



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

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March 2018

President's Message

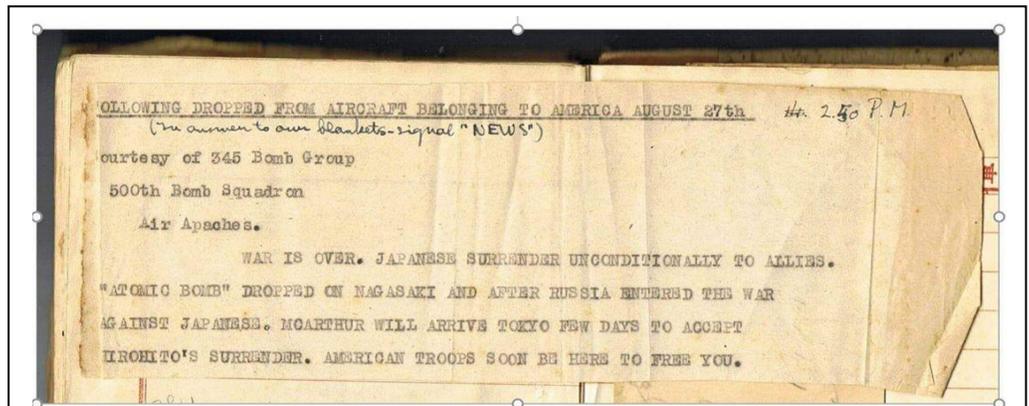
Mary Sloan Roby, 500th



A few times a week I receive inquiries via our Facebook page, where we are now followed by about 1400 people. Generally, they are requests for more information about members of the 345th or questions about Air Apache mementoes. Of the messages I have received recently, two are coincidentally, and sadly, connected to the end of the war in August, 1945.

On November 12, 2017, I received an inquiry about the message in the following image that was dropped on the Fukuoka 2 prisoner of war camp located at Koyagi Jima, Nagasaki.

The inquiry was from a gentleman in Amsterdam, whose father, a Dutch service member, had been a



"Following dropped from Aircraft belonging to America August 27th 2.50 p.m. (In answer to our blankets-signal "NEWS") Courtesy of 345 Bomb Group, 500th Bomb Squadron, Air Apaches. War is over. Japanese surrender unconditionally to allies. "Atomic bomb" dropped on Nagasaki and after Russia entered the war against Japanese. McArthur will arrive Tokyo few days to accept Hirohito's surrender. American troops soon be here to free you."

prisoner in this prison camp. He wanted to know if this was a standard or unique message and whether we might have any information about the crew that dropped the message.

Clint and I pulled the load list from the 500th for that day and found the names of the squadron crew members assigned to the August 27, 1945 mission, including pilots Mortensen, McClain, Nedick, and Watt. We noted that Murph Leventon had flown with Col. Mortensen.

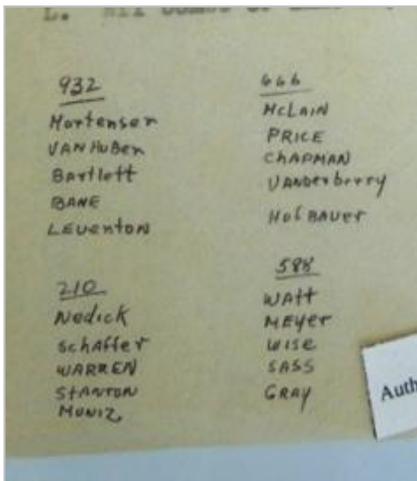
The stated purpose of the mission that day was a "war correspondents observation mission" to three areas, including

Tarumizu and Kyushu, which had been attacked on August 5, and Nagasaki. Detours were authorized to take place at the request of the correspondents.

There is no mention of dropping the flyers containing the message, but Murph Leventon confirmed that at least some of the flyers were dropped from Mortensen's plane.

Arthur Fryling, who sent me the message, maintains a Facebook page for the Fukuoka 2 Prisoner of War Camp. Here is the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/fukuoka2B/>.



