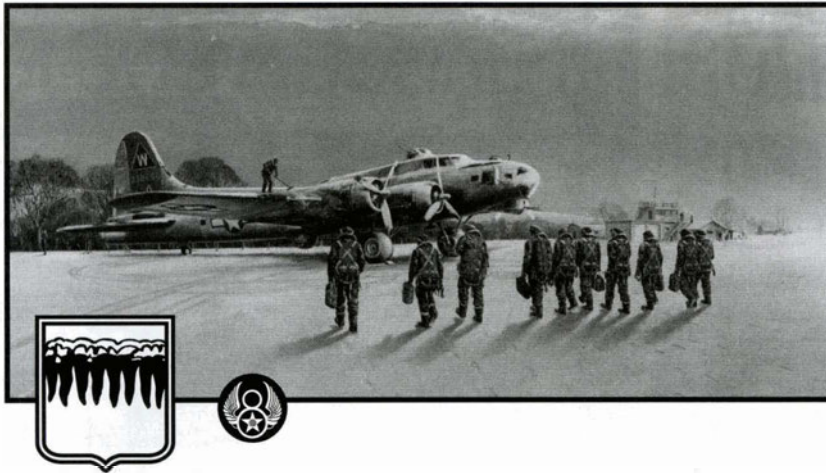




602



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398th BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8th AIR FORCE • 1st AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL. 16 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

OCTOBER 2001

271 At St. Paul Reunion

Four-Day Event Highly Successful

The weather in St. Paul was spectacular — too early for the big snows and too late for the big mosquitos. It was “just right” even if a bit too “brisk” for those coming from the southern climes.

Defying the terrorist uncertainty that followed “September 11” no less than 271 members of the 398th Bomb Group flew in from many parts of the nation to join in the activities of the 18th annual reunion. To be sure, many drove to St. Paul, Minnesota, but nevertheless there was not one cancellation attributed to fear of flying.

That could not be said for others due at the Radisson City Center Hotel at the

same time. And the nation as a whole experienced wholesale convention cancellations.

The reunion was held on October 3-4-5-6, 2001, a scant three weeks after the Attack on America.

Still, “America” was indeed on the minds and hearts of those who came to meet old friends and relive other days which also were fraught with danger.

The tenor of the banquets carried through this theme as organist Phyllis Rahe brought forth “God Bless America,” “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “America,” along with such sentimentals as “White Cliffs of Dover,” and the robust

“Air Force Song.”

Tears came easily and unashamedly as Lee Anne Bradley (our new data coordinator and daughter of the late engineer gunner Fred Bradley) recited a poem called, “A Veteran Died Today.” A stark reminder that WW II veterans are dying at a rate of 1000 per day.

Board member Lew Burke, subbing for George Schatz, hit some personal veins with his recitation of, “Who Will Remember?” A journey through all the wars, big and little, from WW I to the present. And we all had the same thought — how soon we forget.

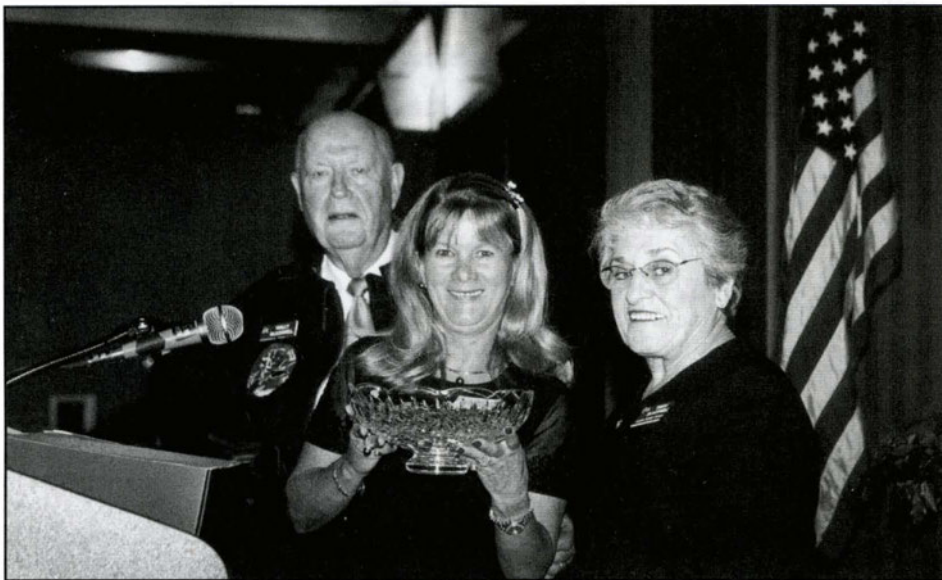
And then came Tom Dougherty, whose sometimes careless youth caused him much pain, found unexpected joy in later years at the discovery of a long, lost daughter. His recitation of “My Cup Has Overflowed,” was personally meaningful. As it was to others, also.

But there were also tours, trips, shopping and chatting as the four-day reunion passed ever so rapidly.

And there was also a Day to Remember for seven members of the 398th who boarded the Aluminum Overcast for a “ride to remember” at nearby Anoka County Airport.

It was more or less a “last minute” experience for them as the Oshkosh based B-17 that flies the 398th colors did not receive FAA clearance until just a few days before the October 5 flight. Remember, all of the nation’s aircraft were grounded after the September 11 attack.

While it was the “event of the day” for all seven, it was particularly emotional for reunion chairman Sharon Krause and her father, Paul Roderick, a 602 pilot. “It was awesome!”



SHARON KRAUSE holds the crystal bowl presented to her by **Wally and Teedy Blackwell** upon completion of the 2001 reunion in St. Paul. Sharon served as the Reunion Chairman. “It took more time than I had bargained for ... but I would do it again,” she said.

Continued on Page 3

From The President:

What He Said Would Happen Has Happened

As has been reported previously, I have taken the needed action to pare from our FLAK NEWS mailing list the members who have never supported the Association with dues, or have not paid dues since 1997.

This list numbers about 500, or almost one-fourth of the 2,200 to which the mailing list had grown since 1986.

This drastic action was necessary to reduce operating costs and maintain the caliber of FLAK NEWS as we have known it these past years.

The Board and general membership endorsed this concept at the group meetings in Savannah, Georgia, last year, and again at St. Paul.

It should be emphasized that no names will be purged from the 398th roster, which dates back to 1943. Only the FLAK NEWS mailing list will be affected by non payment of dues.

New "recruits" should be reminded that their membership – veteran or associate – should be accompanied by the \$20.00 annual membership fee.

Members who have been "pared" may be restored to the mailing list with a \$20.00 payment, payable to 398th Bomb Group, c/o Jim Haas, Perry, IA 50220- 0163.

— WALLY BLACKWELL
President

Dues Time "Out West"

"The Dues" have become vitally important to the 398th Bomb Group this past year, witness the statement by President Wally Blackwell in which he reveals that some 500 members have now become "ex-members" because they would not, or could not, support the Association.

