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

VOL. 18 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 2003

## Ground Crew Talk Is Eye Opener



The Citation Letter reads like this—

*"The prop governor was replaced...small particles were found on sump...cuno and sump were checked and particles of steel found...compression check showed that #4 cylinder had no compression and #9 was 60 PSI...#2 and #3 engines had progressed in oil consumption and #1 was found to have low compression in #3 and #8 cylinders so all engines were changed and the aircraft was back in commission within 24 hours."*

So read portions of the commendation report written by Major Lyle Cochran, 398th Group Engineering Officer in seeking a Bronze Star on behalf of M/S Wilbur Rohrbach, 601 Squadron crew chief.

Read this interesting narrative on Page 5. It may be "old stuff" to the former crew chiefs and aircraft mechanics, but it can be an "eye opener" for others, including the air crew types.

## Wally To Travel

President Wally Blackwell will participate in the AIR STARS ceremonies at Slany, Czech Republic, and is seeking others to join him. *See Page 10.*

[www.398th.com](http://www.398th.com)

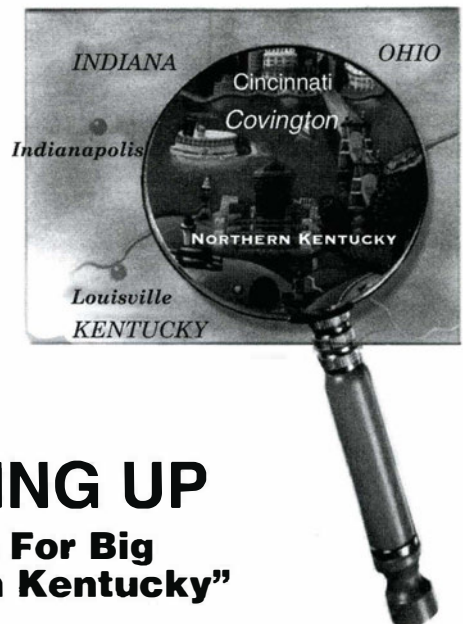
"Congratulations on the new Web page. You have done a super job. We are amazed on the content and clarity of the photos. Looking forward to viewing additional pages."

—BILL & FRAN FISHER

"You must get a computer. The 398th Web page is incredible!"

—SHARON KRAUSE

*See Page 4*



## REUNION COMING UP

### Members Making Plans For Big Gathering In "Northern Kentucky"

The 20th annual reunion for the 398th Bomb Group is designated for an area called, "Northern Kentucky." And that will send many folks to the road atlas, because the great majority of attendees will be coming by car.

What they will find is that the reunion will be headquartered at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in Covington, Kentucky on September 10-13, 2003. They will also find that "Covington" is located across the Ohio River from one of America's greatest cities—Cincinnati.

The reunion city is on the "southern side of Cincinnati", just as the "Cincinnati" airport is only a few miles west of Covington (in Kentucky).

To be sure, there will be tours to Cincinnati, especially to see the remarkable Cincinnati Museum Center with its Natural History & Science museum, the Omnimax Theater and the restored Union rail station with its Art Deco architecture.

And for the many members coming by car because they live only a day's drive from Covington, they can park their cars at the hotel in favor of the tour coaches, which will take in the United States Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air

Force Base, the Newport (KY) Aquarium, Historic Lebanon (OH) and the Lexington (KY) Horse Farm, and more.

There will be activities for every taste and desire. Even for those who will come just to visit with friends and buddies made a half-century ago.

The reunion is still all about the "re-gathering of the troops," to recall those life and death days of World War II and the memories that will not fade.

While there were no dinner cruises aboard stern-wheelers on the River Thames in 1944-45, there will be such an opportunity at Covington. This will come the very first evening in town—Wednesday, September 10—aboard one of the spectacular BB Riverboats on the Ohio River, complete with a coach ride to the dock, a Captain's Dinner Cruise, music and dancing. And a pleasant ride back to the hotel.

All the details of the reunion—the tours, the banquets, the annual business meeting, the costs, etc.—are all documented

*Continued on Page 4*

# THE COVINGTON REUNION

September 10-13, 2003

## REUNION FACTS

**REUNION CHARIMAN**—Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI 48170-2870.

**HEADQUARTERS HOTEL**—Radisson Riverfront Hotel, 668-W. 5th St., Covington KY 41011. Use the enclosed reservation card and mail to the hotel or call 1-800-333-3333. Special rate for the 398th reunion is \$80.00. This rate will be honored only until August 15, 2003.

**LOCATION**—The Radisson Riverfront Hotel is located in Covington, KY, one block east of North-South Interstate 71/75 (south of the Brent Spence Bridge). Use Exit No. 192. Check-in time is 3 PM. Check out time is 12 Noon.

**REGISTRATION**—Begins Wednesday, September 10, 2003, 9 AM in the Derby Room of the hotel (398th "Memory Room").

**TOURS** All tours will be conducted by "Cincinnati & More" of Cincinnati, Laura Adleta, president. Tickets will be required upon entering the coaches for all tours.

**BANQUET TICKETS**—There will be banquets at the hotel on Thursday, September 11 and Saturday, September 13. All tickets must have a Table Number for seating. Check at the Reservation Desk when Registering.

## TOURS

**RIVERBOAT DINNER CRUISE**—For those who like to "come early and take it all in," there will be a dinner cruise on the Ohio River on Wednesday evening, September 10. The coach will pick up customers at 6 PM at the hotel and transport to one of the stern wheelers on the river. Here we will enjoy a "Captain's Dinner," featuring buffet of roast sirloin, marinated chicken breast, pasta primavera, and a bevy of delectables all the way to dessert du jour. Plus music and dancing. A fun way to begin the reunion!

**LEBANON, OHIO TOUR**—Thursday, September 11—This one is primarily for the ladies while the men are at their annual business meeting (2 PM in the hotel ballroom). The coach tour is from 11 AM to 3 PM. Lebanon is rich in Ohio history, once the hub of the stagecoach activity in the early 1800's. There is the outstanding Warren museum, eclectic shopping in the historical downtown, and an abundance of cedar trees, similar to the "Cedars of Lebanon" as recorded in Scripture. Plus a fabulous lunch at the historic Golden Lamb Restaurant in the heart of the city. Back to the hotel by 3:00 PM.

