



STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

December 1995

PHILIPPINE MEMORIAL TO WARPATH

On January 7, 1945 a B-25 medium bomber was hit by flak while on a bombing raid over the Philippines, and crashed into the roof of the parish church in Angeles City. There were no survivors among the bomber's crew. The Japanese troops in the nearby buildings were caught by surprise, and probably panicked, because they shot at every part of the plane. The next day the parish priest said a few prayers for the deceased crewmen and they were buried in graves nearby. After the liberation, the bodies were exhumed and moved to the United States.

Witnesses said there was a big "White Indian Head" painted on both rudders, but the plane was olive drab overall.

After the war ended, the son of one of the fliers placed an add in an American flying magazine in 1988. His name was Ged Dizon, and he asked for help in identifying the dead, or to contact surviving members of the squadron. The add was seen by a former member of the 345th Bomber group, J. W. Albright, who did a little homework, and was able to identify the dead crew members. They were 2nd. Lt. Arthur Browngardt, Jr., 2nd. Lt. Jack Bartlow, 2nd. Lt. Howard Lebeck, T/Sgt. Clarence Gilbert, S/Sgt. William Noe, and S/Sgt. Englehardt Von Hebel, and they were all members of the 499th Squadron.

J. W. and Ged exchanged several letters. In one of them Ged describes the last minutes of the plane crash, and what happened after: "The B-25 appeared within the city at very low level with smoke trailing from its right engine.Due to battle damage, the pilot wasn't able to gain more altitude and the left wing hit a couple of bamboo trees which turned the plane toward the direction of the church. The plane went right into the roofings and exploded on the Holy Angel University Campus next to the church....The roof was eventually patched-up in 1946. (Ged's father) was able to get one of the plane's .50 cal.

machine guns, the rubber boat, one of the control wheels and part of a gauge. The .50 cal. was surrendered to the authorities when the gun ban was implemented, the rubber boat was made into raincoats by my grandfather,

the control wheel was misplaced. What's left with us is part of a gauge. My uncle made pistols out of the engine pushrods, because according to him, a carbine M1 bullet will fit right into the hole."

Vic Tatelman and Ged exchanged several letters, and in one, Ged told about a project he and his brothers had undertaken. They were making a memorial plaque of the incident to be placed in the church. Ged himself painted the insignias of the 345th and 499th and 5th Air Force on the top and his father did the lettering. The marker was installed in the

church on July 19, 1988, and with a simple, solemn service, given a blessing by the priest on the 25th. The plaque is still there and reads in part, after a description of the incident and the names of the dead crewmen; "It is respectfully requested to all who read this marker to say a prayer for the eternal repose of the souls of the crew members of the "Sag Harbor Express" and for the other 345th bomb group airmen who laid down their young lives for the liberation of Angeles, and the Philippines during World War II."



"All the Way from the S.W.P.A. Season's Greetings from the 345th and me." Is this the spirit of Christmas past? It was my first guess, but something tells me I am wrong.



President's Comments

Vic Tatelman
President

Those of you who have moved from one residence to another have my deepest sympathy. What a pain in the butt it is. I don't

think I'll ever be straightened out again.

It brought to mind previous moves that seem so simple now. 50 years ago moving consisted of packing a barracks bag, taking down a tent and loading it all on a truck. A flight of a couple of hours or ship travel of a day or so, re-erecting a tent and setting up a cot, and presto, the move was complete (more or less).

I'm not unmindful of those who built the new campsite, clearing trees, digging holes (the 499th's latrine on Biak comes to mind), setting up the various Sections, etc. But for most, moving was not traumatic.

The hardships of those years, other than getting shot at, pale with time. We tend to forget the inconveniences, the disruptions, the boring routine of camp life and disappointments.

Do you remember in the early months, the daily "fix" of Atabrine that turned everybody yellow? That stuff in cans called butter that wouldn't melt with a blowtorch? Ground Australian mutton that the cooks tried their best to camouflage into something edible?

(Cont. on pg. 3)

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Merl Wooden
V.P. - 498 Sqd.

I received a nice note from Susan Wardle, Elbert's daughter-in-law. He is still living at home and Katherine is in the nursing home close by. He still talks about Biak and all his friends. We send our love and friendship to the whole family. You might want to send a card to him letting him know we're thinking of him.

Robert Hull wrote looking for Charles Brass Jr's address. He was in the engineering department with Phil Schreiner and Raymond Miller. Robert had a pacemaker put in this year. We wish him well and hope to get Charles' address or phone number to Robert.

John Palansky was interviewed by his local newspaper about escorting the Japanese peace envoy to Ie Shima. Congratulations John.

Frank Bissitt sent clippings from Mackay, Australia, where we had our 7 day furlough. It brought back lots of fond memories. A lot of you were there also. Anyone want to write about some of those furloughs? It wasn't as good as Sidney but it sure beat the islands.

Our city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa was on the world news Oct 21-22. Three Presidents were on one podium in front of our new Czech and Slovak museum and library. Slovak Pres. Michal Kovac, Czech Republic Pres. Vatslav Havel and Pres. Clinton were there. People from all around the world visited the opening of the museum. A couple from Czechoslovakia met their own President in Cedar Rapids. We are proud of our international heritage from around Cedar Rapids. Not only do we have one of the largest Czech and Slovak settlements here but also have the popular Amanos where the Germans settled.

St. Louis: see you there in '96.

499th Squadron

Harry Zarfaz
V.P. - 499th Sqd.

Twelve people attended the 499th mini-reunion at Bear Creek Farms, Indiana. I understand that the food and entertainment were very good. We are indebted to Ben Miller for his time and effort in arranging it.

Congratulations to Ben and Norma Miller, on their fiftieth anniversary, January 6th, 1996. Ben survived the November 12, 1944 Kamikaze attack on the Liberty Ship S. S. Nelson. He tells me he left the group he was with to get a cigar from his bunk in the hold, when the Kamikaze plane hit and wiped out the group



he had just left. The cigars were a gift from his future wife, Norma.

John McDowell's son inquired about locating his father's former pilot, Captain Charles E. Rice, Jr. However, I understand that Earl Hitt advised John that Captain Rice was deceased. John McDowell, Sr. was an engineer gunner on Betty's Dream, one of the planes escorting Japanese surrender planes.

How do you contact the famous actor, Charlton Heston, who at the age of seventeen was a radio operator gunner on a B-25 in the Pacific? It so happens that my nephew, who died several years ago, was well known for his musical scores on films in the fifties. His wife now writes screen plays. I contacted her and she advised me on the correct way to go. I have sent a letter to Mr. Heston's son, Fraser requesting input on his father's wartime outfit and also mentioning our reunion.

500th Squadron

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

Our 500th reunion in San Diego in September was great, as they all are. There were a total of 132 + at our final evening banquet at the Town & Country Hotel. The speaker was retired Col. Ben Pollard. He was a fighter pilot shot down in Viet Nam and a prisoner for 6 years! His last post was as second in command at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the appearance of Claudia Mortensen, the widow of our beloved C.O. Max Mortensen. She was accompanied by her son, Max, his lovely wife and their young son. Claudia heard many stories of the heroic and sometimes amusing exploits of her husband from men who had flown with him.

Old San Antonio was chosen for our next reunion in 1997. Make plans now.

Spoke with Margaret and Jerry Burke. He is out of the coma which had lasted how long? Two years. Is able to talk on the phone from the VA facility-- 718-298-8326-- although bedridden. Give him a call.

How about the new member roster? Sorry. I mean the membership directory, just mailed out. A lot of work went into it. Good work, Cavoli!

We lost another of our dear members. Bob Van Ausdell. He was flying an experimental airplane, I understand, in Ohio when it crashed on October 10, 1995.



501st Squadron

Lynn Lee
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

Just got back from the Maine mini-Reunion, and had a really great time seeing old friends and comrades again after all these years. For me the high point of the trip was listening to George Ball retell his adventures. He was shot down and rescued by submarine, then had to transfer to two other submarines. George's eyes still get big when he talks about jumping from one submarine to the next. "There isn't much to jump to," he said. "You just have to push, and grab at the same time."

