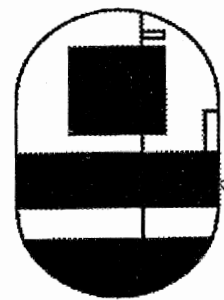




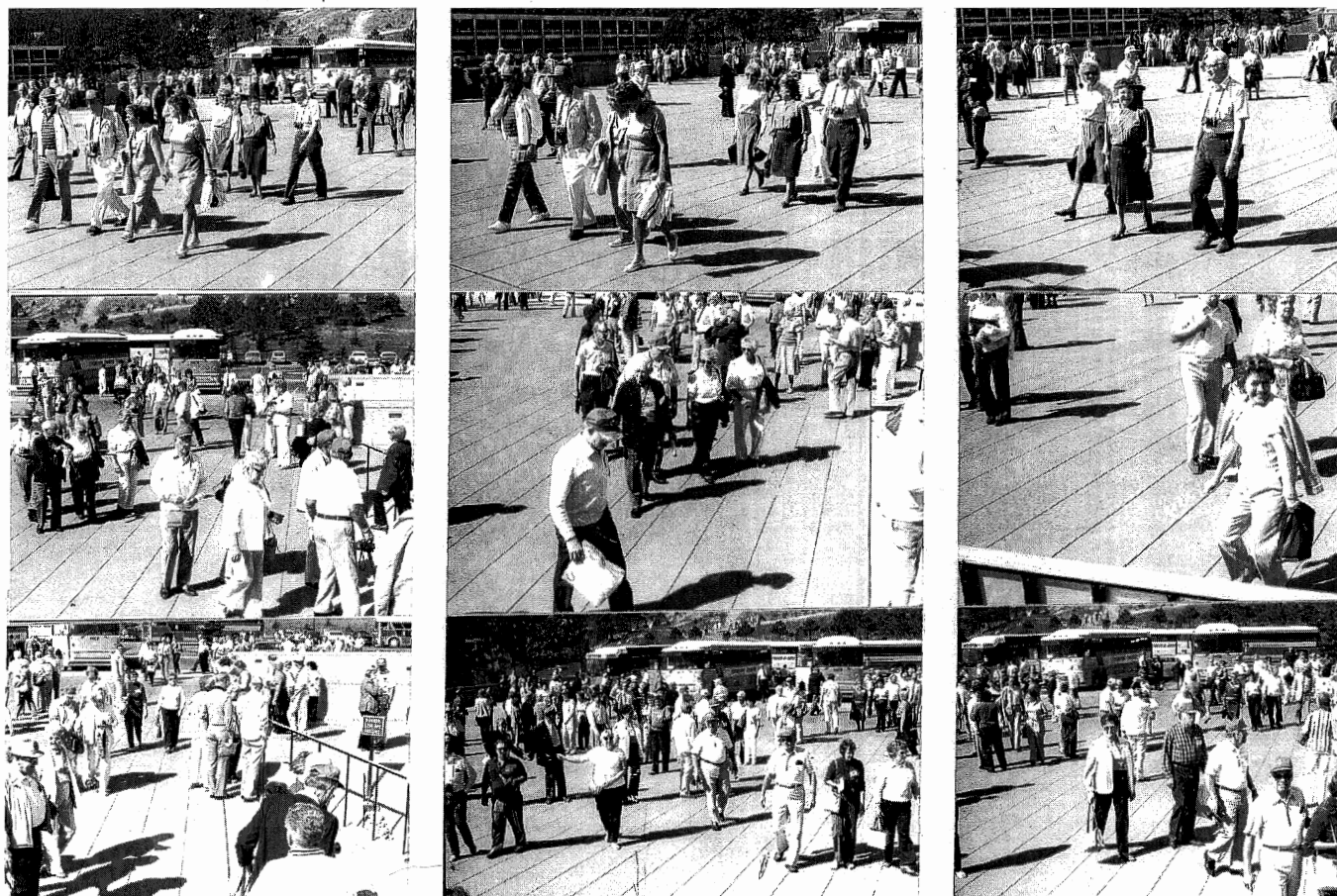
PANTANELLA NEWS



October 1, 2002

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association ©

NUMBER 70



Above photographs by Harry Carl

The theme of this issue of "PANTANELLA NEWS" is "A Tale of Two Reunions"

In the Beginning.

This is the story of the first reunion of the 781st Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF, held at Colorado Springs, Colorado on 11-15 September 1986. But the story did not begin at Colorado Springs. It began when the 465th Bom-

bardment Group (H), with its four Squadrons, was activated on 1 August 1943 at Alamogordo, New Mexico on General Order No. 78, Second Air Force, dated 29 May 1943.

And more particularly on 16 August 1943, when the

first cadre personnel were assigned to the 781st Bombardment Squadron (H) AAF, at Davis-Monthan Field near Tucson, Arizona.

The unit trained at Pinecastle, Florida; Camp Kearns, Utah; McCook, Nebraska and Tunis, Tunisia

prior to beginning combat operations at Pantanella Army Air Base near Canosa in the Ofanto River valley of south central Italy.

The first combat mission of the Squadron was flown to Podgorica, Yugoslavia on 5 May 1944. And the last, number 191, was flown to North Italy on 26 April 1945.

Germany surrendered on 7 May, the war in Europe was finished and the Squadron's mission was completed. The air crews flew all of our planes from Pantanella on 23 and 24 May, and a few ground personnel were transferred to other units.

The remaining members left on 25 May en route to Port of

Spain, Trinidad where the Squadron was broken up to provide support for the Air Transport Command, returning U.S. troops from Europe. As of 2 July 1945, 2 officers and 44 enlisted men remained. The unit was officially deactivated effective 31 July 1945, under authority of General Order No. 10, Hq. 1107 AAFBU, dated 29 July 1945.

Almost forty years passed and 6 June 1984 marked the 40th anniversary of D Day in Europe. This landmark date generated considerable publicity and started many veterans reminiscing about their wartime associations.

Among them was James C. Althoff, a pilot in the 781st Squadron. Jim had maintained contact over the years with Ernie Van Asperen and Ben Donahue, former 781st Bomb Squadron pilots, and began to wonder about his former crew members and where they might be and what they had been doing.

And he began to telephone and write to their wartime addresses. And he searched and he searched and he searched and he found two of them, Hugh Cooper, Bombardier, and Jim Oursler, Engineer. His success in finding these members from his own crew led him to a decision to broaden his search and to start an **organization** made up of **all** former members of the 781st Squadron.

Jim was aware that the 783rd Squadron of the 465th

Group already had such an organization. He knew several of the members and had flown with some of them.

The 783rd Association held its second reunion in August of 1985 at Dayton, Ohio (the first was in 1983) and they invited him to attend, which he did—expecting to learn from their experiences. On the second day of the meeting the Group went to Wright-Patterson Field to visit the Air Force Museum and one of the attractions was a walk through an old B-24.

As he walked through the plane Jim began chatting with the man standing next in line, exchanging information about wartime assignments. This man turned out to be James Marcel Snyder, a “mickey” operator (radar navigator) who also had been a member of the 781st Bomb Squadron. And right there the 781st Bomb Squadron Association was born.

Jim assumed responsibility for locating members in the western half of the United States, and Marcel took on the eastern half.

When he returned home, Jim dug out an old yellowed, dog-eared 1945 roster of 781st officers (with wartime addresses) and he began telephoning and writing letters. He found an astounding 35% of those he tried to contact and an enormously enthusiastic response.

Continued on Page 4

781st Bomb Squadron Association
2 Mount Vernon Lane
Atherton, CA 94027-3037
(650) 325-8356

Officers

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Walter M. Longacre, Vice-President
John W. Ogden, Treasurer
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John W. Ogden
3728 Evergreen Drive
Dickinson, TX 77539-6108
(281) 337-3494

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 WWII (1944-1945). During its 191 missions over Southern Europe it dropped thousands of tons of

