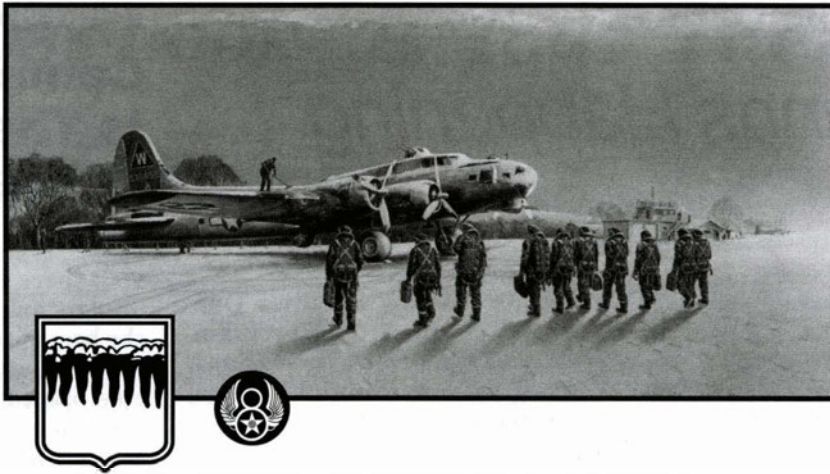




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398th BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8th AIR FORCE • 1st AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL 18 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY 2003

## 2003 REUNION: What Will The Interest Be At Covington?

The 2003 Reunion next month in Covington, Kentucky (September 10-13) will reveal much about the future of the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association.

Will it provide assurance of continuing interest among members or will it give hint of a decline?

Covington, across the river from Cincinnati, is located within easy driving distance of the majority of 398<sup>th</sup> members' homes, unlike last year's meeting across the country in Portland, Oregon.

The Portland reunion attracted 240, one of the smallest attendances in the 20-year reunion schedule. Yet, that figure is almost twice that of some other bomb groups who are experiencing sharp declines in reunion attendance.

The days of 500-plus attendance (Nashville, Dayton, Oshkosh) are probably gone forever, but the possibility of 300 and more could happen at Covington.

The "attractions" scheduled for the four-day meeting should help to "draw a crowd," but in reality it will be the camaraderie between the members that will provide the success or failure of the reunion.

Yes, there will be a visit to the Air Force Museum in nearby Dayton, surely the greatest of its kind in the world, witness the million people who

*Continued on page 2*

**TIMELESS VOICES OF AVIATION**  
LET NO STORY GO UNTOLD

## Chance To Record Your Story

Members of the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group attending the 20<sup>th</sup> annual reunion September 10-13, 2003 in Covington, KY, will have the opportunity of telling their "war story" on video under an EAA project called, "Timeless Voices of Aviation."

EAA Executive Vice President Greg Anderson will explain the program at the Thursday, September 11 Welcome Banquet. Meanwhile, it can be viewed on a new website—[www.timelessvoices.org](http://www.timelessvoices.org).

Randy Stange will supervise the "Voices" program for the 398<sup>th</sup>, utilizing a special Radisson Hotel "studio" on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor. Joe Mansell, often seen with his video camera, also will be part of the filming. Additional secretarial volunteers also are needed to assist in the recording of the biographical data. Please call Randy Stange or Allen Ostrom.

# Good Things Happening

BY WALLY BLACKWELL

President, 398th Bomb Group Association

Good things continue to happen with the 398th Association activities. One of these, our visit to the Czech Republic to attend their June 7, 2003 program to honor 398th airmen, is described elsewhere in this Flak News issue. But I must say here that our attendance and participation in that activity was a very heartwarming and much appreciated experience. (see page 7)

Now to cover some other recent and significant 398th events.

## Memorial Window Book

Lee Anne Bradley has completed a beautiful colored sixteen page booklet that plots the location of each name etched into the 398th Memorial Window at the St. George's Church in Anstey, England. The mapping was done from photographs taken by Randy Stange. Lee Anne has devised a unique overlay map that indexes the location of each name. In addition to the killed in action name placement, the booklet also matches the corresponding mission number, target, plane serial number and American Battle Monument Commission Cemetery burial information for every name. Some copies of this booklet have already been printed and these will be available in the 398th PX. (see PX page 11)

## Stole to Heritage

Reverend James Duvall's clerical stole that was presented to the 398th at our Portland reunion has been suitably framed and presented to the Mighty 8th Heritage Museum in Savannah, GA. The presentation ceremony was held on May 19, 2003 at the Museum. The stole was received by Michael Telzrow, Director of Research and Interpretation of the Museum from Lee Anne Bradley, our 398th Group Historian. Hal Weekley was present at the ceremony along with Teedy and me. (see page 3)

## Funds For Hertfordshire

We have sent \$1,000 to the Friends of the 398th to fund the scanning to CD-ROM of Vic Jenkins' cache of 398th photos donated in his memory by Yvonne. The computer work is being completed at the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) repository under the auspices of Wilfrid Dimsdale, with the good assistance of Goeff Rice and Les Dear. This funding initiates our HALS support for this project, and we will plan to fund the scanning of additional 398th historical records that we and others have already deposited there. This computerized information would then be available on CD-ROM and on our web sites.

## Web Page Bonanza

Last, but surely not least, is a very interesting development concerning those that view of our web page. Some of you may have heard me refer to [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org) as "by the 398th second generation and for the 398th second generation." This is really proving out. We have experienced an ever increasing number of inquiries for "information about my Dad." by those that find and view the page. It is very evident that the web page has stirred many memories and prompted very sincere questions about the 398th history. I am pleased to report that Lee Anne has been able to answer scores of these inquiries using her comprehensive computerized 398th database system.

## How Many More?

Please make an attempt to attend our next annual reunion at Covington, KY. How many more will we be able to have?

## REUNION:

# Camaraderie Is The Key For Success

*Cont from page 1*

visit there each year. There are hundreds of exhibits to see (and naturally the best of them all is the B-17). Also, in the adjacent Memorial Park, is the tree planted by the 398th during the Dayton meeting in 1989. The tour buses will stop there prior to entering the museum.

Also on the tour schedule (published in the April FLAK NEWS) will be visits to the world famous Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington; the Newport Aquarium; historic Lebanon, Ohio; the Cincinnati Museum Center; and dinner on one of the Riverboats.

Special guest at the reunion will be Greg Anderson, Executive Vice President of the EAA Aviation Foundation, sponsors of the Aluminum Overcast, which carries the colors of the 398th.

*(See accompanying story of "Timeless Voices of Aviation", which will be a feature of the Covington reunion).*

The reunion will be held at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel, 668-W. 5th St., Covington, KY, 41011. For reservations, call the hotel at 1-800-333-3333 and ask for the special 398th rate of \$80.00.

