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

VOL. 22 NO. 3

FLAK NEWS

JULY 2007



— Photo by Ozzie Osborn

The 398th Bomb Group and 55th Fighter Group Memorials at Nuthampstead

Editor Moves

ALLEN OSTROM has moved his Seattle residence and FLAK NEWS office to the Suburbs. He can now be reached at this new address Shoreline, WA98155-6815.

Reunion Details

The 2007 Reunion will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, on November 28-29-30 and December 1. General information and details along with information on the several scheduled tours appear on Page 4. The Official Registration form is on Page 5.

Memorials Given To Battle Monuments

BY WALLY BLACKWELL
President, 398th BGMA

The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) now owns the 398th Bomb Group and the 55th Fighter Group monuments and their land property at Nuthampstead, England. All necessary paperwork was completed for the property transfer as of April 2007.

This action has been a long-term goal of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial

Ralph Hall Dies

Just days after President Wally Blackwell personally read this column to Ralph Hall on the phone, praising him for his diligent Memorial work, Ralph died on June 30. "After a long fight, his heart just gave out," said the president.

Association. It frees the 398th from a continuing responsibility to provide for the property upkeep and maintenance, but more importantly, assures us that it will be maintained correctly into perpetuity. The price of this action was the establishment of a \$60,000 Trust Fund which will be owned and administered by the ABMC. The ABMC letter shown on Page 2 gives the details of the official agreement.

The funds for this action were taken from our own 398th Monument Maintenance Fund managed for years by Ralph Hall. I have discussed the details

Continued on Page 2



Established by Congress 1923

THE AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500
2300 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

February 5, 2007

Wallace H. Blackwell
President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

I am pleased to inform you that, after careful inspection of your memorial and review of your application, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) will accept the 398th Bomb Group Memorial located in Nuthampstead, Hertfordshire, England, into the Commission's Memorial Trust Fund Program (MTFP) upon the completion of the following:

- The formal transfer by the 398th Bomb Group Association of all the Association's rights and interests in the memorial to ABMC. The responsibility for drafting of transfer documents rests with the Association. The draft transfer documents should be submitted to ABMC for review at your earliest convenience.
- The performance of all required routine maintenance previously identified by our inspection of the monument in October 2006.
- Submitting to me a check in the amount of \$60,000 payable to the American Battle Monuments Commission, which ABMC shall deposit into the MTFP of the United States Treasury. The \$60,000 will be invested in interest-bearing securities of the United States Government to fund future maintenance of the monument.

Once the monument enters the MTFP, we will inform our European Region headquarters, which will assume responsibility for the care of the monument. Our staff at the Cambridge American Cemetery, located near Madingley, England, will inspect the monument periodically and ensure that it remains in excellent condition.

By placing the memorial in our MTFP, you are ensuring that the memory of the heroic efforts of the 398th Bomb Group During World War II is preserved for future generations. We look forward to receiving the land title and funding and to a long and continuing relationship with your association.

Sincerely,

William J. Leszczynski, Jr.
Brigadier General, US Army (Ret)
Executive Director and Chief

Operating Officer

ABMC Now Owns Our Memorials

Continued from Page 1

of how this ownership transfer action would come about at past 398th annual reunions and in previous FLAK NEWS issues. There will be no change in the property's present maintenance procedure. It will be accomplished as in the past, under the direction of the Superintendent of the ABMC American Cemetery at Madingley located near Cambridge, England.

This is a proper time for me to commend Ralph Hall for his more than twenty years of diligent and outstanding work concerning the 398th property ownership in England. Ralph completed all the legal paperwork for the 398th to accept the property given to us by the Dimsdale family in 1988. During the intervening years Ralph has more than doubled our membership donations to the maintenance fund by astute but conservative investments.

During the past six months Ralph has worked with an English solicitor of hire, and with various levels of ABMC management to complete this task. As in the past, Ralph was assisted with his 398th endeavors by his good wife, Marjorie.

THANK YOU Ralph for another 398th mission, WELL ACCOMPLISHED!

— Wally



RALPH HALL
Thanks For A Job Well Done

Memorial Day At Madingley:

Eighth Remembered ... In The Rain

BY OZZIE OSBORN
Cambridge, England

The alarm went off at 0730 on May 28, 2007. That pleasant ring was replaced by the howl of a wind straight off the Fens, rain beating on the bedroom windows, making the thought of venturing outside most undesirable.

This was Bank Holiday weather exactly as forecast the night before. The cheerful forecaster said that the wind chill, coming from the north, would make it feel like minus two degrees, at the end of May. But who cares about the weather. It was Memorial Day at Madingley.

Fast forward to 1015. We duly parked, donned raincoats, opened umbrellas and walked to the undercroft of the Memorial Chapel to check if the 398th Bomb Group Wreath had arrived as promised. The wind was so strong, the rain was incessant, it was unbelievably cold. I fully accepted the minus two wind chill. It seemed that half of the USAF were in the undercroft, all sorting Wreaths. It seemed prudent to trust the Florist's word and go find somewhere to sit.

We saw so many friends, all with two things in common at this moment — wet and wetter.

Young Wreath Bearers Were Also Cold, Wet

The plastic seats were all in position, running the whole length of the "Wall of the Missing," from the Chapel to the mighty flagpole. The flag was cracking and snapping in the high winds. What a clever design making the seats with a dipped area in which to place one's derriere, how quickly they filled with rainwater, even when one sat on them.

Arthur from the ABMC confirmed that the flypasts were all cancelled — understandably.

I have seen the numbers attending Memorial Day increase over the years since I first started paying my respects in 1971. This year was no exception to last year in terms of numbers turning up, despite the foul weather, all there to remember those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice. Sitting there in heavy rain was as nothing compared to what these young people had gone through. All gave some; some gave all.