Attendance at Reunion Number One

Members

Fred G. Aboud	Louis J. and Joyce Deslatte	Paul H. and Aliene Mallette
James C. and Agnes Althoff	John R. and Gaye Dickey	Adrian A. and Hyllis Martin
Frank C. And Betty Ambrose Bernard Badler	Ben L. Donahue	Eugene G. and Josephine Martis
Daniel E. and Pearl Bailey	James F. and Betty Downs	Robert H. and Jean Matthews
John R. and Terry Baker, Jr. Edwin and Dorothy Bakker Malvern J.Barner	Walter H. Dudley	Russ T. and Caroline Maynard
Henry J. and Doris Barrett	William C. and Lois Ellett	William A. and Dorothy McBride
Donald A. Barrett	Robert W. and Betty Elliott	Charles F and Virginia McKenna III
William B. and Anna Bartlett, Jr.	Leonard H. and Laverne Emmel	Homer L. and Inez Moeller
Aurelius A. and Pearl Becnel	John W. and Ruby Ertel	Robert Moldenhauer
Warren L. and Virginia Beeson	John E. and Fay Fahrer	Lowell E. and Novella Myers
Nicholas C. and Ruth Belik Thomas F. and Robbie Bell, Jr.	John and Edna Fandry	David H. and Nancy Orr
Grant A. and Phyllis Benson, Jr.	Eugene F. and Geneva Fenner	Kenneth L. and Elaine Parkhurst
Griscom and Daphine Bettie, Jr.	Leo A. Fink	GinoJ. and Helen Pelleschi
Billy L. and Patricia Bickley	Dennis B. and Ruby Flaherty	Donald B. and Nancy Postema
Arthur W. and Shirley Bovett, Jr.	Kenneth G. and Marie Foden	Harold F. and Bette Quagan
David L, and Ruth Bowman Charles H. and Irene Bradley Paul B. and Katherine Brady, Sr. Rae W. and Margery Branch Charles A. and Mamie Braud Vernon G. And Pat Burda	Loren W. and Marge Foote	William A. and Rogene Rachow
Harold C. and Maurine Butterfield	Robert R. Gaston	Morris R. and Blanche Rapoport
Roy N. and Katy Byrd, Jr.	Harold A. and Olga Givens	Curtis G. and Elayne Reed
Warren G. and Jessie Garden	Leonard J. and Gratian Goldstein	Kenneth B. and Lois Rehn
Harry S. and Donna Carl	Oliver F. and Ruth Graham	Harry and Lynn Reuss
Gaythor L. and Norma Jeanne Cass	Warren J. and Ruth Hartley	Lewis M. and Betty Roberts
Raymond D. and Garnet Cauble	George Haushold	Theron R. and Dot Robinson
Edward JF Chapin	Glen Haywood	Barney G. and Ann Russell
Vi rgil H. and Billie jean Christian, Jr.	John C. And Ruth Header	John T. and Marie Russell
Francis and Marjorie Clark	Charles R. and Doris Hemphill	Dale L. and Isabel Samuelson
Walter and Connie Ciausen	Michael S. Horvath	SamuelsonNicholas V. and Marion Schaps
Donald E. and Wilma Clodfelter	Charles M. and Mary Howard	Herbert L. Schlossin
David B. and Betty Coleman	Norman Hunter, Jr.	Edward J. Schreiner
Hugh E. and Ellen Cooper	Frank T. and Marge Hylla	Harold G. and Betty Schuster
Edward H. and Karen Corbett	Paul W. and Geraldine Ihde	Harold and Vi Seitz
O.J and Esther Cowart, Ir.	Charles E. and Shirley Ingram	Cader Lex and Melba Shelby, Ir.
John L. and Lee Crowley	Frank R. and Fran Jasicko	Robert L. and Dorothy Shetterly
Richard L. Crutcher, Jr.	William H. and Mary Jostworth	Walker Horton and Mary Jane Shipley
Cornelius V. and Wanda Culhane	Edwin M. and Stephanie Kapusta	Mallory H. Simmons
Carl V. and Wanda Dahl	Dale L. and Betty Keiser	William J. and Virginia Smith
Dennis A. and Betty Daniels, Jr.	Pierre J.J. and Rosemary Kennedy	James Marcel and Dollie Snyder
Eugene C. and Mariorie Deal	James H. Kienitz	Norman G. and Jean Stenerson
Michael J. and Ida Deironimi	Francis K. and Betty Kill	Barbour C. and Beverly Stokes, jr.
	Clarence A. and Lucille Knox	Richard J. and Pat Storm
	Kenneth A. and Catherine Koch	Walter H. and Margie Sutton
	Kenneth I. Kopp	Kenneth E. and Nancy Sutton, Jr.
	Calder M. and Yvonne Lamprey	Roland Craig and Thelma Taylor
	J. Keith and Alice Lancaster	Kenneth L. and Rose Tedin
	John P. and Frances Layne	Albert I. and Ruth Thompson
	Albert T. and Doris Leblanc	Denly J. and Joye Thompson
	Ea rl R. Leinart	Byron W. and Kay Thompson
	Milton and Teddy Levinson	
	Walter M. and Ann Longacre	
	James J. and Emma Lou Lyons	
	Francis M. and Doris Maccani	

Continued. On Page 4

By October of 1985 he

Page 2 continued:

had located 50 men and he started publishing the Newsletter, which he optimistically and typically labeled, "Number One." And in that Newsletter he already was proposing a 781st Squadron reunion at Colorado Springs in September of 1986, anticipating (hoping for) perhaps something over 100 members plus wives might attend.

In February of 1986 he located me (Harry Carl) and when I told him I had a complete list of all the men who had been in the Squadron and whose names had

been on any Daily Report, which was sent to higher headquarters each day, complete with each man's home address as of that time.

I had asked that this information be copied for me at Port of Spain, Trinidad, B.W.I. while our Squadron and Group were awaiting official deactivation effective 31 July 1945. Many of our enlisted men, encouraged by First Sergeant John M. Messmore, devoted numerous hours to copying this information.

