

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



PANTANELLA NEWS

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association© #137 January 2023

2023 REUNION FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA



2023 781ST BOMB SQUADRON REUNION

PANTANELLA NEWS

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PANTANELLA NEWS

781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)
Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF
Italy 1944-1945

Flew 191 Missions over Southern Europe
dropping thousands of tons of death and
destruction to the enemy. Shot down 25
enemy aircraft. Received two Presidential
Unit Citations in Seven Battle Campaigns.



Visit Us On Facebook

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<http://465th.org>

President's Message



always seems to be in one direction,
recognizing them for putting their
country before themselves.

I am a veteran of over 37 years. There is
a reason I served that long. When people
thank me for my service, I usually reply
that the pleasure was all mine. I had a
wonderful career and would happily
re-join if they'd let me. I saw the world. I
worked with a diverse group of dedicated
people from every corner of our nation.
We did interesting and important things.
The military educated me, gave me first
class benefits, and decent pay. It offered
a clear path towards advancement. I

learned leadership skills, teambuilding,
and was exposed to many ideas and
cultures.

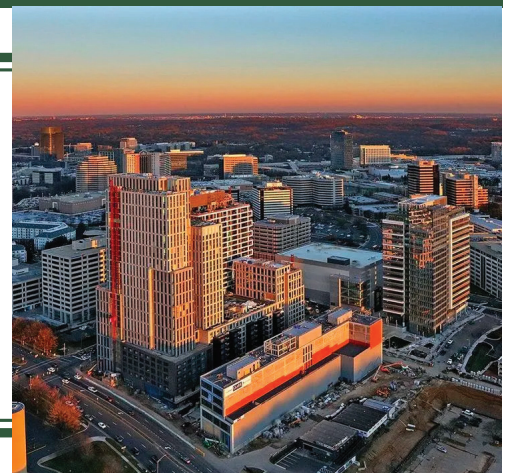
Not everyone shared my happy
experience, I'll admit. It is not the path
for everyone. But I'm willing to bet, on
balance, the experience of most veterans
was a positive one that broadened their
horizons. Today, our country is facing
a military recruitment challenge. So on
this Veteran's Day please recognize the
sacrifices of our veterans, but keep in
mind that it was a watershed moment for
most, and for many, a positive experience.
Let our next generation know that it is
a worthwhile patriotic pursuit that pays
personal dividends.

— Kennard R. Wiggins Jr.
President

2023 Fifteenth Air Force Bomb Groups Reunion 465th Bomb Group Reunion

Date - October 12-15, 2023
Fairfax County, Virginia

I have received word from Dave Blake
(461st BG) that the next all Bomb
Groups Reunion will be October 12-15,
2023. The reunion will be hosted in
Fairfax County, Virginia, the suburbs of
Washington DC.



MEMBERSHIP DUES:

All 781st WWII Veterans are Life Members

**All other members are Associate Members for \$10.00 per year renewable each
January. Your label shows the year you last paid.
If it is not 2023, you owe dues.**

Please make checks payable to 781st Bomb Squadron. Mail to:
Carole Lee, Squadron Treasurer, 4700 S. Cliff Ave. #308, Sioux Falls, SD 57103

2022 Reunion in Wichita, Kansas



Sanford L Jones, 304 Bomb Wing,
455 Bomb Group 740 Bomb Squadron

Sanford was the only veteran at our Group Dinner on Friday night. We visited and I sent him a card later. He returned a letter to me with his military story and some pictures.

Thank you Sanford,
Carole Lee

Friday Night Group Dinner



Above: Liz Wiggins, Carole Lee, Jamie Munce, Libby and Barney (Bud) Russell



Left: Mike and Julie Deslatte

465th Attendees at Reunion

Leo & Becky Meyer	783
Rakfal Susan Maffey	783
Mary Fowler	783
Pam Sawyer	783
Tom & Joan Tennile	783
Ron Horn	781
Roger Soucy	781
Mike & Julie Deslatte	781
Carole Lee	781
Jamie Munce	781
Ken & Liz Wiggins	781
Harley Bridger registered but absent	782



A demonstration by the EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) group was included in a tour of the base enjoyed during the reunion.



