



AIR APACHES

STRAFER

Volume 37, Issue 2

August 2020

President's Message Mary Roby, 500th

I have been suffering from “procrastination syndrome” during the Covid-19 isolation—this Strafer should have been out last month. But in the end, I am glad it wasn't. In just the last week or so, I have received a lot of interesting things to share and it is also a good time to remind you that we are celebrating the end of WWII 75 years ago this month.

First, though, the bad news. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact every aspect of our lives, we made the decision to cancel the 2020 reunion scheduled for October in San Antonio, TX. At this time, no decision has been made about any reunions next year, although we hold out hope we will be able to gather again. Your thoughts about how, and when, to best reunite would be much appreciated.

We were looking forward to dedicating a plaque to the 345th Bomb Group at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg. The plaque is already in place at the museum and we will dedicate it when we are able to visit. Thanks to Marc Stevens for suggesting the plaque and to Stephanie Hagee, of the museum, for her assistance and support. If you live in or visit Texas, I hope you will visit the museum and see the plaque.

We are still accepting donations for the plaque. If you would like to contribute, please make your check payable to the 345th Bomb Group Association and mail to Clint Roby, Treasurer, to the address on the back of The Strafer. Thank you very much for supporting this project. We would like to thank all those who have contributed this year—John Turner, Michael Romano, Albert Heydt, Kim Miller, Karen Cessna, and Jan Rary. Please note that if you contributed through Facebook, we receive a grouped

check from Network for Good. This means we may not know the names of all contributors. Of course, each gift to the plaque is appreciated.



Stephanie Hagee, Director of Memorials for the Admiral Nimitz Foundation at the Museum of the Pacific War in 4 Fredericksburg, TX with the new 345th Bomb Group plaque.

Irving Horwitz Gets His Medals Kelly McNichol, 500th

Sometimes innocent conversations take one in directions unforeseen. My good friend, former 500th BS pilot, Lynn Daker and I spoke over the phone several times a week. After Lynn passed away, I often find myself calling his navigator, Irving Horwitz, just to talk. I don't know if Irv benefits from the time on the phone, but I enjoy the calls. We've spoken on many topics over the years, but one last year sticks out for me.

Last summer, I asked him who would receive his WWII service awards when he had passed on. He told me that no one would because he had no medals. I couldn't understand this statement knowing that he should have received several service commendations. I had a photo of him accepting an Air Medal from General Crabb. I asked why he had no medals.



Irving Horwitz with his Replacement Medals, photo by Joe Horwitz

Several years ago, Irv had a medical issue which necessitated a person to help with daily activities. Irv explained that this trusted person stole his medals and military records for some unknown reason. This

saddened me. I was aware from others in the 345th BG, that he was entitled to the Air Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, Asiatic Pacific Medal and Good Conduct Medal at a minimum.

My U.S. Senator from Kansas, Jerry Moran, has been instrumental in procuring military awards for quite a few veterans in my local area. If the family agrees, an individual service member or family member signs official papers that allow me to make requests for that person. Senator Moran was successful in six out of eight requests that I submitted. In the past, those individuals typically had some Kansas ties. In one instance the veteran resided in another state but was originally from my home state.

I shared with Irv the possibility of attempting to replace the stolen medals through my Senator, but he indicated that his brother had tried once and had no luck. From experience, I know individuals making requests to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO frequently receive a reply indicating the records were destroyed in a fire. The solution to this problem is "who you know". A "no" reply means you haven't found the correct person to speak with. Senator Moran, in my view, appears to be that person.

In June of 2019 I contacted Senator Moran's office in Olathe, KS and explained the situation concerning Irv. I also communicated that Mr. Horwitz was nearing his 100th birthday. The aide in the Senator's office mentioned the request for medal replacement be made through the Congressional office of Irv's home state of New Jersey. I understood this was the normal course of action, but I reminded her the Senator's Office had successfully requested service awards for an out of state individual for me in the past. I emphasized the significance of Irv's upcoming birthday. My contact, Michelle, told me that she wanted to make a phone call and would get in back to me shortly. Within a few minutes she returned the call and said, "we'll do it."

This process is never quick. Michelle called me sometime in January and excitedly offered that the medals had been received by Senator Moran's office. She added, "there's a lot of them". I had been in contact with Hope, wife of Irv's great nephew Joe, keeping her updated on the developments. Senator Moran's office forwarded the service awards to Hope for safekeeping.

My dream was for the Medal Awards Ceremony to be held early this spring with officers from Ft. Dix presenting Irving Horwitz with his WWII service decorations, bestowing all the pomp and ceremony the occasion requires. My friend Jimmy Goldman, son of former 498th BS member Nathan Goldman, had contacted a person he knew from the Jewish War Veterans of the USA who was willing to be part of the festivities. I am convinced many of the 345th BG members would have attended. However, this is not a perfect world. The Covid-19 shutdown threw all plans into chaos and Irv indicated that unless all veterans were given the same honor, he would decline anything special.

Ultimately, the proposed ceremony never took place, but because of all the efforts of many individuals, Irv Horwitz did receive his long-lost awards on Memorial Day: a fitting tribute to a great and humble man.

Thanks to Jimmy, Hope, Joe and all others who made this happen. Senator Jerry Moran and Michelle from his Olathe office are to be commended for their extraordinary efforts. The Senator is currently batting seven out of nine for me, a remarkable percentage.

The lesson I learned is this; when a cause is honorable, an amazing number of people are willing to arise and help. A thief took something not earned, but through the efforts of many, the misdeed was corrected.

A Possible Ray of Hope

By Jim Briggs, 501st

This is an update to what I wrote in the March 2019 "Strafer" about the efforts by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) to find the last remains of my father (the pilot) and the five other crewmen on his B-25, which went down on 9 January 1945. They were on a mission from Tacloban Airfield in the central Philippines to support the initial Allied landing on Luzon Island in the northern Philippines, where Manila is located. My father's case is pretty unique: his crash site was definitely found in May 1963, but then its exact location in very difficult terrain was "lost to history" as the U.S. military decided not to pursue the case (a difficult to locate and access site some 5,000 feet up on Mt. Halcon on Mindoro Island) as it started focusing its

resources on Vietnam. But it does reflect some of the difficulties in resolving MIA cases: under almost any circumstances, it is a labor-intensive and time-consuming process - and nothing happens quickly. As one example, another plane on the 9 January mission - from the 498th Squadron, flown by 1st Lt. Wallace Chalifoux, with a crew of six - took off from Tacloban around 0430 hours and was never seen or heard from again. It was not until October 1992 that two locals came across the wreckage of Chalifoux's plane in a remote area of Sibuyan Island (where my father's plane was assumed originally to have gone down). Found among the wreckage were more than 100 bones and teeth. According to a newspaper report, relatives were asked for DNA samples in 1998 and, after the identification process was completed in March 2000, the remains of the crewmen were buried together with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery on 3 November 2000, with family members attending.

After three years of sending lengthy letters (with supporting documentation) to the highest levels of DPAA - Chief/Past Conflicts Repatriation Branch, Principal Deputy Director, and (most recently) the Director - I have finally gotten DPAA's acknowledgement that more than one crash site was almost certainly visited in the search for my father's plane in 1963 and 1973 (they had adamantly maintained that only one site was visited, despite all evidence to the contrary in the written record). The reason this is important to me, beyond trying to insure that my father's case summary is as accurate as possible for future reference, is that a B-24 Liberator flying from southern Mindoro to Luzon disappeared without a trace on 6 June 1945 with 24 men on board. DPAA has no idea where it might have gone down, but the flight plan had the plane flying west of Mount Halcon in terrible weather. The Filipino businessman prominently involved in efforts in September 1973 to find my father's crash site claimed to have the ID tag of the B-24 co-pilot, citing the exact details on the tag. The team leader in 1973 got my father's flight school ring and the ID tag of the radio operator on my father's plane from the Filipino businessman, but the written record makes no mention of any follow-up on the ID tag of the B-24 co-pilot. There is no indication of where/how the businessman might have gotten it, but it would not

seem illogical to imagine it having been found on Mindoro Island. Thus, there is at least the potential possibility of resolving the MIA cases of 30 men - six on my father's plane and 24 on the B-24 - and not just six, raising the stakes for DPAA considerably. To put this in perspective, from 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019 DPAA accounted for a total of 217 formerly "missing" personnel from past conflicts (their highest total ever), including 140 from World War II. (There are still over 72,000 "missing" from World War II, out of 82,000 total from all conflicts.)

