

"AIR APACHES"

STRAFTER

VOLUME 23, ISSUE I 345TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2005

April 6th, 1945 mission earns the 345th "Air Picture of the War!"

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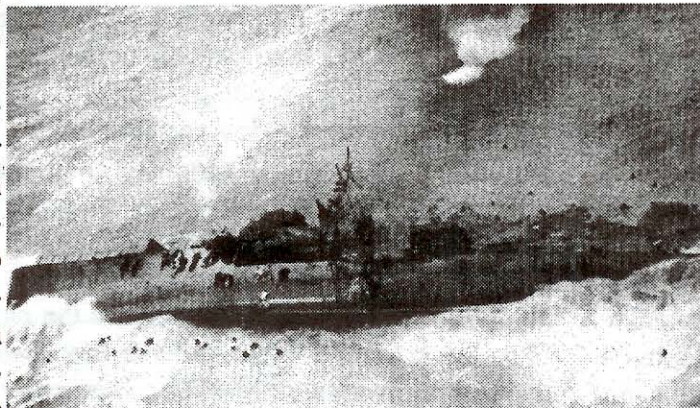
Tipped -off by an intelligence report of a convoy that left Hong Kong on the 5th, the 345th sent 24 planes (six from each squadron) to patrol the area between Amoy and Swatow on the 6th. After checking out the Pascadores Islands en route the planes proceeded to the China coast, near the city of Amoy. Led by Capt. George Musket of the 501st the planes turned southeastward past Quemoy Island and searched the coastline. Just after 11:30, Musket spotted two frigates steaming north-north east. While the six planes passed to their starboard, the two ships turned to the right, lining up perfectly for a pass by the Air Apaches on both ships at once. Musket led his two wingmen on a strafing/bombing run against the first vessel, but scored no hits. They then headed for the second ship, leaving small fires buring on the aft end of the first frigate from their .50's. During Musket's bombing run on the second ship, a bomb skipped off the water and exploded on the deck, killing about a dozen Japanese sailors crouched behind the superstructure.

Lt. Ollie Hatcher, leading the 501st's second flight in #571, sped towards the first frigate with his wingmen on either side. Nine

bombs from the three aircraft splashed around the ship, with one of Hatcher's exploding along the stern, opening a large hole in the side and stopping the ship in it's tracks.

The 499th squadron, led by Capt. Newton E. Wiley in "My Dutchess" was up next. Both Wiley and 2nd Lt. Theodore C. Bronson scored near misses, The ship sank within three minutes. Lt. Lester Morton led his flight against the second frigate, two of his bombs went long, but one scored a direct hit amidships near the waterline. The ship

quickly began taking on water and rolled over on it's side with a round 80 Japanese sailors clinging to the hull before it also sank. This is the photo-



graph of the second frigate, which the Army intelligence magazine "IMPACT" dubbed "Air Picture of the war." This photo was taken from the 498th's plane #305, piloted by Capt. Frederick F. Smith. The ill-fated frigate did manage to shoot-out one engine on plane #005, piloted by 2nd/Lt. Charles H. Myers Jr. Myers was able to get #005 safely back to Laong airdrome, on the northern tip of Luzon after a three hour flight.

President's Corner

Group President: Frank L. Dillard



Greetings to the 345th! My wife, Margaret and I celebrated our first wedding anniversary on December 27th, 2005. That may not be of interest to those of you celebrating your 50th or more, but at least we can remember ALL or ours!

Margaret has expressed a real interest in my war experiences and has read most of the material I have collected over the years. She enjoyed her first reunion at Reno last year and is looking forward to visiting with the new friends she made when we arrive in Washington, D.C. this fall. We have been on the move since our marriage and I missed out on some important phone calls. I only recently learned that Jesses Dean, my radio operator and long-time friend passed away on November 1, 2004. He was a life-long resident of Dayton, Ohio and was responsible for the supervising the restoration of the 345th Bomb Group Association's monument at Wright-Patterson Field a few years back. Jesse was proud to be a member of our bomb group, he was a classy guy and I am proud to say that we members of the same crew.

Reunion plans are beginning to take shape. We have made arrangements to stay at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel. This hotel has all the necessary amenities to host a great reunion. It is close to the Washington National Airport and free shuttle service is provided. There is a Metro station nearby for anyone

adventurous enough to strike-out on his or her own in the nation's capitol.

The next order of business for our planning committee is to select the tour sites. There are just too many wonderful places to visit in the allotted time. Washington is constantly expanding and has become so vast it is impossible to see all there is to see in a single day, therefore we are seeking the advice of those who know the total scope of the exhibits and can recommend specific ones that should have the maximum appeal to a group of WWII veterans. That is where the tour services excel. Not only do they provide transportation to the most interesting sites, they also assist in planning the tour agenda to ensure our time is well spent.

