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JAMES YIP & P-51

Mustang Fan Yip Buys A Ride

James Yip, the B-17 navigator, was an obvious P-51 Mustang fan at the Oklahoma City reunion.

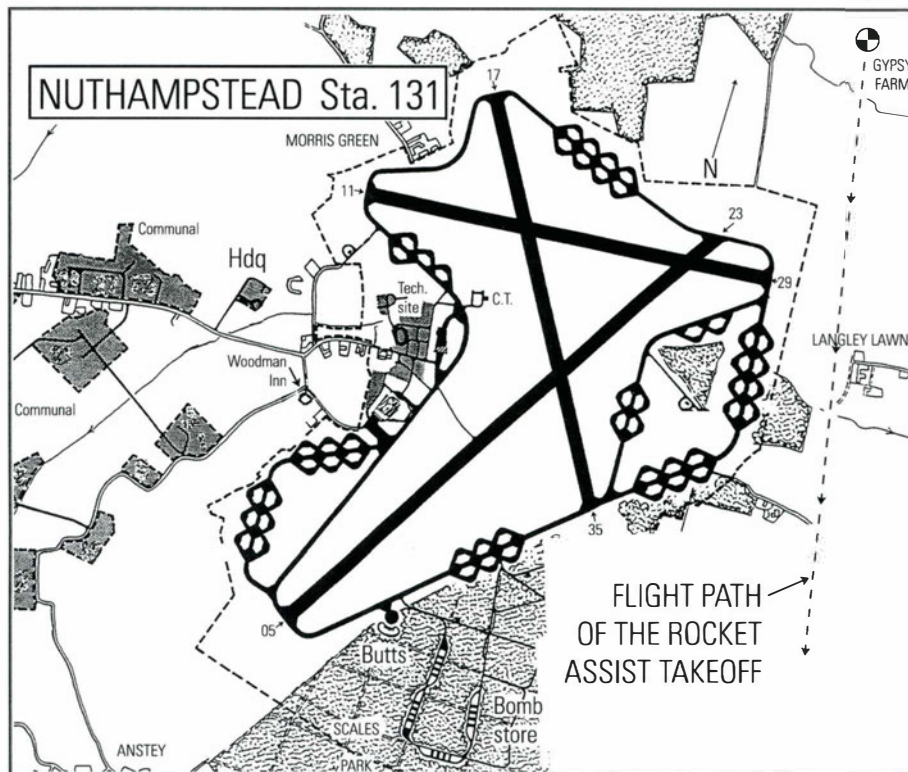
Reserved and "all-business" as the 602 Herb Boehm crew navigator, and still "all business" as a Los Angeles Municipal Court judge, Yip reverted to his Air Force youth when he saw this P-51 cutting the grass during the OKC exhibition.

He was as close as he could get with his camera at "that time."

The "next time"—during the September 2002 reunion in Portland—he will be in the cockpit and fulfilling his fighter pilot dream.

Yip was the first 398th member to sign up for a P-51 passenger ride (\$300) and this will take place on Friday, September 27, 2002 at the Evergreen Aviation Museum's airfield at McMinnville, Oregon.

Continued on Page 4



THIS IS HOW STATION 131 at Nuthampstead looked on March 30, 1945, the day a 398th Bomb Group B-17 was "rocketed" off a farm field by a captain and master sergeant. The complete story of this dramatic takeoff appears on the inside pages of FLAK NEWS.

Nuthampstead Tour Surprise

The Royston Band finished playing The Star Spangled Banner and God Save The Queen. Reverend Gerald Drew had concluded the 398th Bomb Group Service of Commemoration at the Station 131 Memorial.

And then, what seemed like an afterthought, the band seemed to say, "Hold it!" as they struck up "Dixie".

And before the Yanks and Brits could invite each other into the adjoining Woodman Inn for a Mild and Bitter, it happened—

The unmistakable drone of a B-17 was heard...then seen...passing over the Memorial, circling, then circling again and again as if to say—

"This Fly Past is for you!" Enjoy!

And enjoy they did, applauding, clap

Continued on Page 3

President Wally At Station 131:

OUR PLACE IN HISTORY

We are very pleased to be able to return here again, back to the site of our youthful adventures of so long ago. Well, some of us, anyway, because we do have some new younger faces with us. These new faces are the descendants of 398ers. They are our precious resource for keeping 398th memories alive for awhile longer. I am sure that their parents have encouraged them to visit this place called Nuthampstead - Station 131.

This is the place where many young men each spent some months doing their duty. We volunteered to be here. It was necessary for us to do that, to help end what is now called World War II. We survivors, getting fewer in numbers, well appreciate the fact that we are able to have one more 398th reunion at our home base. We cherish the help of our dear English Friends that are here with us now. They have never forgotten what a military organization, called the 398th Bomb Group of the Eighth USAAF, accomplished here.

May we take these few moments to remember all of those that served here at Station 131, perhaps as many as five thousand in number. Together they did the many diverse jobs that were needed to make Station 131 an operational combat airbase. So today, on this plot of ground, generously given to the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association by Baron Dimsdale's family, we must remember them all.

This is the place that will remain, hopefully far into the future, as the home of the spirit of the 398th. We cannot go back to visit those places in the sky that were our battlefields. This is the place we often struggled, sometimes failing, to return to after engaging in combat. This is our place for history, and we are thankful for it, and for all of those that will keep it as our 398th heritage.

Remarks by Wally Blackwell at the June 8, 2002 Remembrance Service at the 398th Memorial, Nuthampstead, England

Call Out For New Secretary

An opportunity to serve the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association in an official (and critical) capacity is still available.

To a current veteran, yes, but also to a prospective spouse or second generation offspring or associate.

The call for a new 398th Secretary came with the retirement of Harold Stallcup, who had held the position for many years. His only predecessors were Wally Blackwell, current president, and the late Jack Davis.

For more information, call president Blackwell.

Aluminum Overcast Fall Tour

Aug 24-26	Spokane, WA	Sept 20-22	Livermore, CA
Aug 29-Sept 2	Seattle, WA	Sept 24-25	Concord, CA
Sept 6-8	Marysville, CA	Sept 27-29	Hayward, CA
Sept 10-11	Medford, OR	Oct 1-2	Modesto, CA
Sept 13-15	Portland, OR	Oct 11-13	Watsonville, CA
Sept 17-18	Santa Rosa, CA		



WILFRID DIMSDALE (right) chairman of the Friends of the 398th, presented a box of 398th Bomb Group memorabilia to the Hertford Record Center during the group tour last June. Receiving the material was **Christine Shearman**, Heritage Services Manager for the Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies. The box, filled with mostly personal 398th letters from 1944-45, was added to the six boxes previously presented, and viewed by the 2002 tour party.

British Pair Look Ahead To 2004

One couple came to the 398th Memorial service on mountain bikes, choosing to park a mile away from the crowded Woodman Inn site. They were asked if the Yanks should return again in two years, as has been the custom since 1986.

