



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

# PANTANELLA NEWS

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#105 December 2011

## New Orleans Was Big!!



**Branson Is Next- Sept 30- Oct 3rd**



## PANTANELLA NEWS

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Orren Lee: President  
Vice President: Earl Leinart  
James Braud: Treasurer  
Secretary: Debbie Cherry

#### Board of Directors

Frank Ambrose  
Joe Soucy  
Georgia McKinnon  
Chaplin: Frank Wassenaar

#### 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



## Attendee's at the 2011 781<sup>st</sup> B.S. Assoc. Reunion

**Frank Ambrose**, Gloversville, NY  
**William Ambrose**, Dallas, TX  
**Frank Ambrose II**, Atlanta, GA  
**Linda Christman**, Norcross, GA  
**Charles "Bubba" Braud & Mamie**,  
Thibodaux, LA  
**Charles & Janie Braud, Jr.**,  
Baton Rouge, LA  
**James & Theresa Braud**, Slidell, LA  
**Robert Braud**, Napoleonville, LA  
**Thomas & Sara Braud**, Houston, TX  
**Raymond Cauble**, Memphis, TN  
**David & Phillis Krech**, Memphis, TN  
**Leonard Emmel**, Homer Glen, IL  
**Lenora Simmons**, Cedar City, UT  
**Deborah Parisi**, Palos Park, IL  
**Sandra Conrad**, Gonzales, LA  
**Christine Frezza**, Holland, MI  
**George Hausold & Veni**, Hernando, FL  
**Thomas Kyle**, Montrose, CO  
**Albert LeBlanc & Doris**, Norco, LA  
**Philip & Belynda LeBlanc**,  
Crowpoint, LA  
**Mick & Sharon Barthes**, Ocean  
Springs, MS  
**Marilyn & Ronald Horne**, Tampa, FL  
**Tommy & Diana LeBlanc**,  
DesTrehan, LA  
**Louis and Sandra Ryan**, Prairieville, LA  
**Orren Lee and Carole**, Sioux Falls, SD  
**Don Munce**, Lee's Summit, MO  
**Karen Myhre**, Minnetonka, MN  
**Earl Leinart** and **Grace**, Omaha, NE  
**Curt Reed**, San Jose, CA  
**Curt Reed, Jr.**, Escondido, CA  
**Harry Smith**, Smoaks, SC  
**Debbie & Bill Cherry**, Smoaks, SC  
**Jack & Patricia Gunter**, Leesville, SC  
**Phyllis and Patrick Hegler**, Smoaks,  
Georgia  
**Georgia McKinnon**, Kennesaw, GA  
**Barbara & Donnie Shumpert**,  
Sumpter, SC  
**Steve Smith**, Smoaks, SC  
**Dorothy Wheeler**, Lexington, SC  
**Roland "Ron" Soucy**, Beavercreek, OH  
**Gregory Soucy**, Beavercreek, OH  
**Rodger Soucy**, Springtown, TX  
**Joseph and MaryLou Soucy**,  
Pompano Beach, FL  
**Elliot Sweet**, Mt. Pleasant, SC  
**Laurie Bedus**, Windsor, CT  
Other family and friends of Folded Wings  
Veterans or Veterans unable to come.  
**Cynthia Freed**, Moon Township, PA  
**(Robert Freed)**  
**Diane and Robert Misinkiewicz**, Nep-  
tune, NJ **(Reyer Swan, FW)**  
**Anna Russell**, Magnolia, AR **(Barney  
Russell II, FW)**  
**Barney (Bud) and Libby Russell III**,  
Tulsa, OK **(Barney Russell II, FW)**  
**Dottie Wassenaar**, Alma, MI **(Frank  
Wassenaar, FW)**  
**Kurt Wassenaar**, Charlottesville, VA,  
**(Frank Wassenaar, FW)**



## 781st BS Association Business Meeting

Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel New Orleans, LA  
St. Ann Room  
September 20, 2011 5:00 pm

President Orren Lee called the meeting to order and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. He introduced Joe Soucy as the presiding Chaplain and Joe gave the invocation.

President Lee asked the veterans to rise and be recognized. They were appreciated by a round of applause. The associate members were then asked to rise and be recognized.

The 2010 Secretary's Minutes of the Business Meeting were published in the January 2011 issue of the PANTANELLA NEWS. Jim Braud made the motion for the minutes to be accepted as printed. It was followed by a second and approved by membership vote.

