



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

345th Bombardment Group Newsletter

Volume 18, Issue 4

December 2000

Twentieth Century Ends! New Millenium Begins!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



LIBERTY SHIP LEONIDAS MERRITT

Contributed by Ira O. Schaub, Jr. (498)

The above picture of the **Liberty Ship Leonidas Merritt** was painted by merchant marine Captain Brian Hope. He was in command of the ship during the invasion of the Philippines. The painting depicts a kamikaze attack on the **Leonidas Merritt**. The attack took place in Leyte Gulf near Dulag, on November 12, 1944. The burning **Liberty Ship Thomas Nelson** is just visible in the background on the right. The **Merritt** was transporting military cargo belonging to the 345th Bomb Group. Casualties were light because she had no large number of military personnel aboard. The **Liberty Ship Alexander Majors** was also damaged by Japanese planes during that November 12, 1944 suicide raid. The principal cargo aboard the **Majors** was heavy equipment belonging to Fifth Bomber Command.

The 345th Bomb Group sustained many casualties aboard the **Thomas Nelson** and the **Morrison R. Waite** during this attack. November 12, 1944 is a date that will live in the minds and hearts of the Air Apaches. As the Twentieth Century closes and we begin the Twenty-first, let us offer a prayer in memory of the members of our Group that perished that tragic day.



PRESIDENTS CORNER

George Modrecai, 345th Bomb Group PRESIDENT

First, I would like to thank the members in attendance at Reunion XIII for the honor that was bestowed on me by my election as the next President of the 345th Bomb Group Association. I will do my best to justify their trust and confidence.

Next, I would like to both thank and commend Ken Gastgeb for the tremendous job he did during his term as President. I will strive to uphold the standards he and our past leaders have established. I know I can count on the cooperation of the officers and the entire membership to help me keep this one of the best WWII Veterans associations in the country.

From all reports it seems that Reunion XIII was a success. Registrations were slow in coming but we ended up with a final count of 225. Obviously we would have preferred more but it was a good turnout, and everyone seemed to enjoy himself or herself. It was nice to see a sizable number of younger attendees. I hope this is a sign of better things to come.

We encountered a few problems but our capable committee soon overcame them. The people at the Sheraton Hotel were especially helpful. They went out of their way to assure that we had everything needed to make our stay a memorable one. The reunion registration committee, chaired by Gus

Ouellette, was well organized and started things off by making registration a pleasure.

The planned tours were well received by everyone. Harold Timmerman was chairman of the tour committee, and although was incapacitated for a while, he still managed to put together a great lineup of interesting things to do in and around Charleston. The selection was so good the only difficult part was making choices. Harold allowed plenty of time for socializing and that seemed to please everyone. It was good to see that Harold had recovered enough to join us and enjoy the fruits of his labors. We all wish Harold continued improvement, and we look forward to seeing him in San Diego next year for Reunion XIV.

Lynn Lee did a great job operating the hospitality suite but he would never have survived if it hadn't been for Ralph Barbato and his buddies. Marilyn McGowen had a hand in keeping things on track and brightened the room with her smile. We had the misfortune of someone "liberating" our entire stock of bourbon during a "midnight requisition raid." I sometimes think Lynn may be getting old as he went to bed and left the hospitality suite under Ralph's supervision and they both failed to "post a guard."

I want to thank everyone for his or her help. Although our group was small in number it was big on fun and camaraderie. We seemed to have developed a more relaxed and congenial atmosphere than at other reunions. It might have been the charm of the Old South or just maybe we are finally learning to get it right.

The Group voted at the business meeting in Charleston, SC, to hold the first reunion of the next millenium in San Diego in 2001. Planning for Reunion XIV is already well under way thanks to Jack and Mary Gronewald (501), and Roman Ohnemus (501). We are scheduled to meet August 30, through September 4, 2001. This is Labor Day weekend and the U.S. Grant Hotel is offering a special rate for a normally slack period.

Mary says to be sure the ladies know that our hotel is right across the street from Horton Plaza Mall and the summer clearance sales will be in full swing!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Ken Gastgeb, 345th Bomb Group Outgoing President

The reunion at Charleston was great. We got to see some of the historical sights that we studied about in history class many years ago. The reunion committee is to be commended for such a fine job of planning and execution.