Without hesitation, they responded with—

“Please come.”

Chairman Wilfrid Dimsdale, on the 2004 question, said—

“Whether you come as a tour group or as individuals, you will be welcomed here as usual. We will continue with this service every two years.”

The calendar suggests 2004 will mark 60 years since D-Day. Hmmm.

“Troopship” Goes Down

It was a great idea...whose time had not come.

The “Troopship” part of the 2002 England Tour failed to attract sufficient numbers to constitute a “tour” so it was left to the individual members to sail home on the QE-2 independently...or to fly home.

Glenn & Jean Knight were the only ones who opted for the cruise, and “we had a wonderful time.”

Travel consultant Barbara Fish and her husband, Rick, also decided on the QE-2 at the last minute, saying, “it was Rick’s retirement present” from me.

Knight is the brother of Albert Knight, gunner on the Charles Searl crew that crashed with nine fatalities near Penn, northwest of London.

Dues Time For Texas And Midwest

The Lone Star State of Texas...and six states in the Midwest...get the honor of supporting the 398th Association this time. The July issue of FLAK NEWS is devoted to announcing the annual \$20 dues for Texas, plus Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Ohio.

Remember, the 398th Board has decreed that members need to support the Association with these annual dues or be stricken from the mailing roster of FLAK NEWS. The roster has already been reduced by over 400.

Dues can always be sent (even without the official reminder form) to Dues Manager Jim Haas, Perry, IA 50220-0163.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

N8 _____ Sqdn K8 _____ Sqdn
N7 _____ Sqdn 30 _____ Sqdn

(Answers On Page 10)

It Was A “Friendly” Surprise

Brits Pull One Over On Yanks At Memorial

Continued from Page 1

ping, pointing, cheering, crying. Whatever sacrifices had been made for the England Tour of 2002 were soon forgotten with that memorable sight.

And, as if that was not enough drama for one morning, consider the appearance of not one, but TWO P-51's, flying formation with England's only air worthy Flying Fortress, Sally B of nearby Duxford.

The two Mustang pilots had heard of the Nuthampstead Fly Past plans and asked to join in. The Friends of the 398th had engineered this arrangement with the Sally B people and had managed to keep all the Yanks in the dark until the final, dramatic moment (arriving right on time with the timely insertion of “Dixie”).

The Return to Nuthampstead 2002 was letter perfect in every way, and that included the Thanksgiving Service at Anstey with its now famous 398th stained glass window, lunch and dance at High Hall Farm, Wally's Tour of the old base, visit to Madingley, where many of the group's KIA lay beneath the crosses and emerald green grass. Some rain managed to dampen the jackets but not the spirits of the 30 men and women who comprised the tour.

Glen Knight, brother of Albert Knight, killed in the crash near Penn (told in previous FLAK NEWS) laid a wreath for the 398th at the Madingley memorial.

Bob Howard, who brought his wife and two granddaughters, had the honor of reading a timely scripture verse at Anstey—Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 (Remember now thy Creator).

Wally Blackwell and Randy Stange contributed to Rev. Drew's pulpit message by demonstrating how a departed veteran's flag is folded. Allen Ostrom offered a prayer on remembering our own fallen comrades.

Russ Reed carried the American flag to the St. George altar, signalling the beginning of the service.

Lowell Culver presented the 398th wreath at the Memorial and John Cosco read Matthew 5:1-16.

The St. George Church at Anstey, following the retirement of Rev. Drew, is now led by Rev. Carol Wodehouse. The church warden, Sir Roger du Boulay, KCVO, CMG, greeted the returning veterans and families.

The Nuthampstead B-17 Fly past was made possible by collecting the \$3000 cost with “Race Night” promotions at the Woodman Inn. These were sponsored by the Friends of the 398th, Wilfrid Dimsdale, chairman.

The promotion, said Dimsdale, was conceived by Peter Brooke, a Hertfordshire professional bookmaker in England's gaming system.

While the Sally B was in the air for applause and admiration, the “other” B-17, Mary Alice, was made available on the ground for inside personal inspection by Duxford special events manager Linda Mason. Most of the tour members, young and old, made their way into the fuselage from the rear door. One was heard to say—

“It seems smaller than I remembered in 1944,” all the while patting a rotund tummy. None attempted entry via the front hatch.

The Duxford American Air Museum was undergoing a major transformation, which will soon accommodate a B-24, which is now undergoing extensive restoration at another hangar.

The tour party was “billeted” at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cambridge along with two other B-17 bomb group types. The hotel served most everyone well even if some felt the Farewell salmon “dinner” appeared more of a “starter” than a main meal. Another member who made an innocent 20-minute telephone call from his room to a UK mobile phone was charged \$53.00. He was livid!

Much To See, Do On London Visit

The London portion of the England Tour provided both deep and high up contrasts, with visits to the underground Cabinet War Rooms of World War II plus a ride on the 200 foot high London Eye.

The tour members had their own “capsule” for the 30 minute ride, which provided spectacular views of the city of 8 million. The Eye is built on the banks of the Thames, across from Parliament, Big Ben and Westminster Abbey.

The tourists also saw the Eye from water level while enjoying a great luncheon on a Thames tour boat.

Queen Elizabeth's golden horse-drawn carriage was also seen during the visit to the Royal Mews, “one of the finest working stables in existence,” and the Queen's Gallery.

Kensington Palace, home of the Duke of Gloucester, who unveiled the Anstey window in 2000, was also on the visit list. It houses much of the royal trappings, including the fabulous gowns worn by the late Princess Diana.

The coach ride from Kensington to a Victoria Street pub for lunch was interrupted by a break in a street water main, causing mammoth traffic delays for many.

To the credit of tour guide Sarah and driver Nick, they managed to “wiggle their way” through side streets and arrived for lunch at the appointed hour.

St. Paul's Cathedral was also visited. Some paused to join in the daily hour of prayer. Others to hear that the site had been a place of pilgrimage for nearly 1,400 years. The present building, designed by Christopher Wren, was begun in 1675 and took 35 years to build.

Part of the building, following WW II, became the American Memorial Chapel, and houses a book containing the names of every American killed in the defense of Britain, including those of the 398th Bomb Group.



THERE WERE nine veterans on the England 2002 Tour, plus 21 additional spouses, children and grandchildren. From left to right, back row—Allen Ostrom (603) tour coordinator; Russ Reed (603), Phil Stahlman (601), John Cosco (602) and Bill Fisher (603). Front row—John Courneen (601), Wally Blackwell (601), Bob Howard (603) and Lowell Culver (601).

Yip Opts For Mustang Ride

Portland Reunion Coming Up

Continued from Page 1

This will be a part of the group's day-long visit to the Museum, home of the Howard Hughes "Spruce Goose" and many other vintage aircraft (including the P-51).

Adding to the "vintage" atmosphere will be presentations by several 398th veterans for the benefit of not only fellow 398th members, but many other museum visitors—including children from neighboring schools.