Treasurer Jim Braud gave a financial report consisting of the current balances of the Association's savings and checking accounts. The report will be filed for audit.

President Lee called for new business. Jim Braud gave a report on the 2011 reunion. He is still in the process of collecting bills related to the reunion and receiving money from various sources concerning the reunion. He will have a more complete report once the reunion is over and all financial issues are finished.

Another item of business concerned having a reunion in 2012. Jim Braud made the motion to have a reunion next year. The motion was seconded and approved with a vote by the membership. After some discussion about possible locations for the 2012 Reunion, Jim Braud made the motion that it be held in Branson, MO and that the Executive Secretary, Carole Lee, head up the arrangements. A second was made and a membership vote agreed to Branson, MO as the new site for next year's reunion.

The Nominating committee (Charles "Bubba" Braud, George Hausold, and Ron Soucy) presented a proposed slate of officers for 2012.

President: Orren Lee  
Vice President: Earl Leinart  
Secretary: Debbie Cherry  
Treasurer: Jim Braud  
Chaplain: Joe Soucy  
Editor of PANTANELLA NEWS: Frank Ambrose

Board of Directors: Frank Ambrose, Joe Soucy, Georgia McKinnon

Frank Ambrose made the motion that the nominations be closed and accepted by acclamation. The membership voted to approve the presented slate of officers.

Earl Leinart gave an update on the Scholarship Endowment Fund. Scholarships have been awarded for participants

to the Top Gun camps. He also read the late Frank Wassenaar's letter explaining the memorabilia of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association to the Air Museum in Omaha, which the late Connie Odgen had shipped. This was much appreciated

by the museum.

Dottie Wassenaar made available copies of a rubbing she did in 1988 while visiting Loconia, Italy. The rubbing was of a plaque which translates: "Here the



United States of America declared freedom for the people".

Frank Ambrose said that he needed help having enough information to include in the PANTANELLA NEWS. He encouraged people to contribute news and pictures to him for the newsletter.

President Orren Lee then asked if there was any other business that needed to be discussed. No business was presented and Jim Braud made the motion for the meeting to be closed. A second was made and President Orren Lee adjourning the meeting at 6:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by  
*Debbie Cherry, Secretary*



5 -25 -11

Mr. Frank Ambrose,  
I am enclosing a check for \$50.00 to help you with keeping the PANTANELLA NEWS in production. I sent you \$100 about 3 yrs. ago.

I attended the meeting in Alabama a few years ago and the only man I knew was Leo Fink who died the following year.

I had started a wholesale business in the Heating & Air Conditioning business. and the meetings were always in the busy time. After I retired and my wife passed away I came to the meeting in 1996.

I was Ray Hurd's co-pilot. We had been on a couple tough missions and were sent to Naples along with Capt. Roberts crew. We were being driven by a local driver at night with the so-called night lights and hit a big truck that had stalled. I was in the middle seat and ended up sitting on my right leg. It was a command car, not a jeep as noted in this article I enclosed.

We had flown 21 missions. In the "Guarding Angel"

Keep the news coming !

*George F. Kilby*

## JEEPS-- PHOOEY! SAYS BATAVIA B-24 PILOT

Leg Broken Riding Midget Car After Landing Safely From Vienna Mission. FLEW GAUNTLET OF FLAK

It took more than German ack-ack to ground Second Lieutenant George F. Kilby, B-24 pilot from Batavia, after 18 missions with the 15th Air Force. "What did it," he told interviewers at AAF Redistribution Station #1, Atlantic City, N. J., where he is awaiting reassignment, "was a jeep" Lieutenant Kilby went on to explain how he fractured his leg in a jeep accident while he was returning to base after a two-day pass to Naples. The 22-year-old flyer, who wears the Distinguished Flying Cross for his three missions to Ploesti says he will never be convinced that the automobile is safer than the airplane. "Look at me," he beefed, "I was on the worst raid we ever had to Vienna. We were in flak 18 minutes. One gas tank was shot out. We had to drop out of formation and an ME-110 attacked us. Our nose gunner blew him to pieces. When we got back to the base there were 52 holes in the plane-big ones. And I didn't have a scratch. "But I get into a little jeep for a pleasant trip home and what do I get? A broken leg. Phooey!" Back after a year overseas, Lieutenant Kilby is only concerned now with getting back on flying status. "But," he adds, "No jeeps." Son of Mrs. Reta Kilby of R. F. D. #1, Batavia, Lieutenant Kilby is a graduate of Alexander Central High School. He entered the service in September, 1942. He also wears the Air Medal and 2 Presidential Unit Citations. °





