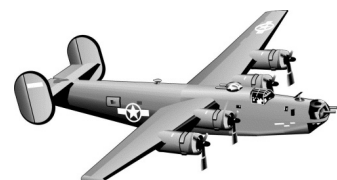




Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

June and September 2021

Past squadron reunions in pictures

Fun & Memories: SDV (Social Distance Version)



It's that time again for squadron reunions. Remember when we could stand this close to one another? We all miss our annual get-togethers, and not just because for 18 months now we've been forced to limit contact with one another due to the continuing Covid pandemic. Let's try to remember when we didn't have to stay apart. Alice Lindeman and Eleanor Ball sent the Flightline several more photos from 780th reunions than what were published in the September 2020 issue. Some of the "new" ones are in this issue, and Flightline will publish the rest in the December issue, because, why wait for next September? Above is the 1984 St. Louis, MO reunion. Sadly, many are unknown to Flightline. Do you recognize anyone? **Front row, from left:** Wes Schultz; three unknowns; Wanda Dannelly; Orlo Wilcox; unknown. **Second row:** five unknowns; Howard Precup; two unknowns. **Third row:** unknown; Bill Edwards; Joe Shinstock; unknown; Jack Ball; unknown. **Fourth row:** unknown; George Kuchenbecker; John Fleischer; three unknowns. **Fifth row:** Joe Theena; seen between Kuchenbecker and Shinstock is Jim Bagley; and between Shinstock and Fleischer is Ashby Nelson. Finally, in the **far back**, to the left of Kuchenbecker, is Louis "Dyke" Lindeman. If you can identify any faces or correct any names on these pages please contact Kathy at johnkath5@comcast.net, 217-414-1400 or the return address on the back page and Flightline will republish the names. Special thanks to Alice and her friend, Buzzy Koerperich, and Eleanor, for sending the photos for all of us to enjoy.

Lupton twins graduate, earn WWII scholarship

Many of you will recall our daughters at squadron reunions: crawling around at the banquets, toddling along on tours, and sometimes co-operating for the group photo. Now, two of them are high school graduates.

Claudia is majoring in mathematics at St. Louis University. Lydia is an environmental studies major at the University of Cincinnati.

Both earned several awards and achievements in high school, including departmental awards, state scholars and the National Honor Society. But there's one award that was completely unexpected and made me cry. Lydia was selected as the recipient of the annual Springfield High School World War II Memorial Award, given in honor of the 76 SHS graduates "who gave their lives in that war to maintain the freedom that we have today." The award was \$1,000.

We were stunned when Lydia received the letter and check (picture at right). Lydia did not apply for it and our family is not from Springfield



John, Claudia, Audrey, Lydia and Kathy Le Comte Lupton. Below right: Lydia proudly holding her scholarship award letter and check.

originally, so our World War II connections are not widely known. Our best guess is someone somehow knew that Lydia's grandfather (John's father) was a B-24 tailgunner in the 13th Air Force in the Pacific, and that her great-grandfather (my grandfather) was a B-24 tailgunner in the 8th Air Force in England and was transferred to the 15th Air Force in Italy where he was assigned to the 780th squadron and was KIA on his first



Double Issue *Flightline*

If you are wondering if you missed an issue of Flightline this summer you are correct. The June issue was missed due to overwhelming family matters this spring and summer (this page and TAPS). I have combined the June and September issues. Hopefully we will stay on track moving forward. Thanks for your understanding and encouragement.

mission with the Vern Larson crew. All I know for sure is that I do not believe there was any more deserving student of this award - other than Lydia's twin sister Claudia.

All of you are family to me so I wanted to share this great news and how World War II continues to have an impact on our family.



Branson Missouri 1995

Front row, from left: Don Ruttenbur; Jim Bagley; unknown; Paul Baker; Orlo Wilcox; Jack Ball; Nile Horne; Arnel Steele. **Second row:** John McWhorter; Bernie Jones; John Fleischer; Bob Bleier; Gerald Stenger; unknown; Bill Larson; Bill Zewadsky; unknown; "Sky" Campbell; Howard Precup; two unknowns. **Back row:** Ashby Nelson; Bill Edwards; Harold Worman; George Kuchenbecker; Jim Halter; Everett Kron; John Fitzgerald; unknown; Louis "Dyke" Lindeman; unknown; Lee Englehorn; unknown; Jack Van Slyke; unknown; Wes Schultz; Joe Shinstock; unknown; Fred Boling. **Please help Flightline preserve the history of the 780th bombardment squadron. If you can identify any faces or correct any names on these pages please contact Kathy at johnkath5@comcast.net, 217-414-1400 or the return address on the back page.**



780th Reunion, Branson, MO 1995



colorado springs 1993

Front row, from left: John Fitzgerald; unknown; John Fleischer; Jim Bagley; Frosty Sommers; unknown; Joe Shinstock; Joe Theena; Wes Schultz. **Back row:** George Kuchenbecker; Bill Edwards; Bob Bleier; unknown; Ashby Nelson; John McParland; unknown; Bill Larson; Howard Precup; Jack Ball; three unknowns.



colorado springs 1993

colorado springs 1993

Front row, from left: Paul Baker; three unknowns; Everett Kron; unknown; Don Ruttenbur; T.P. Walton; Louis "Dyke" Lindeman; unknown. **Back row:** two unknowns; Ardnel Steele; three unknowns; Lee Englehorn; unknown; John McWhorter; unknown; Orlo Wilcox. Please help Flightline preserve the history of the 780th bombardment squadron. **If you can identify any faces or correct any names on these pages please contact Kathy at johnkath5@comcast.net, 217-414-1400 or the return address on the back page.**

colorado springs 1993

Five million visits annually

Coins to Raise Funds for WWII Memorial

Earlier this year legislation was introduced in Congress that would direct the U.S. Treasury Department to mint coins to commemorate the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. Proceeds from the coins would go towards repairs and maintenance of the 17-year-old memorial, as well as educational and commemorative programming.

