

March 2008

Greetings 6918th'ers,

Welcome Able, Baker, Charlie and hello again DAWGS!

Man, has the past six weeks gone by in a hurry. It seems that most of the time has been consumed with viewing the new webpage. Isn't it a thrill to check it every day to see how it is growing? It's almost like watching a grandchild grow. What a job you are doing, Pinky. Thanks.

This edition will have a bit of a different format. I asked several of the guys to give us some input on some things they were involved in during the 2007 Reunion. The following is what Pete Bolte contributed:

“I arrived at the hotel, checked in, and then went to the information desk to find out where we were, on what floor, in what room, etc. etc. When I asked the person for the 6918th reunion they had some trouble finding it and asked “The 345th?” I said “No the 6918th”. But I wondered who the 345th was. Anyway, they got me the right info. Later I checked out the scrolling events board and sure as shit, the 345th was listed just before ours numerically (of course!) on the same floor the same day/days and a different room (of course!). The 345th was scheduled for Thursday night. We started Thursday, then on to Friday and our formal dinner on Saturday which I mostly remember as the line to the bar being interminably long the entire night which is why I ordered two Heinekens every time.

We visited with each other Thursday afternoon turned into night. I was still curious as to exactly who the 345th was if only for the fact that there were two military reunions going on the same Thursday night and it was their last night.

So I walked down the hall to their room, entered and saw a large, formal, sit down dinner with a lot of men older than I and mixture of younger people about our age and even

younger people with no gray hair. There was a woman at the back of the room to whom I introduced myself as a member of the 6918th Security Squadron having our own reunion and asked her about hers. She told me they were World War II vets and that about did it for me. The M.C. was speaking but I asked her if she would approach him when he was done because I, we, the 6918th, wanted to visit and would he speak with me. After he finished, she spoke to him and he walked all the way to the back of the room to speak.

I told him that we would like to say “Thank You” to his reunion and if I brought a bunch of us to his group, would he give us some time? He thought about it for a minute and then said “OK”. I honestly think at first he was uncomfortable because it sort of interrupted his agenda but he was a gentleman and I know he understood that my motives were nothing but as a fellow military brother. To this day I don’t know his name and I wish I did.

I went back to our room and explained to the room about the 345th and that they were WWII vets and that I thought we ought to say thank you to them. If anybody wanted to follow me to their room, I’d appreciate it if they did and also that when I said “6918th salute” that , as a group, we did. I heard a bunch of “OKs” so I headed back out our door over to theirs and presented myself to the woman with whom I’d originally spoken. She gave the high sign to the M.C. who interrupted the 345th’s dinner and explained to them OUR wish and invited me to the podium.

Honestly? I thought I’d be nervous at the podium but I wasn’t. Why? Because as I banged a right down an aisle between tables and then a left down another aisle to the podium there was nothing but silence. Not intimidating. Anticipatory. And because I was confident in what it is I wanted to say to them....from us. Not me. US. Why did I know it was “us”? Because when I got to the podium and looked to the back of the room ALL of us were there. From what I could tell, every single member of the 6918th AND their wives had made the trip down the hall. If that doesn’t give somebody confidence, I don’t know what will.

I started off with a joke saying it was good to see hair grayer than mine which brought a

laugh and then proceeded to explain to the 345th what it was the 6918th had done and that although we had different jobs in different times and different wars, we were indeed brothers. I told them that our generation appreciated their sacrifices to allow us to carry on what they'd given and that we thanked them for that. Then I said "6918th salute" and as I saluted, damn if the timing wasn't absolutely perfect! After all those years we could still get a salute dead on perfect.

I stepped down and got handshakes. One from a woman who was, I have to say HOT! (but I didn't hit on her! I swear!) who said 'thank you', one from a young AF Staff Sergeant who also said "thank you" and at THAT point I realized there were 3 generations attending. His handshake sort of brought it all together. Generation to generation to generation. All brothers and now, sisters.

That night I was very proud of two things. The first being that we'd gotten to say 'thank you' before the members of the 345th faded completely away. The second being that when we all saluted together, I'd never been prouder that to have been associated with men like you. That sort of pride will never fade. I'm so glad to have been privileged to serve with people of your caliber and to have known you.

Here's a brief history of the 345th.

