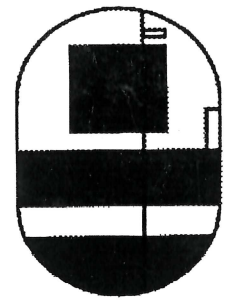




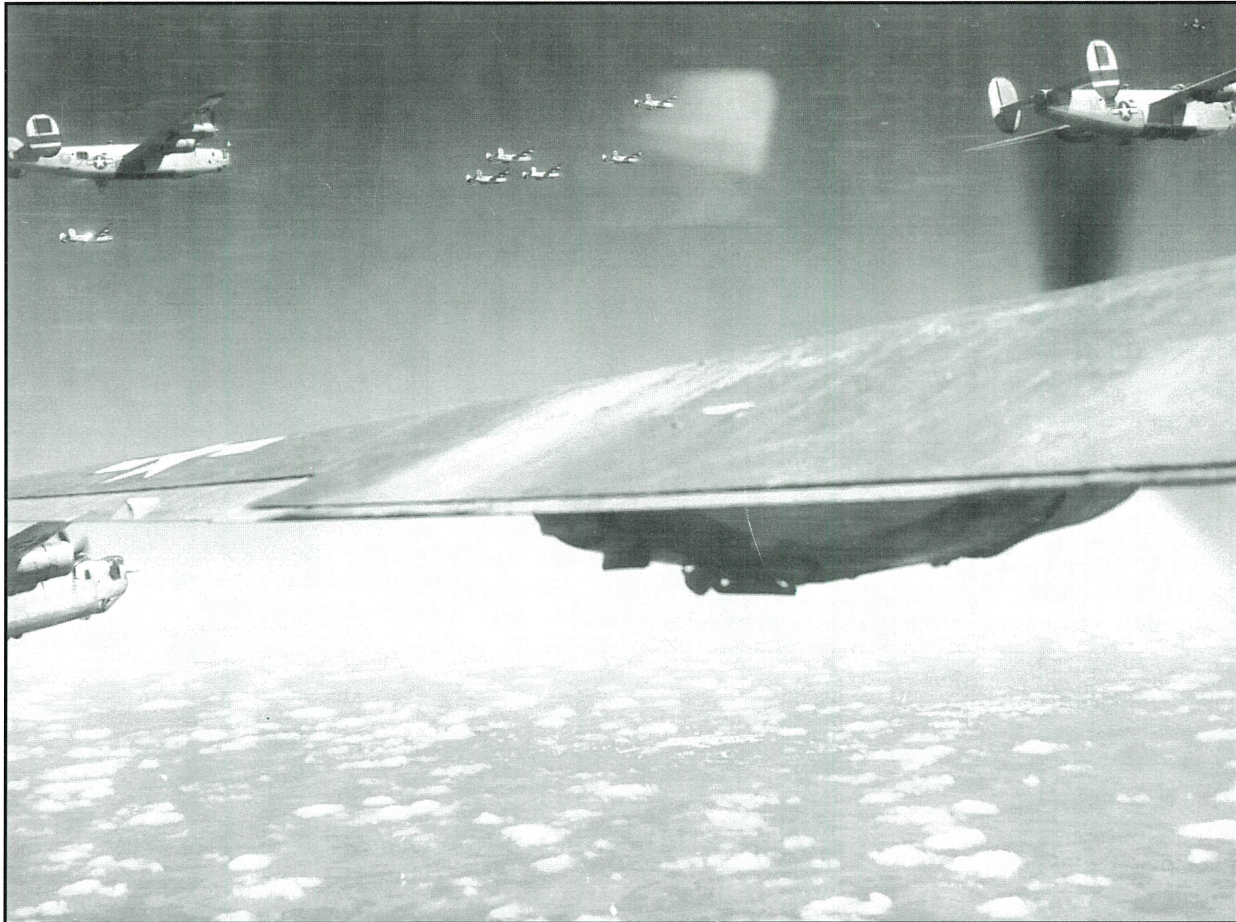
PANTANELLA NEWS



April 2001

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NUMBER 64



Assigned Mission of the 781st Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF
465th Bombardment Group (H)

A History of the 781st Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF 465th Bombardment Group (H) in World War II

By: Harry S. Carl

14 August 1943

World War II in Europe was already four years old and Germany controlled the continent. But the tide was turning. Russia had denied the Germans its three largest cities through two bitter winters of fighting and had

soundly defeated the Wermacht at Kursk (July, 1943). Mussolini had been stripped of power and arrested (24 July). Allied troops were in Sicily and the Island was theirs on 17 August. The Pacific war was almost two years old and Japan had reached the limits of its ex-

pansion. Halsey and Nimitz had begun to counterattack at New Guinea and Guadalcanal, and were moving toward the Gilbert, Marshall, and Mariana Islands. And on this date, 14 August 1943, at Davis-Monthan Field near Tucson, Arizona, the first cadre personnel were assigned to the 465th Bombardment Group (H) and to its four Squadrons (the 780th, 781st, 782nd, and 783rd). The Group had been activated at Alamogordo, New Mexico by General Order #78, Paragraph 1, Headquarters, 2nd Air Force, dated 29 May 1943. The Group was formed as a potential combat force and its assigned mission was the operation of B-24 Liberators, four engined, high altitude, heavy bombardment aircraft. Colonel Elmer J. Rogers, Jr. was named the Group Commander.

