



# AIR APACHES

# STRAFER

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## President's Message

By Mary Sloan Roby, 500<sup>th</sup>



Whenever our 345<sup>th</sup> group gets together, I am inspired to do more! More reading of WWII books, more reviewing of orders, war time letters and family documents, more research! This inspiration reminds me how much we have as a group and how dedicated we are and should be to keep and share the legacy of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

In addition to the pleasure of getting together with veterans and their families at our annual reunions is the opportunity to view their mementoes and hear their related stories. In Greenville, we were thrilled to have Lincoln Grush, Ken Haller, Murph Leventon, and Quentin Stambaugh with us.

Although we have discussed upgrading our website for several

years, we are now finally doing it! We have engaged New River Geographics from Blacksburg, VA to completely revamp the website. This means that the new website will be easier for the 345<sup>th</sup> to maintain, will have an interactive web map that will provide the ability to search for information on missions and crew members, and special files (KML files) that will allow us to utilize Google Earth. Several of us will be trained by New River Geographics so we can keep the website up to date.

We definitely want to spiff up the appearance of the website and so we would appreciate your forwarding pictures, letters and other documents, and images of related WWII items to us. We do not yet know how many items we will be able to use, but we would like to insert a lot of images that will move through the various pages. If you have things you would like to send, please let me know at my email address: [mroby1916@gmail.com](mailto:mroby1916@gmail.com). I look forward to seeing your photos and other items.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have always been curious about how my dad, Eugene B. Sloan, became a navigator/ bombardier and what his training was like. There was no e-mail then,

although air mail was remarkably fast. And, as Gene was a faithful correspondent to his mother, Janie, in Clinton, South Carolina, we have a lot of insight.

Gene enlisted in the Army Air Corps even before he graduated from Erskine College in South Carolina. Following his induction, he was an Air Corps Cadet in Nashville, which was a Classification Center. During this time cadets were evaluated for their future roles and on February 20, 1943, Gene was classified as a Navigator. A month later, he was transferred to Selman Field, Monroe, LA for advanced Navigation training.

Letters to Gene's mother tell the story of his training in Louisiana, along with anecdotes about everyday life there. Various letters describe the weather (hot, swampy), that he is learning about calibration of navigation instruments (at one point he asks her to locate a physics book belonging to his brother and to send it to him), radio and celestial navigation, and some descriptions of a few of the training missions he has flown. He remarked on his first view of the Mississippi River and that the food was not as good there as at home.

Over the years, I have Googled Selman Field several times, hoping

to find some interesting details about the base where over 15,000 men trained. Before this year's reunion, I happened on some information about the Selman Field Historical Society.

Unfortunately, the Society has ceased to exist, but there is a museum in Monroe, LA, the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum, that has some collections and exhibits about Selman Field.

I have not yet found any of the yearbooks that were published about each class, but I have located several books about Selman Field. "Selman Field: World War II: 1942-1946," published by Turner Publishing in Paducah, KY in 1998, is quite rare and expensive—out of my price range. I was able to acquire "World War II Aerial Navigation Training & The Flyboy Heroes of Selman Field" by Richard Chardkoff, published by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2008. It contains some photographs of the base and fascinating personal profiles of navigators who trained at Selman Field.

My point is that when you have a little knowledge about a veteran, whether or not a family member, your interest may be piqued to do further investigation. Reading about other's experiences may give you some insight into what training was like, what things were anxiety provoking, and even about friendships that developed between airmen of very different backgrounds.

Clint and I are looking forward to a trip to Louisiana in January

when we will have the opportunity to visit the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum in Monroe.

Maybe we will find mention of my dad and maybe a class picture! We will keep you posted!

Note: Cindy and Hubert Hillman were able to visit the Chennault Museum on their way home from the Greenville, SC reunion. They provided a positive report!

