

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 3

SEPTEMBER 2011



The 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group vets attending the 2011 reunion in St. Louis are pictured here in front of the B-25 SHOW ME at the headquarters of the Missouri Wing of the Commemorative Air Force. Standing (l-r): Milton Wise (500<sup>th</sup>), Bear Britt (500<sup>th</sup>), Quentin Stambaugh (498<sup>th</sup>), Melvin Best (498<sup>th</sup>), Lincoln Grush (500<sup>th</sup>), Vic Tatelman (499<sup>th</sup>), Jim Mahaffey (499<sup>th</sup>), Don Wagner (500<sup>th</sup>), and Ed Smith (500<sup>th</sup>). Seated or kneeling in front (l-r): Ben Miller (499<sup>th</sup>), George Givens (498<sup>th</sup>), and Ken Haller (498<sup>th</sup>). Not pictured is John Kelly (498<sup>th</sup>).



## PRESIDENTS CORNER

By: JIM BINA

Reunion XXIV is in the bag, and it proved to be a good time for all!

Once again we came together to make new friends, renew old friendships, talk with old buddies, swap war stories and celebrate life and liberty. We were honored to have 13 Air Apaches with us in St. Louis this year and to each of them, and the ones who couldn't attend, a snappy salute and our continued best wishes. Heartfelt thanks must be extended to our reunion coordinators for this year, Diane Brauer and Jan Daker, who did a marvelous job of pulling everything together. Thank you! I trust everyone had a safe journey home. Our target for next year's reunion is Columbia, South Carolina where our focus will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the forming of the 345<sup>th</sup>.

Among the many activities this year we were able to honor our fallen 345th warriors interred at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery through prayer and remembrance; culminating with a B-25 flyover. They are not forgotten. Another highlight was our visit to the Commemorative Air Force Missouri Wing where many got to see, crawl over, and some even flew in their B-25 "Show Me". A special thank you is extended to the Wing for all their efforts in welcoming our group and keeping the legacy of the 345<sup>th</sup> alive. Photographer Brian Dobson brought us up to date on the expedition to find Lynn Daker's airplane near Negros Island and SSgt Chatigney, the crewman that didn't make it out.

We started something new at this reunion and had two video crews with us to record some of the events and to also record the personal accounts of our veterans and the stories they've told to succeeding generations. We had quite a few folks step in front of the camera to share their stories about themselves or to tell the stories passed down to the second and third generations. This is how legacies are preserved through the eons: they are passed from generation to generation. That's how it's been done for centuries and how it needs to continue to be done. These stories of young men "just doing their job" need to be told. I encourage everyone to take some time to record their memories, with a camera, voice recorder, or even with a stubby pencil and paper. In fact, there are many organizations across the country that do this very thing, and are glad to do it for you. The personal accounts that we did record will be posted to our web site.

There are a couple of business items to report. Out of the necessity to preserve our treasury and to fund new endeavors, a unanimous vote approved an increase in membership dues for our annual members from \$15.00 a year to \$35.00 a year. This increase will not affect veterans or their widows. I also reported on the effort to change the tax status of the Association to a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(7). Your executive board is researching both of these options and will let you know the outcome in a future Strafer. We also started a project to fix/rebuild our web site and we also formed a new position on the board, a historian, and Carol Hillman stepped up to take on that challenge. Just a snap shot of what we are doing for our Air Apaches.



## **BATS OUTA HELL**

**499<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**

**By: JIM MAHAFFEY**

The Fifth Air Force was directed to knock out Kavieng, New Ireland, as a supply depot for the Jap forces on New Guinea. That would let Gen. MacArthur direct his forces off the east tip of New Guinea on up to the Philippines. On February 15, 1944, the 499<sup>th</sup> led the mission off with Lt. John D. Wilson taking off at Dobodura. He had an engine failure and crashed near Horanda airstrip, killing all five men including Lt. Joseph Koch, co-pilot, Sgt. Clarence Fiedig, Radio-gunner, Sgt. Oscar Oakes, eng-gunner, Sgt. Andrew Chesanek. Lt. Wilson must have been one of our first replacement pilots, as he had gotten a promotion and his own plane. It must have been a heavy load or unusual situation for Lt. Wilson not to make a successful single engine take off as most of our pilots were well instructed in that procedure. Wilson's crew was the only casualty mentioned that day and Capt. Goforth made no other mention of the 499<sup>th</sup> that day in our official history.

