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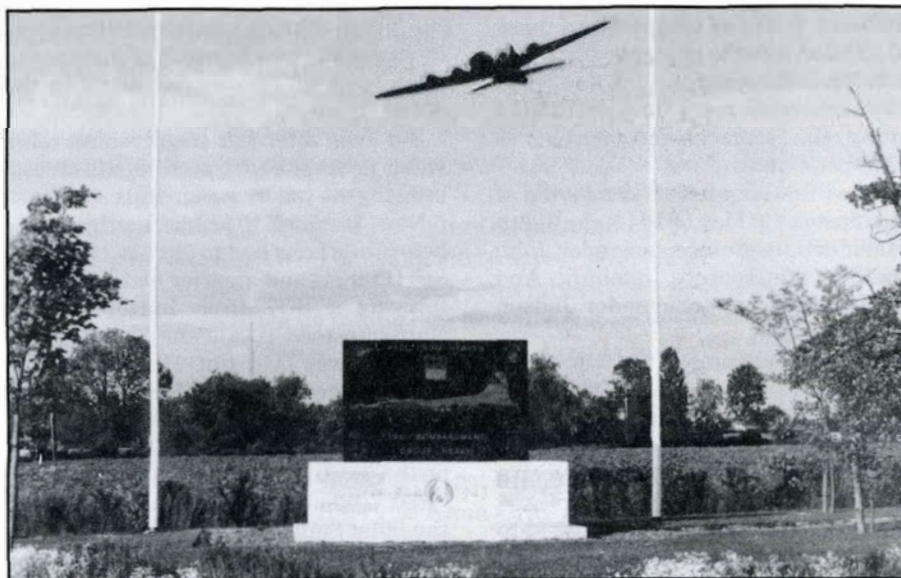
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398TH BOMB. GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8TH AIR FORCE • 1ST AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL. 8 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY 1993



## 398th MEMORIAL FUND RECEIVES LARGE GIFT

A \$20,000 gift has been received by the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association, it has been announced by president Bill Comstock.

"The donor has requested that this money be considered an 'anonymous gift,' which we will honor," said Comstock.

"Further," he added, "it was stipulated that the money be added to the present Memorial Fund, dedicated to the perpetual care and maintenance of our memorial at Nuthampstead, England.

While the Association has been contributing to the Fund since the construction of the memorial in 1982, and will continue to do so, Comstock pointed out that the care and maintenance is actually under the supervision of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The 398th, however, must supply the funds.

The ABMC is responsible for the American military cemeteries and memorials the world over, including the cemetery near Cambridge, where many 398th members

are buried or whose names are on the Wall of the Missing.

Bob Wiggins, who chairs the Memorial Fund Committee along with Ralph Hall and Dick Frazier, announced that the anonymous contribution had swelled the fund to a total of \$51,093.39.

"The interest that will accrue from this money will provide memorial maintenance for many years to come," said Comstock. "We are indeed fortunate to have had such solid support from our members in past years. This new contribution gives us wonderful assurance that our memorial will continue to reflect this pride."

The 398th Memorial was the brainchild of a pair of young Englishmen, Vic Jenkins and Ozzie Osborn. With their encouragement and leadership from England, coupled with that of Herman Hager, a 603 gunner, they combined to get the 398th leadership "excited" about a proper

*Continued On Page 2*

## A Record Turnout At Buffalo?

Like the track and field records that are set and "will never be broken," (but soon are) the 398th reunion attendance record of 582 set last year in Nashville "will never be broken."

But watch out for Buffalo, New York, in September!

This city, site of the 1993 annual reunion, lies within a few hours' driving distance of some of the great population centers of America. The very same population centers where the majority of our 398th Bomb Group members live.

States like New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Massachusetts and New Jersey hold a fourth of the group's membership and can reach Buffalo quickly and easily.

Couple this with the fact that the past 12 months have seen a dramatic increase in the "return of lost souls" and the possibility of an attendance figure of 600 is highly realistic.

Dates for the reunion are Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, September 15-16-17-18, 1993.

Headquarters hotel is the Sheraton Inn, 2040 Walden Ave., at Exit I-90. The "backup" motel is the Microtel, 50 Freeman Road, Williamsville, New York. (Six miles from the Sheraton.)

Reunion Chairman Larry Paul and his committee have been on the job for many months and have organized some very exciting trips and entertainment for the expected (600?) crowd.

Naturally, there will be tours to Niagara Falls. These are scheduled for both Friday and Saturday, September 17 & 18, starting at 9:00 AM each day.

*Continued On Page 3*

# Design Created By Jenkins And Ozzie Osborn

*Continued From Page 1*

memorial at Nuthampstead. Hager died before a firm design was brought out, but Ed Arbutnot, a 601 navigator, contributed a follow-up design.

Both initial designs proved to be too costly for the money available, so Osborn and Jenkins returned to the drawing board and came up with the design that was ultimately accepted. The memorial was placed on land belonging to Robert Dimsdale, but in 1988 the land was officially deeded to the 398th.

The memorial ultimately cost \$15,000, a princely sum considering the few hundred members active at the time of the initial fund raising.

Since the dedication in 1982, membership has grown to over 1,650 plus another 175 offshore. Contributions for the "Memorial Fund" have been received annually with individual dues payments. Additional funds were added with revenues from the book, "398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES."

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## ABMC Reports 398th Memorial As "Excellent"

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Members may still contribute to the Memorial Fund, or to the Fund in memory of a particular person.

Why is money needed for this "care and maintenance?"

The answer comes from treasurer Hall — "Over the years, memorials like ours can easily be neglected and even abandoned. Some around England have already become derelict.

"We are determined not to let this happen.

"The marble is cleaned and treated to prevent corrosion. The engraved lettering re-painted. The grass mowed and trimmed. The walkways tidied. Flowers and shrubs are planted and maintained. American and British flags are flown on special days. The bench installed in memory of David Wells is cleaned and sealed.

"And," he added, "with the investment we have in the memorial, both financially and emotionally, we maintain an adequate insurance policy."

Hall added that our "Friends of the 398th," currently under the leadership of Wilfrid Dimsdale, provide the maintenance skills. The American Battle Monuments Commission inspects the memorial and issues an annual report on the appearance and condition.

"And so far," said Hall, "every report by the ABMC has ended with one word — EXCELLENT."

## Was It "Rough" Early On Or Later?

# STATISTICS ON KIA REVEAL SIMILARITY

"You should have been here when it was rough."

How many times was this little phrase heard by most everyone who ever served in the military?

Including the 398th Bomb Group in WW II.

Surely, by the "new guys" moving into their Nissen hut or tent as they introduced themselves to the "old guys," some just about ready to fly their last mission and then head for home.

Just how "rough" was it at Station 131 in the early going as compared to those final, closing months of combat? At first glance, it would appear that the first crews on the scene were more than justified in greeting the replacements with, "ya shudda been here..."

In those first months after arriving at Nuthampstead in May of 1944, the 398th lost their deputy group commander, John Weibel, on a mission to Hamburg. And then 603 squadron commander Judson Gray over Berlin.

Berlin also accounted for the John Ingram and Ira O'Neal crews.

And then one of the West Point Academy officers who had been recruited by Col. Frank P. Hunter, John Baker, on a short run to Bretteville, France.

The losses and casualties continued to mount, until the KIA toll during those first six months of combat reached 141. An additional seven might be added to this number if the Rapid City training casualties were counted.

But what happened during those months from November, 1944 to May of

1945? Was it just a piece of cake now that the war was winding down somewhat? And the P-51's were now able to accompany the Forts all the way to Merseburg and back.

Most of the surviving Rapid City veterans had been rotated home and the huts and tents now housed replacement crews.

However, the KIA numbers didn't change much.

The toll was 141 for the first six months. The second six months it was 143.

November of 1944 was a grim month for the 398th, with no less than 44 fatalities. Of these, 35 came as result of missions to Merseburg, 20 on one day alone to the 603rd Squadron.

But even after this tragic month there was little respite for the crews still around bringing the war to its merciful conclusion.

New Year's of 1945 had hardly begun before one crew had to ditch in the North Sea (Pinner) and another had crashed in ferrying a B-17 from Burtonwood to Nuthampstead (DeCleene). And before January was over Col. Hunter and the Gonzales crew had gone down over Neuss.

Then there was the horrendous mid-air collision between McCormick and Powell on the way to Berlin. And the unfortunate "RDX" bomb explosion that decimated the 601st Squadron.

The world's first operational jet fighter, Germany's ME-262, also contributed to the "last half" KIA statistics by knocking out the 602 Hubert Beatty Fortress.

So who can really say with any degree of accuracy — "You should have been there when it was rough."

## Our Ground Crews

Here's to the men with the greasy hands,  
Who fuel our planes when we come in to land.  
Who fix the flak damage and stop the leaks,  
Who change the tires and oil the squeaks,  
Tend to the controls to make them fly straight.  
And wait for the planes when the pilots are late.  
Who smooth the scratches, rivet the panels,  
Check "Loud and Clean" on the radio channels.  
Who read off the write-ups and make the repairs,  
Check lines and wires for chafing and tears.  
Who pull the chocks and check the wings,  
And do a million other things,  
That make an aircraft safe and ready to fly.  
So here's a salute to those hard working guys,  
From a group of fliers who too seldom ponder  
About the men who keep us up in the wild blue yonder!



# NIAGARA

*Continued From Page 1*  
Paul points out that these tours will include a crossing into Canada, thus an individual requirement to carry some kind of document attesting to U.S. citizenship.

There will be a stop at Goat Island for a great view of the falls and rapids; a visit to the Power Vista for a view of Niagara Gorge and to learn about the history of electricity in this area. Then into Canada and Niagara-on-the-Lake, the first capital of Canada. Here we'll have time to browse in the shops and pick up some lunch on our own.

Later, a drive along the scenic Niagara Parkway with stops at the Floral Clock and Whirlpool and finally at Table Rock to see the magnificent Canadian Falls.

Then back to the Sheraton by 4:00 PM to tidy up for the evening banquet.

President Bill Comstock will be on the podium as usual to lead the members in the various programs planned for each of the three banquet nights at the Sheraton.

Comstock will greet his "troops" initially on Thursday, 2:00 PM, for the annual business meeting. The ladies, meanwhile, will be at the nearby Walden Galleria Mall for some special entertainment (in addition to the shopping possibilities.)

