



781st BOMB SQUADRON / 465th BOMB GROUP / 15th AIR FORCE /

# PANTANELLA NEWS

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#103 April 2011

## New Orleans Braces For Sept 18-21st 2011

### "BIG EASY" RAISING LEVEES

### National World War II Museum Awaits Onslaught of 781st Vets



Exhibits at the New Orleans World War II Museum bring to the visitor a glimpse of how particularly stressful and terrifying the war was for many people. The museum reveals how racism and nationalism divided people, caused people to be fearful of each other, created notions of superiority that allowed individuals and whole nations to be demonized.

## PANTANELLA NEWS

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PANTANELLA NEWS

Editor: Frank Ambrose

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.

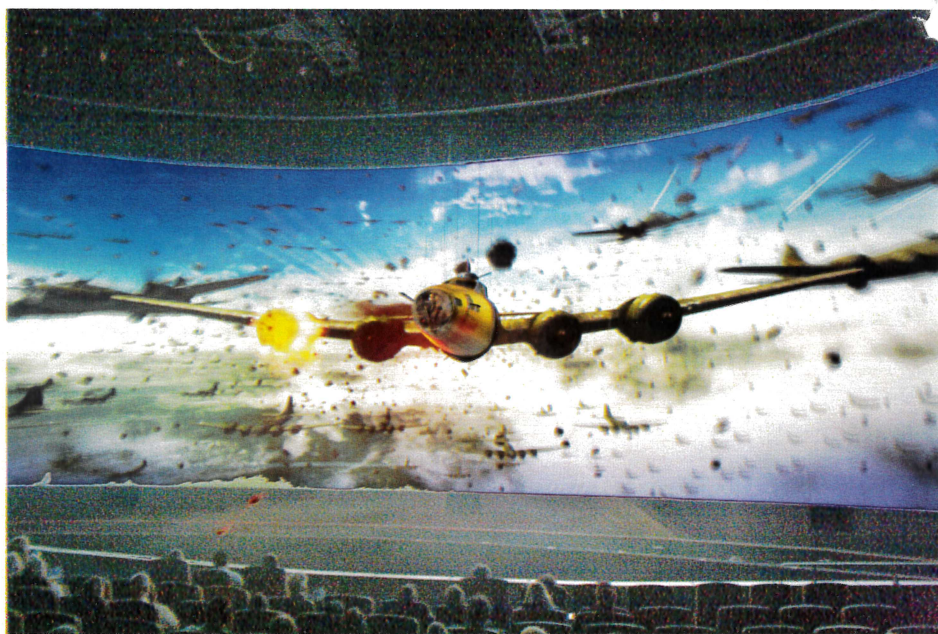
Shot down 25 enemy aircraft

Received Two

Presidential Unit Citations

In Seven Battle Campaigns

## National World War II Museum in New Orleans



Visitors to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans are moved and excited by its unique new immersive film attraction, *"Beyond All Boundaries,"* which not only tells the story of the "war that changed the world" but also breaks boundaries of its own in 4D cinema experiences. For what Tom Brokaw called "the most significant cinematic piece on World War II."

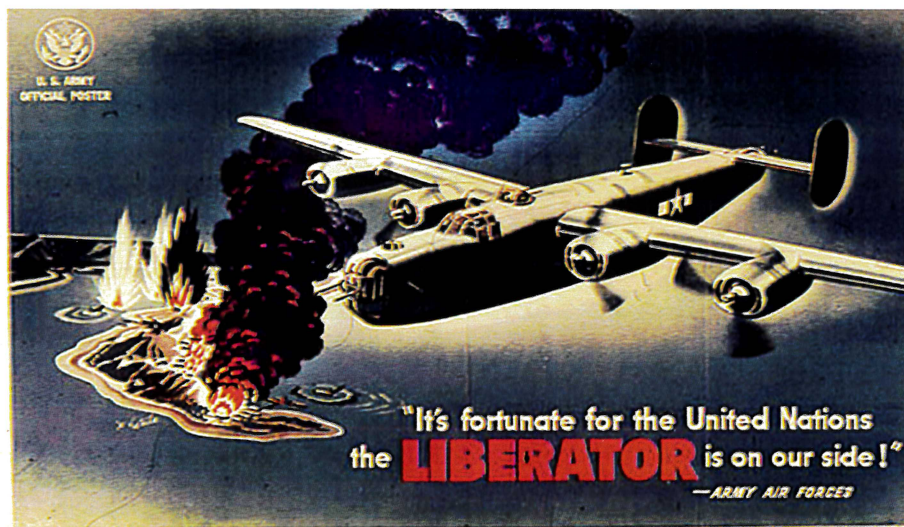
A large-scale immersive production that harnesses 21st century technology, *"Beyond All Boundaries"* plunges viewers into the Greatest Generation's journey from Pearl Harbor into the heat of battle to the final victory of D-Day.