This is a history of the 781st Bombardment Squadron. However, it covers many activities of the entire 465th Bombardment Group since essentially all of the operations of the 781st included the other three Squadrons, as well as Group Headquarters. In fact, except for a few instances, when the Group went into combat the general procedure was for all Groups of the 55th Bomb Wing (H) (the 460th, 464th, 465th, and 485th) to attack the same major objective. So, in most cases, a mission flown by the Squadron and the Group was to the same area as the other Groups in the Wing.

Major Charles F. McKenna, III was appointed commanding officer of the 781st and he assumed command on 16 August. Under his leadership the Squadron was to achieve an enviable record for flying, maintenance, and administration, due in large part to the intense loyalty he instilled in those who served with him. Major McKenna graduated from Fordham University,

class of 1938 with a B.A. degree. He was a member of the National Guard and of R.O.T.C. and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Coast Artillery Corps (Anti-Aircraft) on 15 June 1938. A year later he was graduated from the Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field, Texas and was transferred to the Army Air Corps.

His first Air Corps assignment was as an instructor in Advanced Flying at Kelly Field. Other positions held before joining the 781st included Supervisor of the Primary Flying School,

781st Bombardment Sq (H) AAF Davis-Monthan Field		Tucson, Arizona 25 Aug 43
SQUADRON ORDER)		
:		
NO	1)	
1. The undersigned hereby assumes command of this organization effective 16 August 43.		
OFFICIAL:	CHARLES F. MCKENNA, III, Major, Air Corps Commanding,	
CHARLES F. MCKENNA, III, Major, Air Corps, Commanding.		

The first 781st Bombardment Squadron Special Order

Hicks Field, Ft. Worth, Texas and Squadron Commander and Director of Flying at the Bombardier's School, Midland, Texas.

Initial staff officers assigned to the Squadron were:

Capt. Wallace S. Crouch: Adjutant
1st Lt. James W. Wray, Jr.: Operations Officer
1st Lt. William P. Wood: Navigator
2nd Lt. Walter H. Sutton: Bombardier
1st Lt. Byron W. Thompson: Intelligence
2nd Lt. David H. Orr: Engineering
2nd Lt. Harry S. Carl: Communications
2nd Lt. Gordon E. Haaf: Armament

And the following model crew personnel were designated on 16 August:
Major Charles F. McKenna, III: Pilot

781st BOMBARDMENT SQ (H) AAF
Office of the Commanding Officer
AAB, McCook, Nebraska

6 January 1944.

SQUADRON ORDER)

NO. 2)

1. Hereby appoint 1st Lt. John R. Dickey, 0726341, as Flight Commander of Flight A with the following Officers as Airplane Commanders in Flight A:

1st Lt. Dale G. Tipton, 0724490
1st Lt. Philip F. Schuster, 0439683
2nd Lt. John F. MacFarlane, 0683565
2nd Lt. Joe M. Athon, Jr., 0670486

2. Hereby appoint 1st Lt. Lewis M. Roberts, 0349587, as Flight Commander of Flight B with the following Officers as Airplane Commanders in Flight B:

1st Lt. Thomas J. O'Brien, 0792734
1st Lt. Thomas W. Greenwood, 0724413
2nd Lt. Rae W. Branch, 0681007
2nd Lt. Robert L. Shetterly, 0680736


3. Hereby appoint 2nd Lt. Raymond D. Cauble, 0738346, as Flight Commander of Flight C with the following Officers as Airplane Commanders in Flight C:

2nd Lt. Charles V. Stenersen, 0681230
2nd Lt. Jack Van Slyke, 0804768
2nd Lt. George A. Prince, 0685215
2nd Lt. Robert J. Smith, 0684421

4. Hereby appoint 2nd Lt. George R. Ashley, 0795336, as Flight Commander of Flight D with the following Officers as Airplane Commanders in Flight D:

2nd Lt. Leslie S. Wheeler, 0803325
2nd Lt. Ray W. Hurd, 0805473
2nd Lt. Kenneth M. Martin, 0742433

A TRUE COPY:


WILLIAM C. ELLETT,
2nd Lt., Air Corps.

/s/ Charles F. McKenna, III,
CHARLES F. MCKENNA, III,
Major Air Corps,
Commanding.

Sgt. Ralph C. Finch: Armorer Gunner
Sgt. Charles N. Fry: Gunner

The training program set up to accomplish the mission of the Group was substantially as follows:

First Month: Organization and tactical schooling.

Second and Third Months: First phase operational training

Fourth Month: Second phase operational training.

Fifth Month: Third phase operational training and POM inspection.

Sixth Month: Staging and departure for a combat theater. The Squadron was initially divided into two units, an Air Echelon and a Ground Echelon. The Air Echelon consisted of eight officers and sixteen enlisted men (basically, the Model Crew and the Operations Section plus the nucleus of the aircraft Maintenance Sections and the Intelligence and Medical Sections). This Echelon was ordered, effective 29 August 1943, to Orlando, Florida for special training at the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics (AAFSAT.) The Ground Echelon stayed at Tucson until 11 September 1943, when it was ordered to Camp Kearns, Utah for overseas training.