Several changes in the Association's bylaws were proposed and approved at the business meeting. We addressed the disposition of Association funds in the event we disband. It was decided that any funds remaining after all bills are paid would be distributed equally among the remaining members in good standing. The membership section was changed to make payment of annual dues an option, not a requirement, for Life Members. We voted to reinstate members that have dropped out if they pay the current year's dues. We expanded the Association offices to include a President, 1st Vice-president, 2nd Vice-president, Secretary, Ass't. Secretary, Treasurer, and an Ass't. Treasurer. The members decided to use donated funds for future maintenance of the 345th Bomb Group Association monument at Wright-Patterson Museum in Dayton, Ohio. We wish to thank Jesse Dean (498) for supervising the recent restoration contract. Thanks also to Julius Fisher for recording the minutes in Roland Lamb's absence and to Mary Elizabeth Gamble for acting as our Group photographer at the reunion.

Lynn Daker brightened up the memorabilia room with a display of pictures and other WWII related items.

Lynn recently searched the country for surviving crewmembers, or relatives of the crewmembers that were flying in "Tondelayo," "Snafu" and "Sorry Satchul" on that fateful October 18, 1943 mission to Rabaul. Jack Fellows commemorated this mission in his painting entitled "Tondelayo." Lynn was able to locate several people and got their signatures on a reproduction of the painting of this historical event. It was decided to give a copy of this picture to each member of the Association. Those attending the reunion were presented copies at the business meeting. All other current members should receive their copies in the mail in the near future.

Bobba and I visited her daughter in Sacramento, California last month. While there we had a very enjoyable visit with John and Del Baeta. They were unable to attend the reunion this year due to illness.

It has been an honor and pleasure, for the last two years, to serve as president of this great organization. Thanks to everyone that helped in keeping us together. Let's all stand behind our new officers and give them our full support.

Kenneth David McClure, age 78, died October 24, 2000 in Columbus, Ohio.

He was a member of the 345th Bomb Group, 499th Bomb Squadron. Ken was one of the founders of the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association. He served as treasurer from 1982 to 1984. He was publisher of the STRAFER for many years.

Ken was active in community affairs and will be missed by the many friends and associates he acquired during his lifetime.

He was preceded in death by his loving wife of 55 years, Patricia Smith McClure. He is survived by his daughters, Mary Lynn (Sam) Bates of Worthington, Ohio, and Linda (Charlie) Zimmer of West Chester (Cincinnati), Ohio, and grandchildren, Susan (Dan) Griffith, Casey, David, Adam, and Jason.

The entire membership of the 345th Bomb Group Association wishes to convey our sympathy to Ken's family. He will be truly missed.

**345th Bomb Group Association
Reunion XIII-Meeting Minutes
Charleston, SC, October 4, 2000
By-Julius Fisher for Roland Lamb**

The meeting was called to order by President Ken Gastgeb. The minutes of the Group business meeting at Reunion XII were read by Julius Fisher acting for Roland Lamb and approved as presented.

An audit of the Group treasury was not finalized; therefore the treasurer's report was not given. The Treasurer's report and the audit report will be published in the next issue of the **STRAFER**.

Old Business

Frank Dillard, **STRAFER** publisher, discussed the need for continued participation from Group members in submitting stories for publication in the **STRAFER**.

George Mordecai reported on the use of Group funds relative to the cost of planning and conducting Group reunions.

Lynn Lee requested help from all members in his efforts to locate lost members. If you have any information that will help get a former member back please contact Lynn or any of the Association officers.

New Business

The 500th Squadron will take care of the Group sign.

The contract for cleaning the 345th Bomb Group Association memorial at the Wright-Patterson museum in Dayton, Ohio had not been completed at the time of the meeting.

It was reported that the memorial at Colorado Springs is in good shape.

Ken Gastgeb discussed several proposed changes to the Association bylaws.

Motions were made, seconded, voted on, and carried to incorporate the following amendments to the bylaws:

Article III, Section 5: In the event of dissolution of the Association, and after discharge of all of its liabilities, the remaining funds shall be equally distributed among all Association members in good standing.

Article V, Section 2: There shall no longer be a Life Member category. Members that have paid life membership dues are not required to pay annual dues.

Article V, Section 5: Members who have been dropped from the Association for non-payment of dues may be reinstated by the payment of current year's dues.

Article VII, Section 1: Add the Offices of 2nd Vice-President and Assistant Secretary.

