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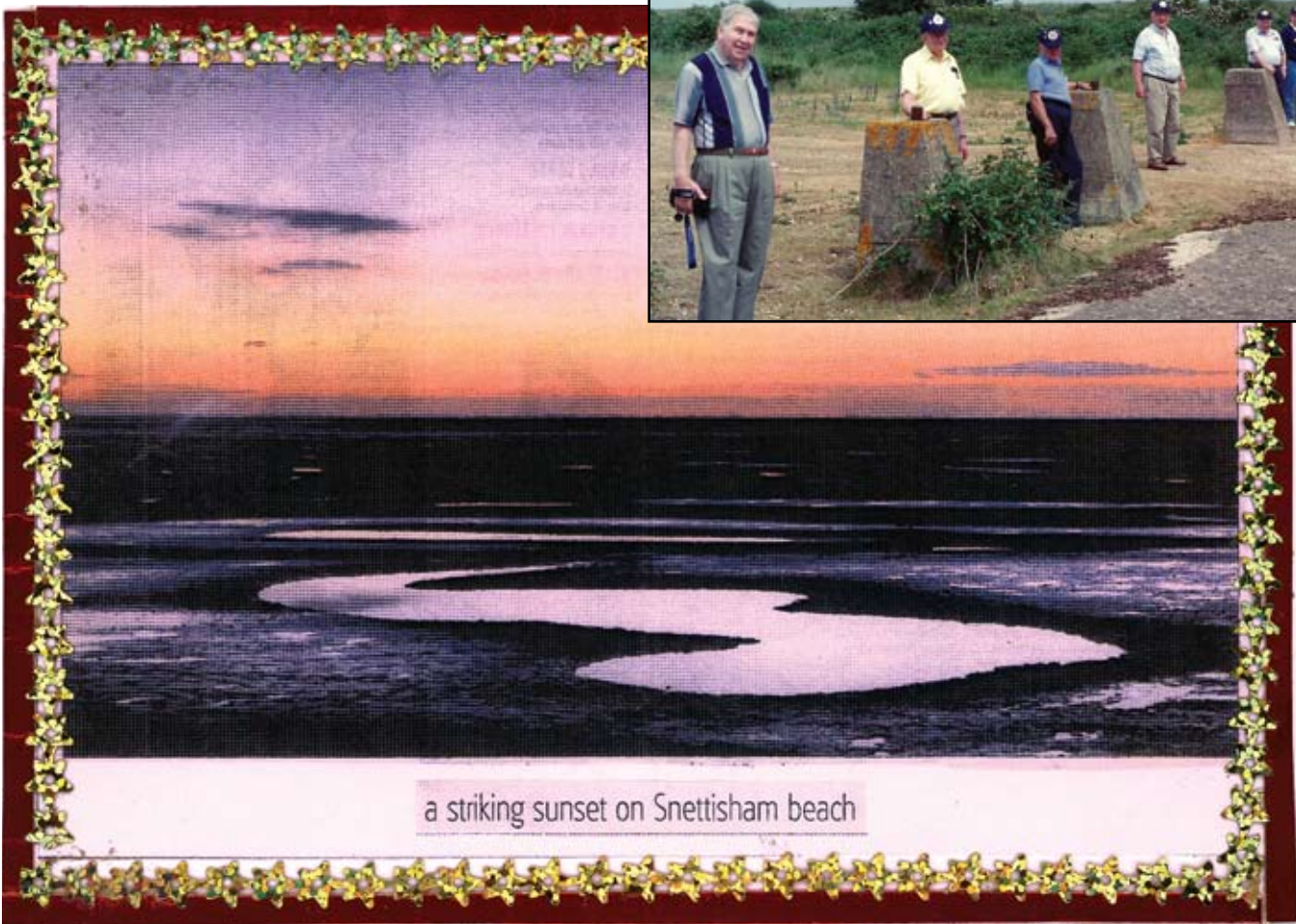
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398th BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8th AIR FORCE • 1st AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL. 27 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 2012



Sonia Gifkins' hand-made card.

REMEMBERING THE WASH

THE AERIAL GUNNERS seen above did some reminiscing when they returned to England's "Wash" while on the England Tour in 1994. They are Bill Engle, Joe Mansell, Ray Talbott, Wayne Doerstler, Ralph Hall, Charles Sutton and Allen Ostrom. All had participated in pre-combat gunnery training at this location near Snettisham on the Channel coast in 1944. They pose next to the concrete bases that held the 50 calibre guns for shooting at targets towed by planes. The scenic photo was from a card sent by Sonia Gifkins, local "Wash" historian. See Page 3.



Carol Comstock Koepfel, Evelyn Comstock Rhodes and the late Bill Comstock at Nuthampstead Memorial in 1994.

Comstocks Remember

“We are sending you this check for \$1500 to apply to the 398th’s FLAK NEWS. When we read that it might possibly run out of money, we were all shocked. Hopefully, this amount will help in its continuing goodness.

“It is presented in memory of Bill Comstock from his family.”

— Carol Comstock Koepfel, Paul Comstock and Evelyn Comstock Rhodes.

NOT ONE VETERAN

There will be not one veteran to represent the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association at the 2012 “Return to England” tour in June.

“Nobody wanted to do,” lamented tour leader Ken Howard, who also cancelled his participation after offering a tour not only to England, but also to France.

Thus no “official” participation at the Memorial service at Nuthampstead on June 16, or at the Anstey service the following day, although Teedy Blackwell and son John are considering a private trip to London ... and Nuthampstead.