During the 26 months that the 345th was in combat, 58,562 combat hours on 10,609 strikes were made. 58,000 bombs with a total weight of 6340 tons were dropped and over twelve-and-a-half million rounds of ammunition were expended. They were credited with sinking 260 enemy vessels and damaging 275 others. They destroyed 260 Japanese planes on the ground and another 107 in aerial combat. Its units won four Distinguished Unit Citations, including one for an unescorted raid on Rabaul in October of 1943. This record came at a high cost, 712 men dead from all causes, 580 killed on flights. Another 111 men were killed on November 12th, 1944, when Kamikaze's attacked the SS Nelson and SS Waite in Leyte Gulf. Most of these men were ground personnel waiting for the 345th to be moved ashore to their new home in the Philippines. 177 planes were also lost. In all, the 345th

participated in nine major campaigns in the Asia-Pacific Theater, these included the New Guinea, Bismark Archipelago, Northern Solomons, Southern Philippines, Luzon, Western Pacific, China Defensive, China Offensive, and Air Offensive against Japan. The 345th became one of the most decorated units of the war.

In August of 1945, the Air Apaches were given the great honor of intercepting and escorting the two Japanese “Betty” bombers that were transporting the peace emissaries who were to initiate the Japanese surrender. The Group was officially deactivated at Camp Stoneman, Ca. on December 29th, 1945, after just over three years of existence.”

Pete, thank you for the above contribution; you said it well! What an honor it was to salute, meet and shake hands with the 345th Group. They and we know that the WWII vets are passing-on at a rate of over one-thousand per day. So, the pride of which you mentioned, WE have of YOU, for having the insight to lead us to their reunion and offer our ‘thanks’.

A funny thing happened while I was writing the newsletter:

Seed Caraway called me to say that he was thinking about selling his business and slowing down a bit, but he didn’t want to quit working completely, so he thought he would get a part-time job to see if he would like it before he sold. He went to Bass Pro in Springfield and asked for a job. It went like this:

Seed: “I’d like a part time job if you are hiring?”

Boss: “Do you have any sales experience?”

Seed: “Well yeah, I owned my own business the last 36 years so yeah, I can sell!”

Boss: “Seed, I like you. You start tomorrow and I’ll check on you tomorrow night.”

Boss: “Seed, how many sales did you make today?”

Seed: “One.”

Boss: “ONE? Our sales people average 20 or 30 sales a day. You’re going to have to improve considerably or look for another job! How much was the sale for?”

Seed: "\$112,237.64"

Boss: "\$112,237.64! What the hell did you sell?"

Seed: "First I sold him a small fish hook. Then I sold him a medium fish hook. Then I sold him a larger fish hook. Then I sold him a new fishing rod. Then I asked him where he was going fishing and he said at Table Rock Lake, so I told him he was gonna need a boat, so we went down to the boat department and I sold him a new bass boat. Then he said he didn't think his Honda Civic would pull it, so I took him down to the automotive department and sold him that new Ford pick-up. I asked him how long he was going to be out at the lake and after he said 5 or 6 days I took him down to the RV department and sold him a slide-in camper for the truck."

Boss: "A guy came in here to buy a fish hook and you sold him a boat, a truck and a camper?"

Seed: "No, he came in here to buy a box of tampons for his wife and I said, well, your weekend's shot, you might as well go fishing."

That's my roomie!

During our gathering in Las Vegas, Bill and Kathy Guerard, Jim and Marty Howard and Don and Kathy Dickson went to the cemetery to pay their respects to our friend, Sgt. Wilford Jackson, loving known to most as "Big Jack". The following is a memory from Bill and Kathy:

"When we heard of Jack's death just before the reunion, we couldn't believe it. We were so looking forward to seeing him once again after almost 40 years. Upon learning that he had been laid to rest in the veterans cemetery in Boulder City, we knew there was no way we would leave Las Vegas without paying our respects to Jack by putting flowers on his gravesite. Standing there in the cemetery was an emotional experience, as we remembered what a wonderful, gentle man he was."

Bill

"As we stood next to Jack's grave in the Veteran's Cemetery in Boulder City, Nevada, I couldn't help but think what a pretty spot it was. It was an odd thought to have in a cemetery, but I think Jack would appreciate the expanse of green grass, the trees, the view

of the distant mountains and the incredibly blue desert sky above it all. It's comforting, in a way, to think of Jack there, resting in quiet contrast to the glitz and vulgarity of Las Vegas."

