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398th BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8th AIR FORCE • 1st AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL. 16 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

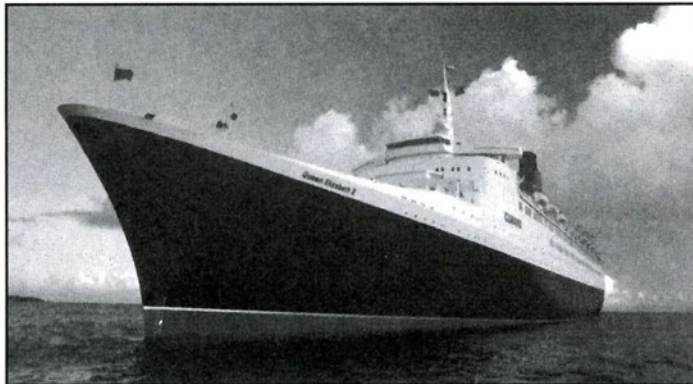
JULY 2001

Back To England In 2002:

Prexy To Lead On Troopship

The "Troopship Tour" is still almost a year away — June 5-20, 2002 — but already there are over 50 members and friends of the 398th Bomb Group who are making plans to be there.

The term "be there" includes the better part of a week in and around Station 131 — the old base at Nuthampstead; three days in London enjoying a variety of sights and sounds; and then six days aboard the finest cruise ship in the world, the Queen Elizabeth 2, better known as the QE-2.



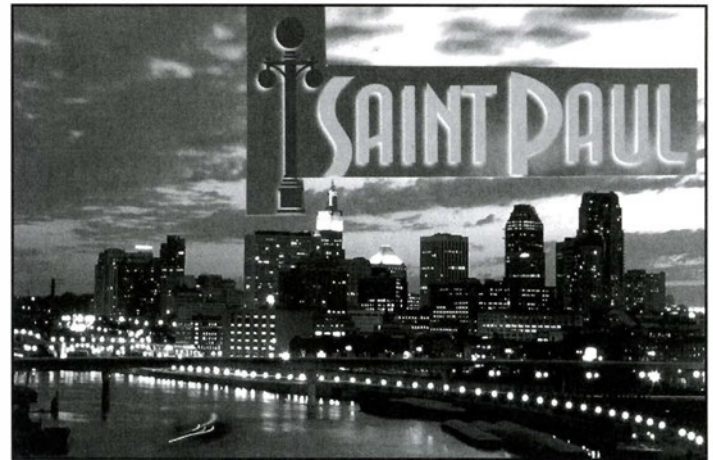
President Wally Blackwell was the first to sign on, and already he has volunteered to conduct another of his famous "Wally's Tours" following the Memorial Service and a Woodman Inn lunch.

Wally has made a science of remembering how the old base looked in 1944 and will lead a bus tour pointing out "how it used to be."

The entire tour program, even a year away, is rather well developed. And the QE-2 Cunard lines has finally offered up their cruise quotations to complete the 398th tour package.

The Complete Tour has variable prices depending on location of the Cunard gateway cities in the U.S. From

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400 EXPECTED AT ST. PAUL REUNION

St. Paul, the "other" part of Minnesota's "Twin Cities" (the other being Minneapolis) will greet the members of the 398th Bomb Group as they meet for the 18th annual reunion October 3-4-5-6, 2001.

Upwards to 400 are expected to register in the memory room of the Radisson City Center Hotel. At least half of these folks can be expected to be in town for the "pre-reunion" events like the Cathedral tour and Riverboat Dinner Cruise, both scheduled for Wednesday, October 3 (not to mention the golfers, who have bright and early tee times).

The Official Registration Form was published in the April issue of FLAK NEWS, and should be in the hands of Reunion Chairman Sharon Krause no later than September 8. Sharon can be reached at Plymouth, MI 48170-2870.

A full schedule of tours and activities has been planned, taking full advantage of St. Paul's Mississippi River location and many local attractions. A St. Paul Visitors' Guide will be available in each Registration packet, along with all individual tickets ordered.

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BACK TO ENGLAND NEXT YEAR

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New York City, requiring no flights from a local hometown, the price is \$4,199.

From other locations on the East coast, the price is \$4,409.

From the Mid-West, the price is \$4,479.

From the West Coast, the price is \$4,554.

All these prices include air travel to London from any number of Cunard gateway cities in the U.S.; the England land portion; the QE-2 "troopship" home to New York City; and back to the original gateway city.

If required, travel arrangement to and from the gateway cities can be arranged by Barbara Fish 1-800-423-5454. Call her for additional information and for Official Registration Forms, or e-mail — trips@travelhouse.com.

For those opting for the England Only portion of the tour (June 5-14), the price from the East is \$2,999; Mid-West and West Coast \$3,099. Air travel will be from various British Air gateway cities. Call Barbara Fish for locations.

The tour party will stay at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cambridge and at the Harrington Hall Hotel in London.

As can be expected, there are any number of "upgrade" possibilities when sailing on the QE-2. Call Barbara Fish for this information.

The 398th Bomb Group "Troopship" prices are based on "M-4" Inside Cabin location and double occupancy. Restaurant seating on the QE-2 will be in the Mauritania Restaurant.

Single occupancy supplement for the Complete Tour will be \$1,460 and \$700 for England Only.

Tree and Benches For Heritage Museum

The 398th Membership voted last year at our Savannah reunion to use the balance of the fund raised for our 398th Memorial monument at the Heritage Museum for additional 398th memorials there. That amount was sufficient to provide two stone benches and one tree for installation in the Memorial Garden of the Museum according to their plan and time frame.

We have recently been informed that our gifts have been installed with accompanying appropriate plaques. So when you visit the Museum to admire our beautiful 398th Monument there, be sure to remember to seek out the sites of these additional 398th memorials.

LEE BRADLEY, who has assumed the title of 398th Data Coordinator, is the daughter of engineer-gunner Fred Bradley of the 601 Howard Traeder crew. Living in Andover, NJ, Lee Anne is now maintaining the current membership roster and has embarked on a new quest of recording personnel information. Members and Friends are invited to use the enclosed Questionnaire.



