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

VOL. 17 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 2002

## What Are The Odds?: Coffee Chat Turned A Bit Bizarre

*What are the odds?*

Consider two women, one a temporary, chatting over coffee in Salem, Oregon and one recalling that she had an uncle that was killed in the air war in Europe in World War II.

The other says that her father was in the 8th Air Force during the same war and he survived.

"Could they have known each other?" Hardly a chance, what with dozens of bomber groups involving tens of thousands of men.

"Do you know the group your uncle was in?" Just one more remote question to continue the conversation.

"Yes, he was in the 398th." This much she knew, but not much more, other than he was killed on a mission before she was born.

"What? My dad was in the 398th." This is impossible! Surely, she must have been guessing.

"It's true. His name was Lehner, the same as mine."

"And my dad's name is Willis Frazier. He was Operations Officer in the 601st Squadron."

One of the three squadrons, along with Lehner's 603rd and the lead 602nd, that met up with a squadron of Foche Wulf 190's in a mission to Merseburg on Nov. 21, 1944.

Yes, Dad (Frazier) must surely have known of Lehner's demise. And yes, Dad surely will talk to you when the 398th comes to Portland next September for the reunion.

(Salem is less than an hour's drive from the reunion hotel in Clackamas, a Portland suburb).

And yes, the FLAK NEWS editor also will be there. He wrote the story, called "Merseburg, Dreaded Merseburg." And he saw your uncle's plane go down that day.

*What are the odds?*



**OREGON'S MT. HOOD forms the background for Evergreen Aviation's Ford Tri-motor and B-17 Flying Fortress, creating a "picture postcard advertisement" for the 398th Bomb Group's annual reunion. This will happen September 25-28, 2002 in Portland, Oregon.**

## PLAN NOW FOR PORTLAND

No, it is not too early to plug in PORTLAND for the 2002 reunion of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

Now is the time to lay out those plans...and then spend the upcoming months looking ahead with anticipation.

Everything you need to know about the next reunion is contained in these pages of FLAK NEWS, starting with the dates—September 25-28, 2002.

And starting now will allow for more than plenty of time to arrange for airline tickets, rail tickets, bus tickets, auto repair and all those things needed to make for a well-planned, organized trip. And a happy reunion.

The folks in charge of the planning have done everything humanly possible to make Portland an exceptional event. The tours to nearby attractions are extraordinary, like Mt. St. Helen's of volcano fame and the beautiful Mt. Hood and its Timberline Lodge.

*Continued on Page 5*



# THE PORTLAND REUNION

**Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, September 25-26-27-28, 2002**

## REUNION FACTS

**REUNION CHAIRMAN**—Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI, 47170-2870.

**HEADQUARTERS HOTEL**—Monarch Hotel, 12566-SE 93rd Ave., Clackamas, Oregon, 97015-9760. Telephone 1-800-492-8700. Hotel is located 10 miles north of the Portland Airport on I-205, Exit 214, Sunnyside Road. Free hotel van service available.

**BACKUP HOTELS**—Two hotels nearby available for overflow. Reservations may be made through the Monarch. Free shuttle.

**PARKING**—Large parking lot at Monarch Hotel, with space for motor homes and trailers. No hookups.

**RESERVATIONS**—A Monarch Hotel reservation form has been inserted in this issue of FLAK NEWS. Each guest is responsible for his own reservation and payment. If reservation form is missing, contact reunion chairman.

**HOTEL POLICY**—Monarch Hotel will honor all 398th reservations made prior to the cut-off date of August 28, 2002. Reservations made after this date will be accepted as space is available. Hotel check-in time is 3 PM, check-out time is 12 Noon.

**TOURS**—All tours will be arranged and operated by Columbia Crossroads Tours, Inc., Portland. Tickets for all venues will be required upon entering the coach. Tour tickets will be included in each person's tour package, available in the Memory Room (Sandy).

**BANQUET TICKETS**—Welcome and Farewell Banquet tickets (if ordered) will be at the special banquet reservation desk in the Memory Room. All banquet tickets must have a Table Number for seating.

**SPECIAL REQUESTS**—Persons wishing to arrange special tours, as for salmon fishing on the Pacific Ocean, or extended tours, may contact Columbia Crossroads Tours, 4800 SW Macadam, Ste. 255, Portland, Oregon, 97201. Telephone (503) 225- 9995. E-mail—[cynthia@columbia-crossroads.com](mailto:cynthia@columbia-crossroads.com).

**GOLF**—No special golf arrangements will be made. Contact Allen Ostrom at the hotel for directions to nearby courses.

## REUNION TOURS

**WELCOME RECEPTION**, Wednesday, September 25, 4:30 PM to 7 PM at the hotel's poolside Garden Courtyard. Complimentary light snacks and no-host bar. A great time to meet and greet members and friends. Dinner this evening will be "on your own." No problem, what with many quality restaurants nearby, including the Monarch Hotel's SAM'S restaurant and lounge.

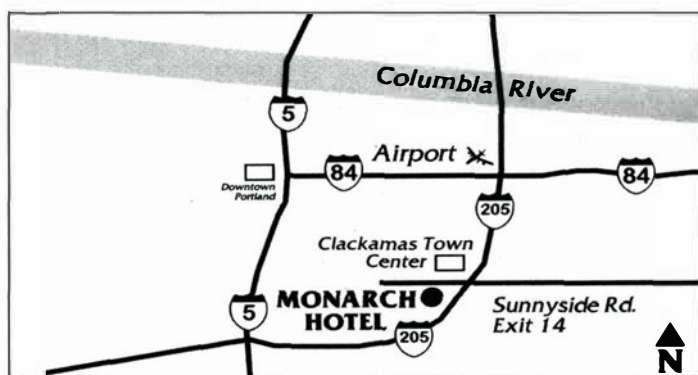
**PORTLAND CITY TOUR**—Thursday, September 26, 2 PM to 4:30 PM. \$28.00. (to coincide with the Group Business meeting in the ballroom). This Crossroads Coach Tour will introduce Portland to the 398th members (the reunion hotel in Clackamas is some 10 miles from downtown). This will be the only time during the reunion that downtown will be visited. The tour will include not only the attractive city center area, but also Chinatown, Chinese Classical Gardens and the International Rose Test Beds (the Portland Rose Festival, held in June, is world famous). A professional guide will be aboard to point out other Portland sights. The coach will return to the hotel in time for the Welcome Banquet.

