



FLIGHT LINE



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron

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Secretary: Eleanor Ball, 1333 E. 84 Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64131 • 816-444-4684 • ballinsky@aol.com

Oct. 2006

USAF Besatzungsmittglieder
USAF Crew Members

Liberator 42-78322 "Harmos"	Capt. Jack M. FAVER 2 nd Lt. James W. THORNTON 2 nd Lt. Richard E. THOMAS 2 nd Lt. Leonard S. COX T/Sgt. Ralph P. SEHNERT T/Sgt. Edwin E. NOLEN S/Sgt. Frank PERRONE S/Sgt. James R. ADAMS S/Sgt. William W. BRODERICK S/Sgt. Harry P. EGERTON
Liberator FO 42-52496 "Brandikar"	S/Sgt. Lawrence J. HAMILTON S/Sgt. Charles F. SELLARS
Liberator 44-41011 "Wannepeter Schrofes"	S/Sgt. John KOSTICK S/Sgt. Willis L. PRINCE S/Sgt. John W. LEMELEY S/Sgt. William R. CAMPBELL S/Sgt. Ernest R. ZAMORA
Liberator 42-78308 "Biberwier"	2 nd Lt. Garber DE WITT S/Sgt. Hoyt O. GEOGHAGEN S/Sgt. Victor E. BULLOCK S/Sgt. Albert A. PEARSON
Liberator 44-41017 "Hohe Munde"	2 nd Lt. Theodore G. POOLE T/Sgt. Albert S. HILL
Liberator 42-95284 "Beim Wasser"	1st Lt. Howard F. FIECOAT 2 nd Lt. Robert C. JOHNSON 2 nd Lt. Seth C. BABCOCK Jr. 2 nd Lt. Latham DENNING T/Sgt. Ralph W. HERRINGTON T/Sgt. Carl L. TRIPP S/Sgt. Andrew S. KRESNAK

The cover of the Flightline was given to me by Joe Spontak, and is an amazing bit of history! Joe and Bret and Bart Branch went to Erwald towell, let Joe tell the story: On the 3rd of Aug, 2001 the people of Erwal, in western Austria, dedicated a monument to the 30 American and 5 German fliers that were killed in the Great Air Battle over the Erwald Region on 3 Aug. 1944 This dedication is a great historical event to honor those killed in action 57 years ago. Several local bands paraded in their custom outfits. TV crews captured the event and speeches were given by 2 German fliers, and also by me.

The 465th Bomb Group lost 8 B 24s that day, 2 from the 780th and 4 from the 782nd, with a terrible loss of 24 crew members. Will send you an English translation of the booklet written in German that was printed for the ceremony.

A note from Kathy and family:

Most of you know (but some of you probably don't) that Kathy, the girls, and I are moving to Washington, DC for three months so I can research at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. It's nice that the girls are young enough that we don't have to take them out of school, but it's unfortunate that they are young enough that they probably won't remember anything. Kathy is taking a three-month leave of absence from the radio station, so she'll be a full-time stay-at-home mom.

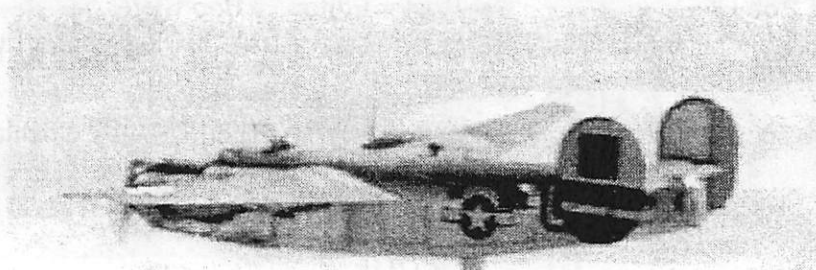
We have an 1,100 square foot apartment in downtown Silver Spring, a Washington suburb. The apartment building is right next to the metro station, so we'll be able to go downtown Washington easily with the girls to go sight seeing. They will certainly see all of the Lincoln sites!

Our email is staying the same, so we'll still be able to communicate that way. If anyone is interested in our physical address and phone number, it is 1215 East West Highway, Apt. 1109, Silver Spring, MD 20910-6279; phone is 301 585-1326. My cell phone is 217-638-6512 and Kathy's is 217-414-1400. We are Verizon wireless customers, so if anyone else has Verizon, you can call us and vice versa for free.

We are leaving this Saturday, and should arrive in Silver Spring on Tuesday the 29th. We should get back to Springfield the first week of December.

John

John A. Lupton
Kathy Le Comte Lupton
johnkath@springnet1.com



780 Bomb Squadron Association
MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING
Portsmouth, NH – September 25-29, 2006

The annual meeting of the 780th Bomb Squadron Association was held on Friday, September 29, 2006, At the Best Western, Portsmouth, NH. The business meeting was called to order by the President, Bob Bleier, who extended welcoming greetings to all attending. On behalf of the Squadron, Bob thanked Helen and Bart Branch for all their hard work in putting together a great reunion.

The opening prayer was given by Chaplain Frank Love. Vice President, Bart Branch lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer Report was distributed and reviewed by Ashby Nelson.

Balance on hand 10-29-05	\$4650.99
Income from dues & interest	<u>1415.70</u>
Total.....	\$6066.69
Flightline & supplies exp.....	-1300.92
Advance for 2006 Reunion.....	<u>-1700.00</u>
Balance on hand 9-18.06.....	\$3065.92

With the increase in expenses for the Flightline, postage and supplies, a motion was made and carried to increase the due to \$25.00, effective immediately.

Reunion Report: Members attending every meeting since 1963 were Wes Schultz and Philena Steele.

Twenty two Squadron members were in attendance with 7 family friends' and guests. Baldwin's Crew had the most members in attendance. One member of the 781st and 5 members of the 782nd with guests, or a grand total of 77 attending.

Old Business:

- > George Kuchenbecker reported on the 15th AF Memorial in San Diego. The B24 is on a pedestal with the nose pointed up, and in the direction on the runway when it flew for the first time. The museum contains more memorabilia on B24 than any other location. George invited anyone in the area to stop by and visit.

NEW BUSINESS:

- > The floor was opened for the 2007 Reunion. James Halter reported they were getting ready. Roberta reported on some of attractions that would be available. They are currently working on hotel and date and report in the Flightline by the first of the year.
- > Dean Ottaway from the 782nd announced that they were meeting next week in Shreveport, LA. The 781st and 782nd requested that the Squadrons consider meeting together since the numbers are declining, plus the fact we have not meet as a Group for sometime. Bob Bleier will report more information in the Flightline.
- > Pat Logan reported on the reactivation of the 780th as an Aircraft Fire Power Test Squadron. They have a new patch and he will work on having it available at the reunion in Indianapolis in 2007.
- > The following 2006 officers were elected:

President.....	Bob Bleier	Treasurer.....	Ashby Nelson
Vice President.....	Bart Branch	Secretary.....	Eleanor Ball
Flightline Editor....	Bob Bleier	Roster Editor.....	Bob Bleier
- > Frank Love announced that his book "This is My Life!" is available in the Hospitality Room for \$10.00, or contact him as listed in the Squadron Roster.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned with a benediction by Chaplain Frank Love.

Respectfully submitted,
Eleanor L. Ball, Secretary

Recap of the 780th Reunion in Portsmouth, NH

Ocean breezes, cool temperatures, fall foliage... this was the backdrop to the 780th reunion in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in September. The Branch family (Bart, Helen and son Brad) hosted and went above and beyond to welcome and entertain us.

Several members of the 782nd and 783rd squadrons joined us in Portsmouth. Just like us, their reunions are getting smaller. We enjoyed their company and we hope they enjoyed ours.

The festivities started Tuesday evening with a drive along the New Hampshire coast to the Branch's Rye Beach beach house, where they served hors d'oeuvres and drinks as we took in priceless views of the beach and ocean. Speaking of price, along the way we got a glimpse of some multi-million dollar beach mansions and horses. Yes, the horses we saw are worth millions as their farm has produced Kentucky Derby and Triple Crown winners. From the Branch residence we drove to a seaside restaurant for a relaxing dinner complete with live music. We all took note that the next time we eat strawberries we'll have brown sugar and sweetened cream on the side.

Wednesday we went to Pease International Tradeport, a former Air Force base, to see the B-24 "Witchcraft", as well as the B-25 and B-17 operated by the Collings Foundation. What a trip down memory lane to not only see but climb through the Liberator... The squadron men had their picture taken in front of the B-24, and a crew from the local ABC affiliate came out to do a story on the squadron and the aircraft which was aired that evening. The affiliate also is working on a 30-minute news magazine about the squadron that will be aired later this month. We then toured the Red Hook brewery, including a tasting.

On Thursday we took a relaxing and informative cruise of Portsmouth harbor and the Isles of Shoals in the Gulf of Maine. The nine small islands have been inhabited since the 1600s and have quite a history that includes pirates, the American Revolution, 1840 resorts, WWII U-boats, and scientific and environmental studies today. On the harbor portion of the tour we saw the Portsmouth naval yard (founded in 1800), the remains of several fortifications, and downtown Portsmouth. Lunch at the famous Warren's seafood restaurant in Kittery, Maine completed the day we spent on the water.

Friday morning was the business meeting at which, among other topics, we discussed our 2008 reunion and whether there was interest in meeting with the other squadrons. We'd like to hear everyone's thoughts on that subject.

The highlight to the day – and the entire reunion – was watching Brad Branch's documentary and homage to the 780th. The screening room was packed. It was four years in the making – and worth the wait! Titled "On the Wing," the documentary features interviews from the 780th and other squadrons, war footage, scenes of Pantanella then and now, and much more. A part of the documentary also focuses on the air battle over Ehrwald, Austria on August 3, 1944. Every member should consider getting a copy for themselves, their children or grandchildren. Brad is shopping "On the Wing" around to the History Channel and other outlets.

Finally, a trip to New England wouldn't be complete without "lobstah," so it's no surprise that lobster was the main course at the banquet. Imagine a room full of people in their Sunday Best and plastic bibs! We also had steamed clams, and chicken for the less adventurous. Before dinner we were entertained by Brad, a professional performer, and his aunt, with tunes from Oklahoma! and other musicals.

Once again, it was another successful, entertaining, and eventful reunion. Who would expect otherwise? Remember to get your copy (or a couple) of "On the Wing" from Brad Branch. I'm sure there will be more information about it in this and following newsletters. We look forward to seeing you next year, in Indianapolis!

Kathy Le Comte
Unofficial reunion reporter and
Granddaughter of George J. Le Comte
(tailgunner on Vern Larson crew)
KIA 11 Dec 1944 over Vienna, Austria

> -> Subject: World War II Facts.....

> > Good stuff.....

> You'll love this from Col. D.G. Swinford, USMC, Ret. and history buff. You would really have to dig to get this kind of ringside seat to history:

> 1. The first German serviceman killed in WW2 was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937), the first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940), the highest ranking American killed was Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps. . . . So much for allies.

> 2. The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. (His benefits were later restored by act of Congress).

> 3. At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was Called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was named "Amerika." All three were soon changed fo PR purposes.

> 4. More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions your chance of being killed was 71%.

> 5. Generally speaking there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance Japanese ace Hirooyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

> 6. It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a mistake. Tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt & gt; to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

> YOU'VE GOT TO LOVE THIS ONE....

> 7. When allied armies reached the Rhine the first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act). found the photo (hand tinted black and white)

> 8. German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City but it wasn't worth the effort.

> 9. German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

> 10. Among the first "Germans" captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they

> were captured by the US Army. < BR>>

> AND I SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST....

> 11. Following a massive naval bombardment 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. 21 troops were killed in the firefight. It would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island.

POST EXCHANGE

780th Tee shirts. Large. \$7.00 (a bargain!)

Contact Helen Branch; 603 623 1107. E mail; hbranch17@verizon.net

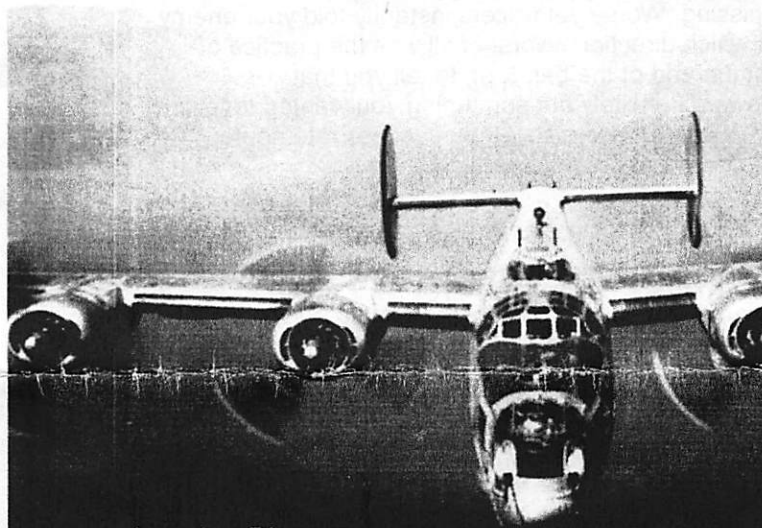
This is my Life, Grin and Bear it. \$10.00

A well done book by Frank D Love

Contact Frank Love; 207 437 2316

On The Wing; A 90 minute Documentary of the 780th Squadron in WW II
by Brad Branch. \$25.00. Contact Brad; 603 749 7810;
bradshawbranch@aol.com.

This is just wonderful; DVD format; and you'll be delighted with it. I've
bought 2 of them, one to show my kids here and the other to mail to those
not to close. Everybody loved it, and it'll give you a lump in the tummy, I
betcha!



Longshot Films
Presents

On The Wing

A story of courage, survival and the B-24

For more Information, contact: Brad@longshotfilms.net

Longshot Films presents **On The Wing** Executive Producer **Brad Branch** Co-Executive Producer **Francis "Genc" Gencarelli**
Written/Produced/Directed by **Bill Humphreys & Brad Branch**
Music Composed by **Mark Petrie** Associate Producer/Archivist **Tyler Heon** Historical Research **Keith Bullock** | **Gerd Leitner** Principal
Photography **Bill Humphreys** Principal Sound **Trevor Humphreys**
Archival Photos **Frank Ambrose** | **R.J. Gottschalk** |
Harry Karl | **Robert Wingfield** Special Thanks **Collings Foundation, Stowe, MA** Post Production By **BBTFilms, Eliot, ME**
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