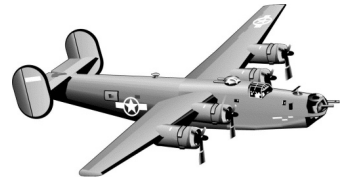




Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

March 2018

Flightline Flashback

Welcome to '780th Town'

Editor's note: Looking at past issues of Flightline I found some articles, photos and tidbits I'd like to share in a series I'm calling Flightline Flashback. This first installment is from the April 2008 issue of Flightline. If you've read this before I hope you enjoy reading it again. If you've never read this story, that's why I'm reprinting it.

by Cliff Taylor

In the first week of October 1944, the enlisted men of our crew, J.P. Dawson's crew, moved into Tent 59 in 780th Town. We found that Bernie Jones was already living in the tent, making seven in one tent... a little crowded. I think we set a record by having three gunners in the 780th from a city of 150,000: me, our nose gunner, Dave Holdsworth, and Jack Bently, a tailgunner on another crew, were all from Erie, Pennsylvania.

The first night I learned my first of many lessons. After going to bed I noticed the tent sagged some over my head. I got up and went out in the dark to tight the guy rope, only to fall in the air raid trench beside the tent. Now I knew where to go if we had an air raid. The next lesson was when I spent a little too much time at the EM Club and going back to the tent,

I learned you had to avoid those relief tube pipes. (That isn't what they were called.) They were very hard on the legs.

In remembering the EM Club I think of the War Bond drives that Major Davis ran. He would be there with these pieces of tissue paper that when you touched a cigarette to a spot on the paper, six lines burned down to the end of the paper. Each line was a horse, and the

first horse to the end won the race. He would get six of us to each bet \$1.25 on a horse. The owner of the winning horse won a \$10 War Bond worth \$7.50. I think I ended up with four or five of those.

One disadvantage to the location of our tent was it couldn't have been any farther from the outhouse, but that became an advantage when they poured gas in those barrels. They burned for several days. You needed your gas



*Beer Bust inaugurates EM's Club - June 1944.
From 780th Memoirs*

mask.

We decided it was time to improve our living quarters - improving its size and getting rid of the dirt floor. We got a truck and headed out into the country to find some tuffi rock. The first farmer we came to sold us the amount of rocks

continued on page 4...

Your News & Letters

Kathy,

I am writing regarding the subscription for Harry D. Fike. Harry is my father and he passed away in December. We would like to continue receiving his subscription of Flightline, however. Could you please change the address to the one I have listed above?

Thank you,

Cheri Amhof

Editor's note: Done! My apologies for not having my email address in the *Flightline*. It will be included from now on (see bottom of page). And I'm very sorry to hear of your dad's passing. His obituary is on page 5. I'm glad I found an article about Harry on the internet, which I republished in the June 2017 issue of *Flightline*.



Kathy,

Just a quick note to let you know that Cookie is flying high with all his 780th buddies. He joined formation at 7:20 this morning. I spent all night with him and was there at the end. We spent all day yesterday in airplanes to get back so I could say goodbye. Thankfully we made it in time.

Dave Kuchenbecker

Editor's note: I am so sorry to get this news, Dave, but thankful to hear you were with him. His obituary appears on page 5. I forwarded Dave's email to my *Flightline* email list (if you aren't on it and want to be, email me at johnkath5@comcast.net). The replies are posted here:



Kathy,

So sorry to hear of the passing of George. He has rejoined the ranks of the many men who served in the 780th. Yes, Flightline is our bond that holds and keeps all of us together and to always be able to share the history and heritage that our ancestors who served in the 780th left us.

Keep up the good work with Flightline!

Rickey Robertson



Hi Kathy,

So sorry to hear of George's passing. He was such a nice fellow. As you know, my father died last July. He was the last member of his crew to go. I believe that George was the last person alive that appeared in my film and I am so lucky to have met them all despite the

sadness I feel upon hearing this kind of news.

Best regards,

Brad Branch

Editor's note: George also was the last member of his crew - the Joe Theena crew. Several members wanted more information about Brad's film. It's called *On the Wing*. Read on...



Also, saddened by this news. Film? How can we see the film?

Regards,

Lisa Warren

daughter of John Stock



Here is information on Brad's film. We own it. In fact, my mother bought a copy for each of my siblings for Christmas

Contact Me

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one year. We treasure it. And since I am speaking about Brad here, I will also say I am forever grateful to him for helping me get to Pantanella in 2013. Without being part of this group, I would not have known about the film, contacted Brad, received his contact info for tour guides in Italy, or had one of the most memorable trips of my life. I have four Italian brothers now, thanks to Brad! And I fulfilled a promise to my father. Thank you again Brad! <http://464th.jkhathaway.org/film.htm>

With great appreciation,
Beth Berger Martin
William E. Berger's daughter



Hello Beth,

Thank you for your kind comments, and it was my pleasure to give you those contacts. It is my intention to return to see our friends in Italy this coming fall to do some more research, etc. Anyone who wishes to contact me can reach me at 603-494-2284.

Best regards to all,
Brad Branch



Hi Brad,

I would like to buy three copies of your film. I seriously don't know where I was when

your film was being made, and I'm so sorry I missed that opportunity. Not paying attention, that's for sure. It's only recently that I have been trying to learn all I can about my dad's World War II experiences. Like most others, he didn't talk about it much.

One funny thing is we had a Norden bombsight in our family room from the time I was born (1961) til about 1985 when my dad finally sold it to a military museum. My dad, John E. Stock, was a bombardier for the 465th. He survived. He passed away in 2005.

My dad kept a tiny notebook where he logged every training mission, every bomb he dropped, and every mission he flew. It's most fascinating. Below are a couple of photos of the pages of the notebook.

I'll call you soon to arrange payment and give you my address...

Lisa Warren
Orlando, FL
407-443-0187

Editor's note: Lisa's images appear on page 4.



Brad,

If the film is still available for purchase would you please send out the information. Thank you.

Kim McLaughlin

daughter of co-pilot
Gayle McLaughlin

Editor's note: Hi Kim! See Brad's phone number above.



George and Gloria have been family friends since the mid-1960s. Great people. My dad (Frank Freeman), who is his age, and I last saw them in Seattle about three years ago. Sorry to hear of his passing, but he outlived our expectations by many years. Dad is doing fine, by the way.

Robert D. Freeman
North Bend, WA

Editor's note: Always happy to hear good news like this, Robert.



My heart goes out to Gloria and family. When you have had a good marriage you never get over the loss.

Hugs,
Vera Bagley,
widow of ball gunner
Jim Bagley

Correction

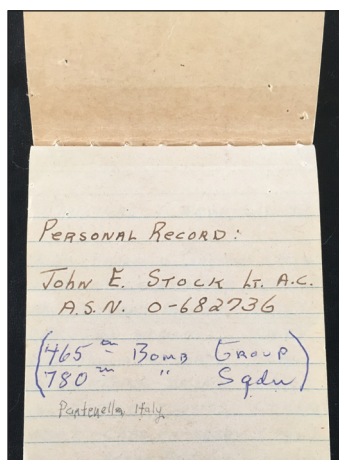
My apologies to Albert Riffle for getting his name wrong in the December issue.

At right is John Stock's mission record. The first mission recorded - to Podgorica, Italy (not Yugoslavia) - is the first mission for the squadron listed in the squadron history book. The missions listed here occurred between 5 May and 24 June 1944. Can anyone explain what OKE means? And do the missions with two numbers - 3/4, for example - count as double missions? Note that in Mission 3/4 their ship came back with 56 holes. A bomb got stuck on the sixth mission and had to be released with a screwdriver. On the seventh mission Stock

#	TARGET	TIME	BOMB LOAD	GROUP POS.	F ICH	F L A K	P A T E	RE SULTS	COMMENTS
1	PODGORICA YUGO	03:45	10 EA 500 GP	#5 IN "E"	NO	NO	5/5 EX COL 144	OKE MISSION FIRST!!!	
2	PARMA ITALY	07 00	8 EA 500 G.P.S.	#4 IN "A"	NO	YES	5/13	OK	OKE MISSION
3	POESTI	07 25	8 EA 500 GP	#4 IN "C"	NO	YES	5/18	P O O R	56 HOLES SHOT IN SHIP
4	POESTI ROMANIA								
5	VALMONTI ITALY	04 20	10 EA 500 GP	#1 "B"	NO	YES	5/22	F A I R	2 HOLES IN SHIP LOTS A CLOUDS
6/7	NEUSTAT AUSTRIA	06 30	40 EA 100 GP	#1 "B"	NO	YES	5/24	POOR	HANGED BOMBS SCREW DRIVER
8	LYONS FRANCE	08 45	50 GP S	#4 E	NO	NO	5/26	F A I R	OKE MISSION

