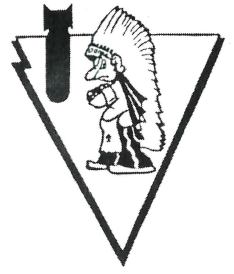


PANTANELLA NEWS



JULY 2004

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NUMBER 76

Chief Crazy Horse Beckons 781st Vets

Rapid City, SD Set for Onslaught of WWII Flyers



Sioux Indian Battle Hero and Patriot, Chief Crazy Horse

Henry Standing Bear, a Lakota Sioux Indian chief from somewhere in South Dakota had been watching progress on the American presidents at Mount Rushmore, and he longed for an equally powerful memorial that would remind the world "that the Red Man has great heroes, too.

In 1939 Standing Bear wrote to Boston-born Korczak Ziolkowski expressing his longing.

The poignancy was not lost on Korczak, an orphan and a self-taught sculptor with a growing national reputation. Though he knew little about the West, Ziolkowski knew an underdog when he saw one: down-trodden and dispossessed; but still patriotic and proud. He empathized. Within a year, he had completed a clay model, then met with Standing Bear and

Cont. on Pg. 2



Crazy Horse-Cont. from Pg.1

went shopping for a mountain to carve.

On June 3, 1948, equipped with only a sledge hammer, a single-jack drill bit and a box of dynamite, Korczak went to work creating the world's largest sculpture.

He would spend the next 36 years of his life doggedly blasting away 7,400,000 tons of granite to rough out virtually the entire figure in the round. It was an excruciating saga of dangerous, back-breaking labor, balky equipment, scarce money and mean weather.

Progress was painfully slow. Unlike Mt Rushmore, which used a substantial crew, it was just Korczak, and later Korczak and his sons, drilling and blasting; drilling and blasting.

Work still continues on the world's largest sculpture after carving started 55 years ago. The dimensions are staggering. A mountain sized statue of an Indian man and a spirited warhorse that's as long as a cruise ship and taller than a 60 story skyscraper!

Thanks to worldwide press coverage, the public is beating a path to Crazy Horse. Visitors are greeted at an expansive new \$1.6 million

Orientation and Communications Center built to welcome the growing number of visitors. Lofty ceilings create a grand lobby and twin theatres show a 17 minute video to acquaint you with the mountain.

Why Crazy Horse? In American history, Crazy Horse is remembered most as one of the Battle Masters who annihilated Gen. George Armstrong Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn on June 6, 1876.

To the Sioux, Crazy Horse was a battle hero and patriot. As other tribes and other Indian leaders gradually capitulated, Crazy Horse remained steadfast in his resistance to the U.S. occupation of Indian Country.

In fact, Korczak chose to depict Crazy Horse during a moment of nationalistic defiance. Chiding that the Indians had lost the war, an officer derisively asked the warrior: "So where are your lands now, Crazy Horse?"

The Indian pointed to the horizon and responded, "My lands are where my dead lie buried." In this respect, the statue is not just a tribute to the man, or to the Sioux, but rather to the dignity of all Native Americans.

When Korczak died in 1982, the mountain showed only a vague hint of a horse and rider. Critics reckoned that the mountain had finally outlasted the man, just as they had predicted.

But Korczak had passed along his vision and passion to his wife, Ruth, and their 10 sons and daughters. He left them three Plan Books and scale models showing how to continue his work. His offspring understood the importance of the project; they had worked side-by-side on the mountain with their father; and they inherited his ferocious work ethic.

Together, during the decade of the 90's, the wife and children brought forth a heroic face from the granite of the Black Hills. The 88 foot-high face of Crazy Horse was dedicated on June 3, 1998, 50 years to the day after Korczak's first blast.

Now the action has switched to carving the horse. A new generation of visitors watch as a new generation of workers carry the Crazy Horse dream forward. An unimaginable dream of an artist named Korczak and a Lakota Sioux Indian Chief named Henry Standing Bear.

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781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)

Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF
Italy 1944-1945

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

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The Squadron History Continues

Continued from Issue #75

First Month-March 1944 Getting our Feet Wet

The Air Crews used the final days of April and the first few days of May to get their living quarters (pyramidal tents) settled. S/Sgt Francis J. Walborn, Top Gunner on Lt. Dickey's Crew, reported his activities during this period,

"My first day in Italy one of the softball teams was short a player so they asked me if I would fill in. My first time at bat gave me a good hit so I rounded first and headed for second base. When I saw it was going to be close I started to slide in. At the last moment I saw it was going to be an overthrow so I put my hand down to catch myself and not slide. My left wrist snapped and I was out of business for about six weeks."

The Ground Units were busy during these final days of April and first few days in May getting ships and equipment ready for the first mission.

A first order of business for the Engineering Section Crew Chiefs was to paint on the airplanes the identification assigned for Squadron, Group, and Wing. The 55th Bomb Wing was identified by a yellow field on the outer sides of the vertical tail surfaces, surrounding a large square which was the same color as the olive drab upper areas of the camouflaged plane. When camouflaging was discontinued the color of the square was changed to black.

The 465th Bomb Group was distinguished by a yellow bar painted on the tail surface below the 55th Wing identification and the 781st Bombardment Squadron was denoted by a yellow

letter painted on each side of the fuselage just behind the waist gun positions. The other Squadrons were indicated by other colored letters; - red-780th, white-782nd, and blue-783rd.

The Base control tower responsibility was assumed by 1st Lt. Harry S. Carl 781st Communications Officer. He and T/Sgt. Clifford C. Bronson from the Communications Section went about getting the tower set up. Group Headquarters got around to confirming this responsibility in a Special Order in January

of 1945. The initial facility was a tent with the radio gear inside the tent and the tower operators standing outside. The name 'Racecard' was assigned, with 'Racecard Five' used by the 465th Group and 'Racecard Four' by the 464th.

There was another radio contact which was very important to the Air Crews. The contact set up for aircraft to call if they were in difficulty when returning from a mission over the Alps and needed information on the heading to fly to the nearest emergency landing facility

Cont. on Pg.6



Lt Prince's Plane hit by enemy fighters goes down in flames 5/30/44

---AGENDA---

781st Bomb Squadron Reunion

Oct. 3-7, 2004

Hotel Alex Johnson, Downtown Rapid City, SD

Sunday Oct. 3- Registration

Monday - Oct. 4th.-

1:00 P.M. Business meeting

4:00 PM to 9:00 PM- Deadwood Tour

Tuesday - Oct. 5th.

Mt. Rushmore/Crazy Horse Monument Tour

Wednesday - Oct. 6th.

9 AM - 4 PM. Ellsworth AFB tour

11:00 AM -Officer Club lunch

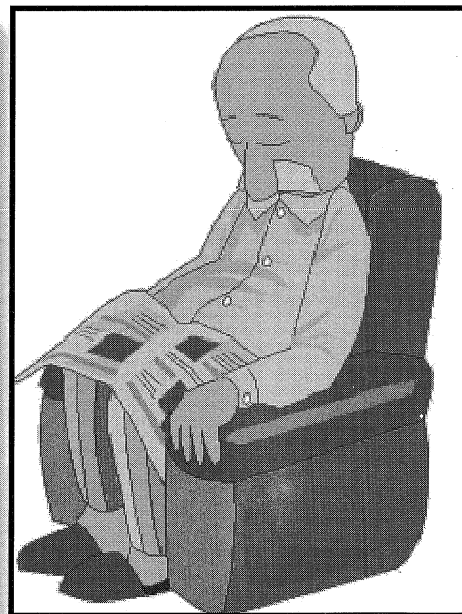
12:30 -Unit mission briefing at the Dakota Club prior to proceeding to the flight line for tour of B1 Bomber and weapons demonstration.

1:30 Canine police unit.

2:30 PM Memorial Service.

Wednesday Evening- Banquet

Hospitality Room will be open when no other formal activities are scheduled -



Don't just sit there-
Send in your Reservation to
John Ogden for the Ellsworth
Reunion



The Hotel Alex Johnson

Welcomes:

781st Bomb Squadron 2004 Reunion

Sunday, October 3, 2004
through
Thurssday, October 7, 2004

We would like to extend an invitation for you to make your room reservations for this event at the "Historic" *Hotel Alex Johnson* in Rapid City, by calling our toll free # **1-800-888-2539** anytime. Please refer to **Group # 3531** when making your arrangements. This will ensure you get the special rate of **\$57.00** single or double occupancy (plus 8% tax), **\$10.00** for each additional person. There is no charge for children under 18 when staying in a room with an adult. Although our guest rooms and facilities have recently been updated, we were careful to maintain the charm and elegance of the days past. Unlike today's newer hotels, we have many different types of sleeping rooms that cater to various guest's needs and desires. Please notify the reservation agent of your preferences for a smoking or non-smoking room and if you require 1 or 2 beds in the room. "**Airport Express**" is a shuttle service that picks up and delivers at every incoming and out-going flight. The cost for this service is **\$7.00 per person** – one way. Our front desk clerks will be happy to make arrangements for transportation back to the airport, if notified in advance, of flight departure times. **Hotel policy requires** we get a credit card number or check for the first nights room and tax charges in order to guarantee your room. Check-in is at 4pm and check-out is at 11am. We will be pleased to honor group rates a few days before and after the event dates – based on availability. If by chance our guests are not able to keep their reservations, we ask that we are notified **48 hours prior** to the arrival date, in order to avoid first night room and tax charges. Room amenities include an iron & ironing board, coffee maker, shampoo, soaps & lotion. Hairdryers are available on request, from the Front Desk.

Many interesting and notable events have occurred here during **our 75 years of operation**. In order to keep these memories alive, we have established a display of the hotel's archives and placed it in our unique lobby for our guests and the general public to visit and enjoy. Located in the "Heart" of our rejuvenated downtown, we are within walking distance of the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, various museums, numerous quaint little shops and across the street from the "Old-Fashioned" Elks Theatre. When you visit us, not only will you receive the finest in service, luxury accommodations and experience AAA dining; you will actually be staying in a piece of South Dakota History! Amenities we have to enjoy during your stay:

AAA Landmark Restaurant & Lounge

Paddy O'Neill's Pub & Casino

The Alex Johnson Mercantile

Complimentary Guest Passes to nearby Health Club & Pool

Childcare and area tour arrangements may be made though our front desk

One day, in-house laundry services are available during the week

Valet parking is offered at our front door or guests are welcome to pickup a parking permit at the front desk to use during their stay.

Please call by September 3, 2004, as these rates are only guaranteed until then!

from Walter Sutton....

Dear Frank,

Reference: The April Edition of the Pantanella News with the Article on the Norden Bombsight.

Although the Norden Bombsight was a fine piece of equipment, Our B-24's were all equipped with the Sperry Bombsight, Which, In my opinion was far superior and easier to use then the Norden Sight. I think all Bombardiers had training on both units but all of our original planes were equipped with Sperry Sights. I

don't know about some of the replacement planes but I think everything we had was Sperry.

I always related the Norden Bombsight and the 8th Airforce as both having very good public relations personnel.

