

# STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

March 1995

## Meet me in St. Louis at the 345th Bomb Group Reunion XI

by Earl Hitt

Although we can't offer the World's Fair that spawned the song made famous by Judy Garland in the movies, St. Louis has a rich tradition and much to offer the visitor.

Over 200 years ago St. Louis became the Gateway to the West. That spirit of adventure was reborn in the 20th century with the Gateway Arch, the nation's tallest monument, on the west bank of the Mississippi River. The Arch offers a view from the top, 630 feet above the river, 30 miles East and West. Below the Arch, the Museum of Westward Expansion lets you follow in the footsteps of pioneer Americans such as Lewis and Clark. The Arch overlooks the St. Louis river front, a levee lined with vintage river boats offering daytime sight seeing, nighttime dining, dixieland music and casino gambling. The river front includes the century-old area that has been redeveloped into Laclede's Landing, a popular entertainment district with unusual restaurants and night spots.

The city of St. Louis has America's largest enclosed downtown shopping mall, the St. Louis Centre. Four levels of shops connect two large department stores. The glory days of railroad travel are preserved at Union Station and the National Museum of Transport. Union Station offers a large marketplace of specialty shops, restaurants and entertainment. The National Museum of Transport offers 150 years of rail transportation history including historic engines, cars and related equipment. The Museum also houses a collection of automobiles, buses, streetcars, aircraft, horse-drawn vehicles, and river boat material.

At Forest Park you will find the St. Louis Zoo, and the space-age Science Center which features hands-on exhibits of interest to all ages. Forest Park was the site of the 1904 World's Fair also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. That was the year that the world sang Meet me in St. Louis, Louis. Now, only a few relics of the fair remain. Then there's the Fox Theatre, a restored 1929 Siamese-Byzantine movie

theater that features Las Vegas entertainers, country music superstars, rock and jazz concerts, and revival musicals. More will be described later, such as:

- Grammy-winning Symphony Orchestra
- the Missouri Botanical Gardens with its geodesic-domed Climatron,
- the St. Louis Cathedral with mosaic art covering the interior,
- the world-famous Clydesdales,
- Anheuser Busch Brewery,
- Busch family estate and game preserve, Grants Farm,
- Daniel Boone's Home,
- the Missouri Wine Country,
- historic St. Charles, first State Capitol, and river front,
- Fairmount Racetrack, horse racing,
- the Rep and Westport Theaters,
- the old Cathedral and old Court House,

- Mississippi River Cruises.
  - Cardinals NL Baseball Team,
  - Blues NHL Team,
  - Rams NFL Team, moving to St. Louis,
- And there's more. All the pages of the Strafer could be filled with descriptions of the sights and sounds of the greater St. Louis area - more in future issues. We will be describing the tours and events that will be offered during the 1996 Reunion in St. Louis. So mark your calendars. The 345th Bomb Group XI Reunion is scheduled for 4 - 7 September 1996. The reunion site will be the Holiday Inn, Westport, which has a long tradition of hosting military reunions. Your reunion committee is hard at work defining and selecting interesting activities for you.

Stay tuned and plan to Meet me in St. Louis, at our biannual reunion!



### President's Comments

Vic Tatelman  
President

I've been reading the "new" Mission Reports recently distributed to the squadrons by Bill Helvey. Fascinating! That project

that he had the pertinacity to pursue alone boggles the mind. The thought of "reading" thousands of frames of microfilm, one is struck by the curious estrangement of his role. Other than the initial curiosity of his father's activities with us, what inspired him to continue the enormous effort through the other squadrons?

The enormousness of the task is not lost on us. Those who have been confronted with a complex research project can certainly appreciate and understand the gargantuan effort required. And to continue through the entire Group - well, almost incomprehensible.

The material itself is like reading stories, tales where we are the protagonists. Like

an out-of-body experience, we are almost looking down on something that couldn't have happened; we the spectators, watching an episode of history that we experienced. An experience that seems reductive after so many years.

I'm sure no one of us reading of his experiences remembers everything, every detail. We thought we'd never forget even the slightest incident, but time dulls the memory. And some of the details, as we read of them, are not familiar, they don't come back, but they must have happened - the report is merely the written reproduction of our own debriefing. No one "made this up, it's an actual history. Did I really do that? Did that really happen? But don't read panegyrics into it, these aren't public compliments. Merely an evocation of childhood memories, and children we were. Reading them now, my thoughts alternated between terror and acceptance.

Thanks Bill, for your splendid contribution, the results are not attenuated by time.

# Squadron Reports

## 498th Squadron

Lester Howard

Merl asked me to write this column for this issue of the *Strafer*. Merl has done such a good job that he's going to be a hard act to follow. The squadron very much appreciates the work he and Joyce have done for us.