There were 1150 names

copied in longhand on 8 by 10 ½ inches paper which has now become quite fragile and yellowed. Yes, I still have the original sheets which I have carried around for 57 years. And the writing and printing, some in pencil and some in ink, are still amazingly clear.

I also have a typed list of the names and 1945 home addresses of all of the officers, probably the same list that Jim Althoff had, as referred to earlier. Thus was the beginning of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association and its First Reunion.

Reunion # One Attendance, Continued:

Lawrence J. Tiehen
Ray and Jerry Trautman
Floyd N. and Regene Trudeau
William S. and Esther Tylavsky
Ernie and Virginia Van Asperen
John E. Ward
Frank and Dorothy Wassaner
Leslie S. and Virginia Wheeler
Henry L. and Judy Willett, Jr.
Jack C. and La Vaun Williams
Thomas L. and Mary Williams
John L. and Carol Wilson
Royal A. and Mary Anne Wilson
Stanley J. and Alice Winkowski
William P. and Jane Wood
James W. and Maurine Wray, Jr.
John and Gerry Wroblewski
Frederick P. and May Yost
William and Claire Yurek

John and Helen Zadrozny
John C. and Charlotte Zartman
Charles R. and Billie Zwerko....

**HONORARY MEMBERS
AND GUESTS**

Burton C. and Kay Andrus, Jr.
Mrs. Lorraine Dalton
Kenneth and Colleen Davis
Robert L. Gaston
Ronald G. and Vanessa Holcombe
Alan Holcombe
Mrs. Minnie Klavans
Mrs. Barbara Mullan
Mrs. Alice Holcombe Reams
Mrs. Patti Holcombe Thompson
Robert Wilson
Mrs. Sybil Lokker Wilson



Reunion # 11 Attendees. Photo by Frank Ambrose

Althoff, James C.
 Althoff, Agnes
 Ambrose, Frank
 Ambrose, Betty
 Badler, Bernard
 Bailey, Pearl
 Bartlett, Bill
 Bartlett, Ann
 Beeson, Warren L.
 Beeson, Garry & Jeffery
 Belik, Nicholas C.
 Belik, Ruth
 Branch, Rae W.
 Braud, Charles
 Braud, Mamie
 Carter, William E., Sr.
 Carter, William E., Jr.
 Cass, Gaythor L.
 Cass, Norma Jeanne

Clausen, Walter
 Clausen, Constance
 Coleman, David B.
 Coleman, Betty J.
 Cooper, John
 Cooper, Ellen C.
 Cooper, Lisa
 Dahl, Carl. V.
 Dahl, Wanda J.
 Deal, Eugene
 Deal, Virginia
 Donahue Ben L.
 Donahue, Lucille
 Durckel, Paul H.
 Durckel, Jackie
 Fairchild, Ralph
 Joanne, Sara, Greg-
 Wassenaar
 Foden, Kenneth G.

Continued on Page 6

Attendees at Reunion #11: Continued

Foden, Dorothy
Forsline, Lori M.
Forsline, Elliot M.
Freed, Robert L.
Freed, Rose Anna
Goldstein, Leonard J.
Grubaugh, Wayne
Grubaugh, Micki
Haushold, George W.
Hausold, Veni
Hiebler, Robert
Hiebler, Alex (Moeller guest)
Hiebeler, Marilyn (Moeller) (Moeller Guest)
Hiebler, Robert - Hiebeler, Alex (Moeller guests)
Keiser, Dale L.
Keiser, Betty
Kennedy, Pierre J.J.
Kennedy, Rosemary
Kill, Francis (Ken)
Kill, Betty Susan
Knowles, Murray
Kopp, Ken J.
Kopp, Jeanne D.
Kyle, Thomas B.
LeBlanc, Albert P.
Lee, Orren J.
Lee, Carol J.
Levinson, Milton
Levinson, Thelma S. (Cancelled)
Limpert, Steven (Moeller Guerst)
Longacre, Walt M.
Longacre, Ann
McBride, William L.
McBride, Dorothy, sor
Moeller, Homer L.

Ogden, John W.
Ogden, Connie
Otto, Dean T.
Otto, Mary B.
Piteo, Frank
Crane, Lisa
Rachow, William A.
Rapoport, Morris R.
Rapoport, Blanche L.
Rehn, Kenneth B.
Rehn, Lois M.
Rowe, Bonnie G.
Russell, Barney G.
Russell, B.G. III
Schlossin, Herbert L.
Schlossin, Shirley
Shallman, Thora M.
Soucy, Roland & Wife
Seitz, Harold & Wife

Snyder, James Marcel
Snyder, Dollie, son
Thompson, Albert I.
Thompson, Ruth
Wassenaar, Frank
Wassenaar, Dorothy
Wheeler, Leslie S.
Wheeler, Geneva S. (Cancelled)
Willett, Henry
Willett, Judy
Wroblewski, John
Zadrozny, John
Zadrozny, Helen

And now for the Final Reunion of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association. As Organized, Managed and Narrated (below) by Walter Longacre. And Thank You, Walt, for a tough job well done.

