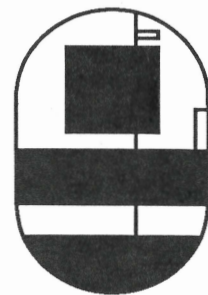




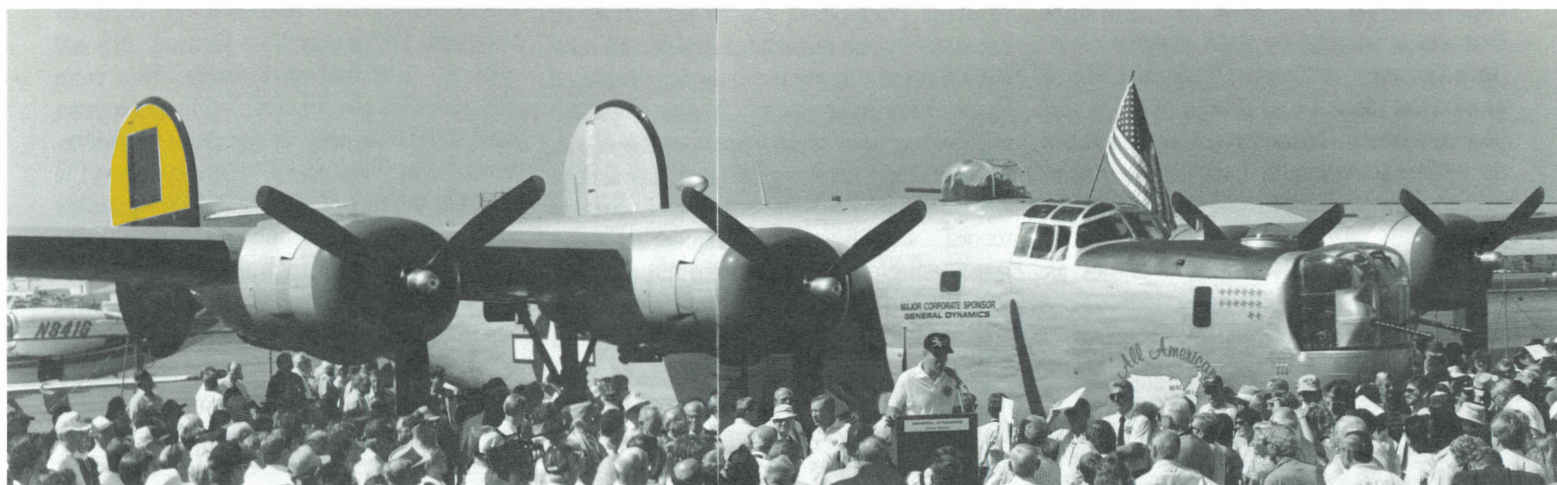
# PANTANELLA NEWS



OCTOBER 1989

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association ©

NUMBER 18



## ALL AMERICAN MAKES ITS DEBUT

After four long years the restoration of the Collings Foundation B-24J is fully restored and on flying status. After some five hours of flight testing it was given the go-ahead by the FAA just in time to begin the flight from Kissimmee, Florida to San Diego for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the First Flight of the B-24.

It took off Sunday morning September 17th and arrived on the evening of the 19th at Palm Springs, California. One of the designated crew, Steve Onysko, Navigator from the 5th Bomb Group, performed the navigation duties for the trip.

It remained there two days in preparation for the final leg to San Diego. The lead and designated crews met the plane here to help in some final details and to enjoy some flying.

For me it was a dream come true when I once again had the thrill of hearing the purr of those R1830's and feeling

the firm, but responsive controls. It is hard to explain the feelings after so many years.

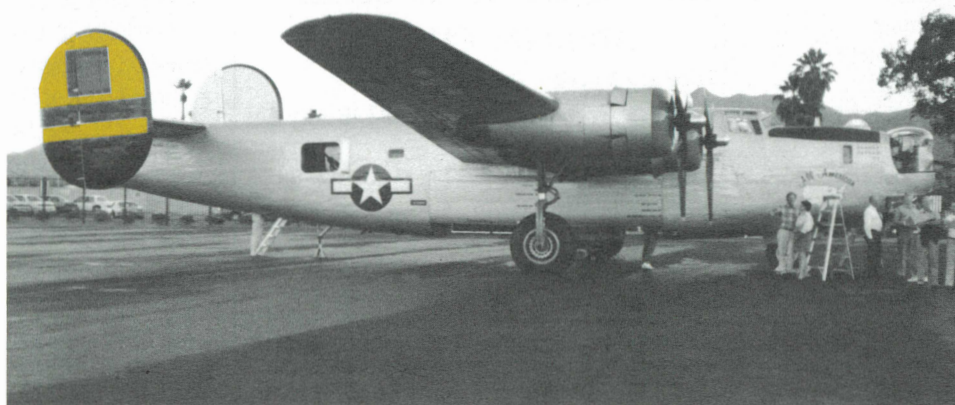
Everything became very familiar in a short time due to the magnificent job Tom Reilly, his crew, and the volunteers did. It made forty-four years ago seem like only yesterday. "All American" is exactly like it was when it was new off the assembly line at Fort Worth, Texas.

That evening some principals of General Dynamics joined the crews in preparation for their departure with the plane the following morning. General Dynamics is the only

major corporate sponsor of the plane. Present was Stanley Pace, CEO of General Dynamics. Some of you will remember Stanley Pace, of the 783rd Squadron, leading the last box on the Friedrichshafen raid on 3 August 1944, losing an engine and going down in Rough 'N Ready, along with seven other planes, during the German fighter attack. Pace got severely burned and spent most of his POW time in a hospital.

The following morning the extra crew members left early to be in San Diego for All American's arrival there. It was the start of several very emotional days for many former B-24 fliers, crewmen and builders. When it arrived precisely at 10:00 AM, as scheduled, it made a fly-over. After hearing those screaming jets landing at Lindberg Field the B-24 sounded like sweet music. Those engines can get anyone excited.

Then, a perfect



landing and All American taxied to a stop before a crowd of over 500 who had been waiting with great anticipation. The top hatch was opened and a large American Flag was raised to a roar of cheers and a round of applause, and a great celebration was underway.

Following arrival, a ceremony of short talks were made by Bob Collings, (see photo on previous page) Stanley Pace, Bob McGuire and John McSweeney. Then the B-24 was boarded by General Dynamics employees and attendees of the celebration that was sponsored by the Liberator Club. Spending most of the next three days in and around the plane I was able to observe and hear comments. To most it seemed it was the only plane in the world. It was so interesting to see so many young people so interested in the plane.

Although this celebration was not as

large as Fort Worth, it was enjoyed by all who attended.

Upon arrival I was greeted by three 781st men, all from Tipton's crew - Michael & Ida Deironimi, Harold Farrar, and Frank & Fran Jasicko. Later Sidney Weiss, Navigator on MacFarlane crew, visited the plane and made a presentation to the aircraft on behalf of the 781st Bomb Squadron. I also received a call from F. D. Bonvillain, Supply Officer, who was not able to attend.

We can thank Bob Collings, of the Collings Foundation for all his efforts to bring about this restoration and we all now have a chance to see the only fully restored flying B-24 in the world! To date over \$1.3 million has been spent on restoration alone.

Our squadron was asked to help out. And we did in a way we can be proud of. For the record - the 781st Bomb Squadron is the largest single squadron contributor of any WWII squadron. Our squadron spirit shows - nearly half of the contributors are ground echelon. Your donations have been very helpful and very much appreciated by Bob Collings. I know some of you are continuing to make donations or are upgrading your present status. Our group insignia is on the tail assembly on the co-pilots side because of our contributions.

Our squadron, along with the next two, is listed below the co-pilot's window on the U. S. map. Due to the squadron contributions it makes the 465th Bomb Group number two, and the group is listed on the map below the pilot's window. Maybe we can get our sister squadrons to become more interested and be able to keep our group insignia on the tail. It should be noted that all contributions are by individuals - no squadron funds have been used.

All American will now be on the air show circuit. Watch announcements of shows in your area or contact the Collings Foundation for the schedule. I know one date - **August 24, 1990, at Hanscom Field near Boston, the 781st Reunion!!**

## HISTORY BOOK

### 781st Bombardment Squadron (H)

As you learned in the July Newsletter, the Squadron History has been shipped - finally, on May 25, not June 23rd. So now everyone who ordered and paid for a copy, should have received it. Please let us know immediately if you have paid for a book and have not yet received one.

Over four hundred copies have been mailed and over thirty members have written to Harry Carl to acknowledge receipt of the book and to say how pleased they are with it. Bill Jostworth wrote, "We were ecstatic with the results..." Oliver Graham said, "Your history is far above expectations." Jim Wray noted, "It is something I'll treasure the rest of my life." Van Reynolds wrote, "There are not enough words to express the thanks for such a magnificent job." Bill Bartlett, Jr. wrote, "I received the 781st Squadron History Book yesterday. When it was delivered I was mowing the lawn. Need I tell you that the lawn didn't get mowed that day." Bob Bassinette said simply, "A super

## A SUPER JOB!

job!"

And Bonnie Rowe wrote a beautiful letter, "I had to write and tell you how much I appreciate what you have given to the members of the 781st Bomb Squadron. Yesterday I received my copy and I never expected as much.

When I arrived home, I got my mail out of the mail box, and there was the book. After sitting on the couch I opened the book and for two hours I didn't move. I even missed the evening news. I am so impressed with the book for it now seems so long ago that it was in another life. Reading the details with all the pictures brought me back to '44 and '45. After so long your attention to details is amazing and will be here for history long after we are gone.

I believe in letting a person know that I praise their talents and efforts while they are alive and Harry, I love you for what you have given OUR SQUADRON."

These comments have been deeply appreciated by Harry.

When the book went to press late in March, the Board of Directors authorized expenditure of Squadron Association funds to print a few extra copies beyond the 375 orders in hand at the time. Consequently, there is an inven-

**781st Bomb Squadron Association**  
2 Mount Vernon Lane  
Atherton, CA 94027  
(415) 325-8356

#### Officers

James C. Althoff, President  
Harry S. Carl, Vice-President  
Walter M. Longacre, Vice-President  
O. J. Cowart, Jr., Treasurer  
Ben Donahue, Secretary

#### Board of Directors

James C. Althoff  
Harry S. Carl  
O.J. Cowart, Jr.  
Charles F. McKenna III  
Jack Van Slyke  
Stanley J. Winkowski  
John Zadrozny

#### Chaplain

Roy N. Byrd

#### Editor

James C. Althoff  
2 Mount Vernon Lane  
Atherton, CA 94027  
(415) 325-8356

#### Historian

Harry S. Carl  
550 Creek Road  
Chadds Ford, PA 19317  
(215) 388-2562

#### **781st BOMB SQUADRON**

as part of the 465th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force, flew B-24 Liberators from Pantanella Airfield located near Canosa, Italy, during WW11 (1944-45). During its 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of bombs, shot down 23 enemy aircraft (German) and received two Distinguished Unit Citations.

#### ADDRESS CHANGES

Verner Macky, Eagle ID 83846  
Quincy F. Adams, PO Box 93, Bitely MI 49309.

Burton Sanders, 10211 Fresh Meadow Lane, Boca Raton, FL 33498. Phone 407 479-3905.

**NEW OFFICE ZIP CODE - It is now 781st Bomb Squadron, Atherton, CA 94027!!**



tory of about 160 books available for sale.

If you would like an additional copy or copies, or have not as yet ordered one, send a check for \$35.00 for each book made out to the 781st Bomb Squadron and mail to O.J. Cowart: P.O. Box 2131; Houston, TX 77001. Harry Carl would be happy to clear some space on his shelves and O.J. would be glad to get the money back in the kitty.

There have been only three corrections received pointing out errors in the book:

Page 162, picture no. 4 should be identified as "L to R: Sgt. Charles W. Kunz, Mechanic; Sgt. William H. Jostworth, Mechanic; M/Sgt. Lee B. Maguire, Crew Chief of the Belle Ringer; M/Sgt. John H. Rudeseal, Flight Chief (not Charles Kremer).

Page 160, picture no. 3 shows Frank Wassenaar and Bill DeKriek, not Bill Cooper.

Page 187, Fred Maute's address is NJ, not NY. He has had a tough time with us getting that straightened out in all of our computer files. Also, he would like it known that he is not shown in the Radar Maintenance Section picture on page 167. In that regard, he is among a distinguished group of 22 others who are "not shown" in that picture, presumably because they were not present when the picture was taken. Since there are 14 men in the picture who are not identified we are not able to name the other 21 who are "not shown," just Fred, and that is so noted.

We appreciate receiving the corrections as well as the congratulations. Undoubtedly there are other errors in the book which should be corrected. If you have found any errors please let Harry Carl know promptly so that he can make the corrections in our archive records.

Again - if you want additional copies of the History Book get your check in to O.J. Cowart.

## FOLDED WINGS

Clarence F. Weith (Hewitt tail Gunner) passed away August 25, 1989.

Rodney I. Block (Gunner) passed away in Stamford, Connecticut in 1976.

Wanda Dannelley (780th Squadron) passed away September 5, 1989.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our fallen comrades and their families.

In a letter from Helen and Marie Weith we were notified that **Clarence Weith** had passed away from a heart attack August 25, 1989. They also noted, "He was thrilled with your Pantanella News and History Book. Although retired since 1965, he never lost his military bearing and he missed the military life. He was buried at Fort Sheridan with military honors."

The information on **Rodney Block** came from Milt Levinson and Pierre Kennedy. Milt and Rodney were friends and were part of a number of replacement that went by ship to the 8th Air Force. After they arrived the 8th AF reduced the crews to nine men and extra gunners were sent to the 15 Air Force.

Milt had been trying to find Block without success. At the Dayton reunion he asked Pierre for some help in locating Block. From information on Block that Milt had, Pierre learned that Block's family was in the jewelry business. He checked Connecticut telephone directories (also some in New York City and Massachusetts). He found a Block jeweler in Agawam, Mass. This was turned over to Milt, who wrote letters without success.

Later Pierre received Rodney's WWII address from Milt and Milt noted that he had

visited Block in Lantan, Florida after the war. Pierre checked the location on a map and found it near Palm Beach. At the library Pierre checked out the telephone directory and found a listing for a Rodney Block in Lake Worth. He sent this information to Milt, who contacted the listed Rodney Block. It turned out to be Rodney's son and learned that his father had died. Then Milt got in contact with Rodney Sr.'s widow.

It took two years for Milt to locate an old friend. On his next trip to Florida he intends to visit the family.

And Milt promises to tell us his story of the voyage from England to Italy on a British ship loaded with Scotch and British Wacs, repatriated Algerian POW's, etc

**Wanda Dannelley** passed away at her desk at the insurance company she worked for. Many of our squadron knew Wanda very well as they were members of the 780th until our squadron association was formed, and some are still members.

About 20 years ago Wanda's husband died a week before the 780th's reunion. Wanda bravely attended the reunion and took over for her husband. Since that time she has been editor and has kept the association running. I know the 780th will miss her very much.



**MINI REUNION** - In August I paid a visit to Sacramento on my boat and decided to call up some of the local 781st members for an afternoon of tall tales. I was not able to reach all the members on short notice, but (L to R) Eugene Weiss, Dale Samuelson, Carl Dahl, Calvert Crawford, and James Gingrich joined me aboard the Sea Lover for a very pleasant afternoon.

