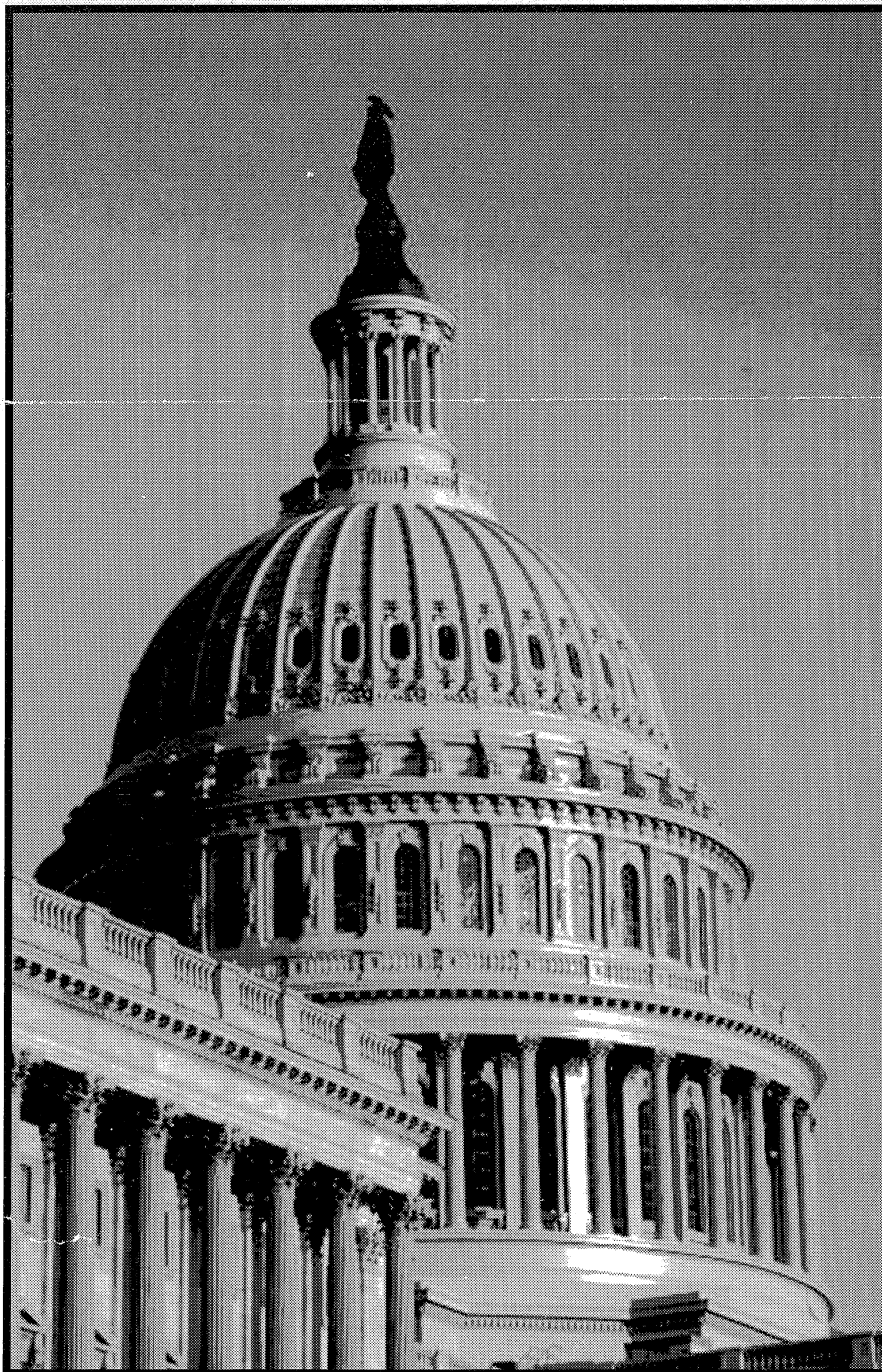


# PANTANELLA NEWS

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association©

# 88 July 2007

## 781st SET TO INVADE DC POLITICOS DEMAND PROTECTION



### The Capitol Dome

The dome of the United States Capitol may well be the most famous man-made landmark in America. It is such a fitting finale for the building it crowns, so familiar and dignified, that it seems surprising that its design and construction came late in the Capitol's architectural evolution.

The Capitol's first dome was finished in 1824 but by the 1850s, this dome was considered too small for the vastly enlarged Capitol. It was also a fire hazard and was in constant need of repair.

Only the west front terraces (1884-1892) and the east front extension (1958-1962) are more recent additions to the Capitol than its dome (1855-1866).

It was designed by the Philadelphia architect Thomas U. Walter, who was also the architect of the House and Senate extensions.

Montgomery C. Meigs, a captain in the Army Corps of Engineers, was the principal superintendent of construction. Together they oversaw the creation of the Capitol's most memorable and remarkable feature.

When the Capitol was recently being remodeled, the silver-plated cornerstone laid by George Washington could not be found -- even with metal detectors. No one knows where it is.

The coffins of several American heroes have rested in the Capitol rotunda before burial, including those of four murdered presidents: Abraham Lincoln, James Garfield, William McKinley and John F. Kennedy.

From: Badler<Longdog50@aol.com>

Subject: PANTANELLA NEWS

Date: April 16, 2007

To: fambrose@frontiernet.net

In the latest Pantanella newsletter.

On the back page the plane is not a B-24. It is a B-26 Marauder!

On page 11 - the picture of "Long John Silver" ground-crew.



In the back row, far right it is Bill Rushing - the crew chief.

Front row far left it is Bill Jostworth.

**A SHORT HISTORY OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH RAE BRANCH WHO PASSED AWAY IN JULY.**

When I graduated from pilot training on July 29, 1943, I was sent to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, supposedly for B-17 transition, but when I got there, there were only B-24's!!!

I was assigned as co-pilot to Branch and that is where our crew was formed. We stayed together until we finished our missions.

We had a personality clash mainly because of our age differences--5 years. In the air we got along very well, but on the ground it was another story. Only when we got older did our friendship mature and we got to be good friends.

The main thing was that he was a very fine pilot!  
-Bernie Badle-

From: <rlf1@peoplepc.com>

To: "Frank Ambrose" <fambrose@frontiernet.net>

Subject: April issue Pantanella New

Date: Sat, 24 Mar 2007

Frank:

After talking with you this morning re page 7 of the newsletter and the identification of the men pictured standing over a B 24 engine I got together with John Zadrozny and after looking over some of the pictures we had plus a short lookover with a magnifying glass we were in agreement that the men shown were members of Ordnance. From the top then left to right they are James Kipp, Malvern Barner, Benedict Jacobs and lastly Harold Schuster

Now let's move on to the Folded Wings section.

Frank Shonk (ordnance)

died 10-11-06 of lung cancer whereas his wife also passed away 6 mos. earlier 4-14-06 (myloma) blood cancer. You might want to put this brief note into the next Pantanella News for those who did not have any background on the 2 deaths.

Lastly I got a big kick out of your diving out of the way of Loren Foote's release of a loaded bomb bay of a plane scheduled for a photographic mission. All I can say is you're still here aren't you? Also be informed that Bubba (Charlie) Braud and I daily faced this ordeal when some planes found it necessary to jettison their bombload because of other needs such as a photo mission or whatever.

Loren Foote, Bubba Braud and myself are still around.  
Thank God!



781st Bomb Squadron Association  
c/o Barney Russell  
3 Mimosa Circle  
Magnolia, AR 71753-2648

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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

**ATTENTION !!**  
**ALL MEMBERS AND FAMILIES**  
**IMPORTANT ADDRESSES TO REMEMBER**  
**NOTIFY OR CONTACT ANY OR ALL FOR**  
**FW's-ADDRESS CHANGES or WHATEVER**

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## The 'LOGS' of a B-24 Top Gunner

Albert Thompson was Top Gunner on the Ashley Crew, his son Roger Thompson, has submitted his fathers logs to be printed in our Newsletter. In the process of transcribing the notes I made no attempt to correct the spelling or grammar, only to decipher his jottings as closely and accurately as possible in order to retain it's authenticity.

*Frank,*  
I am attaching the files of my father, Albert I. Thompson's, log here. Dad was a member of the 781st (Ashley crew) and attended the reunions prior to his death on 1 June 2005. My mother, Ruth M. Thompson, still gets the Pantanella News -Roger-

### Mission #1 5/6/44

Dropped over 100 tons of bombs on Croiva, Rumania today in our first sock at the Gerry. We met no fighters nor did we go through any flak. We saw quite a barrage of it on our left wing. Fighter cover of P-47's over the target and withdrawal. They sure looked good to us. We hit our target but the coverage wasn't too good.

### Mission #2 5/13/44

Parma Marshaling Yards in Northern Italy. Flew along the 5th. Army front and also close to the Anzio Beachhead. Dropped our bombs on target and really smeared it up. We got two important bridges along with the Marshaling Yards. We had Flak coming at us right after we came off the Bomb Run. It was very

inaccurate looking as though it was bursting from 1000 ft. to 30,000. It seemed as if every Group in Italy was hitting Northern Italy today. The sky was dark with planes. We had P-38 coverage to and from the target. Our Group received a personal Commendation from General Twining for this job.

### Mission #3 5/17/44

Piombino in Northern Italy was the target for today. We were split into two attack units for this one. The first unit hit the target 12 minutes before we did and they were ready and waiting for us. They really threw the flak all around us. Our ship was hit a few times and we got one good size hole in #3 Engine Nacelle. We had P-38 and P-51 coverage today. No enemy fighter opposition. The flak today was enough and glad to get out of that stuff. Both attack units hit the target and we had good coverage.

### Mission #4 5/14/44

Forli Marshaling Yards in Northeastern Italy for today. Our first real "Milk Run". No flak or fighter opposition at all. We had P-38 cover again today. Those babies sure look good up here. We done a beautiful job of bombing today. I guess that we made Gerry sick about this one.

### Mission #5 5/22/44

Just across the lines to Volmento today. We went above the beachhead and across then back across the beach. Gerry really threw everything at us today. Our ship, "Sinful Sue", came back with over sixty holes in it. Hydraulic system out and gas tank. P-38's were really thick around us today. Clouds were over the target so we didn't do much good. Got a R.R. truck.

### Mission #6 5/23/44

Back to Volmontone again. This time we went straight over the lines and back. Very little flak. There was 9/10 to 10/10 clouds over the target and we did not drop the bombs. P-38 escort in and out of the target area. The third is the charm. We'll try again tomorrow, I hope.

### Mission #7 5/27/44

We got a long one today. Over Southeastern France today to Nimes. We hit the marshaling Yards and did a good job. No enemy planes or we didn't go through any flak. Plenty of it hit the other groups. One 24 in the formation on our right got a direct hit and went down. One got out OK. P-51 escort today for the first time

### Mission #8 & 9 5/31/44

A Ploesti oil refinery today for my first double. We lost one ship on the way to the target. Cause unknown. Lt King's Crew. There was intense flak over the target but it wasn't too accurate. The entire city was covered with a smoke screen. We must have hit the target as black smoke raised to around 18,000 and was visible for 50 miles. Capt. Wray lost one engine over the target but came back nearly to the coast of Adriatic with us. P-38 and 51 escort. 3 shot at a plane that started in at us at 10:00 high. I think it was a D-520.

### Mission #10 & 11 6/2/44

We had a long one today but it was a "Milk Run" even if they did give us credit for two. The target was the Cluj, Rumania. We done a good job on it so they say. There was no flak or enemy fighters. We had P-38 and P-51 escort. No losses today.

