



VOLUME 26, ISSUE 2

APRIL 2008

NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM ON AGENDA FOR REUNION XXI

The Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum maintains a public display of the largest collection of historic general aircraft and space vehicles in the world. It is also a vital center for research into the history, science, and technology of aviation and space flight, as well as planetary science and terrestrial geology and geophysics.

It would be impossible to view the vast array of remarkable items on display at the museum in a single day. Irregardless, members of the Air Apaches attending Reunion XXI this fall, plan to make a concerted effort to cover as much as possible while on their tour.

The museum owns a B-25, but it is not presently known if it has been restored and made ready for public display. It was reported that a member of the 500th Squadron tried to have them paint it to replicate "TONDELAYO," but they were informed "it was against the museum's policy to cite specific organizations or individuals in the museum's collection." Come to think of it, they didn't hesitate to do just that when it came to the Wright Brothers or Lindberg! Maybe we should all write our congressman?

SEARCH FOR PRESIDENT IN PROGRESS DUE TO TERM LIMITS

Not only is the entire voting-aged population of our nation deeply engaged in the democratic process of attempting to select suitable candidates to represent their specific parties in a National election to replace the present occupant of the office of President of the United States (who's term in office is expiring this year), but the 345th Bomb Group Association's entire voting eligible membership will face the same issue at our business meeting in Arlington, VA this fall. Be Prepared to elect a new Association president at that meeting. Start your search ASAP!

STRAFER EDITOR ESTABLISHES RECORD LENGTH SENTENCE IN CURRENT ISSUE!

The current editor of the STRAFER announces his claim to establishing a new all-time record for compiling the longest single sentence, comprised of the maximum number of words, ever published in this newsletter!

The front-page announcement at the bottom of column one, pertaining to the search for a future presidential candidate is comprised of 77 words, and is presented as the winning statement.

The new record for short sentences was established by the editor's wife in response to the question, "Do you think that is remarkable?" Her answer was, "No!"

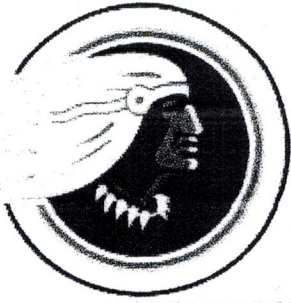
REUNION XXI REGISTRATION FORM ENCLOSED IN THIS PUBLICATION

Included in this issue of the STRAFER is a copy of the Reunion XXI Registration Form for the 2008 meeting of the 345th Bomb Group Association.

This year's reunion will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, in Arlington, VA. The reunion will be from August 28, through August 31, 2008. You are required to make your room reservations directly with the hotel management.

On Your Mark! Summer's end will be approaching and the weather in Washington, DC should be at its prime for our visit.

Get Set! Please provide the requested personal information, indicate your choice of events, banquet meal preferences, other options and return with your check as soon as possible. We must finalize our plans no later than June 10, 2008, but the earlier we know how many to make arrangements for the better chance we have of obtaining our first choice. So! Hurry and mail your form and check to our treasurer, Charles Wilson at the address on the form..... GO!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY: FRANK L. DILLARD

Well, I finished preparing 2007 federal and state taxes for both Margaret and myself, and I just noticed another spring has reluctantly decided it is finally time to end a dark and cold winter and brighten our world. I have learned to dread each new winter season with increasing fervor as time passes, and am delighted to see them go.

No! I don't think I would like to reside in a perpetual tropical environment, but the weather conditions I encountered while enjoying (?) my all-expense-paid government-sponsored tour of the southwest Pacific during the WWII era were, from my standpoint, much preferred to those that were considered normal in both the Arctic and European theaters. I imagine it would have been more enjoyable to drop into an air base PX, or local pub for a beer, after returning from a mission, rather than tossing down a two-ounce shot of "medicinal" alcohol, served by the flight surgeon in a dark army tent, prior to de-briefing, and then retiring to another dark tent to await the next assignment. I do enjoy residing in North Carolina because it offers such a variety of interesting places and geography within a day's drive that there is no reason (other than the price of gas) to ever get bored. I am anxious to get over to the coast and "de-winterize" my boat, which I plan to do as soon as this issue of the STRAFER is in the mail.

At the moment, my principal Group assignment is to finalize details for our upcoming Reunion XXI in Washington, DC. We have completed the selection of hotel, and are crossing "T's" and dotting "I's" with the management regarding arrangements for our arrival reception, hospitality room, banquet details, and other hotel facilities.

Work is in progress regarding scheduled bus tours and other functions. Although some items remain to be finalized, due to the necessity of making reservations in a timely manner, we are enclosing the Reservation Form in this edition of

the STRAFER. It would be greatly appreciated by your reunion committee if you would make an effort to return your completed registration in the next few days. We need to know approximately how many of you will be joining us in order to make arrangements for an adequate number of hotel rooms, banquet meals, tour buses accommodations, and attendance gifts. Washington, DC is a fabulous place to visit. We are convinced we have selected a great place for our center of operations, and promise to provide an interesting program for you to share with family and friends.

