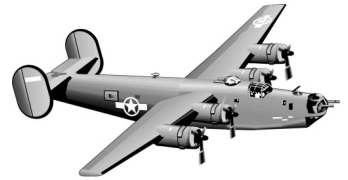




# Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

June 2013

## McParland Recounts Emergency Landings, Fast-Track Discharge

*In 2007, John McParland, who passed away in October 2012 (see obit inside), was interviewed for the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project (VHP). VHP interviews veterans about their war experiences. McParland's interview is posted online at: <http://tinyurl.com/JohnTMcParland>*

*The Flightline urges all 780<sup>th</sup> veterans to tell their story to VHP. For more information go to: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>, or contact your local public library or American Legion to ask if they know of a group interviewing veterans. Below are excerpts from John McParland's interview:*

Caroline Huang:

Is there anything else about combat that you feel that I haven't covered?

John T. McParland:

No, I don't think so. You've let me spout off here at great length, because I'm covering everything and there are lots of questions that you couldn't ask because you don't know what they would be. I can give you a couple of what might be considered interesting anecdotes.

Caroline Huang:

Okay.

John T. McParland:

I mentioned earlier that the ship crash-landed and I wasn't with them because I had been ordered to go to the island of Capri for rest and rehabilitation. Although I didn't want to go, they said, "You have to go."

While I was on the isle of Capri, the crew were on a mission to an oil refinery in Germany and they were very severely hit and crash-landed

at an emergency field near a city in Italy called Bari. They landed and the whole brakes and hydraulic system was shot out. There were several hundred holes in the fuselage and that plane never flew again, but they landed and the emergency fields were equipped with places where you could land the plane in that condition. (It) consisted of a large area of piles of hay and straw and the plane flew into that, landed, and rolled into the hay and straw until it stopped. And then the guys got out and they were taken into an area to be interrogated for the details of the mission.

On that particular flight, which was on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, my navigator was severely wounded and never flew again. That was his 13<sup>th</sup> mission on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Friday, of October. So there were a lot of thirteens there if anybody is superstitious. Now, did I miss anything there? Oh, my navigator never flew again and after he was hospitalized and treated and allowed to go home, he was separated from service and went back to civilian life. One leg was shorter than the other for the rest of his life.

Caroline Huang (interviewer):

Do you recall any particularly funny events or unusual ones?

John T. McParland:

Well, what was certainly unusual was the one that I related to you about me going to the island of Capri, which is where I went to rest

*continued on page 6...*

# Your News & Letters

An email from Jack and Eleanor Ball:

*Thanks for the Flightline. We have moved, our new address is:*

*5901 W. 107<sup>th</sup> St. Apt #285  
Overland Park, KS 66207  
Phone 913-213-5278*

*We are selling our big old two-story house and have moved to an independent living complex. Still in the process of downsizing after 55 years in the same home. It takes a lot work. Please note our change in the next Flightline, thanks.*

*Happy Easter,  
Jack and Eleanor*



*George Kuchenbecker emailed about the Florisdorf mission that was featured in the March newsletter:*

*Hi Kathy. You too, John,*

*Got the new Flightline and am very pleased with it. Good job! Could you send me another copy that I can send to my oldest son? If so, send it to me as I want to make some notes in it to explain some things it brought to mind. This would be much appreciated.*

*The diagram of the FLAK installations on the first page shows very well why we called the Vienna area "FLAK ALLEY." You couldn't get in or out without coming into the intense, heavy,*

*accurate, anti-aircraft fire. We usually rode the whole time over target wearing as many flak suits as you could find.*

*Ol' Dad K (George)*



*Dear Kathy,*

*Excuse the writing but my printer quit. I wanted to let you know Jack Bentley, tail gunner, 780<sup>th</sup>, died February 15, 2013. Jack, myself and David Holdsworth, were three gunners in the 780<sup>th</sup> from Erie, Pennsylvania, a city of about 130,000. Now I'm the only one left of the 780<sup>th</sup> from Erie.*

*I am doing very well at 87. I go to the Y and exercise three times a week, am a VNA Hospice Volunteer, and sing in a church choir.*

*Members of the 780<sup>th</sup> are getting low but we will try and hang in there a few more years. Enjoy the Flightline and enclosing an article I just wrote you might use.*

*Ex-Staff Sgt. Clifford W. Taylor  
Tailgunner*

*(Editor's note: First, it's great to hear you are as busy as you are, Cliff. Thank you for letting us know about Jack. His obituary appears in the TAPS section. I have your article about a Munich mission lined up for the September issue.)*



