



STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

February 1987

Norfolk Chosen For 1988 Reunion

The 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association held its meeting on November 15, 1986, at the La Mansion Del Norte Hotel, San Antonio, TX. **Ken McClure** reported there are now 109 life members in the 345th Group. The memorial in Dayton is paid for, but more donations are needed for its upkeep.

The 1988 reunion site was chosen during the meeting. Several locations were discussed at length, but the final decision was Norfolk, VA, September 7-11, at the Holiday Inn Waterside. Co-chairmen are **Charles "Buck" Banz** (499th) and **Lou Higgins** (499th). A meeting was held January 15-17 in Norfolk to make initial decisions on various matters pertaining to the 1988 gathering.

Reunion Association Treasurer **Ken McClure** and President **Maury Eppstein** attended the meeting, along with **Brenna Weimann** of Security Travel. Several members from various

squadrons live in the general area and will assist on various phases of the reunion. More details, names, etc, will appear in coming issues of Strafer.

The Norfolk Convention & Visitors Bureau has been extremely helpful thus far, and their military Reunion Coordinator, **Sallye DiVenuti**, will certainly be of great assistance as

plans move forward during the coming months.

It is the aim of the committee to make Norfolk our best reunion ever and every effort will be made to realize that goal. Set your sights on Norfolk in 1988!

Maury Eppstein
President

President's Message

With each new gathering of the Air Apaches, our reunions seem to get better. Number Six, in San Antonio, was no exception. The many activities offered variety and interest; attendance hit a record high once again. **Bob Fain**, and everyone on his committees who helped with the plans and arrangements, presented us with a tremendous affair, one that offers a definite challenge to future gatherings.

San Antonio rounded out four years



Maury Eppstein
President

(two terms) for **Ben Fridge** as President of the 345th Reunion Association. We all extend our thanks to him for his notable efforts while in office.

As noted elsewhere in this issue, the new Reunion Committee, under the direction of "**Buck**" **Banz**, is already at work for Reunion Seven. From early indications, it is going to be another great one and we hope to round up some more "strays" among past Air Apaches to continue the tradition of reunion-increased attendance.

I am looking forward to the next two years as president and welcome your input on any ideas that will benefit the 345th. To all Air Apaches and their families, best wishes for the new year.

Maury Eppstein



Left to Right: **Al Bosworth**, **Maury Eppstein**, **Joan (Leslie) Caldwell** and **Shuler Gamble** recall the fabulous '40's in San Antonio.

HEADQUARTERS REPORTS

Off and running—here we go again! All of you Headquarters men, those attending the reunion and those of you not able to attend, I know will be joining me in wishing one of our own Headquarters men, "Congratulations."

Maury Eppstein has been elected president of the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association. I'm sure you all join me in pledging our full support to him during his tenure.

All of the "hoopla" of the past two years on San Antonio has now gone into the history ledger of the Reunion



Charles O. Metzler
VP, Headqtrs. Squadron

Association. On now to '88 and Norfolk. By the time you have digested everything in this issue of Strafer, you will have a composite idea of the San Antonio journey, I'm sure.

Headquarters had 32 people in attendance, including members and ladies. We again say "thank you" to all who worked so hard, diligently and faithfully to make this the best and biggest reunion ever!

Since you Headquarters men have your own letter, "Headquarters Happenings," going out to you periodically, most all Headquarters news will be coming out in this.

However, here are a few changes instituted in San Antonio. An allocation of duties was appointed to, and accepted by, these men. Your V.P. remains the same. Second V.P. is **Ken Gastgeb**; treasurer is **William (Doc) Hoffman** and **Jones Burson** has charge of roster changes. All of you unable to attend for whatever reason have been chosen as "Ambassadors of Good Will" to help promote Headquarters and the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association.

Charles O. Metzler

498th SQUADRON

The 1986 Reunion in San Antonio boasts the largest attendance thus far and provided a tremendous joy in the renewal of old friendships. Many thanks to our 345th organizers.

Some very generous unsolicited donors came forth during our stay with

Henry J. Reynolds
VP, 498th Squadron



amounts of \$100, \$50, \$25 and \$10. We also have a secret donation to be revealed at a later date. Many thanks to those who have donated so freely to the 498th. It will make the purchase of paper, envelopes and stamps a little easier.

