

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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501st SQUADRON

345th Bomb Group Reunion Association

Quarterly

Volume 16, Issue 4, December 1998

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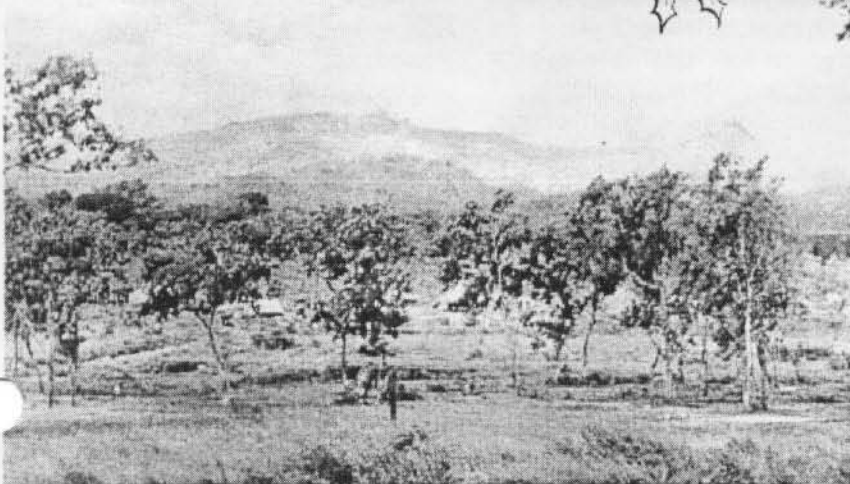


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*All the Way from the S.W.P.A.
Season's Greetings
from the 345th and me*



As has become a tradition for Strafer, this card produced in the South Pacific by the late Cliff Hanna of Headquarters sends greetings from Strafer Publisher Ken McClure and editor, Mark Nordstrom



President's Comments

*Ken Gastgeb
President*

Christmas is just around the corner and there is the hustling and bustling that goes on at this time of the year. A Very Merry Christmas to everyone.

Our thanks to Lynn Lee for doing a fine job over the last two years. He kept things going and was a great help with the reunion. He assisted in putting the pieces together, running errands, and many times he said "I'll take care of that." We couldn't have done it without him. Also thank you all for having confidence in me by electing me as your President for the next two years. I am greatly honored to serve this great group of veterans, families and friends.

One of the projects we are working on is an improvement in the Strafer. The Committee, all Officers and others, is headed by Frank Dillard. The improvements we are looking for is a larger and more informative newsletter. This can only come about by the members submitting articles and pictures for publication. The type of articles we are looking for are (1) war time stories, (2) Home projects or hobbies, such as art work, model

(continued on page 3)

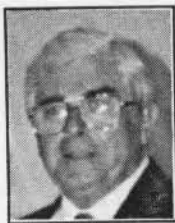
Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

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

Where has the year 1998 gone? When you read this Thanksgiving will be over, so I'll take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.



I received a note from Tommy Gilstrup with photograph of Joan Leslie and little of me dancing. She is a charming lady and I hope she is as proud of being our Apache Princess as we are of her wearing the crown. The local cable TV service has featured several of her movies recently. Thanks Tommy.

Talked to John Gale in Late October. He had just been released from the hospital after some corrective internal surgery and was to be treated in early November for an irregular heart beat. I hope he is doing fine. Ray Letourneau was also hospitalized recently. He is back home (at Naples), and other than being somewhat restless from medication, appears to be fully recovered.

Our new group secretary, Roland Lamb, and I have had several contacts lately. He has me to thank (?) for nominating him to his new office. I also introduced him to his present wife.

George Mordecai and I have been conferring about our future reunion site (Atlantic City, NJ). It appears that there may be a difficulty in airline transportation that has to be addressed. It occurred to me that Lynn Lee might be able to put his bus, the "Albatross," to good use there. Stay tuned for the latest developments!

