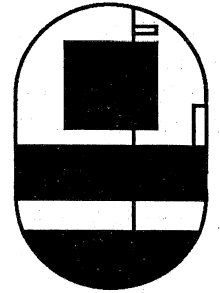




PANTANELLA NEWS



APRIL 1990

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NUMBER 20

REUNION HOTEL NOW OPEN

The new **Boston Vista Waltham** hotel opened in mid-January. We are looking forward to holding our reunion in this beautiful new hotel. Here are some of the particulars about the hotel. Located at 70 Third Avenue, Waltham, MA 02154, phone 617 290-5600, it is in the heart of America's technology region dubbed suburban Boston's "Silicon Valley." Just off Route 128 (exit 27A), the hotel overlooks the rolling hills of New England and the Cambridge Reservoir.

It is 23 miles from Logan Airport, 20 miles from Downtown Boston and 7 miles from Hanscom Air Force Base.

The hotel has all the latest in guest facilities like indoor pool, sauna, car rentals, etc.

If you are flying in have your travel agent check for ground transportation to the hotel. Most airlines have helicopter service to the roof of the hotel! Most discount the fare, so it is worth checking out. Be sure to make your reservations in advance to take advantage of low air fares. The Delta and USAir senior citizens

fare has increased slightly, but now you can travel any day of the week and can make your reservations far ahead.

For those of you driving you will see by the maps how easy it is to get to. Circle around on route 128 and take exit 27A. You should see the hotel from the highway before you turn off. It really stands out on the hill. And free parking when you arrive.

So come prepared for a great time in a beautiful hotel.

Single Men desiring to share a room should notify me. I will exchange the names of anyone desiring to do so.

REGISTRATION FORMS - we have changed them in respect to the tours. If you have already sent in your reservation and are planning a tour you will have to send in another form. Please refer to the tour information.

Some of you have indicated you do not know your departure date from the hotel. Please keep the hotel informed of any changes, but only inform us if you have any changes

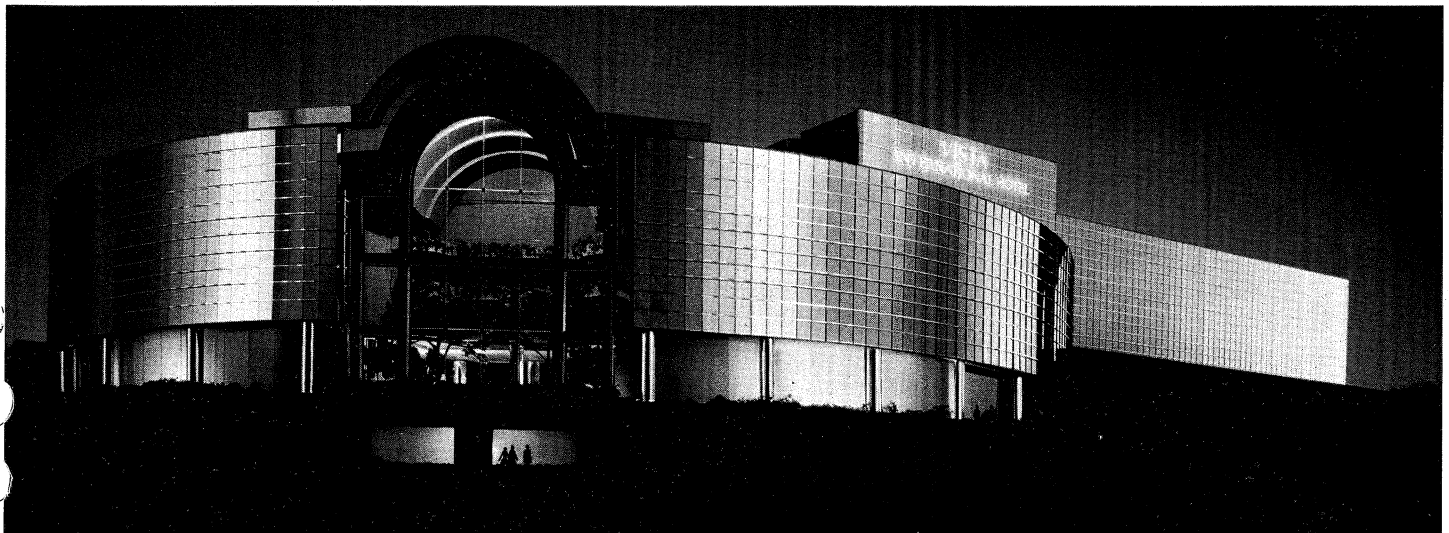
that we should know about for Thursday, Friday or Saturday. For example, we have to guarantee your Thursday night dinner before you register, so if you change your arrival date to Friday we would have to change our meal count.

Hotel reservations must be in by August 2, 1990 to guarantee a room.

COSTS - You know the room prices, \$65 plus tax, half the normal prices! The Thursday dinner is \$23 per person including tip, tax, and a one hour free cocktail party. Saturday banquet is \$25. Registration fee is \$20 per person.

We know many are on limited budgets, so we are bearing that in mind in our planning.

Early registrations indicate a record number attending. As we have seen in the past there is representation from all the sections - the Air Echelon and the Ground Echelon. The Reunion is for everyone that served with the 781st Bomb Squadron and the 465th Bomb Group Headquarters. A roster of those registered will be listed in the next newsletter.



REUNION PROGRAM - We will have a full program including some surprises that will unfold at the reunion. We will have some new program topics like a B-24 symposium and some WWII aircraft recognition slides. We'll see how good you are at recognizing a Me109 head on, or that flash of a FW 190. Lots more of "remember when" or "were you there."

One day, Friday, will be devoted to a visit to the B-24J "All American." Most of you have been keenly interested in the restoration of this famous plane. **In fact the 781st Bomb Squadron has donated more to the restoration of this plane than any other WWII squadron!** Now you will have a chance to climb aboard, take photos and reminisce

781st Bomb Squadron Association
2 Mount Vernon Lane
Atherton, CA 94027
(415) 325-8356

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Editor

James C. Althoff
2 Mount Vernon Lane
Atherton, CA 94027
(415) 325-8356

Historian

Harry S. Carl
550 Creek Road
Chadds Ford, PA 19317
(215) 388-2562

781st BOMB SQUADRON

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WW11 (1944-45). During it's 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

about working on it, or loading bombs or ammunition, or if you were with an air crew you will remember some of your missions. If all goes well you'll see it fly and a few lucky ones will be aboard.

Some have asked if all will get a chance to get aboard. Yes, everyone will have the opportunity, including wives and guests.

Present plans call for the memorial service to be held under the wing of the plane. Maybe some fly overs of other aircraft at the same time.

For the first time we will have a Trophy Room. WWII memorabilia will be on display (be sure to bring yours), photos you may not have seen, a video showing various WWII scenes, uniforms, etc.

