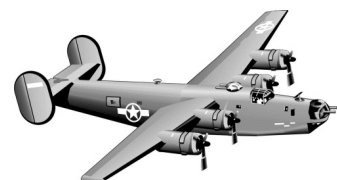




Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

August 2010

'Easy-Breezy' Theme for September Reunion

Prepare to Relax in Biloxi

If you've been thinking about whether or not to come to the 2010 reunion in Biloxi, Mississippi, Sept. 14-16, don't hesitate any longer.

Host Jim Rogers, son of the late Matthew and Eve Rogers, has arranged for a relaxing, low-key reunion at the Isle of Capri Casino. No buses. No schedule. Just fun, friends and food - all in one location! What a great way to catch up with buddies and enjoy time with family - and maybe sneak in some gambling.

Word has it that Bill Edwards is bringing his entire clan, so why not bring yours?

Here's the itinerary:

Tuesday, September 13

Early arrivals. On your own for gambling, entertainment, swimming, spa treatments, or eating at no less than five eateries at the Isle. Or, check out the seven other casinos on Biloxi's Casino Row.

The hospitality room will be open so be sure to stop in to register and share your pictures and stories.

Dinner will be from the hotel's buffet for approximately \$11. We will eat dinner together in the hospitality room. If you are retired military, bring your ID and your meal is half off. If you think you will be eating at the buffet for

breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you can buy a Buffet Triple Play coupon for \$20, covering all three meals for one day, at the front desk.

Wednesday, September 14

Main arrival day. Hang out in the hospitality room or check out what you didn't see on Tuesday at the Isle or the other casinos.

If you are ready to venture out, the Jefferson Davis Home is open for tours with 30-minute notice. Admission is \$7.50 for seniors, \$9 for other adults and \$5 for children.

Dinner is the buffet or on your own.

Thursday, September 15

The last official day of the reunion. We will enjoy breakfast in our hospitality room, followed by the business meeting. The rest of the day is on your own, and the banquet is in the evening. The price of the catered meal will be approximately \$27.

Friday, September 16

We say our goodbyes and hope to meet again next year. Turn to page 3 for hotel and transportation information.



Biloxi's Casino Row, with the Isle of Capri Casino at the bottom and the Hard Rock and Beau Rivage casinos at the top. Credit: Tim Isbell of the Biloxi Sun Herald

Chance Meeting Began with B-24 *Witchcraft* Tour Grandson Meets 780th Members at CA Wendy's

by Joshua Hummel

For several years, my fiancé, family, and I have been searching for the service history of my grandfather, Robert F. Davenport. We are fortunate to have his discharge papers, along with his medals and several crew photographs.

While visiting the Collings Foundation's B-24 *Witchcraft*, I talked to a man who told me about *Wings over Wendy's*, a group started by former military pilots that meets at a Wendy's restaurant in West Hills, Calif. Due to my hectic schedule, it took me nearly a month to finally attend one of these Monday morning meetings, but from the moment I walked in I was in shock. There were members from every branch of service, who participated in nearly every war imaginable. The servicemen were all proudly wearing their hats and shirts, displaying their pins and medals associated with their gallant service.

At this first meeting I sat humbly and soaked in every word. Within a few minutes, I was greeted by two gentlemen, USS Enterprise Admiral Murray Rothberg, and the group's unofficial president, Art Sherman of the 781st Bomb Squadron. I was politely informed that newcomers are encouraged to stand up and offer a brief overview of why they are there.

As I have not served in the military, I stood up and said, "Hello my name is Joshua Hummel, I am from Fargo, North Dakota, and my grandfather was in the 15AF, 465th Bomb Group, 780th Bomb Squadron."

After I expressed my admiration and told them about my search for information about my grandfather, several gentlemen approached me and said they were from Fargo and Minnesota. To my disbelief, Art Sherman

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The Wings Over Wendy's Meeting.

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grabbed the microphone and said, "I was in the 781st stationed at Pantanella, Italy. Gene, weren't you in the 780th?"

Shocked, I looked to my left and noticed a tall, softspoken gentleman. He asked for my grandfather's name and proceeded to write it down. Later, I happily exchanged contact information with Gene Koscinski, a navigator who was also in the 780th Bomb Squadron.

Several days later I received a message from Gene, and though he did not know my grandfather, he was able to find several pictures of my grandfather in his *780th Memoirs* book. At the next *Wings over Wendy's* meeting, Gene brought the book, and to my delight, there was a photograph of my grandfather, a nose gunner, kneeling with his crew. I was so happy that such a nice guy had put so much effort into locating his book and finding my grandfather's photo - for a young adult whom he had only met twice before. Gene and I spent several hours at Wendy's, talking about his life at Pantanella. It was amazing to hear about his time spent in the 780th Bomb Squadron.

A week later Gene left a message for me that he had found the contact information for George Kakaska, the navigator who flew with my grandfather. I received his information at the following *Wings over Wendy's* meeting, and I immediately called George, who happened to be retiring that week. Though our conversation was brief, George and his daughter were both delighted to reach out and exchange stories and contact information with me.

This miracle sequence of events, meeting new people, sharing stories and reaching out to those around me, has graciously led to new information about my grandfather, and has taken me another step closer to piecing together his complete story, in addition to my happily acquiring a *780th Memoirs* book of my own.

I am so fortunate that my winding road towards Robert Davenport's service history has been filled with only highpoints and excitement. It has brought my family closer, my

fiancé and I have spent countless hours conversing about the unraveling war stories, and I have made numerous amazing friends along the way, including Gene Koscinski, Admiral Murray Rothberg and Art Sherman.

I know this process will be long, but I have such great respect and admiration for this specific generation and their service that I can't imagine giving up on the search into my grandfather's service history. My search for my grandfather has grown into an overwhelming appreciation for all veterans, and a hunger to learn everyone's story. We owe these veterans. They went off to a war without being asked. They served simply because it needed to be done.

I would like to say thank you to all who have helped me get this far in the quest for knowledge about my grandfather and other veterans. Thank you to all who have served and given so much for our country.

**More of Your Letters,
Photos and Stories in the
Next Issue of Flightline**

How to Make Reservations

Isle Casino Hotel - Biloxi, MS
1-866-ISLE-VIP or 1-866-475-3847
Group Code: 780BOMB

Rooms: Rooms are \$65 per night for a regular (king or two queens). A room with a balcony is \$20 more. Each room comes with two free breakfasts each morning.

Reunion Contact: Jim Rogers, Baton Rouge, 225-614-5784, or email jimrogers.usa@gmail.com.

Transportation: Airport is in Gulf Port, 15 minutes from Biloxi. If you will be flying, please let Jim know at the numbers above. There is a shuttle service. If you need pick-up service from Jim, please call him in advance of the reunion.

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Flightline

TAPS

Robert L. Babcock, of New Berlin, Wisc., passed away May 4, 2010 at the age of 86. Surviving him is his wife of 62 years, Marion (nee Koch); and children Robert A. (Angie), Donna (Jerry) Choinski, MaryBeth (Todd) Stolpa, and Lynn (Gary) Blaedow; and 15 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; and many other relatives and friends. Robert retired from Schlitz Brewery. He served our country during WWII in the U.S. Army.



John T. McWhorter, CPA, of Bakersfield, Calif., died June 2, 2010, at the age of 92. He was born in Chicago on March 25, 1918. After receiving his degree he traveled around Europe with only a bicycle, change of clothes, and toothbrush. At the onset of World War II, John decided it was time to leave Europe. Once back in the states he became a pilot and trained recruits to fly B-13s at Minter Field in Shafter, Calif. He then was transferred to the 780th Bomb Squadron based in Italy. He excelled as a B-24 pilot and soon earned the rank of captain. His 13th and final combat flight was to raid oil fields near the Poland-Czech border over Germany. The B-24 had over 300 holes in the fuselage, one engine was gone, and the second had to be feathered. Knowing he could not get back to Italy, he headed to a Russian base but had trouble finding a runway. Ultimately he was able to land with little room to spare. At the end of his service, his squadron had flown 191 missions and lost only 18 crew members. John was a character in his own right. He had a grand piano in his office. He owned three '71 Cadillac El Dorados (one blue, one yellow, one for parts). His two dogs were often by his side at home, at the office, and while driving around town. He was a world class traveler, flying over 50,000 miles a year and visiting 140 countries, including many he battled during the war. He would sometimes take an overnight round trip just to get the miles to keep his preferred status. John is survived by his wife, Pat Deen-McWhorter; sons, James (Tricia) McWhorter, Charles (Jaye) McWhorter, David McWhorter and Thomas McWhorter; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and many step-children, step-grandchildren, and step-great-grandchildren. He was preceded by daughter, Anne Hett; and wives Dorothy McWhorter, Charlotte McWhorter, and Barbra Cross- McWhorter.