



PANTANELLA NEWS

Published by 781st Bomb Squadron Association© #112 September 2013

The Sun Is Setting on Deadline For Charleston Reunion

Deadline for Hotel Special Rates is 10/11/2013

Reunion 2013 November 10th-13th
Charleston, SC



Activities will include a Charleston City Tour, a Tour and Luncheon at the Citadel, and a Tour of Joint Base in Charleston.

PANTANELLA NEWS

Edited by: Lance McKinnon

4128 Chanticleer Dr. NW
Kennesaw GA, 30152

770-425-3213

email: glmckinnon@gmail.com

Contact one of the following individuals
for FW's, News, Address Changes, etc.

781st BS Association Officers

President:

Orren Lee

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

605-339-1297

email: cleel3@midco.net

Vice President:

Earl Leinart

936 S 111th Plaza
Omaha, NE 68154-3306

402-334-9118

email: leinartge@cox.net

Secretary:

Debbie Cherry

13656 Hunters Chapel Rd.
Smoaks, SC 29481

803-747-3947

debbiescherry@gmail.com

Treasurer/Executive Secretary:

Carole Lee

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

605-339-1297

email: cleel3@midco.net

781st Bomb Squadron Association

c/o Orren Lee, Pres.

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

Email: cleel3@midco.net

Board of Directors:

President: Orren Lee

Vice President: Earl Leinart

Treasurer: Carole Lee

Secretary: Debbie Cherry

Chaplin: Joseph Soucy

Board Member: Don Muncie

Board Member: Georgia McKinnon

PANTANELLA NEWS

781st BOMB SQUADRON (H)

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

Flew 191 Missions over Southern Europe
dropping thousands of tons of death and
destruction to the enemy. Shot down 25
enemy aircraft. Received two Presidential
Unit Citations in Seven Battle Campaigns.



Visit Us On Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/781stBombSquadron>

President's Letter



The Collings Foundation's 'All American' B-24 that we toured at the 1990 781st Reunion in Waltham, Mass was in Sioux Falls recently. Carole and I enjoyed a tour and conversation with the pilot. He knew Bob and Caroline Collings. We told him about our tour and that the Collings gave us the history of the airplane at our reunion in Massachusetts. He knew Jim Althoff and had actually flown to Pantanella with him. I have asked Lance, our editor, to put the picture we took of it on the back cover of this newsletter. It is now known as Witchcraft.

Carole asked the pilot why the name change. He said because of all it has gone through and seen it is magic that it is still flying.

We've included a picture of Orren sitting inside the B-24. The picture of the designated crew painted on the side is proof that it is the All American. Check it out in the Pantanella News of October 1990 Number 22.

Will I see you in Charleston? ☺

— Orren Lee



Reunion 2013 November 10th-13th Charleston, SC

Hotel Name Change

The Sheraton Hotel had a name change but they will still offer the same great amenities.



Hotel Information

InnPlace Charleston Airport Hotel

4770 Goer Drive • North Charleston, SC 29406

Phone: 1-888-747-1900

Rates are \$79.00 plus tax (state/local taxes are currently 13.5%) These rates will be honored three days pre and post conference. The hotel will offer complimentary, round-trip airport shuttle. Inbound guests can contact the hotel upon retrieval of luggage at (888) 747-1900 for pickup. Outbound hotel guests can arrange for return airport transportation with the hotel front desk.

The hotel will offer scheduled, complimentary shuttle service to the Historic District. Please see hotel desk for scheduled Historic District shuttle times.

The hotel will offer complimentary shuttle service for hotel guests within a two mile radius of the hotel to include the Tanger Outlet Mall and area restaurants.

Reservations Instructions

Call 1-888-747-1900 and identify yourself as part of the 781st Bomb Squadron Reunion group. Give your name, requested type of room, requested bed type (king, double/double) and check in and check out dates. (Any requests for special room arrangements must be made at the time of this call and cannot be guaranteed.) **Individual reservations must be made before October 11, 2013.** Guest check in time is 3:00 pm and check out time is 12:00 noon.