And there will be a very large Hospitality Room. There has been a lot of requests for this - so old friends can meet, sit down, and recall some of the days gone by. There will be plenty of space for all to share with the large Trophy Room and Hospitality Room, especially since they are adjoining. Between the two rooms you will find all the "action."

So, my friends, think about it. In our Golden Years we are starting at Father Time. How many more chances will you have to to enjoy the friendship and camaraderie that was forged when we won the "Big One?" Why not join us for a memorable reunion.

For the first time the Folded Wings have entered two names of men who have been to one of our reunions - some will miss an old friend who they saw just two years ago.

VOLUNTEERS AT REUNION - Volunteers to help have responded very well with most indicating where they would like to help. We need a volunteer to be in charge of seating arrangements for the two evening meals. Someone in Dayton did a great job, but I have lost his name. Do you want to volunteer again, or do we have someone else?

TOURS - There has been a great interest in the tours. Over half have indicated taking one or more of the half day tours. And some would like to take a longer tour in the area.

Due to the numbers involved we

will have to reserve and pay for the tours in advance. With the enclosed registration forms you will be able to make your firm reservation.

If you filled out the previous form it was only to see the interest so that we could plan accordingly. Please fill out the new form again just pertaining to the tours and enclose a check and mail to the Association office. Tour reservations have to be in by July 26 to guarantee a seat. Your hotel reservations will remain in effect if it was sent in.

Those desiring tours for more than one-half day please let me know by checking the form on the space for this. I will forward it to the tour company and they will contact you direct. The tour company is Travel Your Way, 281 Needham Street, Newton Upper Falls, MA 02164. Phone 617 244-4420.

As I have mentioned there are many areas to tour in and around Boston. For those of you that will be driving and taking tours on your own to areas like Cape Cod, we will have brochures of the area at the reunion. Also the host committee will be members from the area and they will be able to help you with your questions.

ADDRESS CHANGES

O. J. Cowart, Jr., 1003 Londonberry Lane, Friendswood, TX 77546. Phone 713 482-1884.

Frank Masiwchuk, 1820 East Hayes, Hazel Park, MI 48030.

Henry Ayres, 9910 Alden Lane, St. Louis, MO 63119 (Permanent home address).

ABOUT ONE OF OUR MEN

In a recent issue of the Confederate Air Force Dispatch a photo appeared of **O. J. Cowart, Jr.** He has been active in helping the CAF in the restoration of WWII aircraft. At airshows he has been in charge of a refueling truck. In the photo he is shown "trying" to refuel a TG-3A. Know what that is? A WWII glider! It has been a standing joke to ask the TG-3A if it needed fuel. Incidentally the CAF puts on a great show, both at Houston and Brownsville. If you have any interest in the CAF, O. J. can answer your questions.

MAIL CALL

From **Jack Van Slyke**, "Last August the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority held their annual Celebration of Flight at the Buffalo International Airport. This year they honored the B-24 on it's 50th Anniversary. **Hank Willett** and myself (Hank on the

so very much more being in the graphic arts work and producing many, many fine publications. It was my pleasure to be on the Brennenman crew and I will see Larry on my way down to Texas the middle of February. We will see our daughter in Dallas and we also have a son in California."



right, Jack on the left) were asked to be part of the opening ceremonies and to have our name inscribed on a bronze plaque along other B-24 pilots from the area. This plaque is to be placed in the new Amherst Museum of Flight located in Amherst, a suburb of Buffalo.

"Dave Tallichet has one of his restaurants, the Flying Tigers, adjacent to the Buffalo Airport and had his B-24 there for the show. I am enclosing a picture of Hank and myself and one of the plaque with our names on.

"Also ran into another 781st member, **Ken Bowerman**, engineer on the Mullan crew. Ken lives in Victory, NY near Rochester, and was in Buffalo visiting his son. He saw my 781st shirt and came over. So we got a picture of him too! He has never been to a reunion so I tried to talk him into coming this year.

"**William Bruce** of the 782nd was there also and honored. He lives in Amherst."

Dick Krekel, (Brennenman tail gunner) writes, "After receiving the last issue of the Pantanella News I thought I should drop you a note of thanks. You are doing a splendid job on the News. And the History Book is a real gem. I can appreciate the book

Thanks Dick for your comments and donation, and I'm sure Harry Carl will appreciate your comments on the history book. And how about seeing some of the Brennenman crew at the next reunion?

John T. Fountain (Radar Navigator) sent in a donation to O. J. Cowart, Jr. and writes, "You people have done a super job with locating so many of us and providing us with a camaraderie that will never fade in my lifetime.

"Please convey my sentiments to all who had any part in the unbelievable venture of our squadron regrouping."

John Hartshorn (McDaniel Ball Gun) keeps us informed on a regular basis. From his January letter, "Just a note to say how much we enjoyed the last Pantanella News - Paul Durckel's remarks and "All American" information. By the way Roy Byrd is listed as McDaniel's bombardier in the mail call section - how about Charlie Zwerko, the pride of the Polish Air Corps.

"Was particularly interested in the photo "Cha Cha Cha" - I think the lady went with Ben Donahue to the Junior Prom at Glendale Hi about 1935 or so!!!

"Knowing the reunion is going to

be just great and once again please pass on our best regards to all. Got a good note and photo of Andrew (Birdie) Dobek, our engineer, a few weeks ago and he looks just like he did in 1945.

"Take good care of yourself - as always our best to you and Agnes and may this be a great 1990 for all."

I know how much John would love to join us at the reunion. However, his wife Penny has been ill and unable to travel. And thanks John for pointing out that Charles Zwerko is McDaniel's Bombardier - Roy Byrd was Hudson's Bombardier and later served as squadron bombardier.

William McBride (Stenerson Bombardier) writes, "It was quite a shock to receive the January issue of PANTANELLA NEWS and learn that our navigator, Samuel F. Monroe, Jr., had died in September. We had been trying to reach him by telephone in December to tell him that our co-pilot, Robert R. Gaston, Lubbock, TX, had died. Bob's brother in Colorado Springs was trying to notify him.

"I failed to write down Bob's date of death in order to notify you but I hope that his son, who attended the first reunion with him, would notify you. If not, his other son is Bill Gaston, 303 Quality Lane, Jacksonville, NC 28540, 919/347/3364. We want to stay in contact with these families."

From **Vincent Beeson** (Engineer Martz Crew), "Bessie and I will be at the reunion. It sounds like a "biggie." Ill health kept us from going to San Antonio last year, but we hope to be there in August.

"The Pantanella newsletter is getting better each time. I sure look forward to seeing this in my mail box.

"I make an annual visit to our 781st plaque at the Air Force Museum on March 14th. It has always been neat and clean, our tree is looking good. It made me feel good that other people have checked on it.

