

HISTORY OF THE 11TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION

Friends, relatives, members and honored guests welcome to the 50th Annual Anniversary of the 11th BGA (H).

The 11th BG received their colors on February 1st 1940 at Hickam Air field in Hawaii. The 11th participated to 8 campaigns throughout the Pacific area, Guadalcanal, Northern Solomons, Western Pacific, Central Pacific, Eastern Mandates, Ryukus, China Offensive and Air Offensive against Japan. The 11th never left the battle zone from 1941 to 1945. They received 2 awards, the Presidential Unit Citation (Navy) during August 1942 and the Distinguished Unit Citation (Army) from July through November 1942.

I believe we should pay tribute to those veterans who made this reunion possible for us to meet and join in the love and camaraderie that we as members cherish today.

It all started back in the late 50s when Bob May met Spencer Davis on a bus and they talked about getting the old gang back together again. Spencer said it would take a lot of hard work to do this. When Bob returned home he called 3 buddies Hiram Jenkins, Ken Crothers and Jack Krey and met in Toledo, Ohio in 1960 the starting of the 11th BGA Reunions. In 1961 they met again with names from the war department and sent out invitations to come to a 11th BGA reunion in 1962. Bob May became the 1st President of the 11th BGA, with 160 members in attendance. The effort and dedication these members put into the reunion was just outstanding and of course we can't forget the officers that were elected to various positions and the members who attended throughout the years.

We would like to pay special tribute to our friend and travel agent Gus Petros who joined our organization in 1965 and served in the Navy during WWII. Gus was with us for 41 years and took care of all travel arrangements. I will never forget what he did in 1991 with our reunion in Hawaii. He took care of approximately 900 people that took 18 buses to transfer us around and never missed a beat. In 2006 Gus passed away and Brenda Fulkerson stepped forward to take his place (Thanks Breads for all your hard work).

In 1998 Bob May wanted to dissolve the 11th BGA after 38 years but the members wanted to keep going, so Allen Davis came forward to become our Sect/Treas. He was also president in 1992 and 1999. After Allen passed away to 2003 another associate member Phil Gudenschwager came forward to be our Secret/Treas. (Thanks Phil for all your hard work) and with our help has carried us to this day. (VETS STAND) I would like to quote from Abraham Lincoln's speech after the civil war. "THE SOLEMN PRIDE THAT MUST BE YOURS TO HAVE LAID SO COSTLY A SACRIFICE UPON THE ALTAR OF FREEDOM" unquote.

A little more history of the men of our group. In 1980 a hard covered book was written and edited by Bill Cleveland and Dick Mansfield called "GREY GEESE CALLING" 1000 numbered books were sold and we are on our second publication. Dick was also Vice President

and chairman of the Navigators Association and was responsible for recruiting 500 of the 1200 members for the association. Mett Messerschmidt donated a flag with the 11th BG logo on it and now that flag is hanging in the Heritage House in Hawaii. In 1991 Dale Henderson wrote and edited a soft cover book called "LEST WE FORGET". He was also appointed Chairman for the Heritage House committee which is a museum located at Hickam Air Field in Hawaii. There are only 3 left of the committee of six, Doyle Ebel, Dick David and Myself. We can't forget Leo Nugent who ran the 35mm projector showing the history of the 11th BG for many many years and was involved in transferring the 35mm to VCR's and later DVD's. The narrator of the film is none other than our own Ken Crothers. He also sent this in to Bob May to put into the news letter. Back in the forties they had a saying it feels like we are behind the eight ball, think about this, we were in the 7th Air Force 11th BG, 11 plus 7 is 18 ends in 8- 26 sqdn 2 plus 6 is 8— 42nd 4 times 2 is 8- 98 ends in 8- 431st adds up to 8— we were in 8 campaigns, maybe we were behind the 8 ball and didn't know it.

The 11th BGA dedicated many memorials through the years such as the plaque on Guadalcanal at Bloody Ridge cemetery where Frank Coombs places 400 flags every Dec. 7th. A plaque was dedicated in 1979 to the Air Force Academy by Bob Baird President of the Denver reunion. Another plaque was dedicated at Hickam Air Field on Dec. 7th 1979. A tree was planted with a plaque dedicated by President Jack Worrell in July 1981 at Wright-Patterson Air base in Dayton, Ohio. A map designed by Harry Girdler was presented to the West Point Academy called "ONE DAMNED ISLAND AFTER ANOTHER" in October 1990 by members of the 11th BG, Sal Lapilusa, Sam Moses and George Kay. In the early part of 2003 a brick was purchased by Doyle Ebel for the 11th BGA and presented by Jim Cuzzolina in 2004 during our reunion in New Orleans. Clint Rutherford also collected from the 431st members money to purchase a brick and was dedicated in 2005. In 2009 a plaque was designed and donated by Ed Lavin in honor of the 11th BGA and presented to the Nimitz museum at Fredericksburg, Texas. In 1980 Hap Kollmeyer was president in Hawaii and wanted to start a 100/100 club meaning he wanted 100 members to give a \$100.00 for a memorial to be built honoring the veterans who lost their lives during the attack on Hickam Air Field. 100 members came forward with the money and it grew to \$30,000.00 with monies coming from friends, relatives, members, legions and VFW clubs throughout the United States. It was dedicated Dec. 7th, 1991 at Hickam Air Field flag pole with about 200 names on it including civilian firemen who were attached to our group with a time capsule located on the right side at the bottom to be opened on Dec, 7th, 2041.

Name, Dates and places are historically correct to the best of my knowledge. Written and edited by Neal Siebenbruner. September 30, 2010

This speech was presented by Neal Siebenbruner during the Orlando reunion Nov.

3/7/2010