Four Veterans in Attendance



Display in hospitality room

B-21 unveiled: US Air Force's newest bomber will call Ellsworth AFB home

The following article was written by Laura Heckmann from the Rapid City Journal.

PALMDALE, Calif. — Scored by the percussion of a bomber fleet flyover and chants of “USA!” Friday from a wall of Northrop Grumman employees, after seven years of development and a legacy dating back 80, the B-21 Raider was unveiled at Northrop Grumman’s and the U.S. Department of Defense’s Plant 42 in Palmdale, California.

In a closely guarded ceremony, the sixth generation aircraft, deemed the backbone of the future of U.S. air power, was dramatically revealed from behind slowly-rolling hangar doors and rolled out towards an electrified crowd of Air Force personnel, congressional delegations, local leaders and invited guests.

The aircraft’s theatrical debut triumphed a legacy that dates back eight decades — a legacy of bravery, boldness and innovation. The Raider spirit.

“Having that Raider heritage, with being bold, brave and innovative, the B-21 is that,” said Col. Joseph Sheffield, commander of the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City — the future home of the B-21 Raider.

Ellsworth Air Force Base was named as the preferred location for the B-21 in 2019, an unthinkable feat 17 years prior when the threat of closure loomed over the base.

“We had one heck of a hill to climb,” said U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., at the unveiling Friday. “It was the people in Rapid City that did the heavy lift.”

Rounds recalled the day the announcement was made that Ellsworth was on the BRAC list and recommended for closure — 10,000 people showed up in an arena, he said.

“Our message was we’re not afraid to climb hills,” Rounds said. “In South

Dakota, we carve mountains. And that’s what’s happened here. So this is great for America, and it’s really great for the Black Hills of South Dakota.”

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D., credited a bipartisan effort for keeping Ellsworth open, as well as the Black Hills community.

“You cannot find a community in this country that respects and supports their installation more than Rapid City and the surrounding areas support Ellsworth,” he said. “And I’ve heard that from high-ranking administration officials and high-ranking uniformed personnel. Rapid City does it right.”

Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender, who was in attendance at Friday’s ceremony, spoke to the culture created in Rapid City by Ellsworth’s presence. Born at Ellsworth himself, Allender’s father was stationed at the base, and after retiring, like so many others, decided to return to the Black Hills.

“That happens a lot, and I’ve spoken to dozens of individuals who have sought me out to tell me that they served two or four years at Ellsworth at some point in their career and made a point to come back,” he said.

The culture created between Ellsworth airmen and the Black Hills community is one factor of many that contributed to the support system that kept Ellsworth open, and now host the B-21 Raider.

Johnson also credited the installation itself — one he called an “unbelievably well-run base, and has been year in and year out.”

There’s something special about Ellsworth,

Allender said — to come from the brink of closure to hosting the next generation in stealth technology, “and it’s going to remain special.”

South Dakota’s role in the story of the B-21 is also the story of the Ellsworth Raiders. The B-21’s name — the Raider — comes from the legacy of the Doolittle Raid, forged 80 years ago, and turning the tide of World War II.



The brand-new, B-21 bomber was pulled out of a hangar during an unveiling ceremony on Friday at Air Force Plant 42, Site 4, Northrop Grumman in Palmdale, Calif. *Matt Gade, Journal Staff*

The innovation, bravery and boldness of the Doolittle Raiders served as the foundation of an Ellsworth mantra heralding the same principles. Three of the four squadrons that participated in the raid now call Ellsworth home.

The B-21 Raider’s name came when the secretary of the Air Force sought recommendations in 2015, receiving thousands of responses. The chosen name was announced at a ceremony attended by a then-surviving member of the Doolittle Raid, retired Col. Richard E. Cole.

“Think about the Doolittle Raiders and what they were able to do,” said Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. at a media roundtable event Friday in Palmdale, prior to the unveiling. “Just a handful of months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, for the very first time you put a bomber on a carrier. That’s innovation. That innovative spirit is sitting behind us right now.”

Eighty years later, through the innovation and technology exhibited in the B-21, and the collaboration between Northrop Grumman and the Air Force, the Raider spirit lives on, he said.

The B-21's impending arrival at Ellsworth has already begun to reshape its hometown of Box Elder. Numerous housing projects have sprouted up as the city prepares for the influx of airmen the B-21 will bring, as well as plans for new schools, a brand-new downtown plaza, new businesses and a newly opened fitness center shared by the base and the community.