"I received a nice letter from Jack W. Smith of Ogden and also some photos. He set me straight on the nose gunner exchange. It was extra good to hear from him and I hope to see him in Boston.

"Of course, Ben Donahue sent notes to Bessie and I, and Christmas cards from several others from the 781st. Its great that we keep in touch.

"Our "All American" is to be at our Air Force show here at Vandalia July 19 to 22. This is a big event in our city at this time. I'll take lots of photos. See you in Boston."

The reason Vince and Bessie visit the plaque on March 14th each year is to pay respect to 11 of his comrades who went down with Vince near Nove Zamke, Germany on that day in 1945. Vince was the only survivor.

From **Lionel (Larry) Lasseigne**, "When you first contacted me I stated that I was only transferred into your squadron not long before VE Day, and that I never flew with you nor knew anyone there. Therefore, I was not interested in receiving your newsletter or history book. My group, the 485th, was shipped back to the States to train for the South Pacific and anyone near finishing their tour was transferred into another outfit. I went from the 485th Group, 828th Squadron (near Venosa) to the 465th, 781st Squadron, to the 459th, 756th Squadron (near Cerignola) before finally coming home in August 1945.

"But you continued to send me your Pantanella News. I have enjoyed it very much, in fact, so much that I want to order a copy of your History. Your outfit seems to be so united, so close knit, just opposite of ours. I could not even get my crew to take a typical crew picture in front of a B-24. I have only heard from one crew member since VE Day.

"Your January issue of the News was so interesting, many places stuck in my mind. You see we bombed Munich, Augsburg, Vienna, Zagreb, and many of the others mentioned.

"Also, the story of a midnight requisition brings back a memory of an incident of our crew. Supply gave us the tent, but a bare tent. Any improvements we had to do ourselves. But with what? There was a lot of building going on by both our squadrons and headquarters. Lumber was needed for walls and

the floor. We waited for a dark, moonless night and hiked over to headquarters, helping ourselves to their lumber, making several trips back and forth. We stored the lumber inside our tent or else someone else would steal it from us. That happened to be a Friday night, and the CO decided to pull a surprise inspection Saturday morning. We were all in our beds when the First Sergeant stepped in yelling "Attention." We leaped to our feet out of our sacks, stood at attention, barely looking over the piles of lumber in the middle of the floor. Of course, immediately we were suspected of stealing from our own squadron.

"The Executive Officer asked if we stole it from our supply. We answered honestly, "No Sir, from Headquarters." The Exec said, "That's fine, as long as it was not from us," and he left our tent.

"Then we all let out a sigh of relief and went back to bed.

"So, you see I do enjoy your newsletters and wish to continue to receive them, plus enclosed please find a check for one of the History Books. It too will bring back many memories."

Theron "Robbie" Robinson writes that he will be at the reunion and volunteered to help at registration.

He also noted that he was an Armorer Gunner, having gone to school for it and received an extra stripe for it. And he pointed out that he ended up being the only enlisted man on the Frazier crew due to changes in the crew coming over and transfers and one getting shot down.

Harold Seitz (Barnett Nose Gunner) informed us that anyone entitled to decorations or medals can get them free by sending a copy of their honorable discharge to: Recognition Programs Branch, USAF Military Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-6001. Harold noted that he received his in ten days.

William Coonan (Engineering) sent in some old clippings and menus that he thought might be of interest for use in future newsletters.

He also suggested Orlando as a future reunion site. Besides Disney World and MGM Movieland he was able to see "All American" at Kissimmee. Number three engine was being changed and he had a good chance to climb inside and walk through.

With **Richard C. Hall's** (Kennedy Nose Gunner) registration was a donation and a note of appreciation to the board of directors for a splendid job being done.

Many more notes and letters were received including a recent one from **Col McHenry Hamilton**, Group CO for a very short time. He and his wife will join us at the reunion in Boston.

ALL AMERICAN

From **Jack Hudson** - a letter, a newspaper clipping, and a dozen photos. He writes, "The "All American" was here on January 16th and I had the grand tour. Of course, your name and other 781st crew names are well represented on the aircraft. Makes one feel proud. I thought you would enjoy the local news article and some of the pictures I took. Hope all is well with you and family. I have placed my boat on the market. Plan to spend the summer in Camden, ME and will be in Boston for our get together."

Your editor can make a report on All American also. I had a business meeting in Tampa and it happened to be the exact time that All American was paying a visit to Tampa. I made arrangements to join it on the flight from Tampa to Ocala, FL.

I visited the plane on Sunday and found another 781st admirer of the plane, **Norman Hunter, Jr.** who was Dickey's Ball Gunner.

On Tuesday, January 30th I joined the plane before departure and found a member of the 783rd Bomb Squadron, **Milton Duckworth** waiting to join the flight.

After clearing the plane of visitors we got off and made a low pass to a very appreciative crowd. Enroute it was planned to pick up some fighter escort. We were joined by five aircraft, including two P-51's. Quite a sight to see those beautiful 51' tucked in under the wing. It re-

mind me when the P-51 Thisizit protected my crew in the Guardian Angel coming home alone from an early return to Vienna. Several more low passes were made including one at Ocala before landing. We had a very exciting flight.

All American has received great publicity so on arrival over 500 were waiting to see the plane. It was 7:30 that evening when we finally stopped the visitors and closed the plane for the night.

Some of you will recall Milton "Mickey" Duckworth who was with the 783rd Squadron. After getting shot up over Vienna with Col. Clark they went down in Russia. They returned home on a B-17 that was returning to Italy and bombed a target on the way.

Then Duckworth was on the flight with Lt. Col. Lokker when they went down over Blechhammer.

Duckworth stayed in the service for over 33 years. In Korea he flew a tour (30 missions) in B-29s. In his group was the 465th Bomb Group Navigator Frank Alois.

In Viet Nam Duckworth changed to fighters and flew 200 missions.

Duckworth had heard very little about All American. When he saw it at Tampa he was extremely pleased and was the first 783rd Squadron man to have his name on the plane. Now All four squadrons are represented!!

Pantanella Tour has been delay until next year. It will be discussed at the reunion by Ralph Hendrickson.



TOASTING FREEDOM—

Lt. Col. Francis S. Gabreski (second from right), Oil City, top American ace in European theater, drinks a toast with three of his flying buddies.

Air Transport Command Photo from Associated Press. all of whom were imprisoned together in Germany, upon their arrival in New York. Left to right: Lt. Col. Herbert Wageman, Ventura, Cal.; Lt. Col. Harvey Henderson, Tyler, Tex.; Lt. Col. Charles F. McKenna, of Pelham, N. Y.

The above newspaper article was sent in by Robert Freed (Ordnance). Charles F. McKenna III, our first Squadron Commander, is on the right. After transfer to the 464th Bomb Group as Deputy Group Commander he finished his tour, returned home, then returned to the 464th. The first mission of his second tour was Vienna where he went down and spent the rest of the war as a POW. He looks very happy in the photo - happy to be back home once again.

