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398TH BOMB. GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8TH AIR FORCE • 1ST AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

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FLAK NEWS

JULY 1997

YANK
THE ARMY WEEKLY

And The Story Of The 8th Air Force



3^d MAY 18
1945
VOL. 3 NO. 48
By the men .. for the men in the service

Spokane Reunion A Big Hit

By Sgt. Ed Rosenthal

London, May 18, 1945 — When the Eighth Air Force dropped its last stick of bombs on Germany, there ended an American “Experiment” which had become one of the most significant elements of victory in Europe. Wherever Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker was on V-E Day, he must have reflected upon this as the news came.

A little over three years before, only 10 weeks after Pearl Harbor, seven men sat at dinner in the Dorchester Hotel, London. They speared their Spam with forks held in their right hands — then conspicuous and unorthodox. They held some equally unorthodox but less conspicuous convictions about aerial warfare.

The strangers were Gen. Eaker and six other U.S. Army Officers, an advance detachment that had just arrived to lay the groundwork for an American Air Force of nearly 200,000 men in Britain which eventually was to send 2,000 heavy bombers and nearly 1,000 fighters over Germany between dawn and dark on a single day.

Their mission, of course, was secret. They made their ideas inconspicuous because those ideas were radical and contrary to conclusions that had been drawn by both Britain and Germany, the two greatest air powers then, from experience in the war up to that time.

During the few months of the Battle of Britain, the *Luftwaffe* had lost more than 2,000 planes in daylight attacks. The RAF had lost up to 50 percent of the bombers it had dispatched on a single daylight mission. Both British and Germans had converted to night bombardment.

Daylight bombardment of Europe, since then taken for granted, was at the time controversial dynamite. Eaker wanted to keep the projected experiment secret from everyone except from the RAF, which generously agreed to provide the laboratory and many appurtenances. Much opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, and *all* the evidence, were against the plan.

“You’ll Love It Here” was the promise given by the Spokane Convention folks when the 398th decided to hold its 14th annual reunion in that Eastern Washington city.

And they were quite right, witness the 335 members who attended the July 16-19, 1997, reunion and then returned to their respective homes saying things like “best ever”, “we had a great time”, “wonderful program and tours”, etc., etc.

Coincidental with the superb summer weather in Spokane that week were hurricanes down south and scorching heat in other parts of the nation. Spokane was the perfect spot at the perfect time.

When not in the hotel for a pair of banquets, enjoying fellowship in the Memory Room, reading 398th albums, watching videos of 8th Air Force battles, meeting old friends, etc., members enjoyed a full schedule of tours and outings.

So popular was the lunch and cruise on Lake Cœur d’Alene, Idaho, (30 miles east of Spokane) that the boat company tied two boats together to accommodate the 236 members of the 398th. The ride was spectacular across the lake, then along the shore lined with tall timber (and million dollar homes).

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'Spectacular' Tour In June 1998

Some of Europe's most spectacular scenery and places of interest will be available to those members of the 398th Bomb Group who opt for the two week tour in June 1998.

After starting off in Munich, and dinner at the famous Hofbrauhaus, plus a cable car to Zugspitze, etc., the tour coach also will roll over the Romantic Road while heading west across Germany and finally on to England.

Visualize, for instance, a day of shopping at Rothenburg, the best preserved medieval city in Germany. Here there is Christmas shopping all year long. If there is a need for a Christmas gift costing between 50¢ or \$20,000 it can be found at Rothenburg.

And all this takes place in just the first few days. The rest of the tour is equally spectacular.

Call now for your reservation form. Contact Barbara Fish, Travel House, Inc., Seattle. 1-800-423-5454. Those who have already decided to make the trip are encouraged to call Barbara even now to confirm. This will aid the planners with hotel counts, banquets, coaches, etc.



Eighteen To Be Honored At Lorraine

Lorraine American Cemetery at St. Avold, France, contains the largest number of graves of our military Dead of World War II in Europe — 10,489. Most of these died in the fierce ground battles spearheaded by the U.S. Third and Seventh Armies.

But Lorraine also is the final resting place for 18 men from the 398th Bomb Group who died either in the frigid skies high over Europe, in their B-17's when they crashed on earth ... or later at the hands of the Germans.

While 18 does not seem much in contrast to the huge total at Lorraine, "our" 18 will be honored with a floral tribute when members of the 398th visit the cemetery next year. This will take place as the Destination Europe coach journeys between Wurzburg and Trier on June 8, 1998.

The 18 who are buried at Lorraine, including their squadron, date of death, and name of crew —

John C. Bait, Jr.	602 4-11-45	Shirk	Curtis D. Lovelace	600 7-16-44	Lovelace
Nelson R. Beyer	601 1-20-45	Mitchell	James R. Mitchell	601 1-20-45	Mitchell
Wilbert Y. Burns	601 9-8-44	Wade	Kenneth Plantz	603 3-2-45	Christensen
Milton C. Ervin	602 4-11-45	Shirk	Gordon Sudborough	602 7-19-44	Hawkins
Howard U. Feldman	602 4-25-45	Ferguson	Thomas L. Thompson	600 5-30-44	Thompson
Louis Fontana	600 9-10-44	Wright	Richard S. Trantham	600 9-10-44	Wright
Eugene Gamba	601 9-8-44	Wade	Warren J. Wade	601 9-8-44	Wade
Thomas D. Garrett	602 7-19-44	Hawkins	Thomas D. Wadleigh	600 9-10-44	Wright
John A. Loomis	602 7-19-44	Hawkins	Frederick C. Windeler	602 4-11-45	Shirk

ITINERARY

GERMANY/ENGLAND TOUR

June 3-16, 1998

Wednesday, June 3.

Depart USA.

Thursday, June 4, Munich.

Rest. Welcome dinner at hotel. **BD**

Friday, June 5, Munich.

Munich city tour. Dinner at the Hofbrauhaus. **BD**

Saturday, June 6, Munich.

Tour to Garmish, cable car to Zugspitze, Oberammergau, Ettal with lunch, Evening free. **BL**

Sunday, June 7, Wurzburg.

Stop at Rothenburg for lunch on your own, on the way to Wurzburg. Dinner at the hotel. **BD**

Monday, June 8, Trier.

Stop at St. Avold Military Cemetery near Metz. Dinner at the hotel. **BD**

Tuesday, June 9, Trier.

Visit to Bastogne and Luxembourg with lunch. Evening free. **BL**

Wednesday, June 10, Neuss.

Visit Koln Cathedral with city tour. Dinner at hotel. **BD**

Thursday, June 11, Neuss.

Visit Ardennes Military Cemetery near Liege. Dinner at the hotel. **BD**

Friday, June 12, Nuthampstead.

Fly Dusseldorf to London/Heathrow. Distribution to homestays. Dinner with hosts. **BD**

Saturday, June 13, Nuthampstead.

Memorial service at Woodman Inn with lunch. Tour of Station 131.

Dinner with hosts. **BLD**

Sunday, June 14, Nuthampstead.

Anstey Church service. Afternoon visit to Madingley. Dinner with hosts. **BD**

Monday, June 15, Nuthampstead.

Visit to Duxford this morning. Slide show at barn this evening. **BD**

Tuesday, June 16.

Early departure from Barkway to Heathrow. Depart from London to USA.

B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner

Preliminary itinerary subject to change.

Dues Due For Texas, Midwest

Six Midwest states and Texas are on the "dues program" this quarter. This means that about one-fourth of the 398th membership lives in the following states:

Texas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Ohio.

Dues envelopes are included in FLAK NEWS for members living in these seven states. Should it be missing, please direct your check (plus voluntary contributions) to FLAK NEWS and memorial fund) to Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740-1915.

Pattern For Victory

"I have always considered that my solemn obligation as the Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force was three-fold. My primary responsibility has been to see that this command was so employed as to make the greatest contribution of which it was capable — or could be made capable — toward the achievement of a prompt and conclusive victory. I have been equally resolved that that contribution should be made with the smallest possible loss of American and Allied lives. Thirdly, to see that activities were so directed and personnel so employed as to ensure that every member of the command not lost in combat would return to their homes in the best possible physical, mental and spiritual condition in order that they might successfully resume their lives as useful citizens.

"The basic policy of the Eighth Air Force of the USAAF has always been the precision bombing of selected military targets. The successes this command has achieved have done much to bring about recognition of the soundness of that policy. As members of a Strategic Air Force, our mission has been to deny the enemy the equipment and supplies he required to wage war. That is why our operations have been characterized by sustained attacks on enemy manufacturing capacity, on their equipment and supplies, and on their transportation.

"We do not yet know the full results of our assaults on Germany's oil and aircraft production, on other basic war industries and on communications, but we can be certain that the aerial bombardment carried out by the Eighth and the other Allied Strategic Air Forces has been a major factor in preparing the way for victory in Europe.

"In making these attacks, however, the over-riding necessity of achieving and maintained the continuity of our air effort has been paramount. To guarantee this continuity, it has been periodically necessary to carry out another type or operation in addition to our principal job — counter-air attacks against the

German Air Force, which had to be kept sufficiently weak to prevent it from successfully interfering with our operations. Our fighters spearheaded these counter-air attacks, their primary objective being the destruction of the German Air Force in being.

For a short period, we accepted an increase in hazard to the bombers so that we might, by immediate offensive means, assure long-range reductions in losses and the eventual comparative impotence of the German Air Force. Success was soon proved by our ability to penetrate to any part of the Reich and by the reduction of casualty rates in spite of ever-deepening penetrations.

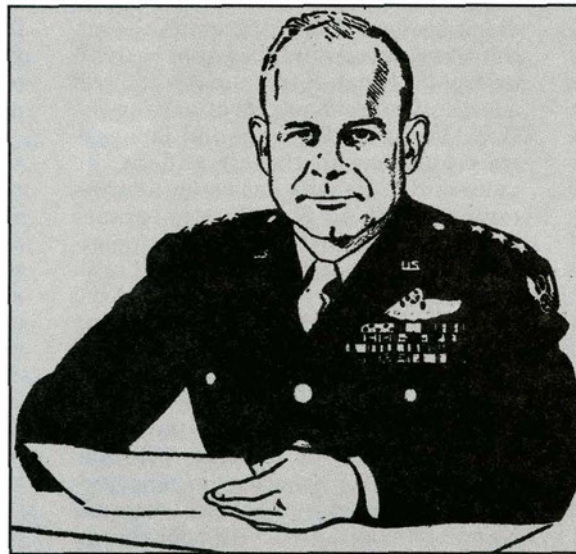
"An important requirement of the Strategic Air Forces is operation in cooperation with the Allied ground forces and the Navy in the accomplishment of their missions. This necessity arises primarily in the breaking of a stalemate, the averting of a catastrophe or the exploiting of a major victory. Examples

were the path-clearing attacks at St. Lo and Caen, the tremendous blows at Von Rundstedt's attackers and the destruction of their essential supply lines during the crucial battles in the Ardennes sector.

"Combined operations in this theater, under the inspired guidance of General Eisenhower, have proved that it is not the individual service, but the team that counts, and have further indicated that a sound national defense organization for the future must have a strong air component.

"I want to take this occasion to congratulate each and every member of the Eighth Air Force for his part in making this organization one of the greatest military teams in history. Whether an individual is a combat crew member, ground crew member, planner, or administrator, as long as he does his job to the best of his ability, he is an equally important member of the team and shares equally in speeding final victory."

J.D. DOOLITTLE.



MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE 8TH

1942

- January 28.** Eighth Air Force activated at Savannah, Ga., with 74 officers and 81 enlisted men. Col. Asa N. Duncan, commanding.
- May 2.** Maj. Gen. Carl Spaatz assumes command Eighth Air Force; Brig. Gen. Ira C. Eaker named C.G. of VIII Bomber Command.
- May 10.** First unit of Eighth (39 officers, 348 men) arrives in UK.
- July 4.** First action seen by American air unit in ETO as six Bostons take off in joint mission with RAF to bomb airfields in Holland.
- Aug. 17.** First Eighth AAF heavy-bomber mission over occupied Europe by 12 Flying Fortresses attacking rail yards at Rouen, France.
- Dec. 1.** Maj. Gen. Eaker becomes C.G. of the Eighth, replacing Spaatz.

1943

- Jan. 27.** First U.S. bombing of Germany as Forts hit Wilhelmshaven and Emden.
- Aug. 1.** B-24 Liberators attack oil refineries in Ploesti, Rumania.

- Aug. 17.** First large-scale U.S. shuttle mission. First bomb Regensburg aircraft plant and fly to North African bases. Schweinfurt ball-bearing plants hit same day. 60 bombers lost, most of them to German fighters.

1944

- Jan. 6.** Maj. Gen. James H. Doolittle is named C.G. of the Eighth.
- Feb. 20 to 26.** Five days of devastation to aircraft plants.
- Mar. 3.** First Eighth Air Force planes (P-38s) over Berlin.
- Mar. 4.** First U.S. bomber attack on Berlin.
- June.** More than 54,000 bomber and fighter sorties flown and more than 60,000 tons of bombs dropped in tactical and strategic support of the Allied Liberation of the Continent.
- June 21.** First England-to-Russia shuttle mission.
- Sept. 17.** 230 flak positions silenced and 904 enemy planes destroyed in month in support of airborne landings in Holland.

- Dec. 24.** More than 2,000 Forts and Libs, escorted by more than 900 fighters, hit enemy rail and communications targets in largest single bombing mission yet flown by one Air Force.

1945

- Jan. 14.** 161 Germans shot out of the air in the greatest single day's victory by Eighth fighters.
- Feb. 22.** 1,400 heavy bombers of the Eighth hit more than two dozen rail targets as part of coordinated air blow against German communications.
- Mar. 24.** Eighth flies 3,000 bomber and fighter sorties in support of airborne landings east of Rhine.
- Apr. 30.** Eighth fighter planes make new record for enemy aircraft destroyed in one month—1,786 on the ground, 148 in the air. Totals for war reach 9,437 enemy aircraft destroyed by fighters, 9,074 destroyed or damaged by bombers.

ARMY TALKS for the EIGHTH AIR FORCE

Luftwaffe Had Ruled Skies Over Europe

Continued from Page 1.

In Normandy about two years later, a GI tanker in Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Army radioed his love to a Thunderbolt overhead which had just knocked out a troublesome Panther ahead. At that moment, 1,500 Flying Fortresses and Liberators, with 700 Mustangs escorting them, were bombing hell out of Panther tank and Focke-Wulf fighter factories at Leipzig, deep in Germany. If the GI tanker had had time for philosophizing, he might also have reflected that the Focke-Wulfs weren't doing *to* him what the Thunderbolt was doing *for* him, and that there was just one Panther ahead instead of three.