*Hi Kathy... or John!*

*My name is Beth Berger Martin and I am the daughter of William E. Berger who was in Operations in the 780<sup>th</sup>.*

*My father passed away 12 years ago and at that time, Charles Dodge had loaned me his '780' Memoirs book for me to make a copy. I did. But now with technology being so much better, I would like to borrow a book again to do a high-quality scan of it. I would be happy to share the scans with those who would want them. My father never had the book himself so I'm wondering if someone could loan me a book. Charles passed away shortly after he loaned me the book (after I returned it) so I do not have that contact any longer. Would you know of someone who could do me the favor of loaning it to me for a few weeks? I would really appreciate it.*

*Also, I just returned from Italy this week and spent a day touring the "hill" where the majority of the buildings were, including the church and the meeting room with frescoes on the wall. I'd be happy to share some photos with you if you'd like.*

*Thanks for your help... and keep the newsletters coming! My mother, Gladys Berger, very much enjoys them.*

*Thanks,  
Beth Martin  
2624 W. Coyle  
Chicago, IL 60645*

(Editor's note: I sent a request to *Flightline* readers I have an email for, asking if anyone would be willing to loan Beth the *Memoirs* book. Cheryl Hewitt, daughter of the late Cleon Moore, loaned her the Moores' copy. The 780<sup>th</sup> family is great, isn't it?)



Hi Kathy,

It is I, Cheryl Hewitt, writing to you from my husband's computer. I am in Gainesville, Florida, for a while, so I don't have access to my home computer.

I am very sad to tell you that my father, Cleon S. Moore, passed

away on Tuesday, 2 April 2013. I have attached a copy of the electronic obituary.

During the interment ceremony, Dad's friend, General Paul Albritton (retired), presented the American flag to my mother and gave tribute to the men of the Army Air Corps who were the forerunners of the Air Force. It was a beautiful and touching event.

I have been doing some paperwork for my mother, and I see that Dad had printed out a Google satellite map of Pantanella, Italy. I guess he was doing some research recently about the WWII days.

Please remove my mother, Peggy Moore, from the *Flightline* mailing list as she told me she no longer wishes to receive it.

Thank you for your wonderful service to the men of the 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron who are truly the Greatest Generation.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Hewitt

(Editor's note: we are very sorry to hear about your dad's passing, but we are so grateful that we were able to publish his series of recollections about his service. I am so glad he enjoyed seeing his story in print.)



More of your letters appear on page 4.

## Honkala donates to *Flightline*, Funds Running Low

The *Flightline* thanks Adolf "Ad" Honkala for a generous donation to the newsletter:

*Kathy,*

*Thank you for the fine work you are doing re: the Flightline. Although I was a part of the ground personnel, the importance of the missions was of great interest to us as it was incumbent that all was working well on the planes. For some reason the Florisdorf mission (see March 2013 issue) rings a bell. Enclosed is a check towards expenses.*

*Best wishes,  
Ad Honkala  
780<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron*

*P.S. My wife passed away January 2012. Please take her name off the rolls.*

Each *Flightline* issue costs about \$120 to print and mail. After 3.5 years and 14 issues the *Flightline* Fund has about \$650 remaining in it. That is enough for about five more issues. If you would like to contribute to keep the *Flightline* flying, please send your donation to:

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

# Your News & Letters, cont.

Dear Kathy,

First, I will say I only hope that somehow the Flightline can find a way to survive. If others feel the same way, let's work on it.

Thanks to Josh Hummel I had one chance to talk to Gene Koscinski. I am so thankful for that one conversation.

In 2008 I got a copy of '780' Memoirs. I began a search for my father's military history. His name was Kenneth O. McMann. The short story is my family knew nothing of his history. I found Jim Long and eventually put his past together. It reads like a novel, and came as a shock to me and my family. The story is still reverberating throughout my extended family.

At the September 2009 reunion I got to meet Jim, a meeting I'll never forget. Today, I can no longer have a thought about my own dad without that thought including Jim Long. He has become an extension of my own father. Everyone from the 780<sup>th</sup> I have talked to has become a part of my fondest memories. I am afraid to list you for fear I will omit someone and feel eternally guilty. I would like to add Gregory Freeman and Gene Moxley to that list.

