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

VOL. 19 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

October 2004

CZECH IT OUT “Liberation Tour” Beckons 398th

Is it possible that there are 20 members/friends of the 398th Bomb Group who have a desire to participate the Pilsen’s 60th anniversary of their liberation from Nazi Germany, and the end to their country’s torturous days of World War II?

If so, such a tour in early May, 2005, is in the offing, according to Barbara Fish, who has conducted tours for the 398th the past dozen years.

“We have secured accommodations in Pilsen,” she said. “And all we have to do now is hear from 20 people and the tour is set.”

This from Barbara, who has retired, but admitted she would quickly “unretire” to handle

Achenkirch On The Tour

The tour to the Czech Republic will include two days in the Austrian Tiroi town of Achenkirch, where a 398th crew was shot down with the loss of two lives. Also a night in Munich before returning home. More details on Page 8.

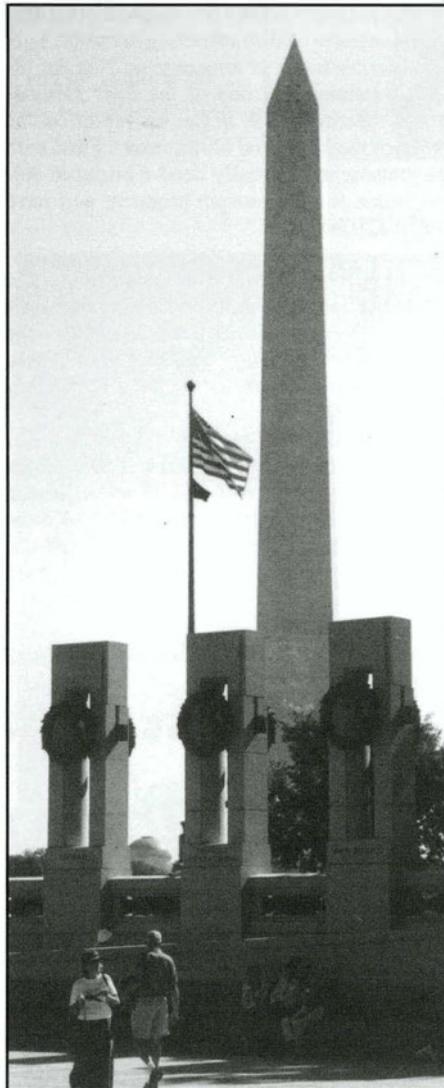
the arrangements along with Allen Ostrom, FLAK NEWS editor.

The 398th was the only Air Force presence at the city’s 50th celebration in 1995, “and it was a time to remember,” said Ostrom.

The ground forces liberated the city on May 6, 1945, 10 days after the 398th came by with what turned out to be the group’s final mission on April 25, 1945. Target – Skoda Works.

The tour is scheduled for May 3 - May 12, 2005. If interested in knowing more details, call Fish at 1-800-423-5454. E-mail <barbf@cascadelink.com>.

“Call soonest,” said Ostrom.



THE AMERICAN FLAG, Washington Monument and three of the state pillars of the World War II Memorial were captured in this photo taken during the 398th Bomb Group reunion visit to Washington DC during the September reunion. A total of 368 attended the 21st annual reunion.

Wow! 368 Show Up At Reunion

398th Membership Looks To The Future

If there had been any doubts that the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association had been experiencing a successful year, they were surely eliminated at the Falls Church, Virginia (Washington DC) group reunion September 8-11, 2004.

Mark it: **368!**

That represents a 100-plus count over last year, with an astounding increase in second, third AND fourth generation participation. The “fourth” generation was provided by the late Col. Frank P. Hunter’s great-grandchildren.

The reunion was held at the Marriott Fairview Park Hotel.

If “youth” was to be served as the “greatest generation” was drifting into the shadows, it was evident during the four-day event, the 21st meeting of the group since “going it alone” in 1984. It was estimated that one third of the registrants were veterans, the rest being made up of family, friends and associates.

There was absolutely no talk of “shutting down” the association, but much lively discussion on the future, such as next year’s reunion at Overlake Park, Kansas; a tour next spring to the Czech Republic; and another visit to England in 2006!

Friends of the 398th chairman Wilfrid Dimsdale came to Falls Church to say, “we’ll

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Remembering Our Special People: President Recalls Those Dedicated To The 398th

BY WALLY BLACKWELL
President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

In the April 2004 issue of FLAK NEWS, I identified a number of 398ers that deserved special thanks from all of us. My decision to recall and explain how they contributed in special ways was well received. I believe it's time for a few more.

WILLIS FRAZIER – I always considered having Willis as my 601 Squadron Operations Officer a real blessing. Somehow that warm smile and friendly demeanor made it all a bit easier. Willis served as the 398th Group Historian for a number of years. During that time he worked diligently to promote a 398th Memorial at the Heritage Museum. Willis had been a stalwart 398er since 1985 when many of us arrived in Seattle for Boeing's 50th year B-17 celebration, and to see what this 398th Memorial Association was all about.



WILLIS
FRAZIER

His presentation at the 2002 Portland reunion on the use of the Norden bombsight (he had bought one from a surplus store) was a delightful technical explanation. If you had to battle, Willis would be the one to follow.

Willis E. Frazier, 84, who served the 601st Squadron as operations officer after Tracy Petersen became CO, passed away July 28, 2004, at his home in Sunnyvale, California. He is survived by two sons, two daughters and two grandchildren.

JAMES HAAS – Jim can easily be called one of the 398th indispensable Official Board members. He does his job nearly every day of the year, and he does all this out of sight of everybody and with great efficiency and dispatch. Jim has a rather famous address, Box 163, Perry IA. Jim receives all 398th dues payments, posts them to his files, banks the money, batching it on to the Treasurer, send address changes on to the Historian for the 398th data files and keeps us posted on our prosperity. Jim deserves one great big thanks for his efforts, but he says it could use more business!

LOUIS STOFFER – If there is one who still (really) works for a living for the love of it, it Lou. As usual however, when there is a significant 398th project to be done, we can count on him. When it was time to build a 398th monument at Savannah he completed a funding drive, oversaw its construction and attended to its dedication. I remember when there was a need for an impromptu veteran's story on a return tour to the old base area, Lou rose to the occasion magnificently with an explanation of the December 24, 1944 take off crash. Lou finished

his presentation with "that was the way it was, because I crawled out of the wreckage of that plane."

ROBERT WIGGINS – Bob was the Chairman of the 398th Nuthampstead Memorial Maintenance Fund for a number of years before his untimely death. Once he became a 398er Bob wanted to be a contributing member. Bob, a banker by trade, is remembered best for his casual statement at one of the 398th Official Board meetings. Bob began his report on the status of the Memorial Maintenance Fund with the statement "we really need a bit more dollars in the fund to prosper properly, so I have added \$20,000 to it."

JACK WINTERSTEEN – Jack exemplified the dedication of a true 398er. During his many years as the 398th Group Historian, before the coming of the computer age, Jack gathered all sorts of personal histories from the 398th membership. He amassed six huge notebooks of 398th historical data. Members sent him all sorts of letters, military orders, pictures of themselves then and now, etc. I remember it well as he said farewell to his books as we transferred them from his car trunk into my car trunk at the Harrisburg, PA reunion. I thanked him and told him we would use them well. We have the books on CD-ROM now, a valuable research tool for all, and we call them Jack's Books. A fitting legacy.

I know I have other stories to tell, so maybe I'll tell some more later on.

www.398th.org

The 398th Bomb Group web site, guided so professionally by Dave Jordan, continues to draw attention and interest from members and friends throughout the world.

"We have had 62,000 visits so far," said Dave at the reunion Board meeting, "and we are adding new material at it becomes available."

Jordan said he is seeking volunteer help to process information for the site, particularly in developing combat flight formations and individual diaries. He can be reached at Middletown, NJ 07748-0454.

Dues For Western Members

It is still 2004 by the calendar, but for this quarter's FLAK NEWS membership it will be 2005 – the kickoff quarter for the annual dues program.

The so-called "Western States" – plus Alaska and Hawaii – have the honor of starting off the new year dues program – still a bargain at \$20.00 per year.

Dues Envelopes – directed to Jim Haas, Perry IA 50220-0163 – have been inserted in this October issue of FLAK NEWS for the following states –

Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado – and Alaska and Hawaii.

Members can choose to do "a little more" to support the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association by adding a special contribution to FLAK NEWS, the major expense for the Association.

A Gentle Reminder

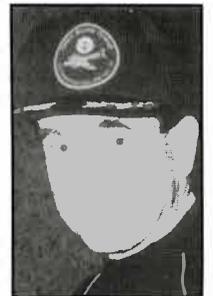
A mail reminder to some 148 dues-delinquent members will be going out soon via director Lew Burke, as authorized by the Board at the annual meeting in Falls Church, VA.

"ONE MORE PEEK"

Friends of the 398th chairman Wilfrid Dimsdale came from England to attend the 398th reunion at Falls Church, Virginia. Having just hosted the 2004 tour last June that was labeled, "One Last Look," he was amused at what some were calling a proposed 2006 tour as, "One More Peek."

A dozen or more individuals suggested that they would be interested in such a tour, prompting Dimsdale to suggest, "I am not certain what you have in mind as a "peek," but you may be certain that you will be welcomed."

He said the Friends have already determined that their 2006 Remembrance Service at Station 131 will be held the first week in June. "We would love to have you come."



WILFRID
DIMSDALE

JOSEPH PX ERA COMES TO END

It was a “heart-wrenching” decision for Joe and Rozanne Joseph, but after 11 years of successfully operating the 398th Bomb Group PX department, the two finally agreed –

“It was time.”

Thus, the Joseph PX era came to an end at the Falls Church, VA reunion September 8-11, 2004 and the entire stock of caps, jackets, shirts, CD’s jewelry, photos, etc., was entirely sold out to the tune of about \$3,000 – entirely via “donations.”

(An era ended . . . and a new one began . . . see Page 11).

The Josephs entered the PX business as “assistants” to the late Jack Wintersteen in 1989, and when Jack’s health began failing they took over in 1993, moved the operation to New Smyrna Beach, FL and continued until, “it was time to go.”

Joe, along with his PX work, has been a busy volunteer in the SCORE program in his Florida community, guiding young people in beginning business ventures.

“We’ll stay busy,” said Joe, adding, “we’ll see you all again at the 2005 reunion in Kansas.”



ROZANNE AND JOE JOSEPH
A “Timely” Gift For Their “Time Out”

Mighty Eighth Seeks Funds For Future

“We have to do this to preserve the memory of those who didn’t come back.”

This was the message of Judy Walker as she spoke to the 398th members at the Falls Church, VA Farewell Banquet on . . . of all days . . . September 11.

Judy is the director of the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum Foundation and was invited to tell the group of the museum’s plans to raise \$25 million in five years to secure the future of the museum so they can continue to “tell your story.”

The Savannah, GA museum has many plans for the future, including a project on newly acquired seven acres. This would include the building of an “English Pub” on the site.

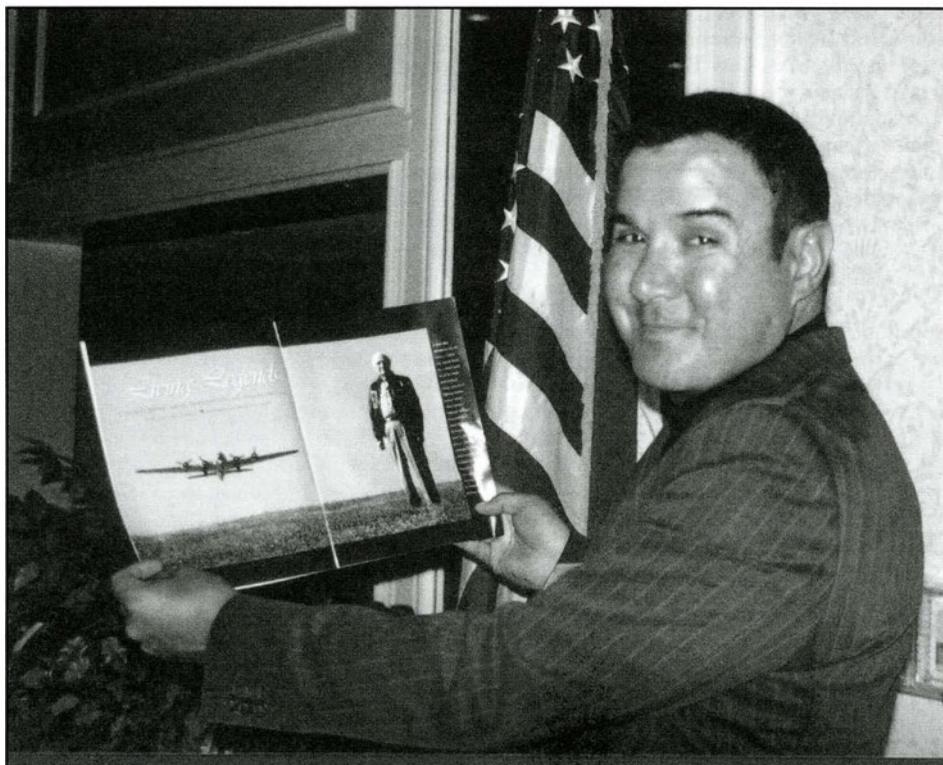
She thanked the group for its support in the past years, pointing out the \$46,000 already given by the group or by individual members.

“But we must also look to the future to keep your story alive.” She added.

