



VOLUME 28, ISSUE 3

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Standing L-R: Lincoln Grush 500, Silas "Doc" Pearson 498, Ed Smith 500, Melvin Best 498, Jim Mahaffey 499, Rex Reheis 500, Troy Raper 498, Don Wagner 500, Vernon Sawyer 500.
Seated: Robert "Bear" Britt 500, Milton Wise 500, Ben F. Miller 499

Veterans belonging to the 345th Bomb Group Association gathered for this group photograph after the closing banquet and ceremonies at their 2010 reunion, held at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Dallas, Texas. The reunion was hosted by the family of veteran Melvin Best who served with the 498th Squadron. All who attended extend their gratitude and appreciation for all the hard work and planning that made the reunion such a success.



PRESIDENTS CORNER

By: JIM BINA

Greetings all. As the newly elected President of the 345th, I would like to say that I am honored to represent this prestigious and highly decorated unit. And as the first president of the second generation is also an additional honor to be entrusted to uphold and preserve the decorated accomplishments of the 345th. I would also like to thank all the newly elected and continuing association board members for volunteering their time and efforts, thank you for serving.

A bit about myself, I am the son of Ed Bina, 501st Squadron, who was also president of the 345th Bomb Group Association from 1990 – 1992. As you all know Dad was instrumental in forever memorializing the 345th Bomb Group through the construction of the 345th Memorial at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. I guess I have some big shoes to fill. Myself, I am an Air Force veteran as well, a career NCO of 24 years dedicated entirely to communications. I started my career fixing radios and retired as a Division Director with the 38th Engineering and Installation Wing, and yes, there is lineage to the 38th Bomb Group! I retired from active duty in 1998 and looking back, I wouldn't change a thing

about my time in the Air Force. Dad and I had similarities in our careers in that I was stationed at some of the same duty stations as him, such as Great Falls, Montana, Lindsay Air Station Germany and in Iceland. More on that in an upcoming Strafer. Now days I reside in the Washington D.C. area and am a project manager with U.S Customs and Border Protection and working on several technical solutions securing the Arizona border.

There is one important item that came from the 345th business meeting and that is the 501(c)(19) tax status that the association is currently under, and must be addressed immediately. Under the provisions of 501(c)(19) the association must have a membership of at least 75 percent veterans or war veterans in order to qualify for that tax status. Those membership numbers have changed in the past couple of years and that section of the membership has dropped below the required 75 percent. In a word, we must change our tax status. Our treasurer, Mary Sloan Roby is researching the tax codes to find out where the association can fit within the tax structure and we are confident that the association will qualify under a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are diligently working this issue and when we get this squared away we will let the association know via the Strafer.

One more item that was discussed is the future of the 345th BG Association. The time is nearing when the association will no longer have a reason for reunions, and that something needs to be done to preserve the history of the 345th. The 345th has done too much and sacrificed too many young men to be relegated to a

faint memory in a history book. It was clear why General McArthur selected the 345th to escort the Japanese dignitaries to Ie Shima, and to fly the last mission of WWII, in that it was the distinguished combat record that impressed the General to select the 345th for this important mission. I suggested that the association take a look at changing its focus and to consider becoming a Historical Society, or a similar type of historical organization, dedicated to keeping the history of the 345th alive through, and for the second and succeeding generations. I believe the 345th has not received all the recognition due and I firmly believe we should continue to share the legacy of the 345th with the world. The response to this idea was eagerly accepted at the general business meeting and I hope those of you reading this will also agree. Over the coming year the board will explore how to achieve a business structure to bring this history project to fruition, and to fit into a differing tax structure as I mentioned above.

Much has already been accomplished in recording the 345th's history through the noted books and recorded accounts of the 345th. I believe we need to go a step further and preserve our veteran's personal history (I'm talking to you vet's now) not just what you did during the war, but what did you do prior to the war, when you volunteered, why did you volunteer, and what you did during and after the war ended, and so on. I sat with some of you vets at the reunion and listened to parts of your life story and marveled at all the accomplishments you all had in your lifetimes, and just

wondered if this was recorded anywhere. And just as important, this is not limited to the war vets alone, but also includes the wives, families and children, how did they keep the home front going, how did your families support each other both financially and personally, etc. Your memories are just as important! What is, in the words of Paul Harvey, "the rest of the story." The 345th story needs this personal touch and that this is a story that needs to be captured and told to the world. I am extending a challenge to the second and third generations, to get with your families and capture this information on paper, tape, video, etc. and dig out those old war letters. I believe this is a good place to start and to continue with a new direction towards a historically based organization.

Again, I am honored to represent you, the distinguished members of the 345th Air Apaches, and excited about the new ideas that the second generation is bringing to this great organization. I'm looking forward to seeing you in St Louis next year!!

YOUR NEW ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President – Jim Bina

1st Vice President – Dennis O'Neill

2nd Vice President – Kelly McNichols

Treasurer – Mary Sloan Roby

Assistant Treasurer – Nancy Ingram

Secretary – Andy Decker

Assistant Secretary – Ruth Damour

A MESSAGE FROM BEN

By: BEN MILLER

The 2010 reunion is now history, and we are left with good memories of reminiscing with old friends and meeting new ones.

Thanks to the Best family for a wonderful and well planned reunion at a fabulous facility. What a talented group!

We thank the 345th group for the great reunions we have attended since 1982 (20 total for us). I also appreciate your confidence by electing me to serve in various offices since 1990, especially as President this past year.

Saint Louis is next and, God willing, we will be there!

Ben and Norma Miller

HEADQUARTERS

By: KEN GASTGEB

One of the best kept secrets of WW2 involved the Japanese balloon bomb offensive, prompted by the Doolittle raid on Tokyo in April 1942, as a means of direct reprisal against the US mainland. Some 9,000 balloons made of paper or rubberized silk and carrying anti-personnel and incendiary bombs were launched from Japan during a five month period, carried by high altitude winds more than 6,000 miles eastward across the Pacific to North America. Perhaps a thousand of these reached this continent, but there were only about 285 reported incidents. Most were reported in the northwest US, but some balloons traveled as far east as Michigan.

The first launches took place on 3 Nov. 1944 and two days later a US Navy patrol boat spotted a balloon floating on the water 66 miles southwest of San Pedro, CA. As more sightings occurred, the government, with the cooperation of the news media, adopted a policy of silence to reduce the chance of panic among US residents and to deny the Japanese any information on the success of the launches. Discouraged by the apparent failure of their effort, the Japanese halted their balloon attacks in April 1945.

In May 1945, six picnickers were killed in Oregon when a balloon bomb they dragged from the woods exploded. The US government quickly publicized the balloon bombs, warning people not to tamper with them. These were the only known fatalities occurring within the US during WW2 as a direct result of enemy action.

Actual damage caused by the balloon bombs was minor. However, the incendiaries which they carried did pose a serious threat to the forests of the northwestern US during the dry months. These balloons also offered a vehicle for germ warfare had the Japanese decided to use this weapon.

The balloon attack began after US air defense facilities had been deactivated. To counter this threat, AAF and Navy fighters flew intercept missions to shoot down balloons when sighted and AAF aircraft and Army personnel were stationed at critical points to combat any forest fires which might occur. Also, supplies of decontamination chemicals and sprays to counter any possible use of germ warfare were quietly distributed in the western states. Before detailed AAF defensive

plans had been put into effect, the attacks ceased.

Japanese bomb-carrying balloons were 32 feet in diameter and when fully inflated, held about 19,000 cubic feet of hydrogen. Launch sites were located on the east coast of the main Japanese island of Honshu.

On April 11, 1945, nine balloons were shot down in two hours by fighters of the 11th Air Force near Attu in the Aleutian Islands.



ROUGH RAIDERS 500TH SQUADRON

By: DON WAGNER

The Dallas reunion is over, and if you missed it, it was a good one. The facilities and ambience of the Gaylord Texan Resort couldn't be beat...just one you needed to experience. The Best family headed by Carol Best Hillman (498th) and sister Judy Best Zurlis hosted the event, and did a great job. You want opulence? I'm told that the Gaylord Texan gets \$15K a night for the Hospitality Suite we were provided. At any rate, the only disappointment was that Jim Terry, who was to be our speaker, was a no-show, and as of this writing I have not heard the reason. You will recall he headed the group that accompanied the

late Lynn Daker in the search of his ditched aircraft off the Philippines, and was going to tell us about it. I was a bit disappointed in the attendance, which I believe was 75-100, but it became apparent that the current economic situation was probably having an effect. The group picture taken of original members showed only 12 had made the reunion.

