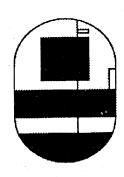


PANTANELLA NEWS



JANUARY 1999

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NUMBER 55

DAYTON REUNION WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED



Tuesday, October 7

great turnout of the 781st combined with comrades from the other squadrons all began on Tuesday. Some early bird arrivals observed were Gene Barnett, Charles Zwerko, Ken Sutton, Loren Foote, Frank Ambrose and others. There were no official functions on Tuesday. Early arrivals congregated in the cocktail and dining area.

Wednesday, October 8

Wednesday activity be-

gan in earnest with early birds from Tuesday becoming active and those preparing for registration beginning to set up. By noon registration began and the hospitality bar was open for cocktails and free coffee and soft drinks. The memorabilia were put on display and the TV began showing the slide program produced by Harry Carl.

By the end of the day over half had registered and there were many gatherings in the registration and hospitality area and later in the dining room. It was after 11 PM when the hospitality area closed.

Thursday, October 9

On Thursday we were in full swing. The hospitality and trophy room opened by 9 AM and the registration table was opened in the center of the room, which also had the trophy collection, PX, and hospitality bar. Some decided to visit the Air Force Museum

and other sites on the base. The final total was 245 registered. included four It registrants; first-time Bill Barrie, Armament, Clarence Armament, Robert Hicks, Leasure, Group **Operations** and Robert McCague, George Ashley's Engineer.

The busy hospitality and trophy room closed at 4 PM for members to get ready to leave by bus or car for the Museum at 5 PM. The Museum closed to the public by 5 PM so by the time of our arrival we had this huge museum to ourselves. If you can call a museum beautiful, this was one beautiful Museum.

After the cocktail party in the Kettering Hall it was time for seating for 245 members and guests for the banquet in the

781st Bomb Squadron Association 2 Mount Vernon Lane Atherton, CA 94027-3037 (650) 325-8356

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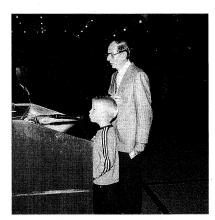
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781st BOMB SQUADRON

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators form Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WWII (1944-1955). During it's 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

Modern Flight Hanger. There were planes all around us in this beautiful area, including a B-52, B-47, SR-71, B-18, etc.



Kyler Rilett with Jim Althoff leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Not the kind you would hang from the ceiling, but there were smaller planes hanging in the ceiling area.

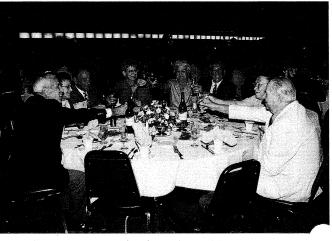
We always begin our reunion with the Pledge of Allegiance. No one had been selected to lead, so I asked Roland Soucy for a suggestion. He commented that there were a number of young family members in attendance and it would be nice to ask one of them. I asked Roland if he would select one. He then selected Kyler Rilett,

seven-year-old great grandson of Charles and Irene Bradley. After minutes few went to the podium to begin our introductory program before the banquet. When the audience finished seating asked for Kyler to come forward to lead us in the

Pledge of Allegiance. Not knowing where he was seated I did not see him and had to repeat "where is Kyler." Then I realized he had arrived at the podium since he was tugging on my slacks.

I handed Kyler the microphone and with a loud and clear voice he led the Pledge of Allegiance. He received a round of applause and it set the pace for the entire reunion — we were one large family with many children and grandchildren participating. In the Charles Bradley family there were twelve members attending.

After a prayer by Loren Foote the food was served and Round Hill wine was placed on all tables. The wine was compliments of Frank Piteo who could not attend. He wrote, " I want to be there in "spirits," oops, I mean in "spirit." So we all toasted Frank. He is quite guy. He has been a great supporter of our squadron and the largest cash donor to the squadron funds. He also appreciates the Collings Foundation B-24 and has made some major donations to keep the 465th Bomb Group insignia on



A toast to Frank Piteo from his comrades.



Frank Piteo proudly points to his name on "All American."

the rudder. Needless to say the banquet was enjoyed by everyone in this beautiful and exciting setting.

Since our Saturday was scheduled as the 465th Bomb Group day we decided to present plaques at this time. The first two to be recognized and receive a plaque for their contribution to the Pantanella News were Harold Farrar and Pierre Kennedy. Their story, written by both of them, was "POW experiences at Stalag Luft IV and Eventual Freedom."

