

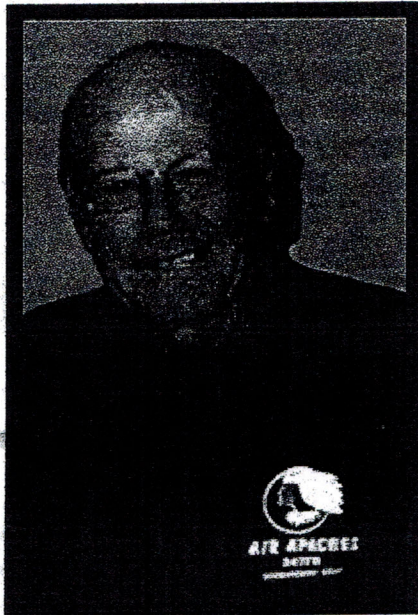
"AIR APACHES"

STRAFER

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2009

FAIRWELL LYNN



LYNN DAKER

FORMER 345TH BOMB GROUP PRESIDENT

The entire membership of the 345th Bomb Group Association is greatly saddened at the recent demise of our highly respected and admired president.

Lynn Daker, 345th Bomb Group president, and one of the original members of the 500th Bomb Squadron, passed away at his home in Denver, CO, on March 11, 2009.

Lynn recently returned from exploring his WWII B-25 wreck site in the SW Pacific Ocean near the Philippines. We will miss Lynn's leadership, and his jovial demeanor at future reunions.

BEN MILLER ASSUMES PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

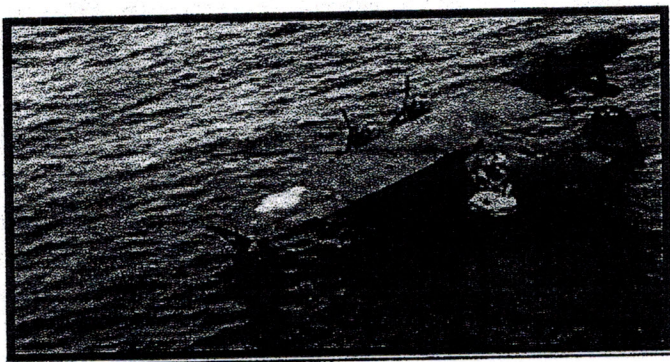
Benjamin F. Miller, 1st Vice President of the 345th Bomb Group Association, and Vice President of the 499th Squadron, will immediately assume the duties of Association President due to the demise of president Lynn Daker.

Ben has been an active member of the Association since December 1990. He has held the office of Vice President of the 499th Squadron ("Bats Ou'ta Hell") for the past nineteen years. The STRAFER readers have long enjoyed his amusing short stories and news reports.

We sincerely appreciate Ben's willingness to step forward in our time of need. Ben will be involved with planning the upcoming 345th Bomb Group Association's Reunion XXII at Dayton, OH, this fall. More will be published regarding this subject in the upcoming issues of the STRAFER.

WRIGHT- PATTERSON MUSEUM FEATURED SITE OF REUNION XXII

The 345th Bomb Group Memorial at Wright-Patterson Museum will be a featured day trip during Reunion XXII. Stay tuned for further details.



MY FINAL MISSION **PHILIPPINES TRIP, 2/14 – 24/2009**

By: Lynn Daker

As many of you know, while attending air shows during 2007 and 2008, I had the opportunity to fly a beautifully restored Mitchell B-25 named "Pacific Prowler," owned by retired Air Force Major Jim Terry of Ft. Worth, TX.

When Terry's crew found out that I ditched a B-25-J22 on January 21, 1945, off the northern coast of Negros Island, and that the remains of top turret gunner, S/Sgt Desire W. Chatigny, Jr. were left aboard, they made plans to search for the wreck site and dive to recover the remains for formal burial.

My itinerary had me leaving Denver Saturday morning, February 14, 2009, for Seattle, but I was put on a later flight and missed my connecting flight to Seoul, South Korea. I stayed overnight in Seattle and caught a 1:15 PM flight to Seoul's Incheon Airport on Feb 15th and arrived via Boeing 777 at Seoul at 5:45 PM on Monday Feb 16th. Was put on stand-by & given the last seat on the one daily flight to Cabu Mactan International Airport, arriving on Tuesday, Feb 17th at 12:45 PM. Major Terry met me when I arrived at the airport and I was taken to his hotel.

Wednesday morning was a shocker. People and motorcycles with sidecars everywhere! There are a few taxies but 95 per cent of travel is on these motorized sidecars. The sidecar has two metal seats and a step on the back. We once saw one scooter with three people in each seat, three on the back step, and three on the cycle for a total of 12!

During the morning I had the pleasure of meeting Ed Orr and Brian Hudson. Orr, Hudson, &

Terry are all certified divers. I also met Lyle Whatchel of Seattle and his wife, who was born south of Manila. They were spending the winter over there and had helped plan arrangements for us.

We then rented a van to haul all of our baggage and diving equipment, and another one to haul the people. We left Cabu City and traveled to the north to Tabuecan, where we boarded a landing craft, which hauls both freight and passengers. We then traveled by water over to Escalante on Negros Island, arriving at 8:30 AM on Wednesday, February 18th. We ferried our luggage van over on the boat, but got a new passenger van in Negros. We then drove on to Cadiz passing through the town of Fabrica. During WWII we flew two missions to Fabrica on January 1, 1945, and on the afternoon mission we lost Lt. Roy Smith and crew over Fabrica Airdrome. Al Skeets was a regular member of this crew but was not flying the mission that day, and is the only survivor.

We unloaded the van at our motel in north Cadiz and went out to the north shore where we boarded a 35-foot fiberglass diving boat equipped with pontoons. At the time of ditching #586, our navigator, Irv Horwitz, of Burlington, NJ gave me the location as 11 degrees N, and 123 degrees, 18 minutes E. We used these coordinates as our starting point. We had everyone in the party together on this trip and stayed out about an hour.

On Thursday, the divers went out and made their first dive. Their depth finder picked up two spots in one section but they did not dive on it just then. The rest of us spent Thursday riding around town in a sidecar.

On Friday, I went out with the divers who were going down for the first time. They had searched a sizeable area by instrument, but had found no evidence of a plane. We knew this was a great fishing area where nets were widely used. We heard that an airplane crash site, five miles west of our possible ditching site, had been salvaged 25 years ago so the fishing nets would not get snagged, and this could also have happened to #586.

The divers went down to a spot where the depth finders had indicated a possible wreck, and there they found two B-25 engines buried in the silt. The engines were aligned facing east and

were spaced the proper distance apart for a B-25. All the rest of the plane had been removed.

One of the divers returned to the boat and secured a bottle, which he then filled with silt and water from the ocean bottom near the engines.

Major Terry had commissioned a commemorative plaque that was to be left down in the plane to honor Sergeant Chatigny. It read as follows:

On this spot lies a North American B-25 #44-29586, and the remains of S/Sgt Desire W. Chatigny, Jr., Serial #31306904, lost 21 January 1945.

The mission to locate this plane, and to recover and return the remains of Sgt. Chatigny, to his family was made possible as a direct result of the generous donation of the 500th Bomb Squadron, its members, and thirty additional donors. If you made a contribution, your name was engraved on the plaque that was placed at the crash site by Major Terry, to honor "Sweets."

We spent Sunday at a motel on northern Cabu and drove down to Cabu City on Monday. At 2:00 AM, on Tuesday, February 24th, we started home. After three flights with a total of eighteen and one-half hours flying time I drove into my driveway at 11:30 PM, still on the 24th.

I'm sure that all who were in the 345th would have to say, "This was a trip of a lifetime."

Be sure to get your Dayton hotel reservations in as soon as possible. Then, follow up with your reservation for the reunion. See you in September.....Lynn

FOOTNOTE: See pgs. 257 & 278 of "Warpath Across the Pacific" for additional information related to January 21, 1945 crash.

EDITOR'S COMMENT:

The 345th Bomb Group members, particularly those from the 500th Bomb Squadron, are deeply grateful to Lynn Daker, and Major Terry's exploration party for their efforts to recover the remains of Sgt. Chatigny, and to honor the WWII crash site where he perished in one of our aircraft.

We now consider this location to be a permanent shrine honoring all 755 members of the 345th Bomb Group that were killed or went missing in action in the Pacific Theater during WWII.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL ...

By: Frank L. Dillard

The average person accumulates various items of personal property, real estate, and other material assets with the passage of time.

The manner in which we wish to dispose of these material things, and who we would like to designate as beneficiaries should be decided, and specified, well in advance of our demise. This topic is not one we would enjoy discussing with our future heirs, therefore arrangements to insure that our preferences for property distribution are followed is a matter better arranged for by someone in the legal profession.

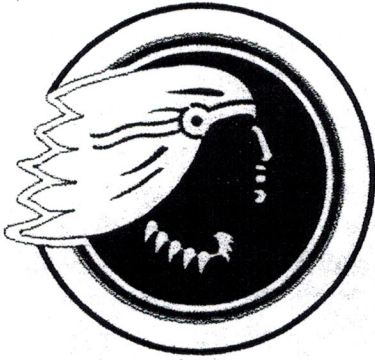
A will is a formal legal document directing the settlement of your estate, and the distribution of your assets according to *your* wishes. Without a will, the intestacy laws of your state of residence will ultimately determine the course of action for your property distribution. Only through a formal legal will, can you designate your own executor, guardians for minor children, and other fiduciaries.

Even those that have shifted the majority of their assets into trusts, or who use joint ownership for property should draw up a will. While these methods are designed to bypass probate (the judicial process that establishes the validity of a will), they are not able to cover all assets. A will, however, does have the potential to cover all assets, leaving no property unaccounted for, and no stone unturned.

Wills are a means of providing security to you and your loved ones. The topic may be emotionally challenging, and one you might prefer postponing, but when the many advantages are considered, they usually outweigh any temporary discomfort.

A qualified, experienced legal professional can help ensure that your will is properly written, and that it contributes to the overall success of the distribution of your estate. The cost is normally minimal, and once finalized, a will provides the declarer complete peace of mind knowing that one's final wishes are to be followed without question.

Be certain your heirs are aware that you have prepared a will and appointed a dependable Administrator. Then, file the document in a secure depository for future execution.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY: Ben Miller

LEYTE-DULAG-CHAPLAIN

Several days after we had lost so many of our friends on the Liberty ships during the invasion of the Philippines as a result of the Japanese Kamikaze attacks, our outfit was still camped right by the beach near the place we had first landed.

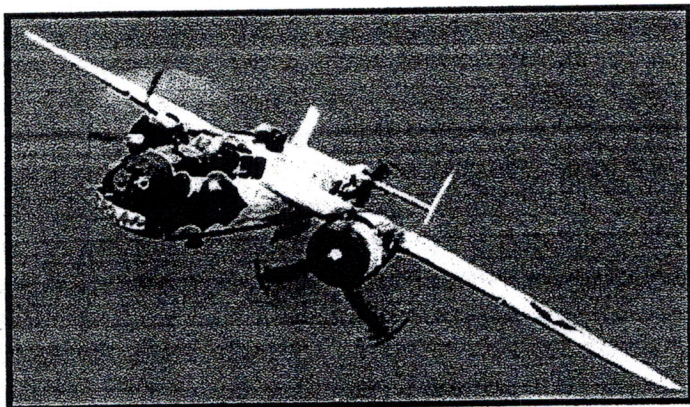
Near our temporary camp, someone had arranged some palm logs in rows, much like a small meeting room. They were next to the edge of a swamp or rice paddy. It was Sunday morning, and the word was out we would have church services with a protestant chaplain. As usual, the morning was wet and heavy fog covered the area. The army had provided a small portable organ, about the size of a large suitcase. The soldier who had arrived with the chaplain proceeded to set up the organ. I was standing to one side with my friends "Beadles," and "Willie the Greek," when the sound of shots rang out from the fog, and splinters flew about as several bullets passed through the organ! Fortunately, none of our six legs were hit. We agreed that someone upstairs was looking out for us. The GI who was supposed to play the organ took off running and vanished in the fog. However, the chaplain, a young man from the Deep South – and a Baptist, said he would conduct services if we were brave enough to stay. After our Kamikaze experience on the Thomas Nelson, we all felt a great need for church services, but every time the fog thinned, shots rang out from the jungle. Before long, our chaplain's chin started to quiver, and his knees gave out. I looked at the people, and decided if they were willing to stay, I would try to finish the Service. He gave me the big book, and I had them all lay down, facing me, and then I got

on my knees. I told my buddies to watch the swamp behind me, because a bayonet in the back held absolutely no appeal for me, but if I happened to get killed, they should inform my parents, that for once, I had tried to do something decent. I read the sermon, recited the 23rd psalm, and led the Lord's Prayer. Every time the fog thinned out a bit, we would see the sniper's head and shoulders, then the orange flash of his rifle as bullets threw sand, knocked splinters off the logs, and buzzed by. While I was doing the service I looked behind me and saw a small white cloud in the fog. It had to be an angel blocking the shots at my back. God was looking out for us. I often think back about that moment. When the service was ended, I asked all the GIs to stay low and crawl away. Then my two buddies crawled away, turned around and covered me, while I gave thanks, and then I crawled away, untouched.

I always felt that my wife just couldn't quite understand me doing something like that until we were in a Texas hotel checkout area and a tall man from Nebraska, or someplace like that, told me to stand still, as he walked around me. He then picked me up and swung me around in a circle a few times. He then said how often he thought about how I did what we all needed on that Dulag beach, so long ago. He said he often wondered if I had survived the war. Sometime after this, I wound up being called "the chaplain," and now I am doing exactly that in our American Legion color guard.

Our combat crews were required to fly fifty missions. If they survived them they would then be eligible to return home. I was in charge of taking care of the codes they carried on their missions. Just as some of our early crews were winding up their combat tours, one of the radiomen came to me with tears in his eyes and asked if I would do him a favor. He then handed me his wristwatch, billfold, and his mother's address. He was all shook up, and asked me to send them to his mother if he failed to return. Luckily he completed all his missions. On a later flight, our squadron put up fourteen planes and thirteen flyers asked me to hold their billfolds...and all came back! How about that?

Fortunately, we can always find time to begin each and every day by giving THANKS!



"BATS OUTA' HELL"

499TH SQUADRON

GOD IN MY LIFE?

Submitted By: James Mahaffey

As a child, and into my teen years, I attended church and Sunday school as a family member. It was more a conventional expectation without any evangelistic component. Sunday school was simply teaching right from wrong without the component of faith. Age and events have changed my comprehension of God in my life, although, like many, I ask myself "Why me?"

I spent two years after high school, trying to earn money for expenses for a college degree at the University of Kansas (a tradition set by my grandmother in 1870 as she first saw the university, while passing through Lawrence, KS, from Minnesota, and vowed that her children would go to that school). I was offered a job in Michigan and expected to have enough money to enroll at KU in the fall of 1941. That changed when I heard about the Eagle Squadron of American volunteers in England and concluded that the US would soon be drawn into the war. I wondered if there was some way I might join the Eagle Squadron. Fortunately, I found out about the Army Air Corp Aviation Cadet program, took the scholastic and medical tests, and was ultimately accepted into pilot training class 42H. I went through training at Kelly Field, San Antonio, Cimarron Field at Oklahoma City, Randolph Field at San Antonio and Victoria Field, Texas, where I received my wings and 2nd Lt. Commission.

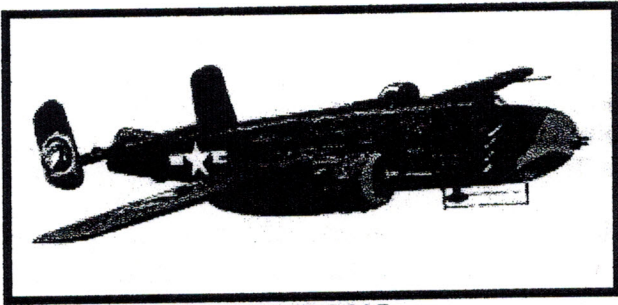
My parents had been in Manila when MacArthur surrendered, and I only knew that American prisoners were interned at Santa Tomas. I had received no correspondence or other word of their status.

On graduation from Victoria, we were given a choice of assignment. Out of the class of two hundred graduating cadets they wanted twenty to train as P-38 pilots, one hundred and fifty to go to the Training Command as instructors to train new pilots, and the rest to become B-25 pilots. We held a lottery for the P-38 slots, and I wasn't one of the winners. I then chose to become a B-25 bomber pilot. This decision resulted in my being ultimately assigned to the Pacific Theater, and eventually got me to see the liberation of Manila and be there to see my parents. My father, who had normally weighed 170 pounds, was down to 90 pounds. He looked like a walking skeleton. I have often asked myself if God had a part in guiding me to apply for pilot training and eventually be in a position to help liberate my parents.

In another among several incidents that seemed provident, on our way from Savannah, GA to the west coast, I was briefed that I would pass through a front around Macon, Georgia, but flying between two layers of clouds, I would be able to see any thunderstorms. Close to Macon the layers merged and I was on instruments. In moments we were bounced and whipped about in a violent thunderstorm. Our pressure instruments were going crazy and I was simply trying to keep the plane level with the attitude indicator. Anything loose was flying about the cockpit, and my navigator was struggling to recover his senses after hitting his head on the navigator's dome light. I made a tight 180-degree turn and returned to Hunter Field at Savannah. The next morning, Jepson, my flight engineer, reported that upon inspection it was found that both engines were nearly out of oil. The plane was scheduled to have a dual engine change on the following day. Had we attempted to continue our flight we would most certainly have lost both engines before reaching our destination. Was the storm that forced my decision to abort the flight and return to base an act of God?

My life seems filled with a generous portion of good fortune, in spite of myself, and I am thankful for what I now know are God's blessings.

Editor's Note: The foregoing narration is by George Cooper, one of the first pilots assigned to the 499th Squadron. For additional information, see pages 34, 77, 87, 386, and 435 of "Warpath Across the Pacific," by L.J. Hickey.



FALCONS 498TH SQUADRON

NOTE: The following article is contributed by Hal Cope, and dedicated "To all the aircraft mechanics in my life - particularly my B-25 crew chief Ed Purser, who worked tirelessly, night and day on WOLFPACK 034, to allow me to fly all 50 missions in New Guinea."

"WHY DO YOU DO IT, SARGE?"

**By: S/Sgt. Steven M. Moriset,
Holloman AFB, N.M.
TAC News Service**

I am an aircraft mechanic. Not so long ago, I was working on the flight line when I noticed a young pilot walking in my direction. Perhaps he was going to a debriefing. It seemed especially hot that day. A few minutes earlier, before remembering I had grease and soot on my hands, I used them to wipe the sweat from my forehead. This, of course, left a sweaty black smudge on my forehead. I'm sure I was quite a sight to the lieutenant who was proudly wearing highly-shined boots and a bright squadron Ascot. He stopped and peered into the side of the aircraft from which I had just removed a panel. He looked around, and then gave me an approving nod. Finally he stretched and squatted. It was plain to see he had something to say other than the usual conversation we had indulged in up to now.

"Sarge, can I ask you a question? Why do you people do it? What is it that keeps you in the service? Why do you work in the heat, snow or rain fixing airplanes all day and night?"

I stood there, not really sure how to answer his questions. Before I could collect my thoughts, a van pulled up and the pilot quickly gathered his helmet bag and flight case and

hustled toward the truck. He poked his head out the open back doors and hollered, "Sorry, Sarge. Next time."

As the truck headed down the ramp, the lieutenant looked back at me until he disappeared from view.

I thought about the lieutenant and his questions much that evening and the next day. Finally, I came up with an answer. I was set for our unscheduled meeting, but I never saw the lieutenant again. I later found out he was transferred overseas. So I thought I would answer him and any others with similar questions this way:

I know that I'll never slip the surly bonds of earth, but I can fix your lofty, silvered wing. I know I'll never strap a fighter on my back. or travel footless halls of air. But when I walk the flight line, you come to me to see if you can do those hundreds of things I've never dreamed of. I'll never soar where lark nor eagle dare, but my spirit is with you on each of your flights.

When I go home in the morning to rest while most are just getting up to begin their day, I sleep well. Screaming children, chatting wives, doorbells and street sweepers do not disturb me. But the roar of your engines often wakes me from my deepest sleep.

I've read that you imagine you become part of your aircraft - that man and machine become one; that your airplane seems to read your mind and react almost before your gloved hand moves the controls. You imagine that steel, aluminum, titanium and plastic become muscle, bone, nerves and sinew. If you can feel the pulse of your aircraft by planting your feet on the rudder pedals, then I'm the surgeon who replaces the cables, valves, motors and bell cranks that are the imagined strength that moves your living rudder.

I'm the specialist that has serviced, topped off, drained, filtered, purged and pressurized the fluids that you imagine to be the life's blood of your friend. I've tweaked and measured, tightened, torqued and tuned, milked and measured, routed and rerouted, fitted, fixed, filed, beat, bent, banged or buckled each vital part of plastic and metal on your companion. Now, sir, I do not mean to belittle you for the things you feel about your airplane because I feel things, too.

Much of the time I feel less than happy about the location of a certain part and I'll call it a bucket of bolts. Sometimes I'll holler at it when it

comes home broken during special occasions such as my wedding anniversary. I'll gripe and groan and tell it that it's just so many thousands of rivets flying in close formation.

Then there are other feelings - feelings that can't be explained as one watches a reflected sunset on its polished aluminum skin. I've sat on a toolbox and watched the moon rise - twisted and distorted through its canopy.

There is also a satisfaction I get as I service a part of the airplane you'll probably never see. Perhaps it's a rivet high on the tail or a clamp somewhere under your seat. I've seen cables and wires, pressure seals and lines, bulkheads and formers - all painted zinc chromate green. I know where each one goes, hat it does and what will happen if it doesn't do what it's supposed to do.

It's hard for me to imagine that you think of this engine as "yours" when I think of the blood I left in the engine bay, the skin from my knuckles up in the hellhole and the little piece of scalp I left hanging on the antenna of "your" airplane's belly. I remember the rib I cracked when I hit the pitot tube the wet morning I fell off "your" airplane.

I've been bumped. bruised, pinched, poked, soaked, cut, scratched, scraped, skinned, burned, squeezed, nicked, picked, smacked, cracked, and shocked. My hands generally hurt and my knees are usually sore from kneeling under, or crawling over, "your" plane. And there is almost always grease under my fingernails.

My utility uniforms are stained and worn, but they're comfortable. Can you say the same about your flight suits, which are jammed full of maps, charts, and clipboards - even a plastic spoon? My hat only weighs a couple of ounces, and it doesn't cause hot spots on my head like your helmet. I'm not the one who has to wear the oxygen mask that causes your face to sweat and itch. As an aircraft mechanic, I don't worry about getting ejected, passed over, bird-struck, or mid-aired. If I get punched out, all I have to worry about is a loose tooth. And the last time I was grounded, I was 12 years old.

Sir, I am happy turning wrenches in this country's air force. I am grateful to be an American and proud to wear the uniform.

You see, sir, I know that in other parts of the world, there are airmen and officers who wear different uniforms than we do. And they work on and fly aircraft that have different markings. Their views on right and wrong, God, and family are also

different. Sometimes this difference is threatening. That's why I have to stand out in the snow and ice once in awhile to make sure that "our" aircraft is ready - ready to ensure that others pose no threat to us and our way of life.

Our country doesn't really ask that much of you or me in exchange for the life we often take for granted. So, sir, I promise, if you keep flying 'em, I'll keep fixing 'ern.

NORTH CAROLINA / OHIO RIVALRY



North Carolina 50 State Quarter features the famous first flight photo of the 1903 Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina



Ohio 50 State Quarter features the 1905 Wright Flyer III built and flown in Ohio, in another famous photo from Huffman Prairie

The US states of Ohio and North Carolina both take credit for the Wright brothers and their world-changing inventions — Ohio because the brothers developed and built their design in Dayton, and North Carolina because Kitty Hawk was the site of the first flight. With a spirit of friendly rivalry, Ohio adopted the slogan "Birthplace of Aviation" (later "Birthplace of Aviation Pioneers", recognizing not only the Wrights, but also John Glenn and Neil Armstrong, both Ohio natives), while North Carolina has adopted the slogan "First In Flight."



FALCONS
498TH SQUADRON
Submitted By: Carol Hillman

ACCOMPLISHED PILOT, MECHANIC,
And "HELL of a MAN."

By: Ron Wolfe

Copied from the Arkansas Democrat Gazette
Dated 11/20/2008

Astronaut Scott Parazynski and World War II pilot Paul Irvin "Pappy" Gunn were inducted into the Arkansas Aviation Historical Society's Hall of Fame on November 13, 2008. Nathaniel Gunn accepted his father's award in a presentation that described Pappy, from Quitman, Arkansas, as "maybe the greatest World War II hero you never heard of." But Gunn's name was no surprise to another hall-of-famer in the audience, retired Brig. Gen. William H. Webster of Little Rock, Arkansas, who flew with Gunn in the Pacific.

Webster, at 22, thought the 45-year-old major looked too old to fly. And the combination of Pappy's weathered look, false teeth, amputated finger that he carried in a bottle, twin-holstered .45s and a genius for "whatever had to be done," made him, at the least, "eccentric." But that son of a gun could fly," Webster said, "and he had no question about his ability. "As soon as he started talking, you listened."

He was born in Quitman in 1899, but Paul Irvin "Pappy" Gunn never knew the word "quit" outside of his hometown in central Arkansas. Gunn became a pilot, and in World War II, a loose but thundering cannon in the Fifth Air Force. His mission: to cut off supplies to the Japanese Army. His means: the A-20 and B-25 Mitchell bombers, the wrong planes for the job.

His secret was a natural genius for mechanics. Gunn transformed the big planes into fat and ferocious swooping birds of prey. He

pushed the limits of man and machine alike in feats that sound impossible, and he could have been famous. But he had to keep his profile even lower than he flew.

"He was a hell of a man," his son, Nathaniel Gunn, says - a mild tribute to the lieutenant colonel's mastery of the curse word. "He used to say, 'I know two languages, English and profanity. Which would you like to have?'"

Gunn's innovations gained him a volatile reputation among the men who flew with him. They called him "Pappy" for being, at 45, twice older than most, and "The Mad Professor" for his new ideas of what the plane could do - and how to do it upside-down and sideways.

He redesigned the stalwart B-25 (the same plane that Jimmy Doolittle flew to bomb the Japanese mainland) with more fuel capacity for distance, and withering firepower for strafing runs. And he perfected the seemingly crazy idea of "skip bombing."

Rather than try to bomb a moving ship, Gunn's trick was to dive in low and skip the bombs like stones over the water, toward the target, and never mind if it meant flying directly into enemy fire. It worked.

His youngest son, 77, remembers the war hero and the father he loved in the biography he wrote, *Pappy Gunn* (Authorhouse, 2004). Nathaniel, "Nath," of Springfield, Mo., is at work on a revised edition of twice the 500 pages as more of his father's exploits come to light.

"He was my Dad, that's how I knew him" Nathaniel says - tough guy, hard worker, strict but fair-minded disciplinarian around the house, ready for breakfast at 4 AM and a teller of unlikely war stories that flew without question as family legends.

But two things bothered the pilot's son. One was a lack of records to prove Pappy's accomplishments. The other was the question he kept hearing: If Pappy Gunn blew the Japanese fleet to pieces, how come he wasn't all over the headlines?

Nathaniel, 11 years old at the time, was part of the answer. He and his older brother, two sisters, and mother were in a Japanese internment camp in Manila. His father had been a civilian pilot in the Philippine Islands. The war called the flier away, and the Japanese took over the Philippine capitol, the Gunn family's home.

"My father wanted absolutely no notoriety about himself," Nath says, "for fear of what they would do to us."

If Pappy seemed reckless, no wonder: He was at war to free his family.

Nath settled his questions with the 10 years' research that went into his writing in *Pappy Gunn*. "I want the true story told about my father," he says, not some (as Pappy might have said) "bull-." Here's a test:

Pappy learned to work on engines by souping up moonshiners' cars in Arkansas. The law caught him as a young man, running illegal liquor from Quitman to Searcy. He joined the Navy as the only way he could stay out of reform school. True or false?

Impatient to get on with war, he stole B-25s from the Dutch in Australia. True or false?

The first B-25 he converted, he packed with too many big-caliber machine-guns. The nose-heavy plane wouldn't take off. Pappy called for corrections in a storm of sulfur and brimstone. Mostly, he was mad at himself, Nathaniel says.

Pappy came back to find the plane refitted to his new specifications - but one thing he didn't expect: The name "Pappy's Folly" on the side, along with a painted caricature of himself in a cussing rage. True or False?

Forced into the sea off Haiti, he anchored his disabled seaplane to a sleeping whale until he could fix the damage, and later advised that anyone with airplane trouble over the ocean should just land on a whale. True or no ##!@! Way?

He broke the little finger on his right hand. The sore finger hampered his throttle action, so he asked the doctor to cut off the troublesome digit. When the doctor refused, Pappy drew a .45 pistol and threatened to blast it off right there. At Pappy's further insistence, the doctor amputated with only a local anesthetic. Yes or ...

"And he flew again that same night," Nathaniel says, certifying all the above: True. And more.

Pappy and his wife, Clara Louise, were the first couple to leave on their honeymoon in an airplane in 1921, Nathaniel says.

Pappy held the first command of a military air-transport service, for which his son argues that Little Rock Air Force Base - home of the c-130 transport plane - should be renamed for Pappy Gunn.

Pappy fought and won three wars, Nathaniel says. He fought the Japanese, fought the American "brass: who doubted he could do so much with a sixth-grade education, and he fought to regain his family.

"I was 11 years old going in [to Japanese custody]," Nathaniel says. "I was 14 coming out, physically, and I was 35 mentally. There's a difference."

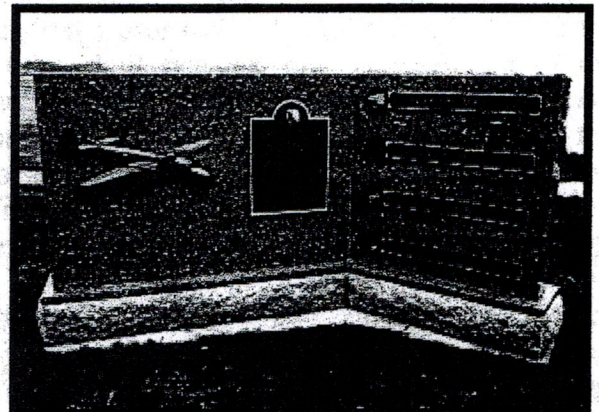
Gen. Douglas MacArthur saw to it that Pappy's family caught the first plane out of the Philippines to meet him in Brisbane, Australia, where Pappy was on the mend with a bomb fragment in his shoulder.

Pappy's son quotes the general: "Gunn was a fine airman."

He was an unbelievable mechanic," Nathaniel adds, "and the finest pilot I ever saw."

Pappy Gunn died on a charter flight across the Philippines in 1957. A storm from out of nowhere slammed his twin-engine Beechcraft to the ground, Nathaniel says, and even then Pappy gained control as the plane rebounded, only to smash into a mango tree.

"He died as he always predicted, the book closes. "He would grin that grin of his and proclaim, 'I'll die before I reach sixty, with my boots on, and the throttles rammed to the firewall!"



345TH BOMB GROUP MEMORIAL
WRIGHT-PATTERSON MUSEUM, DAYTON, OH



500TH SQUADRON

By: Don Wagner

As you all probably know by now, Lynn Daker passed away on March 11, 2009, at his home in Colorado, and it was cancer related. He had only been back from his trip to the Philippines a few weeks and over the telephone he told me it was a very exhausting trip for him. He and the Terry Museum and Foundation search group were successful in locating the wreck site of Lynn's WWII aircraft, but all that was found were the two engines. It's surmised that the airplane was either salvaged, or stripped over the years. The intent of the mission was to find the remains of the Engineer/Gunner, S/Sgt Chatigny, who went down with the airplane, and provide for the return to the United States for interment by his family.

Although not successful, Lynn's commitment to closure, by attempting to return his one lost crewmember, has got to be hailed as the utmost in responsibility and accountability by a Combat Crew Commander.

Lynn served as the Rough Raiders Association President for thirteen years. He was elected to the office of President, 345th Bomb Group Association last year. I don't know of anyone that was a more dedicated Rough Raider/Air Apache than Lynn Daker, and he will be sorely missed. Our condolences go out to his family.

I recently did some house, dog and cat sitting for my son Scott and his wife Lou Anne in Virginia Beach, VA while they took a well-deserved vacation to Costa Rica. While there I had lunch with Vernon Sawyer and his son Rich, who live nearby. Some of you will recall "Verne" was a pilot in the squadron, primarily in 1945. I learned that after the war, he gained a masters degree in City Planning at North Carolina University. What is significant is that as point man for 25 years he headed the renewal effort in redevelopment and renewal of Charlotte, NC. He is given credit for recasting the city's downtown face. His son is expected to become a member of our association, and we hope to have them both with us at the Dayton reunion.

As the 500th Association president I'm the guy ultimately responsible for your not receiving a Rough Raider Newsletter, and therefore apologize for that omission. Until we sort out the problem, only those of you who are also members of the 345th Bomb Group Association will receive a copy of the STRAFER newsletter to keep you up-to-date. This publication will also be featured on the 500th's website in the future for those of you with computer access.

The 345th Bomb Group Association officers have offered to mail approximately 300 complimentary issues of the STRAFER to all the 500th Squadron members who are not members of the 345th Bomb Group Association. This will cost about \$360 for printing and postage. Not included is the cost of preparing name-and-address labels for such a special mailing. If anyone could assist by providing label typing service please contact me immediately.

I'm looking forward to telling the Air Apache story on April 18, 2009, as keynote speaker at the new Military Aviation Museum in Virginia Beach, VA. They have just acquired a completely restored B-25J to add to their collection of WWI & WWII restored aircraft, all rotationally flown. You can count on me to sell the straffer as the most effective use of the Baker-two-bits, and *who* has the certifiable best combat record in them.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: HOTEL CONTRACT

The Association's Constitution and Bylaws explicitly state that the 345th Bomb Group Association president shall execute contractual agreements between the Association and any second party.

The Reunion XXII committee, appointed by Lynn Daker, conducted contract negotiations with a hotel in Dayton, OH. An unauthorized committeeman improperly signed the document. This contract contains the dreaded "Arbitration Clause." This harmless sounding legal device constitutes a potential financial disaster for any subscribing organization that fails to fully utilize the total number of rooms stipulated in the hotel contract.

President Ben Miller (499th) was not party to the flawed hotel contract negotiations, did not officially execute the contract, and will not jeopardize the financial status of the Association by accepting the potential liabilities inherent in any contract containing an "Arbitration Clause."

BULLETIN BOARD

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Annual membership dues for the year 2009 are now past due. To avoid being removed from the mailing list and membership roster forward your check, in the amount of \$15.00, made payable to the 345th Bomb Group Association to:

CHARLES WILSON, TREASURER
345th BOMB GROUP ASS'N.
80 CRESCENT CREEK
NEW CASTLE, IN 47362-1676

STATISTICS

By: Frank L. Dillard

The subject of statistics has always held a fascination for me. When one of my college physics professors defined an example of a "*statistical average*" as the condition that would exist if you were seated on an electrical hotplate (that is turned on to "High"), and your feet were immersed in a bucket of ice water. On the average, you should be quite comfortable!

Another example of the confusion that might emerge from "*statistical analysis*" arises when a mathematician determines that if there are ten people seated in a room, and one just happens to be a pregnant woman, statistically, everyone in the room is approximately one-tenth pregnant!

A National TV news reporter recently commented that there were approximately 2,500,000 WWII veterans in the US, and that approximately 900 were dying each day. I proceeded to evaluate this report statistically, and arrived at the following conclusion: Should the current expiration rate continue unabated, the entire population of WWII veterans will be depleted in another 7.6 years, or around August 15, 2015.

Therefore, if you were considering whether or not you should trade that old car, it looks as though you might as well take advantage of the current slump in automobile sales, and see if you can cut a final (?) good deal. Then, if you unfortunately turn out to be one of the earlier "Dear Departed" veterans, at least the immediate family members will have reliable transportation to the final service!

IN MEMORY OF:

The members of the 345th Bomb Group Association extend our sincere condolences to the families of our departed members and friends:

Julian B. Baird (499th), 02-08-09,
Farmers Branch, TX.

Albert J. Beiga (498th), 01-17-09,
DuBois, PA.

Lynn Daker (500th), 03-11-09,
Denver, CO.

Carl E. Watts (501st), 11-21-08,

BRIEFING AT DAYBREAK

Too soon, the uneasy night will pass
And early morning shadows cast
Upon the earth so soft and warm to touch
While heartbeats conceal much too much.

Silently we assemble, as if by rote,
While war is waged and cadavers bloat.
The path is long, and time grows short,
Our pace is measured and spirits wrought

With longing to be away from here—
More from boredom than from fear,
For the mind ceases to dwell on death
And purges the soul of Hell's hot breath.

When conscious thought returns to love,
And the sky soars majestically far above...
I pause in peace, though far from home
As my mind absorbs this azure dome.

Someday this war will end...as it began,
Without any reasonable conscious plan...
Then why, we ask, was it ever started?
Explain THAT logic to our dear departed!

By: Frank L. Dillard

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The next issue of the STRAFER will be coming your way in early June 2009. Please submit your contribution of articles, photos or other material no later than May 10, 2009.



ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

BENJAMIN F. MILLER (498TH)
9450N. 550W.
DECATER, IN 46733-6804
PHONE: 260-547-4460
E-mail: benmiller@qdamswells.com>

TREASURER

CHARLES M. WILSON (498TH)
80 CRESCENT CREEK
NEW CASTLE, IN 47362-1676
PHONE: 765-529-7186
E-MAIL: <chasande@comcast.net>

SECRETARY

SILAS W. PEARSON (498TH)
P.O. BOX 8
LOUISVILLE, MS 39339
PHONE: 662-773-5271
E-mail: <2thdr@netscape.com>

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

JUDY (BEST) ZURLIS (498TH)
422 TIFFANY TRAIL
RICHARDSON, TX 75081
PHONE: 972-231-2943
E-mail: <judyzurlis@sbcglobal.net>

SQUADRON OFFICERS

HEADQUARTERS

VP KENNETH C. GASTGEB
2313 CRESTMONT ST, #227
NORMAN, OK 73069
PHONE: 405-364-1350
E-mail: <kenseasychair@aol.com>

498TH "FALCONS"

VP CAROL (BEST) HILLMAN
2904 WOODHAVEN
CARROLLTON, TX 75007
PHONE: 972-242-6936
E-mail: <carol.hillman@cisd.net>

499TH "BATS OU'TA HELL"

VP BENJAMIN F. MILLER
9450N. 550W.
DECATUR, IN 46733-6804
PHONE: 260-547-6804
E-mail: benmiller@adamswells.com

499TH "Bats OU'TA HELL"

ASST. VP JAMES M. MAHAFFEY
2708 NORTH STERLING AVE.
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73127-1948
PHONE: 405-947-1855

500th "ROUGH RAIDERS"

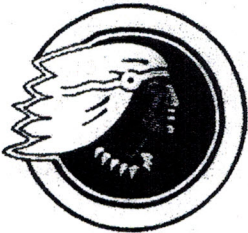
VP DONALD E. WAGNER
11010 PRESIDIO DRIVE
RALEIGH, NC 27617
PHONE: 919-293-0047
E-mail: <buzz@verizon.net>

501ST "BLACKPANTHERS"

VP PAUL VAN VALKENBERG
3137 EAST RIVER ROAD
TRUXTON, NY 13158-3109
Phone: 607-842-6356
E-mail: <vanvalkp@cortland.edu>

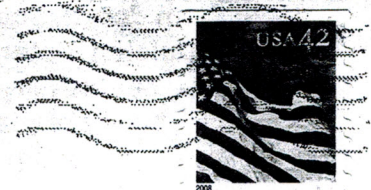
STRAFER EDITOR

FRANK L. DILLARD (498TH)
963 WELLINGTON RD
WINSTON-SALEM, NC 27106
PHONE: (336) 724-6547
E-mail: <straf1@netscape.net>



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

GREENSBORO, NC 27407
PIEDMONT TRIAD AREA
NO. 408, NOV. 2003



LM/2003
Alfred L. Stone
45 Cresthaven Drive
Burlington MA 01803-2137

**ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED**