VOLUME 25, ISSUE 4 OCTOBER 2007

REUNION XX OCCUPATION OF IMPERIAL PALACE BY "AIR APACHE" GROUP DECLARED SUCCESS

LAS VEGAS, NV

The 345th Bomb Group conducted Reunion XX at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, NV from Sept. 17 through the 20th, 2007.

The entire week was spent with old friends enjoying tours and other events planned by our reunion committee, so ably chaired by Sherry Herman (498). Sherry's husband, Ed, took the week off from his airline pilot's duties to make certain our "gathering of eagles" went off without a hitch. Sherry's friend, Linda Hiltbrand, made the legendary work output of the Trojans look like a coffee break for a disorderly band of slackers!

If you have never served on a national organization's reunion committee, I expect you have little concept of just how involved planning such an event can be. Space does not permit publishing even a rudimentary outline of the many facets of preparing and conducting a reunion for a group as large, and widely dispersed as ours.

I have been attending reunions since 1988. Reunion XX ranks among the best I have had the privilege of being associated with.

It is regrettable that our attendance number was down. I know I speak for all that were present when I say to Sherry and her committee, "Thanks. Well done." Hopefully, we will have better attendance at next year's Washington, DC outing.

If you look closely you might just see a group of eagles circling beyond that rose-colored cloud way over there. It appears they are warmly applauding the efforts of our Association to survive.

WASHINGTON, DC TARGETED AS SITE FOR 345TH BOMB GROUP REUNION XXI IN 2008

WASHINGTON, DC

Now that we have all rested from the trip to Las Vegas, it becomes necessary for some of us to begin planning our next event. Washington, DC was selected by a slight margin over Charleston, South Carolina as the site for Reunion XXI.

I hope everyone that attended Reunion XVIII in Washington in 2005 remembers what a great time we had, and plans to join with us in 2008. Those that missed out on a great reunion by not attending have a "second chance" in 2008.

The most difficult problem with selecting Washington as our reunion destination is that of choosing from among the many attractions that are available in the time we are there.

We are fortunate to have members such as Maria Malagon (499th). Maria lives near our nation's capital, and actually volunteered to be chairperson for next year's reunion! She and I have already begun discussing next year's event.

Fortunately, Maria had never heard the old drill sergeant's advice to, " Never stand up when you can sit down. Never sit down when you can lay down, and NEVER VOLUNTEER FOR ANYTHING!"

It appears that all the original 345th members STILL remember that old adage. It's hard to recall when one of them volunteered for anything! As you can see, I am still actively seeking impeachment! My term as your Group president will expire in 2008 and we really need to begin the search for my successor.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY: FRANK L. DILLARD

Well, where to begin? I trust everyone had a safe trip home from Las Vegas and has, for the present, re-adjusted to a less hectic daily schedule. However, if you think about it for a moment, it's not too early to start making plans for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and then, New Years!

If you didn't attend Reunion XX you certainly missed out on a good time. George Blochko (499th) called to say he really enjoyed the meeting, and wanted me to convey his thanks to the Reunion XX Committee for a job well done.

I want to personally complement Sherry Herman (498th), her husband Ed, and their friend, Linda Hiltbrand, for all they did to make Reunion XX one of the best the 345th Bomb Group Association has ever had. My attendance record goes back to 1988, and this reunion certainly ranks at the top. I regret that too many of our members were AWOL, and missed this event.

I also regret to report that we have lost several loyal members since our last "gathering of eagles." I feel a deep personal loss at the passing of my friend, Ira Schaub (498th). We will miss Wendell Decker's (499th) absorbing narrations of some of his WWII experiences, both in Africa and the Pacific, and it won't ever be quite the same without Bill Cavolie's (500th) presence in the hospitality room.

The following message was received from the Imperial Palace: "October 13, 2007. Dear Frank, Just a short note to thank you for giving the Imperial Palace the opportunity to host your reunion. We sincerely hope your events were successful, and the Imperial experience proved to be everything you expected. We value your patronage, and we look forward to serving you in the future. Sincerely, Greg MacKenzie, Convention Service Manager."

During this year's Group business meeting, one of the three members in attendance from the 500th Squadron announced, that beginning with the year 2008 they would be meeting on an annual basis instead of bi-annually. This will definitely reduce, if not eliminate entirely, the number of their squadron members attending future Group reunion. The speaker graciously invited members of the Group's other squadrons to attend the 500th Squadron's reunion next year.

It was a nice gesture, but from a practical standpoint, the cost of attending reunions has significantly increased over the past several years, and it is unlikely that many members of the other three squadrons could afford expending the time, the energy, and/or the money, involved in attending two separate events in a single year.

As a matter of historical background the 345th Bombardment Group (Medium) was formed at Columbia Army Air Base in November 1942. During operations in World War II, the loss of a single man from our Group was a severe detriment to the organization's ability to perform at its maximum level of efficiency. The old adage "the sum is greater that the total of its parts," was proven to be true. The outfit closed ranks, reassigned responsibilities among the survivors, and carried on. This system worked. Ultimately, all the battles were won, World War II ended, and most of the 345th Bomb Group survivors returned to civilian life.

Several years after WWII, former members of the 345th Bomb Group began informal meetings to socialize and renew old friendships. The number of people attending these events increased, and it was decided to form the not-for-profit 34th Bomb Group Association, develop a set of By-laws, and hold reunions on a regular two-year schedule. Subsequent to this majority decision, the 500th Squadron elected to hold independent squadron reunions in the "off years" between Group meetings.

During Reunion XIII, at the Group business meeting in Charleston, SC, it was proposed, that to better serve the majority of our aging membership; (1) The Association reunions should be changed from meeting every two-years, to meeting on an annual basis; and (2) To better accommodate our widely dispersed membership, Group reunion sites should be rotated across the country from locations in the East, Central, and West on a three-year basis.

In the discussion that followed the introduction of the proposed changes to the By-laws, a member of the 500th Squadron voiced an objection, stating that the proposal was in direct

conflict with the 500th Squadron's practice of holding "off-year" meetings.

The objecting member of the 500th was reminded that during the initial Group reunions, squadrons held separate business meetings and scheduled individual squadron banquets at times that did not conflict with Group activities.

The objection by the 500th Squadron was over-ruled, and the motion to revise the existing bi-annual Group-meeting schedule to an annual meeting schedule was approved by a majority vote.

The end result of the Association adopting an annual meeting schedule several years ago has been a significant reduction in the number of members of the 500th Squadron in attendance at Association meetings. Now, that the 500th Squadron has elected to hold squadron reunions on an annual basis, it appears that the 34Sth Bomb Group Association is faced with the possibility of losing the participation, and fellowship, of this entire squadron.

I was aware of this situation when I was elected to my present office. Regardless, I harbored a faint hope that I might be party to a movement that would be instrumental in restoring the 500th Squadron's participation in Group activities to a level comparable to the one that existed back in 1988, when I joined the organization. My goal was to help consolidate the Association into a strong fraternity, and provide a viable organization that could ultimately be transferred to succeeding generations.

The unrelenting passage of time has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of our original members. There is absolutely nothing that can be done about that. However, I truly believed there were still a significant number of remaining members who wished to maintain a viable organization as a legacy for our descendents. I felt certain that there might even be some members of the 500th Squadron within this population. If this is the case, and they would like to re-join the Group, I will be happy to assist them in any way possible.

Mark your calendar! Reunion XXI is scheduled for September 2008, and Washington, DC. is our chosen destination. Maria Malagon (499th), cheerfully volunteered to serve as chairperson, and research/planning efforts are well underway. This is destined to be a "Capital" event!

A great deal of effort is required to make the necessary arrangements for our annual Group reunions. It takes almost as much work to accommodate a few people, as it does for a large number. Therefore, please seriously consider attending our Washington, DC meeting next year and make our efforts worthwhile. Remember, we aren't getting any younger and there is little time remaining on many of those lifetime warranties!

Our former editor, Cliff Dillard, recently changed jobs and it became impractical for him to continue to serve in that position. As a result, I am assuming the editor's duties until further notice. If this issue of the STRAFER seems "a bit strange" to you, it is my fault. I haven't been directly involved in the preparation and publication for quite some time, and no doubt it shows. Some of our regular contributors failed to respond in a timely manner, so I have allowed those that did more space than would be normally available.

Our next newsletter will be forthcoming in January. If my contributors don't respond in early December, the January issue of the STRAFER may be late-coming! If those of you that are currently delinquent in your payment of dues don't correct the situation don't be surprised if your future copies of the STRAFER are not-coming

If you would like to avoid becoming a non-member take a moment to look at the mailing label on the front of your copy of the STRAFER. The year of your last dues payment is clearly printed above your name. Your Association has been reluctant to discontinue mailings to members who are in arrears, but it was decided by the Association officers at the Executive Board Meeting in Las Vegas that; beginning with this October 2007 issue, there will be no further mailings to anyone required to pay dues, that has not paid for the year 2007 or beyond. This ruling does not affect those that are Life members, financially burdened members, Associate Widows or Members in good standing.

May you share a great Thanksgiving with family, friends, and a gorgeous turkey!

May you spend the Christmas holiday season with loved ones, and actually like that tie!

May you welcome the New Year surrounded by the people you love most.

Please, remember your buddies in the "AIR APACHES" in your prayers,..... until we meet again.

Frank & Margaret

HOW THE 345TH GOT STARTED.

