



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

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President's Message

By Mary Sloan Roby, 500th



I'm writing today from Baltimore where we're still digging out from our almost thirty inch snowstorm. It seems that summer is far away. However, it's not been too early to start planning for our 2016 meeting that will be held from August 26-28 in Oshkosh, WI. There was so much enthusiasm at the Dayton meeting last year for continuing to meet that we are moving ahead with plans.

I hope you will be with us on August 26 as we enjoy our welcome reception in the Fergus Plaza at EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association). Meeting in Oshkosh will offer everyone the opportunity to be together again and to visit the outstanding 345th Bomb Group Association exhibit that our member, Marcia Wysocky, and EAA curator Ron Twellman worked so hard to put together. Marcia is our "on the grounds" volunteer and has

already been involved in the early plans for next summer.

It would be very helpful in making commitments for hotel rooms and meals to know if you will be joining us. Could you please send me an email at mroby1916@gmail.com to let me know if you are thinking of attending? Or, if you know you can't be there? That would be great, plus it would be fun to hear from you.

Elsewhere in this *Strafer*, you will read pilot Lincoln Grush's WWII story as written by his wonderful wife, Gloria. There's a romantic story in it that involves another of our 345th members; perfect for Valentine's Day. Thanks to Gloria for the story!

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Strafer*. Your submissions are welcomed and if you'd like to have your story included in a future *Strafer*, please get in touch with Cindy Hillman, our dedicated editor. We have a pretty big following on Facebook, so take a look and add your comments. If you have something big or photos you'd like to post, you can send them to me directly. Your help is much appreciated in keeping 345th history alive.



ABOUT THE 499th BS

By Bob Sweet, 499th

Reading the personal histories and greatness of the veterans of the "Greatest Generation" in the *Strafer* over the years has been remarkable and a source of knowledge about the triumphs and sacrifices of the airmen of the 345th BG. One recent issue cited books about and by members of Units of the Bomb Group. I note some comments - and highly recommend - one of those books: *Flying Colors* by Sarah Moore (Branden Books). The book is available on Amazon and Amazon's Kindle.

This is the personal narrative of Victor "Vic" Tatelman of the 499th. And as the years go by, there are fewer and fewer that can relate the personal experiences of World War II. According to comments on the web, author Sarah Moore was at our 2015 Dayton Reunion. She was well-received, and many had a chance to meet her. Her re-cap of Tatelman's story is well-done.

Victor Tatelman tells it as it is - and was: Going from cadet in the fruit and vegetable region of Southern California to dropping biscuits (and then bombs) in the (con't on page 2)

South Pacific, to the Japanese surrender at Ie Shima, to assignments at the Pentagon. Although I have not yet met "Vic" Tatelman, I feel that I know him. He, and fellow WW II vets have the respect and thanks of the current and future American generations.

Flying Colors is an excellent supplement to Larry Hickey's, *Warpath Across the Pacific*. The Pacific War has not had as much coverage as the European Theater. More is needed, and Victor Tatelman's work helps correct that. In a future issue of the *Strafer*, I hope to report on another book detailing the leapfrogging across the Pacific: Max B. Ferguson's, *Bat's Outa Hell Over Biak*.

Greetings from the 501st

By John Fezio, 501st

Well it was a great reunion last Labor Day in Dayton, Ohio. Now that the 345th is transitioning from a reunion type of association to a historical association, we will have to rely on oral and written histories passed down from our father's and family members. I wanted to relate a story that Bill Helvey conveyed to me in Dayton. The story behind the name "Black Panthers". This may have been previously told by one of the veterans, but we have new members of the second and third generations that probably haven't heard. I'll let Bill Helvey (son of Wilfred Helvey, 501st gunner) say it in his own words:

"I believe it was at the 1994 or 1992 reunion, I sat at the table with Bob Fain, one of the 501st squadron commanders. I asked him how they came up with the name for the squadron. He said that before the 345th deployed overseas, the crews would fly training missions around the country. One of their favorite destinations was Chicago. The pilots usually spent a lot of time at the Hotel Sherman in Chicago. The hotel was very well known, and had a nightclub in it called the Panther Room. (there are articles online about the hotel and the music/big bands etc. that played in the Panther Room). Fain said that when it came time to come up with a squadron nickname, the pilots brought up all the good times they had had drinking etc. in the Panther Room, thus the Black Panthers were born. He also said they liked flying into Chicago as the weather would often ground them in Chicago giving them extra time to party before returning to their South Carolina base."

