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601



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

VOL. 6 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

OCTOBER 1991

PARTNERS

THIS STATUE, depicting a pilot and his crew chief, admirably represents the bond that existed (and still exists) between the combat airmen and the men on the ground who maintained the aircraft. It is a timely portrayal of the "supporting our ground personnel" theme of the 398th Bomb Group reunion November 6-9, 1991 at San Diego.



ROBERT UHL

While the 1991 398th reunion in San Diego will have a definite "ground support" theme, some of this will come from one of the many airmen who discovered the "ground" the hard way ... in a German PW camp.

Robert Uhl of the 600 Dana Lovelace crew, downed over Munich on July 16, 1944, learned a fresh appreciation for life as he watched the air war from the ground.

"I would like to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to all the men who continued flying and speed my release. And to tell how our spirits were lifted whenever those B-17's went by our camp," he said.

Uhl will have this opportunity at one of the reunion banquets.

More reunion news on Page 5

TIME TO DO THE DUES!

Here's a story you have heard before. Yes, it is that time of the year again. Time to pay the piper. As usual, dues are \$5.00 per year, with voluntary options to contribute to the Memorial Fund and FLAK NEWS. Use the insert inside, and please fill in the personal information on the back. If the insert is missing, mail dues to Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740.

“The American Roll of Honour”

“The Roll of Honour records the names of 28,000 American dead, men and women, in all services, among them some who served in British or Canadian formations. Prepared by a group of American and British artists under Mr. Trygve A. Rovelstad, of New York, it is a richly illuminated manuscript of 473 pages, with one or two blank pages for any names that may have been inadvertently omitted. The names run alphabetically, and each is followed by detail of rank and service.

“The book is bound in red leather, and its gold-tooled front cover has in the middle a figure of a Winged Victory holding a crusader’s two-handed sword. Round the border runs a scroll design, with semi-precious stones inset in shields at the corners. Embossed gold clasps hold the covers together when closed. In raised gold-leaf on the title page is an eagle with uplifted wings above an oak-leaf wreath, with a scroll on either side bearing the title, ‘American Roll of Honour.’ The first page of names is headed, ‘To the Glory of God, and in memory of the Americans who gave their lives in military operations from the British Isles,’ with a design embodying the American eagle, a two-handed sword, and American flags. Another allegorical painting shows, across two pages, the Tree of Life surrounded by oak leaves, with the spirit of the dead aloft a palm of victory. Below is a column of United States troops against a background of war-scarred London and St. Paul’s.”

398th Tour Party To View Book At St. Paul’s



American Memorial in St. Paul’s

There is a book that tells the story of the creation of a British memorial to the Americans who lived and died in Britain’s midst in the Second World War.

This book is called “Britain’s Homage to 28,000 American Dead.”

It was published in 1952 and a copy was sent to the next-of-kin of each of the Americans who died while fighting for freedom in Britain between 1941 and 1945.

The story above is an excerpt from this book, describing the “Roll of Honour” that contains the names of each and every Yank who gave his life while serving with the Allied armed forces in England.

To Britain’s credit, more than a few U.K. communities created similar documents bearing the names of local men and women who perished in WW II. One such book was found in Penn, where the 398th tour group visited in 1990. It included not only those who came from Penn, but also the names of the nine members of the 600 Charles Searl crew, who died in the crash of their B-17 on a nearby farm.

St. Paul’s was extensively damaged during the London blitz. The Jesus Chapel, where the American Memorial is located, had been wrecked by a bomb in May 1941. The cathedral had suffered in more than one earlier episode of the blitz, notably the previous October, when a bomb had struck the roof just above the altar, completely wrecking it and causing severe and costly damage.

The building of the American Memorial Chapel was begun in 1951 and finished in 1955.

The Roll of Honour is displayed in the Memorial. A virger turns the page of the book each day. There is also a photostat duplicate of the book, bound like the original, for the purpose of enabling visitors to St. Paul’s to verify the presence in the Roll of Honour of any particular name in which they are interested.

The 398th, with a tour to Germany and England coming up in June-July 1992, is scheduling a stop at St. Paul’s before returning home.

There to pay a brief, silent tribute to a fellow crew member, friend, buddy who paid the ultimate price.

“There be them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported. And some there be, which have no memorial.”

Except, perhaps, in the American Memorial at St. Paul’s London.

England-Germany Tour On Target

Over 60 Already "Aboard" For 1992 Trip

The 398th Bomb Group tour to Germany and England next summer is on the verge of being classified as "sold out."

As of FLAK NEWS press time, the tour reservation number was over 60, which is very near the maximum that can be accommodated by our "Home Stay Friends" at Nuthampstead. AND by struggling hotel systems in the heart of eastern Germany, where Merseburg is located.

This group tour is unlike any other taken by the 398th, what with each member being "assigned" to a home stay in and around Nuthampstead during the five-day visit to Station 131. Friends chairman Wilfred Dimsdale and his committee have been meeting for months to develop a "connection" between each 398th member and their English host.

The host will provide not only the housing, but also the transportation to the many functions and activities being planned. Prior to arriving in Nuthampstead, tour members will have an opportunity to visit Canterbury after arriving from the Continent. And later, before departing for home, there will be two days in London's famous Tower Hotel.

It is hoped that all persons wishing to make this trip will register as soon as possible.

Reservations may still be made by calling Travel House, Inc., (toll free) 1-800-423-5454. Ask for Barbara Fish. The address is 5042 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105.

Or contact FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom, Seattle, WA 98177.

The 16-day tour begins on June 17, 1992, returning home on July 2. Members may leave from four different SAS gateway cities — Newark (\$2659); Chicago (\$2789); Los Angeles (\$2889) and Seattle (\$2849).

As of FLAK NEWS press time, the following members had registered for the tour:

Phil & Mabel Arbogast

Lou & Matea Baffaro

Wally & Teedy Blackwell

Lowell & Audrey Culver

Winsor & Joyce Coleman

Bill & Evelyn Comstock

D.G. (Bud) & Ila Cooper

Ben & Polly Anna Core

Wayne & Ruthanna Doerstler

John & Marion Duncan

Dallas & Geneva Ebest

Maurice & Betty Fletcher

Dean & Ruby Foster

Dick & Junice Frazier

Ralph & Marjorie Hall

Art & Mary Harris

Fred Hotop

Maria Hunter

Joe & Rozanne Joseph

Virgil Kramer

Henry & Lois Lescale

Jack & Jean Madlung

Helen McMillan

Gertrude Wells Neff

Elliott & Connie Novek

Ann O'Beirne

Allen & Geg Ostrom

Russell Reed

Hank & Louise Rudow

Margaret Sigsworth

Phil & Marge Stahlman

Ray & Jean Stange

Charles Sutton

Morris & Mary Swed

Howard & Jane Traeder

Les Veley

Arthur & Phyllis Watson

Hal & Billie Weekley

For Core and Arbogast, the tour will take on an emotional significance when they arrive at Merseburg. It was over Merseburg on November 2, 1944 that their B-17 was downed, crashing in nearby Krumpa. All except pilot Robert Campbell bailed out safely.

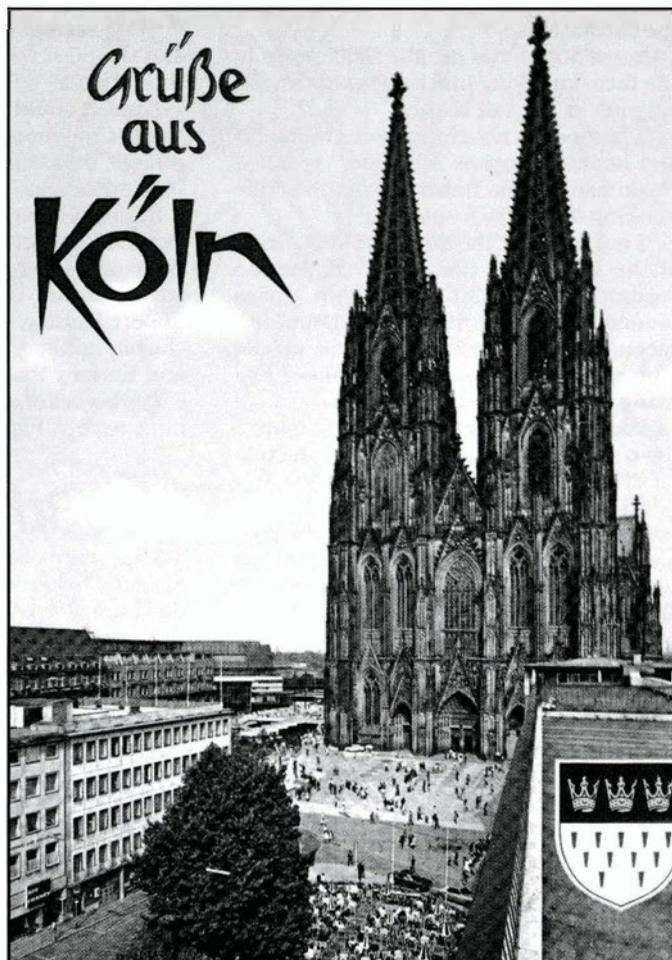
Campbell was found in the Geisel River and buried in a grave at Mucheln. Core and Arbogast will attempt to locate the exact site of the crash and leave an appropriate memorial in memory of their airplane commander.

Continued On Page 10



Still Standing

THOSE WHO had the opportunity to do a low-level pass over some of the German cities after the war would have seen this sight while circling over Cologne. The Cologne Cathedral was just about all that was left standing in the Ruhr city. At right is a current postcard of Cologne and the Cathedral, a site that will be visited in June, 1992, during the group tour to Germany and England.



A Big Story In A Few Words

Tail Gunner Went Down Shooting; Haakenson Lost His Entire Crew ... And One Eye

The grim air combat memories of Selmer Haakenson are recorded on a half a page of paper, type-written, double spaced.

But in those precious few words are written his agonizing, personal life-death struggle, refusal to lay down his twin 50's in what had to be a hopeless situation, a miraculous survival from a separated tail section, the loss of an eye and two months in Stalag 17B.

And ... the loss of EVERY ONE of his B-17 crew comrades!

This was the Donald Christensen crew of the 603rd. They were on their fourth mission for the 398th on March 2, 1945. The target, the secondary that day, was a petro-chemical facility at Bohlen, located 17 miles southeast of Merseburg.

