



STRAFER

498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

June 1996

Events for reunion XI are scheduled

by Earl Hitt

Reunion XI committee held its second formal meeting on May 5. Attendance included President Vic Tatelman, committee chairman Earl Hitt and wife Margaret, committee vice chairman Ed Weinstein and wife Mary, Bill McGrath and wife Dorothy, Lea Camene, John Higgins and Jack Menefee. The meeting was held at the Holiday Inn, Westport and Nancy Cannon, director of sales, attended and briefed the committee on the facilities of the hotel and answered questions. The committee discussed and made decisions on as many of the reunion activities as was possible including the reunion schedule, registration, business meetings, banquets and tours to

be offered.

The committee plans to include articles in the Strafer on activities of Reunion XI. It will officially begin at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 4, 1996 and close the following Sunday, September 8, at noon.

Group activities begin at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday with a wine and cheese party. Squadron banquets will be Friday night. Saturday morning are the Ladies Breakfast and group business meeting. That night are photographs and group banquet.

Five tours are planned during the reunion and two post-reunion tours are planned. Thursday morning there's a tour of the Gateway Arch. That evening a starlight riverboat cruise of the Mississippi or a

trip to Casino St. Charles on the banks of the Missouri River will be available. Friday morning you can choose a tour of historic St. Charles (once a supply stop for pioneers going west) or of several sites including the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair park, science center, Muny Opera and Union Station (once the world's busiest center). After the reunion a one-day, narrated tour of Missouri's wine country includes lunch and antique and craft shops. A three-day trip to Branson, Missouri includes a lake cruise, a country music show and your choice of the area's natural attractions, shopping and recreation. For people are needed for the trip. Cost is estimated at \$275 per person for this tour.



President's Comments

Vic Tatelman
President

The 50th anniversary of the war's end is coming up. Those of us who were called back from that August 14th (15th)

mission will never forget the question and the hope that this was the end. We didn't know until we landed back at Ie Shima the reason for the recall, but a lot of us guessed.

For the non-flying people, it had been a long time since that ship had left California, and for those of us in the flight echelons who persisted from Columbia, that fearsome first leg from Hamilton to Hickam seemed like eons ago.

The airplanes we flew were pretty damn good considering the state of the art 50 years ago. We had very few mechanical problems. Oh, there were a few prop governor runaways and oil pump failures, but on the whole, you fellows who maintained those airplanes were magnificent. I remember specifically an oc-

casion where an airplane came back from a mission pretty shot up; both engines had to be changed. Would you believe both engines were changed OVERNIGHT and that airplane was ready for a mission the next day. To this day I don't know how you did it; out in the open, without adequate lighting, without sophisticated lifting equipment (those engines and props are heavy), and with only hand tools. No one would believe it today. It took six months to change an engine on our B-25 this past winter, inside a hangar and with modern equipment.

Our pilots were pretty damn good too, considering that most had just been out of flying school for a relatively short time. I imagine most had fewer than 200 hours TOTAL time and perhaps 50 hours in B-25s when our group was formed in Columbia or when a replacement pilot joined us. But experience and skill develop rapidly with the kind of flying that was called for in that environment.

Even taxiing that airplane became an art. You can tell a lot about a pilot by the way he taxis. Judicious use of power and brakes and careful steering through the

turns is the mark of a skilled pilot.

Which reminds me ... I think we were at Dobodura where we had to taxi quite far and over some rough spots in the taxiway to get to the takeoff runway. No matter how slowly you taxied over one particular bad stretch of the taxiway, the ride was bone jarring. I remember my comment one time to the crew on the intercom, "I've been showing Willie how to taxi the airplane. I will now take over for the rest of the way to the runway." Of course, the worst was over and the ride was relatively smooth to the runway. Sneaky!

I think there were some 4500 people that "went through" our group from activation in November 1942 to deactivation in November 1945 and almost 1000 casualties. We didn't like to think about the almost weekly diminutions. I'll bet, even to this day, each of us can remember a particular friend, of course the way he was, whose life was finished without being completed. So, this coming August 15th, drink a toast and say a silent prayer for that particular friend, of course the way he was.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Merl Wooden
V.P. - 498th Sqd.