Our 11th and final reunion of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association began on Sunday, September 15th at the Radisson Hotel North, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Thirty-three members and guests signed in on Saturday the 14th. Registration began on Sunday after-

noon with another 31 registering in the Hotel. Monday—36, Tuesday—6 and Wednesday—3, registered to make a total of 111 members and guests. Approximately 50 were members. A trip was made Saturday to a liquor store and Wal-Mart for supplies to furnish the hos-

pitality room. We had a large room, which was available to us throughout the reunion. It was a great gathering place for many. Due to a sizable donation by Frank Piteo (Bilger Crew Waist Gunner.)

Continued on Page 7

Everything was furnished and there was an ample supply.

Monday was a free day to enjoy doing whatever anyone wished to do. Registering continued throughout the day.

Tuesday a bus tour of the Air Force Academy, lunch at the Officers Club at 12:30 and then off to the beautiful Cadets' Chapel at 2:00 for our Memorial Service.

The presiding Chaplain was Lt. Col. David Reeson, who assisted us in the program and did a great service for us. The organ prelude started with the people entering the chapel.

A Quartet from the Academy sang the opening hymn. Colors were advanced by the Color Guard from Peterson Air Force Base. The Pledge of Allegiance and the reading of "You Are My Flag" followed. A responsive reading was done by Lt. Col. Reeson.

The remembering part of the program was a reading of the names of those members killed in action, which was done by Ken Kill. At that time white crosses with their names were placed on a table.

Mrs. Jerome Jolicoeur was honored to place her late husband's cross there. The three candles and flags were displayed and one candle was lit by Hank Willet for them. Another candle was lit for those who joined "folded wings" prior to our last reunion and the last candle was lit for those who joined "folded wings" since our last reunion.

Taps were then presented by the bugler from Peterson Air Force Base. The colors were then retired by the Color Guard.

Picture-taking on the steps of the chapel and back on the bus, continuing the tour to the Garden of the Gods, arriving back at the hotel at 5:00. The evening was free for the restaurant of your choice and/or the hospitality room.

On Wednesday the hospitality room opened early. We had our General meeting at 1:30 and then it was dress up time for cocktails at 5:00, courtesy of Frank Piteo.

The Banquet was at 6:00, with a serving of Prime Rib and Chicken Cordon Bleu. And the wine graciously provided by Frank Piteo.

After our meal, we were entertained by a 30-minute performance by The Rampart Winds, a division of the USAF Band of the Rockies from Peterson Air Force Base playing patriotic songs. This concluded the program of what we hope was one of our finest reunions.

Because of the large number of our members who are passing away each year, or that have physical disabilities, we have discussed what the future brings. In just a few years there will be very few of us remaining. There were several cancellations just this year due to death or health problems. Over 30 members have passed away this past year.

