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

VOL. 6 NO. 1

FLAK NEWS

JANUARY 1991

The Chaplain Writes

*“As the storm clouds gather far across the sea,
Let us pledge allegiance to a land that’s free.
Let us all be grateful for a land so fair
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.”*



BILL COMSTOCK
398th Bomb Group President

U.S. In Another “Time of Crisis”

Our organization exists today as a direct result of “another time of crisis” for our nation and mankind. As survivors of that crisis, we know all too well the trauma that warfare exacts in human and economic costs. But we also know that there are times when these costs are deemed necessary by the President and our Congress as duly elected representatives of the people of our nation.

President Bush has made the decision and he, as Commander-In-Chief, and the men and women serving in the Armed Forces today, deserve our support and prayers in the same way that we did in the struggle we participated in as members of the 398th in “another time of crisis.”

I can’t help but see a parallel to the period of World War II — Saddam Hussein invaded a sovereign state, plundered it, and “moved” it into Iraq! An act of total aggression taken explicitly from Adolf Hitler’s textbook! His next step would, in effect, destabilize and dominate a region crucial to world equilibrium.

As a democracy, our people rightly
Continued On Page 4

So sang Diane Susek at our Richmond reunion in September 1988. Today we remember the words of that song, “God Bless America,” and give thanks for our freedom and blessings. At that time, the storm clouds hovered over the “cold war” with Russia. Then came the easing of tensions, freedom being found in some of the Provinces, the tearing down of the Berlin wall and the unification of Germany.

All seemed to be going well until August 1990. Then, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the people of that small country being deprived of their freedom and independence. We are living with the results of the actions of a tyrannical group that refuses to abide by the resolution of the United Nations to withdraw their troops that order and liberty may be restored to Kuwait. Now, we have thousands of our men and women living in a hostile environment wondering what the outcome will be. Living in a country with an unfamiliar culture and strange customs, they must be confused. We, here at home, are concerned for their safety and welfare.

Knowing what war entails, we can empathize with them. It may be that we are at that point when all should raise their voices in a solemn prayer and trust that the actions of our country’s leadership will not fragment our loyalty and unity.

The daily news is filled with the opinions of what we should or should not be doing in the present crisis. I am not smart enough to give an intelligent opinion or solve the problem. Many give the answers but may not know the questions. When I see groups of people and nationally known protestors hiding behind their signs and shouting their slogans belittling our country, some resentments build up within. That’s when I protest against the protestors.

Freedom and liberty are precious gifts and no individual, or one who sits in a seat of authority, has the right to take those gifts from another. I cannot and do not believe our personnel, along with those of other nations, are there to just protect the oil fields, as some would have us believe, but to carry out the United Nations mandate to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait.

I firmly believe that leaders of nations should rid themselves of inflated egos, the hunger for individual power and the overwhelming desire to control and manipulate people for their self-aggrandizement. It is said that, “God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.” If this is true, and I believe it is, then all are children of God and should be treated with dignity and respect. I am willing to defend with my life my brother’s and sister’s rights to freedom and liberty and the opportunity to live in peace.

My prayer is that peace may come to all the world and that it may begin in me.

JAMES T. DUVALL
Chaplain, 398th Bomb Group

MEMPHIS BELLE



Lady of His Dreams

For a brief moment the old man
Became young again.
He was in the presence of a lady
He had not seen in forty-six years.

He wanted to touch her and to thank her
For the many times she had been
Good to him.
But he was in total awe of her beauty.

What do you say
After so many years?
Few can relate to the moment when
A man meets an old mistress like her.

Heart pounding, a knot
In his throat,
He spoke as he touched the lady
He had loved so long ago.

Many have had old loves,
But this was different.
She was no delicate lady,
Rather, a mighty Fortress, a B-17.

Only a special man can
Appreciate this love affair.
Yes, in a brief moment it all came back.
Again he was in her presence,
The Lady of His Dreams

— JILL V. CHANDLER

This poem by Jill V. Chandler was inspired when she witnessed an "older man" walk up to a B-17 at Felts Field in Spokane. She watched him as he quietly looked, touched, admired and finally walked away. Obviously, a former B-17 airman reliving an old love affair.

Comments Aplenty On New Film

"MEMPHIS BELLE" has been the most topical subject on the lips of 8th Air Force vets the past several months, the Hollywood version of the 1943 William Wyler documentary showing at theaters all over the world.

The comments gleaned from various sources seem to be divided between "outrageous" and "incredible."

Those who claim to have special insights into such things (Hollywood movie production) suggest that the only way such a movie could have been made (profitably) was to interject the kind of "stuff" that would appeal to the modern movie crowd. This would include the overabundance of combat drama crammed into one mission, the 25th and last flown by the crew of the Memphis Belle.

The "jaded" ex-B-17 combat veteran might have been seen to shake his head at some of the melodrama by the professional actors, but the average non-vet moviegoer, on the other hand, probably sat transfixed and enjoyed the action to the hilt. They come to see a "Hollywood" movie. And they got it.

Wally Blackwell, 601 pilot (and newly named 398th Bomb Group Secretary) sat in on a presentation by former RAF Air Vice Marshall Ron Dick. Wally relayed the following "wrapup" by the veteran World War II RAF officer who served as the film's technical advisor. —

"The picture was technically as real as possible, such as the planes, clothes, interiors, support equipment, etc. ... but I had to agree with the producers that a fictionalized and enhanced story had to be followed. This was not intended to be a documentary, but rather good entertainment for "Saturday night at the movies'."

From Elaine Tyler, UK Friends of the 398th, these words —

"Over 55 of us went to see MEMPHIS BELLE. The B-17's were wonderful, but not too sure about the actors."

From Jim Farmer of Air Classics —

"Though some may argue much of the story's tone, its social values, mannerisms and language, and the overflow of action which has been compressed into this one mission are contrary to the facts and even the spirit of the era, technically and visually Warner's MEMPHIS BELLE is one of the most authentic, handsomely mounted historical air dramas to come to the screen in a long, long time.

From "B-17 Combat Crewmen & Wingmen" —

"If you expected to see a documentary on the MEMPHIS BELLE you will have to get the original. This last version is more Hollywood, but nevertheless it is good entertainment and contains some of the most dramatic combat footage ever filmed."

“Blow Out” Was Top Event of AF Career

Jerry Fields Recalls Amazing Survival

Jerry Fields spent 22½ years in the Air Force before picking up his retirement button. And when asked what his most interesting memory from these years might be he will tell you—

“August 8, 1944.”

That would be the day of a 398th Bomb Group mission to the Caen, France area designed to soften up the German defensive positions and give General Montgomery’s English and Canadian forces some badly needed ground support help.

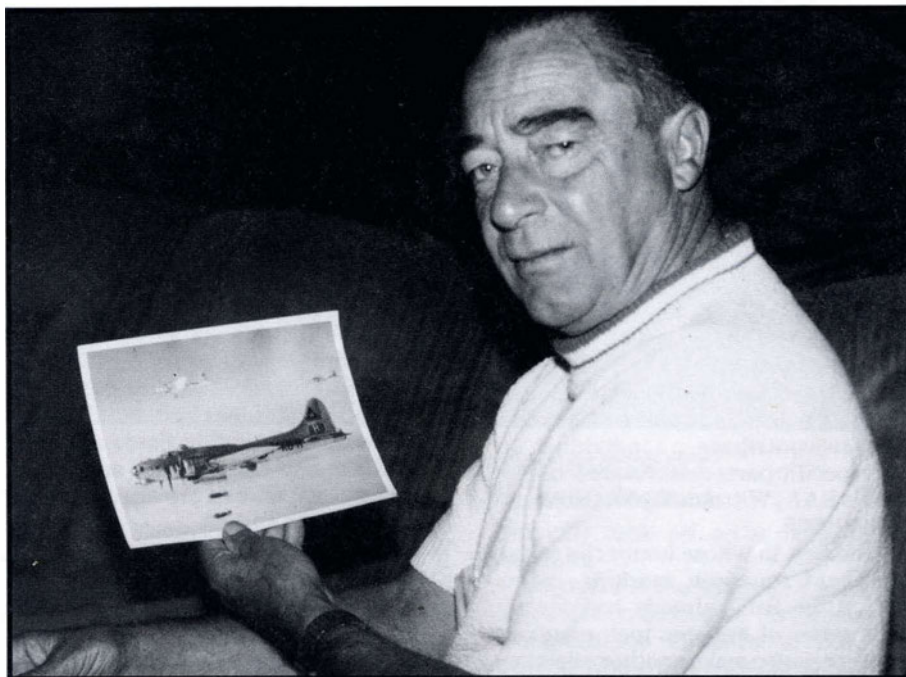
Fields, top turret engineer gunner on the John Baker crew of the 600th Squadron, was on his 23rd mission along with co-pilot Richard Osteen; navigator Selby Heried; bombardier John Kressenberg; radio operator Roy Johnson; ball turret gunner William Wilson; waist gunner Leonard Harris; and tail gunner Michael Romano.

