



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

345th Bombardment Group Newslette

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Christ Sotirakopulos (499)

Letter to the Editor, Received 12/20/00:

"When we landed at Port Moresby and were trucked to 17-Mile Strip, our first overseas operational base, I sent a letter to my mother requesting a couple of packs of watermelon seeds. I planted them and as time went by the seeds produced a vine and I visualized producing 35 to 50 pound watermelons with a flavor like no one ever tasted before!

Wouldn't you know it, just as those vines started popping up all over, we received orders that we had to move out!

To this day I keep wondering if anyone from the 499th ever revisited 17-Mile Strip and found out if anyone was growing watermelons from the ones I left behind?

I don't know why but I just can't believe its been 57 years since I was assigned to the 345th Bomb Group and had the good fortune to cook for the 499th Squadron. I always said, and still do, "it's the gravy that makes the meal." If I must say so myself we did a good job cooking for the best squadron in the South Pacific.

My brother-in-law took the above color photo of me in 1999. The picture I am holding in my hand was taken in Sydney, Australia in 1943.

Well, its time to say "bye" for now from the windy city of Chicago. God bless all of you,

Staff Sgt. Christ Sotirakopulos.

SAN DIEGO REUNION XIV PLANS NEAR COMPLETION

Jack and Mary Gronewald are finalizing plans for Reunion XIV. The place is San Diego, California. The date for our fall gathering is August 30 to September 4, 2001. Jack is in charge of weather, and has completed arrangements for weather best described as perfect! Mary has booked the US Grant Hotel as our center of operations. Together they are making sure that the selection of tours and other entertainment opportunities are varied enough to suit all members of our Association. The list of interesting places to visit in this beautiful city seems endless. A few of the "must see and do" options centers around Balboa Park. This is easily the cities cultural center with a complex of museums that includes the Aerospace Historical Center, the Museum of Man, the Museum of Natural History, the San Diego Museum of Art, the R. H. Fleet Space Theater and Science Center, the world-famed San Diego Zoo, and the Star of India at the Maritime Museum. Try to include day trips to historic Old Town, the Gaslamp Quarter, and the Museum of Contemporary Art during your stay.

Good restaurants and specialty shops will try to lure you away from the main purpose of your visit -- meeting with old friends and socializing with new acquaintances from the 345th Bomb Group Association. Jack and Mary have allowed ample time for this while we try to determine the exact moment that we won WWII.

The June 2001 issue of the **STRAFER** will include complete registration information and details of all events scheduled for Reunion XIV. Please mark your calendar and begin planning for this wonderful party. The only thing that Jack and Mary haven't done is prepare the list of those who plan to attend what promises to be a gala affair!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

George Mordecai, 345th Bomb Group Association

Once again it's time to get another issue of the STRAFER out to all the members of the Association. It seems as if Frank Dillard just finished bugging me about the president's report for the December issue. We can't risk giving him blank space to put all he wants in our paper, so we have to submit the latest news we have about our comrades.

As far as my report, I am fortunate in that I have a lot of individuals to thank for their cooperation in getting some of our projects completed. AS Lynn Lee says, "I pre-she-ate it" (Wish I knew how to spell in Texan).

First I wish to thank Frank Dillard (Sic) for all the work that he has put into improving the STRAFER, and also his help in any other matter when I have requested it.

In appreciation of the great contribution that Ken Gastgeb has made to our Group I have "rewarded" him by an appointment to the newly created office of Group Historian. Ken has asked Paul Van Valkenburg to be his assistant. They will make a good team. Ken has a wealth of information and Paul has the web page to publicize it. Check it out at:

[<vanvalkp@snycorva.cortland.edu>](mailto:vanvalkp@snycorva.cortland.edu)

Please send them any material that can be added to our memorabilia file. Let's all join together to make this a great project

Many thanks to Lynn Daker for mailing the "TONDELAYO" prints out to all the members of the 345th Bomb Group Association that weren't present at Reunion XIII. The print was one of the registration gifts at Charleston. It was so well received the Group officers voted at Charleston

that all paid up members of the organization should receive a copy. Be sure to get yours framed and put in a prominent place so you can always be reminded of the "good old days."