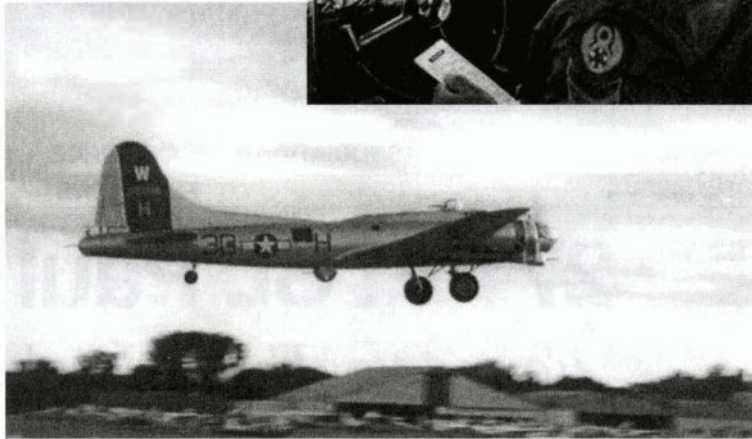
The Board's decision in taking such strong measures, said Wally, was based on a simple business practice. "We will not bankrupt the Association, even if it means trimming the FLAK NEWS roster to do it," he said.

Thus, the practice of dues will continue for all members, this time being offered to those living in the Far West, including Alaska and Hawaii.

Pre-addressed envelopes directed to Dues Manager Jim Haas have been included in the October newsletter for those living in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Plus Hawaii and Alaska.

These will be for the Year 2002. Persons dropped from the roster may "rejoin" by mailing \$20 to Jim Haas, Perry, IA 50220-0163.

Hal's Final B-17 Flight



HAL WEEKLEY ponders his pre-flight check list prior to taking off on July 27, 2001, at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, for the final time as a B-17 pilot. At the age of 80, Weekley was America's last World War II veteran ticketed by the FAA to pilot the B-17. He flew the Fortress in combat with the 398th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, in England. He continued on with his Air Force career, retiring after 30 years only to

resume his flying with the FAA and EAA as inspector and pilot. As a member of the 398th Association, he was instrumental in having the EAA's Aluminum Overcast restored, for which the EAA and the 398th honored him by using the 398th's Triangle W wing-group insignia and Weekley's 601 Squadron number (30) and his plane's call letter (H). As for retiring, Weekley said, "I wanted to get out while at the peak of my game."

— WALLY BLACKWELL, *President*

Presented to Weekley at the 398th Bomb Group Reunion, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 6, 2001.

"Quite A Career"

The banquet program introduced him only as "Quite A Career," but all those in attendance knew it was Hal Weekley.

President Wally Blackwell introduced him at the reunion, and ultimately presented him with the plaque pictured above.

Before bringing him to the stage, president Wally Blackwell recounted Weekley's tour as a 601 Squadron pilot who was shot down on his 20th mission, evaded, and returned to action. And 57 years later was still flying the plane that took him to combat in 1944.

He followed up his 398th experiences with 26 years in the Air Force, retiring as a colonel. This included training jet pilots for both Korea and Viet Nam. He then put in 14 years with the FAA, after which he flew 707's around the world for a travel club.

The last 24 years he has piloted the Aluminum Overcast for the EAA in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, during which time he recorded 413 flights in 30 states and 106 cities. He made 400 landings and flew with 29 different pilots. Over 100 398th members were on board with him during these years.

In his last flight at Oshkosh before 80,000 fans, he had two P-51's flying "top cover." These were Chuck Yeager and triple ace Bud Anderson.

Yes, Weekley had "Quite A Career."

Emotions Abound At Reunion

Ride in B-17 “Awesome”

Continued from Page 1

Others along for the ride were 398th treasurer Marilyn Gibb and her sister, Carolyn Wyatt, Fern Erickson (wife of 602 gunner Vaughn Erickson, Geoff Rice of England, and Willis Frazier, best known as the 601 operations officer.

Also along in the cockpit was Hal Weekley, who came to Anoka as part of the EAA B-17 entourage. Weekley, who had made his last “official” flight as a B-17 pilot, rode as co-pilot. (See Page 2 for Weekley story.)

Rice spent his “non flying” hours in the hotel’s Memory Room, where he displayed the fruits of his labors in researching names and numbers of the 398th aircraft, along with crew listings. He hopes to publish one day.

There was a variety of costumes displayed during the reunion, like the many A-2 jackets worn at the Farewell Banquet, B-17 flight jackets from the EAA, jackets with all kinds of emblems and patches.

But the most unique of all was displayed and paraded by Chuck Sasse, engineer-gunner on the 603 Zins crew. Sasse came out of a back room of the banquet hall wearing all parts and pieces of combat flight gear — helmet, goggles, throat mike, heated suit, jacket, fleece pants, boots, parachute harness ... the whole nine yards!



CHUCK SASSE
All His Combat Gear



THE A-2 JACKET PARADE at the reunion brought forth these men, some wearing their 1944 issue “old timers” and others in varying new stock. Left to right (front) are Bill Engle, Leon Kershaw, Bob Howard and Bob Bowen. Center row — Dale Brown, Hal Weekley, Ed Jones and Allen Ostrom. Back row — Paul Rodrick, Jack Lee, Wally Blackwell, Bob Knowles and Vaughn Erickson. (Photo by Randy Stange.)

Sasse said he returned to the states shortly after VE-Day and “nobody seemed to care if I turned in this stuff of not, so I took it home.”

And he has kept the gear all these 56 years.

Herb Wilson was all set to tell about the amazing June 2001 welcome given him and members of his 602 Godwin crew when they visited the place in France where they were shot down in 1944. However, on the night of his presentation he came down with laryngitis. No voice!

Allen Ostrom pinch-hit for him and told “some” of the story. Then he said to watch for the October FLAK NEWS and “you can read all about it.” (See Pages 4 and 9.)

There were guided tours the entire time, even if one scheduled tour to the St. Paul Cathedral was cancelled for lack of patrons. Some members still went on their own and others caught a glimpse of it while on another tour called, “The Best of St. Paul.” The “Best of Minneapolis” was also featured, so the 398th visitors saw a lot of the Twin Cities. Including the largest mall in America called, naturally, the “Mall of America.”

Two coach loads took in the nearby city of Stillwater, there to view the spectacular homes built in the mid-1900’s by wealthy “lumber barons.” And to enjoy a spectacular luncheon at the famous Lowell Hotel. (Not to mention a few shops along Main Street.)

Heidi, one of the tour guides on the Stillwater Tour, began to “lose it” on the way home when she tried to convey her thankfulness to the veterans on her

Wally Again Voted Prexy

Wally Blackwell was again reelected as 398th Bomb Group president, thus remaining as the group’s only leader besides the late Bill Comstock, who served for 20 years.

Other officers re-elected were Al Turney, vice president; Harold Stallcup, secretary and Marilyn Gibb, treasurer.

Board of Directors voted in again were Lewis Burke, Louis Stoffer, Arnold Schneider and Keith Anderson.

Others voted in again were George Hilliard, contact officer; James Haas, dues manager; Dallas Ebest, historian; Joe Joseph, PX officer; Ralph Hall and Bob Bowen, monument fund; Lee Anne Bradley, data coordinator; and Allen Ostrom, public relations.

One new position was added — *e-mail coordinator*. This will be handled by Sharon Krause, who served as the St. Paul reunion chairman.

coach. “If it were not for you boys back then...” And the tears came.

Later, Heidi confided that some of her concerns at this time were because of September 11 ... and for her 18-year-old son.

“America” also was on the music list for the “Mississippi River Boat Dinner Cruise.” This was provided by the “Bar

Continued on Page 7

Inspiring Ceremonies Thrill Crew Members, Family:

“What memories we have of you! The good times we had together and the tears that came to everyone’s eyes at one time or another. But they were good tears, tears of happiness, tears of warmth, and tears of love.”

— Col. Bernard Delfino, president
French Supporter Squadron (CAF), Cornebarrieu, France



TWO MEMBERS of the 602 Godwin crew, Merrill Butikofer and Herb Wilson, stand beside the American flag that marks the spot where their plane came to rest after being shot down at Cornebarrieu, France, in 1944. They visited the area last June, along with members of the Harold Gnesin family.



ISABELLE LESSER (far left), sister of Harold Gnesin, the 602 bombardier killed when his plane was hit over France, stands with members of her family at the memorial stone erected in Gnesin’s memory at Cornebarrieu, France. The memorial service was part of a week long celebration honoring the 602 John Godwin crew. Mrs. Lesser received a special medal on behalf of her cousin, as did the two other crew members on the visit to France.

Final Scene Plays Out In France

The scene was introduced 57 years ago, and it played out in a series of dramas that included the demise of a 398th B-17, one member killed and the others off to PW camps.

The war was finally over and the cast of characters went their various ways. And yet, the play was really not over as the last act was still to come.

That scene was played out in June 2001 when two members of the John Godwin crew of the 602nd Squadron — J. Herb Wilson and Merrill Butikofer, along with an entourage of family members and friends, returned to France, there to be embraced by loving French men and women in a week-long celebration.

Wilson and Butikofer were joined by Isabelle Lesser, the younger sister of Harold Gnesin, the crew’s bombardier and lone casualty, plus eight Gnesin family members.

Also there were Wilson’s wife, June, daughter Army Lt. Col. Lynn Henselman, and son-in-law Army Col. Richard Dennis. And Butikofer’s son, Karl, and daughter, Karla Lawson.

The “stage” for the final act of this drama was Cornebarrieu, France, where the Godwin Fortress came to rest on a mission to the Toulouse area on June 25, 1944.

The Godwin Fort was hit over Blagnac and crashed on the outskirts of Cornebarrieu. Gnesin went down with the plane while eight others parachuted to safety.

Many cities in France have honored American airmen killed in their country during WW II. In this case, Cornebarrieu joined with residents and officials from neighboring Villaudric, Toulouse, Blagnac, and Montbartier in a week long celebration that included a fly-past of a B-17 from Paris.

Special medals were presented to Wilson, Butikofer, and Gnesin’s sister for “actions which significantly contributed to restoring the liberty of France and the ultimate freedom of Western Europe.”

In return, Wilson and Butikofer presented a framed picture of the Anstey stained glass window to the St. Clement Church in Cornebarrieu. This was the stained glass window that was dedicated at Anstey last year.

The Yank party of 16 was treated to one ceremony after another, highlighted by a Grand Reception for 300 guests at the Toulouse City hall. The above printed words, offered by Col. Bernardo Delfino,

Continued on Page 9

ENGLAND 2002 TOUR BECKONS

“Full Crew” Still To Be Formed

Like the time it takes to berth the Queen Elizabeth 2, or to ease her away from the dock on a slack tide, so it is with the time it is taking to round out a “full crew” for the 398th England Tour coming up in June 2002.

Not that any specific number is required for a “full crew.” But a full coach load of veterans and family members would be exciting to behold when pulling into Nuthampstead, Anstey, Duxford, Madingley, Cambridge, Hertford, Hendon, London, and all those special places in between.

The England portion of the tour is scheduled for June 5 through June 14, with options for flying home on June 14 OR continuing on to New York aboard the QE-2, arriving on June 20. (Six glorious days aboard the luxury liner.)

Those who are still “on the bubble” before making a decision are urged to call Barbara Fish at 1-800-423-5454. She will provide all the tour details (or one can look up all the information in the July 2001 FLAK NEWS).

As of October press time, 19 members had checked in with their required \$200 down payment. However, there was another group of 40 or more who had given

“We’ll Meet Again” Says Reunion Guest

Peter Blyth, who was “born in the Blitz” near London, was a Farewell Banquet guest at the St. Paul reunion, and he left the gathering telling his many new friends that, “we’ll meet again.”

This was a strong suggestion that he and his wife, Linda, would like to be on the 2002 Return to England Tour, and come home on the QE-2.

“I have heard about Nuthampstead and your memorial, and the new stained glass window at Anstey. We look forward to seeing all these with you next year.”

In his talk, Blyth recalled the words of England’s prime minister, Tony Blair, speaking of the September 11 attack —

“From this nation goes our deepest sympathy and prayers for the victims and our profound solidarity with the American people. We were with you at the first. We will stay with you to the last.”

And then Blyth, currently a Radisson Hotel executive, led in the singing of “White Cliffs of Dover.”



THE LONDON EYE

“strong indication” that they would be on the “Troopship Tour.”

Among the early signees were president Wally & Teedy Blackwell (who is already laying out his “Wally’s Tour” of Station 131); Jeanne & Randy Stange; Russ & Millie Reed; Bill & Fran Fisher; Mel & Gail Kessler; John & Rosemary Cosco; Randy & Rebecca Madlung; Glen & Jean Knight; Willis & Ruby Frazier; and Allen & Geg Ostrom, who will be the tour coordinator again (the 10th such mission since 1986).

The above-mentioned “Knight” is the brother of Albert Knight, who was among the nine killed on the Charles Searl 600 Squadron B-17 when it crashed and blew up in a field near Penn while en route to a bombing mission.

Glen Knight was located some years ago by British research specialist Johanna Sienkiewicz, who, along with Ron Setter, arranged for the 1990 visit to Penn. A meaningful Service of Remembrance was held at the very spot of the crash, the farm then occupied by Setter’s parents.

Following the 1990 luncheon held at Penn, Vicar Oscar Muspratt wrote the following words —

“Ron and Johanna worked extremely hard to arrange a fitting remembrance

All Eyes Are On “London Eye”

of your colleagues, who had made the supreme sacrifice here.

“What I have done throughout the years has been done with a sense of gratitude, and our simple way of remembering the immense debt we owe as a village for being spared by them from such appalling destruction.

“I was deeply touched by the warm commendations shared by your members.”

Glenn and Jean Knight have made arrangements to meet with Sienkiewicz during the tour visit to London.

They will be the second set of relatives of a Searl crew member to make the journey to England. The sister and brother-in-law of the pilot — Searl — made the trip in 1990.

Many exciting side trips are being planned while in London, not the least of which is a “flight” on the “London Eye.”

This is a world’s highest observation wheel, offering unrivaled views and totally new perspectives of London’s landmarks. The 398th tour will board its own “capsule” in the afternoon of Thursday, June 13. That ride will provide the principal topic of conversation as the group attends a Farewell Dinner that evening.

The next day, Friday, June 14, the group will begin talking about what lies ahead the following six days — the ride home aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2.

Although they can’t be counted “in” until Barbara Fish acknowledges their down payment, the following folks have at least suggested they will be on the tour, which should include either a British Air ride home from London or a QE-2 ride home from Southampton —

Herb & Doris Goren; Lowell Culver and Jan McCurdy; Merwin Hornshuh and son James; Helen Beatovich Beam; Bill & Cathy McLaughlin; Hal & Billie Weekley; Bob & Jane Bowen; Pam Sirota and son George; Harold & Marilyn Clyne; Ross Moxey; Georgia Ulmschneider; Len Streitfeld; Gerald Sheffer; Al & Daline Turney; Jack Armitage; Bob & Helen Lamons; Bill Palmer; Mary Ludlam; Bob & Eloise Hart; Howard & Jane Traeder; Paul Keenan and daughters; Keith Anderson; Vern & Cecelia Kling; Lou Stoffer; Jim White; Willis & Ruby Frazier.

An updated tour list will be published in the next FLAK NEWS — January 2002. And the final “loading list” in the April issue.

It's Portland Next Year

The search for the "right city" for the 398th's 2002 Reunion City spanned the continent and consumed many hours of researching and questioning.

After a number of location "rejects," the decision came via a B-17, a Ford Tri-Motor, and the "world's largest aircraft."

All these, plus the prospect of our own 398th veterans playing starring roles in telling the "general public" how it was in World War II B-17 combat.

It all added up to PORTLAND, OREGON, and the dates will be September 25-26-27-28, 2002.

A beautifully restored B-17, owned by Evergreen Aviation at nearby McMinnville, Oregon, is only one of the many War Birds to be seen (and flown in) during the first of two 398th days at Evergreen's giant new Museum that houses many of the company's War Birds.

The Ford Tri-Motor also will be available for flights.

But not their gigantic Hughes H-4 Flying Boat or *Spruce Goose*.

The "world's largest aircraft," housed for many years next to the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California, was purchased by Evergreen in 1992 and barged up the Pacific Coast to Portland. It is now on display in the Museum, which adjoins the Evergreen airstrip from which the B-17 and other War Birds fly (including Evergreen's fleet of 747's).

The Museum staff will make available their B-17 for special groups, including school children, who can chit-chat with the 398th veterans, decked out in their squadron caps and A-2 jackets.

Additional tours and activities also will be arranged for the four-day reunion in a Portland hotel.

50-Calibre Syncopation

Ralph Stilwell, who did his 398th time as a bombsight maintenance and electronic technician in the 603rd armament section, had to decline a special invitation to "perform" at the St. Paul reunion.

However, he still has the instrument he would have played had he been able to come. There is only one like it, and he made it at Nuthampstead.

A natural musician, Stilwell created his first instrument when he was 12 years old, a "bottle-o-phone" made of bottles tuned with water.

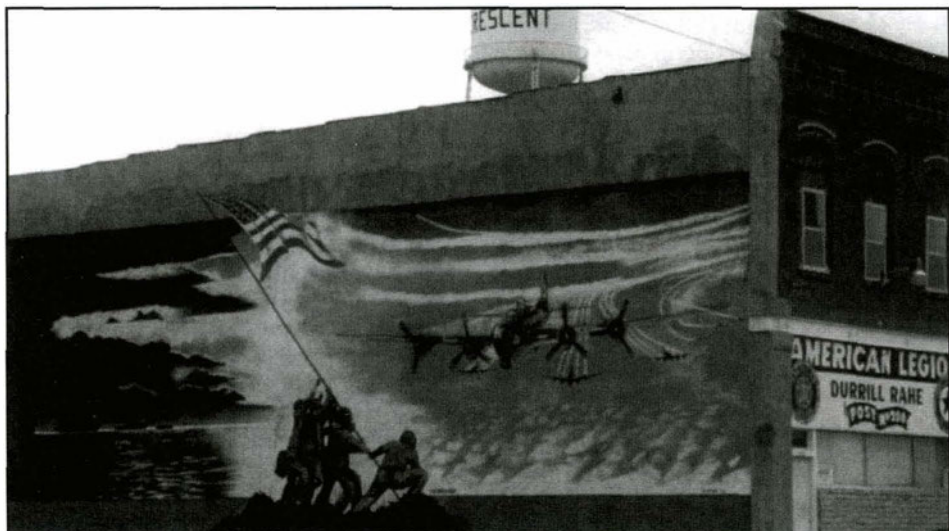
In 1944, between jobs with the 603rd, Stilwell "threw together" a nameless, two-octave bell-toned instrument that "gave out with soothing syncopated melodies."

The instrument is 15 inches long, eight inches high and looks like a miniature vibraphone. The keyboard is made from aluminum, the frame from B-17 wing metal, and the resonator tubes from spent 50-calibre shells.

The mallets? Knitting needles with stacked rubber faucet washers glued to the ends.

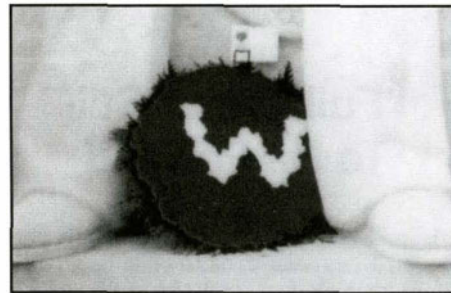
Since 1944, Stilwell has continued to dabble in his musical fantasies and is well known at local hobby stores. His profession, however, has been more tuned to the "meat and potatoes" of music.

He has been a professional piano tuner for the past 50 years. He lives in Decatur, Illinois.



IT'S B-17 TIME every day on Main Street in Crescent, Oklahoma. This beautiful mural appears on the outside wall of the Durrill Rahe American Legion Post No. 200. Not only is it a B-17, but it also carries the colors of the 398th Bomb Group. The Legion Post honors 602 pilot Max Rahe's older brother, Durrill, killed in action in WW I. "Max may have had something to do with the mural," said his wife, Phyllis, who "may have had something to do" with the organ music at the St. Paul reunion.

UK's Aldridge Lays Wreath For 398th



MADINGLEY, England — UK Friend Gordon Aldridge represented the 398th Bomb Group last spring at the annual Memorial Day Service held at the American Military Cemetery, Madingley.

On a bright sunny day, Gordon placed the 398th Bomb Group wreath at the Wall of the Missing together with over 118 other floral tributes representing other military units and organizations.

