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

VOL. 4 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY, 1989

B-17 In 398th Colors Star In "Eagle Hanger"



ALUMINUM OVERCAST OVER LAKE WINNEBAGO



PREMIER EXHIBIT AT OSHKOSH "EAGLE HANGER"

EAA Photos by Jim Koepnick.

The premier exhibit of the EAA's sparkling new "Eagle Hanger" in Oshkosh, Wisconsin is in place. And glorying in the spotlight she earned as the "Queen of the Skies" many years ago is a B-17 Flying Fortress.

And she is robed in the distinguished colors and markings of the 398th Bomb Group!

Many other airplanes, each with their own personal places in aviation history, are displayed in the hangar. But it is the "Aluminum Overcast," with its red wing tips, red tail and triangle W that quickly commands the attention of all who enter.

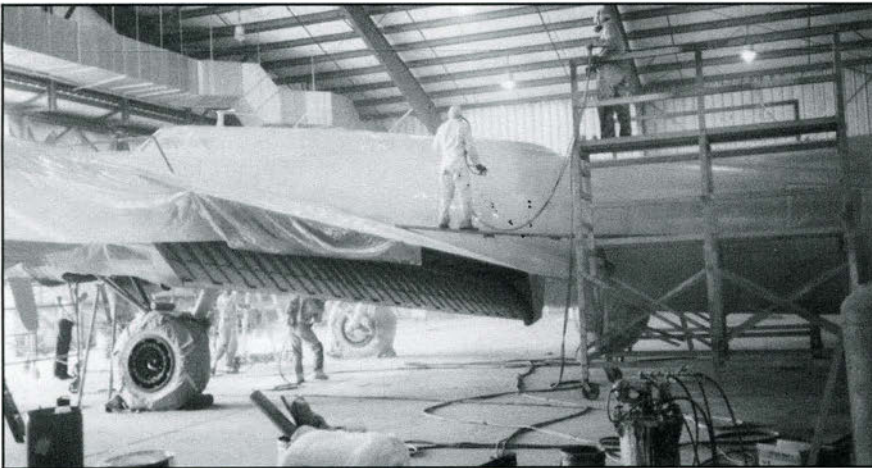
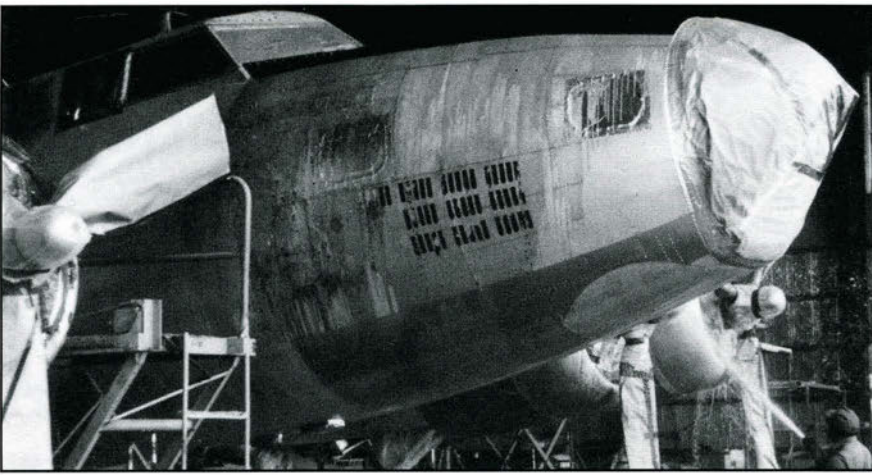
These distinctive markings, plus the Boeing factory serial number of 2102516, the call letter "H" and 601 Squadron letters of "30" are part of the paint scheme because 346 members of the 398th, plus the Boeing Company, and our "Friends of the 398th" at Nuthampstead, England contributed \$21,695.57 to renovate the plane's exterior and imbue the 398th markings.

It was in honor of Hal Weekley that these specific numbers and letters were selected to represent the group as a whole. Weekley flew 601 B-17 No. 2102516 H before being shot down on a mission to Le Manoir, France on August 13, 1944. He escaped capture and returned to Nuthampstead.

Weekley, concurrent with his civilian duties as an FAA inspector, was the chief pilot for Aluminum Overcast during its "pre-renovation" flying days. He monitored the renovation project at Dothan, Alabama, along with EAA Director of Maintenance Daryl Lenz.

Will the Aluminum Overcast continue its flying schedule now that the new

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EAA Photos by Hal Weekley, Daryl Lenz and Jim Koepnick.

398th configuration has been installed? "At this point, it does not seem likely," said Peter P. Poberezny, president of the EAA Aviation Foundation. "Our board of directors recognize the historical value of this marvelous airplane and are gravely concerned for its safety.

