



602



601



603



600

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

VOL. 11 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY 1996

Springfield Reunion Facts

EVENT – 13th annual reunion of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

WHEN – Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, September 25-26-27-28, 1996.

WHERE – Springfield, Missouri.

HQ Hotel – Clarion Hotel, 3333 So. Glenstone, Springfield, MO 65804. Telephone – (417) 883-6550.

BACKUP HOTEL – Hampton Inn, 3232-So. Glenstone, Springfield, MO 65804. Telephone – (417) 882-6611.

BACKUP MOTEL – Comfort Inn, 3330 E. Battlefield, Springfield, MO 65804. (417) 889-6300.

REUNION CHAIRMAN – Jerry Monagin, Florissant, MO 63033-5601.

RESERVATIONS – All information and hotel reservation forms are in the April, 1996 issue of FLAK NEWS. Contact reunion chairman for additional forms and information. Additional tour and schedule information appears on Page 7.



IT WAS A PERFECT DAY at the 398th memorial in Nuthampstead on June 15 when services were held honoring the group's killed in action during World War II. Secretary Wally Blackwell is shown here responding on behalf of the tour group members. It was a stirring ceremony.

IT WAS A GOOD ONE

The children of Anstey and Barkway Schools had just finished placing their flowers on the 398th Bomb Group Memorial at Nuthampstead, honoring the men from the group who had given their lives in World War II.

They had followed others with colorful wreaths and bouquets, including Phil Stahlman, who placed his wreath on behalf of the men and women of the 398th Bomb Group who visited Station 131 on the June 8-18, 1996 tour.

After the bugler's stirring notes of Taps, Rev. Gerald Drew asked for two moments of silence to reflect on what had

taken place on this serene farm land a half century before.

The silence was appropriate for recalling those friends whose lives were blotted out while so young. Some who lie buried at nearby Madingly, visited earlier by the group. Others who lie deep in the waters of the English Channel or in known and unknown graves on the continent.

Then the silence brought out the cheerful singing of the birds in the distance ... and the soft cries of a baby in the background among the 200 or more who had gathered for the service.

Continued on Page 4

Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the 398th Bomb Group will be held at 2 PM, Thursday, September 26, in the Grand Ballroom of the Clarion Hotel in Springfield, MO.

This notification was left off the Official Registration Form, published in the April issue of FLAK NEWS.

Vice president Ted Johnston will preside at the meeting, which will carry an extensive agenda, not the least of which will be the election of a new president.

FLAK NEWS: *How It Happens*

BY ALLEN OSTROM
Editor, FLAK NEWS

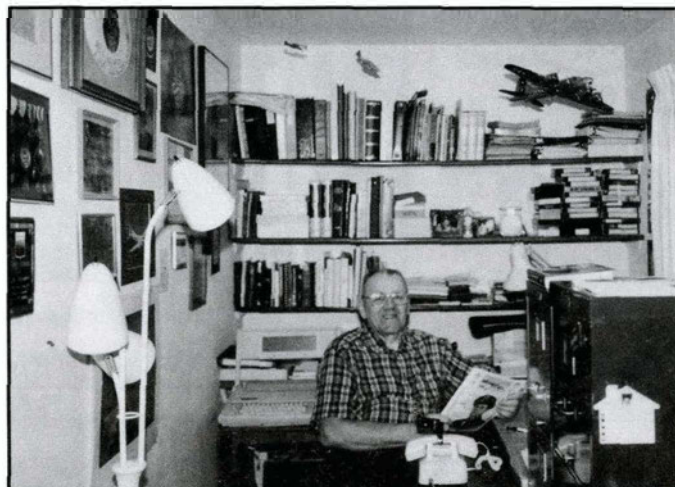
For over 10 years it has been my distinct pleasure and joy to write and edit our 398th Bomb Group newsletter, FLAK NEWS. And I could add the word "honor" as I count it a high privilege to have been able to hold this position for so long.

I can still remember sitting in a Paris hotel lobby while on the 1986 England/France Tour, chatting with Ralph Hall about the future of the 398th Memorial Association. It was here that we conceived FLAK NEWS, and three months later it was in the mails. (And about the same time, Ralph became the treasurer.)

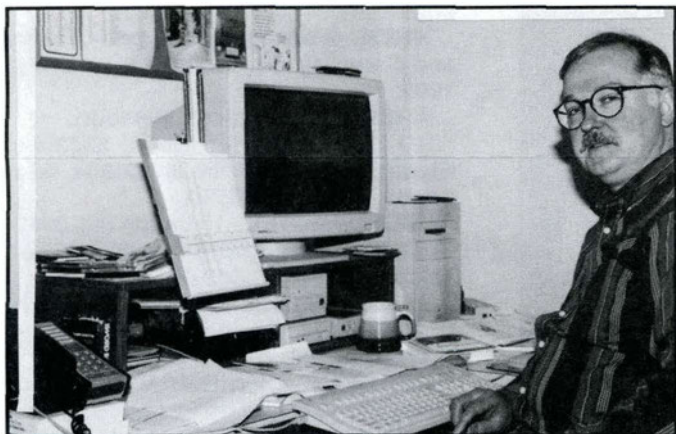
After that first issue in 1986, I looked around and asked myself, "what do I do now?" Ten years later I look around and ask myself, "what do I do with all the material still unpublished?"

There seems to be no end to the number of stories still to be told, questions to be asked, photos to be taken, research to be done, letters to be printed, etc., etc. Would that the Lord allow me to live long enough to honor all the men and women who have sent in stories and photos to FLAK NEWS.

Not to mention the need to maintain health, desire, and a mental capacity to keep abreast of modern publishing technology. Having done most of my journalism with a typewriter,



THE OFFICE — Here is where FLAK NEWS begins. In the office of editor Allen Ostrom in Seattle. A typewriter, word processor, telephone and three filing cabinets. Also assorted pens and pencils, paste pot ... but no computer and no fax.



VANGUARD PRESS' David takes over and does the typesetting for all the FLAK NEWS stories, headlines and captions. All done in the program PageMaker on his Macintosh computer. He gets help from Lois and Jennifer.



HEIDELBERG might sound like one of our WW II targets, but that's the German city where the big press comes from that prints FLAK NEWS. This is a single color, offset sheet-fed press that turns out 6,000 impressions per hour. Ron, Nils, Perry and Rob operate this and other presses at Vanguard.

stubby pencil and green eye shade, I am not always comfortable dealing in the modern world of computers.

I am constantly aware that "there's a better way to do this" as I work on the ever-changing membership roster. And when I present my FLAK NEWS "dummy" to David at Vanguard Press each quarter he takes my old-fashioned makeup pages and does his miracles with PageMaker on his Macintosh computer. He works in a totally different world than I do. But then again, maybe we need each other. Just as I need the stories, memories and photos from our members.

David also needs the typesetting help of Lois and Jennifer on occasions as I overload him with demands for mailing labels, roster corrections, special help in selecting fonts and type faces, rearranging tabular material, captions, etc. No two issues of FLAK NEWS are ever the same. Each has its own character.

Sometimes there is a need for "enhancement" of photos (done in my day by an editorial artist). Today, those "touch ups" are done by David on his computer. And we are lucky to have our own Frederick King of Chicago available for his special graphics art help.

But even more important than the intricacies and mysteries of publication are the "over-and-above" contributions of our members. The \$5.00 per year dues really don't come close to covering the cost of printing FLAK NEWS, which is about \$2.00 per copy. And we send out about 2,000 each quarter. Many of our members kick in with just enough "extra" to keep the bills paid.

Thanks to this generosity, we are able to send some 200 copies to our "Friends of the 398th" in England ... and in Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Channel Islands, Bermuda, Mexico and Australia. These must be sent first class, stamped and in envelopes. Hence, the cost for our "offshore" mailing is almost the same as mailing 1,800 to our U.S. members via non-profit, third class.

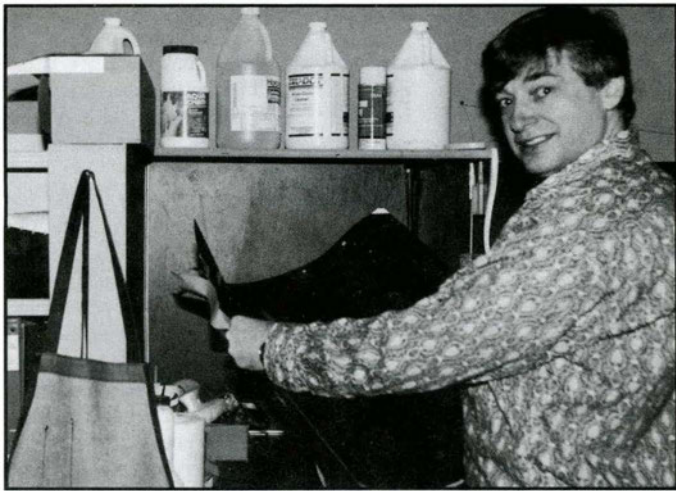
FLAK NEWS is mailed to all the other B-17 bomb groups of the Eighth Air Force, plus 8th AF News, 8th AF Museum, and other WW II-type publications.

Some of the bomb groups are beginning to reduce the size and frequency of their publications. Some send only to those who pay dues or "subscribe" to their newsletter.

"Crosshairs," the official newsletter of Bombardiers, Inc., will cease publication at the end of this year.

Continued on Page 3

MANY TALENTS NEEDED



TRANSFORMING the FLAK NEWS copy and photos from paper to negative to litho plate is done in Tom's department, with litho film stripping contributed by Scott.



THE FINAL production sequence on FLAK NEWS is accomplished at Diers Bindery. The "Saddle binder" assembles, folds, staples, trims and counts the finished product. Donna and her friends monitor the production lines and then hand pack the 2,000+ issues of the 398th newsletter.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Meanwhile, FLAK NEWS will remain "on course and on time" as long as the Board and membership approve of its budget and policy.

And ... as long as David, Lois and Jennifer grind out the stories on their computers. And Tom and Scott do their stripping and engraving jobs for the litho plates. And Nils, Kurt, Ron and Perry keep those big Heidelberg presses tuned up and humming. And Donna and her friends continued to staple, fold and count the "finished product" at Diers Bindery.

And finally, when all that has been accomplished, the gathering of the 398th "troops" at Delta Air Cargo at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport to stuff, sort, label and make ready for the good ol' Post Office.

Air Medals with lots of clusters must go to folks like Ted & Dorothy Johnston; Frank & Frances Weiler; Johnny Johnson; Dorothy Austad; Keith & Chuckie Anderson; Walt & Etta Thumblar; Vivien Jones; Bernice Tillman; Ray Estes; Ike Alhadef ... and Geg Ostrom.

So you see, there are many faces, many talents and many willing workers behind every issue of FLAK NEWS.

Comstock Remembrances

"Today the flag at Station 131 flies at half mast to honor the passing of a fine man. In the words of Rev. Gerald Drew of St. George's Church at Anstey, 'we should all thank God for his life.'"

Wilfrid Dimsdale, Friends of the 398th, Nuthampstead, England

"I have had the great pleasure to know many officers and leaders, but Bill was in a class by himself. We've lost a wonderful man. I have the mental picture of him somewhere overhead, in the left seat of his B-17, smiling at us who wonder what we will do without him.

"The fact is, we are all better off now because of him – the 398th, "our" B-17, and all who value our way of life as Bill did, Someday we'll all form up with Bill again. Until then, there is still work to be done."

Gregory J. Anderson, EAA Foundation, Oshkosh, WI

"Our love and prayers reach out to you in this moment of bereavement. While we grieve, we also give thanks for having had the honour of shaking hands with Mr. Comstock when the 398th visited The Wash on their 1994 England tour. For us it was a momentous occasion and we are proud to have been even a small speck in the history of the 398th."

Brian Clipston & Sonia Gifkins, Norfolk, England

"I will always remember meeting Bill at the bottom of the hotel escalator at the 1976 8th Air Force reunion in Dayton, Ohio. 'We're over here,' he called, and with that I joined the others who made up the first 398th group. The thinning ranks now have been made all the more thin with Bill's passing. I will always remember Bill in my prayers and shed a tear or two."

Bill Faas, Verona, PA

"Beyond the natural feeling of brotherhood with a fellow combat pilot, I felt drawn toward Bill by his leadership qualities, sense of responsibility and devotion to duty. I trust the rest of us will be able to sustain the 398th Memorial Association for many years to come, but no one will ever adequately fill Bill's shoes or represent it with as much dignity as he."

Keith Anderson, 600th Squadron, Issaquah, WA

"We too have lost a friend in Bill Comstock, who was always striving for better understanding between our nations. How well I remember his words at our reception in Neuss in 1988 – 'We came in our youthful years to wage war; we return in our elder years to share the peace.' And so we mourn with our friends of the 398th Bomber Group and trust that you will soon find a new president who will continue the history of this unification."

Alfred Wilms, Neuss, Germany

"We are all saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Comstock. Enclosed please find a contribution to the Comstock Scholarship Fund from our family in memory of our father, Julius Cubranich."

Dale Cubranich, Chardon, OH (Children of the SevenTeens).



EVELYN COMSTOCK presented a 10-year bound volume of FLAK NEWS to George Paul of the Duxford Air Museum while on the group tour to England. It was given in memory of her husband, Bill.

Memories Aplenty For England Tour Group Members:

Clock Turned Back At Station 131

Continued from Page 1

And then, for all the world, the unmistakable drone of a B-17 far in the distance.

Well, maybe it really wasn't a Fortress, but for a few brief and fleeting seconds those Cyclones and three-bladed props were singing in perfect harmony. It was 1944 again and the men who came as 70-year-olds were 20 once again and wearing A-2 jackets and 50-mission crush hats.

There were 39 on the official tour list, and all enjoyed the rare privilege of living with their hosts in such world famous tourist spots as Meesden Bury, Newsells, Barkway, Anstey, Barley, and, of course, Nuthampstead.

There was a pub lunch at the Woodman Inn, sightseeing around the old base led by Vic Jenkins and small plane rides courtesy of local pilots. And some fancy formation flying by a pair of AT-6's and a Russian YAK trainer.

Wally Blackwell, secretary of the 398th association, spoke at the Memorial Service on behalf of the group –

"It is with humble pride that we recall the achievements of the 398th. We owe them a great deal. But we must also remember that it is our task to pass this freedom on to the next generations. This is a commitment worth fighting for. This is the heritage of the United Kingdom and the United States, as it was with the 398th Bomb Group."

The "passing on" of this heritage was evident on the tour. Dana Maryott brought along two sons, Forrest and Dana, Jr., and a grandson, Jordon. Ed and Barbara Jones brought their granddaughter, Kristen Murray.

Jordon and Kristen joined their grandfathers in presenting wreaths at the Memorial at Cambridge American Military Cemetery.

Ernest Brass, making his first visit back to the old base, brought his son, Col. Ted Brass, USAF.

At the Thanksgiving Service at Anstey, Ernest Brass carried the American flag and son Ted, in full uniform, read the scripture lesson.

Rev. Drew, in his sermon, paid tribute to Bill Comstock, who passed away last January. He referred to Blackwell's eulogy at the funeral –

"We shall all see him again at 30,000 feet."

Russell Currier, smartly dressed and looking very "reverend," read the scripture lesson before the Memorial audience.

The 40's dance at High Hall Farm attracted the tour's 39, plus some 400 others to hear Big Band music and show off their WW II uniforms. Dinner: Fish and Chips, naturally.

The tour also found its way to Duxford

Imperial War Museum, there to be greeted by Linda Mason and George Paul of the museum staff. A bound volume containing 10 years' of FLAK NEWS was presented to the museum, by Evelyn Comstock in memory of her late husband, who had been 398th president for 20 years. The new 8th Air Force Museum is now under construction and will house most of the WW II aircraft now in other buildings.

Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman of the Friends of the 398th, Wally Blackwell and Allen Ostrom visited the Hertford Record Center, there to present a FLAK NEWS book and other records and memorabilia to Kate Thompson, County Archivist.

The record office's oldest document is written by Edward the Confessor, deeding the land for Westminster Abbey in London. The document dates back to 1066!

While in London to begin the tour, the members had the rare privilege of touring the Houses of Parliament, courtesy of Viscount Richard Long, member of the House of Lords. There was coffee and tea on the Terrace, adjacent to the Thames River.

The entire England tour was arranged by the Friends, headed by Dimsdale and Elaine Tyler, honorable secretary.

Ticketing and travel arrangement from the U.S. was arranged by Barbara Fish, Travel House, Inc., Seattle.



VETERANS Ed Jones and Dana Maryott were joined by grandchildren Kristen Murray (left) and Jordon Maryott (right) for the wreath presentation at Madingly Cemetery on June 14.

WILL THERE BE ANOTHER TOUR?

Will there be another tour back to the old base in the years to come? This was a question asked by 398th Bomb Group Members and Friends alike.

At the moment, no tour has been definitely scheduled, but there are some clues, the most articulate being offered by Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman of the Friends in England and the one most involved in the Station 131 tour arrangements and operations –

"In the future, there will be no major 40's dance, and perhaps fewer small plane flights from the airfield, but the 398th will always be welcome to return for the Remembrance Service at the Memorial. We have already scheduled that for June 13, 1998."

Thus, it would appear that "the ball is in our court," and it will be up to the Board officers at the Springfield reunion in September to decide on the group's participation.

The question, "should we come back again?" were put to several Friends during the tour. The RAF Air Training Corps Cadets, who participated in the service and in crowd control on the airfield, responded with –

"OH! Yes. Please come back again."

Lord Richard Long sent a hand-written note on a napkin to the tour leader at a dinner, saying –

"Congratulations on a wonderful tour. Yes, you must visit us again."

Lady Helen Long added –

"You all look so young. Of course you should come back again."

Members are invited to make their tour observations and suggestions to any of the Board officers or tour leader Allen Ostrom.



QUEEN ELIZABETH and Prince Philip were seen by the tour group at Windsor, the occasion being Philip's 75th birthday. Fans applauded and cameras clicked as the royal pair emerged from their vintage limousine, a Rolls Royce.



U.S. FLAGS which had been flown on the airfield flagpole on Station 131 were burned in a brief ceremony prior to raising a new one. Taking part were Peggy Wells, Wilfrid Dimsdale, Wally Blackwell, Teedy Blackwell and Allen Ostrom. The flags had been donated by 398th widows.



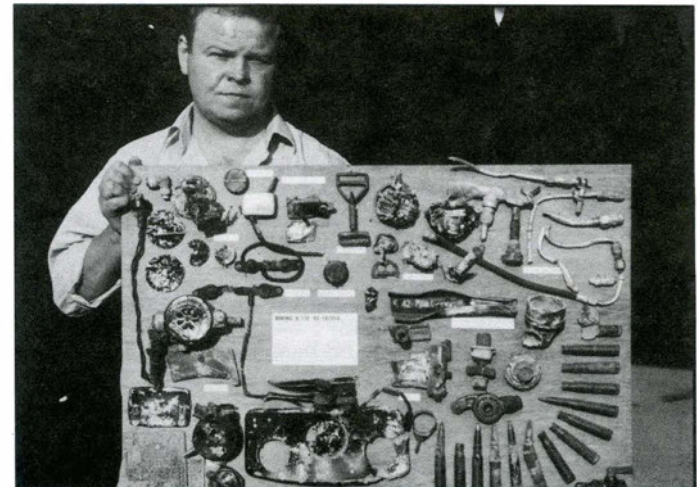
BILL ADAMS, the London wood carver, presented the 398th with this extraordinary carving. The control tower is depicted, along with a B-17 buzzing the tower and another coming in with an engine on fire.



CHRIS REYNOLDS, the youthful MP and his parents, Sandy and Pete, were among the many British guests at the 40's dance who came dressed in WW II attire. Over 400 joined the 39 members of the 398th tour group at the Anstey dance.



LORD LONG joined the 398th tour members for a photo at the Terrace beside the Thames River in London following a tour of the Parliament Buildings. Lord Long functions as the "party whip" in the House of Lords.



THIS REMARKABLE board is a display of parts and pieces of the V.A. Hansard B-17 that crashed near Reed when coming home from a mission to Merseburg on November 25, 1944, killing three men. It was discovered in an antique shop by Peter Brooke. It is destined for the 8th AF museum at Duxford.

Plaque Commemorates 398th Training At Ephrata Army Air Field in 1943

"Warning to all West Coast commercial aircraft. Beware of a squadron of B-17's flying at various speeds and various altitudes between Ephrata, Washington and Blythe, California."

That warning went out over the FAA radio on the West Coast one night in May, 1943 as 12 crews of the "just born" 398th Bomb Group took part in a night flight exercise.

Miller, Daily, Frazier, Ross, Douglas, Rohrer, Markley, Genung, Peterson ...

All fresh, young lieutenants. All assembled by Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr. from a variety of Air Corps training centers around the country including key "model" crews from the 34th Bomb Group.

Some had been sent to Ephrata by Col. Hunter from Geiger Field in Spokane, Washington, where the weather in April/May of 1943 was not conducive to flight training. Ephrata became a "satellite" or TDY training base for a few weeks. Others came directly from training bases throughout the country.

They came to a primitive, wind-swept, just-completed Army Air Field outside the town of Ephrata, population 800.

Some were shocked to see four-engine B-17's, having just graduated from single-engine fighter schools and were supposed to pursue twin-engine training at Ephrata.

Rip Roher, Merwyn Genung and Steve Cullinan were among these, and they appealed to Colonel Hunter for a transfer to a fighter facility.

"I can arrange to send you boys to a field artillery unit, where you can fly single engine Piper Cubs," responded Col. Hunter. "Or, you can check out as co-pilots in that B-17 over there."

All became excellent Fortress pilots with the 398th.

The stay at Ephrata was only a few brief weeks, but it was here that the 398th leadership emerged. Names like Lamb, Hopkins, Nelson, Waarmaa, Weibel, Gray, Killen and Rooney began appearing as squadron front-runners.

Col. Hunter ferried in from Spokane all the ground personnel required to maintain a strict training schedule.

Some of the early arrivals at Ephrata, like Dwight Ross, had the opportunity to assemble their own crews, opting not to wait for others to make this assignment. He selected his own crew while on base duty as "officer of the day."

Ross and others trained with other bomb groups at Ephrata and then were selected by Col. Hunter for transfer to the 398th to Geiger and ultimately to Rapid City, SD.

Last year the city of Ephrata was presented with an attractive plaque commemorating World War II training at Ephrata Army Air Field by five groups

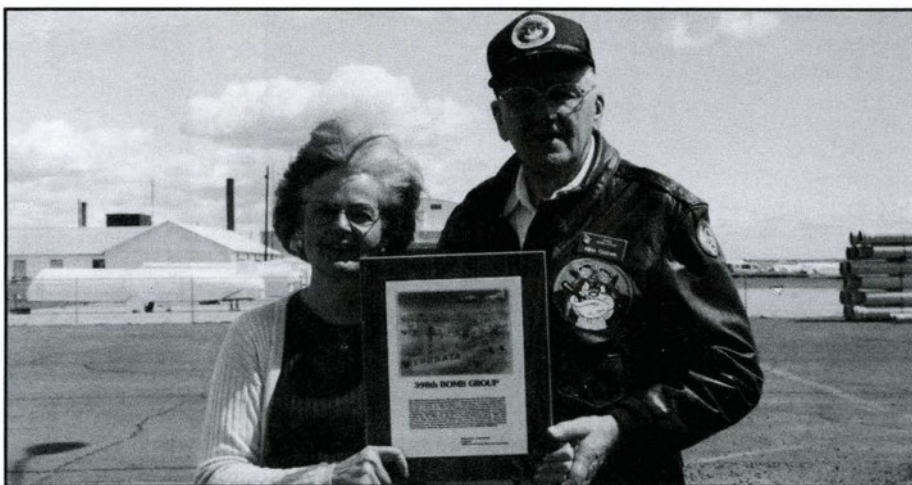
who went on to England and the Eighth Air Force.

Sadly, the 398th was not included as the group was not "officially" stationed there. To correct this oversight, the Board last year at the Charleston, SC reunion decided to "go it alone" and develop an appropriate commemorative plaque for the Port of Ephrata. The Port operates the old airfield, now used by glider buffs and as a maintenance facility by a Northwest airline.

A few of the old buildings are still there, if not the tents, huts and barracks from 1943.

Barbara Deycou, administrator, accepted the unique plaque on behalf of the Port of Ephrata, some 53 years after Colonel Hunter had arrived in this little community with his wife and two daughters ... and to prepare his men for World War II combat.

The plaque displays a squadron of 398th B-17's flying through a Flak area over Germany. And superimposed in the middle of it all is a color photo of the old beacon light tower, a landmark back in the days of Ephrata Army Air Field and surely remembered by all who served there. It is still there.



BARBARA DEYCOUS, administrator of the Port of Ephrata, Washington, accepts a 398th plaque from Allen Ostrom, commemorating the group's training at the old Ephrata Army Air Base in 1943. Some of the old buildings are still to be seen after 50-plus years, plus the tall smoke stacks and beacon light tower.



WALLY BLACKWELL presented the Hertford Record Center with a bound volume of FLAK NEWS during the England trip. Receiving the book for their archives are Susan Flood and Dr. Kate Thompson. Several other 398th books and records also were presented to the center.

Big Turnout Seen For Springfield

The "Heartland of America" is proving to be quite an attraction for members of the 398th Bomb Group as they look forward to the 1996 reunion.

Scheduled for September 25-28 in Springfield, Missouri ... with tours to nearby Branson ... the prospects for a 500-plus attendance are very real.

Reunion chairman Jerry Monagin, who lives in another "Heartland" city - Florissant, MO - has announced that all 398th reserved rooms at the headquarters hotel, the Clarion, have been sold.

The Clarion increased their guaranteed room list from 150 to 185, and all have been spoken for as of FLAK NEWS press time in mid-July.

Thus, more than a few attendees will have to opt for reservations at the Hampton Inn, across the street from the Clarion, or at the Comfort Inn, about a mile to the east.

Fortunately, the great majority of members will be arriving in their own automobiles, or will have rental cars available.

The Clarion catering department assured Monagin that there will be more than adequate space available for the Thursday and Saturday night banquets, what with a large "Atrium" available for ballroom overflow.

The tours are filling up, especially for the trips to Branson for the Lawrence Welk and Andy Williams dinner-shows. These will be on Friday evening.

And there will be no shortage of folks opting for guided tours to Pro Bass Shops, Precious Moments, Silver Dollar City, and others. Some tickets to these tours might be available at the hotel, but it is advised to lay in reservations beforehand to be assured of tickets. The tour operator will require a guaranteed count by September 1, according to Monagin.

The reservation forms were printed in the April issue of FLAK NEWS.

The golfers will take a crack at two different courses, Horton Smith on Wednesday and Friday and Grandview Municipal on Thursday.

Golfers (and others) are encouraged to return to the Clarion Hotel by 2 PM on Thursday for the start of the annual business meeting. Vice-president Ted Johnston will call the meeting to order promptly at 2 PM in order to proceed through a number of issues. This will include the election of a new president.

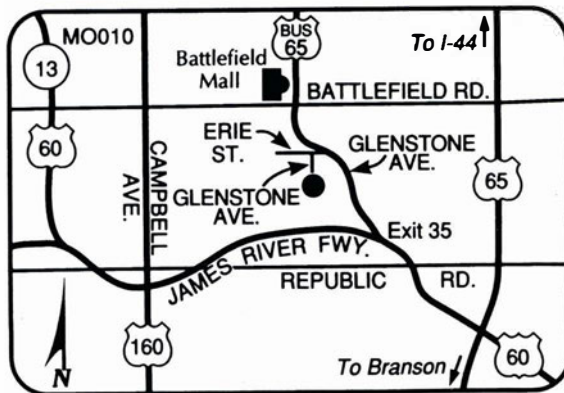
Members arriving in Springfield by air should be advised that the Clarion and Hampton both offer van shuttle service from the Springfield airport. The Comfort Inn does not.



398th BOMB GROUP

The 398th Bomb Group (H) flew 195 combat missions with the 1st Air Division of the 8th Air Force in England during World War II. The group's B-17's were commanded by Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., who was killed in action during a bombing raid on Neuss, Germany, on January 23, 1945. Col. Hunter was among the many key officers and men who came to Ephrata Army Air Base in 1943 for initial training prior to moving on to Spokane, Washington, and then Rapid City, South Dakota, for duty as a combat training unit. The 398th flew with the 1st Combat Wing from May 6, 1944, until April 25, 1945. The group's Last Mission was to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, where they lost two B-17's to enemy anti-aircraft fire. They were the last planes shot down in the European air war. This plaque commemorates the group's combat training at Ephrata Army Air Base, Ephrata, Washington, and is given to the PORT OF EPHRATA.

WILLIAM G. COMSTOCK
President
398th Bomb Group Memorial Association



Driver Alert

The entrance to the Clarion Hotel can be "tricky" when turning off Glenstone (Business 65). Turn west on Erie St., then south in front of the Ford agency. Ya' cawn't miss it!

The Hampton is best reached by turning east on Battlefield. The Comfort is a mile east on Battlefield.

"A GRAND OCCASION"

Several From The 398th At Savannah

BY WILLIS FRAZIER
Historian, 398th Bomb Group

"Another star emerges," was the way Jim Hill of the 8th Air Force News put it.

Jim was referring to the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum, which was dedicated with pomp and circumstance ... and by 4,000 veterans and family members ... on May 13, 1996 in Savannah, Georgia.

It was a grand occasion, complete with aircraft fly-over, welcome by Gen. Buck Shuler, Heritage Museum CEO, invocation, presentation of colors, and national anthem.

The veterans who participated in the ceremonies, now longer of shadow after a half-century removed from World War II, were still the same ones whose 8th Air Force heroics and valor provided the reason for erecting the building.

Our 398th was represented at the dedication by Lou and Matea Baffaro, Phil and Marge Stahlman, Wayne and Ruthanna Doerstler, Bob and Betty Lamons, Harold and Nancy Stallcup, Maurice and Betty Fletcher, along with Ruby and myself.

Stahlman presented the museum with a large, framed photo of his and Larry deLancey's "nose blown" B-17. That photo is one of the most famous of the war's battle scenes.

"We finally have a permanent home for the Mighty Eighth," said Maj. Gen. Lew Lyle, USAF (Ret), Museum president. "All of us can be proud of this place."

The building features a 100,000 volume capacity library, huge archives, memorial gardens, art gallery, meeting and study rooms, gift shop, snack bar, and huge exhibit area.

The 90,000 square foot museum is located at the intersection of I-95 and US 80 (Exit 18) in the town of Pooler, GA.

In addition to the photo given by Stahlman, the museum also received a bound volume of FLAK NEWS, containing 10 years' of quarterly newsletters. Previously, they received a framed silk, escape map from the 398th.

The Heritage Museum features a fascinating re-creation of an actual mission. The mission, from take off through bombs away, is an experience close to virtual reality. Multiple video



THE MIGHTY EIGHTH HERITAGE MUSEUM

screens and speakers, plus excellent combat film, provide the illusion of actual participation. Aerial warfare is made real. Viewing the film is quite an emotional experience.

"People were really shaken when they emerged," said Stahlman.

There are displays of Nazi propaganda, German military memorabilia and photographs, including photos of atrocities committed by the Germans.

"The purpose here is to tell the younger generation exactly why Germany had to be defeated," said Gen. Lyle.

The 303rd Bomb Group had a display case provided by the Smithsonian Institution that included flying suits, parachutes, Mae Wests, helmets, oxygen masks, and photographs.

Our 398th would have no problem filling one of these cases should the group decide to pursue such a project.

Roger Freeman, England's premier recorder of 8th Air Force history, was there for the opening.

"Magnificent. A great tribute to the Americans," he said.

Another museum officer, Col. Wayne Corbett, said -

"The memories will flow for veterans of World War II, of Korea, of Viet Nam, of the Gulf, of the Cold War. Be ready."

Members wishing to join The Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum may write to P.O. Box 1992, Savannah, GA 31402. Membership forms were included in the January FLAK NEWS.



WILLIS FRAZIER (left), 398th historian, was at the opening of the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia last May. He was joined in this photo by Phil & Marge Stahlman and their daughter, Kathy.



BOB ULLMAN — A GUNNER TAKES OVER

Flying The B-17 Fortress: A Spiritual Experience

BY BOB ULLMAN — St. Louis, Missouri

Do you remember your first ride in an airplane? For me, it was during gunnery training at Las Vegas, Nevada, about September 1, 1944, in a war-weary B-17, piloted by an older war-weary Army Air Corps captain who allowed us to “fly” the plane, right seat.

When my turn came he said “turn right” and of course knowing nothing about airplanes, I turned the wheel right and when we reached about 45%, he pushed hard left rudder which caused the plane to slide off to the right, scaring the heck out of me.

He said, “That’s enough for you.” So ended my great career. I was destined to never take the controls again!

Fifty-one years after that glorious experience, the opportunity to fly the B-17 came along again. I heard an announcement on the car radio that a B-17 would be in St. Louis on August 22-23. Rides and an opportunity to fly the plane would be available for \$475.

My immediate mental response was, “That’s too much money,” but within seconds, this little voice said “Bob, you dummy, you’ve passed up this opportunity twice already and you may never get the chance again. You’ve got the money and even if you don’t want to spend the cash, put it on a credit card and pay it off \$10.00 a month.”

When I got home I called the airport and got on the manifest for the following Tuesday.

To my unexpected elation, when I arrived there I saw the “Aluminum Overcast,” the B-17 dedicated to the 398th Bomb Group.

To detail my experience would take a whole book! However, needless to say, after flying the B-17 from the LEFT seat for about 10 minutes around West St. Louis County, I was on Cloud 9.

I had wanted to fly over my house and

church, as my pastor had announced my intention to fly the B-17 again after 51 years and maybe someone would see the plane over the church (Near I-55 and the Meramec River.)

My adrenaline was really pumping, so much that when I took the seat, somehow I became disoriented and missed my designated target by probably 20 miles.

While flying north over I-55 looking for the church, the copilot said time to head back, so I thought I’d at least try the maneuver I had in mind. I made a “Pylon” left turn about 45° angle hard left rudder keeping the wing tip on a reference point, slight pull on the column. WHAT A THRILL!!! Especially for a guy who has never controlled an aircraft except for the previously mentioned Las Vegas experience and one time flying a Cessna 187(?) S&L (that’s Straight & Level) from St. Louis to Alton, Illinois, in 1962. On the video my daughter took of me exiting the plane, I am visibly “drunk” from the experience and a fellow passenger can be heard in the background saying “What a Ride!”

Yes, I’m still flying that airplane, and probably will be for a long time.

My special thanks to the 32nd Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association for sponsoring the trip, and to the volunteers who staffed the event. I cannot say enough for the pilots, Connie and Ed Bolen, and Sam Bass, who were especially nice to me, before, during, and after the flights. (I later learned they are from Georgia, so they’re probably just nice people!) These people volunteer their time to make these trips possible, and while it might look like all fun and games, it’s a difficult job in my estimation. So THANKS, Connie, Ed, and Sam!

For anyone who doesn’t believe in the spiritual, how else could I have had this experience?

Good News, Bad News

There was “good news and bad news” this year from the Macclesfield (England) Historical Aviation Association. This is one of the many groups in the UK that retrieves and restores downed World War II aircraft.

The Macclesfield group guided the 1994 398th tour group to the DeCleene crash site, where five 603 airmen died when they hit a mountain top while ferrying a B-17 back to Station 131.

“We have been informed that a large section of fuselage from the DeCleene plane has been discovered in a local farmer’s barn,” wrote secretary Kevin Whittaker last January. That was the “good news.”

Then in March —

“We went to see the farmer, and indeed it was a 6-foot section from in front of the tail section,” wrote Whittaker. “He had been using it for a dog kennel.

“Over the years it had deteriorated and begun to powder, so two months ago he flattened it with his tractor bucket.”

That was the “bad news.”

And as Whittaker concluded his letter — “Aaaarrrrggghhh!!!”

