



602



601



603



600

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

VOL. 10 NO. 2

FLAK NEWS

APRIL 1995



Charleston

SOUTH CAROLINA

HOUSE OF LORDS VISIT SET FOR '96 ENGLAND TOUR

In what has to be classified as a 398th Bomb Group "coup" of classic proportions, a visit to the House of Lords in London's Westminster has been arranged for the group's tour party to England in June of 1996!

"We look forward to your visit here to the House of Lords. You will be given a grand visit around the Palace of Westminster."

These were the words of Viscount Richard Long, CBE, a member of the House of Lords and "Lord in waiting to the Queen."

A tour to England, and a return to the old base at Nuthampstead, is always a big event in itself. But to start out the tour in London with a private visit to one of England's most prestigious landmarks will make the 1996 even more memorable.

"The House of Lords is a lavishly decorated Gothic style chamber containing the throne of the sovereign and the Woolsack, seat of the Lord Chancellor, which by tradition has been placed in the House since the time of Edward III in the 14th century."

That is the description given to the House of Lords, the dramatic starting point on the 398th Bomb Group tour to England in June, 1996.

(See Page 5 for additional tour details.)



The best of the new world for over 30 years.

Big Turnout Seen For 398th Reunion

The annual reunion at Charleston, South Carolina – October 11-14, 1995 – will be a "first" for the 398th Bomb Group. Meaning the group's first visit to this southern city and even the first meeting in any of the southeast states. The meeting is expected to attract upwards to 500 members.

"About time," echoed the 398th southeast contingent, especially those from nearby Florida, home to some 144 members.

Although the 398th can use the word, "first," the city of Charleston has a history of firsts –

First Chamber of Commerce – 1736.

First fire insurance company – 1736.

First prescription drug store – 1780.

First golf club – 1786.

First artificial ice – 1851.

First municipal college – 1785.

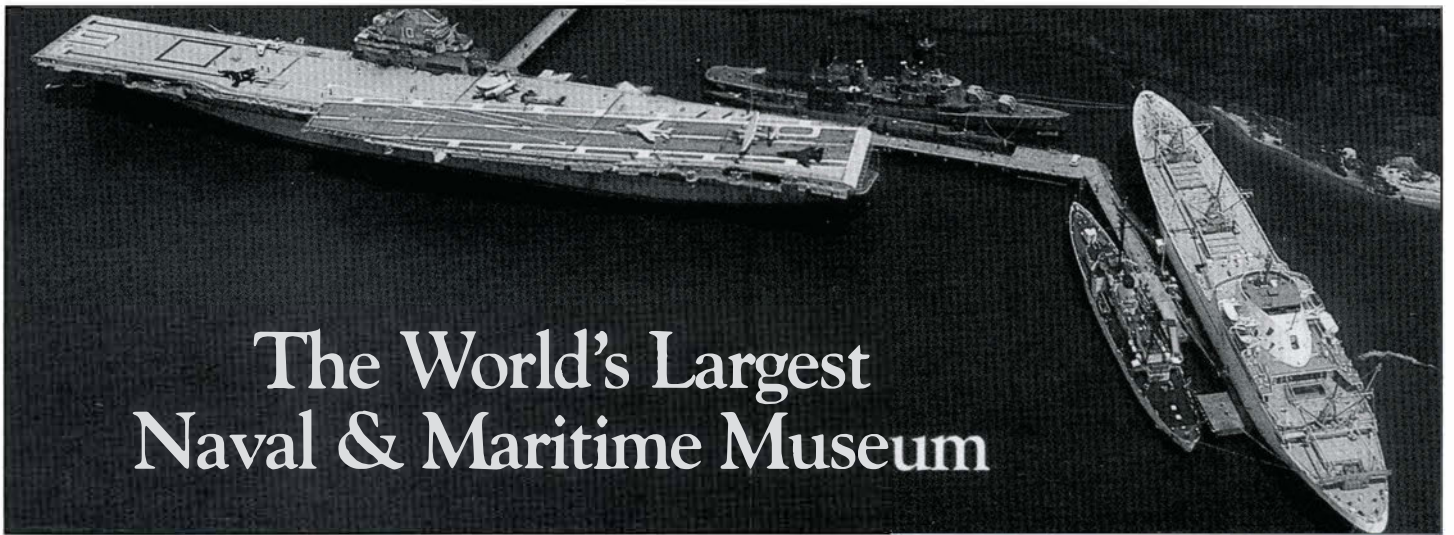
And, perhaps needless to say, the first shots fired in what was to become the War Between The States. Fort Sumter was fired on at 4:30 a.m. April 12, 1861, the beginning of a long, bitter and costly Civil War.

Fort Sumter is still there and can be visited on one of the many coach tours developed for the 398th meeting by Harold & Nancy Stallcup.

Other tours will take members to the world's largest naval museum at Patriot's Point, this being a slight departure from the usual forays to aviation museums (particularly where there might be a B-17 on display.)

Sorry, no B-17's on the Charleston reunion schedule, but you can check the spring fly-in schedule of the Aluminum

Continued on page 2



The World's Largest Naval & Maritime Museum

PATRIOT'S POINT, one of the many great attractions in Charleston, South Carolina.

Many Charleston Attractions

Continued from page 1

Overcast, printed on Page 9.

A visit to Charleston would not be complete without guided tours to old ancestral plantation homes, flower gardens, the slave market, Charles Towne Landing, charming colonial buildings and much more.

The "much more" can certainly include the 2,000-man (1 woman?) South Carolina Corps of Cadets called "The Citadel". The 398th members who opt for this tour will be guests at the weekly Full Dress Parade.

Col. Earl Berryhill, the 398th's ground executive, rounded out his military career as a professor at The Citadel.

Banquets will be held at the headquarters Marriott Hotel on both Thursday and Saturday evenings. A Friday optional dinner will be held aboard the carrier, Yorktown. Otherwise, members have the option of dining in any of dozens of great Charleston restaurants.

The group's annual business meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, October 12. To be discussed is the proposed change in by-laws and introduction of a new "sustaining plan". The ladies will meet at the same time for special entertainment.

Chairman Stallcup has "hired on" several former reunion chairmen to assist in registration, which will start at noon on Wednesday, October 11. Registrants will be asked to make banquet reservations after picking up their registration packets.

All the tours will be handled by Adventures in Charleston, Inc., a Charleston specialist in guided tours.

The Marriott Hotel is about three miles from the Charleston Airport and about nine miles from downtown. The backup hotel is the Quality Suites Hotel, walking distance from the Marriott. There is plenty of parking at both facilities.

Stallcup has arranged for the golfers to use the Charleston Air Force Base course.

The Marriott will have vans available for transportation to downtown each day at 9 a.m., 12 noon, 3, 6 and 9:30 p.m.

A highway map will be printed in the July issue of FLAK NEWS.