The squad dinner was great. I got to see and meet some of the first time members. They were wonderful people and everyone had a good time. Hope to see them in St. Louis. The meeting place for the next mini reunion isn't decided yet, and we are open to suggestions.

George Frye from Milford, Connecticut has a good idea. Let's encourage the sons and daughters of the 345th to join us at the reunions. Sounds good to me, George.

(continued on pg. 3)

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette
V.P. - HQ Group

The last *Strafer* brought the news of Louis Damour's passing. He was my only buddy from New Hampshire who attended reunions. Very sorry to hear this. My condolences to his wife. Knowing her, she's taking it in stout heartedly.

I hope the HQ newsletter will go out before the holidays. Dan Christie wrote, doing very well. Dave Blazer has something to say. Will write more in the HQ newsletter.

Members, dues are now due and will be greatly appreciated. This organization depends mainly on dues as income. We all need to help with our share of the expenses.

Have had a very busy time with various activities in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of WWII. Too numerous to enumerate them all. The thing that got the best of me was the refusal to admit as to who started this mess anyway... Met with another man who collects war memorabilia and he gave me a B-25 tie clip, to remember him by.

As I near the closing of this note I wish the best of everything for the coming holidays to everyone within eye view of this writing. Mainly remember that we have plenty to be thankful for. Adios, and take care.



Powdered eggs that surely had no relationship to chickens? (It was rumored the stuff contained something that caused a variety of contretemps on Sydney leaves and furloughs.)

In the later months, fresh meat and eggs began to appear and sometimes mess was even looked forward to with a certain amount of anticipation. The paradox is that we were probably healthier then than ever before or since.

But I digress from the "moving experience." When available, wood flooring in the tents was a downright luxury. The scrounging of wood for flooring was looked upon as an art-form. (I remember one of the squadrons actually attempted to set up a saw mill - I don't remember if the effort was successful). Flooring lumber was worth more than money and almost equal to booze. So it wasn't surprising that when a move was imminent, the problem of how to move the flooring to the new campsite was paramount.

I remember seeing an airplane taking off with the plastic tail cone removed and floor boards protruding out the tail (weight and balance computations were practically unheard of in those days). Moving with our prized possessions was just as important then as now. Another sight to behold was a segment in the film WARPATH of a truck, loaded with squadron gear, with the long latrine seat board safely ensconced with the other valuable equipment. To this day, I don't know who or how those boards were "holed" with six or eight cutouts, in an environment with so few power tools. It's amazing what the memory bank recalls when it's triggered by a later event. My sympathies go out to those of you who move!

(501st Cont. from pg. 2)

Nat Ethins sent me a clipping about Charlton Heston as a radio telephone operator in the Pacific during WWII.

W. A. Miller is retired now, and just got back from a visit to Australia. He had the chance to revisit Sydney. The city has changed a lot, but he says the Aussies are still the same. They are wonderful people with a great lust for living.

Oh yes, I've heard from Old Stony, our traveler. He says he's been out again. Visited Antarctica, and says it was "cold, and no one was there." Then he went to Vietnam. He says it was hot and everyone was there. He went to Biak, says it's an international airport, with hundreds of flights leaving every day - complete with restaurants, bars, VIP lounges, and flush toilets. Now that's progress.

Well, leaving now. Just want to say many thanks to all who wrote to me this last month, and hope to hear more from you in the near future.

Group Bulletin Board

DISASTER MISSION! NAZDAD TO HOLLANDIA! 37 PLANES LOST!
"Black Sunday," by Michael Clar-
ingbould, now available from
PHALANX, 1051 Marie Ave. W.,
St. Paul, MN 55118.
(800)316-1855
55 pages w/16 photos and full
details only \$19.95.

Your next Strafer will ar-
rive in March. Please send
all items for it by February 1

The Distinguished Flying
Cross Society is now in ex-
istence. If eligible and inter-
ested contact The Distin-
guished Flying Cross
Society, 34552 Camino
Capistrano, Capiarano
Beach, CA 92624-1234

498th note:
Don Sequin 's new
address:
11940 Lake Lane,
Lot 12, Stonegate
Mobile Home Park
Lindstrom, MN
55045
Phone
612-257-6846.

