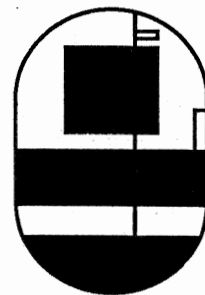




PANTANELLA NEWS



JULY 1990

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NUMBER 21

FINAL NOTICE FOR REUNION 90

Record attendance expected for the 45th Anniversary of Victory in Europe

August 23 to 26 are the dates and the **Boston Vista Waltham** in Waltham, MA is the hotel for the fourth reunion of the 781st Bomb Squadron and 465th Bomb Group Headquarters.

WHO IS COMING? - A roster of those registered as of June 1 are listed later in the newsletter. Some of you have written or called to know if certain people are registered. I know you would like to be sure one of your old friends will be there, but don't wait for someone else to register first. Do it now and you will be glad you did. Or why not call your buddy to urge him to attend.

In the event something comes up and you have to cancel you will get full refund. According to past records 75 more men are expected to register by reunion time. With wives and guests a total of 400 is expected.

Why will this be the biggest ever? Because it's two years since the last reunion and we have more men on the roster than ever before. Additionally we have a full program that will include the B-24 "All American." As Vincent Beeson wrote, "It sounds like this will be a Biggie!"

As most of you know wives are most welcome and are expected. Our program is designed so that wives will enjoy all of our functions. We don't send them away shopping or on a tour - they remain with their husbands and enjoy learning some-

thing about his experiences of over 40 years ago.

And it is the 45th anniversary of VE Day and the deactivation of the 465th Bomb Group and 781st Bomb Squadron. A time to remember and share with your comrades.

THE PROGRAM

Wednesday - Although this is not an official reunion day we know there will be a lot of Eager Beavers, so registration will be open in the afternoon. Hospitality open from noon through the evening.

Thursday - Registration and hospitality all day until 4 o'clock.

Cocktail party at 5:30, dinner at 6:30, followed by a program with Bob and Caroline Collings talking about the "All American."

"ALL AMERICAN" AND THE FRIDAY PROGRAM

"A day to remember"

Kenneth Sutton, Reunion Co-chairman has been doing a great job of lining up a terrific program for Friday. Ken has been in close touch with the Air Force and they are rolling out the red carpet for us at Hanscom Field. Arrangements so far are as follows:

All American will arrive late on Wednesday. On Thursday it will be open to the public from about 8 AM until 5 PM. We encourage those of you who have checked in on Wednesday or early Thursday to take the opportunity on Thursday to see All American. It is only seven miles away and all you need to get on the base is your drivers license. Early in the morning is the best before crowds are likely to show up. Introduce yourself as a member of the 781st Bomb Squadron and you will not have to pay the fee to go aboard.

A question was asked, "Will I get to see and get aboard the B-24?" Yes, **everybody** will get a chance to climb aboard and be photographed with the plane or with your crew or section. You have supported the restoration more than any B-24 WWII squad-



squadron. We want you to see how beautiful "All American" turned out and to enjoy it.

On **Friday** for some it may be a dawn patrol flight around 7:30 AM, then it will be open for all to go aboard. There will be coffee and cold drinks in the hanger next to the plane.

At 10:30 there will be a memorial service under the wing of All American for those Killed In Action and all that have died since. Music will be provided by the Air Force Colonial Brass Quartet, a Color Guard from the Air Force, and a missing man formation of WWII planes by the New

England Escadrille. This service will give proper remembrance to those who are no longer with us.

Following the service the group picture will be taken. Each will receive an American Flag to salute the All American Liberator, by The All American Squadron. Then we will fire up the engines and make a flight for all to see. After the brief flight it will return to the flight line to permit those who have not had the chance to climb aboard to do so.

At approximately 12:00 a deli lunch will be served in the nearby hanger. A variety of sandwiches and salad for less than \$5. After lunch those who have been aboard All American and have taken all the photos they desire may return to the hotel. All American will be closed to boarding around 3:00 in preparation for flying out to the another field.

The rest of the day is on your own. This is the evening for crews, sections and other get togethers. Hospitality will be open, of course.

SATURDAY - A program for part of the day to include a B-24 symposium, a simulated briefing, aircraft identification, etc. In the evening will be a cocktail party and banquet. There will be visiting VIP's from Hanscom AFB and some surprises during the evening program. Another day to remember.

TOURS - As we told you in the last newsletter, you have to fill out the form and pay for the tours in advance before July 25th. We have to make reservations for the buses so we must know the number that are going.

DRESS - Normal wear will be casual. For Saturday night we suggest the ladies wear cocktail dresses or other appropriate dress, and the men to wear a jacket, maybe tie. We will have some VIP's present and usually we like to dress a bit for Saturday night.

HOW TO GET THERE IF YOU ARE DRIVING - If you are driving from the west on 90 (Mass Pike), at junction with 95/Rt 128 go North for 4 1/2 miles from the toll gate, then exit 27A, Totten Pond Road. Make a hairpin turn from exit onto Third Avenue. The hotel is just

ahead on Third Avenue. If you are coming in from other directions get on 95/Rt 128 and turn off on Exit 27A. If you come in from the North, exit on 27A and cross over the freeway and turn on Third Avenue just ahead of the first stoplight.

If you are renting a car and driving from the Logan Airport follow signs to exit airport. After exiting airport, follow signs to Sumner Tunnel (stay in the right lane of the tunnel). Take Rt 93 South to 90 West (Mass Pike), then at Rt 128 take 95/128 North, exit 27A Totten Pond Road. Then make a hairpin turn from exit onto Third Avenue. Note that interstate highways are sometimes referred to as I90 for 90 and I95 for 95.

POINTS TO REMEMBER - The first night deposit for hotel room and any tours you might take are the only payments required with your reservation.

You do not have to attend all the functions. We know some have health problems, so attend those functions that you can. And don't worry about using a cane or wheelchair - there will be a number showing up to join you.

SIGHTSEEING - If you are driving check the sights to see on your drive to or from Boston. Many excellent attractions. Check with AAA if you are a member.

R. V. PARKING - At Hanscom (7 miles) it's first come first served bases. Contact Wayne Clausen 617-377-5316. They indicated they usually have extra space.

Others - Cristal Springs in Bolton (20 miles) 508-777-2711 and KOA Minuteman in Littleton (20 miles) 508-772-0045.