The City of Charleston is within easy reach of the bulk of the 398th's membership. It is reached by a number of interstates connecting with I-26, which leads directly into the city.

A scenic route into Charleston for north-south travelers is I-17, which runs along the Atlantic Coast.

Amtrak operates two northbound and two southbound trains daily the station being located in North Charleston, not far from the Marriott Hotel.

American, Delta, United and US Air all operate flights in and out of the North Charleston Airport.

The Greyhound Bus Terminal is also located in North Charleston.

And for the 398th airmen coming by boat, the Intercoastal Waterway passes through Charleston Harbor.

REUNION FACTS

EVENT – 12th annual 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association reunion.

WHEN – October 11-12-13-14, 1995 (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday).

WHERE – Charleston, South Carolina.

HQ HOTEL – Marriott Hotel, 4770 Marriott Dr., North Charleston, SC 29418. (803) 744-6108.

BACKUP HOTEL – Quality Suites Hotel, 5225 Arco Lane (across the street), North Charleston, SC 29418, (803) 747-7300. Reservations – Toll free 1-800-221-2222.

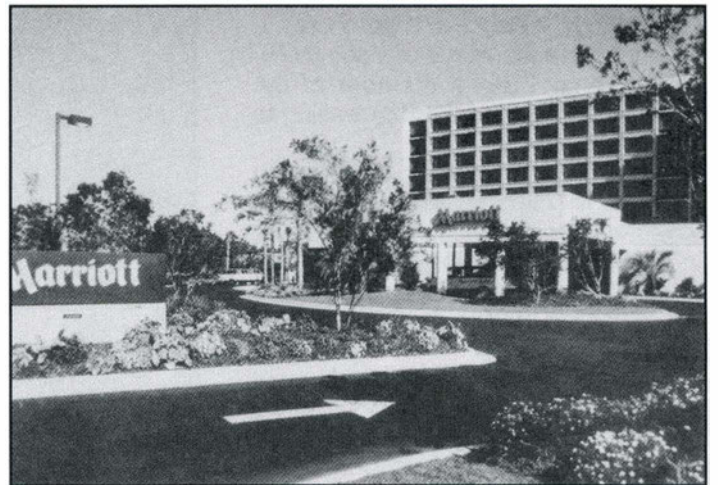
CHAIRMAN – Harold & Nancy Stallcup, Forest City, NC 28043-3728.

EVENTS – See registration page.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS – Marriott Hotel reservation form enclosed in FLAK NEWS. If missing, contact hotel directly. Identify as "398th."

TRAVEL INFORMATION – Travel House, Inc., 5042 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115. Call toll free 1-800-423-5454. (Barbara Fish)

GUEST OF HONOR – All of us!



TEAR OUT OR PHOTO COPY

The registration page for the reunion in Charleston, South Carolina, October 11-14, 1995, may be clipped out and mailed, or you may use a photo copy. A copy of your registration will be returned as a receipt by the reunion chairman following his audit.



OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM

398th Bomb Group Memorial Association 12th Annual Reunion
Charleston, South Carolina October 11-14, 1995

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 15, 1995

NAME _____ WIFE _____ SQD: _____
 ADDRESS _____ PHONE (_____) _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP+4 _____

NAMES OF OTHERS IN PARTY. PLEASE PRINT FOR NAME TAGS

WEDNESDAY, October 11:

Golf	6:30 AM	Meet in Lobby	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Registration	12 NOON - 5 PM	Salons A-B-C	
Charleston Tour	1 PM - 3:45 PM	.....	\$19.00 x _____ \$ _____
Free hotel shuttles to Downtown	9 AM - 9:30 PM		
Dinner at your selection.			
Board Officers Meeting	8 PM	Marriott Boardroom	

THURSDAY, October 12:

Golf	6:30 AM	Meet in Lobby	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Registration	9 AM - 5 PM	Salons A-B-C	
Free hotel shuttles to Downtown	9 AM - 9:30 PM		
Group Business Meeting	2 PM - 4 PM	Carolina Ballroom	
Womens' Function	3 PM - 4 PM	Carolina Ballroom	
Magnolia Gardens Tour	1 PM - 4 PM	.....	\$25.00 x _____ \$ _____
No Host Bar	6 PM - 7 PM	Carolina Ballroom	
Welcome Banquet	7 PM	Carolina Ballroom	\$27.00 x _____ \$ _____

FRIDAY, October 13:

Registration	9 AM - 5 PM	Salons A-B-C	
Free hotel shuttles to Downtown	9 AM - 9:30 PM		
Charles Town Landing/Citadel			
Tour	1:10 PM - 5 PM	.....	\$17.00 x _____ \$ _____
Patriot's Point Tour/Dinner	3 PM - 9:30 PM	.....	\$51.00 x _____ \$ _____

SATURDAY, October 14:

Registration	9 AM - 12 NOON	Salons A-B-C	
Free hotel shuttles to downtown	9 AM - 9:30 PM		
Fort Sumter Harbor Cruise	10 AM - 1:30 PM	.....	\$19.00 x _____ \$ _____
No Host Bar	6 PM - 7 PM	Carolina Ballroom	
Farewell Banquet	7 PM	Carolina Ballroom	\$36.00 x _____ \$ _____

(Table Reservations Required. See Registration Desk.)

Registration Fee (Per Person, 2 Maximum Per Family)	\$10.00 x _____	\$ _____
1995 Dues (if applicable, check your dues card)	\$5.00 x _____	\$ _____
TOTAL		\$ _____

I/We will be staying at the Marriott Quality Suites Other.

Please complete form, enclose check, and mail to:

Harold Stallcup
398th Bomb Group Reunion
Forest City, NC 28043-3728

Received \$ _____ Date _____ <p style="text-align: center;">Harold Stallcup A copy of this form will be mailed to registrant upon receipt of check or money order, payable to 398th Bomb Group Reunion.</p>



50th ANNIVERSARY

More than a dozen German citizens living in communities in and near Neuss gathered at the cemetery at Heerdt to honor "Col. F.P. Hunter and his crew and the victims of World War II". It was the 50th anniversary of the death of Colonel Hunter on a bombing mission to Neuss, Germany, and the end of World War II. A special memorial service was held on January 22 at the "Bunker Church" at Heerdt, which was an air raid shelter during the war. The Germans and members of the 398th planted a joint memorial tree near the crash site in 1988. The tree, honoring the memory of Colonel Hunter, represents "a building stone for mutual peace between the two nations which still stands."

Photo Offer

Once in a great while there comes along "an offer you can't refuse." Like this one –

A "Friend of the 398th" has volunteered to photograph any of the old pubs known to members of the 398th in the Hitchin, Baldock, Nuthampstead, Barley, Barkway, Royston areas. And send color photos to those making the request.

He will also visit the American Cemetery at Cambridge (Madingly) and photograph the cross of a loved one who lies there. Or whose name is on the Wall of the Missing.

