

# STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

March 1992

## September Reunion Added Attraction

### 345th B-25 MITCHELLS IN THE PACIFIC

A corner of the Hospitality Room in the Grand Ballroom will be set up with a 30" TV monitor and chairs in a theater setting to view videos containing footage of the 345th Bomb Group in action.

The Pacific videos will consist of the following:

**WARPATH: STORY OF THE 345th BOMB GROUP** — Rare motion picture film, much of it in color, highlight this unique story of the Air Apaches in WWII. Shows the Group's history . . . role, places and planes . . . from aside training, shipping out to the southwest Pacific, first missions, air campaigns in New Guinea, return to the Philippines, Okinawa/Ie Shima, attacks off Japan, and surrender. (23 Min., b&w/color).

**MISSION TO RABAU** — Includes Air Apache 345th BG motion pictures. The Fifth Air Force in action against the Japanese, from buildup through late 1943. (56 Min., b&w).

**AIR OPERATIONS: LAE - SALAMAUA** — 345th BG Mitchells in action. Official

USAAF combat film of Fifth Air Force heavies, mediums and fighters attacking Japanese airfields at Lae and Salamaua in the New Guinea area. (31 Min., b&w).

**AIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST MUNDA** — 345th BG B-25s on missions. USAAF official combat film of the WWII aerial raids on this tough Japanese-held island. Rare footage of action over the Central Pacific area. (45 Min., b&w).

**WESTWARD IS BATAAN** — Includes Air Apache Mitchells in combat. Official film of Air Force support for Army & Marine New Britain and New Ireland invasions in early 1944. (42 Min., b&w).

**STORY OF THE B-25 MITCHELL** — North American's twin-engine medium bomber; its design, development, and manufacturing. Covers all the many variants. Modifications to armament; use as an extraordinarily successful low-level attack plane. Nose guns, 75mm cannon, delayed action bombs, parafrags . . . strafing Japanese shipping, airfields and troop position. (55 Min., b&w/color).

For those who yearn for a little nostalgia, a 22 Min., b&w video titled **HOW TO FLY THE B-25** (The Official U.S. Army Air Force pilot training film from WWII) will be shown upon request.

This presentation will be conducted by Boomerang Publishers of Colorado. Copies of the videos will be on sale at the Reunion, and also available by mail order after the Reunion.

This added feature to the reunion should create some excitement and hopefully encourage members who have not registered as yet to do so immediately.

#### REUNION REMINDERS

Early Bird registrations must be in by June 1, 1992 to be eligible to win a FREE ROOM for the reunion. All reservations must be in by July 15, 1992.

#### ROOM RATES

\$60.00 per night room rate is for 1 occupant or as many as four occupants. There is no additional charge for occupancy of more than 1 person!

### AIR APACHE INDIAN HEAD TO BE TV FEATURE EVENT

On April 21, 1992, two World War II B-25s will take off from the deck of the aircraft carrier Ranger to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Gen. Doolittle's raid on Tokyo.

This event will take place off Point Loma, San Diego, CA.

Our B-25 "IN THE MOOD" which has an Air Apache Indian head painted on the tail, and soon to become the incarnation of Apache Princess, has been chosen by the Navy as one of two B-25s to launch from the carrier deck.

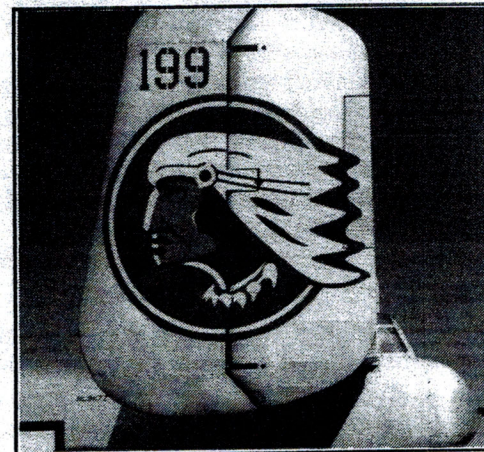
After the launch, these two B-25s will join with additional B-25s and fly up the California coast to make several passes

over Gen. Doolittle's home. Gen. Doolittle is quite frail and mostly bedridden. He will be wheeled outside to watch the bombers passing overhead.

The Navy, in allowing civilians to fly non-military owned aircraft off one of their carriers, is paying great tribute to a hero and pioneer in aviation. The Dept. of Defense has made this carrier take-off a National Historic Event.

We have been told that the TV networks will be covering the take-off and the Discovery Channel may produce a special program on the 50th anniversary.