I received an email from Walt Willard about one of the planes from the 501st. The Wolf Pack was one of the original "ships" sent over. It was also my dad's (SSGT. Joe Fezio, Turret Gunner from the original cadre) assigned plane with Capt. Bruce Marston as pilot. Walt's dad, Walter Willard, later piloted the Wolf Pack. The Wolf Pack survived, with over 100 missions, until Sept 11th (imagine that), 1944 when, while delivering the "laundry", suffered engine failure and forced landed in the Ramu Valley. She still sits there

today. Visit the website – <http://pacificwrecks.com/>. Choose the category – Aircraft. Then - North American B25 Mitchell. Next - 345th Bombardment Group. Then in the 501st category, the Wolf Pack is listed. It is a good accounting of the last mission of "099" with final crew members names and pictures of the plane as she rests today.

Since we now mostly have to rely on stories and written accounts handed down, it is important that we relate these histories to the *Strafer* so that they can be documented for future generations. If you have any accounts that you would like to share of the 501st, please contact us. Have a good spring and see you in Oshkosh.

The Surrender Mission Negatives

By James Bina, 345th BGA Historian

The 345th Bomb Group Association's exhibit formally opened during the Experimental Aircraft Association's annual 2015 AirVenture. The exhibit was the culmination of 5 years of negotiation, writing proposals, collecting artifacts and putting everything in fluid motion to what we have today, a world class exhibit worthy of the men, machines, and the mission of the Air Apaches. The committee and the EAA faced some challenges that advancing technology almost made impossible to reproduce and the historical consequences if we moved forward. This is the story of these challenges.

Amongst the loaned artifacts was a collection of negatives of the famed surrender mission in August 1945, the Japanese envoys being escorted to Ie Shima by the 345th in their white Betty Bombers. Notable in themselves, the negatives are rare because there were only a few cameras onboard the aircraft during the escort mission. These negatives are large, a nine-inch by nine-inch format, the size of each individual negative. The event was recorded by Major John C. Hanna and members of the 5th Air Force Combat Camera Unit.



The negatives remained boxed up for close to seven decades. One set of negatives are individual negatives (separated or cut apart from the roll of film) and the other set was in its original form of being rolled up, and they stayed that until just recently. With the opening of the exhibit, one of our members, Paul Van Valkenburg, offered that the photos from these negatives could be significant to the exhibit, and to history. Paul relates that the negatives came from Vic Tatelman, who was copiloted one of the aircraft on the surrender mission. Vic sent the film to Paul for safe keeping and eventual

reproduction. How these photos found their way into civilian hands is a story for another day.

Ron Twellman, the EAA curator and creator of the exhibit, was eager to reproduce and digitize the negatives for display but came to a roadblock, the rolled up negatives could not be reproduced on his photo reproduction equipment. The negatives would have to be separated into individual negatives for reproduction. In addition, Ron, being highly respectful of historical artifacts and their original condition, was reluctant to separate the photos. We were at an impasse... do we separate the negatives and possibly diminish the original monetary and historical value of the negatives or, do we separate the negatives and reveal the historical significance of what's on the negatives?

Living in the Washington DC area has its advantages especially in this case. I first consulted with a photographic lab in Richmond Virginia that I had previously used to print some outdated negatives, and they stated that unless the negatives are separated they cannot reproduce the images on their equipment. I also consulted with a photographic historian from the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia, the historian stated "...if the negatives are allowed to remain in their current rolled up state, they really have no historical significance because they cannot be viewed or studied. In addition, if the negatives are left in their current state, they will

eventually deteriorate and become unusable." Hence our decision to separate the negatives and move forward with the image processing.

The images were successfully separated by Ron (a trained curator with these processes) digitized, and eventually will be printed for display in the 345th exhibit. The images themselves have been sent to me for safe keeping, they are securely stored in my fireproof safe.



