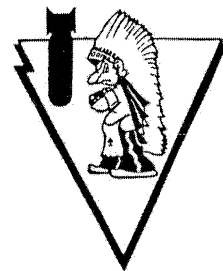


# PANTANELLA NEWS



October 2004

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association©

NUMBER 77

## 781st BS INVADES ELLSWORTH AF BASE

### WWII VETS CONVERGE ON RAPID CITY FOR ANNUAL REUNION



Top foto:  
781st Vets pose for the  
camera.

Right foto:  
Oldtimers take their turn  
climbing into the B1  
Cockpit



The awesome reality and contrast of the many changes that 60 years has made was experienced by the WWII Fliers as they recalled and compared flying the 'Big One' (at the time) over Europe and the B1 today.

Today's B1's Mission is to provide rapid, decisive and sustainable combat airpower; Anytime, Anywhere!

## The 2004 Reunion- Day by Day

By John Ogden

The 781st Bomb Squadron Association 2004 annual reunion was completed very successfully. We do know how to have a



good time when we get together.

The registration table was set up in the lobby of the Hotel Alex Johnson and was attended by Connie Ogden, Betty Ambrose and Carole Lee. By the time the registration table closed down only two or three of our attendees had not yet signed in. The Hospitality Room opened Sunday afternoon and was well attended until closing. Monday morning started with an unscheduled but recognized event. Every year, there is a buffalo roundup at Custer State Park. The purpose of the roundup is to separate 1500 head of "keeper" animals, which is all that the range can support during the winter months, and to dispose of the others. The herd is driven into a valley where chutes and corrals are used for the purpose of separating the animals. The sight of all of those buffalo, which is open

to public viewing, being herded is a once in a lifetime experience. One small problem exists, however, the drive is scheduled to begin at 6:00 AM. Custer State Park is nearly an hour away by car which required a 5:00 AM take-off time. In spite of this, several

carloads of our more hardy souls ventured out to observe the thundering horde. Returning to the Hotel the early risers chided the slug-a-bed members by eagerly recounting their memorable experience. Scheduled activities of the Association began at 1:00 PM with our annual

business meeting. Activity followed the procedure outlined in our bylaws. (see the business meeting minutes, in this issue for details). A quorum was established and business was transacted.



spectacular. The installation is operated by the U.S. Park Service. All of the ancillary activities such as the cafeteria and gift shop were beautifully appointed and handled. In addition to the monument, there were a series of state monuments occupying both sides of the walk as you approached the Grand View Terrace with a close up view of the four presidents. It was a great place for snapshots and our

group took full advantage of the 'Kodak Moment'.

It appears to me, it is a bit incongruous to use miners tool, bull dozers, other heavy equipment and explosives to create such a beautiful display, but that is what was done by the sculptor, Gutzon Borglum. He



Late afternoon Monday found the group boarding buses headed for the Gold Dust Casino in Deadwood for 5 hours of eating, sight seeing and playing at the casino's tables and one armed bandits. The buffet served at the Casino was superb and the history of the city was intriguing. Judging from the many happy faces it seemed as none of our group suffered any major losses at gambling. I believe that Carole Lee had some winnings. Every one thoroughly enjoyed the visit. Tuesday's activities began at 10:00 AM with a bus ride to Mount Rushmore. The weather was glorious and the monument



started at age 60 and worked steadily on the project until his death in 1941. Formal dedication of the shrine did not occur until 1991.

Shortly after lunch, the buses were re-loaded for a scenic 17 miles trip through the Black Hills to view the "Crazy Horse" monument. This is a work still in progress. Korczak Ziolkowski, a Bostonian of Polish descent came to the Black Hills at the request of Lakota Chief Henry Standing

**781st Bomb Squadron Association**  
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### Officers

John W. Ogden, President  
Barney Russell, Vice President  
John W. Ogden, Sec/Treasurer  
Chaplain: Don Bailey  
NEWS Editor: Frank Ambrose