"We do hope the folks from the 398th share this concern and will concur with our decision to keep it in the Eagle Hanger for many future generations to see and enjoy."

Bill Comstock, president of the 398th, added —

"We are still holding out some hope that there will be at least a temporary change in plans to allow the plane to come to Dayton for our reunion in September.

"If not, then we will look forward to our visit to Oshkosh next year," he added.

Greg Anderson of the EAA development office, said —

"You may be sure the welcome mat will be out for the 398th when you hold your meeting here in 1990."

Many thousands of visitors already have seen the Eagle Hanger exhibit since it opened in early July. The formal dedication was on August 1, during the annual EAA Oshkosh fly-in, which attracted over 300,000 aviation fans.

The exhibit opened to "rave reviews," according to Anderson.

Memorial Fund Gains From EAA Campaign

The membership of the 398th contributed a total of \$25,538.57 to the refurbishing and painting of the Experimental Aviation Association (EAA) B-17, according to treasurer Ralph Hall.

"We paid the EAA \$21,695.57," said Hall. "\$1,081.88 was spent on expenses and the balance of \$2,761.69 was earmarked for the Memorial Fund pending final decision by the Board."

Final contributors —

SPONSOR

Earl Cornett

Mark Licker (in honor of Herb Licker)

DONOR

Malcolm Clarke

Leonard Streitfeld

Leo Cunningham

Lloyd Sundheim

Philip Eckman

Arthur Taylor

Odo J. Stenstrom

The Rebirth

Here are four of the many refurbishing cycles undertaken in the renovation project of Aluminum Overcast, now the premier attraction in the EAA's "Eagle Hanger" in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Posing by the propeller is Hal Weekley, its regular pilot and in whose honor the new 398th markings were selected.

Big Number Set For September Dayton Reunion

Reunion time is just around the corner! The fifth annual "roundup" of the 398th will be on Wednesday through Saturday, September 20-23.

The place — Dayton, Ohio, the "birthplace of aviation."

Reunion headquarters will be the Stouffer Center Plaza Hotel. Official registration forms were included in the April issue of FLAK NEWS, along with hotel reservation forms.

Lost 'em? Then contact Chairman Bob Hart, Wilmington, OH 45177.

Bob & Eloise Hart have laid out full and in-teresting programs for every day, but have still provided plenty of Memory Room and nostalgia time. One departure from past reu-nions will find a "Welcome Dinner" Thursday evening instead of a luncheon.

The reunion's "big" day will be Friday, when the group journeys to the Wright Patterson Air Force Base Museum to dedicate a tree and plaque, followed by a tour through the mammoth aviation museum. The completely restored B-17, Shoo Shoo Baby, is one of their prize exhibits.

A number of special guests are expected at the various evening dinner meetings, all to be held at the downtown Stouffer Center Plaza Hotel.

Hart indicated that the 398th attendance mark of 465, set last year at Richmond, was in jeopardy.

"I think we'll come close to 500," he said.

PX Chairman Jack Wintersteen said he would have a full complement of sales items available in the Memory Room, including the new book, "398th Bomb Group Remembrances."

A number of VHS videos will be available for viewing at all times in the Memory Room

The golfers will have their day Wednesday, playing the Wright Patterson course.

THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON June 12, 1989

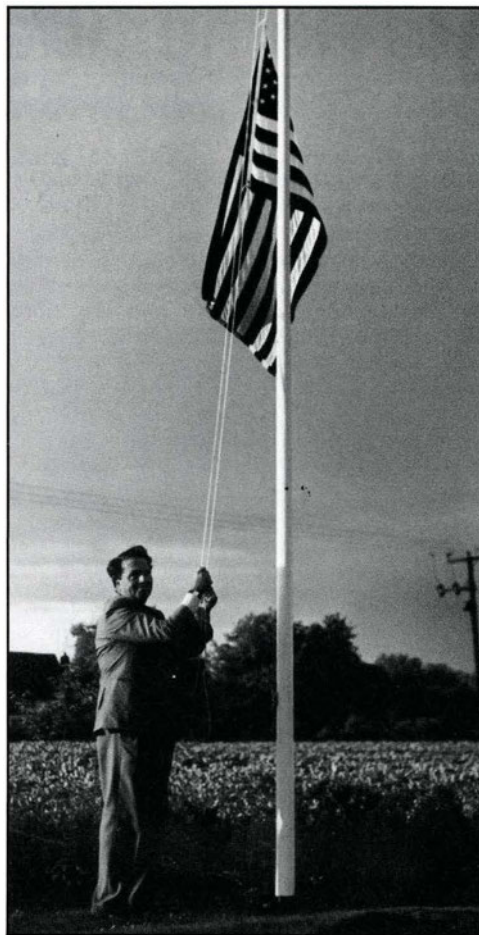
Dear Colonel Comstock:

On behalf of the President, thank you for your invitation for him to be the principal speaker at the annual reunion of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association, to be held in Dayton on September 21, 22 and 23.

