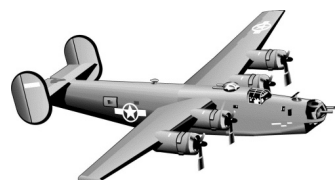




Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

March 2015

Exciting tours, speakers set for Kansas City reunion

The 2015 reunion has gotten bigger - with six groups (not five) collaborating - for the momentous meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, September 24-27. The schedule is in place and registration forms are now available online and inside this newsletter. Here are the highlights:

Thursday, Sept. 24

Arrival and check-in day. The hospitality room and registration table will be open with heavy hors d'oeuvres served in the afternoon and evening. No evening meal is planned. All-group information meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 25

Optional tour of the National WWI Museum at Liberty Memorial, with lunch at the museum's *Over There Café*. This is one of the top 25 museums in the country, according to TripAdvisor. In the afternoon there will be presentations and discussions by veterans and then a social hour. Friday there will be individual group banquets. Three groups will dine in one hall, and the other three groups in another hall.

Saturday, Sept. 26

Optional tour of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, with lunch in the library's atrium. On the way back to the hotel the bus will stop in front of the Truman home. National Park Service rangers will get onto each motorcoach to give an overview of the home's history. In the

afternoon there will be presentations and discussions by veterans and then a social hour. Saturday is the Gala Banquet with all bomb groups. Guest speaker will be 484th nephew, Roger Locher, an Air Force pilot shot down over North Vietnam in 1972 who spent a record 23 days evading capture before being rescued.

Sunday, Sept. 27

Morning memorial service, followed by an optional tour of the Steamboat Arabia Museum, a cargo and passenger steamboat that plied the Missouri River and sunk in 1856. Lunch will be at the museum. An optional casual farewell banquet will be held at the hotel at 6 p.m.

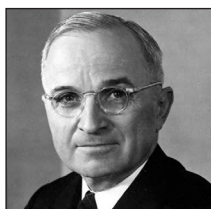
Other Important Details

Hotel: Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel, with free parking and free shuttle between the airport and hotel. Room rate is \$99 per night with full, hot breakfast buffet for two per day, plus two drink coupons per day.

Registration: \$115 per person, includes Friday and Saturday banquets. Museum tours and Sunday dinner ex-

tra, see registration form for details.

Website: For more information about the reunion and the tours, go to: <http://www.451reunion.org>. A registration form is inside and online. A huge thank you to Carole Lee of the 781st for handling the 780th registration!



Your News & Letters

Kathy,

Re: December 2014 Flightline, on page 3 in your "Thank you, thank you, thank you" you have me erroneously listed as Ad Honkala, gunner. I was not in any flight crew so please, at your very earliest, make a correction. I worked, or served, as a ground crew person as a gun turret specialist - never flew.

I am sure something led to the notation as gunner - perhaps my continued interest in the 780th. Most of the letters you get are from flight personnel.

Thank you for noting this as a correction and, once again, accept my thanks for your good work.

Best regards and a happy new year,
Ad Honkala

Editor's note: My apologies, Ad. As you guessed, there is an explanation for the mistake. The 780th roster I inherited has you listed as a gunner. I don't know how or why that was

but it's fixed now! Thanks for letting me know.



Kathy Le Comte,

I wanted to let you know that William G. Shreve (Bill) passed away December 29, 2014, at the age of 91. As a second lieutenant he flew 36 missions over Europe in a B-24 while stationed in Italy. Their last mission they were shot up too badly to make it back over the Alps and he put the plane down safely on a racetrack in Pez, Hungary. It took them six weeks to make it back to Italy and by then the war was over. They were told to go to the bone-yard to find a plane that would get them back home. After much research by the flight engineer they picked one out and took off for the U.S.A. He got everyone home safely and they all left the military. His crew got together every year until age prohibited travel. His bombardier, at 92, is the only one left. After the service he earned his mechanical

engineer degree at Purdue University. He spent his entire working career with the Federal Aviation Administration as a pilot in charge of inspecting their navigation aids. He leaves his wife and five children.

I enjoy reading The Flightline, keep up the good work.