A few days before the reunion, **Jim Manners** had a leg amputated. He had to miss the reunion. A number of us talked with Jim via telephone at the nursing home where he is recuperat-



ing. It really made his day. His number is (206) 423-4060 at the facility.

We had a resurgence of interest during the reunion to locate those still not heard from. Please make an effort to contact one person whose name you know should be on the roster. This would be a tremendous help. We were happy to see many new faces. What a thrill after 40 years. When we meet in Norfolk, hopefully additional faces will appear.

Write me with any information you think our members would enjoy hearing. Pauline and I are proud to be associated with a compassionate, growing and lively group such as this. There is nothing like it anywhere else! Thanks for all your cards, letters and best wishes.

Henry J. Reynolds

499th SQUADRON

Dale A. Rapp
VP, 499th Squadron



Dale A. Rapp, new Vice President of the 499th Squadron, was discharged from the Air Force on October 10, 1945. He farmed in Nebraska until 1964, when he moved to Plano, TX, and went to work in Dallas as a service technician for Western Auto. He retired in 1976.

Dale and his wife, Rosella, have been married 41 years and have three sons, one daughter and six grandchildren.

Dale asks, since plans are underway for our next reunion in Norfolk, for any suggestions concerning the reunion. Contact him and he will forward them to the proper people.

Dale A. Rapp

501st SQUADRON

Ed Bina
VP, 501st Squadron



For the 1986 345th Bomb Group Reunion in San Antonio, the 501st Squadron, with spouses and guests, met together with Headquarters and their spouses and guests for a banquet on Friday night, November 14, at Lackland AFB Officers' Club. Arrangements for use of the Club were made by **George Musket**. Attending the banquet were 219 people.

Jeff Blackmon, President of the 501st, asked Connie Greenquist to give the Invocation. **Bill Cather** presented a plaque to **Bob Fain**, and it was a heartfelt tribute to Bob as the first CO of the 501st. **Al Bosworth** presented Bob with a model B-25, a replica of the Black Panther plane Bob flew in WWII. Bob then made an honorary presentation in the 501st Squadron to **Col. Clint True**.

The squadron members held a brief business meeting. Elected officers were:

Ed Bina — President;
Sandy Cortesio — Vice President;
Neil Fiorello — Vice President;
Al Bosworth — Treasurer;
Virginia Bosworth — Secretary.

Good luck to the officers in the new term. They will appreciate your consideration and cooperation!

Virginia Bosworth
Secretary

REUNION NOTES



Left to Right: Ken McClure, pilot and Jim Mahaffy, bombardier, the last surviving crew members of the B-25, *Doodle, Jr.*



Hombres entertaining the 345th Bomb Group during the Night in San Antonio.



Henry Jepson, George Cooper, Charlie Schell



Bob Fain, Reunion Chairman, 1986.

Newly Elected Officers

Association Officers:

Pres.—Maury Eppstein, 800 Mountain Home Rd, Woodside, CA 94602
VP—Shuler Gamble, 2011 Stebbins Drive, Houston, TX 77043
Treas.—Ken McClure, 5581 Chowning Way, Columbus, OH 43213
Sec.—Elbert Bosworth, 839 W 21st St, San Bernardino, CA 92405

498th—Henry Reynolds, Box 281, Beattie Road, Rock Tavern, NY 12575
499th—Dale Rapp, Route 1, Box 552R, Pottsboro, TX 75076
500th—Fred Moore, 4952 Vivaldi Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89102
501st—Ed Bina, 628 North Deresch, Antigo, WI 54409
HDQ—Charles Metzger, 1019 8-Mile Road, Cincinnati, OH 45230

Those of you who were at the Reunion Banquet in San Antonio know the excitement of seeing in person, for the first time, our own Apache Princess — Joan Leslie. Sometime in 1944, the men of the 345th Bomb Group voted Joan Leslie their pin-up girl, and many of the men then received autographed pictures of her in costume.

In the age of television, we're not too impressed with "movie stars," but we were all most impressed with this delightful lady who gave up the time to spend 24 hours at the Reunion. She also donated a sizeable check to the 345th Bomb Group Memorial Fund!

That evening, the cameras and reporters from a local TV station were at the Ballroom for an interview the moment Leslie arrived. When Maury Eppstein introduced her at the banquet, she commented on her appreciation of the honor of being the 345th Bomb Group pin-up girl because she sincerely feels the publicity generated by this helped her to get some very excellent roles.

