

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

September 1993

Australian Trains and Mail of '42

by Douglas C Busath, 499th

They put us on a "Deluxe" train to go to Townsville after landing at Ipswich. A bunch of Australian soldiers got on also and they all had bedding. We didn't know why, because the train was a Pullman type car with upper and lower births. Turns out the births weren't made up. You supplied your own bedding. I got out my stopwatch and 1/4-mileposts. The fastest we ever went 36 miles per hour and that was downhill. It took 48 hours to go the 600 miles and we were good and sick of Australian trains.

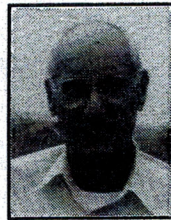
From Townsville we flew to Port Moresby on the south coast of New Guinea and I was assigned to the 499th Squadron of the 345th Group. I was to serve as a navigator. We were stationed at 18-mile strip (18 miles from Moresby).

When we (Leo Carrico and I) first arrived there were no flying personnel. They had all flown their planes down to Townsville to be modified as Strafers and then had gone on to Sydney for leave. For 10 days we did nothing except censor mail. What a job.

Anything went, so long as no military secrets were involved. One guy was writing to three different girls at the same time, describing in graphic detail the sexual acrobatics they were going to involve themselves in on his return. Another, a cook, wrote to his folks and told them he took a little walk in the jungle; that he always took his gun with him; that while sitting on a rock he spied a Japanese (Jap) and, "Pow! One less Jap to worry about." This was interesting to me, because at the time the last Japanese was about 150 miles away. I had to admire his locution. He didn't really lie; he didn't say he shot a man...left it to his folks' imaginations. I'll bet they were proud of him.



"Wrecked planes and shredded palm trees litter the water-pocked Jap airfield at Boram, near Wewak on New Guinea, during an attack by U.S. Mitchell (B-25) medium bombers. At right a service truck chugs up the road and a fuel truck is caught alongside an enemy fighter plane." LIFE Magazine, 10/25/43, page 26. The article says, "American bombers destroyed 60 Jap planes and sank seven ships" in Sept. 29 raid on Wewak. The article identifies U.S. plane production as 7,700 per month and Japan's as 1,200 per month. It gives no source for those statistics.



Comments from the President

Vic Tatelman
President

I recently received a copy of an article that appeared in GQ, written by one William

Davis, that purported to claim in some detail that the operations of the 5th, 13th and 7th Air Forces in the Pacific War were merely "training exercises" the purposes for which were to prepare crews for the true exponents of the conflict, General Curt LeMay's 21st Bomber command.

It seems that, like many human endeavors throughout history, events are changed, distorted, to fit the thinking of a "new age." It was told that the printing of history textbooks in Soviet schools couldn't keep up with "facts" that were devised each time

a world event, disdainful of the Soviets, was brought to light during the 70-odd years of Soviet autocracy.

And now there are organizations claiming the German holocaust didn't exist - history distorted, dissembled.

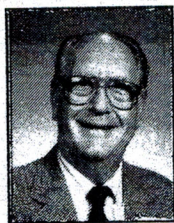
I suppose there will always be villains (and villainous regimes) in this world who would "direct" history to their own ends. I don't know Mr. Davis' age or background, but I think I'll suggest he obtain a copy of Hickey's "Warpath Across the Pacific" to read about those "training exercises"; how we carried on with minimum help from Stateside (who were busy trying to win the war in Europe); how we lost our friends and how we survived malaria, typhus, dengue fever and jungle rot. We had been "training" a helluva long time before the 21st Bomber Command came into being.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

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

We've been featuring the members' stories of the war. We thought you'd like a small-town's-eye view of the war of '43 on the home front.



While the men were at war, the women, children, elderly & disabled stayed at home to make do without the breadwinners. Factories turned into war plants and the above were put to work making a living. They weren't used to working & absenteeism was high with excuses ranging from women having to nurse their young, cars not starting, hangovers, weddings & wakes (even when there weren't any) and having to shop and cash checks during working hours, as they couldn't after work.