We appreciate your extending this opportunity to the President. I regret to write that, due to the heavy demands on his schedule, he will be unable to accept your kind invitation. However, he asked me to convey to you his sincere appreciation for your thoughtfulness and to extend to you his very best wishes.

Sincerely,

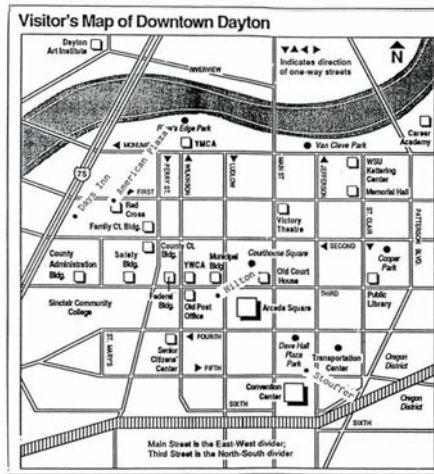
JOSEPH W. HAGIN II
Deputy Assistant to the President
for Appointments and Scheduling



David Wells, chairman of the "Friends of the 398th" at Nuthampstead, died suddenly on June 21.

Peppy, popular and hard-working, Wells was a leader in developing the close bond of friendship that exists between the residents in and around Nuthampstead and members of the 398th. David and his wife, Peggy, traveled in the U.S. last year, stopping at Richmond, Virginia to attend the annual reunion. It was here he was named an "honorary vice-president" in the 398th Bomb group Memorial Association.

The Association was represented at the funeral, held at David's home church at Barkway, by president Bill and Evelyn Comstock.



DAVID WELLS

"We Shall Miss Him"

The untimely death of David Wells has left a gaping hole in the UK Branch of 398th Memorial Association. David's untiring interest and devotion to the Association will be hard to replace. His home at 4, Park Farm Lane, Nuthampstead was known as the 398th UK branch office, a mustering point for all visiting 398th veterans.

His infectious enthusiasm and seemingly limitless energy led to so many successful reunions at Nuthampstead. The memorial and the friendship of so many 398th members were David's pride and joy shared by his wife, Peggy. All of us at Nuthampstead and so many, many friends in the United States will be the poorer in his passing.

We shall miss him . . .

— Tony Clark
"Friend of the 398th"

"A Very Good Friend"

President Bill Comstock and his wife, Evelyn, represented the 398th at the funeral of David Wells on June 29 at the Barkway Parish Church.

Comstock praised Wells for the "significant accomplishments which have come to fruition as a result of the love and respect displayed and practiced by this man."

In explaining the purpose of his visit to England to a Customs officer at Heathrow Airport, Comstock said he was going to Nuthampstead for the funeral of a friend.

The officer replied —

"He certainly must have been a very good friend."

So Long, David

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Ground Crew Theme Set For 8th AF Reunion In Denver

The 15th Annual Reunion of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society will be held in Denver, Colorado October 4-9. The theme for the 1989 gathering will center around special tributes to all ground crew members.

Members of the 398th have been assigned to the Denver Marriott Hotel along with ten other B-17 groups. Newcomers to the 398th may apply for membership into the Society by writing 8AFHS, P.O. Box 727, Oldsmar, FL 34677.

The 398th treasury benefits to the tune of \$5 for each member attending the Mighty Eighth function.

Penn Residents Remember B-17 Crash

Did Searl Fortress Collide in Mid-Air With B-24?

The faint scar of a once monstrous wound inflicted on the quiet English countryside near Penn can still be seen.

Now mostly overgrown by the years is the colossal gouge made by a B-17 as it crashed within earshot of Gen. Jimmy Doolittle's 8th Air Force Headquarters at High Wycombe.

This B-17 came from Nuthampstead on the morning of August 12, 1944.

The incident, like so many like it, had been more or less lost in the pages of time. After all, this happened 45 years ago.

On this particular morning the Fort had taken off on schedule at 6:30 a.m. . . . and was never seen or heard from again until the call came in from High Wycombe —

“One of your aircraft has crashed near Penn. There are no survivors.”

It was the Charles J. Searl crew of 600th Squadron. Others aboard were Albert Dion, co-pilot; Saul J. Kempner, navigator; Leo C. Walsh, bombardier; James A. Beaty, engineer; Cecil Kennedy, radio operator; Alfred Bueffel, ball turret gunner; Albert W. Knight, waist gunner; and Orville M. Wilson, tail gunner.

Were it not for the overflowing thankfulness of the residents in and around Penn this story might never have been told. Every year since 1944 there has been a service of remembrance at the ancient church at Penn in honor and memory of the nine men from the 398th who perished while on their way to a bombing mission to destroy a German airfield on the outskirts of Versailles, France.

