



# PANTANELLA NEWS

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#100

June 2010

## Been There!-Did That!-Seen That! Now it's Tampa Oct 4 to 7

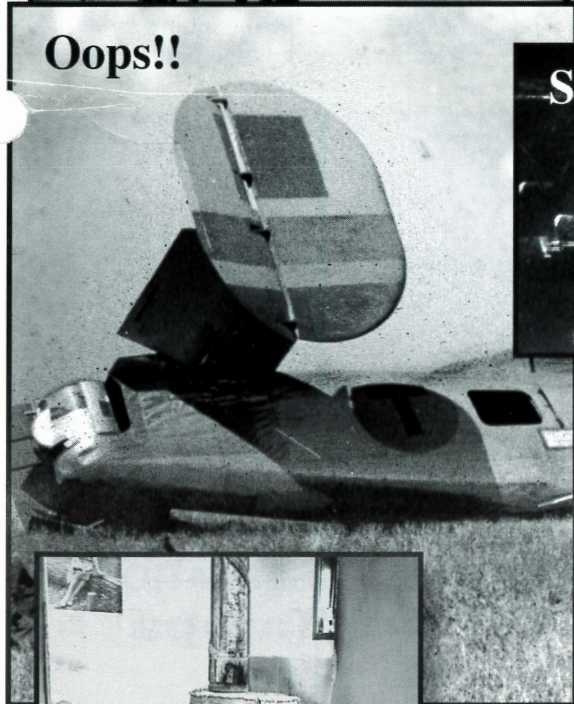
The Vatican



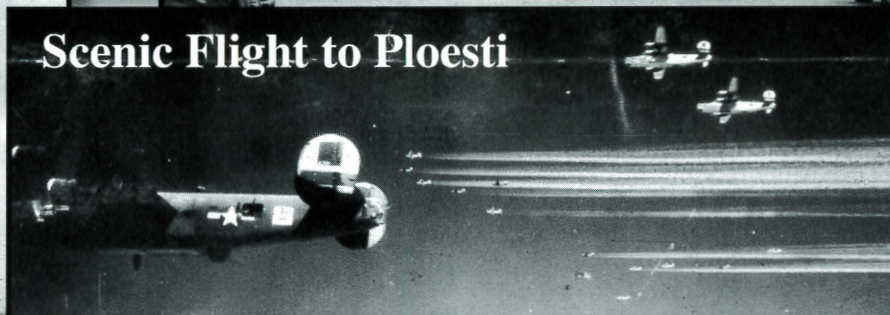
McCook, Nebraska



Oops!!



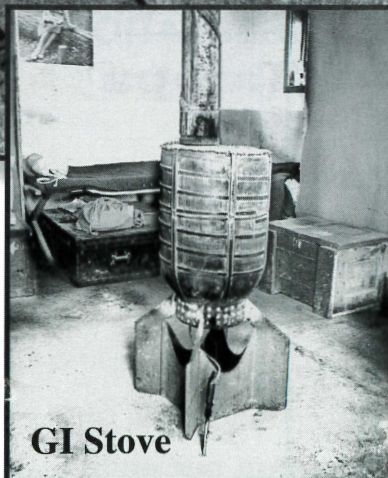
Scenic Flight to Ploesti



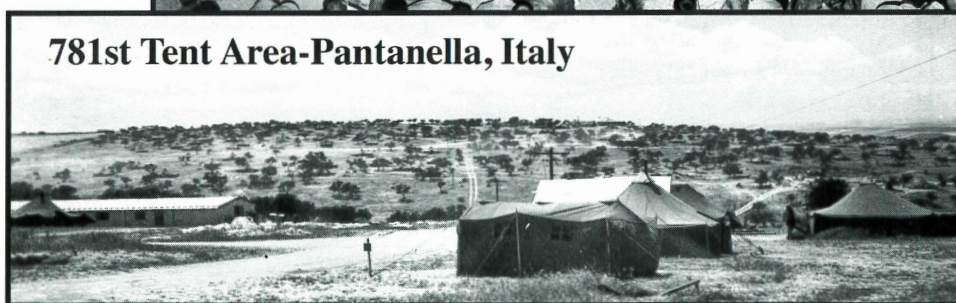
Target  
For Today  
'Vienna'



GI Stove



781st Tent Area-Pantanello, Italy



All Photos from the  
Frank Ambrose Collection



## MEMBERS KEEP IN TOUCH

Notify or contact any or all of the individuals listed below for any FW's---Address Changes--News Or Whatever

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PANTANELLA NEWS  
Editor: Frank Ambrose

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

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

## The Price of Victory!

### 781st Bomb Squadron Crews and Planes Shot Down...

Of the 209 781st BS crew members shot down in WWII:-

- 40 men were KIA,
- 75 became prisoners of war,
- 11 were interned in Switzerland,
- 44 were listed as MIA for a time, having bailed out over hostel territory and with the help from locals, evaded the enemy and returned to our base in Italy.

• Another 39 were also listed as MIA by bailing out over friendly territory and then returning to our base in Italy.

• Downed crew members were held in the following POW camps in Germany:- Luft I at Barth, Luft III at Sagan (Zagan), Luft IV at Gross-tychow, Stalag VIIA at Nurnberg, Stalag XIB at Fallingbomel, and Stalag XIII D at Moosburg.

• Two Crews were held prisoners in a camp in Rumania.

• The first 781st B-24 was shot down May 30, 1944 and the last aircraft went down on March 22, 1945.

• During the 10 month period of the war six 81st planes went down on missions over Blechhammer,

• 5 planes were downed over Vienna, •

3 planes were knocked down over Ploesti,

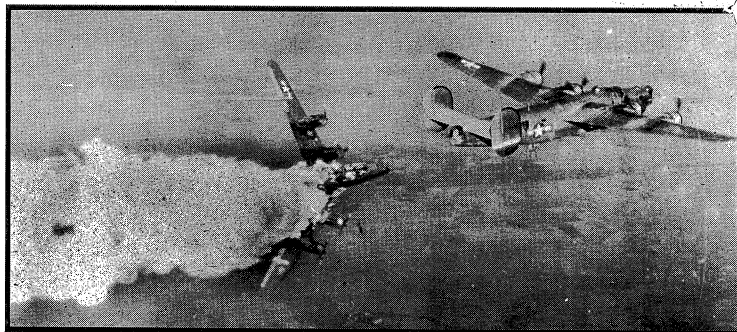
• 2 planes went down over Friedrichsafen.

• 2 planes shot down over Regensburg,

• 1 plane was shot down on each of the missions over Neukirken, Austria; Brux, Czechoslovakia; Marobor, Yugoslavia; Amstetten, Austria; and Nove Zamby, Hungary.

• Six 781st B.S. Aircrew members were KIA in crash landings returning from missions, accidents, or flying with other bomb groups: Cpl. Redford J. Burroughs, 02/01/45; Lt. Larry H. Dickson, 10/28/44; S/Sgt. Carl W. Gruber, 07/22/44; S/Sgt. James D. Kelley 02/07/45; Lt. William T. Newborg, 07/05/44; and Sgt. Dan White, 12/01/44.

In total, 47 B-24's were assigned to the 781st BS in WWII. Of these, 21 were shot down, 7 others crashed and or were salvaged and at the end of hostilities in Europe the remaining 19 B24's were flown back to the United States.



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## Mission # 154 Linz /Amstetten, Austria

On 2 March 1945, the 465th Bomb Group flew two attack units. The first unit, with no 781st Crews participating, attacked the North Main Marshaling Yards at Linz, Austria while the second attack unit which included seven Crews from the 781st Squadron, hit the Marshaling Yards at Amstetten, Austria by Pathfinder methods. 781st Crews participating in the attack were piloted by Capt. Blankenship (with Lt. Hudson), and Lts. Wilcox, Maccani, Benson, Ellison, Donahue and French.

The French Crew failed to return to base and their aircraft was last seen heading East in the vicinity of Amstetten with one engine out and another smoking.