# REUNION 1990 BOSTON AUGUST 23 - 26

This reunion will be the 45th Anniversary Celebration since the 781st Bomb Squadron and 465th Bomb Group was deactivated. It will be held at the New Vista Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. It is actually in Waltham, which is 12 to 15 miles from the center of Boston and the airport.

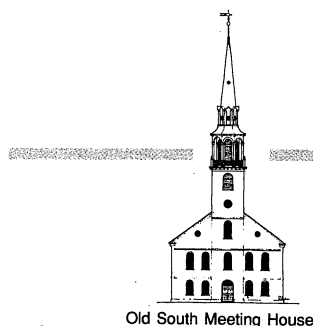
Indications are that this will be our largest reunion. We have more members now than ever before and it has been two years since our last reunion. We will give you some preliminary reasons to make you plans early:

**Hotel** - It will be the brand new Vista International Hotel opening January 1990. Our convention rates are \$65, double or single! - 50% less than normal rates at this super hotel. And we have loads of space for meetings, etc. It is 12 miles from downtown Boston and parking is free. A beautiful surrounding view, and the rates will hold if you come in early or stay on.

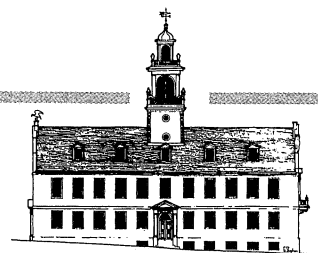
**Program** - We will have our normal interesting programs and in addition we will have the B-24 All American for one day to climb aboard, photograph, some will fly, etc.

**Sightseeing and Tours** - We will have a questionnaire on this in the next newsletter and will plan some on Sunday and Monday following the reunion. I have visited Boston and the surrounding area five times in recent years. It is a very interesting place to visit, full of history, scenery, the water front, etc. Every time I get a chance to be in Boston I plan a few days to visit one of the historic sights or take a trip down to the Cape. I know those of you that haven't been in the area will agree with me once you see it. And the food is great, especially sea food.

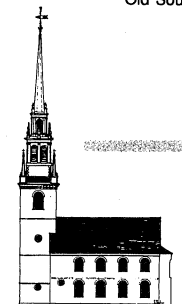
**Travel** - I know many will be driving, but those of you flying can get very low fares if you plan ahead. For example Delta and U. S. Air have senior citizen coupons which make a round trip from anywhere in the U. S. that the airline flies to, for less than \$200 per round trip. Certain restrictions apply like no flights on Friday, Sunday or Monday, a minimum of two round trip purchases, etc. but with planning you can take advantage of them. Go to the reunion and stay over a couple days! Check with your travel agent.



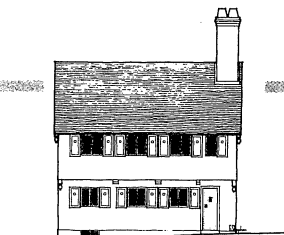
Old South Meeting House



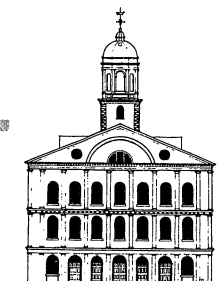
Old State House



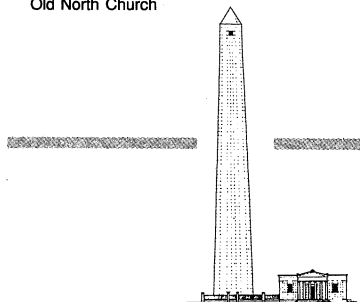
Old North Church



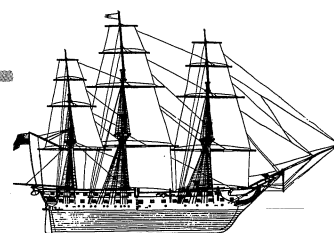
Paul Revere House



Faneuil Hall



Bunker Hill Monument



Charlestown Navy Yard USS Constitution

The hotel has limo and helicopter service from the airport and downtown.

**Reservations** - Reservation forms will be in the next newsletter.

The next newsletter will have more details to help you in your planning. For now mark your 1990 calendar for August 23 to 26. Better yet make it a few days more and take in some of the interesting country where our fore fathers first settled.

In the sketches above are some of the historical attractions in Boston. And remember Boston is known for its parties since 1773 - remember the Boston Tea Party?

And remember everyone is invited. Our association and reunion is for Ground Crews, Air Crews, Enlisted Men, Officers, and Group Personnel. That is why we all can be proud of our squadron and the reason our reunions are as large as group reunions.



Boys will be Boys - There are serious times and care-free times at the reunions. Here at San Antonio, in one of the lighter moments, Jim Wray donned Frank Hylla's greens and someone's helmet to recall the days gone by with fellow model crew members Walter Sutton and William Wood.



## “ANGIE”

### Pantanella's favorite mascot.

Here is the story as told by Angie's caretaker Morris Cohen. "Angie's" mother "Queenie," gave birth to a small litter of pups at McCook Air Army Air Base on either Christmas or New Years 1943. Queenie adopted me because I was friendly with her and she let me pick two of the litter, which I named Angie and Jessica.

As Bob (Freed) told you, when we left McCook we took both pups with us. When we boarded the Liberty ship I put Angie in my duffle bag, and Bob put Jessica in his.

When we were out at sea about a week later Angie got sick and couldn't move her bowels. The doctor made up an ointment, which made her better. Angie became very attached to him.

Bob told you about the hassle we had when the navy decided to test their guns. The pups got frightened, so we had to put cotton in their ears and hid them in our jackets to calm them.

When we got to Africa, both pups were used to gun-fire, so we let them roam without fear. Angie adopted a friend there, but wouldn't mate with him.

When we left Africa, somehow Jessica disappeared.

At Pantanella, Angie met a small Italian terrier dog, and she mated with him and she

became pregnant.

She was a very happy dog. She would go up the hill and visit with the officers, then come back down for chow and stay with us.

You could always see her down on the line with us when we were loading the planes with bombs. She loved to ride on the bomb trucks. Also, she was a bit of a ham - she loved to pose for pictures.

She even walked with me when I was on guard duty. She was a very clean dog and she loved to get washed and groomed.

When the war was over and we were ready to leave, Angie went down to the line and we never saw her again.

The English artillery group pulled out before us, perhaps they dog-napped her, or she decided to stay with her mate. We searched all over for her but couldn't find her. At that time she was almost ready to give birth.

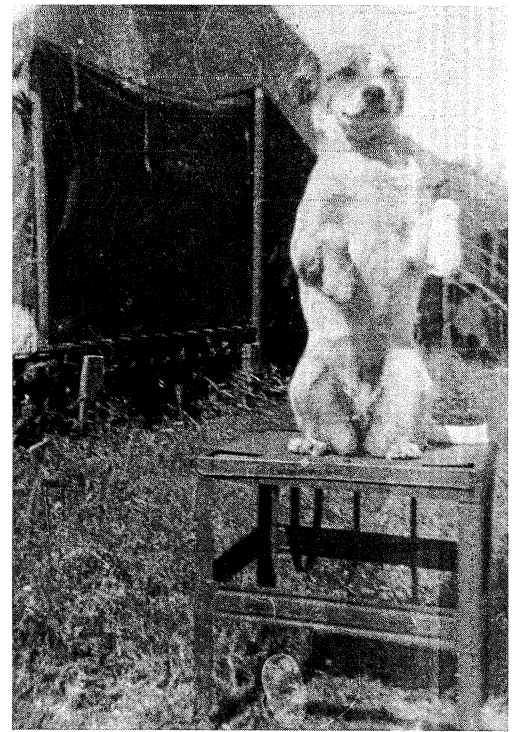
To this day I have her picture hanging on the wall. As Gene Janovich said, "Angie was good for our morale. In a way she was a symbolic link to home and care-free youthful days."

