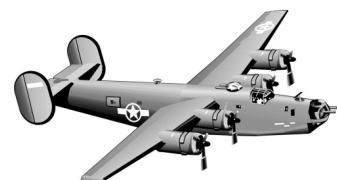


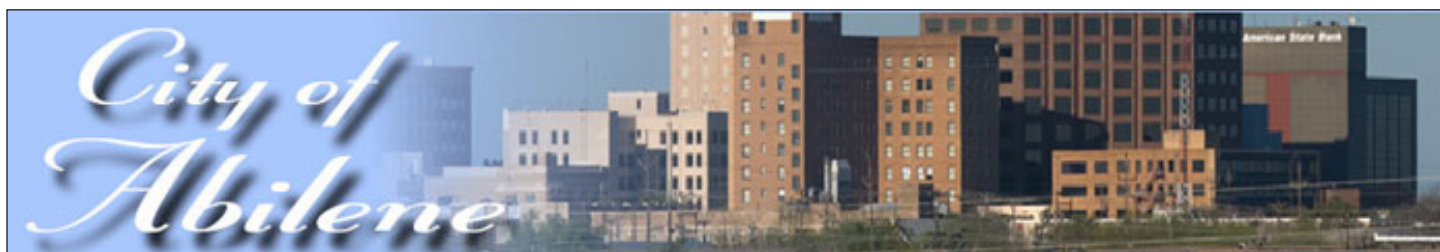


Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

August 2011



780th Squadron to Meet in Abilene in September

All the plans are in place for a great little get-together for the 780th Bomb Squadron in Abilene, Texas. Members, families and friends will meet Thursday through Sunday, September 15-18, 2011.

Kim McLaughlin, daughter of co-pilot Gayle McLaughlin, has organized a super friendly, laid-back reunion for everyone who wishes to relax for a few days away from home, visit with long-time friends, and meet new - yes, new - 780th family members. Several long-time members have made hotel reservations, and at least one new 780th family member is expected.

The reunion will be at the Hilton Garden Inn in Abilene. A block of 20 rooms has been set aside. **UNTIL AUGUST 15.** If you have not made reservations yet, do so now. You can reserve a room after August 15, but the rate is not guaranteed. Rates until August 15 are \$89 for a standard room and \$139 for a room with a jacuzzi. All rooms include a free breakfast buffet.

All the evening meals will be at the hotel. The cost is \$12 per meal, which includes tax and gratuity, if at least 20 780th members eat, so don't plan on eating out! The squadron chooses one of these dinner options per night: spaghetti with meat sauce, grilled chicken pasta alfredo, fried chicken, sausage and chicken BBQ, salad sam-

pler, baked ham, and hamburger, in addition to various sides, rolls, salads and yes, desserts. You won't go hungry!

When the squadron isn't eating they'll meet in the Longhorn A room for socializing. The Lindemans have reserved the jacuzzi room, so bring your swimsuit!

As for what else is planned, you'll just have to show up to find out!

If you have any questions, just drop Kim an email at mclaughrn@yahoo.com, or call her at (325) 370-0593.

Many friends, memories, and good times await in Abilene. Enjoy some quality time with the 780th in Abilene in September!

780th Hotel Website

The Hilton Garden Inn in Abilene has created a website for the 780th. You can make your room reservation by going to the hotel's 780th website or by calling the hotel's toll-free number: (877) 782-9444. The 780th's booking code is **BSR**. Copy and paste this url into your web browser: http://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/A/ABIABGI-BSR-20110915/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG

Train Travel, Army Air Corps-style

by Jack E. Ball

It was a beautiful, clear, and cold day in February when they decided to take us from our warm nest in McCook, Nebraska, and send us into the world we were trained for.

The huffing, puffing engine connected to a long string of railroad passenger cars seem to say, "Let's go, let's go, let's go and remove yourself from this place!" After several hours of hurry up and wait they started to board us. Of course, as usual, they would call our name and we would reply with our serial number, be checked off, and climb a few steps onto the car.

You may have heard that the Army Air Corps always received the best of everything. As you will learn this is true, starting with our accommodations on said train. Breakfast had been around 5 a.m. and now it was around 1 p.m. We all cheered as our lunch came around, a case of prunes for each car.