9/10	WEINER NEUSTAT AUSTRIA	07 00	8 EA 500 GP	#2 IN "A"	YES	YES	5/30	FAIR	SAW SHIP DOWN IN FLAMES
11/12	CLUJ ROMANIA	07 30	8 EA 500 GP	#1 IN "C"	NO	NO	6/2	EXC.	OKE MISSION
13	FERRARA ITALY	06 40	40 EA 100 GP	#1 "F"	YES	YES	6/5	GOOD	OKE MISSION
14	BECHORN ITALY	06 30	16 EA 250 GP	#1 "E"	NO	YES	6/7	GOOD	OKE MISSION
15/16	PETFOURD HUNGARY	05 30	8 EA 500 GP	#1 "F"	NO	YES	6/14	GOOD	OKE MISSION
17/18	VIENNA AUSTRIA	07 30	16 EA 250 GP	#6 "B"	YES	YES	6/16	POOR	MOORE BUCK C.P.
19	BOLOGNA ITALY	05 30	16 EA 250 GP	#2 "A"	YES	YES	6/22	POOR	OKE MISSION
20	BALARUC FRANCE	08 30	8 EA 500 GP	#3 "F"	NO	NO	6/25	POOR	MOORE BUCK C.P.

witnessed another ship go down for the first time, and Mission 8 lasted almost nine hours. Thank you for sharing this priceless document, Lisa Warren.

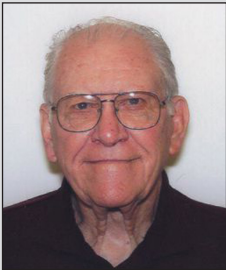


... from front page

we needed from a wall fence around his olive grove. Thanks to the permanent party men who had made a lime pit we were able to make mortar and build walls, expanding the size of our living space by raising one of the side flaps. While we were doing this I was standing on the top of the new wall, pulling the tent over, when

the bomb dump blew up. The concussion almost knocked me off of the wall. We were then successful in getting a cement floor installed and a stove made out of half of a 55-gallon drum. It worked great on gasoline, kept us warm and we could cook on it and roast almonds. Then came the combination desk, and storage bins made from bomb cases and 50-caliber empty ammo cases. We were home in 780th Town.

TAPS



Harry Dale Fike, 95, passed away December 19, 2017, in Davenport, Iowa. He was born in Lincoln, Nebraska; and was married to Lola Marie Doctor in 1944, in Liberal, Kansas. She preceded him in death in 2013. During World War II, Harry served as a B-24 pilot in the 783rd Bombardment Squadron, 465th Bombardment Group. After the war, he and Lola lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, while Harry earned his degree in business administration at the University of Nebraska. Harry's career was in civilian personnel administration for the Department of the Army at various installations throughout the United States, last serving as a program analyst in the Headquarters, Army Armament Material Readiness Command on Arsenal Island. Harry was active in the 783rd Bomb Squadron Association where he served as president for six years. Harry is survived by his daughter, Cheri (Roger Amhof); son, Randy Fike; six grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.



