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# Three Generations At Station 131



## The Veterans And The Way We Were

Five 398th Veterans are scattered in the back row of this collection of British "Re-enactment" members. The photo was taken at Nuthampstead during the 2008 England Tour in June.

The veterans (identified in another photo on Page 2) were joined by these several Brits who came adorned in Air Force World War II costumes and flight equipment, all collected on their own and

for the purpose of adding pageantry and realism to World War II type gatherings. "It was like a 'Ghost Crew,'" the veterans said.

The five were part of the tour group of 20, the others being spouses, friends and second and third generation members. See Ozzie Osborn's tour story and photos on Pages 1-2-4-5-6.

## 2008 Tour Plays Out A Winner

BY MALCOLM (OZZIE) OSBORN  
Cambridge, England

Brandy Howard and her father, Ken, had a plan to bring the 398th BGMA members back to Nuthampstead in 2008. When I attended the Phoenix reunion last year, Brandy and I shared the rostrum whilst she outlined her proposed trip back to England. I promised Brandy we would be there for her the whole time.

I told them to just get the party over to the UK and Ozzie and Peter Brooke would do the rest. Taking on the role of tour organiser seemed daunting but I gave it a go. Keeping closely in touch with Ken and Brandy, I started contacting many friends and acquaintances and began planning and organising each day. This is how it played out —

**Wednesday 11th June.** Saw the safe arrival of all the attendees in the UK, except for Mellisa and Jim Ledlow who were travelling in from Normandy and Elliot and Gregg Novek who were not due to leave JFK until Thursday night. Lee Anne Bradley flew into Stansted earlier.

That evening I gave a slide show in Anstey Village Hall, on the operational history of AAF Station 131, the 55th Fighter Group and 398th Bomb Group. This kicked off our "Long Weekend of

**FLAK NEWS MOVES** *The FLAK NEWS office has moved (again). See address and phone change on Page 12.*

*Continued on Page 4*

## The President's Page:

# Good News On Our Membership Dues

BY WALLY BLACKWELL

President, 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association

With all the good news about the many 398th BGMA activities, planned and underway, I was reluctant to begin thinking that I must continue to address the membership dues requirement in yet another column. In recent years there has been a distressing downward trend in dues paying and contributions supporting the FLAK NEWS publication. But good business practice is a necessary part of the 398th operation. We would perish without our sufficient funding.



WALLY

Thus it was a very happy event to have Dawne Dougherty, our Dues Manager, point out some recent events involving her work. It seems that there is a growing response to our current pattern membership donations! Imagine my happiness when she reports the following information for recent months —

### Individuals who have renewed or purchased "Life" memberships

Gail Bell	Kenneth Howard
Ann Collins	Brandy Howard
Elaine Collins	Cecil Moore
Russell Conrow	Dorothy Steinberger
Douglas Cross	Darrell Thorpe
	William Wallis

### Individuals who have donated \$100 or more

Keith Anderson	Louise Lorenzo
Robert Blacker	Newell Moy
Harold Brown	Iola Muhle (in memory of V.A. Hansard)
Kenny Carlson	Gertrude Neff
Reynold L. Dacom	Evelyn Rhodes
Carl F. Foster	Joe Roberge
J. Jeff Holstead	Henry Rudow
James Hurst	John Thaxton
Karl Issel (see Page 10)	Doris Yip

A total of the above 29 life membership and special donations comes to over \$4,000.00.

And the above does not reflect the continuing efforts of Lew Burke, 398th Director, to contact delinquents before they are dropped from the mailing list. Lew continues to make his efforts pay off with renewals. I also suspect the influence here of the splendid appeal by Marilyn Gibb-Rice, 398th Vice-President, to the younger generations in the last FLAK NEWS issue.

All I can say is, it is very evident the 398th membership, young and old, intends to keep the 398th in business. Let the donations continue!

And I can also say one big THANK YOU.

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



A 1939 DODGE was the backdrop for the five 398th veterans on the 2008 tour to England, a reminder of the "OD" color scheme of World War II transportation. Left to right are Lew Burke, Ray Yarmoski, Terence St. Louis, Arnie Schneider and Elliot Novek. They all agreed, "It was a great tour."

## Chaplain Duvall's Daughter Visits; Saw Where Father Waved To Men

Dear Wally —

How do I begin to thank you for making the connection with Ozzie Osborn for me. He, Joyce and Peter Brooke were gracious hosts the day Carolyn and I visited the old airfield. I was overcome standing where Dad might have been as he waved the planes off on missions. It's a part of my history that now has some completion.

I want you to know that Carolyn and I are keeping you in our prayers. Ozzie was telling us about your battle. Rough stuff! We'll keep in touch. In the meantime, I am grateful to you for being on line and for making contact.

*Fondly, Margaret Utter (Chaplain Duvall's daughter).*



55th Fighter Group



8th Army Air Force



398th Bomb Group

I need to take a bit of space here to commend Ozzie Osborn for his many recent activities in support of the 398th "over there." Besides being a major organizer and guide for the June 2008 tour, Ozzie has conducted tours of the airfield for our membership, written a newsletter, submitted new items for the website, is collecting UK dues, etc. Ozzie also issued the statement "Please note that following consultation with the 398th BGMA we have changed our name to 'Friends of Nuthampstead Airfield' (FONA) thus enabling us to embrace the 55th Fighter Group Association and it's members as well as the 398th BGMA."

I certainly agree with his action. See you at Cocoa Beach.

