



PANTANELLA NEWS

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#101 September 2010

TAMPA BRACING FOR 781st ONSLAUGHT 2010 OCT 4th - 7th REUNION TO BE BIG

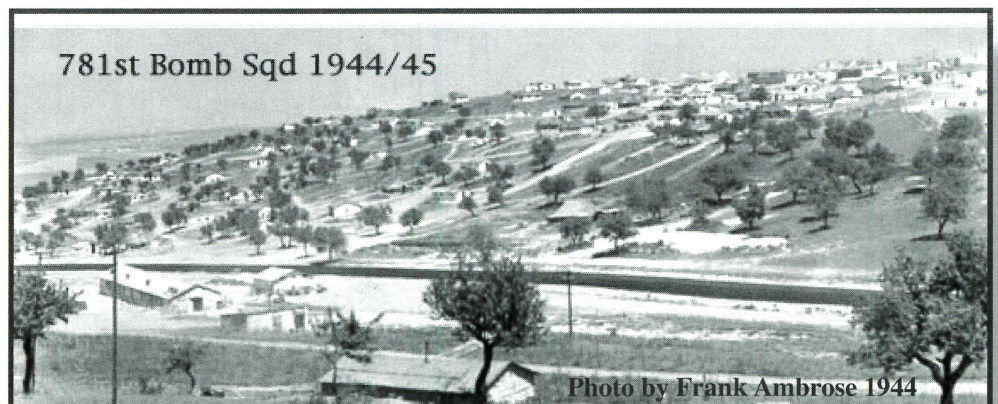


Photograph From the Frank Ambrose Collection

On Memorial Day,
30 May 1944,
the 781st Bomb Squadron suffered
its first combat loss.

The plane, "Cluster's Folly",
carrying Lt. George Prince and his
Crew was attacked out of the sun
about 11 o'clock and fire was
observed to break out in the fuse-
lage behind the wing near the flight
deck...

The full account on page 4...



781st Bomb Sqd 1944/45

Photo by Frank Ambrose 1944

MEMBERS KEEP IN TOUCH

Notify or contact any or all of
the individuals listed below for any
FW's---Address Changes--News
Or Whatever

PANTANELLA NEWS

Editor:- Frank Ambrose:-
News Stories, FW's and Obits
FRANK AMBROSE

44 East Blvd.

Gloversville, NY 12078

email: <frank@frankambrose.com>

781st. Asso. President:-

Orren Lee:

2312 Braemar Dr.

Sioux Falls, SD 57105

605 339 1297

email: <clee75@q.com>

781st. Asso. VP:-

Marilyn Horne

17933 Bahama Isle

Tampa, FL 33647-2777

email: <marilynhorne@yahoo.com>

781st. Sqd. Treasurer:-

PATTY KILL

35 Southfield Ct.

Springboro, OH 45066

email: <pkill@woh.rr.com>

781st Asso. Executive Sect:-

Carole Lee:

2312 Braemar Dr.

Sioux Falls, SD 57105

605 339 1297

email: <clee75@q.com>

781st Bomb Squadron Association
c/o Orren Lee, Pres.
2312 Braemar Dr.
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Email: <clee75@q.com>

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PANTANELLA NEWS

Editor: Frank Ambrose

781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)

Part of the 465th Bomb Gp. 15th AF
Italy 1944-1945

Flew 191 Missions

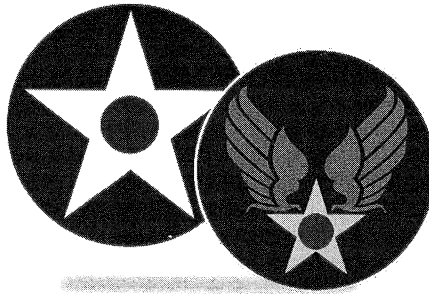
over Southern Europe
dropping thousands of tons of death
and destruction to the enemy.

Shot down 25 enemy aircraft

Received Two

Presidential Unit Citations

In Seven Battle Campaigns



WAR DEPARTMENT FIELD MANUAL

FM 100-20

COMMAND and EMPLOYMENT OF AIR POWER

WAR DEPARTMENT 21 JULY 1943

AVIATION UNITS.

