

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



PANTANELLA NEWS

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association © #136 June 2022

2022 REUNION WICHITA KANSAS



2022 781ST BOMB SQUADRON REUNION

PANTANELLA NEWS

Editor: Dr. Lance McKinnon

4200 River Oaks Rd.

Lake Wylie SC, 29710

404-944-5962

email: glmckinnon@gmail.com

Contact one of the following individuals
for FW's, News, Address Changes, etc.

781st BS Association Officers**President:**

Brig Gen Kennard R. Wiggins Jr.

(DE ANG Ret.)

504 Blacksnake Rd.

Elkton, MD 21971

410-398-0742

email: kennard.wiggins@gmail.com

Vice President:

Don Munce

528 Williams St.

Key West, FL 33040

816-550-2751

email: southernmostchief@gmail.com

Secretary:

Debbie Cherry

5605 Elisa Ln.

Parker, TX 75002

803-747-3947

email: debbiescherry@gmail.com

Treasurer/Executive Secretary:

Carole Lee

4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308

Sioux Falls, SD 57103

605-339-1297

email: cleel3@midco.net

Additional Board Members:

Chaplain: Dr. Lance McKinnon

Board Members: Liz Wiggins,

Georgia McKinnon, Greg Soucy

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.

**Visit Us On Facebook**<http://www.facebook.com/781stBombSquadron><http://465th.org>

President's Message



Here in Delaware I have the privilege to be the curator of the Delaware Military Museum. I enjoy this unpaid part-time job, as I am in near-constant touch with veterans of

every stripe. I get to hear new stories all the time. A lot of what we do is sit around drinking coffee, and telling lies to each other, but I am proud to share this fellowship with a very special group of people. I also maintain a Facebook page for the museum and get lots of reminders for various events and activities.

It seems like every week there is a new celebration of Medal of Honor Day, or Prisoner of War day. There seems to be a welter of new ones springing up in addition to Armed Forces Day and Veteran's Day. Wounded veterans and women veterans should be celebrated, but

it can get kinda overwhelming, and in a way, it dilutes our attention across many worthy causes.

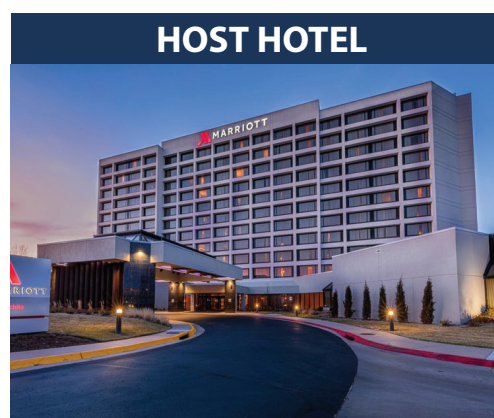
The most meaningful observance for me is Memorial Day. This is the day we have chosen to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation. I can think of no greater thing to give us pause to contemplate and give our thanks for. To forfeit your life and give up an entire future, especially as a young person who has only begun your life, is deserving of our prayers and laurels. It is a debt we can never repay. To remember these folks, to thank them, and their families is the least we can do on this most sacred of days. Please join me in giving remembrance to these very special people whose sacrifice make our way of life possible.

— Kennard R. Wiggins Jr.
President

2022 Fifteenth Air Force Bomb Groups Reunion 465th Bomb Group Reunion

Date - September 15-18 | Wichita, Kansas

- Room rates will be \$102 per night, plus tax and will include a full, hot breakfast buffet, including made to order omelets, for up to two per room.
- Rooms at the group rate will be available for probably three days before and after the reunion dates. Exact dates are yet to be determined.
- Free airport shuttle from 7:00am - 10:00pm.
- This hotel has been recently renovated and is spectacular. The staff is outstanding and our Hospitality room will be second to none. This is a lovely property all the way around.

**HOST HOTEL****Wichita Marriott**

9100 Corporate Hills Drive | Wichita, Kansas 67207

Phone: 316-651-0333

Additional information and the registration form are available on the 465th website. 465th.org. If you have trouble accessing it and need a registration form, please call me, 605-339-1297 or 605-321-2874 cell. Carole Lee

Reunion In Wichita

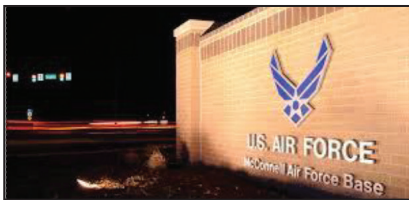
Wichita Kansas is a surprising gem of a city smack dab in the middle of flyover country!