There were three proposals presented to the Group for the location of Reunion XIV in 2001. George Mordecai presented reports on San Diego, California and Dallas, Texas. Bob Kantor reported on Palm Springs, California. After some discussion the Group voted for San Diego as the preferred site for our next reunion. Reunion XIV will be held August 31 through September 4, 2001 at the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, California.

The Nominating Committee presented their recommendations for Group officers. There were no nominations from the floor. The following officers were elected by acclamation:

President - George Mordecai
1st Vice-President - Frank Dillard
2nd Vice-President - Lynn Daker
Secretary - Roland Lamb
Assistant Secretary - Dr. Silas Pearson
Treasurer - Jerry Murphy
Assistant Treasurer - Ed Sharpe

Prior to the general Group meeting the Squadrons held individual meetings. The following Assistant Group Vice-Presidents were elected to office:

Headquarters - Gus Ouellette
498th Squadron - Ira Schaub
499th Squadron - Ben Miller
500th Squadron - Stan Muniz
501st Squadron - William Cather

There being no further business to come before the Association the meeting was adjourned.

SQUADRON **REPORTS**



HEADQUARTERS

August Ouellett, Ass't. Group VP

It's great to have been to the reunion in Charleston, SC. After a slow beginning we were pleased to end up registering 225 people. Truly not as many as at some other reunions, but we have to count the years we are now and were then. The years have taken their toll but one need only to look around at others and realize we are not too bad off after all.

All went off very well at Charleston thanks to George Mordecai and his reunion committee. That is one big task, at our age. Things that were a "piece of cake" a few years ago are now a BIG CHORE!

Ken sent me a nice "thank you" letter for being chairman of the registration committee. I would like to thank the members of the committee; Pat Cummings, Norma and Ben Miller, Andy Simko, Ruth D'Amour, and of course my wife, Pauline. Our team all knew how to put humor into the "chore" and lighten the moment.

I would like to say THANK YOU to Ken for the wonderful job he has done for our Group. No one in the outfit was ever more devoted to the "job." It was a labor of love for

me to work with you, Ken. I've learned some pointers on leadership but it's a little too late to make use of them now. Seems like that's the story of my life!

The reunion tours were interesting and just about right for our age group. The biggest thing for me was meeting Joe Dubois and his son. We discovered many coincidences between the two of us. His mother was an Ouellette from Quebec, Canada, and my father (also named Ouellette) was from Canada. Joe's family runs a restaurant in Methuen, MA. It's about 20 miles from my home and I've been there a couple of times. One of the things that impressed me most was that Joe was there representing his brother who was killed in the Kamikaze attack on the S.S. WAITE. That is what one can call true love. My hat goes off to you Joe, stay as sweet as you are.

We missed many "buddies," living and dead. All those absent were in our thoughts and prayers at all times.

All in all, in my mind, this was the best type of reunion. Quite lower key when compared to previous ones and that's the part we relish now. More social than those in the past.

At the present I am working in my VFW Post to form teams to visit local middle and high schools. The Vets "invade" classes and relate anything they feel comfortable talking to the kids about. If you don't feel good about a particular topic pass on to a "cheerier" subject. I have met with the kids 4 or 5 times and it gives one a great feeling to help them. No one can reach them all but to get to even a few is rewarding. I have but a small space left at the bottom of my page so I will say so long for now and 'till we meet again adios, au revoir, sayonara, etc...etc..., and goodbye.

**May you have a Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Millenium**

Editor's note: regardless of whether your present illness or disability is service connected --you may be eligible for low cost prescription drugs under a Department of Veterans Affairs program. For details call the Department of Veterans Affairs, toll free, at (877) 222-8387 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST, or the local VA facility.



498th SQUADRON

Ira O. Schaub, Ass't Group VP

This is my first attempt at writing the newsletter for the 498th so bear with me. I will have to do this on my own because no one in the squadron has contacted me with any news items as yet. Please let me hear from you before the March issue is ready for printing.

I did hear that Herbert "Red" Garland, one of our 498th buddies had recently passed away, but I don't have the particulars. We do wish to express our sympathy to Dorothy and family. "Red" was a loyal member of the Association and will be missed.

Those of you that didn't make it to Reunion XIII in Charleston sure missed a good party. Including wives and guests, a total of 225 people registered. We had 61 register from the 498th, but only 57 were present. Don Stout had an accident as he was leaving for the airport and had to cancel. We missed his humor, but it was reported that "it only hurt when he laughed!" Sorry Don. We look forward to seeing you in San Diego next year. Roland Lamb, our Group secretary, had to cancel at the last minute due to medical problems, but is now on the road to recovery.