WHAT TO BRING - For the first time we will have a Trophy room for the display of WWII photos, flimsies, old orders, memorabilia, uniforms, or whatever you think will be of interest. No doubt you have some old photos we have not seen. Bring along these items for all to enjoy, to look at, and reminisce. On Friday we suggest you wear your WWII jacket or uniform when visiting the B-24.

Even though the history book is printed we are updating our history

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781st BOMB SQUADRON

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WW11 (1944-45). 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.

ical data. Harry Carl, our historian, will be spending time in this room so go over with him items you think may be of interest to our history.

Also, there will be videos of WWII, B-24's, etc., shown in the Trophy room. This room will be adjacent to the hospitality room. All the action will be in this area when we are not with the B-24 or have a scheduled program.



MAIL CALL

The letter on the lower right was received by Harry Carl from Lt.

Gen. Elmer J. Rogers, the 465th Bomb Group's first Commanding Officer. A beautiful letter from the man that that did such a great job in preparing the group for combat. His leadership was remembered throughout our tour of duty.

On the story on Lt. William Cassel, **David Coleman** wrote a cover letter. Here is part of it. "Now for some good news! Since you wouldn't accept the information I obtained about Marion A. Pitts I continued to try and find more about him. Happily I located him in Atlanta and have renewed our friendship. I am hoping that he will make the reunion.

The other good news is that we have located the last unaccounted for crew member Ralph Leach, our upper turret gunner. Now we have located all of the crew and hope we can have them all together at the reunion. We are working toward that goal.

Jim, I am so thankful you asked me to pull together something for

Lt. Cassel, because this effort resulted in Locating Pitts and Leach, as well as relatives of Cassel. I only regret that I could not provide more information on Lt. Cassel. This effort has taken far too long, but it has been very rewarding. Jim, I can never thank all of you enough for your efforts in forming the association. One of the things that has made it so successful is that it is for the entire squadron and not just for the crews. We all owe you, Marcel, and all of the others of you that have worked so hard to make this a meaningful association. I can't praise Harry Carl enough for his dedicated work in pulling the history together. With fellows like this

no wonder the 781st was one of the very best in the entire Air Corps.

We are looking forward to another enjoyable reunion and we pray that your good health and plans head us for many years to come.

William "Tom" Pulley (Kennedy Top Gunner) wrote that he saw "All American" at Page Field, Ft. Myers, FL. He said he was so proud to see the 465th insignia on the right tail. And he got it on his VCR so they can view it many times.

Along with their reservations **Pat Hendrickson** wrote, "We are really looking forward to seeing friends that we only see at the reunion.



6514 Cross Woods Dr
Halls Church Va 22044
19 Mar 1990

Harry L. Carl
Chadds Ford, Pa

Dear Harry:

Thank you for your extra ordinary kindness in sending me a copy of the 781st Bomb Squadron History.

I have read the account of its exploits and accomplishments, its dedication and its sacrifices and cannot help but be impressed. I confess to a glow of pride as well.

Moreover, you deserve far more praise than we can collectively accord you for your skill and determination in carrying to a successful conclusion what must have seemed at times a mammoth task.

Please be assured of my high esteem.

Sincerely,
Elmer J. Rogers
Lieut Gen USAF (Ret)

"The All American was at the airport in Ft. Lauderdale last month. We went on Sunday March 18th. Much to Ralph's surprise he learned that he had been made a member of the Distinguished Flying Command. We brought to his attention that his name was listed under the D.F.C. on the side of the plane. He then was asked if he wanted to fly to Kissimmee. He couldn't figure out what was going on. He was thrilled and acquired 30 minutes flying time at the controls of the All American.

"Our children had arranged this with the Collings Foundation so it was a complete surprise to Ralph."

Ralph's plane at Pantanella was "Princess Pat."

Fred Aboud sent in copies of his letter to his Senator regarding smoking in the Armed Forces, women in combat, etc. Fred is busy with his pen and making his voice heard.

Bruce Miller (Armament) sent in a newspaper article on the B-24 "All American" that was sent to him by **Charles Howard** (Armament Section). It was a very good story, but since we will be going into detail on the B-24 at the reunion I will not run this article at this time.

Recently **Kerry Myers**, son of Albert "Shack" Myers stopped by to loan me some of Shack's memorabilia. I will bring it along to the reunion. It proved very interesting to me. In looking through the photos I discovered one that included myself in a crew's photo just before the mission on 7 October to Ersekujvar. The photo was taken because it was Shacks's 50th mission. I knew I flew that day with Lt. Col. Bullock, Group Operations Officer, but had forgotten who else was on the crew. From the photo I can identify those standing as Col. Bullock on the left, myself third from left and Pierre J. J. Kennedy, my tail gunner, on the right. Kneeling on the left is Wilton Carter, squadron navigator, third from the left is Shack Myers, bombardier. Since we were group lead the 11th man must be a mickey operator. The record shows the model crew, so the other five must have been McKenna's crew. Any of you men remember flying that day? I am trying to find all the men I flew with while at Pantanella.

Bruce Miller (Armament) inquired what the squadron policy is on joining the McCook Airbase Historical Society. And if

it will be a 465th Group policy or individual decision. The answer is that we have no policy that I know of. It will be brought up at the reunion. There has been a lot of activity there and a marker for our group and squadron is in the works. I'm hoping that all the squadrons can agree to support the marker. I know some of you have been members and if you served time there have found it interesting to keep in contact with McCook. They have a reunion each fall (September 28 & 29 this year). The address is **McCook AAB Historical Society, PO Box 29, McCook, NE 69001**. More information at the reunion.

From **Russ Ball**, 780th BS I received a large 27 X 30 painting of our squadron insignia. Also some large blow ups of McCook and other photos. You will see it all at the reunion. Russ said he expects to see us at the reunion. He has been active in the restoration of McCook Air Base.

Stan Winkowski sent in information on the **Aviation Cadet Alumni Association**. This association (no dues) is for all pilot cadets. If you were a pilot cadet and want to contact former classmates write to Harry C. Bradshaw, RFD #1, Newmarket,

NH 03857. If interested be sure to include your flight class, and flight primary, basic and advanced schools you attended. If you send along a self addressed stamped envelope he will send you the address of those in your class that have responded to date.

In the Sea Power magazine, a Navy League publication, it had an article on **Stanley C. Pace**, Chairman and CEO of General Dynamics. He received the Navy League's tenth Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Award.

Pace, with the 783rd Bomb Squadron during our days at Pantanella, has been with the defense industry over 40 years. And he has been a great supporter of "All American."

