

Letchworth, Hitchin & District
Branch

www.rafa-leitchworth.org.uk



RAFA GEN

‘E’

EDITION

**SPRING
2015**

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**
Friendship | Help | Support



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Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting



**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
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Friendship | Help | Support



RAFAGEN

*The official newsletter of the
Letchworth & District Branch of
the Royal Air Forces' Association*

ROYAL AIR FORCES' ASSOCIATION LETCWORTH, HITCHIN & DISTRICT BRANCH OFFICIALS

President: Gordon Collinson

Chairman: Ernie Brown

Vice Chairman: Roy Newbury

Hon. Secretary: Ken Needham

Hon. Treasurer: Ken Needham

Welfare Officer: Tony Bearepark

Committee:

John Airey, Dennis Dawson, Jemma Macfarlane

Branch R.A.F.A.L.O. Flt Sgt Shaun Griffin

RAFGEN Edited by Ken Needham

All correspondence regarding the RAFAGEN to
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Hertfordshire, SG6 3HJ.

Telephone: 01462 671534

E-mail Secretary@RAFA-Letchworth.org.uk

*Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at
the Conservative Club, Birds Hill, Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire, at 20.00 hrs Guests are welcome*

Supporting something special

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT



Our Annual General Meetings appear to come around more often than they used to, must be something to do with “Time flies when you are having fun” or so they tell me. Well we have just had the Branch A.G.M. so we can settle down for another year and get on with running the Branch. A full report follows. I did hear our Treasurer say that the Branch had made a thumping big loss last year, but I understand it wasn't as much as Tesco, but to hear him go on about it, it might as well have been. Any member requiring a copy of the Branch Annual Report please contact the Branch Secretary.

One thing that the new Committee have vowed to do this year is to put more money into the Branch coffers for extra social events, and to increase the amount we send to H.Q. for our Wings Appeal, as well as continuing making the Branch's Social evenings enjoyable. There you are Committee Members, I have now put you on the spot. - Members make sure they keep to it.

A bit of good news came our way at the beginning of the New Year, we have our own R.A.F.A.L.O again. Since Lisa Berry retired from H.M. forces life, we have been R.A.F.A.L.O.-less, but now all the way from R.A.F. Halton is Flt Sgt Shaun Griffin. More of him later in this issue. Not only did we get Shaun, but he introduced us to his wife Donna, who has now also become a member.

A note from the 'membership' side of the Branch, January was one of our best recruitment months for a long time, with 7 new names added to our list. In the month of February/March we added a further 1. Keep this up and we could end up with one of those awards that H.Q. hand out at the end of the year. If you want to know who has joined us, pop off to page 18 and have a look.

Just one final thing. I do not have trouble in filling the 20 pages of RAFAGEN, but I would like to include your stories. Every time I ask a member for a story, they always say “Nobody wants to hear about me,” but we do. Come you 'vets' let's tell these modern guys what it was really like to be in the R.A.F..

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2015 SUMMARY

Our 2015 Annual General Meeting was well attended by the usual attendees plus some faces that we haven't seen for some time, and we are glad to report, a couple of new faces that we would like to see more regular.

The Secretary produced the usual Annual Reports booklet which contained reports from The Chairman, The Secretary, The Treasurer and the Wings Appeal Coordinator. Any member requiring a copy of this report should make their request the the Branch Secretary.

As you will see from, the list below, we had a couple of changes to the Committee. Lisa Berry has decided to stand down. We hope for only a short time, whilst she feels her feet in civilian life. Lisa was a good asset on the Committee and we look forward to an early return. A new name appeared on the nomination list for a general Committee member, that of Jemma Macfarlane. No election needed for accepting Jemma on to the Committee as she was selected unopposed. Jemma is our trainee Standard Bearer, and doing very well from the reports we are getting back. Which is good to hear as she has never been in H.M. Forces. We all know what it was like when we first went on the Parade Ground at Square Bashing. No one raised any points about the reports, including the financial report, so a very quick Annual General Meeting was brought to a close.

