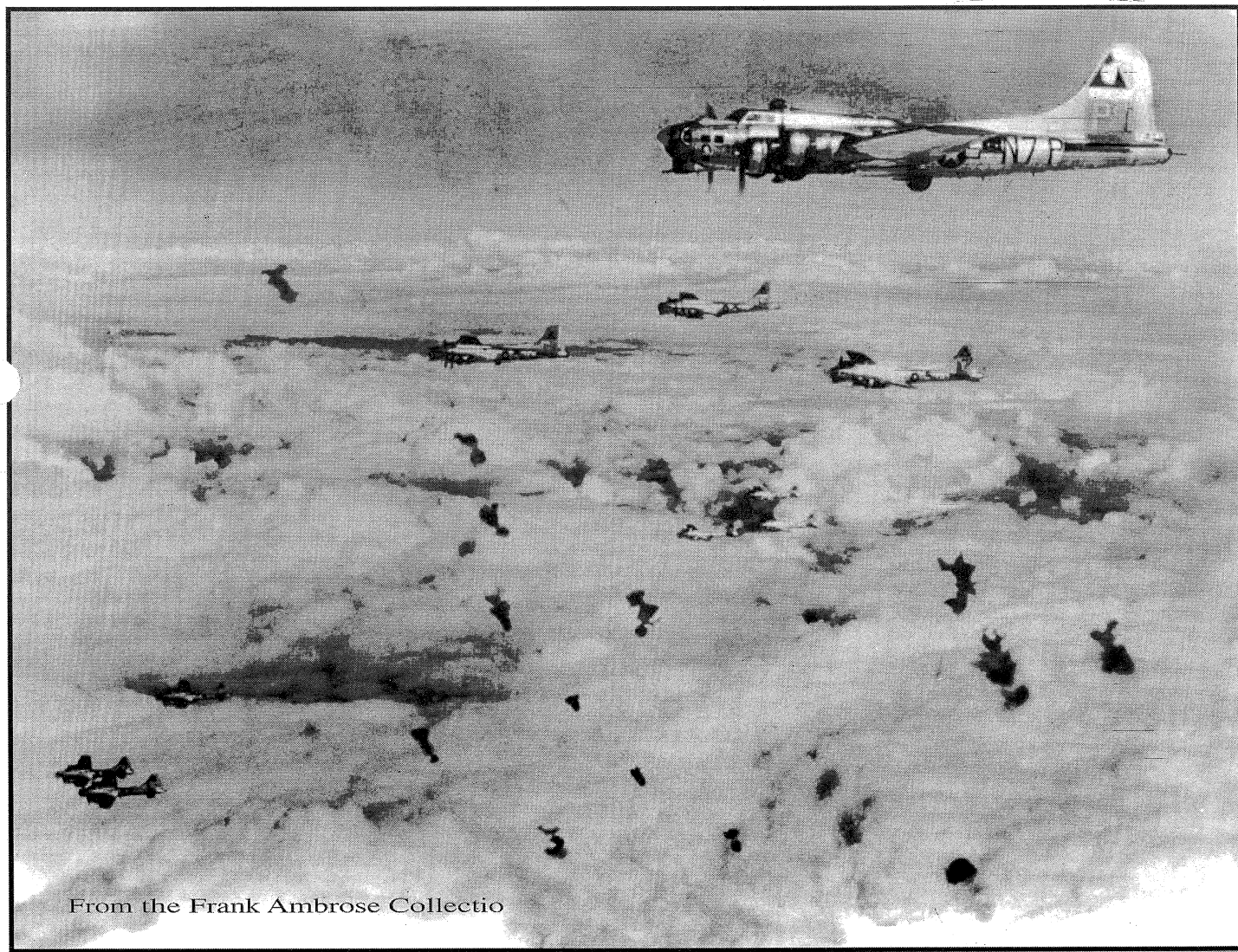


PANTANELLA NEWS

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91—April 2008

TARGET FOR 2008 IS DAYTON MAXIMUM EFFORT URGED



From the Frank Ambrose Collection

The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress four-engine heavy bomber was developed for the US Army Air Corps. Competing against Douglas and Martin for a contract to build 200 planes.

In test flights, Boeing's entry outperformed two other competitors

and more than met the Air Corps' expectations.

A small crowd of Army brass and manufacturing executives watched as Boeing's Model 299 test plane taxied onto the runway.

The 17 was sleek and impressive, with a hundred and three foot

wingspan and four engines jutting out from the wings, rather than the usual two.

The plane roared down the tarmac, lifted off smoothly, and climbed sharply to three hundred feet. Then it stalled, turned on one wing, and crashed in a fiery explosion.

Cont. on pg 2

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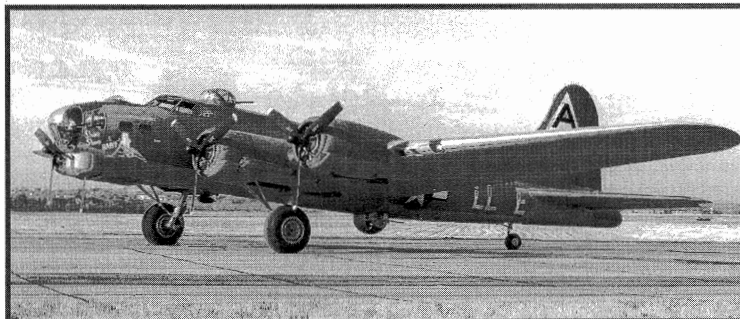
781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)
Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF
Italy 1944-1945

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

The Flying Fortress

From pg. 1

Two of the five crew members died, including the pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill. An investigation revealed that nothing mechanical had gone wrong. The crash had been due to "pilot error," the report said.



Substantially more complex than previous aircraft, the new plane required the pilot to attend to the four engines, a retractable landing gear, new wing flaps, electric trim tails that needed adjustment to maintain control at different airspeeds, and constant-speed propellers whose pitch had to be regulated with hydraulic controls, among other features.

While doing all this the pilot had forgotten to release a new locking mechanism on the elevator and rudder control.

Although Boeing lost the contract due to their prototype's crash, the Air Corps was so impressed with Boeing's design that they ordered 13 B-17s.

Eventually the B-17 Flying Fortress went on to enter full-scale production and was considered the first truly mass-produced large aircraft, evolving through numerous design advancements, from the B-17A to G.

In the daylight precision strategic bombing campaign of World War II the B-17

was primarily employed against German industrial and civilian targets and participated, to a lesser extent, in the War in the Pacific.

From its pre-war inception, the USAAC touted the aircraft as a strategic weapon; it was a potent, high-flying, long-ranging bomber capable of unleashing great

destruction yet able to defend itself. With the ability to return home despite extensive battle damage, its durability, especially in belly-landings and ditchings, quickly took on mythic proportions.

