



Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

June 2015

Kansas City awaits 780th

It's time to get serious about the Kansas City reunion this September that will host six bomb groups from the 15th Air Force. By the time of the next *Flightline*, it could be too late to get a hotel room, so register now!

A registration form was included in the March issue of *Flightline*. To save printing costs I won't include it in this issue, but it is available online (website is at the end of this article) or you can mail or email me for a copy. I plan to attend, and I hope some of you will come. If you can drop in for a day or only for a few hours, that's good, too.

The reunion is September 24-27. The registration fee is \$115, which includes everything except the cash bars, the bus tours and the optional Sunday dinner. The three tours average about \$37 each and include a touring coach and museum admission. Hotel rooms are \$99 per night at the Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel. This rate includes free parking and free airport shuttle, plus a full, hot breakfast buffet for two per day and two drink coupons per day. Here is the schedule of events:

Thursday, Sept. 24

Arrival and check-in day. The hospitality room and registration table will be open with heavy hors d'oeuvres served in the afternoon and evening. No evening meal is planned. All-group information meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 25

Optional tour of the National WWI Museum at Liberty Memorial, with lunch at the museum's

Over There Café. TripAdvisor calls this is one of the top 25 museums in the country. In the afternoon there will be presentations and discussions by veterans and then a social hour. Friday there will be individual group banquets in two halls (three groups to a hall).

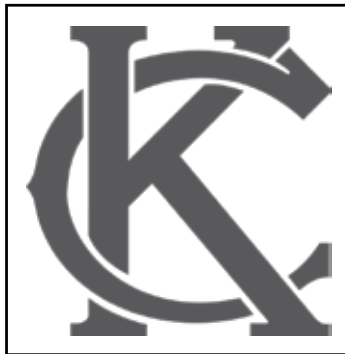
Saturday, Sept. 26

Optional tour of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, with lunch in the library's atrium. On the way back to the hotel the bus will stop in front of the Truman home. National Park Service rangers will board each motorcoach to give an overview of the home's history. In the afternoon there will be presentations and discussions by veterans and then a social hour. Saturday is the Gala Banquet with all bomb groups. Guest speaker will be 484th nephew, Roger Locher, an Air Force pilot shot down over North Vietnam in 1972 who spent a record 23 days evading capture before being rescued.

Sunday, Sept. 27

Morning memorial service, followed by an optional tour of the Steamboat Arabia Museum, a cargo and passenger steamboat that plied the Missouri River and sunk in 1856. Lunch will be at the museum. An optional casual farewell banquet will be held at the hotel at 6 p.m.

For more details or a registration form, go to: <http://www.451reunion.org>. Thanks go to Carole Lee of the 781st for handling the 780th registration!



Your News & Letters

It's been pretty quiet in the 780th since the March newsletter. No news is good news??? I hope the lack of news means only that everyone is too busy to write or email. I only have a couple letters to share:

Kathy,

I enjoyed seeing photos of your girls. They are precious. Attached is a small amount of help for all you do for Flightline. In my old age I write like a doctor.

My best to you and yours,

Jim Long

P.S. Still not accustomed to not having Aileen. She has been gone for seven months.

Editor's note: Thank you for your kind words, "Dr. Long." I'm very sorry to hear how hard it's been to adjust without Aileen. I hope it has gotten a little easier since you wrote these words in January. I apologize for not including Jim's note in the March *Flightline*. I did thank him for his donation in that issue.



Kathy,

I forget to send in something towards your costs once in a while.

I can relate to Rickey Robertson's "phone call." In 2008, I talked with (465th Bomb Group Historian) Gene Moxley in hopes of contacting anyone who had any remote connection with Pantanella. He gave me Jim Long's number. I called Jim. Shortly into "that call" he referred to me as

"Ken" - before I had told him my dad's name.

Any chance of putting Ricky and me in touch?

Thanks,

Jerry McMann

Editor's note: Well, I guess my delaying the publication of Jim's letter paid off! These two letters tie together nicely. I alerted Rickey that Jerry was wanting to reach him, so I hope they got in touch. If anyone else is looking for someone in the 780th just let me know. The only tools at my disposal are the roster passed on to me by Bob Bleier and the internet, but I will do my best to help find someone. And here's one more letter that relates to Jerry's:



Kathy

Thank you for printing the story about my uncle, Sgt. Bobbie T.

Robertson, and the last member of his original B-24 crew, Joseph "Joe" Kling.

Joe was a special friend once I found him through Flightline several years ago. We kept in close touch over the years and had many very interesting and informational chats. He remembered the many missions he flew on (he called them rides), and of missing his friend and crewmate, Bobbie Robertson.

Since Joe's passing I have been in contact with several members of his family. Since I have a small military museum/collection at my home where I display Bobbie's military photographs and his crew photo, they decided to bless me with several items of Joe's to display along with the other items. On March 7, 2015, Joe's niece, Jacklyn Hughes Dumas, and husband, Dwain, came through Louisiana and presented me with a shadow box of all of Joe's World War II medals. What a great item

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THANK YOU

Jerry McMann

FOR YOUR DONATION TO THE FLIGHTLINE

June good month for squadron

Perusing some documents Eleanor Ball, widow of Jack Ball, sent me, I found the Historical Narrative for the 465th Bomb Group for June 1944, its second month of operations. The group is described as making the transition from "'freshman' stage to one of veteran proportions." Here are some highlights:

Capt. William S. Zewadski Jr. became Squadron Operations Officer vice.

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to display along with Bobbie's. And on April 1, 2015, Joe's nephew, John Ackerman, sent me Joe's original discharge paperwork.

I now have a fine display of two brave 780th airmen's World War II items. Sending you a picture of Jackie presenting me Joe's medals at our home here in Louisiana. Thanks for your dedication to Flightline! Keep up the good work!