Members of the missing Crew were: 2nd Lt. Robert E. French, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Kenneth L. Parkhurst, Co-pilot; F/O Davis L. Bowman, Navigator; S/Sgt. William B. Briggs, Engineer; S/Sgt. Frederick P. Wagner, RIO; Sgt. Francis M. Donahue, Jr., Gunner; Sgt. Harold F. Quagan, Gunner; Sgt. Denny W. Horton, Gunner; and Sgt. Lehman V. Wood, Gunner.

In 1986, Ken Parkhurst (French Co-Pilot) wrote, "In heavy, accurate flak the group made a 360 degree turn over the target. Took a hit in engines #3 and #4. Lost power intermittently in engines # 1 and #2. Altitude loss from 29,000 feet to 5,000 feet in 45 minutes. Reached the edge of a weather system on east side of Lake Balaton. Knew from the morning briefing Russians held the east side of lake and Germany the west side.

Order given by Bob French to bail out rather than risk emergency landing in the hilly terrain. I drifted over a small village and landed in a farmer's field.

In a matter of minutes I was surrounded by 25-30 very friendly Hungarians. In about 5 minutes 2 Russian soldiers rode up on horses yelling 'Tovarich, Tovarich'. They took me to a small station house, stripped

and searched me and, when they saw my pack of Camel cigarettes, I was accepted as an American. I was then taken to the village of Taneshi, around midnight, Bob French strolled in.

We were assigned a Russian sergeant to take us to an Allied mission in Debrecen. En route we spent several nights with Hungarian families. My high school German helped a bit to communicate and we even played poker. Food was very scarce and our diet consisted mainly of cabbage soup and jellied horsemeat. We were able to trade some Nylon shroud lines for eggs occasionally but most meat and vegetables were taken by the Russians.



Robert E. French Crew, L to R  
Rear - William B. Briggs, Engr.; Francis M. Donahue, Jr., Gunner; Frederick P. Wagner, RIO; Denny W. Horton, Gunner; Harold F. Quagan, Top Gunner; Lehman V. Wood, Gunner.  
Front - David L. Bowman, Navigator; Nicholas V. Schaps, Bombardier; Robert E. French, Pilot; Kenneth L. Parkhurst, Co-Pilot.

Our experiences with the Russians consisted of a few lunches and dinners at local headquarters. The Russians treated us very well. Although food was a problem, they shared with us what they had. Vodka and wine were abundant, so we were able to survive. Cigarettes were made by rolling tobacco leaves into newspapers.

For the most part we found the Russians extremely friendly and very emotional. Tears were not uncommon when we left a Russian camp.

After about 10 days, we were joined by 7 other U.S. Airmen (not our crew), 2 British agents, and one u.s. agent. One of the British was a young woman and she became our interpreter. Bob and I were exposed to a part of the war we had never before experienced.

We arrived in Debrecen, Hungary at 11:00 p.m. the 13th of March and were greeted by General Keyes, who

arose from bed to dine and chat with us. But best of all was the Red Cross kit with toothpaste and brush."

We returned to Naples and, after a day of interrogation and delousing, we were flown to Bari for an overnight stay in the hospital and more delousing.

On March 18, 1945, just 16 days after getting hit, we were returned to the squadron. After a week of R & R at Capri, it was back to work with our next mission April 7.

In a postscript, Parkhurst noted, 'After my discharge at Camp Beale, California, I returned home to Berkeley. The next day I applied for a driver's license and was refused because I did not have my parents' signature of approval, you see, I was 3 weeks short of my 21st birthday

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813 879 4800.**

Card from Roy Byrd, Toyahvale, Texas with the following inscription,  
*Frank, Thanx for doing a splendid job keeping PN alive.*  
**Roy Byrd  
Bombadier, Hudson Crew**

## I Remember My Father S/Sgt William O. Maloney...

Ball gunner, Tryon Crew

by Ann Maloney

My father, William O. Maloney, a World War II veteran, hospital administrator, devoted husband and loving father of eight died Dec. 9, 2009. He was 89.

He rarely talked with his family about his World War II experiences, preferring to focus on the life he and my mother Lee, his wife of more than 65 years, had created for themselves in New Orleans, where they raised eight children.