The next plaque was presented to a very surprised Frank Ambrose for his touching story "Pantanella Valley 1997." It was a story about his return visit to Pantanella in 1997.

Another plaque was for Dodie Shallman for her story, "A Different War Story." It was the story about Dodie as a war bride, then widowed when her husband, Lt. Jerome F. Jolicoeur, died in a Ger-

man prison camp. Dodie was

unable to attend, so the plaque will be mailed to her.

Then our speaker for the evening was introduced, Maj. Gen. Raymond E. Moorman, **USAF** (Ret). Gen. Moorman retired as the Chief of Staff, Ohio Air National Guard, in 1992 after Maj. General. Raymond of military service with the Air Force



completing 36 years E. Moorman, USAF (Ret)

National Guard. He was in the USAF **Aviation Cadet** Program and was honored as a Distinguished Graduate from Pilot Training in 1958. He completed the Air Command and Staff College and the Air War College. He is a compilot mand

the Air

and

and has over 4,000 hours of military flying time.

It was appropriate that Gen. Moorman talked to us about the United States Air Force Museum since we were dining there in the center of the Modern Aviation Hanger and Gen. Moorman is a volunteer at the Museum. He talked about this being the oldest and largest military aviation museum in the world. It has both chronological and subjective layouts to tell the exciting story of aviation development from the

> days of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk to the Space Age. Exhibits include over 200 aircraft missiles, and plus family oriented and historically interesting aeronautical displays.

Ove

r one and a half million visitors from around the world come

Ohio each year to tour this unique free attraction. The Museum is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and closed only on Thanksgiving. Christmas and New Years. The Museum is designed to tour without guides and photography is encouraged.

It has an Annex which houses 25 aircraft including the Museum's collection of Presidential aircraft. President Kennedy's Air Force One was recently added to the collection and it has set some attendance records. Some of our reunion members made a special effort to see Air Force One.



Frank Ambrose, Harold Farrar and Pierre Kennedy proudly display their plagues.



Many of our Group enjoyed touring the museum.

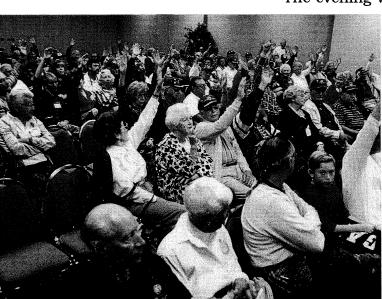
The Museum houses a research facility. Also adjacent is a Memorial Park of statuary memorials, plaques and trees dedicated to individuals, organizations and military units associated with the Air Force. The 781st Bomb Squadron has a memorial plaque and tree dedicated in 1987.

An IMAX Theatre is operated by the Air Force Foundation. Museum Seeing an IMAX film is an emotional experience. It puts you at the center of the action in a way no ordinary movie can, drawing you in with images that are so real you want to touch them, so powerful you can feel them.

This stunning film experience relies on the best motion picture system available in the world—the IMAX system. After the banquet was over we had the opportunity to spend more time in the Museum until the buses arrived and then re-

turn to the Hope Hotel. Friday, October 10

A full day was planned for Friday. Everyone seemed to arrive for breakfast early. The board of directors had their breakfast in the dining area and went to the Hospitality room for their meeting. There was not enough time allocated to get much done before the



Voting on the site for the Year 2000 reunion.

general meeting at 10 o'clock. The primary item of business for the general meeting was to decide on the next reunion site.

The board of directors had recommended California and a vote by show of hands had the majority for California. Some boisterous comments were heard before it was decided to plan on California and in the event of any major problems it will be moved to Colorado Springs. Work will be done on details of a site in California and a report from the board of directors will be in a future newsletter.

At 11:30 the buses were waiting to take us to the Officers Club for lunch. It was a beautiful club and delicious lunch. Following lunch we left for Chapel No.1 for the memorial service at 1:30. As usual Loren Foote and his committee did a very fine job of remembering our men who lost their lives and those who have died since. Following this the group photo was taken and then we returned to the hotel.

The evening was free, so there

were many gatherings of crews and sections for dinner. And the hospitality room had action late into the night.

Saturday, October 11

Saturday was the 465th Bomb Group day. All Squadrons gathered in the large meeting room. The 465th Bomb Group genera'



781st BOMB SQUADRON 1998 MEMORIAL SERVICE

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB CHAPEL-1 9 OCTOBER, 1998

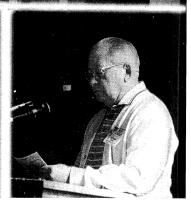












meeting was called to order shortly after 9:30 AM. All squadrons were represented along with several group personnel. A representative from each squadron gave a brief history of their squadron association.

Then Paul Durckel, program chairman, began the program, "A day in the life of an airman at Pantanella." It began with a briefing of the mission to Helegenstadt Vienna's Marshalling Yards. on March 22, 1945. It was the 25th time we bombed Vienna and this one turned out to be the last mission for the 15th Air Force over Vienna with the 465th Bomb Group being the last group over

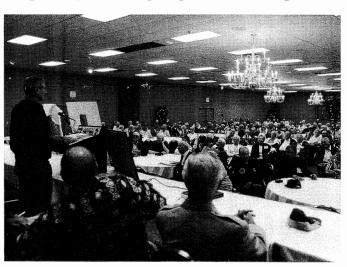
has created the heavens and the earth, and in thy natural way, has made it possible for man to sustain himself in flight through



Barney Russell briefs the navigators.

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." Then the crews' departure discussed was and the mission was under way.



Paul Durckel, Program Chairman, kicks off the briefing.

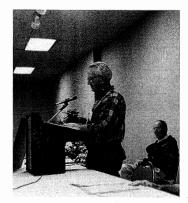
the target.

Paul acted as the briefing officer and called on Charles Zwerko for bombardiers' briefing, Barney Russell for navigators' briefing, and Dean Ottaway told about the enlisted men's briefing.

The briefing ended with Loren Foote giving the prayer Chaplain Blouch gave at every briefing, "Oh God, Thou who While waiting for the mission to return Bill Jostworth from the Engineering Section was introduced and made the following remarks about the part played by the ground echelon:

"As part of the ground echelon attached to the 781st Bomb Squadron I consider this appearance a privileged invitation. Beyond that I feel it is an even greater honor to be in the

presence of air crews who flew dangerous missions in those pregnant looking liberators. I commend you flyers for yo



Dean Ottaway briefs the Bombardiers.

unselfish actions and your bravery.

"Having been an aircraft mechanic at Pantanella Field, Italy, I was asked to share my thoughts with you about life, in general, while serving on the flight line. Therefore, I elected address two separate, but interelated subjects.

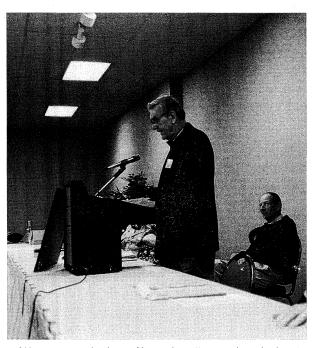
"1. A cursory overview of the line's role in the scheme of things, particularly about our work and your air safety.

"2. My personal thoughts, concerns and empathy for the mission crews.

"Every story has to have a beginning. Mine began as a teenager who had a wild passion for airplanes. That is after fast cars and girls! I had spent many hours around hangers at Cincinnati's Lunken airport gathering enough aircraft mechanical skills to earn my way into the air corp.

"I realize that I'm biased in my next statement. But to me, the 465th bomb group was one of the best in the 15th Air Force and the records attest that. You were damn good 'iron droppers!'

"The 781st squadron's engineering section line crews readily assisted one another in getting their planes back in flying condition. Furthermore, our commissioned Officers, and top dog non-coms checked on us frequently, but never interfered with the work in prog-



Bill Jostworth describes the Ground Echelon's activities and feelings.

ress unless we asked them. I assume this was also prevalent in the other squadrons of the 465th. Military flight safety was of paramount importance and we were all committed to it.

"In our younger Air Corp days we considered the B-24 you flew to be our lovable baby. We pampered it, we fed it fluids, wiped and diapered it with oily rags, stayed up with it all night when it was ill, guarded it around the clock when that crazy saboteur was on the loose, gave it a thorough physical every 25 hours of flying time and bedded it down each night.

"When it was scheduled

for a mission we too were up before dawn, pre-flighting engines and checking out all aircraft systems. I hasten to say Ordinance and Armament also worked throughout the night. Ordnance would be loading bombs, installing detonators and fuses. We would leave because we didn't want to be a

statistic if they goofed. Armament was in and out cleaning, oiling and checking machine guns and turrets. It was a team effort. Radio and radar sections were also included.

"Now it's time to venture on and express my emotional thoughts, and that of others, about the mission flights.

"When the flying echelon arrived for the day's mission at our hard stand I was always in awe as "the crew"

went about its business

in a quiet and professional manner. It might have been a facade, but to me I had knots in my stomach wondering. Was today's target going to be a hell of a one for you? What were you thinking about? What were the chances for

your safe return? And as you individually boarded I questioned to myself, who might be the unfortunate ones wounded or killed? We grease monkeys

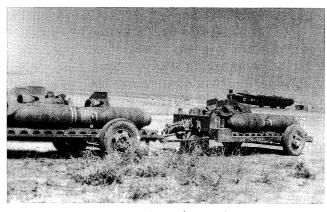
never knew the mission's target.

"Then, after settling down in your respective positions on the aircraft a serene aura seemed to engulf the hard stand area until the engines roared into action, wheel blocks were pulled and you were waved off.

"It was a spectacle to behold to see so many planes taxiing out to the runway, watching each heavy bomber take off while we had our fingers crossed, then seeing them circle into a formation and bounding off to alien destinations. Truly a chilling and life-time remembrance. I have goose bumps now while reminiscing.

"But as you flew out of sight we experienced a let down. Then the long wait began for your return. Throughout the day I'd have flash-backs wondering what exactly was happening to the crew and our baby.

"What terror each one of



Bomb Load

you could be experiencing, how was the plan performing? Did we inadvertently overlook something that could be causing a problem? And could you be lucky enough to draw a 'milk run!'

"Then, upon your return, we would all gather near the landing strip to watch for



flares (indicating some type of trouble), count the planes, [especially looking to see if you and our baby made it through the mission] and after you were 'out there' more than nine hours and did not return, we were almost certain you had gone down somewhere.

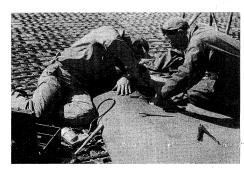
"In that case we would question returning flight crews; Did you see what happened to Yellow A? If it went down, were there parachutes? How many? Did it drop out of formation? Approximately where etc?

"Unfortunately, I experienced a few sad 'no returns' to our hard stand. It was a desolate and depressing place to be and to see some of the minor things the crew had left behind.

"With no definitive information forthcoming, my palate and stomach had no appeal for dinner. Only a prayer for the entire crew came to mind.

"From an 'on line' aspect we couldn't help but admire the flying skills demonstrated by the pilots and their crews. After examining the damaged condition of the aircraft returning to the base we marveled at how you managed to fly it back! No doubt, some of you had very good 'Guardian Angels.'

"Many aircraft had engines and vital systems completely wiped out. Others were severely punctured by bullets, shells, and flat tires. In some cases so much light leaked through the fuselage that it looked like a green house. Walt Dudley, our sheet metal man will attest. Many of the damaged bombers were repaired at the hard stand while some were hauled off to the major repair depot and others were



scraped and cannibalized for replacement parts. And these events continued day after day until the war's end.

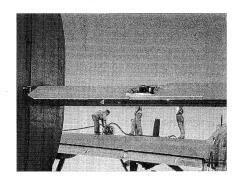
"So, in behalf of all the ground echelon sections and every American and our Allies, we collectively today applaud you flyers and we thank you. For those daring young men who flew in those lumbering flying machines."

Bill's talk was received very well. Too often the ground echelon is not given credit for the job they did to keep 'em flying. Many came forward to compliment Bill and happy to have heard about the ground echelon.

Paul Durckel then took over and discussed the return of the planes and the results of the mission. In the audience were a number of men who were on the mission and a number who were shot down, but survived. They were Paul Durckel, McHenry Hamilton, Rich Richardson, and Wendell Galbraith. Some gave their report on the flak, bombing and how they made out after bailing out and becoming a prisoner of war. One or two found it too emotional to finish their talk about the ordeal even though it was a long time ago.

Others who made it back to base also had something to say. It was pointed out that it was such a rough day for flak because of a change in wind from the briefing. The wind changed completely to a head wind instead of a tail wind, making the ground speed about 100 miles per hour slower than predicted.

This caused the lead plane and deputy lead plane to be hit and go down as soon as they approached the target. I was flight leader of the last box over the target and could see the terrible scene up ahead.



The planes going down, others with engines smoking and the formation loosening up to keep from mid-air collisions.

After the program a buffet luncheon was served. The afternoon was open for visiting between squadrons, etc.

There was a group cock-

tail party at 5:00 PM in the Hope Hotel. The banquet began at 6:30 with the seating of over 400 members from all the squadrons. Tables were reserved in advance by squadrons.

After dinner our honored member Stanley C. Pace from the 783rd squadron was our speaker. Mr. Pace is a graduate of West Point and after his military service he had a very successful business career. He retired as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of General Dynamics,



Stan Pace (783rd Sqdn) addresses the Group while Jim Althoff listens intently.

Inc. He also served in many other companies in various capacities Among them he was Vice-Chairman of TRW.

He is better know to many of us as the second attack unit leader over Friederichshafen on his 39th mission, when his plane went down along with seven other 465th planes during a viscous attack by German fighters.

Mr. Pace talked about his feelings and the decisions he had to make during his escape from his B-24 which was engulfed in fire. He was severely burned, was captured by the Germans and spent nine months in German hospitals and prison camps. (See Newsletter #50.)

He went on to discuss our military situation today and emphasized the need for the youth of today to become involved in the military and that the U. S. should maintain a strong military force to maintain peace in the world. The current military strength is the

lowest it has been since the early 1940s.

Following Stan Pace's talk Kathy LeComte Lupton, granddaughter George LeComte (780th Sqdn) asked to address the audience. She made a very interesting talk, which will appear in a later newsletter.

There will also be a report from two next generation members of the 781st each of whom will address the sub-

ject, "Our next generation continuing our associations."

We left the banquet to continue with our comrades in the hospitality room and then call it a day and an end to a wonderful gathering of 465th Bomb Group veterans and some echoing of another one in the future.

Making the reunion go smoothly-took a lot of work by reunion Chairman Ken Sutton and Co-Chairman Ron Soucy. After preliminary plans for each day's events it was up to Ken to get into the details. Since it was the busiest reunion we have had because of the 465th Group day a lot of detail was required after we ar-



Ken Sutton taking table reservations.

rived at the site.

That is where Ron Soucy came in since he lived nearby and knew the base very well. Some of his leg work included the schedule and special price for the airport van service, the Museum arrangements for our banquet, Hope Hotel reservations, Chapel reservations, Officers Club reservations, Thursday's Contact for speaker, and the list goes on.

Registration at the reunion was very ably handled by Nancy Sutton, Marge Foote, Longacre, and Agnes Ann Althoff, etc. The PX was the work of Barney Russell. Jack Van Slyke ran the memorabilia. Ben Donahue was the official greeter and helpful guide at registration. Loren Foote was responsible for the Memorial booklet, the Memorial Service and special prayers where needed. Walt Longacre planned table assignments and a very busy man who was there when needed was Frank Ambrose. All those wonderful photos give everyone a chance to relive the memories of the reunion.

Overseeing all of this really kept Ken Sutton on the move. Since we presently have no treasurer he had the collection of funds for the meals, dues paid at the reunion, etc.

We owe all of the above

people a very hearty thanks and also all the others who helped with the programs, including Paul Durckel, Bill Jostworth, Stan Pace, Gen. Moorman, Bob Bleier from the 780th Squadron, Dean Ottaway of the 782nd Sqdn, and Ralph Smith of the 783rd Sqdn.

Now that we are back home we have time to relive some of the memories of seeing old friends and remembering those days at Pantanella. Many thanks to you who have written notes of appreciation.

Address changes:

Jim Althoff area code changed to 650. The phone company reply if you dial the old code is "number is disconnected." but don't believe them - I am still here !! Full number is 650 325-8356. Esther Cowart, PO Box 3728, Galveston, TX 77552.

Charles E. Ingram, 6330 Manila Rd., Goshen, OH 45122. Phone (513) 625-3282 Dan Bailey new area code 724.

Andy Getsy 7965 Struthers Rd., Poland OH 44514.
Glen Haywood, 5104
Pheasant Ct., Ann Arbor, MI

48105. Phone 734 485-1479. **Elmer Schoeffel** area code now 920.

James Marcel Snyder, 1706 Independence Ave., Melbourne FL 32940. Phone 407 259-9117.

Raymond C. Hall, 219 Kingsway, Hesston, KS 67062. 316 327-5074,.

Ernst Magmore, PO Box 1020, Pinehurst, TX 77362.

John Stark, 152 NW 15th St., Gresham, OR 97030-3022, Mike La Bella, 125 S. Dobson Rd. Apt 1032Chandler, AZ 85224

Van Reynolds. Mail returned as not deliverable as addressed. I called and his phone number is no longer any good. Any one know where Van Reynolds address??

Billy Bickley. Mail returned. Attempted, address not known. Any know his address??