Included in the package Morris sent was a press release about Morris by Albert "Scoop" Nagel, Intelligence Section Chief. This release later appeared in a Brooklyn newspaper.

In part, "Ground Ordnance men are the unsung heroes of the Air Forces today for they install the highly sensitive 'eggs' into the bomb bays of our huge warbirds. Any hitch may cause the bombs to 'hang up' over the target and endanger the lives of the crew. Ordnance men are carefully selected.

His pet dog "Angie", often called the belle of the field, is the same Angeline Bomber that went through the rigid training phases with the boys back at McCook, Nebraska. Enroute to Italy the boys wondered how she would take to her new environment. The only change made is that she has become the fiancée of an Italian Terrier. Good international relations. Miss Angie is the daughter of Mrs. Queenie Bomber of McCook, Nebraska Army Air Base."

Thank you Morris Cohen for the story. I'm sure it brings back a lot of memories

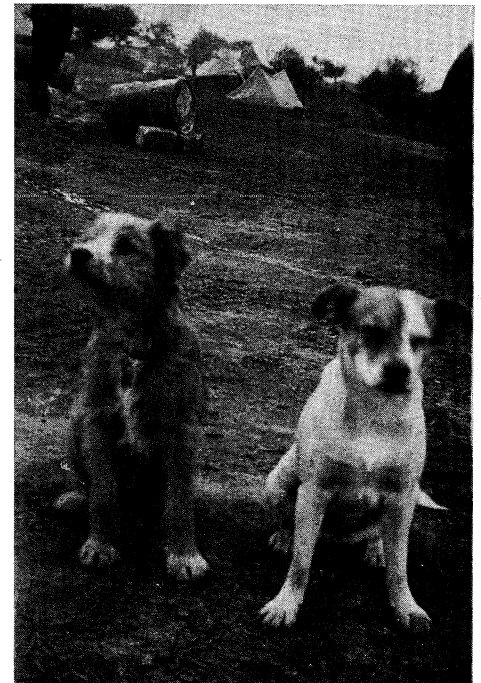


*The above photo is from Eugene Janovich showing Angie posing.*

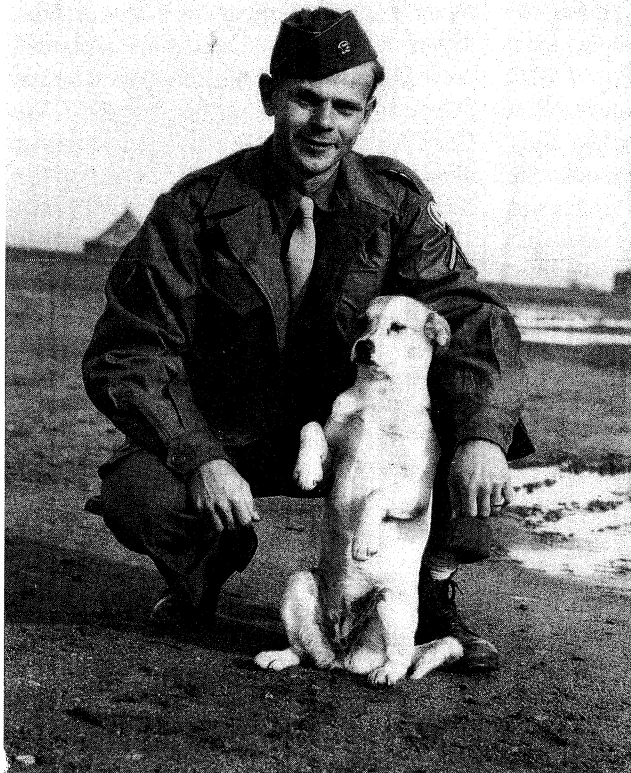
*to a lot of men.*

*It should be noted that Morris corrected the identification of the dog on the bomb fin with some ordnance men shown in the last newsletter - it is Angie's mate, not Angie. Note the long hair.*

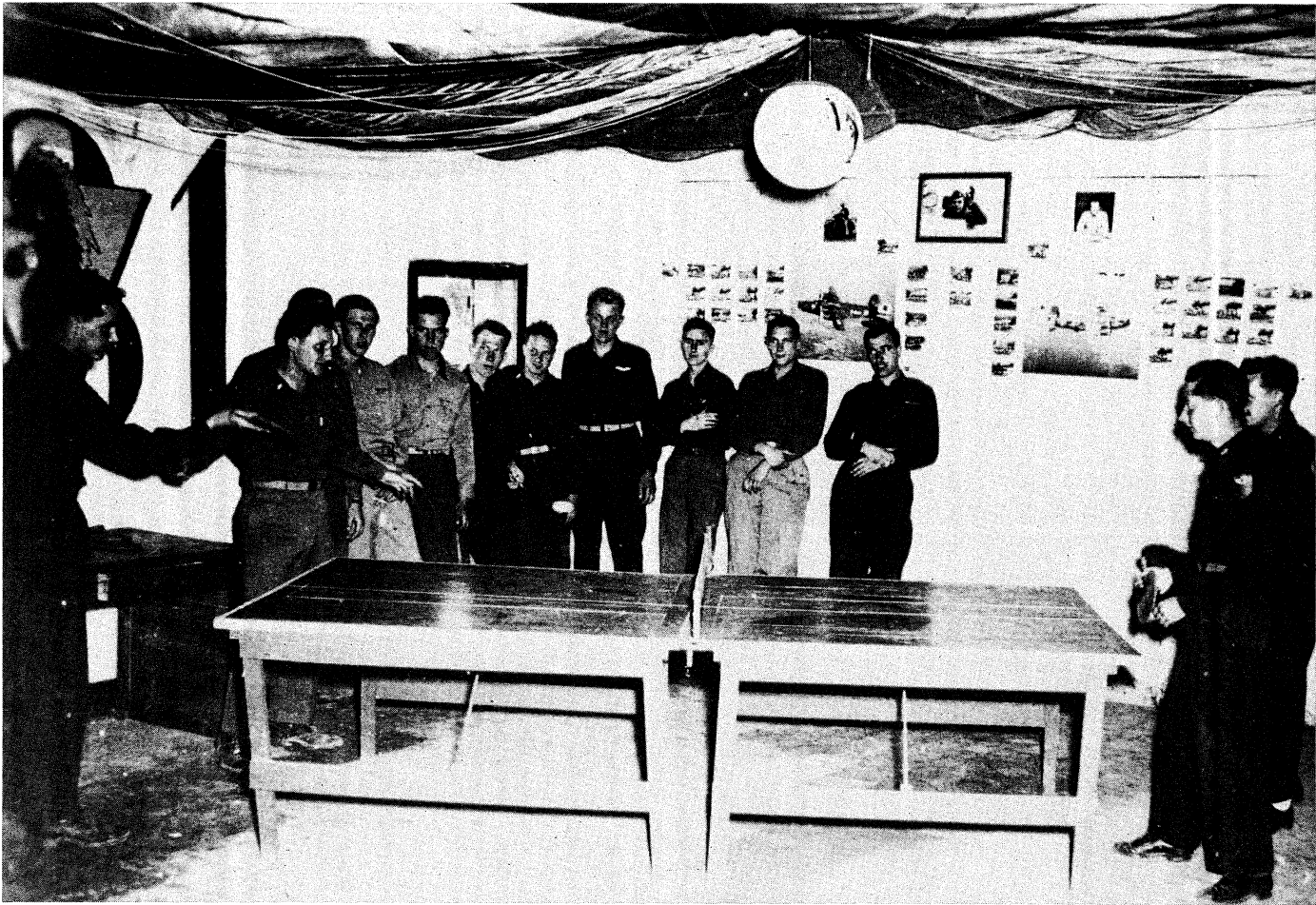
*Our next dog story will be about "Blechhammer", the black Italian dog on the hill. So far not a lot of details. Let's hear from you if you can add to the story.*



*On this photo Morris notes, "Angie is with the Italian Terrier she was mated with.."*



*Angie and Morris Cohen. In nearly every photo Angie is posing.*



**L TO R - Harry Yaroshuk, John Zitlis, Allan Arveson?, Richard Cameron, Unknown, Unknown, Rueben Krough, John Fountain, John Zartman, Unknown, Curtis Reed, Russ Maynard?**

Tense moments for this duel at the ping-pong table. How about some help in identifying the unknowns. Photo taken shortly before the end of the war and was sent in by John "Bama" Fountain, radar navigator, about a year ago. The following is a letter from John;

"I have enjoyed reading the Pantanella News for the past two years. Letters from Robert Matthews, mailed to my dead parents' home address in Brewton, Alabama, were returned by the post office for "address unknown." Bob's persistence finally paid off - he routed his return from Destin, Florida to Atlanta, Georgia, through Brewton and finally talked to a lady who knew my brother who had recently retired from the Navy and chose to live in Brewton - two other brothers and I had long since left our home town.

I sent in my questionnaire, but would like to add a few remarks. I don't remember many of you because I was not assigned to a crew while in the 781st. I went to radar school for two months after completing navigation school and shipped to Italy immediately thereafter. I flew with many

different crews from February, 1945 until VE day in May, since very few planes had radar sets and they flew lead or deputy lead. I believe I remember Ben Donahue. I think I flew with his crew more than once. Ben was the officer of the day on the last night before leaving for stateside? I remember the "lister bag" party that night when the bar was set up at the lister bag because the inside bar had been defrocked and the tent cover dismantled.

The next day, four of us stood on the hill and waved good-bye to all of you who buzzed the headquarters in formation on your way home. We were declared essential to the occupation force (I haven't figured out yet why). We spent four months in a B-17 outfit and were lucky if we got in four hours of flying time each month. When I finally got back and was processed for discharge, a major talked me into joining the AF Reserves. I went back to college, got my degree and went on with my business life, never going to a reserve meeting. In October, 1950, President Truman froze the reserves and I was recalled in January, 1951. After attending a radar refresher course, I was

assigned to a B-29 crew and we flew photo recon practice missions for a few months. My crew was picked to replace a combat crew flying over North Korea, so we were shipped to Okinawa in December, 1951. We flew 24 night missions, each plane 3 minutes ahead or behind the next plane and 500 feet difference in altitude. We used the old radar sets primarily for navigation and for secondary targets, if necessary, but we used shoran sets for the primary targets - they were very accurate.

Anyway, we got back stateside in June, 1952 and I bade the Air Force good-bye, forever!

I want to thank the flight engineer who save my life on my first mission on February 21, 1945 over Vienna, Austria. I was naturally uptight and very busy on my radar set down the bomb run - the last thing I remember was bombs away. The next thing I remember he was shaking me and holding up my oxygen hose to show me he had plugged it into an auxiliary hose and outlet. Somehow it became unplugged from my regular out let and I didn't realize that I was passing out."

William H. Coonan (Engineering) sent in a story he thought might be interesting. The following story by Bill appeared in the Asheville, North Carolina newspaper:

## Mountain Top Christmas

My most memorable Christmas was in Italy during World War II in 1944. Our Air Force Chaplain offered to take us on a surprise trip for Christmas. We loaded up two truck loads of GI's and drove up a winding dirt road to a church on a mountain top. There we attended Mass by a most unusual Priest. His name was Padre Pio. This man had the stigma of Christ's Crucifixion on his chest and nail holes in his hands and feet. As he said Mass, his teeth chattered on the chalice and he moaned as his hands bled during the service. I was close to him as I served at his Mass and kissed his hand afterwards. We were told that he received these special markings when he was a young man. While sitting in the choir loft, he fainted and when he awoke he had the stigma on his chest, both hands, and feet.

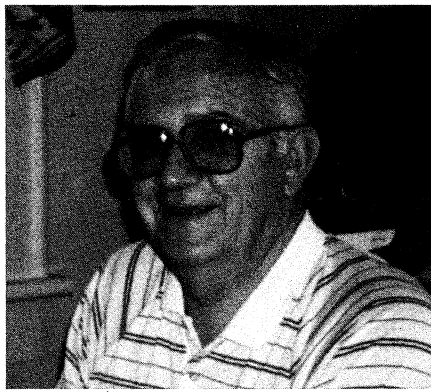


*On the back of this photo it is signed Bill Coonan, July 11, 1945 Italy. Padre Pio, someday a Saint*

So, I am reminded of this every Christmas, that Christ died for us, as we celebrate his birth each year.

There is a National Center for Padre Pio in Norristown, Pennsylvania.

*There was an article about Padre Pio one year ago which reported that Padre Pio's name is within ten years of appearing on the calendar of saints and probably will*



*Bill Coonan, May 1989*

*be listed with the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.*

*Padre Pio died at the age of 81, in 1968. Last year Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage to San Giovanni Rotondo, where Padre Pio lived and worked. The first meeting of the two occurred in 1947 when Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John II) had just been ordained and visited the famous Padre. He was deeply struck by the meeting and returned 27 years later to celebrate his priesthood there.*

## ABOUT OUR MEN KILLED-IN-ACTION

All most of us know about many of our KIA's is the report of the date and mission. We do have some of the details on some and have been acquiring more through the Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR). Pierre J. J. Kennedy has been researching many of the MACR's and has sent information on Alfred Maas. This is his report.

"Alfred Maas, Engineer, is on two MACR reports. The Ploesti raid, 28 July 1944, with the 782nd, George Tucker, Pilot. The plane fell behind formation coming back from Ploesti, got to Yugoslavia where Maas bailed out and the Chetniks got him out of Yugoslavia. Maas returned to Italy. Then on the Vienna mission of 22 March, 1945 with the 782nd, Maas was with Pilot Edgel Richardson. Ernest Alden was the Mickey Operator, plus 2 other Navigators, Garth Atherly and Paul Durckel. This was a 12 man crew, even having a Lt. Col. McHenry Hamilton along as an observer. The plane, Yellow X, was hit by flak while rallying off the target. Ernest Alden and Alfred Maas (top turret) were KIA. Their fate unknown - killed by fire or by civilians. Maas must have flown a lot of missions."

*In addition to Pierres report we have received additional information that Ernest Alden was hung by civilians as reported by*

*Marcel Snyder, another of our Mickey Operators. Paul Durckel survived, and was located in time to attend our last reunion. Maybe he can fill us in more on this mission.*

*As far as Lt. Col. Hamilton is concerned he was to be assigned to our group, I believe as CO, and was not supposed to fly. He was anxious to get on a mission and appealed to a superior at wing to go along.*

## ON THE LINE

News and Views of the Squadron - December 1943

**HARK YE!** The pride of the 781st is at stake. . . Lt. Wray, Operations Officer, wants us back in 1st place in "Flying Hours Accomplished." This week after being 1st all this time, we were squeezed to the runner-up spot by our rivals the 782nd.

**TARGET PRACTICE.** . . Not for our Ordnance Shop. . . for they set up a record (hard to beat). 29 out of 29 men qualified with the .45 caliber equalizer in one trip to the range. And now Lt. Ellett! Beer and more beer for Lt. Sutton (Ordnance) for the rest of the month as per "Bet", after you said not one Ordnance man could qualify. **QUESTION OF THE WEEK?** Sgt. Giulino: Why does he remind one of Rip Van Winkle? . . Say Doc: Are you called the "Pin Up Boy" of the Squadron because your office has all those beautiful luscious films decorating your walls? . . Cpl Maxcy: Why, when asked "How is business"? . . you remarked "Dead". Is it because you were in the undertaking business in civil life? . . Our Squadron Commander Major McKenna, expects the Mrs. . . any day now. . . and Capt. Crouch gets his first taste of sunshine and duty after being on an INFLUENZA vacation spent at our station hospital. . . Say Cpl. Avery. . . "Shoe Shine Boy"? Was it really a mistake when you were caught shining T/Sgt. Chiles shoes? In your haste to get ready for inspections? . . T/Sgt. Botch. . . Armament Chief, expresses. . . "there is nothing like a home-made meal. . . Mrs. Botch knows why too. . . she stays over that well known "hot stove". . . S/Sgt. Rapid Fleenor. . . Transportation Head. . . was once. . . yeh once. . . "a race track driver". . . yeh now he is a jeep driver. . . and has to rest between runs. . . the ole boy. . . puffs so. . . Cpl. Lepana was voted most likely to succeed. . . (with the woman). Is it your Hollywood background, Joe? Hand-pats to Cpl. Howard. . . he is now the proud owner of a Mrs. Howard.



## A EUROPEAN AND PANTANELLA TOUR IS BEING PLANNED

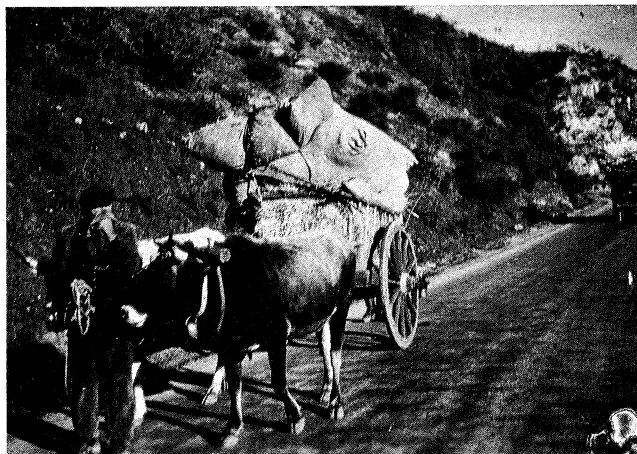
Ralph Hendrickson has notified me that he has been working with a travel agency on a tour to Europe, including a visit to Pantanella. Current plans call for a flight to Munich, then by bus to various cities we "visited" during WWII like Vienna, then on to Venice, a stop at Pantanella, Sorrento, Naples, Rome and various stops on the way to the departure from Zurich. The 20 day tour is currently priced at \$2199 per person from New York.

If you have any interest write to Ralph Hendrickson, 7410 Venetian Way, W. Palm Beach, FL 33406. Phone 407 582-6463. Be sure to contact Ralph if you have any interest so that they can get an idea how many might go, which will help in planning. Ralph or the travel agency will then contact you for further information. The 781st Bomb Squadron Association is not involved in the tour, so please contact Ralph direct.

### Group Report

I recently received a photo album from Robert W. Pennock, Group Casualty Reporter. Many were photos of the surrounding Italian country and villages. They will be appearing in the newsletters.

Robert made some comments about the early days at Pantanella. He was the first one to occupy one of the group buildings next to the theater, which was a chicken house. Since he had classified documents he, or someone else, had to be with the documents. Robert got the duty the first night to sleep there and then discovered the chickens were gone, but the lice were still there.



*An oxdrawn plow near Pantanella.*

The next day Group Adjutant William Bigelow came to the building and began scratching. Robert remarked, "You haven't had your DDT yet." It took a dose of DDT powder to keep the lice off.

### DUES/DONATIONS

Your Board of Directors has set dues or donations on a voluntary basis. It is suggested that you send in \$10 to \$20 each year, whatever you can afford, to O. J. Cowart, Jr., Treasurer, PO Box 2131, Houston, TX 77001. At our reunion last year most of those attending made a payment then. It is now a year later and may be a good time to make your annual payment.



### MAIL CALL

**Harold A. Straughan** (McKenna tail gunner) recently wrote a letter and sent funds for the Collings Foundation for the Distinguished Flying Command category.

He recently visited the All American B-24 and after crawling through, he said it brought back a lot of memories. War may be hell but it sure kindles memories, he notes.

Harold also informed us that he was returning from one of his last missions and was greeted by Col. Wray who presented him with a telegram from home - he was the proud father of twin daughters! In order to get him home in a hurry he flew a mission

every day for the next few days until he finished up and then went home for a well deserved leave.

### A LETTER FROM CHARLES LITTLE;

"I, too was stationed at Pantanella Air Base. I flew all fifty combat missions from that base. I flew some missions with Pilot Marvin Tanenbaum and crew, but later Tanenbaum was grounded and I went on flying with various other pilots and their crew.

Surprisingly enough I have saved quite a few papers regarding restricted orders, bombing targets, photos, etc.

My most memorable experiences, and scared, were flying out of Pantanella on bombing missions to Ploesti Oil Fields, Vienna, Austria, and Blechhammer, Germany. Some of those missions were something to write home about! The enemy (Nazi's) threw just about everything they had at us! Many missions after leaving the target, we sweated out coldness, flak, fighters and the "Swiss Alps"! One instance we had to throw everything out which was either nailed or screwed down just to clear the Alps and make it back to base and with around 165 holes in the 24, just plain shot up to hell, nearly crippled and disabled we made it back to base by the grace of God!

Then there was this mission, just before target time, the bomb bay doors were stuck and lo and behold, Little had to go back and release all of those little 'ole Frag Bombs by hand while those little 'ole spinners were just twirling about! Not realizing all the while I forgot to put on my oxygen mask at 25,000 feet! For this I was awarded the DFC medal. I have received other medals such as the Air Medal w/ clusters, etc.



*Many a GI driver has cussed because of a herd of goats, or a donkey or an ox cart gets in the way.*

I do not wish to bore you too much with my stories, but must mention one more for good measure! After completing my fifty missions and wanting to get home real bad, I decided to take a troop ship home to play it safe! After all those 'ole B-24 bombers were not that great of shape anymore even to cross the Atlantic and back home again! But would you believe a few days out on that troop ship we ran into one helluva storm and almost sank! I swore to God if I ever made it back home I would fly anything after that!"

*Charles ended the letter saying he was in good health at age 70, has been married for 44 years and is still working as an electrical inspector.*

## WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO YELLOW "K"?

The following article was submitted by Ben Donahue. "Yellow K was a tired looking B-24, chipped paint, and oil stained wings and engines.

The one time I flew "K" on a mission was a memorable one. Going over the pre-flight check on the morning of the mission the crew and I found a window in the nose missing. A quick-fix was made by a pile of flack vests stacked over the missing window pane. While checking the turrets and ammo, we found that the top turret was operating only sporadically, and ammo was not aboard for waist gunners. The crew chief of "K" had only been notified an hour before engine start because of a late notice for a maximum effort.

Starting engines was normal until #4. It ran roughly, but smoothed out prior to take-off.

Upon arriving over the IP and opening the bomb bay we changed the power setting and created near disaster. The #4 engine ran away, causing a drastic swerve and nearly a mid-air collision with a wing man. Finally we got #4 under control with partial feathering, but no power. We lost the formation.

Turning for home on three engines, the bombardier salvoed the bombs upon a bridge and highway complex. The men in the back said it looked like a pretty good strike.

We got into more trouble before finally sitting down on an unfinished air strip north of Ancona. In the process the nose gear was destroyed and damage to the main gear.

Two months later Yellow K was back in service with new engines, electrical, etc. and

returned to Pantanella. The next two missions were both aborts which mystified both aircrews and the ground crewchief. Maybe Yellow K just did not want to fly any more. She became a "hanger queen" for the remainder of the time in Italy.

After the war, a crew, new to the squadron, was assigned Yellow K for a flight back to the U.S. Rumors say that the crew spent almost two months flying K home. Delays at Marrakech, the Gold Coast, Ascension Island with a final stop at Puerto Rico, where the crew finally said, "enough is enough."

Now, fellow 781st members, can you complete the story. Just what did happen to Yellow K?"