### Mission #12 6/5/44

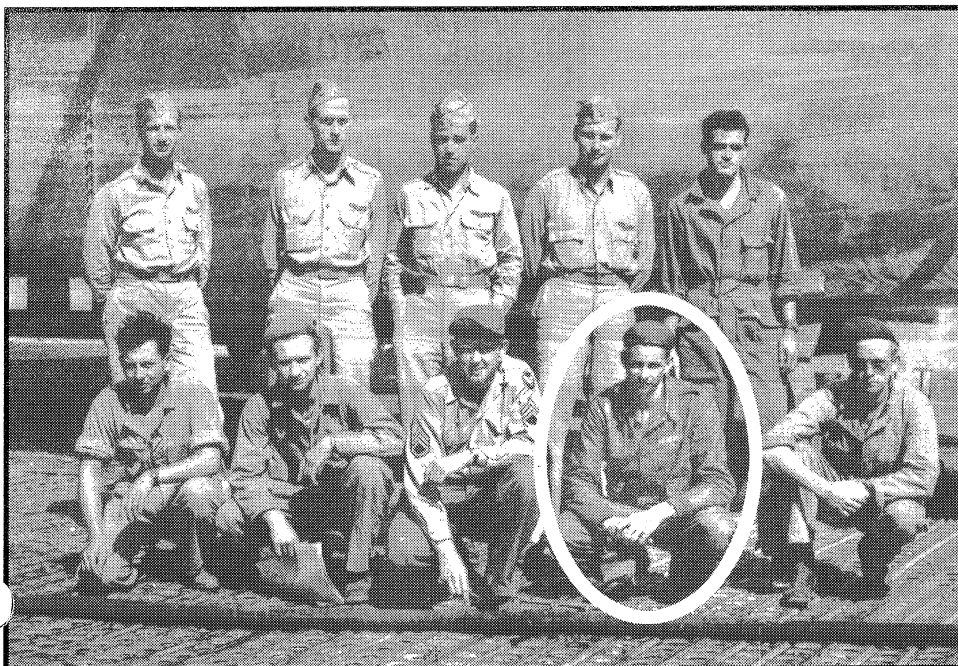
We finally got back to Italy in our rounds. The Ferrara M/Y was the target and we hit it with 40 100's per ship. We had P-38- P-51 cover. Flak was moderate and very inaccurate over the target. Morris saw a fighter go down. An ME-109 he thought.

### Mission #13 & 14 6/9/44

The first trip to Germany for us today. We hit m/y and ammo dump but not the briefed target. There was about 40 German Fighters around but they did not attack our group. They got three from the 485th. Seven of our planes turned back. We had P-38, 51 and 47 escort but they did not stay with us very long. I guess they got several of them tho. Flak was very heavy but not very accurate as there was 9/10 cover.

### Mission #15 6/11/44

We hit another Oil Refinery today. It was at Smidervo, Yugoslavia. We didn't meet any fighters or have any flak. We saw a little of to the left about a mile. There was a lot of smoke came from the target so we must have done a good job.



George Ashley Crew

Frank Ambrose USAF photo

**PLAN TO ATTEND WASHINGTON REUNION NOW**



**Mission # 16 & 17 6/14/44**

Petturdo oil refinery in Hungary. We had p-38 escort on the way and also part way back. No flak at the target. I guess this was the best mission that the group has had. They really put it in the bulls-eye. Fire came up for 2 or 3 thousand feet and the smoke was about 15,000 ft.

**Mission #18 & 19 6/16/44**

We were supposed to hit an oil cracking plant near Vienna today. There was so much flak at the target that I guess it must-have got the best of them. We didn't hit the briefed target. We had P-38- 51 and 47 escort. We also met GU 88, ME-109's and ME110 & 210. I fired a couple of bursts at a 210 as he came in from 9. He broke off and I went back of the tail. I saw one fighter which I thought was a 38 go down. Also a B-24 from another group over the target. The others saw 2 other fighters go down. I took 4 pictures one of the refinery that had been hit just this side of the target. The others were of the flak over the target.

**Mission #20 6/22/44**

We took off for Bologna in Northern Italy today. The target was m/y and we had 16-250 GP's. The first attack unit missed the target but we got it. That is two of our box D & E. Flak was light and inaccurate over the target. We were attacked by 8 or ten planes right over the target but they didn't get any of our planes. I got one burst at a FW-190. P-38's swooped down and drove them away. We also got flak after leaving the target but it was light also.

**Mission #21**

We had the longest mission to date today. It was to Balarue, France and the target was a O/R. We carried 16-250#. The attack units got separated and we went over with 13 ships. They really laid the target low and also got a boat just off the coast. There was no flak or enemy fighters. We had P-38 coverage over the target. We ran out of gas coming back and landed at Naples. No. 4 cut out just as we landed.

**Mission #22 & 23 6/28/44**

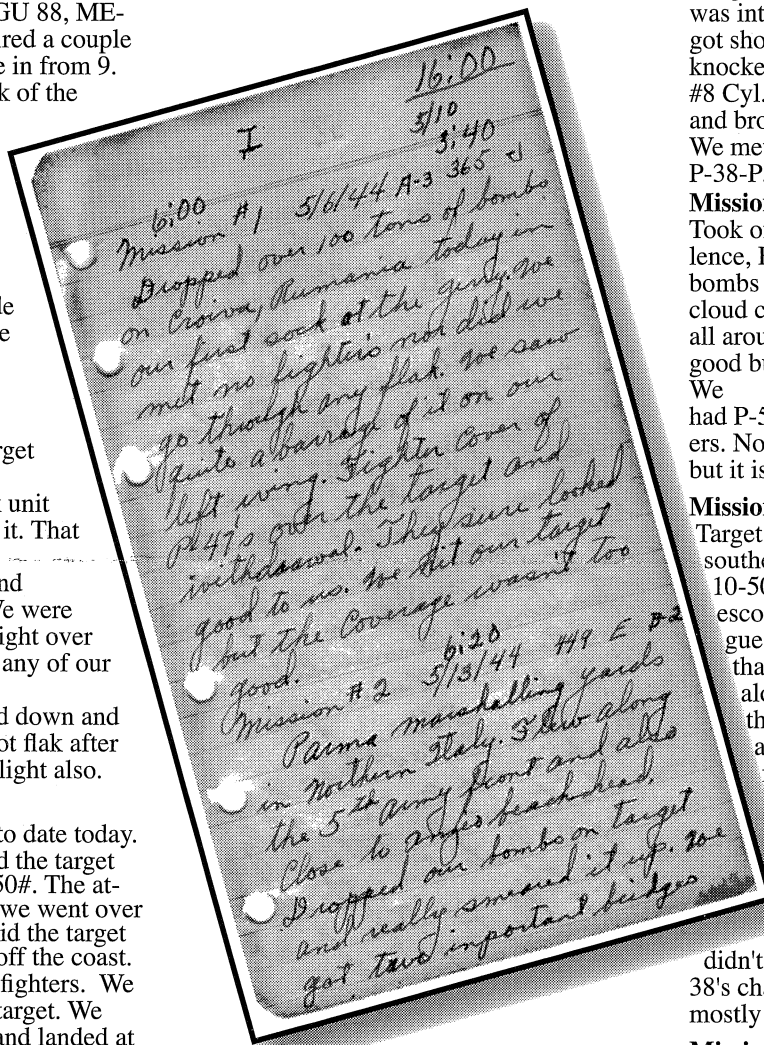
We took off for Bucharest today with 40-100# bombs The target was an O/R. We had P-38 and P-51 coverage and met no enemy fighters. The flak was very heavy but inaccurate. They really did a good job with O/R and city.

