

# STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

December 1996

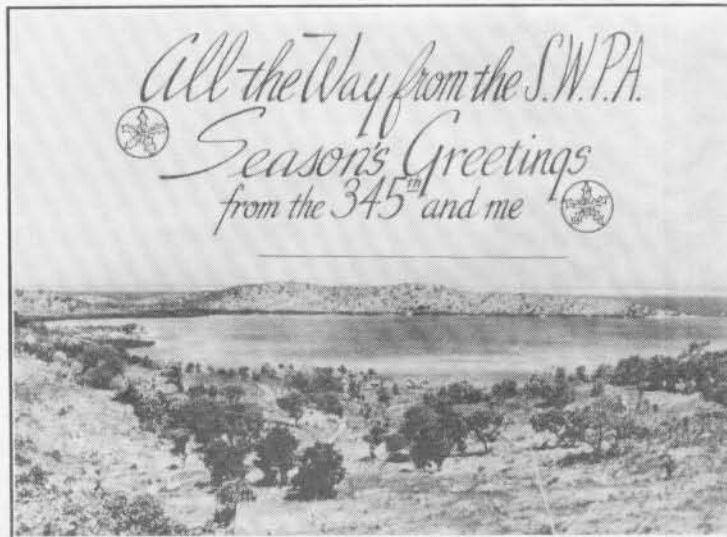
## 345th Reunion XI

minutes submitted by Julius Fisher

The Group Business meeting was called to order by Vic Tatelman. Several questions relative to the degree of involvement by the 345th in the 5th AF Memorial Foundation and relative support of the Maury Eppstein memorial were discussed. The general consensus was that the group should not financially support any personal memorial in fairness to all within the group. A motion to that effect by Rod Campbell carried. Bob Judge moved that the 345th Bomb Group resign from the 5th AF Memorial Foundation. Motion carried. This secretary was directed to notify Henry Kortemeyer and the 5th AF Memorial Foundation of the decisions.

A proposal to change group bylaws was explained by Vic Tatelman. It would rename squadron vice presidents assistant group vice presidents. They would be responsible for group reunion site selection and for developing slates of candidates for selection of group officers. Julian Baird moved to accept the proposed bylaws changes. Motion carried.

A plan to reduce the group reunion to no more than two days was turned down. Discussion showed a feeling that it would leave too little time for both squadron and group activities. New officers were elected: president, Lynn Lee; vice president, Ken Gastgeb; Assistant vice presidents - Gus Ouellette, H.Q., Frank Dillard, 498th, Ben Miller, 499th; Ben Muller 500th; George Mordecai, 501st; secretary, Jay Moore; Treasurer, Dick Feucht; Asst. Treasurer, Jerry Murphy.



Cliff Hanna (HQ) produced four Holiday Greeting cards. This is from his proof sheet. The location is New Guinea. Happy Holidays from Strafer Publisher Ken McClure and editor Mark Nordstrom.

## The enemy in the caves up on the hill



by Ken Gastgeb

A few Japanese soldiers remained in the caves when we arrived at Biak. Those caves were in our backyard. Occasionally someone in our group would get shot at from up on the hill and a call was put in for assistance. A mortar crew and their equipment was sent over to shell the cave entrance. The mortar was set up in a clearing between the 498th tent area and the HQ tent. The accuracy of placing those shells into the entrance of that cave was remarkable. The crew also kept a sharp eye out for airplanes. The shells went very high and into the flight path of planes landing or taking off from the airstrip. The mortar crew was called upon a few times to shell the cave. One day a tank joined in the shelling. A small group gathered around to watch the action.

The target cave was on the hill just behind the officers' tent area.

The picture at left shows the mortar crew and their ammunition boxes. Another picture on page four shows the target.

## Squadron Reports

### 498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

Asst. Group V.P. - 498th Sqd.

This is my first article for the Strafer as Asst. V.P. I will make every effort to continue Merl Wooden's good work. The 498th is indebted to Lester Howard for his service after Merl's death. On behalf of the squadron members, thank you Lester.

We owe Earl Hitt and his St. Louis Reunion Committee a round of applause for a great reunion. I enjoyed getting together with old friends and meeting many new ones. It's unfortunate that we were relatively isolated from the other squadrons and members of Headquarters, while serving our tour of duty. I am going to work on correcting that in the future.

The Weary Warriors Squadron B25-H was a knockout! I didn't have the heart to tell them "Barbie" wasn't born until 1956.

My radio operator, Jesse Dean and his wife Dorothy, drove to St. Louis from Dayton, Ohio on Tuesday, September 3. Jesse became ill, so they returned to Dayton on Wednesday. Shortly after arriving home he had heart surgery. He is still weak, but improving.

I sincerely hope Melvin Best's wife, Gladys, is feeling better. She spent part of their reunion in a St. Louis hospital.

Lester Howard and Ira Schaub live in North Carolina and were victims of hurricane Fran while attending the reunion. Lester's wife, Mary Frances, had some credit cards stolen at the Raleigh-Durham Airport prior to departure for St. Louis. By the time they arrived and she reported the loss, the thief had already run up \$10,000 in charges (or so she told Lester).

