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

VOL. 7 NO. 4

FLAK NEWS

OCTOBER 1992

Nashville Was A "Show Stopper"

Hawaii Tour

Hurricane Iniki wiped out 398th plans to visit Kauai next February, but not to worry! The Hawaii Tour is still on. We will be on Molokai, instead. See the special Travel House brochure inside.

New Roster

A new membership roster was authorized by the Board of Directors. It should be available by the first of the year. Corrections to current addresses, ZIP's, apartment numbers, etc., should be sent immediately to FLAK NEWS.

"Remembrances"

Another reprinting of the book "398th Bomb Group Remembrances" was authorized by the Board of Directors at Nashville. The books should be available by Christmas. Send your orders to Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740. Cost per book is \$22.00, postpaid.

Special Print

A new air combat painting featuring a 398th plane has been created by an English artist. A limited number of prints are for sale. See Page 12.

Dues Alert

Take note, the "new" dues system kicks in this month. Only those members living in the following states have dues notices inserted inside FLAK NEWS —

Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Washington DC and all "offshore" locations.

The next notices will be inserted in the January issue.



"Eat Your Heart Out, Barry Tyler"

ELAINE TYLER, "honourable secretary" of the Friends of the 398th at Nuthampstead, England, was so overwhelmed after her B-17 ride at Nashville that she FAX'd a letter to her husband, Barry, back in England, telling of her ride in the Fortress cockpit. Her letter began with, "Eat your heart out, Barry Tyler, guess what I just did?"

NEW REUNION RECORD

The theme of the spectacular stage show aboard the River Boat General Jackson, was "Show Stopper." A throw-back of those marvelous Broadway and Hollywood shows of days gone by.

And the theme of the ninth annual 398th Bomb Group reunion at Nashville, Tennessee last September could also be — "SHOW STOPPER."

My, it was a good one.

And would you believe an attendance figure of 582?

Move over, Oshkosh, WI, 1990. Nashville, 1992 now holds the record for the best attended 398th reunion.

The overwhelming turnout was only one feature of the four-day event that produced enough "Show Stoppers" to cause Larry Paul to shake his head and ask — "How are we going to top this?"

Continued On Page 3

Einst kamen sie mit Bomben, heute in Freundschaft

Verband der ehemaligen Mitglieder des 398. Fliegerschwadrons der USA besuchte Merseburg

BY ULJANA WUTTIG
Mitteldeutsche Zeitung

Translation By Insa Kipping, German Consulate, Seattle

Merseburg, Germany — It has been 48 years since they came to Merseburg with their bombs. It was war then. Hitler-Germany had declared war on the world. And the world responded. Dreadful bombardments rattled each and every night over German cities. Thousand of people perished, were wounded, lost family members, lost their homes.

“As dreadful as the war was for the Germans, it was also dreadful for us. It was hell 30,000 feet above,” recalls Les Veley.

“We were afraid that the Flak would get us, they were quite accurate,” says the 71-year-old Veley. “We hated Adolf Hitler, we did not hate the Germans down there. We came with the sole target of destroying the production line at the Leuna plant,” the veteran of the 398th Bomb Group remembers. “We did not want to destroy the city or kill the people.”

A surge of memories came alive last weekend when former members of the 398th visited Merseburg. The 75 guests from the United States visited Germany on a goodwill tour.

In the presence of the deputy mayor Jürgen Glietsch and other dignitaries from the city, the guests planted a tree, an American linden, at the Crooked Gate in Merseburg as a symbol of their intention to reconcile for the damages of WWII.

“During the past two years when this trip to Merseburg was in the planning, we were asked ‘Why Merseburg?’ ” recalls Dick Frazier, during his address at the Crooked Gate. “Most people could not understand us, why we wanted to go to Merseburg. But one person understood and said, ‘Your trip to Merseburg will bring a meaningful closure, maybe a new beginning in your relations to the citizens of Merseburg,’ ” Frazier added.

“Once we brought the war to Merseburg with our Flying Fortresses. Today we come as friends, as members of a world community which got so much closer. Our world got too small for another war. Why Merseburg? We want to see with our own eyes that it is better to live in friendship with each other than to be foes,” continued Frazier.

The guests absolved an extensive sightseeing program and were much impressed by the castle and the cathedral. “It is amazing what a wonderful job the citizens did on restoring their town,” pondered Veley.

“Spruce Goose” Moving To Oregon Museum

Visitors to Southern California, at least those coming to Long Beach for a look-see at the “Spruce Goose,” will find that the big, eight-engine Howard Hughes monster, is gone.

No, it did not fly away (it flew only once in 1947) but it is in the process of being hauled away and barged away. Its new home is destined to be in McMinnville, Oregon, southwest of Portland. Piece by piece, section by section, engine by engine, the one-of-a-kind flying boat will be trucked to its new home or barged up the Pacific Coast and the Columbia River to its new home.

This new home will be the Evergreen AirVentur³ Museum at McMinnville, site of Evergreen International Aviation, a private aviation business owned by Delford Smith.

Owner of a fleet of 150 modern aircraft, Smith also owns many vintage aircraft, including a beautifully restored, combat-ready B-17 Flying Fortress.

The “Spruce Goose” is destined to be part of the museum that will house Smith’s vintage collection.



HARRY GRAY and his wife **Alma** pose with a photo memento given Harry at the Nashville reunion for his long time labors on behalf of the 398th. Harry was an original trustee and continues to serve the Association by maintaining the mailing list. The photo was taken by Roger Bradley of England as a B-17 flew over Nuthampstead during the dedications of the memorial in 1982.



DEWEY COOK

“Effie and I would like to say thank you again to Bill & Evelyn Comstock and the 398th for the beautiful gift presented to us at the Farewell Banquet. It was our pleasure to be your chairman for the 1992 reunion. We do hope everyone enjoyed their visit as much as we enjoyed being your hosts.”

—Dewey Cook

Nashville Was A Show Stopper

Continued From Page 1

(Larry Paul is the reunion chairman for the 1993 reunion scheduled for Buffalo, NY on September 15-18, 1993.)

Nashville, 1992 was one "Show Stopper" after another, beginning at the front door of the Marriott Hotel and a staff that knew how to treat a bunch of tired ol' aviators and their families and friends.

