



STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

March 1997



President's Comments

Lynn Lee
President

The bombing of Pearl Harbor was first conceived by the U. S. Navy Planning Board in January, 1932, with the gathering of 200 warships off the California Coast to test the defenses of Peal Harbor. However, instead of an Armada of two hundred there were two aircraft carriers - (the Saratoga and the Lexington), with four destroyers headed by Admiral H. E. Yarnell "an air-minded officer," (which we now know was unusual in that day).

The defense of Pearl Harbor was planned with a fleet of submarines, a division of troops, heavy coast artillery and batteries of anti-aircraft plus one hundred fighters and bombers.

Admiral Yarnell chose Sunday Morning at dawn on February 7, 1932, to attack Pearl Harbor from the North East through trade wind rain squalls and over Koolau Mountains Range where the trade winds would discharge their moisture and leave Pearl Harbor clear and sunny.

In the mock battle the fighters were knocked out on the ground by machine gun fire, the bombers and other military

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Colonel Clinton True 1913-1997

Clinton U. True gave up a college scholarship to Tulane University to attend West Point, at the orders of his father. He graduated in 1936. He was the 345th's first deputy commander at age 29 and later it's second commander. He was the reunion organization's first president. He often said the time he spent in the 345th was the best of his 30-year military ca-

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This old mill screamed

Editor's note: Ken Gastgeb, Vic Tatelman and the late Clint True contributed to this article. The photo was contributed by Ben Fridge.



Nadzab was where the 345th went into the lumber business. Clint True remembered flying to Melbourne to pick up the blade. It's visible in the left half of the picture. The logs are rolling down from the right. The boards the mill produced were worth their weight in whatever was valuable to men who wanted wood floors in their tents. The mill may have been left behind when the squadron moved on to Biak.

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

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

I've heard from some 345th folks and visited with others. Ira Schaub reports that Bryant Edwards died in December. Bryant was a radio-gunner and a fellow member of the group of 16 crews that ferried B25-Hs over from Eglin Field, Florida to Nadzab in the spring of 1944. Ira's recovering from both prostate surgery and multiple bypass surgery.

On a recent trip to Florida I went to the dog races with Ray and Jo LeTourneau and to Busch Gardens with Roland and Dorothy Lamb. Then returned to Illinois for an ice storm!

As 498th VP I'm updating the squadron roster for a new 345th directory. The idea is to make them available at cost. I'll appreciate your suggestions and comments. The topic of revising the Strafer mailing list was discussed in some detail at the group meeting in St. Louis. This list is not the same as the proposed 345th directory.

William Cavoli sent me a copy of the 500th's "Rough Raider Newsletter." It's a really professional 12-page quarterly publication, complete with photographs and editorial comment. They also have regular squadron reunions. I hope to initiate a similar program for the 498th this year.

In the last issue of Strafer I asked if there was any interest in a 498th reunion in Las Vegas in 1997. This takes a lot of preparation. Come on guys, drop me a note with your ideas. It's not too early to make plans.

499th Squadron

Ben F Miller

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

The committee should have a 1998 Group Reunion site by next issue. We intend to have a 499th mini-reunion in September. If no one comes forward to host it, it will be at the same place we've been before. Gatherings haven't been big, but some who don't attend the big reunion make it to the relaxed gathering at Bearcreek.

Spent an entire afternoon going through stacks of old pictures. Two that caught my eye are on the bulletin board. When we went overseas, our planes had belly turrets up front, but they were soon removed. Any information about the plane, or names of crew members will be appreciated.

The second picture shows the hold of the



Thomas Nelson, one of two ships used by the 345th in the invasion of Leyte. Both ships were hit by suicide planes with heavy losses to the group. A fire broke out in our area. Beneath the boards on the floor were 55 gallon drums of 100 octane gasoline, and stacks of wooden crates filled with bags of gunpowder for large guns. All the fire hoses in the aft portion of the ship were destroyed except one. We manned it for quite some time. After the fire was out, some of the boards and the outsides of the powder crates were charred. Talk about angels, who wouldn't believe in them after that? The person on the hose with me was a lanky fellow named O'Merra, or something like that. I wonder if he is still alive.

