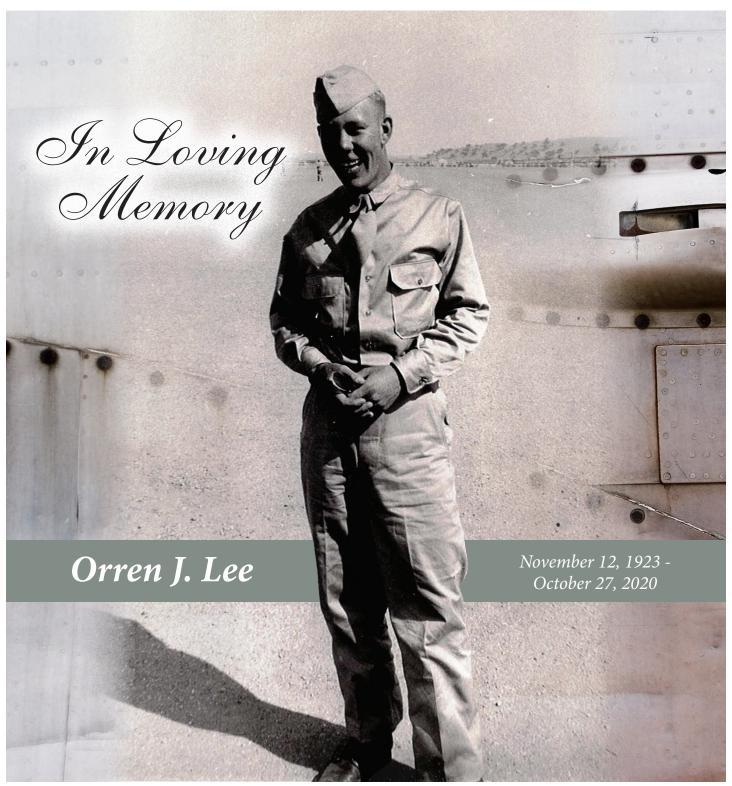


PANTANELLA NEWS

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PANTANELLA NEWS

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PANTANELLA NEWS

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.



Orren Lee Joining Folded Wings



To my dear 781st friends,

It is with deep regret I must report my beloved husband and the 781st Bomb Squadron Association President, Orren Lee, has joined the Folded Wings. He had developed Atrial Fibrillation. He received a pacemaker/fibulator when he was 90, which controlled his heart beat until about this past June. After a couple failed cardioversions to control his heart

rhythms the doctors tried to control it with medications. His health slowly declined until he went to the emergency room on October 20th. He was put on home hospice the next day and died October 27th.

He never missed a reunion after Walt Longacre prior to the 1990 Massachusetts Reunion called him and told him about the 781st Bomb Squadron Association. He considered all the 781st veterans as his friends. The reunions were a highlight of the year for him.

I feel confident he would want me to continue publishing the Pantanella News. I am writing this on his birthday. He would have been 97 today.

— Carole Lee



As you may already know, our President, Orren Lee has passed. It is my sorrowful duty as Vice President to stand in his place, in shoes far too big to fill. He and his family are in our prayers and thoughts.

I always liked the phrase I once heard that "it is no tragedy when an old man dies". The combination of longevity and a life well-lived are a true blessing and cause for celebration. All our veterans of the 781st fit this category. The reunions were once a joyful gathering of old comrades in arms. Increasingly they are an event that honors their service, by surviving family members.

It has been an "Annus horribilis" (horrible year) thanks to the Covid Virus and more. We were forced to cancel this year's reunion as a result. The time is soon arriving when our organization will have no veterans at future reunions, and we must decide how to proceed. The children of these veterans are themselves aging. We'd like to hear from our members their ideas on how to proceed. Please drop us a line and tell us how you feel we could best continue.

Kennard Wiggins Jr.Vice President

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

If your address label doesn't show 2020 your membership renewal is due.