For Foundation information, contact Judy Walker at PO Box 1667, Savannah, GA 31402-1667.

Looking For Photos?

Several Falls Church reunion members had their photos taken at the WW II Memorial by a free-lance photographer, Cliff Crittenden.



ORVILLE DESJARLAIS, a master sergeant in the Air Force and senior writer for **AIRMAN** magazine, displays the double page photo of Hal Weekley and the Aluminum Overcast as featured in the June issue of **AIRMAN**. Sgt. Desjarlais was a speaker at the Farewell Banquet of the Falls Church, VA reunion on September 11, 2004. He told the audience that another 398th photo/story will appear in the October issue of **AIRMAN**, based on the group tour to England and Normandy.

Bulletin

A supply of October **AIRMAN** magazines has been made available to the 398th Bomb Group. For a copy, send \$2.00 for mailing to **FLAK NEWS**, Seattle, WA 98107.

Reunion In DC Area A Big Hit

Continued from page 1

be happy to welcome you.” And at least a dozen members told him, “we’re going,” (negating this year’s “One Last Look” suggestion.)

President Wally Blackwell, at the business meetings and at the banquets, reiterated the “success” flavor of the 398th, pointing out excellent relations with the Mighty Eighth Heritage Center; Hertford Record Center (HALS) in England; EAA in Oshkosh (Aluminum Overcast); American Battle Monuments Commission (Station 131 monument); the group’s general stability and financial condition; and more.

Regarding “stability,” it was noted that the 398th has had only two presidents in its 28-year, post-war history – Bill Comstock, who served 20 years until his passing in 1996, and Blackwell ever since.

The general membership, at the recommendation of the Board, returned all officers for another year – Blackwell, VPAI Turney; Secretary Bob Bowen; treasurer Marilyn Gibb-Rice; and directors Lew Burke, Lou Stoffer, Arnold Schneider and Keith Anderson.

Also moving on for another year were appointees James Haas (dues manager); Sharon Krause (unit contact, E-mail manager and reunion chairman); Lee Anne Bradley (historian and data coordinator); Dave Jordan (web master); Ralph Hall (monument fund manager); and Allen Ostrom (FLAK NEWS editor).

Carolyn Widmann was named PX manager, replacing Joe and Rozanne Joseph (see separate stories on Pages 3 and 11).

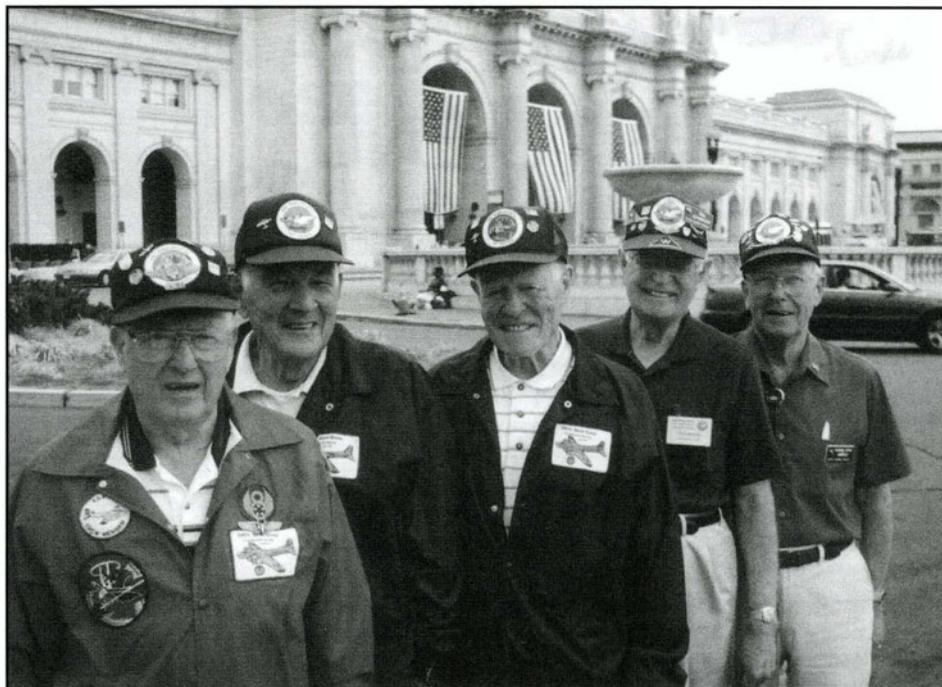
Sharon Krause had her hands full at the reunion (her fourth as chairman), happily ringing up the registrations and successfully trying to please everyone. She deployed a fleet of coaches on three different days to such destinations at Mt. Vernon, home of George Washington; World War II Memorial in DC; the Steven Udvar-Hazy (Smithsonian) Center; the Spy Museum; Union Station; downtown DC; and Arlington Cemetery.

It was an extraordinary busy coach/tour operation, headed by Cynthia Neu, coordinator for Adventures in Travel, Falls Church, VA.

There were many sentimental and nostalgic events during the four-day event, like the daughter of Col. Hunter, Maria Kiser, telling the banquet listeners of her early childhood days of Army Air Corps travel with her father and mother in the 30’s and 40’s.

“He was so proud of the 398th back then, and he would be just as proud of you today,” concluding her talk with a salute that her late father would have been justly proud.

She was accompanied by her daughter, Sally Mackie, and Sally’s three children (represent-



THESE FIVE 398th reunion members showed off their bells and whistles while on the sightseeing tour in Washington DC. Posing by the famous Union Station are (left to right) Bernard Kuse, Bill Dean, David Mills, Ted Johnston and Hamilton Mero.

“Do You Know What You Have Done?”

ing the fourth 398th generation).

Donald Lopez, deputy director of the Steven Udvar-Hazy Center, dropped by to brief the members about the Center – Why? What? How? He said it was BIG, which people learned as they tried to see everything in the 600-foot long monster. Lopez also regaled the members about his days as a P-40 fighter pilot in China. And later as a fighter test pilot. He is also a book-writer on the subject.

Mike Ryan, son of the late 602 navigator of the same name, was there in his natty Air Force Colonel’s uniform to ask the 398th veterans a simple question –

“Do you know what you have done?”

And then he answered his own question –

“Your courage and sacrifice, your victory in the war against tyranny in Europe, your defeat of the Nazi war machine has given the people of Europe something they have never had in 2000 years of history – 60 unbroken years of peace and freedom.

“The Romans gave them a sort of peace, but not freedom. You have them both. Imagine! Most people in Europe have lived their entire lives without even a thought of war. That’s an amazing gift. It was your gift.”

Col. Ryan, an academy graduate and A-10 pilot, is currently with the US mission at the European Union in Brussels.