**Mission #24 & 25 7/7/44**

We were supposed to hit the Blechhammer O/R just this side of Breslin today. We lost 31 engine just this side of Lake Palaton and turned back for the first time. We didn't see any flak or enemy fighters. The rest of the group that went on met a few fighters but they had good cover. Flak was inaccurate over the target.

**Mission # 26 & 27 7/8/44**

Target for today was the Florsdorf O/R just across the river from Vienna. Flak was very intense and accurate over the target. Our ship got hit a few times. Nose and upper turrets got holes in them. There was 34 ships took off but only 14 of us went over the target and 13 of us got back. Capt. Ganpier went down right of the target from flak. All got out. About 16 ME-109's jumped the 64th who were just ahead of us. They lost 3 ships. Longacre got one of them and the group got 7-1-2. Field Day.

**Mission #28 7/13/44**

We took off for an O/R at Porto Macheria close to Venice today. We carried 10- 500# GP. we had P-38 cover to and from the target but they didn't come in like they generally do. Flak was moderate and our ship just got a few hits. Clouds over target so we circled it a few times. Results were fair.

**Mission # 29 7/15/44**

They cut Ploesti down to one mission and then send us over there again. The target was an O/R but it was obscured by smoke screen and from some other group hitting there before we did. We dropped ours by radar and done a good job. We

had 5 1000#. 24 ships. Flak was heavy at the target but not accurate for us. There was white, black and pink bursts. We met about 10 FW-190 on the way back near Belgrade. They attacked two stragglers in our group but didn't get either of them. OBrian Crew got one of them. I shot about 200 rounds but didn't seem to do any damage. We only saw our P-51 escort over the target.

**Mission #30 & 31 7/19/44**

Target for today was the motor works at Munich. We didn't hit it for some reason but got the marshaling yards instead. Flak was intense and accurate. Our ship really got shot in the wrong places. No.2 engine knocked out by a hit in the sump and #8 Cyl. No. 3 Supercharger wheel hit and broke up. Right tire and fuel cell hit. We met no enemy fighters and had good P-38-P51 escort.

**Mission #32 7/24/44**

Took off for a Landing Ground near Valence, France today. We carried frag bombs for the first time. There was a cloud cover right over the target and clear all around. The bombs didn't do much good but we got two planes so they say. We had P-51 escort and didn't meet any fighters. No flak at target or enroute either but it is still too long for a milk run.

**Mission #33 7/30/44**

Target for today was a factory just at the southern edge of Budapest. We had 10-500 GP's. We had the best fighter escort today that I have seen and I guess that it is a good thing that they were along. I saw 2 fighters go down but there were a lot more than that, also three 24's from other groups went down over target.

Flak was moderate but very accurate. One burst about 20 ft. above me and it really cracked. Three 109's closed in to about 600 yds but I didn't see them fire. 38's chased them away. The escort was mostly 51's tho.

**Mission #34 8/2/44**

We took off for Geneva today with 10 500# G.P.'s. We didn't take off to 09:03 and target time was 3:00. There was moderate flak at the target but we weren't in it long. No enemy fighters. P-38 escort in and out of target. They really put the bombs on the docks and I guess that it must have got tore up quite a bit.

**Mission #35 & 36**

We took off for an aircraft factory at Friedrichshafen which is supposed to be making jet propelled planes. The trip to the target was O.K. and the flak wasn't bad where we went over. It was bursting at all altitude from ground up with just a little above us at 24,000. Our group got screwed up at the target and came off last



when we should have been second. Around 40 ME-109's and FW 190's hit us close to Insbruck. Eight of the 28 that went over the target failed to return. I think that 7 were lost and went to Yugo. They only made one attack as around 15- 51's which were above us swopped down and drove them off. I saw 3 24's go down one in flames in a glide and one in a really straight dive and the other twisting everyway. I guess we got around 10 of the fighters.

#### **Mission # 37 8/6/44**

We got another one of those long ones today but it was fairly easy. The target was a R/R bridge near Avignon, France and we carried 10- 500# Com B. There was a few hits on the target and I guess we knocked it out for awhile. The flak was the most accurate that we have had yet but there wasn't much of it. Lt. Gill got hit in the leg and he will be ready to go home when he gets out of the hospital.

#### **Mission #38 8/9/44**

Back to Budapest to finish off the factory and hangar where we were before. The flak wasn't near as accurate as before and we didn't get but one hole. 64 lost one by a direct hit right behind us. We had P-38- 51 escort which was pretty good. We see any enemy planes. We had 10- 500# G.P.'s and they really wiped the target out. 71% and 85.5%. I guess we won't have to go back there.

#### **Mission #39 8/12/44**

We took off for Sete, France today with 10 500# ComB. We had something new for a target this time. It was the coastal defenses. 4 boxes and each had a target of its own. We hit ours O.K. The flak was veeery light and it stopped at bombs away. I got a little hole in the turret.

#### **Mission #40 8/14/44**

Missing page

#### **Mission # 41 8/14/44**

We go back to France again today to soften the coast up some more for the invasion.

We saw three big convoys headed for there. They landed 7-15-44. The gun positions at St Tropez was the targets 4 boxes and four targets. We didn't have any fighter cover and didn't see any enemy fighters. No flak at all. Our box with Lt. Nayers as bombardier just hit the edge of the target. Main landings were made near here.

#### **Mission # 42 & 43 8/16/44**

We go back to Friedrichshafen again today but it wasn't really as bad as the last time. Target was a plant making fuel for jet propelled planes. The hits were all in target but results

unknown. The flak was not too heavy but very accurate. Capt. Roberts and another crew took off to Swiss right after dropping bombs. Gas was pouring out of Robert's bomb bay but I think he made it O.K. We didn't meet any enemy fighters but we really had cover. Around 40 P-38's picked us up and took us nearly to the target. We had around 120 P-51's at target and withdrawal. Our wing was the only one in the 15th which went up there so that is why we got the cover. I guess the rest of them are pounding France again.