500th Bomb Squadron Load List for August 27, 1945

A Second Request: Recently, I received another fascinating inquiry from Kenneth G. Harris, who is the Recruiting Operations Officer for the Boston University Army ROTC. He was looking for any information we might have about Richard S. Lane. “Dick” Lane was a member of the Boston University Army ROTC and a member of the 498th Squadron of the 345th Bomb Group. He was one of the Group’s final casualties of WWII.

The following statement regarding his final days comes from the LIST OF ALLIED AIRCRAFT AND AIRMEN LOST OVER THE JAPANESE MAINLAND DURING WWII at this link:
<http://www.powresearch.jp/en/archive/pilot/index.html>.

“Aug. 7, 1945, B-24 (sic) (#44-31300, 345BG) crashed in Kagami-cho, Yatsushiro-gun (present Yatsushiro-shi), Kumamoto-ken. All 5 crewmembers 1/Lt. Robert C. NEAL (A/C), 1/Lt. Louis J. WINIESKI Jr., 1/Lt. Richard N. LANE, S/Sgt. Robert W. COULET and S/Sgt.

William COHEN bailed out and were taken prisoners. They were sent to Seibu A/D HQ in Fukuoka on the following day. On their way to Fukuoka, a US plane strafed the train that they were aboard and a Kempeitai (military police arm of the Imperial Japanese Army from 1881 to 1945) member was killed and a POW injured near the Araki railway station. On Aug. 10 or 15, they were executed by beheading in Aburayama.”

There is also a summary of the crash and outcome in Lawrence Hickey’s book, “Warpath Across the Pacific,” in Appendix I on page 379. Elsewhere in this Strafer, there is an article by Mr. Harris about Dick Lane and Neal Hubbard (fellow members of the 1942 CRB ROTC) the parallels in their lives, and their tragic ends.

These two inquiries prompted me to learn more about prisoners of war during WWII. It’s said that 40% of American prisoners did not survive the Japanese camps. In addition to the descriptions of devastatingly poor treatment, there are horrific tales of barbaric executions.

While we are thankful for the lives of the men of the 345th who escaped these horrific fates, let us always keep in mind those who were tragically lost.

Please see the article about Dick Lane on page 3

Note to the 345th Bomb Group from Maj. Cole

The note below was received from Major Derek Cole, grandson of Lt. James A. Waggle (500th pilot who was lost on Black Sunday, 1944.)

I’m now a senior pilot and will be looking to continue to retirement which should get me to command pilot. Anyways, I have my grandfather’s basic pilot wings in sterling silver. I managed to purchase some wings from eBay, one being from a B-25 pilot from the 63rd BS. The B-25 pilot’s son was looking to reduce some clutter and I got his duty history, but I realized it would be an honor to continue the legacy of the men who flew with my grandfather by wearing their wings.

As such, if there are any families who are willing to part with a set of sterling silver senior pilot or command wings, I’d be happy to purchase them. It would be a way to continue the legacy and I’d be honored and humbled to wear them. I’d prefer wings from someone who flew with my grandfather in the 500th, if possible. Thank you,

Respectfully,
 Maj. Derek “Sting” Cole
 derekstingcole@mac.com



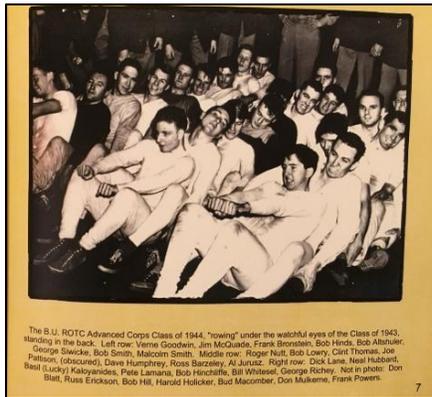
Two Sacrifices Across the Spectrum of Warfare.... Dick Lane & Neal Hubbard

By: Kenneth G. Harris, LTC, USAR

As the Class of 1944 entered Boston University in 1940, American debates raged between isolationists and interventionists. Not far from Boston, Yale students cheered Charles Lindbergh's words "If we desire peace, we need only stop asking for war. Nobody wishes to attack us, and nobody is in a position to do so." War already raged overseas with Japan in China, Russia in Finland, and Germany expanding into Austria, Poland, Belgium and France, resulting in the Battle of Dunkirk.

Hundreds of young men participated in ROTC each year, but a select group of 29 became Advanced Course Cadets in the fall of 1942. This honor coincided with their selection into the Scabbard & Blade Society. By the spring of 1943, everything changed for them as the mission for the US Army expanded for the invasion of Normandy and Europe. Instead of completing ROTC, all 29 Cadets entered into an accelerated program to achieve their commissions through Officer Candidate School.

Many stayed with the 78th Division, but Dick Lane sought service in the Army Air Force (498th BS), and Neal Hubbard was destined to serve with the 5th Infantry Division in his final days.



Right row, Dick Lane (first) and Neal Hubbard (second)

From my own experience, War is a very personal and profound experience. Some of that experience will be defined by where and when you serve, while another portion resides in your heart based on where you came from and what you left behind. Notably in common for both young Lieutenants from Boston University, they chose to wed before leaving the US, and sadly both would leave young widows behind.

Dick Lane left New Jersey for Boston and then headed to the skies over the Pacific. Neal Hubbard, from Connecticut, found himself crossing the Atlantic for the chaotic frontal warfare in France. Where Dick saw more water than land, Neal faced land warfare impeded by rivers, bridges and dams. The life of an Army Air Force B-25 Navigator in the Pacific may not have had a greater polar opposite than that of an Infantry Lieutenant marching toward Metz in Europe.

For Dick, intense missions intertwined with the routine tasks required to prepare for the next mission or fill the down time.

Conversely, random outbreaks of danger and violence threaded through every hour of Neal's existence, exemplified by artillery, snipers, mined roads or patrol routes, ambushes and even just the challenges of staying healthy on the march or in a winter bivouac.

Neal's final day, October 18, 1944, came during a "lull" in the action around the contested fortress city of Metz. The 5th Infantry Division trained with the goal of overcoming the fortifications, with graduation marked by maneuvers against those fortifications. Likely, he fell prey to a trap or a sniper's round while leading a patrol that probed the German positions. Death for an Infantry Soldier all too often felt random.... "You never hear the one that is going to get you."



1Lt. Richard "Dick" Lane

Dick's final days, August 7th through the 15th of 1945 proved to be something very different. His B-25 likely took flak damage. Another bomber on the mission followed them briefly, unable to make contact. The damage

apparently left them all alive, as they force landed near Fukuoka.

They fell into Japanese hands as prisoners, a desperate fate. When one considers that the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6th, compassion and mercy were in short supply among the Japanese forces. Dick's crew survived in captivity past the announcement of the Japanese surrender, but within hours fell beneath the sword blows of a vengeful and frightened Japanese chain of command. In a bid to cover all evidence of their prior abuses, the Japanese soldiers deliberately finished off remaining prisoners and burned their remains.

Dick and Neal were friends, and both made the ultimate sacrifice for the America they believed in, leaving young widows behind. The circumstances surrounding their sacrifices illustrate vastly different ends of the spectrum of war. Neal's final days featured slow patrolling over cold ground, filled with constant, random flashes of danger, on the periphery of a fortified German city, exhorting his men to take each step forward.

Dick's final days featured his journey from a tropical island to fall from the sky over Japan, and then privation, fear and unavoidable danger that only the Prisoner of War can know, concluding with a deliberate and illegal act of violence that resulted in criminal conviction and imprisonment.

Their names, "Hubbard-Lane" now adorn an award or trophy that marks the top Cadet in each class at their alma mater, Boston University. The friends and classmates of Neal and Dick chose this way to memorialize their service and sacrifice, and to inspire others who have chosen to share their profession.

A STORY OF CIGARS IN SAN DIEGO AND LEYTE

By Janice (Miller) Rary, 499th

The 2017 annual meeting (reunion) of the 345th Bomb Group Association in San Diego was a wonderful success, complete with three veterans, two widows of veterans, amazing speakers, and many family members and friends.