IT'S LAFF TIME FROM FLIM FLAM

Bill: What did you girl say on Valentine's Day, when you asked her to share your lot?

Sam: Oh, she just asked as if there was a house on it.

Then there was the fellow who stood on the corner with a piece of bread, waiting for a traffic jam.

Sgt: In what order do the Gospels come?
Chaplain: One after the other.

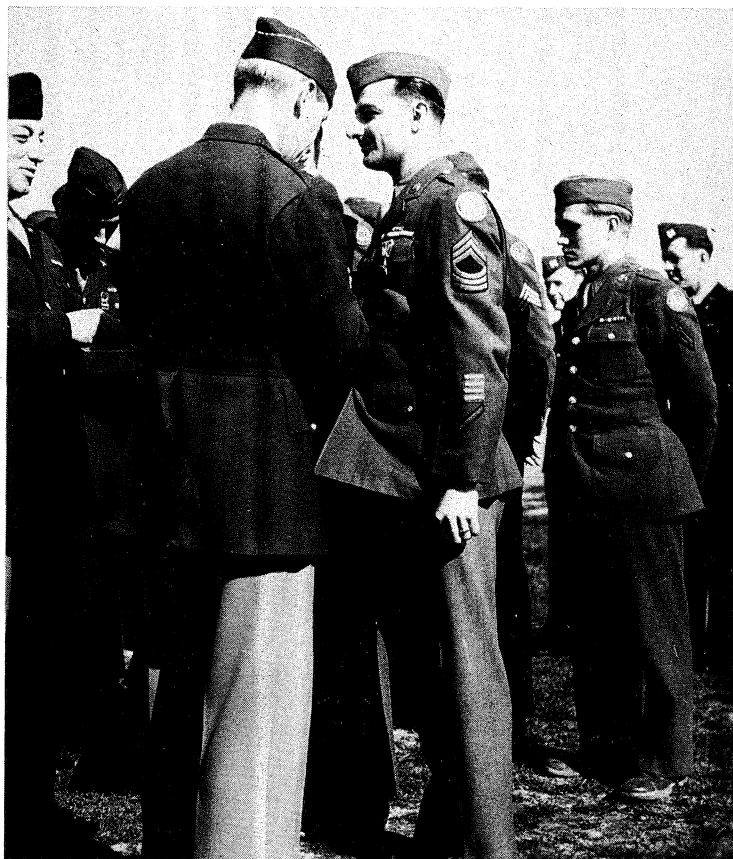
A good cow can be told by her rudder.

One difference between a King and a President is that a King has no vice.

Tell about the hardships of the Pilgrims, why they came over to America on hardships.

Three shots rang out. Two of the servants fell dead, the other went through his hat.

And that's the way it was at Panatanella 45 years ago Sometimes good jokes were hard to come by.



Joseph A. Tucci, Sergeant Major of the 465th Bomb Group Headquarters, is shown above receiving the Bronze Star. We were notified of his passing just before the last newsletter and did not have time to give more details.

My first contact with Joe was in June 1987 when he wrote he was very excited to read in the American Legion Magazine about our reunion scheduled in Dayton. He could not make the reunion due to a busy schedule he had on a trip to the U. S. from his home in France.

He indicated he would be visiting his two sons, who live near me, in June. It was then that he called me and we had a nice visit.

In 1988 he sent in his registration to be at San Antonio, but he had a vertigo problem and had to cancel at the last minute. He had written several times that he was then looking forward to being in Boston.

Since he was located Joe wrote many long letters and talked of all the men he remembered. Being Sergeant Major for the entire time the 465th was in existence gave him the opportunity to meet so many of us.

Some of his story has been in the newsletter regarding returning to France to marry Lolette, whom he met on the Riviera in 1945 while still at Pantanella.

He lived in France most of his life, raised his family there, two boys and two girls, and retired on the Riviera.

Although he lived in France he never had returned to Pantanella and longed to go back with some old friends. When he heard of the tour in 1988 he offered to help out if he could.

In his last letter he wrote, "Congratulations on the wonderful arrangements you have made for the next reunion in Boston in 1990. For an old guy like myself it

seems so far off. In any event I will plan to be there - The Good Lord Willing!!"

Joe Tucci was 75 when he passed away and will be missed by many men of the 465th Bomb Group.

FOLDED WINGS

GEORGE W. JOHNSON (Frazier Top Gunner) passed away in 1985. George W. Johnson's wife was located by Walt Longacre. Walt made a trip to Florida and was checking out some names in the Orlando phone book. He wrote to some of the Johnsons listed and got a reply from Mrs. George W. Johnson and she gave the information on her husband.

FREDERICK P. YOST, Dickey Nose Gunner, passed away recently. Fred attended the first two reunions. No further information at this time. We were notified by Norman Hunter.

ROBERT R. GASTON, Stenerson Co-pilot, passed away December 3, 1989. William McBride informed me that he was trying to locate Sam Monroe, their crew Navigator, to notify him of Bob's passing. Then he first learned in the Newsletter that Sam was the second member of their crew to pass away last fall.

Robert Gaston had two sons, William N. and Robert L. It was Robert who brought his father to the first two reunions along with Williams wife at the first reunion. Robert's wife (the father) died October 23, 1982. Son William was named after William McBride. The men of this crew were very close.

For those of you who didn't know Robert, he was totally blind in recent years. His son Bob did a great job of helping his father around, he would tell him who was speaking to his father by reading the name tags. It was very moving to see this man who remembered his old friends. And he just wanted to with them again, to hear their voices, and to recall some of the times they were together. They had reservations for San Antonio, but Robert became ill with his severe case of diabetes. And that is what caused his death.

ALBERT MILNER, Wheeler Tail Gunner, passed away July 29, 1989, reported by Les Wheeler. Les also sent a poem that will be in a future newsletter. He also noted that he will be in Boston.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our fallen comrades and their families.

SICK CALL

Charles F. McKenna III went on sick call over the holidays and ended up in the hospital for 10 days. He is recovering nicely, but could use a little cheering up! **Ken Koch** (Donahue Radio Operator) has been reported on sick call also. He has sent in his reservations, however, and is determined to be at the Boston reunion. We'll see you there Ken.

Lewis "Jocko" Roberts Crew were the Only Swiss Internees From the 781st Bomb Squadron

On August 16, 1944 the Jocko Roberts and crew was scheduled to fly with our squadron on mission #64 to Friedrichshafen, Germany to bomb an aircraft factory which was the main factory producing the V-2s. It was his 37th mission and he was flying deputy lead.

Between the IP and the target his aircraft suffered three direct hits by flak, two in the right wing and one in the bomb bay. Number 3 and 4 engines were knocked out. The electrical system in the right wing was disrupted so that the engines could not be feathered. The burst in the bomb bay caused a severe leak in the

main cell of the bomb bay.