Anyway, the 345th elected all 2nd generation members to their officer positions, with Jim Bina (501st) moving up from 1st VP, and Dennis O'Neill (500th) moving from 2nd VP to 1st VP. St Louis, MO was selected for the 2011 reunion, with Diane Brauer (500th) and her sister who lives in St. Louis (Lynn Daker's daughters) volunteering as hosts. There is some support for moving the date from Labor Day to Columbus Day in October because many families have family get-togethers on Labor Day, the end of the summer season, and don't make the reunions. It's under discussion.

Upon the request of Linda Bynum, I relieved her of being Treasurer, and appointed Marith Reheis Cady to fill the position until elections at the 2011 reunion in St Louis. She had previously accepted the appointment. We owe a tremendous ovation to Bob and Linda Bynum for 15 years at the job, so meticulously done. With Bob unable to travel, we have missed them both at the past two reunions, and wish them well.

I was premature in predicting an updated By-Laws & Constitution for approval at Dallas. The hold-up is that it appears we may have to re-file our non-profit status under a different government statute, which will affect the wording, so we will delay the upgrading until that is

clarified. Roger Lovell, our Legal Counsel is researching the matter for us.

I have every hope that we will have a larger turnout for the 2011 reunion, and that we will elect an all-2nd generation officer members for the 500th, as has the 345th. It's time for them to take over and continue the legacy.

I leave you with the laugh of the Dallas reunion. When "Bear" Britt was asked "How are you today?" his response was "They haven't told me yet". There's nothing like humor that keeps you going at our old age.



BLACK PANTHERS **501ST SQUADRON**

By: PAUL VAN VALKENBURG

They say everything is bigger in Texas and this year's reunion was no exception. The Best family outdid themselves with a spectacular setting at the Gaylord Texan Resort. On behalf of the 501st squadron I wish to extend our utmost thanks to Melvin, Gladys, Judy, Carol, and all of the Best family for hosting this year's reunion. I hope that next year's reunion will draw more of our 501st veterans as this year we marked the first time where we did not have any veterans on hand.

I believe the 345th Bomb Group Association is moving on to a new page in its history. The executive board is now lead by 2nd generation members, with a renewed commitment to our veterans and the legacy of the 345th. Over the years our membership has grown to include more non-military members, and it has become necessary to change our tax status from the current 501 (c) 19 military veterans status to another 501 tax status such as educational or historical in nature. This is currently being researched and more information will be shared as it becomes available. It is my hope that these changes will forever insure that the history of the 345th BG is never forgotten.

I was looking through some of the old Strafers and I came upon a poem titled "To the Men of the 345th Bomb Group" by William C. Hilton, 499th squadron. (See below) I found it interesting that the thoughts expressed in this poem were the same as my fathers, as well as many of you. Unfortunately, far too many veterans find it difficult to document their experiences during the war. This leaves us second and third generation members with limited knowledge of the sacrifices our loved ones made. There are many of us who want to hear your stories and one of the best ways for that to happen is while we visit at the reunions. I would like to ask each of you to give a call to your old friends that you haven't seen in a while and make plans to attend the 2011 reunion in St. Louis.

To The Men of the 345th Bomb Group

*Graced with youth and foolish questions
He asked, "What was it like then?"
"It was a long time ago" I said, but
I knew what he wanted, a story
Of ancient fire and the faded snarl
Of a B-25 lugging a belly-full of iron
Over the endless and patient water,
A story of ships and cities destroyed
And gallant planes returning in the dusk.
"Were they brave?" he asked, but I
Could give to him no proper answer.
He wanted a scene from a movie;
Strutting actors, sneering at their fate,
Flying down the barrels of alien guns,
Dying with a brilliant, brittle speech
Of duty and of honor. Oh, there was
Enough of both, but I had never heard
Anyone speak about them. They were
Carried quietly; worn in silent assurance,
And I knew that they belonged to those
Who wore them.
"I don't remember anymore" I said.
"But what were they like?" he whined.
"They were men!" I said, "and I
Shall not, in this life, see their like again."*



BATS OUTA HELL
499TH SQUADRON
BY: JIM MAHAFFEY

Not long ago, I was thinking about all the commanders and other notable personalities we had. We had few in relation to other squadrons who changed them daily or weekly as the need required.

