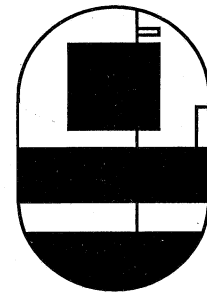




PANTANELLA NEWS



JUL 1998

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NUMBER 53

FINAL NOTICE FOR REUNION 98 AT DAYTON, OHIO

Join us at Wright Patterson AFB October 7 to 11

In reviewing Pantabella News of October 1987 following our reunion at Wright Patterson I am reminded that we had a very successful reunion. Some of the items included; dedicating a 781st bronze plaque and tree, a flyover of A-7s, a filming of a salute for "Good Morning America", viewing the showing of Harry Carl's "Tales from Sacajawea," presenting a Silver Star posthumously to Mrs. Sybil Wilson, Col. Lokker's widow, and a wonderful program to make it one of our most remembered reunions. With the notes coming in with the dues, etc. it looks like the same enthusiasm is still there for our reunion #8 at Wright Patterson. In addition to our regular program

there are many other aviation related activities for your enjoyment. The Air Force Museum alone could take up all of your free time.

Recently I received the "Friends Journal," which is the quarterly publication of the Air Force Museum, and found this 56 page magazine full of aviation history. It leads with an article about the museum being 75 years old this year. There are

many additions to their aircraft inventory including the new Lockheed-Martin F-22 "Raptor." The museum is open 9 to 5 daily.

At our last reunion you, will remember, there was a celebration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Air Force. They had many different planes flying and other events. This year there is another very special event going on. The "Eagles," or better know as the International Association of Eagles (IAE) will have a symposium August 9th and 10th. They are sponsoring "The Gathering of the Eagles." Fourteen famous historic aviators including "Tex" Hill, Brig. Gen (ret) USAF, of Flying Tigers fame, William Campbell, Col (Ret)

USAF from the Tuskegee Airman who gave us fighter cover in Italy, Thomas Stafford, Lt Gen (Ret) USAF, NASA Astronaut, Gemini, Apollo, Apollo/Soyuz, and others.

We have scheduled the dates of the reunion to begin on Wednesday October 7th. Official activities begin with registration and hospitality at 1 PM on Wednesday. The airport van will run all day from Wednesday through Sunday. The round trip, which will include the trip for the return flight, is \$20 per person, half the normal fare.

Over half will register on this day and you will find many comrades to visit with and catch up on the last two years. Volunteers are asked to introduce yourself at registration to see if you can be of some help.

There are no scheduled events other than the hospitality and trophy room which will be open all day long. You may consider a drive to the Memorial Gardens to see the plaque and tree installed at our last reunion. If you have no car, suggest it to a buddy who has a car and enjoy the afternoon together.

On Thursday the registration, hospitality and trophy room will be open all day until about 5 PM. Then everyone will be



Col. (ret) James W. Wray and Vincent Beeson unveiling the plaque in the Memorial Garden at Wright Patterson AFB.

getting ready to go to the museum for our cocktail party and dinner. The museum will be closed to the public so we will have a private party all to ourselves. Buses will be available for those without cars or who not care to drive at night.

Maj. Gen (Ret) Charles Metcalf, Director, USAF Museum, has been invited as our guest of honor and will give us some history of the Museum.

As usual, Friday breakfast will be full of eager members and families looking forward to a full day. Following breakfast there will be a short squadron meeting, then we leave by bus or car for the Officers club for lunch. Following lunch we will go to the chapel #1 for the memorial service and squadron photo. Then we return to the hotel to visit the hospitality and trophy room to meet with old friends. The evening is open for crew and section dinners, or just a few friends getting together.

Saturday is the 465th Bomb Group day. The group program will be held at 10 o'clock in the Hope Hotel area which will include all the

squadrons. After the program a buffet lunch will be available in the same building. In the afternoon there will be videos and casual gatherings in the hospitality and trophy room area. The evening banquet will be at the hotel for our final gathering of the group. The cocktail party will begin at 5 and the banquet.