As "axis of attack" was headed directly toward Switzerland,

Roberts decided to continue on course and go over the Swiss border. Bombs were toggled by the Bombardier, James Lyons, as the bomb sight had been ruined by flak. It was decided

that the crew would bail out because of the danger of landing the plane with two engines saturated with gas. Roberts headed the plane into Switzerland and ordered the crew to bail out. He then headed the plane back toward Germany so that the plane would land in enemy territory. Roberts bailed out at approximately 8,000 feet and landed approxi-

mately 2,000 feet from the Germany border in Switzerland. The plane was seen to crash and burn in a small town just across the border in Germany.

Upon landing Roberts was picked up by Swiss soldiers and taken to the town Miltwillen where part of the crew were assembled. They remained there for a few hours and then were taken to Frauenfeld where the rest of the crew were encountered. Immediately the whole crew was taken to Dubendorf. They remained there overnight and the next day they went to Adelboden where Roberts was made C. O. of the camp by the U. S. Military Attache in Switzerland, Gen. Legge.

The above information came from the micro film obtained from Maxwell Field. Here is Jocko's report filling us in on their time in Switzerland.

"We were shot down August 16,

Gen. Legge acceded to my request to transfer the Officers to Davos, leaving me with about 8 officers (3 from my own crew) to run the camp of 800 non-coms. They were quartered in eight hotels in Adelboden.

"We actually put the monkey on the backs of selected outstanding non-coms to maintain discipline and morale and to really run the camp from the U. S. side. And did the non-coms ever respond! I was immensely proud of all of them, especially their leaders.

"When I first got to Adelboden, the Swiss had a Colonel as their CO of the camp. He was a very fine gent, but with a strong Prussian-like approach to discipline. He actually did some of his advanced military training in Germany. Fortunately he was replaced in two or three weeks after I got there by one of the finest gentlemen I've ever known,

Peter Aebi. When WWII began he was 2nd in Command of the Swiss Trade Office internationally with responsibility for the Asian area. After the end of WWII he was made head of the Swiss Trade Office internationally.

"One weekend a young lawyer came to Adelboden for a weekend vacation. I met him and we got along very well. He, Hans Kober, was asked to come back every second weekend to give a "cur-



L to R: Lewis "Jocko" Roberts, Major Aebi, the Swiss CO, and Bill Rutherford from the 8th Air Force. Camp Maloney, Switzerland.

1944. Actually we had to parachute into Switzerland along the very fringe of Lake Constance - after hitting the old Zeppelin Works at Friedrichshafen which was Germany's main factory for producing V-2s.

"When my crew and I arrived in Adelboden there were about 1250 internees at Camp Maloney - about over 400 officers and 800 non-coms.

rent events" talk to the troops. He readily accepted and paid his own expenses. Hans went on to become head of the entire legal department of Cieba Guggenbuehl Chemical Co. in Basel.

"I got the Red Cross to send a lot of good books and the non-coms set up and managed the library. Musical instruments were also obtained

and an orchestra was organized. Dances were held in the Palace Hole ballroom each Wednesday and Saturday night from December on.

"When the snows came four local ski instructors were hired to instruct the troops in skiing. For many it was the first time in their lives they had skied.

"Once the border with France was opened we methodically set up ways to move our troops out of Adelboden and out of the country. We moved about 10 or 12 men a day at low risk. Some men were overly eager to get going and weren't willing to wait their turn and a fairly high percentage of these were caught by the Swiss Army and police.

"After about a month or six weeks Gen. Legge and the CO of the Embassy found out that about 125 of these men were being held in a barbed wire encampment near Zurich, sleeping on hay mattresses and guarded by dogs. The General raised hell and got the men sent back to Adelboden. They were there only a short time until the Battle of the Bulge took place. When it looked like the Germans might be successful the Swiss Army went into the camp and took the 125 men back. About 10 days later when it showed that the Germans weren't going to succeed the troops were again brought back to Adelboden.

In March the remaining men were released through an exchange agreement between the U. S., Germany, and Switzerland. By that time there were only 350 troops left in Adelboden. A very touching send-off was given by the local townspeople. The townspeople spoke very well of the fine way the majority of the non-coms conducted themselves."

Jocko's crew all eventually returned to Pantanella. T/Sgt Harold Burchards escaped about 1 December 1944. Lt. Donald A. Barrett escaped about 15 December 1944. Lt. James Lyons and Lt. John Noyer escaped 1 February 1944.

Lt. Elliott Sweet, S/Sgt Leonard Emmel, T/Sgt Dowie Hymans, S/Sgt Willie Golden, and S/Sgt Robert Fulkerson were returned by repatriation 17 February 1945. All men returned to duty. Lt. Richard Burgin

was transferred to Davos from Adelboden in September 1944 and returned to Pantanella separately. He left Switzerland near Lake Geneva in December and was picked up by the FFF (Free French Forces). He spent Christmas in a hotel in France and eventually returned to Pantanella arriving there New Years Day 1945

I had contacted Jocko about his last mission just prior to the quake here in California. He called shortly after to inquire how we made out. During the conversation he told about his experience in Guatemala when a 7.5 quake hit there 15 years ago. Some 7,000 people died in that quake.

Jocko was Associate Director, Agriculture Sciences in Latin America, for the Rockefeller Foundation and spent many years in South America.

I just received an article from Vincent Beeson on USAAF Aircraft in Switzerland. It stated that there were 82 B-24's and 76 B-17's from the 8th and 15th Air Forces that ended up in Switzerland. Many were repaired and returned to the U. S. Jocko's plane is not listed since his plane actually landed in Germany.

From **Bernie Badler,**

For the Holiday Season I sent out many cards to our members including one to Sam Monroe. This month I got a very nice brief letter from his son John Monroe telling me of his father's untimely death.

Sam was the Navigator on the Charles Stenersen Crew that trained with us at Wendover, Utah before we were sent to McCook to be part of the 781st Bomb Squadron. Then we flew our planes over to Oudna in North Africa before going up to Pantanella. So you can see how long I knew Sam.

Very few people knew that Sam and I had our own darkroom right near our tents. We dug a rectangular hole in the ground and covered it with a shelter making it very light proof, at night only!

We could only develop our negatives and make contact prints with a homemade contact printer. At this time I don't know where we got our chemicals and paper, I think that Sam scrounged it for us. We did get

quite a bit of work done on nights when we both were not scheduled to fly on the next day's mission.

While I was overseas I had a Speed Graphic camera, a miniature press camera that took excellent pictures. It used individual negatives that I put into glassine envelopes after we developed them to protect them. These I have kept for all the following years and they are still perfectly preserved.

When Harry Carl started putting together the material for the Squadron History I visited him at his home and he was quite pleased to see them. Needless to say many of the pictures ended up in the book.