A local service at the Memorial will still be held on the 16th, after which there will be a preview of the Nuthampstead Airfield Museum near the Woodman Inn, conducted by Friends chairman Russ Abbey.



Members Support Museum, FLAK NEWS

Members and friends of the 398th continue to support the Association not only through dues, but also through their contribution to the Nuthampstead Airfield Museum, various individual memorials and continuing remembrances for FLAK NEWS.

Museum Founder Funds came from Jane Traeder in honor of the Howard Traeder crew; and from Ernest J. Petrocine in memory of Norman (Pep) Petrocine. Museum funds also came from Walter Morris and Keith Anderson.

Additional Memorial funds in memory of Petrocine came in from Rodger Thornton, Jane Richardson, Paula Steige, T.J. Johnston, Madelyn & Art Weingarden, Dr. & Mrs. Richard Nelson, and from the officers and directors of FNB of Estes Park, Colorado.

A Memorial gift in memory of Ray Talbott came in from Marilyn Talbott, Sheila Dale, and Cheryl Sweazringen.

FLAK NEWS continued to be remembered with contributions from Catherine Bradley, Robert Schuh, Eleanor Trevison, Philip V. Baker. John Catera, Albert Chamrad, Frederick Freeman, Irene Hendee, Carlton Herzog, Homer Holcomb, Herbert Meeker, Harry Overbaugh, Joseph Roberge, Henry Skubik, Caron Anne Smith and Jane Traeder.

This FLAK NEWS fund drive now has reached \$19,500.

Editor’s Editorial:

FLASH DRIVE ISSUE

BY ALLEN OSTROM

Over the years — 27 of ’em — this editor who has guided FLAK NEWS from a modest four-pager into a 12 pager with glittering color — has chosen to refrain from “politicizing” as he blended the available material into a mini-sized newspaper.

And there has been precious little “editorializing” on the part of past presidents — until now.

However, things do change, witness the recent “do not run” request by the 398th Board when they learned of the editor’s story to put “Jack’s Books” on a USB Flash Drive.

This is the endearing name of the Historical Books of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association. These are huge albums amounting to 3,265 pages containing many high quality photos, statistics, letters, orders, awards and various forms of information voluntarily submitted by members ever since the 398th returned home from WW II. They have been on display at reunions for years.

They were available on CD’s in the PX for several years a decade ago and are currently listed on the web site 398th.org with a link to the Research page.

On the eve of publication, this message to FLAK NEWS —

“Jack’s Books and the information therein are the sole property of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association and Ken Peirce has no authority to include an article in the April issue of FLAK NEWS re: the sale of USB Flash Drives loaded with that information.”

Peirce, the former Memorial Fund Chair and PX Manager, Carolyn Widmann, had prepared what they thought was going to be a pleasant surprise for the entire 398th membership to enjoy. Ken designed and had made these 4GB USB Flash Drives with colorful 398th BGMA leather case. (See Page 12.) He received the digital copy of “Jack’s Books” from Malcolm Osborn, who in 2009 had scanned the entire collection. Ken further indexed them so the veteran’s submission to the Books could be easily found. In this format one can spend many computer hours reading and even printing items for the family to enjoy and keep.

At the last minute before going to press, the Board found out about this surprise PX sale (\$25.00) and immediately “asked” that it not be done because of concern over privacy issues.

While I appreciate their concern for privacy on behalf of the membership, it is my editorial opinion that privacy issues are not of concern in this instance. Carolyn has pointed out that she was happy to be able to sell digital copies of Jack’s Books again, since they were sold on CD’s by the Josephs in the PX from 2001-04, before her tenure. It is further clear that the forms used by three of the four Historians instructed them to not send in anything that would violate their own privacy. Contributors to the books knew the information they submitted was being shared with the group. This includes the material submitted by the editor.

We have long been sorry that those members and their families who have been unable to attend one of our wonderful reunions have never seen Jack’s Books. Even those who have attended have not had enough time to peruse them in their entirety if they wished. Now could be their chance. We hope that the Board reconsiders the decision and we would be pleased if members voiced their opinion to Carolyn.

It Was Destiny For West Pointers

On January 23, 1945, Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., was killed along with his lead crew, save one member. He was shot down by anti-aircraft fire over Neuss, Germany. *“We’ve been hit, Bill, take over!”*

“Bill” was the deputy lead — William F. Scott, a West Pointer as was Hunter.

Sixty-seven years later — on January 23, 2012, Scott died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 92.

67 Years On

*They came from far away to help
 In a war that was not theirs,
 They strengthened us through conflict
 They shared our hopes and fears.
 Not the last of all on Britain's "Wash"
 Their mark can still be seen
 Where gunners came to test their aim
 And learn to be a team.
 Though time has passed since training days
 Their imprint still remains,
 The presence of these brave young men
 Lies stamped on our terrain.*

— Sonia Gifkins
 Snettisham, England



SONIA GIFKINS



All Expense Paid Trips Available To Veterans

An opportunity has been made available for American veterans — including those from the 398th Bomb Group — to receive free trips back to 8th Air Force bases in East Anglia (including Station 131), London and on to Normandy in France.

This opportunity comes from The Greatest Generations Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Denver and dedicated to serving war veterans.

There are some requirements for the veterans to be considered for these trips —

1. The veteran must receive medical clearance from his/her doctor to travel.
2. The veteran must be able to come on the program without a family member or other personal assistance.

(Each veteran will travel with a cadet escort, who will be there to learn from the veteran, and also provide assistance.)

There will be six such programs, each of nine days duration, scheduled between May and September 2012.