First we had Captain Bankston, who was a likeable guy but he "augered in" on a trip to Houston from Columbia when his wife was giving birth to their first child. Also on that trip was a Lt. Larry Kiscadden, who was a newcomer as we all were. He was a friend of my cousin from Texarkana, Texas. Larry was also killed on that flight. I have often wondered about what happened to Bankston's child.

Then Captain Walters came in. He was from West Point and he wanted all to know it and how strict war can be. But, one day after arriving in New Guinea, Lt. Col. True, who was Walter's upper classman, came to visit our squadron. Upon arriving he was heard to say "I had better put on my rose colored glasses before I look at this place." Soon after that Capt. Walters was co-pilot for Capt. Burger and he pulled up the wheels early for him. Having an extra-heavy load they settled in and ended in a ditch at the end of the runway, resulting in a trip to the hospital.

Later, while getting in his time in an L-5, he ended up in the trees. He released his seat belt and fell out on his head.

Later, we got Major Baird. Everyone liked Maj. Baird. He got his kicks by doing figure 8's around the trees in Columbia.

Before Capt. Walters left, a new West Pointer and under classman of his, a Lt. Dick Reinbold came in. Capt. Walters assigned him to be the Squadron Mess Officer in addition to flying. Not to be dismayed, Dick jumped right in and improved our food and everything about the mess hall. Whatever the task that was assigned him, he always did it to the best of his ability. Reinbold became a 3-star General in SAC. While he was Commanding Officer at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City, he stopped a million dollar retrofit on an AWAC plane for Gen. Jack Catton, who was his superior officer at the Dayton HQ. Dick just says he retired for the good of the service. For his own good he retired to Florida and built a house on the golf course. Dick grieved the passing of his wife in about 2003 and he died in 2005.

Who can forget the nice Captain Andreau from Houston? Reportedly, he bought the rights to a tea plantation in the East Indies when he arrived in Australia. He had a passion for flying even though he had to wear thick glasses. He bought or built his own air-park on Westheimer in Houston. He would fly his Navion down to Galveston for a swim many mornings. His dream was to buy a C-47 and go around and pick up everyone for a reunion. That was cut short as I heard after I left Houston in about 1952 he had spun-in a Havilland on a weather flight in east Texas. His son visited our previous reunion in Dallas. I was sent to Houston to fly B-25 classroom

from Bombardier-Navigator Radar training. I had met Andreau's family at that time at the air park. He was a fine man.

Captain Bert Shaber from the 499 was Operation Officer at Pampa, Texas when I was there in advanced Pilot training. I was supposed to be flying at 100 ft or above but I had misunderstood and thought were to be flying at 100 ft or below, as we had done overseas. One day as I was flying in northwest Texas, a rancher saw me coming and was hurriedly getting off his windmill. I was sure he would report me to the base, but Bert never mentioned it.

You early guys remember Walterboro and the uptight Intelligence Officers who reported on the pilots who were boasting of the incredible and impossible attributes of the B-25 at a café there. As they reported it to Col. Crabb, he listened and had a good laugh. Pappy Gunn changed the possibilities of the B-25 and became a legend in his own time.

Intelligence brings to mind Capt. Hoffman who was also a good artist and did some nice paintings for our club at Moresby. He had his name on his soap bars brought from the family department store in Philadelphia. His dad had built the famous "Falling Waters" house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Hoffman was later the curator of the NYC Museum of Art, a post later held by my cousin's husband. That doesn't make me an artist, but my son Jim Jr. is.

I failed to mention the jeep that someone found in the trees at Moresby. Since we couldn't keep the jeep if it didn't belong to us, someone stenciled Maj. Baird's serial number on it. Then he had

two jeeps to command. Imagine what that could do to people taking inventory.