But he was drawn backward in time when he attended a reunion of his Crew in 1995 in Montana, hosted by Stanley E. Tryon and his wife Hope E. Robins Tryon, Mr. Tryon was the pilot of the Liberator on which he served.

Mr. Tryon had wanted to get his crew together again for some time, so he brought them to his home state for the reunion. He died a year later in 1996.

As a result of Mr. Tryon's efforts, my father began to open up about his war experiences and for the first time our family was given a rare chance to hear tales firsthand from him. Perhaps the most dramatic was the story about the crew's near-fatal collision with a fellow Liberator.

A published report in the pilot's hometown paper noted the following: "Rough air recently hit two Liberators as they moved to new formation positions while enroute to their target in Graz, Austria, three of them so close together that a propeller on one ripped deep gashes into the other.

Although the underside of the top Liberator was mangled by the collision both bombers returned safely to the base with every man uninjured. Flying as pilot in the Liberator with the severed prop was 1st Lt. Stanley E. Tryon, 24, recently promoted to that rank, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Tryon, of Rushville.

"I was flying in the bomber in the rear position, when the plane flying in the lead had an engine conk out on her. The plane flying ahead and to the right side of me looked like he had to take over the lead for the bomb run. I was readying my plane for the maneuver to the right when I heard a roar and a ripping sound like a can-opener at work. I didn't realize until a moment later that my extreme left prop was playing havoc with the catwalk of the Liberator known as 'Old Tiger.' That alone wasn't bad enough but when one Tiger's bombs was released by the impact, dropped through their ripped door and bounced off the fuselage of our Lib below, and then toppled down - I think my entire crew aged a couple of moons. Well, I brought my war bird back with the whole left prop amputated. The Tiger had her

underside mangled."

My parents stayed with the Tryons during the reunion and when they returned, my father became more open about those dark days. He never shared terrible tales from the war, focusing more on stories about what it was like to serve his country. He talked about what it was like to be aboard that noisy bomber, the sense of fearlessness that men who are so young have.

My parents met while attending Loyola University in New Orleans. Almost from the first, the war influenced their lives and who they became. They were engaged on Dec. 7, 1941. He enlisted in May 6, 1942 and entered active service on Feb. 23, 1943, serving in the Air Force until Nov. 8, 1945. He served three years on the continental U.S. and four months in foreign service.

My parents were happily married April 24, 1944. Their beaming faces were captured in a single black and white photo that looks like something from a Hollywood movie: My father so handsome in his uniform; my mother in a gorgeous handmade satin gown.

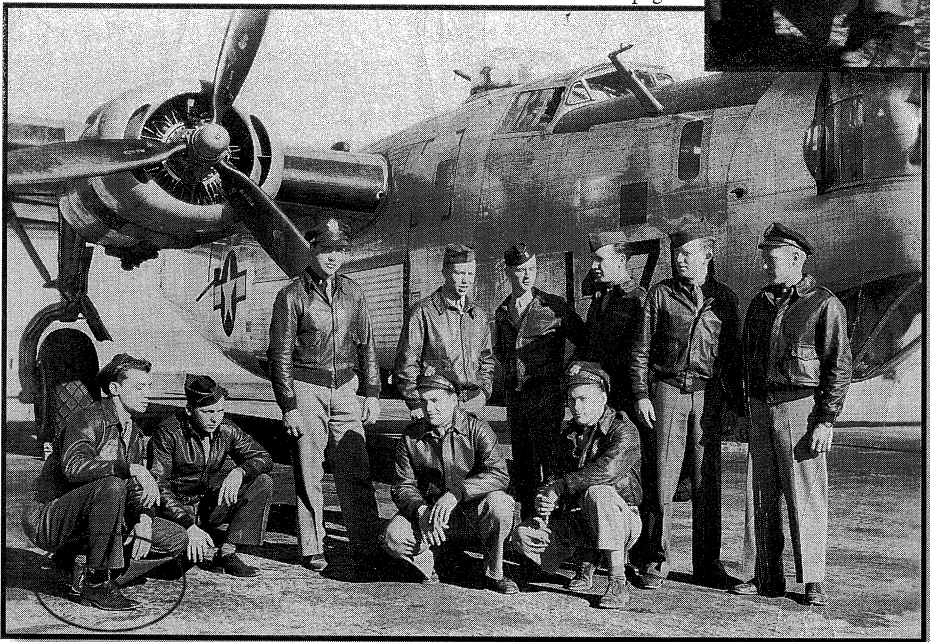
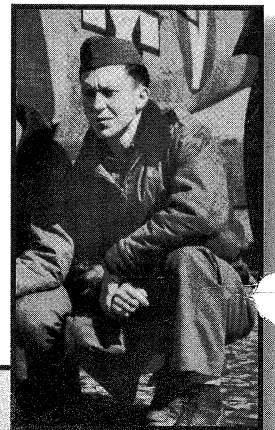
During the months serving in the United States, my mother traveled from town to town, getting jobs and finding apartments, so she could be with my father when he was able to get leave. When he was shipped overseas, she returned home to wait with all of the other young brides in New Orleans.

