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781ST BOMB SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

NUMBER 3

PANTANELLA NEWS

FEBRUARY, 1986

REUNION - I have just returned from Colorado Springs after making arrangements for Reunion '86! The hotel is the Sheraton, the dates are September 11th to 15th. Our priorities were a central location, near an Air Force installation and at a price all can afford. This location has it all. I'm very excited about the arrangements to date. Full details on last page of the News!

MEMBERSHIP - The word is spreading and more of you are joining in on finding our lost members. The good news is that we are now 160 strong. The sad news is that we have located another 90, all in the Folded Wings Section. In total we have now located over one-fourth of the Squadron. Not bad for five months effort. Most were found by plain hard work, phone calls, letters, libraries, checking and cross-checking. All the ads netted about ten to date. Everyone should make some effort to find another crew member, another member in your state or a neighboring state. This may be your last chance to really do something for the 781st. Someone took the time and effort to find you - don't you think you owe someone else the satisfaction of answering the roll call one more time?

STATE CHAIRMAN - It's beginning to work. Some of you have taken the challenge. First to report a couple names from the list was Pierre Kennedy. May we hear from more of you? We need your help and please keep us informed of any results.

WALTER LONGACRE - I Received a letter from Walter stating that I 'murdered' his name in the last roster. Sorry, Walter, I'll make sure your name is spelled correctly from here on! Walter sent in a list of names and accepted state Chairmanship for Nebraska. He's done so well that he now has taken on Iowa. He has added five new names to the roster and is the first I know of to place an ad in the local Legion paper. Walter was nose gunner on George Ashley's crew. We need more Walters!

PHOTOGRAPHS -- Thanks for sending them in. I know you value them very much and you will get them back. I have returned some, but would like to keep others, especially crew photos, for our reunion booklet. If you want them returned before the reunion please let me know. If you haven't sent them in or don't want to, be sure to bring them to the reunion so that others may enjoy them. You'll be enjoying some of the pictures sent in in this and future News.

MICHAEL G. MISERLIS - I was saddened to learn that our squadron operations seargent passed away February 18, 1985. He was a high school classmate of Pierre Kennedy who sent in the information. After the service Sgt. Miserlis owned a cafe in Greenwood, South Carolina and retired a few years ago. In the nine months that I was in the squadron I got to know him quite well and always admired him for the way he kept operations running smoothly.

NORMAN B. SMITH CREW - The first WWII crew photo was from Richard J. Storm, Navigator on Norman Smith's crew. Here are his comments; they arrived at Pantanella on Christmas, 1944. On one mission they lost two engines and had to land in Yugoslavia. Another time their bomb bay doors would not open so they couldn't release their bombs. When they landed the bombs dropped through the bomb bay doors, out onto the runway with the ground personnel heading for cover. After VE day they flew a new B-24 back to the states. After the war Richard Storm went back to school and became a general engineer and retired in 1984 after working as a conductor design engineer for the Bonneville Power Administration. Since retirement he has traveled to Mexico, Hawaii etc. He also sent in some names and addresses and is Oregon State Chairman.

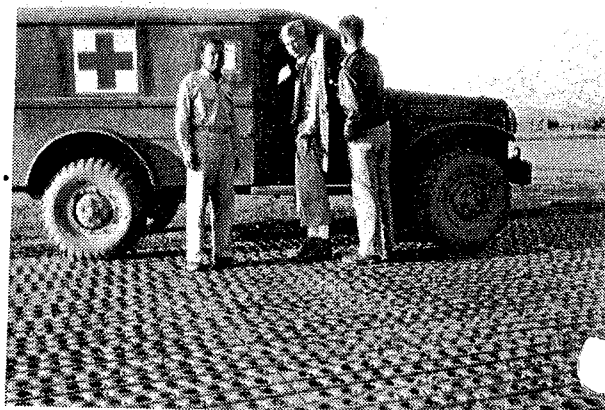


L to R Front, Ken Kill, Bombardier, Norman Smith, Pilot, James Shaffer, Co-Pilot, Richard Storm, Navigator, Standing, Paul Mouton, Crew Chief, Bobby Freeman, Tail Gunner, Johnny Metzger, Ball Gunner, Ken Rehn, Top Turret, Miles Cassidy, Radio, Frank Aken, Nose Gunner.

MELVIN G. FARBER - In the picture in the last issue I asked for identification of the bombardier. First one to identify him was James Culbertson. James was nose gunner on my crew and had a copy of the picture with Farber's name written on back. James was just located by Pierre Kennedy. The second to identify Farber was Vann Reynolds. He reports Farber was killed in a plane crash after WWII, when he was in pilot training. Melvin Farber and Vann Reynolds were both on George Gaines crew.

ROBERT C. JONES - Arrived in the Squadron on January, 1945 and went down in the Adriatic on February 5, 1945 after a mission to Regensburg Oil Storage. All on the crew were lost. Does anyone have his serial number or names and numbers of his crew? We would like to furnish his family with information. Also if you were on that mission and have any information at all please let us hear from you.

HEAVEN CAN WAIT - That was the name of the ambulance in case you didn't know. That's Doc Rapaport on the left, Joe Athon checking out the inside and Tom Arthur on the right. I understand Arthur was the artist on many of the 'nose jobs' and was on Athon's crew. Can't someone find Arthur and Doc Rapaport? Photo sent by Hank Givens.



SQUADRON INSIGNIA - I never knew the origin. Got the history from Walter Longacre and then from Earl Viands. We all knew it was a PO'd Indian but I didn't know his name. It was Chief Jo-Jan, named after Col. McKenna's two sons, Joe and John. Incidentally, in the 1950's the 783rd was reactivated as a troop carrier squadron and they redesigned the insignia by removing the bomb etc.

COL. LOKKER - With all the work getting our reunion location firmed up and the new rosters, I did not have the time to complete the story. To date I have over 100 pages of documents including German Intelligence reports and the National Archives reports. I also want to make sure the facts are correct. There are many conflicting reports and it now appears that only six got out of the plane. Full story next time for sure. The photo on the right is Col. Lokker on his motor cycle. More photos in next issue including the plane going down.

BIG FENCE - Another name long forgotten by many. Others will never forget it. When you were in trouble coming back over the Alps, shot up or engines out and needed a heading, Big Fence got the call. (If your radio was still working)

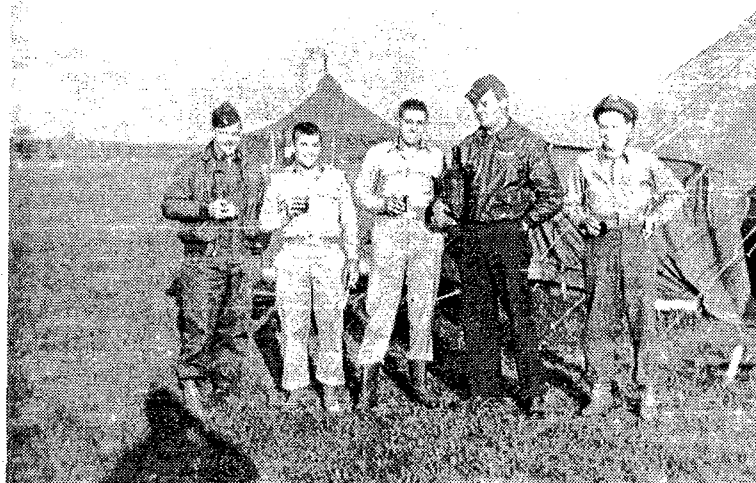
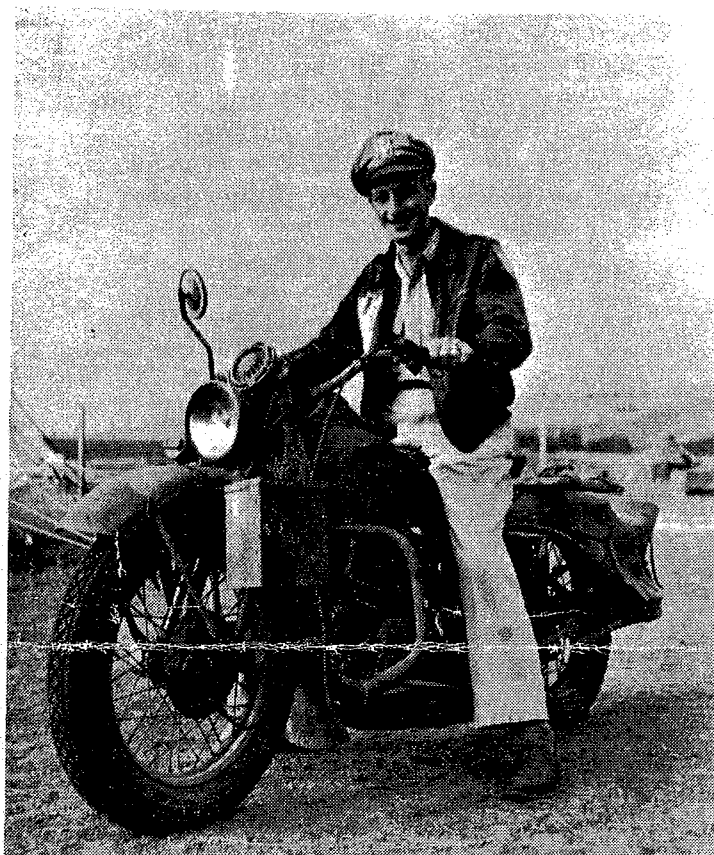
MAIL CALL - John T. Russell's response with the questionnaire, names and other records included a page with all of his crews mothers names and addresses. He noted that he prepared this list at Pantanella in case he might have to write a letter to them in case any of the crew were lost on a mission. "Thank God I never had to use it," he comments. Makes you think about those that were less fortunate.

