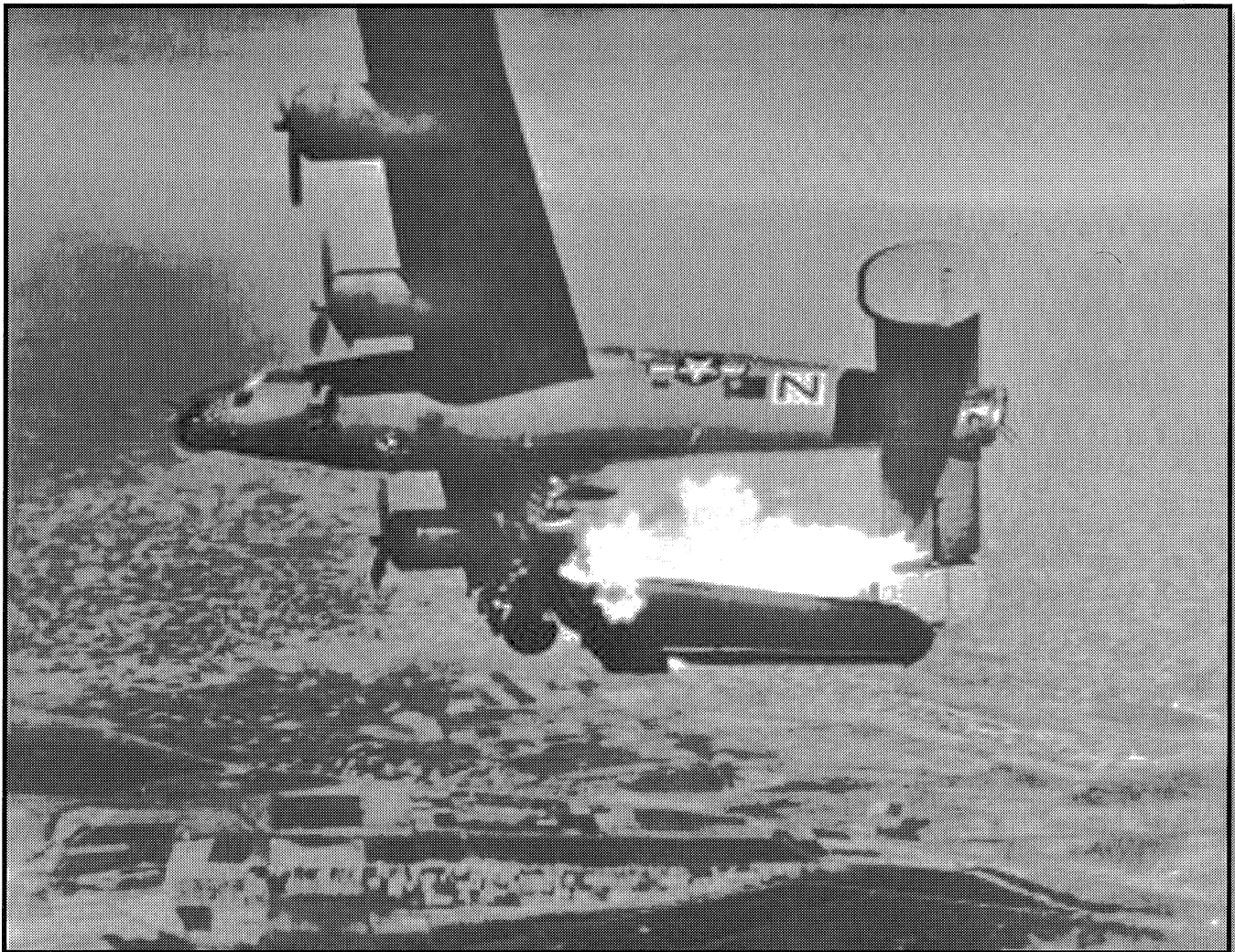


PANTANELLA NEWS

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association©

83 April 2006

SHREVEPORT MISSION ON AGAIN MAXIMUM EFFORT URGED



The War in Europe was over May 8, 1945 and Hostilities with the Germans ended.

One month earlier, April 9, 1945 the first of the ground support operations was flown by the 464th and 465th Bomb Groups when German troop concentrations opposite the British 8th Army front lines near Lugo, Italy were hit.

The next day, April 10, 1945 a repeat performance by the 464th and 465th Groups was accomplished on troop concentrations in the Lugo, Italy area and again excellent results were achieved.

Over the target, on the 10th., "Black N" (44-49710)(Stevenovich II) from the 464th Bomb Group as hit.

There were ten fatalities and one survivor.

DRIVING TO THE REUNION?

Our President, Barney Russell, is asking you to contact him if you are planning to drive to Shreveport for the Reunion.

If you notify him as to your intended route, he will contact various Chambers of Commerce's and arrange for you to receive various packets and information as to side trips and attractions along the way to make your trip more enjoyable.

Drop him a note at:

BARNEY RUSSELL
3 Mimosa Circle
Magnolia, AR 71753-2648
870-234-4063

---REUNION---

**Make your room reservations
directly with the
Holiday Inn
(318-688-3000).**

**Be sure to mention our group
number BOM**

**All hotel reservations must
be made by
September 1, 2006.**

LAST ISSUE "PANTANELLA NEWS"

This issue could very well be the last edition of the "PANTANELLA NEWS".

Do I have your attention?

Do I have your co-operation?

Unless I receive stories, photographs or information from you, your families or friends there will be no need to print the

"PANTANELLA NEWS" any longer.

I have exhausted all of the photos and information that I have, relative to to the 781st., in my possession.

My constant pleas for submissions has for the most part gone unheeded.

I have enjoyed editing and laying-out the "Pantanelle News" as long as I have had resources.

However without in-put in the form of photos, documents, topics and experiences to illustrate and write about, this job is turning out to be a chore and becoming more trying and difficult.

Is this the last Newsletter? I am not sure and I hope not! It all depends a great deal on your in-put and co-operation.

"Git-r-Done"! ' Send me something!!