Marcel Snyder Phone 407 259- 9117.

NOTE!! HELP!! A repeat notice that many area codes are changing and many announcements now coming over the phone have changed and state the phone has been disconnected! Beware! most of those announcements are area code changes. Also Zip Codes are changing. PLEASE send corrections or you may miss the next Pantanella News!

Dues Time! HAPPY NEW YEAR MEANS 99

Yes it is another year and time for dues. Your mailing label should read 99! All you life members can smile, but most of the others are not 99 as yet. When sending in your dues it is a good time to send a note about any suggestions or comments, or maybe you have a story to be published.

Attendees at the Dayton Reunion

James C. Althoff Frank P. Ambrose Bernard Badler Daniel E. Bailey Russ Ball Argene Barnett Harry J. Barrett Bill Barrie William B. Bartlett, Jr. John B. Baum *Bessie Beeson Nicholas C. Belik Charles H. Bradley Charles H. Braud Warren G. Carden Gaythor L. Cass *Julia Cato Raymond D. Cauble G. Steve Chirigotis Walter Clausen David B. Coleman Jerry F. Cottle Cornelius V. Culhane Carl V. Dahl

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Herbert L. Schlossin Elmer L. Schoeffel Edward J. Schreiner Harold Seitz James D. Shaffer Robert L. Shetterly George L. Smith James Marcel Snyder George A. Soroka Roland J. Soucy Charles W. Speer Norman G. Stenerson Bertel E. Stigberg Barbour C. Stokes, Jr. Walter H. Sutton Kenneth E. Sutton, Jr. Albert I. Thompson Ray U. Tyler Jack Van Slyke James E. Waggle, Jr. Frank Wassenaar Leslie S. Wheeler Henry L. Willett, Jr. Thomas L. Williams, M.D. John Wroblewski John Zadrozny Charles R. Zwerko

FOLDED WINGS

Lowell Myers (Ellison Radio Operator) passed away August 21, 1998. Glen Haywood wrote a letter notifying me. He notes, "Lowell was a sound friend and excellent radio man. I always thought his distinctive "key" was about the cleanest transmission one could ever hear. He will be missed)."

Harold A. Straughan (McKenna's model crew tail gunner) passed away August 28, 1998.

Bruce Miller (Armament) passed away July 30th, 1998. Reported by John Ogden.

Robert Williamson (Navigator on Martin's crew) passed away Aug 4, 1998. Reported by his daughter.

A letter from Linda Williamson Hughes. "I am sorry to inform you that dad died a month ago. He was 77. The cause of death

was a heart attack, his second. He had had his first heart attack the year before.

"Since he was a Mason, my husband (also a Mason) arranged a Masonic funeral service which was performed on August 27th by a Past Master of the Huntington Beach Lodge #380. His ashes were buried at Riverside National Cemetery near March Air Base in Riverside, California, on August 28. Because of his exemplary service record during WWII (Purple Heat, P.O.W.) and the Korean conflict, he was buried with honors by the All Forces Memorial Honor Detail."

Pantanella or Bust — May 1999

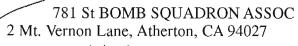
By Marcel Snyder

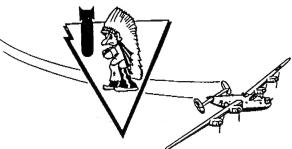
Can you hear the clock tick? None of us is getting any younger. Wouldn't you like to see that old base from which we flew to win WWII? How about showing the area to the little lady and/or the rest of the family and telling them how you participated in making the effort a winning one! As fast as the clock ticks, none of us know whether or ;not this may be our last opportunity. Better sign up quickly. If the tour agency is to commit for the necessary airline space, obtain first class hotel accommodations, sign up the best guides, and all the rest, we need to know your intentions as soon as possible.

Call AWOL Travel at 800-992-2965 to get all the information you need. In case you would prefer to talk to me here are my address and phone number: Marcel Snyder, 1706 Independence Avenue, Melbourne, FL 32940-6846, Phone 407-259-9117.



Pantanella Army Air base. 781st Squadron maintenance area in middle left. Control Tower and Radar maintenance in center. 780th Squadron maintenance across taxi strip from the 781st and alongside landing strip. 782nd Squadron maintenance across taxi strip on the right from the 781st. 783rd Squadron maintenance in lower right corner. Note the aircraft lined up for mission takeoff in the upper left. The 464th Bomb Group maintenance areas are in the upper right, across the landing strips from the 465th Bomb Group.





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