## Greenville Reunion – Some Thoughts....

*By: Dennis O'Neill, 500<sup>th</sup>*

The Group reunion was held over Labor Day weekend in Greenville, S.C. Four vets were in attendance: Mr. Kenneth E. Haller, from Washington State, and the 498<sup>th</sup>; Mr. Quentin R. Stambaugh, from Pennsylvania, and the 498<sup>th</sup>; Mr. Marvin "Murph" Leventon from Maryland, and the 500<sup>th</sup>; and Mr. Lincoln H. Grush, from Maine, and the 500<sup>th</sup>.

For me personally, this reunion took on especially greater meaning. After attending all reunions from 2002-2015, I chose not to go to either Wisconsin or California. Returning after that absence made me realize that I really missed seeing the "reunion family". I also realized that if I miss one, that not everyone else is able to make every single reunion, so I've missed the opportunities to talk to those friends.

Since the 2015 reunion, the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association has focused on educating the public about the history of the group. I can say, with pride, that with everyone's help, we've managed to put forth a lot of information about the

group. One important area has been load lists. Load lists name every member on the plane, for every mission. I would like to thank Andy Decker for compiling the master load list form and providing it in PDF format.

We also have a new friend of the group from the Greenville Reunion, Jason McHale. He is from the Bent Prop Project (now called Project Recover) and has provided us with files from the Washington, D.C. archives, filling in many blanks in our research.

As always, some of the most important information is provided first-hand, by family members of veterans. If you have any items from that period, no matter how insignificant they may seem, please contact us on the group Facebook page, our web site, Mary & Clint Roby, Jim Bina or myself.

(And a big thank you to our Greenville hosts/organizers, Mary and Clint Roby! It was a perfect venue, great food, programs, and we lucked out with beautiful weather.)

Hope to see you all again soon!

## Training at Greenville AAB, 1942 - 1944

*By: Bob Sweet, 499<sup>th</sup>*

In February, 1943, Greenville AAB was a major training facility for replacement crews flying the B-25. My uncle, S/Sgt. Andrew Chesanek, Gunner, was completing his training at GAAB and about to be assigned to the 499<sup>th</sup> BS of the 345<sup>th</sup> BG. According to Larry Hickey's "Warpath Across the Pacific", the 345<sup>th</sup> was based in

Columbia, SC, and about to leave for the Pacific.

Correspondence from my uncle to my mother stressed the intense training. Crews were flying eight hours a day and seven days a week. Bombing practice used bombs that were not live and hit targets in Lake Murray. Aerial gunners had a little fun. First they learned skeet shooting on the ground. In the air they fired at clay pigeons shot from powerful launchers.

My uncle's training unit at GAAB was the 471<sup>st</sup> BS with an insignia showing a cartoon-like bear named "Bomby", pitching a bomb. His letters indicated he would join the 345<sup>th</sup> BG in Columbia, and then head to the Pacific. He could not say where or when.



## What a Difference a Few Days Makes The Circle of Life and a Unique Legacy

By: Robert Jensen Pearson, 500<sup>th</sup>

In September 2008, I received a message on our telephone from Chris McWilliams. He said his middle name was Jensen...just like mine. He was a retired Air Force

Colonel. He claimed we were related, and he knew new stuff about my biological Dad. He asked me to give him a call, and he left me his work number. This was not a prank call, he said. Yeah, right! I'm not calling...he probably has swamp land to sell.

The next night he leaves another message. This time he gives me his home number, talks a little longer, then finally said he got my number from Gilda Jensen. Gilda is my Aunt Gilda that I have known forever...but have not heard from her in years. Now, he has pushed all the right buttons, but I'm still guarded. I call my Mom. "Do you know a Chris McWilliams?" I asked. "Of course", says Mom. She talks about his Mom and Dad back in Greenwich, CT and gives me the family history in five short minutes. OK, Chris just must be legit...I'll give him a call.

Well, we made contact and talked for the next three hours (at times tears were running down my baby cheeks). :- ) He told me military stories about my biological Dad Jensen that I NEVER knew.

