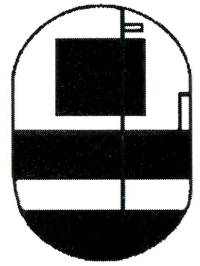


PANTANELLA NEWS



January 2004

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NUMBER 74

IT'S OFFICIAL!! 781st.SQUADRON REUNION SET IT'S RAPID CITY, SD---OCTOBER 3-7, 2004

SINCE WE FLEW THE FIRST 'BIG ONES' IT'S ONLY RIGHT WE GET TO SEE THE 'LATEST BIG ONES'



On 2 January 1942 the U.S. War Department established Rapid City Army Air Base as a training location for B-17 Flying Fortress crews. From September 1942--when its military runways first opened--until mission needs changed in July 1945, the field's instructors taught thousands of pilots, navigators, radio operators and gunners from nine heavy bombardment groups and numerous smaller units. All training focused on the Allied drive to overthrow the Axis powers in Europe. After World War II the base briefly trained weather reconnaissance and combat squadrons using P-61 Black Widow, P-38 Lightning, P-51 Mustang, and

B-25 Mitchell aircraft. Those missions soon ended, however, and Rapid City Army Air Field temporarily shut down from September 1946 - March 1947. When operations resumed in 1947 the base was a new United States Air Force asset. The primary unit assigned to Rapid City Air Force Base was the new 28th Bombardment Wing (BMW) flying the B-29 Superfortress.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Carl A. Spaatz renamed it Weaver Air Force Base in 1948 in honor of Brig Gen Walter R. Weaver, one of the pioneers in

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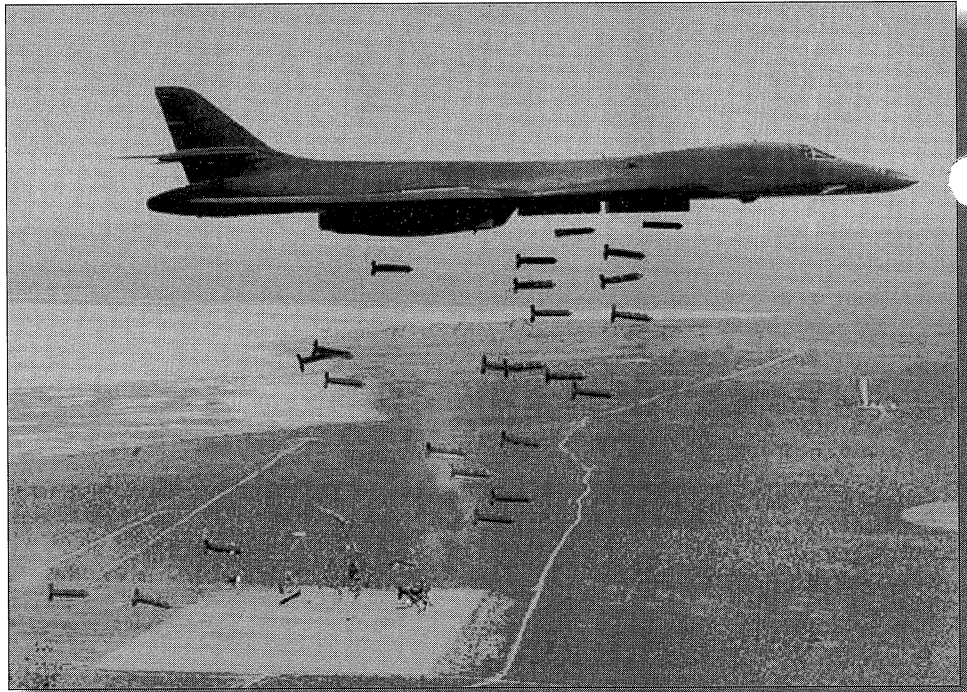
the development of the Air Force.

In June of that year, however, in response to overwhelming public appeals, Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington returned it to its previous name. The base was also declared a "permanent installation" in early 1948.

In 1986 the base and the 28 BW made extensive preparations to phase out the aging B-52 fleet and become the new home for the advanced B-1B Lancer.

In 1994, the Air Force selected Ellsworth as the exclusive location from which to conduct a Congressionally-mandated operational readiness assessment of the B-1B, known locally as "Dakota Challenge." After six months of hard work, under both peacetime and simulated wartime conditions, the 28 BW and Ellsworth passed the test "with flying colors"; and proved the B-1 to be a reliable and capable weapons system; the mainstay of America's heavy bomber fleet for years to come.

In March 1999, the Air Force announced a reorganization plan that makes Ellsworth AFB and the 28



The B-1B is a multi-role, long-range bomber, capable of flying intercontinental missions without refueling, then penetrating present and predicted sophisticated enemy defenses. It can perform a variety of missions, including that of a conventional weapons carrier for theater operations.

"And we thought we were flying the BIG ONES!"

BW partners in the new Expeditionary Air Force (EAF) concept. The expeditionary forces will help the Air Force respond quickly to any worldwide crisis while making life more predictable for military members.

On 1 June 1992, as part of the first major reorganization since the creation of USAF, the Air Force inactivated SAC and on 6 April 1992, the first launch control center shut down.

