

## Lake Murray B-25 Returns To The Surface

### WHAT'S INSIDE

*Editorial*

*President's  
Message*

*Headquarters  
Report*

*"Gary Larkins -  
Part two"*

*Reunion Schedule*

*Financial report*

*Squadron Reports*

*Bulletin Board*

*And More!*



*David Price, Aaron Kozlowski and Archie Trawick assisted in preparing the B-25 for its trip to the Birmingham museum.*

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1943, a B-25C took off from the Columbia Army Air Base and headed for Lake Murray, North Carolina for some skip-bombing practice on Shull and Bomb Islands. This was one year after the Doolittle Raid. Bryce Lever was 19 at the time and was standing on the shore of the lake hoping to catch a few fish that morning. "I was digging for some worms to fish with when I saw the plane come over," he said. "We were used to seeing planes dropping bombs at the lake. But then I heard a sudden splash." The plane had lost power and had to ditch in the lake two miles west of the dam, shearing off the right engine in the process. While Lever ran for help, a north shore resident, Katherine Tapp, saw the crash and summoned her neighbor, Sewall Oliver, to bring his boat and rescue the crew, who had escaped through the cockpit hatch and were standing on the wings of the sinking plane.

By the time Lever returned to the lake, all he saw were the twin tails of the Mitchell above the water and no crew. It was several years before he learned that the crew had been rescued and were safely back at their base. Four of the five crewmen were later killed in the war, only the bombardier, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Henry W. Mascall, survived the war and now resides in Oregon.



*The B-25C rests on dry land for the first time in sixty-three years after having been successfully raised from a depth of 150 feet.*

This was not the only B-25 to go down in Lake Murray. There were six documented accidents involving Mitchells at the lake during WWII. Three crashed and disintegrated, killing a total of 13 Army Air Corps crewmen. A fourth plane got too low and the props hit the water, but it was able to return to base. The B-25 that was recently recovered ditched just four hours before another B-25 ditched in the same area, also with no casualties.

*Continued on page six*

# From the Editor

## *Cliff Dillard*



Here we are again, time for another edition of the Strafer! You may recall in my column that I had changed jobs, well guess what? I've moved yet again! I ended up going back to my old coal mine but this time as a production supervisor, no more examining for me. Anyway, things at the new/old job are going well and I don't intend to move again anytime soon.

The weather here in Southern Illinois is finally beginning to warm a bit (thankfully) and that means that it won't be long before the airshows start up for the new season. I can't wait! there's nothing like the sound of a good 'ol radial engine to get the bood pumping, besides I'll be able to play golf again!

Speaking of airshows, a few years ago I attended a jet model airshow in Metropolis, Illinois named the "Superman Jet Fly-in" As you may remember, Metropolis was the fictional home of "Superman" in the old television series of the same name. After watching the show on TV I must admit to being a bit disappointed the first time I actually visited Metropolis, The population there is around 4,000 people! Not at all what I was expecting. Anyway, the show consisted of all jet-powered model aircraft. These are real turbine jet engines mind you and when they fire one of these engines up it sounds just like a full-size airplane! Very impressive.

If you ever have the chance to visit this or any other model airshow, it really is quite an experience. Some of the models at the show looked too real and too expensive to risk flying. The one model that stuck in my mind was an F4 Phantom that was around 8 feet long and was powered by twin jet engines, just like the real thing. The owner said that he had \$12,000 invested in the thing, and looked perfect both inside and out. Incidentally, this plane crashed shortly after take-off due to a "Flame-out." See what I mean about too risky to fly? I'm going to try and hit some airshows this summer and will report my findings in upcoming editions of the Strafer, until then happy trails!

*Cliff Dillard*

### Reunion Information:

**Hotel reservations:** You are responsible for making your own reservations. The reunion hotel is the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel. The special room rate is \$85.00 per night, plus applicable taxes. The current all-inclusive rate \$100.00 per night. Rooms will be standard king or standard double, depending upon availability. The hotel has agreed to accept reservations at the special rate for on additional three (3) days prior and three (3) days after the regular reunion dates, if space is available. You may make your reservation by calling the hotel directly at 1-888-728-3031, no later than 12:00 noon, Monday July 31, 2006 using a major credit card.

To obtain the special rate be sure to inform the reservation desk operator that you are with the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Reservations received after the cut-off date and time will be accepted on a space and/or rate available basis only. Check-in time is 4:00 pm and checkout time is 12:00 pm. Every effort will be made to accommodate guests arriving prior to the 4:00 p, check-in time.