Credit for this state of affairs is due in large part to the men who conceived the experiment, who pushed it through, and to the GIs and officers who died to make it work.

It wasn't easy.

An army of half-a-million men on heavy anti-aircraft artillery pointed skyward throughout Europe, and a potent *Luftwaffe* fighter force, just across the Channel, waited.

Nobody guaranteed Eaker success. He warned his men that it was not going to be "a game of patty cake" and that there would be heavy losses "before we can sweep in the blue chips."

At that time, the *Luftwaffe* ruled the skies over Europe in a darkening world. Bataan had fallen while the Eighth was engaged in the laborious business of obtaining fields, supplies, personnel and, most important, planes. (In the Spring of 1942 they had exactly one — a British Oxford which was used for transporting officers about England.) Gen. Douglas MacArthur needed planes and supplies in the Pacific. The Red Army had been pushed back toward Stalingrad, and Rommel had prepared his tanks for driving the bedraggled British forces out of Egypt. By Early August, 1942, the Allies had sunk to a lower point than at any time in the last war.

Meanwhile, a trickle of officers, men and supplies had arrived in England to set up skeleton staffs for the Eighth Air Force, which on paper called for 200,000 men — larger than the entire U.S. Army, including the Air Corps, had been three years before.

The spadework had started. Absorbing the RAF's extensive battle experience and obtaining fields and supplies on a lend-lease basis, the Americans began to pierce the black clouds of defeat. While Yanks and RAF men came to learn about each other's ways over mild-and-bitter, a firm friendship had grown between Gen. Eaker and Air Marshal A.T. Harris, boss of the RAF Bomber Command. At a small charity gathering in June, 1942, Gen. Eaker told his new British friends about the Eighth's plans in a

speech noted for its brevity: "We won't do much talking until we've done more fighting," he said. "We hope that when we leave, you'll be glad we came. Thank you."

On July 4, 1942, the United States didn't have much to celebrate. Although the American continent had not been hit (except for Dutch Harbor, in Alaska, and a few sporadic submarine attacks on the West Coast), the Germans and Japanese were supreme in the air and on the ground. But the date has become important in Eighth Air Force history because it marked the first action by an American air unit over the European Continent. Six American crews in A-20 Bostons joined with the RAF in hitting an airfield in Holland. The mission was noted for the bravery of Capt. Charles C. Kegelman, a pilot who inaugurated the Eighth's tradition of bombing the target and returning — if humanly possible. After flak had shot away the right propeller and punctured the nose section of Kegelman's Boston, its right wing tip and fuselage scraped the ground, but the captain flew directly at the flak tower ahead,



silencing it with his nose guns and returned on one engine to win the DSC from Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

That summer, English farmers and children who had learned their aircraft recognition by necessity during the *Luftwaffe* raids were amazed to see a new type of aircraft in the skies. It bore American markings and resembled no bomber they had ever seen. They wondered when these planes, which came to know as Flying Fortresses, would cross the Channel and what the results would be.

The first answer came on August 17, 1942, when the B-17E stretched its combat wings for the first time over Europe, attacking railway marshalling yards at Rouen, France, escorted by RAF Spitfires, 12 Forts headed towards France that morning. A nervous audience had gathered at an airfield in the English Midlands to sweat out the return. Flying at 22,500 feet with perfect weather, the 12

planes dropped 21 tons on and near the target. In the lead Fort of the second section was Gen. Eaker, squirming in his seat from a mixture of excitement and a host of hornet stings he'd picked up during a duck-hunting incident the day before. The only casualties sustained were those of the navigator and bombardier of a Fort which collided with a flight of pigeons.

Six additional bombers, flying two diversionary missions, so confused the Germans that the formation of 12 was not reported until it was close to the target, at which time the enemy excitedly reported: "Achtung — 12 Lancasters." Only a few interceptors approached the bombers and one FW-190 was shot down by Sgt. Ken West, a ball-turret gunner.

Headlines in all Allied nations proclaimed the successful feat. The ghost of Billy Mitchell grinned. This small beginning proved nothing in particular, but it was a beginning.

Mountainous obstacles still loomed to block the Eighth. Germany, as if scenting the challenge, had embarked upon a huge program to quadruple her already strong fighter force, the thousand-bladed sword expected to decapitate the Eighth. England was still a small island, shockingly vulnerable to air, land and sea attack. U-boats roamed the Atlantic, preying on supplies needed to wage air warfare from Britain.

Without fighters that could escort the bombers all the way to the target, large numbers of bombers were needed to provide massed firepower and to spread German fighter defenses by multi-pronged attacks. The strength in numbers upon which the success of the experiment was considered dependent accumulated slowly. Liberator groups came, and Lightnings for escort, only to be whisked away to Africa which many of the fledgling Eighth's key ground and air personnel for the North African invasion.

It was eight months after the first mission before the Eighth was able to put 100 bombers over a target.

But the pioneering old First Wing carried on through a 1942-43 fall and winter which threatened the existence of the Eighth. Ground crews scrounged and scraped to keep the pitifully meager supply of bombers fit for combat. Air crews were painfully aware of their losses, and the slowness of replacements. Like insurance men, they calculated the life-expectancy problem and came out with an answer of less than nil. Nevertheless, they went on slugging it out with the *Luftwaffe* and hitting the target. One squadron began operations in November, 1942, with 90 men, receiving a few replacements later on. After six months the squadron record showed 115 men killed or missing in action.

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The Last 398th Crew To Go Down

Bartimus Remembered His Yellow Pencil

By Joe Christey and Page Shamburger

Authors of the book "Summon the Stars"

Neil R. "Bart" Bartimus of Columbia, S.C., remembers very clearly how it was to bail out of a crippled B-17 over Germany during Hitler's last days. "If any man flew in that war over "Fortress Europe" and says he wasn't scared, he's lying in his teeth. And, God, we were uncomfortable! It's cold in an unheated Fortress at 30,000 feet. We wore long underwear, heavy socks, fleece-lined trousers, boots, gloves, jackets and caps — and still froze. The 20-pound flak suit was on top of all that. It took about eight and a half hours from our base, just north of London, to Berlin and back. It made for a long day. From 30,000 feet, though, it's not a personal war. You're just scared and miserable and, part of the time, bored.

"We were on standby on April 24, 1945. We figured the war was nearly over, and we honestly thought no more missions would go. For many weeks we had mounted 1,000-plane raids against the enemy. The Luftwaffe had practically

were shot down and then found the war was over. Suddenly, the old girl lurched, struggled and seemed to sigh. We were hit!

"I could see the formation leaving us and we were burning on the right side. Number three engine was burning and pieces of the airplane broke off in our wake. Our pilot, Paul Coville, punched the bell to leave.

