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

VOL. 22 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 2007



The 8th Air Force earned its place in history during the perilous years of World War II. It was England — 1942 to 1945 — and more specifically, the area known as East Anglia. See the inside pages and marvel at the huge number of aircraft that occupied this little bit of England to help seal the victory over Nazi Germany.

## From The President's Desk:

# 398th History Gets a FLAK NEWS Boost

BY WALLY BLACKWELL

President 398th BG Memorial Association

The various research areas of the 398th organization continue to add to our history files in many ways. However, it is just as important to make special efforts to preserve what we already have. This is shown elsewhere in this issue with the consolidation and distribution of bound volumes of 21 years of FLAK NEWS issues. Following is the Introduction that has been placed in each of the volumes. Such a record must be recognized!

The 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association has many devoted members who have contributed in a major way to its success as a viable organization. We all understand the value of keeping the 398th spirit alive and the need to continue its activities, at least for a while longer.

During its many years of existence, the 398th Association has accomplished a great deal, such as having joyful annual reunions and frequent returns to its combat base in England. As an Association, we will always be trying to gather our 398th combat history and to save it at various important archival facilities. And we are lucky that we have second-generation members who are also carrying on with this 398th BGMA tradition.

However, there has been only one accomplishment that can be called the lifeblood of the 398th. And that is the 398th newsletter — FLAK NEWS, composed and published in its entirety by Allen Ostrom, four issues per year for the last 21 years.

It all began at the 1984 Rapid City reunion. The members present recognized that if a 398th association was made to prosper, a comprehensive and dependable newsletter was necessary. At that time Allen Ostrom, who was present, said that he would do the job.

Allen served the 398th BG in combat as a tail gunner in the 603rd Squadron. He had done his 35 combat missions and knew what the combat history of the 398th was all about. But also significant was that he had been a newspaper reporter during one of his positions in his lifetime work career. Allen took the 398th newsletter job with a commitment that would last for the rest of his years. And he is still at it!

So as Allen began his work, the success and prosperity of the 398th BGMA took off with him. He quickly became the focal point of all 398th events and activities. Above all else, the FLAK NEWS keeps each member current with 398th events, such as reunion and other associated activities. Before long Allen began receiving the remembrances and stories

of 398th aircrew and ground members. All this type of information is precious for preserving 398th combat history. He also has done many research projects concerning 398th historical events for FLAK NEWS (a name he coined at the outset of publication in 1986.)

FLAK NEWS is recognized as a premier newsletter by other veteran organizations.

Thus through the ensuing years, Allen has assembled a magnificent and extensive record of 398th history, most of which would never have been recorded for posterity. The 398th BGMA is proud to be able to publish the past 21 years of Allen's FLAK NEWS. Copies of these volumes will be deposited in the major repositories of 8th Air Force history. These will include the National Archives, the 8th AF Memorial Museum near Savannah, Georgia, and the Hertfordshire County historical preservation facilities in England.

Thank you, Allen, for your outstanding service to the 398th BGMA that includes the many years of your faithful and tireless publication of the FLAK NEWS!

— WALLY

## It's Time For 398th Dues

The Southeast states plus a few from the Mid-west share the "Dues" honor in this FLAK NEWS issue.

The Dues, of course, are a must if we are to continue as a vital and viable Association, and many members also still see fit to honor loved ones and buddies in the form of special gifts to the Association.

Otherwise, everyone is a Dues Candidate with the burden this quarter falling to those members living in the following states —

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

## Bound Volumes For Mighty 8th And England

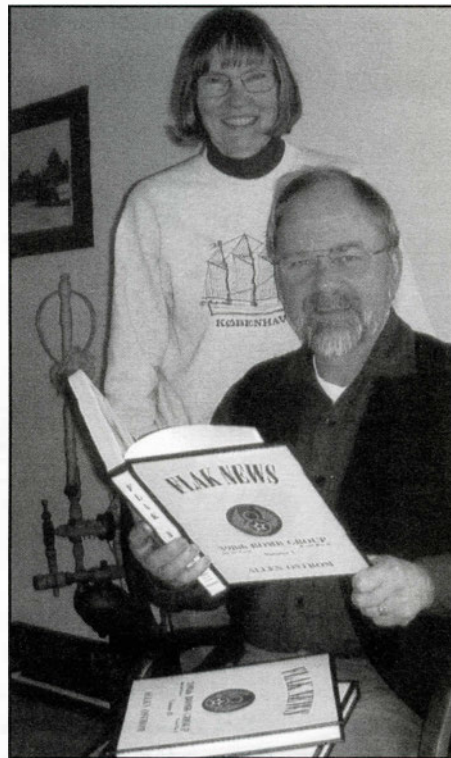
For 21 years FLAK NEWS has been identified as the 398th Bomb Group's quarterly newsletter. And many members insist they still have "every issue."

But for those who didn't save them — and for those who would like to see them in one sitting — it will be possible to do so at the Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah, Georgia, and at Hertford, England.

All issues since 1986 through 2006, in three-volume sets, have been produced at Phil's Custom Bindery in Seattle and shipped to Savannah and to the Hertford Archives and Local Studies (HALS) located not far from Station 131 at Nuthampstead.

"If I live so long, I will add a fourth volume one day," said Editor Allen Ostrom, who had inherited the original 398th mimeographed version from the late George Hilliard in 1985.

"FLAK NEWS has come a long way since then," said Barbara Fish, the travel consultant who went on to lead all the 398th Tours to England and the Continent since 1995. Barbara and her husband Rick enjoyed reading the bound volumes before seeing them sent on to their new homes.



BARB & RICK FISH

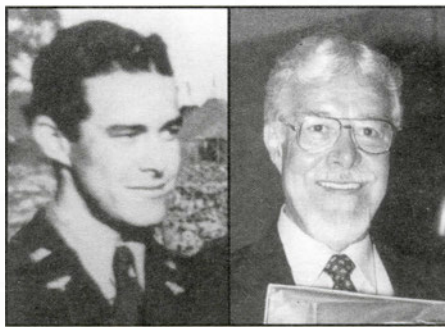
# TAPS

*Day is done...Gone the sun  
From the lakes, from the hills,  
From the sky  
All is well...Safely rest  
God is nigh*

*Fading light...Dims the sight  
And a star gems the sky  
Gleaming light  
From afar Drawing nigh  
Falls the night*

*Thanks and praise...For our days  
Neath the sun, Neath the stars  
Neath the sky  
As we go this we know  
God is nigh*

# Federico Gonzales



**FEDERICO (FRED) GONZALES**  
1921-2007

Federico (Fred) Gonzales, the pilot who providentially survived one of the most dramatic incidents in 398th Bomb Group history, passed away at the age of 85 on February 8, 2007.

He died at Evanston, Illinois, where for 23 years he had been a biophysicist professor at Northwestern University. He died of cancer and a neurological disease, according to his wife Anna, and Laurence, one of the family's seven sons. There are eight grandchildren.

Gonzales' medical specialty was histology, the study of cells and tissue.

Along with his wartime flying skills and medical career, Gonzales also was a photographer, accomplished potter, pianist, singer and builder of model planes and stereo systems.

Gonzales was the 603 pilot in the cockpit along with group leader Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., when their plane was struck by anti-aircraft fire on the mission over Neuss, Germany, on January 23, 1945. As the outer portion of the lead B-17 wing was blown off, the ship went into a violent spin and it continued to descend and ultimately crash.

Eye witnesses later described the final Fortress descent as "a falling leaf."

None of the ten crew members survived save for Gonzales, who was cared for briefly by local Germans before being sent to a hospital. He later spent many months in American Air Force hospitals recovering from injuries to his shattered body.

Gonzales received his "forgotten" promotion to captain in 1988 along with a Distinguished Flying Cross which also had been "lost in the cracks" following VE Day.

One of his "greatest moments" came during the 398th's England Tour of 1988 when he and the members made a "continental" trip to Neuss to meet the current mayor and a host of Germans who remembered the very day he "fell out of the sky."



**PHIL SWAN**  
When The War Ended

The days following VE Day were halcyon days at Station 131, celebrated in many ways by many people.

The most appropriate came in the form of the group-wide Thanksgiving Service on the base, led by Chaplain James Duvall.

Participating musically was trumpeter Phil Swan, who played Taps to signal the end of the war in Europe. The words to the haunting melody are printed above.

Swan was the co-pilot on the Winsor Coleman crew of the 603rd, who finished the war with 31 missions. He was one of several former 603 pilots, including Fred Gonzales, who held informal reunions in various cities in recent years.

This was hardly the "one and only" musical appearance for Swan, who returned home to continue playing for 34 years in a variety of bands plus the symphony orchestra. He lives in Merrillville, Indiana.

**"PILOT TO TOWER. HELP!  
I'M LOST. WE'RE ALL SHOT  
UP AND GAS ON EMPTY.  
WORSE YET, WE HAVE 10  
TEENAGERS ON BOARD.  
OVER."**

*(See Pages 6-7-8-9)*



## Fly The Fortress!

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| March 30-April 1 | Las Vegas, NV   |
| April 3-4        | Chino, CA       |
| April 6-8        | San Diego, CA   |
| April 13-15      | Torrance, CA    |
| April 17-18      | Lancaster, CA   |
| April 20-22      | Van Nuys, CA    |
| April 24-25      | Watsonville, CA |
| April 27-29      | Hayward, CA     |
| May 1-2          | Concord, CA     |
| May 4-6          | Truckee, CA     |
| May 8-9          | Napa, CA        |
| May 11-13        | Sacramento, CA  |
| May 15-16        | Redding, CA     |
| May 18-20        | Eugene, OR      |
| May 23-27        | Seattle, WA     |
| May 29-30        | Salem, OR       |
| June 1-3         | Portland, OR    |
| June 5-6         | Caldwell, ID    |
| June 8-10        | Ogden, UT       |
| June 13-18       | Denver, CO      |

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

# **NEXT REUNION**

Phoenix, Arizona Nov. 28-29-30, Dec. 1, 2007



It's only April, but November will come soon enough. So now is the time to begin making plans for the 24th annual 398th Bomb Group Reunion — Phoenix, Arizona.

In normal years the Registration and Information forms would be available in the April issue of FLAK NEWS, but this year all this will appear in the July issue.

But you can start now to circle the dates — November 28-29-30 and December 1. A lovely wintertime respite to the warm climes of the Southwest. Special tours and events are being planned to take advantage of the sights and sounds of the Arizona desert, all this to be announced in July.

Meanwhile, it will be right and proper for members to begin making their hotel reservations — Grace Inn, 10831 S 51st St, Phoenix, AZ 85044 (seven miles south of the Phoenix Airport at Ahwatukee).

The special room rate for the 398th is \$89.00. You may call 1-800-843-6010 or E-mail — [revenue@graceinn.com](mailto:revenue@graceinn.com).



## **On The Tour Schedule**

It's a bit too early to report on all the tour activities being considered for the 398th Bomb Group Reunion in Phoenix next November, but one item on the agenda is a visit to Falcon Field at Mesa, home of the Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force — and the Sentimental Journey. More information in the July issue.

## **A Letter From Our President**

"I am very grateful for the many, many shows of support, prayers and good wishes that Teedy and I have received during the past months. These acts of kindness are almost too much for me to acknowledge and show thankfulness and gratitude for, but, I have sincerely tried to understand and receive your thoughts, hopes and best wishes for me.



**WALLY BLACKWELL**

"I had entered into a long-term radiation/chemo program to treat lung cancer and it left me out of touch with most everyone for extended periods of time.

"My most recent rehab hospital took away my wheelchair and declared me a brand new "walker," and sent me home.

"I do not know what comes next, but docking back home with Teedy, needs to be reported. Teedy has been my real strength through it all."

— **WALLY BLACKWELL**  
President, 398th BGMA

## **Volumes Sent To England**

"FLAK NEWS" in three bound volumes have arrived at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

"We are pleased to have these volumes, which represent 21 years of reporting by the 398th BGMA," she said. "They add immeasurably to the many documents your organization has contributed in the past years.

"We treasure the volumes, at the same time are sad that you will not be coming to the old base in 2008 with the usual tour group. We shall miss you. Thank you."

**Susan Flood, County Archivist (HALS)**

**MIGHTY EIGHTH**



**AIR FORCE MUSEUM**

"Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Officers and Directors of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum for your recent gift to the Museum. The three volumes have been placed on the Library Shelves, next to the 398th BG unit history."

— **Jean B. Prescott**  
Reference Specialist  
The Mighty Eighth

# “HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR YOU BOYS”

One of the first comments I heard during our group's 1986 England Tour was, "If it had not been for you boys ...". It was apparent that the reference had to do with what might have happened to England had not America entered the war (especially us Yanks with the 8th Air Force).

Later, as I began to understand the Battle of Britain, I added my own thoughts ...

"If it had not been for the RAF and those Spitfires and Hurricanes 'us Yanks' might have had to defend our own American shores."

That initial comment about "you boys" made an impression in my heart in 1986 and remained there for ten more journeys to Station 131. Surely it will be there for the "One More Peek" visit.

Yes, the air war years had their share of drama, heartache, courage, pathos and all the rest, and they are well recorded in the annals of history (including books dealing with the 398th Bomb Group of Nuthampstead.)

But there is more to Nuthampstead than bombs, bombers and bullets. And the memories of this former tail gunner turned tour leader abound with thoughts of the American and British flags flying proudly over the Memorial as the red-coated musicians of the Royston Town Band played the Star Spangled Banner and God Save The Queen for the gathering at the Service of Commemoration.

And how can I forget the moment of silence when we paused to listen to the far off warbling of the sparrow, wren, thrush and cuckoo coming from the old airfield as we paused to honor our fallen?

It was as though we were listening for the familiar, deep-throated roar of the B-17 Fortresses taking off for an early morning mission.

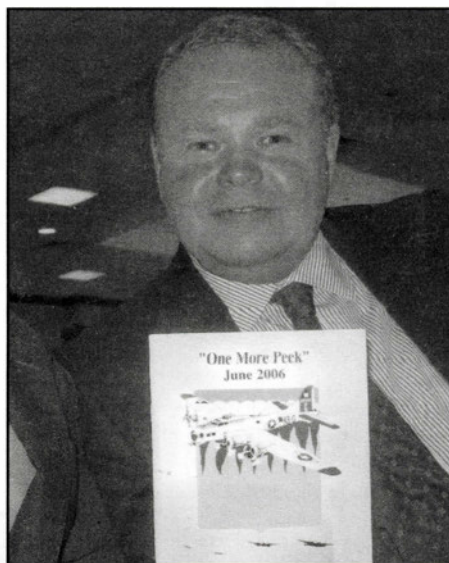
And then there was the late David Wells asking his wife, Peggy — "Any letters from the States today?" Or maybe it was Ralph Hall trying unsuccessfully to explain to Tony Barker that it must have been someone else who pinched milk from his cows in the summer of 1944.

And then there was Eunice Fox pointing to the place where a B-17 clipped the trees above Anstey before plunging into the moat, taking the lives of 10 young airmen. "It was a sad time," she wrote.

Years later, the Bishop of St. Albans would dedicate the Memorial stained

glass window that would carry the names of all 398th men who perished in the conflict.

"A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way," he spoke that day from the ancient St. George's Church pulpit. The "highway" from the Book of Isaiah seemed to connect the Brits with the Yanks, who became known to many as "you boys."



**PETER BROOKE**

## **“One More Peek” Memories**

The "One More Peek" return to England tour of last year featured a Commemorative Booklet edited by Peter Brooke, with help from a bevy of "local lads."

Many writers contributed to the booklet, both Yanks and Brits. Here is one offered by tour leader and FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom. Other stories will be published in future issues.

And "us boys" were wonderfully blessed on many occasions when the "Friends" saw fit to collect enough British Pounds among themselves to pay for a Sally B Fortress fly past over the Memorial. And many of the same Friends, led by Barry Tyler, also rounded up enough local aircraft to offer the Yank visitors rides over the area. How often did we hear the ex-airmen say, "that's the way we came in and landed on the main runway." Ah, memories!

And on some of the tours, we skipped the Cambridge Hotel scene in favor of "home stays." Here we learned more about the many back roads in and around Nuthampstead — all very narrow. Our hosts were accommodating, kind and gracious.