Tom Hanks narrates the 35-minute *"Beyond All Boundaries"* which features Brad Pitt, Kevin Bacon, Patricia Clarkson, Gary Sinise and other A-list actors voicing Americans on the front lines and homefront. As part of the 4D experience,

the theater's seats shake from rumbling tanks, it snows during The Battle of the Bulge, and the nose of B-52 bomber set piece flies in front of the screen during a bombing raid as its wings are projected around it.

*"Beyond All Boundaries"* is projected onto a 115 x 28-foot curved screen.

In front of the screen is a pit from which artifacts - a giant radio set, a concentration camp watch tower, the gun turret of a warship - emerge at appropriate moments in the show. Behind the screen various objects, such as tank traps, can be illuminated, and another giant screen is set back about 20 feet from the main screen. Sequences depicting the fire bombing of Dresden, Asian jungles and the bombing of Japan are especially powerful with the double-screen arrangement which can be augmented with lighting and smoke effects.



## The Astor Crowne Plaza Gateway to the French Quarter

The Astor Crowne Plaza is located at the Gateway to the French Quarter where Canal Street meets Bourbon Street. The excitement of the French Quarter awaits you right outside their door. Whether you are looking for world-renowned dining or the intoxicating sounds of New Orleans' Jazz or Blues – you are in the heart of it all.

The Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel New Orleans offers easy access to nearby attractions like Harrahs Casino, the Aquarium of the Americas, Jackson Square, Morial Convention Center, Riverwalk Shopping, the New Orleans Sports Arena and the Superdome.

The 693 room, AAA 4-Diamond, Bourbon Street hotel is the "Place to Meet" for business or pleasure. The French Quarter hotel's guest accommodations offer an array of amenities such as in-room safes, two dual line phones with voice mail, high speed internet access, blow dryers, iron and ironing board, CD players, coffee/tea makers as well as Crowne Plaza's Sleep Advantage bedding with sleep amenities.

The hotel's services include a 24-hour business center, fitness room, outdoor pool and terrace, executive level accommodations and a concierge to assist you with your plans for the day or evening for an exceptional New Orleans hotel experience.



The hotel is home to Dickie Brennan's Bourbon House Restaurant and Seafood Bar. Enjoy true Southern Cuisines and Fresh Seafood Selections – for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

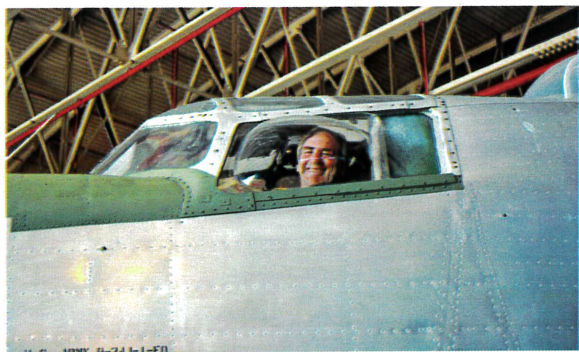
The staff at the Astor is truly versed in Southern Hospitality and ready to not just meet your expectations – but to exceed them. Mix a little pleasure into your stay– then let the good times roll at the Bourbon Street hotel!

**781st 2011 Reunion - Hotel Astor Crowne Plaza**  
**New Orleans Sept. 18-21st**  
**Register with the Hotel Now!! For Reservations call: 1 877 270 1393**

### Reunion Up-Date...

The reunion Committee, consisting mostly of the Braud Family, have been busy pounding the pavements of Downtown New Orleans in search of meeting facilities and entertainment venues in order to make the next reunion a memorable one.

Jim is being assisted by his wife, Theresa as well as his two brothers, Charlie and Robert who live in the area. And, of course, the boys are constantly being prodded by Bubba and Mamie, their mother and father. And after all this, Carole Lee had to be contacted to approve the final arrangements. This REUNION is going to be BIG!



Jim is shown here, busy flying this B-24 around New Orleans, searching for the best Hotel to become our Base for the up-coming 781st 2011 Reunion. If he could only get it off the ground!

### Where Other Squadrons Are Going

*The Latrine O Gram*, 783rds' Newsletter, reports that their Association will be assembling at Sacramento, California September 15- 19th 2011.

They will be staying at the **Doubletree Inn at Arden Fair, Sacramento**. If you are in the area, why don't you become our ambassador and drop in on them.

And the Scuttle Butt says that the 780th is considering a get-together in Abilene, Texas in 2011, Hosted by Kim McLaughlin.

**Editors Note:**

The following article has been taken from The 781st Squadron History Book describing a typical day of a Combat Mission.

## Pantanello Airfield Italy May 1944

Many years later Pilot Les Wheeler was to recall a 'typical' combat mission. "We got up about 3:00 in the morning (sometimes as late as 4:00 or 5:00, if it was a short mission. We'd go to the mess hall and then the briefing room. When you got inside the briefing room, you'd immediately see the map. If you saw the mission was to Ploesti, Munich, or Vienna, you'd rather walk than fly.

"The Intelligence Officers, Operations, Squadron Navigator, Squadron Bombardier, and Group Weather Officer would describe the mission, the route to be flown going and coming, what to expect in the way of flak, fighters, and weather going and coming back, and at the target. Sometimes the Old Man would say a few words, especially if it was a tough mission.

When the briefing was finished and we were ready to head to the flight line and board our planes the Group Chaplain, Herbert R. Blouch would say a prayer, always the same one:

*"Oh God, Thou Who has created the heavens and the earth, and in Thy natural way, has made it possible for man to sustain himself in flight through the air, we ask again Thy blessings on these men as they go out to fly high in the sky, grant them courage to do a good job, protect them against the assaults of the enemy, and may their faith be unfaltering in Thee. We pray it so in the name of Him who has given us power over all the things of the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

There was usually no talking after the briefing. You were taken to your plane and unloaded. There you simply went about your business. Everybody checked his own part of the plane. I walked around the plane on my pre-flight check, then when it was time, I fired up the engines. The flight surgeon came around in the meat wagon and asked if anybody wanted any Bennys. This was after you were a third of the way done (or more) with your missions and you were just so tired all the time. You were too numb to really feel much."

Les recalled rendezvousing with the other planes (B-24s and B-17s from other Squadrons and Groups), the assembly into formation and the long difficult unbearably cold flight to the target area - sometimes accompanied by P-51's or



Yea, though I fly through the valley of Flak of death,  
I will fear no evil: For thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of mine enemies;  
Thou annointest my head with oil;  
My cup runneth over.

P-38's and sometimes not. When they arrived near the target they were met, first by enemy fighter planes, then heavy antiaircraft fire, then by more fighters as they left the target area,

From Weiner Neustadt to Vienna there was about a 20-mile corridor of a lot of manufacturing, refineries, and so forth. To get there you had to go through flak for several minutes and to get back out you were still in that same flak for many, many minutes more. I was up to Vienna three times and it was bad.

The worst part, psychologically, was approaching your target area and seeing all the flak out there. It was puffs of black smoke and you'd see it a good way before you got there. If you were in the lead group, the flak generally wouldn't be up there yet; but if you were two or three groups back, they were already into you.

You could see all of this coming up and you knew you were going to get a beating.

We figured the higher we could get the safer we were, but it wasn't true. They had told us in the early briefings that the German antiaircraft guns were very accurate anywhere from ground level to 40,000 feet, and we were usually flying at 25,000 to 26,000 feet."

Les recalled that the formation usually began to encounter flak about five minutes before reaching its target. Throughout the bomb run the flak continued to explode around them. Nevertheless, the Bombardier in the lead plane guided the flight in and marked the target. Then came the call for "Bombs away," and all planes followed the lead Bombardier and dropped their bombs on the target. And after the bomb run, the flak continued to harass the formation for several more minutes on the way out of the target area."



"Life is like a roll of toilet paper.....the closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes."

**781st 2011 Reunion**  
**Hotel Astor**  
**Crowne Plaza**  
**New Orleans**  
**Sept. 18-21st**  
**Register with the Hotel Now!!**  
**For Reservations call:**  
**1 877 270 1393**

## I GOT MAIL...

From: worthmeg@comcast.net  
 Subject: Thank you from the family  
 of Donald Moeller, Ret. AF  
 Date: January 15, 2011  
 To: frank@frankambrose.com

Hello Frank,  
 I want to thank you for putting together  
 the wonderful website about Pantanella.

My father and I had just "discovered"  
 it shortly before he fell ill to  
 Parkinson's. He was enormously  
 interested in the photos and history that  
 you had assembled. He passed away in  
 Sept., 2010.

Although he was "just" a mechanic  
 there, he seemed to have very vivid and  
 good memories of that place. He always  
 held an interest in WWII and planes in  
 particular, probably due to his experience  
 in Pantanella. He went on to work on  
 atomic weapons in England, but it didn't  
 seem to have the same allure as his year  
 in Italy.

I have donated his modest collection  
 of WWII books, airplane books, videos,  
 etc. to a wonderful little museum in Erie,  
 CO, called the Spirit of Flight Center. It  
 is located at a small airport East of  
 Boulder. It is a gem of a place! The  
 people in charge have dedicated their lives  
 to preserving and honoring WWII history.

I hope, that if you are ever in CO, you will  
 visit this great little museum. I'm sure  
 they would be interested in talking with  
 you.

Thank you again, for giving my dad a  
 walk down memory lane.

Sincerely,

*Meg Worth*  
 Erie, CO

From: KnightoftheMuses@aol.com  
 Subject: Pantanella 464 BG 779 BS  
 Date: December 6, 2010  
 To: frank@frankambrose.com

Dear Frank...

Memories such as these are hard to for-  
 get. I was stationed at Pantanella during  
 late October and early December, 1944. I  
 was with the 464th. across the hill from  
 the 465th. My Squadron was the 779th.  
 with which I flew 9 missions, including  
 one to Blechhammer. And today, by coin-  
 cidence, Dec. 6th. was my last mission...  
 to Bratislava, having been transferred to  
 the 885th. Bomb. Sq. in Brindisi. We  
 were not attached to any group yet, since  
 we worked alone flying single sorties into  
 No. Italy and the Balkans, supplying the par-  
 tisans behind the enemy lines with agents,  
 currency, equipment and leaflets....We  
 worked with the OSS and eventually trans-  
 ferred to Castiglioncello, 10 miles south of  
 Pisa as the front lines moved north.

In the short period at Pantanella, I made  
 trips to Cerignola where one Sunday, I  
 bought a guitar and mandolin in the town  
 square and played Italian music with  
 the salesman while the people gathered  
 around to listen. All I remember was the  
 valley with the twin parallel runways and  
 the Offanto River not far away. We were  
 to have a tufa "house" built replacing the  
 tent, when our orders came through to  
 leave. A few years ago, I read where  
 Hannibal and his Carthaginians made  
 battle with the Roman Legions at that very  
 site. We travelled the same land as those  
 men of 2000 years ago. As for the  
 officers...All I can remember was Capt.  
 Foote. Oh, yes...I was a tail-gunner on the  
 B-24s with Lt. Loser's crew.

Regards,

*Ralph Cavaliere*

## From the Internet: PASS ON TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW

I received a telephone call last evening  
 from an individual identifying himself  
 as an AT&T Service Technician (could  
 also be Telus) who was conducting a test  
 on the telephone lines. He stated that to  
 complete the test I should touch nine(9),  
 zero(0), the pound sign (#), and then hang  
 up.

Luckily, I was suspicious and refused.  
 Upon contacting the telephone company,  
 I was informed that by pushing 90#, you  
 give the requesting individual full access  
 to your telephone line, which enables  
 them to place long distance calls billed to  
 your home phone number.

I was further informed that this scam  
 has been originating from many local  
 jails/prisons.

**DO NOT press 90# for ANYONE.**

The GTE Security Department requested  
 that I share this information with  
 EVERYONE I KNOW.

## Lest We Forget

### Dues are due!

We do not send out statements  
 to remind anyone that their  
 dues are due.

If you are not a "Life Member",  
 check the address label affixed  
 to this issue. If the year 2011 or  
 longer does not appear above  
 your name it means "your  
 dues are due".

The cost of producing and cost  
 of the postage required to print  
 and mail the Pantanella News  
 amounts to little over \$4.00 per  
 issue to each member. In simple  
 math, this means that we are  
 losing \$2.00 on every member's  
 \$10 yearly dues.

We depend on the dues to help  
 defray the cost of producing the  
 newsletter.

If you feel you have the means  
 to donate more than the cost of  
 the dues, it would be gratefully  
 appreciated.

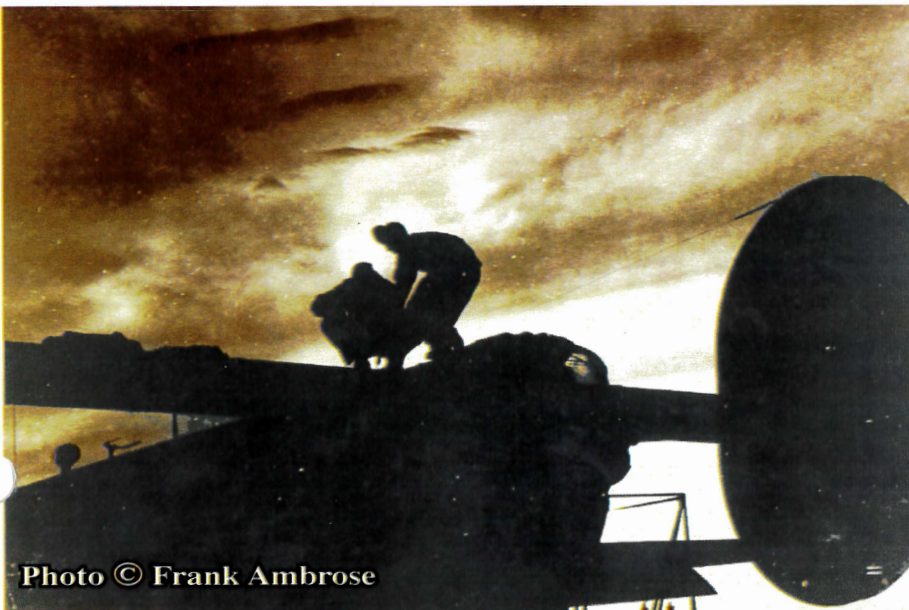


Photo © Frank Ambrose

## AND MORE MAIL...

From: marcs@flgsi.com  
 Subject: Agony Wagon and crew  
 Date: February 9, 2011  
 To: frank@frankambrose.com

Frank,

My father was Lt Marcellus Stromberg pilot of the **Agony Wagon of the 780th**. I believe this is their last days in Italy before returning home.



Lt. Stromberg is front row left and Sgt. Garcia front

row right was a gunner credited with 3 kills on one mission. This is the original crew from the states with the exception of the co-pilot. This photo shows Lt. Gardner the original co-pilot was Lt. Rodgers I believe, who got his own plane.

I'm also including a picture of **Old Dutch Cleanser** and her crew with Lt. Fong center rear being the command pilot.

When my father past in 2003, I gave most everything to my brother for his kids, as I have none. There are many more pictures including about 20 of the V Grand. I'll get over there and see how many I can send you for the site.

We also have a book put together by the intelligence officer for the group, just can't remember his name. This is a wonderful history of the 465<sup>th</sup> from its formation in New Mexico to the close of the war. A better email for me is marcellshomes@gmail.com.

Marc Stromberg  
 Castro Valley Ca  
 925-891-5836

From: gsr\_121562@yahoo.com  
 Subject: "Belle Ringer"  
 B-24H 42-52503  
 Date: February 15, 2011  
 To: frank@frankambrose.com

Hi Frank:

I'm Gary Reardon, nephew of Gunner Cpl Bearnard J. Reardon 11140990 whose plane went missing in the Adriatic on its way home to Pantanella Air Base, Italy from a bombing mission to Regensburg, Germany on February 5th, 1945.