From The President: We Must Build On 2nd Generation

I am sure we are all pleased and encouraged with the success of the many 398th Association events and accomplishments of the past few years. Our 398th membership has made real commitments for necessary operating funds, and contributions to "memorials" have been generous and substantial.

However, the participation of 398th second generation members in helping to run vital Association activities has also been most significant. I believe we can look forward to an increasing number of second, and perhaps even third, generation members getting involved in 398th operational responsibilities.

Our hope for this type of reaction from that segment of our membership has already resulted in appropriate modifications to 398th By-Laws during the past reunions. Our Association has three categories of membership: Regular, Associate and Honorary. All 398th Veteran blood relatives are regular members with voting rights. Associate members also have voting rights, but are in this separate category to insure that tax-exempt Internal Revenue Service rules concerning Veteran membership percentages are kept.

We need to build on the already existing commitment of a few of our second generation and Associate members. There are opportunities coming for their participation in more 398th events and operating responsibilities. All membership categories are urged to attend the 398th St. Paul Annual Reunion and participate in the 398th General Membership Business Meeting at 2:00 PM on Thursday, October 4, 2001.

We want our family members to take an increasing role in Association operation. This is necessary so the spirit and tradition of the 398th will not pass into history along with all those old fellows we know so well.

Friends Dues Project Helps

The recent Barry Tyler/Wilfrid Dimsdale project to begin an annual dues paying program to continue and support the costs for the delivery of the 398th FLAK NEWS letter to its UK membership has been a good success. The 398th Association truly appreciates the commitment of our UK Friends in so many ways, and their receiving the FLAK NEWS is very essential to helping us all remember 398th Bomb Group history. Thank you Barry and Wilfrid!

— WALLY BLACKWELL
President

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

QUESTIONNAIRE

In keeping with her title of "398th Bomb Group Data Coordinator," Lee Anne Bradley has embarked on a personnel information search, the results of which will one day be lodged at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Center in Savannah, GA.

Much of this information has already been recorded in "Jack's Books," now available on CD's at the PX. However, many new members have missed this opportunity, which is now being made available in the enclosed questionnaire.

New members (or old ones) are asked to fill in the questionnaire and mail to Lee Bradley, Andover, NJ 07821-4034.

Use another paper (or back of Questionnaire) for your special stories, information on other 398th members, Taps information, questions, etc.

Friends of the 398th living abroad are especially invited to share their comments.

St. Paul Reunion Coming Up

Continued from Page 1

The first "official" 398th business functions will be on Thursday, October 4, with the board officers meeting at 8AM and the full membership meeting at 2PM. Second (and third) generation offsprings are encouraged to attend the Group Business Meeting.

It should be noted that the dinner cruise will be on the local riverboat, "Jonathan Padelford," rather than the "Delta Queen," as depicted in the April story.

Also note that parking at the hotel's independent Town Square Ramp is not included in the \$79 room rate. There are several available parking lots in the hotel area.

Members looking to stay at locations other than the Radisson, but in proximity, may call the following:

Embassy Suites (651) 224-5400

St. Paul Hotel (651) 292-9292

Holiday Inn (651) 225-1515

Sheraton Midway (651) 642-1234

Ramada St. Paul (651) 735-2330

Please note that the banquet tickets WILL NOT be in the registration Packets as in the past, but may be picked up at the "Banquet Desk" in the Memory Room.

Paul Roderick and his committee will assign individual seats for the banquets and will arrange for crews and friends to sit together.

Weekley, Gaddo To "Star" In EAA Oshkosh Forum

One 398th pilot and one 398th "good friend" will be in the midst of some illustrious company this July when the EAA's "2001 Air Venture" is held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

(Also add one 398th special B-17, the Aluminum Overcast)

Among the features of the air Venture "Eclipse Aviation Forums" to be held between July 24 and July 30 will be B-17 pilot (then and now) Hal Weekley (601 and current Aluminum Overcast pilot) and author Don Gaddo.

Gaddo, who has written two historical fiction books based on 398th characters, and has a third in the works, will speak on "The Angel Mysteries," the theme of his three books.

Garrison Keillor Radio Show At St. Paul Theater

His show is not a part of the 398th reunion activities in St. Paul next October, but there could well be some members who will want to try for tickets to Garrison Keillor and his "Prairie Home Companion" radio broadcast.

Keillor, who made famous his fictitious hometown of Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, will perform at the Fitzgerald Theater on Saturday, October 6, 4:45PM. The theater is within walking distance of the reunion hotel, the Radisson City Center Hotel.

Ticket information may be obtained by writing The Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St., St. Paul, MN 55101. E-mail: fitzgerald@mpr.org.

A-2 Jacket Parade Due At Banquet

To the members who have retained their old A-2 jackets, and to those who have purchased new ones in more recent years, you are invited to parade your jackets at the Farewell Banquet at the St. Paul reunion Saturday night, October 6.

The April issue of FLAK NEWS contained information on where to send for new A-2's. There is still plenty of time to obtain an A-2 and be a part of the parade.

Golfers Check In

Several golfing days are planned for the St. Paul reunion, but the "golf pro" needs to know for sure who is interested. Please call Allen Ostrom to reserve a spot, or to ask for information, or to offer a car for transportation.

The Holiest Fortress:

Bullets, Flak Thwarted By Prayer Missals

The following story was submitted by Richard Salsano, son of Carmine Salsano, waist gunner on the Staver Hyndman crew of the 603rd.

This is one of the many stories that my father told me regarding one of the many missions he and his crew had during World War II.

Before his mission to Merseburg, Germany on November 21, 1944, Chaplain Walter Sullivan saw my father and asked him if he wanted a prayer missal for his personal use and to give to any of his buddies. My father said, "Give me all the prayer books you can." The Chaplain gave him 35 prayer missals.

My father then took the prayer missals and put all of them inside his airplane, a B-17-G Flying Fortress. My father put the prayer missals in every part of the airplane - in the cockpit and in all the other compartments, underneath the ammo boxes, especially where he was stationed, in the waist-machine-gun area in the middle of the airplane.

During this mission, enemy fighter planes attacked the squadron and flak from the enemy anti-aircraft guns on the ground hit my father's airplane, piloted

"Holes Everywhere In Father's Plane"

by Staver Hyndman. It was shot up pretty bad. There were holes everywhere.