Were you aware, however, that on the closing night following the banquet, a number of devoted 345th BG members and guests sneaked out onto the balcony to smoke cigars, evading the hotel's "No Smoking" policy? That's right! Historian for the group, Jim Bina, had purchased cigars earlier in the day which he distributed to eager takers.

No, this wasn't reliving a school yard prank, but rather a tribute to a former member of the 345th BG and long-time VP for the 499th squadron, Ben F. Miller, my father. One of the legacies that he left behind was smoking a cigar each year to commemorate how cigars had saved his life on November 12, 1944, when the troop ship he was on, the S.S. Thomas Nelson, was hit by a Japanese kamikaze plane.

His fiancée, Norma, had recently sent him a box of cigars that were below deck on his bunk. He had been playing cards above deck with a friend from home in Indiana and others when the notion hit him that they needed to enjoy the cigars. Because of that, his life was saved while his buddies were killed. His first child (that's me) was born on November 12 exactly four years later, and Dad made a tradition of smoking a cigar on that date – often the only cigar he smoked all year.

A number of years ago when Marcia Pollock Wysocky, author of "Two Fathers One War", discovered this group and began attending reunions, she came to know Dad and appreciated his stories about the Air Apaches. His story about the cigar had a special appeal to her because her birthday is on November 11. Dad passed away in 2012, but Marcia and I have continued the tradition of sharing the story, and sometimes the cigar, whenever we can connect around midnight between our birthdays.

This year the story was re-told sometime prior to the banquet, and the idea was born that we needed to smoke cigars at the reunion. Jim offered to buy the cigars – an idea that turned out to be more challenging than anticipated in health-conscious San Diego. However, he produced the cigars, and even our speakers Jay Stout, wife Monica, and Colin Colbourn from Project Recovery and the Bent Prop Project, joined in. Dad would have been proud of

us, and I expect was smiling down on us and our attempts at “smoking” in tribute to him and the events that occurred in 1944.

While we enjoy celebrating his survival each year, I believe we also need to remember the tragic results of the kamikaze attacks. Eighty-nine members of the 345th ground echelon aboard the S.S. Thomas Nelson were killed. Many more were wounded. Just 20 minutes later another kamikaze hit the second troop carrier, the S.S. Waite, killing 22 more Air Apaches.

B-25 D Question

Again, from Facebook...

The Darwin Aviation Museum in Australia is interested in restoring the gun mounts for their plane, Hawg-Mouth, as field modified in Papua New Guinea. They are particularly interested in any drawings that may exist.

The plane was the third replacement aircraft assigned to the 500th Bomb Squadron in 1943 and was generally flown by 1/Lt. Raymond E. Geer.

If you have any information about this plane and its time in the 500th, please contact Mary Roby at mroby1916@gmail.com.

New B-25 Model, “Quitich” to be Built

Jim Bina, Historian

Mike Laible, a friend of the Air Apaches, has started a new project to honor the men of the 345th BG. You may remember that Mike exhibited his large-scale flying model of the B-25 “Show Me” at the 2016 reunion in Houston, Texas. His model was a joint project between his dad and him; the craftsmanship was exquisite and highly detailed, exacting down to individual rivets on the skin of the aircraft.

Mike wrote to me a few months ago with some tragic news—“Show Me” had crashed. Apparently the aircraft lost the radio control signal and nosed into the ground. Mike was heartbroken. At first he didn’t have the heart to tell his dad, but relented, and they both picked up the pieces and vowed to rebuild. In the interim he and his dad flew their large-scale B-24 they had built.

Good news—Mike recently announced that a new B-25 project has started. He enlisted a builder who will construct the airframe and Mike will finish out the remaining work. Although, this project will be a bit different, Mike is going to finish the B-25D model in Air Apache livery, again, and as “Quitich” of the 501st Black Panther Squadron.

Those of you familiar with this particular aircraft will remember that Quitich was a seasoned

combat aircraft with many missions to its credit but she met her demise in August of 1944 during a bombing run.

Quitich, piloted by Lt. Nolan and Lt. Bina, collided with Lt. Nirdlinger’s aircraft over Ternate Island. Lt’s Nolan and Bina managed to gain control of their crippled plane and nursed Quitich back to Noemfoor Island ditching just short of the runway. The crew survived the ditching and was picked up immediately.

Mike has promised frequent updates of the rebuild of “Quitich” and I will share those updates in the Strafer and on our Facebook page. He estimates the first flight will be about a year from now. Thanks to Mike for honoring the heroic men of the 345th with such a noteworthy project. Hope to see “Quitich” in the air soon!



Mike (kneeling) and his Dad with the former “Show Me”

Mickey, Terry Lee, and Me

Ed Steers, 500th

In 1942, my Uncle, Michael Hochella, went to war against the Japanese in the South Pacific with the 500th Bomb Squadron. That same year Terry Lee, of Terry and the Pirates, went to war against the same Japanese in Asia. While Terry and his buddies flew "The Hump" over the Himalayan Mountains and served in places like Burma, China, and Singapore, Uncle Mickey and his mates served in the southwest Pacific flying several missions over New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago.

Mickey was shot down during a raid on the Japanese supply base at Kavieng, New Ireland, on his forty-fifth mission on February 15, 1944, Mickey and his crew were rescued two days later and shipped to Australia before being returned to the U.S.



Michael Hochella

Three months after Mickey's rescue, I was playing in the backyard of my grandmother's

house in Bethlehem when I heard the distinct sound of a plane in the distance. (I should tell you that most kids during the war were quite skilled at identifying Allied and Axis planes from their silhouettes.) Some of us could even distinguish planes by the sound of their engines. I stood in the yard listening as the sound grew louder and louder. Suddenly, an enormous roar filled the air over my head as a beautiful B-25 passed directly over the house. It was so close to the ground that I could feel the vibration in my body as it roared over my head.

In an instant my mother popped her head through the kitchen door pointing toward the plane and shouting, "It's Mickey. It's Mickey."

I have no recollection of being driven to the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Airport that day, but I will never forget everything that followed liked it happened yesterday. Standing at the large window of the airport waiting room I couldn't believe my eyes.

Sitting on the tarmac was a magnificent North American B-25 medium bomber. Walking toward us in a leather A-2 jacket wearing a "crush" hat tilted at a cocky angle was Mickey, looking every bit like Terry Lee. After all the hugs and kisses, Mickey asked my brother and me if we wanted to see his airplane. I remember opening my mouth, but no sound came out. "Come on," he said.

"I'll show you what a great plane looks like." My brother and I were about to experience one of those unforgettable moments in life.

As we reached the plane and Mickey started to boost me up into the belly of the plane, I thought I heard my mother yell, "Be careful. Don't shoot your eye out." It was one of those expressions every young boy heard from his mother dozens of times.

After climbing through the plane and sitting in the ball turret and copilot seat we returned home our heads spinning with excitement. Later that evening Mickey came to our house for dinner. Although Mickey and my mother were cousins, Mickey was raised from a young boy by my grandmother after his mother died prematurely. Mickey and Mom were raised as brother and sister.

After dinner, Mickey reached into his pocket and pulled out a strange looking coin. It was the size of a half dollar, copper in color with a kangaroo on one side and the head of a man on the other. Mickey handed it to me and said, "How would you like to have an Australian penny?" I can now tell you that two days later my mother had to pry my hand open to remove the coin so I could take a bath. That coin still sits on my desk next to my computer and will probably be buried with me.



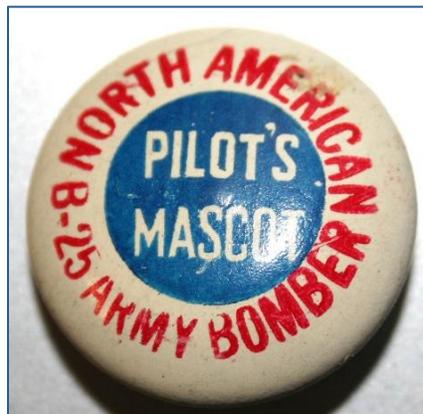
The story doesn't end here, however. Terry and the Pirates was a regular radio show every afternoon after school. Most kids didn't miss a show. Terry, Pat, Big Stoop, and the Dragon Lady filled our heads with thrilling stories every day.

Like every adventure show at the time, Terry's sponsor, Quaker Puffed Wheat Sparkies, offered special premiums to their faithful listeners. Imagine my thrill when one afternoon the announcer ended the day's show with the following:

"Say, Kids, how would you like to be an Army pilot's good luck mascot? Well, here's all you have to do. Just write this sentence on a piece of paper: "I promise to buy a war savings stamp within a week," and sign your name and address to it. In exchange for this patriotic promise, the Army Air Forces permit us to have your name as you sign it, on a piece of paper Enrolled on a microfilm scroll and given to the pilot of a

North American B-25 Medium Bomber with this message, "Good luck and drop a bomb on the Japs for me." That makes you an Army pilot's good luck mascot and is your reward for promising to buy a War Savings Stamp."

WOW! My name was going to fly on a bombing mission in a B-25! As an added premium, we received a special pilot's mascot button (made of wood since metal was a restricted war commodity. I wrote out my pledge and sent it along with a box top from Quaker Puffed Wheat Sparkies. My mother had the good sense to buy a box the week before. Mothers had an uncanny knack for being able to see into the future (they also had eyes in the back of their head). Two weeks later the button arrived and sits next to my Australian penny.



Years later I reminded Mickey of the penny he gave me and asked him if he ever was asked to fly a microfilm roll with kid's names on them on one of his bombing

missions. "No," he said. "I never heard of such a thing." Well, no matter. I had the penny and the button, and I did buy a War Savings Stamp. While Mickey and his buddies did their part to win the war, we kids did our part too. "Keep 'em Flying!"

Update from Jay Stout

Jay Stout, author of the soon to be released Air Apache book, states that "...the manuscript is going good and a draft is expected by the end of February." The book is on schedule and is hoped to be released later this year and we will be the first to let you know when this will occur. Watch our Facebook page for further updates!

Were you stationed in Greenville, SC?

If so, we would like to hear from you! Our 2018 meeting will most likely be held in Greenville. So, we are interested in hearing your stories and seeing your mementoes about life in Greenville during the war.

We would like to hear from veterans, their wives, children, and friends who remember what it was like then.

Please contact Mary Roby at mroby1916@gmail.com if you can offer a story or photographs for The Strafer. Thank you!!

Orville Schmidt: From Newburg to New Guinea

(continued from the last Strafer)

Karl McCarty

The Few, the Proud, the Uncomfortable

Orville affirmed he was in a C-54 transport plane when he flew over the Golden Gate Bridge to New Guinea. It was very similar to, if not specifically, a Douglas C-54 Skymaster, “Yea. It was a converted passenger liner.” In general, during their use in World War II, relatively few people could be seated on those transport planes, often somewhere between 25 and 50.



Douglas C-54 Skymaster

Orville affirmed that few were on his plane, as at the time he was prepared to fly A-20s—not necessarily B 25s—in WWII. “Well, remember, the A-20 was a three man plane. So you could have nine crews, and only have 27 guys.”

The basic arithmetic may have

been less than two dozen, as pilots for the A-20 may not have been on the C-54’s journey. When asked if there were 27 men (nine planes with two crew and a pilot each), Orville said, “Actually there was less than that, because nine crews would have only been two men per plane.... and if there were nine crews on the plane, then actually there were only 18 guys. Two enlisted men—me and the guy with me.”

Orv said what he “remembered mostly” about the Skymaster, was “it was a problem airplane. We no more than get out of San Francisco, about four hours out. Just to about the point of no return. We’re in a hell of a doggone thunderstorm. And I’m in the middle of the Skymaster now. And all the baggages were moving around. And there was only “a narrow walkway on each side of the garbage (bags filled with the guy’s stuff) put in the middle.”

Riding out the thunderstorm, there wasn’t much they could do. “You sat along the outside the bucket seat. That was your comfort for the next 10 hours.” His bucket seat was not more than “a paratrooper seat.” And they weren’t that comfortable. “As a matter of fact, the paratroopers always sat on their shoot.” Orville laughed

about it as, “That helped,” for the paratroopers.

Unfortunately, the young men on Orville’s plane were not paratroopers but A-20 crew members, so they didn’t have a paratrooper shoot to sit on for that bumpy ride.

To Guadalcanal

There were multiple stops for Orville before he was at his first Pacific island base camp. “We made three stops. On different islands –island hopping already,” Orville joked referencing the U.S. strategy in the Pacific. It’s hard to say exactly what demanded the stops, likely fuel or repairs. “And the first stop was Guadalcanal.” He added, “That one I’ll never forget. The first place we landed.” He may have flown over it later in the war, but nothing replaces the first time he landed there in the Solomon Islands. Orville was not allowed to get out of the transport plane. “It was still a very hot area yet,” not hot as in temperature, but volatile as in war. “Lot of Snipers.”

Orville’s guess is they went to Guadalcanal for fuel. “I imagine we did, ‘cause we couldn’t leave the cabin. Or leave the cockpit... And I do remember looking out the side window and I saw a bunch of mechanics

running around and checking it out.” Henderson Field in Guadalcanal “was quite rough” when they came in for a landing, not to mention the hot spots of battle.

Orville tried to explain what happened to the plane: “the front wheel that was supposed to stay stable—unless it’s forced over a certain point and it breaks—why, this doggone pin that was supposed to stabilize everything must have broke during that landing, because the landing field was so rough. Henderson Field, itself.” So the nose wheel on the plane broke, “and they had to replace that. And they were working in the dark. You couldn’t even light a cigarette in the cabin, because of snipers and stuff, and they (the Japanese) were shooting up the place pretty good yet...” Having landed in the Pacific, the plane was probably stuffy. But Orville never mentioned it and the temperature in the cabin was not the first priority.

It was a “couple of hours” on Guadalcanal’s landing strip. He did make a comment at that point on Guadalcanal, it was ‘too bad’ so-to-speak, and one must do what the military tells you. Finally, in Guadalcanal, they gave the plane orders to take off.

“So, we took off from Henderson field (in Guadalcanal). And we landed at another field. I think it was Tarawa.”

To Tarawa then New Guinea

“You betcha” it was still hot fighting in Tarawa too. Orville said the military branches “had just taken over on that one....It was just a narrow strip of land. If you landed on one runway here, you could see the ocean on both sides... that’s a narrow strip of land.” The plane just refueled in Tarawa.

In relation to the war in the Pacific, Orville said proportionally, Tarawa, which is just an atoll in the Gilbert Islands, was the beginning of the U.S. trying to take the islands back from the Japanese. “Tarawa was sorta a jumping off spot for our navy and the military airplanes” and “bombers to take off and bomb some of the other places.” Orville said Tarawa was probably not safe yet in 1943; it was “ours,” but the island was still susceptible to hot fighting.

From Tarawa, Orville made his way to New Guinea. Now, before one gets confused, it’s important to recognize that Orville’s route from Washington State to New Guinea was neither linear nor

quick. In total, Orville said it would easily take well over a dozen hours to get from mainland United States to New Guinea, but “with the stops it would be a lot longer, so he admitted the whole process took over a day “for sure.” He is adamant that in the Pacific New Guinea was where he landed last. “Guadalcanal was first,” even if it seems on the map that that was zigzagging, or even backtracking.

“There were certain flight paths that a passenger plane could only take because there were still hot islands in there.... So you had to kinda fly around them.” Eventually after Guadalcanal and Tarawa, he went to Port Moresby, New Guinea.

What lay in store over the next 18 months for the man born near Newburg ranged from bombing Japanese sites, coasting in B25s twenty feet above the Pacific waves, and flying over nuclear bombed Hiroshima.

(To be continued in the next issue)



Hell's Angels, the True Story of the 303rd Bomb Group in WWII

Clint Roby, 500th

After reading Jay Stout's book "Hell's Angels, The True Story of the 303rd Bomb Group in World War II", I can't wait to read his upcoming book about the 345th.