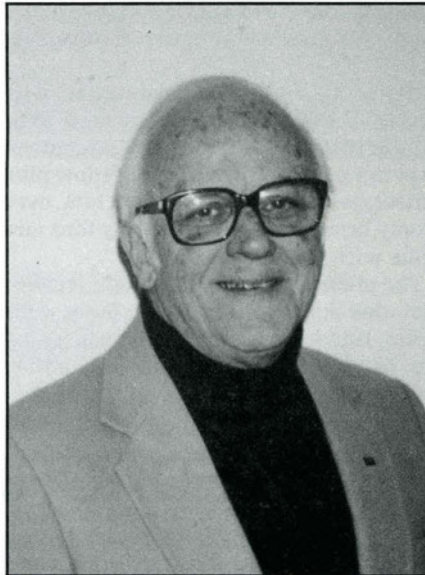
For those who don't wish to do the Niagara on both Friday and Saturday, there will be special tours to "Calspan" on Friday and a Buffalo City Tour on Saturday.

Calspan, a research and development facility, is filled with all kinds of high tech wonders, including a 1,000 MPH wind tunnel. Calspan can accommodate only 25 persons on each of the four scheduled tours.

For the folks who really want to see the host city, the "Best of Buffalo" city tour is a must for Saturday. The lakeshore, downtown, suburban mansions, waterfront, etc., are all included. Plus a stop at "one of the finest churches in the Western hemisphere." This would be "Our Lady of Victory Basilica" at Lackawanna.

And at the Friday evening banquet, "one of the finest soprano gospel singers

"Please indicate in FLAK NEWS that this reunion is being held in 'The City of Good Neighbors' or often called 'The Queen City of the Lakes.' Our committee will do everything possible to live up to that reputation and I'm sure everyone attending will find that the people here are very friendly and hospitable."  
—LARRY PAUL, Buffalo Reunion Chairman



LARRY PAUL  
Reunion Chairman

in the world." This would be Diane Susek of York, Pennsylvania. She will be making her second visit to a 398th reunion, having been the featured performer at the 1988 meeting in Richmond, Virginia.

On Saturday night, a special appearance of the 50-member Amherst Men's Glee Club.

And, as usual, a variety of surprises and announcements that are always a part of the 398th Bomb Group banquets.

If registration forms have not been received, write to Larry Paul, Buffalo, NY 14221.

# FALLS Reunion Facts

**EVENT** — 10th annual reunion 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

**DATES** — Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, September 15-16-17-18, 1993.

**LOCATION** — Buffalo, New York.

**HQ HOTEL** — Sheraton Buffalo Airport Hotel, 2040 Walden Avenue at I-90 (Exit 52 E). Telephone (716) 681-2400.

**BACKUP MOTEL** — Microtel Motel, 50 Freeman Road, Williamsville, NY. Telephone 1-800-252-9880.

**CHAIRMAN** — Larry Paul, Buffalo, NY.

### SPECIAL EVENTS —

Niagara Falls tour September 17 & 18.

Buffalo city tour September 17 & 18.

Calspan tours September 17.

Soprano Diane Susek September 17.

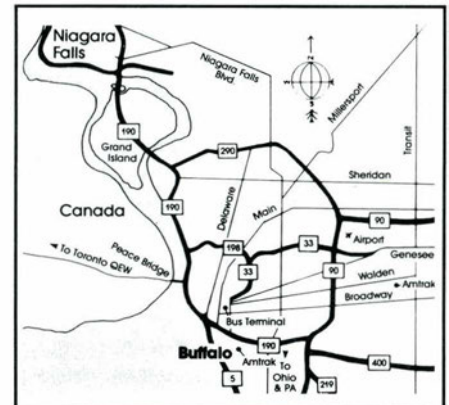
Amherst Glee Club September 18.

Group banquets September 16, 17 & 18.

### BANQUET RESERVATIONS —

Table reservations must be obtained at the Registration Desk.

**GOLF** — Golfers will meet in the Sheraton Hotel lobby on September 16 & 17 at 6 AM. Marve Laufer is golf chairman.





## National Warplane Museum At Geneseo In Reunion Area

A visit to one of the nation's leading WW II aircraft museums, this one featuring the restored and flying B-17, Fuddy Duddy, is an hour away from the reunion city of Buffalo, New York.

A tour to the National Warplane Museum at Geneseo, New York, is NOT on the official reunion program, but members are invited to visit the museum on their way to or from Buffalo if traveling by auto. Or, they can make their own arrangements during the four-day reunion event, September 15-16-17-18, as their individual schedules permit.

Geneseo, New York, is located on Route 63 about 30 minutes south of Rochester and 55 minutes east of Buffalo.

The museum is open Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM; Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM to 5 PM. Admission is \$5.00.

For those interested in seeing Geneseo's annual "Wings of Eagles" air show, the 1993 event will be held on August 15 and 16.

The U.S. Air Force flight demonstration team, the Thunderbirds, will perform at the show on both days.

## Relative Seeks to "Flesh Out" Pilot Uncle From 600 Squadron

### Nephew Anxious To Know James McAfee

Among the most gratifying things that a veteran is asked to do on behalf of a comrade who was killed in action is to help "flesh out" that person for a son or daughter or relative they never had a chance to meet.

"Who was this person I never knew?"

"What was he like?"

"What kind of personality did he have?"

"Do I look like him?"

Such could be the questions asked by the nephew of 600 Squadron pilot James McAfee, whose B-17 was shot down over Orientburg on April 10, 1945.

Jonathon M. McAfee was born 18 years later and today is looking to etch a real person into the shadowy outline he has seen of his uncle all these past years.

The family was "devastated" at the loss of James McAfee, who with four others on his crew were killed when their Fort was hit by both flak and ME-262 jet fighters.

