

STRAFER



498th SQUADRON

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501st SQUADRON

345th Bomb Group Association

Quarterly

Volume 17, Issue 1, March 1999

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Reunion 2000 Committee Report

by George Mordecai Reunion Chairman

The details for the 2000 Reunion are still in the formative stages. As was suggested at the Reunion in San Antonio the committee looked at the Atlantic City Hotel and found that it did not meet our standards. There were many things that would not suit a group such as ours. The only good thing was the hospitality room was large enough for us to enjoy ourselves. After searching and with a report from Gastgeb about the distribution of where our members reside we concentrated our search on the East Coast. This what an area that had substantial support while in San Antonio. Forty-eight percent of our members reside in the eastern part of the country. The sites the committee is investigating are Savannah, GA, Charleston, SC and Hampton, VA. We hope to have complete information about where we will be going by the next Strafer. In

the meantime, if you have an idea that you think should be investigated please call and let us know. The committee is made up of the Squadron VPs and myself. Remember that it was voted that after this Reunion the group would have a reunion each year. It is not too early for getting info on where we want to go. It would be nice to come to the reunion and have concrete plans to vote on for one or more sites. As Tom Brokaw said in his latest book, veterans are dying at the rate of 1,000 per day. This means that we should all attempt to make all reunions from now on. We lost a great friend in George Musket on January 15, 1999. Don Hardeman was not doing well as this report was begun and he died as the Strafer was being put together for publication. He was a fine man and will be missed by us all. Our condolences to his family.



President's Comments *Ken Gastgeb* *President*

This Strafer a Special Reunion issue. I want to thank everyone who sent in pictures and articles. I received an answer from the ad in the last issue about C. J. Allen. Thanks to General Fridge and Ken McClure

for providing the information to Helen Nazzaro. She passed the information along to Col. True's son, Tom.

The Reunion Committee Chairman, George Mordecai, reports that the site for the next reunion has not been selected as yet. The Chairman of the Strafer Improvement Committee, Mr. Frank Dillard, will have a complete report in the June issue.

Thanks to Dick and Pat Feucht for all their work in sending out the Reunion Refund Checks.

The project of placing a picture of Tondelayo in Veteran Centers has gotten off to a good start. The Reunion Association is not financially backing this project. It is up to individuals to purchase a picture and donate it to the Vet Center in your hometown. Anyone wishing to donate a picture please contact Ben Muller. He will have a report later with more information on this project.

(continued on page 3)

Squadron Reports

498th Squadron

Frank Dillard

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

Let me be the LAST to wish you all a HAPPY NEW YEAR. Where did 1998 go? Why not start 1999 off right by paying your dues, and get that out of the way?

This is the time to reflect on the recent past and prepare for the year ahead. Have you had any major changes in your life-style? Moved, married, had a hole-in-one, or know any good gossip? Why not share it with those of us suffering from "cabin Fever"? Phone calls, photos, notes or short stories are always welcome as subject matter for our newsletter. Incidentally, I recently moved into the electronic age, and "went on-line". My e-mail address is: strafer@midamer.net. If you are "connected," please let me hear from you.

Don Seguin dropped me a note expressing regret at not being able to attend our San Antonio reunion but promised to attend the next one. I am sure he would enjoy hearing from you. You may reach him at: 11940 Lake Lane, Lot 12, Lindstrom, MN 55045, phone (612) 257-6846.

I have a happy event to report—I received a phone call back in December from Edmund B. Nasif, 109 S. St. Andrews Place, Los Angeles, CA 90004. It seems that Ed was our Group Photographer, attached to 345th Headquarters. He had been "lost" these many years, but is now back in the fold! Ed was not aware we had been having reunions, but promised to try and make the next one. Ed took all of those "propaganda" shots, and processed the aerial camera films after sorties. I plan to "pump" him for a story for a future issue of the STRAFER. Of course, Gus Ouellette (Ass't. V.P. Group Headquarters) might try to claim him—but I saw him first!

I didn't realize that our previous Group President(s) was THAT big a hero until I saw an ad for prints of a Robert Taylor painting entitled, "Air Apaches On The Warpath" in a recent issue of Military Gallery Magazine. These prints were signed by Julian Baird, Keith Dougherty, Lynn Lee, and Vic Tatelman. Sorry to report that I called to purchase one, and the prints were sold out. I couldn't afford an artist's proof at \$500! I do have a copy of the Michael Hagel painting "Surrender Flight", that is signed by Robert Cornwell, John Palansky, and the former 498th V.P., Merl Wooden (deceased). If you are looking for a real bargain in WWII aviation art you should contact Ben Muller (501st). He has copies of the Jack Fellows painting of "Tondelayo." You might recall that Ben had this picture on display at our San Antonio Reunion



Hospitality Room. I was just barely able to see it through the Valentine brother's cigar smoke screen (thanks for the nice Christmas card, Joe). Ben is actively attempting to place copies of this great painting in all the VA hospitals. He dedicated one at the Houston, Texas V.A. Hospital on December 7, 1998. We should support this worthy cause. This exhibit will be a source of enjoyment to all hospital patients, and perpetuate the memory of our Group's contribution to history. If anyone has enough clout to secure corporate funding to further this project please contact Ben or me.

499th Squadron

Ben F Miller

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

This year of 1999 is off to an unusual start. Last year we had very little snow, but we are making up for it. If a neighbor with a large tractor with a snowblower didn't keep his eye on the neighborhood, we would have been socked in for several weeks. Thanks to daughter Jan, who gave me a copy of Tom Brokaw's book, "The greatest Generation," snowed in didn't seem so bad. "The Forgotten Fifth," by Michael John Clairgould is also hard to put down. It had many accounts of the 345th adventures, including Ken McClure's ditching of THE GODDESS without loss of life.

The 499th has the honor of having several members who were involved in the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo shortly after the start of the war. The raid was probably more psychological than anything. It gave the Japanese the message they could be reached. Jim Mortland has informed me Gordon Hansen, a line chief was there and has passed on this past year. We also lost Waldo J. Dusterhoff, a very skilled mechanic from Montana, but he was not on the raid. Let us remember their families and friends in our prayers.

Shortly after arriving in New Guinea, someone in authority in the 499th sqdn. came up with the idea that we were not getting enough exercise. We were instructed to assemble in the area while it was still dark. It started with roll call, followed by a series of exercises, which none of the enlisted men needed. This was followed by jogging up and down the mountain behind camp. The first morning roll call was answered, followed by much bitching and no enthusiasm. The second day roll call was answered, but people seemed to vanish into the darkness. The third day, we had every name on the roster accounted for, in spite of the sparse crowd. We were scheduled to go on a mission, but because all the people on the line were pulled into camp,



most of the planes were redlined. This means they were unfit to fly until work and inspections were completed. Bomber command exploded and made it very plain that missions were always of the highest priority, even over someone's stateside fantasies.

500th Squadron

Stan Muniz

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

Well, the holidays have come and gone and I think I am almost fully recovered and back to normal, whatever that is.

Getting down to a little business, I guess the job of finding a location for the next reunion is moving along. For what it's worth, I have heard from four members of the 500th squadron who said if the reunion in on the east coast, they will definitely attend. So it looks like that's a couple of votes for the east coast.

On a purely personal note, as some of you know I do oil paintings of missions flown by our group. I use strike photos for the background then after researching the mission reports and information in "Warpath Across The Pacific" I add the correct model B-25 including markings and serial number. I need more strike photos of our planes for details. Each plane has its own personality. Photo copies are fine if they are done on a color copier. Black and white photos turn out much better on a color copier.

I will gladly reimburse any costs and return any photos if requested. So, if you have any photos you no longer have a need for, please pass them on to me. I promise I will put them to good use. Thanks

501st Squadron

Chet Burns

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

Tempus Fugit - Time Flies! Almost six months have gone by since our reunion at San Antonio. The holidays also have come and gone. Hope everyone had a happy and healthy one.

Received some letters about a couple buddies who are not doing too well, J.H. Schillaci and Carl Watts. We all wish them the best. Also, some sad news, the passing on of George Musket. Our condolences to his wife and family.

On the brighter side, it was good to see some of the second generation coming to the reunion. Paul Bocker, Kevin Hansen and wife, Janis, Mark Foreman, Dom Concelmo and new wife, Bobbye. I'm sure there were others unfortunately I didn't meet them. We need them to bolster our reunions.



I live in Florida for six months, so when I drive down I always overnight in Walterboro, SC. Some of you may not know this place. This was our final staging area before going overseas. Like everything else in time, it has completely changed. A small airport still functions, the base is a motel mecca. Restaurants and fireworks supplies galore.