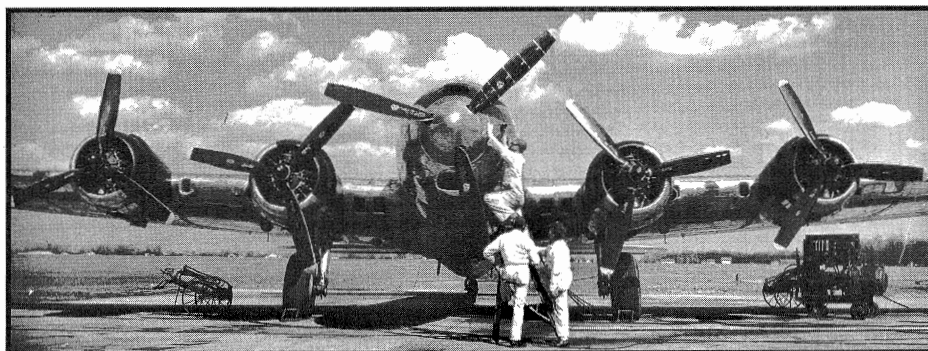
Stories and photos of B-17s surviving battle damage widely circulated, boosting its iconic status.

Despite an inferior range and bombload compared to the more numerous B-24 Liberators, a survey of Eighth Air Force crews showed a much higher rate of satisfaction in the B-17.

With a service ceiling greater than any of its Allied contemporaries, and although no gun on a B-17 carried more than one minute's supply of ammunition, the thirteen Browning M-2 .50 caliber machine guns firing at a rate of approximately 13 rounds per second, the B-17 established itself as a superb weapons system, dropping more bombs than any other US aircraft in World War II.

Of the 1.5 million tons of bombs dropped on Germany, 500,000 were dropped from B-17s.

.....Frank Ambrose-
from USAF Archivers.



BOEING B-17G VARIANTS

Starting in 1943 and continuing after the end of World War II, some B-17Gs were converted for second line duties. The majority of the modified aircraft were made into transport variants. The CB-17G was initially designed as a troop transport capable of carrying up to 64 troops. The VB-17G was a VIP transport for high level staff officers.

The SB-17G, initially designated B-17H, was modified for use as a rescue aircraft. The RB-17G, initially designated F-9C, was a reconnaissance variant. A few aircraft were converted for use as drone directors and designated DB-17G.

The most unusual conversions were three B-17Gs converted to engine test beds. The nose section was removed and replaced with a strengthened mount for a fifth engine.

781st Essay Wins Award For 8th Grader

Cory Love received an Honorable Mention for his article on his great, great Uncle Louis Deslatte in the '2004 Weekly Reader Moments in History' writing competition as an eighth grader at Trinity Lutheran School, Newport News, Virginia. Today Cory is a senior at Fontainebleau High School, Mandeville, Louisiana. Louis Deslatte was a Engineer on the Gaines Crew

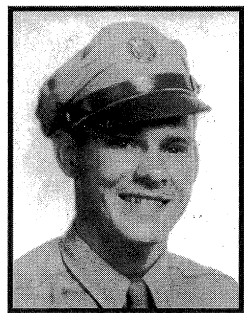
The Award Winning Essay---

Moments in History

by Cory Love

Louis J. DeSlatte

Louis J. DeSlatte is my grandfather's uncle (his mom's brother) and my great, great uncle. He lives in Port Arthur, Texas, where my grandfather was raised.



Louis J. DeSlatte

Uncle Louis's family moved to southern Louisiana from Arcadia, Canada, before he was born. His family is of French Canadian ancestry, also known as "Cajuns." He was born in New Iberia, Louisiana.

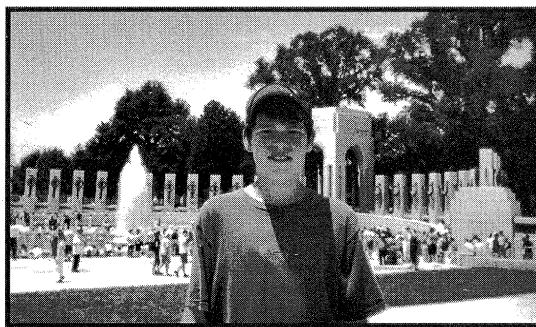
He was one of 13 children; and, when his parents passed away he went to live with my grandfather's family.

He joined the Air Force right out of high school, two weeks before his 19th birthday in December, 1942. Uncle Louis wanted to be a pilot, but it was not to be, and he spent a number of months training as a gunner on a B-24. During World War II he flew on bombing missions over Germany.

During 1943 the Americans thought the War (WW II) was going well, but not fast enough. The United States and Britain were bombing Germany to weaken their determination, weaken their war industry, and keep them from developing weapons that could be used against Britain.

The United States made 100,000 aircraft and 58,000 tanks in 1943. Of all items being manufactured in the U.S. 75% supported the war effort. The B-24 Liberator was one of the planes produced. The Liberator was a 4-engine bomber that could fly farther, faster and take more punishment than any other plane. It would carry a crew of 10 people and could fly missions up to 2,000 miles round trip.

During late 1943 the U.S. 8th Air Force was flying non-stop missions over Germany. The U.S. would fly daytime



Cory Love at the WWII Memorial in Washington

missions and England would fly the night time missions.

Stalag Luft IV was a prison camp opened in May 1944 near Grosstychow, Pomerania, near Poland. Stalag Luft means "enlisted airmen" in English.

The barracks were wooden buildings with poor ventilation. The camp had American, British, Canadian, Australian, French, and Polish P.O.W.s. At times it held 10,000 P.O.W.s even though it was built for 6,400. The camp was divided into 5 compounds. One of the compounds was where the Germans lived. The barracks were heated by coal stoves that were mostly used at night. There were no bathing buildings; and, there were many bugs like fleas, lice, and other parasites.

Food was a daily ration of bread, boiled potatoes, a soup mixture and some meat (horse meat). Red Cross parcels would be received once in a while.

P.O.W.s were locked in their barracks from 4:00 in the afternoon until 7:00 the next morning. Most of the P.O.W.s lost between 15 to 20 pounds.

Uncle Louis never thought about being captured and becoming a prisoner of war (P.O.W.). He always thought it would be someone else; or that, if his plane went down, he would die in the crash. Uncle Louis was more afraid of being injured than of dying.

Uncle Louis flew in 16 missions. In the first 15 missions he never got a scratch. Most of the time he flew in the waist of the plane.

The waist of the plane is the gun turret in the belly of the plane. He had his choice of flying in the top turret or the waist. The waist was colder, sometimes down to 60 degrees below zero, but you could wear your parachute when you were over the target.

The only protection you had was a flak vest. If

you flew in the top turret, you had heat and armor plates under your seat, back, and front. The sight glass in your face was bullet proof. Most of the time he felt safe in the top turret, but one of the drawbacks was that you couldn't wear your parachute. If your plane took a direct hit, you might not have the time to find your parachute or, if you did, get it on.

Before the 16th mission the regular top turret gunner got sick. The gunner that replaced him on the mission they were flying had never flown top turret before and Uncle Louis got elected to do the duty.

