



Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bomb Squadron of WWII

June 2014

Squadron Loses Two Crews at Friedrichschafen

Mission Led by 780th earns 2nd Distinguished Unit Citation

In the March 2013 issue of *Flightline* we reported on the first of two Distinguished Unit Citations (DUC) the 465th Bombardment Group earned during World War II. In this issue we highlight the second citation.

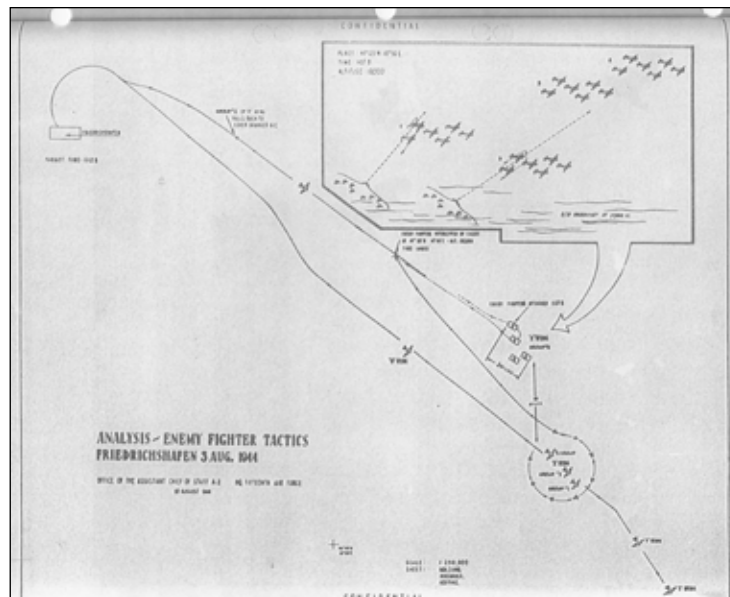
The second DUC was earned for a mission on 3 August 1944, led by the 780th Squadron, to attack the Manzell-Dornier Werke at Friedrichschafen, Germany.

Friedrichschafen was one of the highest priority targets in southern Germany as it was known to be manufacturing parts for new German jet-propelled and pilotless aircraft. Although the target had been attacked and partially damaged previously, reconnaissance photos showed that production capacity was still great. Pilotless aircraft (robombs) were falling in great numbers in England, and jet-propelled aircraft were intercepting bomber formations from English bases. It was evident that pilotless and jet-propelled aircraft were going to become an even larger threat to Allied Forces and had to be stopped.

The long hours and intense flak encountered on previous attacks by the group put considerable strain on the group's ground crews tasked with maintaining the aircraft. Maintenance crews worked through the night to get

34 aircraft ready. All but two of the scheduled aircraft took off at 0644 hours, led by 780th Squadron Commander Major Olen C. Cook. After rendezvousing at Andria, Italy, four additional planes were forced to return to base early due to mechanical problems.

Enroute to the target, the group encountered 9/10s cloud coverage which made formation flying over the Alps extremely difficult and hazardous. Major Cook continued to lead his units toward the target. Despite the danger and extreme skill required, the group kept its formation together and successfully penetrated the cloud cover. Approaching the target area, the group was met by heavy and concentrated



The diagram above shows the enemy attack on X Wing, containing C Box.

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Your News & Letters

Dear Kathy,

Not much news here - same old crap. However, that makes it easy to get along. As the old saying goes, "Another day old and deeper in debt." I don't mind the days passing. It's the debt that gets to me. But what can we do but stay with it and exist.

I would say I'm in pretty good health but my vision is not too good. I have (illegible) and if I clean up then one (illegible) I would probably do good. Oh well, I'll get by, I hope. Boy, I hope you can read this and make sense of it.

To me here in the Masonic Home, one day is like another, same-o same-o as they say. I guess I could say, "keep up the faith" or behave yourself. Drop me a note if you get a chance.

Love,
Ned Hayes (pilot)
Masonic Home of New Jersey
Room W342
902 Jacksonville Rd.
Burlington, NJ 08016-3814

Editor's note: Ned, only a few words I couldn't make out in your note! I'm sending you a separate note, and I included your address here so others could do the same.



Merry Christmas, Kathy,

Thanks for all you do for the vets and their loved ones.

Lisa Stock Warren
daughter of John Stock

Editor's note: I couldn't fit this note into the March issue, but still wanted to acknowledge Lisa's kind note.



Dear Kathy,

Thanks for featuring me in the squadron newsletter. Bill Shreve is still with us - he lives at 631 Lakeview Blvd., Apt. A400, New Braunfels, TX 78130.

Keep up the good work!
Frank Diederichs

Editor's note: It's always wonderful news to hear about a "new" squadron member. Welcome to the squadron, Bill Shreve! Below is a note from Tanya Beitz (daughter of Arnel Steele) updating us on her recent hip replacement surgery.