Reunion XIV will take place in San Diego on August 31st to September 4th, 2001. Jack & Mary Gronewald have done most of the planning and made me feel guilty for not helping them more. Complete registration details will be published in the June Issue of the **STAFER**. Remember that YOU are the most important part of any reunion. If you do not come you will miss a great time - but just as important we will miss the pleasure of your company. Please make every effort to join us for a great time. Mary & Jack--I thank you on behalf of the Association for all your great work!

There has been a lack of administrative follow up on delinquent dues collection for quite some time. In an effort to minimize the problem the members voted to revise Article V, Section 5 of the bylaws to read: "Members who have not paid their dues for past years can be reinstated by payment of the current years dues. Annual dues (\$15) are payable on January 1st each year. If dues are not paid in 60 days thereafter, the organization will so notify all delinquent members. After an additional 60 days those that have not responded will forfeit all rights and privileges of membership. Our number is being rapidly depleted by natural causes, and while we have no desire to further reduce our ranks, we do need to be advised if you wish to continue your membership and receive the **STAFER**."

Frank Dillard, Jerry Murphy, Pat Feucht, and myself are working to produce an accurate up-to-date roster for our organization. This can only be accomplished if you advise us of all changes in your place of residence or telephone number as they occur. Just a postcard is all that is necessary to keep our records straight.

Last but not least, once again I thank you for your confidence in electing me your President. I will do my best to insure that the organization does not falter in our quest to fulfill the purposes for which organization was established:

"To encourage and facilitate camaraderie among the members of the 345th Bomb Group Association."

Start planning a great fall Reunion/Vacation in San Diego. We promise a good time!!!

SQUADRON REPORTS



HEADQUARTERS

August Ouellett, Ass't. Group VP

Another year has rolled over and that means it's time for the March STRAFER newsletter. So far the year has been quiet and not too much material has been turned in to me, but the show must go on, so I'll see what I can dig out of my computer's harddrive (normally called "brain").

Christmas brought in several nice cards from friends that take this opportunity to let us know they are still living and where they are.

I got a nice letter from Fay Bishop (Don's widow). She has overcome some her medical problems and is in much better condition. She is under the care of a specialist and her diabetes is under control. She reports her doctor is making a "new girl" out of her.

Dan O'Brien called and we had a nice long conversation.

I got a card AND a phone call from Ken Gastgeb.

I see Ray Derusha every now and then because we only live about 3 miles apart.

Pat Cummings (499), who was such good help at the registration table, reports she is doing fine and is well settled in her new retirement home. I also received cards from all the other nice people from the 499th Squadron that worked with me at the reunion registration table including; Andy Simko, Ben and Norma Miller, and Ruth D'Amour. Again, I would like to say "Thanks," and add "Happy New Year to all.

Del Reddington, who couldn't make it to the reunion in Charleston, has had a rough time of it lately. I know he is praying that he will get to San Diego this year.

No word recently from Charlie and Mary Metzel. The last I did hear they weren't feeling well, but I hope they are OK by now.

I hope Dave Blazers widow is well. She hasn't written lately, but I suppose everyone was busy over the holidays

As for myself, I've had four "Jolly Green Giant" colds in three months, and all were the antibiotic type. Improving all the time, and that's the name of the game!

I mentioned in the December STRAFER that while attending the reunion in Charleston I met Joe Dubois. He is the brother of Rosaire Dubois (499) who was killed on the Thomas Nelson. Since returning home I've visited the Dubois family in Methuen, MA. which is only twenty miles from where I live. There are a lot of coincidences in our lives. My father was a Ouellette from Quebec, and so was Joe's mother. Joe's family runs a restaurant in Methuen, that we have visited several times in the past without knowing of their connection to the 345th Bomb Group.

Sometime ago I mentioned that I had located the son of Norman Boudreau (499), formerly of Nashua, NH, who was killed during the attack on the Thomas Nelson. I thought he would be interested in the story about the event (that the sailor wrote for the September 1999 issue of the STRAFER) in which his father died. It has been over a year and he still hasn't contacted me. So I'm closing the books on this one. Mission Ended, but Not Completed.

