

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON 499th SQUADRON 500th SQUADRON 501st SQUADRON

345th Bomb Group Reunion Association December 1993

5th Air Force Memorial Dedicated at Academy

A memorial to the 5th Air Force now stands at the US Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, CO. It was dedicated October 8 with some 300 attending. About 15 of them were 345th members. A bronze plaque detailing the service record of the 345th is a proud feature of the memorial. There are 28 plaques identifying each unit of the 345th on the memorial (see the picture on page four). Maury Eppstein (HQ) of the 345th delivered the keynote address for the dedication ceremony. He described the history of the 5th Air Force. Excerpts here begin after Mac Arthur was evacuated from the Philippines.

"Arriving in Australia MacArthur learned that the situation was by no means as he had expected. By July he had decided to make wholesale changes, one of which was returning his top air commander to the US and requesting a replacement. In Washington, General Hap Arnold called Major General George Kenney in from California and assigned him to Australia. Kenney's first meeting with General MacArthur was on July 29, the very day that 4,000 to 5,000 Japanese landed on the north coast of New Guinea near Buna.

"Our 5th Air Force was activated on September 3, 1942. The newly formed 5th Air Force was not a muscular specimen. It had only the partially equipped 3rd attack group, the 8th, 35th, and 49th fighter groups, the 19th, 22nd and 38th bomb groups and the 21st and 22nd troop carrier squadrons. The 22nd bomb group had come into action with Martin Marauders and had difficulty with maintenance problems. The 38th did not have its planes and two of its squadrons were actually assigned to a neighboring theater. And General Kenney didn't even learn he had a 43rd bomb group until he had been in Australia nearly two weeks. And the 43rd had no planes at all.

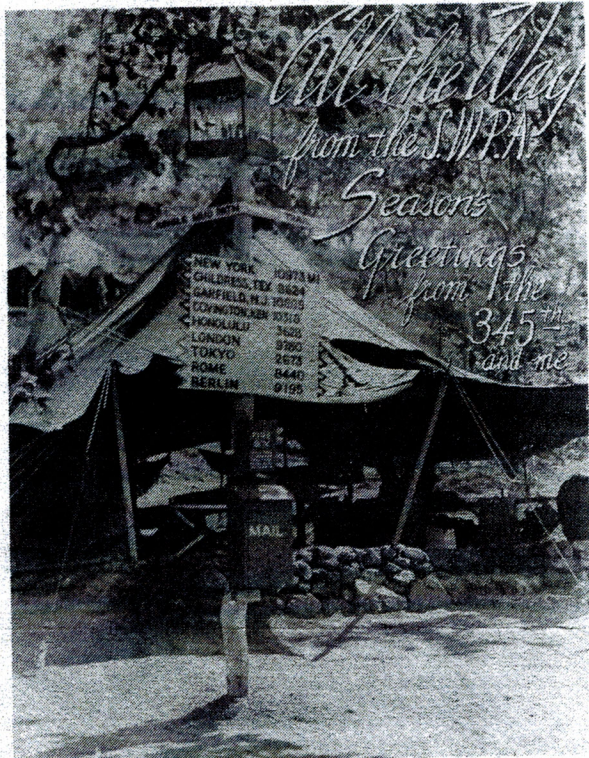
"Calling for an inventory of all planes in the force he was advised that there was a mish-mosh collection supposedly totaling 517 aircraft. After culling...he had 220.

"All this and Washington had decided that Europe was first priority. In August he told Washington, 'We are salvaging even the skin for patchwork from 20-millimeter fire and to patch up smaller holes we are flattening tin cans.'

"The 345th bomb group, with its B-25s, arrived and went into action in New Guinea in June, 1943.

"Units of the 5th Air Force conquered the enemy in the skies, sunk his ships at sea eliminated his planes and bases on ground.

"The 345th bomb group, my old outfit, was given the mission to fly up to Japan and escort their peace envoys to frame the details of surrender."