Just send the name of the pub (and location) and cemetery information to –

Jim Spicer

Hitchin, Herts SG5 2LS, England

Like we said, "an offer you can't refuse."



PX Listing Due In Next Issue

A listing of the 398th's PX products ... T-shirts, patches, pins, cups, etc. , will be published in the July issue of FLAK NEWS. Joe and Rozanne Joseph, who have taken over this department from Jack and Marqeen Wintersteen, are in the process of establishing their "warehouse" in the basement of their home.

(They have been unavailable these past months due to a winter "residency" in Florida.)

Beginning in mid-April they can be reached at Defiance, OH 43512-8854.

Contentment is not the fulfillment
of what we want, but rather
the realization of
how much we already have.

"Death Not In Vain:" Hunter, Crew Remembered By Germans

BY ALFRED WILMS
Dusseldorf-Heerdt, Germany

I have tried many times to imagine how you young men of 20 years must have felt when you had to witness such an event ... your comrades hit by a shell and you saw the plane falling down to the ground.

It was long ago ... January 23, 1945 ... also the beginning of our friendship. We here in communities near Neuss, where your friends died and where Federico Gonzales survived ... remember how you came looking for the very place where your Colonel Hunter and crew had crashed.

It was in 1988 and a tree was planted. Since then it is a memorial site reminding us of this event.

The year 1995 brings back many memories, good ones like to the end of the 2nd World War but also very sad ones like the liberation of the prisoners in the concentration camp of Auschwitz by the Russian army. It is a dark day in our history and can and must never be forgotten.

We wanted to commemorate the dignity of the 50th anniversary of the death of your commander and his crew at Heerdt. The atmosphere when we met on the 22nd of January, 1995, in front of the Bunker Church was that of "the end of the world."

Heavy storm and rain nearly swept us away. The result was the disastrous flood in Koblenz, Cologne and other places on the River Rhine.

The Bunker Church was filled up to the last seat. Dr. Klinkhammer, whom you met in 1988, celebrated that day his 92nd birthday. Parson Herbert Schlömer celebrated the church service. He said the death of Colonel Hunter and his comrades has not been in vain. It was a building stone for mutual peace between the two nations which still lasts.

An orchestra accompanied the ceremony.

Later we laid down a garland at the Memorial place on the Heerdt cemetery in memory of Colonel Hunter and his crew ... and for the victims of the 2nd World War.

The participants of the ceremony asked to send their kind regards to all the friends of the 398th Bomb Group. These were Mr. & Mrs. König; Gertrud Peiffer; Mr. & Mrs. Maier; Mr. & Mrs. Kiefer; Mr. & Mrs. Schröder; Mr. & Mrs. Schmidt; as well as Margret Wilms and myself; Johannes Everding could not come on account of health problems.

And I must thank Frau Pfefferkorn for translating my German letter into English.

21 From 398th Ready For One More Pilsen Trip

Twenty-one members of the 398th Bomb Group will carry the flag of the US Air Force to the Czech Republic, May 4-11 to participate in that country's World War II liberation day festivities.

The 398th will be the only AF unit represented in the many programs planned for Pilsen and Prague, joining a number of other ground forces from the infantry and mechanized branches.

While it was the "ground guys" who drove off or captured the last remnants of the occupying German forces in early May, 1945, it was the B-17's from the 8th Air Force that sealed their fate.

"Get out and get out now!" was the radio warning to the workers at the Pilsen Skoda Works as the 398th and other groups went out on what was to become The Last Mission of WW II on April 25, 1945.

The Czechs remember that warning still today and are looking forward to meeting the eight men from the 398th who were on that mission. These would be Al Bischoff (600), Harry Hoelzel (600), Charles Hough (603), Bob Howard (603), Elliot Novek (602), Arnie Schneider (603), Len Streitfeld (600) and Lewis Sullivan (600).

Other veterans on the tour will be Keith Anderson (600), Harry Gray (602), Danny Leyva (603), Mark Woods (600) and Allen Ostrom (602). There will be six wives, plus Elaine Tyler from England and tour director Barbara Fish.

All veterans will have an opportunity to meet with Czech Republic president Havel in Prague.

A special mission for Harry Gray will be a visit to the memorial in Litice which honors his Ferguson 602 crew, six of whom were killed on The Last Mission.

After the WW II programs in Pilsen and Prague, the 398th tour party will continue on to Copenhagen for two days of sightseeing and touring before returning home on May 13th.

Comstock "Grounded"

President Bill Comstock, on the runway with the nose of his B-17 pointed toward Pilsen to lead the 398th tour party, was recalled by the "tower" at the last moment and told to return to "Sub Depot" for consultation.

In the "flak-filled skies" of a cancer battle the past year, Comstock had his heart set on journeying to Pilsen and Prague for the May liberation activities.

However, the team of doctors monitoring his condition, advised him that such an extensive trip overseas might not be in his best health interests.

Bill, there's another "big one" coming up next year. We'll count on you to lead the 398th to England in June, 1996.

ENGLAND 1996



Yes, it's true. There will be a tour to England next year and there will be visit to the House of Lords!

(Not to mention a return to the old base at Nuthampstead.)

Through the courtesy of Viscount Richard Long, CBE, the 398th Bomb Group will be given a grand tour of Westminster and the storied House of Lords.

This will take place shortly after the group arrives in London.

Dates for the 1996 tour have already been established. And the arrangements will be slightly different than in past years. Some members indicated a desire to "keep the tour a little shorter," while others have been happy to "go the full distance."

So, a "short tour" AND a "long tour." Either way, the tour will start on Sunday, June 9, 1996.

After the four-day London segment all tour members will spend five more days in and around Nuthampstead. As usual, the tour will feature "home stays" rather than "hotel stays."

When the "short tour" members return home on June 18, the "long tour" members will continue on for seven more days with visits to Barnstable, York and Norwich, returning home on June 26.

The extension tour is being arranged by the "Friends of the 398th" through their own "Top Barn Travel Agency."

"Top Barn" will also provide the coaches for the London segment and the touring in the Nuthampstead area.

Travel House, Inc., of Seattle will provide the travel arrangements from the U.S. to England. Neither prices nor itinerary have as yet been established. Complete details will appear in the July issue of FLAK NEWS.

Meanwhile, now is the time to reserve "JUNE 1996" for your Return to Nuthampstead.

And the House of Lords!

Anstey Church Says "Thanks" For Donations

St. George's Church in Anstey, England, slightly venerable at the age of 800 years, might just have a few more good years left thanks in part to members of the 398th Bomb Group.

Remembered as the little stone church at the end of the main runway at Station 131 ... and only a stone's throw from where a 603rd Squadron lead plane crashed and burned on take off ... it had been in dire need of major repair.

(After 800 years the roof had begun to leak, etc.)