Alumum Overcast Fall Schedule

Sept. 6-7	Waukesha, WI
Sept. 8	DuPage, IL
Sept. 9-12	Cheboygan, MI
Sept. 12-16	Grand Rapids, MI
Sept. 16-19	Detroit, MI
Sept. 19-23	Aurora, IL
Sept. 23-26	Zanesville, OH
Sept. 26-30	Beaver Valley, PA
Sept. 30-Oct. 3	Erie, PA
Oct. 3-7	Buffalo, NY
Oct. 7-10	Elmira, NY
Oct. 10-14	Fulton, NY
Oct. 14-17	Millville, NJ
Oct. 17-20	Morristown, NJ

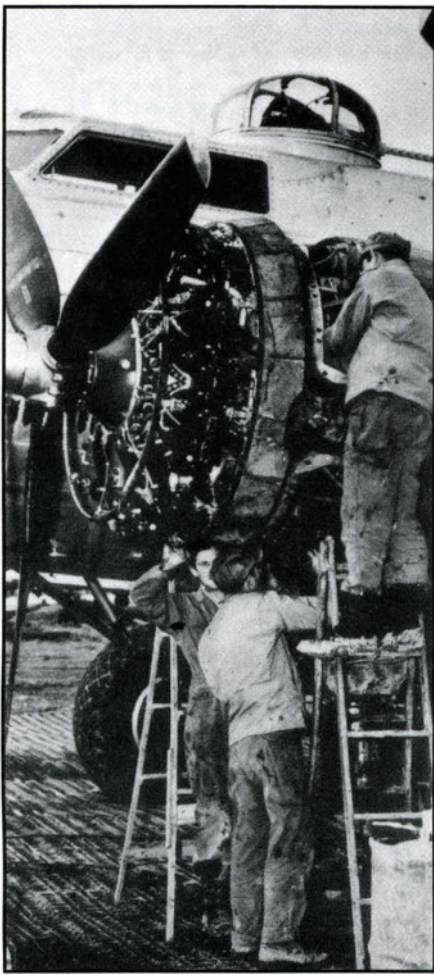
WA5OVF

“With all the radio operators we had in the group surely there must be many out there with current amateur radio licenses,” wrote Dallas Ebest.

“It would be nice if we could get a ‘net’ going on the Ham band. I would love to get it organized.”

Dallas was a crew chief in the 603rd and also the reunion chairman at the 1986 meeting in San Antonio. He can be reached at San Antonio, TX 78213-1516. Or better yet —

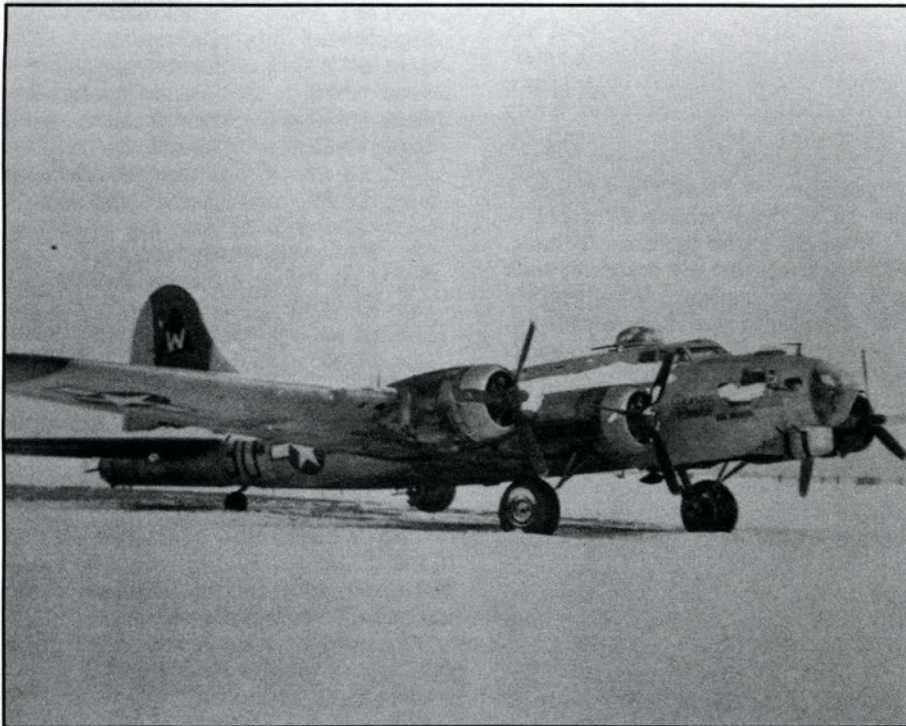
WA5OVF



THE UNSUNG MECHS

There are garlands for flyers in Europe,
 For aces and victors in war,
 And for Lindbergh who flew the Atlantic,
 Touched down onto France's west shore;
 For Byrd who flew over the North Pole,
 For Corrigan's strange "wrong way" trek,
 But where are the towering markers
 To the faithful and capable mechs?
 For a plane is as good as its weak spot,
 Each pilot is risking his neck
 If the plane isn't properly cared for
 By the faithful and capable mechs.

— LEE FLEMING REESE



GEORGIA PEACH is the name painted on the nose of this 601 Squadron B-17. The Fort is parked on a runway in Belgium, possibly Grimbergen or San Denis. Is there someone out there who remembers this flight and forced landing that took place in the winter of 1944-45? Also the serial number of the plane, date of the mission and the members of the crew. Researchers in both Belgium and Poland are interested. Contact your FLAK NEWS editor.

A Follow Up: **German Guard With A Limp And A Warm Smile**



HERMANN BOHN

The story was about "a German guard with a limp and a warm smile."

It appeared in Vol. 10 No. 3 of FLAK NEWS — a "side-bar" that went with Bill Frankhouser's pursuit for the truth as to "what happened to my comrades?"

The Herb Newman crew went down on November 2, 1944, on a mission to Merseburg. He and four of his men were killed; four survived.

One of the survivors, W. Dean Whitaker, credited this young German guard with saving his life. He induced German civilians to stop shooting at Whitaker as he parachuted to earth. He even gave him tea and cookies.

"He handed me my life, and for that I would like to thank him," the story read.

Last year Whitaker received an e-mail from Halle, Germany, written by a reporter who researched the event.

The German soldier's name was Hermann Bohn, and he died four years ago." The headline for the story he wrote for his newspaper read —

"Human Gesture When Hate Was Raging."

All made possible by "a German guard with a limp and a warm smile."

Desk Tops Needed

London wood carver Bill Adams is running out of desk tops, like the one he used to make the beautiful 398th tower plaque as seen on Page 5. If the Friends in and around Nuthampstead can send him a supply he will be able to continue producing this remarkable art. His address is London E13 ONL, England. (He will accept desk tops from the US, too).