Posting of Colours — National Anthems — Welcome Remarks — Opening Remarks — Invocation — Addresses — Recognition of Veterans. Wow! The 305th Bomb Group was there in force, they had just unveiled and dedicated their Memorial at Chelveston on Saturday. Hey, if I was cold what must these tough old veterans be feeling like? But they all stood up along with others, from the 355th Fighter Group, plus a few more proud Veterans scattered throughout the large crowd. My goodness! We all give them such a well deserved round of applause.

Time to present the Floral Decorations. Wind and rain continued unabated. The order was given for the Wreath Bearers



to proceed from down by the Chapel. As they marched past in a single line, with a drumbeat accompaniment, I saw the 398th Wreath being carried with a feeling of much relief. On the command we all walked down to find our Wreath Bearer. Mine was young (they all were) but this guy looked so boylike. I thanked him for bearing the Wreath and for standing in the rain with me. Two bearers down, stood a young USAF lady who was



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

22nd May 2007

Dear Mr. Ostrom,

The Queen wishes me to write and thank you for your letter and for sending the latest edition of Flak News.

Her Majesty was interested to see this issue, which celebrates the existence of the 8th Air Force in England during the Second World War and, in particular, the role played by the cities and towns in East Anglia during this period.

The Queen is grateful for your kind message of continued support and I am to thank you for thinking of Her Majesty at this time.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Hussey

Lady-in-Waiting

Mr A Ostrom

shivering with the cold as she held her Wreath in front of her. At this moment I felt such strong kinship with these young serving women and men as we stood together, united in one common purpose at that moment. Upon the command they stepped forward and placed the Wreaths in the recipients hands. Then they smartly turned right and marched away. Now we all stood in line awaiting the command to place our wreaths, but the public address system decided it had had enough and stopped functioning.

So starting from the far end, like a sinuous wave, we all moved forward and placed our Floral Tributes on the Wall of The Missing. Step back, bow head, rain now running down inside my shirt back. But who cares.

A moment of silence. All those young lives lost. All those terrible injuries, both physical and mental. Give thanks for those who survived. Then a Prayer of Remembrance.

Firing of Volleys made us all jump. Then Taps, played so beautifully by two members of the USAF in Europe Band, ensuring that rain mixed with salty tears.

The following day it was back to Madingley. Now it's so quiet. There were 106 Floral Tributes laid yesterday and we examined every single one of them. Arthur from ABMC told us it was the worst weather for 18 years. He also showed us the flag that was totally wrecked after just one day atop the pole and it was storm quality!

Of one thing I am sure, as we walk down the long line of Wreaths, the Mighty Eighth will never be forgotten.

THE PHOENIX REUNION

(At Ahwatukee)

November 28-29-30 & December 1, 2007

FACTS

REUNION CHAIR — Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI
48170-2870.

HEADQUARTERS HOTEL — Grace Inn, 10831 S 51st St, Phoenix, AZ 85044. Telephone — 480-893-3000 or 1-800-843-6010. The hotel is located in the community of Ahwatukee, seven miles south of the Phoenix airport or 10 miles south of Phoenix city center.

RESERVATIONS — No “mail in” reservations are required. Call 1-800-843-6010 or E-mail — reservations@graceinn.com. Ask for the special room rate of \$89.00 for the 398th Bomb Group.

REGISTRATIONS — Use the Official Registration form (or a copy) on the next page. Fill in completely, recording the cost of each special event, tour or banquet. Tabulate the Total Cost at the bottom. Be sure to include the appropriate Registration Fee and your 2007 Dues (if applicable). Send the form and covering check to Sharon Krause. She will return a copy of the Form, indicating receipt of your funds.

TOURS — All tours during the reunion will be conducted by Hahn-Foristal Travel Management, Inc., 7900 E Greenway Rd Ste 203B, Scottsdale, AZ 85260. Telephone — 480-922-3226. E-mail Rico Francisco — rico@hahnforistal.com. Tickets will be collected by the coach drivers for all tours.

BANQUETS — The Welcome and Farewell Banquets will be held at the Grace Inn's Ahwatukee Ballroom on Thursday and Saturday nights, November 29 and December 1, respectively. Make your table reservations when picking up your Registration packet in the Memory Room, which also will contain all tour tickets.



What a Brilliant Idea!
**Arizona in
November**

Some Will Seek “Extended” Reunion Tours

There may well be some 398th members who are looking at the upcoming winter reunion in Phoenix as an opportunity for something more “extended” than the schedule of four days and group tours.

Toward this end, the Reunion Committee is recommending the group's tour

specialists as being available to advise and arrange for individual pre- or post-tour arrangements. This would include such events as Hot Air Ballooning; Off Road rides on Hummers and Jeeps in the desert; Gliding and Soaring; “Top Gun” fighter pilot experiences; Grand Canyon tours, air and

ground; and much more.

For more information contact Rico Francisco of Hahn-Foristal Travel Management, Inc., 7900 E Greenway Rd Ste 203B, Scottsdale, AZ 85260. Telephone — 480-922-3226. E-mail — rico@hahnforistal.com.

ORGAN STOP PIZZA —

Wednesday, November 28 — 5 PM to 8 PM, via Coach.

What a combination! The Mighty Wurlitzer in a specially designed building with a beautiful Pizza Parlor! Along with a great variety of organ selections by gifted musicians, a huge selection of Pizza specialties, plus appetizers, pasta, sandwiches, salads, soft drinks, beer and wine (and deserts). Just the right venue for the 398th's opening night. This is for the “early birds” who like to get a jump on the reunion activities.

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDENS and ARIZONA MILLS MALL —

Thursday, November 29 — 10 AM to 3 PM, via Coach.

