

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



PANTANELLA NEWS

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2021 REUNION ALBUQUERQUE NEW MEXICO



2021 781ST BOMB SQUADRON REUNION

PANTANELLA NEWS

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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



To my dear 781st friends,

I write this in mid-May as Memorial Day approaches. This solemn holiday marks the passing of our nations' veterans in the service of their country. I grew up in a small town of several thousand residents. It has quadrupled in size over time and is now a sprawling suburb/college town. In the center of town is a monument marking the 29 servicemen and women lost during World War II.

An acquaintance has made it his project to try to "bring to life" those 29 people. His name is Lowell Silverman. He passed that monument hundreds of times and saw it merely as a roster of war dead. His mission became to carefully research these names fading into history and tell the stories of their lives, including their families, friends, and loved ones. He talks about where they lived, and what they did before the war. Where they worked,

played, and studied, their interests and hobbies. Lowell has researched libraries, archives and interviewed some family members in order to tell their stories.

He compiles their service records and searches for their movements while in uniform and the circumstances of their death. It is one of the most honorable things I can think of. He has found photos of these young men and women. As you look at them and read the stories of these people they are no longer anonymous strangers. One can only weep with sorrow at the loss of these ancient neighbors of mine. They appear to be so young. It is a tragedy that their promise went unfulfilled and was interrupted by war.

On this Memorial Day I hope we will pause to reflect on what it really means. I hope you can do something to "bring to life" those who have sacrificed so much.

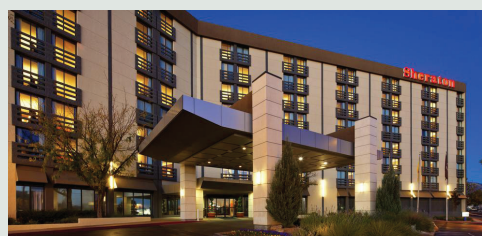
— Kennard Wiggins

A Message from the Executive Secretary

We have provided information on the 2021 Group AF Reunion but not the registration form to cut the expense of the Pantanella News. Addition information and the registration form are available on the 465th website. <http://465th.org>. If you have trouble accessing it and need a registration form, please call me, 605-339-1297, 605-321-3874 cell. – Carole Lee

2021 Bomb Group Renunion

Date - Thursday, September 9 to Sunday, September 12
Albuquerque, NM

**The Sheraton Uptown Hotel**

2600 Louisiana Blvd NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

Room rates are \$118 per night plus tax. Room includes a full, hot breakfast buffet for 2 per room; due to current government restrictions, if a buffet is not allowed, plated breakfasts will be substituted. Eleven ADA accessible rooms are available. If you need to make your reservation by phone, please call the sales office at (505) 830-5781. Please mention **Bomb Group Reunion** to receive the group rate. Room rates are good from September 7 - September 15, 2021.

2021 REUNION TOURS



Friday, September 10, 2021

The New Mexico Veterans Memorial. The bus will drop you off just outside of the Visitor's Center, right next to the World War II section of the grounds. The total memorial grounds are expansive so you can explore and visit as few or as many of the sections as you choose. Seating throughout the park to stop for a break is plentiful. We will also have many wheelchairs on hand for our veterans.



The visitor's center is like a small museum in itself so be sure to allow time to explore inside!

While at the Visitor's Center we will gather in the meeting room for a box lunch with-out the box! From there we will move to the courtyard that is just outside "in back" of the meeting room for our Military Memorial Ceremony conducted by our Reunion Chaplain, Captain Chris Cairns, who is an active duty Army Chaplain whose Grand-

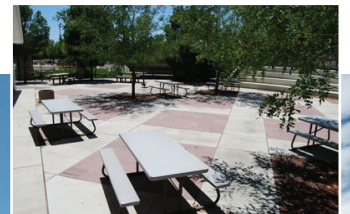
father, Col. Douglas Cairns was the final commanding officer of the 485th BG. Following the tour and Memorial Ceremony we will be treated to an open house on Kirtland Air Force base hosted by active duty members of the 512th Squadron whose lineage takes them back to the 376th BG



Sunday, September 12, 2021

After a stop at Furrs Fresh Buffet for a delicious lunch we will visit the National Nuclear & Science Museum. There we will learn more about the origins of nuclear energy, how "the bomb" was made and delivered. Outside on display are

aircraft to deliver nuclear weapons and a tower like the testing was originally done with. This is a fascinating museum that you will not want to miss.