**EVERGREEN AVIATION MUSEUM**, Friday, September 27, 8 AM to 3 PM. \$32.00. See Howard Hughes' famed "Spruce Goose," housed in this huge museum along with many WW II Warbirds. The feature here will be a "symposium" featuring some of our own 398th members in a theater setting beside a B-17. The speakers will be dressed in A-2 jackets and squadron caps and will be addressing the museum patrons including many children from Portland area schools. There will also be available three Evergreen Warbirds for paid flights. See Page 4 for reservations and additional information. One Crossroads coach will be available to transport interested members to the nearby Spirit Mountain Casino. Lunch available in the museum restaurant (or at the Casino).

**MT. ST. HELENS TOUR**—Saturday, September 28, 8 AM to 4 PM. \$60.00. A wonderful opportunity to see what happened when the volcano "blew its top" in 1980. The destruction to the timber, lakes, roads, lodges and bridges was unimaginable, and the story is re-created for visitors at the National Volcanic Monument center at Coldwater Ridge, Hoffstadt Bluffs and Forest Learning Center. A box lunch will be offered during the early afternoon and the coach will return to the reunion hotel in plenty of time for the Farewell Banquet.

**MT. HOOD LOOP TOUR**—Saturday, September 28, 8:30 AM to 5 PM. \$60.00. This is one of the most scenic tours offered anywhere in America, highlighted by a visit to the famed Timberline Lodge on beautiful Mt. Hood. Lunch is included at the Lodge. Before and after the Lodge visit there will be photo stops at Crown Point Vista House, Multnomah Falls and Bonneville Dam. It is a spectacular tour with awe-inspiring views.

**OREGON TRAIL HISTORIC TOUR**—Saturday, September 28, 1 PM to 3 PM. \$27.00. This tour is for those members who wish to stay close to the hotel and yet desire to learn about Oregon's history. This Crossroads Coach will take you to the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, where your guide will explain the beginnings of America's expansion into the Northwest early in the 19th century.



# OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 19th Annual Reunion  
Portland, Oregon September 25-28, 2002

**PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN AUGUST 28, 2002**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ WIFE \_\_\_\_\_ SQD. \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP+4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAMES OF OTHERS IN PARTY. PLEASE PRINT FOR NAME TAGS.

## WEDNESDAY, September 25 —

Registration	12:00 PM to 5:00 PM	Memory Room (Sandy)
Welcome Reception	4:30 PM to 7:00 PM	Garden Courtyard (no-host bar)
Dinner on your own (many restaurants nearby)		

## THURSDAY, September 26 —

Registration	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	Memory Room (Sandy)		
Board Officers Meeting	8:00 AM to 11:00 AM	Troutdale Room		
Portland City Tour	2:00 PM to 4:30 PM	Crossroads Coach	\$28.00 x _____	\$ _____
Group Business Meeting	2:00 PM to 4:00 PM	Pacific Ballroom		
No Host Bar	6:00 PM to 7:00 PM	Pacific Ballroom		
Welcome Banquet (Table reservations required)	7:00 PM	Pacific Ballroom	\$26.00 x _____	\$ _____

## FRIDAY, September 27 —

Registration	8:00 AM to 9:00 AM	Memory Room (Sandy)		
Evergreen Aviation Museum (Includes coach transportation to Museum in McMinnville, Oregon; to the Evergreen Airfield; and to Spirit Mountain casino) (Dinner on your own at hotel or nearby restaurants)	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM		\$32.00 x _____	\$ _____

## SATURDAY, September 28 —

Mt. St. Helens Tour	8:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Crossroads Coach	\$60.00 x _____	\$ _____
Mt. Hood Loop Tour	8:30 AM to 5:00 PM	Crossroads Coach	\$60.00 x _____	\$ _____
Oregon Trail Tour	1:00 PM to 3:00 PM	Crossroads Coach	\$27.00 x _____	\$ _____
No Host Bar	6:00 PM to 7:00 PM	Pacific Ballroom		
Farewell Banquet (Table reservations required)	7:00 PM	Pacific Ballroom	\$30.00 x _____	\$ _____

Registration Fee (per person, 2 maximum per family)	\$10.00 x _____	\$ _____
2002 Dues (if applicable, check your dues card)	\$20.00 x _____	\$ _____
	<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ _____

I/We will be staying at the:  Monarch Hotel  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete form, enclose check, and mail to:

Sharon Krause  
Plymouth, MI 47170-2870

Received \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Sharon Krause**

A copy of this form will be mailed to registrant upon receipt of check or money order, payable to 398th Bomb Group Reunion.



## **Wally at Mighty 8th Museum:**

# ***“Spirit Of The 398th”***

## ***Seen And Felt***

*TRIP REPORT* - A Visit to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, Savannah, Ga.