From correspondence to Ken McClure



from Robert Lumbard, 498 Roosevelt Ave, Pomona, CA 91767. Phone 714/865-5072.

# Squadron Reports

## 498th Squadron

Merl G. Wooden  
V.P. 498th Sqd.



With the greatest regret, I report the death of Lamar Bowen. I had a letter from Mae. He passed away December 12. Lamar was able to attend a couple of our reunions. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

I also had a phone call from Mike Coloff a few weeks ago. He reported that Elbert Wardle suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. The last report I had, he and Katherine were in a nursing home. Elbert helped in organizing our first group reunion along with Bert Rosenbaum, back in 1970. We will all miss them at our reunions. I just called Bert and he said that Elbert had improved a little.

I had an interesting item sent to me by Dorothy Smith, widow of Frederick Smith, a pilot in our squadron. Fred passed away in Nov. of '88. She sent an article from a Washington, DC paper dated Nov. 29, 1944. The headlines are as follows: "US BOMBERS NOW FIRING 75mm CANNON AT THE ENEMY. FLYING FIELD ARTILLERY SUNK JAP DESTROYER." As you remember, we didn't keep those H's very long because they were tearing up the nose of the aircraft.

Don Stout wrote about one of his experiences. If you recall, we had a 150 gal. auxiliary gas tank between the radio operator and the gunner. The pilot would switch over to the tank, then call back to see if the tank was empty. Don says, "After finishing sending a radio report, I turned around to see Joe Alato standing over the tank with his Zippo lighter in his hand. I went into a cold sweat thinking he was going to check the tank with his lighter. I took a diving leap across the tank and caught Joe, shoulder high, and knocked him up against the upper turret. Joe said, "What the hell's the matter with you?", and I said "What the hell are you doing?" Joe said, "Filling my lighter." So much for stories at this time.

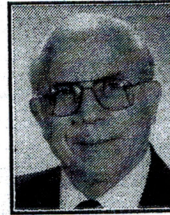
Our reunion isn't too far off. This will be one of our best. The AmeriFlora will be worth the trip to Columbus alone. So be sure to keep your calendar cleared for Sept. 11 thru 13, '92.

SEE YOU IN COLUMBUS . . . HOW'S YOUR PIGGY BANKS? . . .

Have you sent in your reservations for the squadron banquet to Brenna Terrell? Be sure that it is a separate check. The banquet will also be well worth the trip.

## 499th Squadron

Benjamin F. Miller  
V.P. - 499th Sqd.



The holiday season is over, and the new year is about to start. The more we listen to the news and predictions of the future, the more complicated and confusing it becomes. We know it won't be a repeat of 1991 because every year has been radically different from our expectations and predictions of the so-called experts. Here in Indiana, they always say, if you don't like the weather, just wait a half hour and it will change. Our economy seems like our weather. The biggest thing on schedule for all of us is to make it to the reunion in Columbus in Sept. for the 50th and surely the best ever.

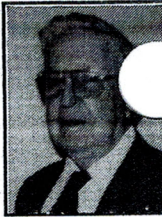
Above all, let's not forget to keep all of our people in our thoughts and in our daily prayers. They say there are no unbelievers on the battlefield. I'll never forget the day both of the ships we were on were hit by suicide planes, and one person from the 499th was blown through the air and wounded slightly. He had a look of terror in his eyes, and was holding a wounded hand with tears streaming, and he said "How in the hell do you pray?" He was observed attending church services several times after that.

Thanks again to the 499th members who attended our Sqd. mini-reunion. We have heard from all but one, they all enjoyed it, and are looking forward to the big one in Columbus in '92. I do have an up-to-date roster of the squadron, so if you have any questions, or have changes to make, contact me and I'll try to help you.

Do you remember what you were doing fifty years ago, on the 7th of December? I was listening to the radio and looking at a rusty old pistol given me by my grandfather and trying to figure out if it could be made to operate. It still lives here, and it still doesn't work, but it means a lot to me. All the good memories from past reunions seem to mean more and more to us with every reunion. Do your best to attend for more treasured memories.

## 501st Squadron

Jerry Murphy  
V.P. - 501st Sqd.



This article will not be as lengthy as my previous ones due to the fact that there is not much to report at this time.

On behalf of the 501st Bomb Squadron, I would like to offer condolences to the family of Shuler Gamble. As you may have heard by now, Shuler passed away Feb. 7, 1992. While he was President of the 345th Bomb Group Association, he did a fantastic job. He will be greatly missed.