Our car had reversible seats and each held two men. This was great because part of the time you could see where you were going, and by moving the backs you could see where you had been. The air conditioning was the best. They allowed us to open the windows at our leisure, and when you started coughing from all the smoke you could close them.

The dinning car was quite different, but the food was nourishing and plentiful. Now we found out why we had been carrying our mess kits all the time we were in training. You followed the picnic table and held out your plate. The waiters put the food in. Sometimes the train would lurch and they would miss. Juggling what was left on your plate and in your cup you returned to your seat.

Here's how to clean a mess kit on a train: go back to the mess car, scrape the garbage into one garbage can, string your utensils and cup on the handle of the plate, slosh it around in another garbage can of scalding G.I. soapy water, then slosh it around in another can of scalding water.

The prunes and G.I. soap made the bathroom a popular place. The Army knows best.

It must have been that they invented the sleeping cars for us. If you got cramps in your neck or legs you could stretch out between the seats or on the floor. Of course, someone might step on you in their hurry to the bathroom.

After two and a half days of delightful traveling through the Southeast we arrived at our destination - Hampton Roads, VA. Someone said we were going to see the ocean, but not yet. We detrained on the siding at a camp like all the others.

For three days we could do what we wanted to do: sit in the barracks, go to the mess hall for meals, and sit in front of the barracks talking. On the second day

after breakfast, a number of us were discussing nothing as usual when one of our group spoke up and said, "I have hemorrhoids and they are sure hurting this morning!" After much thought and speculation we came up with a great idea. With his blessings it was decided we could help him stay stateside. We all went to the railroad siding, which was almost next to the barracks. The subject was to sit on the cold rail until he hurt so bad he could not stand it. This went on for about an hour and then we sent him on sick call. We thought we had accomplished great things and awaited his return. But everyone



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The 465th Remembered

Likely Author Harold B. Murray

In the year nineteen forty three
A new bomb group was soon to be.
This group was numbered Four Six Five
To achieve perfection each member did strive.

They formed four squadrons of brave, young men.
Some would never see their loved ones again.
The squadrons were numbered from seven eighty, through seven eighty-three.
An outstanding bomb group they were destined to be.

They flew the famous B-24
A heavy bomber, just right for the chore.
Loaded with bombs, and bristling with guns,
This was the one that put the Hun on the run.

They were based at Pantanella
In Southern Italy,
Where they flew their many missions
To keep all of us free.

So let us say a prayer
Of thanks to all these men,
For without their gallant effort,
Who knows what might have been.

We will never forget you,
Though many years have past,
You left with us an impression
That will forever last.

So here's to the men of the four sixty fifth,
God Bless you one and all,
Your job was tough and deadly,
But you courageously, answered the call.

Dedicated to all the members of the 465th Bomb Group H

Hummel Gathering Stories for New 780th Book

The poem on the preceeding page was submitted by Joshua Hummel, grandson of S/SGT Robert F. Davenport.

Joshua is compiling a book about the 780th, but he needs your help.

"I am looking for any 780th members or their families who would love to participate," he says. "I would love their stories and some pictures to accompany their service during WWII in the 780th."

If you have some stories and/or pictures to share, contact Joshua at:

Joshua Hummel
230 N Kenwood St #239
Burbank CA 91505

You can call Joshua at (323) 652-2858.

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was so deflated when he returned and the doctor told him he was in great shape and would see him again when we reached our destination. The Army knows best.

Early on the third day, February 11, 1944, we got a shot of adrenalin when the P.A. system announced for us to pack our duffel bags and fall out in front of the barracks. Great balls of fire we were really leaving these beautiful shores. There would be bands playing, beautiful girls, and the Red Cross would be handing out donuts. Now, everyone knew this because we had always heard about this on radio and in the newspapers. Ah, the dreams of youth. In the evening when we arrived at the dock all we could hear was someone asking for our name and serial number and then following the next man onto the ship. For four days we would not see the sky again.



B-24 "Saved My Life" 'Cookie' Praises B-24 on Seattle Morning Program

George Kuchenbecker appeared on KING-TV 5's *New Day Northwest* program June 15 to talk about his beloved B-24 and his service in WWII.

