

781st BOMB SQUADRON | 465th BOMB GROUP | 15th AIR FORCE



PANTANELLA NEWS

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Reunion 2013 November 10th-13th Charleston, SC



Activities will include a Charleston City Tour, a Tour and Luncheon at the Citadel, and a Tour of Joint Base in Charleston.



PANTANELLA NEWS

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Treasurer: Carole Lee

Secretary: Debbie Cherry

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Board Member: Don Muncie

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PANTANELLA NEWS

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.

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President's Letter



I believe summer has finally arrived. We have had a long winter in the Midwest. We certainly timed it right to move into an apartment. I'm sure you have read about our devastating ice storm. We didn't have a yard to clean up after the storm. The City is still cleaning up branches. There are 4 drop off sites in town and they are just mountainous. We have lost a lot of trees.

Dale Samuelson's widow sent us a copy of a paper with his WWII Experiences he had written. A portion of that paper is included in this newsletter. We thank

her for sending it. If other members have written a paper, please send us a copy for the Newsletter. That is what we need, your stories. If you haven't written them down, now is the time to do it.

I will be hosting a dinner for my 90th birthday for all registered attendees at the 781st Reunion in Charleston on Tuesday evening (November 12th). I can't think of a better way to celebrate than to have all our 781st friends with us. I am looking forward to the reunion and hope to see many of you there and also, any of the other squadron members.

— Orren Lee



Reunion 2013 November 10th-13th Charleston, SC

**Hotel Information****SHERATON CHARLESTON AIRPORT HOTEL**

4770 Goer Drive • North Charleston, SC 29406

Phone: 843-747-1900**Fax: 843-744-6108**

Rates are \$79.00 plus tax (state/local taxes are currently 13.5%) These rates will be honored three days pre and post conference. The hotel will offer complimentary, round-trip airport shuttle. Inbound guests can contact the hotel upon retrieval of luggage at (888) 747-1900 for pickup. Outbound hotel guests can arrange for return airport transportation with the hotel front desk.

The hotel will offer scheduled, complimentary shuttle service to the Historic District. Please see hotel desk for scheduled Historic District shuttle times.

The hotel will offer complimentary shuttle service for hotel guests within a two mile radius of the hotel to include the Tanger Outlet Mall and area restaurants.

Reservations Instructions

Call 1-888-747-1900 and identify yourself as part of the 781st Bomb Squadron Reunion group. Give your name, requested type of room, requested bed type (king, double/double) and check in and check out dates. (Any requests for special room arrangements must be made at the time of this call and cannot be guaranteed.) Individual reservations must be made before October 11, 2013. Guest check in time is 3:00 pm and check out time is 12:00 noon.

781st Bomb Squadron Reunion

Charleston, South Carolina • November 10-13, 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
 <p>Check in at SHERATON CHARLESTON AIRPORT HOTEL \$79.00 per room per night plus tax</p>  <p>5:00pm Hospitality Room Opens with Deli Buffet</p> <p>5:00pm - 10:00pm Registration Hospitality Room</p>	 <p>9:00am - 11:00pm CHARLESTON CITY BUS TOUR</p>  <p>11:30am - 2:00pm THE CITADEL CAMPUS TOUR/LUNCH</p>  <p>5:00pm BOARD MEETING</p> <p>Hospitality Room Open</p>	 <p>9:00am BUSINESS MEETING</p> <p>AFTERNOON FREE</p> <p>HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN ALL DAY</p>  <p>Evening Meal Hosted by Orren Lee (Complimentary for registered attendees)</p>	 <p>9:00am - 2:00pm JOINT BASE TOUR/LUNCH</p>  <p>MEMORIAL SERVICE</p>  <p>GROUP PHOTO</p>  <p>7:00pm (Cash Bar 6:30pm) FINAL EVENING BANQUET</p>	<p>Depart</p> <p>ACTIVITY PACKAGE: \$165.00 Per person</p> <p>INCLUDES: Welcome Packet with Name Badges</p> <p>Deli Buffet</p> <p>Charleston City Bus Tour</p> <p>The Citadel Campus Tour/Lunch</p> <p>Evening Meal hosted by Orren Lee</p> <p>Joint Base Tour/ Lunch</p> <p>Memorial Service</p> <p>Final Evening Banquet with Entertainment</p> <p>All Taxes and Most Gratuities Transportation to Group Activities</p>

If you would like receive updates about the reunion as details are finalized,
please email Debbie Cherry at debbiescherry@gmail.com
to be included on an email list.

