

STRAFER

498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

June 1997

Reunion XII set for San Antonio in 1998

Mark your calendar for September 9-13, 1998 and get ready for a trip to San Antonio, Texas. The reunion committee, chaired by Group Vice President Ken Gastgeb, has made those arrangements and has chosen the Holiday Inn Northwest in San Antonio as the location. It's four miles from the airport and seven miles from the San Antonio Riverwalk and from the Alamo.

Don't make your reservations yet, though. Travel agent Aleece Zucker says airlines and hotels won't be taking reservations until 11 months prior to the event. The next issue of Strafer will have details on how to make reservations and other travel arrangements.

Reunion Committee Members Wanted

The details for the upcoming reunion are being worked out now and Reunion Chairman Ken Gastgeb says committee members are still needed to help with those arrangements. He's also looking for suggestions on how the reunion should be planned. If you would like to suggest a specific activity or general guidelines for the San Antonio event, contact Ken. His phone and address are on page three.

Another call you may want to make is to friends who have attended past reunions, but may not be receiving the Strafer this issue. This is the first issue going only to members whose dues are paid, or who have shown that financial hardship interferes with their ability to pay dues. The number of Strafers mailed has dropped from 1,300 to under 500.

Mini-reunions

planned this year

While arrangements are being made for the group reunion in 1998, individual Squadrons are planning reunions for this summer. See the Squadron reports on page two or contact your Squadron's Assistant

Group Vice President, listed on page three.

The last time the group met in San Antonio was in 1986, for Reunion VI. It was in November. Reunions have been held in various months since Reunion I in July of 1973 at Colorado Springs. Reunion II was at Gulf Shores, AL in October of 76, Reunion III in Colorado Springs in September, Reunion IV was also there in September of 79, Reunion V was in Columbus, OH

in September 1984, Reunion VII in Norfolk, VA in September, 1983, Reunion VIII in Las Vegas was in October of 1983 and coincided with the 5th Air Force reunion there. Since that year, all group reunions have been held on approximately the same weekend in September, Reunion IX was held in Columbus, OH in 1992, Reunion X was in Colorado Springs in 1994, Reunion XI was in St. Louis in 1996.

T/Sgt. H.R. Bartlett winner in group title contest

Editor's note: This is a copy of the front page article of a newsletter titled "Tree Top Terrors." It's dated March 11, 1944. The author of the article is not identified. James B. Catlin of Chugtak, Alaska furnished the newsletter.

"Somebody came by my tent and reminded me that a Group Title Contest was going on. I grabbed a handy piece of paper, wrote 'Tree-Top Terrors' on it, handed it in and won!" That is how T/Sgt. Bartlett, of the 501st Squadron, modestly describes the secret of his success in submitting the winning title for our Group.

Feb. 27, 1944, will henceforth be known as the date our Group officially adopted

the title of the "Tree-Top Terrors." Colonel True, Group C.O., prior to the showing of a motion picture, presided as a prize presenter when he awarded Sgt. Bartlett a quite handsome bottle of Gin. Colonel True also took the opportunity to welcome all the recent newcomers to the 345th Lt. Brady, of Special Service, then gave his regular pre-show newscast.



President's Comments

Lynn Lee
President

The next reunion will be in San Antonio. I'm sure it will be a humdinger. It was 10 years ago that Bob Fain put together the '86 Reunion in San Antonio. It was my first. I called Bob and volunteered to be a "gofer" and had a lot of fun. Believe me, if you have a little time, organizing the reunion is a lot of enjoyment. So please get ahold of Vice President Ken Gastgeb and offer your

services. I talked to Bob Fain and he has agreed to help. Also, Muskey and Betty Hamner, I understand, agreed to help Ken.

If you wish, you can call Aleece Zucker at Uniglobe Travel, 1-800/219-7235 and she can compare notes with Ken or me. No airplane or hotel reservations are being accepted until after September of this year, though, Aleece says.