So, through my friendship with Sam Monroe the Squadron gained some excellent quality photographs.

He was a very modest and unassuming person who did his job in a very professional manner and nobody ever had anything bad to say about him. It was my pleasure to have known the man.

My only regret is that I never got to see him before he died. I was going to respond to his son's letter, but felt that this letter to the Pantanella News would get this message to everybody.

COMMENTS FROM YOUR EDITOR.

It is indeed sad to receive news that one of our close friends has passed away, especially in some cases where we have been in contact with them in recent years, but have not had the chance to have a personal visit. It has become more noticeable when for the first time men have joined Folded Wings who have attended a reunion.

The reason for bringing this up is that frequently we are not notified by the families for a number of months when someone has passed away. Many of you would like to know when a friend has passed away.

These comments are intended for all the families to notify friends of their husband or father, or notify the association office. There are some very close relationships between many of our men and they would just like to know when a good friend has passed away.

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

by Lee Billings (20 November 1989)

Today at 12:30 PM is the 45th anniversary of being blown up over Blechhammer South in a B-24 commanded by Lt. Col. Lokker, the Commanding Officer of the 781st Bomb Squadron. I was flight engineer on the crew. Col. Lokker's scheduled co-pilot was in the hospital with malaria, so Capt Duckworth's crew, on which I was engineer, was chosen by Col. Lokker to fly with him. We had flown with Col. Lokker about two weeks before, so he was familiar with our crew.

This time it was Mission #109 which was scheduled to knock out a very important target, one of the last remaining synthetic oil refineries, Blechhammer South in Eastern Germany,

The morning of the mission I was a little late getting down to the orderly room for transport to the flight line. Billie Holbert, the radio operator I flew over to Italy with, yelled that I would be late to my own funeral.

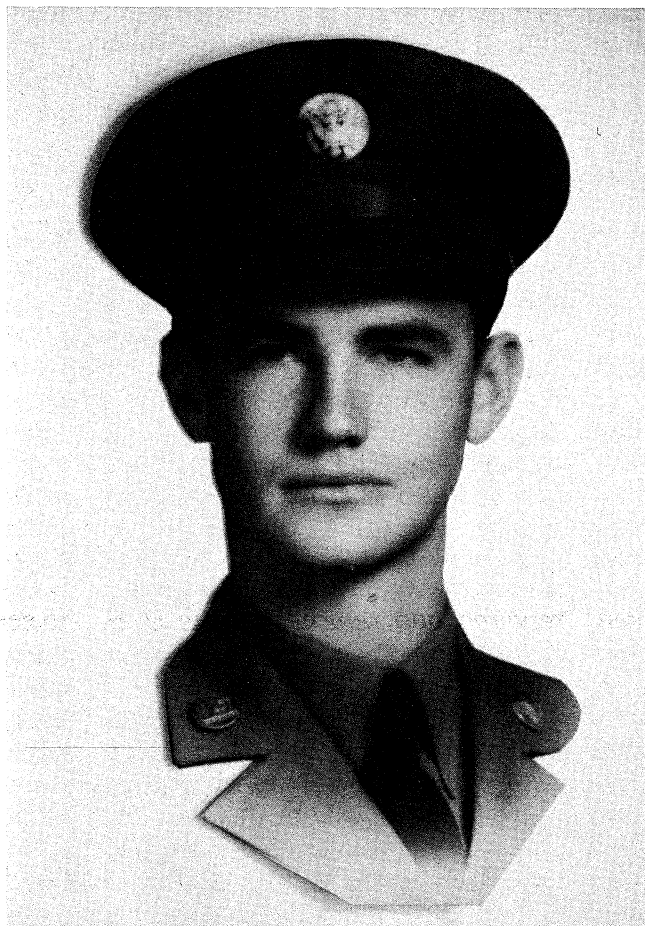
After take-off and rendezvous we set course. Weather was real bad all the way to the target. We missed our IP and flew over Blechhammer South, then over Blechhammer North. We then circled and picked up our IP for Blechhammer South, started the bomb run, and opened the bomb bay doors. The weather had cleared and they say that 700 heavy guns opened up on us. The sky was black with exploding shells.

Col. Lokker then gave orders to make a climbing left turn, increasing altitude 1000 feet.

As we were climbing I saw a dark B-24 in formation back of us with closed waist windows. The radio operator and myself were waist gunners and observers. The waist windows were required to be open

during combat missions. I reported the B-24 to Col. Lokker and he said to keep an eye on it. It was believed to be a B-24 the Germans had repaired and was sent up to observe our formations.

Just as we released the bombs we received a direct hit in #2 engine gas tank on the left wing. In accordance with the photo taken by our left wing



Lee R. Billings in 1943

man the wing separated from the plane when the bombs were about eight feet below the plane. The plane rolled over, then exploded.

I fell down through the debris, burning. I was hit by some heavy object which knocked me out. When I became conscious again I was diving head first to the ground, which was rushing up to meet me. I threw out my arms and straightened up (face up). The chute was above me, so I pulled the rip cord, the chute streamed, but by pulling shroud lines it finally opened up OK.

The chute rocked one way and back, then it hit across a high line or guy wires and left me dangling six inches above the ground. It un-

wound and gently let me to the ground. I pulled the chute together, then a German soldier yelled something in German. I froze in place, down on my knees. He raised his rifle and shot, the bullet glazed my right cheek and neck. I fell face forward on the ground and snow.

My hands, hair, and face were badly burned and bloody. I played possum as the soldier approached. He flipped me over with his bayonet (I didn't breath). He must have thought I was dead, so he wiped his bayonet across my stomach to clean it, then left the area. I slowly opened my eyes a fraction to see if he was gone. He was, so I took off the chute and started to get up when two soldiers (Wehrmacht Home Guard) walked up and took me by the arms. They were walking me toward a farm house when bombs started going off. They dropped me and took off.

I took a pounding from the bombs going off. I felt like I was being lifted up in the air by the blast. I came out of it sucking for air. After the bombing the soldiers came back for me and took me to the farm house nearby. They called the Gestapo and one of their soldiers came and searched me. They took my escape package, my

45 pistol, which I didn't know I had, and asked me a lot of questions, which I didn't answer. He left later on. In the evening a little car like an Austin came and they took me to the Sisters of Mercy Hospital in Kosel, Germany.

At the hospital as soon as they wrapped me up (I had 8 broken ribs, flak in my left leg, busted ear drum, concussion, burns on my hands, face and head) and took me in to see the radio operator on our crew, James Bourne. He and I were the only ones from our crew in this hospital. He was burned badly, had lost an eye, and was wrapped up with bandages.

Before leaving the plane all I remembered is that he fell backwards on me as the plane blew up or

rolled over. I didn't know if anyone else got out of the plane or not.