Merl and Harold Ponder are checking locations for our upcoming Squadron reunion. I understand that since our group is relatively small, it's hard to get a good price. We'll keep you up to date on their progress.

Frances and I really enjoyed our Colorado Springs reunion. We were sitting at the table with Vic Elam and his wife Vada when he won the painting of the surrender flight. Vic says he gets a little emotional when he shows it to people. He still remembers his thoughts when those planes came over and peeled off to land, "It's over. No more watching and waiting to see if all the planes come back from a mission." That is one of the reasons everyone comments on the camaraderie of this group. We shared concern for everyone else's life. I'm sure we all feel our experience shaped our lives as nothing else has.

We hope to have more news on the squadron reunion in the next *Strafer*.

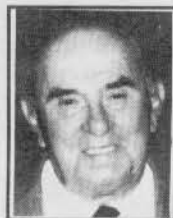
## 499th Squadron

Harry Zarfes  
V.P. - 499th Sqd.

I would appreciate it if our members would contact me with any news they want published. I am merely the conduit for any information about the 499th.

There were several inquiries at the Colorado Springs reunion requesting information on former 345th members. I have the original Warpath book published in 1946 which lists all of the 345th members and their old addresses. If this might be of some help to anyone, please contact me.

Around Easter Sunday in 1943 armament and engineer gunners departed by ship for Hawaii where they rejoined their crews for the flight to Australia. I have often wondered what the name was of that ship. It was not the S.S. President Johnson.



The 1994 September *Strafer* had an article on the possibility of the United States Post Office lobbying to disallow non profit mailing status to reunion organizations and institute an increase of \$.18 per piece for advertising. So I wrote to Senator Harry Reid and Senator Richard H. Bryan of Nevada protesting the position of the United States Post Office. I received a letter from Senator Harry Reid stating in part "I have contacted the United States Postal Service on your behalf and have brought your situation to the attention of the appropriate officials. They have been asked to review your letter and provide us with a written response. As soon as they respond I will contact you again."

As a member of the Air Force Gunners Association I read in their December 1991 Newsletter that the era of the aerial gunner which began for the United States in 1917 during World

War I. It ended on September 30, 1991 at Castle AFB California. The last official flight was on a B-52G model bomber from the 328th Bombardment Squadron of the 93rd Bombardment Wing, 15th Air Force.

## 500th Squadron

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

Our 500th 1995 Reunion is scheduled for Sept. 9 through 13th in San Diego at the Town and Country Motel. As the enclosed flyer in the latest 500th newsletter states, "We want you in San Diego" with Uncle Sam pointing at you.

"Carol Jean," the B-25 donated by Dr. John Marshall to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. remains stored in a hanger. It's in good company with the space shuttle, "Enterprise," a B-17 and B-57. It would be better off, though, in the museum, planned for Dulles International Airport. So far congress has only appropriated money for architectural costs. We are assured that "Carol Jean" will bear the 500th Sqd./345th BG markings. Let's hope some of us will be around to attend the grand opening.

On my soap box again. For those of you interested in prostate cancer support groups, as I am, here are the two prominent ones: Us Too 1-800-808-7866; Man to Man 1-800-227-2345. You will get information and the location of closest chapter. Don't forget your PSA check and DRE.



## 501st Squadron

Lynn Lee  
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

Well, here are the results - 32 returns on post cards: four for Myrtle Beach; three for Branson, Mo.; all others either gave no location or gave various places all over the U.S. So it will be Myrtle Beach. Have appointed George Mordecai as chairman to select committee and make arrangements. George has info on most missions from mid-'44 to July 30, '45. If you want any info, drop him a line giving approximate date, location, pilot's name or anything to nail down specific mission and he will endeavor to answer. His address is George Mordecai, 14 Frederick St., North Branford, CT 06471 (203) 488-8177.

Had a number of responses from widows, some seemed to be hesitant to come to a reunion. Please don't be. You will be well received and I promise you will have a good time.

Got a lot of cards back with forward expired, so will try to update my list from Mark Nordstrom. Oh, yes, Don Sieur, PO Box 1179 E Dennis, MA 02651 is trying to locate John Boden. If you can help, let him know. I ask again, send me info on yourselves so that we can rejoice or help if necessary. I remember, at San Antonio, a buddy needing help for a Vet Hospital asked if I'd write my senator. Don't know if it helped, but I tried. I'll bet if 50 or more wrote his congressman it would do some good. See you @ Myrtle Beach.

