

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

July 1996

The Shiniest Shovel in Town

by Robert S. Lindberg

It seems my entire life has involved shovels, and I am told I was shoveling in the dirt for fun before I can even remember. I have done a lot of serious shoveling, too, including some "save-my-ass" digging. I believe I will dispense with the chronology by first dealing with the latter.

My earliest assessments overseas during WWII, once off the A.P.A. troop ship were in secure places: Manila, and Clark Field in the Philippines. Thence through winding, twisting unimproved roads to Subic Bay. The bulk of our stuff was stashed for loading on a L.S.T. for the next unknown trip toward Japan. The people part of the 345th Bomb Group not flying north (including me) were moved by truck and there was some talk about sporadic sniper pot shots in the mountains, so the admonition to keep a low profile was heeded. To really make the trip interesting, our group had drawn its monthly beer ration, a case of 24 bottles each, and our logistical experts decided to let each of us be responsible for transporting our ration with personal gear on the open truck ride to Subic. With real G.I. logic we collectively decided to lighten the load while we waited to get on the trucks. Beer never saw refrigeration overseas. There were occasions when we cooled it a bit. We punched a small hole in a can filled with gasoline and let it drip over the bottles exposed to the breezes. We could never totally eliminate the taste of gas, nor did we try to drink and smoke at the same time. Warm beer was tasty and refreshing once accustomed to.

Our wait to load up became very pleasant as time passed. We were in a "going on a picnic" mood when we finally loaded into the trucks. Everyone was so helpful and no one coveted thy neighbor's beer. We waved a joyous good-bye to the natives as we went through the only large town, San Something. Then it was off the hard road for the long ride when the rain began, not a deluge, but a typical steady, soaking tropical storm. Most of us donned our

raincoats which were rubberized non-breathing sauna suits. We sweated beer and the jouncing made the trip wretched. As the gulped down beer worked we were all more than a little tipsy and became uncomfortable. Relieving bladder pressure into an empty beer bottle was a challenge until some inventive type broke the neck off the bottle. That presented a different

challenge. The more mobile made for the slats on the sides of the semi trailer or used their canteen cups, not caring what that cup might be used for next. With the wretchedness came retching. I reached the stage where enough is too much, and I gave the rest of my beer away.

(please see "Shiny Shovel" on Page 4)



Staff Sgt. Martin B. Kies with one of his 60-lbs. aerial cameras. It was supported on a waist gun mount. He was an aerial photographer in the 498th SQ. which he joined at Nadzab N.G.

War Photographer

by Julius Fisher

Some of the photographs of the Japanese planes in formation with those of the 345th during the surrender activities were taken by Sgt. Martin Kies. He also photographed the Nagasaki area one week after the atom bomb was dropped there.

Civilian Kies owned a business, *The Photo Mart*, in Lansing, MI until he passed away at age 73 in early June, 1995.

People say, because the 345th was a top air group with a fine combat record, it was chosen for the Japanese surrender.

It's nice to hear, but it should also be said that the Air Apaches' performance represented the efforts of a lot of people who always tried to give it their "best shot," but were sometimes overlooked. One of these people is Martin Kies.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Lester Howard
V.P. 498th Sqd.

Frank Dillard sent me the following info. You may know some folks he can help locate.

"In a telephone conversation with Ira Schaub I learned of Merl Wooden's demise. He was a proud and loyal supporter of the 345th B.G. and his warm friendship will be remembered. Our ranks are thinning, and this is more reason we should all attend the St. Louis reunion.

I am pleased to report that during the past several months, with the aid of a "sick" computer and a CD-ROM telephone directory containing 70 million residential phone numbers it was possible to locate three "lost sheep" from the 498th!

First I found my pilot, Captain W. W. (Jack) Morris, whom I had lost contact with in 1945. I got his answering machine on the first call, but his voice sounded just the same as it did on intercom! We agreed to a mini-reunion in Las Vegas, October 3-8, 1995. We were joined by other 498th vets and their spouses. After 50 years, it was sure great to renew old friendships.

