



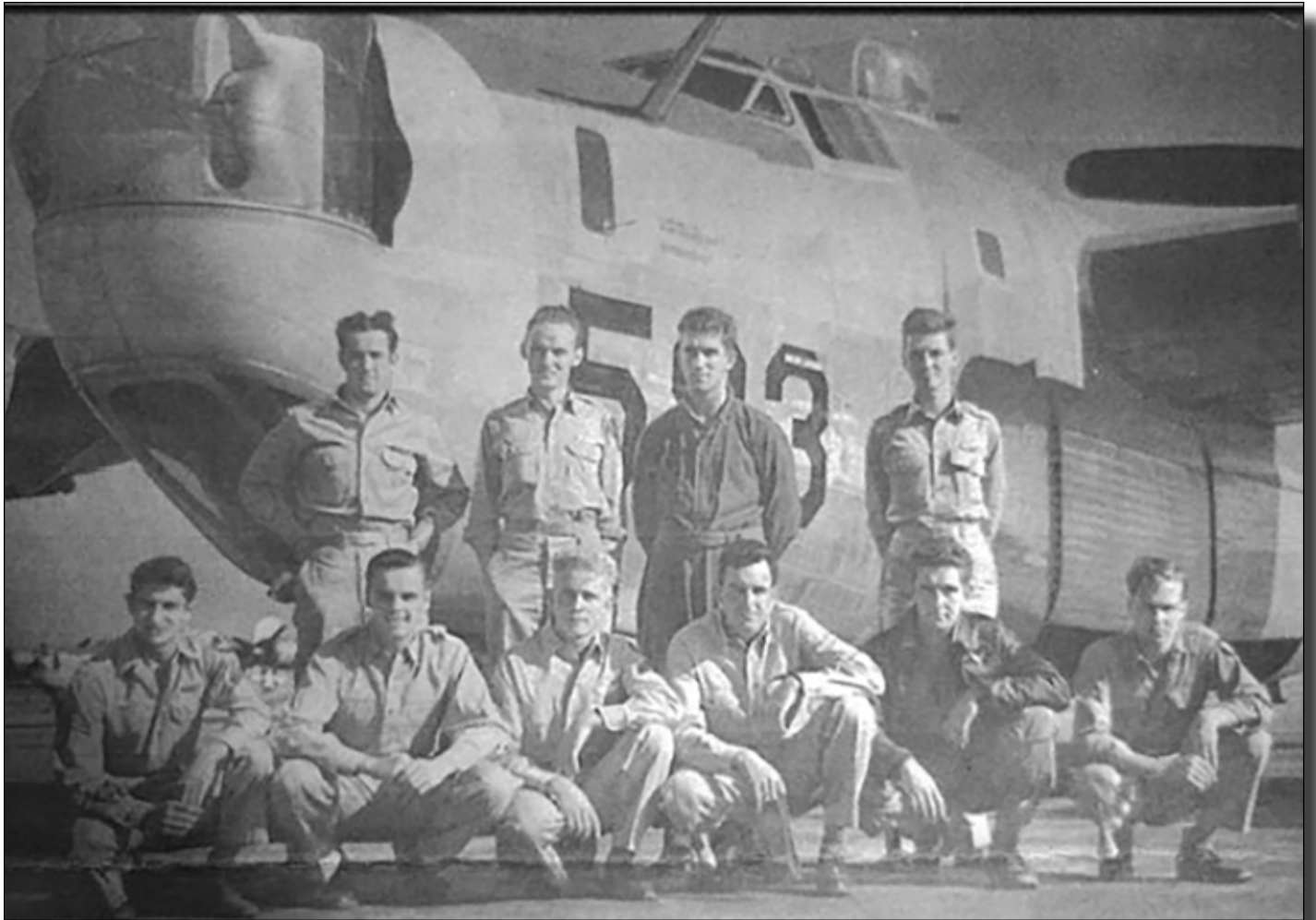
Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

December 2021

Was he a replacement from 8AF? **Baffling Clues to 780th Radio-Engineer-Gunner**



Standing, left to right: 2Lt John F. Joyce, pilot; 2Lt John A. Bowman, co-pilot; 2Lt Russell N. McQuade, bombardier; 2Lt Warren W. VanPelt, navigator. Kneeling, left to right: T/Sgt Anthony Albino, engineer; T/Sgt Joseph F. Brown, radio operator; S/Sgt Robert L. Gorham, gunner; T/Sgt James W. Maddux, gunner; S/Sgt Quentin Q. Andrews, nose gunner; S/Sgt Robert H. Richter, tail gunner.