Note: The hotel will accept room cancellations without charge up to 72 hours prior the date of arrival, cancellations after that time will be assessed one (1) night charge plus applicable taxes.

**Hotel parking:** The hotel will provide complimentary covered parking for members of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association.

**Recreational vehicles:** The hotel does not have facilities for recreational vehicles.

**Airline reservations:** You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements. If you plan to travel by commercial airline try to book your flight directly into the San Antonio Airport. The Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel provides complimentary 24-hour shuttle service between the airport and hotel. It is recommended that you shop around for your airline tickets. We do not have a group discount rate, but some carriers offer senior discounts. Generally, the earlier you make your reservations, the better chance you have of obtaining a discount.

*See Page 11 for further details.*

# Group President

*Frank L. Dillard*

The reunion XIX committee has made considerable progress towards a great meeting in San Antonio, Texas. The members of the committee are; Linda Kaplan, Carol Hillman, Lynn Lee, Phil Grabbe and yours truly. The dates for the reunion are from Thursday, August 31st through Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. We will be billeted at the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel. Dee Musket reports that it is a beautiful place for our reunion. The hotel was completely renovated in a western motif in 2005 and has all the facilities necessary to accommodate our group. There is a complimentary 24/7 shuttle service between the hotel and airport and free covered parking for those of you who intend to drive. The hotel will honor our group-discounted rate for three days before and three after the official reunion dates.

Things get off to flying start Thursday evening with a complimentary wine and cheese reception hosted by the hotel, drop by the Hospitality room afterwards to top off your tank, courtesy of the 345<sup>th</sup>. Friday, we will board a bus for a tour of the Texas hill country. Our destination is Fredericksburg, birthplace of Admiral Nimitz. We will visit the museum of the Pacific; have lunch at a German restaurant and allow the ladies time to browse the local shops. Saturday we will schedule a tour of San Antonio's River Walk, sightseeing from a riverboat, have lunch at a riverside café

and then a visit to the Alamo and other historical sites.

Friday and Saturday night have been purposefully left open to allow each squadron to have their own dinner party, if they wish. The Hilton is available as well as several restaurants across the Interstate from the Hotel in the 200-store mall. I have provided each squadron VP a list of restaurants, but you may want to make your own arrangements.

We will start Sunday off with a complimentary continental breakfast and our regularly scheduled business meeting. Come prepared to elect association officers and to select a location for reunion XX in 2007. According to our regional rotation agreement, we will be voting on a Western site. If you wish to propose a location you should be prepared to give a short report as to the merits of holding our reunion there, or nearby and would like to the local contact to assist in working the many details with the reunion committee. I wish to thank my committee for their support and help during a trying period in my life, without them, it is doubtful that reunion XIX could be held this year!

Sunday night we will convene at 6:00 pm for our social hour. This will be followed by the group banquet and an entertaining program arranged Gladys Best. The hospitality room will be open after we adjourn for farewells and "one for the road." Paul Van Valkenburg has been working diligently to develop our website



and due to his leadership exciting things are beginning to happen. Current projects include; (1) Paul is transferring mission reports to discs for installation on the web, all but the 500<sup>th</sup> squadron have been completed. (2) Ken Gastgeb, Association Historian has compiled a casualty list complete with the names of all 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group members killed either in training or in combat as well as all MIA's. This listing will be the cornerstone of our website. (3) Carol Hillman's history class is in the process of scanning the entire Strafer file to CD to be added to the website as well. (4) The latest revision of the Group Constitution and Bylaws were recently reviewed and edited for inclusion on the website by yours truly. (5) I have almost completed a detailed report on the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group's monument at Wright-Patterson Museum. Many thanks to Julia Bina. Julia was kind enough to make Ed's files available for this report. If you haven't seen the memorial and are unable to personally visit the museum at Dayton, Ohio I hope you will enjoy viewing the website.

If you have copies of historical documents or photographs tucked away in an old manila folder or scrapbook, please share them with the Group. You can send them to me or Paul. We will copy them for the website and return the originals, If you wish to have them back.

