

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON 499th SQUADRON 500th SQUADRON 501st SQUADRON

345th Bomb Group Association

Quarterly

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345th Web site turns one year old.

by Paul Van Valkenburg

The 345th's web site has been on line for almost one year now. Over that time I have received a good deal of e-mail from people who have visited the site and wanted ask questions about the 345th, or just comment on the site itself. Visitors have logged on to the site from all over the United States as well as from Countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, and Japan. These are just the ones that I am aware of, I'm sure there are others as well. I've included some of them and you can read them on the bulletin board on page three. Quite a few are from among the ranks of you, the actual 345th Bomb Group members. Others are from family of 345th members, other persons interested in WWII history, and one from a crew member of the S.S. Thomas Nelson. I was particularly pleased to hear from a former member of the 499th squadron, John O'Meara. John was not aware the 345th had a reunion association until he saw our web site. I was very happy to put John in touch with Ken Gastgeb and get him back on the roster.

I was able to answer most of the questions myself. Others I directed to Ken or other members with e-mail. I look forward to

adding more to the website as time permits. I would like to encourage everyone to check it out. If you don't have a computer with Internet access, stop by your local library.

They will be happy to help you find your way. The address is: <http://snycorva.cortland.edu/~vanvalkp/index.htm>



President's Comments

Ken Gastgeb
President

Here it is summer time again. How fast the time whizzes by. Many things are going on with the

345th Reunion Association. The site for the next Reunion is very nearly nailed down. We are working on a plan to have a reunion every year starting in the year 2000. We hope to have sites picked out for the next three reunions by the end of this year. Any suggestions please let George Mordecai know. A big thanks to Frank Dillard and his staff for all the hard work they have done and will continue to do in the publishing of the *Strafer*. Frank Dillard will start publishing the *Strafer* with the September issue. All articles and news items for the *Strafer* please send to Frank. His address is listed elsewhere in the *Strafer*.

Thanks to Paul Van Valkenburg's WEB

page, some contacts have been made. Miles O'Meara, son of John O'Meara 499th, has contacted us. I sent John a copy of the *Strafer*.

Talked with Robert MacIntyre, HQ Communications, in March. His spirit is high and he is bedridden following many years of suffering from arthritis and surgery. Received several inquiries about the Medals and Ribbons. If you don't have the December issue of the *Strafer* with the instructions, here they are. Your request must have your full name, social security number, branch of service and dates of service. Mail to: National Personnel Records Center, ATTN: NRPMF, 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

A picture of the Apache Sign appeared in the December issue of the *Strafer*. Reinhold Salzman has the sign that appeared in front of the Hotels at past Reunions. We appreciate and thank him for transporting the sign to various locations and having

(Continued on page 4)

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

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

If you're like me, you've been wondering what a Y2K bug looks like. I just hope it doesn't eat the Social Security records. It shocks me to think how dependent on "gadgets" we have become. Now our Air Force even has "smart" bombs. In the 1940s we were lucky to have had a smart bombardier! How about GPS? Wouldn't you ex-radio operators and ex-navigators have loved to have had one of those?

I have enjoyed surfing the Internet since I got connected back in January. The 345th Bomb Group has a web site. If you would like to see for yourself, just enter: snycorva.cortland.edu/~vanvalkp/index.htm on your computer (or one at the library), and I think you will be pleased. There is a great deal of information available on the net. If you like bird watching, gardening, aviation art, or a million other topics, you can find something on the subject. My e-mail address is: Strafer@midamer.net. I would like to "see" from any of you that are on-line.

I enjoyed the brief article in the March '99 issue of the *Strafer* about the U.S. Navy rescue of Pete Prunty (501st) and his crew. Back in the March '98 *Strafer* I mentioned the rescue of Morris Perkins and two other members of his crew (499th) by the submarine USS Chub on May 31, 1945. I noted that this was my last mission (Morris' first) and asked to hear from any of you who were also on that mission. Well, it took a while, but John Palansky called me and it turns out that he was the radio operator on my crew that day! I am continuing to compile data and have the log of the USS Chub for that event. I would like to hear from any who remember the mission. Soon I will file a report with as much information as I can get. It looks like we owe the U.S. Navy a huge debt of gratitude for their part in the air-sea rescue of downed 345th fliers! I regret I didn't get to meet Pete's navy guest, Mr. Norm Lomax, at the San Antonio reunion last fall.