All totaled, the need would eventually reach \$297,000.

At the Memorial Service at Anstey last June, the 398th tour members were told of the need. And a subsequent appeal was made in FLAK NEWS.

The response was a whopping \$2,030.

Sir Roger duBoulay, church warden, wrote the following thank you note -

"Your members have been exceedingly generous and I can assure you that the sum will be rapidly put to the best use in continuing our successful but unfinished programme of essential repairs.

"The links forged 50 years ago are still strong. Thank you."

Sir Roger explained that they had already reroofed two-thirds of the church in lead.

"Thanks in part to the extra money you sent, we hope to have enough in hand to complete Phase II by reroofing in lead the South aisle and South aisle porch."

As Colonel Hunter might have said - "Well done, Men."

THE DUES

Five Midwest states ... plus Texas ... get the honor of "doing the dues" this quarter.

It does cost some money to keep the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association alive and well. Which it continues to be thanks to the generosity of its members. The dues remain \$5.00 per year, with options to pump in a little more for FLAK NEWS and the Memorial Fund.

"With this system," says treasurer Ralph Hall, "we have been able to stay healthy and pay our bills."

Dues inserts should appear in this issue of FLAK NEWS destined for Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and ... Texas.

New B-17 Newsletter

For those looking for interesting stories about the B-17, they are invited to hook up with "The B-17 Flying Fortress Association." Contact the editor, Don R. Hayes, Walla Walla, WA 99362.

"A B-17 OUT OF THE BLUE"

"Eternity is forever. It happened in just a few minutes and yet it seemed forever. Our plane was hit. I knew it to be so because I was thrown to the floor of my radio compartment and I was hurting. "Am I bleeding?"; I asked the ball turret gunner. No, there was no evidence of blood. The radio hatch had slammed into my back and movement was excruciatingly painful and almost impossible. I kept thinking ... I must move, must get out of this situation. What will my mother think if I don't come home!"

By George Graham
Radio Operator, O'Neal Crew, 600th Squadron

With help from one of my fellow crew members, I was able to get to my knees. I dragged myself to the window. I could see flames shooting into the sky. No. 3 engine was on fire! My body might have given up, but my mind wouldn't let it. I crawled, with great pain, to the waist door by pulling myself along the ribs of the airplane. At the doorway, I reached up and yanked the emergency handle releasing the door which blew off.

It was at this same time that I realized that the tail of the ship had broken off and I was now crosswise in the doorway, entangled in the cables which led to that broken-off tail and I was totally incapable of pushing myself out.

The plane was spiralling down now, going faster and faster. Suddenly there was a wrenching jolt that set me free from the maze of wires and I was catapulted out into space. I reached for my parachute ring and yanked. The ring came off in my hand. My parachute had not opened!

I had no sensation of movement as I fell. Frantic now, I began tearing at the elastic bands that held the chute, and finally the lifesaving silk responded to my urgent tuggings and I floated to earth. As I neared the ground, more trouble awaited me. This time in the form of German civilians who had witnessed

my descent and were firing at me. Fortunately, they were not excellent marksmen and as I lay flattened on their territory, they captured me and I was taken to a German Military Hospital in Berlin.

I spent one month in the hospital with a severe back injury before being released and moved on to an interrogation center in Frankfurt.

At the Frankfurt center, I was confined to a room and the questioning began. The questions were precise and persistent. I refused to answer and eventually ... and to my total amazement ... they knew all about me and they told me so. The year I had graduated from high school; when I had entered the service; when I was sent overseas; my Squadron and my Group.

After questioning was complete, I was sent to a German Air Force prison camp, Stalug Luft IV, located, I believe, near Stettin. A room was assigned to me in one of the barracks. The room was approximately 15x15 and housed eight prisoners. I was allowed to keep the clothing I had been captured in and given a few personal items ... shaving equipment, toothbrush, comb.

Each day began with a German guard awakening us with a loud shout and roll call was taken. Shortly after, we prepared for the day. Breakfast was provided by a



GEORGE GRAHAM

central kitchen that dispensed all food. A typical breakfast consisted of hard German brown bread and whatever rations we had in our Red Cross care package. This package should have been one per person per week, but because of a shortage, two prisoners shared one parcel per week. There were times when no Red Cross package arrived. Then we reduced our food intake to extend whatever food was on hand.

Lunch and dinner usually consisted of soup and always there was hard bread, palatable enough when you're hungry, but not recommended for a daily diet!

The buildings forming the prison camp surrounded a compound. During the summer, almost everyone gathered in this area to exchange stories and participate in athletics. Baseball was a favorite. A walk around the perimeter of the compound provided our daily exercise and this was repeated every single day that the weather permitted. During the rainy season, I took the opportunity to wash my clothes by using a scrub brush and soap that the Red Cross had provided. Wet clothes were hung in the barracks or left outdoors in the hope that the sun would eventually do the job.

There were guard towers at the four corners of the compound to discourage any attempt to escape. Two or three

Continued on page 10

Formations For May 19, 1944, Mission To Berlin

"A GROUP"

MILLER
Douglas
Thompson Rice

MARKLEY
Ford
Searl O'Neal

Dunlap Lowe, J.D.
Driscoll Brown Nelson Alhadeff

Scott, E.D. Taylor
Roderick Dollar Turner Farenthold

"B GROUP"

GRAY
Davidson
Foster, T. Latson

WAGNER
Krueger
Cullinan Dwyer

Griffin Hopkins
Fairbanks Heintzelman Fisher Engel

*Arlin Stoll
Hornshuh Farnsworth Cobb

** Flew Deputy Lead with 379th*

O'Neal Crew Was 1st Loss for 398th

Mission No. 8 for the newly arrived 398th Bomb Group to the 8th Air Force Theater of Operations was to Berlin. It would be the fourth such trip to the German capital in the month of May 1944. And before the war was over, the total would be nine.

Planes from all four squadrons took part in the May 19 raid, but they were scattered in two formations. Jean Miller led the "A" Group and Judson (Fred) Gray and "B" Group.

The mission would be remembered as the day the 398th lost its first plane and crew in combat. Ira O'Neal and his men were on their fifth mission, and it was their second time around for Berlin.

It was one of those long hauls out over the North Sea, across the neck of Denmark, and then almost a straight shot southeast to Berlin. A wide pass out of the city and then back home on somewhat the same route.

The mission narrative described the flak over the target as "heavy and accurate" on the bomb run.

Indeed it was, as at least one 88 made a direct hit in the nose of the O'Neal aircraft as he was on the wing of deputy leader Bill Markley. The plane immediately began to

Disabled Fort Drifted Under Falling Bombs

drift to the right. At the same moment, the lead bombardier, Gil Goldman, in the nose of Miller's lead B-17, unloaded his rack of 100-pound incendiaries.