Here's where we get our first feel of the Southwest. The Sonoran Desert contains 400 edible plants and hundreds with medicinal and utilitarian uses. And you can learn all about them ... and about Gila Woodpecker, Screech Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, and more, on any of several optional tours. It's a Southwest “get-acquainted” type of day ... either on the trails or at the outdoor Patio Café.

After this, a beeline to Arizona's largest mall for some prime time shopping and lunch (on your own).

SEDONA DAY TOUR —

Friday, November 30 — 8 AM to 5 PM, via Coach.

This is how to see much of the great Southwest and all its diversities in one special day. A journey from our Ahwatukee hotel in the desert valley into the foothills of the McDowell Mountains and vistas and wonders of Northern Arizona. See the orange and red rock buttes, cathedral spires and cliffs in all directions. Then a stop at Tlaquepaque, a quaint shopping village fashioned after an authentic Mexican village. Shop and lunch (on your own) at the many venues. Then sit back and relax for the equally interesting journey back to Ahwatukee ... and a good night's rest.

FALCON FIELD and CAF MUSEUM —

Friday, November 30 — 9:30 AM to 3 PM, via Coach.

For those who can't get enough of aviation museums (and B-17's) here's a chance to visit the Arizona Wing of the Contemporary Air Force Museum at Mesa. The Wing is home of the Sentimental Journey, one of the dozen or so B-17's still flying, plus a lot of other WW II warbirds.

PHOENIX & SCOTTSDALE TOUR —

Saturday, December 1 — 9:45 AM to 2:45 PM, via Coach.

This tour is for those travelers who are coming to the reunion in Phoenix and want to go home having seen the local areas. It's a “multi-city” tour, which means hitting the high spots in and around Phoenix. There will be a break for lunch (on your own) in one of the popular restaurants in the Scottsdale area.

NOTE — Prices on these tours appear on the Registration Page, along with prices of all the reunion activities.

OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 24th Annual Reunion
Phoenix (Ahwatukee) Arizona November 28-29-30, December 1, 2007

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 27, 2007

NAME _____ WIFE _____ SQD. _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE (_____) _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP+4 _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

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

WEDNESDAY, November 28 —

Registration	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Organ Stop Pizza Restaurant	5:00 PM	Via Coach	\$15.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Coach Fare only. Dinner on your own.)				

THURSDAY, November 29 —

Registration	8:30 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Board Officers Meeting	9:00 AM to 12:00 PM	Casa Grande Room		
Desert Botanical Gardens Tour	9:30 AM to 2:30 PM	Via Coach	\$29.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Tour includes a stop at the Arizona Mills Mall for lunch on your own.)				
GROUP BUSINESS MEETING	2:00 PM	Ahwatukee Ballroom		
No Host Bar	6:00 PM	Ahwatukee Ballroom		
Welcome Banquet	7:00 PM	Ahwatukee Ballroom	\$31.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Table reservations required.)				

FRIDAY, November 30 —

Registration	8:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Memory Room		
Sedona Day Tour	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	Via Coach	\$64.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Lunch on your own.)				
CAF Falcon Field Tour	10:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Via Coach	\$35.00 x _____	\$ _____

SATURDAY, December 1 —

Registration	8:30 AM to 12:00 PM	Memory Room		
Phoenix/Scottsdale City Tour	9:45 AM to 2:30 PM	Via Coach	\$38.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Lunch on your own.)				
No Host Bar	6:00 PM	Ahwatukee Ballroom		
Farewell Banquet	7:00 PM	Ahwatukee Ballroom	\$39.00 x _____	\$ _____
(Table reservations required)				

Registration Fee Per Person (2 maximum per family) \$10.00 x _____ \$ _____

2007 Dues (if applicable) Veteran Widow Relative Associate \$20.00 x _____ \$ _____

I/We will be staying at the: Grace Inn (Must make reservations by Oct.27) **TOTAL** \$ _____

Other _____

Please check all that apply:

- Veteran
- Widow
- Relative
- Associate

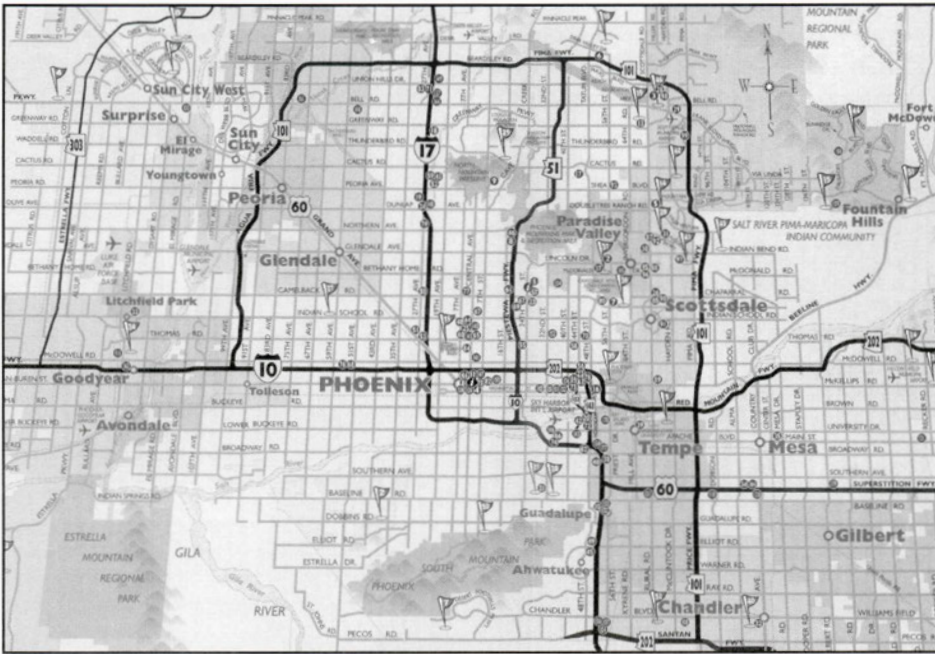
Please complete the form, enclose check, and mail to:

**398th Bomb Group Reunion
Sharon Krause
Plymouth, MI 48170-2870**

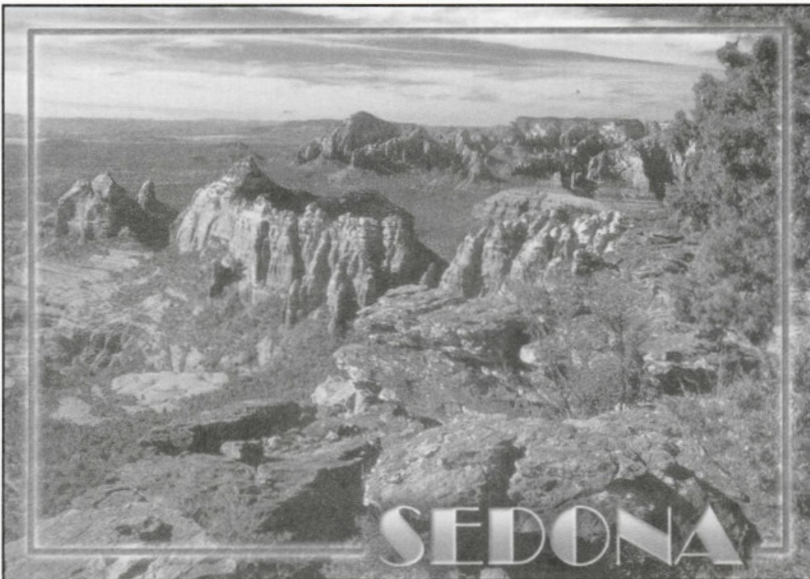
Received \$ _____ Date _____

Sharon Krause

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



FREE ...
Airport Shuttle
for our guests!
 6 am to 10 pm Daily
Just call us when you
arrive at the airport!
480-893-3000



**ORGAN
 STOP
 PIZZA
 FOR
 THE
 EARLY
 BIRDS**



**Desert
 Botanical
 Garden**

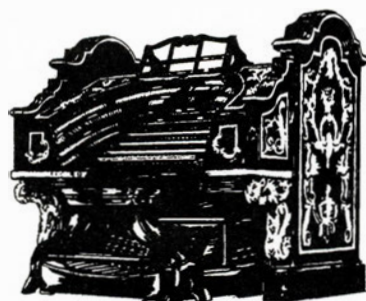
Main Attraction On Thursday
 November 29

**See It All At
 Sedona; Or The
 'Birds At Falcon**

The tour to Sedona represents the "big trip" for the attendees at the Phoenix reunion. It's an all day excursion that will feature the Southwest in all its glory. A feature day for group's photographers.

It's Arizona at its best and it's all contained in the specially prepared 8 to 5 tour on Friday, November 30.

For those more inclined to airplane museums, they can sit tight for a half hour and board the coach for Falcon Field at Mesa and delight in the B-17, Sentimental Journey, and a dozen more War Birds as featured by the Contemporary Air Force. Both tours are on November 30.



**Reunion Will
 End With A
 Dance On
 Saturday
 Night**



A "Shady Lady" Time To Remember

Prevost, Addison Enjoy "Folk Tale" Celebration

Ann Janet Addison of Bellevue, Nebraska, is the daughter of Warren Wade, 601 pilot.

Ted Prevost of Baltimore, Maryland, was Wade's co-pilot on a mission that would later become identified as, "The Saga Of Shady Lady."

That was in 1944, but 62 years later (2006) retired school teacher Addison and the still-working insurance man Prevost joined up for a journey to France that was to become a "trip of a lifetime" for the two.

(And for hundreds of French folks who conceived the invitation and subsequent series of ceremonies.)

Prevost is the only still-living member of the Wade crew. The wartime story of Shady Lady is recorded in Vol. 8 No. 1 of FLAK NEWS (January 1993).

The mayor of the "Commune de Ley," Jean-Michel Merel, issued the invitation on behalf of the city and other nearby communities for Prevost and Addison to join them in celebrating the "folk tale" story of Shady Lady. And to dedicate the stèle (monument) created by a local craftsman.

This "stèle" contains the names of all nine members of the crew, three of who were killed while attempting escape (Wade, Wilbert Burns and Eugene Gamba), four who became prisoners of war (Prevost, Burt Bream, Howard Rex and Frank Brooks) and two who bailed out and evaded capture (William Howell and Robert Ritter).

Prevost asked Addison to record the fascinating story, which she did in the form of many pages of color photos and text. And she has offered copies of this to anyone who might contact her. Her phone is 402-731-3740. E-mail anniekins3@aol.com. Her address is 2903 Columbus Ave, Bellevue, NE 68005.

There were speeches, luncheons, dinners, music, parades, flags, WW II trucks and motorcycles, pavilions, interpreters, ribbon cuttings, Stars Spangled Banner, French Anthem, cannons, photographs, costumes, autographs, a "gold book," wine, toasts, tears, laughter, and, for Addison ... the thrill of wearing the same clothes for several days because the airline lost her luggage.

There was a visit to St. Avoild American Military Cemetery, where the party found the graves of Burns and Gamba.

And "Warren J. Wade, 2d Lt., 601 Bomb Sqd, 398th Bomb Gp (H), New York, Sept. 8, 1944."