"Only recently has his name come up in family discussions," said Jonathon. "My curiosity has been sparked to the point that I want to know much more about him."

Hence, his request to make contact with any of the former members who lived through their bailouts and subsequent PW experiences. And, with other fellow pilot officers who might have known him, even if only briefly. McAfee flew only four missions with the 398th.

The pilots on the April 10, 1945, mission included Squadron CO Bruce Daily, John Hahn, Harry Hoelzel, D.R. Maudsley, Gerald Sheffer, Clarence Hultman, James



JAMES McAFEE

Runnion, Irwin Idso, Albert Bischoff, and Art Watson.

Members of McAfee's crew who were also killed were co-pilot Donald J. Jones, navigator Burton Roth, waist gunner Felix Tichenor and tail gunner Max Paxton. Surviving members were togglier Frank Lewis, engineer Arthur Roit, radio operator Paul Krup, ball turret gunner Haskell Boyes and spot jammer Robert Engard.

Johathon McAfee can be reached at Westmont, IL 60559.

## An EDITORIAL ... Of Sorts

FLAK NEWS does not engage in "editorials" as such. But occasionally there arises a need for publishing a comment of an "encouragement" nature. Or kinda' like an editorial. Like this one —

In developing the four-squadron loading list for the Last Mission (April FLAK NEWS) dozens of letters and telephone calls were required. In addition to finding most of the first names and correcting 1945 clerk-typist errors, many "lost souls" were found, as were new entries to the Taps list.

It became obvious that many current members do have available current addresses of former buddies who are not members of the 398th Association. And also have available information on deceased buddies.

Our Association needs this information if we are to continue to grow. Contact Officer George Hilliard works diligently in locating "lost souls." He contacts many organizations around the country in his "soul search," and he deserves all the helps and aids possible.

So if you know of a buddy "out there" who is not in the current membership roster, contact George in Cincinnati, OH 45236.

## United States Military Academy



And so, Mr. Editor, why is the logo of the United States Military Academy (Army) gracing the pages of FLAK NEWS (Air Force)? Good question! But easily and happily answered.

The U.S.M.A. logo was submitted, along with other program material, by Mrs. Frank P. Hunter, Jr. The widow of the 398th Bomb Group commanding officer had attended the academy's 60th anniversary of the graduation of the Class of 1933.

### Mrs. Maria Hunter Visits W.P.; Colonel Was 1933 Graduate

Col. Hunter graduated as a field artillery officer in 1933, but proceeded immediately into flight training and gained his pilot's wings in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Mrs. Hunter, accompanied by her granddaughter, attended several functions during the three-day festivities of Graduation Week last May. Asked if she enjoyed her participation at West Point, she said —

"Yes, the programs were very impressive, but I do admit to thinking they were quite formal. I can say that the 398th reunions are much more exciting.

"I did enjoy the chapel services as they reminded me of the colonel's musical ability. He sang in the choir and traveled with the group on many occasions to other cities. He was also a very good piano player ... by ear only."

### West Point Military Academy Sent 15 Pilots To The 398th

A memorial service was held honoring all the members of the Class of 1933 who have passed on. Colonel Hunter died on a mission to Neuss, Germany, January 23, 1945.

The 398th Bomb Group had more than one person, however, that arrived for duty with U.S. Military Academy credentials. Like Hunter, they opted for pilot training after graduating from West Point. There were 15 who found their way to the 398th, either early on during the initial group formation, at Rapid City or in England. They were —

John Baker (600)	J.D. (Dave) Lowe (600)
Kearny (Kearie) Berry (603)	Jack Novak (603)
Harold Bestervelt (600)	Ernest Scott (602)
Donald Griffin (601)	William Scott (603)
Selmar Gustaves (601)	Frank Scofield (601)
Harry Heintzelman (601)	Franklin Taylor (602)
Luther Hough (602)	Harold Woodson (602)
Harvey Latson (603)	

Of this group, Bestervelt, Griffin, Heintzelman, Lowe, Novak, William Scott and Hough are current 398th Association members.

Baker was killed on a mission over France on August 8, 1944. Berry and Woodson were killed in Air Force plane crashes following the war. Ernest Scott, Taylor and Latson are deceased. No word on the whereabouts of Gustaves and Scofield.

## Tragic Ending On Ferry Assignment

### Tour Group Will Visit Crash Site On "Peaks"

Co-pilot Donald DeCleene moved from the right seat to the left when 603 CO Jean Miller drafted pilot Ken Hastings and made him a squadron leader (Command of Aircraft).

Also taken from the same crew for lead assignments in early November 1944 were navigator Chuck Wilbur and bombardier Oral Birch.

This elevated DeCleene to first pilot in the remnant crew consisting of Oliver Bradford, John Bourquin, Ken Green, Wilbur Lucas, Ralph Glancy, Jim Briody and Paul Audet.

Further shuffling on the part of the 603 Operations folks sent John Blythe to the crew as co-pilot and Tom Manos as navigator. This was the make up of the crew until the end of 1944.

Hastings, meanwhile, was killed on the November 21, 1944, mission to Merseburg. Birch and Wilbur, along with the rest of the lead 603 crew, spent time in the German PW camps. Glancy, flying with the Charles Howell crew, also was killed. A total of 20 men from the 603rd perished this day.

