

"AIR APACHES"

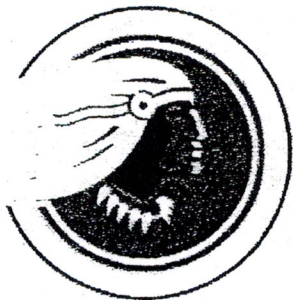
STRAFTER

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 3

DECEMBER 2009



The 345th Bombardment Group Memorial was rededicated in a ceremony held during the 2009 Reunion in Dayton, Ohio.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By: BEN MILLER

Since our recent reunion, we have gone through a series of changes, and I must say, that we seem to have things in order. Some of our officers have been ill, and others are trying to learn the ropes, so here we go for the last mailing this year.

While going through a lot of old pictures in my files, the story about our squadron barber in the 499th seems about due for telling.

We had various people as the squadron barber, the first one being Little Beaver, a barber in his civilian days, but he went to the hospital very ill because his lungs were full of small bits of hair, and he did not live long when sent back to the States.

We had a large fellow for a barber while we were aboard the Nelson, where we were hit by the Jap plane on his fatal dive. The night before we were hit, he was on a life raft wearing yellow and white PJ's and a winter garrison hat. He was a great singer, and it wasn't hard to tell he had spent time studying music, with some of it being classical training.

Toward evening, he sang his heart out, with tears running down his cheeks.

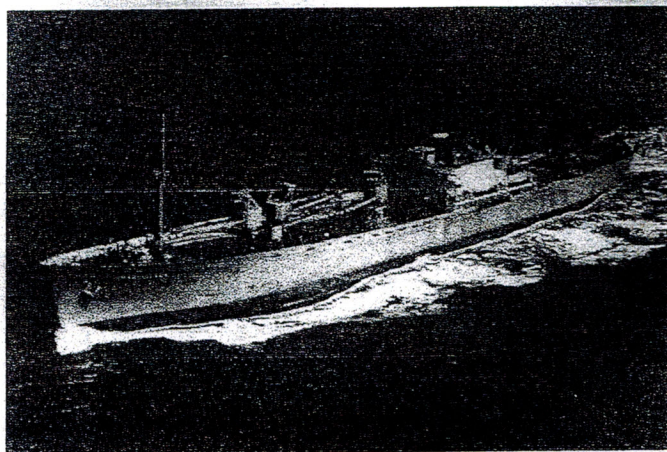
He kept wiping away his tears, and saying this would be his last day of life.

I helped move him the after the JAP BOMB had done its work. How did he know? I'm sure there are other tales quite similar. Events like this made us believe in a MAKER.

Best wishes to all for a great 2010.



345th Bomb Group Association President Ben Miller speaking at the rededication ceremony for the 345th BG Memorial.



The S.S. Thomas Nelson under way (photo courtesy of armed-guard.com).



FALCONS 498TH SQUADRON

By: CAROL HILLMAN

"What was it like to be in the War, Daddy?" My sister, Judy, and I have grown up the daughters of a veteran. We have always heard Daddy's "War Stories." We know about many of the missions he flew, Rabaul, what parafrags are and what they look like falling through the sky. What we haven't heard about was the day-to-day living conditions as he remembers them. Via TV and the Internet, we see the living conditions for our troops in Iraq. How different were the living conditions in the South Pacific during World War II? Here are my father's (Melvin Best) memories of his time in New Guinea.

"From the time we left Australia, the only buildings were used by Operations and the kitchens. They were made of some tin-like material. Everything else was 14 X 14 foot tents. Each flight crew had their own tent and the pilot, co-pilot, and bombardier shared the tent. There were 16 flight crews so there were 16 tents clustered together. I do not remember how the enlisted men were assigned to their tents. Our first base was at 7-Mile Strip at Port Moresby. We arrived there June 5, 1943 and began flying missions. We spent the most time at Port Moresby and departed on January 18, 1944.

The next home for the 345th BG was to the area recently vacated by the 22nd BG close to Dobodura (January 18 – Feb 16, 1944). The tents for the 498th were clustered by the river that cascaded down from the mountains. I think the name of the river was the Swine River. For recreation we would swim in that river until the men came down with ear infections and moss infections. The weather was beautiful in the morning but it rained practically every day. The area averaged 180 inches of rain per year. The native trees were huge, 14-16 feet in diameter. This was true jungle with such dense growth that we did not venture into it. Wallaby and rats the size of cats were common in the jungle.

Nadzab was my last 498th home before I came home the first of July, 1944 (Feb 16 – July 1944).

Most of the food we ate was canned. For 42 days in a row we ate Spam. Spam cooked every way you can imagine! And dehydrated potatoes...those dried flakes that you pour water over and make believe they are real potatoes. Yuck! We had not had fresh foods for 3 months when we flew 2 butchers from our squadron to a ranch near Woodstock Field in Australia. While the butchers processed the beef, the rest of us went to Townsville for fresh vegetables. We bought onions and one other vegetable. The prize was the 10-10 gallon containers of fresh milk. The trip back to Port Moresby was at 15,000 feet to chill the milk and preserve the freshness of the meat. When we landed, the kitchen staff was waiting and began preparing the best meal we had had in months: fresh beef steaks, fresh vegetables, and cold, fresh milk!

