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

VOL. 5 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL, 1990

**God! How You Admired
Those Men Up There
And Sickened For The
Ones Who Fell”**

—ERNIE PYLE



Eagle Hangar At Oshkosh Will Tell Story Of Air War

Almost fifty years have passed since the onset of the deadliest, most all-encompassing armed conflict in the history of mankind. Never has our way of life been so threatened as it was in World War II, and never has our response been so dramatic.

A decisive element in that response was the B-17 "Flying Fortress." Few aircraft played such a significant role in the Allies' victory. For young and old alike, venerable "warbird" aircraft like the B-17 are primary attractions at airshows around the country. Modern military aircraft are also an attraction, but people don't leave them with tears in their eyes or with comments like: "There's the tailgunner's station where Uncle George flew . . ." "My gosh, how did your ever fit into that ball turret, Dad?"

There is a need, increasing just as surely as the number of remaining World

"They Came On With A Terrible Slowness"

ERNIE PYLE, of all the men and women who "covered" World War II for their media, stands apart as the one most closely aligned with the American foot soldier.

The Infantryman, the "Dogface," and "GI Joe."

Pyle knew these people, and loved them, even like his trusty typewriter. His warm, tender, intimate stories about the kids slugging it out with the enemy on every front from Africa to Europe to the Pacific brought him journalistic fame. Even the coveted Pulitzer prize.

He was as well-known to the GI's as General Eisenhower. Both were revered by the soldiers they commanded . . . or wrote about. Pyle's columns appeared in newspapers all over the United States. He represented the link between the families back home and the GI on the front.

In somewhat like manner was Bill Mauldin, the cartoonist for Stars & Stripes. And perhaps to a lesser degree, radio men like Edward R. Murrow, H.V. Kaltenborn and Lowell Thomas.

But it was Pyle who knew the war best,

because he was in it. Never far from the guns and action.

As one would suspect, Pyle died doing what he did best—writing about the war. A Japanese machine gun bullet struck him down on Ie Shima Island during the battle for Okinawa in 1945.

A year before, a few days following the D-Day landings on Normandy, Pyle and his typewriter were following the GI Joes. They were all pinned down by the Germans, awaiting the air strike that would set them free to point their columns toward Paris.

Like the reporter he was, Pyle recorded what he saw . . . and felt. Perhaps no airman involved that day was so aware . . . or so moved . . . as was Ernie Pyle.

The ground war provided adequate opportunities for "journalistic show-casing" of the infantryman, artilleryman and tanker. But there was no "press only" seating in a B-17 . . . or P-51. This was left largely to the combatants themselves. Many airmen took their experiences home and ultimately produced many well written stories of the air war.

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ERNIE PYLE

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Pyle, although intimately identified with his GI Joes, did witness a dramatic bit of the air war one day. And he was moved to pen words that reached the gut level of the most hardened foot soldier. . . or B-17 airman.

The accompanying Pyle column was provided by Maria Hunter, widow of the 398th commanding officer, Col. Frank P. Hunter. It was clipped from the pages of the Richmond (VA) News Leader in June of 1944.

“Friends” Seek Flags To Fly at New Pole at Station 31

“We would be pleased if some of the military American flags given at the funerals of 398th personnel would be sent to us so we can fly them in their honor at our new Memorial flag pole recently installed up by the old main runway.”

This was the request from Tony Clark, chairman of the “Friends of the 398th” at Nuthampstead.

“We will take a photo of the flag and also send a lovely certificate to the donor,” said Clark.

The flag responsibility has been taken over by Tim Wells, son of David Wells, who died suddenly last year.

Flags may be sent to 398th treasurer Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740. Hall will hand carry the flags to Nuthampstead during the group tour in June.

A New Sound: It Was The Heavies:

Pyle Entranced As He Watched The Air War From The Ground

By ERNIE PYLE

NORMANDY—June, 1944—Our front lines were marked by long strips of colored cloth laid on the ground, and with colored smoke to guide our airmen during the mass bombing that preceded our breakout from the German ring that held us to the Normandy beachhead.

