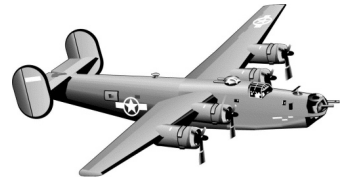




# Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

June 2012

## Edwards Takes Flight to Wash., D.C.



*Left: Bill with Andrews Sisters re-enactors. Right: Bill, far right, with two other veterans and his guardian, Erin. There is a guardian for every three vets to look after them during the day. Below: Bill with a poster of himself in uniform that was displayed at Raleigh-Durham International Airport.*

by Debbie Haggerty

In April, Bill Edwards and 130 fellow World War II veterans from every branch of service traveled to Washington, D.C., on the final Triangle Flight of Honor from Raleigh, NC. The Flight of Honor is an all-expense-paid program flying World War II veterans to our nation's capital to visit the memorial built in their honor. They also visited the Marine Barracks for a drill team performance, the Navy Yard Museum, the Iwo Jima Memorial, and of course, the Air Force Memorial. Their day ended with the changing of the

guard at Arlington National Cemetery. After a big musical send-off at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, they returned

to Raleigh-Durham International Airport to be greeted by 4,000 friends, family members, and patriotic Americans. They were paraded in by the Marine Honor Guard and Bagpipes to the music of the UNC Marching Tarheels. It was a wonderful day for all. Bill said, "So many people shook my hand today and thanked me for my service to our country I started thinking, 'Well, maybe I am a hero!'" *Editor's Note: Yes, Bill, you are a hero, as are all 780<sup>th</sup> veterans.*



# Your News & Letters

Navigator, 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron Association President, and long-time *Flightline* editor, Bob Bleier, is now in a care facility. Bob's step-daughter, Barbara Jones, says Bob fell two nights before Christmas 2011, and also has dementia. Despite these unfortunate setbacks Bob is still the same happy, easygoing person we all know. His daughter, Robin Bleier, says he would love to receive cards and letters. You also can email a message to Bob and Robin will take it to him to read. Bob's contact information is:

Robert Bleier  
112 Garden Hill Drive  
Los Gatos, CA 95032  
408-356-0672

bobbleier780@pawpawmail.com

Gloria Kuchenbecker, wife of tailgunner George "Cookie" Kuchenbecker, should be back at home now following a stroke in early December. It mainly af-

fected her speech. She received physical and speech therapy at a nursing home then an assisted living facility and was on her way home at the end of May. Their younger son, Mark, helped out immensely, working with Gloria on her exercises and keeping George fed! You may send cards and notes to Gloria at:

Gloria Kuchenbecker  
802 N W 193rd St  
Shoreline, WA 98177

Navigator Lloyd Jensen emailed *The Flightline* in March with a recap of his military service. He was seriously wounded and now is on 100 percent VA disability:

"... my injury was October 13, 1944 over Blechhammer, Germany, 22<sup>nd</sup> mission, 13<sup>th</sup> bomb run. Spent the next 14 months in military hospitals. At that time tour of duty was 50 missions where many like Vienna were counted as double

missions. My crew was 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Emil Medley, pilot; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Forest Sommers, co-pilot; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lloyd Jensen, navigator; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John McParland, bombardier; Sgt. Harold Denzin, engineer; Sgt. Howard McElroy, waist gunner; Sgt. Lloyd Norlin, ball turret gunner; T/Sgt. Blaine McCray, nose gunner; Cpl. Lester Lutt, tailgunner; Cpl. Alfred Weinstein, waist gunner. Ranks here were as of 15 August 1944 from orders for us from Manchester, NH, to Italy. I'm sure all had promotions after that, but I don't have records later. I was promoted to 1st Lt. in November 1944 while in the hospital in Bari, Italy."

## Photos Requested for 780<sup>th</sup> Digital Archive Project

Joshua Hummel, grandson of nose gunner Robert F. Davenport, is compiling a photo archive of the 780<sup>th</sup> BS. He would appreciate 780<sup>th</sup> veterans loaning him photographs taken during their service. "I am scanning them to preserve as much history as possible," Joshua says. "Upon copying and saving the images I will promptly send them back to you." Joshua's new address and contact info is:

Joshua Hummel  
9324 Gothic Ave.  
North Hills, CA 91343  
323-652-2858

## Ambrose of 781<sup>st</sup> Folds Wings

*The Flightline* was saddened to learn about the passing of Frank Ambrose of Gloversville, NY, in February. Frank was in Intelligence as a photographer for the 781<sup>st</sup> BS, and former editor of the *Pantanella News*. Frank's family says they will maintain his website that is full of Frank's photographs during the war, including crew photos, B-24 nose art and shots of Pantanella airfield; plus maps, charts and a history of the 465<sup>th</sup> BG. A salute to Frank for preserving our shared history at Pantanella. His website is: [www.frankambrose.com](http://www.frankambrose.com).



# **Moore 'Promoted' to Co-Pilot When Shot Down Over Yugoslavia**

*by Cleon S. Moore*

**M**y plane was shot down, or “forced down”, twice, and both times we landed in Yugoslavia. The citizens of Yugoslavia were divided in their support for the Germans and the Allies. There were “safe days” when our planes could land at Viz, Yugoslavia. The Brits knew when those days were, but I could never figure it out. The British cargo planes would pick up any downed crewmen at the Yugoslavia field and ferry them back to the base in Italy. On both days I landed in Yugoslavia it was not a “safe day,” but we didn’t have a choice.

The first shoot-down was when we were on a run to Blechhammer, Germany, to the South Oil Refinery. Blechhammer had many ball bearing industrial plants that were guarded by artillery. The plants were a popular target, and we tried to keep them shut down. Eventually, the ball bearing plants went underground.