— Wally

# Florida Set To Welcome The 398th

## “Flight 93” At Reunion

A U.S. Customs agent who might just have saved the White House or Capitol from a 9/11 terrorist attack will be the guest of honor at the 398th reunion in early September in Cocoa Beach, Florida.

José Melendez-Perez of nearby Orlando will address the reunion gathering at the Thursday night banquet, September 4, at Hilton's Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Hotel.

As an associate says —

“José is an American hero, a fine speaker, and has an incredible story to tell.

“And, to make it even more interesting, José is a true fan of World War II air combat people. Like us.”

Melendez-Perez will be part of the excitement awaiting reunion members during the four-day program from September 4 through 6. Many tours and special events are planned, beginning with an “Indian River” dinner cruise on the evening of Wednesday, September 4.

The reunion comes to an end with the Farewell Banquet and Dance on Saturday evening, September 6.



**THIS IS THE HOTEL** that will host the 398th Bomb Group's 25th annual reunion on September 3-4-5-6 — the Hilton Oceanfront at Cocoa Beach, Florida. The hotel is located on the Atlantic Ocean 1.3 miles south of SR 520. And about 45 miles east of the Orlando Airport.

## The Saga of Diminishing Crew Counts

For years on end it was a “given” that the Herb Boehme crew of the 602nd would stand up the most members when president Wally Blackwell conducted the annual crew “survey” at the reunions.

Signs of the times have finally caught up with this aspect of activity. Even for the Boehme bunch.

“There are only the three ‘Bobs’ left,” wrote Bob Blacker in reporting the passing of their cockpit leader, Boehme. “Rowland, Knowles and myself.”

Thus, as has been evident the past few meetings, no longer to be heard will be shouts of “eight,” “seven,” “six,” etc., as Blackwell asked for the most crew members represented.

Yes, there will be 1's, 2's and 3's at the next reunion in Cocoa Beach, but those higher numbers will forever be relegated to history.

As Marilyn Gibb-Rice wrote in the April FLAK NEWS, “Bring on the second and third generations!”

## Reservations For Hotel Rooms: 1-800-526-2609

Now is the time to call the Cocoa Beach Hilton Hotel for reservations for the 398th Reunion. No printed forms are required.

Call toll-free: 1-800-526-2609. On line members may use [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com).

The room rate is \$89.00 for 398th members.

As the accompanying photo indicates, there are many options for enjoying the sea and surf, plus many options for enjoying the hotel's food and beverage service indoors and out.

## 2008 Reunion Registration Forms Required By August 30

The Reunion Registration Forms, which appeared in the April issue of FLAK NEWS, must be in the hands of Reunion Chair Sharon Krause no later than August 30.

For replacement forms contact Sharon at 11690 Paciocco Ct, Plymouth MI 48170-2870. Telephone 743-416-5993. E-mail [tink46@comcast.net](mailto:tink46@comcast.net).

## Joseph, Turney Die Suddenly

Director Joe Joseph and former vice president Al Turney passed away suddenly. Joseph had been involved in the program planning for the September reunion. Turney had given up his VP duties last year, being replaced by Marilyn Gibb-Rice. “We will miss these very fine and dedicated people,” said president Wally Blackwell.

# "Ghost Crew" Touched Many Hearts

(Continued from Page 1)

Remembrance." Amazingly, a jet-lagged Lee Anne managed to not only stay awake, but managed a quick beer with us at The Woodman Inn.

**Thursday 12th June.** Peter Brooke drove us down to Heathrow where we met the Richmond's coach for our first excursion, a trip to Chartwell, the home

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## By writing, I realised how much we actually did.

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of Sir Winston Churchill. Peter followed behind as I boarded the coach and said hello to all the reunion party on board. Our good friends Elaine Tyler and her partner Richard Harris were there to greet us at Chartwell where they so generously paid admission for all the 398th party, which now included Melissa and Jim Ledlow, having arrived by taxi from the rail station.

Elaine and Richard also gave out vouchers towards lunch. What a great couple they are. The weather turned unseasonably cold and damp, but it was warm in the House and some braved the cold after lunch to visit the beautiful gardens. We later bade farewell to Elaine and Richard and headed up towards Cambridge and the Crowne Plaza hotel, with Peter following behind just in case we had any emergencies.

**Friday 13th June.** This day, like the one following, had taken a great deal of planning. Just five minutes before we were due to leave the hotel in Cambridge, Elliot and son Gregg Novek arrived in a taxi from Stansted. Whew! My tick list now showed the following safely on board; Brandy, Ken and Helen Howard, Lew and Lillie Burke, Arnie Schneider and Marie Bammer, Mellisa and Jim Ledlow, Terence and Lydia St.Louis, Ann Collins, Elliot and Gregg Novek, Frank Yarmoski with Daughters Cathy Jo and Sandra Petrocco.

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## Three generations return to Nuthampstead.

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We filled the rest of the coach with British enthusiasts, including Cliff Bishop, who wrote "Fortresses Over Nuthampstead," and his brother Stan. We also saw independent travelers Geoff Rice and Ralph Ambrose later in our journey.

We made a small diversion off the road and drove up the full width runway at Eye Airfield, once home to the 490th Bomb Group. Here we were greeted by Clive Stevens in his staff car and no

fewer than four of the veterans climbed aboard for the short drive to Horham and its famous Red Feather Club.