I am excited about visiting the World War Two Memorial, and what would a trip to our nation's capitol be without a visit to the Smithsonian institute? I recently read that on November 11th, 2004 a new exhibit opened, entitled: "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War." This exhibit tells the story of the nation's martial past since the French-Indian War of 1754-1762. This major new exhibit places the emphasis on the sacrifice of those who served in the armed-forces. Some 18,000 square feet are devoted to display more than 800 artifacts, graphic images and interactive stations covering 16 wars.

We were privileged to serve our country in a time when history was being made on a daily basis. Now, we should make the most of this opportunity to see just what American

historians think was important and hopefully glimpse a small segment in which the 345th shares a personal interest.

I know from our discussions at past reunions that you share the pride I feel when I whenever I see a film clip of a B-25 strafers, especially if it bears the Air Apache insignia on the tail. You might also have noticed that many "coffee table" books feature a B-25 bearing the 498th's Falcon nose, or the imposing Bat of the 499th in the medium bomber section. Many times I haven't been able to resist sounding off to an innocent bystander: "That's a picture of a plane from my old outfit!"

My point is this: if you are inclined to enjoy military history then Washington, D.C. is *the* place to be! Sure, we are "too old" to travel and YES Washington in an expensive place to visit, but this is probably the last opportunity for the remnants of the 345th Bomb Group will have to stand in our nation's capital and pay tribute to those members of our group who have joined that ever-increasing gathering of eagles.

The June issue of the Strafer will contain additional hotel information, registration forms, tour descriptions and other pertinent details. If you have never attended one of our reunions then don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Come early- stay late and be sure to bring the grandkids, they aren't learning anything about WWII history in school anyway and this presents a great chance to show them in minute detail how grandpa won the war!

Headquarters

Ken Gastgeb Assistant Group Vice-President

First I want to say thanks to Gus Ouellette for doing such a fine job over the past several years – Thanks Gus.

The reunion was great and our thanks go out to the Planning Committee for doing such a fine job. Congratulations to Frank Dillard and his crew of new officers that will be serving the members of this great association for the next two years. Our condolences go out to the families of Lynn Decker and George Mordecai, in their loss of a loved one.

At the reunion there were some changes approved to the by-laws. The by-laws should be printed in this, or the next, issue of the Strafer. A change was made in the listing of members to improve the record keeping such as; addresses, dues ect. These changes came about due to the hard work of Ed Sharpe and Doc Pearson in keeping the records straight. Also, other changes were made to permit family and friends to become voting members.

A Bit of History

On December 26, 1943 our Colonel True got shot down on a mission supporting the Marine invasion at Cape Gloucester, New Britain. My cousin was in the 11th Marine Division. He was a mechanic on the Marine tractors – an amphibious vehicle. He is writing a book on his experiences in the Marine Corps.

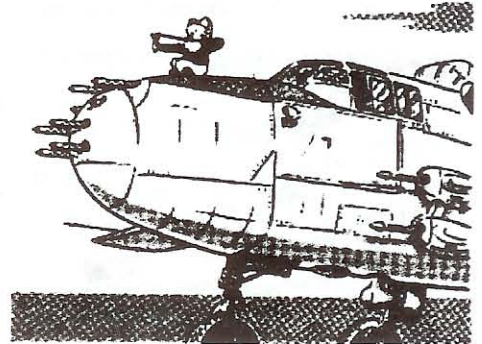
I asked him to send me his account of what happened on that day. When coming under enemy air-attack he was assigned to a 40mm anti-aircraft gun. The Marines were ordered to shoot down any planes that approached from the inland direction, as they would be enemy aircraft. Things got hot and heavy and with ground fires all over the place the air filled with smoke. He said that, suddenly, from the inland direction he saw three twin-engined aircraft approaching through the thick smoke. All anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on the three planes. When the planes passed overhead he recognized that they were ours and yelled for a cease-fire, but with all the gunfire taking place no one heard him. The planes were the flight led by Col. True, who later said that he saw smoke coming out of one engine on one of the planes, but in the thick smoke did not see it go down. Col. True made a successful water landing and he and his crew made it safely to shore.

On September 5th, 1943 the 345th participated in the first large-scale parachute drop in the South-West Pacific theatre. A little over four months later we moved to Nadzab, New Guinea, after stopping at Dobodura for a short time. October 10th, 1945 was the date that Tacoma, Washington welcomed home members of the 5th Air Force home after the war. Members of the 345th were among the 592 officers and 4,017 enlisted men that were on board the ship U.S.S. Admiral R.E. Coontz.