Let's all pull together and make this another good one, like St. Louis, as we know Earl Hitt and his crew will be hard to beat.

The Strafer needs some personal experiences from our members. Send them to the return address on page four.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

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

My copy of the March Strafer was a little late in arriving, my computer crashed and I was delayed in preparing this report. I think I am also a victim of cabin fever, post WWII delayed-action, semi-century stress syndrome, plain laziness or all of the above. This winter has been exceptionally cruel to many people in our country, so I suppose I shouldn't complain about a little "old-timer's" attack.

Mike Coloff reports that Elbert J. Wardle died March 23 in Yakima, WA. Mike said Elbert's wife, Kathy, was in bad condition in a nursing home there. Maybe nearby 498th friends can visit. Mike also said he and his wife, Evelyn, will have celebrated their first wedding anniversary May 25. Here's a belated "congratulations."

Good wishes to Ray Letourneau, whose wife, Jo, has had skin cancer surgery; to Roland Lamb, whose wife, Dorothy, was hospitalized recently and to Ira Schaub, recuperating from surgery. Ira "volunteered" to be my "back up" if I need one.

After a lengthy search I learned through the VA Dept. that Paul J. Hagen died April 18, '82. He was one of the navigators with the 16 crews that delivered the B-25H's to the 498th in 1944.

If you know something light hearted to report, please contact me. At this rate I couldn't blame you "shot the messenger."

I got no response on a 498th reunion for 1997. I'm planning one for Branson, MO in October. Details in the September issue, but right now it looks like I may hold it in a phone booth! Until next time, keep it low and slow.

499th Squadron

Ben F Miller

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

It's been a very busy spring, with part of the barn roof missing as proof of seasonal storms. One item to call to your attention is the passing of M/Sgt. Ike McShane on Jan 20, '87. While going overseas he used my bunk for storing his and my gear, while I slept up on deck, as the foul air made me sick. Ike was a giant of a man with a big heart.

In my last article I asked who was on the fire hose on the Nelson with me. Heard from Bill McGrath of MO. and Andy Lyons of GA., who shared duties on the hose.



Our squadron minireunion will once again be at Bearcreek Farms of Bryant, IN. 1-800/288-7630. We have the package as in the past, from noon Sept. 26 through noon Sept. 28. It includes lodging, meals and theater. If you desire, you can come on the 25th as an extra day. This place is a little over two hours from Indianapolis and about the same distance from the Air Museum in Dayton, OH. It's several miles off a main highway. And, get this, there are NO phones in the rooms. If you check air fares, you might find it cheaper to fly to Indianapolis and rent a car than to fly to Fort Wayne. There are two 18-hole golf courses nearby and a place with shotgun sports for old gunners.

BIAK: we all have memories of the place. Twenty of our squadron went on an advance detail with Capt. Max Ferguson. We could hear the Japanese talking and dogs howling. M/Sgt. Tumbleson did his guard duty with a 12 gauge shotgun. Another time I helped photo man Fred Wilkens (Fearless Fosdick) service tail cameras one full moon night, three shots signaling an air raid sounded. We jumped into our jeep and raced down the coral runway. We slowed down at the far end and almost got into a crater with others already there, but we shifted gears and ran for camp. One bomb from that plane hit in the crater and killed and injured its occupants. Another Thanksgiving Day.

500th Squadron

Ken Stufflebeam

Asst. Gp. V.P. - 500th Sqd.

Troops of the 345th Bomb Group who were on board the vessels Thomas Nelson and Morrison R. Waite should be able to recall the day of October 29, 1944 near Dulag, Philippines in San Pedro Bay. According to Warpath Across the Pacific, there were some men on board the S.S. Loomis too. It was a rainy and gloomy afternoon when we arrived. About the middle of that night a typhoon struck the bay and it was a storm to remember. Anyone topside was almost blown overboard and many things were. Ships were dragging anchors and a tanker was almost grounded.