Included in this symposium will be Wally Blackwell, Phil Stahlman, Hal Weekley, Burt Bream and Willis Frazier.

The reunion will be held on September 25-28, 2002 at the Monarch Hotel, 12566 SE 93rd Ave., Clackamas, Oregon. This is a Portland suburb located 10 miles south of the Portland International Airport on Interstate 205. Telephone 1-800-492-8700.

Reunion and hotel reservation forms were distributed in the April FLAK NEWS. For additional information contact Reunion Chairman Sharon Krause, Plymouth, MI 48170-2870.

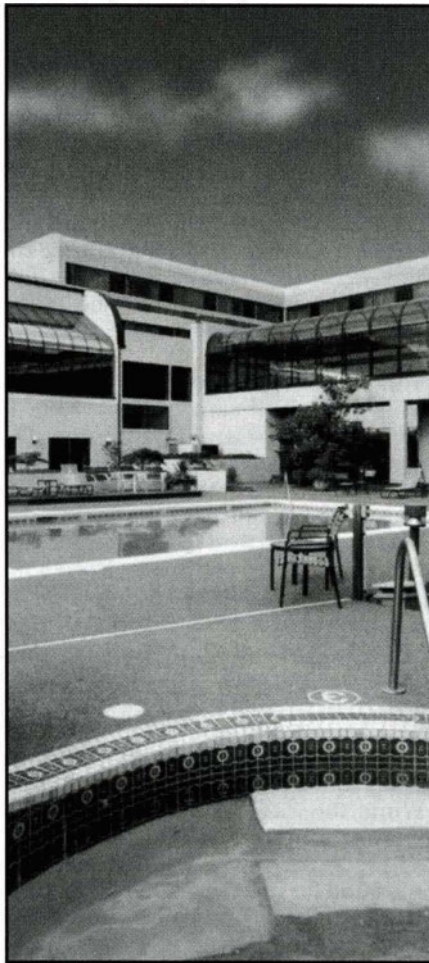
In addition to the Evergreen Aviation Museum visit, other tours have been arranged to the Mt. St. Helens Volcano Center; Mt. Hood Timberline Lodge; an Oregon Trail Tour; and Portland City Tour.

Members and friends wishing to sign up for rides on the P-51, Stearman Trainer or Ford Tri-Motor should contact Sharon Krause as soon as possible.

Air crew members, in support of the Evergreen symposium, are urged to come dressed in their A-2 jackets and squadron caps.

In addition to the Blackwell-Frazier-Stahlman-Bream-Weekley presentations, Randy Stange has promised to bring his late father's navigation equipment to display along with Frazier's Norden bomb sight.

All members are urged to attend the annual business meeting Thursday, 2 PM in the hotel's ballroom. There will be a special city bus tour for the ladies.



THE MONARCH HOTEL is where the 398th Bomb Group will hold its 19th annual reunion on September 25-28, 2002. Not a big hotel, but friendly and gracious, located in Clackamas, Oregon, a suburb of Portland. This pool scene is what early birds will see at the welcome reception, Wednesday, September 25, 4:30 PM. Two major coach tours are scheduled, plus a visit to the famous Evergreen Aviation Museum at nearby McMinnville.

ZIP Correction For Portland Reunion Chairman

It's a small correction, but it could be important—

The correct address for Reunion Chairman Sharon Krause should read Plymouth, MI 48170-2870. The ZIP was incorrectly posted in the REUNION FACTS column on Page 2 of the April issue of FLAK NEWS.

And let this be a reminder that the Reunion Registration forms (and the hotel forms) should be sent in "sooner" rather than "later" for the September

25-28, 2002 reunion in Portland.

Many decisions must be made by the Reunion Chairman relative to tours, banquets, ticketing, reservations, etc., and they all require "sooner" rather than "later" information from those expecting to be there.

Whoops!

Another blooper—
The Reunion's Headquarters Hotel, the Monarch in Clackamas, Oregon, is located 10 miles "south" of the Portland airport on Interstate 205, not "north" of the airport.

Remembrance:

Silence Too Much For Tail Gunner

BY ROBERT SCHUH
Tail Gunner, 600th Squadron

I spent a tension-filled day in the tail of our McLaughlin B-17 going to Brux, Czechoslovakia, a very long long mission on October 7, 1944.

We took off early in the morning and the route took us around Berlin. We soon lost our wingman, Jim Fields, who was hit by fighters and finally crashed into the sea off southern Sweden.

We also took hits and I was unable to reach anyone on the intercom. I thought about bailing out, but then the waist gunner crawled back to the tail to tell me I was not responding to oxygen checks. We were apparently OK.

We dropped our bombs on the oil refinery and headed for home.

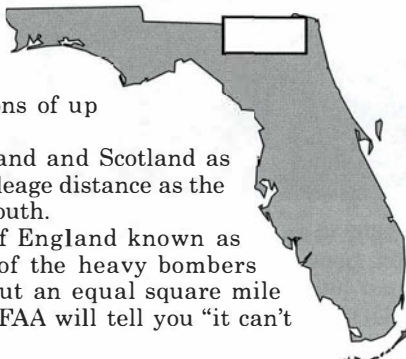
We finally landed at our base at Nut-hampstead, almost out of gas. And then we discovered that flak had severed the intercom lines, explaining why I had become so apprehensive and wondering about my future.

"It Can't Be Done"

How much "air space" for assembly was available to the B-17's and B-24's for a typical mission featuring the three divisions of up to 1296 planes.

Consider the length of all England and Scotland as representing about the same mileage distance as the state of Florida from north to south.

Block out that portion of England known as East Anglia, where most of the heavy bombers were located. Then block out an equal square mile portion in Florida and the FAA will tell you "it can't be done."



Story Of The Rocket Takeoff

A Boeing Tech Team, A Hot B-17 Pilot, And A Master Sergeant

It was a combination of an exceptionally skilled pilot and a master sergeant “who could do anything” that rocketed a 398th B-17 from its unlikely farm field landing site to a dramatic take-off and a landing at a “real” airfield.

That combination, plus the ingenuity of Boeing “Tech Reps”, Air Depot engineers and mechanics, RAF rocket specialists and some high level “general” encouragement from people with names like Doolittle and Spaatz.

And along with “all that,” was the considerable contribution of 398th line mechanics Hilliard, Stegal and Watson.

It appeared to be an impossible situation. The B-17 was intact, save for wing, tail and prop damage. But it was hundreds of yards from the main runway, mired in a mushy barley field on “Gypsy Farm,” northeast of Station 131.

Towing it out was deemed impossible, and yet the Fortress was surely salvageable.

It was inadvertently “parked” there on February 4, 1945 by a new, skeleton crew who had been “slow-timing” an engine at night. What the crew thought were runway lights were actually part of the RAF “DREM” lighting system on poles designed to “funnel” planes into the

landing pattern.