**Mission #44 8/18/44**  
We took off for Ploesti once more today. I just hope that I don't have to make any more there. They had a smoke screen over the target but we hit an oil storage at our target. We had 8- 500# G.P.s and flew at 25,000. The flak wasn't too bad but we got several large holes. We had P-51 escort and didn't see any enemy fighters.

#### **Mission #45 & 46 8/20/44**

We flew first trip to Poland today. The target was an oil refinery near Czechowice. We put bombs every place around the target and some in it. We didn't have much flak at the target. It's alright with us. We got a small hole in the tail. We didn't see any enemy fighters and had fair P-51 cover. Wing formation was the best yet going over the target but 64th left us coming back. Morris finished his 50th today for the first in Sqdn.

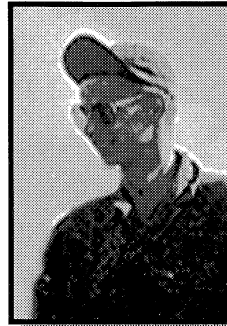
#### **Mission #47 & 48 8/22/44**

Another double today to make them count up faster. The target was an O/R just north of Vienna. We carried 10- 500# G.P. The first attack unit missed the target but the second unit got part of it. The rest of the wing fixed it up so they say. We had P-51 and 38 escort and the 51's really came in close for a change. Flak at the target was moderate and fairly accurate. V-Grand lost a couple of engines and hasn't returned as yet. We didn't see any enemy fighters.

#### **Mission #49 & 50 8/23/44**

This is the one that I have been waiting for just too darn long so it seems. We hit an airfield just outside of Vienna today with 10- 500# G.P. We didn't get too good results even if we did go over the target twice. There wasn't any flak over the target. We didn't see any enemy planes but I suppose that some groups did. We had the best escort of any trip today and were sure glad to have it. Most of them were P-51's but we had a few 38's. Lt Ashley, Lt Fleming, Mc Cague, Poulos and I finished up today-

#### **-I DOOD IT. FINITO.**



Albert Thompson

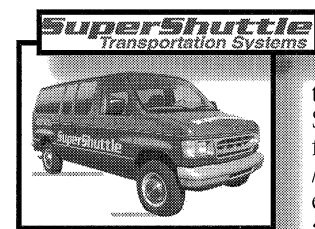
## FLYING TO WASHINGTON

For those flying to our reunion, it is recommended that you fly into the 'Ronald Reagan National Airport' (DCA).

This airport is the closest airport to DC and the hotel in Alexandria that will become our home base. A door to door Shuttle Service is available at the airport to take you to the hotel upon arrival and to return you to the airport when you depart.

Advance reservations are not required upon arrival at the Airport.

While at the Baggage Claim in DCA, follow the signs for Ground Transportation to the SuperShuttle boarding area located curbside at each terminal. A uniformed Guest Service Representative will assist you between 6:30 AM & 11:30 PM.



The cost from the airport to the hotel is \$12.00 for the first passenger / \$8.00 for each additional passenger,

up to five.

Pay your Driver directly by cash, traveler's check, or major credit card upon arrival at the airport.

Try to give the Service a 24 hour advance notice for a pick up from the Hotel to the Airport.

Please have your flight information and number of passengers and departure point when making your reservation.

## Time Check

On some air bases the Air Force is on one side of the field and civilian aircraft use the other side of the field, with the control tower in the middle. One day the tower received a call from an aircraft asking, "What time is it?"

The tower responded, "Who is calling?"

The pilot replied, "What difference does it make?"

The tower replied "It makes a lot of difference.

If it is an American Airlines flight, it is 3 o'clock.

If it is an Air Force plane, it is 1500 hours.

If it is a Navy aircraft, it is 6 bells.

If it is an Army aircraft, the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the 3.

If it is a Marine Corps aircraft, it's Thursday afternoon and 120 minutes to "Happy Hour"

## PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

Since his last report, Ken Kill, our Squadron Treasurer reports that the following individuals have submitted donations to our **Association Operating Account.:**

- Pierre J.J. Kennedy
- Harry M. Smith
- John Fandrey
- William Jostworth
- Russell T. Maynard
- John Russell
- George F. Kilby

Checks should be made out to the **781st Bomb Squadron Asso.**

and sent to our Squadron Treasurer:-

**Francis K. Kill,  
707 West Circle Dr.,  
Findlay, OH 45840.**

**Tentative  
781st. BS 2007 Reunion Agenda  
October 7-8-9-10  
Comfort Inn-Alexandria  
Alexandria, VA.**

**Sunday, October 7, 2007**  
Check In 3:00PM  
Registration

**Monday, October 8, 2007**  
Registration

**Tuesday, October 9, 2007**  
Whitehouse Tour  
Bus tour of World War II Memorial,  
Air Force Memorial  
Air & Space Museum at  
the Dulles Airport.  
Back to the hotel by 3:00 PM.  
Open Hospitality Room

**Wednesday, October 10, 2007**  
Business meeting in the morning.  
3:00 PM: Bus to Fort Myer  
4:00 PM: Memorial Service  
in the Chapel  
5:00 PM: Social Hour (Cash Bar)  
5:30 PM Banquet at the Officer's  
Club

Bus back to Hotel 9:00 PM.

(Times/Events and Places Subject To Change)

Pennsylvania Avenue is among the world's most famous streets, containing several of the must-see Washington DC tourist attractions.

The avenue runs for seven miles inside Washington, but the stretch from the White House to the United States Capitol building is considered the most important.

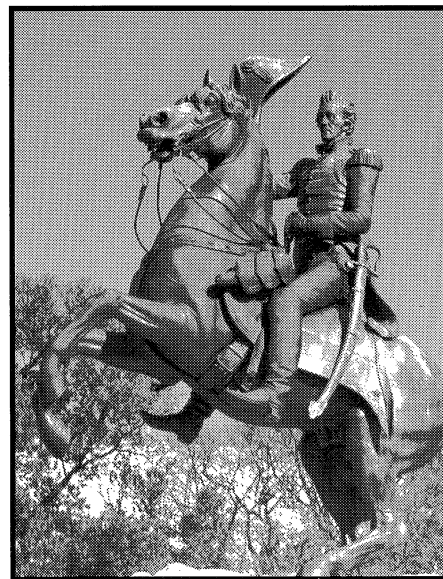
Every four years the nation celebrates inauguration with a grand promenade down the Avenue, while other national heroes and foreign leaders have been honored with parades and motorcades there as well.