The National World War II Memorial Commemorative Coin Act was put forward by Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), who introduced the original legislation that led to the construction of the memorial in 2004, and Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), her across-the-aisle colleague. The bill has 249 sponsors as of September 10 but needs 290 sponsors before it can be considered for a vote.

The National Park Service oversees maintenance at the Memorial and currently has a \$12 billion maintenance backlog of priority work nationwide. Nearly \$1 billion of this backlog is for the National Mall alone. The Park Service has asked Friends of the National World War II Memorial to partner with them on a number of critical maintenance projects at the memorial, including a much needed new lighting system.

Friends, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is dedicated to the edu-

cation, preservation and commemoration of the National World War II Memorial, the 16 million men and women who served in the Armed Services during the war and the 400,000 who paid the ultimate price, and the millions who supported the war effort on the homefront. Friends provides educational programming, facilitates key commemorative



programs at the Memorial and helps to maintain it.

Absent the new legislation, the Park Service will have to foot the cost of making the needed repairs which would likely take a number of years to complete and cost more in the long run.

The bill calls for the Treasury Department to mint and issue up to 50,000 \$5 coins, 400,000 \$1 silver coins, and 750,000 half-dollar clad coins. The design of the coins shall

be emblematic of the memorial and the service and sacrifice of American soldiers and civilians during World War II.

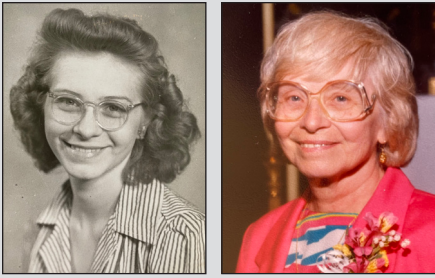
According to language in the House bill, "Today, the Memorial is a top destination for millions of annual visitors from all over the country and the world. For many young visitors, their visit to the Memorial is a first glimpse to a grateful Nation's remembrance of the sacrifices made by the World War II generation," while, "For World War II veterans, the Memorial is a special destination, a rendezvous point, and a gathering place for reunions and commemoration programs."

The Greatest Generation Memorial Act, a companion bill to the House bill, was introduced in the Senate in May by Senators Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). Friends of the National World War II Memorial call the companion bill "a major step towards ensuring legislative success and protecting the National World War II Memorial for generations to come."

The National World War II Memorial Commemorative Coin Act has been endorsed by a number of organizations, including the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

If the Act is passed the coins would be issued in 2023 for one year.

TAPS



Mary E. (Kuhl) Le Comte, 96, passed away March 29, 2021, in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Mary was born September 8, 1924, on a farm that later became a large suburban Chicago cemetery. In high school Mary worked as a counter girl for Prince Castle where she met fellow student and soda jerk George Le Comte. They were married in 1942 and had one son, George Junior, before George enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He was a replacement of a replacement tailgunner on

the Vern Larson crew with the 780th bomb squadron. He was killed in action in 1944 leaving Mary a widow at the age of 20 with a 2-year-old. She never remarried. Mary bought a home at age 22 that she owned for 71 years. She later invested in other real estate, becoming a landlord when other women were homemakers. Mary also worked for the U.S. Treasury Dept. and General Services Administration in Chicago for 29 years, retiring in 1971. She is survived by daughter-in-law, Patricia; granddaughter, Kathleen Le Comte (John Lupton), and grandson Michael (Katherine); and great-grandchildren Lydia, Claudia and Audrey Lupton, and Megan, Ashley and Matthew Le Comte. She was preceded in death by her husband and son. Interment took place at Rock Island National Cemetery, Rock Island, Illinois.

Honor Flights Resume to WWII, Korean Memorials

After being shut down for 16 months due to the pandemic, Honor Flights to the nation's capital resumed in August.

The Honor Flight Network is a national network of more than 130 independent hubs that coordinate to take World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans and a guardian to Washington, D.C., all expenses paid, to see their national war memorials.

Participants must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide negative test results taken within 72 hours of departure. The Network is also following local and national health recommendations at all locations, and the masking guidance at all trip venues.

"Safety is always number one," said David Smith, chairman of Honor Flight's board of directors. "If we're going to honor somebody, we want it to be safe."

As the program restarts, the organization predicts demand will be high due to the long delay.

In 2020 only one flight, from St. Louis, made it to the capital in March before the shutdown. During 2019, 22,764 veterans made the trip, with 42,355 on the waitlist.

World War II vets are usually moved to the top of the list, Smith said. However, they tend to make up 20% or less of each Honor Flight. In 2019, fewer than 2,000 World War II vets made it the trip.

"All our hubs are chomping at the bit to get up and get flying," Smith explained, "but one of our biggest issues is ... letting more people know about our flight mission and to find veterans."

Since its inception in 2005, one year after the opening of the National World War II Memorial, the Honor Flight Network has taken more than 240,000 veterans to Washington, D.C.

There is an Honor Flight hub in every state. To find a hub and its flight schedule visit <https://www.honorflight.org/>.

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Staying healthy is nothing new. World War II health posters aimed at the homefront urged eating wholesome foods and fighting germs. Meanwhile, the message to those in the service focused on venereal diseases. Today, war-era art and messaging have made a comeback to inspire new awareness posters in the fight against Covid-19.