Ryan “discovered” the 398th during a graduate assignment in Washington DC. Reporting to Col. William F. Scott for a thesis discussion,

Ryan discovered that Col. Scott was a pilot in the 603rd Squadron, serving as assistant operations officer. That began Ryan’s search for a 398th connection.

A strong, intimate appeal for supporting the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum was offered by Judy Walker, museum foundation director (see separate story).

George Hershberger, a 602 lead pilot “back then,” ventured into the wine business after retirement, developing a few acres near his home in Springfield, Missouri.

He asked for an opportunity to share a few of his bottles at the reunion, which he passed on to the delight of 17 lucky winners. He also took a few moments for “toasting,” which he did with pouring from an imaginary bottle into an imaginary glass. His five toasts were (1) Jesus, whose mother asked him to make wine (2) our country and our troops (3) Colonel Hunter, with daughter Maria accepting a bottle (4) Bill Comstock, accepted by Evelyn (Comstock) Rhodes (5) Wally Blackwell, president (6) Sharon Krause, reunion chairman and (7) Allen Ostrom, FLAK NEWS editor.

Hershberger, with nervous wife Pearl delivering the wine bottles, proved a low key, witty standup performer with his “one liners”. He promised the gathering another “giveaway” at the 2005 reunion, to be held in Overlake Park, Kansas. (Was this the same all-business pilot who often shared the same cockpit with Colonel Hunter?)

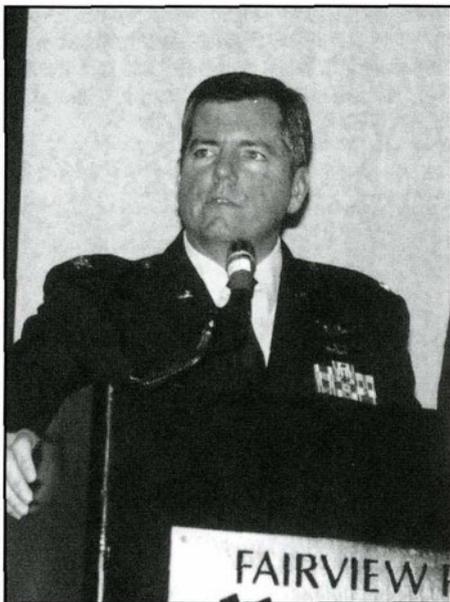


JOE CERVA was a “smash hit” at the 398th banquets, entertaining the members with his accordion music, plus leading the group in “America” and “God Bless America”. Here he “hams it up” with his father-in-law, Joe Joseph, to the delight of the audience.



SHARON KRAUSE (center) shows off her new Waterford candle sticks, presented to her by president Wally and Teedy Blackwell for her work as chairman of the Falls Church reunion. The 2004 reunion attracted 368, with about one third of that number coming from the second, third and fourth generations.

Reunion Snapshots



COL. MIKE RYAN, whose father was a 602 Squadron navigator, was a speaker at the Falls Church reunion, telling not so much of his work with the US mission at the EU in Brussels, but rather on the question for his 398th listeners – “Do You Know What You Have Done?” It was an inspiring speech (one that should have been heard by the rowdy and noisy young people in the adjoining banquet hall).



THE WORLD WAR II Memorial was among the many places visited by the members during the Falls Church reunion September 8-11, 2004. This photo shows six of the 56 granite pillars representing the states and territories that joined forces during the war. At left is the “Freedom Wall” containing 4,000 sculpted gold stars commemorating the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives. Other tours took in the Spy Museum, Union Station and the general sights in DC, the new and colossus Steven Udvar-Hazy Smithsonian Center near Dulles Airport and Washington’s home in Mt. Vernon.

“Coming Back Is Touching Base”

Osborn Recalls Memorial Memories

Although he was the principal architect and driving force behind the 398th Bomb Group Memorial at Nuthampstead, dedicated in 1982, Malcolm (Ozzie) Osborn “drifted away” from further 398th Friends activity until “recalled” for the One Last Look tour last June. Following are his comments as directed to president Wally Blackwell and FLAK NEWS EDITOR Allen Ostrom:

What can I say but “thank you” for not giving up on me these past several years. Thank you for allowing Joyce and me to be re-admitted into the bosom of the 398th association and given the opportunity to meet all you great people one more time.

It was marvelous few days. Days that launched a whole raft of memories that came flooding back into my mind. . . even at 4 o'clock in the morning.

During that wonderful Memorial service on June 11, I could visualize 1982, with my late mother standing in the rain with my father; Vic Jenkins looking on aghast as the wind and rainstorm hit us; those veterans and wives with heads proud, crying unashamedly as the B-17 flew over in winged salute.

Well, this little lamb has definitely returned home to stay, and I thank you all for the welcome back, the invitations to the Farewell Dinner, and especially for that wonderful presentation of the mug that reads, “*Getting back was touch and go; coming back is touching base.*” That says it all.

The memorial looks great and the site is so beautifully maintained. I told Joyce the story of the 398th a few weeks before, and it always makes me lose a few tears in the telling. It was all so emotional that day of the dedication, 22 years ago.

Before the service this year I could almost feel the historic atmosphere at the site. I felt so nostalgic for those heady days of the 1970's and '80's. I sure wished I could have met up with my buddy Vic Jenkins just one last time. But we achieved our main aim, our one burning passion, that the sacrifices made by those young American airmen would not be forgotten.



MALCOLM OSBORN
“I Have Returned”

I cannot help bursting in pride every time I see that beautiful stone monument hove into view, especially from the Anstey direction, viewed through a little archway of trees on the little country road. It really makes my skin



VIC JENKINS & OZZIE OSBORN
Project Began In 1976

tingle and I get goose-bumps in the back of my neck.

You people from the states and the Friends here have done a wonderful job in keeping the 398th “alive” in so many peoples lives. Would that Vic had been here to enjoy what I did. And Herman Hager, too, a great man who contributed so much to the building of the Memorial.

But now you have assembled a fine team of second generation men and women and I look to them to return for many more years to come.

My wife, Joyce, and I join in asking all of you to come back again, just one more time!

New Year Coming With B-17 Calendar

The new magazine, Bomber Legends, now has available a trio of 2005 calendars, including one devoted to the B-17 Flying Fortress (also the B-24 and B-26).

The calendars are priced at \$11.95, including shipping. Send your order to Bomber Legends, 1672 Main St., #E-124, Ramona, CA 92065-5257. Note that you are with the 398th Bomb Group (B-17).

A New 398th Book:

“Fortresses Over Nuthampstead” On The Way

A new, hard-cover book detailing the history of the 398th Bomb Group will soon be available in the United States. And, of course, to members of the 398th Association.