During the summer of 2012 the Veterans History Project taped a 70-minute narrative of this story at the Muskogee, Oklahoma, VA. I believe this is a project which could be important to everyone connected to the 780<sup>th</sup>. It is a project dedicated to preserving the stories of all World War II

veterans. It is normally comprised of first-hand stories. I believe my story was included because of the human interest factor, as well as an earnest plea to encourage everyone to contact all veterans and encourage them to record their stories with the Veterans History Project. If you have questions, contact your local VA.

I might add I found about 12-15 veterans of the 780<sup>th</sup> from Oklahoma in my Memoirs book. I called a few. I found the widow of Monroe Sheppard. Following the 2009 reunion I stopped and visited with her. She showed me some patches and asked me a number of questions. I was able to explain the patches and answer most of her questions about her late husband. It was a great feeling. Imagine if all of us would look up just one person and help!

There are people who keep alive the memories of Civil War veterans/ How can we be responsible for letting the 780<sup>th</sup> die? Coming from a law enforcement background, I am reminded of our unofficial motto: Not On My Shift.

Thanks for listening,  
Jerry McCann

(Editor's note: Well said, Jerry. The Flightline will continue as long as possible. The steady stream of letters, emails, photos and stories I receive tell me there is still great interest in our squadron family staying together, even if our veterans are unable to travel any more.

And thanks for your plug for the Veterans History Project (VHP). The VHP is worth your time, and your service is valued by the VHP, so check them out at: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>. Our feature story this issue is John McParland's contribution to the VHP.



Our last letter for this issue comes from the son of the late John T. McParland. He is responding to the call-out we had in the March newsletter asking for his dad to contact Gin Sommers. I edited his wonderful letter due to length and some personal details about John and his second wife. Those of you who knew John well know these details anyway.)

Dear Kathy and Friends,

I am the surviving member of an immediate family which at our largest number totalled five. My little brother in 1970 at age 14, mother in 1969 (seven months earlier), and my sister in 1996 at 43, were the wife and progeny of my dad whom this missive is mostly in thankfulness, pride and my expression of loss of him in October 2012: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John T. McParland. He flew 35 missions during WWII while stationed at Pantanella, Italy, as a member of the 780<sup>th</sup>...

...I came to assist Dad in taking  
780th BS/465th BG

care of his wife following her diagnosis for terminal cancer. Dad was, at 92 years, incapable of taking care of her needs. It was my pleasure to help my dad...

...I shuttled between my dad's and my home in Arizona until the situation became untenable... My dad and I purchased a mobile home in New York, where this newsletter (March Flightline) found me.

My dad and I always maintained current (at least weekly) by phone and I visited him in Pennsylvania and he came to Arizona several times. However, upon our deci-

sion and move back to the New York City area we really got to know each other very well. A man whom I can remember very little illness fell ill in May 2011 and he began to slide downwardly in health, then attitude etc., until he no longer could function on his own behalf. I consider it a gift to me and a blessing to be healthy enough and capable of being his caregiver.

Over the course of time I've related I learned a great deal about my father. Part of my learning was WWII history and, specifically, his service as a bombardier

who flew 35 missions with the 780th, 15th Air Force, stationed in Italy.

Words cannot express my pride for him and all who participated in that necessary catastrophe. My dad always was and always will be my hero in almost every way.

It was my dad who shared Flightline with me. We would talk every chance I could with Dad about the war, but as seems to be the case with the vets of that generation, he never glorified his part (I handle that every chance I get.).

The ranks are thinning, Kathy, and for quite some time I wanted to write and thank you for your efforts to honor these guys and keep them alive in our hearts and minds.

My dad expressed a desire to be cremated and interred in a Veterans Cemetery. I was given his tri-folded flag during the military service by two soldiers in dress uniform, which of course turned on my tear ducts. My dad was appreciative of what you did and would always pass the Flightline on to me.

Again, Kathy, thank you so much for what you do. It's had meaning for my dad and I for years.

Kevin McParland  
Washingtonville, NY  
son of John T. McParland

(Editor's note: Thank you for your heart-felt words, Kevin. Your dad was a joy to be around at the reunions. I'm sure our other members remember him fondly also.)

## Coming Up in Future Issues of the *Flightline*

- The 780<sup>th</sup>'s second Distinguished Unit Citation
- The Linz, Austria mission from April 1945
- Photos from Pantanella Air Field today
- Program and brochure from first 780<sup>th</sup> reunion in Chicago in 1963
- Photos of Charlie Davis and others from second 780<sup>th</sup> reunion in San Francisco in 1966
- How George Kuchenbecker turned merengue into steak
- \_\_\_\_\_ (to be filled in by you!)