FRANK AMBROSE
44 East Blvd.
Gloversville, NY 12078
email:

<frank@frankambrose.com>



781st Bomb Squadron Association
c/o Barney Russell
3 Mimosa Circle
Magnolia, AR 71753-2648

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781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)
Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF
Italy 1944-1945
Flew 191 Missions over Southern Europe
dropping thousands of tons of
death and destruction to the enemy.
Shot down 25 enemy aircraft
Received Two
Presidential Unit Citations

ATTENTION !! ALL MEMBERS AND FAMILIES IMPORTANT ADDRESSES TO REMEMBER

**781st. Asso. Pres. Barney Russell:-
BARNEY RUSSELL**
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Editor Note:

The following is a reproduction of a WebSite in Poland. The site was researched and constructed by Szymon Serwatka, a member of the MIA (Missing In Action Aircraft Project) Web Ring. The Site was transcribed from Polish to English by Piotr Wiśniewski. The Site can be seen on the Internet by using the following URL:-

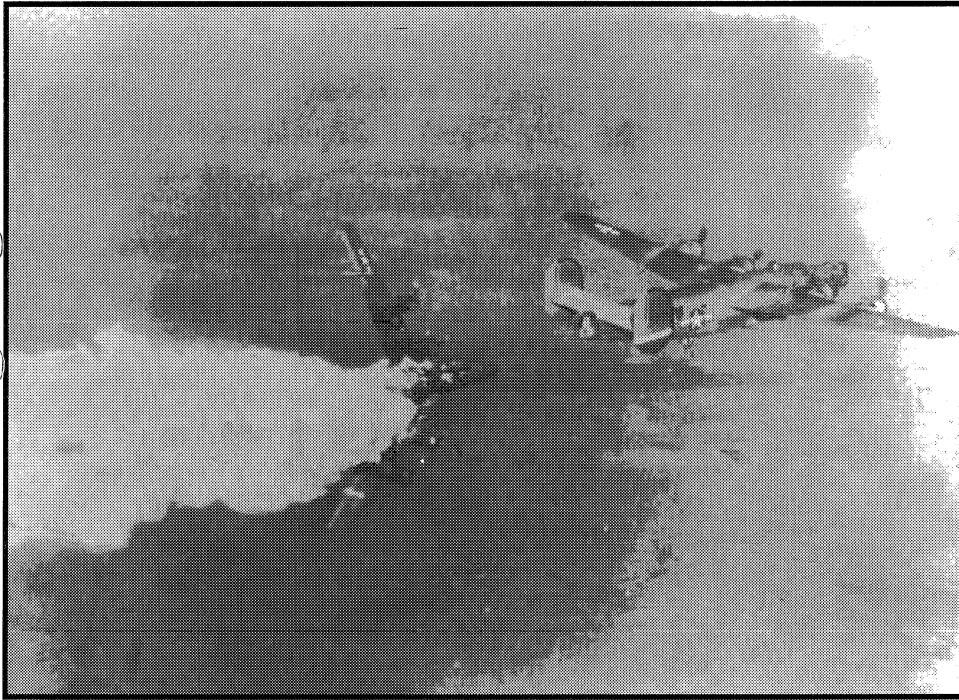
<http://www.samoloty.ow.pl/str208a.htm>



The True Story behind a Famous Photograph

Szymon Serwatka
translation Piotr Wiśniewski

There's probably very few wartime photos showing terror, atrocity and violence of air war so expressively... The photo below had been published many years ago by most of the leading newspapers. Today it is probably known to most of people with at least limited interest in the history of the World War Two. Where did that happen ? Perhaps over the oil fields of Ploesti ? Or the Ruhr ? During a mission to a



Lt. Col. Lokker's aircraft exploding over the Blechhammer South.
(photo: via James Althoff)

target in Austria ? Or maybe... the IG Farben chemical complex in today's Kędzierzyn (Blechhammer South) enjoyed rather doubtful fame of one of the most heavily defended targets in Europe.

The plant was located on the eastern peripheries of the Nazi-occupied Europe where only the Italy-based US 15th Air Force was able to reach. American bombers raided that area many times in 1944 during the campaign aimed at destroying the Nazi oil industry. High Command of the 15th AF sched-

uled for another mission to Blechhammer South for November 20, 1944. Over 400 heavy bombers, escorted by nearly 300 P-38 "Lightnings" and P-51 "Mustangs", were supposed to hit the industrial installations which escaped destruction during the preceeding missions.

However, due to adverse weather, only a third of the bomber force reached the target area.

On that day, a B-24 marked "Blue I" carried more crew than usual. This was the lead aircraft not only for the Group but for the entire Bomb Wing. The "Liberator's" commander was Lt. Col Clarence "Jack" Lokker, also the commander of the 781st BS 465th BG.

His crew were: Capt. Milton Duckworth (co-pilot), Lt. Joseph Kutger (lead navigator for the BW), Lt. Joseph Whalen (radar operator), Lt. Robert Hockman (bombardier), Lt. Grosvenor Rice (nav), Sgt. James Bourne (waist gunner), Sgt. Jack Rabkin (top gunner), Sgt. Paul Flynn (tail gunner), Sgt. Edmund Miosky (radio) and Sgt. Lee Billings (engineer).

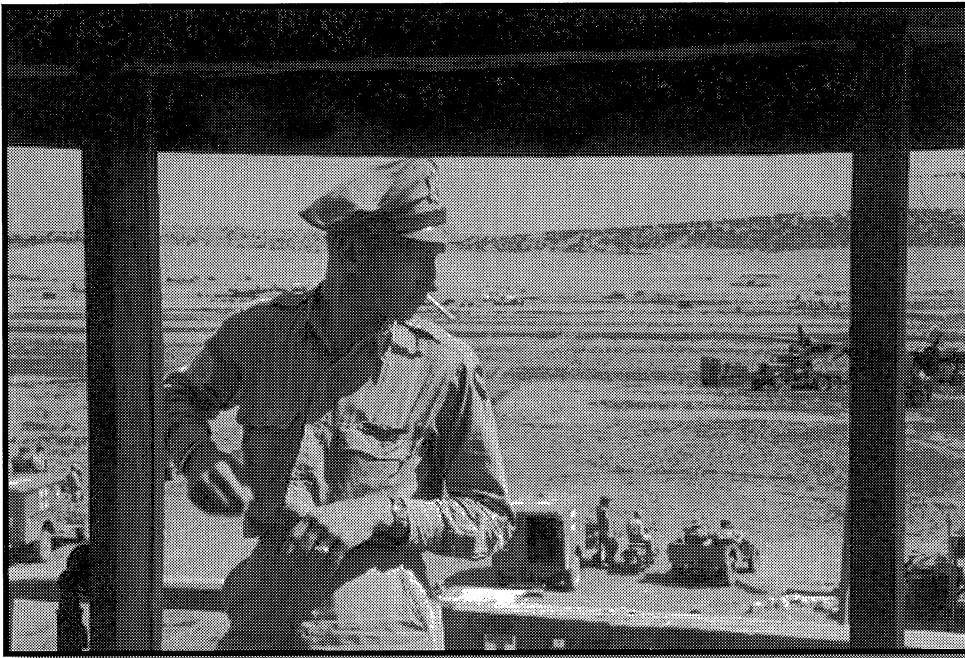
The "Blue I" was in fact a tactical marking, not a given name. At the end of 1944 each of the Bomb Groups of the 15th AF had been divided into "Red" and "Blue" forces. The latter ones, better equipped with electronics, were used for the long distance missions and for bombing without visual target identification. Hence, the lead aircraft was marked the "Blue I". Also, the lead aircraft carried extra crew, usually the lead navigator and the lead bombardier for the entire Bomb Group or Wing. It's pilot was also the commander of the entire formation. Lead ship's ball turret were removed and replaced with the radar for BTO.