George "Cookie" Kuchenbecker passed away February 28, 2018, in Seattle, Washington. He was 92. He was born February 3, 1926, in Duluth, Minnesota. His father died from cancer when Cookie was two years, leaving his mother to raise him and his older sister, Ardell, as a single mother. He graduated from high school early so he could enlist following his 18th birthday. He served as a B-24 tailgunner with the 780th Bombardment Squadron of the 465th Bombardment Group. After the war Cookie went back to Minneapolis to visit his favorite high school teacher where he saw Gloria Johnson, his future wife, in class that day. He was recalled to service during the Korean War and was stationed at Fairchild AFB near Spokane. He held various professional positions but spent most of his career with Westinghouse, where he worked his way up through management to district manager in Seattle. Cookie had several passions, including woodworking, sailing and writing, but his biggest was supporting the Collings Foundation and the *Flightline* newsletter. He spent many years as the Washington State coordinator for Collings' annual visits of their B-24 *Witchcraft*. He was the west coast editor for *Wooden Boat Magazine*, and he raced from San Francisco to Hawaii on a wooden boat named *Magic Carpet*. He is survived by his wife, Gloria; sons, David (Patti) and Mark; two grandsons; two granddaughters; and three great-grandchildren.

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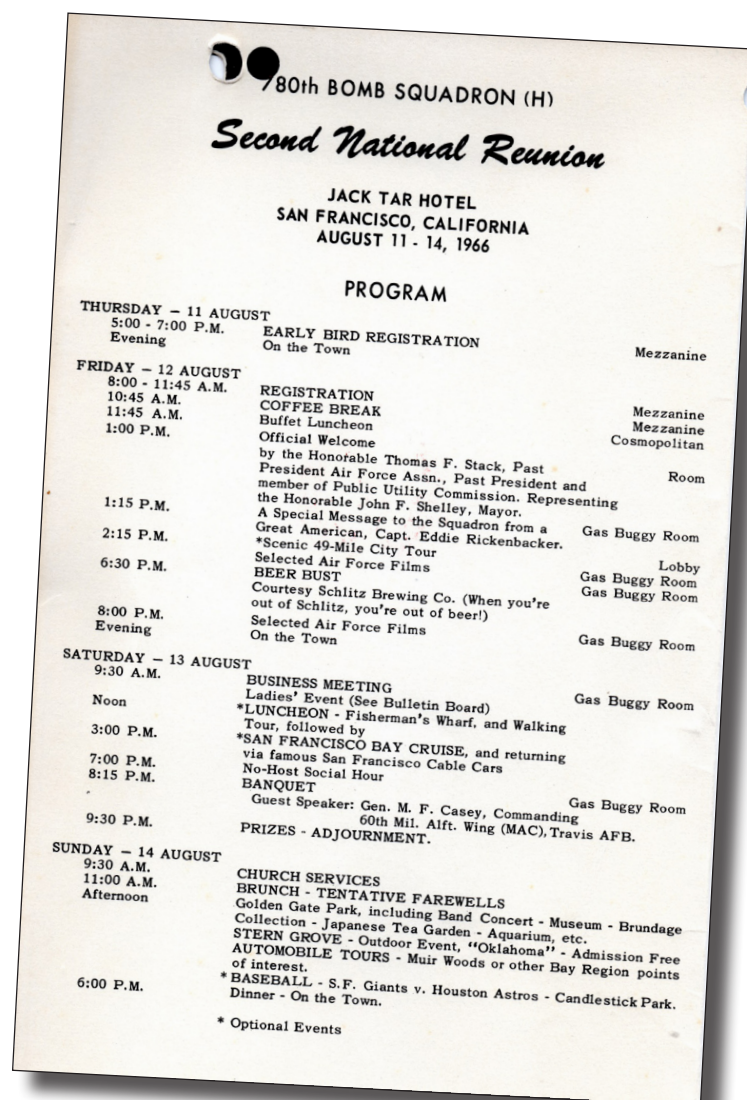
Mark calendar for Dayton reunion in September

It's time to start thinking about the 2018 Dayton reunion, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Dayton, September 13-16, 2018.

Single, double or handicap-accessible rooms are \$114 per night, plus taxes, and includes a full, hot breakfast buffet. Group rates are good from September 8-20, 2018. To make reservations, call (800) 689-5586 and mention the Bomb Groups Reunion. Reservation deadline is August 16, 2018.

The hotel is very walkable, but if you have mobility issues request a room close to the elevators.

If you have questions, call Dave Blake at (913) 523-4044, or email reunion@461st.org. A downloadable registration form is available at <http://www.465th.org/Reunion/default.html>. Use the form for the 781st Bombardment Squadron.



Beer Bust post-war: program from second 780th reunion, in 1966.