**LEXINGTON HORSE PARK**—Friday, September 12, 9:00 AM—What's a trip to Kentucky without seeing "bluegrass", horse shows and demonstrations? Just the coach ride through this picturesque country is worth the price. Everything you ever wanted to know about horses can be found at the Lexington Horse Park. If you have already seen the Air Force Museum, scheduled for the same day and time, the Horse Park tour is a great alternate. Back to the hotel by 4:00 PM.

**U.S. AIR FORCE MUSEUM**, Dayton, Ohio—Friday, September 12, 9:30 AM—The oldest and largest military aviation museum in the world! From the very beginning to the latest in space history. And, of course, a marvelous presentation of World War II aircraft, including a B-17. The tour will start at Memorial Park, where members of the 1989 reunion tour planted a 398th Memorial tree. Then plenty of time to enjoy a tour of the WW II Control Tower, the IMAX theater, all the exhibits and "lunch on your own" in the Cafeteria. Back to the hotel by 4:00 PM.

**CITY TOUR PLUS (Option 1)**—Saturday, September 13, 9:00 AM—A two-hour City Tour of Cincinnati AND Northern Kentucky PLUS admission to the Cincinnati History Museum and viewing of the latest Omnimax movie. Also see the Cinergy Childrens Museum, the Museum of History and Science, and more. All in the spectacular Art Deco grandeur of the old Union Terminal. Lunch on your own at the Museum or later in the Covington area. Back in the hotel by 4:00 PM.

**CITY TOUR PLUS (Option 2)**—Saturday, September 13, 9:30 AM—A two hour City Tour of Cincinnati AND Northern Kentucky PLUS admission to the Newport Aquarium, where you will be immersed in adventure as you explore 60 exhibits, featuring 200 feet of clear, seamless tunnels. The Aquarium is called bizarre, beautiful, exotic, dangerous, scary, fascinating, educational and...a million gallons of fun. Lunch on your own at the Newport on the Levee. Back at the hotel by 3:45 PM.

(See the "Registration Form" for tour prices.)

## Hofbrauhaus, Anyone?

It is not on the "official" reunion tour list, but the new "Hofbrauhaus" Bavarian restaurant and Beer Garden might be a choice for the "dinner on your own" schedule on Friday, September 12. It is akin to the "Hofbrauhaus" visited by the 1998 Tour members in Munich, Germany. It is located a bus ride away in nearby Newport. Call 859-441-4059 for reservations.

GEMÜTLICHHEIT!



**THE RADISSON AT COVINGTON**  
It's A Hotel In The Round



**THE RIVER QUEEN ON THE OHIO**  
Reunion Begins With A Dinner Cruise

# OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 20th Annual Reunion  
Covington, Kentucky September 10-13, 2003

**PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN AUGUST 15, 2003**

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

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

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

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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

## WEDNESDAY, September 10 —

Registration	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Riverboat Dinner Cruise	6:00 PM	Coach Tour	\$52.00 x _____	\$ _____

## THURSDAY, September 11 —

Registration	8:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Board Officers Meeting	9:00 AM	Parlor C (16th Floor)		
Lebanon, Ohio Tour	11:00 AM	Coach Tour	\$33.00 x _____	\$ _____
GROUP BUSINESS MEETING	2:00 PM	Ballroom		
No Host Bar	6:00 PM	Pool Area		
Welcome Banquet (Table reservations required)	7:00 PM	Ballroom	\$36.00 x _____	\$ _____

## FRIDAY, September 12 —

Registration	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Lexington, KY Horse Park	9:00 AM	Coach Tour	\$37.00 x _____	\$ _____
Wright-Patterson AFB Museum (Dinner on your own)	9:30 AM	Coach Tour	\$20.00 x _____	\$ _____

## SATURDAY, September 13 —

Registration	9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon	Memory Room		
City Tour Plus (Option 1-Museum)	9:00 AM	Coach Tour	\$29.00 x _____	\$ _____
City Tour Plus (Option 2-Aquarium)	9:30 AM	Coach Tour	\$32.00 x _____	\$ _____
No Host Bar	6:00 PM	Pool Area		
Farewell Banquet (Table reservations required)	7:00 PM	Ballroom	\$37.00 x _____	\$ _____

Registration Fee (per person, 2 maximum per family)	\$10.00 x _____	\$ _____
2003 Dues (if applicable, check your dues card)	\$20.00 x _____	\$ _____

**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please complete form, enclose check, and mail to:

Sharon Krause  
Plymouth, MI 48170-2870

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.

# Varied Menu Awaits 398th At Covington

*Continued from Page 1*  
on Pages 2 and 3.

Members may take in a little or a whole lot depending on their needs and desires. The Registration Form explains it all and must be sent in to reunion chairman Sharon Krause no later than August 15, 2003.

Sharon is now into her third season as reunion leader and will arrive at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel in Covington on Monday, September 8 to begin organizing for the activities. This will include the Registration, to be held in the hotel's Derby Room (part of the hotel's beautiful "Bluegrass Ballroom").

Actual registration will begin Wednesday morning, September 10. This will allow time for those going on the Ohio River dinner cruise at 6 PM to pick up their tickets and Registration packets.

It should be remembered that each person must make his own hotel reservation. Radisson Hotel forms are included in this FLAK NEWS mailing. Or they may call the hotel reservation department at 1-800-333-3333. Ask for the 398th Bomb Group \$80.00 group rate.

The only park of its kind in the world, the Kentucky Horse Park at Lexington, KY is a working horse farm and educational theme park dedicated to man's relationship with the horse.

Set on more than 1,200 acres in the heart of Kentucky's Bluegrass region, the park is an enjoyable educational experience for everyone.

Featuring more than 50 different breeds of horses at work and at play, the park showcases the horse in daily equine presentations, horse drawn tours and carriage rides, horseback riding and pony rides. There are two outstanding museums and an exciting array of horse shows and special events.

Attendance at the September reunion in Covington is expected to reach at least 300, topping the numbers at the two most recent meetings—240 at Portland in 2002 and 271 at St. Paul in 2001.

St. Paul came the same month as "9/11", which undoubtedly affected the count. And Portland, across the nation from the "population center" of the 398th, was just too far west for many members.