On January 2, 1945, DeCleene was ordered to ferry a new B-17 from the air depot (BAD 2) at Burtonwood, near Liverpool, back to Station 131 at Nuthampstead. Maynard Stravinski, fresh from a landing crackup, was sent as co-pilot along with Manos as navigator. Bradford was to go as engineer and Bourquin as radio operator. Both were ill and not available for this sudden assignment. They were replaced by a pair from the Harold Spangler crew — Frank Garry and Howard Ayres.

The ferry mission ended tragically at 19:25 hours when the Fortress crashed and burned five miles southwest of Buxton, less than 50 miles from Burtonwood.

The official accident report describes the incident in 17 words — "Aircraft with too little altitude to clear the mountain crashed into hillside, broke up and caught fire."

This occurred in an area known as the Peaks District. Not the "snow-capped" kind of mountains, perhaps, but still high enough to surprise any pilot used to the normal sea-level terrain of East Anglia.

Next year on June 22 — almost a half-century later — members of the 398th Bomb Group will pay a special visit to Buxton and visit the exact spot where the five airmen gave their lives.

"Indeed, we have carried out much research into this particular crash and have visited the site many times over the years as it is quite easy to go to. There are still many pieces from this aircraft at the crash site and much more still lies buried in the ground."

These are the words of Kevin Whittaker, secretary of the Macclesfield Historical Aviation Society. His organization is preparing a welcome for the 398th tour members and will lead the group to the crash site.

Whittaker says that some of the local people who attended the crash site near Buxton on January 2, 1945, will be on hand again on June 22, 1994.

"The aircraft, B-17 No. 43-38944 (Y) had been given the callsign 'Army 944' and took off at 1900 hours," wrote Whittaker. "Visibility was quite good over the area so the reason for the crash can only be put down to engine trouble of some kind, though no distress call was given during the time the aircraft was in the air, so it remains a mystery as to the actual reason."

### Underage Veterans Sought

A national veterans association is seeking veterans who falsified their age and served in the U.S. Armed Forces while UNDER the age of 17. A national reunion will be held in October. A free booklet on government policy on underage veterans will be sent on request to any underage veteran.

For more information contact Allan C. Stover, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

# “No Doubt This B-17 Was In Trouble, But He Would Never Reach His Base”



The “Betsy Ross” After Crash Landing in Belgium

## Youthful Memories of Crash Landing

*“It must have been about noon, but we were still at school when we heard the sound of an aircraft. But the sound wasn’t the same we were so accustomed to at the time. We were children, but we recognized the sound of the Bombers B-17 very good. We heard them all days.*

*“But there was no doubt a B-17 was in trouble and was trying struggling home. But this bomber would never reach his base.”*

So began the letter from Marcel Janssens of Berlare, Belgium. He was recalling, as an eight-year-old child sitting in his school room, his reactions to hearing a B-17 in trouble overhead.

Since that day, October 17, 1944, Janssens has done much research on Allied aircraft downed in his native Belgium. Only last year he guided Hank Rudow of the 602nd to the very spot where he crash landed his B-17, also not far from Berlare.

While all the others in the 398th strike force that attacked Cologne that day were returning home more or less unscathed, Perry Powell’s B-17 took a hit that caused No. 2 engine to “blow a jug.” One of the Cycone cylinders blew out, wreaking havoc with the Fort’s airworthiness.

He slipped from the formation in the slot element and was last seen heading in the direction of friendly territory, even then much in question from day to day as the ground forces slugged it out on the fronts below.

*“When at last the school bell rang and school was over, we ran through the street so fast we could, with hope to see the bomber. But in vain we heard it but could not see it because it made a wide circle around the outskirts of our*

*village at a very low altitute looking for a landing place.*

*“When I came home my father told me all about what he had seen. He was standing in his front yard as he saw the bomber approach from the northeast. Two engines were out and the wheels and flaps were down. He saw the bomber at starboard and even the face of one of the pilots.”*

Here the story switches to Marcel’s (then) 16-year-old friend, Albert. He happened to be in the field at the time, very close to the landing place.

*“The meadow seemed like a nice landing place seen from the air, but it was not. It was muddy and there was no hard surface. Just before he was to make contact with the ground the pilot had to pull up his aircraft to avoid a wide and deep trench.*

*“As the heavy bomber touched the ground it wasspectacular. A real wave of muddy water splashed in the air. The big wheels sank into the ground and suddenly the nose stuck against the ground and the tail section lifted up. They rode in this position for about 150 meters and made such deep trenches*

*Continued On Page 7*

## FORMATIONS

Cologne Mission October 17, 1944  
Lead Squadron — 603

SIMERAL			
Hastings			
Reed		BERRY	
		Moore	
Rich			Buzza
Hyndman	Stevens	Tarr	Spangler
		Howell	
W.L. Johnson		Powell	

High Squadron — 600

ANDERSON			
Menzel			
	Zimmer		Holstead
	Armor		Mann
Riley	Weum	Lipnick	Dean
	J.M. Johnson		
	Hansard	T.M. Johnson	

Low Squadron — 602

LEUKARDT			
Hershberger			
	Rusk		Boehme
	Griffin		Evans
Farmer	Payne	Connolly	Hall
		Hancock	
	Shaffer		Zimmerman

# Tragedy Was The Finale

## DFC for Powell

Perry Powell and Samuel Walker, Jr., survived a crash landing and the others on their crew survived bail outs over Belgium in October of 1944. They had their remarkable "war story" ready to tell the folks back home when the war was over.

But there was more to come. There was tragedy in store for this unlucky B-17 crew that at one time must have believed they "had it made."