Maj. Baird consulted with Ken McClure, my pilot, about his wearing Aussie flying boots or tennis shoes, which he was wearing when we were shot down. We were the only two to go home from New Guinea and I am the only one left of the crew. Mac lived his "Dream". He was Mayor of Bexley, Ohio, his hometown and I visited him on a trip in 1976. He was proud to show me the stadium at Ohio State where he played before the war. He was restoring a '39 Buick: one of which I would like to own now. But at the age of 89, I am restoring a '75 Torino Grande Ranchero which I lusted after when I was a brake shop owner.

You can read up on the other Commanders in the "Warpath" book. That would be a good thing to leave to your grandkids so they will know what war is like.

HOW TO ACQUIRE A STRAFER

BY: REX REHEIS

I was a pilot flying B-25J aircraft in the Southwest Pacific Area. From the island of Biak I flew as co-pilot for two missions. Then I flew co-pilot with Captain Mortenson who was the 500th Squadron Operations Officer. I impressed him for flying two and a half hours as straight and level as it was possible to fly. I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant on 14 August 1944. I flew several missions with my original crew members.

One November day I was writing letters to family back in Kansas. Suddenly,

an airman from Squadron Operations called out "Lt. Reheis, grab your musette bag and report to Lt. Dick", who was the Operations Officer. I flew as his co-pilot to the island of Leyte. We shared the flying during the six and a half hour flight. After he landed, we all deplaned on the south end of the runway. He told all of us to stay under the wings as there was a nice breeze. He then told us he had an errand to perform and would be back in half an hour. When he returned, he called me away from the crew so that they could not hear us. He said "See the B-25 at the north end of the runway"? I told him "Yes." He asked me if I was carrying my Test Flight Orders. I showed them to him. He then said, "You are going to fly that B-25J back to Biak. You can do that can't you"? I told him, "Sure."

I walked the 8,000 yards to the other aircraft. There was a Captain and two Tech Sergeants there. I asked permission to lower the front steps and climb up to the pilot's position. The crew had thrown out EVERYTHING that was removable – even the flight records. I climbed through the tunnel to check the rear and there was nothing left except the skin of the aircraft. I flew back to Biak by myself, at 5000 feet, for six and a half hours.

Later, I became the Squadron Operations Officer and flew a lot of missions. On 16 April 1945, the 500th was ordered to fly a mission from the north end of Formosa to the south end. About five minutes from the south end, I was surprised to take a Jap bullet in my right foot. Our flight surgeon removed the bullet and gave me several units of blood. A week later he told me I was going to a

rear area hospital because my eyes were yellow, so off I went on a C-47.

During that period, the entire 345th moved to San Marcelino, almost due west of Manila. I flew a few more missions and then the entire group moved to Clark Field.

The personnel officer told me that I had accumulated 100 points, so I was going home. I got aboard a Swedish freighter and thirty-five days later, I arrived in San Francisco, CA.

MINUTES OF THE 2010 345TH GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

Margene Miller Brown (499th), daughter of Ben Miller, explained she was assisting her father in chairing the meeting.

President Ben F. Miller (499th) called the meeting to order in the Appaloosa Room 1 at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, Grapevine, Texas at 9:27 AM on Sunday, September 5, 2010. He thanked all for coming and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Kelly McNichols (500th) gave the invocation.

Jim Bina (500th) thanked Geico Auto Insurance for their generous sponsorship of the Coffee/Tea Service at this morning's meeting.

Judy Best Zurlis (498th) and Carol Best Hillman (498th) thanked all for attending the XXIII Reunion and explained that the Military Reunion Planners made it possible for us to meet at this fantastic venue. Judy explained that the banquet meals are extremely expensive and the MRP had negotiated greatly reduced prices for each meal. However, they were still

pricey, but we really wanted this reunion to be exceptional and have it at the Gaylord so we asked if the association could supplement the expense of the meals. Member's \$15.00 dues made this possible. Bottom line: Pay your dues so the association can continue to give you outstanding Strafers and reunions.

Mary Roby (500th) gave the Treasurer's Report. She thanked Charles Wilson for the ease in transferring the books. She has big shoes to fill.

Mary combined both accounts as of August 11, 2010 totaling \$16,910.41. Income was \$8,299.76 with Expenses of \$9,770.24 leaving a final balance as of August 30, 2010 of \$12,158.74. Don Rary (499th) moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as given. Bob Pearson (500th) seconded it. The motion carried. The full Treasurer's Report appears on the Message Board page of this issue.

