

"AIR APACHES"

SYMBIAN

VOLUME 22, ISSUE 4 345TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2004

# Remember Pearl Harbor! "Lest we forget"

*December 7th marks the 63rd anniversary of the event that thrust America into World War 2, the attack on Pearl Harbor.*

Pearl Harbor, on the island of O'ahu, Hawaii, (then a territory of the United States) was attacked by the Japanese Imperial Navy at approximately 8:00 am., Sunday morning, December 7th, 1941. The surprise attack had been conceived by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. The striking force of 353 Japanese aircraft was led by Commander Mitsuo Fuchida. There had been no formal declaraton of war. Approximately 100 ships of the U.S. Navy were present in the harbor that morning, consisting of battleships, destroyers, cruisers and various support ships. Fortunatley, over half the U.S. Pacific fleet was out to sea, including the carriers.

Two destroyers, the USS Cassin and the USS Downes were in dry dock #1 (with the USS Pennsylvania). The USS Shaw was in floating dry dock #2, approximately 200 yards to the west. The USS Ogala was moored next to the USS Helena, near the "1010" dock, Naval Ship Yard. Two heavy cruisers, the USS New Orleans and the USS San Francisco were in the Navy Repair Basin. Simultaneously, nearby Hickam Field was also the victim of the surprise attack by the Japanese, 18 Army Aircorps aircraft, including bombers and a few fighters and attack bombers were destroyed or damaged on the ground. A few U.S. fighters made it into the air against the invaders.

A total of 29 Japanese aircraft were shot down by ground fire and U.S. pilots from various military installations on O'ahu. The following is a list of the ships destroyed.

USS Arizona	(BB39)	Battleship
USS West Virginia	(BB48)	Battleship
USS California	(BB44)	Battleship
USS Oklahoma	(BB37)	Battleship
USS Nevada	(BB36)	Battleship
USS Pennsylvania	(BB38)	Battleship
USS Tennessee	(BB43)	Battleship
USS Maryland	(BB46)	Battleship
USS Vestral	(AR4)	Repairship
USS Neosho	(AO23)	Oiler
USS Detroit	(CL8)	Light cruiser
USS Raleigh	(CL7)	Light cruiser
USS Utah	(AG16)	Target ship
USS Tangier	(AV8)	Seaplane tender

## WHAT'S INSIDE

*President's Message*

*Evolution of the B-25 - Part 2*

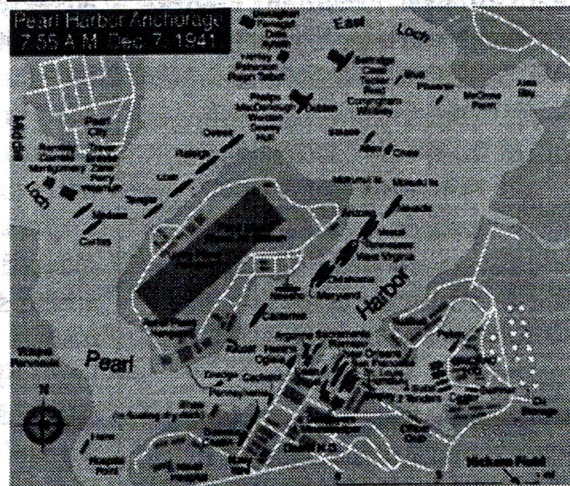
*"War Medals" Part 2*

*"Joining the 345th"*

*Squadron Reports*

*Bulletin Board*

*And More!*







# From the Editor

## Cliff Dillard

Hello all, and welcome to another edition of the Strafer. The holiday season is upon us once again, Thanksgiving has already come and gone, I think I gained 10 pounds from all the get-togethers we attended! It seems that no matter how many different "Turkey Day" dinners you go to, you always end up eating more than you intended. I know that Christmas is just around the corner because Wal-Mart has their decorations on display. Of course, they had those up two days after Halloween! I hope everyone has their shopping taken care of. I don't, but then again it's not December the 24th yet! Walking through the local mall, I can't help thinking I'd rather be on a B-25 during a low-level strafing run than trying to work my way through the holiday crowds. Tracers are easier to see coming at you!

I would like to express my sympathy on behalf of the entire 345th over the death of past-President George Mordecai and also Lynn Daker's wife, Bing. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the friends and families of both of these very special people.