Kathy

And the following from Jim and Marty Howard:

"Stan, a year ago at this time I was looking forward to our DAWG flight reunion. To finally be in contact again with the old DAWG crew was a thrill for me. After getting the telephone number from Dave Bethard, one of my most exciting moments came the day I telephoned my old friend Jack after almost forty years. Throughout last spring, Jack and I talked frequently. We reminisced and looked forward to seeing each other again at the reunion.

You can understand my deep disappointment when I heard of his death. I grieved his loss and my anticipation of the DAWG flight reunion lost some of its luster. Yet, I still looked forward to seeing my other comrades.

When my wife, Marty, and I arrived at the reunion, I was not ready for the rush of emotions I felt as I met and visited with my old friends. I sat or stood where I could see each person as they came through the door. Not only was I excited to see who would come through the door next but it was just as moving to see the display of emotion from other DAWGS as they would smile and rush to the door to meet an old friend that they had not seen for close to forty years. It was such a joy for me to reunite with my DAWG buddies and their wives and hear about their lives since Hakata. I believe this reunion helped many of us to become much closer than we had been at Hakata. It was a moving experience to see so many people hugging and shaking hands and telling each other how happy they were to see each other—and mean it. The DAWG Flight reunion was for me, one of the most emotional events of my lifetime, and based on what I saw from others I believe it was emotional for them as well.

As happy as I was to see so many old buddies, I still missed Jack. Throughout the

reunion, I was surprised that so many guys would bring up Jack's name. I often heard guys say, "He saved my butt," and "He was a great guy," and "I really looked forward to seeing Jack." I gradually realized how much Jack meant to so many DAWGS, and I was only one of many who mourned his passing. I came to feel that our DAWG reunion was memorial to Jack, who helped to organize it.

Marty and I had an opportunity to visit Jack's grave with Bill and Kathy Guerard and Don and Kathy Dickson. It was pretty emotional. It was only fitting to see his grave in a military cemetery where he lies among his bothers and where Air Force planes fly over his head. While we were there planes and a helicopter with a very large US flag painted on, flew directly over Jack's grave. I think Jack would like it there. I found closure there in the Nevada desert with my wife and comrades

I owe a great deal of gratitude to you guys for planning and organizing this reunion. Stan, Dave, Pinky, Troy without your hard work and that of your significant others, Linda, Takeko, Nancy, and Jill, the reunion would never have happened. There may be other reunions but I do not believe that any reunion could capture the excitement and emotion of this reunion. I could never write enough to express my appreciation so I will simply say, Thank You.

Sincerely, Jim Howard"

May our dear friend, Jack, rest in peace. Wow! Bill and Kathy, Jim and Marty, I am not literate enough to add another word to this. Thank you very much!

The following was received from Bill and Valaune Wineland:

"The reunion was more fun than I thought possible. Seeing everyone after all those years was just great. Here's my golf story:

When I mentioned in an e-mail during the run up to the reunion that I was interested in playing some golf, I was 'recruited' to set up some golf for interested parties. That smacked of the volunteerism we knew in the service. Yeah, but, yeah but I was just

asking! Anyway I sent some e-mails and got Dickey Miller, Gil Cadena, Denny Dellinger and myself all lined up to play. We brought wives and Denny brought his son.

(If we'd have been a little better organized I'm sure we could have gotten more golf scheduled and more players. I'll be more careful in the run up to San Antonio.)

I got e-mail confirmations from Dickey and Gil but Denny didn't have e-mail. When I called Denny he was a little reluctant to confirm because he wasn't planning to take his clubs with him. I finally got him to agree to bring his equipment and since he and I were arriving early we decided to play a tune-up round before the reunion started. We were both a little concerned about the potential cost of golf but I managed to find a course that was reasonably priced. Since we had a car my wife and I picked up Denny and his son at the Imperial Palace and we headed for the course. I had only spoken with Denny one time on the phone so I wasn't even sure I would recognize the guy after 38 or so years. Turns out Denny hasn't changed much. We threw the clubs in the back of the van and headed for the course. It was like all the years melted away and we were back on a train to Mojiko for a couple of days R and R. We met his son and he's a great guy. Denny and I really hadn't discussed golf that much so I didn't know if he was a player or a weekend hacker. I'm about an 8 handicap which puts me somewhere in the top 20% of golfers. Turns out Denny and I play about the same game. In fact over the two rounds we were able to get in we scored the same. When we got together with Dickey and Gil, it turns out we're all closely matched.

