

STRAFER



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

345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

September 1994

345th dedicates its share of 5th AF wall

Maury Eppstein presented the keynote address of the dedication ceremony. Many of those attending asked that the full text of the speech be published in the Strafer. This is the first of two parts.

We lived in a turbulent environment of thundering, roaring, powerful engines of the aircraft that was at the heart of our purpose and existence - the plane we came to venerate and respect - North American Aircraft's Mitchell - designed to be a medium altitude bomber - the B-25, which, soon after arriving overseas, we witnessed a talented, imaginative team of American mechanics in Australia convert to a low-level Strafer/Parafrag bomber that changed the course of aerial combat in the Pacific in WWII - acknowledged by many as the most lethal, devastating weapon in our U.S. arsenal.

As a medium bomber it burst on the World's consciousness soon after Pearl Harbor when, on 18 April, 1942, then-colonel Jimmy Doolittle led 16 of them off the deck of the carrier Hornet in the first-ever such maneuver - the famous Doolittle raid, that also marked the first time in history that the Japanese empire had ever been subject to attack by an enemy force.

Later in WWII in the SW Pacific, as a low-level Strafer/Bomber its pilots wrote history with continued deadly strikes at enemy bases and shipping, at enemy planes in the air and on the ground in New Guinea, the Bismarck Sea area, the Netherlands Indies, Malasia, the Philippines, Indo China, China, Formosa, the Ryukus and Japan itself. In this relentless advance, in constant combat with the enemy, the 345th and other units of the 5th Air Force, carried the war to the enemy through 1943, 1944 and 1945. Our 345th air crews, backed up by outstanding ground personnel, wrung every ounce of performance out of their B-25's - became famous as the Air Apaches, and gained respect as one of the premier air units of WWII in the SW Pacific.

In retrospect, it is not the planes alone that capture our thoughts of half a century ago, but also memories of experiences of every possible description shared with the wonderful young men who were there with

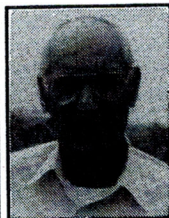
us - some happy memories and some sad - nostalgic flashbacks to the tragic moments that kept so many from returning home. Stop and think about that for a moment - and you will realize why we are all assembled here today.

What may not be known to many of you, the 345th Bomb Group was actually authorized by congress on 6 September, 1942, and created that date by 3rd Air Force order #275, paragraph 1 and officially activated at Columbia, South Carolina Army Air Base on Armistice Day, 11 November, 1942, the date most of us associate with the birth of the 345th. In the following 3 years of exemplary performance, in training and in combat, we brought honor to the air arm of our U.S. forces, to ourselves and to our country. It was a dedicated effort by all who were part of the dynamic story of the Air Apaches.

From scratch the unit was assembled, trained and perfected - and in five-and-a-half months became completely combat-ready, the first air striking force to arrive at full fighting strength for duty in the 5th Air Force after the start of WWII. Under the

initial command of Colonel Jarred V. Crabb, we went overseas in May/June of 1943, and 3 months later, when he was promoted to Brigadier General and made Commander of the 5th Bomber Command, the 345th Command was assumed by Colonel Clinton U. True, who is here with us today, then by Colonel Chester A. Coltharp and lastly by Colonel Glenn A. Doolittle.

Combat was a confined existence, although each day new happenings unfolded, in a way one day was like the last - or the next. And among the high priorities our very existence depended upon the availability of gasoline and taking care of it at whatever cost. It was necessary for fueling the planes, for the motor vehicles, to run the generators that gave us light and power, for the flightline operation, to make the field stoves function in the mess halls, to maintain the precious commodity of refrigeration and other important necessities. And yes, for the mixing of napalm. Ours was a unique little world that ran on gasoline.



President's Comments

Vic Tatelman
President

Reunion X is now a memory and for me, a memorable one. The joy and warmth that returns each time we meet becomes part of that cumulative memory, if that's possible.