### Board of Directors

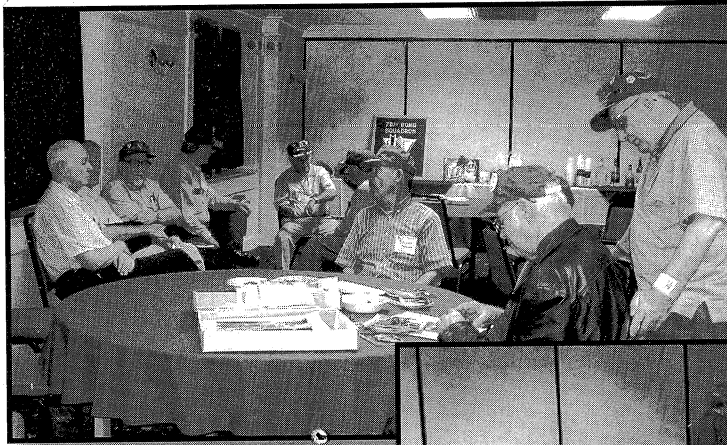
James C. Althoff, President Emeritis  
John W. Ogden  
Barney Russell  
Frank Ambrose  
Ken Kill  
Chas (Bubba) Braud

### 781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)

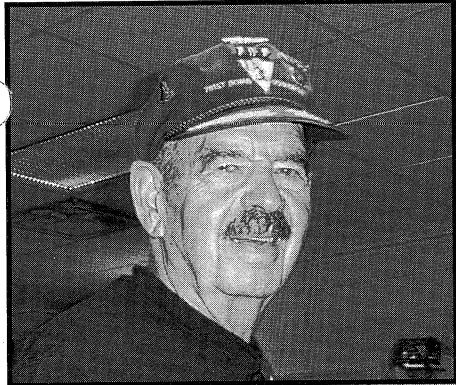
Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF  
Italy 1944-1945  
Flew 191 Missions over Southern Europe  
dropping thousands of tons of  
death and destruction to the enemy.  
Shot down 25 enemy aircraft



Bear, who wished to build a memorial so that the white man would know that the red man has great heroes too. Work was started on Crazy Horse in 1949. It is estimated that people over the age of 60 today may never be able to view the com-



pleted monument. Most of the facilities adjacent to the sculpture are complete and in operation, giving visitors the opportunity to see the sculptors work area, his home, a theater that featured an orientation film, an American



Indian Museum and other outstanding features.

Wednesday morning began with a bus trip to Ellsworth AFB. Upon arrival our group had the opportunity to visit a well appointed museum and to later have lunch at the "Dakota Club", the Base officer's Club. During lunch we were briefed by a staff Colonel on the capabilities and mission of the B-1 Bomber. The aircraft is indeed awesome. He emphasized that one B-1 can carry more ordnance than a whole squadron of B-24's, fly missions from Ellsworth to Iraq and with air to air refueling, stay on duty there for up to 24 hours in support of ground activity. The briefing officer told a story that we can all relate to. We all remember that when the Iraq invasion began, engaging the enemy was hampered by a sandstorm. According to him, that was not a sandstorm, it was B-1 bombing activity, which

decimated the Iraqi army. When the storm cleared, there was no enemy activity for our ground troops to engage. The hands-on close-up visit to one of the B-1's was truly awesome. There are 3 squadrons currently on duty in the USAF.

The plane carries a crew of four. A pilot, copilot and a Offensive and a Defensive Armament Officer. The crew quarters are much smaller than in the B-24. Some of our personnel found it difficult to get into the pilots



seat. It was obvious from the condition of control surfaces, that this plane has seen lots of flight hours.

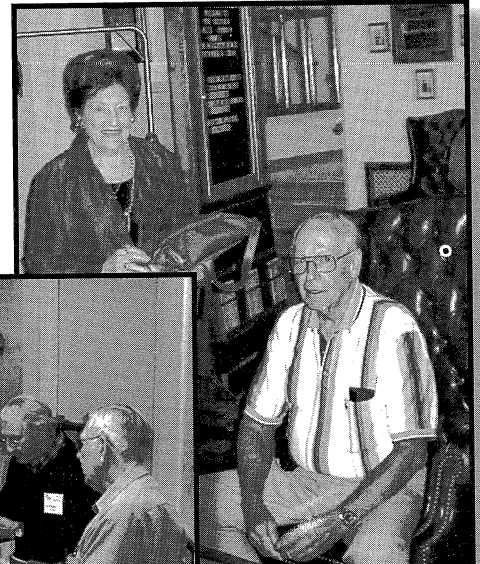
After the leisurely visit to the flight line, we were escorted to a demonstration of the Air Force K-9 animals and handlers. These dogs are extremely important in the interdiction of drugs, explosives, and protection of personnel. I certainly would not like being the object of their attention!