Rickey Robertson

Editor's note: Below is the picture of Jacklyn and Rickey, remembering two great men.



Poor weather limited the group to flying 17 missions and 588 sorties for the month (Missions 19 through 35 in *Memoirs*).

"Important missions" were the marshalling yards of Cluj, Romania (ten aircraft from 780th); Dacia Romano Oil Refinery at Ploesti (nine aircraft); the Milbertschofen Ordnance depot at Munich (eight aircraft); the oil refinery at Petfurdo, Hungary (nine aircraft); the Floresdorf marshalling yards at Vienna (nine aircraft); and oil installations at Bucharest (nine aircraft).

The Historical Narrative singled out the 780th for having a perfect record since group combat missions began May 5: "One of the squadrons - the 780th - completed all thirty-five missions without the loss of a single airplane or casualty of any kind to personnel."

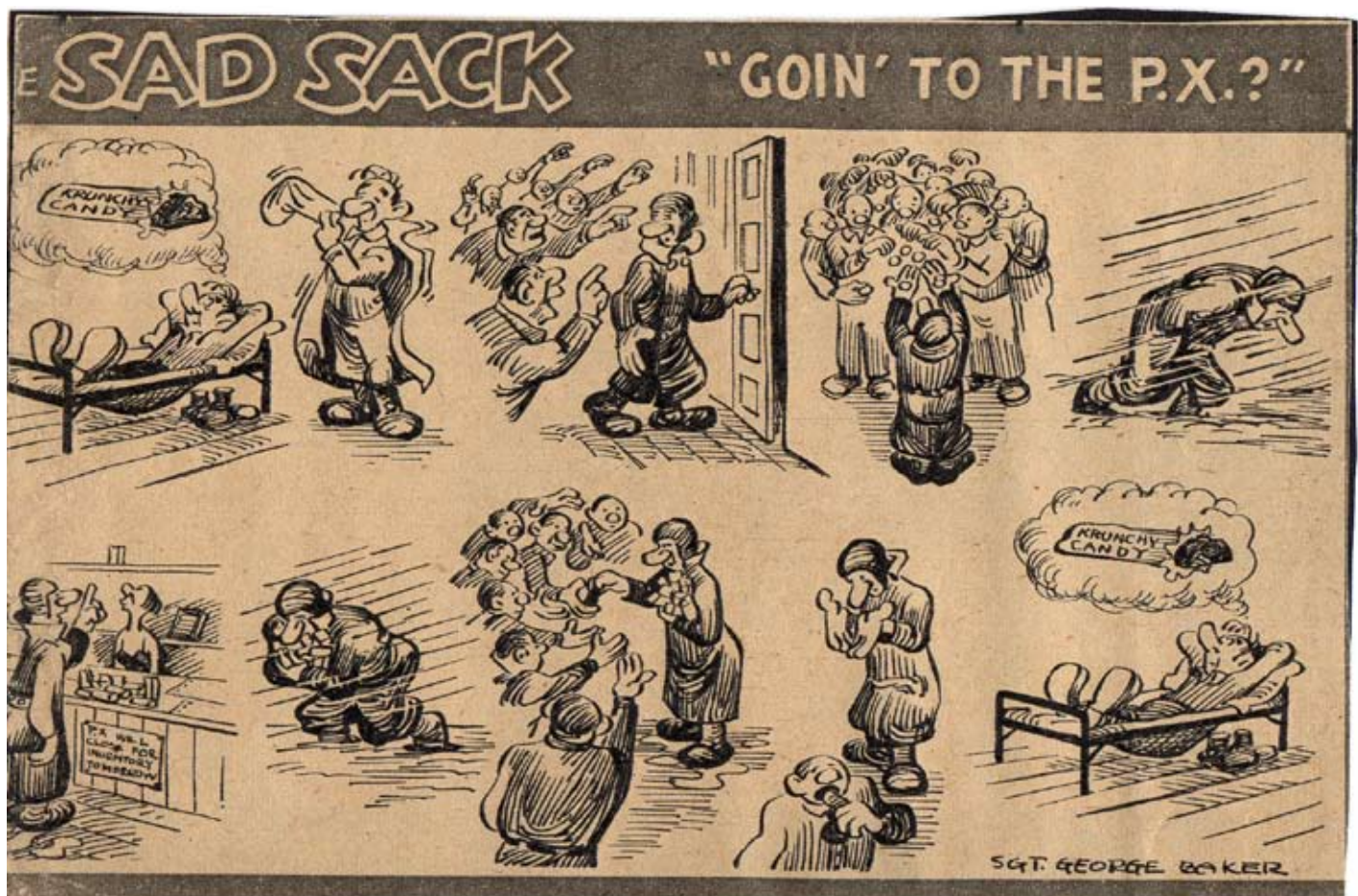
But not all information was tactical. During the month of June particular attention was paid to the health and welfare of personnel. Mess halls were cleaned better, and doors and windows were screened. It was reported that latrines were improved with the addition of latrine covers, or screened houses, to prevent flies from spreading diseases like dysentery. Shower facilities also were improved.

Recreation also was very important, to keep morale high. Cargo trucks were used to ferry men to the nearby beaches of Barletta, Trani and Bari; the Red Cross Clubmobile served coffee, donuts and lemonade following missions; and the U.S.O "Italian Review Unit #5" visited the area providing entertainment.

But the best news for the month, I think, belongs to the Post Exchange. June was the first month American canned beer was available. It was believed that beer would be, "the outstanding morale builder during the entire month," and particularly for the hot, summer months to come.

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Flightline



This Sad Sack cartoon comes from the Collection of Jack Ball, provided by Eleanor Ball. It relates well to the article inside, on page 3.