Covington, well within a day's drive for many, is expected to be a prime attraction for members who want to stay "in touch" with their friends and fellow airmen.

It is not expected that any attendance records will be approached, what with Nashville holding top rung with 582 in 1992. Next is Tucson (1994) with 548 and Oshkosh (1990) with 531.

# www.398th.org

## It's A Success Story

BY WALLY BLACKWELL

President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

There was no doubt about it from the beginning! A 398th web page was needed to continue to gather the 398th combat story. It was sure to be a great success. That is, if you have skilled second-generation 398ers like Dave Jordan, 398th Webmaster and Lee Anne Bradley, 398th Group Historian creating such a spectacular product. Having a web page adds many dimensions to our efforts of getting all possible 398th history reported and recorded for posterity. I surely wish all of the 398th membership would make a special effort and arrangement to look at [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org).

We went public with the web page on January 1, 2003. In the first month of operation there were 1,330 visits to it, more than 40 a day! There have been a few dozen guest book entries, all very complimentary. Imagine our surprise when the Internet service provider reported that our [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org) site is being viewed from the UK, Belgium, France, Sweden, Czech Republic, and as far away as Japan and Australia. Of course, the vast majority of our viewers are stateside.

A great deal of new material is continually being added to the page. Samples of what is presently on display includes unidentified crew pictures by Geoff Rice; updates to original crew listings by Lee Anne Bradley; Anstey Window KIA name mapping by Lee Anne and Randy Stange; James Holloway's diary transcribed by his son; a 1976 return to Nuthampstead trip report by Dorothy Crouch; Flak News transcriptions and his own personal combat story by Joe Mansell; and Ed Jordan's WWII experiences by his son, Dave.

We continue to look for personal histories written by the veteran or by others such as their children. Use the "who to contact" list on the site for directions for data submission. And not to leave anything out, we continue to look for volunteers to help transcribe material for [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org).



**IT WILL BE everything you ever wanted to know about horses when visiting the Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. A day at the famous facility south of the 398th reunion city of Covington is available as one of the tours on Friday, September 12, 2003. It will include a coach ride through the fabulous "Bluegrass" country of Kentucky. See pages 2 and 3 for Registration and Reunion details.**

# Rohrbach Had The Stuff To Keep Forts Flying

*The following story was written by Maj. Lyle Cochran, 398th Bomb Group Engineering Officer. It was intended (in 1945) to quantify the award of the Bronze Star to Master Sergeant Wilbur Rohrbach, 601 Squadron crew chief. The engineering language and technical descriptions are priceless and should serve to remind ground and air crew veterans alike what it took to "keep 'em flying."*

## "And The Aircraft Was Back In Commission Within 24 Hours"

"The Black Widow", Flying Fortress B-17G combat aircraft AAF No. 42-102445-R was received by the 601st Bomb Sq (H) 24 Apr 44 and M/Sgt Wilbur A. Rohrbach was assigned to the airplane as crew chief.

He and his crew worked on the aircraft for a period of time checking and rechecking. Rohrbach was aboard as crew chief as pilot LeRoy Darner and Crew No. 34 flew the plane to Nuthampstead for its first combat mission on May 6th, 1944.

After the first mission it returned with considerable battle damage. The left wing panel had to be pulled and #1 & 2 tokio tanks replaced. The right leading edge was replaced. Other minor damage was repaired.

After the fourth mission, the brakes were found not holding pressure. Upon checking the system it was found that the bleeder valve was leaking and also that the threads on the hydraulic measuring stick had stripped off and gotten into the system causing the relief valves to stick open. The system was drained and flushed, bleeder valve replaced and brakes checked satisfactory.

On the seventh mission the right wing panel was shot up again and had to be replaced after changing #2 tokio tank. Other battle damage was repaired, including left leading edge, which was removed and replaced. On the "Black Widow's" twenty third mission July 8, 1944 it was missing in action.

*(George Wilson, Jr., crew, Humeries, France, mission).*

On 11 Aug 44, "Black Widow II" Flying Fortress B-17G aircraft No. 43-38129-R, was assigned to M/Sgt Rohrbach and his crew and they once again prepared this aircraft for combat service. This airplane flew fifteen missions, encountering major battle damage. They changed the right wing panel for replacement of #1, 2 tokios, also spar front right was repaired. A goodly number of patches from station 6 to tail were repaired, also. "Black Widow II" had to make a forced landing in Belgium on its 15th mission, September 28, 1944. Two engines were shot out and the battle damage was too severe, therefore the aircraft had to be salvaged. The pilot

praised the performance of the airplane even up to the time it made the forced landing, commending the crew chief and his crew on their maintenance.

*(Saul Marias crew, Magdeburg, Germany, mission).*

On Oct 10, 1944, "Black Widow III" was assigned to M/Sgt Rohrbach. It was Flying Fortress combat aircraft No. 43-38658-A. Once again the crew chief and his assistants prepared this aircraft for combat service, flying quite a few practice missions to correct a bomb rack defect. The aircraft went on its first combat mission soon after, flying quite a few just encountering minor battle damage. On the 14th mission in November, the "Black Widow III" returned badly battered by flak. No. 2 engine had to be changed because sump and No. 7 cylinder were badly damaged.



WILBUR ROHRBACH

No. 4 oil cooler was replaced because of flak damage, also. The No. 3 main tank panel was removed and replaced for repair. Aircraft was back in commission within 24 hours, crew chief and crew working until work was completed.

In December 1944, No. 3 engine began to use considerable amount of oil. Therefore the engine was changed. While on a combat mission the 6th of February the pilot noted the engine (#3) was running rough and throwing oil out of the breather pipe. Engine was feathered. Upon checking, crew chief found steel filings on cuno and sump. Because of the shortage

## A Crew Chief... And Proud Son

I am very proud of my father, Wilbur Rohrbach. He served his country, returned home like other veterans, worked hard and enjoyed his retirement years until he died December, 2001.

He was a crew chief in the 601st Squadron, and he told me a lot of his experiences. But he didn't tell me that he had been recommended for a Bronze Star for never having one of his planes abort a mission because of a mechanical failure.

Nor did he tell me about the recommendation written by Group Engineering Officer Maj. Lyle Cochran that documented the medal recommendation.