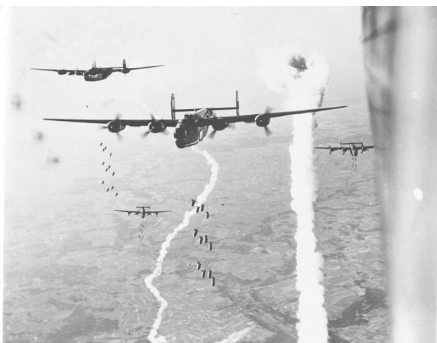
Fifteenth Air Force: The First 40 Years 1943 - 1983

Earl Lienart submitted this excerpt from the book: Fifteenth Air Force: The First 40 Years, 1943 – 1983 as published by the Dictorate of Public Affairs for the Fifteenth Air Force. We are sharing the first Chapter, which covers the World War II years of the Fifteenth Air Force. This is part two of that chapter.

Combat Operations Against Hitler's Europe

Fifteenth flew its first combat mission from North African bases on its activation day. Flying Fortress groups from the 5th Bomb Wing in a ground support mission attacked both the La Spezia naval base in Italy and the nearby Vezzano railway bridge, a communications target north of Rome. The next day, November 2, the command directed its finest strategic efforts against the Messerschmidt ME-109 airframe works at Winer Newstadt, Austria, dropping 312 tons of bombs. The invaders encountered 120 to 160 enemy aircraft of which 56 were destroyed and another 27 probably destroyed, while losing 10 B-17's. This mission was considered to be the "outstanding event" for the initial four months of operations before the "Big Week" effort of February 1944 (described later).

It had been the intent of the Pentagon planners that Headquarters Fifteenth and its newly assigned units move soon onto permanent installations located in the heel of the Italian boot. There was no problem from the standpoint of ground action, for it had been two months since the Allied invasions of Italy, and that offensive did not stall until it was north of Naples. Rather, the airfields were not ready by mid-November due to rains and construction difficulties. Enough prog-



ress had been made by December 1, 1943, however, that Headquarters Fifteenth was able to close down officially and reopen for business the same day 475 miles closer to its assigned bombing arena across the Mediterranean at Bari, Italy. There, 200 rooms were occupied in a large, modern office building formerly used by the Italian Air Force as a zone headquarters.

The movement of units was phased, so that no stand-down was necessary, and operations continued for some time from both North African and Italian bases. On moving day, more than 100 B-17s bombed the Turin, Italy, ball bearings works and marshaling yards. With fighter escort, B-26s attacked bridges and railroad facilities at three locations. Because of weather, B-24s and accompanying P-38s were recalled.

Fifteenth's move was a classic case of logistics triumphing over adversity. Existing airfields in the Bari/Foggia area, which had previously been badly battered by Allied bombing, had to be repaired, and new ones bulldozed out of the Italian plain. Enormous engineering problems were involved. Steel mats had to be used to keep the bombers from bogging down in the spongy turf. Steady winter rains added to the misery of men and machines. Even an auxiliary road network had to be built. Yet, although a treat supply problem existed, combat crews never lacked material with which to fight. Bomb stockage kept ahead of requirements, and gasoline was piped in and stored in adequate field facilities.

A month after the move General Doolittle was reassigned as commander of the Eighth. He was succeeded by Major General Nathan F. Twining on January 3, 1944. General Twining had served in the South Pacific area before his new assignment. He remained as Fifteenth's commander until

completion of the Combined Bombing Offensive 16 months later.

Space does not permit a lengthy story of Fifteenth's operational activities in the period before May 1945, but a few highlights will illustrate the achievements. On December 19, 1943, Fifteenth made its first mass raid into Germany proper, attacking the Messerschmitt plant at Augsburg. On January 2, 1944, air attacks began in preparation for the Anzio, Italy, landing behind the ground battle line stymied in the Cassino area. In the most intensive phase of this beach-head isolation campaign, 600 sorties were flown between January 16 and January 22 against rail yards and transportation centers in central Italy, as preparation for the Anzio landing executed on the latter date.