Pilots Allen Ferguson and John Schmidt were cleared for landing. And so they did...in the barley field...taking with them a wooden chicken coop and a hundred chickens.

Also on board for the night flight were Howard Feldman, navigator; Joe Huestess, engineer; and Michael Brennan, radio operator.

The plane actually came to rest with one of the funnel light poles lodged between No.3 engine and the fuselage. The most serious damage was to the starboard wing panel, and it was replaced before the “rocket assist take-off” on March 30, 1945. The old wing panel served for many years as a bridge over a creek on Tony Clark’s “Langley Lawn Farm,” adjacent to the Bates’ “Gypsy Farm.”

For many years it was exhibited at Duxford Imperial War Museum but is now being “cared for” by 398th Friends chairman Wilfrid Dimsdale.

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Ferguson Had Only Two Bad B-17 Landings



**ALLEN FERGUSON
Killed On Last Mission**

Allen Ferguson had only two bad landings in his 26-mission B-17 career with the 602nd Squadron.

The first, in a barley field short of the runway that ultimately resulted in a dramatic rocket assist takeoff two months later. And the second that took his life and the lives of five of his crew members.

The Ferguson and Paul Coville crews, both from the 602nd, were the last two 398th Fortresses shot down in the war, both hit by anti-aircraft fire while the group was executing a “360” over Pilsen, Czechoslovakia on April 25, 1945.

Ferguson crashed near the town of Litice, which to this day remembers the lives of the crew in a city memorial (and which many 398th members have visited on previous tours).

Ferguson, John Halbert, Howard Feldman, Joseph Huestess and Byron Young died in the wreckage. Michael Brennan successfully bailed out but was shot by a German policeman. Harry Mazer and William O’Malley also bailed out, were captured, sent to PW camps and ultimately returned home.

Halbert, on his first mission, was the new co-pilot assigned that morning to the cockpit of the veteran first pilot Ferguson.

The regular co-pilot, John Schmidt, stood down on this mission, as did toggler Harry Gray, recovering from a flak wound on a previous mission to Berlin.



THESE TWO were in the cockpit of the 398th B-17 that they “rocketed” off a farm field north of the main runway at Station 131 on March 30, 1945. They are Capt. Richard C. Holub and Master Sergeant Raymond L. Kirkpatrick. Both came from the 1st Division’s 2nd Strategic Air Depot at Abbots-Ripton to perform the “first time ever” rocket assist take off. Holub was the pilot and Kirkpatrick the co-pilot and “trigger man” for the rocket “experiment”.

Doolittle, Spaatz Saw Rocket Takeoff

Continued from Page 5

The tail fin also was replaced with a reclaimed spare from the 1st Air Division's "2nd Strategic Air Depot" at Abbots-Ripton (Alconbury). This would explain the "Triangle S" marking of the 401st Bomb Group from Deenthorpe, rather than the "Triangle W" from Nuthampstead.

The Ferguson crew readily recovered from their ill-fated landing to fly 26 combat missions with the 602nd Squadron. Ferguson, Huestess, Feldman and Brennan were killed on the Last Mission—April 25, 1945 to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. (See accompanying story).

Schmidt, who did not fly on the Last



RICHARD C. HOLUB
A "Rocket-plus" Air Force Career

He parlayed a highschool diploma to include a B-17 rocket assist takeoff in 1945, and then added "Technology & Development (Aerospace); Space Shuttle program and launch; and Global Positioning Satellite System worldwide" to round out a 30-year Air Force career.

So read portions of the "BIO" of this man, Richard C. Holub, who did two tours at the Pentagon, where he was involved with the scheduling production of some 2,000 aircraft, including jet bombers, tankers and fighters.

He was also instrumental in helping the Army start their new helicopter program (originally called Aerial Trucks). And he had a hand in the ICBM program until his retirement in 1972.

Holub, in commenting on his BIO, said his last six years in the ballistic missile program was "a sample of some hectic, high-pressure years."

And the beginning of that career began with a "hectic, high-pressure rocket assist takeoff" in a 398th Bomb Group B-17.

Mission, went on to a long Air Force career, retiring as a Lt.Colonel.

Many missions were flown between the "Gypsy" landing and the "Rocket" takeoff and the parked Fortress was observed by many airmen going on and returning from missions during this two-month period.

The use of rockets to boost a B-17 aloft was unheard of at the time and exactly how the rocket plan originated is still not clear. Among those queried was Carl Krafft, a Boeing field service engineer assigned to the 1st Air Division by the Air Technical Services Command at High Wycombe, home of the 8th Air Force Bomber Command.

Krafft, along with other Boeing Tech Reps, was a frequent visitor to Station 131. He said—

"It might have been Ken Martin, our Boeing Structures engineer. At least he confirmed the feasibility of the attempt.

"For sure, he designed the wing racks for the 12 rockets.

"Or it might have been the pilot sent to review the problem—Capt. Richard C. Holub. Or even Master Sergeant Raymond L. Kirkpatrick, who had worked with Capt. Holub previously. He could do anything. Both were from the 1st Air Division's 2 SAD.

"Col. H.M. Mason of the 1st Division's Air Depot engineering office, also was involved, along with Lt. Col. Bill Crew of the 2 SAD."

Holub was the skilled pilot specializing in short take-offs and his aide was M/Sgt. Kirkpatrick, serving as co-pilot and "trigger man" with the rockets.

Gen. Doolittle, there to witness the event, asked Holub—

"Do you think you can pull this off?"

"I can do it," replied Holub.

And he did.

Krafft was there for the entire project and was responsible for reporting the incident to the Services Command. His original report accompanies this FLAK NEWS article.

Although it was personnel from the 2SAD who accomplished the repair for the aircraft and installed the rockets, three mechanics from the 398th were closely involved by removing gun turrets, ammunition, radios and all unnecessary weight and otherwise preparing the plane for the tricky flight.

They were George Hilliard, Durward Stegal and Leland Watson.

The 450 feet of steel matting was installed by the 861st Engineer Aviation Battalion from nearby Boreham. It was estimated that the Fortress used about 372 feet of matting before achieving take-off.

To this day, a piece of the steel matting can still be seen at High Hall Farm near Anstey.

Peggy Remembers B-17 Parked On Family Farm



PEGGY WELLS
"It Was An Exciting Time"

Peggy Wells and her late husband, David, greeted many Yanks who came back to Station 131 in the years following World War II.

Before her marriage, however, Peggy was one of the "Bates Kids" who lived on "Gypsy Farm" north and east of the main runway. Peggy remembers the B-17 that sat down on their land in February of 1945 and remained parked there for over two months.

She also remembers losing about 100 chickens when the Fortress' wing clipped the wooden coop. And all the commotion caused when men came to ponder the task of retrieving the big plane.

She wondered, at the time, how the plane could take off downhill, miss the big tree at the bottom and fly over Tony Clark's "Langley Lawn" farm on the hill.