Dobodura was a nicer place to operate from than Moresby because we did not have to climb the hump over the Owen-Stanley range. I had just come back from the B-17 and B24 squadrons flying weather recon missions at 12 to 14 hours at a time: not my cup of tea. Then we were shot down 25 days later in the Admiralty Islands, but life was getting better at Dobo, as we called it. We started getting tubs of steaks flown in from Australia. There was a nice officers club with a thatched roof. I imported a hand

cranked phonograph with records known to the 40's crowd. We didn't have a laundry service, but a nice stream across the road had big flat rocks we could scrub our clothes on. It did not take long for the sun to dry them out. I almost got in trouble with Col. True when he saw me posing for a picture in a shirt that I had cut the sleeves off, but he was nice and I just smiled at him.



Washing in a stream at Dobodura (photo courtesy of James Mahaffey).

On February 16, 41 strafers from the 345th joined 3 squadrons of the 38<sup>th</sup> Group for an attack on a 14 ship convoy off of Kavieng near New Hanover. Capt. Max Mortenson with his "Rough Raiders" had located the 4,560 ton tanker Sanko Maru anchored on the north side of New Hanover with an unidentified submarine partially submerged nearby. Subchaser 39 was nearby guarding the two vessels.

The tanker was hit several times by their 500 pound bombs and they went off after the subchaser. With the tanker badly hit, the 499<sup>th</sup> came in and completed the destruction and sank it, with the help of the 38th. In all, the 499<sup>th</sup> had hit the ship with 13 bombs. Crewmen from the tanker were attacked swimming to shore.

The 38<sup>th</sup> Group found three more ships that day near New Hanover and sank them. But the havoc of Hanover was about to end as the Japanese were running

out of pilots and planes to sustain that extended operation. The Japanese retreated to Truk Island from Rabaul on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when they had two transports sunk by us.

About February 17<sup>th</sup> the 345<sup>th</sup> started moving to Nadzab in Markham Valley.

Most of the above came from Hickey's "Warpath across the Pacific".



### **ROUGH RAIDERS**

**500<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**

By: Kelly McNichols

In the last newsletter I explored the history of the B-25 Mitchell. In conversations with many of the pilots and crew, it became clear that the Wright Cyclone 2600 engines were a major contributor in the dependability of the plane. One thing often overlooked in engine development is the contribution of Jimmy Doolittle and Shell Oil into high octane aviation gasoline before the war. Most of the information in this article comes from various internet sources, especially an article by Kimbie D. McCutcheon.

As with most mechanical components, there is a constant progression of improvement building on knowledge gained in prior models. The Wright Aeronautical Corporation is a division of Curtiss-Wright Corporation of Paterson, NJ. Until WWII, probably the most famous engine was the Wright J-5 Whirlwind that powered the Ryan aircraft which took Charles Lindbergh across the

Atlantic. Aircraft engines of the time had very limited reliability. Lindbergh needed an engine which could run continuously for the thirty plus hours needed for the crossing. The J-5 was a direct descendent of the Lawrence Aero-Engine Corporation's J-1 developed in the early 1920's by Charles L. Lawrence. Wright Corp. acquired the engine in 1924 when Lawrence became president of Wright. Even though the J-1 had many problems, pioneering technology was used in its design. The J-1 used mercury cooling of the exhaust valves in an attempt to dissipate the heat. This ultimately proved to be too difficult a task in practice, and was later abandoned. Cylinder head cooling was increased by improved casting techniques, thereby increasing the surface area of fins and decreasing the thickness of the metal.

The J-1 transitioned through the J-3 and J-4 series, eventually becoming the J-5. The cylinder head was a new design by Sam Heron. One major improvement of the engine was the complete enclosure of the rocker arms and push rods, a first for any air-cooled engine made in the United States. This would have made the engine more weather resistant and improved the valve train lubrication capability. Heron also is credited for inventing sodium cooled exhaust valves. Heat has always been the enemy of any mechanical component. Sodium cooling helped solve this problem by using a sodium salt inside the hollow valve stem to draw heat away from the exhaust valve face, thereby improving reliability.

In the mid 1920's, at the same time Wright was improving the Whirlwind series, it started work on the Cyclone series. As with the previous series, the

Cyclones incorporated internally cooled exhaust valves. A new improvement was a forged aluminum crankcase. Forging substantially increases the durability of any metal over casting by physically compressing the metal thereby decreasing the internal space between molecules. The Cyclones continued to have improved cylinder head cooling capability by decreasing the thickness but increasing the area and depth of fins. This allowed for more efficient cooling. One major improvement was the use of Nitralloy steel cylinder jugs along with nitriding. Nitralloy is a high quality steel specifically designed for the nitriding process. Nitriding is a surface preparation attained by heating the steel in a nitrogen rich environment. This gives a super hard surface that reduces wear. This technique is used today in many tools such as bits and cutters. It is generally a golden yellow or black treatment. It also imparts a lubricating factor. The nitride penetrates into the pores of the steel for a few thousands of an inch. This may not sound like much, but it was a great breakthrough.