Registrations started early and have been above expectation. As usual Ben Donahue was the first 781st member to register.

By reunion time, if it continues according to past records, the following list of those already registered will grow to a total of 220, including wives and families,

ADRIAN A. MARTIN
EUGENE G. MARTIS
RUSS T. MAYNARD
HOMER L. MOELLER
CAROL FORSLINE
JOHN W. OGDEN
DEAN T. OTTO
GINO J. PELLESCI
WILLIAM A. RACHOW
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BARNEY G. RUSSELL
JOHN T. RUSSELL
HERBERT L. SCHLOSSIN
EDWARD J. SCHREINER

JAMES D. SHAFFER
JAMES MARCEL SNYDER
ROLAND J. SOUCY
NORMAN G. STENERSON
BERTEL E. STIGBERG
HAROLD A. STRAUGHAN
KENNETH E. SUTTON, JR.
ALBERT I. THOMPSON
RAY U. TYLER
JACK VAN SLYKE
JAMES E. WAGGLE, JR
FRANK WASSENAAR
LESLIE S. WHEELER
HENRY L. WILLETT, JR
THOMAS L. WILLIAMS, M.D.
ROBERT L. WILLIAMSON
JOHN WROBLEWSKI

JAMES C. ALTHOFF
FRANK P. AMBROSE
BERNARD BADLER
DANIEL E. BAILEY
WILLIAM B. BARTLETT, JR
JOHN B. BAUM
NICHOLAS C. BELIK
CHARLES H. BRAUD
WARREN G. CARDEN
GAYTHOR L. CASS
RAYMOND D. CAUBLE
G. STEVE CHIRIGOTIS
WALTER CLAUSEN
DAVID B. COLEMAN
CORNELIUS V. CULHANE
CARL V. DAHL
BEN L. DONAHUE
WALTER W. DUDLEY
LEONARD H. EMMEL
HAROLD ERICKSON, JR
KENNETH G. FODEN
LOREN W. FOOTE
ROBERT L. FREED
WAYNE N. GRUBAUGH
COL. MCHENRY HAMILTON
GEORGE HAUSOLD
RALPH D. HENDRICKSON, SR
MICHAEL S. HORVATH
CHARLES M. HOWARD
WILLIAM H. JOSTWORTH
DALE L. KEISER
JOHN B. KENNEDY
PIERRE J.J. KENNEDY
FRANCIS K. KILL
EUGENE M. KRZYZYNSKI
JOHN P. LAYNE
ROBERT R. LEASURE
ALBERT P. LEBLANC
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MILTON LEVINSON

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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 WWII (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.

Clarence J. Lokker

Clarence John (Jack) Lokker attended Hope College in Holland, Michigan where his effervescent personality and jovial nature assisted him in becoming class president. His father was an attorney and Jack's education was pointing toward that vocation. However, his desires to don the Cadet Gray grew until Jack managed to secure an appointment to West Point Military Academy. He was a leader in athletics and academics graduating high in his class of 1941.

He received his commission, as a second lieutenant, in the Field Artillery and shortly transferred to the Army Air Corps. His early training was at the Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa and Randolph Field, Texas. He received his pilot's wings at Foster Field at Victoria, Texas March 1942. It was then that he married his college sweetheart, Sybil Brailey at Randolph chapel and marched under the saber arch of admiring classmates.

His next assignment was at Columbus Air Training School at Columbus, Mississippi; first as an instructor, then as Commandant of Cadets. In early 1943 he took his B-24 training at Hendricks Field, Florida and then was transferred to Davis-Monthan Field at Tucson as an instructor in this aircraft.

When a new group, the 465th, was formed at Tucson Captain Lokker was assigned to it as Assistant Group Operations Officer, on Special Order number 226, dated 14 August 1943.