Our Memorial Service at the Base Chapel followed. Thanks to the efforts of Marcel Snyder and workers from the base this service was one of the most impressive that I have experienced. It featured organ music to accompany the hymns, two buglers (a lead and an echo) playing Taps and recognition of both the KIA's as well as those members that have folded their wings since our last reunion. The pageantry of the disciplined Color Guard made the occasion even more memorable.

Following the Service we returned via the scenic route to the hotel to prepare for the banquet and evening festivities. From 6:00PM to 7:30PM we enjoyed the conviviality of an open bar and fellowship. The hotel staff outdid themselves by serving a veritable feast. No one left that table hungry!

Following the dinner we were honored

by a talk by Jesse Y. Sundstrom, who presented a very knowledgeable paper on the evolution of the American Indian. She was introduced by her nephew, John Kennedy, a 781st pilot. After the talk, there were a few question and answers. John Ogden presented Jesse with a 781st Squadron cup as memento of the occasion as well as our profuse thanks for a very interesting

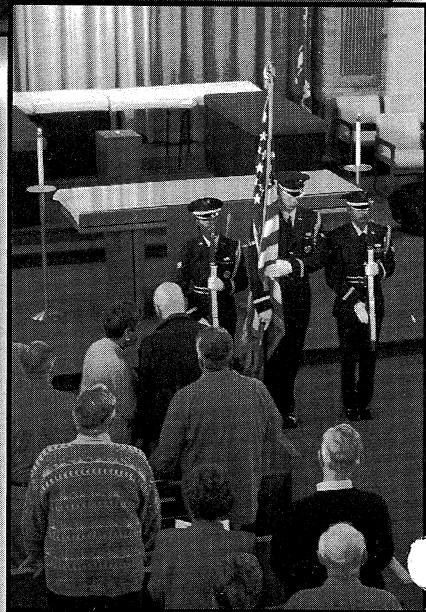
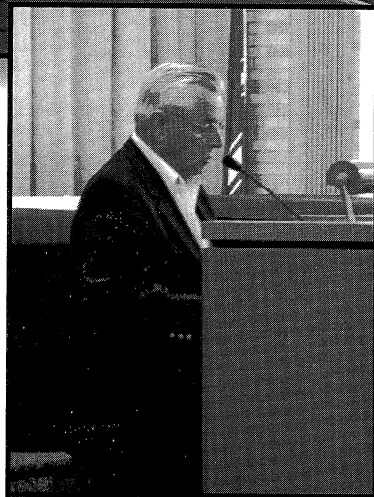
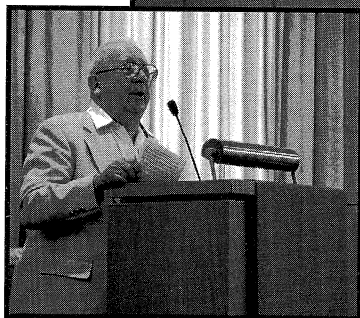


presentation.

Thursday morning was, of course, Good bye time as our members started for home. The next reunion, which is already being arranged will be in Shreveport, LA. We all hope to see you there.

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of Jesse Sundstrom's lecture, free of charge, may do so by sending a request to:  
Jesse Y. Sundstrom  
P.O. Box 361  
Custer, SD 57730  
Phone: 605-673-4377

# SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE FREEDOM CHAPEL-ELLSWORTH AF BASE 2004





# The Squadron History

Continued from Issue #76 Page 9

Many years later Pilot Les Wheeler was to recall a "typical" combat mission. "We got up about 3:00 in the morning (sometimes as late as 4:00 or 5:00, if it was a short mission. We'd go to the mess hall and then the briefing room.

When you got inside the briefing room, you'd immediately see the map. If you saw the mission was to Ploesti, Munich, or Vienna, you'd rather walk than fly.

"The Intelligence Officers, Operations, Squadron Navigator, Squadron Bombardier, and Group Weather Officer would describe the mission, the route to be flown going and coming, what to expect in the way of flak, fighters, and weather going and coming back, and at the target. Sometimes the Old Man would say a few words, especially if it was a tough mission. When the briefing was finished and we were ready to head to the flight line and board our planes the Group Chaplain, Herbert R. Blouch would say a prayer, always the same one:

"Oh God, Thou Who has created the heavens and the earth, and in Thy natural way, has made it possible for man to sustain himself in flight through the air, we ask again Thy blessings on these men as they go out to fly high in the sky, grant them courage to do a good job, protect them against the assaults of the enemy, and may their faith be unfaltering in Thee. We pray it so in the name of Him who has given us power over all the things of the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

There was usually no talking after the briefing. You were taken to your plane and unloaded. There you simply went about your business. Everybody checked his own part of the plane. I walked around the plane on my pre-flight check, then when it was time, I fired up the engines.

The flight surgeon came around in the meat wagon and asked if anybody wanted any Bennys. This was after you were a third of the way done (or more) with your missions and you were just so tired all the time. You were too numb to really feel much."

Les recalled rendezvousing with the other planes (B-24s and B-17s from other Squadrons and Groups), the assembly into

formation and the long difficult unbearably cold flight to the target area - sometimes accompanied by P-51's or P-38's and sometimes not. When they arrived near the target they were met, first by enemy fighter planes,

that same flak for many, many minutes more. I was up to Vienna three times and it was bad.

The worst part, psychologically, was approaching your target area and seeing all the flak out there. It was puffs of black smoke and you'd see it a good way before you got there. If you were

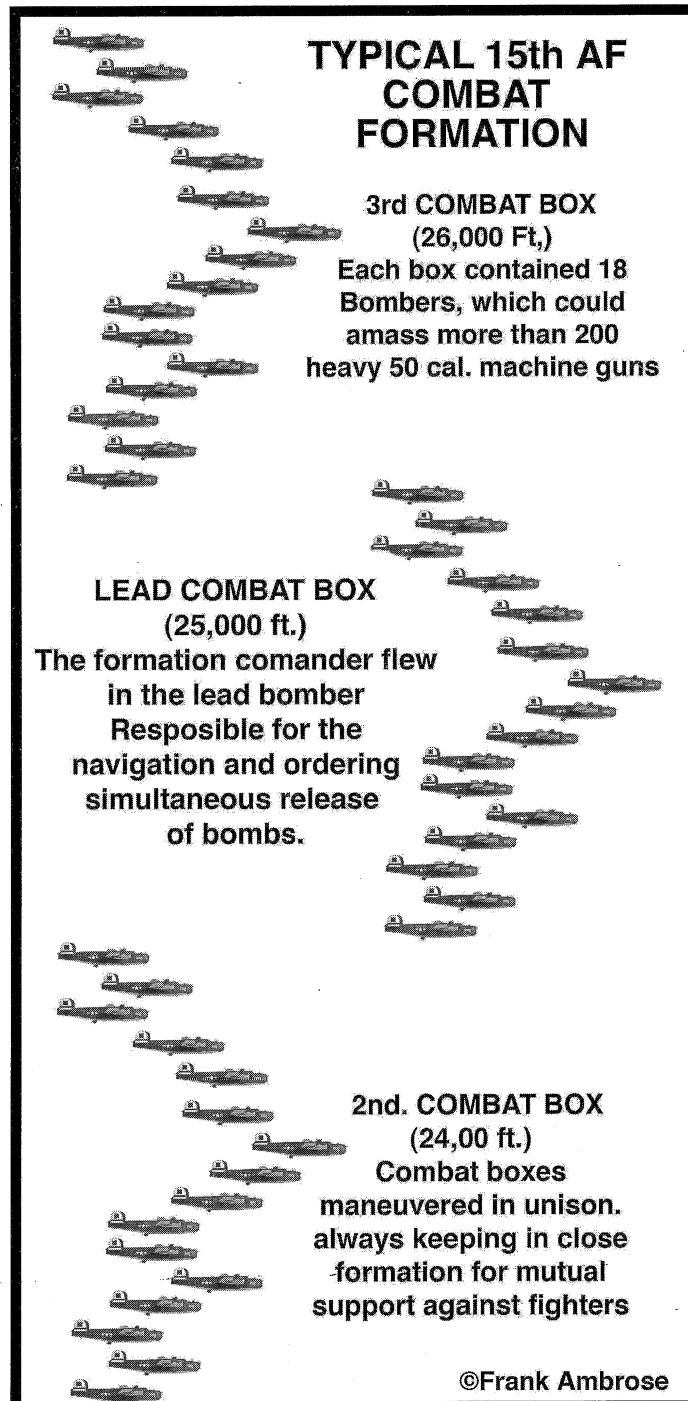
in the lead group, the flak generally wouldn't be up there yet; but if you were two or three groups back, they were already into you. You could see all of this coming up and you knew you were going to get a beating.

We figured the higher we could get the safer we were, but it wasn't true. They had told us in the early briefings that the German anti-aircraft guns were very accurate anywhere from ground level to 40,000 feet, and we were usually flying at 25,000 to 26,000 feet."

Les recalled that the formation usually began to encounter flak about five minutes before reaching its target. Throughout the bomb run the flak continued to explode around them. Nevertheless, the Bombardier in the lead plane guided the flight in and marked the target. Then came the call for "Bombs away," and all planes followed the lead Bombardier and dropped their bombs on the target. And after the bomb run, the flak continued to harass the formation for several more minutes on the way out of the target area."

This first month of combat operations initiated and tested the Squadron and proved that it could handle what was required of it. Combat operations would no longer entail the total uncertainty and dread of not knowing what a real mission might be like. That did not mean that the Crews felt no apprehension or fear as each mission had to be flown, only a fool could face without fear the job they had to go out and do. But the pervading uncertainty of the totally unknown was gone.

The personnel status as of 2400 hours on 31 May was: Officers- 86 assigned, 9 attached, 4 missing in action; Enlisted Men- 386 assigned, 10 missing in action.

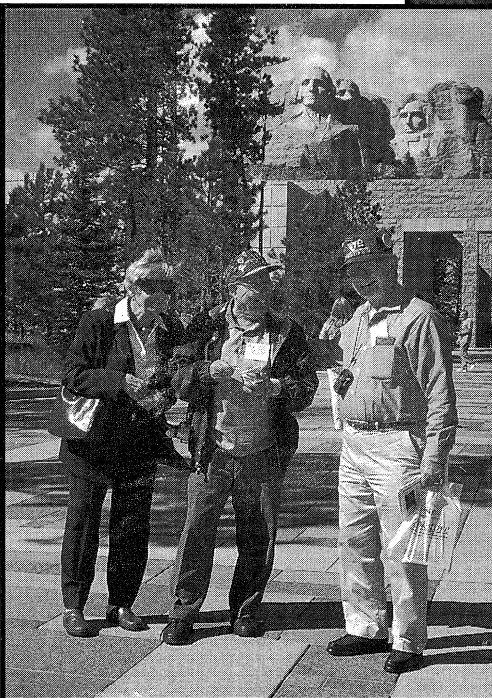


then heavy antiaircraft fire, then by more fighters as they left the target area,

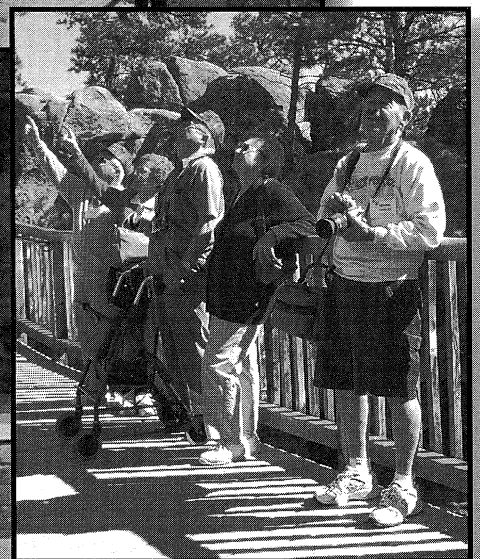
From Weiner Neustadt to Vienna there was about a 20-mile corridor of a lot of manufacturing, refineries, and so forth. To get there you had to go through flak for several minutes and to get back out you were still in

**NOTE:-**  
Squadron History will continue in Issue #78

**If you are not in  
any of these fotos...  
You sure missed  
a lot!  
(We had tons of  
FUN!)**





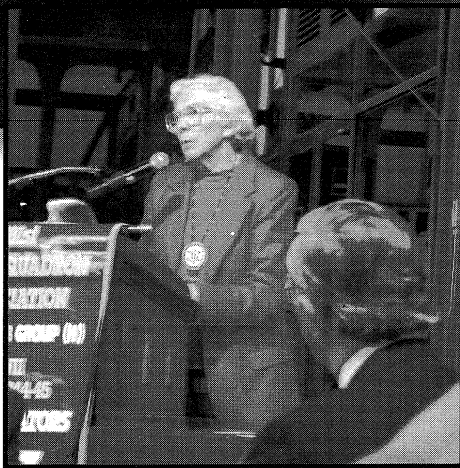




Seated L-R: Carole Lee, Orren Lee, Betty Keiser, Dale Keiser  
 Standing: Ellsworth Base Color Guard



## 781st BS 2004 Reunion Banquet Hotel Alex Jackson Rapid City, SD October 7, 2004



Jesse Sundstrum addresses  
 the group expounding upon  
 the history of our  
 Native Americans



Seated L-R: Calvert Crawford, Ken Kill, Ken Rehn, Lois Rehn, Betty Kill  
 Standing L-R: Elizabeth Crawford, Frank Ambrose, Betty Ambrose



## Having a Great Time Wish you were here!



Seated L-R: William Rachow, Irene Rachow, Phyllis Ehrich, Dean Otto  
Standing L-R: Homer Moeller, Lois Moeller, Charles Sorlie, Mary Beth Otto



Seated L-R: Jeanne Kopp, Ken Kopp, Veni Haushold, George Haushold  
Standing L-R: Jackie Durckle, Paul Durckel, Owana Humber, Bonnie Rowe



Seated L-R: Helen Layne, John Layne Jr., John Layne, Carl Dahl  
Standing L-R: Albert Thompson, Ruth Thompson, Albert Jurasin



Seated L-R: Dollie Snyder, Marcell Snyder, Joyce Bullich, John Kennedy  
Standing L-R: John Ogden, Jesse Sundstrum, Connie Ogden, Ann McKinney



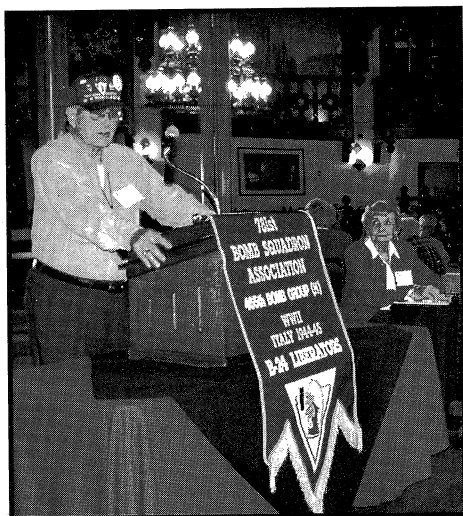
Seated L-R: Frank Wassenaar, Dorothy Wassenaar, Connie Clausen  
Standing L-R: Philip LeBlanc, Albert LeBlanc, Ann Bartlett, Bill Bartlett, Walter Clausen



Seated L-R: Leonard Goldstein, Anna Russell, Barney Russell Jr.  
Standing L-R: Barney Russell, James Kienitz, John Fondrey, Bernard Badler

## Business Meeting Minutes 781st Bomb Squadron Association October 4, 2004

The 2004 meeting of The 781st Bomb Squadron Association was held in the Alex Johnson Hotel, Rapid City, S. D.