781st Bomb Squadron Reunion

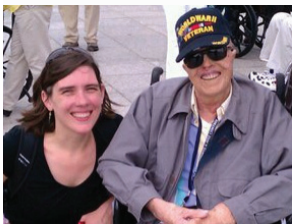
Charleston, South Carolina • November 10-13, 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
 <p>Check in at INNPLACE CHARLESTON AIRPORT HOTEL \$79.00 per room per night plus tax</p>  <p>5:00pm Hospitality Room Opens with Deli Buffet</p> <p>5:00pm - 10:00pm Registration Hospitality Room</p>	 <p>9:00am - 12:00pm THE CITADEL CAMPUS TOUR/LUNCH</p>  <p>12:00pm - 2:00pm CHARLESTON CITY BUS TOUR</p>  <p>5:00pm BOARD MEETING</p> <p>Hospitality Room Open</p>	 <p>9:00am BUSINESS MEETING</p> <p>AFTERNOON FREE</p> <p>HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN ALL DAY</p>  <p>Evening Meal Hosted by Orren Lee (Complimentary for registered attendees)</p>	 <p>9:00am - 2:00pm JOINT BASE TOUR/LUNCH</p>  <p>MEMORIAL SERVICE</p>  <p>GROUP PHOTO</p>  <p>7:00pm (Cash Bar 6:30pm) FINAL EVENING BANQUET</p>	<p>Depart</p> <p>ACTIVITY PACKAGE: \$165.00 Per person</p> <p>INCLUDES: Welcome Packet with Name Badges</p> <p>Deli Buffet</p> <p>Charleston City Bus Tour</p> <p>The Citadel Campus Tour/Lunch</p> <p>Evening Meal hosted by Orren Lee</p> <p>Joint Base Tour/ Lunch</p> <p>Memorial Service</p> <p>Final Evening Banquet with Entertainment</p> <p>All Taxes and Most Gratuities Transportation to Group Activities</p>

If you would like receive updates about the reunion as details are finalized,
please email Debbie Cherry at debbiescherry@gmail.com
to be included on an email list.

Harry Mason Smith

An American Hero I call Granddaddy



This story is about my Granddaddy, Harry Mason Smith, who was a Flight Engineer on George

Prince's crew. Granddaddy was born on March 24, 1923 in the Low Country of South Carolina on a farm, where he still resides. At the age of 18, he moved to Charleston, SC to work at the shipyard building Victory Ships. After America entered the war, he enlisted with a recruiter from Shaw Field in Sumter, SC. His training was completed in several locations including Mississippi, Texas, New Mexico, and McCook AFB in Nebraska. He arrived in Italy in March of 1944.

While stationed at Pantanella, Granddaddy flew 13 missions. His final mission, on Memorial Day, May 30, 1944, was the first casualty for the 781st as two crew members were lost on this day. Their plane, Custer's Folly, was shot down after returning from a successful mission targeting the Nuedorfl Aircraft Components Factory in Austria. Their plane was hit by flak and a fire broke out. Granddaddy attempted to keep the fire at bay while the other crew members were able to abandon the ship. Though he was still on the plane when it exploded, his parachute miraculously opened. After landing in Yugoslavia, he was rescued by partisans. Due to his extensive injuries, he was not

Custer's Folly
hit by flak

Harry's
crew

Harry with his
wife Shirley



Harry M. Smith in uniform.

able to return to Bari for 6 weeks. During this time, the partisans worked to keep him hidden from the Germans. He often slept in barns of various farmhouses, and was transported around in ox carts. On August 12, he was flown out of Yugoslavia in a C-47 which was piloted by Russians who landed on a makeshift air strip that the partisans had fashioned out of a hay field.

Granddaddy arrived in Italy, where he stayed for just over three more months before being well enough to be transported back to the States. During this time, he was cared for by Major George S. Berg, and two nurses named Ms. Hedges, and Miss Molly Quassic. According to Granddaddy, when he was introduced to Miss Molly Quassic, he told her he would call her Miss Molly, since Ms. Quassic was too difficult. This medical team truly changed Granddaddy's life. The decision had been made to amputate Granddaddy's hands, but Major Berg requested and was granted permission

to try to save his hands which had been severely burned in the explosion. Due to the careful attention of Major Berg, Granddaddy was able to keep his hands, only losing one finger.

When Granddaddy returned to the States in December of 1944, he spent time in Tuscaloosa, AL and Battle Creek, MI while being treated for his injuries with various surgeries. He was discharged from the service as a Master Sergeant in November of 1947.

Granddaddy was awarded a Silver Star for his heroic actions on the day their plane was shot down. (According to the Squadron History book, he was one of only four recipients in the 781st.) In spite of this distinction and his seven other medals including the Purple Heart, he would consider his family life to be his best achievement. He married Shirley Dantzler on October 16, 1943 before leaving for Italy. They were married for 65 years before her death in January, 2009, and have 5 children who all also live in South Carolina. Granddaddy is one of the hardest workers that I have ever known. In spite of his injuries, he returned from the war and worked in many capacities. In 1970, he retired from working at Charleston Naval Base as a civilian. In addition to his five children, he also has 15 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.

— Georgia McKinnon



Major George S. Berg, Miss Molly Quassic and Ms. Hedges, served as Harry's medical team.

George Miller Receives Distinguished Flying Cross

George Miller received a Distinguished Flying Cross during a presentation at the Anchorage Veterans Memorial on Monday, April 29, 2013; 68-years after Miller earned the medal while on a bombing mission over Austria in a B-24 Liberator during World War II.

George is an Associate Member of the 781st. He was in the 782nd Squadron. He has come to a couple of our reunions, one in Dayton, Ohio and most recently in Tampa, Fl.



Newspaper Article on George Miller

On Feb. 25, 1945, he battled an eruption of gasoline in sub-zero temperatures to save his damaged B-24 "Liberator" and its crew. Miller was the flight engineer on the bomber, based in Italy and making runs on targets in Germany and central Europe. On that day their mission was over Linz, Austria.

"We had just dropped the bombs," he said. "The bomb bay doors were still open and we got hit. It broke a fuel pump."

Miller had to work his way along a narrow catwalk in the middle of the belly of the plane, with 25,000 feet between him and the ground. The bomb bay doors were left open to keep gas fumes from building up.

As he pumped as much fuel as he could out of the affected fuel tank,

gas showered him from the damaged pump above his head. He tried to staunch the flow with his hand. "The gasoline was spraying all over," he said. "It ran down my arm and filled my boots. The air temperature was 60 below, and I'm assuming that's what the gas was, too."

He endured it for as long as he could before making his way back into the plane's interior. "It was all my body could stand," he said.

Inside, the crew was waiting for him. They'd turned their electric flight suits on "hot" and covered him. They threw his gas-soaked clothes out the bomb bay. The co-pilot tucked Miller's feet under his flight jacket and next to his own skin.

But the ordeal was not over. The plane ran out of gas before it could get back to base. "Luckily, there were fighter strips in Northern Italy and we were able to land there," Miller said. The big bomber had to be relieved of most of its weight to get off the short strip. It took off with just the pilot, co-pilot and Miller. The rest of the crew followed by road.

"TSgt Miller's quick thinking and bravery enabled the entire crew and plane to return safely to the airbase,"

said the citation, which credited him with "outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty."

A recommendation for the medal was written up quickly. But the officer in charge of the matter was seriously injured and flown to a hospital in the states before he could forward the paperwork.

"The new guy came in and just cleaned out the desk and went to work," Miller said. The commendation was lost.

Fast forward 65 years or so. Miller learned that his former commanding officer, John Charlton, was still alive. Miller made contact and Charlton told him, for the first time, that he was put in for a medal.

Miller asked Young's office for help in locating documents. "I read his story and what he was able to do to save his crew," Young said. "He deserved (the medal). He should have had it a lot sooner."

"We had to get the details on events going back a long ways," said Revak, whom Young credited with investigating the facts that led the Air Force to determine that the medal was in order.

NOTES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

781st Bomb Squadron Survey



Please find the 781st Bomb Squadron Survey included in this newsletter. It is designed to not need an envelope. You need to fill it out, fold, stamp, tape and mail.



Hotel registration deadline is
10/11/2013
to receive special rates.

If you need a registration form for the reunion in Charleston, SC, contact Carole Lee, Treasurer.

Phone - 605-339-1297
Email - cleel3@midco.net

The 781st thanks Pierre J.J. Kennedy for his \$100.00 donation and William Jostworth, Charles Lagneaux, and William Pulley for sending in extra with their dues.

Pantanelle News
is accepting articles for publication. If you have any news that would be of interest to the Association, please email us at:
glmckinnon@gmail.com



2013 WW II Bomb Group Joint Reunion

October 17-19, 2013

A 2013 WW II Bomb Group Joint Reunion is being held in Phoenix, Arizona at the Tempe Embassy Suites Hotel on October 17-19, 2013. This event is sponsored by three Bomb Groups from the Fifteenth Air Force (451st Bombardment Group (H) 49th Bomb Wing, 99th Bom-

bardment Group (H) - 5th Bomb Wing and 455th Bombardment Group (H) - 304th Bomb Wing).

For more information, including a printable registration form and a schedule of events, visit: <http://www.gordons.ws/reunion/>.

Engrave a Memory Stone

Cindy Freed sent pictures of these bricks which she placed in a local Memorial Garden (pictured below). She wants others to know that this is something that may be an option in your community. If your community has a memorial garden, you may be able to memorialize a veteran in a like manner.



Moon Township's Memorial Garden Walkway

Honor a loved one with a personalized commemorative brick in Moon Township's Memorial Garden Walkway. Engraved bricks will be placed in the walkway circling the township's September 11, Memorial and memorials honoring Moon Township's public safety professionals and military service members. The Moon Township Memorial Garden is located between the Municipal and Public Safety buildings at 1000 Beaver Grade Road.
– Cindy Freed, Pittsburg, PA



Memorial Stone dedicated by Cindy Freed in 2012 in memory of Robert L. Freed. Robert L. Freed was also a Chartiers Township (PA) volunteer fireman, and a very close friend of Bubba Braud.



Memorial Stone dedicated in memory of those who served in the 781st Bomb Squadron

"I look to the future because that's where I'm going to spend the rest of my life." – George Burns

FOLDED WINGS



CHARLES V. FERICH

90, of Lancaster, passed away on June 1, 2013, at Hospice & Community Care, Mt. Joy.

Charlie was born in Lancaster to the late John and Harriet (Rutter) Ferich. Charlie was preceded in death by his wife June (Barley) Ferich. They were married in Lancaster on November 9, 1946. He was also preceded in death by his 9 siblings.

Charlie was a member of Grace Lutheran Church. He retired from Armstrong after 42 years of service. After his retirement, he spent 16 years working for Saturn, a Sutliff Company, as a courtesy driver.

A machine gunner aboard B-24 bombers during World War II, he was shot down, captured, and rescued. He received his Prisoner of War Medal in Nov. 2012, 67 years after his capture.

Charlie was an active member of the Lancaster Vet 21 Salute Honor Guard, whose mission is summed up as 'Duty- Honor-Country'. The Honor Guard provides a three volley salute at Veterans' funerals. He was the only World War II Veteran on the team, and he rarely missed a funeral. He was also a member of VFW Post # 1690.

As a supporter of the Collings Foundation, a non-profit educational foundation devoted to supporting living history events, Charlie was instrumental in bringing restored WWII aircraft to local airports for air shows.

Charlie enjoyed trips to Hawaii with his wife, and attending World War II Veterans' conventions. He also enjoyed watching Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy, and was an avid reader. Charlie was a great storyteller; those who met him enjoyed hearing his memories from WWII.

Charlie is survived by his daughter, Cindy, wife of Richard Weaver of Duncannon, granddaughter Kristen Mam of Harrisburg, her husband Sovanna and their son Elijah. He is also survived by grandson Geoffrey Weaver of Newport and his children Kenneth and Olivia. He is also survived by an extended family which includes the members of the Lancaster Vet 21 Salute Honor Guard and their families, the Prelec family, his special friends at the Lancaster Eden Resort and his buddy from his WWII Army Air Corp squad, Bill Josworth.

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.



781st "PANTANELLA NEWS"

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



PANTANELLA NEWS

