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



# “398th Is Still In Business”

## Reunion Draws 201

Wallace Blackwell  
President, 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Sir:

It is with many thanks and great appreciation that we agree to place a memorial stone to the 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group and 442<sup>nd</sup> Air Service Group in association with your Monument on your land in Nuthampstead, England. Your generous funding of the Memorial from the “Big Friends to the Little Friends” of World War II is a rare and remarkable deed.

We further agree that the 398<sup>th</sup> BGA should retain ownership of the memorial stone to include it in your memorial fund for maintenance of the Stone and Land.

In addition, any funds that the 55<sup>th</sup> FG and 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG might generate in support of this project will be sent to your Monument Fund Chairman, Ralph W. Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740-1915

My contact person, Frank Birtciel, has coordinated your project with all Officers and Directors of the 55<sup>th</sup> FG and 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG Association and they have unanimously agreed with the project.

Again, I must thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness.

Sincerely

Edward B. Giller  
Major General, USAF, Ret.  
President, 55<sup>th</sup> FG and 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG Association.

*(See Wally Blackwell's explanation of this most interesting development in his "From The President's Desk" column on Page 2).*

Some of our 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force friends have “called it a day,” but the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association is “still in business.”

The projected count for the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual reunion at Overland Park, Kansas was an optimistic 200, so reunion chair Sharon Krause was understandably ecstatic in announcing that 201 had registered for the four-day gathering.

“It was a total success,” she said, as she and the Farewell Banquet gathering savored the musical offering of the “Moonlight Serenade Orchestra,” a 17-member 40’s group led by Don Hatfield.

“What a pleasure to hear such great music,” said one happy member as he recalled those “Glenn Miller days” of World War II.

The music aside, it was a positive and happy meeting, witness the “bunching up” of crews and friends in and around the Marriott Hotel.

And on the new and modern US-built coaches that carried members to the many sights in and around the Kansas City metropolis.

And in the hotel Memory Room, where the tables offered photos, books, brochures, magazines and other memorabilia of those B-17 days gone by.

**Continued On Page 4**

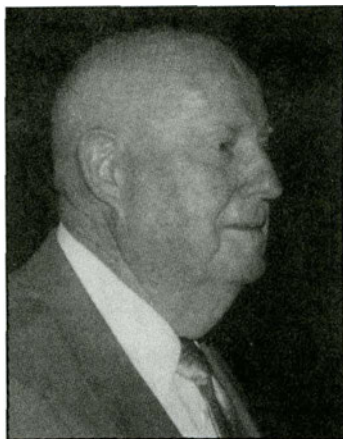
## From The President's Desk:

# 398th To Honor "Little Friends"

BY WALLY BLACKWELL  
President, 398th B G Memorial Association

The 398<sup>th</sup> BG Memorial Association is proud to announce that we will soon have a new addition to our 398<sup>th</sup> Memorial site in Nuthampstead, England! This good news has been in the making for the past few months. We expect a monument honoring the 55<sup>th</sup> FG / 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG, as our "little friends" to be in place on the 398<sup>th</sup> monument site when the 398<sup>th</sup> BGMA conducts its June 2006 return to the old base area. The 55<sup>th</sup> FG / 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG monument will be on the far end of the immediate 398<sup>th</sup> monument area and in a setting of its own.

This major event in our history really started last year during the 398<sup>th</sup>'s 2004 return tour to Nuthampstead. At that



WALLY BLACKWELL

time our long time friend, Ozzie Osborn, who along with Vic Jenkins, was responsible for having a 398<sup>th</sup> Monument at Nuthampstead, proposed the concept. Ozzie planned to accomplish this project partnered with Russ Abbey. Russ has been fascinated by the lore of what happened at Station 131 during WWII along with Ozzie for many years. Russ has concentrated his Station 131 research toward the activities of the 55<sup>th</sup> FG. As we know, the 55<sup>th</sup> occupied the base for about six months before moving on to Wormingford, thus making way for the arrival of the 398<sup>th</sup>.

The 398<sup>th</sup>'s immediate response to the Ozzie and Russ proposal was "go for it." The 398<sup>th</sup> would be proud to honor their 55<sup>th</sup> FG "little friends" by sharing our memorial space. Ozzie and Russ were prepared and ready to do all the considerable hard work to make it happen, and indeed it is happening. There were immediate details to work out relating to the legality of the idea. The Dimsdale family deeded the ownership of the 398<sup>th</sup> Memorial plot to the 398<sup>th</sup> BGMA in 1988. The American Battle Monuments Commission, which oversees USA military cemeteries worldwide, must approve such a project. The ABMC also provides the 398<sup>th</sup> site maintenance under a continuing contractual arrangement.

The 398<sup>th</sup> resolved the ownership problem by proposing to fund or bankroll the estimated \$7,500 project in honor of our "little friends" the 55<sup>th</sup> FG, and include its care and upkeep in our own fully funded ABMC contract for perpetual maintenance. This up front money would enable the 55<sup>th</sup> FG / 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG monument plan to move forward immediately. We must sincerely thank Ozzie and Russ for conceiving, designing and installing this heartfelt tribute to the men of the 55<sup>th</sup> FG. The monument will list the names of those who lost their lives flying combat from Station 131. There will be many on both sides of the Atlantic that will want to contribute to this project. All good wishes are welcome.

The 398<sup>th</sup> membership, together with all our Friends, is proud that a 55<sup>th</sup> FG / 442<sup>nd</sup> ASG monument will be dedicated next June. We hope many of you will be there to help make this a "memorable" event.

## Two Changes Made On 398<sup>th</sup> Board

A pair of "official" changes were made at the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual reunion of the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association in Overland Park, Kansas.

Jim Haas, who served as a 603 bombardier "back then," and for the past several years has handled the important position of "Dues Chairman," asked to step down due to health reasons.

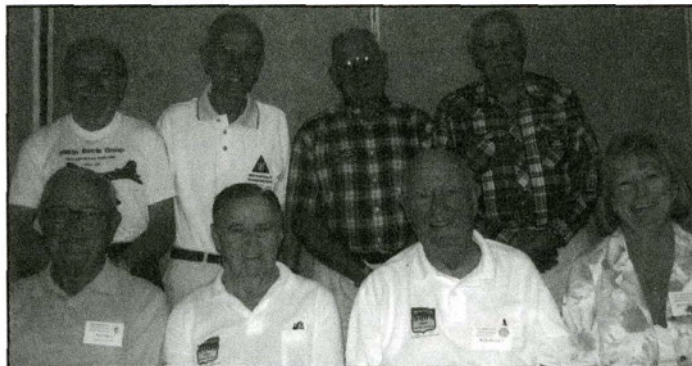
Keith Anderson, 600 pilot "back then" and more recently one of the four elected "Directors," asked to step down because of his commitments as a commercial fisherman in Alaska.

(Keith measures his fish catch by the ton, not pounds.)

Stepping in to take his place on the Board will be Joe Joseph, more recently the PX Manager. Joseph was elected at the general meeting.

Meanwhile, president Wally Blackwell reached out to the ladies to fill Haas' Dues position, calling on Dawne Dougherty, widow of 602 gunner Tom Dougherty. Dawne lives in Harrisburg, Oregon, and has been an active participant in 398<sup>th</sup> reunions and tours.