I was at his side when he passed away and know that his years with the 398th and the B-17's were the most exciting years of his life. The war ended before he could receive the Bronze Star and chose not to pursue it the years that followed.

—JAMES A. ROHRBACH  
West Hempstead, NY, 11552

of help at this other base at which the "Black Widow III" landed, it was necessary for the crew chief and his crew to carry engine and equipment there for the necessary change.

On February 15th, the "Black Widow III" landed at Woodbridge after a combat mission because the hydraulic brakes were inoperative due to flak.

*(Don Grinter crew, Dresden, Germany, mission).*

When the aircraft was flown back to its main base other minor battle damage was repaired.

After a mission on March 4th the pilot told the crew chief No. 1 engine was running rough. The crew chief and crew pulled a compression check on all four engines and found low compression on No.1 engine's 1, 5, & 8 cylinders; also No. 4 engine on #3 & 5 cylinders. Both engines were changed in 24 hours and aircraft was back in commission.

During a combat mission on March 7, 1945 No. 4 engine ran away. Upon ground check, prop governor was replaced. Small particles were found on sump but engine again ran normal. On the 8th however the pilot could not control the prop on this engine, again governor was changed but this time no effect. Cuno and sump were checked and particles of steel were found. Crew chief changed engine because of the prop drive shaft in nose being sheared, therefore no control of prop. Aircraft was back in commission within 8 hours.

On the ninth of April after a combat mission the pilot told crew chief that No. 2 engine was running rough. Crew chief and crew pulled a compression check and it showed that #4 cylinder had no com-

*Continued on Page 9*

# Flag Program Adds To Nuthampstead Lore

Only the ghosts that haunt Station 131 can still be heard today out where the engines of the B-17's droned—seemingly day and night—in the minds of those who lived nearby over a half century ago.

There are those who still hear the strains of “Moonlight Serenade,” as played by Glenn Miller in the T-2 Hanger on October 2, 1944.

But—if you listen carefully when the wind blows—you will hear the unmistakable “flip-flap” of a high-flying flag. The flag of a 398th veteran who was either killed during the air war, or who passed on at home in the years that followed.

Over 50 former 398th men have had their flags flown—day and night—on the “tall pole” stationed very near to where the 398th tower stood, then manned day and night by the 18th Weather Squadron.

The UK Friends installed the flag pole for just one purpose—to honor the memories of those who served there. And all these years Peggy Wells or her son Tim have watched over the “flag program,” meaning they have had a flag in the air 24 hours a day for some 15 years.

This also means that the families of deceased members have joined the flag program by sending the flag of their deceased loved ones to the 398th Secretary, who in turn forwarded the flags to Peggy Wells.

The 398th secretary today is Bob Bowen (602 pilot) Athens, GA 30606-4002.

The first flag flown was that of Col. Frank P. Hunter, Jr., 398th commanding officer who was killed on a mission to Neuss, Germany in January, 1945.

Peggy says a flag can last several months during the summer before being replaced. Not so long in the winter when it is flown more rapidly “to destruction” by the wind, rain and snow.

It can be expected that some flags will be hand carried to England for the 2004 Tour, there to be personally raised on the “tall pole” by loved ones.

Others may be sent to Secretary Bowen, who will forward them to Peggy Wells at Nuthampstead, Royston, Herts SG8 8LT, England.

## *Their Flags Have Flown*

*Frank P. Hunter Jr.  
Clarence Ehret  
Vincent Moore  
Warren Johnson  
Paul Rich  
John J. Colwell, Jr.  
Peter Latrenta  
James W. Bewley  
Charles Wasserman  
Ralph Coomes  
Walter F. Clark  
William Wells  
Alfred Shadroui  
Reuel Myers  
Howard Studer  
Wally Tillman  
Roy Sheely  
Erwin J. Riley  
Thomas G. Slawson  
Claude Dierolf  
Raymond Brokaw  
Carl J. Strickrott  
Mark W. Mangan  
Harry Sleaman  
John Bawduniak  
Archie Paris*



*Julius Cubranich  
Clifton Self  
Jack Madlung  
Forest C. Smith  
Fil E. Arbogast  
George Kuenneth  
Charles J. Rayes  
Jack Wintersteen  
Albert Pichette  
Edward Stewart  
Albert Petska  
William Benoe  
John W. Bornstedt  
Charles Ludlam  
Les Veley  
Herbert Licker  
Pete Giuliano  
Frank Hamill  
Lawrence Crocker  
Frank Weiler  
Arthur Selivan  
Walter Kruse  
William J. Beatovich  
Archie Devaudreuil\*  
Leo Poinke\**

\*non 398th members

# E. Bruce Daily: Complete Airman

The ever shrinking list of the 398th Bomb Group's senior “command” officers became even shorter last year with the passing of Edwin Bruce Daily.

He was 87, and had enjoyed a complete Air Force career, ascending to “base commander” at both Dyess AFB in Texas and Warren AFB in Wyoming. He also served in various positions in New York, Alabama, the Pentagon in Washington DC, Korea, Alaska and at the University of Oregon, where he headed up the ROTC program.

However, the 398th knew him as the original operations officer of the 600th Squadron and Squadron Co. Later he became the Group operations officer, where he served from September 1944 until war's end. During these command assignments Daily still managed to fly 29 combat missions, all as squadron, group, wing or division leader.

Daily's leadership and organization skills produced the massive “Standard Operating Procedure” manual in late 1944. If there was a procedure, outline, briefing, tactic, rule, method, duty, technique, report or emergency involved in operating the B-17 in the air war over Europe, Daily's “SOP” had it covered.

The 398th “SOP” manual can be seen at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum and at the Record Center in Hertford, England.



**EDWIN BRUCE DAILY**

## Enemy Action Or No, England Tour Still On

It is said that the 8th Air Force was never turned back because of enemy action. And now, some 60 years later, the 398th is proceeding under the same credo regarding plans for a 2004 England Tour.

Notwithstanding the situation in Iraq, and various hot spots around the world, there will be an England Tour in June, 2004 that will include not only Nuthampstead, but also the south of England and the invasion beaches of Normandy. (60th anniversary of D-Day).