His name does not appear on the

27 August order sending the cadre to the AAF School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida nor the 23 Sept order moving the cadre from Orlando to the AAF School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida nor the 23 Sept order moving the cadre from Orlando to the AAB at Kearns, Utah. He may have managed a different mode of transportation than the rail travel accommodations provided for the rest of the unit — if he went to Orlando at all.

Early October 1943 through January of 1944, was spent at McCook, Nebraska, with the rest of the 465th Bomb Group undergoing POM or Preparation for Overseas Movement training.

Before leaving for overseas Jack's first and only child was born, David, on December 29, 1943. Jack managed to get home for three days to see his wife and son before he had to leave.

He transferred to Pantanella Air Base in Italy via Oudna Field Two near Tunis, Tunisia with the other members of the Air Echelon on or about 20 to 27 April 1944.

Sometime before this he was promoted to Major and apparently joined

the 782nd Squadron as S-3 (Operations) Officer. There is an order showing him in that position until 2 June 1944.

He became 781st Squadron Commander on 4 June 1944 (relieving Lt. Col. Charles F. McKenna III who had been transferred to the 464th Bomb Group as Deputy Group Commander) and on 18 August he was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

By the winter of '44 the Third Reich was in tatters — the Soviets had overrun Ploesti and were racing toward the Elbe. Although we could see fighters on the runways grounded with no petrol there was one synthetic plant still in operation in upper Selisia; Blechhammer South Oil Refinery. On November 20th a maximum effort was laid on this target and Jack Lokker (whose tour was almost completed) was chosen to lead the one thousand heavy bomber force.

On the bomb run the B-24 he was piloting was shot down while leading a wing on this mission and he was lost to us. But that is another story and it has been covered in depth in earlier issues of the Newsletter.

The loss of Col. Lokker was a crushing blow to his family, and his Squadron; however, the long term loss, to the USAF of Jack's leadership in war and peace is incalculable. Our consolation; we are better people for having known him.

Details on this vital mission which took Jack's life appear in the History. After much research to corroborate the reported facts, Col. Lokker was posthumously awarded the Silver Star. It was presented to Sybil at a reunion of the 781st Bomb Squadron.

Sybil remarried a WWII destroyer commander, Bob Wilson. Jack's son, David is now Exec. VP of Grand Trunk RR.



Col. Jack Lokker on his motorcycle. The motorcycle was liberated from the Germans in Africa and brought to Pantanella when the squadron transferred to Italy.

Information on Col. Lokker was received from Col. Burt Andrus. Photo from Harry Carl's collection.

The Dahl Crew fly Mission

#3.

by Mike Beeson.

Mission #3 for the Carl Dahl crew, on 6 September 1944, was the Marshalling Yards of Nyireghaza Hungary. This target is approximately 150 miles northeast of Budapest. The 6th of September 1944 began as usual, that is if you were a bomber crew in the middle of a war! After briefing and our plane assignment, we were transported to the airstrip where we preflighted our plane. We then climbed aboard and started the engines. After the warm-up we taxied out to the head of the runway and awaited our turn to take off.

Upon receiving take off instructions, we revved up the engines and seemed to be doing well. Everything was OK when suddenly we began to lose manifold pressure on all engines. We had at this time passed the point in our take-off where it was possible to take-off. We had two choices — take-off or crash. Three quarters of the way down the runway we put down ten percent flaps and that seemed to do the trick as we managed to get airborne. We called the tower and informed them of our problem. We were instructed to go around and land.

With great difficulty we managed to circle at tree top height (the right wing tip actually hit the tree line as we circled around) and land with full bomb and gas load. Dahl and I were really relieved to get back on the ground without further trouble.

We were sure that we were through for the day, but to our dismay we were informed that another B-24 was warmed up and waiting for us on the apron.

by Adrian Martin.

The second plane we were assigned that day still had its OD color, it was probably the oldest plane in the squadron. Our take-off and trip to the target was uneventful, there was some flak, but it remained outside of our perimeter. At the target, our luck changed and we lost two engines, we immediately started to

straggle on the flight home. Soon, we were the sole Allied plane in the sky with the exception of four P-51s that stayed with us for quite awhile.