Thanks go to Lester Howard for the nice write-up while we were supposedly relaxing in South Texas in warm weather.

Well, we ended up in Iowa in 24 below weather spending time in the hospital. I went in 2 different times in Jan and Feb and Joyce's dad went in 3 times during Feb and March. Its been a difficult time but we're getting better as the weather does.

Joyce and I went to St. Louis a few weeks ago. We visited with Earl Hitt and his wife at the Holiday Inn where the '96 reunion will be held. Earl and the hotel staff have been doing a great job. I don't know of anyone who won't love St. Louis. We also visited Red and Dolly Garland. Red always tries to be on an up-note.

Our San Antonio trip has been cancelled due to the terribly high-priced hotels. Nothing under \$100. We want to thank all who tried. We have decided to add a few days to the '96 trip and hope all will add Branson, MO to their itineraries.

A bit of sad news, Charles Ogden wrote of the death of his dad, Bill (from Columbus, OH). We enjoyed being with Bill and Mickey while in Columbus before the last reunion there. Our heartfelt sympathy to their family.

Friends of mine sent me an obit of Violet Coloff. I was so sorry to hear of this as she was such a dear person and our sympathy to Mike.

Also of our dear friend, Marie Rone, wife of Hugh. She was another of life's treasured persons.

It hurts deeply to hear of these wonderful friends being gone.

I don't know how many of you frequent your veterans organizations. Our VFW club in Cedar Rapids has 1500 members and is very active. There is always something going on. We recently had a seminar of top notch persons to answer questions for veterans and their families. These were about the VA home, agent orange, dessert Storm and other questions veterans ask. We also had a USO dinner dance and all who could, wore their military uniform. Anyone who remembers me knows I could never get into mine. I'm a lot bigger now. They played WW II music and honored the older vets and life members, etc.

If you get lonely sitting around doing nothing, your local veterans club is the place to go. There is always some war

story going around.

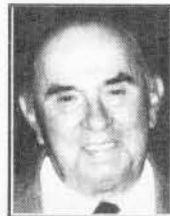
Got a post card from George Davison. He was vacationing at Yokota AFB at cherry blossom time in Japan. What a trip he must be having.

Don't forget to fly the flag June 14.. and meet me in St. Louis in '96 and Branson afterward...

Information will be coming out later on this trip...

499th Squadron

Harry Zarfas
V.P. - 499th Sqd.



Just another reminder that Ben Miller has arranged for the 499th Squadron Reunion.

Dates are from noon, Friday, Sept. 22 through midday, Sunday, Sept. 24.

Location - Bear Creek Farms Box 180 B Bryant, Indiana 47326 219-997-6822 or 800-288-7630. Fifteen rooms have been reserved but Ben has advised me that he can get more.

William Rushworth of Las Vegas and I had an interesting conversation. Bill flew eighty missions as a pilot, part of which was on Doodle #41-30015. C.L. Schell was the crew chief. It's a small world as I was part of the original Doodle crew.

I sent Andrew C. Cartledge of Columbus, Georgia the roster of the 345th Bomb Group taken from the 1946 edition of Warpath. Andy was a member of the 498th.

I want to thank Vic Tatelman for his time and effort in sending me reports on various missions.

The Sag Harbor Express was shot down on January 7, 1945 with the loss of the entire crew. Richard Browngardt, brother of the pilot, Arthur Browngardt, Jr. wrote me, inquiring if I knew the addresses of the enlisted men's families. The 1946 edition of the "Warpath" did not list the addresses of T/Sgt William H. Noe, engineer gunner T/Sgt Clarence H. Gilbert, radioman gunner S/Sgt Englehardt Van Hebel, gunner If anyone can help, please let me know.

Senator Reid of Nevada sent me a U.S. Post office letter. One paragraph states that the postal department has initiated the first of a six step increase for nonprofit organizations to make up for a discontinued congressional postal subsidy. Senator Richard Bryan wrote that according to the U.S. Postal Service, it is now developing a definition of advertising matter contained in certain nonprofit mailings. Until the new definition is final the Strafer may continue to accept advertising in its usual fashion.

I'm not quite sure what the postal service is saying. It's like putting earrings on a hog. You can't pretty it up.

501st Squadron

Lynn Lee
V.P. - 501st Sqd.



Letter from Mrs. (Betty) George Blackwell. George died 2/18/95 after a long battle with Cancer. And from Maury Eppstein that Harold DeKay died October '94. Also, Virgil Gross had eye problems - now doing fine after surgery. I like ending on a good note.

Here is more good news! 501st Reunion, Ocean Creek Plantation Resort, Myrtle Beach, S. Carolina from Tuesday, October 3rd through Sunday, October 8th. Call for reservations: 1-800-845-0353. Rates from \$54 to \$94. They're all suites, so get a buddy and share a condo. Ranches with one, two, or three bedrooms are available.

Note from Sandy Cortesio, 906 Drake Ave., Centerville, IA 52544, 515-856-6565. About the book "Black Sunday." It was the 5th Air Force's biggest losses of the war, due to weather (cut off from home base). A 30,000-word depiction of the mission, survival reports, etc. If interested write to: Aerosian Publications, 7 Rosedale Rd., Glen Iris 3146 Australia.

Thanks to Bill Cather. I called and ordered several hundred badges, bookmarks and pamphlets for 501st reunion.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette
V.P. - HQ Group



In my last notes to the Strafer I mentioned getting Joan Leslie (our Apache Princess) to the St. Louis Reunion in '96. I didn't know what channels to take, but the Strafer editor, Col. True and President Tatelman have all picked up the ball and I'm hoping this materializes. Personally, I've met her and so have many others, but anyone not being so lucky should be happy to meet our "Pin-Up" girl!!! She's one sweetheart and someone had to have vision beyond words to choose her.

While I'm on the '96 reunion subject, amazed at the progress being made from that committee. Not having been so close to the action before probably answers my amazement at present progress. At any rate, my congrats go out to the group and keep up the good work. It behooves us all,

in good shape, to try and make it. We're not getting younger, you know.

Del Reddington sent me quite an article from his local paper about Larry Hickey. We should all feel very honored to be the subject of his first book!!!

As I write this Easter and Passover are in full bloom; so I'll say "Happy Holidays" to one and all.

I have received correspondence from quite a few men of my squadron and will cover more on this in my sqdn. letter very shortly. Thanks to all of you who wrote and to all others. Please take a few moments to let us know that you do (or do not) appreciate these efforts. Personally, I love it. The only "drawback" is the deadlines. The curse of all works of this kind. Sometimes called "Occupational Hazards." Now that I'm retired, "How did I find time to work?" All makes life "Velly Velly" interesting!!!

Before signing off "good buddies," the reunion committee would like to know our squadron plans at the next reunion. Do we want to reserve a room for Friday night's squadron banquet? Do we prefer to join another squadron? What other plans do we need from them? Remembering last reunion's attendance of ten people, I'm sure we don't need a room. Unless I hear differently, I'll vote for joining one of the squadrons, but which one?

I'll sign off now, till my sqdn happenings later soon. Remember, "Meet me in St. Louis, Louis."

Close Calls

by Lynn Lee

Harry Johns, 501, flew with the wrong plane on May 27, 1945. It was a mix-up that would have to stand, said Operation Officer Capt. George Musket. He was sorry, it was too late to make changes now. Harry flew with Lt. Charles Flanders. Somebody else flew in his usual seat on Apache Princess. That was the day the plane went down in a rice paddy near Mizukami, Formosa. Sgt. Robert Bevers was killed and three members of the crew were captured and held till the end of the war. Harry returned to Clark Field in a plane that carried a few harmless holes. He flew the remainder of his missions without trouble.

Harry's motto today is, "Live every day as a special gift from God." Both he and Flanders live in Wyoming.

Sandy Cortesio, 501, remembers a close scrape from April 16, 1944. It was Black Sunday when bad weather caused many losses. Their plane was running low on fuel and Sandy heard the message from pilot W. F. Davis to prepare to ditch. Then Davis spotted a B-24 with its wheels down, followed it and made a safe landing on Saidor

A boy and his mail-order catalogue, Larry Hickey

Editor's note: This article is condensed from a December 7, 1994, front page story in the Lafayette News of Lafayette, Colorado. The original article was written by Michelle LeJeune.

