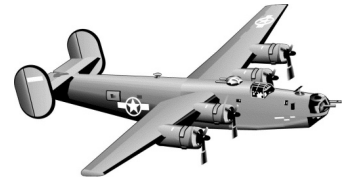




Flightline



Newsletter of the 780th Bombardment Squadron of WWII

September 2015

Two gunners down two Me 109s

Pardubice mission claims 2 crews

by Patrick Kelly

August 24, 1944 was a day to remember for the crew of Liberator 42-78538, also known as *Short Stuff*.

The mission of the day was Pardubice, Czechoslovakia, and the Fanto oil refineries. Lt. Harry F. Lengvenis' aircraft was leading Dog 1, and was hit directly by flak near his #3 engine, which immediately caught fire. It peeled off to the right and went down rapidly in flames, leaving no chutes to be seen by any of the other aircraft in the formation.

The crew consisted of pilot Lengvenis and co-pilot Ralph Kissel, navigator Raymond Bentrud, bombardier Arthur Hulseberg, and engineer C.E. Johnson; and gunners William Bowyer, Tulio Jacovnich, William Walker, Roy Conn and Jesse Prince. There were no survivors.

Lt. Lengvenis' aircraft was "Yellow G" named *Short Stuff*, and was hit about 12:45 p.m. over Czechoslovakia. The location of the crash was a village called Kroisboden, township Haag, Niederdonau (Lower Danube), Germany.

Here is the statement from 2Lt. Doyle J. Fischvogt from the Missing Air Crew Report:

"During a combat mission in Czechoslovakia on 24 Aug. 44, Lt. Lengvenis' aircraft was hit directly by flak centering on or near his number three engine. The ship immediately caught fire.



Original crew, back row, left to right: Sgt. Tulio Jacovnich (ball gunner), Sgt. Charles Sellers (tail gunner), Sgt. Lawrence Hamilton (nose gunner), Sgt. C.E. Johnson (engineer), Sgt. Arthur Jazawski (waist gunner), and Sgt. William Bowyer (radio operator). Front row, from left: Lt. Arthur Hulseburg (bombardier), Lt. Laurence Brehel (pilot), Lt. Ralph Kissel (co-pilot), and Lt. Raymond Bentrud (navigator). Those lost on 24 August 1944 were Jacovnich, Johnson, Bowyer, Hulseberg, Kissel and Bentrud.

It peeled off to the right and went down rather rapidly. He was leading Dog 1, and I was flying in Dog 2. There were no chutes opening as his ship disappeared to the rear and downward."

Here is another statement from S/Sgt. Kenneth E. Files:

"Yellow "G", the plane piloted by Lt. Langvenis was hit and caught fire around the number three engine. The right wing came off, and the fuse-

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Your News & Letters

It's been another quiet three months in the 780th. Please send me a note sometime about what you're doing or what your family is doing. We all are family in the 780th, as you can see from the messages below:

Dear Kathy,

You are such a trooper. Your granddad would be proud. Is your mom still living? Bet those twins are growing up fast.

I am getting too old to travel. We have lost so many dear friends in the 780th. It does not seem the same. But those left still enjoy discussing their war days. I still stay in touch with Eleanor Ball and Ashby and Betty (Nelson) by email. Email is such a blessing to us.

The last time I saw the group I was only capable of traveling with my companion, Dale. Ever since my stroke in 2006 I have lost my confidence. But since Dale needed help and so did I he has stayed with me for 8 years in his part of the house.

I have been blessed in that 4,500 sq. feet waterfront home for many years. But the upkeep and taxes were ruining me. So after Dale developed a beautiful yard and the market was going up, we were able to sell it within two months without a realtor. So now we have sized down to a 1,600 sq. foot home in The Villages. I can play bridge any time I care to, and Dale can return to his billiards games. It is old people's Disneyland. Do not have to lock the doors even at night. Very safe, everyone is friendly. Drive a golf cart everywhere so it cuts down on gas. Can see my church from my home. Moving was a real chore, could not have done it

alone.

I have had an achilles heel for three months. Finally yesterday I found the perfect doctor. We have the best doctors and hospital here. Grocery stores, shopping areas, restaurants, theaters, and anything needed for all a reasonable price. It is like living on a vacation always. People stay so active and healthy that they live longer.