As the "Return to the Old Base" theme continues to grow dim with the passing years, it will be for the "kids" (both American and British) to carry on with this cherished friendship which was kindled during the fires of World War II.

We brought many of our children to Station 131, there to witness the children of Nuthampstead parade to the 398th Memorial with flowers of Remembrances.

In many ways we are so different. And yet we are so alike. May we always share the same Highway.

— ALLEN OSTROM  
Editor, FLAK NEWS

## **Brooke Will Lead Friends During 2008 Celebrations**

The key players are now "in place" for the Services to be held at Station 131 in June 2008.

Peter Brooke, pictured above, will assume the role of Chairman, and he will be abetted by Friends Greta Barker, Barry Tyler, Peggy Wells, Chris Crooks, Robert & Françoise Dimsdale, Arthur & Yvonne King, Malcolm Osborn, Les Dear and Russ Abbey.

Wilfrid Dimsdale, since assuming the Chair role several years ago, felt the need to step away because "other commitments will make it impossible to lead the organization."

The Friends are fully aware of the fact that the 398th will not be coming in 2008

as a full-blown, organized tour group.

"We will have the celebrations during the third weekend in June, and I promise a true welcome to whoever comes in 2008 and succeeding years," said Brooke.

For those members and friends who would seek more information on the 2008 celebrations, you are invited to write to Brooke at the following address —

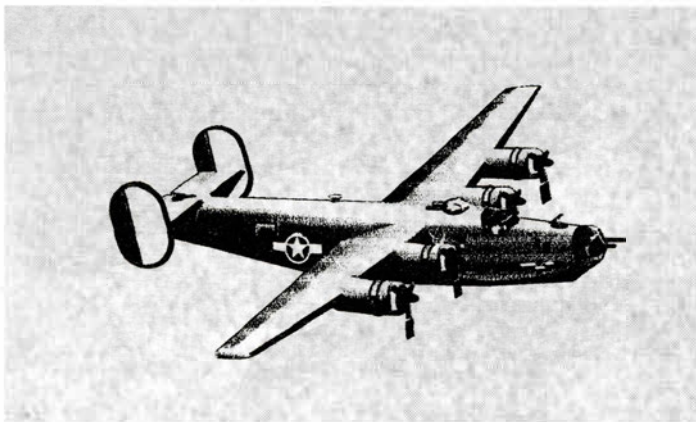
*Peter Brooke  
Buntingford  
Herts SG9 0BL  
ENGLAND*



# THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE

## WW II in East Anglia

Alconbury	482nd	BG	Radar Group
Attlebridge	466th	BG	B-24
Bassingbourne	91st	BG	B-17
Bungay	446th	BG	B-24
Bury St. Edmonds	94th	BG	B-17
Chelveston	305th	BG	B-17
Debach	493rd	BG	B-24 / B-17
Deenthorpe	401st	BG	B-17
Deophan Green	452nd	BG	B-24 / B-17
Eye	490th	BG	B-24 / B-17
Framlingham	390th	BG	B-17
Glatton	457th	BG	B-17
Grafton Underwood	384th	BG	B-17
Great Ashfield	385th	BG	B-24 / B-17
Halesworth	489th	BG	B-24 / B-17
Hardwick	93rd	BG	B-24
Hethel	389th	BG	B-24
Horam	95th	BG	B-17
Horsham St. Faith	458th	BG	B-24
Kimbolton	379th	BG	B-17
Knettishall	388th	BG	B-17
Lavenham	487th	BG	B-17
Mendelsham	34th	BG	B-24 / B-17
Metfield	491st	BG	B-24 / B-17
Molesworth	303rd	BG	B-17
North Peckenham	492nd	BG	B-24
Nuthampstead	398th	BG	B-17
Old Buckingham	453rd	BG	B-24
Podington	92nd	BG	B-17
Polbrook	351st	BG	B-17
Rackheath	467th	BG	B-24
Rattlesden	447th	BG	B-17
Ridgewell	381st	BG	B-17
Seething	448th	BG	B-24
Shipdham	44th	BG	B-24
Snetterton Heath	96th	BG	B-17
Sudbury	486th	BG	B-24 / B-17
Tibenham	445th	BG	B-24
Thorpe Abbots	100th	BG	B-17
Thurleigh	306th	BG	B-17
Wendling	392nd	BG	B-24



## East Anglia Comments

Malcolm Osborn interviewed many East Anglia residents in doing the "Bomber Country" story. Read these interesting comments by a variety of local residents, some of whom remembered World War II and other who had "no clue" that the land was once an "aircraft carrier" for American and British bombers. See Page 8.

## "Bomber Country:"

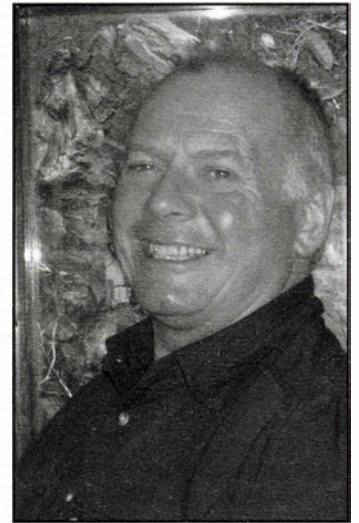
# "We Shall Never Witness It Again"

BY MALCOLM (OZZIE) OSBORN  
Cambridge, England

The towns and cities in East Anglia are fast growing, with ever increasing populations. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, few people today give much thought to all that went on in the skies above them over 60 years ago. But just occasionally, an old War-bird will "make music" in the sky overhead and eyes will immediately glance upwards.

"What's that Dad?" a young boy may ask, "Oh, it's a big bomber son, probably from Duxford," Dad may reply. Some big bomber indeed! B-17G "Sally B" off to give a display somewhere. But the older residents would have recognised that sound and outline immediately, felt that familiar stirring inside from when, as boys, they stood at any one of the 41 heavy bomber bases of the 8th Air Force and watched the B-17's and B-24's lumber off into the early morning mists and fogs.

Back in those dark days of wartime Britain, East Anglians soon grew to love and respect their "Yanks." After all, they saw them fly off, then watched them come back with pieces of their aircraft missing, saw the red flares shooting upwards, knew there were wounded airmen on board. Really just boys.



MALCOLM (OZZIE) OSBORN

So it was that little English villages, towns, cities, all played host to these young men with funny accents. Each village became so closely identified with the bomber base named after them. The bases are mostly all gone now, just outlines left for the knowing eye to spot, crumbling concrete, moss covered brick walls here and there, perhaps a derelict Nissen hut with roof open to the sky. But to the true East Anglian, who became used to 2,000 bombers overhead as they left the coast, it will always be "Bomber Country."

My Dad used to tell me all about the "Mighty 8th" right from when I was a kid. He gave me a copy of "Target Germany" which I devoured. I still have it, something I shall always keep.

But even so, the first time I saw all the bases mapped out it really surprised me. If you look at those Bomber bases, then imagine the Fighter bases, then all the RAF Bomber & Fighter bases, it is easy to see how East Anglia was described as one vast aircraft carrier.

Imagine an air traffic controller of today, trying to organise all those 8th AF bombers into a 2,000 aircraft stream, he would probably give it all up and go home! But they did form up, day after day, those young American airmen. If you stood on the coast of East Anglia as the bomber stream passed overhead, it would take well over an hour for them all to fly past. Can you imagine that? 2,000 bombers over East Anglia at the same time. The FAA/CAA would never allow it, they would say it's far too dangerous! Let us never forget those vast air armadas. Amazing! Truly something we shall never ever witness again.

**See Pages 8 and 9.**

# Bomber Country Stirs Comments

*"We Shall Never See The Likes Of That Again"*

Interviews By Malcolm (Ozzie) Osborn

**Edward (Ted) Webb, Whaddon —**

"One day, a Fortress came back with most of the tail shot off. Well, somebody told us it was coming in to land so we grabbed our little van and went out to watch. It landed OK and came to a halt, but just at that moment a German Dornier 217 came out of nowhere and strafed the airfield, hitting this Fortress with the tail nearly missing. I bet they could not believe their bad luck, to bring it back like that, then get strafed when they were back on the ground!

"I visited other bases occasionally, including Nuthampstead. All that flying, the skies were never still. Full of aircraft noise. All those bases. We shall never see the likes of that again".

**Jean & Graham Weston, Norfolk —**

"We came down to Dereham forty one years ago, we are almost regarded as locals nowadays! Our friends have often talked about the American Bombers that were all around here. That must have really been something to see. I did not realise there were so many though. Seeing 41 marked on your map really brings it home just how many there actually were."

**James Morrison —**

"My Dad told me all about the American bases around here during the war. But, my goodness, it's not until you look at the map that you realise there were actually that many. I wish I could have seen that lot when they were all flying about."

**Don Frost, Cambridge —**

"I remember going down to the bomb shelter one night, then looking up and seeing a German bomber coned in the searchlights. It was on fire. I shall never forget seeing that. It crashed not far away. I remember Cambridge City Centre being full of servicemen and women, loads of Yanks, or so it seemed."

**Pamela Pauley, Cambridge —**

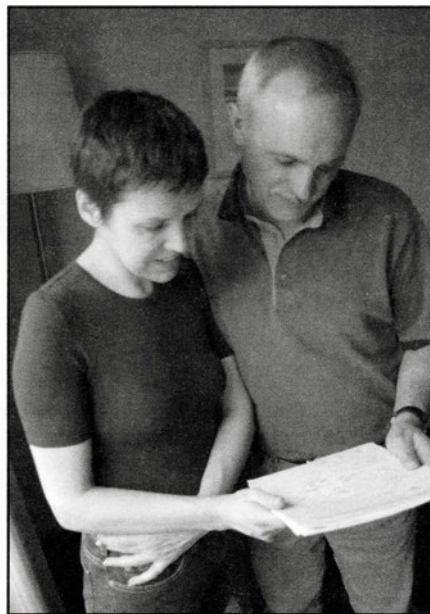
"My late husband was a Navigator in the RAF, in Lancasters and others. I was a nurse and we got married in 1946. He never spoke about his flights, just told me they were never warm; the clothing was so inadequate. They had ice form on the inside of their planes. I knew there were lots of airfields as my husband told me what it was like flying over East Anglia when it was full of so many airfields. There were RAF and American bombers and fighters. It was amazing that there were not a great deal more crashes. That map really is good."

**Denise Pora —**

"I was born in Haddenham, which is near Ely and on the Cambridgeshire Fens. My Dad has often told me how he used to chase after the GI's in Ely when he was a young boy of about seven years old. All those bases, it's not until you see them on a map like this that you realise just how many there actually were."

**Ray Pora —**

"I was born in Maine, USA, and came over to England with the USAF where I served at Lakenheath Air Base. I met Denise, we eventually married and I decided to stay in England. My Dad



**DENISE and RAY PORA**

was a Ball Turret Gunner in the 8th AF, stationed somewhere near Ipswich. So I knew about the bases when I came here, as did some of my colleagues in the USAF, but a great many did not. But seeing them all on this map is still an amazing sight."