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The men and women of Ellsworth AFB draw from past experiences to plan for the future. As they embrace the core values of - Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in all we do - they stand ready to provide "Global Power for America"

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Officers

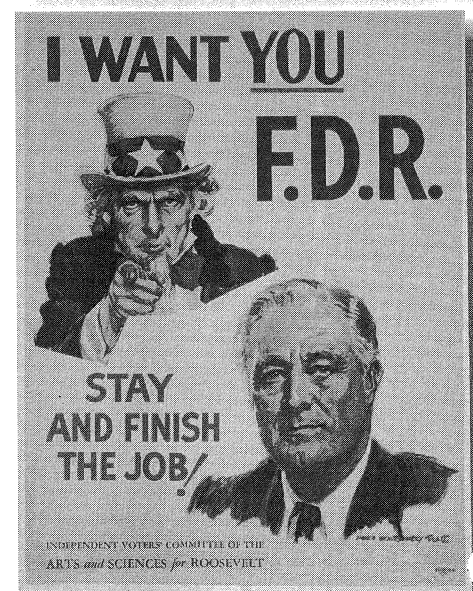
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781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)

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



781st. Squadron History January 1944 to February 1944

Editors Note:

Harry Carl, our Squadron Historian, compiled a myriad of facts and photos to produce an excellent hardbound History Edition of our squadron. The book was a great success and sold out rapidly and many members were unable to secure copies. The decision was made to reprint the yearbook a small section at a time in future Newsletters. The first installment dealing with our beginnings first appeared in the # 64 Newsletter that was printed April 2001. This article is a continuation of the 781st Squadron's History and deals with our overseas movement.

Continued from Issue 64:

January 1944

The Squadron entered January with a subdued feeling of elation because of the expectation that this was to be the last month of training. Along with this there was a feeling of anticipation about the approaching POM (Preparation for Overseas Movement) inspections.

Rumor said that these inspections would be tougher and more thorough than anything previously experienced by the Squadron, and consequently there was doubt in the minds of everyone as to the outcome. There was no feeling of pessimism, but rather that this Inspection was the one last obstacle to overcome before moving to actual operations and somehow it would be surmounted.

The navigators on special training at Geiger Field, Washington returned early in the month and, by flying a heavier schedule, these crews soon accomplished the missions required to complete their second-phase training.

In addition to the regularly required missions for third-phase, several special missions were flown. In January, the first of these on the sixth. This mission was planned by the Second Air Force and involved a number of Groups, including the 465th. The objective was the bombing of the Second Air Force Headquarters at Colorado Springs, Colorado. The 781st furnished six aircraft and formed the OC Squadron or left wing element in a formation of eighteen planes.

The first inspections of personnel and records were held on 13 January. The only errors of any consequence were: (1) some of the dog tags did not have proper tetanus markings and (2); none of the Forms #81 had been signed by Doc Rapoport although they had been initialed by him. These errors were corrected on the day after the inspection (following which Doc reported to sick call with writer's cramp). On paper, there was no question but that the Squadron looked good.

The second mission of importance came as a part of the POM inspections and took place on the 14th. Five 781st aircraft were a part of the primary mission which was the bombing of the steel

mills at Pueblo, Colorado, as well as one plane on diversionary raid and two planes on diversionary raid. The Plane Commanders who participated felt that it was successful and well flown. However, the POM inspectors ruled that it did not pass their high standards.

of hours accumulated by your Squadron, this Group would have set a mark that would have been nothing short of phenomenal.

You and the officers and men of your Squadron are hereby commended for the splendid results you have achieved during our training period.



Idle time was taken up with singing and harmonizing

On 19 January the Squadron was honored by a letter of commendation from the Group Commander, Col. Elmer J. Rogers, Jr., and directed to Major McKenna. The following is quoted from the letter:

The 781st Squadron has led consistently the squadrons of this group during the three phases of training at McCook Army Air Base. Your leadership has been evidenced by high flying time, the greatest number of missions completed, excellent maintenance of aircraft, and superior administration. If all four squadrons of the Group had flown the number

The entire Squadron personnel accepted this honor with great pride.

The final POM inspection mission was flown on the 24th and, although most people in the Group felt it not as good as the previous one, it was satisfactory to qualify the Group for combat duty in the eyes of the inspectors. There was a general feeling that the difficulty with the earlier mission was only unwillingness of the inspectors to approve a unit on the first attempt. From an administrative standpoint, the POM inspectors were well satisfied with the Squadron.

On 4 January 2nd Lt. Ray U. Tyler was appointed Squadron Crypto-

graphic Security Officer reporting in the Communications Section and 2nd Lt. Burton J. Fischley was appointed Squadron Personal Equipment Officer. Flight Commanders and Airplane Commanders of the four Flights of the Squadron were appointed on 6 January.

Cpl. Frank Ambrose was appointed the Group Historical Photographer on 27 January.

Squadron strength at the end of January was 91 officers and 385 enlisted men.

As soon as the POM inspections were accomplished Squadron attention turned to preparations for the forthcoming move to a port of embarkation. Within a couple days after departure of the inspectors, orders were received to send those air crews without flyaway planes to Topeka, Kansas for staging, while all non-flying personnel were to move to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia (Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation). With these orders came the assignment of shipment #0622N, and a new address, APO 9564, c/o Postmaster, New York, New York.