My nephew is a sargent in the Army and last week he found some photos of



## New Orleans...

New Orleans is one of the most celebrated cities of the American South.

The city has a reputation for historical roots, great food, great music, and great times

The French Quarter: is the oldest, most famous, and most visited section of the city. Many old-line restaurants are in the Quarter, along with music clubs, museums, antiques shops, and drinking establishments.

The Central Business District is adjacent to the French Quarter The "CBD" has high-rise hotels and excellent restaurants, along with many museums (the National D-Day Museum, the Louisiana Children's Museum, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the Contemporary Arts Center) and a gallery district on and around Julia Street. Including the "Arts District" and the "Old Warehouse District"

my Uncle and his crew and the "Belle Ringer". Accompanying info says that the "Belle Ringer" was also called the "Yellow H". Can you tell me what the "Yellow H" meant?

Any information you could pass along concerning Gunner Cpl Bearnard J. Reardon would be very much appreciated.

Thanks

Gary Reardon  
 49 Dean Ave, Apt 1  
 Franklin MA 02038  
 508-346-3696

ED: Bearnard J. Reardon was a Radio/Gunner on the Jones Crew

## "Salute to the Greatest Generation"

The Delaware National Guard Retired Officers' Association (DNGROA), will conduct a "**Salute to the Greatest Generation**" at the Grier Auditorium, Carlisle Fire Company, 615 N W Front St, Milford, DE, on Friday, 6 May 2011, 1000 hours (doors open 0900 hours).

The event will recognize the service of those who participated in World War II, the "Greatest Generation" as named by Tom Brokaw, with particular emphasis on those who flew **B24 Liberators**. They will be featuring the story of the **Spartan/Wilkins B24 Liberator** which was shot down on 3 Jul 44 in Romania and was co-piloted by a Milford, DE, native and member of the Carlisle Fire Company, 2Lt Howard C Wilkins who was Killed-In-Action (KIA).

Three members of the DNGROA Military Research Committee visited the Romania crash site in 2010 and were successful in acquiring and returning with two pieces of the **Spartan/Wilkins B24**.

They welcome the attendance and that of your friends at this free event and ask that you advise them if you will be bringing a B24 crewman of WW II.

The members of the Military Research Committee of the DNGROA, all military retirees, are: Brig Gen Thomas P Lauppe, BG (DE) Glenn M Watson, 302-448-1139, and BG (DE) C Elliott Workman,

Submitted by Ken Wiggins, Jr

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

## FOLDED WINGS

**Nicholas Belik:** McKenna Eng.



**Nicholas C. Belik**, 88, died Thursday, Sept. 30, 2010, at his home following a brief illness. Mr. Belik was born July 8, 1922, in Yonkers, N.Y., the son of Constantine and Milly Tyblak Belik.

He was a World War II veteran of the U.S. Army Air Forces, where he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, European African Middle Eastern Service Ribbon with three Bronze Stars, the Good Conduct Medal and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

He retired as a foreman from GATX. Survivors include his wife, Ruth Vaia; his daughter, Karen Bathory of Hubbard; his son, Martin Belik of Brookfield; sister, Mildred Billen of Masury; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

**Ken Foden:** Ball Gunner  
Tenenbaum Crew

Subject: **Ken Foden's passing**

From: lfoden@live.com

Date: December 31, 2010

To: frank@frankambrose.com

It is with deep regret we announce that **Ken Foden** has passed away, December 26, 2010 at 6:25 pm. He was under the care of Hospice who treated him with respect and dignity. He was comfortable and without pain upon his passing. My sister and I will miss him. He has gone onto a better and kinder place.