"My assigned exit was up near the front, just aft of the props, I jettisoned the escape hatch and got down on the floor the way we had been taught. I sat there, looking down at my feet hanging out into space, and a the ground so far below. I was wearing those huge fleece-lined flight boots. I watched, strangely amused, as the stipstream tore them from my feet. Then, I glanced back at the altimeter on my desk. It read 22,000 feet, and was unwinding slowly. I felt a little sad leaving that scarred old bird that I'd ridden on 17 previous missions, and I noticed my yellow pencil rolling to and

"The Strangest Quiet I've Ever Experienced"

ceased to exist, and there weren't many targets left worth bombing. Supposedly, our assigned target for the 25th was Pilsen, Czechoslovakia — the Skoda Works. Even our radio, I mean the standard broadcast radio, had announced it. In fact, we wanted to be sure the people in Pilsen knew of the scheduled attack. Our radio suggested the citizens of Pilsen leave, for tomorrow the Eighth Air Force was going to bomb the Skoda plants. Nevertheless, we were surprised when the call came at 5 a.m. The trip was not scrubbed despite an announcement by General Spaatz that the strategic air war was over in the ETO. We were briefed, lifted off at our usual 100 mph, and headed, 500 airplanes strong, for Pilsen.

"The Czechs had left, I guess, but some top German gunners had moved in. Level, at 32,000 feet, the flak bursts were all around us. The only thing to do about flak was try to ignore it; but all major industrial targets had from 500 to 700 anti-aircraft guns, mostly 88 mm, protecting them. Usually, they'd begin by shooting a flare through our formation to judge our altitude. At the sight of that flare our guts would churn.

"On this mission I was both bombardier and navigator. It wasn't unusual, late in the war, for one man to do two jobs. We aimed for our target and I kept thinking how ridiculous it would be if we

fro on my navigator's desk. That old Fort was pretty stable even with one engine afire and a couple of big holes in her sides. That's a pretty yellow pencil, I thought, one of those mechanical ones somebody had sent us guys overseas. I really liked it. I pulled my feet back in the plane, stood up, and managed to get back to the desk. I got my yellow pencil, unzipped my jacket and stuck it inside my shirt. I didn't think the airplane was ready to explode. I didn't know; I just didn't think it would. Then, I remembered by Colt .45 and shoulder holster and picked that up, too. Everything was unreal, like slow motion, I put on the shoulder holster, went back to the hatch, and sat on the floor again with my feet dangling outside I didn't see anyone else; just me and my dying airplane. So, I thought, 'Guess it's about time to go.' I looked at my watch. It was ten minutes past eleven. For some crazy reason, I drew my .45, then grabbed the rip cord and rolled out.

"The white 'chute burst open just as it was supposed to, and suddenly there was the strangest quiet I've ever experienced. Not a sound. Really, a strange quiet. And there I hung, with that ridiculous pistol in my hand, floating along sight-seeing. Off to my left, I saw another 'chute, and up above me two more 'chutes popped open. The old B-17 seemed to be still fly-

Book Reveals Details Of Last Mission Bailout

The accompanying story on Neil R. Bartimus, describing his adventure on being aboard the last 398th Bomb Group B-17 shot down in World War II, was gleaned from a book written by Joe Christy and Page Shamburger. It was published in 1970 by A.S. Barnes & Co.

It was submitted to FLAK NEWS by Sam Zins, 603 pilot who was on The Last Mission to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, April 25, 1945, along with Bartimus and his Paul Coville crew. Bartimus was the navigator-bombardier on this fateful mission.

The entire Last Mission story was published in Vol. 8 No. 2 of FLAK NEWS, but this segment is presented now as a classic example of one airman's thoughts and experiences after realizing his plane was going down.

Bartimus, following the end of World War II, worked for a time with the Army's Graves Registration division in Europe. He then returned home for further studies and then reentered the Air Force as an aviation cadet. He then went on to a career as a fighter pilot and flew F-51's in Korea.

In 1949, while stationed in Texas, he was called on to escort the body of Charles Walker to his hometown of Homedale, Idaho, for burial. Walker, the ball turret gunner, was the only one killed on the Coville crew as it went down in the area of Marienbad (Sudetenland) now called Marianske Lazne by the Czech Republic.

Others on the crew were Robert McLaughlin, co-pilot; Vincent Ferraro, ETG; Norman Markel, radio; Harry Overbaugh, waist; and Charles Rawlings, tail gunner.

ing, though a lot of smoke and flame trailed behind. Then the right wing broke away in one huge splash of fire and the fuselage went into a flat spin and disappeared.

"The anti-aircraft fire around the target wasn't far away and I could still see that. Then my peaceful descent was interrupted by machine gun fire! I snapped forward and looked down. I was going to land between the lines, on rocky ground that separated enemy ground troops from our own, and this bloody machine-gun nest had opened up on me, I thought. A couple of big pieces of the plane lazied by me and struck the ground, the coughing of that damned machine gun was too loud and I started cursing and waving my pistol. "By then, I was low enough to see they weren't firing at me, but at the

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Spokane

Continued from Page 1.

There was also a glimpse of the Cœur d'Alene Golf Course and its floating green. The "glimpse" was free, but a round of 18 holes would have cost \$160.

Several 398th golfers did play the Creek at Qualchan public course in Spokane and declared it "a beautiful course."

Others looked in at Fairchild Air Force Base to see training on survival... desert, jungle, arctic, mountains, and water. There was parachute training, lectures on what plants, grubs, and animals are edible; how to make shelters; what to expect during interrogation; how to deal with isolation. And how to operate the high tech UHF radio and other equipment when downed.

Russ Reed, downed over Merseburg in 1944, recalled his "survival" training -

"This is the D-Ring. Pull it. Only give them your name, rank, and serial number."

Some of the 146 considered such "survival" when going up to the gondola to Silver Mountain at Kellogg, Idaho. But there were no losses and the lunch on the mountain top was much superior to "plants, grubs, and animals."

President Wally Blackwell and all the other 398th officers were reelected by acclamation. A "toot-toot" was heard in the background when contact officer George Hilliard announced the results.

Others elected were Ted Johnston, VP; Harold Stallcup, Sec.; Ralph Hall, Treas.; and Board officers Hal Weekley, Dick Frazier, Dale Brown, and Ben Core.

Other continuing to serve in appointed positions are Bill Frazier, historian; Joe Joseph, PX manager; and Allen Ostrom, public relations.

Continuing on the Monument Fund committee are W.A. McLaughlin, Al Turney, Jim Haas, and Marilyn Gibb, the latter serving in a "deputy" role.

Blackwell, Hall, and Ostrom presented evidence at the Board meeting that rising costs of paper, production, and mailing of FLAK NEWS needed to be addressed.

"We have been charging only \$5.00 per year for dues," said Hall. "This no longer is meeting our needs."

When Blackwell announced that most groups have \$15-\$25 dues requirements, a motion was made to increase the 398th dues to \$10.00 per year. This motion passed unanimously and will go into effect beginning in 1998.

Historian Bill Frazier pointed out that only 66 members of the 398th have contributed to the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum and urged others to lend individual support.

Blackwell announced that the Bill Comstock Memorial Fund had reached \$6,000. These were funds given by the 398th corporately and individually, plus

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LOU & BETTY STOFFER
A crystal vase for a job well done.



BRUCE DAILY, DICK FRAZIER, GEORGE GRAHAM, MAX RAHE
Enjoying the beauties of Lake Cœur d'Alene



NANCY STALLCUP, POLLY ANNA CORE, JUNICE FRAZIER
Smiles from the ladies on the fan tail.

Spokane

Continued from Page 6.

other friends of the Comstocks. Evelyn announced that the entire fund will be given to the Sylvania, Ohio, High School Academic Excellence Foundation. This is where Bill attended high school.

"Many thanks to all the fine people of the 398th who remembered Bill with their contributions," said Evelyn.

Among the many highlights at the Welcome and Farewell banquets was the presentation by three of our members called, "The Other Side of the War." Fred Gonzales, John McCormick, and Dean Whiatker were all shot down over Germany, spent time in various PW camps and had post war relationships with Germans near where they came down.

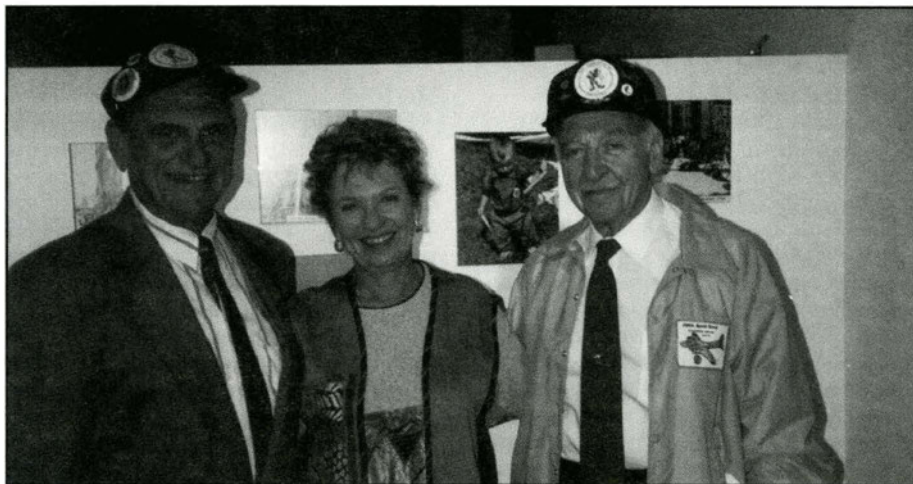
"The Other Side of the War" presented the personal, warm, and human side of the "enemy" ... relationships that continue to this day.

The 1998 group tour to Germany and England will see a continuing chapter of this saga when the tour coach visits Neuss, where the Gonzales-Hunter crew came down.

Jill Chandler, the young woman from Spokane who writes poetry on World War II airmen, presented a reading of her poetry at the Welcome Banquet with such titles as "Eagle of the Sky", "My Guys", "Lady of His Dreams", and "For the Fallen". Nary a dry eye in the banquet hall.

Unable to come to the Farewell Banquet, her poems were read by Nancy and Harold Stallcup — "Back In Time", "Take Me Back", and "Forever In My Mind". Also a poem, "A Toast To Us", written by

Continued on Page 10.



ELLIOT & CONNIE NOVEK AND SAM ZINS

Trio At Czech Center Open House

They were surrounded by members of the 97th Infantry, but Sam Zins of Brooklyn and Elliot Novek of Wayne, N.J., were there to show the 398th flag (602nd Squadron) at an open house of the new Czech Center in downtown New York.

The two just happened to be on the Last Mission to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia on April 25, 1945, and were among those veterans living in the New York area who had received invitations to the affair because of their participation in the liberation of Czechoslovakia 52 years ago.

The Czechs fondly remember their liberation day, primarily because of the ground units who drove out the last pockets of the German occupation. But also because of the B-17's of the 1st Combat Wing, of which the 398th was a part.

In 1995, in a ceremony in Pilsen, the 398th gave a plaque to the city bearing this inscription —

"WE CAME FROM HEAVEN TO LIBERATE YOU FROM HELL."

The Czechs remembered and welcomed the two airmen, along with Elliot's wife, Connie. Elliot was the radio operator on the Nolan Thompson crew. Zins was a pilot, flying on that Last Mission on the wing of Allen Ferguson, who was shot down along with Paul Coville.

"Realizing that," said Sam, "makes one wonder at the fragility of our lives."

The Noveks said each veteran received a bound book called, "PLZEN", a commemorative medal and a pin.

"We also had some snacks and lots of Pilsen beer."

ATR Fly-In At Nuthampstead

The following information is strictly for those members who are planning on being at the Nuthampstead Fly-In, August 23-24-25, 1997, sponsored by the 936 Squadron Air Training Command —

Nuthampstead is 4 NM SE of Royston and 4 NM NE of Buntingford 460 FT AMSL and has an excellent grass strip 05/23, 700 x 40 M. With clear approaches. Radio: C/S Nuthampstead 130.675. A courtesy call to Stansted Zone: 120.625 would be appreciated.

Barkway VOR/DME: BKW 116.25 is sited 1/2 M SW of the threshold 05. Non radio aircraft join overhead and descent to circuit height; 1000 AGL 05 Right hand 23 Left hand circuits. Signal lamps will be in use. After landing proceed under direction of marshalls. Nuthampstead radio will be operated 09.30-18.30 during the Fly-In.

There will of course be NO landing fee. Sorry, no fuel. Looking forward to seeing you.

Note to 398th pilots: Runways 05/23 still the same NE/SW runways of 1944-45. Just a little shorter today.

Death Was Inches Away, And He Can Prove It

The parachute harness doesn't fit like it used to, but something has to be said for a 398th tail gunner who still has it 52 years later. And, still more important, can exhibit the evidence of how close he came to death over Oranienburg, Germany, on March 15, 1945. He was on the Irwin Idso crew of the 600th.

Meet Miles Hagen of Valdez, Alaska, who, at 200+ pounds, can't quite buckle the leg straps. But he can still display three shredded strap areas left by a chunk of metal a scant quarter inch from his backside. Another piece of flak left a hole in his little window inches from his head and another set fire to his oxygen bottles.

"That was close enough," said Hagen, "especially with the war being so close to being over."



MILES HAGEN

Heavy Losses For 8th In First Year

Continued from Page 4.

Meanwhile, Americans of the renowned Eagle Squadron transferred from the RAF to the Eighth in September, bringing their Spitfires with them, and later became famous as Col. Don Blakeslee's Fourth Fighter Group.

As the "experiment" entered '43, the *Luftwaffe* flexed its muscles with new strength, boasting 1,600 frontline fighters. New fighters were rolling off Nazi production lines in increasing volume. *Fliieger Abwehr Canonen* (antiaircraft cannon) were multiplied into the most deadly flak defenses the world had ever seen.

Gen. Eaker was called to Casablanca in January, 1943, to report to the United Nations commanders on his progress. Though the still small Eighth had not yet been able to muster enough planes to penetrate into Germany proper, Eaker got the green light. On January 27 the Eighth passed an important milestone, when its bombers, 53 of them, crossed the German border for the first time, hitting U-boat yards at Wilhelmshaven with good results.

The situation picked up that spring and summer. The Allies had cleared off North Africa and moved on to Sicily. Stalingrad had been saved and the Russians were rolling the enemy back off Soviet territory in a successful summer offensive. Reinforced by men, planes and material of the U.S., the Eighth struck at a target only 80 miles from Berlin. An average of 630 Forts and Libs were now available, with more groups arriving each month. Long-range escorts, however, were still future history. There was no "mystery" about the *Luftwaffe* then, and bomber gunners knew as they left England that they would have to slug their way through.

