



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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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



Carole and I have pretty well adjusted to apartment living. It is not that much different than living in our house except I don't have to shovel the snow. Our new address and email address are listed in the officer's section.

A big thank you goes to Debbie Cherry and family members. They are deep into research and decision making for the 2013 781st Bomb Squadron Reunion in Charleston. Please note the dates, **November 10th thru the 13th**. Mark your calendars accordingly. We have a tentative agenda printed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

I want to thank family members who have sent in their applications and dues to be associate members. It is encouraging to get the support of family members. We will be looking to all members to help us decide on future reunions. Where do we go? Will some one or family step up to help plan it?

— Orren Lee



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.

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.

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 will be sharing the first Chapter, which covers the World War II years of the Fifteenth Air Force, over the next few issues of the Pantanella News.

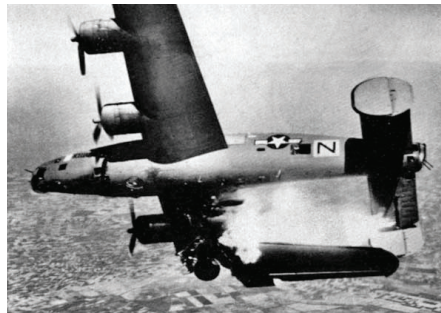
Origins of the Command

As a new command in the latter stages of World War II, Fifteenth Air Force was constituted on October 30, 1943, and activated on November 1 at Tunis, Tunisia. It undertook operations immediately and for the ensuing 18 months contributed heavily to the Allied air war effort against the Axis powers.

Fifteenth was not, however, merely created in a two-day span as either an afterthought or in response to a momentary crisis. Rather, its activation came about due to the unfolding events and decisions associated with the overall war effort. On May 9, 1943, the North African campaign has been successfully concluded with and Allied victory over the Axis powers – the first one over Germany and Italy in the Mediterranean theater of operations. The following August the Combined Chiefs of Staff worked on plans at the Quebec Conference for a cross-channel invasion from England to France to be launched in the spring of 1944. General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, chief of the Army Air Forces, questioned whether Eighth Air Force was able to conduct the required bomber offensive alone. British Air Chief Marshal Portal agreed with him and pointed out that operations from southern Italy would be nearer to the vital German fighter aircraft factories in the area around Vienna, Austria.



A formation of B-24 “Liberator” bombers of 15th Air Force release their payload on the rail yards at Heiligenstadt, Austria on March 22, 1945.



The engine and wing had blown off and the B-24 was on its back, going into a spin, when this picture was made. Seconds later Lieutenant Edward F. Walsh, Jr., the 779th lead radar bombardier, was flown free of the aircraft.

General Arnold reflected on the possibilities opened by this idea, and on October 9 submitted to the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan for creating the Fifteenth as a strategic air force to participate in the Combined Bomber Offensive. After their approval, the Allied Combined Chiefs ratified the plan on October 22.

Major General James H. Doolittle of the Tokyo Raid fame served as Fifteenth’s initial commander. His first headquarters was a large, modern school building in Tunis, the Lucee Carnot.

The U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSAF), stationed in England (and later France), eventually exercised some operational control over the new air force as well as continuing jurisdiction over the older Eighth Force. More directly, Fifteenth became a strategic component along with the British Royal Air Force’s 205th Group in the Mediterranean Allied Air Force. This bombing force came into existence to take advantage of the strategic bombing possibilities offered by the “soft underbelly” of Europe, to use a Churchillian phrase.

Although Fifteenth was the newest numbered air force at the time, it was initially composed of veteran units such as the 97th and the 301st Bomb Groups, both of which had initially been assigned to Eighth and later to General Doolittle’s previous command, the Twelfth, during the North African campaign. Thus, Fifteenth started its existence with experienced heavy and medium bomber units of the 1942-1943 period, with both Twelfth and the Ninth contributing groups. It was assigned four B-17 (Flying Fortress) groups and two B-24 (Liberator) groups. For a brief time at the beginning, it also had two B-25 (Mitchell) groups and three B-26 (Marauder) groups. To protect this armada, three escort fighter groups

with P-38s (Lightening) and one P-47 (Thunderbolt) group were assigned. This was soon increased by three more units with P-47s which later converted to P-51s (Mustang). Eventually, a photo reconnaissance group with F-5s joined the command. Intermediate supervision between Fifteenth and its units was exercised by eight wings. From activation to June 1944 the command gained a number of units, eventually reaching strength of 21 Bomb Groups (6 B-17 and 15 B-24) and 7 Fighter Groups (2 P-38, 3 P-51, 1 P-47). Fifteenth thus became second only in size to Eighth Air Force among overseas air commands.



The number four engine of “Burma Bound,” a B-24 belonging to 15th Air Force, was hit by flak as the plane returned from bombing a target at Munich. It limps toward home on three engines.

The hope of the Quebec and Pentagon planners was that Fifteenth could operate when eighth was “socked in” by the English weather. Ironically, fifteenth soon faced the same problem in operating from the Mediterranean area. In addition, its planes had to face Alpine clouds with their hazardous icing conditions and their interference with visibility. To complicate matters, there was no convenient English channel for aircraft “ditching” purposes, and aircraft flying with one or two engines knocked out found it hard to go over or around the Alps on the return leg of a mission. Fifteenth’s operational area extended over a large territory stretching westward almost to the Franco-Spanish frontier, northward through Czechoslovakia to Berlin, eastward to the Black Sea, and southward to the Peloponnesian peninsula. Normally, its objectives lay within a 700 mile arc centered at Foggia, Italy.