Update on the '99 squadron reunion in San Diego. I talked with Jack and Mary Gronewald, who are working hard on this. A hotel in the downtown area, walking distance to shops and restaurants and many things to see and do. We still have not resolved the Y2K location. I am working on Savannah, GA and Charleston, SC.

Would appreciate any notes, ideas, info for the next Strafer. Thanx.

Headquarters Group

August Ouellette

Asst. Gp. V.P. - HQ Group

Here it is, a new year and first thing first... may this year bring the best to all.

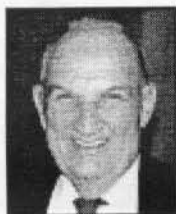
With me, I can say that this year can't be much worse than last year, especially the tail end of it, since November we've had all kinds of medical problems. I started it with a colonoscopy (thank God it turned out O.K.) the wife had a mammogram, two biopsies and finally lost the left breast, three days before Christmas. So far she's doing well. We've been seeing the oncologist. I passed a "stress test" to see if my heart will stand pulmonary rehab. Thank God again, I passed. In the meantime I'm doctor, nurse, cook, dishwasher, laundry man, etc., etc.

I had promised a squadron newsletter this month, but have to hold that on the back burner for now. To me the group Strafer always takes priority.

I've seen some changes in the Strafer, the first issue since the reunion. The article by President Ken Gastgeb on boxcars caught my attention. So much so that I got a lead on the New Hampshire car location already. Haven't had time to check on it, with my problems and the weather. Rest assured it isn't a dead issue with me. I'll report to Mr. President and all, even to take pictures.

I participated in a conference call with all officers of the Air Apaches. New Jersey is out of the question for a reunion in 2000 (the millennium). I know that some progress is being made in other directions, which will be announced in due time. George Mordecai is a very good "right hand man" for Ken and with these two we can't

My last squadron newsletter to Mrs. Crabb was returned, "time expired" on forwarding. I found one of her sons' address in New Jersey and received a nice letter telling me she is with her sister now, with address and all. At this moment I can't find the letter, but I'm sure I'll find



Group Bulletin Board

Reunion XIII

September 2000

Location to be announced

I WANT YOU



I need a general blue-print of the solid nose applied to the J model B-25 in the SWP campaign. Is there a WEB site, book or archives somewhere in which I can find this item? I am interested in many different kinds of information, especially about the 499th. Many thanks for any responses. Paul Aguilar 2031 Blackberry Circle, Oxnard, Ca 93030 (microwave@zzzz4.net)

1999 Dues Payable

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

it when looking for something else (always the way, huh).

This will just about do it for me, for now. My best to each one of you and yours. I'll try to get off a Squadron newsletter shortly or as soon as possible.

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

Checking over our roster of a little over 650 names, it was learned that we have every state

Colonel George Musket

George Musket, 501, spent a career in the Air Force after his years with the 345th. He died January 15 at the age of 82 in San Antonio, Texas. Flying with the 345th he earned the Silver Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters. Later he was a pilot in the Berlin airlift in 1948. He also participated in establishing the U.S. Air Force Academy during the years from 1953-1958 and he commanded the Air Force Recruiting School at

I displayed a beautiful, enlarged photo of Tondelayo on the mission over Rabaul at the September Reunion. The painting is by Jack Fellows, of Seattle, past president of U.S. War Artists. I have permission to enlarge and reproduce it. My cost is \$23, plus mailing tube, postage and insurance for a total of \$28. Size is 21" by 26" for a 24" by 30" frame. I have sold 35 and have five on hand. They are available as long as they last. Lynn Dakar, President 500th Sqd.

VICTORY WAITS ON YOUR FINGERS—



in the United States represented in our Association. Keeping a roster of that size up to date is a big job. Please let Dick Feucht know; (1) your new address if you move, (2) a member or widow that is not getting the Strafer and wants a copy, (3) a member or spouse who has passed away, or (4) anything that changes the status of our members.

Let's make this spring, summer, and the rest of our lives, a safe and happy time. Drive Safely and Take Care.