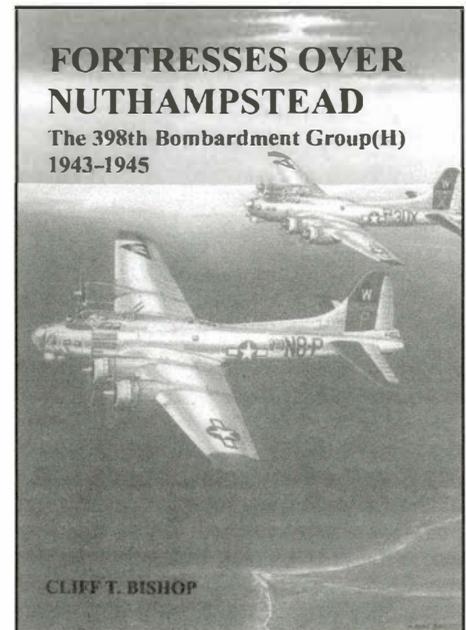
Cliff Bishop, proprietor of East Anglia Books, Bishop's Stortford, England and an authority on the 8th Air Force, said his new book should be available from the publishers before New Year's, 2005.

“*Fortresses Over Nuthampstead*” details the history of the 398th from its beginning days in England, the day-by-day mission story and the history of every B-17 assigned to the group.

“It's a masterful production,” said Geoff Rice, who along with Les Dear has been researching the serial numbers of the group's planes.

Rice contributed to “*Fortresses Over Nuthampstead*,” as did Allen Ostrom, editor of FLAK NEWS and “*Remembrances*.”

Information as to the book's availability will be published in the January issue of FLAK NEWS.



Prop Blade From B-17 Due Home

A piece of 398th Bomb Group history, once buried in the English countryside, is coming home.

A propeller blade from a 600 Squadron B-17, undetected by the Air Force recovery team after it crashed with the loss of three lives returning from a bomb run on Merseburg, will soon be on display at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia.

V.A. (VellArdell)Hansard and his crew made it back to England from Merseburg on November 25, 1944 only to find Station 131 socked in and their gas tanks empty. The rest of the formation landed at other stations in East Anglia.

Hansard, "on the deck" looking for home, scraped some trees in the futile search for a runway. That convinced him to gain altitude before ordering his crew to jump, just as the engines quit. Six jumped and survived. Navigator William Baker also jumped, but too late. Hansard and co-pilot Bob Davis went down with the Fortress, which crashed, burned and exploded at Reed Hall Farm, a farming area adjoining the old Roman Road, near Nuthampstead.

After the wreckage had been cleared, the single propeller blade was found by a member of the Handley family, which operated the farm. In 1994 it was presented to the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association, which turned it over to the Friends of the 398th pending final disposition.

At the urging of Sandra Averhart, niece of navigator Baker, and later by Sandra Hansard Springer, daughter of pilot Hansard, contact was made with Michael Telzrow, Director of Research and Interpretation for the Mighty Eighth, who agreed to accept the historical prop blade and display it "at the discretion of the Museum."

The original Hansard story was recorded in the January, 1993 issue of FLAK NEWS.

The others on the crew who bailed out successfully were Ken Hesterly, toggler; William S. Lake, engineer-gunner; Robert Cantwell, radio operator; Ed Briskie, ball turret gunner; Willie Colclough, waist gunner; and Jim Fowler, tail gunner.

Annual Taps List Due In Next Issue

The annual publication of the "Taps List" will appear in the next issue of FLAK NEWS. Needless to say, the list becomes longer with each passing year.

Readers are urged to examine the listing from last year to see if someone's name is missing. For additions contact the editor at Seattle, WA 98107.



THE 398th was the star attraction on the Channel ferry, Normandie, on the way to France last June. Manuel Ray (with bouquet) is ready to throw the flowers into the Channel. Tour leader Allen Ostrom had just told the Ray mission story for the benefit of several hundred spectators and journalists. Identified with their blue caps are Keith Anderson, Wally Blackwell, Russ Reed, John Cosco and Bob Bowen. At right is Jan Kolb, a tour member, who awaits with her camera for just the right shot.

Photo by Jay Williams, Bristol, England

Press, TV Descended On 398th Party

Many hundreds of onlookers were attracted to the aft end of the Channel ferry, Normandie, when they heard the announcement of a special ceremony to be conducted by members of the 398th Bomb Group, who were on their way to the 60th anniversary D-Day activities in Normandy.

This was to be a small, private ceremony on

June 5, 2004 featuring Manuel Ray, and the throwing of a floral bouquet into the water in memory of the men on his Kearie Berry crew who perished in the Channel during a mission to France on July 8, 1944.

The ceremony was held, and Ray and his wife, Linda, did indeed throw a bouquet into the waters. But it was hardly private, as several hundred of the Normandie passengers, mostly American, British and Canadian veterans, decided to join the party.

And not only did other veterans and their families come, but a host of television and news journalists also descended on the 398th party for photos and interviews, seen and heard throughout England that evening.

Responding to "orders" from the press, tour leader Allen Ostrom introduced ex-tail gunner Ray and told the story of Ray's survival in the Channel waters before being picked up by RAF rescuers.

The floral bouquet finally was thrown into the waters, a memorable moment witnessed by "a few more" people than saw him leap to safety from a burning airplane 60 years before.

Do it today, so you will have time to do something spectacular tomorrow.

— FLAK NEWS

Library of Congress Audio Interviews 398th Members

Several 398th members had the opportunity at the Falls Church reunion to record their World War II memories in a special Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Program Officer Sarah Rouse and her staff, assisted by 398th Brit/US member Ralph Ambrose, recruited eight individual members for audio interviews along with three more "families."

Taking part in the interviews were Robert Rowland, Charles Sutton, Hamilton Mero, Paul Roderick, Howard Traeder, George Graham and Bill Frankhouser.

Also involved were Lou Baffaro and his family, Robert Lamons and his family, and Cate Ludlam and her "Irish war bride" mother Mary.

An invitation To The 398th Bomb Group:

“Since 1990 the tradition has grown up of organizing an annual Liberation Festival in May. People came to the city from all over the world to welcome in the spring with music and dance, to meet American veterans and their families and relatives, and of course, to drink Pilsner beer.”

– Slavnosti Svobody, Plzen 2005

The 398th Bomb Group came to Pilsen in 1995 to join in that city’s liberation ceremonies, and were active participants in the parades, dances, fireworks, and other activities designed to honor those men who helped put an end to the city’s Nazi rule in World War II.

And now, 10 years later, another 398th opportunity to join the Czechs for their 60th liberation anniversary during a five-day period in May 2005.

A 398th tour is being arranged for May 3-12, 2005, starting in Pilsen and ending in Munich, Germany. It will include all the activities connected with the ceremonies both in Pilsen and Prague, and the town of Litice, where a 398th crew was shot down on the Last Mission (Ferguson, 602nd Squadron) on April 25, 1944.