There were several younger family members in attendance. My son Mark was able to drop in for a short time, and we had dinner with Mike Hasselbauer, the son of Manny, and his wife one evening. We need to encourage more of our children to join the Association and share in the "fun and games" at our reunions.

The front cover is one that should be of particular interest to those members of the 345th Bomb Group that made the move up to the Philippines by Liberty ship from New Guinea.

I was aboard the NELSON during the kamikaze attack of November 12, 1944 and knew our outfit had taken casualties on the NELSON and WAITE. I was not aware that there were a total of four Liberty ships transporting personnel and equipment for our Group, and that all were victims of kamikaze attacks that day.

I learned of the connection between the 345th Bomb Group and the Liberty Ships MERRITT and MAJORS many years later. I was visiting friends in Baltimore, MD, and toured the JOHN Y. BROWN, a restored Liberty Ship similar to the NELSON and WAITE, on display there. I was surprised to see the builders plate for the THOMAS NELSON on display in the museum there.

After my visit I wrote a note and enclosed a contribution to Project Liberty Ship, an organization dedicated to preserving the WWII Liberty Ship. I received a thank you letter from Captain Brian Hope and a photo of a painting he had done of the LEONIDAS MERRITT. Following is an excerpt from his letter:

" Your note was most interesting to me, since I knew of the incident in which the THOMAS NELSON was attacked during the invasion of the Philippines. The enclosed photo shows a painting I did a couple of years ago depicting a kamikaze attack on the Liberty Ship THOMAS NELSON. In the background on the right, is the burning THOMAS NELSON, which had been hit earlier in the day.

Casualties were not nearly as great aboard the MERRITT because she had no large number of military personnel aboard. We have the NELSON's builders plate on display aboard the BROWN. Perhaps your organization might someday be interested in having a reunion in Baltimore centered around our "Living History Day Cruises."

Over the years I have found it interesting to note how many of our lives are inter-related and so many of our "ships have passed in the night."



499th SQUADRON

Ben F. Miller, Ass't. Group VP

We agree with the majority of folks at the gathering in Charleston, that it was the most pleasant ever. It was great to see some members for the first time, such as Jack O'Meara and his wife. It turned out that he was the GI on the fire hose with me on the Nelson. My daughter and her husband were there and she said it was even nicer than a previous reunion she attended. She said it again--nowhere can you be a part of a group of seniors who act so young and pleased to be together. Jack Decker had a daughter there, Mike Costa had a granddaughter, Martin Wood Jr. was also one of the attendees, as were others I don't recall. They said the reason the 500th squadron reunions are growing is due to the fact that more and more family members are attending. Sounds like an idea worth trying next year at San Diego. My wife's brother recently attended a Navy ship's reunion in Boston and all four of his brothers were there. He said they had a fabulous time. It would also work for us. Give it some thought.

It was a dirty trick...someone pulling a raid on our supply of cheer and stealing all the bourbon. Being primarily a scotch drinker myself not much damage was inflicted. All the people heading up the various projects did a superb job.

Mary E. Gamble had a big surprise when William Paulus, a former 499th radio-gunner, came with some beautiful birdhouses and many more craft items for the ladies breakfast. These items were made of wood with a lot of copper. Don't let this scare you away from coming to your first reunion, as you don't have to buy your way in, but it was the highlight of the ladies meeting. The birdhouse built to look like a church complete with music was eyed by all. He never said how the birds turn on the music. Is it to put the baby birds to sleep, or what?

This was the longest drive Norma and I made in the car for some time. It was pleasant with one exception -- on the way down some semi-driver gave us a hard time. Another truck driver passed us with mike in hand and he must have set the rude driver straight. It's hard to believe that our modern cars get almost twice the miles per gallon that used to satisfy us. Progress is great!

It's time to place a larger container on the dresser for the next reunion fund. We are looking forward to going to California. The only time spent there by yours truly was a week in Camp Stoneman while arrangements for our tour of the tropics was being finalized. Passes were limited and with me being the newest man in the group, and the 13th man in a 12-man squad I didn't get to see the city. Remember how we offered to trade places with some of the residents of Alcatraz as we sailed past it?

Here's wishing you all the best holiday season ever!