Wichita has a very rich history in aviation and in the early 20th century, the municipal airport was the busiest airport in the country due to its central location. There are MANY things to see and do; much more than we will have time to experience.

Some of the tour options that will be considered include:

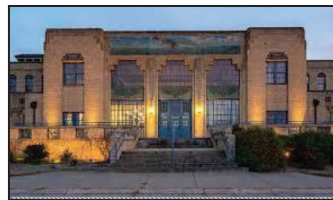
McConnell Air Force Base tour.

Located four miles southeast of the central business district of Wichita, a city in Sedgwick County, Kansas, United States, the airbase was named in honor of Fred and Thomas McConnell of Wichita, who had both been Air Force pilots and veterans of World War II. It is the home of Air Mobility Command's 22nd Air Refueling Wing, Air Force Reserve Command's 931st Air Refueling Wing, and the Kansas Air National Guard's 184th Intelligence Wing.



The Kansas Aviation Museum.

Housed in the former Wichita Airport terminal building, there is much to see in this beautiful Art Deco style building including aircraft on static display outside on the ramp. It is also a great place to watch the a/c from McConnell AFB take off and land, which happens on a regular basis.



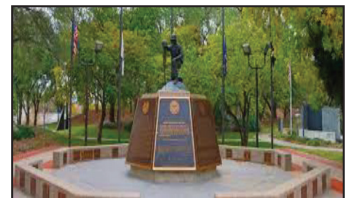
The Museum of World Treasures.

A quirky and fun museum in the heart of the Old Town district of Wichita. Old Town is a fun area loaded with restaurants and shops and is very walkable.



Veterans Memorial Park.

A lovely park along the banks of the Arkansas river in the beautiful riverfront area of Wichita. It features seven memorials to veterans of all wars and Gold Star mothers.



A note from the Reunion Committee Chair:

All, I really hope you'll consider attending this next reunion. All of the ingredients are here to make this a really fun and memorable affair. Wichita is a fun and surprising city. It has lots to offer and is a clean, friendly town that is easier to get to than what you might think. The airport offers flights with all major airlines and the interstate highway I-35 splits the country in half. Please consider coming to perpetuate and honor the legacy and memory of those veterans who are still with us and for those who have gone on to their glory.

Dave Blake
(Son of Lt. Robert Blake, 765th Sq.)

George Hausold Turns 100

The following article on George Hausold ran in the Citrus County Chronicle on May 21, 2022



At 100, Citrus County man reflects on life

By Fred Hiers Chronicle Reporter Apr 4, 2022



World War II veteran George Hausold served as a bombardier on a B-24 over Europe, eventually becoming a prisoner of war. Hausold turned 100 years old on April 4, 2022.

Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

George Hausold never thought much about being killed while flying over Nazi Germany and its allies in his B-24 Liberator as shrapnel pierced the plane's aluminum skin and the crews' flesh and bones.

Even as he parachuted from his falling plane over Hungary and saw angry farmers and German soldiers awaiting his landing,

did he think he was going to die.

"But they beat the hell out of me," he told the Chronicle, chuckling.

And when he was sent to POW camps across Axis controlled lands he never thought he would not make it back home to New Jersey.

But then again, he also never thought he'd beat the odds and make it to 100 years old, either.

But on Monday, April 4, Hausold did just that, becoming a member of a small group of men and women owning the title of centenarian.

Of the world's 7.9 billion people, only 0.004 percent of them are centenarians living today.

Hausold shrugged about turning 100 when sitting at his kitchen table in Hernando with a Chronicle reporter.

His memory is still sharp as he recalled his life and family. Reflecting on his many years, he said he tried not to get overly concerned about things and rolled with the punches.

His greatest accomplishment was not his dangerous stint in the U.S. Army Air Corps during the World War II, but rather his family.

His father was a bus driver in New Jersey and his mother was a homemaker.

Before the war and during the first war's first year, Hausold worked as a machine operator for BG Corporation in Manhattan, which supplied spark plugs to the military.