I spoke to George Mordecai and he is waiting to receive the latest address corrections of the members of our squadron. When he receives that list he will then send out a letter giving all the details for our squadron banquet and other events. As soon as I receive the latest list from Kenny McClure and Phil Rack I will send it along to George.

I received a nice letter from Henry Kortemeyer. I'm sorry I haven't replied, Kort, but you will be getting the latest roster in a few weeks.

I have been working on finding our "Lost Sheep" for quite some time and to tell the truth I need some help. What is needed more are army orders that you may have that will contain Army Serial Numbers from anyone in our Group. Once I have the Serial Numbers, I can then go to the Veterans' Administration and they will tell me if these people are living or deceased. Jesse Dean from the 498th Bomb Sqd. and Charles Maloney from the 499th Sqd. have sent me quite a few names and I am busy checking on those. Thanks Jesse and Charlie for the help. I know that in the 501st there must be some who still have travel orders, etc. laying around. I lost some of my records some time ago so I am not a good example to follow.

Recently I was talking to Gordon Ball and he inquired about Wally Leask and Dusty Davis. I gave him Wally's telephone number in Alaska and he found that it is no longer a working number. Wally, if you get a chance, send me your new number and I will pass it along to Gordon. As for Dusty Davis - I can't come up with his address or phone number.

Whatever happened to:

Donald J. Britton, Hollywood, CA  
Joe E. Kelley, New Haven, CT  
Raymond P. Kohout, Cicero, IL  
Brock M. Moore, Louisville, KY  
Peter Zummo, Hammona, LA  
Phillip J. Girioux, N Vassalboro, ME  
Ephrem J. Auclair, New Bedford, MA  
Macon Moye, Moorehead City, NC  
James C. Neaville, Tulsa, OK  
Thomas R. Youngblood, Kingston, PA

## 5 AF MEMORIAL FUND UPDATE

The 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association has received word from the 5AF Memorial Fund that we would be assured of a plaque on the memorial.

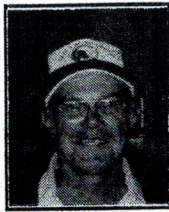
A letter from the 5AF will be going to all 5AF personnel for contributions for the memorial inasmuch as they have not reached their goal as yet. The letter will have a sketch of the memorial that is being planned. 345th members are asked to do what they can to help complete the funding for this memorial.

(Information contributed by Maury Eppstein).

## Headquarters Group

Ken Gastgeb  
V.P. - HQ Group

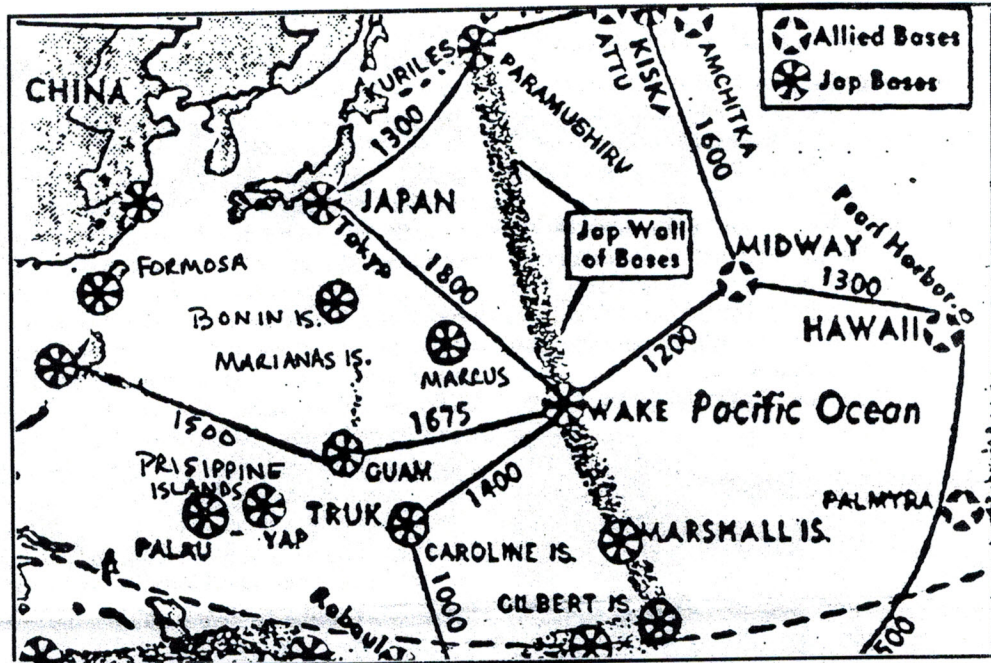
I hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and all a Happy New Year.