The gunner that flew in the waist that day did not have all of his heavy clothes because it was his last mission and he was going home. When the Liberator was hit the waist gunner got hit the worst of all the crew. Uncle Louis felt he was fortunate that he wasn't in the waist that day.

After the plane was hit Uncle Louis bailed out at 8,000 feet. He made the mistake of pulling his ripcord as soon as he cleared the plane. It caused such a jolt to his body and an injury to his joints in his groin area that made it very hard to walk. After walking a few miles in ice and snow his joints stiffened up and marching became "pure hell."

Most of the airplane's crew was captured right away and sent to Stalag Luft IV. The Germans only captured nine crew members from the plane. They questioned the other nine about the 10th crew member and didn't believe there were only nine of them. There never was a 10th crew member on the 16th mission.

The P.O.W.s were reduced to living like animals. They never knew when they would get their next meal during the last three months of being captured and were forced to march day after day.

There did not seem to be any language barriers. The P.O.W.s found ways to communicate. The Stalag was divided into camps by nationality. The group of



George Gaines, Jr. Crew, L to R
Rear - Unknown; Karl Brown, R/O; George Gaines, Jr., Pilot; Murray A. Knowles, Co-Pilot; Melvin G. Farber, Bombardier.
Front - Thomas R. C. McNew, Tail Gunner; Louis J. Deslatte, Engr.; Jack W. Smith, Top Gunner; Lawrence J. Tiehen, Nose Gunner; Vann Reynolds, Navigator. Not shown, Charles R. Murray, Ball Gunner.



I fired my first round it hit 5 inches out at 3 o'clock, I gave it four clicks and fired my next round, hit almost the same place. I moved 5 more clicks. This time I got Maggie's drawers. I fired two more and received Maggie's drawers both times. Then I complained to the range officer. Something wrong with this peace I said..

They double-checked guess what the target was clean. The target to my left had eight hits three were bulls. I then knew what happened. I got a bad score that day, but I was satisfied that I did well. That won't happen again... (Shooting another man's target)

Basic training went along pretty smooth. We sang songs as we marched from place to place.

One that I remember: (BE KIND TO YOUR WEBBED FOOTED FRIENDS FOR A DUCK MAY BE SOMEBODIES MOTHER)...

Some of the guys in the room were talking about the nice girls at the beach and around town. Frankly I didn't see any all the time I was at Miami Beach. Some guys even had dates. They must have brought them with them. I sure didn't see any. (Maybe I didn't look) didn't care neither...At that time in my life the war and the army was all I had on my mind.

It wasn't long now we are over basic and now we get assigned to new work and school. I now am headed for Buckley Field in Denver, Colorado. To study Armament, right down my alley. Must have been the aptitude test.

I leave Miami by train to go to Buckley Field. It was a long trip the way they went. We went all the way to CALIF. to drop some people off there and returned to Denver to let us off. Who knows for what. The school there was for small arms. The Cal.45 colt pistol, the M-1 Carbine and the 30. Cal. machine gun.

We went to school every day for 6 weeks for small arms school. We learned all the parts of all these weapons. (I don't know if the other guys learned or not)

This school was great. One instructor said

I should instruct. Because of the way I learned...

After this 6 weeks I moved to LOWRY FIELD about 20 miles west. It was closer to DENVER.

Now I get to learn the (BIG GUNS)... Big guns are Cal. 50 machine guns, 20 mm. Cannon and the biggest I studied were the 40-mm. cannon. I studied and worked on the guns more to know them and strip them down...Everything there was to know they taught us. We even learned to synchronize firing threw the props of airplanes.

No one knew where we would end up, so we learned all weapons. From the .45 to the 40 mm and all those in between. Never did any firing at this school. On the fourth week we got a pass to go to town. I went to the local dance hall where all the guys said to go I forget who went along with me. I didn't forget the girl I met by the name of Grace Gaster. I still remember her phone # 6723 I went to see her one more time after gunnery training... (I didn't remember the phone # I have a book with all that stuff in it.)

After small arm training I was sent to a weekend of range work. Just to see if I would like gunnery. (I guess). Any way we did some shooting and hanging out with some of the older GI's... anyway this was a camp out in the foot hills of the Rocky Mountains. This place was a rest area where we just did routine work and rested for what was ahead.

One day we went after a rattlesnake that was in camp. That night at mess we heard this story. One of the pilots told that one-day in his P-39 fighter plane. He was at 15,000 feet and noticed down by the stick a rattlesnake coiled up there. He said that he pulled the canopy and rolled over. Flying upside down for a long time the snake would not fall out. The tower said climb to twenty thousand. Then the snake would freeze and could be thrown out. The pilot landed with the snake still in the plane.

This was a good rest before I went to

GUNNERY SCHOOL. Davis Monthan Field here I come.

Tucson, Arizona I never left the field all the time I was there I never saw downtown Tucson to this day and I was there for the next 3 months...

Gunnery school was great, we first went to the range and fired small arms then up to larger weapons. 30 Cal. machine guns on the range. The next thing was to shoot skeet ... they had shot guns on a turret instead of a machine gun. The next thing was they had the turret on the back of a pickup truck.

Now it gets tricky the shot gun mounted on a turret on the back of a pickup. Now we ride down this road and without any warning a clay pigeon pops up. You have to hit it at around thirty miles per hour.

You have to remember the shot gun is mounted. So you have to catch up, lead, and fire. The other thing, you are moving and the target comes out at different angles. This is to simulate airplane movement. I busted 24 out of 25 my best score (all time) with this setup.

The next thing we fired 50 Cal. machine-guns on the range. The thing to do was to fire a burst of 5 or 6 rounds in order to keep control of the weapon. At a still target it was o.k. But when we were acquainted with the .50 Cal. then we went to air to air firing... This consisted of a B-17 loaded just like it would be over seas. The only difference was we only fired waste guns. We painted our bullets so we knew how many hits were in the target which was pulled by an AT-6.

This is a funny situation we flew over the Grand Canyon and fired many a thousand round, where today it is a national monument.

After doing this for a long time we got our wings and became (AERIAL GUNNERS) The thing I forgot to tell is, it was so hot that when you were assigned to a plane to go up one had to run from wing to wing to stay in the shade and keep cool. Other wise you would sweat and be very wet then when you were up it was cold up at ten thousand feet.

Now the next thing was to go to one more school. Everyone on the plane has to know two jobs so I chose radio school.

This is a short class in radio operation. For this I went to Salt Lake City, Utah. The class didn't last to long. I went from here to a 15-day leave before going on to be assigned to a crew and a airplane.

When I got home some of the things I did were crazy, like I brought home my CAL.45 pistol. Paul and I shot holes in the back of that old Chevy that I mentioned before. MOM sold it later and got a good price for it bullet holes and all.

Doing the war one could not find any good cars. I had a good time telling all about the service. No one knew anything

about it. My brother Lawrence was over seas now and there was no way to know where. Some of the things I did was go to see old school friends and such many were already gone to the service. It was November now and getting cold. So the things to do were limited.

After the leave was over I went to McCook A. A. F. base in Nebraska. Here I met the crew. We were introduced in a mess hall meeting. This is what all the training was for. The crew I was assigned to seemed pretty nice to me. I won't go into detail at this time because most every one has heard most stories about the crew anyway...

During the next few weeks we did every thing as a crew. So we could become adjusted to each other. Then we were assigned an Airplane. After this we became a squadron 781st. And the group was the 465th. Bomb Group.

Most every day now some three or four of the planes would fly some where, up north or some where out west.

I remember one such flight we were flying west over Wyoming and run right into a snowstorm. Hawkins the navigator found a small airfield so we tried to land, the only lights they had were two jeeps sitting at the end of the runway. We did manage to land O.K. And stayed in some kind of a cowboy bunkhouse. You can't guess how cold it gets in Wyoming in January. The next morning we ate breakfast with some Firemen and some cowboys that were on this base.

By the way, I just looked up the name of the field. It was named PLAINS AIR WAYS WYO.

They flew freight out of there when the weather was good. It took till noon to dig the B-24 out of the snow and take off for McCook airfield.

One other mission we went on was a navigation trip up to Chicago, this was really great the moon was full and the snow was deep. With the bright moon and all O'Brien flew at about 3,000 feet. Talk about gorgeous... Going along about 200 miles per hour. Can't describe the feeling.

One more and I will move on. This one was a bombing run at night on a bombing range. Seems up north on the Nebraska plains is a place where they had a place to bomb with 100 lb. bombs. At night to find it they had lights in a cross, the center being the bulls eye. Now about 30 miles to the west was a little town that had two main streets. They were also lit up with lights.

Now it being midnight there were no other lights. (DO YOU GET THE PICTURE YET) So after the first run then

the second we could see we were hitting close to the bulls eye.

Not so! The home base called for us to return to base. Our hits set fire to a lumberyard in this small town. Seems we were off target by a little too much. No one to blame here there was two more planes with us and they were doing the same as we were.

After our training for over seas was over we had a brief lull in activity, so four of us applied for a week end pass to Denver. That was Godwin, Williams, Gruber and I.

I looked up my friend Grace that I had met when I was at Lowry Field before. We had a nice time for one day then I developed an earache. The very next morning it was so bad I went to sick call at Lowry and they kept me over. I had been to altitude the day before I went on leave, with a cold... Coming down we had to go back up to clear my ears. It



Back row, L to R:

Harold F. Achenback, Thomas J. O'Brien, Joseph H. Saul, Seth H. Hawkins, Horace E. Williams, Morris G. Godwin
Front row: Quincy F. Adams, Kennard R. Wiggins, Carl W. Gruber, Paul E. Gordon

didn't work too well. Now I have this bad ear. In the meantime we were to ship out on Tuesday of this week.

Every thing turned out O.K. I got back to base on Tuesday and had to get things fixed up. By that time orders were cut, They were going to leave me behind for a replacement. O'Brien came thru, two crews had to go by boat while the others flew over to Italy.

Our crew volunteered to go by boat, now we are off to New Port News Virginia. All the ground forces were at the boat already. When we got there they were loading the boat.

As luck would have it being a gunner and already had the gunnery training. The four of us the same guys that were on the last week end in Denver signed on as gunners on the trip over... With just two days briefing we were now navy gunners for 29 days.

I was assigned a 20-mm on A deck gun with a navy man as loader. The drums of Ammo were pretty darn heavy. I don't

think I could handle. We would fire the guns every day which made the trip go by very fast.

On the crossing there was only one encounter with the Germans. That was a SUBMARINE the navy destroyers handled it although we were ready. They told us to just fire in that direction and I did. For about an hour. I understand they made some hits with depth charges, if they sunk it I don't know.

When we got to the "ROCK" there were a lot of sunken ships that we had to maneuver around. Our first stop was North Africa. We stayed in Africa for about 3 weeks long enough to not like it. Some of the things that went on were crazy. One night two of the guards were killed for what who knows. It was so damn dark you could not see your own hand in front of your eyes. I got a chance to see some of the war damage. There was Ammo

everywhere we were told to let it alone. Some of the guys didn't heed the warning and were blown up by booby traps...

I survived North Africa, and went on north to Italy. Had a one-day stop at Sicily. Then on to Naples Italy. The same thing applied here all things were booby-trapped. I spent about a week there and that was the time Mount Vesuvius Erupted. That was very nice to experience. It was some time in the spring and rain was black and even some snow was dirty. We stayed in an old building that was war torn. There were no windows but the roof was still on.

It came time for us to leave the engineers had all the supplies off the boat and on a train. That was the smallest train I ever saw. The train was loaded with every thing

we needed to set up camp.

When we got half way to Bari, that is where we are going, the train could not make the grade. All the personnel had to get off and walk. I think we walked half a day. I remember eating lunch on a hillside over looking the valley it was called Pantanella, that is where we will build our air field. I didn't know at the time, but we were to start work on laying the mats on the runway.

The operating engineers with their bulldozers had the clearing all finished. The front lines were just 20 miles away. Some times we could hear the big guns blazing away. I suppose there were about 200 enlisted men out every day putting down the runway mats. It took two men on each mat to carry it and every 3rd one had to be staked down to prevent slipping...

The jobs were flexible and long as we worked, it didn't matter what job, so we switched off from place to place and job to job...

cont. pg. 6

The airstrip is finished and the planes are starting to come in. The people that flew over are coming in first. They flew in from South America and then were hung up in Africa.

They tell us that our crew will get a new plane ferried in this next week.

Our plane came in and it is newer than any of the rest. It was worth waiting for.

Now with a little training we fly over the Adriatic Sea every day now waiting for the day we go in combat. The word is next week sometime we will get orders to go on our first combat mission...

We used up most of our off time readying up the tents and mess hall... Us flying personnel made ready by doing gunnery and flying formation which is very important to keep the enemy aircraft from flying between our planes...

Well the first mission came in, the target was the town of (PODGORICA, YUGOSLAVIA) There were some German troops concentrated there, this was supposed to be a MILK RUN! I thought they didn't shoot at you on a mission like this-- anyway we got back safe and did our job.

That number one is over and we are ready for the next mission. By the way the date of this first mission was May 5th 1944.... I won't go into detail about most of the sorties that were flown and that I went on at this time.

Things began to get a little worse as the days went past. The 781st Bomb (That's us) Squadron flew 21 mission in the month of May. I went on 13 of them that is a pretty good record from where I stand. I went on 14 missions in June and in July 6....

July was bad luck times on the 19th I went to Munich, Germany to bomb the Allach Air Craft Factory. Not only did we encounter lots of fighters but also we were hit many times with anti aircraft fire. (Flak) we just barely made it back to Italy crashed landed in a wheat field north of the base. On this mission we all got the D.F.C.

The month of July 1944 will be one I'll not forget (EVER). I shot down a Me -109 received the air medal (3 times) and received the Soldiers Medal...

On July 22, 1944 I went on a mission to the Ploesti Oil Fields in Rumania. This was the worst of them all we lost the air plane.