Arrival at Horham, once home to the 95th Bomb Group, showed two jeeps waiting for us, along with my good friend Frank Sherman, who had opened the museum just for us. A chance to see the famous murals painted in WW II, the excellent photographic collection, museum artefacts, aircraft models plus coffee and tea, made us all feel so welcome. Whilst the rest of us made our way to the haunted Scole Inn by coach for a buffet lunch in our own private dining room, some of the ladies climbed on board the jeeps for the drive. Suitably refreshed, we set off, along with a jeep escort for the drive to Thorpe Abbots



Tower Museum, once home to the 100th Bomb Group. As we drove through the local villages the jeeps sounded sirens and horns. They certainly knew the 398th was visiting. We all entered the Varian Centre where one of the 100th Bomb Group museum staff gave us a brief talk on the history of Thorpe Abbots and the famous "Bloody 100th." Everybody then took their time browsing around the control tower and the other huts making up this world famous museum. Then at 1630 it was time for the drive back to Cambridge through the pretty Suffolk County countryside. The coach driver put some WW II tunes on his sound system and we had a good old fashioned sing-along for a while.

**Saturday 14th June.** A very nervous Ozzie arrived at The Woodman Inn with Joyce and Lee Anne at 0830. Shortly after, the first of the secret "Ghost Crew" crew arrived, to be hidden away at the back of the car park. Stevenage Sea

Cadets arrived bang on time and after a quick briefing started traffic control. "Stagestruck," based in Anstey, arrived to provide a sound system, along with technician, all provided free as their contribution to the Remembrance weekend. Then the coach arrived from Cambridge with its special passengers. Local people

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## I have finished my report on five fabulous days.

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had been arriving for some time as the clock edged towards 1130 a.m. After my introductions and Peter's welcoming speech, Brandy started the first reading —

### Letter to St. Peter

Elma Dean

*Let them in, Peter, they are very tired*

*Give them the couches where angels sleep.*

*Let them wake whole again to new dawns fired, with sun not war. And may their peace be deep.*

*Remember where the broken bodies lie ...*

*And give them things they like. Let them make noise.*

*God knows how young they were to have to die!*

*Give swing bands, not gold harps, to these, our boys.*

*Let them love, Peter, they have had no time —*

*They should have trees and birds songs, hills to climb, the taste of summer in a ripened pear.*

*Tell them how they are missed.*

*Say not to fear, it's going to be alright with us down here.*

Exactly on cue, the "Ghost Crew" appeared as Brandy read the moving

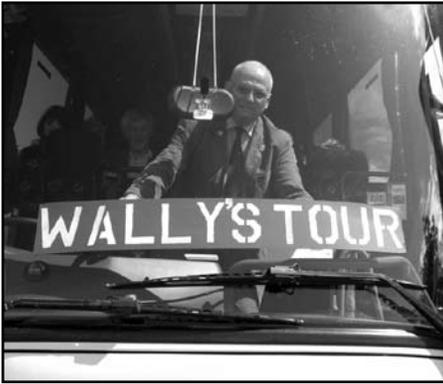
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## Let's do it again in Two Thousand and Ten!

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poem. They walked to the 398th Memorial, looked at the inscriptions, then walked down to the David Wells Memorial Seat, where most stood and some sat, silently, unaware of any people present. This was something I had dreamed about for a long time — a moving and respectful tribute to the crews lost in combat. This was the first time anything like this has ever happened during a service in the

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*(Continued from Page 4)*

UK. The crew felt honoured to do this for our five veterans. There was nary a dry eye to be seen.

The guys had travelled many miles, some making a 250 mile round trip, and actually stayed until 2030 that night. Peter Brooke took them to Anstey to view the 398th memorial window. After the service they donned their Class Twos and joined us all for a superb buffet lunch in The Woodman, with fish 'n chips, chicken, toad-in-the-hole, all good English grub from the 1940's — when food rationing allowed! Seeing GI's, plus uniformed and most attractive ladies, eating in The Woodman was most eerie, like stepping back in time.

Other service highlights were — young Hannah, a Sea Cadet, reading a short poem, Lee Anne Bradley reading the Salute to The Veterans so beautifully, Lew Burke's personal address and reading a moving message from Wally Blackwell, the bugler who played Taps and Reveille with emotion, seeing the children from Barkway School lay their little floral tributes on each memorial.

Lunch over, it was time to climb aboard the coach for "Wally's Tour." Oh! how I wish Wally could have been with us as we set off for a grand drive around dear old AAF Station 131.

We parked up on the airfield, close to the "Tall Pole" on runway 17/35. Here, Ralph Hall's casket flag was carefully pulled down and replaced by that of Lesley Rolfe's late father, who passed three years ago. Lesley, assisted by me, raised her father's casket flag herself, a very moving moment for her and indeed all of us present. Her father was James J. Nichols.

Then we heard the unmistakable sound of a Merlin engine, as a P-51 Mustang made a fast pass over our heads and proceeded to give us a five minute display, all courtesy of Peter Brooke. What a magnificent way to close the day!

**Sunday 15th June.** We all attended church at St George's, Anstey. This was a service of communion, but also commemorated the 55th Fighter Group and 398th Bomb Group. We then drove

*Continued on Page 6*

## **Ann Stars At Air Stars:**

# **Collins Is 398th Rep In Czech Republic**

**BY ANN COLLINS**

**Daughter, 601 Ball Turret Gunner**

It was an honor representing the 398th Bomb Group on June 7 at Air Stars 2008 in Slany, Czech Republic. Many people, young, old and in between were there listening to my words, but mostly to honor all those who served in WW II as well as pay homage to Lt. Don Christensen and his crew for making the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against tyranny so many years ago. Their sacrifice, and the ultimate price paid by so many others, has helped guarantee many of the freedoms we so often take for granted today.