Two of them flew off of our wings actually lowering their landing gear and their flaps in a effort to slow the air speed and remain alongside, the other two scouted around for enemy fighters. We knew that the fighters could only escort us for a short time, their gas supply would soon force them to break off and return to base. No more than 4 or 5 minutes passed after the P-51s departed when we came under fire. Apparently the Nazi Air Force had been watching and waiting for the inevitable departure of the fighters to shoot down our crippled plane.

At the very moment we came under fire, our intercom went out. We weren't able to tell the other gunners where the fighters were coming from, all you could do was listen to the gunfire and try to guess when they were coming by your station.

As far as I know we didn't get

hit, we didn't see any hits on them and they broke it off after what seemed like 4 or 5 minutes. They probably decided that we were worthless or they were running out of gas themselves. So, here we are over the ocean off the coast of Yugoslavia, trying to limp to the island of Vis when our navigator informed us that we're off course and the pilot announces that we probably have to get set to ditch.

Now, of course you don't want to ditch a B-24, the life expectancy of a B-24 on the water was anywhere from 4 to 10 seconds, so we started throwing out everything that wasn't tied down, and a few things that were. First things out were our flak vests, the ammo, in fact John Layne took a couple of the ammunition belts and just snapped them like twigs to help pull out the ammo from the belt that ran to the tail turret from the waist. (Later, when we were safely on the ground, he tried this again, and couldn't even dent, bend or otherwise move the steel links. Whether it was adrenaline or something else, he had done a tremendous



Members of the Carl Dahl crew on 6 September 1944 were :
(Back L to R) Carl Dahl, Pilot; Mike Beeson, Co-pilot; Bill Rachow, Bombardier; Culhane, Navigator; (Front L to R) Frank Martinez, Flt. Engineer; Howard Percy, Radio Operator; Adrian Martin, Tail Turret gunner; Dick Perkins, Nose Turret Gunner; Jack Pettigrew, Top Turret Gunner; and John Layne, Ball Turret Gunner.

MAIL CALL



A few months late, but I know you would like to hear about the Xmas note from **Rae Branch, Ed.**

"I had a heart valve replaced July 28th with a new pig valve plus replacement of a blocked artery I've had for 20 years and am cleared to play golf again and raring to go!" It sounds like we might see Rae at our next reunion. Ed.

From **Joe Rogers**, "The articles on Mission #56 Friedrichshafen, Germany and the follow up letters in subsequent issues brought back some scary memories. I was there on Jack Frazier's crew flying the left waist gun on our plane. I enjoyed reading Russ Maynard's report on the mission. It was exactly as I remembered it. I received issue #49 while one of my sons was here visiting and let him read it. My other son visited a couple of weeks later and also read it. It was the first indication they had of my experiences with the 781st and they were impressed. They insisted that I save subsequent issues so they could read part II and any other reports on the mission. I am keeping the January, 1998 issue out of storage so they can read it."

From **Ruth Goynes**, "I am sending my dues for 1998 so that I do not miss any of the newsletters. I really enjoy reading them. Maybe I can make it back to Dayton in the fall for the reunion. That was the first and last time Garvin and I got to attend."

"I really appreciate your adding the widows names to the list so that we can continue to keep up with our late spouses friends."

From **Ric Church**, "I was sorry to read about the passing of O.J. Cowart. He, like many others whose names I see regularly, was like an old friend I never met. I can understand and appreciate his kidney failure situation, as my wife, who is a registered and licensed nutritional therapist, has specialized in renal failure for many years. From Re's letter it sounds as if O.J. "plowed ahead" with a condi-

tion which usually severely restricts a person. The thoughts and prayers in our home are with him and his family. Ric is Sam Monroe's son. Ed.

