



PANTANELLA NEWS

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781st Bomb Squadron 2015 Reunion CONVERGES ON KANSAS CITY



PANTANELLA NEWS

Edited by: Lance McKinnon

4128 Chanticleer Dr. NW
Kennesaw GA, 30152
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:**

Orren Lee
4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308
Sioux Falls, SD 57103
605-339-1297
email: cleel3@midco.net

Vice President:

Kennard R. Wiggins, Jr.
504 Blacksnake Rd.
Elkton, MD 21971
410-398-0742
email: kennard.wiggins@gmail.com

Secretary:

Debbie Cherry
13656 Hunters Chapel Rd.
Smoaks, SC 29481
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

781st Bomb Squadron Association
c/o Orren Lee, Pres.
4700 S. Cliff Ave, #308
Sioux Falls, SD 57103
email: cleel3@midco.net

Board of Directors:

President: Orren Lee
Vice President: Kennard R. Wiggins, Jr.
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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



The final plans are made for our 1st Joint Reunion. It will be the 24th Reunion for the 781st Bomb Squadron. I'm looking forward to seeing a lot of you in Kansas City, MO September 24-27, 2015.

I was remembering the Stars in the Window during WWII. Do you remember when your home had a star hanging in the window indicating a son in the service? Do you remember the color? It was a blue star. If you saw a

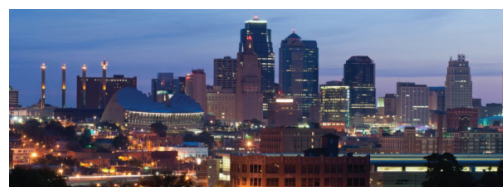
gold star it was for a son that had given his life for his country. I remember a lot of things about those days. Dec. 7th Pearl Harbor, I was in high school at the time, being drafted into the Army, after infantry basics transferring to the Army Air Corp, the Radio School in Sioux Falls for training. The barracks were tar papered buildings with a coal stove. In the morning one could spit coal dust. The latrines were in a separate building. It was a very cold winter. Some guys would run in their shorts to shave and shower. I'm from North Dakota. I went to town and bought a pair of blue pajamas. They called me Blue Bird. I also put on my overcoat to go to the showers.

I know many of you have memories that would be of interest to the rest of us. Please send them in. We can put them in the Pantanella News.

— Orren Lee

2015 Joint Reunion

Final plans have been made for the 2015 WWII Joint Reunion in Kansas City, MO. Our contact, Win Jones of the 451st Bomb Group, has provided the following website for information about the reunion. <http://www.gordons.ws/reunion2015>. Please note the 781st Bomb Squadron is taking registrations for the



465th Bomb Group. Look for the 465th registration form on the website or wait for the printed copy that will be in the June Newsletter.

Note From the Executive Secretary

I recently did a research of Life Members we have not heard from. I tried to find phone numbers. I checked our surveys from the past for family members. With no results I did a People Search and found the following veterans we had listed as Life Members are deceased: Paul Mallette, Hayden Bodenhamer, Ernest Magmore,

James Kienitz, Jerry Cottle, Eugene Deal, Michael Deironimi. I was able to contact the Kienitz family and also the Deironimi family from the information. If anyone has a contact for any of the other families, please let me know.

— Carole Lee

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.

Let's all make a difference in 2015! Happy New Year.



It Is The Veteran... It is the **VETERAN**, not the **PREACHER**, who has given us **FREEDOM OF RELIGION**. It is the **VETERAN**, not the **REPORTER**, who has given us **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**. It is the **VETERAN**, not the **POET**, who has given us **FREEDOM OF SPEECH**. It is the **VETERAN**, not the **CAMPUS ORGANIZER**, who has given us **FREEDOM TO ASSEMBLE**. It is the **VETERAN**, not the **LAWYER**, who has given us the **RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL**. It is the **VETERAN**, not the **POLITICIAN**, who has given us the **RIGHT TO VOTE**.

Hotel for 2015 Reunion



- This hotel has been newly renovated and was done very nicely.
- Kansas City has direct flights in from 37 destinations nationwide.
- Complimentary Airport Shuttle - The shuttle (an actual stand up bus) runs every 15 minutes, 24 hours. It is helpful to call the hotel from a house phone in the airport to let them know you've arrived. There are bus stop type shelters outside that say Hotel Courtesy shuttle. From there you can wave down the Hilton shuttle when you see it.
- Room rates will be \$99 per night plus tax and will include a full, hot breakfast buffet for up to two people and two drink coupons per room, per day.
- Parking is free.

Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel

8801 NW 112th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 64153

Phone 1-816-891-8900

Ask for In-House Reservations — Group Booking Code is: BOM

If You Prefer, Reserve Online:

<http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/M/MCIAPHF-BOM-20150922/index.jhtml>

THANK YOU

We received \$100.00 donation from Frank Cantrell, Jr and \$50.00 from Harry Fike of the 783rd.

KANSAS CITY

2015 Reunion

**Joint Reunion of the 451st and 455th Bombardment Groups (H) WWII
With other 15th Air Force Units
September 24th-27th, 2015**

- The reunion includes the 451st, 455th, 461st, 465th, 484th and 485th Bomb Groups in order to keep our group a strong, viable size.
- Individual group dinners are planned for Friday evening. The 451st, 455th and 465th will meet together as one group and the 461st, 484th and 485th will each have their own group dinner.
- Saturday evening is the Gala Banquet including all Bomb Groups.
- Saturday guest speaker is Roger Locher, an F-4D Weapons Officer and Pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1972. Locher spent a record 23 hair-raising days evading capture before being rescued and returned to friendly territory. Locher says he will consider it an honor to relate his story to our group. He is the nephew of 484th member, Dick Yunghans.

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

- Tours are first class venues that you will really enjoy
- For some tours, there may be substantial walking – wheelchairs are on hand at the venues
- All tours are optional. Tour cost is not included in base registration fee.

World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial (\$39 per person) – 9/25

This is the only Memorial of its type in the country and has been designated by Congress as the nation's official WWI museum and monument. The museum is extremely well done and nationally renowned. It offers a great insight into the war that many of our Bomb Group veteran's fathers fought in and illustrates that "some things just never change"! Atop the museum is the WWI Monument that was dedicated by President Coolidge and the Allied Commanders in 1921 in front of 150,000 people. The area surrounding the tower offers panoramic views of downtown Kansas City and the surrounding area. You can take an elevator to near the top of the 230 foot tall tower, although there are 45 stairs to get all the way up to the observation deck for breathtaking 360 degree views. We will have lunch in the Over There Café before returning to the hotel.

Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum (\$39 per person) – 9/26

You will see first-hand how this humble and simple man from Independence, Missouri led our country and made some really difficult decisions after the death of FDR during the height of WWII. You will be amazed at the simplicity and unpretentiousness of the "most powerful man in the world". This is a great museum that our Veterans and wives will especially relate to. We will have lunch in the indoor atrium that overlooks the outdoor courtyard where HST's grave along with his beloved wife, Bess is located. We will then go the mile or so to view the Truman home from the outside, the home where he and Bess lived from the time they married until his death in 1972. A National Park Service Ranger will board each bus to give an overview of the home. Their home, although quite large by yesteryear's standards is remarkable in its simplicity and that of the surrounding residential neighborhood where the President took daily walks with no Secret Service protection (until the 1960s).

Steamboat Arabia (\$43 per person) – Sunday, 9/27

The Steamboat Arabia was a cargo and passenger steamboat that ferried supplies and people up and down the Missouri River, aka Big Muddy. This boat sank in 1856 and settled to a depth of about 45 feet of mud after the river channel changed over the course of time. It was discovered and a real treasure chest of ship parts and artifacts were retrieved. This is truly a fascinating museum and offers a great insight into the clothing, tools, kitchenware and many, many other items of life in the mid-1800s. We will have lunch in the museum's Atrium Café.

KANSAS CITY



2015 REUNION ITINERARY



Thursday, September 24th, 2015

Arrival and check in day. The hospitality room and registration table will be open with heavy hors d'oeuvres served in the afternoon and evening. No evening meal is planned.

7:00 PM – All group informational meeting will be held in the Kansas room (next door to the Hospitality room).

Friday, September 25th, 2015

9:00 AM - Depart hotel for optional* tour of the World War One Museum at Liberty Memorial with lunch at the Museum Café. This museum and memorial is the only one of its type in the country and is extremely well done! It also offers panoramic views of KC.

12:30 PM - Depart Liberty Memorial for return to hotel

2:00 – 4:00 PM – Veteran led presentations and discussions in the Kansa A&B room.

5:00 PM – Social hour before dinner with cash bar.

6:00 PM – Individual Group Banquets. 451st, 455th & 465th in the Wyandot room

Saturday, September 26th, 2015

9:30 AM – Depart hotel for optional* tour of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and museum. Lunch at the Library's Atrium overlooking a beautiful outdoor courtyard.

12:15 PM – Depart Truman Library for a quick stop to view (from the outside) the Truman home. National Park Service rangers will step onto each motorcoach to give an overview of the home's history. (Our group will be far too large to tour inside the home. They only take very small groups inside.)

12:30 PM - Depart the Truman home for return to hotel.

2:00 – 4:00 PM – Veteran led presentations and discussions in Kansa A&B room.

5:00 PM – Social hour before dinner with cash bar.