It was here his daughter whom he never saw, and his co-pilot, who said of the Shady Lady demise, "it was a magnificent landing," came to pay their respects.

Along with many French men, women and children from the "Commune de Ley" who wanted to "express our thanks and gratitude."

Their monument says —
"Thanks to our liberators."

Look to Page 12 to see and enjoy the impressive color photo of the memorial erected to the members of the 601 Squadron "Shady Lady" crew.

www.398th.org

RÉPUBLIQUE
FRANÇAISE
DÉPARTEMENT DE LA
MOSELLE

COMMUNE DE LEY



Sir Theodore PREVOST
Co-pilot
BALTIMORE
MD 21212-2527

USA

Ley, 3rd of August 2006

Dear Sir,

The 8th of September 1944, you were crossing France with your crew for a mission on Ludwigshafen. A succession of breakdowns prevented you to reach your target to land in France on the French territory, on the territory of our village: LEY. You said it was a "magnificent landing."

The part you took in this conflict as well as a lot of American soldiers was a very precious help. France does not forget what you did. The Commune of LEY, with "of souvenir français" wants to express its gratitude. Our commune has decided to erect a stèle in memory of your crew. This stèle will be inaugurated on the 9th of September.

I have the honor, in the name of the municipality, of the souvenir français and in the name of the inhabitants, to invite you to this ceremony.

A lot of personalities will be present: civilians, militaries. We are awaiting this moment to meet you and to express our thanks and our gratitude. Looking forward to welcome you, I remain. Sincerely yours.

The mayor
Jean-Michel MEREL

Mairie: 41 rue Principale 57810 LEY — E-mail: ley.mairie@wanadoo.fr

Don't Neglect The Dues

A paid up "dues card" will be a requirement for enjoying the Phoenix Reunion. Now is the time to "make sure" by contacting Dawne Dougherty, OR 97446-9585. — duesmanager@398th.org.

Dues notices in this issue have been inserted for the following states —

Texas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio.

Keep 'em flying!

Czech Officials Honor 8th Air Force Members In Slany Air Stars Show

The invitation came from the Minister of Defense of the Czech Republic.

"You are invited to attend the 10th annual Slany Air Stars Meeting on June 9, 2007, and receive a 60th anniversary liberation medal."

It was signed by Vlasta Parkanova. (Yes, a lady.)

On the receiving end of the presentation were to be Wally Blackwell, president of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association; Allen Ostrom, FLAK NEWS editor; Warren Mauger, a B-17 pilot with the 303rd Bomb Group; and Frederick Swauger, a P-51 pilot with the 78th Fighter Group. The latter two had been shot down during the latter phases of the war — Mauger over Pilsen and Swauger of Marienbad.

Blackwell and Ostrom escaped such fate but both had been active in post-war tours and activities in the new Czech Republic.

As the ceremonial day arrived, neither Blackwell, Mauger or Swauger were able to attend. Our president remains on long-term radiation/chemo treatment for lung cancer.

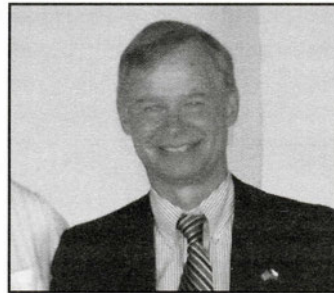
So it was left to the editor to accept all four medals with the admonition to "deliver the others to your comrades when you return home." Which he did.

And as for "no-shows," add the Minister of Defense, who at the last moment was forced to cancel her appearance at Slany.

Her place was ably taken by the chairman of the Air Stars Meeting, Milan Spineta, whose real passion is presenting



CZECH Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Vondra (right) accepts a "Clearing & Colder" 398th framed picture from Allen Ostrom at the Slany Air Stars program on June 9, 2007.



U.S. AMBASSADOR to the Czech Republic Richard Graber also received a gift from the Czech Army at the Slany Air Stars event.

gifts and awards (along with being an astute organizer).

The American Ambassador to the Czech Republic also was there — Richard Graber, a native of Wisconsin.

Ostrom asked him for advice, needing to find "someone" who might receive the framed "Clearing & Colder" picture that he had brought as an "exchange gift" for the four medals.

The Ambassador pointed to a gentleman surrounded by several admiring people —

"There is the second ranking official in all of the Czech Republic," he said. "Perhaps he can help."

At presentation time Ostrom called for Mr. Alexander Vondra from the audience, which by then had re-gathered in the large airfield hanger and was being entertained by a great 40's Swing Band led by Ferdinand Havlik.

"Mr. Vondra, as deputy prime minister, will you accept this gift from the 398th Bomb Group along with our thanks for honoring our members this day?"

Mr. Vondra graciously accepted the picture and held it up to the delight of the many photographers. Hopefully, "Clearing & Colder" now hangs on some government wall in Prague.

While he was unable to make the Slany trip, Blackwell did send along a gift — "Fortresses Over Nuthampstead."

This book on the history of the 398th Bomb Group was presented to Spineta,

Continued on Page 9



FRIENDS OF THE 398TH Jan Zdiarsky and Jaromir Kohout contributed to the Air Stars show in Slany. Both are very interested in 8th Air Force history as it occurred in World War II in the Czech Republic.



CZECH

Continued from Page 8

bearing the inscription —

“Once again you have brought great honor to the 398th Bomb Group and the men who flew our B-17 Fortresses in World War II. We will always treasure our Air Stars medals just as we treasure our Friendship with the people of the Czech Lands.”