Many of you may remember that our troop ships were trying to get out of the area where the enemy might find them. We were being anchored at white beach one night and yellow beach the next night. One night the ships remained at the same beach and outsmarted the enemy, as he bombed the one we were not anchored in.



While we were at one of the beaches, at anchor in the bay, the commander of the Nelson (the ship I was on) allowed Filipino natives to board our ship to barter and trade fruit and vegetables. I had never seen many Filipino people or Japanese, but when I looked at them I immediately had suspicions.

I went up to the commander of the Nelson and saluted and asked him if he could recognize a Japanese if he saw one. I suggested that there could be one among the people on board or that they could be spies for the Japanese. He immediately had the crew clear the deck of the visitors, but it was too late, as I am sure the Japanese Air Force was told that there were American troops on board two vessels.

Those of you who were on board when the Japanese Kamikaze struck the vessels found out that the ships were vulnerable targets because the 345th was on board. I had volunteered with a few men to go on shore with a party of advance detail. We were several miles inland when the ships were struck and we weren't aware of the things that took place until that evening, when a truck full of men was sent to the area we were in. Everyone else was loaded on the beach and we were not picked up until a few days later in the week.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Gp. V.P. - HQ Group

I've tried and tried to get up an interesting notes for this Strafer, but not much luck at it. The March Strafer came in very late and wasn't much help to me anyway. I thought it would give us much more info on the '98 Reunion, but hindsight tells me that not too much was concrete yet. I know that the committee has been very busy and by now may have a few of the pieces tied together.

Ken Gastgeb knows I suggested we try to get the "Apache Queen," Joan Leslie, to come again. The last time she was fantastic to us, and I'm sure this time she would see quite a few new "buddies."

The last Strafer had a nice story on Col. True's career, which was done in good taste. Personally, I was very proud to serve under him. After the promotion of General Crabb from the Apaches, we hadn't noticed anything in the "change of command." They were the two men who formed and made the 345th what it turned out to be. If you don't believe me, ask the Japanese....



My wife saw an ad in the local paper for a Hummel Museum in San Antonio. I should say in the vicinity of (30 miles or so from San Antonio). I understand that's just a hop, skip and a jump in Texas. I sent a copy to Ken to see if it could be inserted in our trips.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of Father Koslowski, let me know. His last newsletter was returned to me.

Our local high school teacher will be having his usual WWII round table discussion and military display. I will represent the Air Apaches for the third time.

I've had a letter from Fay Bishop and she's doing as well as can be expected after "Ike" passed on. I hope this finds y'all in the best that can be, at our ages.

Non-stars

by Max Ferguson, communications officer, 499th

Editor's note: anyone with similar memories is welcome to send them to Strafer.

When people write about the war, they like to describe heroes or stars (outstanding performers). I would like to describe a few non-stars of the 345th.

I had a 45-year-old radio mechanic by the name of Anthony DiCanio. He told me before we left San Francisco, "I'm just going along for the ride to Australia." I don't remember any paperwork on Anthony, but he never arrived in New Guinea to go to work.

One of my telephone linesmen, Frances Stein, fell out of a tree his first week in New Guinea and was injured. I didn't see him again. I was trying to put an antenna in a banana tree and almost joined the non-star ranks when climbing spikes slipped 15 feet to the ground.

One of the 499th pilots, Lt. John Pepper, went overseas with us on the President Johnson. He wanted to get into fighters. He finally got transferred to a P-38 group in Australia. One day while flying transition he saw a jeep parked a good distance away from some buildings. He decided to roll over and make a practice dive on it. He hit the trigger for his guns and they were "hot." He shot the hell out of the jeep. Luckily, no one was in it, but someone got his plane number and it cost him \$1,200.

Erum and Sims had just been checked out as first pilots at Nadzab. They took a B-up for transition and never returned.

I don't dare start mentioning alcoholics, especially a prize adjutant before Walt Barnes.