The 2015 Branch Committee at a glance

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gordon Collinson | President |
| Ernie Brown | Chairman |
| Roy Newbury | Vice Chairman |
| Ken Needham | Hon. Secretary |
| Ken Needham | Hon Treasurer |
| John Airey | General Committee Member |
| Dennis Dawson | General Committee Member |
| Jemma Macfarlane | General Committee Member |

Flt Sgt Shaun Griffin R.A.F.L.O. - Co-opted member

The following members were selected by the Committee later to be responsible for other functions.

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Wings Appeal Coordinator | Roy Newbury |
| County Representative | John Airey |
| Standard Bearer (Temporary) | Roy Newbury |
| Standard Bearer (Trainee) | Jemma Macfarlane |
| Eastern Area Conference Delegate | John Airey |
| Nation Conference Delegate | Shaun Griffin |

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VISIT TO R.A.F. HALTON

2nd June 2015

The visit to R.A.F. Halton to witness the latest 'Passing Out' parade of new members of the Royal Air Force, is now fully booked. We are taking names for what will hope will be another visit in September. If you would like to add your name to the list, please contact Ken Needham. Because of the nature of this event we are only allowed a small number of members to attend each visit.



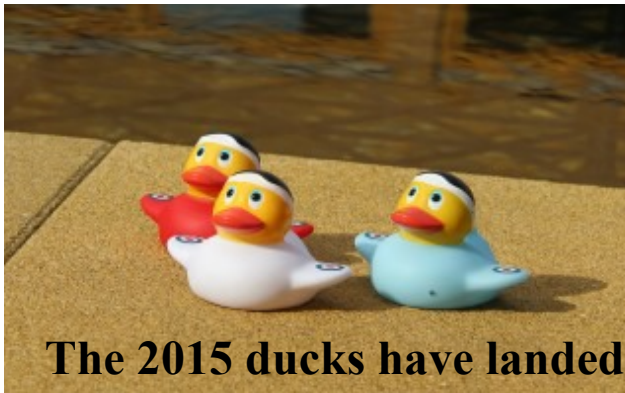
LETTERS PAGE



Dear Ken

*Just a short note to thank you, RAFA and your Standard Bearer (Roy Newbury) for attending my mother's funeral last week
She would have been so proud if she could have seen it.
Once again please thank your Standard Bearer.*

*Yours sincerely
Jackie Green (Nee Byrne)
Hitchin*



The 2015 ducks have landed!

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and to honour the "few"

In aid of the Royal Air Forces Association Wings Appeal

RAF Halton motorcycle club will Ride for the Few on 6 Sept 15. We will be riding around the 11 Group Battle of Britain stations and HQs from RAF Halton, a total distance of 510 km, each km representing a pilot killed during the battle. It is planned that 75 bikers will ride on the day to represent the 75 years since the "Few" battled over the skies of Britain.

Our route on the day will take us on a journey around some of the most significant Battle of Britain heritage sites. .

- Starting at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire
- RAF Stanmore Park (old NAAFI building)
- RAF Hendon (RAF museum)
- RAF Northolt (current RAF Station)
- RAF Uxbridge (Battle of Britain bunker)
- RAF Biggin Hill (St George's Chapel)
- RAF Kenley (615 vol gliding school)
- Chapel-Le-Ferne (Battle of Britain memorial)
- RAF Manston (History museum)
- RAF Hornchurch (Former Officers Mess)
- Finishing at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire

Thank you everyone who is supporting RAF Halton motorcycle club in the venture, I hope we can raise our total of £1500. If you would like to contribute towards the £1500 please go to <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/Rideforthefew>, and make your donation.

One of the organisers of this fund raising event is our very own R.A.F.A.L.O. Shaun Griffin.



The Branch were presented with the above Giant Bear by a member of the Metropolitan Police Force, who I believe won it in a raffle. The Committee thought that it was a little too big for our raffles, being taller than some of our members.

It was agreed that he should join the Royal Air Force, so now he is a member of the fund raising team at R.A.F. Henlow, where we know he will be well fed and groomed each day, and we hope earn them lots of cash.

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting



APRIL

9th Branch Meeting - Speaker Ann Wise on WWI home front.

24th Wings Appeal Concert performed by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment at Rushden Town Bowls Club 19.30 hrs Tickets (unreserved) £15.

Email : tickets@rafarushden.org.uk or telephone 01933 31357

May

9th V.E. Day Exhibition - Brotherhood Hall, Letchworth Garden City. Joint RBL & RAFA project

14th Branch Meeting - Speaker F/s Will Barrow & Buster, the dog who saved 1000 lives.

June

11th Branch Meeting - Speaker Ann Wise on Dating old family photographs

27th Armed Forces Day - Broadway Gardens, Letchworth Garden City. (see local press for full details)

27th Armed Forces Day - Baldock (see local press for full details)

July

9th Branch Meeting - Speaker David Taylor on The Avro Lancaster.

29th R.A.F. Henlow Fun Day. 11.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs Fun Day with a VE Day Theme. Drill Displays and Flying Displays. 17.00 hrs to 19.00 hrs The Big Band sound from live music. Admission details via the Branch Secretary.

29th R.A.F. Henlow - Hanger Dance. 19.00 hrs to 23.59 hrs Theme 1950's with jive and costumes of the period. Jive lessons will be given to the younger members. At the time of going to press the admission price had not been confirmed, but will be between £10 - £15 per person. Admission details via the Branch Secretary.

August

13th Branch Meeting - Speaker David Taylor on Women's roles and achievements in aviation.

15th Town Street Party, Leys Avenue, Letchworth Garden City

31st Wings Appeal Collection at Stotfold Co-Operative Store

31st Raising of the R.A.F. Ensign to denote the beginning of Battle of Britain month
09.30 hrs Letchworth War Memorial - 10.00 hrs Baldock War Memorial.

September

1st to 4th Wings Appeal Collection at Stotfold Co-Operative Store

5th Wings Appeal Collection at Sainsbury's of Letchworth

10th Branch Meeting

13th 11.00hrs. Battle of Britain Parade - Letchworth War Memorial: 15.00 hrs
Hitchin War Memorial.

19th Wings Appeal Collection at Letchworth Town Centre. Main point in the
Garden Square.

26th & 27th Wings Appeal Collection at Morrisons of Letchworth

28th Lowering of the R.A.F. Ensign to denote the end of Battle of Britain month
09.30 hrs Letchworth War Memorial - 10.00 hrs Baldock War Memorial.

October

8th Branch Meeting

November

8th Remembrance Day Service Letchworth War Memorial: 11.00 hrs

8th Hitchin War Memorial 15.00 hrs.

11th Remembrance Service Letchworth War Memorial 11.00 hrs

12th Branch Meeting

December

10th Branch Meeting

Events in italics are for your information only and the Branch will not be taking part.

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting

CHRISTMAS BASH 2014 PHOTOGRAPH





MEET THE MEMBERS

New Letchworth Hitchin and District RAFALO Flight Sergeant Shaun Griffin.

I thought it might be appropriate to use the excellent medium of the **RAFAGEN** magazine run by Ken Needham, also the Branches website (www.rafa-lethworth.org.uk) to introduce myself. I voluntarily took on the Letchworth, Hitchin & District RAFALO duties early in 2015 after moving to Letchworth from Suffolk where I was the RAFALO for the vibrant Stowmarket Branch for 15 years, this was during my time serving at R.A.F. Honington near Bury St Edmunds.



I am a serving member of the Royal Air Force having joined up in 1986 undertaking my basic recruit training at R.A.F. Swinderby in Lincolnshire then completing my R.A.F. Regiment training at R.A.F. Catterick in North Yorkshire. Since then I have served at many UK and Germany R.A.F. Stations. I have served overseas in the Falklands, Belize, Kuwait, Iraq, UAE and Afghanistan, most recently returning from Afghanistan in November 2014. I am currently posted to R.A.F. Halton in Buckinghamshire and commute each morning from Letchworth.