Called up one of our original crew chiefs who lives less than 100 miles from here. How many of you remember an original crew chief who had red hair and always smoked a pipe? His name is Edwin Burns. He went by the name of RED BIRD.

500th Squadron

Ken Stufflebeam

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

Ben T. Muller retired from writing the 500th column so I was asked to volunteer to write it.

I was a member of the original cadre of the 500th sqdn. of the 345th. I went all the way with the sqdn. until the end at I E Shima.

I entered military service on Sept. 21, 1941. I enlisted in the Air Corps for 3 years so I received \$30-a-month pay. I was sent directly to duty with a weather detachment in Augusta, GA. I did not have basic training or boot camp. Fifteen of us washed out and did not get to go on and get a commission. Only one man made it.

I went into Leyte bay on the S.S. Thomas Nelson. A few of us had signed up to go on the advance party inland, so we were not on the ship when the Kamikaze struck.

I met a local nurse at the medical clinic in Burauen. She was from the island of Panay. Anyone who was in the group there please contact me. Oh yes, I married the Filipino nurse when we were at Clark Field in 1945.

The 500th squadron reunion in 1995 was in San Diego. The one this year is to be in San Antonio. I think the suggestion for two-day reunions is in line to consider.

If you need to get any medals from the government do it right away. I put in for some a few years ago and it took four years to get them. Also check your copy of your discharge for mistakes. I found mine lacking the group name and I have waited



more than five years hoping it will be corrected. The U.S. government does not issue the Philippine liberation medal. You have to write to the Philippine embassy Washington, D.C. for that.

501st Squadron

George Mordecai

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

Thanks for all the suggestions on where to hold the mini-reunion. I sent letters to all who attended the last few and received 27 returns. Some were only Christmas cards, but others made choices. Branson got seven votes, Myrtle Beach was second with five. Lynn Lee has made arrangements with the Edgewood motel, where we stayed the last time we were in Branson. Lynn says it's twice as big now. Put aside October 1-7 to enjoy the camaraderie of friends of the 40s.

It's time for all of us to start thinking about the 1998 Group reunion. Thanks to those who donated their time and money to help keep this reunion going. John Cook of Fairfield has always sent a contribution since I became treasurer. He regrets not being at the last reunion, but is looking forward to the next one. Don Hardeman coming along pretty well and will be at Branson, the good Lord willing.

There are still members of the 345th out in the wide open spaces if we could just find them. I received a letter from Fritz Kreidler who attended his first reunion at St Louis. He is quite enthused about our next reunion and it seems as if he might have some good input.

Drop me a line, or those who are into computers leave me a note on TDMORDECAI@AOL.COM. Send me a good joke.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Gp. V.P. - HQ Group

After the Holidays I'm left without much to say, but I'll give it a "Bloody Go Mite."

A site for the 1998 reunion will be chosen soon. We had a few first-timers and widows in St. Louis and this makes for a better time for all. A lot of first-timers had read the notice in "service" magazines and we should insert this as soon as possible.

At St. Louis we narrowed the next reunion to four possible sites, none of which were "in cement." At that time I suggested



San Antonio, Texas. True, we were there once, but if you remember, the weather broke all records for cold and we missed the "fullness" of "San Antone." We have many members in Texas and I'm sure they could "do it up big," like the old saying goes the big horn state.

I learned from Faye Bishop that Don passed away December 29. She said it was cancer that spread quickly and he didn't suffer too long, which is a blessing. He and I were very close and it seemed with every move we would be together again. This same thing prevailed after the war and we had many a good time. I will miss him, for sure, but good times will help the mourning period. It will take time, though. At the insistence of the "kids," Fay says she had a military funeral.

I also had a Christmas card from Oscar Light of the 501st, saying, in case no one knew, Leonard Keller, the payroll clerk of the 501st, died about five years ago of a massive heart attack.

Editor's note: Vic Tatelman saved this newspaper article when he read it in 1945. He found it during some recent unpacking.

MANILA FACES DIRE T-DAY—ALL TRAFFIC WILL GO TO RIGHT

BY DON CASWELL.

MANILA, May 31.—(UP)—Tomorrow is the day traffic switches to the right hand side on the road in Manila.

Tomorrow is the day I plan to stay in bed.