When you write a quarterly column (for the *Strafer*) you are often caught between dates. Either the time has already passed, or it is so far in the future, you lose sight of the event altogether. To avoid this I try to keep notes, but then when report time comes, I can't find the notes! To the best of my memory some of the most important things I had on the list were: file income



taxes (April 15), Roland and Dorothy Lamb's wedding anniversary (June), anniversary of Hiroshima (August 8, 1945) and Ray LeTourneau's birthday (August). Wonder what I did with that list?

499th Squadron

Ben F Miller

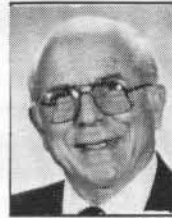
Asst. Gp. V.P. - 499th Sqd.

Remember when?

At Port Moresby we had several natives doing odd jobs for us. They had been educated by French missionaries and spoke to us in pigeon English. One day, Henry, wanted to go to the area beyond the strip we were using, to see his family, so Major Baird agreed to take him. Being concerned about his passengers, he always checked the chute harness. He instructed Henry to jump, then pull the red handle if the plane got into trouble. When the plane buzzed the strip, Henry pulled the ripcord, filling the back of the plane with white nylon. No one checked his shorts.

Shortly after arriving in New Guinea, they found spurs and lineman's gear for me. One evening an officer came to our area, called the squadron together, and spoke about reptiles in the area. Engineers had disposed of most of the crocks in the rivers, but there were centipedes in our blankets, scorpions in our shoes in the morning. Pythons, coral snakes, and one kind of viper that was the worst. If bitten by this reptile, you had about ten minutes to make your peace with GOD. The very next day, while stringing a phone line in the jungle, connecting all the planes in a circle, my foot got caught in the brush. Kicking did not dislodge it. Upon looking down, there was one of the vipers described to us the previous evening coiled under my foot, ready to strike. There I was, standing on one leg, with a taut phone line over my shoulder and no pistol. A new flight crew at the nearest plane came crashing through the jungle with drawn pistols. This scared the snake, so it slithered off in fright. Seeing these rookies with drawn pistols, scared me as much as the snake. That same night I secured a pistol.

At Port Moresby, in the officers side of the mess hall, there hung a brass bugle, and it made the most unearthly noises in what seemed the middle of the night. One morning it was quiet, to everyone's relief, and the bugle was flat, on the concrete floor. A new bugle was secured from quartermaster, but it vanished entirely, never to be heard again. After this, whistles were used to rouse us. Since we were in the Air Force, it surely



must have been GREMLINS.

499th Squadron Mini-reunion will be held at Bearcreek Farms, Bryant, IN, Sept. 22-24. Their phone number for reservations is 219/997-6822 or 800/288-7630.

500th Squadron

Stan Muniz

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

I am beginning to get excited looking forward to our next 500th reunion in Denver, Colorado, September 9-12. This is the 500th's TENTH! biannual reunion, and being the last in this century we want it to be the biggest and best ever. Consider this a maximum effort mission (remember them?) and every one in the 500th is requested to make every effort possible to attend.

The 500th has always been on the cutting edge, pushing the envelop - a real gung-ho outfit. Let's show that we still have that spirit and just flood that hotel with Rough Raiders. By now you 500th members should have the newsletter with the information about the great things in store for our reunion. The people that put this together worked hard and long for us. We can thank them for their efforts by coming to Denver in September.



501st Squadron

Chet Burns

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

The winter in Florida was one of the best on record. I'm sorry I can't say that about other areas in the country who had severe conditions and were not as fortunate. Now I'm back up north.

Update on the San Diego Reunion: the date is September 1-4 at U.S. Grant Hotel. The itinerary is being worked on and more info should be coming out soon through a flier questionnaire. Mary and Jack Gronewald are busy working hard to make this a great squadron reunion. Let us all put our best effort into it together, try and contact old buddies to attend. This will probably be the last squadron reunion. We want to make it a happy, memorable good time.

I have been investigating Savannah and Charleston very extensively, and will be meeting George Mordecai and Lynn Lee at Savanna about April 21st to evaluate both. They are historic and interesting cities with lots to see and do. I am sure George will



have a final report soon.

Received some correspondence from Harold Kimsey - refer to a Navy B-25 that crashed in Badin Lake, 50 miles north of Charlotte, NC, June 8, 1944. There are many haunting questions about the aircraft and the two-man crew. After 55 years with public donations and navy's help they are attempting to raise the aircraft and solve some of the mysteries of this incident which has become part of folklore in the community. Harold also informed me that Merlin Abbey passed on. We extend our condolences to his wife and family.