We were hit by Me-109's and whatever else the Germans could send up. After that we were almost to the Adriatic Sea and were hit with fighters again then more flack. We crashed and that was the end of the war for me... I will not go into details any more.

So in July I had 8 more missions for a total of 35. I could say more on this subject, but for now I should let it rest.

At one time when I was resting I met a

young boy name of VINCE. This young man about twelve years old came to Italy before the war with his parents and they were both killed during an air raid. So he had no proof he was an American. We let him stay in our tent and he showed us around the city near by. (BARI)

One more thing while I was in Italy I found out my brother Lawrence was at Foggia an air base 40 miles to the west of where Pantanella is. Lawrence was visiting me the day of the 22nd of July when we failed to return.

He must have had bad couple days. It took about 4 days for us to return to base. One of the first things I did was go over and tell him I was O.K.



**"We crashed and that was the end of the war for me...
I will not go into details any more"**

After a brief rest (2 weeks) I was sent back to the states, and stayed in a convalescent Hospital for 6 months at Pawling, New York...

The idea here was to get your nerves back. When you lose it, one has a hard time getting back to normal (whatever normal is) I had all kind of treatments to get settled down.

Mostly to just do things, they had classes and sports and, on every Saturday they had dances. Lowell Thomas would do his 15 minute radio show from there once a month. I was on his show once. Just for a couple questions. Then one day a radio show called "WIN A FIN" came to the hospital... By the way this place was once Vassar College for girls and they shut down this part for the war to have room for men coming home from over seas.

ANYWAY GETTING BACK TO WIN A FIN. I was selected to try my luck. There was a punch bowl with subjects in it. I was to draw one. You have to talk for one minute while the host drops quarters in a milk bottle. My subject was girls I had a hard time talking for one minute on that subject anyway. I got my "FIN" \$5.00 so every one was happy.

While I was at Pawling one week I would go home and the next week I stay at the hospital. Lots of things happen in a week's time. They had all kind of classes and old fellow Stanley Missiuda showed me how to shoot pool. I never had the opportunity

before.

One Sunday I went to church, a nice girl sat beside me. We became friends for the rest of the time I was at the school...

This girl called me "SHAKEY" mostly because of the plane crash. I was just having a tuft time with my nerves.

All my life I had lots of names given me... Some of them were WIG, WIGGLES, KEN, KENNY SHAKEY THE FARMER, TROOPER, THE COOKIE KID, POP, DAD. BOY AND HEY BOY...Some I liked and some I didn't. I liked KENNARD best.

On one of those going home trips I met MARIAN LEE DEPUTY. I liked to go

roller skating so on one of those outings at the rink I met MARIAN LEE and her friend Ruth Hasten. I would chase both girls around the rink, and one day MARIAN LEE caught me. We were married on July 18, 1945.

A short time after that I was sent to Albany, Georgia. It was the hot time of the year and I got to spend it in a swamp.

MARIAN LEE came down for a couple months September and October and then in November I was discharged from the Air Force for good.

The time spent in Ga. turned out O.K. I was in charge of some German war prisoners that worked in the machine shop At Turner Field. The prisoners were just like us hard working and a lot of fun. I'm glad I got to know them. I think it took some of the pressures off being shot down and all...

When I was a teenager me and a lot of friends around NEW CASTLE made model airplanes. My brother LAWRENCE was the best. Raymond Evans was his equal...

Well while in Georgia waiting to get out discharge I made a P-51 MUSTANG. It was rather nice and I even put the engine in the rear like the real thing.

So it came time to be discharged and after all the routine things I still had my P-51. The only thing I could do was hand carry it to DELAWARE.

We (MARIAN LEE and I) got our train tickets and climbed on the train for Wilmington... There were no seats the train was full. I stood in between cars till some where in Virginia with people complaining all the way, MARIAN LEE got a seat along the way some where. I got a seat around Richmond, Virginia....

Some trip home after so much traveling for the past three years.

The war is over and America is ready to start over and build back up... and they sure did!!

5 MAY 1944..... The 465th GOES TO WAR

465th BG's First Mission- May 5, 1944

The Events:-

A 465th Bomb Group practice mission preparation and briefing was held on 2 May 1944.

On the evening of that day the first operational field order was received.

The 465th Bomb Group prepared to fly it's first combat mission on 3 May 1944 as a part of the 55th Bombardment Wing (H), Fifteenth Air Force.

The target to be attacked was the town of Podgorica, Yugoslavia, where German troop concentrations were known to be located.

Weather canceled this mission at the last minute and also kept the planes grounded on the 4th.

However the 5th brought good weather and the first mission was flown with the same target, Podgorica, Yugoslavia, as the objective.

781st Bomb Squadron Pilots flying this first mission were:

Maj. Charles F. McKenna, III, Lt. Lewis M. Roberts, Lt. Philip F. Schuster, Lt. John R. Dickey, Lt. Raymond D. Cauble, Lt. Joe M. Athon, Jr., Lt. Robert J. Smith, Lt. Ray W. Hurd, Lt. Robert L. Shetterly, and Lt. Charles V. Stennerson. Hank Willert flew as Co-Pilot for Col. Atkinson's, 55th Wing Commander.

All Crews returned without damage or loss. The Group's results were excellent with severe damage inflicted.

As the 465th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s became operational, it made a total of 20 heavy bomber groups operational in the Fifteenth Air Force.

On that date May 5, 1944. combined with other units of the US ARMY AIR FORCES MEDITERRANEAN Theatre; STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (15th AF) chronicled the following:

640+ bombers (the largest force to date) attack targets in Rumania and Yugoslavia; the B-17s hit marshalling yards at Ploesti/Campina and Brasnov, Rumania; the B-24s hit the marshalling yard at Ploesti and troop concentrations at Podgoricu, Yugoslavia; fighters fly 240+ sorties in support.

TACTICAL OPERATIONS (12thAF) in Italy:- A-20s bomb a supply dump West of Albano Laziale;

XII Tactical Air Command A-36s, P-47s and P-40s fly 24 missions cutting rail lines N and NE of Rome, and hitting guns N of the Anzio beachhead and N of Gaeta and a dump near Frascati; bridges at Orvieto and W of Lake Bolsena are damaged by direct hits, a barge at San Stefano al Mare is hit, several trucks destroyed or damaged, rail lines are cut in several places near Sesti Bagni and aircraft are hit at the Canino landing ground.

A flight of the 5th Combat Mapping Sqd, 3d Photographic Group (Recon), operating from San Severo, Italy, returns to base at Pomigliano, Italy with F-5s.

The Army Air Forces World War II Shoulder Sleeve Insignia

The shoulder sleeve insignia worn by all personnel of the Army Air Forces (AAF) wherever stationed was approved on 23 February 1942.

The patch was designed by Mr. James T. Rawls, an artist and a member of General Arnold's staff. He made many designs, most incorporating pilot wings, but Arnold rejected them all.

Rawls, dejected by his lack of success, was shown a picture of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill giving his well-known "V for Victory" sign.

Rawls made a quick sketch bending the wings up, and Arnold said, "That's just what I wanted."



Gen. Arnold, incidentally, is said to have designed the first Air Force pilot wings in 1917 when he was a major.

The insignia was described in regulations as follows:

On an ultramarine disk (2-5/8" dia.) is imposed in the lower segment a White Star (1-1/8" point to point) with a red disk superimposed and covering the the entire center of the Star.

Surmounting the Star are two stylized wings extending upward and outward at a 45 degree-angle.

The ultramarine disk represents the medium in which the Air Forces operated, and the white star with red disk was the identifying symbol of U.S. Army and Navy airplanes since 1921. (The red disk was removed from aircraft markings in 1942 to prevent confusion with Japanese insignia.)

The golden wings symbolize victorious operation.

On 2 March 1943, shoulder sleeve insignia were authorized for each overseas air force, and the winged star was limited to those AAF personnel not in overseas commands.

On 25 June 1943, personnel in all air forces, including those in the United States, were authorized distinctive insignia, and only Headquarters AAF and a few other independent commands continued to wear the winged star.

It is sometimes known as the Hap Arnold emblem, named for General Henry H. Arnold who commanded the AAF in World War II.

Although the patch is no longer worn on Air Force uniforms, the design appears on U.S. Air Force uniform buttons.

Treasure Report

Ken Kill, our esteemed Treasurer, assisted by his very capable staff, wife Betty and daughter Patty, report that dues have been arriving steadily along with a surprisingly number of new applications applying to become Associate Members of the 781st Bomb Group Association.

The future of our Group will ultimately depend on the success and dedication of those individuals.

Hi-Def TV CONVERSION DEADLINE NEARS

On February 17, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format.

Congress mandated the conversion to all-digital television broadcasting, also known as the digital television (DTV) transition, because all-digital broadcasting will free up frequencies for public safety communications (such as police, fire, and emergency rescue). Also, digital is a more efficient transmission technology that allows broadcast stations to offer improved picture and sound quality, as well as offer more programming options for consumers through multiple broadcast streams (multicasting). In addition, some of the freed up frequencies will be used for advanced commercial wireless services for consumers.

As of May 25, 2007, all television equipment being sold should contain a digital tuner, or should be identified at the point-of-sale as not having one. Be sure to look for this label if you are purchasing a new TV.

After February 17, 2009, you will be able to receive and view over-the-air digital programming with an analog TV only by purchasing a digital-to-analog set-top converter box.

Between January 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be able to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the future purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes.

Eligible converter boxes are for the conversion of over-the-air digital television signals, and therefore are not intended for analog TVs connected to a paid provider such as cable or satellite TV service.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the coupon program. For more information, visit the NTIA website at www.dtv2009.gov.

The Commission's DTV website, www.dtv.gov, also provides information for consumers on the upcoming digital-to-analog converter box coupon program.

An Autobiography

S/Sgt Kennard Robert Wiggins

Ball Gunner: O'Brien Crew
1st BS 465th BG 15th AF



Entered service on 25 Feb 1943, discharged from active service 20 October 1945. Flew from Pantanella Army Air Base (South of Cerignola near Bari) in Italy with the 15th Air Force, 55th Wing, 465th Group, 781st Squadron. 35 Combat Missions, 168:55 Flying Hours in

Combat, as ball turret gunner in B-24 aircraft (Belly gun). Aerial gunnery credited with destruction of one enemy Me-109 Fighter Plane (July 1944). Enlisted in Delaware Air National Guard (142nd Fighter Squadron) 6 September 1946 (Charter member) and discharged 24 January 1951.

Decorations and Awards:

Soldiers Medal

Distinguished Flying Cross

Air Medal with two devices

The European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with 5 Bronze Stars

Good Conduct Medal

Distinguished Unit Badge

Aerial gunner Aviation Badge

Sharpshooter Badge

Overseas Service Bar

Soldier's Medal--Crash Landing

Gruber killed in crash

Crew # 3-H-262: HQ 465th BG AAF, AAB McCook, Nebraska, 1 Jan 1944

Thomas O'Brien, Pilot

Joseph H. Saul Jr. Co-pilot

Harold F. Achenback, Bombardier

Seth H. Hawkins J., Navigator

Sgt Horace E. Williams, Flight Engineer

Sgt Paul E. Gordon Jr., Nose Gunner

Sgt Carl W. Gruber, Radio Operator

Sgt Quincy F. Adams, Tail Gunner

Sgt Morris G. Godwin, Gunner

Sgt Kennard R. Wiggins, Ball Gunner

OFF WE GO INTO THE WILD BLU...

Autobiography

by Kennard R. Wiggins Sr

Now if I say I was to be drafted you would be right. Only I will say its time for me to go into the "ARMED FORCES". I went to Fort Dix in NEW JERSEY. From there I went to the AIR FORCE in MIAMI FLORIDA. For my basic training... On the train from New Jersey the temperature got mighty cold

going through the mountains in West Virginia. I don't know why we went that way took a whole day. Sure was warm when we arrived.

I went on a bus over to Miami Beach. I was put in a hotel on the beach. The President Madison was the name..

I was thinking is this the way it is I can take this very well. And there is the ocean.

You won't believe it about the first two weeks went bye-bye before I wet a toe. (Except the shower). One of the first things we did after we were assigned to quarters was take a test. (I. Q.) this was to find out what you were suited for. I sure was glad I went to trade school now. Most the guys only had High school and were fresh out at that. I scored 129 on my first test and 135 the second time. I found out don't skip a question take a guess you could be right. Skipping a question is the same as a wrong answer.

After living in Delaware all my days, Miami Beach seemed rather hot to me. The first week almost every one ended up with sunburn. (Me too) We had some classes to inform us of what the Air Force was about and lots of drill and roll call at least four times a day. The marching in the hot sun was a killer inspection and K. P. seemed to be the order of the day.

This may bore some people but I'm on a roll now. I had forgot most the routine Most of it is coming back to me now.

About once or twice a week they had a parade for some High Brass, or senator. Most the time was drill and picking up cigarette butts I don't know where they came from Soldiers in their right mind would not throw them down. One drill Sergeant told us how to field strip a butt. I did not smoke. You tear the butt and dump the tobacco on the ground and roll the paper into a little bee bee and stomp it all in the ground. The parade grounds were some sort of park with no trees. Some times we would march 20 abreast and 20 deep 400 guys try-



781st BS... O'Brien Crew

Frank Ambrose Foto

ing to keep in step and we were all rookies this was what they call Basic Training... One thing we had to learn the M-1 rifle so to learn it we had to dismantle it blind folded. This was to insure that if there was a malfunction in the dark some time you were able to fix it (the rifle) so you would carefully lay the parts down as they came out. When you were to put them back they would fit nicely. Once in a while the instructor would move or replace a part. You better know where things go or you failed the test.

I was so conscientious about learning everything that I listened very carefully...