I am really excited about the 498th squadron web site project. I have always enjoyed listening to my father's stories about his time in the Pacific and it would be great to have a resource for stories and information from other people as well. I would also like to see as much information on the B-25 as possible.

It would be nice to have an entire section dedicated to the aircraft used by the "Air Apache's", starting with the trainers and working up to the final days of the war. This section could include: pictures, technical drawings, serial numbers, markings, specifications and especially comments from the men who flew them. This information could of great use to: historians, authors, students, aviation buffs and those interested in building model aircraft, both static and flying. In addition to aircraft articles, the site should obviously contain memories from the men who were there. (WWII) These stories could be of anything and everything our members wish to submit. From boot camp to their most memorable missions, from the serious to the sublime and everything in-between.

I feel these stories should do more than just serve as an historical account of the 345th's existence, it should provide the world with a concise look into the character and personalities of the young men who answered the call-of-duty and served their country with everything they had, including their lives. From what I have seen is being taught in our public schools today, in a few short generations, the epic struggle that was fought to preserve our way of life will be reduced to a few small paragaphs in a high-school history book. To make matters worse, some schools are now beginning to teach that America attacked the Japanese first! Its a shame we can't just teach it like it was without worrying about hurt feelings!

## Treasurer's Report

Listed below are the Group Assets, as of October 31, 2004.

Checking Account:

Wachovia Bank, Burlington NC  
\$2,439.47

Money Market:

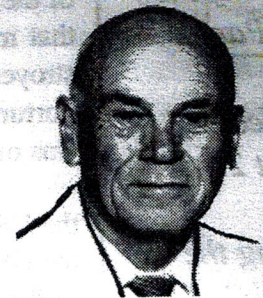
Vanguard Prime Money Market  
\$24,925.29

ARTICLE V, SECTION 3 of our bylaws state in part: "Dues become due on January 1 of each year and shall be payable on later than January 31 of that year". The annual dues are \$15.00 and should be made payable to

"345th Bomb Group Association"

Checks should be mailed to :

Edwin F. Sharpe, Treasurer  
3860 Wesley Court  
Burlington, NC 27215-9729



## CORRECTION

In the last issue, I inadvertently failed to give Don Wagner credit for the 500th squadron's article "The Uniform" on page 9. Fortunately, Don is still speaking to me, so I guess we are still buddies!

Happy Holidays!



# Group President

*Frank L. Dillard*

By the time you receive this issue of the STRAFER Thanksgiving will be a memory and it will be time to Remember Pearl Harbor, wish all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! But where did 2004 go? My year has been full of exciting events. I married, and we have traveled extensively. Then, I was honored to be elected president of this wonderful organization, and privileged to have such a great staff for support.

The recent passing of Lynn Daker's wife, "Bing," and George Mordecai saddened us all. I knew George was not feeling well at Reno, but he still managed to serve as our president in spite of his illness. Our hearts go out to Lynn, Evelyn, and their families.

While leafing through the Group roster a few days ago, I noticed the name and address of Col. Glenn Doolittle. I believe he is the last surviving 345th Bomb Group commander. Although I was never privileged to fly with him, a fellow crewmember, Ray LeTourneau, was his tail gunner on the famous "Battle of Ormac Bay" mission (for which Ray was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross). I told Col. Doolittle next year's reunion was to be held in Washington, DC, and urged him to join us. He promised to consider it.

Your reunion committee is actively working on the many details associated with reunion 2005. If you have a suggestion regarding tour preferences or any

other matter please let me know.

Washington has so many places of interest and historical importance it will be difficult to shorten the list to include the ones the majority would enjoy. Our hotel will extend the discounted room rate for three days prior to, and three days after the scheduled event. Considering the present rate for good hotels in the Washington vicinity this is a real bargain. Why not book an extended stay and re-discover American History? This time you won't have to remember dates and there is no test.

Ira Schaub was in Washington recently. He was disappointed that our names were not engraved on the WWII Memorial walls. He did take the trouble to record the entire 498th roster, as it appeared in the old squadron book, entitled, "Falcon." You other Squadron VP's should follow his lead. Most everyone tends to postpone the simple task of paying annual Association dues. When that happens our secretary, "Doc" Pearson, must go to the trouble and expense of contacting you by mail with a delinquency notice. This is an unnecessary drain on his time and Association assets ("Doc", I paid-honest). Our treasurer, Ed Sharpe, has done a commendable job of stretching our resources through conservative investments. It would be nice if we could reduce or eliminate dues altogether, but with our dwindling membership we would soon be insolvent. Our funds are necessary to fulfill our obligations to serve our Life Members, widows of



members, those financially burdened, pay the expenses of publishing the STRAFER, other operating costs, and certain reunion related items.