Today, the Treasury Building is one of Pennsylvania Avenue's historic structures. Considered by many to be the most spectacular Greek revival building in the United States, it is surpassed in age only by the White House and the Capitol among the federal buildings that are Washington DC tourist attractions.

Not just the scene of official functions, Pennsylvania Avenue is the traditional parade and protest route of ordinary citizens.

Citizens today still come here from all over the world, to let their voices be heard in Lafayette Park, a seven-acre park across from the White House also known as the "Presidents Park."

The noble statue of Andrew Jackson on horseback commands the Square, while in each corner a hero of The Revolutionary War is honored. This public forum for opinionating is a resounding reminder of the democratic revolution that gave rise to the splendor of Pennsylvania Avenue.



**Yet Another Mystery Photo-**  
Browsing through my collection of thousands of photos taken during my tour in Italy, I came upon another of my un-documented images. If any of that can still remember can recognize any of these individuals shown, please send me their names so that I can up-date my files.

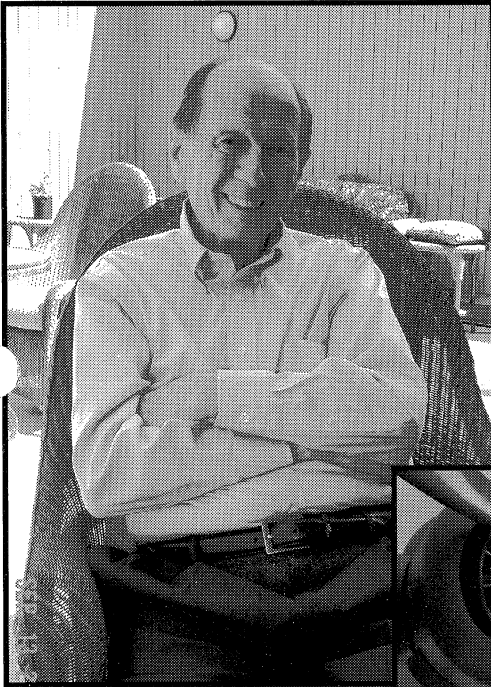
## LETTERS

## ALTHOFF

## To the members of 781st BS...

A report on Jim Althoff.

I talked to Bernie Baddler and he asked for an update on Dad. I called and talked to Frank Ambrose and promised I would send along an update on Dad. I apologize on not doing this sooner, we sometimes get wrapped up in our daily lives and don't always keep everyone in the loop. Dad lives in a nice place with room for 100 and a staff of 98 on 10 acres not far from his old house. The staff are wonderful, almost saints, and Dad is clearly one of their favorites. The van driver snaps to attention and salutes "Capt. Jim" every time he walks by. Dad will return the salute with a huge smile.



Jim smiles for the camera on a recent visit to his Retirement Facility

On warm days I make it a point to walk around the grounds with him as he always enjoyed the sun—something having to do with being a farm-boy and spending so much time on his boat or working in his garden. We will end up on a bench, watching people walk by. He always has a comment on the good-looking girls.

He retains his sense of humor and appreciates a good joke as long as they are short. He is still fairly fit physically, but mentally the disease continues to take its toll. My wife and I saw him over the weekend and he was aloof, barely acknowledging our presence. He usually recognizes me instantly and will get up and come



Grand daughter Amanda and Jim enjoy leisurely chat in October

to me, excited to see me. Lately, though, he has times where he is not as responsive. After about 10 minutes, I brought up Bernie and Frank, and the sparkle came back to his eyes, seeming to instantly know who they were and we talked about the Association and maybe getting around to visit some of the members. Harry Carl's name came up as well as Ernie Van

Below-Althoff with grandson at a recent air show



Asperen.

Dad and Ernie remained close friends, having worked together for so many years. Dad's brother, Don, had talked to Ernie about a week ago and said he is doing well since his stroke last year. Don said they had a good conversation although he has lost a little speech and spends most of the time in a wheelchair. I hadn't talked to Ernie in a while, but Don had a couple of times. We had both worked for/with Ernie and Dad. I spent the last 30 years working

for Dad and was with Ernie's Liquors for 5+ years previously.

Each year I take Dad, and some of the other residents, down to see the Collings planes when they are in the area. Last year Dad enjoyed the people, but paid little attention to the planes. Last year, for the first time, a B-25 was with the 17 and 24, but Dad didn't seem to notice, although he had several hundred hours in the B-25 as an instructor and during his time in the Reserves.

My wife and I would take Dad out to dinner at least once a month until recently, he just won't look at the menu and would sometimes plays with his food. There have been several times we have taken him to a family event at a niece's house in Los Altos and he enjoyed himself enormously. We had a birthday party for him in December and 20 people came. He especially enjoyed the Port brother Don brought, not to mention the cake his daughter, Patty baked. The gifts we great too!

I could write volumes on all the cute stories brought on by Alzheimer's and how everything seems new to dad every few minutes. Bottom line is that he is seemingly happy and still is the gentleman he always was.

### LOST IN THE DARNDDEST PLACES:

An elderly Floridian called 911 on her cell phone to report that her car has been broken into.

Hysterically she explains to the dispatcher.... "They've stolen the stereo, the steering wheel, the brake pedal and even the accelerator!" "Stay calm, an officer is on the way" the dispatcher responded.

A few minutes later the investigating officer radios the dispatcher, "Disregard. "she got in the back seat by mistake."

**PLAN TO ATTEND THE D.C. REUNION NOW**



## Re-Discovering Pantanella

by Frank Ambrose

A great deal of the email that I have been receiving recently concerns questions pertaining to our former Base in Italy. Questioners from all over the world seeking information as to exactly where the base was located, how can they find it and how and where did it get its name.

It appears that quite a few individuals failed to read my article on the subject in the #85 Issue of the Pantanella News. Since the questions continue to persist I felt that further research on the subject was mandated.

I was quite surprised, as I delved into the various encyclopedias and all the assorted data on the internet, that so little reference was available. Amazingly, the only reference to Pantanella that I was able to locate, aside from references to the actual base in WWII, is a company in Italy producing of all things, pasta! (Wonder why?)