On the November 20, 1944, the 465th BG took off at 0742. The bomber formation formed up at 5000 ft at set up a course to the target at 0841. During the inbound leg a heavy overcast had been observed and it was not sure whether the primary target could be bombed. Already over the IP

(still with heavy overcast and malfunctioning radar) it was decided that the formation could turn to bomb the secondary target. Few moments later, the visibility started to improve and suddenly the target appeared down between the clouds. Since the entire formation was already bound for the secondary target, a 270-degree turn was ordered to return to the IP. Lt. Col. Lokker decided also to climb from 22000 ft to 23000 ft to avoid the large caliber flak. Message about the manouever was passed to the 464th BG flying behind.

Continued Pg 4

SIGN-UP NOW FOR SHREVEPORT REUNION OCTOBER 2-3-4



Lt. Col. Clarence Lokker at the control tower of the Pantanella Airfield in Italy. (photo: Frank Ambrose via James Althoff)

Suddenly things started to develop very quickly: just before the bomb run, Lt. Col. Lokker's plane received a direct hit between the #2 engine and the fuselage. Left wing started falling off, the aircraft rolled over, and the bomber immediately burst in flames. That very moment had been captured on the heading photo.

Sitting inside the "Liberator", just behind the pilot (rearwards to the flight direction), was Lt. Whalen. Next to him, facing the flight direction, was Kutger with his radios. Kutger knew that the plane was mortally wounded for through the waist window he noticed the wing falling off. He knew also that all that left was 2-3 seconds to leave the plane. He shouted to Whalen to abandon the ship, but Whalen was either wounded or killed, since Kutger saw no reaction in his eyes. Kutger grabbed chute with his right hand and jettisoned the bomb load with the left. Right after that he jumped into the bomb bay, at the same time trying to put the chute on. He'd been falling through 20000 ft before he finally succeeded. He pulled the handle and after just a couple of swings under the fully opened chute he touched the ground. He was convinced that no one else made it from the bomber.

Lt. Col. Lokker quickly gave up attempts to save the bomber and left it through the top hatch. Rabkin, in the top turret, has just removed his seat and was leaving the ship when the plane suddenly tumbled and he fell back in. He hadn't made it before the plane exploded and most probably was killed in flames. Duckworth tried to get out through a waist window, but failed when the plane started spinning. He crawled to the top hatch, grabbed the top turret's barrels and bailed out.

When leaving the bomber, he noticed Hockman and Rice still in the nose of the falling plane. Hockman managed to put the chute on and got out through the nose wheel bay. Rice had been navigating from the nose turret and got trapped without chute. Most probably, when the electric installation failed, he could not leave the turret and had no time to put a chute on. Bourne, Billings and Miosky were in the rear, at the waist guns. Miosky was last seen standing over the escape hatch with his chute on. Explosion of the aircraft had probably thrown him away from the hatch and he got trapped in the ball of fire.

The same explosion threw Bourne and Billings out. They could not remember the moment they left the ship, but falling down they both managed to

open their chutes and land safely. They both were severely burned and wounded. Bourne recalled that he was standing at the waist guns, trying to get to the tail gunner. He couldn't do that because of flames. Next moment he could recall he was pressed against the top of the fuselage, when the plane started tumbling. The subsequent explosion thrown him clear, with a partly torn parachute and some ropes protruding from the pack. At first, he tried to put them back in, but he could not remember when he pulled the handle. Somehow, he remained conscious, despite his severe burns. He lost an eye and broke a leg when landing. Actually, he landed on the refinery they've bombed and was captured immediately. He spent a month in a hospital at Blechhammer. Right before the Soviet advance troops came, he was moved to the hospital in Bad Soden. He spent rest of the war on recovering from wounds and numerous skin transplants.

Flynn was trapped in the tail turret without a chute and had no chance to abandon the ship. Meanwhile, tragedy in the air continued...

Flak over the target was heavy, intense and accurate. Smoke screen laid by Germans obstructed the target until some 40-50 seconds till bomb run. The deputy lead bombardier finally managed to notice the refinery and, at 1227 bombs had been released. The formation failed to leave the target area as scheduled, because the lead ship was shot down and the deputy lead received some serious damage. That plane was commanded by Fred Johnson with Tom Moore as co-pilot. After the bomb run, Johnson

dropped off the formation, due to fracture of the fuel and hydraulic lines inside the bomb bay. After some hastily applied repairs, the "Liberator" slowly joined the formation. They made it to base, however landing gear had to be lowered manually.

The second wingman to Lokker's plane was Ernest Taft. His bomber was hit soon after the lead ship, went into a dive and exploded. No chutes were seen, however Taft and his navigator managed to escape. According to Taft, their top turret gunner bailed out without chute, he either forgot to put it on or chosen that instead of dying in flames. During interrogation, Taft was told that his crew had been captured by civilians. He was told that his co-pilot bailed out too, but Taft never saw him again.

German reports captured after the war revealed that a number of airmen were lynched by civilians. This could explain the fact that Taft never saw any other crewmembers besides the navigator and that the Germans presented him with some personal articles belonging to his mates.

Joseph Norman with his co-pilot Bob Wills flew directly behind the Lokker's plane. They flew through the ball of fire that remained from the lead ship and "collected" its left main gear. With a tire still burning, it stuck to the nose of the Norman's plane. His crew thought that their plane also got hit and started bailing out. Two of them actually got out before Norman regained control and assured the rest that he could still fly the bomber. In fact, they got hit and trailed thick smoke from two engines. Norman called over the radio that he was heading towards the nearest safe territory. He made it to the Russian-held area and landed safely on the Mokre airfield near Zamość, Poland. They later returned to base.

Flak cut the steering cables in the plane leading the second squadron of the 465th BG and it could not make a turn after bomb run. Therefore, entire squadron flew straight through the flak barrage.