And it was one of those long hummers, like seven hours on oxygen. Solid clouds beneath the group formation, led by Col. Pete Rooney, with tight formations difficult at best, impossible at the worst.

The flight path to the target and back was somewhat parallel with the northern border of Czechoslovakia. Just before the turn to the target a squadron of FW-190's smacked into Ken Beckstrom's 603 high squadron. Christensen, flying No. 2 on the wing of element leader T.L. Guice, took several 20-mm hits and was forced from the formation.

One of these hits caught Haakenson in the face, knocking him backwards on the catwalk in the tail section.

"I landed on my chute, so I grabbed it and hooked it up on one side," recalled Haakenson. "The flak vest kept me from hooking up on both sides.

"I got back on the seat and kept firing at the 190's until the entire tail section separated and went into a spin. I was pinned in the tail until it stalled out for a second. I got the vest off, hooked up the chute and bailed out the tail door. I just made it."

Haakenson said he came down in a small town and was quickly rounded up and taken to German authorities.

"From here I was taken to a hospital, X-rayed, and then sent to Prague. I recall the hospital being on higher ground than the rest of the city and the doctor who took out my eye was a Dr. Schutz."

All this drama was observed by a number of Czech civilians, and later recorded by Manuel F. van Eyck, who now lives in California.

A friend of van Eyck, working on a factory building in the city of Slany, 13 miles from Prague, was one of the eye witnesses to the demise of the Christensen aircraft. He wrote —

"At approximately 1100 hours we saw American bombers with fighter escort flying east. At approximately 1300 hours all

bomber groups were returning and we heard the engines from one bomber flying at a very low altitude. Two engines were not working. When it was directly above us the tail section broke away and one man bailed out.

"The Germans guarding us began shooting at him, but the strong northwest wind carried him away.

"The tail section and aircraft crashed into the ground. The Germans waited for a while and then entered the plane and pulled out eight dead airmen. The Germans took the shoes from the airmen and other parts of the equipment.

"The bodies were taken to the cemetery in Slany for burial. The next day the graves were covered with flowers, which the Gestapo did not appreciate."

Van Eyck, who searched for a number of years before locating Haakenson — the lone survivor — also reported that the Christensen B-17 was not the only aircraft to be downed during this drama in the skies over Czechoslovakia on this day.

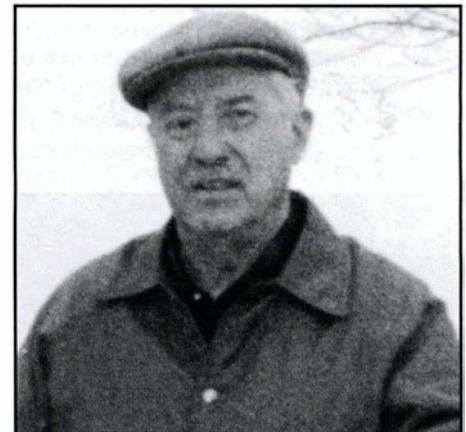
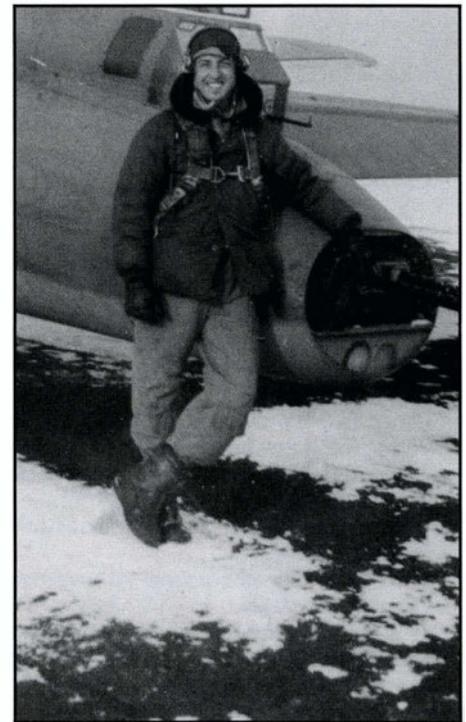
"Two German fighters also came down," he reported. "The first landed due to engine failure. The pilot was Lt. Krapp, and he said he was hit by one of the American bombers. His FW-190 was identified with a blue '3.'

"The second crashed into the ground and the pilot was killed. He was Lt. Gunther Schulz."

Thus, it could well be that Haakenson, in the final moments of his plane's death plunge, took one — possibly two — of his tormentors with him.

Besides Haakenson, the tail gunner, the Donald Christensen crew was made up of William Love, co-pilot; Harry Ostrow, navigator; John Gustafson, bombardier; Robert Dudley, engineer-gunner; Elmer Gurba, radio; Albert Carlisle, ball turret; and Kenney Plantz, waist.

The bodies of all Christensen crew members, except Plantz, were recovered and



SELMER HAAKENSON
He Had A Wild Ride

sent home to respective families. Plantz is buried at Lorraine American Military Cemetery, near Metz, France.

398th Vet And His "War Years"

Many an ex-serviceman has looked on his military career and proclaimed, "Some day I am going to write a book about my experiences."

Most never get around to it.

Larry Miller is one of those rare exceptions. Not just because he is a life member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), but because he DID write a book about his military career.

Well, it is not exactly a "published" book and it is not for sale at your favorite book store. But it is a "book" assembled for his family, friends and fellow airmen on the Ted Johnston crew of the 600th Squadron.

"The War Years" is quite a remarkable (typed, photocopied and hand assembled) narrative of Miller's Air Force career from early training as a gunner, radio operator and crew member through his 30-mission tour with the 398th.

The details remembered and recorded about missions, life on and off the air base and a variety of statistics are only slightly extraordinary. This little gem can well be added to one's library under the heading, "A text book on a World War II B-17 airplane and crew."

Lawrence F. Miller lives in Lexington, MA 02173.

FORMATIONS

March 2, 1945

602 Lead Squadron

ROONEY
Griffin

Pryor Ferguson

Coffee

Beam Andrako

Heathcote Lamiel Saferite Cochran

Jacobs Thompson

600 Low Squadron

ASHWORTH
Hahn

Wagner TREVARROW
Lipnick

Tatchio

Shuptrine Grinter

Shimek Hill Hicks Hoelzel

Sheffer McAfee

Alwood

603 High Squadron

BECKSTROM
Steele

Ellis Spangler

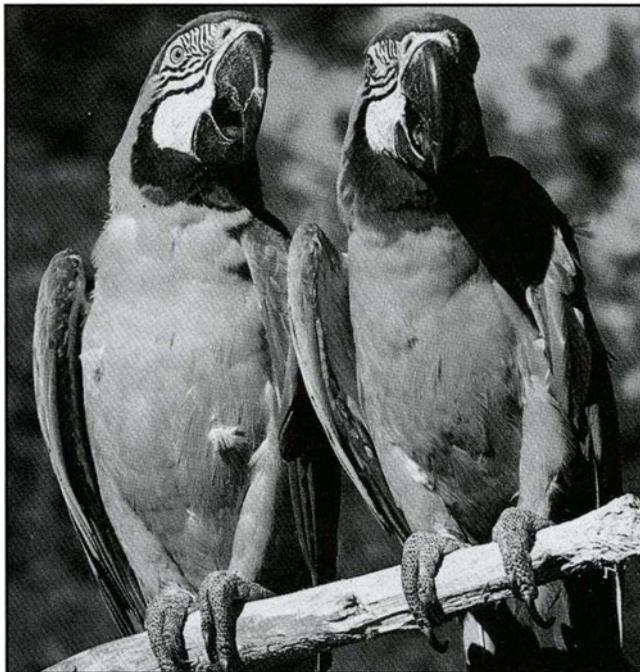
Worley

Moy Guice

Branyon Pinner Christensen Williams

Coleman Oden

“Guess what, Charlie ... the 398th Bomb Group is coming To San Diego to see us!”



Zoo, Wild Animal Park, Sea World And More Await Reunion Members

The annual reunion gathering of the 398th Bomb Group is now just days away — November 6-7-8-9, 1991, at the Southern California city of San Diego.

And, according to the early registrations, another big turnout is expected as president Bill Comstock calls his “troops” to order for the official business meeting on Thursday, Nov. 7 at 3 p.m.

Meanwhile, many early birds will already have settled in at the Town & Country Hotel, 500 Hotel Circle North, just a few minutes from downtown San Diego. Reunion chairman Bob Hopkins and his staff of volunteers will “open for business” at 1 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 6. Registration and the Memory Room will be in the adjoining Sunrise and Sunset Rooms (next to two swimming pools).

The official registration form, hotel reservation and general information were all contained in the July issue of FLAK NEWS. For those who might have mislaid their last newsletter they can contact Hopkins., San Diego, CA 92111.

Three professionally led tours to the above attractions have been arranged by Hopkins, all scheduled for 9 a.m., Friday, Nov. 8. In addition, tour busses to various other city locations leave every 30 minutes from the hotel. No reservations required.

The Town & Country Hotel boasts three different room accommodations — the one- and two-story Garden rooms plus the high-rise East Tower Courtyard and West Tower.

A large coffee shop sits between two of the four swimming pools. And there are

three fine dining rooms on the property.

The San Diego Airport — Lindberg Field — is about 10 minutes away and there is ample space for the auto traveller, including those who come by self-contained motor homes.

For the serious shoppers, Fashion Valley Shopping Center is but a footbridge away.

As usual, Jack Wintersteen will have his 398th PX set up and ready for business on opening day in the Memory Room. Many souvenir items will be on sale, including T-shirts, jackets, photographs, bumper stickers, caps, group and squadron patches, lapel pins, visors, license plates, tote bags and bolo ties. Jack says he can still use a bit of help to “mind the store” on occasions in San Diego.

The principal gatherings at the reunion will take place at the three banquets in the adjoining Convention Center. A special program “honoring our ground support personnel” will take place Thursday night, Nov. 7. There will be dancing on Friday evening, Nov. 8 and professional entertainment Saturday, Nov. 9.

But through it all, the real reason for the annual gathering will be to share memories with friends, buddies, crew members with whom a common bond was established 47 years ago.

While the ranks have thinned over the years it can be expected that a goodly number of sons and daughters (and grandsons and granddaughters) will be on hand to help carry on the storied traditions of the 398th Bomb Group.

Hurry Along With Reunion Registration

“Please send in your reunion registrations ASAP,” is the word from chairman Bob Hopkins.

Traditionally, many folks wait until the last minute, causing no end of frustration for the registration committee. Hence, the appeal from Hopkins.

“Also,” he added, “I hope my fellow Californians will take the lead in this. We expect a lot of local members here and they really can help us out by being early birds, especially in making up their minds on the banquet tickets.”

T A S K F

OIL SUPPLY

DISPATCHER

WEATHER
MAN

INSTRUMENTS

BOMB SUPPLY CREW

RADIOS

ARMAMENT

PARACHUTES

GROUND CREW

MECHANICS

CREW
CHIEF

FLIGHT CREW

NO.2
RADIO

NO.1
RADIO

NO.1
ENGINEER

PILOT

CO-PILOT

BOMBARDIER



O R C E

GAS SUPPLY

SPECIALISTS

SUPERCHARGERS

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT PROPELLERS

MECHANICS

TAIL GUNNER

NO. 2 ENGINEER

NAVIGATOR



A significant "hint" as to what (and who) went into putting a B-17 into the air was captured by Life Magazine photographer Frank Scherschel for the magazine's April 6, 1942 issue.

It was part of an eight-page "photographic essay" depicting the combat training of air crews at MacDill Field, Florida in the early days of World War II.

These were B-17 E models, and the men who were in training were destined to become the first contingent of the 97th Bomb Group, the first 8th Air Force group to see combat over the continent.

The "Task Force" photo is published in FLAKNEWS not only to show the air crew, but to contribute a visual presentation on some of the support personnel that were required to back up the flyers.

A timely publication, what with the annual 398th Bomb Group reunion in San Diego, Nov. 6-9, dedicated to the ground support personnel.

The April 6, 1942 Life Magazine was contributed to FLAK NEWS by M.E. Boswell, 602 pilot who retired from the Air Force as Lieutenant General Boswell, assistant vice chief of staff.

Life Magazine at the time showed Henry R. Luce as Managing Editor. It was his wife, Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce, who visited the 398th at Nuthampstead in October, 1944. A poem, written after being given a ride in a Fortress by Capt. Kearie Berry, is part of the 398th history book, REMEMBRANCES.

The April 6, 1942 Life Magazine will be on display at the memory room at the San Diego reunion.

APRIL 6, 1942 **10** CENTS
 YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$4.50

MILITARY AIRCRAFT

World War II



DESIGNER	AAF DESIGNATION	APPROVED NAME
BOMBERS		
Boeing	B-17	Fortress
Douglas	B-18	Bolo
Douglas	B-23	Dragon
Consolidated	B-24	Liberator
North American	B-25	Mitchell
Martin	B-26	Marauder
Boeing	B-29	Superfortress
Vega	B-34 (O-56)	Ventura
Douglas	A-20 (P-70)	Havoc
Douglas	A-24	Dauntless
Curtiss	A-25	Helldiver
Lockheed	A-29 (AT-18)	Hudson
Martin	A-30	Baltimore
Vultee	A-31, A-35	Vengeance
Brewster	A-34	Bermuda
North American	A-36 (P-51)	Mustang
FIGHTERS		
Lockheed	P-38	Lightning
Bell	P-39	Airacobra
Curtiss	P-40	Warhawk
Republic	P-47	Thunderbolt
North American	P-51 (A-36)	Mustang
Northrop	P-61	Black Widow
Bell	P-63	King Cobra
Douglas	P-70 (A-20)	Havoc
LIAISON		
Taylorcraft	L-2 (O-57)	Grasshopper
Aeronica	L-3 (O-58)	Grasshopper
Piper	L-4 (O-59)	Grasshopper
Vultee	L-5 (O-62)	Sentinel
Vultee	O-49	Vigilant
Curtiss	O-52	Owl
Lockheed	O-56 (B-34)	Ventura
Taylorcraft	O-57 (L-2)	Grasshopper
Aeronica	O-58 (L-3)	Grasshopper
Piper	O-59 (L-4)	Grasshopper
Vultee	O-62 (L-5)	Sentinel
TRAINERS		
North American	AT-6	Texan
Beech	AT-7	Navigator
Beech	AT-10	Wichita
Beech	AT-11	Kansan
Boeing	AT-15	Crewmaker
North American	AT-16	Harvard
Cessna	AT-17	Bobcat
Lockheed	AT-18 (A-29)	Hudson
Vultee	AT-19	Reliant
Fairchild	AT-21	Gunner
North American	BT-9, BT-14	Yale
Fleetwing	BT-12	Sophomore
Vultee	BT-13, BT-15	Valiant
Stearman	PT-13, PT-17	
	PT-18, PT-27	Caydet
Fairchild	PT-19, PT-23	
	PT-26	Cornell
Ryan	PT-21, PT-22	Recruit
TRANSPORTS		
Beech	C-43	Traveller
Beech	C-45	Expediter
Curtiss	C-46	Commander
Douglas	C-47	Skytrain
Douglas	C-49, C-53	Skytrooper
Douglas	C-54	Skymaster
Lockheed	C-56, C-60	Lodestar
Lockheed	C-63 (AT-18)	
	(A-29)	Hudson
Lockheed	C-69	Constellation
Curtiss	C-76	Caravan
Consolidated	C-87	Liberator
Grumman	OA-9	Goose

COMSTOCK ON PEARL HARBOR: Time For A Look Into The Rear View Mirror

Can it be possible that we are about to witness the 50th Anniversary of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor?

What are some of the significant results which affected those of us who are members of the 398th Bomb Group? What are the lessons for the future as we ponder these thoughts?

Public surveys taken over the years have documented the fact that most Americans over 15 years of age on December 7, 1941 remember clearly what occurred on that date, and exactly what they were doing at the time they learned the news. Other dates that some remember are VE-Day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death, VJ-Day and President Kennedy's death. But these other dates are not even close to the events of December 7, 1941 in the ability to recall events of that date. (Some surveys point out that spouses birthdays and wedding anniversaries are not remembered this well.)

The point is that this event totally changed the course of world history, and most certainly that of the United States. In our own case, there is no doubt that there would not have been a 398th Bomb Group which became an important part of the total war effort, and certainly we would not find ourselves as part of a memorial association with strong bonds of friendship among some 1700 members, associates and friends located on two continents today.

That Pearl Harbor changed each of our lives completely is perhaps the greatest understatement that one can put forth at this time. As I reflected on this, I realized that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to serve with many of you and, more importantly, to get to know you and share your friendship and the goals and objective which we have today.

How ironic it is that Japan could not accomplish with military action the Asian co-prosperity sphere which it now demonstrates throughout the world. There are many reasons for this prosperity, of course, but there is obviously a lesson here. And, speaking of lessons, it seems to me that in view of recent events in the Middle East and in the Soviet Union, the rear view mirror of history provides a reminder for each of us that the price of freedom is something worth paying. In this sense, we still need a strong national defense capable of dealing with the aggressors of the world.

Perhaps another Pearl Harbor is unlikely, but I believe we are well advised to continue to remember the original and the lessons which are there for each of us. May God bless each and every one of you.

WILLIAM G. COMSTOCK
President

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

Map Stirs Memories of 1944-45

Here is the area where we spent at least a few weeks of our lives, or possibly a year or more. This is that portion of England's East Anglia which became a giant carrier deck for the air war against Germany in World War II.

The names of some of these tiny communities (and most of them are still tiny today) became daily by-words for members of the 398th Bomb Group. Although the type is small on the map, perhaps you can find such towns as Debden (Debden Buncher), Madingly (Cambridge American Military Cemetery), Royston, Buntingford, Anstey, Bassingbourn (91st B.G.), Baldock, Barkway and, of course, Northampton.

The runways at Station 131 are "penciled in" to provide a location setting. Only portions still remain, the bulk of the concrete and foundation rubble going to build England's new modern motorway system. The original runway foundation material came from the rubble of the London blitz.

This map can come in handy for those 398th members who will be on the June-July, 1992 tour.



BRIEF-things

Some 8th Air Force memorials in England are in various states of neglect and disrepair, but not so the 398th at Nuthampstead. The June inspection report by the American Battle Monuments Commission said "the memorial was found to be in an outstanding state of maintenance ... like new ... clean" ... thank you, **Wilfred Dimsdale** and your Friends of the 398th ... **Manfred Koenig**, who was so helpful in arranging the 1988 group visit to Germany, visited the U.S. this past summer with his family ... he will be "on the job" again next year, helping with arrangements at Merseburg ... a book called, "Three Gold Stars," has been written by **R. Joseph Rosamilia** of Toms River, N.J. ... one of the gold stars is for **William Lewandowski** of the 603rd, one of three brothers lost in WW II ... **Bill Robb**, forever a booster for his 398th "group troops," will be pleased with the San Diego reunion programs ... now, let's send more "ground" stories to the FLAK NEWS editor ... many 8th Air Force groups will be in Britain next summer to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 8th's arrival in the UK back in 1942, but only the 398th will visit Merseburg ... and we will keep appealing to y'all to send a P.O. change-of-address card to FLAK NEWS before you move; saves us all kinds of time and money ... RATS! Your editor blew another one in the "first pilot" listing: **John Stevens** of the 603rd. It was **Stevens'** B-17 pictured in our book, "Remembrances," being tagged with an 88 flak burst. Sorry, **John** ... come reunion time in November it might well be 30 degrees in Duluth or Buffalo, but it will still be about 72 in San Diego; just remember to bring along a sweater or light jacket for evening time ... you will note that the "October" FLAK NEWS is out a bit early to accommodate some reunion news, and to give the Editor time to pack for Southern California ... George Archer of the 601st met a British veteran at St. Paul's in London; both gazed on the stained glass window above the American War Memorial depicting Blitz war scenes; the Brit looked at George and said, "We certainly were there, weren't we, Yank?" ... FLAK NEWS can well be considered an "international" publication, with 120 copies being mailed to England, Scotland, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Channel Islands, Switzerland, Mexico, Bermuda, Czechoslovakia, and Canada.

Stitz To Back Up Hopkins

Bob Hopkins, on the job for two years in preparing for the 398th reunion in San Diego, has called for backup support in handling the 398th reunion. And it came in the form of the navigator on his crew, Tom Stitz of Phoenix. The same man who was his companion in Stalag Luft I.

Hopkins has been battling an unusual heart condition and decided to back off from some of the stress that accompanies reunion activities. Thus, Tom and Ida Stitz will be assisting Hopkins with the reunion administrative load.

Thanks, Tom and Ida. We know we are in good hands.

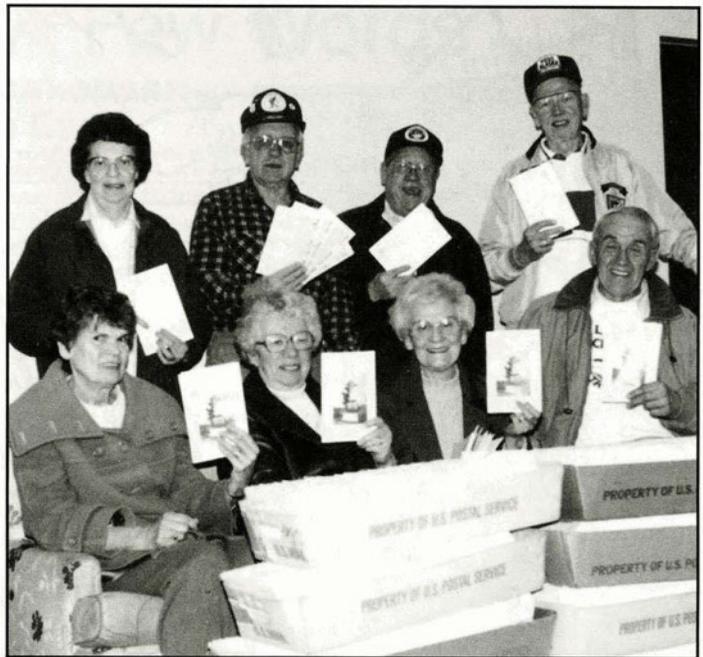
Targets Took Their Toll

Continued From Page 3

The Campbell aircraft was only one of 13 lost from the 398th on missions to Merseburg or nearby petro-chemical targets.

Reed, downed on the same day as Campbell, also will be on the tour. His story of this fateful mission, and subsequent days in PW camp will be told in an upcoming issue of FLAK NEWS.

There also will be visits to Neuss, scene of the dramatic tour visit in 1988, plus Dusseldorf and Cologne. On the way to picking up the ferry to England, members will see Waterloo of Napoleon fame and Ardennes American Military Cemetery, where many 398th members are buried, including Col. Frank P. Hunter, group commanding officer.



THE MAILING CREW: Each issue of FLAK NEWS requires a staff of willing workers to prepare the 1,600+ copies for the Post Office. Here are some of the folks who answered the call for help in getting out the new roster. Left to right, front row, are Dorothy Austad, Frances Weiler, Etta and Walt Thumler. Back row, Geg Ostrom, Frank Weiler, Charles Canter and Johnny Johnson. Others who are frequent helpers include Ted and Dorothy Johnston, Keith Anderson and Tracy Petersen. A normal mailing takes about 22 man (and lady) hours.

Letters To The Editor

Daughter Writes About B-17 Pilot Father

My mother shared the latest copy of Flak News with me this evening, as well as the letters you received and sent on to her from George Schatz and Stan Alpert (members of my father's B-17 crew). The thoughts they conveyed about my father meant a great deal to all of us.

I always felt my father, Ken Elwood, to be a very special man. He was the world to me from the earliest days I can remember until the day that he died. He remains a part of me today as if he was still here. It is wonderful to know that he touched other lives even before I was born. My mother reads Flak News from cover to cover. Just seeing his name once in a while brings him close to her once more.

I grew up with the stories of his time with my mother in Rapid City before he went overseas; the knowledge that he was a pilot in the war; a few stories of "landing in a wheat field" and the knowledge that he had a "love affair with flying." I grew up with the stories of how my parents met; how my mother travelled across country standing on a bus for three days and nights to get to New Mexico so they could marry; how she spent four months in bed expecting my older sister and not hearing from Daddy or knowing that he knew for sure she was pregnant because the mail was held prior to the D-Day invasion. I never truly understood it all because my father was not the kind of man that talked about the things he had experienced.

I remember the vision of Daddy's uniform hanging in the darkened recesses of his closet, and the cardboard box of "Daddy's

"There Was A Part Of My Father I Couldn't Possibly Understand"

things" on the closet floor. I think I was nine years old when I finally asked what the box contained and he pulled it out to show me. I remember him lying across the bed reverently pulling out each item to show me. He only explained things if I asked; never pushed a war story or memory on me unless I first asked for information. I remember how he handled the piece of flak that lodged beneath his seat on one flight and the piece of shot-out plexiglass windshield. I remember most how amazed I was at the small dark medal case that held his Distinguished Flying Cross. He said it wasn't any big deal, but to a nine-year-old it was impressive.

I watched my father differently from that time on. I sat with him while he become so involved in television shows like "12 O'Clock High." I somehow knew that there was a part of my father that I couldn't possibly understand; some secret part of him that loved to stand on the observation deck of the airport and watch planes landing and taking off for hours; some secret part of him that thrilled at the thought of going up in an airplane any time. There were only a few occasions that my father "went up" again after the war, but there was a part of his heart that never "came down."

George and Stan referred to the fortieth reunion they shared with Daddy. It was such a wonderful time for him. He looked forward to going on the reunion in Seattle in the months ahead after he returned. Daddy passed away just weeks before the reunion took place. He left a hole in our lives; a hole in my heart and that no one and nothing will ever be able to fill. He was that kind of a special man as I think you could see by the letters from his crew members. I would like to share something with you that happened after Daddy's death.

It was my father's wish to be cremated after his death and to have his ashes flown and spread over the ocean. It was a difficult thing for me. Daddy died suddenly. There was not time to say good-bye. It would have been easier for me to have had a memorial service of some sort. But, Daddy's wishes were the ones that mattered.

Two days after his death, (before Daddy's ashes were spread)

my husband saw a spot on television about a B-17 aircraft that would be landing at our local airport for press flights and tours on its way to the reunion in Seattle. I didn't know if I could really handle seeing the plane, but part of me just "had" to go because it was "part of Daddy."

We drove a short distance to the airfield. As we approached I caught a glimpse of the "part of my father" I never understood before. We walked around and climbed through the airplane, saw the view that Daddy saw from the pilot's seat. Suddenly the reality of what he had done in his life was very real to me. Until that moment I did not comprehend that my father had been (at 24-years-old) responsible for so many lives. I will never know what that kind of duty and responsibility was like, but I suddenly understood the remarkable nature of this gentle, quiet man.

I spoke to the Sentimental Journey's pilot and told him about my father. He invited us to return to the airport the following day to see the plane in the air. I have never seen such a beautifully graceful craft as it took off and landed. My father's "love affair" was something very understandable from that moment on. The captain agreed as well to take my father's ashes and to fly over the Pacific and spread them over the ocean on his way to Seattle. I received a letter from the pilot of the plane a week later informing me of the coordinates at which he spread Daddy's ashes and a photo of the cloud formations as they flew. In the letter he said how proud he was to be part of Daddy's "last crew." He ended the letter by saying that my father's "last flight was taken in calm weather and peaceful skies."

The photo he sent hangs framed beside my father's picture looking out over the ocean. He was once and always a B-17 pilot. I know that somewhere Daddy smiled down on us all. He was able to fly in his beloved B-17 once again!

It was a tribute to a man who never forgot what it was to fly; never forgot the men he flew with and was responsible for. It was farewell to the man that was my father in a way I know touched his spirit then and now.

Sincerely,

**Marsha J. Brooks
Troutdale, OR 97060**

Editor's Note — This touching letter came from the daughter of 600 Squadron pilot Ken Elwood, one of the original crews formed at Rapid City. Besides navigator Stan Alpert and bombardier George Schatz, the Elwood crew listed John Hutchison, co-pilot; Dewey Burt; engineer; William S. Hanna, radio; and gunners William Rabada, James J. Leahy, Maynard Johnson and Arthur Figueiro.

"I would like to invite any 398th family that is traveling to San Diego for the reunion (or returning) to use our home for a "bed and breakfast" stopover. I still think of the marvelous time I had at the 1988 reunion in Richmond and now look forward to the 1992 meeting in Nashville."

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

"I ordered a video recently from Fusion called "The 8th Air Force Story." Guess what picture is on the promotional cover? A squadron of 398th B-17's! The closest Fortress in the picture shows "K8 H" and the serial number "338775."

Ralph Ambrose, Burke, VA 22015.

"Please accept this donation for our Memorial Fund in memory of Richard Rucker Mills. Dick was one of our most devoted supporters and it is an honor to remember him with this donation."

Bill Comstock, Fairfax, VA 22031.



ENGLAND'S SALLY B

“The Gyro Fluxage Compass Worked Straitaway”

Steve Carter, a crewman on England's Sally B, sent FLAK NEWS a greeting recently and included this item which should be of particular interest to all navigators.

“On the aeroplane front, the old girl, Sally B, is doing very well. There was no heavy maintenance this year other than undercarriage legs.

“I changed a carb on No. 2 and then timed, to a cat's whisker, all the mags.

“The area that has received the attention of “back-as-it-should-be” brigade has been the nose. We made a new navigator's table and shelf, and a new bomb aimer's panel.

“But best of all was in the compass equipment. We untangled a mass of cable only to find a load of connectors lying free. These

were very quickly found to fit onto the compass and gyro equipment above the navigator's table. They were exactly the right length, obviously from its original construction. But the best was yet to come!

“When Sally B was ground run for the first time this year the “erect gyro” button was pressed and lo and behold it worked! It was bloody marvelous. Hooked up for the first time in umpteen years and it worked straight away!

“To say we were surprised would be an understatement. But the fact is we have in operating condition the original fluxgate gyro compass.”

Well, all this seemed quite exciting to your tail-gunner FLAK NEWS editor, even if it

didn't make much sense. So he appealed to 600 navigator Stanley Alpert of the Ken Elwood crew for a layman's explanation. He responded thusly —

“The gyro fluxgate compass is one which is stabilized by an electrically driven gyroscope and is part of the original equipment of the B-17. Obviously, it helps you maintain flight direction, but it is affected by the magnetic deviation of the airplane and all the other electrical instruments.

“Therefore it must be calibrated to account for the magnetic deviation so that the navigator knows the magnetic heading as well as the true heading. Hope this explanation is clear.”

Thanks, Stanley ... I think.