The enemy shells went through the outside of the airplane and into the inside of the plane. One shell hit an ammo box next to my father and fragments of an exploding shell just missed him.

The airplane was shot up pretty bad. The hydraulic oil lines and the the landing gear were damaged. They knew that they could not return to their base in England, and with one crew member wounded badly, navigator Ken Carlson, the pilot told the crew to put a parachute on the wounded crew member and let him bail out of the aircraft. My father suggested that since the airplane was not on fire, try to keep the airplane flying. As the pilot headed towards home, they encountered an Allied fighter plane and the pilot motioned to the pilot of my father's airplane to follow him to his base. They followed him for over an hour and during that time they threw everything out of the plane in order to lighten the load and save fuel.

When they tried to dismantle the ball turret, the bolts bent and the turret was

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A Nagging Urge To Say "Thank You"

FLAK NEWS REFLECTIONS

Maybe Sooner, Maybe Later

There will come a day, maybe sooner, maybe later, when your FLAK NEWS editor will no longer be around to crank out these quarterly newsletters (we are now in our 16th year).

But before this day comes (maybe sooner, maybe later) the time is now at hand for the editor to issue a full-page "world of thanks" to all the 398th members and friends who have made this journey possible.

Think not that I believe this has been a job, because all these years I have considered myself the luckiest guy in town to have had such a privilege during my senior years.

And to have been able to dredge up long dormant skills and turn them into enjoyment for others has been an ongoing source of happiness and satisfaction.

No, the rocking chair is not a current consideration. Perish the thought. Life (and FLAK NEWS) will go on until the good Lord (or the 398th treasurer) dials in some other program.

But as we continue to add names to the annual Taps list, the thought has occurred that in due course mine will be there, too.

Hence, this nagging urge to tell everyone that it has been a great ride in the company of some great folks, and that I want to declare publicly that I have appreciated the task laid upon me.

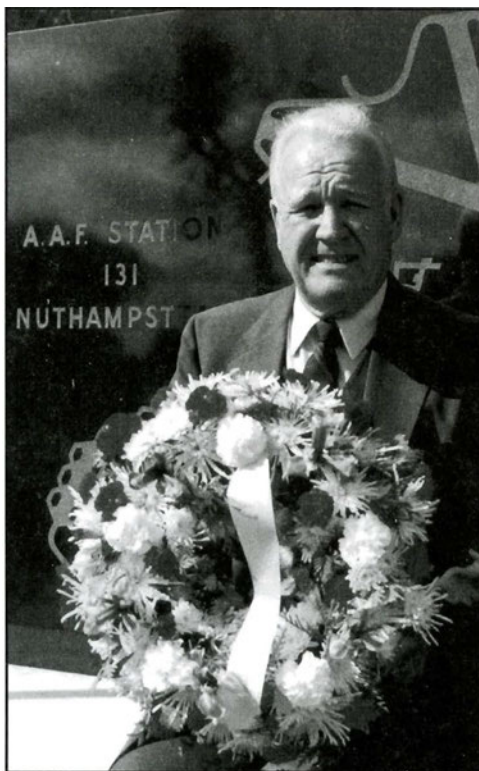
As if those memories of World War II and the air war were not enough, now I must add the memories piled on from 16 years of FLAK NEWS, the 398th history book, REMEMBRANCES, all those past reunions and the many returns back to England and the continent.

And there must be expressions of thanks in all of these areas.

Surely, these must start with the late Bill Comstock, who guided the 398th as president for 20 years. It was Bill who started all this with an invitation to "say a few words" at the 1984 reunion in Rapid City. And then shocked us all by introducing me as "our principal speaker."

That led to an assignment as the association's PR man and ultimately the encouragement to develop a newsletter, which became FLAK NEWS when Ralph Hall and I discussed the idea in a Paris hotel lobby in 1986.

Thanks to Ralph, then our treasurer and current keeper of the Monument



BILL COMSTOCK
Our Leader For 20 Years

fund books, for your careful guiding of the 398th financial matters (and for reminding me that it was "us tail-gunners" that really won the war).

And let's not forget all those "early on" members who got the association off of the ground. Guys like the late Jack Davis and George Hilliard, who is still on the job as contact officer.

George, as if I need to tell anyone, is the priceless one of the 398th! Working with George (and Elaine) has been one of the many real joys of the "job."

While George does go back to the 398th beginning, as do many others, such a reminder also conjures up thoughts like "what's to become of the 398th when we're gone?"

And at that point we can also invoke another strain of of the aforementioned "thanks."

Yes, thanks to the second generation (and third) of "young'uns" who have already stepped in to become working members of the association. Guys like Randy Stange, who as navigator Ray Stange's son, is steeped in 398th history and is a fixture at the side of his mother, Jeanne, at the reunions and tours.

And the one who stepped in to replace Hall as treasurer, Marylyn Gibb, would have made her gunner dad, Jim Crouch,

It Has Been A Good Ride

ever so proud. Not only as the treasurer, but also as the chairman at last year's reunion in Savannah, GA. Same for Jim Bewley's son, Tom, who chaired the reunion in Harrisburg, PA.

And coming up as chairman of the St. Paul reunion in October will be Sharon Krause, daughter of pilot Paul Roderick.

And already embarked on doing great things for the 398th is Lee Bradley, whose dad was engineer-gunner on the Howard Traeder crew. Lee has picked up the historical roster from the late Ed Stewart and now carries the title of "398th Data Coordinator."

The maintenance of historical group data might forever be lost but for the likes of Lee Anne Bradley.

Bringing on even more smiles when considering our future is the fact that there were no less than 18 second generation men and women on the Year 2000 Tour to England.

And when one brings up "England," I cannot forget our Friends and thank them for their love, support and "togetherness" with our association. Britain is part and parcel of the 398th, as if the Friends in and around Nuthampstead need to be reminded.

Who can forget the late David Wells and Peggy? And Tony Barker? And Tony Clark, Barry Tyler, Robert & Wilfrid Dimsdale. And so many others.

Malcolm Osborne and Vic Jenkins combined with our Herman Hager, Ed Abuthnot, Bill Ganz, Dick Frazier and others, including Comstock, to dream up the magnificent Memorial at Station 131.