It was the first fresh milk we had had in 4 or 5 months. That night we were the sickest 400 men on the island!

The only electricity was in Operations and the kitchen. About 3 or 4 in the afternoon the generators were turned on to the tents to light the single light bulb in each tent. Later we were able to buy some refrigerators and they were turned on daily when the generators came on.

Our personal laundry was easy to maintain. We had no washing machines so when we went to take a shower; we wore our clothes, scrubbed them down while we were wearing them, then stripped and took a shower. We had a dry set to change into after the shower.

When we were at Port Moresby the officers, led by Capt. William Kizzire, the head officer, decided to build an Officer's Club. It was to be located on a knoll with a view over 7-Mile Strip. Col. Crab and Col. True's quarters were higher up the hill. Our engineering was quite resourceful. As we were positioning 55 gallon barrels for the foundation to keep the floor of the building out of the rain, the two Col's came by, inquiring about what we were building.

Col True: What're y'all doing?

Kizzire: Building an Officer's Club, Sir.

Col True: Is the Enlisted Men's Club started?

That was all that was said. Immediately two bottles of Vodka and trucks left for Port Moresby where more lumber and supplies were purchased to start the Enlisted Men's club.

The next afternoon as the officers were once again working on their new building, Col. True stopped by.

Col. True: How's the Enlisted Men's Club coming?

Kizzire: They started on it this morning.

Col. True: Very fine. When they are finished with their club, I hope they invite me in.

Col. True was very hard-nosed but was determined that everything would be fair and equal for all of the men under his command. He

was instrumental in the camaraderie that was enjoyed by those in the 498th!"



Attending the re-dedication of the 345th Bombardment Group Memorial were (Front row) Kenneth Haller, Erwin Gerharter, Bob Jacobs, and George Givens and (Back row) Melvin Best, Frank Dillard, and Quentin Stambaugh. Not pictured is Charles Wilson.

REUNION XXII

Many thanks go to the 500th Squadron and Dennis and Susan O'Neill for hosting the 2009 Reunion in Dayton, Ohio. From the Hospitality Suite at the Crowne Plaza, the Wright-Patterson AF Museum, the rededication of the 345th Memorial, the lunch at the Officers Club, and to the Group Banquet, everything was well planned and full of fun. Reunions offer an excellent occasion to renew old friendships as well as to make new ones, and the O'Neill's provided the perfect venue for both.



BATS OUTA HELL 499TH SQUADRON

By: JAMES MAHAFFEY

Glen Taylor came to our squadron as one of the original pilots and one with more savvy, and seemingly older than most of us. I think I heard he taught school before the war. He had nine mentions in the Warpath to describe his tours. I think I flew with him a couple of missions. Here is his story after New Guinea:

"After 50 plus missions and a bout with dengue fever, they sent me home then to Columbia, S.C. instructing in B-25s again. Norm Hyder and Ken McClure were in the outfit. After about three months they asked for Captains with combat experience. Norm and I headed off to war again, and ended up in CBI with the 12th BGP B-25s again, Feni India.

By the end of the war, I had another fifty missions, "over the hump". I was a Squadron C.O., traded our B-25s for A-26s which we ferried to the Occupation Air Corps in Germany. After a couple of weeks enjoying Paris and LeHarve, we came home by ship arriving in Boston on Thanksgiving Day.

I elected to stay in the service and was assigned to Kelly Field, Texas as Director of Flight Safety and later as Chief of Flight Operations.

I applied to the Institute of Technology and was sent to the University of Kansas to complete my degree.

In 1950 I went to Warner Robbins, Georgia as Director of Flight Safety of the 14th Air Force. From there, I went to Air Command and Staff College, followed by a three year tour at US Military Air Academy at West Point in the Department of Military Physiology and Leadership.

In 1955, I went to Wheels, AFB in Tripoli, Libya as Group C.O. of the 580th Air Resupply Group, B-29, C-119, SA-16, C-54 engaged in unconventional warfare during the "Cold War". Next stop was Alconbury, England, AFB as Deputy Commander, followed by Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia.

In 1968, I became Sr. Air Force Advisor to the Maryland National Guard in Baltimore for four years.

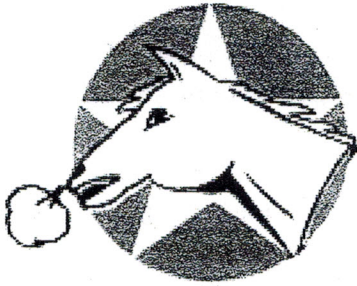
My final tour was six years with Titan II Missiles at Jacksonville Air Force Base, Little Rock, Arkansas as Missile Squadron C.O. and Flight Test Conductor.

While at Little Rock, I married Col. Evelyn Anderson, Chief Nurse of the Hospital. We retired on the same day, traveled in our travel trailer extensively and built a home in Cape Coral, Florida where we enjoyed golfing, fishing, traveling and life.

In 1986, we built a condo in Fort Meyers, Florida and lived there until Evelyn was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and we moved to San Antonio, Texas and Air Force Village II. She passed away in 1995 and is buried in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

I later married Laura, who resided with me at Liberty House, an assisted living center at Air Force Village II, where we are surrounded by lots of old Air Force friends."

Jim Mahaffey adds - It seems like Glen wins the prize for most Commands in a career spanning nearly 30 years. I remember visiting him at Little Rock, AFB about the time of the underground missile explosion and fire, I plead not guilty and there was no more investigation.



**ROUGH RAIDERS
500TH SQUADRON
By: DON WAGNER**

For those of you who missed the Dayton reunion, I can only say you missed a great one. The all-inclusive 345th reunion hosted by the 500th was a smashing success. We owe Dennis & Susan O'Neill who handled the details a great round of applause for their efforts. Approximately 140 members, half of whom were 500th, attended the reunion.

At the 500th meeting officers elected were President: Don Wagner, VP: Jim Stewart, Secretary: Harlan Hatfield, and Treasurer: Linda Bynum. The Rough Raider Newsletter will in the future be produced by Susan Wagner as editor, and all submissions should go to her at 106 Nathaniel Ct, Cary, NC, 27511, or by email: dylanwag@earthlink.net. The schedule will be quarterly issues. Please send her articles, or there can be no newsletter.

During an Executive Meeting of the 345th Association, it was agreed that they would pay for half of the net cost of the reunion. In addition, all life members of the 500th Association were automatically accepted as life members of the 345th Association. As a matter of note I was advised that twenty-six 500th members joined the 345th membership during the reunion, adding to the fifty or so who already have been members of the 345th as well as the 500th.

The 345th Association meeting, which followed ours, elected two 500th members to be officers of the 345th. Dennis O'Neill was elected

Second VP and Mary Sloan Roby as Treasurer. As the 500th representative, I will continue to serve as a VP, and Board member of the 345th. The next reunion will be over the Labor Day weekend, September 2010 in Dallas TX, hosted by the Gladys Best family (498th). The motion to accept Dallas was made and seconded by 500th members. Having a reunion every year instead of every two years makes sense considering the age of we original members. Most of us don't even buy green bananas, so having a reunion every year makes sense.

We felt the absence of those we lost since the last reunion, and those of whom because of illnesses could not attend. We wish the latter speedy recovery, and look forward to seeing them in Dallas next year.

Note: Due to circumstances beyond my control, the orderly transfer of information and data from our former Secretary to those who were elected to succeed has not occurred. The ROUGH RAIDER Newsletter, and mailing addresses will have to be restarted from scratch, and I am working with both Susan and Harlan to do that. Please bear with us. We need your articles and notices. Please send them to Susan Wagner, 106 Nathaniel Ct., Cary, NC, 27511, (www.dylanwag@earthlink.net), and we need them now.

**BEST WISHES TO YOU AND THE FAMILY
FOR THE COMING YEAR.....Don**



BLACK PANTHERS 501ST SQUADRON

By: PAUL VAN VALKENBURG

With another reunion in the books planning is already moving swiftly for next year's reunion in Dallas Texas. It was great to see so many second and third generation members at this year's reunion. Turnout of 501st members was on the low side this year for a number of reasons. I know illnesses prevented several loyal reunion attendees from making the trip to Dayton. I hope the New Year brings better health and a strong desire to get back together with old friends in Dallas. I want to encourage you to invite your family and friends to come along with you in 2010.

We have been fortunate to have several new members of the second generation step up to fill vacancies in the Groups executive board and hopefully more will volunteer in the future. This will help the Association keep going for many years to come.

At the reunion in Dayton we gave out a DVD movie of "The Emperors Envoy" which was first produced by the Association back in the early 1990's. This year we are working on the "Warpath" movie and will have that available on DVD for the Dallas reunion. I hope to be able to put both movies on one DVD and maybe some addition info as well.

We are still looking for someone with web design experience to volunteer to redesign the Groups website at www.345thbombgroup.org. There is a ton of information on the website now but so much more is possible. If you know of anyone who is interested please let me know.

Those of you at the reunion in Las Vegas in 2007 may remember several Vietnam veterans who were also holding a reunion in our hotel. Last month I received an e-mail from one of them and I wanted to pass it along to you all:

Dear Sir,

In 2007 I had the privilege of ad hoc addressing the members attending their reunion in Las Vegas. I'm with the 6918th Security Squadron. We were having our reunion at the same time as the 345th but I didn't know who they were so Thursday night I visited their room, talked with a couple of people and found out they were WWII vets. I asked if the 6918th could come down and say thank you to them and was granted the privilege to do so.

I went back to our room, told our guys and asked that they come on down to say thanks after explaining what I knew of the 345th. I heard a bunch of "sures" so I headed back down to the 345th's room and after a moment, was allowed to address the group.

Meanwhile I looked back to the back of the room and ALL of our guys, including their wives, were there. And when I was done and said "Salute!" damned if all of us 6918th guys didn't give all the 345th guys a dead on perfect salute.

Why am I writing this to you?

I've been watching WWII in HD on The History Channel. It's a great show with narratives by actual vets and rare color footage I've never seen. It brings WWII much more into perspective from an individual perspective meaning you get to know people who were there as an individual. A person in war. A world war.