We managed to get a round in with Dickey and Gil before the reunion was over. It would have been great to play a couple of more times but it was difficult to get everything organized. We missed our chance to play at the air base but we'll work on better scheduling for the next time. I wasn't sure how the scheduled events of the reunion were going to go so I wanted to make sure I had as much time as possible to meet everyone again or for the first time. Since it only takes five or six hours to get in a round of golf we'll have time to play and still be there for the reunion events.

The time I had with Denny, Gil and Dickey (and families) on the courses was great.

Denny and I had some stories to share and catching up on what's been happening all these years was amazing. Forty years sounds like a long time but it's really not. My memory had faded somewhat but some things are so vivid it's unbelievable. Spending time with old friends helped my wife put faces to some of the people I've talked about for so many years. She had heard about Denny and I saw that neither of us has changed all that much. Valaune is looking forward to our trip to San Antonio.

When the time draws closer I want everyone who is even remotely interested in playing golf to sign up to play. We'll be going early and maybe staying a little late so as to get in as much as we can. One of our biggest joys is playing where we haven't played before in weather that isn't cold and rainy, like it is so much here in the northwest. I'll be happy to take the lead in scheduling golf for whoever is interested.

See you all in San Antonio. God bless you all."

Bill and Valanue, thank you for golf report. It was enjoyable reading. Now, the rest of you, you have to realize that I did not hear back from Dickey, Gil or Denny. I understand that Bill was the "recruited" leader, but as all stories are, there should be at least two sides of the story. So, we have to assume either: One, Bill is telling the truth, or Two, Bill got his butt whumped by Dickey, Gil and Denny, and we will never know if they do not respond!

And now my friends, there is another reunion in the works. This one we have dubbed the "Midwest Mini", but of course all are welcome. The idea came to be at the Las Vegas reunion, the thought being, two years until the next 2009 gathering was a long time to wait, so why not have mini's in the meantime. There have been micro-mini's, to date the ones I know of: The Shemek's and the Dickson's in Omaha during the Christmas holidays, and the Wineland's and the Bethard's in Orlando in late February or early March this year. It is heart-warming to see friendships continuing from the sparks that were re-ignited at 2007 reunion. We have ten suites blocked (many more available if needed) for the April gig. Check your calendar and join us if you can. Keep an eye on the website "08 Mini Reunion" for those who have registered. We would love to spend the weekend with you!

2008 Midwest Mini Reunion

- Begins: 4/18/08 (Fri) / Ends: 4/20/08 (Sun)
- Kansas City, Kansas
- Hyatt Place Overland Park/Metcalf
- Room Reservations—call 1-913-451-2553 (Heather)
- ID yourself as '6918th Midwest Mini Reunion' for discounted suites
- Dawg Contact: Stan Freymuth/Rich Caraway
- Check-in time 3 PM/Check out time 11 AM
- Deadline for blocked suites is March 31



Shiek and Evelyn Shemek
And
Don and Kathy Dickson
Met in Omaha over the Christmas Holidays.
Interesting Point!
They did not know each other until the 2007
Reunion

The planning of the 2009 Reunion has begun. If some of you San Antonio guys would like to take the reins for putting our gathering together there, let me know. I have not yet heard anything since Las Vegas, so I have begun to stir the pot here in St Louis. Either location is still feasible. If you want a letter to present to the hotel reunion site stating our needs, let me know. I have one almost ready. Now is the time to begin preparations.

This brings the March newsletter to a close. Guys and gals, thanks for your input. It is a thrill to hear from you. Everyone remember, we still have "Dawg Flight 2007 Reunion" shirts (by now a collectors item) for sale for \$20.00 each, and the two disc "DVD" for sale for \$20.00 per set, shipping and handling provided by Dawg Flight Reunion.

Able, Baker and Charlie Flighters, welcome aboard! This is your newsletter too; I just know more about Dawgs than I do about you, so if you have anything you would like to say to all, feel free to send it to me. The next newsletter will be posted on or about May, 01. If you can have your comments to me by mid April, I'll get 'er done! As always, it is a pleasure. Talk to you in May. Take care and stay turned to the webpage.
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