The unfortunate crew was led by Lubie Robinson. Not only the plane was crippled, the ball turret gunner was also severely wounded. Since the steel cables in the bomb bay were no longer needed, the engineer with some help from other crewmembers used them to repair the steering cables. They regained control over the plane and made it back to the base in Pantanella. Other planes were hit

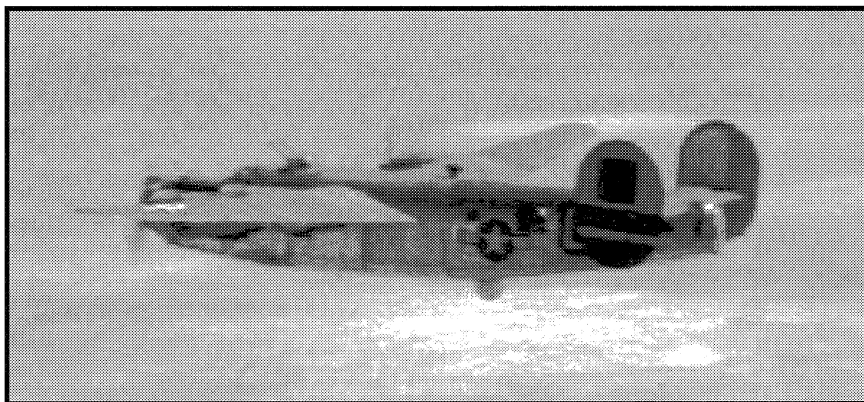
too and some crewmen were wounded.

Three enemy fighters added to the mess, attacking from six o'clock high and the gunners opened fire. P-51 "Mustangs" arrived almost immediately and drove off the attackers.

Fortunately, the remainder of the 465th BG suffered no losses and left the target area as planned. They were joined by survivors from the first two squadrons. The outbound leg was relatively uneventful, in the same weather conditions.

One more American plane failed to make it back and its crew bailed out. The 18 surviving B-24s landed at 1630.

The results of that mission were described in Alfred



Consolidated B-24 "Liberator" from the 465th Bomb Group en route to target. BTO radar can be seen in place of the ball turret. (photo: via Internet)

Konieczny's book "Silesia and the air war 1940-1944". The after strike photos revealed direct hits in the hydrogenation chambers, injector and compressor houses, with two secondary explosions in the latter. Further hits and fires had been identified

right next to power stations and tanks. Many other hits were noticed also in the production installations and in the neighboring living quarters. Refinery's northern railway junction located in the western part of the complex had been hit with a series of bombs, further hits damaged also railway sidings. Luftwaffe released only a brief report "...in Blechhammer damages are moderate, in Blechhammer Sud light, Odertal not hit". On that mission the American losses totalled 16 B-24s (including the four ships from the 465th BG) and two P-51s.

USAAF flew several missions to the Silesian refinery complex. Remains of the lost planes can still be found scattered in the Beskid mountains. Some selected artifacts received special attention and are currently displayed in a local Museum of the Wadowice Province run by Zygmunt Kraus, on a display commemorating one of the USAAF aircrews that went MIA

Perhaps the readers could contribute to preserving the details and stories of these missions and the brave men. Any and all help would be greatly appreciated.

Contact: Szymon Serwatka January 1999

email:- sserwatka@yahoo.com

<http://www.samoloty.ow.pl/str208a.htm>

SIGN-UP NOW FOR SHREVEPORT REUNION OCTOBER 2-3-4

780th BS
RED

#1 I-482
#3 O-313
#5 F-498
#7 L-406
#37 B-446
#38 D-481
#53 R-308
#57 B-446
#58 O-313
#60 K-369
#61 H-376
#62 M-967
#63 N-259
#64 S-167

781st BS
YELLOW

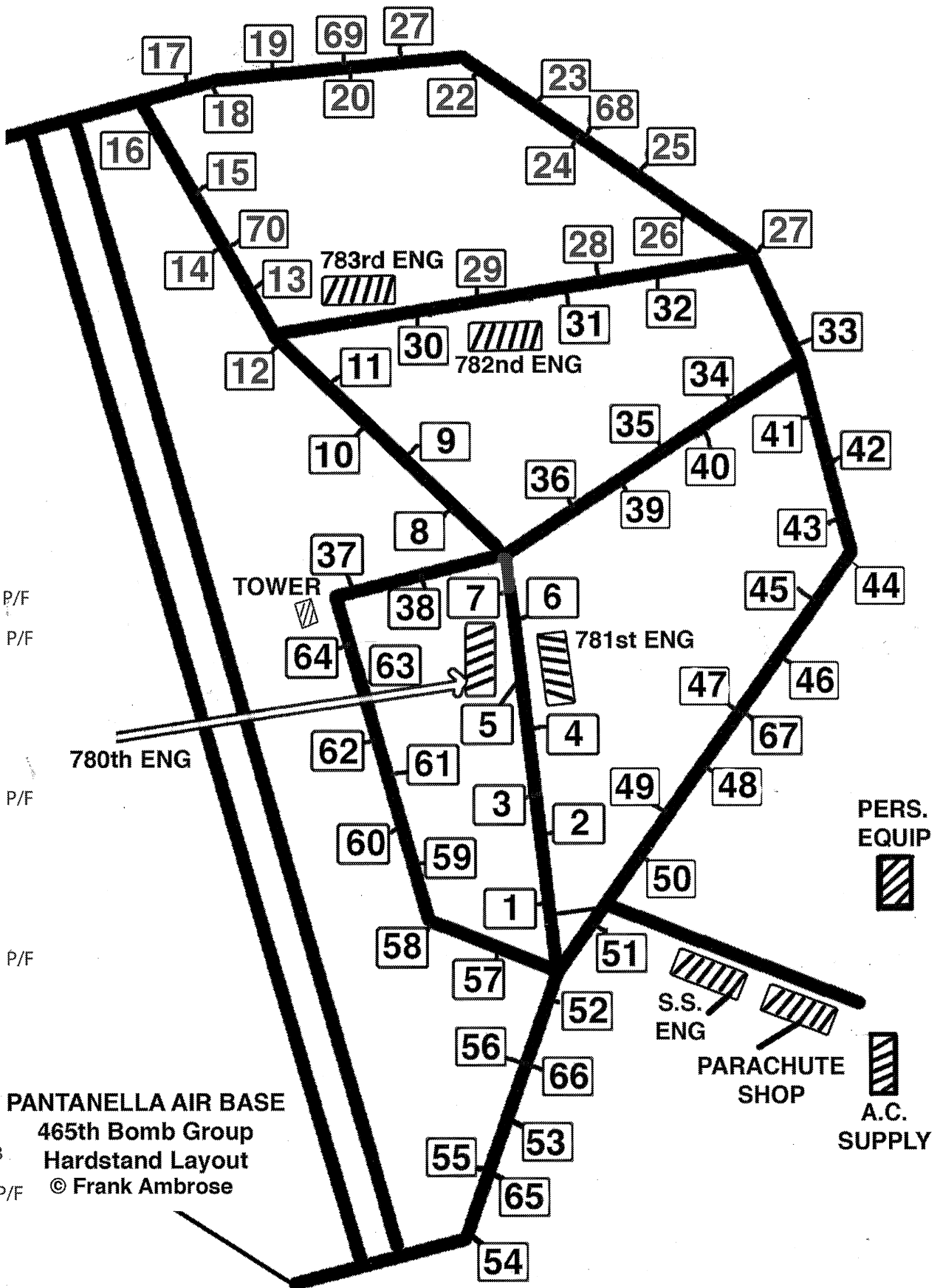
#2 C-358
#4 A-333
#6 F-321
#39 E-414
#40 I-521
#41 D-503
#44 R-401
#45 K-352
#46 N-406
#48 M-559
#49 O-357
P-904 P/F
#50 O-330
#53 Q-857 P/F