I look forward to the RAFALO position with the Letchworth, Hitchin & District Branch, I hope to re-energise the position, hopefully bringing some experience of previous Branches and events. Also and having been a member of RAFA in my capacity as a RAFALO for some 15 years I feel that I understand some of the current issues that can cause concern across the association's Head Quarters, membership and Branches.

I live in Letchworth with my wife Donna and two daughters Lily and Daisy and our energetic crazy dog Oscar. Donna has already become an associate

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member of the Branch and looks forward to helping out with Branch activities. I have a keen interest in military history, have been involved in R.A.F. rugby league for many years, I like to spend my spare time restoring classic Japanese motorcycles; a frustratingly expensive past time.

I look forward to meeting you all during the next few months.

Shaun

NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATES

To coincide with the New Year Honours List, the following have been awarded National Presidential Certificates.

| | RAFA Branch |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Mr Malcolm Bennett | Aylesford & Malling |
| Mr Colin Campbell | Ayr & Prestwick |
| Mr Robert Clements | Norwich |
| Mr Alan Clarke | Wantage & District |
| Mr Leslie Nower | Sandwich & Deal |
| Mr John O'Reilly | Trowbridge |

In conjunction with the New Year's Honours List the Association is pleased to announce that the following have been awarded the SOUTH EAST & EASTERN ARE PRESIDENTIAL CERTIFICATES.

| | RAFA Branch |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Mrs Evelyn Moreland | Lincoln |
| Miss Ann Myhill | Lincoln |

The Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group Commendation is awarded to the R.A.F.A.L.O. Team at R.A.F. Scampton

Our congratulations go to all recipients.



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RAFALO UPDATE ON EQUIPMENT & MANPOWER IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

By Ady Morris



Tornado

The Re-Forming of Number 12 (Bomber) Sqn.

As part of the planned draw-down of the Tornado GR4 Force, No.11 (AC) Sqn was due to disband as a Tornado unit in March 2015, when the Sqn number was to be re-established as a Typhoon sqn. The decision to run on the

Tornado GR4 Force with three frontline sqns until March 2016 means that an unused sqn number must be brought back into service.

No.12(B) Sqn disbanded as a Tornado sqn at R.A.F. Lossiemouth in March 2014, where it had been based since January 1994. The Sqn first formed in February 1915 and has served with distinction in WWI and subsequent conflicts, including WWII, Iraq and Afghanistan. It has been based at R.A.F. Marham previously and on re-forming it will deliver day and night precision attack, support to ground troops and tactical reconnaissance capabilities to UK defence.



Typhoon

No.11(AC) Sqn formed in 1912, making it one of the oldest fixed-wing flying sqns in the world. It has flown Tornado aircraft from R.A.F. Marham since 1989. Its re-establishment as a Typhoon sqn is an element of the wider change programme in the R.A.F.'S combat air forces that includes the growth of the Typhoon force and the introduction of the F35B Lightning II aircraft.

US Basing Footprint in Europe.

The U.S. Has selected R.A.F. Lakenheath to be the first location in Europe to host 2 squadrons of F-35 aircraft. The first aircraft are scheduled to arrive at R.A.F. Lakenheath in 2020. This will ensure the continued close collaboration between the R.A.F. And the USAF and indicates the strength of the contin-



F35B Lightning

ued shared commitment to transatlantic security.

The Department of Defence has been reviewing its requirements for bases across Europe as part of their European Infrastructure Consolidation Review. The review confirms that the US has decided to close R.A.F. Mildenhall and to consolidate the activities it undertakes at R.A.F. Alconbury and R.A.F. Molesworth. Activities at R.A.F. Fairford, Feltwell and Menwith Hill are unaffected by the review which, overall, demonstrates a US commitment to basing in the UK into the 2050s.



TIME FOR A SMILE

Three women go to Mexico to celebrate their college graduation. They get drunk, and wake up in jail, only to discover that they are to be executed in the morning, though none of them can remember what they did the night before. The first one, a redhead, is strapped in the electric chair and is asked if she has any last words. She says: "I just graduated from Trinity Bible College and believe in the almighty power of God to intervene on the behalf of the innocent." They throw the switch and nothing happens. They all immediately fall to the floor on their knees, beg for forgiveness and release her. The second one, a brunette, is strapped in and gives her last words. "I just graduated from the University of Illinois School of Law, and I believe in the power of Justice to intervene on the behalf of the innocent." They throw the switch and again, nothing happens. Again, they all immediately fall to their knees, beg for forgiveness, and release her. The last one, a blonde (you knew it), is strapped in and says: "Well, I'm from Ohio and just graduated from Ohio State University with a degree in Electrical Engineering, and I'll tell ya right now, y'all ain't gonna electrocute nobody if you don't plug this thing in."

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting



**A CHANCE TO PAUSE A MINUTE IN QUIET
CONTEMPLATION FOR OUR FRIENDS AND
COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE RECENTLY PASSED
AWAY**

*Mr Abe Brock originally from Letchworth Garden City
Mr. T.H. Baker of St Neots
Mr D. Jenkins of Hitchin
Mrs M. Byrne of Hitchin*

VISIT TO R.A.F. HALTON

2nd June 2015



Your Branch has arranged a visit to R.A.F. Halton to witness the Passing Out of the latest intake. (Bring back a few memories). You will also visit the TRENCHARD MUSEUM and have lunch in the W/O & Sgts Mess.

Numbers have been limited, but it has been suggested that if this trip is a success we may be able to arrange another in September.

Anyone interested please contact Ken Needham as soon as possible for an update on the situation.



On further investigations

You will have already seen the photograph of Shaun Griffin in uniform in his article introducing himself. This cropped picture was supplied by Shaun himself. Well your editor was wondering what the big picture was, so he went into investigative mood and did a little further snooping. You will have noticed that on the cropped picture he is shaking hands with someone, the question is, who is that person?

Well here is the answer.



15 Squadron get on their bikes

17th April 2014

15 Squadron R.A.F. Regiment will deploy on Operation Herrick, Afghanistan on the “last” deployment which begins in April. The draw-down of Camp Bastion means that transport and various other logistics support will diminish. As the camp is a large area, covering it on foot isn’t always possible.

That’s why Flt Sgt Shaun Griffin (Stowmarket Branch R.A.F. Association Liaison Officer) asked the R.A.F. Association for 15 mountain bikes to help the squadron get around. He said: “We were wondering how we were going to get around once we were out in Afghan, then someone suggested asking the R.A.F. Association. We were really pleased that they agreed to sponsor the bikes we asked for, they will be invaluable to us.

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NEW MEMBERS FOR 2015

Below are the new members who have joined us since January 1st
2015

Our current Branch membership is **103**



Sqn Ldr A. Bell of Lower Stondon
Miss D.A. Browne of Hitchin
Mr S. Daubney of Biggleswade
Mrs D. Griffin of Letchworth Garden City
Mr. S. Leach of Henlow
Rev N Pnematicatos of Hitchin
W/O. S. Tuckwell of Biggleswade
Flt Sgt S. Griffin of Letchworth Garden City

RAFAGEN is hoping to join the modern computer age

Over the past few months your RAFAGEN editor has been experimenting in sending RAFAGEN via e-mail. He admits that so far every attempt has failed because of the size of the file. Now he has found a commercial programme that will make it all possible. All members who have an e-mail address will be able to receive their copy 'on line'. Your RAFAGEN will appear on your screen like a book, and you will be able to turn each page as you would a book. The good news is that for every member who agrees to receive their copy in this new format, it will save the Branch £1. Another good point offered to members receiving the RAFAGEN 'E' as it will be called, is that it will appear in full colour. It will take a few issues to iron out all the problems, but if all goes according to plan your Christmas issue will be on line. Watch this space for future details. If you would like to receive RAFAGEN'E' please let Ken know and he will add you to the list. We will still sent a hard copy out to all who do not sign up.