ACC Revives 15th Air Force for Conventional Ops



Established on 1 November 1943, Fifteenth AF was a combat air force deployed to the European Theater of World War II, engaging in strategic bombardment operations from bases in southern Italy and engaging in air-to-air fighter combat against enemy aircraft.

During the Cold War, 15th AF was one of three numbered air forces of the United States Air Force. Elements of 15th Air Force engaged in combat operations during the Korean War, Vietnam as well as Operation Desert Storm.

15th AF was redesignated Fifteenth Expeditionary Mobility Task Force (15 EMTF) on 1 October 2003. 15 EMTF provided support for strategic airlift for all Department of Defense agencies as well as air refueling for the Air Force in both peace and wartime for the Pacific region. 15 EMTF inactivated on 20 March 2012.

No units will physically move because of the reorganization, and most of the over 45,000 Airmen who work for 15AF will not see changes in their daily operations, ACC said.

The Air Force on Aug. 20, 2020 revived 15th Air Force as its largest organization overseeing conventional weaponry, giving the World War II-era group new purpose for 21st-century warfare.

Air Combat Command headquartered at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, is shifting the fighter jets, battle management aircraft, strike drones, and combat search-and-rescue forces from Ninth and 12th Air Forces under the new 15th Air Force. Fifteenth AF trains Airmen to deliver combat airpower worldwide and provides a light, lean, and agile Air Force, Joint, or Combined Task Force Headquarters.

Maj. Gen. Chad P. Franks, who previously ran 9th AF, will lead 15th AF. The numbered air force began as a bomber group in the Mediterranean during World War II before taking on other expeditionary and mobility roles in later decades. It was inactivated in 2012 as the 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force.

Maj. Gen. Chad P. Franks (left) assumes command of 15th Air Force after Chief Master Sgt. Benjamin W. Hedden, 15th AF command chief, unfurls the numbered air force's flag at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., on Aug. 17, 2020. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Amanda Dick.





Wood Carved B-24 For Orren Lee



My name is Nathan Smidt and I am fourteen years old. My Mom and I met Mr. Lee a few years after I started wood carving. We enjoyed talking with him very much. After meeting him I decided it would be a good idea to carve Mr. Lee a B-24. It was a long project, and when it was finally finished, we learned of Mr. Lee's passing.



The airplane is 11 ¼ inches long and is 18 ¼ inches from wingtip to wingtip. Only the decals and the propellers are from a model kit.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

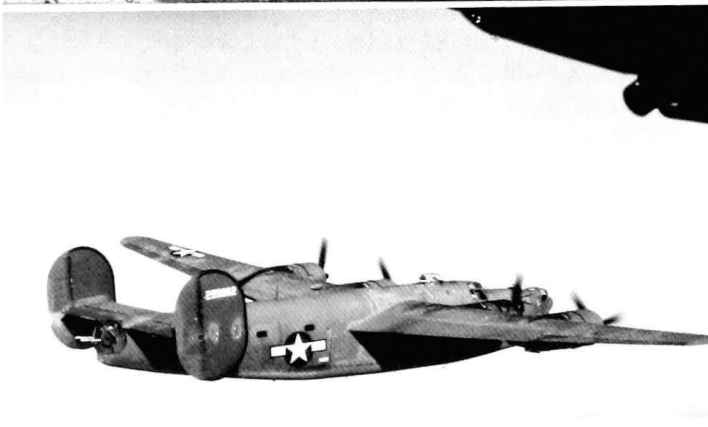
All 781st WWII Veterans are Life Members

All other members are Associate Members for \$10.00 per year renewable each January.

Your label shows the year you last paid. If it is not 2021 or later, you owe dues.

Please make checks payable to 781st Bomb Squadron. Mail to:

Carole Lee, Squadron Treasurer, 4700 S. Cliff Ave. #308, Sioux Falls, SD 57103



Photos from the 781st History Book

Left to Right, Top to Bottom

1. McCook Hotel
2. Cpl. Steve Corso leads drill
3. M/Sgt. Carl Brush instructs on the rifle range.
4. Cpl. Joe LaPena takes careful aim.
5. Practice flight.
6. B-24D training ship.
7. Lt. James W. Wray prepares his unit for review.



THANK YOU

A donation of \$ 100 was received from the Pierre Kennedy's daughter Jane Kennedy-Tenzar. We appreciate that many of you add extra as donations to your due's remittances. We appreciate all donations. Thank you very much.