Ira Schaub had prostate surgery October 29. George Hvizdak's wife, Helen, underwent back surgery October 25. I hope she's fully recovered by the time you read this.

My first assignment as Asst. V.P. was to research Reno, NV as a possible site for the 1998 Group Reunion. Lazy character that I am, I enlisted the services of Larry Coppotelli's daughter, Lauri, to assist me. She lives in Las Vegas and works for a travel agency there. She helped me plan a minireunion in Las Vegas last year for seven 498th members and wives. We had a great time, highlighted by a visit to the Thunderbirds' headquarters at Nellis AFB.

Would anyone be interested in a Squadron Reunion in Las Vegas in 1997? We could make it a combination vacation/reunion. And "if you play your cards right," you might even make expenses at one of the casinos! I would like to invite members

of Headquarters and other interested parties to join with the 498th. The more, the merrier and the better the rates on rooms, show tickets and other activities. I wonder if a dinner show would be a welcome change from the usual catered banquet. Your comments and suggestions are welcome. So let me hear from you. If there is enough interest, I'll start the ball rolling.

### 499th Squadron

Ben F. Miller

Asst. Group V.P. - 499th Sqd.

They have elected me V.P. of the 499th, again at the reunion. Writing for this paper has always been more of a pleasure than a chore. Harry Zarfes did a good job, but had to resign because his wife is ill. Keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

The reunion in St. Louis was well planned and worked out well for the group. We had a large hospitality room where we could visit in comfort, instead of being on a tight schedule, running from one event to another. It was truly great to make new acquaintances. We just cannot say enough for the work done by the entire committee, including William McGrath and Jack Menefee from our squadron. Thanks for a great job well done.

The 499th was fortunate to have with us four members who made it for the first time, and enjoyed it thoroughly. They said they WILL be back. We were honored to have Edward L. and Connie Boghosian, Edwin & Virginia Sharpe, Andrew E. Sitek, and Pat E. Goforth and his bride, Mary Jane Heston, who were on their Honey-moon, and could they dance.

We have just been informed the son of Pat Goforth is critically ill, so please include them in your prayers.

A gentleman from California came. He said he flew in our squadron with Rushworth. He read about the reunion or was informed by a friend. His name is Charles Johnson. We are glad to have him back with us, but his name isn't on any of the recent rosters. If you remember him, please bring our records up to date. Our numbers are not increasing as fast as they are declining, so keep hunting for the lost members. Welcome back, Charles.

The reunion committee has been formed and awaits your response. The four prospective sites are: California, Myrtle Beach, Reno, and San Antonio. The latter would not be a good choice as one of our squadrons is having a Sqd. reunion there in 1997. We have been in the west numerous times, comments so far favor Myrtle Beach, SC. Lets hear your opinions soon.

Some Sqd. members want a minireunion in '97. I'd like your opinions. If you'd like to host it in your area, great. We've been this area three times. It wasn't much work, but a change wouldn't hurt.

### Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Group V.P. - Headquarters

I attended the XI Reunion in St. Louis with my wife and it was F-U-N again. The committee did a good job and deserves all the acclamations that come their way. We can see the numbers depleting and we, who survive, must carry on the great traditions handed to us. Col. True missed a reunion for the first time and was in our thoughts as I'm sure he was thinking of us all through the reunion.

On the other hand, we welcomed a few "first timers" and widows of our buddies and I hope they enjoyed it enough to return in two years. Most said they saw the notice in the "service magazine." Must be something we should do more often for all future reunions.

The trips were a mixture of a bit of everything for everyone. The trips are a must as people in new territory want to take in all they can. The main think is, do crowd the events too close for time. We're all older and our reflexes are slower.

At the reunion business meeting Saturday morning quite a few subjects were discussed at length. One was the idea of doing away with the squadron banquets on Friday night. Most thought this was a good idea. A proposal to do away with life memberships was approved. It brought on hardship with the treasury over the years and we can understand that.

My congratulations go to the newly-elected officers and wish them the best in future endeavors. We cannot forget the outgoing officer wither. They did a great job "piloting" the Air Apaches.

No definite site was chosen for the '98 reunion. We did discuss a few sites and narrowed down to four cities. Not having anyone volunteer to chair the reunion was the main drawback.

Reunion attendance was smaller than usual. At the banquet Saturday night we sat about 350. Not bad for average units I hear about, but our numbers are dropping. It's unavoidable and we'll have to do the best we can as our departed buddies would want us to do.

The best of holidays to all. "Happy Hanukkah," "Joyeux Noel et bonne et Hereuse Annee" and "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" to y'all.

## 501st Squadron

George Mordecai

Asst. Group V.P. - 501st Sqd.

What a great time we all had at Reunion XL! We must thank Earl Hitt for a great time and all the effort his committee put out so the 345th could continue to have its reunions and meet the dwindling number of us that spent time together in the defense of our country. From the stories that passed around at the hospitality room, it is a wonder that we were not charged tourists' rates to participate in this world travel venture. Don't mention this or the politicians might think this is something else they can tax.

It was great to see "Peppy" Blount and Lynn Lee recovered from their accidents and that they could participate in all of the activities that were available to all of us. The hotel was a great place, once you located it. The major complaint was, you could see it, but you couldn't get there from here. The entertainment was excellent, but it showed the problem of the senior citizen's "early to bed, early to rise" lifestyle.

The next reunion is being planned. It's our reunion. What do you want? Many hotels are already booking dates for two years from now. Get your vote in.

Remember, members of the 501st, we also need your suggestions on where you wish to have our minireunion. San Diego, Reno, San Antonio and Myrtle Beach are suggested for the group reunion in 1998. Any of those or others are possible sites. What do you think?

## Sought

My cousin, Robert W. Brand, was a member of the 498th and lost in action August 12, 1945. I believe it was the last plane the 498th lost.

I would like to find members who were at IE Shima in 1945 and remember Bob. None of his immediate family members is still living and when my aunt was still alive she would never talk about him. I want to make sure he is not forgotten. Any help would be appreciated. Richard Dunn, 4885 Crow Canyon Rd, Castro Valley CA 94552. Phone: 510/881-7567

## Missed

The St. Louis reunion was the first since the 345th reunion association was formed that was not attended by Colonel Clint True. He was ill. The former group commander was missed.

Deputy Group Commander Lt. Col. Bert Rosenbaum was also unable to attend and the lack of his company was sorely felt.

## Group Bulletin Board



This is a picture of a cairn I built on my farm in Roaring Branch, PA as a remembrance to my fellow ground crew brothers of the 501st. Our cohesiveness of war years remains. When my car broke down in St. Louis I got so much help, a big problem turned into a small one. *Luigi Giuliani*

You should get your next *Strafer* in March. Please submit all items for it by February first. Use the return address on page four.

### Lost item, please help

I am writing for my husband who is almost blind. We brought a September 1985 Aviation History magazine to the reunion. It features the story of The mission that almost failed. There is about a ten-page, color story including a Japanese invoice and interviews. We were very free with it, allowing people to make copies, but it was lost in the shuffle. The magazine is very dear to him, as he was a crew member on the 498th plane. If anyone picked up this magazine, please return it to him. It cannot be replaced. Herbert "Red" Garland, 9740 Flora Ave., Overland, MO 63114. Thank you, Dolly Garland.

### IN MEMORY OF

Rosella Rapp (wife of Dale)	499th	11/18/96	Pottsboro TX
Robert Dale Best	498th	8/14/95	Columbus GA
George L Womble	498th	9/95	Enid OK
Alice Goehring (wife of Don)	500	6/6/96	Toledo OH

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

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# Reunion XI to Reunion XII

by Ken Gastgeb, Group Vice President

Our Reunion in St. Louis was another great one. Thanks to the fine work of Earl Hitt and his committee. The attendance was around 300.

You have elected me as your vice president for the next two years and I feel it is an honor to serve such a fine group of people. As vice president I have been given the responsibility,

long with the squadron vice presidents, to plan the next reunion in 1998. The committee met after the business meeting at St. Louis and at that time started working on a reunion site. Several sites were discussed, but none was selected. At the banquet we asked for everyone's suggestions and comments. We appreciate your response. Some times it is hard to follow

in the footsteps of those who have worked so hard in the past to keep this great organization together. This committee will certainly do its best to keep the spirit alive and well.

Our constitution and bylaws, article II, states that one of the purposes of the association shall be to encourage and facilitate camaraderie among former members of the 345th Bomb Group. Of course, that includes associate members and families. I really feel honored to just sit down and talk with people who I meet for the first time at the reunion and hear about their experiences. By actually talking to talking to the men who actually flew in the B-25s about their experiences you get a much more dramatic sense of realism than by just reading about them in a book. Making new friends and talking with them certainly makes these reunions meaningful and gives one a sense of satisfaction. The next time we get together, just for kicks, see how many new friends you can meet and talk with and perhaps share an experience or two.

The committee hopes to report a site for the next reunion in the next issue of *Strafer*.

Merry Christmas and Happy New year.

## Reunion XI message

by Earl Hitt

Margaret and I are overwhelmed by the cards and letters we have received since Reunion XI. Because of the number, we are taking this means to thank all those members, their wives and guests that have taken the time to tell us "what a fantastic reunion it was and how much they enjoyed their stay in St. Louis."

Margaret and I want you all to know that the message in the cards and letters has made all our work for the last two years "more than worth the effort." During the reunion we gained many new friends from all squadrons and will remember every one for many years to come.

Margaret and I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the St. Louis Reunion XI committee and their wives: Lea &

Katherine Carmine, Bill & Dorothy McGrath, Jack Menefee and Jack Higgins. It was the assistance of these people that made Reunion XI a success. Of course there were many others who volunteered to fill in where they were needed, and we wish to thank them for their valued assistance.

Until we meet again, God bless you all.



A mortar shell explodes at the entrance to a cave hiding Japanese holdouts on Biak. It was on the hill behind the officers' tents. See story on page one.

### 1997 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to:  
345th BG Reunion Assn.  
DICK FEUCHT  
12500 TOLLGATE RD.  
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## Reunion XII

1998

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