Blackwell, meanwhile, along with the other Board officers, were re-elected for additional terms. Other positions are filled by presidential appointments.



THE ELECTED 398<sup>th</sup> officers pose at the Overland Park reunion. Front row, left to right, are Bob Bowen, Secretary; Al Turney, VP; Wally Blackwell, president; Marilyn Gibb-Rice, treasurer. Back row are Directors Arnie Schneider, Lou Stoffer, Joe Joseph and Lew Burke.



AMONG THE APPOINTED 398<sup>th</sup> officers are, front row, Carolyn Widmann, PX Manager; Sharon Krause, reunion chair/E-mail/unit contact; and Lee Anne Bradley, historian. Back row, Dave Jordan, Webmaster; Randy Stange, special projects; Allen Ostrom PR; Geoff Rice, photo researcher. Not in the photo are Dawne Dougherty, Dues Manager; and Ralph Hall, Monument Fund manager.

# “AO” To Fly Again, But Not Till '06

The Aluminum Overcast will fly again, but probably not until next year, according to the Experimental Aircraft Association of Oshkosh, WI.

Damaged in a severe taxi accident last May, enough repairs had been made to allow the “Triangle W” B-17 to be available for ground tours at last summer’s Air Venture fly-in.

But work will continue on the wings’ leading edges, nose glass, fuel tanks and ball turret before the repaired engines and props can be installed. “It has been a major restoration project,” said EAA President Tom Poberezny, who added that “financial support is needed to complete the job.”

The EAA can be reached at PO Box 3086, Oshkosh, WI, 54903. Telephone 920-426-6523 (Media/Public Relations Office). The EAA website is [www.b17.org](http://www.b17.org).

The 398<sup>th</sup> has twice “pitched in” for major financial help, once for exterior painting and again for internal corrosion control.

Meanwhile, the EAA is continuing its “Allied Victory” tour schedule with “Fuddy Duddy,” a B-17 leased from Wings of Eagles Discovery Center, Elmira, NY.

The tour began in mid-August and will continue until late November, after which additional tours may be scheduled. And then look for the Aluminum Overcast to return to tour circuit next years.

## The Fall Schedule –

October 11-12 ..... Pensacola, Fla.  
October 14-16 ..... Tallahassee, Fla.  
October 18-19 ..... Gainesville, Fla.  
October 21-23 ..... Jacksonville, Fla.  
October 25-26 ..... DeLand, Fla.  
October 28-30 ..... Orlando, Fla.  
November 1-2 ..... Vero Beach, Fla.  
November 4-6 ..... Fort Lauderdale, Fla.  
November 8-9 ..... Naples, Fla.  
November 11-13 ... Fort Myers, Fla.  
November 15-16 ... Sarasota, Fla.  
November 18-20 ... Lakeland, Fla.

*NOTE – All tour dates are subject to change. Call the EAA Tour office at 1-800-359-6217 for specific information on changes and additional flight dates.*

## Lose A Camera?

An Olympus Digital camera was left at the farewell reunion banquet at the Overland Park Marriott Hotel. The owner can retrieve it by calling the FLAK NEWS editor.

## “We Shall Never Forget”:

# FRENCH HONOR CREW

Thanks to a dedicated search by a dedicated French lady – Madame Susan Fox, eight family members of the 398<sup>th</sup>, including one veteran – Meyer (Buddy) Wagner – were honored guests at “heart-warming” ceremonies in France last June.

Wagner was the 600 Squadron commander in the lead B-17 piloted by Bob Hopkins when shot down on a mission to Bretteville on August 8, 1944. This was in support of the Allied ground advance between St. Lo and Falaise in what was called, “Totalize.”

The Hopkins plane crashed near the town of Segrie Fontaine, where this past June its citizens honored the Hopkins crew with a memorial in the city park. Two crew members were killed – James Hochadel and Charles Arnold – and their names head the inscriptions on the memorial along with survivors Wagner, Hopkins, Vonnerlinn Warneke, Tom Stitz, William Germiller, Ray Gibeau, John Werner and Fred Kushera.

Madame Fox had searched for a number of years before locating Wagner and Hopkins. She issued a blanket invite to the crew, but only Wagner was able to accept. He was joined in Segrie Fontaine by his son-in-law and grandson, Jay and Jason Gillette.

Also on hand was Hopkins’ daughter, Mary Lanahan, and Hopkins’ sister and husband, Hope and Bob Coleman. Plus Jack and Nancy Hochadel, he being a cousin of the crew’s ball turret gunner.

Hochadel and Arnold were killed by the Germans either as they descended in their chutes or on the ground. All other crew members survived.

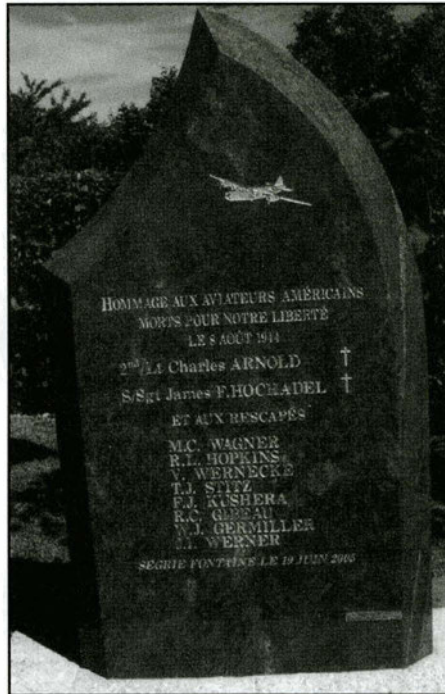
A parade, medal presentation, rides in restored Jeeps, luncheon and ceremonies including the mayor, Madam Marie Claudine Etienne, were part of the eventful weekend.

Madame Fox later took Mary Hopkins Lanahan and the Colemans to the very place the plane came down, some 50 yards from her 1944 home in LaBorde-liere. There they met other civilians who remembered that epic day 61 years ago.

Hochadel, realizing his cousin was buried at the American Military Cemetery at Normandy, took time to visit the site escorted by cemetery officials.

Later in the day he returned to Segrie Fontaine, where he had an opportunity to see the crash site – and the place where his WW II cousin’s life came to an untimely end.

“Despite those political differences our countries have on occasions, we French will always remember what the Americans did here. We will never forget.”