Barbara Fish and Allen Ostrom, tour coordinator, have combined to establish a Complete 13-day, two - continent tour with an option to skip France in favor of six days in England only.

Prices and all the tour "fine points" will not be available until the July, 2003 issue of FLAK NEWS. Over 25 members and friends have already indicated a desire to be included. Others wanting to be added to the list are invited to call Barbara Fish at 1-800-423-5454. E-mail—thincl@nwlinc.com.

The itinerary—

Thurs, June 3	Depart US
Fri, June 4	Portsmouth
Sat, June 5	Normandy
Sun, June 6	Normandy
Mon, June 7	Normandy
Tues, June 8	Portsmouth
Wed, June 9	Portsmouth
Thurs, June 10	Cambridge
Fri, June 11	Cambridge
Sat, June 12	Cambridge
Sun, June 13	Cambridge
Mon, June 14	Cambridge
Tues, June 15	Depart UK

## The Finest Hours Of Churchill, RAF

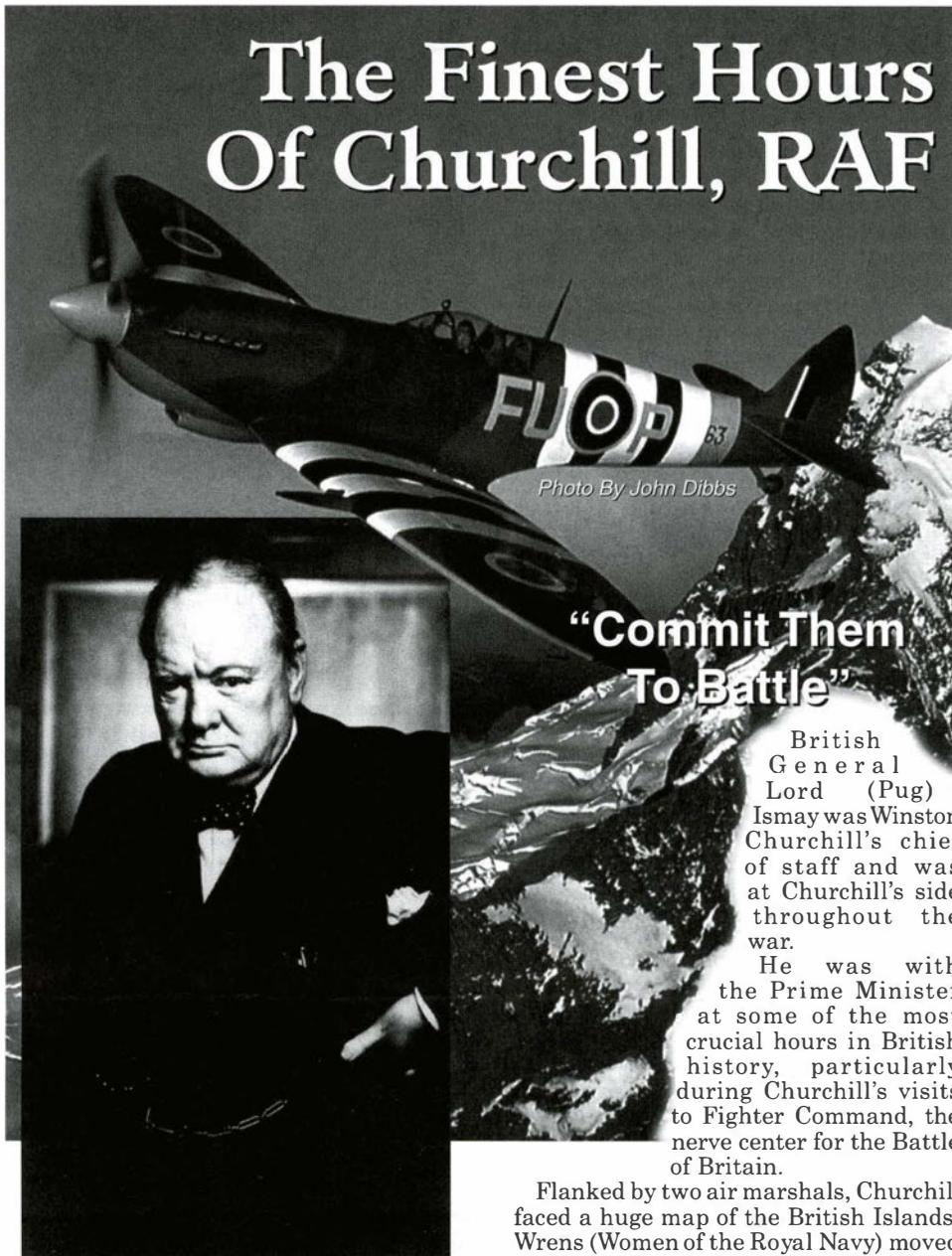


Photo By John Dibbs

**"Commit Them To Battle"**

British General Lord (Pug)

Ismay was Winston Churchill's chief of staff and was at Churchill's side throughout the war.

He was with the Prime Minister at some of the most crucial hours in British history, particularly during Churchill's visits to Fighter Command, the nerve center for the Battle of Britain.

Flanked by two air marshals, Churchill faced a huge map of the British Islands. Wrens (Women of the Royal Navy) moved planes on the maps as the battle reports came. Directly in front of them was a grid of colored buttons. Each button represented a squadron: white signaled "ready reserve"; green "in action"; red "in action, but running out of fuel".

As a squadron came down to fuel, its red light turned white, then green as it went up to re-enter the battle.

It was the day of Goering's heaviest assault. From dawn to dusk, the RAF was in action. Some squadrons actually refueled seven times—dangerous because a plane being refueled is extremely vulnerable, an explosive sitting duck. As the day wore on, the Luftwaffe increased the momentum of the attack. More and more white dots turned green as the RAF rose to meet them, and tension rose with them.

The agony started when the top lines began turning red. The greens, already heavily engaged, would be hard put to provide aircover for the refueling planes below. To protect them, the air marshals committed more reserves—from white to

*Continued on Page 8*

WINSTON CHURCHILL



**THIS IS ONE** of many memorials to be seen on the beach at Normandy, France, commemorating the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944. A visit to Normandy for the 60th anniversary of D-Day is on the next England Tour, scheduled for June 3-15, 2004.

# Churchill And The RAF

*Continued from Page 7*

green. The green board rapidly became red. There was nothing to do but fight to the last drop of fuel. One lone white light remained.

Churchill asked how many planes were left. Seven, was the answer, Great Britain's last squadron. Churchill himself gave the order: "Commit them to battle."

Everything Britain had was airborne. The climax—and balance of battle—had been reached. For a few still minutes they watched. Then Dover reported enemy momentum was slackening. Norfolk confirmed. Again Dover was first: the enemy was withdrawing. Again Norfolk confirmed.

Swiftly the order was given to land, refuel and resume battle. Swiftly the top red light turned to white, then green. Rapidly the board changed from red to white to green. The RAF, refueled, was airborne and battle ready again.

The battle was won.

As Gen. Ismay and the Prime Minister left at dusk, Churchill sank into the back seat of the car. The tension relieved, Churchill was crying. Then he leaned forward and first uttered that famous sentence—

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

And then he told his aide: "And damn it, if His Majesty's Prime Minister sees fit to wear so can one of his generals."

*This story was offered by Ernest Cuneo, a World War II OSS officer who was liaison between Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt. (American Legion Magazine).*



**THIS WAS THE** medical staff of the 398th Bomb Group at Nuthampstead during World War II. From left to right are flight surgeons Lewis Hunter (603), Robert Kelly (600), Herman Zampetti, group surgeon, Robert Sweet (601), William Kavanaugh (602), and Fred Oles, dentist. Yvonne Jenkins, in the adjoining article, writes of her youthful visits to the Base Hospital.

## UK/US Remembrance:

# When The Yanks Came

BY YVONNE JENKINS  
*Bishop's Stortford, England*

As the lorries began arriving with materials to build the roads between camps and runways for the airfield, Nuthampstead and Anstey changed overnight from quiet villages to a hive of activity.

Being children, this was so exciting.

When the Americans moved in we watched almost not believing what was going on. First to arrive were the men of the 55th Fighter Group, but their stay was not long.

Living just one field away from the base hospital, we almost lived there. This would be my brother Bill and two evacuees from London, who spent most of the war years living with us.

We were never questioned why we were at the base, and at all times we were made to feel welcome. Joining them in the mess for many a meal, I can remember vividly how the Americans would joke at the way we cut up our food with the fork in the left hand and with it still remaining there placed the food in our mouths.

Now we know how the Americans cut their food with the fork in the left hand, knife in the right, placing down the knife and replacing the fork into the right hand to put food in their mouths.

We loved our visits to the camp, and when we were given fresh fruit to eat, it seemed like the house of plenty. We were always made welcome by both officers and GI's. I remember Major (Herman) Zam-

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**Yvonne Jenkins was a young girl living near Station 131 during the war years. Recently, she presented to the UK Friends of the 398th, a great deal of historical data that had been collected by her late husband, Vic Jenkins, and Ozzie Osborn, who initiated the movement to build the 398th Memorial in 1982.**

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**Yvonne writes of her youthful Remembrances as she witnessed Nuthampstead turning into a B-17 bomber base.**

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petti, who was in charge of the hospital. And Captain (Fred) Oles, the dentist. He did some work on my brother Bill, removing one of his teeth. Our dentist had told Bill he would have to go to a hospital to have the tooth removed. Captain Oles replied that this was a hospital. At a later date he did a small filling for Bill.

There was also Captain (William) Kavanaugh on the medical side. A man named Zeek was a medic dispenser and he had a little dog named Katerline. He would call the dog to him, then say "Huh Katerline," and the little dog would jump into his arms.

My mother, Dorothy Pennock, worked for the American Red Cross, working at the officer's aero club. Mother and the others were picked up in an American vehicle each morning and returned to their homes in the afternoon. The driver's name was George Matchett. One lady (no name mentioned) when entering the vehicle, would always refer to the bad weather, which was very extreme that first winter (1944-45) as, "ain't it weather enough to flee you." The driver found this to be a very funny saying, and would repeat it on most cold mornings.

Mum came home and told us the story, and as children we also thought it to be very funny. We laughed about it for quite some time.

The American Red Cross girls were named Martha and Nancy. Nancy went home to have her baby and her place was taken by Jean.

At one time I remember going to a wedding reception with my Mum at Barley Village Hall. It was an American couple getting married, but I don't remember the names.

(Possibly Col. Pete Rooney, who married a Red Cross girl at the base).

My husband Vic was born in Highams Park, Chingford. He went to work at Wrighton's Heytonstone Furniture factory, which had been taken over to make the Mosquito airplane during the war. He joined the Merchant Navy, but was not happy and left after a short time. Putting up his age enabled him to be old enough to

*Continued on Page 9*





THE ALUMINUM OVERCAST flight crew that did one of the many legs of the summer tour a year ago took time out to pose for a photo. From right to left are Sam Bass, Dave Mann, Stuart Seely, John Booker, Susan Lincoln, John Soito and Russ Morris.

## “AO” Spring-Summer Schedule; It’s A Very Busy Time

April 26	Oshkosh, WI	July 10-14	St. Louis, MO
May 1-5	Quad Cities, IA	July 14-17	Peoria, IL
May 5-8	Des Moines, IA	July 17-21	Aurora, IL
May 8-12	Minneapolis, MN	July 24-28	Madison, WI
May 15-19	Omaha, NE	July 28-Aug 4	Oshkosh, WI
May 22-26	Lincoln, NE	August 7-11	Cincinnati, OH
May 26-29	Colorado Springs, CO	August 11-14	No. Philly, PA
May 29-June 3	Denver, CO	August 21-25	Boston, MA
June 19-22	Tulsa, OK	August 25-28	Albany, NY
June 30-July 3	Springfield, MO	Sept 11-15	Waukesha, WI
July 3-7	Kansas City, MO		

## 398th Asked For Memorabilia; Send Away For Data Card

One of the country’s finest private collections of 8th Air Force personal information and memorabilia has been quietly but actively collected by a non-vet from Louisiana.

And he is looking for more from the 398th Bomb Group. He is willing to send any member a form data card and self-addressed envelope. “Just fill in the form and enclose any other information or photograph. Or possibly a mission report, or

decoration, POW experience, an autograph. Anything to add to the collection.”