A double bed sheet sold for \$1.47, a Princess Peggy dress was \$1.69, coffee was 59 cents and a loaf of bread was 11 cents, bakeries were just starting to slice the loafs. You couldn't use copper and scrap metal was piled in the streets for collectors to pick up for use in war plants.

Civilian Defense was started with thousands of volunteers with hard hats and flashlights setting up adequate warning systems, surprise blackouts and daylight air-raids.

We had V-mail, Victory gardens; ration books for gas, sugar, shoes, tires, etc. and war bonds.

Synthetic tires and recaps came into being in '43.

In January '43 the Sullivan bros. from Waterloo, Iowa were M. I. A.

Of course Govt. came up with the 5 percent Victory tax, probably still paying it.

The popular comics were Joe Palooka, Boots, Mandrake & Li'l Abner. Movie greats were Norma Shearer, Rita Hayworth, Flying Fortress & Song of Bernadette.

The ladies loved it when the men came home & they could go to USO dances.

The Ohio flooded in the Spring of '43. And the states of Washington and Oregon were bombarded by Japanese balloons with bombs. No one was injured, but forest fires resulted.

People along the Mississippi & Missouri are now fighting our '93 home front battle, "The war of the mighty water."

And all of our memories both at home and on the war front will be once again brought out at the big REUNION OF '94 in Colorado Springs. SAVE YOUR PENNIES & SEE YOU THERE...

499th Squadron

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

Our third mini-reunion of the 499th is nearly here and we are looking forward to a good attendance. It is always harder to do this, as father time is relentless.

Our last mini-reunion was just two years ago, also at Bearcreek Farms and several of those in attendance are no longer with us. A few weeks ago I was informed of the passing of Aaron "Bill" Croop, a man with a heart as big as his body. He played football under the coaching of Paul Brown at Massillon High School in Massillon, OH. After the war he taught school. He was known affectionately by his students as "the bear," because of his large size, 6'5", 250 lbs. He and Barbara had offered to help with this reunion and thoroughly enjoyed the one two years ago. He will be missed at all gatherings and will be remembered as one of the Vice-Presidents of this squadron. May GOD be with all of the families of our departed members.

One of the finest golf courses in the Area is at Geneve, only a few miles from Bearcreek, and it too was partly flooded. The tell me it will be in fine shape by the time we will meet in the area. If anyone shares my enthusiasm in shotgun sports, they have a new facility nearby, set up for a new shotgun game called sporting clays. Since many of our members went through gunnery school during our youth, this might be fun to look into.

We recently had a good air show with two B-25's among the WWII aircraft. Norma and I were in the back of one of these when the guide started his speech with the statement that the 499th Sqd. of the great 345th Group made the best use of this aircraft. He was all wound up when I removed by 345th cap (from the first reunion in Columbus). He stopped his speech, looked at the cap and then at me and he said something that made my day. "J---- C-----, you're one of them." This was quite a tribute to us, but we already felt there was never a better unit. It sure felt good to talk to them for a while, but when they revved up the engines and made a bomb run over the strip with bomb bay doors open, that was a feeling nothing else can duplicate. My white jeans have a few oil spots from standing too close to an engine, but they can just stay there.

Stay Healthy, and keep thinking reunions. This mini-one and the big one next year.



500th Squadron

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

The following is a mis-sive from one of our favorable correspondents (come on the rest of you - input - input): March 12, 1993 - Bill and Emmy Cavoli came north to New Jersey to attend a special affair. While there they were spending a few days with Pete and Anne Luciano. The following day, March 13, we awoke to the "Blizzard of 1993," 15" to 20" of snow. The affair was cancelled to another date and the Cavolis were unable to attend. Emmy and Bill also visited with Emmy's sister-in-law and niece before returning to San Antonio, TX (presumably to thaw out). Thank you Pete and Anne.