Applications may be received by contacting The Greatest Generations Foundation, 210 University Blvd Ste 500, Denver, CO 80206-4622. Telephone 303-331-1944. E-mail: info@tggf.org. Web: www.tggf.org Deadline is April 30, 2012.

In submitting applications the veteran must include a copy of both sides of his military discharge form; a photo copy of his passport; driver's license; military photo; and current photo.

Presidential Quotes:

"It is easier to do a job right than to explain why you didn't,"

— Martin VanBuren

"An honorable defeat is better than a dishonorable victory."

— Millard Fillmore

"Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm."

— Abraham Lincoln

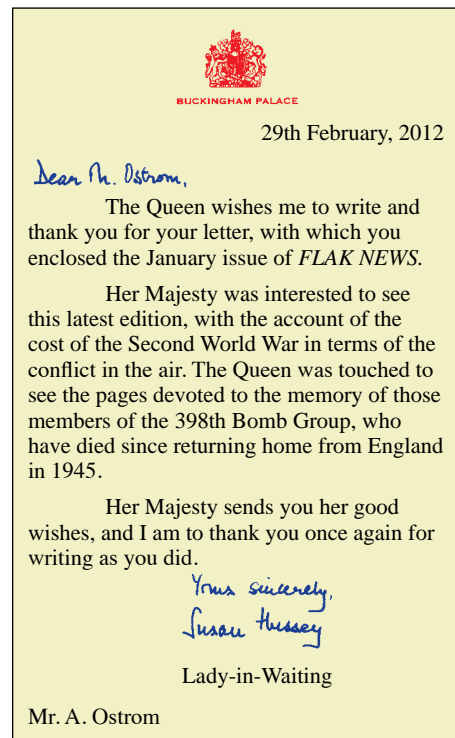
"It is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible."

— George Washington

"No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave."

— Calvin Coolidge

www.398th.org



Veterans Benefits

There is a great deal "out there" dealing with veterans benefits, some accurate and some with "rabbit trails."

For accurate VA benefits it would be advisable to direct inquiries to Department of Veterans Affairs, PO Box 11000, St Paul MN 55111-1000. Or the local VA office.

The Philadelphia Reunion

September 5-6-7-8, 2012

REUNION FACTS

REUNION CHAIR — Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI 48170-2870.

HEADQUARTERS HOTEL — DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Philadelphia West, 640 Fountain Rd, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462-1306. Telephone 610-834-8300

LOCATION — The DoubleTree Suites are located some 20 miles west of downtown. It is near to where Interstate I-476 meets Interstate I-276, (via W Germantown Pike and Atrium Way).

HOTEL RESERVATIONS — Call 610-834-8300. Identify as “398th Bomb Group” for special rate of \$99.00. *Reservations for this special rate must be made by August 14, 2012.*

REGISTRATION — Use the Official Registration Form on the next page or download from www.398th.org. Fill in completely, tabulate the cost, enclose the required check and mail to Sharon Krause. Sharon will audit the form, then send a copy by return mail.

BANQUETS — Remember, the Welcome and Farewell Banquets at the DoubleTree on Thursday, September 6, and Saturday, September 8, require table reservations. Make them when you register. The banquets begin with no host cocktails at 6:00 PM. The banquets begin at 7:00 PM.

AIRPORT — The Philadelphia Airport is PHL. A shuttle service is available called Tropiano Transportation. Round trip to and from the hotel is \$53.00. Reservations can be made at 1-800-559-2040. Credit cards are NOT accepted.

Digital FLAK NEWS?

The 398th Memorial Association leadership has decided to explore the possibility of providing digital copies of FLAK NEWS.

“At least to anyone who has an e-mail address,” said president Marilyn Gibb-Rice from her home in Beck Row, England.

“We are asking all those who want their FLAK NEWS delivered as a PDF file to their own computer rather than by mail, to send me their e-mail address.” — president@398th.org

This e-service would be available to all paid up members (\$20 annually) or to non-members via similar payment to dues manager Dawne Dougherty, Harrisburg, OR 97446-9585.

The e-service should be available in time for the July 2012 issue, providing there is adequate response.

Enjoy Reunion Democracy

Thursday’s historical tour to Valley Forge during the reunion will ignite many school memories as the coach returns to the Doubletree in time for lunch.

The “in time for” also suggests that the 398th annual meeting is scheduled for 2:00 PM, and that all members should avail themselves of the democracy that was fought for at Valley Forge.

TOURS

WEDNESDAY, September 5, 2012 — 5:30 PM to 11:00 PM. Spirit of Philadelphia Dinner Cruise. A fabulous cruise on the Delaware River with exciting views of the Philadelphia skyline. Enjoy a Grande Buffet at your linen-draped table. And there is entertainment to go with the city sights and evening meal. Musical renditions to satisfy the seniors, climaxed by a Spirit DJ performance of Top-40 hits.

THURSDAY, September 6, 2012 — 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. A Valley Forge Day with a coach tour through 3,500 acres of rolling hills once occupied by the Continental Army in 1777-78. A time to imagine the winter spent here by Gen. Washington and his band of soldiers. The beautiful Washington Memorial Chapel, built in the 1900’s, honors the “Revolutionary” army. Facts and stories of the life back then of the famous and not-so-famous.

FRIDAY, September 7, 2012 — 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. A guided tour of Historic Philadelphia, Independence Hall, Liberty Bell, Christ Church and much more, including Philadelphia’s famous Reading Market, when the tourists will have lunch on their own.