For a week prior to the annual Remembrance Sunday, British and American flags line the pathway to the church door. A poppy cross bearing the names of the Searl crew members is placed in the church yard. The names are read during the service.

And had it not been for some determined and ongoing research by Johanna Sienkiewicz of Abingdon, the community west of London would have continued to believe that this B-17 had come from the Combat Crew Training Center base at Bovington, some nine miles to the northeast. It was only this past spring that Johanna made contact with the “Friends of the 398th” at Nuthampstead and discovered the truth.

But why did Searl go down?

Why did it crash so far from Station 131?

What was this aircraft doing so far from the normal formation area over the Debdon “buncher” located east of Nuthampstead?

Why was no distress call heard from Searl?

And another intriguing question: Did

Searl collide in mid-air with another aircraft, possibly a B-24 from the 392nd Bomb Group at Wendling (located to the northeast of Nuthampstead).

One of their aircraft did indeed go down on this day, August 12, 1944, and only 27 miles east of Penn in the north London suburbs.

Was this merely a coincidence, or did a collision really happen?

The 392nd B-24 was piloted by John D. Ellis. He and his entire crew of nine also perished as they went down near the community of Cheshunt.

So many questions!

Except for these “whys” a good deal is known about the Searl incident. Many eye-witness accounts tell of his B-17 coming in low and on fire, barely missing the church before crashing in a ball of flame and explosion on the “Lude Farm” owned by William Setter. As told later in the local paper —

Farmer Setter Had Close Brush With Death On This Day

“As the Fortress neared the Penn side of the valley, Mr. Setter heard the change in the engine noise as a second engine caught fire. By now, the plane was making a terrible screeching noise. The bomber flew nearer and Mr. Setter realized to his horror that it was heading straight for the Lude Farm. Looking up from his milking shed, he could make out clearly the flames and smoke streaming from the two inner engine nacelles, its drab green camouflage and its huge wings.

“The noise from the engines became louder and louder as the Fortress plunged down towards him. Mr. Setter was convinced by this time that he was about to meet his death. Above the roar of the engines he shouted . . . but only the cows could hear — ‘look out, we’re going, we’re going!’

“As if by some miracle or a last act of skill by the doomed pilots, the blazing Fortress skimmed over the top of the farm buildings, over two elm trees on the other side of the road and then crashed into a field about 250 yards from where Mr. Setter was standing.

“Although gripping the door of the milking shed, Mr. Setter was spun around by the blast. The entire craft and its load of bombs, gasoline and ammunition exploded instantly, killing all on board.

“Running toward the field, he found the dead body of a crewman. He covered it with his coat and continued on to the scene of the crash.

“The aircraft had crashed on top of Mr. Setter’s poultry houses containing over 400 six-month old pullets and every one was destroyed. The force of the explosion had reduced the giant Fortress bomber to just fragments of wreckage. Smoke, fire and devastation stretched for yards around the massive crater. The ground was littered with belts of exploding machine gun ammunition.

“As Mr. Setter searched the wreckage for survivors, his wife Mabel and sons Arthur, 24, and Ronald, 12, were recovering inside the farmhouse from the shock of the explosion.

“Shortly afterwards a number of American officers arrived to investigate, among them Brig. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, whose 8th Air Force HQ was at nearby High Wycombe.”

The 398th, alerted to the crash, sent Flight Surgeon Captain Robert Kelly to the scene to assist in identification.

Recalling the incident, the retired Los Angeles gynecologist said —

“The plane and crew were practically vaporized. Nothing left larger than your fist. It was not pretty.”

One member of the crew, waist gunner Knight, is buried at the American Military Cemetery at Cambridge. It is presumed his body was the one seen and covered by Mr. Setter. It is thought that he bailed out of the plane at the last moment. Much too late for his chute to open.

The others are buried in a common grave at Arlington National Cemetery.

A key player in this drama was the vicar of Penn, Rev. Oscar Muspratt. After the war he went to great lengths to contact the relatives of the nine dead crewmen, and to inform them of the crew’s bravery in keeping the aircraft away from the populated areas. He wrote to them:

“I think you will all realise how truly it may be said that they saved others, but themselves they could not save. I hope that the knowledge of their bravery and sacrifice will comfort you.”

The relatives wrote back, warmly thanking him for the information, and pointing out that it was the first detailed account they had received about the crash.

The names of the Fortress crew were entered in “honoured and grateful memory” in the Book of Remembrance in Penn Church, and their names are read out in church every year at the annual Remembrance Day Service.

Although the crater has since been

398TH GROUP TOUR TO ENGLAND NEXT YEAR?

A group tour to England next summer, starting in Scotland and concluding with a "Service of Remembrance" in a little community on the outskirts of London?

And in between a nostalgic visit to Nuthampstead and Station 131, plus Cambridge, Duxford, Hendon . . . and maybe even Hitchin?

All these are now being considered as the "waters are being tested" to ascertain the interest among the 398th membership for such a tour. We are looking at early June, 1990, and the trip

would again be under the leadership of Galaxy Tours of Wayne, PA.

The residents in and around Penn, where the Searl B-17 crashed, are anxious to greet the 398th veterans and their families. And to tell their story of that fateful morning of August 12, 1944.

Those interested in such a trip next year are urged to call Mark Burton, Galaxy Tours, toll free, (800) 523-7287. Or Allen Ostrom, FLAK NEWS editor.

filled, there are still many small pieces of wreckage to be found . . . as if serving as a permanent reminder of that crash 45 years ago.

Now retired, the Rev. Muspratt still lives in the community and maintains a vibrant interest in the 1944 tragedy.

He and the many others who have kept this story alive all these years are intimately familiar with every detail of the crash since the burning and doomed Fortress first appeared over their heads and crashed so violently in their midst.

But they, like others, still seek answers.

In the past few months a number of clues have surfaced, providing some "possible" if not "absolute" answers to the intriguing scenario.

To set the stage for the drama that was to come later in the morning, the 398th narrative on mission described the weather as follows —

"Misty clouds were encountered about 10,000 feet which were solid up to 30,000 feet. Visibility was less than ¼ mile. Assembly was changed first to 23,000 feet over Debdon, and later to Splasher #11 at 18,000 feet. Assembly was finally made four (4) minutes south of Splasher #11. The Wing departed from assembly thirty-five (35) minutes late."

Splasher #11, located near Southampton on the English south coast, was one of several powerful permanent radio beacons used by Allied bombers. Each beacon was used to provide checkpoints for use with the radio-compass in the cockpit.

Southampton is approximately 75 miles southwest of Debdon, where the 398th was attempting to form up. A flight of about 35 minutes for a B-17. A navigation heading from Debdon to Southampton runs almost directly over Penn! It would appear that Searl had responded to the radio order to pick up Splasher #11 and was on his way when tragedy struck.

Jim Bestervelt was the squadron leader for the 600th, leading the high group. Hal Lamb led the 601st low group and Bill Scott led the lead 603 group with Jean Miller the air commander for the 398th.

"I recall breaking out of the clouds into clear air and seeing many of our 36 planes scattered about at random altitudes," recalled Bestervelt. "We were all converging on Splasher #11. I never heard a thing



They Are Remembered

THE VILLAGE of Penn remembers this crew which crashed in their midst in 1944. Back row are Leo Walsh, bombardier; Al Dion, co-pilot; Charles Searl, pilot; and Saul Kempner, navigator. Front row are Orville Wilson, tail gunner; James Beaty, engineer; Alfred Bueffel,

ball turret gunner; Albert Knight, waist gunner; Cecil Kennedy, radio operator; and Frank Snyder, waist gunner. All perished in the crash except Snyder, who was "stood down" for this mission. Their B-17 was named for the city of Tomahawk, WI, Searl's home town.

from Searl after our take off."

Meanwhile, the day was shaping up poorly for the 392nd B-24's. They had been assigned an airfield target at Juvicour, France. Like the 398th, the Liberator fliers were up and around in the 2 a.m. darkness for briefings and preparation. They, too, were scheduled for take-off at 6:30.

Although stationed northeast of Nuthampstead, the Wendling B-24's were sent on a "circuitous route extending down over the Cherbourg Peninsula to a point east of Paris."

The 392nd narrative continues —

"Assembly weather was very poor causing six (6) ships to abort and return to base, one (1) of which, #023 from the 577th with Lieutenant J.D. Ellis' crew, crashed and killed all personnel."

Historian Roger Freeman wrote in his MIGHTY EIGHTH WAR DIARY —

"Assembly collision was an ever present hazard in a clouded morning sky. A 398th B-17 and 392nd B-24 are believed to have touched on 12 August, 1944, although exactly what occurred is unknown as both crews perished."

Conceivably, the 392nd also had been

re-directed to a south coast Splasher rendezvous. There were four others in the area besides No. 11 at Southampton.

Unlike the 398th, which finally proceeded as a group to its assigned target at Versailles, only 19 of the 392nd B-24's stayed together. Ten caught on with various other groups. Five returned safely to Wendling via the abort route and one crashed at Cheshunt.

Searl was on his way to Southampton, being guided by the radio beams being transmitted by Splasher #11. Ellis, in his B-24, was apparently returning home with five others from the 392nd.

Could the two have "touched" someplace high in those murky skies?

Intriguing, in not conclusive, can be found that "something" did happen in those skies on that morning. Hand written on the bottom of the 398th Interrogation Report filled out by 600 pilot Erle Ford upon returning home from the mission are these words —

"Looking toward the east and near London — saw large explosion above clouds. May have been score on Doodle Bug (German V-1 rocket). Left one splotch of

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“Remembrances” A Winner

Half of the total number of “398th Bomb Group Remembrances” printed (1,000) were sold before the books were off the press!

