



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

Volume 32, Issue 2

July, 2015

345th Bomb Group Association Reunion Dayton, Ohio September 4-6, 2015

Our event is fast-approaching! We are so excited to be your hosts again in Dayton. We had a great time in 2009, and look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones. Here is an update regarding the event:

- If you have *not* registered for your hotel room(s) at the host venue, Holiday Inn, Fairborn, please do so NOW! The hotel has other groups besides ours that weekend, and although they may have some overflow capabilities nearby, it will be much more convenient to stay at the reunion location. Contact information: Phone 937-426-7800. Be sure to ask for “345th Bomb Group” rate of \$105 plus 12.75% tax. You will get the group rate for any days before/after the event that you may wish to add.
- This hotel is located in a business park, directly across from Wright State University. Dining options include the hotel restaurant, McKenna's Bar & Grille (breakfast included for the group), plus several “walkable” fast food establishments and a Texas Road House in the next block. There are other options, but not easily accessible by walking. The hotel doesn't have a shuttle, so you may wish to investigate a rental car if you fly in and plan to do much venturing off-site. Or, you can see about buddying-up with those who have transportation to explore off-site dining options.

- There are also many other nearby attractions, and the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau is excited about our event. They are providing our group with bags of visitors' information, which you can get a jump on here: <http://www.greenecountyohio.org/>
- Speaking of “bags”, we're putting together an *awesome* collection of mementos that is part of your registration fee. One of the highlights of any reunion, we're hoping that this edition will be a real crowd-pleaser!
- If veterans and/or their families have any original documentation and/or personal mementos from their time in the Pacific that they could share with the group, please, PLEASE feel free to bring them along. Many members are “students” of the war, and especially our group. We are eager to view and read these priceless items, and every bit will help to keep these histories alive and accurate for the future.
- Registration Form:
<http://www.345thbombgroup.org/pdf/Reunion/Registration%20Form%202015.pdf>

That's all for now – if you have questions, please feel free to call or email me! We'll see you soon!

Dennis and Susan O'Neill
djoneill@bex.net
419-450-6370

*Are you following us on Facebook?
It's a good way to stay in touch with
folks who are interested in the 345th
and other WWII topics! It's fun, too!*

**345th Bombardment Group Association XXVII Reunion
(Comprising HQ, 498th, 499th, 500th, and 501st Bomb Squadrons)
Rough Raider Reunion XXI**

**Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the End of WWII
Hosted by the 500th Bomber Squadron, Dennis and Susan O'Neill**

Registration Form

Name _____ Spouse/guest _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____

Please make your hotel arrangements directly with the hotel: Holiday Inn—Dayton/Fairborn; 2800 Presidential Drive, Fairborn, OH 45324. You must request the “345” Bomber Group rate. The group rate is \$105 plus 12.75% tax. Reservations number is 1-937-426-7800.

*Prices shown for the 345th activities are per person and include all costs as described.
Additional details will be forthcoming.*

Friday, September 4, 2015

Registration in the Hospitality Suite (Time to be determined)
Ice Breaker Reception with Full Dinner Buffet (Time to be determined)
(Mementoes, administration costs, and dinner)

No. of persons _____ x \$75 = \$ _____

Saturday, September 5, 2015

Visit to Wright Patterson Air Force Museum (Museum admission is free)

No. of persons _____ No Charge

Hospitality Suite Open (Time to be determined)

Sunday, September 6, 2015

Business Meetings for individual squadrons, followed by 345th group meeting (morning)
Hospitality Suite Open (Time to be determined)
Banquet at hotel (Includes meal, tax, and gratuities)

Please indicate the meal choice for each attendee:

_____ **Prime Rib** _____ **Salmon** _____ **Chicken** _____ **Vegetarian**

No. of persons _____ x \$35 = \$ _____

Grand Total = \$ _____

Please mail this completed Registration Form and your check, made payable to 500th Bomb Squadron Association, to Dennis O'Neill, 3269 Wendover Drive, Toledo, OH 43606. Questions may be sent to Dennis at 1-419-450-6370 or djoneill@bex.net.

Please indicate if you would like to offer your assistance as a volunteer for either of the following:

_____ **Registration** _____ **Hospitality Suite**

President's Message

Jim Bina, 501st

As I write this message, the Exhibit at the EAA is ready for the formal unveiling. By the advance reports that I've been getting, the exhibit is, in a word, awesome. Ron Twellman and Marcia Pollock Wysocky have done a masterful job in creating a fitting tribute to those who served as Air Apaches. I extend my sincere thanks to all who have provided photos, artifacts, and financial contributions in support of the exhibit.



