



# Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

September 2013

## *Pilot Pulls Two Feats to Regain Control of Aircraft* **Crew Averts Disaster Over Munich**

by Clifford Taylor

"Everyone up, you're flying today, get a move on!"

That was a corporal from Operations waking us up at 4 a.m. We got dressed with as many layers as we could, knowing that the temperature would be 30 to 40 degrees below zero. Then we headed to the mess hall.

We got coffee, what they called *Spam* - it was gray, ground-up something, not *Spam* as we knew it - and fresh eggs, not powdered. We had been told whenever you got fresh eggs it meant you were going on a bad mission.

After breakfast we went back to the tent and took everything out of our pockets. I kept a pencil and a small Bible. I put on my shoulder holster and put a full clip in my .45 and left to go up for the briefing.

The mission was for the marshalling yard at Munich. We left the briefing and went down to the flightline to preflight the plane. I did the tail turret.

We were flying Red M in Able Box, Position 4. The 465<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group formed over the Adriatic and headed north-northwest to Munich. This was my fourth mission and Munich always was a bad target.

As we turned on the IP (Initial Point) the bombardier took over flying the plane with the Norden bombsight. The .88 shells started exploding around us.

Blue L out of Baker Box rolled over and went down in flames. Just then we got a direct hit in our #4 engine that rolled us over into a spin of which B-24s seldom recovered from. Our pilot



Likely 465<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group B-24 shot down by flak over Munich, Germany, November 1944. (credit: D. Sheley, All rights reserved.)

got us out of the spin into a straight down dive. Then he got us out of the dive without peeling the wings off. After losing 10,000 feet we were going to have to climb to get over the Alps on three engines. We threw everything out that was possible: guns, ammo, flack vests, anything to get as much weight as possible off the plane. The navigator was able to get us through a valley between two mountain peaks and back into Italy and the 465<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group base.

When we got up to interrogation we were told that we were reported down over the target. That double shot of whiskey the medics gave us tasted extra good.

# Your News & Letters

Dear Kathy,

*I wanted to write to inform you of my grandfather's passing on February 15, 2013. I know my grandfather enjoyed receiving his Flightline in the mail. Thank you for keeping these men connected.*

*Sincerely,  
Faythe Chevalier*

Editor's note: Jack's obit was in the June issue of *Flightline* but I forgot to include Faythe's note in the *Letters* section.



Kathy,

*We have met at a couple of 780<sup>th</sup> functions - once years ago in Peoria. I think you are doing a splendid job on the newsletter, and I am enclosing a donation for one of your issues.*

*I am 91 years old and have had a wonderful and eventful life. I've run a big company, raised four successful children and eleven grandchildren, taught at a university, been a professional speaker, visited 40 or 50 countries, and even dined at the White House. Hence, I can't believe my astonishing luck at having survived 31 missions with the 780<sup>th</sup>.*

*Some years ago, I published a book on my AAF experiences. I believe it is still available on Amazon.*

*Best regards,  
Jim Alter*

*P.S. I helped set up that 1963 Chicago reunion.*

Editor's note: I indeed remember Jim as we're both Chicagoans (Technically, I was a suburbanite.). His book, *From Campus to Combat: A College Boy Becomes a WWII Army Flier*, is available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle editions. I'm reading it now. The reunion Jim refers to was mentioned in the June issue and appears elsewhere in this issue.



Dear Kathy,

*We have moved my mom, Patricia Ruttenbur, into a memory care facility. She enjoys getting the Flightline. Can you send it to her new address:*

*Pat Ruttenbur  
200 Terrace Ln.,  
Priceville, AL 35603*

*Thank you so much,  
Diane Moore*



Kathy,

*This is from Joe Sullivan. My beautiful wife, Kay, died last year on April 29, 2012. Left alone in the house, completely disabled, my doctor and family convinced me to move to a senior facility - the Roseville Commons in Ro-*

*seville, California. My new mail address is:*

*Joseph H. Sullivan  
105 Columbia Ave.  
Roseville, CA 95678*

*My telephone number is 916-865-4918. My email is joesully2@prodigy.net. Sorry for the changes, but keep up the good work. Always glad to see the Flightline.*

*Respectfully,  
Joe*

Editor's note: Changes are no problem! Glad to hear you are doing well, Joe.



Dear Kathy,

*Enclosed is a card showing our change of address for future issues of Flightline. My wife and I have enjoyed every issue that we have received. You have done a wonderful job and I am sure that every member of the 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron and their families appreciate your work also. May I suggest that in a future edition you write an article telling about writing experience as Flightline does not appear to be the work of an amateur. I am enclosing a check to help with expenses.*

*Sincerely,  
Richard W. "Dick" Finck*

Editor's note: Thanks for the compliments, Dick. Yes, I have  
780th BS/465th BG

a writing background. Only because you asked I have included a few words about me later in this issue. It is my absolute pleasure to edit *Flightline*. Finck's new address is:

Richard Finck  
55 Mulberry Ln.  
Easthampton, MA 01027



On the passing of Jack Ball (obit appears on page 4):

*That is very sad. Jack and I spoke just two months ago in great length. He was a kind and funny man. He will be missed.*

With Respect,  
Joshua Lee Hummel



Hi Kathy,

*Thanks for your E-Mail. At 89 I am doing well as an Old Digger. I am the last of my crew after George Britton died a few months ago. I would like info on Bob Bleier. My mail to him was returned, also his phone was disconnected.*

*Keep up the good work with the Flightline.*

Warmest regards to you and John,  
Joe Spontak

Editor's note: Thanks for your email, Joe. Bob Bleier's address is: 112 Garden Hill Dr., Los Gatos, CA 95032. I haven't received any news on George Britton's passing. If anyone

has details, please send them to *Flightline*.



Hi Kathy,

*So good to hear from you! Thank you for publishing the Flightline. I always look forward to it. I will be shutting down this email address soon. Please use jprecup@cox.net instead. Can you please email the Flightline to me and my brother? We are all doing fine and looking forward to some cooler weather! Have a safe Labor Day holiday!*

Jo Ann

Daughter of Howard Precup



This summer I received calls from Ashby and Betty Nelson, Jim Long, and Tanya Beitz, daughter of Ardnell and Philomena Steele. All are doing great. I also attended the funeral services for Jack Ball where I had a nice visit with Eleanor and her welcoming family. While I wish it wasn't under such circumstances, it was nice to visit and see Jack's memorabilia one more time.

## Meringue, Well Done!

by George Kuchenbecker

I got caught goofing off at Fairchild AFB and was placed on night KP for a few nights. I got to know the mess sergeant and we had good times BS'ing about many things. One night I was mixing the meringue for some of those huge sheet lemon pies. I had it going in one of the big GI mixing bowls. My buddy, Bill Maddox, was also on the shift with me. We all chatted and talked and joked until the meringue, all those egg whites and stuff, was about done. The big mixing bowl was pretty full by this time. The mess sergeant stopped by, dipped his finger into my bowl and flipped a bit of meringue into my face. Nothing was said, but I returned the favor. This escalated with the three of us merrily flipping the white stuff and laughing 'til we hurt. Plus, the meringue was about gone. We cleaned up the mess and started to make the meringue for tomorrow's pies. When all was done the mess sergeant told us to pick out a steak for the grill and we sat down to a great meal. We also had all the milk we could drink. The mess sergeant said he had enjoyed the night's festivities and told us that whenever we came back to base very late to check the mess hall to see who was on duty. If it was him, he said we could come on help ourselves to another steak dinner. And with all the milk we wanted.



# Jensen Injured Navigator in McParland Story

Lloyd Jensen has come forward to say he was the injured navigator in the John McParland interview published in the June issue of *Flightline*.

Jensen is 88 and lives in Mesa, Arizona. He says after the Friday, October 13, 1944 mission to the south oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany - mission #13 for the crew - when the plane was severely hit and crash landed at an emergency field, he spent the rest of his career in military hospitals until December 1945, when he was discharged on disability retirement. After that he earned two electrical engineering degrees from Iowa State University. He was the youngest of the crew by two years and, as far as he knows, after the recent passing of McParland, is the last one left.

Jensen says his crew came from fascinating backgrounds, such as farming, musician, pilot, and the U.S. Postal Service.

"The joy of my career was navigating us on a new B-24 from Topeka, Kansas, to southern



*The Medley Crew, front row, left to right: Sgt. Harold Denzin, T/ Sgt. Blaine McCray (nose gunner), Cpl. Lester Lutt (belly gunner), Lt. John McParland (bombardier), Sgt. Lloyd Norlin (tail gunner). Back row, left to right: Lt. Emil Medley (pilot), Lt. Forest Sommers (co-pilot), Lt. Lloyd Jensen (navigator), and waist gunners Sgt. Howard McElroy and Sgt. Alfred Weinstein.*

Italy via New Hampshire, Newfoundland, the Azores, North Africa and Italy."

On the next page is Jensen's official mission record.