\*As a sidebar, this is what I did know from a letter my Mom received. Dad Jensen was an aircraft commander (pilot) of a B-25 in the Pacific. On March 15, 1945 (2 months before I was born [May 17, 1945]), he followed the lead aircraft in to bomb an enemy ship in the China Sea, near Hong Kong. The lead aircraft's bomb hit the target, the enemy ship exploded right under Dad Jensen's aircraft. He lost one engine (B-25 has only two engines); he

successfully feathered the engine but could not gain enough altitude before his plane crashed into a mountainside 16 miles Northwest of Hong Kong. The other planes circled the crash site. There were no survivors and death was instantaneous.

\*I also know that he has a memorial gravesite at the Military Cemetery of the Pacific (known as The Punchbowl) in Hawaii, which I have visited many times when I was a pilot for the Air Force and later with my family.

\*On my initial visit to the Punchbowl in the early 1970s, caretakers informed that the gravesite was only a memorial, that the coffin was empty. At a later date I was told that there are items in the coffin, but I do not have authorization yet to have access to that information.

\*PERIOD. Nothing else. Until the call from Chris.

Chris asked if I wanted to know more about the crash. To put him at ease, I told him that I had already filled out the paperwork so that my wife, Nancy, and I will be buried at the gravesite of Robert Jensen.



Bob Jensen

Chris explained that he had been in contact with Dad Jensen's

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former squadron—the 500<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron—and some of its members over the past four years or so. More recently (this past July), he has been in touch with two gentlemen, Chris Davis and Tobias Brown. Toby has been to the actual crash site of “Bold Venture”, Dad Jensen’s plane. They also have talked with a Chinese citizen who was 16 years old at the time of the crash. The Chinese were our allies and wanted to get to the crash site before the Japanese to hide the crew’s remains. The Chinese found the five bodies and buried them with honor. The old Chinese gentleman recalled that one of the crew members had a silver dollar (dated 1922) on his person. That was Dad Jensen’s birth year. It was his silver dollar, and the Chinese buried it with the body out of respect.

At the end of the war, the Graves Registration Unit of the military went to recover bodies of servicemen killed overseas. They were told where the crew of Bold Venture was buried and the Unit brought back the remains to different cemeteries. Dad Jensen was interred in Hawaii.

Through the efforts of Chris Davis and Tobias Brown (amateur historians and archeologist), a memorial may be constructed on the site of the crash in the future. They are continuing to excavate the site at this time. A website has been set up for more information. [www.boldventureb25.com](http://www.boldventureb25.com)

Now, Cousin Chris informed me there are former crew members of Dad Jensen’s 500<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron

(345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group) still living and active, and coincidentally they were having a reunion in Ogunquit, Maine the following week. Did I want to go? I didn’t hesitate to get a flight from Jacksonville, FL to Boston’s Logan Airport. Chris was to pick me up...we had never met...but he is a BIG New York Giants fan...so I wore my own big blue Giant hat for recognition (after Super Bowl XLII, we figured there wouldn’t be TOO many of those seen in Boston). He brought me to his home in Massachusetts to meet his lovely wife, Paula.

The reunion was four days long, but both of us being new, we figured we would hit the last two days.

\*\*\*Upon entering the Hospitality Room of the Reunion, I spot a young man (of mid-80s) looking at me and asking my name. I say “Bob Jensen Pearson”. He says “Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my God!” Tears come to his deep blue eyes and to my green eyes as he says that he flew with my Dad. And we hug. He thought he had seen a ghost.

This is Lynn Daker (rhymes with baker:-)). He explains that he was the aircraft commander on Dad Jensen’s first combat mission in the Pacific on 21 January of 1945. Lynn was the pilot and Bob Jensen the co-pilot. They lost an engine on the B-25 and had to ditch the plane in the ocean. Capt. Rex Reheis circled the down aircraft with his B-25. Rex orbited for 3 ½ hours, shooting at the Japanese to keep them from capturing the survivors until a PBY (amphibious

rescue aircraft) came to pick them up. I find out that there is a painting of this incident and am given a large copy of the print by Chris. Lynn points to the print, “That’s your Dad in the water up there”. Lynn is shown saving a crew member and Rex Reheis is flying “Seabiscuit”, the name of his B-25, protecting his squadron mates in the water (the 500<sup>th</sup> named many of their aircraft after famous race horses).

