



602



601



603



600

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

VOL. 24 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 2009

*So long Wally. We'll see you at 30,000 feet.*



# BLACKWELL

Wally Blackwell once told his friends he was “proud of his 398th Bomb Group heritage and confident of its future.”

And he remained so ‘til the day he died — January 14, 2009. He succumbed to lung cancer after “fighting it off” for several years (just like his predecessor, Bill Comstock, had “fought it off” prior to his passing in 1996.)

Those who were at the reunion in Cocoa Beach, Florida, last September might have noted his calm, quiet countenance as he presided over what would be his last 398th gathering.

Vice president Marilyn Gibb-Rice has inherited Wally’s position as president of the 398th BGMA. It was Wally himself who had encouraged Marilyn to take an active “second generation” role in the association. That encouragement resulted in no less than eight second generation men and women now being on the official board.

Wally might have done many things in his retirement years following his 398th Air Force combat service and subsequent civil engineering career with the Department of Commerce in

*Continued on Page 2.*

## Keep ‘em Flying:

# “We Will Continue”

BY MARILYN GIBB-RICE

President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

Wally. Wally Blackwell. “Yup, yup, yup.” “Keep ‘em Flying.” “Tally ho!” And to so many of us, a second father that shared those precious years in the 398th during World War II with our own fathers. We will all miss Wally. He became very precious to so many of us. He set his sites on the rest of us including the Twos and Threes continuing to keep this incredible organization alive. We will continue.

A few years ago when Al Turney informed Wally that he would not be able to continue as vice president, Wally called and asked if I would take the VP job. I was excited to be in a position to be able to work to keep the 398th thriving. But, I was so very honored to think that Wally felt that I could be the one to continue as president when the time arrived. After I agreed, Wally and

*Continued on Page 2*



# BLACKWELL

## "We Remember Him"

(Continued from Page 1)

Washington, DC.

He joined the 398th BGMA at the group's reunion in Seattle in 1985. This was during the 50th anniversary of the B-17, which Wally flew on 36 missions in 1944. His tour included a mission over France that resulted in a bail out for his crew and the death of his tail gunner. Wally returned to duty and completed his required tour.

His original crew of 10, following his "sojourn" in France, eventually turned out to be, upon subsequent research after the hostilities, a "crew" of no less than 34 airmen who would fly one or more missions with him.

Comstock named Blackwell to the Board as Director in 1986 and then Secretary in 1989. It was during this period that Wally headed up a 398th campaign to raise funds to "refurbish" the Aluminum Overcast with a fresh paint job (that would include the colors of the 398th). The same campaign continued on to include more funds for "corrosion control." The Aluminum Overcast still flies. (See page 7.)

Wally named Lou Stoffer to a committee to raise money for a "like 131" Memorial for the 398th at the Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah, Georgia. It was a rousing success.

A firm believer in the tours "back to the old base," Wally and wife Teedy made many trips to Nuthampstead, other parts of England and the Continent. He nurtured the 398th relationships with the Brits and encouraged his own children and other second/third generation offspring to join the tours. He was especially close to the American Air Museum at Duxford, being an initial charter supporter of the project. A Duxford high point was having his photo taken with Queen Elizabeth II.

A memorial service was held in his hometown of Rockville, Maryland, where he was cremated and where part of his ashes will remain. Other parts were taken to the family grave site in Sagamore, Maine.

The family is also considering a third urn to spread near the Memorial in Nuthampstead. This would happen in 2010, during the proposed England Tour.

Plans for such a tour are even now under way under the guidance of Ann Collins. (See Page 6.)

A web site tribute to Wally can be seen at [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org).



### We'll See You At 30,000 Feet

The base is off at one o'clock; We fire a red-red flare.

The Doc is there to meet us and dispense his tender care.

You lift your eyes to Heaven thanking God you have found

That he's at 30,000 feet the same as on the ground.

—Excerpt from poem by Steve Quinn  
Navigator, 603rd Squadron

# "We'll Carry On"

(Continued from Page 1)

I never really discussed what would happen when it was time for me to take over. I always thought I still had plenty of time to discuss the details with him.

Wally called in November and suggested that maybe it was "time." My reaction was "NO!" He agreed to continue on. In an e-mail the next day, Wally wrote, "You have the basic traits of honesty and the skills to do the job. That is all I ever have had, and that is all you need also! What comes down the road you can handle." Thus begins my journey down the 398th road as the next president.

My plan will be to continue the business of the 398th as usual while striving to increase membership and continue this legacy. My hopes are that I will have the support of the membership and we will carry on with our great 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association. Keep 'em flying!



WALLY BLACKWELL and MARILYN GIBB-RICE

## Dues Also "Carry On"

The quarterly dues appeal for the 398th falls on no less than 17 states this time. And the states are well scattered —

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

These particular 17 states represent one-quarter of the funds needed for 398th operation, primarily the costs connected with the production, printing and distribution of the group's newsletter, FLAK NEWS.

Needless to say, as one takes note of the ever-increasing costs of postage, sending FLAK NEWS to 1,300 members and friends through the U.S. and many part of the world, represents a strong investment.

And 398th "customers" sometimes demand their quarterly news. When late, some are known to send off queries like, "Where's my FLAK NEWS?"

And then there are others who show their appreciation with "something extra" along with their dues. That "something extra" can be the funds that keep the group in the black. (See Page 4.)

Send your Dues to Dawne Dougherty, Harrisburg, OR 97446-9585. Dawne loves to acknowledge receipt of those funds that represent "something extra." Dawne also can be recipient of Taps notices and other changes of address.



# New Regime Begins At Reunion

## Austin, Texas Meeting Site

It all may seem a “little different” when the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association convenes for its 26th annual reunion next September. But there will be a reunion and it will be held in Austin, the capitol city of Texas.

The dates are September 9-10-11-12, 2009.

For the first time since Bill Comstock took over as president among a small gathering in Dayton, Ohio, in 1976, there will be a lady at the helm.

Marilyn Gibb-Rice, the daughter of the late waist gunner Jim Crouch, ascended to the presidency at the untimely passing of Wally Blackwell this past January. Wally had served as president since 1986, following the passing of Comstock.

(The “26th annual” designation actually began in 1984 at Rapid City, South Dakota, when the 398th began meeting independently outside the umbrella 8th Air Force Historical Society.)

Thus, Marilyn, the lady who had been “groomed” as vice-president by Blackwell himself, now receives the opportunity to lead the Association, which already is well sprinkled with both men and women from the second generation.

One of Marilyn’s first order of business obviously will be the “grooming” of her



A PADDLE WHEEL PARTY IN AUSTIN

own vice president.

This will come during the initial meetings of the Official Board and later at the General business meeting. Both to be held on Thursday, September 10.

Holdover elected officers, besides Marilyn, are Bob Bowen, secretary; and Mellisa Ledlow, treasurer. Board of Directors are Lew Burke, Paul Roderick, Arnie Schneider and Joe Mansell. The English Friends director is Wilfrid Dimsdale.

Other officers are Sharon Krause, reunion chair; Dawne Dougherty, dues manager; Lee Anne Bradley, historian

and data coordinator; Carolyn Widmann, PX Manager; Dave Jordan, web master; Geoff Rice, photo researcher; Peter Brooke English Friends chairman; and Allen Ostrom, FLAK NEWS editor.

(The second generation officers include Gibb-Rice, Ledlow, Krause, Bradley, Widmann, Jordan, Rice and Brooke.)

The new president (Marilyn) has been known for her many “surprises” when serving as vice-president. One surprise, which turned out to be a smashing success, was her presentation of special medallions to all the veterans.

This was in Phoenix two years ago, and she repeated the idea last year in Cocoa Beach, Florida, adding the new members who missed out in Phoenix. She will do this again in Austin, and will encourage all the veterans to “pose for a picture” wearing their medallions.

The banquet programs (Thursday and Saturday nights at the hotel), have not been announced, but it can be taken for granted that England’s Malcolm Osborn will be there to tell his audience about the success of the 2008 England Tour ... and render a special invitation to the scheduled 2010 Tour. (See Page 6.)

The reunion actually begins with a dinner cruise on Austin’s downtown Lady Bird Lake, Wednesday evening, September 9, and ends with a hotel dance on September 12. All events are well recorded on Pages 4 and 5. Krause emphasized that Registration Forms be sent to her no later than August 10, and that individual hotel reservations be recorded with the Radisson North Hotel no later than August 18.



55TH FG MEMORIAL At Nuthampstead

## 398th To Welcome The 55th

The 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association will have a welcomed addition to the reunion in Austin, Texas, this September.

The officers of the 55th Fighter Group have agreed to give the 398th a “try.” Since both groups’ memberships are decreasing in size each year, each group thought it would be beneficial to join forces.

The 55th Fighter Group was stationed at Nuthampstead, Station 131, before the 398th occupied the base. They were there from September 14, 1943, until April 16, 1944, when they transferred to Wormingford ([www.55th.org](http://www.55th.org)). They flew P-38’s and P-51’s while escorting B-17’s on their missions to the mainland.



# THE AUSTIN REUNION

September 9-10-11-12, 2009

## Facts

### REUNION CHAIR —

Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI 48170-2870.

### HEADQUARTERS HOTEL —

Radisson North Hotel, 6000 Middle Fiskville Rd, Austin, TX 78752-4315. Telephone 512-451-5757.

### HOTEL RESERVATIONS —

No mail-in reservations are required. Telephone the hotel at the above number or 1-800-333-3333. Ask for the 398th Bomb Group rate of \$99.00 E-mail [rhi\\_auno@radisson.com](mailto:rhi_auno@radisson.com).

### REGISTRATION —

Use the Official Registration Form on page 5. Fill in completely itemizing the cost of each tour selected, banquet meals selected, registration fee of \$10 or \$20, and the yearly dues (if applicable). Send the form, with covering check to Sharon Krause. She will return a copy of your form, with accompanying receipt of your funds.



### TOURS —

All tours will be conducted by Around Austin, Inc., 6836 Austin Center Blvd, Ste 250, Austin, TX 78731-3193. Telephone 512-371-9111. E-mail [office@around-austin.com](mailto:office@around-austin.com).

### BANQUETS —

The Welcome and Farewell banquets will be held in the hotel ballroom on Thursday, September 10, and Saturday, September 12, respectively. Make your table reservations when picking up your Registration Packet. All Banquet Tickets must show a Table Number.

## Blackwell Memorial

Many friends, members and relatives of Wally Blackwell contributed a total of \$1810.00 to the 398th BGMA, the funds earmarked for a special memorial in his memory at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum. These are the contributors —

Ambrose	Davis	Lee	Traeder
Averhart	Doerstler	Mansell	Underwood
Balint	Dougherty	Rhodes	Watson
Blackwell	Eberle	Rice	Weekley
Bradley	Faletti	Roderick	Yarmoski
Bowen	Jordan	Schneider	Yarmoski
Crouch	Ledlow	Stange	

## Tours



### WEDNESDAY, September 9, 2009 —

#### Lone Star Riverboat Barbecue Cruise

5:30 PM to 9:00 PM

It's a delightful cruise on Lady Bird Lake on a charming paddle boat. View the great city skyline as you enjoy a full Texas-style Barbecue. A great way to kick off the 26th annual reunion.