# Headquarter's Report

by: Ken Gastgeb

*The following narrative account was taken from an actual Unit Report submitted to the Commanding Officer of the 310th Bombardment Wing, Lt. Col. Herring, by the 345th Bombardment Group Headquarters 10 April 1945.*

Although based at Port Moresby, the 345th Bombardment Group took off from Dobodura on a series of missions to Rabaul on 12 October, 18 October, 24 October and 2 November, 1943. The flight echelon again ran missions from Dobodura starting on 24 December, 1943. Early in January the ground echelon moved to Dobodura and regular missions took off there until 22 February, 1944.

The Rabaul missions were among the most important ever run by this Group. On 4 missions a total of 160 planes went over the target dropping 98 tons of bombs and expending 435,000 rounds of ammunition. 66 enemy planes were destroyed in the air and many more on the ground. 6 planes of this Group were lost and 17 men killed or missing.

On the mission of 18 October, the 345th, led by Lt. Col. True, the Group Commander, went over Rabaul without fighter cover. 41 enemy planes were destroyed in the air and at least 25 on the ground. One plane had to fly on a single engine soon after leaving the target. First one then the other of the escorting planes of the same flight were shot down, but the crippled plane managed to fight off all attacks, flying at minimum altitude. 9 enemy planes were shot down by this plane alone.

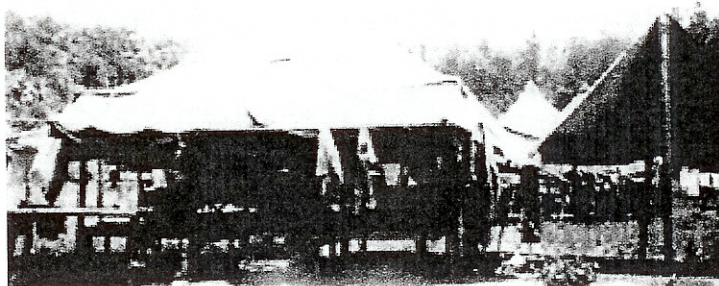
The principle targets during later missions from Dobodura were in preparation and support of the landing at Cape Gloucester in softening up the Admiralties, and in denying the Japs sea-borne supplies and the use of his forward air-

fields. 197 sorties were flown against western New Britain targets from 24 December to 6 January and over 200 tons of bombs were dropped. 171 sorties were flown against land targets in the Admiralties with 178 tons of bombs dropped. Shipping around the Bismark Archipelago was the target for 91 sorties, which accomplished the destruction of 5 patrol craft and 6 merchant ships for a total of 15,400 tons. Barge and land targets along the



against Kavieng cost the Group four of the 45 planes over the target. Prompt and heroic action by Major Chester A. Coltharp and Lt. Gordon, pilot of a Navy PBY affected the rescue of 15 men of this and another group, practically under the muzzels of enemy guns. During the 62 days at Dobodura, this Group flew a total of 1149 sorties for an average of over 18 a day, dropped 1029 tons of bombs and expended 1,900,000

rounds of ammunition. This was certainly the busiest and possibly the most effective period in this Group's history up to the present.



New Guinea coast south-east of Wewak were the objectives for 91 sorties on which 98 tons of bombs were expended. One strike was conducted against Dagua drome and a big strike

# Reunion XIX Tour Schedule

Friday, September 1, 2006: This is an all-day tour. The bus will leave the hotel at 9:00 am. We will journey through the Texas hill country to Fredricksburg. Named in honor of Prince Fredrick of Prussia, this is the birthplace of Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander of the Pacific Fleet during WWII. The town was established by German immigrants in 1845-46 and their influence is reflected in the architecture and local food establishments. While there, we will tour the Museum of the Pacific. The ladies should enjoy browsing through the many unique specialty shops. The men might choose to the remainder of their time in the "White Elephant Saloon" (circa 1888). Once part of a chain of "Gentleman's resorts," the establishment is now considerably less rowdy, but then, so are the Air Apache's!

**Fredricksburg street name trivia:** The first letters of streets intersecting Main Street, heading southeast from the center of town spell "All Welcome." The first letters of streets intersecting Main Street heading northwest from the center of town spell "Come Back." The tour lasts approximately six hours and you should be back at the Hilton around 3:00 pm.