After spending a few days in Tacoma, we boarded trains that took us to our homes all across the United States. A great day after not having been home in nearly three years.

Some B-25 Humor

Surfing the web one evening, I came across a few sites that featured WWII cartoons and some that focused on the "Mighty Mitchell." All I had to do was type "B-25 cartoons" in the search field and Bingo, there they were!
Ed.



Caution: as there are no lockout provisions on waistguns, be careful not to fire into tail or nacelle.

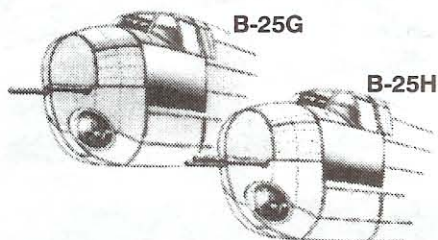


The Evolution of the B-25 Mitchell

Part III: Enter the Strafer

In this, the final installment of our series on the B-25, will conclude with a look at the aircraft's development from medium-level bomber to low-level strafers. Before we do however, I'd like to say thanks to Mr. Robert "Bob" Draper of the 499th who pointed out that the D model had a cluster of three fuel tanks in the wing tips, which raised the fuel capacity to 978 gallons, making the "D" a seven-hour plane compared to the "C" which was a five-hour plane instead. This is the type of information not available in ANY books that I've seen. Keep it coming.

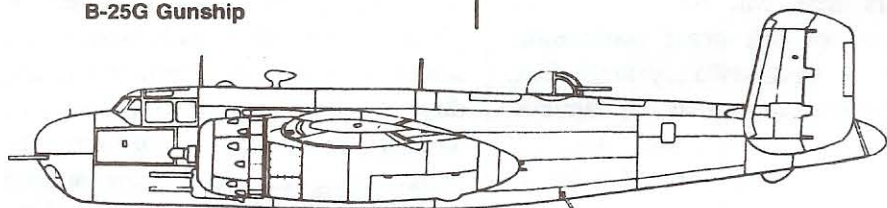
Nose Variations



Target selection in the Southwest Pacific was different from that found in Europe, being mostly jungle and shipping, these targets required low-altitude flying to find the enemy. Taking a cue from the field modifications performed on the "C" model by Lt. Col. Paul "Pappy" Gunn and NA's Jack Fox in the Pacific, North American debuted a more lethal Mitchell in May, 1943. The "G" model featured a shortened nose with two fixed .50 cal. machine guns and a 75mm cannon, mounted in the bombardier's crawlway, which were fired by the pilot. The bombardier became the cannoneer, not an easy task.

In addition to increased firepower up front, the "G" also had armour added to protect the pilot, cannoneer, 75mm ammo box and top-turret gunner. Fuel capacity was increased to 434 gallons. Top speed stood at 278 mph. 400 "G's" were built.

B-25G Gunship



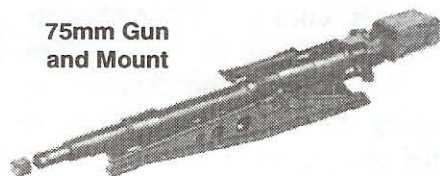
The "H" Model

In August, 1943 the "H" model replaced the "G" on the line at Ingelwood. This version now added a fifth man to the crew, which now consisted of multi-MOS (Military Occupational Skill) people, only the pilot and tail gunner had a single role. The top-turret was moved forward, just behind the flight deck. The lower turret was finally deleted, it never worked well anyway! The tail area received a proper canopy with twin .50's and 600 rounds of ammo, waist guns were added to the rear fuselage on both sides with 200 rounds per gun and four blister gun packs (two per

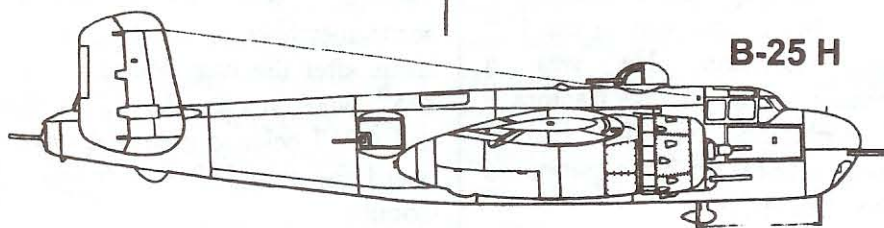
side) were added to the forward fuselage under the pilots' windows. As if that weren't enough, two more fixed .50's were added to the nose, giving the pilot a total of eight .50's to fire! While the 75mm cannon was retained from the "G" model, it was replaced with a new lighter type; the

T13E1. With a 21-inch recoil, some said it felt as if the plane stopped in mid-air when the cannon was fired! (which of course, it didn't). One change that was not very popular with

75mm Gun and Mount



veteran crews however, was the absence of a co-pilot, with the cannoneer taking his place. 1,000 model H's were built before North American pulled one more rabbit out of it's hat, the ultimate strafers - the B-25 J....