Committee Reports:

Paul Van Valkenburg (501st) reported that the website has been updated with Mission Reports and new and old The Strafers since last year. He needs someone to redesign the website. Suggestions are needed.

Paul also reported we have additional DVDs available for \$10.00 each. Included on the DVD is: Warpath of the Air Apaches, Mission to Rabaul, The Emperor's Envoy, and the 2004 Reno Fly-by. Each person who registered with the reunion received a copy. He suggested that we post on the website that the DVDs are available for purchase. He gave the website address for our association – www.345thbombgroup.org.

Jim Bina explained our 501(c)19 tax status is for Military Veteran Associations that have a minimum of 75% veterans. We are not in compliance with this rule; therefore, we must change to a new tax status. Mary Roby and Jim will be researching the best tax status for our association. *The Strafer* will keep you abreast of the results.

Jim also discussed the status of the 345th and what it will be in the future. One suggestion is that we become a Historical Society instead of an Association. Jim wants to share with the world the legacy of the 345th. In order to do so we will need to increase the website. He wants to preserve the veteran's personal history – what they did prior to the war, when they volunteered, why, what they did during and after the war ended. Not veterans alone, but to include what the wives and children did to keep the home front going. How the family supported each other both monetarily and personally, etc. Jim challenged the second generation to get the information on tape, video, and etc. He would like to continue with a new direction to get a good start towards a Historical Society.

Kelly McNichols suggested we might donate papers to a museum rather than lose family and personal documents.

Nancy Ingram volunteered to record and write videos of the veterans.

Dennis O'Neill reported the audit of the Treasurer's books was perfect. He was very happy with what he found.

Margene Brown recognized the current officers. They are:

President – Ben F. Miller (499th)

1st Vice President – Jim Bina (501st)

2nd Vice President – Dennis O'Neill (500th)

Secretary – Silas Pearson (498th)

Assistant Secretary – Judy Best Zurlis (498th)

Treasurer – Mary Sloan Roby (500th)

Assistant Treasurer – Charles Wilson (498th)

Mary Sloan Roby (500th) presented the Treasurer's report. Copies of the report were distributed. A copy is attached.

Silas Pearson announced that he will continue to send condolence letters to families of deceased veterans. He will continue to absorb all expenses as the feedback has been tremendous and he is honored to do this small service.

Silas Pearson complimented Melvin Best (498th) on his devotion to the 345th Bomb Group. He and Gladys have attended every reunion of the association and hosted two of the reunions.

He then reminded everyone of Kenneth Gastgeb's diligence in compiling a complete list of all deceased veterans.

The slate of proposed officers was presented:

President – Jim Bina

1st Vice President – Dennis O'Neill

Secretary – Andy Decker

Treasurer – Mary Sloan Roby

Don Wagner (500th) moved that the nominations be accepted as presented. Don Rary (499th) seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Margene Brown (499th) read the duties of the remaining officer positions to be filled – 2nd Vice President, Assistant Secretary, and Assistant Treasurer.

Jim Bina (501st) thanked all for the honor and is humbled to be elected President. His father, Ed Bina, was elected president in 1990. He realizes he is the

first second generation president and first son to be elected to the office.

Kelly McNichols (500th) suggested Don Rary (499th) as the group Chaplain. Diane Brauer (500th) seconded the suggestion. Don accepted the position. This is not an elected officer position.

Andy Decker (501st) agreed to continue as editor of *The Strafer*.

Ruth Damour (499th) volunteered to be the Assistant Secretary.

Nancy Ingram (499th) volunteered to be the Assistant Treasurer.

Judy Best Zurlis (498th) moved the positions be approved. Norma Miller (499th) seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Diane Brauer (500th) nominated Kelly McNichols (500th) to be the 2nd Vice President. Bob Jensen Pearson (500th) seconded the nomination. The motion passed.

Dennis O'Neill announced that the government will pay for a headstone for all veterans. Harlan Hatfield said that if the veteran had already passed on, the government would pay for a plaque added to the marker.