"As soon as we realized that we were going to be the training base, and the first base to get the B-21, we knew we had quite a bit of work to do," said Box Elder Mayor Larry Larson Friday night in Palmdale.

While there is work to do, there is also a sense of pride, Larson said. Larson, who was in attendance at the ceremony, said he talked to friends back home in Box Elder after they had viewed the live stream online.

"They were pretty excited," he said. "Hey, yeah, we're from Box Elder — that's where Ellsworth Air Force Base is located."

The sense of pride from South Dakotans extends to the nation, as well, and the role the B-21 will play in the nation's defense.

"The most important part of today is global security," Johnson said. "This capability which the United States has because of the B-21 is going to keep the world safer. You can't overstate the importance of this kind of a tool to keep the globe safe."

The B-21 will serve as a key foundation of the long-running strike capability for the nation, Sheffield said, ensuring strategic defense, challenging of adversaries and ensuring and supporting its allies.

"That's what the B-21 is going to do in spades as we go into the future. So it's exciting for Ellsworth to build on our current mission, and where we're going in the future," he said.

The unveiling set the table for its arrival at Ellsworth, Sheffield said, where

preparations are well underway to host it. A low observable hangar broke ground at Ellsworth earlier this spring, with contract awards for over 30 more projects beginning to formulate.

The unveiling ceremony, precluded by an aeronautics expo championing Northrop Grumman's history with American aviation, painted a picture of advanced technology unlike anything the Air Force has seen before. An aircraft with unparalleled advances in stealth, long-range strike capabilities, open architecture and digital technology.

"This changes everything," said Northrop Grumman CEO, chair and president Kathy Warden at the unveiling Friday evening.

Warden described the B-21 as opening a new era of technology, and the most capable stealth bomber ever built.

She recognized the Northrop Grumman team, saying they have "proved once again that we can lead the world in innovation and deliver to our military the technology needed to execute their mission and return home safely."

Attendees Friday night also heard from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, who rooted the night once again in the legacy of the Doolittle Raiders.

"Now, this Air Force bomber has been in development for seven years, but its roots go back much further than that," he said. "Eighty years ago, on a cold and rainy April morning, four months after Pearl Harbor, 16 U.S. Army bomber planes took off from an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. And then Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle embarked on a daring mission."

The audacity of the Doolittle Raiders has inspired generations of American aviators, Austin told the crowd Friday night.

"The B-21 Raider is the first strategic bomber in more than three decades, and ingenuity and innovation is proof of the

department's long-term commitment to building advanced capabilities that will fortify America's ability to deter aggression today and into the future," Austin said.

He said strengthening and sustaining U.S. deterrence is at the heart of their national defense strategy — and so is the uniquely-American spirit of innovation and invention.



Col. Joseph L. Sheffield, commander of the 28th Bomb Wing, Ellsworth Air Force Base, comments on what the new B-21 bomber will mean to the base ahead of the unveiling ceremony on Friday.
Matt Gade, Journal Staff

"If you want to see that strategy in action, if you want to see America's enduring advantages in action, if you want to see integrated deterrence in action, well, just look at this aircraft," Austin said.

An imposing and impressive presence, the B-21's mammoth frame was a site to behold as Austin described its superior range, stealth and durability.

"It was definitely an amazing event to be at," Larson said. "I can't wait to see it flying over the skies in Box Elder."

Johnson described the day as a bright light among political infighting and tragedies around the country.

"There are times when you see that years of hard work pays off, and helps to make a nation safer and helps to make a state more prosperous. This is that day," he said.

Laura Heckmann Rapid City Journal

The following letter is from an honorary member of the 781st. His father John Fahrer included the Association in his will. Mike was added on the mailing list as an Honorary member. With Mike's permission we have included a letter below that he wrote to Carole Lee. Mike also asked if anyone knew his father? If so, contact Carole Lee and she can put you in touch with Mike.

Dear Carole Lee,

I am the son of John E. Fahrer. I have emailed you before and thanked you for sending me your newsletter. But I felt you would enjoy knowing how much I really like getting them. I have cut out all the B-24 pictures and have them in a protected folder. I read all the Folder Wings articles, on the many who have passed. All who served in WW II are heroes and deserve recognition for their service. I served in the NAVY. I spent almost a year in a Naval Hospital. I am 100% service-connected disabled. I understand what giving your all for our country really is.

My deepest thank you for keeping me on your mailing list. May God bless you and the Vets you help keep in touch from WWII.

*Thanks again,
Rev. J. Michael Fahrer*



The following message was sent to Carole Lee. You can contact Carole if interested in the copies offered.

Hi, I recently purchased some documents from Facebook marketplace belonging to a veteran of the 781st bomb group. It's a pretty decent collection of orders, flight manifests, personal info etc. The aviator's name was Staff Sgt. Norman Hunter Jr. He was the ball turret gunner on a B24 named "Super Natural". I plan to get all of these documents scanned, and then donate the originals. Would your organization be interested in copies of these records?

Thanks,
Matt Sturgell

PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

The time has come for me to resign as publisher of the Pantanella News. Long time editor Frank Ambrose passed in February 2012. I had been keeping the mailing list and Frank had been sending it to me to print and mail. I called Lance as he had offered to help Frank. With his help, our current and very capable editor, Lance McKinnon, we began with our first publication in March of 2012. It has been a joy to stay connected with so many of you through the newsletter.

Our mailing list has gone from about 300 in 2012 to 75 today. The current list of 75 includes 7 WWII veterans, 4 honorary members and 4 museums. The remainder are associate members. Nearly all the people on the list are associated with the 781st.

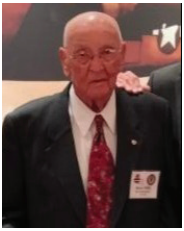
Moving forward, I can see two options:

1. One of you reading this volunteer to take over as publisher. I and Lance are here to assist you continue the newsletter in its current form. I can help with printing, mailing financing and providing updates and Lance does a great job with the graphics and layout.
2. If there are no volunteers, I can transition the newsletter to a periodic email update with information on members, reunions, etc. I would need to receive your email address if that is what we end up doing. So please forward that to me. It's nice to have email addresses for you anyway.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider the future of the Pantanella News!

Sincerely,
Carole Lee
Publisher

FOLDED WINGS



**RIFFLE, ALBERT
DELMON,**

August 3, 1925 -

September 7, 2022.

Albert D. Riffle "Junie"
97, of Frederick,
Maryland, passed from
this life on Wednesday,

September 7, 2022, at Citizens Care and
Rehabilitation Center in Frederick, MD.
He was the husband of the late Audrey
Louise Lewis Riffle.

Born on August 3, 1925, in Thurmont, MD,
he was the son of the late Albert Johnson
and Nellie Gertrude (Moser) Riffle.

Junie was a 1942 Graduate of Thurmont
High School. He proudly served in the
United States Army Air Corps from
November 1943 to October 1945 in World
War II. He was assigned the Ball Turret
position on a B-24 Bomber, flying on 33
missions. Junie was employed by C & P
Telephone Company for over 35 years. He
was a Life Member of Edwin C. Creeger
American Legion Post 168 in Thurmont.
He also was a member of the Telephone
Pioneers of America.

Junie enjoyed visiting friends and family.
He also enjoyed taking his "Ride Abouts"
with his son Scott. They enjoyed their trips
to Lancaster, Pa, the Williamsburg, VA
area, the Chesapeake Bay area of Maryland
and the Delmarva beaches. His favorite
motto was "You have wheels? Let's Go!" In
2021, they enjoyed traveling over 15,000
miles across the country. He enjoyed
anything seafood, from eating crab cakes to
going to Fords Fish Shack in Leesburg, VA
for weekly oysters on the half-shell.

He is survived by his Son, Scott Douglas
Riffle of Frederick; with whom he lived for
4 years; his Brother, Franklin Riffle and his
wife Shirley of Thurmont and many loving
nieces and nephews. He was predeceased
by his son Larry; his daughter-in-law
Debbie; his brothers Elwood, Leroy and
Kermit.

**Our thoughts and prayers are
with all our fallen comrades who
have found everlasting peace. You
have served your country well. We
will remember you forever.**



781st Bomb Squadron Assoc.,

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