After we learned all the parts of a rifle we went to the RIFLE RANGE. This is what I been waiting for. It seemed like we rode for about two hours in the back of a truck down a dusty road. After we arrived there we did a lot of dry firing. That is sight on the target and then squeeze one off. If and when the rifle sight stayed on the target you did well, after you did this five or six times. The range officer gave you a round to shoot.



1st Mission photo by Frank Ambrose

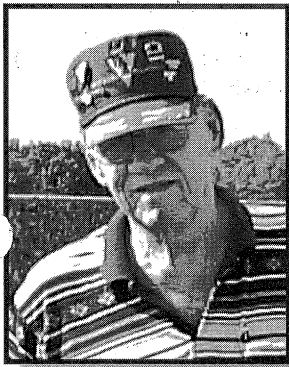
L to R-Front: Wiggins, Adams, Gruber, Godwin, Williams
Standing: Hawkins, Achenback, Col Atkinson (Acting Pilot), Lt. Willet (Acting Co-Pilot), Absent: Gordon

American P.O.W.s that Uncle Louis was with spent a few days in a British P.O.W. camp. The British P.O.W.s seemed to have an easier time getting their Red Cross supplies. The Americans were starving even though the British had a warehouse full of British Red Cross parcels. They refused to share with the Americans. The American prison camp near by gave them their soup so they could survive.

For a time Uncle Louis thought he was going to starve. The sergeant in charge finally got them some Red Cross parcels. There were a number of days Uncle Louis thought the end was near. All he could do was take it one day at a time. When they were in camp, they read books, played checkers, and walked around the compound to pass the time. His family back home was the furthest thing from his mind.

He mostly thought about surviving. In February, 1945, the Germans told the P.O.W.s they were going on a three day march. The march lasted three months. It was 15 degrees and there were 14 inches

of snow on the ground. They were marched across Poland and across northern Germany near to Hamburg. Many died along the march. They slept in barns, along the road, and in the forest. The march



Louis J. DeSlatte

covered 600 miles. No one knows how many men died in the march. The P.O.W.s who survived were finally freed by the Allies during the spring of 1945.

The day he was freed from being a P.O.W., Uncle Louis felt like he had "died and gone to heaven." There is no was to describe his emotions even to this day. After calling home he ate and ate and ate.

After he returned home, he left the Air Force, though there were days he wished he had stayed in. He would never join the Army, but he would join the Air Force again if there was a war. Back in his younger days, it was something else if you had those wings pinned on your chest. You considered yourself something special, but it didn't feel special when they started shooting at you.

Uncle Louis turned 80 in December, 2003. My grandfather said Uncle Louis has always been his hero and that his Uncle is the reason he joined the Air Force.

To this day Uncle Louis is proud to have served his country and would do it all over again.

I am honored and proud to have Uncle Louis as my uncle.

HONOR FLIGHT ORGANIZATION FLYS VETS TO DC AT NO COST

The Honor Flight Organization is a non profit organization created to fly Military Veterans to Washington, DC to visit and reflect at their memorials absolutely free.

Across America, about 1,200 WWII Veterans pass away every day and top priority for flights are given to those senior veteran WW II survivors along with those other veterans that may be terminally ill.

The Honor Flight's organization is committed to transport those veterans that have never been able to visit the various national memorials. The memorials constructed to do them honors for the service and sacrifice of their and their brothers and sisters in arms.

All such veterans, regardless of the conflict they participated in (Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, etc), who wish to visit our nation's existing memorials, will be invited to do so.

Specifically, this program includes ALL veterans, even younger veterans who participated in recent conflicts for which a national memorial does not exist.

The Honor Flight Network, feels all veterans should have an opportunity to clearly see and appreciate how our nation honors those who were willing to lay down their very lives in service to our country.

Honor Flight pledges to do whatever it takes to fulfill the dreams of veterans and, very importantly, our senior heroes to

travel absolutely free.

Honor Flight first flew with six small planes flying 12 WW II veterans, in May 2005 departing from Springfield, Ohio,

In 2006, with a waiting list of veterans expanding rapidly, they transitioned to commercial airline carriers to accommodate the maximum number of veterans as possible.

Partnering with HonorAir in Hendersonville, North Carolina and Hero Flight in Provo, Utah, they formed the "Honor Flight Network."

In 2007 they aggressively expanded their program to other cities across the nation.

A special category of veterans concerned for are all those who served in uniform that were recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. This special category of veterans are referred to as "TLC's," meaning "Their Last Chance".

TLC's are given top priority. Everything possible is being done to ensure such veterans are accommodated on the very next flight, regardless of their location.

The veteran is not required to pay for ANYTHING, unless they choose to purchase souvenirs.

If you or someone you know meets this criteria, please contact:

Mr. McLaughlin
at (614) 237-3086
or (614) 558-6220

TAX RELIEF CHECK REBATE DATES

THESE ARE THE DATES WE WILL BE RECEIVING OUR TAX RELIEF CHECKS. IT IS SCHEDULED BY THE LAST 2 NUMBERS OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER. IF YOU FILED A JOINT RETURN IT WILL BE UNDER THE HUSBANDS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

The check is in the mail		
Week	Last 2 digits of your SSN	Receive your check by week of
1	00 - 09	July 23
2	10 - 19	July 30
3	20 - 29	August 6
4	30 - 39	August 13
5	40 - 49	August 20
6	50 - 59	August 27
7	60 - 69	Sept. 3
8	70 - 79	Sept. 10
9	80 - 89	Sept. 17
10	90 - 99	Sept. 24

For married taxpayers who filed a joint return, the first Social Security Number on the return determines the mailing date.

'08 REUNION NEWS

Ron reports that he and his co-chair person, Carole, aided by his able staff of two sons, Gregg and Roger, have been in constant touch with the Air Force Museum in Dayton tying up a multitude of loose strings.



Carole and he are determined to make the reunion the best ever.

Efforts are being made to place the B-24 on

display for the vets in our group to tour

They want to remind everyone that the block of rooms the Hope Hotel has reserved for our reunion is at the rate of \$65. and the Reservation cut-off date is September 5, 2008.

In order to keep the costs down of hiring Buses used to shuttle our members around to make our Reunion more affordable, efforts are being made in an attempt to rent passenger Vans for the duration of the Reunion to be used instead.

Greg and Rodger Soucy have volunteered to chauffeur the Vans to and from the National Museum of the United States Air Force, to the malls, the beauty parlor, and possibly from the airport with a reservation.

The HOPE HOTEL...

The Hope Hotel is the only privately owned hotel operated on Air Force property - a unique arrangement that required an act of Congress. In this way, both military and civilians have easy access to the Hope Hotel and the aviation heritage that surrounds it.

Embodying the commitment and laughter that served our troops for half a century, the Hope Hotel is aptly named after Bob Hope. With Mr. Hope as our inspiration, our commitment is to create a place that lives up to his reputation - both serious work and lots of fun!

The Hope Hotel & Conference Center is literally at the Crossroads of America. Located in the I-675 corridor, just minutes from Interstates 75 & 70 as well as downtown Dayton, Springfield, and the Dayton International Airport, Ohio.

The Hope Hotel's guest rooms are complete with internet access, in-room coffee service, hairdryer, iron/ironing board and mini-refrigerators, voice mail, AM/FM clock radio and individual climate control.

**Make Your Hotel
Reservations
Directly With
The Hope Hotel
Tel: 1-937-879-2696**

AND A LETTER.....

January 29, 2008

781st Bomb Squadron Association

The Squadron Treasurer

Mr. Ken Kill

707 West Circle Drive

Findlay, OH 45840

RE: MEMBERSHIP FEES

Kurt D. Hillernan and Robert B. Hilleman

Dear Mr. Kill:

Please find enclosed check #491 in the amount of \$20.00 for two (2) memberships for my husband, Kurt Hilleman, and his brother Robert B. Hilleman.

Their grandfather, **Clarence C. Hilleman**, served in the 781 Bomb Squadron, 465th Bomber Group on Gene Bamett's crew.

My husband and his brother are very proud of their grandfather's service to our country and always enjoyed listening to his recollections of the war. He as well as all his crew served our country well and we could not experience the freedom we now have in the United States if it were not for your service.

We thank all who served and appreciate the sacrifices your generation made. My husband will attempt to attend the next reunion, and if possible, his brother if he is not serving in Iraq.

With deepest gratitude,
Kurt and Paula Hilleman
1557 NE Court
Pompano Beach, FL 33064

**781st BS ASSO 2008 Reunion
October 5-6-7-8, 2008**

**Hope Hotel
WPAFB, OH**

Tel: 1-937-879-2696

Tentative Reunion Agenda

Sunday, October 5, 2008

3:00 PM to 9:00 PM Registration/Hospitality

Monday, October 6, 2008

9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Registration /Hospitality
7:00 PM Board of Director's Meeting

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

8:30 AM Bus to WPAFB Chapel II
9:00-9:30 AM Memorial Service
10:00 - 4:00 PM Dayton Aviation Tour
7:00 PM--? Business Meeting- Hospitality Suite

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

9:00 to 11:00 AM Guided Tour/WWII Area
& Presidential Aircraft Hangar
11:00 AM to 4:00 PM Courtesy Van Back to Hotel
5:30 PM Van to National Museum & Gift Shop
6:00 to 7:00 PM Open Bar-Aircraft Entry to the B-24
7:00 to 8:30 PM Banquet on the Museum Floor
8:30 to 9:30 PM Program
9:30 to 10:00 PM Van to Hotel

(Times/Events and Places Subject to Change)

**ATTENTION VETS...
...Become a Recruiter**

Family member of the 781st Bomb Squadron that served at Pantanello Base in Italy or any person dedicated to preserving the history of the Association is now eligible to join and become an Associate Member of our Association.

Only by getting our younger people to participate will Our Legacy survive. Encourage your family members to join. Contact any officer for Application Forms

MYSTERY PHOTO....

I found this print in the bottom of my Barracks Bag. If any of you can still remember that far back and can identify these men, write me a letter...

frank@frankambrose.com



FOLDED WINGS

Norman Glen Stenerson:

.....Tail Gunner, Maccani Crew

From: tntwatson@msn.com

Subject: Obit

Date: February 23, 2008

To: frank@frankambrose.com

I would like to submit my father's obituary to the Pantanella News,
Norman Glen Stenerson, age 87, of Apache Junction, AZ, formally of Baker, MT, passed away 2-2-08 of cancer.



He served in WWII, 15th Air Force, 465th bomb group, 781st bomb squadron, flying over 50 missions as a B24 tail gunner, 1943-45 in Italy.

He was preceded in death by his wife Jean and leaves behind three daughters, Tami, Terri and Kristie, 3 sons-in-law, 2 granddaughters, 1 grandson and 1 great granddaughter.

Terri Watson

Colstrip, MT

tntwatson@msn.com

Robert H. Matthews:

.....Bombardier, Schuster Crew

Robert H. Matthews, passed away February 15th, 2008.

He was a member of the Dunwoody, Georgia VFW Post 10822 and was a past commander of Post 9548 in Middleton, Massachusetts. The Dunwoody VFW post conducted his memorial service and he and his wife will be "inurned" at the Columbarium at Arlington Cemetery in September. Reported by his son,

Alan Matthews



Jack C Williams:

.....Tail Gunner, Prince Crew

From: navycdog13@msn.com

Subject: Jack C Williams,

Date: February 8, 2008

To: frank@frankambrose.com

Dear Frank and members of the 781st:

I was asked by Mom to notify you of the passing of my Dad,
Jack C Williams, on 4 February 2008 in Aurora after a long illness.

He was a tail gunner on the Yellow "G" which was shot down returning from Weiner-Neustadt on 30 May 2008.

Dad retired and had a 32 year career as a school principal in Colorado.

He was our "hero" like all of you and will be greatly missed.

Please make notification as appropriate in the Pantanella News. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Steve Williams

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**

President's Corner

Comrades-

The Soucy Family and our 'Executive Secretary' are in full swing with the planning stage of the 781st 2008 Reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

Please note the correct dates are **October 5th through the 8th**. Mark your calendars accordingly.

We have a tentative agenda printed elsewhere in this Newsletter. Also, we have a memo explaining transportation for the reunion elsewhere in this Newsletter.

I want to thank family members who have sent in their applications and dues to be associate members. It is encouraging to get the support of family members. We will be looking to all members to help us decide on the 2009 Reunion.

Where do we go? We welcome proposals for 2009 and beyond. Marcel Snyder presented two proposals at our 2007 reunion; Charlotte Zartman's proposal for Phoenix and a proposal by Ralph Hendrickson for a Caribbean Cruise.

A 781st Bomb Squadron Endowment Fund has been established at the Strategic Air & Space Museum in Omaha, NE. Look for the article in this Newsletter with information on how individuals can contribute funds and/or memorabilia.

Orren Lee -

Report from the Memorabilia Committee

As a memorial to members of our Folded Wings, a generous donation has been made to the SAAC Museum in Ashland, Nebraska by a member of the 781st Bomb Squadron.

The interest from this gift is designated to be used as a flight training scholarship for a qualified student in the years ahead.

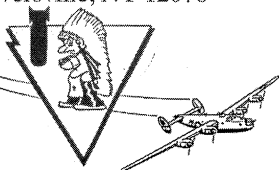
The Strategic Air command Museum in Ashland, Nebraska welcomes your donations of funds and or memorabilia in honor of our folded wings comrades.

These gifts may be forwarded to-
SAAC Museum,
Attn: Mac McLean, 28210 Park
West Hwy. Ashland,
Nebraska, 68003.



Like Ghosts In The Nite.....From The Frank Ambrose Collection

781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"
c/o Frank Ambrose, Editor
44 East Blvd.
Gloversville, NY 12078



781st 2008
REUNION
DAYTON AF BASE
OCT. 5-6-7-8
Hope Hotel