In nearly three and one-half years as a war correspondent I never sweated over any D-Day as much as dread tomorrow.

In Manila traffic keeps to the left—when it isn't in the center or on the right or going up a one-way street the wrong way.

Tens of thousands of Army vehicles struggle through swarming pedestrians, carretelas, side-car bicycles and pushcarts. A carretela, incidentally, is a Manila institution—a high two-wheeled cart carrying two to 19 people, depending on their waistlines. It is powered by a tiny descendant of the early Spanish horse, which hasn't improved much on the prehistoric horse—doubtless due to smoking Filipino cigarettes during colthood.

Americans, who have kept to the left in Australia and New Guinea and all the intervening islands for more than three years, will have a tough time relearning their youthful habits.

The army has displayed an understandable nervousness about the changeover. Originally it was scheduled for April, then postponed to May 1, finally to June 1.

Group Bulletin Board

Your next *Strafer* should arrive in June. Please send suggestions, articles, notices, pictures and other items to the return address on page 4. Please submit all items for it by May 1.

The history of the 345th, "Warpath Across the Pacific," by Lawrence J. Hickey, is now in a new 4th edition. Among its new features is a new jacket, with a new photo. It's \$75 from International Research and Publishing Co., P.O. Box 3334, High Mar Station, Boulder, CO 80307



Notice the belly turret on this B-25 early in the war. See Ben Miller's column for more.



Inside the Thomas Nelson (see Ben Miller's column).

Wish to buy: "We Band of Brothers" by Ralph "Pappy" Blount & "Bats Outta Hell over Biak" by Max Ferguson. Paul Van Valkenburg, 3137 E River Rd, Truxton, NY 13158, 607/842-6356

IN MEMORY OF

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|----------|--------------------------|
| Jim M Adams | 498th | 2/10/97 | Daytona Beach Shores, FL |
| Edward H Allport | HQ | 3/20/94 | Vancouver, WA |
| Deane Boedy | 499th | 3/19/95 | Medfield, MA |
| Don Bishop | HQ | 12/29/96 | Waynesboro, PA |
| Wayne Bissell | 500th | 1/9/97 | Vancouver, WA |
| Jerome J Burke | 500th | 2/6/97 | Long Island, NY |
| Rueben Cantor | 501st | 12/24/96 | Brooklyn, NY |
| Orrin V Cook | 500th | 1/2/96 | Boulder, CO |
| Nathan S Etkins | 501st | 11/27/96 | Las Vegas, NV |
| Jack Flynn | sqdn | 12/6/93 | Elmira, NY |
| Thomas B Freeman | 500th | 6/94 | Fallston, NC |
| Delores Madson (wife of Richard) | 499th | 12/93 | address |
| Miles E McIntyre | 501st | 2/94 | Walnut Creek, CA |
| Hobart "Doc" Rankin | 500th | 12/3/96 | Ft. Walton Beach, FL |
| Clinton U True | HQ | 2/11/97 | Florida |
| John Vail | 500th | 6/15/96 | Cincinnati, OH |

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

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Col. True

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reer. He is remembered by many.

General Ben Fridge was a tent-mate of True's at Port Moresby and Nadzab. He remembers True as "pretty rough and



Colonel Clinton U True, commander of the 345th Bomb Group, May 1944, Nadzab, New Guinea

ready" and as a man who took his command very personally. "He was 100 percent into that job," says Fridge. "He felt he was completely and totally in command and everything that happened, he felt was his responsibility." He remembers True defending him when superiors were critical of Fridge for scrubbing a November 1943 mission to Wewak. True argued that orders were to scrub if there was no fighter cover, and that was what happened.

True is possibly remembered most for

the October 1943 unescorted mission to Rabaul. An abort order was given, but True said he never heard it. Court-martial was considered, then he was awarded the distinguished service cross. "Although aspects of his command were controversial," says historian Larry Hickey, "he was a very proud, strong leader, single-minded in advancement, who led the 345th through a very important time. He continued General

Crabb's efforts to shape the group into a first-class combat unit and they were very successful under his leadership."

"He was stern, fair and very efficient," says Vic Tatelman, who was a pilot on the unescorted mission. He sees the raid as True's greatest legacy.

Strafer asked True in 1993 to sum up his command. "I was a strict disciplinarian," he said.