On that run, a shell exploded between the nose turret and the No. 3 engine and knocked the engine out. It jammed the right side bomb bay door. At the nose turret, there was an electronic sight for aiming the twin 50-caliber guns. The shell cut off the sight right in front of my face. The co-pilot was injured, and he lay down in the waist and we got bandages and morphine for him. Then No. 4 engine cut out. That was when I took over for the co-pilot. The hydraulic lines were severed, and we couldn’t lower the flaps to slow for landing and couldn’t lower the wheels. We released the left side bombs, but the right side held five 100-pound bombs, and we couldn’t eject and release them. All of us crew members strapped ourselves down, and we landed the plane on sand and gravel and steel-piercing planks (mats). When we crash landed, the plane was torn up and the bombs rolled out. I jumped out of the plane and ran. I jumped into a ditch, and the plane caught fire



*Cleon's daughter, Cheryl Hewitt, with the Norden Bombsight.*

and the bombs exploded.

Before we landed, I exploded the Norden bombsight. I pulled the red pin and an explosive device inside destroyed the internal part of the sight so the enemy couldn’t figure out how it worked. When the red pin was pulled out one notch, the bombsight would detonate in ten minutes. When the red pin was pulled out to the second notch, the sight detonated in one minute. So, if we were going to crash land, we wanted the sight to be destroyed during the landing.

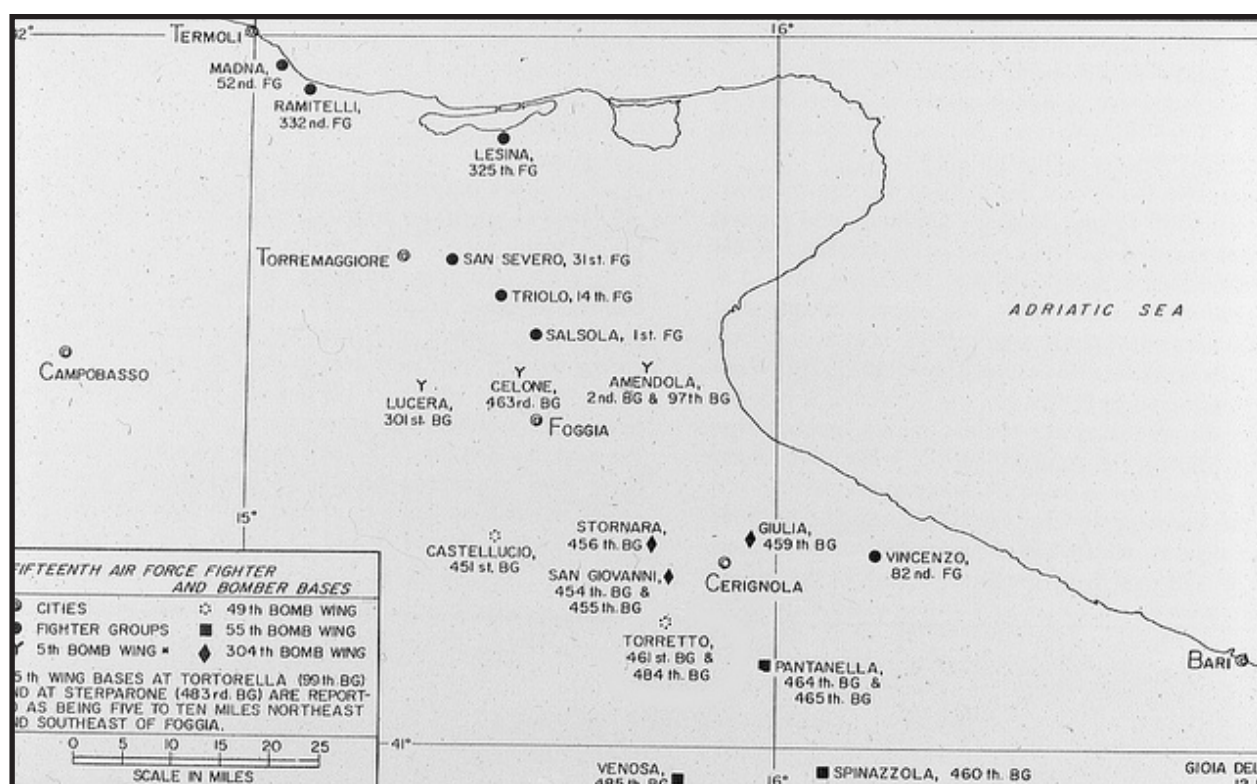
The Yugoslavs took us captive that night and held us for ten days. They said they thought we were Germans posing as Americans, but I believe they were mad because of the destroyed bombsight. The Yugoslavs wanted an intact Norden bombsight to trade to the Germans. All planes that crash-landed from our squadron destroyed the bombsight. The Brits finally got us released. That counted as a successful mission.

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

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1004 Williams Blvd.  
Springfield, IL 62704-2832

## *Flightline*

### The Old Neighborhood



### 781<sup>st</sup> Reunion Invitation Reminder

The 781<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron Association has invited our squadron to their reunion in Branson, MO, in September. The 781<sup>st</sup> will meet at the Grand Plaza Hotel from September 30 - October 4, 2012.

For more information about the 781<sup>st</sup>'s reunion visit their reunion website at: [www.reunionproregistration.com/781stbombsquadron.htm](http://www.reunionproregistration.com/781stbombsquadron.htm), or contact Carole Lee at [cle75@q.com](mailto:cle75@q.com) or (605) 339-1297.