The makeup of the Powell crew changed somewhat as they picked up additional missions after returning home from their Belgium experience.

Phelps, the bombardier, became the navigator, taking over from J.K. Hancock, Jr. Waist gunner Marvin Luckie took togglier training and replaced Phelps.

R.A. Adkins came over as a spare gunner from the Harry Sleamon crew that was finishing up. Then Dave Bancroft, who had lost two crews while standing down as a

spare gunner, was assigned to Powell in late January 1944.

Thus, it was Perry Powell, Sam Walker, Bruce Phelps, Marvin Luckie, Clarence Harper, Robert Colgan, Thomas L'Estrange, Dave Bancroft and Albert Aleksyn who made up the crew for the February 3, 1945, mission to Berlin.

This aircraft collided with the 602 plane flown by John McCormick. Only Bancroft survived from the Powell aircraft.

(This story is told in great detail in the historical book, "398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES.")

Aboard the McCormick plane were William Feinstein, Ray Woltman, Bill Logan, Marvin Gooden, Joseph Stritch, William Garner, Reynaldo Garcia and Jack Withrow. Only McCormick and Logan bailed out successfully. Logan survived only to be killed on a PW forced march by strafing American fighter aircraft.



PERRY POWELL

*"The courage, coolness and skill displayed by the officer on this occasion reflect the highest credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States."*

Thus read the Distinguished Flying Cross citation presented posthumously to the family of Perry Powell in March of 1946.

It was for the skill he displayed in landing his stricken B-17 on a wet, marshy piece of Belgium real estate following a bomb run on Cologne on October 17, 1944.

That award had been in the works when Powell and his 603 crew collided with the 602 B-17 piloted by John McCormick on the way to Berlin on February 3, 1945. Only two members survived this accident.

But it was on October 17, 1944, that tested the flying skill of Powell, and for which he was honored —

*"After bombs away, No. 2 engine caught fire and pieces flew off and damaged No. 1. Powell himself was injured and his parachute was destroyed. The instrument panel was pierced by fragments, rending the gyro and air speed indicator inoperative.*

*"Defly maneuvering the airplane, Lt. Powell put out the fire by diving his aircraft, at the same time ordering all unnecessary equipment jettisoned. He continued to lose altitude and, after ascertaining that he was no longer over enemy territory, ordered all crew members except co-pilot Sam Walker to bail out.*

*"Evinces singular proficiency and inspiring determination, Lt. Powell then effected a crash landing in a large meadow."*

Powell's family also received his Purple Heart at the ceremony held at the home of his parents in Grand Island, Nebraska.



MARCEL JANSSENS of Berlare, Belgium, displays a sheet of metal taken from the downed B-17 on which is painted the brief story of Perry Powell's crash landing near Janssens' home town in 1944. Beside him is the Belgian flag.

*Continued From Page 6*

one could swim in them.

*"When the bomber finally stopped the tail fell down with a loud smash and stood again in the normal position.*

*"It was really astounding how the pilots effected the successful emergency landing."*

Only two airmen came out of the bomber to be greeted by Albert — pilots Perry Powell and Samuel Walker, Jr. The others from this 603rd Squadron crew had been given orders to bail out by Powell. These

would be J.K. Hancock, Jr., navigator; Bruce Phelps, bombardier; Clarence Harper, engineer; Robert Colgan, radio; K.R. Smith, ball turret gunner; Marvin Luckie, waist gunner; and Thomas L'Estrange, tail gunner.

All descended safely between Berlare and nearby Wiere. The crew members spent three days at Wiere before working their way back to the nearest U.S. Air Force base and rides back to Nuthampstead.

*Continued On Page 8*

# Landing Was Big Event In Belclare

Continued From Page 7

Albert continues —

*“When the men came out of the plane they ran to me and asked, ‘Holland? Holland?’ because they did not know where they had landed. I told them, ‘Belgie, Belgie.’ They seemed to understand, as they both smiled.*

*“Then they ran back to the bomber and stood on top and waved to some P-51 fighter planes that were circling. They apparently understood the waving as they soon waggled their wings and disappeared in the direction of England.*

*“Soon an English jeep and soldiers arrived and took the pilots to Wiere. Here they met the others of their crew.”*

The bomber, known as “Betsy Ross,” was a 45-mission veteran that had “belonged” to and was named by Ross Howden. The Howden crew had completed their tour by the time Powell arrived at Station 131. Powell did acquire his “own” plane and promptly named it “Powell’s Prowler;” It just happened to be in the “shop” for maintenance on October 17, 1944.

Hence, it was the “Betsy Ross” that ended her 398th World War career in a swampy meadow in Belclare, Belgium, although she did continue to serve in her “grounded” condition. She became a magnet for the area’s children.

Janssens continues —

*“As for me, I saw the bomber the next day after the landing. But I really did not know what I saw, being a boy of eight. I saw many in the air, but never realized they were so big.*

*“Guards watched the plane for two weeks, then it became a playground for children. I remember seeing the 45 bombs painted under the pilot’s window. And I may say that I sat at the controls of a famous Flying Fortress B-17. In the very seat of pilot Perry Powell.”*

Ground crewmen from an Air Service Depot on the continent had come to remove the engines, the armament, ammunition, radios and other equipment.

Within two months much of the rest of “Betsy Ross” had been carried away by the local people. Only a carcass was left.”

## Miller Book Available

Radio man Larry Miller of the Ted Johnson 600 crew wanted his children to know about his life in the Air Force during World War II. Training, combat missions, life on and off the base, etc.