The next major episode in the Fifteenth's wartime history was one of the most controversial of the conflict. This was the bombing on February 15, 1944, of the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino in preparation for an assault designed to end the U.S. Fifth Army's month-long stalemate before the Germans' Gustav Line south of Rome. Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, commander of the European theater of operations at the time, saw a radio antenna on the abbey roof when they scouted the structure several days earlier in a Piper Cub observation plane. However, continued pressures from ground commanders about the infantry advance up the road to Rome from Naples being impeded beyond the time schedule led General Eaker to acquiesce in destroying the obstacle.

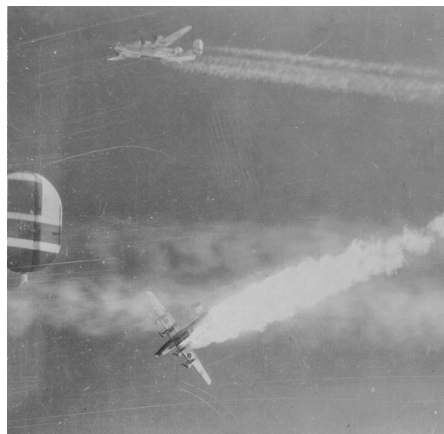
Shortly after that came the "Big Week" of February 19-25 for the Combined Bombing Offensive. During the only important period of good weather in several months, Fifteenth and Eighth jointly participated in mass raids against the German aircraft industry. Fifteenth



lost 14 bombers out of 183 dispatched on its first day of participation, February 22, against Regensburg. The next day 102 bombers went against a ball bearing plant in Austria, losing 19 aircraft. On February 24 Fifteenth attacked an aircraft component plant at Steyr, Austria, losing 17 bombers. The intensity of the air battles was reflected in loss claims. On February 22, the escort fighters for the Fifteenth and Eighth forces claimed 60 German fighters at the price of the lost. On February 24, the bombers claimed 108 German fighters destroyed, while the escorts claimed 37.

Fortunately, the weather held good for the fourth successive day as both Fifteenth and Eighth attacked German aircraft factories in southern Germany on February 25. Fifteenth and Eighth attacked German aircraft factories in southern Germany on February 25. Fifteenth launched 400 bombers, of which 176 attacked the main target at Regensburg, while the remainder were dispatched against other targets at a shorter flying range. These actions concluded a week of maximum effort to paralyze the German aircraft industry and defeat the German Air Force before the deadline for the Normandy invasion, looming ahead in June 1944. Fifteenth lost 89 bombers total, or an average of about six percent per mission. Bomber losses per sortie were nearly five times as great as those of the escorts.

On March 15, units of Fifteenth joined with those of the Twelfth in a mass saturation bombing designed to eliminate German resistance in the Cassio area; the town was destroyed, but Allied armies were unable to break through at the time. Fifteenth flew its first "thousand ton" raid on March 28, one of a five-day series of especially heavy missions against rail yards and industrial areas in northern Italy in support of "Operation Strangle." This operation was carried out from March 19 to May 11 to cut off supplies to the German troops. On April 3 bombers



made the first heavy air attack on Budapest, Hungary. The next day Fifteenth's heavy bombers made the first air attack on Bucharest, Rumania. Other special missions reached to Sofia, Bulgaria, and later to Athens, Greece. During the May 25-27 period, hundreds of bombers dropped more than 3,000 tons on 14 rail and transportation centers in southern France as part of the preparation for the upcoming cross-channel invasion.

With the success of this preinvasion bombing support, an order was issued from the USSAF to Fifteenth on the afternoon of the D-Day, June 6, 1944, stating: "From this on you need spend no further effort in the battle area. We will handle it here. You go back and keep working on the sources of military strength, particularly air strength, deep in Germany." With this directive, strategic bombing missions were intensified against central and eastern Europe.

Previously, Fifteenth had begun strikes on April 5 against the Ploesti, Rumania, oil refining installations as a crowning achievement of the spring campaign. The refinery complex had already been struck by the Eighth, beginning August 1, 1943, but the 11 remaining refineries still had a production of capacity of eight million tons, a reduction of only one million. These attacks continued until August 24, 1944, when Russian land forces moved into the area.