Several people have asked about the possibility of autographed pictures of Joan Leslie. She has indicated she would be glad to send pictures. Just send your name and address to: Virginia Bosworth, 839 West 21st Street, San Bernardino, CA 92405. Also, please write whether you were active in the 345th Bomb Group after March 1, 1944, or simply because you've been a fan of Joan Leslie for 40 years!

"30 Minutes Over San Antonio"

The latest two people from the 345th Bomb Group to fly in a B-25 were Mary Warnick and George Hvidzak.

Tommy Gilstrap and his committee organized a lottery to raise money for the 30 minute flight over San Antonio in the Yellow Rose.

Says Gilstrap, "Mary was ecstatic (at having won the ride) and George, who vowed to give his ticket away if he won, was as happy as when he got his first bicycle."

Congratulations to both Mary and George and many thanks to Tommy and his people for organizing such a tremendous event!

Crew Chief

He was born and grew
to patience in some place
Where life had to be torn
from a reluctant ground
With old machines and blood.
Here, he practiced necromancy
of bolt and cable, casting
spells upon dumb machinery
in pre-dawn darkness;
Selling bits of his soul
that we might have a better
chance at life; he cast

out demons from the plane's soul
as a banker casts out counterfeit;
Could smell the evil in
hydraulic fluid as a vintner
smells the bitterness in grapes.
He would touch the plane
in some magi-mixture of love
and antagonism, rap
a hand against her side,
"She's ready," and turn away.
Our faith was rooted
in the truth of that.

—William C. Hilton,
499th Squadron

Strafer Shorts

Keith W. Hopper, a US 5th Army Air Force historian, collects, catalogs and stores information and records on the Fifth. He wants to promote public awareness of the Fifth's achievements and sacrifices in the Southwest Pacific during 1941-46.

Please send copies of personal diaries, operation records, crash reports, missing aircrew reports, unit histories, personal recollections, photographs, letters home, unit citations, special orders, etc., for his collection. He will meet any expense incurred by those submitting any information. His address is: 18 Bishop Street, Townsville 4810, Queensland, Australia.

Herbert Garland has several patches left over from the reunion in San Antonio. Interested parties can purchase one or more patches for

\$3.25 each. Send check or money order to: Herbert Garland, 9740 Flora Ave., Overland, MO 63114.

The 345th Patch was not the only reunion memorabilia to make a splash. The pewter B-25 lapel pin also is in great demand. Those of you who didn't get one and would like one (or two or three...), address inquiries to: Buckle Connection, 2290 Eastman Avenue £106, Ventura, CA 93003.

Bruce D. Hoy, Curator at the National Museum & Art Gallery in Papua New Guinea, recently began a quest for color photos depicting aircraft and men of the 345th Bomb Group in Papua New Guinea. Hoy would like to add the color photographs, dedicated to WWII, to his display gallery at the museum. His address is: PO Box 2566, Boroko, Papua, New Guinea.

REUNION COMMITTEE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME 01/85-12/31/86

Dues	\$ 4475.00
Life Members (109)	10900.00
Book Sales (\$5/Month)	610.00
Interest (Checking)	583.29
Interest CDs	1209.55
Reunion	6145.04
	<u>\$23922.88</u>

EXPENSES

Strafer & Rosters	\$ 7484.31
Postage	928.00
Telephone	488.12
Ben Fridge Expenses	342.00
Air Force Museum	250.00
Reunion Expenses	4552.54
	<u>\$14044.97</u>

Gain	\$ 9877.91
Bank Balance 1/85	3469.36
Bank Balance 12/31/86	\$13347.27
Less CDs plus Interest Chase Bank	11209.55
Checking Account 12/31/86	<u>\$ 2137.72</u>

(ALL BILLS HAVE BEEN PAID)

Dues Are Due

CDs are not available for operating expenses at this time.

Current checking account balance of \$2137.72 is dangerously low, and we need the dues to continue our program and deliver the Strafer to you!

Send to: **Ken McClure**

5581 Chowning Way
Columbus, OH 43213
Phone: 614/864-5772

REUNION Sept. 7-11, 1988



**Holiday Inn Waterside
Norfolk, Virginia**

**345th B. G. Reunion Committee
2770 E. Main St.
Columbus, Ohio 43209**

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