\*\*\*We next meet Rex Reheis (92 years young), the same pilot mentioned above. Rex was involved with my Dad Jensen’s first combat mission and his last. On Bob Jensen’s last mission on March 15<sup>th</sup>, Rex was the pilot of the lead aircraft that bombed the enemy ship that exploded under Dad Jensen. This is mentioned above as a fact that I knew previously. BUT, I never knew the names of these crew members. In the book, *Warpath Across the Pacific*, all these men are mentioned, some at length, including Dad Jensen. Rex autographed my copy, writing “A pleasure to at last find the son of Lt. Jensen”.

\*\*\*I learned that my Dad Jensen’s regular co-pilot was not on that last flight. His name is Bud Gilmore, he lives in Colorado, and I plan to make contact with him.

\*\*\*Many B-25s were lost in March of ’45, so new crews were needed. An experienced aircraft commander was one of them. His name was Don “Buzz” Wagner. When he arrived at the squadron in mid-March 1945, he heard about some of the flights of the 500<sup>th</sup> and

zeroed in on the name Bob Jensen. He asked where Jensen was from, and discovered that Jensen was from Glenbrook (Stamford), CT. Buzz was amazed, "That's my good high school buddy from Stamford High!" The same Buzz Wagner also was at the Reunion.

What a small world. Now Buzz, Cousin Chris, and I are sitting down and I am learning about my biological Dad from his high school buddy. He says that Bob was good looking, tall, had a great smile and all the girls loved him. :-) He also played golf. :-)

Lynn Daker had been the President of the 500<sup>th</sup> for the past 13 years. Buzz Wagner has just taken over that position. At the closing banquet the two talked to the 80 friends and family at the Reunion, of which 18 were original members of the 500<sup>th</sup> in the Pacific. Buzz expressed his appreciation that new members have joined the 500<sup>th</sup> Family and specifically mentioned Chris and me. It was another special moment I will never forget.

I pointed out to this group that this really was not a "reunion" for Chris and me, but a UNION, for this was the first time that I met them all, including my cousin, Chris Jensen McWilliams.

Chris, thanks for the call two weeks ago. I'm glad it wasn't a hoax. :-)

## Remembering Greenville 2018

*By Jan Rary, 499th*

When Mary asked me to prepare a summary of the recent annual meeting of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb

Group in Greenville, SC, I was pleased to take on the task but had to concentrate on translating many good memories and emotions into real events that had occurred. I tried. If you were at the meeting and find that I omitted something that was important to you, please forgive me. Even better, put your memories into words and share them in the next Strafer.

Don and I arrived at the Courtyard by Marriott, Greenville, late on Thursday evening, August 30. It was hours later than we had hoped to arrive, thanks to driving through hard rains and miles and miles of road construction as we came closer to Greenville. We know several people in Marietta, Ohio, where we currently live, who had told us that Greenville was their favorite city in the US, and a likely retirement destination for them. In the coming days as we explored the city, we learned why. It is a thriving, "small" town filled with friendly people and a large selection of shops, art, music, museums, and restaurants to appeal to many preferences. As often comes with such growth in the population of an area, the roads and infrastructure struggle to keep up.

When we walked into the hotel lobby we were pleased to be greeted by Mary and Clint Roby, and the Grush family who had arrived from Maine. We chatted briefly, and then gratefully checked into our room for a good night's sleep.

On Friday morning we ventured outside the hotel to find some-

thing to eat. We were delighted with the selection of unique small restaurants within a few blocks of the hotel, regardless which direction we walked. When we returned to the hotel where we had the pleasure of greeting Dennis and Susan O'Neil, whom most of us remember from previous reunions, especially the ones they hosted in Dayton, Ohio. Dennis remains a resource of information about the 345<sup>th</sup>. It was a pleasure to welcome them back!

Friday afternoon was a happy time as we greeted others when they arrived at the registration table in the lobby of the hotel. The hotel's staff was attentive and willing to help with whatever was needed, displaying true southern hospitality at the Marriott! We discovered that many had shared our experience of driving through torrential rains and slow-downs from road construction as they drove to Greenville. Even some who flew to Greenville had experienced delays due to weather conditions. But this didn't seem to ruin anyone's enjoyment; perhaps it made them even more grateful to arrive, to be greeted by members of the 345<sup>th</sup> "family", to renew acquaintances with people they had learned to know over the years, and to meet people who were attending their first reunion.

The Meet-and-Greet event on Friday evening in the spacious hospitality room included a delicious array of food items, plenty of seating to visit with friends, and many tables filled with history items brought by members.

Much of what had been in the Air Apache's display at the EAA in Oshkosh was also in the hospitality room.

Saturday morning began with a light breakfast in the Hospitality Room, a welcome addition that eliminated the need to awaken early enough to eat breakfast at the hotel. Then we boarded the bus (yes, we only needed one this year. I can't help but feel a tinge of sadness as I recall boarding one of 3 or 4 buses with my parents and so many other "Greatest Generation" members when they were able to attend these reunions) and headed for the Upcountry History Museum on the campus of Furman University in Greenville.

Staff at the museum had prepared an interesting and informative presentation for us about South Carolina's involvement in supporting the war effort in the 1940's. A movie, oral presentation, and Q & A session preceded a quick tour of the museum. We also learned that this museum frequently changes its exhibits and is interested in housing the Air Apache's traveling exhibit as a future display.

After a yummy lunch at Soby's, we spent a delightful afternoon exploring the unique shops, bakeries, and even "real" bookstores!!! in the area. We found Greenville to be filled with scenic parks, sculptures, and historic sites along the pedestrian walks.

On Saturday evening we were fortunate to have guests from the SC Historic Aviation Foundation

who provided an exhibit in the Hospitality Room and an opportunity to interact with volunteers from the group.



Corey Ashe with the SC Historic Aviation Foundation

The business meeting was held on Sunday morning, and concluded with plans to meet again in 2019!

Sunday afternoon, several of us decided to visit the Museum and Library of Confederate History where dedicated volunteers shared their views on the history of the confrontation that nearly tore our country apart.

The meeting ended on Sunday with an outstanding banquet. The speaker for the evening was Fritz Hamer, Curator of History/Archivist at the SC Military Museum in Columbia. His presentation, "WWI Aviation: The Origins of US Army Air Force," was an interesting twist on our normal focus on the B-25 and other aircraft of WWII. Fritz also offered to help us with developing our traveling exhibits and displays.

Another welcome guest at the banquet, who sat at our table, was Jason McHale, a new historian working with "Project Recover" to locate and recover the remains of

planes that were lost in warfare throughout the world. Most of us had been introduced to them at the 2017 meeting in San Diego.

Following the banquet came the most bittersweet part of these meetings for many of us. We spent 3 days with people from across the country who have one thing in common, to keep the legacy of our fathers, husbands, uncles, and friends alive so that future generations of Americans will never forget and will learn from their examples and sacrifices. Many were acquaintances we had learned to know and care about over many years. Others were new to us. But we all shared a common devotion to our Air Apaches. Yes, it helped to know that we had decided to meet again in 2019, but we also realize that not everyone will be able to return. We said our farewells, we shared our intent to "see you next year", and we parted with both smiles and tears.

We wish you well in whatever the coming year brings. We thank Mary and Clint for the fantastic job they did in planning this meeting, and we are in awe of Mary's comment at the business meeting that she considers it an honor to be able to plan these annual meetings for us.

Until we meet next year, may God bless each of us!



## Research Equipment

By: Jason McHale, Bent Prop Project

Hello everyone! It is an honor to be able to address all of you again after meeting many of you only a short time ago. I cannot express my gratitude enough for the warm welcome you gave me at your reunion in Greenville. It was an incredible experience. Thanks to all of you for your hospitality.