BY: KEN GASTGEB, HEADQUARTERS

The 345th Bomb Group was activated on November 11, 1942, at Columbia Army Air Base, in Columbia, South Carolina.

Bill Darwin gave me a copy of the first 10 orders. Following are a few excerpts from Special Order No.1, drawn up and signed by William N. Darwin, 1st Lt., Air Corp, Adjutant:

1. Having been asgd to this Gp pp 2, SO #292, HQ 3AF Tampa, Fla.., dated 5 Nov. 1942, Col. JARRED V. CRABB, 0-17996, AC is asgd to HQ 345th Bomb Gp (M) AAF
2. Having ..... dated Nov, 1942, Lt. Co!. CLINTON U. TRUE, 020271, AC, is asgd to HQ 345th Bomb Gp' (M)AAF
3. Having .....dated 6 Nov, 1942, Capt. ALLRIDGE R. NICHOLS, 0-297438, AC, is asgd to HQ 345th Bomb Gp' (M) AAF
4. Having ..... dated 15 Oct. 1942, 2nd Lt. MICHAEL CARSO, II, 0-562689, AC, is asgd to HQ 345th Bomb Gp, (M) AAF, and is aptd Personnel Officer.

11. Having .... dated 31 Oct. 1942, the following Officers are asgd as indicated;
    2ND Lt. JACK EMANUEL GELFAND, 0-856026, 498TH BOMB SQ. (M)
    2ND Lt.PALMER G. LAUGHRIDGE, 0-856078, 499TH BOMB SQ. (M)
    2ND Lt. XRWIN STUART LEVY, 0-856084, 500TH BOMB SQ. (M)
    2ND Lt. ROBERT L. SMEYTRON, 0-856138, 501ST BOMB SQ. (M)

498th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)

12. The following pvts Hq. ppl, SO#304, Hq. Daniels Field
    Houck, Wendell G, 34430316
    Johnson, John W, 34421721
    Iverson, Raymond N, 36263275
    Jordan, Jessie L, 14156163
    Gastgeb, Kenneth C, 33302381

Copies of the first 10 orders in my possession follow the excerpts shown above. They contain names of the personnel assigned to 345th Headquarters, and the four squadrons, between Nov. 11, and Nov. 23,1942. If you were assigned during this period, and would like a copy of the page that has your name on it, let me know. I'll be happy to send you one.

Sorry I missed out on Las Vegas. I hope to see you in Washington DC next year.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

498th SQUADRON

By: CAROL HILLMAN

If you had the opportunity to poll the attendees of the recent Las Vegas Reunion to see how much money everyone lost, the amounts would probably be very small. Why? Because we were so busy on tours and visiting, there was no time to gamble! Kudos to Sherry and Eddie Herman and a cast of only a few for hosting one of the most interesting, active reunions we've ever had.

I missed the Thunderbirds presentation (some of us are still gainfully employed and cannot take a week off from work!) but am told that it was fascinating to learn what is involved in becoming a Thunderbird team member and the training involved. Gladys Best said, "The spokesman came in carrying a cup of coffee and just talked to us like we were old friends, very relaxed and friendly." That was the theme for the whole reunion: Knowledge from Experts in an Ultra Relaxed Atmosphere

Hoover Dam was amazing! The magnitude of the project is inconceivable. Once again, Sherry arranged for the "Top Brass" to speak to us and conduct the tours: down into the bowels of the mechanical area, through the solid rock tunnels, and even on top of gigantic pipes that move the water! One can only imagine what the engineers of yesteryear could have accomplished if they had had today's technology.

The second day highlight, for me, was the tour of the Atomic Testing Museum. I probably don't have the name exactly right, but the museum had such an impact on me that I've even dreamed about it. Ernie Williams was the guide for our group. Such an amazing man! He has lived and breathed atomic testing since 1951, when he joined the agency. He has witnessed every atomic test conducted by the US in the contiguous 48 states and the South Pacific. Dates, facts, and figures rolled off his tongue as easily as school kids repeat the alphabet. The theatre in the museum is a replica of a bunker used to observe a test. You felt the vibrations of the earth, the roar of the noise, the flash of light, and the swoosh of the wind exactly as those did who witnessed the testing back in the 80s and 90s. Amazing, absolutely amazing!

Here is just one small thing Mr. Williams told us: When atomic testing was moved to underground testing, a hole 12 feet in diameter

and 1000 feet deep was drilled with an accuracy controlled to within 3 degrees of vertical! The bomb package (about 3-4 stories tall) was CAREFULLY lowered into the hole. Next, gravel and sand were packed on top of the package and an epoxy plug was inserted to seal the opening.

There were seventeen 18-wheelers filled with computer technology equipment waiting to gather data from that test. Now, this is the amazing part, when the bomb when off, all those computers had 1 billionth of a second to gather all of the data! That's it! One billionth of a second! The last atomic test was in 1992. Just imagine how much our scientists would learn if they had had today's technology in those 18-wheelers!