After a week of high fever and swelling up like a Jersey bull, my ear drum broke and drained. I felt a lot better except I couldn't see as I was scarred all over. I slowly started to recover. Every time I awoke my nurse, Sister Ungart, was beside my bed. She was very encouraging and said I would live to be a very old man and be free to live a good life. In bombing raids she would stay at my bedside saying they know we are here and won't bomb us. (What confidence). She was a little shaken when they bombed a hospital next door.

There were several other Americans in the ward where I was. We had one of the best doctors in Germany. I'm sure he and sister Ungart saved my life.

The English POWs were in a camp close by and they furnished us with Red Cross parcels that the hospital used to prepare our food from. From them I learned that Col. Lokker was found on 20 November 44 and was buried the next day.

The English brought me some clothes to wear, heavy shoes, extra large pants, a tight shirt, a big overcoat and a skull cap. My clothes were too burned to wear. The heavy electric suit was charred, even my chute cover was burned and the chute had holes in it, probably lucky I was knocked out and had a long free fall. I must have been close to the ground when I came to. I was a sight to behold with English clothes and scabbed over eyes.

James Bourne, myself, another POW, and a priest with his arm in a cast, as guard, left the hospital on our way to Oberursel (interrogation camp close to Frankfurt). The Battle of the Bulge was being fought at this time.

We walked to the train station about a mile away. We missed the train by one minute. Later it was destroyed by Russian bombs in the next town. We got the next train which was a streamliner and it took us across Germany.

It was dark when we arrived in the station close to Frankfurt. The station was full of German troops and

guns going to the front. An air raid warning sounded and we pulled out of the station a few miles and parked. The people left the train and scattered.

We were locked in the train while the British hit the marshalling yard with Block Busters. The train rocked and windows broke, but we were soon on our way again to Frankfurt.

In Frankfurt we were put in a cellar, three floors down under the train station. A bombing raid set the whole Bonhof on fire. The walls were crumbling, so they took us out in the rail yard and were immediately surrounded by angry Germans. A Luftwaffe officer made them scatter and he brought us hot coffee. Soon after we boarded a train and were on our way to Oberursel.

At one stop the Germans getting off grabbed me and tried to pull me off the train. The guards saved me from certain death from an angry mob.

At Oberursel the ride to camp on a street car was during a bombing raid and the camp was hit by a bomb, killing a lot of high ranking Allied POW officers.

We were finger printed, pictures were taken, then placed in a cubby hole for interrogation. They called it a sweat box. It was heated and had a bunk. They brought us food and cigarettes.

From here they would take us to interrogation, ask a lot of questions, then return us to the cell.

Then the heat went off and there was no food. Finally they came around and turned the heat on and brought some hot soup. Then it was back to interrogation.

After a week of interrogation and no answers they accused me of being a spy. During interrogation I heard whipping and loud screams, most likely coming from some other POWs.

Finally they let me out to go to the compound with other troops. I found out that is where they got all the information they needed - from prisoners talking to other prisoners.

I met a Major who was shot down over the Alps on a night bombing mission. They all got out of the

plane, but he was the only one that could make it out of the deep snow. I gave him some food out of a parcel I had saved. He was a big man and awful hungry. Hamburgers would be worth \$1,000 in a case like his.

After several days we were sent to Wetzlar, a transit camp. On the way when we were in a tunnel fighters bombed the entrance, blocking us for several hours. I sure was glad to get out of that tunnel.

After a couple of weeks we were put on a train to Barth on the Baltic. After seven days and nights we ended up in Berlin. We were shot up in Halle and one of the P-51 fighter pilots got shot down and ended up on our train as a POW.

In Berlin we arrived at the station at dark. The air raid warning sounded and we were pulled out to let a troop train through. The station was destroyed. In the bombing raid a lot of trains were destroyed and a path was bombed across Berlin several miles wide. The block busters nearly shook us off the tracks.

The next morning we were pulled up close to the destroyed station and parked. We could not get through, so after 3 days we were sent to Luckenwalde, some 40 kilometers from Berlin. In the station I faked a fit, so they threw me out in the snow. I hit the ground eating snow, as I had not had any water it seemed like days. I was bare footed and they made me walk about 2 miles down the tracks with a guard to get a bucket of water. My feet still get cold thinking about it. I managed a few raw potatoes from the shack where we got the water, with a little help from some refugee girls working there.

I sure was glad to get out of Berlin. There were 52,000 POWs at Luckenwalde camp 3A, mostly Russians and French. We had one blanket and no heat. We paired up and slept together, one blanket under and one over, with our clothes on. My partner was Frank Shanks. The food was soup, bread and potatoes but not much of it. I traded my wool shirt for a pack of cigarettes, which in turn I traded for food. Once, on guard was alone I traded a cigarette

for a head of cabbage. The guard threw it over the fence and it broke. Before I got to retrieve it POWs came out of the wood work and helped themselves and that cabbage head disappeared quickly.

The day of the first air raid I dug a fox hole in the yard. Most of the POWs made a lot of fun of it, but during the next air raid on Potsdam, down the hill, a bomb fell close by. I was covered up in the fox hole and the next day a lot more holes were dug. I thought for sure the world was coming to an end during the raid on Potsdam.

The Germans told us that Max Smelling would visit us. Then one day a German Officer came into our compound. He was dressed very sharp. He said, "My name is Max Smelling." After talking awhile he said, "I whipped Joe Louis too."

Hitler gave orders to kill all Allied POWs, but the officers failed to carry out his orders. The night before we were liberated from the Germans by the Russian Army two English men asked me to escape with them. I wouldn't go, but they tried. They went through the first fence OK, but were caught at the second fence and were shot by a guard.

The Russians came through the next morning at day light. They came through the fences with tanks and kept on going.

The Russian POWs went wild. They raided all homes from the camp to Lukenwalde, killing and raping as they went.

Later in the day three of us took off and went to Luckenwalde looking for food. We stayed in a German home for a week, but were caught with a jug of butter that was given to us by Russian POWs raiding a Polish women's home. We were sent back to prison camp in lieu of being shot.

We picked up some live chickens on the way back to camp and we cooked up a storm that night. Man! that fried chicken was the best I had ever eaten, but the next day I paid the price for eating too much. I had case of the GIs.

After two days the German Army came in and took us back over. Then the Russians returned and took us back from the Germans. After re-

capturing us the Russians took us through the woods to Adolph Hitler Camp. The Russians strafed us with P-39's by mistake. At the camp the Russians and Germans were in a big battle. The base was clean and sharp like West Point. It was used to experiment on drugs, chemicals, germ warfare, etc.

The next day we were moved to Luckenwalde.

The battle raged on, but finally the Russians surrounded a 200,000 man German Army and pounded them for two days and nights. They killed 120,000 and captured the rest. They sent the German prisoners back to Russia. The Russian guards were riding horses and whipping soldiers with black snake whips. These German prisoners were the elite of the Germany Army.