"It was an exciting time," she recalled.

Peggy moved to nearby 4 Park Farm Lane, Nuthampstead, after her marriage and is still there.

"Natural Born Leader" Died At The Age of 76

Raymond Kirkpatrick, the master sergeant who rode as co-pilot and "rocketeer" on the takeoff from Gypsy Farm, died in 1995 at the age of 76, according to pilot Richard Holub.

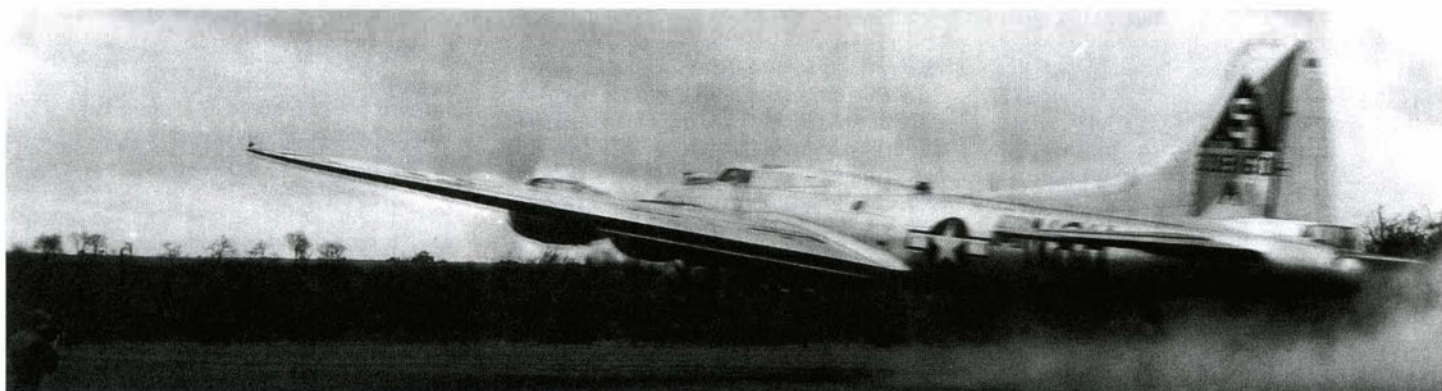
"He was a natural born leader," said Holub, who praised his cockpit assistant in recalling their WW II flying relationships, of which there were several of the "short takeoff" variety.

Kirkpatrick returned to civilian life after the war and became manager of the King Ranch in Hollister, California.

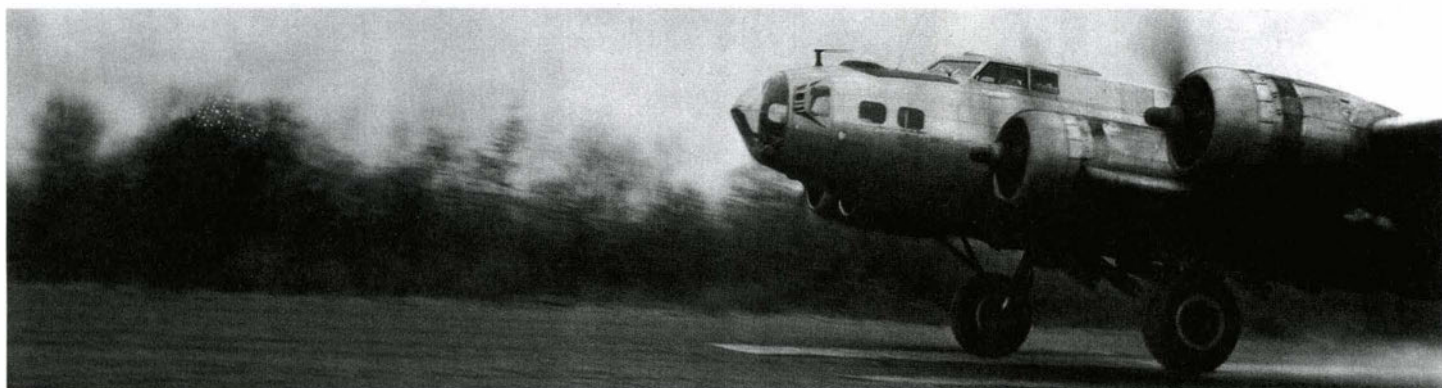
Drama At Gypsy Farm * Rockets Lift Grounded B-17



4. Air Force photographer ducks as Fortress rockets by and into the air.



3. The B-17 lifts off with 1/3 flaps and the rockets firing.



2. Fortress is off the ground before the end of the 450' steel matting.



1. First rocket fires and tail lifts. Note replaced tail with "S" marking.

Many Hands Involved In Flight From Farm

BY CARL (BUD) KRAFFT

*Boeing Airplane Company Technical Representative to the 1st Air Division,
8th Air Force, England*

The use of rockets was decided upon to remove B-17G #43-39137 from a cultivated field in which it had landed at Station 131. When it was found that unless the airplane could be flown out, it would have to be cut up and scrapped. The only road in to the field was too soft and too narrow to accommodate the heavy equipment necessary to haul the airplane out in sections, and the surrounding terrain prevented any attempt at cutting across the fields to the main highway with such a load. However, the field was too small to permit any type of unassisted take-off, so the rocket attempt was considered.

Capt. Richard Holub, test pilot of the 2nd Strategic Air Depot, had long been interested in such attempt, since it had fallen to him to fly several airplanes out of small fields in the past.

Once the use of rockets was decided upon, personnel of the 2nd SAD from Abbots-Ripton proceeded with the necessary repairs. The left and right outer wing panels were replaced, a new vertical stabilizer installed and the No. 3 propeller replaced. Minor damage to the longitudinals and circumferentials in the radio room and at the main entrance door was repaired.

In addition, all turrets, guns, armor plate, loose gear, and radio, with the exception of VHF and command equipment, were removed to minimize the weight.

While this work was in progress, Capt. Holub proceeded to enquire into the rocket problem. Ken Martin, Boeing Stress Engineer was called in to work out the installation. An RAF station was known to have conducted some similar tests on carrier aircraft, so a visit was made to that station at Farnborough. Thru the courtesy of the experimental section, a supply of rockets and all available technical data was made available to Capt. Holub, and Martin. The English evinced an immediate interest in the project and volunteered many valuable suggestions. The rockets, 5" No. 5 MK 1, were procured thru the efforts of British liaison personnel.