Lackland Air Force Base from 1963-1965. He retired as a Colonel in 1965 after 28 years of duty and opened a Real Estate business in San Antonio. He retired from that business in 1978. He enjoyed fishing, golf and the company of his family until his death in January. He was buried with full military honors at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Some of the people of Reunion XII

The San Antonio reunion brought people together who first became acquainted over 50 years ago. Some became acquainted for the first time, while they shared memories of those days from over half a century ago. The pictures

spread across the next several pages take a look back at some of the people and events that were part of the fellowship and fun that recalled those not-so-old days. A time when just getting to the South Pacific was a bigger job than

anything a person can do on this planet today. We didn't realize what a monumental task we were doing, each of us just did his job and the task was accomplished. Looking back now we might wonder sometimes how we did it. That's part of what we share when we get together. These pictures are a look at that gathering.



Jerry Murphy, Vic Tatelman



Vice President George Mordecai and wife Evelyn



General Fridge and wife Takako



A happy group of Air Apaches gather around their Princess



All loaded up for a great tour.



Working crew lounging in the lobby after putting together the goodie bags

Joan Leslie says, thanks

(letter sent to Ken Gastgeb)

Many thanks for all you did to make my stay in San Antonio so pleasant. My warm thanks also to Lynn and Melba, George and Evelyn, Bobba and of course, Gus, for shepherding me about and being such good company. Also Julian, Don and Morris my fellow "Sing-a-Longers," they were terrific. Thanks to Paul McIntyre for the stunning silver medallion, a precious keepsake to me. Everyone was marvelous to me and I'll never forget a moment.

As I look back over the entire event I can't help thinking that it did not seem like a 50th year reunion of Veterans — instead I saw a group of animated, witty confident men, friendly and congenial, — much like the boys I met at the Canteens in the 40s. I felt and enjoyed the total mood of camaraderie. It was beautiful.

Thanks for inviting me.

Signed Joan Leslie Caldwell

Your Apache Princess.



Skillful Volunteers working hard to put goodie Bags together.

Sag Harbor Express

by Ken Gastgeb

January 7, 1945 the SAGHARBOREXPRESS, on a mission over Clark Field in the Philippines, was hit by enemy A/A fire. The pilot, 2nd Lt Arthur Browngard, Jr. tried desperately to gain altitude and keep the plane under control. The plane ran into a Church Steeple, a short distance from Clark Field, and crashed. All aboard were killed.

Danon D. Dizon, a member of that church, sent me an E-mail last year. He told me about the crash site and that they had placed a Marker in the Church as a memorial to the crew. Every January 7 they have a Special Mass for the crew of that plane.

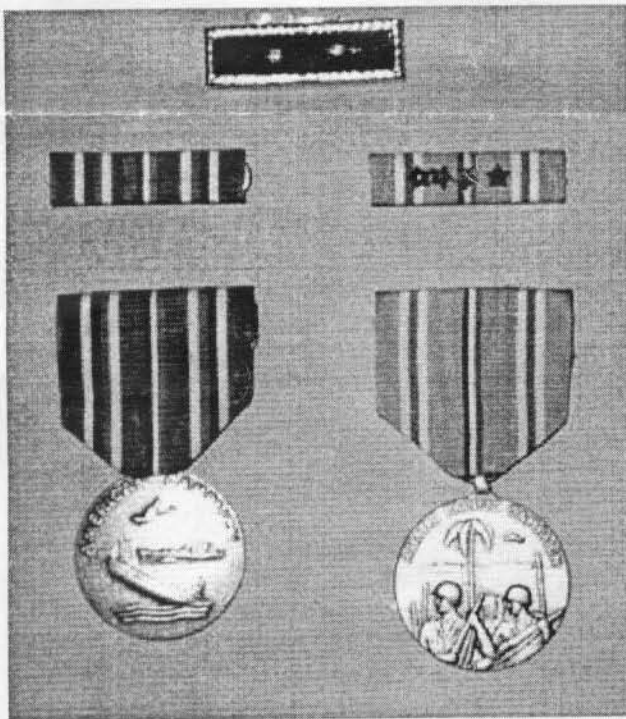
I asked him to please send me a picture of him and the Marker. I received the following E-mail last August, but have not received the picture:

Thank you very much for your reply. We will send you a photo of the marker and us. The marker was erected in 1998 by Daniel Sr. (my dad), Ged (eldest brother), Ivan (brother) and me Daniel Jr. (Danon). Fortunately, we still possess some parts of Sag Harbor Express which were taken from the plane by my dad in Jan. '45. These parts namely: A toggle switch maybe located on the instrument panel. And a backing plate of an electric motor. Another switch was given by my brother to Richard Browngard, a surviving brother of Arthur Browngard (pilot of Sag Harbor Express) who visited us about five years ago. I also enjoyed reading the Book, Warpath Across the Pacific, by Larry Hickey. Here, I learned so much about your bravery and determination of pilots who survived and those who did not return. If the liberation of the Philippines was delayed further, then we would not be here as my dad was timely saved from chronic dysentery by the liberating American forces.