The following is a letter addressed to the Squadron from Sam Monroe's adopted son, Ric Church.

In December (1989) I sent in an article for your January issue about the death of my father, **Sam Monroe**. Dad and I had a special relationship, since as a teenager, some twenty-five years ago, he and my mother, Lee, took me in as a foster child - a commendable act in itself when you consider they had six children of their own. Dad and I used to talk

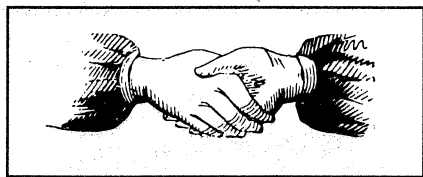


about his experiences in the service. As I think back, they were almost all about the time spent overseas.

After Dad's death I took a particular interest in his military life, going through old records, pictures, back issues of the Pantanella News, etc. I began reading the Squadron history book. I found it both educating and fascinating, not to mention enjoyable. I found myself looking at pictures with a magnifying glass, picking out details described in the text. I am sure that people traveling on the same planes I did on some of my business trips thought I must be an historian of some sort.

After doing as much reading as I have about your experiences and lives together, it is easy to understand why "old army buddies" are so important to ones life, at least in your era. You shared so many experiences, good and bad, and now share so many memories.

At the risk of sounding like a philosopher, I must say that we tend to let go of many things and people who are indeed a significant part of our past and who are influences on what we ultimately become. I applaud your efforts and energy spent keeping the part of your lives a current memory. I look forward to continuing to receive Dad's copy of the Pantanella News.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Marion Arthur Pitts (Pilot), 3912 Live Oaks Drive, Daraville, GA 30040. Phone 404 449-9718.

Pitts was located by **Dave Coleman**, Pitts Navigator. I asked Dave to write what he knew about Lt. William Cassel, Bombardier on Pitts crew the day they went down. I had a few notes about Cassel dying in a POW camp, but not the complete story. In the meantime Pierre Kennedy got the MACR on the crew Lt. Cassel went down with

and, after receiving it, I forwarded it to Dave Coleman. By researching this and other information on Cassel, Dave picked up enough information to locate (Marion) Arthur Pitts.

Some of you know that Pitts was reported to have been killed in a car accident some years ago. This good news of his whereabouts is a happy time for his crew and many friends in the 781st. There should be some celebrating at the reunion this year by Pitts and his crew!

Another search that looked like it was a dead end for Ben Donahue finally led him to locate **Robert Floyd** (Donahue Top Gunner). Floyd lives at 955 E. Twain A18, Las Vegas, NV 89109. Ben followed a lot of leads and finally one paid off. It sounds like there will be a large turnout of another happy crew at the reunion.

In the last newsletter I indicated that I had practically given up on locating **Richard Grantham**. Since that time I received the address of his daughter Diane, and, if I can read the French correctly, she is a Professor of English at the University in Montpellier, France. I wrote to her and asked that she forward the letter on to Richard.

Recently I received a response from Richard. His address is:

Institut D'Evolution Moleculaire
Universite Claude Bernard Lyon I,
69622 Villeurbanne, cedex, FRANCE

Richard writes,

Dear Jim,

My daughter Diane has passed on your letter of 25 March to me. I'm sorry I haven't written before and can only plead overwork. After the war I took a degree in Chemistry at the University of Southern California and then did a Dr. d'Etat in Biology in France, where I've been since, having acquired a French wife and a daughter in a second marriage. I'm now engaged in the field of Global Ecology and Future Evolution and am collaborating with international colleagues specifically on developing measures for controlling the Greenhouse Drift.

Flying to and from Nairobi recently I was struck by 2 things: (a) Africa is brown and getting browner, which means it is running out of water and is

desertifying, and (b) at 30,000 feet there is much more mist and clouds than we used to see going up over the Alps. This is evidence of the buildup of moisture at the bottom of the stratosphere, where it shouldn't be, and where it is bad for both ozone depletion and Earth warming. Africa is leading the world in these manifestations. The stratospheric water is general, however, I noticed the same thing on a flight to Stockholm.

If any of your 781st associates are interested in global environment problems, whatever their discipline is, I'd be glad to hear from them. Please give my warmest greetings to Durckel, Zwerko, and McDaniel. I can't remember if you and I have ever met in person, if not it may not be too late. I've been to Italy several times and looked over the Bari-Cerignolia area a few years ago.

Sincerely,

Richard "Dick" Grantham.

Richard sent along a 18 page paper he wrote entitled "Approaches To Correcting The Global Greenhouse Drift By Managing Tropical Ecosystems." It is very interesting. If anyone would like a copy drop me a note.

It took over two years to find Richard after I learned that he was at one time a professor at Montpellier. In talking to a friend of mine about the search he referred me to a girl, Allison Patton, who had spent a year on a scholarship in Montpellier. She had some friends there, but the French move slowly and it took a long time to get replies.

Joe Tucci was trying for awhile and recently Byron Thompson had contacts in France and they have been on the trail, so it just takes time.

As I have said before, men, there are some still out there waiting to be located. Have you done all you could?

From the records - 1015 men have been located. 397 are in Folded Wings and 618 are members.

From JACK VAN SLYKE

Walt Shipley's account of the Zalk crews first mission was very interesting to me because I think I was the pilot that took them on their mission. I know I flew with a new crew on my last mission which was to Vienna on September 10, 1944.

I remember the radio was hit that day filling the flight deck with smoke and dust and it also left a large hole right behind my seat!

The aircraft was Yellow "C", Hot Mathilda, and was full of holes when we returned. At that time we could pick our last mission. When operations asked if I wanted to pass I said, what the heck, I made it this far taking them as they came so, I might as well stick with it. Needless to say I had second thoughts when all hell broke loose over the target. But my luck held out and the new crew was a very good bunch and did very well on a tough first mission.

About Yellow "K", our crew took the first "K", a Ford B-24H, over to Africa and then Italy. This was a very good aircraft. Frank Coats was the crew chief starting when we received it new at McCook. They kept it in top shape and we never had a "no go or a early return" with it. I have a small hand and I remember Frank tailored the throttles so that I could hold the four of them easily and also made an armor plate that just fit my seat bucket. I remember one flight his crew put their beer ration in the back of the plane so they could have a "cold one" when we got back. That was sure a confidence builder.

After "Hells Belle" was shot down with the MacFarlane crew we received a new B-24G that a new crew just brought over. This may be the "K" that you were asking about because it was a real dog from the start. Something new was always going wrong with it and it must have drove Frank crazy. We flew it about 11 or 12 missions and complained so much Hank Willett gave me "Hot Mathilda" when it came into the squadron. This was a B-24J built by Consolidated. A very good airplane and we finished up flying it. It did get shot up pretty bad on my last mission as told by Shipley in the Octo-

ber Newsletter.

On the lighter side I guess every crew had a pet. When in Africa our bombardier, Al Stephens, picked up a small monkey. We had a clothes rack built in the middle of the tent and the monkey used to get up on top and several times messed on John Ward's clothes. John rigged up a couple of bare wires along the rod and connected them to an old motorcycle magneto. When the monkey got up on top of the rack Ward would give the mag a spin and you would see a real performance. After a few times the monkey decided to take his act elsewhere.

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS

Wessley C. Shaw, 2601 N. Old Stage Rd, #7, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067.

Clifford Derr, 4427 113th PL. NE, Marysville, WA 98270.

Michael Horvath, 502 Evergreen, Talmadge, OH 44278.

M. Arthur Pitts, 3912 Live Oaks, Dr., Daraville, GA 30040. Phone 404 449-9718.

Robert Floyd, 955 E. Twain A18, Las Vegas, NV 89109.

Robert L. Williamson, 4005 Stardust Rd. #10, Kingman, AZ 86401

William O. Weaver, 111 Pullens Dr., Coffeyville, KS 67337.

SICK CALL

Lewis "Jocko" Roberts had to cancel his reunion reservations. He is undergoing major surgery. Jocko, we wish you a speedy recovery.

In the photo on the right, L to R standing, Ramon Castillo, Henry Ayres, and Bill Rushing. L to R front - George Soroka, Gene Sims (Szymanek), LeRoy Carlisle. These men were from Engineering and kept our planes ready to fly. This crew kept Rae Branch's Long John Silver in great shape until it was shot down by fighters 30 June 1944.



FOLDED WINGS

Ordnance Section lost one of its own, **Eugene Janovich** passed away February 28, 1990. Bob Freed notified us. Janovich had a weak heart and lung problems.

In a recent phone call to Robert L. George I learned that **John F. MacFarlane** (Pilot) passed away December 31, 1988. John remained in the service and became ill in 1969 and received a medical discharge. He never fully recovered and died at his home in Florida.

His wife Helen lives in the family home in Florida. They had two daughters and one son. Helen said that John missed the service, but enjoyed his retirement.

Maj. Gen. George R. Acheson, 55th Wing Commander. His death was reported by Jim Wray. No other particulars available at this time.

John R. Dickey (Pilot) died March 20, 1990 after an illness of four months (cancer). Reported by John Fandrey. Dickey, who was awarded the squadrons first Silver Star, attended all three reunions. He will be missed along with the others that joined the Folded Wings.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our fallen comrades and their families.

A MASTERPIECE,

by Charles F. McKenna III

Some things don't improve much with age, just remember your 10-year-old automobile is usually ready for the junk pile.

But wives are an exception. Ten years after "I do" at the altar, she is only starting to show her good points.

After 15 or 20 years, she may need a nip here and a tuck there or an occasional repaint job.

After 25 years, she is almost indispensable and can be treated as a member of the family. In fact it's high time a husband quit insisting she salute when he comes into the room.

What does a mature wife have over a young one? Well, let's see...

She may not look as glossy, but she has more under the hood.

It isn't a federal case when she carries out the garbage once in a while.

Her feet tire as quickly as yours, so an infrequent night out is enough for her, too.

If she finds a blonde hair on your coat, she knows some dame just brushed up against you. Besides, she knows you can't do your own homework, much less doing tutoring on the outside.

She may believe money grows on trees, but she has finally realized that those trees grow in the neighbor's yards.

Her meals don't taste like a misprint in the cookbook, she knows your likes and dislikes.

When household appliances break down, she knows better than asking for help. That's the pits. She fixes it herself.

A great deal of effort, time, trouble, and understanding go into taking a flighty, young wife and turning her into man's greatest masterpiece - - - a perfect wife. But well worth that effort.

GROUP REPORT

From the archives I located an August 1944 report, filed by Major R. C. Pease, Group Historian. This was one year after the 465th Bomb Group (H) was formed. The report follows.

August 1944 marked the successful completion of "The First Year" of the 465th Bomb Group (H). It was a year of great achievements. It had grown from a slender cadre of enthusiastic but untried key personnel to a full strength, lusty, assured and tried outfit of veterans. Their record in combat was enviable and outstanding, yet prior to actual operations, only two of its officers had combat experience, the Engineering and Communications Officers.

In one year the group has set the following records:

- a. Established an Army Air Force record with 9,990 hours of

operational training without an accident of any kind.

- b. Set a new standard of safety with a year of operations without a fatal accident attributable to engineering maintenance.
- c. Had scored the highest sustained bombing accuracy record in the Fifteenth Air Force.
- d. Had the highest ratio in the Fifteenth Air Force of enemy aircraft destroyed per loss to enemy aircraft.
- e. Had the lowest expenditure of ammunition per enemy aircraft destroyed in the Fifteenth Air Force.
- f. Safely landed twice the number of severely flak damaged aircraft than any group in the wing.

R. C. PEASE
Major, AC
Historian

JUST DOING MY OWN THING. . . .

It's official! **781 BS** is the official FAA number on the light aircraft I built this past year. The photo shows the Buccaneer in my backyard when it was completed. The wings come off and it is transported in a trailer. The 40 hours of testing are now over and I can fly it anywhere.

For you airplane buffs it came in a box of 889 parts and 1902 nuts & bolts, plus the engine & prop. It weighs in at 483 pounds (dry), wingspan of 30 feet, rate of climb 1200 fpm, cruise about 60 mph, take-off run and landing roll is 150 feet! And it lands on land or water. The 64 horsepower Rotax (made in Austria) two cylinder, two stroke engine makes it a great performer. But the most fun these days is low and slow!! No, I won't be flying it to Boston.



LATE REUNION NEWS INFORMATION

We will have Squadron shoulder patches, caps, pins, etc. available at the reunion. Information on how to purchase these items by those not able to attend the reunion will be in the next newsletter.

