

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

December 1994

Mission Reports Available

by Bill Cavoli

Bill Helvey, son of the late Wilford Helvey (501st Squadron), was so fascinated with his father's 345th Bomber Group experiences that he undertook a most worthwhile, historical project. Recently he completed it. After more than two years of research, hundreds of man-hours and an outlay of many dollars, he has turned over the end product of his massive effort to Vic Tatelman, our Association president. On behalf of all Air Apaches, Bill, many thanks for your amazing effort.

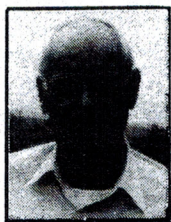
Specifically, Bill has obtained copies of most of the "After Action Reports" prepared by the intelligence sections of the 345th Bomber Groups after each mission.

These mission reports have been made available to each squadron's volunteer project officer for further distribution to those wishing to request copies. The project officers names and address are posted on the bulletin board, on page 3.

Each available mission report lists the date of the mission, aircraft number, the pilot who flew it, the target and in most cases, the mission review. Some reports also include hand drawn maps. Anyone interested in obtaining copies of specific mission reports, should contact the appropriate squadron project officer directly. In order to make his job easier, your request should include as much information as

possible about the missions in question. Remember, the 345th flew 10,000 sorties. Help him pin down the aircraft number and/or the name of the pilot you were with. Be advised that, in general, there are no crew members listed, except for those wounded, killed, or recommended for an award.

The project officers will answer all requests in the order they are received, and as promptly as their busy schedules will permit. This will take a lot of effort on their part and we're all grateful to each of them for volunteering to undertake this worthwhile task. The requester will be asked to pay for the cost of the reports (postage, copying, stationary, etc.).



President's Comments

Vic Tatelman
President

I want all of our people to know of the dedication and enthusiasm of "Kort" Kortemeyer and his Colorado Springs Reunion committee. Those people worked their tails off to make that event the success that it was and we all owe them an exuberant round of applause.

Kort himself, who headed up the effort, took on the chore knowing full well the work that would be involved (he did this twice before when we met in Colorado Springs) and even though those earlier meetings cost him a bundle out of his own pocket, he agreed to do it all over again. And do it he did! All the arranging, the meetings with Academy officials, hotel arrangements, coordinating events, the extraordinary finely tuned scheduling - and this went on for over a year. His telephone bill to me in Miami alone had to have been exorbitant.

His deputy, Lee Barnes, was the master of responsibility; his was to honcho the main events, the Saturday morning Ladies' Breakfast and the Saturday night banquet, both

accomplished beautifully. It's no small matter to arrange a dinner for 400 people, see to it that the honored guests had accommodations, design seating both in the room and at the head table and arrange for the public address system. He provided the minister for the invocation and secured the color guard (weren't those kids terrific! Did you notice that only the young lady wore earrings?) and all the while looking after his wheelchair-bound wife.

Reiny Salzman did a masterful job as head of transportation. He saw to it that we all got to the hotel from the airport. He arranged for the RV parking, he set up the Group Sign at the hotel and dismantled it afterward. And all this driving back and forth from Greely, an hour-and-a-half each way.

Jerry Murphy took responsibility for the registration area. The setup for each squadron, posting of notices and security of records during off-duty hours. His working with the hotel staff assured the smooth running operation it became.

Lynn Dacker was the chief arranger for the Hospitality Room setup. It was comfortable and efficient. I haven't heard one negative comment about that room.

And the rest of the committee, Del Reddington, Matt Mattson, Bob Lewis, all played a significant part in the success of the Reunion.

I want to especially mention and thank Patti McClure and Mary Elizabeth Gamble, the former for her past and continuing help to Ken in his duties as Treasurer and particularly for her and Mary Elizabeth's help in escorting and introducing Donna Lancaster, the speaker at the Ladies' Breakfast. Ladies, you have no idea how much we (the committee) owe you for taking on that effort.

And, lastly, I want a great "Huzzah" for Brenna Terrill. Talk about a girl Friday; she supplied the nuts and bolts, the details and particulars from the beginning of planning to the end of the banquet Saturday night. Her help was magnificent; thanks Brenna!

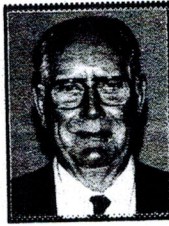
And my particular gratitude to Maury Eppstein, who graciously answered my call to deliver the key address at that most dignified ceremony, the 5th Air Force Plaque Dedication. Good job, Maury.

I understand our chairman for Reunion XI in St. Louis, Earl Hitt has already started to recruit members of his committee. Can't start the planning too early; good beginning, Earl!