The Cyclone 2600 is a two row, 14 cylinder engine that used engine oil to power the hydraulic-shifted, two speed engine driven supercharger to provide higher manifold pressure and consequently more combustion air at higher altitudes. Superchargers provide higher air density to the engine emulating lower altitude flying conditions. The Cyclone used different clutches and gears to power either the low at 7.06:1 or high at 10.06:1 speed ratios.

According to Larry Utter, crew chief for the Commemorative Air Force-Minnesota Wing B-25 "Miss Mitchell", the Cyclones used either Holley or

Stromberg/Bendix carburetors. He said the Stromberg was more fuel efficient. He also mentioned that the major flaw of the engine was the weak master rod bearing. If a Cyclone fails it is often because of the master bearing.

In any radial, a tradeoff exists between efficient cooling of the cylinders and total frontal surface area of the engine itself. Generally, the higher the power, the larger the diameter engine, the more drag in the air. Air baffles in the engines to provide air to the rear cylinders as with the 2600. One way to reduce the diameter is to increase the length by stacking more banks of cylinders as with the Cyclone 3350 which has four. Liquid cooled engines can be physically smaller for similar horsepower ratings. The radiators and coolant present the problem. Often damage to these components would bring down a liquid cooled plane while an air cooled radial could limp home. There have been stories of radials coming home missing complete cylinder barrels or holes in the crankcases. Assuming adequate engine oil, they can still fly. Often liquid cooled engines would seize up after damage. Because of the simplicity of the radial design, there are fewer parts than a liquid cooled engine.

There were many different dash models of the engine throughout the war. Some differences were minor while others were fairly major. At the end of the day the Wright Cyclone could produce 1700 horsepower and was very dependable. We can only really scratch the surface on all the attributes of this engine. Let us say that it did help make the B-25 "Mitchell" one of the best planes of World War II.



## **BLACK PANTHERS**

**501<sup>ST</sup> SQUADRON**

**By: Andy Decker**

I spent two weeks in New Guinea again this year with the intention of investigating several possible USAAF crash sites near Wewak.

The first was a two engine aircraft reported as crashed on the side of a ridge at the But (sounds like 'foot') airdrome near an enemy machine gun position. The other was an A-20 last seen over land during a low level bombing and strafing run.

Wet weather made climbing the But ridge inadvisable (I'm not sure the word "ridge" fully describes it since the hillside was nearly vertical) and village tensions made the A-20 site too sensitive to get to this trip. I switched to Plan B.

I've been through some rainstorms, but never in my life have I witnessed rain of such intensity or duration. Water was running everywhere for days after the storms: down the streambeds, down the hillsides, down the roads, across the roads and it even seemed to be running through the roads. Where the water couldn't run, it pooled up into vast areas of standing water. The streams between Wewak and the villages to the west were muddy, gushing torrents. With most of the bridges long gone, travel involved fording a half dozen swollen streams. I was fortunate that my driver had four wheel drive and an iron resolve to get me where I wanted to go.

I visited But village that sits right on the beach. The residents were friendly, helpful and showed me quite a bit of

wartime wreckage that was left on the old airstrip and a Japanese Ki-46 Dinah airplane that had been shot down off the end of the runway.

One reason for visiting But was that I had read the story of an Australian Beaufighter airplane that had been shot down and landed in the surf between Dagua and But villages. The lone survivor of that crash drifted west past a jetty at But before swimming to shore and beginning his stealthy journey back to Allied lines to the west. The locals showed me where the jetty had been before it rotted and washed away in the mid-60's.

I also revisited the crash site of the 501<sup>st</sup>'s TIN LIZ. Wreckage was visible that I had not seen on my previous visit. I found a part number on a piece of wreckage that indicates that it is the horizontal stabilizer from a B-25 but since the tail section from the TIN LIZ broke away from the fuselage and was later moved for use in a static display, I am left wondering if there is another B-25 that crashed in the same spot. There are several B-25's that were last sighted right in that area, one of which is from our 498th.



**But village and jetty in September 1943 (photo courtesy of Vic Tatelman).**



**FALCONS**  
**498<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON**  
**By: JOSEPH**  
**SOLOMON**

**ANITA**

This particular story starts at San Marcelino, a small village on the southernmost tip of the Philippines. The date was June, 1945. Our base consisted of the orderly room, operations and intelligence offices, supply room, mess hall and tents for the personnel.

I was chief clerk in operations, responsible for recording all combat missions and assisting the operations officer in scheduling crews for the various missions. During this period our planes were concentrating on Japanese shipping of all kind.

At this time orders were sent down that we were to employ civilians wherever possible. This was a way to create their trust in us and to improve their morale. Therefore, in early June, our commanding officer would conduct interviews with the local people who had applied for work with our outfit. This took place in our tent since we had more open space. There were about ten applicants and all were hired. Now he was faced with the problem of placing the new employees in various departments. Supply took most of them, leaving two young ladies to be assigned, one to the orderly room and one to intelligence. Since we were not in need of additional help, operations was left out of the selections.

The intelligence office happened to be located in our tent, and the young lady

assigned to them had to walk through operations area in order to reach her desk. She was Filipino attending the university in Manila, and perhaps, the most enchanting person I had ever seen. Her hair was gleaming black and long, brushed softly almost to her waist. She had lovely brown eyes and an excellent figure. I would place her age at about 19 years. Her name was Anita.

From the first day that she started to work, the whole aspect of the war changed. I never saw so many people hanging around our office. Even the constant grumbling about the war had eased. Something new was happening.

This was when I began to think about how I could get her transferred to operations. The answer came very simply. Intelligence really did not need her, and since we were one man short, I was asked if I'd mind if she transferred to our office. I replied that I thought we could find enough work to keep her busy. I remember that she started off filing flight records and typing our daily reports. It was then that I realized we had a very beautiful and intelligent girl working for us. She got along nicely with the rest of the guys in operations. Since she was working under my jurisdiction, I had to spend time showing her how to file and type certain reports. This I did not mind at all. We seemed to hit it off immediately and got along well in the office.

One day when things were quiet in our office, I asked Anita if she would like to ride down to the air strip and see our planes. It would only take five minutes to get there by jeep. She agreed quickly and off we went. I was astounded by the excitement and surprise she displayed when we reached the planes. They were

all lined up and looked beautiful. This was the first time that she had ever been so close to a war plane.



I'd brought a camera and asked if she would like a picture of her sitting on the wing. We moved a ladder over and she climbed up to the wing and sat with her legs curled under her, and hair blowing in the wind. I took a couple of shots there, and then had her sit in the cockpit with her arm and head out of the window: another good picture. I've kept these photos all through the years. They were taken 66 years ago. It seemed like everyone on the line stopped work and just stared at her. It was a great day for her, and I thought it was a great day for me, too!

The days flew by with the resuming of the bombing runs and the general routine work. Anita was becoming more proficient with her duties and fell into the usual pattern of every day work. About a week later, she requested a meeting with me, so I had her come to my section and seat herself in front of my desk. I could not imagine what was so important for a meeting.

As it turned out, the folks in the nearby town were planning a social and asked if Anita would invite some of the people she was working for. The result was that a dozen of the fellows accepted

the invitation. The following Saturday evening, we borrowed an army truck and all rode over to the hall.

I'll never forget how strange we looked as we walked into the hall with our army boots, sidearms and uniforms. The hall was quite crowded with the local citizens and families seated along the walls and visiting with each other. We just stood in the corner. This was our first social in three years. I tried to find Anita in the crowd and finally spotted her sitting with a group of friends. I caught her eye and waved to her; she waved back but stayed with her friends. Anyway, the music started, which consisted of a piano player and two guitarists. People started to dance, and Anita danced with her brother, I found out later.

She was a very graceful dancer. We just stood in that corner and watched. Everything was so proper there. At any rate, the music eventually stopped and folks drifted off the floor. Ten minutes later the band took their seats and broke out with a Tango. The song was "La Cumparsita." No one seemed to want to try it, so I remember, clearly, the long walk in my boots across that floor to Anita's table--you could hear a pin drop. All conversation stopped. Anita looked up as I arrived and had a huge smile on her face, as if to say 'it's about time you came over.'

I knew the Tango and Anita proved to be an excellent dancer. We were the only couple on the floor and danced the Tango away. When it was over, the locals came alive and clapped their hands in appreciation. I just walked Anita back to her table as fast as I could and went back to the guys in the corner. I've never forgotten that dance.