We also intend to have a professional video taken during the reunion and have it for sale at a price not to exceed \$30. This will include the B-24 flying, services under the wing, hospitality room, banquet, etc. We would like to know your interest in this. Just drop a note and to let me know if you think it's a good idea and if you would be interested.

EXTRA SPECIAL ITEM !!! The United States Postal Service has agreed to have a special cancellation stamp to commemorate our reunion. We will have special envelopes printed with artwork by Frank Quagan noting our reunion, the B-24 All American, and the Forty Fifth Anniversary of Victory in Europe. The Postal Service will set up a temporary post office at the reunion to cancel the envelopes with the special cancellation stamp - maybe even aboard All American.

Extra envelopes will be cancelled and be available after the reunion, especially for those not attending. The Philatelic Press will also have some interest.

TOURS - Not mentioned earlier is the name of the tour company to contact if you want a three day tour. Its Travel Your Way, 281 needham Street, Newton Upper Falls, MA 02164. Phone 617 244-4420.

And remember you have to pay in advance for tours on Sunday or Monday. The January registration form did not indicate this. Use April or July registration form.

CASH is desired as the form of payment for registration and meals. It makes it easier for the treasurer, O. J. Cowart, Jr., to handle the funds with the hotel.

REGISTRATION is on schedule for the estimated 400 to attend. With wives and guests the total is now over 250. Registrations picked up the past week and there was an air of excitement in phone calls and notes as the time is getting closer. There are plans by many to meet old friends in the east and many are planning get-to-gethers after the reunion. If you are not staying at the hotel we would like you to send in the Squadron registration. We need to know if you expect to be attending the Thursday dinner.

If you have never seen Boston or the East, I can assure you that you will enjoy the people, the historical area, and a great sight-seeing area. Not to mention seeing old friends and the B-24 at the reunion!!

And the hotel is **FIRST CLASS**. Several local members have checked it out and are all excited about it.

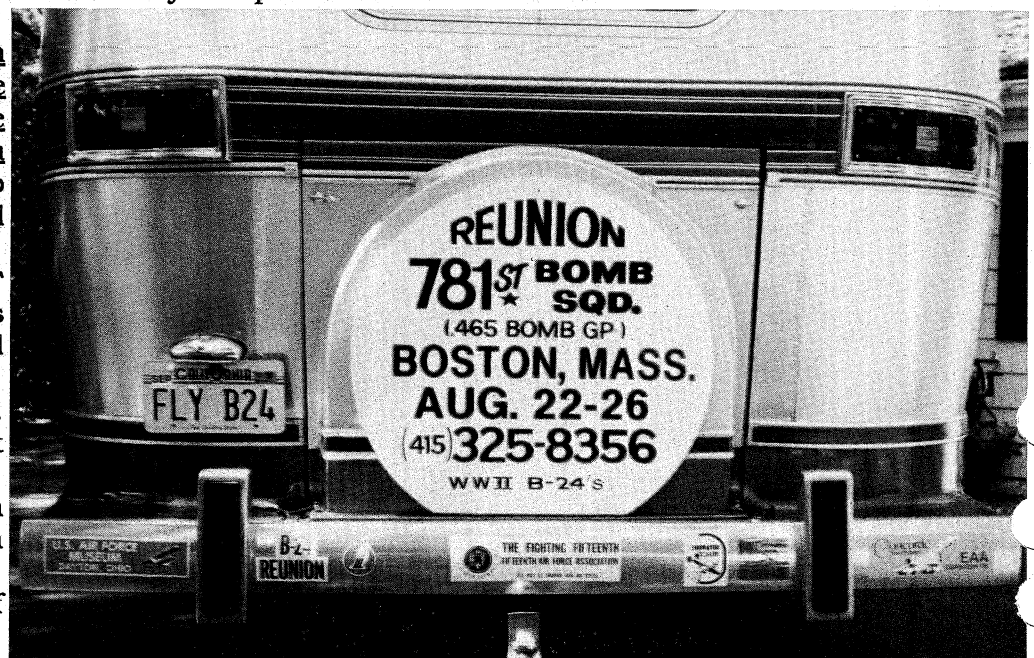
So, what else can I say. Don't wait to read about the great reunion - **BE THERE!!**

If you see the vehicle on the right traveling to Boston you'll win a prize!

Above, right, is the list of advance registrants.

JAMES C. ALTHOFF
FRANK P. AMBROSE
BERNARD BADLER
DANIEL E. BAILEY
DONALD A. BARRETT
WILLIAM B. BARTLETT, JR
ROBERT L. BASSINETTE
JOHN B. BAUM
AURELIUS A. BECNEL
VINCENT A. BEESON
ARTHUR W. BOVETT, JR
VERNON G. BURDA
HAROLD C. BUTTERFIELD
WARREN G. CARDEN
HARRY S. CARL, JR
GAYTHOR L. CASS
RAYMOND D. CAUBLE
WALTER CLAUSEN
DAVID B. COLEMAN
HUGH E. COOPER
O.J. COWART, JR
R. LEON CROUCH
CORNELIUS V. CULHANE
CARL V. DAHL
* LORRAINE DALTON
MICHAEL J. DEIRONIMI
MELVIN L. DERRY
LOUIS J. DESLATTE
BEN L. DONAHUE
JAMES F. DOWNS
* JOSEPH DOWNS
WALTER W. DUDLEY
PAUL N. DURCKEL
HARRY R. EDWARDS
ROBERT W. ELLIOTT
LEONARD H. EMMEL
HAROLD ERICKSON, JR
JOHN FANDREY
HAROLD B. FARRAR
CHARLES V. FERICH
LEO A. FINK
DENNIS B. FLAHERTY
LOREN W. FOOTE
ROBERT L. FREED
ROBERT (BERNARD) FREEMAN
TELIO P. GIAMMARCO
LEONARD J. GOLDSTEIN
OLIVER E. GRAHAM
WAYNE N. GRUBAUGH
* HELEN HALL
RICHARD C. HALL
COL MCHENRY HAMILTON
GEORGE HAUSOLD
ALVIN HELLMAN
RALPH D. HENDRICKSON
CHARLES E. INGRAM
FRANK R. JASICKO
WILLIAM H. JOSTWORTH
ROBERT M. JOYNER
EDWIN E. KAPUSTA
DALE L. KEISER