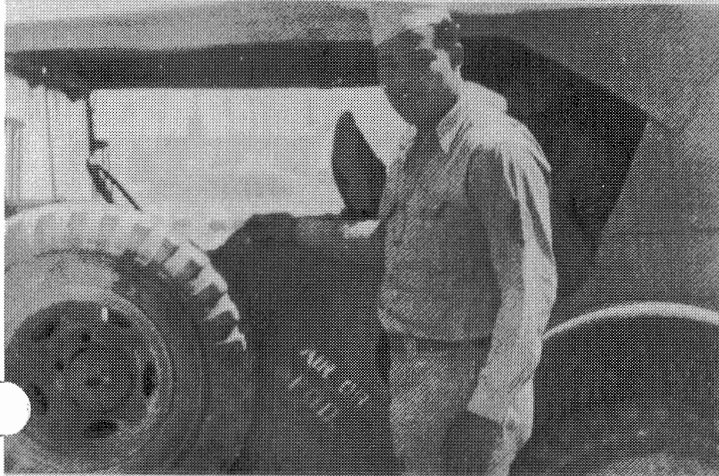
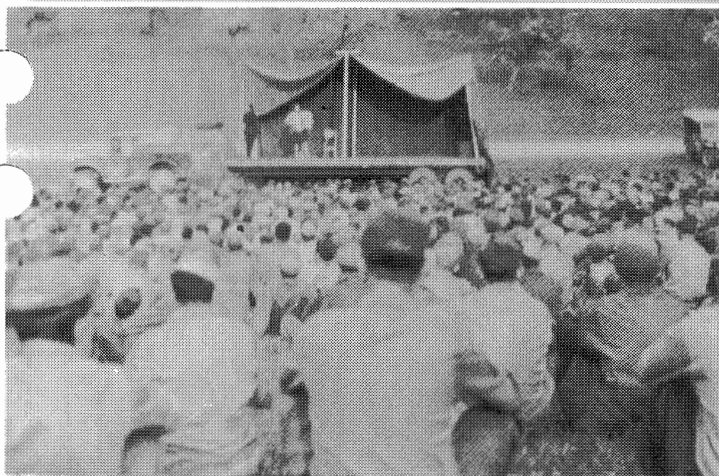
782nd BS
WHITE

#8 X-464
#9 O-917
#11 P-332
#12 M-347
#27 O-137 P/F
#28 B-129
#29 A-284
#30 I-017
#31 E-287
#32 Z-011
#33 W-753
#34 S-442
#35 Q-543 P/F

783rd BS
BLUE

#13 D-539
#14 -097
#15 E-012
#16 Y-337
#17 K-298
#18 H-280
#19 B-2403
#21 P-761
#22 I-853 P/F
#23 X-464
#24 O-360
#25 E-424
#26 R-977





Left to Right, Top to Bottom

1. USO accordianist.

2. The USO shows always attracted a large crowd, more or less a captive audience.

3. Joe Louls visited to referee an amateur boxing match.

4. Lt. Bill Ellett, Cpl. Joe La Pena, and Sgt. Henry Conwell managed to get box seats for the boxing match.

5. USO dancer.

6. USO singer.

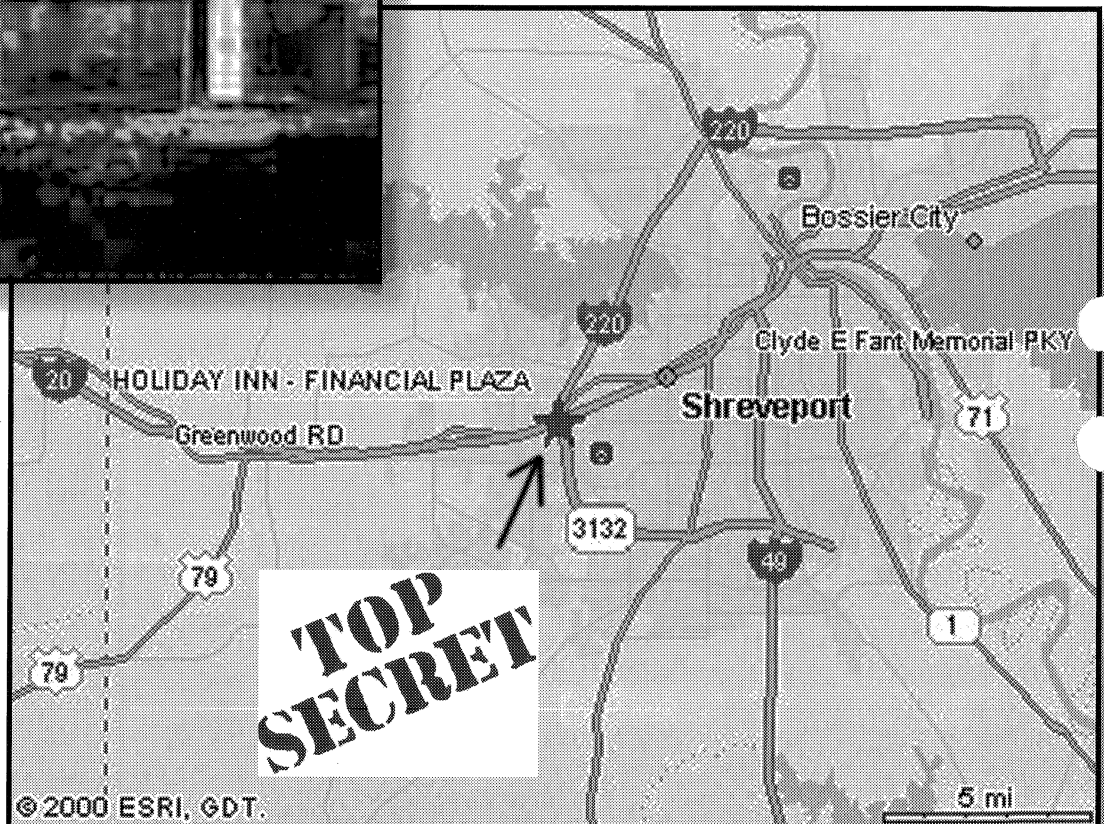
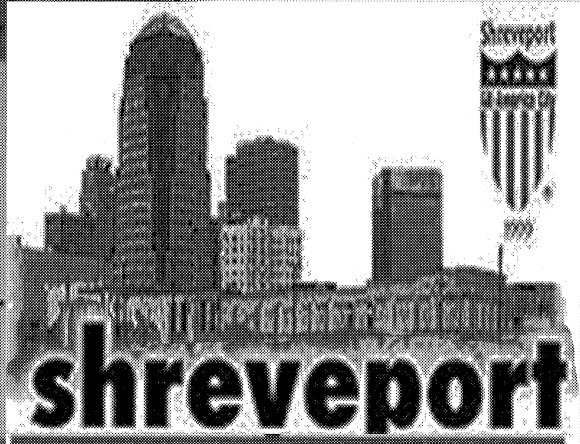
7. Local Italian dancer.