Don Rary announced that the government will fly veterans free of charge to Washington D.C. to see the WWII monument. Contact Don for more information.

Kelly McNichols announced that he will help any veteran apply for any Service Awards or medals.

Don Wagner explained that traditionally we rotate the three different sections of the US for our reunions. It would be nice if we could secure a central US location for Reunion XXIV.

Diane Brauer (500th) announced her sister, Janice Daker (500th), lives in St. Louis and if she does not kill her for volunteering herself they will be happy to host the 345th Bomb Group Reunion XXIV next fall, 2011 in St. Louis. Judy Zurlis moved to accept Diane's offer to host the XXIV reunion next fall. Don Rary seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The newly elected officers are:

President – Jim Bina (501st)

1st Vice President – Dennis O'Neill (500th)

2nd Vice President – Kelly McNichols (500th)

Secretary – Andy Decker (501st)

Assistant Secretary – Ruth Damour (499th)

Treasurer – Mary Sloan Roby (500th)

Assistant Treasurer – Nancy Ingram (499th)

Squadron Vice Presidents:

498th Vice President – Carol Best Hillman (498th)

499th Vice President – James Mahaffey (499th)

500th Vice President – Donald Wagner (500th)

501st Vice President – Paul Van Valkenburg (501st)

Volunteer Positions:

Webmaster – Paul Van Valkenburg (501st)

The Strafer Editor – Andy Decker (501st)

Mailing of *The Strafer* – Judy Best Zurlis (498th)

Group Chaplain – Don Rary (499th)

Silas W. Pearson (498th) will continue to send condolence letters to the families of deceased veterans.

Kenneth Gastgeb (HQ) will continue to keep a list of all deceased veterans.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully,

Judy Best Zurlis, Assistant Secretary

THE MECHANICS by Vic Tatelman

Through the history of world aviation,
Many names have come to the fore.
Great deeds of the past in our memory will last,
And they are joined by many more.

When man first started his labor,
In his quest to conquer the sky,
He was designer, mechanic and pilot,
And he built a machine that would fly.

But somehow the order got twisted,
And then in the public's eye,
The only man that then could be seen,
Was the man who knew how to fly.

The pilot was everyone's hero,
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand,
As he stood by his battered old biplane
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

To be sure those pilots all earned it;
To fly, you have to have guts,
And they blazed their names in the hall of fame
On wings with bailing wire struts.

But for each of those flying heroes,
There were thousands of little renown,
Those were the men who worked on the planes
But kept their feet on the ground.

We all know the name of Lindberg
And we've all read of his flight to fame,
But think, if you can, of his maintenance man,
Can you remember his name?

And think of our wartime pilots,
Those that you haven't forgot.
Can you tell me the names of their crew chiefs?
A thousand-to-one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people,
And wings are not easily won,
But without the work of the maintenance man
Our pilots would march with a gun.

So when you saw those mighty Mitchells,
As they made their way through the air.
A grease-stained man with a wrench in his hand
Was the man who put them there.

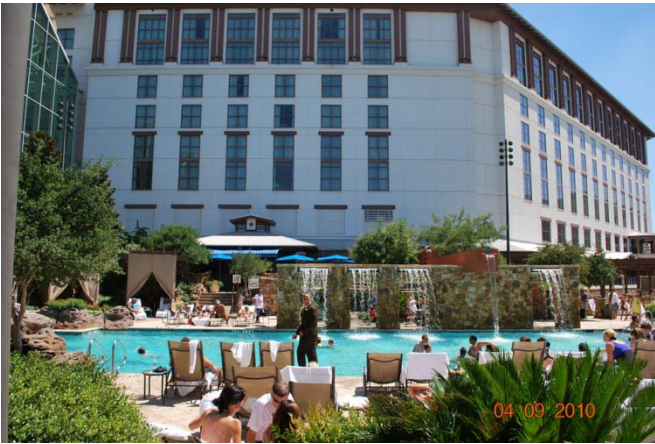




Harlan Hatfield the picture taker.



The Friday night Welcome to Texas buffet.



The outdoor pool.



Trophies on display.



Dennis O'Neill and Ed Smith in the Hospitality suite.



Social hour before the Sunday banquet.

PRESIDENT

Jim Bina (501st)
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