It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day and I firmly believe that Lt. Christensen and his crew were looking down and smiling at all who had come to pay their respects. I was presented with a sealed glass container with soil from the Christensen crash site as well as a certificate of authenticity which I will give to Don Christensen Jr. at the 398th Reunion at Cocoa Beach, Florida in September.

I then presented my speech with Jan Zdiarsky admirably translating it, poetry and all. Certificates of Honorary Membership in the 398th BGMA and medallions, like those presented to the veterans in Phoenix, were presented to seven individuals who have long supported the Slany Air Stars Memorial. These individuals included Petr Bendl, Governor of the Central Bohemia Region, Vilem Zak, Vice Governor, Jan Zdiarsky, Jaromir Khout, Milan Spineta as well as the Museum of the Battle over the Ore Mountains and the Slany Aero Club.

Included in the presentation accomplished personally via president Wally Blackwell was a medal sent to Vladislav Kratky, curator of the Skoda Museum in Pilsen, described as "a wonderful friend of the 398th."

Afterwards, several people came up to me, and through the translation of Jaromir Khout, expressed their appreciation for not only what the Christensen crew had done for their freedom, but for my words as well as thanking me for coming all the way from California to represent the 398th.

"For those of us here today, we are left to cherish the memories of our loved ones as well as remember those who gave so much. To you and them I offer the following Native American Prayer." —

*I give you this one thought to keep —*



**ANN COLLINS**

*I am with you still; I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the diamond glints on snow,  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken  
In the morning's hush,  
I am the swift, uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not think of me as gone —  
I am with you still — In each new dawn.*

After feasting on a roasted pig with all the trimmings and some fine Pilsner beer, the crowd was treated to an aerial acrobatic display by some old war birds, including a Spitfire, and a fly over by the Czech Royal Air Force. I spent the next three days exploring Prague and its surroundings before heading back to England to join the rest of the 398th contingent for the biennial return to Nuthampstead.

Prague and/or Pilsen is a definite must for any 398thers thinking of returning in two years time. 2010 will not only be the 65th anniversary of the Christensen crash, big things are being planned by Milan Spineta for Slany, but it will also mark the 65th anniversary of the end of WW II. What better way is there to show our love and appreciation for all the sacrifices made by the "Greatest Generation" than having a big group of 398thers, second, thirds and perhaps a few first generation members gathered for such an important occasion.

# “Big” States Get Dues Notices

As indicated in other parts of the newsletter, the “Association” continues to look at its financial health. And this quarter the “look” turns to those members living in seven of the most heavily populated states.

As usual, only one-quarter of the Dues Notices are mailed at one time. This to give some modest “office” relief to our Dues Manager — Dawne Dougherty.

This issue is “devoted” to those members living in Texas, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Needless to say (again) that the Dues are what keeps the Association (including FLAK NEWS) afloat. Not only the Dues, but any and all additional contributions in the name of the 398th BGMA.

Dougherty’s address and telephone, along with all the 398th officers, appears on Page 10.

## Letters

“Thanks so much for the article by Marilyn Gibb-Rice in your April 2008 issue. When I talk to other veterans about our 398th Memorial Association, my comments always make a point that we are so fortunate that the second generation of our membership is now handling most of our administration activities.

“As we veterans are passing on, those younger persons have kept our WW II message alive. I thank not only Marilyn, but also each and everyone of those others who are so active and effective in their efforts.

“As a result, our organization is still passing out a fruitful message about our activities in WW II.”

**Bill Frankhouser, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania**

“I was pleased to see the recent FLAK NEWS Page 1 photo of Ralph Hall’s flag flying over the Memorial. I am reminded that Ralph’s flag also flew over the ‘Tall Pole’ where so many other veterans’ flags have ‘flown to destruction.’

“I remind all of our veterans’ families that their loved ones’ flag also can be flown there, a spot not far from the old 131 tower. Send the flags to me and I will forward to our Friends in England.”

**Bob Bowen, 398th Secretary, 109 Alpine Way, Athens, Georgia 30606**



**ENGLAND TOURISTS — Posing at Chartwell are Ozzie & Joyce Osborn, Elaine Tyler, Richard Harris, Marie Bammer, Arnie Schneider, Lee Anne Bradley, Ken Howard, Lillie Burke, Lew Burke, Terence St. Louis (behind Lew), Helen Howard, Lydia St. Louis, Ralph Ambrose, Ann Collins, Frank Yarmoski, Mellisa Ledlow, Cathy Jo Yarmoski, Sandra Yarmoski-Petrocco and Jim Ledlow.**

*(Continued from Page 5)*

to The Woodman Inn for a grand “Hog Roast,” courtesy of Julian Clark and Peter Brooke. The Reverend Carol Kimberley and her husband joined us, along with Elaine Tyler and Richard Harris. Then on to the American Military Cemetery. Here, Arthur Brookes from the AMC was waiting for us, where he made a welcoming speech and the five veterans laid the floral tribute in memory of their comrades.

Arthur then presented the 398th party with a flag previously flown over the AMC. This will be taken to all the 398th’s Stateside reunions and placed in the Memory Room. All 398th graves were marked with flags and Arthur was on hand to rub sand from Omaha Beach into the headstones, to enable clearer photographs. But there was a further surprise to come.

