



# FLIGHT LINE

Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron



Edited by Bob Bleier ♦ 1288 Rio Hondo Drive, San Jose, California 95120 ♦ (408) 268-2310

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PILOT



NAVIGATOR



CO PILOT



BOMBARDIER

## MAIL CALL

Frank Diederichs

A letter from Adam Fabel in the March issue of the Newsletter grabbed my attention! Adam was Navigator and I was Bombardier on Bob Himes crew which joined the squadron in Aug, 1944, and stayed until the end of the war after pulling 30 missions. In a letter from Jim Alter, the fellows in the photo that Fabel sent to you were identified by him but I think the one he thinks was Liles was actually "Perk" Perkins. At any rate the photo prompted me to grub through my memorabilia and I dug up some sketches which you might find interesting!

See you, I hope, in Las Vegas in the fall!!

*I sure did find them interesting, and I was delighted to use some of them for my cover sheet. The rest may be used at some future date. Looking forward to seeing you.*

Frank English

As per usual, I thoroughly enjoyed your latest Flightline. As a member of the 15th AFA Board of Directors, as you know, I'm tickled to read of the interest in coming back together, so to speak, as a Group! The squadron can still do their thing, also.

Anyhow, Bob, what I would like to ask is this-will you start sending the Flightline to our 15th AFA Director (and Sortie editor) Ben Franklin, please? Most all of the 15th Bomb Groups, ad infinitum keep him informed and I know he would appreciate hearing from you.

Thanks for listening. All the best to you, yours, and all the gang!

*Consider it done. I have received Sortie, and it's a fine publication.*

Al Bonin

I've been disconnected for so long that I've forgotten who's in charge of the dues dept. Please send him the enclosed check.

I'll be 80 years old in a few months months, and I tell people that I don't feel a day over a 100! I've learned to appreciate memories, though, Bob. To be able to close your eyes and see again the faces, and hear the sounds, roar of the engines again and to know that wherever they are, your buddies can connect with you, is reward enough for having done it.

*Thanks, Al, I'll forward your check to Everett Kron, and he'll take you off his "list!" Hey, being close to 80 doesn't put you in an exclusive club around here! I'm in that neighborhood, too! And we love your nostalgia!*

Charles Dodge

Well, now I know of at least 4 of the "Lucky 13" that are still around and kicking; me, Hadsell, Nix, and Hankala. Does anybody know what has come of the other 9? I visited with Shepherd in Berkeley, CA in the late 40's, but that's about it. I talked to Larry Nix and he will be in Las Vegas. I hope Hadsell and Hankala and some of the others can make it.

A couple of years ago, my family Assoc. asked us for favorite stories of experiences of WW II. Here is a copy of my story. When I was at Vesuvius last year, I collected some of the lava, ground it up, and it is purple!

*And....Here's your story!!!*

Whitten  
in 94

## PURPLE SNOW

Fifty years ago last month, I landed with my Bomb Squadron in Italy. We were in Naples for several days prior to moving out to our base south of Foggia.

The day we left Naples in convoy in open British Bedford trucks was the day Vesuvius erupted. Ash, cinders, and even large blocks of lava were blown into the air by this spectacular eruption. We spent our first night with a Canadian regiment, the Windsor Scots, in a small village in the mountains east of Naples and finally arrived at our base about midnight the next day.

We had been told to get into groups of eight to be issued a tent and additional blankets. All this was taking place in the dark with only a pinpoint of light to guide us to the ropes that we had to follow to get our new bedding and shelter. By about 0300 hours (3:00 a.m.) we had our "stuff" and were told to pitch our tents and get some sleep, because the next day we would be laying the steel matting for our runways.

My group decided against pitching a "squad" tent on the side of a hill at night, with no lights and no ax or hammer to drive tent stakes with. We found a small depression and put on more clothing, put a shelter-half on the ground with a blanket on top and three blankets for cover. Several of us had "liberated" a couple of bottles of "vino", and we polished it off, more or less as a sleep inducer.

When I awoke the next morning, I was very warm and was surprised because the night before had been very cold. I pulled the blankets back, sat up, and quickly lay back down. I nudged my buddy next to me and said, "Russell, sit up and tell me what you see." He did, and exclaimed, "My God! The whole damned world is purple!" And it was.

It seems that we had had nine inches of snow after we went to sleep, and it had filtered out the volcanic ash from the atmosphere. The snow was purple and, after about a week, everything we owned or wore had a purplish tint.

A month or so later, when I was returning from a test mission, I saw our hill for the first time from the air. There was only one tent that we could see, because its O.D. green stood out like a sore thumb. All the other tents, some 7 or more, had the purple ash cover and they blended in with the ground so that they couldn't be seen from 500 feet up. We had had a couple of air raids, but they were at night and little damage was done. But I figured that, if they raided during the day, our tent--#52--would be the "aiming point". So I got my tentmates to rub "purple mud" over our tent to camouflage it.

As a professor of geology, I have told this tale to several thousand freshmen students over a 30-year period. Even today, someone will see me after many years and remind me of the "purple snow".

Bill Zewadski

I enjoy your Flight Line as ever and I wish I were a better contributor. This has been sort of a rough year with getting two knees and having my arthritis cut up everywhere else. The new knees seem to be working fine and give me very little trouble.

In view of this I don't think we will make it to the next reunion there in the gambling capital of the world, Las Vegas. I do hope to get to the next one and that's one reason I am writing.

When you have the Squadron meeting and determine the location of the next reunion, I hope it can be more over in the eastern side of the country and preferably in the Maxwell Field area there in Montgomery, Alabama. We had a 41F Class reunion there in about 1989 and it was a great success with great accommodations and the intelligence officers at Maxwell Field gave lectures and confidential information that was a great source of education and pleasure.