Janet Shreve

Editor's note: Janet, my condolences on the passing of your father. His obituary appears in TAPS, page 9. It sounds like you know a great deal about your dad's service. Many World War II servicemen did not talk about their service, for various reasons, and many children didn't think to ask. I'm glad neither seems to be the case with your family. I am honored to continue *The Flightline* in honor of all the guys like your dad who defeated the enemy from the skies.

continued on page 3...

THANK YOU!

My deepest appreciation to the following for their recent donations to ***The Flightline***

Jim Long, radio operator
Bill Sturm, son-in-law of Harry Larson, ballgunner
Harold Miers, orderly room

Your grateful Editor



Hi Kathy

Sadly I have to report that Joe Spontak died on December 27th. Joe and I became friends when I was filming On The Wing and stayed in regular contact. Joe was a crewmember on the B-24 Sugar Baby that was shot down on August 3, 1944. He was the last surviving member of the crew. I last spoke to him about three weeks ago when he called to say that he felt he was failing and wanted to talk for a few minutes. We had a nice conversation and he was entirely alert and matter of fact about the situation. His daughter told me he called others as well. This was the type of fellow he was. He will be missed.

I would imagine his obituary is in The Baltimore Sun. Please pass on my best wishes to any of the members you happen to speak with. I hope all is well with your family.

*Best regards,
Brad Branch
son of Bart Branch*

Editor's note: Thank you for letting us know, Brad. Joe's obit appears in TAPS on page 9. I'm glad you kept in touch with Joe and for making that film. I also want to apologize for an error I made in the December issue in reference to a phone conversation with Brad in which I stated Lee Englehorn wasn't doing well. I meant Joe Spontak. Lee, in fact, passed away several years ago.



Dear Kathy,

Forgive me for using snail mail. I am one of the old timers who still does not have a computer and use it to communicate with my friends and family. Let me also thank you so much for the tremendous job you do keeping the spirit of the 780th Bomb Squadron alive. I read every issue with great interest even though I was not one of the "fly guys." I was an enlisted man working as a Classification Specialist. That means I was responsible for the maintenance of all personnel records and to do whatever my old friend, Major Charlie Davis, asked me to do. Incidentally he was one of the nicest men I have encountered in my 91 years.

Enough of that nostalgia. My reason for writing you is to answer Ad Honkala's question about the name of the Liberty ship which transported about 500 squadron members across the "blue waters" to Naples in 29 days. The ship was called the Lambert Cadwalader. We lived in the Trenton, N.J., area for roughly 12 years in the 50s and 60s and there was a very nice public park there which was also named Cadwalader Park. It so happens that Mr. Cadwalader was a well-known figure in Trenton.

I had an interesting experience on the ship on the way to Italy. We spent most of the time sitting on deck and soaking up the salt air. But, one day I saw someone who I was pretty sure I knew. He was a captain and I was a lowly corporal but I went to say hello to him anyway. I said to him,

"Pardon me, sir, but aren't you Doc Nagle from Lafayette College?" He said, "Yes, I am, who are you?" When I told him I was Harold Miers from Phillipsburg, N.J., he said, "Oh, yes, I know you, too. You played basketball for Phillipsburg." After some interesting reminiscing he said we should get together after we get settled. We later did just that. He was based in a town whose name escapes my memory right now but he was with the only B-17 squadron in Italy. Doc Nagle was the athletic trainer for Lafayette College, which was located across the Delaware River in Easton, Pa. He was a real gentleman.

Keep up the good work you are doing in The Flightline. You never know when some interesting information is going to pop up. My wife, Claire, is a late-stage Alzheimer's patient and I am handicapped and confined to a wheelchair so we do not so any traveling except for what we read. Please excuse my much too long epistle but that's the way you get when you are 91 years old and have had an interesting life. I am sending a small contribution to help you keep The Flightline going. God bless.

*Sincerely,
Harold W. Miers*

Editor's note: No apologies are necessary, Harold, especially when you have such detailed and interesting memories. And, of course, my deepest appreciation for your kind words about the newsletter and for your donation. As to Doc Nagle's location in Ita-

continued on page 4...