***From the 'Pantanella Company Website': "Pantanella products are made with high quality spelt grown in Molise, one of the most natural and healthiest region of Italy. Used in a large range of food such as pasta, crackers, baked goods and spelt in grains. The Pantanella line also contains a range of special Artisan 100% durum wheat semolina pasta in regional shapes, which can not miss on the table of true Italian pasta lovers".***

Since no further information was available I felt my only alternative was to actually visit the Base once again. This time I would attempt to pay more attention to the towns and villages around the base and any roads or landmarks leading to it.

In the late 90's my son and I returned to Italy in order to visit the former air base. A narrative report of our observations was printed in a subsequent issue of the Pantanella News.

A transcript relating my observa-

tions also appears on my WebSite:- (<http://www.frankambrose.com/pages/pant.html>)

From time to time since then, the yearning within me peaks my curiosity and often forces me to revisit our former base 'Virtually'.

A typical "Virtual Journey" to Italy usually takes place in the evening, shortly after viewing the local and national news on the tube.



This is a 'Frame Grab' of the former 465th Bomb Group and 781st Squadron Hill Area as it appears today. Shown in the group of buildings still standing is the Group Photo Building and Briefing Room, Commanding Officer's House, Group Communications, Group Theatre and PX. The Runways were located towards the top of this photo.

The road leading to the top of the photo is the same dusty road that was used to access those runways each morning. The remains of the Group Chapel is also shown between the curve in the road and cluster of tall trees. The 'Area' that at one time constituted the '781st Squadron Area' and the '465th Bomb Group' is now covered with thousands of neatly arranged rows and rows of Olive Trees surrounded by lush golden fields of wheat.

As I relax and settle into 'First Class' (the 'Lazy Boy' in my living room) and with the aid of my Apple Laptop as a transport, I prepare for my flight to Italy.

I 'Log-In' to 'Google Earth' and type '**Canosa, Italy**' as my destination. As the craft begins to roll I gaze out my window (the Laptop Screen) and become instantly aware that the earth below me is beginning to turn and pass under me ever more rapidly as the speed

accelerates to reach cruising altitude.

Attaining 'Altitude' over the Atlantic, a westerly course adjustment is observed as the British Isles soon come into view.

Over France the craft begins a gradual decent towards Italy. The decent continues to 5000 feet over Canosa finally reaching our destination.

The flight to Italy had only lasted just a few seconds.

In my first attempt to locate 'the base' I circled Canosa descended to 1000 feet to locate and follow route SS93. I followed the route southwest to Laconia. Arriving at Laconia I began an Easterly zig-zag search pattern extending to several miles, gradually widening the paths.

Eventually the former 465th Group

## National Air and Space Museum

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum maintains the largest collection of historic air and spacecraft in the world. The Museum has two display facilities: the National Mall building in downtown Washington, DC and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles International Airport. The museum runs a shuttle bus called the Express, which will take you between them. During your DC vacation, make sure to include them both in your exploration of museums in DC.

The National Mall Building in Washington DC has hundreds of artifacts on display, including the original Wright 1903 Flyer, the Spirit of St. Louis, the Apollo 11 command module, and a lunar rock sample



that visitors can touch.

In recent years, exhibits have become very hands-on, with the addition of flight simulators in both locations; armchair pilots can now see what flying a plane is really like.

## The Comfort Inn Alexandria

Located in the heart of business technology corridor by day and Old Town Alexandria featuring a variety of entertainment by night, the Comfort Inn Alexandria is situated just 7 miles from downtown Washington D.C.

It is conveniently located by inter-states I-95, I-495 and I-395 allowing for quick access to the entire Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Comfort Inn provides the best location of the hotels in Alexandria, Virginia.



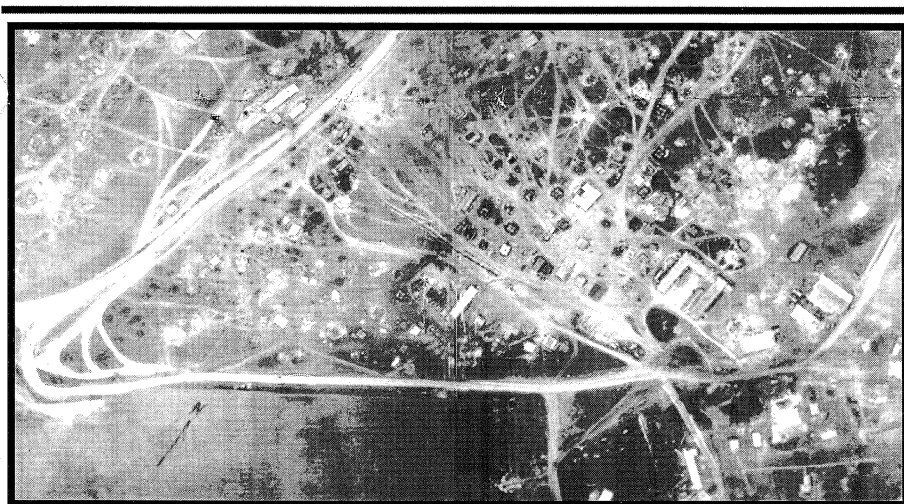
The Inn offers a complimentary deluxe continental breakfast, featuring fresh "Make Your Own" Belgian waffles and a complimentary USA Today (Mon-Fri). Other amenities include;

- Free local calls
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- Gift Shop on premises
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- Outdoor seasonal pool
- Laundry facility on premises
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AAA Official appointment and Noble Roman's Restaurant on premises

For Special Reunion Rates, members are urged to make their reservations as early as possible, directly with the facility before August 30th.

**Comfort Inn Alexandria**  
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**Alexandria, VA 22310**  
**Tel: (703) 922-9200**  
**Fax: (703) 922-0132**



This is a view of the 465th Group Headquarters area and 781st Squadron Area as it appeared in 1945

Buildings, Group Photo, Briefing Room and Chapel ruins come into view.

Hovering over the buildings I descended to 500 feet circling the area where my tent was once located and eventually the spot where I had constructed my 'Casa'.

On this day the area was obscured with a light cloud cover so it was impossible to discern the runways.

The area is an awesome sight to behold showing the neatly arranged rows of Olive Trees covering the entire former 781st Hill.

Lest I not forget the moment, I prepare to take an Aerial photo to share with friends and relatives. I 'Right Click' the mouse and then 'Frame Grab' the monitor to perpetuate the moment!

