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

VOL. 9 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY 1994



FRANK P. HUNTER, JR.

1908-1945

Colonel, U.S. Air Force

398th Bomb Group (H)

Commanding Officer

1943-1945



Aluminum Overcast Will Be At Tucson Reunion; Rides To Be Available At \$325 Each

The B-17 carrying the proud colors of the 398th Bomb Group, the EAA's Aluminum Overcast, has been scheduled for a three-day appearance at Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona.

This will coincide with the four-day annual reunion of the 398th, scheduled for Tucson on Wednesday-Thursday-Friday-Saturday, September 21-22-23-24, 1994.

The Overcast, with one of the pilots being Hal Weekley of the 601st, will be available for viewing and rides (\$325 per passenger) on Tuesday, September 20 (after 12 noon); Wednesday, September 21, from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Thursday, September 22, from 9 A.M. to noon. (See other story this page for appearances in other cities on the fall tour.)

A shuttle bus will be available at the Doubletree Hotel to take passengers to and from the airfield.

The addition of the B-17 to the already busy reunion schedule makes for an even tighter program, according to reunion chairman Clyde Sebastian.

Tours also have been arranged to Nogales, Mexico; Sonora Desert; Davis-Monthan Field and Pima Air Museum and Sabino Canyon. Also a Western dinner at Old Tucson. The entire schedule appeared in the April issue of FLAK NEWS, including a reservation form for the Doubletree Hotel.

The hotel is located at 445 S Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711. Telephone (602) 881-4200.

The Aztec Inn is the backup hotel, located at 102 N Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711. Telephone 1-800-227-6086.

A post-reunion tour to the Grand Canyon and other Arizona landmarks is available through Southwest Arrangers, 4520 E Grant, Tucson, AZ 85712. Telephone (602) 881-4474.

For further reunion information contact Clyde Sebastian, Tucson, AZ 85730-1773.

Of special interest to movie fans, particularly those of Gene Hackman, will be the appearance at the Saturday night Farewell Dinner of Lt. Col. Iceal Hambleton.

Hackman plays the role of Col. Hambleton in the movie, "Bat-21," the story based on Hambleton's real life adventures in Viet Nam.

The B-17 flights, by the way, will be of one-hour duration, with each customer entitled to some eight minutes in the co-pilot's seat. (Don't mess with the flaps, Jack.)

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day."

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Mid-West Tour Set For "Our" Fortress

A 14-stop Aluminum Overcast tour of Mid-West cities has been set up for this fall, it was announced by Greg Anderson, executive vice-president of the EAA of Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

(This will include a stop at Tucson, Arizona, to coincide with the 398th reunion.)

Following is the fall schedule—

Duluth, Minnesota August 26-30	Bartlesville, Oklahoma September 22-27
Eden Prairie, Minnesota August 30-September 6	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma September 27-30
Des Moines, Iowa September 6-9	Fort Worth, Texas September 30-October 4
Omaha, Nebraska September 9-13	Olathe, Kansas October 4-6
Wichita, Kansas September 13-16	Kansas City, Missouri (MKC) October 6-8
Albuquerque, New Mexico September 16-20	Kansas City, Missouri (GVW) October 8-11
Tucson, Arizona September 20-22 (398th Reunion)	Oshkosh, Wisconsin October 11

\$21,157.17 Contributed By 398th Membership

Members of the 398th Bomb Group, asked to "chip in" to do some major corrosion control in the EAA B-7, Aluminum Overcast, responded with a whopping \$21,157.17, it was announced by treasurer Ralph Hall. This is in addition to the previous \$22,000 contributed in 1989 to repaint the exterior and then add the Triangle W colors to make it a 398th Bomb Group classic.

Following is the final list of contributors to the project—

SPONSORS

Tony R. Delbart
Joe Joseph
DONORS
Frank M. Thompson, Jr.
Ed Arbuthnot
Rose Spencer
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William Cook
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J. Herbert Wilson
Bob Unger
Bob J. Shearer
Herbert Mann
Jack Walstrom
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COL. FRANK PATTERSON HUNTER, JR.

The commanding officer of the 398th Bomb Group as remembered by journalist William J. Humphries, a college classmate, friend and confidant.

Colonel Frank Patterson Hunter, Jr., D.F.C. with Oak Leaf and Croix de Guerre with Palm, was born February 21, 1908. He was graduated with the Class of 1933 and was shot down January 23, 1945, while leading his Group, the 398th Heavy Bombardment, into action over the Rhine River town of Neuss. It was his 17th raid against the German enemy. The B-17 from which he was directing the engagement sustained a direct hit going in on the target run. The A.A. burst sheared off half the port wing, and the bomber crashed, killing all but one of the crew.

This survivor has told how Colonel Hunter fulfilled his last responsibilities as a soldier-airman. Self-sacrificing as always, "Foxey" remained at the controls, struggling to right the spinning ship so that his crewmen might have a chance to bail out. Those who could least spare the tireless warrior were his wife and two young daughters. The men of his Group, like a wide circle of friends, experienced in his death both an irreparable loss and an inspiration. The Colonel's passing challenged everyone of them with the knowledge that his effort would have to be greater because "Foxey" was not coming back. There was also the realization that there was a lasting grief to bear. The memories of Colonel Hunter had built a shrine to which fond thoughts would be making a perpetual pilgrimage.

The Colonel's ability to inspire was the result of a quiet earnestness, leavened with a love of the worthwhile things in life. Humor and seriousness were admirably counterbalanced in the mind of the son of the late Frank Patterson and Cora Wilcox Gayle Hunter. His father and mother lived at Portsmouth, Virginia. They handed on to "Foxey" the best qualities of their Southern inheritance. These were a sense of their convictions and a respect for the ageless values of family ties and customs. The unostentatious self-assurance of the true Virginia gentleman was inseparably a part of "Fox".

These characteristics were inborn. His love of flying belonged to another age, but there was something natural about it. He wrote from Randolph Field in 1933, that "it would make me very happy to be a good airman — a good artist." The appreciation of craftsmanship expressed then came from an innate admiration for excellence



Getting His Wings

FRANK P. HUNTER, JR., began his Air Force career as an Army Air Corps officer student at Randolph Field in Texas following his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1933. Among the planes he flew at Randolph was a Stearman PT-17.

in all worthwhile fields of human endeavor. The grasp of "Foxey's" mind enabled him to find and reverse the true artist in a broad range of activities. Thus, his friends knew him as a man as ready to pay homage to a deserving Southern kitchen, as to pass keen judgment on less perishable works of the purely intellectual arts.

"It Would Make Me Very Happy To Be A Good Airman—An Artist"

This is said, not to confine his interests to select, precious matters, but to give them scope. "Foxey" was keenly alive to the problems of his time. The Army was his career, but it did not encompass his life. His sensitive mind was always alert to the forces at work beyond his professional horizon. He felt that his responsibilities as an officer obligated him to be well informed on all broad questions of the day.

Equipped with a thirsty intellect, he found his self-imposed task easier than most men. Then, he had another advantage in his inclination to weigh his information rather than embrace it. Because contemplation tempered all his observations, "Foxey" was known as a reliable, as well as a hungry reader. Because contemplation flavored his thoughts, he was sought out as an excellent conversationalist.

Frank went to Randolph Field after his graduation and commissioning in the Field Artillery. He elected the Air Force because the element of the air challenged his unflagging curiosity and because he correctly sensed its undeveloped arm had to be exploited by a high degree of craftsmanship. In flying, the expert hand had to be revealed and maintained at all times. With his appreciation of high performance, it was only natural that he should try to win his wings. He got them in October, 1934. The following December, he married Maria Greenough Burgwyn Long, daughter of the late Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Williams Mason Long, of Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. "Foxey's" two daughters are Maria Burgwyn, born in 1935, and Sarah Gayle, born in 1940.

"Foxey" attended Portsmouth, Virginia, High School and St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland, before entering West Point in 1929. His decision to drop his liberal arts studies may have come as a surprise to his St. John's friends of three years' good standing. But it was arrived at after a careful review.

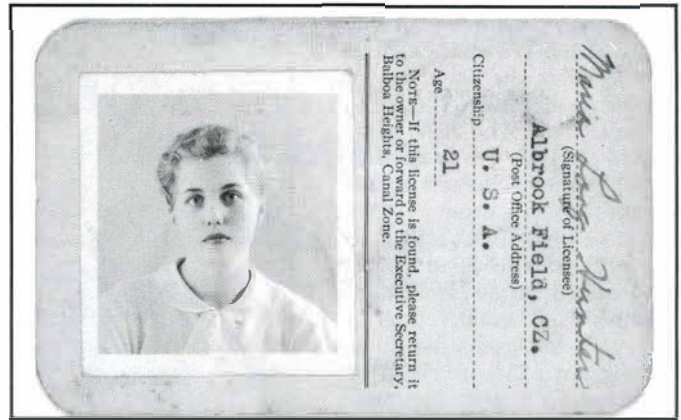
His first Air Force assignment was Albrook Field, Canal Zone. Enroute to Panama, the transport stopped at San Juan. The brief break in the voyage set his mind to work in a characteristic manner. He saw the riotous contrast of lush tropic color and debasing squalor. He saw the "tiniest church in the world," a Catholic miniature with two pews. He saw the hand of Vauban, the French military architect, in the construction of El Morro. These varied impressions were typical of his journeys. In Panama, the backdrop of his work interested him just as much. There were the Indians, whose language and primitive ways had a fascination for him. Then, the pair of young Americans, who had buried themselves in the jungle years previously. They were engaged in a losing gamble to

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The Hunters, In The Beginning

COLONEL HUNTER (above) poses with his young family in a pastoral scene at Ephrata, Washington, on July 4, 1943. Wife Maria is at right with daughters Maria and Sarah Gayle. The drivers' licenses at right, issued at Albrook Field in Panama in 1934, belong to new Air Corps Lieutenant Frank Hunter, Jr., and his new bride, Maria Long Hunter.



He Was Inspiring and Unobtrusive

Continued From Page 3

grow coffee as a short cut to wealth. These and other wayside people were never too haphazard to have a story and a significance. "Foxey" could listen as well as converse. Because he could instill confidence in those about him, he could draw from a man his more searching thoughts.

This was done in a friendly manner. The stamp of a gentleman is the ability to be considerate and understanding. "Foxey" wore it enviably, which is to say casually. To less fortunate men, it seemed, perhaps, to be a medal to be displayed or laid aside at will. "Foxey" was too interested in mankind, however, to be seen without his friendliness. The villagers about Nuthampstead, Hertfordshire, England, where the 398th Heavy Bombardment Group was stationed, were among those who found him so.

These friendly people, from the Vicar to the jolly proprietor of the thatch-roofed pub, got to know the Colonel and his Group. They learned to miss them, too, before the shooting was over. The 398th arrived in April, 1944, and went into action May 6th. It teethed on Berlin. It participated in four raids on the "Big Town" within the first two weeks. The bombing schedule leading up to D-Day was a mammoth undertaking. The East Coast of England shook daily with the thunderous roar of B-17's and B-24's fall-

ing into formation. In the decisive push to shake Germany to her foundations with "1,000 Bomber" efforts, there was unavoidable losses. The Eighth Air Force had laid out a vast carpet of pre-invasion targets, and Germany's most heavily defended war centers were among them.

The Leuna synthetic oil works at Merseburg; Kiel, Ludwigshaven, Posen, Dessau and Mulhouse were a few of the names over which were inscribed the flaming arcs of gallant airmen and their ships dying together. After the Normandy beachhead was secure, the merciless pounding went on. Berlin again, Hamburg, Leipzig. Munich and Peenemunde, the Baltic Sea birthplace of V-1's and V-2's. The inclination of many thoughtful men in times like those tense moments was to discard accepted, adult values. To lose a sense of balance was either exhilarating or logical. The extroverts squeezed the utmost from their hard-playing leaves. A moment of repose for the introvert meant a chance to brood according to his faith, his hopes, or his despair. The men of the 398th will remember how inspiringly but unobtrusively their Colonel stood among these wearing tides of psychology. His appreciation of the light-hearted moments, his interest in the work of the Chaplains, his fondness for seeking a quiet moment with intimate friends all identified "Foxey" as a balanced intellect whose leadership was

exceptional. The quality of being able to serve as an example is a virtue that is regarded as ordinary in peacetime. In wartime, it is vital. "Foxey" had that quality.

After completion of his foreign service, he went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Thereafter, he was stationed in the United States until going overseas in the war. His patience, his ability to get the most out of his men and his professional skill were the very qualities that kept him out of combat until 1944. He was an ideal training man and as such, he saw with deep disappointment, two Heavy Bombardment Groups take off for combat without him. These were the 301st and 307th, of which he was deputy commander. His next assignment, the 398th, brought him the chance he had been waiting for. He led it to the European Theater. He would have been proud of its record. Three months after he was posted missing in action, the 398th went on its last raid of the war. It was No. 195.

The exhausting pressure of his responsibilities never left the Colonel too tired to feel anxiety about the welfare and comfort of his Group. His interest in their recreation stemmed from the sort of solicitude that a boy comes to expect from his favorite uncle. Never a coercive man in such matters, "Foxey" did not expect non-religious minds to share his own, deeply religious convictions. But there were many

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THE BOEING P-12 was one of the planes Lt. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., flew during his four-year assignment at Albrook Field in Panama in the mid-1930's. He also flew the Morse O-19 as a member of the 44th Observation Squadron. Later he would be a colonel in command of the 398th Bomb Group, flying another Boeing plane, the B-17.



LT. COLONEL HUNTER, then the deputy commander of the 301st Bomb Group at Casper, Wyoming, and Mrs. Hunter entertained comedian Bob Hope at the air base in 1942.

HUNTER

Continued From Page 4

who saw in his composure an influence of his devotion to the Episcopal Church and a thing to be desired.

It is safe to say that "Foxey" continues to influence the lives of those fortunate enough to share his friendship. For them his memory is imperishable, both as an admirable, loveable character and as a mind who had surveyed life and found it eminently worth living. His friends will always remember, for example, his subtle way of expressing his ideas. He was too intelligent to be academically opinionated. He accepted the other point of view. But he would return it, eventually, so skillfully interwoven with his own precise and revealing thoughts that such thoughts keep recurring to those who knew him well. They return with their enduring interpretations, as old refrains come back from nowhere. The haunting ways of memories and tunes would indicate that neither have completely fulfilled their purpose.

There are many who think that "Foxey" would have turned to writing eventually. He showed himself to be an expert correspondent, and those who were on his mailing list were confident that his reporting of his many environments were good enough to be published. Certainly, he had the first qualification of a good writer, the ability to get the comprehensive view and transmit his thoughts accurately on paper.

The friendliness of "Fox" was a noble thing. He liked places as well as people. He



The Colonel And The Orphans

"THIS CAKE," wrote Colonel Hunter, "lubricated with chocolate and vanilla ice cream, went down into the 40 orphan stomachs in an amazingly short period." Hunter and his staff hosted the young folks at a special party at Station 131 in the summer of 1944.

saw charm in the drab, war-worn dignity of London. Equally attractive was his native Tidewater, Virginia, where he could see the marsh grass swaying in the thick, salt air, with their roots deep in the rich, smelly mud of the Chesapeake. No scene was too casual, no vista too narrow but what "Foxey" could find in it a memora-

ble story of history, of people and of their joys and quarrels.

From January, 1945, to the summer of 1946, "Foxey" was buried in the North Cemetery at Dusseldorf. His body now rests in the American Cemetery at Neuville-en-Conbroz, near Liege, Belgium. He was a very gallant gentleman.

“EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP”

Special to the Roanoke Rapids Herald, North Carolina. February 15, 1945

AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE BOMBER STATION, ENGLAND — Colonel Frank P. Hunter, Jr., 321 Hamilton St., Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, who has been declared “missing in action” over Germany, has earned an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Distinguished Flying Cross for “extraordinary achievement” while serving as Air Commander of a bombardment formation of B-17 Flying Fortresses on a mission over Germany on January 23, 1945.

The citation accompanying the award read in part—

“On this date Colonel Hunter assembled the formation above the briefed altitude because of heavy cloud cover in the assembly area. Skillfully maintaining formation integrity, this officer directed the flight to the target area where adverse weather conditions were encountered.

“Displaying unremitting determination and exemplary leadership, this officer maneuvered the formation and commenced the bomb run. The aircraft in which he was flying was then hit by a burst of anti-aircraft and failed to return from the mission. The courage, coolness and devotion to duty displayed by Colonel Hunter on this occasion reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.”

Colonel Hunter was commanding officer of the 398th Bomb Group (H). He was graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1933. His wife, Mrs. Maria Long Hunter, also is from Roanoke Rapids.

Western States Due For The Next Dues

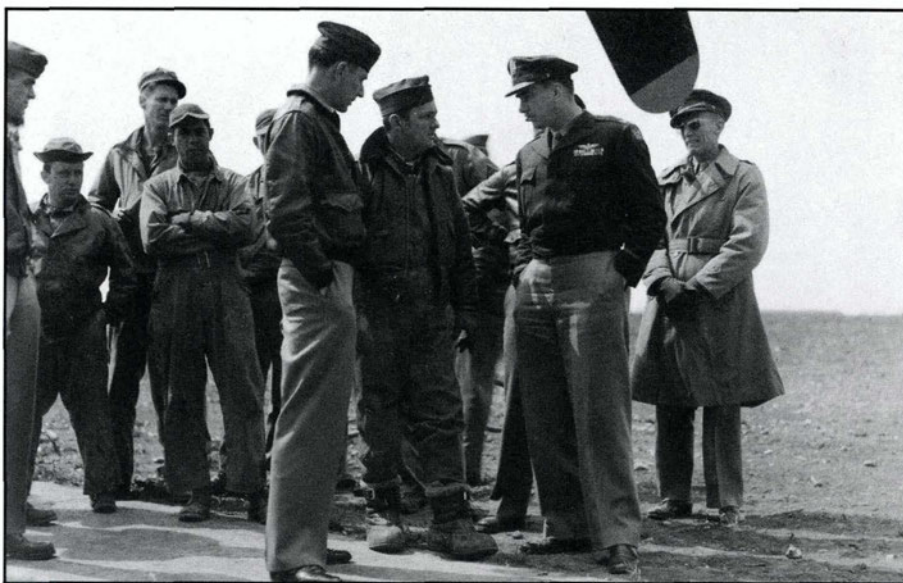
The 398th Bomb Group annual dues program completes the full circle this quarter as the members living in 10 Western states and Alaska and Hawaii enjoy the opportunity of contributing to the group with their financial support.

Dues remain at \$5.00 per year, but folks may add to this figure with special contributions to FLAK NEWS and the Memorial Fund. The group financial picture remains solid, according to treasurer Ralph Hall, thanks to the “over and above” giving by the members.

Dues notices have been placed in the newsletters mailed to Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Who among us lives in Hawaii, you ask?

A pair of 600 Squadron pilots — Don Griffin and Richard (Rip) Rohrer.



GENERAL WILLIAM GROSS (right) commanding officer of the 1st Bombardment Wing, was on hand at Station 131 to greet Colonel Frank P. Hunter and the 398th when they returned from Berlin on April 7, 1944. Among those listening in to the conversation are Jean Miller of the 603rd and Col. Earl Berryhill (right).

Colonel Hunter Took His Turn

CONFIDENTIAL

Headquarters 1st Bombardment Division
Office of the Commanding General
APO 557

GENERAL ORDERS
No. 375
Award of Distinguished Flying Cross

As commanding officer of the 398th Bomb Group, Col. Hunter “took his turn” with other ranking group and squadron officers in flying as “Air Commander” during the group’s 195-mission tour.

In addition to his “official” lead mission, Col. Hunter also “sneaked” aboard several times to fly “unofficially” as a co-pilot. Here are the “official” missions credited to Col. Hunter while at Nuthampstead—

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Sottavast, France | May 6, 1944 |
| 2. Berlin, Germany | May 7, 1944 |
| 3. Villacoublay, France | May 20, 1944 |
| 4. Nancy, France | May 25, 1944 |
| 5. Boullogne, France | June 2, 1944 |
| 6. Hardelot, France | June 4, 1944 |
| 7. Bordeaux, France | June 15, 1944 |
| 8. Leipzig, Germany | July 7, 1944 |
| 9. Dessau, Germany | July 20, 1944 |
| 10. Villaroche, France | Aug. 1, 1944 |
| 11. Rouen, France | Aug. 13, 1944 |
| 12. Delitzsch, Germany | Aug. 16, 1944 |
| 13. Lutzkendorf, Germany | Sept. 13, 1944 |
| 14. Magdeburg, Germany | Sept. 28, 1944 |
| 15. Frankfurt, Germany | Nov. 5, 1944 |
| 16. Merseburg, Germany | Dec. 12, 1944 |
| 17. Neuss, Germany* | Jan. 23, 1945 |

* Killed in Action

Colonel Hunter is buried at the Ardennes Cemetery, near Liege, Belgium, along with 41 others from the 398th, plus four listed on the Ardennes Wall of the Missing.

Copies For \$2.00

Additional copies of this FLAK NEWS — Vol. 9 No. 3 — are available for \$2.00 each, post paid. Write to Allen Ostrom, Seattle, WA 98177-4808.

1. Under the provisions of the Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended and pursuant to authority contained in letter, HQ Eighth Air Force, File 200.6 23 September 1944, subject, “Awards and Decorations”, the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS is awarded to the following named officer—

FRANK P. HUNTER, JR. 0-19083, Colonel, Air Corps, United States Army. For extraordinary achievement while serving as Air Commander of a Combat Bombardment Wing composed of B-17 aircraft on two bombing missions over enemy occupied territory. On both of these occasions Colonel Hunter demonstrated consummate flying skill and exemplary leadership in attacking installations of vital importance to the enemy. On 15 June, 1944, he directed the formation to the designated target where bombs were released and outstanding results obtained. Colonel Hunter led the Wing on 1 August, 1944, to the assigned objective with a high degree of proficiency. Upon reaching the target area the airplane in which he was flying was badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire. He continued on the bombing run and although haze and clouds made sighting the target difficult, bombs were dropped with accuracy. The courage, coolness and superior airmanship displayed by Colonel Hunter on this occasion reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered the military service from North Carolina.



398th Bomb Group

Constituted as 398th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 15 February 1943. Activated on 1 March 1943. Prepared for combat with B-17's, but interrupted these activities from July to December 1943 to train replacement crews for other organizations.

Moved to England in April 1944 and assigned to Eighth AF. Entered combat in May 1944, and until V-E Day operated primarily against strategic objectives in Germany, attacking targets such as factories in Berlin, warehouses in Munich, marshalling yards in Saarbrücken, shipping facilities in Kiel, oil refineries in Merseburg, and aircraft plants in Münster.

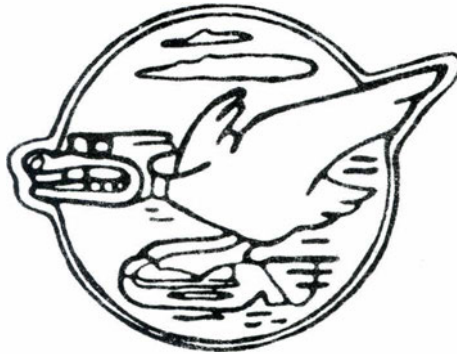
Temporarily suspended strategic missions to attack coastal defenses and enemy troops on the Cherbourg peninsula during the Normandy invasion in June 1944; strike gun positions near Eindhoven in support of the air attack on Holland in September 1944; raid power stations, railroads, and bridges during the Battle of the Bulge, December 1944-January 1945; and attack airfields to aid the Allied assault across the Rhine in March 1945.

Flew last combat mission, attacking the Skoda Works in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, on 25 April 1945. Transported liberated prisoners from Germany to France after V-E Day. Returned to the U.S., May-June 1945. Inactivated on 1 September 1945.

STATIONS. Ephrata AAB, Washington, 1 March 1943; Blythe AAFld, California, 5 April 1943; Geiger Field, Washington, 29 April 1943; Rapid City AAB, South Dakota, 20 June 1943 — April 1944; Nuthampstead, England, 22 April 1944 — 26 May 1945; Drew Field, Florida, 3 July — 1 September 1945.

SQUADRONS OF THE 398th

600 SQUADRON N8 MAPLE



EMBLEM. Over and through a light turquoise blue disc, DAFFY DUCK in flight, dark gray, bill, feet, and band about neck yellow, riding a dark red aerial bomb, shaded black palewise, all beneath a white cloud formation in chief, and emitting black speed lines to rear. (Approved 20 January 1944.)

601 SQUADRON 30 NEWWAY



EMBLEM. On a light pastel green disc border black, piped white, a baby proper, under a golden halo, wearing a red suit and aviator's helmet, black and green ear phones and goggles, having black horns, trimmed white, and black bat wings, grasping in the left hand a white trident with black aerial bomb prongs, in flight above the flames of the fires of Hell proper. (Approved 25 October 1943.) Patch was designed by Gil Goldman, 601 Bombardier.

602 SQUADRON K8 ENCLASP



EMBLEM. GOOFY dog, proper, wearing a white shirt, green jacket, tie, trousers, and hat, yellow orange shoes, yellow gloves, standing with feet spread apart, hands on hips, and supporting a small black and red aerial bomb on the right shoulder, holding a white clay pipe between the teeth, all behind a shamrock formed by a light green outline; shamrock charged in sinister leaf with stylized white aerial bomb outlined green. (Approved 6 March 1944.)

603 SQUADRON N7 ADORN



EMBLEM. On a lemon yellow disc, the head and shoulders of a pugnacious, caricatured black bull dog proper, chewing on fin of black aerial bomb, and wearing brown aviator's helmet, tan goggles, trimmed blue, brick red jersey, and a light turquoise blue scarf wrapped about the neck. (Approved 25 October 1943.)

8th Air Force Awards And Decorations

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS 17 AUGUST 1942 to 15 MAY 1945

Medal of Honor	14	Legion of Merit	207
Distinguished Service Cross	220	Oak Leaf Cluster to L. of M.	2
Oak Leaf Cluster to D.S.C.	6	Silver Star	817
Distinguished Service Medal	11	Oak Leaf Cluster to S.S.	47
Oak Leaf Cluster to D.S.M.	1	Distinguished Flying Cross	41,497
		Oak Leaf Cluster to D.F.C.	4,480
		Soldier's Medal	478
		Oak Leaf Cluster to S.M.	2

Purple Heart	6,845
Oak Leaf Cluster to P.H.	188
Air Medal	122,705
Oak Leaf Cluster to A.M.	319,595
Bronze Star	2,972
Oak Leaf Cluster to B.S.	12
Unit Citation	27
Meritorious Service Unit Plaque	19

THE 398th BOMB GROUP (H)

Colonel Hunter Hand Picked His Staff

When history buffs examine the records of the 8th Air Force in World War II they will note that the 398th Bombardment Group (H) flew fewer missions (195) than other groups who took off from East Anglia to do combat with the German Luftwaffe pilots and anti-aircraft flak gunners.

A rookie outfit? A last-minute collection of airmen sent over to help mop up in the final year of the war? Not really. A "rookie" outfit this was not. Arriving on the combat scene in early 1944 instead of 1943 was not the choosing of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., and his staff.

The staff was hand-picked by Hunter. He had selected several West Pointers, like himself, to be the nucleus of this new B-17 group. Most of them came from the 34th Bombardment Group (H), then at Blythe, California.

