

# STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

March 1994

## Reunion X offers views back and ahead

The upcoming reunion in Colorado Springs will offer new ways to trade stories and memories. It will also give you a chance to look toward the future of aviation, which just might spark some memories of it's past.

The past will be recalled and preserved for the future in the dedication of the 345th plaque, which is part of the 5th Air Force memorial at the U.S. Air Force Academy. After the dedication ceremony you will have a chance to tour Falcon Air Force Base, and see the most modern technology, in the process of striving toward the future. The base houses some the most sophisticated aviation, targeting and navigating technology in use. Some of the facilities there were involved in Desert Storm. They participated in identifying Scud missile launches and initiating the responses of the Patriot missiles that coun-

tered them.

Some of the most enjoyable recollections of any reunion happen in casual conversation among members meeting for the first time since the 40's or maybe for the 10th time, since this is the 10th reunion.

The hospitality room will feature a video tape player, where old movies (transferred to tape), tapes of past reunions or even war movies can be shown. There will also be a bulletin board for general use. Anyone with a photo of a person or place that needs to be identified can post it with a request for help.

Groups of friends have begun to form at

reunions, and many of those will have to share sadness at the thinning of their ranks. Some members will miss the reunion only because they did not live to make it. Some who would have been attending their first will never attend one at all.

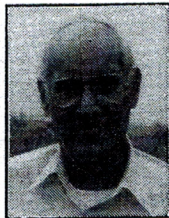
In some cases wives and children of members have become friends over the years and will renew acquaintances in Colorado Springs.

One common thread can be shared by all, whether attending or not. It is the pride that the efforts and sacrifices of World War II, both at home and in combat, crushed totalitarianism. Not even the wildest dreams

## Williams Closes

Williams Air Force Base, where many 345th pilots received their training, closed formally on October 1, 1993. Williams also supplied 25 percent of all the pilots in the Air Force. It was the largest flight-training base in the Air Force for 52 years, officers of the closing base said.

The Mayor of nearby Mesa, AZ says it will take a long time before the intended civilian use of the base gets underway. The Air Force is working on approving leases sought by private firms. It may take years for transfer of the base property title to a private consortium of nearby communities. Mesa municipal employees will maintain the base. It's expected that the Air Force will pay the city \$2.2 million to maintain the base through July 1995.



### President's Comments

Vic Tatelman  
President

I'm planning a trip to Maxwell Air Force Base at Montgomery, Alabama, to deliver some film (before it deteriorates completely) to the Air Force Historical Research Center where the Air Force maintains its film archives. This is the film from which that magnificent three-projector/three-screen presentation was shown at our reunion in Colorado Springs some years ago. Cliff Hanna and Bill Witherall were the geniuses behind that truly spectacular event. The film WAR-PATH was also an offspring of that composition and now on the commercial market, and, I'm sure, many of you have in your libraries.

The phrase "your libraries" brings me to the point. If any of you have motion picture film of our lives and activities during our sojourn in the Western Pacific and can identify the time, place and people, please consider donating it. If

your kids are anything like mine, they are not much interested in our experiences in years past so when we are gone, such memorabilia will probably disappear. Give it some thought.

Remembering the events will be the problem. The memoirist Lucy Greely said, "I once thought that when you understood something, it was with you forever. I know now that this isn't so, that most truths are inherently unretainable, that we have to work hard all of our lives to remember the most basic things." I suppose that applies to us!

New Subject (or at least a previous subject): I've received very few requests for football game tickets (the Air Force Academy vs. Brigham Young University) during the coming reunion at Colorado Springs, as per this column of a couple months ago. Those of you who want tickets-let me know!

We are in the process of preparing the Registration Form for the upcoming Colorado Springs conclave. It will probably be sent out with the next issue of the *Strafer*. Please complete and return it as soon as possible.

# Squadron Reports

## 498th Squadron

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

I received a card from Eddie Carrington. Carroll passed away this last July. He will be missed by everyone in the Squadron and the Group. Carroll was very ill but attended our reunion in Columbus. He has been for several years.

I appreciate all the cards, letters and phone calls this past year. I hope everyone had a happy holiday season. Keep those letters coming. They help in writing this column.

Another member found us. His name and address is:

Charles P Martin  
520 11th Street N E #20  
E Winatchee, WA 98802

He was a pilot and joined the 498th in the Philippines. He first wrote to Bill Cobali of the 500th and Bill forwarded his letter to me. Anyone knowing Charles might want to write to him and welcome him into the Squadron again. Hope he can make it to the reunion in Colorado Springs.

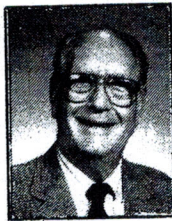
I talked with Mike Coloff a few weeks ago. He and Violet are getting along fine. They will miss this reunion because of the high altitude in Colorado that Violet cannot take. You might remember the great report at Columbus he did on the Doolittle Raid in Tokyo.

I'll have a letter out to you in the near future outlining our Squadron banquet. We had a good attendance at our last reunion. Since our next reunion will be in the West, we should have an even better turnout. Vacationing in the Rockies is a great trip for us retirees. They should be beautiful in September.

Joe Solomon has kept me posted regarding a B-25 that was shot down May 23, 1942. One of the crew members was from Waterbury, VT. An Australian investigator knows about where the wreckage is, but they have had a difficult time getting to it.

Keep saving those dollars and cents for your vacation in Colorado Springs in September.

Don't forget I will be taking care of the Squadron dinner and a separate letter will tell you all about it and the price and where to send the money for it.



## 499th Squadron

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

Things have certainly changed since we took that supervised tour across our great nation to defend the rights we hold so dear. Being from Indiana, I had never seen deer in the wild. While on guard duty by the kitchen car in the Colorado mountains, there were deer across the ravine, and a Thompson submachine gun in my hands. Now we often look out our kitchen window and see deer eating our winter wheat. Last night we saw 14. They also like to steal grapes from the backyard in the fall. After feeding them for 30 years, we decided last fall was the time for us to have venison. As you might guess, just before my planned hunt, the power company cut down the two trees to which I had attached a deer stand, and it was beyond their line. People and times have sure changed.

The reunion in Colorado Springs sounds exciting, with a view of Pikes Peak from the hotel. The dedication at the Air Force Academy should be quite impressive. Things like this always make a person feel so small and unimportant, but had it not been for all these small and unimportant people answering the call, we might be eating rice or saurkraut. If you didn't make either of the previous reunions in Colorado, try real hard to make this one. Nature lovers and historians plus people in general should find something of interest. Cripple Creek sounds especially inviting since I love history. The last time we were there Max Ferguson was working on his book, Edwin McKay had his book out in print, Larry Hickey's book is now among the best in the world, and Peppy's books are something else. A very talented group of warriors.

We've had the usual winter sicknesses, with the hospitals being overcrowded. I had to be different and have another bout with DENDUE fever. Am just now getting up to a full head of steam. If any of you are plagued by this bug in your blood, let me know if there is a faster cure.

The family of pilot of the 499th, Harold Warvel, would like to contact anyone who was close to him while in the 499th. He



passed away many years ago, and his son would like to hear more about his father. He was shot down at Wewak in the fall of '44 and was rescued by Cpl. Joe Bechtel, who was in my tent for a while. Did Joe Bechtel survive the war? If you knew Warvel or some of his crew, please contact me, as his brother from NY has been here and has written often. The gunner on the crew was Cpl. Razook, Copilot Lt. Francis A. Thompson, navigator Lt. Kenneth L. Smith.

## 501st Squadron

Virgil Gross  
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

I'd like to wish you a belated Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year. Frankly I forgot it for the last news-

letter since it had to be at the publisher the first of November.

Speaking of forgetting - Jay Moore just told me some of the symptoms of old age are: 1. Can't remember names 2. Can't remember faces 3. Can't remember to zip up your pants 4. Can't remember to zip down your pants. I'm well on my way. (Fran says this also applies to women).

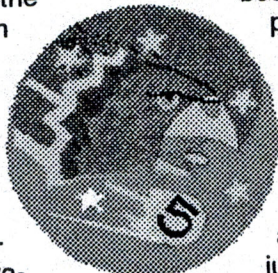
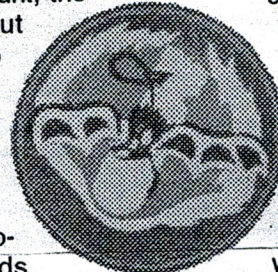
It's time for us to start making plans for the reunion in Colorado Springs in Sept. That is beautiful country and we should see as much of it as we can since we will not have many more opportunities. Try to remember to bring your name tag holders to the reunion. It seems to present a problem each time and I am one of the worst to forget.

