



602



601



603



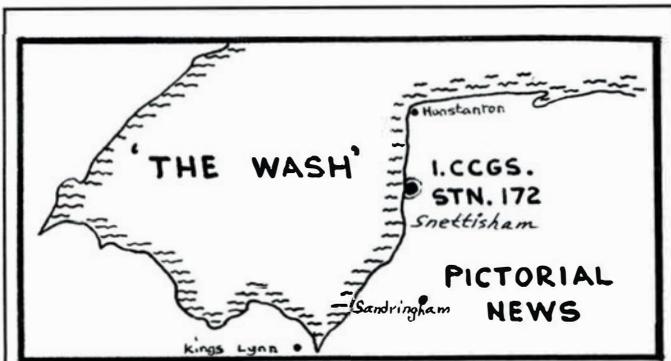
600

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

VOL. 8 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

OCTOBER 1993



ISSUE 1.

MAY 1992

50 YEARS ON

They came from far away to help
 In a war that was not theirs,
 They strengthened us through conflict;
 They shared our hopes and fears.
 Not least of all, on Britain's 'WASH'
 Their mark can still be seen,
 Where gunners came, to test their aim,
 And learn to be a team.
 Though time has passed since training days-
 Their imprint still remains,
 The 'presence' of those brave young men,
 Lies stamped on our terrain.

— BRIAN CLIPSTON—SONIA GIFKINS



398th MEMORIES TURN GOLDEN

Like the autumn leaves of New England, the memories of the men and women of the 398th are taking on a golden hue.

All of a sudden (wasn't it just yesterday?) we are looking at our 398th experiences through eyes dimmed by 50 summers.

Was it really 50 years ago that the 398th was born? Yes, indeed, March 1943.

Was it really 50 years ago that the 398th came to Rapid City, South Dakota, to prepare for combat only to learn that the group would remain there to train others? Yes, indeed, May and June 1943.

And will it be 50 years since the 398th finally received orders to "move out" and join the 8th Air Force in England? Yes, indeed, April 1944.

And, will it be 50 years since the 398th swapped training flights over Rapid City for combat flights over Berlin? Yes, indeed, May 1944.

Also remembered after this 50-year span of time, are those who perished — 296 — and those who became prisoners of war — 298.

And for more than a few of our members, it is also golden wedding time. And for at least one, J. Gordon Blythe, graduation from college 50 years later. (See story on Page 2.)

But it is not only for members of the 398th to look back and recall "those" days. Our Friends in England remember all too well the horrors of World War II. And they still look upon the Americans as ones who came to their little island and helped turn the tide of battle.

Brian Clipston and Sonia Gifkins put their thoughts into a poem they called, "50 YEARS ON." They are among the men and women living near "The Wash" on the English coast who are in the process of establishing a small museum at Snettisham to commemorate the service rendered by the 1st Division's Combat Crew Gunnery School, also known as Station 172. It was here that many gunners fine-tuned the skills learned at various gunnery schools stateside.

A special visit to Snettisham will be made next June (50 years on) by the 398th 1994 England Tour party. The travel group will then proceed to Nuthampstead for a five-day "home stay" visit with the "Friends of the 398th."

A Degree At 72 For 398th Pilot

Target Reached After 50 Years

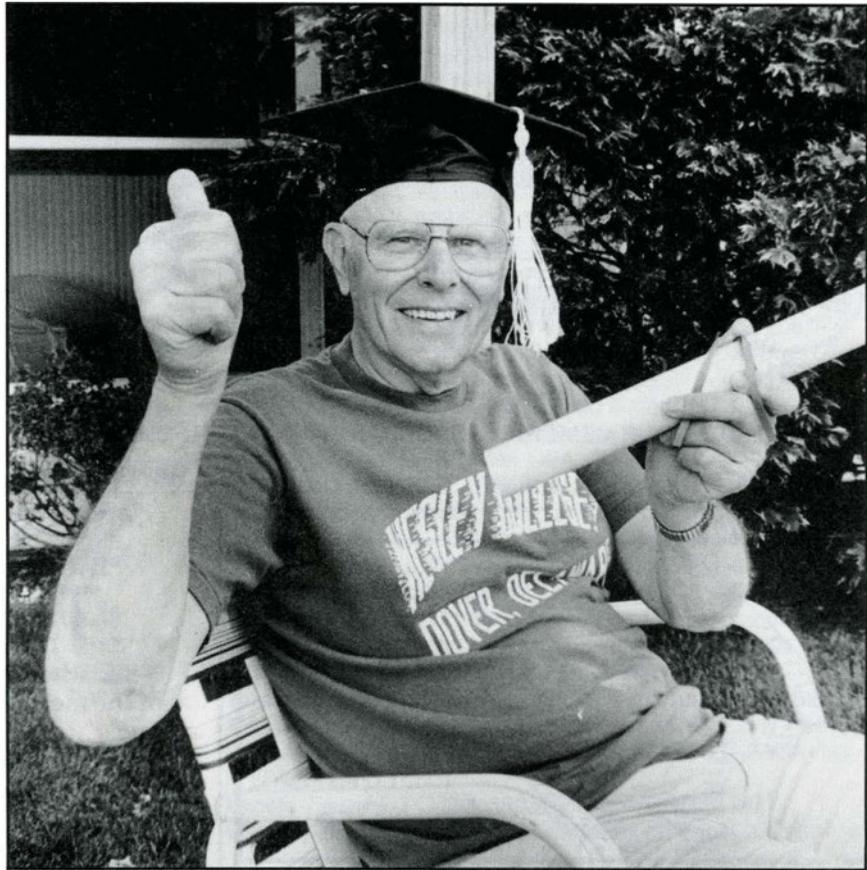
It took 50 years to do it, but J. Gordon Blythe got his college degree. At the age of 72!

The former 398th pilot returned to school in the fall of 1991 after his wife died. "One day I told myself," he admitted, "I still don't have my degree. I'm going to go for it."