Again, I would appreciate some more letters, ideas refer to the squadron reunions, which will be here very soon. Let's make it a super one.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Gp. V.P. - HQ Group

In regards to the "Box Car" referred to by our president in a past *Strafer*, I have found the New Hampshire car. I took a picture of it, but I'm sure it won't come out. The car is in a garage type of structure with a glass front that reflects the sky, sun, clouds, trees, or landscape. Now I'm in process of looking for a post card or even an original newspaper picture. No luck so far, but one never knows. Never say never, I've heard very often. I'll keep you posted, should I find it, after all this is maybe one of the "eight" wonders of the world.

I want to give notice to all members of headquarters squadron that I'm going to include my newsletter into the *Strafer*, as of the September issue. This will eliminate the duplication of news and will give all our buddies the chance to catch all that we talk about. Personally, I have no objection to change, it will take patience and will, to make it work.

At this time I want to say thanks and a job well done for Ken McClure and to Mark Nordstrom. I personally enjoyed working with them.

Haven't heard too much about next year's reunion, but I'm sure this will come soon. We have a good man in up state New York. He may have ideas for us to visit there, for a change of scenery.

I'm planning to work on a squadron newsletter after this and hope that my absence of letters hasn't disturbed too many of you. Thanks for your patience and I want to say thanks to God for keeping an eye on us during our illnesses. Keep the faith and all is well.



Group Bulletin

Reunion XIII

September, 2000

1999 Dues Payable

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

E-mail

Editor's note: Received by Paul Van Valkenburg through the 345th Internet home page.

Hi Paul, We don't know each other, but I thought I would write to let you know that my father was one of you, and how he loved his old flying group! He spoke often about his adventures and how important all of you all were to him! His name was Walter C. Kurowski Sr. Lt. Col. ret. Of all the planes he piloted the B-25 was his favorite. He passed away last year. I found your web site and thought I'd at least let you know! I don't know if you have or kept a roster, but thought you should know! Thank you for your service and this site! Sincerely, Walter C Kurowski Jr.

I was surfing around the other day and found the home page for your old outfit. It caught my interest immediately. I was a one of the crew on SS Thomas Nelson and was there on the ugly day off Dulag when the Kamikazes hit our ship and the SS Morrison R. Waite. I don't remember which squadron or squadrons of the 345th had people aboard the Nelson, but I do remember that one of them was an enlisted man named Coloff who was the older brother of three of my high school friends in Longmont, Colorado. I also have vivid memories of the chaos of that day.

I've thought often about you guys over the years and I'm glad to have found your web page.

Kent Sanborn

Correction Correction Correction

Last issue, Ben Miller's column incorrectly identified Gordon Hansen as having "passed on this past year." It should have read, "Gordon Hansen, a linechief was there and is still living. Curtis Cloud, a crewchief was also there, but has passed on this past year." Editor's error, not Ben's.

IN MEMORY OF

Claire Dinges (wife of John)	500	11/29/98	Homewood, IL
J.A. (Al) Gatreau	500	3/7/99	South Easton, MA
Elsie Hiner (wife of Jim)	500	12/7/98	Southgate, MI
John W. Knerr	499	1/25/99	Hutchinson, MO
Helen McDaniel (wife of Herbert)	500	11/20/98	Bloomfield, NM
Frederick W. Meisner	501	3/25/99	Newark Valley, NY
Ann Pavkovich (wife of Mickey)	500	11/21/98	Steubenville, OH
Frank Pohlman	500	11/26/98	Punta Gorda, FL
Gladys Purser (wife of Edwin)	498	8/15/98	Silver Creek, WA
William H. Wallace	500	3/25/98	Montrose, PA

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New Strafer future starts next issue

by Frank Dillard

Beginning with the September 1999 issue, the *Strafer* will be edited by Frank Dillard (498th) and published in Illinois.

This change resulted from a resolution passed at the regular business meeting during the group reunion in San Antonio, Texas last September.