The 303rd Bomb Group (Hell's Angels), 8th Air Force, flew B-17s from their base in Molesworth, England. The group's name, Hell's Angels, was chosen in part to honor the plane of the same name, which was the first 8th AF bomber to complete 25 missions. The 303rd's first mission was on November 17th, 1942 and their last mission was on April 25th, 1945. They flew 364 missions during the war and lost 210 planes and 841 airmen. 764 men from the 303rd became prisoners of war. Col. Stout has included many accounts from 303rd POWs who survived the war. On D-Day, Walter Cronkite flew with the 303rd; another time Clark Gable flew with the group.

For the 303rd, the three plane element was the basic unit of a mission, and three of the four squadrons of the group would generally provide four 3-plane units; so the group might

provide 36 planes to a mission. Early in the war, they were pressed to be able to provide half this many, but by 1944 the group often provided 40 planes for a mission, and on November 26, 1944 they put 58 planes in the air.

In addition, the missions the 303rd flew were often very large. For example, over 600 planes took off on the mission of January 11, 1944. The 303rd also took place in the largest assemblage of aircraft in history, on December 23, 1944, when over 2000 heavy bombers were launched against Germany, along with 853 fighters. The book also describes some of the procedures developed for large missions that took off in bad English weather.

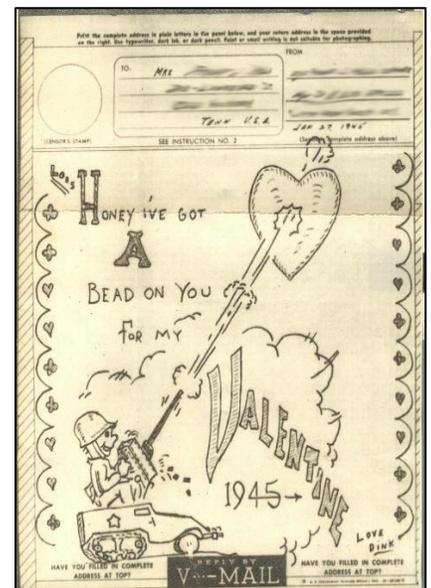
The book contains in depth coverage of missions, and how they fit in with various strategies introduced by commanders at different times during the war. Many interesting aspects of the 303rd's operations are included, such as putting a copilot in the tail gunner position of the lead plane so the lead pilot would know how the formation looked; use of electrically heated clothing and oxygen at high altitude; the attempt at using glide-bombs; and

encounters with the Me262 jet fighter.

Stories of veteran's lives before and after the war are included. The book is well footnoted with a nice bibliography.

But, it is a story of war, of gruesome death and terrible injury, but, also supreme bravery and determination. Again it shows us how incredible this generation was.

Mary and I also picked up a copy of "Unsung Eagles", also by Col. Stout, which includes a chapter "Low Level Fury" about the 345th's Roman Ohnemus (501st). Check it out!



Although Valentine's Day has passed, I hope you had a "sweet" day.

~ Editor

Note to our Members and Friends. Thank you for your membership in the 345th Bomb Group Association, which is now a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational and historical organization to which your contribution may be tax deductible on your federal return. Memberships and contributions help us achieve our goals to remember and share the accomplishments of the 345th.

**345th Bomb Group Association
2018 Membership Form**

Name(s) _____ Squadron _____

Mailing Address _____ Please check if new

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Home _____ Cell _____ Other _____

Email Address _____

I am a:

345th Vet or Widow 345th Family Member Vet from another group Other

Please tell us about yourself and your interest in the Association. We are especially interested in hearing from grandchildren and great-grandchildren of veterans. If you are a family member, please tell us who your veteran is and about your relationship to him. We are very interested in hearing your stories and about any personal materials you might have or want to share with the Association.

Please check here if you would like to be contacted by the Association about getting involved.

Dues are \$15 per year for 345th Veterans and their spouses/widows. All other 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:

Clint Roby, Treasurer
345th Bomb Group Association
PO Box 8755
Roanoke, VA 24014

Thank you!!

345th Bomb Group Association
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A new representative is needed for the 498th Squadron. Please contact Mary Roby if you are interested.

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