The books were delivered to the Seattle FLAK NEWS office on June 30 and the first shipments began going out to members on July 7.

The early return comments on the book suggest it will be a winner and will serve admirably as a memorable record of the 398th Bomb Group.

As Chaplain James Duvall said —

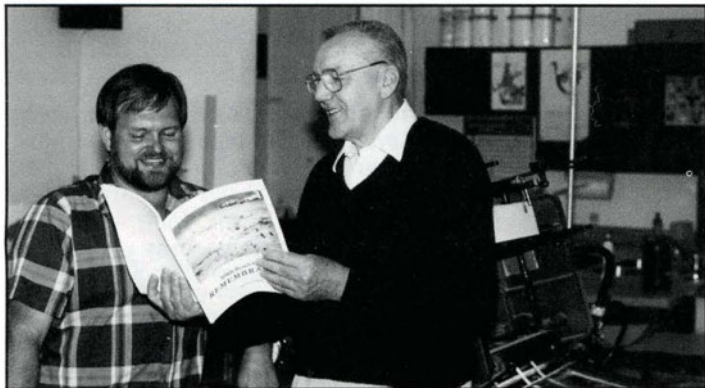
“The book truly captures the emotions of that period. Such memories it brought back to me.”

“Remembrances” contains over a hundred photos and illustrations, plus a variety of stories and vignettes dealing with life and death in the group’s 30-month history.

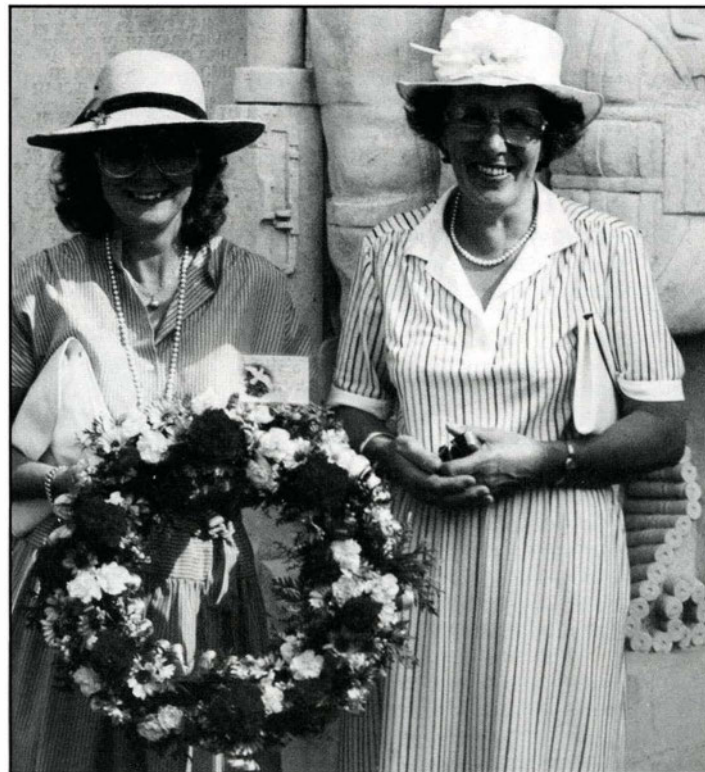
One of the major surprises among the early orders was the request for 40 copies by East Anglia Books of Bishop’s Stortford, Herts, England.

Additional orders are being shipped to various aviation book stores throughout the United States.

“Remembrances” costs \$20.00 (postpaid) and may be ordered through Ralph Hall, 398th Bomb Group, New Bedford, MA 02740.



FLAK NEWS editor and author of “398th Bomb Group Remembrances,” Allen Ostrom, looks over a copy of the book with one of the printers from Vanguard Press who turned out the publication, Mark Clark. Both agreed, “it’s a good job.”



ELAINE TYLER AND GRETA BARKER
Nuthampstead “Friends” Pose With Memorial Day Wreath

Memorial Day, 1989 was especially meaningful to the 398th and to the “Friends of the 398th” in England.

On this date, May 21, the memory of the many Americans killed in action during World War II in Europe (mostly from the 8th Air Force) was remembered in formal services by many hundreds of visitors and dozens of military, political and religious officials.

Representatives of no less than 75 military units presented floral wreaths along the impressive Wall of the Missing at the cemetery on the outskirts of Cambridge.

Representing the 398th were “Friends” David Wells, Greta Barker, Ron & Joan Spicer, and Elaine Tyler. David carried the 398th wreath to the wall, his last official action on behalf of the 398th. He died one month later.