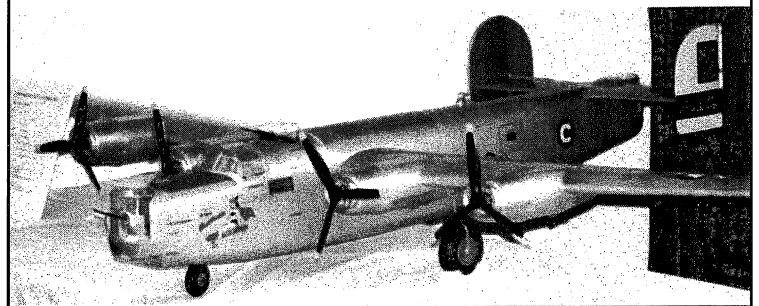
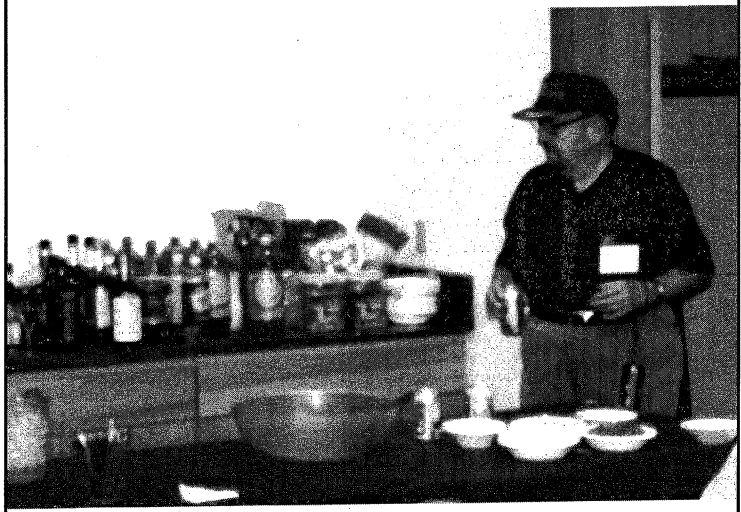
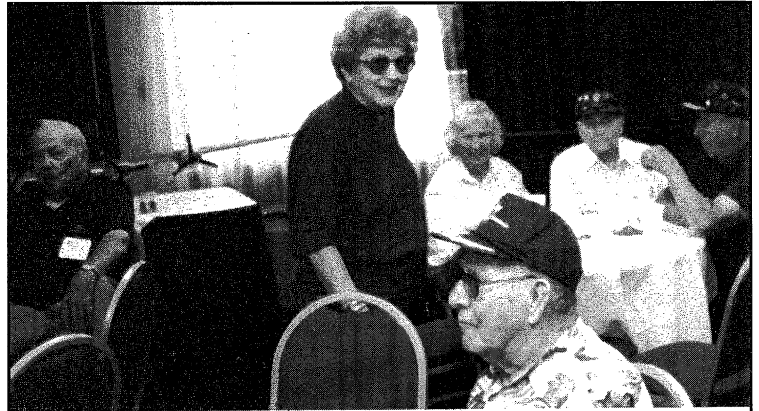
We feel that the last two reunions were an extra effort for

all of you and hope that you enjoyed them. It's been a lot of work and putting on a program takes a lot of people, which we don't have any more, and also a lot of time.

For this and other reasons, we are discontinuing the national reunions of the 781st Bomb Squadron Association. Many other organizations, including the 15th Air Force Association, are having small reunions. These or any other type of reunion will not be officially nor financially supported by the Squadron Association.

All of our Officers and Board of Directors will remain the same for the time being and, at our president's discretion, can be changed. No other people will be recognized as having any official status.

Our Officers, Board of Directors, and treasurer have all done their jobs well over the years and are to be respected for so doing. Again, "thank you" to Frank Piteo for being so gracious in providing the wine, liquor and blessings for this reunion.



The Reunion #11 Photos on pages eight, 10, and 11 were provided by Eugene Barnett—and we are very grateful to him for these—as well as to Frank Ambrose for the Group photo on Page five provided by Frank.

MAIL CALL



Subj: NEWSLETTER
Date: Saturday, August 10,
From: sgtrpd@megalink.net
To: althoff781@aol.com
Dear Sir,

I am interested in getting this news letter. Please inform me what I need to do. My Dad was in the 465th, 781st as a radio operator/gunner. (Adelard G. Cayer.) I am trying to gather as much information as I can. The web has an abundance of information, however, the newsletter would be great to read.

I just returned from the Balkans after serving one year in Kosovo, working for the UN as an International Police Officer. I traveled from Greece to Vienna, Austria and witnessed all the old German bunkers that are amazingly still in good shape.

Any information on the 465th, 781st would be great.

Regards,
George T. Cayer
Sergeant
Rumfore, Maine Police Department
815 Penobscot Street
Rumford, Maine 04276
george_cayer@yahoo.com
www.geocities.com/george_cayer

PRESIDENTS CORNER

I have just become aware of a new book that has been published which covers our Bomber losses during WWII.

The title of the book is "**Missing In Action**". The author is Gene F. Moxely. It covers the 95 Bombers shot down in our 465th Bomb Group during WWII.

It can be ordered by calling toll free 1-888-280-7715 at 1st Books Library, 2595 Verma Pike, Bloomington, IN 47404. Or you can go on the Internet by logging on to www.1stbooks.com.

Recently I received a letter from Jeffrey Beeson, the son of Warren L. Beeson. Co-pilot on Dahl's crew.

Jeffrey writes, "As your children, we have heard about the members of the 781st Bomb Squadron all of our lives. Believe it or not, each one of you is a part of each of us. We want to offer whatever behind the scenes assistance needed to continue your reunions.

We will support you, until fate decides to fold the final pair of wings.

Folded Wings

Bernard L. Koenig: Bombardier in Billger's Crew, passed away on 11 June 2001 due to complications following heart surgery.