“The 398th was leading the 1st Division and we were the deputy lead ship,” recalled Fields. “We arrived at the IP on schedule, and so did the German Flak. We did a few evasive “S” turns, but each time we returned to course the bursts got closer. As we moved into another “S”, putting us in the space just vacated by the lead ship, we caught the better part of a four-burst barrage.

“One burst tore off the port wing, causing us to dive out of formation and into a series of snap rolls. Just before all this happened I had instinctively tucked my chest pack chute between my legs.”

Fields then told of being trapped behind the cockpit, unable to move because of the centrifugal force as the plane spun towards the ground.

“Then the bombs in the bomb bay exploded, apparently set off by another flak burst. As the plane disintegrated we were all blown out. Amazingly enough, I came to with the chute clutched in my hands. I got hooked up and pulled the cord in time to swing twice and drop through an apple tree.



JERRY FIELDS
August 8, 1944 Was A Day To Remember

“I saw our plane coming down as I was hooking up the chute. And it looked more like confetti than a B-17. Later I saw it on the ground and about all I could identify were the wing stubs and part of the bomb bay framework.

“After the bombing was over and the noise stopped, the Germans came out of their bunkers and fox holes. They soon found me and took me to an old barn. They said they had found seven bodies near the wreckage and taken one other prisoner.”

This would be bombardier Heried, who had hooked up his chute before being blown out. They asked us if we wished to bury the others, but both of us were injured and unable to do this.

After the war was over Kressenberg, Wilson and Romano were laid to rest in Brittany American Military Cemetery in France. Baker, Osteen, Johnson and Harrison were returned to their hometowns.

Heried returned to Minnesota and Fields to Kingman, AZ, where he lives today.

Fields and Heried were separated following their interrogation by the Germans. Fields was taken across the Seine in a row boat, then marched through Belgium and Holland and then to the Frankfurt area for air crew questioning. Then a train ride to Dulag Luft 4, east of Stettin in Poland. On February 7, 1945, four months later, Fields and some 10,000 other prisoners began an 88-day march covering some 600 miles, winding up near the Danish border.

“We were liberated by a British 2nd Armored spearhead on May 2. A Polish fighter pilot and I commandeered a pair of

bicycles and we began peddling in the direction of the Channel.

“After about 20 miles we came upon a small town that had been liberated a few days earlier. Freed Polish slave laborers were having a party ... dancing, drinking and eating. The Polish pilot decided to stay with his people and was having a ball when I left.

“I knew we were in a proposed Russian occupation zone so it was vital that I got across the Elbe River.

“I resumed my peddling and finally met up with the American forces. They gave me food, clothing and medicine, and also fixed me up with a ride to Brussels. Here I was looked after by a British doctor and finally off to LeHarve, France and a four-week hospitalization. I was home on June 15, 1945, a little short of a year since that mission of August 8, 1944.

Fields remained in the Air Force until 1963.

The Baker crew was not the only 398th B-17 downed on August 8, 1944. Wally Blackwell’s 601 Fort took a direct hit in the tail, killing his tail-gunner, Charles Simons. All the others parachuted to safety in friendly territory and were soon back at Station 131 to continue their respective tours.

Bob Hopkins of the 603rd, with Meyer (Buddy) Wagner as CA, managed to unload their bombs, but then were brought down with a flak burst and all 10 crew members parachuted to safety. Except bombardier Charles Arnold and ball turret gunner

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Belle Videos Available

A VHS video made in England explaining the background on the making of the movie, MEMPHIS BELLE, is available from the FLAK NEWS editor. It shows how some of the battle scenes were filmed, how only six B-17’s were utilized to create the effect of a full squadron, and interviews with both the original Belle crew and the actors selected to play their roles in the Hollywood production.

Also available is the original 1943 MEMPHIS BELLE documentary, filmed during combat in 1943 by William Wyler.

Each of the videos is priced at \$25. Write to Allen Ostrom, Seattle, WA 98177.

OSHKOSH B-17:

Special Funds For Interior Restoration

Among the reminders from the 1990 Oshkosh reunion to "check it out later" is the question of donating special funds for the interior restoration of the EAA B-17, Aluminum Overcast.

The 398th, as a corporate body, provided all the funds for refinishing the exterior, including the 398th markings. However, some of the members had questions about the interior restoration, which is an ongoing project with the EAA.

The EAA, through Carl Swickley, museum director, will make available to anyone wishing to contribute ... individual or crew ... specific parts needs and costs. His address is EAA, Wittman Field, Oshkosh, WI 54903-3065.

Hal Weekley, in whose honor the serial number and squadron markings were placed on the B-17, already has contributed a series of Fortress tech manuals and is preparing to make another selection from a long list of "miscellaneous" items.

These range from bail out bells (\$10.00) to bomb racks (\$2700.00). In addition, there are needs like an "aircraft flooring package" costing up to \$4475.00.

Some 398th members are planning to purchase specific items in honor or in memory of a full crew or individual member.

\$1,000 Given In Doolittle Honor

In keeping with the generous spirit of its members, the 398th Bomb Group planted a little more of itself at the Air Force Academy with a contribution of \$1,000 toward the building of the proposed Alumni House in honor of Gen. James Doolittle.

This act continues the 398th's close representation at the Academy, having dedicated a plaque to the memory of the group's killed in action during the WW II conflict. This took place during the annual reunion in Colorado Springs in 1986.

Board member Dale Brown represented the 398th in the presentation of the Alumni House contribution at the Academy.

"REMEMBRANCES"

The book, "398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES," telling of the group's brief, but battle-filled history, is still available, thanks to last year's second printing.

"REMEMBRANCES" is priced at \$20 each, postpaid. Order from Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740.

'Crisis'

Continued From Page 1

express their opinions and thoughts as to whether military action was correct. We can take comfort in the fact the United Nations' resolutions and the ultimate vote of support by Congress for the president were not arrived at lightly. In spite of diplomatic efforts at the highest levels within our government and those of others, Iraq could not be persuaded. With the failures of these efforts, the common judgment was that Saddam Hussein provided no acceptable alternative to the conflict of arms which is now underway.

I hope and pray that a successful conclusion can be quickly achieved, but until then, our President and the men and women who serve this Nation deserve our prayers and support. I know that history demonstrates that the 398th "comes together as a family" in times of crisis. This crisis also calls for our support in every way that we can provide. May God bless you, one and all.

WILLIAM G. COMSTOCK
President
398th Bomb Group

Many Changes In 8th AFHS

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society, the "parent" organization of the 398th and all the other 8th AF organizations, has undergone several changes in its structure.

Thomas L. Thomas is the new president. Vice president is Orlando Petrillo. John Hutchinson is the secretary treasurer.

Membership & publicity will be handled by Edward Kueppers, Jr., St. Paul, MN 55107. This will also be the official 8th AFHS office. The former office in Oldsmar, FL has been closed.

All matters relating to finance, PX and annual dues (\$10.00) will be handled by Arthur Swanson, Strasburg, PA 17579.

Thomas announced that the annual 8th AFHS reunion has been rescheduled for September 18-22 in New Orleans. Murray Fein, Hallendale, FL 33009 will handle all matters relating to the reunions.

The new editor of 8th AF News is James W. Hill, Furnace, PA 16865. The next issue is expected to be published in early February.

Nashville Picked for '92

Nashville, Tennessee has been selected as the site for the 1992 398th Bomb Group reunion. Dates will be September 17-18-19-20, 1992. The meeting will be held at the Marriott Airport Hotel.



U.K. CHRISTMAS PARTY

On Saturday 1st December the members of the "UK Friends of the 398th" held a Christmas get-together. Seventy-five people attended and enjoyed an evening of nostalgia, which started off with a film show and talk given by Vic Jenkins. Vic showed some of his wonderful collection of war-time slides and kept us amused with his flow of anecdotes and information.

This was followed by a buffet supper and wine. The fine spread of food had been prepared by the ladies of the Committee, and judging by the empty plates, was appreciated by all. Glen Miller played gently in the background.

To end the evening a light-hearted quiz was held with members having to answer 20 questions relating to the 398th at Nuthampstead and the 8th Air Force. The winner of a bottle of champagne was Paul Droy with a magnificent result of 18 correct answers, closely followed by Duncan Fraser with 17 out of 20. Very well done!

The evening was voted a great success and will no doubt be repeated again next year.

ELAINE TYLER
Chairman UK Friends Membership

PX Dept. Sets Shirt Sale

Jack Wintersteen, the 398th PX peddler, is having a "Special Sale" for one of his products.

"Kids' sweatshirts have been marked down to \$15.00," said Jack.

They come in light blue, S, M & L (6-8, 10-12 and 14-16), according to Jack, whose home and PX shop are located in Danville, PA 17821.

A complete list of available items will be printed in a future issue of FLAK NEWS.

MEMORIES IN THE MAKING

England and Germany in Plans for '92

It was a trans-Atlantic telephone call from Meesden Bury, Buntingford, England. It began like this —

"Good morning, Allen, we have now completed arrangements to hold the dance on either June 26 or 27."

Wilfred Dimsdale uses precious few words in his communications.

What he really was saying, translated in American, might have been something like this —

"Good morning, Allen, this is Wilfred Dimsdale, chairman of the UK Friends of the 398th. I am calling from my home at Meesden, not far from Station 131.

"We are quite pleased to learn of the 398th proposal to come here on tour in 1992 and we are proceeding with plans to make you welcome.

"The dates you have suggested, June 25-30, are quite satisfactory and we have already had contract talks with a 1940's band to play at the dance. It will be either on Friday, June 26, or Saturday, June 27."

Well, the conversation was not nearly as formal as that. Once Wilfred explained that the UK Friends had held a meeting and voiced their approval for a 1992 "Yank invasion," it was just a matter of settling on the dates.

"But we do have a special request," added Dimsdale.

"We are all anxious that you come and relax more this time. Not be so rushed about. And instead of staying in a Cambridge hotel, we plan on putting you up in homes of our members.

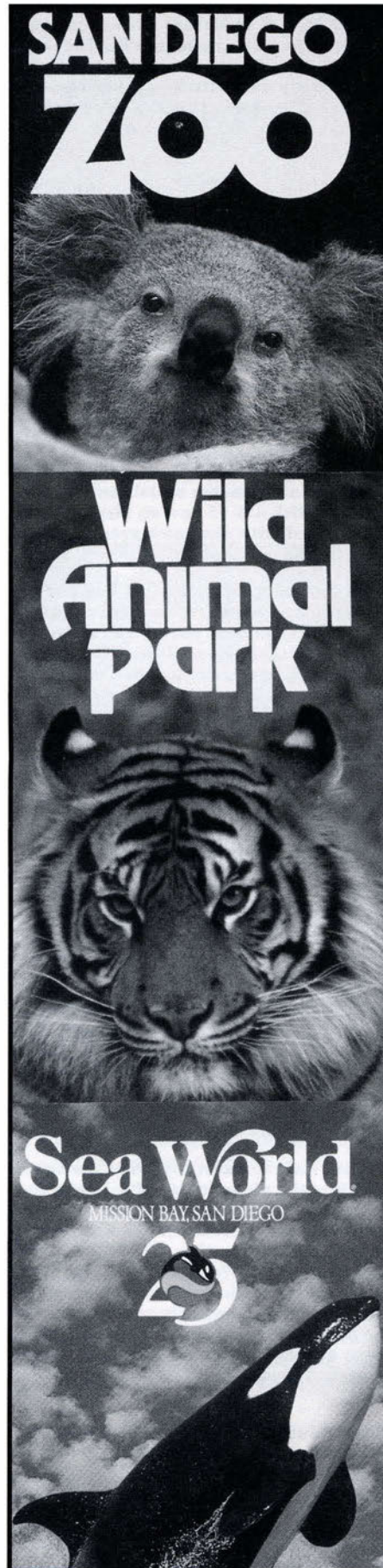
"We will take care of you while in England," said the Friends chairman.

Thus, plans are underway for a 1992 tour that will include a visit to Nuthampstead and nearby points of interest, including London.

And not only England, but Germany!

Yes, the plans are for the tour party to meet in Frankfurt, flying there directly from several cities in the U.S. The departure date from the U.S. is June 17. The next six days would be spent in Germany, with at least one "target" city being Neuss, where Col. Frank P. Hunter's B-17 went down. It was there that the 1988 tour party spent a remarkable day seeing the exact crash site, visiting with members of the community and even sharing in the planting of a tree in remembrance of the 1945 event.

Federico Gonzales, the lone survivor in that plane, was along on the tour and also made a return trip to Neuss in 1990. He reports that the Germans who welcomed the party in 1988 are looking forward to another 398th group visit in 1992.



Next Up: San Diego:

Polynesian Theme For '91 Reunion

Bob Hopkins wants the 398th membership to know that the temperature in San Diego in early November will be in the area of 72 degrees. Assuming the weather follows the pattern set in November, 1990.

Hopkins, who will serve as chairman for the November 6-7-8-9, 1991 get-together next winter, points out that there was "zero" rainfall during this period last year and the Pacific Ocean temperature was a swimmable 64 degrees.

The reunion will be held at the Polynesian-like Town & Country Hotel located in the heart of San Diego on Mission Valley's Hotel Circle.

In other words, the 1991 meeting will feature swimming pools and palm trees. But also a major Convention Center, a variety of restaurants and a foot bridge walk to Fashion Valley Shopping Mall. Not to mention such off-site tours to the San Diego Zoo, Wild Animal Park and Sea World. Golfing at Miramar Naval Air Station and possibly a visit to an aircraft carrier.

The guaranteed Town & Country Hotel SINGLE occupancy room rates will be \$55 for Garden; \$70 for East Tower Courtyard; and \$85 for West Tower. Add \$10 for DOUBLE occupancy.

Hotel reservations and Official Reservation forms will appear in the July issue of FLAK NEWS.

Like NOW is a good time to begin plotting travel arrangements to San Diego whether this be via car, bus, train or plane.

Drivers can begin to tune up the ol' buggy in preparation, train and bus buffs can begin to pore over the schedules and the air riders can start looking for the best service to the California sunshine city.

To assist with travel arrangements, the 398th has contracted with VIP Travel of Alexandria, VA. The best possible fare and schedule will be searched out for members requiring travel assistance, be it in the form of bus, train or plane.

A toll-free telephone is available — 1-800-451-5439. Ask for Ellie Turner. VIP address is 100 No. Royal St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

The Town & Country Hotel is located at 500 Hotel Circle No., San Diego, CA 92108. Telephone (619) 291-7131. (The phone number printed in the October FLAK NEWS was incorrect.)

For special reunion information contact Bob Hopkins, San Diego, CA 92111.

Jack Lee's Search For Miss X

Editor
Salem Evening News
Salem, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

I am writing to ask your assistance in piecing together the last pages of an interesting story about a lady I once knew. Your newspaper chronicled the story with quite a few articles from the summer of '45 to the winter of '47.

In her heyday, she was admired by many and feared by more.

She was born in Seattle and died in Salem. At birth she was reputed to have a worth of \$200,000. She died a battered, disheartened lady, whose worth was set at \$200.

In her prime, she shared exciting and memorable times with the men in her life. If you were with her, you indeed had good luck. She was beautiful. As graceful as a ballerina, as tough as a fullback, and had the instincts of a survivor.

In her waning days she was stripped and beaten. She had won all previous battles in life, but in the end succumbed to malicious, uncaring vandals and vagrants.

She was known as Miss X.

I am writing to ask your assistance in helping the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association to learn more about her final days. She was a B-17 Flying Fortress. She was in the demolition business during World War II. Her job was to assist in the demolition of factories, oil refineries, railroad marshalling yards, etc.

During the War, I was a Flying Fortress pilot in the 603rd Squadron 398th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, stationed in England. The plane I flew most often was named Miss X.

I was raised in Salem. After the war, the city wanted a plane as a war memorial to honor Salem veterans. Someone remembered I had flown a bomber and the city decided to buy the one I had flown the most.

The plane was purchased from the Army Air Corps and was flown to the Beverly airport. It arrived on December 17, 1945. It was moved to Salem in July 1946 and set up at the Block House Square at the corner of Fort Avenue and Almshouse Road.

Miss X was vandalized while in Beverly, and further mugged by vandals and vagrants while in Salem.

She became an eyesore, and in December 1947 she was sold as scrap for \$200.

I had been one of those to greet her upon her arrival in Beverly, but I left Salem in February 1946 to attend the University of Southern California. I was not in Salem during her sojourn there.

My mom and dad kept me apprised of the saga of Miss X in letters with occasional clippings, as well as phone calls. The last I recalled about Miss X was that she had been significantly vandalized and her remains had been shoved into a nearby dump and buried. Both parents passed away several years ago.

After retiring in 1987 I joined the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association. They put out a quarterly newsletter and have an annual reunion in different cities each year. A year ago they published a book concerning the life of the Bomb Group.

I attended my first reunion in September, 1990, at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. While talking with an old friend who is on the board of directors of the association, I mentioned that I thought my old plane, Miss X, might be buried in my home town and if so there was a long shot that we might be able to recover some parts of it for display at the renowned air museum in Oshkosh, in conjunction with a B-17 now on display there and painted with our bomb group's colors and insignia.

Upon returning to my home I dug out old clippings and some from a more complete set my folks had kept, but which I had never studied in depth. Most of these were from the Salem Evening News. Some were from Boston papers. I found one that indicated it had been sold to a Harry Greenberg, owner of Greenberg's Auto Wrecking Company in Ipswich.

Via the telephone company, I found that Greenberg's was still in business. I called, but the current owner knows nothing of the Greenberg's nor of the plane.

Members of our Association will visit Salem for the purpose of photographing the site where Miss X lived prior to her death, and to attempt to uncover more about her final days.

It would be greatly appreciated if my friends could have access to your archives to uncover any further articles, photographs, or other information concerning her stay at Salem, especially her final days.

Some questions we have are as follows:

Was any part or parts buried at the Salem site? Was the plane cut up at Salem or was it trucked to Ipswich? If trucked, who trucked it (any pictures)? Does anyone in Salem have information about Miss X that might be helpful? Would a brief article in the paper asking for information be possible? Does anyone by chance have a souvenir of the plane and be willing to part with it? Is there anyone in Ipswich who might have some knowledge of the plane, and if so, what?

Thank you for taking the time to read the above. Any assistance you could offer would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Jack Lee
Covina, CA 91722

Love Affair Began With "Blood & Guts"

Jack Lee's intriguing search for his beloved Miss X all began with another B-17 named Ole Blood & Guts, also a part of the 603rd Squadron inventory during the winter of 1944.

Ole Blood & Guts had her own claim to fame, concluding her venturesome 398th career with a crash landing in Bruges, Belgium that earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for her pilot on that day (Nov. 21, 1944), Staver Hyndman.

However, Lee had flown Ole Blood & Guts on an earlier mission, the day the group photographer chose to take his crew's picture as they returned home. It was the standard lineup for such an event, with the usual caustic comments such as — "Take the stupid picture so we can get outa' here."

Posing for pictures after a 10-hour mission didn't make for a friendly atmosphere.

So the photo of the Lee crew eventually arrived at the newspaper office in Lee's hometown of Salem, MA. And naturally, the photo editor spotted the name, Ole Blood & Guts on the plane's nose. Coincidentally, the paper had just carried a story about Gen. George S. Patton having received a promotion to the rank of permanent major general. And Patton was "leading the smashing motorized assault that may trap a stunned German army in western France."

Naturally, there had to be a connection made between the Patton Blood & Guts and the B-17 Blood & Guts piloted by 21-year-old Lee.

"As far as his father knows, the flight lieutenant and the general are not related," the story said. "Although it is barely possible they met somewhere overseas."

It had to happen, of course, that the printed story with all its Blood & Guts verbiage about Lee and Gen. Patton was posted on the 603 Squadron bulletin board. Needless to say, life was made a bit miserable for the now famous Lee.

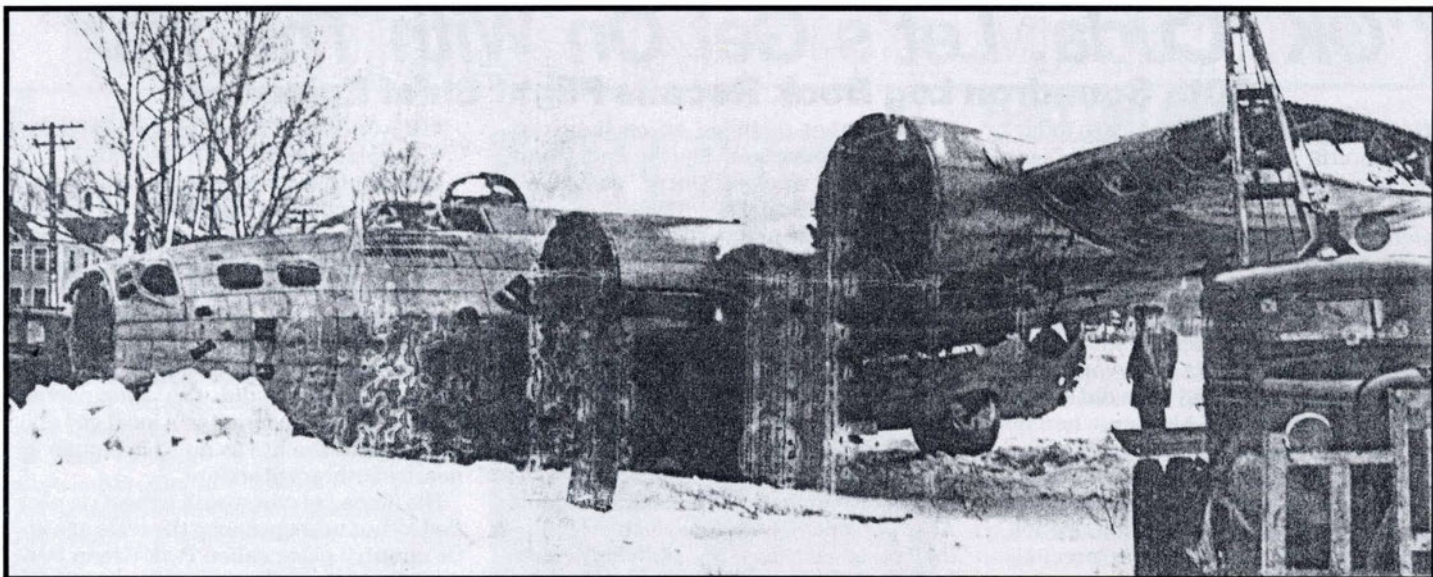
The decision to paint Ole Blood & Guts on the nose of the brand new replacement B-17 was made by flight chief George Hilliard, concurred by crew chief Ray E. Bailey. The actual painting was accomplished by Frank Hopp, radio operator on the Jim Davidson crew.

Lee's love affair with Miss X began rather poorly.

"Early in my tour," Lee recalled, "I was ordered to the flight line to fly this B-17 to a large repair facility not too far from Nuthampstead.

"She was on a 'Red X,' meaning ground-ed. Non-flyable. Certainly not for combat,

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HULK OF MISS X SHORTLY BEFORE FINAL "DISAPPEARANCE"

Role as "Memorial" Was A Short-Lived Affair



JACK LEE was a proud pilot when the citizens of Salem, MA brought his 398th B-17, Miss X, back to his hometown in 1945 to serve as a War Memorial to those who served in World War II. Within two years the plane was so thoroughly vandalized it was finally sold as junk. He and others of the 398th are hoping to discover the missing hulk, or whatever parts of Miss X still exist.



WALLY BLACKWELL, Ken Green and Ralph Hall visited this site in Salem, MA that is thought to contain the remains of Jack Lee's Miss X. The trio found no conclusive evidence that the Fort was buried here, following its brief and tormented life as a war memorial. The search continues.

Life Decided On Coin Flip

"I had two radio operators," said Jack Lee as he recalled other members of his 398th Bomb Group crew. "Melvin Cohn and George Flood were top men. Both real nice guys.

"Then one day I got word that I would have to give up one of the two as there was a shortage of radio operators. Well, neither would voluntarily leave our crew, so I was forced into making the decision by the flip of a coin.

"Cohn lost and was assigned to Herb

Newman's crew. On November 2, 1944 (Merseburg) Newman's plane went down after an ME-109 attack and Cohn was one of five on the crew that was killed.

"I have never forgotten that a coin flip cost a man his life."

Other members of Lee's crew were Dick Blackledge, co-pilot; Steve Devlin, navigator; Gordon Courtenay, bombardier; Tom Terrill, engineer; John Baughman, waist gunner; Carl Kircher, ball turret; and Stanley Kolodziej, tail gunner.

“OK, Cuda, Let’s Get On With The War”

600th Squadron Log Book Recalls Flight Chief Episodes

George Cuda was (and remains so today) a “free spirit” when operating as a flight chief in the 600th Squadron, 398th Bomb Group.

George was serious about his responsibilities, which included the care and maintenance of three B-17’s in “C Flight.” He supervised three crew chiefs and nine or more airplane mechanics. In addition to the “supervision,” Cuda also worked on the planes as needed and even did stand-in KP duty for some of his men when he felt they were needed more on the line than in the kitchen.

The long trek to the Mess Hall was like a burr under the saddle to Cuda. He felt it was such a waste, as it cut into precious time required for such things as engine changes, flak damage repair, instrument tuning, etc.

So one day he did something about it.

The big Wright Cyclone engines came in large wooden packing crates. And there were lots of discarded bomb boxes lying about. So why not use this good lumber and build a “shack” out there near the dispersal area? And this he did, locating his new “home” among the trees just a short walk from the 600 hardstand.

A cot, a chair, a stove, a lamp and Cuda could now dismiss the long hike or bike ride to the Mess Hall and squadron Nissen huts. Friends in the Mess Hall supplied him with enough food to allow for him to “recluse” in comfort in his new home.

Soon two more of his crew joined him and they had a regular commune country club hidden away in the woods.

Among the “perks” Cuda initiated for his C Flight crewmen was an occasional delivery of “Jerry” cans filled with some of England’s tastiest brew. There was a pub (and it is still there today) located a couple of miles away at Langley Lower Green. The innkeeper and Cuda developed an “understanding” in their rela-

tionships that included an exchange of such commodities as butter, meat and cigarettes for a pair of “Jerry” cans filled with England’s finest.

Cuda, his bike and two “Jerry” cans became a familiar sight on the perimeter track near the 600th dispersal area. It has been suggested (although never completely verified) that one of the chief recipients of some of England’s finest (in addition to Cuda’s ground crew) was Col. Frank P. Hunter, the group CO.

All seemed to be going quite well with the “Clandestine” operations until one day an order came down demanding that ALL personnel would have to reside in their assigned Nissen huts. Obviously, this included Cuda and his fellow “campers.”

Feeling this was an infringement on his B-17 care and maintenance program, Cuda used his Flight Chief prerogative and placed a red cross in the status column of every plane in his flight. This effectively grounded all his aircraft.

Upon hearing this, Col. Hunter popped into his jeep and raced to the 600 hardstand and demanded of Cuda, “What goes?”

Cuda, the free spirit, responded with, “We have to spend so much time travelling back and forth to the huts we just don’t have time to get the planes ready.”

Col. Hunter, who knew of the wooded commune (and POSSIBLY knew of Cuda’s clandestine trips for England’s finest), responded with —

“OK Cuda, go back to your shanty. “Now, let’s get on with the war.”

The war that Cuda went back to, fighting engine changes in the freezing cold of the winter of 1944-45, changing those huge B-17 tires, patching Flak holes, doing the required but tedious slow time on new engines, etc., etc., continued until the final group mission on April 25, 1945.

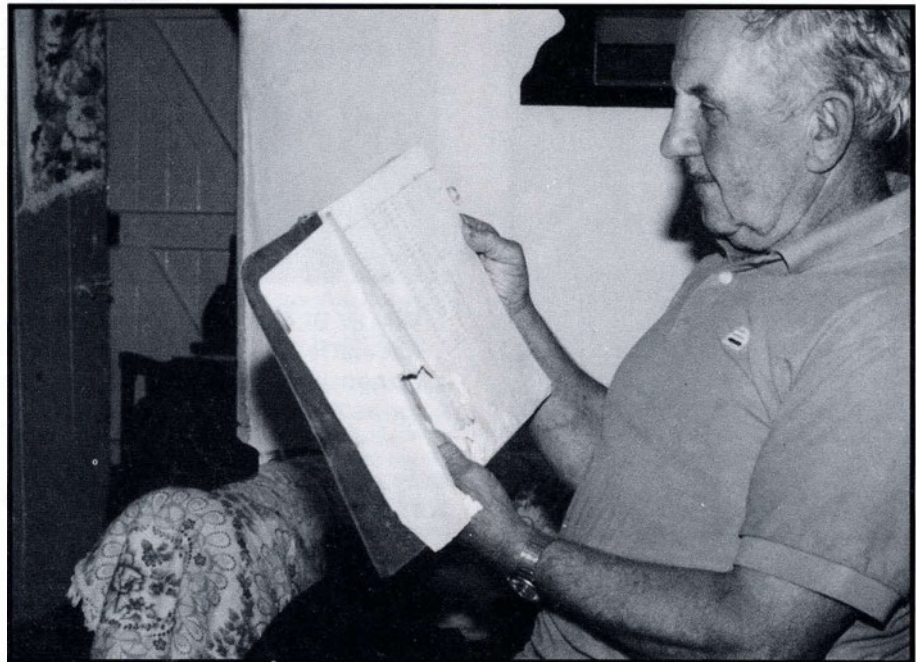
When everybody else went home, Cuda (the free spirit) did the unexpected (again). He got married to a local girl and settled into the life as an Englishman at nearby Bishop’s Stortford.

His home (as one would expect) is nestled all but unseen among the trees at a little country place called Park Green Berden. From here he runs “George Cuda Transport,” a small trucking operation that provides service between London and Scotland.

Visited at this secluded home, Cuda brought out a weathered, brown notebook, the pages held together with a pair of 1/8” bolts. Some of the pages had suffered from rain damage over the years, but most were clean and intact enough to recognize they represented the 600th Squadron Mission logbook.

Here were the tabs that identified “A Flight,” “B Flight,” “C Flight,” Squadron Inspectors (Floyd Beattie, Lester Homely, Michael Zozzaro); Electrical Specialists (Frederick Groff, Walter E. Clark, Joseph Wetzell, Corbett Julius,

Continued On Page 9



Flight Chief Memories

GEORGE CUDA looks over the 600th Squadron mission flight book he “preserved” from his days as a flight chief. The tattered pages brought back many memories from those days on the line at Station 131. At left is a photo of Cuda as he appeared in 1944. Cuda remained in England after the war and makes his home not far from Nuthampstead.

Lost Fortresses Bring On Tears

Continued From Page 8

George Taylor, Charles Dirocco); Instrument Specialists (Grady Newsom, Thomas Burris, Leroy Negoski); Sheet Metal Specialists (Michael Fox, Michael Weiss, Frank Layher, John Morgan, Herbert Bethe, Patsy Dell'aria); Propeller Specialists (Robert Hill, Glen Hartshorn, Cecil Rowe); Refueling Unit Operators (Willie Askins, Chester Berry, Harry Edgell, Earl Seibert, Lewis Stroud, Thomas Rainault, Cecil Edmonds, Roy Leach, John Massey); Tech Supply Clerks (Howell Motsenbocker, Paul David, Jack Walker, Willie Inman); Engineering Clerks (Robert Bell, Bruce Cartwright, Edward Lesniak); Welding Specialists (Eugene Cook, Edward McDonald); Detached Service (LeRoy Clapp, Roy Hebert, Herman Kastroll, William Kleiner, Wallace Strchschi, Robert Pearson, Walter Mulligan, Robert Craig, John Thibodeau).



COL. FRANK P. HUNTER
He Settled The Issue

The first page of the book is devoted to the squadron's line chief, George N. Nash, 19018380, M/Sgt, MOS 750.

"A Flight" crew chiefs and mechanics listed George Knight, Frank Cashion, John Harding, Myron Bickel, Frank Bolin, Wilbur Clapp, Richard Lube, Harry Holder, Herman Hudson, Nicholas Turk, Albert Manske, Melvin Huseby, James Neenan, Robert Leasure, Joseph Halloran, Anfin Henrikson, Raymond Clifton, Willie Gillespie, and Robert Dexter.

"B Flight" listed Fred Harrington, Louis Buschle, Joseph Corcoran, Harold Hammett, Gurvis Hogan, Alexander Wrensch, Hugo Kreitinger, Frank Garrison, Henry Barnhart, Gus Columbus, George Cole, John Dubiel, Orvis Green, Willis Davis, Louis Gross, James Harader, Norman Schultz, Robert Hobbie, and John Weir.

"C Flight" listed George Cuda, Edgar Hunsaker, Joseph Goeller, Clarence Delph, Melvin Emshoff, George Rolfes, Robert Phelps, Ernest Tucker, Estel Hadley, Beach Parsons, Edward Perreira, William



VICAR AND MRS. OSCAR MUSPRATT
A Surprise Wedding In Penn, England

Vicar Oscar Muspratt, the venerable clergyman from Penn, England who kept alive the memories of a 398th Bomb Group crew long after they had perished in a crash near his church in 1944, pulled a bit of a surprise last fall when he married his long-time friend and housekeeper, Vera Allen.

The widowed vicar and his new bride

promptly took off on a honeymoon in Australia.

Members of the 398th who were on the England-Scotland tour last summer will recognize the entrance to Holy Trinity Church, where a Service of Remembrance was held for the Charles Searl crew of the 600th Squadron.

Shandor, James Hunkele, Bartholomew Hurley, Williard Fitzgerald, James Davis, Joseph Perotti, Stanley Vangordon, Rodney Haight, and David Cohen.

Each crew chief recorded every mission flown by his B-17. Some not only displayed the mission number and date, but such notations as "Crashed on take-off," "Pilot's Abort," "Did Not Return This Date," "Landed on Continent, Returned to Station 131 in February. Went on Mission March 2, and did not return," "Crash landed on Return from Mission. Salvaged," "Did Not Return From Mission," "Abandoned on Continent," "Crash landed at this Base," "Major battle damage," "Crashed in England," etc.

"The boys took it pretty hard if they lost their B-17," said Cuda as he reminisced over the tattered pages. "When you live day and night with your plane it is more than just a machine to you. I remember how Joe Goeller cried when his plane crashed near Royston when returning home from a mission to Merseburg on Nov. 25, 1944."

This would be the B-17 piloted by V.A. Hansard, Jr. and co-pilot Robert Davis. On the deck, running out of gas and the weather socked in, they hit a tree. Immediately they rang the bail out bell and all members of the crew exited from the waist door.

Eye witnesses on the ground estimated the B-17 was at no more than 500 feet at the time. It quickly crashed, carrying Hansard and Davis to their deaths. They were no more than four miles from the base.

Parachuting to safety were William

Lake, Robert Cantwell, Kenneth Hesterly, Ed Briskie, James Fowler and Willie Colclough. Not so lucky was navigator Bill Baker, the last man out. He hit the ground near Royston before his chute opened.

"There were many sad moments like that one," recalled Cuda. "But on the other hand Bob Phelps had the very same plane throughout the war. No. 42-97249 flew 112 missions. She was called "Was It Well."

The 600th used 40 B-17's during the group's 195-mission campaign. Fifteen were lost in action, eight crash-landed and five were abandoned on the continent after sustaining heavy damage.

Cuda might have maintained a "reclusive" lifestyle while doing his thing with the 600th Squadron, but he kept good records, lived to keep his Forts flying, and died a little each time one from "C Flight" failed to come home.

"To remind you how screwed up the Air Corps was in those days I remember how they used to send you boys up there to fight and die, yet they insisted on sending you to me for permission to get married."

**JAMES DUVALL, Chaplain
398th Bomb Group**

TAPS: Final Call For 398th Veterans

Adeleman, Milo
 Agnew, Harry
 Alexander, Claude
 Anderson, Emil
 Anderson, Roy L.
 Anderson, William G.
 Andrews, Kenneth E.
 Arlin, Allen A.
 Ashworth, Dean H.
 Atkins, James R.
 Audet, Paul E.
 Aukerman, John V.
 Austad, Kermit

Bagley, Bernard
 Bailey, Ray E.
 Baker, Albert A.
 Baptist, Claude A.
 Barkovich, Fred
 Bamhard, Joseph E.
 Bash, Claire C.
 Baxter, Richard
 Beavers, Cecil
 Beckley, Robert J.
 Belcher, Jess
 Bell, Marvin
 Benefiel, Phillip L.
 Bennett, Norville
 Berry, Kearie L.
 Berthoud, Charles
 Bingle, Henry
 Bird, John C.
 Blanda, Guido
 Blankenship, G.W.
 Bonjani, Bruno
 Bosshart, Herbert
 Bowman, Leonard L.
 Brady, Jack
 Braddock, Heyward M.
 Breault, Al.
 Breymeyer, Royal
 Briody, J.
 Brown, E. Logan
 Brown, Sidney
 Buckley, Tom
 Bushle, Louis
 Butler, John
 Buzza, Kenneth
 Byrne, Felix E.

Callahan, Noel
 Campbell, Van B.
 Campbell, Tom
 Cason, Alfred
 Chesshir, Kenneth
 Chase, Lewis D.
 Christofer, George
 Church, Fred M.
 Churchill, Wesley H.
 Civitaresse, William A.
 Clafford, Lloyd
 Clarke, Walter F.
 Cochran, Curtis
 Coene, William
 Colburn, Warren
 Cole, Harold
 Coleman, George F.
 Coombs, William F.
 Coopet, Joseph L.
 Corcoran, Joseph W.
 Corsuti, Anthony
 Cote, Arthur
 Cowen, Harry
 Cowley, Jr., John J.
 Cox, Norman
 Crouch, James
 Cummings, D.L.
 Cutcher, James L.

Dacon, Charles H.
 Dalton, Hal.
 Damer, Leroy
 Delbart, Raymond S.
 Delorier, Joseph
 Devan, Samuel
 Dierolf, Claude E.
 Dippel, Francis
 Douglas, Gene
 Dreyer, Charles G.
 Dunne, Bill
 Dwyer, Jr., William J.