Our thoughts are with those who have been effected by the natural disasters of the past year. Those with whom I have been in contact that went through the fires and earthquakes in California were quite fortunate by not having substantial losses. I haven't heard from anyone who had any losses in the Midwest from the floods or from the extreme cold in the North and Northeast.

Our sympathy is with the families of Tom McGowan and Cecil Johnson during their recent bereavements.



I would like to find a copy of the tape "Last Mission" that was played at the Columbus reunion.



# Yes, Virginia, There Really Were Sergeant Pilots!

by Bill Cather

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series telling about the "flying sergeants." It was compiled by Bill Cather (501st) for Strafer. He lives in Birmingham, AL today and is a frequent reunion attendee.



Yes, it really is true. Species: S/Sgt. Pilot Bill Cather, Circa 1942. Sergeant stripes are displayed on his left arm, pilot wings above his left pocket.

In June, 1941 Public Law No. 99 was enacted and 2574 enlisted men of many branches of the expanding armed services were trained by the Army Air Corps from Class 42C through Class 42J at over a dozen fields in the Training Command, ultimately receiving their wings as Staff Sergeant Pilots.

Probably 95% of the Sgt. Pilots flew combat missions. One hundred fifty-five are recorded as killed in action; seventeen are enshrined as "Aces" and eleven of those who remained in the Service were retired as General Officers.

During the week of September 12, 1942, 14 of these enlisted pilot from Class 42H, Moody Field, Georgia, arrived at Columbia Army Air Base. They joined a few other S/ Sgt. Pilots from Spence and Turner Field, Georgia and Ellington Field in Texas to startle the officer instructors of the 309th Training Group. They had never seen a Sergeant Pilot and didn't quite understand that we were there to fly their airplanes. We had just started familiarization flights

in the old B-25 B's and C's at Columbia when on September 22 the first of our little group was killed in a fiery crash right in the middle of the airfield. Pete Conrad was a good friend of mine and would have been an asset to any unit to which he might have been assigned.

The 309th duty sergeants were always looking for new meat to cover the many details that run the Army. We were often told to report to the Sgt. of the Guard to stand guard duty or some of the other little details one tries to avoid. If the simple answer "I can't . . . I am a Pilot" didn't discourage them we had other alternatives such as "We have to go to the flight line to synchronize the propellers," or "The bomb sight needs calibrating." We were even told to serve as Night Operations

Officer, or O.D., but that was easy to get out of when we explained how badly it would reflect on the C.O. if a surprise inspection took place and he had a Sergeant in charge of the base.

In the 309th on many a cross-country flight, when pilot and copilot were both Sergeants, as we filed clearance at some field that did not base a B-25 we were asked by the Operations Officer, "Where did you men taxi this plane from?" When this happened the tower generally got a request to give us a close (very close) inspection of the nose wheel as we headed for home. The Communication Officer at Columbia began to believe that most of the S/Sgt. pilots had some kind of honorary degree as from distant cities the telegrams would arrive signed: "Sgt. Barth, R. O. N."



One of the Japanese who surrendered on Biak is pictured here with his captors. The man with no shirt to the left of the prisoner may be Harold Brydges, who was killed in the kamikaze raid on the Thomas Nelson. The picture comes from Max Ferguson, who has written a book, "Bats Outa Hell over Biak," about the summer of 1944 when the 345th was based on Biak Island near the neck of New Guinea. It has been fifty years since the B-25's of the 345th terrorized the Japanese airfields with their eight fifty caliber machine guns and para-frag bombs. As airplanes were destroyed and airfields neutralized, the U.S. armed forces moved their bases toward Tokyo. The book is available from Max Ferguson, 1215 Taylor Ave., Charleston, IL 61920-1991. It is a 153-page, illustrated, hard-cover book. \$14.00