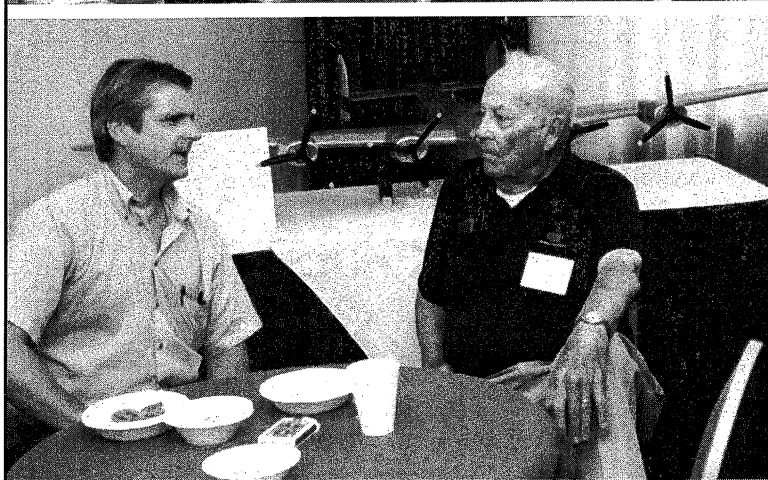
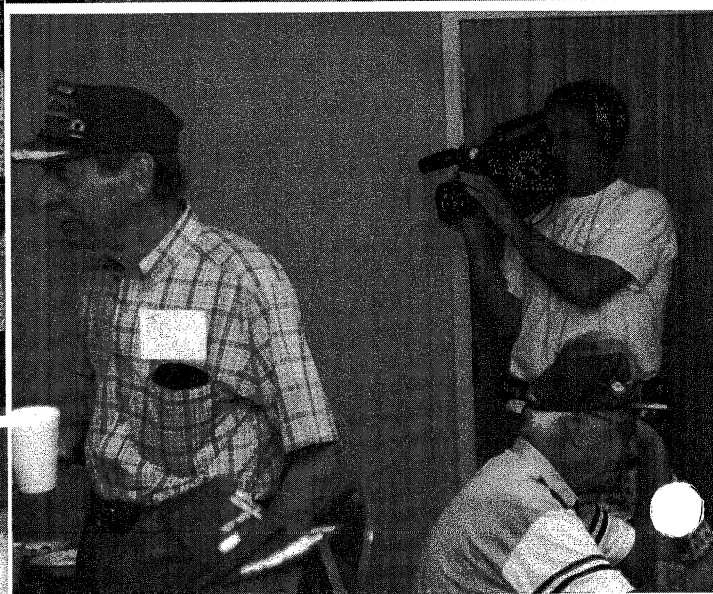
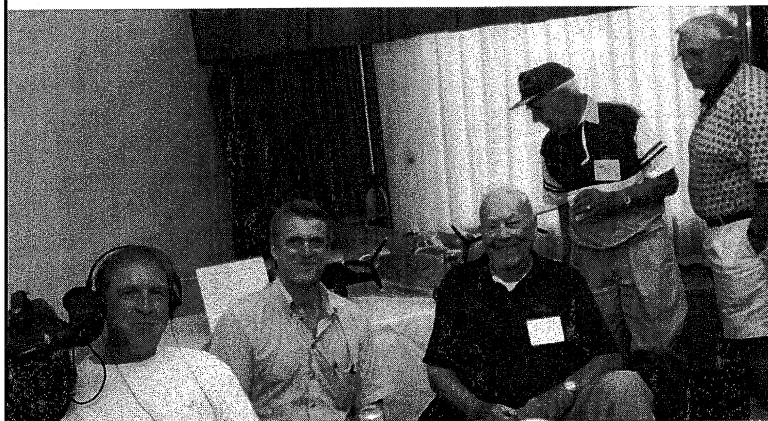
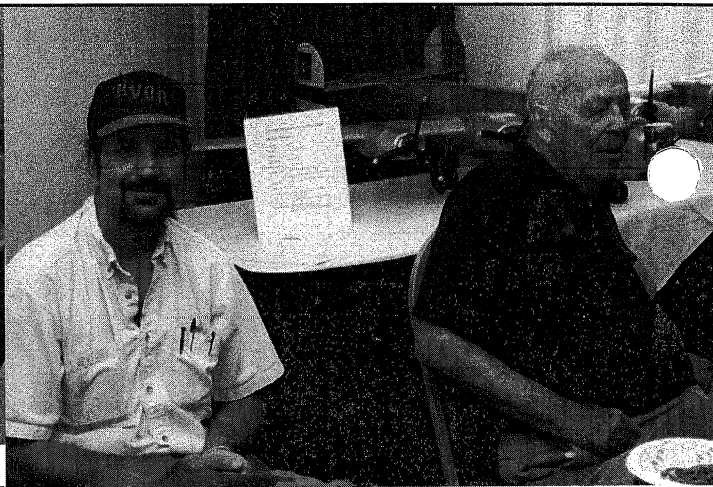
Frank Piteo learned of Bernie's death from Koenig's daughter when he contacted her to query why he did not receive the usual Christmas Card in 2000.