All Photos by Frank Ambrose

The Target for October 2-3 and 4

Shreveport, La.

If you are driving; Intelligence has informed us that all Land Mines have been neutralized and only minor delays will be encountered due to Re-construction or Road Repairs. For those of you who are flying;- No Flak or Enemy Fighters are expected en route, to and from the target.



Greater Shreveport, a vibrant metropolis in northwest Louisiana with a bustling workforce serving the likes of General Motors, Barksdale Air Force Base, Libbey Glass, the Caddo-Bossier Port, LSU Health Sciences Center and the Bio-Medical Research Institute. Whether you're in Caddo, Bossier, DeSoto or Webster Parish, there is always plenty to see and do.

Experience it all, from dining out for the delectable cuisine that Louisiana is best known to spectacular festivals and gaming fun on the riverfront.

Often referred to as a sportsman's paradise, Greater Shreveport is surrounded by beautiful lakes and captivating sights along the mighty Red River. A well-planned transportation infrastructure, you'll spend little time on the road getting

to where you want to go – in most cases, you can get anywhere in 20 minutes or less.

A day of shopping at fine boutiques and neighboring malls means just that – the hassle of heavy traffic and long commutes is unknown in these parts. As home of many celebrated artists and athletes,

Greater Shreveport sparkles day and night with fun and entertainment for all ages.

SEND RESERVATIONS TO

KEN KILL
707 West Circle Drive
Findlay, OH 45840

REGISTER WITH HOTEL

Holiday Inn Financial Plaza
(Holidome)

5555 Financial Plaza
Shreveport, LA
318-688-3000

One mile west of the airport

Shreveport

Located along the shores of the Red River in northwest Louisiana, Hollywood Casino Shreveport is Louisiana's most exclusive new resort. Designed to resemble an art deco palace from Hollywood's Golden Era, the luxurious hotel and casino combine a touch of Hollywood glamour with the excitement of Las Vegas gambling and shows.

More than 1,400 slots and 68 gaming tables are located in the casino which is attached to a grand atrium-style pavilion. The spacious pavilion offers a variety of restaurants and cocktail lounges, an extensive collection of movie memorabilia, the Hollywood Casino Studio Store and a luxurious spa.

While this new resort is indeed stunning, one of its most alluring attributes is Hollywood Casino Shreveport's free marquee card slots rewards program, which awards card holders with discount or complimentary hotel stays, food and entertainment. the marquee card also offers cash bonuses, including same day cash back, and a host of other perks and privileges. so, simply put, all you have to do is play to win.

The spacious casino may be the resort's main draw but there's much to do at Hollywood Casino Shreveport. Enjoy a headliner show presented by Hollywood Casino in the nearby Shreveport civic auditorium or take in a lounge act at the Celebrity Club Show Lounge. Sit down to a delicious meal in one of the resort's five restaurants and cafes. book a pampering massage at the stunning spa, or simply relax and enjoy the elegant surroundings, which include a display of the resort's extensive collection of movie memorabilia. There's enough Hollywood glamour at Hollywood Casino Shreveport to make everyone feel like a star.

THINGS 2 DO RIGHT NOW!!

First- SEND IN RESERVATION

Second- CALL HOTEL

Third- Y'AL COME TO SHREVEPORT, HEAR?

781st. BS 2006 Reunion

October 2-3-4 2006

Holiday Inn

FINANCIAL PLAZA SHREVEPORT, LA 71129

Tel: 1-318 688 3000

Reunion Agenda

Monday, October 2, 2006

9:00 AM to 2:00	Registration
3:30 PM	Bus to Casino
5:00 PM	Casino Buffet
9:00 PM	Bus to Hotel

Tuesday, October 3, 2006

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM	Jefferson Activity
5:00 to 6:00 PM	Business Meeting
Dinner on your own	
Hospitality Room Open 4:00 to 10:00 PM	

Wednesday, October 4, 2006

9:00 AM	Bus to Barksdale AFB
9:30 AM to 10:00AM	Memorial Service
10:00 to 11:45 AM	Barksdale Museum
12:00 to 1:00 PM	Lunch at Officers Club
1:30 to 3:30 PM	B-52 Familiarization
4:00 PM	Bus to Hotel
6:00 to 7:30 PM	Open Bar
7:30 to 8:30 PM	Banquet

(Times/Events and Places Subject To Change)



Frank Ambrose Collection

LETTERS

From: olee@iw.net
 Subject: Pantanella News
 Date: March 17, 2006
 To: fambrose@frontiernet.net

Dear Frank,
 I was a radio operator and waist gunner on Becker's crew in WWII. We were a replacement crew and got to the

Panta-nella Air Base in about four months before the war ended. I had to go to the radio shack to get checked out as a radar operator.

