



# Flightline



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

March 2022

## ***First squadron casualty occurs first training mission***

# **1943: 780<sup>th</sup> quickly grows to combat strength**

*Below is the official history of the 780<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, from unclassified military records obtained from the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. This article is the first in a series. - Editor*

Under II Air Force General Order No. 78, dated 29 May 1943, the 465<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) was activated on 1 August 1943 at the AAB, Alamogordo, New Mexico. It consisted of Headquarters and four squadrons: the 780<sup>th</sup>, 781<sup>st</sup>, 782<sup>nd</sup> and 783<sup>rd</sup>. This is the History of the 780<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron (H).

Under General Orders No. 226, dated 14 August 1943, Captain Olen C. Cook was assigned to the 465<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, and by Oral Orders of CO 16BO--, he was further assigned as the Commanding Officer of the 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron.

Capt. Cook was a student at Wake Forest College, N.C. from 1935 to 1939. He entered the Air Corps as a Flying Cadet in the summer of 1940. After completing primary flight training at Hicks Field, Texas, and Basic Flight Training at Randolph Field, he went to Barksdale Field, La. and graduated in the first class of two-engine Bombardier-Pilot Cadets trained by the Army. He was awarded his wings in April 1941, and was assigned to Barksdale Field as a Bombardier-Pilot instructor.

After a year at Barksdale Field, he was stationed at Ellington Field, Texas, for almost a year as an instructor in the two-engine advanced flying school and pursuit school, which included fixed aerial gunnery and fixed air-to-ground gunnery.

From November 1942 to March 1943 Capt. Cook was stationed a B.A.F.S. Waco, Texas and Pampa,

AAFS during the organization of those two-engine schools. Upon request, he was then sent to F-AAF for B-24 transition, following which he was held at the Gulf Coast Training Center as an instructor and flight commander on B-24's. Upon further request he was transferred to the II Air Force in July 1943. Up to the end of 1943 he had flown 27 different types of modern aircraft, including among bombers and pursuits, the B-19, for a total flying time of approximately 2000 hours.

The original staff of the 780<sup>th</sup> Squadron was as follows:

Commanding Officer	Capt. Olen C. Cook
Executive Officer	none
Adjutant	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lawrence Leibowitz
Intelligence Officer	Capt. Charles Davis
Operations Officer	1 <sup>st</sup> Lt. Julius C. Kubala
Supply Officer	W.O.j.g. Seymour S. Rovner
Ordnance Officer	none
Sqdn. Bombardier	Lt. Emerson G. Dunning
Sqdn. Surgeon	1 <sup>st</sup> Lt. Eldred J. Sievers
Engineering Officer	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. Charles E. Dannelly
Communications Officer	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. William E. Barnes
Tech. Supply Officer	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. John P. Fischer

Approximately 20 percent of the Squadron key personnel were sent to Orlando, Fla. on 29 August 1943 for a 30-day period of training at the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics (AAF-SAT). There they suffered their first casualty when Squadron Bombardier Lt. Dunning was injured as the result of a runaway nose gun, this accident occurring on the initial mission of the Squadron from

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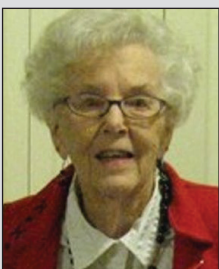
# TAPS



Ashby Nelson, 98, passed away March 11, 2022 in Preston, Idaho. He was born January 1, 1924 in Perry, Oregon, the son of David Eugene and Beula Bell Ashby Nelson. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. He married Irene Nielson on September 16, 1949. She preceded him in death in 2003. He married Betty Church on February 14, 2004. Ashby worked as an agricultural agent for the Department of Agriculture. In his later years he enjoyed working as a school crossing guard and enjoyed fishing and gardening. He was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having served in many callings including in the stake presidency. He served three missions for the church. Ashby is survived by his wife, Betty; daughter, Bonnie Smith; son, Justin (Serene) Mitchell; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren and two sisters.



Richard W. "Dick" Finck passed away on January 7, 2022, six weeks shy of his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday, in Leeds, Massachusetts. He was born the son of Gustav and Elizabeth Patterson Finck at his family's home in Buckland, Massachusetts during a blizzard in 1923. The doctor had to travel by horse-drawn sleigh to bring him into the world. Dick was commissioned as a B-24 bomber pilot with the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force in Italy during World War II. After the war he attended American International College in Springfield where he was the captain of the rowing team. Upon graduation Dick joined the family business, Finck and Son Insurance Agency, where he worked until he retired in 1990. He also served as a director of the Northampton Cooperative Bank and was the former president of Hill Institute in Florence. Dick had a variety of hobbies including fishing, oil painting, baking, photography, videography, collecting coins and stamps and building a huge HO train display. One of his most prized activities was traveling the world to fly fish and to attend summer and winter Olympic games, which he and his wife did for almost 30 years. He is survived by sons, Douglas (Cherry) and Roger (JoAnne); daughter, Marjorie (John) O'Leary; four grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. He was predeceased in 2018 by his wife of 70 years, Priscilla Parsons Finck.