Meanwhile, on June 2, 1944, "Operation Frantic" had begun. This was a system of shuttle missions by which U.S. Planes bombed eastern European targets and landed at one of the three airfields in western Russia. The operation began with a raid of B-17s and P-51s against Debrecen, Hungary. On July 22, Fifteenth established the first all-fighter shuttle to Russia. These missions occurred sporadically until September 13, ending because of Russian obstinacy, vulnerability of the airfields to German attack, increasing distance from the Eastern front, endangerment of Russo-American relations, and relative inefficiency of the system.

At the time of Ploesti missions were ending, Fifteenth's planes supported "Operation Anvil," the amphibious invasion of southern France. Simultaneously, for the first time since the V-1 flying bombs began to attack London on June 12, 1944, Fifteenth was called in to aid the months-long effort to destroy their launching and manufacturing sites. During August a total of 773.7 tons were dropped by 323 bombers against V-weapon plants at Ober Raderach, Germany.

Among proposals made after the successful occupation of southern France was one to move Fifteenth Air Force there from southern Italy. This could relieve bombers of the need to fly over the Alps, where where flying conditions were so often well-nigh prohibitive. Both Generals Spaatz and Eaker opposed the plan because it would require the investment of too much time and logistical support to reestablish satisfactory French bases. In addition, Fifteenth would no longer have been able to reach the vital targets in Czechoslovakia and eastern Germany. The proposal lapsed because of this opposition, although some planners hoped that a few of Fifteenth's groups might go to Russian-controlled bases in Hungary, a move which never occurred.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Dues are \$10.00 per year. The last time you paid dues is recorded on your Newsletter label. Send checks payable to 781st Bomb Squadron Assoc. to Carole Lee, 781st Bomb Squadron Treasurer, 4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308, Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

The 781st thanks the following people for their donations:

\$100.00 Josh Golden (son of Nathan Golden FW)
\$100.00 Douglas Hanson (son of Selmer Hanson FW)
\$100.00 J. Keith Lancaster

The following have sent in extra with their dues:

Ralph Bonser, Arthur Crandal
Louis Deslatte, Connie Hamilton



Shreveport, LA Reunion 2006. Ray Cauble doing a dance waiting for the bus to pick us up from the Casino. Is it a Victory Dance Ray?

My WWII Experiences

By Dale L. Samuelson, Lt. Col.,
Co-pilot, Hudson Crew

(Folded Wings December 2012 Pantanella News)

I was born in 1922. I joined the Army Aviation Cadet Program in 1942 and was discharged from the United States Air Force 30 years later in 1972. In the Aviation Pilot Program, I earned my wings and was then assigned as co-pilot on a B-24 Crew. After completing combat crew training, we were given a new airplane and told to fly to England for further orders. From there we were told to fly to Italy to replace one of the many crews lost in the Ploesti bombing raids. In Italy we were assigned to the 781st Bomb Squadron located at Pantanella Army Air Base.

First, I would like to tell about our aircraft. Over 19,000 Consolidated B-24 aircraft were built, more than any other aircraft in WWII. The B24J had four 14 cylinder, air-cooled radial engines, each rated at 1,200 hp at take-off. It carried four power operated turrets (nose, top, ball and tail), each with two fifty caliber machine guns, plus two guns in the waist position. It has a maximum speed of 3000 mph at 30,000 feet, but most combat missions were flown at around 230 mph. It could carry ten tons of bombs. And it cost about \$375,000 (1944) dollars, fully equipped.

Our Squadron flew its first combat mission on 5 May 1944 and continued flying combat missions until 26 April



1945, VE Day. The primary objectives of our Group and Squadron were: (1) to destroy the German Air Force in the air and on the ground, where ever it might be located within range. (2) Destroy German fighter aircraft plants, ball bearing plants, oil refineries, rubber plants, munitions factories, submarine pens and bases. (3) To support the battle on the Italian main land. (4) To weaken German positions in the Balkans.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

During this year of combat, our Group flew 191 combat missions over Southern Europe. Shot down 23 German aircraft, dropped 2,532 tons of bombs, and won two War Department Citations. Earned seven Battle Stars for Air Offensive Campaigns. Established the 15th Air Force record for bombing accuracy for



a single mission. Participated in the last heavy bomber raid over Nazi Germany in WWII. (I was on that last raid and it was my 35th and final mission) After flying 27 missions as copilot, I was upgraded to aircraft commander and flew my last 7 missions as such.