Dive bombers hit it just right. We stood in the barnyard of a French farm and watched them barrel nearly straight down out of the sky. They were bombing about half a mile ahead of where we stood.

They came in groups, diving from every direction, perfectly timed, one right after another. Everywhere you looked separate groups of planes were on the way down, or on the way back up, or slanting over for a dive, or circling, circling, circling over our heads, waiting for their turn.

The air was full of sharp and distinct sounds of cracking bombs and the heavy rips of the planes' machine guns and the splitting screams of diving wings. It was all fast and furious, but yet distinct, as in a musical show in which you could distinguish throaty tunes and words.

And then a new sound gradually droned into our ears, a sound deep and all encompassing with no notes in it—a gigantic faraway surge of doom-like sound. It was the heavies. They came from directly behind us. At first they were the merest dots in the sky. You could see clots of them against the far heavens, too tiny to count individually. They came on with a terrible slowness.

They came in flights of 12, three flights to a group and in groups stretched out across the sky. They came in “families” of about 70 planes each.

Maybe these gigantic waves were two miles apart, maybe they were 10 miles. I don't know. But I do know they came in a constant procession and I thought it would never end. What the Germans must have thought is beyond comprehension.

Their march across the sky was slow and studied. I've never known a storm, or a machine, or any resolve of man that had about it the aura of such a ghastly relentlessness. You had the feeling that even had God appeared beseechingly before them in the sky with palms outward to persuade them back they would not have had within them the power to turn from their irresistible course.

I stood with a little group of men, ranging from colonels to privates, back of the stone farmhouse. Slit trenches were all around the edges of the farmyard and a dugout with a tin roof was nearby. But we were so fascinated by the spectacle overhead that it never occurred to us that we might need the foxholes.

The first huge flight passed directly over our farmyard and others followed. We spread our feet and leaned far back trying to look straight up, until our steel helmets fell off. We'd cup our fingers around our eyes like field glasses for a clearer view.

And then the bombs came. They began ahead of us as the crackle of popcorn and almost instantly swelled into a monstrous fury of noise that seemed surely to destroy all the world ahead of us.

From then on for an hour and a half that had

in it the agonies of centuries, the bombs came down. A wall of smoke and dust erected by them grew high in the sky. It filtered along the ground back through our own orchards. It sifted around us and into our noses. The bright day grew slowly dark from it.

By now everything was an indescribable cauldron of sounds. Individual noises did not exist. The thundering of the motors in the sky and the roar of bombs ahead filled all the space for noise on earth. Our own heavy artillery was crashing all around us, yet we could hardly hear it.

The Germans began to shoot heavy, high ack-ack. Great black puffs of it by the score speckled the sky until it was hard to distinguish smoke puffs from planes.

And then someone shouted that one of the planes was smoking. Yes, we could all see it. A long, faint line of black smoke stretched straight for a mile behind one of them.

And as we watched there was a gigantic sweep of flame over the plane. From nose to tail it disappeared in flame, and it slanted slowly down and banked around the sky in great wide curves, this way and that way, as rhythmically and gracefully as in a slow motion waltz.

Then suddenly it seemed to change its mind and it swept upward, steeper and steeper and ever slower until finally it seemed poised motionless on its own black pillar of smoke. And then just as slowly it turned over and dived for the earth—a golden spearhead on the straight black shaft of its own creation—and it disappeared behind the treetops.

But before it was done there were more cries of “there's another one smoking and there's a third one now.”

Chutes came out of some of the planes. Out of some came no chutes at all. One of white silk caught on the tail of a plane. Men with binoculars could see him fighting to get loose until flames swept over him, and then a tiny black dot fell through space, all alone.

And all that time the great flat, ceiling of the sky was roofed by all the others that didn't go down, plowing their way forward as if there were no turmoil in the world.

Nothing deviated them by the slightest. They stalked on, slowly and with a dreadful pall of sound, as though they were seeing only something at a great distance and nothing existed in between. God, how you admired those men up there and sickened for the ones who fell.

Two More Added To EAA Project Fund

Not wanting to be excluded from being a part of the EAA B-17 restoration project, conducted in early 1989, two members sent in Donor contributions to bring the grand total to \$25,573.57.