FABIAN "MOE" MOELLER (499TH)

While at the Atomic Testing Museum it surfaced that Moe Moeller (Pictured above) was one of the first people to return to Hiroshima to take photographs for the military! He took many of those famous pictures we've all seen.

If the Thunderbird tour was one scoop of vanilla ice cream, and the Hoover Dam tour was a scoop of chocolate ice cream and the Atomic Testing Museum was the strawberry ice cream, all nestled between two banana slices, then the keynote speaker for the banquet, Steven Chealander, was the cherry on top of the banana split! This former Thunderbird pilot, former Military Aide to President Ronald Reagan, and current Member of the National Transportation Safety Board captivated the audience with personal stories of his service to the American people. His gentle delivery of fascinating stories from his years as Military Aide to President Ronald Reagan painted mental images clear enough that you thought you were there eavesdropping on history

We all know that it's the toppings that make a banana split so special and this reunion was covered with a smorgasbord of toppings from which to choose. The Legends Musical Review provided entertainment by Elvis, Ray Charles, and The Supremes, among others. The impersonators were quite good! There wasn't enough time to consume all of the delicious food laid before us! The Commendations from the Senator from Arizona for each man present was documentation of the gratitude Americans have for your service to our country. Yet, for me, the most exciting topping was listening to the stories told by our brave 345th members. Y' all are such a humble group. You don't brag, ever. One has to drag stories out of some of you! Melvin Best has often said. "We were not doing anything special, just what we were told to do. We were like Joe College Cool in the military."

Thanks again to our planners, for coordinating such a great trip. Given the Las Vegas venue, we were able to witness many aspects of history throughout several decades. From the Hoover Dam, to the Thunderbirds, to the atomic testing sight, to stories from the Regan administration - opportunities to learn and gain insight into the past were enjoyed by all.

Of course, the reason that brings us back year after year is the treat of seeing the familiar faces of our dear friends. Every year, as we listen to their first-hand accounts of the war, our hearts are again filled with gratitude to these men for their service to protect our country and its values.

The riches of Vegas can be found for some on the casino floor, but for our group, it is in the experience of knowing these heroes that have shaped history for generations to come. In truth, all our lives are richer for knowing these men.

WISHING YOU A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

"IT JUST DOESN'T FIGURE: I SLEEP WELL, GET LOTS OF EXERCISE, EAT HEALTY FOOD, AND I'M STILL SLUGGISH!

499TH SQUADRON

Bv: BEN F. MILLER

Sometimes, I get to thinking about my "good '01 days in the service." I was among the advance echelon from the 345th Bomb Group during the invasion of the Philippines. The date was October 29, 1944 (D-day plus 9), when we arrived at Dulag harbor, Pol., by Liberty ship. However, it was the Monsoon season, the airstrip we were supposed to use wasn't serviceable, and we had been left sitting at anchor in the harbor under constant "Red Alert" conditions.

I vividly remember November 12, 1944. I had just been brought ashore from the ship after we were forced to evacuate. We were hit that morning by a Jap Kamikaze plane while at anchor.

This incident happened just three days after our Squadron Commander, "Jack" Decker, went on a four-plane "suicide mission," damaged a loaded enemy troop ship at Ormac Bay, and caused the Japs to abandon their landing attempt, thereby saving the lives of many allied troops. Most of those on this mission were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After we landed we were assigned temporarily to campsite located near the water's edge. There were three serviceable pillboxes nearby. The center pillbox was the largest, so we put a 50caliber machine gun in it. We placed 3G-caliber guns in the other two. Frank Nemechec was familiar with the guns so he checked me out and designated me as a gunner. We were ordered to shoot at anything that moved, and to protect the shoreline from any attempt the Japs might make at establishing a beachhead.

Since the pillboxes were swarming with "skeeters" we couldn't stay inside, so we squatted just outside the entrance. It was a very dark night. Suddenly, we heard noises coming from a boatload of people heading for the shore in front of our position. Frank and I ran to the shore and saw that there were a lot of babies among the people in the boat. We warned them not to land because we had orders to shoot, and we certainly didn't want to become baby-killers! We heard a lot of chatter from the boat, but they decided not to attempt to land and continued down along the shore.

Later that night, guns started firing in our direction, followed by people running toward us. I started to squeeze the trigger on the carbine I had pointed at the chest of a figure coming directly toward us. This was supposed to be a spy, according to two MPs that were shooting rapidly as they joined us. One of the bullets came so close to my left ear that it stung. Later, a doctor examined it, and said and said that if my helmet hadn't been cocked on the back of my head there would have been a groove in it! I still think of this close call very year around Christmas and give thanks.

We often wondered just where on earth the army managed to find some of the stuff they tried to include in our rations! After we set up our squadron mess tent in the mud on Leyte, local natives showed up every time chow was served. They stood near our GI garbage cans with small cans and took the food we didn't eat. About this. time, the army found a steady supply of fresh turnips from somewhere. Some were yellow, and others were white with purple tops. Both kinds were cut into cubes before they were cooked, and the tops were boiled in a separate greenish mess that was supposed to be like spinach. We managed to ignore this stuff for several days until they stationed some poor young officer at the serving line to make sure we all "got our share." The destitute natives withdrew their tin cups and wouldn't touch the stuff.

I remembered at the time, that when I was a little kid on the family farm we fed such turnips to the cows in the winter!

Well, we are rapidly approaching the end of 2007, and I hope you all have a nice Thanksgiving family reunion, and a wonderful Christmas.

HERE'S WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!
BEN & NORMA

Editor's Notes:

Ben Miller was scheduled for hip replacement surgery when he returned home from Reunion XX. Unfortunately, he suffered a mild heart attack during pre-operation preparation. Fortunately, he was in the hospital and received immediate attention. Ben is now back at home recuperating from that emergency. Remember Ben and Norma in your prayers.

Ed Sharpe was forced to cancel plans to attend Reunion XX, due to personal medical problems. Then, Ed's lovely wife Ginger passed away on October 29, 2007 after a lingering illness. Her memorial service is scheduled for November 9, 2007, in Burlington, NC. Our hearts go out to Ed during these trying times.

500TH SQUADRON

By: Don Wagner

Sorry to have missed the 345th Group Reunion in Las Vegas. The reason is that I had previously accepted to participate in the GATHERING OF MUSTANG & LEGENDS at Rickenbacker International Airport, Columbus, Ohio that was held at the same time. A four day air show with about 60 P-51's, other war birds, the THUNDERBIRDS, and performances by the F-22, 8-2, two 8-25's, 8-17, other fighters, and civilian acrobatic teams. When I came back from the Pacific I was assigned to the 31st Fighter Group flying P-51's. Those of us who had flown the P-51 (way back when), the current P-51 owners and pilots, and Mustang lovers, who paid to attend, mixed it up, with many autographs given. It was a big show with 200 to 250,000 people attending each of the weekend days. One of the 8-25's was the PACIFIC PROWLER which is the one Lynn Daker has recently flown. I met Jim Terry, one of the crew, and have a promise to fly with him in the near future. I'm sure looking forward to that.

My trip started out by driving to Washington DC to attend one day of the Air Force Association Convention which also celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the Air Force. This was a big show with most of the aerospace industry on display. I was joined by Ken Chilstrom, Colonel, USAF Ret'd., and former Chief, Fighter Test at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. He had 80 fighter-bomber missions in the A-36 (P51A) in Africa, Sicily, and Italy. He flew 140 aircraft in his career mostly in fighter test, and is known as "Mr. F -86" having flown the phase two testing on the YP-86 with ultimate acceptance by the Air Force. He sure humbles my total of 24 airplanes flown in my career. I might add, some of his pilots were Chuck Yeager, Bob Hoover, and Pete Everest, and he had an exchange tour with the Navy flying 50 carrier landings in the F8F Bearcat - a helluva flying career. We shared driving to Columbus, Ohio, then on to Dayton, Ohio, and back to Washington.

We drove to Dayton after participating in the Columbus show to revisit the Air Force Museum, which is on Wright-Patterson AFB. I also wanted to see the 345th Monument, which I had not seen. I can't say enough about the Museum. It starts with WW I aircraft and takes you through all the airplanes up to and including the prototype YF-22 Raptor, just now coming on line. Plan on your coming to the reunion there in 2009! The Museum and our magnificent monument is a must to see. We stayed in the Hope Hotel & Conference Center on the base, which is named for Bob Hope. It's a popular spot for reunions because of it's facilities, and reasonable hotel prices. I came away with a reunion portfolio for our 2009 reunion hosts for their consideration.

THE ART OF STRAFING

Richard B.H. Lewis recently retired as an Air Force Major General flew F-4, F-t6, F-III's, and was program Executive Officer for the F-22 fighter, has written an article for the July 2007 issue of Air Force Magazine entitled "The Art of Strafing". He points out that some may think that strafing is a tactic from a bygone era, which is erroneous, and explains it's use in fighter aircraft through the years to include the provision of guns in the new F-22 for strafing.

Since General Lewis was a fighter pilot throughout his career, it's significant that he singles out only one bomber as a Strafer, and that was the 8-25. I quote: II Among World War II strafing aircraft, few if any were more effective than the American 8-25 Mitchell bomber. In the Pacific, it was used frequently on treetop level missions against Japanese airfields and shipping, with great impact."