"WEB"-STER'S ELECTRONIC GYMNASTICS

I enjoy searching the internet web for WWII related items, with specific attention to those about the North American Aircraft Company's B-25 Mitchell, and the Pacific War Theater. Each search session item invariably leads to another-and another, until either your brain gets weary of the game, or your butt goes to sleep!

If you have access to a computer you can also have fun just looking up words online. Open your website and type in a single word in the "Search" window and press the "Search" button. You will usually generate more potential "Hits" than you care to exercise. It is amazing just how much information is stored within the "brain" of that little "black box." As an example, I entered the following words and obtained the number of potential sites as listed:

"STRAFER"- 212,000;
"SEX" - 1,440,000;
"WAR" -2,180,000,000;
"LOVE" - 3,660,000,000
"PEACE" - 3,660,000,000;
"MONEY" - 4, 080,000,000;
"FRANK DILLARD" - 1,700,000.

I was surprised to note that my name generated more responses than "SEX," but when I think about it my name is somewhat easier to remember.

If you are "on-line," don't fail to open the GOOGLE EARTH website. Once connected, you can conduct searches for all kinds of geographic locations, including aerial photographs of your present home site, your birthplace, and practically every spot on the earth's surface. I visited Port Moresby, and the air port looks considerably more civilized than it did during my first visit on route to join the 345th Bomb Group, 498th Squadron at Nadzab, N. G.

BULLETIN BOARD

TREASURER'S COMMENTS:

If you are a Life Member or an Associate Member you may disregard the following notice. Otherwise, membership dues for the year 2008 were due in January, and are now past due. Look at the mailing label on the outside cover of this issue to see if you are current with your dues payment. If the date shown on the label is prior to 2008, you are past due, and this will be the last copy of the STRAFER you will receive, unless you renew your membership immediately.

Dues are still only \$15.00. Your continued support is necessary to help defray the publishing costs of our newsletter, including postage, and such other miscellaneous expenses deemed necessary to sustain our organization. Make your check payable to:

345th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION,

and mail to;

CHARLES WILSON, TREASURER

80 CRESCENT CREEK

NEW CASTLE, IN 47362-1676

LOST SHEEP: Moved? Moving? Plan to move in the near future? Don't become a LOST SHEEP!

When, and if, you move from your present residence, the United States Post Office will only forward first-class mail for a limited time. To ensure uninterrupted delivery of the STRAFER, remember to notify the editor, the Group treasurer or your squadron VP if you change your address.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We are always happy to receive written material, and/or photographs, for publication. This newsletter is for - and about - the present, or past exploits of our members. If you have something to share, please send it in. Don't worry about diction or spelling, we have a minimum number of literary critics among our membership.

The next issue of the STRAFER will be mailed in July 2008. Please submit your contribution of articles or photos no later than June 5, 2008.

NOTICE - NOTICE - NOTICE **REUNION XXI INFORMATION**

HOTEL RESERVATIONS - You are responsible for making your own hotel reservations for Reunion XXI in Arlington, VA.

The Hotel is Hyatt Regency Crystal City At Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The special 345th Bomb Group room rate is \$104.00 per night, plus applicable state and local taxes (currently 12.25%).

All reservations must be guaranteed at time of booking with either a first night's deposit or a major credit card. The Hotel's check-in time is 3:00pm. The Hotel's checkout time is 12:00 NOON. In order to cancel a reservation without penalty, it needs to be canceled 24 hours prior to the date of arrival by 4:00pm. Otherwise the penalty is one night's room and tax.

The regular reunion dates are from August 28, 2008 through August 31, 2008. The hotel has agreed to honor the special Reunion rate for an additional two (2) days prior, and two (2) days after the regular reunion dates. To take advantage of the special rate you must make your reservations on, or before, the "cut-off-date" of Thursday, August 7, 2008.

Guests that have a late check out will be charged according to their departing time. If the departing time is between 1:00pm - 3:00pm they may be charged an additional \$50.00 fee. For guests departing between 3:00pm - 6:00pm there will be a charge of half the quoted room rate. Guests departing after 6:00pm will be charged the full quoted room rate.

TRANSPORTATION - You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements for Reunion XXI in Washington, DC. If you fly into Reagan Washington National Airport you should use the complimentary hotel shuttle service which leaves the hotel every half hour.

If you choose to drive to Washington you may use the hotel-parking garage at an overnight cost of \$23.00 per day.

**REUNION XXI REGISTRATION FORM
345TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
HYATT REGENCY CRYSTAL CITY
AUGUST 28, 2008 TO AUGUST 31, 2008
ARLINGTON, VA**

NAME _____ SQUADRON _____ PHONE # _____
 ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 SPOUSE NAME _____ E-MAIL _____
 GUEST #1 _____ GUEST #2 _____
 ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____ TRAVEL VIA _____

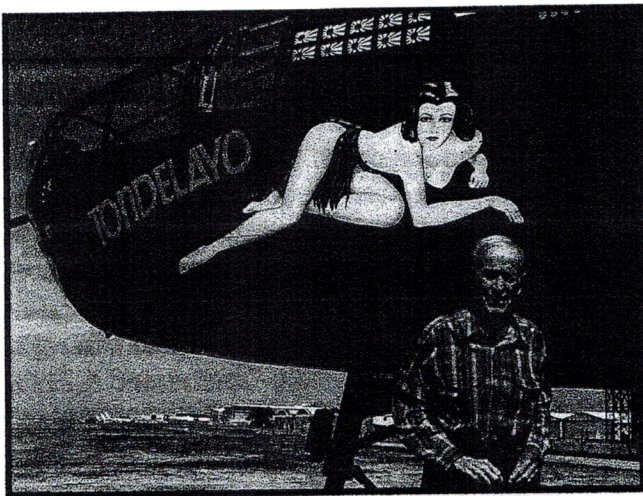
NOTE: PRINT NAME(S) SHOWN ABOVE AS YOU WANT THEM TO APPEAR ON NAME TAG(S). ATTACH SHEET IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS REQUIRED.

DATE	EVENT	NUMBER PERSONS	COST PER PERSON	AMOUNT
THURSDAY: 08/28/08	REGISTRATION HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN 11:00 AM TO 5:00 PM		\$25	
THURSDAY: 08/28/08	RECEPTION (Wine & Cheese) HOSPITALITY ROOM 6:00 to 7:00 PM		COMPLIMENTARY	
FRIDAY: 08/29/08	BUS LEAVES 9:00 AM TOUR AIR & SPACE MUSEUM AT DULLES AIRPORT		\$20	
SATURDAY: 08/30/08	BUSINESS MEETING 9:00 AM CONTINENTAL BK'FST. SERVED		COMPLEMENTARY	
SATURDAY: 08/30/08	SOCIAL HOUR 6:00-7:00 PM BANQUET 7:00 TO 10:00 PM CHECK ENTRÉES & NOS.: CHICKEN _____ NO. _____ BEEF _____ NO. _____ FISH _____ NO. _____		CASH BAR \$35	
SUNDAY: 09/31/08	BUS LEAVES 9:00 AM TOUR WASHINGTON POINTS OF INTEREST		\$20	
GRAND TOTAL				

IMPORTANT: Your Reunion Committee must make reservations for meals, tour tickets and other events well in advance of our arrival. Tour buses of adequate size must be reserved in advance and prepayment is required. Your early and prompt response will make their job easier. Please return this form with your remittance as soon as possible, **BUT ABSOLUTELY NO LATER THAN JUNE 10, 2008.** In the event it should become necessary for you to cancel your attendance of the reunion the Association will refund your payment in full, upon receipt of adequate notice. Make your check payable to **345th Bomb Group Reunion XXI.** Mail to: CHARLES WILSON, TREASURER, 345th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION, 80 CRESCENT CREEK, NEW CASTLE, IN 47362-1676.
REMEMBER TO MAKE YOUR HOTEL ROOM RESERVATION DIRECTLY WITH THE HOTEL

498TH SQUADRON

BY: CAROL HILLMAN



THE TONDELAYO WAS IN DALLAS!

Recently, three "Bs" buzzed into Dallas with the Wings of Freedom Tour 2008; a B-25 Mitchell, a B-17 flying Fortress, and a B-24 Liberator, all owned by the Collins Group from Massachusetts. The planes were available for tours and actual flights. The B-25 had been re-built and re-named to represent the 345th Bomb Group's Tondelayo, from the 500th Bomb Squadron.

Melvin Best (498th) gathered up all of his books and photos of the original Tondelayo and headed out to visit with the plane's flight crew. Melvin was actually surprised at how little the flight crew seemed to know about the WWII feats of the crew of the Tondelayo while on the unescorted raid on Rabaul. He was also disappointed with the extent that airplane deviated from the original aircraft.

While the Tondelayo story is somewhat well known, the bravery of the other 345th Bomb Group crews on that specific mission has not been as widely publicized.

On the morning of the 18th of October, 1943, the 345th Bomb Group, accompanied by the 38th Bomb Group executed a strike on Tobera and Rapopo airdrome landing strips, and on Japanese shipping in Vunapope Harbor immediately North of Rapopo airdrome, without the usual friendly fighter protective cover. The Japanese were reported to have had 15 fighters, 31 medium bombers, and 21 light bombers at Rapopo airdrome. Total actual strength in the Rabaul area was 89 fighters, 65 medium bombers, 21 light bombers and 21 floatplanes.

This 5th Air Force bomber raid, to one of the strongest bases in the Southwest Pacific was flown without benefit of friendly fighter protection due to adverse weather. This was as much of a surprise to the Japanese airmen as it was to the members of the American aircrews flying the mission!

Colonel True led the strike from the assembly point at Oro Bay directly to the South entrance of St. George's Channel, thence Northwest to a point just South of Cape Gazelle, and thence West to their target, Rapopo Airdrome.

The weather forecast for the route to the target was extremely bad. The fighter escort assigned to the strike had been briefly sighted aloft at the beginning of the mission, just as the two bomber groups formed up to skirt clouds and hug the surface of the ocean to better avoid radar detection.

When Colonel True, leading the two groups of B-25's, broke out of the dismal weather as they approached Kabanga Bay, he discovered that the covering fighter escort had evidently aborted the mission and turned back, citing the poor weather as their reason. By then, it was too late to turn the Strafers back, and in fact that probably would have been more dangerous, for the entire Japanese fighter force at Rabaul was intact, and available to overtake, and probably destroy many of the unescorted B-25's. By proceeding with the strike as originally planned, the two bomber groups figured to utilize the element of surprise to catch and destroy many of the enemy aircraft on the ground, and in the confusion - make good their escape to the safety of the cloud cover over the target. The Japanese were definitely confused as to the location of the American fighter cover, and their airborne fighters remained aloft searching for them for some time. This enabled the B-25 Strafers to carry out their mission on both land and sea targets before making contact with the enemy fighters. Interception by the enemy fighters only began as the 498th, 499th, and 501st Squadrons finished their strike on the land targets, and the 500th began its part of the show by, attacking the shipping in Vunapope Harbor.

The 38th Bomb Group left the Bomber Wing Formation about one mile south of Tamillili Bay and proceeded to attack Tobera Airdrome.

The following report describes the 498th Squadron's participation in the October 18, 1943 unescorted raid on Rabaul, as reproduced from a booklet entitled;

GUNFIGHT AT RABAU

THE UNESCORTED B-25 RAID ON RABAU
498th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M) AAF
345th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M) AAF
OFFICE OF THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
OCTOBER 18, 1943
APO # 929

SUBJECT: Narrative report on mission FFO 290 AA. Performed by the 498th Bombardment Squadron (M), on October 18, 1943.

TO: Commanding Officer 345th Bombardment Group (M) APO 929.

On the morning of 18 October 1943, nine airplanes of the 498th Squadron were ordered to bomb and strafe Rapopo strip, the Eastern strip. The attack was coordinated with attacks by other Squadrons of B-25 Strafers of the 345th and 38th Bomb Groups. The 501st and 499th Squadrons followed the 498th in attacks on Rapopo, while the 500th came in abreast of the 498th and attacked shipping in Blanche Bay. The 38th Group attacked Tobera Airdrome.

Our squadron took off from Dobodura at 1000-18-L and rendezvoused with the other squadrons over Oro Bay. The route out was direct to a point 25 miles SE of Kabanga Bay, turning left to cross into New Britain at Kabanga Bay, where the 38th Group was to leave the formation and attack Tobera Airdrome.

The weather enroute was so bad that the fighter escort of P-38's returned to base. Because of weather interference with radio transmission the flight leader was unaware that the fighters had turned back and by flying at 20 to 50 feet above the water and in and around the tropical squalls was able to continue on to the target.

The nine planes of the 498th Squadron attacked in line abreast formation in a South to North direction. The attack was made at 1252-L from minimum altitude of 100 feet.

The first flight composed of Lt. Col. True (Aircraft 024), Lt. McCall (Aircraft 042), and Lt. Robinette (Aircraft 351) all carrying 12 X 3 clusters of parafrag bombs, attacked the runway and dispersal areas on each side of the strip. Lt. Col. True attacked the center of the runway in order to destroy any planes that might be taking

off or preparing to take off. As no planes were sighted in his part of the target he strafed and bombed Ack-Ack positions at the Northern end of the flight strip. Lt. Robinette attacked the left side of the strip and seeing no planes along the runway cut over into the left dispersal area and strafed and bombed enemy planes parked in this area. Bombs were observed to burst near grounded planes and several were believed destroyed or damaged by the bombing and strafing. One Corvette type ship in Blanche Bay near Gredner Island was strafed as plane left target. Lt. McCall attacked the dispersal areas adjacent to the right side of the strip destroying two Dinahs and 1 Zeke and blowing the wing off one Betty. Parafrag bombs were also seen to hit the control tower and burst. The Corvette strafed by two other planes of this flight was also strafed.

The second flight composed of Capt. Kilgore (Aircraft 046), Lt. Chappe (Aircraft 188) and Lt. O'Rear (Aircraft 037) and carrying 12 X 100 lb demolition bombs with 8/11 second delay fuses attacked the dispersal areas on the right side of the landing strip. Capt. Kilgore strafed and bombed enemy planes in Eastern dispersal area destroying one twin-engine bomber and damaging two other planes by strafing. A Corvette near Gredner Island was strafed and hit with two bombs, which caused an explosion greater than the explosion of the bombs. Lt. Chiappe released bombs in Eastern dispersal area and strafed parked planes. Damage was not observed. Corvette near Gredner Island was thoroughly strafed as plane was leaving target. Lt. O'Rear strafed and released bombs in the Eastern dispersal area starting two small fires of undetermined origin.

The third flight composed of Capt. Kizzire (Aircraft 036), Lt. Magee (Aircraft 063), and Lt. Hill (Aircraft 040) and carrying 12 X 100 lb. demolition bombs with 8/11-second delay-fuses attacked stores, Ack-Ack positions and planes in the Eastern dispersal area. Capt Kizzire strafed and bombed planes, dump areas and Ack-Ack positions. Bombs were seen to hit among four parked twin-engine bombers, which were believed to have been destroyed. Ack-Ack positions along the Eastern revetments were silenced by strafing. One large fire, which emitted large columns of black smoke, was started in oil dumps located 1500 feet East of the Southern end of the runway.

One Zeke was strafed and damaged but did not burst into flame. Lt. Magee bombed and strafed along inside of Eastern edge of dispersal area destroying 1 Dinah and 5 Zekes. Destruction of these airplanes is positive. Lt. Hitt bombed and strafed dumps and Ack-Ack positions East of Dispersal area starting one large fire 1800 feet East of runway. Small fires were stated in oil dumps in the same area. Ack-Ack positions were strafed and silenced during the bombing.

Immediately after leaving the target the 498th squadron was intercepted by approximately 40 Zekes and Haps. The planes drew into close formation and flew close to water to prevent attacks from below. In a running battle that lasted for twenty-five minutes 10 Japanese Zekes and Haps were definitely destroyed. Tracers were seen to enter other fighters but only one probable is claimed. The fighters attacked from above at 3 and 9 o'clock positions. Pilots appeared experienced but some attacks were made from 10, 2, 5, and 6 o'clock. Positions. Pilots appeared experienced but did not press attacks, appearing reluctant to attack the close formation. The 498th Squadron suffered no casualties to personnel or to planes.

One Hap attacking Aircraft 024 from 3 o'clock was shot by turret gunner. Plane was observed to be smoking badly and when last seen was headed downward and only a few feet above the water. This ship is claimed as probable. One Zeke attacking from overhead at 3 o'clock was shot down by turret gunner and seen to crash into the sea. This plane was definitely destroyed and credited to Aircraft 351.

One Zeke attacking Aircraft 040 from above at 3 o'clock was hit by gunner and A/P was observed to crash into the sea. This plane was definitely destroyed.

One Zeke attacking Aircraft 063 from above at 4 o'clock was shot down by the turret gunner. Pieces fell from the cowling and the landing gear dropped. This plane hit the water at 7 o'clock and was definitely destroyed. Another Zeke attacking at 6:30 o'clock was hit by tail gunner and observed to be smoking badly when lost from view.

One Hap attacking Aircraft 046 from above at 3 o'clock pulled up in a steep bank and turret gunner hit him with several bursts. Plane burst into flames and crashed into the sea. One Hap

attacking from above at 10:00 o'clock was hit by several rounds from the waist gun fired by the radio gunner. Plane smoked badly and was seen to crash into water. One Hap attacking from above at 7:30 was hit by tail gunner and plane burst into flames and crashed.

One Zeke attacking Aircraft 188 from above at 8 o'clock was hit by several bursts from the upper gunner. Plane fell away on left wing and crashed into the sea. One Zeke or Hap attacking from above at 6 o'clock was hit by several bursts by turret gunner and crashed into the sea.

One Zeke or Hap just after taking off from Rapopo Airstrip was hit by several bursts from tail gunner. Fighter continued right turn, lost altitude and crashed. One Zeke attacking from above at 5 o'clock was hit by turret gunner as he broke off his attack. Plane nosed over and crashed into the sea. These planes were shot down by Aircraft 037.

All planes reported definitely destroyed were witnessed by other crewmembers and by crewmembers of other planes. The gunners involved saw the planes they hit smoke or burst into flame or crash. The fact that we were flying just above the water put the fighter in the water a few seconds after he was hit. The gunners did an excellent job of warding off the attack and destroying enemy planes.

A DON STOUT STORY

BY: MELVIN BEST

The year was 1944. We had just started flying B-25 Strafers, and were returning to Port Moresby after a routine mission.

Doug Allen, my co-pilot, asked me, "Mel, who would fly the airplane if you and I got hurt?" I answered, "Doug, I never thought of that—I don't know."

We called to our bombardier, "Bob, get up here and see if you can fly." He couldn't do it.

Next, we let Jake Truitt, our engineer, try and he just couldn't do it either.

At that moment, Don Stout, our radio operator, climbed over the bombay and up to the flight deck. "Don, have you ever tried to fly, I queried? "No," was his reply. "Well, let's see what you can do," I replied.....

For the next 35 minutes or so, Don did an unbelievably fine job of keeping up close to the flying formation. We later practiced this on the return trips after several missions, and it was amazing how well he did. Once, I even let him fly

the plane back to within 10 feet of the runway, but I did not let him land to avoid jeopardizing the lives of the other crewmembers. I am convinced he could have done it safely, however.

Don finished his missions while we were stationed at Nadzab, and I wrote a letter recommending him for pilot training.

I next met up with Don at our first 345th Bomb Group reunion in 1973 at Colorado Springs, CO. It turned out he did go to pilot training. He finished the training just 2 weeks after WWII ended. When he was told he must sign up for a 4 year tour to be commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the Air Corps he said, "I'm going back to Ma Campbell!" Don had worked for the Campbell Soup Company prior to the war and had a fine record there. After his return to his former job he was promoted to Mid-West Division Manager for Campbell Soup Co.