The meeting was called to order at 1:25 P.M. by President John W. Ogden.

1. Roll Call of Registered Personnel.
  2. Declaration of Quorum.
  3. Connie Ogden was appointed Interim Secretary
  4. Treasurers Report as of October 1, 2004 was read and approved by membership.
  5. Reading of the Minutes of the last meeting. Motion to Approve by Barney Russell, Bernie Badler
- Motion carried .

### 7. Old Business:

Frank Ambrose made a motion to continue to send the Pantanella News to present dues paying members until notified of their demise, and to contact non-dues paying members one more time.

Motion carried.

### Re: Memorabilia:

Bernie Badler contacted Travis AFB Chaplain, Air Force Aid Society, McCook NE.

Orren Lee reported Argene Barnett might add his B 24 model.

The president noted that Ron Souci has volunteered a report on Wright Patterson AFB.

Bernie Badler brought items from Jim Altoff's collection to be evaluated.

Marcel Snyder declined nomination for President.

### New Business

#### Election of Officers

Ballots were distributed by various members. Carol Lee and Connie Ogden volunteered to tally and record ballots.

Results of written ballots were read by John W. Ogden as follows:

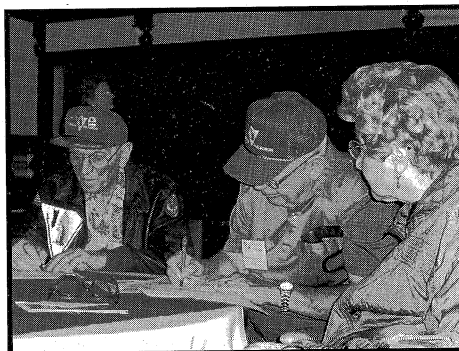
25 Eligible voters present.

President Emeritus and honorary Board Member: James C. Altoff unanimous vote.

For President: John W. Ogden 21 votes

For Vice-President: Barney Russell, Sr. 16 votes

For Secretary/Treasure: John W. Ogden



20 votes

#### For Board of Directors:

Ken Kill 23 votes

Frank Ambrose 23 votes

Charles Braud 5 votes

For Chaplain: Don Bailey 15 votes

Should we plan a reunion for 2004?

11 votes YES. 0 votes NO.

Washington, D.C. 8 votes

Shreveport, La. 8 votes

Orren and Carol Lee and their son and Ken Kill volunteered to work on D. C. Reunion

Barney Russell, volunteered to work on Shreveport. Oren & Carol Lee volunteered to support him.

Discussion followed and vote to have reunion in Shreveport, La., with Barney Russell, Chairman of Reunion Committee.

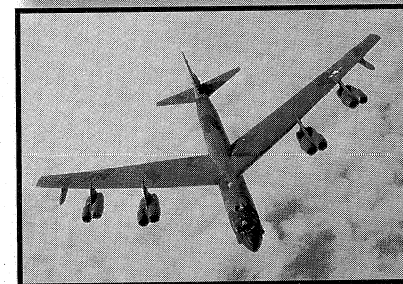
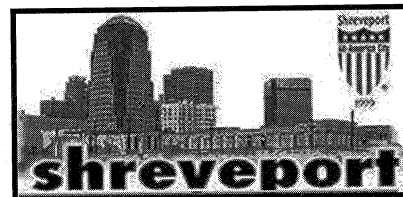
Memorabilia Volunteers: Chairman of Committee: Frank Ambrose . Bernie Badler will return remainder to California and provide storage.

There being no further new business, the chair called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Marcel Snyder..

Motion carried at 2:55 P.M.