For reunion information, contact the reunion chairman, Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI, 48170-2870.

## Dues Next Up For Texas, Midwest

The 398th "life support" system (dues) continues this quarter with notices going out to members living in Texas and six Midwest states—Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa.

If the dues reminder is missing from your FLAK NEWS, just send your \$20 to Jim Haas, Perry, IA 50220-0163. Any added contributions for 398th support will be gladly accepted by Dues Manger Haas.

# "One Last Look" Is Tour Theme

It will be called, "One Last Look."

And why not, considering that the ages of those brash, confident Yanks who parked their B-17's at Nuthampstead almost 60 years ago are now, or very near, 80-ish.

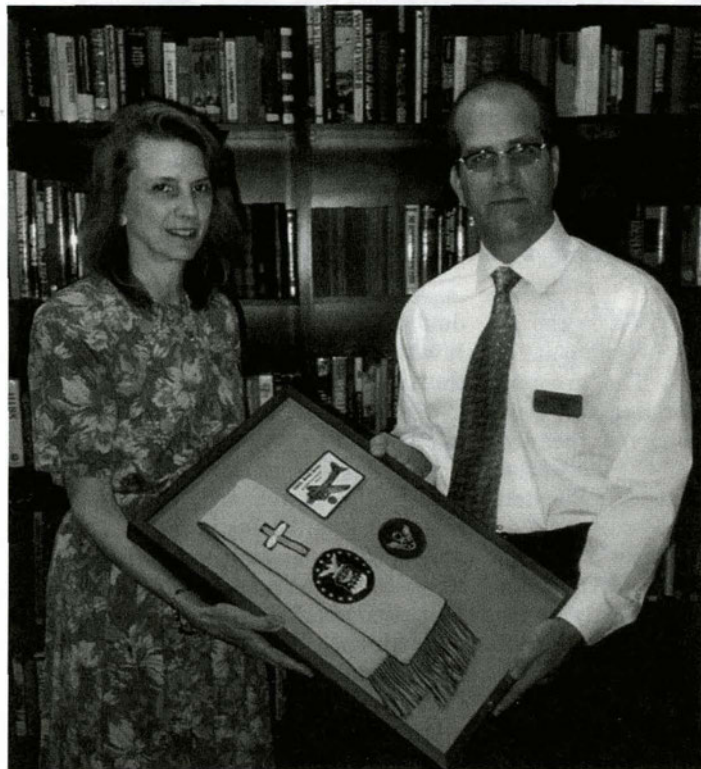
It's the England Tour of June, 2004, and it kicks off with a Channel crossing and a three-day visit to Normandy before finishing off with ceremonies and celebrations at Nuthampstead.

One Last Look at the 398<sup>th</sup> Memorial, Woodman Inn, St. George's Church, Anstey, Madingley, Duxford, Hertford and those little big towns of Barley, Barkway, Meesden, Buntingford, etc., etc. Names etched in the minds and hearts of those young men who came to England to save the world.

Barbara Fish and tour leader Allen Ostrom have been working for many months preparing just the right itinerary, selecting just the right hotels and just the right places to visit for that One Last Look.

And that One Last Look is also geared to attract many second and third generation sons and daughters, a hallmark of 398<sup>th</sup> tours and reunions.

The 2004 England Tour is scheduled for June 3-15, with hotel stops in Portsmouth, Villedieu-les-Poeles (France)



## Remembering The Chaplain

LEE ANN BRADLEY had the honor of presenting Chaplain James Duvall's clerical stoll to the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Heritage Museum last May. Receiving the framed stoll was Michael Telzrow, Director of Research and Interpretation for the museum. Lee Ann was accompanied to Savannah by Wally & Teedy Blackwell and Hal Weekley. Lee Ann serves the 398<sup>th</sup> Association as historian and data coordinator.

## SIGN ON NOW FOR TOUR

**Today is not too early to sign on for the 2004 England Tour, said tour leaders Barbara Fish and Allen Ostrom. A crunch for hotel rooms in Normandy is expected because many thousands will be coming for the D-Day celebrations. Hotel space in Portsmouth and Cambridge also needs to be addressed, plus space on the airlines. It's not too early!**

and Cambridge. The 13-day tour is priced at \$2945 (land only.) Airline prices from various gateway cities will be quoted by Barbara on an individual basis, thanks to the current instability of the airline industry.

Persons interested in the tour should call Barbara for a detailed brochure. She can be reached at 1-800-423-5454 or E-mail [thinc1@nwlink.com](mailto:thinc1@nwlink.com).

An alternate 7-day tour (Nuthampstead Only) can also be arranged. The land only price for this tour will be \$1395.

Since the tour was announced last April, the "count me in" list has reached 30, headed by President Wally Blackwell and several Board members. With tour announcements also being made on the 398<sup>th</sup> web site, it can be expected that this number might double by year's end. The site—[www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org)—has produced a rush of activity, especially on the part of "young 'uns" seeking information on their fathers' military careers...and Station 131.

## French Preparing For 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

"Each veteran must surely feel at home on Norman soil," is the message from Normandie Memoire 60 Anniversaire, said the chairman, Admiral Brac de La Perrier. "The presentation of a badge (insigne de poitrine) to each veteran present in Normandy during the summer of 2004 will be a token of our esteem."

The 398<sup>th</sup> tour party will be staying at Villedieu-les-Poeles, near Caen, on June 5-6-7, 2004, before crossing the Channel and moving on to Portsmouth and Nuthampstead.

There will be a special visit to Juno Beach, site of the D-Day landing of the Canadian forces. The mission for the 398<sup>th</sup> was listed as Courseulles-Sur-Mer. A memorial at Juno commemorates the landing of 21,000 Canadian soldiers...and 1,000 killed in action.

## 2004 England Tour Itinerary

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

# RAF Cadets In US Flight Schools

## *DuBoulay Learned Under “Most Brilliant Pilot”*

BY SIR ROGER DU BOULAY  
*Buntingford, England*

Under the “Arnold Scheme,” British RAF trainee pilots like myself were brought to the United States to be trained either in existing Air Corps or Naval Air Arm flying schools or at civilian schools commandeered for the purpose.

Initially, my group was assigned to the Naval Primary Training School at Pensacola, Florida. This meant we contributed the junior wing in an on-going US training program, the senior wing or “upper classmen” being all young Americans.

The test – if test it was, conscious or unconscious – was: could young Brits of our background adapt to this situation and in due course take over as “upper classmen” with a junior class of Americans? The answer proved to be “No.”