Contributions arrived from John Schmid of Potomac, MD and Dennis Johanson of Moncks Corner, SC. All monies over the \$21,695.587 have been placed in the 398th Memorial Fund, according to treasurer Ralph Hall.

Still Time To Join The Tour

'Friends' Await 398th Visitors

The 1990 Scotland-England tour is less than two months down the road, but there are still opportunities to join the 40-plus who have already signed on for the two-week 398th Group tour.

It all begins in Boston on June 20, the "tourists" gathering for the overnight flight to Edinburgh and the start of a varied and exciting 14 days.

Reservations and information may be obtained from Galaxy Tours, P.O. Box 234, Wayne, PA 19087. Or call their toll free number 1-800-523-7287. Ask for Mark Burton.

Scotland, where many of the 398th airmen first touched down after their long flight over the Atlantic . . . and others took their flak leave . . . will provide the setting for the first four days of the tour. The King James Hotel will be tour "headquarters" in Edinburgh.

Then on to England to enjoy the beauty of the Northern Lakes Country and also a stop for some Shakespeare culture at Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Then on to Nuthampstead and Station 131, where the "Friends of the 398th" have been preparing their usual gala welcome festivities. These to include a Service of Remembrance at the memorial, private plane flights from the old airfield, tours of the field, bus trips to the nearby communities and, the highlight of the visit, a major barn dance at nearby Anstey.

40's music, fish & chips, WW II uniforms and a variety of special events await the tour party from the U.S. The barn dance and the influx of Yank visitors unquestionably will be the biggest thing to

happen in Nuthampstead and Anstey all year. The dance will attract over 400, many coming from great distances to hear the special dance music and rub elbows with men who came to their shores so long ago to aid in Britain's defense of freedom.

There will also be an opportunity to spend time at the American Military Cemetery at Madingly, where acres and acres of crosses bear testimony to the Americans' contribution.

One cross that will be honored belongs to Albert Knight. He was the tail gunner on the Charles Searl 600 crew that perished in the crash of their B-17 near the community of Penn on August 12, 1944.

Knight might have tried to bail out of his stricken, flaming ship a moment before crashing. All the others on the crew are buried in a common grave in Arlington National Cemetery. (See photos below.)

The drama of the Searl incident will be re-lived as the tour party spends a day at Penn, there to take part in a Remembrance service and visit the actual crash site and talk to the people who witnessed the event 46 years ago.

The organizers of the Penn program have promised they will have "some very nice surprises" for the Yank visitors.

"We have been looking forward to your coming for over a year," said Johanna Sienkiewicz. "The community is terribly excited about all this and you may be certain it will be a very festive and memorable day."

Greetings on behalf of the 398th will be carried by president Bill Comstock, who will be making his fourth visit to England since accepting the leadership of the Association in 1975.

"Sgt. Gill" Remembers Concern of General Jimmy Doolittle

Among those who have vivid memories of the 600 Squadron Searl crew crash at Penn on August 12, 1944 is Mary Gill Rice.

On this morning, "Sgt. Gill," WAC, was Gen. Jimmy Doolittle's secretary at 8th Air Force Headquarters at High Wycombe.

"I remember that morning very well,"

said Mrs. Rice. "The General was visibly upset over the nine American crewmen who perished in the crash. He was greatly impressed and moved over Vicar Muspratt's desire to write to the families of the crew. As you know, the General did furnish the names and addresses of those Americans, and the Vicar did write to the

families.

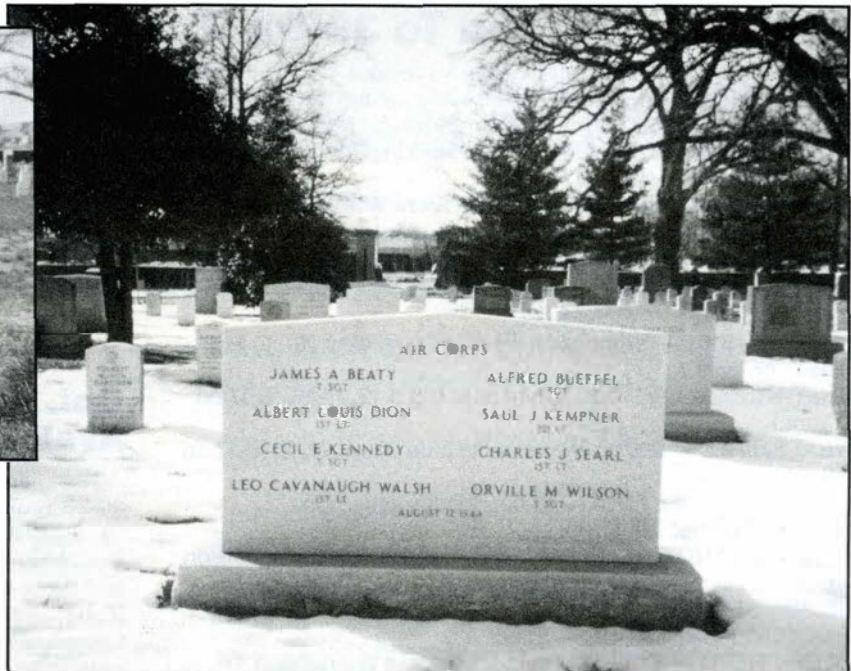
"I am planning a visit to High Wycombe this summer and hope to visit with the people at Penn."

Mrs. Rice lives in Marietta, GA, and is acquainted with 398th members Lloyd Stovall, Hal Weekley and Russ Reed, all of whom live in the Atlanta area.



Not Forgotten

A TEMPORARY grave marked the remains of the eight members of the Searl crew at Arlington National Cemetery in 1950 (left). At right is how the grave site appeared in December, 1989. The ninth member of the crew, Albert Knight, is buried at Cambridge, England.



Eagle Hangar Ready Room Turns Clock Back 50 Years

Continued From Page 1

War II participants is decreasing, to remember their experiences. The EAA Eagle Hangar at Oshkosh is the answer to that need, and the 398th B-17 is a focal point of interest.

A walk through the Eagle Hangar is like a walk back almost 50 years in time. Visitors enter from a concourse "skywalk" with background musical strains of "Sentimental Journey," taking in a recreated 196 foot by 196 foot hangar of World War II. From the concourse overlook, Foundation aircraft such as the B-17 will await closeup inspection on the hangar floor below. Outside the hangar, a B-25 or perhaps a Corsair may be on the concrete "apron" preparing for a short taxi to Wittman Field for fly-by demonstrations.

On the concourse, visitors will enter a quonset hut "ready room" with reconnaissance maps, weather charts and airfield diagrams. A uniformed museum tour guide will welcome and brief visitors on today's "mission" with remarks and an audio-visual presentation on likely aerial combat scenarios. Descending to the hangar floor, a Link "Blue Box" trainer will be utilized for instruction, and visitors may walk through an engine shop, radio maintenance office, radio/instrument shop and flight surgeon's office. Along the back wall will be a stunning 110 foot world mural showing major World War II aerial units' headquarters, insignia and major engagements where airmen fought and died for our freedoms.

And, of course, the aircraft. Among some six or eight significant aircraft displays, the B-17 "Flying Fortress" is the major attraction. Visitors may proceed on a "walkaround" inspection—truly experiencing a pilot's eyeview, a tailgunner's tight squeeze or a crew chief's "hands-on" love for his airplane. It became well-known as the "Aluminum Overcast." Since 1980, it has flown before millions of onlookers as one of only seven known airworthy B-17's. One of the key people involved in keeping the aircraft flying has been Harold (Hal) Weekley, a former 398th Bomb Group pilot.

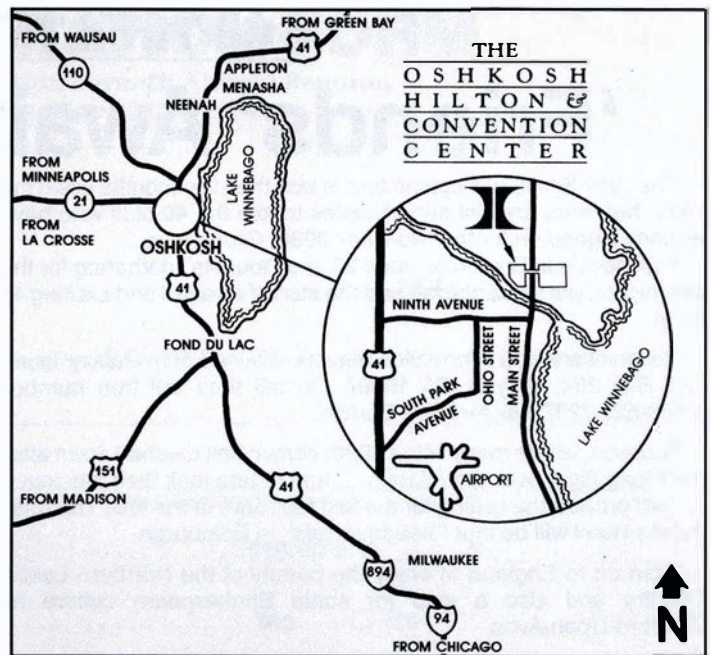
With Hal's leadership and encouragement, the 398th last year raised almost \$22,000 to pay for a complete exterior renovation and re-painting of the Aluminum Overcast. The plane now carries the markings of the 398th Triangle W, 30 of the 601st Squadron, and call letter H and serial number 42-102516. This was the aircraft the Weekley crew was flying on a mission to LaManoir, France on August 13, 1944 when it was shot down. It was on its 34th mission.

New Items Added To 398th PX

"The 398th Bomb Group PX is alive and well," reports director Jack Wintersteen. "Even added some new items like B-17 sweat shirts and squadron lapel pins." Members are invited to contact Jack at Danville, PA 17821.

Following are the items available from Wintersteen—

- CAPS — \$7.00. Navy blue only. Specify squadron.
- JACKETS — \$30.00. White, gold, navy, royal blue, lite blue. XL, L, M, S.
- JACKET PATCHES — (only) \$4.00.
- T-SHIRTS — \$10.00. White, gold, lite blue, royal blue. XL, L, M, S. (B-17 on front.)
- T-SHIRTS (childrens) \$10.00. White only. 6-8, 1-12, 14-16. (B-17 on front.)
- SWEAT SHIRTS — \$20.00. White or lite blue. XL, L, M, S. (B-17 on front.)
- SQUADRON LAPEL PINS — \$5.00. Specify squadron.
- LAPEL PINS (Special). \$6.00.
- SQUADRON AND GROUP PATCHES — \$5.00. Specify squadron. Group design is "Hell From Heaven."
- BUMPER STICKERS — \$2.00.
- MEMORIAL POST CARDS — \$1.00.
- COLOR PHOTO — \$7.00. B-17 flying over Lake Winnebago, WI. 8x10.



ALL ROADS LEAD TO OSHKOSH

WHAT—7th Annual 398th Bomb Group Reunion.

WHERE—Oshkosh, Wisconsin

WHEN—Wednesday-Saturday, Sept. 12-15, 1990

HEADQUARTERS HOTEL—Oshkosh Hilton & Convention Center, 1 North Main St., Oshkosh, WI (414) 231-5000. (See Reservation Insert.)

BACKUP HOTEL—Pioneer Inn & Marina, 1000 Pioneer Dr., Oshkosh, WI (414) 233-1980. (Located 2 blocks from Hilton.)

BACKUP MOTEL—Super 8 of Oshkosh, WI, Highway 41 and 44 (Near Wittman Field). 1-800-843-1991.

REUNION CHAIRMAN—Morris Swed, Princeton, WI 54968.

SPECIAL AIR FARES

Special discount air fares through United Air Lines, flying into either the Oshkosh or Appleton airports, are available to 398th members heading for the 1990 reunion.

These rates have been arranged by Dartford Travel, Inc., located at Green Lake, Wisconsin. Discounts range from 5% to 35%, according to Linda Tieman, Dartford president.

Members may contact Dartford at 529 Mill St., P.O. Box 99, Green Lake, WI 54941. Their toll free number is 1-800-874-3233. FAX 414-294-DART.

Col. Turner "Duty" Speech Now Available On Audio Cassette

The speech on "Duty" given by Col. Michael W. Turner at the 398th reunion in Dayton last September is now available on a "loaner" audio cassette tape. The Wright Patterson AFB officer was cheered repeatedly as he paid tribute to the 398th veterans and those who came to the defense of their country in World War II. He contrasted these acts of "duty" with the acts of "rights," treason and spying by some Americans in recent years. Send your request to FLAK NEWS, Seattle, WA 98177.

NEXT STOP: OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN



The EAA Aviation Foundation Eagle Hangar and its B-17 is a permanent place of honor for the men, women and machines of World War II fame.



MORRIS SWED AND FRIEND

“Sometimes I Get The Feeling That This Is Bigger Than All Of Us.”

These were the words of Morris Swed, Oshkosh reunion chairman, as he scurried to organize the myriad of details required in hosting 500 members of the 398th Bomb Group September 12-15, 1990.

No small task, as witness Bob Hart, Bob Wiggins, Dallas Ebest and Dale Brown, respective chairmen the past four years in Dayton, Richmond, San Antonio and Colorado Springs.

Since the 398th began doing its reunions sans “professional” help, the task has fallen to members living in the reunion city. . . or at least nearby.

Swed, like the others, was a professional in another field before assuming the responsibilities of reunion chairman. He began learning first hand and quickly what a major job he had taken on. A

former banker and retail store operator, Swed “inherited” his new position by virtue of living near to the Oshkosh reunion city (Princeton, WI).

And, needless to say, being a willing candidate (and having a willing wife, Mary.)

As noted in the opposite Registration page, Swed has prepared a full schedule of events for the four-day meeting. He began his assignment at the conclusion of the Dayton reunion last September.

After several months “on the job,” Swed and Mary sent the following message to the reunion coordinator—
“Everything seems to be running smoothly.”

And then left for a Florida vacation.

OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association Seventh Annual Reunion
Oshkosh, Wisconsin September 12-15, 1990

Deadline for Return:

July 31, 1990

NAME _____ WIFE _____ SQD: _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE () _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NAMES OF OTHERS IN PARTY. PLEASE PRINT FOR NAME TAGS

Registration Fee (Per Person, 2 Max. Per Family) \$10.00 x _____ \$ _____

WEDNESDAY, September 12:

Golf - Lakeshore Municipal 8:00 AM Tee Time Yes No
 Registration 1 PM Oshkosh Hilton
 Memory Room 1 PM - 5 PM Hennepin Room
 No organized activities today. Dinner at a restaurant of your choice.

THURSDAY, September 13:

Golf - Lakeshore Municipal 8:00 AM Tee Time Yes No
 Registration 9 AM - 5 PM Oshkosh Hilton
 Memory Room 9 AM - 5 PM Hennepin Room
 Officers Meeting 10:00 AM Board Meeting Room
 Ladies Activities 2 PM Ball Room C - Hilton
 398th Business Meeting 3 PM Regatta, Convention Center
 Cash Cocktail Bar 6 PM - 7 PM Tradewinds Room
 Welcome Dinner 7 PM Regatta B \$16.00 x _____ \$ _____

FRIDAY, September 14:

Cash Continental Breakfast 7 - 8:30 AM Oshkosh Hilton
 Memory Room 8 AM
 Bus, EAA Museum Tour, Squadron Pictures, Squadron Lunches
 9 AM - 2 PM \$14.00 x _____ \$ _____
 Cash Cocktail Bar 6 PM - 7 PM Tradewinds Room
 DINNER and Dancing 7 PM Regatta B \$16.00 x _____ \$ _____

SATURDAY, September 15:

Cash Continental Breakfast 7 - 8:30 AM Oshkosh Hilton
 Memory Room 9 AM
 Oshkosh City Tour, concluding at Manufacturer's Marketplace Mall, featuring
 Oshkosh B-Gosh & much more. Lunch on your own.
 9: 30-1: 30PM \$4.00 x _____ \$ _____
 Cash Cocktail Bar 6 PM - 7 PM Tradewinds Room
 Farewell Dinner & Entertainment
 7 PM Regatta B \$16.00 x _____ \$ _____

SUNDAY, September 16:

Memory Room 9 AM - Noon
 Check-Out Time 12 Noon

398th Memorial Association dues for 1990 (if applicable) \$5.00 \$ _____

I/We will arrive by: Auto Air Other. TOTAL \$ _____

I/We will work 2 hours in Memory Room if needed Yes No

Please complete form and mail to:

Morris Swed
 398th Bomb Group Reunion
 Princeton, WI 54968

Received \$ _____ Date _____ Check # _____ Morris Swed A copy of this form will be mailed to registrants upon receipt of check or money order, payable to "398th Bomb Group Reunion."
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Please cut out along the dotted line

Brief-things

The regular membership circulation of FLAK NEWS for April, 1990 is 1,450, representing an increase of 100 per year each of the last four years. . . most of the thanks for this on-going increase must go to **George Hilliard**, our "contact" officer and chief bird dog for 398th "lost souls" . . . after being cleaned out at his PX at the Dayton reunion last fall, **Jack Wintersteen** now has restocked and is ready for business (lapel pins, T shirts, squadron & group patches, photos, jackets, bumper stickers, membership plaques, caps) . . . write him at Danville, PA 17821 . . . some "398th Bomb Group Remembrances" books might still be available by reunion time in Oshkosh, but less than 80 were on hand at FLAK NEWS press time . . . a sincere "thank you" to the folks who send in Post Office changes of address, saving the Association mail costs and terse messages that read "Forwarding Order Expired" . . . **Ralph Hall**, our guardian of finances, is pleased to report that the group is in excellent shape, thanks to faithful dues payers and otherwise generous donors to the Memorial Fund, FLAK NEWS and other special projects . . . anybody out there have a line on the whereabouts of **Irv Laufer**, 603 Mickey navigator who went down over Merseburg on Nov. 21, 1944? . . . a story on the V 2 that hit Station 131 on the morning of December 14, 1944 will appear in the next issue . . . also a story on **Joe Joseph**, who did a stint with the 97th Bomb Group in Africa before joining the 398th in England. . . **Chaplain James Duvall** writes that as much as he wanted to join the tour party to England in June, there was a conflict with **Marguerite Duvall's** appointment with her eye surgeon at the same time. . . "But we will see you all in Oshkosh" . . . **Len Streitfeld** did not send Christmas cards to his fellow crew members; he called them all long distance! . . . many of the Germans who hosted the 398th tour party in Neuss in 1988 continue to keep in touch . . . **Alfred Wilms** of nearby Heerdt (where the Hunter-Gonzales B-17 crashed) reports that the property around the crash site has been purchased by Japan's Fuji Film Co. as its European headquarters. . . **Wilms** is working on another "chronicle" to include the story of the 398th visit, which was reported in just about every newspaper in West Germany. . . a line in his report says, "it was an unforgettable picture to see an armada of 500-600 bombers above us on clear, winter days, followed by a wall of clouds, left by contrails" . . . the Nuess-Heerdt-Dusseldorf community is looking forward to a private visit by **Federico and Anne Gonzales** this summer. . . greetings also have been received from **Pierre Eicher** of the Battle of the Bulge group in Luxembourg. . . they still remember the group visit in 1986. . . no less than 52 copies of **Larry Paul's** "home movie" of Station 131 have been reproduced and shipped . . .

"Bells Started Going Off All Over The Place"

Bob Rasmussen, who was one of two survivors on the 603rd Paul Rich crew when shot down by German FW-190's on November 21, 1944, had two major "revelations" recently. One in the form of the book, "398th Bomb Group Remembrances," and the other in the form of a 16 mm. micro film tape on the history of the group.