Searl Family In Wisconsin

Continued from Page 5

smoke but no trail. Believed it was a Buzz Bomb. On heading of 237 degrees — at about 8,000 feet — direction of 9 o’clock.”

Buzz Bombs were reigning on London at that time, so conceivably the flash seen by Ford at that early morning hour could have been a V-1 rocket being downed by a British Spitfire or anti-aircraft fire.

Or possibly, a flash caused by a collision between Searl’s B-17 and Ellis’ B-24.

There are no signs “up there” today identifying the place it happened. Or “if” it happened.

Only the memories are left. Even the deep wounds inflicted on the English countryside near Penn and Cheshunt by a pair of American bombers so long ago are filled and overgrown.

Yet, memories are strong in the presence of love and gratitude.

The family of Charles J. Searl, whose B-17 crew perished in the early morning crash near Penn, England, in 1944, have been following and contributing to the research of the FLAK NEWS story.

Most of the family lives in or near Tomahawk, Wisconsin, home of the 398th pilot. It was in honor of this northern Wisconsin town that Searl named his B-17 — Tomahawk Warrior.

He and his crew were among the original members of the group. They went down on their 28th mission.

Searl’s mother, Josephine, is 90 years of age and lives in Tomahawk. A daughter, Cheryl Surfus, lives in Wausau, WI, and another daughter, Charlene Wydaven, lives in Alamogordo, NM.

Searl’s sister, Charlotte France, lives in Phillips, WI.

His wife, the mother of the two daughters, is now Mrs. Arlie Schuetz of Tomahawk.

The only other relative of the Searl crew that could be located is Mrs. Melvin Cloud of Benton, Arkansas, sister to the engineer-turret gunner, Robert Beaty.

“Our family is thrilled at hearing how the people at Penn remember Charles’ crew. Hopefully, we will be able to come to England one day and take part in the service,” said Mrs. France.

Cheryl Surfus has, among her prized possessions, a letter from Vicar Muspratt relating the events of the August 12, 1944 crash. It was written to her grandparents, Nile and Josephine Searl, in 1948.

Letters, Letters

"Immediately upon arriving in London on a typical April English day (rain, snow, sleet) we drove to Nuthampstead. It was with joy, sadness and reverence we stood for some time before the 398th Memorial, each of us wrapped in silence. Our trip was to commemorate our arrival at Nuthampstead from Rapid City exactly 45 years ago. The Memorial is truly distinctive and one of which all can be proud. Our thanks to all who made it possible. Check for '398th Bomb Group Remembrances' enclosed."

Max & Phyllis Rahe, Crescent, OK 73028.
Fred & Mary Dunlap, Anderson, SC 29621.

"Thank you very much for your kind greetings, which I herewith return. The other day I went once more to the place where you and your friends planted the young tree as a token of peace and reconciliation between our nations. It actually has taken root as one can see from the green leaves. I hope also, with God's help, peace between our people will continue to grow."

**Alfred Wilms, Krefelder
Dusseldorf-Heerd, West Germany.**

"The heart problem that surfaced last year while on our trip to England and the continent finally resulted in a three-way heart by-pass last May. Everything went fine and we are looking forward to Dayton. Enclosed is my check for a copy of 'Remembrances.'"

Bill Markley, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

"Can any of you help me in locating a couple of buddies I had while working in the 398th bomb dump? I would like to find Garland Davis, who came from Roosevelt, OK and Myrt Simmons, who came from Peoria, IL. I am now 77 years old but still retain many dear memories of those days at Nuthampstead."

Sam Hoekstra, Grants Pass, OR 97527.

"I am sad to say that there is no longer an 8th Air Force Museum at Prestwick. I am so grieved, having been associated with the 8th since a lad back in 1942. My health is no longer the best and it became quite expensive to keep it open. I have high hopes that space will soon become available for all our memorabilia at the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock or at Culzean Castle. We in Scotland must never forget the brave men of the 8th Air Force. It is exciting to think that some of you Americans from the 398th might come to 'Jock' Land as part of your tour to Nuthampstead next summer. You may be sure I will be here to welcome you."

**John Fleming, Ayrshire, Scotland,
KA1 2NT.**

"My late husband was a life member of the 398th, joining the group from the start in Blythe, CA. The enclosed check is for a life membership for our son, George Mitchell. By the way, my father worked on the USS Manhattan in the Camden, NJ shipyards. This ship later became the USS Wakefield, which carried the 398th ground forces to England."

Catherine Mitchell, Brooklawn, NJ 08030.

"I would like to update you on the recent renovations at our Stouffer Center Plaza Hotel. When you arrive for your reunion in September you will find newly renovated elevators, fresh wallpaper and carpeting in the halls, new pictures and lamps and wonderful floral arrangements. The assembly area has been updated as well as our rooftop restaurant. We are all looking forward to greeting the members and guests of the 398th."