Warren Lipman sent me an interesting letter. In it he noted that he had attempted to report the demise of Boy Mayerson back in 1992, but he doesn't recall it being published in the Strafer at that time. Well, I would like to remedy that and apologize to his family for the oversight. Quoting Warren, "Bob got ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and was only able to last about three years. The amazing thing was that Bob led a superlative life, he didn't smoke, drink or eat anything that wasn't good for you and he was a perfect specimen of a man. How or why he got ALS is unknown to anyone." And I would add, except God.

Warren also mentioned that his pilot, Walt Treadwell, was still actively engaged in flying. It appears that Walt builds EAA half-scale aircraft replicas and enjoys flying them. It was reported that his most recent plane is a P-38 with our Air Apache insignia on both vertical stabilizers. Walt, if you read

this, please send me a picture and more information. I know many of our association members would be interested in hearing more about your hobby.

499th Squadron

Ben F Miller

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

Happy holidays. The season is here. Turkey day doesn't mean as much as it did when we weren't here. My first Thanksgiving, an advance detail set up or next camp. We were told they actually had turkey at our old base. We had warm lemonade, a helping of cold beans, salmon and two dog biscuits. The following year we were at Leyte. A stack of flour and supplies was set on fire and it smoldered for days. Every time we went to chow, a plane would come over, and we dispersed. Finally we gave up and ate a box of K rations in the foxhole.

In today's society, many of us fly a lot. How do you feel when boarding? It always bothers me when heading for those cramped seats. The thought is always the same, "What am I doing here without a chute?" This goes back to the time we moved from 13 mile to the other side of the dreaded pass. We, of the advance detail, came back to pick up our gear. It was a great chance to sit in the turret and take pictures of the clouds. All at once the red light started flashing, the pilot gave the command to be ready to bail out. We were at the top of the mountains when both engines started to miss and the nose dropped. We had neglected to take an engineer on this short hop. A gunner by the name of Tacy was standing between the pilot and copilot. When the engines started to act up he spun, reached for the generator switches with outstretched arms as he leaped through the air. His deed was in the nick of time, as both engines roared and the nose came up. I didn't have a chute on, but to this day, boarding makes me a bit uneasy. Is Tacy still alive? The radio may was Sgt. Blair, lost in 1944.

500th Squadron

Stan Muniz

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

Having to come up with something for this column got me to remembering little things that happened back when I was with the Squadron.

I had just returned from a mission to



Lamsepo Airdrome in northern Luzon on A/C 034, which we had borrowed from the 499th Squadron. I believe Lt. Hill was pilot. I was tired and a little shook up from seeing what a 20 mm hit did to the radios. Lucky for me I was in the tail.

As I walked into my tent Marvin "Murph" Leventon said, "Hey, you're just in time for some hot pork and beans." Our chief scrounger had done it again. He had gotten some "C" rations from someplace and cooked up a great meal. He even had hot rolls to go with it. The guy was unbelievable! One Sunday morning he got up early and had French Toast for us when we got up. We never asked him where he got the stuff of how he got it. What a guy! What great memories.

P.S. I wonder who repaired 034, the 500th or the 499th? Maybe some of the ground crew for that plane may remember. Just a thought.

501st Squadron

Chet Burns

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

Now that I have been elected your VP for the next two years, I want to thank George Mordecai and everyone who approved it. I will try to do my best as all my predecessors have done.

About myself, I was an original 501st cadre member in 1942 at Columbia, SC in the maintenance Dept. I was the youngest kid in the squadron. Bob Fain reminded me of that many times. It doesn't make any difference today.

The 1998 reunion was very enjoyable even though the weather didn't cooperate. Also, many of our buddies were absent and missed. A few to mention: Quinton Giuliani, whose wife, Wanda, was ill, Gene Bonadies, Fred Shoemaker, Ralph Kunkle, and many others. There was some sad news after the reunion, George LaHood's wife, Eva, underwent surgery and unfortunately passed away.