A letter from **Frank Piteo;**

The enclosed pictures were taken in 1967 on a visit to Pan-tanella. The church was still there but filled with farm equipment and the landing field is all farm land. The picture of our house (upper right) shows me walking with our pet dog and in the background is our houseboy. The picture on the front of the building was a logo that I received from Warner Bros. I asked for something to put on our wall. It is not too clear, but it's Bugs Bunny sitting in a big pot with a fire under it, Bugs Bunny is eating a carrot and the writing above his right cheek says, "What's Cooking Doc."

We were the only house among the enlisted men that had a walk-in closet. Being the interpreter for the squadron I was able to get a lot of things done.

I had an aunt living in Bari who I went to visit. The family were not poor; my cousin Antionette owned a jewelry store and Antonio was an Italian police officer. My Aunt said that the only thing they could not get was sewing thread.

So, I had my Mother send me a gross of large spools of white, black and brown, and I used them to bribe all the places that had things that we needed. We had cement but we needed lime to mix it for good mortar. So, I asked the Captain for a truck because I wanted to pick up the lime from an olive company. They used the lime to cure the olives. When I asked the owner for 25 bags of lime he said "No." I then took out two of each color of thread out of my pocket and said to the owner's wife, "Look," She screamed and told her



husband to give me the lime. He said no and she went in the bedroom and brought out a pair of black pants and a white shirt that was a favorite of his and said in Italian, "Go fix them yourself." He finally agreed to give me the lime. I asked if he smoked and he said yes. I then gave him two cartons of cigarettes. I gave the wife a total of a dozen spools of thread and she told him to make it 35 bags.

When I got back to the base I asked the Captain where I should put the lime and when he saw the 35 bags he couldn't believe it. I showed him the spools of thread. There was another officer standing next to him and he asked for a spool of each color. I gave them to him and I was later told that he had a girl in Canosa that he was sleeping with. I told him no more thread for him.

The ride I had on the All American B-24 a few weeks ago brought back a lot of memories. I phoned the four other remaining members of our crew, the co-pilot, bombardier, engineer and nose gunner and told them of my ride on the B-24.

The enclosed pictures from the daily news was taken when the B-24 was in Burbank. The girl from the News was taking my picture and asking many questions. Then one little boy came up to me and asked for my autograph. I signed my name, and Bomb Squadron. He ran and showed his parents all beaming with smiles. I felt terrific.

Heavies Lament HEDDY LEMAR

Oh, Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal and Madeline Carroll is too
But you'll find, if you query, a different theory
Amongst any bomber crew.
For the loveliest thing of which we can sing
This side of the heavenly gates
Is no blonde or brunette of the Hollywood set,
But an escort of P-38s.

Yes, in days that have passed when the tables are massed
With glasses of Scotch or Champagne
It's quite true that the sight was a thing of delight
Us, intent upon feeling no pain.
But no longer the same nowadays in this game
When we head north from Foggia's gates
Take the sparkling wine, everytime just make mine
An escort of P-38s.

Byron, Shelley, and Keats ran a dozen heats
Describing the view from the hills
Where the wild flowers play and the winds gently sway
An army of bright daffodils
Take the wild flowers, Byron, the daffodils, Shelley,
Yours is the Myrtle, friend Keats.
Just reserve me those cuties, American beauties,
An escort of P-38s.

Sure we're braver than hell, on the ground all is well,
In the air it's a different story
We sweat out the track, through fighters and flak
We're willing to split up the glory.
Well, they wouldn't reject us so Heaven protect us
And until all the shooting abates
Give us courage to fight 'em and one other small item,
An escort of P-38s.