Lauren H. Lauzon: Armament Section; 4316 N. Calle Santa Cruz; Prescott Valley, AZ 86314, Died 15 May 2002. Reported by John Ogden. No details reported.

Elmer L. Schoeffel: Armament Section; 174 South Wind Trail; Horicon, WI 530320, passed away 28 July 2002. Reported by John Ogden. No details available.

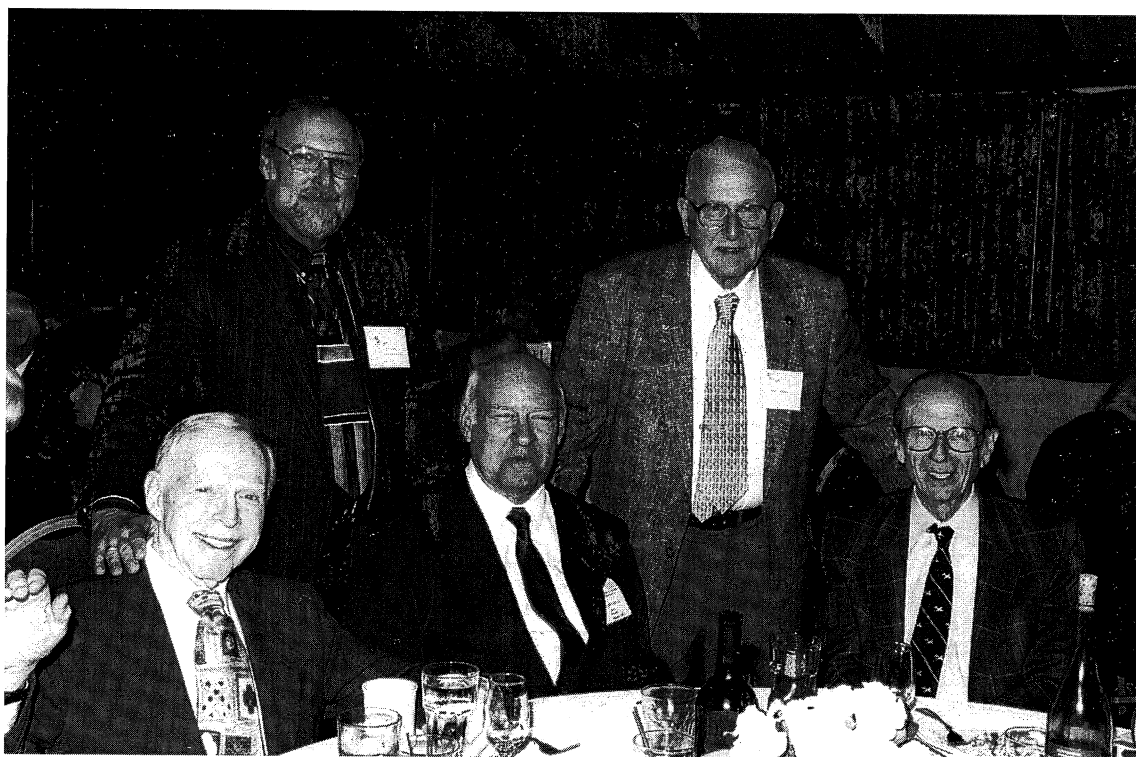
Who knows what the future will bring? But, because of you and, what you did between 1941 and 1945, we were given the greatest gift of all, an understanding of what the American Dream is all about."

Respectfully,
Jeffrey Beeson.



The PantanellaNews Blues:

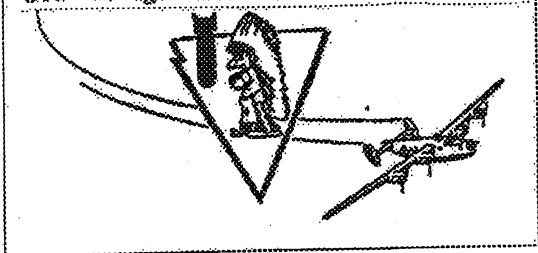
My Carl and I have been beating the bushes for some stories or copy for the current issue,, but we have found little for this one. I would like to remind you we were a squadron where we all worked together. Lets Keep it that way! Let us hear some of your experiences and refresh our memories of some of the happenings at Pantanella or since then, And don't forget photos.



Photos from the recent reunion.of the althoff Crew.
Top, Bud Russell and Pierre Kennedy,
Lower row is Leonard Goldstein,
Barney Russell and myself,



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January 01, 2003
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