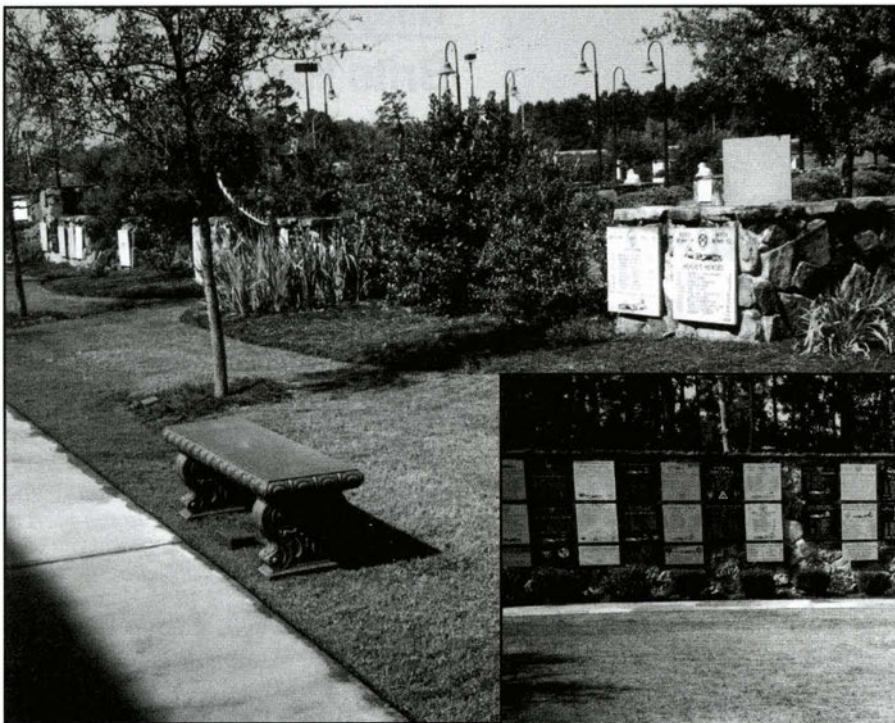
Sixteen men from the 398th rest beneath the beautiful green grass at Madingley while 14 other names are inscribed on the Wall of the Missing.

An impressive flyover by USAF F-16 and the B-17, Sally B, brought the day's ceremonies to a memorable conclusion.

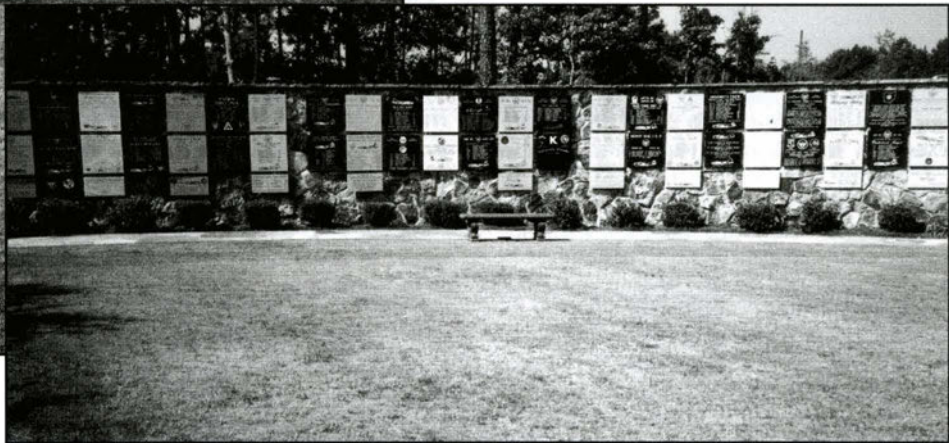
Madingley is on the Back to England "Troopship Tour" itinerary next June, 2002.



RALPH STILWELL
Knitting Needle Melodies



Rest Here, Courtesy 398th
 THIS BENCH, centered on the walk in front of the Wall of Valor at the Mighty 8th Heritage Museum, was provided by the 398th Bomb Group, along with a memorial tree. These were paid for by the funds left over from the 398th memorial that was dedicated last year at the Savannah, Georgia, museum. The Wall of Valor plaques in the background honor individual 8th Air Force crews, including some from the 398th.



Reunion Hearts Touched

Continued from Page 3

bary Coast Jazz Trio" — Banjo, Clarinet and Bass. (And the Bass guy also played trumpet and sax.)

They were really sensational, especially upon realizing that the clarinet player was blind!

Lou Stoffer, who did the lead work in raising money for the 398th Memorial at the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum, got all kinds of applause when he announced that extra monies from the campaign has gone for the purchase of a bench and tree at the museum (See Page 7). And also, for a chandelier for the "Chapel of the Fallen Eagles," now under constructions.

Don Gaddo, whose speeches in Oklahoma and Savannah were so appreciated, and who was scheduled again in St. Paul, sent word that he would be unable to appear.

His speech, "Oshkosh Was Incredible" was to tell of his time at the Oshkosh Airventure and his ride with Hal Weekley on the B-17. The speech was read by Marilyn Gibb, who held up ad-

mirably until —

"The entire gathering of people, about 500 strong, rose to recognize a veteran of World War II, a member of the 398th. And four minutes later, after a thunderous salute of applause and cheers, these grateful people returned to their seats and suddenly I felt unworthy of my appearance."

Barbara Fish, in St. Paul to tell about the England tour next year, moved to the podium to help Marilyn finish —

"The vision of miniature cars and trucks danced in my mind and while searching the heavens from my window of the waist gunner's position I swear I could hear the strains of "The Old Rugged Cross" reverberate against the fuselage of a B-17. While there, I felt your presence. The presence of you all, and all those who proudly served in the 398th Bomb Group.

"And I wish you well. As Wally Blackwell says —

"KEEP 'EM FLYING."

8th Air Force To Celebrate 60th Anniversary

The 398th Bomb Group was a part of the 8th Air Force for a little more than a year in 1944-45, soon 60 long years ago.

Much happened in that short period of time, and much more has happened since. And "all that" will be part of a symposium to be held at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum, Savannah, Georgia, January 25-27, 2002.

It will be a part of the "Sixtieth Anniversary of the 8th Air Force" celebration. A reception featuring music and hors d'oeuvres will open the program on January 25, sponsored by the Savannah Wing of the 8AFHS. R.S.V.P. — 912-354-6880.

The General Hap Arnold Lecture Series on January 26 will feature noted UK historian and author Roger Freeman, current 8th Air Force commander Lt. Gen. Tom Keck and others. R.S.V.P. — 912-748-8888.

A free public program and memorial service will be held at the Memorial Gardens on January 25. R.S.V.P. — 912-748-8888.

Great Response For Lee's Questionnaire

Thank you to all who have responded to the 398th BG Questionnaire. I have received close to 300 responses, which I think is just wonderful. Just about all of you listed your crew members, so at an average of six names per response, that's 1800 names and positions you have supplied me

with! I couldn't be more pleased.

The 398th database is becoming very accurate and complete thanks to all of you. Also, a special thanks to those of you who submitted your stories and crew photos; they too will be added to our archives.

— LEE ANNE BRADLEY
 Data Coordinator

FLAK NEWS Taps List

FLAK NEWS' annual publication of the 398th Bomb Group "Taps List" will appear in the next issue — January 2002. Now is the time to advise the editor of any late additions — Seattle, WA 98107.

Sergeant(s) Honored At Son's Ceremony

Bob Schuh did most of his 398th gunnery and toggler missions with the Bill McLaughlin crew of the 600th, closing out with the Don Kenyon and Don Grinter crews.

So he came home to Wisconsin to raise a family, teach school, retire and take a parent's normal interest in the careers of his three sons.

Little did he know that this "interest" in his son Mark's career would also involve himself, and much more intimately than anything that ever happened to him at Station 131.

Not the least of which was receiving an American flag and flag case with the inscription, "In appreciation of honorable service to the U.S. in 1943-45. 35 B-17 combat missions."