You might consider a Christmas gift of Associate Membership to a son, daughter, or grandchild. It's only \$15 and it would help to maintain our status as a viable organization. The 345th Membership is a highly mobile group. Equally important to your annual contribution of dues, we also need to know your current address, phone number and e-mail address, if you are online. It is a real mess when copies of the STRAFER are returned for lack of a reliable address. It takes an undue amount of time (and additional expense) to re-route mail. Please consider, we are unpaid volunteers and have many things we would rather be doing.

Mike Hasslbauer has been working to establish a web site for the 498th Squadron. This is part of a plan to develop a central depository for photos, newspaper clippings and other suitable material relative to the 498th Squadron. He plans to coordinate with Paul Van Valkenburg to develop a link to Paul's 345th Bomb Group web page in the near future. Ultimately, we hope to have a similar web page for each of the four squadrons with interconnecting links to the central web site.



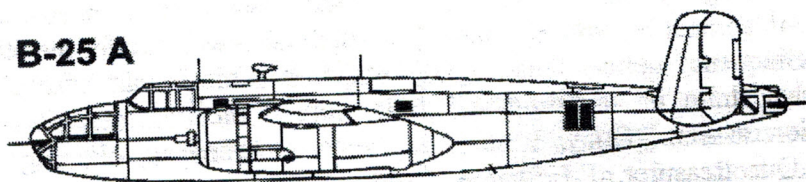
# The Evolution of the B-25 Mitchell

## Part II: Into the Fray

When the first B-25's were sent into combat in 1941, it quickly became apparent, that good as the original design was, the rigors of war were going to require certain modifications to the aircraft in order for both the ship and crew to come home in one piece. Following the initial development and production of the first twenty-four B-25's the USAAF ordered forty B-25A's. This model was the first true production version of the aircraft. In addition to the new broken dihedral wings and larger vertical stabilizers, the "A" also addressed some areas of concern encountered with the original design, namely the addition of armored areas for the crew and self-sealing fuel tanks. These changes were well received by the crews who flew them,

These improvements came at a cost, however, as the Mitchell gained weight, performance suffered. Top speed dropped from 322 mph to 315 mph, while the effective range was reduced by 750 miles to 1,350 miles.

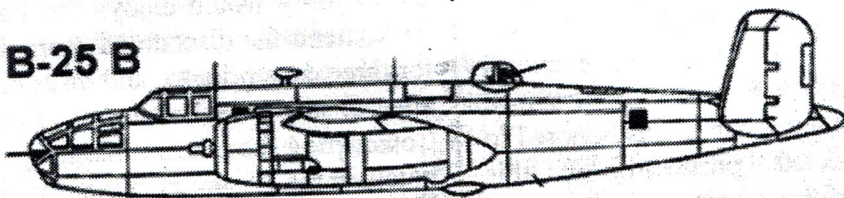
B-25 A



The service ceiling fell from 30,000 ft. to 27,000. The Mitchell could still carry a 3,000lb bomb load. Of the forty B-25As built, six went to the 44th Bombardment Group at McDill AAF; six went to the 39th BG at Felts AAF; six went to the 30th BG at Esler AAF; six

went to the 43rd BG Bangor, Maine; one went to Wright AAF where it stayed until a B-25B became available and the remaining fifteen B-25As went to the 17 BG at McCord AAF.

B-25 B

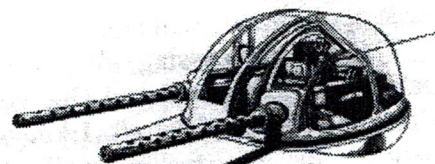


### The "B" Arrives

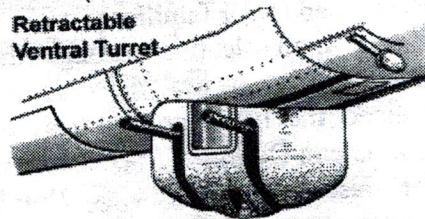
Early missions had shown that an unarmed bomber was no match for enemy fighters, even with an armed escort. To increase the Mitchell's chances of surviving an aerial attack, designers incorporated two new turrets into the "B" one mounted in a dorsal position towards the rear of the fuselage and one mounted underneath, in the ventral position. The ventral turret was retractable, to help diminish aerodynamic drag, but

ultimately proved very unpopular with gunners who complained of vertigo and the airsickness that came with it. It was finally discontinued on the H model. A total of 120 B-25Bs were built, although only 119 were actually delivered as one happened to crash

before delivery. An unknown number of B-25Bs went to the US Navy and were designated as PBJ-1 and were used as land-based patrol bombers to hunt and kill submarines.