Not much news from here at this time.

Looking through one of my scrap books I noticed a newspaper clipping that I had cut out of an August 7, 1943 paper. My mother and dad had the Pittsburgh Press sent to me when we were overseas. It is a map of the Pacific Ocean. This was two months after we arrived at Port Moresby, New Guinea. The map shows that the Japs had control of most of the territory in the Pacific and we at Port Moresby were practically surrounded. The Marines were fighting at Guadalcanal and our Army along with the Aussies were fighting in the mountains just north of Port Moresby. That was our situation in 1943.

We will all be reading in the Strafer and Squadron newsletters about the 1992 Reunion so I will only say hope to see you there.



**LINEUP OF JAP AND ALLIED POSITIONS** in the vast Pacific warfront, where U.S. forces are increasing their attacks daily, is shown here. Down the middle is a wall of Jap bases that is being hit by bombers, warships and invasion forces.

## Heroic Action on the SS Morrison Waite

Dear Julius (Fisher):

You may or may not remember a Staff Sergeant in the Communications Section named old J. Morrison. Morrison was a graduate mechanical engineer who, because of the depression had been able only to find work as a lathe hand. Having been drafted into enlisted ranks he tended to be on the bitter side. He was not much of a mixer and, as I recall, had no close buddies within the squadron. Nevertheless, he was a reliable, knowledgeable noncom of no mean abilities.

The ground echelon as you know traveled from Biak to Leyte in a Liberty ship and occupied the forward hold. While anchored off Dulag about 6 pm one evening we were kamikazied and the 2nd plane which attacked us managed to impact just at 2nd deck level of the forward hold leaving his engine just inside the point of impact. I happened to be up in the ship's galley at that instant but fellows who survived in the hold told me that Morrison was active in fighting the fire which raged in the hold and had the foresight to flood the magazine of the 4 inch gun which was just forward of the hold.

I can testify on my own to the fact that, when the hospital ship was brought up rail to rail with our ship, Morrison was there busy helping get wounded personnel over the rail to safety. The line seemed endless. When finally it was about complete I turned to Morrison as though to throw my arm across his shoulder. He flinched suddenly away and almost screamed "Don't touch me!" At that instant the moon broke through the cloud cover and I saw where his back and shoulders not covered by his life

## IN MEMORY OF

Jack H. Alexander	500th	Jan 13, '92	Durham, NC
John W. Belknap	501st		Forsyth, GA
Lamar Bowen	498th	Dec 12, '91	Greer, SC
Eugene J. Colihan	499th	Nov, '91	New Orleans, LA
Shuler Gamble	499th	Feb 7, '92	Houston, TX
Helen Hanna	500th	Widow of Cliff	Whitmore Lake, MI
Wilfred D. Helvey	501st	Dec 12, '91	Newark, OH
Eugene V. Kay	500th	Feb 13, '92	Spencer, IN
Richard Mohlke	500th	April 2, '91	Lakeland, MN
Lloyd Nolen			
Everett E. Robertson	501st	Dec. 20, '91	Lexington, KY
Linus Sargent	500th	Jan 2, '92	Green Valley, AZ
Col. Fred Smith	498th	Nov 12, '88	Orlando, FL

The last issue of the Strafer listed Lenly Humphries as deceased. The information sent in was happily incorrect in two ways . . . the information was incorrect in both spelling and accuracy . . . Lenley Humphreys (correct spelling) is alive and well, but we're not too sure of Lenly Humphries, whoever he is. We're sorry for the inconvenience caused to the Humphreys family.

### Association Officers

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517/543-4816

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614/864-5772

Reunion Chairman -- Ken McClure  
Co-chairman -- Jay Moore  
614/836-5215

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499 - Ben Miller  
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702/871-4405

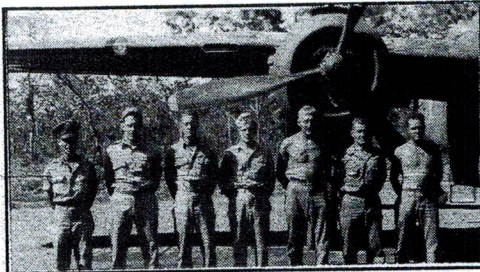
501 - Jerry Murphy  
5208 Lynd Ave, Lyndhurst, OH 44124  
216/442-7273

## The Jap That Got Away

I was assigned to the 499th as a replacement radio operator/gunner in early October, 1943. My first two missions were to Rabaul on October 18th and November 2, 1943. This event happened on November 2.

