

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

September 1995

Reunion XI Status Report: It's a go!

by Earl Hitt

In the last issue of the Strafer, the overall schedule for Reunion XI was described. Beginning with this issue, individual aspects and events being planned by your reunion committee will be described. In response to the desire of many members, more time is being reserved for "just visiting." This will also provide more time for individual or small group activities. Your committee wants to be as responsive as possible to the needs and desires of all the membership; our goal is to provide the most enjoyable four day reunion that is possible to provide.

For Reunion XI a sealed, personalized, clip-on badge will be issued to all members and their guests in attendance. This badge will be the primary identification for members attending 345th Reunion activities. Also for Reunion XI, there will be no formal "registration desk/area" instead the committee will provide a "Reunion Service Desk." Registration packages will be prepared by the reunion committee and will be given to each member on check-in. For those who choose not to stay at the reunion hotel, registration packages will be available at the Reunion Service Desk.

Plan to arrive early! Why? Because you won't want to miss anything. The reunion will officially begin at 1 PM on Wednesday, September 4, 1996 when the Hospitality Room opens for your use. During Reunion XI the Hospitality Room will be operated by the 345th and manned by volunteers. It will be a place to meet, visit, and have a few (inexpensive) beverages with old friends and make new acquaintances. The Hospitality Room will be "open" at all times during the reunion, except for banquets and business meetings. The room will be located on the lobby level of the hotel. It will feature a "Reunion Service Desk" manned by local members of the 345th who will assist in nonscheduled activities and help solve any problems or emergencies that arise.

On Wednesday evening the hotel will host a "wine and cheese" reception party for all members of the 345th and their guests. This should be a great "kickoff" event for Reunion XI. And for your information, the wine and

cheese reception will be provided by the hotel at no cost to the 345th or its members.

Plan to stay late! Why? Although the reunion officially ends at 1 PM on Sunday, September 8, 1996, there will be "post reunion" activities. For those who plan to drive to the reunion, the hotel will allow you to leave your vehicle in their parking lot. The hotel will also extend the reunion room rate for your return, should you need a room until you depart for home.

The committee is planning a new approach to providing a keepsake record of the reunion. Instead of "Squadron Pictures," the committee is negotiating for the preparation of a "Reunion Photo Album," which will include pictures of each member and also reunion activity pictures. This album will be similar to a school annual, but on a smaller and more inexpensive scale. Pictures of each member and his wife and/or girl friend, as applicable, will be taken on the evening of the Group Banquet. All pictures will be identified with the name and/or names of those in the pictures. The company preparing the albums will require that a minimum number of albums be purchased, but will include pictures of all attendees whether or not they purchase an album. Albums will be letter size and will have a durable cardboard cover. More on this as negotiations are completed. In

the interim, the committee would be interested in any suggestions, ideas, complaints, etc., on this approach to providing a record of Reunion XI.

For travel by air, the committee is negotiating for possible discounted fares. To-date, most airlines recommend that you use their "senior citizen" rates, as they don't offer much better rates for such activities. However, SouthWest Airlines, has indicated that they will extend an additional 10% discount, over their "senior citizen" discount to the 345th. Your committee hopes to have more on discounted air travel as we complete negotiations and get closer to Reunion XI.

It is planned to distribute the Registration forms for Reunion XI beginning with the March 1996 issue of the Strafer. In order for your committee to complete arrangements for reunion activities, the cutoff date for receiving registrations will be July 15, 1996. Each registration will be confirmed by return mail and the confirmation will include helpful information for planning your trip to St. Louis.

Let's make Reunion XI the biggest, the best, and the most enjoyable reunion yet. Plan to "MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS AT REUNION XI."



President's Comments

Vic Tatelman
President

I missed the 1992 Reunion in Columbus, as many of you no doubt will remember, because of Hurricane Andrew's visit through these parts. Since I had the job of planning the 499th's dinner meeting program, at the last minute that chore fell to Marty Wood and Ben Miller. From what I've heard, their filling-of-the-breech was innovative: Several people stood and recounted episodes that occurred during the three years of the Group's existence that were not gener-

ally known. The stories were fascinating and evocative.