Janice Jo Teater, 97, of Plain City, Ohio and formerly of Marysville, Ohio, passed away on September 4, 2021. She was born to the late Lelah (Drumm) Hull and Joseph Hawley on September 6, 1923 and raised by her mother Lelah, and Stanley Hull. Janice married William "Bud" Cloyd Teater on June 12, 1942 and they celebrated 66 years of marriage before his death on October 31, 2008. Janice worked in the jewelry department at several stores in the Columbus area while raising her 5 children. (con't)

# TAPS

She loved reading, crossword puzzles and garage sales, traveling the country with her husband in their camper, and boating with family and friends. Janice is survived by her daughters, Sherrie Conner and Danetta (Denny) Babbs; sons, Randy Teater and Greg (Sandra) Teater; daughter-in-law, Peg Teater; four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She was preceded by her husband and her son, Stanley Michael "Mike" Teater, and daughter-in-law, Elizabeth "Betsy" Ann Teater.

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the Pinecastle satellite air field of AAFSAT. Training was completed on 26 September 1943 and the unit was ordered to return to Kearns, Utah to rejoin the squadron. Meanwhile, on 11 September 1943, the balance of the squadron has been sent to Kearns, Utah, to complete basic training and to receive newly-assigned personnel.

On 30 September 1943, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Dunning was transferred to 520<sup>th</sup> Base Headquarters and Airbase Squadron, AAB, McCook, Nebraska, and was replaced as Squadron Bombardier Officer by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William R. Taylor.

Under Special Order No. 4, dated 4 October 1943, our Squadron, as part of the group, left Kearns, Utah on 5 October 1943, for AAB, McCook, Nebraska, to begin its three phases of combat training.

On 10 October 1943, Captain Albert L. Liggett was assigned to our Squadron, and became its first Executive Officer. On the same day, Capt. Edwin R. Sievers became Squadron Asst. Intelligence Officer. On 15 October, he was transferred to 781<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Squadron and Lt. Forrest L. Line replaced him as Asst. Intelligence Officer. On 22 October 1943, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Leibowitz, our first Adjutant, was transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> AF, Mitchell Field, N.Y., and was replaced by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Herbert P. Theobald, who arrived to take over these duties on 23 October 1943. On 28 October 1943, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Henry C. Morris was assigned to the Squadron, and became its first Ordnance Officer.

The month of October saw various changes in personnel as indicated. Planes and crews arrived for training purposes. At the end of the month, the total strength of the Squadron was 339 officers and enlisted men.

About 15 November 1943, our group commander, Colonel Rogers, obtained the loan of five new B-24 J's to aid in our first phase training. After their use they were returned to the AAB, Lincoln, Nebraska. First phase ground school was completed on 30 November 1943.

On 18 November 1943, Captain Liggett was transferred to 360<sup>th</sup> Base Headquarters and Airbase Squadron, being replaced by Captain George E. Hartelle. On this same date, four other squadron changes took place: Capt. Davis was appointed War Bonds and Insurance Officer. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ernest W. Fallentine was assigned as Assistant Operations Officer. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Line was appointed Physical Training Officer - also Squadron Unit Censor. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Eugene S. Schwartz was assigned as Cryptographic Security Officer - also Assistant Unit Censor.

Under Squadron Orders of 28 November 1943, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Fischer was detailed to duty as Personnel Supply Officer, replacing WOjg Rovner; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Gordon Hill was appointed Squadron Bombsight Officer; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Line was detailed to duty as Squadron Photographic Officer.

At the close of the month, the Squadron strength totaled 62 officers and 342 enlisted men.

On 5 December 1943, eight combat crews arrived, bringing the squadron up to full strength of 18 crews. This rates our squadron as having the largest number of combat crews in a combat squadron up to this time.

*This article will continue in the next issue of Flightline. Coming up: a 780<sup>th</sup> enlisted man receives the Distinguished Flying Cross and other medals, and the Squadron wraps up training and prepares to head overseas.*



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## *Flightline*

Jim Precup sent me a large envelope full of 780<sup>th</sup> memorabilia, including old issues of 780<sup>th</sup> News (precursor of *Flightline*), reunion photos, membership lists and war-time photos from Italy. I was able to connect the two items at right: the drawing, signed *Thomas 2-28-45*, appears to be based on the photo, below. The names in the drawing match the names written on the photo. From left in drawing: Wallace Clegg, James Fendley, Joe Maze and Jack Ball. In photo the order is Clegg, Ball, Fendley and Maze. Jack Ball was a crew chief so presumably this was his crew. What a crew of characters!