**THE FRENCH erected this monument in “homage” to the Hopkins crew shot down near Segrie Fontaine on August 8, 1944 and to the two men killed after bailing out. The French “did not forget.”**

## VETERAN ATTENDEES AT REUNION

**Robert Beckley, Wally Blackwell, Herb Boehme, Bob Bowen, John Brandstatter, Dale Brown, Lewis Burke, Bill Clack, Ben Core, Lowell Culver, Russell Currier, Bill Dean, Tom Dunn, Vaughn Erickson, Carl Foster, William Frankhouser, Dick Frazier, George Graham, George Hershberger, James Hill, Dick Hall, Earl Hoefert, James Humbert, D.J. Ibling, Ed Jones, Joe Joseph, Paul Keenan, Bob Knowles, Art Laughlin, Joe Mansell, John Matecki.**

**Herb Meeker, Hamilton Mero, David Mills, Ray Moore, Newell Moy, Elliot Novek, Allen Ostrom, Harry Overbaugh, Howard Pinner, James Powell, Max Rahe, Russ Reed, Z.T. Reed, Homer Rhoades, Paul Robeson, Paul Roderick, Robert Rowland, Hank Rudow, Jim Runnion, Conrad Samuelson, Arnie Schneider, Phil Stahlman, Lou Stoffer, Charles Sutton, Ray Talbott, Al Turney, Eugene Werner, Bernie White, Jim White, James Yip.**

# Reunion A Happy Affair

Continued From Page 1

And wherever two or more were gathered to compare caps, pins, jackets and endless supply of stories. . . some authentic and some clouded and colored by the passing years.

The organization is "getting older and slower," one was heard to say, "but I'll see you next year."

The attendance, according to Krause, was made up of about one third veterans (64), one third second and third generations and one third friends relatives and associates.

President Wally Blackwell conducted smooth and timely business meetings and welcomed positive reports from the various Board officers and committee chairs.

Among the major items of business was the announcement that the 398<sup>th</sup> had funded a special monument honoring the 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group (P-38's) which was stationed at Station 131 prior to the arrival of the 398<sup>th</sup> in 1944. This monument will be located near the present 398<sup>th</sup> memorial and will be dedicated during the England Tour in June, 2006 (See other stories on the 55<sup>th</sup> plus more tour news).

The always popular PX, recently turned over to Carolyn Widmann by Joe and Rozanne Joseph, continued to impress buyers both old and new.

"We have sold over 150 'Fortresses Over Nuthampstead'", said Widmann, referring to the classic 398<sup>th</sup> history by England's Cliff Bishop. "Our people just love it."

Also popular were the new golf shirts for both men and women, and the new updated style baseball caps with the squadron logos (very important for reunions and tours).

Also popular was Phyllis Rahe, who came to Overland Park with her 602 pilot/husband and an organ for entertaining during the Welcome Banquet. (The organ was provided by the local firm, Schmitt Piano Company).

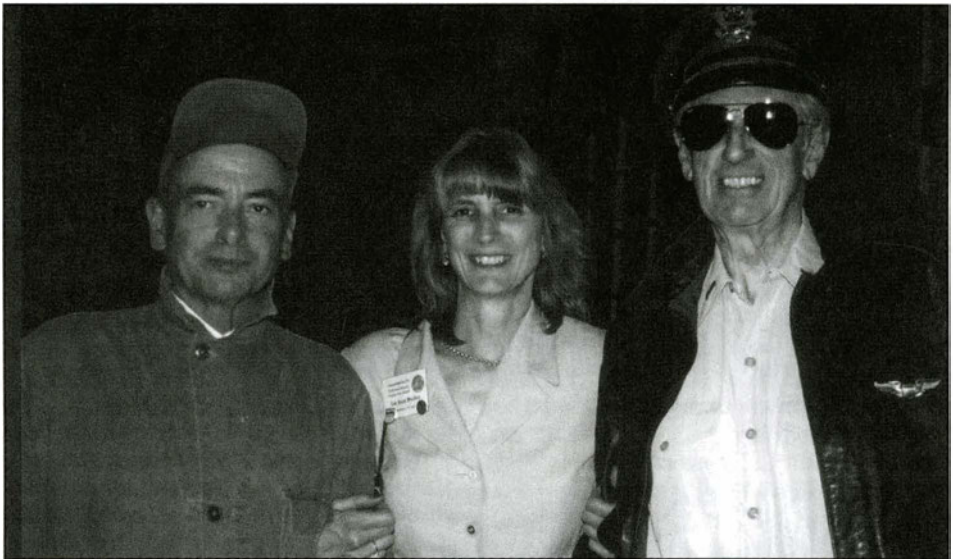
A reading of Roger Freeman's great poem, "The Sky Was Never Still," was followed by Phyllis' organ rendition of "The White Cliffs of Dover."

Additional "entertainment" was offered by the duet of Ralph Ambrose and Geoff Rice, who had a dialogue between a pilot and crew chief. Each was dressed accordingly and each anticipated a call from Hollywood.

Carolyn Widmann and sister Marilyn



**SHARON KRAUSE** displays the crystal vase given her by president Wally Blackwell and Teedy for her "well done" job as reunion chair at the Overland Park, Kansas reunion. Yes, she will do it again next year in Livonia, Michigan.



**LEE ANNE BRADLEY** congratulates the performers of the banquet skit called, "Dialogue Between The Crew Chief (Geoff Rice) and Pilot" (Ralph Ambrose). The "actors" are considering Hollywood offers.

Gibb-Rice also tested the acting waters with their version of "What You Need To Know To Be A Pilot."

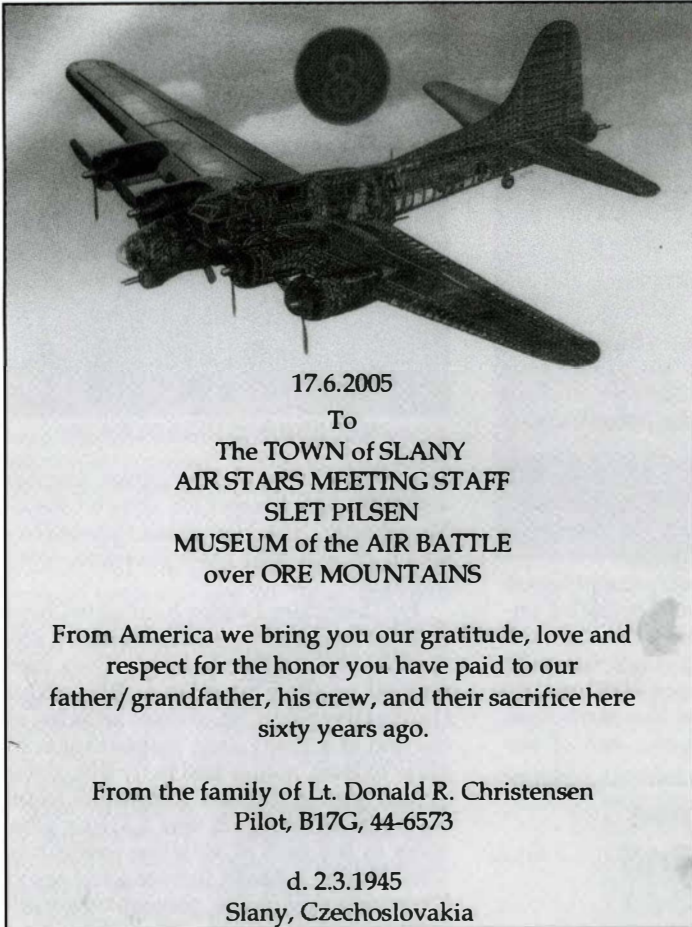
Web Master Dave Jordan announced that no less than 5,500 "hits" were made on the group's web site (*398th.org*) during the month of August. "They are finding us," he said.

Blackwell and Director Lew Burke conspired to surprise FLAK NEWS editor and tour leader Allen Ostrom with a lovely plaque for his past work. "It

was not on the program," protested the shocked (and very pleased) editor.

