

“AIR APACHES”

STRAFER

Boram

VOLUME 30, ISSUE 4

DECEMBER 2012



17 veterans of the WWII 345th Bomb Group attended the 2012 reunion in Columbia, SC. Pictured in front of our newly-dedicated historical marker placed during the reunion are: back row, left to right; Bill Paulis (499), Quentin Stambaugh (498), Arthur McGrane (501), Lincoln Grush (500), George Givens (498), Bear Britt (500), Don Wagner (500), Tom Edwards (499), Ed Smith (500), Ken Haller (498), Ben Miller (499), Jim Mahaffey (499), Frazer Dougherty (498) and front row, left to right; Joe Mallard (500), Harry Chused (500), Vic Tatelman (499) and Melvin Best (498). Also attending, but not pictured here, were member widows Karen Cessna (499), Ruth Damour (499) and Jean Willard (501).



THE THANK YOU'S

By: Mary Sloan Roby

Planning a reunion is a big job, and one for which I now have extra appreciation for the job

done by Diane Brauer and Janice Daker in St. Louis, Carol Hillman and Judy Zurlis in Grapevine, Dennis O'Neill in Dayton, and all the others who have had a hand in planning a special experience along the way for the members of the 345th Bomb Group Association. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the planning and execution of the Columbia reunion.

The members of our far-flung planning committee deserve special recognition.

Jim Bina came to Baltimore several times to think through the reunion and helped along the way with the myriad decisions that needed to be made. He also secured significant sponsorship for the meeting from Long Term Care Partners. Thanks also to Elizabeth Callahan from LTCP who, in addition to providing the sponsorship, has come several times to our meetings.

I think Kelly McNichols now knows the contact people for every B-25 group in the country! He was the driving force behind getting Texas Flying Legends Museum's *Betty's Dream* to Columbia. He worked untiringly to secure sponsorships from his family, friends, and work contacts that enabled us to make a significant contribution to TFLM.

The Mahaffey Clan, otherwise known as Nancy Frick, Loni Mahaffey, Carol Bell, and Dixie Homan, played a

significant role in making sure each registrant had some nice remembrances of Columbia and who also managed the whole, well-run registration process. Nancy secured wheelchairs and did all the running around in Columbia. She and her sisters and daughters made the beautiful table decorations for the banquet. The boutonnieres for the veterans and our guest speaker were a nice touch!

Ron Shelton, of Lexington, who loves all things aviation, pulled together the members of the SC Historical Aviation Foundation and other volunteers to set up and take down the tables for our lunch at the SC Aeronautics Hangar. Ron also connected us with a number of other Columbia folks who helped with arrangements and also provided one of the wheelchairs.



B-25 on display at the SC Aeronautics Hangar.

One of the side benefits of planning the reunion was making a bunch of new friends and I especially have appreciated a new friendship with Rachel Haynie. As a local Columbia writer, she knows everybody, and her recommendations for contacts put me in touch with so many helpful people. She had known both my parents, Gene and Kitty, so I felt an

immediate bond with her. We thought through the educational sessions together and Rachel provided an extensive media list and other contacts.

I also want to thank Lynne Douglas at Columbia Metropolitan Airport, who never said no to a request, made sure the marker got installed, and set up the seating area for Sunday morning; Revé Richardson at the SC Aeronautics Commission Hangar; Eddie Wright who owns Sound and Images and provided the AV equipment without charge; Allen Stokes, Fritz Hamer, and staff of the South Caroliniana who let us have a rare reception in their library; Debbie Bloom of the Richland County Public Library who arranged for us to use the auditorium; Peggy Lopez and Chris Eversmann at Eagle Aviation; Kara Motosicky at Fort Jackson who helped secure our National Anthem singer, Anwan Edge; Rev. Bob Lineberger for the beautiful invocation at the marker ceremony; Color Guards from the Wil Lou Gray and Airport High Schools; and Bill Funderburk from Books on Broad in Camden, who brought copies of Hugh Ambrose's book, *The Pacific*.



Sgt Anwan Edge (left) and members of the Wil Lou Gray school color guard.

Thanks also to Hugh Ambrose for making the trip from Helena, MT to serve as our keynote speaker. Thanks to moderators Dr. John Hammond Moore, Dr. Fritz Hamer, Jim Bina, and panelists Debbie Bloom, Rachel Haynie, Fielding Freed, and members of the 345th who contributed to the success of the first round of educational sessions.

The four crew members of the Texas Flying Legends Museum, Warren Pietsch, Doug Rozendaal, Freddy Caraveo, and Tyson Voelkel, truly went out of their way to make sure all the veterans who wanted to were able to have a ride in *Betty's Dream*. Through their connections, the USC football game flyover and on-field visit were made possible. We will certainly maintain our connection with this fine group based out of Houston. In the spring they travel to North Dakota and in the summer to Maine, so if you get to either of these places, I know they would be happy to see you there.



Some of our vets posed with the B-25 *Betty's Dream*, which was flown by members of the Texas Flying Legends Museum.

Special thank you's go to: Nancy Frick and family who solicited and packaged up lots of fun gift items for the raffles; Bill Paulis, the birdhouse man of Lake Murray, who provided ten handmade birdhouses, and hats for each of the veterans; and Mike Buchkoski, who managed the sale and production of individual squadron t-shirts from his home in Albuquerque.

Lastly, I want to thank Dennis O'Neill, who jumped in with Clint to make sure the hospitality suite was always well stocked and that Charlie the bus driver was tipped, and Andy Decker and Paul Van Valkenburg (who we really missed seeing this year) who were so helpful with *Strafer* and website postings.

I'm sure there are many I've left out. Please know your efforts were noticed and appreciated.



ROUGH RAIDERS 500TH SQUADRON

By: Kelly McNichols

I took some time the recently to do something necessary. I had been at the same spot a few months before, but having my family with me in the car, I didn't think I had the freedom to stop. Traveling alone that day, I decided to take advantage of the moment.

I had found out about this place several years ago researching something and had copied an article from the Topeka Capital-Journal newspaper which caught

my interest. Being a Kansas boy, I had vague knowledge of where Frankfort, KS was located. Rarely was I in that part of the state.

According to the article originally published November 22, 2006, Senator Pat Roberts entered the names of 32 Frankfort, KS boys into the Congressional Record on November 16 of that year.

Roberts in his remarks stated, "What makes this town notable is the solemn fact that 32 brave men from Frankfort and the surrounding farmland gave their lives in World War II. Based on records from local county newspapers of that time, it is concluded that the Frankfort community lost more men in World War II than any other town of similar size."

Here I was in Frankfort and I wanted to see what the town had done to memorialize these men. The town of 200-300 people is like many Kansas towns. Being in a farming community I'm sure the population had declined over the years. The people are friendly. How often can one ask any person on the street for help and it would be forthcoming? That's how it was in Frankfort.



The Memorial Stone for the "Frankfort Boys", located in Frankfort, KS (Kelly McNichols).

I drove down the main street and stopped and asked a lady crossing the street if she knew anything about the Frankfort Boys and if so, was there a plaque commemorating them? The woman pointed to a park a half a block away where the memorial stone was located. She told me I needed to talk to the local newspaper editor and pointed a few blocks away to the location. By the time I had turned the car around and drove to the newspaper office, the editor was gone. I asked a couple standing on the street about the editor and was told she had just left. I inquired of the couple if they knew much about the Frankfort Boys. I believe it shocked them a bit to think that a person not related to any of the young men would stop to look at the stone.

The woman, Janet Seematter, invited me into her shop and mentioned that she had a newspaper which I might be interested in. Quickly she found a copy of the Kansas City Star from May 27, 2007 with the front page entitled "Frankfort's Sacrifice" and included photos of many of the Boys. As I looked at the newspaper, Janet told me to photocopy anything I was interested in. A few moments later she told me to just keep the newspaper because she had another copy. Generosity is evidently common in this community.

The KC Star article had short bios on each man. Skimming through them, I noticed several men were Army Air Corps. These men piqued my interest and upon returning home, it was there I started my search. Lt Koester Johnston was killed in a bomber crash near Minot, ND. SSgt Donald E. King was killed when three B-25s collided over Greenville, SC February 12,

1944. Several Army Air Corp personnel were killed over Europe. However, two gentlemen were killed in New Guinea.

The first gentleman I came across was killed April 16, 1944. I looked to my "Warpath Across the Pacific" by Larry Hickey and determined that was "Black Sunday" Upon further investigation, I found that gunner Sgt Melvin Cope went down in the 417th BG 675th BS A-20G #43-9488 piloted by pilot 2Lt Michael Jovanovich. The plane ran out of fuel after a bombing mission to Hollandia and ditched on that fateful day. The two gunners refused to bail out and went down with the plane. Jovanovich survived.

The other airman, Navigator 2Lt Don Hockensmith, Jr., died when his 38th BG 823rd BS B-25 #42-87286 crashed after being hit by AA on a raid over Uligan Harbor, on the north coast of New Guinea, on January 8, 1944. All crewmen on the plane piloted by Lt Leo Braun were killed. I sent 38th BG President Jack DeTour a photo of the stone from Frankfort listing Hockensmith.

The number tallied from the Topeka Capital-Journal and KC Star newspapers and the Memorial Stone at the park in Frankfort stands at 42 men lost during WWII from this small town and surrounding area.

It's impossible to remember all those killed in WWII but I believe none should be forgotten.





FALCONS
498TH SQUADRON
By: Joseph Solomon

FURLOUGH

In December
1943, twelve

members of our outfit applied for a leave. At the time, we were stationed in New Guinea and we were very happy when our leave was granted. Since we were only four hours flying time from Australia, we were sent to Mackay, in Queensland. We flew out of Jackson strip, our base, just west of Port Moresby via C-47 plane. We arrived in Mackay in the early afternoon. It was pleasantly warm, since December was the start of summer down under.

Mackay, a rest and recreation area for American soldiers was a small town, population about 12,000. The main shopping street ran for four or five blocks right through the center of the town, with stores on both sides of the street.



AMERICANS arriving at Mackay from a DC3 (Dakota) aircraft on August 29, 1944.

On arrival, we had to report to the military post where we would be assigned

to barracks during our two week furlough. We did have an option to stay elsewhere, so we chose a small two story hotel with a veranda across the front of the second floor. The hotel was located right in town, which made it very convenient for us. The pub was located on the first floor. We checked in, paid for our room and then proceeded to the pub to try the Australian beer that we had heard so much about. We agreed with the rumors. It was very good.

As I remember, we took it easy the first day. After a few beers in the pub, we walked around the shopping area until we located a good restaurant and had our dinner. We couldn't get over how well everyone treated us that first day. The local people were very helpful and courteous, making us feel welcome.

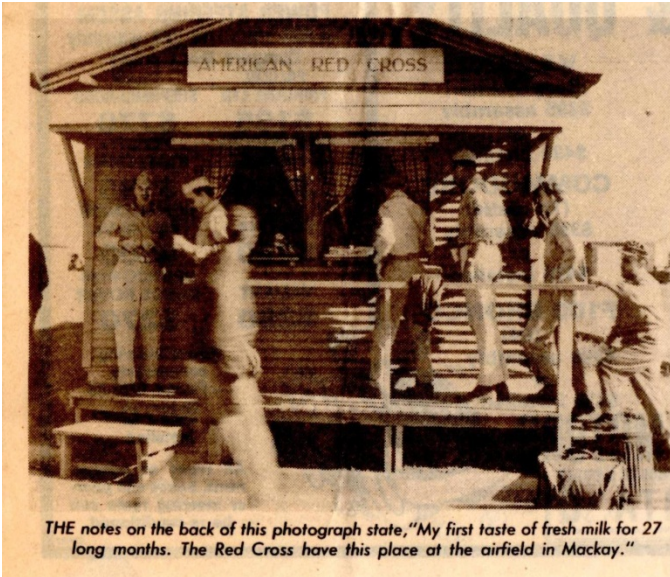
The next morning we found another nice restaurant and ordered breakfast. Breakfast in Australia consisted of steak and eggs. Everyone around us had ordered steak and eggs so we thought we would give it a try. Turned out to be very good and the price was seventy-five cents.

After breakfast, we rented bicycles and rode around the area. Mackay proved to be a beautiful little town, with some great houses and well-kept lawns. Since this was a rest and recreation area, the Red Cross maintained a large hall, where coffee and donuts were served daily, and dances were held every evening with music from a Nickelodeon.

We decided to give the dances a try and were quite surprised how crowded the hall was with soldiers and a large gathering of the local girls who cheerfully provided dance partners. Like most of the guys, we

just stood around watching, not brave enough to walk across the hall and ask the girls to dance.

One of us had to start the ball rolling, so I walked across the hall and asked this very pretty young lady if she would like to dance. She agreed, and she was a great dancer. The rest of our group did likewise and we were all into it.



The girl's name was Effie Gillan. Her sister Jean was also there and danced with another member of our group, Macdowell. Effie and I had every dance together that evening. I wasn't about to give anyone else a chance to move in. We danced well together and when the dance was over, Macdowell and I walked the sisters home. It had been raining and there were a lot of puddles on the street. So both girls took their shoes off, put them under their arms, and walked barefoot. We learned later that a lot of rationing was going on and leather for shoes was scarce.

We saw the girls as often as we could—took in some afternoon movies and a lot of long walks around town. Their

parents invited us for afternoon tea a few times during the two weeks. Needless to say, I was growing quite fond of Effie. We had great times together and seemed to hit it off well. We still made time for an occasional Red Cross dance: so many great memories to take back with us. Macdowell continued to go with Jean during the same period.

One Sunday their parents drove the four of us to the beach where we romped around like a bunch of school kids. The girls went into the water, but we did not have swimming trunks so we just watched. That same evening the girls invited us to their church dinner and dance. We were able to meet a lot of their friends.

During our long walks, we talked about the war and what we wanted to do when it was all over. There was not much a person could do or plan because there was no way of knowing how long the war would last, or what was ahead for us.

Our leave time seemed to fly away and soon the hour had arrived for our return to our base in New Guinea. There were a lot of fond farewells, with promises to write. The Gillan sisters and their parents made our furlough very successful. We could never forget them. When departure day arrived, we loaded up in the C-47 and flew back to New Guinea and Jackson strip. Macdowell, King (who had also made the trip) and I spent many hours in our tent reminiscing about our great stay in Australia and the fine people we met.

Effie and I corresponded as often as we could, but with the frequent moving to advanced areas, the mail could not keep

up and soon our letters stopped. We still had our memories.

About a year later, perhaps November 1944, we were stationed on Biak Island, off the northwest coast of New Guinea. Our planes were successful in their missions of reducing the enemy to just a few stragglers. Word came down that leaves were coming up soon and applications should be turned in. Again, Macdowell, King and I submitted requests for furloughs, which were approved. The same C-47 took us from Biak to Mackay for two weeks of rest and recreation.

Upon arriving, a jeep took us to the same hotel. We registered, checked out the pub, and called Effie and Jean. Effie answered and was so surprised to hear from us again. Mac and I called at their house and all were happy to see us. It was just as if we had never left.

We saw Effie and Jean as often as we could and enjoyed the dances at the American Red Cross. As the days wore on, I began to feel a great fondness for Effie. We continued our long walks and occasional movies. It was just fun being together.

While we were there, Mackay was hit by swarms of locust. They were everywhere and raised havoc with lawns and vegetation. The folks had to cover their lawns with canvas to protect the grass. This lasted for two days and then they were gone, but in the meantime had created a lot of damage.

On the last day of our leave, I came down with fever, later diagnosed as dengue. It's very much like malaria with the same symptoms, and caused by mosquitoes. I was taken to the military

infirmary where I was told that I would have to remain for a few days, and could not fly out with my group in the morning. Not caring for this arrangement, and wanting to return with my buddies, we planned that they would bring my duffel bag and take me out of the infirmary in the early hours of the morning. It was 4:00 A.M. and no one was in attendance at the infirmary when the boys came. I was ready and dressed. No one saw us leave and they're still probably looking for me.

I did not get a chance to call Effie before leaving but sent a letter when I returned to the base explaining the events. The fever grew worse as we flew back and upon landing, an ambulance took me to our base infirmary. I remained there for two weeks until the fever left me. One week after that, our outfit was ordered to move again, this time to the Philippines. From then on, the tempo of the war picked up and there was not time for letters. I can never forget those two furloughs in Australia.

Many years later--forty to be exact, sometime in 1985, I wrote a letter addressed to Effie and Jean Gillan to their Mackay address. It so happened that the postmaster there remembered the Gillan family. Jean was married to John Pearson and it was to her that the postmaster gave my letter. Effie had married Paul Rumballe and moved to Brisbane. Jean forwarded my letter to her and thus we renewed our correspondence. Effie, as well as myself, were now grandparents, with photos of the kids going back and forth.

In 1993, we were surprised with a visit from Jean and John Pearson. They were in Toronto visiting their son and

grandchildren, and called to tell us they would stop in Burlington for a few days and visit with us. This was very exciting for me since almost 50 years had passed since we last were together.

They stayed with us for the weekend and were able to meet most of the members of my family. Effie and I were still corresponding at the time, but she never made the trip to the states.

I've enjoyed putting these memories down on paper so that I can read them and remember with great fondness the wonderful Gillan family who received us so well when we were so far from home.



SAVE THE DATE

**October 25-27, 2013,
for the next 345th
Bomb Group Reunion.**

When friends offer you a wonderful opportunity that is also the solution to a dilemma, the wise person takes them up on the offer. That is exactly what the Executive Board of the Association has done concerning the 2013 Reunion.

Those who attended the 2012 Reunion in Columbia, SC last month were a part of the best reunion yet. The flight crew of the B-25 *Betty's Dream* was instrumental in creating memory after memory as they took any WWII veterans who desired on a flight around Columbia. With two of our veterans on board, they were the fly-over at the beginning of the University of South Carolina vs.

University of Arkansas football game then joined the WWII veterans on the field for a special recognition. You have no idea how many goose bumps can pop up until you have heard 88,000 fans chanting USA-USA in tribute to our husbands, fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, and friends.

The Texas Flying Legends (TFLM) has 7 war birds they take to various events around the country. We wanted them to be a part of the 2013 reunion but could not find a weekend that would work. The months of October and November are prime convention months in New Orleans with hotel rates that are way over our budget; the planes from the TFLM will be in Maine the month of September, the month that New Orleans hotel rates fit our budget. What could be the solution?

Tyson Voelkel, the President of the Texas Flying Legends Museum has solved the dilemma by inviting us to Houston October 25-27, 2013, the same weekend as the Wings Houston Air Show. Here in a nutshell are some of the perks for moving the reunion to Houston:

- There will be so many different planes to see up close and personal with over 80 war birds attending the Wings Over Houston Airshow.
- Besides the museum associated with Texas Flying Legends, there are at least 3 other Airplane museums in the immediate area.
- The Autograph Tent VIPs including X-15 pilots, Astronauts, Fighter Aces, and Medal of Honor recipients will spend a few hours at the TFLM hangar as well.

- The Tuskegee Airmen are expected to attend as well.
- We can fly into Hobby International Airport which is very close to our activities and hotel.
- The TFLM has a huge hanger with a full kitchen and they want to do something for us!
- Hotel rates fit our budget!
- Maybe a hanger dance could be a part of the festivities depending on timing and interest.
- Oh, yes, and NASA is only a hop, skip, and jump away.

Now that we know more about scheduling events in New Orleans, we can use that knowledge in planning the 2014 Reunion. STAY TUNED AS MORE DETAILS ARE ETCHED IN STONE FOR THE 2013 REUNION IN HOUSTON, TEXAS.

VETERAN BIOGRAPHIES

Bob Kantor (499) suggested that we could include short biographies of surviving 345th veteran in issues of the *Strafer*. He agreed to write the first one and it follows below. Please take the time to write something similar and send it off to the *Strafer* editor so that it can be featured in another issue of our newsletter.

I am Bob Kantor. I joined the 345th BG in 1944 as a replacement for one of the men lost in the kamikaze attack on the Nelson.

When the war started, I was a student at the University of Pennsylvania and was drafted in October, 1942. Following basic training, I was assigned to the Air Force Training Command, cadet

preflight, at Santa Ana. Joining the 499th at Tacloban, I was assigned to the Intelligence Section. I stayed with them as they moved north and when the war ended, I was on Ie Shima.

Following the war I started a vending business that grew in size and when I sold it in 1990, it had become a very large national operation.

I've been married to Margie for 65 years and have two children, seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. We make our home on Mercer Island, Washington.



Then and now photos of Bob Kantor of the 499th.

MINUTES OF THE 2012 345TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP ASSOCIATION BUSINESS MEETING Sunday, November 11, 2012

President Jim Bina called the meeting to order at 3:12 pm. at the Doubletree Hotel in Columbia, SC.

In the absence of Secretary, Andy Decker, Judy Zurlis read the minutes. Frazer Dougherty moved the minutes be accepted as read. Bob Jensen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Mary Sloan Roby presented the Treasurer's Report. [A copy of the report is available on the website.] Marith Reheis moved to accept the Treasurer's Report while Kathryn Mahaffey seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Kelly McNichols thanked Mary Sloan Roby for 'raising all the funds' that helped offset the expenses of the reunion.

Old Business:

Jim Bina explained we are presently discussing how to go from a 501(c)(19) status to a 501 (c)(3) status. Kelly McNichols reported that it was extremely difficult to acquire donations without the 501(c)(3) status. Corporations are looking for tax deductions for their donations.

Jim introduced David J. Chused, attorney, who explained that in the 1980s when the 345th Bombardment Group Association was formed we qualified for the 501(c)(19) status. We no longer qualify in that category because we have more non-veteran members than veterans, we hold assets, and we earn income. We should apply for 501(c)(3) status which will be the best way to solicit for donations. The 345th Bombardment Group Association has copies of the forming of the association. They will have no problem transferring their status to the 501(c)(3) status. However, when the 500th Squadron formed the official papers have been misplaced. Discussion followed on how to correct this issue. A motion to table the discussion was made.

The Strafer was the next topic. Jim Bina reported it is expensive to send each member a copy of the Strafer; therefore, it

was recommended that we send electronic copies to those members with emails. However, some preferred to receive a paper copy even though they have emails. It was recommended that we utilize the website for posting the Strafer for those who prefer to receive it that way. Discussion followed without a final decision.

We returned to the 501(c)(3) status discussion. After reviewing the Association Bylaws, attorney, David Chused moved: (the motion will be included in the minutes posted on the website as the motion is quite lengthy). Margene Miller moved we accept the motion. Marith Reheis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

A second motion was made by David Chused (the motion will be included in the minutes posted on the website as the motion is quite lengthy) to form a group of 345th members to discuss all the issues. Margene moved to accept the motion while Marith Reheis seconded it.

New Business

Jim Bina reported the website has been expanded but is still under development to enable us to add pictures, a data base, etc. Elizabeth Callahan is undertaking this task.

Harlan Hatfield reported he recently visited Wright Patterson and realized the Memorial marker needs 'sprucing up'. The stone is okay; however, the plaques need scrubbing and refinishing. It was suggested we contact the original builder as there may be a lifetime warranty. Harlan asked that funds be allocated to

make our memorial be repaired. John Brown moved we give authority not to exceed \$750.00 to clean the memorial. Carol Hillman seconded the motion. Mary Sloan Roby questioned if this was enough or if more funds might be needed. The motion carried.

Carol Hillman reminded us we voted to go to New Orleans for the 2013 reunion. With the passing of Milton Wise, the family has decided now is not the appropriate time to continue chairing the 2013 Reunion. Carol stepped up to the plate and is chairing the 2013 Reunion. A questionnaire was distributed asking for suggestions the members would like included in next year's reunion itinerary. We are working with the Texas Flying Legends to coordinate a mutual date for the Legends to attend our reunion.

George Givens announced he is a charter member of the National WWII Museum and during the last 4-5 years the South Pacific Theater has been the primary area of expansion. Enough funds to complete this section are almost complete. It will be on our itinerary to visit.

Jim Bina opened discussion on a location for the 2014 reunion. Cities recommended were: Washington, DC, Seattle, and somewhere in the Midwest. No decision was made.

Judy Zurlis gave a brief report on the Federal Benefit for Veterans and Their Spouses called Veterans Aid and Attendance. For more information contact Judy – 972-231-2943, their website – Veterans Aid & Attendance nvf.org, or call 1-888-777-4443.

Jim Bina announced that Andy Decker's Secretary and Ruth Damour's, Assistant Secretary positions needed to be filled. Nancy Frick accepted the nomination as Secretary. Margene Miller moved we accept Nancy Frick as the Secretary. Marith Reheis seconded the motion. The motion carried. Judy Zurlis accepted the nomination of Assistant Secretary. Margene Miller moved Judy be accepted as Assistant Secretary. Carol Hillman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Marith Reheis moved the current officers be retained as officers for the next 2 years. Ken Haller seconded the motion.

Current officers for 2012-2014:

President – Jim Bina

1st Vice President – Dennis O'Neill

2nd Vice President – Kelly McNichols

Secretary – Nancy Frick

Assistant Secretary – Judy Zurlis

Treasurer – Mary Sloan Roby

Assistant Treasurer – Nancy Ingram

Headquarters – Kenneth C. Gastgeb

498th "Falcons" – George W. Givens

499th "Bats Outa Hell" – James M. Mahaffey

500th "Rough Raiders" – Kelly McNichols

501st "Black Panthers"

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 pm by President Jim Bina.

Judy Best Zurlis

Assistant Secretary





2012 REUNION

RECAP

By: Mary Sloan Roby

From the arrival on Thursday morning of the Best family—Melvin, Gladys, Carol Hillman and Judy Zurlis—to the departure of Ken and John Haller on Tuesday morning, the 25th reunion of the 345th Bomb Group had to be called a success.

In addition to the educational sessions on “Columbia in the War” and “That Stuff in the Trunk” on Friday, the veterans were visited and honored by SC Governor Nikki Haley. She thanked the vets for their service and noted that, “in South Carolina, every day is Veterans Day.” Each veteran who attended the reunion received a citation from the Governor. Friday afternoon found our group at Hamilton Owens Field checking out the Texas Flying Legends Museum B-25, “Betty’s Dream,” and visiting the SC Military Museum, which greeted the members of the 345th with a special banner. There were surprise rides in *Betty’s Dream* for veterans who elected to fly.

At Friday evening’s welcome reception, we viewed “From Columbia to the Pacific,” an exhibit focusing on the odyssey of the 345th Bomb Group in the Pacific and enjoyed hors d’oeuvres while getting reacquainted with old friends and making new ones.

A special session on the B-25 was led by Jim Bina at the Richland County Public Library on Saturday, followed by lunch at

Senate’s end. Luckily, we had not made any firm plans for later in the afternoon!! Thanks to the efforts of Tyson Voelkel, President of the Texas Flying Legends Museum and our own Kelly McNichols, the University of South Carolina agreed that *Betty’s Dream* could fly over the Williams Brice Stadium prior to the kickoff at the USC/University of Arkansas football game and that our veterans and their families would be recognized on the field between the third and fourth quarters of the game!! After the vets were introduced, 80,000 fans provided a deafening salute and broke into the chant, “USA, USA, USA.” I was honored to fly with Quentin Stambaugh and George Givens in *Betty’s Dream*.

The weather was perfect on Sunday morning for the dedication of the historical marker commemorating the 70th anniversary of the activation of the 345th at Columbia Army Air Base on November 11, 1942. The colors were presented by the Army J-ROTC from the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the National Anthem was beautifully sung by Sgt. Anwan Edge from Fort Jackson. Rev. Bob Lineberger, whose brother served in WWII and who lived near CAAB in the early days, gave the invocation. *Betty’s Dream* tipped her wings in salute as she departed for Houston. Dr. Tracy Power from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, who worked with us on the marker’s language and Jim Bina, current president of the 345th, made remarks.

Following the marker dedication we enjoyed a barbeque and fried chicken lunch at the SC Aeronautics Commission Hangar and had the opportunity to meet some local authors with books related to

WWII, Rachel Haynie and Col. Tom Fincher. Although our banquet speaker's arrival was delayed, Bill Funderburk from Books on Broad in Camden, SC, was kind enough to bring copies of *The Pacific*, so we could have them autographed later by Hugh Ambrose.

The annual banquet always caps off the reunion. Dem Bones, a trombone group from Columbia, serenaded us with hits from the 40's during the cocktail hour and then played the National Anthem. The colors were presented by the Airport High School Army J-ROTC. Don Rary, group chaplain, said the blessing.

As always, we have a renewed appreciation for the amazing accomplishments of the 345th Bomb Group. Next year, we will meet in Houston and look forward to seeing everyone then.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By: Jim Bina

Our 25th Reunion and 70th Anniversary of the 345th Bomb Group was held in Columbia, South

Carolina over the Veterans Day weekend, on the original site where the group got its start. This year we were honored with 17 Air Apaches, thank you gentlemen for making your way to Columbia!

The weekend was a grand one, starting with the arrival of everyone at the Doubletree Hotel where one and all were welcomed. One highlight was when Governor Nicky Haley came and welcomed us and made a proclamation that the day should be known as Air Apache Day

throughout the great state of South Carolina.

We were also honored to have the Texas Flying Legends and their B-25 *Betty's Dream* on display for all of us. They provided rides to 9 veterans who wanted to fly in a B-25 again. Watching you gentlemen eagerly climb up the ladder was an inspiration to all.

Saturday was a busy day with the B-25 being invited to perform the fly over of the University of South Carolina's stadium after the National Anthem. The day culminated in a grand way when the University invited our Air Apaches to walk on the football field at the end of the third quarter to be recognized. To hear those 80,000 fans erupt in cheers and applause, and chanting U-S-A...U-S-A... was a moment I will not forget.

We ended the weekend with the dedication of the 345th Marker at the Columbia Airport, the former site of the Columbia Army Airfield. The marker stands proudly at the drive up entrance to the air terminal alongside other historical markers which describe the history of other Air Corp units that transitioned through Columbia AAB. My hope is that those who view the 345th marker will take a moment to think of all the young men who passed through the hundreds of airfields and camps across the United States as they trained for the largest conflict in modern history.

We have made a change in next year's reunion plans. The change is a major one as we have been invited by the Texas Flying Legends (TFL) to come to Houston, Texas for our 2013 reunion. Plans are to meet October 24-28, 2013.

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:

Albert J. Fait (499) 17 March 2012 Valparaiso, IN
Richard C. Lathrop (501) 28 June 2012 Paso Robles, CA
Milton B. Wise (500) 21 August 2012 Slidell, LA
Clarence J. Roh (500) 4 September 2012 David City, NE
John A. Rauzon (498) 29 October 2012 Redmond, OR

70th ANNIVERSARY CHALLENGE COINS



Forty of these specially minted 345th Bomb Group challenge coins are available for purchase. These coins commemorate the 70th anniversary of the formation of the 345th Bomb Group in Columbia, SC as well as the dates of overseas service. The coins are available for \$20 each which includes shipping. Orders can be placed with our Treasurer by sending your check to the following address:

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



**THE AIR APACHES
345TH BOMB GROUP ASS'N
1449 KOBY LANE
HERNANDO, MISSISSIPPI 38632**

**ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED**

PRESIDENT

Jim Bina (501ST)
1386 Cranes Bill Way
Woodbridge, VA 22191
703-680-1057
jamesbina@verizon.net

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

Dennis O'Neill (500TH)
3269 Wendover Drive
Toledo, OH 43606
419-475-3304
djoneill@bex.net

2ND VICE PRESIDENT

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

SECRETARY

Nancy Mahaffey Frick (499TH)
212 Harrison Point
Lexington, SC 29072
803-957-6708
nancy@basejlaaw.com

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Judy Best Zurlis (498TH)
2312 Silver Holly Lane
Richardson, TX 75082
972-231-2943
judyzurlis@att.net

TREASURER

Mary Sloan Roby (500TH)
1916 Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21231
410-563-1442
msroby@verizon.net

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Nancy Ingram (499TH)
700 Forest Trail
Cedar Park, TX 78613
512-258-3604
jningram2@yahoo.com

HEADQUARTERS

Kenneth C. Gastgeb
2313 Crestmont St., #227
Norman, OK 73069
405-364-1350
kenseasychair@gmail.com

498TH "FALCONS"

George W. Givens
806 Center Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 45202
412-734-5944
mairinthor@comcast.net

499TH "BATS OUTA HELL"

James M. Mahaffey
14901 N Penn Ave #7B
Oklahoma City, OK 73134
405-751-1525
mahaffeyjk@aol.com

500TH "ROUGH RAIDERS"

Kelly McNichols
2256 80 Road
Burr Oak, KS 66936
785-647-7541

mcnichols@ruraltel.net

501ST "BLACK PANTHERS"

Paul Van Valkenburg
3127 East River Road
Truxton, NY 13158-3109
607-842-6356
van@345thbombgroup.org