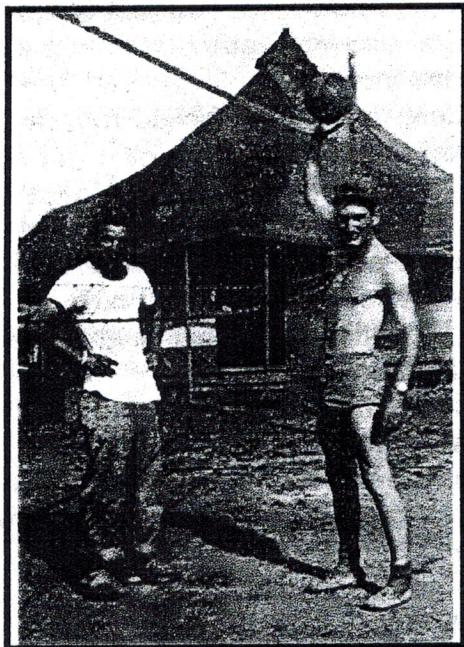
Gladys, and I spent a week with the Stouts the following summer at their beautiful home just outside of Minneapolis, MN.

Don Stout may possibly be the only person ever to turn down pilot's wings for the Air Corps! He definitely is one of the few.

SOUND OFF!

Dear Frank:

Per our recent phone conversation I am sending you a couple of pictures and relating an incident that I was involved in way back in September 1945.



CARTLEDGE & HILL
TAKEN ON IE SHIMA, 9-26-45

I was an engineer-gunner with the 498th Squadron at the time. Two of our B-25's were assigned to escort a C-47 load of high-ranking military personnel to Keijo (now Seoul), Korea to a meeting to discuss plans for the occupation of Southern Kyushu.

We spent the night in Keijo, and the next morning started our return trip to Ie Shima. A short time after takeoff, our plane developed an electrical problem and we returned to Keijo to correct it. After working several hours, we thought we had fixed it and once more, took off for Ie Shima. About 30 minutes out we had more electrical problems, and the pilot decided that we would land outside a town called Beppu Won, in Southern Kyushu. The landing gear would not go down, so we had to belly-land at a small airport there.

About 15 minutes later, a busload of men arrived and approached our plane. One man introduced himself as the Mayor of the town, and escorted us to a large rooming house in town.



SORENSEN, WILLIAMS, & CARTLEDGE
TAKEN ON OKINAWA, OCT. '45

After several days, we finally made contact with our base and a PBV came and took us back to Ie Shima. About a week later a typhoon hit Ie Shima and left nothing!

Our group was moved to Okinawa, then to Fukuoka, and finally to Kyushu to perform occupation duty.

Regards to all,
Andy Cartledge

499TH SQUADRON

BY: BEN MILLER

The human mind sometimes seems to be similar to a bucket of mush! Especially when it happens that certain strange memories from the past ooze back up to the top after so many years.

Back in October of 1944, certain members of the 345th Bomb Group were selected to be among an advance party for the invasion of the Philippine Islands. Some of us were boarded on the Thomas Nelson at Biak and we proceeded to Hollandia to join up with the invasion convoy. While at anchor on shipboard at Hollandia, we became bored just sitting in the hot sun watching the multitude of ships gather that were to make up the invasion force. After a few days our ship's captain said we could jump overboard and go swimming. Since it was a chance to wash our dirty life vests, some of us climbed up into the ship's rigging and jumped overboard, making sure to hold the bottom of the filthy vests, so they wouldn't pop up and snap our necks! I jumped from a place they said was 42 feet above the water, and it sure was a long way down! It was only after my swim that I discovered my life jacket was actually light blue.

Two of the fellow's bet they could dive off the ship and swim under the hull from one side to the other. While below the surface of the water they discovered a strong undercurrent that pulled them down. One was dragged against the bottom of the ship's hull which was covered with barnacles, and his back was all cut up.

The loading of the ships, and round the clock commotion, was something you had to see to fully understand the size of that invasion force.

Someone pointed out a house on a hill overlooking the bay that was rumored to be complete with gold doorknobs, that McArthur had the army build for him. Truth or fiction - who knows?

When we finally pulled out of our anchorage with the task force, there were many different types of craft in each and every direction you cared to look. We were a bit uneasy because a ship loaded with all kinds of ammunition and explosives was just off to one side of our vessel.

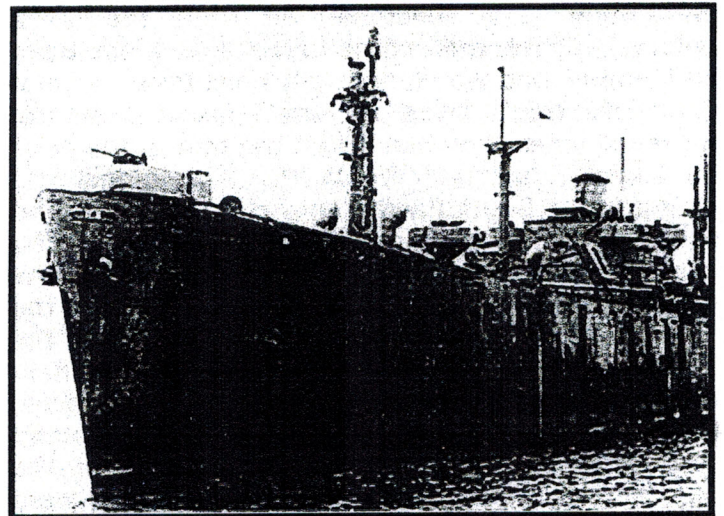
One particular WWII memory of mine about the invasion of the Philippines, was of all things - army barbers! Most especially, the one from the 499th Squadron. This particular man was at least our third barber in succession. I remember he was very dark skinned, with a heavy head of curly black hair. His name was something like Macropoulis, and he took over the barber's job when Pax Baker was rotated home. He located his bunk on the after deck of the Nelson, near a rack that held a life raft. Quite a few of the people from my section were

also bunked in that same area.

We arrived in the Philippines on October 29, 1944, just nine days after the initial invasion force had landed. It was the height of the monsoon season, and impossible to build a landing strip, so we remained on board the Nelson lying at anchor in the harbor.

On the night of November 11, 1944, the night before our last day on board the Nelson, our barber, dressed in yellow and white striped pajamas and wearing a winter dress uniform cap on his head, sat perched on the life raft. Several of us often got together at day's end and sang a lot, and this night was no different. Our barber must have been well trained in music, because he had a great voice and sang a lot of classical and operatic songs. After awhile he broke down and started crying, with tears running down his cheeks. We asked him what was the reason, and he said that this would be his last day alive on this earth, and that's exactly what happened! How did he know? I have often asked myself this question.

The next morning, November 12, 1944, I went below deck to my bunk to get one of the cigars my little mama had sent me while we were in Hollandia. Suddenly I heard a very loud hammering on the hull of the ship! It came from just outside the place where my cot was, and sounded like an air hammer! We were under Kamikaze attack! One of the attacking Jap plane strafed, bombed, and crashed into the Thomas Nelson near the place where many of the 499th Squadron members were bunked. That was quite a horrible event. Sadly, we suffered many casualties, including our barber.



THE USS WAITE LYING AT ANCHOR IN LEYTE HARBOR. NOTE THE TRIANGULAR-SHAPED HOLE IN THE PORT SIDE OF THE HULL CAUSED BY THE JAPANESE KAMIKAZE ATTACK. OF 11/12/44. PHOTO COURTEST OF KEN GASTGEB, HDQ'S.

Finally, the fires had been extinguished, the wounded transported to a hospital ship in the harbor, the dead placed in rows along one side of the ship. And now, the survivors were more than ready to be evacuated to a secure position on shore. Late that afternoon, of November 12, 1944, after having sat at anchor in the harbor providing a ready target for the Nips for all those many days, the ships survivors were taken ashore.

Later General Crabb said we would be part of history. I suppose it may be true that some people are recalling that period, and possibly giving us more credit than ever. If so.....Thank God!

Incidentally, I can't stand cigars any more, but regardless, every year on the 12th of November, like them or not, I smoke a cigar in honor of those that did not survive that fateful day.

JANICE (MILLER) RARY*

Letter to the editor:

I recently returned from attending my father's World War II Army Air Corps reunion and I want to share a few examples of the respect for our veterans that I witnessed at this event.

This year's reunion of the 345th Bomb Group, the AIR APACHES, was held in Las Vegas, NV. On Tuesday the Group toured Nellis Air Force Base, which is the home of the THUNDERBIRDS the Air Force's official air demonstration unit.

Just touring the base and THUNDERBIRDS Museum would have been a memorable experience, however, our visit was much more than that!

The THUNDERBIRDS team had been in Hawaii performing at a scheduled air show the week before. They returned home to Nellis Air Force Base on Monday, and would normally have taken several days off from flying to rest and recuperate. However, when they heard that the tour of the base on Tuesday included World War II veterans who fought in the South Pacific, they changed plans and came in just to meet with this group. The commander of the flying team spoke with the reunion group of about 75 people, of whom the veterans were the minority. With each reunion, the number of veterans declines and a larger proportion of the group is made up of widows, children, friends, and grandchildren of the men we love and respect. Following a personal meeting with the commander of the THUNDERBIRDS team, we were ushered out to bleachers on the edge of the runway where we witnessed four of the pilots who boarded their jets and took off for us in the stunning diamond formation. I can still see the silver of the jets glistening in the sky as I sat there stunned with amazement. It wasn't just because of their skill - although that is awesome most of all, I found it

hard to believe that on Sept. 18, 2007, these young men and women chose to fly solely as a tribute to a small number of elderly men who had served proudly in the South Pacific more than 60 years ago.