In 27 January the contingent of non-flying Air Crew personnel, including 17 officers and 15 enlisted men departed from McCook to Topeka, Kansas and their overseas staging. The staging procedure was accomplished within 24 hours of their arrival at Topeka and they were left with considerable leisure time before leaving for Camp Patrick Henry to join the ground personnel for the movement overseas.

The last week of January was a busy one for the remainder of the Squadron. In addition to the necessary preparation of personnel for departure, such as making up existing clothing and equipment shortages, there was the tremendous job of crating and shipping organizational equipment, most of which had now arrived. Specialists were sent to McCook to supervise and simplify this job but the burden of the work fell on the Squadron Supply Section and they did an excellent job. It was found that the so-called specialists were not nearly as capable as could reasonably be expected and, in addition, there was a considerable shortage of packing materials at the most crucial time. However, by improvising, and working on a 24 hour basis, the equipment was made ready to move

on schedule.

During January fifteen flyaway B-24's were assigned to transport most of the Air Crews overseas. One extra plane was attached to the Squadron for maintenance although it actually was assigned to Group Headquarters. These planes replaced those used for training purposes and the latter were now transferred out of the Squadron

February 1944

On 1 February 1944 at 0630, 12 officers and 275 enlisted men of the ground personnel of the 781st Squadron, under the command of Capt. Wallace S. Crouch, departed from the Air Base at McCook for the overseas destination. Personal feelings about the departure were naturally varied.

During the four months that the Squadron had trained at McCook, the men had made many local friends and several had married girls from the area. For these few leaving was not easy, but on the whole morale was high, as was proven by the fact that there was very little griping even though the Unit was confronted with the problem of trying to be comfortable on day coaches for the three-day trip to Newport News.

An attempt was made to determine who was responsible for the failure to obtain Pullman cars but no one at the McCook Base could, or would,

provide a suitable explanation.

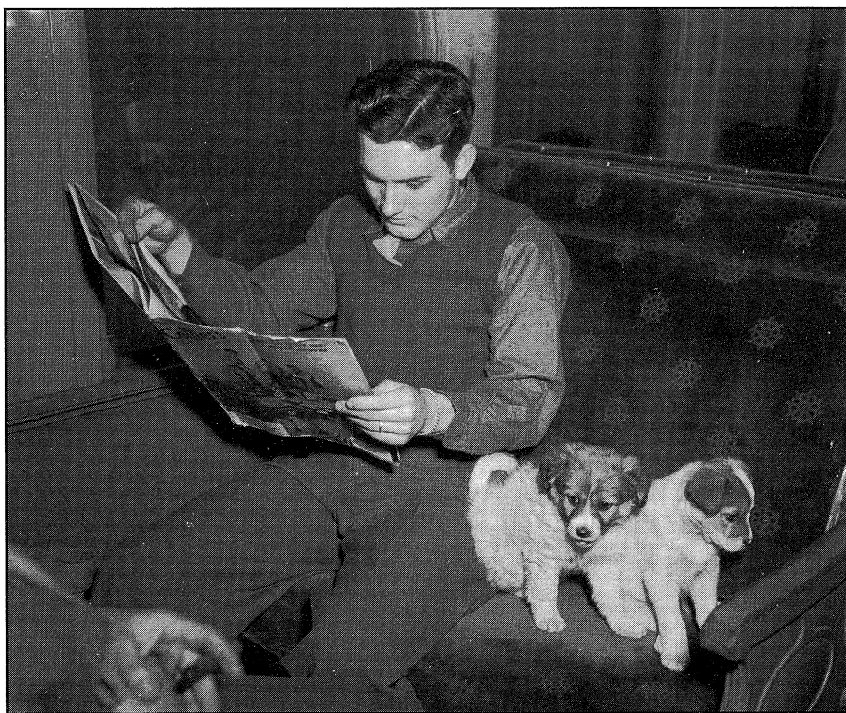
Arrival at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia was made at 0120, 4 February, following three days and two nights of travel via St. Louis, Missouri, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Richmond, Virginia. Spirits were still pretty high even though every man was dead tired from the inability to sleep comfortably on the train. Much credit was earned by the Mess Section, which did a remarkable job keeping up Squadron morale by preparing excellent meals during the trip.

The Topeka Air Crew detachment had reached Camp Patrick Henry on 3 February. The staging camp was located near Newport News, Virginia in a low, swampy area. It was well serviced with theaters, post exchanges, and service clubs and had large consolidated mess halls in each area. Yet, its overall appearance was dull and depressing. If the camp was designed to create a desire to get out, overseas or anywhere, rather than stay there, it was successful.

On 7 February perfunctory clothing inspection was held by the station quartermaster and a similar arms inspection was held by the station ordnance section. Outside of a quick check of administrative records, staging for all practical purposes was completed on this day and there began a period of waiting for a ship and a convoy. The supply section was kept busy during this time making up as many clothing and equipment shortages as possible before embarkation and this was successfully accomplished.

The first alerting of the Squadron came on 8 February with the expected shipping date to be between the 10th and 12th. However, the shipment alert was canceled on the 10th for reasons never known by the Squadron. This meant a delay of a week or more and 48-hour passes were granted for all personnel.