SATURDAY, September 8, 2012 — 9:00 AM to 2:45 PM. Coach tour to the National Constitution Center and National Liberty Museum. Visit “America’s Most Historic Square Mile,” like Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were signed. Lunch on your own at the Food Court of the building or the indoor farmer’s market. Try a Philly Cheese Steak or Amish Pot Pie. This is the day you will hear about “We The People,” the preamble to the Constitution. A crash course in American history.

See next page for tour prices.



SPIRIT OF PHILADELPHIA
A Special Evening For The Early Birds

17 States On Dues List

There are no less than 17 states included in this quarter’s appeal for “annual” dues. This represents one-quarter of the cash required to keep the 398th treasury in the black.

Use the enclosed envelope and mail your \$20 to Dawne Dougherty, Harrisburg, OR 97446-9585.

The “lucky” states this time are as follows —

North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska.

OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 29th Annual Reunion
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania • September 5-6-7-8, 2012

This form can be
downloaded, filled
in and printed from
www.398th.org.

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN AUGUST 14, 2012

NAME _____ WIFE _____ SQUADRON _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE (_____) _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP+4 _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

NAMES OF OTHERS IN PARTY.
PLEASE PRINT FOR NAME TAGS _____

WEDNESDAY, September 5 —

Registration 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory Room
Spirit of Philadelphia Dinner Cruise 5:30 PM to 11:00 PM Via coach \$80.00 x _____ \$ _____

THURSDAY, September 6 —

Registration 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory Room
Valley Forge National Park Tour 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM Via coach \$35.00 x _____ \$ _____
Board Officers Meeting 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
GROUP BUSINESS MEETING 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM
No Host Bar 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Welcome Banquet 7:00 PM \$40.00 x _____ \$ _____
(Table reservations required.)

FRIDAY, September 7 —

Registration 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory Room
Historic Philadelphia Tour 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM Via coach \$40.00 x _____ \$ _____
Lunch on your own.
Complimentary Happy Hour 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Light appetizers, beer and wine.

SATURDAY, September 8 —

Registration 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory Room
National Constitution Center 9:00 AM to 2:45 PM Via coach \$50.00 x _____ \$ _____
& National Liberty Museum Tour. Lunch on your own.
No Host Bar 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Farewell Banquet 7:00 PM \$50.00 x _____ \$ _____
(Table reservations required)
The Cheers, a 10-piece group, will perform.

Registration Fee per person \$10.00, two or more persons \$20.00 (max) \$ _____

2012 Dues (if applicable) \$20.00 x _____ \$ _____

The Philadelphia airport code is PHL and is 25 minutes from the hotel. Tropiano Transportation offers shuttle service for \$53.00. No credit cards accepted. (See Page 3.)

TOTAL \$ _____

NOTE: DoubleTree Suites reservations must be made by August 14, 2012.

I/We will be staying at the: DoubleTree Suites
 Other _____

Please check all that apply:
 398th Veteran
 Widow
 Relative
 Associate

Please complete form, enclose check, and mail to:

**398th Bomb Group Reunion
Sharon Krause
Plymouth, MI 48170-2870**

Received \$ _____ Date _____

Sharon Krause

A copy of this form will be mailed to registrant upon receipt of check or money order, payable to 398th Bomb Group Reunion.

What Are The Odds?:

398th Gunners Had Early, Late, Later Encounters

It was two o'clock in the morning on the night of February 25, 1942 — some 10 weeks after Pearl Harbor. The skies over western Los Angeles from Long Beach to Santa Monica suddenly came alive with Flak bursts.

It was a Western Defense Command alert and several anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on what was presumed to be incoming (from the Pacific Ocean) enemy aircraft.

The defensive AA guns had been put in place only days after December 7, 1941, sent there to defend the Douglas aircraft factories at Long Beach and Santa Monica; the North American plant at Inglewood; and the Northrup plant in Hawthorne.

Southern California had been on nervous alert ever since the forced relocation of the area's Japanese. Plus the shelling of oil facilities up the coast at Santa Barbara by a Japanese submarine.

The 2:00 AM firing of the 3-inch anti-aircraft guns brought that nervousness to a fever pitch. And especially when the skies glowed with hundreds of flak bursts with some of the shells exploding on the ground, causing some exciting damage.

Fred Parker was a high school student in Long Beach, and he was awakened by an explosion that caused considerable damage to the local bank.

Allen Ostrom was a "flak" gunner, operating the "azimuth" position on Gun No. 2 at Hawthorne, dug in on a site vacated earlier by Japanese farmers.

Nearby was the Northrup plant, even then building the Flying Wing, later to be called the B-2.

Fast forward 2½ years —

Fred Parker is the tail gunner on the 600 Squadron Charles Ballard crew; Allen Ostrom is the tail gunner on the Warren Johnson crew of the 603rd.

What are the odds of finding two young men being a part of the "Battle of Los Angeles" and soon afterwards in combat with the 398th Bomb Group a half-world away?

Fast forward another 42 years —

Fred Parker, now from Alaska, is a member of the 1986 England Tour, Allen Ostrom is the tour leader, the first of 13 such assignments.

Fast forward another 26 years —

Fred Parker, now from Olympia, Washington, is at Randy's Restaurant in



THIS WAS THE SCENE at the time of the "Battle of Los Angeles" in 1942. It was one of four 3-inch anti-aircraft guns "dug in" at Hawthorne, California, and soon to be firing at "unidentified aircraft." The "azimuth" operator was Cpl. Allen Ostrom (before his transfer to the Army Air Corps). Note the World War I steel helmet.



FRED PARKER
He got around, too.

Seattle, having lunch with some members of the 398th; Allen Ostrom, the FLAK NEWS editor, is the luncheon host!

What are the odds?

Now, backtrack 70 years and learn that the "Battle of Los Angeles" was initiated by a meteorological balloon sent up by the Western Defense Command to check on the weather ... even at the post-midnight hour.

The AA batteries, with their visual "Height Finder" and "Director" tracking

equipment, located the balloon via the powerful searchlights and ... unable to identify the "object" which contained a small light, made at least one battery commander nervous enough to order, "Commence Firing."

Others along the coast followed suit and soon a thousand rounds were firing at the "unidentified" object before the battery commander at Hawthorne responded to his "Height Finder" crew's sudden shout, "It's only a weather balloon!"

"Cease Firing!"

The distraught G.I. from the Western Defense Command who inadvertently started the "mistake," said —

"Captain, they're shooting down my 'met' balloon!"

What are the odds?

Help Me

Help me to find someone today who needs what I have to share —

A kindly word, a thoughtful deed, a bit of loving care.

Help me to take the time to be an understanding friend

To someone who needs a helping hand on which they can depend.

Help me to love as Jesus loves — that same unselfish way.

Help me to be like Jesus in all that I do and say.

— Bera Beall Parker

Less Than 30 Alive Today:

Women Air Force Service Pilots



Women Air Force Service Pilots Wings

“This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war and we need to fight it with all our ability and every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used.”

— ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, 1942

Millie Davidson Dalrymple, a University of Texas journalism graduate, who loved to fly, had just lost her young husband, Bill Davidson, a B-17 pilot, to German fighter aircraft while returning from a bombing raid on a German ball bearing factory. It was thus no surprise that Millie eagerly heeded the words of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Millie, daughter of the legendary Roy Banford Inks, was one of 25,000 women who, starting in 1942, answered our country’s call for women pilots to serve at home in order free male pilots to fight the war overseas. Those who qualified would become part of a brand new, “experimental” Army Air Corps program called “WASP” for Women AirForce Service Pilots.

She was one of the 1,830 applicants who were accepted in the program and one of the only 1,074 talented women to complete the program — to become one of the first women in our history to fly military aircraft. And become a part of a group of extraordinary, patriotic women who wanted to do even more for their country than what those hundreds of thousands of dedicated American women — symbolized by “Rosie the Riveter” — were already doing here at home while their husbands, brothers, and sons were fighting the war “over there.” These WASP would fly transport, weather, target towing, ferrying, maintenance checkout and other missions; they would fly trainers, fighters and bombers to and from factories and air bases; they would make sure that those marvelous aircraft built by the “Rosies” were ready for combat service overseas.

Millie took flying lessons on her own, soloed after only 11 days, successfully



**MILLIE DALRYMPLE
WASP Pilot, 1944**

applied to the program and on November 5, 1943, she reported to Avenger Field near Sweetwater, Texas, for seven months of intensive flight training in Class 44-4.

She graduated on May 23, 1944, a day and a ceremony she will never forget. For, in addition to receiving her silver WASP wings, Millie also accepted the Air Medal

Time Closing In On WW II Veterans Including WASP

America loses approximately 1,000 World War II veterans every day. There are approximately two million of these brave men still alive today, and less than 300 WASP, many of them on their “final approach.”

In March 2010, Millie Dalrymple, along with approximately 200 surviving WASP, traveled to the U.S. Capitol to accept the Congressional Gold Medal, a well-deserved and long overdue honor for their distinguished and trailblazing service during World War II, service that earned them these prophetic words by WASP Byrd Howell Granger in her book “Final Approach” —

“If the nation ever again needs them, American women will respond. Never again will they have to prove they can do any flying job the military has. Not as an experiment. Not to fill in for men. They will fly as commissioned officers in the future Air Force of the United States.”

Last December 2011 was the 67th anniversary of the termination of the “experimental” program.

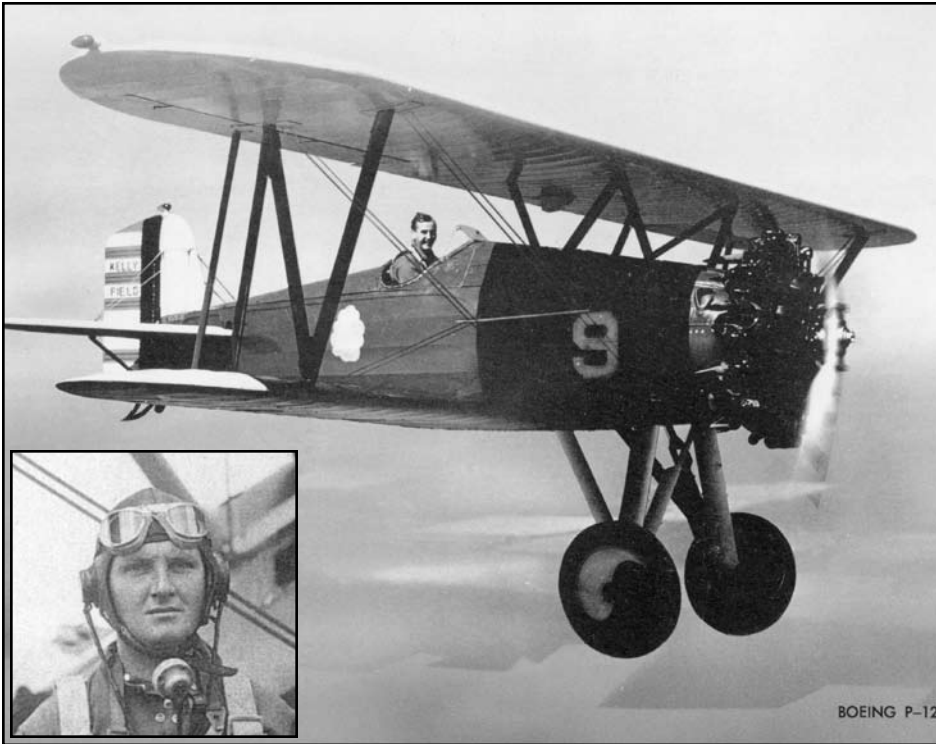


**MILLIE AT 88
Congressional Gold Medal**

for her husband who had given his life for his country only a short time before.