I would like to request that we all try and make some efforts to contact lost members of our group who have not attended reunions in the past. Phone calls, letters, etc. may bring them about. Our reunion is getting much smaller. Any suggestions, information in reference to future reunions will be appreciated.

Let me hear some stories from you guys, old or new, to make this column more interesting.



Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Gp. V.P. - HQ Group

After my last notes it may be impossible to write another one so soon. I have no idea what to cover, but will give it a "mighty go mite."

As we look to another new year, it should be easy, but in our cases "we are not getting any younger." Our numbers are decreasing and we have to carry on.

I recently received a letter from President Ken Gastgeb asking for new ideas to liven up the Strafer. That means the vice presidents can't do it alone. It will take some input from as many buddies as possible. Almost any subject one can think of as interesting is bound to meet with someone's approval. And the more the better. The thing to do is write it, send it in and let the editor decide. He has changed some of my writings and in most cases it was for the better.

I'm very interested in youths and I've loved every minute of it. Some of you guys deal with veterans organizations, others are tied into local governments, some even volunteer in many ways at helping others.

After our reunion my son, stationed at Ft. Bliss, Texas, met us and we spent four days touring the vicinity of San Antonio. We visited the Hummel Museum and Admiral (mitz) Museum, dealing with his career in the Pacific. That was very interesting to me as we were "shoulder to shoulder" with him. Who can forget Leyte! The President Johnson Museum and ranch were something else too.

The payoff came at the air terminal in San Antonio. We met three recruits from Lackland Air Base who had just gotten their medical discharges. One was diagnosed with cancer two weeks before graduation. Another's knee kicked from a previous injury two weeks into tech schooling. The third one I never found out the trouble, but they were devastated and well they should be. I had quite a chat with the one with the knee trouble. After I mentioned the Air Apache group he was all ears. I took his name and address and sent him the group record. His father was in the Air Force in "Nam" and his grandfather was in WWII. The kid was 10 when his grandfather died and he never had a chance to talk about the war. I spent near an hour with the kid and told him, "Now I'm your grandfather." A very rewarding experience for both of us.

The local high school teacher is supposed to put on a program for Veterans Day. Haven't heard from him yet, but he's always a last minute man. He knows I'll be there. All I need to know is the day and time.

Take care, God bless, have the best possible holidays.



Group Bulletin Board

Reunion XIII

September, 2000

Atlantic City, New Jersey

Wanted information on of Col. Clint True's co-pilot C. J. Allen. Please pass information on to Ken Gastgeb. Thank You.

1999 Dues Payable

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

Your next Strafer should arrive before the end of March. Please send items for it by February 1.

Thanks to all for the fine greetings received from the San Antonio Reunion. It's the first one I've missed and it was a special pleasure to receive so many kind greetings. It makes you feel welcome, even when you're not there.

Ken McClure

345th Internet home page is at <http://snycorva.cortland.edu/~vanvalkp/index.htm>

All honorably discharged veterans of the Air Force, Army Air Corps, Army Air Force, are entitled to one of charge replacement set of their authorized medals and ribbons from the U. S. Government. Submit request to National Personnel Records Center Attn: NRPMF, 2455 North Lincoln, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Use veteran's name, social security number, branch of service, and dates of service. Request must be signed by the veteran. If deceased next of kin can order and send for it.

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

building, collections, etc., (3) Your health, (4) News of events in your home town, (5) Something you did or are doing, and other items that are of interest to your WWII friends.

The last issue of the Strafer was great and put together in such a short time. The March 1999 Strafer is going to be a Special Reunion Issue along with the other items. Waiting till March to do this will give everyone more time to get organized. Everyone is invited to send in a picture or two with a caption for each picture. This issue will let everyone see what a good job you did taking pictures and share them with your friends. So go through your pictures and pick out a couple and send them to Nordstrom (address in Strafer). Include a SASE for the return of your pictures. Send them in early so Mark will have plenty of time to organize them for the March issue.