He was honorably discharged from the service as a staff sergeant, after serving as an AP Armorer and Gunner 612. He was responsible for keeping guns and turrets in working order, supervising the loading and fusing of bombs and flew as a ball turret gunner on combat missions on a B-24 Liberator with the 781st BS, 465th BG, 15th. Air Force in Europe. Campaigns included No Appennines, Po Valley, Rhineland and Central Europe. He received an American Theater Ribbon, EAMET Theater Ribbon with four bronze stars, Good Conduct Medal, Air Medal, WWII Victory Medal and a Certificate of Meritorious Service.

What always amazed me was that after his service, he came back and built a life that followed the American dream, a simple plan of working hard to get what he wanted.

With the help of the GI Bill, he completed his education and graduated in social sciences from Loyola University in New Orleans and began a career as a journalist, then in public relations at a hospital run by nuns who saw his potential and groomed him to be a hospital administrator.

Cont. next page



When the floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina retreated from the New Orleans home of my father William O. Maloney in September 2005, among the items recovered was a pair of Air-Force issued uniform shoes. The same shoes that he is shown wearing in this photo taken taken with his crew April 1945 at Pantanella.

Standing, L to R:- F/O Robert E. Ledwith, navigator; 1st Lt. Stanley E. Tryon, pilot; 2nd Lt. Rumold B. Diegel, co-pilot. Kneeling R to L:- S/S Oliver M. Nelson, top turret gunner; S/S William M. Pruitt, tail gunner; S/S Wayne F. Weber, radio operator; S/S William G. Boyer, aerial engineer; Cpl. Kenneth T. Demott, nose gunner; and S/S William O. Maloney, ball gunner



## 781st BS Association Annual Business Meeting Agenda

The Annual Business Meeting of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association is scheduled to be held October 6, 2010 7:00 pm at the Doubletree Hotel in Tampa, Fl.

The Agenda will be as follows:-

Call to Order:

Invocation:

Pledge of Allegiance:

Secretary's Report:

Treasurer's Report:

Unfinished Business:

New Business:

2010 Reunion Report

Future Reunion

Election of Officers

Other business

Adjourn:

'My Father' from Page 4

He and my mother raised eight children, ensuring that we each received a Catholic education. An avid golfer, he was also a loyal New Orleans Saints fan and season ticket-holder from the very first season.

My Father was an accomplished photographer and home cook. After he retired, he and my mother became beachcombers -- traveling to Florida, Caribbean and South Pacific -- and spent time with their family.

We miss his wry sense of humor, huge capacity for forgiveness and empathy, which translated into his being a compassionate man, who despite all of life's demands always put his wife and children first.

Did the war shape him? I have to think it did. I have to think it made him appreciate, not only his country, but the importance of having a home where one felt loved and safe from the potential turmoil and horror of the outside world that he learned about as such a young man.

I miss Daddy, but I take comfort that my little world and this great big world is a better place because of him and the men of his generation.