Tactical air units of the Army Air Forces from the smallest to the largest are designated to flight, squadron, group, wing, division, command, and air force. The method of assignment and employment of the air forces necessitates a highly flexible organization within tactical units.

- 1) The flight is the basic tactical group or unit of the Army Air Forces and consists of two or more airplanes.
- (2) The squadron is the basic administrative and tactical unit and consists of three or four flights, depending upon the type of aviation.
- (3) The group, composed of three or more squadrons, is both tactical and administrative; it contains all the element essential for its air operations.
- (4) The wing is the next higher unit of the Army Air Forces and its functions are primarily tactical.
- (5) Two or more wings may be combined to form an air division.
- (6) An "air command" may include divisions, wings, groups, service and auxiliary units, and is both tactical and administrative.
- (7) The air force is the largest tactical unit of the Army Air Forces. It may contain a strategic air force, a tactical air force, an air defense command, and an air service command. It requires aviation engineer units for the construction and maintenance of air bases.

Units are designated according to their primary functions; for example, reconnaissance squadron, fighter group, bomber wing, air service command.

Ordinarily the group is the largest unit of the Army Air Forces that will operate in the air as a tactical entity under the command of one individual. Many air operations are conducted by smaller units. Reconnaissance and photographic missions, and less frequently bombardment

missions, may be carried out by single airplanes with the required fighter cover.

In addition to tactical units, units are organized for the purpose of maintenance and supply and for facilitating air operations. These units comprise personnel of the Army Air Forces and Army Service Forces who are trained for rendering service for the Army Air Forces. The maintenance and service units serving an air force are collectively designated the air service command.

STRATEGIC AIR FORCE

GENERAL. - Strategic air force operations are undertaken in furtherance of the strategic plans prepared by the War Department General Staff. The selection of strategic objectives is a responsibility of the theater commander. Ordinarily, the theater commander will control these air operations by the assignment of a broad general mission to the air force commander. The air force commander executes the assignment by means of a directive to the strategic air force commander and general supervision of his forces.

MISSIONS. - Generally, the aim of the strategic air force is the defeat of the enemy nation. Missions are selected which make a maximum contribution to this aim. Objectives may be found in the vital enters in the enemy's lines of communication and important establishments in the economic system of the hostile country. Objectives are selected in accordance with the ultimate purpose of the strategic plan. Counter air force operations necessary to neutralize or limit the power of the enemy's air forces are of continuing importance. Although normally employed against objectives listed above, when the action is vital and decisive, the strategic air force may be joined with the tactical air force and assigned tactical air force objectives.

COMPOSITION. - The strategic air force is normally comprised of heavy bombardment, fighter, and photographic aviation. Heavy bombardment aviation is the backbone of the strategic air force. This class of aviation is characterized by its ability to carry heavy loads of destructive agents for great distances. It is also capable of conducting long-range strategic reconnaissance over land and sea. It relies upon speed, altitude, defensive fire power, and armor for security.

Accompanying fighter aviation, where its radius of action permits, is also used to increase security. Fighter aviation furnishes air defense for bombardment bases. Photographic aviation performs long-range, high-altitude photographic missions for the theater, air force, and strategic air force commanders.

Saga of The 'Tulsamerican'