Which leads me to my point: There are many stories out there, events that each of us knows and remembers but are not generally known (they're not in Hickey's book), but they should be told (and recorded) before they are lost. I can think of a few:

1. The details of McClure's and Decker's almost fruitless search for the Jap Betty's, how they were finally "found," and the radio transmissions involved.

2. Ferguson and Barnes (and others) should start a combined effort to detail the account of the kamikaze action off the coast of Leyte that decimated our people (it's almost surreal now).

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Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Merl Wooden
V.P. - 498 Sqd.

It's been a crazy few months. I put my house on the market in April. I moved June 1st into a 16 x 80 mobile home. Third week of July, I had back surgery. I got to where I couldn't walk across the room. Feeling better so far. Aug. 5, I will be walking my granddaughter down the aisle. My daughter is also in a leg brace after having surgery on her knee.

I did have a letter from Bill Pennanen from the 499th. After the war he was navigator for the war correspondents flying around the Pacific looking at all the war damage. The plane was from the 498th, the pilot being Col. Coltharp. The copilot and 2 EM's were also from the 498th. Bill is trying to remember who the copilot was. If anyone might remember, would they write Bill at: V William Pennanen, Merritt Towers #702C, 300 S. Sykes Creek Parkway, Merritt Island, FL 32952-3306

Also received a letter from Harold De Witt, Jr. of the 500th Bomb Sqd. He wants us to add Mrs. W. F. Boing, Jr., "Mike" as she is known. She's the widow of Lt. Col. Wm. F. Frank Boing who as a captain was the first Supply Officer of the 498th. He died in 1963. Anyone remembering him might want to send a note to "Mike." I'm sure she would love to hear from you. Maybe we can talk her into attending the reunion in St. Louis. Her address is Mrs. W. F. Boing, Jr. 2110 East Walnut Street, Goldsboro, NC 27530.

Please, think about the extended trip to Branson, Mo. after the reunion as a 498th get together.

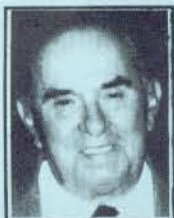


499th Squadron

Harry Zarfas
V.P. - 499th Sqd.

The 499th has lost another member, Louis J. Damour passed away on April 14th, 1995. We first met Louis and his wife, Ruth at the 1982 Colorado Springs reunion. Ida and I always looked forward to their warm companionship at subsequent reunions. We will sorely miss Louis.

A memorial service was held in Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York for the crew of the B-25 plane "Sag Harbor Express" shot down over Clark Field on January 7, 1945 with the loss of the entire crew, Lt. Arthur Browngardt, Jr.,



Pilot. A model of the B-25 was presented to Arthur's brother, Richard, which will be on display for the next few months in the village before going on permanent exhibit at the municipal building of the Legion.

V. William Pennanen of Merritt Island, Florida sent me information on Sgt. ENGELHARDT Von Hebal, part of the Sag Harbor Express crew. He was a substitute gunner and this was his first mission.

Mickey D. Pavkovich wrote me that Mrs. Norman (Louise) Walker passed away on June 29, 1995. Our deepest sympathy to Norman E. Walker who was an engineer/gunner on the Dirty Dora.

John Winstrom from Tucson, Arizona, who was in 499th ordinance called, inquiring about the next reunion. John, we would sure like to have you join the 499th and attend the St. Louis reunion.

500th Squadron

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

A chance conversation with a fellow member of the Houston Cactus and Succulent Social and the next thing I know, I am in the Philippines! My cactus friend and I spent 3 weeks on Luzon this past May and June. He is a scientist and an aspiring author. As an author he is writing a novel about Mt. Pinatubo, the volcano near Subic Bay and Clark Field, that erupted causing massive destruction in 1991. As a scientist he invited me along, all expenses paid, to assist him in searching for gold bullion buried by the Japanese just before Luzon capitulated in WWII. It's called "Yamashita's Gold," and many books have been written about it. Our trip was financed by an American gold hunter who has been searching for 10-15 years. In one small area I saw many abandoned holes that were dug looking for tunnels where gold is buried. Japanese secret maps as well as hearsay are used to "pinpoint" the caches. So far as I know only F. Marcos has been successful. He is reported to have found billions in bullion.