The following day, I eagerly awaited Anita's arrival at the office. As usual, she was on time and walked right by my desk with a little smile and a nod. And that was that. Like it never happened. As I said before, their customs were very different in many ways from ours back home. There was a lot I had to learn.

Her desk was in back of mine so that she faced my back. In order for me to see her, I would have to turn around. That was okay until she started to quietly hum "La Cumparsita." Two of the guys who were at the dance glanced at me with big grins. I tried not to pay attention to them or the humming. The humming did not go away that easily. Fortunately, some reports had to be taken to headquarters and I quickly volunteered. I knew then that she hadn't forgotten the Tango we'd danced.

One day she informed me that she would have visitors that afternoon. Since the base was a restricted area, I had to ask who they might be. She replied that her brother and uncle would like to see where she was working. A clearance was arranged and about two P.M. they arrived. She introduced them to us and proceeded to show them where she sat at her desk.

All went along well until her uncle, who was rather old, said that he was used to an afternoon nap, and asked if there was some place where he could nap for about an hour. The only available cot would be mine, so I escorted him there and left her brother to look after him. Anita was very pleased with this, which of course made me very happy. They returned after an hour and left the base. It seemed like Anita wanted me to meet the whole family.

Anita's family summer residence was at San Marcelino, a good distance

from our base. One day, she asked if I would like to visit their summer home. She would take us there that day after work. My friend, Carrington, checked out a jeep and we drove to her home. It was really back in the bush. It was a typical summer home with a lovely veranda encircling the entire house. The lights were on inside, and it gave off a warm atmosphere. We were invited in and met the folks. They told us that they'd seen a few Jap soldiers lurking about in the woods, looking for food. But these were half-starved stragglers and presented no problem to the people living in the area. This did not reassure us, as we knew they would be a problem for us. Even though we were heavily armed, it was a shaky experience.

We met her sisters, brother, uncle and mother. Her father was in Manila at their place of business. After a few minutes visiting with the family, Carrington gave me the signal that we should be on our way. We made it back to the base without any further incident.



Once the Japanese were pushed out of the Philippines, orders came down that since we were finished with targets in Northern Luzon we would be pulling out for Leyte Gulf at Tacloban. This was many miles to the north so that we had to dismiss the local citizens from their various

jobs in our outfit. It became a sad day of goodbyes. There were many such during this war. I hated to see Anita leave us, but that was the way it had to be.

I had a few minutes alone with her and told her that we would meet again if we were ever posted anywhere near Manila. She said she would miss us and ask if I'd write to her. She gave me her Manila address, hoping that I wasn't going to be just another "Pierfriend." I hadn't heard the expression used before and asked her what she meant. She answered; we were friends until we left the Pier. I assured her that would not be the case.

From Leyte Gulf we moved further north to Clark Field, about 40 miles from Manila. Our bombing raids continued, with targets being enemy transports and warships. We were not at Clark Field more than a couple of weeks when an army truck pulled up in front of operations. Anita and her sister were sitting on the front seat with the driver and I could see she was pointing at our office. I don't know how she ever found us because all movements were military secrets.

I was very happy to see her and so was everyone in the office. I thought perhaps she was looking for a job again, but that was not the case. She just wanted to see us again. I made it very clear that the feelings were mutual. It was at this time that we both realized this was more than just a casual friendship. Our feelings were very strong for each other, but also very restrained. I had no idea where or what this could lead to. It was best not to think that far ahead.

The girls could only stay for the day and then would need a ride back to Manila. Carrington, our first sergeant, again saved the day by offering to drive

them and me to Manila. This made Anita happy because she wished me to meet her father. The four of us drove to Manila late in the afternoon, Anita and I in the back of the jeep, Carrington and her sister in front. Anita and I held hands all the way back. Her sister came as chaperone. This was the custom.

When we arrived in front of their home, we were still holding hands, neither would let go. The feeling was that this would be the last time we would meet. We had a war to fight and were preparing to move again. At any rate, we got out of the jeep, still holding hands, until her sister reminded Anita we would be entering the house.

We had a great evening with the family. The parents were great and we all had dinner together. I guess Anita must have paved the way. We took our leave after many goodbyes and drove back to the airbase. Again, we felt like it was our last time together.

Within a few days, orders came through moving our outfit from Clark Field to Ie Shima, a small island with two landing strips for our planes. This was a good strategic move because we were now closer to Japan and within easy striking distance for our planes. This move occurred about the first of August, 1945. We pounded the Japanese homeland incessantly for days, doing a tremendous amount of damage. Then, a few days later, the two atom bombs were dropped eradicating Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese unconditionally surrendered and the war was over.