This one was sorta special. The Plaque Dedication Ceremony in that lovely and serene place, the mystery of the workings of Falcon Air Force Base, that fantastic ride up Pike Peak, and the most enjoyable talks of Hank Potter and (I've heard) of Donna Lancaster, all combined to make our meeting special.

But most of all, our camaraderie and friendships renewed - that is really outstandingly special.

I want to thank Henry Kortemeyer and his committee for their dedication and effort. Each of them deserve a special thanks for making Reunion X such an outstanding success.

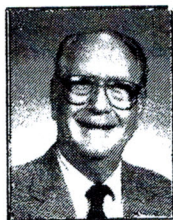
And congratulations to our new officers and Squadron Vice Presidents. We have a fine start on Reunion XI. And speaking of Reunion XI, thanks to our site selection committee for coming to agreement so expeditiously. Their work saved a lot of fractious discussion.

So the effort starts anew; St. Louis will be our next venture. My fervent wish: everybody stay well.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

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



Our 10th reunion in Colorado Springs is history. It's time to reminisce a little about our nine previous reunions.

The first one was 1973 in Colorado Springs. Started by Elbert Wardle and Bert Rosenbaum, there were 18 or 19 members of the 498th present. About all we did was talk about the past and get reacquainted. We hadn't seen each other for 28 or 29 years. It had been good seeing everyone and we all had a good time.

The second was at Gulf Shores, Alabama in 1976. The only good thing there was Perry Lane stopping to make a phone call and accidentally running into us. You could hear him yell for a country mile. We stayed in cabins on stilts on the shore. The next year a hurricane wiped them out. Our banquet consisted of raw oysters and boiled shrimp. There wasn't much there then.

We spent '79 and '82 in Colorado Springs at the Antlers Hotel. Each time we went to the Air Force academy and had our '79 banquet at the Officers club. Our attendance improved as we all started finding others. In '82 we had our first and, I hope, our last picnic. Too old for that nonsense.

In '84 we held the reunion in Columbus. It was our best reunion to then. We took side trips and went to the Ohio State football game. That year we set up the 345th Memorial at Wright Patt AFB. Attendance was up to about 50 members.

Our 6th reunion in '86 was in San Antonio. We decided to find a warm area of the country and got quite the opposite. It was colder than @&**. No one had warm clothes. We had to stay in several hotels. There was a lot to do in San Antonio, including the river ride. Everyone seemed to have a lot of fun despite the cold.

Norfolk in '88 was another good one. We took several side trips, including Old Williamsburg and the Naval shipyards.

Our first reunion with the 5th Air Force in Las Vegas was almost a bust. The hotels controlled us; we had little time together. We did enjoy the bus and boat trip to Lake Meade. Not much was said about anyone's pockets being emptied.

The trip to Columbus in '92, I felt was the best ever. Our Squadron banquet was especially nice, I thought anyway. The Ameriflora tour was a special sight to see honoring the 500th year of Columbus. The only problem was the hotel couldn't get us

in our rooms because the previous group didn't want to leave. And those terrible beds coming out of the walls. Joyce took me to an out of the way bar where I had my first experience with Chinese lo mein.

Our first reunion started out small and how it's grown. It's too bad these reunions can't go on forever...

499th Squadron

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



Back to reality after another unforgettable reunion of the historic 345th Bomb Group. The anticipation of seeing old friends is nothing compared to that smile and firm handshake with every greeting. The hugs form all the pretty girls are equally welcome. Our daughter accompanied us to the reunion. She said she never saw such a group of young, older people. She thanks all who made her feel so welcome. She said she felt the strong bond among all in attendance, like no gathering she ever.

The dedication of the plaque at the Air Force Cemetery was very impressive. No one pays tribute to an occasion like Maury Eppstein. The monument's setting is perfect with the mountains in the background. The clear air makes the sky bluer; the clouds whiter than in parts of our country where humidity/pollution is higher.

George Cooper did his usual great invocation to start the squadron banquet. Thanks to Lou Damour for the bottles of wine especially bottled and labeled for our reunion. Vic Tatelman and committee did a great job making everything come together. Vic was everywhere, moving about like someone in training for some future Olympic event. Julian Baird and Wendell Decker, two of our squadron commanders, were there and plan to come to the next one. Before looking at the cost of the dinner tickets, think about all the expenses involved: help, the hall, all the meetings and correspondence - all covered by the ticket. Vic is a dandy fellow, but I have the feeling he railroaded me into the position of squadron president, a job he always did along with other duties. This means planning the squadron meal in St. Louis will be up to me. All suggestions and input will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks a lot for the great support you have given me as your VP the past years, it was fun. You are, however, in for a treat as Harry Zarfes will continue to function in

the tradition of all the 499th VPs. Give him the cooperation and support you gave me. Stay healthy. GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

500th Squadron

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



345th Reunion, Colorado Springs. I think, if there was a theme to this reunion, it was "A Family Affair." Here's an example of what I mean. C W Romans came from Texas with three of his sisters: Odelle Strickland, Edith Romans, and Marie Goodman. All from Texas. And the Horton Stewart family came, practically the whole family. As you know, Horton left us last year. His wife Lee came with daughter Nancy and her husband Barry Sandkuhl and son Jim and his wife Thanya. All from California. All seemed to be having a grand time.

Also, I met two young men attending with the 501st. Bill Helvey's father was an engineer on "Horatio" on a mission to Rabaul. Bill spent hours and dollars researching all mission records and the site at Rabaul. Hired a helicopter to get detailed photos of Rabaul and surrounding areas. He donated all his records to the group so copies will be available. I asked for a copy of the April 3, 1945 mission when we were shot down on my 37.5th mission.

The other young man of the 501st, named Arnst, came as the friend of a family, whose father he only knew of. He was interested in and flying since age 14. He is a commuter air line pilot in Wisconsin.

Did you know a mayor of a town is in our 500th? Bergie Ritscher is mayor of Alma, Wisconsin, population 900+.

Our main speaker at the 500th banquet was General William C. Mitchell, a former fighter pilot in the CBI and also bomber and fighter pilot in the ETO. He was instrumental in the surrender of German troops in Norway. He aimed his P-38 at the headquarters of the Nazi General in command and they all came out with their hands up.

The 345th Banquet speaker was General Hank Potter, navigator on Jimmy Doolittle's plane on the Tokyo raid. The crowd of about 600 gave him a standing ovation for his detailed description of preparing for and carrying out that mission.

Get ready for our 500th meeting in San Diego in September. Bring a relative or friend and don't forget your PSA monitoring, so you can be sure and be at the next meeting.

501st Squadron

Virgil Gross
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

It has been an honor to be your President for the past two years. I've gotten to know you better.

Congratulations to Lynn Lee on his election to take over the reins of the Presidency. I'm sure he will do an excellent job. Please give him ammunition for the newsletter.

Reunion #10 was a great success with attendance in the neighborhood of 350. Of course, as usual, the 501st had the most members present. We had several for whom this was their first reunion. Hope this will not be their last.

It was nice to meet and visit with Mark Nordstrom, editor of the *Strafer*.

Robert Arndt, whom I mentioned in the last newsletter, was in attendance as well as Ed & Julie Bina's son.

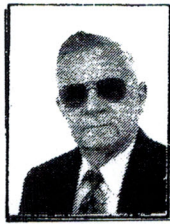
We appreciate the widows who attended and miss those who couldn't be there.

We lost a very dear friend in June with the death of Billie Moore, wife of Jay Moore. Julius & Margaret Fisher, Bob and Sybil Anderson and Fran & I were able to attend the funeral.

Bob and Sybil Anderson lost their son, David, in March, while on a tour to Thailand.

After each reunion we are closer than before. We have told many people (ex-military & civilian) we are closer than our own "blood kin." A fringe benefit of our friendships is that we can go coast to coast and within a day's travel in any direction can always find a meal and a bed. All of our "family" knows that there will always be a "light in the window" at our house.