It was sort of a "may I help y'all?" kind of attitude on the part of the employees. And the 398th must have impressed the hotel staff, as one restaurant supervisor was heard to say on the final check-out day —

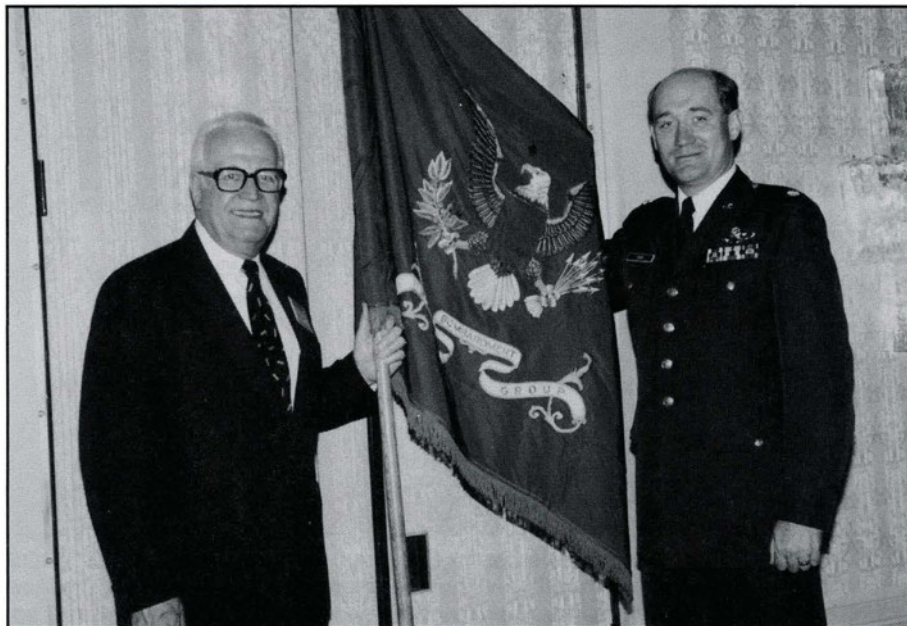
"This group was good."

For some, like the Don Grinter crew, their "Show Stopper" was gathering with crew buddies and family members. There were no less than 16 in their "private" group, including the grandson of one of their deceased members, toggler Kenneth Kaiser. Twelve-year-old Wesley Williams was there, proudly showing off his grandfather's silver wings and decorations.

And no confusion as to who these folks were, what with each wearing a "DON GRINTER'S CREW" T-shirt.

Others had their special gatherings, some with several crew members, some with a few. There were over 65 who were attending their very first reunion.

Wherever one looked — lobby, restaurant, pool, bar, banquet room, in the rooms — older guys became young again as they talked of Nuthampstead, Cambridge, Baldock, Rapid City, Merseburg, Berlin, Stalag Luft, crash-landings, square eggs, marmalade, engine changes, Flak, Foche Wulfs and Colonel Berryhill.



BILL COMSTOCK (left), president of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association, poses with Lt. Col. Douglas Dick, deputy commander of the 398th (Air Refueling) Operations Group. Between them is the 398th Bomb Group commander's flag, which graced the office of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., during the World War II years of 1943-45, and now is in the care of Col. Stephen Lorenz, current 398th CO at Castle Air Force Base, Merced, California. Col. Dick brought the flag to Nashville for the reunion, along with one of the group's KC-135's.

And as if the guys really needed any prompting to revert back to the 1940s, a very special B-17 flew in to put the remembrance frosting on the cake. "Aluminum Overcast" from the EAA Museum in Oshkosh, WI dropped in at nearby Smyrna Airport and was made available for viewing — inside as well as outside.

This was the surprise promised several months ago by the 398th Board of Directors. The 398th, which raised over \$30,000 to pay for exterior cleaning and painting in 1989 (in 398th colors) guaranteed the

"mission" to Nashville with a \$5,000 contribution.

And that's not all!

With EAA pilot and 398th officer Hal Weekley handling the details, the Aluminum Overcast was made available for passenger rides on the final day of the reunion, Sunday, September 20, at a cost of \$1,000 per passenger!

Would there be any takers? Absolutely! No less than ten signed on for the rare opportunity —

Bill Comstock, 602 pilot and 398th president.

Howard Traeder, 601 pilot.

Bill Carter, 603 Ordnance.

Ralph Hall, 601 tail gunner, McCarty crew.

Margaret Sigsworth, widow, 600 co-pilot John Sigsworth.

Gertrude Wells Neff, widow, 601 pilot, William Wells.

Ted Brass, son, 601 lead navigator, Ernest Brass.

Martin and Gloria Chavez, engineer gunner 600, Alhadeff crew.

Elaine Tyler, secretary, Friends of the 398th, Nuthampstead, England.

Each of the ten opted for an invite to ride in the cockpit, which was manned by Dr. Bill Harrison (former owner of the AO), John Baugh, president War Birds of America, and Weekley.

Needless to say, all ten remained "in the clouds" for the remainder of the reunion period.

Comstock reported that he and pilot Harrison "cut the grass" at the Smyrna Field at 280 miles an hour! (With airport permission, added Comstock.)



THE TRIANGLE W is back in business! Once the tail marking of the 398th Bomb Group of the 1st Combat Division, it is now the name of one of the 398th's Air Refueling KC-135's. Pilot Major Walter Ifill is pictured in the cockpit window. Painted beneath the window is "Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., Commander, 398th BG, 1943-1945."

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THE KC-135 crew that flew to Nashville for the group reunion shows off the spectacular Keith Hill print that was presented to the 398th Air Refueling Operations Group at the Farewell Banquet. Left to right are Major Walter Ifill, Capt. Jerry McCrave, Capt. Jeff Fields, T/Sgt Gary Davis, and S/Sgt Brad Hamann. The print was presented to Col. Douglas Dick by 398th vice president Ted Johnston.



M.L. (BOZ) BOSWELL (left) and Tommy Garcia compare B-17 notes in the Memory Room at the Nashville reunion. Garcia was the featured speaker at the Farewell banquet, telling of his experiences as technical director on the movie, "Memphis Belle." Boswell, a 602 pilot and later a Pentagon three-star general, proved to be the champion lap-swimmer at the Marriott Hotel pool.

Comstock, Dr. Harrison "Cut The Grass" at 280 MPH

Continued From Page 3

But not all thrills were at 280 miles an hour in the B-17.

While that might have been the supreme event for the ten lucky ones, 368 opted to enjoy their "grass cutter" at Grand Ole Opry, where Roy Acuff (who was popular in the 40s) still contributes to the Country Western music lore.

The Grand Ole Opry Show Stopper came in the form of the old gospel song, "How Great Thou Art."

And another 301 opted for an evening on the stern-wheeler, General Jackson. The 398th was by far the largest group among the 800 on board who enjoyed a cruise down the river along with great dinner and stage show.

And adding his own version to the Show Stopper on stage was a "volunteer" from the audience who turned out to be John Hardy, formerly a tail gunner on the 603 Tbm Matthews crew. Hardy upstaged a much younger "volunteer" with his smooth, slow, solo dance routine.

And another "volunteer" also came from the 398th group — Sally Mackie, grand daughter of Mrs. Maria Hunter. Brought to the stage as "straight man" for the ventriloquist, the voice that came out of her mouth hardly matched the demeanor of a "sweet, young thing."

Baugh, a Nashville businessman and president of the War Birds of America, told the Welcome Banquet of his exciting introduction to flying in a Stearman trainer. After which followed adventures with a WW II Corsair and later with a P-51 Mustang, culminating with his romance

with the B-17.

He was introduced to the Aluminum Overcast by Hal Weekley and is now one of the pilots who brings it out of the Oshkosh hanger occasionally for such occasions as the 398th reunion. He identified the Fortress as —

"A very cooperative airplane."

Lt. Col. Douglas Dick, deputy commander of the 398th (Air Refueling) Operations Group at Castle AFB, California, told the gathering how proud his organization was in "hooking up with a class outfit." In the Air Force reorganization that resulted in the "resurrection" of the old 398th, Dick explained that they wanted to be identified with an organization that not only had impressive World War II credentials, but also was alive and active today.

"Thank you for the heritage you have given us," said Col. Dick. "I hope you can be as proud of us as we are of you."

CONTRAILS — *The banquet table reservation system, long time coming, was most successful thanks to Bob & Mildred Kuchta (sorry for the glitch on the final night) ... the lady who sang the "America The Beautiful" duet with Dick Frazier was Betty Carter, Evelyn Comstock's sister; Dick signed her up for next year in Buffalo ... Frank Morrison brought his WW II Master Sergeant uniform to the reunion again, and why not? It still fits ... more than a few ex-398th members were familiar with the KC-135, including 600 Squadron leader Bill Markley, who spent seven years in the cockpit of the converted 707 ... James (Al) Davidson, one*

of the better golfers who tested the Two Rivers course, passed around a bunch of 8th Air Force 50th anniversary mementos that he made: a penny with "1942" on one side and "1992" on the other ... There is one less B-17 out there these days, the Florida hurricane scattering parts and pieces of "Great Balls of Fire" from its home at Tamiami Airport ... Jack Wintersteen is our PX officer, but Joe and Rozanne Joseph are his No. 1 and 2 PX peddlers; if the PX supplies were diminished it was because of those two (got any 603 caps left, Joe?) ... who was it who wanted a copy of the audio tape, "Write It Down?" Send your \$5 to FLAK NEWS ... who got the cheapest ride to Nashville? How about Bruce Daily and Joe Tolbert, who hitched rides with Col. Dick and his KC-135 from Castle AFB ... the son of Michael O. Ryan, 602 navigator, would like to contact any of his dad's former crew members; Ryan went down on his very first mission, flying with the Arthur Shirk crew; contact FLAK NEWS ... the Friends of the 398th at Nuthampstead, always looking ahead, are now looking to acquire a Nissen hut and turn it into a 398th museum ... and would you believe that the Friends are already making plans for another Yank invasion in 1994? ... at least a few people inquired about the FLAK NEWS editor's 1964 Pontiac Tempest; sorry, too far a drive from Seattle to Nashville, but two weeks before the reunion the aging car's odometer hit 500,000 miles.

NASHVILLE REUNION ATTENDEES

Here are the names of the 299 members who registered for the Nashville reunion. With wives, friends and guests, the count came to 582, a reunion record. There were 48 cancellations for various reasons, which might otherwise have pushed the count to 630.

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| -A- | Peter Dimich | David Lawler | Arnold Schneider |
| John Abernathy | Stan Diner | John Lesko | William Schwan |
| Dan Adams | Henry Dingus | Roy Leukhardt | Bill Scott |
| Nunzio Addabbo | David Doerfler | George Leung | Frank Scribner |
| Kenneth Akins | Wayne Doerstler | Polk Love | Charles Seal |
| John Alfano | J.B. Dollar | Dave Lowe | Lyndell Sellers |
| John Allare | David Duncombe | -M- | Anthony Severi |
| Bobby Allen | Fred Dunlap | Bernard MacKenzie | Eldon Severson |
| Charles Anderson | Donald Dunn | Basil MacPhail | John Shafer |
| Randolph Anderson | William Durst | Mark Magnan | Margaret Sigsworth |
| Phil Arbogast | -E- | James Mairs | Anton Sistek |
| Edward Arbuthnot | Dalton Ebbeson | Joe Mansell | Aaron Slavin |
| Ray Armor | Dallas Ebest | Bill Markley | John Smith |
| -B- | Joseph Elick | Walter Marsh | Harold Spangler |
| Adrian Bacon | Vaughn Erickson | Charles Marshall | Joe Spechuilli |
| Louis Baffaro | -F- | William Martin | Robert Stachura |
| Bud Bailey | Jerry Fields | August Martone | Philip Stahlman |
| Kenneth Barnett | Maurice Fletcher | John Matecki | Harold Stallcup |
| John Baumeister | Carl Foster | John Maxfield | Raymond Stange |
| Morris Baxter | Bill Frankhouser | Edward McCormack | Bob Steele |
| Ben Beck | Clarence Franks | John McCormick | Mike Stenstrom |
| John Bell | Richard Frazier | Harry McDougall | Thomas Stitz |
| John Bernard | Willis Frazier | Ralph McIntyre | Lewis Stoffer |
| Harold Bestervelt | -G- | W.A. McLaughlin | Lloyd Stovall |
| Cleo Bickford | Merwin Genung | Robert McMichael | Leonard Streifeld |
| Albert Bissin | Morgan Gibson | Frank Meden | Jane Studor |
| Robert Blacker | Allen Gidcumb | Bob Miceli | Gilbert Sulkey |
| Wally Blackwell | Federica Gonzales | Alex Miles | Charles Sutton |
| Houston Booth | George Graham | Adelyn Mills | Dennis Swarmer |
| M.L. Boswell | Harold Grass | Catherine Mitchell | Morris Swed |
| John Brandstatter | Harry Gray | Jerry Monagin | Charles Swjantek |
| Ted Brass | Richard Greene | Ray Moore | -T- |
| John Britton | Richard Griffin | Bob Morrison | Ray Talbott |
| Raymond Brokaw | Donald Grinter | Frank Morrison | Joseph Tarr |
| Henry Brooks | -H- | Russell Morrison | Tom Tatarian |
| Dale Brown | Selmer Haakenson | -N- | William Taylor |
| Paul Brown | Forrest Hagedorn | Gertrude Neff | Roy Test |
| Lewis Burke | David Haight | Bob Nelson | Wilber Timm |
| Charles Busbee | Robert Hale | Harry Nelson | Joseph Tola |
| James Bussard | Ralph Hall | Marshall Nemer | Joseph Tolbert |
| -C- | Jim Hanauer | Donald Nilles | Carl Tope |
| Roger Campbell | John Harbauer | Elliot Novek | Howard Traeder |
| Robert Cantwell | John Hardy | -O- | Philip Trenkle |
| Richard Carter | Bob Hart | Robert O'Brien | Albert Turney |
| William Carter | Howard Hawkins | Allen Ostrom | Elaine Tyler |
| Kenneth Catterson | Frank Henning | Harry Overbaugh | -U- |
| Leo Cerovski | George Hershberger | Tom Overturf | Robert Uhl |
| Marvin Chavez | George Hilliard | -P- | Robert Ullom |
| Bill Clack | Jean Hinkle | Percy Paget | -V- |
| Harold Clyne | Blair Holmes | Samuel Palant | Thomas Vanner |
| Don Coffee | Raymond Hosbach | Archie Paris | John Veenschoten |
| Marvin Coffee | Earl Hoynes | William Parker | Lester Veley |
| Bob Collins | Robert Huey | Larry Paul | Donald Vredenburg |
| Ray Collins | James Humbert | Guy Perkins | -W- |
| Bill Comstock | Maria Hunter | Henry Phillips | Robert Walters |
| John Contento | -J- | Howard Pinner | Leland Watson |
| Dewey Cook | James Jenkins | Wally Poole | Henry Webb |
| William Cook | Don Jillie | James Powell | Joe Webb |
| Herbert Cooper | Dennis Johanson | Lynn Prather | Harold Weekley |
| Loren Cosens | Ted Johnston | Edmund Proctor | Robert Weidig |
| William Costanzo | Edward Jones | Jesse Prugh | Frank Weiler |
| Robert Cron | Floyd Jones | -R- | Horace Weymer |
| Dorothy Crouch | Philip Jones | Max Rahe | William Wheeler |
| Joseph Cucco | Joe Joseph | Howard Randall | William Whitaker |
| Stephen Cullinan | Dorothy Junker | Robert Rebillot | Jim White |
| Lowell Culver | -K- | Russell Reed | Fred Whitman |
| Byron Cunningham | Lloyd Keating | Theo Regello | Robert Wiggins |
| Russell Currier | Steve Kiacz | Bill Robb | Leo Wilcox |
| -D- | Charles King | J.P. Roberge | William Williams |
| Philip D'Addio | George Klux | Paul Roderick | William Wimer |
| Bruce Daily | Robert Knowles | Dwight Ross | Jack Wintersteen |
| Hollis Dalton | Frank Kremnec | Robert Rowland | Frederick Wismar |
| Lawrence Darcy | Robert Kuchta | Henry Rudow | -Y- |
| James Davidson | Rudy Kurish | James Runnion | Frank Yarmoski |
| William Davidson | Bernard Kuse | John Ryan | Raymond Ytuarte |
| Jack Davis | -L- | -S- | -Z- |
| William Dean | Hal Lamb | Wendell Saferite | Samuel Zins |
| Paul Deininger | Bob Lamons | Ronnie Sammonds | Michael Zozzaro |
| Herbert Desh | Marvin Laufer | Walter Sampson | Conrad Zufall |
| Mason Dicks | Arthur Laughlin | Conrad Samuelson | |
| Gerard DiGuissepe | Sylvia Law | Loren Schipull | |

Oahu & Molokai

Exciting 398th Tour To Hawaii

Tours to England and the continent are becoming old hat for the 398th, but now comes something special!

HAWAII, February 9-18, 1993.

The ten-day tour has been designed to offer an interesting combination of Waikiki and Oahu coupled with the laid-back charm of one of the least known islands, Molokai.

The tour will be under the leadership of Barbara Fish of Travel House, Inc., Seattle. Fish also led last summer's highly successful tour to Germany and England. She can be reached toll-free at 1-800-423-5454, if special information is required. Otherwise, all details are provided in the enclosed brochure.

While the tour originates and is priced via Northwest Air Lines out of Seattle, arrangements may be made with Travel House to use other more convenient routes and schedules.

It should be noted that Oahu and Molokai suffered very little damage from Hurricane Iniki as compared to the island of Kauai.

Two former 398th pilots, Richard (Rip) Rohrer of the 600th and Don Griffin of the 601st, live in Honolulu. Rohrer's son, Chip, is an instructor glider pilot at Dillingham Field, which the group will visit while on Oahu.

Glider rides are an option on Oahu, while Malokai offers something unique — mule rides.

Golf is also an option on both islands.

The tour operator needs to receive reservation commitments by early December to hold space at the two hotels.

Mahalo!

Wiggins Named To Fund Board

Bob Wiggins, who headed up the 1988 reunion in Richmond, Virginia, was appointed to the 398th Memorial Fund Board by president Bill Comstock during the Nashville business meetings.

"We are trustees of over \$30,000 in Memorial funds," said Comstock. "We are pleased to have a man of Wiggins' banking and finance experience to assist in utilizing this money wisely."