The 398th came together quickly and efficiently at Rapid City Army Air Force Base, South Dakota, the four squadrons being led by John G. Weibel (600th Squadron); Leo Killen (601); Pete Rooney (602); and Judson Gray (603). All seasoned B-17 men.

The ground echelons were under the command of Earl Berryhill, who entered the Army in 1931, two years before Hunter graduated from West Point.

For several months the 398th sharpened its skills for the call to combat that surely was eminent. Not so. Instead, the new assignment was for remaining at Rapid City to perform "RTU" duties, meaning Replacement Training Unit. A bitter disappointment for Col. Hunter, who felt his group was "ready."

But the 398th did remain at Rapid City, there to take 326 untrained bomber crews and send them on to combat theaters of the world as skilled as humanly possible. Thus, more than a little bit of the 398th already was in England long before the group arrived at Nuthampstead (Station 131) in April of 1944.

Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, then the commanding officer of the 8th Air Force, sent this message to Col. Hunter after the 398th returned home from its "Baptismal" mission to Berlin on May 7, 1944, flown only 14 days after arriving at Station 131—

"I desire to welcome the officers and men of the 398th Bomb Group into the operational organization of the Eighth Air Force. It is noteworthy that yours was the first unit in the First Bomb Division to dispatch a double strength group on an initial operation. Your achievement on this occasion reflects great credit upon your training and combat spirit."

Thus, the 398th quickly won its combat spurs and for the next 12 months flew with

the 91st and 381st as a member of the battle-tested First Combat Wing.

Colonel Hunter was not there when the final mission was flown on April 25, 1945, His division-leading B-17 was plucked from the skies over Neuss, Germany, on January 23, 1945.

Had he lived, he might have been the one who penned these words to the officers and men of the 398th at the conclusion of hostilities—

"In what should be a source of pride for us all is the fact that in the final four months of the campaign our 398th ranked first in the entire Eighth Air Force with 95 percent accuracy within the 2,000 foot bombing circle."



"On the raid to Derben on April 8, 1945, the group had 100 percent in the 2,000 foot circle and 98 percent in the 1,000 foot circle."

"No one can argue that the 398th ended the war as a proven wartime performer on par with the best of the veteran units. Congratulations."

This was written by Col. Lewis P. Ensign, who came over from the 91st to assume leadership at Station 131 following the death of Col. Hunter.

In retrospect, the 398th was assigned the same targets as the other B-17 and B-24 units. Berlin, Cologne, Munich, Schweinfurt, Frankfurt, and dozens of other places big and small as dictated by the Eighth bomber command.

And the same history buffs who took note of the "fewer" combat missions flown by the 398th may also take note of a target called "Merseburg." Just another town west of Leipzig. No big deal. No submarine pens here. No ball bearing plants. No Foche-Wulf 190 or ME 109 factories.

Just the place where the Nazis turned out much of the petroleum products so vital in keeping their war machine humming. Another Ploesti, it was called.

And at times it seemed that the 398th had "Merseburg" as its personal target. The group hit Merseburg and nearby petroleum chemical targets no less than 13 times. At a cost of 13 B-17's and their crews. With some 400 Flak guns assigned to the area, it was easy to understand why the target became known as—

"Merseburg ... Dreaded Merseburg."

One of every seven men of the 296 men killed in action with the 398th were on missions to Merseburg or nearby targets deep in eastern Germany. These were mis-

sions requiring consummate physical and mental endurance.

The missions were always over eight hours duration, or roughly the same time required for a 747 to fly half way around the world ... like from Seattle to London. But it was only about 400 miles from Nuthampstead to Merseburg "as the crow flies." Or 800 miles per round trip. A two-hour hop for a 747.

But "bunching up" 36 B-17's over an East Anglia radio beacon, each Fortress grouping to find his proper place in the formation in the pre-dawn darkness, took the better part of an hour or more. All this at 150 mph or less. And then the trick of slipping into bomber stream in the exact position, changing headings from time to time to conform to the flight plan. And then the game of zig-zag to keep the Luftwaffe guessing. And then the game of threading the bomber stream between known Flak areas. Sometimes successful, sometimes not. All this adding to the air time.

Continued On Page 9

A Rookie Outfit It Was Not

Continued From Page 8

The dash to Merseburg and its Leuna refinery was never straightaway. But rather a feint towards Berlin, or Hannover, or Magdeburg, or Schweinfurt. All this adding to air time. By the time the group was committed to Merseburg, the Flak guns below were ready.

"Black, ugly puffs were popping up everywhere around our airplane," wrote an airman in his "forbidden" diary. "In the midst of it all I saw one of our ships in the high element drop suddenly, his No. 3 engine afire. Then he simply blew up. I don't think anyone got out."

On another trip to Merseburg he wrote—"They now have a 40-mile stretch of 88's leading into this area and I think every one of those guns shot at us today.

"We have no more desire to go to Merseburg."

Those lucky enough to escape the Flak, the fighters, the cold, the anoxia, the stress, the fatigue could enjoy the "fruits of their labors" once the formation was over friendly territory and the group had descended to an altitude of 12,000 feet.

These "fruits" came in the form of (1) a candy bar (2) chewing gum (3) a cigarette (4) relief tube. Not necessarily in that order.

Probably the most dedicated cigarette smoker in the 398th was Larry deLancey, the pilot who won a Silver Star for bringing his B-17 home from a mission to Cologne with the plane's entire nose blown open.

Congresswoman Enjoyed B-17 Ride; Said Thanks With Fortress Tribute

On occasions DeLancey was known to remove his oxygen mask while at 25,000 or more feet so he could enjoy a puff or two from his favorite cigarette!

The normal time span between the wake-up calls and the post de-briefing dinner after a Merseburg mission was about 14 hours.

And the last words the crews wanted to hear when they finally returned to their huts or tents were—

"You are scheduled to fly again tomorrow."

There were enough "tomorrows" in one year's time for the 398th to lose 70 B-17's in combat with the enemy, plus 50 more abandoned on the continent after forced landings. In addition, 33 more aircraft returned home so severely damaged they were reduced to salvage.

On the human side, the 296 killed in action were joined by 298 who became prisoners of war. Eight were rescued at sea; 44 were liberated by Allied troops; 32 evaded capture and 82 were wounded (not counting the many wounded who fell into enemy hands.)

With Station 131 being the closest bomber base to London, it was oftentimes

visited by a variety of "brass." Gen. Doolittle, who was a close personal friend of Col. Hunter, stopped by at Nuthampstead many times. Once he brought with him an assortment of U.S. political visitors, one being Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce. And herself a gifted writer.

The crews assigned to fly that morning grumbled at having to rise a half-hour earlier than usual to accommodate the visitors. And later mumbled under their breaths at the Congresswoman's naive question—

"Why hasn't this target been bombed before?"

A month earlier the base was visited by other congressmen, including Karl Mundt of South Dakota. Mundt had been present at Rapid City a year earlier, shortly before the entire group flew off for England. He had witnessed the "christening" of Col. Hunter's aircraft, WITKA TANKA TON by members of the Sioux Indian tribe of South Dakota.

"The Bird That Lays Big Eggs" (WITKA TANKA TON) flew 30 missions from Nuthampstead. It was shot down on November 21, 1944, on a mission to Merseburg. The same week that Mundt had paid his visit.

Congresswoman Luce, not much of a hit with the men at briefing, apparently did impress Kearie Berry, 603 operations officer. Berry offered to take Mrs. Luce for a ride in a B-17, an offer she gladly accepted.

Upon returning, she thanked the 398th pilot with the following poem about her flight—

*Oh, fellow Congressmen, I pray,
Be angry not with me
For riding in those Fortresses;
It's friendship, don't you see?
The explanation's simply this—
Oh, everywhere I go
I always seem to run across
Some Fortress friends I know.
That I should fly exclusively
While you below me walk,
Is something that I would avoid—
It causes so much talk,
But what can any lady do
Amid these distant scenes
When she has, ah, so many friends
Among B-Seventeens?
I feel for you, for on the ground
Existence is so tame;
I seem to be so singled out,
But I am not to blame;
Ah me, those friendly Fortresses!
They have such hearts of gold;
I ask you, can a lady go
And cut a Fortress cold?
Be broad and understanding, men!
The explanation's clear;
What can a woman do, sir, when
B-Seventeens are near?
I fear you are provincial, boys,
For really in a war
You ought to understand just what
Four-motor friendships are!*



COLONEL HUNTER enjoyed decorating his men. In one of many such ceremonies at Station 131, he is shown here awarding DFC's to Willis Frazier, Bill Markley and Tracy Petersen.



THIS WAS the B-17 flown to England by Colonel Hunter, the Witka Tanka Ton, named by Sioux Indians at Rapid City, SD.



CLAIRE BOOTH LUCE
A "B-Seventeen" Fan

*"And when our work is done,
Our course on earth is run,
May it be said, 'Well done,
Be Thou at peace.'"*

From Alma Mater, West Point.



THIS CROSS marks the site where Colonel Frank P. Hunter's B-17 crashed, killing him and all but one member of his crew on a mission to Neuss, Germany, January 23, 1945. The cross and floral decorations were prepared by Germans living in the area for members of the 398th who visited the site in both 1988 and 1992.



COL. EARL BERRYHILL
First On The Scene



THOMAS-MORSE O-19 was the plane Lt. Hunter flew with the 44th Observation Squadron in Panama in the mid-1930's. It was the plane he cracked up in on a flight over the jungles of Panama, sustaining a serious foot injury. The O-19 featured a wrap-around corrugated sheet metal fuselage.

Col. Berryhill Was First "On The Job"

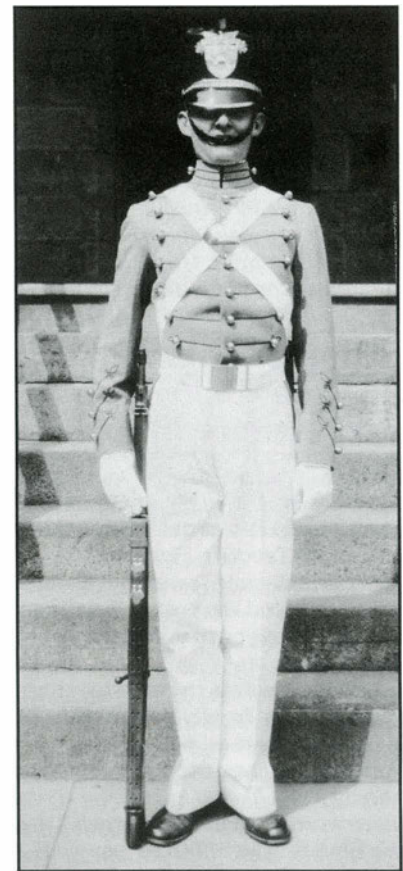
The very first man selected by Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr. to form the nucleus of the 398th Bomb Group leadership in early 1943 was Lt. Col. Earl Berryhill.

Berryhill was named "Ground Executive Officer;" and given the massive responsibility over transportation, military police, mess halls, finance and all other non-flying facilities.

It was left to Col. Berryhill to instill Col. Hunter's military credo of "duty, honor and country" among the men who labored to support the flying combat personnel. If it had to do with any function relating to the ground operation at Station 131, whether in one of the four squadrons or any of the following units, Col. Berryhill was involved—

- 1226 Quartermaster**
- 206 Finance**
- 478 Sub Depot**
- 1449 Ordnance**
- 344 Medical**
- 1142 Military Police**
- 860 Chemical**
- 325 Station Complement**
- 426 Air Service Group**
- 18 Weather Squadron**

"To acquit himself like a man in his efforts to realize the ideals of West Point, in doing his duty to God and Country."



FRANK P. HUNTER, JR.
As A West Point Cadet

Hunter Knew What He Wanted

When Lt. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., received his pilot's wings in 1934 his first mission was to ask Maria Long to marry him. His second mission (as a Southern gentleman) was to seek her father's permission. After waiting his turn to be called by the father-physician into the latter's office, Dr. Long joked—

"You don't want to marry her. She's young and can't do a thing."

"Sir," said Hunter, "I'm asking for her hand, not a medical opinion."

The Chaplain Recalls His Trusted Friend

By Rev. James T. Duvall
Chaplain, 398th Bomb Group

My first meeting with Col. Frank P. Hunter was in January 1944. He appeared to be a forthright person and knew what he expected from his troops. For me, this proved to be true.

A short time after, he invited my wife and me to his home for dinner. My being a Lieutenant and he a Colonel, I was a little concerned as how to act during the evening. It didn't take long to relax. The graciousness of the Colonel and Mrs. Hunter made things comfortable in a hurry. The evening was enjoyable. It was the beginning of a trusted and respected friendship.

The Colonel was appreciative of all the work done by his men — the bomber crews and the ground personnel. He was not egotistical nor did he take credit for the group's successes. He received a letter from Gen. Jimmy Doolittle congratulating him on his leadership of the 398th on its first major mission, May 7, 1944, to Berlin. In the book "REMEMBRANCES" (page 7), you will find his reply. He recognized the importance of each man and had the ability to inspire them to do their best. A definite mark of a leader.

It was nothing out of the ordinary for the Colonel to drive around the base to see how things were going. At times, he would stop, pick up a man, talk to him in a friendly manner and ask about his welfare. It was probably a surprise meeting for the man, but he would learn his Commander was not a demagogue but was interested in his opinions whether positive or negative. This is one way he tested

The friendliness of Col. Hunter was felt by those who knew him and had opportunities to share some time with him. I remember one cold morning when we were watching the take off of a mission. He told me I needed a warm jacket. Informing him that ground personnel could not draw them, the subject was dropped. Upon returning to my Jeep, there was a fur lined jacket on the front seat. He had given me his. A gesture of friendship and caring by one I respected.

His friendliness extended beyond the confines of the base. He was known by the residents of Nuthampstead and Barkway. In my opinion, his association with them helped in creating a positive attitude toward the personnel of the 398th. On occasions, he would invite groups of children and adults from the surrounding area to come on base for luncheon. It seemed as though the children thoroughly enjoyed such outings. There were introduced to some "kid food" (hamburgers) tasted for the first time. Some weren't sure they would like them. After the first bite, they were "off and eating." It was enjoyable to see the neighborliness and camaraderie among both the children and adults. The Colonel was a good "P.R." man.

The Colonel was a man of faith. He was always supportive of the chapel program. Before shipping out for England, there were chapel services scheduled for the recognition of each squadron. The Squadron Commander or his representatives was asked to speak during the service. There were also those who were asked to assist

398th Commander Was a Man of Faith

the morale of the troops. He was interested in the welfare of all his men and would do what he could to make their lives as comfortable as possible in adverse conditions.

Of course, there was another side to the Colonel's personality. There were times when it became necessary to become a disciplinarian. This was not easy for him to do but he did it fairly and justly. With a group as large and diverse as ours, there would always be some who balked at discipline and would try to blame others for their actions. We sometimes forgot that each individual was there to do his part in the overall performance of the group to make it effective and cohesive. In my opinion, he was a good Commander, tough at times but fair. That was his job and responsibility and he did it well.

in other aspects of the service. Col. Hunter was the speaker for the Group on March 26, 1944. At Station 131, he would attend chapel services whenever possible. Occasionally, after service he would say, "Let's go to the village for a church service." I think he missed the liturgy of the Episcopal Church or maybe he wanted to hear a good sermon. The Vicar of Barkway was a good friend and often visited the base. The Colonel would tell me he was going to teach me to chant, but, not being much of a singer, he never succeeded.

January 23, 1945, was a sad day for the 398th Bomb Group (H). The Colonel was leading his group and the 1st Combat Wing on a mission to Neuss, Germany. He didn't come home. The 398th lost a Commander. I lost a trusted friend.



MARIA HUNTER, Colonel Hunter's widow, holds the very flag that her husband had while commanding the 398th Bomb Group. The flag is now in the office of the 398th Operations Group commanding officer at Castle Air Force Base, California.



THE 1994 ENGLAND TOUR

“Getting Back Was Touch And Go; Coming Back Is Touching Base”

These are the words inscribed on the special mug created by Tony Weston of Nuthampstead, England. A “Friend of the 398th.”

And given to each member of the recent England tour, conducted during June 15-30, 1994. A most fitting expression for those who otherwise might be hard-pressed to sum up in a few words how they felt after their return to Station 131 and other stops along the tour.

Most were touched by frequent reminders that others would never be able to retrace this route and remember those tumultuous years of World War II. Many comrades lie deep in the cold waters off the English Channel, many beneath the crosses at Madingly and other cemeteries on the continent; others at home; others remembered only with their names on Walls of the Missing.

They shall not grow old,

As we that are left grow old;

Age shall not weary them,

Nor the years condemn.

At the going of the sun and in the

Morning we shall remember them.

Aaron, Abbott, Aleksyn, Anataillia ...

Feinstein, Feldman, Ference ...

Khoury, Kiernan, King, Kiska ...

O’Neal, Osteen, Ostron ...

Woodward, Young, Zasa, Zook ...

Just a few of the names forever etched in the 398th Bomb Group’s chronicle of “Killed In Action.” They were remembered at the Service of Commemoration at



BILL AND EVELYN COMSTOCK pose beside the 398th Memorial at Nuthampstead during the Service of Commemoration held there on June 25. They headed up the 1994 England tour, which is described in greater detail on Pages 12-20. Otherwise, most of the current issue is devoted to Colonel Frank P. Hunter, Jr.

the Memorial, complete with songs of prayer and praise, raising of flags by current members of the Air Force stationed in England; the laying of wreaths by the 398th (Ralph Hall, Charles Sutton, Ray Talbott), Friends of the 398th, Royal British Legion; local ATC Squadron; and the children of Anstey and Barkway schools.

The Memorial was bedecked with

flowers, adding even more beauty to an already beautiful monument.

President Bill Comstock praised the Friends for their faithfulness in maintaining the memorial and grounds and for “the bonds of kindred spirit and fellowship that we have with you.”

Then he borrowed from Winston Churchill in adding ...

“Never have so many owed so much to so few.”

And then the tour members set about to revel in five days of activities that included services at Madingly and St. George Church in Anstey, visits to Duxford Imperial Air Museum; a smashing 40’s barn dance (over 400 on hand); a hog roast and even small plane rides on the old main runway.

It was a slightly exhausting experience, according to more than a few of the members, but none faltered.

There were touches of colds here and there, a cut finger, injured foot, and ... a near “international incident.”

Bob Knowles, proudly wearing his 602 Squadron cap on a walking tour of Oxford earlier in the tour, had his “Goofy” cap snatched by a young “thug” on a bicycle. Several gave chase, but lost the “little begger” in the winding alleys of the venerable college town.

Elaine Knowles came down with a cold at the end of the tour, but was able to belt out her version of “An Irish Blessing” at the Farewell Banquet in London.

Continued On Page 13



ELAINE TYLER, secretary of the Friends of the 398th, poses with the memorial wreath presented by the visiting 398th Bomb Group England tour party at Madingly last June 24. The wreath had been placed by Bill Comstock and Wayne Doerstler on behalf of the group. The act underlined the theme carried on throughout the two-week tour, “For The Fallen.”

"TOUCH AND GO"

Continued From Page 12

No word at edition time if the Knowles completed their planned 300-mile bike tour of East Anglia after the tour.)

"Honorary" titles were bestowed on three members of the Friends during a "lavish" dinner at nearby Broxted. Wilfrid Dimsdale, Friends chairman, was made an honorary vice president by Bill Comstock and also presented with a special 8th Air Force wooden carving (created by Bill Adams of London).

Barry Tyler was named honorary president and Elaine Tyler was named honorary secretary.

Dimsdale, in accepting his award, urged the tour members to "preserve your 398th history before it is lost or 'binned'. Do not lose these bits of noble achievement."

Dimsdale said he was hopeful that an arrangement for developing a "repository" for these records can be created at Duxford.

All those who wished to do so were able to fly in one of several small planes at the old field. At the conclusion of the flights, three Harvards (AT-6) thrilled the airfield audience with a formation fly-past, many recalling those three-plane flights of B-17's a half-century earlier.

Wally Blackwell, who administers the 398th flag program, arranged for a "flag burning ceremony" with Tim Wells at the big flag pole location near to where the tower used to be.

The flag of Colonel Frank P. Hunter, Jr., was the first to be flown at this new pole. Many others have followed, as presented by veterans' families. As the flags deteriorate, they must be replaced and disposed of. All the old flags were burned according to American flag etiquette.

The flag of Thomas Slawson, 601 gunner, is currently flying.

Bill Dean, former 600 pilot who ferried the deCleene crew to Burtonwood in 1945 and who learned later that this make-up crew had crashed near Wildboardclough, had the honor of carrying the American flag during the service at Anstey. The flag reposed on the altar during the service.

Sir Roger du Boulay, KCVO, CMG, Anstey church warden, welcomed the men and women of the 398th. He reminded his audience—

"Freedom is not the end of the struggle, but the beginning of new challenges."

Sir Roger and Viscount Richard Long of the English House of Lords, attended the 398th luncheon held on the nearby grounds of Fred and Binnie Oldenberg.

During the final hours of the tour at Nuthampstead, a metal plaque was affixed to the propeller that had once belonged to the B-17 flown by the V.A. Hansard crew of the 600th Squadron. The plaque, explaining the circumstances of the ill-fated plane that crashed on returning from a Merseburg mission, was given to the Friends for future placing in a designated repository.

It Was A "Kennedy" Evening

The England tour had just gotten underway in Southampton when it became apparent that someone was going to be honored for a deed long forgotten by many.

The name "Kennedy" triggered memories of an RAF air-sea rescue attempt in the English Channel. The Doerr crew of the 602nd, on its way to the continent, had plunged into the Channel on the morning of December 30, 1944. (See FLAK NEWS, October 1992.)

An RAF Walrus, flying in the area looking for a missing Lancaster, witnessed the mishap and immediately landed beside the crippled Fortress, which quickly sank beneath the surface.

Flight Officer Robert L. Kennedy, unable to grapple one of the Fort crewmen, jumped into the water in a futile attempt to save one man. And almost drowned himself before being pulled aboard his rescue aircraft.

Only last year was the identity of this man discovered. And on Saturday, June 18, 1994, Robert Kennedy's widow and two children were at the Novatel Hotel in Southampton to receive a plaque from the 398th Bomb Group honoring their hero husband/father.

Kennedy, of Northern Ireland, died several years ago, but his gallant effort on that day 50 long years ago provided England's Johanna Sienkiewicz the needed encouragement to locate the RAF hero and his family.

Johanna, of Oxford, and Ron Setter, of High Wycombe, were there to see a plaque honoring Kennedy presented to Mrs. Vivien Kennedy of England, and Iain Kennedy and Alison Millar, both of Northern Ireland. The plaque contained a poem written by Kennedy during the early years of his service with the RAF.

Bill Comstock made the presentation. Iain, speaking of his late father, said—"He was a very humble man, and all this fuss tonight would have thoroughly embarrassed him.

"But we all thank the 398th, Johanna and Ron, for a most memorable evening."

Sitting at the same table with Mrs. Kennedy was Joe Mansell, one of Doerr's gunners, who had concluded his required number of missions before that final, fateful flight. They had much to talk about.

Johanna and Ron continued on to Oxford to help guide the visitors there and at Blenheim Palace, but could not travel to the next stop, Wildboardclough (next page). They were the leaders in researching the story on the deCleene crash and setting up the arrangements for the group's visit.



ALISON MILLAR and IAIN KENNEDY
Proud of the Dad



MRS. VIVIEN KENNEDY

Special Contributions Needed for FLAK NEWS

This special edition of FLAK NEWS, dedicated to Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., had been in the planning stage for over a year. The cost of this production, double that of the "regular" 12-page quarterly issue, was approved by president Bill Comstock and treasurer Ralph Hall.

"However," explained Comstock, "we are hopeful that some of our members will make special contributions to offset the additional costs."

Contributions to the "Colonel Hunter Special" may be sent to treasurer Hall at New Bedford, MA 02740-1915.

A Cross On The Mountain Top

398th Tour Members Remember Fallen

BY JOHN PRINCE

Manchester Evening News

June 22, 1994 — Wildboarclough, England — Nearly 50 years after a U.S. wartime Flying Fortress bomber smashed into a Cheshire hillside, twisted pieces of the wreckage still lie there.

Five American crewmen died as the B-17 — on a routine flight from Burtonwood to Nuthampstead — broke up and burst into flames in January 1945.

They were only 20 feet from safely clearing the brow of the 1,500 feet Birchenough Hill, above Wildboarclough, near Macclesfield, and just four months from the end of the war.

Former comrades from the 398th Bomb Group (Hell from Heaven) made an emotional pilgrimage to the crash site. They packed the tiny village church for a memorial service.

Fifty ex-Air Force men and their relatives then hiked up the steep hill to where their comrades died and flowers were laid on the spot where the plane broke up.

British flying legend Air Vice Marshall Gen. Johnnie Johnson turned up to meet the American veterans and praised their heroism.

"As long as the English language is spoken we will be indebted to the Eighth Air Force," he said.

The focus of the visit by the Americans was to honor five men who symbolized the gallantry of the bomber crews.

Former tail gunner Charles Sutton, from Minnesota, bowed his head at the hilltop spot, which is marked by memorial crosses. He said — "We have the privilege of coming here to pay our respects to five guys I really never knew. But we were all part of the same effort.

"They were just 20 feet from survival. It was so sad."

A simple cross on Birchenough Hill remembering the men was put up by the Macclesfield Historical Society, according to Kevin Whittaker, secretary and founder.

An inscription on the cross says: "Respect them — and this site."

Are You Moving Soon?

Many of our member seem to be on the move these days. If you are one of these, please remember to send FLAK NEWS your change of address. Not AFTER your move, but BEFORE.

Also, we will need your new ZIP Code, including the "plus 4" that you can get from your mail carrier or Post Office.



THIS CROSS marks the place where the deCleene B-17 finally came to rest after hitting the hill 20 feet from the top. The names of the five airmen are inscribed on the cross, placed there by the Macclesfield Historical Aviation Society. Parts from the B-17 are still evident at the scene.

Original Crew Members Visit

Three members of the original Ken Hastings 603 crew, who but for illness and unavailability, would have been aboard the plane that crashed into Birchenough Hill taking five lives.

Oliver Bradford, John Bourquin and Oral Birch are alive today, and chose to visit the crash site along with the others on the 1994 England tour. They were joined by Birch's two daughters, Karen and Robin; and Dale and Dorothy Brown.

Those three places were taken by Frank Garry and Howard Ayres of the Harold Spangler crew; and navigator Tom Manos. Donald deCleene was the regular pilot and Maynard Stravinski the co-pilot.

The Bradford party concluded their visit to the crash site and then proceeded on their independent tour.

Bill Comstock presented a special memorial plaque to Kevin Whittaker of the Macclesfield Historical Aviation Society. Whittaker presented an original drawing by Steve Ridgeway to Comstock and the 398th.

MACCLESFIELD

Historical Aviation SOCIETY

29th June 1994

Dear Colonel Comstock,

On behalf of all our members, I am writing to thank you most gratefully for the presentation of the 398th BG plaque to our society, and for the wonderful speech that you gave. I apologise for my response in that I lost my composure as did my colleague, Gerald, but we were overcome with the emotion of the event.

Everyone with whom you came into contact and spoke to, still talks of you with great pride at having met with you and the other veterans of the 398th. I have written to Allen Ostrom, and sent him copies of the press reports that have appeared since last Wednesday. Allen also told us of your forthcoming operation. I, and all of our members, send you and your wife all best wishes for the future and we wish you a speedy recovery from your operation.

From everyone at Wildboarclough and this side of 'the pond', the memory of your visit will stay with us all. God bless you.

Yours sincerely,

KEVIN M WHITTAKER
Secretary

Funds Sought For Venerable Anstey Church

The venerable St. George Church at Anstey, which came so close to being demolished when a 603 Squadron plane crashed next door with the loss of 10 lives on October 15, 1944, was the scene of the Thanksgiving Service during the tour.

The vicar, Rev. Gerald Drew, used as his sermon title, "A Mighty Fortress." A coupling of God as our Mighty Fortress and the strength and stability of the B-17 Flying Fortress.

Bill Dean, 600 Squadron pilot, carried the American flag to and from the altar as the 398th representative.

Bill Comstock read the New Testament lesson, Micah 4:1-4.

The vicar later made an appeal for funds to carry on the renovation of the stone structure. Comstock endorsed the request with a contribution, and encouraged others to add to the fund by sending a donation to "398th Bomb Group Anstey Church Fund," %Ralph Hall, New Bedford, MA 02740-1915.



THIS WAS THE SITE of the Birchenough Hill crash that took the lives of five members of the 603rd Squadron. A wooden plaque has been placed there commemorating the event. The England tour party hiked to the site to pay their respects to the fallen. Posing with the plaque are Bill Dean, Charles Sutton and Keith Anderson.



KEVIN WHITTAKER (left) secretary and founder of the Macclesfield Historical Aviation Society, presented a specially framed drawing of a 398th B-17 to Bill Comstock. The drawing was an original by local artist Steve Ridgeway. (The men in the center are not identified). The Ridgeway drawing can also be seen on Page 20.



HOWARD TRAEEDER won the tour prize for having the most patches on his jacket. His colorful costume caught the attention of many as the group visited such destinations as Southampton, Portsmouth, Beaulieu, Stonehenge, Oxford, Derby, Wildboardclough, Snettisham, Barkway, Meesden and Broxted, just to name a few.

Tour Attracted 59 Members

The 1994 tour to England was a composite of 59 members. There were 46 on the main tour, some going all the way and others joining in here and there.

These were Wally & Teedy Blackwell; Bill & Evelyn Comstock; Charles Sutton; Dorothy Crouch and son Butch; Marilyn Gibb and son Andrew; Bill & Pat Dean; Wayne & Ruthanna Doerstler; Bill & Norma Engle; Bob & Elaine Knowles; Joe & Willetta Mansell; Allen & Geg Ostrom; Don & Dorothy Sable; Russ Reed and Millie McMillan; Ray & Jeanne Stange; Ray & Marilyn Talbott;

John & JoAn Thaxton; Howard & Jane Traeder; Mark Woods; Ralph & Marjorie Hall; Charles & Annette Anderson; Keith Anderson and son-in-law and daughter Ken & Susan Mauermann and grandsons Mark and David; Tom & Dawne Dougherty; and Barbara Fish, tour director.

Also, travelling on their own, were Walt & Cena Marsh; and Joe Spechulli. Also coming on their own tour and continuing on to the continent, were Dale & Dorothy Brown; John Borquin and Oliver Bradford; Oral Birch and daughters Karen and Robin.

The party joined the main group in Wildboardclough for the special remembrance service honoring the Donald deCleene crew that crashed there, killing five members.

Two ground crew members George Cuda and Bob Robertson, who married and remained in England after the war, also joined the activities.

And lastly, Harry Mazer, who bailed out from the Ferguson 602 aircraft over Pilsen on The Last Mission, April 25, 1945, joined Ostrom for ceremonies at Litice, Czech Republic. (See Page 17.)



THE WASH on the English coast was where gunners came to learn the fine points of aerial combat before experiencing "the real thing." Here, at one of the machine gun mounts still standing on the old site, four ex-tail gunners show off their 1944 form. Left to right are Charles Sutton, Ray Talbott, Allen Ostrom and Ralph Hall.



THE LADIES and their hats just had to be photographed at the luncheon following church services at Anstey. Left to right (back row) are Binnie Oldenberg, at whose home the luncheon was held; Elaine Tyler and Françoise Dimsdale. Front row are Elizabeth du Boulay, Evelyn Comstock and Lady Helen Long. There is just something about a hat that brings on the smiles ... and the cameraman.



BRIAN CLIPSTON AND SONIA GIFKINS

They hosted the England Tour group at Snettisham, showing some of the ex-gunners where they "honed their skills" on the target range before departing for Nuthampstead. They are developing a history and museum of old Station 172 and were delighted to welcome back some of the 1944-45 "residents."



WILLETTA MANSELL displays the vest she festooned with her husband Joe's World War II medals and ribbons. Plus assorted buttons, flags and trinkets picked up on the England tour.



DOROTHY CROUCH is all smiles as she accepts this plaque given to her by Bill Adams, the London wood carver, who is also all smiles. Adams surprised several of the tour members with his desk top specialties at the tour's Farewell Banquet.

Anyone For A "Last Mission" Tour?

A number of people in Pilsen, Czech Republic, inquired about the possibility of the 398th Bomb Group coming to their city on a special "Last Mission Tour" next May 1995. The city that represents the final mission of World War II for the 398th will be celebrating its 700th birthday next year and would like to include the 398th in its programs. Such a proposed tour would include a visit to the Skoda factory, the famous Pilsner beer plants, Prague and other points. If interested in such a proposed trip please call Barbara Fish, Travel House, Seattle, 1-800-423-5454.

Survivor Retraces Last Mission Adventures

After the England Tour, there was one more stopover on the continent to continue the tour's theme of "For The Fallen."

Two members of the 398th, one a survivor of a bail out over Pilsen, Czech Republic, would join in placing a memorial wreath at a monument erected a half century ago by Czech citizens in memory of the six members of the 602nd Squadron Alan Ferguson crew who met their deaths in their community.

It was a journey back in time for Harry Mazer, the waist gunner and one of three who successfully bailed out from their stricken B-17. Mazer, of Jamestown, New York, and William O'Malley of Winnetka, Illinois, came down and were captured and imprisoned by the Germans.

Michael Brennan came down and was shot by a German officer. Two who actually witnessed the incident, were at the ceremony.

Ferguson, John Halbart, Howard Feldman, Joe Huestess and Byron Young were found dead at the crash scene.

"NEZAPOMENEMEI" Czech Meaning: "Not Forgotten"

All these bodies, plus six others from other bomb or fighter groups, were unceremoniously dumped in a common grave near the town of Litice by their captors. This act led to the erection of a memorial by the local Czech citizens.

The ceremony held on Saturday, July 2, was attended by Mazer and Allen Ostrom of the 398th along with Litice Director (Mayor) Joseph Vesely and members of his staff. And some 50 local residents.

After a greeting by Mr. Vesely, Ostrom responded for the 398th and thanked the Czech citizens for their faithfulness in preserving the memory of the fallen Americans. Jaromir Kohout of Pilsen, who was instrumental in arranging the Litice ceremony, translated the talk.

Mazer told of each of his crew members and shared his emotions on being able to come half way around the world to honor his fallen crew members, "whom I shall never forget."

Martin Kubr of the Litice staff, translated for Mazer.

Mazer picked up a favorite Czech word during the ceremony — "Nezapomenemei." Translation — "Not Forgotten."

And he had not forgotten the place he came down in his parachute, just missing high voltage transmission lines. Or the place he was greeted by Germans with guns. And the long walk through the woods and to his confinement at the Pilsen airport. He retraced all these steps.

And visited the exact spot where O'Malley came down. And where Brennan was executed. And the plot of ground in the old cemetery where his comrades were buried.

Later, a guided tour through the Skoda plant which was heavily damaged by the 398th and other 1st Division bombers on April 25, 1945.

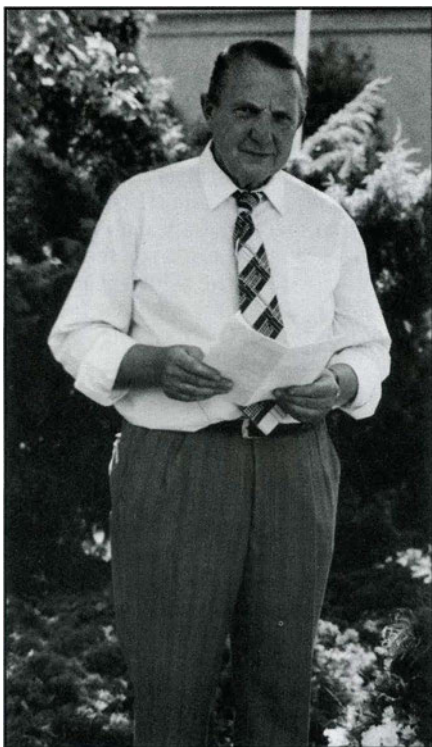
And even a visit to the actual crash site, where members of Kohout's SLET group still dig up pieces of the bomber. Parts of the wing structure are in possession of Kohout, as well as the pilot's seat.

On display at the Letecke Air Museum in Prague is one of the four engines from Ferguson's aircraft.