Senior Master Sergeant Mark Schuh completed 22 years in the Air Force this year and they honored him with a Retirement Ceremony May 31, 2001, at Ellsworth Air Force Base, Rapid City, South Dakota.

SMS Schuh began his career at Chunate Field, Illinois, where he was an

honor graduate as "Egress Systems Technician." He served at Holloman AFB, Langley AFB, Selfridge AFB, and in Holland, England and Germany.

He was awarded "Aircraft Accessory Systems Technology and Instructor of Technology and Military Science" degrees from the Air Force and accumulated three rows of commendation ribbons during his career.

Sgt. Schuh (McLaughlin crew, 1944) and his wife, Angie, attended the Rapid City function and he found himself on the receiving end of an American flag that had been flown on three modern day bombers — B-52, B-2 and B-1 — impressively folded and placed in the case with the inscription.

With tears in his eyes, he received the flag to the applause of his family and the many men and women attending the ceremony.

Sgt. Schuh (McLaughlin crew, 1944) taught English at Chilton, Wisconsin, for 34 years. He and Angie have two other sons, Greg and Jerry.

Troopship Tour Item:

Brits Have A Way With Their Words

The Brits can always be counted on to speak and write "proper" English ... even when describing a London hotel.

The Harrington Hall Hotel, where the 398th "Troopship Tour" members will stay next year, is described like this —

"Superlative value with typical English ambiance. Two top-hatted doormen work in tandem to open the double doors to this neoclassical terrace crowned with turrets and abloom with flowers.

"The austere but elegant lobby offers little more than a centerpiece bouquet and quick-to-respond staff. Next to the marble entrance is a lounge with a flotilla of modern sofas in strong reds and greens. These flank the row of stools at the paneled alcove bar. Beyond is a large restaurant wrapped around obese pillars.

"An international à la carte menu with English classics supplements buffets and carvery items, and tables are spaced for privacy.

"Amenities include air conditioning, minibars, teamakers, trouser presses, hair dryers and combination baths clad in marble."

I can't wait.

Life In England's Nissen Hut:

Few Pleasant Memories Recalled

The following story was written by Ken Blakesbrough, a B-24 co-pilot. He reveals some of the "impersonal" facets of 8th Air Force Nissen hut living during WW II in England.

To me, a Nissen hut during the winter of 1944-45 was a man-made cave. The interior was always gloomy, damp and cold. The windows were covered by thick blackout curtains, the overhead light bulbs, two to a hut, gave scant lighting.

The scarcity of coal for the potbelly stove was another reason for avoiding your hut. As a result, the time spent in the hut was mostly for sleeping. Off duty time was largely spent at the officers club where there was a huge fireplace which gave off some warmth, if you stood close enough.

A hut provided quarters for up to 12 men but my hut usually housed 10. There were no chairs, no table. Men in lower bunks could sit down, but men in upper bunks were disadvantaged.

In my hut no lingering ties of friendship seemed to develop. For example, the four officers of my crew shared my hut with four other officers from the time I arrived in December until they finished their tour in March.

Within a matter of days, they received travel orders and we never heard from

them again. No final good-byes, no exchange of addresses. Why was this so?

To begin with, the Nissen provided cramped and uncomfortable quarters, in atmosphere not conducive to social conversation. We tended to share limited personal information about ourselves. The infrequent talks seldom touched on serious matters such as the war or future plans. I didn't know who was married, nor anyone's home state with the exception of the bombardier nicknamed "Tex", who I assumed was from Texas.

There was another factor, and it was probably the primary one, working against the creation of friendships, namely combat missions. We tried to deny it to ourselves but the missions concentrated and dominated our thoughts. You couldn't help thinking that maybe tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, or the next day after that, you might be wounded, face captivity or even death. A man was meditative about missions and survival. Maybe we tried not to know each other too well, so if a man from the hut was posted as missing, or killed, the loss would be less personal.

Your bunk bed was a repository for your mail and other items. One day I returned from a mission and found a good-looking box lying on the bed. It was an Air Medal,

given for six missions. Additional increments of six missions brought flimsy sheets of paper to the bunk informing you that Oak Leaf Clusters were added to your Medal. This method of award delivery lessened the luster of the award. No ceremonial rites, no hand shakes.

The practice of rating an officer with an efficiency report continued even in combat zones. In view of what one of my reports contained, or more correctly what it didn't contain, I was lucky that my report even reached me. The rating, completed by the squadron commander, stated "the only rating I can fairly give this officer is UNKNOWN." By then I'd been in the squadron almost three months, I'd flown a lot of combat missions and been awarded an Air Medal and two Oak Leaf clusters. It was a strange feeling to be "unknown".

If there was anything good to be said about living in a Nissen hut, it was the omission of a mainstay of military routine in the states, the inspections of quarters. We took advantage of this; we wasted no effort to make up bunks or to be neat. This disarray added further to the man-made cave atmosphere of the Nissen hut.

U.S. Flag Flies For Yanks

Continued from Page 5

aptly described the feelings of both the guests and hosts at the Farewell Banquet.

The farewell evening ended with 150 singing "Auld Lang Syne," along with "much kissing and hand shaking."

Col. Jean E. Roeder of the French Supporter Squadron (CAF) was the principal organizer of the celebration, combining with the French "Escadrille Croix du Sud" and 398th contact Wilson.

A symbolic tombstone with a plaque had been placed in the Cornebarrieu cemetery in 1944 for Gnesin and tended all these years by local residents. Last June, in one of the many ceremonies, a floral arrangement was placed at the site by Gnesin's family and the two Godwin crew members, Wilson and Butikofer.

The B-17 pilot from Paris used the red, white and blue ribbon markers at the memorial site for his fly-past.

A park will be developed around the monument and a street will be named in Gnesin's memory.

Visibly stirred by the emotions of the day were Gnesin's family members, including his sister, Isabelle Lesser and her daughters Ruth Lesser, Phyllis Mellinger, Jean Perrine, and Linda Williams; plus granddaughters Kimberly Williams and Alexis Perrine; niece Fern Gnesin and boyfriend Michael Galoppo.

Among the many memorable incidents noted during the week occurred in the village of Villaudric, where an 81-year-old mother and her daughter hung out a "liberationera" homemade American flag in honor of the American guests. A service was held in the village in memory of the 19 residents who were killed in reprisal by the Germans for the killing of a German soldier by a Resistance fighter.

Wilson and Butikofer were especially interested in seeing the bomb craters still visible left after the 398th bombed the German ammunition dump near Montbartier.

Also of interest was the visit to Chateau du Ferradou, which served as the German Air Force Headquarters in Blagnac. This was where the surviving Godwin crew members were held for five days before being transferred to PW camps. In 1998, Wilson was among those on the 398th tour who visited Moosberg, Germany, and saw the huts where he served out his PW time.

Like the Colonel said —

"What memories we have of all of you! The good times we had together and the tears that came to everyone's eyes at one time or another. But they were good tears, tears of happiness, tears of warmth, and tears of love."



A B-17 FORTRESS flew down from Paris for a special fly-past during a ceremony at Cornebarrieu, France, honoring members of the 602 Godwin crew and family who visited the 1944 crash site and nearby communities last June. One member of the crew, Harold Gnesin, was killed but eight others parachuted to safety ... and PW camps.