Flightline hopes someone might recognize this crew, James W. Maddux or have general information about replacements that joined the 780th. Dick Smith contacted *Flightline* in November asking if there was any information about his uncle, James Maddux, kneeling third from right in the above photo. Dick has precious few clues about his uncle's military service. See article on pages 4-5 for details.



780th Bomb Squadron 465th Bomb Group 15th Air Force - North Africa & Italy 1944-1945 - Reunion 2002
Peoria, Illinois

Forget something? WWII bomb explodes in Munich

Did anyone in the 780th leave something behind in Munich in 1944?

According to German authorities a World War II bomb exploded at a construction site next to a busy railway line in Munich on December 1, injuring four people. Local reports described a loud bang followed by a column of smoke. An excavator was overturned by the force of the blast.

The explosion occurred during drilling work near Donnersbergerbrücke Bridge, close

to the main station. The construction site is located on the approach to Munich's central station, about a half-mile to the east.

Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann said the aerial bomb weighed 550 pounds. Emergency services rushed to the area and bomb disposal experts were quickly at the scene examining the remains of the bomb.

The 780th Squadron participated in ten missions to Munich between May and November 1944,

including one night mission and a mission to the West Marshalling Yard, which included seven 780th aircraft.

Unexploded war-time bombs are frequently found in Germany and prompt big evacuations, sometimes of entire towns, but most are defused by experts without exploding. Big construction projects in central Munich usually take considerable care in checking for war-time ordnance. An investigation is underway.

2001 Gainesville, Florida reunion (previous page, top)

Front row, from left: Wes Schultz' wife; unknown; Hilda Larson; Socorro Fleischer; Bob Bleier; Roberta Halter; John McParland's wife. **Second row:** unknown; Wes Schultz; Orlo Wilcox' wife; Bill Larson; John Fleischer; Jim Halter; John McParland. **Third row:** unknown; unknown. **Fourth row:** Jim Bagley; Vera Bagley; Orlo Wilcox; wife of Don Ruttenbur; Florence Kron; Everett Kron; wife of Ashby Nelson; Eleanor Ball; Jack Ball; Philena Steele; Arnel Steele. **Fifth row:** John Lupton; Kathy Le Comte; Bertha Rostedt; unknown; Don Ruttenbur; GLoria Kuchenbecker; Ashby Nelson; Pat Logan; Howard Precup; Howard Precup's daughter; Lee Englehorn. **Sixth row:** Tanya Beitz; Ron Beitz; unknown; Alice Lindeman; Helen Branch; two unknowns; T.P. Walton; Bill Edwards; George Kuchenbecker. **Back row:** Louis "Dyke" Lindeman; Bart Branch; Brad Branch.

2002 Peoria, Illinois reunion (previous page, bottom)

Front row, from left: Wes Schultz' wife; Wes Schultz; Bob Bleier; Joe Theena's wife; Ashby Nelson's wife; Hilda Larson; two unknowns. **Second row:** Orlo Wilcox' wife; Orlo Wilcox; Arnel Steele; Philena Steele; Eleanor Ball; Jack Ball; Bill Larson; John Fleischer; Socorro Flerischer; Howard Precup. **Third row:** George Kuchenbecker; Gloria Kuchenbecker; Everett Kron; Florence Kron; Tanya Beitz; Ron Beitz; John McParland; Skye Campbell; unknown; Bernie Jones. **Back row:** Bill Edwards; Alice Lindeman; Louis "Dyke" Lindeman; Kathy Le Comte; John Lupton; Joe Theena; Bertha Rostedt; Ed Rostedt; Helen Branch; unknown; Bart Branch; Brad Branch.

Thank you Alice Lindeman and Buzzy Koerperich for sending the photos.

More questions than answers about Maddux, crew

A bit of a mystery surrounds James Maddux' military service.

His nephew, Dick Smith of Texas, says his uncle was a radio operator-engineer-waist gunner and flew 24 missions from 1943 to 1945. Smith knows some of the targets but he has no dates.

Smith has Maddux' crew photo (front page) and learned that the crew was assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group in England but Maddux' discharge papers (below) indicate he left the service from the 780th Bomb Squadron. Was Maddux with both units? Did the entire crew serve with both or just Maddux? Where and when were the 24 targets, and which unit attacked

those targets? Mysteries abound and Maddux didn't provide many answers.

"My mom told me that when he came home from the war my uncle sat the family down at the kitchen table and said, 'I'll tell you one time and then never again,'" says Dick. "He rarely spoke of the war after that."

The mission list for 392nd Bomb Group is online. The Joyce crew participated in many missions but Maddux is never listed with the Joyce crew, or any crew, even though he is in the Joyce crew photo. His name does appear in an alphabetical list of 392nd airmen's names as an "assistant engineer."

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION									
HONORABLE DISCHARGE									
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL Maddux James W			2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 19 101 055		3. GRADE T Sgt	4. ARM OR SERVICE AC		5. COMPONENT AUS	
6. ORGANIZATION 780th Bomb Squadron			7. DATE OF SEPARATION 3 Sep 45		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION Sep Cen Ft MacArthur Calif				
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 2167 San Francisco Ave Long Beach Calif				10. DATE OF BIRTH 16 Oct 16		11. PLACE OF BIRTH Goliad Texas			
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT See 9				13. COLOR EYES Blue	14. COLOR HAIR Brown	15. HEIGHT 5' 11"	16. WEIGHT 172 LBS.	17. NO. DEPEND. 2	
18. RACE WHITE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEGRO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) <input type="checkbox"/>		19. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) <input type="checkbox"/>		20. U.S. CITIZEN YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. Chemist Organic 0-07.03			
MILITARY HISTORY									
22. DATE OF INDUCTION		23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 7 Aug 42		24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE 7 Aug 42		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE Los Angeles California			
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA	26. REGISTERED YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. 276		28. COUNTY AND STATE Los Angeles Calif		29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE 2325 Daisy Ave Long Beach Calif			
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. Radio Oper and Mech 757				31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) Marksman 45 Cal Pistol 15 Jul 43					
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS Northern France Air Combat Balkans GO 33 WD 45 Central Europe North Appenines Po Valley Rhineland GO 40 WD 45									
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal Air Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster GO 884 Hq 15 AF 23 Feb 45									
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION None									
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES					36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN				
SMALLPOX	TYPHOID	TETANUS	OTHER (specify) Typhus		DATE OF DEPARTURE		DESTINATION	DATE OF ARRIVAL	
Mar 45	Feb 44	Feb 44	Jan 45		10 Sep 44		European African Theater	17 Sep 44	
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE						38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD			
CONTINENTAL SERVICE			FOREIGN SERVICE						
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS				
2	3	21	0	9	6	T Sgt	8 Jun 45	United States	16 Jun 45

Above, T/Sgt. James W. Maddux's DD 53-55 or discharge record. At this time it's the only proof Dick Smith has that his uncle served with the 780th Bombardment Squadron (see field 6).

TAPS

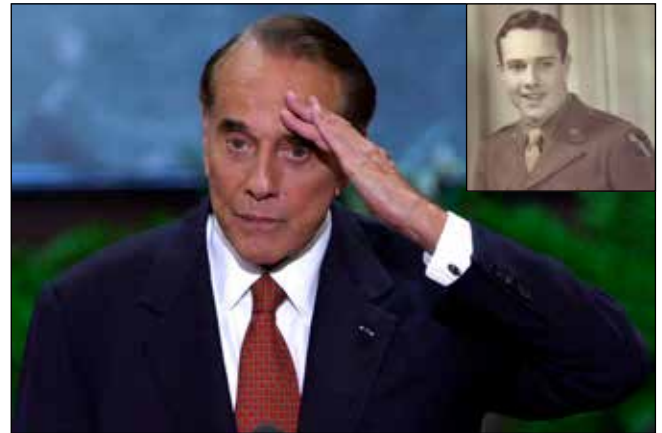


Gloria Kuchenbecker passed away in December 2018 in Seattle, Washington. Son, Dave, reports she passed just eight months after his father and squadron veteran, George Kuchenbecker. Their ashes were scattered over Puget Sound at a place that they could see from the house they had lived in for 48 years. Gloria is survived by sons Dave (Patti) and Mark; two grandsons; two granddaughters; and several great-grandchildren.

Turning to Maddux' discharge document, in field 36 it states he arrived in Europe in mid-September 1944 and returned to the states in June 1945 which is when the last of the 780th started heading home. In field 32 "Battles and Campaigns," Maddux was credited with participating in campaigns in Northern France (July-September 1944), Air Combat Balkans (dates unknown), Central Europe (March 1945), North Appenines (September 1944 to April 1945), Po Valley (April-May 1945) and Rhineland (September 1944 - March 1945). Maddux could have been with the 780th in April and May 1945.

Maddux passed away in 2010. After contacting *Flightline* Smith is continuing his research at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis and the Air Force Historical Rsearch

Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. If you have information about Maddux or the Joyce crew contact Dick at pilikoa@gmail.com or 808-482-0906.



Statesman Bob Dole dies at 98

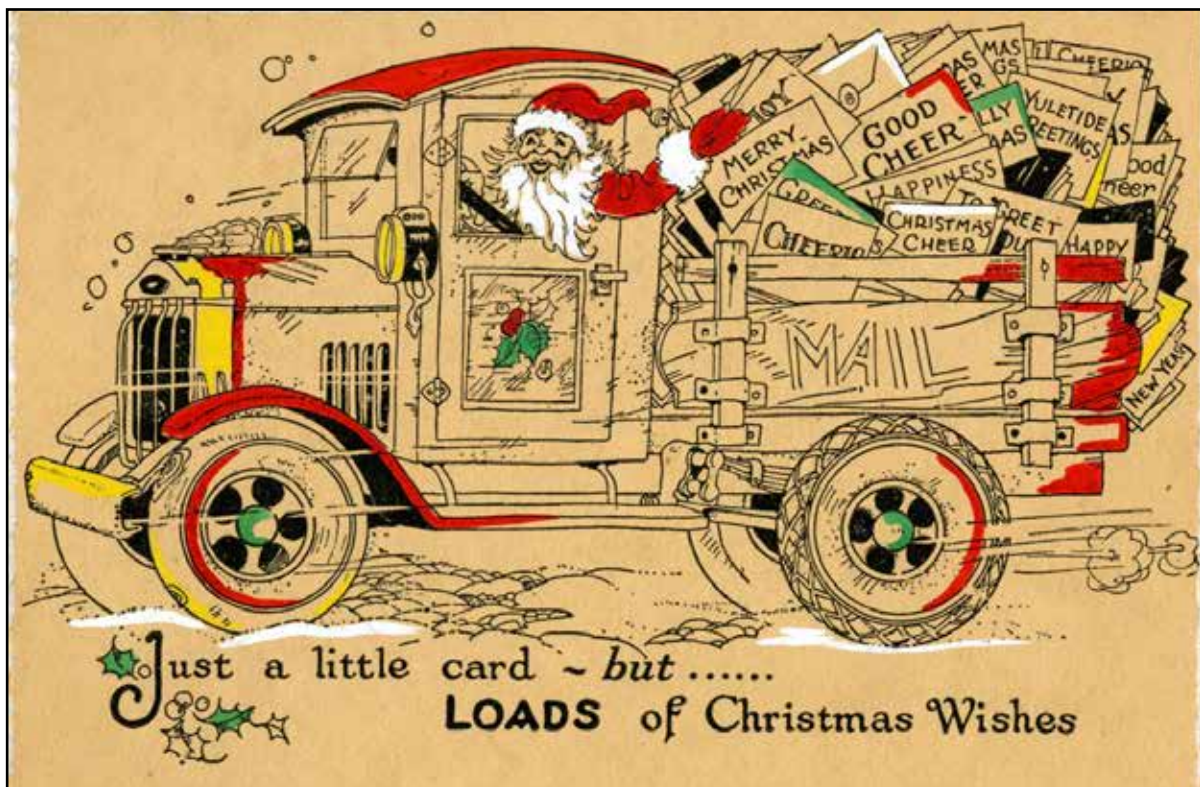
Just before going to press *Flightline* learned of the passing of former U.S. Senator and decorated World War II veteran Bob Dole on Dec. 5. He was 98. While we can't mention the passing of every World War II veteran of note we feel it is appropriate to mention Dole's for several reasons. First, he served in Italy, like the 780th. He was an officer with the 10th Mountain Division and was severely and permanently wounded. Second, during his long political career he championed veterans issues including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the creation of the National World War II Memorial. Put simply, Dole personified the Greatest Generation.

2021 reunion well attended after year delay due to Covid

Nearly 140 people attended the 2021 15th Air Force Bomb Groups Reunion in September in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The 465th Bomb Group was represented by 20 veterans, spouses and family members from the 781st, 782nd and 783rd squadrons, all of which still have active associations. Eleven 15th Air Force bomb groups in total met. The last reunion was in 2019 as the 2020 reunion was scrubbed due to the pandemic. The 2022 reunion already is being planned. It will be held Sept. 15-18, 2022, in Wichita, Kansas.

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Flightline



As we wrap up another year of masking and social distancing I am thankful that we are still connected through Flightline. Creating each issue reminds me of the fun and laughter at past reunions - where the hospitality room was still roaring past midnight. Those were great times. I hope Flightline reminds you that your 780th family is still here. Happy holidays and we will "see" you in 2022! - Kathy