JOHN B. KENNEDY
PIERRE J.J. KENNEDY
FRANCIS K. KILL
KENNETH A. KOCH
GEORGE KURKOUSKI
* PETER B. LAUGHNER
ALBERT P. LEBLANC
ORREN J. LEE
MILTON LEVINSON
CHARLES G. LITTLE
WALTER N. LONGACRE
RALPH E. MAGUIRE
ADRIAN A. MARTIN
EUGENE G. MARTIS
RUSS T. MAYNARD
JOSEPH P. MC DEVITT
HOMER L. MOELLER
GINO J. PELLASCHI
HAROLD F. QUAGAN
WILLIAM A. RACHOW
MORRIS R. RAPOPORT
CURTIS G. REED
KENNETH B. REHN
HARRY REUSS
VANN REYNOLDS
IRVING ROBERTS
THERON R. ROBINSON
JOSEPH ROGERS
BARNEY G. RUSSELL
NICHOLAS V. SCHAPS
EDWARD J. SCHREINER
HAROLD SEITZ
JAMES D. SHAFFER
WALKER H. SHIPLEY
EUGENE R. "GENE" SIMS
GEORGE W. SINNER
JAMES MARCEL SNYDER
GEORGE A. SOROKA
BARBOUR C. STOKES, JR
RICHARD J. STORM
HAROLD A. STRAUGHAN
WALTER H. SUTTON
KENNETH E. SUTTON, JR
BYRON W. THOMPSON
CHARLES I. TITTL, JR
JACK VAN SLYKE
JAMES E. WAGGLE, JR
JOHN E. WARD
FRANK WASSENAAR
LESLIE S. WHEELER
HENRY L. WILLET, JR
THOMAS L. WILLIAMS
STANLEY J. WINKOWSKI
* JEAN WOOD
JAMES W. WRAY, JR
JOHN WROBLEWSKI
EUGENE M. YOUNG
WILLIAM YUREK
JOHN ZADROZNY
JOHN C. ZARTMAN
CHARLES R. ZWERKO



Lt. William L. Cassel Died in POW Camp 11 March 1945

by David Coleman

Lt William L. Cassel was born 24 February 1920 at Neodesha, Kansas and died in POW Camp Stalag Luft 1, Barth, Germany, 11 March 1945.

Cassel enlisted in July 1941, became a mechanic, then transferred to the Field Artillery and went to O.C.S., but washed out because of lack of experience. Here he married his high school sweetheart. He then applied for Aviation Cadet School and graduated from Bombardier School at Boise, Idaho. From there he went to Lincoln, NE and on to the 782nd Bomb Squadron.

On his fifth mission on 5 September 1944 he was shot down over Yugoslavia. He was the only one on the crew not injured. He evaded and with the help of one of the underground units was returned to Pantanella.

He was then transferred to the 781st and flew with various crews.

Cassel was flying his 13th mission on 16 December 1944 when he bailed out near Linz, Austria. This was a mission to Bruix, German to bomb the oil refineries there. On this unfortunate day Lt. Cassel was flying as bombardier with a new crew on their first mission. This crew was known as the Pitt's crew, however, Michael Blakita was flying as pilot.

Before dropping bombs an engine went out due to an oil leak. After dropping bombs they were unable to maintain altitude and were forced to bail out. After bailing out near Linz the crew was taken prisoner having landed near a flak battery and along the Linz-Styr railway. Several days later the entire crew was taken to Interrogation Center, Dulag Luft, near Frankfurt. The interrogation process required a few days in solitary confinement after which the crew was reunited at the Red Cross Reception Center at Wetzlar. This was our first time to spend time in bomb shelters praying that the 15th Air Force was not

aiming for our position. We had already experienced the effectiveness of the fighters in destroying trains on which we had booked passage. It was a welcome relief to observe that the fighters we saw were ME 109s and not P 51s.

Upon our departure from Wetzlar our train was composed of boxcars loaded with POWs bound for various camps in Northern Germany. We arrived at Barth on 30 December 1944 and were assigned to North Compound III, which had only been built early in December.

In late February Lt. Cassel was admitted to the POW Camp Hospital for treatment of a sore throat. The hospital was located in South One

talized.

Cassel had stated he would soon return to our compound, but he looked very weak and it didn't look as if he had fully recovered. Within a very few days the Chaplain visited us and informed us that Cassel had died from leukemia. This was Sunday, 11 March 1945.

On 15 March Lt. Cassel was given a limited military funeral. Colonel Herbert Zemke, the ranking U.S. military Officer, led the funeral procession from the POW Camp to the City Cemetery at Barth. This was a two mile march each way and proved to be a challenge in endurance. Chaplain Rev. T. A. Douglas, British Army, conducted the service at grave side. Attending were Lt. Col. Francis Gabreski (America's leading Ace in Europe), crew members Lts. Blakita, Pitts, and Coleman. The body was interned in the Barth Cemetery until late 1948 at which time it was disinterred to Plot BB, Row 7, Grave 162, in the U. S. Military Cemetery, Neuville-en-Condroz, near Liege, Belgium.

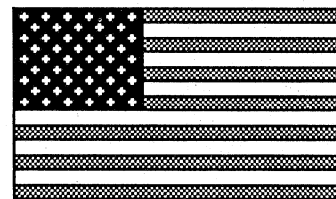
Lt. Cassel is survived by his wife, Vera Cassel Williams, three brothers, E. Lee Cassel, Valley Center, Kansas; Davis J. Cassel, Jr., Sour Lick, Texas; Leonard J. Cassel, Port Arthur, Texas; and one sister, Mary McGarigle, Wichita, Kansas.

Additional information from other crew members with which Lt. Cassel flew with would be appreciated by the 781st Bomb Squadron and by the members of the family.

David Coleman obtained information for the above story from his memory, records, the family, and from the Missing Air Crew Reports obtained by Pierre J. J. Kennedy.



Lt. Williams L. Cassel at Bombardier School in Boise, Idaho Compound and was manned by British Doctors and other British medical personnel. The medical staff was very skilled and dedicated, having spent many months treating prisoners and refusing to be repatriated even though eligible. Their equipment was limited as were their supplies, however, they provided the best care that was available. Prisoners were not allowed to visit between compounds, therefore, only one crew member, Don Stern, had seen Cassel while he was hospi-



Dale C. Tipton Crew's Mission to Ploesti.

by Eugene Krzyzynski

On 31 May 1944 we were briefed for a mission to Ploesti and were assigned another aircraft because our plane (Yellow H, Crescent of the Half Moon) was down for repairs. Also, we learned that Capt. Wray would fly co-pilot.