Orlando, Florida

The

Air

2nd Lt. Carl L. Elsaesser: Co-Pilot
1st Lt. William P. Wood: Navigator
2nd Lt. Walter H. Sutton: Bombardier
Sgt. James E. Waggle, Jr.: Engineer
Sgt. Nicholas C. Belik: Assistant Engineer
Sgt. Jewell C. Shelnutt: Radio Operator
S/Sgt. Harold A. Straughan: Tail Gunner

Echelon left for Orlando in the early morning on 29 August 1943, accompanied by the air echelons from group headquarters and the other squadrons of the group. The trip was for the most part uneventful and the time was spent getting acquainted. On the final day of the trip

the train had no dining car and a very hungry and disgusted group of men arrived at Orlando at 1900 on 1 September. However, after the brief checking-in procedure, a very satisfactory meal and a hot shower lifted morale considerably.

The first day, 2 September, was one of leisure and relaxation, notable only by the assignment of 1st Lt. Morris R. Rapoport as Squadron Medical Officer and Flight Surgeon. Training began on 3 September with two days of general lectures and orientation after which the Unit was separated according to job classifications for ten days of lectures related to the individual's specific job. On 14 September final examinations on the academic work were given and the Air Echelon prepared to move to its assigned air field for operations under simulated combat conditions.

The Unit left AAFSAT by truck on the morning of the 15th and drove about 14 miles to Pinecastle Air Base at Pinecastle, Florida. Upon arrival everyone was convinced that the ultimate duty destination was the Pacific Theater for it would have been difficult to find a more complete simulation of tropical operating conditions. Quarters consisted of pyramidal tents surrounded by swamp land from which a humid stench continually floated over the living area. As if this were not enough, the saturated muck between the tents was so unpleasant as to make movement out of the tents hazardous and undesirable. Each afternoon brought a tropical downpour which flooded the area and created more muck.

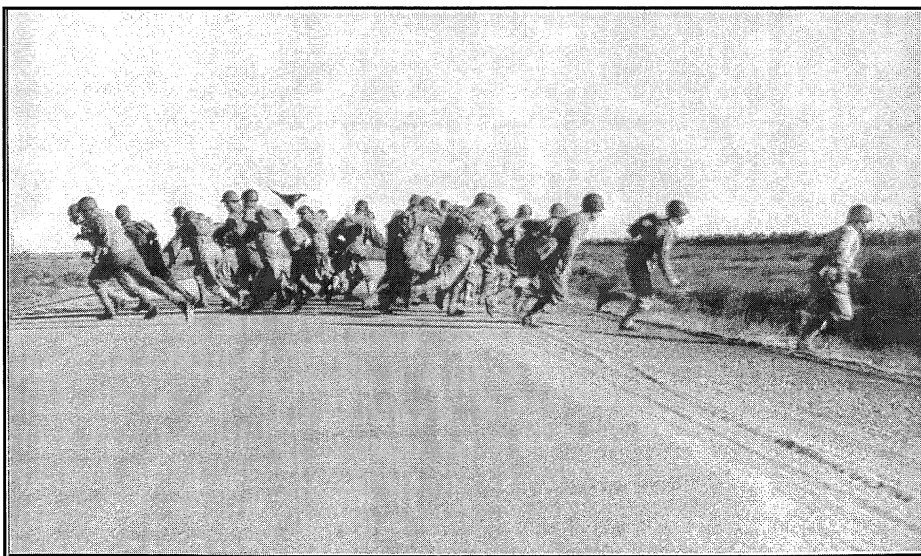
However, the reaction was that almost anything could be tolerated for ten days and, in fact, it was — including the worst food anyone in the unit had experienced anywhere in the States. And topping all the inconveniences were the mosquitoes. Having been at AAFSAT longer than the 781st, these insects were well trained in formation attack and their primary delight seemed to be in proving the vulnerability of the government issue mosquito netting. To them the term "mosquito bar" simply meant easy access to a quick drink of

their favorite nectar. The air echelon of the squadron flew six missions from Pinecastle for a total of 34.8 hours flying time. One mission was completely unsuccessful because of mechanical failure but five were generally effective and more would have been flown except for a shortage of high octane gasoline in the area.

On Sunday, 26 September 1943, with everyone happy to be moving, the unit left Pinecastle by train for Camp Kearns, Utah to rejoin the Ground Echelon. Although no one knew exactly what the future had in store most believed that it had to be better than the stay at Pinecastle. The Unit arrived at Salt Lake City on Thursday and was met by Major William B. Vaughn, the Group Executive Officer, who led the way to Camp Kearns and reunion with the men who had been left behind at Tucson.

Camp Kearns, Utah

On 11 September 1943, the Ground Echelon, led by Capt. Wallace Crouch, with the ground echelons of the other squadrons and group headquarters, had entrained at Tucson for the trip to Camp Kearns. The two day trip was highlighted by the good conduct of the men and the Unit arrived at Camp Kearns on 13 September. Salt Lake City lay some 16 miles to the northeast. Morale was high in spite of the usual warnings of the other units stationed there to, "go back where you came from" and,



Take cover!