The B-25 J: Enter the Dragon!

As successful as the "H" model proved to be, certain limitations became apparent where the 75mm cannon was concerned. Since the cannon was hand-fed by the cannoneer, during a typical attack run the cannon could only be fired an average of four times. Furthermore, the plane could not deviate from its course - putting the plane at great risk from enemy anti-aircraft fire. To remedy this

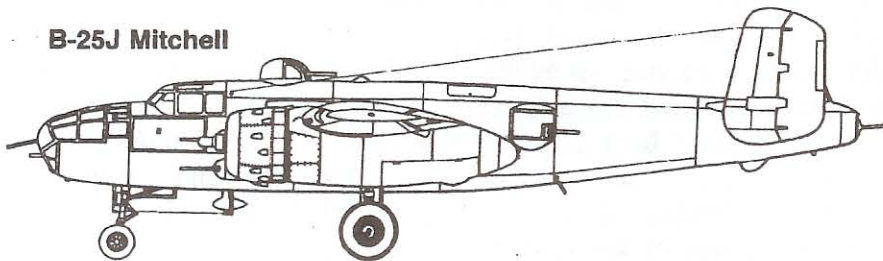
three 1,000 pound bombs instead of two and the capability to carry two 1,600 pound armour-piercing bombs as well. Total armament now stood at twelve guns on the glass-nosed version and eighteen on the solid! The "J" model replaced the "D" on the line at the Kansas City plant and a total of 4,318 were produced, making it the most numerous version of the series. Out of these, 800 were solid nosed.

The "Super Strafer"

In 1943, North American engineers began toying with the idea of fitting a B-25 with Pratt & Whitney R-2800-51 Double Wasp 2,000hp engines. With authority from the USAAF, the 302nd B-25H was pulled off the production line to create the NA-98X, the Super Strafer.

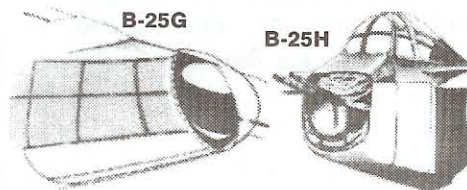
The aircraft featured bullet-nosed propeller spinners, squared-off wing-tips (ala P-51), high-speed air induction cowlings and a 1.4 square foot area increase to the ailerons. With a projected gross weight of 34,000lb, top speed was to be 300mph at military power with a sea-level rate of climb of 1,800 feet per minute; top speed with emergency power was to be 325mph.

B-25J Mitchell



problem and to relieve the crews who were used to having two pilots up front, North American unveiled the B-25J in December, 1943. Two versions were produced; a more traditional glass-nosed bomber and a factory strafer, featuring no less than 8 .50 cal. machine guns in the nose! Combined with the existing side-package guns held over from the "H" and the two .50's in the top-turret, the Mitchell could now lay down fire from a total of 14 .50 cal. machine guns at one time, a truly withering degree of fire-power. Of course, in true Apache fashion, several of the glass-nosed planes were field-modified to include four "fixed-fifties" in a painted-over nose. The "J" also included the following; electrically operated bomb-bay doors and bomb racks, armour plate protection for the bombardier and pilots, altered pilot instrumentation, the ability to carry

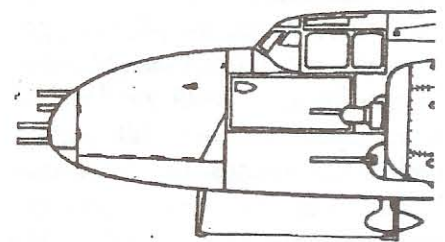
Tail Postions



Many aircraft were fitted with underwing racks to hold 5-inch rockets, as well as the addition of a 150-gal. fuel tank in the radio compartment to increase operational range. Crew complement was raised to six, as the bombardier was returned to his original position.

The RAF received 314 of the B-25J's as the "Mithcell III". Most of the Mitchells were assigned to the Second Tactical Air Force of the RAF. maximum speed was raised to 293mph with the addition of Wright R-2600-29 Cyclone 14 turbosupercharged engines and no 75mm cannon.

B-25J Gunship



Test flights began on March 31 with the plane being even faster than was projected. Unfortunately, the plane crashed on April 24th, 1944 after a steep spiral pull up from a dive ripped both outer wings from the plane.

by: *Cliff Dillard*

Mission Memories

When the war ended, I was just finishing my combat tour as a pilot with the Air Apaches. After the second atomic bomb was dropped August 9th, 1945, on Nagasaki, we flew search missions in areas where our crews were shot down. Later in the month we flew on a mission to drop leaflets and message streamers on the outlying Japanese held islands to inform their commanders that what they heard on the radio was true. The war was over and peace negotiations were in progress and that they were forbidden to fly any aircraft or to sail any warship. Our patrols were authorized to deal with any violation of these instructions.

On August 28, 1945, my crew was given the assignment to drop a message streamer at the enemy airfield on the island of Ishigaki Shima, about 100 miles southeast of Ie Shima and Okinawa. Approaching the airfield at low level we observed a Jap Zero that had just touched down. As we got closer, the pilot stopped the Zero, got out and ran for cover. I was flying a B-25 model J-22 with eight-gun nose fully armed with 3300 rounds of .50 caliber bullets. I can't remember my exact thoughts at the time, but I did make the decision not to shoot-up the Zero or the pilot, although I would have been fully justified to do so. The Zero pilot probably long remembered the B-25 that flew about 10 feet over his head that day and was very thankful that he survived. Anyway, we dropped the message streamer, racked the

airplane around a two or three hundred-foot hill not far from the airfield and headed for home.....not the end of the story.

Three months later I was back in California, my home state. While on my 45 day R&R leave, I visited the family of a good high school friend, Darrell Booth, a Navy airman who was killed in the Pacific. Darrell and I had spent many nights with other friends doing what 16 and 17-year-old boys did during the depression on the streets of Los Angeles. During the visit, his father, a city fireman, showed me a letter that he had received from Darrell's commander aboard an Aircraft Carrier in the Pacific. (I do not remember the name of the Carrier) Darrell was a gunner-radio operator on a TBM Avenger. His plane was in a group making a strafing and bombing run on the airfield at Ishigaki Shima a few months before the war ended. His plane was hit by enemy fire and the last seen of it was a parachute just starting to open under the aft fuselage (probably Darrell's) and then the airplane crashed into the hill that I mentioned earlier. Obviously, there were no survivors. The family was still mourning Darrell's loss.

In my prayers, I still remember Darrell and the other boyhood friends who did not return from World War II.

Story by: Jerry Chealander - 501st

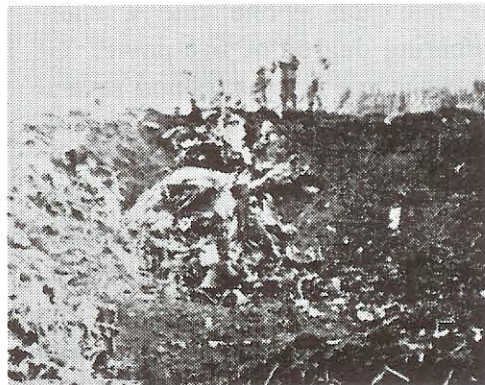
Training Accident

Part of being in an Army Air Corps Bomb Group is helping keep all of the various elements of the group sharp and ready for action.

I remember on May 5th, 1944 such an occasion when one of our pilots, 1st Lt. Harold F. Rhode and his crew were asked to help the searchlight crews in a nighttime training exercise over Nadzab N.G. This training was necessary to ensure that our ground crews were prepared for any Japanese night air attacks. Lt. Rhode took his Mitchell, a B-25D model, up to around 2,000 feet and began circling the airfield. The Searchlight crew had the task of finding the Mitchell in the darkness. Unfortunately for Lt. Rhode, the searchlight crew was a little too good at their job, they managed to pick-up the Mitchell and shined their powerful light beams right on the aircraft's fuselage - blinding Lt. Rhode in the process. The Mitchell suddenly went into a steep dive. I was watching the exercise from the airbase and realized what was happening. I remember screaming; "Turn off the damn searchlights", but they kept the lights trained on the plane all the way into the ground about a mile west of Strip Three.

Lt. Rhode and his crew, as well as two passengers who were on board were all killed.

Story by: Max B. Furguson - 499th



B-25D 41-30165 Crash Site.

498th "Falcons"

Mike Hasselbauer Assistant Group Vice-President



I often get emails from squadron members, some inspirational, some comical and some just plain silly. Over the last two years with our servicemen deployed overseas many the email has been written about our servicemen and women overseas.

I had the remarkable good fortune to be working near Nellis AFB in Las Vegas Nevada over the last week. Often times we were outside and the roar of the jets was deafening. We watched as Stealth Bombers and Stealth Fighters, F-15's, F-16's, flights of A-10 Warthogs, and even some of the very latest F-22's roared up into the sky for operations. It was quite a show. While talking about how exciting it would be to have such an experience at 24 or 25 years old I realized that 60+ years ago it must have been equally exciting for the men of the 498th to take to the skies.

We had lunch at a BBQ restaurant near the base and it was crowded with young men in flight suits and uniforms, grouped at each table displaying behavior, which seemed well beyond their years. It is funny how things change so much and still remain the same.

After lunch we were back at work when I commented to one of the regular guys on the site on how noisy it was, he responded simply "That's the sound of freedom".

You can rest assured that the tradition continues.

Since the last newsletter I did get a nice photo from Betty and Fred Arnett taken at the last reunion, while I was sitting with Gordon Evans and his neice, Bob and Grace Jacobs sent me some literature on nice model planes that had the 498th Falcon paintjob available from Island Charter Store at Disney Orlando www.islandcharterstore.com

Thanks!

I can give more info if anyone is interested. I also received correspondence from Jon Anderson who is now living in my neck of the woods (Arizona). His uncle was T/sgt Orville Diedrichs KIA 29 March '44 aboard 'Hitt and Miss'. I am sure that he would appreciate any info if you have any, I can provide the address. I still trade email jokes with Ira Schaub if you have any good ones to pass on and I am still trying to track down our vagabond President Frank Dillard.

I am still waiting on some suggestions for what we might call our webpage for the 498th! Come on now there have to be some creative suggestions out there.

See you in Washington....

Hickey under fire

Lawrence J. Hickey, author of the book "Warpath Across the Pacific" has more on his mind these days just than just writing. According to the newspaper, the Boulder News, Hickey is being sued by members of the 22nd, 38th, 43rd

and 312th WWII Bomb Groups.

The groups allege that Hickey that has broken his promise to publish books about them. Hickey has spent the last ten years gathering photos and memorabilia, as well as taking pre-paid book orders from the groups. As a result of the delays, members of the 22nd Air Group have filed a lawsuit. The 38th Bomb Group Association has also filed a complaint with the Colorado Attorney General. The Attorney General's office won't comment on the complaint, but if investigators find evidence of consumer fraud the State can bring a lawsuit to seek restitution and civil penalties against the author. In a statement for the 22nd Bomb Group, attorney Howard Bittman said that, "If and when the book is published, my clients would be willing to withdraw their lawsuit." When it comes to Mr. Hickey, "One of the problems we have in the military is that when someone gives us his word we have no doubt that it will be honored" said Colonel Don Evans, 76 of Bonsal, Calif. Evans served as a navigator with the 22nd. "That puts us a disadvantage when dealing with charlatans and con men." Hickey agreed to write the history of the 22nd in 1986, when the group had 1,300 members. Only 800 remain today. Evans said members had no idea how long Hickey was going to take on the other book projects when he signed on to write their book. He estimated the job would take about 30 months.



499th "Bats Outa Hell"

Benjamin F. Miller Assistant Group Vice-President

Here in the Hoosier state, We are experiencing one of the worst winters in many years. Last summer it was too wet, then too hot. This winter it has been a constant change, from one extreme to the other. Sure glad I've been retired over 20 years. It's nice to stay in and watch the neighbor come with his big tractor and take care of the snow. When I was at Chanute Field in Illinois during the war the winters were very severe. In the two months I was there we saw a bit of grass for two days and a lot of below zero weather. That must have been my conditioning for my stay in the tropics. Before going to service we, in the country, enjoyed the snow. The county didn't plow any of the roads. The neighbors would come over with their mules, hook them to our bobsled - which we still have, and yes it's for sale. We would fill the sled with straw, a few horse blankets and always a jug of hard cider. Sure thought of this a lot during the winters on the equator.

After many years, I'm finally trying to please my family by putting down the adventures we had in the Pacific. I tried a small recorder my wife got me, but what a surprise when the sound came out, I asked my wife, "Do I really sound like that?" She responded: "Oh yes!" I have decided to use the good old typewriter instead. It's surprising how many incidents come to mind once a start is made.