'Cookie,' as he is fondly called, told stories about flying in a B-24 during the war and the present day to promote the *Wings of Freedom* tour that was in the Seattle area. *Wings of Freedom* flies WWII aircraft to cities around the country to publicize the need to preserve WWII aircraft.

Cookie appears at airshows like *Wings of Freedom* in his flightsuit to talk to the public about what it was like to fly in a B-24.

The segment is about eight minutes in length. To watch it on your computer, go to: <http://www.king5.com/new-day-northwest/Wings-of-Freedom-Preserving-WWII-history-123921714.html>.

**What's Your Story?
Send it to *The Flightline*!**

The Artistry in Getting a B-24 in the Air

Flying: Not as Easy as It Looks

by Cleon S. Moore

My plane was *Alley Oop*, a B-24 Liberator. The Liberator could carry heavier loads — 5,200 pounds — and fly farther than any plane used in WWII. It could fly on two engines if necessary after discharging the bomb load.

We flew in a seven-plane box formation. The first three planes flew wing tip - to- wing tip. They used belly turret guns. The next four planes were one hundred feet above the first three and couldn't use the belly turret guns. The last plane was called Tailgate Charlie.

Each squadron sent up seven planes each day. The airfield had three squadrons, so 21 planes went up each day. If the sky was overcast or we had bad weather, we couldn't fly that day, and the crews scheduled for that day skipped their turn and flew again three days later.

We usually flew seven hours to the target, and seven hours back. We would depart about 6 a.m. and return at 8 or 9 p.m., landing with flares on the runway. We departed before daylight and could not see who else was flying with us.

The crews would line up on one side of the flight briefing tent and load onto trucks to take us to our planes. At the plane, we checked our stations and reported to the pilot any deficiencies or that all was okay. The plane ground crew was standing by to correct any deficiencies or to ground the plane if the problem was serious enough to jeopardize the flight. Then we loaded into the plane and took our take-off positions.

Each crew member had an assigned position for take-off and landings. The runway was 300 feet wide, and when I arrived at Pantanella, they were taking off two bombers parallel to each other at the same time. After one plane blew out the inboard tires and veered into the other plane, causing both to crash at the end of the runway (canceling the mission for that day), they started taking off one behind the other at

one-minute intervals.

The control tower would shoot a yellow flare into the air, which meant we had five minutes until take-off and to start engines. If the mission was a "go," they would fire a green flare and the planes would take off one behind the other until all 21 planes were airborne.

The planes then would begin to form up in their boxes as they flew towards the targets.

There were no external radio emissions from any of the planes or control tower because the Germans could pick up these signals. When our formation got out over the Adriatic Sea, the lead plane would shoot up a yellow flare - the signal for the planes to spread apart and the gunners to fire-check their guns.

After entering enemy territory, the planes would fly zigzag courses so that the enemy could not determine which targets we were going to bomb. If they knew the target far enough in advance — it would take four to six hours for the bombers to reach the target — the enemy could rush anti-aircraft guns on rail cars to that site. They could also set smoke fires that would obscure the targets. Sometimes when we got to the target, the planes ahead of us had bombed the target and there was so much smoke and fire that we could not see the actual target, such as bridges or factory buildings, so we just dropped the bombs into the smoke and flames.



Cleon in his flightsuit outside his tent.

Kathy Le Comte
Editor, *Flightline*
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Flightline

Famous WWII Photo is 465th BG Aircraft



A WWII photograph that appeared in newspapers across the country, and familiar to many Americans even today, was an aircraft from the 781st squadron of the 465th Bomb Group. The photo, above, shows Blue 1 as its left wing falls off following a direct hit just before the bomb run during a mission to Blechhammer South on 20 November 1944. This was the lead aircraft for the entire bomb wing, piloted by Lt. Col. Clarence "Jack" Lokker. The plane directly behind Lokker flew through the fireball and ended up with Lokker's left main gear stuck to its nose. Amazingly, five of the eleven crew bailed out. This photo is posted on the web, courtesy of James Althoff. You can read the story of this historic photograph at: <http://www.samoloty.ow.pl/str208a.htm>.