As we were the last people in the cemetery, he requested that the five veterans bring down the USA flag, and then fold it into a triangle. Arthur played the US National anthem, UK anthem, and then Taps on the Carillon and Arnie Schnieder slowly pulled the flag down. The five vets wasted little time in expertly folding the flag, what a great bunch of guys they are. Thanks Arthur, for making it such a moving and memorable visit to the AMC.

**Monday 16th June.** The coach arrived at Bassingbourn, once home to the 91st Bomb Group, at 0940 for our visit to the Tower Museum. This was where William Wyler filmed much of the wartime documentary ‘Memphis Belle’. After a welcoming speech by the curator, Chris Murphy, the group slowly viewed all

the exhibits. Then back on the coach for a drive around the original full width WW II taxiway, the only one left in the UK. But I had another surprise now come to fruition, thanks to my good friend David Crow. A spirited drive saw us arrive at Steeple Morden, once home to the 355th Fighter Group, where the European Aerobatic Display Champion was in the hold waiting to give the 398th a private little air show. Now what a display that was in his little Laser aircraft, even going backwards at one point, which we all know is impossible! Wow, after that we listened to David telling us about the impressive 355th FG memorial, then we drove to the church at Littleton to view the 355th FG memorial window. This is unique as it was actually made in the USA, the only stained glass window made in the USA and assembled in a 16th century frame in the UK.

We then drove to Duxford to spend the rest of the day looking at the exhibits in this famous museum. Then it was back to the Crowne Plaza for the farewell dinner later that evening. Brandy and Ken had commemorative coins for everybody, Lew presented a signed copy of Hal Weekley’s book to me, a wonderful surprise. I had also shown my slides on the 55th and 398th throughout dinner. Suddenly it was time for us all to say our good-byes, after all that planning and organising, six months had somehow been compressed into five wonderful days. Thanks everybody, you are all such great friends to have.

**Let’s do it again in two thousand and ten – please.**

# The Day We Led The Eighth Air Force

BY KEITH ANDERSON  
Co-Pilot, 600th Squadron

The most unique of the many memorable missions I flew as 600 Squadron co-pilot of the Gene Douglas lead crew was the group's 44th mission on July 7, 1944. We led the entire 8th Air Force into Germany with the 1st Combat Wing CO, Brigadier General William M. Gross in the right seat as mission commander for the First Combat Wing. I flew in the tail gun position as his eyes astern.

I flew eight missions as tail position observer for various fine air commanders — Colonel Frank Hunter, Lt. Colonel Robert Simeral, Lt. Colonel Bruce Daily, and Major Jean Miller — but General Gross was in a class by himself. (Later I became first pilot when Douglas was shot down.)

Upon meeting us at our PFF ship for that lead mission, Gross commented that he anticipated a “routine mission, not particularly rough.” As a point of reference, he mentioned that he had led the 1st Combat Wing to Schweinfurt on the infamous August 17, 1943, two-pronged Regensburg/Schweinfurt thrust and that his was one of the three aircraft from his formation that survived. That, apparently, defined “rough.” Thereupon, to emphasize his own lack of concern, he declined a flak suit and offered it to any of the crew that might desire additional protection. He didn't decline a parachute, however. There was a limit to his coolness!

3rd Bomb Divisions were dispatched to various oil, ball bearing and aircraft plant targets in the Leipzig/Merseburg area and 373 B-24's from the 2nd Bomb Division hit other oil facilities in the region.

Weather was excellent over the entire area, permitting a visual bomb run by both of our formations. However, heavy smoke screens completely obscured both primary and secondary targets so the MPI was shifted to a railroad marshalling area. Strike photos showed good results. Fighter escort was excellent during the entire time we were over German territory (not surprising since General Gross was directing traffic) and flak was moderate but accurate during the bomb run. We lost two aircraft shortly after bomb release — Folger from the lead group and Nisewonger from the low — with three crew members killed and 15 POW. Both were replacement crews with eight prior missions for Folger and three for Nisewonger.



GEN. WILLIAM GROSS

combat tour during these circles and can still visualize a dozen or so parachutes, both white American and tan German, floating below. There was considerable fighter activity and several collisions reported. Nine B-17's, including our two, and 28 B-24's were MIA as well as one P-38 and five P-51's, and 114 enemy aircraft were claimed destroyed.

Adrenaline slowly subsided when the last wing in the division dropped its bombs and we finally headed west. Reports of heavy icing over England forced us to lower to 1,000 feet over the North Sea and adrenaline rose again as we groped our way back to Nuthampstead in group formation in very bad visibility. A routine mission, indeed!

Later, I learned more about General Gross. He had assumed command of the 101st Provisional Combat Wing in July 1943 while still a Colonel, and soon advocated use of VHF radio in aiding assembly and control of formations during missions as opposed to the RAF doctrine of radio silence which had been adopted by the 8th Air Force. He reasoned that prudent radio communication would add little to German intelligence since our large formations routinely operated at radar detection and contrail producing altitudes.

An opportunity to prove that VHF command and control could benefit the outcome of a mission came on August 31, 1943, when Gross flew as air commander to attack Romilly-sur-Seine airfield. When his leading formation reached the target area they found it covered by

*Continued on Page 8*



The 398th put up 36 aircraft as the lead and low groups of a 54-plane “LeMay” combat box wing formation. It was one of the last missions we flew in that unwieldy configuration. Soon thereafter, we converted to the more nimble 36-plane group formation with lead, high and low 12 ship squadrons. I don't recall or have records to show whether the 91st or 381st provided the 18 plane high group.