Everything was normal until we got over the target. An anti-aircraft shell got a solid hit in the area of #1 & #2 engines and our troubles began.

Seth Hawkings (O'Brien Navigator) saw us take the hit since they were directly behind us in formation. He told me this at the Dayton reunion.

Tipton and Wray had a tough time keeping the aircraft under control. We began to jettison everything that wasn't nailed down, to lighten the ship. We kept losing altitude and managed to reach Montenegro before the mountains got too high for us to fly over them.

I was standing on the bomb bay
In the Photo below Burda is holding his parachute with the Partisans after landing.



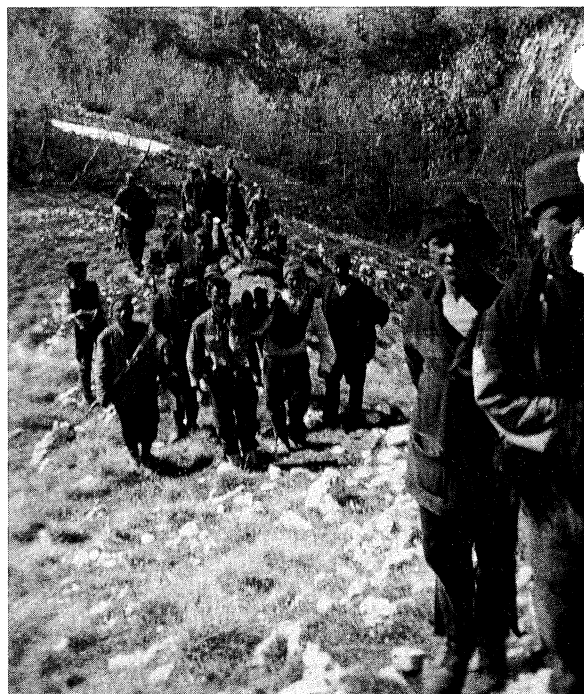
catwalk just back of the flight deck and was throwing equipment, handed to me, out the bomb bay. Then Jasicko handed me my chest pack chute and motioned for me to jump. I clipped on my chute, squatted down, and got momentarily hung up by the flight deck floor and the bomb rack. A boot in the butt from Jasicko got me clear. I pulled the rip cord as soon as I cleared the plane, but the chute didn't open. I pulled the canopy with my hand and it opened.

I swung twice and landed in the trees going backwards. I felt and heard branches breaking, then landed on my right side on the ground and was pulled back when the branches whipped back. My feet were touching the ground so I got out of the chute and harness and pulled the chute down out of the trees. It was pretty badly torn up. What happened was that we were approaching the top of a mountain when I jumped and everyone that jumped after me landed on the other side of the mountain.

After I buried the chute and got my bearings, I began to climb around the mountain so that I could get together with the rest of the crew.

After a couple of hours I came to a clearing and heard cowbells. Figuring where there are cows there must be people, I began to approach the cattle. Minutes later I saw two figures sitting at the side of the clearing and made out a red star on the hat of one of the men. Figuring they were Partisans, I stopped crouching, stood up and approached them. I spoke to them in Polish and learned they were indeed Partisans.

They guided me to a cluster of huts and I was reunited with the rest of the crew. It was an extremely joyful moment to learn we all got out safely with noth-



Above - Partisans carrying injured gunner William Soteropoulos.

ing more serious than bumps and bruises.

With Burda's and Jasicko's knowledge of Checkoslavak and my Polish we got to communicate quite well with the Partisans. We were told that they would get word out that we were with them and that we would go to an airstrip and be flown back to Italy. You can imagine how great that news was.

The walk to the airstrip was quite a challenge. We swore that every mountain in Yugoslavia goes up, but not down. We had to take some horses with us so that the Partisans could bring back supplies on their return trip. They were more of a hindrance than help. I think everyone of us was either kicked or bitten before the trip was over.

The airstrip was next to a small village (Berane) and it took us about a week to reach it.

We slept in real beds and gorged ourselves on fresh eggs. After a great nights sleep we were awakened by a large volume of small arms fire. I thought for sure that the German were attacking, but as it turned out the Partisans were just celebrating the news of D-Day. Frankly I thought that it was just propaganda and didn't believe it until we got back to Italy.

We met the British Liaison unit

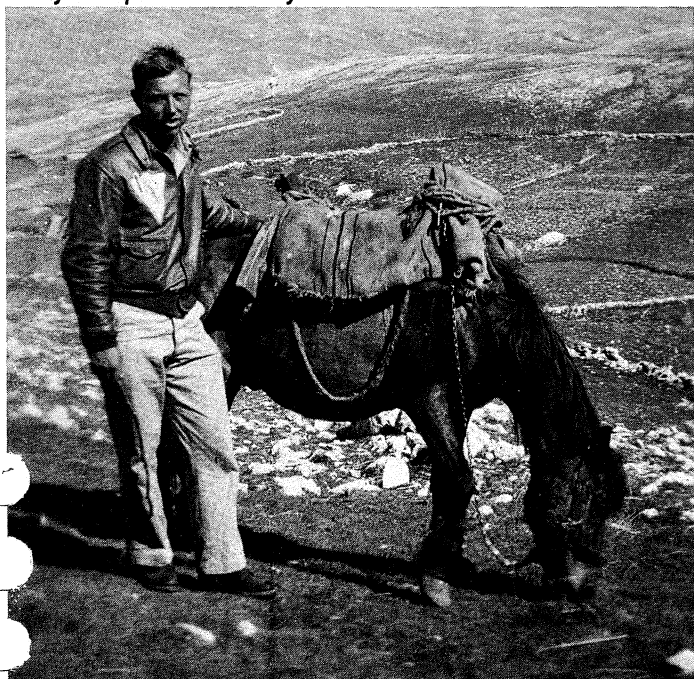
and were told that the Germans were expected to come through pretty soon on their annual forage for food. In that case we would have to go up in the mountains until they retired. They told us a humorous story. Their building had a real flush toilet in it and every time they had to abandon the town they would take great pains not to damage it. It seems the Germans returned the favor when they left. A very civilized lot.

When we saw the airstrip it was hard to believe that anyone could land on it and in the dark of night to boot. However, a C-47 did come in. They brought supplies for the Partisans and took severely wounded Partisans back to Italy for treatment along with any aircrew that were there.

We got back to Italy 9 June 1944 and spent a day in a hospital at Bari for a checkup. Then it was back to Pantanella.

The time spent in Yugoslavia was a unique experience. We had to put our complete faith in the Partisans. Even though the country was overrun by German troops, when we walked to the airstrip (about 60 kilometers) it was during daylight hours. The Partisans said the high mountains were relatively free of German troops.

Vern Burda standing by his friend the horse, which they had part of the way.



For rations we had black bread, cheese and some sausages. An interesting food was dried goat meat. They would slaughter the goat and stretch the carcass on a wooden frame and dry it. The meat turned a dark mahogany color and they took the whole thing along as a ration. To eat it, you broke off a piece (it was quite brittle) kept chewing until it softened and then it could be swallowed. Not gourmet stuff but it kept you going.

We all learned a lot from this experience. When we resumed flying missions, we made sure we all wore a good pair of G. I. shoes and each carried a musette bag with extra socks, hard candy, bars, toilet paper, etc. Little did we know that these items would be used in July when we were shot down again.

The photos were taken by Vernon Burda. Burda noted that they hiked about 10 days through rough mountain terrain. In the Partisans villages they still plowed with a wooden stick behind a cow. They lived on what they could raise on a small patch of ground, plus fish, venison and sheep — lots of sheep.

Crew members were Operations Officer James W. Wray, co-pilot - Dale C. Tipton, Pilot - Eugene Krzyzynski, Bombardier - Vernon Burda, Navigator - Frank Jasicko, Engineer - Hulitt Holcomb, Radio Operator - Albert Ralston, Gunner - Harold Farrar, Gun-



Wedding day celebration and dance in the village. Marshall Tito is in the picture as he was in the dance.

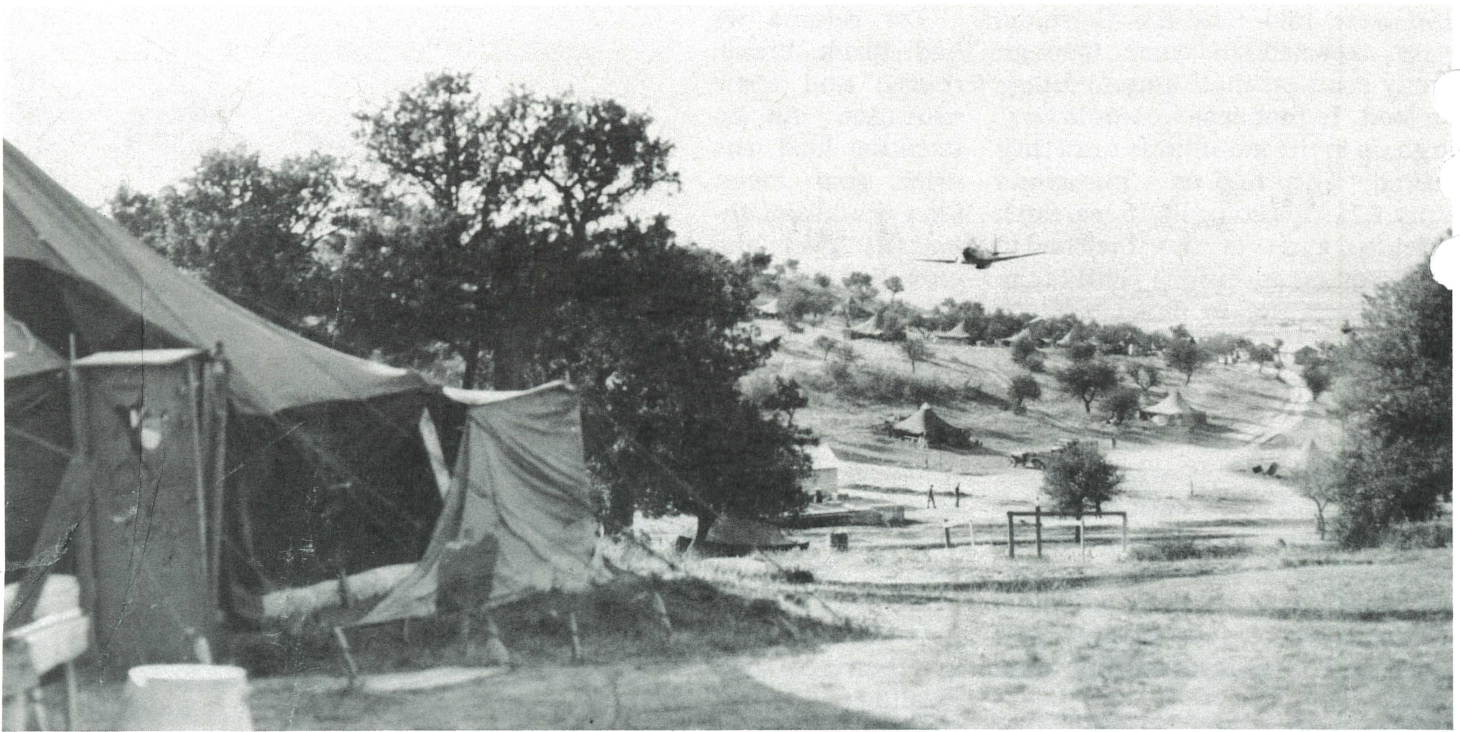
ner - William Soteropoulos, Gunner - Michael Deironimi, Gunner.

Seven weeks after returning to Pantanella the Tipton crew was shot down again on a mission to Vienna. This time all were captured and remained POW's for the rest of the war.

FLIM FLAM

From the Chaplains Section
FOR THE AIR FORCE

Our Aviators to the war are gone
And high over battlefields you'll find them,
Their valor and worth are second to none,
We, their loved ones are steadfast behind them.
Land of Freedom! not for once will we rest -
In the skies there will be no surrender;
Our courage to patriots we invest
In our country - we're here to defend her.
Though we fight to the death for what we love,
We are proud of the honor so granted -
Protection we ask from our God above
All our hopes in America planted!



Shown above is a P-51 giving Pantanella a buzz job. The 51's, along with the P-38's and a few times a Misquito, would give us a thrill. I've heard of tents sometimes going over from the prop wash. Recently, in a conversation with Robert L. Gaston, son of Robert R. Gaston who passed away recently, he told of his uncle (Robert R's brother) flying P-51's and he would come down to say hello to Robert by giving him a buzz job. Maybe this plane was flown by Robert's brother?

781st BOMB SQUADRON ASSOC
2 Mt Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94027



FIRST CLASS

ORREN J. LEE
2312 BRAEMER
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57262