6:00 PM – All Groups Banquet, Roger Locher, featured guest speaker in the Shawnee Ballroom.

Sunday, September 27th, 2015

9:00 AM – Memorial Service

NOON – Depart hotel for optional* tour of Steamboat Arabia museum with lunch

3:30 PM – Depart Steamboat Arabia Museum for return to hotel

6:00 PM – Optional* Casual Farewell Banquet in the Wyandot room.

* Registration fee does not include the cash bars, the optional bus tours on Friday, Saturday & Sunday or dinner on Sunday

MUSEUM OFFICIALLY PURCHASES ROSIE'S OLD PLANT

YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP, Mich. (AP) — Rosie the Riveter's old plant in Michigan has officially avoided the wrecking ball.

Yankee Air Museum board chairman Ray Hunter signed papers Thursday making the aviation museum the owner of a 144,000-square-foot slice of the former Willow Run Bomber Plant, where Rose Will Monroe and other workers built B-24 Liberator bombers during World War II.

The signing ceremony represented the culmination of efforts to raise the \$8 million needed to save part of the factory for the nearby Yankee Air Museum's new home.

"The building is truly saved," said Michael Montgomery, a consultant on the fund-raising effort.

Hunter, Montgomery and others associated with the Save the Willow Run Bomber

Plant campaign want to convert the factory and dedicate it to aviation and all the Rosies who toiled at similar U.S. plants to aid the war effort.

"We're very proud that we played a part in preserving" the plant, which "contributed so much to our victory in World War II," Hunter said.

Following the signing event, two Rosies unveiled the name and logo of the planned facility: National Museum of Aviation and Technology at Historic Willow Run.

"If we're telling the Arsenal of Democracy and Rosie story, this is the place to do it," said Montgomery.

He said \$5 million more is needed to "fill out the interior of the building" — to create the exhibits and infrastructure necessary to transform the edifice into a museum.

The facility in Ypsilanti Township, west of Detroit, was owned by the Revitalizing Auto Communities Environmental Response Trust. It took control of sites around the country left behind in General Motors' bankruptcy.

RACER Trust is overseeing the demolition of the massive plant. The section purchased Thursday would have been razed if Yankee Air Museum hadn't stepped in.

The Willow Run factory, which was built by Ford Motor Co. and featured a mile-long assembly line, churned out one B-24 every hour and nearly 9,000 in all.

It transitioned to producing cars after the war ended and made them and parts for more than a half-century under the GM name.

— By Mike Householder





AUSCHWITZ AGAIN

The article "Auschwitz and Synthetic Fuel" ("Perspectives," March 2005) was very informative, especially the reference to the Allied forces' reluctance to bomb the gas chambers at the death camp.

In fact, the Fifteenth Air Force bombed the synthetic oil refineries at Oswiecim/Auschwitz on August 20, September 13, December 18 and December 26, 1944. I flew as a sergeant tail gunner with the 781st Squadron, 465th Bomb Group, on the September 13 mission to Oswiecim.

It was a long haul and it took our Consolidated B-24s from their base at Pantanella, Italy, to the extreme end of their operating range. The squadrons and groups rendezvoused over Italy, then climbed with a full bomb load, all the way to the target. We climbed to 22,000 feet, reached the IP (initial point) and started the bomb run. At the appropriate time our bombardier dropped his bombs.

The German flak guns gave us a rousing welcome. A piece of flak struck my right .50-caliber machine gun, and a

foot behind my seat another piece sliced the underbelly of the fuselage, went up to pierce the rudder control arm, and left a gaping one-foot jagged hole across the top skin of the fuselage. I could smell the cordite from the exploding flak bursts, and my tail turret's plastic dome shattered. We lost hydraulic fluid, but our pilot managed to get us back to Italy, landing with no brakes and lots of holes.


After that mission, I placed a piece of steel from a discarded flak suit on my turret seat. I had volunteered to fly extra missions in order to get back home earlier, but after Oswiecim I stopped volunteering. That mission was the only Oswiecim flight recorded in our 781st Bombardment Squadron history.

Perhaps, as the author explained, there was reluctance in sending our bombers to Oswiecim for whatever reason. We never

heard a word in any of our briefings about German concentration camps and gas chambers at Oswiecim/Auschwitz. While I only flew one mission to Oswiecim, my group flew nine missions to the Blechhammer South and North oil refineries, which were located near Cosel, Germany. They were tough targets and it was during one of these missions that I was finally shot down on Friday, October 13, 1944.

*Pierre J.J. Kennedy
West Hartford, Conn.*

Footnote: As many of you know, the pilot Pierre mentions was James C. Althoff.



This article appeared in the September 2005 World War II Magazine by Pierre Kennedy.

781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"

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



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