Some business that must be attended to – at the upcoming 345th BGA business meeting at the Dayton reunion, a new President of the 345th Bomb Group Association must be elected. Per the bylaws, I have reached the end of my term limit, which was four years. With that, I am formally asking for nominations for the role as President of the 345th BGA. Please submit those nominations to myself, Kelly McNichols (2nd Vice President), or Nancy Mahaffey Frick (Secretary). This election will be held during the upcoming business meeting at Dayton, Ohio in September.

During my term we have accomplished a lot. There have been some very memorable reunions, the exhibit at the EAA, lots of new friends such as the Texas Flying Legends with their B-25 "Betty's Dream" and the Missouri Wing of the Commemorative Air Force with their B-25 "Show Me" and getting the 345th Memorial cleaned up and polished. We've also made progress with bringing forward yet more history of the 345th.

Some of the new challenges for the next president will be the transformation of the 345th Bomb Group Association from a 501(c) (19) to a 501(c) (3) to better align with the tax code, and the establishment of the next version of the 345th Bomb Group Association. Regardless of the direction of the unit I believe it's imperative that the group step up to a new level of preserving the history and legacy of this distinguished unit.

As for the upcoming final reunion, I am saddened that this will be the last official reunion for our group. It's been an extraordinarily good run; this will be the 27th official reunion with dozens of unmentioned mini-reunions. Just think, this started back in 1973 when Colonel Clinton True wondered who was out there and who would be interested in this sort of thing. His vision carried through for over 40 years. Just because this is the last "official" reunion doesn't mean we can't meet in the future.

Cheers and have a safe and fun summer!

That's Jim Bina's dad's flight jacket at EAA to the left.

Addition to the 345th Bomb Group Members Buried at Arlington

We heard from Jay Brown that his father, Lee M. Brown of the 500th, was also interred at Arlington in 2008. Please let us know if you are aware of additional 345th members who are interred there.

Recent Deaths

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of these 345 veterans who have recently passed away:

Eugene Day Lowrey of the 500th. Died December 23, 2014

Gerald E. Sims, Crew Chief in the 501st. Died March 17, 2015 in Lake City, FL

Please let us know of those who have passed on.

345th Exhibit at AirVenture EAA Museum Telling Gallery

The new museum exhibit about the 345th Bomb Group that Marcia Wysocky has been so committed to debuted at AirVenture on July 21, 2015. As our 345th Bomb Group Association members know, the 345th helped develop low-level bombing and strafing techniques in the Pacific theater.

Marcia sends thanks to all who helped make this happen. She says, "Such an honor we have created for these men...the grand opening promises to be an emotional and humbling experience." The exhibit will be up for two years, so please visit if you are not able to make AirVenture this year.

The heavily armed B-25 Mitchell bombers blazed a trail from Australia north to the Japanese islands. Because each aircraft had a rear-facing aerial camera, their exploits produced some of the most dramatic photographs of the air war.

The new exhibit in the Telling Gallery uses many of these images to illustrate the devastating blows the Air Apaches inflicted on the Japanese bases, dropping demolition and fragmentation bombs backed up by a torrent of .50-caliber machine gun fire.

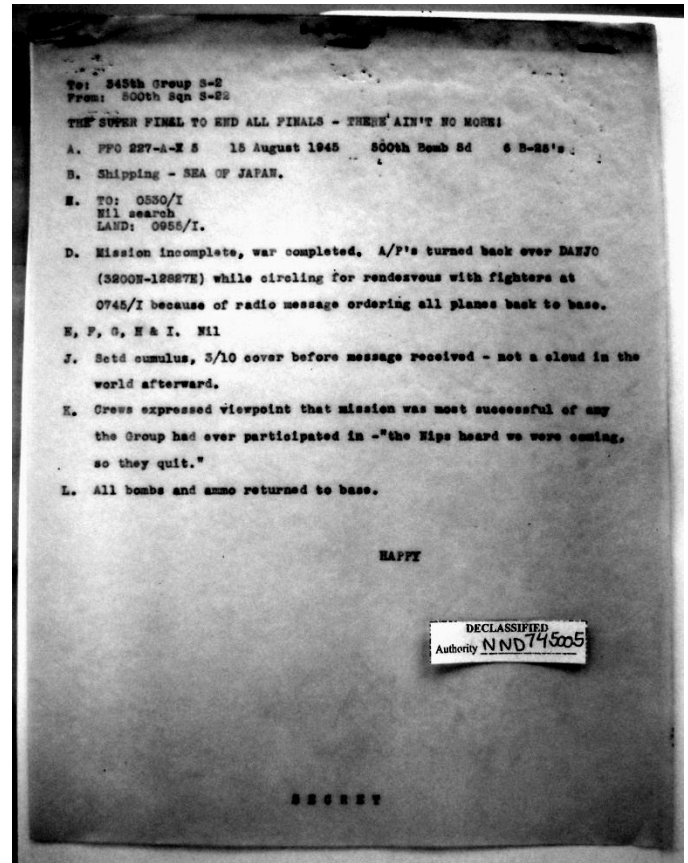
The stories of the brave crews who flew these unforgiving treetop-level missions is told through videos and artifacts donated by the families of 345th veterans. The flight jackets, photo albums, "short snorters," and especially the dog tags representing the 794 who lost their lives tell the story of the Air Apaches.

A special area of the exhibit honors those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.



Robert Wysocky prepares dog tags for the wall of remembrance.

Mission Incomplete: War Completed A Final Mission Report of the 500th



The August 13th Report to 345th S-2 by 500th Intelligence Officer Philip Hutchinson was called the "Final Final Report". The August 14th report was called "Definitely the Final Final Report" by Intelligence Officer John Dinges. On the 15th Officer "Happy" Hutchinson called it "THE SUPER FINAL TO END ALL FINALS – THERE AIN'T NO MORE!"

As the 70th Anniversary of V-J day approaches, it was exciting to see this report where the planes were called back from their mission as the war was over.

"The crews expressed viewpoint that mission was the most successful of any the group had participated in – the Nips heard we were coming, so they quit."

There are many dry documents at the Archives related to the history of the 345th Bomb Group, so it is nice to see this bit of humor at the end of the war. While the collections are not complete, it is incredible that so many documents can still be found at the National Archives in College Park, MD. As you read through the documents, you begin to have a fuller sense of what war in the Pacific was like.

Is This Mitchell Bomber the Only Remaining One of the Training Fleet Used by the 345th? Ron Shelton, SChAF

The B-25C Mitchell Bomber's fascinating history is centered in South Carolina and holds a unique place in the state's WWII efforts and contributions. The B-25 became an aviation icon at Columbia Army Air Base (CAAB). After Pearl Harbor, the Lexington County Airport was rapidly militarized to become perhaps the largest B-25 advanced training base in the war effort.

From this base came the volunteer crews of the famous "Doolittle Raid" on Tokyo. Lt. Col. James Doolittle came to the Midlands to seek volunteers because, as he later said, this was where the best B-25 crews were.

B-25C 41-13285 (tail number 113285) was delivered in June 1942 directly from the North American Aviation assembly plant in Inglewood, California, to join the fleet as an advanced trainer at Columbia Army Air Base, where it was used until early 1944 when it was transferred to Greenville Army Air Base (GAAB).

The bomber's entire service life was spent in South Carolina, including 39 years at the bottom of Lake Greenwood. Ironically, the unfortunate training accident that required the plane to ditch into the lake also saved it. Other B-25s from that fleet disappeared from the aviation landscape. This one, recovered from the lake bottom more than 30 years ago remains as an artifact and icon of WWII service in South Carolina.



B-25 C, GF-2 on the ramp at Greenwood Airport. 1984.

The 345th Bombardment Group was founded at CAAB in November 1942. Crews training with the 345th used this aircraft as well as others in the fleet.

The Story of a Special B-25C Mitchell Bomber

The B-25C, GF-2, is the only known intact aircraft from the fleet used to train airmen who perpetuated Doolittle's legacy at the base. Given tail number 41-13285 by its builders at North American Aviation's Inglewood, California, assembly plant, the plane was delivered to CAAB in 1942.

On D-Day—June 6th, 1944—while Allied forces were storming ashore at Normandy, France this plane was on yet another training mission. At this point in its history, the plane was temporarily assigned to the Greenville Army Air Base (GAAB). While stationed at GAAB, GF-2 was painted on the plane's fuselage to designate Greenville AAB, Foxtrot Squadron, and Plane Number 2. An earlier pilot or ground crew had given the plane the name "Skunkie", but by June 1944 that nickname had been painted over. At CAAB the plane would have had a different numerical nose ID number designation. Most CAAB aircraft had numbers in the 1500s (e.g. 1516).

On this day, while practicing low-level bombing runs over Lake Greenwood, the instructor pilot swooped a little too low, and when the propellers touched the water, he had to ditch. The aircraft sank in minutes. There were no serious crew injuries, but the plane was lost under the water and, shortly afterwards, was declared unrecoverable by the Army Air Force.

After 39 lost years under the waters of Lake Greenwood, the plane was recovered in 1983 by a group led by Mat Self of Greenwood, SC. From that point forward, the plane had a succession of owner groups and ultimately was returned to Columbia, specifically to the Curtiss Wright Hangar at Owens Airport (now Hamilton-Owens Airport).

A cosmetic restoration begun by volunteers was completed in time for the plane to be used in 1992 as a centerpiece for the 50th Anniversary Reunion of the Doolittle Raiders. The reunion was held in Columbia, where recruitment for these crews took place.

Ten years later this plane again was a focal point, this time at the Raiders' 60th reunion. It was repainted to appear identical to Lt. Col. Doolittle's B-25. After that

Special plane, continued

the plane languished in limbo, with little being done to further its preservation, much less its restoration.



B-25, GF-2 at the SC State Museum in 1992.

Recognizing that the plane's fate was in jeopardy, the South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation (SCHAf) was formed. Securing ownership and accepting stewardship of the B-25C Mitchell Bomber was the new organization's prevailing initiative. The aircraft is now undergoing cosmetic and stabilization restoration thanks to various grants and donations, especially that of the Richland County (SC) Conservation Commission.



B-25, GF-2 today at Owens Airport Hangar in Columbia, SC.

Columbia, SC may be the only place in the country where a training plane used by the 345th is still in existence and on public display. Maybe someday the serial number (Tail Number) for this aircraft will be recognized in a photo from CAAB.

Dispatch from Columbia

John Fezio, 501st

I am looking forward to the reunion in Dayton, Ohio!

We were saddened to see that Riley Kline (501st) passed away last July 18th, 2014. I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with him in League City, Texas. Mr. Kline was still active at the time, still singing in a quartet. It was evident that he enjoyed a full life.

I reported last that the Columbia Army Air Base front gate had been located and the site has been refurbished with a monument and dedication to the 229 men and one woman who died during training at the base. The names engraved include 345th members but don't identify them by bomb group.

In Hickey's "Warpath Across the Pacific", I found an accounting of the crews lost in training at Columbia. There were 6 crews lost from December 30th, 1942 to February 1st, 1943 for a total of 33 men. All names are engraved on the monument. I found only 3 conflicts in spelling of the names and 2 conflicts of rank. There were 3 crews from the 498th, 2 from the 499th and 1 from the 501st. There is also a dedication to Jimmy Doolittle's Raiders who trained in Columbia.

I have included a picture of the original gate as it is today and as it was during the war. Hope to see you in Dayton.

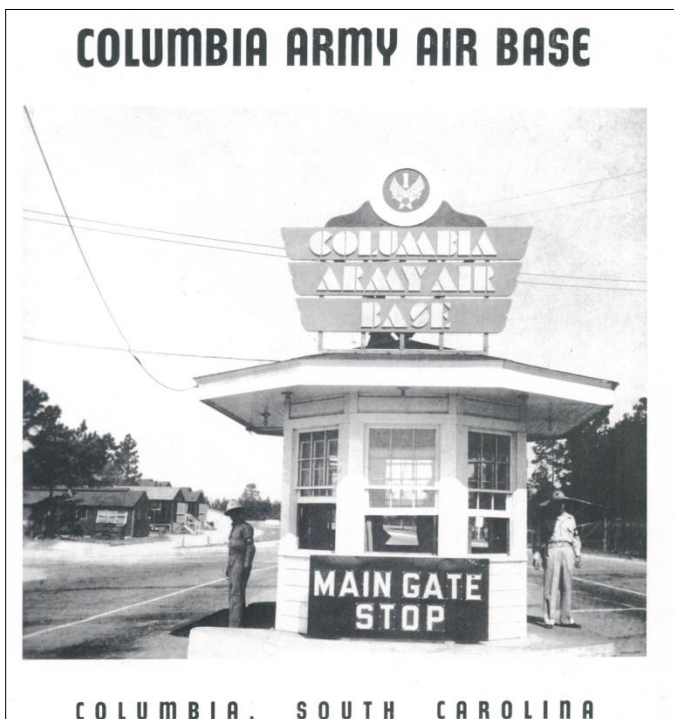


Area of the CAAB as it is today; note monument.

If you would like to know more about the South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation or support their efforts to restore GF-2, their web site is:
<http://www.schistoricaviation.org/>

Arriving at Columbia for Training George Givens, 498th

Now it's September 1944 and me and a group of us were being assigned to Columbia Army Air Field, Columbia, South Carolina. It was common scuttlebutt in the air corps to know what went on at certain airfields and we all knew Columbia AAF was a B-25 Mitchell airfield. We didn't realize it at the time, but we were being fed into the pipeline of replacement crews for one of the most legendary groups in the 5th Air Force, the famous 345th Bomb Group, who called themselves the "Air Apaches". Their reputation was as notorious in the Air Force as the 82nd and the 101st airborne divisions were to the US Army. However, the Air Apaches didn't get any of the glamorous press coverage the airborne received.



The CAAB gate as George Givens might have seen it.

We had been in training for 11 months without any leave. We were granted a 10 day delay en route to our next station. A delay en route differs from a furlough in that you are not charged with furlough time, which is 30 days in the peace time army, yearly. However, on a delay en route, travel time is included from one station to the next. Uncle Sam made all of the travel arrangements, so I had six days at home in Pittsburgh between Yuma and Columbia.

I called home with the good news and it was a wonderful site-seeing trip across the nation,

accompanied by beautiful fall weather. One evening, just after sunset, as we were rolling through the prairie states, we had a full moon that raced along with us. It kept up with us on the shiny tracks parallel to us, and then its reflection skipped along with us in stream beds and small lakes and ponds.

I pulled out my harmonica and began to softly play some of the more sentimental songs of the day that were popular. I played the mournful strains of "Going Home" and some of the soldiers crooned along softly so we all became lost in our own reverie.

The Pennsylvania Railroad station on Grant Street and Liberty Ave. in Pittsburgh was bustling with incoming and outgoing military personnel when my train pulled into the station. I grabbed my B-4 bag and made my way through the huge crowded waiting room.

"Welcome home gunner", exclaimed a very familiar voice. It was my father. Somehow he knew my train would be arriving about this time. He guessed right. I wanted to hug him, but I didn't. I felt he wanted to hug me too, but he didn't. Our generations did not show much emotion then, so we just shook hands.

My dad was a PFC in WWI and I pointed to my corporal stripes and said with a grin, "Look Pop, I outrank you now." We both laughed and made our way out of the busy waiting area to the street and caught a cab home.

My mother was much more emotional and embraced me long and hard. Then I hugged all 4 of my younger brothers and we spent a lovely evening talking and talking. The younger ones wanted to know all about shooting the .50 caliber machine guns.

The next six days went by in a blur. It was a little more somber leaving for Columbia this time than the first time I left for the army. As far as we all knew, this departure was my final one before going overseas. My dad's asthma flared up so we said our goodbyes at home. The youngest of my brothers, Chucky, was crying because my dad was crying as I was departing. I blurted out, "I'll be back, Pop." He replied, "Yeah son and you better be wearing a chest full of medals just like one of those Russian generals."

My mother and I went to the Pennsylvania Railroad station. We sat on the hard wooden benches in the waiting room for them to announce over the PA system my train departure. We didn't talk much. It was a difficult time. A lot of things were left unsaid by both of us in our clumsiness of the moment. The strains of "Margie" had just concluded on the PA when my train

and track number were called out, "ALL ABOARD FOR WASHINGTON DC, ON TRACK NUMBER SEVEN."

"That's my train maw." I said. We stood up and embraced hard and I said, "Just like I told Pop maw, I'll be back." Mother did not trust herself to speak, she was brave. She held back the tears. She somehow managed to force a strained smile as she saw her second son off to war. I grabbed my bag, kissed her slightly on her cheek and headed for the departure gate. I looked back once but she was lost in a sea of faces. I could hardly see where I was going thru the blur of my own tears.

The Red Arrow Express left the Pennsylvania Railroad station for Washington DC, the first leg of my trip to Columbia, SC. It was close to midnight by now and the coaches were full of military personnel with a sprinkling of civilians, the lights had been dimmed and most of the passengers were dozing off. I found an empty seat beside another GI. I watched the city of Pittsburgh slipping by as we rolled east. The low hanging clouds were tinged with red from all the steel mills going full blast. Pittsburgh was doing its part for the war effort.

The soldier next to me fired up a butt and fumbled around in his musette bag. He came out with a bottle of whiskey, took a long pull and offered me the bottle. I drank a few beers now and then on weekend passes but drinking was no big thing in those early years. I just spent a week at home and never even considered drinking. I was feeling a little bit blue from my goodbyes with the family and my mother at the train station, so I took a swig. It must have been good whiskey, because it went down very smoothly without a chaser. We talked for a little while, had another pull or two on the jug. Soon we both dozed off as the Red Arrow sped off to war.

I checked in at headquarters at Columbia AAF and was assigned a bunk in a tarpaper barracks. Combat crew replacements were arriving from all over the USA. I didn't see any familiar faces. We young men were mostly a gregarious lot, and we made buddies very easily. This was to be the last phase of our training, and the scuttlebutt had it that we were headed for the ETO, European Theater of Operations. Why else would we be on the east coast. HA, HA, we still hadn't learned yet, don't ever try to figure this man's army out; you'll be wrong every time.

We were all aerial gunners. We were also a mixture of radiomen, flight engineers and armorers. After breakfast the next morning, we had to march to a large assembly area. It was already filled with a bunch of brand new shiny 2nd lieutenants, who were pilots,

co-pilots and navigator-bombardiers. Somewhere in this crowd of officers and enlisted men was my combat crew.

There is something unique about the Air Corps combat flying crews that drove the other branches of the service nuts. It was the way we stood around as officers and enlisted men. The nonchalance and seeming disdain for rank and military protocol. Almost to a man we stood around with our hands in our pockets and had the inevitable cigarette dangling from the corner of our mouth, joking and kidding around like long lost buddies, but this was camaraderie of spirit, developed as our training progressed. If there was something to slouch against, we slouched. When we were introduced to the officers on our crew, we exchanged salutes, but thru the rest of the entire time we were together I can't ever recall saluting one of them again. Believe me, this was not any sign of disrespect or lack of military discipline at all. When we were given an order from an officer, it was, "Yes Sir, Right Away Sir." But we didn't have any of that Mickey Mouse BS the other services had. Dogfaces from other services envied us, but the officer's corps did a slow burn. We enlisted men loved it.

A jeep pulled up and a captain stood up in the rear seat with a clip board in his hand and bellowed for all to hear; "Alright men, pay strict attention. We are going to form combat crews now. As I call out each name, line up here." The captain indicated where he wanted the lines to form.

"I'll call all the pilots first. Form a line abreast and arms length away from the pilot beside you. Then I'll call all the co-pilots and they will form up directly behind the pilots. Then the navigators-bombardiers, flight engineers, radio-gunners and tail gunners until all the crews are assigned."

The pilots lined up as their names were called. It was done alphabetically, no favoritism or buddy-buddy shenanigans here. There were perhaps 25 or 30 crews being formed. Eventually it became the radio-gunners turn and as my name was called I approached the pilot of the crew I was form up on. I stopped in front of the pilot of my crew and popped to attention and saluted him. He returned my salute. We looked one another squarely in the eye, I liked him instantly.

"Corporal Givens, Sir" I said in a loud and crisp.

"Lieutenant Gruer, Corporal, welcome aboard." He replied as we firmly shook hands. I stepped past the pilot to the co-pilot and saluted.

“Corporal Givens, Sir.” I said.

“Lieutenant Holdener, Corporal.” He replied as we also shook hands.

Next in line was the navigator-bombardier, also a second looie named Hart. Behind him stood the flight engineer-gunner who is also the top turret gunner. Like myself he was a corporal fresh out of engineering and gunnery school. His name is Frank Holz. I took my place behind him. Next man called to the crew was the armorer-gunner. As he made his way down the line introducing himself, he was by far the shortest man on our crew and my first thought was how he had missed being a ball turret gunner on a B-17 or B-24. His name was William Sainato and as we were the only two men in the rear compartment of the B-25, Willie and I became very close friends, as we still are to this day.

We held ranks loosely as we smoked and got to know each another a little better. When all the crews had been formed the captain called us to attention and in essence said; “OK men, this is the way the crews have been formed by headquarters. This assignment is on official record and will not be altered. Every man here has been trained well in his particular job and each of you is a specialist at his own task. Now begins your training where you will learn to work together as a team. For the next several weeks, we are going to fly your butts off, formation flying, bombing from high altitude, skip bombing, strafing, aerial gunnery and navigation. You came here to fly and you’re going to get a belly full of it. Now take a 15 minute break and get to know your other crew members a little bit more. Crews, Dismiss!”

My pilot, 2nd Lt. Albert W. Gruer was from St. Louis, Missouri, a 22 year old, with two years of college. Well built, 6 foot 2 inches and about 160 pounds. 2nd Lt. John J. Holdener was from Sacramento, Ca. A beer truck driver and the biggest fellow of our crew at 6 foot 4 inches and about 180 pounds, was my co-pilot. Our bombardier-navigator was 2nd Lt. John Hart. John was about my size 5 foot 11 inches and 150 pounds. He had a swarthy complexion. Holdener and Hart were the oldest men on the crew at 24 years. Hart was also from St. Louis but he did not know Lt. Gruer. Hart was on his second tour of duty, his first was in Alaska. Sgt. Frank Holz, the upper turret gunner and flight engineer was from Poughkeepsie, NY. Frank was 21 years old and about 160 pounds. He sported a thin mustache that went with a sly kind of smile. Willie Sainato was the guy that made us a real Hollywood type of crew. In almost all of the war movies, there was always at least one

character from Brooklyn, NY. And where do you think Willie was from? You guessed it, Brooklyn, NY; accent, mannerisms, the whole works.

Although Gruer had a friendly face, there was a certain reserved demeanor about him that cautioned one not to be too buddy-buddy. He had an air about him that exuded efficiency and professionalism which in the critical and exciting days to come proved to be quite accurate. He was an expert at flying a B-25 Billy Mitchell under all conditions.

What we’re reading now...

Books by and about 345th members...

First Generation American: My Life in Peace and War. By William “Bill” Paulis of the 498th. Self-published. Bill Paulis has put out a memoir of his time in the 345th, but also what his life has been about since then, something I wish we knew about more veterans.

Flying Colors. By Sarah Moore. Branden Books. You will learn a lot of things you didn’t know about WWII and about our own Vic Tatelman of the 499th. Plus, some interesting photographs. Don’t miss it!

Black Sunday: When the US Fifth Air Force Lost to New Guinea Weather. By Michael John Claringbould. Aerothentic Publications, 2000. This is a compelling story about April 16, 1944, when the biggest weather-related loss in US Air Force History took place. The 500th lost one plane, “Tinkie” and her crew, and “Stingeroo” of the 499th ditched, but her crew survived.

Flights of Passage: Reflections of a World War II Aviator. By Samuel Hynes. Frederic C. Beil and the Naval Institute Press, 1988. This is an enjoyable memoir that covers a young naval aviator’s maturation as he goes from training through his war service in just about two years.

Are you reading a great book? Please let us know and we’ll mention it in the next Strafer.

Remembering a 345th Friend Kelly McNichols, 500th

Lynn Daker shared many stories with me over the years. I believe he related the following to me when he and I traveled together with Lynn speaking in four venues in three consecutive days in Kansas. Lynn spoke at the Mid America Air museum in Liberal, the Museum of the Kansas National Guard in Topeka and two times at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina. The cities were at widely separated areas of the state, so we had many hours converse. These were good times.

The first example I remember is when Lynn took anti-aircraft fire and damaged his prop. During his flying, he took fire 28 of the 36 combat missions flown. I'm not sure when or where this happened. It could have been in New Guinea or the Philippines. Lynn indicated his plane had a terrible vibration. Upon landing, it was found a large chunk of the propeller near the center hub had been shot away. He was amazed the prop stayed together at all and didn't fly apart since a fist sized part of it was gone. If it had separated this story would have never been shared. The plane was repaired and part of the testing of a rebuilt prop was to take the plane up and give it a run through. This meant feathering the prop and cutting the engine several times. The mechanic wanted him to really put it to a test.

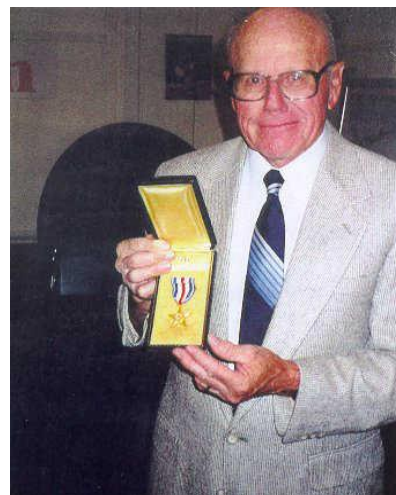
Lynn said there were always members of other branches of the military service at the bases he flew out of and many men wanted to ride in planes because of the novelty. Lynn knew what he was about to do even though none of the prospective passengers had a clue about what was up. Lynn walked to his plane and a flock of men circled around. He pointed to a couple of the Navy men and asked if they wanted to go up. Eagerly they accepted. The two were in the rear behind the bomb bays. Lynn took his plane up and as he said, "Really put her through the ringer." He feathered the prop several times completely shutting the engine down and restarted it. He slew the plane back and forth as he would do when strafing a target. Much of the test flight was done very close to the ground.