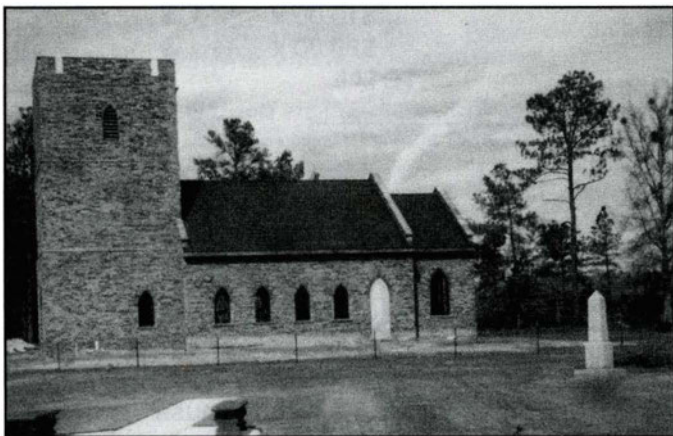
Teedy and I made a real special visit last February on our way down the East Coast from Maryland to points south. We arrived at the Mighty Eighth AF Heritage Museum during the afternoon and spent time in the Museum's Memorial Garden finding signs of the 398th.

We walked down a newly installed sidewalk to the front of our beautiful 398th Monument. That Triangle W on the tail of the B-17 on the Monument face looked splendid! We sat down on a bench labeled, “DONATED BY THE 398TH,” installed across the sidewalk from the Monument, and took time to appreciate our surroundings. Just a few hundred feet to our left was the Memorial Chapel, now looking nearly complete on the outside, that will have a chandelier installed—funded by the 398th. As we walked part way toward the Chapel we passed a tree, just budding out, that also has a plaque—DONATED BY THE 398TH. All this was a beautiful experience.

We rediscovered 398th crew plaques and individual 398th name tablets on the Wall of Honor, and then found the other 398th bench installed nearby. The next morning we roamed around among the many 8th AF displays and exhibits in the Museum Gallery. So much to help to bring back old memories!

I made sure to spend some moments with the Museum's staff that are such an integral part of the Museum's operation. There are a few new faces, but most of them remember helping us with our very successful reunion activities held there in September 2000. We presented Historian Rusty Bloxom with a set of our recently produced CD-ROM, Statistical History of the 398th for their archives. It will become additional information for those researching the 398th story in the future. The entire Museum staff is filled with enthusiasm and hospitality for visitors, but especially so for 8th AF veterans. We are fortunate to have the Museum available for our remembering, but most of all, it is our heritage for the future. So plan a visit to the Heritage Museum. It is a unique experience. And I must finish this trip report with a reminder—that your membership and financial support of the Heritage Museum will continue to show the fine “Spirit of the 398th”.

**WALLY BLACKWELL, President  
398th Bomb Group Association**



**New Chapel At Mighty 8th Almost Ready**

# **Warbird Flights Are Available**

Turn back the clock, guys (and gals). Back to those Warbird Days of WW II and even long before.

To those of you who always wanted to be a P-51 fighter pilot, but wound up in a B-17 cockpit.

To those of you who learned to fly an Army Air Corps Stearman even before you had a driver's license.

To those of you who wondered how it would feel to be crammed into a 1920's vintage corrugated passenger airplane with three motors built by Ford.

Opportunities like this come by rarely. But they will come for 398th members and friends on Friday, September 27, 2002 when the group visits the Evergreen Aviation Museum as part of the annual reunion.

Arrangements have been made with Evergreen for members to purchase 20-minute flights in their P-51 Mustang, Stearman PT-17 trainer and Ford Tri-motor.



All are piloted by Evergreen's own staff of 747 pilots or commercial pilots stationed in the Portland area.

The Ford Tri-motor seats 12 passengers, with each seat coming with a \$100 price tag.

The Stearman ride will cost \$150.

The P-51 ride will cost \$300.

Reservations and payments must be made directly to reunion chairman Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI 47170-2870.

Make checks payable to “398th Bomb Group Reunion”.

The 20-minute ride segments will be scheduled between 10 AM and 3 PM, with shuttle service available between the museum and the airfield (across the highway). Krause will coordinate the flight assignments with Evergreen.

It would be prudent to make reservations “soonest” as the schedule will be made on a first-come first-serve basis. The flight scheduling must be completed by August 28, 2002.

## **Notice Out To Remind Of Delinquent Dues**

A very attractive, albeit pertinent, brochure has been mailed to some 225 398th members. The “New Year's Greeting,” is a reminder that members delinquent in dues (\$20) are in jeopardy of losing their FLAK NEWS “subscription.”

Dues may be sent in at any time to James Haas, Perry, IA, 50220-0163.

This quarter a dues envelope has been inserted for those members living in the following states—North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

President Wally Blackwell reminds that the \$20 dues is for membership in the 398th Association, and that FLAK NEWS represents one of the benefits of membership.



# Portland Attractions Beckon

## Symposium Will Be Reunion Feature

*Continued from Page 1*

Not to mention a visit to the new and remarkable Evergreen Aviation Museum, which houses the world's largest plane—the Hughes HK-1 Flying Boat, Spruce Goose. And dozens of World War II Warbirds like the B-17 Flying Fortress.

The BIG event at the museum promises to be the “symposium” featuring five of our own 398th personnel, all dolled up in their A-2 jackets and squadron caps and all relating some personal 398th history for the benefit of our members, the museum patrons, including children from nearby Portland schools.

Featured in this symposium will be *Hal Weekley*, the last WW II B-17 pilot to still hold a Fortress pilot rating. Weekley had accumulated so much B-17 history the 398th honored him with an appropriate plaque at last year's St. Paul reunion.

President *Wally Blackwell* also will be on the podium, speaking primarily of the

unique relationship between our group and the British Friends of the 398th.

Telling his story of a dramatic crash landing, capture, escape attempt and imprisonment will be *Burt Bream*, navigator of the *Shady Lady*, piloted by Warren Wade.