Lawrence Foden

Debra May Foden-Celso

I can be contacted by e-mail:

<lfoden@cfl.rr.com>

**Homer Lynn Moeller:** Co-Pilot  
Pitts Crew

From: csorlie@comcast.net

Subject: **The passing of Homer L. Moeller**

Date: March 15, 2011

To: frank@frankambrose.com



Dear friends,

I am sorry to pass on the sad news of my father's death. **Homer Lynn Moeller** died earlier this evening, March 15, 2011 (6:30 p.m. Arizona time) at Scottsdale Hospital-Shea. He celebrated his 88th birthday last October 2010,

living just 10 years and 30 days past our mother's death (Inez) on February cessary. He was home 13, 2001.

He loved the reunions, especially this last one in 2010, and was looking forward to seeing everyone next year. Our dad's health seemed to be fading more and more this past year, though he seemed so strong at the reunion this year. More and more he needed the assistance of a wheelchair and last December took a fall which ended him up in assisted living for a few weeks before returning home. He was sent home with oxygen but preferred not to use it unless nefor about six weeks before he suddenly died while watching television. Thank you for years of friendship and cameraderie. You'll never know how much the each of you meant to him...and the special times and places. They really did ADD to his life.

Blessings to the each of you. Maybe we will see you in the future.

Love,  
**Chuck Sorlie**

Proud son of **2nd Lt. Homer Lynn Moeller**, Co-pilot, 781st Bomb Squadron

**Russ Maynard:**

Co-Pilot, Frazier Crew

David Maynard reports that his father, **Russ Maynard**, passed away in February 2011. Inquiries may be directed to: <dmayn103@verizon.net> or <jenlyn1@verizon.net>

## Presidents Corner

**781<sup>st</sup> Friends –**

**The Golden Years**

– Is everyone as busy as we are in their Golden Years? Carole is busy with keeping the 781<sup>st</sup> Roster up to date. Most recently Jim Braud has been keeping us informed of his progress with planning the 2011 781<sup>st</sup> Reunion in New Orleans. He has been hitting the pavement in search of a Hotel for our enjoyment. You will find that information elsewhere in this Newsletter. Carole still works about 16 hours a week at the Company she has been with for nearly 40 years. She belongs to the National Association of Women in Construction and also Business and Professional Women. She is coordinator of a Shepherding Program at our church.



Yes, I keep busy too. I work for a Pharmaceutical Company delivering prescription drugs to nursing homes Monday, Wednesday and Saturday nights for a total of approximately 1,000 miles. I belong to the **781<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron Association**, currently the President, the **Veterans of Foreign Wars**, the **American Legion**, the **Elks**, the **Moose** and **Lions**. I also usher at our church.

We travel quite a bit as our children live in Phoenix, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago and Geneva, Switzerland. We have been to Chicago and are planning a trip to Sedona, AZ to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the end of March. We are scheduled for a 6 Day Land / 7 Day Cruise in Alaska at the end of June. Now we learn our grandson is getting married in August so that means a trip to Geneva, Switzerland. And of course New Orleans this fall! Can't miss that!

As I write all this I thought most of you can match this and possible surpass it. Write us a letter telling about your life and Frank will print it.

**Orren Lee**

**Prayer For Our Troops:**  
"Lord, Protect and watch over our troops as they protect us.  
**Hold them**  
**in your loving hands.**  
**Bless them and their families for the**  
**unselfish acts**  
**they perform for us**  
**in our time of need.**  
**Amen."**

**ymond W. Smythe:**

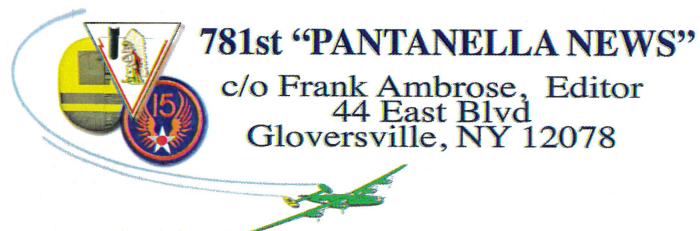
Tail Gunner: Wortham Crew

**Raymond W. Smythe** died 2/12/07.

Reported by Carole Lee

781st BOMB SQUADRON / 465th BOMB GROUP / 15th AIR FORCE

## PANTANELLA NEWS April 2011



*It's The Big Easy  
Sept 18-21  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
For Reservations:  
1 877 270*

ASSOC 2010  
CAROLE J. LEE  
2312 BRAEMAR DR.  
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57105-4126