**Lauren Grainger —**

"I thought you were going to try and sell me something! I hated history lessons at school, especially war and stuff. Why did we need all those bomber bases then? First time I have ever heard of them. Did you say they were all American?"

**Martin Woresley —**

"I've never really given it any thought to be quite honest. I am not that interested in WW II. How many did you say? That must have taken ages to build all those airfields, who actually built them? Did we have many round here then?"

**Kenneth Wilson, Bishop Stortford —**

"I was born in a little place near Gypsy Corner, not far from Langley Green. They built Nuthampstead airfield and fenced all the perimeter off, but you could still get around. The Americans loved us kids. It was never quiet in those days, the skies were full of every aircraft you could think of. I saw P-38 Lightnings crash and one day a P-51 Mustang bellied in not far from where I was helping out in the fields. I saw 398th B-17s come back in all sorts of states, lumps missing out of wings and tails. I saw DeLancey's Fort come back and watched it land. It was making a screaming noise. No wonder when you saw the mess it was in. I suppose because of all I saw at Nuthampstead, I have always had an interest in old warbirds and the old bases in East Anglia. It was amazing to think that so many aircraft could go up without hitting one another. There were only three take-off crashes at Nuthampstead, which is remarkable when you think about it."

**John Jowett —**

"How many? You're kidding surely? Have you got that right? Let's see that map again. How on earth did that lot get airborne without hitting one another?"

**Julie, Norwich —**

"Do you know, you are the first person to ever tell me that. I would never have dreamed that so many airports could have been built in such a small area — sorry, airbases. Wow, this place must have been so cool with all those hunky men out on the town."

**Gwen Gyton, Cambridge —**

"After the war, we still had some American bases in East Anglia. Lakenheath and Mildenhall are still there. One of my cousins married a Yank and went back to the USA with him. She is still there, happily married. Lots of local girls married the Yanks during the War then went over there with them afterwards you know."

*"Well Done,"*  
— Editor

There is a special tip of the Editor's cap going to graphic artist/typesetter David Ruberg and our English buddy, Ozzie Osborn, for combining their skills to create the East Anglia/Bomber Country map on Page 6 and for putting together all that material to make it so interesting.

Yes, all you other 8th Air Force editors are welcome to copy, courtesy FLAK NEWS.



# Heavy Bombers Of The 8th AF In East Anglia



## REGULATIONS For Operation of AIRCRAFT (1920)

*“Once You Have Tasted Flight  
You Will Forever Walk the Earth  
With Your Eyes Turned Skyward,  
For There You Have Been,  
And There You Will Always  
Long To Return.”*

*Leonardo Di Vinci  
1452-1519*

### FIRST DIVISION (B-17)

#### 1st Bomb Wing

91st BG	Bassingbourne
381st BG	Ridgewell
398th BG	Nuthampstead

#### 40th Bomb Wing

92nd BG	Podington
305th BG	Chelveston
306th BG	Thurleigh

#### 41st Bomb Wing

303rd BG	Molesworth
379th BG	Kimbolton
384th BG	Grafton Underwood

#### 94th Bomb Wing

351st BG	Polbrook
401st BG	Deenthorpe
457th BG	Glatton

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### SECOND DIVISION (B-24)

#### 2nd Bomb Wing

389th BG	Hethel
445th BG	Tibham
453rd BG	Old Buckingham

#### 14th Bomb Wing

44th BG	Shipdham
392nd BG	Wendling
492nd BG	North Peckenham
491st BG	Metfield

#### 20th Bomb Wing

93rd BG	Hardwick
446th BG	Bungay
448th BG	Seething
489th BG	Halesworth

#### 96th Bomb Wing

458th BG	Horsham St. Faith
466th BG	Attlebridge
467th BG	Rackheath

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### THIRD DIVISION (B-17)

#### 4th Bomb Wing

94th BG	Bury St. Edmonds
486th BG	Sudbury
447th BG	Rattlesden
487th BG	Lavenham

#### 13th Bomb Wing

95th BG	Horam
100th BG	Thorpe Abbots
390th BG	Framlingham

#### 45th Bomb Wing

96th BG	Snetterton Heath
388th BG	Knettishall
452nd BG	Deophan Green

#### 93rd Bomb Wing

34th BG	Mendelsham
490th BG	Eye
493rd BG	Debach
385th BG	Great Ashfield

#### Radar Group

482nd BG	Alconbury
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1. Don't take the machine into the air unless you are satisfied it will fly.
2. Never leave the ground with the motor leaking.
3. Don't turn sharply when taxiing. Instead of turning sharp, have someone lift the tail around.
4. In taking off, look at the ground and the air.
5. Never get out of a machine with the motor running until the pilot relieving you can reach the engine controls.
6. Pilots should carry hankies in a handy position to wipe off goggles.
7. Riding on the steps, wings, or tail of a machine is prohibited.
8. In case the engine fails on takeoff, land straight ahead regardless of obstacles.
9. No machine must taxi faster than a man can walk.
10. Never run motor so that blast will blow on other machines.
11. Learn to gauge altitude, especially on landing.
12. If you see another machine near you, get out of the way.
13. No two cadets should ever ride together in the same machine.
14. Do not trust altitude instruments.
15. Before you begin a landing glide, see that no machines are under you.
16. Hedge-hopping will not be tolerated.
17. No spins on back or tail slides will be indulged in as they unnecessarily strain the machines.
18. If flying against the wind and you wish to fly with the wind, don't make a sharp turn near the ground. You may crash.
19. Motors have been known to stop during a long glide. If pilot wishes to use motor for landing, he should open throttle.
20. Don't attempt to force machine onto ground with more than flying speed. The result is bouncing and ricocheting.
21. Pilots will not wear spurs while flying.
22. Do not use aeronautical gasoline in cars or motorcycles.
23. You must not take off or land closer than 50 feet to the hanger.
24. Never take a machine into the air until you are familiar with its controls and instruments.
25. If an emergency occurs while flying, land as soon as possible.

## “I Am Not Your Father”

# Long Search Has Happy Ending

“What was the relationship between you and my father?”

This was the question posed last year in a letter from a lady in Texas to a lady in England. The letter continued —

“My father died recently and among his belongings we found several greeting cards from you. I would love to know more if you would like to share.”

Lesley Rolfe of Wakefield, England, was thrilled to answer, yet fearful of what the results might bring. She pondered her response to Glenda Stark of D’Hanis, Texas.

Many years before (1944-45 at Nuthampstead) “someone” from



**LESLEY ROLFE and GLENDA STARK**

the 398th Bomb Group had fathered a child and then left for the States when the war ended.

An oft-repeated story at the time throughout England.

Although her mother maintained silence on the matter throughout her life, Lesley had come to “know” that her father was James Jay Nichols, the chauffeur for Colonel Frank P. Hunter, Jr.

A long search was begun some 10 years ago to locate Nichols “somewhere in the United States.” The search was abetted by the late George Hilliard, and by the FLAK NEWS editor.

The search ended successfully ... but it was only for the moment. “I am not your father,” replied Nichols through his wife, Sybil, from their home in Wyoming. Lesley had come this far, only to be met with a closed door.

Meantime, Nichols and his wife, along with Glenda and her family, all moved to Texas, where Nichols ultimately passed away.

Last year came the astonishing letter — “what was the relationship ...?”

Then the letters, e-mails and ... in 2006 ... a face to face meeting at Nuthampstead between the “sisters,” born to different mothers a world apart.

It was a happy surprise for the FLAK NEWS editor, who for many years had been “doubling up” as England Tour coordinator, the latest (last?) in June. Lesley continued —

“We spent 10 days together and had a wonderful time. I gave Glenda all my files on the ‘search’ and she thought that the entire project had been dealt with immaculately. It was important to me for her to know that our reasons for contact were honorable and from the very best of intentions.”

The story goes on.

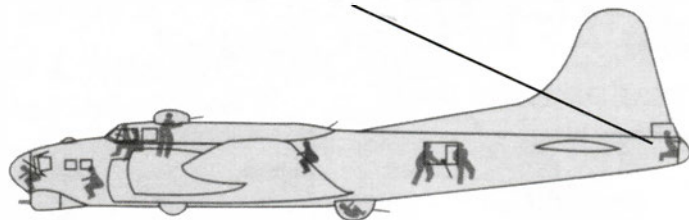
“I travelled to Texas last November and stayed for a fortnight with her and her husband on their ranch. I even met with Sybil, Glenda’s family and friends and they all accepted me.

“There were some interesting comments about the difference in accent but it all worked out like a dream.

“And guess what? I have plans to return again one day and will get a chance to see more sights as we travel across America!”

An American Dream ... born in England.

## Tail Gunner



The tail guns of the Fortress were the most important defense weapons of the bomber. These gunners inflicted severe damage on attacking fighters from the rear. The tail gunner was well aware that the first objective of the attacking pilot was to eliminate him and his weapon.

The tail guns on the Fortress made their first appearance on the B-17E. Early Fortress models had no defensive armament in this area and enemy fighter pilots found the aircraft to be very vulnerable. Later, on the B-17G, the tail gun area was modified to what became known as the “Cheyenne” turret, which had a better angle of fire and increased visibility.

The gunners in the rear of the airplane would assemble in the radio room for takeoff and once the aircraft was airborne, they would take their combat positions. The tail gunner would take his parachute and crawl around the tail wheel. Once seated he would plug in his heated flying suit, oxygen and intercom. The gunner took a kneeling position with his knees resting on padded supports and his legs doubled back.

The original gun emplacements were aimed by hand through a ring and bead sight outside, in front of the gunner’s window, and linked directly to the movement of the guns. The “Cheyenne” turret on the B-17G’s provided a wider angle of fire and was quipped with an improved reflector sight. An emergency escape door just below the horizontal stabilizer could be used by the tail gunner if he needed to bail out of his disabled Fortress.

*This concluding presentation is part of a living History created by the Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, Mesa, Arizona. Special thanks to the CAF and the Sentimental Journey.*