Lawrence Hickey was 12 years old when he first saw the collection of photographs and read the story of the 345th bomb group. He ordered a book entitled "Warpath" from a catalogue. The pictures were inspiring, he said, but the text was sketchy. "The guys in WWII were my heroes. Just by seeing the pictures I knew there was an incredible story that wasn't being told."

Hickey began researching that story when he was in college. He eventually found and actually talked to 400 of the 4,500 men in the 345th Bomb Group.

In the downstairs offices of his Boulder home, Hickey's research library has taken over two rooms. It's in these crowded rooms he currently works on his next five books: "Saga of the Sunsetters," "Revenge of the Red Raiders," "Rampage of the Roaring 20's," "Kinsman Against The Empire" and "Harvest of the Grim Reapers." He says he hopes that after these five books, each about a different bomb, attack or fighter group of the 5th Air Force, he'll be "done with" World War II.

He helps many of the men he interviews be "done with" World War II. Lieutenant Ted Hart had not even told his wife about how Japanese captors had poured water into a cloth on his face until he passed out from lack of oxygen, then jumped on his stomach until he vomited to revive him. Hart resisted this six times, despite having been told that he should tell everything if captured, because it wouldn't matter at the late stage of the war in which it occurred. "Some of these men are locked up with these secrets all their lives," says Hickey. When I'm writing, I'm relieving these experiences."

"Warpath Across The Pacific," designed, laid out, written and edited by Hickey, cost about \$75,000 to produce. No commercial publisher wanted it as is, he says, because of the size (448 pages) and the large number of photographs (626).

He formed a company, International Research and Publishing, and published it himself. He says he received enough book sales to see a return on his investment in a few months. Today "Warpath Across The Pacific" is going into its fourth edition. Hickey says it's not the money he cares about. He cares about the details, the history and the people. In "Warpath Across The Pacific" you can look up the serial number of the B-25 "Labor Pains," the date it was assigned, the pilot and crew chief. The plane's service is detailed. There are 400 such entries. The book also includes an appendix of personnel killed or missing. Dates and details are given.

"My books are like exciting adventure novels," says Hickey, "but there is nothing in them that I create. If I talk about emotions it's emotions they've (the people he's interviewed) told me they had."

Hickey also has a touch for subtlety the experienced reader can appreciate.

A group of WWII 345th Vets once pointed out to Hickey that his birthday, April 15, 1944, was the date the 5th Air Force took its largest losses of the war. It wasn't battle, but bad weather that cost them 30 planes that day. "They said, half joking, I was the incarnation of the fliers," Hickey says.

Be here now

Minireunions are coming soon. Contact your Squadron Officers quickly to be sure you don't miss out.

IN MEMORY OF

Julia Bannister (wife of Lawrence)	499	March 22, 1995	Lake Ozark, MO
George Blackwell	501	April, 1995	Medford, OR
Violet Coloff (wife of Mike)	498	1995	Portland, OR
Harold DeKay	501	October, 1994	Atlantic, IN
Robert Gerstein	501	April 10, 1995	Ocala, FL
James A Gray	500	April 20, 1994	Vero Beach, FL
Charles L. Itt	501	May 9, 1995	Fort Wayne, IN
Bill Ogden	498	1995	Columbus, OH
Marie Rone (wife of Hugh)	498	1995	Henryetta, OK

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

Group Bulletin Board

●
Your Next Strafer should arrive in September. Please send all items for it so they can arrive by August first. Please use the address shown below.

●
Brenna Terrill, who has assisted with organizing reunions since San Antonio, has been associated with Coopers & Lybrand as an auditor since April. She'll be happy to assist with travel arrangements, though, at: 1-800-219-7235.



499th Microreunion

On a may Sunday Vic Tatelman flew the B-25 "Barbie Two" into Fremont, MI. He was greeted by (l. to r.) Milt Opie, Vic in white hat, Jim Mortland and Floyd Fox. Jim buys lunch for all the B-25 pilots who fly in to Fremont. This was the first time he's had to do it. Wives, kids and grandkids were there. Plane rides were flown. Fun was enjoyed.

1995 Dues Payable

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

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Reunion XI



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

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