Remit to 781st Bomb Squadron Association and mail to:

Carole Lee, Squadron Treasurer, 4700 S. Cliff Ave. #308, Sioux Falls, SD 57103

Orren J. Lee November 12, 1923 - October 27, 2020 A Tribute in Pictures



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The Only Time an American City Has Been Bombed

During the dead of winter, March 2st 1944; Miles City, Montana; local residents woke to their quaint little town being overrun and submerged by the rising frozen waters of the Yellowstone River. Ice jams were blocking the flow of the river. As the blocks of ice, slush and freezing waters flooded into the city, raising the river level dangerously, residents were forced to flee their homes for safer grounds.

Miles City Mayor L.S. Keye knew immediate action must be taken, and brought in explosive experts from a nearby town. Two local pilots took a small aircraft over the river and attempted to drop and detonate 50 pound homemade bombs on the Yellowstone ice jam, but unfortunately it had little effect.



Mayor L.S. Keye then decided to do the unthinkable, and placed an urgent request to the Governor's office. His request was short, and to the point "Send in the Bombers!"

At a USAAF base in Rapid City S.D., the crew of an Army Air Force B-17 were quick to accept the unusual mission, and preparations to bomb an American city were fast underway. The crew hastily began fusing and loading 250-pound bombs into the bomb bay of their USAAF Boeing B-17 Flying

Fortress. Shortly thereafter, the loaded bomber with her crew of eight, took to the skies in a harsh blizzard and low ceilings.



The plan was to deliver the bombs to Miles City where the load would be transferred to a waiting Dive-Bomber to execute the bomb delivery. As the lone B-17 was nearing Miles City, low clouds forced the plans to be changed. Under a blanket of 1000 foot overcast skies, the B-17 was then ordered to handle the bombing run themselves.

Originally planned to release the load at 10,000 feet, the low overcast forced the bomber crew to take their ship lower. At 1930 hours, in heavy snow, winds and cold, the bomber appeared over the river and executed two dummy bombing runs as crowds of locals watched in amazement. On the third pass, the B-17 released a test bomb that exploded precisely on target. Unsure of the effect, the crew brought their bomber around again.



Making two more passes, releasing all six of the 250 lb bombs. Hundreds of residents watched motionless, and none speaking a word. The entire town, their homes and their families' future hung in the balance as they watched the bombs fall. Seconds later a huge plume of ice, mud and water exploded skyward from the frozen Yellowstone River.

The ice jam quickly broke apart, and the frozen waters slowly receded, saving the small town. The next morning, local residents were thrilled to watch as the water levels had dropped a full 10 feet from the day before.



That night the crew of the B-17 were welcomed by the thankful and relieved residents of Miles City Montana. The entire crew was put up at the local hotel, and each received a well-deserved steak dinner

The next morning, the crew departed, and the B-17 made a final victory pass low over the town at 50 feet over the rooftops, rocking their wings as they flew back home to Rapid City SD ... and so the story goes of the only time the continental United States was bombed ... Don't you just love old flying stories???

- Bob Heydon

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FOLDED WINGS

ROBERT W. "BOB" ELLIOTT

Age 95, of Solomon's Island, Maryland, on Monday, March 30, 2020.

In WWII, Bob flew 31 combat missions including one where the crew had to bail out behind enemy lines and returned after 30 days missing in action. He lived in Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania for most of his life where he enjoyed a successful career in real estate sales. He is remembered fondly by so many friends and relatives for his unmatched humor, his comradery on the golf course, and for his music as a self-taught jazz pianist.

ROY E. HICKS January 9, 2020



ORREN J. LEE

Orren J. Lee, 96, of Sioux Falls, SD died Tuesday, October 27, 2020. His funeral service will be 11:00 AM Friday, October 30 at Grace

Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, with burial at Woodlawn Cemetery. Visitation begins at 5:00 PM Thursday, October 29 at George Boom Funeral Home & On-Site Crematory, Sioux Falls, where the family will greet friends from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Face coverings will be required for both the visitation and funeral service.

Orren Jason Lee, son of Henry and Tina (Reno) Lee, was born November 12, 1923 at the family home in Walcott, ND. At age four, his family moved to Abercrombie, ND, where Orren received his education. He was confirmed July 3, 1938 in Emanuel Lutheran Church.