PROFILE OF A TYPICAL MISSION:

We were out of bed at 4 am. We dressed for cold weather. It was often 60 degrees below zero at 28,000 feet. A fast breakfast at mess hall then mission briefings conducted by the Squadron Commander and staff for the crew, then crew members had separate briefings. We were issued para-



chutes, May West's, flight lunches, cold weather gear, etc. Each crew member was issued an Escape and Evasion Kit to use in case of bail-out. Each kit contained a personal photo, paper money with a special seal, maps, compass, etc.

A 6x6 trucked our crew down to the aircraft. Crew members loaded their equipment and pre-flighted the aircraft then loaded aboard. At a preset time, engines were started and taxi started. Again at a pre-set time, our seven Squadron aircraft took-off, and was a part of our Groups 28 aircraft.

With hundreds of aircraft taking off from a number of different airfields, the problem of assembling the formation starts. This is an intricate plan of circling and climbing each Bomb Group until they are all in the proper place. This often takes over an hour, climbing and flying in circles, and sometimes looking directly into the sun, until the formation is assembled and heads out over the Adriatic Ocean. When clear, the commander orders the gunners to test fire the guns and to arm them for combat. The climb for altitude continues to get us over the Alps and on to the target. Over the initial point, the bombardier controls the aircraft until bombs away, and then we head for home, still looking for fighters. If the trip over the target and the trip home are uneventful, we land and are hauled up for debriefing. Before debriefing, we are lined up and the Flight Surgeon pours a slug of bourbon for each of us. This helps to bring us back to earth, for after flying from 8 to 10 hours and never leaving our seats; we are in a state of mild shock. The Flight Surgeons treatment also made the debriefing more productive.



FOLDED WINGS

RICHARD S. SEABRIDGE

(March 10, 1925 - November 15, 2011)
Richard S. Seabridge, 86, died Tuesday at his home in Lawrenceville, NJ. Born in Lawrenceville he was a life long resident. Mr. Seabridge was a World War II veteran having served in the Army Air Corp. He was a proficient aerial and ground gunner assigned to a B-24 bomber and was awarded numerous citations. He was a lifelong member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3022. Mr. Seabridge was a PSE&G lineman for 35 years before his retirement in 1981. He had a lifelong interest in breeding and raising champion racing and endurance pigeons and was recognized as an international authority having been credited with writing and publishing a manual on the subject. Mr. Seabridge co-founded Flying Tipplers of America, was past president of the Tipplers of U.S. and was winner of 45 National Grand Tippler Awards. – *As reported by his wife, Joyce E. Shive Seabridge.*



SELMER HANSON

Born on February 19, 1925 in Minot North Dakota, to Eugene and Sena Hanson. He was the 6th of 8 children. He was preceded in death by his siblings, Justin, Harold, Eunice, Marion, Helen and Bernard, son David, and granddaughter Grace. He is survived by his wife Doris, sister Ardys (Gilbert), children Cheryl, Douglas (Linda), Dennis (Jan), Thomas (Carol), Gregory (Sandy), and Bette, 13 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. Selmer was orphaned at the age of 6, and was taken in by his great-uncle Tom Beaverson and family. He later went to live with his sister Ardys at the home of Henry and Selma Bartz. He graduated from Downing High School in 1942. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1943, and was a turret gunner in the B-24 bomber, and flew more than 50 missions over Europe during the latter part of WWII. He was stationed in North Africa and Italy, and was awarded 5 Oak Clusters. After his military service, he attended Chicago School of Science & Technology in Chicago Illinois, and earned an Associates degree in Electronics. He met Doris Sirotiak from Boyceville, WI at a dance in 1948. They were married in 1952, in Stillwater, MN. He was hired by Honeywell Corp in 1950, where he worked