And that’s not all –

Following the days in Pilsen, the 398th tour will head for Achenkirch, Austria, where a 600 squadron crew was shot down and two members killed. And who have been remembered on previous visits by the late Bob Hart and American singing groups led by tour leader Pär Nilhammer, who will also be leading the 398th in 2005.

The group will be welcomed by Sister Sofie, the nun at the Achenkirch church where the bodies of the two airman were laid to rest in 1944 – pilot Dana Lovelace and ball turret gunner Gerald Anataillia. Her younger brother is now the priest there. Sofie’s older brother was the priest in 1944.

Achenkirch lies in the Austrian mountains about an hour’s drive south of Munich and between Innsbruck and Salzburg.

The very first person to sign on for the tour was Willie Ivy, ball turret gunner on the 603 Willard Worley crew that flew the Last Mission.

“I always regretted missing the Pilsen tour in 1995,” said Ivy. But my wife and I are going to make this one.”



**ACHENKIRCH
A 398TH Destination**

PRE-FLIGHTING:

The “land only” cost of the tour to Pilsen May 3-12, 2005 has been set at \$2249 per person, according to Barbara Fish.

Individual flight schedules from any city in the US can be arranged via several airlines so as to leave the US on Tuesday, May 3 and arrive in Prague in the morning of Wednesday, May 4. A coach will transport the party on the two-hour ride from Prague to Pilsen.

The flights home will originate from Munich on the morning of Tuesday, May 12.

Flight schedules and costs may be secured from Barbara or Sara at 1-800-423-5454. E-mail <barbf@cascadelink.com>.

**THANK YOU
AMERICA!**



MEMORIAL IN PILSEN

Last Mission First Pilots Are Scarce

The “Last Mission” was almost 60 years ago – April 25, 1945 – and it was an attack on the Skoda Works in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic).

There were four squadrons of 10 crews each on that mission – 40 first pilots and four command-of-air pilots, one of whom served as the group leader that day – Michael Robinson of the 601st Squadron.

The other CA pilots were Gaylord Pryor (602), James Hanauer (603) and Orrin Tachio (600).

The first pilots were –

600 – Robert Nolan, Albert Shimek Dean Hill, Harry Hoelzel, Alois Beck, Arthur Watson, Neal McLean, Francis Eisele, Clarence Hultman, and Albert Bischoff.

601 – Tom Marchbanks, Earl Green, Ronald Mundhenke, LeRoy Roper, Paul Adams, Robert Starkey, Robert Jauregui, Raymond Hernden, James Koenig, and Michael Marchner.

602 – Nolan Thompson, Marvin Coffee, William Heathcote, Richard Cady, Robert Wallingford, Herbert Miller, Sam Zins, Paul Coville, Allen Ferguson and Robert Agnew.

603 – Ken Beckstrom, Robert Gieryn, Charles King, Paul Keenan, George Donovan, Willard Worley, Charles Lollar, Norman Williams, George Leung and Royce Branyon.

Of these 40 first pilots, only nine remain today as members of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association – Marchner, Coffee, Zins, Keenan, Leung, Hill, Hoelzel, Watson and Nolan.

None of the four command pilots are members.

Those first pilots known to have been killed in action or deceased later include – Marchbanks, Starkey, Hernden, Coville, Ferguson, Agnew, Beckstrom, Gieryn, King, Donovan, Williams, Eisele, Hultman, Bischoff, Mundehenke and Shimek.

The remaining “unaccounted for” first pilots include Beck, Miller, Worley, Lollar, Adams, Jauregui, Heathcote, Cady, Wallingford, Green, Roper, Koenig, Thompson, Branyon and McLean. These have either never been members of the Association, have discontinued their membership or have passed on.

Besides the aforementioned first pilots and their co-pilot command pilots, the 40 B-17’s carried the usual navigators, bombardiers, engineers, radio operators, gunners and spot jammers totaling 358 men.

Bloodlines:

A Family Search In Song

She is but 19, and she lives in England. And she has a grandfather she never seen or known. Except through her mother, and her mother knew him only through intermediators or well meaning friends from "the old airfield."

And now she is seeking her own bloodline. Her personal lifeline. Her "empty hands" speak for her search for family identity. Her search is not through records, computers, histories, but rather through music.

This hauntingly beautiful song speaks of this young girl's search that stretches across the sea.

TRACES OF MY BLOOD

*By Kate Rolfe
Yorkshire, England*

Drawing out the bloodlines
On a sketchy photofit,
Filling in the spaces
With a trace of blood once spilled.
Running down the generations,
Forging its lines
A bloodline and a lifeline
For this empty hand of mine.

I sit, I scan the carpet
For a footprint of a scar
Upon these boards they say you walked
So many years before.
And later, still, I'm standing
In places you once stood,
Searching my empty hands
For traces of my blood.

Maybe I can find you
In the eyes of old allies,
In faces of some strangers
I vaguely recognize
Or in the tears of enemies
Lost beneath the flood
Of a sea that flows between us,
Drowning traces of my blood.



KATE ROLFE

A Little Schoolboy Has Prayed For You:

A GRATEFULL SWISS REMEMBERS

During the "One Last Look" tour to Normandy last June, a man handed out copies of this letter to the tour members. Excerpts are printed in this issue of FLAK NEWS.

I was only a young schoolboy then, living on a small farm in northern Switzerland, very near to the German border, but I shall never forget that bright summer morning – June 6, 1944.

We had to rise early in those days during haymaking-time. We children had full days of farmwork to do.

Coming from the bedroom into the hall, which was lit by the first rays of the rising sun, I froze on the last steps of the stairs.

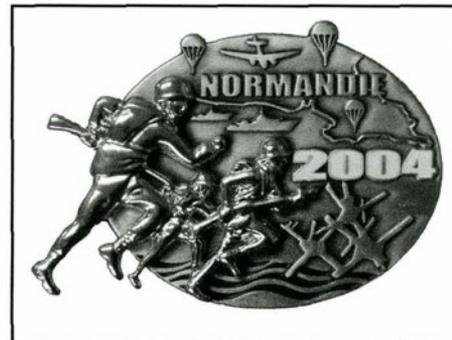
"The invasion has begun. Allied forces are landing in the Normandy."

Intensely I listened to the news which the radio in the living room was announcing loudly. And ever since, the fragrance of fresh hay, on a bright summer morning, brings vividly back to my mind the immense feeling of relief which I experienced then, on that early morning 60 years ago.

I remember fleeing from a tree, where I had been picking cherries, and running home in a panic because a "Flying Fortress" had just lumbered down our little valley, barely three hundred feet above the treetops. It was terribly shot up. Only two of its motors were working; a huge hole was gaping in one of its wings. I was happy to learn later, that its crew had managed to land it safely on our airfield.

In the years following the war, I cried without shame when visiting Allied war cemeteries in France, Belgium and Holland. Their graves hold the men who gave their lives while saving us.