And I've been doing a lot of crying. Out of gratitude, sadness, and pride for what they (ALL Americans-front lines or factories) did. For what they gave to future generations. That show has given me a deeper appreciation of their sacrifice.....and their gift to us.

So watching this show I thought of that night in Las Vegas and thought of them and the debt we as a country owe that can never be repaid and I know they will never ask for any repayment. They were just doing their job as were we doing ours. They expect nothing back.

But I wish to say it was a distinct honor and privilege to be able to say, if only for one minute, "thank-you" to those vets. It's something I won't ever forget and something I, and I'm sure my generation's vets, hold sacred.

I'm sure the 345th has lost members since 2007. It's a regrettable fact of life.

But if you would be so kind as to thank the survivors again, from me, I'd be appreciative. Just so they know some people haven't forgotten and won't ever forget.

Kind and best regards,

Pete Bolte

Ex SSGT 6918th Security Squadron/USAFSS

I want to wish all of you a blessed Christmas, a happy Hanukkah, and a very happy new year!



501st Squadron members attending the rededication of the 345th Memorial in Dayton, OH.

General Meeting of the 345th Bomb Group Association Reunion XXII Minutes

President Ben F. Miller (499th) first welcomed everyone to the XXII Reunion of the 345th Bomb Group Association. He then called the business meeting to order at 10:48 am in the Van Cleve room at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dayton, Ohio, on Sunday, September 06, 2009.

Don Pease (500th) led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Don Rary (son-in-law of Ben F. Miller 499th) gave the prayer.

Margene Miller Brown (daughter of 499th Ben Miller) introduced herself and explained that she was assisting her father in presiding over the meeting.

Judy Best Zurlis (498th), Assistant Secretary, read the minutes of the XXI Reunion. Don Rary moved to accept the minutes as read with Ben Haller seconding the motion. The motion passed.

Charles Wilson (498th), Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's report. As of August 10, 2009, the total Money Market Account is \$13,917.25 while the Checking Account total is \$2,993.16 leaving a total of \$16,910.41. This year's checking account reflects expenses for the XXI Reunion's expenses. The report is attached.

Charles explained that often he receives a membership renewal after he has sent the Strafer mailing labels to Editor Frank Dillard (498th). Therefore, the label does not reflect the updated status for that person. Please be assured the label will be updated for the next issue of the Strafer. He also requested that Life Members and Associate Widows that do not pay annual dues to please notify the Treasurer of their current address, phone number, etc.

Frank Dillard moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted for approval subject to the Audit Committee's result.

Dennis O'Neill (500th) was the only member to volunteer to be on the Audit Committee.

Paul Van Valkenburg (501st) did not have a Webmaster's report. However, our website – www.345thbombgroup.org - will be included in the Strafer's next edition. Ben Miller thanked Paul for all the time and work he has donated to our website.

New Business:

Lynn Daker (500th) was elected as the President at the XXI Reunion last year. Per our Constitution and Bylaws, Ben Miller (1st Vice President) assumed the Presidency upon the death of Lynn Daker. Our bylaws state that every 2 years beginning in 1982 Officers for the Association should be elected. Since only the President was elected in 2008 we must elect

Officers for only one year. Then in 2010 we will elect new officers.

Ben F. Miller is continuing as the President of the 345th Bomb Group Association.

The following offices must be filled.

1st Vice President

2nd Vice President

Secretary

Assistant Secretary

Treasurer

Assistant Treasurer

The floor was opened for nominations.

Jim Bina (501st) was nominated for the office of 1st Vice President.

Dennis O'Neill (500th) was nominated for the office of 2nd Vice President.

Silas Pearson (498th) was nominated for the office of Secretary.

Judy Best Zurlis (498th) was nominated for the office of Assistant Secretary.

Mary Sloan Roby (500th) was nominated for the office of Treasurer.

Charles Wilson (498th) was nominated for the office of Assistant Treasurer.

Ruth Damour (499th) moved to accept the slate of officers as named. Carol Hillman seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Ben Miller announced that Frank Dillard would like for someone to volunteer as the Assistant to the Editor of the Strafer. Andy Decker (nephew of Warren W. Everett (501st)) volunteered to help.

The question was asked if the Strafer was financially okay. Frank explained that our \$15.00 membership dues more than cover all costs of printing and mailing the Strafer.

Don Rary (498th) then asked how the editor selects submitted articles to be included in each Strafer. Frank explained that due to postage restraints we only have 12 pages in the Strafer. Nine of the pages are committed to the Officers' reports, front and back, and the Bulletin Board leaving only 3 pages for other articles. Therefore, some articles are too large to be accepted and are not used. This brought questions and suggestions of how the stories of our veterans can best be preserved and shared with others. Ideas are: the

345th website and the Veteran's History Project as proposed by Kelly McNichols (500th),

Norma Miller (wife of 499th Ben Miller) asked why the Headquarters was not included in the 345th Memorial. Frank Dillard (498th) explained it was an oversight and nothing could be done about it at this late date.