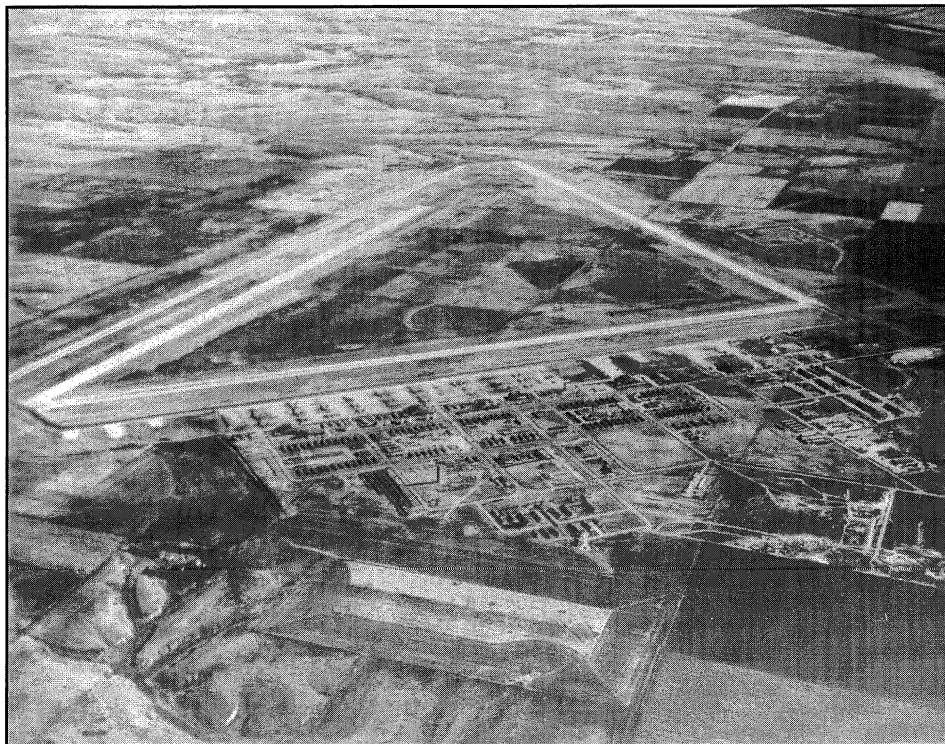
"you won't like it here" and, "you'll be sorry". The barracks were long and low with latrines located in buildings separate from the living quarters.

True to Army form, orientation began with the cleaning of the barracks and scrubbing and cleaning of the latrines, the kitchen, and the dining room. Some men reported the feeling of being in a very large jail. Shortly after arrival, drill and physical training started. This included the usual calisthenics and an obstacle course over which each man was required to carry his gas mask, pistol belt, canteen, raincoat, and a wooden stick cut in the shape of a carbine and referred to as a "piece". In spite of all this, Lt. William C. Ellett, at that time a member of the 782nd Squadron and very soon to be adjutant of the 781st, broke the post record for the time required to complete the obstacle course. These activities were presided over by the "Blue Beetles", Camp Kearns' permanent personnel, so called because of the blue helmets which they sported. Besides the physical training program, lectures were presented in chemical warfare, first aid, camouflage, map reading, interior guard duty, pitching pup tents, venereal disease, and the Articles of War. These lectures were supplemented by films and practical exercises.

One of the main objectives of the overseas training was to qualify as many men as possible in small arms marksmanship and much of the training was devoted to accomplishing that end. As so often happened in the Army, the group practiced with one type of weapon (Springfields) while actual firing was done with another (carbines). In spite of this a high percentage of qualifications was obtained and S/Sgt Thomas Kyle shot a very good 190 out of a possible 200. The men of the 781st be-

lieved that they made more noise and did more work than anyone on the post. It was a fact that no organization in the group could consistently form up and move out as fast as they. And if any other unit did happen to move out first it was invariably passed by the 781st before the final destination was reached.

On 30 September 2nd Lt. William C. Ellett was transferred to the 781st as Adjutant, assum-

