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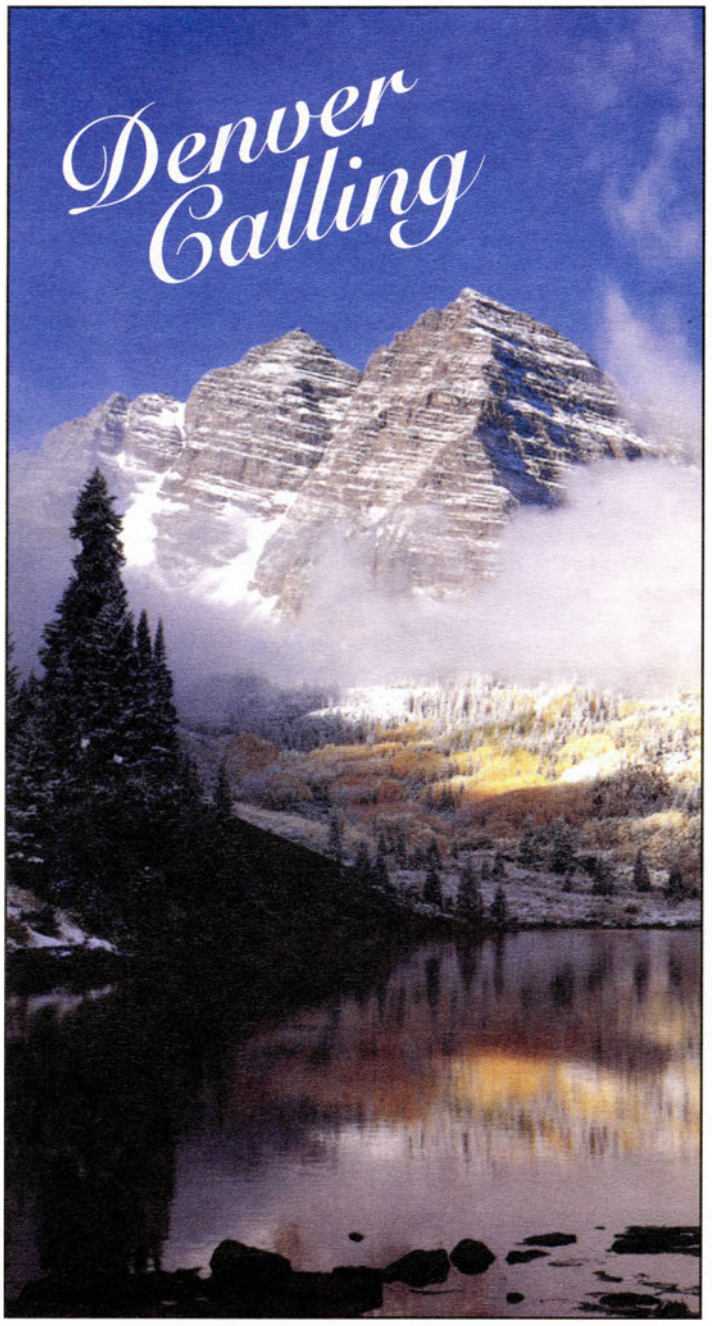
398th BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION • 8th AIR FORCE • 1st AIR DIVISION • NUTHAMPSTEAD, ENGLAND

VOL. 25 NO. 3 FLAK NEWS JULY 2010



DENVER CALLING

The 27th annual 398th reunion is just around the corner. See Page 3 for all the details, including the hotel name change. The same Denver hotel is now called the Holiday Inn (not Radisson).

ANOTHER GREAT TOUR

The urge to "return to the old base" was evident in June. It was England again, plus the Czech Republic. See Pages 4 and 5.

Photo By Ralph Ambrose

DOG NEVER FORGETS

A most interesting story about a German Shepherd who remembered his master, even when he returned home in a casket. See Page 3.

"TERRORISTS HAD HUMAN FACES"

A nostalgic war story, remembered after 64 years by a German youth who had been warned about the American "terrorists" who were invading his homeland. See Page 10.

THE TOURS FROM THE BEGINNING

There have been many 398th Tours to England and the Continent. They are all remembered by the Editor, plus a "sidebar" by tour specialist Barb Fish. See Pages 5-6-7-8-9-10.

The President's Page:

Reunion Decision Due For Museum Funding

BY MARILYN GIBB-RICE
President, 398th BG Memorial Association

Greetings from warm and sunny England! Much different than when we had the memorial service a couple of weeks ago. Good news about plans for the Nuthampstead Airfield Museum. Land has been purchased behind the Woodman Inn for the museum by Andrew and Christine Grisbrooke, the chairman and treasurer of the museum trustees. It has taken a while and the solicitors are happy, but now serious plans can begin. A formal presentation will be made to the board of directors at the Denver reunion in regard to fund raising.

Please take note of Lew Burke's reminder to those who have NOT been supporting the 398th with their annual $20 dues.

Don't miss receiving the best newsletter of any bomber or fighter group of World War II.

Time For "Big" States To Offer Up The Dues

One quarter of the annual funds needed to keep the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association doors open will be "gathered in" during this period.

And that "one quarter" will come from the "big" states of Texas, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Indiana. Yes, the members who live in these states represent about one-quarter of the current roster.

So now it's time for "you folks" to send your $20 annual dues to Dues Manager Dawne Dougherty. The dues envelope should be contained in your FLAK NEWS. If missing, just send the dues and any other special gift to her at Harrisburg, OR 97446-9585.

Some Respond; Others Cut

A number of delinquent members have been cut from the FLAK NEWS mailing list, according to director Lew Burke, who also reported that "about 75% of the folks who received reminders did respond with dues payments. The others apparently didn't care."

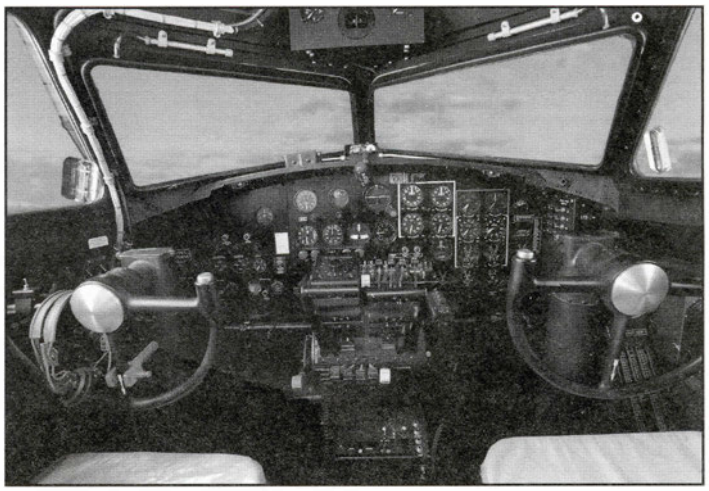
New Palace For President

Marilyn Gibb-Rice, the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association president, has resettled in a new residence in England.

Marilyn and husband Geoff Rice are now located in the county of Suffolk, some 30 miles east of Cambridge, and in the same city made famous by another B-17 group — the 94th — at Bury St Edmunds.

Marilyn Gibb-Rice and Geoff Rice
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk IP28 8HS
England

E-mail — president@398th.org



B-17 Memories — The Cockpit

GALA CEREMONY FOR FORT'S 75TH

It hardly seems possible that the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association came to Seattle in 1985 for a reunion ... and to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the B-17.

What the people at Boeing thought back then might possibly be a gathering of "a couple of the old bomb groups from World War II" turned into a couple of dozen groups and other outfits that taxed not only Boeing, but also the local hospitality industry.

That was 25 years ago, and no less than four B-17's came to help celebrate the event, including the Air Force leaders who developed the plans and systems for what was to become the greatest air war armada of all time.

A type of war that will never happen again.

In June 2010, 75 years after the B-17 was born, another party was held at the same airfield where the very first "Fort" was birthed. This time, the Museum of Flight was prepared and produced an event worthy of the plane's gloried history.

The city's lone, remaining B-17, where thousands were born and sent to the world's battlefields, was the glittering star in a corner of a giant hanger where some 900 came to pay homage to a Seattle legend —

"The Museum of Flight is proud to honor the pilots, crew members, ground crew members, designers, builders and protectors of the B-17.

"Thanks to their efforts, a war, an industry, and the world were forever transformed. We're proud to welcome and recognize many of those whose contributors and their families — a small gesture on our part in gratitude for their enormous and world-changing contributions."

These "contributors" included many workers and "Rosie the Riveters," designers, engineers, test pilots, "WASP" pilots who delivered the planes, and in later years those who came to restore the B-17 F brought to Seattle 25 years ago.

Lastly, came the air battle veterans to the cheers and applause of the huge gathering. Each received an "honoree" medallion and a B-17 "dog tag."

All that, plus a very special fly past by a B-25 and a pair of P-51's.

It was a night to remember.

For more information, visit —
www.MuseumOfFlight.org/gala2010

www.398th.org

398th Gathering Coming Up:

Reunion In Denver

It will be the 27th time around for the 398th as the annual reunion date nears —

September 8-9-10-11, 2010.

And the reunion site is Denver, Colorado, where many, many Air Corps/Air Force types trained or passed through before, during and after World War II.

For those who are poised to register or reserve their hotel rooms, they should be advised that the Denver Radisson Hotel has become the Denver Holiday Inn East, a name change that took place earlier this year (and after the April issue of FLAK NEWS). Same address — 3333 Quebec Street. (Local phone 303-321-3500.)

The Official Registration Form will still show "Radisson" so be advised to think "Holiday Inn" when arriving in Denver. At the airport, seek out the "hotel board" and look for "Denver Holiday Inn East, Stapleton" when calling for transportation.

Also, when calling for hotel reservations, note that the new number to call is 1-800-HOLIDAY (1-800-465-4329). Identify as "398th Bomb Group" for the $85.00 special room rate.

For those who missed the April Registration Form, visit *398th.org* or call Reunion Chair Sharon Krause.

The reunion at Denver will begin, as usual, with something special on Wednesday evening prior to the initial registration Thursday morning, September 9, at 8:00 AM in the 398th Memory Room.

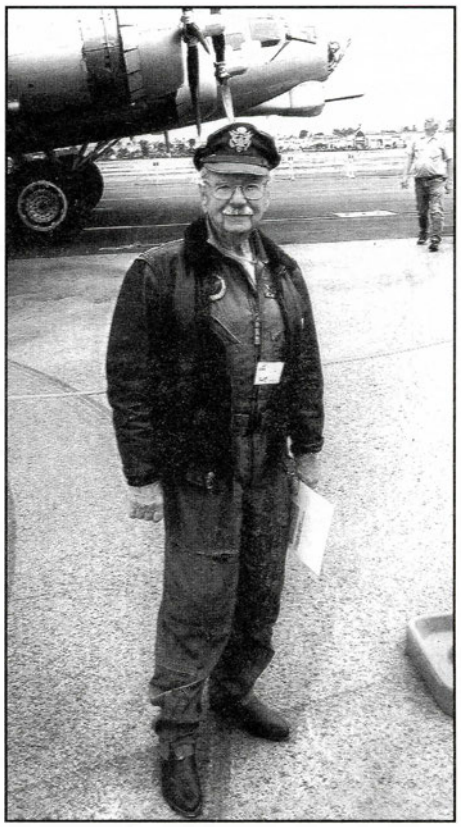
Those coming on Wednesday, September 8, may enjoy an evening dinner at the Adams Mystery Playhouse. And ... a great mystery show. A wonderful way to begin the 27th 398th gathering, which had it start at Rapid City in 1984. (Were you there?)

President Marilyn Gibb-Rice will call the group to order on Thursday afternoon, September 9, for the annual business activities. That day will also include a City Tour in the morning and the Welcome Banquet in the evening at the hotel (Holiday Inn East).

Tours will continue on Friday, September 10, with a visit to the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs and then on to more sights in "Pike's Peak Country." Then "home" to the Holiday Inn East for a complimentary "Happy Hour" featuring light appetizers, wine and beer.

A fascinating visit to "Wings Over The Rockies Museum" will come on Saturday, September 11, along with "Red Rocks Park."

The Reunion will conclude Saturday evening with the Farewell Banquet and Dance by "Peneplain Music."



JIM WHITE, sporting his original co-pilot's 50-mission crush cap, provided B-17 "authenticity" as he visited the Aluminum Overcast last spring at Torrance, California. Jim was on the Don Grinter crew of the 600th Squadron and survived the dramatic takeoff crash at Station 131 on December 24, 1944. The bombardier and navigator were killed. Jim recovered after four months' hospitalization. He doesn't fly the B-17 anymore, but he does fly his own small plane.

"Now I Know ..."

A Dog And His Memory

BY FREDERICK SEAMAN
Miami Springs, Florida

I met Paul Rich when he was recovering from a broken leg in the Station 131 base hospital. I was 13 years of age living near the 398th base and visited it as often as possible.

He invited me to his quarters (a tent) when he recovered and I listened avidly as he spoke of his life, school and New Hampshire. On my last visit I found his door locked and sealed. The crew who lived opposite (Pilot William Dean, 600 squadron) did not know what had happened to him.

I did not learn for many years that he was killed on a Merseburg raid on November 21, 1944. A small item in FLAK NEWS caused me to contact his family in New Hampshire. His niece, who was eight years old when Paul was killed, invited me to visit them. William Dean, who I had regained contact with, also came and we visited Paul's grave site.

We learned that after being buried by the Germans he was again reburied by the Russians. Finally he was returned home and buried in his local cemetery.

Whilst there I was shown a photograph of Paul with his German Shepherd on his last leave before going to the U.K. in 1944.

The dog had never left its home area but when Paul's coffin was taken from his home to his grave the dog followed every step of the way. This caused Paul's mother to say — "Now I know Paul is in that coffin."

Who knows what powers of retention, memory and affection a dog may possess? But this greatly comforted Rich's mother.

Floral Wreaths On Memorial Day

"Two floral tributes ensured that all those who served so gallantly at Nuthampstead remain in all our thoughts on this special day."

Thus, it was Memorial Day at Madingley, England, on May 31 and the 398th was remembered with a floral wreath presented by Board Member Wilfrid Dimsdale, while the Friends of Nuthampstead (FONA) was remembered by Cliff Bishop, publisher of *Fortresses Over Nuthampstead.*

Dimsdale subbed for president Marilyn Gibb-Rice, who was on a stateside visit. Bishop filled in for Malcolm Osborn, who has been "unwell" for several weeks combating a pesky infection.

He was unable to attend personally, but he did pen the sentiments.

"Do It Again In 2010" (Maybe Again In 2012):

Old Base Still Has The Welcome Mat Out

The 2010 England-Czech Republic Tour came off as a rousing success according to both participating members and their hosts alike, culminating with much talk about the "next one" in 2012.

Both Brits and Czechs turned out in great numbers to welcome the 398th vets (and the second and third generation members).

But with one lone vet on the Czech portion (Terrance St. Louis) and two on the England side (Ted Johnston and Lew Burke), one might be tempted to paraphrase Winston Churchill —

"Never have so few owed so much to so many."

The England crowd "drifted" into Cambridge at various times, but were all treated to choice welcomes by the likes of Malcolm Osborn, Peter Brooke and Mike Warner.

There were the "usual" visits to the Duxford Air Museum and the American Cemetery at Madingley, near Cambridge. This is where the history of World War II and the 398th comes alive and personal. Few can walk among the crosses and the Wall of the Missing and not be moved to quiet tears.

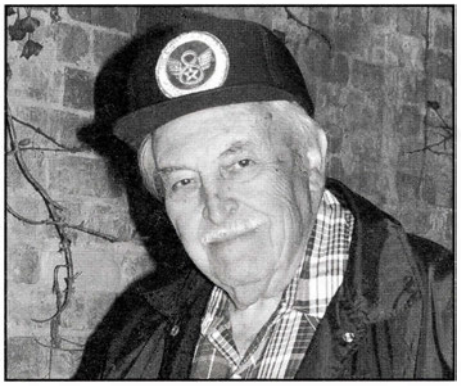
Burke and Johnston presented a Memorial wreath at the Madingley flag pole, as many others have done since the 398th began returning to England some 30 years ago.

Others on the 2010 tour to England included Anne Collins, the tour leader, Jim and Mellisa Ledlow, Garry Crocker, Teedy, John and Liz Blackwell (who delivered Wally's ashes at the Memorial and "out on the field"); Karen Neff, Frank Evola, Lillie Burke (and President Marilyn Gibb-Rice and Geoff Rice, who now live in Bury St. Edmunds, England).

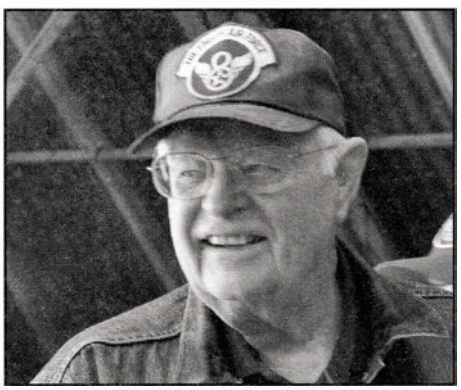
The Burkes came to England carrying heavy hearts. Lew's youngest son, 55, passed away in January following a battle with diabetes, and his eldest son, 61, passed away in April, losing his battle with cancer.

Malcolm, who "engineered" the tour again in spite of being "unwell," signed on Mike Warner to take the visitors on a tour to Suffolk and Norfolk (east of Hertfordshire). This would include a look at some of the "other" bomber bases of WW II (like Tibenham, where actor Jimmy Stewart gained fame as a B-24 pilot and group leader).

And Hardwick, where their friend, Maurice Hammond, houses his Piper Cub, AT-6 and TWO P-51's. And Knettishall, Fersfield and Old Buckenham, to round out a luxury coach tour that took most of the day and provided a grandiose look at East Anglia.



LEW BURKE
One More 603 Mission



TED JOHNSTON
One More 600 Mission

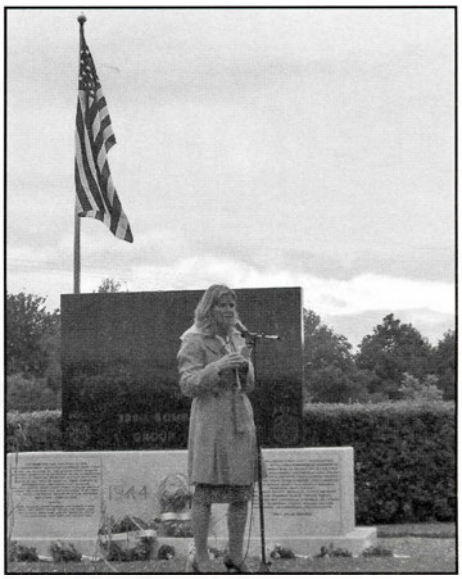
Prior to arriving at Station 131, the members coming off the Czech tour opted for an overnight in London for some sightseeing.

This would include a visit to Bletchley Park, where legendary work was accomplished early in England's war on the code-breaking equipment called Enigma. This was arranged by the very busy Collins. (Never have so many owed so much to so few.)

The Czech-only tourists were St. Louis and wife, Lydia; Don and Steve Christensen and Don's son, Jeff; Will and Linda Mayhall and Ken Howard. Karen Neff and Frank Evola continued on to England.

The three Christensens did manage a fast trip to Nuthampstead before returning home. They could not stay for the full England tour, but received a "top of the line" Station 131 tour from Ozzie and Joyce Osborn and Peter Brooke.

Remembrance Day at the Memorial loomed cold and cloudy with a brisk north wind keeping most of the participants inside the Woodman Inn until just before the services.



JONNA DOOLITTLE
Greetings from "Jimmy"

There were greetings by Brooke and Ozzie, who raised Wally's flag to fly for the duration of the Tour; the school children of Anstey and Barkway, who paraded to the Memorial with flowers gathered from the old Airfield; messages of "We Remember Them," "Gates of Prayer," and "Let Them Come In" served to remind the veterans that they are still remembered at Station 131.

Jonna Doolittle, granddaughter of the 8th Air Force commanding officer, came by to offer comments about the man she used to call "Gramps."

Marilyn closed the service with a greeting from the Rev. Gerald Drew, and a "thank you" to the vets, seconds and thirds who came on the tour, and to the local Friends of the 398th, who came to the Memorial service (and to the Woodman to get warm.)

No tour back to the old base would be complete without a visit to St. George's Church at Anstey, where the gorgeous stained glass window commemorates the lives of the 292 men of the 398th killed in action. Every name inscribed, plus —

A Pillar of Fire.
A Pillar of Smoke.
A Pillar of Cloud.
Group and Squadron Emblems.
Flying Butterflies.
Flying Fortresses.

The Rev. Carol Kimberley led the Sunday services, greeting a near-full house of local worshippers, many of whom remember well the day in 1944 when a 603 Fortress crashed into the nearby tall trees and burst into the moat surrounding a long-abandoned castle. And a loss of 10 lives. But the church was spared.

As Eunice Fox said of the tragedy —

"It was a sad time."

The farewell lunch was appropriately held at the Woodman, with time enough to reflect again on the Memorial, both for the 398th and the 55th Fighter Group.

Drama In Czech Lands

The England-Czech Tour got under way in Prague, where Ann Collins arranged sightseeing following the long flights from the U.S. to the Czech Republic.

Then off to Pilsen, there to meet Jaromir Kohout and old friends who remember the day the 398th bombers visited the city's Skoda plant on April 25, 1945.

It was the group's Last Mission, and ball turret gunner Terrance St. Louis of the 601 Jim Koenig crew was the lone veteran on his return 65 years later.

Others returning to the Czech Lands were Don, Steve and Jeff Christensen; Karen Neff, Frank Evola, Ken Howard and Will and Linda Mayhall.

Kohout led the group to Litice, where the 603 Ferguson crew is honored in a striking memorial. A visit to the Patten Memorial near the Skoda plant brought some "ground" history to the group. And then some additional history at the "big" Synagogue and then the famous Pilsner brewery, followed by dramatic fireworks.

TERRANCE ST. LOUIS
One More "Last Mission"

Ann *(b17annie@live.com)* and Kohout then pushed their tour bus to Kovarska, there to visit with Jan Zdiarsky and his famous museum honoring the "Air War Over The Ore Mountains."

The Christensens thought they had saved the "best for the last" when they stopped at Slany, there to see the memorial honoring Lt. Don Christensen, and his crew, whose 603 plane was shot down there in 1945.

After a short plane ride to nearby Panesky Tynec, where Milan Spineta and his group staged a classic air show, the three Christensens returned to Slany to search the exact spot where the plane crashed. "We found two dozen pieces of our Dad's plane," said the emotional sons and grandson.

Steve, in the thrill of his lifetime, was flown from Slany to the Panesky Tynec air show in the back seat of a jet Czech fighter.

Tour Guide Remembers 398th — And Freedom

BY BARB FISH
Seattle, Washington

"One More Mission to Merseburg and a Return to Nuthampstead" was the tour that Allen Ostrom had in mind for the 398th Bomb Group in 1992. He walked into Travel House in the winter of 1991 and asked me to organize flights, hotels and motor coaches for a group of World War II veterans planning to revisit their old airbase near Cambridge and across the Channel to "dreaded" Merseburg.

Organizing such a group tour to Eastern Germany at that time would be difficult enough, and I had so many questions: What is a B-17? A bomb run?

BARB FISH
"An Incredible Journey"

A tail gunner? A Norden bomb sight? Where exactly are Nuthampstead and Merseburg? And why would a group of veterans be interested in returning to areas they bombed during WW II? Why is the Newsletter called "FLAK NEWS?" Little did I know that I was about to start an incredible journey with a group of veterans who provided freedom for me and my generation 50 years ago.

After many phone calls, faxes (those were the days before the internet!), letters, brochure production and printing, mailings and office visits with Allen, I realized that the 398th Bomb Group was a very special organization. It was a joy to speak on the phone with the veterans who were all looking forward to going back to Europe one more time. (Did I say "One more time?" How about nine times?!) They were excited to visit former enemies who had since become friends on the ongoing fight for freedom 50 years later.

June 18, 1992, was a very special day as we all met at Copenhagen Airport and boarded our flight to Frankfurt, Germany, (a frequent target during the war). This time rather than being met by Flak and fighters, we were met by our German tour guides and hosts who had spent the past year organizing our visit. We needed two coaches to handle our large and friendly group of veterans, wives, family and friends ready to experience Germany and Belgium from the ground instead of the air.

It was awesome for those of us who were hearing about bomb runs for the first time as we realized what the flight crews and ground crews experienced during the

Continued on Page 9

Were You There?

Travel guide Barb Fish reminisced on the first of her nine journeys "back to the old base" with the 398th.

Also in this issue is the Editor's story of all the group tours to Nuthampstead and the Continent. Were you there?

Skoda Takes Another "Hit"

The 398th B-17 bombers did a major hit on Pilsen's Skoda Works in 1945, which was turning out munitions for the Nazis in World War II. It was the group's Last Mission.

Another "hit" was made on Skoda this year when the firm's Holding Company decided to close the Skoda Museum for "economic reasons."

It had been headed by Vladislav Kratky, who welcomed the 398th tour party to the museum in 1995 as the group helped celebrate the city's 700th birthday and the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

"I am now with the Skoda Archives, but I wish to continue to receive every issue of FLAK NEWS so I can receive information about the 398th Association."

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

To the 398th Bomb Group:

The Queen wishes me to write and thank you for the April 2010 newsletter. Her Majesty was interested in this issue of FLAK NEWS and I am to thank you for sending it to The Queen.

Yours Sincerely,
Jennifer Carden Lemieux
Lady-in-Waiting

The 398th's History Of Touring

Many Visits To The Old Base To Renew Friendships

BY ALLEN OSTROM
Editor, FLAK NEWS

Most of us can agree that at "our age" it is not always easy to nail down facts and figures as it once was. This editor oftentimes needs to "consult the files" before committing to paper (word processor) for the next issue of FLAK NEWS.

Thus, in his desire to reminisce on the previous Tours to England and the Continent, dating back to 1976, it was necessary to pull down the FLAK NEWS bound volumes and recharge the memory banks. My, my, what tricks the years do play!

Not counting the many individual trips taken to England by 398th members, there have been no less than 18 organized tours (not counting the first one in 1944).

Most of these came under the auspices of the 398th banner, with Barbara Fish of Seattle being the Travel Consultant.

It all began in **1976** under the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and the 398th joined in with 11 participants — Lou and Betty Stoffer, Jim and Dorothy Crouch, Earl Berryhill, Heyward and Millie Braddock, Phil and Marge Stahlman, Bill Jones and son Keith. These 11 "spun off" from the 8th party to look in on Nuthampstead.

By this time, locals Ozzie Osborn and Vic Jenkins were ready to present their plans for a group memorial, and men like Herman Hager, Ed Arbuthnot, Bill Comstock, Chuck Dreyer, Dick Frazier, and Bill Ganz led the drive to raise the funds for the Memorial that stands there today as the symbol of Station 131. The dedication was held in **1982**, attended by some 66 398th members and a host of English Friends (and a whopping wind storm that all but laid waste to the refreshment tent).

By **1986** the group had begun meeting outside the 8th Air Force umbrella and was ready to "go it alone" and hooked up with Galaxy Tours of Pennsylvania (Mark Burton). It was called, "Lest We Forget," and it was Jenkins who guided the members on a tour of the old field via a hay wagon pulled by a tractor, while others received small plane rides. In later years it changed to a modern coach and became known as "Wally's Tour."

The '86 tour went on to the Continent, where the 398th joined a French D-Day Celebration at Ste-Marie-du-Mont, whose mayor was quite impressed that these visiting airmen, who had never set foot on French soil, had chosen to follow the trail of the land battle all the way to Paris.

(Eighteen years later (2004) the 398th returned to France for the 60th anniversary of D-Day.)

It became the "Bomb Run Tour" in **1988**, and again it was handled by Mark Burton. He and all the tour members were enchanted to have as a participant Mrs. Maria Hunter, who came to Station 131 to raise her late husband's flag out on the "tall pole," which today stands near the old tower.

Hunter's was the first such "casket flag" which would be followed by 59 more in the years to come. David and Peggy Wells and son Tim handled the duties for many years. It is now under the care of Peter Brooke, chairman of the Friends of Nuthampstead Airfield (FONA).

The '88 Tour also witnessed the "title change" of the Memorial land ownership. Robert Dimsdale turned the title deed over to Ralph Hall, who negotiated the transfer on behalf of the 398th. It has since been transferred to the American Battle Monuments Commission.

That epochal '88 Tour also continued on to the Continent, where Burton and his "Battle of the Bulge" friends gave the travellers an apt description of the famous battle (to which the 398th had contributed missions during the winter of 1944-45).

Neuss was the target city when Col. Hunter, Fred Gonzales and their lead crew fell to anti-aircraft gun fire on January 23, 1945. Neuss also was on the itinerary in 1988 and this time the mayor of the German city greeted the tourists in his garden office. Later a ceremony was held near the Hunter crash site. It was drama, pure and simple, and it continued at the Ardennes Military Cemetery, where Maria Hunter fell to her knees as she viewed her husband's burial marker.

It was an "All UK" tour in **1990**, beginning in Scotland and winding its way to Nuthampstead by way of Loch Lomond, Hadrian's Wall, Blackpool, Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon. Linda Ellis took over for Burton and was an immediate hit as tour guide.

THE EDITOR and the 1992 tour party were greeted by Paul Droy of Barkway, dressed is WW II Air Force togs, and his World War II Jeep.

Also ... thanks to such friends as Joanna Sienkiewicz and Ron Setter ... an emotional journey to Penn in Buckinghamshire, where the Penn church and American Air Force bandsmen joined the 398th in honoring the nine-member Searl crew that perished near there. It was Oscar Muspratt, the local vicar, who had been instrumental (in 1944) in identifying and honoring the crew members.

Several members of the '88 Tour donated 8th Air Force memorabilia to Dean Castle in Scotland, including the editor, who gave his 1940 vintage Army

Continued on Page 7

"We Planted A Tree In Merseburg"

No Guns, Fighters During Visit To Once "Dreaded" City

(Continued from Page 6)

blouse (jacket) complete with Sam Brown belt.

"Why would anyone want to go there?" was the question when it was announced that the **1992** tour would begin at ... of all places ... MERSEBURG!

This is when the 398th "found" Barbara Fish, a professional travel consultant, to lead not only the Merseburg tour, but eight more as well.

This "dreaded" city that took so many 398th lives during the "target" days had just come out from under 44 years of Communist rule (plus the previous six under the Nazis).

Seventy five inquisitive members found their way to Leipzig (and a very nice hotel) and the next day a quick coach trip to Merseburg, taking note of a new McDonald's en route. The general manager at Leuna was kind, hospitable and knowledgeable (in German). He answered many questions for us, and "us" answered some for him. (Thank you interpreter, Insa Kipping).

The "curtain" was still evident in Eastern Germany, but the members shook it a little by planting a Lime Tree in the heart of Merseburg.

"Let us hope that this tree of friendship between our nations may thrive," said Dr. Peter Ramm, president of the Municipal Council of Merseburg.

It still lives today, as does the tree in Neuss, planted in 1988.

The tour continued on to such places as Düsseldorf, Neuss, Cologne, Margraten, Waterloo, and a special Hank Rudow visit at Duffeld. And finally Oostende, Belgium, from where the group sailed across the Channel for "home" and a tour continuance to Nuthampstead, with Willis Frazier displaying his "Purple Heart" following an encounter with a Belgian breakfast bun and a sharp knife.

While still on the Channel ferry, the group gathered on the aft deck and tossed a floral bouquet into the sea in memory of the Lyle Doerr crew. Joe Mansell and James Powell, a pair of Doerr crewmen who missed that fateful mission, led the ceremonies.

Arriving at Madingley, Col. Earl Berryhill, then 84, led three second generation "kids" in presenting a wreath on behalf of the 398th. They also met the great 8th Air Force historian, Roger Freeman.

It was an "All England" tour in **1994** with president Bill Comstock honoring the Friends of the 398th for their faithfulness in maintaining the Memorial and grounds.

He recalled the famous Churchill words in his praise —

"Never have so many owed so much to so few" —

Wells, Clark, Barker, Tyler, Dimsdale, Jenkins, Osborn ...

The Brit recognition continued with a visit to Southampton, where Comstock honored Mrs. Vivien Kennedy and her two children. It was RAF Flight Officer Robert Kennedy who, in 1945, dove in the cold waters on the Channel in a vain attempt to save one of the Doerr crewman.

It was also the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the Tour took in the museums at Southampton and Portsmouth.

Then on to Wildboarclough, and to climb the "mountain" where a 398th crew crashed with a loss of five lives. And to meet RAF Battle of Britain hero Johnny Johnson. Then on to such destinations as Stonehenge, Oxford, Derby, Beaulieu, Broxted, The Wash at Snettisham and of course, Nuthampstead. It was a long day!

It was not an "every other year" in **1995**, but the invitation to join the Czech people in celebrating V-E Day and ... Pilsen's 700th birthday ... was too inviting. After all, Pilsen and the Skoda Works represented the Last Mission.

Thirteen veterans and six of their ladies were there to take part in a series of celebrations in and around the city, highlighted by a recreation by the Army storming the church tower in which some Germans were still holding out. Even 50 years later it was exciting.

Danny Leyva led the 398th veterans in the Pilsen parade, proudly adorned in his still-fitting WW II uniform and carrying the 398th flag. The Air Force veterans also joined the vast number of Army types in the Prague parade.

Several members from the Czech Embassy joined the 398th and the mayor of Litice in honoring the Ferguson crew that was shot down on the Last Mission. Jaromir Kohout and his "SLET" friends arranged it all.

The young college tour guide hired for the Czech tour was David Frous. Today he is "second secretary" at the Czech Republic Embassy in Washington, D.C.

THE CEMETERY at Ardennes, Belgium, provided this dramatic scene as Maria Hunter came upon the burial cross of her husband, Col. Frank. P. Hunter, Jr., during the 1988 tour to England and the Continent.

The year **1996** provided a different look at Nuthampstead and surrounding countryside as the 39 members on the tour were assigned to "home stays" by the Friends. The tour coach drivers were challenged as they negotiated the tight, little roads in dropping off and picking up the members at various homes.

No problem in finding the House of Parliament in London, however, for a special tour of the House of Lords and tea and cookies on the Thames River Terrace restaurant. The tour was arranged by Viscount Richard Long of Anstey.

It was a very special "hat day" for the ladies.

New president Wally Blackwell remembered Comstock, who had passed away

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2000 Became A "Tour Of Tears"

(Continued from Page 7)

earlier that year, at a special flag burning ceremony at the Station 131 Tall Pole. Wally and Friends chairman Wilfrid Dimsdale also took time to deliver FLAK NEWS bound volumes to the Record Center in Hertford. The 398th was the only American heavy bomber group in Hertfordshire in World War II, and as such were most pleased to have the 398th memorabilia.

It was also a special day at Windsor, with the tour group being at the right place at the right time to see Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip "up close and personal."

There were some who wondered, after 1996, if there would be enough interest for any more tours. That was brilliantly answered in **1998** when six second-generation "young uns" presented a wreath at Madingley and then told their parents —

"Hey, Dad, your 398th is in good hands." These words by Patty Haas, Cate Ludlam, Diane Moy, Randy Stange and sisters Bev Wilson and Lynn Henselman.

The trip became mostly "off shore," as tour guide Pär Nilhammer paraded the group to such places as Munich, Luxembourg, Neuss, Malmady, Cologne, Bastogne, Remagen and Moosberg. There was drama all along, especially as Ike Alhadeff, Russ Reed, John Hiller, Sam Gailey, Bob Hart and Herb Wilson walked among the buildings that were their Prisoner of War "homes" at Moosberg.

And then there was Dachau, another sobering stop along the way. Plus American cemeteries like St-Avold in France and Ardennes in Belgium. There seemed no end to the drama.

THE 398TH VETERANS not only took in the 50th D-Day celebrations in Pilsen in 1995, but they also marched in the city's parade, led by Danny Leyva in his still-fitting uniform. They also "joined the Army" for a parade in Prague.

A young journalist in Düsseldorf was intrigued by the quote from the group's 1988 visit to Neuss, across the river —

"We came in our youthful years to wage war. We return in our elder years to share the peace."

"Who would count the tears?" was beautifully evident in **2000** when the 398th tour members gathered with some 400 British Friends to witness the dedication of the stained glass window at St. George's Church at Anstey, whose history goes back to William the Conqueror in the 12th century.

It was dedicated by the Bishop of St. Albans, the Rt. Rev. Christopher Herbert, in memory of the 292 men from the 398th who gave their lives in the WW II air war over Europe. Their names are etched in the window, along with many B-17 combat symbols of that epoch time.

The Royal Family was represented by HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who pointed to the window and said —

"The United States Air Force invited some very ordinary men to do some very extraordinary things, and were not invited to count the cost."

And after all that drama, it was off to the Czech Republic again to look in on such places as Prague, Pilsen, Litice, Kovarsaka, Marianske Lazne, Karlovy Vary and Slany. The latter is where a 603 crew perished and is remembered with a memorial.

It was non-stop drama in both England and Czech Republic.

(Later that year the 398th dedicated a memorial at the Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah, Georgia.)

The Friends pulled out all the stops in **2002** when they surprised the tour members, including nine veterans, with a B-17 Fly Past during the Remembrance Service.

"This is for you," the Friends said, as "Sally B" made several passes over Station 131 ... in the company of TWO P-51's.

President Wally Blackwell and Randy Stange displayed the techniques of folding the American flag, reminding that 398th veterans' flags may be offered and flown "to destruction" on the Tall Pole.

It was also the year of "Princess Diana," and many opted to see her former residence in Kensington. That tour also took in the famous London Eye.

The Friends waved "goodbye" and said, "Come again in 2004."

That did happen, but one year later (**2003**) six members, including the Editor, Wally, and relatives of the Christensen crew killed in action, visited Slany in the Czech Republic to honor the crew members who perished near the airfield where a beautiful memorial is located. Jan Zdiarsky's 8th Air Force Museum in Kovarska also was visited.

It was called, "One Last Look" in **2004**, and 40 responded, including 12 veterans, all anxious for a real, live look at Juno Beach, the D-Day bombing target for the 398th, along with such other French attractions as Villedieu-les-Poêles, the tour hotel, Courseulles-sur-Mer, where Wally brought a "We Were There" plaque to the town's mayor. The presentation was made (in French) by Air Force Col. Mike Ryan, who came to the affair from his EU

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GERTRUDE NEFF
Husband's Flag For Nuthampstead

2nd Generation Has Taken Over

(Continued from Page 8)

duties in Brussels.

The D-Day speeches by presidents Bush and Chirac were witnessed by several thousand veterans, friends and celebrities.

Before the D-Day festivities began, there was a major attraction on the Channel ferry from Portsmouth to Ouistreham. A call went out announcing a ceremony on the port side deck featuring the 398th Bomb Group, and hundreds of passengers, journalists and reporters responded to see Manuel Ray toss a floral bouquet in the Channel where his Kearie Berry 601 plane came down 60 years before.

It was called, "One More Peek" in **2006**, suggesting the tours back to the old base may finally be running their course.

It was indeed the last for Barbara Fish, and also for the Editor, who had been the Leader since 1986, a total of 11 tours, plus extras to the Czech Republic.

Ten veterans were joined by 10 sons and daughters plus four grand children and a huge Brit turnout to see the dedication of the new 55th Fighter Group Memorial in 2006.

The 55th, and their P-38 fighters, were the first occupants of Station 131 and this year they dedicated a proper Memorial adjoining the beautiful 398th Memorial.

"The Sky Was Never Still" was read to the luncheon crowd at High Hall Farm. It was Roger Freeman's lament about the London "townies" descending on the quiet lands of East Anglia for their summer homes and weekend cottages. "They knew little or nothing of the bombers that

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FOUR MEMBERS of the 1998 tour to the Continent doffed their caps when visiting their P.O.W. quarters in Moosberg, Germany. They are John Hiller, Ike Alhadeff, Russ Reed and Sam Gailey. Also at Moosberg, but missing from the photo, were Bob Hart and Herb Wilson.

Barb And Her First Tour

(Continued from Page 5)

war. We were proud to hear our fathers, husbands and friends relate the details of the bomb runs, POW camps, ditched flights, how they survived and returned safely. Many times while relating their experiences as young men, the veterans would pause, remembering those who did not return.

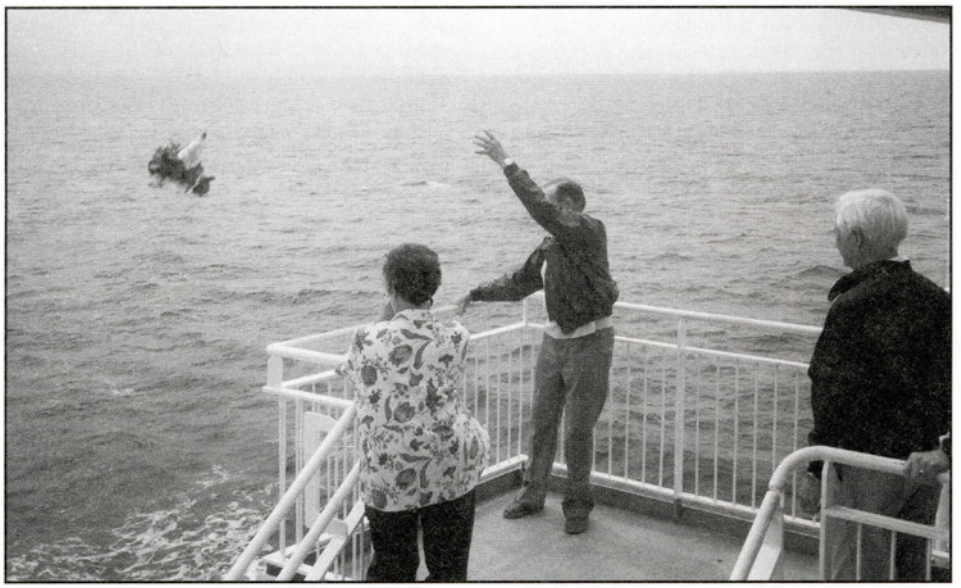
We toured the petrochemical plant at Leuna, joined the citizens of Merseburg in a joint goodwill ceremony, met our German friends in Neuss and visited the Ardennes American Military Cemetery near Liege. Returning to England, the White Cliffs of Dover was a thrilling sight, this time from a Channel ferry instead of a B-17.

The next five days at Nuthampstead were an exciting time with our U.K. Friends of the 398th. Memories of Station 131, Woodman Inn, Service of Remembrance at the Memorial with the Reverend Drew (complete with his

BARB

398th sweatshirt under his vestments and 398th cap); Remembrance Service at St. George's Church, Anstey; Duxford Air Museum; Cambridge American Military Cemetery at Madingley; and most important of all the U.K. Friends of the 398th who are vital to the success of the 398th Bomb Group Memorial Association. The tour ended in London with a visit to Hendon Air Museum and time to enjoy the sights of the city before our farewell banquet.

I am honored and pleased to be associated with the 398th Bomb Group. Reflecting back on the nine tours taken with the 398th, I am constantly reminded how fortunate we are to have the freedoms we enjoy today secured by the sacrifices made by the veterans of the 398th. I've said it before, and I will say it again: YOU ARE THE BEST.



JOE MANSELL had the honor of tossing a bouquet in the water in memory of his crew members who were lost in the English Channel. This occurred during the 1992 ferry crossing from Belgium to Dover, England.

Reed's Story Was A Smash Hit:

"The Terrorists Had Human Faces"

"The American Terrorists Had Human Faces"

BY KARL ISSEL
San Francisco, California

I am writing to you to let you know how much your journey has touched me.

It also gave me great joy to see how you maintained that undaunted American spirit of "never give up" in what might have been one of the worst times in your young life.

Your story moves along like a ship with a great wind in its sail. A great "finale" is the exchange you have with the German interrogator interrupted by those B-17's up in the sky above, carrying the flowing spirit of a nation that has never lowered its flag to anyone. Thank you, Russ, for conveying it so simply, yet so brilliantly.

When the squadrons appeared in the skies over our town, Stassfurt, we were fascinated by the silver vapor stripes they painted in the blue. In the beginning, we didn't register the horrors of raids on the larger cities. For us youngsters, — aged 11-13 — it meant a lot of excitement connected with war and danger. The ever increasing bombardments started to erase the thought of the many countries and their suffering under Hitler's war, and all we could feel was an intense fear of American forces in the air and on the ground.

The day came, when in the little town of Ballenstedt at the foothills of the Harz Mountains, a German army detachment took a last stand against the superior forces of American infantry. The city came quickly under American control. A Signal Corps took over the home of my grandparents where I was staying at the time. It had a strategic location near the forest on one side and overlooking the city below and countryside around it on the other. The members of this group treated my grandparents with the utmost respect and dignity. I was flabbergasted. I had come face to face with these "terrorists" that had flown mission after mission against German cities — "terrorists" with the most human of faces.

Yes, we were being asked after a couple of days to leave the home. After all, we were still the enemy. The war was still being fought, albeit only for another 16 days. But we had to be viewed as potential threats to the security of the corps and its operations. I was allowed to come back to the home without restrictions many times to pick up some household articles. One day, as I went back for some other items, the Signal Corps had left. My grandparents had many valuable things in their home some of which would have been all too easy to carry away. Nothing was missing.

Again, many thanks for writing your story. It comes across as an inspiration. God bless you.

Shortly after returning home from World War II and his tour with the 603rd of the 398th Bomb Group ... ending with the final eight months in the German prisoner of war program ... Pilot Russ Reed wrote of his fateful final mission.

That came on November 2, 1944, over Merseburg, and the "column" he wrote later was essentially directed to his college English professor friend (see FLAK NEWS Vol. 7 No. 1.)

That story found its way into the hands of a San Francisco architect, who was a 12-year-old youth in Germany at the time of Reed's mission. This is his response.

Letters

"Many thanks for sending me those back copies of FLAK NEWS that I requested. I was too young for World War II, but I really enjoy those many stories in your newsletter. Enclosed is money for postage. Thank you."

Ed Vopelak, Janesville, Wisconsin

"Many thanks to historian Lee Anne Bradley for sending me all that information on my missions — crew members, targets, aircraft numbers and much more. It brought back so many memories. It was so thoughtful of her."

Don MacPherson, Erie, Pennsylvania

"The Station 131 flag program is a reminder that my father's (Claude Dierolf) flag was among the first to be raised there (1992). And that I became a Lifetime Member of the 398th with my $100 Memorial contribution."

Deborah Hodges, Tucson, Arizona

ALL THE TOURS

(Continued from Page 9)

dominated these lands in World War II ... when the skies were never still."

Two years later, in **2008**, the tour was down to five veterans. Signs of the times. But it was also time for the second and third generations to step in. Brandy Howard and her dad, Ken, had begun working with Ozzie Osborn at the previous reunion in Phoenix and they conjured up a well-attended tour of 20 to England, representing three generations.

"I wish Wally could have been here," said Ozzie, noting that Wally's health at the time was such that it would bring

about his passing in early 2009.

Ann Collins also got into the act, not only in England, but also as the 398th representative at the Slany celebrations in the Czech Republic. Jan Zdiarsky translated her speech before a distinguished array of Czech officials, plus many others who had "adopted" the 398th on several previous visits.

Two years later, and with the same zest for remembering the 398th veterans (which included her own ball turret gunner father) Ann took on the 2010 Tour leadership and brought one veteran to the Czech Republic and two to England.

The **2010** stories appear elsewhere in these pages.

More Visitors Come To 131

There were two non-tour visits to Station 131 this summer.

Connie Novek, who had been on several previous tours, arrived with her son, daughter and son-in-law to raise Elliot Novek's casket flag on the "Tall Pole" near the old tower.

It joined some 59 others who have sent flags to be "flown to destruction." The program is headed by Friends chairman Peter Brooke, who works in concert with 398th secretary Karen Neff.

The Lestitian family came to seek information on their uncle, Thomas A. l'Estrange, who was killed when his Perry Powell crew collided with another B-17 while on a mission to Berlin.

The family, consisting of Ellen, Jim, Tricia and Linda, was greeted by Russ Abbey and Geoff Rice. The visitors also went on to London, there to read their uncle's name in a book at St. Paul's Cathedral, showing the names of all Americans killed in action in World War II.

They parted with the words —

"Russ and Geoff certainly went out of their way to make us welcome."

BRIEF-things

Boeing is even now working on some exciting new things at their Phantom Works, but the company and the Seattle Museum of Flight took time this past June to celebrate the 75th anniversary of he B-17 (which is the reason FLAK NEWS honors Rosie the Riveter) ... it seems like only yesterday when the 398th was in Seattle for the Fort's 50th anniversary ... in all those "Back-to-the-Old Base" England tours as described in this issue, it was remarkable that there were no serious injuries or mishaps, excluding ***Al Petska's*** midnight hospital visit in Cambridge the night before embarking for the Continent in 1988; the doctors diagnosed ***Al*** with a prostate problem, and he opted for the operation when he discovered that the doctor was world famous in this field ... some years later, in Luxembourg, ***Bill Markley*** had a late-night heart problem, and his attending physician was a Boston-trained heart expert ... among the many experts discovered on the tours was ***Tilly Kimmes,*** the Luxembourg travel guide lady who knew all there was to know about the Battle of the Bulge ... the 398th floral ceremony at Hamm Military Cemetery brought tears to ***Ralph Hall*** and ***Ralph Yarmoski,*** especially when the trumpeter played "Taps" for their friend ***Darrell Argubright,*** who was buried there ... golf was never on the Tour agenda, but the editor and ***Charles Sutton*** did borrow clubs from ***Robert Dimsdale*** on one visit and played (not well) 18 holes at Royston ... and then there was the story about ***Col. Hunter*** (then an Air Corps lieutenant) who became concerned about his new bride, ***Maria,*** when she described a fellow ***Hunter*** officer as a "cute boy" ... there was much screaming and shouting when the Edinburgh hotel in 1990 assigned ***Margaret Sigsworth*** a closet-sized room ***(Linda Ellis*** fixed it) ... the 1986 tour guide, ***Mark Burton,*** had to do some fast explaining when he told the group that he will "knock you up at seven o'clock tomorrow morning" ... the title of "most tours" has to go to ***Ralph Ambrose,*** who as a displaced London kid used to watch the bombers come and go from his favorite haystack; until this year ***Ralph*** had made solo visits to every one since the Memorial Dedication in 1982; a busted leg in last winter's snowstorm in Virginia finally grounded him ... the ***Doolittle*** Raiders of 68 years ago are still remembered, witness the gathering of 17 B-25's in formation last April at Dayton (there were 16 on the Hornet flight) ... ***Fred Parker*** of the 600 Ballard crew did some flights over the Channel in a B-17 H, but never had to drop the rescue boat ... speaking of "old" aircraft, the 50-year-old Lockheed U-2 reconnaissance plane is still on the job ... yes, many crews did practice ditching in a semi-submerged B-17 in Tampa Bay (including the ***Pinner*** crew) ... ***Barb Fish*** wrote her tour reminisces while aboard the MV Galatea heading for Alaska, (she and hubby ***Rick*** are retired but are still travelling — on their own power boat) ... the bomber crews remember well their "lunch" on those long missions: a candy bar and a package of gum ... compare that to the steak and salmon dinner served to the lucky WW II "Honorees" at the B-17 75th "hanger dance" party in Seattle ... France's lone B-17, "Pink Lady," has been retired from flight status and is now reposed at an airfield near Paris ... Seattle's "Boeing Bee" is a beautifully restored B-17F, but will remain on "static" display ...

ROSIE THE RIVETER
Remembering Those Days

398th Bomb Group PX

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