## **781st BOMB SQUADRON ASSOCIATION**

### **465th BOMB GROUP (H)**

The 781st Bomb Squadron (H), flying B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Air Base, Italy, flew its first combat mission 5 May 1944 and continued flying combat until 26 April 1945. During this year, as part of the 465th Bomb Group (H), the squadron accomplished the following:

- Flew 191 Missions over Southern Europe
- Shot down 23 German aircraft
- Dropped 2632 tons of bombs
- Awarded two Presidential Citations for bombing and gunnery accuracy
- Awarded eight Battle Stars for Air Offensive Campaigns
- Holds the 15th Air Force record for bombing accuracy for a single mission
- 46 men were Killed In Action including Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Clarence J. Lokker
- Participated in the last heavy bomber raid over Nazi Germany in WWII

The primary mission for this squadron, as part of the 465th Bomb Group and 15th Air Force, was directed at accomplishing four main objectives throughout the war. In general order of priority the objectives were:

- 1) To destroy the German Air Force in the air and on the ground, wherever it might be located within range.
- 2) To participate in POINTBLANK (the Combined Bomber Offensive), which called for the destruction of German fighter aircraft plants, ball bearing plants, oil refineries, rubber plants, munition factories, sub pens and bases, etc.
- 3) To support the battle on the Italian mainland (mainly by attacking communications targets - in Italy, along the Brenner Pass route and also in neighboring Austria).
- 4) To weaken German position in the Balkans.

Added to these objectives later was a set of targets associated with preparing the way for invasion of southern France which would take place on 15 August 1944. During the year in combat it accomplished its mission: It knocked out Germany's oil refineries, razed her aircraft and arms factories, shot her fighters from the sky, and it knocked out gun positions in France to pave the way for the invading 7th Army. It had destroyed what it was designed to destroy, with skill and precision. The 781st Bomb Squadron had made history.

During the squadrons' long range strikes deep into Germany, attacking the German Air Force and oil targets, it ran into the German fighters. Although the squadron was a heavy bomber formation the record appears to indicate that it was a fighter squadron - 23 enemy fighters shot down while losing only four Liberator bombers during formation air battles.

On bombing runs the squadron suffered greater losses, however, some 20 bombers lost to the deadly Wurlitzer guided German anti-aircraft guns.

An Association of Veterans of this squadron was formed in late 1985 and the spirit and camaraderie of over 40 years ago was still there. Of the 1106 men in the squadron 1015 have been located (397 are deceased). The search continues for the remaining men.

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## Thru The Lens Of My Smart Phone





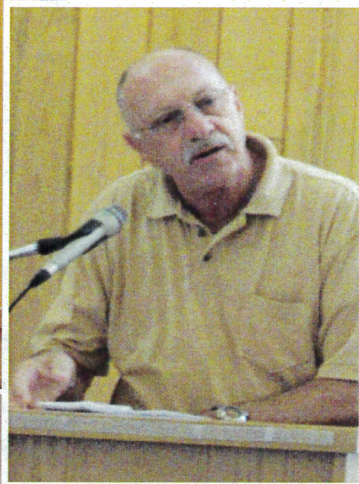
# Memorial Service of Remembrance 21 September 2011

## Good Shepherd Chapel Naval Air Station, Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, Belle Chasse, La

Base Chaplain Robert Pete



781st. Acting Chaplain  
Joseph Soucy





## Reunion Committee Report

Orren and I have arranged our 2012 781st Reunion with Gathering Plus, a Military Reunion Planner in Branson, MO. The dates are **September 30th thru October 3, 2012** at the Grand Plaza Hotel, Branson, MO. The hotel room rate will be \$87.00 per room per night plus tax. It includes a hot buffet breakfast, free parking, hospitality room and other amenities. Registration will be \$215.00 per person which includes Welcome Packet with Name Badges, Deli Buffet, the Clay Cooper Show and lunch at McFarland's, Veterans Museum, Memorial Service, Showboat Branson Belle Dinner Cruise and Show, Banquet and Entertainment. It includes transportation to group activities and a reunion website. A full activity package will be in the next Pantanella News.