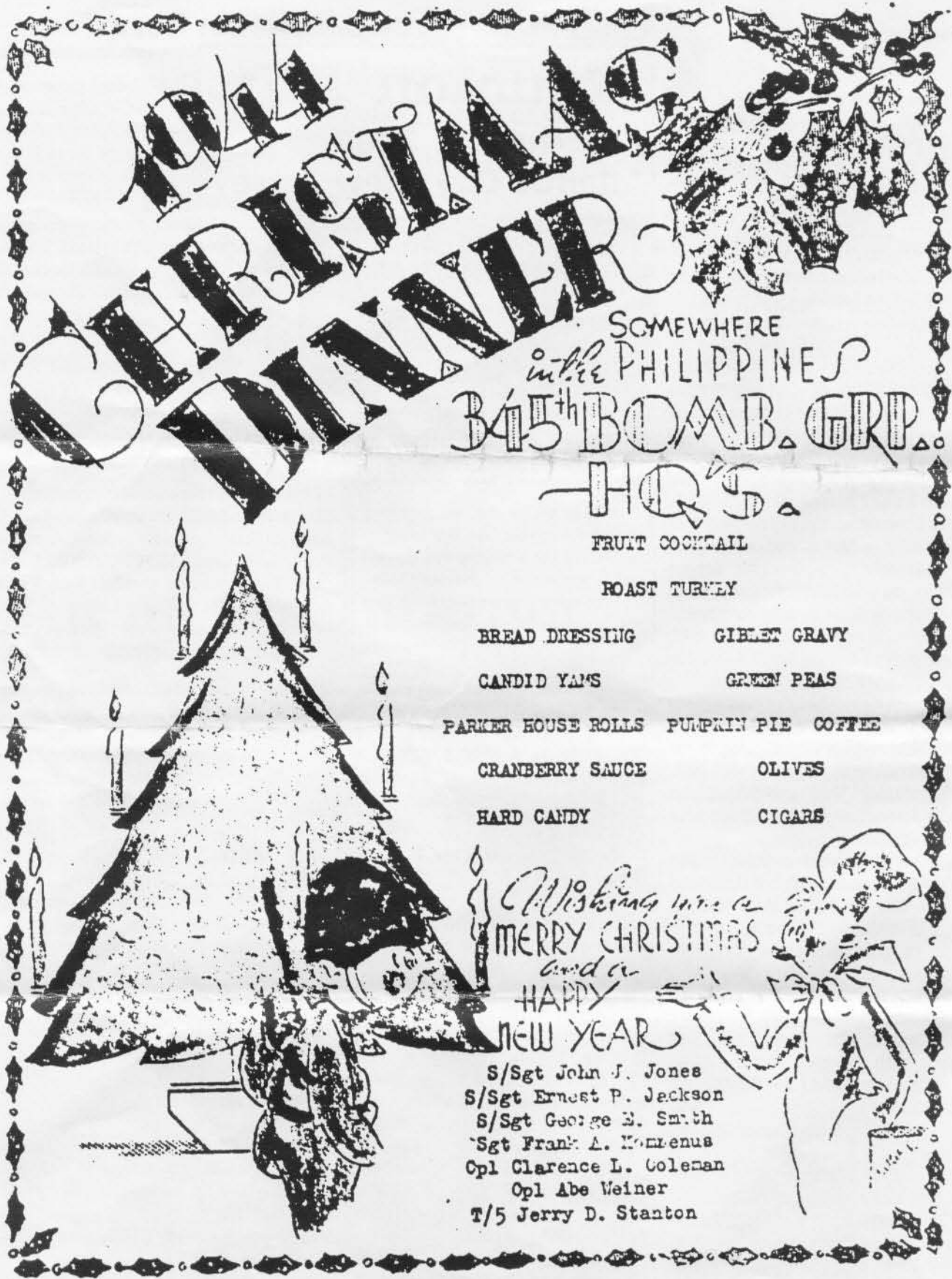
An item that we regret, happened. In the early planning stages of the reunion we were quoted prices on the tours that were incorrect. As a result we are giving a refund to those that went on the tours. You should receive your refund before Christmas. If you went to one or both tours and didn't receive your refund in a month or so please

let me know.

Question: Does the Group have a Historian? During the last year or so I received many inquiries about our members from sons and daughters. They request information about just what their father did, such as gunner, pilot, electrician, or what ever, while serving with the 345th Bomb Group. They are looking for people that their father worked with. Anyone that can give them information. One man attended the reunion and talked with friends of his Dad. A Historian could provide them with the information or help where to get it. If someone has been appointed Historian please let me know. If not, we may need a volunteer or perhaps a team to gather the info. If anyone knows C. J. ALLEN or knows anything about him please let me know. He flew Co-Pilot with Col. Clint True.

George Mordecai, our Vice President, is the Chairman of the reunion Committee. The Assistant Vice Presidents and other appointees make up the Committee. George will be very happy to receive your comments and suggestions.

This office is open to any and all comments and suggestions.



Setting the table

by Vic Tatelman

Christmas of 1944: Group Headquarters mess served a feast. I don't remember the squadrons having such a menu. This came to light in some old microfilm I've been editing. The menu includes fruit cocktail, roast turkey, bread dressing, giblet gravy, "candid" yams, green peas, Parker house rolls, pumpkin pie, coffee, cranberry sauce, olives, hard candy, cigars. Names listed at the bottom are S/Sgt. John J. Jones, S/Sgt. Ernest P. Jackson, S/Sgt. George E. Smith, Sgt. Frank A. Xomnenus, Cpl. Clarence L. Coleman, Cpl. Abe Weiner, T/5 Jerry D. Stanton

This is the Army?

Many of the members of the 345th Bombardment group are shown here gathered for a group picture surrounding actress (and Apache Princess) Joan Leslie. Ms. Leslie participated in many of the reunion events and kept cameras flashing as she posed with members for mementos of the reunion. This one was taken after the business meeting. In 1943 she was posing with Ronald Reagan in "This is The Army." In San Antonio she helped the 345th "Turn Back The Clock."



The 345's original newsletter

TREETOP TERRORS



The first 345th newsletter was issued March 11, 1944 with the cover illustration shown here. It included news from all the squadrons and was classified as "Restricted" by Col. True. It was not to be mailed home or given to anyone outside the group.

The back page included a list of personnel who were soon to be transferred home. The

message with the list is interesting:

"Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home... With this thought in mind a lot of our Group's veteran combat crews are eagerly waiting for the signal to head back to the good old U.S.A. Everybody knows what an excellent job they've done and those that don't can easily find out by turning back to

the Combat Review on page two. We naturally can't help feeling proud of these guys and hoping that someday, somewhere we'll kind of meet up with 'em and review the old days and times. Until then, all we can do is gulp a little and wish each and every one of the guys... loads of luck and 'Bon Voyage.'"

Welcome to the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association Home of the AIR APACHES



All too often, in the assumed and "taken for granted" freedom in which each successive American generation lives, the present seeks to obliterate the past - and that must never be allowed to happen! Knowing and remembering the price that past generations paid to save our nation, future generations can understand what they must do, if necessary, to preserve it.

(R.E. Peppy Blount - We Band of Brothers)

345th on the Internet

by Paul VanValkenburg

The summer of 1998 brought the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association to the Internet. In an effort to bring the amazing history of the 345th Bomb Group to a larger audience, especially students using the Internet as a research tool, a Web site was established to serve that goal. Paul Van Valkenburg, son of 501st armorer Richard Van Valkenburg, asked for permission to design and maintain a Web site for the Group. Permission was obtained from Larry Hickey to

use excerpts and photos from his book and several members offered various pictures and patches to be scanned and used for the site. The site features a brief unit history, Maurice Eppstein's "Who were these men?", upcoming reunion information, current reunion Association officers, links to 345th books, and a photo page. More is hoped to be added as time permits. Members are encouraged to share the web address with as many people as possible, especially teachers and other vets. Suggest-

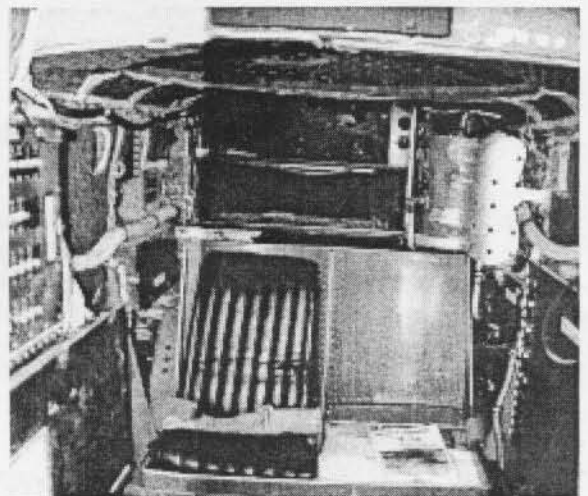
tions for adding to the site are always welcome. If you have a special picture you would like added send it to Mr. Van Valkenburg and he will scan and return it to you. Personal short stories of all kinds are also of interest. Most local libraries now have Internet access. Stop by and ask for help accessing the 345th Web site. It can be found at <http://snycorva.cortland.edu/~vanvalkp/index.htm>. Paul Van Valkenburg 3137 East River Rd. Truxton, NY 13158 e-mail: vanvalkp@cortland.edu



Actress Joan Leslie, the 345th's "Apache Princess," poses for a picture while chatting with 345th President Ken Gastgeb (left) and Bobba Harper (right)

Looking back

The view from the pilot's and copilot's seats of a B-25 looking toward the tail. This pilot flies by the book. A pilot's manual is lying on the right seat.



Weather

by Dick Fezatte, 498

After reading and knowing all about Black Sunday I have decided to share a personal story.

I believe the flying personnel or the 345th had seen any type of weather conceived. If not in the trip from Moresby to Tokyo, certainly since those days.

About 15 years ago my wife and I were on a trip in the upper peninsula of Michigan. We watched the sun go down over Lake Superior. It was very quiet. It was short and fast. The cold air chilly for August. The black of night appeared rapidly. We watched the weirdest sight you can imagine. No signs of daylight, except for a full-size rainbow. The colors were more vivid than any daytime colors and lasted about 10 minutes.

We were a quarter mile from large groups of people. Maybe 30 or 35 of them. None of them had seen anything, though. In fact, they all thought we were crazy.



Hickam AFB on Oahu, Hawaii features this display of a B-25. The photograph was taken by Quint Giuliani's grandson, Chuck Palmer.

My mind goes back to 1950-52, when Reader's Digest carried a story similar to our experience. As I recall, the name of the article was "Weather Phenomena."

Many people were near this sighting, but few saw the happening. I wish all members could have seen this sight. You would not have believed it.

Distant news

Joe Clevenger, 499, has been heard from. He is living in Guam. After the war Joe worked for TWA and served in the Berlin Airlift. He had three sons, now has three grandchildren and he and his wife, Carmen, have adopted a daughter and son.



Warm welcome at Missouri CAF

by William F. James



When our son visited the Confederate Air Force in Missouri and found a plane there with the Air Apache painted on the tail, he asked some questions about it and ended up talking to the wing leader there, a Col. Chet Davis. They called me on the phone and we talked for a while. I am not a member of the CAF, but since then I have been over to visit the unit a couple of times. I found they had a small museum dedicated to the 345th. I donated a copy of the original "Warpath" book for it, along with a B-25 flight jacket with the Indian Head painted on the back and the 499th Bats Outta Hell emblem on the front.

As a result of my visits to the CAF I contacted our local newspaper, The Belleville, Illinois *News-Democrat*, and suggested this might make a good feature article. They wrote one, with pictures, that covered more

than a page and featured extensive comments from Chet Davis. This picture of my wife and me was featured in the CAF July, 1997 newsletter, identifying me as a member of the 345th.

Editor's note: William James served as a navigator on B-17s after the war and retired as a Major in 1960.

IN MEMORY OF

George Augusta	✓	501	4/19/98	Detroit, MI
David Chadrow	✓	498	2/97	Philadelphia, PA
Margaret Dugan (wife of Frank)		499	9/5/98	McConnelsville, OH
Eva Lahood (wife of George)		501	9/25/98	
Joseph Liparela	✓	501	4/10/98	Wilkes Barre, PA
Charles Mardis	✓	501	8/97	

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

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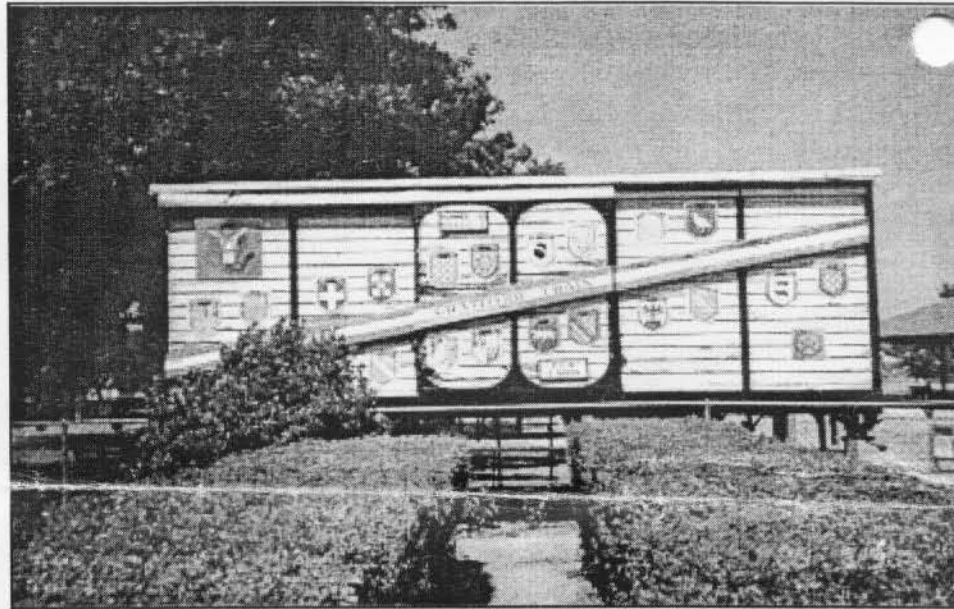
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908/886-0529

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR BOXCAR IS?