One question I was asked at the reunion is what equipment I use when conducting research at the archives. I'd like to take this opportunity to go over what equipment we use, how it is set up, and some of the methods we use to keep track of what we've captured and reviewed.

When going into the archives, my basic research kit includes: a laptop, extra hard drive, articulating tripod, and a camera. If we are looking into capturing photographs, we will also bring a flatbed scanner in order to obtain high resolution scans of the photographs.

The tripod we use is a Manfrotto 055. It has an articulating head as well as a 90 degree column arm that allows for the camera to be positioned directly over documents. Any tripod that has the 90 degree arm can be used in this situation. The camera attached to the tripod is a Canon EOS Rebel T6i with a standard zooming lens and shutter remote. The Rebel T6i has a moveable touchscreen that is useful for ensuring you have the documents and camera properly

aligned.

The tripod has the column arm set to 90 degrees with the camera mounted over the documents. This setup allows for quick capture of documents because you can flip through the folders while using the shutter remote to quickly snap a picture of each page.



The setup in action

The National Archives also has smartphone camera stands available to those who want to use their phones to take pictures of documents.

If we are looking at photographs, we use a large flatbed scanner to obtain high resolutions scans of them. We use an Epson Perfection V370 Photo for our scanning purposes.

Along with ensuring quality pictures of the documents, it's also important to keep track of what you are capturing. We create daily "Archive Trackers" which are Word documents noting what records we requested and reviewed that day, what documents we captured, and didn't capture, and the record request information if we need to look at them again. We also take pictures of the record request pull slips and the boxes themselves to add to our records. This helps if we ever need to pull the records again. We can quickly do so

without having to go back into the catalog or finding aids.

This setup and system allows us to maximize our time at the archives in terms of document collection and record keeping while also being easy to transport to various locations.

I'd be glad to answer any questions anyone has about conducting research at the archives or about the equipment we use.

## Information Request

By: Paul Van Valkenburg, 501<sup>st</sup>

I received an email from David Bell, curator staff member at MAPS Air Museum in NE Ohio. He is seeking information regarding John W. Gwinn. Bell is assisting a small museum in Lewisburg WV who has Gwinn's A2 jacket. They are looking for any information on Gwinn. I advised him that our records show he was with headquarters but I could not find any other information. Bell sent me photos of the A2, below.



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I told him I would have something put in the next Strafer.

Bell also mentioned that he is aware of another 345<sup>th</sup> member who volunteers at the museum. His name is Ron Armitage. Bell said Armitage was a meteorologist with the group and would fly out ahead of the missions. I don't have any records listing Armitage. Could he have been from another outfit and just attached to the group? Bell is going to ask him when he next sees him.

David Bell's email address is [dvbell@roadrunner.com](mailto:dvbell@roadrunner.com).

## Researching Wartime Histories

*By: Andy Decker, 501<sup>st</sup>*

Have you ever tried solving a crossword puzzle only to be stymied because you have entered a wrong answer that does not allow anything else to make sense? Or maybe you worked diligently on a jigsaw puzzle only to find that there were pieces missing so you couldn't see the whole picture? Well, piecing together the wartime history of deceased relatives can be a similar experience.

Until only recently, records and documents were kept on paper or microfilm. If the papers survived long enough, they might be fortunate enough to be archived in a safer place, but all too often, they could be misplaced, overlooked, put aside, neglected or deemed disposable and their absence not noticed until after the original participants were unavailable. Archived records

have been known to burn or decay despite being in safe repositories. In many cases, the original participants did not document all the answers to our questions and in others, security demands did not allow for the dissemination of all the answers. All of these things can leave gaping holes in our knowledge of our family history.

For those who are only now trying to find answers about passed relatives, the effort comes down to finding everything that is documented about your particular soldier and then doing a lot of reading of the biographies and published stories of those who were fighting in similar units and conditions. As you read and learn, you will find bits of information that can be added to your own file of facts and that can help explain what was going on.

By searching through an attic or storage area, you might be rewarded with an old shoebox full of letters or a footlocker full of wartime memories. Go through what you find with an eye for dates and locations. I found it helpful to start a spreadsheet that later turned into a detailed timeline of my uncle's brief life.

Digital copies of wartime records can be found in many places. Veteran's associations often have websites that offer mission documents associated with their group, the national archives website ([nara.gov](http://nara.gov)) can be searched, commercial sites like [fold3.com](http://fold3.com) offer digital copies of enlistment cards, missing air crew reports and annotated photographs. The US Air Force

itself has several historical research sites that will reply to emails and provide answers or documentation. For WW2 Army Air Force casualties, a file, called the Individual Deceased Personnel File, can be obtained from the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri. Even though it took months for my IDPF to arrive, it was worth the wait and contained many unique documents. Looking through all of these sources can get to be a full-time effort but you will soon accumulate your own personal archive of materials that will help you with your search.

As an example, in my own search for information about the wartime death of an uncle, coming across a stack of letters gave me his bomb group and squadron. An online search put me in contact with members of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association who provided copies of their squadron's mission summaries for the day of his last mission. Contacting the Air Force Historical Support Office got me a copy of the Missing Air Crew Report for his airplane. Emailing the Air Force Historical Research Agency ended up with me purchasing several rolls of microfilm that held documents for the 501<sup>st</sup> BS. Looking back, getting access to his letters home was the one event that really opened the gates for more information. Once I knew his military unit, the number of search results increased incredibly.

One of the first books I read was by a 38<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group pilot who was flying B-25's in New Guinea just prior to the arrival of the 345<sup>th</sup> BG in the Pacific. He described how

early strafing tactics involved four aircraft flying in a diamond formation, with the airplane at the rear of the diamond flying higher than the other three. In too many cases, that fourth airplane was shot down or suffered more damage than the others in the flight. The author went on to say that the tactics were changed to three airplane formations because planes that were flying *differently* (in this case, higher) received more attention from enemy machine gunners on the ground and enemy fighters in the air.

Later in my research, I happened across an article in the newsletter of an Australian Beaufort bomber association that described how one of their airplanes was shot up and crashed in the surf near the But plantation on the north coast of New Guinea. All four crewmen survived the crash but only one managed to get back to Allied lines by working his way west along the coast until a friendly patrol boat picked him up eight days later. The crash of his aircraft was one day before the B-25 with my uncle aboard crashed about two miles farther along the coast to the east. The Aussie described surviving Allied bombing and strafing attacks that occurred after surviving his first nights in the jungle.

Next, I came across some documents that were statements from the aircrews of the lead and left wing airplanes that had been flying with my uncle. One statement mentioned that during the strafing run, the lead and left wingman investigated a crashed,

smoking, twin-engine airplane ("Beaufort or A-20") in the surf one and one half miles west of the Dagua airdrome. When they returned to their strafing run, their right wingman was not with them.



Lt. Warren Everett, Andy's uncle

So, from all those disparate sources, it would seem possible that when the two aircraft investigated the crashed Beaufort, my uncle's plane was the only thing left for the enemy gunners to shoot at. They were the *different* airplane and as such may have garnered more of the attention of the enemy machine gunners hidden beneath the palm trees and on the steep hillsides south of the Dagua airdrome, which is a few miles east of But. Purely conjecture on my part, I admit. But all those unrelated bits of information can help to answer the big question of, "Why was this particular airplane shot down?"



The Tin Liz, Andy's uncle's plane. Picture credited to the late Gerald Sims, by way of Duffy and Tess Soto.

Making all this information even more meaningful, I found a large, online collection of WW2-era maps at the Perry-Castaneda Library at the University of Texas in Austin that helped put all the geography in order. Between those old maps and the current satellite images available online, a bigger, more complete picture of my uncle's time in New Guinea became clearer.

Another problem that is becoming apparent as I expand my research on missing aircrews is that nobody ever really knew exactly where they were (and that even holds true through the Vietnam War). There was no GPS available for use so they had to depend on dead reckoning. Many descriptions of crash site locations are too vague or general to be helpful in finding wreckage. Issued maps were not very precise in many cases. Often times, there was only one navigator for an entire flight of aircraft, so putting a geographic location to an event could have come down to best estimates or guesses during a debriefing. Documents might offer actual geographic coordinates as a crash site location, but they frequently turn out to be incorrect, perhaps because the observer did not really know their own location. Add to this the necessity of converting coordinates between different geographic coordinate systems and the challenge of knowing where they thought they were gets even more interesting.

Twenty-six years after starting this family history project, I have a good idea of my uncle's time in

New Guinea, the missions that he flew, and the circumstances of his death. I still find important new documents to add to the collection every once in a while. Persistence seems to be the key to finding answers to old questions.

## The Missing Man Table



The Missing Man Table is a place of honor, and was present during the reunion-meeting Sunday evening banquet and at every reunion meeting banquet. Jim Bina gave a narrative to the audience explaining the symbolism of each item.

The table is set for one and is small, symbolizing the frailty of one missing soldier. The table is round, to represent everlasting concern on the part of the survivors for their missing loved ones.

The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms.

A single red rose in the vase, signifies the blood that many have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America.

The red ribbon represents the love of country, which inspired them to answer the nation's call.

A slice of lemon on the bread plate represents the bitter fate of the missing.

The lit candle is reminiscent of the light of hope which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation.

The empty chair represents the missing and fallen that are not present.

Salt sprinkled on the bread plate is symbolic of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

The inverted glass represents the fact that the missing and fallen cannot partake.

## The Chennault Museum

By: Cindy Hillman, 501<sup>st</sup>



At the reunion banquet, we were surprised to hear Mary mention the Chennault Museum in Monroe, LA. We came in to the reunion in our RV and were scheduled to spend the night in Monroe, so we checked it out before heading home.

We were greeted by a very nice lady named Kay and she really gave us the VIP treatment! She first took us into a small theater and showed us two short film clips, then we toured the museum.

The museum is located in one of the last buildings of Selman Field Army Air Corps Navigation School, and is very personalized, really focusing on individuals and concentrating on Monroe area vets and specifically highlighting the career of General Chennault.

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## Recent Deaths

We have recently heard of the deaths of veterans USAF Major General Leonard Hilding "Jake" Jacobson (Ret) and Roger W Lovett. It was our privilege to have Roger attend the last reunion held in Dayton, Ohio in 2015.

Additionally, we are very sorry to report the death of Laurence C. "Larry" Hanna. Larry was the son of Cliff Hanna, who was well known in the 345<sup>th</sup> for his films of wartime activity and who began the Hanna Fund. Larry continued with generous contributions to the organization (after all the squadron groups merged into one) in support of our annual reunions.

We also lost Rachel Haynie, the author of "Cornfield to Airfield: A History of Columbia Army Air Base," who provided much assistance with the 2012 reunion in Columbia, SC, and the dedication of the plaque commemorating the formation of the 345<sup>th</sup> BG on November 11, 1942. Rachel became a personal friend and we will miss her.

We have also received news of the death of George Givens. George last attended a reunion in Columbia in 2012, where he, Quentin Stambaugh, and Mary Roby had the thrill of flying in Betty's Dream as it flew over Gamecock Stadium after the playing of the National Anthem. Thanks also to George for the many installments of his WWII memories that have appeared in the Strafer.

*We extend sympathy to all the families of those who have recently lost loved ones.*

**Note to our Members and Friends.** Thank you for your membership in the 345<sup>th</sup> 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 345<sup>th</sup>.

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Please check if new

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

I am a:

345<sup>th</sup> Vet or Widow  345<sup>th</sup> 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.**

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

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

**Clint Roby, Treasurer  
345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association  
PO Box 8755  
Roanoke, VA 24014**

*Thank you!!*

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Squadron Representatives

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