“Boomerang” Struggled To Reach Formation:

English Channel Holds Secret To Doerr Crash

Lyle Doerr, described as “kindly and friendly” by a fellow pilot from the 602nd Squadron, took off on a bombing mission with a make-shift crew on December 30, 1944.

It was not only the tag end of 1944, but it also was to be his final mission before rotating home. Just one more to go!

Half of his crew had already finished up, and after this one he and the others would be U.S.-bound. Doerr had grown up in southeastern North Dakota, where he attended a one-room country school. He graduated from Monanago, ND High School and attended Valley City, ND State Teachers College before volunteering for the Air Force.

“Boomerang,” as his B-17 was called, never reached the group formation led by 602 CO Col. Pete Rooney and lead pilot Roy Leukhardt.

That Doerr was on the assigned course, or very close to it, can be ascertained by the quadrants assigned to the site of his crash in the English Channel. 50 33' Long; 00 25' Lat. About 16 miles from “Beachy Head” on the southeast English coast and very near to the famous “White Cliffs of Dover.”

The last group check point before swinging east and on to the Continent was Dungeness. It can be assumed that Doerr was still trying to find his squadron formation. It can also be assumed that he was experiencing difficulties. While the rest of the group was lining up on the next check point on the coast of France, Doerr was plunging into the Channel. Beachy Head is just south of Dungeness.

That “Boomerang” did crash and burn in the Channel has been established by eye-witnesses. Flying in the area that

morning in search of an RAF Lancaster four-engined bomber that disappeared the night before was a “Walrus.”

This was the name given to an ungainly-looking air-sea rescue amphibian. Part boat, part plane with a pusher prop engine mounted between a pair of wings. At the controls were a pair of Australians, Flying Officer Colin Robertson and F/O Robert Kennedy.

Robertson was a decorated pilot from the RAF Coastal Command. He had transferred to ASRSquadron 277 after damaging his lungs in rescuing a mine-sweeper crew, flying a four-engined Sunderland.

The RAF Operations Record Book for December 30, 1944, revealed the following entry under “Summary of Events” —

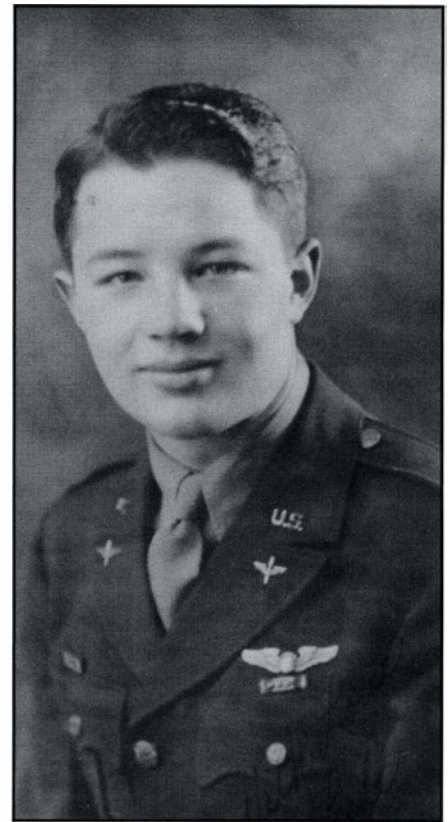
“F/Lt C.G. Robertson, DFC, took off this morning to search position R0412 again but on arriving at the position saw an explosion about four miles ahead. An aircraft was burning on the water and a customer was seen to wave. After landing, several attempts were made to take the customer aboard and F/Lt Robert L. Kennedy jumped into the water to help him, but on reaching the customer he was dead.”

The “customer” who was almost rescued by Kennedy, who himself came near to drowning, was Doerr’s navigator, John Walker.

About an hour later an RAF air-sea rescue high-speed launch commanded by F/O F.R.G. Milton from the port of Newhaven arrived on the scene and was able to retrieve the body of Walker. Six hours later they recovered the bodies of Robert Fox, tail gunner, and Robert Stewart, togglier.

Missing at the time and later presumed

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LYLE DOERR

The Crew

December 30, 1944 Mission

TARGET: Bischofsheim, Germany

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Lyle Doerr</i> | <i>Pilot</i> | <i>So. Madison, SD</i> |
| <i>Giles Teague</i> | <i>Co-Pilot</i> | <i>Burlington, NC</i> |
| <i>John Walker</i> | <i>Nav.</i> | <i>Eugene, OR</i> |
| <i>Robert Stewart</i> | <i>Togglier</i> | <i>Gary, IN</i> |
| <i>Joe Kiska</i> | <i>Engineer</i> | <i>Duquesne, PA</i> |
| <i>Joe Gaiser</i> | <i>Radio</i> | <i>Buffalo, NY</i> |
| <i>Hazen Earle</i> | <i>Ball Turret</i> | <i>Everett, MA</i> |
| <i>Joe Bergant</i> | <i>Waist</i> | <i>Murray, UT</i> |
| <i>Thomas Fox</i> | <i>Tail</i> | <i>Baltimore, MD</i> |

Stewart, Kiska, Gaiser and Earle were not regular members of the Doerr 602 crew, but were assigned to Doerr for this one mission. Other regular crew members who had concluded their respective tours were George Hennrikus, bombardier; Joe Mansell, engineer; Herbert Bugbee, radio operator; Landis Frantz, ball turret gunner. Gunner Victor Klimaszefski had been wounded earlier, excused from further combat and rotated home.

Stewart, Earle and Gaiser were members of the Stanley Allen (later V.H. Rust) crews; and Kiska came from the Franklin Taylor crew.

The bodies of Stewart and Fox were sent home. Walker is buried at the American Military Cemetery at Cambridge, England.

The names of Doerr, Kiska and Gaiser are inscribed on the wall of the Missing at Cambridge. The name of Teague is inscribed on the Wall of the Missing at Henri-Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium and the name of Earle is inscribed on the Wall of the Missing at Ardennes in Belgium.

Klimaszefski (Klemens) is deceased. His widow, Victoria, along with Mansell, Frantz, Hennrikus and Bugbee, are all members of the current 398th Association.

A sister to Doerr, Sylvia Law, lives in Huntington Beach, Calif. A nephew to Teague, C.R. Staley, lives in Burlington, N.C.



JOE MANSELL was able to honor the members of his crew that crashed in the Channel in 1944 by throwing a bouquet of roses into the waters while on the 398th group tour last June. James Powell also participated in the ceremony as three members of his crew also were aboard the Doerr aircraft.

SQUADRON FORMATION

LEAD SQUADRON — 602

ROONEY
Leukhardt

Shafer Templeman
Van Opdorp

Zimmerman Comstock

Schipull Doerr Peters Andrako

Shaffer

Beam McCormick

LOW SQUADRON — 601

GENUNG
Marias

Taylor Curtis

Palant Hunt

Watkins Marchbanks Landrum Bornstedt

Andrews

Zinter Magness

HIGH SQUADRON — 603

MOORE
Rehme

Pinner Selby

Johnson Steele

Thomas Tarr DeCleene Overton

Hyndman

Aniello Stravinski



JOHANNA SIENKIEWICZ of Oxford, England, was responsible for researching much of the story about the Doerr crew, particularly the role of the RAF in the rescue attempt. Johanna, Ron Setter and Peter Halliday are active in locating downed World War II aircraft.

THE RAF Walrus was the plane used in the rescue attempt of Lyle Doerr's B-17 crew in the English Channel on December 30, 1994. The ungainly amphibian was designed by England's R.J. Mitchell, who also designed the Spitfire.



December 30, 1944, Was Not A Good Day For Flying

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dead were Doerr; co-pilot Giles Teague; engineer Joe Kiska; radio operator Joe Gaiser; ball turret gunner Hazen Earle and waist gunner Joe Bergant.

Three months after this rescue attempt Robertson himself was lost in another air-sea rescue attempt in the Channel. His unit was based at Hawkinge, an RAF Spitfire field near Dover.

The day Doerr and his crew went down, December 30, was not a good day flying. And the weather could well have contributed to "Boomerang's" demise.

A gunner who kept one of those "forbidden" combat diaries wrote these words about the mission —

"There was an hour's delay before take-off due to icing on the ships and on the runways."

Another reference to icing was made in his diary the week before (December 24) recalling the two planes had crashed on take-off.

"Before we could even begin to taxi we ran into engine trouble. We had to return to the hardstand to change plugs in one engine."

"Once they were replaced we again taxied out to the runway for our take-off. After waiting for a few minutes there was a sharp explosion, seemingly in or near our ship. Charley came back to the waist to see if a round had gone off in one of our guns."

"The explosion sounded so close, but it actually came from a plane that crashed and blew up beyond the runway. Two men were killed. Even before that accident another B-17 went down on take-off. All the men got out."

Thus, a week later, there was concern about icing.

But there was more concern about the German offensive in the Ardennes so it was critical that the mission not be scrubbed. Another "forbidden" diary entry —

"Our target at Mainz was a group of ordnance buildings on the outskirts of town. A community called Bishofsheim. This plant has been producing arms which were supplying Gen. Rundstedt's army. All the missions this past week were in support of the American counter-offensive which is now being called the Battle of the Bulge."

It was a tense period at Station 131 at this time. The news from the front had not been good and the airmen were anxious for the weather to clear so they could take to the air in support of the hard-pressed ground forces.

More than a few 398th ground personnel had been shipped out to join combat infantry units fighting at the Bulge.

The weather on the Continent was "snow, cold and fog," ideal for the Nazi surprise offensive. And if the weather on the continent was bad, it was much the same in England. It was tricky enough just to get into the air, let alone finding one's squadron high above the "London Fog" that sometimes reached 15,000 or more feet.

These were the conditions that existed on December 30, 1944.

What actually prevented Doerr and his "Boomerang" from joining this 602nd Squadron on that fateful day is forever buried deep in the cold waters of the English Channel.

Beachy Head. 50 33' Long; 00 25' Lat.

Forever In My Mind

Do you hear it?

Do you hear it in the air?

The faint drone of engines

Planes taking off from an airdrome somewhere

Can you smell it?

Can you smell it in the air?

The stench of gunpowder and gas and sweat

The smell of a battle out there

Can you see it?

Can you see it in the air?

The ghostly image of a bomber

Limping home from a mission over there

These recollections are forever imprinted

In my mind

Time will not let them rest

Tho' I try to leave them behind

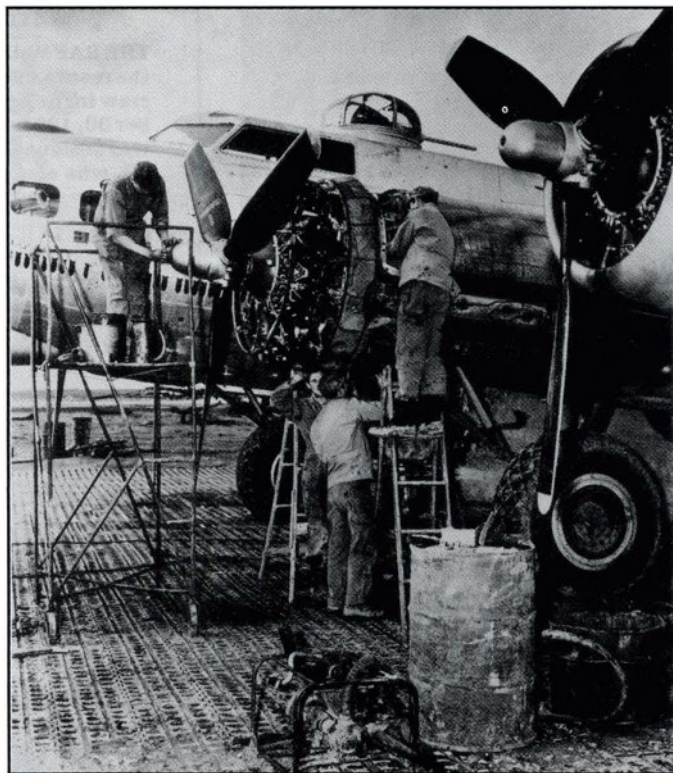
I was there and lived those days

I will always hear it

And smell it

And see it in my mind

This nostalgic poem was written by Jill Chandler of Spokane, Washington. Several of her poems have been previously printed in FLAK NEWS. Her "Lady Of His Dreams," a tribute to one man's B-17 memories, also appeared in the last issue of 8th Air Force News. "Forever In My Mind" was recited at the Nashville reunion by Sallie Mackie, granddaughter of Maria Hunter.



Yes, They Really Did All That

ENGINE CHANGES on the Fortresses were part of the Station 131 story as remembered by Tony Clark in his story on the next page. Sometimes engine changes were performed in the warmth and leisure of the daylight hours, but other times in the cold of night so as to have the B-17 ready for an early morning mission.



The Queen Was Star Attraction At 398th Reunion

THE ALUMINUM OVERCAST, the 398th's "own" B-17 from the EAA in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, was the star attraction at the annual reunion. Shuttle busses from the Marriott Hotel to the Smyrna Airport were kept busy all day as attendees took their turns probing the interior from nose to tail. And then there were ten who opted for the ultimate — 20-minute rides at \$1,000 each. Was it worth it? All agreed, "You bet!"

Did They Really Do All That?

Full Throated Cyclones Roar Again As Men Of Grey Become Young Again At Station 131

By Tony Clark
Langley Lower Green, England

It is often said time heals all wounds ... and memories of good times outweigh the bad.

So 50 years on, how could any of these grey haired men of faltering step once have been the combatants of the sky? Then, so far from home with their very life in jeopardy, these airborne warriors had faced the foe and delivered a mortal blow carrying the war deep into the enemy vitals. Then to return to base at Nuthampstead scarred or shattered but glad to hear the welcome sound of tyre squeal on familiar concrete. Were these those men? Look deep into those eyes. Oh, yes, it is them, returned!

And what of Station 131, Nuthampstead, 50 years on? The woods and fields have returned, little outcrops of concrete and strips of runway remain. On an early, misty morning in November quietly stand where once the runways stretched in all directions. Are you sure that you cannot hear the sound of youthful conversation mingled with the smell of exhaust and fuel? The full

throated roar of four 1200-hp Cyclones rising to a crescendo as a fully-laden B-17 lifts off the runway. The imagination plays tricks with us all but to these men it is as real as if 48 years had not happened and they were back here at Nuthampstead.

Behind all those flying men were those who serviced both men and machine, those who directed and protected, fed and watered. But what of them? In quiet corners of the base, overgrown and weed-choked, lay non-descript rusty pieces of tin, steel and corroded aluminum, born of the air war. Who knows what part they played? All those men left a year of their life here, but what a year! Packed into it was every single human emotion, a momentous year, never to be repeated or forgotten.

So, local people remember, older people are grateful and younger people look on in wonder and say —

“Did they really do all that ...?”



What's Christmas Without A Tree?

TOM OVERTURF of the 603rd Squadron orderly room tried his best to give his buddies a Merry Christmas back at Nuthampstead in December of 1944. The tree was a tad bit scrawny, but the spirit was elegant. This was one of the many memories that prompted Tony Clark to ask the question, “Did they really do all that?”

In those long-ago years when we bombed the city, I must imagine that the people of Merseburg felt many fearful reverberations in their bodies. When that "Dom" organ played for us, I felt the vibration through my body; but this time the sounds produced a feeling of awe and peace and thanksgiving, not the trembling vibration of wartime. I felt that this was the embodiment of why we had returned to that ancient and well remembered city.

—JEANNE GRAHAM, ST. CLAIR SHORES, MICHIGAN

Dear Friends of the 398th —

You wonderful people planned and executed the finest reunion for the 398th that I have ever attended. Your warm greeting was quite different from our reception in April 1944 when we arrived at Station 131 for combat. We were greeted at the time by "Lord Haw Haw" and "Axis Sally." Then came a strafing attack on our flight line. Quite unfriendly.

My daughter, Barbara Ann, and I enjoyed every minute of our stay in England and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all for their warm hospitality.

It is my hope that you will visit me in San Antonio, Texas, sometime in the near future. At least prior to the time this old trooper has to march off into the "sunset."

Please extend my sincere thanks to all the friends of the 398th.

—Col. Earl Berryhill, San Antonio, Texas

The absolute highlight of the trip. The welcome by the "Friends of the 398th." The sight of the Jeep with the "Welcome Back" sign, the caravan leading us to the Village Hall, the warmth and the sincerity of the hosts and the hundreds of people who came to the dance, the picnic, the barbeque, the individual people who came up to the men to ask for autographs.

The local people we met at the pubs we went to with our host family. All wanted to share their recollections of those days, oh so long ago, when life was so terrible for those living with the threat of the bombing of the home town. And yet, it was such a simpler time. The number of young people who have such an interest in collecting information and after being given answers to their question, and signing their books, the "Thank you, sir: It is an honor to shake your hand, sir;" was an overwhelming response.

Of course, the slide presentation of the base really brought everything back to life for Elliot. For me, a wife who did not know Elliot during those days, it gave me an even greater understanding of life at Nuthampstead. It truly proved that "a picture is worth a thousand words."

—Connie Novek, Wayne, New Jersey

We hope that you are well settled down at home again after your strenuous tour, which we greatly enjoyed. It was nice to meet so many new people as well as many old friends.

We have settled down to normal life again now. It is less hectic than when you were here, but sometimes seems a bit dull."

—Robert & Françoise Dimsdale, Barkway, England

Just wanted to say a great big, warm "thank you" for the obvious work you all did on the trip. It was all we expected and a lot more; the planning was wonderful and we surely did cover a lot of territory. Fabulous! A word that is used a lot, but it does the trick in this case.

We had many, many memorable experiences and I will send you mine. Russ Reed will come along as he has to sort them out. There were so many. Mine was going up in the plane at the air field and watching Russ find the landmarks of the old field, and to hear him say that the last time he had seen that field from the air was November 2, 1944, the day he was shot down. There were others for me, but it was his trip and the emotion of that moment was most strong. I have heard and heard about all the war, the 398th — and prison camp — but seeing the areas and being there make it very, very real.

—Millie McMillan, Stone Mountain, Georgia

Please accept this donation to the 398th Memorial Fund in memory of Dale & Dorothy Brown's son, Larry.

—Bill & Evelyn Comstock, Fairfax, Virginia

Enclosed please find a check for \$10. This represents our rebate for the A-2 jacket purchased from us by your Vincent Moore, Jr.

—Bradley Associates, Montgomery, Alabama

I would like to tell everyone on the Germany-England tour how honored I was to have been asked to accompany you and serve as your interpreter. Those were moving and memorable days for me, especially returning to my native Merseburg. Having read and translated all those German press stories after the tour, I can assure you all that the people of Germany, especially in Merseburg and Neuss, hold the 398th in high esteem.

—Insa Kipping, Seattle German Consulate

Visit To Crash, Burial Site Stirs Crew Memories



The story of how a memorial to Robert Campbell was created in a dramatic setting on the South Umpquah River in southern Oregon was told in the July 1991 issue of FLAK NEWS.

A sequel chapter was written last June at the very site that marked the death plunge of the 601 pilot's B-17 in Germany. And at the site where he was temporarily laid to rest pending the final outcome of World War II.

Fellow crew members Phil Arbogast and Ben Core, along with their wives and Wally Blackwell, accepted an invitation from the burgermeister of Mucheln to see these areas first hand. Udo Werzel, the "mayor" of this city not far from "dreaded" Merseburg, hosted the five 398th visitors in a 16th century building, then led the party to the crash site. Core described the trip as follows.

"It was located a short distance outside the city. We left the main road and then proceeded over a dirt road to a cleared area where we parked. We then walked down a

bicycle trail a couple of hundred feet and then through tall grass, weeds and vines to the middle of a cleared area bounded on one side by an embankment which slanted rather steeply upward about 45 feet with trees and bushes.

"The guide showed us the direction the plane came into the area and struck the ground. Oddly, the heading was toward Merseburg, rather than away from it. But of course, we all remembered that it was on fire and out of control when we bailed out.

"Then we went to this lovely, old cemetery where we were shown the plot where Campbell was buried. There were a dozen graves in this section, one being empty."

Campbell was taken from this place and interred at the American Military Cemetery at Margraten, Holland.

A stop at Margraten a few days later completed the journey that would honor their fallen comrade.

A Visit To His 1944 Crash Site:

48 Years Later Rudow A Celebrity in Belgium

The following is a translation by Janssens Marcel of an article that appeared in the Duffel, Belgium, newspaper following a visit to Duffel by Hank & Louise Rudow. The Rudows left the 398th Bomb Group Germany-England Tour for a two-day visit to the site where he crash landed his 602 Squadron B-17 in 1944.

Duffel, Belgium —

On Monday afternoon, June 22, Henry Rudow, captain of the American B-17 which crashed in the Klokkestraat after a raid on Cologne on October 5th, 1944, has been welcomed at the town hall together with the Dr. Holster family. Afterwards they all went to the scene where the plane crashed.

It was by chance and thanks to intermediary Janssens Marcel from Berlare that Henry Rudow from Albuquerque, New Mexico, got in touch with Dr. A. Holsters. He was first to arrive near the crashed plane. "Almost beheaded, because the plane flew very low," said the doctor from Duffel.

The plane had been hit on its way back from Cologne, after which all four engines broke down. The captain had already ordered to throw out all the ammunition, and most of the crew had left the plane. One of them even got caught in the the church tower of Duffel with his parachute.

The pilot tried to bring down the plane but that wasn't exactly a rest cure. Nevertheless he managed to avoid the village and finally crashed in the Klokkestraat. There were still four crew members in the plane who thought to be in occupied territory. One of them was injured in his back, one of them tried to reach Waarloos, another stayed with the injured and Captain Rudow sat on Dr. Holster's motorbike to get to the English hospital.

Colonel Bado Arthur James, leader of the 109th British General Hospital, became freeman of the city on November 11th, 1945. All this was commemorated during Captain Rudow's visit. He was a member of the 398th Bomb Group and 22 years old when the crash occurred. Later on Mrs. Tiberghem, who looked after the injured, joined the company.

This was an unforgettable remembrance for Rudow who now is 70 years old. During the meeting he received a tin plate from Mrs. Clem Van Winkel, mayor of Duffel, as a souvenir of his visit to Duffel.

Five Crew Members Bailed Out

Others on Rudow's crew for the October 5, 1944 mission were Dan Whitley, co-pilot; Dick Hall, navigator; Bill Neville, bombardier; Clarence Davis, engineer; Lloyd Slingsby, radio operator; Richard Secci, ball turret; Wauldean Like, waist gunner; and Ray Langford, tail gunner.

When it became apparent that the plane was going down, five opted to bail out: Neville, Slingsby, Secci, Like and Langford. Hall and Davis rode out the crash landing in the radio room. Rudow and Whitley guided the B-17 to the earth, selecting "the front yard of the brick building with the white square and red cross on the roof."

Davis injured his back in the crash-landing, and spent two weeks at the nearby British hospital. The others returned to Station 131 the next day. It was the crew's last mission.

Rudow, during his visit to Duffel, found some bits and pieces of his old B-17 at the 1944 crash site.

"This was a moving experience for us," said Rudow, "and we are most grateful to Marcel for his help in arranging the visit to Duffel."



HANK RUDOW (second from left) was taken to the site where he crash landed his B-17 near Duffel, Belgium, in 1944. His hosts were Mrs. Tiberghem (left) an eyewitness; Janssens Marcel, who coordinated the visit and Dr. A. Holsters (right) who treated Rudow and his crew after the successful landing. In the background is the transmission tower Rudow brushed with his wing tip in coming down. "The bend in the steel is still there," said Marcel.

A Note From The Chaplain

Dear Friends of the 398th —

I truly appreciate the card you sent me from the Nashville reunion. It was so full of signatures and short messages wishing me well. I must admit it was most welcome and touched my heart. So many names of old friends I love. Marquerite and I regret we could not be present but my back injury has curtailed many activities, mostly travel. I have learned that life happens to us while we are making other plans. Thank you so much for remembering me.

CHAPLAIN JAMES DUVALL, San Pedro, CA



“Close Encounter”

THIS DRAMATIC painting of a 398th B-17 having a “Close Encounter” with an ME-109 is the product of Keith Hill, the “official artist to the United States 8th Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation.” This is one painting in a set of 60 that Hill is creating for the new American Air Museum at Duxford, England. Copies also will hang in the EAA Eagle Hanger in Oshkosh, WI, and at the 8th Air Force Heritage Center in Savannah, GA. Only 250 30” x 20” prints will be sold, signed and numbered by the artist. They may be purchased for \$90.00 each (U.S. funds OK) from Keith Hill, Rushden, Northants NN 10 9XW, England.