Operations Officer *Willis Frazier* will not only bring his Norden Bomb Sight, but will also regale listeners on some of the tactical planning that went into each mission. He will also share some of the history of the D-Day Landings on June 6, 1944.

*Phil Stahlman*, who sat in the same cockpit with Larry deLancey when their Fort lost its nose over Cologne, and who battled their way home in one of the air war's epic events, will share some of his story, “The Cockpit Was Breezy.”

Each of the presentations will be accompanied by additional stories and photos. And then the kids (of all ages) will have a chance to hob-nob with the 398th heroes and ask all the questions they want.

Preparations can begin anytime by filling in the enclosed hotel reservation form. The Monarch Hotel of Clackamas, Oregon (Portland suburb) awaits our group, which hopefully will number at least 200.

The Official Reservation Form appears on Page 3, and can be used or copied. And then sent to Reunion Chairman Sharon Krause, doing the chair honors for the second straight year.

It should be noted here that the Monarch Hotel, while it has all the amenities required by our group and has a perfect location, there is a room limitation. Two other hotels across the freeway may be used for overflow, with free van service available.

## “Race Night” At Woodman

In preparation for the arrival of the 2002 England Tour members in June, the UK Friends of the 398th put on a “Race Night” at the Woodman Inn this past winter. The event raised £500, which will go toward the Friends' expenses in staging the various Tour events.

A number of organizations were among the sponsors, including Sotheby's (established 1744), Ridgeons, Richmond's Coaches, Barkway Motors, Abacus Travel, Watts Knowles and Brooke Racing.

The Royston Police also took part, all enjoying a meal courtesy Ian & Sandy Johnson, proprietors of the Woodman.

*Ed's Note:* What is a Race Night?

## CD-ROM's Prove Hot 398th Item

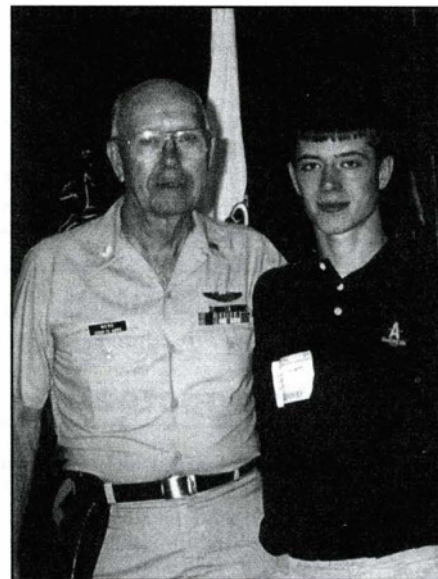
The CD-ROM set that depicts 398th statistical history, added to Joe Joseph's PX this year, has proven to be a hot item. Costing \$55.00 for the two-disc set, the first consignment has been sold out and a new order has been placed.

See page 11 for additional information.

Some 30,000 pages of 398th history has been placed on the CD-ROM's, including such items as awards, mission reports, debriefings, etc. This information was electronically transferred to CD's and now available through the 398th PX.

## Welcome To The Air Force

*(The 3rd Time Around)*



HAMILTON MERO AND  
SETH CURTIS JONES

Hamilton Mero became a “proud third generation” family last year when he welcomed his grandson, Seth Curtis Jones, into the Air Force in a “swearing-in” ceremony at Syracuse, New York.

Mero, a 600 Squadron co-pilot, is also a retired Air Force colonel.

Thirty-two years ago, in 1970, Mero went through the same ceremony with his daughter, Caryl, swearing her in for Air Force basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Seth, whose father is also an Air Force veteran, is now on active service in Alaska.

Mero flew with a number of 600 crews after his original Parke Wright crew was shot down over Stuttgart on September 10, 1944.



**HARRY GENERAUX** poses in his WWII A-2 jacket and 50-mission crush cap beside the props of the Aluminum Overcast. Harry, 601 pilot, is one of several Portland area members looking forward to the September reunion in the Portland suburb of Clackamas.



# MEMORIAL WATCHES OVER STATION 131

## 30 Members Set For Tour

It will mark the 10th journey of the 398th back to Nuthampstead...the 11th counting the original WW II visit in 1944.

Thirty members, coming from a variety of points around the country, leave via British Air on June 5, destined to return one more time to the quiet farming community where the drone of the Fortresses' Cyclones are still heard among the waving stalks of wheat.

The 398th Memorial watches over Station 131, standing proudly on guard (US soil) and assuring one and all that the spirit of the 398th lives on.

The Memorial has been on guard since 1982, when Bill Comstock, the group's president, and his entourage, dedicated the beautiful memorial as a Flying Fortress breezed overhead to salute the visitors...and the 293 men of the group killed in action.

It was also a salute to Ozzie Osborn and Vic Jenkins, the two local residents who led the way in the development of the memorial. And to Herman Hager, the group's stateside memorial chairman, who didn't live to see his efforts dedicated

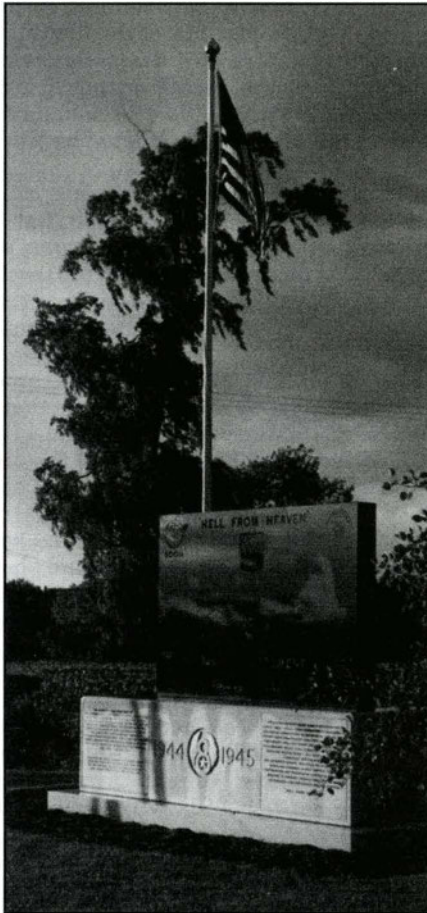
## German, Dutch Friends Due At Nuthampstead

in 1982. And to the many others, who along with Comstock, pursued the project early on. And those who led the fund-raising that ultimately led to the design and construction of the classic monument. It will form the background for the memorial service on June 8.