A total of 756 B-17's from the 1st and

We turned left out of Leipzig and then made several wide circles while General Gross observed and directed the rest of the 1st Division making their runs. I imagine that there were many choice words over intercoms in our formation but we were actually fairly safe since all the flak in the area was directed at the incoming bomber stream and we were surrounded by Mustangs. I had the best view of a bombing mission of my entire

# The Day We Led The Entire 8th

(Continued from Page 7)

clouds, so he immediately radioed the following combat wings, saving them needless miles over enemy territory. More importantly, on the route in he had sighted, in the clear, the Amiens/Glisy airfield, another important Luftwaffe base, so he improvised a new mission profile on the spot and radioed instructions to his task force for a successful attack.

He was named commanding general of the 1st Combat Wing, based at Basingbourn, in May 1944 and continued to develop significant changes in combat flying techniques. One was the first use of fighter aircraft as weather scouts flying to target areas an hour or so ahead of the lead bomber formations. These scouts were armed P-51 Mustangs flown by bomber pilot volunteers who had completed their tours and flew in two-ship elements with experienced fighter pilots as wingmen. Another first introduced by the 1st Combat Wing was the use of bright colored paint on wing tips and tail surfaces to aid in formation assembly and yet another was initiation of the "buddy wing" concept between specific fighter and bomber wings.

Another "first," which nearly ended his career prematurely, was acquisition of a brand new B-17 for use as a Command Scout for the 1st Combat Wing. The airframe was streamlined and lightened by removal of the ball and chin turrets and bomb racks so the aircraft could easily make sustained flight at 200 m.p.h. IAS. Gross took it all the way to Dresden on the mission of April 17, 1945, planning to fly with the first group across the target, circle away and come in with the second and repeat the procedure with the remaining groups of the 1st Division. An ME 262 appeared during the move from the first group to the second and made a firing pass. Fortunately, the German pilot was not a sharpshooter and only one cannon shell exploded in the bomb bay. The wounded Command Scout promptly tucked in with the nearest formation and remained there for the return flight.

Gross graduated from West Point in 1934 and was the first in his class to become a Brigadier General. He retired after 30 years of active duty without ever receiving a second star. He was a courageous, innovative and "hands on" combat commander but apparently not so successful at peacetime military politics.

## The Leipzig Mission

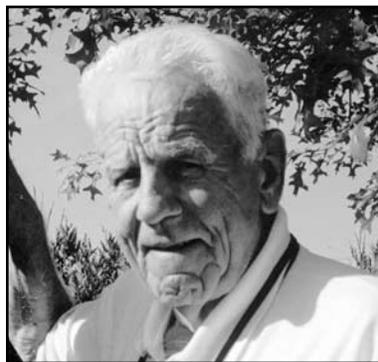
January 7, 1944  
FORMATIONS

### 600 Squadron

	GEN. GROSS DOUGLAS		
	MENZEL	COL. HUNTER RUDRUD	
		Baker	
	Folger	Lovelace	
	Dalton		Rice
Falkenbach	Weirney	Wheeler	Slavin
	Davis, J.A.		Davis, J.H.
Darner	Weekley	Taylor	Wilson
		Farnsworth	

### 602 Squadron

	DUNLAP WALKER		
	Clark	Hough	
		Richardson	
	Boehme	Zimmerman	
	Cullinan		Woodson
Farenthold	Nicwonger	Driscoll	Rudow
	Dwyer		Novak
Foster, D.L.	Spitzer	Howden	Gallagher



KEITH ANDERSON

The author of the adjoining column, Keith Anderson, is not the "retiring" type, witness the labor he expended in the adjoining column, "The Day We Led The Entire 8th."

In addition, Keith has been active with the Aluminum Overcast visits to Seattle, along with other Northwest vets like Lou Stoffer, Ike Alhadeff, Russ Reed, Charles Hough, Ted Johnston and Allen Ostrom. Keith only recently did retire from commercial fishing in Alaska.

Ah, Youth!

## AFA Magazine "Monumental"

Anyone serious about the Air Force will not want to pass up the May issue of the AFA's magazine called AIR FORCE.

The monumental production is called "USAF Almanac 2008," and the editors modestly advertise it as containing "a variety of information and statistical material about USAF people, organization, equipment, funding, activities, bases, and heroes."

There are photos of awards and decorations ... and even the names of every airman earning the Medal of Honor in every conflict since WW I. And every airman cited as an "Ace" since Eddie Rickenbacker.

It begins with the nation's air arm and early leaders from 1910 to such as Arnold and Spaatz down to the current USAF Chief of Staff — Gen. T. Michael Moseley.

And so much more. It is monumental.

## Help Comes In Bunches To FLAK NEWS

Wow! When the editor asked for “help” he really got it. Looking to find a copy of a 1991 FLAK NEWS, he received no less than 16 responses!

Many thanks to readers Gertrude Neff, Al Chamrad, Jeff Eberle, Jack Dodson, Verna Spangler, Ralph Ambrose, Loren Longmore, Jim Humbert, Ralph McIntyre, Dorothy Crouch, Bruce Binger, Alex Cochrane, Jan Sheely, Matea Baffaro, Marcel Janssens (Belgium) and George Cuda (England).

The 1991 issue was included in the 22 years of bound volume FLAK NEWS destined for the 8th Air Force Archives at Penn State University.

Other three-set bound volumes have previously gone to the Mighty Eighth Museum and the Hertfordshire County Record Center in Hertford, England.

Longmore, by the way, included the news that there are still four “alive and well” on his 602 Joe Kaminski crew — Henry Stebick, Llwellyn Fisher, Thurman Gentry and himself.

He added that his crew arrived at Station 131 in time to get in their required combat training ... only to see the war end before their first mission.

## Wedding Bells At Museum

Is there a wedding in your future?

Look no further than the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles, the English Countryside church at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum at Savannah, Georgia.

More and more couples are choosing the Museum venue these days, according to Susan Eiseman, the museum’s Director of Events.

“The Chapel, with its majestic stained glass windows and historic charm, combine to lend sacredness to this special occasion,” she said.

“The prospective brides always ‘oo and ah’ as they tour the Memorial Gardens. And they love the Lyle Rotunda for their reception ... and the elegant Art Gallery and High Wycombe. The young brides think it is all so unique.

“And it really is,” she continued, “especially when you see a wedding pair having their portraits being taken by the Reflection Pool.”

Eiseman can be reached by phone at 912-748-8888, ext. 124 or 160, or e-mail [events@mightyeighth.org](mailto:events@mightyeighth.org).



## The Flag Still Flies At Station 131

An American flag still flies day and night on the “tall pole” near the old tower at Station 131, thanks to the many widows and loved ones who have contributed their casket flags.

Peggy Wells and son Tim still monitor the flag program from their homes at Nuthampstead. The 398th secretary, Bob Bowen, is available to receive the flags and make shipments to England. His address can be found on Page 10.

Following is the list of past contributors beginning with Col. Frank P. Hunter. The flags are “flown to destruction” and then burned at proper ceremonies when no longer suitable.

Frank P. Hunter, Jr.  
Charles J. Anderson (for a friend)  
Fil E. Arbogast  
John Bawduniak  
William J. Beatovich  
William Benoe  
James W. Bewley  
John W. Bornstedt  
Raymond Brokaw  
William Cantwell  
Walter F. Clark  
Philip Collins  
John J. Colwell, Jr.  
Ralph Coomes  
Lawrence Crocker  
Julius Cubranich  
Tom Daugherty  
Archie Devaudreuil  
(non 398th member)  
Claude Dierolf  
John Driscoll  
Clarence Ehret

Pete Giuliano  
Ralph M. Hall  
Frank Hamill  
Warren Johnson  
Walter Kruse  
George Kuenneth  
Peter Latrenta  
Hebert Licker  
Charles Ludlam  
Jack Madlung  
Mark W. Mangan  
Vincent Moore  
Reuel Myers  
James J. Nichols  
Archie Paris  
Albert Petska  
Albert Pichette  
Leo Poinke (non 398th member)  
Charles J. Rayes  
Paul Rich  
Erwin J. Riley  
Richard Schmidt  
Charles F. Seal  
Clifton Self  
Arthur Selivan  
Alfred Shadroui  
Roy Sheely  
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Harry Sleaman  
Forest C. Smith  
Edward Stewart  
Carl J. Strickrott  
Howard Studer  
Wally Tillman  
Les Veley  
Charles Wasserman  
Frank Weiler  
William Wells  
Jack Wintersteen

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

# Time Changed Fighting Into Prayer

BY KARL ISSEL

Associate Member, San Francisco

The sirens warned of dreaded foes  
That flew in disciplined formation.  
You had to be quick on your toes  
To reach a shelter for salvation.

Night after night the same old same-old.  
If midnight or an hour past,  
Us kids were woken up and told  
"Get dressed and make it rather fast."

But 1945 in May —  
Oh, how I recollect that time —  
Allowed us sleep all night (and day)  
Ignoring any bells that chime —

Thanks, Heaven, peace by any measure.  
Well, granted we had been the losers.  
In all of that was a little pleasure,  
Remember, beggars can't be choosers,

We finally had our chance  
To see those Yankees from up close.  
We studied them sort of askance,  
They didn't look like dreaded foes.

Here were those young kids from the West  
(The ones we thought we'd have for lunch)  
With their behavior at their best!  
My God! they looked a pleasant bunch.

The question was in all our minds  
Why did they bomb us all those years?  
No finer chaps than them one finds,  
So let's forget the war, my dears.

Remember, though, atrocities  
By our leaders' evil doings  
Caused plenty animosity  
That put those towns in total ruins

The airmen that survived the war  
Came visiting old battle grounds,  
Returned and opened up the door  
To healing wounds in German towns.

To meet old enemies as friends,  
To meet the children and their parents  
To pray with them and shake their hands:  
True acts of biblical forbearance.

I came to see the finer sense  
That guides 398th endeavor:  
A brotherhood's thoughts so immense  
With memories to last forever.

To gunner Allen deepest thanks  
For granting membership that tied  
Me firmly into your great ranks,  
This kid from, yes, "the other side."

The irony of history:  
Whereas to get me then, you fail,  
But got me now — oh, mystery —  
As paying member — quite a tale.

With cash flow low in altitude  
"We're Short," the editor hollers —  
To show once more my gratitude  
Here is another 100 Dollars.