Thank you for Liberating the Philippines just in time and for preserving worldwide peace! God Bless.

Sincerely yours, Danon D. Dizon

I sent him an E-mail in January saying that I had not yet received the picture. When I receive the picture it will be in the next issue of the Strafer.



Get Your Medals

by Ken Gastgeb

Two of the medals and three of the ribbons I received from the U. S. Government Record Center. The top ribbon is the Presidential Unit Citation with two Oak Leaves. The ribbon and medal on the left is the American Campaign and the one on the right is the Asiatic Pacific with eight Campaign Stars. The Good Conduct and World War II medals and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon were also received. The December issue of the Strafer has the instructions on how to request them.

U. S. Navy Rescued Air Apaches

Below is a copy of the Submarine U. S. S. Plance report of rescuing a downed Air Apache crew. Pete Prunty, 501st, a member of that crew, reunited Mr. Norm Lomax and wife Jean, to our reunion in San Antonio. Norm was a member of the Sub crew that rescued the Air Apaches.

11 August 1945

0916 (I) Sighted what appeared to be a small boat through high periscope bearing 119*(t). Closed to investigate on four main engines. Looked like sampan with two sails. Boat under way on approximate course of 120*(t).

0931 (I) Manned both 40mm guns. As we approached, could see several figures moving about, but making no signs of recognition, or waving. A balloon ascended from boat. Realizing it could be antenna for Gibson Girl, or a signal for locating boat, but could see no reason for using it at this late period when we were in plain sight, unless it was a radio antenna getting off a last message. About 30 feet from boat we could see what appeared to be a black periscope

in water. Having received no word from Okinawa or recently sighted planes as to survivors, decided to approach with caution as this appeared to be the perfect set-up for a midjet submarine decoy. Still no sign of recognition from boat as it turned and presented a zero angle on bow. At about 1,500 yards range put rudder over hard right and circled. Fired three 40 mm shells as a warning. All overs. Still no signs of waving or recognition. As we circled to left, a yellow object was displayed with a figure 8 which looked like a Goodyear. Approached closer at flank speed and then figures appeared waving arms, etc. Could discern then that they were friendly. Maneuvered close aboard and picked up 5 survivors from B-25 Rummy 993, 501 Bomb. Sqdn., 345th Bomb. Group. Lat. 31-34N, Long. 128-35E, as follows:

MASTERSON, J. F., 1stLt., USAAF #0555614,

Navigator
WILKINSON, E. J., 1stLt., USAAF #0765178, Pilot
RUNOLFSON, T. R., 2ndLt., USAAF #0838975,

Co-Pilot
McCOY, G. L., Sgt., USAAF #31409421, Eng.
PRUNTY, P., T/Sgt., USAAF #32821119, Radio.

All survivors except Prunty in good shape, except for bruises, small cuts, contusions, and shock. Prunty was suffering from a badly swollen leg which was diagnosed as a strain and probable dislocation. Object which had appeared to be a periscope was found to be an empty black cylinder of helium thrown overboard when balloon was inflated and was floating vertically. Thanked God we "ceased firing" when we did, but all circumstances leading up to the firing looked like the perfect underhill decoy set-up, which we were warned to be on the alert for.

Strafer future

by Ken McClure

In 1983 the first Strafer came out, featuring news about an upcoming reunion and other items about the 345th. It was personally financed by the publisher. It has come out four times a year for 16 years without a single increase in dues or in fees paid to the editor. Postage rates have increased over that time, but dues have not increased. Now a group committee is thinking of having the Strafer done by a member. Considering our ages, we may have to change editors unpredictably. Mark Nordstrom is 47, he edits the Strafer, handles office duties, miscellaneous correspondence, deals with the post office on addresses and mailing permit and keeps the membership list up to date. He is doing it for the same, 16-year-old rate of \$303-a-month..