IT WAS OLD, worn and handmade, but this French woman from Villaudric brought out her WW II Resistance flag in honor of the 398th visitors from America who came to the region where their B-17 was shot down on June 25, 1944.

Troopship Memory:

Our Ken Elwood crew was one of the first complete crews from the 398th to finish our tours. Our final mission was on August 8, 1944. We left on September 10, 1944.

And we also must have made one of the fastest Troopship trips back to the states. And in the company of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. And with a printed dinner menu, no less.

Churchill kept the Queen Mary waiting for three days as workers prepared his quarters for the journey to meet President Roosevelt in Canada.

The trip took only three days, 19 hours even while maneuvering to avoid the German sub fleet. Meanwhile, the few of us on board (3000) enjoyed the fine food, movie theater and soft chairs and sofas.

But above and beyond the Queen Mary's luxury was the realization that we had survived our combat tour. And to this day we still appreciate the "crew Brotherhood" we developed during combat.

GEORGE SCHATZ, bombardier
STAN ALPERT, navigator
600th Squadron

QUEEN MARY MENU

Sunday, September 10, 1944

Dinner

Creme Americaine

Darne of Salmon, Mousseline

or

Calf's Feet, Poulette

or

Roast Long Island Duckling,
Savoury and Apple Sauce

French Beans

Egg Plant,
Lyonnaise

Boiled and Roast Potatoes

Fedora Pudding

Dessert

Coffee

LETTERS



PILSEN, Czech Republic
September 13, 2001
Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Pilsen citizens and myself let me express my deepest sympathy and concern with regard to Tuesday's terrifying attack on the United States. I consider this an attack

on values that we share.

When liberating Pilsen in 1945 you were there with us, and again 50 years later to help us celebrate. In these hard times of 2001 we are with you.

Jiří Šneberger

Lord Mayor of the City of Pilsen

September 17, 2001
Rockville, Maryland

Dear Lord Mayor of Pilsen:

On behalf of the entire membership of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association, I sincerely thank you for your much appreciated and precious message to us.

Members of our Association have experienced many cherished moments in the City of Pilsen during our journeys there as returning veterans. We do share these mutual feelings of patriotism and caring at this difficult time.

With heartfelt thanks and great hope for the future of our countries.

Wally Blackwell, President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

It is with great grief I am writing this letter to you after what happened in your country on September 11. It seems almost unreal. So many innocent people killed. People in Europe as well as the U.S. are in shock. All the flags here were on half mast and memorial services were held in a lot of cathedrals. This is not only an attack on the U.S., it is an attack on the entire free world.

Pär Nilhammer (tour guide), Göteborg, Sweden

Accept, please, our moral support and deep, sincere expression of sorrow over sacrifice that U.S.A. had to make in the fight for freedom against evil of terrorism. God bless you — America.

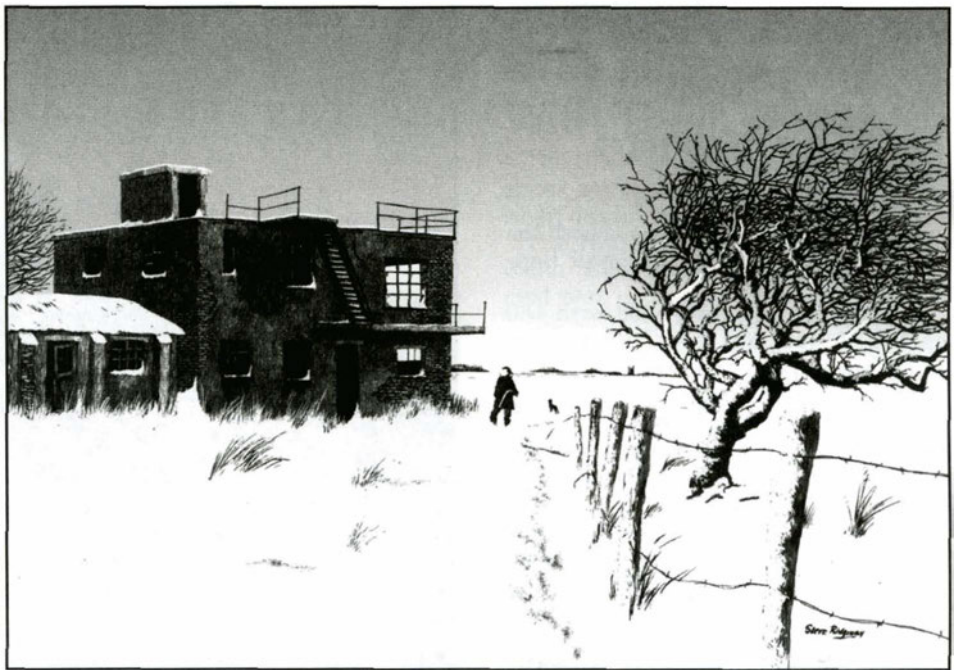
Family Ladislav Kohout, Pilsen, Czech Republic

Please remember you are in our thoughts and prayers at this very sad time. We share your grief and agony. How could people do such a thing?

Ron Setter, High Wycombe, England

I Hope you all are safe after the terrible tragedies in the states. Anything more horrific is hard to imagine.

Lesley Rolfe, Wakefield, England



East Anglia Ghost

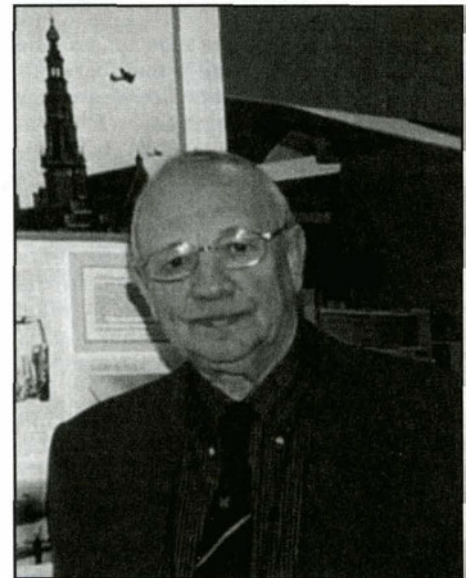
STEVE RIDGEWAY, the English artist, calls this abandoned B-24 WW II tower "Dis-tant Echo." It could be a reminder of the 398th tower before it was completely torn down many years ago. Look closely at the tree. There is more there than just branches.

The Eighth Air War In "Navigator Speak"

Between watching the bombs fall on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and completing two tours as a navigator with the 94th Bomb Group, Abel Dolim should have some "credibility," to say the least.

And this credibility is quite obvious in his book, "Yesterday's Dragons." A story of the young men who faced those "dragons" day after day in the Eighth Air Force. It is available for \$19.95 from Communication Concepts, 35111 Newark Blvd # 19, Newark, CA 94560.

Like any good navigator, Dolim confesses "I didn't make many mistakes," and navigators from near and far will appreciate reading about the air war in their own language.



HENNY QUIK
Remembers B-17 Food Drops

Henny Quik, longtime chronicler of WW II allied air crashes in Holland, was a recent participant in a Liberation Day exposition in Leiden, Holland.