BRIEF-things

The "In Memory Of" certificates are still available to those who send in contributions to the Memorial Fund "in memory of" a 398th loved one; send to treasurer **Ralph Hall** ... **George Meketa** chose to honor his pilot's (**John Shafer**) wife this way ... the Distinguished Flying Cross Society will hold its first convention October 23-27, 1996 at the Town & Country Hotel (where the 398th met back in 1991) ... the legendary German Luftwaffe ace, **Gen. Adolf Galland**, died earlier this year at the age of 83 ... a copy of FLAK NEWS found its way to Poland recently, prompting a letter from an aviation writer named **Michal Mucha** with questions on the 398th mission of May 29, 1944 of Posan (that story will be told in an upcoming issue of FLAK NEWS) ... also, one day in the future, the story of the **Howard Pinner** crew's "detour" to Russia and their roundabout journey back to the base ... former **Willard Hadjes** crew tail gunner, **Dr. Floyd Jones**, who survived two weeks on the run after being shot down, returned home to raise three sons for the Air Force; the eldest (now 48) flies Apache attack helicopters in the Air Force Reserve at Fort Knox ... the "Unsung Mechs" poem on the preceding page was sent in by **Bill Robb**, always on the outlook for items about his beloved ground crew types ... **Willis Frazier**, our historian, couldn't say enough about the new Mighty Eighth Museum; his photo coverage and other opening day souvenirs will be displayed at the Springfield reunion ... foreseeing his coming demise, **Ned Hunphreys** laid out procedures for the "shutdown" of Bombardiers, Inc.; these began with **Ned's** death last April ... treasurer **Ralph** reminds us that many of our members pay not only their annual \$5 dues, but also add extra dollars for the Memorial Fund and FLAK NEWS (which explains why we can remain in the black) ... a sister and two brothers of Bill Beatovich, navigator who went down with Col. Hunter and crew, will be at the Springfield reunion ... the irrepressible **Jim Spicer** of Baldock came up with some VAT 69 bottles for the England tour and shared them with the visitors; a couple of jugs will be at Springfield as a tribute to the John Rice crew that put that label on their plane at Rapid City ... the tour party stopped by the old Mosquito factory north of London, there to learn that this fast plywood bomber was known as the "twin-engined Fortress" ... can one of you Station 131 armorers tell us what that little 6 x 9 brick shack in the middle of the bomb dump was used for? ... it's still there, sort of ... **Robert Dimsdale**, who deeded the Memorial property to the 398th a few years ago, showed up at the festivities in his "high sheriff" costume; this is an ancient office held by both his father and grandfather; once the "high sheriff" was the law in English counties, but only ceremonial today ... **Tony Weston** presented each visitor with a ceramic "Fortress candle", with the inscription reading, "Last Call For Nuthampstead" ... Hmmm? your FLAK NEWS editor spent six days in Pilsen after the England tour and reports that the Czech friendship toward American veterans is still sky-high ... the 1996 Czech liberation theme was the early American Indian ... happy to report that the special "Hell From Heaven" flag taken there on the 1995 tour is still displayed at the Pilsen community center ... Aluminum Overcast pilot **Hal Weekley** hand-carried a bound volume of FLAK NEWS courtesy **Evelyn Comstock** to EAA executive VP **Greg Anderson**, who wrote back saying, "I can honestly say the 398th is the best managed group of them all" ... also a thank you letter from Mighty Eighth Heritage archivist **John Edwards**, who received his copy via **Willis Farzier** ... this being the July, 1996 issue of FLAK NEWS should serve as a reminder that next year's reunion will be held in Spokane, Washington July 16-19, 1997; and that city should trigger memories of Geiger Field for many of the 398th early-birds ... a coach tour to Grand Coulee Dam has already been scheduled for the July meeting, there to see the spectacular laser show at the dam ... if your July FLAK NEWS was a little late, consider the plight of the mailing crew that had to put up with new Post Office ground rules (L004 3-digit ZIP Prefix Groups for ADC Sortation)

398th Bomb Group PX

	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Enter Total Cost</u>
Cap - Fits All Sizes (Specify Squadron or Group)	_____	\$8.00 each _____
Jackets - Navy Blue (S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)	_____	\$25.00 each _____
T-Shirts - Red, White, Navy Blue (S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)	_____	\$10.00 each _____
T-Shirts - White, Pink, Blue (Children Sizes 2-4, 6-8, 10-12, 14-16)	_____	\$8.00 each _____
Sweat Shirts - Red, White, Navy Blue (S, M, L, XL, XXL, B-17 on Front)	_____	\$15.00 each _____
Sweat Shirts - White, Light Blue (Children Sizes M & L, B-17 on Front)	_____	\$10.00 each _____
Squadron Patches - Specify Squadron	_____	\$7.00 each _____
Group Patch - "Hell From Heaven"	_____	\$6.00 each _____
Jacket Patch - Rectangle B-17	_____	\$4.00 each _____
Squadron Lapel Pins - Specify Squadron	_____	\$5.00 each _____
Group Lapel Pin - Special Design	_____	\$6.00 each _____
Bumper Sticker - 398th Bomb Group	_____	\$1.00 each _____
Glass (9 oz.) with B-17	_____	\$6.00 each _____
B-17 Lapel Pin - Specify Silver or Gold	_____	\$5.00 each _____
B-17 Earrings - Specify Silver or Gold (For pierced ears only)	_____	\$9.00 pair _____
Photo (Control Tower) - Station #131	_____	\$2.00 each _____
Photo (398th Memorial) - Post Card Size	_____	\$2.00 each _____
Bolo Ties - Group Logo	_____	\$4.00 each _____
Golf Towels - Group Logo	_____	\$4.00 each _____
Neck Tie - American Flag	_____	\$22.00 each _____
Folding Umbrella - Red with White B-17	_____	\$18.00 each _____
Beach Towel - White with Black B-17	_____	\$18.00 each _____
Barrel Bag with picture of B-17	_____	\$17.00 each _____
Cost Of Items Ordered	\$ _____	
Delivery And Handling Add \$3.00, or \$4.00 if Order is Over \$20.00.	\$ _____	
Total	\$ _____	

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Make checks payable, in U.S. funds, to the
 "398th Bomb Group Association PX" c/o:
 Joe Joseph, Defiance, OH 43512-8854

NOTE: Orders cannot be filled between November 15 and April 1.
 Please keep this in mind when ordering for Christmas.

There are many fine women in the world, but you are the best of them all. Charm can be deceptive and beauty doesn't last, but a woman who fears and reverences God shall be greatly praised. Praise her for the many fine things she does. These good deeds of hers shall bring her honor and recognition from even the leaders of nations.
 — SOLOMON