RAY L LAUGHNER - Ray passed away some time ago and his sons would like to know more about their father. I do not have his crew records and would like to hear from someone that knew Ray at Pantanella. He joined the squadron on November 30, 1944. On his second mission as navigator on Blue "N", December 19th, he was shot down and held as POW in Stalag 2. A full story on Ray when we get the details.

YOUR SERVICE REDORD - Now is the time for those of you that haven't given your family your service record, to get your information together. Reunion will be a good time to compare notes, get copies of missions etc.

DUES - As the monkey said when he peed in the cash register, "This is going to run into money." We will accept contributions of a ten or twenty. Frankly, we didn't expect the response and the demand for more information. We are delighted to have the response but would like help toward the additional costs. A mailing runs a couple hundered dollars and we want to keep them up. Thanks to some who have already sent some in. We appreciate your support.

FLY BOYS - The lively group on the right; L to R, Cris Beetle, Jerry Seifert, Jocko Roberts, Lard Hylla, Mac McFarlane. The shadow? Must be Rae Branch who sent in the photo.



RECORDS - They were achieved on the ground as well as in the air. This article appeared in Stars and Stripes and was saved by Dale Samuelson. Let's hear from some of you record breaking men - on which plane was this change made?

EARL VIANDS - A follow up call to Leo Lutring, who promised some more names and addresses, resulted in locating Earl Viands. Earl was 71 years young on December 28th. He was Col. McKenna's crew chief, who's plane was the famous "Bulls Eye". Over the pilots cockpit and around it read "Come and Get Me You Bastards." And in German "Kommen Holen Zie Mir Er Misgeborn." After a couple missions Col. Clark, group CO then, made him take part of it off. Earl recalls working on LB30's in South America, which were used for patrol service. Leo Lutring joined him in Ecuador, then they went to Davis-Monthan, Arizona, then on to McCook for the formation of the 781st. Known as the 'Deacon', Earl still works half days at the VA hospital. During writing his four page letter to me he indicated three or four times that he had to lay his glasses down to rest his eyes. Deacon, we wish you well and appreciate hearing from you. Another proud member of the 781st.

O. J. COWART, JR. - One of the earliest questionnaires that were returned came from O.J. He indicated that he would like to help by the use of his computers. I felt the distance would be a problem and ignored his offer. In early January I received a thick packet of a computer run of all the names on the rosters that have been sent out to date! Needless to say I phoned him immediately and welcomed his offer. The nice, neat alphabetic roster, mailing labels etc. are all the work of O.J. He was Communications and Intelligence Sergeant at the 781st. He kept lots of photos and remembers a lot about the early happenings 'on the hill.' I'll relate one story he told me. When the squadron began settling down on the hill, it was decided that the hay barn would become our briefing room etc. It was full of hay and Yankee Ingenuity decided it was easier to burn it out rather than removing it by hand. It ended up a big smouldering mess and eventually had to be removed by hand anyway.

QUOTABLE QUOTE - I received a very kind Christmas Letter from Sam Marie, President of the 783rd Bomb Squadron Association. He wished me well and success in organizing the 781st. Since he has had a few years experience in organizing the 783rd, he offered me a word of encouragement and advice. I quote Sam; "Having already walked the path you are traveling, I have a bit of experience that needs to be passed along. NEVER, NEVER! GET DISCOURAGED. You will find in the months to come you are dealing with the Damnest Collection of 'Procrastinators' known to man. They have good intentions and eventually will respond and come around. The disappointments go with the happiness. But you will be both pleased and happy of having fired your shot." Thanks Sam for the advice. I have to say to the procrastinators that discouragement does not fit in my limited vocabulary. We are going to go forward, enjoy the fellowship developed at Pantanella and have one hell of a reunion. Wouldn't it be nice if you would respond NOW and be a part of the 'ol Fighting 781st again? As Ronnie would say, "Make it one more for the Gipper." Why not "Make it one more for the 781st!"

Claim Engine Record



15th AAF - Seven men of a Liberators squadron have set an unofficial record for a heavy engine change. Their time for a complete change was seven hours and 29 minutes.

Shown above are the record-making mechanics. From left to right, in front of the engine nacelle, are Master Sergeant Leo G. Lutring and Sergeant Aurelius A. Becnel. In the back row, from left to right, are Master Sergeant John L. Thomas, Technical Sergeant Mallory H. Simmons, Master Sergeant John T. Patrick, Staff Sergeant James B. Aitken, Jr. and Sergeant Martin A. Honthaas.

CANCELLATION - You can cancel right up to the last week and receive full refund from from the motel. Why take a chance on not getting the type of room you want or the low price. Get your reservation in NOW and if things don't work out you can always cancel and get full refund. Your reservations and cancellations are directly with the motel. If you send your motel reservation card to me I just forward it to the hotel.

COURTESY - Please give us the courtesy of reserving early. We have 100 of Sheraton's 200 rooms reserved for us at the low rate. We should be able to use than 100 rooms, but, at this point, we cannot ask the motel to hold more. Remember, at this time of year, motels fill up very fast, particularly when the Academy has a home game. Rooms will be assigned by the Sheraton on a first-come, first-served basis. Don't take a chance on not getting the discount rates for this memorable event. Remember, the most important ingredient for a really great reunion is YOU! Send in your reservation right away to be sure you won't be left out.

DEDICATION - This reunion will be dedicated to Col. Lokker and all others that were Killed In Action. Since all records are not available to us we ask your help in informing us of additional names on the KIA list.

PEEL OFF THE REUNION RESERVATION FORM AND SEND IN



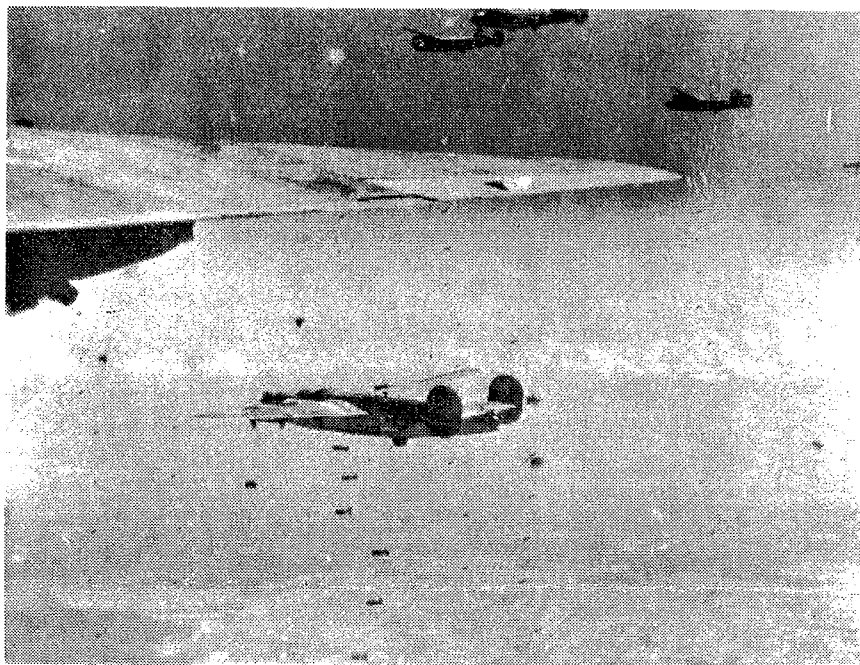
OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE - We are dedicated to find all former 781st Bomb Squadron members who served at Pantanella Air Base, Italy. To date we have done a super job. You may be wondering why I keep stressing the need for more help to locate the remainder of the squadron. The primary reason is to get everyone located before our reunion so that they can attend. We can only locate them once so we may as well get the job done now. With this Newsletter we have included three rosters; The Folded Wings Section with all known KIA and deceased members, the membership roster with all active members as of this date, and the non-member roster with WWII or last known addresses. These rosters supersede all others and should be kept as we do not intend to put out another roster for some time. We will add to these from time to time.

Our greatest success has been through the efforts of the state chairman. This past week I made many calls to state chairman and find they are really working. Marcel Snyder reports the same on those in the eastern region. To give you an example, I made a call recently to Warren Hartley and he gave me a new way to find someone. He wrote to the Chamber of Commerce in Battle Ground, Washington to see if there was any address for George Harteloo or any of his relatives. Back came George's address. In the state of Texas I found that with a persons name, birthdate and \$2 you can get their address. Lots of ways to find someone. So, join in the rewarding experience of finding someone. Work with you state chairman if you one. If not why not volunteer for your state.

Here are the state chairman;

Arizona	Billy Bickley	505 298-0553
Michigan	Chuck Bradley	517 783-1381
Arkansas	Spec Christian	214 882-5962
Minnesota	Frank Hylla	612 685-3551
California	Ben Donahue	415 967-1855
Montana	John Russell	406 494-4445
Colorado	Rae Branch	303 751-1392
Nebraska	Walt Longacre	402 721-3557
Connecticut	Pierre Kennedy	203 561-1592
New Mexico	Billy Bickley	505 298-0553
Georgia	Bob Mathews	404 394-9466
North Carolina	Charles Hemphill	707 647-5655
Idaho	Richard Storm	503 654-7549
North Dakota	Frank Hylla	612 685-3551
Illinois	Leonard Emmel	312 841-4009
Ohio	John Zartman	614 486-0087
Indiana	Harry Reuss	317 926-6744
Oklahoma	Don Fleming	214 296-6809
Iowa	Walt Longacre	402 721-3557
Oregon	Richard Storm	503 654-7549
Kansas	Donald Fleming	214 296-6809
South Dakota	Frank Hylla	612 685-3551
Louisiana	Spec Christian	214 882-5962
New York	Howard Sopenoff	516 796-0966
	Fred Aboud	502 454-4166
Pennsylvania	John Patrick	411 377-2659
	Robert Elliott	412 561-1573
Tennessee	John Layne	615 837-6040
Texas	Spec Christian	214 882-5962
Virginia	Russ Maynard	703 786-8951
Washington	Warren Hartley	509 525-1507
Wyoming	John Russell	406 494-4445
Wisconsin		

FIRST CREW TO GET SHOT DOWN - George Prince's crew went down on a raid to Weiner-Neustadt, Austria on May 30, 1944. George Prince and his Navigator Calvin Canyuck were killed during an Me-109 attack. The plane caught fire, exploded and three were thrown clear; Smith, the engineer was burned badly, Hal Holden, co-pilot and Dubinske, Gunner. The others bailed out and evaded the enemy. Rae Branch's crew flying with the squadron that day shot down the Me-109. The information comes from Rae and a reply just received from Jack Williams, Tail Gunner on Princes crew. Jack spent 35 years in public education as a teacher, coach and school principal. Today he is a licensed insurance and real estate broker.



A PRAYER REMEMBERED - At early morning briefing and after the shock of seeing the red line on the wall map pointing to Munich, or Vienna, or Blechhammer, the flak report, weather report etc., then came a moment to listen to the consoling words of Chaplain Block while we paused in a prayer for a safe return. The Prayer: 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 THRU 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 ASSULTS OF THE ENEMY, AND MAY THEIR FAITH BE UNFALTERING IN THEE. WE PRAY IT SO IN THE NAME OF HIM WHO HAVE GIVEN US POWER OVER ALL THE THINGS OF THE EARTH. THRU JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN. CHAPLAIN H. R. BLOUCH

WHO ARE THESE MEN - I found this photo with my WWII photos but do not recognize any. The first to recognize yourself can have the original photo.

HANG IN THERE - A recent article by Buck Consultants reports that a 65 year old man can expect to live to 81! Just think how many more reunions we can have!!

APOLIGIES - Please forgive errors and omissions. Time does not permit a lot of cross checking. Let me know of errors and it will be corrected.



REUNION AND RESERVATION INFORMATION

DATES - 11 to 15 September 1986

PLACE - Sheraton Inn, I-25 and North Academy Boulevard, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The motel is located one mile from the Air Force Academy's south gate and 10 miles north of Colorado Springs on Highway I-25. If you drive, you will find an abundance of free, safe parking. If you fly, there is free transportation from the airport to the motel. If you fly to Denver, you might want to rent a car; it's just an hour's drive. The motel just completed a remodeling and addition, and the rooms are in excellent condition. It has all kinds of extras, such as a 24-hour pool, exercise areas, hot tub, etc. And the scenery offers a spectacular, panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains. There are many other attractions which we will give you more information on later, in case you want to come early or stay over, as the weather is beautiful at that time of the year.

COSTS - The Sheraton Inn is giving us special rates which are approximately 25% off their normal rates. Singles are \$45, and doubles are \$55 per day. The rates are guaranteed for three days before and three days after if you want an extended stay. And you get a full breakfast FREE! We do not have all the food arrangements made, so cannot give you all those costs; however, the buffet lunch is \$3.95. We expect to have our Saturday night banquet at a restaurant away from the motel and the Sunday night dinner at an officers' club. In addition to your room and meals, there will be a nominal registration fee to cover the cost of the bus for the Academy tour and football game, the football tickets, and some incidentals. At this time, we would expect the registration to be between \$35 and \$50.

PROGRAM - At this early stage, we cannot confirm all the arrangements being made. We can tell you though there will be something to do every waking hour, and you will relive memories, shed a few tears, and go home with an experience that you will never forget. Several of your directors have attended other squadron reunions. It was an experience for us, and we had not had the close ties of serving with those squadrons. Full program out in the next Newsletter, but for a brief rundown;

Thursday - Registration, hospitality room and evening cocktail party and buffet.

Friday - Tour of the Academy; lunch at the Academy; afternoon business session and hanger flying; and evening on the town devoted to crew or unit reunions. The motel is arranging a fashion show for the ladies during the business session.

Saturday - Morning group function and afternoon ~~football featuring Hawaii and top-rated Academy~~ *Sorry, but Academy rescheduled this game. We'll arrange something else for the afternoon.* Evening banquet and program.

Sunday - Church for all faiths at the Academy; lunch there also; and afternoon of tours or group programs at the motel. Farewell dinner at ~~officers'~~ *NCO* club.

Monday - Check-out and sad farewells.

DRESS - Daytime; Casual. Evening; Men, coat and tie; ladies, cocktail dress. No formal attire.

RESERVATIONS - Fill out the enclosed card for the motel and, along with your check for the first night's deposit, mail it to the motel, or you can mail it to me along with the filled out association reunion questionnaire and I'll forward it. Send the reunion questionnaire only to me - not to motel. You may also charge by credit card as indicated on the motel reservation card.