until he retired in 1985. Selmer & Doris made a home in Shoreview, MN where they raised seven children. Son David passed away at the age of 2 years, in 1958. During his early family days he was involved in the Civil Defense Corps and the church softball team. Later he was heavily involved in boy scouts, where he served as a district leader, and enjoyed many of the activities. He was a little league baseball coach for several years and was involved with the PTA at Turtle Lake Elementary School. He spent many hours driving his children to many sporting events, and was a great fan. Hobbies included: gardening, wood working, rope making, canoeing, camping, home remodeling, and small engine repair. Selmer retired in 1985 and moved with his wife to Downing, WI in 1985 where they built an earth sheltered home. During retirement he enjoyed golfing, bowling, wood working, tapping Maple trees for syrup, darts, and helping his children with home repairs. He was known for his outgoing personality, funny stories, and his love of the annual Hanson family reunion every August. He began the "long goodbye" when he started to exhibit the effects of Alzheimer's disease around the turn of the century. Selmer was cared for by his loving wife, and spent the last year of his life at St. Anthony Park Home, where he received compassionate and excellent care. He passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family on January 19, 2012.

JOSEPH FRANCIS FERGUSON

Joseph Francis Ferguson, age 89, of Aston, PA, died Wednesday, March 20, 2013 at home, surrounded by his loving family. Mr. Ferguson was a Veteran of the Army-Air Force and served during World War II. He was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross. Joseph was employed as a Lathe Operator with Uff's Machine Shop, Upland, PA, until his retirement in 1986. Joseph was the husband of the late Hannah Mack Ferguson. Survivors: Daughter: Joanne (Wayne) DeMarco of New Castle, DE, Son: Joseph (Martha) Ferguson of North Carolina, Loving Companion: Regina Grace, 5 Grandchildren, 7 Great-Grandchildren, 1 Great-Great Granddaughter. Funeral Mass: Saturday, 10:30 AM, at the Church Of St. Joseph (St. Mary's Chapel), 3255 Concord Road, Aston, PA. Visitation: Saturday, after 9:30 AM, at the church.

JOHN ZADROZNY SR.

90, of Belle Vernon, Fairhope, died Saturday, March 30, 2013 at his home. Born February

7, 1923 in Arnold City, PA he was the son of the late Pete and Christina Kosiba Zadrozny. Mr. Zadrozny was a lifelong resident of Belle Vernon, member of St. Joseph Polish National Catholic Church where he served a past council President. He was retired from Corning Glass of Charleroi as a Process Engineer with 45 years of service. John was a veteran of WWII having served in the US Army Air Force overseas with the 781st Bomb squadron located in Italy, the 465th bomb group, the 55th Bomb Wing and the 15th Air Force in the European theater. He also served on the Board of Directors of the 781st Bomb Squadron Assoc., member of the Belle Vernon American Legion Post 659, Charleroi VFW Arden Calvert Post 167 and PNA Lodge 976 Arnold City, a graduate of Marion High School Class of 1941, served on the board for the Corning Glass Federal Credit Union and the board at the Center on the Hill. John also enjoyed gardening, hunting and fishing. He is survived by his wife Helen Kuyon Zadrozny to whom he was married 66 years, two sons & daughter in law John "Fud" & Kathy Zadrozny of Fairhope, Robert Zadrozny of Perryopolis; two grandchildren Donald Zadrozny of Clearwater, FL, Jan Marie Zadrozny of Sawyer, MI; two sisters Helen Heino of Dunlevy, Mariann Estok of Melbourne, FL and several nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by a Brother Frank Zadrozny. Visitation will be held Tuesday from 2-4 & 6-8 PM at the Parzynski Funeral Home & Cremations, Family Owned and Operated, 626 Broad Avenue, Belle Vernon 724-929-6183. Services will be held Wednesday at the Parzynski Funeral Home & Cremations at 10:00 AM with the Rev. Felix Pyzowski of St. Joseph Polish National Catholic Church officiating. Interment will take place in Belle Vernon Cemetery. Members of the Belle Vernon American Legion will conduct services Tuesday evening at 7 pm in the funeral home.



**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.**

781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"

Orren Lee, President
4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308
Sioux Falls, SD 57103



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