It's nice to be singled out and recognized, isn't it? The article goes on to make the case that strafing will continue as a needed tactic, and concludes "There will always be a possibility that you have to protect that guy on the ground with your last bullet. That part of the job will never completely disappear."

The A-10 is today's ultimate strafing machine with the 30 mm Gatling gun, and a whole lot of other sophisticated munitions. I wonder if Pappy Gunn considered one of those when he engineered the eight 50's for us, although I don't know whether a machine operated one existed as yet. The hand-cranked model was used as early as the Civil War.

Anyhow, if I were active today, there's no doubt in my mind I'd probably be flying the A-10, because their role is most like ours was. As a matter of fact I often wondered why the strafing version of the 8-25 wasn't called an A-25. The Air Force is so sold on the A-10 that it is scheduled it to be in the inventory until at least 2025.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

MERRY CHRISTMAS & A JOYFULL NEW YEAR!

THE 345TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF REUNION XX BUSINESS MEETING
LAS VEGAS, NV, SEPTEMBER 19, 2007

The business meeting for Reunion XX was held in the Pearl Room of the Imperial Palace Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. on September 19th 2007.

The meeting was called to order by President Frank Dillard (498th) at 9:25 a.m. He opened the meeting by commenting that the Association had been formed to honor the 755 members of the 345th Bomb Group lost in action during World War II. President Dillard requested that the members in attendance stand for a moment of silence in honor of our fallen comrades. He next called on Ben F. Miller (499th), to lead us in prayer.

President Dillard also announced that we were celebrating the Group's twentieth reunion, and that he hoped we could all look forward to many more in the future.

The Association officers in attendance were then recognized. They were:

1st Vice President; Lynn Daker (500th), and president of the 500th Squadron.

2nd Vice President; Ben F. Miller (499th), and vice-president of the 499th Squadron.

Group Secretary; Dr. Silas Pearson (498th)

Asst. Group Secretary; Judy Zurlis (498th)

Group Treasurer; Charles Wilson (498th)

498th Squadron Vice-president, Carol Hillman

501st Squadron Vice-President, Paul Van Valkenburg

OLD BUSINESS

Next in the order of Old Business, Dr. Silas Pearson 9498th) read the minutes of Reunion XIX, held in San Antonio, TX, on September 2, 2006. Julius Fisher (501st), made a motion to accept the minutes, as read. The motion was seconded by Vic Tatelman (499th), and passed by voice vote.

President then called on our new Group Treasurer, Charles Wilson (498th), to give his report on the current status of the Association's treasury. The treasurer's report was as follows;

RECEIPTS:	
Transfer from Ed Sharpe, Former Treasurer	20,018.74
Dues and Contributions	2,835.00
Money Mkt. Dividends	368.62
Star Bank Interest	27.70
Reunion XX Deposits	3,545.00
Total Receipts	26,795.06
DISBURSEMENTS:	
Administration Supplies	765.56
STRAFER Expenses	1,216.71
Reunion XX	875.00
Total Disbursements	2,857.27

DEPOSITS, DIVIDENDS Be INTEREST:	
Edward Jones MM Acct.	15,000.00
Dividends-MM Acct.	368.62
Star Financial Bank Acct.	8,541.47
Interest-Bank Acct	27.70
Total Deposits, Dividends & Interest	23,937.79
CALCULATED BALANCE;	
Total Receipts	26,795.06
Total Disbursements	2.857.27
Balance	23,937.79

It should be noted that most of the Reunion XX receipts and expenditures are not included in the above statement. The January 2008 statement will include these items and reflect the balance in the Association treasury as of the beginning of the year 2008.

MEMBERSHIP

Treasurer Wilson next reported on the current status of the Group's membership. As of September 3, 2007, the number of members on the roster, in each category, was as follows:

Life Members (LM).	35
Members (M)	213
Associate Members (AM)	66
Associate Widows (AW)	56
Financially Burdened	3
Total	393

Of the above total number of members, 124 are not required to pay dues. Of the 279 remaining dues paying members, 120 have not been heard from since as far back as 2005. The Association has been mailing copies of the STRAFER to those that have not paid dues for several years. President Dillard reported that the members of the Executive Committee had agreed at their recent meeting, that this practice must be terminated. Therefore, all members listed on the current mailing list will received a copy of the October 2007 issue of the STRAFER. This issue will contain notification stating, in effect, any member not current with the payment of the 2007 dues, or later, would be considered delinquent, and would be removed from the active membership list Therefore, this will be the last issue of the STRAFER a delinauent member will receive.

NEW BUSINESS

President Dillard commented that the Association would like to see more activity on our web site. He requested that members submit written articles and copies of photographs. Copies of pictures are preferred, but originals will be returned, if requested. He encouraged members to forward copies of written articles pertaining to the Group, or any of its members, for the web site.

The next order of business was the selection of a site for next year's reunion. President Dillard announced that next year's reunion was to be held in the Eastern section of the country. He asked the assembly for their suggestions for the location of Reunion XXI. He cautioned us to remember the transportation availability concerns of our older members.

Chet Bums (501st) proposed that we schedule next year's reunion in Washington, D.C. The motion was seconded by Carol Hillman (498th). Lynn Daker (500th) announced that the 500th Squadron had voted to meet annually at their last reunion, and had scheduled their 2008 reunion in Port Smith, Maine. He proposed the group join with them. The motion was seconded by Charles Wilson (498th). Carol Hillman (498th) made a motion to close the discussion for proposed locations for Reunion XXI. Chet. Bums (50 1st) seconded the motion. The motion to close the site proposals passed.

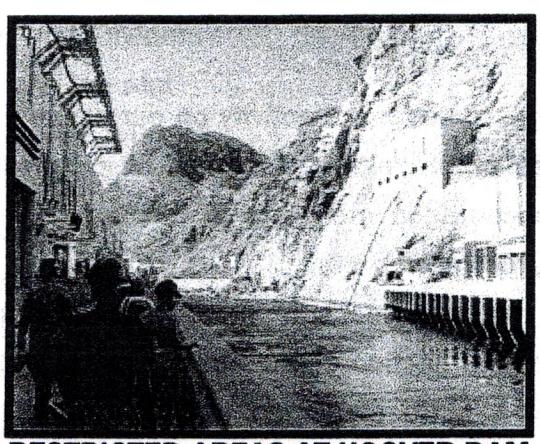
President Dillard announced that there were two (2) potential sites to be considered. The first was Washington, D.C., and the second was Port Smith, Maine. President Dillard called for a show of hands as a vote on each of the two locations. The vote count was 22 for Washington, D.C. and 10 for Port Smith, Maine. Therefore, it was declared that Washington, D.C. was selected by majority vote to be the site for Reunion XXI in 2008.

Bill Cavoli's daughter, Kathy Rubin (500th), requested an opportunity to address the Association and was recognized. Kathy is presently the secretary of the 500th Bomb Squadron. She stated that the 500th Squadron's reunions had grown to be like a family affair. She announced that the 500th had voted at their recent 2007 reunion to meet annually. Kathy invited the members of the other squadrons within the 345th Bomb Group to join with them on September 12-14, 2008, in Port Smith, Maine.

Carol Hillman (498th) was afforded an opportunity to exhibit an "Air Apache" jacket patch that Phil Grabbe (498th) had sent her. Anyone interested in purchasing a similar patch should contact Carol. She also wanted to complement Sherry Herman for acting as committee chairperson for the reunion.

Vic Tatelman (499th) was recognized from the podium. Vic thanked president Dillard and his staff for making this year's reunion such a great success.

Henry Kortemeyer (50 1st) was recognized to speak about his involvement with the Air Force Academy Library Board. He described the wonderful facility and extensive content of the archives. Henry offered his services to assist anyone from the 345th to get into the Academy and the library. President Dillard commented that the Association might want to consider Colorado Springs as the location for Reunion XXII in 2009.There being no further business before the assembly, a motion to adjourn was offered by Vic Tatelman (499th), and seconded by Henry Kortmeyer (50 1st). The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote. The meeting was officially ended at 10:50 am by president Dillard.



RESTRICTED AREAS AT HOOVER DAM

DEEP WITHIN THE INTERIOR OF THE DAM

BULLETIN BOARD

IN MEMORY OF...

The members of the 345th Bomb Group Association extend our sincere condolences to the families of our departed members and friends.
Ginger Sharpe, wife of Edwin F. Sharpe,
10-29-07, Burlington, NC.

TREASURER'S MEMO:

DON'T BECOME A LOST SHEEP!
AVOID BEING DROPPED FROM THE MAILING LIST.

Annual Association membership dues are still only $15.00. Your continued support is appreciated and necessary, to defray publishing expenses, and sustain our organization.

Check the mailing label on the cover of this issue of the STRAFER, to see if you are current with your annual dues. If the date is before 2007, this will be the last issue you will receive unless you respond. Dues are now payable for 2008. To avoid being removed from the mailing list, send your check, in the amount of $15.00, payable to the 345th Bomb Group Association to:

CHARLES WILSON, TREASURER
80 CRESCENT CREEK
NEW CASTLE, IN 47362-1676

EDITOR'S NOTE NO. 1

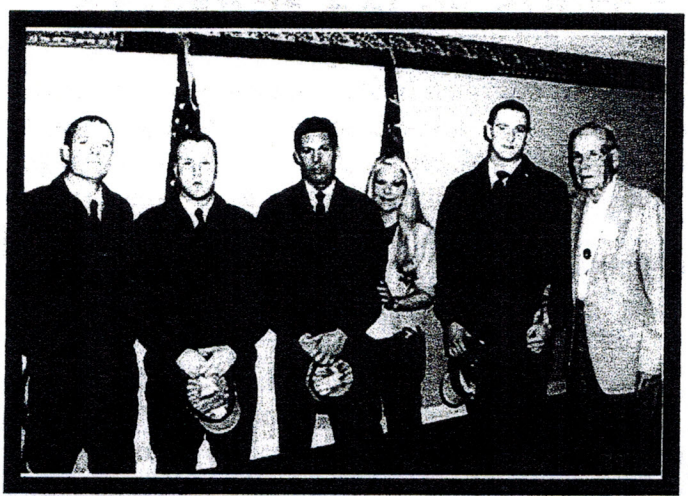
Moved? Plan to move in the near future? Remember to notify either the Group treasurer, or the STRAFER editor. The Post Office will only forward first-class mail for a limited time.

EDITOR'S NOTE NO.2

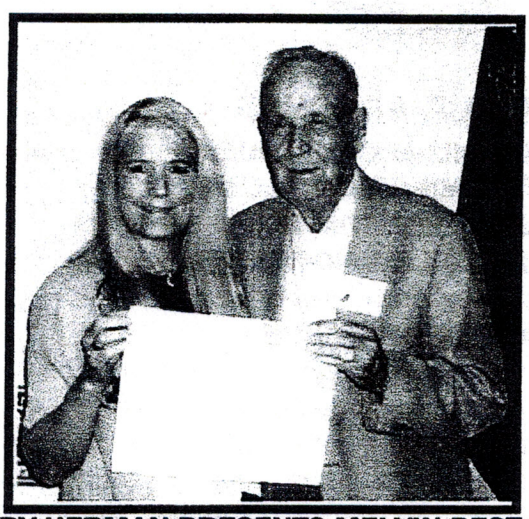
The next issue of the STRAFER will be mailed in January 2008. Please submit your contribution of articles or photos no later than 12./10/2007

THE THUNDERBIRD INSIGNIA

RETIRED THUNDERBIRD COL. CHEALANDER
REUNION XX BANQUET SPEAKER



OUR HONOR GUARD (WITH SHERRY & MEL BEST)



SHERRY HERMAN PRESENTS MELVIN BEST WITH CONGRESSWOMAN SHELLY BERKLEY'S CONGRESSIONAL RECOGNITION CERTIFICATE

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President
Frank L. Dillard – 498th
963 Wellington Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27106
Phone: 336-724-6547
E-mail: strafer1@netzero.com

1st Vice President
Lynn W. Daker – 500th
4250 Ponderosa Court
Boulder, CO 80301
Phone: 303-444-6489

2nd Vice President
Benjamin F. Miller – 499th
9450N. 550W.
Decater, IN 46733-6804
Phone: 260-547-4460

Secretary
Silas W. Pearson – 498th
P.O. Box 8
Louisville, MS 39339
Phone: 662-773-5271

Assistant Secretary
Judy (Best) Zurlis – 498th
422 Tiffany Trail
Richardson, TX 75081
Phone: 972- 231-2943

Treasurer
Charles M. Wilson – 498th
80 Crescent Creek
New Castle, IN 47362-1676
Phone: 765-529-7186

Assistant Treasurer
Edwin F. Sharpe – 499th
3860 Wesley Court
Burlington, NC 27215
Phone: 336-584-6132

SQUADRON OFFICERS

Headquarters
Kenneth C. Gastgeb
2313 Crestmont St., #227
Norman, OK 73069
Phone: 405-364-1350

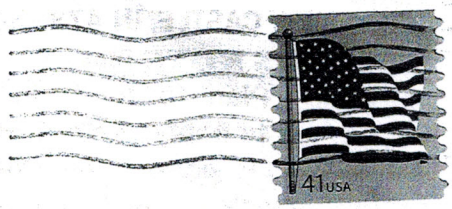
498th "Falcons"
Carol Hillman –498th
2904 Woodhaven
Carrollton, TX 75007
Phone: 972-242-6936

499th "Bats Outa Hell"
Benjamin F. Miller – 499th
9450 N. 550 W.
Decatur, IN 46733-6804
Phone: 260-547-4460

500th "Rough Raiders"
Donald E. Wagner –500th
11010 Presidio Drive
Raleigh, NC 27617
Phone: 919-293-0047

501st "Black Panthers"
Paul Van Valkenberg – 501st
3137 East River Road
Truxton, NY 1311158
Phone: 607-842-6356

345th BOMB GROUP
AIR APACHES
2007



THE AIR APACHES
FRANK L. DILLARD, PRESIDENT
345TH BOMB GROUP ASS'N.
963 WELLINGTON, RD
WINSTON-SALEM, NC 27106

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

AW/2007
Julia
Bina
628 North Deresch St.
Antigo WI 54409-1172