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

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FLAK NEWS

JANUARY 2000

FUND DRIVE A SUCCESS

\$27,145.20 Raised For Heritage Museum Memorial

The members and friends of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association made quick work of "The Final Project."

With one announcement in the October FLAK NEWS and one special mailing by fund chairman Lou Stoffer, the drive to raise money for a 398th memorial at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum has gone "over the top."

The proposed monument, designed much like the group's beautiful memorial at Nuthampstead, will be "paid in full" this month according to the contrac-

tual arrangements with the DePue Monument Company in Savannah, Georgia.

The cost is \$27,145.20, which includes state sales taxes and Mighty Eighth Museum fee.

The memorial will be ready for dedication when the 398th visits Savannah September 20-23, 2000, for the 17th annual reunion.

Said 398th president Wally Blackwell "I am so very proud of our members: I just knew we couldn't fail. To think we

raised this sum in such a short time is a tribute to the kind of people we have in our association.

"And thanks to Lou Stoffer, who picked up on this project early on and saw it to a successful conclusion."

News that the project was a definite "go" came at the same time as the passing of James T. Duvall, chaplain of the 398th. He died November 11, 1999, at the age of 91. (See Page 2.)

The dedication of the memorial will be held in concert with the group visitation to the Heritage Museum on Friday, September 22, 2000. The 398th with an estimated 300+ members expected for the reunion, will "own" the museum from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Jack Burton, special events coordinator for the Museum, is working with president Blackwell in arranging for a special welcome for the 398th visitors. The dedication will take place in the Rotunda/Art Gallery, followed by the unveiling of the new memorial at its permanent location.

Among the 398th members having a "personal" interest in the Heritage Museum is Roy Hussey, navigator on the 603 Donovan crew. Hussey is a Savannah resident and volunteers as a docent.

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"See You In Savannah," Says The President

I expect to see many of you in Savannah in September so we can enjoy the fruits of what we accomplished in the Heritage Memorial Fund drive.

It is such a joy to appreciate what we have done in what surely will be our Final Project.

We have a membership like no other.
-WALLY BLACKWELL



This Is The Place

398TH PRESIDENT Wally Blackwell and Ralph Ambrose hold up a sketch of the monument that will be placed at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum next September in Savannah, GA. They are standing on the exact spot where the memorial will be placed.

FUND DRIVE A SUCCESS

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The group visit on September 22 will originate at the downtown Marriott Hotel. The package tour ticket will include the nine-mile coach ride, Museum admission, and lunch.

Complete details on the reunion, which will include several local tours, will be published in the April FLAK NEWS.

There were over 400 individual contributors to the successful Heritage Memorial Fund, including several from off-shore countries.

The success of the campaign was reminiscent of previous drives to raise funds for 398th projects—

The Memorial at Nuthampstead.

The Memorial plaque at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs.

The plaque and memorial tree at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

The exterior renovation and painting of the EAA B-17, Aluminum Overcast, in 398th colors.

The interior corrosion control of Aluminum Overcast.

The assistance for renovation and repair of St. George's Church, Anstey, England.

The Scholarship Fund for Bill Comstock.

The tree planted in Neuss, Germany, in commemoration of the 398th tour visit in 1982.

The Group contribution to the American Air Museum, Duxford, England (many members contributed independently, also).

The Anstey stained glass window in memory of all 398th men killed in action during their stay at Nuthampstead in WWII.

Indeed, members of the 398th have been most generous and supportive of special projects. There are more than a few of the Heritage contributors who have had a hand in each and every of the aforementioned projects.

A complete list of Heritage contributors, as of January 2000 press time, appears on Page 8. Additional names will be added to the list in the April FLAK NEWS.

"I officiated at the funerals of most of the 398th men buried in England. Whenever I hear the playing of "Taps," I see again in my mind the rows of white crosses and Stars of David at Cambridge. Emotions well up within me and I think of the brave young men who gave their lives that others might live in freedom."

— Chaplain James T. Duvall

James T. Duvall, 398th Chaplain, Dead At 91.