Frank Shanks and I were trying to hike a ride to the American lines on the Elbe River. Along the way we saw the forest where the battle was held. The dead were piled up like cord wood. Dead and Dying.

Along the way we went to a hospital where all the people had been shot by the Russians because the Russians said they were sniping from the hospital.

We continued and were nearly to the American lines before the Russians caught us and sent us back to camp. The Russians were going to send us back to the USA through Vladivostok.

The Americans got the word and came in and took us from the Russians. They took us across the Elbe River to Hildersheim and then by plane to Camp Lucky Strike.

In camp, before I left to come home by boat, I met Capt Duckworth going to the mess hall. I was supposed to meet him later, but didn't get to make it. He told me that he had helped Col. Lokker out of the aircraft.

From Lucky Strike we came back by ship to Camp Kilmore, New Jersey and home by train and a 90 day leave.

After a stay in the hospital they let me re-enlist at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas and I was sent to Williams Field, Arizona to work on F-80-jets in research and develop-

ment. Test pilot Capt. Chuck Yeager was in the squadron.

After 22 years in the Air Force and 23 years in civilian aircraft I've finally hung it up - 70 years young.

Lee had a cover letter with his story talking about Lt. Col. Lokker and I quote, "Yes, Col. Lokker was an exceptional flier, really loved his work. A natural leader of men, always had a great concern for his men. He certainly would have made aviation history as Gen. Chuck Yeager has made. It has been a privilege to know both men."

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

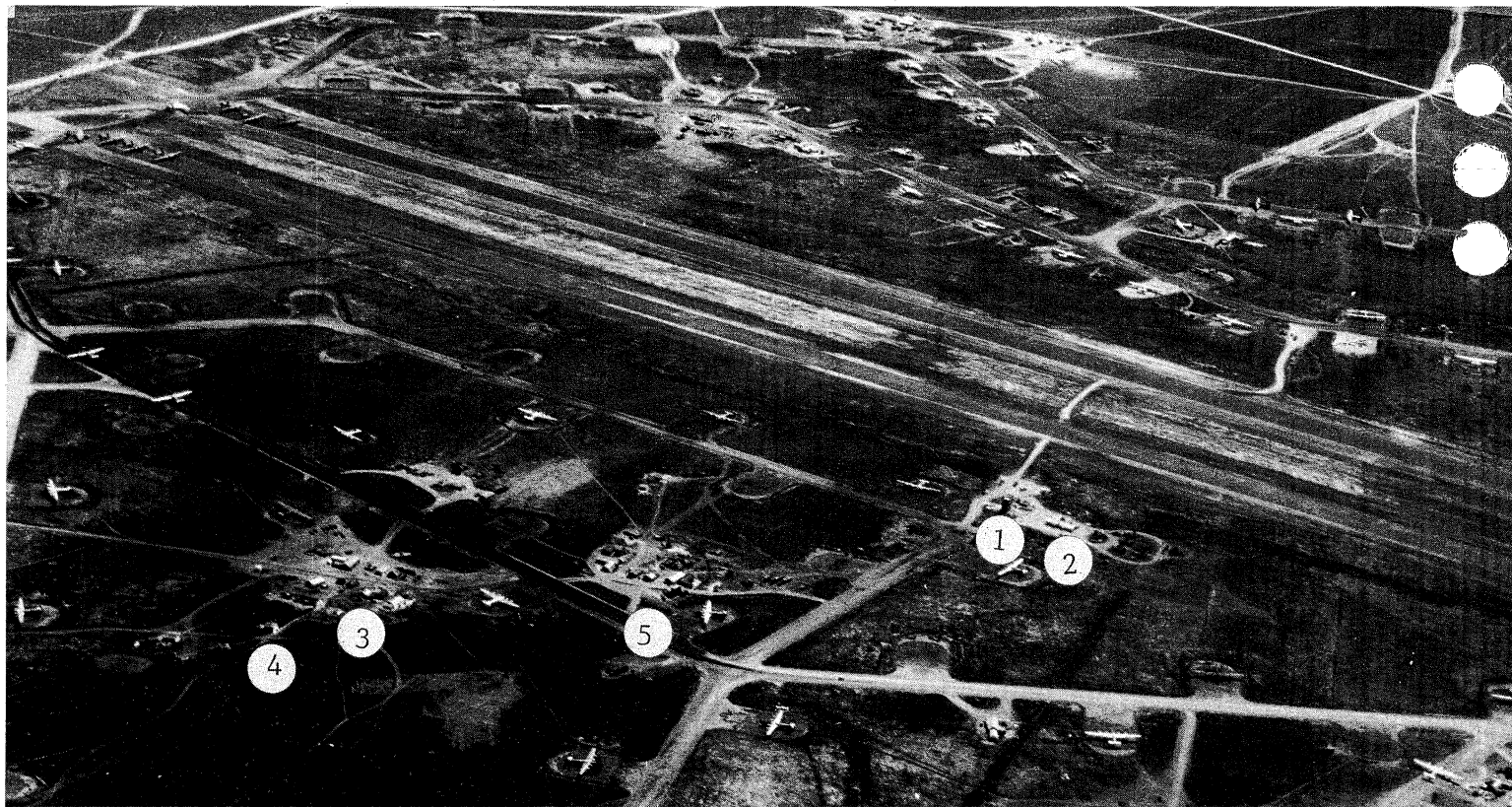
RALFORD L. CROUCH, (Ashley Co-pilot) 8632 Bald Eagle Lane, Wilmington, NC 28405. Phone 919 686-7826.

After a long dry period our Membership Chairman, Walt Longacre, located another lost soul. Finding Ralford Crouch was the greatest joy Walt Longacre has had since his search began. Hardly a month went by without some reference to Crouch by Walt. It was through a tip from Ben Donahue that finally cornered Crouch.

And of course noted in Folded Wings Walt located the family of **George W. Johnson** (Frazier Top Gunner) so another is off the not-located list.

And **Ben Donahue** solved the mystery of another member that has been on the not located list. For reason we will not go into we will not divulge this man's name.

Another man we have been working on for a long time is **Richard Grantham** (McDaniel Co-pilot). For two years I have been in contact with a student that spent a year in France at Montpellier. It was there that Grantham was a professor. Indications are that he moved from there to another University several years ago. Contact was finally made with his daughter. She has replied that Grantham does not want any contact with his past. He left the U. S. after a tragedy in his family and has never had any contact here since, note even with his family.



Where all the action was at Pantanella. Numbers are below the locations. 1 - The Tower, 2 - Radar Maintenance, 3 - Communications, Armament, Ordnance and Engineering Maintenance, 4 - Carl and Orr's Casa, 5 - 780th Maintenance. Note six planes on end of runway ready to take off to bomb Germany. The rest of the group planes are approaching on the taxi w

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