What did the photos reveal? Interesting you should ask! Some of the photos are within this article and are of the surrender mission, different angles of the Japanese Betty Bombers taken from the waist gunner position of the escorting B-25. As stated by Ron: "Most of the shots are of the surrender aircraft with the occasional view of a B-25, but the last three surprised me as some are of B-17H 43-39263. This was one of a small number of B-17's that were converted for search & rescue with a Higgins boat under the nose and a radar unit in place of the chin turret. In the high-res version I can see that it has nose art on it and I think there's a name there too, but distance and the inboard engine nacelle keep me from being able to identify it (con't on page 4)

beyond saying that, yes, it's a pin-up girl. In the very last one which was taken closer up, I had enlarged it to look at the nose art but discovered something else. I know you can't really see them in the lo-res images, but there are four dots in front of and below the nose of the B-17 and four more trailing behind it. They are the P-38s that provided cover for the mission. I remember Hickey mentioning them in the book, but I'll need to re-read that part to see if he mentions the ASR B-17s which should be from the 6th Emergency Rescue Squadron of the 5th Rescue Group." Ron is printing the photos and should soon be on display in the exhibit.

What has become of great interest to me in this time of advanced technology and digital photography, is that the processes and technology to reproduce photos from negatives (the traditional method of film processing and printing) is nearly a lost science, vastly overtaken by the digital age. Sure, you still see the photo labs in your local drug store, but the majority of photos printed from those machines are of a digital format, sent from a computer, digitally processed by a computer and printed by a computer. I dare say that 99% of all photography today is digital in nature and it takes a computer to view the photographs. Yes, it's a brave new world, and as a photographer I have embraced the digital format, but I still highly respect physically handling a photo and admiring the work by all those who were involved.

Makes you wonder if we have really progressed....

Are Airplanes Art?

By Kelly McNichols, 500th

I like art and enjoy airplanes. Many people don't consider planes as art, but I do. Over the years, I have taken of what I consider "artsy" photos of aircraft. I like propellers, spinners and nacelle cowlings in particular. Every type of plane is unique. What really fascinates me about the golden age of aircraft in the 30's and 40's was that function wasn't always utilitarian. Often elegance in the design for the sake of art was thrown into the mix. Who can dispute the graceful lines of a Beechcraft Staggerwing or a round nosed Waco. Likewise, I think Spitfires, Mustangs and Corsairs are items of beauty. My top pick for most appealing airplane, however, is the Messerschmitt ME 262.

In the winter of '03-'04, I was fortunate to have worked on a Curtiss-Wright P-40K Warhawk. This lend-lease plane crashed in Russia during WWII and what was left of it was purchased by Kenneth Hake of Tipton, KS and brought back to the United States for repair. Hake spent over ten years reworking the plane, making the many damaged and missing parts from scratch for the fuselage and wings. I worked on various items, but mainly the landing gear doors. It was an enjoyable time for me because I was able to contribute to the preservation of history. I'll be forever grateful to

Mr. Hake for the opportunity.

I love the aesthetic lines of the P-40. The long sweeping hood, the massive spinner on the prop and chin radiator ducts were objects of art to me. The metalworking was intriguing. If aircraft are just a means of transportation for you, the following statement won't make any sense to you, but if you like the artistic lines of planes, you will understand. I often ran my hands over the plane with my eyes closed, feeling those sweeping lines and curves. Form does indeed follow function, but in this aircraft, something extra was involved. It is technically difficult to make compound curves. The P-40 oozed curves. The original design team and craftsmen did it well.

The rebuilt fuselage and wings were sold to Ron Fagen of Warhawks, Inc. in Granite Falls, MN and the aircraft was completed by a young twenty-five year old man named Erik Hokuf. Erik shared that his lifelong dream had been to work on WWII aircraft. I had never seen anyone so young as detail oriented with the technical ability to complete a difficult job. For Hokuf historical accuracy was very important. A lot of research went into getting everything right from the paint to the wiring. One example that I remember involved the control cable ends. Most times cables ends are either raw or sometimes wrapped in wire or tape to prevent the cable wires from fraying. Hokuf told me that Curtiss-Wright Aircraft terminated

the control cables by weaving back the loose ends into the cable proper. It's rather like a crown knot used in rope making. Erik relayed that he found some original technical literature and read up on how to do this. I'm not sure how long it took to learn the process, but for accuracy, he learned. That says much about his dedication. The Aleutian Tiger P-40K won Grand Champion at the Experimental Aircraft Association AirVenture Fly-in in Oshkosh, WI in 2006. Fagen flew it for several years. Additionally, Hokuf worked on the P-51 Mustang "Twilight Tear" which also won many awards.

In 2012, the Texas Flying Legends flew their B-25 "Betty's Dream" to Columbia, SC for the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the 345th BG. In researching the organization, I learned that the TFL had various WWII aircraft and was flying a P-40K. The K model is rather rare and upon examination of the tail number in photos, I determined that this was the same plane I had worked on in Kansas. The Texas Flying Legends purchased the airplane from Ron Fagen several years ago.

My wife's aunt recently sent me a newspaper article from a Minnesota newspaper. The article dated 11/22/15 by John Enger of Minnesota Public Radio News is about Erik Hokuf and his current airplane projects. Hokuf now owns AirCorps Aviation in Bemidji, MN and works alongside a group of likeminded employees on restoring WWII aircraft. Currently AirCorps is finishing a North American P-51 Mustang. The emphasis of the article was on the next project. The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt razorback is owned by The Texas Flying Legends. This plane was abandoned in New Guinea in 1944 and plans are to bring it back to flying status. Hokuf recently purchased a \$40,000 laser scanner which will allow him to quickly make 3D scans of parts from loaner aircraft to be used as patterns for those damaged or missing on the TFL plane. Isn't new technology amazing?

The part of the article that caught my attention was the fact this plane flew in New Guinea during WWII. I contacted 500th BS member Dennis O'Neill who found

in one of his reference books concerning the 5th AF that several Fighter Groups flew P-47s out of New Guinea. Quickly found were the 35th FG, 49th FG, 58th FG and 348th FG. There may have been more. It is a distinct possibility that this plane long ago damaged and abandoned in New Guinea flew fighter cover for the 345th BG on some of its missions. As of this writing, this has not been verified, but it is feasible. In corresponding AirCorps historian Chuck Cravens the 35th and 49th FGs have been eliminated. He is still researching the 58th and 348th FGs.

I think it is great the Texas Flying Legends is keeping the military aviation history of this country alive. Additionally, I'm sure all are proud to know them and are thankful for their mission. Several are working on trying to find out more about this plane. If anyone knows anything about 42-27609, let me know. If you have from photos from New Guinea with P-47s in them, look at the tail numbers. Maybe we can solve this mystery. I'll keep you posted.

~*~*~*~*~



Photo courtesy of Charles Darby, *Pacific Wrecks and Where to Find Them*, taken at Dobodura, circa 1972. He authored the book *Pacific Wrecks and Where to Find Them*. Mr. Darby is a very respected authority on Pacific wrecks, and we thank him for his generosity regarding this re-print.

To see more pictures of this plane and other WWII aircraft, go to the AirCorps Aviation website at www.aircorpsaviation.com.

Pilot Lincoln Grush's Story

Recorded by Gloria Grush, 2015

Time seems to be running out to give you "my history," so here goes...

I grew up in Lexington, Massachusetts and left from there when I enlisted at 19.

Just before that. I met the love of my life Gloria (Glo) just a few days after she turned 16 and I was in college. We dated for a couple of months and then I enlisted in the Air Corp. After training in the States and getting ready to head overseas, I wanted to get married, but her folks said she was still in high school and too young. Rex Reheis was able to get a plane so I could fly home from South Carolina to give her an engagement ring. I wanted to make sure she would be there when I got back.

When we left in our plane SeaBiscuit (named after the famous race horse) with Rex as pilot and I was his co-pilot, we flew under the Golden Gate Bridge. I heard later that several others had done that also.

When we first arrived in the South Pacific our first missions were medium altitude, then they changed over to low-level strafing and bombing for the rest of the war.

We moved many times from one island to another. Had some interesting experiences—some good, some bad, some amusing, although they weren't at the time.

Some of the good ones were all the great friends that I made, spending time with them building living quarters as we moved from island to island and enjoying each others' company.

Some of the bad ones were losing some of them when a plane didn't come back from a mission.

Another bad one was when we were in Dulag Harbor in the Philippines waiting on an old Liberty ship for the airfield to be rebuilt.

There were two of our ships loaded with troops when the Kamikaze planes arrived. The first ship was hit on the deck and many were killed or wounded, so we cleared our deck and laid out hoses to get ready for the next plane. Unfortunately it hit below deck where all the enlisted men were quartered.

Another Lieutenant and I headed down a small metal ladder into the quarters to see how we could help. It was a scene I'll never forget. There was smoke and flames, wounded men, some already dead, body parts. I saw a man trying to climb up the metal

ladder. His right arm was blown off at the shoulder. I went over to help him and he said, "Never mind me, Lt., just help the guys that really need you." We did what we could to help, hoping there wouldn't be another explosion or another plane.

Then we waited for the Navy to come and pick up the dead and wounded. It was dark by then and we were sitting ducks with all our lights on in a blackout, but thank goodness the planes didn't come back.

I had two experiences that weren't amusing at the time. The first, another officer and I were walking down the road to the mess hall. The Jap planes came strafing every day and we always looked for a fox-hole to jump into. We saw a pile of dirt behind the mess hall and assumed there was a fox hole behind it. We dove over it and found it was the garbage pit!

The second, again two of us were walking along the beach when the planes came strafing. We saw a big tractor and dove things calmed down we crawled



Pictured left to right: Dick Ellis, John Henebry, Chuck Howe, and John Gilmore with SeaBiscuit.

under it. When out and saw painted on the side the word "Gasoline!"

One of the most hair-raising times was returning from a 12½ hour mission and fuel was getting scarce. As we approached the field many red lights were flashing on the deck. Halfway down the runway both engines quit and we coasted the rest of the way.

My last mission was on August 14, 1945, and we were halfway to Japan when it came over the radio that the war was over!

I was there to see our B-25's land in IE-Shima with the Betty Bombers where the envoys were taken to McArthur on the Missouri to sign the surrender documents.

I was awarded the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and nine campaign ribbons. Linck Grush, 500th

The Importance of WWII Letters

By Marith Reheis, 500th

Most of my adult life I've heard my dad's (Herman "Rex" Reheis) stories about flying with the 345th and the 500th in the Pacific, including the episode of taking a bullet in his foot and the loss of Seabiscuit and two of his crew members when another pilot was flying. I had always thought that he was shot when flying Seabiscuit and that the plane later went down while he was recuperating. One of the values of actually reading and transcribing your relative's letters from the past is being able to put a timeline on some of these events—and it turns out I was wrong. In a letter

posted to my mother Maxine on April 17, 1945, he wrote about the wound:

"I'll bet you can't guess where I am? I'm in a place where I have some company too. I went on a mission yesterday. Incidentally, my last one, as I have all my points in.

Going over the target a Jap machine gun bullet came up through the floor of the ship and now I've earned the Purple Heart. It hit me in the foot. Time out there, while they shot me in the rump with my fifth and last shot of penicillin. My rump is sore enough that I can't lie on it, my arms are full of holes too so the only place I can lie in comfort is on my tummy. The slug was about the size of a .45 caliber. Made quite a hole. Does this make you ill? I don't mean to. I know you'd want to know everything about it. Anyway, I'm a pretty tough customer so the Doc says. They had to give me twice as much dope to put me to sleep and they have you count slowly to tell when one goes out. They say most men get to about 16 but I got to 79 and even when they started, though I did not know it, it took four men to hold me down. I guess I had quite a jag on too, after it was over.

It hurts very little so I really feel swell. However, because of the lack of a few things here at the forward base, I'm to be evacuated to a rear area General Hospital. Probably back to APO 72. That's my guess anyway. Right now I have to be carried everywhere as they have no crutches, etc. I don't

know yet when I'll go nor how long I'll be gone, but I'll give you the dope as I get it.

Well honey, there's really nothing to say except I'll get out of here as soon as I can and be home soon, I hope. I love you with all my heart and say a prayer with Joey for me."

Ten days later, on April 26, he wrote the following:

"Today I'm permitted, by the time lag in censorship of three weeks, to tell you of some bad news. Three weeks ago the Group was on a mission out in the China Sea. A pilot named Herick was flying my ship, the one I brought overseas, "Seabiscuit". Burke and Smith, my radio operator and tail gunner respectively, were flying with him. The plane received a direct ack-ack hit (heavy), burst into flames and exploded. Crew and plane were lost. I am thankful for only one thing, that they did not suffer. Their loss was a deep shock to me and to the entire Squadron. I did not fly that day, else they would have flown with me. Who knows, they might still be alive or it could have been me and the rest of my crew. At any rate I must write their folks and offer my condolences."