The German guns were run by radar. We would listen for a certain sound then send a signal in the same frequency back at the gun to jam it. My story is that soon after arriving at Pantanella, I was talking to an airman who began telling me of his experience bailing out over Hungary.

He proceeded to tell me how he was one of the last to leave a burning plane but the first to hit the ground.

Asking him how that was possible. He said his chest pack would not open.

Well, I thought he was pulling my leg because he knew I was a rookie and hadn't been there long.

He continued to tell me he was tumbling through the air as the chute would not deploy. He pulled the knife he was carrying out of his boot and cut into his chest pack, threw the chute into the air, it opened and he landed okay.

I didn't give it much more thought being sure he was kidding me until I read it in our History Book.

On page 90 it says Fred Wagner, a

radio man, showed real guts when he had to open his chute while falling with a knife he had received from his brother one week prior to the mission.

I did fly one mission as a radar operator but not with my crew. As you may remember, we used a lot of chaff to foil the radar. It looked like the aluminum tinsel we used to put on our Christmas trees.

Regards- Oren



Editor Note:-

In the letter above, Oren mentions 'Chaff' and how it was used in WWII. These photos depict how the 'Chaff' was used to adorn the tree in my 'Casa', Xmas of '44, by my house mates and I. Pictured from Left to Right, kneeling; Chester Whetzel, standing; Frank Ambrose, Elwood Helfer and Tom Callaghan

From: bradshawbranch@aol.com

Subject: Pantanella News

Date: March 22, 2006

To: fambrose@frontiernet.net

Dear Frank,

I think I covered all the information the last time we sent you an update but please let me reiterate that any one who is interested in coming to the reunion in Portsmouth would be very welcome. I also would like to say that I consider it a privilege to be working on this film about the crews of Pantanella and that I value the friendships of all I have met. To me it is most important that the story of the heavy bombers of the 15th is revealed and remembered. I hope to hear from you and the rest of the 781st often. If I can ever be of help in any way, I will do my best to be there.

Sincerely, **Brad Branch**

FOLDED WINGS

Wilton E. Carter: Navigator:

Blakita Crew

Frank,

My father Wilton E Carter Sr. passed away yesterday after a 2-year battle with cancer. He was proud of his service with the 781 st Bomb Squadron during World War II and did enjoy the two reunions that he was able to attend in the last 10-12 years. I accompanied him on the last reunion in Colorado Springs that he was able to attend. I met you during that time.

Thank you,

Wilton E "Sandy" Carter Jr.

Lt. Colonel Wilton E. Carter, Sr., U.S. Air Force, Retired – Reserves, age 87, passed away February 28, 2006. He was the father of Susan Stanley Carter Kanipe of Princeton, KY, Wilton E. Carter, Jr. "Sandy" of Charlotte, NC and Jennifer Carter of Asheville, NC. He was preceded in death by his wife, Frances Leamore Stanley Carter and his son, William Walter Carter "Mac". He also leaves behind eight grandchildren: Dean Kanipe of Durham, NC, Marc Kanipe of Louisville, KY, Elizabeth Kanipe Englebright and her husband Ty of Princeton, KY, Holly Carter Lotterhoss and her husband Mike of Raleigh, NC, Tyson Carter of Chicago, IL, Cooper Carter of Washington, DC, Corey Sisk and his wife Denise of Morganton, NC and Brittany Sisk of Boone, NC; beloved great grandchildren, "Mac" and Emerson Englebright and Jake and Brandy Lance and James Lotterhoss, III. Surviving also are his brother, Frank Carter of Raleigh, NC and his sister, Frances Finnell of Roanoke, VA.

Born in Monroe, NC, he grew up in Raleigh. He graduated from NC State University, degreed in Industrial Engineering. He co-captained the NC State Football Team and lettered in three sports: football, baseball and boxing. He was a member of the Sigma Nu Fraternity. He served as First Lt. in the 119. Infantry and was squadron navigator for the 781st Bombardment Squadron. He flew 35 sorties over Europe in a B-24 bomber plane. He earned the Air Medal with

Three Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross, given for heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight. Upon discharge he moved to Marion, NC and was employed by Marion Manufacturing Company as Athletic Director. The Carroll Baldwin Hall Community Center. He edited the "Picks and Hanks" company newsletter and coached American Legion Baseball in the East Marion community. He loved sports and his church family. He was a man of courage and conviction who will be missed in the lives of those he took care of. Interment will be in Oak Grove Cemetery. Full military honors will be provided by the United States Air Force. .

From: PerkysGrl@aol.com
Subject: Lt. Col. Ben Donahue,
Date: March 21, 2006
To: frank@frankambrose.com
Frank...

I would like to let you know that my grandfather, Ben Donahue, passed away on March 16th.

You will be receiving a Memorial Letter in the mail really soon...

I hope this email finds you well...

Best Regards,

Jennifer Perry~

Ben Donahue, 781st Pilot,

Born February 10, 1918, died March 16, 2006 in Hollywood, CA. He entered active duty April 1944 as a Second Lieutenant with the Army Air Corps.

He piloted B24 Liberators during WWII over Northern Africa, and Italy. For his service he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was honorably discharged as a 1st. Lt. in October 1945.

Ben was called back to active duty in April 1951, where he again took to the air in the Korean War. After once more being honorably discharged, he continued his military career in the Air Force Reserve and retired as a Lt.Colonel in 1978.

After the war, he began his career as a California Highway Patrol officer. Retiring in 1972. He spent most of his CHP career working out of the Redwood City office where he was responsible for Highway I and the Half Moon Bay area. A friend said, "Ben will remain a legend on the San Mateo coast. Ben was affectionately known

as "Blazin' Ben" by his co-workers and friends.

Ben was an active member of the American Aviation Historical Society as well as the 781st Bomb Squadron and the Golden Gate Wing of the OX5 Aviation Pioneers.

To share a short story; many years ago Ben and a dear friend took a road trip in which they were to visit every air museum and air field they could between the Bay Area and Southern California. One evening, they arrived at a Holiday Inn in Riverside. When they checked in they found that the bar was in "happy hour" mode, serving 2 for 1 drinks and a free food buffet. They thought that they had struck gold. As they sat at their table enjoying a drink and food, twelve USAF officers in flight gear walked in. Two of the officers walked by Ben's table, which was near the buffet, to get some food, as they walked by Ben naturally tried to strike up a conversation with them. He told them he was retired USAF. They were polite but they returned to the others at the bar.

A bit later, Ben's friend excused himself from the table for a moment and, unbeknownst to Ben, contacted the bartender. He asked him to buy a drink (actually 2) for each of the Officers and to tell them it is compliments of the Colonel, pointing to Ben. Soon all the Officers came over to thank him, and in no time, he was the center of attention for hours. The Officers wanted to hear about flying the B24 and WWII. Ben accused his friend of having a hand in all of the attention and the friend swears he saw tears in Ben's eyes. It turned out the Officers flew F-16s and were from Hill AFB. Ben's friend said it was the highlight of the trip and it was worth everything to be there with Ben on that night.

He left us on March 16, 2006 to fly again in his beloved B-24s.

He is survived by Lucille, his wife of 59 years, his daughter Jill and son-in-law Arthur Hively, his two grandchildren, Jennifer Perry and Christopher Hively and his two great-grandchildren Rowan and Zachary Perry. He is also survived by his brother Frank Ziegler and his family.

Remember life is eternal, that which men call death is but a change in the conditions of life, but life goes on forever, and so will Benjamin Louis Donahue.

Joseph E. Rogers:

Radio Operator Frazier Crew Frank,

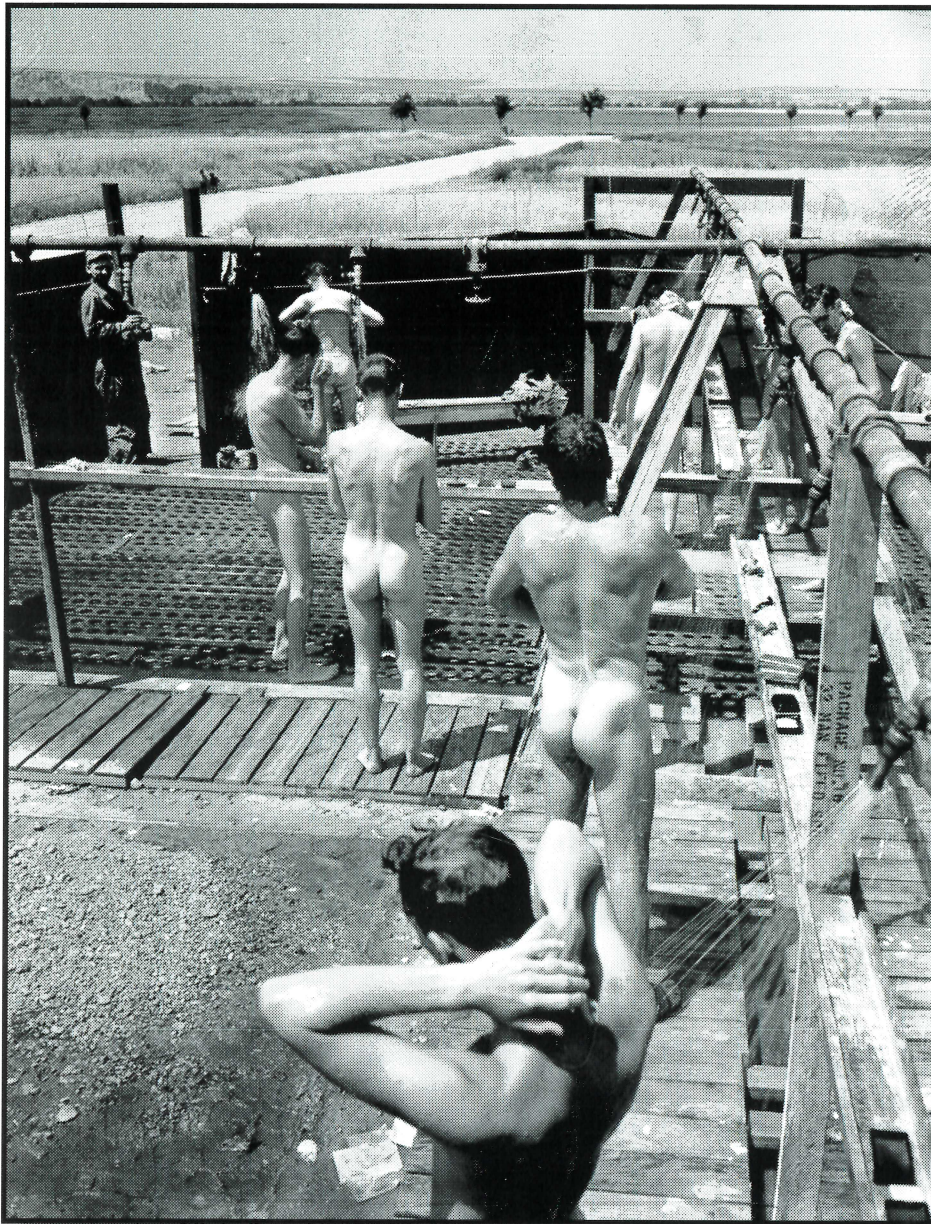
My brother and I are both very proud of what he and you, and the many other service men who fought for our country in World War II. My dad always spoke highly of his associates and crew members. He enjoyed telling my brother Jon and I about his experiences in the Service and later with the reunions at the Bomb Squadron Association, contributing towards the airplane's restoration. He saved every copy of the Pantanella News, and proudly displayed his medals and pictures of the "crew" and the bombers in his family room. I think I have also read every copy, and I've also visited the Bomb Group's web site several times. I have his panoramic photo of the last reunion he attended.

I have attached my Dad's obituary below.

Bob and Jon Rogers

Joseph E. Rogers, 81, of Lecanto, died on Veterans Day, (November 11, 2005) in Inverness, FL. Born in Chicago, IL, he was the son of Joseph and Edith Radzik. He retired from Pratt & Whitney, East Hartford, CT, after 38 years as an engineer. He previously lived in Manchester, CT, and Chicopee, MA. He served in the Army Air Corp during World War II, flying 50 combat missions. He was a member of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association, and Brentwood Golf Club, where he was an avid golfer, shooting his age in the past few years. He was predeceased by his wife, Ruth Rogers in October, 1997. He is survived by 2 sons, Robert Rogers of Bradenton, FL, and Jon Rogers of Bolton, CT, and their wives, Debra Steines and Kimberly Rogers; by 3 brothers, Lee Radzik of IL, Bob Radzik of CA, and Jack Radzik of IN; and a sister, Kayellen (Radzik) Mitchell of WI.

Our thoughts
and prayers
are with all
our fallen comrades
who have found
everlasting peace.
You have served
your country well.
We will remember you
forever.



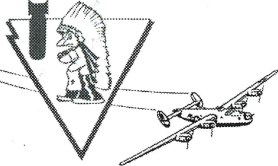
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