Kathy,

Thank you for Flightline, it came online today. Good job.

Surgery was February 24, all went well. I am home, after one week and doing therapy in home, and therapist says I am doing great. I am determined to do well, and do the exercises, so that helps. Age is not a factor yet, As with the squadron folks, therapy is hard! Ron is good. Also being a good nurse.

Mother (Philena Steele) was brought here to visit my first week home, and both of us were happy to see each other. Today, we did regular family physician visit and visited with my mother while in Effingham. Mother is doing good at age 89. Mia was actually at Mother's visiting on a week vacation and we all enjoyed lunch and visiting together.

Sister Sandy and Sister Ardel will both be home in late March. We all miss them, but with Illinois weather we wished we could have had some of their sunshine and warm temps over what we had this Winter. Might be a plan for Ron and I to go south in the future.

Take care, keep in touch, and again, thank you for all the work you do on the Flightline.

Tanya & Ron Beitz



Dear Kathy,

I really appreciate all the trouble you went to in tracking me down, especially since I am not even a member of the 780th. George Kuchenbecker and I are friends of nearly 50 years, and about 15 years ago he suggested that as an old B-24 pilot I could and should join the group, so I did. And I have enjoyed reading the Flightline ever since.

You might be interested in a little of my history. About a week after Pearl Harbor day an Army Air Corps recruiter come to the campus of Whitman College

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where I was enrolled. I went in to see him with the intention of volunteering for flight training. He took one look at me and said, "I'm sorry, but we can't take you, your teeth are too crooked." I think he was still going by the standards of the pre-war Air Corps which was probably a very elite outfit and elite outfits didn't admit recruits with crooked teeth.

I already had a pilot's license which I had earned through the Civilian Pilots Training Program, and all I wanted to do was fly airplanes so I found a job with Pan American Airways as a navigator on the China Clipper. I flew from San Francisco to Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. After 14 months of this I decided that I really wanted to be a pilot so I gave the Air Corps another chance. This time they took me, crooked teeth and all. I went through the cadet program and got my wings on Dec. 23, 1944. All this had taken so much time that the war in Europe ended while I was still in B-24 transition. So that's why I never got into combat like the brave men in the 780th.

Once again, thanks for keeping in touch with me,

Frank Freeman

Editor's note; We are thankful to have you with us, Frank. Many of us reading the Flightline now are children and grandchildren, and we cherish the stories of all veterans, but especially Air Corps vets. Keep 'em Flyin', right?



Dear Kathy,

Thanks so much for the Flightline. I read the online version, so please take me off the mailing list and save a stamp.

All is going well in KC. My kids are keeping me busy and I still have several projects that I am working on.

Enjoy your trip to St. Croix and celebrate that anniversary.

Eleanor Ball

Editor's note; Eleanor is one of the many readers of the pdf version of Flightline. If you prefer to receive your issue by email, just let me know. And, yes, John and I enjoyed a wonderful few days in St. Croix, USVI, in May, for our anniversary.



A W O L

The whereabouts of the following 780th members is unknown. Their newsletters have been returned, and after some online searching their new address hasn't been located. Do you know where they are? If so please tell them to report in:

Rick Cox

last known to be in San Marcos, CA

Marion Babcock,

last known to be in New Berlin, WI

Gin Sommers

last known to be in Wisconsin Dells, WI

**Send new contact information to Kathy Le Comte,
1004 Williams Blvd., Springfield, IL 62704**

Lastly, I enjoyed a nice telephone conversation with Eunice Bettencourt in March. She said she is a "charter member" of the 780th Bombardment Squadron Association with her husband, Vern, who passed away 11 years ago. Vern was a pilot who flew 32 missions. Eunice said Vern always said his co-pilot was, "the one up above." She said on one mission 12 planes were sent but only three came back. Eunice said, "I'm hanging in there," and will be 90 on July 4. Her address is: 300 Westminster Canterbury Drive Apt. 319, Winchester, VA 22603-4279.