*We have some of the answer, Ben. On the mission you referred to, you landed at Falconaire. We have no knowledge of what crew flew it to Puerto Rico, but, at reunion '86 I found out that it was Jim Wray who took over and completed Yellow K's journey to the U.S. He remembers it well, since he stopped over in Miami and had a great night on the town. The next day he flew Yellow K to Savannah, Georgia, and Yellow K ended up in some scrap yard.*

*OK, does anyone remember flying Yellow K to Puerto Rico?*

## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

My files show notes that quite a few of you have promised to send in your stories. Many interesting things come to light that many of us did not know about. And air crews were not there for the full year, so they like to know what happened at Pantanella. So, men, let's wrap up what you have and get it in!

There has been a good reply on the B-24 names and numbers. If you have any information and have not sent it in please do so. I'll publish the list soon. Some interesting reports like Rae Branch did you know Mad Cap Margie was transferred to the 450th Bomb Group and went down over Weiner Neustadt May 29, 1944?

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS** - The Holiday Season is upon us and during this season we think more of our family and friends than any other time of the year. Your officers and directors wish you and yours a very joyous Holiday Season. We want you to join us in our thoughts and prayers for our fallen comrades that have joined the Folded Wings, and their families.



**MYSTERY PHOTO?** I received this from Harry Carl inquiring about identification. Obviously it is not a full crew coming into the squadron. We have no record of any crew other than those listed in the history book, except several that came in the last week as the 485th Bomb Group was closing down. It appears that this was a make up crew, maybe a co-pilot checked out as a first pilot? The man on left rear is a flight officer, but can you make out the wings? And two men in the front left appear to have another identification above our squadron insignia. Could they be replacements from the 8th AF?



*L to R , Rear - Walker Horton Shipley, Navigator; Floyd N. Trudeau, Co-Pilot; Arthur A. Zalk, Pilot; Joe Degen, Bombardier; Front - Glenn A. McCabe, Nose Gunner; Selmer E. Hansen, Ball Gunner; Orville Quail, Top Gunner; George Kurkouski, Tail Gunner; Jack F. Puliti, Radio Operator; Alan Chessher, Engineer.*

*A request was made to Walker Shipley for information for a story on the Zalk crew. He and the survivors of the crew furnished the following information.*

The Zalk crew was first assembled 12 June 1944, at Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas. Here the crew received combat crew training in high altitude formation flying, bombing and aerial gunnery. After losing friends in training crashes, the crew was confronted with the reality that war-time flying, even in the states, was not all fun and games.

On 23 July 1944, the crew was ordered to pick up a new aircraft at Topeka, Kansas. At this time, no one knew for certain what theater of operations would be the final destination. Strongest rumor said "India."

After flight testing the brand new B-24 Number 42-51664, the crew departed 9 August 1944 for Grenier Field, New Hampshire. While enroute, over Niagara Falls, the plane developed a fuel leak. At Grenier Field, two civilian mechanics were assigned to repair the leak. The mechanic in charge spoke with a thick German accent, so one crew member stayed with the aircraft at all times while it was being repaired.

On 15 August 1944 the plane and crew flew to Gander, Newfoundland. Here they were grounded by a severe North Atlantic storm system for 10 days.

Finally, on 25 August, the crew headed for assignment in Europe by the way of the

Azores and Africa. The weather continued to be poor, and take-off from Gander was about 0200 hours into a low ceiling with heavy rain. Zalk, along with co-pilot Trudeau, decided to check out Navigator Shipley by telling him all the radios were out and removed the fuses from the radio without telling him. So, he had to go by dead reckoning through the storm. As the sun rose and the weather cleared Shipley was able to direct the plane to Lagens Field, Azores after the eight hour flight. Orville "Swede" Quail (top turret gunner) recalls, "As soon as the Radio Operator put the fuse back in the radio compass worked perfectly."

The quarters were poor at the Azores and Floyd Trudeau remembers, "the Azores had the biggest rats any of us had ever seen. I was riding in the front seat of a truck and they looked like armadillos crossing the road in the headlights."

Then it was on to Marrakech, Tuni, and on 28 August arriving at Gioia, Italy. While at Gioia Floyd Trudeau recalls, "We lost our new Liberator and in a few days a B-24 from 465th Bomb Group Operations picked us up and flew us to Pantanella. I recall Zalk and I were impressed by the coordination between pilot and co-pilot. We learned a lot from that short ride."

Zalk's nickname "Ack Ack," which was a result of his initials A. A., was readily adopted by the squadron at Pantanella. With

his outwardly happy-go-lucky attitude, the squadron became very aware of the Zalk's crew arrival.

At Pantanella they moved into a tent with "veteran" Charles Titl, who "showed them the ropes" and later joined the crew as co pilot when Trudeau became a first pilot.

Navigator Shipley was the first of the crew to fly a mission when he replaced F/O Goldman on the Nelson crew, who was killed when he fell out of the nose wheel door on a training mission.

The crew's first mission was on 10 September 44 to Vienna, probably with Capt. Blankenship. They got their "Baptism of Fire" from intense, heavy and accurate flak. Over 100 holes in the aircraft were counted after landing.

The crew's good luck charm was rubbing the head of Puliti, the radio operator, prior to take-off. The charmed life of Puliti began in training when he turned down an offer to fill in on another crew when a member was sick. That crew crashed that day and all were killed. Then on his first mission flak hit the corner of his radio, then a near miss under the waist gun he was manning, and a third miss went over his head when he reached down to turn on the camera!

On another mission that is remembered by this crew, as it is by most who flew that day, 13 October 1944 (Friday) to Blechhammer. Over the target the plane in front of



Zalk took a direct hit. Zalk also took a direct hit through the trailing edge of the right wing, but the shell did not explode. (Our squadron lost the Lovey and Gaines' crew that day).

Shipley recalls, "On the bomb run, I heard a loud bang and the navigator's compartment filled with smoke. I looked down on the map table and found a piece of shrapnel about as long as a kitchen match. It had rolled back the "skin" of the plane like the top of a sardine can and bounced off my helmet. I couldn't believe that such a small object could make so much noise."

George Kurkowski remembers getting his oxygen line cut for three consecutive missions and Allen Chessire recalls getting knocked to the floor of the flight deck when flak hit him in the chest of his flak suit.

On another mission 17 October to Vienna they were forced to make an emergency landing at Vis due to an engine out. They returned to Pantanella after having been reported as shot down.

On another return from Vienna their hydraulics were shot out and George Kurkowski recalls that Zalk had chest chutes tied to the waist gun to act as flaps. But they didn't know a tire was shot out, so the plane ended up on its belly off the runway in the mud.

And Shipley recalls another Vienna mission when a German defector was riding the group lead plane to monitor enemy radio messages. "I have always suspected he was a double agent, giving away our altitude, because of the accuracy of the flak. The group lead plane took a direct hit and started trailing fire. I watched out the bubble window in the nose as the lead plane pulled straight up, hung on it's props momentarily, and fell away into a spin, trailing fire and smoke. For the German defector aboard, it was either poetic justice or an ironic tragedy."

The crew had many more experiences on their missions. Many missions to the rough ones like eight trips to Vienna.

After Floyd Trudeau became first pilot he recalls going to Vis short on fuel and running out of gas on the final approach. In his words, "I'm the only pilot to ever dead-stick land a B-24... and live to tell about it." There were no injuries, but the plane was a total loss.

On 16 Jan 45 the crew was granted a rest leave for five days in Cairo and Tel Aviv. Accompanying the Zalk crew on this memorable trip was Ground Crew Chief John T. Patrick and Squadron Flight Surgeon "Doc"

Rapoport. Joegia Wolf (Yellow F) provided the transportation and the squadron mess received several crates of delicious oranges grown in Palestine.

In the spring of 1945, Charles Titl completed his tour and returned to the U.S. Earl Leinart joined the crew as co-pilot and returned to the states with the crew.

After the war ended the Zalk crew packed their gear, loaded their plane, "Dragonass" and departed Pantanella for Taranto, Italy. On 7 June they took off for the U.S. via Tunis, Algiers, and Dakar, Africa. From there it was 9 1/2 hours over water, 1630 nautical miles, across the Atlantic to Natal, Brazil. Then to Puerto Rico and Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia.

It would be nice to end the history of the Zalk crew with "and they all lived happily ever after." Unfortunately, Capt. A. A. Zalk was killed in the crash of a military aircraft in 1946. Joining the ranks of flyers who have folded their wings are crew members Jack Puliti and Allen Chessire.

But like all good stories that are told and retold with great fondness, it can be said of the Zalk crew, "They lived together, laughed together, flew together and fought together for a year and a day....12 June 1944 to 13 June 1945."

Post Script: Most of us are now parents and grandparents. Can you now imagine, in your wildest dreams, turning loose a bunch of 20 year old kids in a million-dollar aircraft loaded with hi-test gasoline, hair-trigger bombs and bullets, and sending them out on an errand...and expecting them to return on time? For the rest of my life I will always remember the sound of the jeep coming to

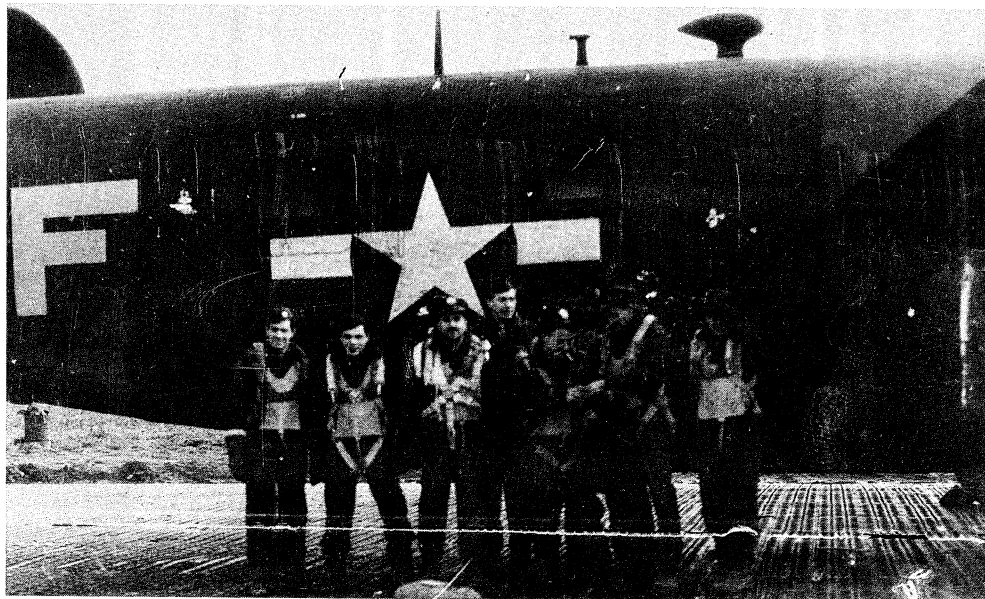


*Ack Ack Zalk, the nose who knows.*

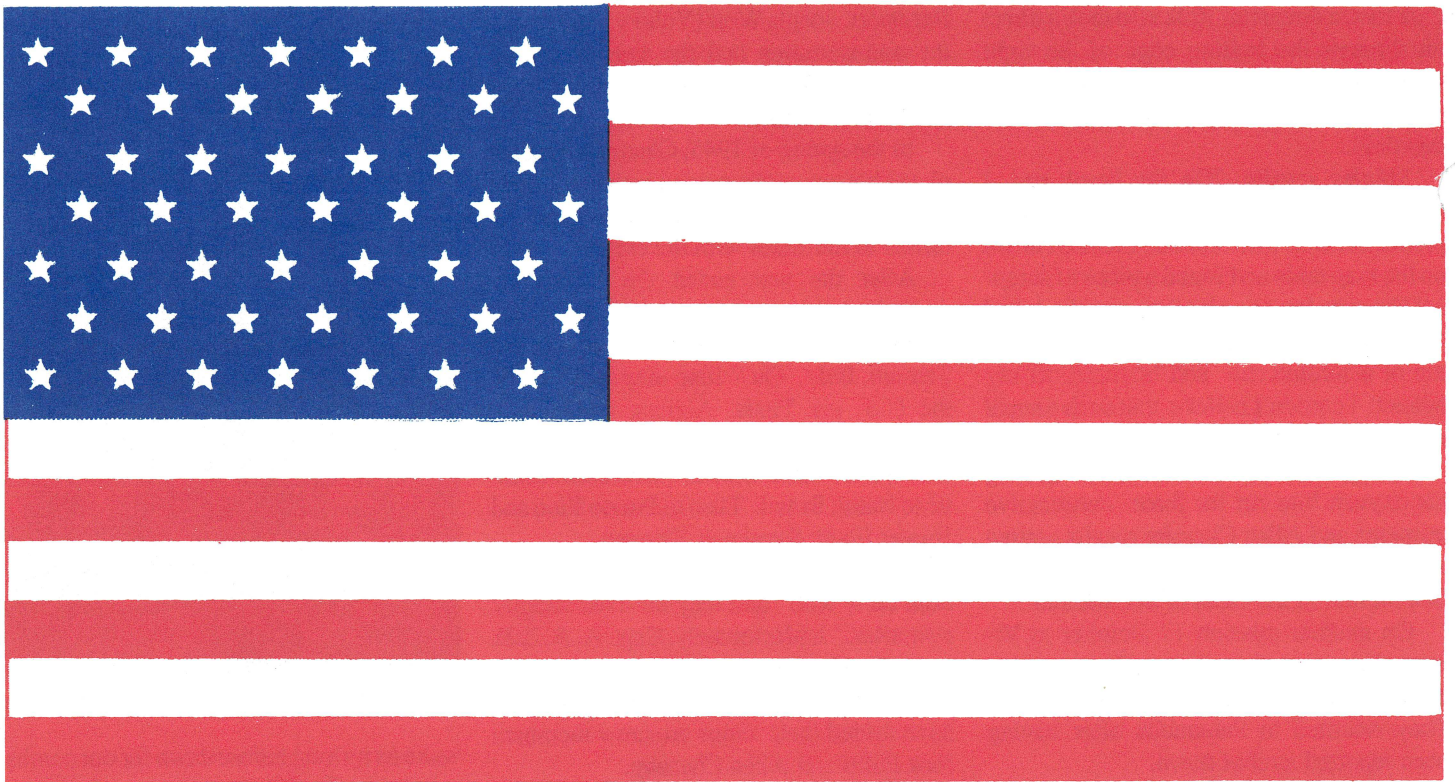
wake us up long before dawn for our combat missions. To this day, the sound of a car engine before daylight has me completely awake."

*Thank you Walker, and other crew members, for the story. We all remember Ack Ack and his crew.*

*Walker Shipley prepared a bound 26 page booklet with the full crews story and photos. A nice remembrance for the crew.*

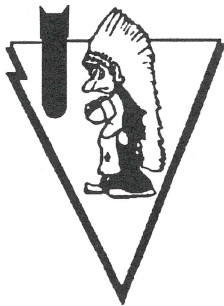


*LEAVING FOR CAIRO - L to R, McCabe, Puliti, Rapoport, Patrick Zalk, Kurkowski.*



Born of a desire for freedom, carried to the ends of the earth in the spirit of brotherhood, defended at great personal sacrifice, flown in pride and honored as the symbol of the greatest democracy in the world, the American flag carries the history of a nation woven into its fabric.

**781st BOMB SQUADRON ASSOC**  
2 Mt Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94027



NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MENLO PARK, CA  
PERMIT NO. 998

ORREN J. LEE  
2312 BRAEMER  
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57262

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED