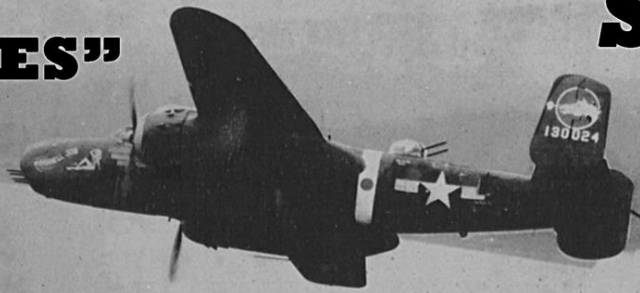


**“AIR
APACHES”**

STRAFER



Wakde Island

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2011



This Christmas card was addressed to the 501st Squadron's B-25 'Tin Liz' in 1943 and was delivered to Gerald Sims, the airplane's crew chief in New Guinea. Laura Ruby, of Tacoma, Washington sent the card but her ties to the airplane remain a mystery.



ROUGH RAIDERS **500th SQUADRON**

By: Kelly McNichols

Several years ago I was privileged to help with a memorial service for a 500th Bomb Squadron gunner named Finley C. Smith, Jr. Finley, along with the entire crew of Seabiscuit, was killed off the China coast on April 6, 1945 while attacking the Japanese destroyer Amatsukaze. A service with full military honors was held in his hometown of Mankato, KS sixty years to the day after he was killed. As a result of that service I became acquainted with an Army chaplain at Ft. Riley, KS who helped me with the ins and outs of planning because I have no military background. I later found that this chaplain has a jump rating and leaps from perfectly good airplanes. The fact perplexed me somewhat. I was erroneously under the impression that military chaplains stayed out of harm's way. That was an incorrect assumption.

Chaplain John Messer suggested that I read the book entitled No Greater Love by Dan Kurzman. It detailed the lives of four chaplains who went down with the transport ship USAT Dorchester on Feb. 3, 1943 in the icy waters of the North Atlantic off Greenland. All four men, Rev. George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Rev. Clark V. Poling and Fr. John P. Washington, were as different as individuals could be, but they all had the common goal of saving as many lives as possible. They sacrificed their own lives to save others.

When I was introduced to former 500th BS tail gunner, Ben Muller, I met a truly unique individual. Ben had been shot

down April 3, 1945 and was a Japanese prisoner until the end of the war. "I was not long for this world", he once told me. He weighed less than 90 pounds and spent months in hospitals after he was rescued on Hainan Island. Ben mentioned that on the day he was shot down, he later learned; his father had traveled to see him at San Marcelino. The unique part of this story is Ben's father, Alfred C. Muller, was an Army chaplain. I've often tried to imagine how Chaplain Muller dealt with the fact that he was to minister to the troops although his son had been shot down and presumably killed. What agony that must have been. I asked Ben if he and his father discussed the incident at the conclusion of the war. He reflected, "We never really talked about it". Chaplain Muller went on to help with a Baptist seminary in Mexico after the war. Ben sent me a photo from 1943 of the two sitting on the hood of a jeep.



At the recent reunion in St. Louis, I overheard a conversation from one of the 498th members stating that his squadron's chaplain was the longest serving in WWII. After I returned home, I thought that I'd do some checking into this claim. I called the Chaplain's Office at Ft. Riley who in turn had me contact the U.S. Army Chaplain Museum at Ft. Jackson, SC. According to the information provided, Chaplain (Maj) Edward Adam Kozlowski was the longest serving chaplain in the 345th Bomb Group. Fr. Kozlowski served from Nov. 30, 1943 through Dec. 4, 1945. He was appointed as chaplain Feb. 25, 1942 and was placed on inactive duty in the reserves on July 1, 1950.

Another individual with ties to the 345thBG was Chaplain Edward J. Karnis. Before he became a priest and chaplain, 1/Lt. Karnis was a navigator for the 499thBS. He was on 1/Lt. John Baeta's crew when they were forced to ditch March 11, 1945. According to *Warpath Across the Pacific*, Karnis nearly fell through an open hatch in the floor as crew members were stripping everything to lighten the plane. He first served as chaplain for the Delaware National Guard and Army Reserves from 1961-1966. He then served with the Army from 1966 until his retirement in 1985 as a full colonel-a span of 24 years.

Over 9000 chaplains served during WWII. The museum at Ft. Jackson has recorded 107 chaplains and five chaplain assistants killed in the war.

In addition to the customary officer positions, the 345th Bomb Group Association has our own chaplain. Elected in 2010, Don Rary follows in the same tradition of chaplains serving in the military. If anyone needs to talk to

someone, consider sharing with Chaplain Rary (740-376-0540). I'm sure he will do his best to help, regardless of the problem.

For those of us who never flew combat missions, it is often difficult to comprehend what the air crews faced. My good friend Lynn Daker once told me *Air Combat at 20 Feet* by Garrett Middlebrook was the best book he had read which described the type of flying the B-25 strafers were required to perform.

Another book which gives background on the development of air strategy in the Southwest Pacific is *Pappy Gunn* by Nathaniel Gunn. This book follows the life of the legendary Pappy Gunn who developed the strafing concept of attack against Japanese targets. To say that Gunn was a character is probably an understatement. He was also a mechanical genius. Many of the pilots I know still have a reverence for Gunn after all these years because they understand their missions would have been impossible without him. Gunn was the one who put those eight 50 cal. Browning machine guns in the noses of the B-25s. He even put 75 mm cannons in a few.

Lastly, the book *General Kenney Reports* by Gen. George Kenney follows the events which led to the formation of the Fifth Air Force and the air battles through SWPA. It explores in depth the men in leadership roles and the difficult decisions faced. The book follows the many problems encountered in developing techniques to strafe and skip bomb. This is an excellent book for historic background into the type of flying the 3rd Attack, the 38th BG and the 345th BG were forced to confront and the reasons for the strategy.

It has recently come to my attention that there are former WWII Group

members who are unaware of the existence of 345th Bomb Group Association. With the historical significance of the upcoming reunion commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the Group's formation, all of us need to make a special effort to inform those unreached members of the next reunion. It has been suggested that an ad in the American Legion Magazine, DAV magazine or similar publication could be an avenue to contact former members. Any ideas are welcome so let Jim Bina or other officers know how to find those former members. If any of the original members know of anyone who isn't a member of the 345th BG Association, please let us know. We want this to be special because an anniversary such as this is truly monumental.



BLACK PANTHERS **501ST SQUADRON**

By: Paul Van
Valkenburg

We received several requests for information through the website in the past several months. If you remember the servicemen involved or have any information for the families, please send them an email or contact me for assistance.

Randy Butcher, nephew of T/Sgt Leo W. Butcher, of the 500th Squadron, is looking for anyone who remembers Leo or who has any information about the 7 Aug 1943 crash of the C-47 Dakota that went down off Townsville while taking 21 345th personnel to R&R in Sydney, Australia.

Randy sent this picture of T/Sgt Butcher and can be reached at butcherclan@charter.net



T/Sgt Leo W. Butcher (500th)

We also received an email from Ricardo, the VP of the Brazilian Army Museum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Their museum came into possession of the uniform of 2nd Lt. Stephen Toth, a navigator with the 501st. Lt. Toth was aboard the B-25 "Arkansas Traveler" on 30 Jan 1944 when it was shot down over Hansa Bay, New Guinea during a low level attack on shipping.

Ricardo is looking for a photo of Lt. Toth as well any information that could be included in an exhibit at their museum. He can be reached through Paul at paulvanvalkenburg@frontier.com.



HEADQUARTERS

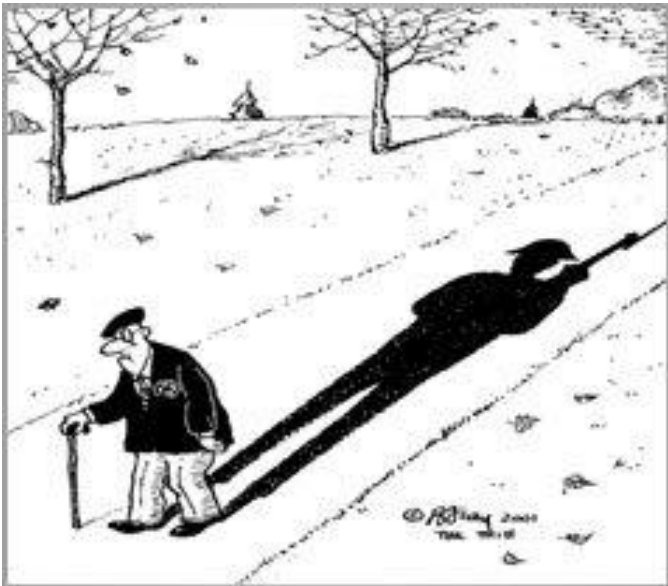
By: Ken Gastgeb

November 11,
Veteran's Day, was
celebrated here in

Norman, OK with a big parade. There were 125 entrants of various types of units. I went with my son in law riding in a 1947 pickup truck, with a twin fifty caliber antiaircraft gun and dragging a large cannon. These were made of wood.

At the end of the parade everyone gathered at the Veteran Memorial for a few speeches. We had a great turnout of 300 or so people. I manage to get on the program and read my poem, "I Was There". I felt very proud reading about what the 345th Bomb Group did in WWII.

GOD BLESS



BATS OUTA HELL

499TH SQUADRON

AIRSTRIIP AT LAE, NEW GUINEA

By: Vic Tatelman

In 1990, I traveled to New Guinea. I visited several of the areas that I had come to know from the cockpit of Dirty Dora. Among them, Lae and the adjoining airstrip were amazingly unrecognizable from my previous visits.

The strike photo dated 16 January 1943 was taken about six months before the Australian troops threw out the Japs as part of the Lae-Nadzab Campaign. Note the bomb craters: we pounded that area for weeks. The Lae airstrip was secured on 1 September 1943 by the members of the Australian Army.



Lae airdrome, 16 January 1943

The photo of 18 September 1943 (18 days after the Japs left) shows the Lae airstrip with five Aussie soldiers walking on the taxiway.



Lae airdrome, 18 September 1943

On our combat mission to Wewak on 5 September 1943, I had to drop out of the formation just as we were to cross the coast above Madang, leaving the Markham Valley.

The weather had closed in so instead of climbing back over the mountains on instruments, I salvoed the bomb load over the mountains (for which I later got hell) and dropped below the cloud deck and followed the coast south toward Lae. When we reached a point opposite the Lae airstrip, I could see the weather had closed in over the mountains to the west, so since Lae was now in Allied hands, I decided to land there and spend the night.

The Aussies put us up that night and with clear weather in the morning we found the problem with the engine and returned to Port Moresby. The 18 September 1943 photo of the Lae strip was how we saw it that day.

On returning to Moresby, I really caught hell because I had neglected to radio our base as to what happened and where we were going. Of course, it was assumed we had gone down in the mountains.

In 1983 I happened to see a photo of Lae in a travel magazine. The arrival of

civilization in that area was startling to say the least.

As part of my 1990 visit, I wanted to see that airstrip, so I rented a small airplane from Jackson Drome (now the municipal airport for Port Moresby) and after a check ride, I flew to Lae. I wanted a photo of the strip taken from the same angle as the photo of 18 September 1943. My 1990 photo is pretty close.



Lae airport, December 1990

In addition to the paved runway and taxi strip, there is a new modern passenger terminal with huge letters over the entrance: LAE-NADZAB AIRPORT. Almost unbelievable.



Lae (Nadzab) terminal, December 1990

MY HONOR FLIGHT

Submitted by: Sterling Hasey (HQ)

Sterling sent in these notes from his brother Raymond about the Honor Flight that the two took together last year. The flights are provided at no cost to WWII veterans.

It is September 19, 2010. My brother and I are up at 4:00 am to arrive at Billy Mitchell airport in Milwaukee by 5:00 am. We proudly wear the navy blue honor shirts they provided us with. We are met by guardians, all wearing their red honor shirts. They may have been listed as guardians, but in my mind they were guardian angels. Each guardian took 21 a 21 hour day out of their life to assist the 200 WWII Veterans for their day. Lots of steps to navigate, lots of wheelchairs to push, some with oxygen bottles.

As we taxied out, a fire truck sprayed us with a water cannon. It creates a rainbow effect over our plane. Three restored training planes do a fly-over and a fly-along for a sendoff.

We arrive at Dulles Airport and are given another water cannon salute. We are then loaded into buses for the 20 mile ride to the WWII Memorial. We are given the VIP treatment with a squad car leading our bus with the siren on and lights flashing. We are greeted at the Memorial by smiling, clapping strangers who are saying "thank you" over and over.

The WWII Memorial was impressive. I rated it the best one with its eagles, pillars and view across the water to the Washington Monument. I sat by the pool and thought a lot about Norman Truax who was shot while in his parachute, and is resting in Belgium. It was an especially emotional spot for me. I could almost see

my crewmate's faces and feel their presence.

Next, we visited the Iwo Jima statue, Arlington National Cemetery, Korean Monument and the Air Force Memorial.

Then it was back to the plane for the flight home. Husky volunteers were on hand to hoist some veterans from step to step, one step at a time, all the way up into the plane.

We arrive back in Milwaukee at 10:45 pm. In my wildest dreams I never expected what was about to happen.

Entering the airport, I heard a bagpipe faintly in the distance. It grew into 14 pipes and a drummer with his big drum. I was tired, but the energy started to flow. The pipes always reach inside me to a place I can neither identify nor explain. My fatigue faded and my legs became senior teenager legs. There was a path between people extending as far as I could see. A young lady rushed up and gave me a candy bar. Another gave me a small flag. People of all kinds were shoulder to shoulder about 10 deep on both sides and they were all saying thank you and clapping. I saw off duty police, military, business suits and families with children on a school night. They had been standing there for several hours waiting to welcome us. A sea of smiling faces.

When the Air Force turned me loose, I had been in the service for three years, 11 months and 23 days. I walked out to the gate and stuck my thumb out in Victorville, California. I caught a ride to Illinois, where I hitchhiked north to Madison, Wisconsin and college. This Honor Flight has now become my wonderful, unbelievable homecoming.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

Bob Kantor (499th) sent a note recommending two books for all to read since the 345th was operating in the same part of the world and sometimes lived under similar conditions.

Touched With Fire by Eric Bergerud is the story of the land war in the South Pacific. Much of the book tells the tale of the US and Australian infantrymen who were fighting on the ground while units like the 345th were attacking from above. It is an interesting look at the same battles from another vantage point.

With the Old Breed by E.B. Sledge is about the battles for Peleliu and Okinawa, told by a Marine who was there.

There are several more good books that have found their way onto my bookshelf.

One is the story of Capt. George Frederick as told by the son he never made it home to know. Capt. Frederick was with the AAF in New Guinea and served with the Air Liaison Parties that directed the close air support missions flown to support the invasions by Allied troops. The book is titled *World War II: A Legacy of Letters, One Soldier's Journey* and was written by Clinton Frederick. Capt. Frederick had some good things to say about the 345th for their ability to put the bombs on target.

The second book is *Lost in Shangri-La* by Mitchell Zuckoff. This book covers the exceptional tale of a joy ride gone wrong for an airplane load of American servicemen and WAC's who took off from Hollandia for a sightseeing tour of a remote New Guinea valley and end up crashing into one of the surrounding mountains. Three of the 24 survive only to find themselves wondering about the

whereabouts of the Japanese enemy and the intentions of the local warrior tribes. This is the well told story of an amazing rescue.

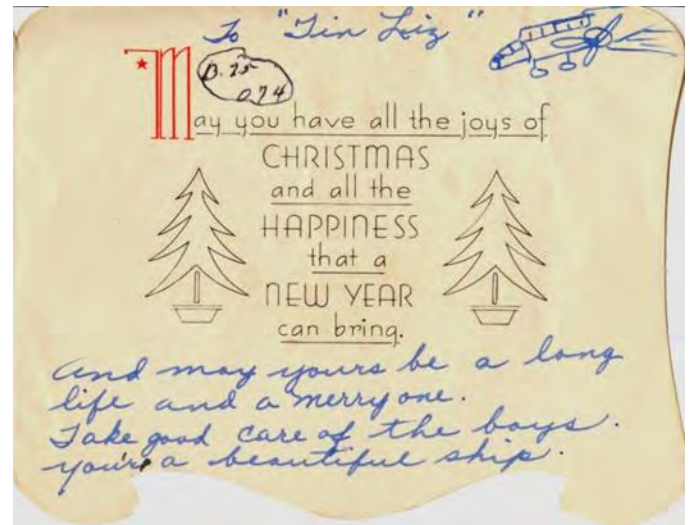
Finally, there is *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand. This book tells the story of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic athlete who became a bombardier on a B-24 in the Pacific. What follows is a testament to his indomitable spirit as his life takes one tragic turn after another.

All are available online at Abe Books or Amazon.

ABOUT THE FRONT PAGE PICTURE

Duffy Soto, son-in-law of Gerald Sims, a 501st crew chief, recently sent along a 1943 Christmas card addressed to the B-25 'Tin Liz'. The card was delivered to Gerald for no known reason other than it was his airplane. Gerald has kept it among his possessions all these years.

The return address on the envelope indicates that the sender was Laura Ruby, of Salmon Beach, Tacoma, Washington. She sent the card airmail on 4 November 1943.



Whether Ms. Ruby had a hand in the assembly of the 'Tin Liz' at the North American plant in Kansas City or had something to do with it as it traveled from

South Carolina to California on the way to the South Pacific, she thought enough of the airplane or the men onboard it to spend 6 cents on an airmail stamp.

As always, if anyone happens to know of Laura Ruby or if your airplane received holiday cards from strangers, I'd like to hear from you.

Thanks to Gerald Sims, his daughter Tess and son-in-law Duffy Soto for sending in this interesting piece of 345th history.

2012 REUNION NEWS

The 2012 Reunion of the 345th Bomb Group Association is scheduled for Veteran's Day weekend (8-12 Nov) in Columbia, SC.

This will be the 70th anniversary of the formation of the 345th Bomb Group.

The reunion hosts will be Clint and Mary Roby (500th).

The tentative schedule is as follows:
Thursday, 8 November - hospitality suite open in the evening and possible executive committee meetings

Friday, 9 November - morning and afternoon educational sessions; lunch with a speaker; Opening reception, possibly at the Caroliniana Library, with heavy hors d'oeuvres.

Saturday, 10 November – morning business meetings; lunchtime B-25 pilots (vets and current) roundtable; afternoon marker dedication at Columbia Air Base, now Columbia Airport (if we can arrange); possible fly-over; evening banquet with speaker.

Sunday, 11 November – morning Veterans Day parade (veterans participation to be determined); possible afternoon field trip to Fort Jackson

museum or one of the National Guard units

More details of the reunion will be published as they are finalized.

Since this is a significant reunion for the 345th, we hope to have a great turnout for the events. If you know of former 345th BG members who are not members of the 345th Reunion Association, please urge them to join us in Columbia. It is also a good time to enlist the participation of second or third generation members who have yet to join up. Membership forms can be printed from the website or can be obtained from President Jim Bina, Treasurer Mary Sloan Roby or Secretary Andy Decker as well as any of our squadron officers.

ANNUAL DUES NOTICE

Annual dues are due and payable in January of each year. At the general business meeting held during the 2011 St. Louis reunion, the executive committee recommended to the membership that annual dues be increased to \$35 for all members other than veterans of the 345th Bomb Group and their widows. The proposal was voted upon by the membership and was approved. The annual dues for our veterans and widows remain unchanged.

Please send your check made out to the 345th Bomb Group Association and mail it to:

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

MORE ABOUT STRIKE PHOTOS

Strike photos were taken from aircraft participating in attacks on enemy positions. The cameras were large, heavy devices usually installed in the rear belly of the plane. The film was advanced by an electric motor and the camera took a picture at a precise time interval after it was turned on by a crewmember. Our aircrews were often supplemented by an aerial photographer who would take additional pictures and film footage of the attack.

After returning from a mission, the photos were developed and could be used to assess damage inflicted upon the enemy position and to identify targets for future missions.

Many of our vets returned home with copies of strike photos and many are available for viewing on websites that are dedicated to WW2 history.

Most strike photos have an intelligence strip running along the bottom edge of the photo that contains the details of the photo.

The photo on the next page is a strike photo and has the intelligence strip running along the bottom edge. The strip can be deciphered as follows:

290-AA is the FFO or mission number

RAPOPO is the target, in this case the Rapopo air strip, which was one of several airstrips that made up the Rabaul complex

18 Oct 43 is the date the photo was taken

1258k is the time the photo taken, in this case 12:58 pm. The k refers to local time.

7"150' refers to the lens length (7") and the altitude of the airplane (150 feet)

498BS-345BG refers to the unit the airplane was assigned to – 498th Bomb Squadron, 345th Bomb Group

30-51 perhaps refers to the picture being number 30 of a series of 51 total photos 351 is the tail number of the airplane that the photo was taken from.

Knowing all this, we can then look at the mission summaries and can find out that Lt. Robinette was flying #351 that day and that the 18 October 1943 mission was the one where the 345th kept flying to the target even though the mission had been aborted due to weather and their fighter cover had turned back.

The style of the intelligence strip seems to have changed as the war went on and as soon as I can figure one of those out, I'll put an explanation in another column.

I extend my sincere thanks to Everett Hatcher for supplying me with some excellent strike photos from his father's collection.



Ollie Hatcher in an animated discussion.

BULLETIN BOARD

IN MEMORY OF:

The members of the 345th Bomb Group Association extend our sincere condolences to the families of our departed members and friends:

Morris R. Perkins (499) 18 Mar 2011 Wichita, KS
Earl W. Keller (498) 23 Mar 2011 Kettering, OH
Harold L. Estey (500) 17 May 2011 Jackson, MI
Curtis Kahl (501) 15 Oct 2011 Bloomsburg, PA
Harold R. Kimsey (501) 3 Nov 2011 Oak Ridge, NC
Julius B. Fisher (501) 4 Nov 2011 Charlotte, MI
Lewis Goldston (500) Virginia



Parafrags float down over the Rapopo strip. The intelligence strip runs along the bottom of the photo. This photo was provided by Everett Hatcher, son of 501st pilot Ollie Hatcher.



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