This is one of the Christmas cards produced by the late Cliff Hanna (HQ). Charles J. Cook (HQ) sent it in recently. Happy Holidays from Strafer executive editor Ken McClure and editor Mark Nordstrom.



President's Comments
Vic Tatelman
President

I recently returned from the 499th mini-reunion at Bear Creek Farms, near Fort Wayne in northeastern Indiana. It was an idyllic couple of days in an area that must have been the breeding ground for the term "peace and quiet." The weather was perfect, and the hospitality of the management was unique in its "service with a smile."

The area is in Amish Country, and to those of us unfamiliar with Mennonite customs, we were intrigued with the austere clothes, the bearded men (although that's not too unusual everywhere these days), and the horse drawn carriages. But most of all, the food. We had dinner one evening at an Amish restaurant on

what looked like a working farm. To those of us counting calories, self control was, to say the least, difficult. That dinner was a repast in every sense of the word.

But what to me was the notable truth of the weekend was the camaraderie and companionship of our people. We were as if we were never separated; the joyfulness of our closeness was so evident. We missed those who had passed from our midst and talked of our deeds long ago. Lots of exaggeration (not lies), I'm sure, but what the hell, we've earned a little stretching of our memories.

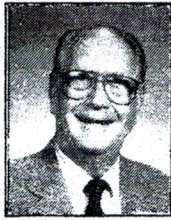
The arrangers and planners of that marvelous few days were Ben and Norma Miller. They did yeoman work and their efforts are certainly appreciated. Ben and Norma, you have our heartfelt thanks.

But the outstanding obviousness was the conviviality and affection for each other. Be it always so.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

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



We told last issue about the changes on the homefront. This one is about the changes in the lives of the new servicemen leaving home for the first time.

We were kids from the farms, small towns and big cities from coast to coast. We were thrown together in boot camps someplace in the USA.

When we left our homes, we told our loved ones not to worry because we would make it OK. We were more worried about our people at home than ourselves. (Of the 4,300 men that went through the 345th, 712 didn't make it back home.)

In boot camp and Army schools we looked forward to letters from home and we did our best to write cheerful letters to our families. We missed them very much.

We were the kids who learned to fly, navigate the bombers, send messages, to handle the 50-caliber machine guns, armaments and ordinance and communications. It wasn't long until those kids became men, with high ranks in their outfits.

Our first Christmas away from our families and 10,000 miles from home, we hoped for Christmas mail and packages, home cooked goodies. Most of us celebrated Christmas with turkey and all the trimmings plus the goodies from home.

One of the worst things beside being in active duty and seeing our buddies get killed or maimed, was the "Dear John" letters from wives or girlfriends. The recipients could do nothing about it but cry, cuss or both. Or get stinking drunk on leave.

Early in Sept. of '45, all members with 80 or more points soon left for the States aboard the Admiral Koontz and docked in Tacoma, WA. After a few days in Ft. Lewis, they departed for their discharge or reassignment station. The average G I had a hard time adjusting to home life again. He had done as he pleased for a long time and his wife or girlfriend had done the same. Most of the quick marriages before he went into service, failed within a few months. Somehow we adjusted in the long run and resumed our lives and grew old.

In Sept. '94 we will meet again and reminisce Hope to see ALL of you there.

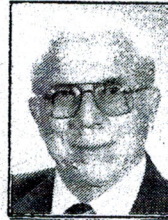
HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON ...

P.S. I will handle the money for the squadron party only. You will receive a letter from me in January or February about it. Do not send it to Brenna this time.

I NEED LETTERS AND STORIES.

499th Squadron

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



Hello again. Time sure flies. It seems like the 16, 17 and 18 of Sept. were just the other day. These are the days the 499th sqdn had another mini-reunion at Bearcreek Farms of Bryant In. Our group president, Vic Tatelman was there along with 15 other members of the Sqdn. Ken & Patty McClure were unable to attend due to Ken's recent surgery.