Your (Reformed) Ex-Bartender,
Ben

Editor's Note: I noticed an article about Max Fergusen (499) in an old 50th Anniversary issue of the STRAFER. It reported that Max had authored a book entitled "**Bats Outa Hell Over Biak.**" I wondered if the book was still available so I called Max. He said he still has some copies, so if you are interested, you may obtain one by mailing a check for \$12 (includes S/H) to Max Fergusen, 1215 Taylor Ave., Charleston, IL 61920-2928.



500th SQUADRON

Stan Muniz, Ass't. Group VP

The other night while I was working on detailing the engine of a model of the Grumman F3F-2 Navy biplane from the 1930's, I remembered a telephone conversation I had with Jackson Pratt ten or fifteen years ago. Jackson was a crew chief in the 500th Squadron. Some of the planes he watched over were "Mexican Spitfire" number 592, and "Fatso" number 588. In the conversation I mentioned that the Antique Aircraft Museum that I belonged to was rebuilding a Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior R985, a 450 H.P. engine used on the Vultee BT-13 ("Vultee Vibrator") basic trainer, and we were in need of a rocker arm housing. Jackson laughed and said that reminded him of something that happened at Clark field while we were stationed there. It seems that orders came down from headquarters that there was going to be a maximum effort mission the following day. One of the engines on "Fatso" had a cracked rocker arm housing and a check with supply told him there were none in stock. Jackson thought for awhile and remembered he had heard that the Japanese always copied American aircraft parts. With that thought in mind he headed into the boonies looking at some of the Japanese wrecked aircraft that were scattered around Clark Field. He finally found what he was looking for, a wrecked "Betty" bomber. With tools in hand he removed

one of the rocker arm housings from the "Betty's" engine. With hopes it would fit he returned to the hardstand where number 588 sat surrounded by the rest of the maintenance crew. He put the housing in place and to his relief saw that the screw holes lined up perfectly. The housing was an exact copy of the ones on the Wright R2600 engine! He could now report that "Fatso" was ready and able. As he said laughingly as he signed off, "there were times when he said THANKS to the Japanese."

Lynn Daker was elected to the 2nd Vice-President's office at Group Reunion XIII in Charleston. We know we can always count on Lynn to do a great job.

Lynn reports that he has filled orders for 65 prints of the Jack Fellows painting "Tondelayo," and 5 for "Wolfpack." These are a great bargain for collectors of aviation art prints. If you are interested you may order directly from Lynn. The price, including shipping and handling, for "Tondelayo" is \$32.00, and "Wolfpack" is \$33.00 Mail your check to: Lynn Daker, 4250 Ponderosa Ct., Boulder, CO 80301-1634.

Lynn has also agreed to be the official guardian for the 345th Bomb Group sign that has been the center-piece of many reunions. The original sign was made in 1988 under the direction of Ken McClure (499) for Reunion V. We were sorry to hear that Ken recently passed away. He was an active member of the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association, and he will be missed by all of the members.



The 345th Bomb Group Association Sign



501st SQUADRON

BILL CATHER, Ass't. Group VP

Reunion XIII held in Charleston in October, is over. It was well attended and well planned. For the first time I can recall the 501st failed to lead in attendance, but we did provide the new Group Association President as George Mordecai was elected to this office.

We had three young men with our squadron at Charleston; Paul Van Valkenburg, of Truxton, New York, Joe Fezio's son John and one of the armorers for "The Eager Beaver" introduced his son to me. It was a pleasure having them attend our gathering. We should encourage more family members to join with us and become involved. If you are "on-line" check out Paul Van Valkenburg's web site <vanvalkp@SNYCORVA.CORTLAND.EDU>.

At the squadron meeting I made the mistake of coughing as they were asking for volunteers for the office of Squadron Vice President! I know it will be hard following Chet Burns' interesting columns for the STRAFER, but we will do the best we can. I will need all the help I can get so send me any news or items of interest or just a good joke. I don't do e-mail but the U.S. Postal Services makes daily deliveries right to my home. My address, phone and Fax numbers are listed with the other Association Officers.

I have talked to Ben Fridge since the Charleston meeting. Ben was the original 501st Operations Officer before being promoted to Group Headquarters. He has been under the

weather and would like to hear from any old friends. Ben's address is 13905 Rancho Verde Drive, Reno, NV 89511.

In order to fill my first column, and since I have not received any correspondence as yet, I think we'll go back 27 years to recall a little history about the first Group reunion. The 1973 reunion was conceived and planned by several former 345th Bomb Group members. Among them were Bert Rosenbaum, Henry Kortemeyer, Bob Fain, Jones Burson, and Maury Eppstine. Names and addresses for the invitations were gathered mainly from Christmas card lists. I don't think we had over 150 invitees. Our meeting place for this first reunion was Colorado Springs, Colorado. Henry Kortemeyer planned and chaired the Group meeting and hosted the 501st party at his home. The 501st had the largest turnout, about 50 including the wives. We had no formal organization at the time but General Crabb was able to attend and was guest of honor at the head table. This was probably the most enjoyable from a social standpoint of all our reunions because it was the first time many of us had seen each other in 30 years.

The following montage brings back many good memories (see anyone you know?):



BULLETIN BOARD

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have recently moved or plan to move you must notify the Treasurer, or the Editor, of your change of address to insure continued delivery of the **STRAFER**. We cannot maintain an up-to-date mailing list without your cooperation. The post office will not forward first-class mail indefinitely.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By Jerry Murphy

Your annual association membership fee for the year **2001** will be due **December 31 2000**. Check the date on your mailing label to see if you are current (2001). Still only \$15.00. We need your continued support to defray expenses and sustain our organization. Make your check payable to the **345th Bomb Group Association** and mail to:

Gerard J. Murphy
6745 Bonnieview
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

Following is a summary report of the Group's financial status as of October 31, 2000:

Funds on Deposit:

(1) Checking Account; National City Bank, Cleveland, OH.

Balance 09-30-00	\$25,368.27*
Receipts	461.00*
Disbursements	851.60
Subtotal as of 10-31-00	<u>\$24,977.67*</u>

(2) Certificates of Deposit; Fifth Third Bank, Columbus, OH.

Subtotal as of 10-31-00	<u>\$19,156.78</u>
Grand Total as of 10-31-00	<u>\$44,134.45*</u>

* This amount includes fees collected from the members attending Reunion XIII, but not paid as of 10-31-00. The net amount in the treasury will be less after all bills related to Reunion XIII have been paid..

IN MEMORY OF...

The members of the 345th Bomb Group Association wish to extend our sincere condolences to the families of our departed members and friends.

- ✓ **Helen Blodgett** (500), wife of **Rick Blodgett**, 07-14-00, Anchorage, AK.
- ✓ **Herbert B. "Red" Garland** (498), ?-?- 00, St. Louis, MO.
- ✓ **Robert O. Haas** (500), 06-16-00, Evansville, IN.
- ✓ **Wendell Houck** (HQ), 05-31-99, Ashville, NC.
- ✓ **William E. Hourigan** (500), 09-07-99, Holland, NY.
- ✓ **Rodney A. Johnson** (700), 10-19-99, Salem, OR.
- ✓ **Robert F. Kinney** (499), 11-18-99, Rancho San Diego, CA.
- ✓ **Claude F. Mousty** (499), 09-12-99, Sun City Center, FL.
- ✓ **Kenneth D. McClure** (499), 10-24-00, Columbus, OH.
- ✓ **John B. Nusbaum** (501), 08-07-00, Buffalo, NY

I'M FREE

Contributed by W.W. "Jack" Morris (498)

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God has laid you see.
I took his hand when I heard His call
I turned my back and left it all.
I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found the peace at the close of day.
If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joys--
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Oh, yes these things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with times of sorrow.
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I savored much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief--
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts, and peace to thee--
God wanted me now; He set me free.

THE CASE OF THE PURLOINED TURKEY

By Frank Dillard (498)

Isn't it odd how the memory of events of minor importance can be dredged up from the darkest recesses of our subconsciousness?

One such moment occurred over 50 years ago on a distant pacific island not far from the Equator. The place was a small coral dot in the ocean, named Biak. The Japanese had occupied this island and still held several pockets of resistance when the 345th Bomb Group set up operations there.

The memory that I referred to involved the celebration of Yom Kippur by members of our Group who followed the Jewish faith. Someone thought it would be appropriate for the gentiles in the outfit to serve as KP's during Yom Kipper, and those of the Jewish religion would reciprocate during the Christmas feast.