Marriage and World War II interrupted Blythe's college plans the first time around. After two years of college Blythe and his wife, Muriel, his high school sweetheart, decided to get married. At the same time he enlisted in the Army Air Force, ultimately finding his way to Nuthampstead and the 603rd Squadron.

Blythe arrived as the co-pilot on the Ken Buzza crew. When Buzza became a lead pilot, Blythe mentored in the cockpit for rookie pilots going out for the first time. He was on such an assignment on November 21, 1944, when Buzza's plane was shot down over Merseburg.

Blythe then picked up "other stragglers" to form a new crew and finished his 35 missions as first pilot.



J. GORDON BLYTHE
He Started "Teaching" In The Cockpit

New Teacher Opts For Elementary

He was apprehensive about returning to school with students the same age as some of his 14 grandchildren. "I looked at them with fear and trembling," he said. "College is certainly a life for kids. I thought I might be intruding. But as it turned out I had a good rapport with them and made some good friends. It's nice for an old man to walk across the campus and hear someone say, 'Hi Gordon.'"

He received his degree in history from Wesley College, Dover, Delaware.

The Blythes began family life in Holland, over which Gordon had flown many times with the 398th. They pursued evangelical church work there for many years until finally returning to a similar work in New Hampshire. They moved to Delaware in 1984.

Through a Wesley internship, Blythe worked as an interpreter at the John Dickinson Plantation, worked as a substitute elementary school teacher and now is in fulltime teaching at this level.

Why teach elementary school?

"There is a lack of men teaching young students," he replied. "I feel it's more of a challenge in making an impression on them."

Perhaps Blythe picked up this "challenge" when he mentored those rookie pilots back at Nuthampstead.

ENGLAND TOUR FACTS

EVENT — The 1994 tour to England will feature a program designed exclusively for 398th members and friends. Visits will be made to places that will stimulate personal memories for our traveling party. Like the D-Day exhibits at Portsmouth; the crash site of one of our B-17's in the Peak District; a visit to The Wash, where the gunners fine-tuned their skills before combat; Madingly, where many 398th members lie in peace. And, of course, five days at Nuthampstead, where "Friends of the 398th" open their homes to the Yank visitors. And much more, like the Hendon and Duxford air museums; small plane rides over the old airfield; a great 40's dance at an Anstey barn; services of remembrances at the Memorial; and naturally, a visit to the Woodman Inn. And it all finishes up with two wonderful days in London!

DATES — It will be a busy 15-day tour departing June 15 and returning home on June 30, 1994.

DEPARTURE CITIES — Members have the option of flying to England from no less than seven departure cities — Washington DC; New York (Newark); Chicago; Dallas-Fort Worth; Los Angeles; San Francisco; and Seattle.

AIR LINE — All flights to England and return will be via scheduled United Air Lines.

COST — Including the "home stay" program at Nuthampstead, roundtrip airfare, first class coaches in England, all hotel rooms, 12 dinners and 14 breakfasts, small plane flights, museum visits (and more) the cost per person is under \$3,000 double occupancy. This translates to about \$200 per day.

TICKETING — All ticketing will be done by Travel House, Inc., 5042 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Toll-free phone 1-800-423-5454. Barbara Fish, CTC, is in charge of all ticketing and tour arrangements. Allen Ostrom of the 398th Bomb Group is the tour coordinator.

RESERVATIONS — Complete itinerary and reservation forms were included in the April issue of FLAK NEWS. Each reservation must be accompanied by a \$300 deposit. For additional forms or information contact Barbara Fish.

BUFFALO REUNION: IT WAS A GOOD ONE

497 Turn Out For Meeting

"This time we'll look at the Falls" may be remembered as part of the lyrics to a great, old song.

But this is exactly what five bus loads of 398th Bomb Group members did at the 10th annual reunion, September 15-18, at Buffalo, New York.

And they also went out in big numbers on the tour coaches to see "The Best of Buffalo."

And they also went out in big numbers to visit a KC-135 air refueling tanker belonging to the 398th Operations Group of Castle Air Force. Colonel John Arsenault came with a crew of eight to show off the jet that carries the logo of the (old) 398th Bomb Group. He even brought with him the group flag that graced the offices of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., in 1943-45.

Plus a gorgeous plaque telling of the (old) 398th combat history from WW II. It will be permanently affixed to the interior of the Boeing 707 (KC-135).

The total number of registrants at the reunion, according to chairman Larry Paul, was 497. This is fourth best, following Nashville in 1992 (592); Oshkosh in 1990 (531) and Dayton in 1989 (522).

But first best or fourth best, take nothing away from Buffalo, as Paul and his committee went all out to provide marvelous programs and settings for the visitors to this western New York city, gateway to Niagara Falls.

Reunions are for "the gathering of the clan," and there were more than enough opportunities to reminisce. And, of course, to fly some of those "rough" missions one more time.

Besides the two major bus tours, there were shuttle trips to Cal Span, an engineer's research paradise. And to a couple of local golf courses, where several "engineers" did some probing into the mysteries of directing a very small ball into an equally small hole. Some progress was noted in the research, but it was also discovered that rain (sixth hole) interfered with any meaningful discussion.

What was lost outside (on the sixth hole) was more than recovered on the inside (banquet hall) when Diane Susek began to sing. The York, Pennsylvania, soprano, who promised a program of "Praise and Patriotism," began with "You Are The Wind Beneath My Wings." Couples looked at each other, held hands and pretended they weren't crying.

Men who remembered flying missions with "wounded" Fortresses and then seeing them repaired time and again by ground crews were moved by Diane's version of "Climbing Higher Than I've Ever Been."

And then songs like, "White Cliffs of Dover," "Amazing Grace," "I'll Fly Away," "I'm Proud To Be An American," "Grand Old Flag," and others. She even shared the stage with our own Dick Frazier, whom she invited to sing the first verse of "America The Beautiful."

For almost an hour Diane Susek held her 398th audience in the palm of her hand.