The last I heard the wheels were in motion for our upcoming reunion in San Diego. From all reports it is a nice city and the climate is supposed to be ideal. It will be great to get together again.

Two BEE or Not too Bee

This is the story of the Bee
Who's sex is very hard to see.
You cannot tell a "he" from a "she,"
But She can tell and so can He.
The Bee is a very busy soul.
He has no time for birth control,
And that is why in times like these
There are so many Sons of Bees.

There isn't much more to report for now, so I better sign off for the time being. **See y'all** (I picked that up in S.C.)! In the meantime Good Luck, and God bless.



498th SQUADRON
Ira O. Schaub, Ass't. Group VP

It seems as though Florida is getting crowded with "snow birds" from the 498th. I made a quick trip to my son Mark's wedding at Orlando and narrowly missed running into Frank Dillard (our editor). He was "goofing off" instead of working on the STRAFER. He reports that Roland Lamb (our secretary) is much improved from his recent illness. Frank admits that (in a weaker moment) he bought a HO train set at a yard sale while visiting Ray and Jo LeTourneau in Naples. Now he wonders where he'll get the time to construct a layout. Too many irons in the fire if you ask me!

Recently, there have been some interesting happenings on the Internet related to the 345th Bomb Group. I received information from the family of Paul Panciocco who was lost on a mission back on January 9, 1945. (See feature story pages 8-10 of this issue). Then Paul Van Valkenburg forwarded a companion piece to this story. It concerns the recovery of the remains of the co-pilot of the plane that Paul was

assigned to on that ill-fated flight. An excerpt of the e-mail reads:

"A Soldier's Remains Return, 56 Years Later. A mystery that has haunted a family for 56 years will end in a cemetery in southwest Iowa. The ashes of Army 2nd Lt. Neil B. Davis were to be buried Saturday (02-24-01) with full military honors. Davis was the co-pilot of a B-25J Mitchell bomber on a mission from an airbase at Tacloban, Leyte, in the Philippines on January 9, 1945 when he and five other crewmembers disappeared. The wreckage of the aircraft was found in 1992 on a mountain slope in a remote area of Sibuyan Island."

The missing plane was one of six from the 498th Squadron on that mission. Roland Lamb was piloting the plane following and recalls seeing A flash through the clouds. The downed aircraft was flown by Lt. W.N. Chalifaux. The crewmembers were; N.B. Davis, co-pilot; A.F. Bauer, navigator; J.O. Orloff, engineer-gunner; J.C. O'Donnell, radio operator, and P.J. Panciocco, tail-gunner.

Lt. Chalifaux's remains were never recovered from the wreckage. Other crewmembers were identified by DNA tests. Closure has been slow in coming for the families. Hopefully there is some peace in knowing that these brave men died with honor and without prolonged suffering.

Another e-mail development centers on a planned expedition of scuba divers to the site off Kavieng, New Ireland, where the 498th's "Gremlin's Holiday" was ditched on February 15, 1944. The dive is scheduled for April of this year, and we will follow the event in more detail as the story develops.



499th SQUADRON

Ben F. Miller, Asst. Group VP

REMEMBER WHEN? While at the 13-mile strip near Port Moresby, we were told that thousands of bats would emerge from several of the nearby caves at dusk. Being young and curious we drove to a nearby valley. At twilight we heard an awful screeching noise followed by an endless ribbon of large bats coming from several caves. One of the fellows fired his .38 into the cloud of bats, but only brought down two. They were covered with fur, had a head like a small fox with gleaming eyes and large teeth. They had claws on all four feet, and we learned they slept suspended head down while hanging by their back feet. It would have been quite an experience to have one of these creatures land on your head! The floors of the caves were covered with a thick layer of foul smelling dung.