Along with the many members of the British community who will be there for the service will be other Friends coming from the continent. Manfred König and Alfred Wilms, who twice have organized services of Remembrance for Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., and the Federico Gonzales crew at Neuss, Germany, will be there.

Also coming for the 398th celebration will be Henny Quik of Leiden, Holland, that country's longtime leader in honoring Allied crewmen killed in his country. He is expected with a dozen of his Friends.

There were 64 men and women of the 398th at the 1982 dedication, plus an additional 300 English Friends. Phil and Marge Stahlman were among the original Yanks at the dedication and they will be the only ones of that group returning



on the 2002 Tour. See Page 9.

All the drama at the Memorial will be only one of many venues awaiting the tour group. Duxford, Anstey, Madingley, Hertford, Cambridge, the Woodman Inn, High Hall Farm, etc. describe only the places to be visited. No mention of the people, the memories, the laughter, the tears, the joy, the sadness that surrounds each Return to Nuthampstead.

And that's only the beginning. London still awaits. And the return home via the QE-2.

## LOADING LIST

Bob & Helen Howard  
Brandy & Stephanie Howard  
Mary & Ken Ludlam  
John & Barbara Courneen  
Mel & Gail Kessler  
Wilbur & Fran Fisher  
Glen & Jean Knight  
Russ & Millie Reed  
Jeanne & Randy Stange  
Wally Blackwell  
Lowell Culver & Jan McCurdy  
Phil & Marge Stahlman  
Randy & Rebecca Madlung  
John & Rosemary Cosco  
Rick & Barbara Fish  
Allen Ostrom

# England Tour Itinerary

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

**Thursday, June 6**—Arrive London. Transfer to Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cambridge.

**Friday, June 7**—Duxford Imperial War Museum. Evening no-host reception at the hotel.

**Saturday, June 8**—Service of Remembrance at Station 131. 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. Lunch and dance at High Hall Farm. Late afternoon visit to American Military Cemetery at Madingley.

**Monday, June 10**—Tour of Hertfordshire Record Office to view 398th memorabilia. Lunch at Woodman Inn. Farewell dinner at hotel.

**Tuesday, June 11**—Motorcoach to London, with stop at Hendon Imperial War Museum. Evening free after arrival at Harrington Hall Hotel, Kensington.

**Wednesday, June 12**—London sightseeing to Cabinet War Rooms, Royal News, etc., plus shopping at Harrod's. Evening free.

**Thursday, June 13**—Morning visit to Kensington Palace; "flight" on the London Eye in the afternoon. Farewell to England dinner at the hotel.

**Friday, June 14**—Transfer to Southampton to board the QE-2 for the Troopship Tour to New York (arrive June 20). Others will fly home via British Air or continue on personal tours.



THE "LONDON EYE"  
*The 398th Will Be There*



## War And Post-War Remembrances:

# Schweinfurt Was Hardly A “Target Of Opportunity”

BY RICHARD HOSMAN  
Pilot, 601st Squadron

I was the pilot of a replacement crew that arrived in England in October, 1944, and our first mission was to Merseburg – November 2, 1944.

My last was supposed to be to Eger, Czechoslovakia on February 23, 1945, but the target there was covered by clouds and too small for a suitable radar target. So we went looking for a suitable target of opportunity.

We found it – Schweinfurt.

My bombardier made his aiming point between the railroad roundhouse and the adjacent factory, which just happened to be a ball bearing plant. We encountered intense flak, and then made a sharp turn with the tail gunner hollering, “flak at 6 o’clock level!”

All our planes got out, but two crew members were wounded. Later we learned that we inflicted about 20% damage to the ball bearing plant and the Germans had to move the operation to another location.

## *Liberators Triumph*

What had been a tragedy in 1994 became a triumph in 2001 for the City of Norwich, England...and members of the 2nd Air Division of the 8th Air Force.

The city lost its library in a great fire in '94, taking with it the 2nd Air Division memorial library, which was originally funded in 1945, built in 1963, and sustained throughout the years by members of the 14 groups that made up the division.

They flew B-24 Liberators and the groups were located in eastern East Anglia and their “bunching up” areas were over the English Channel.

Some 550 veterans attended the November dedication of the new 2nd AD library, contained within the new Forum, which rose out of the ashes of the old Central Library.

The new memorial boasts an array of books and archives which dwarfs the original collection. A new Book of Remembrance has replaced the original lost in the flames.

The 2001 event was compared to the victory parade of 1945, the dedication of the original library in 1963 and the 50th anniversary of VE Day.

Shortly after that I became assistant group operations officer and did the briefing for the missions.

I did the briefing for the April 13, 1945 mission Neumunster. The planes were to carry RDX-B-2 bombs, which were very sensitive. The instructions were to drop them “maximum interval”, meaning no salvo. Unfortunately, one plane did salvo, two bombs kissed and the resulting explosion decimated the squadron.

We lost six of the 10 planes, with only four returning home. And no enemy action. My regular crew’s engineer, Floyd Aaron, was killed. I have very vivid memories of that mission. See *FLAK NEWS Vol. 3 No. 1*.