At age 19, Orren entered the U.S. Army. Following his basic training in the infantry at Camp Roberts, CA, he transferred to the Army Air Corps. Orren went to radio school at the Army Air Base in Sioux Falls, then gunnery school at Yuma, AZ. He later joined a crew and trained at Pueblo, CO. He served as radio operator and waist gunner with the 15th Air Force, 465th Bombardment Group, 781st Bomb Squadron on a B-24 Heavy Bomber based in Italy during WWII. Orren earned the Air Medal by flying missions in four

campaigns, North Apennines, Po Valley, Rhineland and Central Europe. He was honorably discharged in 1945. He was proud to serve his country.

After the war, Orren returned to Abercrombie and worked as a mechanic for two years. On November 1, 1947, he married Eileen Wein and they had three children together. Eileen died December 22, 1967. He came to Sioux Falls in 1949 and worked for Terrace Park Dairy for 25 years.

Orren married Carole Love Munce on March 26, 1971. Shortly after, he established a trucking business, Orren Lee Trucking. Orren was always very active and kept himself busy in many ways. So, after he dissolved the business, he needed something to do. He first went to work for Sioux Falls Auto Auction. Later, a friend asked Orren to help with a parttime prescription drug delivery service to nursing homes. His route had seven drops, starting about 6:00 PM and ending around 2:00 AM if everything went as scheduled. During the same period, Orren also drove part-time for Enterprise Car Rental. At age 90, Orren quit both jobs due to health issues.

Orren was a member of the American Legion for 67 years, the Lions Downtown Club, the Elks, the Moose, DAV and was a life member of the VFW. He was President of The Transportation and Industry Club, an officer of the Elks Lodge, the 2009 Elk of the Year, Enterprise Employee of the Month for his district, and President of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association. He was an active member of Grace Lutheran Church. At the age of 94, he was proud to be honored as a WWII Veteran in a half-time show at a Minnesota Vikings football game and at a Kansas City Royals baseball game.

Grateful for having shared his life are his wife, Carole; a daughter, Roxanne Richle and her husband, Roland, Geneva, Switzerland, four step children, Don Munce and his wife, Robyn, Lee's Summit, MO, Patti Wilson and her husband, Joe, Glendale, AZ, Karen Myhre and her husband, John, Ely, MN, Jay Munce and his wife, Jill, Park Ridge, IL; 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and a special

friend Molly Beckman.

Orren was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife, Eileen; a stillborn son, David; a son, Richard; a stillborn great-grandson; Joshua Merriman; a brother, Howard Lee; a sister, Geneva Rogde; six half-brothers, George Lee, Melvin Lee, Clarence Lee, Harry Lee, Alvin Haug, Emery Haug; and three half-sisters, Clara Lee, Myrtle Root and Thelma Schauer.



HAROLD L. SEITZ

Harold L. Seitz, 101, of Silvis, IL, died Tuesday, September 8, 2020, at Illini Restorative Care Center, Silvis. Burial will be at Greenview

Memorial Gardens with a Celebration of Life to follow at a later date. Harold was born April 7, 1919, in Moline, IL, the son of Jess and Ida (Bridges) Seitz. He married Violet Krieger April 27, 1941, in Palmyra, MO. She passed away August 17, 2011. He served in the Army Air Corp during WWII, where he flew over 35 missions as a nose gunner on a B-24. In his earlier years he had worked for the Post Office. He later worked and retired from the Rock Island Arsenal. Survivors include his children, Andrea "Andy" (Larry) Gull, East Moline, IL, Jay Seitz (Gary West) Grand Isle, VT, and Gary (Jacalyn) Seitz, Springfield, IL; 10 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren; and 2 great great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, wife, daughter and son-in-law, Vicki and Mike Hoffman; granddaughter, Wendy Thompson; siblings, Lorene (Albert) Dussliere and Ival (Catherine) Seitz; and his special friend, Totoo Pinto. Memorials may be made to the Quad City Honor Flight. Online condolences may be left for the family at www.vanhoe.com

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.



781st BOMB SQUADRON | 465th BOMB GROUP | 15th AIR FORCE | DECEMBER 2020

781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"

Orren Lee, President 4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308 Sioux Falls, SD 57103

