



307th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV) ASSOCIATION

"THE LONG RANGERS"

Newsletter 1998-2

5 September 1998

QUOTES OF NOTE:

"Time has no division to mark its passage, there is never a thunder storm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols.

- Thomas Mann

"Provided a man is not mad, he can be cured of every folly but vanity."

- Jean Jacques Rousseau

"Fate makes our relatives, choice makes our friends."

- Jacques Delille

"It is foolish to tear out one's hair in grief, as if grief could be lessened by baldness."

- Cicero

"Fate is something you believe in when things are not going well. When they are, you forget it.

- Aubrey Menen

"I can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. It's all how you look at it."

- J. Kenfield Morley

"Time ripens all things; no man is born wise."

- Cervantes

"To be effective, questions must be specific and, preferably short."

- Sam Donaldson

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I appreciate the number of 307th members who have taken the time to fill out the "Reunion Site Ballot" and get the copy to me. The response has been good in the balloting which makes it much easier to select the year 2000 site. The site selected will be announced at the Annual Membership meeting in Hampton.

Little response has been forthcoming on a Nominating Committee for the selection of Board members. Nominations for Board positions will have to be taken from the floor at our Annual Meeting. We need help in this area, so come prepared to nominate your candidate.

Currently, work is being done on updating the Association By-Laws. Within the next year, copies of the By-Laws will be forwarded to current members for their review. Comments will be requested from the membership prior to final approval of the By-Laws being acted upon at the 13th Annual Meeting of the membership.

Dave Owens,
President

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NOTICE

Any 307th member who has not been paying his membership dues is being dropped from the membership list. Widows of deceased members are excluded.

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FROM YOUR HISTORIANS

Missing Planes - Missing People

Over the many months of the World War II life of the 307th Bomb Group many planes and crews were lost. Those of us who were there handled these losses, each in our own way, and carried on despite heavy hearts, knowing that survival chances in the Pacific air war were slim. The combination of distance, the trackless ocean, and the philosophical character of the Japanese left slim chance for survival for downed air crews.

However, several 307th men were captured and showed up after the war. Others, we have learned, were captured but never seen again.

Zamperini - Phillips

In April of 1943 the Phillips' crew from the 372nd was forced to ditch during a search mission out of Hawaii. Three men survived the landing; pilot Russell Phillips, bombardier Lou Zamperini and tail gunner MacIntyre. MacIntyre died on the 33rd day of the 47 days the raft drifted before the two survivors were picked up by a Japanese ship. Probably because of Zamperini's fame as an Olympic runner, the two men survived months of torture and beatings in a Japanese prison at Amomori before being released after the end of the war. This information came to us from Association member Lewis Smith.

Birdwell

Gene Birdwell was a gunner on the 371st crew of Richard Kates during the October 3rd strike on Balikpapan. The Kates plane was hit by flak on the bomb run and crashed in Balikpapan Town after three men were seen to bail out. We have only a small newspaper clipping which reports that Gene Birdwell was released from a Jap prison camp in China following the war. We don't know if any of the others reported to have parachuted from the downed plane also survived. Can any one can fill us in on Birdwell's story?

Recently we have received documentation regarding several crewmen from planes downed over Yap and Palau who were captured and, at least for a while, seem to have survived captivity.

The additional information, new to us, came from Dr. Pat Scannon, of whom we have written in past Newsletters, and Mr. Chad Anthony, grandson of Don Anthony, pilot of a 371st crew shot down over Yap.

Pat Scannon, a member of a diving team working in the Palau Islands, is researching the part played by AAF units in the reduction of Jap forces in that area for use in a future book. To this end he has documented many B-24 losses over Palau. Chad Anthony has also gathered documentation regarding the loss of his grandfather's plane over Yap. The following draws on material from both of the above.

Gilbert - Mooney

Members of the 371st crew of Don Anthony, shot down over Yap on August 10, 1944, Hilary Gilbert (photographer) and Reynold Mooney (gunner) bailed out and landed on a reef at the mouth of Yap Harbor where they were captured. The following day they were placed on SPECIAL SUBCHASER #27 under command of Ensign Miyake Hito which reached Palau the next day. On August 19th, 1944, the two prisoners were placed aboard the Japanese light cruiser KINU at Palau for transfer to Manila by way of Cebu. Activities of the KINU from that time until it was sunk on October 26, 1944, near Masbate Island in the Central Philippines are unknown as is the fate of the prisoners who were never heard from again.

Curry

Earl Curry, probably from a 5th Bomb Group crew, bailed out of a B-24 shot down over Palau August 25, 1944. On September 2, 1944 he was placed aboard URUPPU MARU for transfer to Manila via Davao. No further word of Curry.

Moore - Schumacher - Vick

John Moore, Arthur Schumacher and Alexander Vick bailed out of a 424th B-24, piloted by Jack Arnett, which was shot down over Palau on September 1, 1944. On September 5, 1944, the three men were placed aboard the NANSHIN MARU for Davao. (Note: one report lists this

ship as the JANSIN MARU). None of these men turned up after the war.

It is to be noted that reports of the capture and disposition of the last six men discussed in this story came from Japanese officials queried after the war. In none of the cases was definite information given regarding the ultimate fate of the men involved. One wonders how much the

spectre of possible war crimes trials affected the answers. That our men did not show up after the war's end verifies that our concerns regarding probable Jap treatment of prisoners were well founded. That only three 307th prisoners returned, all sick, injured and considerably the worse for wear, of these nine POWs is a record for which Japan and its people should feel eternal shame.

London, England, Honors Bill Adams

You may have met Bill Adams at our Dayton reunion back in 1992 where he donated more than a dozen carved plaques depicting 307th aircraft nose art for use as raffle prizes.. As a young boy growing up in London during World War II Bill developed a special affection for the great four engine bombers seen in the skys over England and the men who manned them. Following a serious illness long after the war Bill took up wood carving as therapy and discovered a special talent and love for carving, thus opening a whole new aspect of his life. Drawing on his love for American military aviation, Bill turned much of his new found talent into the creation of wood plaques patterned after AAF unit insignia and nose art. Much of his work has been donated to the men and units involved, including our Association which was presented carvings of each 307th Group and Squadron insignia. Also more than a dozen lucky 1992 raffle winners and others have become owners of Bill's distinctive work. Pictures of Bill, the donated plaques and the lucky winners appear in the 1992 Dayton Reunion Book.

You'll be happy to know that Bill and Joyce,

except for the usual flu bug, are doing well. Exerpts from a recent letter from Bill to Marty Sporn tell of his most recent honor:

"I'm sending you a couple of photos taken on the day I was awarded a prize as a winner at a London art show. I had entered two carvings of 307th nose art. The luck of the 307th Bomb Group was with me! After four judges looked over the many entries on display I was awarded one of the nine prizes - L850!"

"One picture shows me with Vic Turner, Lord Mayor of London, who awarded the prizes. In the other picture shows the two 307th nose art carvings entered in the show."

"It was strange to be shaking hands with the Lord Mayor. I had not seen him for over twenty years when I was a truck driver going in and out of the Royal Albert and the King George V docks where Vic Turner was then a docker. I knew him only by sight but we had quite a talk about old times. He was amazed that I, a trucker, had developed the talent and skill needed for wood carving. A wheelchair bound friend who I have been instructing in wood carving also entered a pair of carvings and missed being a winner by only one point!"



More on "Long Ranger's Combat History"

Newsletter 98-1 contained an essay entitled "Long Ranger's Combat History" which ended with the comment that "we have no idea who wrote the above". A recent letter from Bob Wingert sets the record straight with a xerox of an original *"Souvenir copy of program presented at LR theater commemorating the 307th Bomb Group's second year of combat activity in the South and Southwest Pacific, February 13, 1945"* from which the copy was taken. The script for the program was written by Gordon K. Harvey and Eugene K. Hamilton and read by Warren and McConnell. The song ("We'll Say Goodbye") printed in the program was sung by Dennis, Souter, Hall and Ryan.

Our apologies for not having all the facts on this story. Things sometimes get a bit complicated because those preparing the Newsletters are so widely separated across the country. Occasionally neither the right hand nor the left knows what the other is doing. We seem to remember that this particular anniversary program has been printed before, either in a Newsletter or Reunion Book. However, a quick check of our files have failed to turn up anything. To make up for this apparent omission we are including an actual size copy of this souvenir program along with this Newsletter. It should be of interest to everyone despite the fact that it deals primarily with our South and Southwest Pacific years in the 13th Air Force and barely mentions our months with the 7th Air Force flying endless search missions out of Hawaii and still finding time to hit Wake Island, Nauru and Tarawa.

The End of the Yamato

Every so often another of our members will write to ask why we have not set the record straight regarding the sinking of the Yamato, Japan's super battleship. Usually these letters follow closely on the heels of national media coverage of the anniversary of the sinking of the massive ship by U.S. Navy planes. Our letter writers are generally indignant that the media had again failed to credit the 307th Bomb Group for its part in the sinking of the Yamato.

It is very difficult for us to demand proper recognition for a victory in which our Group played

no part. The U.S. Navy alone must be given full credit for sinking of the Yamato. However we can claim to be one of the few American military units to actually clash with the Yamato.

The 307th encounter with the Yamato took place on October 26th, 1944 over the Sulu Sea. The Battle of Leyte Gulf was drawing to a close and Adm. Kurita's task force, of which the Yamato was the flagship, was trying to escape through the islands of the Central Philippines to its anchorage in Brunei Bay, Borneo. As the 307th learned, the Yamato was a most formidable target, displacing almost 73,000 tons, with 18.1 inch guns which, in addition to their more traditional uses, could be accurately and effectively fired at approaching formations of aircraft at ranges of more than ten miles. In addition, the ship carried 100 anti-aircraft guns ranging from 25mm to 155mm and armour plating up to 16 inches thick in places. Three 307th planes were shot down during the attack. The battleships sailed through the attack, seemingly unscathed. Crewmen on our bombers reported hits on the deck of the Yamato but photos taken during the attack failed to verify this. However, a postwar Japanese book reported that our bombs wounded many people above decks and split Yamato's plates, allowing the ship to take on seawater almost equal to the tonnage of a cruiser. And still she maintained full speed. Remnants of the task force returned to Brunei Bay where the 307th and 5th bomb groups bombed it again on November 16, 1944. This mission cost the 5th Bomb Group at least two B-24s.

By early April of 1945, five months after the 307th encounter with the Yamato Task Force in the Philippines, Japan concocted a scheme known as the Kikusui Operation. Under this plan Japan's Second Fleet, including the Yamato, was to leave Japan and sail into the enemy anchorage of Kadena off Okinawa Island at daybreak of April 8, 1945. The crews were to scuttle the ships in shallow water and do as much damage to the American invaders as possible, after which any survivors would make their way to shore and die in the land fighting. It was clear even to the Japanese that such a hope was impossible and that the Kikusui Operation was a suicide operation, but Yamato, light cruiser Yahagi and eight destroyers, about all that remained of the Imperial Japanese Navy, set out on the mission at about 10 a.m. on April 7,

1945. At 12:30 p.m. the first of 280 fighters, dive bombers and torpedo planes ordered into the action by the U.S. Navy located the Japanese ships, sank a destroyer, severely damaged the cruiser and hit Yamato with two bombs and a torpedo. A second wave of attackers arrived at about 1 p.m. and completed their attacks by 2 p.m., having hit the Yamato with five more torpedoes. A third carrier strike force arrived as the second was departing and continued the attack, hitting the Yamato with at least eight more bombs and one torpedo. By now the ship had begun to list heavily allowing four more torpedoes to explode against her exposed bottom. At 2:23 p.m., following a series of internal explosions, the Yamato capsized and sank.

So, the 307th did attack Admiral Kurita's task force in the Sulu Sea on October 26, 1944. Any who flew on that mission will never forget it. Two squadrons bombed the Yamato and the other two the battleship Kongo. We probably did more damage than the Japanese were willing to admit officially even after the war but surely did not hurt her enough to claim any credit for her eventual sinking five months later.

We hope this will clarify the part played by the 307th in the wartime history of the battleship Yamato and correct misapprehensions still held by many of our Association members.

Alone on Guadalcanal-A Coastwatcher's Story

Martin Clemens arrived in the Solomons in 1938 as a young Colonial Office cadet. On leave in Sydney when the Japanese attacked Hawaii he immediately sensed that this was the end of an era. Returning at once to Tulagi as the Japanese approached he arrived as most other settlers were frantically leaving. He was assigned to the district office at Guadalcanal where he might be able to do some good. He soon found himself in the unenviable position of being the sole British official on Guadalcanal and automatically a link in the Islands Coastwatching Service. The Service had been set up by the Royal Australian Navy after World War I to keep watch over the country's coast in case of war. The area included New Guinea, the Bismarks, Solomons and other strategic islands off Australia's northeast coast. Clemens was at his headquarters in the tiny native village of Vungana,

high in the mountains of central Guadalcanal when our troops landed on the island. Because of his primitive communications it was some days before he learned of the invasion. A week after the landings, following a two day trek from Vungana, he entered the American lines with his teleradio, carriers, native scouts and little white dog.

From then on Martin Clemens supplied the Marines with native scouts and guides while continuing to collect information from his innumerable native contacts. He was still there when the 307th arrived to fly missions from Guadalcanal into the Northern Solomons. Of the 307th personnel who became acquainted with Clemens at least one, Bob King, still corresponds with him. Bob sends an interesting excerpt from a letter recently received from Martin with news of a book which should be of interest to many of you:

"One reason I'm so far behind in my correspondence is that I have been proof reading the chapters of my book. I have done 20 up to now and there is one more lot to come. It should be out next April, published by the U.S. Naval Institute Press".

The title of Martin Clemens book is:

*Alone on Guadalcanal
A Coastwatcher's Story*

We checked with the Naval Institute Press on price and availability of the book. It is scheduled for release in November, 1998, rather than April as mentioned by Martin. If after November you can't locate a copy locally you may order one from the Naval Institute Press at:

U.S. Naval Institute Press
118 Maryland Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21402-5035
(410) 295-1043
Attn. Virginia Schultz

Price of the book is \$32.95 if purchased locally. Should you order by mail or phone from the Institute add \$5.00 Shipping and Handling, plus, if you live in Maryland, 5% Sales Tax.

This book should be of interest to any 307th member, especially those who flew out of Guadalcanal and benefited from Coastwatcher's help.

NOTES FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

We happened upon this story via a telephone call from Bob Raya. You may want to call it, "How to Give My Father The Best Birthday Present of His Life."

The story begins with Janet Lewallen Eppolite wondering what to give her Dad for his 75th birthday. Many phone calls and letters later she had located five members of her Dad's crew, many who had not seen each other for 50+ years.

Charles Lynch Christian - pilot
Bob (Jesus) Raya - co-pilot
Richard E. Damon - belly gunner
William A. Lewallen - flight engineer
Homer Bryant - radio operator
Franklin Weishaar - navigator

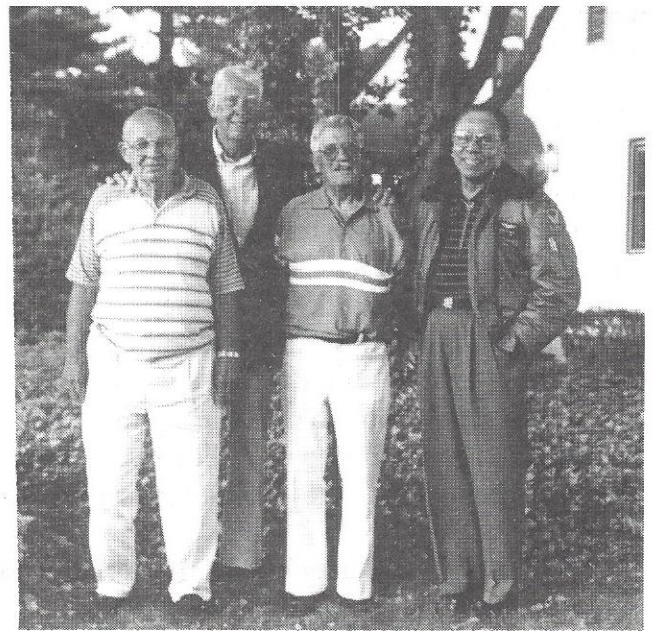
Lynch Christian and his wife Joy flew into NJ from their home state of VA with Lynch piloting his own "Piper". Richard Damon drove from Ohio with son Dick and Bob Raya and son David flew in from California.

Homer Bryant and Franklin Weishaar were unable to attend but participated by sending letters, photos and audio tapes that were shared at the party.

Janet writes: The entire event was a complete surprise to my Dad and Mom when we drove to the airstrip of the Trenton-Robbinsville Airport just at the moment Lynch was landing his aircraft. You can imagine Dad's surprise when we stopped at the hotel to drop off Joy and Lynch and found Richard Damon and Bob Raya waiting for him. Four of the crew members together for the first time in over 50 years.

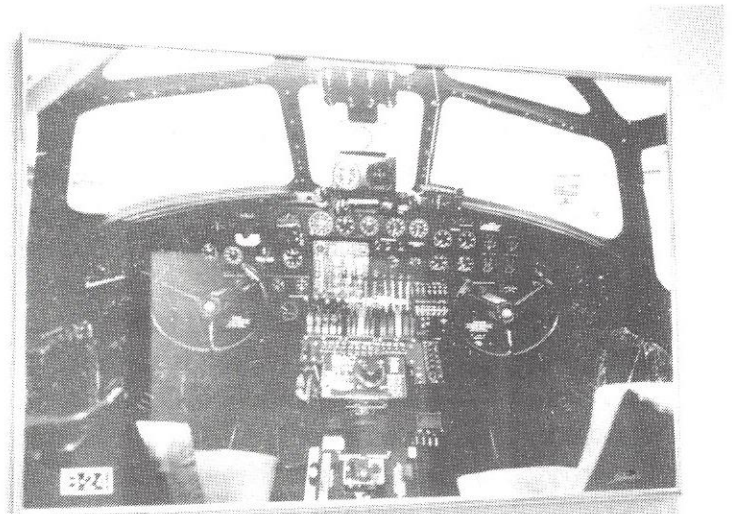
Saturday we gathered at my home for an outdoor brunch where everyone exchanged photos they had brought of their days serving in the Air Force, as well as current photos of families. Old "crew" stories were relived and we listened to audio tapes sent by Franklin Weishaar.

The afternoon was spent at the "Air Victory Museum" at the South Jersey Regional Airport in Medford, N.J.

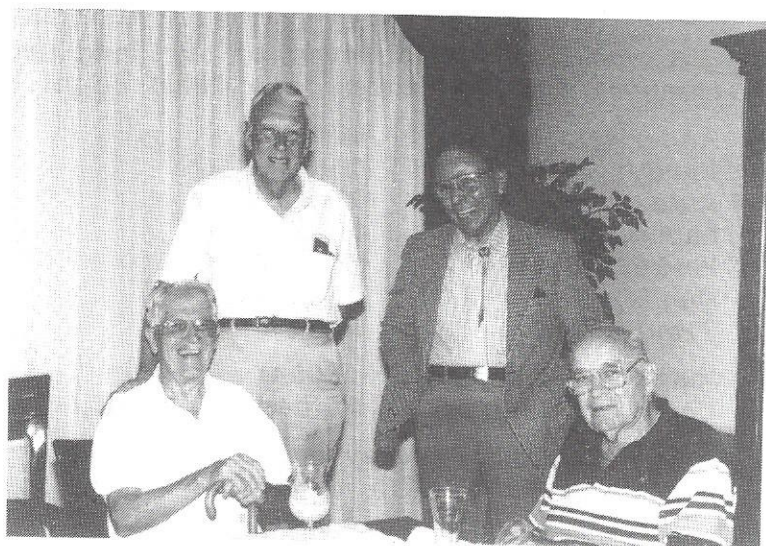


I to R - Richard Damon, Lynch Christian
Bill Lewallen, Bob Raya

The crew had a great time with their guided tour of all the old military aircraft. The museum also had many photos and models of the B-24 (see cockpit photo) and is actively seeking help in distinguishing the "nose art" photos they have from B-24's. (over 400 I believe). Contact the museum is anyone can help.



We concluded our reunion with a dinner and Dad's 75th birthday celebration at a local restaurant, along with my family.



The "Crew" - left to right
Dad - William (Bill) Lewallen
Charles (Lynch) Christian
Jesus (Bob) Raya
Richard Damon

What a great time my Dad had! And after receiving phone calls and letters from the others, I would venture to say they enjoyed the event equally as well!!

They are all looking forward to seeing each other again in Hampton, Virginia at the October reunion.

Sincerely,
Janet Eppolite

P.S. Dad continues to receive letters from Homer Bryant. After 50+ years of not seeing or hearing from each other, they all are in contact with each other!!

* * * * *

"Have you ever heard of a nicer birthday present than the one Janet Lewallen Eppolite gave her Father. She not only gave her Father a gift, she gave his crew a gift."