I suppose digging a 20-foot-deep well and having it turned into a crapper would qualify me for the non-star group.

Group Bulletin Board



BOB HOPE - JERRY COLONNA

Dobodura, New Guinea, 1943

Wedding Announcement

Bill Cavoli, 500th, and Kathleen J. Boren, March 15, 1997. Now reside at 1021 River Park, San Antonio, TX 78216-7832
Phone: 210/497-3580

Send us your e-mail address. The Internet is becoming a more common meeting place every day. And members of the 345th can take advantage of it. If you are on line, send your e-mail address to Strafer. A directory of all addresses received will be published in the next issue. You can use postage or e-mail it to 71155.1461@compuserve.com. Items for Strafer can also be e-mailed to that Internet address (Mark Nordstrom's).

Your Next *Strafer* should arrive in September. Please submit all items for it by the first week of August.

IN MEMORY OF

Victor P Ascenzi	500th	April 29, 1997	Portland, OR
David B. Chadrow	498th	Feb. 2, 1997	Philadelphia, PA
Ray Geer	500th	Nov 15, 1995	Surprise, AZ
Raymond Kimball	498th		Winner, SD
Walter "Chet" Kurowski	499th	April 7, 1997	Sacto, CA
Henry McCord	500th		Little Rock, AR
Kenneth Roach	501st	Sept, 1996	Enid, OK

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

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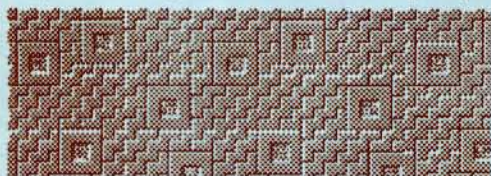
A memory of the VJ Day Anniversary

by Stan Muniz, 500th

A few years ago I met Bob Lombard, the owner of the B-25 named "In The Mood." The Air Apache logo was, and still is, displayed on the rudders. He invited me to Hawaii for the 50th Anniversary of VJ day. He said I would be a VIP and get the red carpet treatment, which we did receive. Doyle DeJong and I were taken in a VIP group by marine helicopter out to the USS Carl Vinson and we landed on the flight deck. We marveled at all the WWII war birds that were there, waiting to be launched. When the time for the launching came, we all lined up along the side of the flight deck. There were more cameras on that deck than there were AA guns during the war. A Wildcat took off, followed by the two Corsairs and then an AT-6. Then two Grumman Goose Amphibians, three B-25s, a Grumman Avenger, a Grumman Albatross Amphibian, then the navy launched to FA/18 Hornets.

It was simply fantastic! For a moment it was like being taken back in time to WWII, then almost like Desert Storm. Everyone's emotions ran wild for a few moments.

We were all given lunch in the officers wardroom. Doyle and I were seated with four FA/18 Hornet pilots. They asked about our B-25 operations on enemy shipping. They said we were either very brave or crazy to fly so slow and so low and literally drop a bomb by hand into the enemy ships



while going through all the flak and fire-power. They said they flew at Mach 1 and attacked from five miles out from the target.

After a leisure cruise back to Pearl Harbor, past Hickam Field and the Arizona memorial, it was back to the bus and on to Barbers point to get our cars.



Above: the barn with its Apache insignias, before the storm. Right: The insignia in its new location on a smaller building. The other insignia is close by. Editor's note: A cairn on Quint Guiliani's farm was featured in the December '96 Strafer.



Before and After

by Quint Giuliani, 501st

Although I lost my barn to heavy winds, I managed to salvage the two Apache insignias, which graced the front of it. In no way did I mean to disparage their significance. I just like to look at them no matter where they're located. We all remember the Apache Playhouse, well this is a condensed version with a satellite TV dish. A very rare outhouse indeed. Apache Playhouse is what's written on the small sign under the peak of the roof.

Reunion XII

September 9-13, 1998
Holiday Inn Northwest
San Antonio, Texas

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