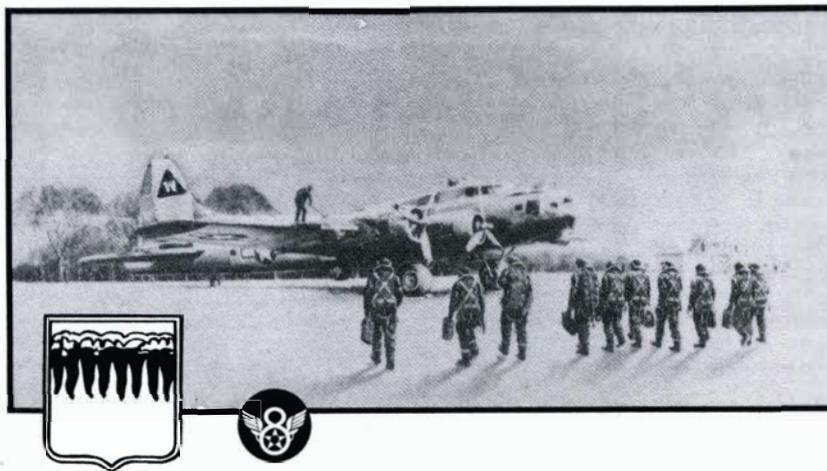




602



601



603



600

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

VOL. 2 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

OCTOBER, 1987

Nuthampstead Memorial Land Is Now Ours!

The land under our memorial at Nuthampstead now belongs to us! The deed to this plot of British soil will be officially transferred to the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association at a ceremony at Nuthampstead June 4, 1988. This date coincides with a special Group Tour to England and the Continent next summer.

But for all intents and purposes, the land is ours. The unusual transaction has been officially underway for almost two years, thanks to treasurer Ralph Hall, who has been in constant communication with the Dimsdale family, their Trustees and the solicitor firm of Dawson & Co., Bedford, England.

Coincidentally, president Bill Comstock has been negotiating with the American Battle Monuments Commission, Washington, D.C., caretakers of American cemeteries throughout the world. They will assume actual management of the land and monument, financed by the interest generated from the special 398th Memorial Fund of \$10,000. The Commission will maintain the memorial and land unto perpetuity.

The 398th committed \$825.69 for legal fees and \$183.33 for land costs.

The Memorial project is administered by a three-person board made up of Hall and Dick Frazier from the Board of Directors and Mrs. Sarah Gayle Randolph, daughter of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr.

Flag Program Set

Of special interest to widows of 398th veterans is the offer to fly their husband's flag over the Memorial. Arrangements are being made with David and Peggy Wells of Nuthampstead to raise the donor's flag on a given day and send a photo and certificate in return.

Flags should be sent to Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740. He will forward to the Wells in England.

Mrs. Frank P. Hunter, whose husband is buried at the Ardennes cemetery in Belgium, has offered to bring Col. Hunter's flag to Nuthampstead next summer for the "changing of the deed" ceremony.



MEMORIAL LAND NOW BELONGS TO 398TH

SAN ANTONIO REUNION: Drama and Sweet Memories

It was not quite a record. But close!

San Antonio (in July!) attracted 373 registered members and friends of the 398th to the fourth annual reunion, held at the Marriott Hotel July 22-25, 1987.

So Dale Brown's record of 391 at Colorado Springs last year still stands. But watch out for Richmond, Virginia next year! (September 21-24, 1988.)

Projections point to 500 for the next annual gathering, also scheduled for the Marriott Hotel, in the historic Virginia city.

But while some will be looking ahead, especially those members in the thickly populated Eastern states who have never attended a 398th affair, three hundred and seventy-three will be re-playing the drama and sweet memories of San Antonio last July.

Yes, it was a bit warm and a bit humid, but that particular week in Texas was probably more tolerable than in most other parts of the nation.

Simply put: we lucked out!

But it wasn't just the weather that made the memories. Excellent accommodations, facilities, food, exciting downtown location, interesting tours and activities, nostalgic visit to Lackland Air Force Base and museum, and nat-

urally the constant and ongoing reminiscing of days gone by. And a couple of dozen members added an extra day to the meeting by visiting Harlingen, Texas and Confederate Air Force Museum.

But for pure, tear-flowing drama consider the meeting for the first time between Mrs. Frank P. Hunter, widow of our C.O., and Federico Gonzales, the pilot in Hunter's division lead plane and only survivor in the crash at Neuss, Germany, January 23, 1945.

No attempt will be made to find words to describe the emotions of these two, and the rest of us who listened and watched with unashamed tears in our eyes.

It was the first-ever 398th reunion for both Mrs. Hunter and Gonzales. The latter had been unable to attend previously due to his teaching duties as a bio-physics professor at Northwestern University. Mrs. Hunter was "found" and invited only last winter.

"Until your call last December, I had closed the book on that part of my life," she said. "And now I am so happy to have the book open again."

Mrs. Hunter was accompanied by her two daughters, Mrs. Maria Kiser of Raleigh, N.C.; Mrs. Sarah Gayle Randolph of Topping, Virginia;

Continued on Page 3

Col. Hunter "Sneaked" Extra Missions

The 398th History Book, published a year or two after the end of World War II, reveals that Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., group CO, took part in 17 missions as lead officer for either the Group, Wing or Division.

The rotation for lead was determined by Col. Hunter, who took his turn "up front" along with other group and squadron leaders.

But it was not generally known (or approved by Wing and Division bosses) that Col. Hunter flew additional missions as co-pilot on other planes scattered in the formations.

And on one occasion, August 8, 1944 to Couvincourt, France (see FLAK

NEWS, Vol. 2, No. 1) Hunter not only flew as co-pilot for Norm Rudrud in the low-low element of the lead group, but Deputy CO Bob Simeral also was on the mission as co-pilot for John Heintzelman! One might suggest that this kind of scheduling was forbidden.

HUNTER, RUDRUD PAIRED UP IN LEAD

Rudrud, of Westby, Wisconsin, "confessed" that Hunter joined him "several" times as co-pilot in addition to the missions they flew together as cockpit lead.

Rudrud, who is recovering slowly from a series of strokes, suggested that Hunter liked to ride with him "because he insisted I had the best radio operator and navigator."

Tracy Petersen, Eatonville, Washington, 601 CO, revealed that he and other commanders at times positioned themselves in trailing element aircraft just to retain the feel of flying in propwash, and have to struggle at "max power" just to keep up.

"It was easy flying lead," he said. "We just enjoyed ourselves being fat, dumb and happy."

(Now he tells us!)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HEADQUARTERS

AAF STATION 131

APO 557 U.S. ARMY

10 August 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Report of Mission, 8 August 1944.

TO: Commanding General, 1st Bomb Division, APO 557, U.S. Army.

1. The following is a narrative report of Mission, 8 August, 1944, on Couvincourt, France.

a. The take-off, assembly and flight into France was well executed and without incident until the Wing formation approached the I.P. About five minutes prior to reaching the I.P. the Wing Commander notified the Deputy, and High and Low Group leaders that he was going to fly south of the assigned I.P. before turning into the bombing run. Why this decision was made cannot be determined as the Wing Commander was shot down on the bombing run.

b. The Wing Commander turned into the bombing run and the Group took proper interval. Intense, heavy and accurate flak was encountered on the bombing run and continued for the entire run. This flak was more intense than any which has been encountered by this Organization. One hundred percent of the airplanes in the group suffered battle damage, seventy percent being serious and many crewmen were wounded.

c. As the target approached, the airplane of the Wing Leader was hit and fire appeared on the underside of the fuselage. The airplane started down and turned out of the formation. Simultaneously, the bombs of the lead airplane began to fall. It is not known whether the lead airplane's bombs were intentionally released or whether the flak damage caused the release. All of the Lead Group airplanes, including the Deputy, dropped their bombs on the smoke bomb of the lead airplane. The bombs of the lead airplane fell about 25 miles short of the assigned target. However, in view of the intense enemy anti-aircraft fire in this area, there is no doubt that these bombs fell on enemy installations. The Deputy Leader took over after the bomb release.

d. The Low and High Groups observed the bombfall from the Lead Group and assumed they were in the target area. In view of the heavy flak being encountered, they were sure that they were over enemy territory. Both bombardiers released their bombs on what they believed to be the proper aiming point, or very close thereto. The navigators of these airplanes attempted to check, but the flak was so intense that their checks were not accurate. One lead navigator's maps were blown from his hands by flak fragments. The plots of the bomb-falls reveal that both the High and Low Groups bombed short of the target.

e. After investigating all the possible sources of information, AND FROM MY OWN OBSERVATIONS FROM THE LEAD AIRPLANE OF THE LOW-LOW FLIGHT OF THE LEAD GROUP, I believe that the Lead Group bombed short because the Lead aircraft's bombs were released when it was hit by flak. It is not known whether this release was intentional or the result of the flak. Furthermore, it is believed that the Low and High Groups bombed short due to the confusion caused by a change in the I.P., the intense and damaging flak encountered, and the observation of the Lead Group's bombing. These conditions, plus the fact that the target was a difficult one to pick up, created confusion in the minds of the lead bombardiers and caused them to think they were bombing in the assigned target area.

2. In view of the enemy fire in this area, it is assumed that the bombs fell into enemy territory despite the fact that the aiming points were not those assigned.

FRANK P. HUNTER, JR.
Colonel, Air Corps
Commanding

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Blackwell Discovers He Had A 34-Man Crew

One of the most unusual . . . and thorough . . . bits of research turned in by a member of the 398th was accomplished by Wally Blackwell of Rockville, Maryland.

At the age of 20, Blackwell was a pilot in the 601st, reporting to Station 131 in July, 1944 and concluding on December 28.

Forty-two years later Blackwell decided he wanted to know more about his missions, the planes he flew, names of crew members who flew spare now and again, the target cities, etc.

So last year Wally contacted the National Archives, USAF History Section, and Army Military Personnel Center.

Blackwell, whose ship was shot down August 8 (Couvincourt) knew he had lost his tail-gunner on that mission and that his bombardier and toggler had suffered combat wounds on other missions. But in compiling his record, which went into a book shared with each member of the original crew, Blackwell was more than surprised to find that no less than 34 airmen had been a part of his crew during the 36-mission tour!

On Blackwell's original crew were Roy Anderson, co-pilot; Ike Assuto, navigator; John Gibson, bombardier; Arnold Brunsberg, engineer; Hilyer Brown, radio; Robert Augustin, ball turret; Adrian Bacon and Gerald Decker, waist; and John Bell, tail.

Others who flew with Blackwell in various positions were Roy Gainey, R. Rickabaugh, Don Coffee, Robert Beckley, Jim Crouch, Clifford Donahue, Frank Yarmoski, Henry August, John Shrader, Leo Terrion, Al Albro, K. McCroskay, George Gouvein, George Abbott, W. Burns, Joe Brigda, Russell Lachman, Edward Hoag, Jack Eder, Clayton Johnson, Charles Simons, Jack Bohn, Dave Broderick and Robert Hatcher.

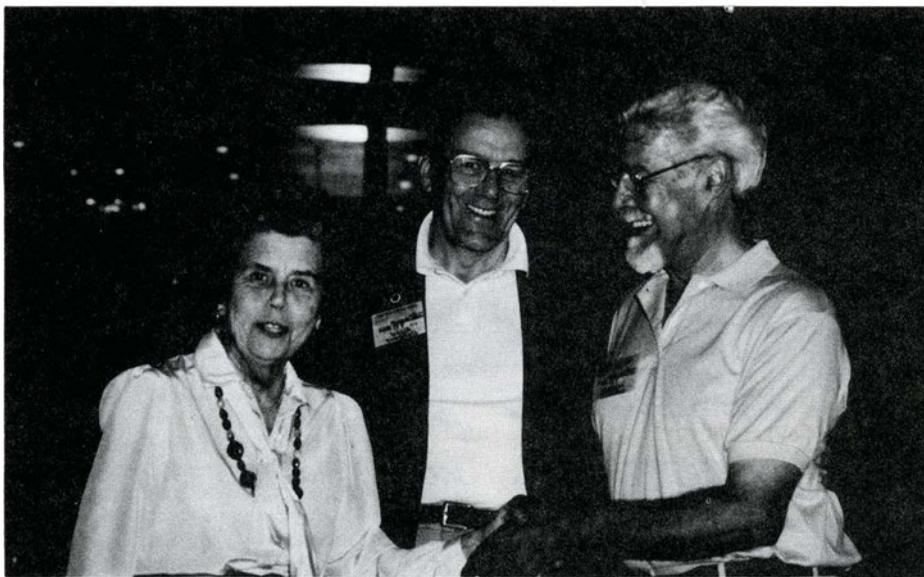
ONE KILLED AND TWO WOUNDED

Simons was killed instantly when an 88 knocked him out of the tail over Couvincourt. The rest of the crew bailed out over occupied France and returned home to resume their tour. Gibson was wounded on the first mission and Bacon on the 25th.

In researching the various B-17's assigned to his crew, Blackwell discovered that of the original 68 planes flown to England by 398th pilots in May of 1944, only six had survived the war.

While the following are but numbers and letters to some readers, to many an airman they represent an intimate and dramatic (and perhaps traumatic) segment of their lives. The survivors:

600 SQD.	601 SQD.	602 SQD.	603 SQD.
42-97249 P	42-102596 N	42-102593 C	NONE
42-102487 B	42-107190 L		
42-102507 F			



Editor Introduces Mrs. Hunter, Gonzales

They had closed the doors to that fateful crash of 1945 all these years, but they opened again in San Antonio last July. Mrs. Frank P. Hunter, widow of the 398th CO, and Federico Gonzales (left) met for the first time at the reunion, introduced by FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom. Gonzales was the lone survivor in the

Hunter lead crew of 11 men. Both Gonzales and Mrs. Hunter have indicated they will travel to England next June on the group tour, and also will visit the "bomb run" cities in Germany, including Neuss, where the plane went down.

398th Doors Open Once Again For Mrs. Hunter, Gonzales

Continued from page 1

and grandson Frank Hunter MacDonald of Seattle.

Gonzales was with his wife, Anne, "but we didn't bring any of our seven sons or many grandchildren."

"I have been simply overwhelmed by the attention I have received at this, my first 398th reunion," said Gonzales.

"The other day at the business meeting your reception touched me deeply. At the same time I had mixed feelings. I had a feeling of loneliness and a feeling that I did not deserve this attention and affection. Because whatever inconvenience I may have suffered, it was nothing compared to the ultimate sacrifice of Colonel Hunter and all the other brave young men with me on that final mission.

"One of the outstanding moments of this reunion for me has been meeting with Mrs. Hunter and members of her family. I appreciate and am most grateful for her sensitivity and consideration for me in the talks we have had.

"Now, I would like, with your indulgence, to make a little philosophical observation. If there is any upside to war, it is what we have been reliving during this reunion. The bonding of men who fought and flew together made us like brothers. I've felt like a man who has been out of touch with his brothers for many years.

"Now that I have found you, I love you all and am glad I am home. Thank you very much."

The drama and warmth of the final banquet evening was additionally highlighted by the presentation to Mrs. Hunter of the framed (and faded) painting of "Clearing and Colder," on which was superimposed a photo of Col. Hunter.

Dayton Site For Reunion In Sept. 1989

Dayton, Ohio, probably the best known aviation city in America, will be the site of the 1989 reunion of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base . . . Air Force Museum . . . Aviation Hall of Fame . . . Carillon Park . . . Aviation Trail . . . all these and more will be waiting for our members as they converge on the Ohio city September 21-24, 1989 for the group's sixth annual reunion.

The Board officers, on the recommendation of the site selection committee, made the Dayton decision at the San Antonio reunion last July.

Meanwhile, preparations continue to stage the NEXT reunion in Richmond, Virginia, September 21-24, 1988. Bob and Mildred Wiggins are handling the arrangements.

A Note of Thanks From the Ebests

Geneva and I want to say "Thanks!" for the large turnout here in San Antonio in July. We feel the reunion was a big success, but without all of you it could not have happened.

It was great fun putting it all together and we are pleased that everything went so smoothly. Your many cards and comments were so appreciated, and made it all worthwhile.

It is always a thrill to get together each year and renew friendships. Let's all do it again next September in Richmond, and give your full support to Bob & Mildred Wiggins. See you next year.

DALLAS & GENEVA EBEST

nent insurance executive and former Air Force Chief Master Sergeant.

Gaylor's talk on "High Tech and High Touch" was especially timely in view of the "high touch" drama surrounding Maria Hunter, Gonzales, Berryhill, Schapiro and others.

The 398th was honored at the Lackland ceremonies, reviewing some 900 graduating enlisted students. One veteran was moved to comment on how smart the airmen (and air ladies) looked as they marched by. "Lot better than we could do 45 years ago," he said.

"Yeah," said his friend, "but look at the protection they're getting from those aircraft around the field — B-17, B-24, P-51, P-38, B-25, A-26 . . ."

Col. Jerry Bailey, vice commander of the training command, was moved to tell the members at the luncheon—

"I work with young kids all the time, 17 to 20 years old, and I'm proud to say they are fine examples of today's Air Force. But here today as I look upon you folks, I'm looking into the faces of Air Force history.

"And besides, it's nice to see some people around here who are older than I am."

Also receiving special paintings were two well-loved officers, Col. Earl Berryhill, group exec., and Maj. Joe Schapiro. Berryhill was "roasted" by Bill Jones of Florence, Alabama while Tom Overturf of Tuscon did the "job" on Schapiro. Both veteran officers were visibly moved by the honors bestowed on them.

For Jones, it was a productive reunion benefitting the 393th and Confederate Air Force. Jones came forward at the business meeting to conduct his famous "Alabama Auction!" In less than 10 minutes he had extracted \$3,500 in cash donations from members to purchase a first-ever bomb group sponsorship to equip and maintain the "Sentimental Journey," the B-17 flagship of the Arizona Wing of the C.A.F. (See letter of thanks.)

Still in a generous mood, the 398th also voted a \$1,000 contribution to the South Dakota Air & Space Museum at Rapid City in memory of Col. Hunter. This project was spearheaded by Dale Brown. The motion was made by the man who replaced Hunter as CO, Col. Lewis Ensign, who resides in San Antonio.

In another area of business, the group reiterated its earlier decision to provide free, lifetime memberships to widows of the 398th. Several widows this past year had notified officers of the passing of their spouses, some suggesting the group may not wish to continue them on the mailing list.

"Not so," said president Bill Comstock. "Widows are not only welcome to remain on the rolls and receive each issue of FLAK NEWS, but are encouraged to join us at the reunions."

Another highlight at San Antonio was the appearance and address of Bob Gaylor, an promi-

From Nuthampstead to Neuss:

Group Tour Will Have It All

It will be Group Tour all the way from "Take-off" to "Bombs Away!"

The 398th, in cooperation with Galaxy Tours of Wayne, PA, has planned a return to England next June that will include such "Bomb Run" cities as Cologne, Dusseldorf, Koblenz, Bingen and Neuss. Plus such Battle of the Bulge landmarks as Bastogne and Malmady. Plus the cemeteries in Belgium and Holland where many of our comrades who didn't make it home are laid to rest.

The '88 Tour is set for May 31 to June 11. It has been arranged as a "Complete Tour" to include London, Cambridge, Nuthampstead and the other East Anglia sites so well-known 40-plus years ago. But in addition to these, there also will be Luxembourg, Germany, Holland and Belgium.

However, it can also be a "Short Tour" to include the England portion only, starting on May 31 but concluding on June 6.

Our British friends . . . and there are many. . . are gearing up for a typical Nuthampstead Welcome, something they feel that is as special to them as Station 131 is to the 398th. Those who returned in 1982 and 1986 can attest to that special something that exists between "those" English and "us" Yanks.

So sign up today! Visit the Woodman Inn, Royston, Cambridge, the great Museums at Hendon and Duxford (there are B-17's at both places) and, of course, London.

As a special event as we honor our fallen at the 398th Memorial, we also will experience a "changing of the deed" ceremony as the very land under the Memorial will transfer from the Dimsdale family to the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

And we hope to arrange a brief memorial at Anstey, the little community at the end of the main runway where one of our crews perished on take-off on the morning of Oct. 15, 1944.

After leaving England we'll travel by air to Luxembourg, and then visit the many cities along the Rhine so well known to 398th bombardiers. But this time including a "steamer" ride on the Rhine, a wine tour and stops at Cologne, Dusseldorf and Coblenz. We'll also try to find the exact spot near Neuss where Col. Hunter went down on January 23, 1945 (See FLAK NEWS, Vol. 1, No. 2). The burgermeister (mayor) of Neuss has offered his services in locating the crash site. Mrs. Maria Hunter has indicated she will be on the tour, plus pilot Federico Gonzales, the lone survivor on Hunter's plane.

All this and more. Join us for what is certain to be a most memorable tour. Those dramatic days of 1944-45 at Nuthampstead are worthy of remembrance, even to the point of sharing the memories with loved ones. . . spouses, children, grand children.

It is the "young folks" who will carry on the memory of our own youthful adventures. What better place for them to begin to understand and treasure these memories than at Station 131 and on the "bomb run."

1988 Upon Us; Time For Putting Treasurer To Work

It seems like only yesterday we started 1987, but soon a brand new 1988 will be upon us. And with the new year comes the need to support the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association through dues, Memorial Maintenance and special funds for general expenses and FLAK NEWS.

Use the enclosed blank, featuring a trio of smooth-flying B-17's from the 602nd. Send along to Ralph Hall, our treasurer who needs lots of mail to justify the addition he put on his house just to work on 398th treasury business.

Quotable Quotes From The Briefing Room:

"My thanks to the many who have taken on the responsibility of keeping the 398th alive and well, after all these years. As a ground crewman for the 601st, I am thrilled with the information in FLAK NEWS which gives me for the first time actual accounts of what happened to the brave men I watched board our aircraft and fly off eastward from England to encounter the enemy. At that time we knew so little about their experiences and until now could only imagine what they endured in our behalf."

David J. Samek
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

"Enclosed you will find my pledge for the Sentimental Journey sponsorship. You officers did a good airman's job on that project. You delivered the goods with a direct hit."

Joe Schapiro
Los Angeles, CA 90024

"When Colonel Hunter bumped by co-pilot to fly with me somewhere in the formation I did not ask any questions. I thought it was a bit unusual, but I wasn't about to second guess the boss. My recovery (stroke) has been slow but I try to remain optimistic. Keep up the good work with FLAK NEWS."

Norman Rudrud
Westby, WI 54667

"We are all so pleased you are coming back to visit this tiny hamlet. Whoever would have thought such a small English village could be so well known all over the USA? We will try and make your return visit a happy and memorable one."

David & Peggy Wells
Nuthampstead, England

"My son, Air Force Captain Chip Kozak, recently dropped by the Woodman Inn at Nuthampstead and he reports that the folks there are looking forward to the 398th visit next year."

Steve Kozak
Glendora, CA 91740

"How can I ever thank you all for inviting me to the reunion in San Antonio? The love you gave me has made me very happy and so very proud of the 398th. I am looking forward to the England trip next June and will go with you on the 'bomb run' tour to the continent. The handsome gift you gave me has been hung in a place that all can see when they enter my home. One day it will go to my grandson, who in three days in San Antonio learned all about the grandfather he never knew."

Mrs. Maria Hunter
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870

"Words cannot express what our trip to San Antonio meant to us. The 'colonel's ladies' were treated like royalty. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Looking forward to seeing you in Virginia next September."

Mrs. Sarah Gayle Randolph
Topping, VA 23169

"I really enjoy receiving FLAK NEWS and the mission stories. What memories they bring back! I flew the 'Betsy Ross' in the 603rd. It was in good shape when I left, but heard later that it had crash-landed in Belgium. Can someone verify this?"

Ross Howden
Orange, CA 92665

Reunion Leftovers

The appeal by Dick Frazier to support the Sentimental Journey in the form of a \$3500 sponsorship probably would have been approved anyway, but it was assured when he reminded us how we loved to see the B-17 "belching smoke and dripping oil". . . it is not assured at this point, but the "SJ" could well be at our next reunion at Richmond . . . the 398th officers received a neat letter from the CAF, thanking the group for its support, "a fitting tribute toward the continued preservation of these great machines". . . and a special thanks to *Chuck and Este Mae Hunter* for their work at the reunion, doing registration, selling caps, jackets and keeping everyone loose and happy. . . a small, tattered 8th Air Force history book marked "Harry O. Smith" turned up missing at the Memory Room at San Antonio; if found, please return to the Editor. . . Russ Reed, 601 pilot, must have been the most surprised and delighted member at Lackland AFB in July when he discovered that the F-86 on display at the museum was the very same fighter he flew in the early 50's. . .



THREE INJURED IN "909" GULLY LANDING

B-17 "Survivor" Damaged In PA Airshow Mishap

One of the dozen or so still-flying B-17's in the U.S. was severely damaged at an air show last August when it ran off the runway at Beaver Falls, PA. Three passengers who had been riding in the nose were injured.

The others, a crew of three and six passengers were not hurt, according to Tommy Garcia, who monitors the surviving B-17 fleet via his co-op in Houston, TX.

The "909" Fortress, owned by the Bob Collings Foundation of Stowe, MA, ran out of runway and plunged nose first in a 90-foot gully. The three nose passengers, two former B-17 bombardiers and an ex-navigator, had just unbuckled on the landing roll when the plane became airborne again and they ultimately flew through the nose. Although hospitalized, the trio was back a week later assisting the salvage and re-building effort.

The plane suffered considerable damage, especially to the nose, wheels, engines, nacelles and wings. All three of the nose passengers had flown their 8th Air Force tours without injury.

Of special interest to 398th folks is the fact that Harold Weekley, former pilot from the



HAROLD WEEKLEY
Still Active in B-17's

601st, flew the "909" last year in Atlanta. As the principal operations inspector for the FAA (air carrier and general aviation) he was the only pilot in the FAA authorized to give B-17 type ratings. Weekley is a former airline captain (707's) and is now an aviation & management consultant.

Weekley is the regular pilot for the EEA B-17 of Oshkosh, WI, which he flies regularly at the nation's air shows. He is the only B-17 pilot among the "surviving" fleet to have had World War II combat experience.

His combat ended on August 13, 1945, when his plane was shot down over LeManoir, France. He alone from his crew escaped capture and returned to England. He remained in the Air Force and retired as a colonel.

Others on his crew were Ben Clark, Ray Delbart, Paul James, Joe Skarda, Bob Unger, Joe Fabian, Bob Stickel and Gene Leonard.

San Antonio Reunion Video Loaner Available

A VHS video of the entire reunion at San Antonio has been made available on loan by Tom and Jean Overturf of Tuscon.

"All we request is \$2.00 for mailing," they said. "No charge for Tom's great production," offered the affable Jean.

Send your requests to Tom & Jean Overturf, Tuscon, AZ 85730.

Also available for mailing fee only is the VHS video of the group's 1986 trip to England. Send your requests to the FLAK NEWS editor.

"Old Codger" Was Happy To Share Suit

One the 603rd's "old codger" armorer-gunners and a fuzzy-cheeked P-51 fighter pilot shared an unusual experience during the waning weeks of WW II.

Vencil Bolton of Denver had flown 24 of his 35 missions with the Warren Johnson crew. At 29, he was the "old guy" on a crew that collectively had become seasoned and experienced. All were veterans and skilled at their respective positions. And most of them rotated home in early 1945.

Bolton, with 11 more to go thanks to some hospital time, had to finish up as spare for a variety of new pilots. He flew the tail, waist and ball as gunner and also dropped a few as togglier.

"By this time the crews were getting greener and I was getting older," said Bolton. "On one mission, I had to install every gun on the plane. With only a couple to go I was beginning to miss my buddies on the Johnson crew."

On his final mission in mid-March, Bolton's plane was hit by flak and lost an engine. Ten minutes later a second engine went out and soon out of formation and all alone.

"We were still an hour away from our lines," he recalled, "and I'm beginning to think I'm not going to make 35 after all."

"Pretty soon somebody yells 'enemy fighter!' and I look over and see this beautiful P-51.

Veteran Gunner Began To Long For Old Buddies

Well, I got everyone on board convinced it wasn't a 109 and this guy stays with us all the way to some field in France, where our pilot made an excellent landing.

The P-51 pilot, recalled Bolton, must have been low on gas as he too landed and followed us to a parking spot. The B-17 crew members excitedly greeted the fighter pilot to extend their thanks for escorting their wounded plane to a friendly field.

"This kid looked so young I'm sure he wasn't shaving yet.

"After the thank you's, this kid asked our crew if any of them had a spare heated suit, to which each member responded negatively!"

Bolton, perhaps thinking more of home than the others, responded differently—

"Son, I don't have a spare, but you can sure have the one I've got on."

And right there on the hardstand, Bolton stripped down to his longjohns, removed his heated suit and gave it to the happy P-51 pilot.

398th Officers Busy With Membership Lists

Your 398th association maintains not one, but THREE membership lists! It's time for a clarification . . . and YOUR help

No. 1 is maintained by George Hilliard, Cincinnati, OH 45236. Please keep him informed on new members, deaths, changes of address. He keeps the MASTER list.

No. 2 is maintained by Harry Gray, Farmington, MO, 63640. He keeps George's list on his computer and provides all the mailing labels for FLAK NEWS and general mailing.

No. 3 is maintained by Ed Stewart, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334. Ed also has a computer and has compiled squadron affiliation, phone, position on plane (or other duty) name of pilot, number of missions flown, whether shot down or not, and period of service in the 398th.

Our 398th mailing list now contains 1,212 names, not bad considering it all started 10 years ago with 30 names and a bank account based on \$1.00 per head.

But the battle never ceases to remain progressive and current.

T-Shirts and Jackets Now Available



T-Shirts and Jackets bearing special 398th designs are now available to our membership.

T-Shirts are priced at \$10.00 each and Jackets at \$30.00 each.

Sizes are small, medium, large and extra large.

Colors are white, gold, light blue, navy blue and royal blue.

Not all colors and sizes are "in stock" but can be ordered from the factory within a reasonable period of time.

In addition, baseball caps (navy blue only) are available with any of the four squadron insignias. They are priced at \$6.50 each.

Send your order, showing color and size, plus \$1.00 each for shipping, to the FLAK NEWS editor.

OK! Now We Know All About A Radar "Spot-Jammer"

It all started out with a typical tail-gunner's question: "What did a 'radar counter-measures and spot jammer' do on a B-17?"

The question was directed to Bud Bailey of Dallas during one of those FLAK NEWS exchanges. The ex-tail-gunner's idea of "counter-measures" was a pair of twin-fifties!

Came the answer from Bud:

"Our equipment consisted of six transmitters and one receiver located in the radio room. There were two of us in each squadron and we flew every other mission.

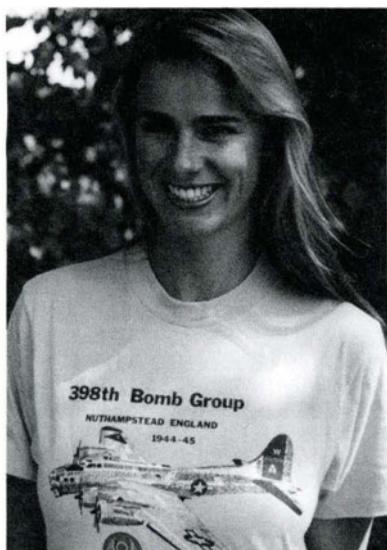
"At the morning briefings we were assigned a certain range of frequencies to monitor. We would listen for a particular signal put out by the German radar, and then we would set one of the transmitters on top of their signal, which in effect jammed their signal and made their radar accuracy ineffective.

"The only time it was not effective was at some targets at which they employed what was called a 'box barrage' type of anti-aircraft fire. Even so, it was still effective enroute to and from the target."

Thanks, Bud. I needed that!

398th BOMB GROUP FLAK NEWS

c/o Allen Ostrom
Seattle, WA 98177



ALETA OSTROM
Models New 398th T-Shirt