DPAA holds "Family Member Update" conferences for MIA families around the country every year; at the one in Las Vegas on 25 January, I talked to the DPAA director, as well as the lead DPAA historian on World War II losses in the Philippines. The latter had by far the most significant news: an "investigation team" that went to the Philippines in 2013, tasked with looking into my father's case, had gotten no leads on anything but had contacted a local Mindoro Island tourism official, who had said he would forward any information he might acquire in future about crash sites on the island. Subsequent case summaries on my father always stated: "DPAA has been attempting, without success, to reestablish contact with the tourism

officer." This year, clearly in preparation for meeting me in Las Vegas, the lead historian had had a Filipino who worked for him try again, and he was able to contact the tourism officer, who said he had "sent a local resident to a crash site with a disposable camera." I am still waiting to hear about photos. (As I said, nothing happens quickly.)

In a letter I received recently, the DPAA director wrote: "Our goal is to place this case on our Master List so as to appropriately plan for an organic or partner team to locate and correlate any crash sites in the Mount Halcon area to that of your father's in 2021/2022." I'm quite pleased at what seems to be progress. DPAA had been telling me conflicting versions of their "plans" for some 5 years; in recent years, they had made it clear that their only plan was to "explore the possibility of using a partner in the region to locate and survey" possible sites, most likely in 3-4 years' time.

It's hard not to think that any photos taken of a "crash site" might be directly relevant, either to my father's case or that of the B-24. I've written to the DPAA director for more information, but it's uncertain when I might hear back.

345th Member, George Cooper, Recognized in New Book by Jay Stout

At age 100, Colonel George L. Cooper is one of the few Air Apaches still with us. In fact, just a couple of years ago during the writing of *Air Apaches—The True Story of the 345th Bomb Group and Its Low, Fast, and Deadly Missions in World War II*, I wasn't able to locate anyone, including Cooper, who had flown with the group during the early part of the war.

But George was there. And I only found him when his daughter called me in April 2019, after he had read *Air Apaches*. She said that George had enjoyed how it reconnected him with old friends and memories. She also said that although he was a little hard of hearing, that he would enjoy talking with me if I had the time.

I did have the time, and I was excited to do so. Because I had flown in the Marine Corps for twenty years, we were able to share pilot stories. It was interesting to me that although the technology has certainly changed, the stories about military flying are

pretty much the same. I guess it's because human nature doesn't change much regardless of what generation we're talking about. And human nature dictates how the aircraft are flown. Now, I'm no spring chicken, but bear in mind that the Colonel was born when Woodrow Wilson was president!

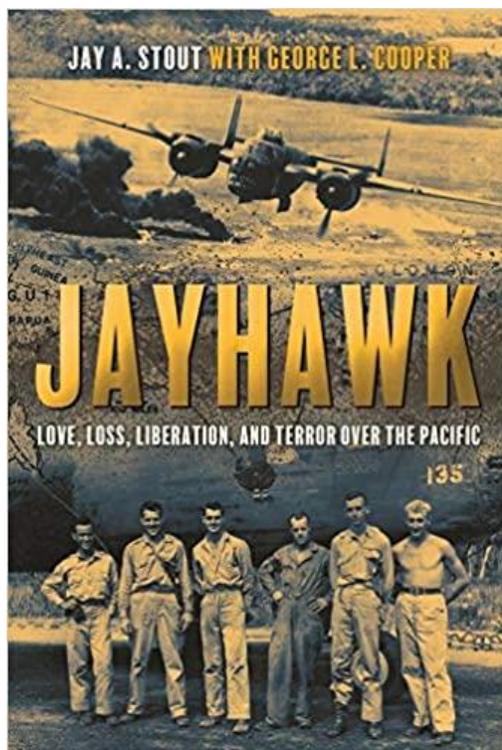


Col. George L. Cooper, Ret. and Jay Stout, author

The more we chatted, the more I became interested in George's story. He had been born and raised in the Philippines to accomplished parents, and his childhood experiences were unlike virtually any other flyer in World War II. He came to the States just before the war started so that he could make enough money to attend Kansas University. As it developed, that had to wait until after VJ Day.

After earning his wings during the summer of 1942, George was one of the very first to help stand up the 345th. Following unit training he went with the rest of the group to New Guinea and started fighting against the same enemy that had imprisoned his family in the Philippines. As you might guess, his stories of flying and fighting at fifty feet at the controls of the redoubtable B-25 were spectacular.

I recognized that there was a book's worth of experience in George's story and persuaded him to let me write it. I traveled to his home in Tongonoxie, Kansas, a few weeks later and we had a fine couple of days talking and researching together. He still lives independently in his own home on many acres of farmland. I don't know if it's clean living or genetics, but you'll note from the photograph that he looks more like my older brother than a colleague of my deceased grandfather.



Working with Colonel Cooper was a great experience, and the resulting book, *Jayhawk—Love, Loss, Liberation and Terror over the Pacific*, is something I'm very proud of. Not just for the stories of air combat, but for how it conveys George's personal actions and feelings. It's just been published and I'm hoping that he is as pleased with it as I am.

Obituaries and Notifications



George W. Blair, longtime Sturgis area rancher and former state legislator, died on Jan. 1, 2020. He was born in Sturgis, SD on Aug. 24, 1921 and grew up on the family ranch in Pleasant Valley, graduating from Sturgis High School in 1939.

After World War II broke out, he began taking flying lessons from the legendary Clyde Ice in Spearfish and attending classes at Black Hills State. It was there that he met his future wife, Viola, in Algebra class. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1942 and flew 47 missions as the pilot of a B-25 in the Pacific Theater. On his final mission, his plane was shot down and he had to ditch in the South China Sea. He and his crew were rescued by a U.S. submarine.

Following the war, he married his college sweetheart, Viola, and they ranched in Harding County, SD, before moving to his childhood home in Pleasant Valley.

George was active in many state and local organizations throughout his life. In 1978, he was elected to the SD House of Representatives and served 4 terms in Pierre. Integrity, courage, and determination were hallmarks of his character.

He is survived by eight children, including our member Gayle Urban and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Reed Robertson, 500th
1921 – October 23, 2018

William Paukovich, Pilot, 500th
May 4, 1922 - July 12, 2019



Paul W. Rush, Navigator-Bombardier, 500th
March 3, 1921 – July 23, 2019

Note: Mr. Rush is the photographer of the images from late in the war

Fred Shoemaker, B-25 Mechanic, 501st
April 19, 1924 – March 28, 2020

Crae Hillman (son of Carol Best Hillman)
June 15, 1969 – May 7, 2020

We are extremely sad to report that Covid-19 has touched our 345th family. After suffering a heart attack, and triple bypass surgery, Crae succumbed to Covid-19. Please take the virus seriously and stay safe!

We extend our sympathy to all our 345th family and friends who have recently lost loved ones.

Congratulations

to our friend, Colin Colbourn, from Project Recover, on receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Southern Mississippi, and on the publication of his first book,

**The Marines
"Semper Fi"**

OUR WEB PRESENCE

Have you visited our web page or Facebook page lately?

Our Facebook page has over 1500 followers who post questions and interesting material about 345th veterans and general WWII information. If you post a picture or story, you will probably get a number of responses. It's a good way to share pictures, letters, etc. about the veteran in your family.

Did you know that all The Strafers are posted on our website at www.345thbombgroup.org? The very first listing is the 1979 "Apache Journal" that went into some detail about the third reunion that had been held in September 1979 in Colorado Springs. The reunion was well attended and it is fun to read about who was present and the activities.

It's likely in the future that we will decrease the number of Strafers per year, because we will soon drop under the minimum number to receive the nonprofit postage rate, which is also ever-increasing. So, I urge you to take a look and get familiar with the website and Facebook so we can keep in touch between Strafers and future reunions.

**The deadline for the next
Strafer will be**

November 1, 2020.

Please contact Mary Roby if you have a story or picture idea, or some news about 345th veterans or members.

"More than just an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars." ~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

75 Years Ago: Images from War's End

In August of 1945, the Air Apaches were given the great honor of intercepting and escorting the two Japanese "Betty" bombers that were transporting the peace emissaries who were to initiate the Japanese surrender.

Arthur Rush contacted me to see if we would be interested in some photos from a box he found recently that were taken by his father, Paul W. Rush. Paul Rush (500th) was a pilot who did not go overseas until nearly the end of the war. From Arthur, *"He had the same shot of the 345th sign at Ie Shima that you use on website. He was in Greenville in June of 45. Took a train to Salinas, CA. Arrived in Ie Shima in August of 45. Transported on LST 765 to Fukuoka in November of 45. Stationed there at the American occupied Ashiya Airfield, Japan. He got back to Georgia in the spring of '46."*



*Rush traveled by train to Salinas, CA
June 1945.*



*Air Apaches sign at Ie Shima when
Paul Rush arrived in August 1945*

Bylaws and Membership: & the Future of the 345th

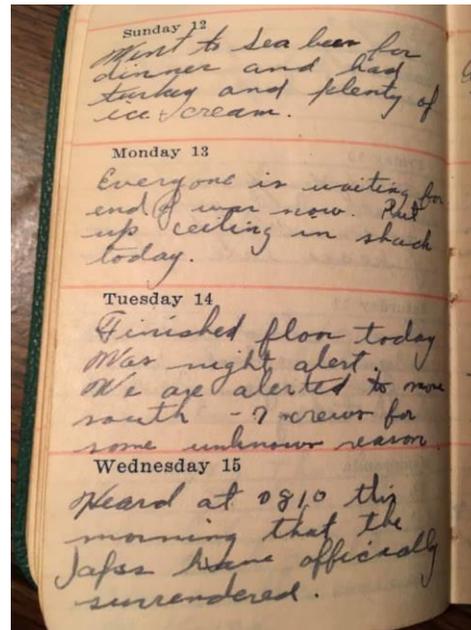
An ongoing project for the Association has been the revision of our bylaws, or the rules by which the organization operates. We have been working on this for several years, as many things have changed because of how many active members we have and general operations of the 345th Bomb Group Association as a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.

Following our 2019 meeting in Ypsilanti, MI, Jim Bina, Dennis O'Neill, Marith Reheis, Lynne Victorine (President of the Roanoke Valley Unit of the National Association of Parliamentarians) and I reviewed the draft. With Lynne's help, we streamlined and improved language to make it easier to understand and to reflect the reality of operating in a time when many WWII organizations are ceasing to exist. That draft is now ready to present to the membership.

Some of the new provisions involve reducing the number of officers and staggering from year to year their election. The new version also states that we will hold an Annual Meeting during the months of September or October. We intended that the new bylaws be voted on this summer, become effective immediately, and that new officers would be elected at the Annual Meeting that was planned for October. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will be doing this a bit differently. I have asked Paul Van Valkenburg to post the current bylaws and the proposed bylaws to our website.

In the next month or so, members will receive a ballot in the mail. So, if next to your name on the back of The Strafer there is a "2020" or "LIFE" notation, you will receive a ballot. If not, and you would like to receive a ballot, please pay your membership dues for this year. Remember, it's \$15 for veterans and their spouses/widows and \$35 for everyone else. *Please note: we did away with LIFE memberships some years ago but continue to recognize veteran/spouse/widow LIFE memberships.*

The future of the 345th Bomb Group Association depends on you, its members and friends. Second generation leaders of the Association are getting older themselves and we need younger members willing to take on tasks and leadership roles. Please contact me if you might be interested in working on educational programs or events, helping boost membership, or overseeing outreach efforts through social or other media. I look forward to hearing from you. MSR

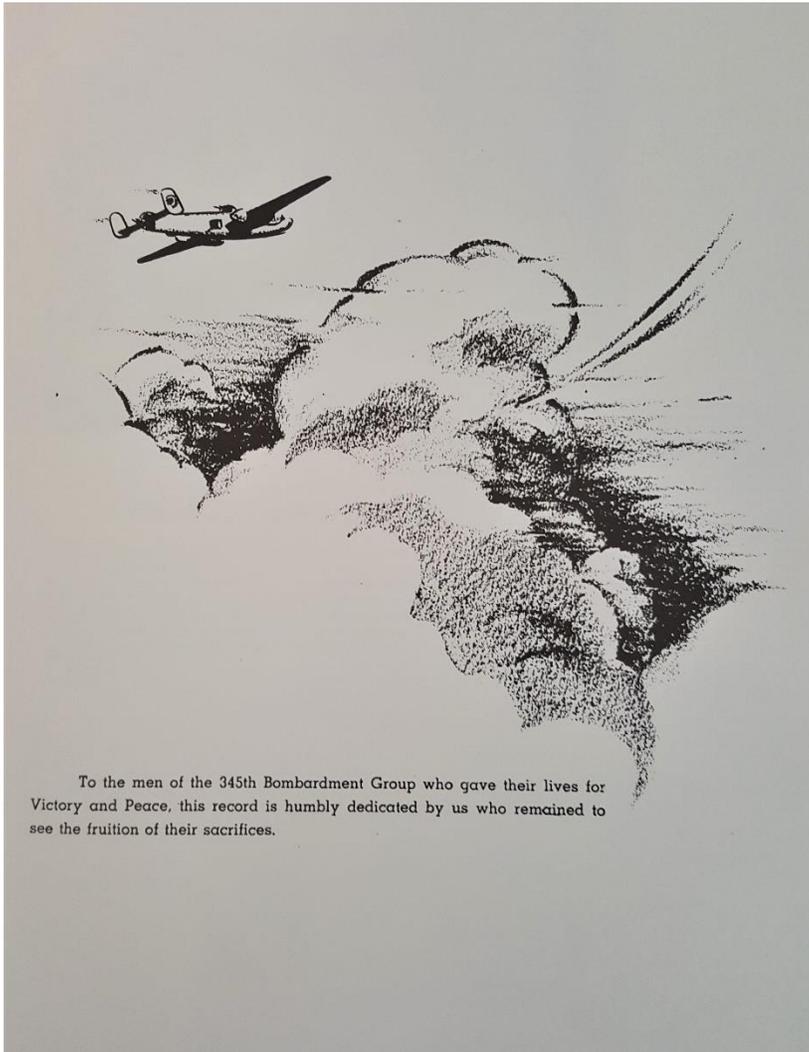


Linck Grush's diary entries for the week of The Japanese surrender. Courtesy Dave Grush



Recreation at Ie Shima; Rush photo. Does anyone know anything about the small airplane?

**Dedication to the Men of the 345th from
Warpath: A Story of the 345th Bombardment Group (M) The
Air apaches in World War II**



To the men of the 345th Bombardment Group who gave their lives for Victory and Peace, this record is humbly dedicated by us who remained to see the fruition of their sacrifices.

Mission Report for August 15

On a mission to the Sea of Japan, the airplanes were directed to turn back. So, the mission was not completed, but the war was over!

To: 345th Group S-2
From: 500th Sqn S-22

THE SUPER FINAL TO END ALL FINALS - THERE AIN'T NO MORE!

A. WFO 227-A-X 5 15 August 1945 500th Bomb Sq 6 B-25's

B. Shipping - SEA OF JAPAN.

E. TO: 0530/I
Nil search
LAND: 0955/I.

D. Mission incomplete, war completed. A/P's turned back over DANJO (3200N-12827E) while circling for rendezvous with fighters at 0745/I because of radio message ordering all planes back to base.

E, F, G, H & I. Nil

J. Setd cumulus, 5/10 cover before message received - not a cloud in the world afterward.

K. Crews expressed viewpoint that mission was most successful of any the Group had ever participated in - "the Nips heard we were coming, so they quit."

L. All bombs and ammo returned to base.



A Bombed-out Church in Manila; Rush photo

Vic Tatelman was President of the 345th Bomb Group Association in 1995. Following are his thoughts on 50th anniversary of the end of WWII.

The 50th anniversary of the war's end is coming up. Those of us who were called back from that August 14th (15th) mission will never forget the question and the hope that this was the end. We didn't know until we landed back at Ie Shima the reason for the recall, but a lot of us guessed.

For the non-flying people, it had been a long time since that ship had left California, and for those of us in the flight echelons who persisted from Columbia, that fearsome first leg from Hamilton to Hickam seemed like eons ago.

The airplanes we flew were pretty damn good considering the state of the art 50 years ago. We had very few mechanical problems. Oh, there were a few prop governor runaways and oil pump failures, but on the whole, you fellows who maintained those airplanes were magnificent. I remember specifically an occasion where an airplane came back from a mission pretty shot up; both engines had to be changed. Would you believe both engines were changed **OVERNIGHT** and that airplane was ready for a mission the next day?! To this day I don't know how you did it; out

in the open, without adequate lighting, without sophisticated lifting equipment (those engines and props are heavy,) and only hand tools. No one would believe it today. It took six months to change an engine on our B-25 this past winter, inside a hangar and with modern equipment.

Our pilots were pretty damn good too, considering that most had just been out of flying school for a relatively short time. I imagine most had fewer than 200 hours TOTAL time and perhaps 50 hours in B-25s when our group was formed in Columbia or when a replacement pilot joined us. But experience and skill develop rapidly with the kind of flying that was called for in that environment.

Even taxiing that airplane became an art. You can tell a lot about a pilot by the way he taxis. Judicious use of power and brakes and careful steering through the turns is the mark of a skilled pilot.

Which reminds me... I think we were at Dobodura where we had to taxi quite far and over some rough spots in the taxiway to get to the takeoff runway. No matter how slowly you taxied over one particular bad stretch of the taxiway, the ride was bone jarring. I remember my comment one time to the crew on the intercom, "I've been showing Willie how to taxi the airplane. I will now take over for the rest of the way to the runway." Of course, the worst was over and the ride was relatively smooth to the runway. Sneaky!

I think there were some 4500 people that "went through" our group from activation in November 1942 to deactivation in November 1945 and almost 1000 casualties. We didn't like to think about the almost weekly diminutions. I'll bet, even to this day, each of us can remember a particular friend, of course the way he was, whose life was finished without being completed. So, this coming August 15th, drink a toast and say a silent prayer for that particular friend, of course the way he was.

Note to our Members and Friends. Thank you for your membership in the 345th Bomb Group Association, which is 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
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 urge you to share any information you may have with the Association, by scanning and sending to the Association on a flash drive or DVD.

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

Please check here if enclosing a special gift for the 345th Plaque at the Museum of the Pacific War

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

Have you paid your 2020 dues?

*Only \$15 for veterans and their spouses/widows.
Other individual memberships are \$35 per year.*

Your support enables us to publish The Strafer, maintain our web presence, install and maintain our 345th monuments, and (usually!) hold our Annual Reunions. Additional contributions beyond membership are much appreciated!

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

President

Mary Sloan Roby (500th)
PO Box 8755
Roanoke, VA 24014
410-963-8693
mroby1916@gmail.com

Vice President

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

Secretary

Janice Rary (499th)
604 6th Street
Marietta, OH 45750
740-376-0540
janrary@suddenlink.net

Treasurer

Clint Roby (500th)
PO Box 8755
Roanoke, VA 24014
443-413-6458
croby001@gmail.com

Historian

Jim Bina (501st)
5115 Mary Ann Lane
Oklahoma City, OK 73150
703-680-1057
jamesbina@verizon.net

Squadron Representatives

498th "Fighting Falcons"

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

499th "Bats Outa Hell"

Bob Sweet
4934 Western Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-229-0493
sweet@hood.edu

500th "Rough Raiders"

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

501st "Black Panthers"

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