Send your stories, mission notes, diary entries, photos, letters, quips and comments to:

Kathy Le Comte  
editor, *Flightline*  
1004 Williams Blvd.  
Springfield, IL 62704  
johnkath5@comcast.net  
217-414-1400 (cell)  
217-787-6512 (home)

*...continued from front page*

camp alone on my 13<sup>th</sup> mission, on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, and my crew was going on a mission and getting all shot up, so that would certainly be interesting.

Caroline Huang: Yes.

John T. McParland:

And the other one I remember was the one where we landed at the emergency airfield. That was a particularly tough sortie from the standpoint of the flight, up fairly close to the target, was pretty good but close to the target.

Now, I couldn't tell you, it would have to be a guess, maybe 15 or 20 minutes from the target - which happened to be Vienna, Austria - we ran into terribly bad weather and the formations just broke up in every direction and we're in clouds, most of the time not knowing where we were going, and it was at that particularly vulnerable time that was the first time I ever saw fighter planes. They came in and we saw them... they came in and I guess we lost some airplanes to them and at that point I was doing the navigating so the co-pilot asked me to give them a heading home. I didn't have the foggiest notion where we were because we had to fly and make all kinds of moves to avoid the clouds which were high cumulonimbus, which are called thunderclouds, and it was pretty rough. But, I estimated where we were and kind of guesstimated the right way to get back home, which wasn't all that hard, because if I took the heading due south, it would have us heading back towards Italy. But the questionable part was where we were starting from. But we were lucky.

When we got a little distance away from Vienna, one of the biggest landmarks in that whole area was a lake in Hungary called Lake Ballaton and the minute I saw that, I knew that we were okay. And so from there on in, we did pretty well getting back. The only problem we had was shortage of fuel and my pilot kept asking where we were and how much distance did we have to travel. Because between him, the engineer, and myself, we had to figure out if we had enough fuel to get where we wanted to

go, which obviously was an emergency landing field, and we had been hit by anti-aircraft fire but it wasn't all that bad. And as luck would have it, after several hours, the weather cleared up and we came out and pretty much knew where we were, and I could see the emergency landing field from where we were, and I pointed it out to the pilot and he landed it and we walked away from it.

I must say that the landing feat was pretty great flying because this emergency landing field was difficult to get into and equally as difficult to get out of. So we made it okay. But we landed on what was known as the island of Vis and it was in the hands of partisans, Yugoslavians who were allied with us, they were friendly with us. They gave us a place to stay, which was a big barn. We slept on the straw but that night we had what I would consider pretty interesting eating. These people, which included men and women, were getting ready to get into boats and trucks and all kinds of transportation to fight the Germans in another part of Yugoslavia. So they had a little bit of a celebration that night, so there was dancing and camaraderie and it was very interesting. By the way, it was my first experience, the same thing's true of my crewmates, to see foot soldiers with bandoleers of ammunition slung over their shoulders, carrying rifles and machine guns, and a good number of them were women. So that was pretty interesting. But we took off the next morning and barely made it out of the emergency airfield and we got back home okay.

Caroline Huang:

What did you do after the war?

John T. McParland:

You mean after the war ended? I didn't get back to the point where I was discharged yet. Want me to cover that?

Caroline Huang: Sure.

John T. McParland:

The bomb was dropped and Japan surrendered. Then we had to wait to be discharged and it was all done on a point system. You got a point for every month of service and the med-

# TAPS



Cleon S. Moore, 92, of Gainesville, Florida, passed away at his home on April 2, 2013. He was born in Brookhaven, Mississippi, and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, serving as an aerial gunner and bombardier flying B-24 Liberators in World War II. He completed 34 air missions and was highly decorated. After the war he earned a degree in civil engineering and then worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He worked on many national projects, including Cape Canaveral's launch facilities, and forts and air bases, including some that were used during Operation Desert Storm. He was promoted to Chief of Construction of the Mobile, Alabama District, where he managed all of the Army, Air Force and NASA construction sites in the Southeast. He was given the Army's highest honor for civilian service - the Decoration for Meritorious Civilian Service Medal - and retired as a Lt. Colonel. Cleon is survived by his loving wife of 67 years, Margaret "Peggy" Moore, daughters Sandra Moore (Terry) Kite and Cheryl Moore (Seth) Hewitt, a son Richard G. (Linda) Moore; two grandchildren, Adrian (Tami) Moore and Rebecca Moore; and great-granddaughter, Madison Moore.