He stood at the end of the runway at the beginning of every mission at Station 131 in 1944 and 1945.

"As I waved them off, there was always a prayer in my heart that God would give those young men the strength and courage to face whatever the day would bring."

Rev. James T. Duvall, 398th Bomb Group chaplain, died quietly and peacefully in Loveland, Colorado, on Veterans Day, November 11, 1999. He was 91.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Marguerite, and two daughters, Margaret Utter and Nancy Miller.

Among the many attending the services at All Saints Episcopal Church in Loveland were Charles Y. Shultz, group radar officer, Williamsburg, VA; Bruce Gillis, Littleton, CO, 603 lead radio operator; Andrew Fay, Loveland, CO, 601 toggler (Traeder); and Dave Doerfler, Englewood, CO, 603 waist gunner (Stevens).

Chaplain Duvall was known then, and remembered in subsequent years by 398th Association members, as the group's chaplain, a first lieutenant. He was the Protestant chaplain and Rev. Walter Sullivan the Catholic chaplain.

However, Chaplain Duvall retired from the United States Air Force as a Colonel, after serving 20 years.

In addition to his tour with the 398th, he served the Air Force in Louisiana, Puerto Rico, Nebraska and Washington DC (Pentagon).

Following his AF retirement Chaplain Duvall had pastorates in Spokane, WA, and Hamilton, MT. He also served in assistant capacities in San Pedro, CA and Loveland, CO.

His ministry began as a student at Texas Christian University and later as pastor in Ennis, TX.

GOD'S PEACE

Peace, peace, God's peace

Not as the world gives, give I unto you,
But peace in the darkness of your soul,
And peace through the valleys of life.

Be anxious for nothing my little one,

Cast your cares on me,
I care for the sparrows and the lily of the field,

How much more than will I care for you.

Peace, peace, God's peace.....

Not as the world gives, give I unto you,
But peace, peace, God's peace:

I am here, by your side, take my hand,
all is well.

— NANCY DUVALL MILLER



**Chaplain JAMES T. DUVALL
Dies Quietly, Peacefully**

East, Off-Shore Dues Time

All the members and friends of the 398th Bomb Group living on the East Coast have the opportunity this quarter to contribute to the livelihood of the Association.

This includes the following states -- Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware and Washington DC.

And this Dues Time also includes the 200-plus FLAK NEWS "subscribers" living in England, Scotland, Ireland, Channel Islands, Switzerland, Bahamas, Mexico, Canada and Australia.

Dues are still \$10 per year or \$100 lifetime. Use the enclosed mailing envelope and don't forget to make a notation of any new address or telephone number.

Also, please check the appropriate membership box. We now have only two categories: (1) Veteran, Widow, Spouse or Blood Relative and (2) Associate.

Time Nears For Tour

The planning began two years ago, but now the Adventure is but a few months away.

It's the Year 2000 Tour to England and the Czech Republic. More than 80 398th Bomb Group members are beginning to brush up on their English and trying to remember how many Dollars in a Pound (or is it the other way?)

And for those going on to the Czech Republic, suffice to say that there will be memories aplenty in Pilsen and all the other stops along the way in the country where the 398th flew its Last Mission.

The adjoining photos and story on Slany tell only a part of the activities being prepared for that part of the tour.

The world famous Hotelova Skola in Marianske Lazne, which prepares young students for positions in the hotel industry, will serve the 398th visitors a special lunch, with time left over to look for Czech glass bargains in the city.

There will be a return to Litice, the city which honored American airmen killed on Czech bombing raids, including members of the Allan Ferguson crew of the 602nd. They were shot down on April 25, 1945, along with the Paul Coville crew, on The Last Mission.

Jan Zdiarsky will welcome the tour group to Kovarska, where he and others, including Jaromir Kohout, have built a museum filled with air war memorabilia.

And, of course, a visit to Prague.

In England, the tour route rings with more familiar names – Nuthampstead, Anstey, Cambridge, Madingly, Duxford, Saffron Walden, Baldock, Hitchin, etc.