Edwards, John H.
 Ehill, Edward
 Ehret, Clarence
 Elsrod, Orville
 Elwood, Kenneth
 Engard, Robert

Faughn, Joe
 Ferguson, Allen
 Fernandez, Frank
 Fletcher, Richard E.
 Folger, Robert
 Foraker, Kenneth H.
 Francischine, Gino
 Freel, Lawrence A.
 Frew, George
 Fritz, Jack
 Froelich, James S.

Garland, Jack S.
 Gibb, Robert
 Gloor, John
 Godfrey, John
 Grant, Sam
 Green, Norbert
 Greenberg, Abraham I.
 Gresh, Steve
 Griffo, Arthur
 Grossman, M.
 Grothues, Al
 Gruber, Fred

Hager, Herman L.
 Hakomaki, Floyd
 Hancock, William C.
 Hardy, Arnold
 Harmon, Carl H.
 Harrington, Cornelius
 Hartwell, George, W.
 Hatch, Dwight
 Hatcher, Robert
 Hatten, Harold R.
 Herbert, Earl
 Herbert, Robert G.
 Herrera, Pedro
 Hesterly, Kenneth
 Hicinbothem, Franklin
 Hogrefe, Carl H.
 Holloway, Edwin C.
 Houchins, Harry
 Howard, Grant
 Hunnicutt, Elzie
 Hunsaker, Edwin F.
 Hutchinson, John L.
 Hunter, Dr. Lewis G.
 Hyland, Gervase (Gerry)

Isdahl, Chester R.

Jackson, Paul K.
 Jaman, Gordon
 Jendrezewski, Ray
 Johnson, Gene
 Johnson, Warren
 Jones, Ira.

Jordan, Edward
 Kay, Allen
 Kearney, Earl
 Keene, Raymond
 Kelly, Jerome F.
 Kiser, Kenneth
 Knight, George N.
 Kotte, Norman E.
 Knife, Percy
 (Honorary Member)
 Krause, John J.
 Kroh, Charles H.
 Kuck, Homer R.

Lachman, Russell
 Land, Don
 Lang, Fredrick
 Lassegard, Leroy
 Latrenta, Peter
 LeDoux, Ray J.
 Leemon, Don
 Levy, David L.
 Linke, Walter J.
 Long, Douglas
 Lowe, Donald B.
 Lowe, Lloyd F.
 Lutz, Joseph

Madden, Edward F.
 Marchbanks Tom.
 Marfilius, Elmer H.
 Massey, Frank
 Matheson, Burton
 Masters, Marvert
 May, John M.
 McLaughlin, Ken E. (Bud)
 McLaughlin, Robert J.
 McCoy, Wayne
 McCurdy, Robert G.
 Melis, Charles
 Melson, Rufus
 Miller, Lewis M.
 Miller, Paul
 Mitchell, George
 Meyers, Russ
 Moore, Randolph
 Moore, Vincent
 Morris, Jr., Stacey
 Moss, Latrelle R.
 Mummert, William S.
 Meyers, Revel J.

Namey, John
 Nash, George N.
 Nelson, Gene
 Nejaski, Leroy
 Noble, Earl
 Norby, William
 Notarpole, Robert J.

O'Brien, Robert J.
 O'Connell, Danny
 Ongley, Bert
 Overton, Vemon

Pappas, Venizelos G.
 Parrish, Lewis E.
 Peach, Tom
 Peek, Kenneth R.
 Perry, Arthur M.
 Peterson, Christian
 Pierson, Donald
 Powell, Sam
 Puthoff, Lewis A.
 Pysson, Albert

Radnedge, William B.

Reid, Perry
 Rex, John H.
 Riccio, Michael
 Rich, James T.
 Rickabaugh, Ronald
 Roberts, Jack
 Robinson, Robert
 Rockstroh, Kenneth J.
 Rolfes, George
 Rooney, Pete
 Rose, Arthur
 Rosenzwieg, Harold
 Rossi, James H.

Sachs, Stanley
 Sawyer, Hiram N.
 Schmidt, Richard H.
 Schneider, John
 Schofield, James
 Schwere, George, J.
 Scott, Ernest D.
 Scott, Jr., Talma A.
 Seaver, Warren
 Selevan, Arthur
 Shaffer, W.A.
 Shaw, Donald
 Sigsworth, John R.
 Simeral, Robert
 Shimek, Albert J.
 Skellinger, Walt.
 Smith, Coy
 Smith, Harold
 Smith, John E.
 Smith, Ralph D.
 Snyder, Frank A.
 Southwick, Earl J.
 Spain, Edwin F.
 Sponholtz, Milo
 Stanbrough, Claude
 Stankiewicz, Charles
 Stephens, James
 Stombaugh, C.E.
 Stone, Warren
 Stripling, Aaron M.
 Strmad, Frank
 Suggett, Walter
 Sullivan, Walter B.
 (Catholic Chaplain)

Swan, Jr., Neil
 Sweet, Dr. Robert

Taylor, Franklin
 Terbieten, Dr. Urban
 Terrion, Leo W.
 Thomas, Henry
 Thompson, Oakley J.
 Trotter, Joseph H.
 Troost, H.M.
 Tryon, William V.
 Tucker, Frank
 Turner, Mark

Unkel, Rudolph E.
 Upmeier, Tom

Vanderlick, William
 Vela, George E.
 Vemet, Jr., Waldemar

Waarama, Arthur
 Walkup, Jr., Charles A.
 Wallrath, Raymond
 Walter, R.N.
 Waring, Leonard, H.
 Wasseman, Charles
 Wells, Burton B.
 Wells, David
 (Honorary Member)
 Wickam, James E.
 Wiemey, Joseph
 Wilde, George J.
 Wilson, William R.
 Wolfe, Leonard
 Woodcock, William
 Woodmansee, D.A.
 Woodruff, Clinton L.
 Woodson, Harold
 Woodson, Woodrow
 Woodring, Dave
 Wright, Ellsworth S.
 Wymer, Kenneth M.

Zagelow, Larry
 Zampetti, Dr. Herman

Where Are They Now?

While the 398th roster continues to grow, with almost 1,500 on the mailing list, this growth has happened despite the loss of several former members who have moved and left no forwarding address. Conceivably, some have passed on, but others have simply forgotten to advise FLAK NEWS of their new address. Anybody out there know the whereabouts of these men?

Fred Aholton
 W. Burt
 Floyd Beattie
 Joe Batter
 Lyle Cochrane
 James Douvres
 James Fisher
 Harold Guese
 Howard Goldstein
 Williard Hadjes
 William Harper
 Ray Hoffman
 Don Ideling
 Phil Krieg
 Arthur Keifer

Harvey Latson
 P. Levinson
 Burt Matheson
 Norm Markel
 John McGraw
 John McMillian
 James Martindale
 Preston Morrison
 John Petrel
 George Robinson, Jr.
 Henry Sandoval
 Richard Severence
 Frank Strandberg
 Lee Treff

Letters From Here And There

"At approximately 1100 hours on 2 March, 1945, prisoners working on factory foundation in Czechoslovakia observed one American bomber aircraft at very low altitude. They noticed two engines not working and damage to the fuselage. Approximate altitude of 400 m's and loosing. At approximately 250 m's aircraft lost the tail section and one airman bailed out. Aircraft crashed into the ground. Germans pulled out eight dead airmen. Airman who was fortunate to open his chute landed safely quite a distance from the crash-site due to strong southwest wind. I have several original photos of this crash-site obtained from Czechoslovakia with wreckage of this aircraft and dead members of crew near by. I can provide you with the location of this crash. Can you provide me with the name and address of the surviving member of the crash?"

Manuel F. Van Eyck, No. Hollywood, CA 91605.

(Ed's. Note: Indeed we can. He is Selmar Haakenson, Sacramento, CA 95828. Selmar was the tail gunner on the B-17 piloted by Donald Christensen. Others on the crew, all of whom perished, were William Love, Harry Ostrow, John Gustafson, Robert Dudley, Elmer Gurba, Albert Carlisle and Kenneth Plantz. Selmar lost an eye during the combat with the attacking FW 190's. The mission was to Bohlen, on the outskirts of Leipzig.)

"I noted in the last FLAK NEWS that our ground crew person-nel will be honored at the San Diego reunion next November. What a great idea to recognize the men who performed those un-glamorous but necessary jobs. To be sure, the air crews deserve every bit of recognition and honor, but it is nice to know that our 398th leaders also remember us ground guys."

Herman Bodenheimer, High Point, NC 27260.

"Our Godwin crew of the 602nd was shot down on June 25, 1944. All my personal belongings were returned to my home in New Jersey except my 1938 high school class ring. It's a long shot at best, but is there someone out there who cleaned out my locker that can tell me what happened to the ring?"

J. Herbert Wilson, Middlesex, NJ 08846.

"Your call was a pleasant surprise. It was quite a shock to hear from someone from the 398th after 45 years. And then Jesse Prugh called to add even more excitement to my day."

James I. Powell, Shelbyville, TX 75973.

(Ed's. Note: Powell was on the 602 Stanley Allen crew, and had been a "lost soul" until 1990. Contact officer George Hilliard is the principal 398th locator of lost souls.)

"Thanks to all the men and women who made us feel welcome and comfortable at the Oshkosh reunion. It was a good feeling to be among the veterans of the 8th Air Force and to learn firsthand about the air war. The Missing Air Crew Report you provided was both enlightening and painful."

Henry & Lorna Lescale, Terry Town, LA 70056.

(Ed's. Note: Henry Lescale is the brother of Clement Lescale, one of the nine men who perished on the 600 William Wells crew April 8, 1945, on a mission to Derben. There was one survivor; Robert B. Templeton of Montana.)

"Thank you for your kindness in taking my late husband's flag to Nuthampstead last summer. My son, Douglas, was so happy and proud to receive photos of the ceremony at the Memorial. I also have written to the Friends in England, thanking them for their part."

Mrs. Dorothy (Ehret) Junker, St. Louis, MO 63109.

"I wish to thank all you of the 398th Bomb Group for the way you received and honored my daughter, Suzanne Wales, at the memorial service for the Searl crew last summer at Penn, Eng-land. Suzanne was edified by the service at Holy Trinity Church, the stirring homily by the visiting vicar, the luncheon, and by the friendliness of the tour party. She felt like an honored celebrity and very proud of the Stars & Stripes and the 398th Bomb Group."

Henry W. Dion, Pigeon, MI 48755.

(Ed's. Note: Dion is brother of Albert Dion, co-pilot on the 600 Searl crew which crashed at Penn in 1944.)

"As treasurer of the 398th Bomb Group I would like to express my thanks to the membership for their whole-hearted financial support of our fine organization. This not only includes the annual dues, but the special efforts like the recent B-17 paint project at Oshkosh; our magnificent Memorial at Nuthampstead; the special plaques at Dayton and the Air Force Academy; contributions to the Doolittle Alumni building at Colorado Springs, South Dakota Air & Space Museum and the 8th Air Force Museum in Duxford, England; not to mention our group history book, '398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES,' and our quarterly newsletter, FLAK NEWS.

"This support is reflected not only in the contributions, but also in the enthusiasm of our members at the reunions and overseas tours. Thanks for keeping Marjori and me so busy."

Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740.

Brief-things

Amazingly, our FLAK NEWS mailing list continues to grow despite seeing an increase in our Taps list ... January's mailing numbered 1,536 to regular members plus another 93 to our Friends of the 398th in England ... and a reminder to widows of 398th members: you automatically qualify for lifetime membership (remember to advise FLAK NEWS of any mailing label change) ... after conducting the highly successful Oshkosh reunion, **Morris & Mary Swed** took off to recoup in Bradenton, Florida, and then decided to make it their permanent home (won't you miss those Oshkosh winters?) ... treasurer **Ralph Hall** has not been "snowed in" at his New Bedford, MA home, but he has been "snowed under" with 398th dues contributions ... note to **Ken Catterson**: the problem with the FLAK NEWS editor's tailgate window was in a loose electrical connection in the fire wall ... (the Pontiac Tempest got home to Seattle OK and the odometer recently turned 482,000; next trip: San Diego) ... Help Wanted: FLAK NEWS plans to publish the names of every first pilot who flew a mission with the 398th, but needs the first names of the following — **Adams, Beck, Cady, Douglas (603), Gieryn, Koenig, Keathley, Kaufman, Lollar, Maudsley, Mattson, McLean, McKinney, Roper, Tatchio, Trischett, Vallish, Wallingford, Womeldorf** ... And like **Bill Hineman** said in his Christmas card, "All I want for Christmas is one more" ... this is from another bomb group (388th) newsletter, and we are proud to print it here: a lady known by many of their airmen, **Alice Bloomfield** of Coney Weston, died last year at the age of 93; she had played the organ (manual pump) at the local church for 76 years! ...

'Blow Out'

Continued From Page 3

James Hochadel, who were "found dead" by the Germans.

Others on the crew were Frederick Kushera, Vonnerlin Wernecke, Tom Stitz, William Germiller, Ray Gibeau and John Werner.

"Germiller and Gibeau were with me on the march to the PW camp," said Fields. "We wound up in the same barracks and were together a good deal of the time on that miserable march.

"It was one of the coldest winters in history and we had precious little food and shelter."

Fields is convinced that the 398th mission on August 8, 1944 contributed mightily to the defeat of the Germans.

"It not only allowed Montgomery to push up the coast and then east into Germany, but it also helped to spring Patton north toward Paris and then west, cutting off thousands of German troops in what became known as the Falaise Pocket. They suffered huge casualties here," recalled Fields.

"I was in the middle of all this and the Germans were not overly impressed with having to look after another American prisoner.

"I would have enjoyed hearing one of them shout —

"Yankee go home!"

'Blood & Guts'

Continued From Page 6

but supposedly OK for this short hop. She had been quite badly shot up and the damage was more than could be handled by the ground crews or at sub depot.

"I don't recall the specifics of the damage other than some of the control cables were inoperable. It was a very short flight, possibly 10 to 15 minutes, but I recall I thought it might be my last. A member of the ground crew came along and he was soon sorry that he had asked for the ride.

"From the moment we took off until we landed she shook violently as if she had the world's greatest case of St. Vitus dance. I could not make turns to one side (I can't remember which side) and when I did turn, she could only manage an almost flat bank.

"This repair facility was considered to be an elephant bone yard. If a B-17 could not survive this intensive care it was cannibalized.

"Some time later I was told to go out to the line and test fly a plane and put some slow time on the engines. The plane turned out to be Miss X. What a difference from our last date! We flew through the sky like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. She was a beauty to behold and handle. I fell in love.

"When I got back to 131 (Moorhen) I

Blackwell Named 398th Secretary

Wally Blackwell, one of the most active and enthusiastic members of the 398th, has accepted the position of Secretary, it was announced by president Bill Comstock.

A member of the Board of Directors, Wally "moves up" to secretary to replace Dalton Ebbeson, who submitted his resignation.

"I will be married in June and moving to Tucson," said Ebbeson, who lives in Wausau, Wisconsin. "I will miss my work on the Board," said Dalton, "but I really must devote full time to this new life coming on this year."

Blackwell served as chairman of a fund drive that raised almost \$22,000 in 1989 to restore the exterior of the B-17 at the EAA Eagle Hanger at Oshkosh, WI.

immediately went to operations and asked to have her assigned as my plane. From then on I flew Miss X on 14 missions, the last one being on December 24, 1944.

"And that's the story of how boy met girl and fell in love."

Miss X's crew chief, the man who kept the romance alive, was Uhro (Whitey) Kaskella. He lives in Makinen, MN.

398th BOMB GROUP FLAK NEWS
c/o Allen Ostrom
Seattle, WA 98177