## TAPS



Jack E. Ball, 92, of Kansas City, Missouri, passed away July 31, 2013. He was born Oct. 2, 1920 in Topeka, Kansas. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II in the 780<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Air Corps. He was a staff sergeant, working as a crew chief on B-24 bombers. Upon returning to Kansas City he attended the Kansas City Art Institute and worked in both lumber and chemical sales, traveling throughout his career. Jack married the love of his life, Eleanor Baer, in 1955, building a house and life in Kansas City, Missouri, next to his parents. Always quick to make friends, their house was open to all - his children's classmates, old squadron buddies or new acquaintances. In retirement he and Eleanor traveled the world, wintered in Arizona and Florida, attended their grandchildren's events, and were present at nearly every 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron reunion. Jack's life was his family, his church and his friends. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor; four children and their spouses, Sandra and Rick, William and Beth, Duane and Cecelia, and David and Angela; and six grandchildren, Jessica, Matthew, Martha, Sophie, Anthony and AnneMarie.

NAME JENSEN, LLOYD E.ASN 0-2056604RANK 2nd Lt POSITION NAVIGATORORGANIZATION 780th Bomb Sq

## RESIDENCE

As of

ITALY

TOTAL

March 1

Missions

Missions

1944

Hours

Hours

DATE	TARGET	MISSION	HOURS	TOTAL MISSIONS	TOTAL HOURS	CLAN'S
Sept 6	Nuremberg, Hung	1	7:15			
10	Vienna, Austria	2	6:55			
12	Munich, Germany	2	7:55			
13	Oswiecim Poland	2	7:55			
17	Budapest, Hungary	1	6:20			
18	Isot, Hungary	1	7:45			
22	Munich, Germany	2	7:30			
24	Scrananga, Czech	1	6:10			
Oct 4	Munich, Germany	2	7:25			
7	Essen, Germany	2	7:20			
11	Vienna, Austria	2	7:15			
13	Blechnauer, Ger	2	8:10			
*12	Bologna, Italy	0	4:05			

Certified Correct:

William K. Jernstedt

Major, Air Corps

Operations Officer

## AWARDS

AWARD	AUTHORITY	DATE

465th Gp Opns  
Form # 91

**Memorabilia from the First 780th BS Reunion, Chicago (1963)**  
*courtesy the late Jack Ball*

PROGRAM FOR THE 780TH SQUADRON (H) NATIONAL REUNION  
to be held at the EDGEWATER BEACH HOTEL  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
9 - 11 AUGUST 1963

FRIDAY - 9 AUGUST:

1700 - EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION  
1930 - INFORMAL RECEPTION  
1930 - AL FRESCO BUFFET (NO HOST)

Lincoln Room  
Lincoln Room  
Poolside

SATURDAY - 10 AUGUST:

0930 - REGISTRATION  
1115 - BUSINESS MEETING (Squadron members only)  
1230 - LUNCHEON - FILMS (Squadron members only)  
1230 - LUNCHEON & FASHION SHOW (For the ladies)  
If weather prevents, this event will be  
held in the Michigan Room on Lower Level.  
1430 - BEER BUST - Courtesy SCHLITZ BREWING COMPANY  
(The Beer that made the 780th famous)

Lincoln Room  
East Lounge  
South Terrace Room  
East Terrace

(You know - "There we were on 6 June 44, flying  
on the deck over Floesti right after I got  
that Me-109 that made a pass at us - remember?" )

Ladies will rejoin the members

South Terrace Room

1830 - RECEPTION AND COCKTAILS  
1930 - BANQUET - OFFICIAL WELCOME

Ballroom  
Ballroom

Guest Speaker - General R.W. Fellows  
Director of Plans & Programs  
Air Force Logistics Command  
Wright-Patterson Air Force B  
Ohio