.....Ann Maloney

**REGISTER  
NOW  
781st 2010  
REUNION  
TAMPA**



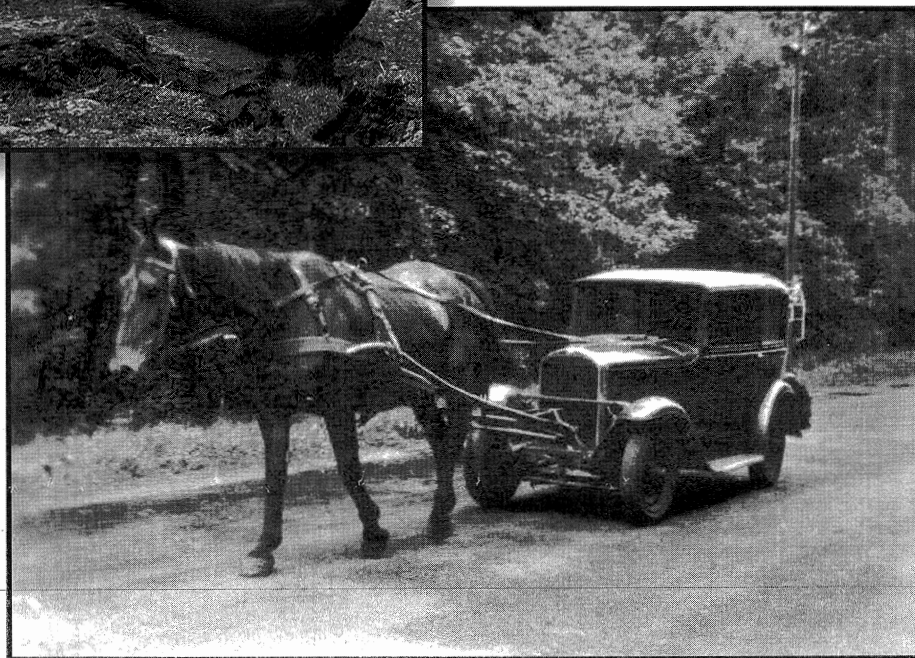
I found these unusual, interesting and somewhat amusing photographs while browsing thru my photographic collection. The two images were taken in England of incidences that made the war years appear a little less grim. I thought I ought to share them with you.

On the left, how would you have felt having gotten up in the morning and found this unexploded bomb in your front yard?

In the photo below, this car with a fifty-horse powered engine was replaced with the more efficient one-horse variety.

Leave it to the Brits!

...Frank Ambrose



**781st BS Assoc. 2010 Reunion**  
**October 4-5-6-7,**  
**Doubletree Hotel Tampa Westshore Airport**  
4500 West Cypress Street, Tampa, Florida,  
**Tel: 1- 813 879 4800**

**Reunion Agenda**  
**Complimentary Continental Breakfast every Morning**  
**Monday, Oct. 4:**

3:00 PM Registration/Hospitality

**Tuesday, Oct. 5:**

8:00 AM Bus to Fantasy of Flight

**Wednesday, Oct. 6:**

Free Day

Nearby shopping amusement parks as well as the Liberty ship located at Channel side in Tampa next to the Tampa Aquarium.

Busch Gardens and many, many more other Attractions

**Thursday, Oct. 7:**

8:00 AM: bus ride to MacDill AFB for the Memorial Service at the base chapel

12:00 PM: lunch at the Officers Club.

1:30 PM: Static display of the KC-135 and a windshield tour of the base.

3:30 PM: Bus back to Hotel

7:00 PM: Banquet at the Doubletree

**All Times Subject to Change**



## 781st to Visit 'Fantasy of Flight' In Tampa

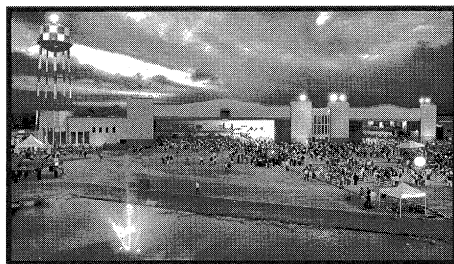
One of the events booked for the up-coming reunion is a day at the *'Fantasy of Flight Museum'*. Our group is scheduled to spend all day Tuesday, October 5th. there.