Keith Anderson, a regular copilot on the Miller/Gene Douglas lead crew, observed the following drama from his observer's position in the tail turret –

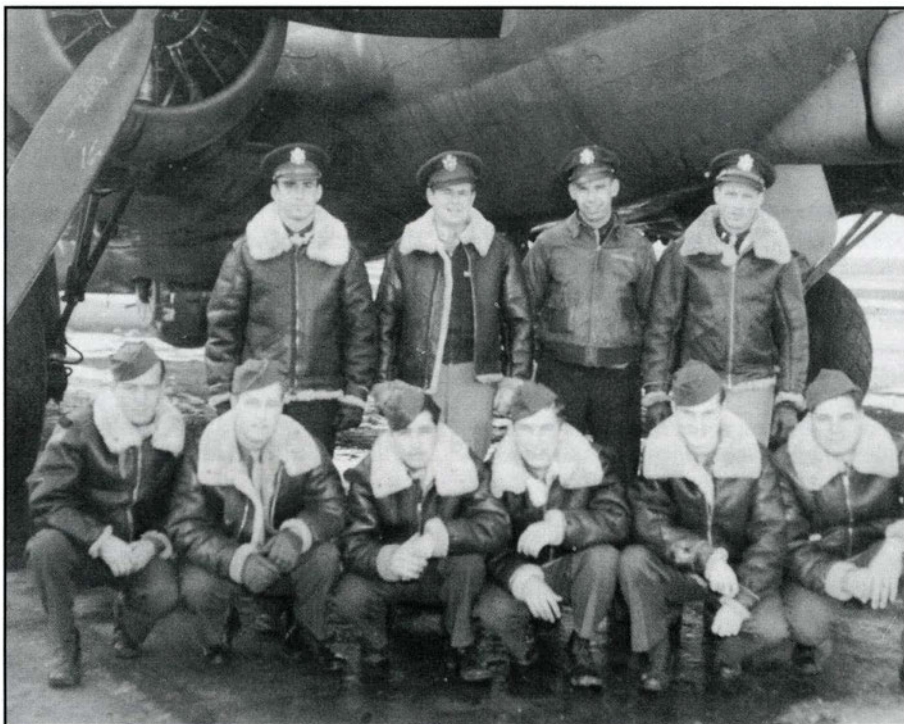
"When we dropped our bombs I looked down and saw several bombs drop right on the O'Neal plane. He had drifted directly under Bob Nelson's plane in the high element and apparently no one saw it in time to hold up the bomb release."

George Graham, the radio operator and one of the two survivors of the mishap along with navigator Howard Baer, corroborate this view in the accompanying articles.

When Graham and Baer they met at a reunion many years later, the two remembered seeing another parachute descending. Just the chute and harness. Nobody in it.

O'Neal had jumped ... but had fallen out of his chute."

Others who perished on the ill-fated O'Neal B-17 were Roger Comer, copilot; Merritt Deull, bombardier; Dale Schaupp, engineer-gunner; Joe Barzano, ball turret; Gerald Farren and Frederick Cone, waist; and Robert Jenkins, tail gunner.



THIS WAS THE FIRST 398th combat crew shot from the skies in World War II. All but two of the 600 Squadron crew members perished when their plane was hit by flak over Berlin ... and then struck by falling bombs from another plane. Left to right, back row, are Howard Baer, navigator; Merritt Deull, bombardier; Ira (Lee) O'Neal, pilot; Roger Comer, co-pilot. Front row, left to right, are Frederick Cone, waist gunner; Dale Schaupp, engineer; Joseph Barzazo, ball turret gunner; George Graham, radio operator; Gerald Farren, waist gunner; and Robert Jenkins, tail gunner. Only Baer and Graham survived.

"Blood Was Running From The Cockpit"

Howard F. Baer, navigator on the Ira O'Neal crew, died in 1993, but not before he had recorded his version of those dramatic moments high in the skies over Berlin on May 19, 1944.

BY HOWARD F. BAER

We were flying in the No. 2 position of the lead "slot" element, off the wing of deputy leader Bill Markley.

As we approached the target, we were hit by a direct flak burst in the nose. I was struck in the forehead and the concussion opened a big hole in the nose. I was not stunned, but I was bleeding.

Almost simultaneously, the plane lurched to the right and seconds later bombs from

a plane above us fell through the cockpit, top turret and radio room.

The plane started into a spin and the bail out alarm bell sounded. I looked up and saw blood running down from the cockpit. Then O'Neal came down and said the copilot (Roger Comer) had been hit and that the bombardier (Merritt Deull) and I should get out now.

I pulled myself up from the navigator's seat. Then Merritt motioned me to rub my face as I was getting frostbite. I went out the hole in the nose, but never saw Merritt or Ira alive again.

It had been my practice to unsnap the parachute harness while navigating, and after I jumped and pulled the rip cord I wondered why I was sitting so low in the harness. It was then I realized that the leg straps were unbuckled.

I landed within 400 yards of George Graham and started towards him. A German took several pistol shots in my direction so I stopped.

One of the Germans approached me and said in very good English – "For you the war is over."

An hour later I saw the rest of the crew. They were in a cart. All eight were dead.



HOWARD BAER

BTO PFF OBOE H2S H2X MICKEY

Enter The Mystical World of Radar Navigation/Bombing

By Marvin Laufer

603rd Squadron Navigator

BTO, PFF, OBOE, H2S, H2X, MICKEY

What were all of the above and what did they mean to the Army Air Force's heavy bombardment groups of both the 8th Air Force operating out of England and the 15th Air Force operating out of Africa and Italy?

The inclement winter weather and the applicable cloud cover over the skies above the European continent generally obscured the visibility of the targets of the Bomb Groups, thereby limiting their effectiveness.

The British scientists developed the initial use of radio detection and ranging (RADAR) for airborne use. American scientists added their skill and knowledge to further improve the bombing techniques and help attain a reasonable degree of accuracy. The end result of the combined efforts of the scientists was initially known as BTO (Bombing Through the Overcast) and eventually referred to under the code name Mickey (PFF-Pathfinder Force).

The early techniques used by the Army Air Forces were as follows:

1. British developed "Gee" utilizing an airborne transmitter which interrogated two ground beacons and was used for crude aerial navigation and bombing through the overcast. Gee was very susceptible to jamming by the Germans.

2. Oboe, also developed by the English, was the reverse of Gee in that ground stations interrogated an airborne transmitter and it was somewhat more effective than Gee.

3. The next method used for BTO/PFF bombing was the use of an airborne RADAR set designated as APS15 by its developer, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The name used by the Air Force was H2X, or its more commonly used name of Mickey. H2S was the next improvement to H2X.