**The Alamo and River Walk tour: Saturday, September 2** – This is another all-day tour. We will leave the hotel at 9:00 am. Our tour guide will lead us on a journey that includes the Alamo and other historical sites. The word Alamo is Spanish for Cotton wood. The name was given to the mission in 1803 by cavalry unit that was sent from Coahuila to reinforce the military

to reinforce the military garrison stationed in the closed mission complex. The cavalry unit was the La Segunda Compania Volante De San Jose Satiago del Alamo de Parras. They nicknamed it after their hometown. (thank god, ed). On March 6, 1836 after 13 days of continuous assault, the Mexican army under the command of General Santa Anna, breached the walls of the Alamo and massacred William Travis, Davey Crockett, Jim Bowie and the entire force of 187 defenders. No prisoners were taken. The Mexican casualties, who had died at hands of the Alamo defenders, totaled over 2,000! Six weeks later, Sam Houston, with the battle cry "Remember the Alamo!" defeated Santa Anna, established the independence of the Texas Republic and the loss of the brave defenders of the Alamo. (Check out the movie "Alamo" with Dennis Quaid, it's great. Ed) The "Yellow Rose of Texas" is not a flower, but an indentured slave woman. Her name was Emily West Morgan. She was captured by Santa Anna during a raid on the settlement of New Washington, near the mouth of the San Jacinto River on April 19, 1836. Santa Anna was totally enamored by her beauty. Reportedly, Sam Houston climbed a tree to spy into the Mexican camp from the nearby woods on the morning of April 21 and saw Emily preparing a champagne breakfast for Santa Anna. He remarked "I hope that slave girl makes him neglect his business and keeps him in bed all day. By that afternoon, the great final battle for the independence of Texas was engaged.

The Mexican army was caught completely by surprise and Santa Anna was literally caught with his pants down. Emily was rewarded for her heroism. She was given her freedom by her owner, Colonel James Morgan and sent to New York City. In the state of Texas, San Antonio is the number one tourist destination with the Alamo being the second-most visited site in the city. The honor of being the most visited site goes to the "River Walk," which is open 24 hours a day compared to the 8 to 5 schedule of the Alamo. We will cruise through the River Walk district by barge, stopping for lunch (on your own) and an opportunity for sight seeing and shopping. Our tour lasts approximately six hours and we should arrive back at the hotel around 3:00 pm.

**Other tours:** The purpose of reunions is to visit with old friends and to make new ones. Your reunion organizers try to provide pleasant surroundings and entertaining functions that will help to make the event a memorable one. Many members make it part of an annual vacation. For those of you that plan to take advantage of the special hotel rate and arrive and/or stay after the official end of Reunion XIX, information describing other San Antonio tours and tourist attractions is available in the hotel lobby. Submitted by *Frank L. Dillard*

# Lake Murray B-25 Continued

By: Cliff Dillard



Dr. Robert Seigler – head of the pediatric intensive care unit at Greenville Hospital System, military historian and author of the book *A Guide to Confederate Monuments in South Carolina* – orchestrated the recovery of the downed Mitchell, though it was not exactly an easy process. A U.S. Naval Reserve diving and salvage unit first located the plane in 1993. However, no claims were made on the wreck. Seigler asked the SCE&G, the lake's owner, for rights to the plane. After years of clearing any claims on the plane by the state or federal government, Seigler was able to secure exclusive salvage rights.

The next problem was in finding a home for the aircraft. Seigler wanted to display the plane as close to the lake as possible – with two requirements. “The plane must be displayed indoors and was not to be flown.” But no one in Richland or Lexington counties, the city of Columbia or the state government would commit to the cost of restoration and long-term exhibition. After two years, Seigler still had not found a taker for the plane. A Google search turned up the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, Ala.

The museum's director, Jim Griffin wanted the Mitchell saying “This is a major aviation treasure, I have received e-mails from New Zealand, Australia, France and the United Kingdom asking about the plane. People are very excited.”



After finding a home for the plane it was time to begin the salvage operation. Seigler hired the internationally known vintage aircraft salvager Gary Larkins to oversee the entire project. The History Channel was given exclusive film rights. The team also joined forces with the SCE&G, the S.C. Institute of Archeology and the U.S. military. Lake Murray Power Squadron members also assisted in the project. A sectional barge, anchored with four 4,000-pound cement weights was positioned directly over the plane.

Most of the divers were volunteers from a cave-diving group from Florida. “We’re used to silt, murky conditions and extreme depths,” says diver Billy Baxter. Diver Brian Armstrong explained some of the challenges involved. “When you first get down there as the first team of the day, you might get a couple feet of visibility, but the plane is covered in silt. As soon as you touch it at all, visibility drops to a few inches or nothing at all. Even lights don’t help. You have to work your way along the plane by feeling for the place to affix a strap.”

Two air-compressors were installed to operate two winches fixed to steel beams straddling an open pool in the middle of the barge. Over the next few days, Larkins and his Air Pirates directed divers on where and how to position the lift straps around the wings. They attached 400-pound spreader bars over the wings to distribute the lift load. About 1,000 pounds of sand in 55-gallon drums were added to simulate the weight of the missing engine and to help balance the aircraft. Dive teams also removed over a foot of silt from the plane.

On a day when about 40 boats ringed the barge the winches began raising the plane just enough to break the suction of the lake bottom. With that accomplished, the plane was raised to about 20 feet from the bottom and dive teams were sent down for the first 360-degree inspection.

*Continued on page 10*

# 498th "Falcons"

*Mike Hasslbauer Assistant Group Vice-President*



The administration of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association and office of the Strafer, your official newsletter, needs to accelerate the collection of delinquent 2006 annual dues and revise the association's roster and mailing list. U.S. postage rates continue to increase and we need to eliminate the unnecessary cost incurred when we send our newsletter to the wrong address or to those that no longer wish to remain active members of the association.

Things constantly change with time in a group as large as ours. People move, the post office changes zip codes, the telephone company changes area codes, you change your e-mail server and we suffer the loss of members through accident and illness. As a result, during the calendar year our mailing list becomes obsolete because the association is not informed of these changes. Phone calls and e-mail messages fail to go through and regular mail is returned. Communication between the association and its membership becomes seriously impaired. That is why it has become necessary to conduct a poll to determine just who our members are and where they now reside. Association bylaws require certain classes of membership to pay annual dues on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to be considered an active member. The payment of dues provides the necessary funds for the continuance of our organization. This is our only source of income.

Dues payments entitle members to receive our quarterly newsletter, the Strafer, and other mailings. The main source of correct addresses and other personal information is normally obtained with the collection of annual dues. Unfortunately, we are now in the month of April, 2006 and the majority of those required to pay dues have not, as yet, responded. In past years the association's secretary mailed individual notices to all members delinquent in the payment of dues by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. This system was extremely costly, time-consuming and still did not provide an updated mailing list on current addresses for the non-paying classes of membership in the association. This memorandum is issued to serve the purpose of notifying all members that they are responsible for the payment of dues for the year 2006 and will reduce the cost of mailing individual letters. If you have paid your dues for 2006 and we have your current address and other information, then no action on your part is required. If, however, you have not paid your dues and are required to do so, (Member or associate member), then please remit your check for \$15.00 no later than May 15, 2006. Please make checks payable to: 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association. The mailing address is: Edwin F. Sharpe (treasurer) 3860 Wesley Court Burlington, NC 27215-9729.

The association needs everyone's cooperation if we are to develop an accurate membership roster and mailing list for the year 2006.

Therefore, if you are not required to pay dues, (Life member, associate widow, financially burdened member and honorary member), and wish to remain on the membership roster you still need to confirm your current mailing address. Please reply to the above address on or before May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and the following information: Name, squadron, address, city, state, zip code, phone number and if applicable an e-mail address.

If you do not respond by May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 it will be assumed that you no longer wish to be a member of the 345<sup>th</sup> and your name will be removed from the current roster, as a result of which, you will no longer receive copies of the Strafer. Please do not delay. Sincerely, *Frank L. Dillard*

## Video Review

If you are interested in a good video series, then you should consider watching Reader's Digest "Great Battles of World War II." Volume 4 in the series "Victory In The Pacific." covers the year 1945 and best of all has 18 minutes of action entitled "Warpath of the Air Apaches" The video features actual combat footage and also an interview with a General Jones in which the General describes an observation flight aboard a B-25 to direct the dropping of paratroopers on Carrigador. My father, Frank was the top-turret gunner on that flight by the way! These videos are available at Sam's Club stores.



## 499th "Bats Outa Hell"

*Ben Miller Assistant Group Vice-President*

Greetings, fellow Air Apaches. The new schedule for the Strafer seems to make a lot of sense to me. It was always irritating to send in the September column just before the reunion. Now we can report on the festivities later. It's a good thing we have more member from family and friends. The column of lost members just goes on and on. One of our recent members of the 499<sup>th</sup> we've lost is Harley Gsfeller, of Tonganoxie, Kansas. Gus Oulette, of Headquarters, who loved working at the registration table has also departed this earth. They will be missed. We can look forward to being together in the big reunion in the sky. Most of the original members are all over 80 now. It was surely good to see the picture and article of our Apache Princess in the latest Strafer. Stay with us princess, as we need a cheerleader. We enjoy looking at some of her old movies.

Last year's reunion was great, but due to my physical condition it was about the most painful reunion we ever attended. Since the patch job on my spine life gets better every day, although a little too slowly for me. Many of our friends have sold out and moved into rest homes, condos in the city or apartments. We are still hanging on in the country. The thought of the family farm being sold when Norma and I can no longer handle it bothers me a lot.

We have family, they all like it but no one wants to live here. We are the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generations of people living here from both sides. I must send in m papers to the governor for a sign in the front yard stating our family has owned this tract since before the Civil War. Most of our neighbors have sold out, and it will be quite an auction when we wave the white flag. It's hard to believe all the things we have acquired since we have worked together for over 60 years. Yes, we do have a safe - way overdue. My one favorite possession is a double-barrel shotgun, made in 1933. A local car dealer has a standing offer to trade it for a new pickup truck, but I don't need a truck!

Last week Norma and I were at a local restaurant when the waitress said she should know me. She said she didn't recognize the face but she did the voice. She said she will never forget my voice. Other people have said the same thing. I am still the Chaplain for the Legion, and am still thankful to still be doing rites for the departed Brothers and Sisters. So I guess I'm not quite useless yet!

A neighbor went to a local college last year as a candidate to "Boy's State." He got so enthused he told his parents, "This for him!" He is currently attending there now. They offered a one-semester course that dealt specifically with the history of WWII. He was so inspired that he joined the Marine Reserve! Too bad more of our youth can't have his enthusiasm.

It's sad to be at a ballgame or some other public event and see how few people in the audience know, or care, enough to show respect for the American flag. Our grade school children are doing much better than their parents in that respect. Regarding the matter of respect, the following poem submitted by Victor W. Tatelman sums it up nicely....

*It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.*

*It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.*

*It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.*

*It is the soldier who salutes the flag, who servers beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.*



# 500th "Rough Raiders"

by: Don Wagner



Dear folks, I am writing to all of at once so we are all on the same page. About 2-3 years ago, a 500<sup>th</sup> member from Ohio made up 200 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group 4" patches. However, he failed to put 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group at the top. He sent them to me for distribution. I get 5 to 6 requests per month for patches. I sent out the last two Air Apaches patches last week to Ken Gastgeb of Norman Oklahoma and to Cliff Lawrence of Bountiful Utah. Cliff helps out two days a week at Hill Air Force Base and they were given new jackets. Cliff wanted an Air Apache patch to put on it. Also, two years ago, the sons of the late Max Mortenson (CO of the 500<sup>th</sup>) made up a 4" + patch to honor their father, the 500<sup>th</sup> and Max's plane "Rita's Wagon." They told Bill Cavoli about their idea and he suggested the addition of "Tondelayo."

So, I am going to order 50 of the Mortenson patches and 100 of the Air Apache patches from a local firm here in Boulder. Because of the small volume the cost is quite high. For the lot of 50 the price is \$5.95 per patch and for the lot of 100 the price is \$4.95 per patch. This is quite a costly outlay for one person, but I feel it is well worth it. When people request a patch, they always ask the cost. So, I am going to order 50 of the Mortenson patches and 100 of the Air Apache patches from a local firm here in Boulder. Because of the small volume the cost is quite high. For the lot of 50 the price is \$5.95 per patch and for the lot of 100 the price is \$4.95 per patch. This is quite a costly outlay for one person, but I feel it is well worth it. When people request a patch, they always ask the cost. I'm hoping they will help reimburse me on this project.

So, the Rough Raider patch will be \$5.95 plus postage and envelope for a total of \$6.50. The Air Apache patch will be \$4.95 plus postage and envelope for a total of \$5.50. A picture of each patch is included below to give you an idea of what your hard-earned money will buy. Also, does anyone know anything about the availability of patches for the 498<sup>th</sup>, 499<sup>th</sup>, and 501<sup>st</sup> squadrons? If so, drop me a line or give me a call. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the next gathering and I hope all is well with you all.

## The Air Apache and 500th Patches





# 501st "Black Panthers"

Paul Van Valkenberg

Assistant Group Vice-President

None of us, who were lucky enough to go there, will ever forget the "Fun-House" we had in Manila, especially those of us who managed to skydeerry our way there as often as the opportunity arose. Oh baby! Wine, women and some... as well as good food as a bonus. We were always received with the most wonderful greeting. Running toward you laughing and smiling, they not only threw their arms around you, but also their legs, wow! I remember thinking, "I hope this isn't a dream!" I will not mention his name (*to protect the "not so innocent?" ed.*) but he was one of my fellow armorers. I will only refer to him as "M." Well, one evening "M" and I got into the booze pretty heavy. Needless to say, we got bombed. "M" suddenly said "I think I'm going to get sick" I yelled at one of the girls, "Hurry up, bring me a pan!" In the nick of time I held the pan for him and out it came. What really impressed me was the volume (*Quantity not noise-level I take it, ed.*) Looking down into that pan I wondered, "What is that U shaped thing I see?" My curiosity got the best of me, so I reached down through the muck (*now "that's" curious! ed.*) and picked it up. After a few vigorous shakes I stuck it in my back pocket. The next morning, I was vigorously shaken by "M." "Hey Julie, do you have my teeth? I need them bad, we're having steak today."

Moaning and groaning, I was able to mumble "Take a look in my back pocket." All I remember hearing after that was a steady stream of, "Thank you" all the way down the hall. I rolled over and snuggled myself back to a sobering slumber. I think we had fun! *Submitted by Qunton Giudani.*

## Lake Murray B-25 from page 6

After discovering the nose section was separating and a critical support strap had worked loose, the plane was eased back to the bottom for additional harnessing.

Three days later, the barge began the slow journey to shore with the plane suspended about 50 feet below the surface. Buck Mooneyhan of Advanced Docks, who handled placement and transport of the barge, pushed it "as slow as we could and still maintain directional control." Though it was almost midnight before the crane slowly hoisted the plane from the water, hundreds of people were still on hand, watching from the Dam or from boats floating nearby.

Though twisted and fractured, its left propeller torn loose en route to shore and its right engine missing, the stricken aircraft emerged almost intact, still mounted with five .30-caliber Browning machine guns. After 800-gallons of fuel were pumped from the plane's tanks, the crane settled the plane onto a steel cradle where it was later cleaned, searched, documented,



*Bryce Lever recalls for the History Channel the day in 1943 when he saw the B-25 go down in Lake Murray.*

"The plane is time capsule," says Seigler. "We found lots of radios. The control columns, dials, gauges, bombardier's sighting equipment were all there. No ammo or bombs, which had been jettisoned before impact. We found parachute lines, leather driving gloves and the leather brim of a cap, brass buttons and the lower one-third of a page from the State newspaper. It was under something that kept it from getting wet."

But its not about the aircraft, Seigler says, "As my stepfather says "It represents a Herculean effort on the part of the whole country to do something that absolutely had to be done." Five days later, the plane was gone, shipped in pieces to the Birmingham museum. "The state needs an aviation museum," Seigler insists. But there's something else he says is just as important. "We should erect a monument on the shore of this lake to all the brave men who lost their lives here."

# Apache Bulletin Board

*"The latest news"*



## Seeking Information:

**M**y name is Michael Medina and I am the grandson of John Fernandez (some called him Poncho) of the 501<sup>st</sup> Black Panthers. Do you have any information on some of the missions the group flew? At the end of the war my grandfather said he had a cap with all the missions on it, however it was lost on his way back to El Paso, Texas. He thinks he lost it somewhere in San Antonio. He is still alive and I want to be able to reproduce one for him to have, as it meant a great deal to him. I was also wondering if you knew where to get any vintage and reproduction items of the 345<sup>th</sup> Air Apaches and of the 501<sup>st</sup> Black Panther squadron? Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Michael Medina  
Senior Sales Manager  
Marriott Suites Dallas, Texas  
Phone: (214) 589-6113

## Article Submission

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

Cliff Dillard  
1203 Clubhouse Rd  
Marion, IL 62959  
or email it to:

cdillard63@hotmail.com  
The submission deadline for the August issue is: July 15th  
Photos should be black and white, emailed digital photos should be in .jpg or .tif format.

## Reunion Information Cont'd.

**Reunion registration:** The 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association registration desk will be located in the hotel lobby on Thursday, September 1, 2006. 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 functions. Do not forget to enter your name on the sign-in sheet for the drawings at the Sunday morning business meeting.

**Wine and cheese reception:** Gather in the hospitality room Thursday evening at 6:00 pm 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 San Antonio. The "refreshment stand" will be open. Dinner that night will be 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 the registration desk.

## Treasurer's Report

As of March 31, 2006  
Checking Account:  
Wachovia Bank \$3,696.29  
Money Market:  
Vanguard Prime \$22,509.50  
Total \$26,205.79

## In Memory of...

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

**Richard Baker - 499th**  
December 25th, 2005  
**Harley Gfeller - 499th**  
November 11th, 2005  
**George Culver -**  
November 27th, 2004  
**Albert K. Hines - 500th**  
February 6th, 2006  
**George H. Braun - 500th**  
February 22nd, 2006  
**Robert E. Jacobson - 500th**  
March 16th, 2006  
**Stewart R. Malquist - 500th**  
March 27th, 2006

## Next Issue:

## More Reunion Details

## President's Corner

## Orders from HQ

## Squadron Reports

## And Much More!

# ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

## Group President

*Frank L. Dillard - 498th*  
963 Wellington Road  
Winston-Salem, NC 27106  
(336) 724-6547

## 1st Vice President

*Lynn W. Daker - 500th*  
329 Lakeshore Park Road  
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(303) 642-7459

## 2nd Vice President

*Benjamin F. Miller - 499th*  
9450 N 550 W  
Decatur, IN 46733-6804  
(260) 547-4460

## Secretary

*Silas W. Pearson - 498th*  
P.O. Box 8  
Louisville, MS 39339  
(662) 773-5271

## Treasurer

*Edwin F. Sharpe - 499th*  
3860 Wesley Court  
Burlington, NC 27215  
(336) 584-6132

## Assistant Treasurer

*Mary Gronewald - 501st*  
1371 Parkside Drive #148  
San Bernardino, CA 92404  
(909) 883-0360

## Headquarters

*Kenneth C. Gastgeb*  
2313 Crestmont Street, #227  
Norman, OK 73069  
(405) 364-1350

## 498th "Falcons" Squadron

*Micheal Hasselbauer - 498th*  
7107 East Hacienda La Colorande  
Gold Canyon, AZ 85218

## 499th "Bats Outa Hell" Squadron

*Benjamin F. Miller - 499th*  
9450 N 550 W  
Decatur, IN 46733-6804  
(260) 547-4460

## 500th "Rough Raiders" Squadron

*Donald E. Wagner - 500th*  
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Raleigh, NC 27617  
(919) 293-0047

## 501st "Black Panthers" Squadron

*Paul Van Valkenberg 501st*  
3137 East River Road  
Truxton, NY 13158  
(607) 842-6356

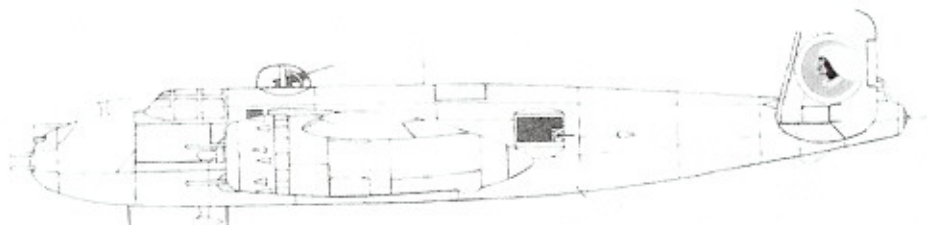
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**Reunion XIX Registration Form**  
**345th Bombardment Group Association**  
**Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel**  
**San Antonio, Texas**  
**August 31st, 2006 to September 4th, 2006**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ Guest(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Travel by: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name(s) as you want it (them) to appear on name tag(s)

Date	Event	No. of persons	Cost/Person	Total
Thursday, August 31	Registration			
Thursday, August 31	Wine & Cheese Reception		Free	
Friday, Sept. 1	Bus tour of Texas Hill Country, Fredricksburg, Museum of the Pacific Lunch at German Resturaunt		\$35.00	
Saturday, Sept. 2	Riverboat tour of the River Walk and the Alamo, lunch at riverside cafe' Group Banquet that night		\$35.00	
Sunday, Sept. 3	Continental breakfast, Business meeting Social Hour that evening		Free	
Monday, Sept. 4	Check-out and farewells			

Grand total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Please return this form with your remittance by July 15, 2006

Make checks payable to: 345th Bomb Group Reunion XVII

Mail to: Edwin Sharpe, Treasurer 345th Bomb Group Association

3860 Wesley Court, Burlington, NC 27215-9729