I never was too keen on the idea of KP as a Private and certainly felt it beneath me as a Sargent until my buddy, Ray LeTourneau (who was 10 years my senior), 'splained it all to me. Ray reasoned that since KP's serve in the kitchen and food is in the kitchen, then it figures that KP's and food could find ultimate happiness in peaceful coexistence. As a corollary premise he stated that the "liberation" of choice foodstuffs and the establishment of "emergency ration stores" was a sacred duty and challenge to the ingenuity of non-commissioned officers. When I expressed concern about the consequences of being apprehended during such a sortie, Ray assured me that the worst thing that could happen was that they would either make me a civilian again, or in time of war, shoot me, which ever came first. I figured he must be right. I had missed out on the reading of the Articles of War. I was too busy at the time helping him ship a practice bomb to his mother in Worcester, Mass. But that's another story and anyway I wouldn't have really minded being a civilian again...So Ray and I volunteered for KP!

On the morning of our completely altruistic, totally noble and unselfish mission Ray informed me that flying coveralls were the

uniform of the day for "Kitchen Police" duty. He said coveralls were essential because they held more. At first I wondered if Ray had a secret stock of jungle juice which he had reluctantly, but bravely, consumed to shield me from the evils of drink. However, as soon as we reported to the mess hall Ray demonstrated the adaptability of our apparel. He proceeded to store a bushel of apples in the right leg of the flying coveralls and an equal quantity of oranges in the left. When I attempted to duplicate the feat he quickly pointed out the error of my ways. It seems I had started stuffing apples in the left leg, which was only natural to me because I'm left-handed. Ray would not accept that excuse for he was also left-handed. Once I had mastered the subtleties of the process it was relatively simple to wobble-transport the "liberated" foodstuffs to our tent where we stashed same in an old Japanese ammo case. When I returned to the mess hall after my third "strike" I discovered that a big controversy had broken out concerning a missing select grade turkey that had been set aside and designated as "THE COLONELS!" The Mess Sargent was beside himself (which was no small feat considering his size), and he was vociferously questioning the KP's paternal genealogy. I glanced at Ray and was immediately relieved and reassured at his angelic expression. I was certain he had it! The regular cooks were making small pretenses of searching the area but acted more like they were afraid it might bite if they found it. The Mess Sargent stormed out of the kitchen and assaulted the Orderly Room clerk demanding a cadre of MP's to conduct a "shake down" inspection of the entire compound. Since they weren't looking for apples or oranges I couldn't have cared less.

On the pretext of conducting an advance reconnaissance (That's French. Did I mention Ray was French?) survey for the MP's Ray was able to "re-liberate" (Like Mac--"I shall return..") the turkey...and all in less than 10 minutes. He told me later that he sat the turkey behind the First Sargent's desk. I guess the MP's didn't see through this clever dodge, because they never did recover the damned thing!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



THE AIR APACHES
345th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
1203 CLUBHOUSE RD.
MARION, IL 62959

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

PRESIDENT: GEORGE MORDECAI

14 Fredrick St.
North Branford, CT 06471-07
203/488-8177

1ST VICE-PRESIDENT: FRANK DILLARD

1203 Clubhouse Rd.
Marion, IL 62959
618/995-2225

2ND VICE-PRESIDENT: LYNN DAKER

4250 Ponderosa Ct.
Boulder, CO 80301-1634
303/444-6489

SECRETARY: ROLAND LAMB

3100 Black Walnut Dr.
Flower Mound, TX 75028
972/355-2373

ASS'T. SEC.: SILAS W. PEARSON

P.O. Box 8
Louisville, MS 39339-0008
662/773-5271

TREASURER: GERARD J. MURPHY

6745 Bonnieview
Mayfield Village, OH 44143
216/442-7273

ASS'T. TREASURER: EDWIN SHARPE

2438 Edgewood Dr.
Burlington, NC 27215
910/584-6132



|||||
KENNETH C. GASTGEB 2000
700
2313 Crestmont St Apt 227
Norman OK 73069-6524

ASSISTANT GROUP VP's

HQ-AUGUST OUELLETTE

86 Central St.
Hudson, NH 03051-4600
603/598-6559

498th-IRA O. SCHAUB, JR.

3526 Barron Berkley Way
Raleigh, NC 27612
919/787-2260

499th-BEN MILLER

9450 N 550 W
Decatur, IN 46733-9428
219/547-4460

500th-STAN MUNIZ

5378 Borneo Circle
San Jose, CA 95123
408/227-3240

501st-WILLIAM CATHER

314 Windsor Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35209-4338
205/871-0590

STRAFER EDITOR - FRANK DILLARD

1203 Clubhouse Rd.
Marion, IL 62959
618/995-2225
e-mail: strafer@gte.net