MEMBERSHIP LETTERS - continued

The following letter is from a new member of the 307th Assn.

"Dear Jim,

I discovered the 307th Association in the American Legion Magazine listing reunions. I won't be able to attend the reunion in Hampton, but knowing about the Association has started me doing a lot of remembering about when I was in the 424th Squadron.

I found the newsletters very interesting, although I must admit I don't remember many of the names involved. I was particularly interested in John Vanderpoel's letter in the 1998-1 edition. I didn't know Ray MacDowell personally, but I certainly remember his cooking! After a meal of spam and dehydrated potatoes, he could make you leave the mess hall with "a good taste in your mouth" with one of his desserts. I do question the part about Ray's age though. He couldn't have possibly been twenty years older than M-Sgt. John Wheelless, our Line Chief. Sgt. Wheelless liked to say that he had served in every branch of the army; strung wire in the Signal Corps, curried horses in the Cavalry, etc. I do know that Sgt. Wheelless was the backbone of the Engineering section of the Squadron. He ran the whole show, and I, the Engineering Officer, was totally dependent on him.

Just a little about myself - I joined the 424th in Ephrata, WA in June, 1942. Fresh out of college (NC State) with a degree in Engineering and an ROTC commission, I was made Engineering Officer. After about two months in the desert at Ephrata I was sent to Hartford, CT, to the Pratt-Whitney plant for a two week "engine training" school. While I was away the 307th moved to Sioux City, IA.

At Sioux City we were busy training pilots. Each squadron had one pilot checked out in four engines - the rest were fresh out of single engine school. We scheduled all maintenance at night so that the planes would be available for training flights from 6 am to midnight.

Toward the end of October we, the ground personnel, went by troop train to San Francisco. After several days on an

island in the harbor we set sail in a Norwegian banana boat for Honolulu (I was seasick all the way.) The four squadrons were at different airstrips. The 424th was at Mokuleia. In Hawaii we flew search missions along with more training. And, of course, the famous mission to Wake Island.

After several months in Hawaii, we moved to Esperitos Santos. Two squadrons moved up to Guadalcanal and for a while the crews rotated between Santos and the Canal, flying missions to the northern Solomons, probably out of Henderson Field. I remember that we were in Santos at Christmas, 1943. When Koli Field was ready, we all moved to Guadalcanal and flew out of there until we moved up to Kahili. I know that we were on Guadalcanal on Mothers' Day 1944, because that's when we had a flood in the camp.

I think we moved directly from Kahili to Wakde, then on to Noemfoor and finally to Morotai. When the war ended, we went to Manila (in a LST - seasick again) to a transit camp where I waited an eternity for "suitable transportation" to return to the states.

All told I was overseas three years and two days.

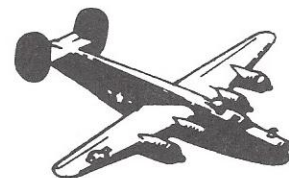
As I say, I have a lot of memories, but they are not too specific as to when they occurred. I wonder if you could provide me with the dates when we moved from place to place. Also, the Association membership seems to be mostly flight personnel, as one would expect, but if you happen to hear from any of the ground personnel from the 424th, I'd like to get in touch.

My phone number is 910-369-2341 and my e-mail address is eluke@carolina.net.

Sincerely,

Ed Luke
22945 Riverton Rd
Wagram, NC 28396

Taps



THE LAST FLIGHT

A sad farewell to seven of our long time members who have taken their "Last Flight."

Anderson, Ira	05-06-98
Hardy, Robin L.	03-12-98
Kidder, Karl M.	07-19-98
Logan, Lloyd R.	07-31-98
Parke, Leonard V.	08-14-98
Qualls, Carter P.	02-14-98
Trout, Lewis	12-02-97

Matheny, Bernice L. - Widow of Group
Commander William A. Matheny 05-27-98

Our sincere sympathy goes out to all the families of these 307th members.

REUNION UPDATE

Word from C.E. Jordan, Site Chairman for the 12th Annual 307th bomb Group Reunion is: All goes well. Reservations keep coming in and it looks as if we will have a nice turnout.

See you in Hampton.

Dave Owens
President
John Reeves
Vice-President
Jim Kendall
Historian
Harry Sterkel
Asst. Historian
Anita Sporn
Parliamentarian
Cena Marsh
Secretary/Treasurer