What a surprise for me! Seabiscuit and her crew were lost 10 days or so before Dad flew his last mission—so he must have been flying another airplane. Now, I suppose, I'll have to figure out which one! Maybe in the mission logs....

~*~*~*~

A Letter to the Editor

By Bob Kantor, 499th

Dear Cindy,

I was a member of the 499th Squadron, 345th Bomb Group. I appreciate the fact that you are taking over the *Strafer* even for the few of us that remain. I am almost 95 now and lead a fairly active life and that is what I want to tell you about.

I had heard of the "Honor Flights" and enrolled last May and was included in the Puget Sound group to leave for Washington, DC in October of this year [sic, 2015]. It was a great experience and at this point open to veterans of World War II. We were flown from Seattle to Washington, DC on Alaska Airlines on a complimentary flight, breakfast and lunch included, and billeted in a Baltimore Hotel near our stay in Washington. For the next two days we were shown around Washington in special buses with an escort of bikers, also a dinner

banquet each evening. At each venue tourists applauded us and expressed appreciation for our service. The trip was not strenuous as wheel chairs were always available. The high point was our visit to Arlington National Cemetery and the changing of the guard. I bring this event to your attention because I am sure Honor Flights occur all over the country and it is the way some caring people show their appreciation for what we did. I might mention that there was no cost attached to the weekend.

* * *

Editor's Note: Mr. Kantor's letter enticed me to look up Honor Flight, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing veterans with honor and closure.

Honor Flight Network is a non-profit organization created solely to honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices. They transport our heroes to Washington, DC to visit

and reflect at their memorials. Top priority is given to the senior veterans – World War II survivors, along with those other veterans who may be terminally ill.

Of all of the wars in recent memory, it was World War II that truly threatened our very existence as a nation—and as a culturally diverse, free society. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 640 WWII veterans die each day. Our time to express our thanks to these brave men and women is running out.

It is your donations that make this invaluable gift possible for our veterans.

Contact info.:

Honor Flight, Inc.
300 E. Auburn Ave.
Springfield, OH 45505-4703
Office Hours: 9 am – 5 pm EST
Phone: 937-521-2400
www.honorflight.org

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE!

Recent Deaths

I'm saddened to tell you another of the great men, Col Clifford J Lawrence RET, of the 345th BG 500th squadron has passed away. This is my father's obituary: <http://www.russonmortuary.com/notices/Clifford-LawrenceRetColUSAF/>

Dad joined the 500th as a pilot due to a transfer from the 3rd BG 90th squadron where he flew 20 A-20 combat missions. Dad arrived at the 345th around the first of May 1944 where he flew another 20 combat missions until the end of the war.

Ken Lawrence, on behalf of the Clifford and Carole Lawrence family

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This is to inform you that my dad, Harry Chused, a member of the 345th Group and 500th Squadron, died on November 23, 2015 at age 94, surrounded by his family.

On October 6, 2006, he was awarded the purple heart in connection with his final combat mission. David Chused

*Please let us know of others who have passed on.*



## Why the 345th Bomb Group Association Matters to Me

By: Mary S Roby, 500th

February 22 would have been my dad's 94th birthday. He died suddenly in 1969 when he was only 47 years old, half that lifetime ago. As a sixteen year old teenager, I had barely gotten to know him other than as my dad and I knew little about his experiences in WWII. Other than the silk maps from the Philippines and New Guinea that fascinated me and my sister, the important records he kept—mission log, orders, and some photos—were for discovery much later.

Around the time the WWII Memorial opened in Washington, DC, my interest in Daddy's war years grew. I searched the WWII registry for names that appeared in his mission log and was saddened to see KIA or MIA and excited to find living veterans. One of those was Wilbur "Pat" Spickler, the last surviving member of my dad's crew. Clint and I have had the pleasure of meeting Pat and his wife, Betty and hearing a bit about the crew's experiences and relationships.

Another early contact was Lynn Daker, who sent a copy of his personal flight log, showing that he and my dad had flown together just after each arrived in the Pacific Theater. Stanley Muniz sent mission reports for most of my dad's missions and wouldn't take any payment for them. My husband, Clint, and I began attending the annual reunions, the first in Washington, DC that was hosted by Murph and Vivian Leventon, who live in Baltimore and who've become friends. Joe Mallard, a fellow navigator in the 500th who lives in Michigan, was discharged at the same time as Daddy and they traveled home together.

