when she was told how so many of the 90th had met their end with the samurai sword. Thirty attended the Saturday night banquet. The future of the western reunions was discussed and it was decided that in the future they would be limited to weekend get-togethers with a hospitality room and diners at restaurants in lieu of off site tours and banquets. We are looking for volunteers to host next year's event.

TAPS

*These buddies, wives, friends and comrades-in-arms
forever remain heroes.*

While doing research on Henry Chovanec I tried to locate **Samuel M. Hasell** who was the Summary Court Officer for the officers. Unfortunately I found that had passed away on July 26, 2007.

Kenneth Harring, an associate member, passed away on September 13, 2008. Kenneth's brother, Arthur Harring was lost on June 6, 1945, in the greatest single catastrophe in the history of the 90th when 24 men on leave were lost in weather on a flight to Manila from Maguire. Kenneth's wife, Rose Marie, said that her husband never got over the loss of his brother.

Morrell Allred of the 320th Squadron notified us that his wife **Nancy W. Allred** passed away on January 13, 2009. Nancy was the daughter of a veteran of both World Wars, Rear Admiral Arthur J. White. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the 90th Association making many dear and lasting friends across the USA.

George Taylor notified us that **Jerry (Sidney J.) Rosenbaum, Jr.**, of the 400th Squadron, passed away on

March 20, 2009 in an automobile accident.

Delores Skibbins wrote to inform us that her husband **Harry F. Skibbins** passed away on March 31, 2009. Harry was a radio operator on the Weeks crew in the 320th Squadron.

Matt Karhan notified us that his father, **Charles "Moose" Karhan** passed away on March 12, 2009. Charles was a member of the Hart crew in the 400th Squadron.

Laura Dow notified us that her husband, **Harry L. Dow**, passed away on February 27, 2009. Harry was a member of the 319th Squadron.

Dorothy Ryno notified us that her husband, **Albert Ryno**, passed away on May 16, 2009. Albert flew 50 missions as a navigator in the 400th Squadron.

The US Air Force Weather Association announced the departure of **Walter A. Keils**. Walter passed away on April 10, 2009. Walther was a member of the 320th Squadron.*

William Buerkle, Jr. passed away on September 2, 2008. William was a member of the 320th Squadron.*

Melvin L. Broussard passed away in February of 2008. Melvin was a member of the 321st Squadron.*

Jimmie DeMuyneck passed away on November 1, 2007. Jimmie flew 47 missions as a tail gunner in the 320th Squadron with the Faahs crew.

Glenn O. Tedrow passed away on January 25, 2009. He was a member of the 321st Squadron.*

Thomas W. Stierhiem passed away on August 2, 2005. Tommy was a member of the 321st Squadron.*

Le Roy Van Bogart passed away on March 28, 2009. 'Van' was attached to Headquarters and assisted in the installation of the nose turret on Connell's Special.

* Contributed by Kenneth Sheats.

George Taylor has the sign Bogan's Bunch and a picture of Ken Letich standing next to it. George would like to know if anyone knows the whereabouts of the bomb hanging below the sign. If you know where the bomb might be please contact George Taylor or the association treasurer.



NOTICES

DUES Year 2009 annual dues of \$10 are due if the date on your newsletter address label indicates 08 or before. If you have the letter W, H, or L instead of a date you do not need to pay dues, just update your address when needed. Make dues checks payable to: 90th Bomb Group Association and mail them to 273 Wellington Cutoff, Wellington, NV 89444

The newsletter is available online on John Barrett's website at <http://www.jollyrogersweb.com/> Oct 15th is the deadline for the next newsletter.



90th Bomb Group Association
273 Wellington Cutoff
Wellington, NV 89444

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Pfc. Aniello V. Panetta, Brooklyn, NY
A17 Fairchild Aerial Camera, Jackson Drome, 9Dec42