After this "test" flight, Lynn landed and he said he saw something he had never witnessed before. He saw "green" men. He said they were absolutely green. He always wondered if those two ever set foot in an airplane again. He bet they asked some informed questions of the pilot before they did.

Another example of Lynn's devious side happened when he was invited to travel to Detroit for an air show. On the ground under the wing of the B-25, Lynn showed his flight jacket and Mae West to attendees and spoke of his wartime experiences. The plane gave rides to paying passengers and sometime late in the day, Lynn was asked if he wanted to go up. He told me he hadn't been in the cockpit of a B-25 since the war and he quickly accepted. He didn't know if he would be allowed to fly or not so he bided his time. I think the flights were generally 30 to 40 minutes long.

Near the end of the flight one of the pilots got up from his seat and offered it to Lynn allowing him to take control. Lynn took the yoke and said it felt really good. Absentmindedly he maneuvered the plane as he had during the war again slewing it back and forth as well as diving. Lynn said someone tapped him on the shoulder and the person told him there were paying passengers in the back. It was like old times. He snapped back to reality.

Like the first example, Lynn wondered what the passengers in the back thought of his flying, but he did think they probably got their money's worth.



Lynn Daker in 2000

Note to our Members and Friends. Thank you for joining and supporting the Association. In order to keep publishing *The Strafer* and continuing our outreach efforts—like the exhibit that is currently at the Experimental Aircraft Association Museum in Oshkosh—we need your financial support. If you've not supported the Association in the past, please consider making a contribution in addition to your membership dues. It's much appreciated!

**345th Bomb Group Association
Membership Form**

Name _____ Squadron _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Additional Names _____

Membership Type

_____ New _____ Renewal _____ Address Change

Status

_____ 345th Vet or Widow _____ 345th Family Member _____ Other

(Please specify the name and squadron of your 345th veteran and/or tell us about yourself) _____

Other (Please specify) _____

Dues are \$15 per year for 345th Veterans and their spouses/widows. All other types of memberships are \$35 per year. Additional contributions are most appreciated. Please make your check payable to 345th Bomb Group Association and send it with this application page to:

**Mary Sloan Roby, Treasurer
345th Bomb Group Association
1916 E Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21231**

345th Bomb Group Association
1916 E Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21231

Bulk Rate
US
Postage
PAID
Permit No.

PRESIDENT

Jim Bina (501st)
1386 Cranes Bill Way
Woodbridge VA 22191
703-680-1057
jamesbina@verizon.net

1st VICE PRESIDENT

Dennis O'Neill (500th)
3269 Wendover Drive
Toledo, OH 43606
djoneill@bex.net

2nd VICE PRESIDENT

Kelly McNichols (500th)
2256 80 Road
Burr Oak, KS 66936
785-647-7541
mcnichols@ruraltel.net

SECRETARY

Nancy Mahaffey Frick (499th)
212 Harrison Point
Lexington, SC 29072
nancy@basilaw.com

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Judy Best Zurlis
2312 Silver Holly Lane
Richardson, TX 75082
972-231-2943
judyzurlis@att.net

TREASURER

Mary Sloan Roby (500th)
1916 E. Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21231
410-563-1442
mroby1916@gmail.com

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Nancy Ingram (499th)
700 Forest Trail
Cedar Park, TX 78613
512-258-3604
Ingram.central@yahoo.com

498th "FALCONS"

George W. Givens
806 Center Avenue
Pittsburg, PA 45202
412-734-5944
mairinthor@comcast.net

499th "BATS OUTA HELL"

William Paulis
172 Timmons Road
Chapin, SC 29036
803-781-5313
apaulis26@sc.rr.com

500th "ROUGH RAIDERS"

Kelly McNichols
2256 80 Road
Burr Oak, KS 66936
785-647-7541
mcnichols@ruraltel.net

501st "BLACK PANTHERS"

John Fezio
352 Cross Rd
Lexington, SC 29073
803-312-3792
asynthetic@yahoo.com

ACTING STRAFER EDITOR

Mary Sloan Roby (500th)
1916 E Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21231
mroby1916@gmail.com