So he wrote a book of his experiences (nicely done) and passed them out. He still has a few copies left over to sell in case some of our members are interested. Write him at Lexington, MA 02173.



THE BETSY ROSS of the 603rd Squadron, crash-landed by the Perry Powell crew in Belgium in 1944, soon became a children’s playground. Note the 45 bombs painted beneath the pilot’s window. It didn’t make it back to Nuthampstead on its 46th.

## Herbert Guild Where Are You?

Among the “most wanted” of our 398th Bomb Group “lost souls” is one Herbert Guild, who gained some degree of fame as a tail gunner on the Larry deLancey crew of the 601st.

Guild was with deLancey when their ship took a direct hit in the nose, but still managed to return to Station 131.

However, it was Guild’s amazing survival from his tail position “ejection” that is the prime cause for a “where is he?” Flak News search. In 1945, his hometown was the Bronx, New York. Today, there are a lot of “Guilds” in New York. In other words, he is still a “lost soul.”

If someone out there can locate Herbert Guild (a real survivor) FLAK NEWS will send him a copy of “398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES.”



HERBERT D. GUILD



# Nose Art Effort Went For Naught

## The Story Of Leo And His "Vat 69"

Among the countless tales remembered about WWII and the air war over Europe is the yarn about the second lieutenant with the clipboard who greeted the crews who had just landed in England with their spanking new B-17 after their long flight across the North Atlantic.

Among the many items brought over that had to be "signed off" when they arrived was "1 each B-17." The second lieutenant with the clipboard wanted "our B-17!"

"You jokers are all alike," he growled at the protesting crew members who were not about to give up "their" airplane to this nasty second lieutenant with the clipboard.

"You fly this thing over here and you think it belongs to you. Sign here."

It finally began sinking in that they had merely been entrusted to ferrying "their" B-17 to England and now it would suddenly be ripped from their grasp and sent off to some depot to remove the de-icing boots and undergo a variety of other modifications.

One such incident concerned a crew that not only "claimed" this plane as their own when they pushed off from Rapid City, South Dakota, but even went so far as to paint "their" B-17 with "their" special nose art.

The John Rice crew of the 600 Squadron chose "VAT 69" in honor of their favorite Scotch whiskey. The artist selected for this



LEO LORENZO

important nose job was tail gunner Leo Lorenzo.

And he did a commendable paint job in the time allotted. Orders to "proceed to England immediately" prevented Leo from lettering in the "69" on the long-necked bottle.

"I'll finish it in England," he promised his buddies.

These "buddies" were pilot Rice; copilot Clinton Clifton; navigator Art Murphy; bombardier Max Raithel; engineer Sidney Triebwasser; radio operator Ed Richey; and gunners John Kolafa, Mike Holmberg and John Goldsmith.

Enter the second lieutenant with the clipboard and "VAT 69" (without the "69" on the bottle) was never seen again. That is, not by Lorenzo and his willing paint brush.

Nose art researcher Clarence Simonsen, writing for the British publication, FLY PAST, discovered that "VAT 69" had an illustrious combat career with another group and that someone had indeed added the missing "69" to the bottle.

When it was reported that this Yank "VAT 69" Fortress had logged 100 combat missions a grateful distillery in Scotland sent the crew a case of VAT 69 Scotch.

Not a drop for artist Lorenzo and his buddies.

And all because of a second lieutenant with a clipboard.

### "Remembrances" on Sale In Buffalo

A supply of the book, "398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES," will be available for purchase at the annual reunion in Buffalo, NY. It will be part of Jack Wintersteen's big PX Department in the Memory Room at the Shearson Airport Hotel.

(See Page 11 for complete list of other PX items available from "Jack's 398th Department Store.")

REMEMBRANCES also can be purchased by mail from Ralph Hall, treasurer, New Bedford, MA 02740-1915. Cost is \$22.00.

### Stewart Directory Also Is Available

For those members who desire more membership information than is available in the 1993 roster, they are invited to purchase a directory compiled by Ed Stewart, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33334. This roster contains name, address, telephone, squadron affiliation, duties, name of pilot and number of missions flown. Cost of the roster is \$10.00.

### West Coast Areas Next Up For '93 Dues Program

Three of the four "zones" making up the 398th Bomb Group population areas have already had opportunities to contribute to the annual dues program.

(These "zones" were contrived to ease the mail burden of Ralph & Marjorie Hall, our treasurer and his wife. What was once a tiring and burdensome task coming at Christmas time is now handled in quarterly takes. The Halls are grateful, and so should be the rest of us.)

Now comes time for the Western States, Alaska and Hawaii members to make their contributions. Dues are still \$5.00, with opportunities to add funds for FLAK NEWS and the Memorial Fund.

A blue "Dues Notice" should be included for those members living in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, Alaska and Hawaii.

Don't forget to fill in the backside if you have information to share with the group treasurer or any of the current officers.



THIS IS the burial site of Donald DeCleene at Cambridge. The cemetery marks all 398th crosses with U.S. and British flags when the tour party visits, as will be the case next June. (See our story on Page 5.)



### **A Close-Up of Giving A B-17 Some Tender Loving Care**

It was a big bird but it needed some very special tender loving care on the part of dedicated ground crew members, specialists in engines, sheet metal, radio and electronics, fuel, armament, ordnance and a dozen other crafts. All together, along with the men who flew her, the B-17 Flying Fortress

became "an airplane you could trust." She saw action on every World War II front: Europe, North Africa, South Pacific, Aleutians. Her exploits are legendary, likened unto the men who flew her and the ground crewmen who provided the "tender, loving care."