...continued from page 3

ly, apparently there were six B-17 groups in Italy, but two units arrived in March 1944. Perhaps Doc Nagle was with one of them. They were based near Celone and Sterparone, near Foggia. Do either of these cities ring a bell? The groups established before March 1944 were in Amendola (two units), Tortorella and Lucera. Here is another letter I got answering Ad's question about the Liberty ship:



Kathy,

This might answer the question in the December Flightline. It's from a book I wrote when I retired.

Joseph J. Sullivan

..."then to McCook, NB, and assigned to the new 465th B-24 Bomb Group. After completing training, half our ground crews left for Hampton Roads, VA, where about 500 enlisted men and officers boarded the Liberty ship Lambert Cadwalader bound for Italy. Our convoy of some 80 vessels spent 29 days at sea in the North Atlantic from February 11th through March 10th of 1944 before landing at Naples, Italy. During the entire voyage I and other Ordnance weapons men, were assigned to relieve the ship's Navy gun crews by manning the 20 millimeter cannons in the gun tubs on the ship. My station was the gun tub immediately aft of the bridge on the port side of the ship. I was part of the

night watch. Our task was to load the 20's magazines in the event of an attack, and stand by to help the Navy gunners, if necessary.

Our convoy passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, two ships at a time, and sat idling as the convoy was reformed in the Mediterranean Sea. While in that condition one Liberty ship was torpedoed in the evening by a German submarine, and sank. I learned later that the 550 troops on board, and the crew were all lost that night. Another struck a mine in the same area, after the convoy had reformed and was in motion, but successfully made it to port. Remarkably, shortly after the torpedoing, while our convoy crept in darkness through the Mediterranean, from my tub I watched a fully-lighted cargo ship, emblazoned with a huge lighted Spanish flag on its side advertising it was neutral, pass the convoy going in the opposite direction on our port side.

After passing through the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Italy our darkened convoy passed Stromboli at night, and from my tub I watched, fascinated, as its volcano's fiery lava flowed down the volcano, lighting the sea. The night we landed in Naples the convoy was bombed by a single German aircraft, that I was told local anti-aircraft gunners named "Bed Check Charley" as he did this regularly. We embarked, and were billeted in the University of Naples. Two days later Mt. Vesuvius erupted, blowing grey volcanic ash, which covered everything exposed. On the fourth day we departed by truck convoy to Pantanella, near Canosa, Italy, arriving on March 14th, where we pitched tents in a storm of grey

ash-filled snow. We worked for two months to build a runway for our bomb group..."

Editor's note: You can't find these details, and described so vividly, in a history book. Thank you, Joe, for sharing it. Finally, Eleanor Ball, widow of Jack Ball, emailed this passage from 780 *Memoirs*. It provides some additional details, like the name of the second ship that carried the 780th overseas, and more information on the torpedo attack. Eleanor also provided a photo of the arrival harbor for the second ship in Tunisia:



Kathy,

Read your request for information about the squadron going overseas. I'm attaching information from the squadron book. Also sent another e-mail with a picture of the Bizerte Harbor from Jack's file. Hope this is the information you were looking for.

Happy New Years...
Eleanor Ball

Squadron Moves Overseas

At 1300 hours, on 1 Feb 1944, the Ground Echelon, Group Headquarters Personnel and four combat crews, boarded a train at McCook, Nebraska, their destination, the staging area at Camp Patrick Henry, Newport News, Virginia, arriving there early in the morning of 4 Feb 1944. During an eight-day stay at Camp Patrick Henry final processing,

continued on page 7...

780th BS/465th BG

Print your return address in the space provided on the right. Please print clearly in dark ink.

Return To:

From:

Carole Lee 781 st BS, 465th Bomb Group 4700 S. Cliff Ave. #308 Sioux Falls, SD 57103 Email: clee13@midco.net Phone: 605-339-1297	Name:
	Address:
	Telephone No.
	E-mail:

Joint Reunion 15th Air Force Bomb Groups WW II
Kansas City Reunion: September 24th – 27th, 2015
Registration Form for the 465th Bomb Group Attendees

Basic Registration Fee: Includes Fri & Sat Dinners	_____ X \$115.00 per person =	\$
Optional Bus Tour 9/25: WWI Museum & Lunch	_____ X \$39.00 per person =	\$
Optional Bus Tour 9/26: Truman Library & Lunch	_____ X \$39.00 per person =	\$
Optional Bus Tour 9/27 Steamboat Museum & Lunch	_____ X \$43.00 per person =	\$
Optional Sunday Dinner 9/27	_____ X \$30.25 per person Southern Catfish	\$
	_____ X \$30.25 per person Grilled Pork Loin	\$
	_____ X \$25.50 per person Veg. Lasagna	\$
	Total	\$

(Make Checks Payable to: 781st Bomb Squadron Association)

Specify how name should be listed on name tag:

My Name Tag:	
Spouse's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	
Guest's Name Tag:	

Continue →

Name of Person Registering (same as Page 1): _____

Dinner Selections

For the dinner entrees, I/we have selected the following: (Select one entrée for each attendee)

Friday Dinner: Grilled Salmon _____ Roast Pork Loin _____ Ravioli _____

Saturday Dinner: Kansas City Strip _____ Chicken Oscar _____ Vegetable En Crouete _____

Hotel & Travel

Staying at the Hilton Hotel : Yes _____ No _____

Arrival Date: Thursday 9/24 _____ Friday 9/25 _____

I plan to arrive by: Plane _____ Car _____

Bomb Group Association

Are you a Survivor of the air war in WWII? (Yes/No) _____

What was your group number? _____

Date of Birth: _____

List your duty position (pilot, tail gunner, mechanic, etc.): _____

If air crew member: Were you shot down: Yes _____ No _____

Were you a prisoner of war: Yes _____ No _____

Number of Missions: _____

List Medals awarded: _____

Attach your Air Force history (write-up) if available.

If not a Survivor, describe your relationship to a Bomb Group Member: _____

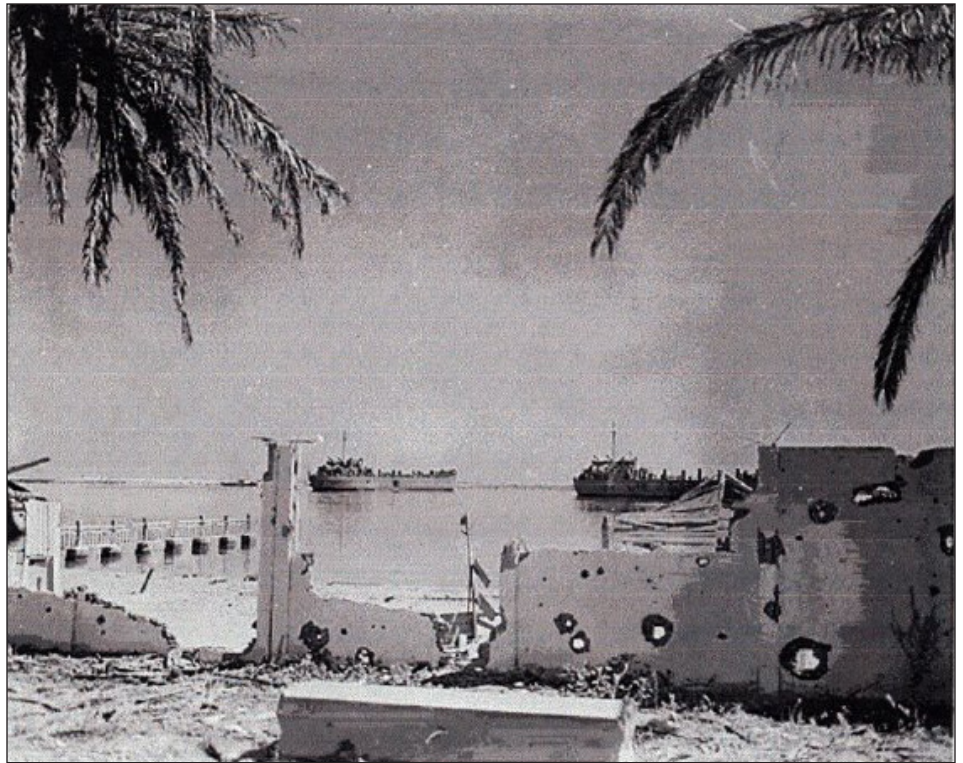
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physical examination, clothing and equipment checks were completed. For the first time in the history of the Squadron, mail censorship became effective.