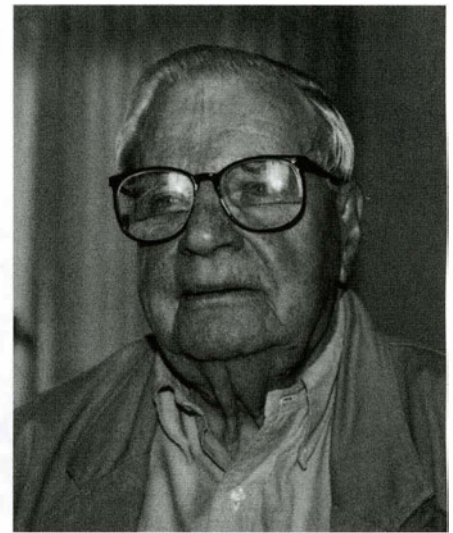
From the information obtained, Martin designed the racks. These were to fasten to the external bomb rack fastenings, and each was to carry six rockets. The racks were constructed by the 2nd SAD in record time. The racks were installed, and a test conducted on the runway at the 2nd SAD to familiarize Capt. Holub and his co-pilot, M/Sgt. R.L. Kirkpatrick, with the operation of the installation. Several ground runs and one normal take-off were attempted to determine the best method of operation. Everything worked satisfactorily, and the installation

was proved to be more than adequate.

In the meantime, the 398th airplane had been repaired and the field was undergoing preparation for the take-off. An unobstructed straightaway of 1320 feet, on a 3% down grade was afforded. At the end of this distance a sizeable ditch crossed the path at right angles. On the edge of the ditch, directly in the line of flight, stood a tree, thirty feet high. Beyond the ditch, the ground rose gently for another eight hundred feet, to the crest of a hill. A farm house topped the hill. The ground was smooth, and though the surface was slightly muddy, the underlayer was sufficiently hard to keep the airplane from settling.

The airplane was towed to the corner of the field affording the unobstructed path

Continued on Page 10



CARL KRAFFT

Part of the Rocket Take Off Team

Today, living in Seattle, where he helped build the B-17 some 60 years ago, Carl Krafft lives in active retirement at the age of 89.

In 1944 he was assigned to the 8th Air Force's Air Technical Services Command, as "Boeing Field Service Engineer" with the 1st Division. It was his task, along with others, to try to salvage a B-17 stuck on a farm field.

He monitored the operation and wrote a report for Boeing and the Services Command. This report, saved after all these years, appears in this issue of FLAK NEWS.

Krafft continued with Boeing for many years after WW II, working on the Strato-cruiser, BOMARC, and other commercial and military missile and space ventures.



COL. H.M. (Hub) MASON (right), maintenance officer for the 1st Air Division, ponders the words of Master Sergeant Raymond Kirkpatrick as they review plans for a test of the rocket take off system that will be used to lift a 398th B-17 from a barley field. There were six rocket pods under each wing. After a successful test Kirkpatrick and pilot Richard Holub lifted the B-17 off steel mats in less than 450 feet, with Kirkpatrick as co-pilot and "rocketeer."

“Why Not Try Rockets On A B-17?”

“You Yanks Are Crazy,” Is Royal Navy Reply

Many people have asked the question—
“Whose idea was it to use rockets to extricate the grounded B-17 from the barley field northeast of Station 131?”

For the better part of two months, this predicament had elicited the attention of 8th Air Force CO Gen. Jimmy Doolittle and an assortment of ranking brass.

The answer comes from an interview with Capt. Richard Holub, the pilot who ultimately did the “extricating.” He was assigned to the 2SAD of the 1st Air Division, specializing in flying damaged aircraft out of difficult situations.

“I had seen some magazine articles of the Royal Navy test launchings using rockets, and I suggested to friends—

“Why not on a B-17 stuck in a barley field?”

“I discussed it with Ken Martin of Boeing, and it led to some of us flying down to Farnborough on March 20 to talk with the rocket experts there. They ridiculed the idea, saying they had been working on

such a proposal using 2 1/4” rockets and all they accomplished was tearing the wings off a Sterling bomber.”

Holub was told by Farnborough that he could obtain 5” rockets from a “dump” in Scotland, adding this comment—

“You Yanks are crazy.”

Holub flew to Scotland on March 23 and returned to Abbots Ripton (2SAD) with 4,500 pounds of 5” rockets.

Holub returned to Farnborough on March 25 for more consultation and on March 29 made the first test (at Abbots Ripton) on a B-17, using two rockets under each wing.

On March 30, 1945 Capt. Holub and M/Sgt. Raymond Kirkpatrick flew the 398th B-17 out from its resting place and on to Abbots Ripton and its adjoining Alconbury airfield.

From March 20 (inception) to March 30 (execution) adds to 10 days. The only time that rockets had been utilized for a takeoff from a barley field.



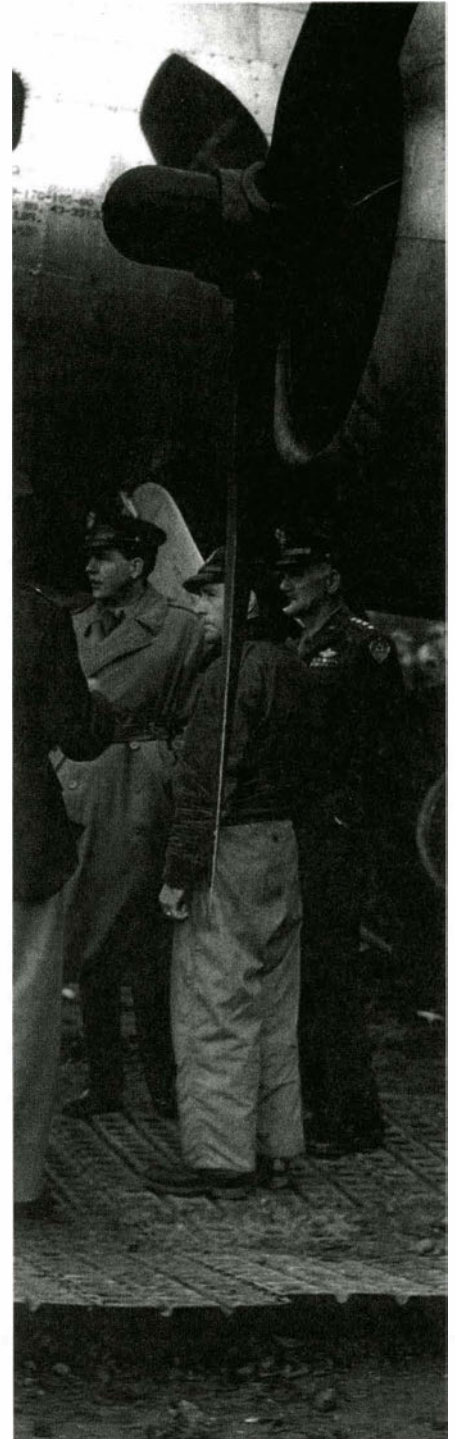
THESE ARE THE FACES of the men who installed the 12 rocket pods under the wings of the 398th B-17 that was rocketed off the farm field just off Station 131 in 1945. There were six rockets under each wing. The special installation was handled by these men from the 1st Air Division’s 2SAD, with help from a trio of 398th line mechanics. The rocket rack system was designed by Ken Martin, a Boeing structures engineer assigned to the 1st Division.