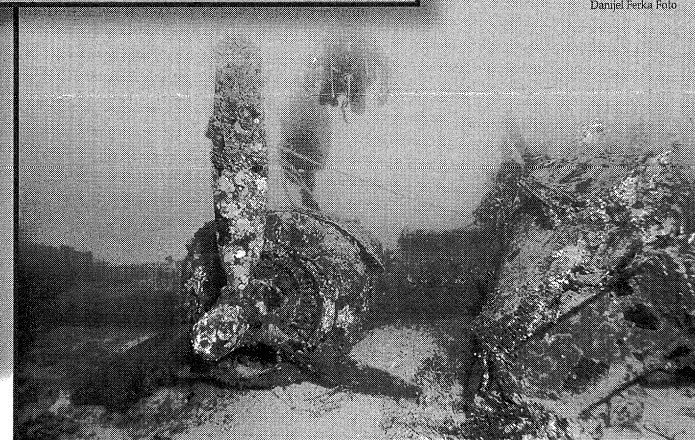
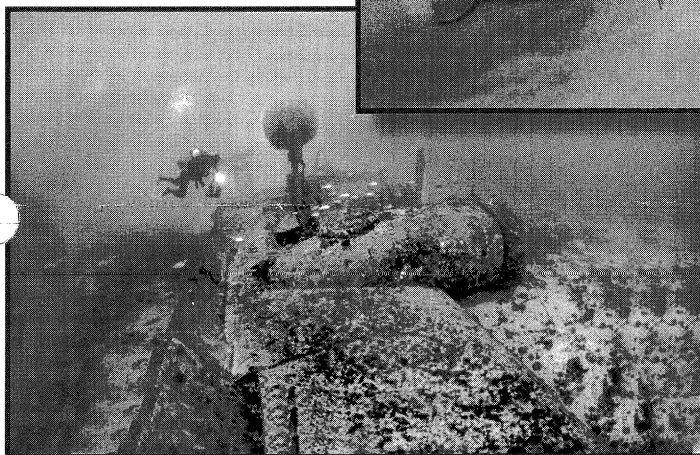
B-24J Downed in '44 and found 66 Years later

by John D. Bybee

1512 hours, Sunday, 17 December 1944:
1st Lt. Eugene P. Ford, 461BG/765BS

Squadron Leader was out of gas and out of luck. A balky nose wheel spoiled his desperate two-engines out final approach to the emergency airstrip on Vis Island. Ford broke off his approach and began a series of wide circles to give Flight Engineer T/Sgt Charles Priest time to free the nose gear.

Ford and his copilot 1st.Lt.Vincent O. Ecklund struggled to hold the *Tulsamerican* aloft. Halfway through their second circle, Sgt. Priest returned to the flight deck and reported the nose wheel was hopelessly jammed. Ford committed the Liberator to a short final.



The runway threshold was in sight, and was less than two miles away. Suddenly, at 100 feet above the Adriatic, the B-24's two right engines coughed on their last drops of fuel. Lt. Ford calmly uttered his last words "We're going in!"

Ford and Ecklund in a Herculean effort of strength and spirit brought up the right wing and leveled the "*Tulsamerican*". and tried to "comb" the ten-foot white-caps rather than impact them head on.

At the last instant of control, Ford let the *Tulsamerican* slump to the left. His decision to impact on the left side first, saved seven lives but doomed him.

The blunt glass nose bulldozed into the Adriatic. The open bomb bays swallowed tons of seawater. The extended main gear tripped the plane. The *Tulsamerican* cartwheeled, overturned and broke her back in a single heartbeat. The tail broke off and flipped forward over the cockpit and joined the dismembered nose turret in its race for the

bottom.

Ford's high-backed armored coffin seat crushed the blond, hazel-eyed 21-year-old New Derry, Pennsylvania native against the instrument panel. Navigator 1st. Lt Russell C. Landry and Flight Engineer Charles E. Priest were either crushed by the fallen top turret or dazzled and entangled in the shambles of the flight deck and drowned. Radio operator/gunner S/Sgt. Edward F. Steelandt stepped from the shattered right waist position on to the wing. Not seeing the wounded tail gunner S/Sgt. James R. Hazel, S/Sgt. Steelandt returned to the sinking bomber and pulled Hazel out of the plane.

Steelandt and Hazel were in the cold Adriatic for about forty-five minutes before a fishing boat crew rescued them. Miller, his right leg broken in half, treaded water for two hours before being rescued.

Vincent O. Ecklund, Val R. Miller, Wallace H. McLemore, James R. Hazel, Edward F. Steelandt, John F. Toney and Casimir P. Walenga were taken to a small British hospital on Vis and later transferred by C-47 to the hospital at Bari. Sgt. James R. Hazel was the only one who returned to duty.

Time and life went on. For 66 years, the *Tulsamerican* lay submerged in the shallow waters off the southeast foot of Mt. Hum. Families and friends mourned and remembered their losses and slowly the survivors passed away.

Today, Val Miller (Oklahoma City, OK.) is the last survivor of the 17 December

1944 crash. Miller, *Tulsamerican's* original tail gunner, now lives in Picayune, Mississippi.

In the mid 1980s, the SPG (Same Page Gang) consisting of Gerry Landry (cousin of navigator Russell Landry and retired manager of Cal Tech/North American Trisonic subsonic wind tunnel, Azusa, CA.), Jerry Whiting (retired SF Bay Area detective, 485th Group Historian and author, Walnut Creek, CA. Kevin Gray (lawyer/author and member of Tulsa Air & Space Museum, Tulsa, OK. and John Bybee (retired railroader and aerospace historian/author, Vermont, IL.) joined forces to

keep alive the saga of the *Tulsamerican* and began the quest to locate the plane and the remains of the three airmen still aboard.

In December 2009, diver Darko Bojanic discovered the wreckage of an unknown B-24 off Vis. Other dives were conducted by the Croatian Conservation Institute on March 18, March

19, 2010; the identity of the bomber was suspected to be the *Tulsamerican* but could not be confirmed.

Finally on Memorial Day 2010, the divers recovered the builder's data plate—#42-51430, B-24J-10-DT—the wreck was the *Tulsamerican* (the last Ford Willow Run KD kit built by Douglas at Tulsa)!

At present, JPAC (Joint POW, MIA Accounting Command)and DPMO (Defense POW/MIA Personnel Office) (via Jerry Whiting who taught classes at the DPMO's Pentagon offices) are involved in the discovery and recovery of the airmen's remains and possible recovery of the B-24 for display at the Tulsa Air & Space Museum.

Memorial Day, 30 May 1944

From 781st Squadron History Book 465th BG Mission #18

On Memorial Day, 30 May 1944, the second consecutive tough mission was flown and the Squadron suffered its first loss.

The target was the Neudorfi

Flugzeugfabrik Aircraft Components Factory at Neunkirchen, Austria. Flak was heavy and a number of enemy fighters were encountered. The Group claimed three of these shot down, one of which was a Focke Wolfe-190 claimed by Ronald E. Hill, 781st gunner.

The plane carrying Lt. George Prince's Crew was attacked out of the sun at about 11 o'clock and fire was observed to break out in the fuselage behind the wing near the flight deck. They were able to stick with the formation for about 13 minutes before being forced to abandon ship. Returning Crews reported eight to ten parachutes seen to open in the vicinity of Luici Palanski, Yugoslavia before the plane crashed.

Members of the missing Crew were 2nd Lt. George A. Prince, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Harold D. Holden, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. Murray Septoff, Bombardier; 2nd Lt. Calvin J. Canyock, Navigator; T/Sgt. John L. Crowley, Engineer; T/Sgt. Harry M. Smith, Radio Operator; Sgt. Abraham Dubinsky, Gunner; Sgt. Jack J. Williams, Gunner; Sgt. James F. Downs, Gunner; and Cpl. Jimmy Patrick, Gunner.

One Crew member who had been severely wounded in the fighter attack (T/Sgt. John L. Crowley) returned to the Squadron in early July and five more returned on 22 July. The five were: 2nd Lt. Harold D. Holden, 2nd Lt. Murray Septoff, Sgt. Jack C. Williams, Sgt. James F. Downs, and Cpl. Jimmy Patrick. These men confirmed that two more Crewmembers were in safe hands but that 2nd Lt. George Prince and 2nd Lt. Calvin Canyock were killed when the aircraft exploded following the fighter attack.

T/Sgt. Harry M. Smith returned to Italy from the Balkans in August after having successfully evaded the enemy and at that time, was awarded the Silver Star for exceptional bravery above and beyond the call of duty in the face of enemy opposition. Only one member of the Prince Crew, Sgt. Abraham Dubinsky, remained in enemy territory.

As Al Rodman described the 30 May mission, "Another two-fer and well worth it, they must have a slew of aircraft factories around this area. We had to combine with the 460th (Bomb Group) to form a group. We lead the entire wing. Takeoff and assembly were okay on course all the way in and nothing eventful happened.

Hit our objective on the nose and peeled off intact. Saw a B-24 go down in another group and 8 chutes came out. Let down to



George A Prince Crew: 781st Bomb Squadron's 1st Casualty in combat... May 30, 1944.

14,000 feet and that was a fatal mistake. ME-109's and FW-190's jumped us and shot up our #5 man, that was Prince's crew. They flew along for a few minutes and 8 chutes came out. Plane went into a slow turn and exploded.

Fighters again attacked our box and tail gunner and top gunner knocked an ME-109 down. Nose gunner also sliced him up as he fell away. Fighters made two more passes at us with no effect and from the point on no one bothered us. Another day, another dollar, and boy are we earning 'em. Lost three men from flak yesterday over Vienna. Found out that two enemy aircraft destroyed were credited to our squadron. Our crew got one and Athon's bunch the other."

**STOP READING
THIS NEWSLETTER**



**MAIL IN REUNION
REGISTRATION
FORM FIRST
AND THEN
RESUME
ENJOYING
THE PANTANELLA
NEWS**

I GOT MAIL...

Email to: frank@frankambrose.com
Dear Mr. Ambrose,

As you may have noticed my Grandfather, Mallory H. "Buddy" Simmons, passed on 23/01/2002, he was a life member of your organization. My Father and I thoroughly enjoy reading your news letter, The Pantanella News. If it is necessary to renew our dues please let us know and we will be happy to do so! The Newsletter is still being sent to his address 1504 N. Bragg Blvd, Spring Lake, N.C. 28304, if you could change the address to our home it would be most appreciated. I am a Musician; this song was composed this morning with help from this morning's Fayetteville Observer Monday 26/4/2010 and an Email from a family member.

I can be reached @
Troy H Simmons Jr.
3518 Thamesford Rd.
Fayetteville N.C., 28311
(910)467-7460

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OTHER SQUADRON NEWS

The 780th BS will be having their 2010 Reunion September 14th to 16th in Biloxi, Mississippi. The Host Hotel is the "Isle Cassino Hotel. If you're in the area, why not stop in and make yourself known.

AND MORE MAIL...

From: jonny1note@gmail.com
 Subject: Next Issue
 Date: June 23, 2010
 To: frank@frankambrose.com

Regarding the June 2010 issue as being 8 pages & the next only 4.
 I for one would love to see a few pages of your photos from Pantanella giving a perspective of daily life.

Thanx...
 Jon / John Taliman

1500 Runnymede Lane
 Char NC 28211
 June 19, 2010

Frank,
 I have received your issue #100 of the "Pantanella News."
 The stories are interesting and thank you for taking the time to put out this news.
 I am enclosing a copy of navigator records for my father Wilton E Carter, Sr. I found this record in his files after he died in 2006. You may already have records like this but it does give some history of the flights that he went on and destinations for each mission.

Regards' Sandy Carter



This is a photo showing members of the 781st Bomb Squadron enjoying the luxurious bathing facilities at "Pantanella" back in 1944-45. It is reprinted in response to John Taliman's note requesting more photographs giving a perspective of daily life

To: cle75@q.com
 Date: Tue, 29 Jun 2010
 From: crane-legs@sbcglobal.net

Dear Mr. Orren Lee,
 I have been getting the Pantanella News letter since Frank Piteo passed away as an honorary.
 I thank you and GOD BLESS you and all the veterans for making our country safe.
 My old address was 211 West Alameda Ave. #101, we moved April 30th and now the new address is below.
 Again thank you everyone.
 Frank so loved his 781st Bomb Squadron and 465th Bomb Group. I remember meeting a lot of you when I went with him to Colorado Springs gathering.
 Thank You & God Bless each and everyone of you.

My very Best Linda
 Linda G. Crane
 President & CEO
 Schutrum-Piteo Foundation

LAST MINUTE 2010 REUNION INFORMATION FROM CAROLE LEE

September 1st was the registration deadline for the reunion, but if you find that you can now go, call Ron Horn, Patty Kill or myself and let us know you are coming. Ron will then make the arrangements. A good group is coming but always room for more. If you have a problem getting the room rate after Sept. 5th, contact Ron Horne and he will work with the hotel on it. My home phone number is 605-339-1297 or call my cell, 605-321-3874. Carole Lee, 781st Bomb Squadron Association Executive Secretary.

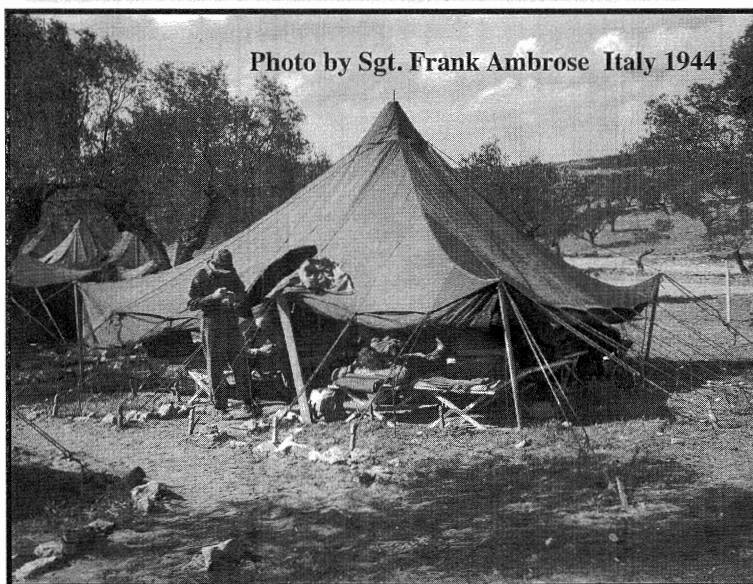
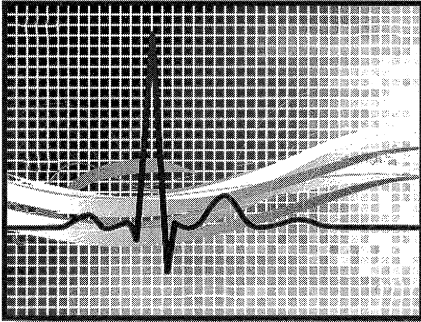


Photo by Sgt. Frank Ambrose Italy 1944

Another photo in response to John Taliman's request depicting the daily life at "Pantanella" in 1944 and 1945. Eventually this tent and many others were replaced by various abodes constructed mainly by "Tufi" blocks and an assortment of indescribable building materials.

How to Survive a Heart Attack When You are Alone

Since many people are alone when they suffer a heart attack, this article seemed to be in order.



Without help, the person whose heart is beating improperly and who begins to feel faint, has only about 10 seconds left before losing consciousness.

However, these victims can help themselves by coughing repeatedly and very vigorously.

A deep breath should be taken before each Cough, and the cough must be deep and prolonged, as when producing sputum from deep inside the chest.

A breath and a cough must be repeated about every two seconds without let up until help arrives, or until the heart is felt to be beating normally again.

Deep breaths get oxygen into the lungs and coughing movements squeeze the heart and keep the blood circulating.

The squeezing pressure on the heart also helps it regain normal rhythm. In this way, heart attack victims can get to a hospital.

Tell as many other people as possible about this, it could save their lives!

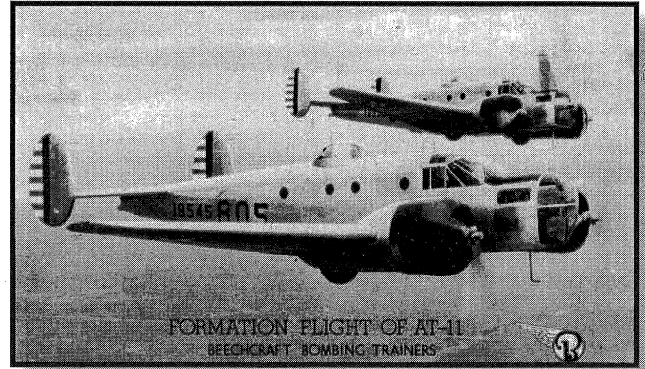
(reprint from The Mended Hearts, Inc. Publication, Heart Response)

Lest You Forget...

First you forget names, then you forget faces. Then you forget to pull up your zipper. It's worse when you forget to pull it down.

The AT-11, a modified Twin Beech used for bombing training.

Another very successful Model 18 military version was the AT-11 and AT-11A used to train bombardiers. Most of this training was done in the Southwest sections of the country where almost perfect flying weather allowed around-the-clock training. The AT-11s were equipped with a Plexiglas bombardier's nose and bomb sights. These aircraft carried a crew of two, plus three students who rotated into the nose for hands-on training.



WANTED

781st
*members
*relatives
*friends

to attend
2010 reunion
in TAMPA

REWARD

GOOD TIME
TO BE HAD
FOR ALL

781st BS Assoc. 2010 Reunion

October 4-5-6-7,

Doubletree Hotel Tampa Westshore Airport

4500 West Cypress Street, Tampa, Florida,

Tel: 1- 813 879 4800

Reunion Agenda

Complimentary Continental Breakfast every Morning

Monday, Oct. 4:

3:00 PM Registration/Hospitality

Tuesday, Oct. 5:

8:00 AM Bus to Fantasy of Flight

Wednesday, Oct. 6:

Free Day

Nearby shopping amusement parks as well as the Liberty ship located at Channel side in Tampa next to the Tampa Aquarium.

Busch Gardens and many, many more other Attractions

Thursday, Oct. 7:

8:00 AM: bus ride to MacDill AFB for the

Memorial Service at the base chapel

12:00 PM: lunch at the Officers Club.

1:30 PM: Static display of the KC-135 and a windshield tour of the base.

3:30 PM: Bus back to Hotel

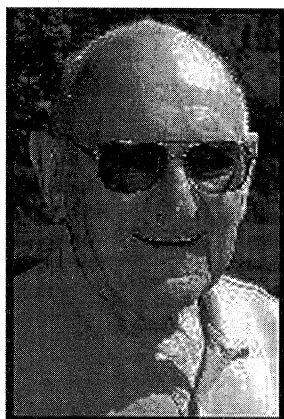
7:00 PM: Banquet at the Doubletree

All Times Subject to Change

FOLDED WINGS

Glen H. Haywood: CoPilo
Ellison Crew

Glen H. Haywood passed away on July 2, 2010, of complications after open heart surgery. Born in Kansas in 1921, he grew up on the family wheat and cattle farm just outside Marquette. Though Glen loved the land, he was captivated by the sounds and sights of early airplanes that might occasionally fly overhead near the family farm. As a result, Glen took a job with Cessna Aircraft in Wichita, working as a welder to build military aircraft, and when war broke out, he quickly enlisted in the Army



Air Corps. He served for part of the war as a flight instructor, but went on to serve as a combat B-24 bomber pilot, flying thirty five combat missions in Europe and North Africa, as a member of the 15th Air Force. He was awarded several med-

als for valor, including three Air Medals. Shortly before his discharge from the Air Corps in 1945, he married his high school sweetheart Gussie Helmig, who preceded him in death. They had two children, Ryan H. (Linda) and Shane H. (Denise) who survive him, and five grandchildren. Glen's working career after military service was in the railway maintenance equipment business, selling, providing field service for and design ideas related to, heavy equipment used to construct and maintain railroads. His inventive genius in this area eventually led to U.S. patent recognition.

He loved nothing more than "tinkering" in his shop, inventing new, interesting, and sometimes exciting (especially for the occasion-ally frightened neighbors!) new gadgets. A favorite story involves the time in the 1950s that he managed to start a small jet engine in his workshop ... but forgot to include a means to shut it off. People came from blocks away to investigate the terrible noise. He loved to read, was an avid student of history - especially military history, and liked to tax his mind with crossword puzzles. MIA memorial service was held in the Chapel of the First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, AR on August 7, 2010. The family requests that in lieu of donations or flowers, that those who knew and cared for Glen, hug a friend, feed a stranger, or make someone happier and someplace more beautiful.

