

345th Mission to Nation's Capitol Results in Direct Hit!

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One-hundred-Thirty-five members of the Association registered for this year's reunion in Washington D.C. According to intelligence sources, all crews returned safely to their respective bases after the raid.

Highlights of the reunion included; A bus tour to Arlington Cemetery, where Association members witnessed the changing of the guard ceremony, which was said to be very moving. The new Udvar-Hazy Air Museum, was a popular tour, no surprise seeing as this state-of-the-art museum features 356 aircraft on static display, an IMAX theater and a whole host of other attractions. A tour to the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum was also a big hit among Association members. Tours of all the major monuments around the Capitol were also available, these included; the WWII National

Monument, where several members had the chance to chat with tourists from all over the nation and share some of their experiences during the War, the FDR monument, Washington monument, and Mt. Vernon, President Washington's home. As well as various other local attractions.

The Group banquet, which was held Saturday night, was attended by a total of 186 members, associate members and their guests. Group President, Frank L. Dillard opened the event with a short introduction speech and was followed afterwards by the night's featured speaker, Brigidere General Lorenzana, representing the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C.



The General thanked the 345th for their efforts in freeing his country during the War. To finish the banquet in style, General Lorenzana then proceeded to award a total of thirty-five Philippine Liberation Medals and the Presidential Unit Citation to those Air Apaches who qualified for them.

Coincidentally, the night of the banquet, September 3rd, was EXACTLY sixty years to

the day from the date when the Philippine campaign was officially declared over. Talk about good timing! Details on how both the Philippine Liberation Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation can be obtained are inside on page 7.



From the Editor

Cliff Dillard

Alright, I have to admit that I'm a bit jealous of those members who were able to attend the latest reunion in Washington, D.C. Once again, I was unable to make the trip due to a rather inflexible work schedule. Maybe next year... For an aviation buff, such as myself, I can't think of a better place to visit than our nation's capitol. The Smithsonian Institution's Air & Space Museum would be worth the trip alone. From what I've been told, a person could spend several days roaming around that collection of aviation history without getting bored one bit. With the opening of the new Udvar-Hazy Center and its extensive collection of aircraft and displays, I imagine one could probably use up an entire week just visiting those two museums alone. Perhaps one day I'll find out. I just hope my father used a lot of film on his trip!

The weather here in Southern Illinois is finally beginning to cool off somewhat, our temperatures are now only in the upper 80's to low 90's! Fortunately the humidity has dropped to a more tolerable level, that's what really wears you out when you are trying to work or play outdoors. I know that doesn't sound very cool to some, but around here that's not all that bad. Of course, I would rather have the heat than the cold. I can always get cool, but I can never seem to get warm enough in the winter.

No wonder so many people retire to Florida or Arizona. Besides, having weather you can play golf in 300 days a year would be a big plus to me! Our golfing season is about 6 months long here, just long enough to begin getting the game together only to lose most of it over the winter months. In other words, the frustration never ends! But I guess that's why they call it golf. All the other four-letter words are already taken!

The local economy seems to be reviving after a 20-year lull, due in large part to the return of the coal mining industry in our region. With the new environmental regulations in place, power plants will finally be required to install scrubber systems to remove the sulfur dioxide from the coal they burn. That, coupled with the rising cost of natural gas and heating oil, makes Illinois coal an attractive energy source once again. Currently, there are four new mines under construction in our area. Two of these mines will feature their own power plants at the mine-site! In all, these facilities will provide upwards of 1,800 high-paying jobs and the ancillary services they require to Southern Illinois. With the scarcity of experienced coal miners nationwide, the job market should improve by leaps and bounds. I know our local towns could certainly use an economic boost.