H2X and subsequently H2S consisted of a receiver and an antenna. The receiver and antenna were located in the bomber's fuselage in a housing known as a Radome. The radio compartment of the bomber contained a cathode ray tube along with the necessary electrical equipment needed for its operation. The retractable Radome replaced the ball turret. Langley Field, located in Hampton Roads, Virginia, became the first training center for Mickey operators who, on completion of training, were assigned to units of both the 8th and 15th Army Air Forces. Mickeymen quickly became a very scarce commodity in combat areas due to the staggering losses of lead crews. Additional navigators were trained in England at Alconbury. This base was also used to provide advanced training as the equipment improved. All Pathfinder-

trained crews were assigned to fly as lead for Groups, Wings, Divisions and, of course, the Air Force. The lead aircraft was responsible for navigation to the IP and target and all aircraft would drop bombs when the lead ship dropped its load.

The Mickey operator would work directly with the bombardier by feeding dropping angles to be incorporated in the Norden bombsight optics thus synchronizing the bombsight rate and course by adjusting ground speed, drift and distance to the target.

By detuning the set and reducing the

gain on the scope, the experienced Mickey man was able to more accurately determine the target blip and get a better read, thereby attaining greater accuracy on the target. Bombing results were improved and the circular error was substantially reduced.

With the availability of BTO equipment the bombing offensive of both Air Forces would have been greatly curtailed.

The Mickey operators were "loners," in that they were not assigned to any particular lead crew, but flew where or when they were needed.



COL. FRANK P. HUNTER, JR. pins the Silver Star on Lt. Marvin Laufer at a ceremony at Station 131. Laufer earned the decoration on a combat mission over Germany while flying with the 97th Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force. Transferred to the 398th to fill a "Mickey" shortage, Laufer arrived in time to receive the Silver Star from Colonel Hunter ... and then proceeded to get shot down over Merseburg on November 21, 1944.

Laufer And Murphy's Law

Marve Laufer says his final mission with the 398th Bomb Group, to Merseburg on November 21, 1944, was a study in Murphy's Law. If something can go wrong, it will.

To be sure, the 603rd sent out 13 aircraft, and only three came back in formation. Five were shot down, two crash landed on the continent, two came home alone and one aborted.

(See FLAK NEWS Vol. 5 No. 4.)

Laufer, the Mickey man, normally would have been flying on the deputy group lead (602) plane, ready to take over if the lead was taken out. Instead, he was assigned to the lead in the high (603) squadron.

Early on in the mission, Laufer's Mickey unit began blowing fuses. He saved one for the bomb run, and it went out after the IP.

"The whole H2X unit was bad," he recalled. "Also, we had trouble with the oxygen system and the radio didn't function right.

"When the Wing radioed orders to descend 10,000 feet, we didn't get the message. We soon lost sight of the other two squadrons and right after that we ran into the FW 190's.

"One 20 mm shot killed the CA pilot, Ken Hastings, and another set fire to an engine. When told to bail out, we had trouble getting the waist door open. I finally got out and then passed out from lack of oxygen. I came to just in time to pop the chute ... and get captured by some old German soldiers.

"From then on, I was relieved of my A-2 jacket, lighter and cigarettes. Then on to a small jail cell, interrogation, several rifle butt smacks from SS officers and finally to Stalag Luft.

"One time we marched past a Red Cross office in some small town. And they pulled down the shades as we sent by."

Murphy's Law.

ALUMINUM OVERCAST:

Spring Tour

The Aluminum Overcast will be off and flying again this spring and summer on another "B-17 Victory Tour."

A 21-city schedule, covering 13 states, begins on April 21 and concludes July 5, 1995. All the stops will be either in Central or East Coast cities. As usual, the two-day airport stopovers will be under the sponsorship of the EAA of Oshkosh, WI and local chapters.

Members of the 398th are invited to join the "B-17 Historical Society" for a \$475 donation. With this comes a Certificate of Membership, a quarterly newsletter, a Society jacket and ... a flight in the Aluminum Overcast plus a cockpit photo of the member at the controls.

A Ground Crew Society membership also is available for \$75.

All flight arrangements can be made at each local airport.

The 1995 Victory Tour Spring Schedule (subject to change without notice) –

April 21-23 – St. Louis, Missouri

Spirit of St. Louis Airport

April 24-25 – Jonesboro, Arkansas

Jonesboro Municipal

April 26-27 – Little Rock, Arkansas

Adams Field

April 28-30 – Tulsa, Oklahoma

Richard Lloyd Jones Jr. Airport

May 1-4 – Wichita, Kansas

Col. James Jabara Airport

May 5-7 – Kansas City, Missouri

Kansas City Downtown

May 8-9 – Lebanon, Tennessee

Lebanon Municipal

May 10-11 – Collegedale, Tennessee

Collegedale Municipal

May 12-14 – Lawrenceville, Georgia

Gwinnett County/Briscoe Field

May 15-17 – Knoxville, Tennessee

McGhee Tyson Airport

May 18-21 – Hickory, North Carolina

Hickory Regional

May 25-29 – Indianapolis, Indiana

(site to be determined)

May 30-31 – Zanesville, Ohio

Zanesville Municipal

June 1-4 – Long Island, New York

(site to be determined)

June 5-7 – Youngstown, Ohio

Youngstown-Warren Regional

June 8-11 – Kalamazoo, Michigan

Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International

June 12-14 – Valparaiso, Indiana

Porter County Municipal

June 15-18 – Aurora, Illinois

Aurora Municipal

June 19-21 – Waukegan, Illinois

Waukegan Regional

June 22-25 – Racine, Wisconsin

Batten Field

July 1-5 – Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Waukesha Crites Field



IT IS DIFFICULT to tell which of these two had the "greatest thrill" when Teedy Blackwell took over the controls of the Aluminum Overcast last September in Tucson. Looking on is hubby Wally, who was the "real" B-17 pilot with the 601st Squadron. A husband-wife combination in a B-17 cockpit constitutes a very rare event, to which both Wally and Teedy will attest.

"Walking My B-17 Back Home"

Was it (is it) possible to back a B-17 into a parking space? "Not likely," many have said, in that the ol' Fortress was (is) a WW II type taildragger and not equipped with reversible pitch propellers.

"Can do," said a TWA captain and former 305th BG pilot.