Dorsal Turret - B-25 B Model



Retractable Ventral Turret

The B-25B was to take part in perhaps the most famous raid of the war, The Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, Japan. The ventral turrets were removed to make room for a fuel cell which raised fuel capacity to 1,141 gallons. The Norden bombsight was also replaced with the Mark Twain site. Although all 16 planes were lost in the mission, most of the crews survived. To prevent a similar occurrence the Japanese kept four front-line fighter groups at home, out of the war.



# The B-25 C/D

On September 28, 1940 the Army ordered an updated version of the B-25 featuring a number of modifications dictated by combat experience. This was the first of the series to see mass production with a total of 1,625 aircraft from the Ingelwood, Califor-

The gross combat weight now stood at 33,500 pounds on both models. Despite the extra 100 horsepower of the new engines, top speed slipped to 282 mph.

A number of Cs and Ds were field-fitted with four, fixed .50 caliber machine guns in the plexiglass nose, which was painted over, and were used in the low-level strafing role with devastating effect against ground targets. I'd say the 345th veterans "may" know a thing or two about that!

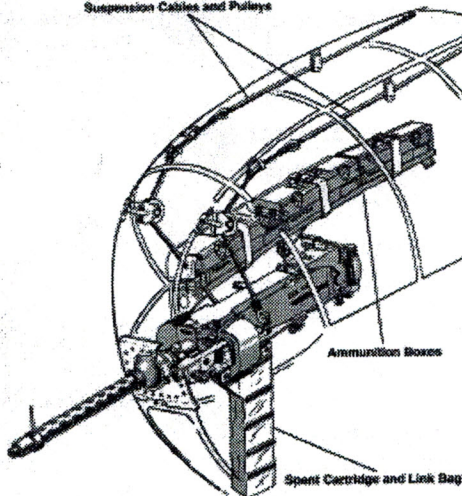
Two B-25Cs were modified to become the XB-25E and the XB-25F, these were the first Mitchells to be given an X designation. The XB-25E was fitted with hot-air de-icers for the wings and tail surfaces while the XB-25F received thermo de-icers in the same locations. These projects were eventually dropped as most Mitchells were being used in tropical or semi-tropical areas.

nia plant (the "C" model) and 2,290 from the Kansas City plant (the "D" model). Other than the fact that the two types were manufactured in different plants, the C and D were exactly the same aircraft. Deliveries began in January 1942.

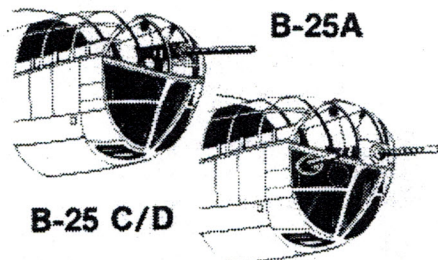
The autopilot that had been installed in the "Doolittle Raiders" was fitted as standard equipment and the Wright R-2600-9 engines were replaced with the more powerful R-2600-13 featuring Holley carburetors. A de-icer system, a 24-volt electrical system and larger wing tanks, plus a removable bomb bay tank were also fitted. The bomb bay was enlarged and external fittings to carry bombs under the wings and a short torpedo under the fuselage were added. The .30 caliber nose machine gun was replaced by a .50 caliber gun and another fixed .50 caliber to be fired by the pilot was added to the nose. An astrodome was added as a blister on the upper forward fuselage to allow the navigator to take star or sun fixes more easily.

The Mitchell's were by now extremely popular with the Armed Services and their crews alike. From Russia to Rabaul, from England to Egypt - the B-25 was used in every theater in the war and was proving itself very well-suited to modification, as the Japanese were beginning to discover in the Pacific, much to their chagrin!