In its first year of operations, the Eighth made 124 attacks, losing 472 bombers and nearly 5,000 men, dead or missing. For every bomber lost, four enemy aircraft were destroyed.

The Eighth began its second year of operations still without long-range fighter escort but with a terrific fury which cast a long shadow over Hitler's continent. The anniversary date — August 17, 1943, — was celebrated with assaults on two of Europe's most important targets. More than 350 Forts pushed unescorted through swarms of enemy fighters to blast the Schweinfurt ball-bearing plant and an aircraft factory at Regensburg. The bombers hitting Regensburg continued on to Africa, marking the first of the Eighth's shuttle missions. In a three-hour battle with the *Luftwaffe*, 300 enemy fighters were destroyed for a loss of 60 bombers. The Regensburg attack cost the Germans at least two full months of production there, the equivalent of 500

Me-109's.

In July and August, the Eighth put the first crimp in the rising curve of German fighter strength. Successful blows at fighter plants and sharp gunnery sent German fighter losses higher and production of replacements lower. The *Luftwaffe* was operating in the red for the first time — but only temporarily.

Meantime, the Eighth's Libs had been called to Africa again. There they joined Ninth Air Force Libs to fly the long haul across the Mediterranean for the historic first attack on the Ploesti oil fields in Rumania, on August 1, 1943, going in at smokestack height. After attacks on Rome and other targets, the Libs returned to England.

Just as the Eighth threatened to gain supremacy over the German Air Force, the old bogey of winter weather pulled down a screen behind which German planes multiplied again.

Both sides worked feverishly for the crucial air battles expected as soon as the weather lifted. Against the Allies' double-pronged weapon of the RAF and Eighth, the *Luftwaffe* prepared to fight for its life.



Allied research laboratories and tacticians matched brains with the Germans in advancing methods of aerial warfare. Factories behind the American and German borders worked overtime to supply the combat units with the needed planes. Huge convoys delivered flyers and ground men to England for the coming air struggle. The High Commands of Allies and Germans looked to their air forces upon which the fate of Europe might depend.

During the early winter of 1943-1944, the Eighth had introduced long-range P-51 Mustangs capable of flying to Berlin and back. Lighter than Thunderbolts, less heavily armored, in the coming months of 1944 they were to escort bombers to every corner of Europe. Treated-paper fuel tanks had also increased the range of Thunderbolts, which showed a favorable score against the *Luftwaffe*.

Recognizing the growing danger of

bombardment, the Germans resorted to underground factories, more deadly flak and new aerial tactics. In addition, the Hun had developed a new and merciless weapon — the V-bomb which was to attack London in the coming months.

Only by the time Maj. Gen. James H. Doolittle came to the Eighth as new C.G. in January, 1944, two years after this Air Force had been activated in Savannah, Georgia, was its strength beginning to approach the original conception. Demands of worldwide war had not yet permitted the Eighth enough bombers to send 1,000 of them against Germany in a single day.

However, the Eighth was strong and growing stronger, and long-range fighter escort had arrived. This was historically important for, under cover of winter, German fighter production had expanded to a new high. With heavier armament and better tactics, German fighters had become more formidable.

Doolittle gravely considered the question foremost in his mind. Would the Eighth be able to cripple German fighter production before the increased strength and lethal power of the *Luftwaffe* crippled the Eighth?

February 20, 1944, dawned cold and clear. The Eighth's first 1,000-bomber armada went after the German fighter industry in the first of a series of critical air battles. For six days, involving five devastating assaults on German plane plants, the battle continued in German skies. It represented a tremendous climax to a struggle upon which depended control of the sky and successful invasion of Europe.

As bombers streamed across the English Channel, escorted by hundreds of Thunderbolts and Mustangs, the *Luftwaffe* rose to defend their birthplace — aircraft factories. Furious battles were fought between fighter planes ranging from 30,000 feet to treetop level. Names like Gabreski, Gentile, Zemke, Blakeslee, Johnson and Mahurin caught the public fancy, glamorizing a grim life-and-death struggle. American parachutes carried hundreds of airmen into German prison camps. American GIs died violently as bombers exploded in mid-air, when German interceptors sneaked through the fighter screen to hit the Germans' greatest enemy of the moment.

Thousands of tons of American bombs brought death, devastation — and victory. In the five attacks, the Eighth damaged or destroyed aircraft plants accounting for 75 percent of Germany's total fighter production. The hope of the *Luftwaffe* to match expanding Allied air might had been broken. Germany's monthly production had been pushed back below the 1942 rate.

One of the greatest battles occurred on

Continued on Page 9.

But Then Came 2,000 Bomber Missions

Continued from Page 8.

February 22 during a Liberator assault on a Messerschmitt plant at Gotha. For 700 miles and 3½ hours, the Libs were hit by enemy aircraft firing rockets, cannons and machine guns. The Germans attacked in waves of 30 to 40. Thirty-three out of 230 Libs were lost, but the plant was virtually destroyed and 75 Nazi planes were shot down by the Libs. The Eighth's giant paw continued to sweep German skies, knocking down interfering aircraft and pounding installation while fighter pilots went down into the teeth of antiaircraft guns to destroy on the ground the German fighters that didn't come up.

By June 6, the Supreme Commander could say to GIs embarking for the invasion of Europe; "Don't worry about the planes overhead. They will be ours."

And that's the way it was. The *Luftwaffe* was unable to contest the invasion itself.

Between August 17, 1942, and June 6, 1944, the Eighth had destroyed 8,407 enemy planes in air combat and probably destroyed or damaged 7,697 more in the air and on the ground. The British Air Ministry conservatively estimated that at least 5,000 fighter aircraft were kept from action by Eighth Air Force bombardment of aircraft plants in the first five months of 1944 alone.

Concurrent with neutralization of the *Luftwaffe*, in May the Allied strategic air forces in Britain began the campaign against the lifeblood of Germany's *Wehrmacht* — oil. By September, 1944, 75 percent of the enemy's oil production as of March, 1944, had been stopped.

Paralleling this, the Eighth played a major role in salting down the invasion coast, cutting road and rail lines to isolate the battle area between the Loire and Seine rivers from German reinforcement, battering the marshalling yards, supplying the French resistance movement with guns and ammunition, dropping millions of leaflets on German cities, blasting V-bomb sites to spare London an even worse ordeal, and still blasting tank, half-track and motor-vehicle plants inside Germany at every opportunity.

Photo-reconnaissance planes mapped the continent for Gen. Eisenhower. Liberator bombers, the same that had blasted many German oil plants, temporarily became freighters and hauled gasoline to the continent to help keep Patton's Third Army rolling across France. Liberator crews packed bomb bays with weapons and supplies and parachuted them from low level to the Allied Airborne troops at Arnheim and Nijmegen, and again when the northern Rhine was crossed to begin the last great heave.

Strategic bombardment continued, for not until the day of Germany's complete

surrender could it be certain that the Nazis would stop repairing the rebuilding the plants which were the source of their power to resist.

A captured telegram from Speer, Reichsminister of War Production, to Reichsleiter Bormann, Hitler's deputy, gives a glimpse of the havoc inside Germany: "The idea is spreading that reconstruction of oil plants is purposeless, since the enemy always finds a suitable moment, soon after resumption of work, to destroy them again ..."

"All means must be employed to assure that the workers engaged in reconstruction of the plants shall not be crippled in their efforts ..."