That collection now numbers thousands of photos and cards, each filed according to his own group or squadron album. All of it, he says, will one day go to the Heritage Museum.

The collector of all this is Harry Tanner, Sulpher, LA, 70663. Write him today.

## Yvonne Remembers When Yanks Came

*Continued from Page 8*

join the Royal Air Force, where he stayed for six years. After his training he was posted to Germany, returning to England at the age of 20. Here he was posted at former Station 131, Nuthampstead, with headquarters at the old 398th Hospital.

Vic and I were married in Anstey Church.

Later, Vic worked for the British Rail-

way at Buntingford. He also worked for the ambulance service at Bishop’s Stortford. When he contracted diabetes, he was told that his illness made it unacceptable that he remain in that position, so he closed out his working career at 60, working with Civil Aviation at Stansted Airport. He died in 2000.

# 104 Missions And No Aborts For Rohrbach

*Continued from Page 5*

pression at all and No. 9 cylinder was 60 PSI. Then after checking No. 3 engine it showed a progressive oil consumption. Therefore both were changed.

Battle damage not already mentioned included the following: Right and left waist windows replaced, leading edge left wing changed once, left wing panel twice, left front spar repaired, left flap replaced, left elevator replaced, over 100 patches covering whole of aircraft, right wing panel for tokio replacement, #2 & 3 fuel booster pumps, heater shrouds burned out and were constantly changed until modification came through; D-5 valves were changed #2 & 3 main tanks, a total of 12 engines.

On April 13th, “Black Widow III” blew up from fire caused by exploding bombs shortly after the crew crash landed in Germany. This was the sixty fifth mission for the “Black Widow III”.

*(Ray Hernden crew, Neumunster, Germany, mission).*

On April 17th, Flying Fortress B-17 combat aircraft No. 43-38661-P returned from the Continent after making a forced landing because of major battle damage on March 23.

*(Roland Mundhenke crew, Rosenheim mission)*

It was re-assigned to M/Sgt Rohrbach after which it was given a complete check, cleaned, and inspected. Flew a combat mission on April 18th.

*(Earl Green crew, Rosenheim mission)*

This would become “Black Widow IV”. The crew chief and assistant were flown there to make necessary repairs. Fourteen hydraulic lines were shot in two, cowl flaps and brakes were all inoperative, not having sufficient tubing to make the repairs it was necessary to take the parts from salvaged aircraft. Upon ground check after this mission, No.2 and 3 engines were found to have progressed in oil consumption and No. 1 was found to have low compression on #3 & 8 cylinders. All were changed and aircraft was back in commission within 24 hours.

M/Sgt Rohrbach and his assistants have 104 combat missions without an abortion.

## We’re Not Sure

The Group and Squadron engineering officers are quite certain that the four 602 B-17’s crew-chiefed by Wilbur Rohrbach were all called, “Black Widow.” However, air crewmen involved at the time cannot substantiate this, nor can Geoff Rice, the UK historian specializing in identifying 398th serial numbers and nose art. Can someone come up with a “Black Widow” nose art photo?

## **President Will Be There:**

# Honor For 398th Crew

The 398th Bomb Group will be represented at the AIR STARS MEETING 2003 in Slany, Czech Republic on June 7, 2003.

President Wally Blackwell said, "I will be there for the ceremonies, and I invite others from the 398th to join me." He will be accompanied by his wife, Teedy, and FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom.

The Slany ceremonies will honor Czech and allied airmen, "including the 398th Bomb Group crewmen who perished near here in the wreckage of their B-17 on 2 March, 1945." This would be the 603 Donald Christensen crew, shot down over Czechoslovakia during a mission to Bohlen (near Leipzig) with a loss of



eight lives.

The ceremony will take place at the Slany Aeroclub airfield near the memorial dedicated a few years ago to the Christensen crew. During AIR STARS the crew "will be canonized (ordained) by one of the high canon dignity of Prague," according to Milan Spineta of the AIR STARS organizational staff.

Lone survivor Selmer Haakenson, the tail gunner, has been invited but is unable to make the trip.

The AIR STARS event will be "under the patronage of Middle-Bohemia regional Governor Ing. Petr Bendl."

Also taking part will be Jan Zdiarsky, director of the Air Battle Museum at Kovarska, visited by 398th tour members in 2000, and Jaromir Kohout, who was instrumental in developing the 398th memorial in Litice, near Pilsen.

For more information call Blackwell.

## **Reminder: Dues Are Due; Add a Relative or Friend**

The April issue of FLAK NEWS contains the usual newsy tidbits, plus special pages dealing with the Covington, KY reunion. It also contains Dues insert envelopes for those members living in-

North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

If the dues insert happens to be missing, just send your \$20 annual dues check (\$150 lifetime) to Jim Haas, Perry, IA 50220-0163.

Remember, the 398th Board will remove members for non-payment, witness the 500-plus already deleted from the FLAK NEWS distribution list.

Also remember to add a family member or friend to the "blood relative" or associate list, thus keeping the spirit of the 398th alive

## **"Clearing & Colder" Print Now At PX**

The 398th logo, "Clearing & Colder", as seen on Page 1, is now available in dynamic color through the 398th PX. The 15 x 20 print is priced at \$30.00 and the 11 x 17 print is \$15.00. Both are suitable for framing. See Joe Joseph's PX column on Page 11.

# Letters, Letters



"My Christmas cards last year were late for a very wonderful reason. I was married on New Year's Day. My new husband is George Rhodes, retired Air Force officer. George and Bill were close friends and served together on several occasions. We plan to live in my house here in Virginia and George's house in Ohio. Also, the possibility of spending the cold weather months in Arizona."

*Mrs. Evelyn Rhodes, Fairfax, VA 22031-2625.*

*Ed's Note* Evelyn is the former Mrs. Bill Comstock, whose late husband was president of the 398th Memorial Association for 20 years until his death in 1996. Her new husband, widowed three years ago, retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant general.

"We are a successful museum because of generous gifts from great organizations such as the 398th! We will use your contribution of \$5,000 to fund education programs thus, preserving the history of the Mighty Eighth. Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing members of your group in the future.