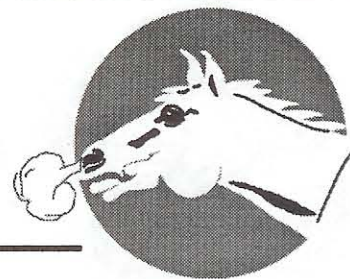
I and still the Chaplain for our local Legion and business is still too good. Last year I did 36 funerals and so far in January of this year we have committed 7 comrades to the Great Beyond. One our past commanders always kidded (I thought) that I would have to do her entire service when she passed on. Much to my surprise, that is just what her family requested of me when cancer took her recently. Boy, that's tough to look at a hundred people with tears rolling down the cheeks of half of them. Now, those clowns in the color guard say they plan to ordain me. It will have to be done after we have a meal, a keg of beer and a service or their making. I'm ready for the party, but that's it!

We are always sweating out the new rules the VA hospital keeps coming up with. Everywhere I've inquired about the Dengue Fever, that has bugged me ever since I contracted it in 1943, the last line has always said: "There is no cure for it and it can kill you!" Now, some high-raking person in the government that my Congressman contacted says that considering the time frame I had been inflicted with the disease; seven years after the end of the war, and that since I am still alive, that was it - I'm cured! Can you imagine the government paying for such wisdom? However I recently heard that the VA now recognizes that Agent Orange did give cancer to some Vietnam vets. They said that two of their patients have cancer and that it is a direct result of exposure to Agent Orange.

According to the plans for the reunion in D.C. later this year it will be all, or more, than we expected. It sounds like we will have our quota of WWII planes to take us on an historic flight. Hunt through your closet to see what equipment you still have. There's nothing better than a flying helmet, goggles or a white WWI scarf! All I've found is an old pair of very worn flying glasses. Since both of my eyes were repaired this year, due to modern medicine, I can read a book without glasses. Oh yes, I also found an old Army prayer book. With Frank being the president things should go as planned. When the two of us had to run the bar at a previous reunion, things went well. We will, of course, miss George, as he was our leader in so many of the past reunions.

Please make an effort to gain new members for our reunion. We are fortunate to have all three of our family members and their spouses signed up. Members of the 499th may remember Clifford Vick, a slender lad from Tennessee who worked in Intelligence and always had his nose in a book. He lived near here and always came out the first Saturday of Squirrel season, around the 15th of August. He always had a problem with Malaria popping up. While on vacation in France the fever hit and a French doctor gave him some medication that the Doc said would cure him forever, but that's another story....

God Bless,
Ben and Norma Miller



500th "Rough Raiders"

"Special Mission" by: Don Wagner

Prologue:

What was left of the Japanese troops in the Philippines had congregated on northern Luzon, hopeful that their Navy would get a ship through our blockade and take them off the island. Intelligence had reports from Filipino guerilla fighters that a good number had escaped capture and evaded their way north through the jungle to a point near Aparri on the coast.

Clark Field - Luzon, Philippines May, 1945

5th Bomber Command sent a mission requirement to the 345th Bomb Group, which was passed on to the 500th Bomb Squadron to accomplish. The mission consisted of a single B-25, with minimal crew, to take the Commanding General - 11th Airborne Division and some of his operational and planning staff for a view of a planned jump area near Aparri in northern Luzon.

The General and his staff did not want to use a C-47, which the troops would jump from because they felt the Japanese would suspect the recon as a prelude to an airborne assault. The B-25 was selected so as not to alert them to the coming action and if fired upon could provide protection.

With a co-pilot and crew chief and eight fully-loaded 50's up front, we flew to a camouflaged runway near Bantanges, south of Manila Bay, where the 11th Airborne was bivouacked.

The landing strip was a hard-surface runway camouflage painted to match the surrounding jungle. From it's length I could tell that with a load it definately would be a short-field takeoff. We landed without incident and were parked in a small clearing off the end of the runway.

A weapons carrier pulled up with Major-General Swing-11th Airborne, two Colonels and a Lt. Colonel. One of the Colonels was the Division Chief of Operations, the other was the Chief of Intellience. The Lt. Colonel was the Battalion Commander who would head the jump. We gave them a briefing on the airplane and emergency procedures. General Swing rode in the navigator's compartment and our chief played host to the rest of the party in radio compartment.

Our flight to the jump area was without incident and the Battalion Commander came forward over the bomb-bay for a good look at where his troops would be jumping. General Swing asked if he could sit in the co-pilots seat for a better look-see and he and the co-pilot changed places. To the east to the area we saw a few Japanese trucks through the foliage. We were flying at about 200 feet when suddenly small-arms fire started coming our way and I swung west out of the way. General Swing then asked if my guns were charged and I replied in the affirmative, he looked at me and said "Well, let's strafe the sonsabitches!" I made tewo passes over the area where we had received the fire at 50 feet. The General was overwhelmed by the firepower of those 50's and we saw some fires on the ground where we had vehicles or ammo.

He was so excited that he asked to make another pass and could *he* fire the 50's? I banked the aircraft around and lined up on our target, the General was like kid with a new toy!

Flying back to Bantanges the General said that he couldn't remember having more fun and I told him about Pappy Gunn and how we came about that great strafing firepower. We landed OK and the General thanked us for taking he and his staff to see the drop area and with a big grin on his face said: "and for the great combat experience, I'd like to do that again sometime!" It was a mission to remember.

Training Video

Would you like to learn how to fly the B-25? According to Tom Hoey of the 498th, there's nothing to it! Tom came across an old Army training film entitled: "Flying the Bombers B-25 and B-26, on VCR format. The black and white film was produced in 1944 and runs 71 minutes total. One side of the box shows the "B-25's over Rabaul Harbor" painting, the other side features a B-26 in combat. The tape was marketed by: American Sound and Video Corp. 25133 Thomas Drive, Warren, Michigan 48091. (313) 536-9100. Purchased ten years ago, there's no telling if it's still available.



501st "Black Panthers"

Paul Van Valkenberg

Assistant Group Vice-President

Hi gang, time for another report from the "Panthers" Work is continuing on establishing a Group website with its own name. Two names mentioned from the site are: "AirApaches.com" and "345thBombGroup.com". A decision will need to be made as to which one to go with, so let's have a vote! You can vote on one of the above suggestions or one of your own choosing. Send your vote to me at: 3137 East River Road, Truxton, NY 13158-3109 or e-mail in to van@cortland.edu I will also attempt to set up an individual 501st website just for us.

Progress is being made in collecting 345th memorabilia for our archives. Vic Tattelman has sent in an audio recording on cassette from the first reunion, held in Colorado Springs, July 1973. While time has taken its toll on the quality of this recording I was able to get it copied to a CD format. Vic also sent a publication by the name of "AIRDROMES GUIDE - SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC AREA", dated July, 1945. It is a detailed listing of all the airdromes with information such as; location, size, surface bearings, traffic patterns, elevation and more. This is a nice piece of SW Pacific history. Vic is still digging and hopefully more "stuff" will be on the way. Please consider sending in your momentos or copies of them so that we can continue to develop a central repository for 345th history.

On a personal note I had the privilege to spend several days hunting last November with past 501st VP Quint Giuliani at his "Ranch" in Pennsylvania. It looked like it was going to be a very rewarding hunt when we spotted three bucks feeding in his back yard on the afternoon before the opening day. Unfortunately, they must have been tipped off that the next day was the opener because they were nowhere to be found for the remainder of the hunt. The camp didn't go

The "Crew" - Then

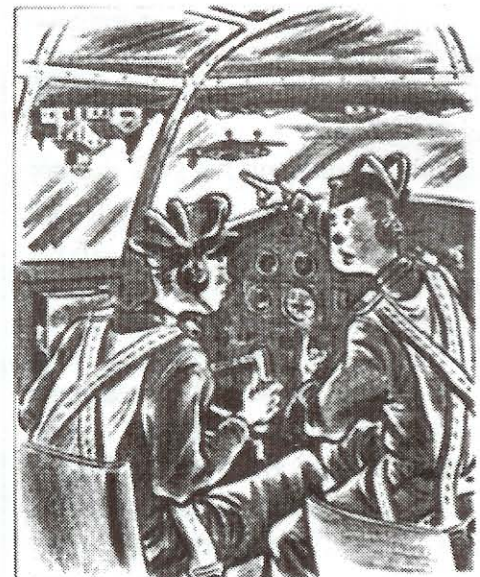


hungry though with Quint "Deadeye" Giuliani bagging a nice doe. I want to thank Quint, Tony and Joe for their display of hospitality and for a great hunt! I hope everyone will be making an effort to attend the reunion in Washington, D.C. this September. This will be one not to miss.

And Now!



Thanks to former 501st VP Quint Giuliani for sending in these "Before and After photos", these are just the kinds of articles that help make the Strafer more enjoyable to read! (Ed.)



"You gonna believe me, or the gyro?"

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 February 28th, 2005

Checking account: Wachovia Bank - Burlington, NC
\$2,657.62

Money Market Fund: Vanguard Prime Money Market
\$24,643.03

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
June 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.

George Frye - 501st

Jan. 28th, 2004

Leta Decker

(wife of Wendell Decker) -499th

Feb. 3rd, 2005

Paul Bingham

Jan. 19th, 2005

Dale Ward - 498th

Don Bishop - HQ

June 20th, 2003 → 1996

Donald T. Goehring - 500th

March 1st, 2004

Next Issue:

President's address

Washington reunion details

Reunion registration forms

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