The squadron were given Shipment number 0622-M (Flying Echelon 0622-MZ.) and divided into two units for shipment to the Port of Embarkation, Hampton Roads, VA. The first unit, in charge of Capt. Martelle, was assigned to Ship No. HZR-925 (otherwise known as the "SS Lambert Cadwalader"). The other unit in charge of Capt. Davis was assigned to Ship No. HR-328 ("SS John Hathorn"). Both of these vessels being Liberty (cargo) ships of approximately 10,000 tons each, fitted out to transport troops.

The first unit left Camp Patrick Henry on 11 Feb 1944, the second a day later. Both vessels departing from Hampton Roads, Va., on 12 Feb 1944, and joined the convoy of some eighty-odd vessels for final departure the following day. For most of the personnel this was their maiden ocean voyage, with rough weather being encountered, seasickness was quite prevalent. The journey overseas was not entirely un-eventful, one vessel being torpedoed, near Bizerte, Tunisia, and another striking a mine in the same area, the latter vessel being able to make port, whereas the torpedoed vessel sank shortly after being struck.

Ship Hr-925, after one day stop-over at Augusta, Sicily, reached the port of Naples, Italy, on 10 Mar 1944. Personnel were transferred to Staging Area No. 1 Camp, at the Peninsula Base Section, departing four days later



Bizerte Harbor, Tunisia, in May 1943. It already looks pretty beaten up. Photo from the National Archives, and provided by Eleanor Ball from the Jack Ball collection.

for Pantanella, Italy, where the Group Airfield was to be located. After a night stop-over at Avelino, Italy, the first unit of the Squadron arrived in Pantanella 15 Mar 1944.

In the meantime, Ship HR-928, with the second unit of the Squadron, was withdrawn from the convoy at Bizerte, Tunisia, docking there on Mar 1944. From there this unit journeyed by truck convoy to Phillipville, Algeria, reaching Camp Jean Staging Area (British) late in the day. Four days were spent at this camp before embarking on the "SS Iliea"

for Naples, Italy as part of another convoy, arriving Naples 14 Mar 1944. Personnel were then transferred to the same staging area as the first unit and while at this staging Area received their first baptism of fire, when this area was bombed by the enemy late the night of their arrival.

Editor's note: Thanks to all who answered this question. On the back page are photos of the SS John Hathorn and the SS Lambert Cadwalader, plus more information.

Ugly Ducklings

Despite their impressive official classification, the ships were initially often referred to as "ugly ducklings" by the press. To counter this negative image, the Maritime Commission began referring to the first order of so-called Ugly Ducklings as the Liberty Fleet. - The Liberty Ships of World War II

Man finds KIA uncle's 780th crewmember

Editor's note: This is a condensed version of an article printed in the November 10, 2014 issue of The Town Talk of Alexandria, Louisiana.

Bobbie Robertson's first mission in World War II was his last. The 21-year-old was a crew member on a B-24 Liberator bomber that was shot down while bombing German positions in Vienna, Austria, on October 11, 1944. Robertson, a Sabine Parish native, helped other crewmembers parachute out of the plane before it went down, but he and some other crewmembers died when German machine guns opened fire as they floated down in parachutes. Three of the crew lived to tell of Robertson's heroics, but it would be more than six decades before the Robertson family learned what happened that day, thanks to the persistence of Rickey Robertson, Bobbie's nephew.

In the 1980s Rickey, 59, first attempted to learn what happened to his uncle, but it wasn't until 2005 that Rickey made contact with the 780th Bombardment Squadron Association. His desire to find someone who remembered his uncle was published in *The Flightline*. Eventually, a letter arrived from Walled Lake, Michigan.

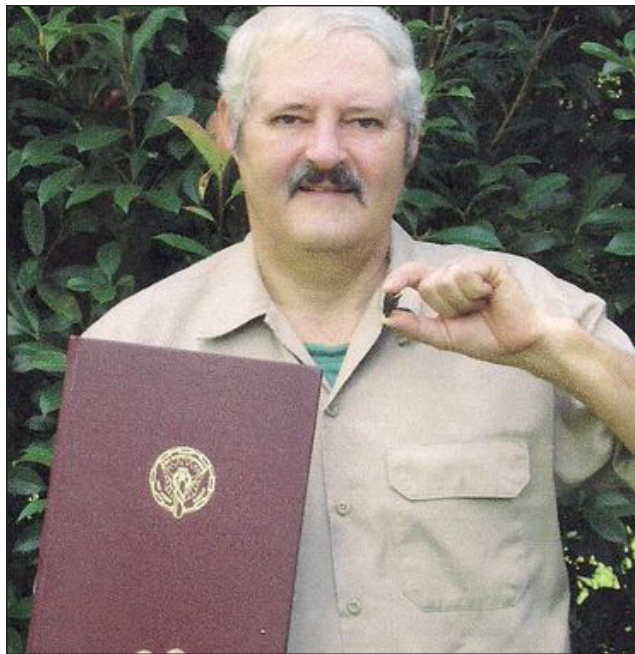
"Lo and behold, it was from the last surviving member of the B-24 crew on which Bobbie Robertson was assigned," Rickey stated. It was from Joe Kling, who was a nose gunner in the B-24 right behind Bobbie's plane on that fateful mission. Kling had witnessed Robertson's plane being shot down and saw the crew parachute out.

An emotional phone conversation between Rickey and Kling followed, and Kling sent a

780th Bomb Squadron yearbook to Rickey in memory of his uncle and to keep the story of the crew alive.

Rickey and Kling kept in touch and finally met at the squadron's final reunion in September 2010 in Biloxi, Mississippi, where the men had trained. Rickey and his wife, Patsy, made arrangements to meet Kling there. As Rickey was walking into the meeting room, a man walked out, wearing a 780th ball cap.

"Rickey, it's Joe Kling!" Patsy said after seeing his name tag.



Rickey Robertson, holding an original 780 Mem-oirs and the piece of shrapnel given to him by Joe Kling.

A very tearful reunion took place right there. Kling introduced Rickey and Patsy to other squadron members and later provided Rickey with details about his uncle, their training, and their experiences overseas. Kling explained that as part of being a newly-arrived crew, he and Robertson were split up in separate planes on that first mission so that the inexperienced newcomers would be flying with battle-tested airmen.

"Joe told of what a sad day it was to have lost his friend on their very first mission," Rickey report-

ed.

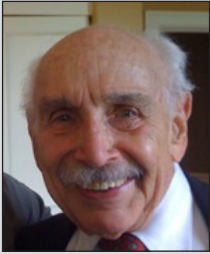
Kling and the rest of Bobbie's original crew flew a total of 35 combat missions, and all survived the war, although four of them were wounded. After the war, Kling lived in Michigan where he was a barber for nearly 65 years. Over time, he became the last surviving crew member. Rickey is grateful that he got to meet and become "real fast friends" with Kling.

"Our family treasure was the footlocker of Uncle Bobbie's," and Rickey learned that Kling

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780th BS/465th BG

TAPS



Edward Gluklick, 93, of Southfield, Michigan, died on January 2, 2015. Ed was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on October 23, 1921, and moved to Detroit as a young boy with his parents and nine siblings. He was selected and attended Cass Technical High School as a music major, where he became the first member of his family to graduate high school. During World War II he was a B-24 pilot, flying from the North African and Italian theaters. After the war, he returned to Detroit where he entered the building business, which led to a long career as a commercial contrac-

tor and, later, surety consultant for the industry. He spent many hours composing music for the piano, some of which was produced and recorded in the 1990's. Ed also was a prolific writer and sometimes actor. He appeared in the Clint Eastwood film *Grand Torino*. He also enjoyed traveling and his family. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, of 69 years; son, Peter (Helen Ross) Gluklick; daughter, Karen (Patrick Moore and the late Robert Braun) Gluklick; grandchildren, Helios, Tenaglia, Lauren, Leah and Alex Braun; and Corinne, Chloe and Cole Gluklick; and one sister, Freda Doroff, who is the last surviving of the ten siblings. He was preceded by son Daniel Gluklick and daughter-in-law Jeanine Gluklick.