Three Squadrons Were Involved

The B-17 that was “rocketed” to fame by Capt. Richard Holub and M/Sgt. Raymond Kirkpatrick had been delivered to the 398th only days before being set down on Gypsy Farm. It was No. 43-39137, and assigned to the 600th Squadron on January 29, 1945.

The plane’s first mission was to

Mannheim, Germany on February 1, 1945 and piloted by Staver Hyndman of the 603rd. The second mission was to Berlin on February 3, piloted by Al Shimek of the 600th. A day later, February 4, on a night “slow time” flight it was inadvertently “grounded” by a 602 pilot, Allen Ferguson.



“I Can Do It”

CAPT. RICHARD HOLUB (behind prop blade) stands with 8th Air Force Gen. Tooeey Spaatz (right) and Capt. Dan Hendricks of the 1st Air Division Engineering Office prior to the rocket takeoff. All three were watching Gen. Jimmy Doolittle (not shown) who was pacing off the length of the pierced mats. Doolittle asked Holub, “Can you pull this off?” Holub responded with, “I can do it.” And he did!

Fortress Was Airborne In Eight Seconds

BOEING TECH REPORT: Continued From Page 8

and 450' of steel mat was laid in front of each main wheel. Only this length of runway was thought necessary since if the airplane failed to take off in that distance, a crash into the tree was unavoidable, and it was hoped that the ground would help to slow the airplane in case of such an eventuality. The tree was left standing.

With these preparations completed, the racks were installed and loaded. Provisions were made to fire the rockets manually, by a self contained four volt electrical system. Wiring from the rockets was run thru the wings, into the bomb bay and thru the station #4 door to a selector switch mounted above the instrument panel in front of the co-pilot. The inboard booster pump blisters were removed, and the pumps wrapped with asbestos. Approximately 125 gallons of gasoline was added to each of the four main tanks and the oil tanks were filled. This completed the preparations.

The actual take-off was made by Capt. Holub, with Sgt. Kirkpatrick as co-pilot and "rocketeer", into a twenty mile and hour headwind, by running the engines up to 2500 RPM and 50" Hg. with the brakes locked, and cowl flaps in trail. The brakes were released, and after two seconds, flaps were lowered 1/3 and the first pair of rockets fired. The remaining rockets were to have been fired at 2 1/2 second intervals, but the third and fourth pairs were fired almost simultaneously. No ill effects were noticed. The airplane accelerated very rapidly and became airborne at the time the fourth pair of rockets were discharged. The remaining rockets served to gain altitude. The tree was cleared by at least forty feet. The climb-out, after firing the sixth pair of rockets was quite steep and the ship passed over the farm house with plenty to spare.

At the instant he cleared the tree, Capt. Holub stated that he had attained an airspeed of 150-155 MPH, and had already started to throttle back for a normal climb. In the excitement, no accurate gauge of the take-off roll was made, but the best estimates showed it to be 375 and 425 feet. The ship was airborne eight seconds after starting to roll. Capt. Holub did not jerk the airplane off the ground, but rather let it fly itself off, which it did at about 105-110 MPH. On passing over the end of the matting, he brought the stick back firmly and aided by the remaining rockets, was able to climb out steeply. During the take-off roll, the tail was allowed to come up to reduce friction.

After taking off, the airplane was flown to the 2nd SAD, a fifteen minute trip, where it was weighed after landing. The weight, including the residual gas and oil (full oil tanks and 300-350 gallons of gas)

and the rocket installation was 38,735 lbs. The rocket installation consisted of twelve spent rockets at forty pounds each and the two racks, each weighing approximately sixty pounds.

The take-off was repeated a few days later on a surfaced runway, (with the same 398th plane #43-39137). For this test, an accelerometer and an inclinometer were mounted in the airplane. Capt. Holub and Sgt. Kirkpatrick, accompanied this time by Lt. Col. H.M. Mason, Director of Maintenance and Technical Services, 1st Air Division, accomplished the take-off in a measured ground roll of 386 feet, in a 45 degree cross wind of 23-27 mile velocity. The maximum reading on the accelerometer was recorded at 2g. The inclinometer showed 20 degrees in the climb out, which was purposely made much steeper than previously. Also, the ship became airborne at between 100 and 105 MPH from the three point position.

At the conclusion of this test, the airplane was inspected for any ill effects. No trace of scorching was found on any of the under wing, flap, or empennage surfaces. The booster pumps showed no signs of excessive heat. The wing joints and the rack mountings appeared undamaged.

Capt. Holub, in describing his sensations, stated that the effect of each pair of rockets was quite noticeable in the

Generals Ducked Behind The Wrong Haystack

General Jimmy Doolittle, himself an aviation innovator and pioneer, could not resist being on hand when the 398th B-17 was rocketed off its "parking" spot on Gypsy Farm on March 30, 1945.

He even brought his 8th Air Force CO predecessor, Gen. Tooeey Spaatz, along to Station 131 to watch the epic take off (plus three other 1-star generals).

Nearing time for the flight, and watching mechanics check the final details, Gen. Doolittle said to Gen. Spaatz—

"We're making these guys nervous. Let's watch from behind that haystack."

"That" haystack just happened to have been gathering for some years and it was quite "ripe".

The B-17 was towed as far back as possible, placing it directly in front of the haystack. When the engines were fired up, the prop wash did a number on the haystack, leaving two generals well doused with sweet-smelling hay.

cockpit, but that it was not violent. No deceleration was felt between rocket discharges, but the rockets fired after becoming airborne were felt more, due to the increased efficiency of the rockets with speed, and because the energy from these was translated into vertical acceleration also. The airplane reacted normally to the controls at all times, and with the high power used at take-off, rudder control was available almost immediately. The rockets produced no tendency to swerve the aircraft during ground roll or in the air. In Capt. Holub's opinion, the experiment was a complete success.

The appearance of General Spaatz and Lt. General Doolittle at the barley field take-off has resulted in plans being made to utilize rocket assistance in reclaiming other aircraft stranded on the continent. Additional tests are being planned by the 2nd Strategic Air Depot involving tactical aircraft. It is expected that the data obtained from these experiments will be made available to Wright Field for evaluation in the near future.

Full credit for the successful completion of the rocket assisted take-off experiments lies with Lt. Col. H.M. Mason, Director of Maintenance and Technical Services, 1st Air Division, Major W.E. Crew, Chief of Maintenance, 2nd SAD, Lt. Robert Miller, Inspection Officer, 2nd SAD, Capt. Richard Holub and M/Sgt. R.L. Kirkpatrick, the shop personnel of the 2nd SAD that devoted a great deal of their spare time to the project and Mr. Ken Martin.

—April 5, 1945

Now Is The Time To Support 8AFHS

"The world is full of willing people. Some willing to work, the rest willing to let them."

So wrote Robert Frost.

Today, the 8th Air Force Historical Society is looking for men and women (and kidds) to bolster their thinning veteran ranks by joining the society.