*'Fantasy of Flight'* is an aviation-themed attraction built around decades of historic achievements in flight. With the world's largest private vintage and restored aircraft collection, themed immersion experiences, flight simulators, interactive exhibits and daily aerial demonstrations,



Families can climb aboard the huge 1944 Short Sunderland flying boat and also scamper through a B-17 Flying Fortress, where the bomb hatch offers the sensation of flying over enemy countryside.

Flight simulators provide the experience of shooting down enemy aircraft in the South Pacific. And an Audio Tour of vintage and restored aircraft broadcasts special effects and remarkable stories and details about the 40-plus planes and their pilots, all written and narrated by Kermit Weeks.



A special tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen honors these brave African-American pilots who overcame extreme odds with dignity and valor.

As you recall, those 'Redtails' baby sat you guys on many occasions to and from the target.

### ATTENTION MEMBERS

You may have noticed that this issue of the 'Newsletter' consists of only 8 Pages. I am projecting only 4 pages for the next issue unless I receive submissions from all of you. Are you going to do something about it?

...Frank Ambrose, Editor

## The 15th Air Force

In the 18 months of existence, operating principally from the complex of airfields in southern Italy, destroyed all gasoline production within its range in southern Europe; knocked out all the major aircraft factories in its sphere; and destroyed 6,282 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

The 15th crippled the enemy's transportation system over half of once-occupied Europe with repeated fighter and bomber attacks. On occasion it helped disperse enemy counter attacks and spearheaded the advances of our own armies.

The 15th dropped 303,842 tons of bombs on enemy targets in 12 countries of Europe, including military installations in eight capital cities. Its combat personnel made 148,955 heavy bomber sorties and 87,732 fighter sorties against the enemy. It lost 3,364 aircraft and 21,671 personnel killed, wounded, missing and taken prisoner -- 20,430 bomber crewmen and 1,187 fighter pilots.

The 15th fought four broad campaigns: against enemy oil, enemy air force, enemy communications, and enemy ground forces. Most vital of the 15th's oil targets was the Ploesti complex of refineries, which contributed about 30% of the entire Axis oil supply and an equal amount of gasoline.

Ploesti was protected by 150 first class fighters and 250 heavy flak guns when the 15th, with the cooperation of the RAF 205th Group of night bombers, began a series of attacks against it on April 5. The campaign continued until August 19.

15th and RAF bombers flew 5287 sorties, dropping 12,870 tons of bombs. The cost was 237 heavies (15 of them RAF), 10 P-38 dive bombers and 39 escorting fighters. More than 2,200 American Airmen were lost.

But results were good.

At the end of the campaign the refineries were reduced to only 10% of their normal rate of activity and during the entire period from April to August the average production rate was reduced by 60%.

## Wrong e-mail Address...

A Minneapolis couple decided to go to Florida to thaw out during a particularly icy winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years earlier.

Because of hectic schedules, it was difficult to coordinate their travel schedules. So, the husband left Minnesota and flew to Florida on Thursday, with his wife flying down the following day.

The husband checked into the hotel. There was a computer in his room, so he decided to send an email to his wife. However, he accidentally left out one letter in her email address, and without realizing his error, sent the e-mail.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston, a widow had just returned home from her husband's funeral. He was a minister who was called home to glory following a heart attack.

The widow decided to check her e-mail expecting messages from relatives and friends. After reading the first message, she screamed and fainted.

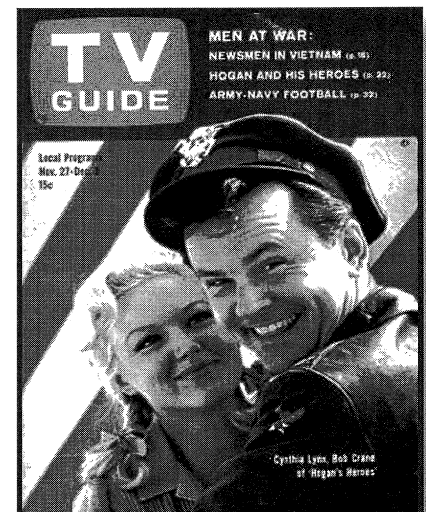
The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen which read:

To: My Loving Wife  
Subject: I've Arrived  
Date: October 16, 2005

I know you're surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now and you are allowed to send emails to your loved ones. I've just arrived and have been checked in.