**What's Your Story?
Send it to
The Flightline!**

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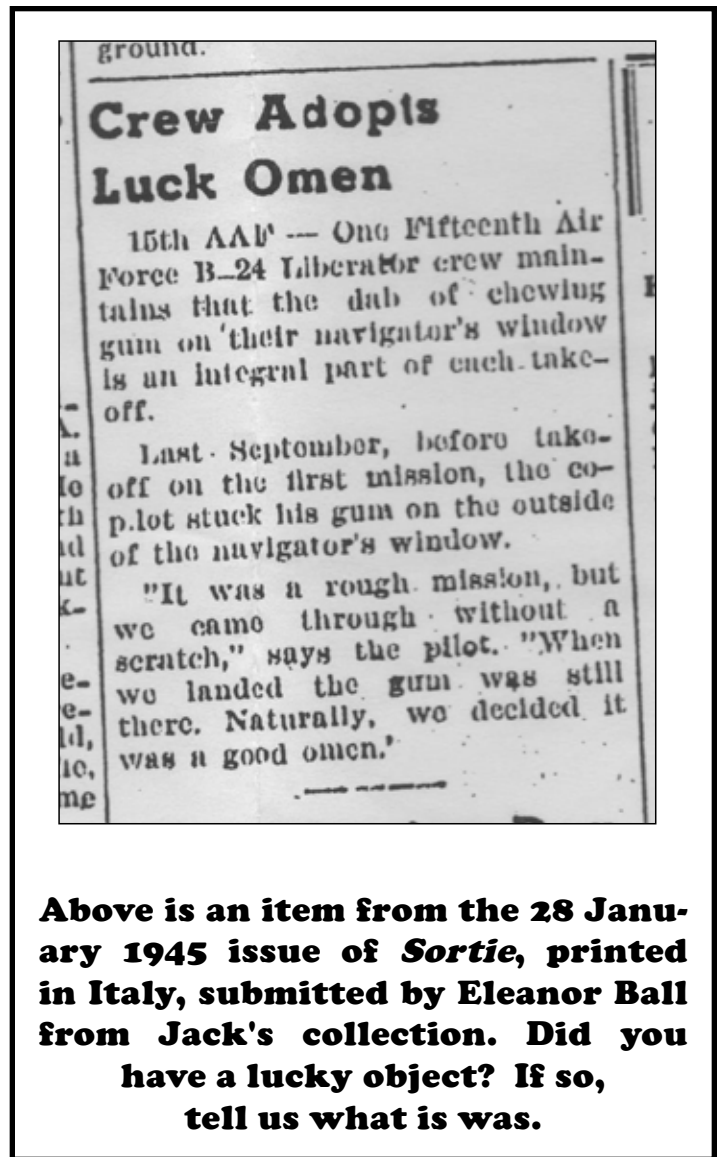
anti-aircraft fire. The group maintained its compact form and 28 bombers accurately dropped their bombs on the target.

Damage assessment photos showed 69.5 tons of 500-pound RDX bombs scored direct hits. Retaining its formation despite the flak, the group then turned off the target and headed home. Suddenly, 40 enemy fighters appeared and struck the group without warning. In V-shaped waves of four, the fighters knifed through the unescorted formation with guns and cannons ripping into the two center boxes. Eight planes from boxes C and D were hit and lost. The formation remained tight while the remaining gunners returned fire, and before the attackers could break away for another attack the group's gunners destroyed nine enemy aircraft: seven ME-109s and two FW-190s, and severely damaged seven more. The enemy did not return for a second attack.

Of the six planes the 780th put up for the Friedrichschafen effort (Mission 56 in '780' *Memoirs*), four completed the mission and two were lost. The crews and planes that were lost were the Jim Crane crew (Red "F") and the Lloyd Clarke crew (Red "H"). Six members of those crews were KIA, the rest were taken prisoner. Members of these crews who are on the *Flightline* mailing list include pilot Jim Crane's nephew, Larry Crane; navigator, Joe Spontak; and co-pilot P.J. Logan's son, Pat Logan.

Spontak and fellow crewmembers, George Brittan and Lee Englehorn, appeared in the film *On the Wing*, produced by Brad Branch, son of 780th member Bart Branch, about their survival of the Friedrichschafen mission.

The Friedrichschafen mission resulted in the heaviest losses the group had suffered in 56



Above is an item from the 28 January 1945 issue of *Sortie*, printed in Italy, submitted by Eleanor Ball from Jack's collection. Did you have a lucky object? If so, tell us what it was.

attacks upon German targets. The 465th was the lead group in two of the three attacks by the 55th Bomb Wing against the three primary targets at Friedrichschafen. During May-June-July 1944, the group averaged 22 enemy fighters destroyed for every bomber lost, and accounted for one enemy plane for every 760 rounds of ammunition. The ground crews were commended for their efforts and spirit, and for working unselfishly hand-in-hand with flying personnel.

Special thanks to 780th Friend Paul Jarvis for sending the *Flightline* the documents pertaining to this award.

TAPS

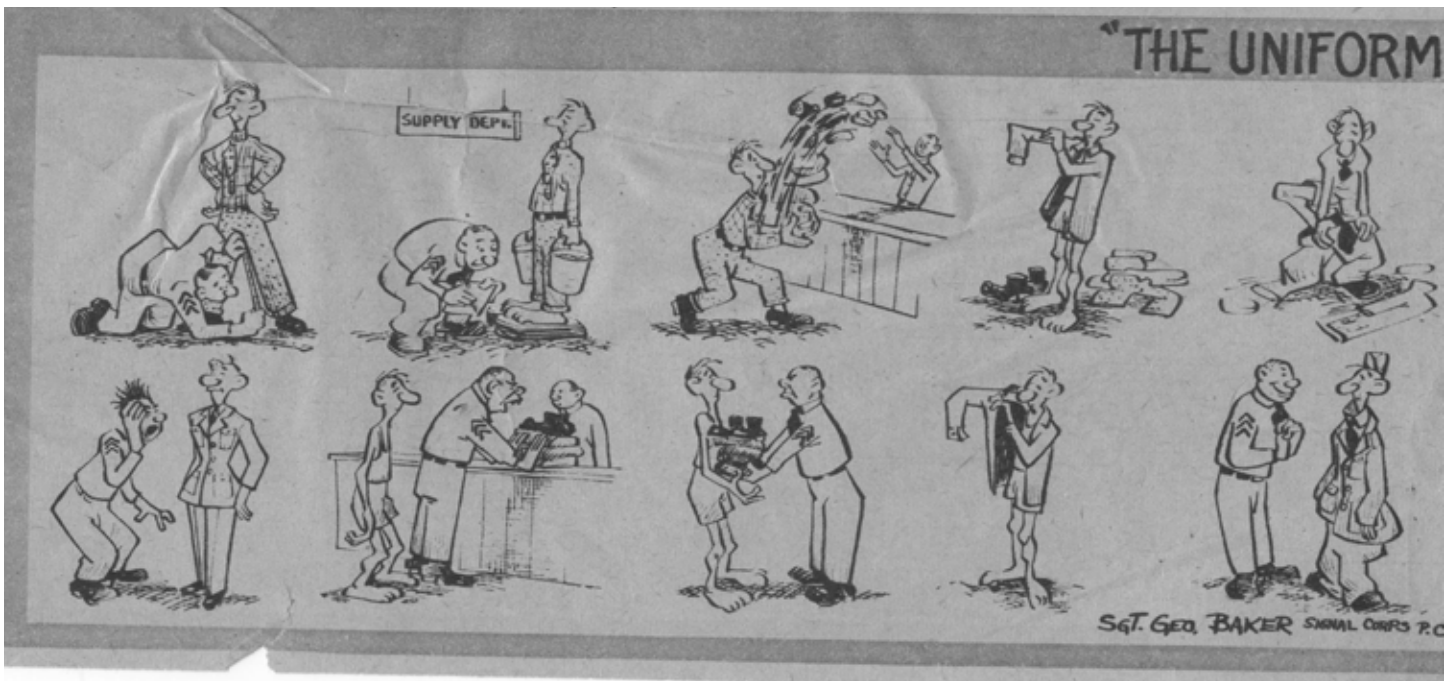


Louis J. (Dyke) Lindeman, 89, passed away peacefully in the Logan County (Kansas) Hospital on May 15, 2014. He was born September 1, 1924, on the family farm in Sheridan County. He attended school in a one room school house where he picked up the nickname *Dyke* because he resembled the little Dutch boy in the book, *Hans Brinker; or, the Silver Skates: A Story of Life in Holland*, who put his finger in a dike to save the city. In high school, Louis was brought back home early to help on the farm when his brother, Oliver, entered service in World War II. He joined the war himself after turning 18, and served with the 780th bombardment squadron as a turret gunner, flying 25 missions. After the war he ran a number of businesses, and farmed. On June 18, 1957 he married Alice Campbell, and they had four children. During retirement he enjoyed fishing, hunting, beating women at cards, going to casinos, and being with his grandkids, plus driving the occasional section with his friends. His wife, Alice, convinced him to travel, driving all over the country, and they were consistent attendees of 780th reunions. Louis is survived by his wife, Alice; children, Lou Ann (Brian) Hansen; Tom (Myra) Lindeman; Brenda (Steve) Macari; and Kay Lindeman; eight grandchildren; two brothers; two sisters; and numerous other relatives and friends.

Editor's note: Pat Logan provided the photo at right of Louis "Dyke" Lindeman from the 780th Abilene, Texas, Get-Together in September 2011. Louis, center, received a Never Forget coin and Veteran Award from the Dyess Air Force Base honor guard. "Louis was a great guy and I will always have fond memories of him and his comrades of the 780th Squadron," Pat writes. "They were a 'Band of Brothers' who were a major part of winning World War II."



Remember this guy? He's the Sad Sack. This is from his early days in the Army, "when he used to sit on the seat marked 'venereals' because he thought it meant 'recruits.'"



Kathy Le Comte
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Flightline



I may be mistaken, but this looks like V-Grand. According to the caption it's getting maintenance at Vis Island, Dalmatia, c. October 1945.