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

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



We had an unforgettable reunion at Colorado Springs, except for our 498th banquet. I know they didn't get those pork chops from Iowa. I've been on the phone so much with that hotel and have received nothing but the runaround. We took a big loss on that meal.

All right you Texas members, get behind Harold Ponder and help him with our 498th Squadron reunion. There are 17 of you in that area to help him make it a success. Joyce and I will be in that area in February. What little help we've been so far was to find hotels that wanted us for \$100-to-\$150 a night. Remember the great time we had when the Group met there in '86? San Antonio is a wonderful city for reunions.

I had a surprise visit from George and Louise Womble. They stopped by for a little while on their vacation around the country. I was sure tickled to see them. We were together throughout the war. George promised to try to make it to the next reunion. We want to congratulate Texas for taking the honors of winning the door prizes. Victor Elam of Austin was the very proud winner of the Surrender Flight picture. Estelle Goldman from El Paso won the hat that Joyce made.

We were happy to see the family of Tim Adams, Jr. of Atlanta, GA. He had six there for the reunion. Wouldn't it be nice if more members brought their families. And we would enjoy seeing more of the widows of our members. Wasn't Dorothy Muth a joy to have in Colorado Springs? Please, ladies, try to attend. You'll enjoy it.

Lester Howard will be writing the next Strafer story. Send him information.

499th Squadron

Harry Zarfus
V.P. - 499th Sqd.



The former, great speaker of the house Sam Rayburn once said a vice president is about as useful as a bucket of warm spit. I hope I can at least be like a bucket of warm beer.

Congratulations to Ben Miller for his election to president. He has arranged with the Bearcreek Farms for our 1995 Squadron Reunion. Their address is RR1, Box 180-B, Bryant, IN 47326. Telephone: 219-997-2222 - 222 288 7630. Fifteen rooms have

been reserved at a package deal of \$154.95 for two. The date is from noon on Friday Sept. 22 through midday Sunday 24th. The deal includes an evening meal on day of arrival, all meals the second day and breakfast on the third day. For other questions please call Ben at 219-547-4460.

In September, Rabaul lay under tons of ash and rock from two volcanoes, Tavurvur and Vulcan. This is the third time Rabaul has been destroyed in 60 years.

I suppose you got your group photo. If not contact: Don Stotts: photographer, 1429 N Cedar St, Colorado Springs, CO 80903-2601, 719-471-0270.

500th Squadron

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



What a nice surprise I received in the mail the other day. It was from Stan Muniz in California. Subject: narrative report on mission FFO93-D-24, performed by 500th Bombardment Squadron, 3 April, 1945. Loochow Peninsula and Hainan Island in the South China Sea. This was a copy of the report detailing the mission that Gene Lawlis and I will remember as the one on the day on which we both started learning the Japanese language the hard way - under duress. I do remember that "benjo" means toilet. Very important to know. It was my 37th mission. You may also obtain a mission report by contacting Stan. He's listed in the 500th roster. I understand a new one will be out soon.

After our Group reunion I attended a church meeting in Evian, France; then visited relatives, including a sister-in-law in northern Italy, Bassano Del Grappa. They have an escarpment there with a row of some 20 trees dedicated to heroes of a massacre. On each tree is a permanent picture and date of an Italian soldier executed by the Germans.

Traveled with my BMW motorcycle club to Tamaulipas, Mexico in November. Crossed the Tropic of Cancer and took a picture at the marker.

501st Squadron

Lynn Lee
V.P. - 501st Sqd.



Reunion X was a blast. Wouldn't have missed it for naught, but now to mini-reunion! When and where? Please drop me a post card and tell me your pleasure.

Talked to Bill Stone in California. He ran across an invoice for a B-25 he signed for when he started overseas - \$76,000. Poor Tatelman, guess he paid too much. Stone was in Quito, Ecuador and saw a B-25 on display at the airport. Talked to Perry Blount. You remember him. He's the guy who put the 345th on the map. Well, most know he had a bad wreck: hurt back, ribs and legs. Also ego I'm sure, but now he is up and walking and still has his good sense of humor. Said he missed not being with us and we know he did.

One more thing. I'm having a contest. If you want to see one of our fellows who has not attended a reunion or mini-reunion, send in his name with a few bucks. The one with the most money pledged to his name gets a free ticket to the next reunion. So keep those dollars and cards coming in and we'll tabulate the nominations.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette
V.P. - HQ Group



Most of my first letter to my comrades will be spent on our recent reunion at Colorado Springs, to dedicate the "Air Apache" plaque at the 5th Air Force Academy Cemetery.

It was another "Sentimental" dedication which we've experienced before at the A Force museum, but really an uplifting Spirit type of thing.

The reunion went off fairly well, considering that no way is anyone going to please everyone.

Our numbers are "Depleting." It was very evident, but it was nice to see (not in a special order) Don & Faye Bishop, Gus Pauline Ouellette, Ken Gastgeb & Bobb Harper, Maxine Card, Mr. & Mrs. Maur Eppstein, Mel & Dorothy Reddington, Virginia Solomonson, Charlie & Mary Metz Col. True & Helen Nazzaro. Please notice that two of the single persons were widows of two buddies. This gives me a great feeling of camaraderie and very happy to see them. I'm sure that their husbands were looking down with smiles.

The main speaker at the banquet did a fantastic job of giving minute details of the B-25 mission off the carrier into Japan.

The tile replica of our plaque was beautiful and has brought nothing but praise from my friends. It should be made available (at a price) for the buddies unable to be at the reunion.

Dedication

Editor's note: This is the conclusion of Maury Eppstein's address at the dedication of the 345th plaque on the 5th Air Force Memorial at the USAir Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

The conduct of combat in strange and violent territory lays bare almost every possible emotion: bravery, fear, uncertainty, excitement, loneliness, ingenuity, camaraderie and many, many others. There were lighter moments when lucky enough to be on short leave, happy occasions when mail-call brought letters from loved ones back home, or boisterous gatherings in a crowded tent to celebrate a pal's promotion, or your own. And there were numbing occasions such as seeing an Air Apache plane go in over water or the jungle or wherever, or reeling from the psyche-pummeling effect of an insane kamikaze attack, or when the guy you played cards with the night before or had breakfast with that morning flew the mission in the plane that didn't return - you never saw him again. These and a thousand other circumstances were the alpha and omega of war.

In recognition of its increasingly outstanding performances over many months of combat this unit was singled out to fly some strategic and special, noncombat missions that were historic in nature. These included: 1. to record by photos for HQ USAF the damage done to Manila by the Japanese as they retreated from the city - information to be used in planning the soon-to-occur recapturing of the city by our American ground forces; 2. flying war correspondents and aerial photographers over Hiroshima to record in word and picture the devastation wrought by the atomic bomb; 3. flying the American occupation generals and staffs into Keijo (now Seoul), Korea for the purpose of taking over command of that country and 4. the historic 19 August, 1945 mission to escort the Japanese peace envoys from Japan to IE Shima on their way to meet with General MacArthur in Manila to frame the details of surrender. This was the last meaningful mission by a 5th Air Force Unit in WWII. Added to the many remarkable combat strikes flown by the Air Apaches, those special missions (plus receiving three Presidential Unit Citations) are honors of which the 345th may justly be proud.

For better than 30 months, more than 900 days overseas, the air crews and ground personnel combined to write the Air Apaches' history, which was officially ended upon deactivation at IE Shima, on Japan's doorstep, on Armistice day, 11

Group Bulletin Board

Chairman of reunion XI, Earl Hitt is recruiting committee members. A date of the 1996 reunion will be announced.

499th Project Officer:
Vic Tatelman, address below.

500th Project Officer:
Stan Muniz,
5378 Borneo Circle, San Jose, CA 95123,
(408) 227-3240

Your next Strafer should arrive in March. Please submit all articles and pictures by February 1st, 1995.

501st Project Officer:
George Mordcaj, 14 Fredrick St. North Branford, CT 06471-1807 (203) 488-8177

498th Project Officer:
Frank Dillard,
Rt. 5, Box 542,
Marion IL
62959, (618)
995-2225

John Muth, 498, would have wanted it this way! Buried in the Born Cemetery, Otis Air Force Base, in Massachusetts, his final assignment was site number 345.

Only one 345th Squadron wall plaque is left from the 1994 reunion. Please call Ken McClure, (614) 864-5772, if you would like to purchase it.

IN MEMORY OF

Victor N. Bell	501st	10/12/91	Greensburg, PA
Bill Bevan	500th	7/12/94	Tucson, AZ
Alfred V. Cole, Jr.	498th	11/11/94	Endicott, NY
Bill Cummings	499th	9/17/94	Palisades Park, CA
Harold G. DeKay	501st	27/8/94	Atlantic, IA
Nelle O. Fain (wife of Bob)	501st	3/17/94	Mexia, TX
Ed Hicko	500th	date	Hammond, IN
Gordon "Curly" King	499	9/90	Pensacola, FL
Bill Ogden	499th	11/6/94	Columbus, OH

Please mail notices of deaths to Strafer. See next issue deadline on Bulletin board.

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500 - Ben T. Muller 713/774-3905
7215 Sandpiper Dr
Houston, TX 77074
501 - Lynn Lee 915/672-1836
1717 N 6th
Abilene, TX 79603

"Dedication," (from page 3)

November, 1945 - exactly three years to the day from its origin at Columbia, SC.

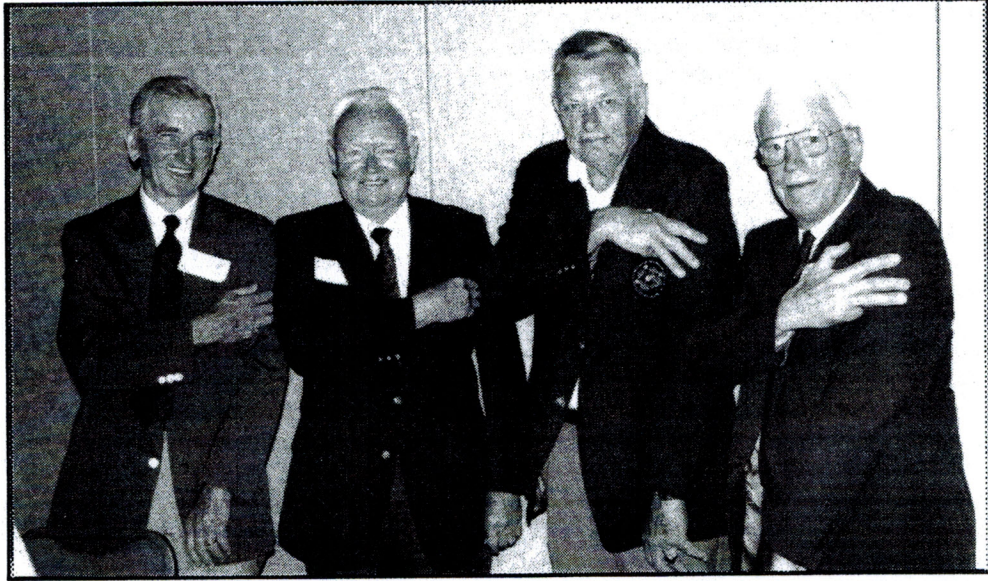
You have known of the impressive statistics of the 345th, verified by the 5th Bomber Command at the close of WWII, but on today's special occasion it may be fitting to review them on our plaque on the 5th Air Force Memorial. It is the first plaque on the upper row, left side. On the center portion of the memorial are listed some 70 of the units that served in the 5th Air Force. And front and back are plaques for many of these units. None can boast of a higher caliber of men, none exceeds the proud tradition or our own 345th. It was an uniquely superior unit and each one of you who served can be proud to have contributed to its historic accomplishments.

More than 4300 men were members of the 345th at one time or another during the three years of its existence in WWII. And our plaque on this impressive memorial is testament to each one who served as an Air Apache, in whatever capacity. And we have a special reason for gathering here today in addition to dedicating our plaque, a half-century after the accomplishments of this great unit. To repeat, in a way, remarks in my keynote address delivered here at the dedication of this memorial on 8 August last year.

We are here, with solemn purpose, to honor the memory of our fellow Air Apaches, 720 of them, who gave their lives in the

struggle for victory. With this plaque and this memorial: for all time, in the first light of morning and with the coming darkness of night, through the summer suns, and

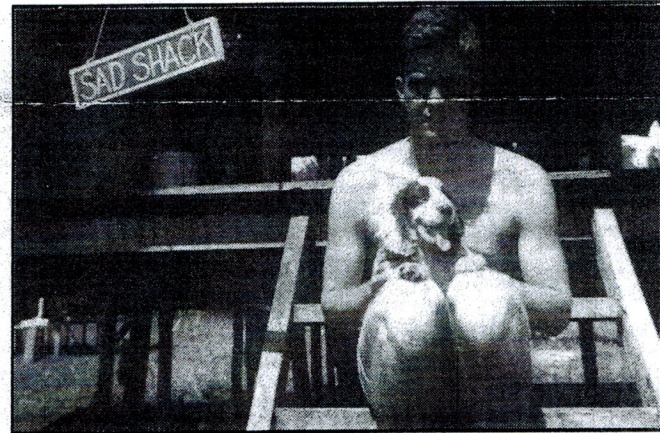
the winter snows, they will be remembered. May God bless them, bless each of you, and bless our United States of America.



Three fingers to the wind. Jim Clark, Dick Barth, Ed Baily and Bill Cather (l to r) reproduce the three stripes they wore on their arms as Sergeant pilots. The 345th reunion brought them back together, where they posed during the 501st Squadron banquet.

Flight Officer Flaps

Ken McClure (499) poses with his dog in front of his tent. The origin of the dog's name is open to speculation. The tent was named with a cartoon character in mind. The dog was the only member of the crew that did not survive the crash of McClure's plane at Manus Island in January of 1944. McClure employed the vocal image of another cartoon character, Donald Duck, to announce he was hit. (Photo from Max Ferguson)



1995 Dues Payable

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

Reunion XI

St. Louis, MO

1996, 1996, 1996, 1996

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