Now, sixty years later, you, the surviving veterans may proudly remember those days on the beaches and in the air think of the friends



you lost. You, the wives and children, mothers and fathers, sisters, brothers and friends of those brave soldiers, will be mournfully remembering your loved ones. Let me say it as well as I can.

To us, those men with the many thousands of Allied soldiers killed earlier or later in that war, have saved us. To you, the proud veterans, to the mourning relatives who have lost their dearest, but especially to you the victims who have been cut down so early in your life. Let me say:

Thank you! Your sacrifices and sufferings shall not be forgotten. It has not all been in vain. A little schoolboy has prayed for you, years back. Because he knew that you, each one of you, have helped him and millions of other children to survive in freedom. And he, like thousands of those children, is now, 60 years later, still gratefully remembering you, praying again. May God bless you! And saying once more: Thank you!

**– Alfred Keller-Maag
CH 8457 Humlikon, Switzerland**



Greetings from Merrie Olde England.

Many thanks for the honor you bestowed on me following the D-Day programs last June. It was very special to follow you 398th fellows around so I could write your stories for Stars and Stripes.

I enjoyed being with you nine years ago in the Czech Republic and again in England this year for the 60th anniversary of D-Day. I take pride in this association.

My next assignment will take me to Iraq. I'm not looking forward to it, but that's the job and the world we live in.

Again, Thanks for the honor. Hope to see you again sometime somewhere.

Ron Jensen, Stars and Stripes, Mildenhall, England.

Ed's Note: The "honor" Jensen wrote about was the 398th cap presented to him following the church services at Anstey. He wrote several D-Day articles for Stars and Stripes, including those on the 398th during the visits to Nuthampstead and Anstey.

Kansas Site For 2005

Twenty-one consecutive 398th reunions have been held since the first independent meeting in Rapid City in 1984.

The top attendance was 582 in Nashville, 1992.

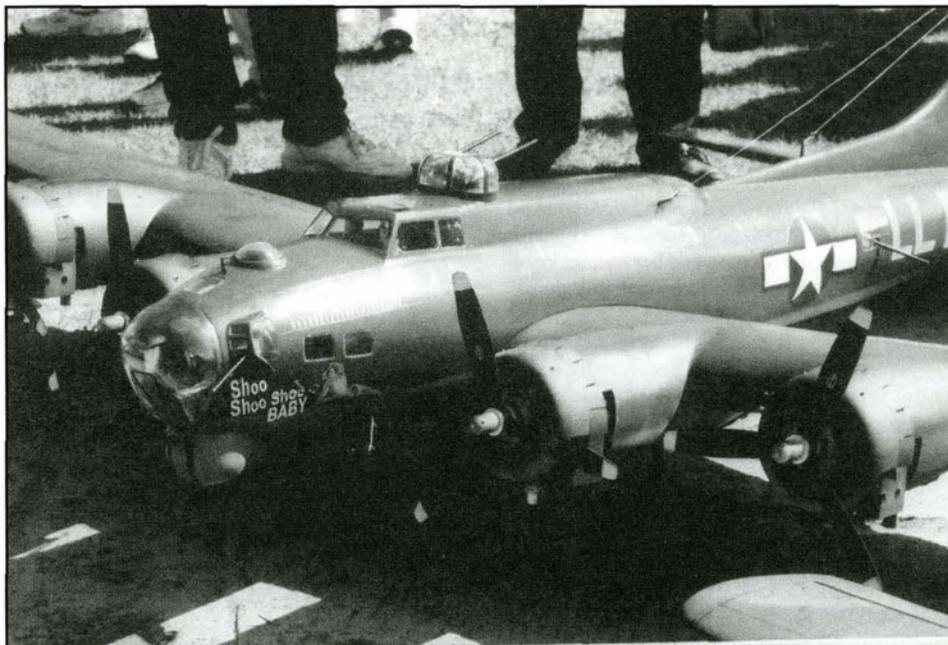
The “next up” will be Overlake Park, Kansas on September 7-10, 2005. The host city lies immediately south of Kansas City, Kansas. And adjacent to Kansas City, Missouri.

Past meetings:

| YEAR | CITY | ATT: |
|------|----------------------|----------|
| 1984 | Rapid City, SD | 200 est. |
| 1985 | Seattle, WA | 300 est. |
| 1986 | Colorado Springs, CO | 391 |
| 1987 | San Antonio, TX | 373 |
| 1988 | Richmond, VA | 465 |
| 1989 | Dayton, OH | 522 |
| 1990 | Oshkosh, WI | 531 |
| 1991 | San Diego, CA | 467 |
| 1992 | Nashville, TN | 582 |
| 1993 | Buffalo, NY | 497 |
| 1994 | Tucson, AZ | 548 |
| 1995 | Charleston, SC | 494 |
| 1996 | Springfield, MO | 437 |
| 1997 | Spokane, WA | 236 |
| 1998 | Harrisburg, PA | 425 |
| 1999 | Oklahoma City, OK | 276 |
| 2000 | Savannah, GA | 480 |
| 2001 | St. Paul, MN | 271 |
| 2002 | Portland, OR | 240 |
| 2003 | Covington, KY | 268 |
| 2004 | Falls Church, VI | 368 |
| 2005 | Overland Park, KS | — |

From 1976 through 1983 the reunions were held jointly with the 8th Air Force Historical Society:

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1976 Dayton, OH | 1980 Orlando, FL |
| 1977 St. Louis, MO | 1981 Minn/St. Paul |
| 1978 Washington DC | 1982 Cincinnati, OH |
| 1979 Phoenix, AZ | 1983 Houston, TX |



TAKE A GOOD LOOK at this B-17 (Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby). And the “giants” directly behind. No, it is not an illusion, but rather two men standing behind the Fortress, which happens to be a radio-controlled model with a 12-foot wingspan.

Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby (TWICE)

There is a real B-17 named Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby, to be seen today at Wright-Patterson AFB Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

There is also another B-17 named Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby to be seen at the Smithsonian’s new Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Center.

The “Hazy Version” just happens to be a \$10,000 model Fortress with a 12-foot wingspan operated by a state-of-the-art radio controlled system. And it has made over 400 flights for its owner-builder, Doug Smith of Coral Gables, FL, and fellow hobbyist Robin Rabideau.

Smithsonian curator Thomas Dietz said – “We didn’t have a good example of a current

state-of-the-art, multi-engine, large radio-controlled model, and this fit the bill.”

Smith was willing to give up his model to the Hazy Center, but added that he was already at work on another larger plane –

“We are building a B-24 Liberator.”

The Fortress model was seen by members of the 398th reunion group during the visit to Hazy on September 10.

“Fuddy Duddy” Subs For “AO” On B-17 Tour

With the Aluminum Overcast still sitting in Van Nuys, California as result of her “grounding” last May (soon back in action) the EAA’s “Salute to Veterans” tour was picked up with a “substitute” B-17, Fuddy Duddy of the Wings of Eagles Discovery Center of Elmira, NY beginning last August 6.

