



Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

December 2012

Fits Right In (of Course!)

Ball Attends 781st Reunion in Branson



Last year the 781st Bombardment Squadron Association extended an invitation to the 780th to join them at their 2012 reunion in Branson, MO. Jack and Eleanor Ball accepted. Jack is pictured far left, looking sharp as always in his uniform. In the front row from left are 781st veterans Charles Braud, George Hausold and Ray Cauble. In the back is Jack, Louis Deslatte, Earl Leinart, Kenneth Rehn, and 780st Association President Orren Lee. Here is Eleanor's report from the reunion:

When we read the invitation to the 781st Squadron Reunion in Branson in the Flightline, we hesitated, not knowing any of the members. Branson was close by and we looked forward to meeting the members so we registered. Upon arrival, they were most welcoming and in a short time we felt right at home and had a great time. Gatherings Plus planned the reunion and it was well organized, with lots of shows and activities, and bus travel was provided to everything. The best part was the hospitality room, with the videos, books, stories and great conversation. We shared On the Wing (editor's note: the video produced by Bart Branch's son, Brad) which they all really enjoyed. A memorial service was held for all departed members and a wonderful banquet with great entertainment was scheduled on our last night. Like the 780th reunions, the time went by to fast. We are so glad to have met the 781st members and encourage anyone near Charleston, SC, to attend their next reunion.

More photos from the 781st reunion are on the back. Please consider joining them in 2013.

Your News & Letters

Several readers responded to the back page photo (below) that appeared in the September 2012 issue of *Flightline*, asking if it was the briefing room. Here are the comments and additional information that we received:

Photo is indeed the "bomb run" room. I sat in it 13 times for our pre-flight info for the target of the day. Usually started at 4 a.m. I was navigator for my crew. These days officially "Lloyd E. Jensen, 1st Lt Retired USAF." Retirement was result of serious injury from flak on my 13th bomb run. As I recall it was counted as my 22nd mission since we got double count on most of them. Ripe old age of 19 thru all of this, with official retirement at 21 in February 1946 at the end of my terminal leave while a freshman engineering student at Iowa State College - now called Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Greatly appreciate your efforts with Flightline.

Lloyd Jensen

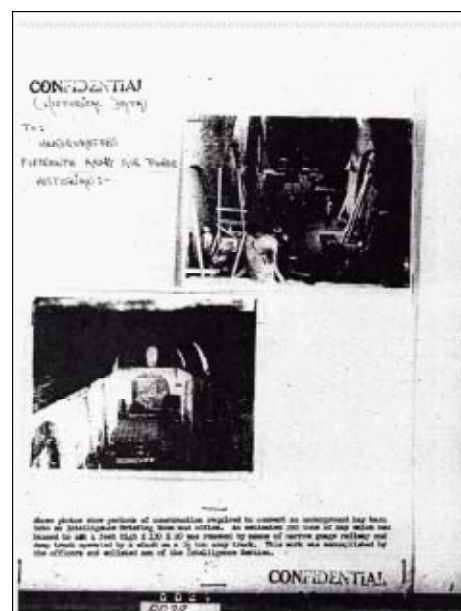
Kathy,

I would like to pass along some comments in response to your question in the September 2012 Flightline regarding the photo of a Briefing Room.

I was in the B/R for each of the 35 missions I flew between August '44 and March '45. That photo sure looks like a B/R but not as I recall the 780th B/R.

Our B/R was quite similar to the photo. It was in a wine cellar just like that shown in the photo, Access was via a concrete staircase (from ground level), that hugged the wall on the right. No stairway is shown in the photo, unless it is behind the camera.

The 780th B/R did not have 170 "chairs" so precisely aligned. I recall we had benches. Maybe life got more comfortable as VE-Day



A page from Jack Ball's microfilm records of the 780th BS.

approached.

Thanks for the excellent effort you are making to perpetuate the 780th Squadron.

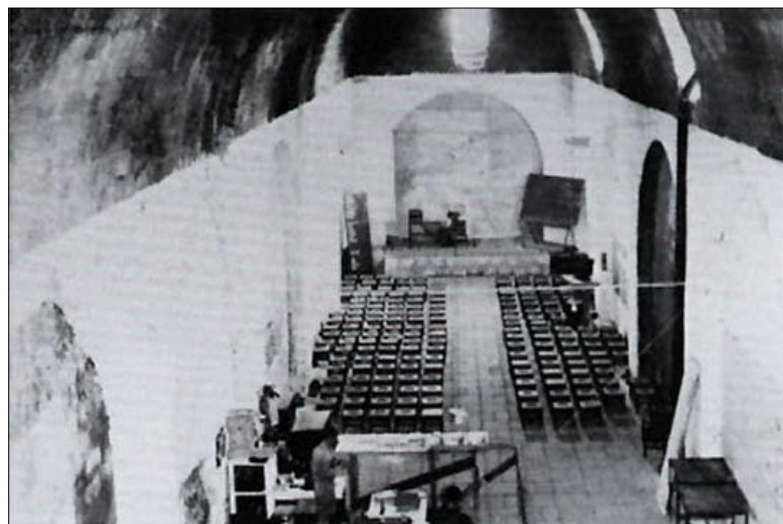
Regards,

Lt. Gene Caputo

1st Pilot

120 Pineview Drive

Elizabeth City, NC 27909



The Briefing Room, posted at <http://www.canosaweb.it>.

The last contribution came from Jack Ball, who has a precious set of microfilm containing formerly classified documents from the 780th. If I remember correctly, he obtained the microfilm from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, AL. AFHRA is the repository for the Air Force's historical documents. The image at

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780th BS/465th BG

Leaving Pantanella for the Last Time

by Cleon S. Moore

Editor's note: This concludes Cleon's series of articles about his war-time experiences. Please follow his excellent example and send your story to the Flightline.

After D-Day, I saw a sign saying that anyone who was a staff sergeant or above could be commissioned into the infantry as a second lieutenant. That was because so many second lieutenants were being killed in the ground war. When I saw that sign, I said to my friend, "Who would do that?" Every time we flew over the front lines and would see the men dug into fox holes in the snow, we would think, "We get to go home and sleep in our beds tonight."

The war in Europe ended 8 May 1945. On 12 May 1945 the surrender was signed. On 13 May, all of us at Pantanella took all of our clothes

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at the top of the previous page has two photos of the briefing room with a description underneath. The description says:

Above photos show periods of construction required to convert an underground hay barn into an Intelligence Briefing Room and office. An estimated 350 tons of hay which had burned to ash 4 feet high x 130 x 20 was removed by means of narrow gauge and dump truck operated by a winch on a 2 1/2 ton army truck. This work was accomplished by the officers and the enlisted men of the Intelligence Section.

(Editor's note: Not only am I impressed with the amount of hay ash that had to be removed, but that officers got involved in the dirty work! Thank you for the responses. If you or your children or grandchildren are interested in the history of the 780th Bombardment Squadron and its missions, visit the AFHRA website at; <http://www.afhra.af.mil/>)



(except for one pair of khakis and one pair of fatigues) and threw them in a pile along with all our other possessions. We could keep the German and Italian field pick-up weapons as souvenirs. I got six new khaki pants and shirts and six .45s and six .45 ammo boxes from the pile of stuff that the other men had dumped into the pile. I smuggled this stuff into a plane and hid it. Also in that cache was my collection of .50 caliber bullets, one for each mission I flew with the date of the mission written on it.

When we arrived in the states, we would be allowed to carry one small bag off the plane; everything else was thrown away and we got a new bag and new clothes. That last night in Pantanella, W. B. Newton (the waist gunner) and I went back to the plane to retrieve our contraband supplies, but we discovered that the plane had already departed for Arizona to be stored. I guess that stuff is still in the plane, wherever it is.

On 14 May, we left Pantanella, heading back to the states. We flew our own plane to Hunter Field in Savannah, Georgia. It took us twelve days to return home because the plane developed engine trouble in Rio de Janeiro. We got back around 26 May. Then we had a 30-day furlough to go home.

Kathy Le Comte
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Flightline

More Photos from 781st Reunion



Pictured above are nearly all of the 34 people who attended the 781st BS Association reunion in October in Branson, MO, including Jack and Eleanor Ball from the 780th. Eleanor is wearing the blue dress on the left. At right is a collage of reunion photos, the largest being Jack, along with a note from Eleanor. These photos appeared in the December issue of *Pantabella News* - the 781st newsletter. They were treated royally, don't you think? Thank you Carole Lee, 781st Treasurer / Executive Secretary, for the invitation. The 781st will meet in Charleston, SC, November 10-13, 2013. More information will appear in the *Flightline*.



More Coming, But More Needed!

Paul Jarvis, a friend of the 780th, has sent the *Flightline* several pages from a book containing 780th mission narratives, reports, drawings and maps. We will publish some of these pages in March. Thank you, Paul, for contributing. I'm running low on material so please dig through your files and send something from the war era, or even from past reunions!