There were many exhibits of the famous food drops that took place in that country in April and May 1945 featuring B-17's and B-24's.

The persistent (and grateful) Quik located three members of a 390th crew that dropped food to his hometown of Valkenburg and invited them to the country's celebration in 1995.

Quik and others plan to be in England next year and hope to meet with members of the 398th tour party in Nuthampstead.

Troopship Memory:

I finished my tour with the 398th Bomb Group on November 30, 1944, (Merseburg) and was shipped to Liverpool on December 10 for the trip home, supposedly on the Queen Mary.

However, it was filled up when we arrived, so we boarded another Merchant Marine troopship. We had Netherlands Marines, German PW's, and an assortment of GI's. It was a "pleasant" nine-day trip to New York, especially knowing I had survived Merseburg a few times.

Our troopship: USS WAKEFIELD, which had brought the 398th to England earlier that year.

RALPH TROUT, tail gunner,
Slavin Crew, 600

BRIEF-things



"Clearing & Colder" has been the FLAK NEWS logo from the beginning, not to mention the picture given to friends in the US and abroad, plus the 398th art for letterheads, envelopes, and business cards ... today we must report that **Jack Olson**, the artist who conceived the picture as part of the B-17's 50th birthday celebration in Seattle in 1985, has passed away; Jack, Boeing artist and engineer, flew B-24's in the 8th AF ... if you hear from your buddies or crew mates asking, "I didn't get my FLAK NEWS, did you?" — just ask them a simple question, "did you pay your dues?" ... like **Wally** wrote, "what we said would happen, has happened" ... among the many "latter day" stories of heroism to surface (now 56 years later) is that of gunner **Andy Moon** of the 600 **Ted Johnston** crew who kicked out three 500-pounders, much to the chagrin of a British destroyer below in the Channel ... we can get a hint of our own ages when we hear of a grandson of a Nuthampstead Friend (**Eunice Fox**) serving in the British Army in Cyros ... are there any of you "out there" who trained on B-17's in Spokane in 1943 who remember that Geiger Field was once named Sunset Airport (and today is Spokane International Airport?) ... ever-thoughtful **George Schatz**, among the early replacement crews, would like to know what went through the minds of the original crews when they loaded up and saw BERLIN on the briefing map the morning of May 7, 1944, the group's second mission ... send your thoughts to the FLAK NEWS editor ... the Hughes Flying Boat, the "Spruce Goose," is not made of spruce, but of birch, bonded in layers of plywood and Duramold ... only **Howard Hughes** himself flew the plane, all of one minute at an altitude of 70 FEET in 1947; it never flew again (we'll see it in Portland next year) ... the "Ground War" photo layout in the July FLAK NEWS brought together a couple of 603 buddies for the first time in 57 years — **Henry Baethge** and **Houston Boothe** ... **Tommy Garcia**, engineer and Warbird restorer, reports that **Dellon Baumgardner** of the 306th was the next-to-the-last B-17 FAA ticketed pilot after our own **Hal Weekley**; he piloted the CAF's Texas Raiders ... **Garcia** is now knee deep in helping restore an F4 for the CAF and it will be the only such fighter in civilian hands; **Tommy** predicts that the F4 will one day carry the same aura as our Fortresses enjoy today ... the B-17 Co-Op has identified no less than 48 B-17's around the world, but only 13 actually flying, including the Aluminum Overcast; a complete listing of all the Forts, describing their present condition, will be published in an upcoming issue of FLAK NEWS ... did you notice the AP story about the tail gunner who lost six of his buddies at the hands of angry Germans after a raid on Ruesselsheim? ... after 57 years the tail gunner returned to that city to receive an official apology for the killings ... "I have long since forgiven them and I have no animosity in my heart," he said ... (The Other Side of the War) ... **Colonel Hunter's** widow, **Maria**, is doing "just fine" in her Washington, DC, retirement home, but confined to a wheelchair ... **Ross Moxey** is looking for another single to accompany him on next year's England QE-2 tour (call **Barbara Fish**) ... WW II bomber crew types, be they USAF or RAF, have much in common, witness the reunion at Duxford of three Lancaster veterans ... **Fred Fish**, **Harry Helmsley** and **Ted Friend** — their first Lanc visit since being "demobbed" in 1946 ... **Fred** is a neighbor of **Wilfrid Dimsdale** at Meesden and hosted **Jack Madling** and his family on their 398th England tour visits ...

398th Bomb Group PX

Qty.	CLOTHING	Cost	Total
___	Cap - Fits All Sizes 600, 601, 602, 603 Group	\$8.00 ea	___
___	Jackets - Navy, B-17 on Front S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$25.00 ea	___
___	T-Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$10.00 ea	___
___	Sweat Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$15.00 ea	___
___	Golf Shirts Group Logo on Front Navy or White - M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea	___
___	Turtle Neck Shirt - B-17 on Collar White - S, M, L, XL	\$20.00 ea	___
___	Children's Sweatshirts (Blue or White) M, L - B-17 on Front	\$10.00 ea	___
CD'S & VIDEOS			
___	CD Jack's Books	\$25.00 ea	___
___	CD FLAK NEWS	\$30.00 ea	___
___	Video Anstey Window Dedication	\$10.00 ea	___
JEWELRY			
___	Squadron Lapel Pins - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$5.00 ea	___
___	Group Lapel Pin (Hell from Heaven)	\$5.00 ea	___
___	Group Lapel Pin - Special Design	\$5.00 ea	___
___	B-17 Lapel Pin (Silver)	\$2.00 ea	___
___	B-17 Earrings (Silver - Pierced only)	\$5.00 ea	___
___	Bolo Ties - Group Logo	\$4.00 ea	___
LOGO PATCHES			
___	Squadron Patches - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$6.00 ea	___
___	Group Patch ("Hell from Heaven")	\$6.00 ea	___
___	Jacket Patch - Rectangle B-17	\$4.00 ea	___
___	8th Air Force	\$4.00 ea	___
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS			
___	Folding Umbrellas Red with White B-17	\$18.00 ea	___
___	Note Paper with B-17 (Packet of 12)	\$4.00 pkt	___
___	Tote bag, Navy with White B-17	\$7.00 ea	___
___	B-17 Sun Catcher	\$10.00 ea	___
___	Beach Towel White with Black B-17	\$18.00 ea	___
___	Golf Towel, White w/Black B-17	\$7.00 ea	___
___	Christmas Ornament with B-17	\$6.00 ea	___
___	Ceramic Magnet with B-17	\$3.00 ea	___
___	Playing Cards with B-17 Single Deck	\$7.00 ea	___
___	Double Deck	\$12.00 ea	___
___	Anstey Window Post Card	\$2.00 ea	___
___	Photo (Control Tower) Station 131	\$2.00 ea	___
___	Photo (398th Memorial) Post Card	\$2.00 ea	___
___	Photo (8X10 Aluminum Overcast)	\$2.00 ea	___
___	Bumper Sticker (398th Bomb Group)	\$1.00 ea	___
___	License Plate Holder (398th B.G.)	\$2.00 ea	___

Cost Of Items Ordered \$ _____

Delivery And Handing Add \$4.00, or \$5.00 if Order is Over \$20.00. \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

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

Mail to: Joe Joseph
New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168-6168