## SHREVEPORT, LA PLAN FOR 2005 NEXT REUNION



**HOME OF THE  
(B for Big) B-52s**

## ADDRESS CHANGES

George and Lila Gaines:

New Address

3 Azalea Drive

Orange City, FL 32763-6113

Dick and Mickey Krekel:

New Address

18945 Hiview Drive

Brookfield, WI 53045

Telephone: 262-792-1393

Jim Kienitz: New Address

1800 Shaver Street # 123

Rapid City, SD 57702





**FOLDED WINGS**

Royal A. Wilson, Tail gunner on the Clodfelter crew, passed away July 20, 2004. Reported by R. W. Elliott, Clodfelter Flight Engineer

Richard I. Swanson, Donahue Ball Gunner, died December 25, 2003, due to a massive heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Jean, son Jim, daughters Mary Kay and Kristin and 7 grandchildren. Reported by his wife Jean.

Denly J. Thompson, 83, Engineering Section, departed this world February 17, 2004. He is survived by his wife Joyce, 3 sons, Denly, Timothy, Mathew, 2 daughters, Sarajane Grandia, Marijill Nickerson, and 8 grandchildren, 3 Great Grand children, 1 brother, Carl of Portland, OR and 1 sister, Wanda Christ of Las Vegas, NE. Reported by his daughter,

Richard C. Hall, Kennedy Nose Gunner, Folded his Wings April 27, 2004. Reported by his wife.

Harold A. Givens, Athon Bombar-dier died June 21, 2004. Reported by his daughter, Laurie A. Fitzgerald.

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.

Subject: Update on squadron member  
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2004 7:03 PM  
From: ed.schmitt2@sbcglobal.net  
To: <frank@frankambrose.com>

Dear Mr. Ambrose,

My father Melvin Bleiweiss (now Blye) was a member of your squadron during WWII. He was a radar man and first lieutenant.

I am sad to inform you that my father passed away after a long illness on Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2004., just three weeks shy of his 80th birthday. in Las Vegas, NV.

I saw that the squadron is having a reunion next week. I know my dad attended one of the group's reunions, I believe it was the 50th anniversary of WWII in 1995. I know that it would mean a great deal to his family to let is brothers' -in-arms know of his death.

We are fortunate to have gotten many of my dad's accounts of his war experiences on tape. The stories never varied. Your website has helped put many of the events into perspective. Knowing that I can no longer ask him to tell me again makes being able to refer to this information a great comfort.

If at all possible, if anyone attending the reunion has any stories or anecdotes about my father would it be possible to collect then and either email me at ed.schmitt2@sbcglobal.net or via regular mail :Elizabeth Schmitt, 2410 El Cerrito Dr, Dallas, TX 75228. I am the family's archivist and have put together one scrapbook of "the war years" My brother, sisters and I are meeting in Las Vegas the weekend of the 10th of October (his 80th) to celebrate his life with our mom Barbara, his bride of 59 years.

Thank you, Mr. Ambrose, for maintaining this group's history. I have photos, telegrams and letters if you'd be intereted in any for your records.

I hope my requests are not too much of an imposition.  
Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Schmitt (youngest child of Mel Blye)

**TREASURER'S CORNER****TREASURERS REPORT as of September 30, 2004**

PMA (Reunion) checking Account.....	\$4095.48
781st BS Association Savings Account.....	\$37,085.75
781stBS Checking Account.....	\$3670.69
Total.....	\$44,851.92

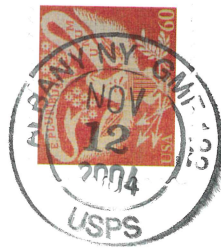
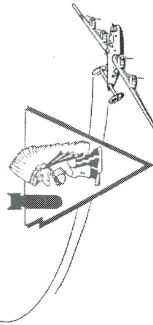
There are \$3398.84 in obligations resulting from the 2004 Reunion which have not yet cleared .

Respectfully Submitted  
John W. Ogden



WWII 781st BS B-24 Veterans and wives waiting their turn to enter the cockpit of the B-1

781st BOMB SQUADRON  
ASSOCIATION  
3728 Evergreen Drive  
Dickinson, TX 77539-6108



1/1/2005  
ORRENJ.LEE  
2312 BRAEMAR DR.  
SOUX FALLS, SD 57105

Return Service Requested