Many men living in the Eastern part of the United States were thus able to get home. For almost all personnel it was the first such opportunity in over six



Two 'Unidentified Stow-aways' were not listed on the official Troop Train's Manifest

months and in many cases for more than a year. All leaves had been canceled by the 16th Bombardment Wing shortly after the Squadron had arrived at McCook and in spite of the proclaimed policy of the War Department to give leaves and furloughs to men in units about to ship overseas, this policy was not followed. Naturally, the men had been disappointed by this and morale dropped sharply when it was discovered that there would be no leaves at Camp Patrick Henry. The short passes which resulted from the shipment postponement helped take away some of the bitterness.

After all men had returned from their passes there was very little to do and time hung heavy. Daily details of 25 to 100 men were called for kitchen police and other work in the area, but otherwise sleeping and eating were the principal occupations.

On 14 February the men were marched to the abandon ship practice area. Here they were required to get over the side of a mock ship on a rope ladder and load into a lifeboat. The practice was no doubt good for an ocean liner, but it was the luck of the Squadron to draw a Liberty Ship, from which abandoning ship was simply a matter of jumping overboard to the water about six feet below the deck line.

Shortly after the 10th, the incoming mail stopped and the postal officer was contacted to determine why. It was found that the New York Post Office had been notified to hold all mail after the 9th because of the shipment alert. When the alert was canceled several days elapsed before the base postal officer was notified. When queried he claimed to have called New York and requested that all mail be sent to Camp Patrick Henry. However, only a few letters reached the Squadron before departure and that did little to help morale.

On 19 February the Squadron received its second shipment alert and on the 20th the pre-embarkation medical inspection was given to all personnel. The same day all duffel bags were taken to the ship for loading. The official time of departure from the post was set at 1000, 21 February. At 1045 the train, filled with troops, arrived at the dock and the Unit prepared to unload. Then came some of the saddest news of the stay at Camp Patrick Henry. The ship had been overloaded with wheat at Baltimore and, even though it was known that it was to carry troops, no effort had been made to remove some of the load prior to arrival of the troops nor to determine the condition of the ship for receiving troops.

The result was a useless train ride with subsequent delay at the Post. The delay resulted in other ships to be delayed in loading because this one train was being used to carry all personnel to the dock. The Squadron, disgruntled and unhappy,

The ship was a Liberty, the SS Asa Gray, built by the New England Shipbuilding Co. at Portland, Maine in 1943. Her round bottom was soon found to be practical only for maximum storage space and not



A great deal of the time at "Camp Patrick Henry" was spent scaling and descending the Mock Ship training Center

arrived back at Camp Patrick Henry at 1445 and returned to its former quarters.

It was assumed that the ship would be reloaded, but the question remained as to whether it could be done in time to go with the convoy sailing on the 23rd.

Fortunately, the reloading was accomplished and at 1700, 22 February, the second trip to the Port was made. This time the ship was ready and the 29 officers and 303 enlisted men of the Squadron were all aboard at 1845.

conductive to comfort. The smallest swell made her roll like a cradle in the relatively calm waters off the coast of Virginia, and about 90% of the troops aboard were soon seasick.

Accompanying the 781st on the ship were two smaller organizations and three casual officers for a total on board of 40 officers and 449 enlisted men in addition to the ship's crew.

At 2045, 22 February, the ship was pulled by tug into the main channel

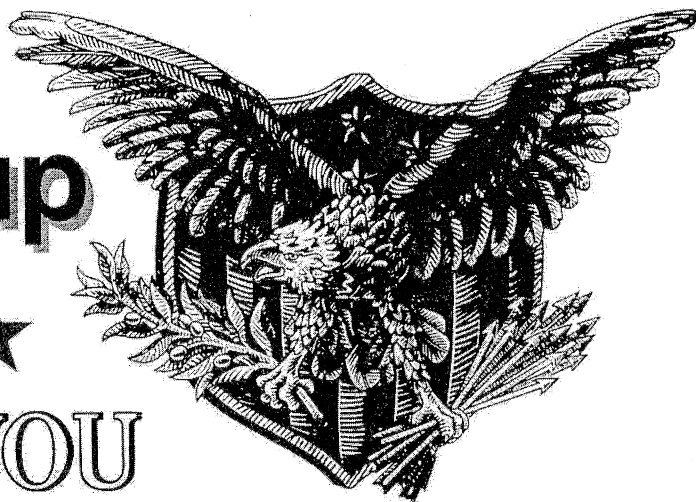
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OUR HONOR ROLL

465th Bomb Group



WE SALUTE YOU



For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. During the intensive aerial campaign against the Axis oil and communications centers, the 465th Bombardment Group was ordered to attack and destroy the Florisdorf Oil Refinery and Marshalling Yards at Vienna, Austria. A successful completion of this important mission would deprive the enemy of vitally needed gas and oil supplies for her mechanized ground forces and her air force at a most critical period in the war. Although sustained operations to targets deep in enemy territory had grounded many of the Group's aircraft, the ground crews labored tirelessly and efficiently throughout the night prior to the attack, to insure that their aircraft were in the best possible mechanical condition for the operation.

On 8 July 1944, twenty-two (22) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, were airborne and set course for their destination. Mechanical difficulties forced eight (8) of the bombers to return to base thus seriously weakening the defensive formation. Undaunted by the seemingly overwhelming odds, molding the remaining ships into a tight formation, the gallant crews continued on course.

Approaching the target, the formation encountered an extremely heavy anti-aircraft barrage which in-

flicted severe damage on the Group before it reached the objective. Heedless of the intense and heavy enemy fire, displaying superior coordination, and outstanding professional skill, the courageous crews brought their aircraft through for a highly successful bombing run, inflicting damage to vital enemy installations and supplies.

Leaving the objective, their formation was aggressively attacked by approximately twenty-five (25) enemy fighters. In the ensuing fierce aerial battle, maintaining a perfect formation to enhance the effective defensive fire, the gallant gunners of the Group accounted for seven (7) enemy aircraft destroyed and three (3) damaged, with their own losses held to a minimum of one (1) bomber.

Later reconnaissance revealed that the Florisdorf area was rendered inoperational at a time when the war was approaching a critical stage. By the outstanding gallantry, airmanship, and grim determination of the combat crews, together with the outstanding technical skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, **the 465th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.**

By command of Major General Twining

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520

C-UPD-bmr

26 October 1944.

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 4186)

Citation of Unit I

SECTION I -- CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular No. 89, Headquarters MATOUSA, 10 July 1944, the following unit is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy:

465TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP. For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. During the intensive aerial campaign against the Axis oil and communications centers, the Group was ordered to attack and destroy the Florisdorf Oil Refinery and Marshalling Yards at Vienna, Austria. A successful completion of this important mission would deprive the enemy of vitally needed gas and oil supplies for her mechanized ground forces and her air force at a most critical period in the war. Although sustained operations to targets deep in enemy territory had grounded many of the Group's aircraft, the ground crews labored tirelessly and efficiently throughout the night prior to the attack, to insure that their aircraft were in the best possible mechanical condition for the operation. On 8 July 1944, twenty-two (22) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, were airborne and set course for their destination. Mechanical difficulties forced eight (8) of the bombers to return to base thus seriously weakening the defensive formation. Undaunted by the seemingly overwhelming odds, molding the remaining ships into a tight formation, the gallant crews continued on course. Approaching the target the formation encountered an extremely heavy anti-aircraft barrage which inflicted severe damage on the Group before it reached the objective. Heedless of the intense and heavy enemy fire, displaying superior coordination and outstanding professional skill, the courageous crews brought their aircraft through for a highly successful bombing run, inflicting grave damage to vital enemy installations and supplies. Leaving the objective, their formation was aggressively attacked by approximately twenty-five (25) enemy fighters. In the ensuing fierce aerial battle, maintaining a perfect formation to enhance the effective defensive fire, the gallant gunners of the Group accounted for seven (7) enemy aircraft destroyed and three (3) damaged, with their own losses held to a minimum of one (1) bomber. Later reconnaissance revealed that the Florisdorf area was rendered inoperational at a time when the war was approaching a critical stage. By the outstanding gallantry, airmanship and grim determination of the combat crews, together with the outstanding technical skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 465th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By command of Major General TWINING:

OFFICIAL:

J. M. IVINS
J. M. IVINS,
Colonel, LCD,
Adjutant General.

R. K. TAYLOR;
Colonel, GSC,
Chief of Staff.

DISTRIBUTION: "D"

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The 465th Bomb Group was honored by the 15th Air Force Association in a recent issue of 'SORTIE', their official publication. Our Group's first Presidential Citation was reprinted and emblazoned with artwork with a headline reading "OUR HONOR ROLL". The page appeared in 'SORTIE' on page 5 of the September issue of 2003.

This is a reproduction of the original General Orders Citation as it was received by our Group October 1945.

of the James River and then under its own power steamed into Hampton Roads to join the other ships and wait to form into convoy.

The convoy began to form in the afternoon of the 23rd with 14 destroyer escorts and 70 or more other vessels of all descriptions and nationalities. Course was set on the morning of 24 February and the next couple weeks were spent reading, taking sunbaths, playing cards, and drilling for attack alerts. Two real alerts were experienced during the voyage but no attack was made on the convoy.

On 3 February, two days after the Ground Echelon had left McCook, the Air Echelon flew from McCook Air Base to Lincoln, Nebraska. There, all planes and equipment were

ney in his diary, "Took off from Lincoln, Nebraska AAB on the first leg of the trip overseas. Temperature 25 degrees below zero and everyone anxious to be going. All the officers suffering from hangovers due to big farewell party in the nurses' quarters the previous night. All we did here for 3 days was draw new equipment and get our new plane.

"Take-off accomplished at 1426 GCT on 3 engines due to one still frozen. Once in the air everything settled into a comfortable routine. Did combined pilotage, dead reckoning, and radio and results of navigation were gratifying. Hit all turning points okay hit our destination, Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida on the nose. Landed at 2205 GOT okay and the temperature was a welcome relief to what we

had left. Will be here 3 or 4 days to arrange ship and check personal records and load mail for overseas. Officers' club here very plush, permanent personnel must have it made."

Most of the Crews took off from Morrison Field in the early morning of 15 February and from that point the flight routes varied. All planes were scheduled to fly to Wailer Field, Trinidad and though most Crews made it, a few developed engine trouble, conveniently forcing

them to land at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, one

of the finest bases in the entire Caribbean area.

Lt. Rodman reported, "Took off from Morrison Field at 0529 GOT in the dead of night. Ship heavy with mail, baggage, and crew. Did celestial and dead reckoning with a little radio, can't trust radio too much. Hit check stations okay but thick under cast and an occasional overcast played hell with my celestial work. Hit Puerto Rico around dawn and checked course visually. Rest of trip done by pilotage and dead reckoning. Contacted Wailer Field, Trinidad and went in on the beam. Nearing Wailer our gas was checking low and we began sweating 'er out. We landed at 1559 GOT but one more swing around the pattern would have finished our gas, tanks checked dry when we reached the parking stand. Wouldn't like to stay here too long, quarters are fair but chow is lousy",

At Wailer Field, the Squadron's first ac-

cident occurred.

As Lt. Rodman recalled; "The accident involved the plane and crew of 2nd Lt. John E MacFarlane, at 1152 hours (local time) on 15 February. They had exhausted their gasoline supply and the number four engine had cut out about one-half hour earlier. A tropical rainstorm swept the field just before they reached it so the landing had to be made downwind on a wet runway and the brakes failed to hold at the end. MacFarlane tried to ground loop the plane but it swerved down into a 20 foot ditch, broke into three parts, and was completely destroyed; fortunately, it did not burn.

Second Lt. Sidney Weiss, T/Sgt. Edwin Delarzelere, and T/Sgt. Thomas Jackson received injuries. All uninjured Crewmembers completed the trip via Air Transport Command and the three injured men followed by the same means as soon as they had recovered sufficiently to travel.

Most Crews left Puerto Rico or Trinidad on 16 February for Belem, Brazil where they remained for several days. The next stop was either Portaleza, Brazil or Natal, Brazil depending on which field the Crew chose.

At Puerto Rico a good time was enjoyed by everyone and there were many plans to load aboard extra "goodies" for the trip and for survival in the ultimate foreign environment. Hank Willett was flying with Lt. Tipton's Crew on the overseas trip and, as Assistant Operations Officer, he laid the law down pretty clearly at Puerto Rico that no one would load extra liquid refreshments. There was already enough cargo with personnel, baggage, and mail. Everyone in the Crew understood and agreed, of course.

However, at about the middle of the take-off run Hank noticed that Tipton was really struggling with the controls so he reached over to give him a hand. They managed to get airborne but at the expense of the tops of a couple of palm trees, a wingtip, and an outboard engine. Two mighty scared Pilots brought the ship back to Wailer Field and the Crew had to stay for an additional week while repairs were made to the plane. The palm trees were left to repair themselves.

As Lt. Rodman wrote, "Took off from Wailer Field at 0917 GCT after a real lousy breakfast, crew eager as hell to leave this place. Figured on flying some sun line landfalls but much easier doing pilotage and dead reckoning. Can't use radio around here too much, ground stations, too unreliable. We followed the coastline part of the way and then cut inland; hit Amazon basin and some extremely turbulent cumulus clouds at the same time. Descended on course below clouds and buzzed several villages. Amazon River was quite a sight, green vegetation very lush. Contacted Val de Caes Field, Belem, Brazil early and came in on money Landed at 1546 GCT and it was really hot on the ground. Various types of aircraft all over the area. Navy has a big patrol base here. Malaria very



The 'Reading Room' was continually occupied with the men reading and exchanging 'Paper Backs' which helped pass the time

checked over, and the route to be flown, the final destination, and all information pertinent to the flight overseas were presented to the men. Departure for Morrison Field, at West Palm Beach Florida was scheduled for the following day but a tremendous snowstorm of blizzard proportions hit Nebraska on the night of the 3rd. The Base was closed to air traffic until 12 February and Crews were restricted to the field, spending their time eating, sleeping, and enjoying the hospitality of the various clubs. Much the same kind of training as was being enjoyed at about the same time by the Ground Echelon at Newport News but the clubs at Lincoln probably were better.

The flight to Morrison finally was made on 12 February and there another briefing and the last equipment check were held. Again, restrictions prevented the men from leaving the Base and enjoying the social life and beaches of Florida.

Lt. Alfred W Rodman, Navigator on Lt. Rae Branch's Crew, described the jour-

prevalent and Atabrine a must. Nothing on the field of much interest and combat crews not allowed a pass to town."

Departure from there was on or about 20 February with the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean made on this leg. All Crews made the crossing safely and landed at Dakar, French West Africa. They left Dakar on or about 22 February for Marrakech, French Morocco but some were forced to land at Tindouf, French Morocco because of poor weather conditions.

in the dead of night on the 'ultima thule' of all navigators' dreams, an across the ocean hop. Did combined celestial and dead reckoning with good results until we hit a tropical storm near the equator. turbulence was severe along with rain, hail, and full cloud coverage. Updrafts would cause plane to gain altitude 1000 feet per minute at 200 mph with the nose down. Plenty of static electricity around props, spinners, and pitot tubes.

"Branch and Badler did a fine job at the controls. Really sweated this one out and just

course, can't for the life of me figure where I fouled up.

"Landed at Marrakech Field in Marrakech, French Morocco at 1347 GOT, our first contact with Arabs and their customs. Got pretty high on French wine the first night, ran all over town taking in the strange sights and clothes. Quartered in tents again and the nights were colder than a nun's lips. Saw the Caid's palace and grounds, very elaborate. We were near an old French fort and the detachment of their troops there were colorful.

