



Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

December 2010

780th Test Sq. Attends Last 780th Bomb Sq. Reunion

780th Passes the Torch



Veterans of the 780th Bomb Squadron Association attending the squadron association's last reunion were, seated from left: Jim Long, Ashby Nelson, George Kuchenbecker and Joe Kling. Standing, from left, were Jack Ball, Ed Gluklick, Ed Rostedt, Bill Edwards, and Louis Lindeman. In uniform are officers from the 780th Test Squadron. Inside, read remarks from the 780th TS Operations Officer about accepting the 780th's legacy.

It had to happen some time.

After 39 reunions, time and aches and pains have caught up with the 780th Bomb Squadron Association. The last formal reunion was held in September in Biloxi, Mississippi, and the organization has been officially dissolved.

But this isn't the end to everything! The *Flight-*

line will continue, and a 780th get-together is planned for September 2011 in Abilene, Texas.

Here's how it will work. The *Flightline* will continue as long as there are funds, interested readers, and most importantly, material submitted

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TAPS

Frank D. Love, 93, of Albion, Maine, passed away October 6, 2010. He was born May 19, 1917, in New York. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in Rochester, New York, on December 12, 1942. After receiving basic training in Atlantic City, New Jersey, he was sent to Colby College in Waterville as an air cadet. While there he met his future wife, Bertha McCaslin. They were married on April 1, 1944. He received more training in Illinois, Texas, and California, where he met his fellow B-24 Liberator crew members. He completed his training as a radio operator and nose gunner. Following training at March Field in Riverside California, they flew overseas to Pantanella airfield in central Italy. Frank flew 55 missions over Nazi-held Germany and bordering countries. He was shot down three times, evaded capture, and was missing in action in Poland for 30 days. He completed his missions in April 1945 and came home on a Liberty ship, arriving in New York City on his birthday. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. He is survived by five sons, Darwin (Loretta) Love, Roger (Deborah) Love, Kevin (Pam) Love, Duane (friend, Karen) Love, and Brian (Sue) Love; three daughters, Thelma (Robert) Smith, Shirley (Jim) Raddatz, and Robin (Wayne) Ouellette; 15 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren and counting; and one great-great-grandson. He was preceded by his wife, Bertha, of 60 years.



Frank, kneeling second from left, is pictured with his crew, from top, left to right: Gilbert Carter, Eugene Zorek, Vern Larson, Joe Norman. Bottom row: Richard Block, Frank Love, Theodore Deitsch, Thurman Atkinson, Robert Crist and Mike Urda.

Your Letters

In the August 2010 Flightline John T. McWhorter, on his 13th combat flight over Blechhammer, which by the way was Friday, October 13th, and also my 13th and last combat flight. I was navigator, then age 19, on another plane on that mission. I was seriously injured by flak, but my pilot and crew got me back to Bari to the hospital.

My stay with the 780th was short. My first combat mission was on September 6 and the last on October 13, 1944. The highlight of that experience was getting to navigate a B-24 from Topeka, Kansas, to Italy via New Hampshire, Newfoundland, Azores, and North Africa.

Over the years I have not attended reunions but do greatly appreciate receiving the newsletter.

Lloyd Jensen
Mesa, Arizona

Did You Know Rolland Cohen?

I'm looking for any information about my father-in-law, Rolland Cohen. I believe he was a tail gunner. Since he passed away before I had the opportunity to talk with him about his adventures I have very little to go on. Any and all information would be appreciated. I also would appreciate a 780th cap if anyone has one to part with, and information on acquiring the patches, both original and new, if possible.

**Tom Fanslow
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Address to the 780th Bomb Squadron Veterans

16 Sep 2010, Biloxi, Mississippi

Major James W. Stahl, Operations Officer, 780th Test Squadron



Good evening, it is a great privilege and honor to be in the presence of so many great men; true American heroes and patriots. Thank you for allowing me to come and speak before you today.

Before I introduce myself allow me to tell a short story about James “Jimmy” Caldwell. Jimmy was born in 1918 in a rural West Texas town. He grew up there and worked and maintained oil rigs. Jimmy was known for his love of God, his keen mechanical talent, and his work ethic. He married young. He knew little of war or politics and his focus was always on his family. Then came the call. Snagged by the Army Air Corps and recognized for his mechanical savvy, Sgt. Jimmy Caldwell became an airplane mechanic. He left for the war in November 1943 and spent nearly two years of his life in England fighting for our country and keeping combat aircraft in the air and in the fight. The living conditions, long hours, and enemy bombardments were always a challenge. But he, along with so many of our American troops, persevered despite those many hardships.