The BIG event will be the dedication of the stained glass window at Anstey on Sunday, June 11, 2000. The 600-year old church will be slightly overwhelmed with the 398th crowd, plus the American Ambassador, Bishop of St. Albans, local residents, visitors, etc.

Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman of the Friends of the 398th, is coordinating the event in concert with Sir Roger duBoulay, Anstey church warden.

Space is still available for both the England Only or Full Tour packages. Contact Barbara Fish 1-800-423-5454. And there is a reminder that tour members must have a US passport AND that it must be valid six months after departure from Europe, which is Copenhagen on June 20, 2000.

The England Only members will be flying directly to London via British Air, mostly to Heathrow but some to Gatwick. All will meet at Heathrow for the hour-plus journey to Cambridge.

The Full Tour members will be flying to Copenhagen via SAS and then to Stansted, where the coach will bring them to the Holiday Inn in Cambridge.



LOADING LIST

ENGLAND ONLY – Wally & Teedy Blackwell; Robert & Jane Bowen; Conrad Samuelson and Nancy Cotter; Dick & Junice Frazier; Willis & Ruby Frazier and Douglas and William Frazier; Bob & Eloise Hart; John & Maryanne Hobbs; Robert & Helen Howard; Ted & Dorothy Johnston; Joe & Rozanne Joseph; Jean Madlung, Randy Madlung and Cherie Ross, Nancy Zeller; Joe & Willetta Mansell; Gertrude and Karen Anne Neff; Dottie Neuland and John & Carolyn Pierce; Elliot and Connie Novek; James & Jaunice Powell; Hank & Louise Rudow; Edmund & Louise Soule; Lou & Betty Stoffer; Charles Sutton; Howard & Jane Traeder and Bruce and Karen Guenther.

WHOLE TOUR – John & Rosemary Cosco and Mary Louise Capecelatro; Lowell Culver & Jo Anne Eppel; Bill & Fran Fisher; Gail Fisher & Mel Kessler; Charles Hough; William R. Cole; Robert & Elaine Knowles; Bill & Kathy McLaughlin; Hamilton & Mary Mero; David Mills; Ross Moxey; Russ & Millie Reed; Chuck Sasse & Reva Swanson; Arnold Schneider & Marie Bammer and Linda Hayes; Phil & Margaret Stahlman; Jeanne & Randy Stange; Allen & Geg Ostrom, tour coordinator; Barbara Fish, travel consultant.

Čest Vaší Památce

THIS WAS the scene in 1996 when the citizens of Slany, Czech Republic, dedicated this memorial to the 603 Squadron Donald Christensen crew that crashed near their city in 1945, taking the lives of eight crewmen. Another ceremony will be held there on June 17, 2000 when 398th tour members come to visit. Loosely translated, the Czech words, "Čest Vaší Památce" mean "In Grateful Memory."

*If you don't know
where you are going,
you will probably
end up someplace else.*

EULOGY FOR A FRIEND

Allison Stafford was the Sergeant Major of the 603rd Squadron, and was a witness to the crash of the lead 603rd Fortress when it went down on takeoff at Anstey on October 15, 1944, taking the lives of 10 men. One of those who perished was Mickey navigator John P. Baker, with whom Stafford had become friends. Upon returning to the United States after the war, Stafford was moved to write a letter to Baker's parents, then living in Bridgeport, CT, expressing his sorrow at the loss of their son and his friend. The letter was written from Stafford's

home in Red Creek, NY, and was mailed on 26 October, 1945. Others on that crew were Charles Hourie, Bill Meyran, William Vanderlick, Carlton Moore, William Tull, George Barton, Charles Kennedy, Victor Petrauskas and Melvin Brown. Stafford's sensitive letter, written 55 years ago, is printed in its entirety, along with a photo of Baker's temporary gravesite at Cambridge, England. Stafford, who went on to a long career with the Red Cross, lives in Norfolk, Virginia.