I also located George T. Flynn and Herbert R. Loeb with the CD-ROM. George and Herb were featured in "Warpath" on page 158. They were crew members of the ill-fated April 24, 1944 mission that resulted in their crash landing on the beaches of New Guinea. Herb is doing fine, but George is slowly recovering from a stroke. I am sure he would enjoy a card or letter from his friends in the 345th. None of these guys were aware of our organization, or reunions until I contacted them.

My search for my navigator, Paul J. Haben was not as successful. I learned from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs that Paul had died on April 18, 1982. He was mentioned in "Warpath", on page 166. The crash in which he was injured occurred on Biak, not Wakde, however.

If anyone would like me to search for a "long lost sheep" please let me know. I need the full name, and last known address. I can't guarantee a contact, but we can try. You can reach me at R5, Box 542, Marion IL 62959. (618) 995-2225. Best regards to all, and I'll meet you in St. Louis."



501st Squadron

Lynn Lee
V.P. - 501st Sqd.

Got a nice letter from Bob and Syble Anderson about the oldest flight engineer in the 501, Harvey Hangsleben. Harvey was 36 when he flew with Bob, and Bob was 20 at the time. Bob says Harvey was an over the road trucker, retired due to injury received 15 years ago. Now in wheel chair but in good spirits and has sharp mind. In case your arithmetic is bad, he is 86. Those who know him drop Harvey a line. His address is 1935 N. Pennsylvania Ave. Indianapolis, IN 46205.

I remember another older crew member.



Bob Anderson stands behind Harvey Hangsleben during a recent visit.

He was Gordon Belmont of Ripon, Wisconsin. I talked to his widow recently. Gordon died in 1985, but she still lives in Ripon. Gordon was born in 1911. Gordon's crew was Lt. Billig- McEwen- Jastrzemski- Sgt. Bench and Klein. We still have Klein and Jastrzemski, but Billig is dead. Does anyone know about McEwen and Bench? Remember Tatelman's convention episodes of our sqd. and group that is not recorded. Does anyone know or remember who was in the Rope Hole under the 75 mm when we were hit by the kamikaze on the Thomas Nelson? If so please write me.

A correction on Joe Peak. He was from Des Moines, Iowa, not Texas. Also no info on Everte E. Robinson, Ord. Officer of 501 for Martin H. Taylor. Martin's address is 1013 Baldwin St. Jenison, Michigan 49428. Hope you all enjoyed the edited letters from those who sent in. I mailed over 300 to 501 members. You all wrote me some good info on things I can help with. See you in the fall in St. Louis.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette
V.P. - HQ Group

I'm sure that all reunion plans are made and from all indications the committee has done a great job. I've said that before, but it's worth repeating good news for any committee. It never hurts to hear a compliment repeated and repeated again. Many times it looks like the cause is lost, but when the moment comes everything falls in place and in order.

The main thing for all to remember is: Do not be afraid to offer your help. Volunteers are always needed at registration or even at the hospitality room.

That report of Lt. Marvin Wachs, in June "Strafer," was very good. Was he one of our chaplains? We all need to read something like that once in a while.

The passing of Maury Epstein and the resignation of Ken McClure as treasurer reminds me how vulnerable we all are. Many thanks go to Ken for the wonderful job he has done over the years. And don't forget his wife deserves a big share of the thanks of carrying more than her share of the load all these years. Ken and Patti's financial knowledge was out of this world.

As far as President Tatelman's idea of Reunion lasting only two days, it seems to me it is quite a long way to go for just that short a time. True, some of our agendas were crowded with tours, and other events. The camaraderie hinges on "How have you and the family been the last couple years?" I'm all for cutting down squadron banquets and letting us gather in friend groups, to catch up on current family affairs. I have no idea how others think about this, but that's my thinking.