Message to kids: The
government took me out of
high school; treated me rough
for a year while it taught me
war. Then it sent me to war.
While I was there I met the
most important people in the
world, my friends. Some of
them were killed. When it
was over they brought me
back. My friends said thanks.

Are you entitled to medals which
you have not received? You might be
eligible for the Philippines Liberation
Medal and Presidential Citation and
not even know it. Contact Ed Weinstein,
191 Emerald Green Court, Creve Coeur,
MO 63141-7555 for help.
Please enclose a copy of your dis-
charge papers.

IN MEMORY OF

Joe L. Peek	501st	July 1995	Texas
Col. Evelyn Taylor (wife of Glenn)	499th	10 Oct. 1995	San Antonio, TX
Henry R. Treece	498th	12 July, 1995	Alabama
George Womble	498th	Oct. 1995	Oklahoma
Robert C. Van Ausdell	500th	10 Oct. 1995	Lima, Ohio
Edward J. Stewart	501st	30 July, 1995	Farmerville, NY

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

Association Officers

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915/672-1836

REUNION XI: GREAT TIME FOR ALL WHO MEET IN ST. LOUIS

I received a call from a 345th member asking assistance in making an early reservation at Reunion XI. That call also made me realize that I have not said enough about the Reunion site and how to make hotel reservations. So here goes !!

The reunion hotel is the HOLIDAY INN WESTPORT, located in west St. Louis County a few miles from the Greater St. Louis area airport. The hotel has a fleet of vans and provides free transportation to and from the airport. The hotel will extend the Reunion room rate for guests who wish to come early and/ or stay late. The hotel is well-prepared and experienced in military reunion activities. In the hotel area you will find outstanding restaurants, a dinner theater, movies, shopping malls, and even fast food establishments. Within the hotel van free service area you will also find gambling casinos and major tourist attractions.

For those of you traveling by car the hotel is located just off the I-270 bypass west of St. Louis at Page Avenue exit. The hotel offers full service motor home hookups on premises for R.V's. Others not requiring a "hookup" may park free-of-charge in designated areas of the hotel parking lot.

The room rate for Reunion XI is \$67. All reservations require a one night deposit. You may make your reservations by calling the Holiday Inn National number (1-800-HOLIDAY), or by calling the hotel direct: 1 (314) 434-0100. Be sure to indicate that you are

reserving space for the 345th Bomb Group Reunion and request a confirmation number. For reservations by mail, the address is: Holiday Inn Westport, 1973 Craigshire, St. Louis, MO 63146. Be sure to enclose a check or money order for the first night's lodging and mention the 345th Bomb Group Reunion.

Make early reservations. There is no penalty for cancellations before your check-in date. Plan to come early and stay late. The hotel will host a free beer, wine and cheese party for 345th members on Wednesday evening, September 4th. We hope you will attend the party, which should be a great "kickoff" to a great reunion.

345th Pilot dies test-flying historic plane

(Youngstown, Vindicator) October 10, 1995, North Lima, Ohio- A pilot was killed today when a restored, "priceless" single-engine plane crashed at Youngstown Metro Airport.

The pilot was Bob VanAusdell, 74, of Los Angeles. He had planned to fly the plane to Staggerwing Museum in Tullahoma, Tenn.

The plane was confirmed to be a Travel Air Mystery Ship Model R, a 1920's military fighter plane. The plane had crashed in 1931

and was restored during the past six years. The aircraft is considered priceless. The cost of the restoration was nearly \$200,000.

VanAusdell was selected by the owners to fly the aircraft to Tennessee, because he was the most qualified. A witness, videotaping the incident, said the plane dropped unexplainably on the second landing pass. He said it was moving faster than landing speed on both passes



Is this a familiar face? Last seen on the cover of September Strafer, it belongs to T/Sgt. John W. Thompson, 499th Sqd. He was identified, and this picture sent in by Matt A. Mattson, who was with Thompson throughout the war. Matt also identified W. C. Hatchitt, with the gun.

1995 Dues Payable

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

Reunion XI



Holiday Inn Westport
St. Louis, MO
September 4-7, 1996

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