They complained about there being too much food, but the accommodations were fine and the live theater was a quality production. Julian Baird's new legs are serving him well. In fact, we were hoping he wouldn't spring some close order drill on us. Vic Tatelman has also made a good recovery from his injuries a year ago in the hurricane. We are at the age where we do whatever our bodies require to keep going. The group of ladies who always accompany us are reason for daily Thanksgiving.

While at the reunion, we received a communication from Lowell, IN from Dorothy Gwyn. Donald Gwyn, one of our pilots at the conclusion of the war (went on to earn his command pilot's wings in a 21 year career in the AF), passed away suddenly on April 23. The address is: Dorothy Gwyn, 351 Joe Martin, Lowell, IN. 46356.

The holidays are here. Think back to where we were 50 years ago and how holiday meals are now. No more mutton stew with dog biscuits and luke-warm lemonade. Our efforts were not in vain. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

500th Squadron

Ben T. Muller
V.P. - 500th Sqd.



Yes! The 500th reunion in Atlanta was great and I know the 120 who attended will agree. Highlight of the meet was the after-banquet, riveting speech and slide show by Pat Epps and Richard Taylor about the finding and recovery of the "Lost Squadron" 264 feet below Greenland's ice cap. Two B-17s and six P38s were left on the ice cap after an aborted ferrying mission from the US to England in 1942. Over the years they were buried and lost in the ice. After 10 years of effort the Epps-Taylor expedition recovered one P38, which is now in Kentucky being restored.

See what you non-attendees missed - in 1995 the 500th will be meeting in San Diego. Can't wait to see what our reunion committee, headed by Bob Scudder, have for us there.

Our new 500th President is now Lynn Dakar, of Boulder, CO. Lynn and Wanda attended the dedication of the 5th Air Force Memorial October 8th in Colorado at the AF Academy as 500th representative.

Another highlight of the reunion was the presence of a young (40's) couple. Charles and Sue Jenkins, who live on a small, small reef island between New Ireland and New Hanover. They have found a plane underwater that seems to be Mike Hochella's "Stubborn Hellion," which went down 2/15/44. Mike and the Jenkins spent lots of time pouring over maps and discussing ways to positively identify the plane.

On my way to Florida in late September I stopped in Sulfur, LA and called Sam Bennett. Joda, his wife, answered and said Sam had died September 12. He was 75 and we will miss him.

Our new squadron secretary, Bill Cavoli, informs me we will have a new squadron roster in November.

O.K. guys, input - input - send me news. We're all interested. Don't forget your

501st Squadron

Virgil Gross
V.P. - 501st Sqd.



Hi y'all it is nice to be with you again.

Those of you who didn't get to the mini-reunion in Myrtle Beach sure missed a good one. The weather was ideal. The Condos were great and the view of the ocean from the balconies beautiful.

We had 43 in attendance at the banquet. We had several for whom this was the first reunion including some of the Flying Sergeants. We were especially glad they were there with their war stories.

I don't know, whether anyone attended any of the several Country Music shows in the area- didn't have time.

For those who like to shop there was the Barefoot Landing Complex with 110 stores and the WACCAMAW outlet mall with well over 100 stores.

The Alabama Restaurant has excellent food and atmosphere situated on the of the Inland Waterway.

Just got word that Jeff Blackmon passed away July 27. He will be greatly missed. As you know he was the one who created the 345th monument that is located at Wright

Patterson AFB, Ohio.

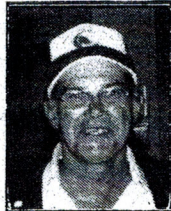
Talked to George Blackwell the other day and he is doing quite well despite having had cancer and is 82 years of age.

Contacted Roman Ohnemus regarding fires in Calif. and they were spared - passed their home by 5 miles and the studio by 5 blocks.

Let us hear from you with any news you have.