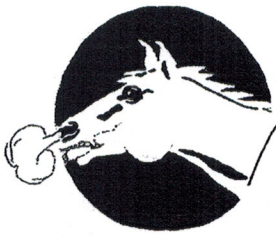
Today most of them move more slowly and don't hear as well as they did when they, as young men, found themselves thousands of miles away from home, loved ones, and the lives they had known, in the jungles and islands of another world. For many of the veterans, these reunions are of utmost importance in their lives. They tell their stories of war, survival, ingenuity, and humor. They always remember the friends they made who never came home. As their ranks decline, it becomes more important for their families and friends to listen, remember, and thank them for their service. I am thankful for the legacy my father and his "brothers" left me, and I am awed by the respect shown to them by today's younger freedom fighters. Please continue to publicize and keep their stories alive in our community so we will never forget, or fail to appreciate the freedom they fought so bravely to preserve.

*EDITORS NOTE: Janice (Miller) Rary, is the daughter of Norma and Ben Miller. This letter was reproduced from a "Letter to the Editor" Janice sent to a local newspaper after attending the 345th Bomb Group Ass'n. 2007 reunion in Las Vegas, NV.

We are proud to include her as an Associate Member of our Association.

345TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
TREASURER'S REPORT
AS OF MARCH 10, 2008
BY: CHARLES M. WILSON

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
BEGINNING BALANCE STAR BANK	
CHECKING ACCT, 02/11/08,	\$3,734.63
RECEIPTS;	
DUES.....	715.00
INTEREST.....	1.46
TOTAL RECEIPTS.....	\$716.46
DISBURSEMENTS;	
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE	28.61
STRAFER EXPENSE.....	402.52
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$431.13
ENDING BALANCE STAR BANK	
CHECKING ACCT 03/10/08,	\$4,019.96
BEGINNING BALANCE MONEY MK'T...	\$13,662.44
TOTAL FINANCIAL ASSETS	\$17,682.40



500TH SQUADRON

BY: DON "BUZZ" WAGNER

I can't begin to tell you how joyful it is to take a trip with GPS. When I think of the flights taken strictly on dead reckoning navigation in our early days, I wonder how we ever got there. What GPS would have done for us! Anyway, I'd received a Garmin GPS for my car for Christmas, and was dying to get on the road and try it out. A good friend of mine, who like me formerly lived in Florida, suggested we drive down to visit old friends and neighbors, stopping to do the same with those we knew en route. Since we were both retired Air Force guys, most that we visited were also retired military, and since my friend was the former Chief, Fighter Test of the Air Force, many visited were retired military and civilian test pilots.

It was a great trip culminating in a visit to Kermit Weeks' "Fantasy of Flight Museum" in Polk City, Florida. If you haven't been there, I highly recommend this great museum. What makes it unique is that every aircraft, including pre-WW I types are not only superbly restored but are flyable, and different aircraft are flown every day. Also you get to tour the restoration facilities with talks by the restorers themselves. If you have never experienced an open cockpit flight, you can get one at a very reasonable price. Kermit Weeks is a billionaire pilot who fly's all of his airplanes from the museums private airfield. Included is a pristine B-25C with the "Apache Princess" as nose art, and our Indian head on the vertical stabilizers. Weeks personalized the Indian girls face with that of his wife. I'm glad we didn't miss this fine museum.

The trip was nostalgic for me, since we stopped on the way north at Ocala, Florida, where my wife and I were married in 1944. The church has grown, but the original 150 year old chapel has been retained, and I took pictures inside and out for my two boys. I was just completing my primary pilot flight training at the Greenville Flight School in Ocala at the time of my wedding, but unfortunately the airfield we flew from has over the years disappeared, becoming a housing development. It sure brought back fond memories

or trying that great Stearman PT-17. Since I have returned home to Raleigh, I received a copy of the church records of our marriage from one of the caretakers I'd talked to. I was amazed that they would still have records that far back, and what a nice thing for them to do.

Anyway, it was a great two-week driving trip, and I can't say enough about how great that GPS is. I can't wait for my next trip to where ever. I'll leave you for now with a quote by Kermit Weeks about flight: "Flight is a metaphor that reaches to the core of what and who we are. It's pushing our boundaries, reaching beyond ourselves and, in the end, freedom. Not everyone can relate to airplanes. But everyone shares a fascination for flight because flight is the most profound metaphor there is for what goes on inside of us. We soar in our imaginations and fly in our dreams. But I think what we're really reaching for, in all of that, is ourselves".

Couldn't have said it better myself!

MILITARY MANEUVERS

1. If the enemy is now in range, so are you!
2. Tracers work both ways.
3. The only time you have too much fuel is when you are on fire.
4. You've never really been lost until you've been lost at Mach 3!
5. Any ship can be a minesweeper...Once!
6. Never use a stopwatch to time delay fuses!
7. When one engine fails on a twin-engine plane you always have enough power left to get to the scene of the crash.
8. You know you failed to lower the landing gear when it takes full power to taxi to the terminal.
9. It is generally inadvisable to bailout directly over an area you just bombed.
10. Whoever said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." obviously never got bayoneted!
11. The Piper Cub is the safest airplane ever manufactured. It can just barely kill you.

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THE AIR APACHES

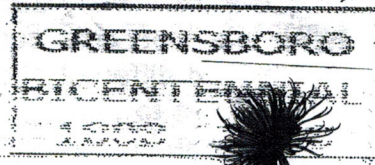
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