I've seen that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then! Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.

P. S. Sure is freaking hot down here!!!!



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## FOLDED WINGS

**Walter Longacre** Nose Gunner  
ASHLEY CREW

**Walter N. Longacre**, 86, of Fremont, Nebraska, died Saturday, April 3, 2010, at Nye Legacy in Fremont.

He was born April 17, 1923, in Humphrey to Harlow and Elsie (Bunker) Longacre. He grew up in Humphrey and was a 1940 high school graduate there. He worked for United Airlines in Cheyenne, Wyo., for several years.

He then entered the U.S. Army Air Force and served from Dec. 7, 1942, to Sept. 5, 1945, during World War II, flying 51 missions over various targets in Europe and France as a nose gunner in a B-24 Bomber.

He received the Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak clusters. He worked for farm equipment dealers, managing for several years. He owned and operated Longacre's Texaco for 13 years.

He married Ann Dworak on Sept. 8, 1948, in Clarkson.

He was a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Fremont.

Survivors include: his wife, Ann Longacre of Fremont; a brother, Donald Longacre of Fremont; and four sisters-in-law, Helen Hawkins of Clarkson, Lillian Saalfeld of Schuyler, Mary Ladwig of Schuyler and Rosemary Longacre-Kerndt of Phoenix.

He was preceded in death by a brother, three brothers-in-law and a sister-in-law.

A funeral Mass was held at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Fremont with the Rev. James deAnda officiating.

A military graveside service was conducted by the Fremont Honor Guard of Veterans of Foreign Wars

## Albert Nagel: S2 Section

From: dakaferlady@gmail.com  
Subject: in loving memory  
Date: May 16, 2010  
To: fambrose@frontiernet.net

Dear Frank,

As I write this to you, the tears are fresh on my face. I got word that last night **Albert Nagel**, my grandpa passed away. I'm sicken with sadness beyond. I know that we all must eventually go, but I wasn't ready to let my grandpa go.

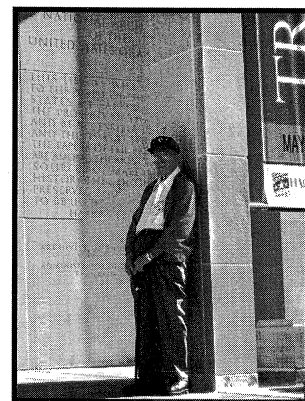
This upcoming Saturday I will be getting married. And I know that I need to enjoy that day but my heart aches for the loss of my grandfather. I wanted to let you know personally, how grateful

I am that I had the chance to spend such a wonderful trip with him for his WWII reunion. And also the chance to have my article that he loved and read, before his passing.

Attached is one of my favorite pictures of him from that trip.

With great sadness,

.....*Kristin Nagel*



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

## Presidents Corner

### 781st Friends –

Now, instead of shoveling snow we are mowing grass!

Carole, our Executive Secretary, has been working to update our mailing list. Please let us know if you are not receiving the Pantanella News and would like to, or if you are receiving it and no longer read it. Any help you can give her will be greatly appreciated.

Originally only 781st members that were based at Pantanella Air Base in Italy were eligible to be members. The Bylaws have been changed. Any family member or any person dedicated to preserving the history of the association is eligible for Associate Membership and will receive the Pantanella News. Dues currently are \$10.00 per year. The status of your membership is on the address label of your Pantanella News. We urge you to ask people in your family to become Associate Members. We need them to perpetuate the Association.

And then invite them to go with you to the 2010 781st Bomb Squadron Association Reunion in Tampa, FL.

*Orren Lee*



## ATTENTION: Vets and Families...

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their **DD-214's** online:

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html>

This may be particularly helpful for Military veterans and the next

of kin of deceased former military members to now use this new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site.

Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized.

The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

# PANTANELLA NEWS June 2010



**TAMPA**

**Oct 4th - 7th  
2010**

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**70**

[illegible]

ARTHUR R 44

**Cartoon by Tom Arthur, Navigator, Anthon Crew, 1944**