"I sat motionless in church that Sunday morning"

Red Creek New York
26 October 1945

My Dear Mr. and Mrs. Baker:

I find it difficult to go on with this letter – chiefly because we have never had an introduction and I doubt seriously if John had mentioned me in any of his letters to you before his untimely death.

I wanted so very much to write to you about John and the fatal accident, however, censorship regulations would not allow me to correspond with you until now.

John had only been with our Squadron (then the 603rd Bombardment Squadron) a short time. However, I met him the very day he reported to our organization and there was something about his character and manly make-up that caught my personal attention. From that point on John and I became excellent friends, though we never actually went places together since I was an enlisted man and he an officer. Then, too, I was so very busy that I seldom was able to leave the Base.

I shall always remember that misty, Sunday morning on the 15th day of October, for I was standing out in front of the office where I worked; it was just 0623 hours British War Double Time when I turned my eyes toward the field and carefully followed the mighty ship as it sped down the runway for the take-off.

It was purely coincidental that I should have even been up at such an early hour, however, it was my morning to arise early to relieve the charge of quarters at the office and it was only coincidental that I had stepped out from the washroom and in front of the office just in time to see the first ship of the scheduled mission speed down the runway for the take-off.

It was further coincidental that I should have stopped as I heard the plane speeding down the runway, and to watch it, but such was the circumstance. My eyes were fixed upon the ship as it lifted itself from the runway. I remember saying aloud to myself, "My God boy, you'll never make it!"

Scarcely had these words left my lips when I was frightened thoughtless as I



**BAKER'S BURIAL SITE
Cambridge, England, 1944**

saw the wings of the ship cutting off the tops of the trees in a wooded section beyond the end of the runway. Then in only a split second there was an explosion that illuminated the sky over a large area and could be seen for miles away. The things that I saw in the next few seconds and later, I can not begin to tell you here, but it was all over for John and the other members of the crew. I am sure none of them realized or none of them suffered the slightest pain.

I didn't know until about an hour later that the boys on the ship were of our Squadron, however, it was only a matter of seconds after knowing this before I was able to obtain the list of personnel aboard. Truly, I was speechless, it seemed unbelievable. I tried to catch hold of myself but there was a sudden weakness that passed over me and I returned to my bunk and rested for a few minutes as the tears rolled down my cheeks. Your lovely son was not the only member of the crew I had known, no, several others had been in our Squadron for a long time and two of them even trained with us in this country before going overseas with

us.

I went to church that Sunday morning, as usual, though was most uneasy. I tried to listen to the Service but my mind was elsewhere. It wasn't with John and other boys, for I knew they were all happy and peaceful now, now that God had taken them into his eternal Kingdom. No, my mind and prayers were not with John and the boys now. They were with you and the families of the other boys who were taken so suddenly from us.

I prayed that when the news reached you, God would comfort all of you and help you to understand that He needed your son and the other boys and that He was giving them Eternal Rest. Today as I think back, I like to feel and say the same of these boys, my close friends, as Mrs. Roosevelt said about our President after he had passed away. I don't recall her actual words, but its meaning was quite the same as this:

"That, Mr. Roosevelt had successfully fulfilled his duties here on earth and that our Heavenly Father chose to give rest to him and his body, and to give his soul eternal life."

To me, that seemed the most beautiful thought one could express.

As I sat motionless in church that Sunday morning, 15 October 1944, and just as our Holy Communion Service was coming to an end, the last of the five-hundred pound bombs from John's ship exploded in the distance, and to me it meant a most reverent salute to those who had that gorgeous Sunday morning, only a few hours ago given their lives that we and our great nation might live.

Mr. and Mrs. Baker, words can not reveal to you my sorrow in your great loss, and I am unable to tell you in words how very much I admired your faithful son. The only bit of comfort I can convey is to tell you how greatly proud you can be for giving such a beautiful young man, a body of your own blood and flesh to the greatest sacrament on earth and to Almighty God.

John and the other boys were given a beautiful military funeral service and were laid to rest in the Cambridge American Military Cemetery at Cambridge, England. I was unable to attend the fu-

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