"I was driving to my girlfriend's at the time ... in my 1935 Dodge. I had the radio on when they announced Pearl Harbor (and



The exact aircraft George Hausold escaped from over Europe before it exploded is seen above. The bombardier said when it was time to jump he exited from the nose-gear opening at the front of the aircraft and deployed his parachute. He was captured and sent to a prison camp in Germany.

Special to the Chronicle

its bombing by Japan)," he said. "I really didn't know where Pearl Harbor was."

"(But) I was going to stay with the company. The work was easy and I was helping the war effort," Hausold recalled.

Holding a key job necessary for the war industry, Hausold was exempted from the draft.

How did Hausold become a bombardier on a B-24?

"I was always very interested in aviation. I made model airplanes and gliders and helicopters," he said.

On June 18, 1942, he enlisted.

"That's when you started hearing about the concentration camps and stuff like that," he said.

"And I was interested in learning to fly and could do my duty too," Hausold said.

The 20-year-old went through basic training and then to Wichita Falls in northern Texas for more training. It was also a way to weed out flight applicants by way of heavy calisthenics, he said.

"A lot of us would pass out. If they saw you then you were out (of the program), he said.

"But I went through it fine. I had to take an IQ test ... and I qualified to be a pilot, bombardier, or a navigator," he said. "I wanted to be a hotshot pilot."

The U.S. Army sent him to Blythe, California, where he learned how to fly.

There was one problem.

"I had a little problem landing. I had trouble with depth perception. I couldn't quite determine the distance to the ground when I was landing," he said.

So landings were a little bumpy, he joked.

"But they said I could still choose between navigator or bombardier," he said. "So I chose bombardier because I thought that's where the action is."

Hausold's odds of surviving were not good and he knew it.

During World War II, 46 percent of bomber aircrews were killed. When those wounded and taken prisoner were added, the odds increased to 60 percent to be either killed,

taken prisoner, or wounded.

The B-24s earned their nickname as flying coffins.

He tried not to think of the dangers as the Germans shot anti-aircraft guns at him or the shrapnel exploding around his plane as he and the crew flew through smoke from the explosions so think he jokingly said you could walk on it.

His targets during his dangerous daytime raids were usually factories, oil refineries or oil storage facilities.

He said the air sirens alerted civilians long before he arrived over his targets giving them enough time to scatter. He said he tried not to think about people dying from the bombs he dropped.

And he knew he could easily be shot down and not able to escape from the plane.

"It's odd. I thought that I should be more afraid, but I was more afraid of making a mistake that would cause the (crews') death."

So he kept his eyes on the crosshairs of his bombsight and with controls attached



George Hausold's crew is pictured before a mission to fly over the European theater of operations during World War II.

to the autopilot, guided the plane to its destination.

"I remember it looked like fireflies. Then I realized that was anti-aircraft shells going off ... and we had to fly through it," he recalled.

His plane was hit plenty.

On June 30, 1944, during a bombing run over Austria, at about 11 a.m. shrapnel tore through the plane and through the pilot's calf and copilot's shin bone. He bandaged them as best he could and they managed to make it back to base.

But in 1944, flying over Hungary to what is now Poland, Hausold's pilot was forced to descend under the clouds along with a German Focke-Wulf 190 fighter plane chasing him and firing its 20 mm cannons.

Hausold's bomber was hit and caught fire. Electric communications within the plane

stopped working. By the time he got to the cockpit, the pilots had already parachuted out, so he did the same.

The nose gunner and plane belly gunner couldn't escape. The navigator, who had tried to put out the fire, died 10 days later from his wounds.

As he floated down over fields, he saw a group of farmers and German soldiers form a ring and await the young lieutenant's landing.

Despite brandishing pitchforks and rifles, he was never afraid his life would soon end.

"That's youth," Hausold told the Chronicle and shrugging.

He was sent to different prisoner of war camps and eventually liberated April 29, 1945.

The army Air Corps offered to let him stay

in the service after the war, but having just gotten married, and with no guarantees of where he would serve, Hausold instead joined the civilian ranks.

Back in New Jersey, his uncle helped him get a job with New Jersey Bell installing and repairing telephone switchboards. With credit for his technical training he was paid \$29 a week. He and his wife had a boy and girl.

Thirty-five years later when his boss died of a heart attack, he declined the telephone company's offer to take over the job.