While still singing and humming songs of the previous evening, along came the Amherst Male Glee Club to entertain with a variety of choral numbers plus quartets and solos. Director Walter Reitz has held the baton since 1948. Being a veteran him-



LARRY PAUL displays the B-17 model presented to him by his fellow reunion committee members at the conclusion of the highly successful Buffalo meeting.

self, Reitz was at home with such patriotic numbers as "The Air Force Song," which brought the 398th audience to their feet.

He also joined his percussionist with some comedy routines, reminding everyone of those long-past radio days of Fibber McGee & Molly, Jack Benny, Red Skelton and others of that era.

LEE'S REUNION REPORT

DIANE SUSEK: WOW! Exceptional!
AMHERST MALE GLEE CLUB:
Another winner with great singing and super jokes!
JACK WHATSIZNAME: Courageous and also ran!

But it was the blend and quality of the voices that demonstrated why the troupe is the most in-demand singing group in that part of the United States.

Jack Lee had the "misfortune" of following the Amherst Glee Club to the stage. No easy assignment for any speaker. But Jack, no slouch with low key comedy, proceeded to bring smiles and laughter as he poked fun (mostly at himself) about a number of incidents.

Jack was one of the 23 registrants who found themselves "locked out" of their rooms at the Sheraton Inn due to "over-booking." This did not set well with those who had to commute to other nearby hotels. Nor with reunion chairman Larry Paul, who admitted he was "embarrassed" by the hotel's tactic.

Lee and Jim Humbert, with help from Marshall Zinter in the audience, combined to regale their listeners with a humorous story about the 8th Air Force's "Darky"

Continued On Page 4



DIANE SUSEK was the popular soloist at the reunion.



The 398th: Yesterday & Today

BILL COMSTOCK (left) of the "old" 398th, meets **Col. John Arsenault** of the "new" 398th Operations group at the Buffalo reunion. They are admiring the plaque which will be installed in a KC-135 air refueling tanker. It tells of the 398th Bomb Group history from World War II.

COMSTOCK VOTED PREXY AGAIN

All members of the 398th Board of Directors were re-elected to another term at the group's annual meeting in Buffalo, New York.

Bill Comstock, the only president the 398th has ever had, was re-elected by acclamation, as were the other officers. The Board is now made up of the following members—

Bill Comstock, president.
Ted Johnston, vice-president.
Ralph Hall, treasurer.
Wally Blackwell, secretary.
George Hilliard, contact officer.
Jack Wintersteen, historian & PX.
Allen Ostrom, public relations.
Bill Jones, board.
Hal Weekley, board.
Dick Frazier, board.
Dale Brown, board.

In addition, Bob Wiggins heads up the Memorial Fund Board with Bill McLaughlin and Frazier.

"Good Show" Was English Lady's Comment

Continued From Page 3

system, set up to guide lost airplanes to their home field.

Harry Mazur, one of the two survivors of the Allen Ferguson B-17 that went down on the last mission, was on hand to give away and autograph his novel, called "The Last Mission."

Mazur was given a photograph of the memorial erected in the town of Littice, near Pilsen, in honor of the six members of his crew who were murdered by the Germans after parachuting. A similar photo was mailed to William O'Malley, the other survivor. Harry Gray, a Ferguson crew member who missed the last mission because of previous flak injuries, also received a photo.

Needless to say, the Niagara Falls coach tour was the highlight of the "outdoor" activities, most seeing the sight for the first time. At one point, members were asked by a distinguished looking lady, "were any of you in England during the war?" When they answered with "Yes, indeed," the lady responded with two words —

"Good show!"

When one of the coaches wandered off the main line onto a small neighborhood street, it was met by an irate citizen yielding a menacing shovel. (Obviously not a good show.)

REUNION RIPPLES — When the reunion committee gives the reunion chairman a beautiful B-17 model you may be

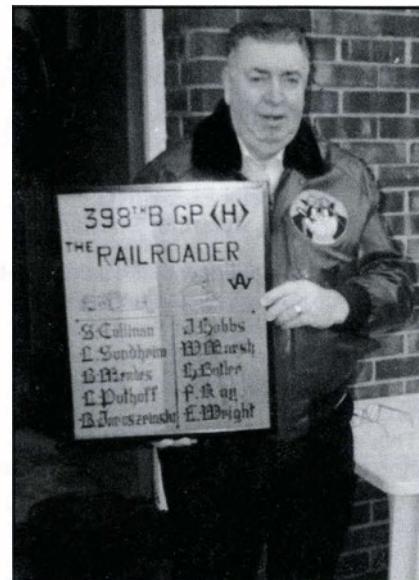
sure he was a good guy to work for ... that was the reasoning of Bill & Marilyn Hineman, Marshall & Nancy Zinter; Marve & Betty Laufer; John & Betty Quinn; Bill & Irene Schwan; and Howard Cox ... Pick Lydic picked up the Buffalo telephone directory and proceeded to locate the brother of Joe Gaiser, who went down with the Doerr crew in the Channel ... president Bill Comstock noted that our Memorial Fund is quite healthy today, but that a series of "payouts" this past year has left the general fund on the short end ... the first response to Bill's appeal for extra funds came from George Meketa, who had to leave the reunion early because of his wife's illness ... Board member Bill Jones pointed out that the 13-year-old 398th charter is in need of updating; Comstock appointed Ted Johnston to head up a committee to do just that ... what did Diane Susek really long for after singing to our group? A genuine A-2 jacket! ... sadly, the Sheraton Inn dining room failed to offer a "regular" menu, so many of their guests opted for trips across the street to "Jim's Truck Plaza" ... travel agent Barbara Fish, who has been taking folks on tours for 20 years, admits to a special fondness for the 398th; she was at Buffalo to remind us of the June 1994 tour to England, which she will lead again ... there were TWO B-17 models given away on the final night; Larry Paul got his from the committee and Loren Longmore won his in a drawing ... Loren was just about

ready for his first mission when the war ended ... the Memory Room always seemed to have people around looking at the various memorabilia displays, watching B-17 videos or just talking with men they hadn't seen for a long time, like 49 years ... the 398th had a Chinese navigator and Chinese pilot; James Yip and George Leung, respectively, met for the first time at Buffalo ... and once more Frank Morrison came to the reunion in his master sergeants' uniform; it still fits! ... the Sheraton DJ in the bar accommodated our people with good ol' 40's music; and some of our guys and gals can still really swing it ... those B-17 models given to Larry Paul and won by Loren Longmore were built by a local Buffalo area man, Dan Marafino; his models are available for \$50.00; his address is Lancaster, NY 14086 ... your FLAK NEWS editor is looking for some interesting WW II stories after asking the reunion audience to answer the question, "What was going through your mind?" ... a takeoff on the television reporter poking his microphone into the face of the guy who has just done something dramatic (like bailing out of a burning B-17) ... who were those pilots who did such a great job in honoring our ground crews? Bill Frazier, Hal Weekley and Dick Frazier ... our PX impresario, Jack Wintersteen, had another big sales effort at Buffalo, and once again thanks to chief hustler Joe Joseph and his aid-de-camp, Rozanne.