Don Wagner, President of the 500th, thanked Dennis O'Neill for all the hard work he and Susan gave in organizing and hosting the reunion. He almost gave Dennis a heart attack when he suggested they be the permanent reunion hosts!

The floor was opened to suggestions of where our XXIII Reunion should be held. Ken Haller (498th) proposed the Seattle area as a possible location. Due to scheduled back surgery he is unable to chair the committee.

Don Wagner (500th) announced that some families have requested that the reunion be moved to another 3-day weekend because the Labor Day weekend is a conflict for many family activities and to please take this request in consideration when planning the next reunion.

Marvin Leventon (500th) told us about a magazine that will help host reunions. The details were sparse but available if the Reunion Committee was interested.

Don Rory asked since there is an offer of the Seattle area on the table is there anyone who would be willing to host the reunion there? After discussion, no one volunteered.

Jim Bina suggested the following cities a locations: Wichita, KS, Milwaukee, WI and Oshkosh, WI.

Bob Jacobs suggested San Antonio, TX.

Carol Hillman announced that Gladys Best has volunteered the Best family to host the reunion in the Dallas, TX area. After much discussion Gerry Paquette (500th) moved that we accept Dallas as the sight of the next reunion. Bob Jacobs (498th) seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Charles Wilson explained that we had dues and contributions of \$3,790.00 with the Strafer expenses for last year being only \$1,811.00.

He then read a letter from Douglas Stroz, son of Henry Stroz (498th) requesting help in

locating anyone who might have known his father during his short duration with the 345th before his untimely death in 1944. A request will be placed in the Strafer.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12: 04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Best Zurlis

Assistant Secretary

"TIN LIZ AT DAGUA"

By: **ANDY DECKER (501st)**

Mid-morning on May 21, 2009, I sat on the torn edge of the right wing of the B-25 Tin Liz, staring at an unfiltered Pall Mall cigarette burning in my hand, hoping that a snake would not slide out of the wing and take exception to my presence. I had not smoked in 18 years, yet this cigarette was telling me I could start again anytime. I had brought them along just for this occasion: finding a 65-year-old aircraft wreck 8000 miles from home.

It was hot and steamy sitting there under the sago palms and tall ferns that were growing at the base of the hills rising up south of the old Dagua airstrip near Wewak. It had been hot since the sun had first poked above the horizon. It was never cool by my Minnesota standards, but standing on the deck at my hotel that morning and watching the sun rise, the air had been heated instantly by the appearance of the sun just as if the door of a hot oven had been opened. From then until sundown, it would just be increasing levels of heat and humidity.

A few more puffs on the cigarette, a few silent words for an uncle and his five crewmates who died at this spot in 1944 and then my small search crew and I went back to photographing wreckage that was strewn over a thirty yard area. My crew of two men, a teenager and two young boys were all business when at the crash site. On the road and walking along the jungle trails they were talking all the time, but they became quiet and serious when we came upon war wreckage.

I am sure various groups have poked through the Tin Liz wreckage, but for me, being

there and standing among the various pieces of fuselage and engine parts marked the moment of putting that uncle to rest after so many years. Most of the information I had used to get to the site had not been available during my parents' and grandparents' lifetimes. I know that they had wanted to make this journey, but New Guinea was a world away back then.

Over the last six years, I had collected documents from veterans' groups, government agencies, books and Web sites, all of which had brought me closer to knowing the exact location of the crash site. With the willing assistance of some of the Dagua villagers, I was able to hike directly to the wreck without having to scour the jungle for days.

The people I met in Papua New Guinea thanked me many times for everything the Americans did to free their country. They were keenly aware of the price paid for their freedom and I felt truly welcomed by them.



TIN LIZ wreckage near Wewak, May 2009.

TREASURER'S REPORT

By: **CHARLIE WILSON**

August 12, 2008 Balances:

Star Financial Bank Checking Acct	\$9,331.49
Ed Jones Money Market Acct	\$11,813.36
Total	\$23,144.85

August 10, 2009 Balances:

Star Financial Bank Checking Acct	\$2,993.16
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345th Bomb Group XXIII Reunion, 2010 Registration Form

September 2 – 6, 2010

Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center

Grapevine, Texas

Name _____

Name(s) of Spouse/Guest(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____ Squadron No. _____

Keep the other pages so you will remember all the fun things we will do at the Reunion!

Registration Fee: No. of Persons _____ X \$35.00 = _____

Friday: Welcome to Texas Dinner and Entertainment:
No. of Persons _____ X \$20.00 = _____

Saturday Morning: Greet the Troops at D/FW Airport
No. of Persons _____ X \$15.00 = _____

Sunday Noon : TEXAS MYSTERY Luncheon
No. of Persons _____ X \$15.00 = _____

Sunday Evening: Closing Banquet
No. of Persons _____ X \$40.00 = _____

Tour of Cowboy Stadium (an "extra")
No. of Adults _____ X \$15.00 = _____
No. of Seniors/Children _____ X \$12.00 = _____

Tour of Ballpark in Arlington (an "extra")
No. of Adults _____ X \$10.00 = _____
No. of Seniors _____ X \$8.00 = _____
No. of Children _____ X \$5.00 = _____

Grand Total = \$ _____

Please complete this Registration Form and mail it along with your check to:

345th Bomb Group

Judy Best Zurlis

424 Tiffany Trail

Richardson, TX 75081-5553

Home: 972-231-2943

judyzurlis@sbcglobal.net

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: 345TH Bomb Group
Remember to make your own hotel reservations at
866-782-7897; Group Code X-BMB; Group Name 345th

Ed Jones Money Market Acct \$13,917.25
Total \$16,910.41

Note: the large change in the checking account balance was caused by Reunion Xxi expenses of \$8,050.24 recorded this fiscal year.

Membership Record as of August 17, 2009:

Members (M)	149
Associate Members (AM)	84
Life Members (LM)	49
Associate Widows (AW)	61
Total	343

Respectfully submitted: Charles M. Wilson

It has been a pleasure to serve the last three years as your treasurer. I appreciate your trust and also your cooperation in notifying me of the changes in your addresses and other vital statistics. I also appreciated the various notes and letters that oftentimes accompanied your dues payments.

I would be remiss if I didn't remind you one last time about the rules of the game. Members (M) and Associate Members (AM) owe dues of \$15.00 per year payable to the 345th Bomb Group Association January 1 of each year.

If your Strafer mailing label (check it) reads 2009 or before, your dues need to be sent in to the treasurer in order to receive the Strafer. Life Members (LM) and Associate Widows (AW) DO NOT owe membership dues but donations are gratefully accepted. Also, Life Members and Associate Widows should contact the treasurer or secretary occasionally in order to update our mailing labels.

As of the September board meeting, we have a new treasurer. Her name and address are listed on the last page of your Strafer along with the other officers. Please give her the same kind considerations that you gave me. The treasurer's job is a big one with a lot of details. I'm sure she will do great job for the Association. I wish her well.

This is my last HURRAH. Thanks- OVER and OUT!

B-25 DOCUMENTARY ON DVD

Hal Cope (498th) mentioned in an email a documentary available on DVD that covers the crash and rediscovery of a 38th Bomb Group B-25 that was on a mission to Madang, New Guinea. The 52 minute DVD is titled *The Bomber Reef* and was put together by Walt Deas. It is available online. Hal recommends that we all watch it as the 345th also flew missions against Madang.

AN EDITORIAL NOTE

Being new to newsletters and the Bomb Group Association, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Frank Dillard for letting me be a part of the production of *STRAFER*. Frank has done a great job for the Association and deserves our thanks.

With this being a bit of a rushed edition of the *STRAFER*, there are parts missing, such as some of the squadron officer reports, that will be included in future editions.

I encourage everyone to send in emails or letters of their stories, recollections, photo's or news of interest to the Association members. If you have suggestions for future editions, I would like to hear them. My email and mailing address is listed on the Association Officer's page.

There are a growing number of young people who have taken an interest in the wartime activities of their relatives. If you can help any of those that write to us, I know that they will be very appreciative.

The next *STRAFER* should be published in March, so start thinking about what you want to submit and send it off to both Frank and myself by February 10th so we can make sure it is considered. You can send your articles and pictures either through an e-mail or the US Mail.
Andy Decker

345th Bomb Group XXIII Reunion, 2010

Labor Day Weekend; September 2 – 6, 2010

**Headquarters: Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center
1501 Gaylord Trail, Grapevine, TX 76051**

Make Your Own Hotel Reservations

Reservations: 1-866-782-7897

Specify Group Code X-BMB10

Group Name: 345th

Room reservations received after the reservation cut-off date of August 3, 2010, will be confirmed on a space-available basis at the best available rate at the time you make the reservation.

The Hotel

The hotel is the Gaylord Texan Hotel and Convention Center in Grapevine, TX. Please go to this web site

<http://www.gaylordhotels.com/gaylord-texan/>

to see pictures of the hotel and learn more about it. Normal room rates begin at \$249 for our block of rooms. We have secured a rate of \$99 per guest room with single or double occupancy plus 12% taxes rather than the normal 18% tax rate. The resort service fee of \$15.00 per room per night will be waved. Each additional adult will be \$20.00. Rates will apply three (3) days prior to and following the reunion, so come early and stay late.

Parking Issues

Parking is about \$15 per day. They will give us 4 free passes each day. We plan on having daily drawings to give these away. There is remote parking for motor homes but no hook-ups.

Airport Shuttle Service

The hotel is literally in the flight path for planes landing at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. Got a parachute? Hop out! Otherwise, go outside the luggage claim area and catch a Super Shuttle to the hotel. Any Super Shuttle can deliver you to the hotel but the Super Shuttles with the Gaylord Texan logo in the window comes directly to the hotel. A Super Shuttle picks up every 30 minutes. Cost is \$12 per person.



GAYLORD TEXAN

From Dallas Love Field a Super Shuttle departs every hour on the hour from outside the baggage claim area. Cost is \$18 per person.

Thursday, September 2, 2010

Come in early and enjoy the ambience of the Gaylord Texan. Yes, the Hospitality Room will be open daily with open bar and snacks! We will have bartenders manning the Hospitality Room from early in the morning until midnight. Then go to bed, Get some sleep! Rest up for the rest of the reunion!!!

Friday, September 3, 2010

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Registration in Hospitality Suite.

No. of Persons _____ X \$35.00 = _____

Enjoy the open bar and snacks while you visit with old friends.

Interesting displays will be in the Hospitality Suite all weekend. Please bring your pictures, books, scrapbooks, and other items to show to all of us.

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Welcome-To-Texas Buffet & Entertainment

No. of Persons _____ X \$20.00 = _____

You are in TEXAS! When we say buffet we mean BUFFET! Join us at the Gazebo for a delightful Fiesta Dinner Buffet that will fill you up, eliminating the need to go out for dinner afterwards. Besides, we've planned some wonderful entertainment in the Yellow Rose Ballroom especially to set the mood for the weekend. You don't want to miss this night.

8:00 PM – Midnight

Hospitality Suite is open! Y'all come! Visit with your friends.

Saturday, September 4, 2010

7:00 AM – Midnight

Join us for a light Continental breakfast (until 10 AM). Registration continues as does swapping tall tales with your 345th buddies.

Meet the Troops at D/FW

Time to be Announced

Currently a plane from Iraq and Afghanistan lands at D/FW Airport at 8 AM bringing troops home for R and R. By next Labor Day the plane landing may be as late as 10 AM. Hundreds of citizens gather in the terminal lobby to greet and cheer these brave soldiers as they walk out of the customs gate into the arms of their families. Many of the troops will be transferring to other planes for the next leg home and will not have family there to greet them. We get to give them hugs! We know you will love being a part of this moving event. Please bring clothing with B-25s or 345th Bomb Group or your Squadron "stuff" to wear. If original hats or flight jackets are still around, wear them. Veterans are placed at the beginning of the welcoming line immediately after the welcoming families. There is always someone making a video of the arrivals then each soldier gets a DVD of their arrival as a keepsake. Usually there is newspaper or TV coverage, which I would expect on the day we greet the troops. One never knows until the night before what time the plane will land and we, too, will have to work with that flexibility. The bus company will work with us on this timing. We are on the official schedule to greet the troops on Saturday.

If, by chance, that Saturday should turn out to be one of those rare days that a plane does not land, we will take a bus trip to one of the numerous museums in this area dedicated to planes and war memorabilia.

No. of Persons _____ X \$15.00 = _____

If we end up going to a museum, there will be a small entrance fee but we will not know that until late Friday night when we hear what time the troops plane lands.

Saturday Afternoon

The afternoon is opened for you to take advantage of the many sidebar activities available. Choose the ones that suit your tastes. See the Extras! Extras! Extras! Section below.

Saturday Evening

Squadron Parties and Squadron Business Meetings

There are zillions of great restaurants all around the area and public transportation to get the people there. Each Squadron will be responsible for their own get-together but we will work with each group to help them find the perfect place. Squadrons will want to hold their short business meetings during their parties.

Sunday, September 5, 2010

7:00 AM – 9:15 AM

Continental Breakfast in the Hospitality Room

9:30 AM – 11:30 PM

General Membership Business Meeting

Election of Officers and selection of the destination for the XXIV reunion. Please let the 345th BG officers know where you want to go for the next reunion. AND, if you would like to host the reunion, speak up! Don't be shy!

12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

The TEXAS MYSTERY Luncheon (formerly known as the Ladies Luncheon)

Due to popular demand (since the men didn't get to see the Paris Fashion Show at the Addison, TX Reunion, 2002), we are extending a cordial invitation to the men to join the ladies for this Texas Mystery Luncheon. Can't tell you anything else...it's a MYSTERY!!

No. of Persons _____ X \$15.00 = _____

12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Hospitality Room Open
Next-to-Last chance to visit with your friends!

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Banquet Cocktail Hour with a cash bar provided.

6:00 PM

Banquet

Keynote speaker to be announced in the March *Strafer*.

The food for this banquet will be spectacular. The reunion planners have negotiated with the hotel to get the price of the meal cut almost in half. Please indicate the quantity of desired entrees:

Beef _____ Chicken _____ Fish _____

No. of Persons _____ X \$40.00 = _____

After the Banquet – Midnight

Last chance to visit with your friends in the Hospitality Room as it will close for good at midnight.

EXTRAS! EXTRAS! EXTRAS!
What can we do on Saturday????

Restaurants are Everywhere

There are 4-5 restaurants, bars, sports bars, nightclubs all inside the hotel.

Practically every known restaurant chain in the free world is in Grapevine. Very affordable transportation is available to all of the restaurants.

Activities for Adults

The "Big Boy Toy Store", Bass Pro, is literally just down the street from the Gaylord Texan Hotel. For those who prefer Cabela's, there is a huge store just 20 minutes away.

Across the street from the Bass Pro is the Grapevine Mills Outlet Mall.

Historic and quaint Main Street in downtown Grapevine is filled with boutiques and specialty shops plus eateries.

Want to play golf? The Dallas Cowboy's Golf Course is associated with the Gaylord Texas Hotel and is also just around the corner.

Don't forget to check out the boutiques, wine tasting room, video game room, and other activities available in the hotel.

Activities for the Younger Guests

There is a huge outdoor swimming pool at the hotel for the kids of all ages and another large indoor pool for those who want to avoid the sun. Plus, we are told that by next summer the hotel will have installed their own outdoor water park for their guests. The kids (of all ages) will love playing there. We hope you will bring the second and third generations to the reunion.

Spoiling of the Guests

The most luxurious Spa is waiting to pamper you. A state-of-the-art fitness center is waiting to keep you in shape.

What Else!

Cowboy Stadium, Six Flags Over Texas Entertainment Park and Texas Rangers Ballpark at Arlington are all next door to each other.

We can arrange for tours of Cowboys Stadium for those who are interested. Tours last 1¼ hours and the costs are:

Individual tours – Adult \$15.00; Seniors (65+) and Children (5-12) \$12.00;

Group tours of 20 or more – Adult \$12.00; Seniors (65+) and Children (5-12) \$9.00. Children under 5 are free.

No. of Adults ____ X \$15.00 = _____

No. of Seniors/Children ____ X \$12.00 = _____

If 20 or more sign up for the tour, you will receive a \$3.00 per person refund

Ticket prices at Six Flags are \$49.99 for guests 48" + tall and \$31.00 for guests under 48" tall. Purchase these at the gate.

Costs for tours of The Ballpark are Adults \$10, Seniors (62+) \$8, Children (4-18) \$5

No. of Adults ____ X \$10.00 = _____

No. of Seniors ____ X \$8.00 = _____

No. of Children ____ X \$5.00 = _____

If 25 or more sign up for the tour, you will receive a \$2.00 per person refund for adults and seniors and a \$1.00 per person refund for children.

Super Shuttle will transport you to Cowboy Stadium, Six flags or The Ballpark for a fee.

There is much to do and see in Dallas-Fort Worth, all the way from the historic Fort Worth Stockyards (and Billy Bob's legendary honky tonk) to the Kennedy Memorial in Dallas. Let us know if you would like to see these places.

Renee Armstrong has a desire to compile more video histories of the veterans during the reunion. Please share your time with her for an interview as she continues to do research for her book centered on one of our members.

A Final Word

Our goal for this reunion is to provide the most luxurious atmosphere for this special reunion. We have strived to provide much, much time for the veterans to visit in the Hospitality Room yet intersperse fun events throughout the weekend. We have purposely left off long tours of museums and military bases to allow more time for the veterans and their families to visit with each other and teach the younger generations about what the vets and the 345th BG members did during the war.

Our hope is that you will bring the 2nd and 3rd generations. There will be much for all ages to do at this reunion.

If we have left off something that you are wanting to do, let us know. We are flexible and will be glad to try to accommodate your request.

Please register early...don't be a slow poke! *Slow Pokes ain't fun but Cow Pokes are!* Come on down to Texas and have a grand time at the 345th Bomb Group Reunion!!

Your XXIII Reunion Hosts,

Melvin and Gladys Best

Carol Best Hillman and Judy Best Zurlis

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.

Bert Rosenbaum (498) 2003

Tacoma, WA

Martha Rosenbaum (498) 11-11-2009

Tacoma, WA

RELAY FOR LIFE FUNDRAISING EVENT FROM PAUL VAN VALKENBURG (501ST)

As many of you know my twin daughters started college this year at Mount Saint Mary's University in Emmetsburg Maryland. They just let my wife and I know that they are participating in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Mount St. Mary's University. I am proud to hear that they are continuing a commitment to cancer fundraising that they started in high school. The fact that they lost both of their paternal grandparents to cancer I'm sure has a great deal to do with their commitment to this cause.

In any event, they are looking for sponsors for their team. The 345th has lost a great many members to cancer including my father. Unfortunately, I am confident that each of you reading this e-mail has shared in the loss of a loved one or knows someone who is battling cancer now. With this in mind I am asking that you consider making a donation to the American Cancer Society Relay for Life of Mount St. Mary's University.

Heidi and Kate are on team "Carnival of Hope" and their Relay for Life website is at: <http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?pg=team&fr id=24362&team id=564635>.

You can make a donation to the team or to an individual team member from that page. There are numerous links that explain this event much better than I can do myself.

Thanks for your consideration and please feel free to pass this info on to others! Paul

DID YOU KNOW ROBERT BIDGOOD (500TH)?

This request for information comes to us through Paul Van Valkenburg who received the original email. If anyone has any information for Kelly, her email address is at the end of her letter:

Mr. Van Valkenburg,

I am trying to find out more information, photos, stories of people who knew him....about my uncle Robert "Bob" Bidgood who was a pilot with this bomb group in the 500th Squadron.

I have some information. I know he went missing with 37 other planes over Papua New Guinea, I think in 1944 and that his name is on a marker there in memoriam of these pilots. This information came to me by my Aunts who most have died or now have dementia.

I am trying to put his story together so my family can honor him and his life that he gave to our great nation.

I have a great picture of him if that helps. I was wondering how to find out if anyone in your reunion group knew him. Also, how to get a copy of his service record that would show what missions he went on...

Any help, information or direction is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your service.

*Kelly Bergstrom
Apple Valley, CA
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