I'll see you in St. Louis, Louie... at the Reunion. To all Headquarters members, I will write a letter in the meantime.



1996 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to
345th BG Reunion Assn.
DICK FEUCHT
12500 TOLLGATE RD
PICKERINGTON OH 43147-9161

Long lost sheep found

Attention all personnel. Pat Goforth is coming to the reunion. Who is he? Pat Goforth was one of the first Air Apaches, who joined the 345th while it was in training in South Carolina. He was assigned to the 499th, and served with the 345th through the entire war as an intelligence officer. He was with the 499th through the entire war and rode back to Seattle, Washington on the troop ship. And the last time he saw any members of the 345th was the day he left the ship in Seattle. That was 50 years ago.

Pat was persuaded to make a career out of the military while in Ft. Riley, Kansas. He met an old friend whom he had gone through O.C.S. with who said.... And to make a long story short, Pat Goforth retired from the military after 35 years of service. He served in the Pentagon, Washington D.C., in Europe, and Hawaii and now makes his home in Washington state.

Most of the work was done by Marty Wood, (s?) who tracked Pat down to his lair via the Internet on his personal computer. Then he gave him a call. And Vic Tatelman was the one to call. In a telephone conversation Pat said, "It is a little startling how memory works. It took me a little while to connect a picture of Marty with his voice, but when I spoke to Vic, I remembered him right away. But now I have trouble with how he looks in the recent pictures, and how I remember him. You see, Vic used to have this real thick head of black hair..." Then recently Ken McClure was able to call him, and then mailed him some back issues of the Strafer. And the rest is history.

Shiny Shovel

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On arrival at Subic Bay, I was "volunteered" to start the first loading shift, 8 hours on, 4 off, until we sailed. I was miserable. But I did remember to rinse my canteen cup before I drank any real Navy coffee out of it. Loading the ships involved a lot of days with lots of lifting, shoving and pulling. By the time we put out into the Bay to form up a convoy the bunk space below decks was gone, so some of us rigged a tarp over the top deck loading ramp for our cots.

The tropical voyage north to I E Shima was pleasant and uneventful and the flat-bottomed L.S.T.'s rolled constantly. I E Shima is about 30 miles west of Okinawa. If I said it is only 2x4, I would not be off by much. And we had more planes landing

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Group Bulletin Board

CONGRATULATIONS!

To Mike Coloff and new bride Evelyn, united in marriage May 25, 1996, in Jefferson, OR, now living in Portland.

ATTENTION ALL READERS!

This special issue of the Strafer is brought to you in the interest of making certain that all personnel have received all information necessary to get to St. Louis.

The registration form in this issue is for Reunion XI. Also see March Issue for a registration form.

Your next Strafer should arrive in December. Please supply all picture and articles for it by November 1

Reunion on The Internet: There are several Internet "Home Pages" devoted to World War II. One of them features a mention of Reunion XI. The internet address is <http://www.webbuild.com/~jbdavis/ww2.html>

501st. member George Foy would like to buy a copy of the original "Warpath." Will truly treasure. Contact at 350 Westwood Dr., Barrington, IL 60010, or call (847) 381-6531.

My father, Richard Van Valkenburg, was an armorer with the 50st. I'd like to hear from anyone who might remember him, or any other armorer in the 345th. I have a group picture of 5 sgt.'s standing in front of the 501st Squadron sign. On the back is the name "L.F. Ogler". I would also be interested in locating this member of the 501st. Paul Van Valkenburg, 3137 East River Rd., Truxton, NY 13158.607-842-6356 vanvalkp@snycorva.cortland.edu

Blind man's book. Ken McClure has written a book, "Reflections of A Bexley Boy." It's about his life before and after the war in the town of Bexley, Ohio and about his experiences in the 345th.