About Sept. 1, 1945, the troops started to be sent home for discharge from the service. A group of us flew to Okinawa to make air connections with C-47

transport planes to Manila. From Manila we would be scheduled to head home via troopships as space became available. That meant a few days in Manila.

Upon arriving there, I immediately phoned Anita at home. But her sister answered and said she was working with the army office again. She gave me the address and I asked her not to call Anita as I wanted to surprise her.

Again, Carrington accompanied me downtown. We found the office easy enough, a large complex with glass windows between all the offices and lobby. I asked the young lady at the desk if she would call Anita and tell her she was wanted in the lobby. I could see her office from where I stood and watched her as she spotted me and started to run to the lobby. She was so excited and happy that when Carrington opened the door for her, she ran right into my arms. This was a most unexpected reunion. You read about this in story books. There was no way that I could have known that I would see her again.

We sat on a bench in the lobby and visited for a very long time, holding hands of course. Carrington had told me on the way that our shipping orders had come through and that we would be leaving within two days. I told Anita of this, and she insisted that we come over to her house for the evening. I looked at Carrington and he said, okay, so we went to her home and spent time with her family.

According to their custom, we were never left alone. Either an aunt or some other relative would chaperone us. Still, it was a pleasant evening and I knew, as she did, that this would be our last time

together. I had brought my camera with me and gave it to her for a remembrance.

It was soon time to leave and we said our goodbye, again. We shook hands but held each other's hand very tightly. The folks seemed to approve and after promising to write, we took our leave. It was a sad time for both of us. I remember getting back in the jeep and asking Carrington to put the top up because it was raining. He just looked at me and then at the stars above and said, "Wipe your eyes."

### ANNUAL DUES

Beginning in January 2012, the annual dues for membership in the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association have been increased to \$35 per year for all except our veterans or their widows, whose dues remain the same. Dues are payable in January. Make your check payable to the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association and send to:

Mary Sloan Roby, Treasurer  
345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Assn.  
1916 E. Pratt Street,  
Baltimore, MD 21231

### A REUNION THANK YOU

Dear Travelers:

Jan and I want to thank you so very much for joining us in St. Louis this past Labor Day. It just amazes us each year that we hear more and more interesting stories that our Vets have to share with us. I know that if one of you pilots had done the flyover at Jefferson, we would have seen the plane at a much closer distance,

correct? We hope everyone had a good time, a safe trip home and that everyone stays healthy so we meet again next in Columbia, SC.

Again, thanks for letting us enjoy your company.

Jan and Diane Daker  
St. Louis 2011



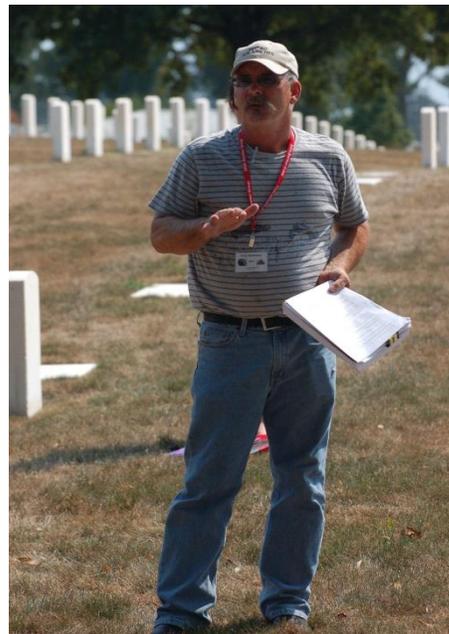
Downtown St. Louis seen from SHOW ME.



Flyover at Jefferson Barracks.



Jefferson Barracks Cemetery.



Kelly McNichols delivering the memorial service at Jefferson Barracks.



The CAF B-25 SHOW ME wearing the Air Apache artwork on her vertical stabilizers.



The B-25 SHOW ME taxiing in after our flight.



## HEADQUARTERS

By: Ken Gastgeb

Ken submitted this clipping explaining the Japanese Kamikaze for this issue of the Strafer. The Kamikaze plagued our naval forces increasingly as we closed in on the Japanese home islands.

### KAMIKAZES



QUESTION: Who were the Kamikaze?

ANSWER: They were a group of Japanese airplane pilots whose mission was to crash dive their planes into Allied naval vessels. Kamikaze, which means divine wind, was the popular name given these fliers. They were, however, officially named the Special Attack Force of the Japanese Naval Air Force. Because the Japanese believed it to be an honor to die serving the emperor, the suicidal nature of the mission seemed unimportant to the men.

Kamikaze units had no definite organization or training. Pilots varied from groups of well-trained men with special equipment to any navy flyer who decided to smash his plane, loaded with bombs, into an enemy ship. Some flyers were equipped with a special kind of kamikaze plane. It was a glider equipped with explosives. A bomber carried the glider close to its target, then released it. The pilot then guided the glider into a warship.

Kamikaze units were used on a large scale, with varying degrees of success, in the invasion of Okinawa in October of 1944. 6,000 planes were used. While only a few hundred hit ships, they caused considerable damage and many deaths.

## ATTENTION, COLUMBIA VETERANS!

By: Mary Sloan Roby

Were you a member of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group when it formed on November 11, 1942 in Columbia, SC? Did you train at Fort Jackson? Did you make bombing runs over Lake Murray? Did you meet your wife in Columbia? If so, we would like to hear from you.

November 11, 2012 is the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group at the Columbia Air Base and is also the 25<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association. As part of the reunion, we hope to collect and display some stories and archives about the group's time in Columbia.

At the reunion in St. Louis, Carol Hillman agreed to serve as the group historian, so please get in touch with her to tell your story or share your pictures. She can be reached at 2904 Woodhaven, Carrollton, TX 75007 or at her email address [carolhillman@verizon.net](mailto:carolhillman@verizon.net).

As a Columbia native, I look forward to welcoming the 345th Bomb Group to my home town next fall and will be in touch as the plans are firmed up for the reunion. This will be a significant anniversary for the group and the reunion, so I hope you will attend—and urge your family and fellow veterans to attend, too.

## THANKS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

My thanks go to Clint Roby and Mary Sloan Roby, Harlan Hatfield and Jim Bina for supplying photographs of the 2011 reunion in St. Louis. Vic Tatelman supplied the photo of But village and jetty which was taken from the co-pilot window of the DIRTY DORA in September 1943.

## A NOTE FROM RENE ARMSTRONG

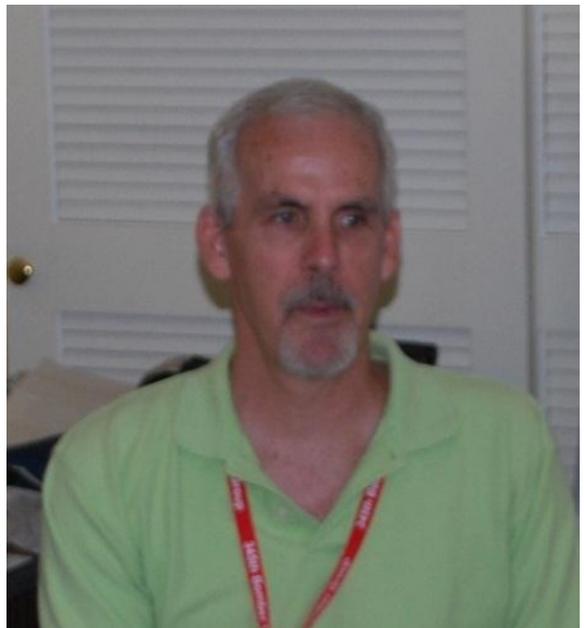
I want to thank each member of the 345<sup>th</sup> for your service to these great United States of America. It has truly been an honor to have written about one of your members and in the process, share with the world just a small glimpse of the amazing feats you performed in the South West Pacific Theater. Suzie Jones Neff, daughter of James Richard "J.R." Jones (501<sup>st</sup>), attended her first reunion with me and was overwhelmed with emotions as she learned more of her father's participation with the 345<sup>th</sup>.

May the words found in *Wings and a Ring: Letters of War and Love from a WWII Pilot* be an inspiration to future generations to rise to the occasion when our freedom is threatened!

God bless you and God bless America!

## VICTORY AT SEA

I came across a three segment set of videos on Youtube called "Victory at Sea: Melanesian Nightmare". This newsreel style show documents the air, land and sea battles for New Guinea. A shot of the DIRTY DORA being started up is shown at about 6 min, 45 sec into segment one. Does anyone recognize the guy sitting in the right seat starting the engines or the crew that arrives in the jeep? It seems that 345<sup>th</sup> history is scattered in bits and pieces in many archival documents. I encourage everyone to take note of where they find these little bits of history so that they can be included in our history preservation projects.



Author Bruce Gamble.



Author Rene Armstrong.



Author Senath Rankin.

# BULLETIN BOARD

## IN MEMORY OF:

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

George Balochko (499<sup>th</sup>) 11 January 2011 Edgewood, PA  
Leonard Lowman (501<sup>st</sup>) 18 February 2011 Latrobe, PA  
Stanley J. Trohimovich (498<sup>th</sup>) 24 April 2011 Hoquiam, WA  
Harold DeWeil, Jr. (500<sup>th</sup>) 14 May 2011 Vidalia, GA  
Walter McMahn (500<sup>th</sup>) 31 May 2011 Denver, CO  
Alfred F. Waldheim (500<sup>th</sup>) 10 July 2011 Middletown, CT  
Peter J. Luciano (500<sup>th</sup>) 21 July 2011 Randolph, NJ

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2011 GENERAL MEETING

- Work is progressing to change our status from a Veteran's association to some form of Historical organization. The name of our group does not have to change.
- Annual dues for membership in the 345<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association have been raised to \$35 per year for all members except our WW2 veterans or their widows.
- The 2012 reunion is scheduled to take place in Columbia, South Carolina and will be hosted by Clint and Mary Roby and their families. Dates and more locations will be published in future issues of the Strafer.
- The Strafer will be made available in an online digital format for those preferring not to receive a copy through the mail.





**THE AIR APACHES  
345<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP ASS'N  
1348 112<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
AMERY, WISCONSIN 54001**

**ADDRESS SERVICE  
REQUESTED**

---

**PRESIDENT**

Jim Bina (501<sup>ST</sup>)  
1386 Cranes Bill Way  
Woodbridge, VA 22191  
703-680-1057  
[jamesbina@verizon.net](mailto:jamesbina@verizon.net)

**1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT**

Dennis O'Neill (500<sup>TH</sup>)  
3269 Windover Drive  
Toledo, OH 43606  
419-475-3304  
[djoneill@bex.net](mailto:djoneill@bex.net)

**2<sup>ND</sup> VICE PRESIDENT**

Kelly McNichols (500<sup>TH</sup>)  
2256 80 Road  
Burr Oak, KS 66936  
785-647-7541  
[mcnichols@ruraltel.net](mailto:mcnichols@ruraltel.net)

**SECRETARY and EDITOR**

Andy Decker (501<sup>ST</sup>)  
1348 112<sup>TH</sup> Avenue  
Amery, WI 54001  
612-296-1424  
[strafer2@gmail.com](mailto:strafer2@gmail.com)

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

Ruth Damour (499<sup>TH</sup>)  
162 Box Branch Dr. (winter)  
Branchville, SC 29432  
843-563-2219 (winter)  
[ruthoma1@hotmail.com](mailto:ruthoma1@hotmail.com)

**TREASURER**

Mary Sloan Roby (500<sup>TH</sup>)  
1916 Pratt Street  
Baltimore, MD 21231  
410-563-1442  
[msroby@verizon.net](mailto:msroby@verizon.net)

**ASSISTANT TREASURER**

Nancy Ingram (499<sup>TH</sup>)  
700 Forest Trail  
Cedar Park, TX 78613  
512-258-3604  
[jningram2@yahoo.com](mailto:jningram2@yahoo.com)

**HEADQUARTERS**

Kenneth C. Gastgeb  
2313 Crestmont St., #227  
Norman, OK 73069  
405-364-1350  
[kenseasychair@aol.com](mailto:kenseasychair@aol.com)

**498<sup>TH</sup> "FALCONS"**

Carol Best Hillman  
2904 Woodhaven  
Carrollton, TX 75007  
972-242-6936  
[carolhillman@verizon.net](mailto:carolhillman@verizon.net)

**499<sup>TH</sup> "BATS OUTA HELL"**

James M. Mahaffey  
2708 North Sterling Ave.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73127  
405-947-1855  
[mahaffeyjk@aol.com](mailto:mahaffeyjk@aol.com)

**500<sup>TH</sup> "ROUGH RAIDERS"**

Donald E. Wagner  
11010 Presidio Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27617  
919-293-0047  
[buzzwag@frontier.com](mailto:buzzwag@frontier.com)

**501<sup>ST</sup> "BLACK PANTHERS"**

Paul Van Valkenburg  
3127 East River Road  
Truxton, NY 13158-3109  
607-842-6356  
[van@345thbombgroup.org](mailto:van@345thbombgroup.org)