Three days after VE-Day, I flew a plane to Stettin to pick up American PW’s and take them to Rouen, France. On the way back to England we flew over Caen and the group commander, Col. Ensign, who was flying with me, grabbed the wheel and made several sharp turns. I said, “What are you doing?” and he said, “Somebody’s shooting at us.”

I replied that the war has been over for three days, but sure enough there were black puffs from a German 88. Fortunately, we were not hit, and it didn’t count as a combat mission.

For me, April 13, 1945 will live as a day of infamy for the 601st Squadron.

## For UK Archives:

# 398th To Add ‘Personal’ Letters, Data

Many documents, photos, records and albums have been left with the Hertfordshire County Council in England to preserve that part of history left behind by the 398th Bomb Group from World War II.

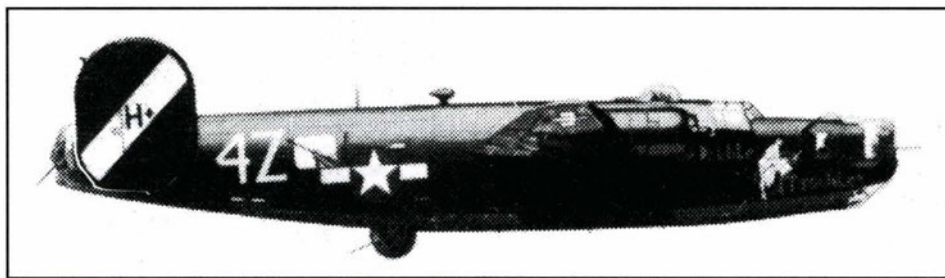
All these stored side by side with pertinent Hertfordshire history dating back almost a thousand years. And all available to the public for viewing and examination. And soon there will be more.

With four boxes already marked “398th” another will be presented to the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies in the form of personal letters, diaries and tapes accumulated in past years primarily through the FLAK NEWS office.

These will be of interest to those researchers dedicated to reading “behind the news” into the minds and hearts of those who served at Station 131, the only four-engine bomber base in Hertfordshire in WW II.

The presentation will be made by Wally Blackwell, president of the 398th and Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman of the UK Friends of the 398th, during the 2002 England Tour on June 9.

It will be received by Christine Shearman, Heritage Services manager, on behalf of the Council.



WHAT IS A B-24 doing in FLAK NEWS? See “Liberators Triumph”

## Next FLAK NEWS: The JATO Story

It took 57 long years to “pull it all together,” but the story of the JATO (jet-assist-take-off) featuring a 398th B-17 will finally be told in the July issue of FLAK NEWS.

A former Boeing engineer, now 89 years of age, was located by one of our UK Friends, Geoff Rice. This “Boeing Tech”,

who was there for the entire operation, will explain the decades old mystery, complete with photos.

The story will feature the 602 Fortress that set down in a barley field on the Bates’ “Gypsy Farm” in January of 1945 and was “rocketed” out by a captain pilot and master sergeant co-pilot two months later.

## **64 on First Tour In 1982:**

# 20th Anniversary of Memorial Dedication

It was 20 years ago that the first England Tour party descended on Nuthampstead. The mission—dedicate the new 398th Bomb Group Memorial. President Bill Comstock led a party of 64 that year, the first of nine returns to the “old base”—Station 131. Following is the “loading list” for the 1982 dedication Tour:

Forest Smith	Jay Loveless	William G. Nelson
Robert Ross	Lew Burke	Kelly Reed
Joe Alwood	John Bell	Ike Alhadeff
Earl Berryhill	John Bourquin Sr.	Oliver Bradford
Joe Wierney	Dorothy Tilley	Louise Jones
	Bill Jones	

Mr. & Mrs. Phil D’Addio	Mr. & Mrs. Tom Mueller
Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Dreyer	Mr. & Mrs. Dick Frazier
Mr. & Mrs. Phil Stahlman	Mr. & Mrs. Bill Markham
Mr. & Mrs. Russ Reed	Mr. & Mrs. Leo Lorenzo
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Mr. & Mrs. Len Streitfield	Mr. & Mrs. Bill Comstock
Mr. & Mrs. John Contento	Mr. & Mrs. Hayward Braddock

### **WW II Information E-mail**

American Center, Czech Republic ..... amcenter@mbox.vol.cz  
American Cemetery, Ardennes Belgium ..... thompsonh@cybernet.be  
Archives, National College Park, MD ..... inquire@nara.gov

### **Web Sites**

Bomb Group, 398th Cincinnati, OH ..... www.398th.org  
Heavy Bombers 398th ..... www.heavybombers.com  
Combat Crewmen & Wingmen B-17 ..... www.b-17combatcrewmen.org  
Vet, B-17 South Gate, CA ..... www.i-networks.com/memories  
Liberator B-24 ..... www.b24liberator.org  
(Aluminum Overcast), EAA Oshkosh, WI ..... www.eaa.org  
Smith’s POW Site Mary ..... www.mercki.com  
Eighth Museum, Mighty Savannah, GA ..... www.mighty8thmuseum.com  
Archives Veterans ..... www.vets.org  
of Foreign Wars Veterans ..... www.vfw.org  
Air Museum Yankee ..... www.yankeeairmuseum.org

## **German Flak Gunner Everding Dies At 95**

Johannes Schultze Everding, the former German anti-aircraft gunner who was on duty when Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr. and Federico Gonzales’ B-17 was shot from the skies, passed away last February at the age of 95.

It was Everding who, while guarding the downed Fortress on the outskirts of Neuss, “appropriated” Gonzales’ parachute which a few years later, was turned into dresses by Mrs. Everding.