The History Channel featured a film of WWII that brought back memories of the night before we left Biak. We were assembled by the road, all packed. We had a huge fire consuming our beautiful furnishings and the road was full of military vehicles. Just like in the newsreels, shadows danced eerily on the ocean and the threatening jungle. The subject on everyone's mind was the upcoming move, and we wondered if we all would survive the ordeal. Late in the night our CO, Major Reinbold, treated us to Coke, followed by a very serious speech. His next speech was delivered on the

beach at Dulag, in the Philippines. No one sang.

When we set up camp, each tent was permitted one 40 watt light bulb. The fuel tank for the generator was filled with just the right amount of fuel to run until around 9:00 PM.

When it wasn't raining we had the most beautiful sky, looking ever so bright. The moon seemed much bigger and closer than at home. We often wondered if our loved ones were looking at the same moon. Since then we have put a man on the moon and entered a new century with nothing unusual happening except many of our group have passed 50 to 55 years of marriage.

On a flight to San Marcelino we saw black smoke from fires in Manila. Two Jap fighters stayed just out of range while they did their aerobatics. They were trying to sucker us into range of the shore batteries and they almost got us.

At that time my future brother-in-law was down there directing fire for the First Calvary artillery. Before I got to Manila, just a few days later a sniper had killed him. How different our lives might have been had he survived.

Some of our squadron members still insist on having a mini-reunion. The suggested time is early may. They propose the same place we went in the past. If interested let me know as soon as possible.

WRITER'S CRAMP..

(Editor's note): The **STRAFER** is proud to announce that the 345th Bomb Group's illustrious author, Peppy Blount (501), has produced a 360 page sequel to his book "We Band of Brothers." Peppy's new book is entitled "A Time For All Reasons" and is scheduled for publication in April 2001. Until recently, "We Band of Brothers" has not been available except from a secondary market supplier. That has now been changed with a second printing. The price of either book is \$28.00 per copy (including shipping and handling). If you wish to reserve copies of either or both you may do so by contacting: Ralph E. (Peppy) Blount, P.O. Box 1227, Longview, TX 75606-1227, Phone (903) 758-2733.

You do not need to send money with your order as you will be billed upon delivery.



500th SQUADRON

Stan Muniz, Ass't. Group VP

Now that the holidays have passed and I have a little time to relax, I got to thinking of holidays past and in particular the holidays I spent during World War II. One that comes to mind was Christmas Eve 1944. I was attending radio school in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I had the day off and had gone in to town to do some shopping and get a haircut. I think all the barbers on the base qualified for the job because of their previous experience as sheep shearers, which was why they treated every GIs head as if it was a sheep. No scissors to be found, only electric clippers! Anyway, as I was getting my haircut I was griping about the tar paper shacks we had for barracks. No central heat, just three little coal stoves that didn't give off enough heat to keep your canteen from freezing solid over night. Then there were the outdoor latrines. Getting up in the middle of the night to use the latrine in 25 to 30 degrees below zero was quite an experience. When I had finished spouting off one of the men waiting his turn for a haircut came over to me and said "Son, I know just how you feel, and I am sorry. You see, I am the contractor that built those barracks. They should never have been built here. The army sent us the wrong plans. Those temporary barracks were supposed to have been built in Biloxi, Mississippi, and the two story barracks, with steam heat and inside latrines that were

built there should have been built here!" Once again he said he was sorry and paid for my haircut (for which I was grateful, since money was short in those days). I left the barbershop and started shopping for a gift for my closest buddy, Cecil Riggs. I remembered he was constantly pulling up his coat collar because his neck was always cold. I found a nice wool muffler in olive drab (which was the height of fashion during that season) for him, and he loved it. Later I was in the local 5 & 10 cent store (Remember them?) and I saw those red and whited striped candy canes selling two for a nickel. There were twenty four cots in my barracks so I paid the young lady sixty cents, got my candy canes, but couldn't get her phone number, and returned to the base. That night I got up when everyone was asleep and hooked a candy cane over the bar on the foot of each cot, including my own. Christmas morning everyone was talking about the candy canes and wondering where they came from. I had to smile as I said to myself, "Yes, Virginia, there IS a Santa Claus -- or at least a helper."





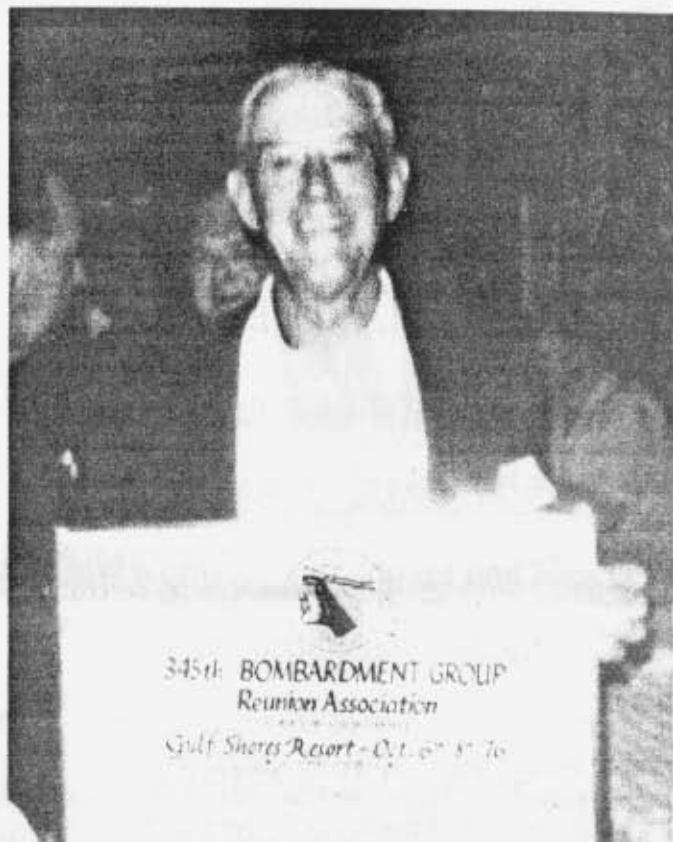
501st SQUADRON
Bill Cather, Ass't. Group VP

Here it is- two days before the New Year begins-too cold to fish, too cold to golf and no significant football game until tonight, so I may as well get started on the next STRAFER column. It's 20 degrees (F), which may not be cold to some of you, but brother that's cold in Alabama!

Back again to the history of 345th Bomb Group reunions--the first ones were real hell-raisers. Maybe that's what made them so much fun! In 1976 Bill Darwin and Jones Burson planned the meeting in sunny Gulf Shores, Alabama. The most memorable event was the sudden change in the weather. The day we arrived was sunny and warm enough to don bathing suits and get out on the beach. That night the temperature started dropping and nobody thought of the beach. By the next afternoon most of the attendees were huddled in their rooms with as many bottles of liquid heat as we could locate. If it hadn't been for Ed Bailey and his bottle of Ouzo I would have headed home. It turned so cold and raw we moved the elaborate Seafood Dinner off the pier. The American Legion Hall was the only place available, and though small and cramped, we all had a good time. The ladies were wine and dined at the Grand Hotel at Point Clear on Mobile Bay. A large group of the 501st was requested to leave one of the nicer restaurants.

We must have been having a real good time because there weren't many other customers around that October.

It was at this time that the 345th Bomb Group Reunion Association was formed and Col. Clint True was elected as our first president. Al Bosworth was elected to be the 501st VP, and the next reunion was scheduled for Colorado Springs in 1979.



Col. True with Plaque at Gulf Shores



An Airman's Toast

When the sands of time have passed away
 And we come to that last Judgement Day,
 May I hold my glass both high and steady,
 And toast the world, "I AM READY."



S/SGT. PAUL J. PANCIOCCO

**Parades and Epiphanies: Laying a War Hero
to Rest after 55 Years
by Julie Panciocco Macksoud**

I confess. Memorial Day and Veteran's Day and even the Fourth of July have not meant that much to me over the years. It's not that I am unpatriotic. Being part of the Bicentennial events on the Boston Esplanade in 1976 was a memorable experience, but, for the most part, these holidays seemed full of people I could not really relate to: Flag-waving military types marching in parades. Granted, my father served in the Air Force but didn't exactly see much action. **Stars & Stripes Forever** never made my favorite song list, but I have been on a remarkable journey, back through time that has changed me, and made me think differently about such matters. I have had the rare privilege of coming to know someone who died before I was even born. He died for his country. For my country.