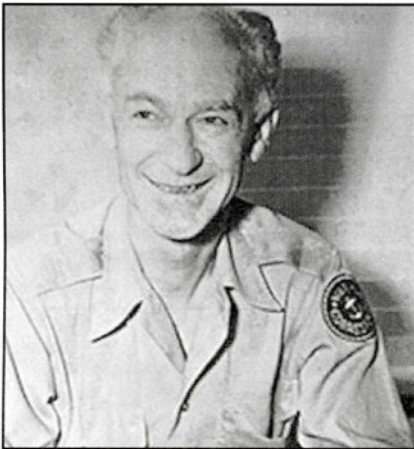
The opening ceremonies had been held at the airfield’s beautiful memorial honoring the Don Christensen crew of the 603rd. The crew was shot down near the airfield by FW 190’s, leaving one survivor among the nine-man crew. Tail gunner Selmer Haakenson would have been invited to the meeting, but died last year. A plaque was given to the 398th in his memory.

The ceremonies were scheduled to being at noon on June 9, with the medal ceremony due shortly thereafter. Thankfully, the “whole show” was moved indoors thanks to the excessive temperatures.

That met with the approval of the large, colorful gathering of Czech veterans, attired in their World War II uniforms — mostly with RAF insignia and medals. Many of the members have passed on in recent years.

Only the timely intervention of Jaromir Kohout and Jan Zdiarsky, a pair of 398th “Friends,” made it possible for the editor to be on time for “the show.”

“My (rescheduled) flight from Copenhagen to Prague was right on time, arriving in a four-engine prop aircraft called a Dash 8,” he said. “However, my luggage went to Hamburg and the framed picture to the wrong hotel in Slany. The next day Jaromir and Jan came to the rescue and all went well.”



ERNIE PYLE wrote the fascinating story about the 8th Air Force bombing raid near St. Lo that opened the way for the Allied ground forces to move on to continue their offensive following D-Day. The 398th was a part of this action, which was called “Cobra.”



“It Was The Heavies”

BY ERNIE PYLE

Pulitzer Prize Journalist of World War II

NORMANDY, June 1944. — Our front lines were marked by long strips of colored cloth laid on the ground, and with colored smoke to guide our airmen during the mass bombing that preceded our breakout from the German ring that held us to the Normandy beachhead.

Dive bombers hit it just right. We stood in the barnyard of a French farm and watched them barrel nearly straight down out of the sky. They were bombing about half a mile ahead of where we stood.

They came in groups, diving from every direction, perfectly timed, one right after another. Everywhere you looked separate groups of planes were on the way down, or on the way back up, or slanted over for a dive, or circling, circling, circling over our heads, waiting for their turn.

The air was full of sharp and distinct sounds of cracking bombs and the heavy rips of the planes’ machine guns and the splitting screams of diving wings. It was all fast and furious, but yet distinct, as in a musical show in which you could distinguish throaty tunes and words.

And then a new sound gradually droned into our ears, a sound deep and all encompassing with no notes in it — just a gigantic faraway surge of doom-like sound. It was the heavies. They came from directly behind us. At first they were the merest dots in the sky. You could see clots of them against the far heavens, too tiny to count individually. They came on with a terrible slowness.

They came in flights of 12, three flights to a group and in groups stretched out

across the sky. They came in “families” of about 70 planes each.

Maybe these gigantic waves were two miles apart, maybe they were 10 miles, I don’t know. But I do know they came in a constant procession and I thought it would never end. What the Germans must have thought is beyond comprehension.

Their march across the sky was slow and studied. I’ve never known a storm, or a machine, or any resolve of man that had about it the aura of such a ghastly relentlessness. You had the feeling that even had God appeared beseechingly before them in the sky with palms outward to persuade them back they would not have had within them the power to turn from their irresistible course.

I stood with a little group of men, ranging from colonels to privates, back of the stone farmhouse. Slit trenches were all around the edges of the farmyard and a dugout with a tin roof was nearby. But we were so fascinated by the spectacle overhead that it never occurred to us that we might need the foxholes.

The first huge flight passed directly over our farmyard and others followed. We spread our feet and leaned far back trying to look straight up, until our steel helmets fell off. We’d cup our fingers around our eyes like field glasses for a clearer view.

And then the bombs came. They began ahead of us as the crackle of popcorn and almost instantly swelled into a

Continued on Page 10

ERNIE PYLE

Continued from Page 9

monstrous fury of noise that seemed surely to destroy all the world ahead of us.

From then on for an hour and a half that had in it the agonies of centuries, the bombs came down. A wall of smoke and dust erected by them grew high in the sky. It filtered along the ground back through our own orchards. It sifted around us and into our noses. The bright day grew slowly dark from it.

By now everything was an indescribable cauldron of sounds. Individual noises did not exist. The thundering of the motors in the sky and the roar of bombs ahead filled all the space for noise on earth. Our own heavy artillery was crashing all around us, yet we could hardly hear it.

The Germans began to shoot heavy, high ack-ack. Great black puffs of it by the score speckled the sky until it was hard to distinguish smoke puffs from planes.

And then someone shouted that one of the planes was smoking. Yes, we could all see it. A long, faint line of black smoke stretched straight for a mile behind one of them.

And as we watched there was a gigantic sweep of flame over the plane. From nose to tail it disappeared in flame, and it slanted slowly down and banked around the sky in great wide curves, this way and that way, as rhythmically and gracefully as in a slow motion waltz.