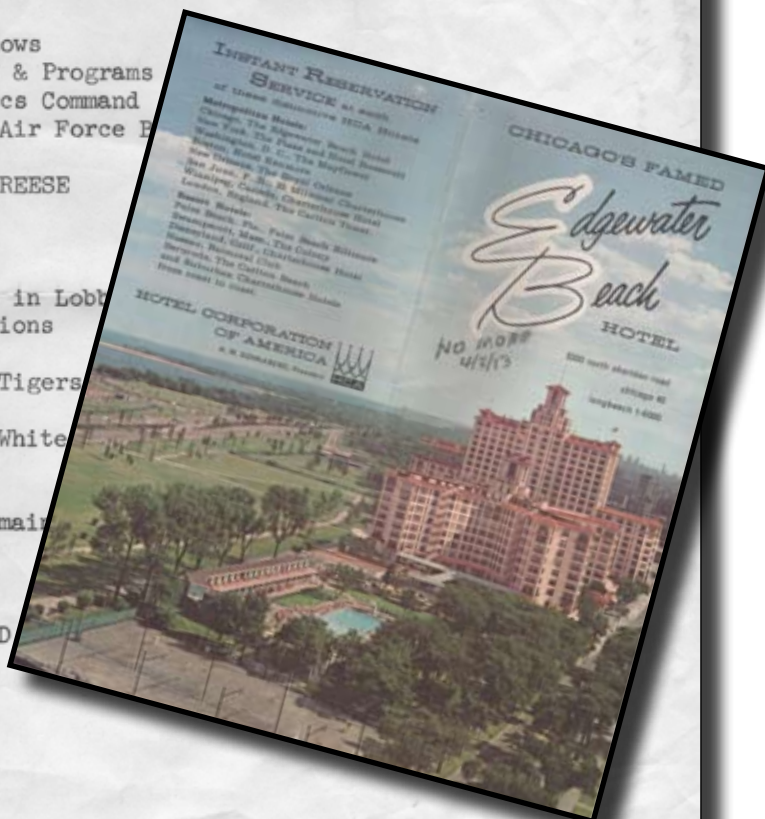
2130 - ENTERTAINMENT AND DANCING - LOU BREESE

SUNDAY - 11 AUGUST

0930 - CHURCH SERVICES - See Hotel Chart in Lobby  
Names and Locations  
1230 - BRUNCH - TENTATIVE FAREWELLS  
1400 - ON THE TOWN - Baseball - Detroit Tigers  
vs.  
Chicago White

- or You Name It.  
1800 - DINNER (NO HOST)  
For those members and families remain

WATCH THE BULLETIN BOARD





## The Second 780th BSA Reunion San Francisco - 1966



The only person identified is Charlie Davis, center, above. Who are the other two men?

In the foreword of 780<sup>th</sup> Memoirs, Davis writes:

*Many suggestions were made to perpetuate this spirit (of comradeship) in the formation of a permanent 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron Association. Excellent as this idea was, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to put into effect, unless one of our number had the time and means to handle the great amount of detail work involved.*

You all came forward to form the 780<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron Association that lasted for 50 years. Thanks for continuing your interest through the *Flightline*.



## THANK YOU!

The *Flightline*  
is grateful for donations from

**Jim Alter**  
**Richard W. "Dick" Finck**  
and  
**Joshua Hummel**

to keep *Flightline* flyin'

If you would like to contribute  
please send your donation to:

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

## About the Editor

Dick Finck asked me to write a few words about my writing background, so here goes:

I have a bachelor's degree in Radio-Television from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and a master's degree in Public Affairs Reporting from the University of Illinois Springfield. What all that means is I was trained to be a radio and television reporter, with extra training covering state government and politics. That's what I more or less did for more than 15 years. Due to budget cuts in 2007 I was laid off from my local NPR station as the afternoon news anchor and program host. Since then I have been raising three children, volunteering, and editing *Flightline* and another newsletter for an organization for WWII orphans. My grandfather was KIA on the 11 December 1944 mission to Vienna when my father was 2.5 years old. I hope to get back into some form of professional writing some day soon. Enough about me, let's hear more from you guys! Just drop me a letter or email about your service and what you've done since then. My address is on the back cover and my email is [johnkath5@comcast.net](mailto:johnkath5@comcast.net).

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

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## *Flightline*

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### ***Do You Recognize These Buildings?***



Beth Berger Martin, daughter of the late William E. Berger who was in 780<sup>th</sup> Operations, recently visited Pantanella and took more than 1,000 images of the remaining buildings, mainly those on the hill. Can you identify the buildings pictured at left? If so, please contact Beth at (773) 456-2846 or [bethbmartin@gmail.com](mailto:bethbmartin@gmail.com). More of her fascinating images will appear in the December issue of *Flightline*.

#### **Movie Treatment in the Works**

Joshua Hummel is working on a movie/television treatment about the 780<sup>th</sup> and would like your participation. He would appreciate written accounts and documents pertaining to bombing missions and other significant 780<sup>th</sup> events during the war.

Hummel also reminds veterans to share their stories with the Library of Congress Veterans History Project at <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>. To share your story with Hummel, contact him at:

9324 Gothic Ave.  
North Hills, CA 91343  
T: 323.652.2858  
[summersun83@gmail.com](mailto:summersun83@gmail.com)