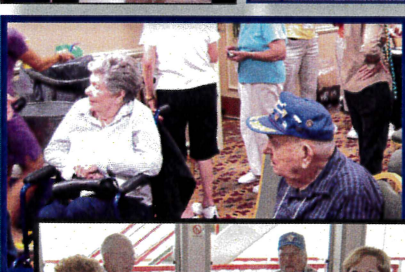
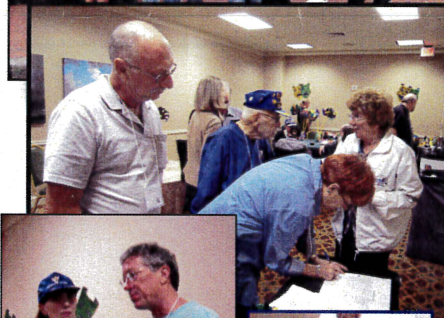
Carole Lee

## About Branson, Missouri

Branson was formally incorporated in 1912 and construction of the Powersite Dam nearby on the White River which would form Lake Taneycomo was completed.

The closest commercial airport is the newly developed Branson Airport which opened in May 2009. This airport is privately owned, and it is thought to be the largest privately-owned commercial airport in the United States.

## More Images from My Smart Phone



## Presidents Corner

### 781st Friends –

Welcome to the two new 781st Board Members, Georgia McKinnon, Board Member and Joseph Soucy, Chaplain. Thank you to Earl Leinart for moving to Vice President.



If anyone has a copy of the 781st Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF hard cover book copyrighted in 1989 by 781st Bomb Squadron Association and published by Jim Althoff with Harry

S. Carl, Editor and is willing to part with it please contact me. We have a request for one from a veteran's family.

Carole will inform you about the next year in Branson. Look for her 2012 Reunion News in this Newsletter.

## FOLDED WINGS

### George Gaines:

Pilot: Gaines Crew

From: Murray Knowles  
<maknowles2@comcast.net>  
Subject: George Gaines, Pilot 781stBS-  
Date: June 22, 2011  
To: Frank Ambrose  
<frank@frankambrose.com>

Sadly I have to report that George has joined the ranks of "Folded Wings" George died April 11, 2011 unexpectedly of a heart attack.

I will miss him as we would occasionally meet for lunch as lived 50 miles from each other.

I have notified other surviving members of our crew: Vann Reynolds, Navigator and Lou Deslatte, Flt Eng..

George was very supportive of our Sqdn.'s Organization.

**Murray Knowles Co-Pilot**

### Ray Tyler:

S-2 Intelligence

Ray Tyler passed away March 8, 2011.

### Loren W. Foote Jr.:

Ordnance

FOOTE, LOREN Retired Salvation Army officer, Major Loren W. Foote, Jr. went home to be with the Lord August 26. Services were held September 6 at 11:00 a.m. at Turner and Stevens Memorial Park and Mortuary, 200 E. Duarte Rd. Monrovia, CA. 91016.

### Bernard Badler:

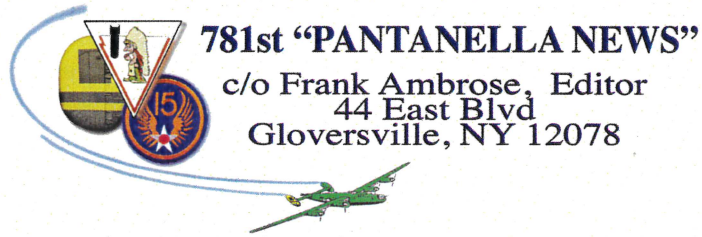
Co-Pilot: Branch Crew

Bernard Badler, resident of Petaluma, died on August 7, 2011 of heart failure at age 89. Bernard proudly served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II as a B-24 Liberator pilot and achieved the rank of Major. He kept in contact with his crew members throughout his life and provided photographs and stories about his squadron for their published memoirs. He enjoyed spending time with his family and friends, and his positive attitude and sense of humor will always remain in the hearts of everyone who knew him. He is survived by his children, grandsons, and great grandchildren.

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



781st BOMB SQUADRON / 465th BOMB GROUP / 15th AIR FORCE  
**PANTANELLA NEWS December 2011**



**Honoring Those Who Served!** **VETERANS MEMORIAL MUSEUM**  
BRANSON, MISSOURI

**NEXT REUNION  
BRANSON, MI  
Sept 30 to Oct 3,  
2012**

Covering the Wars of  
the 20<sup>th</sup> Century including  
WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam  
& the Persian Gulf.

ASSOC 2012  
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