Jack E. Bentley, 91, of Girard, Pennsylvania, passed away February 15, 2013. He was born in Erie on November 7, 1921. After graduating from high school Jack served in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II as a tailgunner. Later he was employed for over 41 years, retiring from GE. Jack enjoyed old cars and traveling, and was a member of the local American Legion and the Disabled American Veteran's Commanders Club. He was preceded in death by his wife, Trevette, and two stepsons, Richard and Charles Taylor. He is survived by his daughter-in-law, Helen Taylor, and grandchildren Alan (Darcy) Taylor, Barbara Taylor, Karen Taylor, Faythe (Dennis) Chevalier, Brett (Tracey) Taylor, Larry Taylor, Dana (Donna) Taylor, Julie Taylor (Tony) Renfrew, and Sam (Leslie) Taylor; and many great-grandchildren.



John T. McParland, of Washingtonville, New York, passed away October 4, 2012, at Castle Point VA Hospital. He was born July 30, 1918 in New York City. He was 94 years old. John was veteran of the World War II Army Air Corps. He was a member of the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, flying 35 missions as a bombardier. He was a salesman and a member of the Washingtonville American Legion. John was preceded by his wife, Leona McParland; daughter, Sheila Rizzo; son, Patrick McParland; and two brothers. He is survived by a son, Kevin McParland; granddaughter, Shannon Rosendale; and several nieces and nephews.

als that you earned were all worth points. So I had a certain number of points. But I was at an airbase where there were probably 10,000 airmen, and many of them had been in the South Pacific since 1941 so there were many, many guys ahead of me, and I could foresee months in Texas doing nothing.

Well, I did that for a couple weeks - that was a kind of nice couple of weeks - we got to take off on every weekend and go to nearby towns like Abilene, Texas, and some other towns I can't remember the name now. When we were off, we were constantly griping about when we were going to get discharged. And, I remember it was

the topic of importance. Everybody griped about it no matter where we were, whether we were in the officers' club or the mess hall, wherever we were together, we were wondering, "I wonder how much longer I'm going to stay here."

I remember one night in the officers' club, talking with a bunch of guys, there was another officer there who said some interesting thing: "You know, there are other ways you can get discharged..." or as they called it, separated from service, "...other than points." Well, I don't know what way that was unless it was called a

*continued on back page...*

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

---

## *Flightline*

---

*...continued from page 7*

Section 8, which meant you were crazy. I didn't want that kind of a separation.

Well, he kept mentioning others and then he finally said, "There's another reason called hardship." So I said, "What's hardship?"

"Well, if all the boys in the family are in uniform and the parents or parent is home alone, that is the reason for discharge." And I said, "That's me! My mother is home alone and my two brothers are in service, and here I am. What do I do?"

And he said, "Come see me in the morning," which I did and I was out of there, separated from service, on my way to be separated that afternoon. So I hitchhiked to Fort Dix in New Jersey, at which point I was officially separated and friends of mine came and picked me up and I went home. I went back to work, to the same job I had when I enlisted.

Caroline Huang:

So did you make any close friendships while you were in service?

John T. McParland:

Yes, several very close. My co-pilot [the late Frosty Sommers] and I have corresponded every year since 1945 to the present. And one other guy I became very friendly with belonged

to another crew who was positioned with us in Italy, but I knew his brother from the early days of what we called aviation cadet training. See, I was with about 300 guys going to basic training in Florida and so was he, and I got to know him pretty well. And then, coincidentally, I got to meet his younger brother in Italy and, of course, when he heard that I knew his older brother and had spent time with him, we became pretty friendly, and since he was from New York, I met him really frequently. We visited each other at home and continue to function, but my most significant friendship was with my co-pilot. We still are friendly. We go to the reunions every year. My squadron has a reunion every year in some part of the U.S. And we try to meet each other.

Caroline Huang:

How did your service and the experience of your service affect your life?

John T. McParland:

Well, as so many guys in my position would tell you, I mean it woke us up ... We grew up pretty fast and in a short time and I, you know, I can't think of anything specifically that was helped by my experience in the service, with probably the exception of becoming familiar with guys from other parts of the country and finding out that they were pretty ... normal like we were.