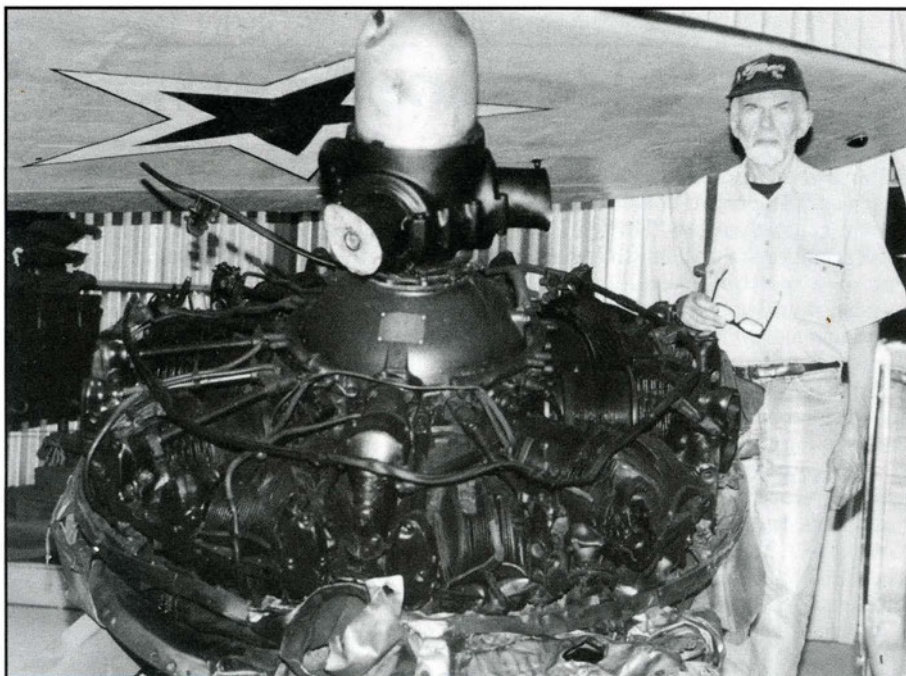


For The Fallen

HARRY MAZER AND ALLEN OSTROM stand beside the memorial in Litice, Czech Republic, after a ceremony there honoring the members of Mazer's crew who were killed after being shot down on The Last Mission over nearby Pilsen on April 25, 1945. The citizens of Litice, who erected the memorial in 1947, said the ceremony attended by two members of the 398th Bomb Group and 50 of their own residents, was "the best service we can remember." The people of Litice and Pilsen are hopeful that others from the 398th can return next year for Pilsen's 700th birthday. And repeat the ceremony at the memorial.



JOSEF VESELY, Director of the town of Litice, hosted his American visitors at City Hall, then read a welcome speech at the memorial honoring members of the 602 Squadron crew who were killed on the Last Mission of World War II.



HARRY MAZER stands beside one of the four Wright Cyclone engines that came from his Ferguson B-17 that was shot down on April 25, 1945, over Pilsen. The engine is exhibited at the Letecke Air Museum in Prague, some 50 miles east of Pilsen. Other parts from the plane are in the hands of a group of young crash-site researchers called SLET.



TIM WELLS (right) prepares to burn several of the old flags that had been flying on the memorial pole near the site of the old 398th tower. Wilfrid Dimsdale, Ralph Hall and Wally Balckwell look on. The first flag flown belonged to Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr. The current flag was given by the family of Thomas Slawson. Wells heads up the flag program at Nuthampstead and Blackwell for the Association.



JITKA FONIOKOVA, on the staff of the Interhotel Continental in Pilsen, displays the Pilsen newspaper that described the memorial service held at nearby Litice, attended by two members of the 398th Bomb Group. "Come back next year" was Jitka's farewell to the American Visitors.

BRIEF—things From The Editor's Desk

Then there is this fellow (life member) who continues to send our treasurer a \$100 check, the last one being accompanied with a scratch paper note showing GOOD NEWS BAD NEWS; a generous guy with a sense of humor ... hidden away in the woods on Station 131 all these years was an old ordnance shack, and inscribed in the concrete floor was the name of the cement mason, **Dale Kimball**, an early-on 398th member ... letters and photos keep coming from members who have seen the Aluminum Overcast at various fly-in cities, and all attest to the beauty of "our" B-17 ... **Harold Stallcup**, **John Hiller** and **Gordon Courtenay** and wives were on a cruise ship for the D-Day activities and each received the Commemoration Medal of the Jubilee of Liberty from the mayor of Cherbourg ... the video film produced by **Len Streitfeld** on that infamous mission to Derben (January 1994 FLAK NEWS) has resulted in contributions of over \$1,300 to the 398th ... president **Bill Comstock** made the England tour knowing he would be facing cancer surgery upon his return; he endured, with the surgeons adding, "Bill, you have lots of good years left" ... among the little things discovered about **Colonel Hunter** were that he was a member of the Glee Club at West Point and was more than a little talented on the piano ... the Czechs, despite their existence under both Nazi and Communist regimes, have developed a remarkably complete air museum in Prague ... credit **Jaromir** and **Martin Kohout** and their SLET friends from Pilsen for keeping alive the memories of those allied airmen who came down in what was then known as Czechoslovakia ... the brothers both work at the Skoda factory and provided **Harry Mazer** and **Allen Ostrom** with a guided tour; Skoda is now owned by an American firm, Brown & Root, who in turn are under the umbrella of Hillburton Company of Dallas, Texas ... the proposed flight of a 398th KC-135 to England to join the tour was cancelled at the last minute ... all along the tour route the prime topic of conversation was **Ray Stange's** low cholesterol diet requirement (he ate well) ... yes, there were visits to palaces and cathedrals, including Blenheim, Salisbury, Beaulieu, Oxford, Coventry, Chatsworth House and Sandringham ... **Mike** and **Sue Brown**, the talent behind the 40's barn dance at Anstey High Hall, received an 8th Air Force pewter tankard from the 398th for their labors ... **Marilyn Talbott** dislocated her shoulder two weeks before the tour, but refused to cancel, saying, "I'm going to England!" ... much of the talk at the Cambridge cemetery, where a wreath was presented for the 398th fallen, was about the fly-past of Sally B during **President Clinton's** visit ... "came in so low he clipped the trees," they said ... learning that the tour group did not come to Wildboarclough prepared with either flowers or wreath, **Mandy Whitaker**, wife of the Society's secretary, provided both and were carried to the mountain top crash site ... the taped radio interview on BBC from Cambridge featured **Bill Comstock**, **Wally Blackwell** and **Keith Anderson**; "they done good" ... the "surprise" promised by the Friends at Broxton banquet turned out to be the well-known Welyn Garden City Singers, a marvelous choral group whose beginnings go back 75 years; they were good! ... the tour guide, **Jim Espezel** and coach driver, **Mick**, received book presents from Travel House tour consultant **Barbara Fish**; but there was no gift for **Barbara**, so the men were asked to thank her with a kiss. (good thinking, Bill) ... can you believe there have been over 300 address changes in the 398th roster since the last one was printed less than two years ago. **George Hilliard** keeps coming up with new additions and others are "discovering" the 398th when they learn of the Aluminum Overcast's visit at an airport near their home ... **Ed Stewart** has brought his roster up to date and it is available for \$10 each; write him at Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33334-5248 ... a crowd of some 400 is expected for the Tucson reunion next month and more than a few of these folks will be looking for a ride in the Aluminum Overcast ... the 8th Air Force tankard given to the Browns will be made available for \$80 each in the Memory Room at Tucson; also a commemorative D-Day tankard ... members attending the official

business meeting should come prepared to comment on the new 398th by-laws and sustaining organization plan as developed by vice president **Ted Johnston** and his committee ... **Jack Lee** (and others), we have it on good authority that you will not be "cut off at the pass" at the Doubletree Hotel in Tucson, as was the case at the Sheraton Hotel in Buffalo last year ... **Mark Woods**, one of the group originals and a member of the England tour party, spent more than an hour with a Royston reporter and photographer while at the Madingly cemetery; surely, these two young men learned a great deal about the 8th Air Force from the ex-navigator on the 600 **Stanley Reed** crew; they produced a two-page color spread in the Royston Crow that paid tribute to the special bond that exists between the 398th and our English Friends ... the floral piece created by the florist in Pilsen for the Litice ceremony was the size of an 18-wheel truck tire, it was big — and gorgeous.



WILFRID DIMSDALE, chairman of the Friends of the 398th at Nuthampstead, and wife **Cathy** display the wooden plaque presented to the Friends during the England tour. It was created by **Bill Adams** of London.

Jill And Her 'Heroes'

"Last summer I had the pleasure of meeting some of the members of the 385th, who were in Spokane for their annual reunion. Among their guests was Franz Stigler, who flew ME-109's for the Germans. He is now living in Vancouver, B.C.

"I had met him before in 1986 at an air show in Yakima, WA and we have remained friends. He had even given me a color print of himself and Gen. Adolph Galland. Seeing Stigler, who was the enemy in World War II, and men like yourself, remind me of ghosts from a far distant past.

"What a neat experience to be 30 years old and to have met some of the greatest heroes of WWII.

"I am hoping that the 398th will come to Spokane one day so I can attend. I will write some special poems for the occasion. I want to go to one of your reunions SO bad."

Jill Chandler, Spokane, WA 99212

Editor's Note — Jill's poems have appeared in FLAK NEWS on a number of occasions. Spokane is not on 398th reunion list in the next couple of years, but she will join us next September in Tucson, Arizona.



SKETCH OF 398th B-17 AND CREW BY STEVE RIDGEWAY, ENGLAND

398th BOMB GROUP FLAK NEWS

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