Headquarters Group

Ken Gastgeb
V.P. - HQ Group



Boy, time sure flies fast any more as it seems that I just wrote an article for the last issue of the Strafer. Have only heard from a few people during the past several months. Dave Blazer, Group Communications, has moved this past summer from Jay, NY to Lake Placid, NY. He enjoys skiing and I understand Lake Placid is a very good place.

Warren Perkins, assistant Group Communication Officer, and his wife Dixie visit their daughter and family every summer that lived in northern Alberta, Canada. That is a long way from New Mexico.

However, this past year his daughter and family moved to southern British Columbia where fruit trees are in abundance. A long drive but not as long as to northern Alberta. They enjoyed eating the tree ripened fruit. Driving back they ran into a snow storm at Butte, Montana.

Warren is keeping busy these days giving amateur radio license exams. He has an active amateur radio station and keeps in touch with several friends that he worked with at NCR in Dayton, Ohio. I'm sure Warren would appreciate a call from any one that has an amateur station. Just CQ or call direct to W5UZU. Also he gives exams for various classes of Radio Operators. A very nice hobby and a part time job.

General Jimmy Doolittle, a great pioneer in aviation, died this past month. An old newspaper clipping I have in my scrapbook has an article on his achievements up to July 1937. The first man to make the impossible outside loop, first to fly and land a plane solely by instruments, the first to fly coast to coast in less than 24 hours, to mention a few. Many of you may remember the names of two of the planes he flew, Gee Bee and Skyway Buzzard, that set the speed records and won the Thompson Trophy. Record breaking speeds then were in the neighborhood of 300 MPH.

A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to one and all.

Group Bulletin Board

The enclosed color flier is of a very limited edition print of an important event in the history of the 345th. The print retails for \$125, but the artist, Michael Hagel, is offering it to 345th members and families for \$100, plus \$5 shipping and handling. His interest in this flight grew out of hearing his father (a WWII B-25 crew member) tell about his experiences during the war.

Your dues are paid if there are five stars next to your name on your address label. A life member will find an LM rather than stars.

Your next *Strafer* will arrive by March. Please send all stories, pictures and information for it by February 1. Please attach your name to the back of pictures to make returning them easier.

Strafer
15 W OAK ST
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Plans are being completed for 1994's Reunion X. The next issue of *Strafer* will include a registration form. Don't put off attending. Every opportunity is important.

Why Worry

Either you are rich or you are poor
If you are rich there is nothing to worry about.
If you are poor there are only two things to worry about - you are well or you are sick
If you are sick there are only two things to worry about you are going to live or die
If you are going to live there is nothing to worry about
If you are going to die there are only two things to worry about you are going to heaven or to hell
If you are going to heaven there's nothing to worry about.
If you are going to the other place you will be so busy shaking hands with old friends...why worry?

IN MEMORY OF

Jeffery Blackmon	501st	July 27, 1993	Mount Airy, NC
Aaron "Bill" Croop	499th	July, 1993	Toledo, OH
Adolph J. Luhta	499th	June 12, 1993	Painesville, OH
J.H. (Mac) Mac Williams	499th		Tyron, NC
Herbert F. Rielly	500th	October 1993	
Harry R. Sharpe	501st	June 1, 1990	Flagstaff, AZ

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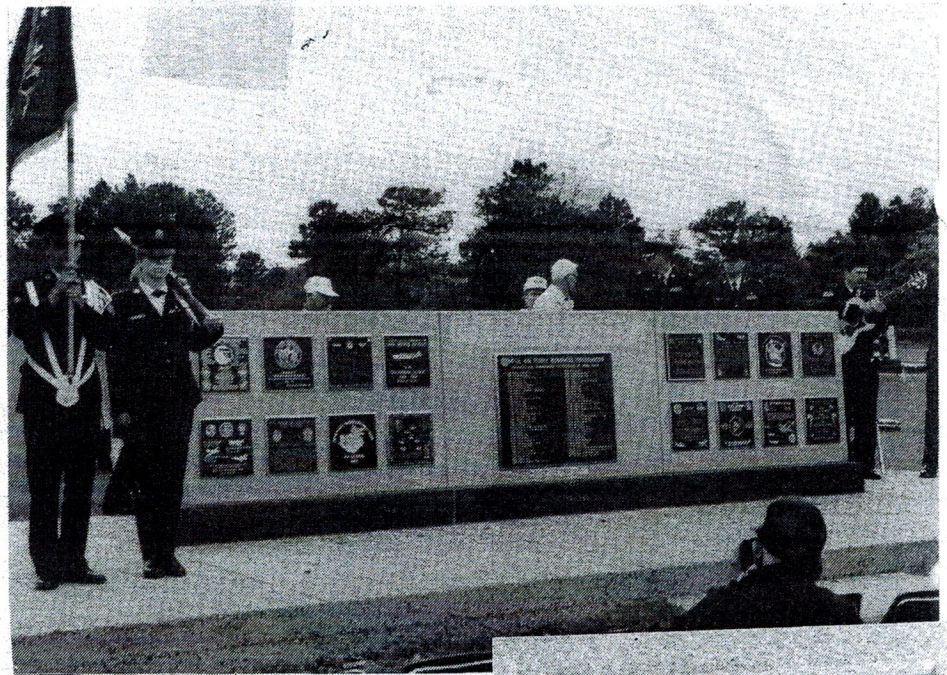
Memories. Some faded, some didn't

by Charles J Cook (HQ)

Enclosed is a photo that was used as a Christmas card in 1943 (see page one). I was Group Ordnance officer from 6/12/43 to 6/27/44, when I was rotated back to the states via Milne Bay and a slow boat home.

My memory of that year has faded considerably, but I do remember learning to sleep through noisy, all-night poker games that became a permanent arrangement in our tent. The only name I remember is that of Sy Katz (Engineering Officer) with whom I had several wild rides while testing some aircraft modifications. I lost some of my enthusiasm for these rides after spending a day hacking our way through jungle to a downed plane, in which the bombs had been ripped from the shackles. And one of them, waiting to be defused by yours truly, was parked in a cloud of flies between the bodies of the pilot and copilot.

I remember my train ride from Sidney to Townsville. It was a three-day ordeal in a seats-only compartment with nine Aussies and a "his feet in my face and my feet in his face" arrangement. Eating was a race to find a cold, greasy mutton pie and perhaps tea, while stopped for a minute or hours at some station. We lost hours in changing trains at the Queensland border, where the rail bed changed from standard gage to narrow.



"With this memorial, for all time, in the first light of morning and with the coming of darkness at night, through summer suns and winter snows, they will be remembered."

The 5th Air Force Memorial Dedicated at the US Air Force Academy on October 8. It includes 28 bronze plaques identifying each unit, including the 345th (right). The 345th Plaque will be dedicated in a special program during Reunion X. The Ceremony will be held Friday, September 9, 1994.

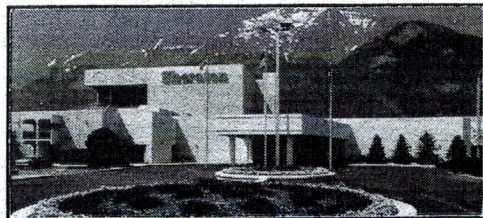
The 345th's Maury Eppstein was the keynote speaker for the event (see story on page one). He outlined the history of the 5th Air Force from its formation during World War II, through shooting down the first enemy planes during the Korean conflict through Captain Ralph S Parr's scoring the final air victory in Korea, through limited involvement in Vietnam through today's presence in Japan. The 5th Air Force operates there today with the motto, "The Tip of The Spear."



1993 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to
345th BG Reunion Assn.
KEN McCLURE
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Reunion X



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Colorado Springs, CO
September 8-10, 1994**

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