The list, which was once around 1500 members, is down to around 600. The largest drop came when members attending a reunion voted to send the Strafer only to members whose dues were up to date. Every year the list gets shorter with the attrition of time and as members don't get around to paying dues. About 100 members are now attending reunions, about 15 percent of the number who receive the Strafer. When decisions are made about spending group money, the members should be polled.

Attracting articles and enforcing deadlines for the Strafer can be difficult. All Air Apaches benefit if the Strafer publishes interesting Group news on time and maintains the 16-year publishing run. Publishing the Strafer has been fun and a lot of work.



Joan Leslie, with assistants Don, Julian and Morris, does a great job leading the Sing-a-long.

IN MEMORY OF

George Augusta ✓	501	4/9/98	Detroit, MI
Don Hardeman ✓	501	2/17/99	Orlando, FL
John H McArn ✓	498	6/2/98	Rowland, NC
George Musket ✓	501	1/15/99	San Antonio, TX
Edna Ponder ✓	498	Jan., 99	
Dean H. Rasmussen ✓	500	1/22/99	Reedley, CA

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

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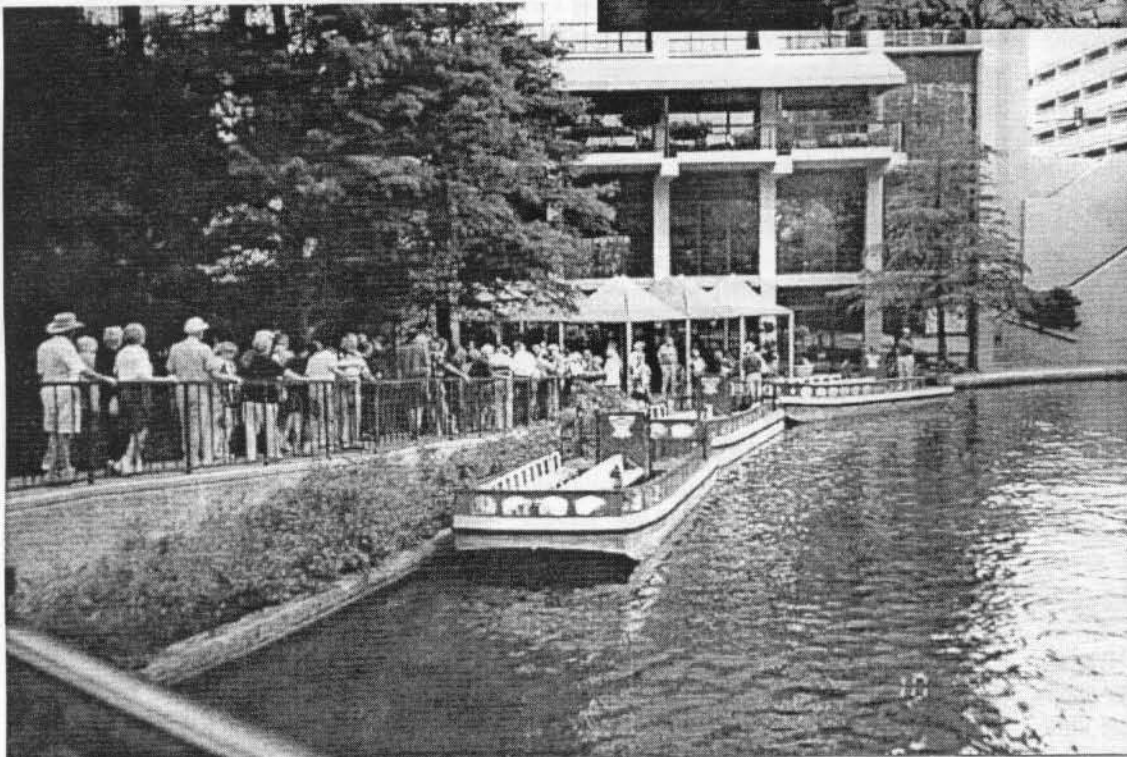
President Lynn Lee and Melba Ellinger



George Barnaskey, Sherry Herman (Arizona Rodeo), Bobba Harper, Ken Gastgeb



Bobba Harper and Ken Gastgeb hold a banner with pictures of some of the Joan Leslie Movies. The banner and the Fellowship and Fun banner were made by Bobba.



The big lineup waiting to board the river boats for a ride