I will enclose a copy of the 41F plans for a Montgomery reunion which I will not attend. It seems that there is someone that would take care preparing for the reunion if we don't have anybody in that area. *Just after misplaced, I'll keep looking*

I'll never forget the wonderful time we had in Branson, MO. My thanks will go out to John Fletcher for his great preparation and the execution. I just sorry that Bascom and I were such a drag on the organization but with volunteers to push the wheelchairs and bring cars to pick us up and all the great discussions we had in the hospitality room made it an outstanding reunion. When I got home from the reunion, I immediately went the hospital and got the new knees in September of 1995 and have been trying to exercise a little bit and get back my strength from these long stays in the hospital. The New Year brought me a toe infection with another hospital visit. I know I will get to know when the next meeting is going to be through the Flight Line. Thanks again.

*Bill, we're sure going to miss you and Bascom at the reunion...it just won't be the same! I've been through the "new knees" routine, and it ain't fun, but mine turned out just great, as I hope yours will...well enough for us to see you both in Santa Fe!*

A BUSINESSMAN boarded a plane to find, sitting next to him, an elegant woman wearing the largest, most stunning diamond ring he had ever seen. He asked her about it. "This is the Klopman diamond," she said. "It is beautiful, but there is a terrible curse that goes with it."

"What's the curse?" the man asked. "Mr. Klopman."

—Taylor Benson, quoted by Alex Thien in Milwaukee Sentinel

### Come Again?

FROM A DISPLAY AD for an automotive dealership in Cleveland, Tenn.: "Why go anywhere else and get cheated when you can come here!"

THE ORANGE STREET Food Farm ran an ad in the Missoula, Mont., *Missoulian* for "Golden, Ripe, Boneless Bananas, 39 cents a pound."

AN ASSOCIATED PRESS report described Fresno State University basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian: "During the scrimmage, Tarkanian paced the sideline with his hands in his pockets while biting his nails."

## Joe Sullivan

Saturday afternoon, leaving a wedding reception in Sacramento, I received what movie people exploit, a flashback. As Kay and I came out the door I heard a sound that anyone connected with heavy bombers during WW II will always remember, the heavy rumble of Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasps. I looked up and directly overhead, low, was a B-24 and a B-17, flying close formation, on what was obviously a landing approach turn. The 24 was the All American, but what caught my eye and filled them with tears, were the red cowls and tail marking of the 465th Bomb Group. I froze, and was pulled back 51 years, remembering the too many times we ground people watched, counted and prayed that all our planes and their crews were coming back to the base. It tore me up!

The next day, working in the back yard, I heard the same rumble and overhead, this time alone, was the All American, probably flying to its next base display. I watched her until she was out of sight, and once again was bought back to the twin runways and our hill overlooking the Pantanella Airfield.

Later that day I learned the All American and the B-17 were at Mather Field for display in honor of Armed Forces Day.

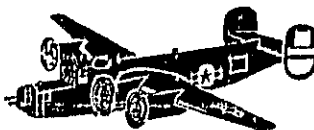
Will see you in Las Vegas next September, God willing and the creek doesn't rise. .

*Joe, they had just left San Jose, where Jim Althoff, Ben Donahue, and I, among others, had acted as "docents", if you will, guiding the public through and around the planes, trying to answer a million questions, etc. It is a fun experience, because you meet a lot of interesting people. I even met an ex-Luftwaffe fighter pilot! We determined that we'd never shot at each other as he was in the Netherlands flying a Focke-Wulf 190A. Never saw one of those! Looking forward to seeing you in Vegas!*

## Walter Longacre

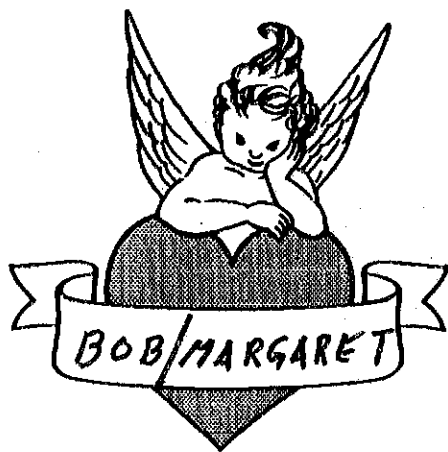
Enclosed find picture of the plaque installed at the McCook Air Base site. It will be dedicated as dated on the plaque and I am asking the Historical Society to notify each Squadron through their newsletter. I will not be able to attend as we are having our reunion in Montgomery.

*I'm enclosing this insert from the 782nd Flak Flimsy instead of the picture, because it shows up much better.*



THIS PLAQUE IS DEDICATED IN HONOR  
OF ALL OUR COMRADES OF THE 465TH  
BOMB GROUP WHO SERVED AND TO THOSE  
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN DEFENSE OF  
OUR COUNTRY DURING WW II

BOMB SQUADRONS  
780TH, 781ST, 782ND, 783RD  
DEDICATED SEPT. 28, 1996



And now for a personal note. Those of you who were at Branson met Margaret Wadsworth. I'm just delighted to say that, as of June 20th, we were married. How sweet it is!!!



However, our joy has to be tempered with a TAPS announcement. *Chester J. Milczarek*, Group Navigator, died April 26th at his home in Corpus Christi, Texas. He'll be buried among many of our national heroes at Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery.

## Countdown



# Las Vegas '96

For those of you who haven't gotten the word yet (!!!) our reunion will be at the brand new Monte Carlo Resort, arriving Sept. 9th, departing on the 13th. For reservations call 1-800 311 8999, and ask for the 780th Bomb Sq., or write to 3770 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Las Vegas, NV 89109.

I'll be driving there this month (ooch, HOT!) to try and make all the final arrangements. I'll have an agenda in the next Flightline.