Joseph Spontak, of Ellicott City, Maryland, passed away December 27, 2014, He was preceded by his wife, Anna Mary Spontak. He is survived by his daughters, Mary Jo Dennis and Jane Donovan; and four grandchildren.

William Guy Shreve Jr., 91, of New Braunfels, Texas, passed away on December 29, 2014. He was born in Washington, D.C., on May 21, 1923. He spent a year at Virginia Tech before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1942. He was stationed in Italy as a 2nd Lieutenant, flying B-24 bombers over Europe where he received the Distinguished Flying Cross of heroism and outstanding achievement in combat. After leaving the service he attended Purdue University where he earned an engineering degree. It was there that he met his first wife, Patricia Vaughan, and together they had five children. His lifetime career was with the Federal Aviation Administration where he was a pilot and maintained navigation aids all over the country. After his wife passed away he married Janet Fink Kerner.

He is survived by his wife, Janet; daughters, Linda Taylor and Catherine Shreve; sons, James (Toni) Shreve, Michael (Lesley) Shreve and Joseph Shreve; nine grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. He also leaves three brothers and one sister.

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helped pack it to be sent to Bobbie's parents a few days after Bobbie's death. "They were buddies, and Joe and the first sergeant packed that footlocker... and every item is still in that footlocker, 70 year later."

Kling gave Rickey a piece of shrapnel that hit his plane on a different mission. Rickey keeps that along with Kling's letters, *Flightline* news-

letters and, of course, Bobbie's footlocker with all of its contents.

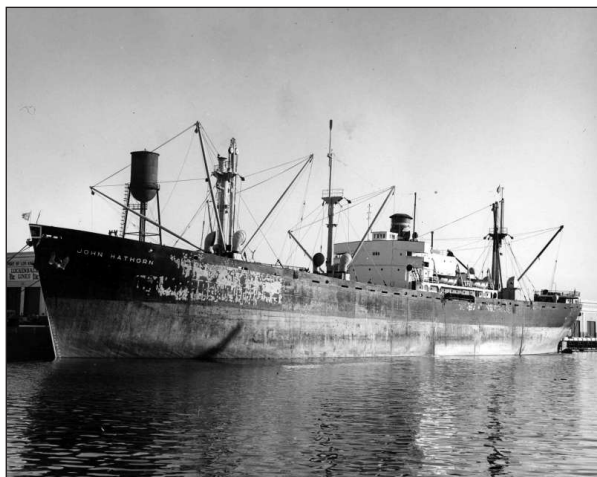
Kling celebrated his 97th birthday (last) year, but fell ill soon thereafter and died a month later.

"The whole crew is back together," Rickey said. "They're flying somewhere higher than that B-24. They're flying in the sky forever right now."

Kathy Le Comte
Editor, *Flightline*
1004 Williams Blvd.
Springfield, IL 62704-2832

Flightline

780th takes 'public transportation'



At left: SS John Hathorn, right: SS Lambert Cadwalader, the two Liberty ships that carried the 780th Bomb Squadron to Italy in February 1944. See Your News & Letters, inside, for more details about the group's transport overseas. Below are the specifications for a basic Liberty ship:

Length: 441 feet, 6 inches Beam: 57 feet Draft: 27 feet, 9 inches

Displacement: 14,245 tons (fully loaded)

Cargo Capacity: 9,140 tons, nominal (over 10,000 tons, with external deck cargo)

Propulsion: Two oil-fired boilers, one triple expansion 2,500 HP steam engine

Speed: 11.5 knots, maximum range: 17,000 Nautical Miles

Typical Crew Size: Up to 44 Merchant Mariners and 12 to 25 Naval Armed Guard

Armament: One 3-inch bow gun, one 5-inch stern gun, and six to eight 20-mm guns