# BRIEF-Things

Of interest to our bombardiers is the news that the Norden bomb site building (still standing) at McCook Army Air Base, Nebraska, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The old McCook air base recently lost its last remaining concrete runway, but an association still exists and several members came by to celebrate the 50th anniversary since the construction in 1943 ... the 8th Air Force News magazine reports that they have a 4% return on their quarterly mailing, which means paying dearly for Post Office services ... the 398th FLAK NEWS returns are less than 1/2 of 1%, for which we are all most grateful ... and this for you "stax" minded folks: the first issue of FLAK NEWS in January 1987 numbered 1,071, cost \$91.04 to mail, and the lot weighed 46.9 pounds ... the April 1993 issue numbered 1,824, cost \$380.59 to mail, and weighed 167 pounds ... printing and postage costs for each FLAK NEWS averages out to about \$1.50 per copy ... the costs for labeling, stuffing, folding, carting, etc. come free of charge thanks to some neat 398th men and women living in the greater Seattle area, some of whom drive 40 miles to lend a hand ... members who are coming to the Buffalo reunion who happen to be 398th "Life Members" are encouraged to wear their "Life" identifying ribbons ... some of you out there who parachuted to safety way back then and became "Caterpillar Club" members can do Pasqual Marquez a favor by telling him how to hook up with this club; Pasqual lives at Los Angeles, CA 90032 ... he leaped for his life over England on July 4, 1944 ... while most of the "In Memory Of" certificates are for loved ones lost during World War II, they are also being sent to current members who have lost family members; the most recent were to Harry & Alma Gray and Dale & Dorothy Brown, both having lost sons ...

## "In Memory Of"

In response to the increasing number of members who have been sending in contributions in memory of a 398th friend or loved one, a certificate suitable for framing has been created to be sent to all such contributors.

Remembrances may be sent to Ralph Hall, treasurer, 398th Bomb Group Association, New Bedford, MA 02740-1915. Enclose the contribution, the name of "In Memory Of" and Hall will send the certificate by return mail.

Hall pointed out that gifts to the Memorial Fund need not be accompanied by a specific name, but may be sent in general support of the Memorial. (See story on Page 1.)

## Signs Of The Times

"The nation that will insist on drawing a broad distinction between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking done by cowards."

— SIR WILLIAM FRANCIS BUTLER  
19th century soldier and author

## 398th Bomb Group PX To Be Open In Buffalo

Jack Wintersteen's well-stocked 398th PX will be open each of the four days at the September 15-18 annual reunion in Buffalo. As usual, Jack's key aides, Joe and Rozanne Josephs, also will be on hand to man the display tables. And there are opportunities for volunteers to assist in the sales. Contact Wintersteen or reunion chairman Larry Paul.

Orders may be placed for any of the PX items by contacting Jack at the address listed below.

The following items are available:

CAPS — \$7.00. Specify squadron.

JACKETS — \$30.00. White, Navy, Royal Blue, Light Blue. S M L XL.

T-SHIRTS — \$10.00. White, Royal Blue, Light Blue. S M L XL.

(B-17 on front.)

SWEAT SHIRTS — \$15.00. White, Light Blue. S M L XL.

(B-17 on front.)

SQUADRON PATCHES — \$15.00. Specify squadron.

GROUP PATCH — \$5.00. (Hell from Heaven.)

JACKET PATCHES — \$4.00. (Special design.)

SQUADRON LAPEL PINS — \$5.00. Specify squadron.

LAPEL PINS — \$6.00. Special "Friends of the 398th" design.

BUMPER STICKERS — \$2.00.

ALUMINUM LICENSE PLATE — \$4.00. (398th logo.)

CANVAS TOTE BAG — \$5.00. Group logo.

VISORS — \$4.00. Group logo.

BOOK — \$22.00. "398th Bomb Group REMEMBRANCES."

MEMBERSHIP PLAQUE — \$25.00. Specify Regular or Lifetime.

BELT BUCKLE — \$14.00. Group logo.

LAPEL PINS — \$6.00. Specify silver or gold.

EARRINGS — \$9.00. Specify silver or gold.

COFFEE MUGS — \$6.00. 8th AF & Group logos.

Send your orders to:

398th Bomb Group PX

% Jack Wintersteen

Danville, PA 17821

## Letters

*"I sincerely appreciated the April issue of FLAK NEWS. The report on the Last Mission was highly informative and historically highly significant.*

*"I teach Modern European history and shared that information with my class this morning. The explanation about the reason for the mission was extremely interesting in light of the Cold War which followed.*

*"But what a tragic ending for Allen Ferguson, my good friend Bob Halbart and the rest of the crew.*

*"Enclosed is a small donation for your Association for use at your discretion. Thanks again for sending me a copy of the newsletter."*

**Tommy Owen,**

**Nashville, TN 37205**

*"I cannot tell you how delighted I was with your story of the Hansard crew (January FLAK NEWS).*

*"In fact, it moved me to tears. I forwarded the extra copies to my sister and brother. They, too, were touched and appreciated, as I did, the work and effort that went in the article. We have always been proud of our uncle, William Baker, the navigator on the crew. But Memorial Day means even more to us now. Thank you."*

**Sandra Averhart,**  
**FL 33903.**

**Fort Myers,**