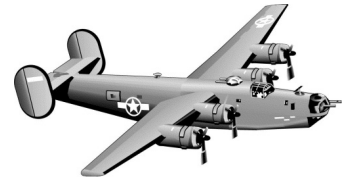




# Flightline



Newsletter of the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron of WWII

September and December 2022

***Ground, air echelons continue preparations for combat***

## Squadron builds, reunites at Pantanella

*This is part three of the official history of the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, drawn from unclassified military records obtained from the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, and online sources. - Editor*

In the June issue we left off with the ground echelon arriving at Pantanella for the first time, in March 1944. The following is a continuation from the unclassified squadron history found in records from the Air Force Historical Research Agency:

Pantanella lies in what can be best described as the Foggia-Bari section of southern Italy. Nearby towns are Canosa, about 12 miles distant; Carignola, about the same distance away; and Spinazzola, where our Wing Headquarters (55<sup>th</sup>) is located. Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters, of which we are now a part, is located at Bari, Italy, some 60 miles southeast. Our bases lies about 100 miles from the present theater of ground operations.

On arriving at our base it was found that the squadron (and entire group) would have to build literally and actually from the ground up. Ours being the first squadron on the scene, became pioneers in this building program and for many weeks the duties of our members became those of en-

gineers rather than Air Corps specialists. Tents quickly went up. Cots were built, laterines dug, mess equipment installed and, in a remarkably short space of time, our camp commenced to take definite shape.

Our location proved ideal. Situated high on a hill overlooking a beautiful valley, it was a simple matter for the men to adjust themselves quickly to their new living conditions as they found them.

The weather, at first, was cold and rainy. Very soon, however, sunny Italy really began to live up to its reputation, and the morale of all in the organization soared. Engineers began building our airfield in the valley below while squadron life began to take on its normal shape.

Under special orders dated 4 April 1944, Lt. H. Theobald was transferred to Group Headquarters and took over the position as Assistant Group Adjutant. Under the same orders, Lt.

Reo N. Carr was transferred from Group to our squadron as the Squadron Adjutant.

Our flying echelon, minus the few crews forced to cross the water by boat, left McCook, Nebraska on 2 February 1944, arriving at Lincoln, Nebraska that same day. Final processing took place at this base and on 7 February 1944 they departed



*Pantanella airfield*

*continued on page 4...*

# Your News & Letters

Good morning Kathy,

*It's been almost six years and it is still hard to tell you of our Pop's (Bill Lukens) passing. He had a fall on July 4, 2016, developed pneumonia in rehab, and passed away two weeks later. My brother lives in the family house so we still get the Flightline newsletter. I have saved them.*

*We miss him dearly.*

*Cora Lukens  
Youngest of four with Molly,  
Greg and Judith*

Editor's note: Even though our lives move on the memories of our parents and our "Wonder Years" remain vivid. I lost my father almost 18 years ago and I mention him to my daughters all the time. Keep your memories alive, Cora! It's wonderful your brother still has the family home.



*Hello,*

*Thanks for continuing to put out the 780<sup>th</sup> newsletter. What a delight to read. Wanted to send a few notes for the next go around.*

*If anyone is interested in selling or donating their 780<sup>th</sup> bomb squadron jacket, I*

*would be honored to care for it. Thank you for your consideration.*

*If anyone has any additional photographs or any correspondence on the Pantanella / air war life I would be honored to receive them.*

*How many original members or their spouses are still reading with us? It would be a pleasure to speak with them further.*

*Thank you,*

*Joshua Hummel  
summersun83@gmail.com  
(323) 652-2858  
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Editor's note: My apologies to Joshua. His email was sent in May and should have appeared in the June newsletter. His request still stands, though, so if you don't know what to do with some of your war memorabilia, Joshua is a worthy candidate to be its next caretaker. Joshua also asks a good question about our subscriber list. That information appears on page 5.



*Dear Kathy,*

*My father was Stanford Hooker, an ordnance sergeant in the 780<sup>th</sup> from Big-*

*ger, Arkansas. Dad passed away in 2015.*

*He talked openly about his time in the war, but never wanted any of his three sons to serve in the military. We never did, although I was signed up to become a naval aviator until I failed a Navy depth perception test while in college. I remember him telling me in detail about how he fused the bombs. Years later, I worked in sales and marketing for Schlage Lock Company. During war-time production Schlage made bomb fuses and I saw an example of these at one of our plants in Mexico. I knew immediately what it was from the stories dad shared with me.*

*This is one of the few war time pictures I have of my dad, we believe this is when he was stationed in Italy.*

*Jim Hooker  
Bullard, Texas  
jimhooker.denver@gmail.com*

Editor's note: Hello and welcome to the 780<sup>th</sup>, Jim! We are happy to have you join our family. Jim's photo of his dad, and another one I found in 780<sup>th</sup> Memoirs, appears on page 3.

I always enjoy hearing from readers. Please email or call me: johnkath5@comcast.net; (217)414-1400.

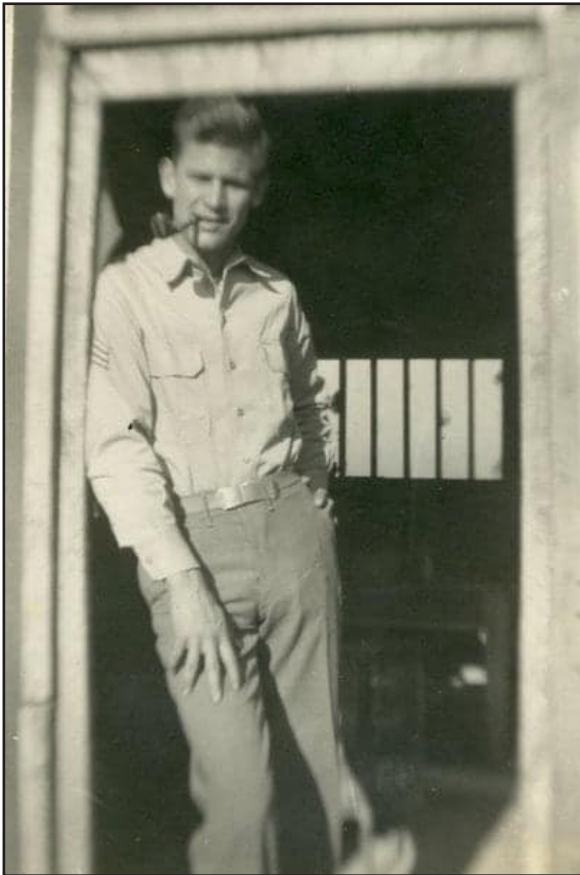
780<sup>th</sup> BS/465<sup>th</sup> BG



Far left: Stanford Hooker, location believed to be Pantanella.

Above: Ordnance Section (original members) Taken January 1944 at McCook. From left, back row: Lockhart, Irwin, Kramlich, Passic, Snow, Hooker, Borchart, Holman, Powers, Morris. Second row: Ostrowsky, Myrtle the mascot, Sullivan, Schepps, Pirano, Dzidul, Mayer, Stroup, Wafer, Perno, Granahan. Front row: Ruddy, Miles, Powell, Lewis C.E., Maturo, Petchnik, Noberine, Cataldi, McGettigan, LaBarbera.

Bottom: Loading bombs onto a B-24 (not a 780<sup>th</sup> photo)



# Let them eat Wacky (cake)!

If you're looking for a new dessert for the holidays, how about this old one?

Wacky Cake, also called crazy cake, Joe cake, wowie cake and World War II cake, is a spongy, cocoa-based cake. What makes it wacky, you ask? It doesn't have eggs, butter or milk.

Wacky Cake may have come about during the Depression when many ingredients were hard to come by, but it really became popular during the war years due to rationing.

Wacky Cake is prepared by mixing dry ingredients in a baking pan and forming three hollows in the mixture, into which oil, vinegar, and vanilla are poured. Warm water is then poured over, and the ingredients mixed and baked.

The cake can be topped with icing or confectioner's sugar, or served plain.

Makes 15 to 18 servings

- 3 cups flour
- 6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 cups warm water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees (325 degrees for glass pans). Grease a 13-by-9-inch pan.



In a large bowl, mix together dry ingredients. Make three wells in the mixture. To the first one add vanilla. To the second add the oil. In the third hole, add the vinegar. Pour warm water over all and mix well.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake in preheated oven 35 to 40 minutes or until cake tests done. Cool on a rack. Serve as is (it's moist) or frost or dust with powdered sugar.

My apologies for the lateness of this issue of *Flightline* and for completely missing the September issue. This is a combined issue. It's getting harder to find material to publish, and life has been busier lately, but I will try to maintain a quarterly schedule in 2023. As always, thanks for your continued interest in receiving *Flightline*.

...continued from front page

by air for Morrison Field, Florida. Departures were dated from 1 February 1944, and arrival overseas at Tunis, Tunisia (Oudna Field #1) dated from 19 February 1944. Intermediate stops were made at the following places:

- Borinquen Field (Puerto Rico)
- Waller Field (Trinidad)
- Belem, Brazil
- Fortaleza, Brazil
- Dakar (Senegal)
- Tindouf (Algeria)
- Marrakech (Morocco)

From the date of arrival of the final flight at Tunis until 18 April 1944, the air echelon continued its extensive combat training, consisting principally of high altitude formation flying, bombing and gunnery. On 19 April 1944 the flying echelon left Tunis to rejoin the ground echelon at its permanent Italian base at Pantanella. On 29 April 1944 Major Cook arrived at Pantanella Air Base and reassumed command. This completed, finally, the assembly of the squadron - flying and ground echelons - at our first overseas base.

*The series continues in the next issue of Flightline, with the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron becoming operational.*

# TAPS



Adolf U. Honkala of Richmond, Virginia, passed away September 20, 2018. He was 97. He was born April 18, 1921, in Salisbury, New Hampshire, where he graduated from college in 1942. He was a turret specialist with the 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron during the war. He married Eileen Thornton on January 12, 1945, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Ad and Eileen moved frequently. In 1956 they moved to the Republic of Turkey where they both were employed to construct a large dam. They finally settled in Richmond in 1959. Ad was a geologist, and founded the Virginia Association of Professional Geologists in 1960. Eileen passed away in 2012.



Stanford Hooker, 92, of Palm Harbor, Florida, passed away on June 6, 2015. He was born April 4, 1923 in Biggers, Arkansas to Walter and Tommie Hooker. Stanford dropped out of high school during the depression and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, traveling to Idaho where he participated in public works projects. He served as a sergeant in the Army Air Corps with the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron in Italy during World War II. He married Patricia Bush in 1955. Stan was retired from General Motors where he started as a welder, working his way up to foreman. He is survived by sons Philip (Kathy) of Tonopah, Arizona; Jim (Glenda) of Woodbury, Minnesota; and Scott (Joy), of Seminole, Florida. He also is survived by five grandchildren, five great-granddaughters, and one sister.

## 780<sup>th</sup> Membership as of December 2022

The only way to estimate how many 780<sup>th</sup> veterans remain is through the *Flightline* address list. Bob Bleier created the address list and it has been added to and subtracted from since 2009. Therefore, the numbers here are what is known to the squadron. They DO NOT represent how many 780<sup>th</sup> veterans may still be living.

	Mail	Email	2022 Total	2015 Total
<b>Veterans (including other squadrons)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Widows</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Children</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Other family</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Associations</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Unknown connection</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>
<hr/>				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>121</b>

Kathy Le Comte  
Editor, *Flightline*  
1004 Williams Blvd.  
Springfield, IL 62704-2832

---

## *Flightline*

---



*Wishing you and all  
your family a blessed  
holiday.*

*May 2023 bring us all  
peace and happiness.*

*Kathy and family*