Lynn Dakar underwent major surgery the first part of April and has recuperated at home in beautiful Boulder, CO. He and Wanda and another couple plan to journey to Alberta, Canada this summer via, what else, their motorcycles. Wish I could make it with you Lynn.

The '93 mini-reunion is coming up September 5-8. It's at the Hyatt Regency Peachtree Center in Atlanta, GA. Albrig Bynum and Reheis are in charge and doing a great job. I know you'll have a great time. It's still not too late to make your plans to go.

Reading "The Divine Wind," a story of the Kamikaze force (by Japanese officers: Captain Rikihei Inoguchi and Commander Tadashi Nakajima), found a chart showing attacks during November 1944. There were six on November 12, 1944. Sorties were reported to Leyte Gulf at 11:10, 11:15, 12:30 and 16:45. One was the fateful mission that attacked the transport ships Nelson and Waite off Leyte. The book is the most comprehensive account available on Japan's aerial suicide assault.

Don't forget your PSA test!

501st Squadron

Virgil Gross
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

Well, summer is here! Nature is showing what it is capable of: storms and flooding, heat and drought as well as some beautiful weather.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people in the Midwest who have been hit



by the rains and flooding. Wish there was more we could do, but at this stage no one is sure what it will take (besides dry weather and time) to help people get back on their feet and resume some semblance of normalcy.

haven't heard much from the members lately. Billie Moore and Jack Gronewald are making good progress. I did get some info from George Blackwell (see page 4).

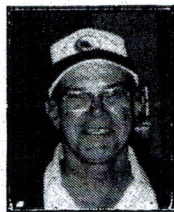
We made our reservations at Ocean Creek Resort a couple weeks ago and hope lots of you are doing the same. Let's have a real good turnout for the mini-reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC October 7-10.

Hope to see y'all there!

Headquarters Group

Ken Gastgeb
V.P. - HQ Group

Didn't hear anything exciting from anyone since the last issue.



While going through WWII documents, that I'm putting together in book form, I noticed an article written by N. Blaylock of the 501st BS that appeared in an issue of "Squadron - Communiques" dated 1943.

The article: "He never gets a chance to drop bombs on enemy targets, or knock enemy fighters out of the sky. He doesn't wear silver wings on his chest...probably never will. Chances are he'll never get a decoration or make the headlines, because a job like his isn't glamorous. But he's one of the war's unpraised heroes: a member of a ground crew. And he's doing a whale of a BIG JOB! If it wasn't for him and thousands like him, the glamorous, headline-making jobs might never be done. After every flight he goes over every plane from nose to tail; checks engines, plane and instruments with infinite care making sure there can be no possibility of mechanical failure on the next mission. He knows that the success of those who do the glamorous jobs, yes perhaps even their lives, may depend upon the care and skill with which he does his job. So don't ever let anyone tell you he's not important because, brother, he's important as hell!!"

Some phrases I have heard or read in books or articles as "my plane - my pilot - my radioman" etc. are a feeling of an individual doing his best and more to do a good job.

The men of the 345th, both flight and ground personnel were 100 per cent dedicated to doing a job equal to no less than excellence. The cooperation and togetherness made the Group a great organization. One of which we are all very proud to be members.

Group Bulletin Board

Demand exceeded supply for the **Indian Head Lapel Pins** available at Reunion IX.



Minimum reorder resulted in small number remaining. Send \$5 check (\$9 for two) to:

Ken McClure
5661 Chowning Way
Columbus, OH 43213

Address information is very much appreciated. Thank you to all who keep *Strafer* up to date on changes. New addresses are also welcome. Please write when you learn of a 345th member who does not receive *Strafer*.

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

Strafer
15 W OAK ST
CANAL WINCHESTER OH 43110

The 500th Sqd. is now in the process of updating its member roster of names/addresses. If you are currently receiving the *Strafer*, but are not receiving the quarterly 500th Newsletter, please send your name, wife's name, address & phone number to:

Bill Cavoli
2147 Encino Loop
San Antonio, TX 78259-1902
or call him: 210/497-3580

Dues Note:

Five stars next to your name on your address label indicate that your dues have been received as of August 1.

The IRS says our Association is a 501(c)(19) organization and all dues and donations are tax deductible under section 170 of the IRS code.

Reservations for Reunion X

in Colorado Springs, CO can now be made. Airline tickets at 10% discounts for 345th Members and guests. Call Uniglobe Travel, toll-free, and ask for:

Brenna Terrill
1-800/219-7235.

IN MEMORY OF

Aaron "Bill" Croop	499th	Nov, '91	New Orleans, LA
Robert H Forsyth	HQ	Mch 8, '93	Southern Pines, NC
Gail R Holmes	499th	1993	Orlando, FL
Art Polcaro	501st	Jan 25, '93	West Newton, MA
Virgil Redd	501st	1993	Shaw, MS
Jesse A Wittkowski	501st	Mch 11, '93	Tampa, FL

Association Officers

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614/864-5772

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Colorado Springs, CO 80909
303/471-0039

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713/774-3905

501 - Virgil Gross
84 Ridgeland Dr., Columbus, MS 39701
601/328-9369



Nadzab, New Guinea, May 1944, 501st Sqdn. Standing L to R: Tech. Sgt. Marty Taylor (ord. chief) Sgt. George Blackwell, Staff Sgt. Joseph Valentine. Seated L to R: Staff Sgt. Charles Schweitzer, Sgt. Edward "Red" Steward. Center: first four 345th portraits by Blackwell.

Names and Pictures

by George Blackwell

Editor's note: This brief autobiography of a 345th career came to Strafer from Virgil Gross.

When I joined the 345th in March 1944, at Nadzab, I was assigned to the Ordnance Section and later to the S-2 Section, where I was P/R, Awards and Decorations, and Combat Points Clerk for the flying contingents.

When I had a little time off, I was busy painting names and pictures on B-25's, including Chow Hound, Potent Cock, Apache Princess; all together about 15 aircraft. These were done for the crews at their expense. All the lettering on these craft was done by Sgt. Joe Marenda, 501st Eng. Section. Also, at Biak, when we got the B-25 J's I was kept back, with others,

to paint the new Air Apache logos and plane numbers on the vertical stabilizers.

To keep me busy at night, I had the good fortune to be able to make pastel portraits of about 48 officers and enlisted men, under the brightness of a 60-watt globe One-a-day for several weeks. At reunion I have been told by many of these people and their wives that they have kept these drawings all these years.

Reunion X Reservations

Airline reservations for Reunion X in Colorado Springs, CO can now be made. Special 10 percent discounts are available for 345th Members and possibly for guests. Call **Brenna Terrill**, toll-free, at Uniglobe Travel: 1-800/219-7235.

Kortemeyer reports that golf will be available during our reunion. Green Fees will be \$25 (for military retirees) at the Air Force Academy; \$12 for military retirees and \$16 for others at Ft. Carson, which is closer to the Sheraton. There are also several civilian golf courses around town.

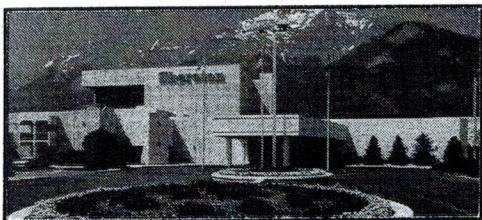
He suggests that you contact him for times and courses. His address:

Henry A. Kortemeyer
3133 San Luis Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80909-1325
719/471-0039

1993 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to
345th BG Reunion Assn.
KEN McCLURE
5581 CHOWNING WAY
COLUMBUS OH 43213

Reunion X



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

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