WOW, the miracle of the internet!

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## WHITE HOUSE TOUR.....Tuesday October 9

Marcel Snyder, "Reunion Committee Chairman" and his "Reunion" staff have been relentlessly working on arranging for a 'Tour of The Whitehouse'.

Whitehouse tours generally have to be coordinated with Congressmen. As of this printing, the tour has yet to be confirmed. When finalized, the White House Tour would be added to the Bus Tour prior to the Tuesday WWII Memorial tour.

Due to 'Security', if you plan to take the "Whitehouse Tour" we will need the names with social security numbers and date of birth of everyone beforehand. Confirmation is anticipated that we will be taking the tour.

If you have not sent in your registration, please add social security numbers and date of birth of anyone you are registering as we will need it in advance of the tour. We will need to prepare the list prior to departing for Washington DC. A new 'Registration' blank is inserted in this newsletter.

Also in the works, Marcel is working up a trip to the Capitol via the Metro for Monday. This 'Tour' will be leaving the Hotel at 9:00 Monday morning. Those of you that are interested and planning to take this tour must be checked in to the Hotel the day before on Sunday.

The information on this will be in the next Newsletter (September 2007) and also available at the Registration Table at the Reunion with a sign up sheet.



Located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, the White House is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country.

The White House has been the official residence of all the presidents of the United States with the exception of George Washington. Washington served from 1789 to 1797. By the time the White House was completed in 1800, John Adams was President. The house was rebuilt and restored after it was burned by the British in August 1814.

The White House has six floors--two basements, two public floors, and two floors for the First Family. Visitors who tour the White House are able to see the most beautiful and historic rooms in the house including the East Room, the Green Room, the Blue Room, the Red Room, and the State Dining Room. These rooms are used by the President and First Lady to entertain guests and to receive leaders of other countries.

The Oval Office is where the President does the business of the country--signing bills and Executive Orders and meeting with staff, visitors, and guests.

## TOUGH TIMES IN THE '40's

In the United States, nationwide food rationing was instituted in the spring of 1942, and each member of the family was issued ration books by the Office of Price Administration (OPA).

These books contained stamps and gave precise details of the amounts of certain types of food that you were allowed.

Rationing insured that each person could get their fair share of the items that were in short supply due to the war effort and import reductions.

By the end of the war, over a hundred million of each ration book were printed.

'A'  
GAS  
Wind-  
shield  
Sticker



By the end of 1942, half of U.S. automobiles were issued an 'A' sticker which allowed 4 gallons of fuel per week.

That sticker was issued to owners whose use of their cars was nonessential.

Hand the pump jockey your Mileage Ration Book coupons and cash, and she (yes, female service station attendants because the guys were over there) could sell you three or four gallons a week, no more.

For nearly a year, 'A'-stickered cars were not to be driven for pleasure at all.

## SCUTTLEBUTT....

The 783rd Bomb Squadron will be holding their 2007 Reunion in Charleston, South Carolina September 9th to 13th. They will be based at the Holiday Inn, Riverside..

The 780th will be meeting Sept. 13th to Sept. 16 in Indianapolis.

**BOOK YOUR ROOM RESERVATION NOW**



**FOLDED WINGS****RAE BRANCH: Pilot**

From: mbranch@VirginShipRepair.org  
 Subject: PASSING OF RAE BRANCH  
 Date: April 5, 2007  
 To: fambrose@frontiernet.net  
 Frank,

My father, **Rae Branch**, folded his wings on July 20th, 2006. I was reminded to notify you upon receipt of the latest issue of Pantanella News, forwarded from Dad's address. In fact were Dad alive, he would be able to give you the names of the Long John Silver ground crew – his aircraft.



Rae Branch with son, Mal Branch

It was Dad's distinguished and eventful service with the 781st that formed a very influential part of my youth. I grew up with Dad's pictures, medals (Air Medals and 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses), the piece of flack that penetrated his aircraft and lodged in his flying boot, and his memories.

It was that influence that caused me to pursue a flying career. Many proud moments were shared with him and my mother throughout a 29 year career in Naval aviation, from wings to my command of an A-7 squadron, to becoming Commanding Officer of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73).

I miss him more that words can express, but am comforted in knowing he has joined my mother after 13 years of being apart after her death. Please give HIS love to all of his squadron mates who will join with you in Alexandria in October. He will be there in spirit. With sincerest best regards,  
 Mal Branch

**Kenneth Pulham:**

Hendrickson Radio Operator  
 From: jmsnyder@bellsouth.net  
 To: olee@iw.net,  
 fambrose@frontiernet.net  
 Date: May 22, 2007  
 Subject: Death of Another Squadron

Dear Carole and Frank,  
 Ralph Hendrickson, a 781st pilot who lives diagonally across the street, advised me that his radio operator, Kenneth Pulham, died last month.

More details are in his note, a copy of which is attached. He was hoping that this information is in time to make the next edition of the Pantanella News.

-Marcel-

Attachment: as stated:

**Kenneth Pulham**--Hendrickson Radio Operator

Kenneth Pulham died 14, April 2007.

He was 86 years old.

Kenneth was a resident of Orem, Utah and is survived by his wife Dona.

Reported by Ralph Hendrickson via Marcel Snyder.

**Charles M. Howard:** Armament  
 Charles M. Howard died July 29, 2006 of Alzheimer's disease.  
 Reported by his wife  
 Mary R. Howard

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

**ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

Located across the Potomac in Arlington, Virginia, Arlington Cemetery is home to the remains of thousands of military veterans and national figures.

Veterans from all the nation's wars are buried here, from the American Revolution through Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Arlington National Cemetery facts sheet, more than 300,000 people are buried here, and approximately 6,400 burials are conducted annually.

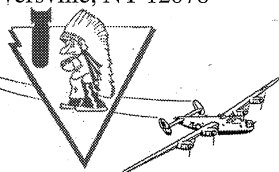
The Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington Cemetery was dedicated on May 15, 1920, and serves as the nation's official venue for remembrance. About 5,000 visitors attend each of the three major annual memorial services, on Easter, Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

**RESERVE THE HOTEL AND SEND IN YOUR REGISTRATION NOW**



Pennsylvania Avenue is among the world's most famous streets

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c/o Frank Ambrose, Editor  
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