Thanks to all the men and women who were a part of that project, both Yanks and Brits. It stands today as a tribute to them... and as a memorial to the 292 men who gave their lives in the conflict while serving at Nuthampstead.

And Friends beyond the Herfordshire wheatfields like Johanna Sienkiewicz and Ron Setter, who dreamed up that very special tribute to the Searl crew that crashed on the Setter farm with the loss of nine lives. And the Penn vicar, Rev. Oscar Muspratt, who went directly to Gen. Jimmy Doolittle to obtain the names of the crew so he could honor them at his Penn church. That was 57 years ago and the tradition carries over still today.

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Tours To Continent Were Special For 398th



O. deVALLAVIELLE
Mayor of St. Marie du Mont

Prayer Missals Did Their Job

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just hanging down from the plane. Coming in for a landing with only two engines and their landing gear badly damaged, they knew that they had to crash land. Approaching the runway, there was a large building in the shape of a barn as camouflage, made out of hay. The pilot made the ball turret hit the barn to make it fall off and then he belly-landed the airplane. When they came to a stop, they realized what had happened. The runway was lined with a tar-paper covering over a grass field. Thus, there were no sparks created when the metal fuselage hit the ground. They found out that the base was in Bruges, Belgium.

When they checked the inside of the airplane - they noticed that the airplane looked like a piece of Swiss Cheese - but wherever my father put a prayer missal, the bullets and flak missed. God was with them.

Other crew members aboard that day were Allen Gidcumb, co-pilot; Dalton Ebbeson, bombardier; Charles Gray, engineer-gunner; Charles Jones, radio; Carl Stanley, ball turret; and Robert McLaughlin, tail gunner.

For his piloting action that day, Staver Hyndman was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The 398th Bomb Group, not necessarily appreciated by everyone on the continent in 1944-45, nevertheless found many wonderful friends in the years that followed.

This was the finding of the FLAK NEWS editor (and tour coordinator) as we journeyed to those countries only seen from above in WWII.

It was dramatic and emotional in 1986 as the mayor the St. Marie duMont, O. deVallavielle, hosted our tour group with glasses of wine before joining us in a "Liberation Day" celebration with French soldiers at "Kilometer 7" near Omaha Beach.

"You are the first Air Force Americans to come to our celebration," said the mayor, himself a youthful French hero in the D-Day landings.

Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for your welcome.

Then on to St. Mere Eglise, Arromanches, Caen, Versailles and Paris. And, naturally, Les Champs Elysees.

It was two years later, 1988, when we met Tilly Kimmes of Luxembourg, who led us on a tour and told us about the Battle of the Bulge and how our B-17's sounded like "humming music" to the citizens of Luxembourg when we flew over.

CEBA actually stands for "Cercle d'Etudes sur a Bataille des Ardennes" (Battle of Ardennes). CEBA is a Luxembourg organization dedicated to telling a recording the story of "The Bulge." And we learned much as we visited Bastogne, Clervaux and Malmedy and reminisced about how our own planes had been grounded during that German offensive and how the 398th finally got into the air on December 24, 1944, with all four squadrons (and lost two Forts on take-off).

Thank you Tilly Kimmes and CEBA for sharing the story of the Bulge. A story you know so well because you were there.

The 1988 drama was still not over as the tour group entered Neuss. Not to be met with 88-type Flak this time, but with a welcome headed by burgermeister Bertold Reinartz. He officially welcomed president Bill Comstock and the tour party, some of whom were in the air on January 23, 1945 when Col. Frank P. Hunter's plane, piloted by Fred Gonzales, was shot down and came to rest on the outskirts of Neuss.

Also there was Johannes Shultz Everding, who just happened to be one of the German gunners firing on the 398th that day. He was not only there,



TILLY KIMMES
Battle of the Bulge Expert

he came with the parachute cords from Gonzales' chute, taken from his plane along with a medical kit and silk maps. Gonzales was the lone survivor.

Gonzales was there, too, in 1988, and was the recipient of a piece of the cord, as were other veterans. He also received a baptism dress made from the parachute silk by Mrs. Everding for their daughter some 40 years earlier.

And as if that drama was not enough for one day, Col. Hunter's widow, Maria, walked up to Everding and embraced him.

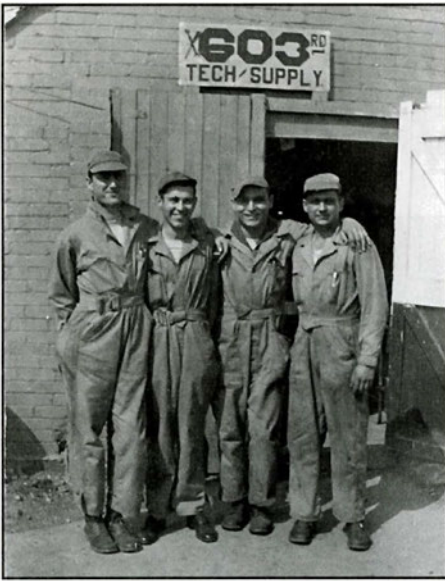
All this did not come together by accident, but rather via the intercession of a local resident, Manfred König. He and historian Alfred Wilms knew of the January 23, 1945 bombing and the pending arrival of the tour group. They even erected a cross at the crash site commemorating the event. And four years later planted a tree at a Neuss playground which was dedicated by the 1992 tour group.

Mayor Reinartz, König, Wilms, Gertrud Peiffer and all our other friends in Neuss, thank you for showing us "the other side of the war."

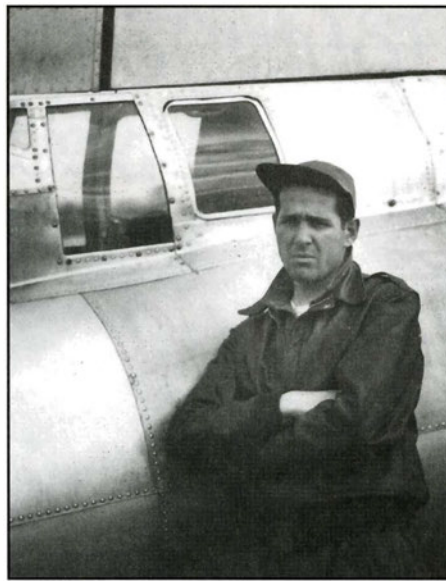
The scars left in Eastern Germany, seen after the demise of the Berlin Wall, were still evident in 1992 when two coaches of 398th tourists visited Leipzig and (of all places) Merseburg!

No other 8th Air Force group had come here before, and while the roads and other facilities on the way were a bit grim, the welcome at Merseburg was remarkable. The Leuna factory, well known to bombardiers, was still in business and open to the visitors. We even had a grand tour of the huge facility, including information as to the location of where every

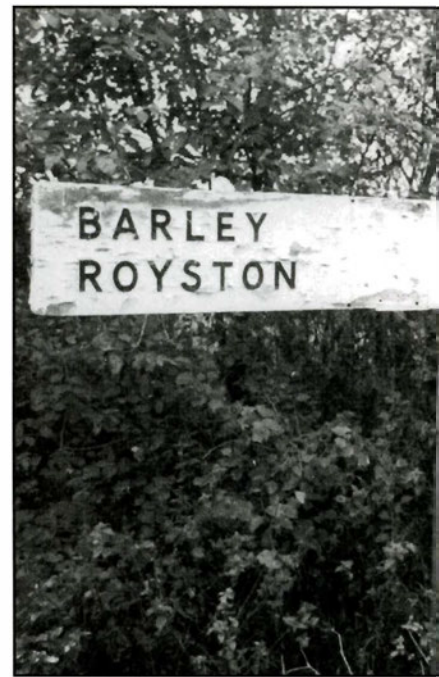
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Houston Boothe
John Bachman
Anthony Vitelli
Henry Phillips



Wilfred Armstrong



This was a familiar road sign for the "forces" who labored to keep the roads open during WWII. And these are some of the men who spent their days (and nights) keeping the roads open.

The Ground War



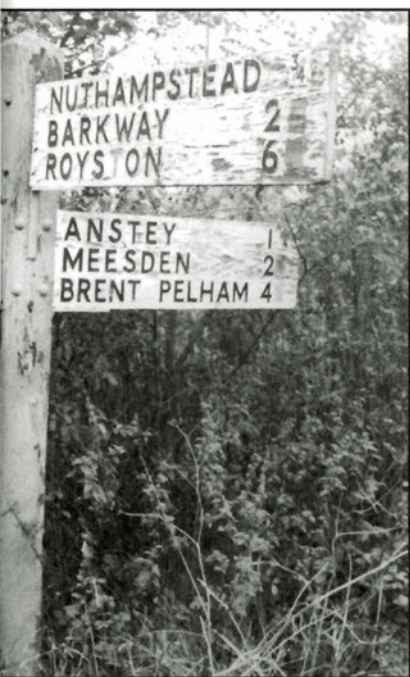
Leonard Bowman



Erwin Riley



Dallas Ebest
Earl Southwick
Fred Whitman



many 398th Bomb Group "ground
 fortresses flying at Nuthampstead
 of the faces of the men who spent
 planes repaired, tuned and ready.



Frank Gelwicks

At Station 131



Allyn Schroeder
 Robert Vincent
 Latrelle Moss



Charles Dacon



Fred Gruber



This was a familiar road sign for the many 398th Bomb Group “ground forces” who labored to keep the Fortresses flying at Nuthampstead during WWII. And these are some of the faces of the men who spent their days (and nights) keeping their planes repaired, tuned and ready.

We're Thankful For Many Friends

England Tours Memorable

Continued from Page 4

Wildboardclough and Birchenough Hill were only strange names to the Yanks until Kevin & Mandy Whittaker invited the 1994 England Tour members to see the place where six 603 airmen perished while on a B-17 ferry flight. RAF ace Johnnie Johnson and a WWII British chaplain were there for the church service, along with a cadre of young RAF cadets. Local members still climb Birchenough Hill to place flowers and an American flag at the crash site.

Should not we all be thankful for people like this?

And how about Brian Clipston and Sonia Gifkins, who invited tour members to see what they and others at The Wash had accomplished in remembering the combat gunnery school that existed there in WWII. And who also come to the Nuthampstead celebrations.

Mark Burton - young, bright and British - led the 1986 and 1988 tours to England and the continent and was a popular leader. And totally dependable in watching over his Yank tourists. He never lost a member, even if Al Petska quietly "skipped out" of his hotel room in Cambridge at midnight for a prostate operation.

Linda Ellis took over for Burton in 1990 and guided the Yanks through Scotland, Hadrian's Wall, Loch Lomond, Shakespeare country and other tour spots including Station 131 (tail gunner Charles Sutton became an avowed Linda Ellis fan). Thanks to Linda for brightening those rainy days around Loch Lomond and Blackpool, and for the poem she wrote about her sojourn with the Yanks. The last verse said—

*I'll say it was a tour I'll never forget,
both poignant and fun in the main.
My only hope is that the 398th
will be returning to England again.*

Thanks, Linda, for happy memories from 1990.

Writing about our UK Friends would not be complete without Anstey, the 1944 crash near St. George's Church that took 11 lives; the services held there on tour Sundays; Rev. Gerald Drew and his 603 cap; Eunice Fox and her on-the-scene story, "It Was A Sad Time." And culminating in the dedications of the Stained Glass Window last year before several hundred people, Yanks and Brits alike, including royalty.

Thanks to all you wonderful people.

The Woodman Inn, of course, holds a



ROGER FREEMAN, 8th Air Force historian, found Linda Ellis just as charming as the 398th folks on the 1992 England tour. Freeman was a speaker at one of the tour banquets and Linda the tour guide on the England portion of the trip.

place in the hearts of all the men who served at Station 131. And the many who have returned in more recent years. And will return again in 2002.

Why do we come back, year after year? Maybe one reason is because of two youngkids sent to nearby Hare Street to escape the London blitz early in the war. They used to bike to Nuthampstead and from a vantage point on their favorite haystack watch the 398th bombers come and go. And, of course, practice that common question — "got any gum, chum?"

In 1986, now a bit older but still inquisitive, they stood by the highway as the 398th tour bus pulled away from the Cambridge American Military Cemetary at Madingly — and saluted.

Meet Ralph Ambrose and Roger Bradley.

And who sought them out and identified them as the 1944 Blitz Kids from



DAVID WELLS
"Mayor of Nuthampstead"

London? Wally Blackwell, who went on to become Comstock's successor as 398th president.

Researching, writing and editing stories about the missions was (and still is) the heart of FLAK NEWS, but certainly not at the slighting of the ground echelon, witness the many stories and photos about the mess hall, airplane mechanics, bomb loaders, truck drivers, medics, the chaplains, and to the personnel under the watchful eye of the esteemed Col. Berryhill.

There also came to FLAK NEWS opportunities to assist in locating 398th members who fathered children during their stay at Station 131. There were some successes and some failures, but all provided lasting, albeit personal, relationships.

Thank you to all these who confided in this editor, giving him stories about "the other side of the war."

Also remembered as part of "the other side of the war" would have to be Karl and Ursulla Buchmann, who left their home in Hamburg, Germany after the war and emigrated to Seattle, there to open a print shop that years later would print FLAK NEWS.

The "payroll" part of all this has to be the letters, cards and phones expressing thanks for doing what has been a joy and pleasure.

And that B-17 model given for "dedicated service."

Now do you know why I say "thank you?"

— ALLEN OSTROM
Editor

Continent Tours Were Special

Continued from Page 5

one of our bombs had fallen.

"Typical German recordkeeping," said the superintendant with a smile.

Thank you for showing us "other side of Merseburg."

Occupied during the war years by the Germans and then for another 40 years by the Russians, Czechoslovakia finally broke free from occupation shackles and became the Czech Republic. And the citizens opened their arms of love to the visiting Yanks.

In 1995 the 398th joined hundreds of Army ground force types in celebrating the 50th anniversary of VE Day... and the liberation of Czechoslovakia.

Jaromir Kohout, a welding instructor at the Skoda Works by day and devout researcher of fallen World War II aircraft the rest of the time, along with his SLET comrades, played a key role in inviting the 398th to the 1995 Liberation Day celebrations in Pilsen. It was an event to remember.

Kohout led the tour party to nearby Litice, where a memorial had been erected in memory of the Ferguson crew that was shot down on the Last Mission on April 25, 1945, plus other American airmen downed by the Germans... or killed while on the ground.

Since then, the 398th has seen much of the Czech Republic and met many of its citizens, like Miloslav Raboch, Vladislav Kratky, Josef Vesely, Karel Dezort, Jiri Chum, Ladislav Piskacek, Ladislav Kohout, Jan Zdiarsky, Milan Spineta and many, many others.

Also, a man of many countries — Pär Nilhammer — a Swede working out of Luxembourg and accustomed to tour-guiding in many European countries. He said —

"I will take other tour groups to these places and tell them what you Americans did in World War II, and how the Czech citizens have honored your deeds."

And think not that connecting our people with all those "continent" people simply happened by accident.

Enter Barbara Fish of Seattle (of Czech heritage) who "tour guided" our travelers not only to the Czech Republic, but to Germany, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Luxembourg... and England... on all the 398th tours since 1992.

Barbara will be in St. Paul, Minnesota for the annual reunion and will have all the information needed for the Troopship Tour.

Working with such people, at home and abroad, has turned a job into an honor. Thank you.

ALLEN OSTROM

A Paris Hospital & Stuka Bombers:

Buddy, Von Led Sisters Out Of Harm's Way

BY BUDDY WAGNER

Commanding Officer, 603rd Squadron

Meyer (Buddy) Wagner was commanding officer of the 603rd, flying as CA with Robert Hopkins, when their plane was shot down on a mission to Bretteville, France on August 8, 1944. This is his "sidebar" story, dealing with his activities when "hiding out" in Paris.

To set the scene, I was shot up, shot down, captured and escaped, living for a while in Paris during the occupation. A small French hospital had doctored my wounds and in the basement was caring for a number of wounded Allied troops.

As I seemed to be the ranking officer in the neighborhood, I dropped in periodically and one day found my navigator there, Vonerlin Wereneke.

In September 1944, I suspect the Germans had given up on Paris as a lost cause. Theretofore, Paris had been considered an "open city" but retreating forces had mined parts of the city to blow bridges, thoroughfares, etc. It is my understanding that when the order came down to "blow it," the order was not carried out by the local command, so the little man with the small mustache and big mouth ordered the city bombed which resulted in an air raid of pitiful force of a few Stukas.

Von and I happened to be at the hospital when the first bomb dropped.

The hospital consisted of a basement, 1st floor lobby, doctor's and business offices, a 2nd floor with beds, a 3rd floor with a few beds and Nun's quarters, and a little cupola on top occupied by a delightful Franciscan Friar.

A spiral staircase ran from the lobby to the third floor, spiraling very close to a three story stained glass window de-

picting the image of Jesus.

Now back to my story. When the first bomb dropped, Von and I, of one mind, ran up the stairs to help Sisters and patients to the basement. As we started down with me carrying a child and Von, like a wonderful sheep dog, herding the Sisters and ambulatory patients, a second bomb dropped close enough to rattle that enormous window. Our little group came to a dead stop as the Sisters dropped to their knees and commenced to Genuflect.

Von yelled: "Everybody up! Get away from this window (pointing)!"

The Sisters rose and started down again when a third bomb dropped. Closer. This time the window really rattled and there was a tinkling of glass and again the Sisters dropped to their knees. Unable to move the procession, Von ran around the group, turned and assumed sort of a General Patton pose with hands on hips and yelled: "Dammit Sisters, God helps those who help themselves — now get off your fannies and get down these steps!"

I don't know how many spoke English, but they got the message. I am certain God forgave him. I did, and we made it to the basement without incident — except for the Mother Superior trying to chastise Von without laughing.

Attic Aberration:

She Saw Into The Future

He was the radio operator on the B-17 crew that was attacked over eastern Germany, and whose plane came to rest near Slany, Czechoslovakia.

This would be the Donald Christensen crew of the 603rd, taken down in an attack by FW-190's on March 2, 1945. Of the nine aboard, eight were killed, including the radio operator, Elmer Gurba of Cleveland, Ohio.