"I didn't want the stress," he said.

So he quit at 58 years old and moved to Rainbow Springs and later to Hernando.

He and his wife traveled. He played golf.

His wife died unexpectedly at 60.

"The first time I saw her I thought to myself I'm going to marry her," he said wistfully as he recalled her.

In 1986 he remarried. His second wife is now 97.

Asked how he felt living such a long life, Hausold responded, "Like I'm a 100 years old."

When asked, he said his best decision in life had nothing to do with his career or military service, but rather getting married and having a family.

At 100 years old, his single advice for anyone who cared to listen: Decide what you want in life and "go for it."

Fred Hiers is a reporter at the Citrus Chronicle. E-mail him at fred.hiers@chronicleonline.com

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

All 781st WWII Veterans are Life Members

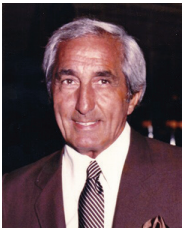
All other members are Associate Members for \$10.00 per year renewable each January.

Your label shows the year you last paid. If it is not 2022 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

FOLDED WINGS



MINISTRELLI, PETER,

**November 7, 1923 -
October 19, 2021.**

Peter, of West Bloomfield, entered eternal life on Tuesday, October 19, 2021.

Spending nearly 98 years on this earth, Peter lived an incredible life. With his great accomplishments in business and his incredible commitment to philanthropy, he was an inspiration to many. His concern for others and generous response to the needs of the poor, the sick, and the infirm was a treasure. He demonstrated his boundless generosity for others by establishing a college prep high school for young people in Palm Desert, California, his generous concern for the sick in our community with his contributions to Beaumont Hospital, and his commitment to his faith by his support of a monastery in Petersham, Massachusetts. Many other acts of generosity are known only to Peter. He loved his wife, Florine, and his family. He was also proud to include his family in his many endeavors, from his classic car collection to his home developments in California and Michigan; his vision and legacy will last forever.

From his birth on November 7, 1923, a very humble beginning, Joe Peter Ministrelli was an exceptional man that served his God, his country in World War II, and his fellow man.

Surviving are his beloved wife Florine; and numerous nieces and nephews, and great-nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by siblings, Reno Ministrelli, Mary Ann Bratkowski, Pearl Marino, and Marvin Ministrelli.



CHIRIGOTIS, GEORGE STEVE,

**August 3, 1924 -
December 29, 2021.**

Colonel George Steve Chirigotis (Steve) took off for the wild blue yonder on December

29, 2021. He was 97 years old, born August 3, 1924, in Saco, Maine to Antone and Panayota (Levakos) Chirigotis, who

had emigrated from Gythion, Greece. Steve graduated from New Bedford H.S. and earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Administration from Northeastern University in 1949. He enlisted on 10 November 1942 in the U.S. Army Air Corps, which became the Air Force. During WWII, he served with the 781st Bomber Squadron, 465th Bomber Group. He flew 50 missions over Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, France, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Italy and the Balkans. His favored B-24 Bomber "Hells' Belle" was shot down over Ploesti. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the 465th Bombardment Group Distinguished Unit Citation, and an Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters.

After WWII, he served active duty in the Korean War and received the Korean War Medal with 2 Bronze Stars. He served with the 6050th Tactical Control Squadron, 6147th Tactical Control Group - "The Mosquitos". He went on to active service in Japan and retired from active service in November 1953 and began his USAF Reserve Service where he rose to the rank of Colonel before retiring in 1984.

Steve was predeceased by 2 brothers who were WWII veterans, Colonel Frederick F. Chirigotis, US Army Ret. and Vasil "Bill" Chirigotis and 2 Sisters, Stavroula (Dolly) and Silvia. His former wife and the mother of his 7 children Olga (Petrakos) passed away in 2000. His Son Peter died in 1999 and son John died in 2013. Steve is survived by one brother Nicholas Chirigotis, 1 daughter, Helen Chirigotis and 4 Sons: Colonel Stephen J. Chirigotis, USAF Ret., Charles, Frederick and SGT. William Chirigotis U.S. Army Ret. as well as 9 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.

**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 Bomb Squadron Assoc.,
4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308
Sioux Falls, SD 57103-4982



PANTANELLA NEWS