## Hitler Youth Was Not For Him

*Karl Issel was a member of the Hitler Youth as a 14-year-old, living in East Germany. He managed to avoid Army service, only to fall under the Communist regime in 1945. In 1948, as an 18-year-old, he escaped to Western Germany and ultimately pursued an architectural career. This led to post-war work in Canada, New York and finally San Francisco. He retired from the SF Power & Light Company, where he worked on power plant construction. Issel translated the work of German friend Kurt Hesse, who wrote "The Clay Pit," which appeared in FLAK NEWS.*

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# BRIEF-things

Can it really be 20 years since the England Tour group dropped in on Neuss, Germany, and witnessed **Maria Hunter** giving a hug to the anti-aircraft gunner who might just have been involved in shooting down her husband's B-17? ... and on the same tour joining up with the German hosts in a joint service at the Bunker Church? ... all that to report that the "Peace Tree" planted by the 398th in Neuss continues to grow proudly in the city's "playing field" ... **Manfred Koenig**, who played a major part in the group's three visits, continues to be "not well" as reported by his (our) good friend **Alfred Wilms** (and his translator **Mrs. Pfefferkorn**) ... an alert *398th.org* viewer, **Douglas Pape**, points out that the story of the 602 B-17 that went down in the channel on Dec. 30, 1944, (**Lyle Doerr**) displayed a "transposed" location; it should have been 50 degrees 33 minutes *North Latitude* and 00 degrees 25 minutes *East Longitude* (the "00" degrees refers to the Greenwich meridian, placing the Channel crash side almost due south of the English city ... the initial transposed recording came from the **Doerr** FLAK NEWS story in Vol. 7, No. 4 (Editor apologizes) ... most everything is going up these days, including postage, which includes the price of mailing FLAK NEWS (please don't overlook the dues) ... the AFA's "Almanac" of the Air Force tells of how many Medals of Honor were awarded to men of the Eighth who flew on those "dreaded" Merseburg missions ... the stax also reveal that a P-38 pilot, **Richard Bong**, had the most WW II air victories, 40, flying in the South Pacific ... your FLAK NEWS editor has moved three times in the past few years (see Page 12) after 45 years in the same house; a scenario that seems consistent with many others in our group (send in your address correction *before* you move!) ... those brides opting to be married at the Mighty Eighth Museum might select a ride on the Museum's "new" 1941 fire truck, a leftover from Hunter Air Field and Stewart Army Base of WW II ... and some 398th folks might just opt for a wedding background featuring the plaque of a loved one, or the Memorial itself ... check it out during the 8th Historical Society reunion August 3-8 this year (or while at the 398th reunion at Cocoa Beach in September) ... cars with 388th Bomb Group and 398th Bomb Group license plates were seen parked side by side at a Seattle restaurant parking lot (a rare coincidence) ... many ex-398th crewmen drop in to "show and tell" with the Aluminum Overcast crew at the Fort's various stops around the country, but **Roy Test** has made a "career" of it around the Southwest; and for his efforts he was honored by the California State Commanders Veterans Council ... a German friend, **Stefan Irlenbusch**, is seeking a photo of the **Roger Weum** crew that was shot down on a Merseburg mission in 1944; **Stefan's** grandfather was a gunner on an 88-mm. anti-aircraft gun that might just have been responsible for downing **Weum's** B-17, which came down near the city of Grossloebichau ... talk about bad timing, the AFA published the names of all the top AF brass, only to have Defense Secretary **Gates** fire both the AF Secretary and AF Chief of Staff ...



**ROGER WEUM**

**Percy Paget** of Fort Lauderdale, a stone's throw from Cocoa Beach, waited "forever" for a 398th reunion in Florida (September 3-6) only to find that his grandson's wedding has been scheduled for the same time in DC ... our VP-Ambassador, **Marilyn Gibb-Rice**, will "do whatever it takes" to promote the 398th; recently she attended the 55th Fighter Group reunion and invited them all to Cocoa Beach ...

# 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, please indicate size)	\$28.00	_____
_____	Golf Shirts, embroidered Triangle W, 60% cotton, 40% poly mesh		
_____	Mens, light blue or white, S-XL	\$25.00	_____
_____	Ladies, light blue, S-XL (please indicate size & color)	\$25.00	_____
<b>CAPS</b>			
_____	Black, with logo (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$8.00	_____
<b>BOOKS</b> (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	_____
_____	"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)	\$5.00	_____
_____	Group lapel pin (Hell From Heaven)	\$5.00	_____
<b>LOGOS</b>			
_____	Squadron Patch (indicate 600, 601, 602, 603)	\$6.00	_____
_____	B-17 Jacket Patch (rectangular)	\$4.00	_____
_____	8th Air Force Patch	\$6.00	_____
<b>PHOTOGRAPHS &amp; PRINTS</b>			
_____	"Clearing & Colder" (8x10)	\$10.00	_____
_____	"Clearing & Colder" (14x17)	\$30.00	_____
_____	Anstey Stained Glass Window booklet (11x17 includes list of comrades Killed in Action)	\$10.00	_____
_____	Aluminum Overcast (8x10)	\$2.00	_____
_____	"Sunset at Nuthampstead" (8x10)	\$7.00	_____
<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	_____
_____	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, 16589 Brookhollow Dr, Noblesville, IN 46062-7150, telephone 317-867-1898, carolynwidmann@aol.com.

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## **FLAK NEWS OFFICE HAS MOVED**

FLAK NEWS readers, plus those friends living in other parts of the world, are advised that the editor has moved, both his residence and office, to another city (north of Seattle). The new address and telephone are as follows:

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