I recently spoke with my father and he told me that work on the Group website is beginning. Paul Van Valkenburg and Mike Hasslbauer are heading-up the

project and have already secured most of the funding necessary for the site. I think this website will become an invaluable tool for ensuring the continued interest in our association and World War II history for the public at large. I can visualize a day in the not-too-distant future when you can go on-line to read the Strafer as well as back-issue copies of our newsletter. Having the Strafer on-line will enable members to view action pictures of 345th historical events and download written articles by association members. The addition of a Group website should also make it easier for members to submit articles for publication. With the rising use of computers and the Internet in our public schools our site should itself prove useful for students doing research on history papers and will hopefully spark the aviation bug in a few young people.

From my own personal experience, mainly from attending various Air Shows around the country, I have found that those individuals involved in aviation are the nicest people you can meet anywhere. It never ceases to amaze me the time and patience a pilot will spend to answer any question I may have about his or her aircraft, from when it was built to what the rate of climb is. They always seem to enjoy educating the public about aviation. Pilots both past and present would be good role models for future generations. Until we meet again....

Cliff Dillard

Group President

Frank L. Dillard

On September first through the fifth, 2005 members of the 345th Bomb Group assembled in our Nation's capitol to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War Two. When the War ended it also marked the end of an Army Air Corps unit known as the 345th Bombardment Group. The members of this unit were justifiably proud of their record of service to our country and to have been known as the "Air Apaches." While the majority of the members of this group were destined to disperse and return to civilian life after the war, some wished to continue the friendships forged in the tropical heat of the Pacific Theatre. After several small informal gatherings this feeling of fellowship led to the formation of our 345th Bomb Group Association.

The surviving members of the original 345th Bomb Group should consider each annual meeting to be a time to collectively honor the memory of those 755 members that lost their lives in the performance of their duties in time of war. These meetings can also be an opportunity to make new friends from among the dwindling ranks of our group, as well as to meet and enjoy the company of those special friends from our past.

Thirty-five of those attending Reunion XVIII were awarded the Philippine Liberation Medal and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. Michael Hasslbauer and Paul Van Valkenberg accepted the awards posthumously for their fathers.

I felt honored to stand within the group as General Lorenzana, representing the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. presented each man his medals. In spite of age, every man still had the bearing of a soldier, proud of his contribution to America's war effort. Sixty years is a long time to wait for an award, but the occasion was most appropriate.

I remember, quite vividly, our arrival in the Philippines aboard the Thomas Nelson on November 29th, 1944. I also remember when we were struck by a Kamikaze. I was twenty years old. Today, at age eighty-one, that day was clearly the most horrible experience of my life.

The United States and our Allies were credited with winning World War II, but what a dreadful price was paid. We can never know how many potentially great teachers, ministers, doctors, scientists, engineers, poets, philosophers, artists, musicians and legislators might have been among the 755 companions lost from our unit. We do know that 755 sons were lost, but there is no way to accurately count the number of brothers, husbands and sweethearts that were among those tentmates of ours. Most of them never had the opportunity to be a husband or father and for this there is no just compensation. We trust that in honoring their bravery, through our annual gatherings and the retelling of old stories, that we may preserve the essence of their tragically shortened lives.



Today, after so many wars, too many wonderful young men and women still walk in the harm's way in unfriendly foreign lands. Let us pray for their safety and for the time when the leaders of all nations realize that war is not the final resolution to the grievances of a few, but rather, the beginning of eternal grief for so many. Armed with this knowledge let them devise a civilized and peaceful way to resolve all differences.

Reunion XVIII is now history. If you weren't there you missed an opportunity to visit some of our nation's most honored historical sites and some of the most interesting and educational attractions. Arlington Cemetery and the "Changing of the Guard" at the tomb of the unknown soldier was most impressive. Our tour of the Udvar-Hazy Museum was another high point for me.

I would like to thank the following people for their help with Reunion XVIII; Pat Cummings, Margaret Dillard, Phil Grabbe, Ed and Ginger Sharpe, Paul Van Valkenberg, Mike Hasslbauer, Bill Stone and "Doc" Pearson. I would like to commend the Group on our unanimous vote to send \$1000.00 to the Hurricane Disaster Relief Fund.