His name was Paul J. Panciocco. He and I came from the same small back pocket of Boston, the hardworking, blue-collar town of Hyde Park. We were descended from the

same sturdy Italian stock that immigrated to America at the turn of the century (the last one). That's about all we have in common. He was my grandfather's younger brother and he died at the unpardonable age of 23. As a child, I remember being curious about the faded black and white photograph of dashing "Uncle Paully" and intrigued by the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death during World War II.

For 23 years he belonged to my family. For 22 months he belonged to Uncle Sam. For more than 47 years he was missing in action. Then in 1992, when two Philippine Nationals reported finding the wreckage of his plane, a B-25, and some remains on the small (but steep) island of Sibuyan, a God-forsaken, lizard-laden jungle in the Pacific. Unfortunately, it took the U.S. Government six more years to notify our family of this discovery. Red tape, you know. Paul's parents were long gone, of course, and his brother (my beloved grandfather, Rocco) had passed on as well. But Paul's sister, my Great Aunt Margaret, who is a spry 89, moved from Massachusetts to Maine in the 1970s and settled on Sebago Lake where she lives today with my Uncle Joe. They had no children. So it was my father who began to act as liaison. There were blood tests needed from all six families who lost men aboard that ill-fated mission in the early hours of January 9th, 1945. DNA would be compared to the eleven teeth and more than 100 bone fragments found scattered over the site.

For the past year and a half many unanswered questions have surfaced, many letters were written requesting more information and much anguish relived. My father, who has never been able to grasp the concept of retirement, launched a virtual campaign from Cape Cod to assist (provoke?) the government workers assigned to this case. He bought and taught himself to use a computer, going on-line to order all kinds of World War II books and maps. He spent hundreds of hours on e-mail trying to connect with people who had knowledge of the 345th Bomber Group, 498th Squadron. He educated himself on all facets of the failed air mission. And for the first time in our lives, we worked

together, as father and daughter, on a project, researching the whereabouts of other descendants of Paul's crew. They were from Illinois, Iowa, New Jersey, and New York. The eldest was 33. These are the facts, as they came to be dusted off. They were not the feelings. Those came later, gradually, and surprisingly.

My aunt entrusted us with a small, gray suitcase full of letters she had saved from her soldier brother. It was tied tight with an old blue ribbon. At Christmas time, 1999, I began to read Paul's letters aloud in my sister Lisa's kitchen in Hopkinton, MA. They were amazing. Neatly written with beautiful handwriting and full of corny phrases from the forties, such as "awfully swell" and "big lug" and "sitting pretty." They remain his legacy to us. What a Christmas present! The first letter was dated, coincidentally, on my father's eighth birthday, March 19, 1943. 2 of 3

It tells of his being shipped out from Fort Devens, MA. to Miami Beach, Florida, for eight weeks of intense basic training. He said they had to shine their shoes four times a day but "the chow is great." Paul had originally entered the service thinking he would train to become a mechanic. But after awhile, the lure of being a gunner overtook him. To his astonishment, he was good at this soldier business and kept succeeding. He tried to shield this information, however, from his parents, which was not that hard to do as they could not read or speak English very well.

I am especially fond of a letter he wrote to my father and his brother on April 7, 1943: "Gosh, I miss you two little rascals. I wish you were down here for a while, boy you would love it. I know you would be proud of me if you could see me in my snappy uniforms & zooming around here in airplanes. You pray for me and maybe someday I will fly right to Hyde Park in one of these big, big planes. You do pray for me, don't you? Well, I hope so because I ask God to bless you both every night."

Paul was a good kid; enchanted by the sights and sounds of a strange, southern city that he found "too damned beautiful." he went to church. He wrote his mother every day (at

first) and asked constantly about 'his girl' Mary. He was small and swift and started boxing. On April 15 he wrote his sister: "I had already heard that Mom was a citizen & am I proud. We are all Americans now. I wish I were home. I'll bet she was as happy as a kid with a new toy.. you are right about us Panciocco's, Mag. We are a tough outfit to lick."