Joseph J. Pera:

Tail Gunner, Wilcox Crew

From: pjlaurenzi@verizon.net
Subject: For: Pantanella News
Date: June 27, 2010
To: frank@frankambrose.com

Dear Frank,
I am the daughter of **Joseph J. (Joe) Pera**. I am sad to inform you that my Dad, **Joseph J. Pera** of 84 years, has passed away on June 2, 2010.

My Dad was a tail gunner in Howard R. (Bob) Wilcox's crew during World War II. He was with the 781st Bombardment Squadron of the 465th Bombardment Group. My dad's wishes were not to have a death notice in any newspapers. However, I found some notes that he typed on May 13, 2010 which specifically request that Pantanella News be notified of his death.

Frank, I believe my Dad had intentions of attending the October 2010 reunion in Tampa, FL. (He missed the last one in 2002 and the one in 1994, both of which were held on the West Coast.) I also believe he was extremely grateful of being part of Bob Wilcox' crew because, as I understand, Bob was one of the more experienced pilots.

My Dad, of Saddle River, New Jersey, is survived by his wife, Violet Willis Pera, of Saddle River, New Jersey. He is survived by his three daughters (Paulette Pera Laurenzi of Mahwah, New Jersey, Peggy Pera Connolly of Saratoga Springs, New York and Patty Pera Itkin of Sarasota, Florida). He is also survived by his three sons-in-laws, his five grandsons, his one granddaughter, and four great grandchildren.

Besides his family, my Dad enjoyed a lifelong career in journalism as a news reporter and editor of various publications. He also served on and then became chairman of the Saddle River Planning Board during his retirement years.

Unfortunately, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in April of 2010 which led to his sudden passing.

If you would like additional information, I would be more than happy to write a more complete story of my Dad before the next publication. On a separate note, I was curious to know if Bob Wilcox is still alive. Not sure since I understand he would be aged in his early 90's now. If so, I would love to contact him. I have a picture of Bob which dates back to the October 1994 reunion and was sent to Dad in March of 2000 as part of a death notice for John Crane Zartman.

Presidents Corner

781st Friends –

I just returned from the South Dakota Honor Flight to Washington DC. What a privilege it was to be on that flight. It was awesome and humbling. I felt I was receiving the benefit rightfully earned by those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, their lives.

I was on the 7th South Dakota flight and 3 more are planned before the end of the year. They were so organized. They had caregivers, wheel chairs and anything we needed. We were greeted at Dulles Airport by a line of well wishers and also an airport full of people with flags and welcome home signs in Joe Foss Airport in Sioux Falls as we returned.

I told a family at the WWII Memorial that I was on a B-24. Their 8 year old son piped up – that's the Liberator!

If you haven't been on the flight, get your applications in. When you go to the WWII Memorial be sure to check out behind it. It says "Kilroy (with the picture) was here!"

Orren Lee

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

Joyce DeSalatte:

From: ljdeslatte@suddenlink.net
Subject: obit
Date: June 18, 2010
To: frank@frankambrose.com

My wife **Joyce** passed away feb.22- 2010 after a brief illness.

Louis J Deslatte
Gaines' engineer

p.s.

I would like to know who I could buy a 781st cap from.

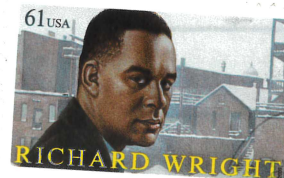
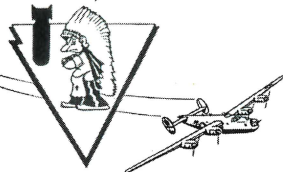
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to e-mail or call me. I will be available by cell at any time. However, I will not be available by e-mail again until the night of Thursday, July 1st.

Regards,

Paulette Pera Laurenzi
201-406-8013 cell
pjlaurenzi@verizon.net

PANTANELLA NEWS September 2010

781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"
c/o Frank Ambrose, Editor
44 East Blvd.
Gloversville, NY 12078



781st Reunion

TAMPA

Oct 4th - 7th
2010

ASSOC 2010
CAROLE J. LEE
2312 BRAEMAR DR.
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57105-4126