IN MEMORY OF

James Hopson	499th	April, 1994	Virginia Beach, VA
Martin B. Kies	498th	June, 1995	Lansing, MI
Conrad Lemery	499th	19 Mar., 1993	Coventry, RI
Bernice Malquist (wife of Stuart)	500th	18 Nov., 1995	Dublin, OH

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

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Shiny Shovel

(continued from Page 1)

there than on the flat top fleet at Midway and the Coral Sea. And the mission was to build landing space for the airplanes. There were bulldozers scraping coral dirt off a hill 24 hours a day, into waiting loading shovels that filled a constant stream of dump trucks that hauled the fill down to be added to the runways, taxiways and parking revetments so more planes could land, be serviced and take off again. I E Shima is noted as the place Ernie Pyle, the G.I.'s pal, was killed. A sniper got him.

My witness to history was after the A-Bomb was dropped, and the Japanese Peace Mission landed on I E Shima to change to American transport planes for the flight to surrender to MacArthur in the Philippines. Our 345th Bomb Group B-25's met them over Japan and escorted them to I E Shima for the transfer. One of my squadron's 498th "Mad Falcons" planes was escort. (I saw the transfer after the war. Time-Life videos on "War in the Pacific," did a special on the 345th and it's island hopping up from Australia. The escort and transfer is featured.)

I spent one overnight on the I E Shima beach. I moved to the new camp area after dark in the rain and mud. We woke up next morning to find our tent in the middle of an ammunition dump. We were relocated next day to what was to be our campsite and began the business of getting set up. The first shoveling was a privy detail, dug on a high place where the view was good. It was for a prefabricated base for an eight holer - no roof, no sides.

At the end of the first day at the campsite to be, while most of us were sacking out, some of the old timers started digging slit trenches alongside their tents. They were



Lt. Gen. KAWABE (at right), Vice-Chief of Staff of Imperial General Staff, leads Japanese peace party of 16 officials.

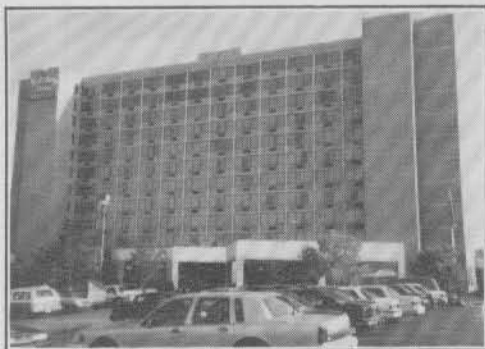
telling us something-- that we were in a combat area and the war could come to us. We were tired. We were complacent.

That night about 3 A.M. we had our first air raid alert since Clark Field. The P.A. system was in place and let loose with the siren and alert. The island went blackout. Even the bulldozers scraping coral dirt off a hill to the waiting loading shovels to fill the constant stream of dump trucks hauling fill 24 hours daily for an added runway, taxiways, parking revetments for the more planes to come, had to stop. The tamping and grading stopped too, and the red blinker atop our mountain high point was darkened. Our P.A. system tuned to the defense system frequently and crackled with voice traffic from radar directing bogey locations to night fighters. It was scary to be so naked for a couple or three hours until the "all clear" sounded. One Jap plane

flew over I E Shima and dropped a no damage salvo.

That night we all became believers. Next morning we did some serious "save your ass" digging. Not piddling little slit trenches, but real holes to accommodate eight sitting men with all safe, below ground level. Thereafter we had an air raid alert every night including a fly over by Piss-Charlie, a lone pilot who seemed more interested in looking than dropping bombs. But we never knew. Only he did. Charlie kept us honest. It's surprising how you can get accustomed to nodding off sitting in a hole with a steel helmet on, the P.A. blasting about bogeys and some ineffective ack-ack firing bursting overhead. With the "all clear" sometimes the P.A. system played Les Brown's "Sentimental Journey." That was nice.

Reunion XI



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

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