After graduation, Millie was assigned to Maxwell Field, Alabama, where she was fortunate to fly under an officer who believed in the capabilities of these young women. There, she flew an amazing number and variety of military air craft,

Continued on Page 10



Retirement Is A Busy Time For Malcolm

“When you are good, everyone wants you.”

Or so it would seem for England’s Malcolm Osborn, who initially promoted the 398th memorial and then designed it, and now works as a guide at the American Military Cemetery near his hometown of Cambridge.

He also has been called by the coveted “Blue Badge” guides to explain the painted ceiling at the Eagle Pub in Cambridge. It has a history of U.S. airmen “tagging” the ceiling while “sinking the odd pint” when away from their air base. (It includes the “work” of 398th personnel.)

All that, plus bookings with the Norfolk and Norwich Aviation Society to speak on the 486th Bomb Group and also at Boxted to speak on the 56th Fighter Group. He had previously spoken at both sites about the 398th.

All that, plus an invite from the American Air Museum at Duxford to explain the roll of pilots and navigators in the 8th Air Force, using 398th historical references.

It’s nice to be retired ... if only he can hold up under the pace.

THIS VINTAGE BOEING P-12 is the same type of fighter aircraft flown by the then Lt. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., when he first entered the Army Air Corps in the 1930’s. His first assignment was at Aldbrook Field in Panama. Hunter perished as a Colonel leading the 398th Bomb Group on a mission to Neuss, Germany, in 1945.

Veteran’s Flags Still Flying On Nuthampstead’s Tall Pole

Another of the “hero” projects at Nuthampstead these past may years is the raising of casket flags on the tall pole located near to what used to be the 398th Bomb Group tower

The pole was purchased and raised in 1986 by the then Friends treasurer Barry Tyler and since then has seen no less than 62 veterans’ flags raised and flown, either to “destruction” or lowered and returned to the sender.

Peggy Wells and son Tim were the first “flag chairmen,” followed by Malcolm Osborn and Peter Brooke. This year the job is in the hands of the new Friends chairman, Russ Abbey.

The program was initiated by the then 398th secretary, Wally Blackwell, followed by Harold Stallcup, Bob Bowen and currently by Karen Neff, whose home address is Lexington, VA 24450-6742. Flags should be sent to her and she will ship to England.

Following are the flags flown thus far:

Frank P. Hunter, Jr.
Charles J. Anderson (for a friend)
Fil E. Arbogast
John Bawduniak
William J. Beatovich
William Benoe
James W. Bewley

John W. Bornstedt
Raymond Brokaw
William Cantwell
Walter F. Clark
Philip Collins
John J. Colwell, Jr.
Ralph Coomes
Lawrence Crocker
Julius Cubranich
Tom Daugherty
Archie Devaudreuil
(non 398th member)
Claude Dierolf
John Driscoll
Clarence Ehret
Pete Giuliano
Ralph M. Hall
Frank Hamill
Robert L. Howard
Warren Johnson
Walter Kruse
George Kuenneth
Peter Latrenta
Hebert Licker
Charles Ludlam
Jack Madlung
Mark W. Mangan
Ralph McIntyre
Vincent Moore
Reuel Myers
James J. Nichols

Elliot Novek
Archie Paris
Albert Petska
Albert Pichette
Leo Poinke (non
398th member)
Charles J. Rayes
Paul Rich
Erwin J. Riley
Richard Schmidt
Charles F. Seal
Clifton Self
Arthur Selivan
Alfred Shadroui
Roy Sheely
Thomas G.
Slawson
Harry Sleaman
Forest C. Smith
Peter Special
Edward Stewart
Carl J. Strickrott
Howard Studer
Ray Talbott
Wally Tillman
Les Veley
Charles
Wasserman
Frank Weiler
William Wells
Jack Wintersteen

High Level Talk On FLAK NEWS

GUEST: *FLAK NEWS* is a very nice newsletter.

EDITOR: Thank you.

GUEST: What system do you use to produce it?

EDITOR: Huh?

GUEST: You know, what computer and operating system do you use to create those 12 pages?

EDITOR: I have a Word Processor. Kinda’ like a glorified typewriter.

GUEST: Huh?

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Actually, he sends me his written or typed copy; the headlines, captions, photos, etc. I type and scan everything on an iMac using Adobe Creative Suite and Microsoft Office. I mail the proofs to him.

GUEST: And, then what?

DESIGNER: He pastes everything on a 12-page dummy the way he wants it and mails it to me.

GUEST: Mail?

DESIGNER: Snail mail.

GUEST: Couldn’t he do all this on the system himself?

EDITOR: Huh?

HONORING OUR HEROES

“Greatest Air Armada” And The Price Paid

BY MALCOLM OSBORN
Cambridge, England

It was Christmas Eve, 2011, and we were up early as Joyce and I drove to the American Military Cemetery at Madingley, a site well known to the men and women of the 398th Bomb Group from more than a dozen tours “back to the old base” these past 30 and more years.