Paul wrote a lot of letters. He told about the nosebleed he got the first time he flew, about pulling guard duty at 3AM, how hard it was to get by until payday, what he wouldn't do for a cold beer! He wrote of his journey across America by train, before being shipped overseas. It was not something the average boy from Hyde Park would normally experience. He was genuinely appreciative and shared his wonder and excitement about what was happening to him in writing. He shared his worries and concerns as well, about his buddies and his fading hope of love with Mary (who eventually did break their engagement and his heart). Paul wrote about his bouts with malaria (something even a boxer could not out spar), and a nagging sense of not returning from the war. He just had a feeling.

After weeks of reading these pieces of the past, they became a kind of diary to me. I started to know Paul, to like him. I was familiar with his handwriting, his sweet expressions, the high he felt upon each accomplishment, and the ultimate low that waited for him as the stacks of letters dwindled down to their inevitable and inescapable ending. It was awful. Like watching a movie you never expected to enjoy. Just when it starts to get really good, you recall that you have already read the book and know how it is going to end. Badly. Paul's ending was somewhat ironic. He had just returned from a hospital in New Guinea, having suffered another setback in the tropical disease arena, which was common for many servicemen. He was officially listed as "back up crew" at that point when a Staff Sergeant took sick himself and needed to be replaced. Paul was the replacement. The B-25 took off at 4:30 A.M. from Tacloban Air Strip on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. A far cry from the narrow garden paths of his father's home on Garfield Avenue. The target

destination was approximately 550 miles northwest. They were one of 18 planes headed to Luzon in poor weather conditions. They never made it. Someone said about the Philippines "every cloud has a rock in it," and in fact we did lose more planes to the weather than to the Japanese.

One hundred and eighty miles into the flight there was a bright flash and a loud explosion. Mt. GuitingGuiting which remains today untouched by the modern world had appeared suddenly and in an instant (we hope) he was gone. Paul was classified as missing-in-action, the second worst string of three words in the world. My aunt kept the delicate telegram that meant she would never see her brother again. The war ended seven months later.

The investigation is over. Finally, as my family now prepares to lay Paul's remains to rest in the cemetery in the town he never got to come home to, I can't help but reflect on all the lives Paul touched in his brief 23 years. And the ones he touched long after he left this world. The man he replaced is still alive. He is in his eighties now, living in Florida. That Christmas afternoon when we read Paul's long forgotten words was the first time I ever saw my father cry. Paul's sweetheart, Mary, turned out to be the aunt of one of my college friends who presented me with the gift of his letters to her family which makes us feel related somehow. My Aunt Margaret now has peace of mind (not necessarily peace of heart) that can help her close this painful wound, left raw with uncertainty for so many years. As for me, I look at the blessing of my own sons and wonder about the boy named Paul with the laughing brown eyes of my grandfather. He never got to show off his uniform to his nephews, marry the girl of his dreams, or buy a home of his own. He never got to have children, count the days to retirement, or reminisce as a veteran. And it occurs to me, not without more than a little discomfort, that I have missed the point of many a parade.

Rest in peace, Uncle Paul.

Oils Well That Ends Well

Contributed by Quinton Giuliani (501st)

One morning in early 1945 I arrived at the Tacloban airstrip on Leyte to service the B-25J that had been assigned to me. As I jumped out of the weapons carrier I looked up at those eight 50's in the nose. I was horrified to see that they were all a rusty brown in color! (If you recall, the J's were equipped with a total of eighteen 50's, and they were all covered with rust!) I ran back to the tail to check the number thinking, "No way in hell is this MY airplane!" I stood there staring at those numbers a long time, but no matter how long or how hard I stared the numbers stayed the same. It was No. 44-29571--my plane!

As an Armorer I took great pride in having all my 50's return from a mission empty. I went to work on those rusty old guns almost in frenzy. No way was my plane to go on a mission and have a couple of guns freeze up. Every bullet had to count.