**Shellie Silcott, Sales Manager, Stouffer Center Plaza Hotel
Dayton, OH.**

"I am the brother of William J. Lewandowski, co-pilot on the Richard Ellis crew of the 603rd, killed in action on March 14, 1945. Enclosed is the American flag, given in memory of Bill, which I understand will be forwarded to England and flown over the 398th Memorial at Nuthampstead. Also enclosed is a \$25 check to cover my 1989 dues as well as a donation for FLAK NEWS and membership roster. My sincere thanks and God's blessings."

**Theodore J. Lewandowski, Lyndhorst,
NJ 07071**

"I must apologize for being late with my contribution towards the fund drive to put our colors on the EAA B-17. I am happy the goal was reached and will be thrilled to see our Triangle W on one of the very few Fortresses left in the world today. I would like to commend the leadership of the 398th for keeping the spirit and memories alive for us all. Thank you."

Len Streitfeld, Hammonton, NJ 08037.

PX Dept. Alive & Well

The 398th PX is alive and well and growing all the time. Your PX officer is Jack Wintersteen and he does business from his residence at Danville, PA 17821.

Following are the items available from Jack's store:

CAPS — \$7.00. Navy blue only. Specify squadron or group.

JACKETS — \$30.00. White, gold, navy, royal blue, lite blue. Specify XL, L, M, S. (All with 398th patch).

T-SHIRTS — \$10.00. White, gold, lite blue, royal blue. Specify XL, L, M, S. (B-17 on front).

T-SHIRTS — (Children's) - \$10.00 - White only. Specify 6-8, 10-12, 14-16. (B-17 on front).

MEMBERSHIP PLAQUE — \$25.00 - Specify life member or regular.

SQUADRON/GROUP PATCHES — \$5.00. Specify squadron. Group patch is "Hell From Heaven."

BUMPERSTICKERS — \$2.00.

LAPEL (or) CAP PINS — \$6.00. Metal 1/2" x 1".

MEMORIAL POSTCARDS — \$1.00.

Special Videos Available

A number of members, primarily Lou Baffaro, have been taking video films at the reunions and tours in recent years.

And they are now available to the membership for a modest

4.00 mailing fee, courtesy of Paul Brown, Burnsville, MN 55337.

Paul has placed highlights of the 1985 (Seattle), 1986 (Colorado Springs), 1987 (San Antonio) and 1988 (Richmond) reunions on a single VHS video tape.

On the tape are such scenes as the Silver Star presentation to the Ted Kline family; Bill Comstock's "legacy" talk at the Air Force Academy; the 50th anniversary celebration of the B-17 at Seattle; and Federico Gonzales' emotional meeting with Mrs. Frank P. Hunter at San Antonio.

Also available on three individual tapes are (1) highlights of the 1986 group tour to England and France; (2) the 1988 tour to England; and (3) one that includes both the England portion and the trip to the German city of Neuss and the Battle of the Bulge sites.

398th BOMB GROUP FLAK NEWS

c/o Allen Ostrom
Seattle, WA 98177

BRIEF-things

A pair of West Coast B-17's, two of the dozen or so of the world's Fortress fleet still airworthy, flew to Duxford, England in late June to star in a movie about the famous "Memphis Belle." The Seattle based B-17 F "Museum of Flight" and a B-17 G belonging to **Dave Tallichet** of Anaheim, CA joined England's Sally B and a pair from France in the Warner Brothers film . . . the Seattle Fort suffered a flat tire and a leak in one of the fuel tanks just prior to take-off (so what else is new, eh, crew chiefs?). . . a number of 398th folks visited Nuthampstead this year, including the **Dick Fraziers, Larry Pauls, Milton Dunlaps, Max Rahes, Frank Weilers, George Rusinaks** and **Alex Cochrans**. . . it was meaningful (and difficult) for **Larry Paul** as he visited the crash site where his crew went down near Anstey, and then see their graves at the cemetery at Madingly. . . **Barry Tyler** of the "Friends," who flies his own private plane from the end of the old main runway at Station 131, took private pilot **Frazier** up for a hop, and guess who did most of the flying? . . . at the last reunion a member asked your FLAK NEWS editor, "Where do you get all that material for the newsletter?" The response — "Well, some of it is mailed to me voluntarily, some via phone, and the rest as a result of some 600 letters I write each year." . . . along with the notice that **David Wells** of Nuthampstead had passed away came the news that the mother of **Roger Bradley** had died at about the same time. **Roger** is a "Friend of the 398th" living in London, a prime contact for our travellers. . . another death notice announced the passing of **Helen Ebbeson**, wife of our secretary . . . **David & Peggy Wells'** next door neighbors at Nuthampstead, **Ron & Joan Spicer**, will be at the Dayton reunion following a tour of the US. . . **Ron**, a British Army veteran with Dunkirk experience, is a past District Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Masonic Lodge of England!