Flexible .50 Caliber Nose Gun  
Suspension Cables and Pulleys



## Nose Variations



In the next issue of the Strafer, we will conclude this series with a look at the B-25s development from the G through the J, as well as some specialty Mitchells that never saw production, including the proposed "Super Strafer"

by: *Cliff Dillard*



# War Medals: Part 2

by: *Cliff Dillard*

This is the second installment of the story on obtaining the service medals which you may have earned while overseas during WWII. As stated in the first part of this two-part article, you may have more success ordering these awards from an on-line supplier. There are a number of Internet-based companies that specialize in military merchandise, but the two that look the most promising are [www.usmedals.com](http://www.usmedals.com) and [www.soldiercity.com](http://www.soldiercity.com). Along with medals, both sites offer other military products such as: ribbons, t-shirts, hats, patches and a whole host of other items. I hope this information proves useful.



## Good conduct

**Criteria:** Exemplary conduct, efficiency and service during three years of active enlisted service with the U.S. Army (1 year during wartime)

**Devices:** Bronze, silver, gold knotted bar



## Air Medal

**Criteria:** Heroic action or meritorious service while participating in aerial flight, but not of a degree that would justify an award of the Distinguished Flying Cross

**Attachments:** Bronze or silver oak leaf cluster



## Distinguished Flying Cross

**Criteria:** Heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

**Attachments:** Bronze or silver oak leaf cluster



## Silver Star

**Criteria:** Gallantry in action against an armed enemy of the United States or while serving with friendly foreign forces.

**Attachments:** Bronze or silver oak leaf cluster



## Army Commendation

**Criteria:** Heroism, meritorious achievement or meritorious service.

**Attachments:** Bronze letter V (for valor), bronze or silver oak leaf cluster



## Distinguished Service Cross

**Criteria:** Extraordinary heroism in action against an enemy of the U.S. or while serving with friendly foreign forces

**Attachments:** Bronze or silver oak leaf clusters



## Prisoner of War

**Criteria:** Awarded to any member of the US Armed Forces taken prisoner during armed conflict dating from WWI.



## WWII Victory

## Commemorative

**Criteria:** Awarded for service in US Armed Forces between 1941 and 1946.



## United States Army Service

## Commemorative

**Criteria:** Awarded for service in US Armed Forces between 1941 and 1946.



## Combat Service

## Commemorative

**Criteria:** Awarded for all who served in US Armed Forces during combat operations between 1941 and 1946.



## Overseas Service

## Commemorative

**Criteria:** Awarded for all who served in US Armed Forces overseas between 1941 and 1946.



## Victory over Japan

## Commemorative

**Criteria:** Struck to honor all soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen who served in the US Armed Forces in the Pacific Theatre in WWII.



# 498th "Falcons"

*Mike Hasselbauer Assistant Group Vice-President*



First off, I have to tell those of you that gave me their address for some of the pictures of our Squadron dinner that I apologize for the delay. I still have them and am intending to get them out this month (Dec), as most of you know, this a very busy time of year for everyone.

There was some talk of a golf outing at the next reunion. any takers? All I know is that I want some strokes on Melvin Best! I have not gotten any reports on golf conditions in the NE from Gordon Evans but I can tell you this, they are great in the SW, come on down! Actually, I have not had time for golf, lest you think I have completely wasted my time.

I have been working on getting a website established for the 498<sup>th</sup>. We are to the point where I need some input from you! We need to decide on a domain name. Bear in mind that they cost an annual fee and many with commercial value are already in use. Some examples you might consider are Falcons498th.com or Treetopterrors.com. How about some suggestions? I have an offer to have a server provided at no charge. We can also possibly have email addresses for those of you that would like such as [Bob@Falcons498th.com](mailto:Bob@Falcons498th.com). I have some talent lined up to provide some sizzle to the site but you also need to give me the direction you want. Do you want a roster with phone numbers and addresses? Look at some other sites and let me

what direction you want the site to go in. In order to get as many ideas for the site name as possible, we are going to hold a little contest to choose the best one. The name should share a common bond with the 345th, it could incorporate the "Falcon" squadron title, or be something completely different, that's the idea behind the contest, to get as many ideas to draw from as we can. One of the goals of the new site is to serve as a receiving area for veteran's stories, historical information and other items of interest. This information could then be linked, or added directly to the Group website. So put on your thinking caps and help us give this site a name we can all be proud of! Feel free to enter as many names as you wish, (kind of like elections in Chicago: Vote early, vote often!.) Suggestions can be mailed to me at my home address: 7170 East Hacienda La Colorande, Gold Canyon, AZ 85218.

Stay tuned for further developments in this riveting, high-stakes drama, or just wait for the next issue of the Strafer to magically appear on your doorstep to see if your suggestion will be the one to appear for all to see on the information super-highway. We will certainly have a section for pictures and documents, of that much much we are certain, but we need suggestions from all our association members in order to make this site as enjoyable and as useful as possible. look for an update on the website project in the next issue of the Strafer, until we meet again....

## Things to say about a gift you don't like.

1. Hey, now there's a gift!
2. Well, well, well...
3. Boy, if I had not recently shot up 4 sizes that would've fit.
4. This is perfect for wearing around the basement.
5. Gosh, I hope this never catches fire! It is fire season though. There are lots of unexplained fires.
6. If the dog buries it, I'll be furious!
7. I love it - but I fear the jealousy it will inspire.
8. Sadly, tomorrow I enter the Federal Witness Protection Program.
9. It's a shame that I vowed to give all my gifts to charity this year.
10. I really don't deserve this.





# 499th "Bats Outa Hell"

*Ben Miller Assistant Group Vice-President*

Some time ago I mentioned belly Sturrets on B-25's and several members told me I was all confused in my old age. When at our last reunion I purchased a book about Pappy Gunn, the man who modified our planes into strafers, and if you read this book will see that I wasn't off base. When I was at McDill field in Florida my outfit had some of those streamlined, beautiful B-26's. We also had two B-25's, which looked like grasshoppers by comparison. Whenever new cadets they had to prove they could fly by taking flights in Mitchells. They tried to use the "26's" for low-level flying and coined a new phrase in the process, "A plane a day in Tampa Bay." One day a crew flew too low and hit the water with the props, shooting the bombardier and the Plexiglas nose into the bay. When the crew returned to the base they were, needless to say, a bit excited about the bombardier's loss. You can imagine their surprise when he walked up, all wet, having been rescued from his un-planned ditching! Remember all the wrecked B-26's cracked-up along the short 13-mile runway? There used to be an Australian Ack-Ack gun on the end with the river and I'm told that the swamp on the other end still contains a 499<sup>th</sup> plane that pulled the wheels up too soon. Our last reunion was one of the best ever, and my hat is off to all the people who set it up.

Our next reunion, in Washington D.C. should be as good, if not better. The thought of a group of B-25's being there and perhaps giving rides sounds great. The National WWII Memorial will also be something to see. I can't wait! The last time we were there they were in the process of pouring the footings. It sure is bigger than we ever thought it would be.

Soon the holidays will be here. From Thanksgiving until the end of the year there will be a shopping feeding frenzy at the local malls, which is maddening for most men and should be avoided like the plague. How can women really enjoy this? Christmas is supposed to celebrate the birth on our savior, but all the merchants have put most of that aside in favor of Santa Claus. Remember how the Japanese always pulled a raid, if possible on the holidays? They never forgot our 4<sup>th</sup> of July or Christmas.

Speaking of the holidays, who can forget the traditional Christmas meals, I remember when Captain Max. B. Ferguson took a group of 20 to Biak as the advance echelon and I was one of them. It was on the equator and water was scarce. The first 5 days we were there we had over 50 alerts and air raids. We slept with our shoes on. While there we noticed a disabled Jap artillery piece nearby. We sat by it one day to eat lunch, and actually had peaches, which was a rare treat, unfortunately the big green flies also noticed the peaches and we had them on our spoons for every bite.

Since the flies refused to give up their spot on the spoons, we made a contest out of it. We counted how many flies a GI could eat with one bite. The winning number was 8 while the runner-up had 7. Guess who came in second?

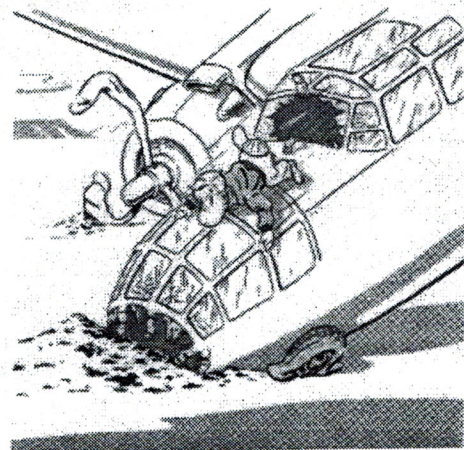
Values and choices of entertainment certainly do change during war. Norma and I wish all a blessed holiday season. Give thanks every morning when you open your eyes and discover you are still with us.

God Bless,  
Ben and Norma Miller

## Look familiar?

The cartoon below was taken from the B-25 flight manual, according to the source on the Internet. If anyone has a copy of this manual, the editor would like a copy to use as reference material and just to have for his own personal collection.

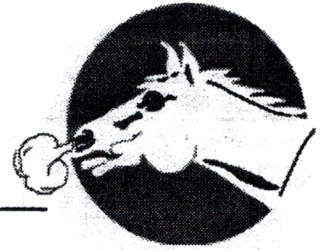
**Caution** Don't use brakes until nose wheel is on runway. Braking before nose wheel is lowered causes it to be thrown violently to the ground.





# 500th "Rough Raiders"

*"Joining the 345th" by: Don Wagner*



We arrived at Biak from California during the latter part of February, 1945. My crew consisted of: Bud Holm, Copilot, Reed "Robbie" Robinson, Navigator, "Pug" Pugatch, Radio operator "Ray", Stenlake, Armorer/Gunner and "Bob" Hadzor, Engineer. We received orders upon arrival to report to Nadzab for "in-theater" familiarization and training. The program was to be six to eight weeks we were told, but we flew four clean-up type missions on Rabaul and other locations in the first three weeks and I was called into the CO's office and told that our training was over.

The New Guinea troop carrier, a C-47 outfit known as the "Tokyo Trolley" flew us back to Biak, where we were to meet with Major Max Mortinson. He had flown a crew into Biak to pick up a new plane at the depot there and would be our transportation to the Philippines. We spent the night at Biak and during the evening saw a movie in an outdoor theater. The MP's picked up a Japanese soldier in American fatigues who had sneaked in from the jungle, stole some clothes off a line, got into a chow-line had a meal and was sitting in the back row enjoying the movie when he got caught!

We took off the next day for Peleliu Island, in the Palau Island group, an enroute stop to the Philippines liberated and held by the Marines. We found upon arrival that officers were accommodated in quonson huts, but enlisted men went into tents close to the swamps.

We made everyone 2nd Lieutenants for the one-night stay, telling the Marines we were all replacement pilots. The Marines bought our story and it was a decent night's sleep for all. Upon arrival in San Marcellino we were assigned the 500th squadron, which had the most crew loss. I was assigned to a tent, which had five "jockstraps" hanging from a nail on the center post. I was about to be indoctrinated into the meaning of "He hung his jock". I also remember that although everyone was pleasant, it wasn't until I'd completed my fifth mission that anyone really became "buddy-buddy" with me. I came to realize that you wanted to make sure a guy was going to be around a while before you got too close to him. I flew three missions as a co-pilot before I flew as aircraft commander with my crew. I have always been proud of being an "Air Apache" and as "Peppy" Blount named us in his book "We Band of Brothers."

## Panic in Manila?

The following article was clipped from a Philippine newspaper when the 345th moved into Clark Field in 1945.

### MANILA FACES DIRE T-DAY - ALL TRAFFIC WILL GO TO RIGHT

BY DON CASWELL

MANILA, May 31. - (UP) - Tomorrow is the day traffic switches to the right hand side of the road in Manila.

Tomorrow is the day I plan to stay in bed.

In the nearly three and one-half years as a war correspondent I never sweated over any D-Day as much as I dread tomorrow.

In Manila, traffic keeps to the left - when it isn't in the center or on the right or going up a one-way street the wrong way.

Tens of thousands of Army vehicles struggle though swarming pedestrians, carretelas, side-car bicycles and pushcarts. A carretela, incidentally, is a Manila institution - a high two-wheeled cart carrying two to 19 people, depending on their waistlines. It is powered by a tiny descendant of the early Spanish horse, which hasn't improved much on the prehistoric horse - doubtless due to smoking Filipino cigarettes during colthood.

Americans who have kept to the left in Australia and New Guinea and all the intervening islands for more than three years will have a tough time relearning their youthful habits.

The Army has displayed an understandable nervousness about the changeover. Originally it was scheduled for April, then postponed to May 1, and finally moved to June 1.

*Thanks to Vic Tatelman for submitting this article, just goes to show that the Army had other things to worry about than the Japanese!*





# 501st "Black Panthers"

## *Paul Van Valkenberg*

*Assistant Group Vice-President*

It is a great honor to be asked to assume the role of vice-president of the 501<sup>st</sup> Bomb squadron. I want to thank Quint Guliani and George Mordicai for their vote of confidence in my ability to handle this responsibility. I will do my best to live up to their expectations.

For those of you who do not know me, I am the son of Richard "Dick" Van Valkenburg. Dad was an armorer with the 501<sup>st</sup>, original cadre. Dad died in 1986. I regret that I never got to talk with him about his time with the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. It wasn't until I inherited his discharge paperwork that I learned of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. It took me a couple of years to track down any history of the 345<sup>th</sup> but luckily I was able to find a mention of a reunion on the internet and with a little more digging I was able to make contact with then 501<sup>st</sup> VP Lynn Lee. Since that time I have been fortunate to have been able to attend the last six or so reunions. I have made many new friends at these reunions and have always learned something new about the Group at each one.

As for myself, I live in upstate New York, about midway between Syracuse and Binghamton. My wife Janice and I have three beautiful daughters, twins Heidi and Kate, 14 years old, and Gail 8 years old. I have been a police officer for the New York State University Police at Cortland for 16 years.

I am a police firearms instructor and department weapons armorer.

I'm told that the biggest part of the job will be writing the piece for the Strafer. I am not much of a writer but will do my best to put something together that I hope will be of interest to you. With that said, I want to encourage you to send me idea's and material to write about. If you don't feel like you can write something just give me a call. I would really like to hear the "untold stories" that haven't been published yet. These do not have to be the "combat" stories (although these would still be appreciated) but also the stories of everyday life in camp or on leave. Having been to several reunions now I have heard many of these stories...how to cool beer with aviation fuel, and how to make "improvised" filters for aviation instruments just to name a couple. Stories of your leaves to Australia or Manila would be great. Don't worry, I can change names to protect "the innocent" and clean them up if need be. I would also like to get your thoughts on where you would like to see the direction of the reunion association to be heading. If you have suggestions on reunion locations, dates, activities, or the like, please pass them on to me. I would also encourage you to enlist family members to join the reunion association as an associate member. Your sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will be the future of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. The 2005 reunion is scheduled for Washington, DC.

This would be the perfect time to invite family members to accompany you to the reunion. This reunion is being hosted by the 500<sup>th</sup> squadron and plans are underway to make this a very special event. Ever thought about flying in a B25 "just one more time"? This may be your opportunity. If all goes as planned there will be a number of B25's as well as other vintage warbirds available to view and get a flight in. This past reunion in Reno saw a significant increase in family attendance. Lets see if we can increase those numbers even more for next years Washington, D.C. reunion. If you haven't already done so, now is the time to think about gathering your photo collections, letters, and other memorabilia and making arrangements to pass them on to family members who can appreciate the sacrifices you made during the war.

Too much 345<sup>th</sup> history has been lost over the years because a member didn't think anyone would care about their part in the war. If you don't think there is anyone for you to pass your things onto, give me a call and I will help you find an organization or person who will appreciate receiving your collection. I look forward to working for you over the next couple years. As I mentioned, please feel free to send me any suggestions, ideas for the group, stories, etc. If we haven't met, drop me a note and introduce yourself, I'd like to hear from you. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, and Happy New-year!



# Apache Bulletin Board

*"The latest news"*



## 345th Trivia

See if you can name the town this picture was taken in. *Circa: 1943*



*Answer below "Article Submission"*

## In Memory of...

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

**George Mordecai**

Nov. 5th, 2004

**Bing Daker** (wife of Lynn W. Daker)

Oct. 20th, 2004

**William H. Ames**

Oct. 10th, 2004

**George Brasko**

Oct. 10th, 2004

**Frederick W. Fieder**

Oct. 2004

**John M. Palansky, Jr.**

May 28th, 2004

## Article Submission

**H**ave something you would like to see printed in the Strafer? Send it along to the editor.

Cliff Dillard

1011 Election Circle

Benton, Ill. 62812

or for faster service, email it to:

cdillard63@hotmail.com

The submission deadline for the March issue is:

February 15, 2004

Photographic prints should be black and white, emailed digital photos should be in .jpg or .tiff format.

*Answer to trivia: Port Morsby NG*

## Next Issue:

*President's Address*

*498th web-site contest update*

*Squadron Reports*

*Evolution of the B-25 - Part 3*

*Mission Memories*

**and Much More!**