Our B-25s were C and D models, with a hand held .30 Cal MG pointing out of a small window on each side of the tail fuselage. This was my gun position, and afforded little or no forward visibility for picking up targets because of the wing and engine nacelles.

After crossing the ridge between the nearby



The above photo of George Cooper and his crew (499th) was taken at 17-mile strip in New Guinea in 1943. It has been in the possession of Bob LeMay (499th) who recently sent all his photos to me. I am making arrangements with the Still Picture Branch of the National Archives in Washington to accept our photos (eventually) for preservation.

Contributed by Vic Tatelman.

volcanos, the pilot dropped down to spread our load of phosphorus bombs along the shore of the harbor. Looking out over my port side .30 cal., I only saw rows of buildings (huts, shacks, etc). I figured they must be of some value to the Japs, so started hosing them down with my gun. Everybody else was shooting at something, so I thought I should be doing the same. Besides, it made me feel better. In no time, I quickly used the fifty rounds in the ammo rack. Unwrapping another belt of ammo, I reloaded the rack, charged the gun, and looked back out of the window. Instead of crude huts and shacks, however, what I saw was a single engine plane pointed right at me, with a row of red lights blinking along the leading edge of his wing. From briefing, I knew that all "friendlies" in the area that day would have two engines (B-25s or P38s) so I swung my MG toward him and fired. He was dead level with us, and not very far out from us. I was sure I couldn't miss, he was that close. But the .30 cal. only fired ONE bullet and stopped! I quickly charged it again, but that plane was no longer in sight. The gun worked just fine after that, but I never again had such a set-shot in any of my next 50+ missions.

Perhaps this was the same Jap plane that Larry Hickey mentions on page 88 in his great book. *Warpath Across the Pacific*, as making a pass on Lt. Cabell's plane from a blind spot on his left. I remember that we had some hits

on the left side of our plane in the life raft and radio compartments. I don't think, however, that I scored on the Jap with my SINGLE .30 cal. bullet.

Frank Croft was our flight engineer that day, and it is he who reminded me that Lt. Ca' was the pilot. I don't recall the names of gunner or copilot. I do recall asking the pilot how fast we came out of Rabaul that day, and his answer was indeed memorable: 330 miles per hour! And we were at sea level! In other words, we were executing that well known military maneuver known as, "Getting the Hell Outa There!"

Contributed by Donald E. Hitchcock, (radio operator-499th) 120 Bethlehem Pike #A302, Ft Washington, PA 19034.

## HOT COLUMN!

SEND IN 345TH REUNION DUES  
\$15 FOR 1992 % KEN MCCLURE  
5581 CHOWNING WAY,  
COLUMBUS, OH 43213

JOIN 5AFMF \$5 PER YEAR DUES.

MAKE CONTRIBUTION TO  
5AFMF TO HELP FINANCE 5AF  
MEMORIAL AT AF ACADEMY.

HELP LOCATE "LOST SHEEP"  
FROM 345TH.

### "Heroic Action" cont'd from page 4

jacket were burned and wrinkled like old leather. Reluctantly, very reluctantly, he finally agreed to join the others on the hospital ship. He crossed over just as they were about to move away and the last thing I heard was him sharply telling people on the other ship not to touch him.

I guess it was two, maybe three weeks later while we were still on the beach at Dulag that Harry Montgomery was one of the first to come back from the hospital ship. When I ask

ed him how Morrison was doing he just looked back at me and said, "He died that night."

I have never forgotten this incident, it tells me that TRUE HEROES emerge sometimes where you least expect them. He probably comes to mind more often than any other member of the old squadron. Our casualties that night were almost 50%. Capt. Shetron who was O.D. that night was one. I understand he was crushed under the jerry-rigged stairway that led down into the hold. Roll call the morning after was heart-wrenching.

I wonder how many others from the 501st

remember Morrison and are aware of depth of his contribution.

*This story is taken in part from a letter to Julius Fisher from Fred Deady. Deady was one of the original cadre of the Communications Section, 501st Sqd. Julius adds "He (Fred) worked as an engineering supervisor for Chrysler Corp. and retired from there. I worked there also as a manager in engineering but several buildings away. Eventually our paths crossed and not remembering him from my time in the 345th, you can imagine my surprise to find out that we had served in the same outfit, at the same time, and lived for many months just a few yards apart. Small world."*

**345 B.G. Reunion Committee  
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Columbus, Ohio 43234-0287**

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