**Get Ready For Arizona**

# BRIEF-things

"American Experience" presented an excellent television story of the 1948-49 Berlin Air Lift, depicting the Air Force in a humanitarian — not military — role; 17 AF personnel lost their lives delivering thousands of tons of coal and food to the isolated Berliners, including one or our own, 602 co-pilot **Don Leemon** ... the 398th tour of 2004 that included a Channel boat trip to France was the subject of a DAR "Heritage" story by **Margaret Passler** of Issaquah, WA; the many veterans aboard the NORMANDIE witnessed four Navy men on a helicopter repelling down onto the deck of the USS ROSS as the destroyer escorted the veterans (34 from the 398th) to France: they all cheered the dramatic Navy maneuver and ROSS escort service ... the Taps list of January produced at least two errors — 603 pilot **Tom Guice's** name SHOULD NOT have been listed (he's alive and well in Homer, Louisiana) and 601 Operations Officer **Willis Frazier's** name SHOULD have been there; as usual when FLAK NEWS "hit the streets" calls came in to announce the passing of other 398th loved ones (some who had been gone several years ... the "cardboard" story in January was most timely as **Selmer Haakenson** passed away in December ... the treasurer is constantly amazed at the ongoing contributions made on behalf of loved ones, the latest few coming from **Stan Lucy**, **Bill Markham** and **Lillian Tomsho** (we all say "thanks") ... England's irrepressible **Roger Bradley**, after seeing the license plate display in the January FLAK NEWS, insists HE has the best plate — HBG-398 W, plus decals of the 8th and *Hell From Heaven* on his Honda Civic ... one of our Brit Friends also is in a struggle with cancer — **Tony Weston** — the Nuthampstead artist/poet who wrote that wonderful saga called "292, Two Hundred Ninety Two;" he was also the creator of special pottery gifts given to 398th visitors ... look for a new shipment of Anstey Window Mapping Booklets to be ready at the PX; the original printing of 200 has been sold out ... **Mr. & Mrs. George Middlemas** were honored by the Paterno Library at Penn State U for their contributions to the 8th AF Library Fund (she is the daughter of the late **Al Petska**, 602 pilot) ... the super interesting book (typed & copied) by the late **Jim Brockman (Sponholtz crew)** and shared with his crew mates, can be ordered from FLAK NEWS for \$35; the book includes the crew's mission story plus a section called, "Journey Back To England" ... another marvelous "return story" will be told in the July FLAK NEWS by the daughter of KIA pilot **Warren Wade**, who along with co-pilot **Ted Prevost** visited the **Wade** crash site in France last year ... another member who likes his special license plate is **George Schatz** of Illinois; it reads "DFC B-17," plus "398th BOMB GROUP and NUTHAMPSTEAD 1944-45" ... you meet the nice people at the airport; like **Brad Bullick**, a salesman who liked FLAK NEWS so much he joined the 398th as an Associate and then later viewed the group web site and was "impressed with all the history, photos and stories" ... remember when we had an "A-2 Jacket Night" at the St. Paul reunion? the 388th guys picked up on this and are suggesting that their A-2 owners "take 'em out of that plastic bag and treat them with Lexol" ... the 386th, which flew both the B-24 and B-17, has a web site showing the "loading lists" of all the group's missions ... and "our own" web site, [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org), reported no less than 110,000 visits in 2006, with "look-ins" from all over the world ... the site currently features eight of our members telling their histories on "Timeless Voices" ... and you may well be seeing some of the "East Anglia" features on the site in the future ... E-mail your digital photos or text submissions for FLAK NEWS to our "typesetter," **David Ruberg** ... the Truckee, CA, chapter of the EAA produced an excellent DVD of their 2006 fly-in, and it displays wonderful inside-the-B-17 shots as the crew traveled between cities (a copy can be ordered from FLAK NEWS for \$7.00) ... the 8th AF Historical Society 2007 reunion will be held at Kalamazoo, MI, which was the home of **Dr. Bill Kavanaugh**, 602 Squadron flight surgeon.

# 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, gray, with with logo on back	\$12.00	___
___	T-Shirt, olive, with Triangle W	\$12.00	___
___	Denim Shirt, long sleeve, 398th logo (S, M, L, XL XXL, <b>please indicate size</b> )	\$28.00	___
___	Golf Shirts, embroidered Triangle W 60% cotton, 40% poly mesh		___
___	Mens, light blue, white, S-XL	\$25.00	___
___	Ladies, light blue, S-XL	\$25.00	___
<b>(please indicate size &amp; color)</b>			
<b>CAPS</b>			
___	Black, with logo (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$8.00	___
<b>BOOKS (All books postpaid.)</b>			
___	Fortresses Over Nuthampstead (Bishop)	\$65.00	___
___	398th History (1946, photo copy)	\$20.00	___
___	"Remembrances" (1989, photo copy, Ostrom)	\$30.00	___
___	"WW II Odyssey" (Frankhouser)	\$19.00	___
___	"The Youngest Crew" (Wagner)	\$19.95	___
___	"Hell From Heaven" (Streitfeld)	\$19.95	___
<b>JEWELRY</b>			
___	Squadron lapel pins (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$5.00	___
___	Group lapel pin (Hell From Heaven)	\$5.00	___
<b>LOGOS</b>			
___	Squadron Patch (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$6.00	___
___	B-17 Jacket Patch (rectangular)	\$4.00	___
___	8th Air Force Patch	\$6.00	___
<b>PHOTOGRAPHS &amp; PRINTS</b>			
___	"Clearing & Colder" (8x10)	\$10.00	___
___	"Clearing & Colder" (14x17)	\$30.00	___
___	Anstey Stained Glass Window (11x17 includes list of comrades Killed in Action)	\$4.00	___
___	Aluminum Overcast (8x10)	\$2.00	___
___	"Sunset at Nuthampstead" (8x10)	\$7.00	___
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
___	Bumper Sticker (black)	\$3.00	___
___	Blue Ink Pen (398th imprints)	\$5.00	___
___	License Plate Frame (398th imprints)	\$5.00	___
___	Book Marker	\$5.00	___
___	WW II Coloring Book (with crayons)	\$4.00	___
___	Tote Bag (20x15, black, with logo)	\$8.00	___

Cost of Items ordered \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Delivery and Handling add \$4.00  
 or \$5.00 if order is over \$20.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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



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NEWS**  
c/o Allen Ostrom  
Seattle WA 98107-3165