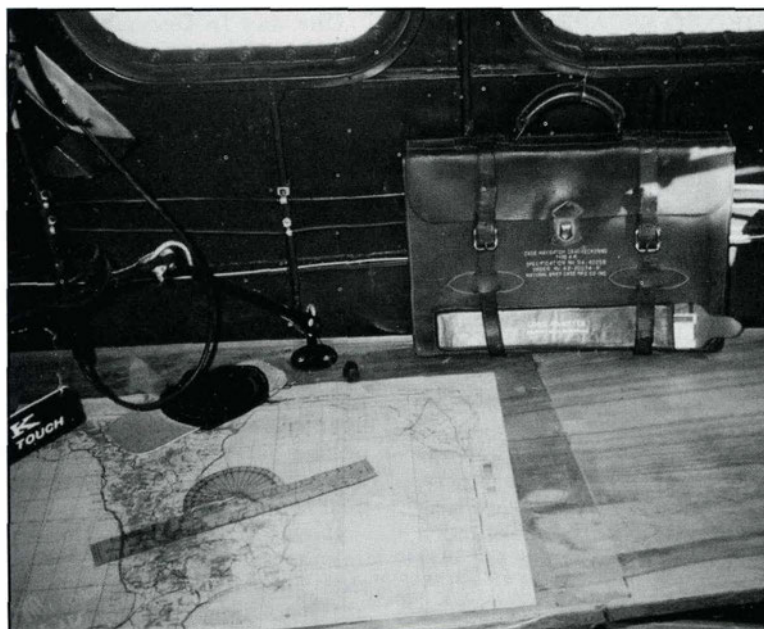
Like this –

Lock the left brake and pour the coal to the No. 1 (left, outboard) engine; the Fort then pivots to the right, which causes the right main wheel to roll back slightly.

Then stomp on the right brake and advance No. 4 engine to full throttle; this forces the left wheel back.

By alternating in this manner, it is possible to "walk" a B-17 backwards.

–Courtesy Perry Schreffler, 305th Bomb Group.



THIS IS THE Navigator's table on a B-17, complete with "Case, Navigation, Dead Reckoning, Type A-4." Also tucked in the straps is a little tool called the "load adjuster."

The Chaplain Remembers

BY CHAPLAIN JAMES DUVALL
398th Bomb Group

The chapel was located in a building in the Group Headquarters area. It was also used for general briefings. A Sgt. Russell, who worked with the Clerk of the Works, (Civil Engineers), built and erected the steeple which identified the building as the Chapel.

We had very little altar equipment. When we needed a candelabra someone made one out of welding rod and shell casings. It seems that whatever was needed someone would either find it or make it. For Christmas Eve, some men made candle reflectors out of Number 2 cans. These were placed in the window sills but were blown off when some bombs began to pop off when two planes crashed on takeoff at the end of the runway (See FLAK NEWS Vol. 4 No. 4).

Many happenings might seem insignificant to some but meant much to me.

For a period of time, we did not have an assigned Catholic chaplain. It was necessary to find a civilian priest or chaplain from another base for Catholic worship services. It was a great day when Walter Sullivan was assigned to our Group. We then had one to share in the day-to-day activities and conduct services.

Each of us had a Chaplain's assistant. Corporal Dick Gray assisted Chaplain Sullivan and Corporal Elwyn Coburn assisted me. These men did our typing and routine office work and assisted us in the worship services. They were also required to pull Squadron duties.

Chaplain Fierman, from 8th Fighter Command, would come

by occasionally and conduct Jewish services. At other times, one of the men from the Medical Group, who was a Cantor, would conduct the service on Friday night and I would speak. It was nothing out of the ordinary for a Chaplain to serve all personnel without compromising his faith.

Informal meetings were also conducted. Bible studies were held and we would discuss, question and answer the teachings as we understood them. At times, a few men would ask to get together for a more intimate discussion. These were enjoyable times and we learned from the experiences of one another. This seemed to bond us and give us strength for whatever the day might bring.

The American Bible Society furnished us with pocket-size New Testaments and other religious literature was available whenever it could be found.

Colonels Hunter and Berryhill were supportive of the Chapel programs and attended services whenever possible. Both enlisted and officer personnel assisted in the worship services. Some would help in preparing the chapel for worship, play the small field organ; Dick Frazier would form singing groups, decorate for special Sundays, assist in serving the Holy Communion or whatever needed to be done around the Chapel.

Many times men would ask if they could assist in the Sunday services. There was never any lack of help. To this day, there are those who are still being used in their civilian churches. I thank God for their help, their witness, then and now. And for their lasting friendship.

A Day In The Life Of A Prisoner Of War

(Continued from page 6)

guards manned each tower and they were highly visible. These efforts to keep us in control were effective. NO ONE EVER TRIED TO ESCAPE.

The highlight of the week (in the early part of my stay in camp) was when there would be a new arrival of prisoners at the entry way to the camp. My inquiry was always the same. "Was anyone from my bomber group?" One day I came across someone from the 398th Bomb Group and asked which Squadron he had been in. He replied the 600th. I didn't remember him and upon further questioning, learned he was a replacement crew member. I further asked which crew had replaced and he said "O'Neal's crew." He had replaced MY crew, and now he also was down.

There was limited access to what was happening in the war. We had no papers, no books, no radio. The days were long and the nights endless. We spent much time conjecturing as to when the war would end.

We were never mistreated. Perhaps we were lucky in that the head of our camp was a German captain who had been educated in the United States and had returned to his homeland in 1937. We

were often hungry; cold in the ill-heated barracks in the winter; and supplies for personal hygiene were limited to whatever we got from the Red Cross.

One day in December our captors announced that we were abandoning this camp because the Russians were approaching. What a revelation that was! We were marched to a railroadsiding and loaded onto what was commonly known as a 40-or-8 - either 40 soldiers or 8 horses. In our case, approximately 80 to 100 were crowded inside. For eight days this was our home on wheels as we railed down to Nurnberg. One day was spent in the marshalling yards of Berlin which was under siege by day by the American bombers, and at night by the British. It was our good fortune not to be affected by this bombardment although we stood on the periphery of it. We eventually reached Nurnberg where we spent the next three months.

It was during these three months, January, February, and March, 1945, that Nurnberg was under heavy attack by the Allied Forces. I witnessed a number of B-17's leaving their formation and ultimately being destroyed. At night, it was an eerie feeling to see the British drop huge flares that lit up Nurnberg

(which was about 10 miles from our camp) and to hear the tremendous explosion of the 4,000-lb. blockbuster bombs which must have done heavy damage. To see British bombers and/or German fighters on fire and hurtling through the sky was a sight which I shall never forget!

As the three-month stay at this camp neared an end, we knew that the war must be about to end because we were informed that we were being marched to a camp farther into the interior of Germany. This march lasted approximately seven days, and what a sight it was to see the American fighter planes zoom down and strafe targets of opportunity such as trains, buildings, convoys. All this was witnessed from our position on the ground.

We finally reached a camp in Moosberg which was a hodgepodge of people, and not very well organized. We were there only a short while when, on May 8, 1945, we heard rifle fire. From that point on, we saw no other German soldiers. The Americans had entered our camp.

Twenty-six months after entering the Service, I celebrated my 21st birthday on May 11, 1945. Happy to be alive and free again!

BRIEF—things

George Hilliard, our leading locator of "lost souls", in his role as "contact officer", found himself learning all about "3-way by-passes" at one of Cincinnati's "Sub Depots" last February... he'll be fit for combat by Charleston time ... AC Engine Mechanic **Don Hosutt** says he was waiting at Nuthampstead when the first B-17's arrived in 1944 and was there when the last ones left a year later; no recall on how many engine changes he made during this time ... the editor incorrectly placed **Robert C. Carter** on the Taps list in 1994, apologized, and then did it again in 1995; **Frank Lewis** also hit the Taps list in error; both gentlemen are alive and well ... FLAK NEWS gets into the "third class, non-profit" mails each quarter after a dozen or so Seattle area members put in about 28 collective hours folding and applying labels; an additional six hours are required to sort by states and apply stamps for the overseas members; when all the expenses are counted, each FLAK NEWS costs about \$2.00 each ... the UK D-Day commemorative stamps offered by **Jim Spicer** were claimed by **Bill Auten**, a longtime collector ... he is a recent add to the 398th roster, but **Guy Quick, Jr.** is highly qualified; he pulled 52 missions as co-pilot on two tours! ... **Al Bischoff**, who is going on the Pilsen tour in May, reminds that he piloted "Miss X" on the Last Mission; this was **Jack Lee's** B-17 that was put on display in Salem, MA as a war memorial, only to wind up lost in the local dump a few years later ... any **Orrin Tatchio** crew members out there? his widow, **Joyce**, would love to hear from you; Foley, AL 36535 ... **Ed Pennylegion**, the group sergeant major, is another one of those life members who still contributes each year, anyway ... thanks to all you folks who give us your new addresses AND new telephone numbers ... the war was over before **Bob Ullman** got in one mission, but he wishes to thank the "vets" who treated him so nice at the reunions ... **Clement Lescale**, an Air Force reservist and nephew of a 398th uncle with the same name, shares his FLAK NEWS with "young troops" in his unit, who describe the newsletter as, "cool" ... Guess What? the "little girl" pictured in the January FLAK NEWS, photographed in 1944 with Harold Rosenzweig, is still living in Nuthampstead; she is Sylvia Uzzell and is still an active Friend of the 398th after 50 years ... the 398th roster reveals that the 603rd Squadron has the most registered members (360), followed by the 601st (340), and the 602nd (325) and the 600th (315); sadly, some 350 members are not identified by their old unit; please "identify yourself" on your next dues notice ... over 150 FLAK NEWS are mailed each quarter to our Friends of the 398th in England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Channel Islands, Czech Republic, Bahamas, Australia, Mexico and Canada ... California still leads the states with 194 ... members receive constant "pitches" to sell their heirloom A-2 jackets and other pins and patches, promising big money; but don't forget to consider your local air museum before you unload these gems; **Harry Nelson's** hand-made solder navigator's wings, made in Stalag Luft, are one of these ... 8th AF Historical Society president **Charles Dye** sent a letter to the Smithsonian pointing out that their proposed display of the Enola Gay would have been "an affront to an entire generation of Americans and veterans of WWII" (they cancelled it) ... as one member said when he heard about the England '96 tour, "you bet I'm going; how many more years have we got left for such a trip? ... the most number of 398th B-17's ever scheduled for a single mission came on December 24, 1944, flying in support of the Ardennes battle; **Colonel Hunter** called up 53 from all four squadrons (**Grinter** and **Zimmerman** crashed on take-off); the 457th sent up no less than 62 (including the kitchen sink) ... the Taps list published each year in FLAK NEWS reflects only the names of members who have passed on since World War II; the Killed In Action list will be published in a future issue.

Letters, Letters

"Just a short note to say thank you very much from Andy Parsons and myself for the copies of the January FLAK NEWS, which featured our photo story on the returning Americans to Nuthampstead last summer. It was great seeing our work in another publication, especially one in another country.

I am glad you enjoyed the feature as much as we did working on it. I wish all of you in the 398th Bomb Group all the best for this important anniversary year. Hope to see you all again in June of 1996."

Gary Sutcliffe, Chief Reporter, Royston (Herts) Crow, England

"Thank you for printing the names of our loved ones from the 398th who have passed on. Seeing Tom's name among those in the column was sad to read. But it was a thoughtful tribute to all the deceased members."

Louise Overturf, Walla Walla, WA 99362-3333

"Talk about luck! I'm married to my best friend and constant companion, live in a marvelous part of the best country on earth, nice house, no mortgage, good neighbors, good friends, no debts, fine kids, grand kids, step grand kids; even the step kids and step grand kids treat me as Dad and Granddad. Still in good health and condition at 74. Would that everyone were so lucky!"

John Thaxton, Boulder, CO 80303.

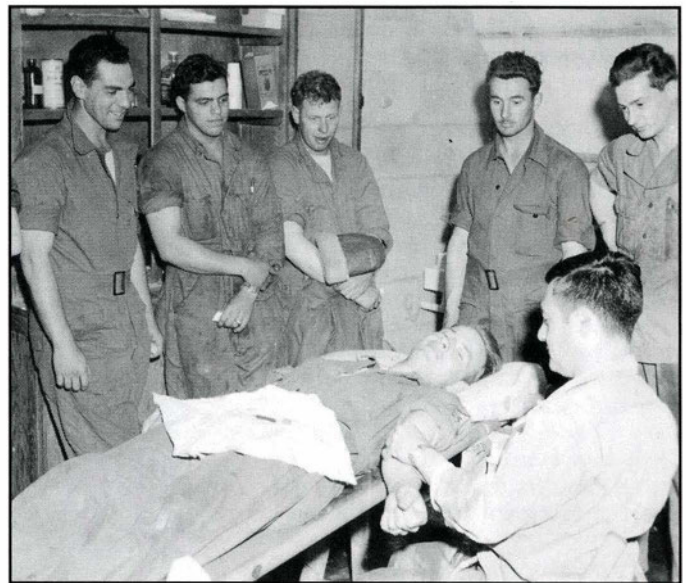
"It always amazed us how easily a bond of friendship was forged on our England-Scotland tour back in 1990. We became fast (meaning secure) friends with many of those on the tour. I hope to continue this friendship even with Russ now gone. The bond is still there.

"And I wish to thank the 398th for sending me a life membership. How very kind."

Becky Morrison, Bathgate, ND 58216-9655

New By-Laws Plan To Be Presented

Members of the 398th Bomb Group will have an opportunity to review and vote on the proposed new Association By-laws and new Sustaining Organization Plan at the annual meeting in Charleston, SC. The plan was presented at the last annual meeting at Tucson last September.



THESE GUYS knew more about airplanes and engines than medicine, but they were not too proud to line up for giving blood when the call came. While medic Jack Thornberg preps **George Mitchell** on the gurney, six others get ready. They are (left to right) **Leonard J. Bowman, Nathan Klatzkin, William J. Palmer, Robert K. Meyer, Frank I. Gelwicks and Rudy Kurish**. No information available as to how they weathered the needle attack.



JUST A REMINDER of what "Flak-filled skies" really looked like in those days.