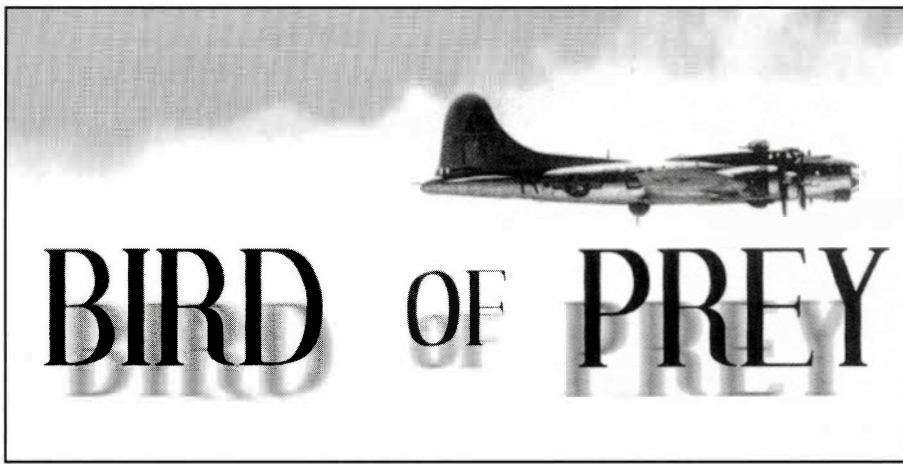
Then suddenly it seemed to change its mind and it swept upward, steeper and steeper and even slower until finally it seemed poised motionless on its own black pillar of smoke. And then just as slowly it turned over and dived for the earth — a golden spearhead on the straight black shaft of its own creation — and it disappeared behind the treetops.

But before it was done there were more cries of, “there’s another one smoking and there’s a third one now.”

Chutes came out of some of the planes. Out of some came no chutes at all. One of white silk caught on the tail of a plane. Men with binoculars could see him fighting to get loose until flames swept over him, and then a tiny black dot fell through space, all alone.

And all that time the great flat ceiling of the sky was roofed by all the others that didn’t go down, plowing their way forward as if there were no turmoil in the world.

Nothing deviated them by the slightest. They stalked on, slowly and with a dreadful pall of sound, as though they were seeing only something at a great distance and nothing existed in between. God, how you admired those men up there and sickened for the ones who fell.



“Please read the stories of my father’s WW II experiences and know that he was very young once and that he and others showed great bravery and made many sacrifices when it counted. We thank God for that.”

The above quote is attributed to David A. Coffee, the “proud son” of Marvin W. Coffee, who did his 27-mission tour in the 398th Bomb Group with the 602nd Squadron.

Coffee joins some others who have published books on their WW II experiences. This is called, “Bird of Prey,” a most fitting title considering the deadly mission of his B-17.

The book tells of the “Coffee Grinder” missions from February 20, 1945, to the

Last Mission to Pilsen on April 25, 1945. While at the “tag end” of the war, it was fraught with long missions and many losses.

Descriptions of these missions, steeped with records and intimate details, make for exciting and exacting reading, be the reader new to air war drama or one who has “been through it.” It’s 175 pages of well documented 398th history. See PX on Page 11.

— OSTRUM

Letters, Letters

“My family and I went to the Ardennes American Cemetery today in honor of Memorial Day. There were over 3,000 of the Army Air Force airmen buried there. We paused long and quietly as we contemplated the grandeur of it all. My thoughts were of my own father and my many dear friends in the 398th. All the best.

**Col. Michael Ryan, USAF,
Brussels, Belgium.**

“Thanks many times for your thoughtfulness in printing Fred’s photo story of his life. It was a full and happy one.”

Anne Gonzales, Evanston, IL.

“Reference to your inquiry about Jean Miller, the 603 CO and Group Operations Officer. I saw his name on the Air Force Retired Activity Office as having died in 2002. Miller made a career of the Air Force. I saw him briefly in the late 20’s when he was about ready to assume command of the SAC B-50 Bomb Wing.”

Newt Moy, Salt Lake City, UT.

“Thank you for mixing my trumpet photo and Gonzales’ story and photo along with the words to Taps in the last FLAK NEWS. It was a beautiful presentation. I recalled that Fred received his long-forgotten captain’s bars at a ceremony in San Antonio, thanks to the work of the late Col. Lewis Ensign.”

Phil Swan, Merrillville, IN.

“Thanks for doing FLAK NEWS for 22 years. I especially enjoyed the April issue featuring both Gonzales and Swan. I look forward to many more years of great issues.”

**Howard Pinner, Black Mountain,
NC.**

“Today I sat down with my husband, Hamilton Mero, and read FLAK NEWS to him, page by page. It was a thrill to see his face light up as I read the many names and places to him. He is suffering from dementia, so this was special.”

Mary Mero, Oneida, NY.

“I have been receiving your FLAK NEWS on an exchange basis as contact for the 94th Bomb Group, and have enjoyed each issue. Our newsletter has now been discontinued after 25 years. Hang in there.”

Frank Halm, Corvallis, OR.

“Thank you for the color photo of ‘Aluminum Overcast.’ It always commands my respect and prayer as I look at it again and again. And your FLAK NEWS is pithy beyond words. Almost like watching Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Always graceful, and worthy of the gaze. Pithingly yours.”

Frosty Fowler, Poulsbo, WA.

Editor’s Note: “Pithy: being rich in meaning and tersely cogent in expression.”

“Wow!”