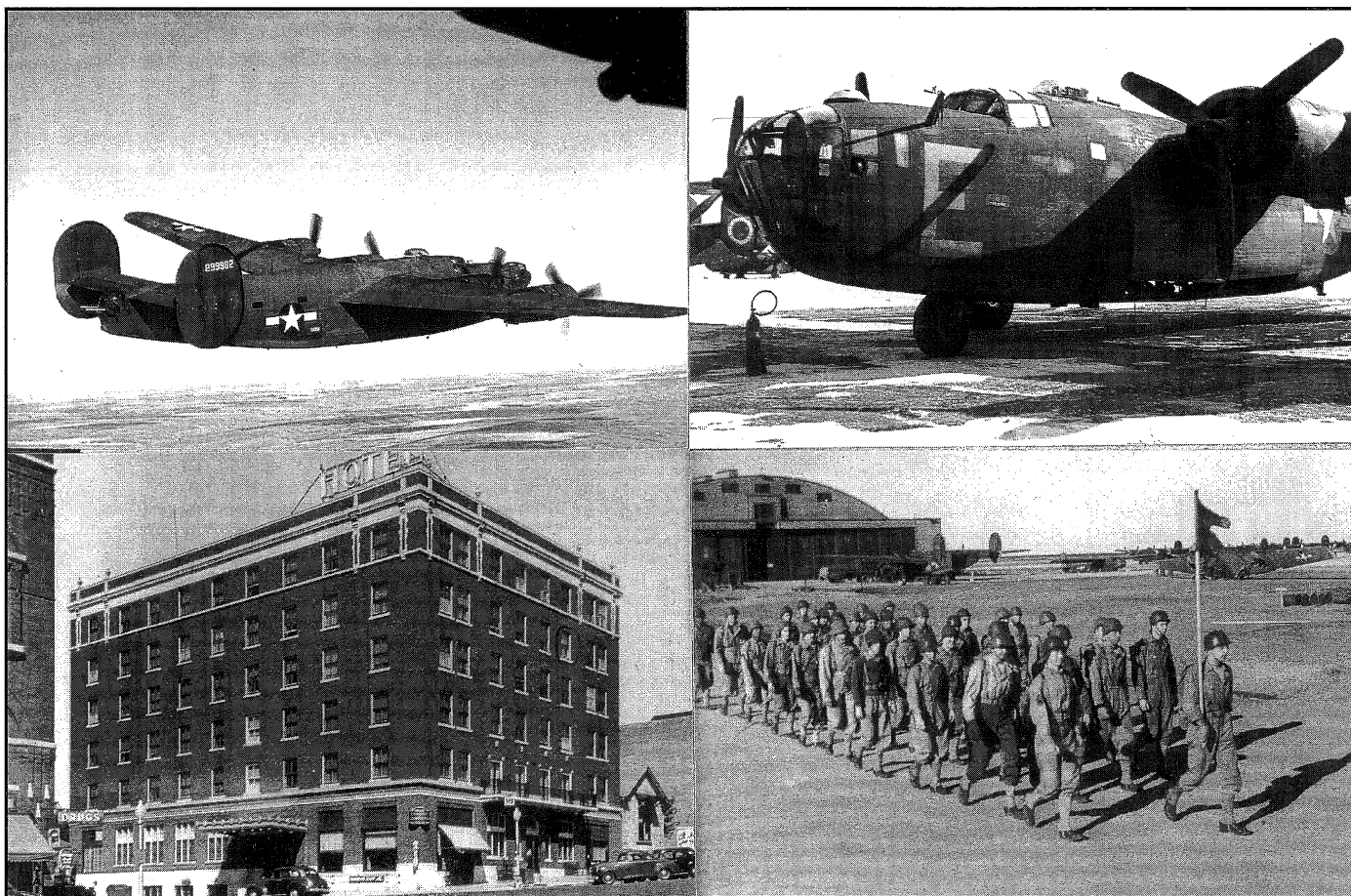


McCook Army Air Base, 1944

ing the former duties of Capt. Wallace S. Crouch who had been assigned on 18 September to the newly created position of Squadron Executive Officer. And on 17 September 2nd Lt. William S. Merritt was assigned as Assistant Engineering Officer.

October 1943

At approximately the same time as the Air and Ground Echelons were reunited at Camp Kearns, the Group received orders warning of probable departure for the Army Air Base at McCook, Nebraska. Within a few days the orders became official and the packing of the Unit's meager equipment was accomplished. Train accommodations were soon arranged and the



B-24 training planes at McCook, downtown hotel, Steve Corso leading drill.

small group of men eagerly looked forward to renewed flying operations at a real air base where keeping the planes in the air would be the order of the day and mosquitoes, obstacle courses, "Blue Beetles", and hut-two-three-four would only form an occasional interruption in the daily routine. On the evening of 5 October 1943, the movement eastward through the Rocky Mountains and onto the plains of Nebraska was begun.

Through the frosted windows of the train in the early morning light of 7 October the town of McCook, Nebraska could be seen stretching northward from the railroad tracks. McCook, with only 6000 inhabitants, appeared at the time (and proved to be) a typical small midwestern town. But a town which did its utmost to be friendly and helpful to the large number of military personnel suddenly thrust into its midst. A number almost as large as the population of the town, itself.

There was a twelve-mile truck ride to the base and, after a hearty breakfast, the job of getting settled in barracks and buildings was begun. The physical facilities of the base exceeded expectations in most cases. The orderly rooms were spacious, and hangars, barracks, and mess facilities appeared to be adequate. By Monday, 11 October the Squadron was pretty well settled and operations were begun with the limited equipment and personnel on hand. The Squadron's first airplane, a B-24H (42-7702) was assigned on 14 October 1943 and there was a general feeling of elation because now the unit could begin to justify its existence.

The first new Air Crews arrived on 29 October from Tucson with the following Plane Commanders: 1st Lt. John R. Dickey, 2nd Lt. Ray D. Cauble, 2nd Lt. Joe M. Athon, Jr., 2nd Lt. George R. Ashley, and 2nd Lt. John F. MacFarlane. And on 3 November the second



McCook Army Air Base, 1944

B-24 was assigned. Meanwhile, after having become comfortably settled in the hangar and orderly room and with operations starting to function smoothly, the Squadron received its first minor setback. The 486th Bomber Group had arrived on the field and had to be given some of the by now taxed facilities. This meant that the 780th and 781st squadrons would have to give up their buildings and move in with the 782nd and 783rd respectively. The move was accomplished in an orderly, though definitely critical, manner on 24 October. Critical, because it did not seem possible for two rapidly expanding groups to operate on a field having such limited space and equipment.

The maintenance sections were particularly hard hit because the sub-depot initially had been able to furnish only an inadequately small

amount of equipment with which to work and now even that short supply had to be cut in half. This situation existed for sixteen days with two squadrons sharing each orderly room and four squadrons using one hangar.

Fortunately, there were very few planes assigned to the units and the units were able to maintain operations by sharing the meager available equipment. During October 56.92 flying hours were recorded with the limited planes on hand and no major mechanical failures or accidents were reported. A large number of new men representing almost every job classification were assigned to the Squadron during October. Capt. Edwin R. Sievers joined as Squadron Intelligence Officer, temporarily replacing Lt. Thompson in that assignment, and 1st Lt. Kenneth Sutton, Jr. was assigned and joined as Squadron

Ordnance Officer. As of the 31st, 38 officers and 250 enlisted men were assigned.

November 1943

November began with the Squadron getting down to the serious business of accomplishing its first phase of overseas training. The 781st was the first Squadron of the group to inaugurate an intensive ground school program with training for combat crews starting on 1 November. Also, on 1 November, M/Sgt. John F. Messmore was appointed First Sergeant of the Squadron.

News finally arrived on 5 November that the experiment, if that's what it was, of trying to

mentation to visit a medical station periodically while in towns or at rest camps.

While operating with the 783rd, the Squadron took top honors in the Saturday inspections on 30 October and 6 November, thus depriving its hosts and rivals of the banner which they had won the two preceding weeks. On 7 November 2nd Lt. F. D. Bonvillain joined as Squadron Supply Officer and 2nd Lt. Frederick R. Crandall as Squadron Bombsight Maintenance Officer.

During November two very successful showdown inspections of quartermaster supplies were held by Lt. Bonvillain in preparation

for the final one which was to be in December. Also during November there was an increase of six in the number of planes assigned to the Squadron and five new Crews arrived from the Army Air Base at Wendover, Utah, all of whom had previously been through the three phases of overseas training.

Pilots of these Crews were: 2nd Lt. Robert L. Shetterly, 2nd Lt. Charles V. Stennersen, 2nd Lt. Rae W. Branch, 2nd Lt. Leslie S. Wheeler, and 2nd Lt. Jack Van Slyke.

November also saw accomplishment of a great deal of the ground personnel's basic training. This included,

in addition to the subjects mentioned earlier, safeguarding military information, Articles of War, tent pitching, and five -- mile hikes, and approximately 65% of the Squadron qualified in the use of small arms on the range. In one day the Ordnance Section was able to qualify its entire complement of 29 men. It probably should be noted that almost none of this proved to be of any use in later operations.

On 24 November 2nd Lt. Alfred P. Connor replaced 2nd Lt. Gordon E. Haaf as Armament



Enlisted Men's Mess Hall at McCook

develop and train two groups on the one field was at an end and the 486th was leaving. So again equipment, files, etc. had to be packed but this time for a move back to the previous facilities and the mood was considerably more enthusiastic. Through the persistence of Capt. Wallace Crouch, basic training in the subjects of first aid, map reading, chemical warfare, and camouflage discipline was begun on 15 November for all ground personnel. Of these subjects probably the only one ultimately utilized, and that not to the fullest extent necessary, was the first aid course, particularly regarding the strong recom-

Officer with the latter transferred to Tucson. Also leaving the Squadron during November were Capt. Edwin R. Sievers, S-2, and 2nd Lt. Carl L. Elsaesser, Model Crew Co- Pilot. Capt. Sievers was replaced by 2nd Lt. William O. Weaver who was assigned as Assistant Intelligence Officer to 1st Lt. Byron W. Thompson who returned to his former position. And 2nd Lt. Henry L. Willett, Jr. was assigned and joined as Assistant Operations Officer. The month ended with the Squadron having logged 387.24 hours of flying time and the table of organization rapidly approaching full strength with 61 officers and 348 enlisted men assigned as of 30 November 1943.

December 1943

December developed into the Squadron's most active month to date. Second phase flying operations were begun and a total of 432 missions were flown and 1023.71 flying hours logged for the month. There were 780 practice bombs dropped. Although this was an excellent record, a number of required missions remained to be flown because of the absence of several of the navigators who were at Geiger Field, near Spokane, Washington for specialized training. On 5 December eight more Air Crews arrived from Tucson to bring the Squadron to full strength in Crews assigned. Seven aircraft were transferred out of the Squadron and eight new ships were assigned. Pilots of the new Crews were Capt. Asahel W. Vaughan, 1st Lt. Thomas W. Greenwood, Jr., 1st Lt. Lewis M. Roberts, 1st Lt. Philip Schuster, 1st Lt. Dale C. Tipton, 2nd Lt. Robert J. Smith, 2nd Lt. William J. Goeke, and 2nd Lt. Ray W. Hurd. During the month ground school for both flying and non-flying per-

sonnel operated on a large scale.

Flying personnel attended the regular second-phase classes while all ground men completed an eight hour course in first aid and many received an additional three or more hours of aircraft recognition. All men went through the gas chamber and a portion of each section completed a special course in camouflage discipline. Coincident with this ground school training, the Personnel Section (S-1) was making preparations for the final administrative inspection.

Many records had come to the Squadron incomplete but by the end of the month, with patient and thorough checking and rechecking, very little remained to be done to them. Further showdown inspections for shortages and for the marking of clothing and equipment were carried out by the Supply Section (S-4) during the month. These proved satisfactory and coveralls were the only item in which the Squadron was critically under- supplied by the end of the month. The Squadron's operating efficiency was lowered on 27 December when a 781st aircraft flew over the town of Dickens, Nebraska on a practice bombing mission and, by mistake, dropped seven practice bombs in the vicinity of the town. One bomb struck a shack at a lumber mill and caused slight damage but the others fell harmlessly and no casualties resulted. Responsibility for the mishap could not be definitely placed at the time with a particular Crew because several aircraft were in the area when the incident occurred. The personnel status as of 31 December 1943 was 95 officers and 390 enlisted men.

Address Changes

Denley Thompson:
Ste 212
Prairie View Place
Kearney, NE 68845

Folded Wings

Earl "Deacon" Viands:
Deacon (Engineering) passed away in Dec 2000. He was 86 years of age and living in the veterans home at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Reported by Denley Thompson.