At the end of his tour Jimmy was scheduled to return home. He boarded the aircraft with his bags but was abruptly pulled off to help out with an urgent operational need. The aircraft took off and headed for home without him. Neither his bags nor the aircraft would ever reach ground again. While we consider him lucky, many of his closest friends were lost in that crash. He eventually made it home safely, arriving back in the states several months after the war concluded in November 1945. He quietly lived out the rest of his days as a west Texas oil man and family man, speaking very little of his life or the war.

Humble, simple, yet so exceedingly critical to winning the Great War. Jimmy was a great man, a true American Hero, one of the Greatest Generation. I never knew the unit he flew for or many of the details of that time. I only knew him for the

warm loving man that he was.

I am his grandson. My name is Maj. James Stahl. I’m currently the Operations Officer for the 780th Test Squadron. I, along with three of my lieutenants, have come today to learn about our heritage, to share a few moments with our predecessors, and absorb as much as we can so that we may pass on your story to future generations. Personally, I am trying to make amends for having done such a poor job of learning about my grandfather’s past, and I hope that tonight I can learn about you great men and share your story.

At first glance, it seems that all we have in common is three simple numbers: 7-8-0. The 780th Bomb Squadron, now the 780th Test Squadron. However, there is more to it than that. We are also of the same fraternity and tradition of the profession of arms, and while I am not from a bomber squadron, our squadron develops and tests the very munitions that are used in Afghanistan and Iraq today.

What else do we have in common? I too have flown combat missions for my country, with nearly 100 hours of combat time over two flying deployments in Afghanistan. I too have lived in tents and bonded as a family with my fellow crew members. We were from all walks of life and backgrounds ranging from the airman basic of 18 years to the crusty SMSgt of 44 years. Yet we lived, exercised, ate, and flew together; sometimes flying our special operations mission every day of the week.

While I have those similarities with you great men there are many, many differences that set your accomplishments and sacrifices well above those of my generation. You are known as the Greatest Generation for good reason. Let me share a little of what I do know by contrasting some of the differences in our eras.

For the past two decades we have enjoyed Air Supremacy. We have flown our missions in unchallenged and safe skies free from encounters with enemy aircraft. With the exception of the oc-

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780th Bomb Squadron Association

Minutes of Annual Meeting

Biloxi, MS - September 16, 2010

The annual meeting of the 780th Bomb Squadron Association was held on Thursday, September 16, 2010, at the Isle of Capri Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. The business meeting was called to order by the acting President, Ashby Nelson. Ashby welcomed everyone.

Tanya Steele Beitz thanked Jim Rogers and family for hosting this reunion. Over the years the Steele and Rogers families had become very close, visiting and traveling together, along with attending reunions. She emphasized the creativity of Matthew Rogers and enjoyment of spending time with Eve and the family. In Oklahoma City, Eve Rogers stepped forward to host the 2010 Reunion in Biloxi. Upon her death, Jim came forward and hosted the reunion his mother wanted. This has been a great reunion, with wonderful accommodations and time to visit with everyone. Tanya presented Jim with a gift from all members of the Association.

Vera Bagley gave the opening prayer. Jack Ball led the Pledge of Allegiance. Eleanor Ball reported there were 38 in attendance with 9 original Squadron members. First time visitors were Dale North, Rickey and Patsy Robertson, Cathy Edwards, and Chuck Sullivan. The family groups were identified and welcomed. Philena Steele was recognized as having attended all 39 Reunions held since 1963. Then the original 9 Squadron members in attendance were asked to stand and were given a round of applause. They were:

Jack Ball	Bill Edwards
Ed Gluklick	Joseph Kling
George Kuchenbecker	Louis Lindeman
James Long	Ashby Nelson
Ed Rostedt	

The Financial Statement was distributed and reviewed by Ashby Nelson:

Balance as of Sept. 1, 2009	\$2,343.15
Income	
Dues and Donations	\$3,598.83
Interest on Checking	\$6.93
Total Income	\$3,605.76
Disbursements	
<i>Flightline</i>	\$1,556.39
Stamps	\$44.00
Liability Insurance	\$275.00
Filing Fee	\$10.00
Total Disbursements	\$1,885.39
Balance as of September 2010	\$4,063.52

Ashby opened the meeting for a discussion as to the future of the Association. He stated that Bob Bleier, elected president, was unable to attend due to knee problems and that he would no longer serve as President. Bob was thanked for his many years of service to the organization both as President and *Flightline* editor. Ashby then stated that he would no longer be able to serve as Treasurer. As a new slate of officers would be needed, volunteers were called to place their names in nomination. No volunteers were received and no nominations were made.

A long discussion took place as to the future of the Association. Options were raised, such as disbandment, future get-togethers, continuation of the *Flightline* as a means of group communication, and what to do with the banners and financial balance. The motion to disband was put to the original squadron members and it carried. The Constitution Article on Disbandment was read. The final financial figures will not be complete until the end of this reunion and after all bills are paid. It was voted to provide the *Flightline*

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casional surface to air missile we operate in a permissive environment. You men did not. Daily risking your life and losing many friends along the way, you were the definition of bravery and courage, a feat that has seldom been required or duplicated since. Thank you for your courage.

In our forward deployed locations, our aircrew live in climate controlled tents with mattresses and chow halls that rival commercial cafeterias. You men did not. You faced poor living conditions and hardships on a daily basis and inconsistent logistic trains that often left you wanting. Thank you for enduring those hardships.

We flew 60-day rotations, regardless of the amount of missions. You men did not. You routinely flew 50 missions and sometimes spent years away from family and loved ones. Thank you for your sacrifices.

We flew with well-trained crews that had flown practice missions with a codified set of tactics over and over again before deployments. We had special school houses set up for training programs sometimes as long as one year. You men did not. You were called up from all walks of life and thrust into the middle of a war. We now rely on sophisticated intel and state of the art technology. You relied on your ingenuity, grit, and can-do attitude. Your fraternal bond allowed you to continue the mission, to continue the fight. Thank you for your resolve.

In all my deployments and combat sorties there have been zero fatalities amongst members of my units. You men sacrificed so much more, and many paid the ultimate price with their lives. Thank you for your patriotism and bravery. Thank you for that ultimate sacrifice.

7-8-0, 780, the same number for both of us but very different missions, very different environments. However, we are still united in our service to our country and our unwavering dedication to protect the umbrella of freedom we all live under. As a tribute to you, the 780th Test Squadron wears your patch, that of the 780th Bomber Squadron, every Friday. We honor you and your greatness. We asked the heraldry society if we could make it our permanent patch to carry on your tradition and heritage. The request was denied since the missions were so different. But make no mistake you are remembered.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. For the trail you have blazed, for the example you have set for future generations, for the sacrifices you have made, for keeping America great and free in the face of a terrible enemy. Your accomplishments are not forgotten. Thank you.

I now close thinking once again of my grandfather. He would never admit to being a hero but he was. I'm sure many of you would balk at being called heroes but you are. You are our heroes. You are the Greatest Generation.

...Minutes, from page 4

with enough funds to continue publication for the next several years as part of the Association final debts and liabilities. The balance would be given to non-profit organizations. The Collings Foundation, which maintains the only flying B-24, and Disabled Veterans of America, were selected to receive the remaining balance. Final financial figures will be reported in the *Flightline*.

Five officers of the new 780th Test Squadron, based at Eglin Air Force Base near Pensacola, Florida, would attend the evening banquet and are part of the program. It was voted to offer one of the 780th banners to them for display at their headquarters. Peter Gluklick will check with the museum at Willow Run in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where some of the B-24's were manufactured, to see if they would accept and display it. Otherwise, it will be displayed at Ardnel Steele's VFW Post in Effingham, Illinois.

Tanya reported that she has been in contact with Kim McLaughlin who has volunteered to host a reunion in 2011. Kim will now host a "780th Get-Together" in Abilene, Texas, in 2011. Additional information will be reported in the *Flightline*.

Ashby closed the meeting with a fond farewell and urged members to keep in touch through the *Flightline*, e-mail and 780th Get-Togethers.

Eleanor Ball, Secretary

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Flightline

...Torch, from front page

by you! The *Flightline* account has approximately \$1,700. The newsletter will continue on a quarterly basis until the funds run out. It will be printed in black and white to save money.

Also, there no longer are any dues. All you need to do is contact the *Flightline* (address above) for any address or email updates. You also can email the *Flightline* at johnkath5@comcast.net.

More information is inside. Remember to stay in touch, and to send or email your stories and photos. I look forward to continuing the *Flightline* and hearing from all of you.

Kathy Le Comte
Flightline editor, and
granddaughter of
S/Sgt. George J. Le Comte
Vern Larson crew
KIA 11 Dec 1944
over Vienna, Austria

*It wouldn't be the holidays without
Bill Edwards' rendition of Santa Claus
(that's his sleigh flying in the background).*



*Happy Holidays!
See you in March!*