### THURSDAY, September 10, 2009 —

#### Lady Bird Johnson Center & Zilker Botanical Gardens

9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

This is a four-hour tour of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and Zilker Botanical Gardens. This tour is for the ladies, or those who choose not to take in the 398th business sessions and board meetings. The Center displays the native plants of the Central Texas Hill Country, South and West Texas (see Page 12). See the Zilker Gardens that are endowed by nature with handsome trees, natural grottoes and aquatic habitats that have been integrated into a design of spectacular beauty and tranquility.

### FRIDAY, September 11, 2009 —

#### Hill Country & War Memorial Tour

8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Fredericksburg and Nimitz National museum of the Pacific War. It's the old world flavor to Fredericksburg with its architecture and traditions of the German heritage of the quaint town. And many will enjoy visiting the famous Nimitz World War II museum.

### SATURDAY, September 12, 2009 —

#### Austin Duck & War Museum Tour

12:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Experience Austin's newest interactive museum dedicated to the history and spirit of the Lone Star State. Many exhibits, IMAX theater, stores. And a ride on Lady Bird Lake in the Austin Duck, a British land/water carrier called the Stalwart.

## Members Help Out

Last year a number of members and friends made contributions "over and above" to the 398th BGMA. Here are the last names who added funds of \$100 or more to the general treasury —

Bargreen	Erikson	Issel	Roberge
Beckley	Green	Johnston	Zinter
Bell	Grenley	Joseph	
Bowen	Holden	Muhle	

# OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 26th Annual Reunion

Austin, Texas September 9-10-11-12, 2009

**PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN AUGUST 10, 2009**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ WIFE \_\_\_\_\_  398th SQD. NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
 55th FG

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

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

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

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

## WEDNESDAY, September 9 —

Registration 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory (Elm) Room  
Lone Star Riverboat Dinner Cruise 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM Via Coach \$65.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## THURSDAY, September 10 —

Registration 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM Memory (Elm) Room  
Board Officers Meeting 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Sycamore Room  
Lady Bird Ctr & Zilker Botanical Tour 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM Via coach \$39.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Price does **NOT** include \$6.00 admission to the Lady Bird Wildflower Center.)  
GROUP BUSINESS MEETING 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM Hill Country D  
No Host Bar 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM Hill Country AB  
Welcome Banquet 7:00 PM Hill Country AB \$34.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Table reservations required.)

## FRIDAY, September 11 —

Registration 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM Memory (Elm) Room  
Fredericksburg & Nimitz Museum Tour 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Via Coach \$49.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Price does **NOT** include \$7.00 admission to the Nimitz Museum. **WW II** Veterans free.)

## SATURDAY, September 12 —

Registration 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Memory (Elm) Room  
Austin Duck & Bullock Museum Tour 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM Via coach \$44.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Price does **NOT** include \$7.00 admission to the Bullock Museum.)  
No Host Bar 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM Hill Country AB  
Farewell Banquet 7:00 PM Hill Country AB \$44.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Table reservations required.)

**Registration Fee**  One person \$10.00  Two or more persons \$20.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**2009 Dues** (if applicable) \$20.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

**NOTE: Radisson North Hotel reservations must be made by August 18, 2009.**

I/We will be staying at the:  Radisson North Hotel

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply:  
 398th Veteran  
 55th Veteran  
 Widow  
 Relative  
 Associate

**Please complete 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.**



## **LET'S DO IT AGAIN IN 2010:**

# Plans For England, Czech Republic



All that to say that Ann Collins is very interested in telling everyone about the proposed 398th Bomb Group England Tour. And she calls it —

“Let’s Do It Again In 2010.”

Riding on the success of the 2008 tour, when 20 members returned to the old base and had a “wonderful time,” the ex-ball turret gunner’s daughter (Ann) has set out to do it even better next year.

The 2008 tour was inspired by third

generation Brandy Howard, her second generation father, Ken; and his mother Helen, the widow of the late ball turret gunner Bob Howard. They conspired to bring 14 of their “generational” friends plus six veterans “back to the old base” (and a whole lot more).

Next year, Ann Collins hopes to duplicate that number via a brisk agenda in England (led by Malcolm Osborn) plus a week in the Czech Republic.

The dates in England have been set for June 14 through June 21, highlighted by the service at the Station 131 Memorial on June 19 and the Remembrance Service at Anstey on June 20.

The days between the arrival in London

(Cambridge) and the Nuthampstead/Anstey activities will be filled by “UK tour leader” Osborn, who is even now arranging special programs and activities in and around East Anglia. A visit to Madingley to honor fallen comrades and Duxford to admire the B-17 (and more) will be included in Osborn’s agenda.

The tour price will be settled once Collins has determined the number of members who have given “strong indication” that they wish to go.

The “opening segment” of the 2010 “England Tour” will actually begin in Prague, Czech Republic. It will include a “Return To Pilsen” visit, recalling the

*Continued on Page 7.*

## **Big Friends, Little Friends Live It Up:**

# Nostalgia Night At The Woodman Inn

**BY MALCOLM OSBORN  
Cambridge, England**

Last night (February 11) was one of those evenings I shall look back on with so much fondness. It was a fund-raising evening, organised by myself and Russ Abbey, with enthusiastic support from Peter Brooke and Sandy and Ian, proprietors of the Woodman Inn.

Thirty-five people turned out on a freezing cold February night. Sandy laid on an excellent hot supper for the attendees — Cottage Pie or Vegetable Lasagna — yummy. Peter arrived with a mannequin dressed 100% accurately as a 398th Navigator, right down to and including underclothes. Peter also brought a small part of his 8th AAF collection, including two — yes, two — 398th A-2 jackets no less, flak vest, caps, patches and oxygen bottles. A wonderful array of memorabilia.

Russ arrived with pre-prepared photo display boards — one set 55th FG, the other 398th BG. Russ also brought along his collection of memorabilia — oxygen bottle from a B-17, 0.50 cal ammunition strip, shells, German wooden box from a Flak Battery and marked accordingly.

We sat the mannequin alongside the screen, laid everything out on a table, hung jackets, arranged photo display panels. I must tell you, the end of the room looked really atmospheric with all the collection laid out and hung up for all to see.



We started on time at 1930 and Russ gave a great talk on the 55th FG, with movie clips mixed in with a superb selection of 55th FG photographs. Then we took a 40-minute break for food and the occasional drink. It was great seeing everybody sitting together, then all milling around the memorabilia and photo displays. I finished the evening off with my 398th talk. We were completed by 2200, time to start disassembling everything and packing it into our respective cars, which by now were all covered in a thick white frost.

You know, standing alone in The Woodman car park last night, looking up at a cloudless starry sky, after such a

wonderful evening full of 55th and 398th chatter, really made the hairs prickle on the back of my neck. I could just imagine all the activity going on all around me. The 398th’s February 11th mission (1945) was scrubbed because of bad weather. Thankfully, the “Nuthampstead Airfield Research Society’s” was not and we made £200.00 for Russ’ memorial to Archie Daniels. Thanks Sandy. You made that possible. Thanks Russ and Peter, family and friends, for such a great evening.

Big Friends — Little Friends —  
Never forgotten.

## Who Put The Bolt In The Filter?

# Sally B's 2008 Display Lasted Only 10 Minutes

"We Shall Overcome" has long been a rallying cry in America. And it is also a rallying cry for a large segment of people in Britain, but in a slightly different context.

*Sally B*, the only still-flying B-17 in the UK, where it has been a stellar "display" performer for 33 years, found the year 2008 a borderline disaster.

"But we shall overcome," said Elly Sallingboe, the plane's operator and administrator, upon realizing that *Sally B's* total air display time for the year totaled 10 minutes! The season ended with the annual "End of Season Celebration" at Duxford in "horrendous" weather.

Plus realizing that 2008 had seen *Sally B* lose not one, but two Cyclone engines along the way, giving cause for chief engineer Peter Brown to exclaim —

"It's been a funny old year for us all."  
Funny indeed!

When one "replacement" engine failed, Brown called on a second "replacement" engine so *Sally B* could continue with the scheduled "displays" in an around Eng-

land, with the accent on the final flights at Duxford.

It was not to be.

After the crews dropped the second failed engine and shipped it off to maintenance for a "look-see" the news came back with a head-shaking answer —

"A bolt had been left inside the oil filter at the last "repair" depot, restricting the flow of oil and causing extensive damage to the master rod bearing."

"What a dreadfully expensive way to find it," said Sallingboe.

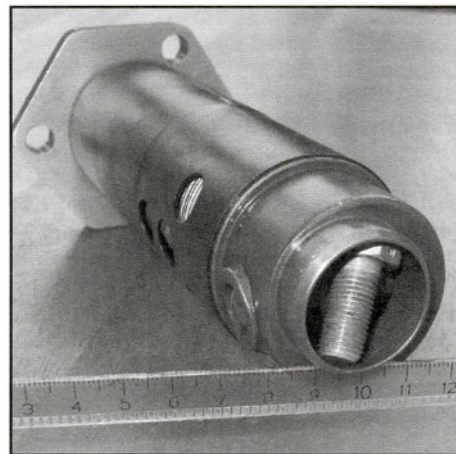
"Next year will be fine, and our *Sally B* will be where we know she should be, gracing the skies, and looking as good as ever."

And a final verse from Trevor Graham's "The Castle In The Air" —

*She leads a formation  
Of thousands of crews  
A legion of airmen  
Flights overdue  
The ghosts of the boys  
Who never came home  
Who will always be with her  
She's never alone.*



ENGLAND'S SALLY B  
Mechanics Checked ...



... And Found This!

## England Tour

(Continued from Page 6)

Final Mission of the 398th Bomb Group on April 25, 1945. It was in 1995 that 19 members returned to Pilsen to help celebrate the city's 50th anniversary of VE-Day (and that city's 700th birthday).

The 2010 visit will also take in Slany, where the nation's premier "Air Stars" annually honors the 398th Bomb Group's 603 Christensen crew, shot down near the airfield in the final days of WW II.

Czech friends Jan Zdiarsky and Jaromir Kohout will combine their tour talents in welcoming the 398th visitors (as they have done in previous years).

This "pre-tour" will begin on June 8, culminating with the flight from Prague to London (and the beginning of the England Tour) on June 14.

Ann Collins will be in Austin, Texas, for the 398th reunion September 9 through 12 and will have all the latest information on "Let's Do It Again In 2010."

For those who wish to get a "budget jump" on the airline prices that "might" be in effect next summer to London or Prague are invited to call Sara.



MALCOLM OSBORN  
On The Job Again

## Fly The B-17! Aluminum Overcast

April 21-22	Visalia, CA
April 24-26	Hayward, CA
April 28-29	Stockton, CA
May 1-3	Napa, CA
May 5-6	Truckee, CA
May 8-10	Sacramento, CA
May 12-13	Redding, CA
May 15-16	Portland, OR
May 20-26	Seattle, WA
May 29-31	Ogden, UT
June 3-9	Denver, CO

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





# Frosty And His Aviation Memories

BY FROSTY FOWLER  
Poulsbo, Washington

I remember May 21, 1927, quite well. Charles Lindbergh packed a few ham sandwiches in his pocket and took off in the rain from Roosevelt Field, New York, for Paris. As he miraculously crossed the Atlantic in his Ryan-built plane and came upon the Irish coast, he dropped down, cut his engine power and yelled out to a farmer, "Which way to Paris?"

Later he flew the *Spirit of St. Louis* all over America from state to state and thanked people for their support. At one point, he flew from Des Moines, Iowa, to Omaha, Nebraska, right over Gramma's house and three awestruck young boys. That night he spoke in Omaha as my dad and other National Guard protected his plane.

I used to live in Omaha and went to Miller Park Grade School. It was famous for being the elementary school that Henry Fonda attended.

For several summers my two older brothers and I went out to Gramma's farmhouse a few miles out of Logan, Iowa. (We're talking about 1927.) Gramma was a classic. She washed clothes outside in a copper tub over a wood fire and dried them

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Frosty Fowler is a Seattle radio personality ... and a devout follower of the 398th Bomb Group, FLAK NEWS, and the men who flew the B-17. When the war ended he was on his way to the Pacific as a B-29 gunner. Here, he recounts some of his memories, dating back to his "Gramma" days in the Midwest and later in the Northwest.

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clothes in the hot sun. They smelled great. She dealt with occasional rattlesnakes using a pitchfork. When a roof-tearing cyclone came through at night she would quickly send her visiting grandsons out to the storm cellar. It is where she kept her canned fruits and vegetables.

Cyclones almost have a mind of their own. Folks claim they tear off walls of a house, leaving china and pictures untouched on the opposite side of the room. Some claim they have seen them roar up to the steps of a local church, stop,

Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney battled toe-to-toe in the still remembered classic *Long Count* boxing match. Another memory from when I was a kid was watching from my backyard in Omaha as a daring young figure dropped off the wing of an airplane, pulled the ripcord and floated to earth in 1928.

By the way, I believe Charles Lindbergh himself was once a wing walker. Incidentally, I myself made three jumps out at Snohomish Field, not far from Seattle. The third jump landed me in the

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## Dempsey Long Count Remembered

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then turn in another direction, leaving the church undamaged.

Back to Gramma. She made wonderful chicken dinners, wringing the heads off the birds herself. She'd put me to work making butter in a stand-up churn.

Another time in Gramma's kitchen, we listened on a small radio as prizefighters

power lines along the highway in front of traffic.

We moved to Tacoma in 1929. A soon found Sunday delight was to frequent a local airfield with plane rides for sale. Ford tri-motor planes sprayed us with dust as they turned to leave. And the Air Corps showed off their new B-18 snub nose bombers. Then came the B-17's. The first version had no tail gunner and looked quite slender, just like they did when they flew over the ocean liner Rex. (FLAK NEWS January 2009.) By the way, that Tacoma airfield was soon to become a part of McChord Air Force Base. Those were fascinating days. Little did I know as a kid what was to come and just around the corner: Hours to be spent in B-17's, B-24's, A-26's, B-13's and as a waist gunner in B-29's.

Another memory — In the 1980's United Airlines pilot Jack Leffler found a beat-up Boeing 247 down in California. He put in some plugs, washed the windows, dragged it back out to the strip, cranked it up and flew it up to Boeing Field in Seattle. He called me one day and invited me to fly with him for an hour out over Elliott Bay. Later, he donated the plane to the Boeing Air Museum. As they cleaned up the 247 they found great amounts of rust, debris and bird nests in the wings. They gasped that pilot Jack could even get the plane off the ground.

And a last memory — One time flying out of Manila in 1969, I counted 45 DC-3's all lined up as part of the Philippine Government Air Corps to service the Philippine Islands. No telling how many more were stashed around the dozens of islands.

So much for Gramma.  
So much for memories.



**CHARLES LINDBERGH and Ann Morrow came to Seattle in the 1930's, landing briefly at Sand Point Naval Air Station. He was displaying his new Monocoupe, a more powerful plane that he used to fly the Atlantic. The Navy was impressed. And so was Frosty Fowler, author of the accompanying story.**





## Frank Andrews

When Lt. Gen. Frank Andrews was killed in an air crash in May 1943, he was commander of U.S. forces in the European theater, responsible for overall direction of the bombing campaign and planning for the invasion of the Continent. Had he lived, it is possible that he, rather than Eisenhower, would have been commander for D-Day.

Andrews was a cavalry officer after graduating from West Point in 1906. He switched to aviation and won his wings in 1918 in hopes of obtaining a combat assignment. That did not work out, but Andrews rose steadily on the new course he had chosen. His strong performance and leadership earned him the respect not only of his colleagues in the Air Corps but also of the Army General Staff.

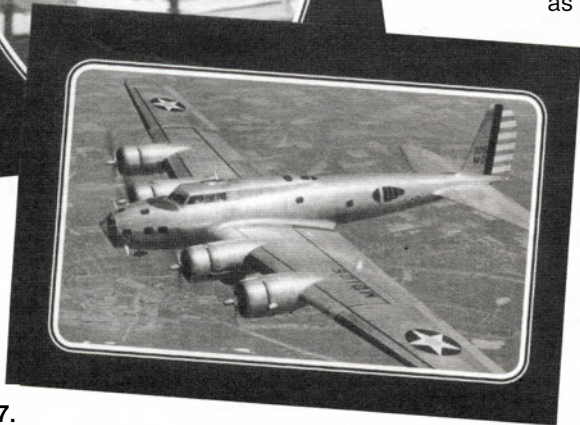
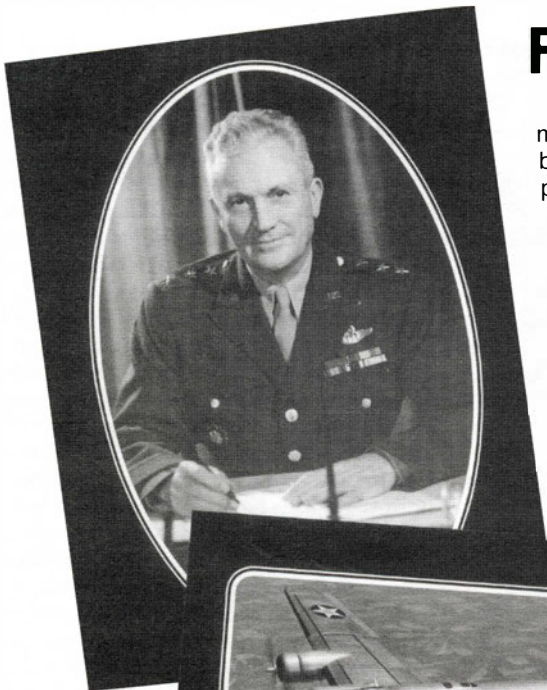
In 1935, Andrews was selected to command the newly formed General Headquarters Air Force, which consolidated all Air Corps tactical units into a single organization. GHQ Air Force was a big step toward Air Force independence. Andrews, however, drew the displeasure of the Army and the War Department with his unrelenting advocacy of the heavy bomber. His adversaries called the B-17 "Andrews' Folly."

World War II would prove them wrong and Andrews right, but at the end of his tour as GHQ Air Force commander, he was reduced from his temporary grade of major general to colonel and exiled to Texas.

When Gen. George Marshall became Army Chief of Staff, he called Andrews to Washington despite protests from the War Department, promoted him to brigadier general, and put him in charge of a General Staff Division. Senior command assignments followed in the Caribbean Defense Command and in the Middle East.

In February 1943, Andrews was promoted to lieutenant general and replaced Eisenhower as commander of U.S. forces in Europe when Ike became supreme allied commander in North Africa. Three months later, Andrews died when the B-24 he was flying crashed while he was attempting to land in Iceland.

"No Army produces more than a few great captains," Marshall said at the memorial service. "General Andrews was undoubtedly one of those."



An early B-17.

## Ira Eaker

Ira Eaker built the Eighth Air Force during World War II and commanded it during the darkest days of the bomber offensive in Europe. The son of a tenant farmer from Field Creek, Texas, Eaker became an Army pilot in 1919.

Eaker is renowned for his intellect but he was also a distinguished airman. He was chief pilot of *Question Mark* when it set an airborne endurance mission in 1929. In 1936, he made the first coast-to-coast flight on instruments alone.

In February 1942, Brigadier General Eaker went to England, with six people, as advance man for Eighth Air Force and commander of VIII Bomber Command. As a major general, he replaced Carl Spaatz as commander of Eighth Air Force when Spaatz went to North Africa as allied air commander. By 1943, Eaker had built the Eighth from scratch to a force of 185,000 men and 4,000 airplanes.

Time and again, forces destined for Eighth Air Force were diverted elsewhere, but Hap Arnold, who commanded the AAF, was impatient with Eaker's results and progress. Effectiveness improved with time and resources, but in 1944, Spaatz returned to England to head U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe and Jimmy Doolittle came with him as Eighth Air Force commander. Eaker was promoted to lieutenant general and made allied commander in chief in the Mediterranean, in charge of Twelfth and Fifteenth Air Forces and two British air forces. It was a step up, but Eaker was disappointed, believing that he had been shuffled away from the primary arena of the war.

In 1946, Eaker was named deputy commander of the AAF. He retired in 1948 and continued to write and speak. His syndicated column on national defense for the Copley News Service was carried by 1,400 newspapers. He also wrote for various publications, including AFA's *Air Force Magazine*.

He was awarded a special Congressional Gold Medal in 1978 for his contributions to the nation, and in 1985, Congress promoted him to four-star rank on the retired list. Eaker died in 1987.



A B-17 encounters flak over Germany.



# 398th BG Financial Report

JANUARY – DECEMBER 31, 2008

## Income

Flak News	80.00
Membership Dues	16,500.00
Interest Income	.09
Timeless Voices	760.00
Misc donations	260.00
FONA (UK)	1,525.20
	<u>\$19,125.29</u>

## Expenses

Timeless Voices	3,005.31
Flak News	13,189.51
Postage & Delivery	656.39
Supplies	535.76
Telephone	493.31
FONA Books	864.00
Printing	991.21
Website maintenance	939.35
Microfilm costs	355.36
Bank Fees	22.00
	<u>\$21,052.20</u>

**Net Income** **\$(1,926.91)**

## Current Assets

Checking/Savings	
APG Edwards & Sons	
(cash)	5,608.78
APG Edwards & Sons	
(bonds)	34,577.40
Chase Bank Checking	3,903.12
Chase Bank Savings	25.09
Total Checking/Savings	<u>\$44,114.39</u>
Total Current Assets	\$42,187.48

**TOTAL ASSETS** **\$42,187.48**

## Liabilities & Equity

Equity	
Opening Bal Equity	5,765.02
Retained Earnings	38,349.37
Net Income	(1,926.91)
Total Equity	<u>\$42,187.48</u>

**TOTAL**  
**LIABILITY & EQUITY** **\$42,187.48**

## Some DVD's Now Ready

Some 398th "Timeless Voices" interviews are now available on DVD's, according to PX manager Carolyn Widmann. These interviews were produced by Marilyn and Geoff Rice during the last three reunions.

The DVD's are archival gold quality and are priced at \$17.00 for members and \$22.00 for non-members. They may be ordered through the PX on Page 11.

For more information see "Timeless Voices" on [www.398th.org](http://www.398th.org).

## "Scholarly Study" To Be Published



**LYNN ALEXANDER**  
**An Anglo-American Study**

In the months before his passing, president Wally Blackwell was in contact with a doctoral student named Lynn Marie Alexander of Independence, Missouri.

The two discussed a foreign relations project Alexander was involved with that concerned "the tracing Anglo-American relationships through the life and times of the 398th Bomb Group."

It was to be a "scholarly" project that would involve an Alexander journey to England and more specifically to Nuthampstead, there to meet with many of the citizens who "grew up" with the men who came to replace their wheat fields with a heavy bomber base.

Alexander went on to complete the "scholarly" journey last year and finished her paper this year.

FLAK NEWS will publish this report in a coming issue.

## Letters

"You have outdone yourself with the current (January) FLAK NEWS. The parachute story, the tree at Neuss, Anstey, the features on Doolittle and Spaatz, and the front page are wonderful. Especially, in view of Wally's demise. How fitting that his last column was on the 'Taps' list. I could not help but review the list, pausing at many friends and especially at Wallace H. Blackwell, Jr.

"Jane and my son, Bob, always read FLAK NEWS. Bob has done some writing for our local newspaper and enjoys critiquing good writing. He has said that he thinks FLAK NEWS is one of the best newsletters he has read.

"You and I and our shrinking group will try to carry the flag with the great help of our 'Second Generation' (the product of Wally's fertile mind). The good Lord willin' and the creek don't rise, we will see you in Austin next September."

*Bob Bowen, Athens, Georgia*

"I just received the January FLAK NEWS. Thanks for keeping me on the list. I read all the articles, and then mail the issue off to other WW II air crew members I know. Thank you."

*Fran Irwin, Schweinfurt Middle School, Germany*

"My father, Warren Currie, always enjoyed the 398th reunions and reading FLAK NEWS. He passed away in 2007 and my mother also recently. Now I would like to transfer their membership to me.

"Sometime in the future I hope to become involved in the group's activities. It seems the second generation is stepping up and it will be my turn. Thank you for all that you have done for the organization ... and more so for serving our country."

*Mrs. Linda Parnell, Champaign, Illinois*



**PETER BROOKE, The Collector**





# BRIEF-things

The January Taps list of four, full pages contained some 1,300 names ... and to that list we have already added 19 ... Personal Note — FLAK NEWS has been assembled all these years with the help of a Word Processor (plus a pencil and paste pot), but the “processing of words” is becoming increasingly difficult with the advent of something called “arthritis” in the editor’s hands ... and a reminder from reunion leader **Sharon Krause** that all veterans should remember to bring their Medallions to the Austin reunion ... **Sharon**, by the way, will be doing her ninth “chair” this year (why not, everybody loves her) ... **Peter Brooke**, the Friends chairman, began his interest in “things 398th” when he came upon (and purchased) a 2- x 3-foot plywood board displaying parts and pieces someone had previously found and assembled from the **Hansard** crash site at Reed, just a few miles from Station 131 ... since then **Brooke** has added many additional 398th and 8th Air Force mementos ... Reed, for the benefit of the travelers, lies on the A-10 freeway between Buntingford and Royston (once known as the Roman Road) ... some years ago FLAK NEWS ran a photo of an unidentified B-17 sitting idly on a snowy field in Belgium (Georgia Peach?); it’s still unidentified, but Belgium friend **Leendert Holleman** of Brugge is dedicated to finding the answer ... remember when President **Clinton** cut and slashed military spending? ... welcome to another cut and slash program under **Obama** ... as one expert put it, “our Air Force fleet is not only aging, but worn out” ... the 2010 England tour will include the Czech Republic, much to the delight of the “reception ladies” at the Continental Hotel in Pilsen, not to mention **Jaromir Kohout**, **Jan Zdiarsky**, **Milan Spineta**, **Vladislav Kratky**, **Ladislav Kohout** and other special friends in the Czech lands ... Listen Up, Detroit: **Jean Madlung** of Indiana (92) recently took out a five-year loan for a new car (PT Cruiser) ... the 398th has been in many cities for reunions, but never in Austin, where a popular activity is “bat watching” ... every evening at sunset the largest bat colony of free-tailed bats in North America flies out in “cloud formation” from under the Congress Avenue Bridge (and over the 398th dinner cruise ship) ... **Dick Baribault** will be the “contact guy” for the 55th Fighter Group when his bunch reunions with the 398th in Austin; they’ll have their own meeting rooms, but will dine with us at the banquets, and share the podium ... the exquisite B-17 photo on Page 1 of January’s FLAK NEWS came about as no “lucky shot” ... **Ozzie Osborn** was invited to Madingley, which had closed for the day, to be there when the restored B-17 Liberty Belle was scheduled to fly past ... he was, and came up with the dramatic photo ... he’s now 96, but former Boeing “tech rep” **Carl (Bud) Krafft** still recalls the day 64 years ago when he and others rigged a grounded 398th B-17 with rockets under the wings and pilot **Richard Holub** took off from the nearby Gypsy Farm barley field in less than 400 feet (on steel matting) ... **Holub**, “still kicking” at 92, passed his driver’s test with a 100% mark on both the written and driving tests; also received a “we just love you” comment from a lady in the local book store (they know all about him in Grass Valley, California) ... **Ike Alhadeff** is another “ancient one” at 93 and still goes to the office every day in Seattle; and **Max Rahe**, also 93, still works his 1,500 acres of farm land in Crescent, Oklahoma ... “can’t talk much now ‘cause we’re in the middle of a hurricane alert” (they survived) ... the widows coming to the reunion in Austin, Texas, are reminded that they are welcome to take part in the 398th “Timeless Voices” program ... check with the folks in the Memory Room.

**Because of the Lord’s great love  
we are not consumed,  
for His compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.**

—Lamentations 3:22-23

# 398th Bomb Group PX

## ORDER FORM

(The Second Generation)

QTY	ITEM	UNIT COST	TOTAL
<b>CLOTHING</b>			
_____	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, <b>please indicate size</b> )	\$28.00	_____
_____	Men’s Golf Shirt, light blue, embroidered Triangle W, 60% cotton, 40% poly mesh (S, M, L, XL, <b>please indicate size</b> )	\$30.00	_____
_____	Men’s Golf Shirt, navy blue, embroidered Triangle W, 65% poly, 35% cotton (S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL, <b>please indicate size</b> )	\$30.00	_____
<b>CAPS</b>			
_____	Black, with logo (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$12.00	_____
<b>BOOKS (All books postpaid)</b>			
_____	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	_____
_____	“Last of the B-17 Combat Drivers” (Weekley)	\$39.95	_____
_____	“The Youngest Crew” (Wagner)	\$19.95	_____
_____	“WW II Odyssey” (Frankhouser)	\$19.00	_____
<b>JEWELRY</b>			
_____	Squadron lapel pins (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$6.00	_____
_____	Group lapel pin (Hell From Heaven)	\$6.00	_____
_____	B-17 lapel pin, gold or silver	\$5.00	_____
<b>LOGOS</b>			
_____	Squadron Patch (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$6.00	_____
_____	B-17 Jacket Patch (rectangular)	\$6.00	_____
_____	8th Air Force Patch	\$6.00	_____
_____	Group Patch (Hell From Heaven) 2½x3	\$6.00	_____
<b>PHOTOGRAPHS &amp; PRINTS</b>			
_____	“Clearing & Colder” (14x17)	\$30.00	_____
_____	Anstey Stained Glass Window booklet (11x17 includes list of comrades Killed in Action)	\$10.00	_____
_____	“Sunset at Nuthampstead” (8x10)	\$7.00	_____
<b>TIMELESS VOICES DVD’s</b>			
_____	Interviewed 398th Vets	vet \$17.00 non-vet \$22.00	_____
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
_____	Bumper Sticker (black)	\$3.00	_____
_____	Blue Ink Pen (398th imprints)	\$5.00	_____
_____	License Plate Frame (398th imprints)	\$5.00	_____
_____	Book Marker	\$5.00	_____
_____	Tote Bag (20x15, black, with logo)	\$8.00	_____
_____	Pencil Sharpener, B-17, antique diecast	\$5.00	_____
<b>Cost of Items ordered</b>		\$	_____
<b>Delivery and Handling add \$4.00</b>			_____
<b>or \$5.00 if order is over \$20.00</b>		\$	_____
		<b>Total \$</b>	_____

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

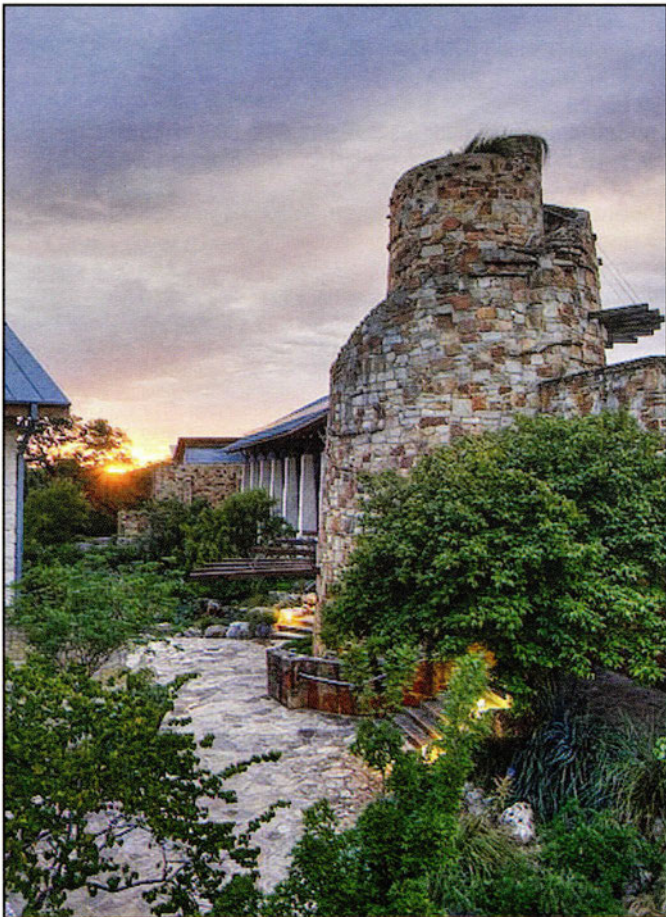
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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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## Roster Additions and Corrections



**THERE WILL BE** some 5,000 species of Texas wildflowers awaiting 398th travelers as they descend on the state for the 26th annual reunion September 9-12 at Austin, Texas. The state itself functions as a “landscape gardener,” caring for some 800,000 acres of highway beauty.