Bob wrote the following letter to FLAK NEWS—

"The micro film and my copy of "Remembrances" arrived about the same time. I could not have been in the 398th for more than three months out of a 30 year Air Force career, but I learned more in the past week than I ever knew before about my time at Nuthampstead.

"The micro film tells me I flew seven missions with crews other than Rich, but I have no memory of these flights or the circumstances that put me on other crews. And I also discovered I went down on my 16th, not 17th, mission.

"The article on 'Witka Tanka Ton' was most interesting. I read it two or three times before I realized that this was the B-17 we were flying when we were shot down over Merseburg. Our bombardier,

Earl Kearney, and I were the only ones who got out. He died two years ago.

"On the front cover of 'Remembrances' is an aircraft numbered "317 P." I took one look at that number and bells started going off all over the place. For some reason I had remembered that tail number for 46 years. I paid particular attention to the micro film and found that we had flown five missions in that plane. If that didn't bring up the past, nothing ever could! For the life of me, I can't remember why I recalled that tail number, but it is one thing I can recall about that far distant past.

"You can't imagine how I felt after seeing that plane on the front cover and knowing that I actually flew in her. It was quite a sensation!

I want to thank you for 'Remembrances' and for the use of the micro film. We will go to Oshkosh this fall and I want to see "Aluminum Overcast" in 398th colors."

**Robert J. Rasmussen,
Albuquerque, NM 87123**

Museums Await 398th Memorabilia

What to do with military memorabilia? This is a question often asked by many members, and answers have not always been easy to get.

In response to a number of such requests, the 398th Board has endorsed the South Dakota Air & Space Museum at Ellsworth Air Force Base, Rapid City, SD as a prime recipient for members' memorabilia.

These to include such things as A-2 and other World War II flight jackets, helmets, oxygen masks, radio equipment, photographs, diaries, decorations, news clippings, tech manuals, etc.

And, particularly, any written accounts of the 398th while the group was stationed at Rapid City Army Air Force Base as a combat training unit in 1943.

Ronnie E. Alley, curator, made the following proposal to the 398th—

“We have just recently moved from our old, on base, location to a facility outside the main gate of the base. We moved four large hangers to this new location and we now have 10 times the space we had before.

“I cannot promise that everything donated will be used in the exhibit, but what is not used will be put in artifact storage for possible reference use.

“We had over 60,000 visitors last year,

and we expect to double this figure in 1990.

“We are now planning an exhibit on the early years of Ellsworth, and we would like to include the 398th as a major part of this exhibit.”

The mailing address is South Dakota Air & Space Museum, Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD 57706-5000.

For members wishing to keep their memorabilia closer to home, they are reminded that almost every US Air Force Base, in nearly every state, maintains an official museum. They can be contacted in care of the curator.

The 398th also maintains close ties with the EAA Aviation Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. This is the home of the B-17 called Aluminum Overcast, now painted in official 398th colors after members contributed over \$21,000 for the exterior refurbishing and paint color scheme.

A collection of daily “Stars & Stripes”

Duxford Fund Opportunity

Members of the 398th have been invited to participate in a fundraising project to build The American Air Museum in Britain. To be located at Duxford, current site of the Imperial War Museum, the new building would house all the current American aircraft now

newspapers from May to September, 1944, gathered during his 35-mission tour time at Nuthampstead, was donated to the EAA Museum by Frank Weiler of Yelm, WA. He was a gunner on the James Dollar 602 crew.

The EAA Museum curator is Ron Twellman, Wittman Field, Oshkosh, WI 54903.

Another potential home for 398th memorabilia is the soon-to-be-built 8th Air Force Museum at Duxford, England. (See below.)

Bill Hineman, radio man on the 603 Foster crew, turned his “memories” over to the National Warplanes Museum, PO Box 159, Geneseo, NY 14454, near his home in Lancaster, NY.

FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom sent his 1940 vintage National Guard blouse, complete with ribbons and decorations, to the Friends of the Eighth Air Force, Kilmarnock, Scotland. Plus an assortment of photos, books and catalogs.

stored on the base. The museum is expected to cost \$20 million. Members interested in making a contribution may write to The Friends of the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ, England.

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