by Ken Gastgeb

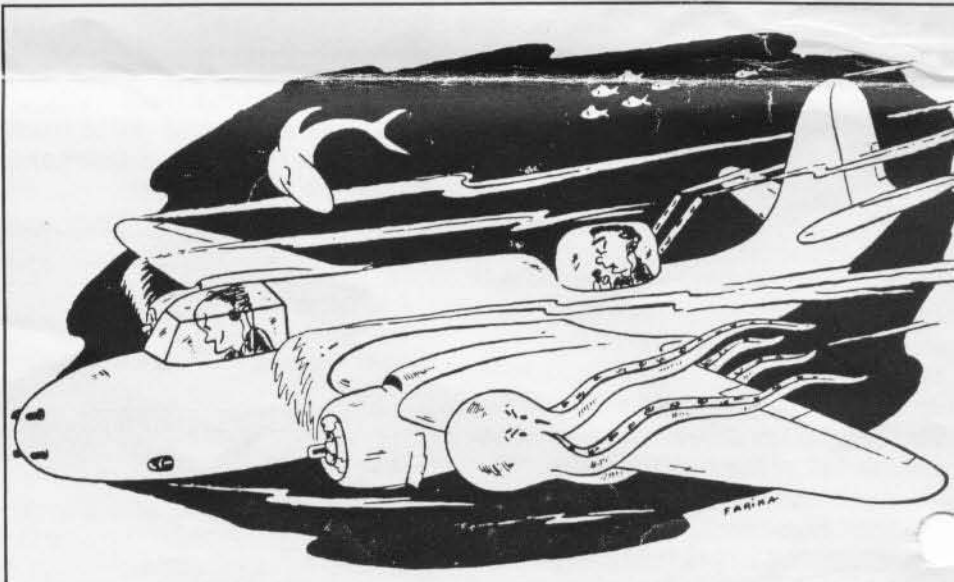
The boxcar for your state is one of 49 that were delivered to the United States in 1949. One for each state and one to be divided by Washington, D. C. and Hawaii. The Oklahoma Boxcar stands on a short strip of rails at the J. D. McCarty Center, for Children with Developmental Disabilities, here in Norman. A quote from a New York paper, February 1949: "FRENCH GIFT TRAIN RECEIVES WARM WELCOME ON ARRIVAL. The French freighter Magellan transformed from a lowly ore carrier to the envy of her country's merchant marine, brought the French Gratitude Train to New York yesterday amid a welcome coming din surpassing that accorded the maiden arrival here of an ocean passenger queen. A flotilla of small boats descended on the gayly beflagged Magellan at her anchorage off Quarantine in the wintry, early morning sunlight and made the Narrows resound with blasting sirens and whistles. Their arrival was the signal for an aerial salute by groups of bombers and jet fighters from the First Air Force which roared over the freighter and her gift-filled cargo of '40 and 8' box cars, destined for the forty-eight states and the District of Columbia." The boxcar is also called "The Forty and Eight Merci Boxcar". The Forty and Eight term came from the troops in World War I. The boxcars were used to transport either 40 troops or eight horses during the war. World War II soldiers also used those boxcars for transportation across France. The boxcars were manufactured between 1875 and 1886 and were quite old during World War I. The goodies in the box cars were gifts from tens of thousands of French citizens, gifts as dolls, wine, cheese, baskets, pins, and many giving their personal prize possessions, to thank "The Americans for their help" during World War I, World War II and immediately after World War II. Upon the arrival of the Boxcars in New York, New York's Mayor O'Dwyer led a big ceremony, with Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt and other dignitary in attendance. He welcomed and thanked the French Train Committee, that had arrived a few days earlier. Railroad lines volunteered to deliver the Boxcars to their destinations. The Train Committee traveled all around the United States attending the special ceremonies in many of the State Capitols. The fates of the Boxcars around the country were many. Some just faded away with deterioration of the wood and all that remains is a rusty frame. Others deteriorated some and were restored and some were well cared for in Museums and other areas. A few states still have their Boxcar in a museum with



The Oklahoma boxcar that was part of the 49-car "Forty and Eight" train, given to the U.S. by France after World War II as a sign of gratitude. Photo by Ken Gastgeb

the original contents. Of the 49 Boxcars, it is reported that 42 have survived over the years. An organization was formed called the "Forty and Eight". It originated after World War I with a purpose of helping the returning sick and injured soldiers. Also helping wives, widows and children that were suffering. The Forty and Eight provided medical help, such as buying diphtheria serum and shipping it to wherever it was needed. They followed through on that program until the dreaded disease was knocked

for a loop. They purchased playing cards for the soldiers of WWII and Vietnam. They raised funds to pay tuition for Nurses Training, which was badly needed. They are assisting in the Cerebral Palsy program in Oklahoma and Kansas. An organization knows the needs of their fellow man and are doing something about it. Their efforts over the years are greatly appreciated and a great big THANK YOU from us all. Writer Note: This is a condensed version of a great undertaking.



"BEG YOUR PARDON SIR, BUT AREN'T WE OVER DOING IT A BIT?"

From "Altitude minimum : 89th Bombardment Squadron (Light), Southwest Pacific." by William Houha and Conrad Stuntz, 1945. The 89th was part of the 3rd Bomb Group, which flew B-25s, A-24s, as well as (later) A-20s and A-26s out of New Guinea