Possible sites for the next reunion are Austin or San Antonio Texas.

We'll keep you posted.....

Headquarter's Report

by: *Ken Gastgeb*

Our reunions are still going strong. Gus and Pauline Ouelette and our Apache Princess, Joan Leslie were the only ones I know of that attended from Headquarters.

We served our Nation on one of the greatest teams of all times. The 345th Bomb Group was one of the players on the 5th Air Force team. Our four squadrons and headquarters made up our position. Every member of the Group had a job to do and we all performed them very well. There were some who planned the missions, others who flew the planes, mechanics that repaired the planes, Supply, Communications personnel, Ground Transportation, Medical, Food Supply, Intelligence and a host of others that made the 345th function as an effective fighting force. There were times when our Group was alone and had to perform as a team within the team. The records show that we lost many friends and planes when doing our job of destroying the enemy's war machine on our march to Japan.

The 345th Bombardment Group earned many individual medals and Unit Citations for great performance under adverse conditions. Of course, there are many who will never receive these awards as they are still on patrol in the Pacific. We are all proud to have served as members of this unique team, along with the other teams that saved our Nation from an enemy that wanted to destroy not only our Nation but our way of life as well.

Message from our Apache Princess, Joan Leslie; "How wonderful to be with the 345th again. The warmth and friendliness of each one of you was so gratifying. I was thrilled to see the Philippine General present those well-deserved medals to our men and to see the military bearing so evident in each one of the recipients! My "Papoose" and I thank you for such generous hospitality. We were delighted to be there for your 60th reunion. Love, Your Apache Princess, Joan Leslie."

One of the highlights of the reunion was the trip to the WWII Memorial. Association members were given the opportunity to educate and



entertain younger Americans with tales of their exploits during the War. The 498th's Melvin Best is shown above fielding questions from an interested couple. This trip was a rare treat for the public at large, it isn't often that this many WWII weterans are found together in the same location.

Thoughts from Al Gruer (498th)

Dear Frank, First, let me thank your wife Margaret and the reunion committee for organizing the 18th reunion of the 345th Bomb Group. I'm sure everyone was pleased with the various tours and events that took place. I know we did.

For me, the World War II Memorial was a big hit, as was the "Changing of the guard" at Arlington Cemetery. Watching those young men walking through their routine with such grace, presence and precision was truly a moving experience.

The outstanding visit to the Air & Space Museum at Dulles was certainly one the trip's highlights! It was a delight to see so many well-preserved aircraft on display. I could have spent an entire week there and still wouldn't have seen it all. Our tour guide at Dulles did a superb job! He seemed to take a special interest in our group, seeing as we were a part of aviation history itself. I was extremely impressed with his knowledge of every plane in the building. Try as we might, we couldn't seem to find a question he could not answer in detail!

This is one reunion I am very thankful to have attended. I can't wait to see what next year's reunion will bring.

Business Minutes of Reunion XVIII

The business meeting for Reunion XVIII was called to order by President Frank Dillard (498th) at 10:00 am, Saturday, September 3, 2005.

Old Business

President Dillard asked Group Secretary, Silas W. Pearson, Jr. (498th) to read the minutes of the business meeting from Reunion XVII held in Reno, Nevada, September 4th, 2004. Following the presentation of the minutes Jay Moore (501st) introduced a motion to approve as read. The motion was seconded by Ken Haller (498th) and carried by a unanimous voice vote.

President Dillard called on Group Treasurer, Edwin F. Sharpe (499th) to report on the financial condition of the Association for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. The results of the treasurer's report were

August 31, 2004 account balances:

Wachovia Bank Checking Account	\$12,558.19
Checking Account Deposits for Reunion XVII	(\$8,731.49)
Vanguard Prime Money Market	<u>\$24,403.30</u>
Total	\$28,230.00

September 1, 2005 account balances:

Wachovia Bank Checking Account	\$11,130.03
Checking Account Deposits for Reunion XVIII	(\$7,247.13)
Vanguard Prime Money Market	<u>\$24,923.59</u>
Total	\$28,806.49

The chair accepted the financial report as read following a motion by Al Gruer (498th), a second by Ken Haller, and a unanimous voice vote in the affirmative.

The next order of business was the status of the Association's membership. Mr. Sharpe was requested to report on the current number of members in each category as compared to one year ago. The report is summarized as follows:

MEMBER CLASS	NO. 2004	NO. 2005	CHANGE
Life Member (LM)	72	69	-3
Member (M)	270	235	-35
Associate Member (AM)	32	42	+10
Associate Widow (AW)	88	102	+14
Financially burdened (FB)	4	3	-1
Totals	466	451	-14

President Dillard stated that the Association required approximately \$4500 annually for the production of the STRAFER, website maintenance and miscellaneous administrative and office expenses. Since the Association's only income is from the collection of dues, it is evident that a minimum of 300 dues-paying members are required to avoid withdrawing funds from the treasury to pay expenses. Members and Associate Members are the only membership classes that are required to pay annual dues. They were urged to pay their dues in a timely manner to avoid the expense of mailing delinquent dues notices.

Reunion Business Minutes Cont'd.

New Business

President Dillard called upon Paul Van Valkenburg (501st), Chairman of the Treasurer's Audit Committee for his report. Paul stated that the results of the audit committee's examination indicated that the Association's books were in proper order. He further commented that Mr. Sharpe should be commended for the excellent manner in which the books were maintained. The Association acknowledged Mr. Sharpe's contribution by a round of applause.

J. W. Stone (501st) asked about the disbursement of the money in the Association Treasury should the Association elect to disband. The president explained that the matter was covered in the Group By-laws, but in essence, the funds remaining after all expenses were paid would be divided equally between the current Life Members, Members, and Associate Members, share-and-share alike.

Michael Hasslbauer was asked to report on the status of the 345th Bomb Group Association's proposed website. Due to his present involvement in a job change Mike deferred to Paul Van Valkenburg. Paul stated that some work had been done, but certain costs were involved and the Website Committee needed authorization to proceed. At that time George J. Balochko (498th) rose and donated \$300 to fund the project. This was followed by J.W. "Bill" Stone's generous donation of a check for \$1000 and Fabian G. Moeller's (499th) pledge of \$1000.

Jay Moore (501st) made a motion that the Group donate to the Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund. Phil Grabbe (498th) seconded the motion. After some discussion it was agreed that our treasurer, Ed Sharpe, should issue a check in the amount of \$1000 for Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief and present it to the Salvation Army. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

The next order of new business was the selection of a mid-continent site for Reunion XIX. After some discussion regarding possible changes in time of year it was the consensus opinion that Labor Day weekend was still probably the best for all concerned. Several locations were mentioned as possible sites including San Antonio, TX; St. Louis, MO; Wichita, KS; Colorado Springs, CO; and Dayton, OH. Linda Kaplan (501st) made a motion that we select Austin, Texas as next year's site. Mike Hasslbauer (498th) seconded the motion. Carol Hillman (498th) commented that if the University of Texas was playing a home game that weekend it would be next to impossible to book hotel rooms. It was decided by voice vote to select Austin, Texas as our primary site for Reunion XIX, but to evaluate San Antonio, Texas as a secondary site in the event we were unable to obtain suitable hotel accommodations in Austin. Several Texas residents volunteered to serve on the Reunion XIX committee.

Charles Wilson (498th) volunteered to research information on Pacific Theater medals that the members were eligible for and had never received.

Gordon Evans (498th) won a free room night in the raffle. Three others were drawn but the lucky persons were not present and would have to wait until the banquet to receive them.

Ken Haller (498th) announced he had written his autobiography and had copies for sale after the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Association the chair requested a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Phil Grabbe (498th), and seconded by Al Gruer (498th). The motion carried by unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned.

498th "Falcons"

Mike Hasslbauer Assistant Group Vice-President



Reunion XIV is now Modern History. There were so many great places to visit it would be difficult to single out one as more special than the others. The World War II Memorial did seem to be in a class by itself. Members of the 498th Squadron might have been pleasantly surprised to find their name and hometown (at time of enlistment) entered in the Memorial's computer archives. We have Ira Schaub to thank for that. It seems that Ira downloaded the entire roster from an old squadron book entitled, "The Falcons" while in Washington on a previous visit.

Arlington Cemetery and the changing of the guard at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a moving experience. I wonder what the "old timers" were thinking when we heard a distant bugler play Retreat. If their pulse quickened and the hair bristled a bit they were among friends.

The trip to the National Air and Space Museum was a real treat. Our docent was so knowledgeable about all phases of aviation it was a privilege to following him through that enormous complex. If you were like me you regretted that our allotted time had expired and we had to rush to catch the bus for the return trip to our hotel.

It was an honor to be part of the Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Philippines. I accepted my father's Philippine Presidential Unit Citation and his Philippine Liberation Medal posthumously.

He would have been proud to take his place in the ranks with his old friends from many years ago. The medal is beautiful, as is the reason for it being presented to the ancient warriors from the 345th Bomb Group.

During the business meeting the membership was highly supportive of a proposal to establish an Internet website for the Association. Several members at the meeting made generous contributions to provide funding for the project.

I am deeply involved with the many details associated with my recent decision to change jobs. My main reason for changing was to have more time at home with family and less time on the road. After I am settled in my new job I hope to have more time to help Paul with our Air Apache website project.

For this site to be of interest to others it must be carefully organized and provided with the best pictures and documents from individual collections. Most of you have mementoes of WWII that you treasure as something very special. Please make copies and forward to Paul Van Valkenburg. If you wish the material returned be sure you let him know and he will after scanning it into our website. This is a new venture and we need help from all members of all squadrons. Initially we would like to establish a link to the 500th Squadron website, and add other links as they become available. President Frank Dillard reported receiving a phone call from Sherry (Barnaskey) Herman.

It seems that she forgot to pay her dues and inadvertently became a "lost sheep" and missed out on our Washington reunion. Sherry lost her dad, George Barnaskey, last year. George was an original member of the 345th Bomb Group and a great supporter of our Association. We plan to hold Sherry to her promised to be at Reunion XIX in Texas next year.

Ken Gastgeb reported that a volunteer civilian team had successfully recovered a B-25C from Lake Murray, South Carolina

Those of you that trained at Columbia Army Air Base at Columbia, South Carolina will remember the lake as a training site used by CAB for simulated low level bombing missions. There was a small island near the west end of the lake that supported a large target that resembled a roadside billboard. Practice skip-bombing runs using 100-lb bombs were frequently flown over the lake during our operational training. It seems that in 1943 one of the pilots from Columbia converted his B-25C into a submarine during one of those buzz-jobs.

The recovery team has announced plans to restore this waterlogged relic to flying condition. It seems that there are no C-model Mitchell's presently in display status at any museum in the country. I am sure this group would welcome donations but fortunately (for us) I don't have their address.



499th "Bats Outa Hell"

Ben Miller Assistant Group Vice-President

The elections are over, so all the newly elected officials are on the campaign trail getting ready for the next one. They keep saying that an official elected to a post in Washington will become a millionaire within two years. By then all the promises they made to the voters will be forgotten. Since the time most of the GI's came home from the war, changed into civilian clothes and it's insuing way of life, the world has undergone tremendous changes. We have put a man on the moon and explored the stars. We used to think the stars were put there just to help us navigate. If a submarine was trapped several hundred feet below the surface it was lost, now we can bring them up from great depths. A private company (from Japan!) is now offering tourist rides into space and back again for a handsome fee. Yes, this world of ours is always changing and I'm glad I was here to see it.

After highschool, I went to work for General Electric, where I stayed for 42 years. You don't see many people stick with one job for very long anymore. In fact, I read that most people will change jobs at least 11 times during their work career! Does this say something about the workers or the companies they work for? At the time the girls were not permitted to work third shift, of course they soon changed that law.

My grandpa gave me his 1922 Model-T Ford to drive

One night while I slept, my dad and uncle towed it to a junkyard and sold it, they gave me the whole \$15.00 it was worth! Not long afterwards, Dad borrowed my 1936 Ford with a V-8 to go to town. The old Model-T had mechanical brakes while my newer car was equipped with hydraulics. Dad was accustomed to hearing his old engine roar to get moving so when he stepped on the gas in that V-8 ford he literally flew out of the driveway, throwing stones the entire time and almost wound-up in our neighbor's field! Upon his return he gave me the keys and said he would never drive that "Death-trap" again! And he never did either! That car went over 90 mph with an 85 hp engine. Our brilliant engineers haven't made much progress since. The oilmen and the automotive companies have seen to that.

I read a lot of history books and that our Founding Fathers did a superb job on the Constitution, but I've dicovered after researching their lives, that they also had problems. Alexander Hamilton and his son were both killed in dueling matches within a period of months. Do you think our elected officials would resort to this if it were legal?

Fifty years ago we had just returned from the far-flung corners of the world and since then many of us have sent family members to the far-flung corners of the earth to bring democracy to others. My co-worker, Rodney Shane was old enough to be my father and we got along just fine, but he was killed when we were

bombed on the Thomas Nelson.

He had a 35mm camera, an Argus K model, and he always said if anything would happen to him the camera was to be mine. We got film for it from the photo lab, it was the unused ends from the gun cameras of fighter planes. The material was very stiff, but it worked alright.

I have a stack of rosters going back several years but most of the calls I get these days are people looking for members from all the squadrons. If you have any questions about a missing Air Apache, give me a try as I have helped locate information on a few.

Treasurer's Report



Group Assets as of August 31st, 2005

Checking Account:
Wachovia Bank - Burlington, NC
* \$11,130.03

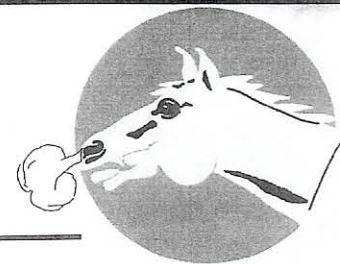
Money Market Fund
Vanguard Prime Money Market
\$24,923.59

* Includes Reunion XVIII funds

Ed Sharpe

500th "Rough Raiders"

"Reflections" by: Don Wagner



On the eve of our reunion in Washington, some reflections on it's meaning comes to mind, and I'd like to share these thoughts with you. This is the 60th anniversary of the end of the war in the Pacific. The papers, you will note, are once again debating whether the atom bombs should have been dropped. After the cessation of hostilities, I had access to some of the invasion plans for Japan at HQ, 5th Air Force, and there is no doubt in my mind that the decision not only saved a lot of our lives, but millions of Japanese as well, and the "Monday morning quarterbacks", most of which were not born yet have no idea of how right that decision was.

I can't express how delighted I am with the number of our offspring and relatives that are honorary members. It's not surprising that there are now more of them, than there are of original members. My fervent prayer is that that they will carry on the spirit of the Association for years to come.

I'm sure it is hard for our relatives to comprehend the fact that we were a family before they became ours. A different kind of family true, but a family nonetheless. One bound together in a common cause, scared to death, at times uncertain of whether or not we would ever return to our homeland, always looking out for each other, and suffering the same in both our losses, and exaltations of our victories, and relief when the end of the war came, with the satisfaction of completing the job.

I'm looking forward to our Washington reunion for many reasons. I may not recognize everyone, or remember some names, but the look in the eyes are the same. The family will be back together again, and I rejoice in that. We'll probably tell some of the old stories over and over again, and that's OK; they bear telling over and over. When we discuss those that have left us, members and spouses alike, I know I will shed tears unashamedly, because that's my nature. My wife and I made most of our reunions, and enjoyed every one of them. She left me two years ago after 59 years of marriage, and awaits me at Arlington National. My sons are part of the honorary membership, and they and their families will be at the reunion. You can bet we'll spend some of our time with their mother.

It's going to be the best reunion yet guys. Even without the hoped for aircraft, there is no more fitting place than Washington for this one. If you have ever had anything to do in setting up a reunion, you know what a task it is. "Murph" Leventon and those who helped set this one up deserve all our accolades up front. If you haven't guessed it already, I'm proud to be a "ROUGH RAIDER", and "AIR APACHE", and I make no apologies for being nostalgic.



WWII Monument Registry

Anyone who served in the Armed services during World War II, and any American who helped on the home front is eligible for inclusion in the World War II Memorial Registry. Home front activities include; working in defense-related industries, recycling of materials needed for the war effort and more. You may register your own name, the name of a family member or friend.

You may enter a name in the registry via the internet or by mail. To register a name via the internet, go to: <http://www.wwiimemorial.com> Click on the "WWII Registry" button at the left. Follow the online instructions to enter the name you wish to honor.

To enter a name via mail, call 1-800-639-4992 and a form will be mailed to you with the instructions

Arlinton Cemetery was just one of the sites selected as a bus tour destination for those who attended Reunion XVIII.



501st "Black Panthers"

Paul Van Valkenberg

Assistant Group Vice-President

I just returned from Reunion 2005 in Washington DC and can report that a good time was had by all. It was certainly good to see familiar faces again and many new 2nd and 3rd generation members as well. For those who were not able to attend the event, your presence was truly missed.

The highlight for me was seeing the new World War Two Memorial. What made it truly meaningful was being able to be there with so many veterans of the 345th. It was also moving to see other visitors to the memorial approach our veterans to say "thank you" and to have a chance to listen to a story or two from our "Greatest Generation". By the end of the day I think we were all pretty beat from all the walking but I know I for one will remember this trip for a long time to come.

The business meeting brought forth several new items of interest to the Group. It was decided that the Group should have its own website to help us keep the memory of the 345th alive for many generations to come. We have secured the web address of "345thbombgroup.org" and are working toward the development of a professionally designed site. We had a number of VERY generous donations to assist us on implementing this new project and getting things started. Michael Hasselbaur and I will be spearheading this project and I'm sure between the two of us

we will come up with a website the Group will be proud of. I'll keep you up-to-date on the progress of this new adventure.

Plans for next year's reunion were also discussed. As it stands now, Austin Texas looks like the place to be. More details will be posted when they become available.

One topic of specific interest to the 501st was the squadron's copy of its mission reports. At last years reunion in Reno, NV we learned that those reports had been turned over to Philip Heidorf, the son of a 501st pilot, apparently with the understanding that he would share them with anyone who wanted copies. Unfortunately, this person has never been associated with the 345th Bomb Group Association and is now charging for copies of the reports as well as "shipping and handling" fees. Mr. Heidorf wants over \$750 to make copies of these reports for the Group. This matter has been turned over to Frank Dillard who has vowed to take appropriate action to get these reports back to their rightful owners.

In closing, I would like to once again ask for your assistance by sending me material for the Strafer. From listening to all the accounts of days gone by, I know you all have a story or stories that others would like to hear. Please take a few minutes to write down your favorite story or memory and send it in.

Until next time, stay well.

Military Advice

Advice and instructions taken from actual military sources. Some of these guys must have had a sense of humor...

"Aim towards the enemy."
--Instruction printed on U.S. Rocket Launcher

"When the pin is pulled, Mr. Grenade is not our friend."
--U.S. Marine Corps

"Cluster bombing from B-52s is very, very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed to always hit the ground."
--USAF Ammo Troop

"A slipping gear could let your M203 grenade launcher fire when you least expect it. That would make you quite unpopular in what's left of your unit."
--Army's magazine of prevention maintenance

"It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you just bombed."
--U.S. Air Force manual

"Try to look unimportant; the enemy may be low on ammo."
--Infantry Journal

"Tracers work both ways."
--U.S. Army Ordnance

"Five-second fuses only last three seconds."
--Infantry Journal

Group President

Frank L. Dillard

On September first through the fifth, 2005 members of the 345th Bomb Group assembled in our Nation's capitol to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War Two. When the War ended it also marked the end of an Army Air Corps unit known as the 345th Bombardment Group. The members of this unit were justifiably proud of their record of service to our country and to have been known as the "Air Apaches." While the majority of the members of this group were destined to disperse and return to civilian life after the war, some wished to continue the friendships forged in the tropical heat of the Pacific Theatre. After several small informal gatherings this feeling of fellowship led to the formation of our 345th Bomb Group Association.

The surviving members of the original 345th Bomb Group should consider each annual meeting to be a time to collectively honor the memory of those 755 members that lost their lives in the performance of their duties in time of war. These meetings can also be an opportunity to make new friends from among the dwindling ranks of our group, as well as to meet and enjoy the company of those special friends from our past.

Thirty-five of those attending Reunion XVIII were awarded the Philippine Liberation Medal and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. Michael Hasslbauer and Paul Van Valkenberg accepted the awards posthumously for their fathers.

I felt honored to stand within the group as General Lorenzana, representing the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. presented each man his medals. In spite of age, every man still had the bearing of a soldier, proud of his contribution to America's war effort. Sixty years is a long time to wait for an award, but the occasion was most appropriate.

I remember, quite vividly, our arrival in the Philippines aboard the Thomas Nelson on November 29th, 1944. I also remember when we were struck by a Kamikaze. I was twenty years old. Today, at age eighty-one, that day was clearly the most horrible experience of my life.

The United States and our Allies were credited with winning World War II, but what a dreadful price was paid. We can never know how many potentially great teachers, ministers, doctors, scientists, engineers, poets, philosophers, artists, musicians and legislators might have been among the 755 companions lost from our unit. We do know that 755 sons were lost, but there is no way to accurately count the number of brothers, husbands and sweethearts that were among those tentmates of ours. Most of them never had the opportunity to be a husband or father and for this there is no just compensation. We trust that in honoring their bravery, through our annual gatherings and the retelling of old stories, that we may preserve the essence of their tragically shortened lives.



Today, after so many wars, too many wonderful young men and women still walk in the harm's way in unfriendly foreign lands. Let us pray for their safety and for the time when the leaders of all nations realize that war is not the final resolution to the grievances of a few, but rather, the beginning of eternal grief for so many. Armed with this knowledge let them devise a civilized and peaceful way to resolve all differences.

Reunion XVIII is now history. If you weren't there you missed an opportunity to visit some of our nation's most honored historical sites and some of the most interesting and educational attractions. Arlington Cemetery and the "Changing of the Guard" at the tomb of the unknown soldier was most impressive. Our tour of the Udvar-Hazy Museum was another high point for me.

I would like to thank the following people for their help with Reunion XVIII; Pat Cummings, Margaret Dillard, Phil Grabbe, Ed and Ginger Sharpe, Paul Van Valkenberg, Mike Hasslbauer, Bill Stone and "Doc" Pearson. I would like to commend the Group on our unanimous vote to send \$1000.00 to the Hurricane Disaster Relief Fund.

Possible sites for the next reunion are Austin or San Antonio Texas.

We'll keep you posted.....

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