*C.R. Roberts, President and CEO, Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum, PO Box 1992, Savannah, GA 31402*

"A sincere thank you for the honor that was given to Jim in the January FLAK NEWS. My family joins with me in this expression of love for Jim. He did love the men of the 398th!"

*Mrs. Marguerite Duvall, Loveland, CO 80538-9948.*

*Ed's Note* "Jim" refers to Chaplain James Duvall, who served as Protestant chaplain with the 398th throughout its two year history.

"I am thrilled to volunteer my time to keep the 398th strong and continuing. The reunions meant so much to my mother and father that I feel very strongly about continuing them until no one else can or wants to attend. I have made and continue to make such great friends through the association. I only regret not attending the reunions before my father passed away. Everyone should encourage their children and grandchildren to attend the reunions. They are a fantastic experience."

*Marilyn Gibb, Fountain, CO 80817*

*Ed's Note—Marilyn serves the 398th as treasurer, and as president Blackwell has said, "we are thrilled to have her on board."*

"I once recommended that the 398th begin phasing out because of our advancing ages. I did not see or believe that the next generation could carry on the tradition, but they have proven me wrong and I am so proud of them. The enthusiasm and dedication of our younger people is recognized and appreciated."

*Hal Weekley, Mableton, GA 30126-1164.*

"With every good wish for the New Year and thanks for sending FLAK NEWS."

*Vladislav Kratky, Skoda Museum, Pilsen, Czech Republic.*

"As much as I admire the technical expertise that brought a 398th Bomb Group Website into its bright, early fruition, I still believe that it is, and will continue to be, our FLAK NEWS that will be eagerly and gratefully opened and read intently cover to cover, keeping us transformed ever as a precious family."

*George Schatz, Highland Park, IL 60035-5207.*

*Ed's Note—Bless You!*

# BRIEF-things

*Dave Jordan* didn't emerge out of the computer field to become the 398th web master ([www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org)) but rather from the telecommunications industry, where he earned his keep before retiring by developing the "800" system for the phone companies...among the first "recruits" attributed to the new web site are Marine LC *James Haig* and his father, *Alfred Haig*, who served in the 603rd...80-something *Gertrude Neff* got a fighter roar in a P-51 at Portland last fall, then added a silent ride in a glider this spring...a note from 398th good friend *Greg Anderson* of the EAA (Aluminum Overcast) says "the Triangle W continues to fly proudly around the country and it continues to be one of the finest examples of aviation heritage on tour"...they lay under the Greenland ice for 46 years (268 feet deep), but one of those six ill-fated P-38's was resurrected in 1988 and finally took its first "born again" flight last fall at the Lost Squadron Air Museum in Middlesboro, Kentucky (drop by there on your way to the Covington, KY reunion in September)...*Roger Hovden's* relatives in Norway found the name of the deceased co-pilot on the 398th Web page, and asked for more information on his 600 Squadron career on the *Stan Reed* crew; they were steered to the group CD-ROM available at the PX (which may not include *Hovden's* postwar, 10,000-hour 747 career as captain...if you contact *Ralph Hall* you might just discover that he and his SE Massachusetts Shriners delivered 112,000 Campbell Soup labels for their charity work, not to mention 2,750 baby bonnets and booties...Dues manager *Jim Haas* suggests that members purchase annual memberships for family and friends so they can read all about 398th combat history in FLAK NEWS...also, see it on the web site...all you *Diane Susek* fans will be happy to hear that she will be our guest at the 2004 reunion to be held in the Washington DC area; she sang for us on three previous occasions, Richmond (1988), Buffalo (1993) and Harrisburg (1998)...prexy *Blackwell* says he plans to attend a ceremony on April 4 at Arlington, where the ashes of *John F. Schmid* will be interred; *Schmid* had a long AF career, which included being shot down while "subbing" as co-pilot with a rookie 602 crew (*Arthur Shirk*); but he missed being killed with his regular crew (*Allen Ferguson*) on the war's last mission to Pilsen...*Bill Frankhouser* thought the *Churchill* quote in the January FLAK NEWS was right on and will use it for one of his letters-to-the-editor to counteract "those crazy peaceniks"...if 398th air crews learned to fly formation properly and maintained air discipline and protocol they can thank *Bruce Daily* and his classic "Standard Operating Procedure" manual; every page contains his signature...your FLAK NEWS editor apologizes for not responding in the last issue with a sincere "thank you" for the many Christmas and New Year's greetings...THANK YOU...also, apologies to *Herb Boehme*, who was identified as *Max Rahe* in the January photo taken at the Evergreen Museum (both good looking 602 pilots)...several members have submitted stories on their Cadet flight training, including *Sir Roger du Boulay*, our UK friend who headed up the campaign for the Anstey window; *Sir Roger* flew with the RAF but received his flight training in the US...how does one say thanks to people like *Becky Morrison*, who as a life member still sends in \$20 to keep FLAK NEWS coming her way in North Dakota...did you know that both the lead and deputy lead B-17's on the (Nuess) mission that took the lives of *Col. Frank P. Hunter* and his crew (excluding pilot *Fred Gonzales*) came from the 91st Bomb Group? And the 398th deputy that took over for the downed *Hunter* aircraft was piloted by *John Smith* and *CA William Scott*...only the lead 603rd and 602nd Squadrons took part (Jan. 23, 1945)...*Ralph Ambrose* found two errors in the last FLAK NEWS, so he was invited to send \$2.00 to treasurer *Marilyn Gibb* for the editor's Pencil Sharpener Fund, which is open to all readers...the long awaited answer as to why the Boeing Stratoliner that crashed into Seattle's Elliott Bay on a test flight after six years of immaculate restoration—*It Ran Out Of Gas!*

# 398th Bomb Group PX

Please circle squadron, size and/or color choices.

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; Navy - S, M; Black - L, XL		

## 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

_____	Photo (11x17) Anstey Window with list of 398th Fallen Comrades	\$4.00 ea	_____
_____	Round Coaster with B-17 Aluminum Overcast in color	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Print (15 x 20) "Clearing & Colder"	\$30.00 ea	_____
_____	Print (11 x 17) "Clearing & Colder"	\$15.00 ea	_____
_____	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	_____
_____	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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 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mail to: Joe Joseph

New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168-6168