"There was a flock of B-26's on field headed for England. Heard later that a lot of them were clobbered off the French coast on the way up.

"We opened our sealed orders here and found out we were headed for a field near Tunis. Braley. I had quite a time one evening running around the rooftops of the native quarter. How we escaped being knifed will always be a mystery"

Bad weather covered the entire area for about nine days before takeoffs were permitted for the last stop in Africa - Oudna Field Number Two, 20 miles south of Tunis, in Tunisia."

And Lt. Rodman described the last leg, "Took off from Marrakech at 0843 GOT on course to our last stop before the combat zone. Trip was along the northern coast of Africa most of the way. Skirted all the big coastal towns to avoid having our own AA batteries shooting at us.

Saw plenty of water traffic and began to realize the immensity of this war. Saw lots of bombed cities en route and it looked as though a thorough job was done. Bizerte, Algiers, and Tunis in particular.

"Landed at 1503 GOT at Oudna Field Number Two near Tunis, Tunisia. Will stay here until combat base in Italy is prepared for us. Again in tents and some damn beat up ones at that. 0 rations the only chow except when you can barter some fresh 'yard' eggs and small oranges from the Arabs- and they're plenty shrewd when it comes to haggling. They can also steal the shirt off your back while you're looking.

Formation missions were as regular as the weather would permit. We lost two entire crews in a midair collision during one. Got into Tunis plenty of times and got barreled up on a couple of occasions. No decent liquor or beer, drank champagne that was more like vinegar."....

to be continued in future NewsLetters



Lt's Branch, Rodman and Braley at Marrakech

Lt. Rodman's diary reads, "Took off from Belem at 1031 GCT on the shortest leg of the entire trip Flew along the coast all the way so all I did in the way of navigation was pilotage. Cumulus clouds very thick and restricted visibility quite a bit. Scenery was wonderful and everyone was trying to look everywhere at once. Skirted large towns like Paramairabo and Georgetown because they are allergic to planes flying over their harbors.

"Hit Adjacento Field at Fbrteleza, Brazil on the money, landed at 1450 GCT and Branch greased 'er in. Swell layout and we tried to layover as long as permissible. Badler tried the old gag of having the GI's but it didn't work, guess they wanted us out of there. We slept in tents and the weather was perfect, warm days and cool evenings. Officers' club featured real American liquor and good Brazilian beer.

"Took off from Ferteleza at 0238 GCT

before daybreak the storm abated. Fixed our position celestially and we were 40 miles right of course. Altered course slightly and awaited daybreak. Gave Branch an ETA for the coastline but Badler screwed it up when he mixed a radio call sign in Africa with one in Brazil. As it was we were 6 minutes late on the ETA but on course, a damn fair piece of navigation if I do say so myself.

"Landed at 1334 GOT at Eknes Field in Dakar, Senegal, French West Africa, a curious place. Saw the French Foreign Legion at their retreat ceremony. Destroyed my story-book illusions. Barracks here were flimsily built and malaria control the top subject. Food was skimpy and poor."

Rodman's diary continues, "Took off from Dakar at 0626 GOT and proceeded on course over a portion of the Sahara Desert. Just an immense wasteland with no sign of life. Did pilotage and dead reckoning, checked weather ahead by radio and got the okay to go through a mountain pass near destination. Started into pass okay but came out on the other side of the mountain range off

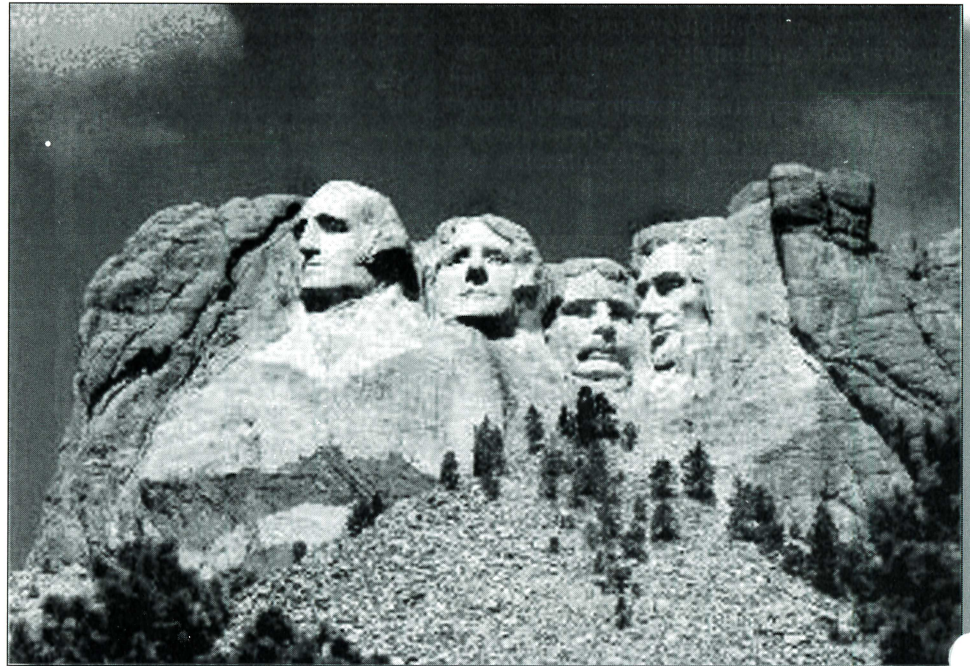
South Dakota's Black Hills provide the backdrop for Mount Rushmore, The world's greatest mountain carving

These 60-foot high faces, 500 feet up, look out over a setting of pine, spruce, birch, and aspen in the clear western air. This epic sculpture features the faces of four exalted American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.