Rising smoke casts its shadow across the Czechoslovakian landscape as one of Fifteenth’s B-24 Liberators leaves the target area of the Pardubice Oil Refinery attacked by heavy bombers on August 24, 1944.

Nathan "Sonny" Golden

Dec. 1922 - Oct. 2012

Center: First Lieutenant
Nathan "Sonny" Golden



Nathan "Sonny" Golden

Luckily, my father's back-up job, after bombardier, was navigator. He and Archie Davis help navigate the damaged plane over the Alps into Swiss airspace and then the crew bailed out and were interned in Adelsboden, Switzerland. My dad broke his leg when he landed but recuperated fast. He was interned for just over a year before being released in a POW swap.

The other dramatic part about this story was that the plane continued on for about 30 km on autopilot before it crashed into the inhabited Wyden Castle. Luckily nobody was killed, and ironically, the castle was a Red Cross neutral outpost. The US Government ended up paying war reparations for the damage caused by the wayward Jackpine Joe.

This article is submitted by Josh H. Golden, son of Nathan "Sonny" Golden.

My father flew 21 missions before catching flak over Germany. He received a certificate of valor for surviving the 22nd as per below.

Jackpine Joe was hit with flak over Munich on July 19, 1944 during a massive bombing mission. The plane fell out of formation and was lost to sight shortly thereafter.

The navigator prematurely bailed out and was interned in a German POW camp.



First Lieutenant Nathan "Sonny" Golden, is kneeling to the right of Archie Davis.

Jackpine Joe Crashes Into The Wyden Castle



Pictured above is the Wyden Castle that Jackpine Joe crashed into after the crew bailed out. The castle is a private residence today. Pictured top right is wreckage from the crash.



Pictured to the right is Nathan's crew. Nathan is back row 2nd from the left. Achie Davis is 3rd from the left on back row.



The Gas Bomber



This is not a normal airplane story.

Shortly after WWII a guy named Art Lacey went to Kansas to buy a surplus B-17. His idea was to fly it back to Oregon, jack it up in the air and make a gas station out of it. He paid \$15,000 for it. He asked which one was his and they said take whichever you want because there were miles of them. He didn't know how to fly a 4-engine airplane so he read the manual while he taxied around by himself. They said he couldn't take off alone so he put a mannequin in the co-pilot's seat and off he went.



He flew around a bit to get the feel of it and when he went to land he realized he needed a co-pilot to lower the landing gear. He crashed and totaled his plane and another on the ground. They wrote them both off as "wind damaged" and told him to pick out another. He talked a friend into being his co-pilot and off they went.



They flew to Palm Springs where Lacey wrote a hot check for gas. Then they headed for Oregon. They hit a snow storm and couldn't find their way, so they went down below 1,000 feet and followed the railroad tracks. His partner sat in the nose

section and would yell, "TUNNEL" when he saw one and Lacey would climb over the mountain.

They landed safely, he made good the hot check he wrote, and they started getting permits to move a B-17 on the state highway. The highway department repeatedly denied his permit and fought him tooth and nail for a long time, so late one Saturday night, he just moved it himself. He got a \$10 ticket from the police for having too wide a load.



FOLDED WINGS

CURTIS GIVENS REED

October 11, 1920 - January 26, 2013


Resident of San Jose. He was born in San Jose, CA. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII and was the co-pilot of a B-24 stationed in Southern Italy. After the war he worked with his father in the family owned business Valley Gas Service, in Orland, CA. He was the owner and manager for over forty years of several propane gas businesses, finishing his career in the industry in 1992 with Surbanban Propane. Curt was an avid golfer at The Villages in south San Jose. He was preceded in death by his loving wife, Elayne H. Reed. He leaves a daughter, Joan Pailhe, and a son Curt Reed, Jr. (Jeanne). He is survived by five grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. A Memorial Service was held on February 2.

GOLDEN, NATHAN "SONNY" - (780th)

December 2, 1922 - October 25, 2012

Passed away peacefully in his home, surrounded by and attended to by his closest family members. He was born in Revere, MA on December 2, 1922, and was given the nickname "Sonny" at his birth, by his beloved late sister, Geraldine. A member of the greatest generation, the Intrepid Sonny overcame becoming orphaned at an early age, the Great Depression, and he served with distinction in the Army Air Corps during WWII. Notably, he survived 22 missions in a B-24 Liberator where he served as the bombardier. His plane Jackpine Joe, was hit by flack over Germany and Sonny bailed out and spent 1 year as a POW in Switzerland. After the war, Sonny worked as a song plugger and became the road manager for the Andrew Sisters. He went on to become a prominent and well respected business manager and financial advisor to clients involved in the entertainment industry, for over 50 years. He is survived by his loving children, Josh (Rebecca) and Dayna Golden and grandchildren, Kai and Natasha Golden, all of Santa Cruz, CA; as well as family members: Lynda and Stan Levy, Jules, Josh and Aaron Levy, Allison Ross (Jason) Chauncey, Emily Ross (Brian) Shenson, and Jon Ross; and brother-in-law, Alan Ross, 97 years young.

– See article on page 4-5



**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"

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