Unique Trophy For Treasurer

RALPH HALL and wife Marjorie pose with the unusual "Flowers For The Living" trophy given Ralph for his years of labor as 398th treasurer. The trophy registered medals for air combat and combat wounds while with the 601st. Also one "Bovine" for his deftness in stealing milk from farmer Tony Barker, Nuthampstead.



WILLIAM F. ADAMS
"The London Wood Carver"

One For The "Railroader"

Few people around the world enjoy the kind of hobbies that bring joy and pleasure to others. One of these is a "Friend of the 398th" who lives in London.

Bill Adams has done dozens of wood carvings for other 8th Air Force groups, but he admits to a very special kinship to the 398th. Using discarded school desk tops and an incredible amount of skill, Adams fashions dead wood into living memories.

Most recently, he chose to honor his personal friend, Walter Marsh and "The Railroader" crew with his artistry. Each of the ten crew members' names are inscribed in classic Script —

- Steve Cullinan*
- Lloyd Sundheim*
- Bernard Mendes*
- Lewis Puthoff*
- Bernard Jurszewski*
- John Hobbs*
- Walter Marsh*
- Harold Butler*
- Flo Kay*
- Ellsworth Wright*

All will agree that Adams has a most worthwhile hobby.

Taps List to Run Again In January; Help With Names

As has been the custom for several years, FLAK NEWS will run the entire list of all 398th members who have passed on since the group returned home 48 years ago. This list will run in the January issue.

That is, all the members' names we are aware of. Oftentimes we discover the death of a member only by accident. Thus, a request to advise of this statistic. Please notify our secretary, Wally Blackwell, Rockville, MD 20850.



JAROMIR KOHOUT of Pilsen, Czech Republic, poses by the memorial erected in Litterice to honor the Americans who were killed by the Germans following the last mission flown by the 398th.

Czechs Honor 602 Squadron Crew

One of the most prominent memorials in the Czech Republic city of Litterice is the one erected in 1946 to the memory of the American flyers who were killed by the Germans after parachuting after bombing the Skoda Works at Pilsen on April 25, 1945.

Six of these were from the Allen Ferguson 602 crew — Ferguson, Byron Young, John Halbert, Howard Feldman, Michael

Brennan, and Joseph Huestess, Jr.

The bronze plaque was removed during the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia, but was put up again in 1991, this time on a newer and larger granite base. Memorial services are held there, led by the "SLET" friends of the 398th. The "SLET" members are hopeful that members of the 398th will see fit to visit the memorial site in Litterice, a few miles from Pilsen.

Reception City For 8th Air Force

BY JOHN FLEMING

Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland

Most people familiar with the work of the 8th Air Force during World War II believe that the Americans arrived at Prestwick, Scotland in the summer of 1942. This is when the first B-17's of the 97th and 401st Bomb Groups arrived.

This is not correct. Long before — in the spring of 1941 — Yanks were to be seen in and around this west coast Scottish city. There were many ranking officers and none of the enlisted men held ranks below sergeant. Their work was clothed in secrecy.

They were setting up the administrative and communication systems for the huge trans Atlantic ferry missions that were soon to begin.

It was by chance that Prestwick became the number one receiving base for aircraft flying the northern ferry route. In 1940 a Lockheed Hudson landed at Prestwick, having become separated from the rest of his group. He was supposed to have set down at Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. Having proved the feasibility of making it to Scotland — even by accident — Prestwick became the primary receiving base.

In 1942 the 18th WX (Weather Squadron) flew missions over the North Atlantic from Prestwick's Orange Field gathering weather information for the benefit of the incoming flights from the United States. This was dangerous work and the crewmen never received much accolade for their efforts. Living on the west coast of Scotland, and knowing the weather here, I can attest to how big an adversary the weather can be in this part of the world.

Some 25 miles down the coast was an RAF Coastal Command base. From here the big flying boats ranged far out to the Irish Sea and Atlantic searching for German submarines. The U-Boats did manage to lure American pilots off course with false signals. Two B-17's ended up in the Orkney Islands, well off course.

Incoming aircraft were warned to watch for Ailsa Craig Rock and Arran, mountains rising out of the sea, as they approached Prestwick. A B-24, C-47 and P-38 did crash on Arran. Otherwise, Prestwick had a beautiful approach.

The Germans tried many times to bomb Prestwick, where Spitfire fighters were built. They did inflict some damage and some workers were wounded.

Had the Germans managed to hit the munitions factory at nearby Ardeer I would not be here writing this piece today!

It would be in the summer of 1942 that the "Marble Arch Bus Service" began. This was reference to the C-54's and C-47's that car-



JOHNNIE FLEMING

ried military and civilian personnel from Prestwick to Wales and England.

On the north side of Orange Field was Adamton House, a Georgian building which housed incoming air crews. Also the Aero Club, library, the main Ayr to Glasgow road and other buildings. Some are still there today, but used for much different purposes.

I had many a good laugh at the base. I knew how to sneak the GI's back onto the base after a night out. Those "Snowdrops" never knew where we got in, or how it was done. And I am not about to tell them now!

Being innocent and young in those days, we also used to smuggle girls in by a certain route. They wanted to see their sweethearts, they told us.

I recall a B-26 taking off one day. He blew a tire and almost hit a young lad on a tractor. Another day a B-24 took off, climbed a bit and then began to sputter. He came back and made a successful forced landing.

Another day we watched two RAF Spitfires dog fighting. They collided and crashed in a field. Both pilots were killed.

I often wondered how many other young Americans got their first real look at the UK when they set down at Prestwick before journeying on to other bases in England. And how many of these lie buried on English soil today, or whose loved ones back home still mourn for a son or husband who was declared "Missing in Action" 50 years ago.

Prestwick. Never a famous "12 O'Clock High" bomber base. Never a field from which fighters were sent up to challenge the Luftwaffe. But from 1940 to 1945 some 1,200

Spitfires were repaired here and sent back for active duty elsewhere. And this does not take in the others repaired at barassie in Troon and the slipways that were built at large for the big RAF Sunderland flying boats and the American Catalinas.

But still, Orange Field will always be known to the Scots as the place where 40 to 50 American aircraft arrived daily during those war years, bringing men and materials to fight the air war over Europe.

Prestwick. Long overdue to have its rightful place in World War II history recognized.

FLEMING TO GET NEW HOME FOR COLLECTION

Johnnie Fleming's extensive 8th Air Force collection, including many items supplied by 398th Bomb Group members, will have a new home in late 1994.

Currently housed and displayed occasionally at Dean Castle near Kilmarnock, Fleming's collection will be given a new home at Prestwick's International Airport.

Fleming has been advised that when refurbishments have been completed at the airport he will be invited to display his memorabilia at a special terminal location.

Dimsdale, Tyler Honored By 398th Officers

Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman of the Station 131 "Friends of the 398th," was elected honorary vice-president by the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association at the annual officer's business meeting in Buffalo, NY.

The late David Wells held this position prior to his untimely death.

The Friends' "honourable secretary," Elaine Tyler, who attended the reunion, was granted the title of "honorary secretary." Peggy Wells, Gordon Aldridge, Jim Espezel and Ron Setter also flew over from the UK to join the festivities.

Elaine addressed the gathering the first evening and reported that the Friends are preparing for an influx of Yanks next summer at Nuthampstead.

Setter reminded the American audience of the need to "tell the young people of today" of the tremendous contribution made by 8th Air Force flyers in World War II.

"It is the same in England as in America," he said. They just don't know. And they won't know until we tell them."

398th Air Refueling Group Now Part Of New Command

“Colonel Miller has proudly assumed command of our group and embraced the enthusiasm we all share in our proud heritage. The 398th Bomb Group historical wall in his office provides a stepping off point for all our distinguished visitors receiving base orientations, and is the envy of frequently visiting operations group officers from other bases. I know Colonel Miller will carry on our close association with the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.”

The above quotation came in the form of a letter received from Lt. Col. Douglas R. Dick, then the deputy commander of the 398th Operations Group at Castle Air Force Base at Merced, California.

It will be remembered that the KC-135 air refueling group, as part of a major administrative realignment last year, dipped into World War II 8th Air Force history for its new identity. They took on the flag and group number of the 398th Bomb Group.

The very same commanding officer's flag that graced the office on Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., in 1943-45 became the CO flag of Col. Stephen Lorenz. His three subordinate squadrons became the 398th Operational Support Squadron, 330th Flying Training Squadron, and 93rd Air Refueling Squadron.

The 398th Operational Support Squadron even elected to wear the “Hell From Heaven” group patch of WW II.

This realignment was dictated by the placing of the air refueling group under the new “Air Mobility Command.”

But this past July another new hat —



COL. ANDREW MILLER

To The 398th Bomb Group:

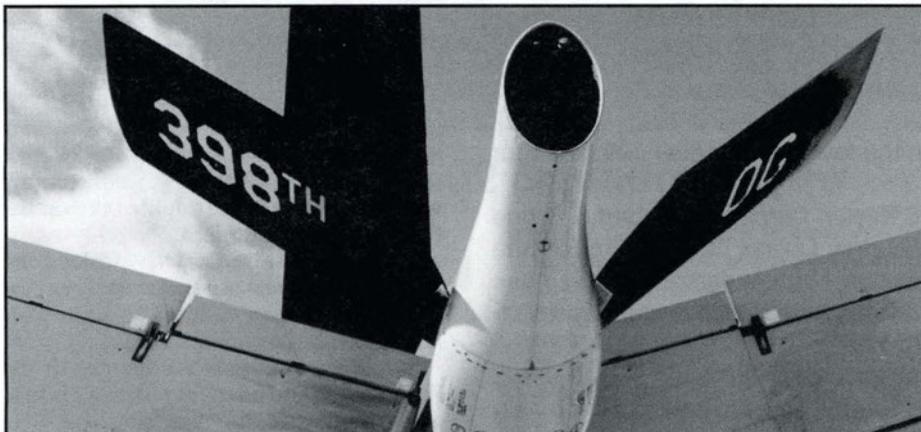
“I want to thank all of you for the warm hospitality the 398th Operations Group KC-135 crew received at your group reunion at Buffalo, New York. Lt. Col. John Arsenalault returned full of wonderful stories of new friends and camaraderie. The entire crew enjoyed the chance to meet with the original warriors of the 398th Bomb Group.

“We look forward to continuing and improving this relationship.

“The plaque that was presented to you at the reunion banquet, telling the story of the original 398th and its battle achievements, will be permanently installed in the KC-135 you saw at Buffalo, “The Spirit of the 398th.”

Thank you again for the first-class reception.

ANDREW S. MILLER, Colonel, USAF, Commander



THE BUSINESS END OF A KC-135 AIR REFUELING TANKER.

The 398th is now a part of the newly created “Air Education and Training Command.” The group remains at Castle.

“We are scheduling skill training and professional military education at appropriate career points to better prepare our people for increased responsibilities,” said Gen. Merrill A. McPeak, USAF Chief of Staff.

“We’ve given AETC the responsibility for large weapon system combat crew training, allowing the war-fighting commands to focus on preparing for combat.

“We have faced the reality that our Air Force will get smaller,” he continued. “Air Education and Training Command will help us make it better.”

Even as the new titles were becoming accustomed to, more changes were taking place among the staff leadership.

Colonel Lorenz departed Castle for March Field, CA, there to assume command of the 22nd Air Refueling Wing (KC-10's). His successor at the helm of the 398th is Col. Andrew Miller, an Air Force veteran of some 2,800 hours in KC-135's and KC-10's.

Colonel Dick, who had accompanied a KC-135 crew to Nashville, TN to join the 398th (Bomb Group) for the reunion activities last year, has retired from the Air Force.

Our own Bruce Daily and Joe Tolbert took part in the change of command ceremonies at Castle.

NE And Offshore: 1994 Dues Policy Back to “Zone 1”

The 398th Bomb Group's “one quarter at a time” dues policy continues this time with a return to “Zone 1.”

Thus, the 1994 dues collection will resume by asking those members in the following states to send in their \$5.00 annual dues (or \$50.00 for lifetime membership) —

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Washington DC and “offshore” locations like Canada, Mexico, Ireland, England, Channel Islands, Switzerland and Australia.

Dues cards should be included in FLAK NEWS for all these locations.

Gen. Jimmy Doolittle Dies

General Jimmy Doolittle, one of the great names in the history of aviation, died last September 27, 1993. He was 96.

Gen. Doolittle commanded the 8th Air Force during the epic World War II 1,000-bomber raids of 1944-45. He was a frequent visitor to Station 131 at Nuthampstead and was a personal friend of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., 398th commanding officer.

Although Doolittle held a doctorate in aeronautical engineering from MIT and was a pioneer in aviation, he is best remembered for leading a squadron of B-25's on an attack on Japan in early 1942. They flew from the carrier deck of the Hornet.

When asked where the B-25's took off

from, President Franklin Roosevelt smiled and answered, "Shangri La." This was a reference to the movie of that period of the same name.

Comedian Red Skelton, whose skits frequently included such one liners as, "I dood it," found his quote used on Page 1 of a Los Angeles newspaper the next day after the raid. This time it read, "Doolittle Dood It!"

The cooks at the 398th caught the wrath of Gen. Doolittle on the morning of November 29, 1944, when he and a party of VIP's, including Clare Booth Luce, came to inspect and see the early morning take off.

And there was no coffee!



HERE IS THE CREW that flew their KC-135 air refueling tanker from Castle Air Force Base in California to Buffalo, New York, so they could join the annual 398th Bomb Group reunion. From left to right, back row, are S/Sgt Phillip Blaisse, boom operator; Capt. Mark Olive, A/C; Lt. Col. John Arsenault, squadron commander and navigator; Capt. Peter Rooney, evaluating navigator; Capt. David Sprague, pilot. Front row, left to right, S/Sgt. Frank Tobias, crew chief; A1/C Jeffrey Wyrick, crew; and A1/C Thomas Muszynski, crew. (Photo by Steve Kozak)

England Tour Count Reaches 27

As of FLAK NEWS press times in mid October, the count for next summer's England Tour had reached 27. That is, 27 have sent in their reservations plus the required \$300 deposit.

Those who have indicated an "interest" in the tour number over 100. The tour is scheduled for June 15-30, 1994.

The "loading list" as of mid-October: Bill & Evelyn Comstock, Robert & Elaine Knowles, Wally & Teedy Blackwell, Lowell & Audrey Culver, Dorothy Crouch and family; Russ Reed & Millie McMillan; Charles Sutton, Keith Anderson & family, Allen & Geg Ostrom, Ralph & Marjorie Hall, Wayne & Ruthanna Doerstler, and Ray & Marilyn Talbott.

Barbara Fish, who is handling all the ticketing for Travel House, Inc., Seattle, says "this is an unusually heavy registration for this early. This indicates that the next couple of months will see the numbers reaching ... and perhaps surpassing ... the 1992 tour."



GEN. JIMMY DOOLITTLE (right) and Col. Frank P. Hunter during one of Doolittle's visits to Station 131. They were close friends.



MARION PAUL (right) receives a gift from Evelyn Comstock for the Pauls' work as leaders of the Buffalo reunion.

Another Pete Rooney

Reunion attendees, especially those from the 602nd Squadron where Col. Pete Rooney was the commanding officer from the beginning until a few weeks before war's end, were doing double takes at the three evening banquets.

Introduced along with Col. John Arsenault and the other airmen from the 398th Operations Group, was ... Pete Rooney!

But this was Capt. Pete Rooney of the KC-135 crew and he spent much of his time explaining that he was not the Pete Rooney of 1943-45 (now deceased). Also a slight difference in age of some 40 years

LIFE'S COVER

(December 29, 1941)

"In last week's bitter warfare over all the world, no men were more important than the aerial gunners.

"On the cover is one of America's best. He is Private First Class Delbert C. Gilliam of Smackover, Ark., photographed in the rear topside blister of a bomber.

"Although he wears the Army Air Force's heavy winter uniform of sheepskin coat and goggles, he keeps his hands gloveless even in the intense cold. This is so that when the time comes, and he sees a Jap or German plane ahead, he will be all set to fire away with his powerful 30-cal. machine gun."



AIR FORCE GUNNER'S ASSOCIATION

No, readers, the Air Force Gunner's Association did not contribute to the above caption from LIFE magazine printed over 52 years ago. Nor was there such an organization when the photo was taken by LIFE photographer Eliot Elisofon.

The photo was part of an extensive post-Pearl Harbor layout featured in the December 29, 1941 issue.

There was not much of an Air Force (Corps) back then, but rather the beginning of a buildup that would grow into the greatest air arm the world has ever known.

The LIFE photo was patriotic and certainly realistic enough for the readers of that day. And undoubtedly contributed to Air Corps recruiting.

However, the gunners who served in the hostile, frigid skies over Germany must wince at the thought of doing "gloveless" battle at 30,000 feet. But let's not forget, gunners, this was only a "PR" photo for LIFE's readers long ago. We can assume that young Gilliam learned about bare skin and freezing metal before he arrived on the combat scene.

Thanks to M.L. (Boz) Boswell for contributing the LIFE magazine for the interesting story.

And thanks, too, to Jay E. Ingle for reminding the 398th Bomb Group Association that there does indeed exist an organization called "Air Force Gunner's Association." It was organized in 1986 and currently has 1,300 members.

The group held its biennial reunion last July in Bethesda, MD. For membership information, contact Air Force Gunners Association, PO Box 844, Denair, CA 95316-0844.



Tucson, Arizona, Reunion City For 1994; Sebastian Chairman

No sooner are we over one 398th Bomb Group reunion (Buffalo, New York), but what plans are already being laid for the next one.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tucson, Arizona, September 21-24, 1994.

And the leader of the '94 conclave will be Tucson resident Clyde Sebastian, assisted by his wife, Gale. The headquarters hotel will be the Doubletree Inn.

Sebastian served the 398th as the line chief in the 603rd Squadron. In other words, he made the final decision as to the air worthiness and combat status of all the squadron's B-17's, usually numbering about 15 planes.

Tucson is the home of Pima Air Museum,

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and the Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center. The Pima Museum also houses the 390th Bomb Group's Moller museum and library. The restored B-17, "I'll Be Around," will be available for viewing.

In addition, a variety of coach tours are being planned by Sebastian and his committee.

Complete information on the reunion, plus registration forms and hotel reservation cards, will be published in the April issue of FLAK NEWS.

Sebastian's address is Tucson, AZ 85730-1773.

Yanks Visit Crash Site:

Relatives Honor British Tenacity

The British, known for their tenacity, proved this truism once again ... to the benefit of the 398th and its members and friends.

Enter Ron Setter and Johanna Sienkiewicz, a couple of "Friends of the 398th" living in the Oxford area. These are the folks who did the research on the crash of the Searl crew, and subsequently arranged the inspiring tour to the site for the visiting Yanks in 1990. (See FLAK NEWS Vol. 5, No. 3.)

The crash site was actually on Lude Farm, where Setter lived as a small boy in 1944. Sienkiewicz, whose father was an air raid warden at the time and was the first to approach the site, took up the search when she discovered that the Searl plane had come from the 398th rather than from one of the more nearby bases.

While the subsequent ceremony at the farm, plus the luncheon at Penn and visit with the vicar was a tremendous success, the two sleuths carried on to search out other relatives of the crew, all nine of whom perished.

In San Diego for the 1991 reunion, Setter and Sienkiewicz found a cousin of Tail Gunner Albert Knight and he in turn sent them to a brother, Glenn.

This past July, Glenn and Jean Knight came to England and retraced the route taken by the 1990 tour party. To the farm, there to see the exact spot where the crash took place, then to the Penn church to see the Book of Remembrance where all the Searl crew members names are recorded.

And then to Setter's home to view the book he assembled of the Searl research and subsequent record of the tour party's 1990 visit.

Glenn Knight, who had inherited his brother's Air Force possessions, including his Purple Heart and other decorations, presented these mementoes to Johanna in honor of her long and tenacious research.

Like we said, the British are known for their tenacity.

The Crouch Family: England Calls Again

BY DOROTHY CROUCH

My children are very proud of their father's (James C. Crouch) role in the 398th Bomb Group during WW II, as was their father. His participation in the war is a truly important part of their heritage; therefore, my family is interested in the places and events that their father was involved with.

Returning to England with such a knowledgeable group of people that enjoy relating the stories of the war is an excellent way to discover the past. The reason I am going back to England in 1994 is that I enjoy the fellowship with other members of the 398th and the people of England. Next summer two children and a grandson will accompany me.

The trip in 1994 will be my fourth back to Nuthampstead. The first was taken with my husband in 1976 with the group from the 8th Air Force, that included only six members of the 398th Bomb Group. The second trip he and I took to England was in 1982 when the memorial was dedicated. In 1992, I returned with my oldest daughter, Carolyn. The fourth trip will include my other two children, Butch and Marilyn, and her son, Andrew, who is 14.

My children learned much from the reunions and tours. The stories from the men of my husband's crew have been the highlight of these reunions for them.

Since the English people are such wonderful hosts, we are all extremely excited about this trip. We look forward to being in England 50 years after the 398th Bomb Group was there.

BRIEF-Things

The letter from **Jack Conway** under the "Letters" column should come under a separate column heading entitled, "How To Make Your FLAK NEWS Editor Happy" ... **Conway** and his 600 Squadron **Hubert Beatty** crew were the first to be knocked down by a jet fighter, this coming on a mission to Stendal on February 22, 1945; your editor recorded the event with these words after witnessing the ME-262 attack: "All of a sudden an ME-262 jet broke out of the clouds, made one pass and knocked a ship out of the lead element in the high squadron. He made a fast, turning climb to his left with some P-51's on his tail. The Fort went into a flat spin with No. 3 engine on fire. After two parachutes opened it burst into a complete flame. In another second the bombs must have exploded as the whole ship shattered into small pieces. A black column of smoke marked it's plunge to the ground. It was a sight I shall never forget." ... **Conway, Alva Freeman** and **Jim Godsey** are still around, still feeling lucky to have survived the jet attack ... some 100 former airmen from Utah got together last spring at the Hill Air Force Base Museum to compare notes on their World War II experiences; the event was covered nicely by the Salt Lake City Tribune, and getting top play with a color photo on Page One was our own **Newell (Newt) Moy** of the 603rd ... **Roy Test** and his son took advantage of a visiting B-17 and B-24 at Brackett Field in LaVerne, California, telling reporters that he recalls never counting a mission complete until he was out of the airplane; one man took **Test's** hand and thanked him for serving the country ... and then there came a news clipping from **Ed Jerominski** recalling the night when a B-17 took off from Dalhart, Texas, on a training mission and missed their target by 30 miles; they bombed the courthouse at Boise City, Oklahoma, instead of the bombing rage at Conlen, Texas; no one was injured and no property was destroyed, but the town had "dimples." ... a "penny post card" Post Office change-of-address card costs a member only 19 cents, but if the PO has to forward FLAK NEWS to a member's new address it costs the 398th association \$1.23 ... yes, readers, there are errors to be found in our book, REMEMBRANCES, the latest to be uncovered (by one of the cooks in the Combat Mess); **Ray Rovinsky** reminds us that **Brooks Atchison's** name is misspelled; Brooks was among those KIA on the November 21, 1944, mission to Merseburg ... the 398th mailing roster includes a number of "Associate" members (friends, relatives, etc.) plus **John Stewart** of the 490th BG, who happened to get on the list as a result of getting on a 398th bus by mistake at the 1985 reunion in Seattle and wants to remain an associate "so I can continue getting FLAK NEWS" ... a pair of 100th BG folks also are on our mailing list: **Elwood Blondfield** and **Joseph C. Allen**; and a "B-24 driver" friend of **Harry Generaux**.



CAROLYN and DOROTHY CROUCH

Letters:

"Learning about 'In Memory Of...'" offers me the opportunity to honor the memory of the pilot of my crew, Ken Elwood. He not only brought us safely through 32 missions, but made a wheels-up landing in a wheat field in South Dakota and an emergency landing in England after one of our own squadron planes crushed our rudder and its controls during a pre-combat training mission.

"Quiet, dependable and dedicated to his duty, Elwood was the finest man I have ever been privileged to know. Every sun-lit day that I am fortunate enough to live is a tribute to his memory. This check may be used by the 398th in any manner it chooses.

"It is only a small portion of the total debt I owe Ken Elwood."
George Schatz, Highland Park, IL 60035.

"I am the daughter of Robert A. Downing, who passed away in 1991. He was a waist gunner on the Russ Conrow crew of the 601st and became a PW after being shot down on September 28, 1944. I am currently writing a biography of my parents and am anxious to hear from any of the airmen who might have been with him in Stalag Luft IV. I am particularly anxious to talk to anyone who might have been with him on the Death March between January and May of 1945."

Maggie Downing, Clarksville, GA 30523.



MAGGIE DOWNING

"I just received my July issue of FLAK NEWS. What a great little paper! I really enjoy reading it at least two times when it arrives and then a few more times on and off the next few weeks.

"I was quite taken by the story on the 'KIA Statistics' and the reference to the Beatty crew of the 600th that was taken out by the ME-262. It was remarkable that you saw us go down and then recorded the scene in your diary way back then."

Jack Conway, Coconut Creek, FL 33066.

From One Ball Turret Gunner To Another: A Hand Salute

"I read with much interest the account of the mission to Pilsen, the last mission of the 398th Bomb Group. Strangely — or perhaps not so strangely — while I was reading the story a lot of memories of an incident 48 years ago surfaced. When I called my best friend then and now, Tom N. Smith, who was our armor gunner, and Fred Maurer, our pilot, for their recollections, I even learned a few things that I had not known at the time.

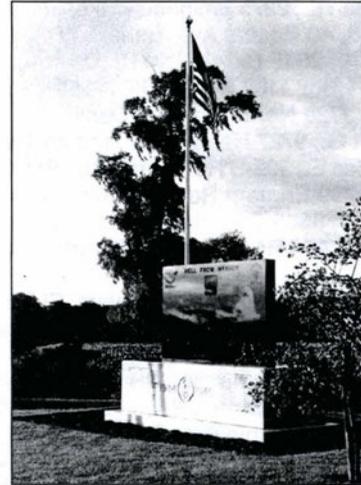
"I was the ball turret gunner on Lt. Maurer's crew when we were assigned to the 602nd Squadron. We arrived in England around the middle of February 1945. On March 29, while we were cycling through Group and Squadron training, I finally turned 18. And on April 21 we flew our first mission, to the marshalling yards at Munich.

"On April 25th, the day of the Pilsen mission, our crew appeared on two lists, one scheduled for a mission (of course, we didn't know where) and one for a Passion Mission to London. Someone checked with Colonel Rooney, our squadron commander, and was told that there would be many more missions, and we should take our leave and enjoy it. Indeed we did!

"When we returned to the base 48 hours later, we were greeted with the cold shoulder by the guys in the squadron. We got an equally cold reception from the crew we shared the hut with. It was two or three days before we learned that Lt. Colville's had gone down. Most of that crew eventually made it back — but not the ball turret gunner.

398th BOMB GROUP

Memorial Association



In Memory Of

KEN ELWOOD

A Gift Has Been Received By The 398th Bomb Group
MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

Given By **GEORGE SCHATZ**

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association Date **9/1/15**

THIS IS THE NEW "IN MEMORY OF..." CERTIFICATE given to those who make a contribution to the 398th Bomb Group in memory of an individual. Contributions may also be given to the Memorial Fund to be used only for the ongoing care and maintenance of the Memorial at Nuthampstead.

"No doubt our Squadron mates had a variety of personal responses to the situation. If our plane had gone to Pilsen, might things have gone differently? Our own feelings certainly included the mixed guilt and relief embodied in "That could have been us!" as well as genuine sadness for the loss of the ball turret gunner.

"As it turned out, the Munich marshalling yards was our one and only mission. I returned home still very young and relatively unscathed. I never knew S/Sgt. Charles Walker, but from a distance of 48 years I offer a snappy hand salute from one ball turret gunner to another."

Jack Hudson, Seabrook, TX 77586

"My wife and I thoroughly enjoyed our first 398th Bomb Group reunion last September in Buffalo, New York.

"Seeing and talking with many of the men and women and comparing notes from a half century ago I recalled something that surely has to be most unusual.

"There were three young men from the small village of East Rochester, New York, who joined the Air Force in 1943. They were Edward Seward, Jerry DeGuiseppe and myself. We left town at different times and trained at different bases. Yet all three of us wound up with the 398th at Nuthampstead. DiGuiseppe and I came to the 601st and Seward to the 602nd. It's a small world.

"See you again in Tucson next September."
John R. Courneen, Fairport, NY 14450.