George Hershberger and wife, Pearl, gave out two cases of their "Baron" brand wine during the Farewell Banquet. George, who piloted in the 602<sup>nd</sup>, issued a pair of "silent" toasts from the podium, one to Jesus and the other to the 398<sup>th</sup>. He made a point to see that the 40's band leader received a bottle for "giving us that wonderful music."

# Czechs Remember 603 Crew



17.6.2005

To  
The TOWN of SLANY  
AIR STARS MEETING STAFF  
SLET PILSEN  
MUSEUM of the AIR BATTLE  
over ORE MOUNTAINS

From America we bring you our gratitude, love and respect for the honor you have paid to our father/grandfather, his crew, and their sacrifice here sixty years ago.

From the family of Lt. Donald R. Christensen  
Pilot, B17G, 44-6573

d. 2.3.1945  
Slany, Czechoslovakia

Presented to Czech Friends

## A "THANK YOU" LETTER

A 398<sup>th</sup> veteran sent a letter to a second generation acquaintance enclosing copies of FLAK NEWS depicting World War II air war action. The responding letter, printed here, is one that might have come from any number of young people receiving similar documents and information about WW II for the first time –

"Thanks so much for sending me FLAK NEWS in response to my letter. It is both interesting and deeply moving to read these accounts of vivid memories from a time my generation knows only by hearsay.

"I am reminded again of the great debt we owe the many who worked so hard, who suffered and died, on behalf of freedoms we younger folks often take for granted.

"I found the D-Day unit listings both impressive and helpful. And, of course, the Churchill quote about 'so many/so few' regarding the Battle of Britain is one of the finest and most meaningful rhetorical moments.

"I appreciate your sending me these accounts of the 398<sup>th</sup> and other memories, reunions and special events. I am going to pass them on to my father, who missed the action in your quarter (Europe). He was stationed in Adak, Alaska, awaiting the imminent full-scale invasion by the Japanese that thankfully did not occur. He also has great interest in things WW II.

"Cheers and all the best wishes to you and your fellows!"

– MELINDA BARGREEN, Seattle

## "An Overpowering Experience"

It happened 60 years ago, and since that time he had heard only fleeting and faint stories on what happened to his father in World War II. It all changed on June 17, 2005.

Finally, Donald C. Christensen heard, saw and felt the story of his father, killed in his B-17 when it crashed in Czechoslovakia after being hit by German fighters on March 2, 1945.

In a ceremony at Slany, Czech Republic, where the plane came down so long ago, the drama was replayed as Christensen and his family were honored by Czech officials, Czech RAF WW II Officers, The American Embassy, a military fly-past, autograph signing and even a 1940's hanger dance.

Included in the drama for the son of the 603 pilot was seeing and holding one of the propeller blades from his father's plane. And a fly-over the exact spot where he had come down. "It was simply overpowering for me and my family," he said. This included his wife Miriam, son Jeffrey, grandson Peter Jacob and stepson, Joah McGee. The family lives in Salida, Colorado.

The ceremonies took place at the great memorial at Slany dedicated to the crew members who lost their lives that day in 1945 – Christenson, William Love, Harry Ostrow, John Gustafson, Robert Dudley, Elmer Gurba, Albert Carlisle, and Kenneth Plantz. Tail gunner Selmer Haakenson was the lone survivor.

The ceremonies were arranged by Milan Spineta, director of the Air Stars celebration, and Jan Zdiarsky of the International University Center for Air Sports in Prague.

"For me, the journey marked the culmination of a 60-year-long search for the father I lost as a child," said Christensen. "At least I know his final destination, and that some fine people in a far away land remember and honor his sacrifice and have erected a monument in his memory."

One young Czech lady at the ceremonies told Christensen –

"I did not know anyone from my country who lost a family member during the war. But you Americans came to fight for us and lost thousands, including your own father. How could we forget that?"

## Story Of Trip Available

Donald Christensen came home to Salida, Colorado to write an intimate story covering all the memorable moments he and his family experienced in the Czech Republic last June.

He said he will be pleased to make this available to any and all who contact him. "Call, write or E-mail and I will send you a copy."

Donald C. Christensen, Salida, Colorado, 81201.

## Dues Out West For 2006

Members living "Out West" get the honor of kicking off the dues program for 2006. Plus the honor of sending them to the new Dues Chair, Dawne Dougherty of Harrisburg, Oregon.

States involved this quarter are Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Montana, Wyo-ming, Colorado, Alaska and Hawaii.

Self-addressed Dues envelopes should be enclosed for members living in these states. If missing, simply send your \$20 check to 398th Bomb Group c/o Dawne Dougherty, Harrisburg, Oregon 97446-9585

Remember, dues keep the 398th "afloat." And are required for receiving FLAK NEWS.

"I'm Grateful For The Little Bits He Shared With Me":

# A 398<sup>th</sup> Daughter Remembers Dad

BY LEE ANNE BRADLEY

Historian, 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association

(Daughter of 601 Engineer-Gunner Frederick C. Bradley, Jr.)

My earliest memory of dad referring to his Army Air Force days dates back to when I was about five years old. He was showing me how to make my bed "the proper way" using "army corners" for a tight bed. You could bounce quarters off the darn thing. I also think it was a clever way to keep me from falling out of it at night... those sheets and blankets never budged an inch.

We lived near the Jersey Shore. Blimps and planes of all sorts frequently flew up and down the coastline. Single engine bi-planes pulled trailing banners advertising events at Convention Hall in Asbury Park and daredevil skywriters demanded "Don't Burn Use Cop-pertone". Occasionally a big four-engine plane would roar by and my dad would say, "There goes a B-17, I flew in one just like that during the War." I was six and I was more interested in swimming than airplanes.

For the most part dad said nothing of his WWII experience in the 398<sup>th</sup> BG, 601 squadron. Except when we received our annual Christmas letter from Howard Traeder and his wife Jane.

I would ask, "Who is Howard Traeder and what did he trade?" (For years I was convinced he was a fur trader.) My dad would tell the same story every year. Howard was his pilot during WWII, and a very good one at that. "He saved our entire crew", my dad would say. Howard skillfully made a controlled crash landing, bringing down their badly damaged B-17 outside of Paderborn, Germany, and "they all got out alive".

It was April 13, 1945... Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, the day a B-17 crew, flying above them in formation, mistakenly salvoed their RDX bombs all at once rather than drop them "in train" individually. The highly sensitive bombs bumped together and blew up approximately 400 feet under the 601 Squadron. The accident took out six B-17's and my dad's was one of them, serial number 43-38121 Q "Queenie".

With two engines out and losing altitude, Traeder headed for Allied lines. Just as the situation was getting really desperate, he spotted a German fighter strip outside of the city of Paderborn. He committed to landing, but as he got closer he saw the Germans had piled debris and rubble from the bombed out city on both sides of this strip, making it too narrow to land a B-17. He had no choice. The crew braced themselves in the standard "toboggan" crash position

in the radio room with tail gunner Bill Jones leaning against the bomb bay door and the rest of the crew sitting single file in front of him, facing the tail

Traeder came in wheels up and hoped enough of the wings would break off enabling their B-17 to pass through the walls of concrete debris. Unfortunately, only one wing broke off and ol' "Queenie" canted 45 degrees down the strip then slid across the road at the end of the

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## New B-17 Came To Untimely End In Greenland

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runway. Amazingly, everyone escaped with just minor injuries... except for poor Bill. He fractured his vertebrae during the crash, probably from being positioned against the door. As they watched Queenie burn, two trucks raced towards them. The anxious crew, not knowing if they were behind Allied lines or not, braced themselves for the worst. Their fears were laid to rest as the trucks drew near. It was the Red Cross!

The fighter strip had been taken over by the Allies only one week before. So it turned out that particular Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> wasn't completely unlucky!

That was the 24<sup>th</sup> and last mission for the Traeder crew. Within a week, they had all returned to Station 131 from various field hospitals... all except Bill Jones of course. By the time the crew was deemed ready to fly missions again, the war in Europe had ended. They stayed on through May flying practice missions until they were sent home on June 2, 1945, fully expecting to be called to the Pacific once their leave was up Stateside. Fortunately, the war ended before that happened.

My dad's *first* B-17 disaster happened before he and his crew-mates had ever seen combat! On December 15, 1944 the Traeder crew departed Lincoln, NE



FREDERICK C. BRADLEY, JR

in a brand new B-17G serial number 43-39085 and headed for Grenier Field, Manchester, New Hampshire where they would be assigned their overseas destination.

On December 18 they headed to Goose Bay, Labrador where they waited a few days for the weather to break. They then took off on their next leg to Bluie West One in Greenland, an airbase situated at the end of a fjord near Narsarsuaq. In order to land, planes had to fly fifty miles up the fjord which has mountains looming on both sides... it was a tricky situation in the best of weather conditions. They landed without incident and spent Christmas and a few pleasant days afterward before taking off on their next leg to Iceland on Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>. (See the July, 2004 FLAK NEWS for an interesting story on Bluie West One).

Cleared for takeoff, they rumbled down the runway toward the Fjord. As engineer, it was my dad's job to stand behind the pilot and co-pilot and call out airspeed on take-off. Suddenly, as he was doing so, the needle stopped registering. Thinking possibly it might be stuck; he reached over and tapped the indicator a few times attempting to jar the needle... nothing. He yelled out "NO AIRSPEED".

Howard had to make a quick decision. He could either take off not knowing his airspeed, not a good idea with mountains all around, or he could abort the takeoff. He decided to abort, but by that time their B-17 was rolling along at a pretty good clip. Slamming on the brakes, they skidded off the runway across rough terrain onto the frozen fjord. As their B-17 burst into flames the crew made a mad dash out of the aircraft. The entire ship became engulfed in flames and black smoke. It was completely destroyed along with all of the crew's personal possessions and winter gear.

At first it was thought that the "Pitot" tube cover had not been removed before take-off, this would have caused the air-speed gauge not to register. The Aircraft

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# Deposits For Tour Due "Now"

The calendar may suggest that June, 2006 is almost a half-year away, but reality suggests that the time is now for prospective England Tour participants to declare their interest by sending in their \$300 registration deposits.

Barbara Fish, now working on her 9<sup>th</sup> tour with the 398<sup>th</sup>, dating back to 1992, warns of a tight supply of rooms, especially singles. "I have just enough rooms reserved for a group of 25, but if we begin to exceed this, I should know about it soon as possible," she said. The \$300 deposits should be paid no later than December 1, even now added Fish.

The first 20 or so sign-ons came in quickly, and the Overland Park reunion brought forth another 20. Thus, the tour leaders are in somewhat of a "guessing game" for predicting an accurate count.

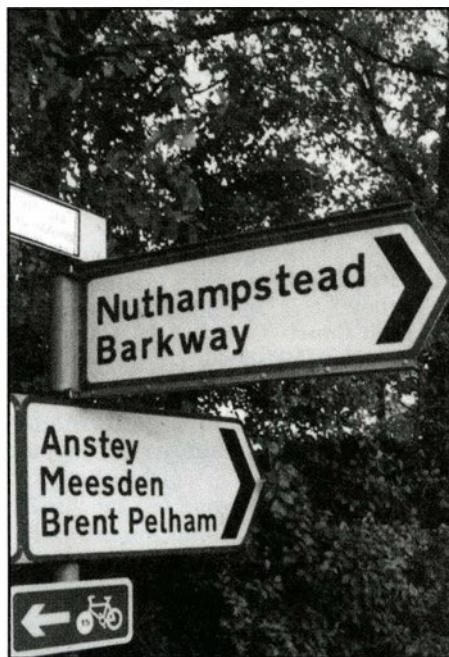
One of the first persons to sign on was Don Menard, radio operator on the Sheely 603 crew, shot down on October 28, 1944. He is bringing his daughter, Melissa.

His attention, however, has been turned elsewhere of late. His home and business in Baton Rouge, Louisiana were damaged by Hurricane Katrina.

FLAK NEWS was unable to reach 398<sup>th</sup> members living in the Gulf area, namely John Bernard of Thibodaux, LA; Ed Pennylegion of Pass Christian, MS; Mrs. Herman Hager, Metairie, LA; all hard hit by Katrina.

Tour information and reservation forms may be had by calling 1-800-809-0154. Mail to Barbara Fish, 160 SW 152<sup>nd</sup> St, Seattle, WA 98166. E-mail <barbf@cascadelink.com>. Or call tour coordinator Allen Ostrom.

The 10-day tour package costs \$2495. This does NOT include air fare "across the pond." Barb or Sara are available for further flight information, both overseas



## THE ITINERARY

- May 31 – Depart USA.
- June 1 – Cambridge (Welcome Dinner)
- June 2 – Cambridge (Duxford, Welcome Reception with Friends).
- June 3 – Cambridge (Station 131 Service: Woodman lunch. Wally's Tour of the old base.
- June 4 – Cambridge (Anstey Thanksgiving Service; Lunch at High Hall with Friends).
- June 5 – Cambridge (Madingley Cemetery; Hertford Record Center; Woodman lunch; farewell banquet at Hotel.
- June 6 – London (Coach tour of London; shopping; evening free.
- June 7 – London (Thames luncheon cruise; ride on the London Eye).
- June 8 – London (Windsor Castle; shopping; farewell dinner).
- June 9 – Depart for USA.

or local.

Barb also pointed out that deposits are refundable until March 1, 2006.

# Last Call For 398<sup>th</sup> Group Tour

The upcoming England Tour in June, 2006 will undoubtedly be the last major, organized 398<sup>th</sup> sponsored tour back to the old base, it was announced jointly by president Wally Blackwell and Friends of the 398<sup>th</sup> chairman in England, Wilfrid Dimsdale.

Members and friends will always be welcome at Nuthampstead, they said, and recognition services will be held every other year at the Memorial and at the church at Anstey, probably the first Saturday and Sunday in June of those years.

"However," said Wally, "we will no longer sponsor a group effort as has been the case since the Memorial dedication in 1982. Our British Friends agree that they can no longer support such major semi-annual celebrations as in the past."

Dimsdale emphasized that individual 398<sup>th</sup> members and friends, even small groups, will always be welcome at Nuthampstead.

Following the dedication in 1982, the group has returned in large numbers in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004. Next summer's "final" tour is scheduled for May 31 – June 9, 2006 with visits to the Nuthampstead area and London (See other story).

Past tours have included many other UK areas, including Scotland. Also, there have been stops in France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark and Czech Republic.

Extraordinary visits were made in 1992 to Merseburg, a "favorite" bombing target in 1944-45 and to Neuss, in 1988 where Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., and his crew were shot down in January, 1945.

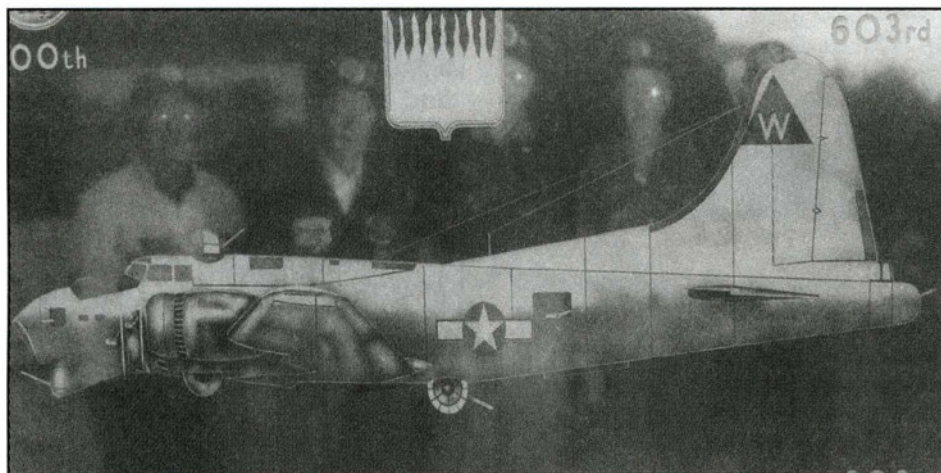
## MICHIGAN NEXT

It will be another "small town" atmosphere for next year's 23<sup>rd</sup> annual 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group reunion – Livonia, Michigan.

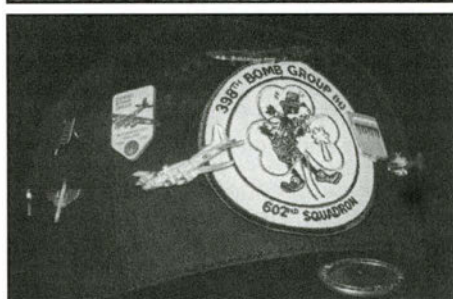
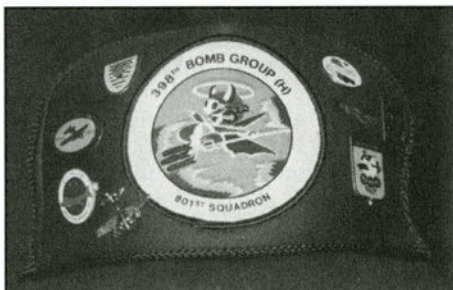
The dates will be September 6-7-8-9, 2006.

Livonia is located some 15 miles west of Detroit and will once again be "chaired" by Sharon Krause. Other recent "small town" reunion cities have been Overland Park, KS, Falls Church, MD, and Covington, KY.

Michigan is heavily represented in the 398<sup>th</sup> membership, a fact that influenced the Board decision.



# Your 398th Officers



Here are a few of the many caps and their adornments as photographed at the reunion in Overland Park, Kansas.

## President

Wally Blackwell  
Rockville, MD 20850-3067

## Vice President

Al Turney  
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## Secretary

Robert T. Bowen, Jr.  
Athens, GA 30606-4002

## Treasurer

Marilyn Gibb-Rice  
Fountain, CO 80817-1795

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Arnold Schneider  
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Joe Joseph  
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## Dues Manager

Dawne Dougherty  
Harrisburg, Or 97446-9585

## Group Historian/Data Coordinator

Lee Anne Bradley  
Andover, NJ 07821-4034

## PX Manager

Carolyn Widmann  
Noblesville, IN 46062-7150

## Webmaster

Dave Jordan  
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## Special Projects

Randy Stange  
Fullerton, CA 92631-3331

## Photo Researcher

Geoff Rice  
Fountain, CO 80817-1795

## Friends of the 398th Chairman

Wilfrid Dimsdale  
Buntingford  
Herts SG9 OAY England

## Monument Fund

Ralph Hall  
New Bedford, MA 02740-1915

## Public Relations

Allen Ostrom  
Seattle, WA 98107-3065

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**"We are a religious people, whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. Without moral and spiritual absolutes, our nation is doomed to further decay and to ultimate destruction by the judgement of a just, holy, and righteous God.**

**– William O. Douglas  
Supreme Court Justice, 1952**

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# The Sky Was Never Still

BY ROGER FREEMAN  
*8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historian, England*

The old man sat in the English pub  
As he had for many a year  
And listened to the stranger's talk  
As he sipped a temperate beer.

A stranger asked how long he'd lived  
In the village here about.  
"Why all my days," the old man said  
An age, without a doubt."

"I envy you" the stranger sighed  
Your tranquil village life,  
The gentle fields, the muted sky,  
Devoid of urban strife."

The old man smiled a wistful smile,  
"That's just a townie's dream.  
For I have seen the sky aflame  
And heard the meadows scream."

"I've known a thunder at each dawn  
That shook the very ground  
As warplanes sought to gain the  
clouds  
From airfields all around."

"They called some Forts and others  
Libs  
And there were fighters too  
I've counted hundreds at a time  
Yes, what I tell is true."

"They'd climb and soar like flocks of  
rooks  
And round and round they'd mill  
From north and south, from east and  
west  
The sky was never still."

## Favorite Tour? Tell FLAK NEWS

The FLAK NEWS editor would like to hear from people who have a "favorite" England Tour experience. This could date back to 1986, (or 1976, when several members visited Nuthampstead as part of a 8AFHS tour).

The tours "back to the old base" also have included visits to such points as Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Southampton, London, Windsor, Wildborclough, Coventry, Blackpool, The Wash, Hertford, and many more towns, big and small.

Also, for those who wish, may include the tours to Merseburg, Waterloo, Munich, Pilsen, Malmady, Neuss, Remagen, Litice, Pilsen and many more continental cities, big and small.

Mail your stories to FLAK NEWS,  
Seattle, WA 98107.

"Sometimes there'd be a wondrous  
sight  
A sight beyond compare  
The bombers going out to war  
Forging the frigid air."

Four miles above, just silver specks  
Like sunshine on the dew  
And trailing lines of cloud-like white  
Across the cosmic blue."

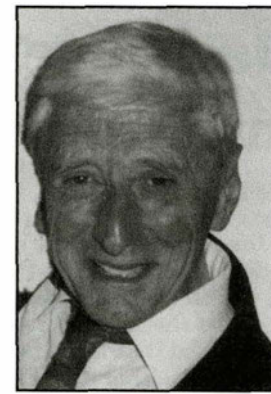
"They set the heavens all a-throb  
That did not fade away  
For others rose to meet the night  
Invisible to stay."

"And when was this?" the stranger  
asked  
"And who were those you saw?"  
The old man drank and then replied  
"It happened in the war."

"They were but boys and many died  
Some lost without a trace  
For then the sky in foreign parts  
Could be violent place."

Yes, they were boys and me a child  
But I remember well  
And if you have the time to spare  
There's more that I can tell."

The stranger said that he must go  
"Perhaps another day"  
Indifferent to the old man's tale  
He quickly slipped away.



ROGER FREEMAN

The old man turned to inward  
thought  
His memories to tend  
He knew that those who were not  
there  
Could never comprehend.

Those who'd not known the crowded  
sky  
The sounds that drenched the land  
Or stood in awe and wonderment  
Would never understand.

The old man left the English pub  
And stood awhile outside  
The evening vault was milky blue  
Cloud-free and stretching wide.

He raised his head and scanned the  
sky  
That held so still and clear  
And in his mind a memory  
And in his eye a tear.

[www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org)



**THE WOODMAN INN is the "Library Reading Room" for FLAK NEWS in England. In this case it serves the foursome of Peter Brooke, James Hodge, Gary (Fingers) Duce and Dave Baisley. This group and all the Nuthampstead Friends, are looking forward to the "One More Peek" 398<sup>th</sup> Tour next June, 2006.**

# A Daughter Remembers

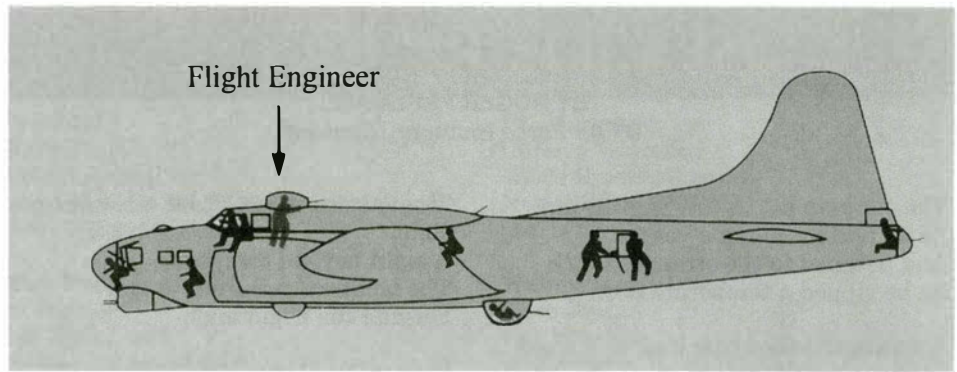
Continued From Page 6

Accident Investigation Board stated in their accident report that the Pitot tube cover had indeed been removed and this had been triple checked before take-off. It was determined that while taxiing for take-off position, either the Pitot tube or the lines had become frozen by blowing snow causing the airspeed indicator malfunction. In addition to that problem, the men in the waist said they saw flame from the #3 engine as they were barreling down the runway. Howard was not positive if the fire occurred before or after he cut power and slammed on the brakes.

So now without a plane, the crew "hitchhiked" by cargo plane to Iceland and Scotland, then by bus and train to Royston, Hertfordshire, England. They finally arrived at Station 131 by truck on January 23, 1945. As a humorous sidebar to this story... my mom had given my dad her favorite photo of herself to keep with him while he was overseas. Naturally it was destroyed in this accident along with everything else he owned. She never forgave him for "letting her photo burn up."

Howard tells another hair-raising story about my dad. By the time 1945 rolled around, most of the B-17's in the Eighth Air Force had seen better days. They had been through many missions by then and most had been patched and repaired multiple times. The bomb bay doors were notorious for not working. It was the engineer's job to crank them open by hand when they got stuck. It was February 25, 1945, their 7<sup>th</sup> mission. As usual the bomb bay doors would not open so my dad began to crank away. In his urgency to get the doors open, his oxygen hose detached. It wasn't long before he became anoxic, lost consciousness and slumped over the sill of the door to the bomb bay. Co-Pilot Lt. Quentin McMurray, always keeping an eye out for the crew, saw what had happened and quickly connected the hose to my dad's oxygen supply. Suddenly revived, my dad automatically jumped to resume cranking. Fortunately Mac grabbed him. The bomb bay doors were open and he would have jumped right through them at 20,000 feet.

My dad didn't tell any other stories about the war while I was growing up, and for that matter, after I grew up! But one day in the mid-eighties, Howard called and excitedly told him he became a member of the 398<sup>th</sup> BG Association and that my dad should join too. My dad did join and so began receiving the quarterly FLAK NEWS newsletter. My mom and dad lived in Largo, Florida at



The flight engineer was specially trained to have a wide knowledge of the bomber and its equipment. He was capable of servicing the aircraft if it landed away from its home base and he could perform most jobs handled by the ground crew. Along with

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## Bomb Bay Doors Were A Problem On Older B-17's

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his ability to maintain the airframe and engines, the engineer was also an armorer with a detailed knowledge of the aircraft's guns and bomb racks. He had a working knowledge of all the aircraft systems and was a key figure in any emergency situation.

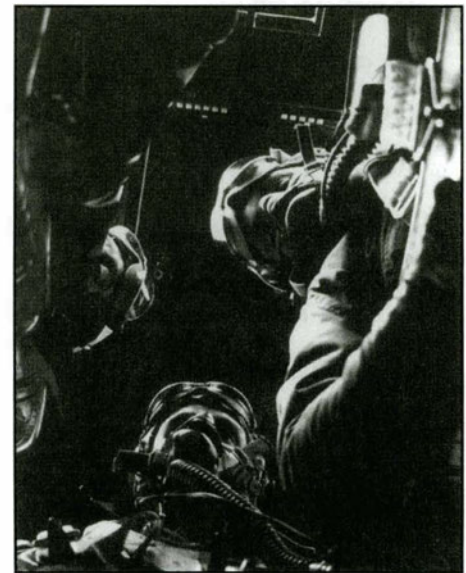
The flight engineer's primary job was manning the B-17's top turret in combat. His view from the top turret covered a 360 degree radius over the aircraft. The turret, positioned just aft of the pilot and co-pilot on the flight deck, gave him easy access to monitor the airplane's systems.

the time and I would often visit. There on the coffee table was the FLAK NEWS. Thumbing through, I became very interested in the articles and photos. I asked a lot of questions like, "Did you know this guy?" or "Did you fly in that plane?" and "What was the name of your plane?" The answers were always the same, "Naw, I didn't know him... there were a million guys there", "We didn't name the planes then because we never flew in the same plane twice".

Now, as 398<sup>th</sup> BG Historian, I have learned many things about those Nuthampstead days during 1944-1945. The facts I find most amusing are those that contradict my dad's answers to my questions. For one, the Traeder crew flew in two B-17's for most of their 24 missions. "Queenie", serial number 43-38121 Q, was the plane they crashed in on their last mission on April 13, 1945. The other was serial number 43-38064 H. Two years ago I learned from Howard that my DAD unofficially named that one "Umbriago" (translated: "The drunken one"). So much for never flying in B-17's that were named.

My dad was eighty years old when he passed away in April 1999. He had just begun to open up about his experience with the 398<sup>th</sup> BG and I am very grateful for the little bits he shared with me. Towards the end, I believe he actually enjoyed reminiscing about those days at Nuthampstead. In fact, the 1999 April FLAK NEWS had just arrived in the mail and I brought it over to him in the hospital. I still remember how his eyes lit up when I gave it to him.

He and his memories of Station 131 were gone three days later.



At engine start and runup the flight engineer stood behind the pilots checking the fuel and engine gauges. During take-off he called off the airspeed so the pilot could concentrate on keeping the airplane straight down the runway. Once the airplane was airborne he would keep watch on the engine performance and the fuel consumption throughout the flight.

*This presentation is part of a living History created by the Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, Mesa, Arizona. Other similar crew positions will be presented in future issues. Special thanks to the CAF and the Sentimental Journey.*

# BRIEF-things

Through the first nine months of 2005 more than 50 members of the 398<sup>th</sup> were added to the Taps list, but also sad is the dropping of 58 longtime members from the FLAK NEWS roster because they either forgot or chose not to pay their annual dues . . . our pal in England, **Les Dear**, is busy creating new signs for use on "Wally's Tour" of the old base for next year's visit. . . the latest feature on "398th.org" is the "short snorter" program offered by **Walt Boland** of the 602 **Leukhardt** crew. . . our friends at Station 131, including **Dear** and **Ozzie Osborn**, held a very special remembrance service for **George Abbott** at the Memorial last October 15, the day in 1944 he was killed as the togglier in the **DeLanceyStahlman** plane. . . a congratulatory message from The Queen awaited **George & Joy Cuda** on June 14 as they celebrated 60 years of marriage; the 600 flight chief liked England and his English bride so much he just stayed on, and still lives not far from Station 131. . . a young Belgain aviation historian, **Nicolas Clinaz**, would dearly love to locate 602 co-pilot **Claude Williams** of the **Bill Dwyer** crew; **Williams'** cap was found in the wreckage of their 1944 crash and is preserved as part of his city's WW II artifact collection (**Williams** moved from Woodbury, MN without a forwarding address); four Belgain houses were destroyed when their B-17 came down. . . a Friend of many 8<sup>th</sup> AF bomb groups, **Roger Freeman**, say's he's "still in there fighting" as he endures cancer treatment . . . his nice letter observed that the 398<sup>th</sup> is still going strong, whereas some other groups are "calling it a day" (don't miss his great poem, "The Sky Was Never Still," on Page 9). . . FLAK NEWS picked up a sheet of the new American aviation stamps (civilian and military) and the first one used was of the B-24, honoring the editor's high school buddy killed on a South Pacific B-24 bombing mission (B-17's were not included in this latest PO issue). . . **Karen Neff**, one of our active "second generation" members, was in her Virginia home this summer when "microburst" 100-MPH winds and golf ball size hail took the roof and chimney off her house; she immediately called the office she works for - Federal Emergency Management Agency ("I snapped into my FEMA mode," she said). . . There may be other opportunities to visit Station 131 after next June, but it won't be the same without a coach-full of 398<sup>th</sup> friends and buddies. . . 2006 will be the 11<sup>th</sup> and last "group tour leader" job for the group's PR guy (and FLAK NEWS editor). . . we may not know his decision for a month or so yet, but there is a 50/50 chance that **Prince Andrew (Duke of York)** will join the 398<sup>th</sup> tour next year; we will be advised by either his "Private Secretary, Assistant Private Secretary, the Equerry or his Office Manager". . . bring your hats, ladies, or just in case. . . if the "old money" is evident in Kansas City, MO, then the "new money" is evident in Overland Park, KS, site of the 2005 reunion. . . **Hank Rudow** still keeps in touch with the people in Germany where he crash-landed his B-17 and where he visited while on the 1992 tour to Merseburg. . . some of the Army Reserve Medical Symposium members meeting at the Marriott came over to listen to the 398<sup>th</sup>'s 40's band music and our **Randy Stange** took the occasion to ask a female visitor to dance (a Colonel). . . **Joe Joseph** used his "What If?" talk to remind the members to seriously consider the 2006 England Tour (One More Peek). . . **Lew Burke** received a special plaque for his 398th.org website story on why he should have received a DFC (but didn't). . . the great, new magazine, Bomber Legends, published two 398<sup>th</sup> stories in its Vol. 2 No 3 issue, one on **Hal Weekley** and **Ike Alhadeff** and the other on **Richard Holub**, the captain who told Doolittle, Spaatz and a couple of other generals that, "you're making our guys nervous" as he prepared for his historic "rocket assist" take off at Station 131. . . Virgin Atlantic Airlines, Lloyds of London and a host of Sally B supporters combined to keep the B-17 in the England skies until the first of the year, and then Sally B again must face up to the EU'S "illogical" insurance regulations.

# 398th Bomb Group PX (The Second Generation)

## ORDER FORM

Qty.	Item	Unit Cost	Total
<b>CLOTHING</b>			
_____	T-Shirt, Black, "398th BG Flying Fortress"	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, Navy, with B-17 front view	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, Navy, with Triangle W	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, Olive, with Triangle W	\$12.00	_____
_____	Golf Shirt, Mens, Lt Blue, White, Red (Embroidered Triangle W, 60% Cotton, 40% Poly Mesh (S-XL)	\$25.00	_____
_____	Golf Shirt, Ladies, Lt. Blue, Yellow (Embroidered Triangle W, 60% Cotton, 40% Poly Mesh (S-XL)	\$25.00	_____
<b>CAPS</b>			
_____	Black, with logo (600, 601, 602, 603)	\$8.00	_____
<b>BOOKS</b>			
_____	Fortresses Over Nuthampstead	\$65.00	_____
_____	398 <sup>th</sup> History (1946 Photo Copy)	\$20.00	_____
_____	"Remembrances" (1989 Photo Copy Ostrom)	\$30.00	_____
_____	"WW II Odyssey" (Frankhouser)	\$19.00	_____
_____	"The Youngest Crew" (Wagner) (All books postpaid)	\$19.95	_____
<b>JEWELRY</b>			
_____	Diecast B-17 Model (1/10 scale, green)	\$9.00	_____
_____	Squadron lapel pins (Indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$5.00	_____
_____	Group lapel pin (Hell From Heaven)	\$5.00	_____
<b>LOGOS</b>			
_____	B-17 Jacket Patch (rectangular)	\$4.00	_____
_____	8th Air Force patch	\$6.00	_____
<b>PHOTOGRAPHS</b>			
_____	"Clearing & Colder" (11 x 17)	\$18.00	_____
_____	"Clearing & Colder" (17 x 22)	\$30.00	_____
_____	Anstey Stained Glass Window (11 x 17 includes list of comrades Killed in Action)	\$4.00	_____
_____	Aluminum Overcast (8 x 10)	\$2.00	_____
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
_____	Sun Catcher w/logo	\$10.00	_____
_____	Bumper Sticker (Black)	\$3.00	_____
_____	WWII Coloring Book (with crayons)	\$4.00	_____
_____	Tote Bag (20 x 15, Black w/logo)	\$8.00	_____

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Make checks payable to 398th Bomb Group PX. Mail check and completed order form to Carolyn Widmann, Noblesville, IN 46062-7150.