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Honouring more than 'The Few'

As many of you will know, 2015 marks the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The RAF Association will be leading the nation's thanks to those who played their part at this pivotal time during World War Two.

At the time this article went to press, plans were underway for a series of commemorative events around the UK, including a service at St Paul's Cathedral on 15 September. Many of you will remember the service that was held in 2010 to mark the 70th anniversary. This year we will hold services at cathedrals around the UK to recognise the towns and cities that supported the country through this time.

In addition to the annual Wings collections, we hope to run a London Wings Day on 15 September and collections at major regional rail stations on Thursday 17 September. The culmination of this week of activity will be the Battle of Britain services held on Battle of Britain Sunday, 20 September.

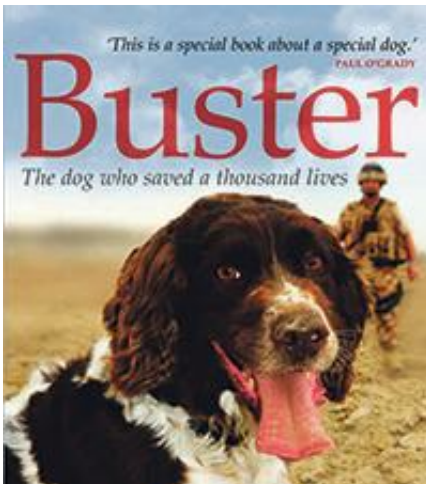
We would also like to hear your own memories and recollections of that time. Part of the work that is being co-ordinated by the team at Leicester is to ensure that those previously unheard stories are told throughout 2015. Much has always been made of the bravery and skill of the 'Few' – those pilots who risked their lives night after night and who have rightly been recognised for their actions. However, there are also thousands of people who supported them and made it possible for them to do what they did. Perhaps you were one of the brave ladies who flew aircraft from airfield to airfield or perhaps you were a fire warden or an ambulance driver or medical staff. Maybe you were a child at the time and remember the noise of the air raid siren or the sight of the German aircraft coming overhead as they headed for their target. Stories like these will help us bring this anniversary to life, so if you have a memory from that time that you would like to share, please either email it to battleofbritain@rafa.org.uk or send it to:

Battle of Britain stories
RAF Association
117½ Loughborough Road
Leicester
LE4 5ND.



We are hoping to get a lot of stories, so we may not be able to use them all. We will, however, try and acknowledge everyone who gets in touch. If you have any photographs you would like to share, please include a stamped addressed envelope and they will be returned promptly.

Come along and meet BUSTER & WILL at our 12th May meeting



Most dogs are special to their owners, but here's a dog that is extra special.

Beautiful brown and white springer spaniel Buster is a military hero... he has a nose for danger, a heart of pure gold and during active service with the R.A.F., he saved thousands of lives.

Described by his many admiring 'colleagues' as a best friend in dog's clothing and 'a real person trapped in a fur coat,' Buster served in three separate wars in **Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan**, an unparalleled achievement for a military dog.

He retired in 2010 and the following year he was showered with tributes and won the

Crufts Friends for Life Award and a nomination for the prestigious **Sun Military Award**. Buster is also the official lifetime **mascot of the R.A.F. Police**.

Throughout his long and perilous career, Buster had several handlers but there was one man with whom he built up a mutually adoring relationship – R.A.F. Police Flight Sergeant Michael 'Will' Barrow.

Buster, who saw Will through some of his darkest hours in Afghanistan, 'the most dangerous place on God's earth,' now has a permanent home with the R.A.F. serviceman and his family in Lincoln. The two have appeared on 'BBC Breakfast'; 'The One Show'; and now they are coming to meet you.



BUSTER (along with Flt Sgt 'Will' Barrow) is to be the guest speaker at our May meeting (14th May 2015). This is one meeting that you can't afford to miss. - Just for the record - Buster has had a book published.

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