Send your \$20 annual fee to 8AFHS, PO Box 1787, Savannah, GA 31402. (And then take credit for being "willing").

ANSWERS

(from Page 3)

30	—	601st Squadron
N7	—	603rd Squadron
N8	—	600th Squadron
K8	—	602nd Squadron

BRIEF-things

Treasurer **Marilyn Gibb's** mid-year report says "the 398th is in good shape," adding a comment that the dues have been brisk since some 400 "subscribers" had been cut off for non-payment...what 398th couple will be the first to repeat their marriage vows in the new Chapel of the Fallen Eagles at the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum in Savannah?...**Lou and Betty Stoffer**, who headed up the fund raising Memorial project, were at the dedication last May 18...those CD ROM's of 398th history will be available for viewing at the Portland reunion in September; a computer will be available in the Memory Room, plus many videos to be shown on a television monitor...the England tour group members saw for themselves what wonderful condition our Memorial at Nuthampstead is in...and **Ralph Hall** says our Memorial Fund helps to keep it that way...Seattle's B-17 fraternity held its breath last March when a vintage, four-engine Boeing "Stratoliner" crash-landed in shallow water while on a local test run; at first glance it looked for all the world like a B-17, as the 1939 plane had the same engines, same wing design and tail as a Fortress; it was in production in 1939 when Boeing shifted to the war effort and the B-17...**Henny Kwik** of Holland affirms that the annual ceremony at the American cemetery at Margraten honoring 8,302 young Americans is "more than just a day in May" for Dutch citizens (16 men from the 398th are buried there, or have their names on the Wall of the Missing)...8th AF News editor **Walter Brown**, in his (Pinup) March issue, included an interesting story about the 2SAD at Abbots Ripton, which is where the "rocket" team came from...the same issue contains an emotional letter written (1945) by the mother of the pilot whose plane crashed at Anstey (**Bill Meyran**), taking 10 lives...also published in the News was the Anstey comment by eyewitness Eunice Fox, "It Was A Sad Time"...**Editor Brown** really does a fabulous News job, considering he does double duty as "**Physician Brown**...a major chunk of the wing of the B-17 shot down over France in 1944 is now on display at the CAF museum in Midland, Texas, thanks to **Herb Wilson**, **Merrill Butikofer** and friends of the **602 Godwin** crew (CAF now means "Commemorative" Air Force)...England's **Queen Elizabeth's** "Queen Mum" died this year at the age of 101, the year also marking Elizabeth's 50th year on the English throne...our German friend, **Manfred König**, recently hosted the brothers of **Col. Hunter's** navigator, **William Beatovich**, taking them to the Neuss crash site and to his burial site at Ardennes...veteran Seattle broadcaster **Frosty Fowler**, a WW 2 B-29 crew member, recently became a 398th life member, admitting "somehow I feel a part of your B-17 group" (he has been on FLAK NEWS' PR mailing list)...**Tom Dougherty** was a happy and thankful person when he found and reconciled with the daughter he left behind in England, and the daughter recently honored him by attending his funeral in Oregon...**Ike Alhadeff**, 600 pilot and German PW guest, is anxious to return to the days of his youth and will get another Stearman flying lesson at the Portland reunion...among the most visible missing items in London was the Bovril sign in Picadilly Circus and the pigeons in Trafalgar Square...not missing was the immense courtesy of London drivers, be they in cars, busses, trucks or taxis...among the discoveries at Hendon Imperial War Museum in London was the RAF motto—"PRESS ON, REGARDLESS"...the food at the Woodman Inn is more than fish & chips, thanks to their 20-something chef...**Maj. Mike Ryan**, one of our second generation Air Force types, came to Nuthampstead with his family from his War College station in Paris...the annual Taps list will be published in January, so now is the time to inform FLAK NEWS of a veteran's passing this year...the cross-country mileage from the East Coast to the West Coast reunion city of Portland may limit the attendance, but look for the Californians to make up for much of the difference (not to mention the Oregonians and Washingtonians)...travel consultant **Barbara Fish** made her seventh 398th England tour, so she'll have many special memories to share at the Portland reunion...

398th Bomb Group PX

Please circle squadron, size and/or color choices.

Qty.	CLOTHING	Cost	Total
_____	Cap - Fits All Sizes	\$8.00 ea	_____
_____	600, 601, 602, 603 Group		
_____	Jackets - Navy, B-17 on Front	\$25.00 ea	_____
_____	S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	T-Shirts - B-17 on Front	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Sweat Shirts - B-17 on Front	\$15.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy - White - S, M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Golf Shirts Group Logo on Front	\$20.00 ea	_____
_____	Navy or White - M, L, XL, XXL		
_____	Turtle Neck Shirt - B-17 on Collar	\$20.00 ea	_____
_____	White - S, M, L, XL		
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_____	CD Jack's Books	\$25.00 ea	_____
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_____	Video Anstey Window Dedication	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	Video Return to Station 131 Memorial	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	and Anstey Window Dedication (video)		
_____	(CD-ROM) Statistical History of 398th B.G.	\$55.00 set	_____
_____	Set of 2		
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_____	Squadron Lapel Pins - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Lapel Pin (Hell from Heaven)	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Lapel Pin - Special Design	\$5.00 ea	_____
_____	B-17 Lapel Pin (Silver)	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	B-17 Earrings (Silver - Pierced only)	\$5.00 ea	_____
LOGO PATCHES			
_____	Squadron Patches - 600, 601, 602, 603	\$6.00 ea	_____
_____	Group Patch ("Hell from Heaven")	\$6.00 ea	_____
_____	Jacket Patch - Rectangle B-17	\$4.00 ea	_____
_____	8th Air Force	\$4.00 ea	_____
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS			
_____	Folding Umbrellas	\$18.00 ea	_____
_____	Red with White B-17		
_____	Note Paper with B-17 (Packet of 12)	\$4.00 pkt	_____
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_____	B-17 Sun Catcher	\$10.00 ea	_____
_____	Golf Towel, White w/Black B-17	\$7.00 ea	_____
_____	Ceramic Magnet with B-17	\$3.00 ea	_____
_____	Anstey Window Post Card	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (Control Tower) Station 131	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (398th Memorial) Post Card	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Photo (8X10 Aluminum Overcast)	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	Bumper Sticker (398th Bomb Group)	\$1.00 ea	_____
_____	License Plate Holder (398th B.G.)	\$2.00 ea	_____
_____	U.S.A.F. B-17 Key Ring	\$5.00 ea	_____

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HELLO, SALLY B



THE SALLY B, Britain's only operational B-17, made a surprise visit to Nuthampstead on Saturday, June 8, 2002, at the conclusion of the Service of Commemoration at the Memorial. It was a pleasant shock and surprise to the 30 England Tour members. The British Friends managed to keep the Fly Past a secret until the last moment. See Tour stories on Pages 1, 2 and 3