FOLDED WINGS

ARGENE BARNETT

2019

MELVIN DERRY

October 19, 2019

GEORGE LEGGATE

November 3, 2012

GINO J. PELLESHCI

December 22, 2019



WILLIAM THOMAS 'TOM' PULLEY

Willima Thomas Pulley passed away on February 27, 2020, of congestive heart failure at the age of 94. He was born in

Independence, Missouri, and graduated early from Raytown High School, he enlisted in the Army Air Force in January 1944. After serving his basic training at in Texas, he returned to marry the love of his life, Marie Short, in August 1944. After further training in Tucson, Arizona, he left on the USS Argentina for Pantanella, Italy, arriving on Christmas Eve, 1944. He served 25 missions in the 781st Squadron of the 465th Bomber Group. He performed as a top turret gunner and aerial photographer aboard a B-24 bomber in the Jack Kennedy crew until the end of the war. At that time, they flew their bomber home by way of Africa, South America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba.

Tom worked in flowers all his life. He started as a young boy on the family farm. He also scoured the local railroad tracks with his parents—cutting wildflowers for the Kansas City city market. After WWII, he moved to Fort Myers, Florida where, he and Marie grew gladiolus, peppers, and eggplant, and had two daughters. In the early 1950's, Tom and his family moved back to the Kansas City area and later had a son. Tom opened a wholesale Florist business with his two brothers where he remained President until he retired in 1994. At that time, Tom and Marie moved to Fayetteville, Georgia. Marie passed away in 2015, a few months after they celebrated 70 years of marriage.

Tom and Marie's passions through life

were their family and travel. They had 3 children, 5 grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren. Tom and Marie loved to spend time with all of them. When they weren't with family, they were traveling in their RV. They spent their 50th anniversary on a 3-month trip to Alaska. They are both sorely missed.



KENNETH B. REHN

Kenneth B. Rehn, 97, of Orion, Illinois, formerly of Woodhull, went to be with the Lord Thursday, January 7, 2021. He was born June 2, 1923 in

Andover Township, IL to Elmer and Anna Peterson Rehn. Kenny graduated from Orion High School in 1941. On March 2, 1947, he was united in marriage to Lois M. Freeze in Moline, IL. She died June 29, 2015.

Kenny was a U.S. Army Air Corp. veteran serving from 1943-1946. He was the top turret gunner in the B-24 Bomber and flew 17 missions. Kenny was the last surviving WWII veteran with the Miles S. Sturgeon American Legion Post 546 and he enjoyed attending the 781st Airborne Reunions. He loved farming and in his mind, never left.

He was a member of the Bethany Lutheran Church, Henry County Farm Bureau, Livestock Feeder's Association and the Board of Directors of the Woodhull COOP. Kenny enjoyed bowling in his younger years, golfing in his older years, wintering in Texas and especially being with his family. He was a die-hard Cubs fan.

Survivors include one daughter, Teresa (Ron) Carlson of Orion; two sons, Bill (Becky) Rehn of Long Grove, Iowa, David (Susan) Rehn of Woodhull, one daughter-in-law, Debbie Rehn of Plano, TX; 11 grandchildren, 31 great grandchildren; one great great grandchild; one sister, Joyce (Robert) Nelson of High Point, NC; several nieces and nephews.

His parents; wife, Lois; one son, Steven; one grandchild, Aric; two sisters and three brothers preceded him in death.

JOHN THOMAS 'JACK' RUSSELL

January 28, 1924—May 13, 2019

Thomas "Jack" Russell passed away peacefully on May 13, 2019 at home, in the company of his family John. Jack was born on January 28, 1924 in Osborn, Kansas to Roy and Charlotte (Thomas) Russell, the oldest of two sons.

Jack served in the 781st Bomber Squadron in World War II as a bombardier in B-24 Heavy Bombers. He served for two years and flew some 25 combat missions over Nazi Germany and Austria. He was discharged from active duty in 1942 but continued to serve in the United States Air Force Reserve until retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1984.

Jack married Marie Ghiringhelli in 1949 and the couple raised eight children in Butte.

Jack managed the shoe department at J.C. Penney for 20 years before purchasing the Bonanza Freeze Restaurant in 1968. He owned and managed the Bonanza Freeze until 1986.

Jack is survived by his wife, Marie; brother, Jim (Jean); his children, Colleen, Nanette (Charlie), Mary (John), Mike (Pam), Tim (Anna), Suzanne (Bob), Tom (Leighann), and Lisa (Vern); 25 grandchildren; and 26 great-grandchildren

OSCAR SCHMITT

March 25, 2019

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.



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Sioux Falls, SD 57103-4982



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