As of mid-October, the remaining cities on that tour are as follows –

Oct. 18-21 Harrisburg, PA. Oct. 21-26 Manassas, VA. Oct. 26-28 Richmond, VA. Oct. 28-Nov 1 Newport News, VA. Nov 1-4 Charleston, SC Nov. 4-8 Jacksonville, FL. Nov. 8-11 Orlando, FL. Nov. 12-15 Boca Raton, FL. Nov. 15-18 Ft. Meyers, FL. Nov. 18-22 Lakeland, FL.

For more information call 1-800-359-6217.



AND THIS IS NOT a “real” B-17 from the 3rd Division’s 486th Bomb Group (Square W), but a 6-foot radio-controlled model owned by A.L. Flood of Ware, a Herts community not far from Nuthampstead, England.

BRIEF-things

Jan Zdiarsky, the energetic young Czech who created the marvelous Air War Over the Ore Mountains museum in his hometown of Kovarska, has taken on a new title, that of "PhD" (doctorate), earned for his studies in water management . . . *Ted Inman* headed up the Imperial War Museum at Duxford for 26 years before stepping down last June to pursue new adventures in London, but our Friend-of-the-398th Linda Mason is still on the job . . . *Chaplain Duvall's* widow, *Marguerite*, is losing her eyesight, "but I can still identify the voices of friends and family" . . . Dues Manager *Jim Haas* wishes to point out that "several" Lifetime members have continued to support the 398th with contributions of \$100 or more; and we all say thank you! . . . in addition to the B-17 radio controlled models (page 10), there is a 12 foot model B-52 flying out there and its eight, jet-powered engines alone cost \$24,000! . . . *Malcolm Osborn*, reminiscing about the 1982 Memorial dedication at Nuthampstead, recalled the congratulatory letter received from *President Ronald Reagan* (also the horrendous storm that wreaked havoc with the tent and its party supplies) . . . *Gail Fisher* wrote a neat article on "flags" for the Arizona Republic, including the story of the 398th flag program at Nuthampstead; a new flag was delivered last June, that coming from the Covington, KY Convention Bureau, site of the group's 2003 reunion . . . many thanks to *Ron Setter*, who remembered *Albert Knight* of the 600 Searl crew with flowers at the Knight grave site at Madingley . . . family members of *Gerald Anataillia*, killed on the July 16, 1944 mission to Munich along with pilot *Dana Lovelace*, would dearly love to see the church at Achenkirch, Austria where the bodies were buried; *Eloise*, wife of co-pilot *Bob Hart*, also hopes to go, which will be part of the Pilsen tour next May . . . talk about "good fishing," *Keith Anderson* came home from Alaska in time for the reunion with a "six tons" salmon catch story . . . *Nancy Zinter* (bless her heart) was among those who stepped out to tell the obnoxious kids in the adjoining reunion hotel banquet hall to "show some respect" for the World War II veterans meeting in the adjoining space; it was the only bit of bad scheduling by the otherwise impeccable Fairview Park Marriott staff . . . Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum Foundation director *Judy Walker* was warmly received at the reunion, with some members even suggesting that the 398th make a repeat visit to Savannah . . . *Jack Lee* calmed the flying fears of his daughter by showing her his flying gloves, saved from his WW II missions . . . *Mila Raboch* of the Pilsen 60th Liberation staff says we will be the only 8th Air Force group at the May 2005 festival and that we will be warmly welcomed at the opening of the new *Gen. George S. Patton* Museum . . . Swedish tour guide *Pär Nilhammer* says he will have been waiting four years to lead the 398th to Achenkirch, there to meet "my special friend," *Sister Sofie* . . . *Charles Sweeney* became a brigadier general at 36, 11 years after dropping an A-Bomb on Nagasaki in the B-29 called Bock's Car; he died this year at 84, and remained an outspoken defender on the use of the A-Bomb to end the war with Japan . . . former B-24 nose gunner *Ed Tkacik*, honoring his departed wife at the Indiantown Gap (PA) Veterans Cemetery, stopped at a nearby grave of a departed 398th engineer-gunner, *Wayne Doerstler*, to share sympathies with widow *Ruthanna* . . . a cousin of gunner *Sherman Klein*, killed on the Derban mission on April 8, '45, is trying to research the duties of "Spot Jammer," the position *Klein* was filling when shot down . . . low tides at the Wash on the English Channel, along with fire hoses, bare hands and determination, recently gave up the remains of two RAF airmen who crashed in their DeHavilland Mosquito in 1945; the search for Allied and German aircraft lost in England and on the Continent in WW II may well continue for generations . . . a blue-green windbreaker was left behind in the Memory Room at the Falls Church reunion; contact the FLAK NEWS editor . . . a photo of the Anstey Window appears in AIRMAN and it contains an inset of five names etched in the glass – Darrell Argubright, Vernon Anderson, Floyd Aaron, George Abbott and Joe T. Andrews . . . the magazine also contains a photo of a tired looking tail gunner who had just returned from Merseburg . . . the lead AIRMAN story asks the question (of today's Air Force personnel) "are you fit to fight?" reminding us WW II types of those Air Corps physical training (PT) exercises at the various air bases around the country in the 40's (nothing's changed).

398th BOMB GROUP

Memorial Association

P X



MARILYN GIBB-RICE AND CAROLYN WIDMANN
Second Generation Sisters Will Take Over

IT'S A NEW LOOK FOR THE P-X

It will be a New Look for the popular 398th Bomb Group PX Department beginning New Year's, 2005.

With Joe and Rozanne Joseph stepping down after 11 years on the job and all the inventory being closed out (See Page 3), a pair of second generation sisters came forth to keep the program alive.

"It saddened me to think of giving up our wonderful PX," said Carolyn Widmann, daughter of the late Jim Crouch, gunner on the 601 Harold Stallings crew. "I talked it over with my sister (Marilyn Gibb-Rice, association treasurer) and we made an offer to Mr. Blackwell. And he accepted, and the Board approved."

Carolyn said she is retiring from the retail industry, has a big house with abundant space for the PX inventory, and will have ample time to devote to the PX business.

Both Carolyn and Marilyn have attended most of the 398th reunions and some England tours, mostly in the company of their mother, Dorothy Crouch and brother Butch.

"We were so pleased that Carolyn and Marilyn came forth with this offer," said president Blackwell. "They will have the authority to develop their own marketing system and products."

Carolyn said she will be seeking out new items to go with established products and plans to work closely with the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum in Savannah.

The New Look will be presented in the January issue of FLAK NEWS.

Carolyn will begin operating the PX from her home in Michigan until such time as she moves to a new home in Indiana. Until a new "PX Office" is established in January, 2005, she can be reached at W. Bloomfield, MI 48322-3286.