We were using a very sensitive magnetometer that can detect subsurface anomalies. Some hunters use the old divining rods, witching sticks, and pyramids to search for the gold. I saw a 4 1/2' X 4 1/2' hole 197 feet deep with two men at the bottom filling a 6 gallon bucket with rock and dirt. They dig away 12 hours a day in 4 hour shifts. They use a small electric winch to move the dirt and themselves up and down the shaft. A small blower pumps air down via a 2 1/2" plastic hose. We had a three-man Filipino crew working for us. They were

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501st Squadron

Lynn Lee
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

It's September already and I'm having a hard time figuring out where the year has gone and how time has gone by so quickly. It's been so busy around here, it seems like the last time I had time to look at my calendar there was still snow on the ground. Thinking about Christmas already.

Major news for the 501st! Reunion coming Tuesday October 3d. thru Sunday October 5th, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Call 1-800-845-0353 for reservations. Rates start at \$54 and up to \$94. All the rooms are suites, with one, two and three bedrooms available. I've already ordered several hundred badges, book-marks and pamphlets for the reunion.

Have you been in touch with George yet? He has most of the information about the missions flown by the 501st from June '44 until July '45. If you want to know more about a particular pilot, or mission or date contact: George Mordecai, 14 Frederick St. North Branford, Connecticut 06471.

I had a number of responses from widows, some seemed to be hesitant to come to a reunion. Please don't be. You will have a good time and be welcome.

Can't wait to see all of you at Myrtle Beach.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette
V.P. - HQ Group

Seeing that it's raining, for the first time in over a month I might as well see if I can write an article for the issue of the "Strafer."

Have been quite busy with my last year (of 40) in Boy Scouting. Just finished with our annual picnic, the last of my big affairs. Now it's just a case of "lay back and coast in" until Dec. 31st.

Took part in many 50th anniversary programs of WWII. Visited Wright Museum in Wolfeboro, N.H. No relation to Wright Bros. or Wright-Patterson Field fame. Just an "Ordinary Joe" building dedicated to the owner's father, who was in the war. Talk about "operating on a shoe string," he's doing it. Also saw a "Skyline" picture of St. Louis, Mo. and added a B-25 and Air Apache emblem. I reduced it and hopefully the reunion committee can use it as a logo for correspondence of our big event.

Attended a roundtable discussion of WWII at the local high school in May. Took my



uniform out of storage and it was in good as new condition. Naturally I couldn't even get into it. Took with me at school and the kids were very appreciative. One of the boys tried it and he looked like a real soldier. Even one of the girls tried it and was in seventh heaven to say the least. Later found out she wants a try at the Air Force. Needless to say I said "Go for it," but try Air Force Academy as an opportunity for education first.

Haven't heard too much of the reunion but at last report they had it all lined up and ready to go. It sounded like a good times are promised to any and all who attend. I've heard a lot of people say we won't regret going to St. Louis. Nothing but good reports all around. Saw some Indian statues in gift shops, etc. and if ever I find an Apache statue or even a picture I might buy it for a centerpiece at the head table during banquet. I don't know what the reunion committee is planning for a gift this year but my vote would be that a plate with the wording and emblem would be nice. Just a suggestion and maybe others have some ideas. Let one of the members know as I'm sure they appreciate any and all help that comes down the pike.

I don't know about you guys but I'm quite disgusted at all this talk about Japan not admitting Pearl Harbor and the war. I know one guy that will never forget all the hell they've caused us, (namely me).

Sag Harbor Express

"The memorial is dedicated to those who served in World War II and those who lost their lives," said Paul Saurer on Monday. It is a symbol of country and courage on the part of these men."

Mr. Saurer referred to a case which held a model airplane carefully constructed by Miles Anderson, and bearing the legend "The Sag Harbor Express." The bomber upon which the model was designed, named after his hometown newspaper, was flown by Sag Harbor's Arthur Browngardt until it was shot down and crashed over the Philippines during WWII, killing Browngardt and the rest of the crew. On Monday, during Memorial Day ceremonies at the American Legion, the model was presented to Arthur's brother Richard, and will be on display in the village for the next few months, before remaining on permanent exhibit at the Municipal Building or the Legion.

In the glass and woodframed case there are two models of the plane, one shows a cross section of the inside while the other shows the plane's side. The case bears the memorial: "In honor of all who served. In memory of all who died."

Group Bulletin Board

Did you know Charlton Heston (Yes, that Charlton Heston) was radio op/gunner on a B-25 in the south Pacific during WWII? What unit? If you know, tell Strafer. Invite him to future reunions? Time will tell.

Your next Strafer will arrive in December. Please send all items for it by November 1

Our thanks and special thoughts to A. J. Gross who gave a contribution to the 345th in memory and honor of his wife Lois who died this year.

Reprinted after 25 years! "Fifth Air Force Story," classic by Kenn Rust. Now a special 50th. Anniv. Ed. Contact: Sunshine House, call 1-800-999-0141, write P.O. 2065, Terre Haute, In. 47802

Send contributions for 5AFMF to George McGee, 8200 Elm, Raytown, MO. 64138-2055. Money goes to perpetuating memory and history of 5th Air Force.

Mrs. "Danny" Daniel, 6421 W.166th., Finley Pk, IL 60477 is looking for a sketch her husband drew in '43 or '44. It's a group of men walking to the latrine. One of them looks real upset. If someone in the 499th has one, please send her a copy. (And send one to Strafer for future publication).

IN MEMORY OF

Louis J. Damour	499th	April 14, 1995	Branchville, S.C.
Lois B. Goss (Mrs. A.J.)	499th	May 3, 1995	Austin, Tx.
Harold E. Leet	500th	June 26, 1995	Wayland, N.Y.
G.W. Stanbery	500th	July 5, 1995	Jenera, Ohio
Louise Walker, (Mrs. Norman)	499th	June 29, 1995	Mesa, Arizona

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

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President's comments

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I already have the following three:

3. Bob Post's "deactivation" of Ie Shima weeks after the typhoon. (That entire operation was forgotten by the wheels on Okinawa until Post succeeded in cobbling together a Piper Cub and enough fuel to fly over to Okinawa to inform the authorities that there were still people on Ie Shima.)

4. Ed Egan's crash landing on an isolated beach in the Philippines in an airplane in which he was hitchhiking and how he and the other survivors on board that airplane made it back to San Marcellino.

5. Max Ferguson's account of the difficulties setting up our base at Biak without heavy equipment (let alone harassment from Jap stragglers).

These are examples of the sort of stories that should be told. Each of us has such a story to tell; funny, irreverent, sad, serious, but part of our history. I urge you to write it and send it to me or Strafer. We will save them and perhaps some day edit and combine them into a publication for history. It would be a history like no others.

And finally: I'm moving! My new address after September 15 will be: 208 Aviation Drive, Winter Haven, FL 33881. I won't have a new phone number until then.

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



Before there were Air Apaches, there were the "Tree-top Terrors." The name was chosen February 27, 1944. The name was suggested by t/sgt Hobart R. Bartlett (501). Later, during the last few weeks at Nadzab, a name suggested by Maj. John "Cliff" Hanna was chosen. It was "Air Apaches." The Apache head began appearing on rear stabilizers in September of 1944. Can you identify the man smoking a pipe? (history of 345th group name researched in "Warpath Arcross the Pacific," by Lawrence J. Hickey)

500th Squadron

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paid the going wage of 150 pesos (6 dollars) a day. One morning they presented us with a ten-and-a-half-foot King Cobra, shot the night before. What a monster!

I also visited the beautiful American military cemetery in Manila where 17,000+American and Allied personnel are buried. I got a printout of all the men of the 500th that are either buried there or listed as killed in action and not recovered. I did that by listing the squadron first, then the group and then Army Air Force. My pilot and copilots' names were listed. They went down in the South China Sea. Of the 110 men of the 500th listed only 14 were buried there. Any that want a printout

of their organization can obtain one by writing Mr. William J. Gaulty, Supt. American Battle Monuments Commission, APO AP 96440. The location is Fort Bonifacio Metro Manila R.P.

The Philippines are now the Republic of the Philippines. I tried to get to San Marcelino where my last mission originated, but only got as far as Subic Bay where we spent the night. It is a huge abandoned U.S. Naval base the Filipinos are using as a freeport. They have sport car races on the tarmacs and taxiing areas.

Don't forget the 500th reunion in San Diego. I'll see you there in September.

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