BRIEF-things

Art Laughlin of Ashland, Nebraska, asks if those FLAK NEWS volumes are for general sale — the answer it “no” but if he has saved all those back issues from 1986 (many have) the editor can intercede and arrange for his personal “bindery” project ... historian **Lee Bradley** scored again in finding former member **Robert Armstrong** of Irving, Texas; history shows he flew ball turret with the **Paul Keenan** crew on the Last Mission to Pilsen ... our web site (www.398th.org) genius **Dave Jordan** has “put up” another new one — the **Baker Diary/Hansard Prop** stories ... **Jan Zdiarsky** of Kovarska, CZ, has published an excellent story of the 8th’s greatest air war with the luftwaffe over the Ore Mountains on September 11, 1944, and FLAK NEWS hopes to run the entire feature in the October issue ... **Jan’s** museum has been visited by many 398th members, although it was the 100th BG that was the focal point of the battle ... a visit to Pilsen brought out the news that the very fine Skoda Museum is about to get a large new facility, this according to director **Vladislav Kratky**, who fondly remembers the 398th visit in 1995 ... still no word from anyone as to taking the lead in arranging an England Tour in 2008 ... some years ago FLAK NEWS published a pair of stories called, “A Tale of Two Daughters” and “A Tale of Two Sisters,” featuring **Sharon (Roderick) Krause** and **Elaine (Stahlman) Jurs**; both stories reappeared in the fine B-17 magazine, “Splendor in the Skies” ... your Editor is “coping” with his new retirement environment and especially enjoying “going down to dinner” ... the Editor’s journey to Slany and Pilsen, CZ, revealed that European women and men are much more slender than their American counterparts and that their beer is better there (Pilsen) than here ... prexy **Wally** is beginning to wonder if he has picked up a “Job Syndrome;” after his ongoing bouts with chemo and radiation for cancer, he had another hospital visit to repair a hernia ... **Carolyn**, our PX boss, says the “orders just keep comin’,” citing a broad range of items being ordered by a broad range of people via both FLAK NEWS and www.398th.org ... among the many, many 8th Air Force heroes to have passed on this year was **Steven Rosenthal**, the much decorated B-17 pilot who went on to become a lawyer and have a hand in the Nuremberg Nazi trials; “seeing those strutting conquerors being sentenced was the closure I needed” ... yes, **Lee Anne**, there will be a dance at the Phoenix reunion, so just keep on practicin’ ... our good friend **Greg Anderson** staged another fine welcome for the Aluminum Overcast last June in Denver, and **Marilyn** and **Geoff Rice** were there telling the 398th story ... **Ralph Hall** was never a man to rest on his laurels, but chose to live life to the fullest and keep busy, mostly by doing things for others; his proudest achievement was guiding the 398th into ownership of the Memorial (1988) and his second was seeing it turned over to the ABMC (2007) ... yes, there will be a job for you in Heaven, **Ralph** ... **Harry Mazur** was a survivor on the **Ferguson Fort** that went down near Pilsen on the Last Mission, and he came home to write a book with the same name; that book was translated into Czech by his friend, **Oedrich Nykles** (the FLAK NEWS editor will gladly share it with any Czech friend) ... **Harry** is presumed deceased, as are many more 398th vets not heard from in years ... **Lillian Pfluke** is the lady in the European office that helped with the ABMC paper work and who, like **Wally**, went through cancer radiation and chemotherapy ... a note from **Mable Duvall** advised that **Marguerite**, wife of our Chaplain, has passed away ...

www.398th.org

398th Bomb Group PX ORDER FORM (The Second Generation)

QTY	ITEM	UNIT COST	TOTAL
CLOTHING			
_____	T-Shirt, black, “398th BG Flying Fortress”	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, navy, with B-17 front view	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, gray, with with logo on back	\$12.00	_____
_____	T-Shirt, olive, with Triangle W	\$12.00	_____
_____	Denim Shirt, long sleeve, 398th logo (S, M, L, XL XXL, please indicate size)	\$28.00	_____
_____	Golf Shirts, embroidered Triangle W 60% cotton, 40% poly mesh		_____
_____	Mens, light blue, white, S-XL	\$25.00	_____
_____	Ladies, light blue, S-XL (please indicate size & color)	\$25.00	_____
CAPS			
_____	Black, with logo (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$8.00	_____
BOOKS (All books postpaid)			
_____	Fortresses Over Nuthampstead (Bishop)	\$65.00	_____
_____	398th History (1946, photo copy)	\$20.00	_____
_____	“Remembrances” (1989, photo copy, Ostrom)	\$30.00	_____
_____	“Bird of Prey” (Coffee)	\$19.95	_____
_____	“Hell From Heaven” (Streitfeld)	\$19.95	_____
_____	“The Youngest Crew” (Wagner)	\$19.95	_____
_____	“WW II Odyssey” (Frankhouser)	\$19.00	_____
JEWELRY			
_____	Squadron lapel pins (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$5.00	_____
_____	Group lapel pin (Hell From Heaven)	\$5.00	_____
LOGOS			
_____	Squadron Patch (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$6.00	_____
_____	B-17 Jacket Patch (rectangular)	\$4.00	_____
_____	8th Air Force Patch	\$6.00	_____
PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS			
_____	“Clearing & Colder” (8x10)	\$10.00	_____
_____	“Clearing & Colder” (14x17)	\$30.00	_____
_____	Anstey Stained Glass Window (11x17 includes list of comrades Killed in Action)	\$4.00	_____
_____	Aluminum Overcast (8x10)	\$2.00	_____
_____	“Sunset at Nuthampstead” (8x10)	\$7.00	_____
MISCELLANEOUS			
_____	Bumper Sticker (black)	\$3.00	_____
_____	Blue Ink Pen (398th imprints)	\$5.00	_____
_____	License Plate Frame (398th imprints)	\$5.00	_____
_____	Book Marker	\$5.00	_____
_____	WW II Coloring Book (with crayons)	\$4.00	_____
_____	Tote Bag (20x15, black, with logo)	\$8.00	_____
Cost of Items ordered		\$	_____
Delivery and Handling add \$4.00			_____
or \$5.00 if order is over \$20.00		\$	_____
		Total \$	_____

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Make check payable to “398th Bomb Group PX.” Mail completed order form and check to Carolyn Widmann, Noblesville, IN 46062-7150,

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 2023-2024



— Photo by Jose Bourguignon
THE SHADY LADY MEMORIAL IN LEY, FRANCE
 “Thanks To Our Liberators”

8306

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