"We must not allow ourselves to give up hope that we must eventually be successful in gaining mastery over the enemy air forces. ..."

The message was dated September 17, 1944.

Even so, the Eighth devoted to tactical targets, or direct ground force support, about one-third of the entire tonnage of bombs dropped in 1944.

On December 16, the winter weather



was so thick that Rundstedt decided upon his counteroffensive, believing the Allied Air Forces couldn't leave their bases. Many agreed with him that they couldn't, but they did. The Eighth's bombers and fighters took off with visibility sometimes limited to 50 yards over runways coated with ice. The Eighth's largest force up to that time, 2,000 bombers and nearly 1,000 fighters, left their fog-covered British bases on Christmas Eve to help stop Rundstedt and save Bastogne by cutting roads and rails just back of the Bulge. This mighty air fleet was in striking contrast to the 12 bombers which attacked Rouen on August 17, 1942. Ground and air forces combined to stop the German push in that historic Christmas week.

Short on oil and pilots, the *Luftwaffe* made a few more attempts to stop the tremendous bombardment, but the Eighth's fighter pilots cut them down again. The Eighth kept pounding at tank

and armament plants, oil and rail targets, and jet-plane bases. In March, when the great heave came, the Eighth dropped a record 70,000 tons of bombs on Germany during the month, an amount equal to the total dropped during the entire first 18 months.

Germany was on the ropes.

On April 16, Gen. Carl Spaatz, USSTAF commander, announced that strategic air war was at an end in Europe and that from then on the strategic forces must "operate with our tactical air forces in close cooperation with our armies." Signifying the change in its status, the Eighth undertook a new kind of mission in the first three days of May, dropping 3¼ million meals to the starving population in Holland.

By that time some figures could be assembled to show the vast size of the Eighth's efforts. Almost 700,000 tons of bombs had been dropped. Germany, alone, had caught 530,000 tons, or an average of one ton every minute, day and night, for a year.

Casualty figures showed that 43,687 fighter pilots and bomber crewmen had lost their lives in action or were missing in action. Another 1,923 were seriously injured.

Before the complete collapse, the Eighth's bombing line had narrowed to such a degree that targets were hard to find. The Allied troops had occupied cities and towns whose names had been headlined only a year before as bombing targets.

The Eighth has finished in Europe the job it began against then-current opinion and precedent. Goering's boast that Allied aircraft would never fly over Germany sounds silly now — but it wasn't so funny when he said it.

Now the eyes of the Eighth are focused on Japan.

There will be more than 12 bombers on its first mission there.

Duvall, 89, Off To Colorado And 'Retirement'

Chaplain James Duvall, who had planned on attending and addressing the 398th reunion in Spokane, has announced that he and his wife, Marguerite, have moved from San Pedro, California, to a retirement home in Colorado.

His new address is Loveland, Colorado 80538-9948.

Chaplain Duvall will be 89 years of age in August. Also in at 89 this year is Col. Earl Berryhill, the group's ground executive officer. Had he survived the war, group commanding officer Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., also would have been 89 this year.

“Odyssey”, “Youngest Crew”;

Frankhouser, Wagner Offer New Books On 398th Careers

Two more of our 398th Bomb Group air men have taken the journalistic route in their senior years and turned out hard-cover books telling of their respective adventures in the Air Force.

Bill Frankhouser, who began his combat career as navigator on the 603 Herb Newman crew, and later flew in lead aircraft, came up with “World War II Odyssey”. He clarifies this title with “Pennsylvania Dutch Farm Boy Becomes 8th Air Force Navigator”. He admits he compiled his 224-page book for the benefit on his family, but has made a few copies available for general sale at \$19.95.

“Odyssey” brings back a host of memories of Station 131. Many photos and charts depicting life in “those days” are sprinkled throughout. Frankhouser’s address is 108 Southridge Dr., Bedford,

VA 24523.

Paul Wagner, pilot in the 600th, came up with the title, “The Youngest Crew”, suggesting the “we were a bunch of kids with our own B-17”. Wagner, who at the age of 20 was teaching newly graduated pilots how to handle the B-17, came to Station 131 with his “Youngest Crew” and flew 25 missions. Wagner called on his flight engineer, ball turret gunner and waist gunner for their personal combat narratives, adding to his own views from the cockpit.

Wagner’s 227-page book is available for \$29.95. His address is Albuquerque, NM 87111.

Both books will be sent to the Hertford Record Center, England, where many books and documents of 398th history are being preserved.

Reunion

Continued from Page 7.

Marvin Berz, 600 navigator on the Wheeler crew.

“You done good,” someone told the Stallcups.

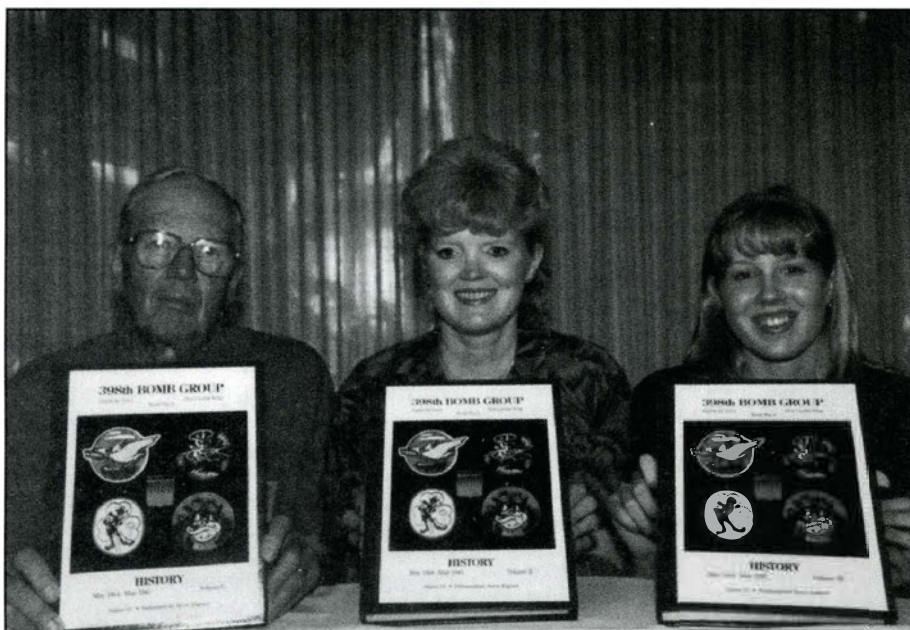
The Friends of the 398th, Nuthampstead, were ably represented by Elaine Tyler, the Friends’ honourable secretary.

Elaine recounted the warm friendships that exist between their members living in and around Station 131 and their American friends. She urged the 398th to keep looking ahead to future tours to the old base, especially next June 1998.

As in past years, the Reunion Chairman and his wife were honored with a job “well done”. This time it was for Lou and Betty Stoffer of Centralia, Washington, to receive a gorgeous crystal vase from Wally and Teedy Blackwell. Stoffer paid sincere compliments to all the volunteers who assisted at the registration and Banquet table reservation desks.

Aluminum Overcast Fall Tour:

St. Louis, MO	Aug. 29-Sept. 2	Beaver Valley, PA	Sept. 25-29
Holland, MI	Sept. 2-8	Fulton, NY	Sept. 29-Oct. 2
Cheboygan, MI	Sept. 8-11	Millville, NJ	Oct. 2-6
Detroit, MI	Sept. 11-15	Caldwell, NJ	Oct. 6-9
Zanesville, OH	Sept. 15-18	<i>Pending confirmation:</i>	
Buffalo, NY	Sept. 18-22	Winchester, VA	Oct. 10-12
Erie, PA	Sept. 22-25	Aurora, IL	Oct. 17-19



CONRAD SAMUELSON, NANCY COTTON and DANA COTTON, representing father, daughter, and granddaughter, show off the three-volume history of the 398th. Sent from England, the books include reports on all missions, plus additional squadron reports. The books will eventually be sent to the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum. Samuelson served in 603 Intelligence.

BARTIMUS

Continued from Page 5.

parachute to my left. However, I figured I’d be next. You can see very clearly from a ‘chute. Too well, under those circumstances, and you feel like a pig in a barrel. I saw a couple of vehicles bounce over a little hill heading, hell for leather, for where I was going to land. My God! Not only are they trying to machine-gun us, now they’re bringing in reinforcements. I flicked the safety off my pistol and aimed at them with about as much logic as the western movie hero who drops the bad guy from clear across town. Still about a thousand feet up, the whole scene was before me, and then I realized those vehicles were our jeeps. Some of our wonderful GI’s had seen the Fort’s trouble, watched us jump, then came piling to the rescue; and before I hit the ground, damn’ if they didn’t just erase that machine-gun nest! About then, I hit, landed on a rock and broke my right leg. That didn’t matter then. I was down and alive. All but one of our crew made it. Our ball-gunner never left the airplane.

“Our troops loaded us into trucks, and 15 minutes after leaving the Fort — at 25 past eleven — I was receiving medical aid in a nearby village.”

We asked Bart what ever happened to his yellow pencil. He said he didn’t recall.

What really counts is what you’ve learned after you know it all.

—Chaplain Jim Duvall

BRIEF-things

The 398th Board of Directors held out a long time with the dues at \$5.00 a year, but finally had to up the ante to \$10.00 ... costs of producing FLAK NEWS (paper, printing, bindery, mailing, etc.) had risen dramatically in the past two years, necessitating the increase ... not every member has been a contributor, so it has been those "extra" contributions that have kept the books balanced ... treasurer **Ralph Hall** will breathe easier come next year when the new dues kick in ... when FLAK NEWS first published in 1986 there were less than 1,000 subscribers; the April 1997 press run numbered 2,044 ... Cavanaugh's Inn at the Park proved to be a winner with the Spokane reunion attendees, and that includes the hotel, location, and employees ... the Scottish Pipe Band that played at the Welcome Banquet was **Dana Maryott's** suggestion (he lives in Spokane); and it was pure drama when all the members rose to their feet when the band played Amazing Grace in honor of the men killed in action ... **Phil Stahlman, Ben Ruckel, and Al Albro**, members of the "nose blown" **DeLancey** mission, were all at the reunion and all enjoyed the Page 1 story and photo of the mission published in the Cœur d'Alene Press ... **Jeri Brown** was the featured singer/pianist at the Farewell Banquet; she did just fine, except that she sang not one of the WW II songs she promised ... **George Hilliard's** son is at work setting up an internet web site featuring the 398th ... **Ed Beecher** of Duluth was one of the last to receive a copy of REMEMBRANCES (now out of print); he was just coming out of bypass surgery when his daughter presented it to him and it brought tears to his eyes ... **Peter Edwards** and **Sam Whitworth** are the latest Friends from England who have become 398th life members ... after searching for him for years, **George Hilliard** finally tracked down **Paul Coville**, 602 pilot of the last plane shot down of WW II (Pilsen); he died last March ... many thanks to **Stan Gabriel**, 603 turret specialist from Lowell, Wyoming, for contributing that old copy of YANK that told the story of the 8th Air Force in this issue of FLAK NEWS ... **Jim Davidson**, who commanded the 603rd for a brief time before moving up to the 1st Wing, is now president of the West Virginia 8th AF Historical Society ... **Selmer Gustaves**, another early 602 leader, is a recent rejoiner of the 398th ... our contact in the Czech Republic wishes to announce that the Skoda Works (our final target) is once again an all-Czech company after several years under U.S. ownership (Hilburton) ... FLAK NEWS would like to hear from one of you Pennsylvania guys who would love to be the reunion chairman in Harrisburg next year (August 26-29, 1998) ... **Charles J. Rayes III**, son of the late 603 mechanic, recalls his father telling of the "saddest night of my life" when the B-17 carrying CO **Judson Gray** failed to return from Berlin ... 53 years later, **Bob Ditmer** discovered that his A-2 jacket bore the name and serial number of another 600 bombardier, **Walter Poole**; latter had been shot down (without his A-2 jacket) and the QM folks passed it on to **Ditmer**; the two talked by phone about this recently and had a good laugh over the "historical" jacket re-issue ... it was not the principal reason for selecting the city as a stopover for the 1998 tour, but Trier just happens to be Germany's oldest city (16 BC) and oldest wine growing city ... **Joe Joseph**, our PX entrepreneur, couldn't sell many jackets, sweat shirts or umbrellas at the Spokane reunion 'cause the weather was so perfect, but he had a good run on patches, pins and caps ... our German Friends at Neuss have suggested that the June 1998 tour includes a stop at Remagen, the bridge that provided a Rhine crossing for Allied troops even as ME-262 fighter-bombers tried to knock it down ... our many members living in California will be glad to hear that the Aluminum Overcast is planning on a West Coast tour next year ... the Group history records sent here by our English Friends will give FLAK NEWS much additional information, including names of those who received the Purple Heart (and perhaps the names of those who were busted by **Col. Berryhill**) ... don't call your FLAK NEWS editor August 11-27; it's 50th anniversary time, to be celebrated on Maui ...

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved.
And mercy more than life.
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
'Til all success be nobleness
And every gain divine.



398th Bomb Group PX

	Qty.	Enter Total Cost
Cap - Fits All Sizes	_____	\$8.00 each _____
(Specify Squadron or Group)		
Jackets - Navy Blue	_____	\$25.00 each _____
(S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)		
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(M, L, XL, XXL)		
T-Shirts - Red, White, Navy Blue	_____	\$10.00 each _____
(S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)		
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(S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)		
Sweat Shirts - White, Light Blue	_____	\$10.00 each _____
(Children Sizes M & L, B-17 on Front)		
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Group Patch - "Hell From Heaven"	_____	\$6.00 each _____
Jacket Patch - Rectangle B-17	_____	\$4.00 each _____
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Bumper Sticker - 398th Bomb Group	_____	\$1.00 each _____
China Plate with B-17 - 9"	_____	\$15.00 each _____
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(Latest photo)		
Bolo Ties - Group Logo	_____	\$4.00 each _____
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B-17 Playing Cards (single)	_____	\$7.00 each _____
B-17 Playing Cards (double)	_____	\$12.00 each _____
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Delivery And Handing Add \$3.00,		
or \$4.00 if Order is Over \$20.00.		\$ _____
	Total	\$ _____

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Make checks payable to 398th Bomb Group Association PX (US funds).

Mail to: Joe Joseph, Defiance, OH 43512-8854

(Orders cannot be filled between November 1 and April 1.)