We missed Peppy Blount, because of his accident and hope he is progressing well. We all missed Yvonne Baker, after her knee surgery. Have a speedy recovery.



Donna Lancaster's Singular Message

by Patti McClure

It was a powerful message that Donna Lancaster delivered to the women at the 345th breakfast meeting. From personal experiences, living with birth defects which limited her height to four feet, she has lived life to the fullest. When growing up she was teased by others because of her tiny size and missing fingers on one hand. Her feet were where her knees should have been. Instead of being angry and depressed, she confronted life and adopted the attitude that she was thankful to be alive. She told herself that people who were cruel had their problems and her choice, which we all have, was to make the most of what she had.

Donna earned her degree in bacteriology from University of Kansas and one year later graduated from their school of Medical Technology.

She has logged over 2000 hours as a pilot and works two jobs: one with Jet East in Dallas in the evenings and her daytime job is with an oil company. She is a licensed real estate broker in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. She has been married but divorced her spouse as he had a drinking



Donna Lancaster spent a lot of time in conversation with reunion attendees. Here she is with Mary Elizabeth Gamble (L) and Ken McClure (R).

problem he could not overcome. Later (just two weeks) he died and she felt very guilty, but putting her own philosophy to work she choose not to retain these feelings and, instead, uses her time productively. It is obvious that she loves what she does and is thankful to be alive.

I think many in attendance had tears in their eyes. We should take a long look at ourselves, especially as we grow older and make new decisions about what is really important, being guided by choosing to do the most we can with the time we have left. The choices are ours to feel as we do.

Thanks, Donna, for helping us to re-evaluate our lives. We will all keep your profound statement "meeting resistance can be one of the most powerful forces within us" to help get through the challenges of life. I wish I had recorded your presentation!

Headquarters Elects New Vice President

The Headquarters group has elected Gus Oulette to succeed Ken Gastgeb as Vice President.

Ken Gastgeb announced in the June Newsletter mailed to Headquarters members that he planned to resign from his six-year service as Vice President at the September Reunion.

A column on Headquarters events will begin appearing under Gus' byline in the next issue of *Strafer*.

It's unlikely that the Headquarters ever moved so far, so fast, with so little effort. Ken Gastgeb's home is in Oklahoma, Gus Oulette's is in New Hampshire. The move was made via Colorado Springs.

345th Bomb Group Reunion X

by Julius Fisher

The tenth reunion of the 345th Bomb Group Association, held in the Sheraton Colorado Springs hotel on Sept. 8-11, is now history but not in the hearts of those who were there. Although activities did not start officially until Thursday, Sept. 8, there were impressive numbers who checked into the hotel before that date.

The first item on the program of activities started Thursday with a large group of the membership visiting Falcon A.F.B., located east of town about ten miles. This base has been activated since our last reunion held here in 1982. It is part of Air Force Space Command, which headquarters is at Peterson A.F.B., also located just east of Colorado Springs. The command unit at Falcon is the 50th Space Wing, whose mission is to command and control D.O.D. satellites and manage the Air Force world wide satellite network, NATO and Navy Fleet communications. NORAD still has it's original mission of defense.

Friday began with the dedication of the 345th MEMORIAL PLAQUE at the Air Force Academy Cemetery, under the direction of our president Vic Tatelman. The program consisted of posting the colors by the Air Force Academy Color Guard, the invocation by an Air Force chaplain, introduction of the Air Force representative by Henry Kortemeyer followed by the keynote address by Maury Eppstein, unveiling of the 345th Memorial plaque by Col. True, benediction, taps and retirement of the colors. When one stands at this spot and gazes into the high mountains and pines along with the quietness of the area, one can only conclude that this is the perfect place for our memorial. What a peaceful feeling one experiences here.

Later on in the afternoon, another group of the membership took another tour at Falcon A.F.B. The last activities of the day consisted of squadron pictures and dinners.