The four figures carved in stone on Mount Rushmore represent the first 150 years of American history. The birth of our nation was guided by the vision and courage of George Washington. Thomas Jefferson always had dreams of something bigger, first in the words of the Declaration of Independence and later in the expansion of our nation through the Louisiana Purchase. Preservation of the union was paramount to Abraham Lincoln but a nation where all men were free and equal was destined to be. At the turn of the Twentieth Century Theodore Roosevelt saw that in our nation was the possibility for greatness. Our nation was changing from a rural republic to a world power. The ideals of these presidents laid a foundation for our nation as solid as the rock from which their figures are carved.

Sculptor Gutzon Borglum began drilling into the 5,725-foot mountain in 1927. Creation of the Shrine of Democracy took 14 years and cost a mere \$1 million, though it's now deemed priceless

Each man possessed great skills and leadership of the brand our nation needed for the times. Today millions of visitors come to see Mount Rushmore and gain inspiration from these four great men



ATTENTION... BIG FENCE..BIG FENCE..BIG FENCE..OVER!...HELP..HELP..HELP!

**ATTENTION!
LAWYERS IN THE 781ST BOMB SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
(PARTICULARLY IF YOU WORK IN CALIFORNIA)**

The organization needs your help! Mr. John E. Fahrer, a member, who folded his wings on December 5, 2003 left a bequest to the 781st Bomb Squadron Association in his Living Trust. This bequest was in the 6th amendment to the trust, dated August 22, 2001. For some reason, the court appointed a Trustee to oversee the Living Trust late in Mr. Fahrer's life. This trustee is choosing to reject the 6th amendment, thereby removing the 781st from the will. The Board of Directors of our Organization has decided to investigate the reasoning behind this decision, and, if feasible, contest it. Additional details are available from John Ogden. If you can/will assist with this problem, please contact him. Please follow up ASAP
Thanks.

John W. Ogden, President
781st Bomb Squadron Association
3728 Evergreen Drive
Dickinson, TX 77539
E-mail johnoco@hal-pc.org
Phone: (281) 337-3494
FAX: (281) 337-3494

FOLDED WINGS

Marcel Snyder reports that Dr. Thomas L Williams died in September of 2002

Seth H. Hawkins passed away September 10, 2003

John E. Fahrer died 5 December, 2003.

Angelo Carriere passed away February 5, 2003.
Reported by Dale Keiser

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.

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

It saddens me deeply to report to the membership of the organization, that Harry Carl, one of the hardest working and most dedicated members of our association, has succumbed to Alzheimers Disease. Harry has severe problems with vertigo and cannot move about unassisted. His condition deteriorated rapidly and he is now in need of institutional care. His cogent moments are few and far between. Donna does not believe that he would be able to read or understand messages that he might receive, never the less we can all keep both Donna and Harry in our thoughts and prayers as they proceed through this difficult experience.

It is also time again for those of you who make your dues in annual payments to send in your annual payment. Look at the address label on this issue. If the date is January 1, 2004, a payment is due.

A number of you have prepaid for future years. This reminder does not apply to you. Send your checks to the 781st Bomb Squadron Association, 3728 Evergreen Drive, Dickinson, Texas, 77539

Come on Guys! Lets show that we are proud of our organization and proud of the work that we did both as individuals and as an organization during W.W.II and during the time since.

We are the 781st Bomb Squadron Association!

Respectfully,

John W. Ogden, President

--RESERVE THESE DATES--**Tentative Reunion Agenda**

781st Bomb Squadron Reunion

Oct. 3-7, 2004

Hotel Alex Johnson, Downtown Rapid City. SD

Monday - Oct. 4th.- Business meeting at 1:00 P.M.
4:00 PM to 9:00 PM- Deadwood Tour

Tuesday - Oct. 5th. -Mt. Rushmore/Crazy Horse Monument Tour

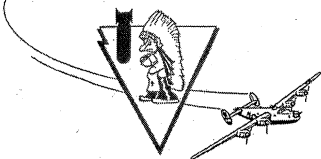
Wednesday - Oct. 6th. 9 AM - 4 PM. Ellsworth AFB tour
11:00 AM -Officer Club lunch
12:30 -Unit mission briefing at the Dakota Club prior to proceeding to the flight line for tour of B1 Bomber and weapons demonstration.
1:30 Canine police unit.
2:30 PM Memorial Service.



Airmen of the
781st Bomb Squadron
availing themselves
of the amenities
provided by
The 'SS ASA GRAY'
"Spacious Living Room"
with adjoining
Lounge
and
Reading Room

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"Ocean Excursion"
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Hampton Roads, VA
to
Bizertti, No. Africa
Feb 22 to Mar 15, 1944
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Return Service Requested