*The above poem was sent in by Rae Branch. He noted,
"I'm with my son, Malcolm, and the George Washington
(aircraft carrier) over in the Adriatic enroute to the
Med for a shore leave in Marseille, I looked back into
some of my memories and stumbled across the poem."
Rae's son commands the George Washington, one of
our largest. Rae also noted that it was hard to realize
that 53 years ago on June 10, 1944 on his 15th
combat mission they blew the hell out of the harbor. Rae
spent 4 days shore leave anchored in that same harbor. Ed*

Notice

Since the passing of O. J. Cowart the treasurer's duties have been split up. Ken Sutton will handle all matters pertaining to the Reunion and Jim Althoff will handle the dues payments. Anyone interested in serving as association treasurer please let me or any of the directors know. We expect to elect a treasurer at the reunion in Dayton.

B-24 Bronze Sculpture

The B-24 sculpture will take its place in the Honor Court of the Air Force Academy along with other WWII aircraft. It will be dedicated on September 25th. The sculpture will have a wing span of over 18 feet, will weight about a ton, and will be placed on a blue polished granite pedestal weighing three tons. A plaque mounted on the pedestal will have the name of the 465th Bomb Group as a donor. All squadrons participated in this group effort.

"Lil Red Can"

by Ben Donahue

When we went on missions we all, as you know, were incumbered by layers of clothing and heated garb. That included the heavy boots and the necessary tubes and wires.

When nature made a call to get rid of the numerous cups of G. I. coffee, one had to struggle his way to the smelly and often unreliable relief tube.

Thus the 'lil red can." The engineer could always find a red can, labeled hydraulic fluid for the B-24 had a voracious appetite for it's contents. The engineer would place it behind the left seat on the flight deck, eliminating that struggle to the tube.

Disposal of that red can which by now was possible full from usage by the deck crew, was tied to a bomb, so that on "bombs away" the little red can was a simple token of disdain to the Nazis below.

The thought has often come to mind. If the red can survived it's plunge to earth what did the finders think of a smelly little red can amongst the destruction by the bombs? What was this device that the U.S. was now dropping upon us??

THE STORY OF HIGH FLIGHT

High Flight, the inspired sonnet of a youthful American flier who lost his life serving with a Royal Canadian Air Force Squadron during the Battle of Britain, has been published in almost every WWII Air Force publication.

Magee was only 19 years old when his imagination captured all the exultant wonderment of flight with a minimum of words as he piloted his Spitfire along "the windswept heights" above the UK. In September, 1941, just a few weeks after his RCAF unit arrived in England, he dashed off a boyish note to his parents, that told how the soaring lines were born: "I am enclosing a verse I wrote the other day. It started at 30,000 feet and was finished soon after I landed. I thought it might interest you."

The letter went to a distinguished address, historic St. John's Church on Lafayette Square, opposite the White House, in Washington, D. C. The pilot's father, Rev. Dr. John Gillespie Magee, was then rector at this widely known "church of the President" where the nation's leaders have worshipped since 1916. Dr. Magee has since deceased; his widow lives in Pittsburgh.

Pilot Officer Magee was born in China, where his father had been a missionary since 1912. The boy first came to the United States in his early teens to attend prep school in Connecticut, where his marked literary talent began to show itself. A few years later he went to England's famed Rugby School, winning the coveted Rugby poetry prize in 1939, a few months before World War II exploded.

Returning to the States, young Magee decided against accepting a scholarship at Yale and instead joined the RCAF because he felt his duty lay in serving the cause of freedom. He was 18 when he enlisted in September 1940.

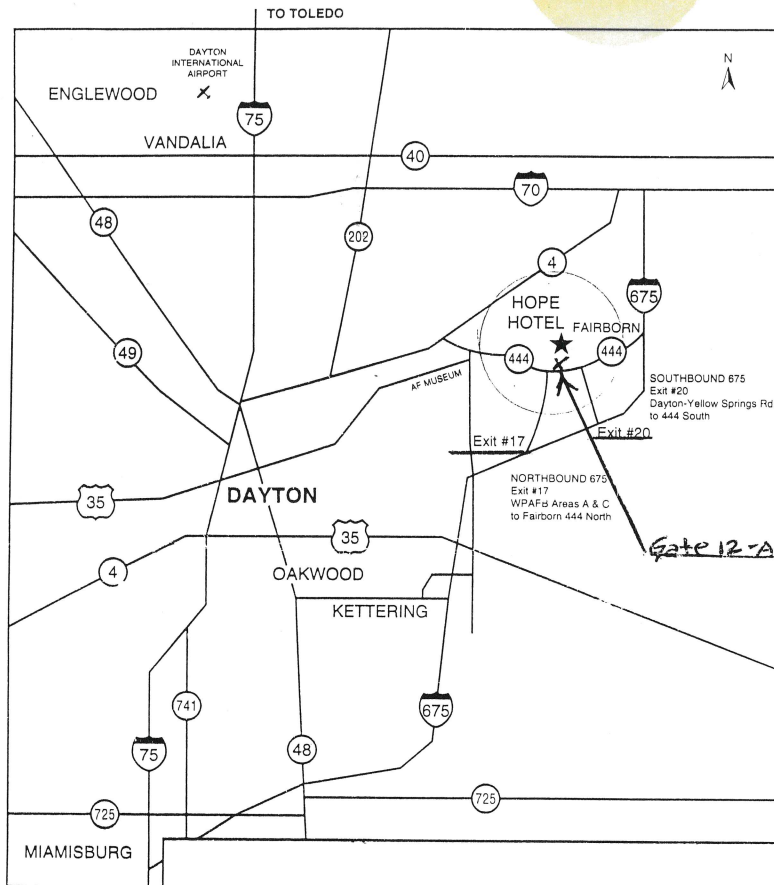
The Library of Congress acclaimed *High Flight*, ranking Magee "with our best known poets of faith and freedom," and noted literary authorities hailed the sonnet as the work of gallant genius. The plaudits never reached the poet's ears. Within three months of the poem's creation, Magee flew his last mission and, as he so prophetically wrote, put out his trusting hand "and touched the face of God" which he knew all along waited in the sky where he found it.

The original of *High Flight* is preserved as a rare manuscript in the Library of Congress. A copy hangs on the wall inside the entrance to St. John's Church, where its eloquent lines are read by the countless tourists and other visitors who come to Washington.

HIGH FLIGHT

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
and danced the skies on laughter-silvered
wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tum-
bling mirth
Of sun-split clouds — and done a hundred
things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and
soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there.
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with
easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The untrodden sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie Magee, Jr.



How to get there

The closest gate to the Hope Hotel is gate 12-A off of State Route 444, but you may enter through any gate. Your name must be given at least three days prior either by registration sent to Ken Sutton or if you do not register in advance you can contact Roland Soucy, co-chairman, at 2822 College Hill Ct., Fairborn, OH 45324, phone 937 426-6314. Roland will be turning the names into Security at Wright Patterson. Lets make it easy on everyone and register early.

Hope Hotel & Conference Center, Bldg 823, Area A, WPAFB, OH 45433. Gate 12 A off Route 444. 937 879-2696

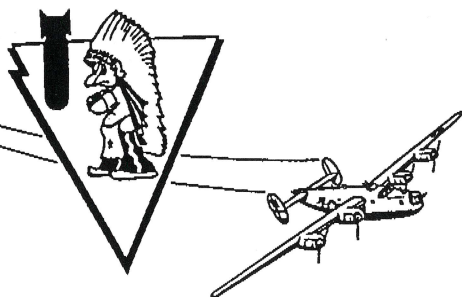
Remember this is a very large base. If you are driving have a good map of the area and get a map for the base if you can.

Local mobile home parks:
McMahan's Drive-in Mobile Home Park
3324 Valley Pike, Dayton, OH 45424
(937) 233-3750 (4 miles).

Huber Mobile home Park, 4311
Kitridge Rd, Dayton, OH 45424 (937)
233-8822 (8 miles).

Enon Beach Rec. Park. Enon
Road & IH-70, Enon, OH 45323.
(937) 882-6431. (13 miles)

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