Richard L. Crutcher, Jr.:
(Crew Commander of the Crutcher Crew) passed away Nov. 22, 2000. His wife called to say he died of lung cancer.

[Folded wings continues on page 11.]



From Hoyt Adsit, Gunner on MacFarlane Crew:

Harry Carl and myself had a conversation on the phone a short time ago and Harry asked if I would put into writing my thoughts and send a copy to you as well as to him

I have talked to a friend of mine who was with a B-29 Group that bombed Japan. They had a reunion last fall and their powers to be made it very clear that it was to be the last national reunion. If anyone wanted a regional reunion then it was his or her own business.

They felt that increasing age and numbers decreasing was the reason. They have had some of their members think they might get together as single crew or regional but no more national.

My thoughts are that we and/or the Board of Directors take the stance and let everyone know ahead of time that this is the last national reunion by the Squadron. Crews that want to get together and have their own reunion is great and the newsletter would help by putting the dates and places in print. My friend said their Squadron was very pleased with it in that respect

I believe if one more reunion is planned it should be about mid-country so it is about equal distance for those living on both coasts. I would help out if needed. I would let the organizer or board find out what is needed and go from there.

In no way am I dictating

to you or the board to do as I think. It is only my opinion and use it as such. At this time I say no to Phoenix; maybe to Omaha, but I doubt It.

This decision will not be easy for you or the Squadron directors. I wish all of you good luck on trying to arrive at a fair decision

From William H. Coonan, Engineering:

Frank and Harry did a wonderful job on the pictures. Am sure everyone had a great time.

Am still in good health and spend my time helping the poor and playing golf. My sister sent in my write-up for "Home Town Heroes" to our Ashville paper in Feb. Enclosed is check for 2001.

Ed: Following is the article Bill refers to above.

"Bill Coonan has a passion for helping others both young and old. He coached the Babe Ruth League for three years. As a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, he visits the needy and disburses money to help pay their bills for rent, food, electricity, gas, and water.

"He has been a volunteer at Ashville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry for the past 11 years and won the Governor's award for his service.

"He does plumbing and maintenance at the shelter, answers the phone and provides his car to deliver shelter clients to the hospital and to the doctor's office. Mr. Coonan has picked up 5,000 items of food such as bread, cakes and pies at local bakeries as well as 5,000 bed sheets from various locations. He uses time, his resources and his abilities to help those who need it the most. In

addition to his work at ABCCM, he belongs to an organization at his church, St. Eugene's, called 'Dads Will Do It.' As a member he makes repairs at homes of the church's needy. Friends say he never asks for anything in return, but gives of himself because he loves people and wants to help."

"I learned from my mother to help others. I always thought you should help the poor: That's what the Lord taught us to do and I get a lot of enjoyment out of it."

My brother asks nothing in return ... His motto is "Reach out and touch someone as one person can make a difference." - Kathleen C. Liner, sister.

Editor's Corner

Subscription for the Pantanella News for 2001 is due. Most have paid, but if you have not and want to continue to receive the Pantanella News it is \$10.00 per year payable in advance. Your mailing label should read DEC 2001 or later (or LIFE) to be current.

Make checks payable to the 781st Bomb Squadron Association and mail to our Treasurer, John W. Ogden; 3728 Evergreen Dr.; Dickinson, TX 77539.

And **please** keep us current on your address changes. Send notice of any changes to 781st Bomb Squadron Association; 2 Mount Vernon Lane; Ather-ton, CA 94027

Folded Wings

Kenneth E. Sutton, Jr.:

Ken passed away on January 4, 2001. He privately and quietly fought cancer from late 1991 until his death. Those of us who did not see Ken on a regular basis were unaware of this until shortly before the reunion at Fairfield, CA. In spite of the progress of his cancer he did most of the planning and



Kenneth E. Sutton, Jr. at McCook Air Base.

running of the 1992 reunion at Omaha, the 1994 reunion at Tucson, the 1996 reunion at Montgomery, and the 1998 reunion at Dayton. And he managed to do a large part of the groundwork for the Squadron reunion at Fairfield which he planned to attend almost to the opening date. He was a fighter.

We lost an honorable airman, comrade, and helper who

served his squadron and his country beyond reasonable expectations. He joined the Squadron in October of 1943 and transferred from it at Trinidad on 25 June 1945 where the Squadron was breaking up.

He filled many positions during his tour of duty. First, he was the 781st Bomb Squadron Ordnance Officer and therefore responsible for the Ordnance Section, consisting of 30 men. In addition to this he was assigned responsibility as the 465th Bomb Group Motor Pool Officer. He was in charge of all vehicles in the Group, their maintenance and the supply of fuel, etc. Also, with his engineering background he was called upon to supervise the building of the Squadron Officers Club, Restaurant and Lounge.

I became acquainted with Ken when Ernie Van Asperen, who had invited the Althoff crew to move into his tent with him, decided to join with Ken to build a new casa and my crew was invited to move in with Van Asperen to Sutton's new casa. I was not aware of all this since I spent several weeks in a hospital (an old schoolhouse in Venosa) and returned to find my crew in Ken's new casa. Ken did a fine job with the new casa by positioning a 50 gallon oil drum on the roof to use for a shower, room dividers, etc.

On our search for squadron members during the formation of the 7681st Bomb Squadron Association Ken was located early on. We renewed

our old friendship and Ken took an active part in the Association. When it came to reunion time he volunteered to be Chairman taking on all the financial work as well as organizing all the events for the reunions. He sure took a load off of me with this help.