## Headquarters Group

August Ouellette  
V.P. - HQ Group

Hope everyone had as good a holiday period as can be had. As long as the kids are happy, I consider it a good holiday!

I've received the preliminary work on the St. Louis (next) reunion and glad to see the amount of work accomplished. It's almost unbelievable that "so much can be accomplished in so little time." It's beginning to look like this may be "The Reunion" of "reunions and I would love to see as many as possible in attendance. I still say it would be nice to see the "Air Apache Princess" again, if possible. Some who were in San Antonio would be very happy to see her. I wouldn't know "channels" to go through, but, no doubt, someone does.





It behooves every one of us to "liven" the program and be sure to send any and all ideas to the committee. Active participation is more rewarding than just being one of the numbers there. Many of my veteran friends say, "Boy, do I wish my unit had reunions like that." My friends, we do have it. And everyone, take advantage of it before it's too late!!!

While on that subject, it's not too early to start thinking of helping serve on the registration tables. A great and rewarding feeling to be the first to welcome any guests. Not to mention help socialize too, you know. After all, you're not working for the devil, you're working for the 345th!

I've met a lady in town who is from an Apache tribe and I hope to sit down with her and see if she can give us any info on the Air Apache, which we so dearly love! At our first meeting she was very "sociable."

A poem that caught my and - very true:

It is the soldier, not the reporter who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer who has given us freedom to demonstrate.

It is the soldier who salutes the flag; who serves beneath the flag; and whose coffin is draped by the flag....who allows the protester to burn the flag.

## Recovery is termed "a miracle"

**Ex legislator, 70, refused to give up**

*Editor's note: Sent to Strafer by Ben Muller, this is an excerpt from a 1/9/95 Houston Chronicle article by DeAnn Smith. R.E. "Peppy" Blount served in the 501st.*

R.E. "Peppy" Blount is a former Texas legislator, University of Texas football stand-out and World War II bomber pilot. But his biggest accomplishment has been his recovery from a devastating car crash last May.

"I am just thankful to be here now," the 70-year-old Longview attorney says. "My doctors say I am a miracle."

All 54 doctors. Blount required that many aid in his recovery from a May 27 collision that crushed his aorta, fractured nine ribs, put a steel rod in his leg and left him with 40 stitches in his face.

After surviving World War II, Blount was not too worried about dying. "You just don't give up."

## Group Bulletin Board

### Reunion Committee:

Earl Hitt, 498, Chairman  
Ed Weinstein, 501, Vice Chm.  
Leander Camene, 498  
John Higgins, 498  
Martin Holtzman, 501  
Jack Menefee, 499

### Want to find:

Francis L. Mason, radio operator with 498th.

### Send info to:

Billy Matthews  
4655 Snowdown Chambers Rd  
Montgomery, AL 36116

Your Next Strafer  
Should arrive in  
June. Please submit  
all materials for  
it by May 1.



## IN MEMORY OF

Nate Arkes	499	10/16/94	Chicago, IL
Gordon Bedell	501	5/27/89	Bellaire, MI
Paul Daker (son of Lynn)	500	11/23/94	Boulder, CO
Bill Frederick	500	12/20/94	Hot Springs, AR
Thomas Donald Giese	501	7/6/91	Riverbank, CA
Harold G. Holmes	501	1/4/94	Tualatin, OR
James Hopsom	499	4/94	Virginia Beach, VA
Bob T. La Croix	501	8/15/94	Havre, MT
Marie Lentz (wife of Ken)	500	7/1/94	Milwaukee, WI
Charles F. (Hap) Maloney	499	12/19/94	Pasadena, TX
Frank Parker	499	1/94	Asheville, NC

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

### Association Officers

President -- Vic Tatelman  
18900 SW 232nd St, Miami, FL 33170  
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Secretary -- Julius Fisher  
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Reunion Committee Chairman -- Earl Hitt, 15718 Callender Court  
Chesterfield, MO 63017-7306 314/227-2692

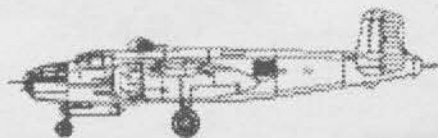
### Squadron Vice Presidents

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409 Lewellen Dr NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 319/396-0257B  
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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



### Commanding Candor

Shown in the picture at right, together at the 499th dinner in Colorado Springs are two of the three living Squadron commanders, Wendell D. Decker (on the left) and Julian B. Baird.



### Our Three Wheels

Pictured at right (l to r) are General Ennis Whitehead, 5th Air Force Commander, General Jarred V. Crabb, Commander 5th Bomber Command, and Clinton True, 345th Group Commander.



### 1995 Dues Payable

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

## Reunion XI



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

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