It was my task to be there, along with Superintendent Mike Green, to raise the American flag, greet any early morning visitors, and then return at 4:30 PM to bring the flag down as Taps is played over the carillon bell system.

That was just a few months ago, but it was another Christmas Eve many years ago that was in the mind of this second generation Brit. I heard the same story from countless returning vets who were actually a part of the largest air armada ever assembled in the whole history of aviation.

nearly 1,000 fighters, would take to the skies to support the American ground troops engaged in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge on the Continent.

The 8th and 9th Air Forces had been grounded for almost two weeks because of the uncompromising weather, both in England and on the Continent.

Thus, on Christmas Eve, the order was for “every available” aircraft to take to the air. Regardless.

The 398th sent up four squadrons, led by Bill McLaughlin, Merwyn Genung, Bill



MALCOLM OSBORN
At England's Madingley

As I conducted my tours this past year at Madingley, especially to the groups of visiting air cadets from the U.K. Training Corps, I tell them of Christmas Eve 1944. I ask them to pause and remember those young men who made our peacetime in the U.K. so possible.

Many of the returning crews from that 1944 mission would find their field at Nuthampstead socked in by the weather and had to land at other bases. In the Ardennes, meanwhile, shivering GI's were in freezing foxholes.

The Battle of the Bulge ultimately would prove successful for the U.S. but it would come at a great price over there, plus Harrod and Flores on the 398th airfield.

I recall composing four lines, which are inscribed on the Memorial at Nuthampstead:

*Their wings of silver touched the
passing clouds,*

*Made soft white trails across
the azure blue,*

*But not for them in this life we
share on earth,*

*They sacrifice that gift for me
and you.*

B-17 Question

The B-17 tail wheel was recessed into an opening in the fuselage. What kept the air flow from “blowing over” the tail gunner, who was positioned only eight feet beyond the opening?

(Answer next issue.)

SOLDIER'S MEDAL FOR CREWMAN

That would be Christmas Eve 1944.

The weather was atrocious with sub-zero temperatures and freezing fog. The photo on Page 1 of FLAK NEWS provides a hint of that weather. Note the snow being swept from the wings as the crew approaches for a mission.

No less than 2,032 bombers — B-17's, B-24's, B-26's and B-25's — as well as

Scott and Jean Miller. But tragedy struck very quickly as a pair of 600 planes, piloted by Leland Zimmerman and Don Grinter, both crashed on their takeoffs due to icing on their wings.

The Zimmerman crew all survived the crash, but two from the Grinter crew perished due to injury or subsequent explosion.

Navigator Franklin Herrod succumbed to the injuries sustained while in the nose while David Flores, flying as a student navigator, could not be extracted and died at his position in the subsequent explosion. A gallant, but unsuccessful rescue attempt to save Flores won the Soldier's Medal for John Contento of the Grinter crew.

The concussion from the explosion was felt across the airfield, including the little chapel at the rear of the Group HQ and Operations. The shock wave blew over two vases of flowers, which fell onto the altar.

I find it so moving, that two young Americans would pay the ultimate price ... and have those flowers scattered on the altar of the little 398th chapel.

Joyce and I walked to the grave of David Flores and rubbed sand on the inscription of his headstone. Not just any sand, but this was from Omaha Beach, Normandy, and brought to Madingley by the American Battle Monuments Commission for just these types of occasions.





THIS UNUSUAL PHOTO shows workmen rolling the B-17, Mary Alice, out of the American Air Museum in Britain. The wings were detached in order to move the Fortress out of the fire exit, saving the removal of the huge plate glass windows. Renovation and a new paint job will take place at another facility on the Air Museum's grounds in Duxford, England.

HELP SOUGHT FOR B-17 RESTORATION

The Mary Alice is one of the most important aircraft displayed within the American Air Museum in Britain, being one of the few examples of a B-17 still remaining in Europe. However, the conservation staff spotted signs of deterioration within the aircraft, including signs of corrosion as well as rivets popping out of place.

To prevent further damage, the aircraft was removed piece-by-piece to the nearby conservation hangar, where it is undergoing a 16-month renovation, including a new paint scheme.

Despite the aircraft's large size, the staff was able to disassemble the B-17 into sections small enough to fit through the fire exit doors, saving the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to disassemble the Museum's glass wall.

Members of the 398th, remembering their contributions in making the Aluminum Overcast flying again have been invited by the Museum in Britain to help with the needed renovation.

Many of the England Tour members will fondly remember their visits to Duxford and the Mary Alice, which the Museum made available for "up close and person" visitations on the many visits since 1986.

Contributions of \$35 or more will help

further the work of the Museum and education programs to teach younger generations about the sacrifices of America's World War II airmen flying out of England.

Contributions may be sent to American Air Museum in Britain, PO Box 97055, Washington, DC 20090-7055.

Letters

"Here's \$100 to help keep FLAK NEWS coming. Incidentally, I would be interested in buying one of those old, genuine A-2 jackets."

Catherine Bradley, Santa Barbara, CA 93150

"I am pleased to send you a second copy of my book, 'Splendor In the Skies.' I would be pleased if you would present it to your local library or the Museum of Flight."

Donald Hayes, Walla Walla, WA 99362

"Your latest FLAK NEWS on the thousand bomber missions makes it hard to believe WW II was 70 years back. Yes, soon there will be none left."

Frosty Fowler, Poulsbo, Washington

WASP

(Continued from Page 7)

including B-17's, C-45's, BT-13's, AT-6's and the B-24 "Liberator" bomber, an aircraft Millie says she "usually flew for four or five hours after repairs to make sure they were ready for combat service."

These women went through the same flight training as the men. They flew dilapidated planes, flew every kind of aircraft, and they flew every kind of mission except combat. A few exceptionally qualified women were allowed to test rocket- and jet-propelled aircraft.

The WASP program would last only 18 months, but during that period Millie and her fellow patriots would be stationed at 120 Army Air bases across the country; would fly 60 million miles in every kind of mission; would receive hardly any recognition and see 38 WASP and WASP trainees pay the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

In December 1944 the WASP program was suddenly and unceremoniously terminated. WASP did not receive any military benefits and little or no recognition for their wartime service.

Inexplicably, the WASP records were classified and remained sealed for 33 years. Even historians had no access to records containing the WASP significant contributions to the war effort, thus denying Americans the opportunity — the duty — to honor these heroic women.

When the WASP disbanded, these women had to pay their way back home. Thirty-eight of them were killed, but because they had no benefits, the family had to take up collections to get the bodies back home.

The Army would not even allow the U.S. flag to be put on fallen WASP coffins.

Millie, however, says she harbors no ill will or bitterness towards the government and considers herself to be "one of the luckiest women in the United States to have had the opportunity."

In 1977, after a two-year WASP "Battle of Congress," President Jimmy Carter signed legislation granting the WASP corps full military status for their service.

Subsequently, in 1984, each WASP was awarded the World War II Victory Medal and many of them also received the American Theater Ribbon/American Campaign Medal for their service during the war.

Finally, in 2009, Congress was pressured into granting the WASP the Congressional Gold Medal — legislation that President Obama signed on July 1, 2009.

Special thanks to Dorian de Wind, military affairs columnist for TMV and "Moderate Voice" for the WASP article.

— Editor

BRIEF-things

The last FLAK NEWS (January) caught the attention of many, especially those who compared the price of a WW II war plane to the cost of today's jillion dollar jets ... next issue in July (God willing) will see much more of 8th Air Force history ... like the fact that in one month, December 1944, the 8th went through 840,026 gallons of gasoline ... a photo of the 398th memorial at the Mighty Eighth Museum was randomly selected for viewing by Scotch Canadian via Google Earth ... president **James Garfield** was hardly a dummy; he could write Greek with one hand while writing Latin with the other ... **Alfred Wilms** could speak no English and the FLAK NEWS editor could speak no German, but the two conversed nicely over a glass of beer in Neuss while discussing Col. Hunter; Wilms passed away this year ... ex-Vietnam fighter pilot **Bob Chapman** was one of the early purchasers of "Splendor in the Skies" ... how many former B-17 combat crew members are now reporting, "I'm the only one left" ... while the 398th enlisted gunners did their thing at the Wash (Page 1) the officers did their pre-combat at Basingbourne (91st BG) before reporting to Station 131 ... **Johanna Sienkiewicz**, the English lady historian who set up the group's tour visit to Penn to honor the Searl crew which crashed near there with a loss of nine lives, sends a greeting from Princes Riseborough, England ... the U.S. State of Pennsylvania presented England's City of Penn with a beautiful certificate recalling the 1944 event ... nice to remember **Brian Clipston**, who originated the 398th association with the early travel groups to the Wash ... many will remember **Sonia Gifkins** as the "Wash lady" who traveled to Wildboardcliff to honor the 398th crew killed near there; it was a half day's journey for her ... **Ann Collins**, the ball turret gunner's daughter who brought 398th greetings to Slany in the Czech Republic, is about to embark on a doctorate program in "Applied Exercise Physiology" ... did you know that **Marine Capt. Venice Armour** was the first woman of color to engage in U.S. aerial combat? She flew helicopter Cobra gun ships in Iraq ... and that **Maj. Gen. Marcia Anderson** is the highest ranking woman of color in the Air Force? ... and that **Sarah Brown**, 91, got a ride in the primary trainer Stearman for having worked on the airplane in Corpus Christi in WW II? ... (no such luck for the Editor, who is also 91) ... "The Battle of the Bulge" was undoubtedly the greatest battle of World War II, and must be considered as an ever famous American victory" — **Sir Winston Churchill** ... remember 70 years back, the day in 1942 when **Jimmy Doolittle** and his B-25's bombed Japan? ... there's a "Doolittle Raid" reunion in April in Dayton, Ohio, which probably will be the last for the few living members; there are several restored B-25's out there and they will probably continue to remember the epic raids ... another 70th anniversary being celebrated this year is that of the 8th Air Force, born in Savannah in 1942 ... did you know that Finnish pilots battled the Russians since 1937 in such fighter aircraft as the Buffalo, Fiat G.50 and Curtis Hawk ... and finally in ME 109's as they became uneasy allies of the Germans? ... **Ilmari Juutilain** had 94 victories, including a U.S. lend-lease P-39 (and he flew most of his missions as a sergeant before achieving the rank of Warrant Officer) ... "Splendor of the Skies" was Bill Scott's favorite reading before he passed on this year ... the tail wheel question (Page 9) should pose no problem for the ex-tail gunners ... the ex-398th pilot met the ex-WW II Boeing worker: "You built 'em; I wrecked 'em" ... recalling the 398th B-17 called, "Hang the Expense" ...

The Next 398th Reunion
September 5-6-7-8, 2012
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
See Pages 4 and 5

398th Bomb Group PX

This form can be downloaded and filled in from www.398th.org.

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398th BOMB GROUP FLAK NEWS

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Seattle WA 98125-6324



Another view of “The Wash” in England.



USB Flash Drive. See Page 2.