Then, there are our 345th "cousins," Kelly, Dennis, Marcia, Marith, Walt, Jim, and so many more members of the second generation who are keeping the memory and history of the 345th alive. The connections with our remaining veterans and their children means I can still have a living connection to my dad and his WWII experiences.



## LOOKING FOR OLD STRAFERS!

By Cindy Hillman, Editor

A great big thank you to Jim Bina for letting me take his prized *Strafers* home with me from Dayton to copy and scan them to preserve them (and to his dad, the late Ed Bina, for saving them!).

I don't know if I have 100% of all the past *Strafers*, so if you have kept some or all of them, please give me a call at 832-563-5807, so I can see which ones I don't have and we need to preserve them! \*\*\*Especially interested in issues from the 70's and 80's.\*\*\*

If you want a jump drive with old issues of the *Strafer*, I'd be happy to send you one or you could pick it up in Oshkosh. I only ask for \$10 or \$15 to cover the cost of the jump drive and postage. I promise lots of hours of good reading!

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

"We can't all be heroes. Some of us have to stand on the curb and clap as they walk by."

by Will Rogers



Please follow us on Facebook; it's a good way to keep in touch.

# Blasts from the Past

This article taken from  
a 1994 Strafer:

## One Cold Night in '42

Have you ever been in Colombia, SC on a cold early winter night? Well it does not get any colder. I had just joined the new cadre of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. As a qualified radio operator, I was placed on an air crew with a Lt. Mayer\* as pilot. Our new B25 D's started to arrive and were placed on hard pans on the field. We, as crew, were placed on guard duty at night. My first duty was a nightmare. It rained and was cold, I have never been so cold in all my life. I tried to burn hydraulic fluid, but no go. It just got colder. In the distance I heard this jeep, stopping by the various hard pans. It was the new



Hope you all  
had a happy  
Valentine's  
Day!!

second in command Lt. Col. True. We were well briefed on him. Point graduate and all. A real hard nose. He wheeled into the pan and got out and started to walk toward me. My knees shook, what should I do.? "Halt!" I shouted. He kept coming. I put a round in the chamber and shouted halt again. This time he stopped. "For God's sake soldier it's the OD," he said. I told him to advance four steps and place his ID on the ground. "Now take four steps back," I said. The wallet got soaking set. This was my first

meeting with our new chief. I figured my last. He did acknowledge that my actions were correct and that some of my buddies would be in for some big trouble. I can't believe this was nearly fifty year ago.

\*Lt. Mayer later changed to another squadron. He was reported killed over the Owen Stanley Mts. a year later. He was the son of LB Mayer of MGM.

~\*~\*~\*~

## THE B-25

To the B-25 we dedicate  
An era we do not celebrate.  
We are the guys of a certain group  
Who were there when our babies went into the soup.

When the flames from our wingers were a message from hell  
And we prayed to our God they would all come out well,  
But we knew as we prayed it could be our lot  
To end as these wingers and then be forgot.

On the twelfth day of April in '45  
Those who flew and still are alive  
Are thankful to members who flew with us there  
And we are still thankful for our own ground crew's care.

We flew Hanaan Island that memorable day  
We swooped down like sea-hawks and then flew away,  
Our nose guns up front were belching hot death  
And our bombs rained behind like Satan's own breath.

Our crews were intent on doing it right,  
Our pilots flew truly, our plans stayed in tight,  
But two of our crews caught enemy ack  
They threw flames for miles and never came back.

The fighting is over, the Jap is our friend.  
The war of the forties has come to an end.  
But so long as are Air Apaches alive  
They'll still feel awe for the B-25.

Ben S. Adkins (10-10-85)

**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!

**345<sup>th</sup> 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**

\_\_\_\_\_ 345<sup>th</sup> Vet or Widow \_\_\_\_\_ 345<sup>th</sup> Family Member \_\_\_\_\_ Other

(Please specify the name and squadron of your 345<sup>th</sup> veteran and/or tell us about yourself) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are \$15 per year for 345<sup>th</sup> 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 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association and send it with this application page to:

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**345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association**  
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