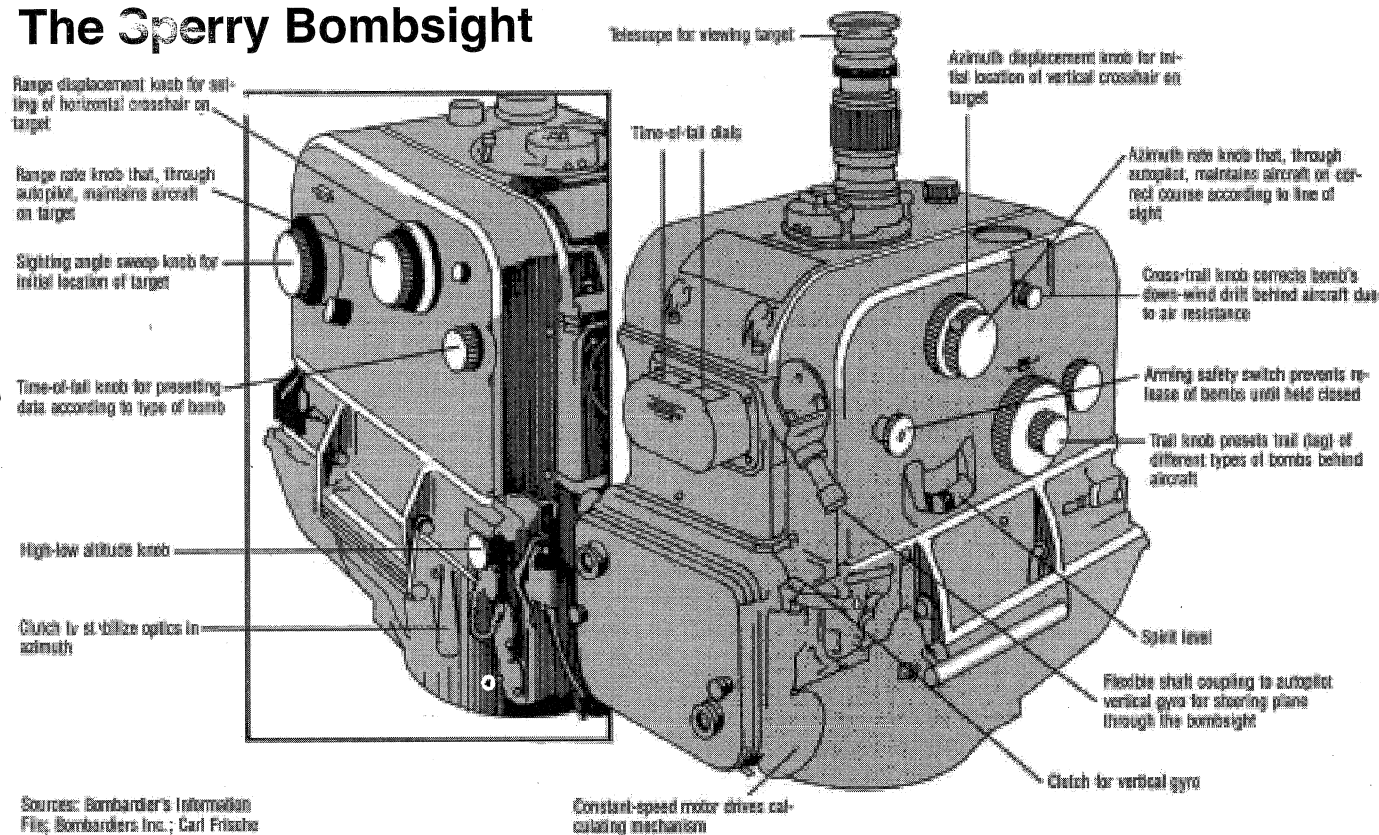
I heard Jim Wray express two or three times, that on one of our missions the 781st squadron held the 15th Air Force record for bombing accuracy with 80 percent of our bombs falling within a 1,000 foot area of our target center. I don't recall which mission he said it was and I don't know how long the record stood, but we were pretty good weren't we?

As squadron Bombardier I had, and still have, a maintenance book covering the Sperry sight. I am enclosing a couple of pictures from this book. They are not too clear but I couldn't do any better without destroying the book.

Remember the good old days when you, Hank and I used to go flying to get some pictures you wanted? Especially when Hank stuck a wing down into Mt. Vesuvius while it was still smoking? I sure miss Hank!

As Ever,
Walter Sutton

The Sperry Bombsight



An Italian Affair

A wealthy man was having an affair with an Italian woman for several years.

One night, during one of their rendezvous, she confided in him that she was pregnant. Not wanting to ruin his reputation or his marriage, he paid her a large sum of money if she would go to Italy to raise the child and he would

also provide child support, once born, until the child turned 18.

She agreed, but asked how he would know when the baby was born. To keep it discrete, he told her to simply mail him a postcard, and write the word "Spaghetti" on the back. He would then arrange for child support payments to begin.

One day, about 9 months later, he came home to his confused wife.

"Honey," she said, "you received a very strange post card today."

"Oh, just give it to me and I'll explain it later," he said.

Obeying, the wife watched as her husband read the card, turned white, and fainted.

On the card was written:

"Spaghetti, Spaghetti, Spaghetti.
Two with meatballs, One without."

781st Sqd History

Continued from Page 3

The call name was 'Big Fence'.

The Squadron's maintenance facilities on the flight line were very much like the control tower. Everything was in tents, Engineering, Communications, Armament, Ordnance and even the living quarters, everything! It was crowded, dirty, muddy, and totally unsatisfactory, however that was all there was in the beginning. Fortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers unit attached to the Group, within a few months was able to build a very satisfactory structure for the control tower. The material used was tofa block, a soft limestone formation available in the Pantanella valley area. It could be cut quite readily when first quarried but hardened with exposure to the atmosphere. Wooden buildings for the Squadron maintenance operations also soon became available.

A practice mission preparation and briefing was held on 2 May. On the evening of that day the first operational field order was received.

The Group prepared to fly its first combat mission on 3 May as a part of the 55th Bombardment Wing (H), Fifteenth Air Force. The target to be attacked was the town of Podgorica, Yugoslavia, where German troop concentrations were known to be located. Weather canceled this mission at the last minute and also kept the planes grounded on the 4th. However the 5th brought good weather and the first mission was flown with the same target, Podgorica, Yugoslavia, as the objective.

Pilots flying this mission were: Maj. Charles F. McKenna, III, Lt. Lewis M. Roberts, Lt. Philip F. Schuster, Lt. John R. Dickey, Lt. Raymond D. Cauble, Lt. Joe M. Athon, Jr., Lt. Robert J. Smith, Lt. Ray W. Hurd, Lt. Robert L. Shetterly, and Lt. Charles V. Stennerson. All Crews returned without damage or loss. The Group's results were excellent with severe damage inflicted.

On 6 May the mission was to bomb the Marshaling Yards at Cralova, Rumania. Maj. McKenna was the lead Pilot for the Group on this mission. Other 781st Crews were flown by Capt. Wray (with Lt. Prince), and Lts. Martin, Willett (with Lt. O'Brien), Hurd, Stenersen, Shetterly, and R. J. Smith. Results were good and all Crews returned safely.

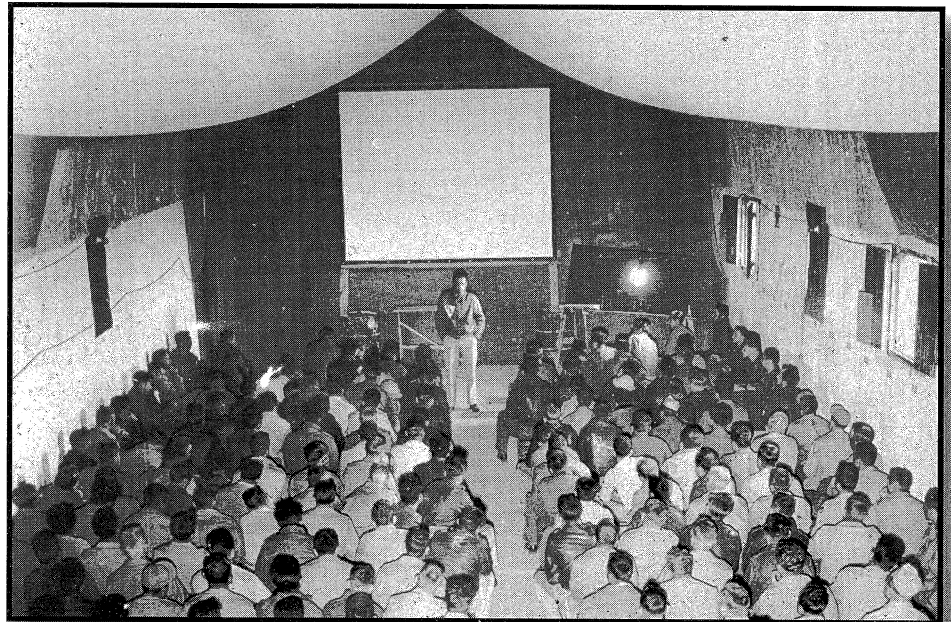
No missions were flown on the 7th and 8th and weather canceled the mission of 9 May scheduled for Weiner Neustadt, Austria. This same mission was attempted on the 10th, but the Group encountered bad weather and was forced to turn back at the Yugoslavia coast.

No mission was flown on 11 May and the only event of interest occurring on that day was the opening of the Enlisted Men's Mess Hall. A new tufa block building which had been in the process of construction since the arrival at Pantanella.

On 12 May, two missions were scheduled with the target of the first mission the Marshaling Yards at Parma, Italy. Plane commanders were Maj. McKenna, Capt. Wray, and Lts. Roberts, Van Slyke, Wheeler, and Willett. Clouds obscured the target and all bombs were brought back to the base. Because of this bad weather the afternoon-

mission to La Spezia, Italy was canceled.

On 13 May the mission to Parma was flown again. Excellent results were achieved and all Crews returned safely. Plane Commanders were Lts. Cauble, Hurd, Schuster, Willett, R. J. Smith, Ashley, Tipton, Stenersen, and Shetterly.



Maj. Chas McKenna III briefing crews before a mission

The Group was commended by Major General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General, 15th Air Force, for their bombing of this target.

The fifth mission of the Group was flown on 14 May, with the Marshaling Yards at Mestre, Italy as the target. Plane Commanders were Maj. McKenna, Capt. Wray and Lts. Van Slyke, Roberts, Wheeler, O'Brien, Prince, and Athon. Only poor results were achieved on this mission and some flak was encountered but all Crews returned safely.

On returning from this mission, Maj. McKenna learned that he had been promoted to Lt. Col., effective 11 May. The entire Squadron was pleased at this well-earned recognition.

No missions were flown 15 May and 16 May. On 17 May the target was the Marshaling Yards at Piombino, Italy. Plane Commanders were Lt. Col. McKenna, and Lts. Willett, O'Brien, Wheeler, MacFarlane, and Dickey. Results were excellent and there were no losses or casualties.

The official Squadron daily chronology makes no mention of any missions flown on 18 or 19 May. However, the 55th Bomb Wing Narrative History and the 465th Bomb Group listing show that the 465th flew missions on these dates.

On 18 May the target was the Vega Oil Refinery at Ploesti. There was much flak encountered and bad weather caused poor bombing results. Crews participating in this mission were flown by Capt. Wray and Lts. W. J. Smith, Cauble, Shetterly, Tipton, Branch, Roberts,

O'Brien, Hurd, and Athon.

Lt. Rodman's diary describes the mission of 18 May,

"Ploesti, Rumania Oil Refineries. Got a little revenge for Pete Timpo on this one (He was lost on the first low-level raid). Also got credit for two (missions) due to distance

involved, well deserved, too. Everyone leery when route was revealed at briefing. Takeoff and rendezvous were well timed and smooth. Weather all right over Adriatic but clouded up when we hit Yugoslavia. Off course for a while but corrected in time. Danube River looked anything but blue.

"Turned just a little short of IP and had difficulty spotting target due to clouds. Off aiming point a little but a good percentage got in. Flak really raising hell. This place aptly called 'Flak Alley'. Peeled off in short order and batted ass for home. Several ships out of formation and some missing as we reformed. About 20 or 30 ME-109's and FW-190's in vicinity but our group wasn't bounced."

"Several P-38's picked us up off target and stuck with us for a while. Had to weave in and out of some wicked looking thunderheads on route back. Hit the entry point on coast only slightly off and came on in pretty low on gas so traffic pattern was a little hurried. All ships with wounded on board were handled first.

Landed okay and counted nearly 30 flak holes in 'Long John Silver'. We lost a ship with several men. Interrogation was brief and then we hit the two ounces. I drank Badler's, too. Tired but glad to be back. Heard of the casualties in other squadrons, too - rough."

The Squadron participated in a mission to the Forli, Italy Marshaling Yards on 19 May. Maj. McKenna led the Group with 2nd Lts. Ashley, Wood, and Sutton as Co-Pilot, Navigator, and Bombardier, respectively. Bombing accuracy was excellent with 75% in the Marshaling

Yards. Other Crews participating were flown by Lts. Stenersen, Willett, MacFarlane, Schuster, Dickey, Wheeler, and Athon.

No missions were flown on 20 May and 21 May. On 22 May the target was Valmontone, Italy in support of a new offensive of the Fifth Army. The target was troop concentrations, but due to bad weather, results were generally poor. Some flak was encountered but all Crews returned safely. Crew Commanders were Capt. Wray and Lts. Cauble, Branch, Prince, Shetterly, Smith, and O'Brien.

Al Rodman had this to say about the 22 May mission, "Wow, another day like today and I'll be a good candidate for a Section 8!! Takeoff was okay but the rendezvous was snafued. Had to circle and tag on to the rear of the wing with our formation spread all over. Lost the group in overcast near Capri so four of us went on to target alone. We were flying Cauble's 'No Love-No Nothin' as our ship being patched" "We had to lead the box

over the target as we were the only ship with bombing tables for under 20,000, went in at 15,000 and right on course.

At the IP all hell let loose and flak really tore us up. At that altitude a B-24 is a sitting duck for good gunners and those Heinies had plenty on the ball."

"Lost #1 engine, gas lines torn up, hydraulic system out, A-S automatic pilot shot to pieces

and control cables badly chewed up. Bursts knocked us completely out so we had to peel off short of target, salvoed the bombs in the Mediterranean along with extra ammo and two waist guns to lighten ship. Gas leaking all over so we headed for Naples."

"On way in we rechecked gas supply as per orders from Naples and decided we had

Weather obscured the target and all bombs were returned to the base. Crews were flown by Lt. Col. McKenna and Lts. Athon, Stenersen, Willett, Van Slyke, Schuster, Dickey, Ashley and MacFarlane.

A very tough assignment was scheduled for 24 May to the Machine Shops and Supply Dump at Wollersdorf Airdrome at Weiner Neustadt, Austria. Intense flak was encountered and the results were only fair. Many ships received flak damage but all Crews returned intact. Plane Commanders were Capt. Wray and Lts. Hurd, Roberts, Branch, Tipton, Prince, Martin, and Shetterly.

Lt. Rodman didn't agree with the official mission report, "Another two count mission and highly successful, too. After a lousy breakfast and an early briefing the group took off at 0645 and assembled well, evidently the ass-chewing over previous flights taken seriously. Picked up our escort of P-38's near IP and they went in and out with us. Plenty of

enemy aircraft at target. Saw a P-38 knock down an ME-109 that was bouncing our lower unit. Our gunners taking several bursts now and then but results inconclusive. Later reports showed enemy lost heavily today

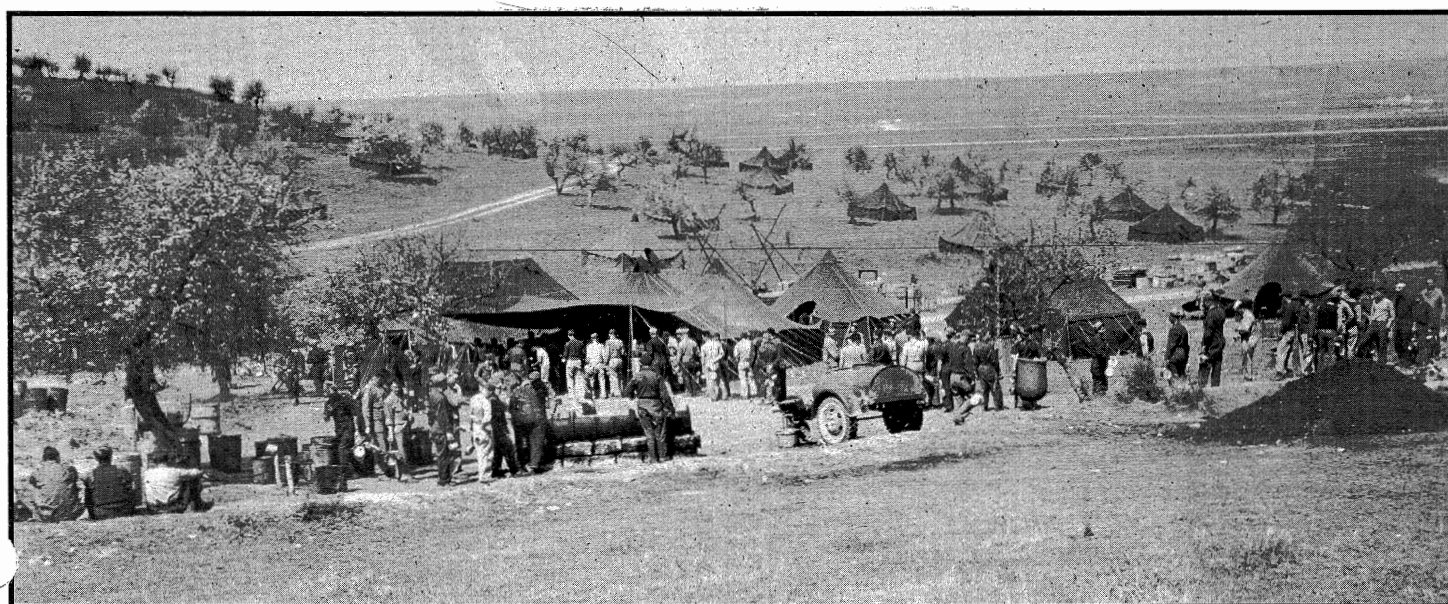
"The flak was dense from IP to target but we evaded a good part of it. Bombs were really laid into target, had five bombs hang



M/Sgt Carl Brush and his crew with a load of Ordnance for the next mission

enough to reach our field. Flying with #3 feathered and #4 pulled back to 12 inches. Later events not recorded here but we made it back to the field okay. No one was hit luckily but Branch had his pants and flying boots torn by flak. I lost a heel on my flying boot and hardly can recall the burst when it happened. Tired and still shaky, too close for comfort."

A repeat engagement to Valmontone was flown on 23 May as mission number 10.



Original 781st Squadron Men's Mess Area

up but Zimmerman kicked 'em out and we got those near the target, too. Hit a lot of times by flak but nothing bad, one piece tore a hole between Braley (Bombardier) and me and we gave each other a sick grin."

The first of a series of missions into France was flown on the 25th with the target the Marshaling Yards at Givors, France. Bombing was outstanding and considerable damage was inflicted. No losses were encountered. Plane Commanders were Lt. Col. McKenna and Lts. Athon, Dickey, Willett, Van Slyke, Cauble, Martin Schuster, and MacFarlane.

The second mission to France was flown on the 26th with the LaMouche Marshaling Yards at Lyon as the target. The results were excellent and no Crews were lost. Plane Commanders were Lts. Smith, Cauble, Roberts, O'Brien and Branch.

The third mission to France came on 27 May with the Marshaling Yards at Nimes the target. Results were fair to good and no Crews were lost. Plane Commanders were Lt. Col. McKenna, and Lts. Willett,

this mission with Raymond Cauble, Jerome Joliceour, and John Fandrey receiving flak wounds. William Gill had his left hand frostbitten while repairing a broken gasoline line in the bomb bay at high altitude. None of the wounds were considered serious. Plane Commanders were Lt. Col. McKenna, Capt. Wray, and Lts. Cauble, Ashley, Hurd, Martin, O'Brien, Stenersen, Dickey, and Tipton.

On Memorial Day, 30 May, the second consecutive tough mission was flown and the Squadron suffered its first loss. The target was the Neudorff Flugzeugfabrik Aircraft Components Factory at Neunkirchen, Austria. Flak was heavy and a number of enemy fighters were encountered. The Group claimed three of these shot down, one of which was a Focke-Wulf-190 claimed by Ronald E. Hill, 781st gunner.

The plane carrying Lt. George Prince's Crew was attacked out of the sun at about 11 o'clock and fire was observed to break out in the fuselage behind the wing near the flight deck. They were able to stick

Gunner; and Cpl. Jimmy Patrick, Gunner.

One Crew member who had been severely wounded in the fighter attack (T/Sgt. John L. Crowley) returned to the Squadron in early July and five more returned on 22 July. The five were: 2nd Lt. Harold D. Holden, 2nd Lt. Murray Septoff, Sgt. Jack C. Williams, Sgt. James F. Downs, and Cpl. Jimmy Patrick. These men confirmed that two more Crewmembers were in safe hands but that 2nd Lt. George Prince and 2nd Lt. Calvin Canyock were killed when the aircraft exploded following the fighter attack.

T/Sgt. Harry M. Smith returned to Italy from the Balkans in August after having successfully evaded the enemy and at that time, was awarded the Silver Star for exceptional bravery above and beyond the call of duty in the face of enemy opposition. Only one member of the Prince Crew, Sgt. Abraham Dubinsky, remained in enemy territory.

As Al Rodman described the 30 May mission, "Another two-fer and well worth it, they must have a slew of aircraft facto-



Early morning Take-Off-View from 781st Tent Area towards runways

Stenersen, Dickey, Athon, Van Slyke, Wheeler, Martin, and Ashley

No mission was flown on the 28th but another tough assignment was scheduled for the 29th. The target was the Atzgersdorf Amme Luther Seek Aircraft Components factory at Liesing, Austria. Intense flak was encountered and results were fair.

The Group lost its first ship on this mission due to flak, but all 781st crews returned safely. One box of the Squadron's planes claimed a Me-109, another enemy plane was also claimed by the Group. The Squadron suffered its first casualties on

with the formation for about 13 minutes before being forced to abandon ship. Returning Crews reported eight to ten parachutes seen to open in the vicinity of Luici Palanski, Yugoslavia before the plane crashed.

Members of the missing Crew were 2nd Lt. George A. Prince, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Harold D. Holden, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. Murray Septoff, Bombardier; 2nd Lt. Calvin J. Canyock, Navigator; T/Sgt. John L. Crowley, Engineer; T/Sgt. Harry M. Smith, Radio Operator; Sgt. Abraham Dubinsky, Gunner; Sgt. Jack J. Williams, Gunner; Sgt. James F. Downs,

ries around this area. We had to combine with the 460th (Bomb Group) to form a group. We lead the entire wing. Takeoff and assembly were okay on course all the way in and nothing eventful happened.

Hit our objective on the nose and peeled off intact. Saw a B-24 go down in another group and 8 chutes came out. Let down to 14,000 feet and that was a fatal mistake. ME-109's and FW-190's jumped us and shot up our #5 man, that was Prince's crew. They flew along for a few minutes and 8 chutes came out. Plane went into a slow turn and exploded. Fighters again

attacked our box and tail gunner and top gunner knocked an ME-109 down. Nose gunner also sliced him up as he fell away. Fighters made two more passes at us with no effect and from the point on no one bothered us. Another day, another dollar, and boy are we earning 'em. Lost three men from flak yesterday over Vienna. Found out that two enemy aircraft destroyed were credited to our squadron. Our crew got one and Athon's bunch the other."

The final mission for the month of May was flown on the 31st to the Dacia Roma Oil Refinery at Ploesti, Rumania. Because of a smoke screen, the primary target was obscured and two targets of opportunity were bombed with fair to good results. One was the pumping station and water separation plant of the Baldesti Oil Field near Ploesti and the other was the Concordia-Vega Oil Refinery near Ploesti. Flak was intense and a number of ships were damaged.

The aircraft of Capt. Wray's (Squadron Operations Officer, flying with 1st Lt. Dale C. Tipton as Co-Pilot) was forced to leave the formation over Yugoslavia and had failed to return to base as of midnight on the 31st.

At 1215 hours with number one and number two engines smoking, Wray had reported by radio that he would have to fall out of formation. The ship was seen to lose altitude, follow below the formation for a while, and finally trail behind out of sight. No parachutes were seen and the place of landing or possible escape of any crewmembers was not known at that time.

However, the Crew was able to evade the enemy after bailing out over Yugoslavia



And They're Off!!!-Destination Ploesti

and returned safely to the Squadron on 9 June. Their plane had been hit by flak, which ruptured the fuel lines to #3 and #4 engines. These engines shut down, a prop ran away, and they were unable to stay with the formation. They soon found themselves looking up at the tops of the Dineric Alps as they fought to stay aloft long enough to reach friendly Yugoslavian territory held by Partisan forces. They were forced to bail out however, and fortunately found themselves in the hands of Broz Tito's troops.

Sprained ankles and bruises from landing made it necessary for the Crew to stay in the landing area for a couple days before starting the trip out. Then, traveling by foot, horseback, and wild truck rides over the mountain roads they arrived at a Brit-

ish Commando encampment from which 15th Air Force Headquarters was contacted by radio. The next night a C-47 landed by the light of four oil drums, picked up the Crew and flew them back to Bari. At Bari they were de-loused and de-briefed before going to Capri for a week of rest before returning to the Squadron to resume combat operations.

During their journey out of Yugoslavia it was learned that it was Lt. Tipton's Crew that had accidentally bombed the lumberyard at Dickens, Nebraska on 27 Dec 1943 during training at McCook.

Crew members on this mission, in addition to Capt. Wray and Lt. Tipton were: 2nd Lt. Vernon L. Burda, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Eugene M. Krzyzynski, Bombardier; T/Sgt. Frank R. Jasicko, Engineer; T/Sgt. Hulitt L. Holcombe, Radio Operator; S/Sgt. Albert D. Ralston, Jr., Gunner; Sgt. Harold B. Farrar, Gunner; Sgt. William G. Soteropoulos, Gunner; and Cpl. Michael J. Deironimi, Gunner.

The Squadron was selected during May as the lead Pathfinder Squadron of the 55th Bomb Wing. This was a significant honor for the 781st because units which received this unique responsibility were chosen with great care. Pathfinder techniques used radar to make possible, for the first time ever, reasonably accurate bombing of enemy targets in darkness or through overcast weather conditions.

During the month of May three Radar Officer Specialists and two Crews of Radar Specialists, whose Pilots were 2nd Lt. Marvin Tanenbaum and 2nd Lt. Theodore G. Poole, were added to the squadron. These personnel were attached only for the purpose of setting up the Pathfinder equipment in the Squadron.....

781st Squadron History
To be Continued in Issue #77



Italian Lira
and
Allied Military Currency
in WWII

LETTERS

Bernie Badler Writes---

Wed. June 9th

Dear Frank;

As I don't have a computer I have to sit down at my old typewriter and get this off to you.

First of all there was a mistake in the last News-letter regarding my wife's death. You had it as Ellen-her name was Helen.

A little background on her. She was a Holocaust survivor. She was born in Amsterdam, Holland and in 1940 when the Nazi's invaded the country she was 9 years old. Her father escaped to Curaçou (it is spelled wrong). He couldn't get the family out so Helen, her mother and sister had to be hidden all through the war. Of course being Jewish~ was a big problem, but thankfully she had an Aunt who was not, and coming from a large family that had a lot of farmers they were able to take care of them so that they were able to survive. But the Nazi's killed her maternal grandparents and many other relatives.

The thing that led to Helen's death was bladder cancer mainly caused by 50 years of smoking!

A little news on what I am doing with my life here in Petaluma. I am very comfortable in my nice 3-bedroom house that we bought 7 years ago. Thank goodness I am still in pretty good health. I have so many things to do that even if I wanted to get a job I don't know how I would find the time. I have a very nice woodshop in my garage with good quality tools and keep busy making cabinets and furniture. Also I do stained glass- I usually give them away.

I do like to take trips in my truck-I have driven to most of the reunions. This will include my trip to Rapid City in October.

In closing I think that I am one of the very few that have attended every reunion!

Best regards,
Bernie Badler

Subject: 78IST ILL MEMBER

Date: Sunday, July 4, 2004 8:00 PM

From: Robert Freed <RLF1@peoplepc.com>

To: Frank Ambrose <amber@superior.net>

Frank: RoseAnne and I spent this rainy afternoon with Helen and John Zdrozny. During one of our conversations I asked John if he had heard anything new on the status of Eugene G. Martis (Radar - Navigator) Maccani Crew - Page 137 Squadron History Book. Eugene was seriously injured in an automobile accident back in April 2004 and has been confined to Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh since April 15th, 2004. So far there hasn't been any indication as to when he will be released. His home address is "Eugene G. Martis, 238 Voyager Estates, West Newton, Penna. 15089-9708. Phone is (724) 872-5289" I hope some of the members who knew Gene would send a card of remembrance to him at his home. Josephine (his wife) visits the hospital on a regular basis and I'm certain she would be very glad to bring any and all cards to his bedside. Pass this info. along to Mr. Ogden at your convenience and if possible get it into next issue of Pantanella News. Thanks. Eugene lives just down the road a few miles from both John and I and we always manage to keep in touch.

Bob Freed

Subject: Wilton Carter

Date: Thursday, May 27, 2004 2:15 PM

From: Sandy Carter <scarter@am-truetzschler.com>

Reply-To: scarter@am-truetzschler.com

To: <frank@frankambrose.com>

Dear Frank,

I have sent to you an e-mail with and attachment from the Asheville Citizen-Times. My father has been ill for past 8-weeks and is at the VA hospital in Asheville NC.

At the present time the "Commemorative Air Force" is holding an exhibition at the Asheville airport and my father was interviewed by some news people from the local paper. There is a B-24A at this exhibition.

Carter is not doing well healthwise with radiation for some cancer tumors in his lungs. He's a fighter and we all hope he does well in future.

My father was in the crew of Michael Blackita and was at Pantanella Field late 1944, early 1945. Regards, Sandy Carter. Charlotte NC.

From: Michal Zeman <zeman.640@seznam.cz>

Date: July 2, 2004 1:40:55 PM EDT

To: frank@frankambrose.com

Subject: 60. Anniversary - Mission Pardubice 8/24/1944

Reply-To: Michal Zeman <zeman.640@seznam.cz>

Dear Mr. Ambrose,

it was in August, 24th in 1944 when the big battle was in the sky over Jindrichuv Hradec in South Bohemia in WW II-occupied Czechoslovakia. Many airplanes of 15th USAAF were shot down and many Luftwaffe airplanes too.

Your formation was going back from mission over Czechoslovak town Pardubice with refinery oil named DAVID FANTO WERKE when it was attacked.

Our HISTORICAL AVIATION CLUB OF JINDRICHUV HRADEC, MEMORIES TO THIS BATTLE TO CELEBRATE 60. ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE.

Please inform alive veterans crews:

780 BS- Co-pilot Lt. Harry C. NOLEN-POW-, crew Lt. BUCK (KIA)-783 BS-pilot LT. R. J. JONES, co-pilot Capt. T. T. CLARK, 2 men crew KIA.

The Club came into existence in 1990. The two enthusiasts who founded it Vladislav Burian-president, and Frantisek Sindler set themselves the aim of dealing chiefly with the activities of the air force on the territory of former Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the lots of our pilots during the second world war. They hope to cooperate with military formations and facilities in supporting and developing the traditions of our present day armed forces. Currently the Club has fifteen active members and in the implementation of their plans they have carried out field research with the aim of documenting the activities of the Allied Air Force on our territory during the second world war. They have given dozens of lectures and held meetings dealing with military history. Important club activities include gatherings of wartime pilots and by no means least organising of expeditions to foreign countries.

We think of all of you which helped us during the WW II here in Europe.
Best regards Michal ZEMAN,

FOLDED WINGS

Adelard Cayer, Brennaman Radio Operator, passed away 10-26-2002.
Reported by
Ken Clemmer.

George W. Huddleston, Radar Mechanic, died 4/29/2004
Reported by his son-in-law,
Alfred Ambrosi.

Gaythor L. Cass, Navigator on Richard Crutchers crew.
FW 6/13/2004 following open heart surgery.
Reported by Norma Jean Cass

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

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The planning work for the Reunion in Rapid City, South Dakota is essentially complete. The Reunion committee, consisting of Orren and Carole Lee and Marcel Snyder are doing exceptional work in making this 2004 Reunion one of the most memorable to date.

All active members of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association should take pains to thank these folks for a job well done!

One of the best ways to provide your personal thank you is to sign up and take advantage of the hard work and many hours of effort that these folks have contributed. As a matter of fact, a big turn out will be the only way that our Reunion Committee will be able to see the results of their work, first hand. With each passing year, it becomes more and more important for each active member of the organization to accentuate the positive and make the Annual Reunion the activity that should not be missed.

We are all aware that the membership of our organization is not getting younger. Oh! To be sure, there are notable exceptions, but in the interest of the modesty of those members, we will avoid mention-

ing them by name. Suffice it to say, that the membership of our organization is maintaining par value with the National Statistics which apply to World War II veterans.

Be thinking about a suitable disposition of 781st memorabilia. The current thinking is to find a suitable repository (Wright -Patterson, AF Museum, Colorado Springs, B-24 museum) to keep 781st material all together. It has also been suggested our remaining funds should go with the memorabilia to help maintain it. This is a call for volunteers! If you have any ideas or connections, please contact me.

On to other subjects. At the Rapid City South Dakota meeting, there will be a new supply of 781st Bomb Squadron hats available at the PX in 2 different styles. There will be a supply of "all material" hats, designed for those who wish to keep their brains warm, as well as a supply of ventilated models, for those whose mental activity is exothermal in nature.

Another milestone! Work is in progress to convert the 781st Bomb Squadron History slides, that Harry Carl assembled, into high resolution CD's. These pictures will be used to enhance the pages of Pantanella News. For those of you that have maintained personal photo collections, I would, once again, offer the opportunity to have those pictures made a part of squadron archives, at squadron expense.

Speaking of personal collections, we all have memories (stories) of the time we spent together (in Italy during WWII). Are you willing to spend a few minutes and contribute a yarn, tall tale, or just bloviate a story for everyone to share? The Pantanella News cupboard is bare! Our editor and all personnel would appreciate sharing those memories.

C'mon Guys! We are the 781st Bomb Squadron Association! Show your organizational pride, by keeping the Pantanella News alive and interesting, and by making an appearance at the Rapid City, South Dakota Reunion, October 3rd. to the 7th. 2004!

Respectively;
John Ogden, Pres.

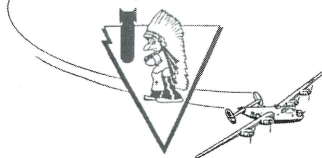
TREASURER'S CORNER**TREASURERS REPORT as of July 15, 2004**

781st Bomb Squadron Association Checking	\$2893.12
PMA Checking (2004 Reunion)	\$1079.04
PMA savings	\$34,854.38
TOTAL	\$38,806.74

Since the last report, money has been expended to purchase caps, which will be on sale at the Reunion, and to have the over 300 pictures from Harry Carl's history collection enhanced and put on CD.



**781st BOMB SQUADRON
ASSOCIATION**
3728 Evergreen Drive
Dickinson, TX 77539-6108



1/1/2005
ORREN LEE
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SOUIX FALLS, SD 57105

Return Service Requested