

Udvar - Hazy Center to be centerpiece tour for Reunion XVIII

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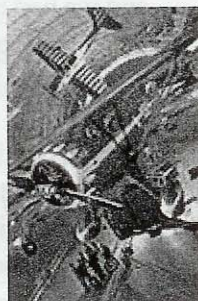
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And More!

The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Washington Dulles International Airport is the companion facility to the Museum on the National Mall. The building opened in December, 2003, and provides enough space for the Smithsonian to display the thousands of aviation and space artifacts that cannot be exhibited on the National Mall. The two sites together showcase the largest collection of aviation and space artifacts in the world.



Visitors to the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center admire the Monocoupe 110 Special Little Butch and other aircraft hanging from the aviation hangar's 10-story-high trusses.

The Center was named in honor of its major donor, and features a large aviation hangar in which aircraft are displayed on three levels. Visitors can walk among aircraft and small artifacts in display cases located on the floor, and view aircraft hanging from the arched ceiling on elevated skywalks. Many engines, helicopters, ultra-lights, and experimental flying machines are on display in a museum setting for the first time. Among the aviation artifacts on display are the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, the fastest jet in the world; the Boeing Dash 80, the prototype of the 707; the Boeing B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay; and the deHavilland Chipmunk aerobatic airplane.

The James S. McDonnell Space Hangar opened in November 2004 and displays hundreds of famous spacecraft, rockets, satellites and space-related small artifacts. The centerpiece of the space hangar is the Space Shuttle *Enterprise*. Other space artifacts include the Gemini VII space capsule; the Mobile Quarantine Unit used upon the return of the Apollo 11 crew; and a Redstone rocket.

In addition, the Donald S. Engen Observation Tower provides an excellent location from which visitors can watch air traffic at Dulles Airport.

The Center also offers an IMAX® Theater; flight simulators; food service; a museum store; free docent tours; daily educational programs; and school group tours and activities are available.

There are 356 aircraft in the collection of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM).



From the Editor

Cliff Dillard

Hello fellow Air Apaches. Summer is almost here, well it will be by the time you get this, and it's time to start planning on attending this year's reunion in Washington, D.C. I am getting an inside look at all the work that goes into holding an event like this since my father, Frank, is taking care of the preparation. All I can say is; I'll stick to editing the Strafer! It's much easier! I don't think most people have any idea just how much work and frustration is involved with putting a reunion together. I certainly didn't.

Frank is treating this like a full-time job and rightfully so. Just getting conformation from the hotel (after you choose a hotel) requires an act of congress. It's been said that arm-chair generals talk in terms of strategy, while professionals think about logistics, now I know what they mean. Selecting the reunion site and dates are the easy part, planning and coordinating the various events to be held with the hotel and it's staff and deciding on what tours to book are quite another story. I tip my hat to all those who have been in charge of past reunions, it truly is a daunting task. But the rewards are well worth it.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend this reunion either, my work schedule just will not allow it. Maybe some day I will be allowed to take my vacation when I actually want to, rather than when the company says I can! We'll see....

During the past several days, I'm writing this in May by the way, my wife, Diana, and I have been installing some new landscaping features in the backyard of our home. Namely, a small pond. Actually, I have to revise that description, it started out as one pond and has now evolved into four separate elements in one! I was *blessed* with being raised by an engineer, my dad. As a result, I have a tendency to think a little "too" logically at times.

This was never more evident than during our current landscaping project. It all started with my wife's desire to spruce-up the back-yard a bit. She wanted a small pond fed by a water-fall, it sounds imposing, I know, but Wal-Mart sells kits complete with pond, pump and water-fall for around \$75.00. My son Craig and my daughter's boy-friend, Dustin helped install the original pond under our constant guidance, (we parents are always wanting to put our two-cents in!) Anyway, in no time at all the pond was in the ground and was looking good. The whole process took three days and I thought I might have a chance to play golf on Saturday as the pond was installed by Wednesday, but nooooooooooooo! My inbred since of engineering took over on Wednesday night! My wife and I were admiring the new addition to our home when I asked myself one question; "Where did the water come from for the water-fall?" I wasn't talking about hooking up the pump for the water source, that was already done and the water was cascading down the into the pond pretty as you please.

I was speaking from the perspective of a geologist. Where did the water-fall come from? Was it fed by an underground aquafir? Perhaps it was the result of mountain snow melt? The idea of an underground spring crept into my mind for a moment, but was dismissed almost as quickly. How did the water just appear at the top of the hill to flow down into the pond? My mind just couldn't reconcile what I was seeing with what I knew occurred in nature. Now to complicate things, Dustin had given us a pond that he had and we had installed it next to our pool.

I looked at this second pond sitting there by itself and that's when it hit me. Of course! I'll *just* put the second pond above the first and have *it* feed the water-fall! When I announced my intentions it went over like a pop-quiz in a quantum mechanics class on the morning before spring break, not to well in other words! As if that weren't enough, Dustin also gave us a small wooden bucket with a pump-handle spigot. Now the plan was to have the water go out of the spigot into the bucket into the top pond down the water-fall and finally into the lower pond. Say that three times fast!

To make a short story long, our three day project turned into seven and cost almost the equivalent of a week's pay as well as three blisters and four missed rounds of golf! It would have been far easier to have been happy with just the one pond like we had originally planned, but then again engineering isn't about doing what's easy it's about doing what's right. Thanks dad, I couldn't have done it without ya!

Group President

Frank L. Dillard

Reunion XVIII is dedicated to the memory and honor of the members of the 345th either killed in action, or listed as missing in action during the period of unit activation during WWII.

While attending the reunion we will be visiting several of the Namtton's memorials to our war dead. Among these are; Arlington National Cemetary and the WWII Memorial. I have been in washington several times on business trips, but have never had the time to visit these hallowed sites. I personally am anxiously looking forward to the opportunity to pay my respects to those in residence.

Planning for the reunion is finally complete! Now, the rest is up to you. I wish to thank everyone that has contributed their time and suggestions in an effort to make this event one that will be a treasured memory. Special thanks to; Ed Sharpe, "Doc" Pearson, Ken Gastgeb and our Strafer editor (my son) Cliff Dillard. This issue of the Strafer contains details of all the events and the registration form for our upcoming reunion. Please fill out the registration form and return it before the deadline. I will use the space allocated for my column to comment on some specific issues as follows:

1. Hotel reservations: We have obtained a special rate at the Hilton. The rate, inclusive of current applicable taxes, is \$104.74 per day. this rate will be honored for one (1) day prior and two (2) days after the official reunion

2005 dates, which runs from Thursday September 1 to Tuesday September 6, 2005. A metro terminal is located near the hotel. It is within walking distance, but it might be too far for some of us, so check with the hotel desk to see if the airport van is available for your use.

2. Airline travel:

The reunion dates include Labor Day weekend. Airline reservations might be difficult to obtain if you wait too long. Try to book your flight directly into Ronald Reagan National Airport. The hotel is located 1/2 mile form the airport and provides complimentary shuttle service for guests. Dulles is 45 miles and an expensive cab ride away!

3. hospitality room:

i suggest you confine your ordering of lcoholic beverages to the hopitality room. Food prices at Washington resturants are moderately expensive, but they charge almost as much for a drink as the major oil companies charge for a tank of gas!

4. Bus tours:

The tour prices were calculated on full bus occupancy. Hopefully, we will have a good turnout and maybe break even! We have tried to schedule stops at major sites, especially those of an aviation, or military historical nature. We also offer an alternative tour for the ladies, on Sunday, in lieu of the Dulles - Hazy museum tour.

Medal Award Ceremony:

The Philippine Embassy will present the Philippine Liberation Medal to elligible members of the 345th Bombardment Group Association that are in attendance at the banquet on



September 3, 2005. The awards are for those that have not previously recieved the medal. The presentations are to be made by Major General Delfin Lorenzana, AFP (Retired), Special Presidential Reperesentative and Head Office of Veterans Affairs. He has also graciously accepted an invitation to be our featured speaker.

Note: to receive your medal you must be present at the banquet and provide proof of eligibility. This proof consists of single copies of your Army Service Record and your Army Discharge Certificate. Mail your copies to: Frank L. Dillard, President - 345th Bomb Group Association, 963 Wellington road Winston - Salem, NC 27196. **The deadline is July 15, 2005.**

Eligible members of the 500th Squadron attending their reunion in Washington are cordially invited to attend our banquet to receive their medals. After I recieve your papers I will compile a list of those that are eligible for the medal, attach the required documents and forward them to the proper authority at the Philppine Embassy in Washington D.C. I was sorry to recieve the news of Ed Bina's passing. I wish to offer the Group's condolences to Julie and family. Ed was a loyal and dedicated member of our association and was the force behind the Association's successful efforts to install the 345th Bomb Group Memorial at Wright-Patterson Museum, in Dayton, Ohio.

Reunion XVIII - General Information

Hotel Reservations:

You are responsible for making your own reservations. The reunion hotel is the Hilton Crystal City at Ronald Reagan National Airport. The special room rate is \$95.00 per night plus all applicable taxes. The current all-inclusive rate is \$104.74 per night. The hotel has agreed to accept reservations at the special rate for an additional one (1) day pror and two (2) days after the regular reunion dates. You may make your reservation by calling the hotel directly at: (703) 414-7787, or toll free at: 1-800-695-7551, no later than Thursday July 21, 2005 using a major credit card. To obtain the special rate be sure to inform the reservation desk operator that you are with the 345th Bomb Group. Reservations may also be made by mail directly to the hotel by enclosing your personal check for one night's lodging (\$104.74) Be sure to note that you are registering for the 345th Bomb Group Reunion. The hotel address is:
 HILTON CRYSTAL CITY at
 RONALD REAGAN NATL AIR-
 PORT 2399 JEFFERSON DAVIS
 HIGHWAY ARLINGTON VA 22202
 Cancellations will accepted without charge up to 24 hours prior to date of arrival.

Airline Reservations: You are responsible for your own travel arrangements. If you plan to travel by commercial airline try to book your flight directly into Ronald Reagan National Airport. The hotel operates a fleet of vans for transporting airline passengers to and from the hotel free of charge. We do not have a group rate for airline tickets, therefore you should shop around for the best price.

Recreation Vehicles: The hotel does not have parking facilities for recreation vehicles.

Hotel Parking: The hotel features underground parking with elevator service to the lobby level. The 345th has been given a daily rate of \$8.00

Reunion Registration: The registration desk will be located just to the left of the hotel's main entrance door on Thursday September 1, 2005. The hours will be from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Later, the registration desk will operate out of the Hospitality Room. You must register and wear your reunion badge to be admitted to any of the reunion functions. Don't forget to enter your name on the sign-in sheet for the drawings at the Saturday morning business meeting.

Wine & Cheese Reception: Gather in the Hospitality Room Thursday evening at 6:00pm for food and fellowship. The hotel is joining with the Group to provide wine and cheese without charge as a warm-up for our first night in the Nation's Capitol. The "Refreshment Stand" will be open. Dinner on your own.

Hospitality Room: The Hospitality Room will be open for as many hours as we have volunteers. If you will help by acting as host or hostess, please indicate when you will be available at time of registration.

Executive Committee Meeting: The Executive Committee, consisting of all past Presidents, former Group and squadron Commanders and current officers will meet Friday September 2nd.

Squadron Business Meetings: Squadrons may conduct such business as deemed necessary by meeting in the Crystal Room or Hospitality Room before the 10:00 am Group business meeting.

Group General Business Meeting: Members, spouses of members and associate members will meet in the Crystal Room at 10:00 am for the purpose of conducting such business as deemed necessary for the orderly operation of the Association.

Group Banquet: The social hour will be from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm in the Crystal Room. A cash bar will be available. The Banquet will be from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm, also in the Crystal Room. We are privileged to have Major General Delfin Lorenzana, of the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. as our guest of honor and principal speaker. The Embassy will conduct an award ceremony for those members in attendance who are eligible to receive the Philippine Liberation Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Reunion Bus Tours: Tours will be scheduled depending on the number of members registering for each tour. If you sign up and your tour is cancelled because of insufficient interest, you will be refunded your money. Tour tickets and name tags will be required for boarding tour buses. All tour buses will load at the hotel entrance promptly at 9:00 am. Please be considerate of others and arrive at the boarding station a little before departure time.

Reunion XVIII

Schedule of Upcoming Events

Thursday, September 1

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Registration in hotel lobby. Those arriving after 5:00 PM will register in the hospitality room.

6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Welcome reception in the hospitality room. Wine and cheese will be served, compliments of the hotel and a cash bar will be open for all. This night's dinner will be on your own.

8:00 PM to 10:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

Friday, September 2

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Bus tours will be conducted, for those wishing to participate, around Washington. These tours will include; the FDR, Korean and WWII Memorials. Lunch will be on your own at the National Mall.

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

Saturday, September 3

9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

A ladies' breakfast will be held.

10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Business meeting for members and associates.

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Social Hour - A cash bar will be available.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM

The Group Banquet will be held in the Crystal Room. Group President Frank L. Dillard will give the welcoming speech, after which the presentation of colors and the invocation will be given. Following this will be the introduction of the guest speaker, Major General Delfin Lorenzana, AFP (retired), Special Presidential Representative & Head Office of Veterans' Affairs, Embassy of the Philippines.

General Loenzana will present the Philippine Liberation Medal to those members who qualify. The Banquet will conclude with the Retirement of Colors ceremony.

10:00 to ?

The hospitality room will be open.

Sunday, September 4

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

A bus tour of the new "Udvar - Hazy Center at Dulles Airport will be conducted for those members who wish to participate. Lunch will be on your own.

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

A bus tour for all ladies who wish to participate will be conducted. Lunch will be on your own.

Monday, September 5

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

A bus tour of Arlington Cemetery as well as various other National Monuments will be conducted. Lunch will be on your own.

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

7:00 PM to 10:00 PM

The hospitality room will be open.

Tuesday, September 6

Checkout by 12:00 PM

Checkout of the hotel, unless prior arrangements have made for an extended stay.

Special Note:

The hospitality room hours shown above depend upon the availability of volunteers. Obviously, the more volunteers we have the less time each of them will have to spend behind the bar. If you are willing to act as host or hostess during the times listed above, please sign up at the registration desk upon your arrival. Thank you.

Reunion XVIII Tour Information

by: Frank L. Dillard

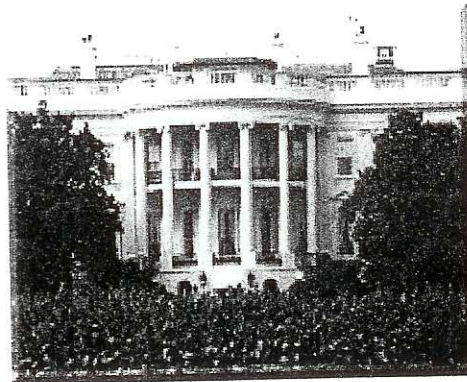
Washington and Arlington Tour

Friday, September 2nd: This is an afternoon tour that leaves the hotel at 1:00 PM.

It should provide a brief interlude to cure "Jet-lag" for those that traveled a considerable distance on Thursday. The bus will make stops for visits to the Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial and Arlington Cemetery. While at the cemetery you will have an opportunity to visit the Kennedy gravesite and view the impressive Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Participants will also view, in transit; the White House, Watergate/Kennedy Center, Iwo Jima Memorial and the Mall area. The tour lasts approximately four hours and you should be back at the hotel around 5:00 PM.



Arlington National Cemetery



The White House

Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum

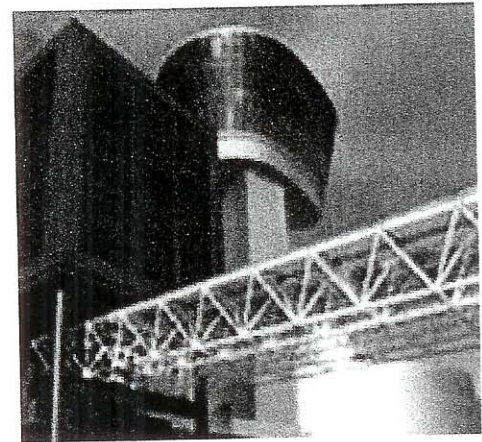
Sunday, September 4th. This is a morning tour that leaves the hotel at 9:00 AM. It should be especially interesting to the male members attending the reunion, though the women are certainly welcome to join in, they may find the Mt. Vernon tour more to their liking. The recently opened Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum at Dulles is described in some detail on the cover page. We will spend the entire day at the site. Lunch will be on your own at the center. Departure time from Dulles will be announced on the bus, but we will be back at the hotel by 5:00 PM.

Mt. Vernon and Old Towne

Sunday, September 4th. This is a special afternoon tour especially for the ladies. The bus leaves the hotel at 1:00 PM, so you may have time for a nap after brunch! The bus makes stops for visits to; Mt. Vernon Mansion Support Buildings and Gardens as well as the Washington family tombs. You will view in transit; Old Towne Alexandria, Christ's Church, Gatsby's Tavern, Fort Washington and the Masonic Temple. The tour lasts approximately four hours and you should be back at the hotel by 5:00 PM.

National Museums

Monday, September 5th. This is a morning tour. You should be back at the hotel in plenty of time to; pack, eat dinner and retire for a last night of fellowship in the "War Room" (Sometimes called the Hospitality Room, for those not "In-the-know"). The tour will make stops to visit; Ford's Theater, the Lincoln Memorial, Peterson House, the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and the Museum of Natural History. You will observe in transit; Downtown / Chinatown, the National Gallery of Art, the National Archives and the Canadian National Embassy. The bus will return to the hotel at approximately 12:30 PM.



Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum

Other tours

For those of you that plan to take advantage of the special hotel rate and stay after the official end of Reunion XVIII, there is information describing other tours and tourist attractions available in the Hilton hotel lobby.

498th "Falcons"

Mike Hasselbauer Assistant Group Vice-President



The following excerpt was sent to us by Mr. Ken Haller, who served with 345th in Ground Communications. Mr. Haller is currently writing a book detailing his experiences in WWII and sheds some light on an apparent error in John Hickey's book "Warpath Across the Pacific" concerning the kamikazi attack on the Thomas Nelson.

..... We finally steamed back to Dulag and are anchored in the harbor with lots of ships around us. A few days back we encountered a typhoon and being in hold #4 I was able to keep dry. Mitchell, Taylor, Rettick and I were playing a game of Hearts when we heard a very loud noise and a lot of commotion up on the main deck. Several fellows were practically running down the stairs. I jumped up and without hesitation I ran over to my bunk and had my life-preserver half on when I heard gun-fire. I dropped to the floor, lying as flat as I could and reached for my helmet when a big explosion occurred. Dust, water and boards were flying all over. The wooden stairs collapsed.

I got up as quickly as I could and got behind a ventilation pipe, which seemed like a long time, but I'm sure it wasn't. I started shaking like a leaf and was wondering what had happened. I was scared spitless. After a short time I decided I needed to get out of the hold and went over to the steel ladder and climbed out. The scene before me was ghastly. There were bodies scattered all over the deck, some blown apart; legs and arms here and there with blood everywhere. Many fellows were badly wounded but still alive. Some were blown overboard and were swimming in the water. Ducks, barges and small boats were picking them up. A big fire was burning at the stern of the ship. Confusion reigned all over the place. Some of us went to get the fire hose but it was useless as it was shredded from shrapnel. A Navy DE came along side that brought doctors and nurses from the hospital ship to take care of the wounded.....

In "Warpath" Mr. Hickey states in the first paragraph on page 237, "*Flames were also licking up from inside the No.4 hatch, where the bomb apparently exploded.*"

Mr. Haller was in hold No.4 when the attack occurred and as you can see from his excerpt there was no explosion in that location. In fact, Mr. Haller states the only problems in hold No.4 were some dust and broken pipes. Mr. Haller is currently selecting pictures and tying up all the other loose ends needed to put his story into book form. No title or release date were announced.

As you can see, the printed material available to the general public is not always as accurate as it could be, that's why it is important for as many of our association members to contribute their stories as possible.

A nice surprise

Occasionally, you receive a gift from out of the blue, no pun intended. Such was the case when I opened my mail one afternoon after a hard day's work, (I have to say that because my dad got me the job!) anyway, I opened a large manila envelope and found a beautiful 8 x 10 color print of the newly restored B-25 "Tondelayo" given to me by Vic Tatelman. Thanks Vic!
Cliff Dillard



499th "Bats Outa Hell"

Ben Miller Assistant Group Vice-President

Memorial Day

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service.

There are many stories as to its actual beginnings, with over two dozen cities and towns laying claim to being the birthplace of Memorial Day.

While Waterloo N.Y. was officially declared the birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in May 1966, it's difficult to prove conclusively the origins of the day. It is more likely that it had many separate beginnings.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

The South refused to acknowledge the day, honoring their dead on separate days until after World War I (when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war).

Memorial Day is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May

(Passed by Congress in 1968 to ensure a three-day weekend for Federal holidays),

although several southern states have an additional, separate day for honoring the Confederate war dead.

January 19 in Texas, April 26 in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi; May 10 in South Carolina; and June 3 (Jefferson Davis' birthday) in Louisiana and Tennessee.

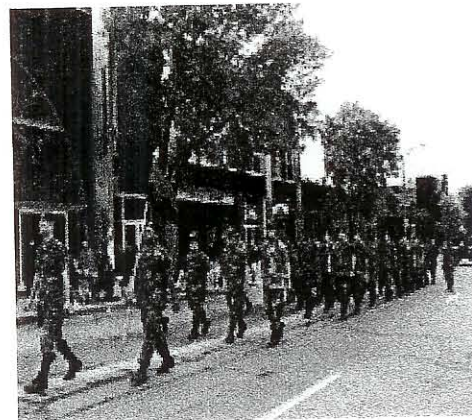
Since the late 50's on the Thursday before Memorial Day, the 1,200 soldiers of the 3rd U.S. Infantry place small American flags at each of the more than 260,000 gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery. They then patrol 24 hours a day during the weekend to ensure that each flag remains standing.

Since 1998, on the Saturday before the observed day for Memorial Day, the Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts place a candle at each of approximately 15,300 gravesites of soldiers buried at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park on Marye's Heights, Virginia.

But some are concerned that many Americans have forgotten the true meaning of Memorial Day. To help rekindle America's solemn observance Memorial Day, Congress introduced the "National Moment of Remembrance" resolution on Dec 2000. The resolution asked that at 3 p.m. local time, all Americans "Voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to 'Taps.'" The White House is working to establish this national moment of remembrance as an annual observance on Memorial Day.

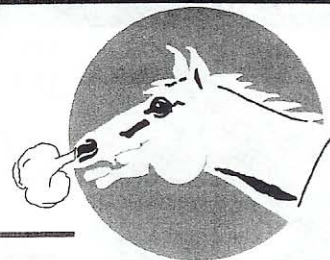
Information provided by Secretary of the Air Force, Public Affairs

America honors it's veteran's



500th "Rough Raiders"

"Invasion of Japan" by: Don Wagner



It's strange to me that you still run into people who challenge the decision made to drop the atom bombs on Japan. They find it hard to believe that had we invaded Japan that the losses would be so horrific that dropping the atom bomb was necessary. To those people I can only quote the situation that existed, and the expectations of the invasion.

SOUTHWEST PACIFIC 1945

There were few Americans in 1945 and fewer Americans today aware of the elaborate plans that had been prepared for the invasion of the Japanese home islands. Fewer yet are aware of how close we actually came to launching that invasion and of what the Japanese had in store for us had it been launched.

"Operation Downfall" was prepared in final form during spring and summer of 1945. It called for two massive undertakings to be carried out in succession and aimed at the heart of the Japanese Empire. In the first invasion, code named "Operation Olympic," American troops would land by amphibious assault during the early morning hours of November 1, 1945, on heavily fortified and defended Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands. Fourteen combat divisions of soldiers and marines would land after an unprecedented naval and aerial bombardment.

On March 1, 1946, the second invasion, "Operation Coronet," would send 22 more combat divisions against one million Japanese defenders in an assault on

and the Tokyo Plain in a final effort to obtain unconditional surrender of Japan.

Except for a part of the British Pacific Fleet, "Operation Downfall" was to be a strictly American operation. It would use the entire U. S. Marine Corps, the employment of the entire U. S. Navy in the Pacific, and efforts from the 7th AF, and 8th AF recently developed from Europe, the 20th AF, and the Far East Air Force. Over 1.5 million combat soldiers with millions more in support would be directly involved in the two assaults. A total of 4.5 million American servicemen, over 40% of all servicemen in uniform in 1945 were to be part of "Operation Downfall."

It was to be no easy military undertaking and casualties were expected to be extremely heavy. It was estimated that there would be 250,000 Americans killed or wounded on Kyushu alone. Considered by General McArthur's staff to be conservative, the estimate of American casualties from the entire operation would be one million men by the fall of 1946. The intelligence section of the FCC monitored internal Japanese radio broadcasts, which disclosed that Japan had closed all its schools to mobilize its school children.

It was arming its civilian population and forming it into national civilian defense units, and was turning Japan into a nation of fortified caves, and underground defenses in preparation for the expected invasion. Japan's defense plan was called "Ketsu-Go" and divided their naval and air forces into districts each with hidden airfields being built

and hangers and aircraft dispersed and camouflaged in great numbers. All would be operated under one unified command.

Our intelligence estimated that the Japanese had no more than 2,500 aircraft, 300 of which would be deployed in suicide attacks.

The facts are, in August 1945, they still had 5,651 Army, and 7,074 Navy aircraft for a total of 12,725 planes of all types. During July 1945 alone they had built 1,131 new planes, and 100 underground aircraft plants were in various stages of construction.

Footnote:

With the fact that quoting from one source is called plagiarism, and from two or more is research, the majority of this article is gleaned from a book, "Top Secret: The Details of the Planned World War II Invasion of Japan and How the Japanese Would Have Met It," by James Davis and Bert Weber. After the cessation of hostilities in August 1945, I was reassigned from the 500th to Headquarters 5th Air Force, where I was able to see some of the planning documents. I can only say that I'm thankful we didn't have to fly those planned invasion missions.



501st "Black Panthers"

Paul Van Valkenberg

Assistant Group Vice-President

Ok guys, now's the time to make your plans for Reunion 2005. Things seem to be shaping up nicely and I can't think of a better place than our Nation's Capital to hold this year's reunion. I for one am looking forward to viewing the new World War Two Memorial with my own link to "the greatest generation" you, the 345th Bomb Group veterans. I sincerely hope that each one of you can find a way to make it to this reunion. While Bob Lombard's grand plans for a mass fly-in of B-25's may not materialize, this reunion isn't really about that, it's about you being able to spend a little time with friends that share a special bond. It also has developed into an opportunity for my generation to get to know all of you a little better and to learn more about your experiences and accomplishments. I hope you take this opportunity to attend this reunion and bring along your photo albums and stories to share with everyone. You never know, you may have a picture of someone whose family would be thrilled to get a copy of. I remember looking through Bill Cather's photo album at a past reunion and coming across a photo of my father. It was a photo I had never seen before and I was very thankful when Bill gave it to me. We have seen an increase in "the next generation" at the past few reunions and based on the e-mails I have been getting I think we will continue to see more new faces.

Air Force Maintenance

Here are some actual maintenance complaints submitted by U.S. Air Force Pilots and the replies from their maintenance crews. (P) = Problem (S) = Solution

(P) Test flight OK, except that autoland very rough. (S) Autoland not installed on this aircraft.

(P) Evidence of leak on right main landing gear. (S) Evidence removed.

(P) DME volume unbelievably loud. (S) Volume set to more believable level.

(P) Dead bugs on windshield. (S) Live bugs on order.

(P) Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 fpm descent. (S) Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

(P) IFF inoperative. (S) IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.

(P) Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick. (S) That's what they are there for.

(P) Number three engine missing. (S) Engine found on right wing after brief search.

(P) Aircraft handles FUNNY (S) Aircraft warned to straighten up "fly right" and be serious.

Top Ten Reason's to attend Reunion XVIII

#10 - That 345th name tag sure looks good with my shirt!

#9 - Another chance to drive "Hal" at the hardware store mad with jealousy!

#8 - Five whole days without soap operas!

#7 - The possibility of actually seeing government officials earn their pay!

#6 - No designated driver needed to "Tie one on!"

#5 - I find hotel beds strangely comforting!

#4 - The Strafer said I had to!

#3 - Can finally find out if TiVo will really record my favorite shows while I'm gone!

#2 - Room Service!

And the #1 Reason to attend Reunion XVIII - I miss all my old Air Apache buddies!

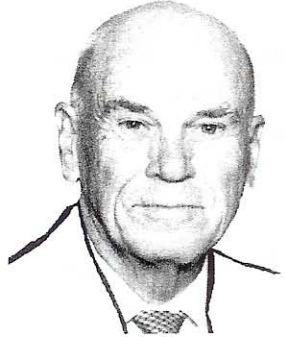
By: Cliff Dillard

Apache Bulletin Board

"The latest news"



Treasurer's Report: *Ed Sharpe*



ARTICLE V, SECTION 3 of our bylaws state in part: "Dues become due on January 1 of each year and shall be payable no later than January 31 of that year." The annual dues are \$15.00 and should be made payable to the 345th Bomb Group Association. Checks should be mailed to: Edwin F. Sharpe, Treasurer, 3860 Wesley Court, Burlington, NC 27215-9729

Thank you, *Edwin F. Sharpe*

Group Assets as of April 30th, 2005

Checking Account: Wachovia Bank - Burlington, NC
\$4,097.90

Money Market Fund - Vanguard Prime Money Market
\$24,744.85

Article Submission

Have 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
September issue is:
August 15, 2005

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

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.

Ed Bina - 501st

March 21st, 2005

Samuel Kellar, Jr. - 500th

March 27th, 2005

Katherine Camene - 498th

(wife of Lee Camene)

May 28th, 2004

John M. Palanski, Jr. - 498th

May 25th, 2004

Roger Conant - 500th

May 5th, 2005

Next Issue:

President's Address

From the Editor

Squadron Reports

Reunion Highlights

Mission Memories

and Much More!

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499th "Bats Outa Hell" Squadron

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500th "Rough Raiders" Squadron

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501st "Black Panthers" Squadron

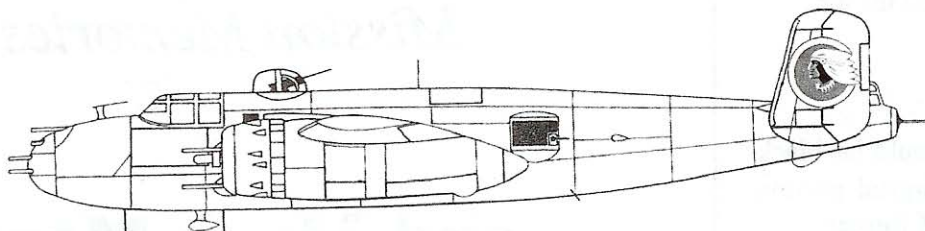
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REUNION XVIII REGISTRATION FORM
345TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION
HILTON CRYSTAL CITY AT RONALD REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
SEPTEMBER 1, 2005 TO SEPTEMBER 06, 2005

Name _____ Squadron _____ Phone No _____
 Spouse _____ Guest(s) _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 E-mail Address _____
 Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____ Travel by _____
 Please print name(s) above as you want it(them) to appear on name tag(s)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>NO. PERSONS</u>	<u>COST/ PERSON</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Thursday, September 1	Registration Fee		\$25	
Thursday, September 1	Reception		No Charge	
Friday, September 2	Bus tour of WWII, Vietnam, Korea and other military memorials. Arlington Cemetery changing of the guard		\$20	
September 3	Banquet: Buffet style Entrees include fish, chicken, & beef.		\$35	
Sunday, September 4	Bus tour of NASM's new Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles Airport. Lunch on your own.		\$20	
Sunday, September 4	Ladies Breakfast Ladies special bus tour of Mt Vernon Mansion & Gardens, Alexandria Old Town		\$15 \$20	
Monday, September 5	Bus tour of Ford's Theater, Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Air & space Museum Lunch on your own.		\$20	
GRAND TOTAL			\$	_____

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please return this form with your remittance by July 15, 2005
 Make checks payable to: 345th Bomb Group Reunion XVIII
 Mail to: Edwin Sharpe, Treasurer, 345th Bomb Group Association,
 3860 Wesley Court, Burlington, NC 27215-9729.