A committee appointed by Association President Ken Gastgeb and comprised of the Assistant Group Vice Presidents, unanimously agreed to the following:

1. The Association would appoint Frank Dillard to serve as Editor of the *Strafer*, beginning with the September 1999 issue.
2. The association would terminate the use of the services of Mark Nordstrom, after the June 1999 issue of the *Strafer*.
3. The new Editor will serve for as long as the 345th Bomb Group Association deems appropriate, or the Editor elects to continue in office.
4. The new Editor will serve without compensation, other than reimbursement of direct costs incurred in publication and distribution of the *Strafer*.
5. The new Editor will obtain prior approval for purchase and expenses relative to the publication of the *Strafer* from the Association President, or his designated agent. Receipts, for such approved purchases and/or expenses, will be periodically routed to the Association Treasurer from the Association President for payment.
6. The new Editor will not enter into any contractual agreements with any party, that would be legally binding on the Association.
7. The new Editor will maintain the established quarterly publishing schedule, with deliveries to all recipients in March, June, September, and December.
8. The new Editor will distribute copies of the *Strafer* in accordance with the most current mailing list provided by the association Treasurer.
9. Should the Association elect to terminate the services of the Editor, or the Editor wish to discontinue in office, the Editor agrees to serve in that capacity until such time as a new Editor is appointed by the Association.

These changes in publishing procedures may result in a significant reduction of cost to the Association. Mark Nordstrom will no longer be paid a set monthly fee, plus postage, for each quarterly publication. The projected cost of producing and distributing the September 1999 issue of the *Strafer* is

estimated to be approximately one-third less than the cost of previous editions. This potential reduction in publishing costs presents the possibility of reducing membership dues. This has been under discussion by several of the Association Officers. If deemed appropriate, such a change would be presented to the membership for approval at the next Group reunion in the fall of 2000.

The entire *Strafer* evaluation Committee wishes to express our gratitude to Ken McClure for his leadership in developing the *Strafer* to the high standard we have enjoyed these many years. We appreciate all that he and Mark Nordstrom have done in the past.

Your next issue of the *Strafer* will have a new look. Changes in type size, format, logos and the addition of some new features are now in the final planning stage.

Among the changes is a "Sound Off" column, where members can cite views, and express opinions in letters to the Editor. We also will include a section entitled, "Rogues Gallery," with photos from "Then" and "Now," so send in your snapshots.

Gus Ouelette (HQ) has laughingly agreed to prepare a humor section, featuring jokes and stories with a military flavor. He would appreciate any and all contributions.

Naturally, we will continue to regularly present "Fact and Fiction" tales from the past and present.

You artists are invited to submit paintings, cartoons, and other graphics for inclusion. Just be sure we aren't violating any copyright laws.

The Association is very concerned with the reduction in membership that has occurred in the past two years. Efforts are underway to contact past members and encourage them to return to our ranks.

The continued success of the *Strafer* depends on more than one person. Your new

Editor most certainly understands that. He also appreciates the magnitude of the before him. Let us resolve to uphold the standard of excellence set by his predecessors. With the help and guidance of our membership this will be accomplished.

Ken McClure

by Ken Gastgeb

Back in the early 80s Ken McClure saw a need for a newsletter for the men of the 345th Bomb Group. Ken started printing the newsletter and named it, *The Strafer*.

He printed it in his home for several years before getting a Publisher. Ken has been the Editor ever since copy number one was printed. He has done an excellent job over the years and has shown much dedication to the Group. In addition to being the Editor of the *Strafer* he was the Treasurer of the Group from 1982 to 1996. He also spent much time working with others in organizing the Reunion Association. Ken, you have put in many years of hard work for the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association. We all appreciate and thank you very much for your dedication and faithful service.

President's Comments

(continued from page 1)

space to keep it. Now we need to know what to do with the sign, if we want to continue to use it for future reunions or to give it away. We can donate it to a Museum or other Organization, or whatever. We will discuss this item at our next meeting. Suggestions are welcome. Have a nice safe summer and always.

CAF to honor Blount

Capt. Ralph E. "Peppy" Blount, USAAF, will be inducted into the Confederate Air Force's American Combat Airman Hall of Fame Friday, Oct. 1, 1999, at CAF Headquarters in Midland, Texas.

Biographical information regarding each inductee will be displayed, initially, at the American Airpower Heritage Museum at CAF headquarters in Midland, Texas, and, ultimately, in a place of honor in the L.P. Nolen Member Center at CAF Headquarters upon its completion.

Capt. R.E. "Peppy" Blount of Longview, Texas was the pilot and aircraft commander of a B-25 combat flying crew in the Pacific Theater of World War II with the 345th Bomber Group "Air Apaches" of the 5th Force. He flew 31 minimum altitude missions against the Japanese. Capt. Blount was awarded 15 military decorations, including the DFC Air Medal, the Pacific Theater Ribbon and the Presidential Unit Citation.