The lone survivor was the tail gunner, Selmer Haakenson, whose story has been told in previous issues of FLAK NEWS.

However, the night before the mission, in Cleveland, the mother of Elmer

Gurba had a strange dream. She was in a darkened attic when she saw a shadowy figure. Coming closer, Mrs. Gurba saw a person wearing a patch over one eye. Then he disappeared.

Hours later, in Slany, the badly injured Haakenson, who had successfully bailed out, was captured by the Germans.

Taken to a hospital in Prague, a German surgeon named "Doctor Shultz" removed his right eye, damaged by a FW-190 20mm bullet.

Until a new eye was implanted years later, Haakenson wore a patch over his eye.

The Quest Became More Rewarding Than The Prize

Crash Course

PADERBORN PROJECT – All these men, plus others, were involved in locating the 1945 crash site of Howard Traeder's B-17 near Paderborn, Germany. From left to right, Horst Gerken, retired city employee; Traeder; Mayor Kurt Wessel; Friedhelm Henning, crash site hobbyist; Dr. Hans Wichert, history professor; Manfred König and Alfred Wilms of Neuss who combined to organize the search; and vice mayor Rudi Koch. This event took place during the summer of 2000 when Traeder, his wife and children visited Germany, there to discover that "the quest became more rewarding than the prize."



2002 England/QE-2 Troopship Tour

ITINERARY

Wednesday, June 5 – Depart US via British Air for London.

Thursday, June 6 – Arrive London. Transfer to Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cambridge. Welcome dinner at hotel

Friday, June 7 – Duxford Imperial War Museum. Visit the American Air Museum and see the B-17's, Sally B and Mary Alice. Lunch at the cafeteria and then back to Cambridge for a no-host reception for the Friends of the 398th.

Saturday, June 8 – Service of Remembrance at Station 131 Memorial at Nuthampstead. Ploughman's Lunch at the Woodman Inn. Wally's Bus Tour of the old base. Evening free.

Sunday, June 9 – Thanksgiving Service at St. George's Church, Anstey. View 398th Stained Glass Window, dedicated in 2000. Lunch and afternoon dance at High Hall Farm. Late afternoon visit to American Cemetery in Madingley. Evening free.

Monday, June 10 – Tour of Herfordshire County Record Office to view 398th memorabilia and records. Shopping at downtown Hertford. Farewell dinner at Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Tuesday, June 11 – Motorcoach to London, with stop for lunch and viewing at Hendon Imperial War Museum. Evening free after arrival at Harrington Hall Hotel near Kensington.

Wednesday, June 12 – London sightseeing day, with visits to the Cabinet War Rooms, the Royal Mews and shopping at Harrods. Evening free to attend one of many shows.

Thursday, June 13 – Morning visit to Kensington Palace, Royal Family home of the Duke of Gloucester, who unveiled the Stained Glass Window at Anstey last year. In the afternoon, a "flight" on the London Eye, the super ferris wheel on the Thames. "Farewell to England" dinner at the hotel.

Friday, June 14 – Transfer to Southampton to board the QE-2 for the "Troopship Tour" home. Dinner on board, the first of six such gala dinners aboard the QE-2, plus numerous other meals and activities on board before arriving in New York Harbor on Thursday, June 20. Transfer to hotel for overnight or to airport for flight home.

— or —

Friday, June 14 – For those choosing to fly home or extend their tour to other European cities, departure from London airports or rail stations.

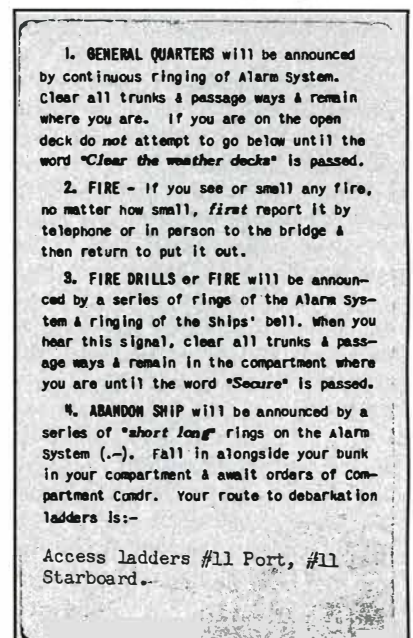
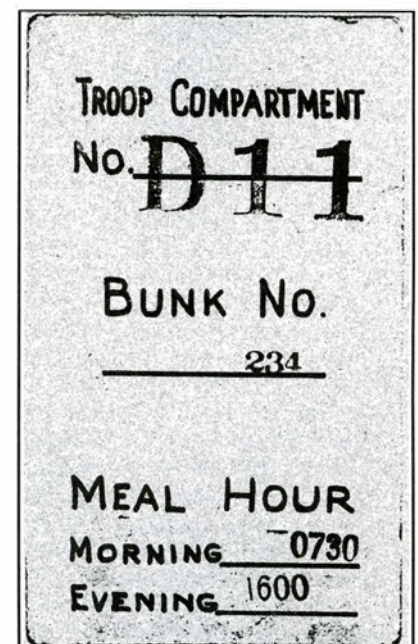
AO Contact

The Aluminum Overcast will have some kind of a Fall Tour, according to the EAA, but no schedule is currently available. For current information, or to book future rides, call 1-800-359-6217.

Meanwhile, the AO will be flying and available for rides at the EAA Fly-In at Oshkosh July 24-30.

THESE ARE copies of Bob Holden's bunk and eating assignment ticket on the Wakefield heading for England. On the back side were emergency instructions. The 2002 troopship tour promises a more elegant crossing.