The reason for this was simple but profound. All Brits of my generation had been through the mill and had the nonsense knocked out of them by the age of 16, ei-



SIR ROGER DUBOULAY of Anstey, England, an RAF Cadet in 1941, learned to fly in the United States in a PT-17 Stearman, as did thousands of American airmen. DuBoulay went on to a multi-plane career with the RAF in World War II.

### **Some Brits Were Not Enthused By Student Hazing**

ther at their public school or in the factory or down in the (coal) pits. Americans, by contrast, had not. So the American system had devised methods of taking young men down a peg or two when they reached college through hazing and initiation ceremonies at the fraternities.

This system had been transferred, lock, stock, and barrel into the initial training schools of the armed forces. At Pensacola it was run by upper classmen, who had unlimited power over the junior classmen and exercised it with no interference by the officers.

All sorts of unusual (if not cruel) punishments were devised and imposed to punish the most trivial or non-existent offences by the juniors. “Sitting straight” and “eating square” at meals, “doing a dodo” at the parade ground, and frequent circuits of the perimeter on the double in “full kit” under the blazing Florida sun.

The trouble was the Brits had already been through the mill and saw no reason why they should do so again. Many of us were “quite old.” I was 18, but some were over 20 and had already done one or more tours on RAF combat operations as gunners before re-mustering as cadet pilots.

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### **Career Began In Oklahoma**

Sir Roger duBoulay may best be known to the Yanks as the Church Warden at St. George’s Church at Anstey. The “greeter” at the special services for England Tour visitors. And the man who spearheaded the drive to produce the 398<sup>th</sup> Memorial stained glass window that was dedicated in 2000.

But long before, in the days following the Battle of Britain, it was RAF Cadet Roger duBoulay, who began his flying career in Oklahoma (described by himself in the accompanying article).

He successfully finished his “Wings” (British Flying Training School) in the US with some 200 hours in the Stearman PT-17, Vultee BT-15, and the AT-6 Harvard.

Then back to Britain for “conversion courses,” learning to fly different aircraft (Advanced Flying Training) like the Oxford and Blenheim Ic and IV. Soon operational flights on Beauforts and Beafighters, with some experience in the Douglas A-20 Havoc and British Mosquito.

After this twin-engine time it was back to single engines on the Miles Master for

dual and soon to Hurricanes and Spitfires. It was here (Peterborough) he met up with the Americans again with their P-38’s and P-47’s. Together, the Brits and Yanks conducted dummy attacks on small formations of Fortresses and Liberators.

DuBoulay then headed East, with time in Israel (then Palestine) in Hurricanes and Spitfires and ultimately to the Far East (Burma and India). He was with a “Hurri-bomber” squadron from early 1944 through July, 45, leaving Burma the day Americans dropped the A-Bomb on Hiroshima.

During his time in Burma, duBoulay did stint in a B-25 Mitchell in close support of the British Army in the siege of Mandalay. His B-25 carried a 75 mm cannon in the nose, 14 50 calibre machine guns and eight 500-pound bombs.

After the war, duBoulay served part time in the RAF VR summer camps, flying AT-6 Harvards. He also was called up as second pilot on a York (Lancaster bomber conversion) for the Berlin Blockade.

# Inverted Loop In Stearman Was Obsession

*Continued from page 4*

They did not take kindly to being ordered inordinately around to make fools of themselves at the behest of brash young Americans much younger in experience and well as years.

The authorities saw sense and we were posted away rather abruptly.

The civilian school I attended at the time of Pearl Harbor was the British Flying Training School at Ponca City, Oklahoma. There all the cadets were British and all the staff American civilians. The latter had no conception of hazing, or discipline, for that matter. Except in the air! Flying was all that mattered. Flying was an art, a science, a passion, an obsession. The civilian staff's sole concern was to pass this on.

My own instructor at primary level was Jim Miles. Each instructor had 2-3 cadets assigned to him exclusively for the duration of the primary course, some 70 hours in PT-17's.

Miles had been a barn-stormer since the 1920's. Certainly the most brilliant pilot I have ever flown with. He had little truck with the theory or the book. For him, the seat of the pants was the beginning and end of flying. There was nothing he could not do with the P-17. Or almost nothing.

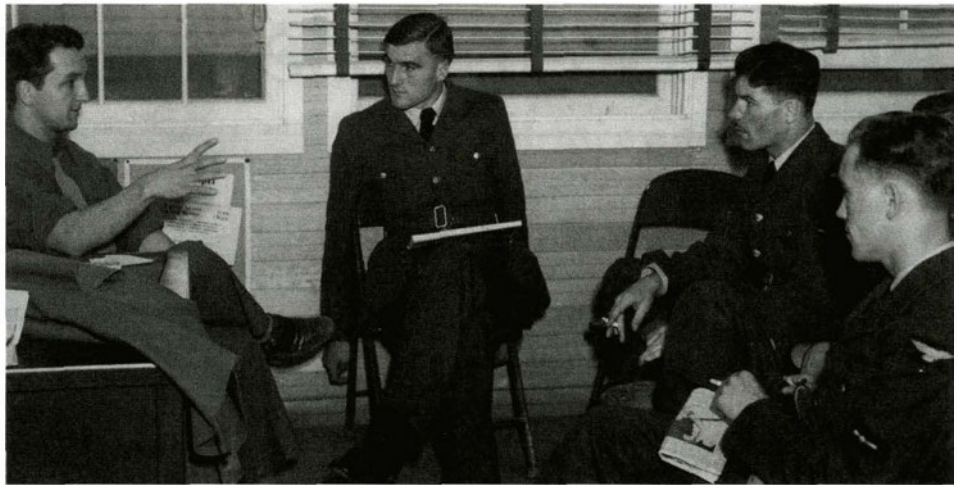
Jim's obsession at the time I started flying was to persuade the P-17 to complete an inverted loop. His endless experiments to this end were, in a way, the test that all his pupils had to undergo. Those who failed it (and a few did) simply disappeared from the course.

The testing started quite early in the proceedings. The initial two or three flights involved nothing more than climbing and gliding and simple Rate 1 turns. But about the fourth, after 30 minutes or so, Jim would say, "I've got her," take her up to 5,000 feet, shout, "hang on!" and push the nose relentlessly forward. Down we would go, vertical and then inverted, then as the engine cut with the negative G, further and further upwards upside down!

I recall getting as far as about 45 degrees up, never further. Inevitably, he would snap out. This inverted snap roll in a stall was a maneuver Jim particularly relished. He tinkered endlessly with the engine to get longer running under the negative G, but whatever combination of speed and power he extracted we never in my time completed the inverted loop. After 5-10 minutes of this Jim would call out, "OK, take her back to base and do a decent circuit and landing."

I should point out that the PT-17 then

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**AN AMERICAN CIVILIAN teacher (left) instructs RAF Cadet Roger duBoulay (center) and two fellow students in meteorology in Ponca City, Oklahoma in 1941. Note the informal dress of the US teacher as compared to the "full dress" attire of the British students. Many Brit Cadets were fresh from operational combat tours before arriving in the US for pilot training.**

## Knighthood Remains Honored And Popular In England

*"In England, knighthood is now an honor bestowed on individuals by the ruler in recognition for outstanding merit or service."*

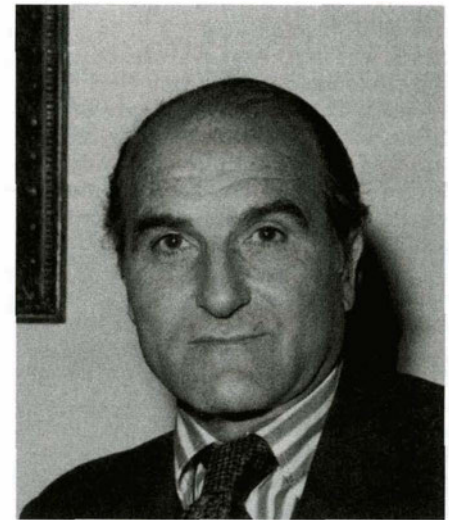
So it is stated in the World Book in describing "knighthood" dating back to 1066 when "French-mounted soldiers came to England after the Norman conquest."

Sir Roger duBoulay suggests that "the Armed Services and Civil Services in England have always been ill-paid but lavishly honored, with this 'knighthood' surviving six different orders of chivalry.

"One of these is in the personal gift of the Sovereign – the Victorian Order – and since I served The Queen personally as a member of her household staff for many years, I was lucky enough to be given by her a Knighthood in that order."

This carries with it a title for life of "Sir" instead of "Mr.," and the wife can call herself "Lady."

"Yes, this still happens in England and people still like it. It may seem silly, but it is cheaper than vast emoluments," said Sir Roger.



**SIR ROGER DUBOULAY  
UK Friend of the 398<sup>th</sup>**

## WWII Memorial Dedication Date Set

The Year 2004 will see the completion of the long overdue (59 years) World War II Memorial dedicated to all who served in the Armed Forces and Merchant Marine of the United States.

The construction site in Washington DC is located between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, at the eastern end of the Reflecting Pool.

The American Battle Monuments Commission has set Saturday, May 29, 2004--Memorial Day weekend--as the dedication date.

It can be expected that the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association will visit the site at some point during the group's reunion in the Washington DC area in September, 2004.

# “D-Day And Beyond”



*Briefing was at 0130; take off was at 0430. We had not been told until briefing, but we already knew it was the big day because there were so many planes already in the air. The ground was shaking and the air was throbbing. It was June 6 1944.*

*We were a lead crew and as we approached the bomb run, we could see the many ships below as it was now about 0600, and the fog had cleared. Our target was Courseulles, France. This was Juno Beach, and we were bombing in support of the Canadian landing forces. Clouds obscured the area, but we were using the new PFF (radar), and our group hit the target. We returned to base and prepared for a second mission, but it was cancelled as the landing forces were on shore at that time. This was a tremendous day. We all knew it was the beginning of the end of the war. It was D-Day.*

-HGC

**BY HERBERT G. COOPER**  
**Radio Operator, Rohrer Crew, 601<sup>st</sup> Squadron**

D-Day was over and the intensity of the bombing raids on Germany had been stepped up. In succession we had been to Hamburg, Berlin, back to Hamburg, with both of these cities being heavily defended.

Several weeks before, our crew had been chosen as one of the first lead crews to fly the new pathfinder B-17's, equipped with new radar equipment for bombing through the clouds. It was June 21, 1944, and we were preparing to strike Berlin again.

Awakened at 0200, we ate breakfast and were briefed at 0300. The plan of attack was to fly east over the Baltic Sea and circle back to approach Berlin from the east. This meant ten hours or more in the air with the possibility of being attacked by enemy planes at any time during about four hours of this time. This was in addition to heavy anti-aircraft fire over the target.

We were the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Consisting of 38 planes in two squadrons – lead and high. The mission had over 1000 planes, plus fighter support.

The early portion of the flight was fairly uneventful, and we made the turn west and began our bomb run. Flak (exploding pieces of anti-aircraft shells) was very heavy and being the lead plane of the squadron, we were first over the target. All primary navigation, bomb sighting and radio communications back to command in England was performed by the lead plane. As radio operator, I handled all messages to and from command.

The lead plane drops smoke trailer bombs with its bomb load, and all the squadrons drop at the marker. We had just dropped our bombs and were preparing to peel out of the flak area when the pilot rang the emergency bell and called on the intercom to prepare to bail out at the second bell. We had been hit, and the plane was on fire.

The bomb bay doors were still open and the quickest exit for me. At the second alarm, I entered the bomb bay, sat down on the catwalk and hesitated. I was

thinking that when I leave the plane, I leave US territory in the middle of Germany. Then I heard some creaking and groaning from the damaged wing and jumped.

There is no training for jumping from a disabled plane, but we were instructed to free fall before pulling the rip cord. At 33,000 feet, it could take 20-30 minutes to descend if the parachute opened immediately.

When the ground appeared to be about 8-10,000 feet below, I rolled on my back (we had chest packs) and pulled the rip cord. The one thing going through my mind was, I hope this “thing” opens.

Over Berlin the chute opened with a snap and I experienced sudden deceleration. The pull of an opening chute is much less after you have accelerated to maximum free fall speed (about 125-130 MPH) than it is if the chute is opened immediately which gives a much stronger jerk.

In a military chute of this type you will descend at about 30 MPH which means at 10,000 ft. you hit the ground in about 3.8 minutes. I saw a clearing or small park toward which I was drifting and thought I was going to make it when I suddenly hit a red tile roof of a two story building. My chute fell on one side of the roof peak and I slipped part way down the other.

Discarding the chute and harness, I descended to an adjoining one story section looking for a way down. I went back across the roof to the other side, saw no way, and coming back to the first location saw a German policeman pointing a pistol at me saying “Kommin Sie hier (you come here)”. He pointed to a drain pipe which I slid down and was taken several blocks to a large building with a num-

*Continued on page 8*

## Time In POW Camps Told By Survivor

Four of the first seven 398<sup>th</sup> crews to be lost in the Air Battle over Europe were shot down over Berlin. That included two squadron commanding officers—Judson Gray of the 603<sup>rd</sup> and Leo Killen of the 601<sup>st</sup>.

On June 21, 1944, with Killen leading the group to Berlin with Richard (Rip) Rohrer the lead pilot, the plane was crippled by flak on the bomb run and all 10 men bailed out. All survived the war in PW camps and ultimately returned home.

This is the story of one of these –radio operator Herbert Cooper—a story he has told to others in his home town of Indian Trail, NC and has been encouraged to share with others.

FLAK NEWS is proud to print his story, in this issue and the next.

The 601 crew consisted of Killen, group leader; Rohrer, pilot; Harvey Kramer, navigator; Clarence Franks, bombardier; Theo Cantrell, Pathfinder operator; Douglas Chisnell, engineer gunner; Cooper, radio; Richard Greene, waist; Frank Henning, waist; and Philip Jones, tail gunner.



↑ 1944 HERBERT COOPER 2003 ↓



# 398<sup>th</sup> Tour Is “Czeched” Out

## Six From US See Trio of Dramas

It was held in Slany, Czech Republic, and billed as AIR STARS 2003. It was to honor Czech and Allied airmen of World War II. And that included the 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, which was represented by Wally Blackwell and his wife, Teedy; Andrew Gurba and his wife, Rosemary; their daughter, Susan Hubacher; and FLAK NEWS editor Allen Ostrom.

The spectacular June 7 event at the Slany airfield then “spilled over” to Kovarska the following day for a visit to the “Museum of Air Battle over the Ore Mountains on September 11, 1944. An old school converted into a display of memories of another “9/11” event of another era.

And then the following day, June 9, the 398<sup>th</sup> tour “spilled over” again, this time to Pilsen to present a wreath at nearby Litice to remember the 602 Allen Ferguson crew that perished there on The Last Mission—April 25, 1945.

It was so much in so few days, and it left the US visitors slightly speechless and slightly exhausted as one drama upon another unfolded during the troika of events.

Tears fell unashamedly as Andy and Rosemary Gurba gazed on the beautiful memorial at Slany bearing the name of Gurba’s radio operator brother and seven others on the 603 Donald Christensen crew. Only tail gunner Selmer Haakenson survived, but living on are the memories, thanks to the energies of men like Milan Spineta, of Slany, the bombastic AIR STARS organizer and his youthful genius counterpoint, Jan Zdiarsky of Kovarska.

Zdiarsky was the “point man” for AIR STARS (along with his vintage Skoda automobile appropriately called “War Weary”). And he is also the heart and soul of the “Air War” project, along with his associates, Peter Frank of Kovarska and Jaromir Kohout of Pilsen. Much of Kohout’s WW II crash findings are at Kovarska. He and his brother, Martin, head up the Pilsen contingent called SLET.

Gurba, on the day his 398<sup>th</sup> brother, Elmer, was killed on March 2, 1945,



**Elmer Gurba and his wife, Rosemary, were on the Czech Republic tour and saw the memorial at Slany dedicated to the Christensen crew, on which his brother Elmer, was among the eight killed. They were both deeply moved at seeing the memorial and being a part of the accompanying AIR STARS 2003 ceremonies.**

was in Germany with the Army’s 13<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.

Special guests at AIR STARS included the Czech Ex-RAF Members Association (some now in their 90’s); Slany mayor Ivo Kubik; Czech Army HQ Chief, Gen. Lt. Ing. Pavel Stefka; and US Air Attache Col. Ed Gallagher (who was flying KC-135’s at the time the squadron was carrying 398<sup>th</sup> colors); and Middle Bohemia Region Governor Ing. Petr Bendl.

Also starring were members of the Czech Army helicopter rescue team and an aerobatic pilot. Both put on incredible demonstrations over the Slany airfield.

Inside the hanger, members of the RAF veterans association (and 398<sup>th</sup> veterans) signed autographs for admiring Czech civilians. And then enjoyed lunch highlighted by a pig roast!

After “all that” came the music of Ferdinand Havlik of Prague. This was truly Big Band at its best and reminiscent of Glenn Miller, Artie

## Honors From “AIR STARS”

Shaw, Ray Anthony, Harry James, Artie Shaw, etc. Havlik, at 75, is a skilled clarinetist who played in the Benny Goodman Band in the US. His female soloist, Eva Dostalova-Emigerova, was superb with such American gems as “Sentimental Journey” and “Paper Moon” along with several Czech classics.

The band’s closing number, “Auld Lang Syne,” afforded an opportunity for the FLAK NEWS editor to dance with the statuesque Czech singer.

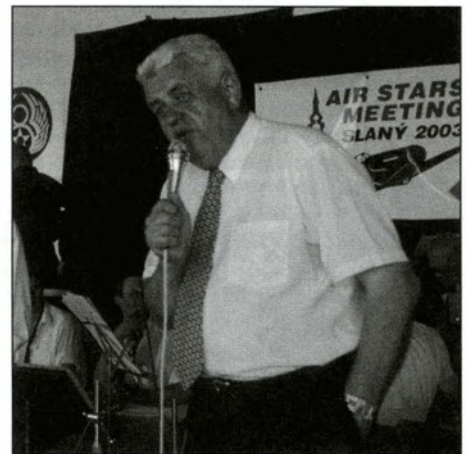
Ah, those Big Band memories.

President Blackwell responded to the welcome greetings at Slany, Kovarska, Litice and Pilsen, each time praising the Czech people for continuing to remember the Allies (including the 398<sup>th</sup>) for their World War II efforts in liberating the Czech people from Nazi tyranny.

(There are many memorials to Allied servicemen killed in action during WW II in the Czech Republic).

Blackwell received a huge, “God Give You Luck” ceramic jug from AIR STARS, plus a National Hockey

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**MILAN SPINETA was the driving force behind the spectacular AIR STARS 2003 ceremonies in Slany, Czech Republic, attended by six 398<sup>th</sup> members headed by president Wally Blackwell. Former Czech RAF airmen shared guest billing with the 398<sup>th</sup>, well known in the Czech lands for several previous visits (during and after World War II).**

# D-DAY AND BEYOND: "Kommen Sie Hier"

## Prayer Took Over From Depression

*Continued from page 6*

ber of angry citizens walking along shaking their fists. Here I was slapped around some, searched again for a weapon and later taken to another building.

I was moved some distance across Berlin by truck and taken to the basement of a large building which was shored up with heavy timbers. I was here the rest of the day down in a partially walled up corner with many curious people, from various offices, I suppose, coming to see the captured American flyer. One young secretary saw my parachute lying on a box and came on in past the guard to feel the silk, wanting to have it very much it seemed.

The guard watching me saw me looking at my watch, which had to be exact to the second to keep the radio message schedule. He pulled out his watch, which with German precision, was also exactly on time. This seemed to absolutely amaze him! He thought that was something very great and made some comments about it.

Later in the afternoon I was taken to a military transport truck which was picking up captured airmen from the Berlin area. Here I was reunited with my very good friend and crew member, Curtis Greene, who was a waist gunner. His chute had caught on a scaffolding and while hanging there someone punched him in the mouth. His upper lip was cut nearly all the way through.

We ended up at Templauf Airdrome where we were relieved of all belongings both military and personal. All we had was our uniforms without a jacket. There were probably 25 or 30 of us there. We were kept in a basement that night and given a piece of black bread and butter to eat.

The next day we were taken to the Luftwaffe mess to eat about noon where there were a number of other P.O.W.s. After eating we boarded a passenger train which we later found was going to Frankfurt. This was a processing center for Air Force P.O.W.s.

Here we were questioned but not very aggressively. We received a small cardboard suitcase containing a uniform shirt, pants, a field jacket and heavy overcoat and hat all sent through the Red Cross. We were here only a few days when the realization of where we were hit us and deep depression set in. After much prayer, I finally accepted my situation. When we left a few days later, I felt fully confident I would someday return home.

Before leaving Frankfurt, our personal belongings such as a watch, ring, very

small pocket knife, and billfolds were returned to us. All money and I.D. was taken but my family and fiance's pictures were returned. I had also put two American \$10 bills in a secret pocket of my billfold which they did not find.

We were loaded on a train of cattle cars which was headed for Stalag Luft IV at Txchowo, Poland. While en route we were put on a siding in a section of the Berlin rail yards and while here an air raid took place. The guards locked us in the cars and took off for a safer place.

It was a tense twenty or thirty minutes before the air raid was over, but that area was not a target for the day. The guards returned and let us off the train for a few minutes break before the train continued on its way.

We arrived in Belgard, Poland, where we were unloaded and marched five miles or more to the prison camp at TYCHOWO.

This was a typical German prison camp much like the one shown in the movie *The Great Escape* (a true story) with Steve McQueen. To prevent digging under the barracks, the barracks in our compound were off the ground about two feet. Each room contained eight double decker bunks, a small heating stove, a table, and four chairs. Before we left here, the bunks became triple decker.

Life in the prison camp was generally pretty monotonous. There was a head count each morning and evening in formation on the center field of the compound. We were locked in the barracks about 8:00 PM and lights out at 10:00 PM.

The camp consisted of four compounds with two more being built, originally laid out to handle about 1500 prisoners each. There were 10 barracks per compound with 10 rooms per barracks measuring about 18 ft. by 12 ft.

Food parcels were sent in through the Red Cross and were to be distributed one per man each week but generally only permitted one per two men. Each parcel contained one can of Spam, a can of corned beef, liver paste, powdered milk, a can of margarine, bags of raisins or prunes, crackers, three packs of cigarettes, a bar of soap, and a small can of jam. The German rations consisted primarily of potatoes and barley cereal with a small amount of black bread, and occasionally some corned beef or salami.

My friend Curt and I decided to keep in shape so we walked the perimeter twice a day, around and around near the guard rail which was about 20 feet from the barbed wire fence. Crossing the guard rail

could get you shot.

Later in the summer a man did go out of his head, crossed the guard rail, and started to climb the barbed wire fence. After calling "Halt!" several times, a tower guard shot him in the shoulder. He was taken away to a hospital.

At Christmas time they let us out late in the evening with the flood lights on and we played games and celebrated our Christmas, far from our loved ones and the country we loved and had sworn to protect.

*To be continued in the October, 2003 issue of FLAK NEWS.*

*Editor's Note -- Upon returning home from the war, Herb Cooper pursued a career as an electronics systems engineer in Indiana. Later, he became a regional sales manager for Gem Signal Corporation and today lives at Indian Trail, NC 28079.*

## "Atmospheric Flak" Damages B-17, B-24

The Collings Foundation, which supports both a B-17 and B-24 on nation-wide tours, had the misfortune of having both of its WW II restored bombers in the wrong place at the wrong time on April 5, 2003.

Parked at the Addison Airport near Dallas-Fort Worth, the two planes were hit by hail during an unforeseen storm. Not just "hail," but hail the size of golf balls.

The fabric control surfaces on both planes, such as the ailerons and elevators, were destroyed. And there was "significant" damage to the sheet metal caused by the "atmospheric flak."

An "Emergency Recovering Fund" has been established for repairs- PO Box 248, Stow, MA 01775.

## Hilliard, Bradley On "AO" Flights

George Hilliard, who did his share of ground mechanics on the B-17 during the war, will be an honored guest aboard the Aluminum Overcast in Cincinnati on August 9. His flight takes place at Lunken Field, Cincinnati's Municipal Airport, at 10:30 AM. On August 26, 9:30 am, historian Lee Anne Bradley will be on an "AO" flight at Albany, NY.





**LITICE MAYOR Karel Dezort (left) is joined by Pilsen's Jaromir Kohout (right) as Allen Ostrom and Wally Blackwell prepare to present this giant floral wreath in memory of the 602 Ferguson crew killed on The Last Mission.**

*Continued from page 7*

League shirt from Spineta, a reminder that Slany's favorite son, Jaromir JAGR, plays for the Washington professional hockey team. The shirt carried the number "398" on the sleeves.

Garba was again clearly touched during a brief ceremony at Lidice. Kohout presented him with a plaque bearing a 50-caliber bullet and pieces of plexiglass taken from the Christensen crash site. Later, the plaque was scrutinized by Prague Airport customs officials and marked "weapon."

Lidice (near Prague), now a memorail site, was calm and peaceful during the visit. The evening shadows reflected a quiet beauty across the flower gardens, belying the ordeal that took place there in World War II when the Nazis leveled the city and killed most of its inhabitants.

Mayor Karel Dezort was joined by Skoda Museum director Vladislav Kratky at the floral presentation at Litice (near Pilsen), there to watch Blackwell and Ostrom present a huge wreath in memory of the Ferguson crew members who were killed there during the raid on the Pilsen Skoda Works in 1945.

Jaromir and Martin Kohout arranged for the "heavy-weight" wreath, and also arranged for the nine-passenger van to transport the 398<sup>th</sup> visitors to and from their hotel in Kladno, some 50 miles from Pilsen.

At a reception at the Hotel Continental, Mila Raboch of the Pilsen mayor's office told the 398<sup>th</sup> visitors—

"You are all invited to come to Pilsen in May, 2005. We will be celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our city's liberation from Nazi occupation. It will be a big celebration, just as some of you might remember from 1995." The 398<sup>th</sup> was represented by 13 veterans and eight family members in that celebration, the same year that Pilsen celebrated its 700<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Adding to the invitation on behalf of the Hotel Continental were three members of the Reception staff—Jitka, Rose and Renata.

**JAN ZDIARSKY is the man behind the "Air War" museum in the Czech city of Kovarska. He was also a big part of the AIR STARS program in Slany, along with organizer Milan Spineta.**

## **British Cop Question:**

# **What Was The Airfield Like During World War II?**

**BY JON VINE**

**Royston, Hertfordshire, England**

I am a police officer based at Royston and part of my patrol area is the old airfield at Nuthampstead, then known by the American Air Force as Station 131.

I am desperate to get some photos of the site as it appeared while in operation in 1943-45.

I have spent many hours there looking through the woods and exploring what parts of the airbase are left. I imagine what it must have looked like 60 years ago! I often sit there when it's quiet and enjoy the peace that area now enjoys.

The silence is almost deafening some days and it makes your mind wander as you begin to think about what was happening there in World War II. I always take time and think about those men that didn't make it home.

On Christmas Day just past a colleague and I went to the airfield in the late evening before midnight and said our thanks. We even sent up some firework rockets to honour those men. A bit strange, some may think, but we believed the boys would have thought it appropriate.

I have a huge interest in the airfield, but sadly the history books and internet do not supply much information.

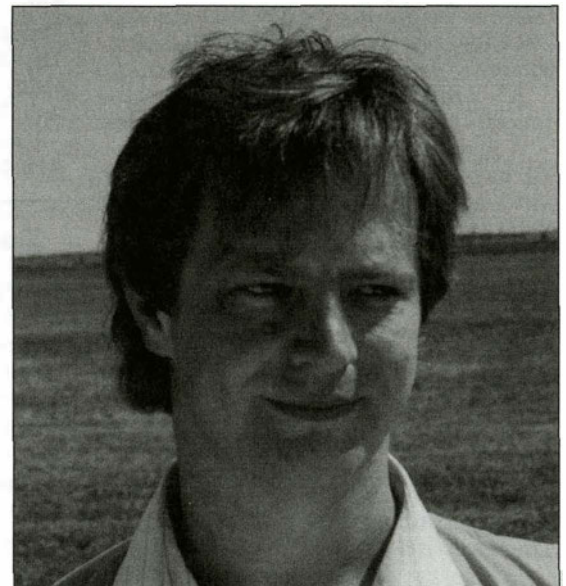
*Ed's Note: This should improve as [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org) continues to develop coverage on Station 131.*

It was with great pride that I attended the 2002 Remembrance Services at the Nuthampstead Memorial, and then the following day at St. George's Church at Anstey. I met some of the aircrew and thoroughly enjoyed talking to them about their incredible adventures.

I am working on plans for placing a framed collection of Station 131 photos in front of the Royston Police Station. This way the members of the local community will see for years to come the amazing piece of history they have on their doorstep.

And even now I am beginning to look forward to June, 2004, when many of these men will return to the old base for "One Last Look."

Members wishing to contribute WW II-era photos of the old base can send them to John Vine, c/o Royston Police Department, Royston, Herts SG8 5TF, England.



# Du Boulay: A PT-17 Snap Roll At 50 Feet

Continued from page 5

was fitted with a lap-seat belt. You soon learned to belt up tight. I still recall the first inverted loop when with a loose belt I found myself upside down and at least 18 inches out of the cockpit, quite unable to remember, but thinking frantically about where the D-ring was on my parachute.

So the beginner I was, to put it mildly, in a blind whirl, not knowing whether he was coming or going, and quite often in a cloud, when told to take over and find base.

Jim's obsession with inverted loops meant that he was a master of nil, a negative G, long before astronauts were invented.

On my first navigation exercise, I told Jim I had dropped my pencil. Not a word was said, but suddenly to my astonishment my pencil rose (with a good amount of other debris) from the depths of the cockpit and hovered within a few inches of my right hand. It took a long time for me to recover my wits and grab it. Quite delicate control, all done, of course, by the seat of the pants.

Similarly on our first night-flying exer-



cise. This took place at a satellite airfield, in pitch darkness except for a line of dozen kerosene lamps as flarepath and the red and green signaling lamps. The chief flying instructor, with whom Jim had a long-standing feud, was acting as ground controller. "We'll fox him," said Jim as we took off on my first-ever night flying exercise. He brought the PT-17 smoothly into the circuit UPSIDE DOWN, so that all the ground control could see was a green light, not the red of the port wing which they expected on a left-hand circuit. How long it took the CFI to figure out that it wasn't a PT-17 flying backwards, but one upside down, I don't know.

However, it took me some time to get used not only to the inverted circuit but to the snap-roll at less than 50 feet on the approach so that we did at least touch down the right way up. (And, being Jim, on immaculate three points, velvet smooth, within feet of the first flare).

I do remember that when it came time to taking over for myself, first dual, and then on the same night, solo, the more ordinary hazards and difficulties of night flying seemed easily surmountable. Some such thought was, I don't doubt, somewhere in the back of Jim's mind. For not only was he a born pilot, he was a born instructor.

I hope you can accept that these were genuine tests, albeit not official ones. I just scraped past. Not all did. And what I must add is that I was never afterwards ever fazed by anything that happened in the air, or any attitude the aircraft got itself into in the heat of the moment. This is no small asset for an operational fighter pilot.

But I never attempted an inverted loop on my own.

## Letters, Letters And A Poem

"I read with interest the letter from Ralph Ambrose on the German bomb that fell at Dassels. I agree with him that it was a V-1, not a V-2.

"I was on Home Guard with Horace Cook outside the Adam and Eve Pub on Hay Street when it came over and carried on. When we heard another V-1 coming we went to the Pub and told the Americans to takeover. The bomb landed a mile away at Coles Park.

"Five minutes later a third V-1 came over and it exploded in the direction of Dassels. We quickly went there to find the last Bus from Hertford with nearly all its windows blown out.

"A V-2 did fall one afternoon in the lane opposite the Adam and Eve at Hay Lodge.

"A new tin roof had just been put on a big barn at Hobb's Lane, near Dassels, when eight bombs dropped near there. None exploded and before the Army removed them my workmate Percy Hart and I had to cut the wheat binder over them as the wheat could not be wasted. There was an Army dump at Buntingford so we believe that was what the Germans were looking for (very near Station 131.)

"I am now the only remaining member of Broughing Home Guard. (I still have my Gas Mask).

**Digger Webb, Buntingford, Herts SG9 OBW, England.**

"Thanks for the April issue of FLAK NEWS. I really enjoyed the tribute to M/ Sgt. Rohrbach and all the crew chief types. Good to see the guys in the trenches get some recognition. If it were not for them..."

**Robert Chapman, Orange Park, FL 32073.**

*Ed's Note: Chapman is a retired AF major with 4F fighter experience in Viet Nam.*

Giving thanks for all I have received  
And to all who help me on my path  
Those here with me now  
Those before  
Those yet to come  
I truly feel the richness of abundance  
And I know the whole is greater than the sum  
**Cate Ludlam, Norwich, NY,  
11732-1036**

Thanks so much for your article in the April FLAK NEWS on Bruce's passing. I know he would have appreciated your nice comments. The September reunion in Covington sounds great. You may be interested in knowing that I was born there and visit there to renew many happy memories."

**Mrs. Bruce (Betty) Daily,  
Sacramento, CA 95864-5640**

"Dear Wilfrid (Dimsdale): I have received and paid the annual monument maintenance fee to the American Battle Monuments Commission. The report states that your contract is being renewed for next year and the ABMC evaluation of the Memorial site conducted in March gave the overall condition of the monument and grounds an 'excellent' rating.

"We all thank you for the great care and attention you so faithfully give the site. You are appreciated!"

**Wally Blackwell, 398<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group president.**

"Mother and I just reviewed the Anstey Window Booklet and we love it! What patience and work it must have taken to produce. You did a fine job, Lee Anne and Randy. We also love the new 398<sup>th</sup> web site. It is a work of art. Thanks to you all for the hard work. You are the best!"

**Karen Neff, Lexington, VA  
24450.**

"Please God, save my life! I don't wish to die because I know nothing about life."

- **Anonymous gunner from the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group as he fell to earth without a parachute. He crashed through the glass roof of a railroad station, was treated for multiple injuries by a German doctor and survived. (Thank you, Lord).**

# BRIEF-things

**Wilfrid Dimsdale** is happy to report that the B-17 Sally B from Duxford did a fly-past over Madingley on the US Memorial Day last May... other signs of the times – the 95<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group (First B-17's over Berlin) will vote this year on dissolving their Association following their 2004 reunion; if this passes, they will assign all their assets to their (second & third generation) 95<sup>th</sup> Memorials Foundation, Inc... The Iraqi war, which introduced us to the “embedded” press coverage, also came up with “collateral damage”, “shock & awe”, “decapitation” and “target of opportunity”; the latter, however, is hardly a new phrase, witness the many “TO’s” from “our” WW II air war, and we did it without “embedded” press coverage... Our 398<sup>th</sup> Association is “alive and well,” according to the latest financial reports, but not so with some other B-17 groups, one admitting that “only half of our members are dues paying and we are neglecting our second generation members”... The Editor admits to an April “www” boot: the sidebar on Page 1 said “dot COM” when it should have read “[www.398th.ORG](http://www.398th.ORG)” which was corrected in the story on Page 4... (oh, for a new pencil sharpener)... thinking ahead, **William Tordoff** decided to contribute his WW II 398<sup>th</sup> (Armament) uniform to the museum in Clearwater, Florida... a note from **Leta Seal** reminds that a flag honoring her late husband, **Charles**, had indeed been flown on the tall pole at Nuthampstead and that his name should be added to the FLAK NEWS’ list (April 2003); **Leta** and her two daughters have visited there several times, calling it “quite an experience”... **Barbara Fish** is busy with arrangements for our 2004 Tour to England and Normandy, but at a new Seattle location; her old building was set ablaze by a transient cooking a mid-night barbeque—same telephone number, however, 1-800-423-5454 or [thincl@nwlink.com](mailto:thincl@nwlink.com)... UK friend **Frederick Seaman** (living in Florida) recently organized a visit to Sugar Hill Sampler Museum in New Hampshire, where there is display honoring **Paul Rich**, killed over Merseburg; the visitors included pilot **Bill Dean** and communications officer **Arthur Kenney** of the 603<sup>rd</sup>; **Seaman** presented the museum copy of the 2000 Anstey Memorial Window dedication program; the museum is operated by **Rich’s** cousin... a copy of this July issue of FLAK NEWS will be sent to **Queen Elizabeth** at Buckingham Palace, London; previous issues have been sent, too, and the editor has received responses, thank you... folks who have had their telephone Area Codes changed recently should note the change on their next Dues card (or notify the FLAK NEWS editor)... no foolin’ folks, the Anstey Window/KIA booklet created by **Lee Anne Bradley** and **Randy Stange** is really a work of art...and love; get yours from **Joe & Rozanne’s PX**... It is derelict, decrepit, and deserted, but remains of the old tower at Bovingdon, England has been targeted by a few zealots from the 92nd Bomb Group for restoration; it was a CCRC (Combat Crew Replacement Center) until the 92<sup>nd</sup> moved on to Podington... While delivering the Chaplain’s stoll to the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Heritage Museum, Lee Anne ordered a memorial plaque in memory of her 601 engineer-gunner dad, Frederick C. Bradley... Our Czech Republic friend, **Jan Zdiarsky**, not only manages the Kovarska “Air War” museum, but he also works in computer graphics while pursuing a Ph.D. in water science at Prague University.

# 398th Bomb Group PX

Please circle squadron, size and/or color choices.

Qty.	CLOTHING	Cost	Total
___	Cap - Fits All Sizes 600, 601, 602, 603, Group	\$8.00 ea	_____
___	Jackets - Navy, B-17 on Front S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$25.00 ea	_____
___	T-Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$10.00 ea	_____
___	Sweat Shirts - B-17 on Front Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$15.00 ea	_____
___	Golf Shirts Group Logo on Front Navy or White - M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea	_____
___	Turtleneck Shirt - B-17 on Collar White - S, M, L, XL; Navy - S, M; Black - L, XL	\$20.00 ea	_____
<b>JEWELRY</b>			
___	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	_____
<b>CD'S &amp; VIDEOS</b>			
___	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	_____
<b>LOGO PATCHES</b>			
___	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	_____
<b>PHOTOS</b>			
___	Booklet w/Location of Names On Anstey Win.	\$10.00 ea	_____
___	Anstey Window Post Card	\$2.00 ea	_____
___	Photo (11x17) Anstey Window with list of 398th Fallen Comrades	\$4.00 ea	_____
___	Photo (Control Tower) Station 131	\$2.00 ea	_____
___	Photo (398th Memorial) Nuthumpstead	\$2.00 ea	_____
___	Photo (8X10 Aluminum Overcast)	\$2.00 ea	_____
___	Print (15 x 20) “Clearing & Colder”	\$30.00 ea	_____
___	Print (11 x 17) “Clearing & Colder”	\$15.00 ea	_____
<b>MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS</b>			
___	B-17 Sun Catcher	\$10.00 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	_____
___	Golf Towel, White w/Black B-17	\$7.00 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	_____
___	Round Coaster with B-17 Aluminum Overcast in color	\$5.00 ea	_____

**Cost Of Items Ordered** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Delivery And Handing Add \$4.00,**  
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**New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168-6168**