Jim Althoff

John R. Baker:

(Nose gunner on Crutcher Crew) passed away Sept 30, 2000. Reported by Gaythor Cass.

James C. Boswell:

(Armament) passed away recently. A notation on a returned card I sent to him in Dec. 2000 replied "deceased."

John H. Pursel, Sr.:

(Engineering) passed away Dec 2000. A letter from his wife follows: "This is the wife of John H. Pursel, Sr.: Master Sergeant in the 781st Bomb Squadron. John really looked forward to your news booklet.

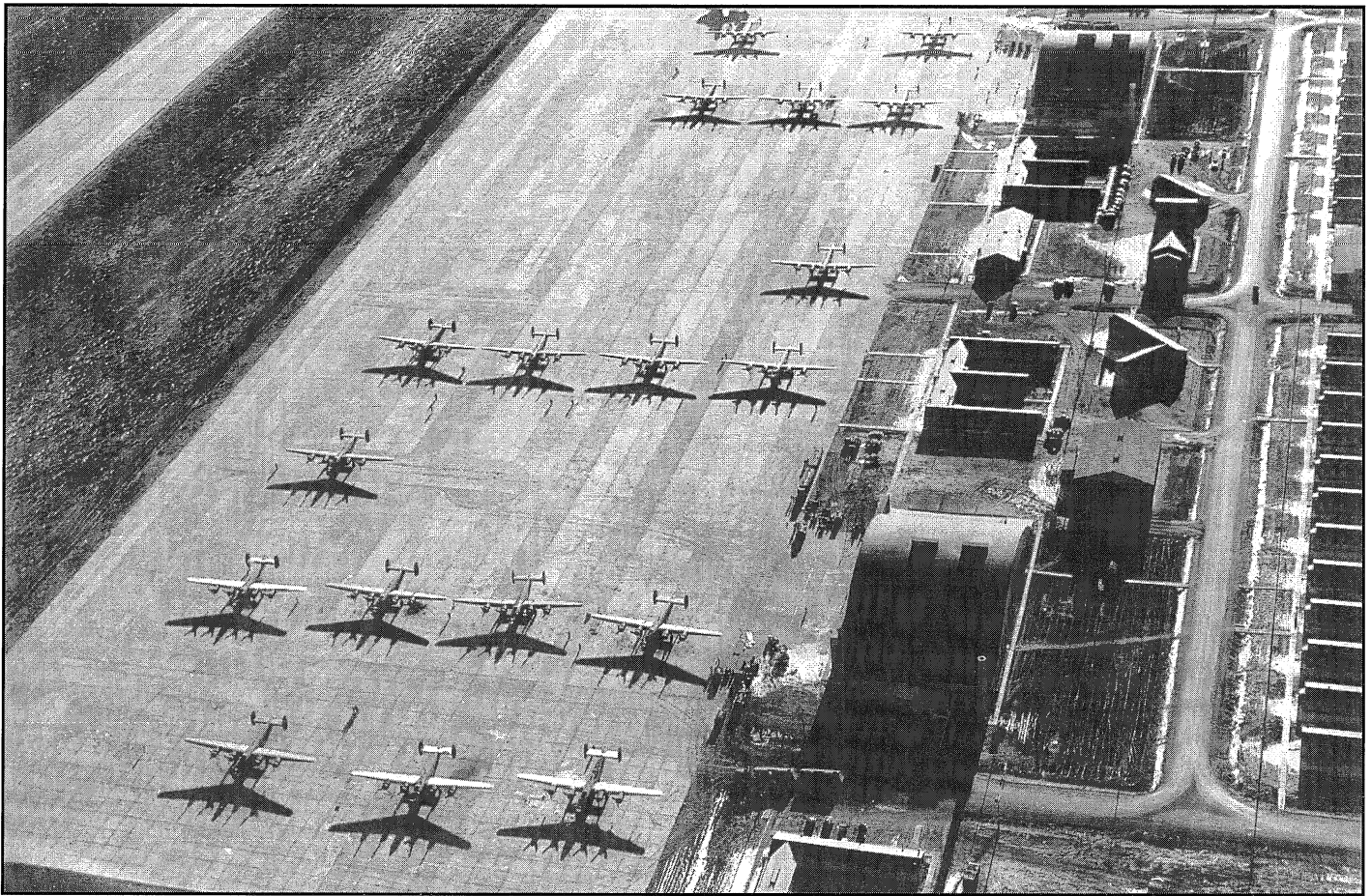
"About six years ago John lost his leg due to sugar problems. He was looking forward to getting to one of the reunions. But his health detracted each year and wasn't up to making the trips.

"John often spoke about his work and his pals in the service. He really was proud of the time he served. He had a military funeral with the Guards. It was very nice.

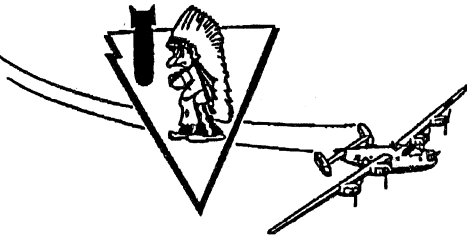
God bless you all."

Our thoughts and prayers for our fallen comrades who have found everlasting peace--you served your country well. We will remember you forever.

Jim Althoff.



781 St BOMB SQUADRON ASSOC
2 Mt. Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94027



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Orren J. LEE DEC 2001
2312 Braemar Dr.,
Sioux Falls, SD 57105