# Some days in the life of a WWII POW

by Merritt Eugene Lawlis

*Editor's note: This is the first of two parts on experiences of 345th members who were held prisoners by the Japanese during World War II. Gene Lawlis (500th) lives now in Bloomington, IN and is an active member of his squadron and the group.*

As some of you will remember, Ben Muller and I were POWs of the Japanese on Hainan Island, China, for five and a half months just before the end of WWII in the Pacific. At present I am trying to describe what it was like to be a POW from day to day. Partly I work from notes I jotted down in various hospitals after the war. (My earliest notes were on rice paper that my nurses gave me in the first hospital, which was Japanese, there on Hainan). But Ben's and my experience was limited—just part of one year in one war in the middle of the 20th century. What was it like to be a POW in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) and in a dozen or so other wars since then, including the war in Somalia going on right now? To discover answers to these questions, I have read several hundred books and articles. I am dividing my comments into some 50 topics, such as Surrender and Capture, Beatings and Torture, Comradeship and Discord, Death, Diversions, Forced Marches, Interrogation, Liberation, Rumors, and Suicide. In almost every topic I compare and contrast Ben's and my experience with the experiences of other POWs through the centuries.

Following are a few bits and pieces I thought you might "enjoy."

In the introduction I am saying that every ex-POW I have encountered, either directly or indirectly (in my reading), has said that he is glad he had the experience (though several say they might go mad if they had to go through it again). There are various reasons why we found being a POW valuable. One is that you know firsthand the worst that life has to offer, and you can relate to the stories you read in the newspapers every day. I am thinking, for example, of the extreme poverty all over the world, but especially in Africa and India. All of you who remember the fear that went along with hunger in the Great Depression have an inkling of what I am talking about. We ex-POWs also relate to people who have been kidnapped and robbed of all their belongings, including the clothes they have on.

Yet most of us never gave a thought to suicide. The Japanese were about the only ones who took suicide seriously—and more on them in a moment. One reason we survived, and even at times laughed and felt joy, is comradeship; we supported

each other, quite literally and physically at times, and the rest of the time we raised each other's spirits. We in our crew from the 500th Bomb Squadron were lucky to get along so well; I know that now from my reading. Among most POWs, in the wars I have read about, there is a great deal of discord. You can see why—you are crammed in close together with little to eat; so there are bitter arguments, fights, stealing of food, and occasionally even a murder. But all that is foreign to Ben and me. I got angry at him once—when he drank some bad water from a tap close to the cell we shared in Sanya. No doubt he had better reason to get angry at me a few times.

What we learned early on as POWs was

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that simple courtesy and simple kindness toward each other were crucial to survival. I still find them crucial, in my daily life and in the slim chances for peace that I see in this world. The only prescription for peace that I know of is: speak courteously and kindly to all friends and potential enemies, but carry the biggest stick around.

Occasionally we encountered rare acts of kindness from our captors. Of our seven guards, only one was naturally kind; his name was Suzuki (as common a name in Japan as Smith is in the U.S.), and his was the only name we wanted to know. The rest we just nicknamed. Bayonet was a name that fitted one of them. He always had a bayonet attached to his rifle, which he kept in his hands at all times; and he was always threatening to disembowel us. I am not sure Suzuki ever had a bayonet on his rifle; what I do remember is that he placed his rifle against a tree the moment he came on duty and left it there the whole time. He gave us little things. Over a period of time he gave us match boxes, from which we made a deck of cards; and you

can imagine how that deck of cards helped us pass the time.

But the act of kindness I remember most vividly occurred early in our captivity. The Japanese guns at the Haikou naval base set us on fire, and we ditched in the bay nearby. For the first month we were handcuffed night and day and kept in solitary cells four feet long and two and a half feet wide. During the third week we stumbled along on a forced march down the main streets of Haikou, the three of us tied together with a long rope. For some reason I just happened to glance up on my right to a second-floor window. There, looking down intently at me, was a young woman about my age. I have never seen such a look of compassion. I was reminded of that look recently when I read about Gene Hackman, the actor, whose father left home when Gene was a boy. As the father left in his car, he waved to the boy in such a subtle and expressive way that there was no doubt that the father was leaving for good. The young woman I saw in Haikou, mainly with her hands and face, conveyed to me her horror that we were being treated so cruelly and her sorrow that she could do nothing about it.

There was another act of kindness that we remember vividly. After the ditching, Ben, the radio operator/tail gunner; Charles Suey, the engineer; and I, the navigator, inflated our Mae Wests and tried to keep our heads above water. My legs were paralyzed for the first hour or so, after my back took a blow from the rim of the hatch; Chuck and I were standing up in the hatch and were thrown clear on the plane's impact with the water. Certainly I, and probably Ben and Chuck as well, would have drowned if several other crews on that mission had not dropped their inflatable rubber dinghies for us. Without the use of my legs, I was lucky even to make it into one of the dinghies. Now I would like to have the names of the men who dropped those little boats that day so that I can acknowledge what they did for us. To refresh your memory: that was the 3 April 1945 mission to the bay north of Haikou, Hainan Island, the southernmost province of China. We were supposed to hit Japanese merchant shipping; when we found no ships there, we hit the secondary target, the naval base at Haikou. Letters to me from the men themselves would be most welcome.

# 345th BOMB GROUP REUNION X AIR APACHES



## SEPTEMBER 8-11, 1994

*The Sheraton Colorado Springs  
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

### Agenda

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- WEDNESDAY** 4:00 PM HOSPITALITY ROOM (SUITE 3009) OPEN THROUGH 11:00 PM  
September 7
- THURSDAY** 8:00 AM HOSPITALITY ROOM (SUITE 3009) OPEN THROUGH 11:00 PM  
September 8  
9:00 AM REGISTRATION THROUGH 6:00 PM  
~~1:30 PM LEAVE SHERATON FOR TOUR OF FALCON AIR FORCE BASE~~
- FRIDAY** 8:00 AM HOSPITALITY ROOM (SUITE 3009) OPEN THROUGH 11:00 PM  
September 9  
9:00 AM REGISTRATION THROUGH 6:00 PM  
✓ 9:00 AM DEPART FOR AIR FORCE ACADEMY CEMETERY PLAQUE DEDICATION CEREMONY. Ceremony begins at 10:00  
✓ 12:30 PM LEAVE SHERATON FOR TOUR OF PIKE'S PEAK ON COG RAILWAY  
1:30 PM LEAVE SHERATON FOR TOUR OF FALCON AIR FORCE BASE  
6:45 PM SQUADRON PHOTO SESSIONS THROUGH 7:30 PM. Sheraton Hotel Atrium.  
7:30 PM SQUADRON DINNERS
- SATURDAY** 8:00 AM HOSPITALITY ROOM (SUITE 3009) OPEN THROUGH 11:00 PM  
September 10  
9:00 AM GROUP BUSINESS MEETING. Salon A  
9:00 AM LADIES' BREAKFAST. Summit Room 1  
10:30 AM LEAVE SHERATON FOR FOOTBALL GAME. Air Force vs. Brigham Young University, kickoff at 12:00 noon.  
11:00 AM REGISTRATION THROUGH 3:00 PM  
7:00 PM GROUP BANQUET. Sheraton Ballroom 1.
- SUNDAY** 8:00 AM HOSPITALITY ROOM (SUITE 3009) OPEN THROUGH 1:00 PM  
September 11  
No alcohol will be served.

More information on these events will be placed in your Registration Packet. The final planning of time, location, bus schedules, etc. will be done when final counts are made from the Registration Forms received by July 15, 1994.

All reservations must be received by July 15, 1994

Cancellation deadline is August 15, 1994

If you have a special itinerary or if you have a problem, call Brenna Terrill at Uniglobe Discovery Travel, Inc. in Columbus, OH. National toll-free: 1-800/219-7235. Local phone: 614/337-8020. Fax: 614/895-3408.

*Mailed reservations June 3 1994*



# Registration Time Is Now!

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The 345th Bomb Group Reunion X agenda is on the back of this page, page 1.

Page 3 is the registration form for the events. Costs are noted.

Page 4 is the registration form for the hotel and information regarding airfare, airport to hotel transportation, motor home parking, etc. When arriving at Colorado Springs Municipal Airport find the 345th bus for courtesy transportation to the Sheraton. The Sheraton also provides an airport shuttle.

**HOSPITALITY ROOM:** Suite 3009 in the Sheraton has been reserved for the Hospitality Room. It will accommodate a large number of people. A video tape player and bulletin board will be available in the room. A cash bar will be open 1:00 p.m. to closing every day.

**Events:** Dedication of the 345th plaque on the 5th Air Force Memorial, Friday morning. Tours of Falcon Air Force Base, Thursday and Friday afternoons. A cog railway tour of Pike's Peak Friday afternoon. Air Force vs. Brigham Young University football game Saturday afternoon. Group Banquet Saturday night. The many attractions available in the Rocky Mountains are nearby. If you sign up on the registration form for any of the tours and pay for bus transportation, your bus fee cannot be refunded if you cancel participation or travel by other means. The bus company won't budge on this.

**Pike's Peak Cog Railway** is the world's largest cog railway. It takes visitors on an unforgettable and panoramic trip to the 14,110-foot summit of America's most famous mountain. Discovered by Lt. Zebulon Pike in 1806, the summit will make you feel as if you were on the top of the world! To the south the Sangre de Cristo range stretches majestically in the distance, while the gold rush town of Cripple Creek seems near enough to touch. To the west lies the great Continental Divide; eastward the plains roll on forever. North looms the city of Denver and the peaks of the Rocky Mountain National Park. If you attend the memorial dedication Friday morning, you will return to the hotel and have about one hour for lunch before leaving on the cog railway tour.

**Falcon Air Force Base Tour** The base was the nerve center of Desert Storm activity. All electronic targeting was routed through Falcon. Only 40 people may tour at one time. There will be two tours, one Thursday and one Friday. The bus will leave the hotel at 1:30. If you attend the Friday tour you will not be able to attend the cog railway tour.

**Cripple Creek Gambling Casinos** are open to all, but you must schedule a tour on your own.

**Air Force vs. Brigham Young University Football Game** We are fortunate that the game falls as a home date while we are in Colorado Springs. The cost is \$16 for game tickets. Transportation to football game is not included in ticket price. Ticket money must be received by August 1.

**Questions:** If you still have questions after closely reading all four pages of this registration insert, then call, write or send a fax to:

Brenna Terrill, Uniglobe Discovery Travel, Inc.  
104 Granville St.

Gahanna, OH 43230

National toll-free: 1-800/219-7235. Local phone: 614/337-8020. Fax: 614/895-3408.

Keep pages 1 and 2 for future reference and send pages 3 and 4 to Brenna Terrill as soon as you have decided on the schedule and events that you wish to attend. Please do this as soon as possible. Reservation deadline is July 15. Final cancellation date is August 15.

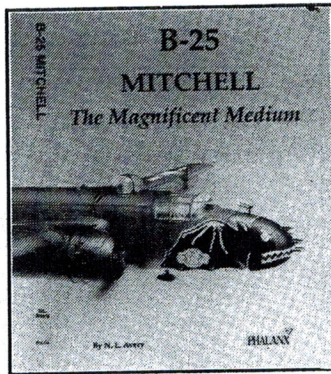
# B-25 MITCHELL

## THE MAGNIFICENT MEDIUM

By

**Norman L. Avery**

- 200 pages long
- Over 300 photos,
- 3 pages in full color
- Hard cover, Dust Jacket
- 26 appendices
- 8 1/2" by 11"
- 36 drawings



Norm Avery spent forty years (most of it with North American) in the aerospace industry and shares his lifetime of knowledge in this, the first comprehensive look at the B-25 Mitchell. He starts with the birth of the aircraft industry, moves on to the development of the medium bomber concept, and the manufacture of the B-25 Mitchell. He tells of its use in World War II and service with many foreign air forces, post-war employment in the Air National Guard and civilian use. He completes this work with lush appendices that include production statistics, allocations to U.S. and foreign users and a full listing of the surviving B-25s and their locations. Phalanx is extremely proud to be publishers of this fine book. It is the **complete** look at the B-25 Mitchell.

Price of the book is **\$29.95**. Shipping costs are **\$3.50** for one book, **\$4.00** for two or more. We will ship by surface any place in the world at this rate. Payment must be in U.S. funds or by check drawn on a U.S. bank. We also accept Visa or Mastercard.

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**Yes, Send me B-25 Mitchell.** I understand that it will be shipped immediately and that if I am not completely satisfied I may return it, undamaged, and my money will be refunded.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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# Very varied career ends

by John Baeta



### *Prayer for a deceased priest*

*Lord, you gave Edward your servant and priest the privilege of a holy ministry in this world. May he rejoice forever in the glory of your kingdom. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.*

A man who served as a navigator in the 345th, an agent in the FBI, a pastor in the Roman Catholic Church and a chaplain in the US Army of the Korean and Viet Nam wars, has died. Reverend Father Edward J Karnis was 71. He died of heart failure this past July in Philadelphia.

In 1951 he became an FBI agent and worked in New York, Detroit and Miami. Her entered the St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore in 1956 and was ordained for the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington in 1960. In 1966 he returned to full active US Army duty and served as the command Chaplain in Korea, Viet Nam and Germany. He retired from the Army October 1, 1985 as a Colonel. He was the oldest Army Chaplain, its senior Colonel and the last member on active duty from the 499th of the original 345th Bomb Group.

Many in the 345th may remember Ed Karnis as the Chaplain who, in 1982, gave the invocation at the Colorado Springs group banquet. He also gave the invocation and benediction for the 345th Monument Memorial dedi-

cation at the Wright Patterson Museum in 1984. He was a 499th navigator and flew 48 combat missions during 1944 and 1945.

He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. At the entrance to the cemetery the casket was placed on a horse-drawn caisson followed by a saddled horse with suspended boots facing to the rear. The procession of family, military escorts and band walked to the burial site to the funeral beat of drums. Graveside ceremonies included with a firing squad and taps.

When our plane was hit during a mission to Batangas, an entry hatch was one of the items jettisoned to lighten the plane - flying with one engine. The plane reached Triton Island in the China Sea. Preparing for a crash landing in the water there, Karnis almost stepped through the open entry hatch coming off the flight deck. I believe to this day that he survived our ditching, because he was destined to become a priest.

## "Medium" book is tops on the B-25

by Vic Tatelman

This magnificent book by N. L. Avery, published in 1992 by Phalanx Publishing Co., Ltd. in St. Paul, Minnesota, is the ultimate in its description of the development of our special airplane. Its author, Norm Avery, is of our generation. He attended Pasadena City College and joined North American Aviation in 1941 as a draftsman. He was part of the design team under the legendary James H. "Dutch" Kindelberger, of not only the B-25, but also the AT-6, P-51 and the F-86, in addition to other North American projects.

This book is not just the story of a famous airplane. It chronicles the very birth of

America's aircraft industry, its bomber development and the evolution of the medium bomber. It recalls episodes in our history that spawned the Mitchell. From the prewar design struggles of the B-25, through its many modifications, including those that evolved from our experiences, which led to "Pappy" Gunn's development of our Strafer.

The sections describing its "tour of duty" in the SWPA, treetop level operations in New Guinea, shipping strikes and the many armament arrangements will bring back memories of our own relationship with this unique airplane.

Avery discusses its service with nineteen nations, its postwar uses and finally, a current record of the few survivors, all covered with statistics and over 300 photos, many taken from Air Apache airplanes. Even our own Bill Cather contributed with his comments on flight characteristics, quoted on page 94.

This is the comprehensive history of the most versatile medium bomber of World War II. The author's firsthand knowledge, technical expertise and years of detailed research combine for a thorough story of the development, production and employment of this remarkable North American product.



# Neck broken, flew combat, says ex-Pilot

*Editor's Note: This 1946 article refers to Thomas L. Frazier, injured in the March 11, 1945 crash landing as copilot to John Baeta (499). The navigator (later FBI agent, turned Priest, turned Army Chaplain) was Ed Karnis. See page 6.*

Washington-(AP)-A former Army bomber pilot testified yesterday he flew 15 combat missions in the Pacific with a broken neck, which had been diagnosed as a muscle strain.

After repeated complaints, he said, he was sent to a hospital for X-rays. Medical officers then corrected the early diagnosis and grounded him.

He flew the missions strapped to his seat and wearing a board strapped to his back, he told a House Armed Services subcommittee. His neck had been broken, he said, when his plane crashed in flames in the China Sea.

The testimony was given by, First Lt. Thomas L. Frazer of Adrian, Ga. He was one of four crippled officers who told the Congressmen that they have been unable to get disability retirements despite severe wounds.

The other three were ground, officers, and all started their Army careers as enlisted men. They were Capt. Carlos Ogden of San Jose, Calif., Congressional Medal of Honor winner-Capt. Frederick J. Bready of North Wilbraham, Mass., and Capt. Thaddeus S. Moore of Highland Park, Mich.

Frazer, who wore a high neck brace as he testified, said his injury was first diagnosed as a muscle strain. He flew until one arm became paralyzed, then hospital examinations showed that his neck had been fractured.

He has been a patient at Walter Reed Army Hospital here since last October. He said he was wearing the brace when the Army discharged him last April.

The committee called Frazer and the others as witnesses in its investigation of Army and Navy retirement systems.

## Group Bulletin Board

The four-page insert for reunion registration can be torn in half, so you can keep pp. 2 & 3 for reference.

This is an expanded issue of *Strafer*. Let us know how you like it. We may continue at this size.

Your next *Strafer* will arrive by June. Please send items to be included in it in time for them to arrive by May 2.

498th Members: Watch your mail for information on the upcoming reunion's squadron banquet.

Your help in notifying Strafer of your change of address is always appreciated.

Last issue included an insert showing a print by artist Michael Hagel. Still available at a \$25 discount for 345th members (\$105 including postage).

Hailstone Graphics  
P O Box 610  
Arlington Hts, IL 60006.

## IN MEMORY OF

Pauline Brown (widow of Archie)	499	May 27, '93	Sarasota, FL
Claude Burger	499	Nov 1, '93	Southern Pines, NC
Genevieve M. Burzynski (wife of Herman)	501	Oct 5, '93	Cheektowaga, NY
Joseph J. Chiado	499	1985	Windsor, CO
Octave "Danny" Daniel	499	Jul 24, '93	city, state
Don Gwyn	499	April 23, '93	Lowell, IN
Harry C Hilbert	498	Nov 5, '91	Greenville, SC
Edward J Karnis	499	July, '93	Philadelphia, PA
Cecil O. Johnson	501st	Jan 18, '94	Phoenix, AZ
Thomas A. McGowan	501	Dec 19, '93	Naples, FL
Paul Murphy	501	Dec 23, '93	
Charles Lloyd Schell	499	Nov 5, '93	Bartlesville, OK
Lewis P Watkins	501	Jul 26, '92	Hixson, TN
J F Zemer	499	Sep 16, '93	Arcadia, CA

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

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Liberal, Kansas is the home of two very famous flying objects. Dorothy's house from "The Wizard of Oz" and a B-25 from the 345th Bomb Group. This is not a plane that flew during WW II, though.

# LIBERAL, KANSAS



## 81 flying objects, 80 aircraft

The Mid-America Air Museum in Liberal, Kansas is proud to feature a B-25, says one of the museum's founders. Keith Knos says the museum was able to obtain the plane from Col. Tom Thomas. It was manufactured in the summer of 1945 and never went into combat. It served as a water bomber in the western United States before it came into possession of the mu-

seum. The foundation that operates the museum chose to display it as a WW II aircraft and painted it with the markings of the 345th. "That was a group with an excellent record," says Knos.

Most of the 80 aircraft displayed in the museum are not military planes, Knos says. They feature a large number of trainers and liaison aircraft.

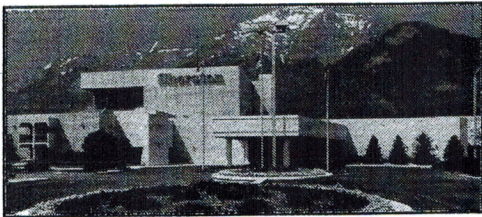
Liberal was a B-24 base during WW II and Knos counts himself among the B-24 admirers. "I might have flown a couple of missions in a B-25, but I don't brag about it," he says with a smile and a chuckle.

A 345th member who visited the museum tells Strafer that he was able to go through the entire plane. He reports that 0535 is not registered to the 498th. Knos says they did not seek to honor a specific plane, but the whole 345th Bomb Group.

### 1994 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to  
 345th BG Reunion Assn.  
 KEN McCLURE  
 5581 CHOWNING WAY  
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## Reunion X



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