And peices of the parachute cord, 43 years later, were presented to Col. Hunter’s widow, Maria, Gonzales, and members of the 1988 tour that visited Neuss.

A dramatic moment in the ceremony came when Mrs. Hunter embraced Everding, the German gunner who possibly was at least partially responsible for the demise of her husband.

Other members of the “Neuss Friends” annually visit Hunter’s grave at the Ardennes American Military Cemetary in Belgium.

# Aluminum Overcast

## **B-17 Spring Tour**

The Aluminum Overcast, the 398th’s “own” B-17, will embark on a “Freedom Tour” in mid-April, touching down in several Southern and mid-Western states. The Fort will spend from one to three days in 28 different cities.

Members of the 398th wishing to secure reservations for flights, or other information, may call the EAA B-17 office at 1-800-359-6217. The “AO” will be on the West Coast in August.

April 17	Lakeland, FL
April 18	Sarasota, FL
April 19	Fort Meyers, FL
April 20	Orlando, FL
April 21	Daytona Beach, FL
April 22-25	Savannah, GA
April 25-29	Birmingham, AL
April 29-May 2	Rome, GA
May 2-6	Lawrenceville, GA
May 6-9	Dekalb/Peachtree, GA
May 9-13	Nashville, TN
May 13-16	Champaign, IL
May 16-19	Springfield, IL
May 25-27	West Bend, WI
May 27-30	Lexington, KY
May 30-June 3	Louisville, KY
June 3-6	Bowling Green, KY
June 6-10	Knoxville, TN
June 10-13	Ashville, NC
June 13-17	Hickory, NC
June 17-20	Winston-Salem, NC
June 20-24	Virginia Beach, VA
June 24-27	Richmond, VA
June 27-July 1	Winchester, VA
July 1-5	Pittsburgh, PA
July 5-8	Akron, OH
July 8-11	Columbus, OH
July 11-15	Toledo, OH



# Thoughtful Acts Bring Solace To Family

*"In memory of Capt. William J. Beatovich, navigator of the 398th Bomb Group, USAAF, shot down and killed 1/23/45 leading a raid on Neuss, Germany. Outstanding airman, gentleman, crewmate and friend." This message appeared in the January*

*25, 1995 edition of the Hibbing, Minnesota Daily Tribune, placed there by his bombardier friend, Charles J. Anderson. The following article was submitted by Eli Knezovich of Tucson, Arizona, half brother of Beatovich.*

By chance a close family friend noticed the Hibbing memorial and notified us, the Beatovich/Knezovich family. Fifty years after that fateful mission, Bill Beatovich's roommate and close friend, Charles Anderson, started a series of events that lifted the cloak of mystery for us about what had happened on January 23, 1945. He also provided us information on Bill's activities prior to that date.

We received notification that Bill was missing on February 8, 1945. Later we were informed that the aircraft had part of a wing missing and was last seen spinning and disappearing into the clouds. Six days short of a year after he was shot down we were notified that he was killed. Two months later we were informed that his was one of two unidentified bodies and that he was buried in either one of two graves in Dusseldorf. Finally we were notified that he was interred in a certain grave in Ardennes American Cemetery. That was the extent of our knowledge through 1995.

After we contacted Charles Anderson, he and Jim Bestervelt, who were the bombardier and pilot on Bill's regular crew, each wrote letters apprising us of Bill's activities during their move to England. Our attendance at 398th Bomb Group reunions brought us together with Charles, Jim and other members of Bill's regular crew—Tom Tartarian (waist gunner), Bob Collins (waist gunner), Ray Hosbach (tail gunner) and Henry Brooks (radio operator/gunner).

In addition we met with the only survivor of Bill's Neuss mission crew, Federico Gonzales (pilot), who provided extensive details about the Neuss mission, the unusual circumstances associated with the downing of the aircraft and his experiences. We also met Colonel Frank P. Hunter's widow, Maria, navigator colleague Bill Frankhouser; and other 398th Bomb Group friends. During these visits a wealth of information was provided about Bill's activities and missions, the final Neuss mission and the post-war visits made to Germany and England.

Our sister, Helen Beatovich Beam and her daughter Patty made the trip to Germany and England in 1998. Knowledge of the facts brought solace and profound satisfaction to our family after fifty years of wondering and imagining.

Charles Anderson gave us the following account of some of Bill's activities. In



**COL. JEAN MILLER places the Distinguished Flying Cross on the uniform of Capt. William J. Beatovich, 603 Squadron navigator. Beatovich, killed on the mission to Neuss, is remembered by friends and family.**

the move of the 398th to England as an operational unit they were staged in Grand Island, Nebraska. During a medical check Capt. Bob Kelly (flight surgeon) detected an infection in Bill's ear and questioned whether he should be grounded. Bill pleaded that it wasn't serious and asked that he be reexamined at the departure base in Manchester, New Hampshire. During the flight to New Hampshire Bill suffered excruciating pain and was hospitalized on arrival. Charles and Jim visited Bill briefly. Bill was crushed that they were leaving him behind. After two months of recovery Bill was told that he would be limited to an altitude of ten thousand feet. This would have been the end of the war for him. Bill would not hear of this and signed a release that he would not hold the Air Corps responsible. The release was accepted due to a shortage of navigators. Bill arrived at Nuthampstead in England ready to fly. In a short time he was recognized for his ability and was appointed 603rd squadron navigator and promoted to captain. Bill flew every time there was an opportunity. He shrugged off any praise or accolades by saying, "I'm just a Minnesota farm boy doing his job." Bill was on his 23rd and last mission on January 23, 1945 with Colonel Hunter. Jim Bestervelt substantiated Charles Anderson's account.

Federico Gonzales spent time with us

describing the Neuss mission. He gave us his recollection during the very brief time from when the aircraft was hit until he was rendered unconscious and also when he regained consciousness on the ground. He told us about his discovery and capture by the Germans. He also spoke of the people who took him into their home and about his injuries, imprisonment, hospitalization and his return home. He pointed out eyewitness accounts of crewmen in other aircraft who saw the aircraft hit by flak disappear into the clouds below.

Federico said that a POW told him that he saw the aircraft float down like a leaf. He explained that others believed that Colonel Hunter stayed at the controls causing this phenomenon thus saving Federico's life. Federico said he learned that the tail fell off the aircraft nearly a mile before it hit the ground, probably because of heavy vibration. The unarmed bombs remained in the aircraft.

The Beatovich/Knezovich family is extremely grateful for the thoughtful acts of kindness and remembrance by Charles Anderson and the gracious help of Jim Bestervelt and Bill's other regular crewmembers, Federico Gonzales, Mrs. Hunter, Bill Frankhouser, Bill's other 398th friends and the 398th Bomb Group organization. All helped to bring closure to this important and emotional part of our lives.

# BRIEF-things

The carrier *USS Carl Vinson* returned to its home port in Bremerton, Washington following its action against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and the captain acknowledged the welcoming cheers wearing an *Air Force A-2* jacket...the "Evergreen International" airline that shipped tons of supplies to Kabul for the city's decimated zoo is one and the same that runs the Evergreen museum that the 398th will visit next September during the Portland reunion...*Eli Knezevich* not only wrote a most sensitive story about his family's search for information on the death of their brother, *Bill Beatovich* (Page 8), he also contributed a healthy sum for FLAK NEWS...Do we dare be so bold as to plan a group tour to Pilsen when that city celebrates the 60th anniversary of VE Day? This comes about in 2005, or 60 years after the 398th's last mission; (our last trip to Pilsen in 1995 was absolutely fabulous)...to go with their 1928 Ford Trimotor, the Evergreen Museum also has a 1929 Ford Model A mail truck, plus more than 50 other exhibits including the giant Hughes Flying Boat (plus a B-17)...our B-24 friends are the be congratulated for their initial support of their 2nd Division Museum in Norwich in 1946, and then again after it was destroyed by fire along with the Norwich library (see Page 7)...guess who was the most frequent world figure to visit the White House during the Clinton years? Answer—*Yasser Arafat*...*Ed Arbuthnot's* list of "confontations"—a "Dear John" letter; first burst of flak; birth of a son; quadruple by-pass; radiation treatments; and cataracts (not necessarily in that order)...it's a long way from being ready to fly, but at least the nose of a B-24 (Fightin' Sam), will be on display near the B-17, Mary Alice, at the museum at Duxford and our Tour visitors will be getting a great chance to compare...the priest at St. George's Church, Anstey, *Rev. Gerald Drew*, has retired, but will be "recalled" to conduct the service for the visiting tour members in June; his replacement at Anstey (and the other churches in the local benefice) will be *Rev. Carol Wodehouse*, the area's first lady minister...two friends from Germany, *Manfred König* and *Alfred Wilms*, will join the 398th celebration in England, as will Friend *Henny Quik* of Holland...a July FLAK NEWS article will settle once and for all who set his B-17 down on Gypsy Farm and who (and how) it was "rocketed" it out two months later and in full view of *Generals Spaatz* and *Doolittle*...*Adam Smith*, recent import from Scotland and current EAA Museum Director, now also heads up the B-17 program; he encourages 398th members and friends to visit the "AO" on its spring tour (see Page 9)...UK Friends chairman *Wilfrid Dimsdale* had extra time to prepare for June's "Yank Invasion" as he has spent the spring recuperating from busted ribs after a tumble from a horse...President *Wally Blackwell* will be in England representing the 398th again, but *Teedy* opted to stay home to represent their family in the graduation of a granddaughter...squadron leaders *Bill Markley* and *Bruce Daily* are both out on a very rough mission these days, facing flak in the form of cancer...the Evergreen Museum is dedicated to the memory of *Capt. Michael King Smith*, an Oregon National Guard F-15 pilot; the Eagle can be seen on the airfield, across from the highway from the nose of the Hughes Flying Boat.

# 398th Bomb Group PX

Please circle squadron, size and/or color choices.

Qty.	CLOTHING	Cost	Total
___	Cap - Fits All Sizes 600, 601, 602, 603 Group	\$8.00 ea	___
___	Jackets - Navy, B-17 on Front S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$25.00 ea	___
___	T-Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$10.00 ea	___
___	Sweat Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$15.00 ea	___
___	Golf Shirts Group Logo on Front Navy or White - M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea	___
___	Turtle Neck Shirt - B-17 on Collar White - S, M, L, XL	\$20.00 ea	___

## CD'S & VIDEOS

___	CD Jack's Books	\$25.00 ea	___
___	CD FLAK NEWS	\$30.00 ea	___
___	Video Anstey Window Dedication	\$10.00 ea	___
___	Video Return to Station 131 Memorial and Anstey Window Dedication (video)	\$10.00 ea	___
___	(CD-ROM) Statistical History of 398th B.G. Set of 2	\$55.00 set	___

## 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	___

## 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 Red with White B-17	\$18.00 ea	___
___	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	___
___	Golf Towel, White w/Black B-17	\$7.00 ea	___
___	Ceramic Magnet with B-17	\$3.00 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	___
___	U.S.A.F. B-17 Key Ring	\$5.00 ea	___

<b>Cost Of Items Ordered</b>	\$	___
<b>Delivery And Handing Add \$4.00, or \$5.00 if Order is Over \$20.00.</b>	\$	___
<b>Total</b>	\$	___

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**Make checks payable to 398th Bomb Group Association PX (US funds).  
Mail to: Joe Joseph  
New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168-6168**