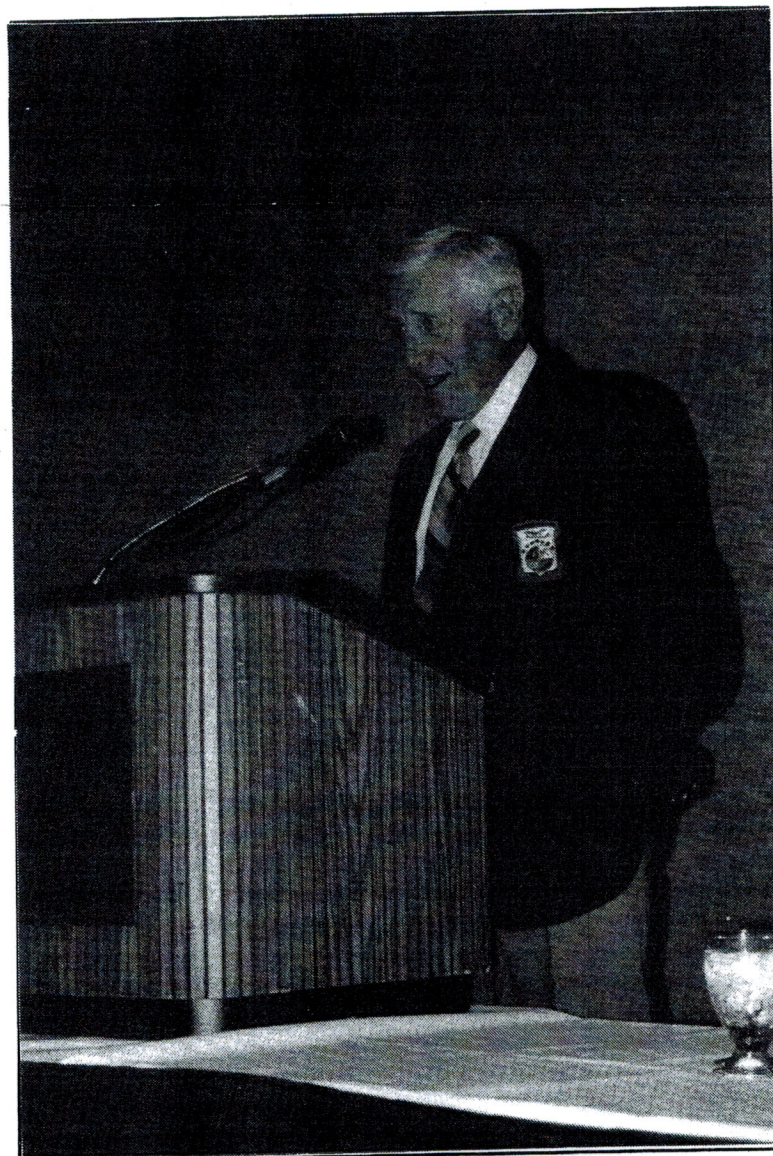
The final day, Saturday, began with the usual Group business meeting where the election of Group officers resulted in the following: President- Vic Tatelman, Vice President- Lynn Lee, Treasurer- Ken McClure, Asst. Treasurer- Richard Feucht and Secretary- Julius Fisher.

Also reported at the meeting was the results of the squadron election of officers which resulted in the following: 498th- Vice President Merl Wooden, 499th- Vice President Harry Zarfes, 500th- Vice President Ben Muller and 501st Vice President Lynn Lee. Because of the extensive work load involved with office of treasurer, the office of asst. treasurer was created as noted in the above election of officers.

An ad-hoc committee of squadron vice presidents, appointed earlier in the day, selected St. Louis Mo. as the next city for our 345th Group reunion in 1996.



The 345th Squadron signs identified the Colorado Springs Sheraton as the location for the tenth reunion of the Air Apaches. The sign is now ready for service in St. Louis.



Hank Potter's amiable nature is evident in this shot of his description of the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. Banqueters listened intently.

345th financial statement

Certificates of Deposit	
September 21, 1994	\$14,242.88
Checkbook Balance	
September 24, 1994	\$3,968.12
Total	\$18,210.00
All Bills Paid	

No more advertising

The United States Post Office has changed the rules for nonprofit mailing permits, which is what the 345th uses.

As of September of this year advertising is no longer allowed. If Strafer accepts advertising that would be a violation of the permit, which would mean an increase of about \$0.18 per piece in postage costs. That's an increase beyond our means.

Strafer has accepted advertising in the past. Notices regarding "Warpath Across the Pacific," "B-25, The Magnificent Medium," the color insert advertising the color print by Michael Hagel (Hailstone Graphics) of the surrender flight and others were all paid advertising. Since that advertising helped cover the cost of providing the Strafer newsletter and all advertisers jumped at the opportunity to pay, it's hoped that they were able to cover their costs.

The question of what is advertising now becomes an important one. On this issue's bulletin board are notices of persons seeking opportunities to travel and trade. These are not paid and they are submitted by members of the 345th Reunion Organization. The post office defines items not directly related to the purpose of the organization as advertising.

The post office has also worked to lobby congress to disallow nonprofit mailing status to reunion organizations such as the 345th. You may want to inform your congressional representative of your feelings on this matter. Other veterans organizations would also be affected.

Group Bulletin Board

Will the person who took the picture from the album by the 499th roster board please send the original or a copy to Julian B Baird, 3111 Whitemarsh Cir., Farmers Branch, TX for replacement in the album.

Anyone want to go to Australia? Frank Hansen does and he's looking for company. 15 Orange St Port Jervis, NY 12771-1426 914/856-3802

Your next Strafer should arrive in December. We appreciate your help giving address changes or other information that will help get Strafer to you or your friends.

Wall plaque replicas as given to reunion attendees in Colorado Springs available for \$6/ea. and \$10/pair including postage. Check to 345th Reunion association. Mail to Ken McClure at address listed under reunion officers.

Wanted: Hack Watch Trade or buy GI watch issued during 345th years or just before, preferably all stainless with contract data on back, in working order or restorable. Will swap for nylon "Escape and Evasion chit" for jacketback (U.S. flag plus message in seven Asiatic languages or escape map for Nagasaki area or cash. John Dinges 708/798-6979

IN MEMORY OF

William (Josh) Kilpatrick	499th	5/13/94	Conyers, GA
Dwight G Marlatt	499th	7/30/94	Denver, CO
John M Mushok	499th	12/93	Bryan's Rd, MD
John Muth	498th	12/91	Barrington, RI
Edward Nunes	499th	1/18/92	
Charles C Phillips	499th	3/12/94	Pittsboro, NC
Otto J Taylor	499th	1/4/94	Rochelle, IN

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

Next Issue of Strafer to arrive in December

Association Officers

President -- Vic Tatelman
18900 SW 232nd St, Miami, FL 33170
305/247-8439

Vice President -- Lynn Lee
1717 N 6th, Abilene, TX 79603
915/672-1836

Secretary -- Julius Fisher
1640 Battlecreek, Charlotte, MI 48813
517/543-4816

Treasurer -- Ken McClure
5581 Chowning Way, Columbus OH 43213
614/864-5772

Assistant Treasurer -- Dick Feucht
12500 Tollgate Rd
Pickerington, OH 43147-9161
614/837-7062

Reunion Committee V. P.

HQ - August Oulette
86 Central St, Hudson, NH 03051-4600
603/598-6559

498 - Merl Wooden
409 Lewln Dr NW, Cdr Rpsds, IA 52405
319/396-0257B

499 - Harry Zarfaz
913 Falcon Head Ln #101, Las Vegas,
NV 89128-4131 702/255-2718

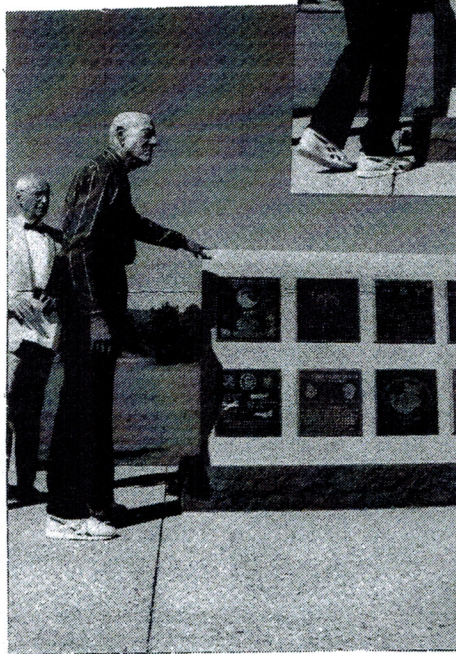
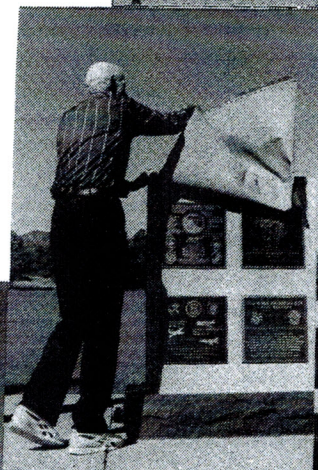
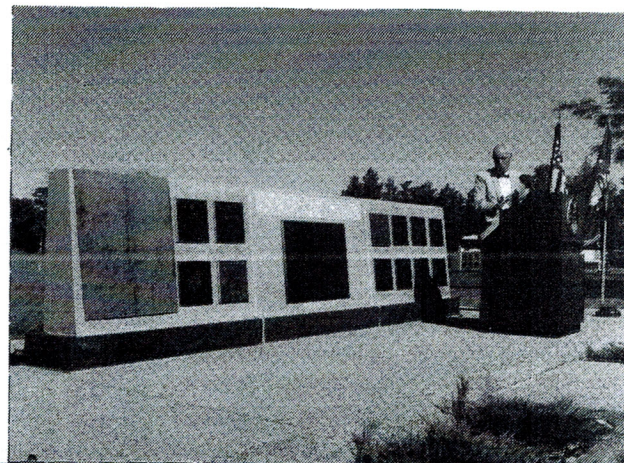
500 - Ben T. Muller
7215 Sandpiper Dr., Houston, TX 77074
713/774-3905

501 - Lynn Lee
1717 N 6th, Abilene, TX 79603
915/672-1836

345th Members Preserving History

At the dedication of the 345th Bomb Group Plaque on the 5th Air Force Memorial at the U.S. Air Force Academy members gather after arriving via busses (bottom right). The memorial is on the left of the main drive. A sense of height and peace permeates the 7,000 foot-elevation setting. Many who attended commented that they were inspired by the setting. Viewing the memorial from the drive, the mountains are visible reaching up to 14,000 feet beyond the trees. Vic Tatelman welcomes the group and introduces speakers (top). Mary Eppstein delivers keynote address (right, middle). Col. Clint True unveils the plaque (left, middle) then steps back and displays the pride that is felt by all (bottom, left). Maury Eppstein's dedication speech will be published in its entirety in the Strafer. The first of two installments is on page one. The 345th ceremonially granted ownership of the plaque in the form of title to the property. A prayer and taps followed the ceremony.

Then it was time for individual, close-up pictures of the 345th plaque. Most of the members attending the ceremony took home a personal photo of the plaque. They also took home a ceramic replica of the 345th plaque. It was featured as a check-in gift for everyone attending the reunion, as a further memorial of the occasion. Many attending said that some of the most deeply-felt memories come to mind under the expansively clear, blue sky of the high mountain altitude, against the even higher peaks beyond and the surrounding evergreens.



1994 Dues Payable

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

Reunion XI

Saint Louis, Missouri

1996 1996 1996 1996

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