Troopship Memories



BRIEF-things

Don't forget to bring your A-2 jacket to St. Paul for a special banquet parade and group photo... also, not to forget to send FLAK NEWS your "troopship memories"... The National D-Day Memorial, for you folks travelling in the East, is located at the interchange of State Routes 460 bypass and 122 in the city of Bedford, between Roanoke and Lynchburg, VA... as **Ike** said, "You are about to embark upon a Great Crusade"... it was the "thrill of a lifetime" when 602 pilot **Paul Roderick** was taken for a small plane ride by his pilot grandson... **Newt Moy** was one of the pilots on the May 14, 1945 PW recovery flights to Barth, Germany; his flight picked up, among others, **Oral Birch**, who had gone down over Merseburg on November 21, 1944; a video of this recovery mission may be seen in the Memory Room at the St. Paul reunion... Chicago will become the new headquarters for the Boeing Company, but Seattle is where they built the B-17 and will continue to build the 737, 747, 757, 767, 777 and the new Sonic Cruiser... the newsletter, Bulletin Air War, documents the many Allied and German planes that crashed in Holland and now tells of a claim by a former Luftwaffe ME 262 pilot, **Hans Guido Mutke**, that he broke the sound barrier in April 1945, long before **Chuck Yeager**; those of us who saw the 262 would be the last to dispute the claim... **Norm Markel** made it big in a Greeley, Colorado Tribune photo/story telling of his being shot down on the Last Mission to Pilsen; and the horror he felt at visiting Buchenwald, not far from where he had parachuted earlier and had been picked up by an American Jeep driver; **Markel** was the radio operator on the 602 **Coville** crew... and as **Wilfrid Dimsdale** said, "planning for the Yanks' 2002 visit will return to the front burner once the lambing season is out of the way"... **Barbara Fish's** front burner plans include the question of how many "capsules" the 2002 tour will need for their "flight" on the London Eye (20 customers per capsule)... thinking about the QE-2 tour next year? Remember Noah's advice — Don't Miss The Boat... the B-17 crash site at Paderborn that **Howard Traeder** found last year (with the help of "German organization") was the result of that infamous April 13, 1945 RDX mission; when the location of **Traeder's** crash site search was advertised, no less than seven Germans remembered playing on the Fort as kids... also on board that day was engineer **Fred Bradley**, whose daughter, **Lee Anne**, is 398th Data Coordinator (and very much interested in such historical data)... your editor, curious about a Fortress named Wailuki Maui, discovered the reason for the name while visiting Maui — a still-practicing Wailuki optometrist named **Dr. Yuen Kong Yee**, but in 1943 an 8th AF bombardier who came home with a few Purple Hearts and 18 months of PW time; after 58 years he received a full page Memorial Day spread in the Maui News... a 385th BG chap with an eye for statistics discovered that the average life span of the 300 Fortresses assigned to his group was four months, 12 days; not one of their originals made it from beginning to end... your FLAK NEWS editor will entertain the idea of running a periodic Ladies Column (what am I saying?)... somebody just has to talk **George Hilliard** out of his decision to skip the St. Paul reunion (his first miss ever)... a little church in a little town in Iowa made a big thing out of Memorial Day, honoring their local servicemen with "America The Beautiful"... and a reading of "30,000 Feet," the poem written by 398th navigator **Stephen Quinn** (the reader got a standing ovation)... ball turret gunner **Vaughn Erickson** of the 602nd made it big in the Seattle Times when the Aluminum Overcast dropped in for a few days at Boeing Field, across the street from where it was built some 58 years before... Dues Manager **Jim Haas** and his 8AFHS friends in Ames, Iowa will hear all about the recovery of a P-38 from deep in the ice of Greenland from the guy who did it, **Robert Cardin**... the P-38 restoration is nearing completion at the Lost Squadron Museum in Middleboro, Kentucky... another "don't forget" concerns the Questionnaire inserted in this issue of FLAK NEWS — it will cost you only a 34¢ stamp and a little bit of time, and you'll make **Lee Anne** very happy.

398th Bomb Group PX

Qty.	CLOTHING	Cost	Total
_____	Cap - Fits All Sizes	\$8.00 ea	_____
_____	600, 601, 602, 603 Group		
_____	Jackets - Navy, B-17 on Front	\$25.00 ea	_____
_____	S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	T-Shirts - B-17 on Front	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Sweat Shirts - B-17 on Front	\$15.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Golf Shirts Group Logo on Front	\$20.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy or White - M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Turtle Neck Shirt - B-17 on Collar	\$20.00 ea	_____
_____	White - S, M, L, XL		
_____	Children's Sweatshirts	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	(Blue or White) M, L - B-17 on Front		
CD'S & VIDEOS			
_____	CD Jack's Books	\$25.00 ea	_____
_____	CD FLAK NEWS	\$30.00 ea	_____
_____	Video Anstey Window Dedication	\$10.00 ea	_____
JEWELRY			
_____	Squadron Lapel Pins - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Lapel Pin (Hell from Heaven)	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Lapel Pin - Special Design	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	B-17 Lapel Pin (Silver)	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	B-17 Earrings (Silver - Pierced only)	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Bolo Ties - Group Logo	\$4.00 ea	_____
LOGO PATCHES			
_____	Squadron Patches - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$6.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Patch ("Hell from Heaven")	\$6.00 ea	_____
_____	Jacket Patch - Rectangle B-17	\$4.00 ea	_____
_____	8th Air Force	\$4.00 ea	_____
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS			
_____	Folding Umbrellas	\$18.00 ea	_____
_____	Red with White B-17		
_____	Note Paper with B-17 (Packet of 12)	\$4.00 pkt	_____
_____	Tote bag, Navy with White B-17	\$7.00 ea	_____
_____	B-17 Sun Catcher	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	Beach Towel White with Black B-17	\$18.00 ea	_____
_____	Golf Towel, White w/Black B-17	\$7.00 ea	_____
_____	Christmas Ornament with B-17	\$6.00 ea	_____
_____	Ceramic Magnet with B-17	\$3.00 ea	_____
_____	Playing Cards with B-17		
_____	Single Deck	\$7.00 ea	_____
_____	Double Deck	\$12.00 ea	_____
_____	Anstey Window Post Card	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (Control Tower) Station 131	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (398th Memorial) Post Card	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (8X10 Aluminum Overcast)	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Bumper Sticker (398th Bomb Group)	\$1.00 ea	_____
_____	License Plate Holder (398th B.G.)	\$2.00 ea	_____

Cost of Items Ordered \$ _____
 Delivery And Handing Add \$4.00,
 or \$5.00 if Order is Over \$20.00. \$ _____
 Total \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Make checks payable to 398th Bomb Group Association PX (US funds).

Mail to: Joe Joseph
 New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168-6168