President's message

(continued from page 1)

targets were demolished and all ships in the harbor were sunk or damaged by bombs of the planes from the two aircraft carriers, and as supposedly early Sunday morning found the defenders less alert. Some of the high-ranking officers wanted to reorganize the Navy. They wanted to center on air power with support from ships, rather than around the battle ship. Unfortunately Washington did not heed this view.

It was surmised that Japanese spies saw the mock raid and notified Japan of its sure success, as they had spies around Pearl Harbor, at most high points, in fishing sampans and where Navy people congregated.

After intense study in Tokyo, information obtained formed a basis for a series of secret maneuvers that was ultimately used in the attack on Pearl Harbor approximately eight years later.

We also know that Japanese Naval experts had concluded (as many of our admirals had) that the primary weapon had become air power. Admiral Onishi, Commander of the First Air Fleet realized that conventional methods of warfare would not stop the U.S. Forces. So he conceived of the Kamikaze planes, which crashed into our forces at Leyte, Luzon and other targets in the Philippines. There was a

total of 2,519 men and officers sacrificed by the Kamikaze "Divine Wind." On August 15 Admiral Uzaki and seven planes radioed they were diving on targets in Okinawa. The last Kamikaze of World War II. That night Admiral Onishi plunged a Samurai Sword into his abdomen. He refused aid and died the next morning. His long suffering was obviously made in expiation for his part in one of the most diabolical tactics of war the world has ever seen. This information was obtained from a Reader's Digest article written in 1964 by Edwin Muller.

Sniper victim remembered

Jack Caplan writes, he was the one loading the mortar aimed at a sniper in the picture on page 1 in the last issue. He is John Hutchinson was killed by the sniper. "He was a very fine guy, who took care of the mail for our division," Caplan says.

1997 Dues Payable

Please send \$15 annual payment to
345th BG Reunion Assn.
DICK FEUCHT
12500 TOLLGATE RD
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345th Bomb. Group Association Reunion XI, Meeting Minutes Sat. Sept. 7, 1996.

The meeting was called to order by Vic Tatelman. The minutes of the last reunion held in Colorado Springs were read by the secretary and approved. The financial report as submitted by Dick Feucht was as follows: checking account \$12,382.33, savings account \$12,774.51, certificates of deposit \$15,505.82. Approved as read.

Old Business.

There was much discussion on group finances relative to their investment earnings. Investing in government bonds was proposed by Ralph Blount which was negated by membership agreement to keep the group finances as presently invested.

Another financial point of concern was the cost of Strafer publication and its financial support by group monies. Fabian Moeller offered a motion to continue the same support for another two years as used during 1994 through 1996. Motion carried.

The need to update the membership list with its affect on the cost of mailing and publication of the Strafer and the related problems of collection of membership dues was also discussed. Roz Campbell offered a motion to publish the Strafer four times per year and insert an invoice in the last publication of the year. It should call for dues for the coming year to be mailed in or the member would be dropped from the mailing list. A place on the invoice would allow persons with insufficient funds to request being kept on the mailing list.

Julian Baird offered an amendment to the above motion to place the invoice in the first publication of the year and use other means to update the mailing list. Frank Dillard offered a motion to change the invoice to contain three check windows:

1. wanting to receive the Strafer and payment of dues.
2. receive the Strafer, waiver dues for lack of funds.
3. continue Strafer- life member.

The invoice would also contain notice that lack of action on the invoice would result in being removed from the mailing list. This last amendment was carried.

The question of what to do with the 345th Bomb Group money at the cessation of final Group activities due to lack of membership was discussed and the general consensus, without a motion, was to handle that problem at the proper later time.

345th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Invoice for Annual Dues

Dues: \$15 Due June 31, 1997

Check One:

- \$15 Dues Enclosed. Continue STRAFER
- Continue STRAFER, but \$15 Dues is NOT enclosed. (Financial Burden)
- *Life Member. Continue STRAFER

If this Invoice is not returned, the member will be eliminated from the Group Roster (inactive) and the STRAFER Mailing List.

Name _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date _____

*Life Memberships have been deleted. Those who previously held Life Membership are urged to resume paying Annual Dues.

Return This Invoice To:

Dick Feucht, Treasurer

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