Love and blessings,

Vera Bagley
9590 S.E. 171st Argyll St.
Villages, FL 32162
(863) 224-1541

Kathy,

Editor's note: It sounds like you are living in paradise, Vera. It's good to hear how happy and healthy you are. Yes, my grandmother is still living. She will be 91 next week. My twins, Lydia and Claudia (who attended almost every reunion in their lifetimes) are 12, going on 16 in some ways, but 6 in other ways! Their sister, Audrey, 10, is no different.



Dear Ms. Le Comte,

Attached please find an updated version of my mother's address. She has moved apartments at Westminster Canterbury. As she enjoys your newsletter so much,

she wanted to make sure that she continues to receive it.

Sincerely yours,
Vern Bettencourt Jr.

Editor's note: Very nice to meet you, Vern, and you can call me Kathy. I'm so glad to hear that your mother enjoys reading the *Flightline*.



I had a wonderful phone chat with Bill Edwards recently. Bill sounds great and looks great, as only Sweet Ol' Bill can do over a telephone. He has a few ailments but says, "at my age you have to have something wrong with you!"

Bill said he got a call recently from a woman trying to sell him drugs for his sex life. He told her, "I don't have a sex life!" Maybe Bill didn't recognize the call was actually from a friend trying to flirt!

Bill mentioned he's 90, second youngest in the squadron after George Kuchenbecker. This maybe explains his lovable "baby brother" behavior that continues to this day.

Anyway, Bill asked a very good question. He wanted to know how many veterans are left in the 780th. I said I'd try to find out and publish it here. See the next page. Thanks for asking, Bill!

780th Membership as of August 2015

The only way I have to determine how many 780th veterans remain is through the address list. Bob Bleier created the address list and I have added and subtracted from it. I also have an email address list now. The numbers below do not reflect how many 780th veterans are still living, only the ones I know about. Certainly there are others who never joined the association or were dropped from the rolls long ago. Here is the mail/email list by category:

	Mail	Email	Total
Veterans (including other squadrons)	43	6	49
Widows	7	3	10
Children	21	17	38
Grandchildren	2	3	5
Other family (niece, nephew, cousin)	5	2	7
Association (e.g. Eglin AFB, other squadrons)	1	3	4
Unknown connection	6	2	8
TOTAL	85	36	121

15AF Kansas City reunion

By the time you receive this newsletter the reunion of six bomb groups from the 15th Air Force will be only a couple weeks away (Sept. 24-27, see Dec. 2014, March 2015 and June 2015 issues of *Flightline*).

It appears that no one from the 780th bombardment squadron will be attending. I had planned to go but my husband, John, will be at an out-of-state professional conference, and someone has to be home to help with homework and fix dinner for three pre-teen girls! I am really sorry to have to miss a great gathering of guys who served in Italy like the 780th.

Carole Lee, treasurer and executive secretary of the 781st, reports in the September 2015 issue of *Pantanella News* that two veterans from the 781st, and one each from the 782nd and 783rd squadrons will be in Kansas City. We hope they have a great time and will remember the 780th.

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lage turned over on its side with the left wing in a vertical position. It then fell into a spin. A few seconds after it went out of my view, I heard and felt the concussion from a violent explosion. I saw no chutes. We were flying Lt. Lengvenis' wing, in number two position. This was the 24 Aug. at about 12:45, over Czechoslovakia."

Another 780th crew also was lost on this mission: pilot LeRoy Buck and crew F/O Harry Nolen, 2Lt. Lester Emery, 2Lt. Robert Carlen, Sgt. Irwin Gute, Sgt. Richard Lee, Sgt. Walter Shanley, Sgt. Russell Bakes, Sgt. George Pfeiffer and Sgt. Jim McParland. Only Noland survived from this crew.

Also on this mission two gunners were credited with destroying one Messerschmitt each: 2Lt. William Stephens and S/Sgt. Edward Zappa.

The front page photo is the original members of crew 39-8-144 taken January 1944 at McCook AAB, Nebraska. The name of the aircraft was *Luger Luggin' Lassie*.