The next day, arriving back from a mission, the pilot and co-pilot came out of that plane laughing. They told me what had happened--but no laugh came out of me. I had those guns so saturated with oil that when they were fired oil flew all over the windshield! I still get cold sweats thinking about the pilot and co-pilot straining to see through oil covered windshield while flying a combat mission.

Thank God they remained composed about the situation. As I recall, they removed their shirts and reached out the side windows to wipe off as much oil as possible. It was remarkable that they were able to land the plane unscathed under the circumstances.

There wasn't a lot said between Frank Hansen, the crew chief, and me. We just plodded along cleaning up that mess, and we only stopped when No. 44-29571 was shining like a new dime.

I'm sorry I can't remember the names of the crew members but I'm sure, even after all these many years, that has to be one of their favorite war stories. I only hope they don't remember my name, because it's quite possible they might tell the story to someone that knows me. However I can't deny it was mea culpa, BIG TIME MEA CULPA!

BULLETIN BOARD

LOST SHEEP...

The following persons are considered to be "Lost Sheep." Their copies of the December issue of the **STRAFER** were returned by the U.S. Post Office marked "Undeliverable."

Howard P. Akerly (501)
James T. Caldwell (501)
John S. Kinney (499)
Ralph M. Knowles (501)
Walter R. Nass (499)
William D. Sellards (498)
Carl A. Strauss (700)

If you have information concerning the present address of anyone listed as a "Lost Sheep" please let your Squadron VP, the Treasurer, or your **STRAFER** editor know.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you plan to move, you must notify the Treasurer, or your 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.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The next issue of the **STRAFER** will be mailed in **June**. Please submit your contribution of photos, notes and articles no later than **May 5, 2000**.

TREASURER'S NOTE: Association dues for the year 2001 are past due. Check the date on your mailing label to see if you are current (2001). Still only \$15.00. Make your check payable to the **345TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION** and mail to:

Gerard J. Murphy
6745 Bonnieview
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

SICK CALL; Henry C. Blackwell (500) is recovering from a stroke. He would very much like to receive a card or letter from his friends. His address is: P.O. Box 428, Adamsville, AL 35005-0428. No phone calls please.

IN MEMORY OF...

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

- ✓ **Lester E. Darnell** (498),) 05-95,
Corunna, MI.
- ✓ **Helen Dusenberry** (500), wife of Charles
Dusenberry, 04-00, Zanesville, OH.
- ✓ **Leander A. Grosse** (501), 01-16-00,
Eagan, MN.
- ✓ **George W. Harding** (499), 08-27-00,
Spokane, WA.
- ✓ **William E. Rushworth** (499), 08-26-00,
LaQuinta, CA.
- ✓ **Robert J. Lemay** (499), 06-02-99,
Manchester, NH.
- ✓ **Michael Scott** (501), date unknown,
Tampa, FL.
- ✓ **Harold Springer** (499), 08-03-00,
Sylvania, OH.
- ✓ **Richard D. St. John** (501), 11-21-00,
Raleigh, NC.
- ✓ **Sidney Strassheim** (500), 06-08-00,
New York, NY.
- ✓ **Renee Stratton** (500), wife of Morris Stratton,
11-06-00, Normal, IL.
- ✓ **Milan Vosevich** (498), 01-21-01,
Avon, IN.

SEEKING: James O. Hanesworth (501) is looking for information about the whereabouts of Melton Harper (Pilot) and Frank Flannagan (Co-pilot). If you can help please contact him at: 4508 E 200 S, Lot 478, Kokomo, IN 46902-4282.

NEW WEBSITE: <<http://rmv.to/UncleJack>>
The nephew of George "Jack" Voiter (499) has initiated this Air Apache site in honor of his uncle. It includes pictures of "Lady Ruth", guest book, bulletin board and much more. Drop by and say "Hi!" to Richard.

FORGET THE ALOMO- REMEMBER SAN DIEGO !!!!!
SEE YOU THERE



|||||
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Norman OK 73069-6524

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