

SECRET

CHAPTER V

PACIFIC WAR

Time was no longer moving backwards and October came into being with the Allies holding the initiative. Pearl Harbor had secured for the Japanese the ranking power in the Pacific - by March of 1942 their strength had carried them through the Netherlands East Indies and had lost for us the Philippines. A thrust in May against Port Moresby was smashed in the Coral Sea and for the first time America could fight back. Those early days of the war were heart-breaking days - there just wasn't enough to fight a war with. The air force was a pitiful sight but what it lacked in airplanes, the valiant men made up for in guts. During the month of September, the 38th Bombardment Group became of age and took a leading part in the spearhead of the Fifth Air Force. This early date was the beginning of the end of a strong, always numerically superior foe.

During the months of October 1942, the operations of the 38th were increased ten-fold over the activities for the previous month. Each passing day saw the role of the 38th assuming more importance as the Pacific War passed. Although the bulk of the missions for this month were reconnaissance missions, the fighting arm of the "Sun Setters" was being felt by the Japanese enemy. In operations from the Laloki strip, the group participated in 28 reconnaissance, 3 attack, and 1 patrol mission. The score at the end of the month was six enemy planes shot from the skies and one probable, and two destroyed on the ground. The Group unfortunately lost one airplane with its crew of seven men, but the lessons of combat they had learned during this one month had made veterans of the men.

On 3 October, two planes piloted by Lieutenants Tanberg and Johnson, took off from the Laloki strip for the first mission of the month in an attack on the Wairopi Bridge. After a short flight the B-25's approached the target area. Circling the area to pick up the target, the two planes made four runs dropping bombs each time as they crossed the target. At least three of the 500 pounders scored direct hits completely demolishing the bridge, and three additional near misses contributed still further to the damage. The Nips failed to show their hand and offered no resistance of any type. As the two airplanes withdrew from the target area, the pilots sighted a camouflaged area of approximately 150 square yards, which was assumed to be a supply dump, and farther up the river another bridge similar to the one they had just destroyed. After the planes had returned to Laloki strip, their findings were immediately reported and efforts were made to have another mission take off and bomb these targets. However, difficulties in contacting the necessary officials to secure permission to make the

SECRET

SECRET

attack resulted in too much time lost, thus making it too late for another mission on that day.

On the following day, one plane took off for a run over the Buna Area. Aboard the plane were four Infantry officers and the mission centered around them. They were anxious in finding a suitable area in which to drop supplies when American Infantry got into the area. Again the Nips failed to challenge the intruder and the mission was very uneventful.

October 5th proved to be the most exciting - and most tragic day of the month for the men of the advance echelon. Orders had been received for two planes to fly to Cape Waria, make the coastal patrol to Oro Bay, thence back and strafing the track to Wairopi. While making this patrol the planes were to drop their bombs on the supply dump and bridge sighted on the 3rd of October. And lastly, they were to drop medical supplies to Australian troops in the Sangai Area.

Most of this did not come off however, for the two planes piloted by Lt. Brandon and Lt. Carey sighted two destroyers and one troopship off the Buna coast. After radioing in the position of the convoy to the base the two pilots decided to attack the convoy.

Lt. Carey went in over the target first, but he did not have a chance for suddenly from over head out of the clouds swooped six Zeroes jumping right on his tail. He was last seen heading for the water with his engines smoking. Lt. Brandon, in the meantime went in over the target, and in dropping his bomb made a very near miss on the transport. Before he could drop the rest of the bombs, the Zeroes were coming in for the attack. This forced Lt. Brandon to abandon the attack and head for home. Over land he salvoed his bombs in order to gain more speed and a running battle was on. During the course of the battle, the B-25's gunners shot down two of the Zeroes and there was a good possibility that a third went down for its engine was smoking as it left the scene of the attack. To add further discomfort to the situation, the Japs on the ground took a part in the fight and began throwing up ack ack, none of which did any damage. Finally as they reached the mountains, the remaining Zeroes broke off the attack and the surviving B-25 landed back at Laloki at 1930 hours.

There a report was turned in, the position of the convoy verified, and six planes were made ready for the attack. At 0930 hours the following day the six planes took off. One of the planes failed to function properly and although he could not keep up with the rest of the flight, he tried to continue on to the target area alone. The convoy was still in the same area and upon reaching the target the five planes went in for the attack. Again the enemy

-37-

SECRET

SECRET

fighters came out of the clouds and the planes were forced to salvo their bombs without regard to the targets and fight back. Another running fight ensued and after return to the base the tally was taken and it was found that four Zeroes were definitely shot down and one probable. All of our planes were holed and some of the crew members were injured but no losses were sustained. Fighter protection was supposed to have been given for this mission, but because this protection did not materialize, the entire mission was considered a failure. If the fighters had been there, there is no doubt that the results of the mission would have been different.

For the next few days there was a lull in missions and up until the 9th of the month the bulk of the missions were of the reconnaissance type and a few scattered patrol missions. On October 9th orders were received to send all planes to the Rorona strip for an overnight stay - the Third Group was to come into Laloki strip and the B-17's were to use 17 Mile for a raid against Rabaul. The planes returned to Laloki the following day.

It was not until 24 October when one of our recon planes made an attack at Lae that anything of any importance happened. While flying over the Lae-Salamaua area, the plane piloted by Lt. Cox, sighted four twin engine bombers lined up wing-tip to wing-tip on Lae Airfield. This target was too "juicy" to overlook and Lt. Cox went in for the attack. He made two runs over the target dropping three 500 pound bombs on each run. The first three bombs dropped on the runway doing comparatively little damage, but the last three were seen to drop among the planes and it was certain that at least two were destroyed and the other two partially damaged. While this was going on, another airplane covering the Vitiaz Straits area sighted a white square at the West end of the landing strip at Ioma. This was the signal that all of the Japs were out of that area and that the allied forces were in full control.

On 26 October, word was received at the advance echelon Headquarters that the Ground echelon had departed Townsville on the S. S. Wingate and were enroute to Rorona Strip, New Guinea. Further orders were received telling the Squadrons to move out of Laloki, the 71st was to go to Townsville and the 405th to Rorona. Upon arrival at the Rorona, conditions were so bad that it was found advisable to send the planes of the 405th on down to Townsville and continue operations out of there. Only two of the airplanes remained behind and these were kept for the purpose of transporting supplies in to Rorona.

-38-

SECRET

SECRET

CHAPTER VI

THE GROUP GETS TOGETHER

In the month of November, the bulk of the missions for the Group changed from the Reconnaissance missions to the attack. Results of the months activities against the Nips were two enemy aircraft destroyed and twelve damaged; the 38th lost one airplane with the entire crew of seven men. Following a pattern of supporting the Ground troops, attacks were carried out against Buna and the Lae-Salamaua area, and an attack on a Japanese convoy.

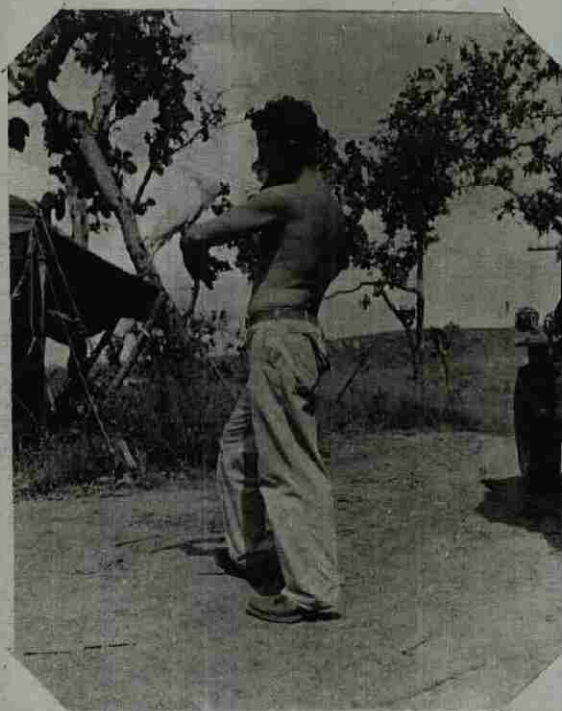
Activities for the month started out rather slowly, the major portion of the time being spent in preparing the base for occupation by the entire Group. Rorona was noted for its highly infested mosquito area; the mosquitoes were so abundant that even during the day-light hours they were out in great force and the men actually claimed that they adopted formations similar to those flown by Allied planes. In addition to making life most disagreeable, these insects were a source of malaria and dengue fevers. Many of the men in the area had already fallen victims to malaria and dengue. Having all personnel in the area take quinine and atabrine soon became a standard operating procedure. New Guinea had just about everything a man wouldn't want. Even the waters were dangerous to swim in, for to swim there was an invitation to fungus infection.

At Rorona the men made their first contact with the new Guinea natives and much to the surprise of many, the natives were not the cannibals and head-hunters they had expected to find; many of them were converts of Christianity due to the magnificent efforts of the Christian missionaries who had gone to the Island before the war. The native Papuans were short with broad noses and wooly hair and in turn became known as the Fuzzy-Wuzzy. Practically all of them proved to be willing workers for they were as glad as any to see the Japs leave their country. Their exploits with the Ground Troops during the entire New Guinea campaign were world renown.

The jungle area surrounding the Rorona strip was densely populated with all sorts of New Guinea animal life. The most striking creatures in the region were the birds; their voices in the early morning hours and evening hours sounding as if all pandemonium had broken loose. Some were extremely large; others small; some were brilliantly colored, while others were quite plain. The men found quite a liking for these strange looking birds and as might be expected, many of the men acquired pets of every description. The most likable pet to be found was the parrots, and as soon as a Yank adopted a parrot for a pet the

SECRET

SECRET



... A Parrot and his master ...

Parrot in turn became a constant companion to their owners. Many of the Parrots were quick to learn the Yankee language and their outbursts were a never ending source of entertainment for the men.

Occasionally, the more unpleasant creatures of the jungle could be seen; huge rats over two feet long, giant flying foxes, a member of the bat family with a wing spread of over four feet, and snakes - even Ripley wouldn't believe the size of some of them. In most cases, all snakes, regardless of size, color, or nationality, were killed or chased away but among the members of the 38th was one lad who took a liking to them and could be seen almost any time out looking for "snakes". Nobody bothered Pvt. Ogles when he came strolling into camp with one of the big ones hanging around his neck. Some of the New Guinea lizards, although big and ugly, were quite harmless. There were occasions when even these monsters were captured, tied up, and kept as pets. Let us hasten to add that not all of the wild life of New Guinea became a part of the Group - the mosquitoes were never accepted as friendly.

-40-

SECRET

SECRET



- a pre-historic monoster in the meking -



- Ogles and his slimey pets -

SECRET

-41-

SECRET

Personnel of the ground echelon began debarking from the S.S. Wingate on 1 November, but only a few of the men were allowed to get off. More got off on the 4th and 5th but it took two weeks for all of the men and all of the equipment to be unloaded from the ship. It was a slow and tedious process with the equipment first loaded on barges and then towing the barges in to the shore. The trip from the harbor to the camp site was then made by truck convoy. After all the personnel had come ashore and arrived at camp, construction really got under way. The camp area was cleared, latrines were built, bridges repaired, and roads constructed. Natives were hired and aided in mosquito control projects, helped with construction of mess halls, and in general did a good job. The movement of equipment and supplies from the boat to the area proved to be the biggest job and was hampered by washed out roads and bridges. During this period of building up the camp, many of the men came down with malaria. Everything humanly possible was done to exterminate the pest malaria carrying mosquitoes, but it was always a tremendous problem.

Missions for the month did not get under way until the 16th at which time the airplanes of the 71st and 405th took to the skies under the command of Lt. Col., "Shanty" O'Neill, who had been assigned as Group Commander on 6 November. Missions for the 16th saw the Group sending up elements of three airplanes to attack troops and supply dumps in the Gona-Buna and Soputa areas. On the 17th and 18th five attack missions were scheduled for the Lae-Salamaua area, and a convoy off Gasmata. The Lae-Salamaua missions were carried out with good results however, the attack on the convoy was turned back due to weather.

From the 18th to the 26th, the Group participated in no missions as orders were received for the Group to transfer its base of operations from Wards Drome to the Durand Strip. In the meantime, elements of the 3rd Bomb Group continued to carry out missions against the Japanese. This movement did not entail too much time and trouble as the personnel concerned were air crews and only those ground crews necessary for the maintenance of the planes and the running of operations. For everybody, it was quite hard to determine just where the home base was - some of the personnel were at Townsville, Port Moresby, Rorona, Durand, and a few were on DS with 5th Bomber Command.

Thanksgiving Day, 26 November, was a busy day. At 0815 hours, five planes took off for the Buna Area, a sixth plane was to have participated in the mission but was forced to remain behind because of tire trouble. Approaching the target at 4,000 feet the planes encountered heavy, but inaccurate, anti-aircraft fire, but managed to drop fifteen 500 pounders in the target area. A second mission for the day consisting of seven planes, took off for the Durand strip at 0950 to participate in an attack on a reported

-42-

SECRET

SECRET

enemy task force in the Lae-Salamaua area. Arriving in the area of the reported convoy, nothing resembling an enemy task force could be seen. The Lae-Salamaua area was then searched for any enemy aircraft that might be flying or on the ground but this too offered little - nothing was sighted.

The last mission of the day consisted of twelve planes loaded with 500 pounders for targets in the Buna Area. Because of inclement weather, nine of the airplanes were forced to return to base. The remaining three did however manage to get through the weather and inflict considerable damage on the Japs. Lt. Best made the first run over the target and all of his bombs landed in the area. As he withdrew, he could see grey smoke rising from three of his bomb hits, and from the fourth, there arose a huge column of black smoke reaching to 400 feet. The results indicated that a fuel dump had been hit. The second plane over the target was piloted by Lt. Uhler, he made one run over the target but was unable to drop his bombs due to the bombardier opening the bomb-bay doors. It seems that the handle was pushed too far, thus locking the bombs in the racks. Lt Uhler, in circling for another run over the target, spotted five Zeros in the distance so he salvoed his bombs into the sea and headed for home. While over the target, Lt. Uhler encountered heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire and upon return to the base found that his plane had been holed in ten different places. Captain Thompson, pilot of the third plane, flew over the target at 3,000 feet. As soon as his bomb-bay doors were opened, one bomb fell free of the target, but the other dropped well within the target area and one was seen to lift an anti-aircraft emplacement completely out of the ground.

On the following day, eight airplanes carried out an attack on the Lae Airdrome. As the formation approached the target, the plane flown by Lt. Turcotte was seen to fall thru the clouds and shortly after, a bright flash of light was seen - presumably the plane exploding as it crashed. Low hanging clouds in the target area obscured the results of the attack.

In spite of inclement weather on the 29th, eleven planes took off for a very important mission -- word had been received that there were 60 Zeros and eight or ten bombers at the Lae Drome. Col. O'Neill informed all concerned that the importance of the mission necessitated that it be carried out in spite of the bad weather but he did mention however, that the pilots were to use their own discretion in continuing to the target if the weather encountered became too severe. Of the eleven planes participating in the mission, ten reached the target, one having returned to base fifteen minutes after take-off due to instrument trouble. The planes dropped their bombs in the target area but because of the thick layer of clouds, results were unobserved. Nine of the airplanes returned to Durand on Schedule, but Lt. Pavlich was not

-43-

SECRET

SECRET

heard from until the next day. After having been assumed as lost, Lt. Pavlich did manage to get word to the base that he had crash landed off Yule Island due to an attack by a fighter. The crew members were only slightly bruised, and all were returned to base by boat.

The last mission of the month was carried out over the Buna area with all planes reporting that their bombs had hit in the target area. A more detailed report of the mission could not be obtained due to the fact that no records were available. However, we do know that all planes returned to base safely.

-14-

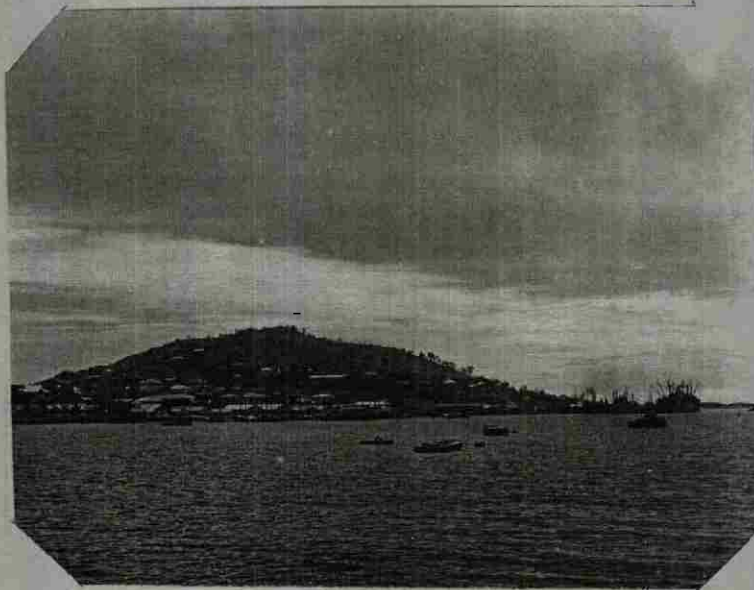
SECRET

SECRET

CHAPTER VII

NEW GUINEA

New Guinea - a part of the land "Down Under" came into being with the outbreak of the war. Years from now, people will still be talking about New Guinea, Historians will write about New Guinea, so there is little need to go into a deep discussion here. Instead this entire chapter will be the story of New Guinea as it was in November 1942 and how it looked to the men of the 38th Bombardment Group. They lived there - some died there - they fought a war there - they did this with a pitifully small amount of men and material - yet, they had time to look around and find out just what made this strange land so fascinating. This is what they found.

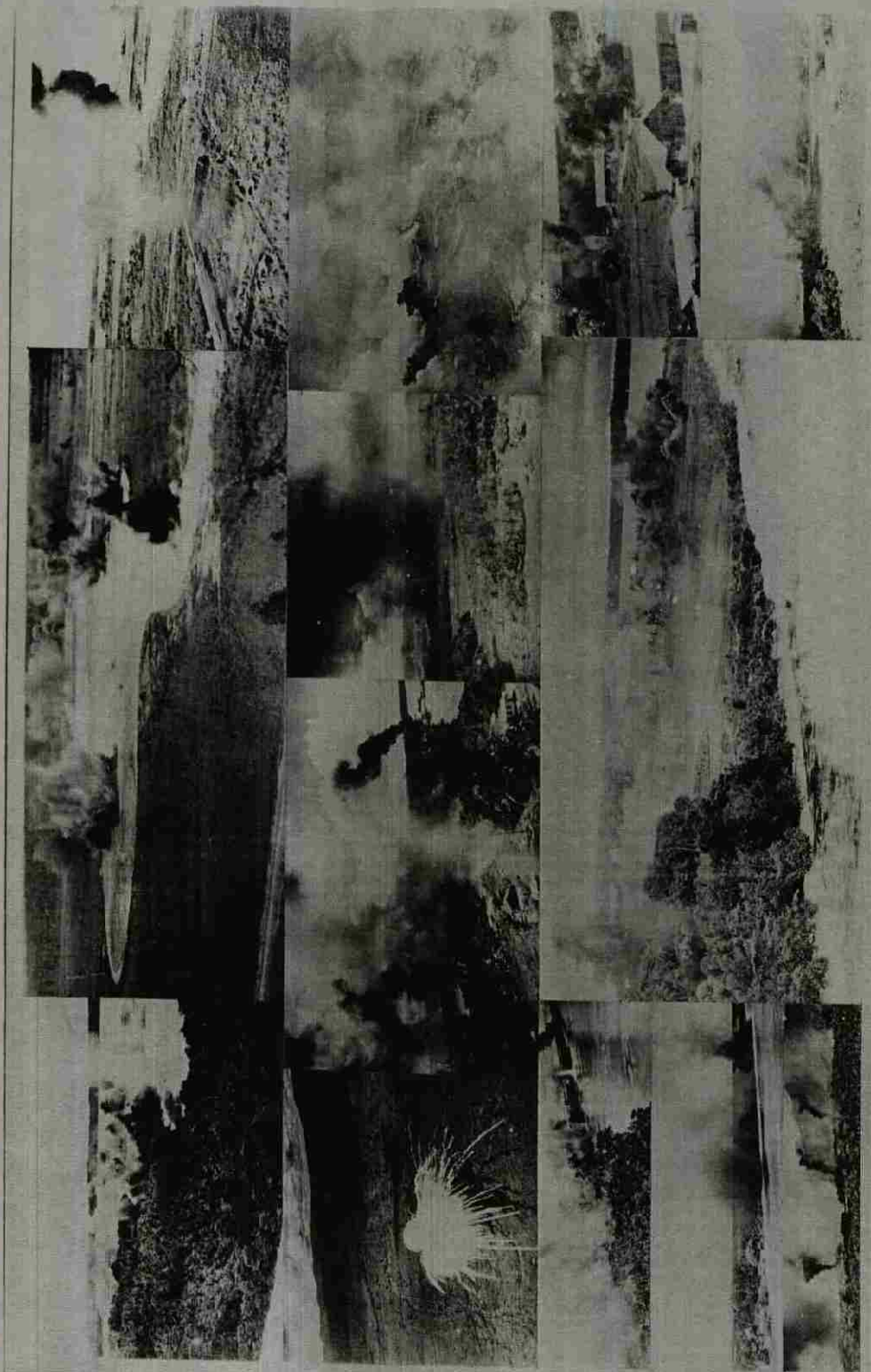


- PORT MORESBY HARBOR -

Port Moresby Harbor at one time the last remaining foot-hold on New Guinea. Here, the Allied ships came often but not often enough - still, the war went on. Had the Japs succeeded in taking Port Moresby the story today might be different - the fact that they did not succeed was because a hand full of Australian and American foot soldiers were too stubborn to give up. Today Port Moresby is just as important to New Guinea as it was during the Battle of the Coral Sea.

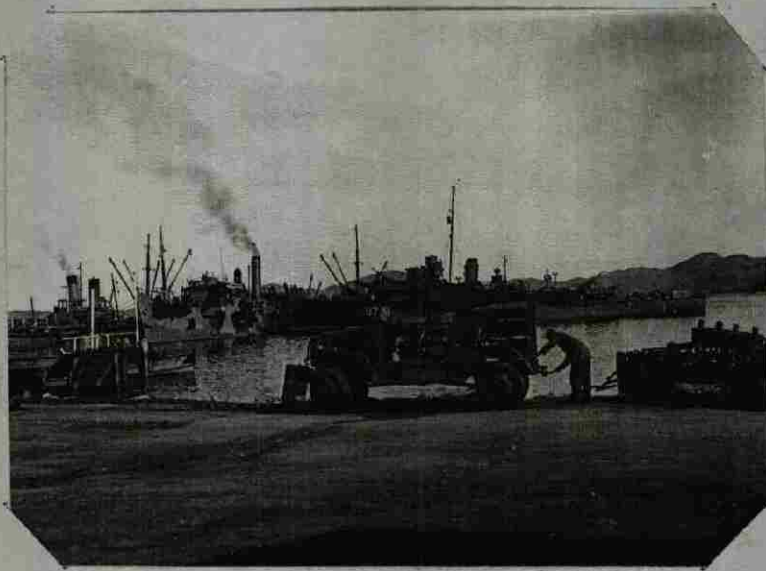
-45-

SECRET



OUCH - THAT HURTS

SECRET



... unloading at Port Moresby was a difficult job -



and the natives were an invaluable asset to the Allies ...

-46-

SECRET

SECRET



... the Port Moresby Hotel gave evidence of civilization,

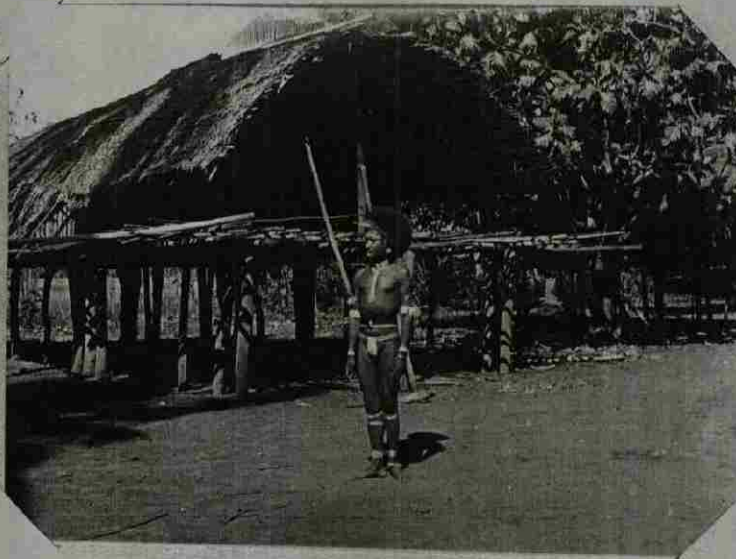


while the mountains to the North offered picturesque beauty ...

-47-

SECRET

SECRET



... the New Guinea Warrior or Fuzzy-Wuzzy became a soldier



with the Allies while his brothers acted as police or foremen ...

-48-

SECRET

SECRET



... each village had its main street and the GI's whiled



his off hours in search of some souvenir to send home ...

-49-

SECRET

SECRET



... the people themselves were a strange sort but showed



a likeness for the white man and his ways

-50-

SECRET

SECRET



... the Rivers of the jungles were scenes of beauty and the

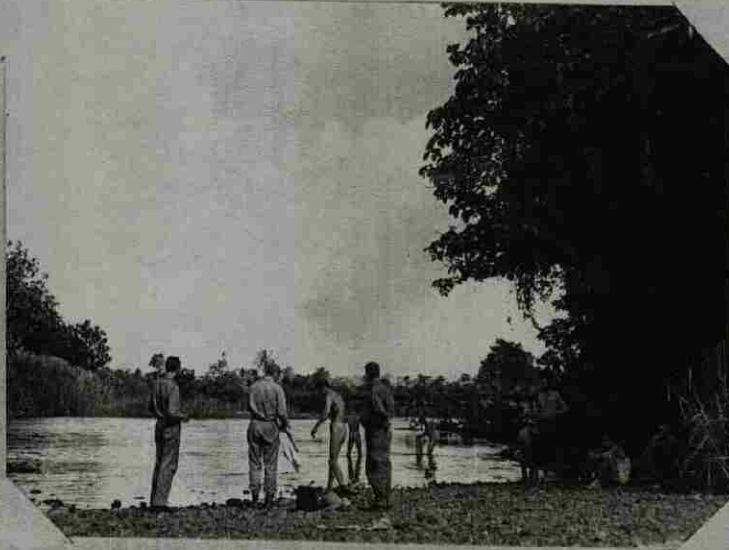


camp sites were located among row upon row of coconut trees ...

-51-

SECRET

SECRET



... keeping clean in New Guinea presented a big problem -

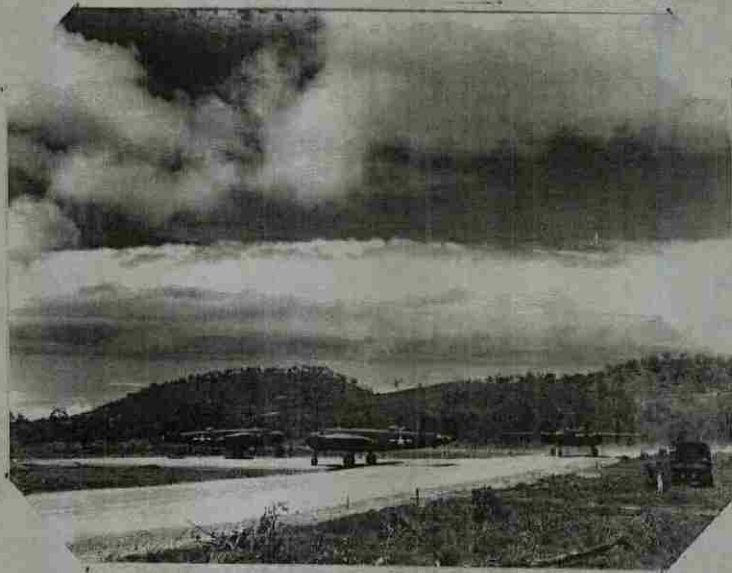


as did finding suitable drinking water for the personnel ...

-52-

SECRET

SECRET



... airdromes were cut out of the jungles and sanitation



facilities were a constant source of rumors and talk ...

-53-

SECRET

SECRET

CHAPTER IX

A MONTH TO REMEMBER

A year ago when the month of December came into being, the world knew peace except for the war going on in Europe. America expected treachery on the part of the Japanese on 7 December 1941, this expectation became a reality. During the year that followed the ill equipped forces in the Pacific fought back with what little they had - the Japs were finally stopped. Their victorious march had turned into one of slow and costly retreating and when another December rolled around, the Allies were sitting in the drivers seat.

As the month of December opened, so did the rain clouds over New Guinea --- and the Group found itself still operating from Durand Strip. There is actually no way of describing the New Guinea rains -- when the rain would start, it could be heard in the distance rolling slowly toward the Strip. It sounded like the rolling of mare drums, gradually increasing in tempo and volume, and quite suddenly the whole area would be engulfed in a solid sheet of water, all of which would be accompanied by a thunderous road similiar to the savage poundings on a huge drum. On many occasions these rains caused an extreme flooding of the local rivers and washed out roads and bridges. The weather that caused these rains prevented the completion of many missions and when bombs were dropped, the results were usually unobserved due to the rain or low hanging clouds.

December proved to be a busy month of the year for the Group. On the 1st day of the month four missions, involving twenty airplanes -- one failed to reach the target because of engine trouble, and four others were turned back because of the weather -- struck at the Buna Area, Lae-Salamaua Area, and a convoy. On these missions two Zeros were destroyed with the loss of one of our airplanes, #707 piloted by Lt. Mencher. As Lt. Mencher was leaving the target a Jap Zero zoomed out of a nearby cloud bank and pounced upon the plane. The Jap managed to set fire to the planes right engine and possibly struck Lt. Mencher himself, for when last seen the plane was spinning crazily toward the sea. It is possible that two of the crew escaped death by parachuting from the stricken plane; however, the men may have been picked up by the Japs.

The mission which Lt. Mencher was shot down was an attack made on a Jap convoy of four destroyers and one aircraft carrier. One of the ships suffered a direct hit and three near misses were scored on the others. Two of the ten Zeros protecting the convoy were shot down. Another mission was set up later in the day to attack

SECRET

SECRET

the same convoy however, the planes were turned back due to weather, making an attack impossible.

The second of December saw no let-up in the intensity of the blow directed against the enemy. General Walker called the Group directly and explained the necessity of the repeated missions; because of the previous lack of air reconnaissance, the Japs were able to continue to land troops and supplies on the New Guinea Mainland, thus causing a great deal of concern. If this could be stopped now, the General went on to explain, it would mean much less trouble in the future.

The Japs were reported landing troops and the mission for the 2nd was to get the troops and the ships if possible. Nine airplanes were set-up to do the job but just at take off time, the pilots were informed that the destroyers were already leaving the area and were thirty miles out at sea. The mission was carried out, nevertheless, but in arriving at the reported target area, the ships could not be found. All of the airplanes returned to base.

On the third day of the month an attack was planned against the Buna Area but the mission was incomplete because of inclement weather. Approximately one hour after take-off, the formation came in contact with an impenetratable front and after many attempts to break thru met with failure, the pilots decided to return to base. With the failure of the first mission of the day, another mission was decided upon which also was to be an attack on the Buna installations. Six planes of the Group took to the skies, but only three of the Mitchells managed to get thru the frontal area. These planes that did manage to get through to the target area dropped their bombs, but because of the low-hanging clouds and rain squalls there, results of the mission were unobserved. However, it was certain that all of the bombs landed in the target area, and several fires were seen to start as a result of the bombing. During the course of the mission, slight inaccurate ack ack fire was encountered -- none of the airplanes were damaged.

The 4th day of the month proved to be a day of rest -- according to prearranged plans, it was the day for the 3rd Bomb Group to take to the skies and paste the enemy installations.

The mission for the 5th called for a raid on the Buna Mission Point. The target area was comparatively small and the bombardiers were told to stay on the ball. The plan called for the dropping of a flare after the last bomb had been dropped which lead all to believe that the attack was carried out in conjunction with operations of the ground troops. During the course of the attack, forty-three 500 pounders were dropped in the target area. The Japs put up a fairly stiff resistance with their ack ack batteries on this mission for when the planes returned to base, it was found that four of the planes had new holes in them. No crew members were injured.

-55-

SECRET

SECRET

A second mission of the day was one plane search flight for a lost pursuit plane. Lt. Uhler flew the plane over the Mambare River area where the lost plane was supposed to have gone down, but after searching for about forty-five minutes and sighting nothing, the plane returned to drop supplies in the Taututu Mission.

The third mission of the day was a repetition of the morning mission. It was to be another attack on the Buna Sector. Nine planes took off from Durand strip at 1300 hours and at 1500, the formation was over the target dropping their 500 pounders from 2000 feet. The results were gratifying as several large fires were started and two ack ack positions knocked out by direct hits. The ack ack fire and the machine gun fire encountered on this mission was thought severe -- apparently the Nips were rather peeved at the pasting they were receiving from the "Sun Setters". One of the planes was hit in several places by the bursting ack ack, one was hit in the right engine and was forced to make a crash landing at the Seven Mile Drome. Another plane suffered mishap during the course of the mission -- Shortly after the planes had taken off for the target, the plane piloted by Lt. Middlebrook was forced to return to base because of engine trouble. Then Lt. Pinkstaff took off in stand-by plane and over-took the rest of the flight as they were circling and climbing for the mountain pass. When the formation climbed into the clouds, Lt. Pinkstaff was with them, but when they came out on the other side he was not with the formation.

On the following day, the 6th, one plane of the Group took off early in the morning in an effort to locate Lt. Pinkstaff's plane. They sighted nothing. Later in the morning a report came in to the Group that an unidentified plane had crashed near Myola Lake. According to the reports by the Australian Ground Forces at Buna Mission the missions of the 38th in the Buna sector were considered highly successful on the last two occasions. The Australian report stated that three buildings were knocked out, eight machine guns were silenced, two ack ack positions were knocked out, and several fuel and supply dumps were set on fire. The Australian report went on to say that this was the known damage and that in all probability much more damage was inflicted on the enemy and his positions.

7 December 1942 -- just one year since the infamous attack of the Japanese on Pearl Harbor. Although the Japs had struck treacherous blows because of their stab in the back that enabled them to reap the benefits of the element of surprise, the Allied Forces in the course of one year had stopped the Japanese hordes in the jungles of New Guinea -- Now they were pushing them back.

The first flight of the 7th was a search mission for a reported submarine in the vicinity of Yule Island, about forty miles

SECRET

SECRET

southwest of Port Moresby. The sector was searched for more than two hours, but there was no sight of a submarine anywhere. Major Offers went out again in the morning to look for Lt. Pinkstaff. He found where some plane had crashed and exploded then he flew over Kokoda and dropped a note to the Aussies below, directing them to the scene.

The first combat mission of the day was an attack on the Buna Mission Point again with six of the planes of the Group participating in the attack. Sixty-five 100 pound demolition type bombs were dropped in the target area, causing several fires, but the results of the attack were generally unobserved. The ack ack encountered was intense and accurate with two of the planes receiving a total of five holes - none were seriously damaged. Another mission of the day was a mercy mission involving only one airplane. It was thought that an allied fighter plane had fallen into the sea about five miles off the Buna Coast. The pilot was reported to be swimming towards land. The airplane was sent out to drop canteens of water, a life raft, a compass and a map marked to show his position and the direction for him to proceed. The mission was unsuccessful, however, inasmuch as the swimming pilot could not be located, reports later indicated that the plane for which the search was conducted was a Japanese plane and pilot - not American. For all of the American fighters had returned safely to their base.

There were no combat missions for the next day and all personnel of the Group except the boys "who keep 'em flying" took on a well deserved rest. On the 10th day of the month, the remainder of the Group began to move from the Rorona Strip to the Durand Strip -- this move indicating that the Group was not going to have its home base at Rorona during its stay in New Guinea's Port Moresby Area, but at Durand. Several DC-3 transports were used in this move, which was one of the factors why the move was completed in such a short time. In no time at all it seemed, the men were settling up tents, mess halls, and administrative buildings in preparation for their stay at Durand. In the course of the stay, showers were constructed, and clubs for both the officer and enlisted personnel were constructed; and later there came the setting up of a motion picture projector for these entertainment hungry men. It was really considered a gala occasion for USO entertainers of any sort to be in the vicinity -- whether they were big name entertainers or someone they, the men, had never heard of. These entertainers always seemed to bring a part of the United States with them. Girls were always greatly appreciated, and at the same time the men proved to be a greatly appreciative audience to the talents of the male entertainers.

The first mission of the day came during the afternoon hours. It was an armed reconnaissance mission in the vicinity of the Lae sector with the specific target being enemy shipping reported to

-57-

SECRET

SECRET

have been in the area. The planes took off from Durand at 1737/I and searched westward along the coast just north of Buna to within thirty miles of Lae. The planes were within sight of Lae Harbor when they turned north and seaward for forty miles and then eastward and parallel to the coast to a point about fifteen miles below Buna. They sighted no shipping at all but they did see two fires, one west of Sanananda Point and the other on the Buna airdrome near the new strip.

On the 11th another mission was planned which was to have been an attack on enemy installations at the Lae Airdrome. This mission was not completed due to adverse weather conditions over the northern pass over the mountains. Six planes of the 71st Squadron tried for more than two hours to get through the passage, but were finally forced to turn back to the base. An alternate mission was then planned in which six planes of the 405th were ordered to attack the Lae target via the Kokoda pass over the mountains. The planes did manage to get through on this occasion. Thirty 500 pounders were dropped in the target area. The bombs seemed to have struck two fuel dumps for on two occasions tremendous explosions were caused which later resulted in the areas to give off huge sheets of flame and spiraling columns of smoke. Two ack ack positions near the sea were silenced, as well as two machine gun positions on the south side of the runway. The ack ack and machine gun fire encountered was highly inaccurate and the enemy fighters failed to put in an appearance.

Saturday, 12 December, was a day of rest for there were no missions, but the boys were in constant readiness for any thing that might come up. The activity about the camp area in the construction of the camp continued. Later in the day, Mr. Jacobson, the owner of the plantation at Lae gave the combat crews a little lecture on the terrain of the plantation and pointers on how to deal with the natives in case they were forced down in the vicinity.

The mission of the 13th was a search for a submarine reported to be between Lae and Buna. If the submarine was not sighted, the planes were to proceed towards Lae and search for a ship that had been reported to be in these waters. In case neither of these targets were sighted, the planes were to return to Buna and drop their bombs in the Buna Sector. The planes took leave of the base at 0730/L. After a long continuous search failed to locate the submarine, a course was then charted for the position at which the enemy ship was to have been, but this too proved useless, there was no ship. The third target was then selected for the disposition of the bomb load. Coming over the target in two elements, the planes dropped the bombs from 0900 feet with fifteen of them falling well within the target area. Because of the heavy terrain, and dense clouds the results of the bombing were unobserved.

-58-

SECRET

SECRET

During the afternoon hours, the group was asked to furnish one plane to fly one of the operations officers down to Iron Range to straighten out some flaw in the missions carried out from that base. On the way to this base, the pilot of the ship was ordered to drop 500 pound bombs on the old wrecked ship just outside of the Moresby Harbor so that the results of a hit or near miss with a 500 pound bomb could be observed. Records were to be kept of the positions of the hits and the near misses and check them with the results found by the observer.

The first day of the week, Monday, December 14, saw the planes of the Group take off from the Durand Strip at 0055/L for an attack on an enemy convoy which was reported to be in the vicinity of Buna. This mission did not materialize however, because of bad weather; many of the ships tried to penetrate the barrier, but were unable to do so. The planes began to return to base at 0930/L. No bombs were dropped. Just before this mission took to the skies, the vicinity of the Durand strip was under a red alert. Quite a bit of ack ack was fired at the enemy planes, but they were never picked up by the searchlight batteries. These planes came over and went back out to sea several times. Apparently they were trying to keep the Allied planes on the ground in order to prevent attacks on their convoy. The planes of the 38th took off in the midst of the red alert -- all the while the ack ack batteries were firing at the enemy planes.

Later in the morning hours the 90th Bomb Group and the 3rd Bomb Group went out after the convoy and a few of their planes got through the bad weather. They spotted approximately sixteen barges being unloaded near the mouth of the Mambare River. These planes managed to come in for an abbreviated attack and during the course of the day, sunk two of the barges. The planes of the 405th had a chance to get in on this juicy target later during the day when six of their planes were dispatched to the scene of the enemy operations. The planes took leave of the Durand Strip at 0956 and arrived over the target area at 1100/L. The squadron did divide into two elements of three planes each and came in for the attack at heights ranging from 1500 to 2000 feet. Clusters of 23 pound para-frag bombs were dropped in the target area - 432 of them. Several small grey smoke fires were started and crewmen reported that two of the barges were left in a sinking condition as a result of this attack. After dropping the bombs, the vicinity of the enemy operations was strafed.

Eight barges were sighted along the coast from Ambush Point to Douglas Harbor. One was sunk but the rest seemed to be serviceable. One barge was at the mouth of the Opi River, two were seen at the mouth of the Mumusi River. Between eight and ten floating supply dumps were observed at forty degrees from Ambush Point and two to ten miles out to sea. These dumps were suspended from empty

SECRET

SECRET

oil drums, in clusters of from five to fifty barrels in size. The first flight encountered no opposition except very light machine gun fire. One of the machine gun positions was verified as silenced. No other ground activity was observed.

A third mission for the day consisted of six planes going after the same target. The attack of these planes was made at the mouth of the Mambare River. On this occasion the bomb load consisted of 500 pounders, the bombs falling well within the specified target area, but the damage inflicted could not be observed. A large oil slick was observed at the mouth of the Gira River about two miles at sea. Between fifteen and twenty men were seen swimming near shore on the Mambare Delta, but before the planes could be turned for a strafing attack on the Nips - giving them a little of their own medicine - the men had returned to the shore and disappeared.

Another mission of the day was an attack once again on the enemy installations and operations that had been pestered twice before by this group on this day. Again 500 pounders were dropped in the target area, and some parafrags were dropped for good measure. Four barges were left in a sinking condition after this attack; the mission house at Duvirea was set afire and there were at least two direct hits on floating supply dumps off Ambush Point. The last phase of the bombings against this enemy operation for the day came in a six plane attack by the planes of the 405th. This flight took off in the late afternoon hours, and carried a bomb load of 23 pound para-frag bombs. The attack was made from 1000 feet. One stick of bombs was seen to fall among four barges on the east bank of the Mambare at Gaurora Village. An unknown number of clusters were seen to fall among the floating supply dumps off Ambush Point. One barge was seen to overturn as a result of a good near miss. After the bombing run, the entire area was strafed.

To top off the operations of the group for the day, the Nips came over at night to cause the boys the loss of several hours sleep. Apparently the Japs were trying to get back at the "Yankees" for the pounding they had received during the day. The searchlight batteries scanned the skies for more than two hours, but because of a heavy undercast, the enemy planes were not picked up. Nevertheless, the radar-controlled ack ack batteries fired round after round into the skies. There was no damage inflicted by the enemy and it was not certain whether or not any of the enemy planes were damaged.

The next day, 15 December, was a day of well earned rest for the combat crews. Sack time was in order. Again on the 16th there were no mission, so the boys turned over in their sacks and slept on the other ear. The next day was the same and by this time many of the combat crews were beginning to think that an armistice had

-60-

SECRET

SECRET

been signed. But, on the 18th the group was ordered to send up two planes on a nuisance raid over the enemy territory -- no bombs were to be dropped nor were the machine guns to be fired. These tactics were carried out in conjunction with the ground activities of the Allied troops, specifically the covering of the advance American tanks. One of the planes of the mission, during the course of the flight hit the top of a tree which damaged his right wing and the hydraulic system of the plane. He headed low over the water toward Milne Bay where he later made a crash landing at the Dogura Mission, and returned to the Durand Base two days later.

On the early morning hours of the 19th the group was alerted for a mission on two enemy destroyers reported in the Finschhafen area. The destroyers were to be the primary target, with the Lae area as the secondary. Six planes of the group participated in this mission. Upon arrival at the designated target area, and after a prolonged search, the destroyers were nowhere to be found. The formation then headed for the Lae Drome and dropped the 500 pound bombs. The results of this bombing other than the fires and explosions caused by the bomb burst were unobserved, for during the search for the destroyers, all flares had been dropped in seeking them out, thus rendering it impossible for the crews to penetrate the Japs blackout in the Lae area. There was no ack ack encountered on this mission, but one of the planes of the 405th was forced to come in on its belly due to a faulty hydraulic system. No one was injured during the course of the landing.

After these several days of activity, the men were given a rest for the next eleven days. During the course of this time Christmas time came around, and as is the custom of the Army, a real dinner with all of the trimmings was put out for the men. Due to the policies of the War Department all of the American fighting men throughout the world were guaranteed ample portions of Turkey. The men did not forget the religious significance of the day, for one and all turned out for the Christmas services held by Father Quest. Some of the Officers as well as the Chaplain addressed the men, and those who were able to play a musical instrument furnished the music for the occasion. It was indeed an inspiration to see these men in the heart of the New Guinea jungles, in the midst of the bitterest war in the history of man-kind, bow their heads in respect to their Creator.

As the ceremonies took place throughout the day, the camera recorded the record of events. Christmas, 1942, will be long remembered by the men of the 38th Bomb Group and it is to those men who shared that day that we dedicate the pictorial history of events that appears on the following pages. Many of those men have since died in combat, while others have returned to the United States to await the defeat of the one time strong Japanese powers. This is a history of those men and their actions.

-61-

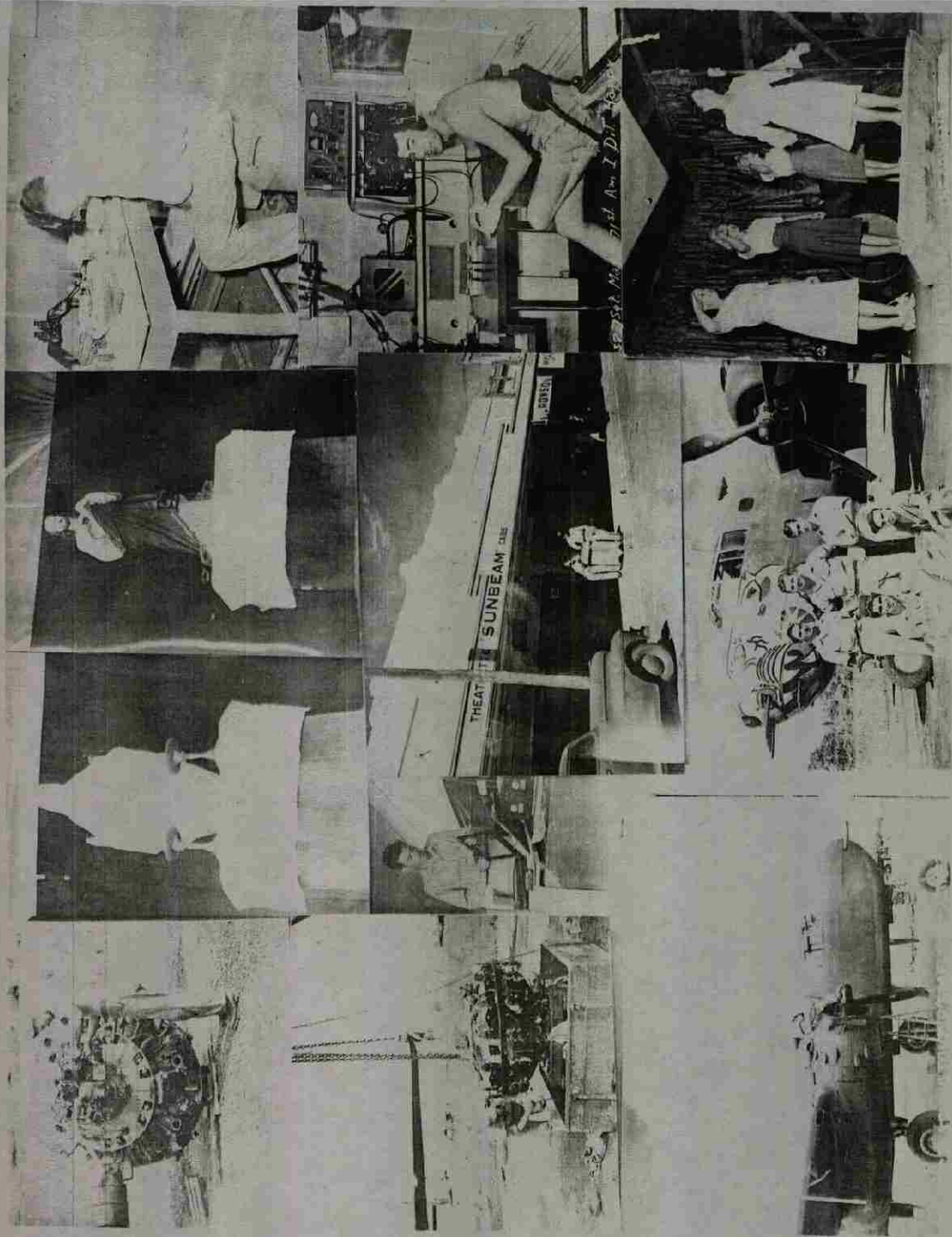
SECRET

SECRET

The last mission of the month took place on the last day of the month. Six planes of the Group participated in an attack on the Lae installations. The run over the target was made at 2200 to 2300 feet, with the approach being made from the Markham Valley. Five hundred pounders were dropped in the target area, in the dispersal areas, and on the strip. The results of the bombing were unobserved. On the approach to the target, while over the target, and in leaving the target, the formation encountered ack ack that was intense but not accurate. The planes were attacked by six or eight Zekes who did not seem too anxious to get within range of the close formation of Mitchells. Only on a few occasions did these intercepting planes come close enough for it to worth while for the gunners of the planes to expend their ammunition on the Zekes. One enemy fighter was definitely knocked out, while two others were seen to be hit by tracers.

Thus comes to an end operations for the year 1942, as well as the month of December. The Group had now been in combat operations for three and one-half months, and each month saw a steady increase in the operational ability of the Group which caused the enemy to fear and respect the Mitchells of the 38th. Of course, the blows of the 38th on the enemy installations were not loss to the "Sun Setters". The loss of these personnel was felt deeply by all, but at the same time these losses gave the other combat members of the group new strength to smash the enemy.

SECRET



SECRET



- The Consecration -



- The Elevation -

-62-

SECRET

SECRET



86 0638 "CHRISTMAS MASS" NEW GUINEA 1942

- Christmas Mass -



86 0639 "THE KYRIE" NEW GUINEA 1942

- The Kyrie -

-63-

SECRET

SECRET



- Communion -



- General Services -

-64-

SECRET

SECRET



6638 GROUP OFFICERS CHRISTMAS SERVICES - N. GUINEA

- Group Officers Services -



CHRISTMAS SERVICES - 1942

- Nature's Church -

-65-

SECRET

SECRET



... The men furnished their own music ...

-66-

SECRET

SECRET

CHAPTER X

A NEW YEAR

With the entry of the New Year, the United States had been at war with the Axis powers for a few weeks more than a year. Although, the Axis was still strong, aggressive, and still able to score scattered victories over the Allies, important events in the year 1942 had taken place that definitely indicated that the Axis nations had reached their peak in victories, and that it would be only a matter of time that the Allies would beat back the Axis aggressors on every front.

The 'Battle of New Guinea', termed by War Correspondents as, "the toughest fighting in the world" was one year old on 23 January 1943, the anniversary of the Jap landings on Rabaul - from there the Japanese made many more landings on the New Guinea Coast - Lae - Salamaua - Hansa Bay - Wewak - Hollandia - and numerous other spots. In fact the onslaught of the Japanese had moved so quickly that Port Moresby itself was threatened - this prompting Radio Tokyo to announce that Port Moresby (at one time given 36 hours to hold out against Japanese attacks) was a mass of rubble and that it would be under the flag of Japan in seven days. That was in March of 1942 - they didn't quite make it!

But, in January 1943, although the Japs did possess more bases on and around New Guinea, the Allies were well equipped and their bases were stronger than those of the Japs. The 16,000 men of Japan thrown into the Papuan campaign and led by General Horii were either dead, captured, or wounded -- mostly dead. The General, himself, was dead. Australian and American Infantrymen had beaten the "unbeatable" jungle fighters of Japan.

In the month of January the 38th made a total of 38 Missions against the enemy -- 27 attack -- 6 Reconnaissance -- 5 Patrol. During the month 13 enemy aircraft were shot from the skies -- 10 were damaged, and one enemy cargo ship was destroyed. Our losses still remained small with only one airplane shot down and seven men missing in action. The first day of the month, New Years Day, there was no activity for the Group -- a day of rest with the usual New Guinea rain. However, the second day of the new year saw six planes of the 71st start on an attack mission to the Lae area and all of the planes managed to get over the target. The mission went off very smoothly and the planes dropped their bombs without interference from enemy ack ack or enemy fighters. Large fires were started in several supply dumps and large columns of smoke were seen to rise from the areas hit. Detailed results of the damage could not be given but it was certain that the damage was more than visual sighting indicated.

SECRET

SECRET

On the third, a mission of six planes was sent out to intercept enemy shipping going from Lae to the Buna area. As the planes approached the Lae area through the Markham Valley, they drew three bursts of ack ack fire from enemy positions at the northern tip of the Lae airdrome. None of the planes were damaged by the fire, but the bad weather made up for it. Encountering severe storms and rain squalls, the planes could not find the ships and returned to base because there was no secondary target to be found.

The following day the planes of the Group participated in a mission against Dittymans Creek. At 0955, six planes of the 405th took off and were over the target area at 1130. Each plane was loaded with twelve 100 pound demo bombs and the attack was made from a height of 1500 to 4000 feet. Faulty mechanism prevented the dropping of all the bombs, however those that were dropped were seen to hit in the target area and it was quite certain that two direct hits were made on two enemy buildings; one ack ack position was seen to go out of action. The enemy fire was sporadic and inaccurate and all of our planes returned to base safely.

5 January saw the 71st Squadron sending six planes into the air to attack the Terrace Supply Dumps at Lae. A-20's were to go in before our boys and give the place a working over with their strafers. At 1200/L our boys crossed the target at 4700 feet and began to string their bombs out over the target. One train of twelve 100 pounders was seen to hit along the Taxi Strip on the North side of the runway but the other damage was unobserved.



- Stringing them along the Taxi Strip -

-69-

SECRET

SECRET

The Nips threw up eight or ten bursts of heavy ack ack but all of it was above and behind the formation. Two enemy fighters were seen to take off towards the sea and circle to the south, but they failed to come up for an attack. At the West end of the strip, three twin engine planes were parked in line and returning crew members reported that the center plane was pouring out black smoke. Apparently this plane was set afire during the A-20 attack.

The target for the 6th was Sanananda Point. Again the 71st Squadron sent six planes for the attack. Coming over the target at 1100/L, the formation dropped twenty four 300 pounders thru out the target area, however since the planes were bombing from altitudes between 1500 and 3100 feet, the results were unobserved. After the bombing run had been made the formation went down to strafe Supple dumps of boxes and barrels approximately 500 yards from the shoreline along Sanananda Track. A machine gun positions at the mouth of the first creek West of the Point was strafed but results in both cases were unobserved. The Nips made no effort to ward off the attack and the only resistance shown was a small amount of machine gun fire coming from the track.



- Sanananda Point -

The next day, 7 January, was a big day for an enemy convoy had been sighted proceeding in the general direction of Lae. The mission consisted of six planes of the 405th and six of the 71st Squadron. At 0805/L an eight ship convoy consisting of naval and transport vessels was sighted at 06 40' S-149 55(E). The first

-70-

SECRET

SECRET



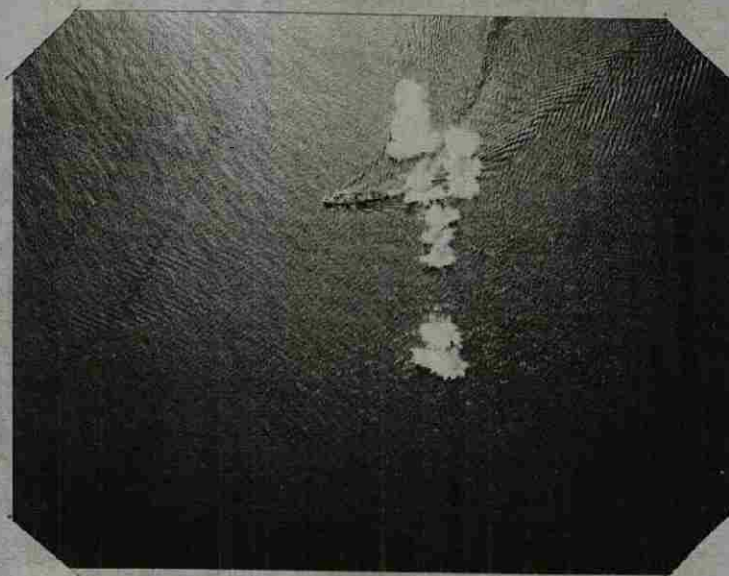
- Shipping sighted -

element attacked at a height of 1100 to 4300 feet dropping five 500 pounders, but the results were unobserved for the enemy fire was of heavy caliber and very intense. The second element attacked at a height between 3300 and 4300 feet dropping seventy-eight 300 pounders and again the results were unobserved. All eight ships in the convoy appeared to be maneuvering independently from one to three miles apart. Debris around one of the transports indicated that perhaps at least one of the bombs had scored a hit. Still another transport was left dead in the water from near misses. Another transport was emitting white smoke but this was believed to be a smoke screen. Most of the crews were unanimous in their descriptions of the destroyers - all four of them appeared to be of the very latest destroyer design. Just after the second element dropped their bombs, five Zekes made individual attacks on the formation. One of the Zekes was seen to go down in flames as tracers from the top turret of plane 710 shattered into it. Another Zeke was shattered by the same gunner while still another was seen to be hit by plane #830 and fall away pouring out black smoke. The 71st Squadron lost one plane. Plane #708 was seen to crash land in the water after receiving a direct hit by ack ack directly in the right engine. The plane was seen to fall toward the sea and in landing broke in half and disappear. Three parachutes from the stricken plane were seen to open but what the fate of the men was is not known. Several of the other planes were hit by ack ack and a few of the crews injured, but all the planes made it back to base safely.

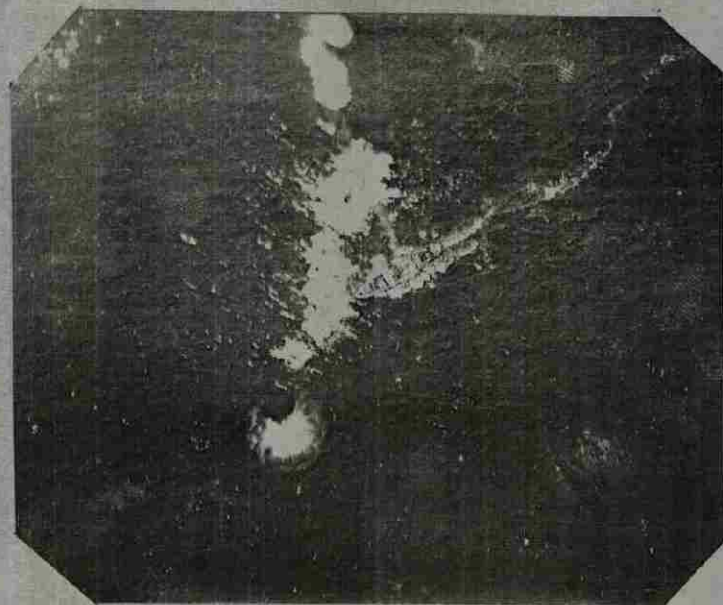
-71-

SECRET

SECRET



..... Enemy convoy, 7 January 1943.
Four Naval Vessels and four trans-
ports - none of the ships were sunk
in the morning attack.



-72-

SECRET

SECRET

The second mission of the day was an attack on this same convoy and again twelve airplanes were sent into the air. Two of the planes returned to base due to engine trouble but the remaining ten were over the convoy at 1555/L. By the time the convoy had been sighted, it had moved into Lee Harbor and as soon as our planes appeared, the convoy moved into such a position so that none of the cargo ships could be attacked without first going over one of the Naval vessels. Again the Nip vessels threw up an intense amount of ack ack which was considered fairly accurate at all levels. As the planes dropped their bombs, one direct hit was observed on the bow of one of the transports and several near misses on the other vessels. One ship in the convoy was laying on its side as a result of the previous attack so evidently the damage was greater than we had expected. After the bombs had been dropped, the Zekes came in again for an attack. None of them were too anxious to press home their attack but it is believed that hits scored by one of the Zekes was responsible for one of our planes crash landing in the Buna area. One of the enemy fighters was probably destroyed for as it came in for an attack, tracers from our planes were seen to enter it and the Zeke was seen to dive toward the water.

On the 8th the same convoy came under attack, and the Japs were still trying to land more troops and supplies. The strike, composed of twelve planes, took off at the break of day and came over the convoy around 0800 hours. The first element scored a direct hit on one of the transports and when the second element

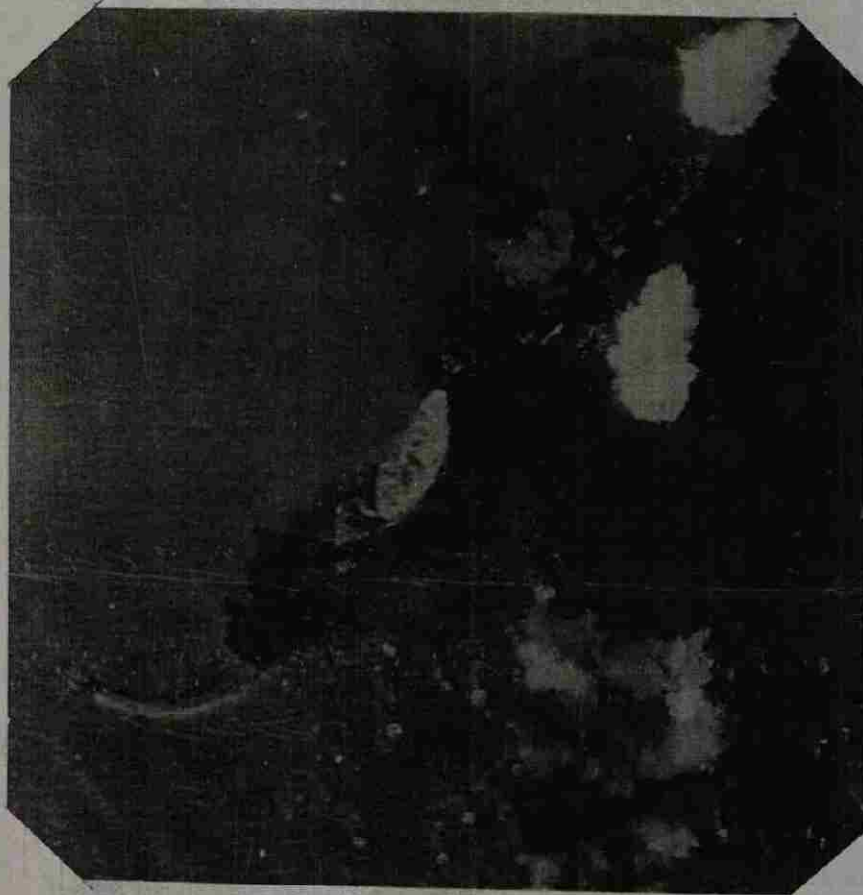


- one down -

-73-

SECRET

SECRET



- a closer view -

came over the convoy, the ship had disappeared beneath the waves. Another ship in the convoy received another direct hit on the bow and this ship was claimed as probably sunk - at least seriously damaged. Three of the planes attacked supplies on the shore, scoring direct hits and causing huge fires with great columns of smoke. At this stage in the attack, the ack ack became quite intense thus depriving the crews of further observation of the damage done. Zekes, about fifteen of them, attacked the planes from all sides and when the finally tally was taken, five Zekes had been shot down, all confirmed, and two more were probably shot down while a third was badly damaged. None of our planes had been lost during the attack.

Again the same day, the planes bombed up and went out after

-74-

SECRET

SECRET

the remaining shipping in Lae Harbor. By this time the Japs were probably wondering where in the hell so many B-25's could come from. On this trip ten of our planes went after the ships and the supplies they had unloaded. Bombing was considered fairly good and another direct hit was scored on one of the transports. The supply dumps along the shore were severely pestered. This time 13 enemy fighters were sighted and most of them were very eager to break up the bombing runs. Zeros came in from all quarters - they made individual attacks from all sides and underneath - some dived low over the water with full throttle. The top turret gunner of #710 shot down one Zeke which was seen to fall out of control and hit the water. Another Zeke came over the formation in an inverted position and tracers from #692 were seen to enter the cockpit. When the plane was last seen, smoke and fire were pouring from the cockpit and the pilot was doing his best to leave the plane - this one was claimed as definitely destroyed. Still another Zeke was shot down by #908 and this one was verified by another plane. One of our planes had the top turret shot away and others had several holes but all returned to base.

The 9th saw no let up in the attack on the Jap shipping. At 0820 our planes came over at 3900 feet and dropped their bombs in the woods and along the beach in the jetty area. Hits were scored on a large transport at Voco Point causing the ship to burst into large flames. The supplies along the beach at Voco Point were set afire and the entire area was pouring off



- Supplies and Shipping go together -

-75-

SECRET

SECRET

black and white smoke which rose to 2000 feet. The ack ack was very light in contrast to yesterdays greetings and the enemy fighters didn't seem to eager to tangle with the B-25's. Only five Zekes were seen, but they were not anxious to press the attack. The tip turret gunner in #710 was on the ball again and scored hits on one of the Zekes - the last time the plane was seen he was diving away and giving off trailing white smoke. Again all of our planes returned safely to base.

During the afternoon, twelve airplanes took to the air again to search for a reported convoy between Finchhaven and Gasmata. The formation patrolled the area from Cape Ward Hunt across the Huon Gulf to a position North of Finchhaven. A large circle was made returning to Cape Ward Hunt but nothing was sighted. Bad weather covered anything that might have been in the area.

On the following day twelve planes were sent up to knock out the Supply dumps and ack ack positions at Lae. The 71st Squadron dropped their bombs in train from the Terrace to the Dispensary while the 405th scattered their bombs from the Burns Phillips Bulk Store to the beach southeast of the jetty area. Hits were scored on several buildings and one building near Burns Phillips was seen to explode. Fires were still visible twenty-five minutes after the planes left the area. The Nips continued to throw up heavy and light ack ack but again their aim was way off. During the course of the attack, four serviceable Zekes were sighted on the East end of the runway and two Zekes were seen over Lae Salamaua doing their best to get away from four P-38's.

The mission for the 11th was a change from the daily attacks on shipping and supply dumps in the Lae area. The planes were loaded up with oil bombs and sent over the Gona area to start as many fires as possible. All of the bombs fell well within the target area and each bomb was seen to start one large central fire and numerous smaller ones around it. Further results were probably hampered by the intense rain of the last few days.

Tuesday, 12 Jan, was a day of rest for the combat crews. The 71st Squadron was alerted for a mission that did not materialize.

The 13th was a resumption of the attacks on the Lae area - with the Dock facilities being the primary target. The 71st Squadron crossed the target at 2000 feet dropping their bombs throughout the town and on the jetties in the dock area. The Lae Hotel was seen to explode as a result of a direct hit. Five other buildings in the vicinity of the Hotel were set afire and Jetty #120 (Lae Locality Map) received a direct hit causing a fire and dense black smoke. As the airplanes withdrew from the

-76-

SECRET

SECRET



- The jetties get a working over -

area, they sighted a 60 foot flat top boat in Lae Harbor moving rapidly towards the end of the runway. None of the crew members knew just what this boat was, but all were of the opinion that if it was a barge, it was the largest they had ever seen. In those days it looked large enough to be a small aircraft carrier.

A second mission of the day was a patrol mission for a friendly convoy. The assigned area was patrolled until the planes had to return to base.

On the 14th there was no mission, but in a practice flight Lt. Pitmans plane crashed in a landing -- the crash was caused by one of his brakes locking as the wheels touched the runway. The plane was a complete wash-out, but fortunately none of the crew members were injured.

The 15th of Jan 1943, the Group became two years old. There were no celebrations, but instead it was a day of rest for the entire Group.

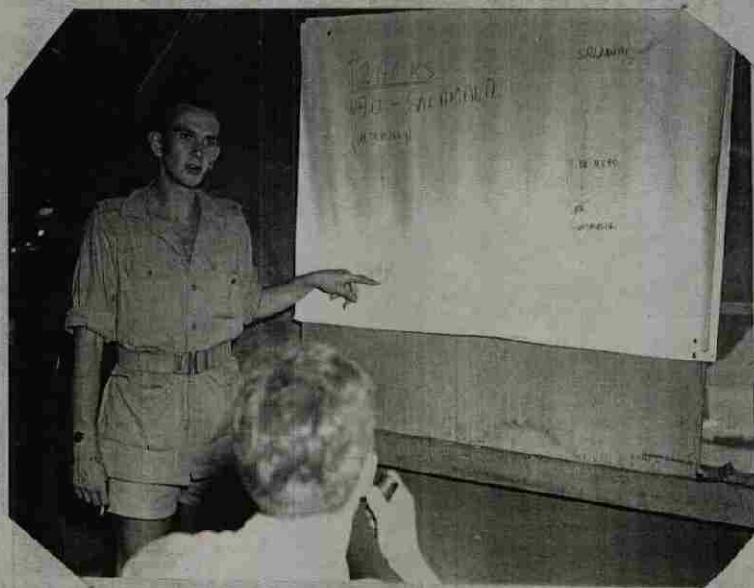
On the 16th, the Lae supply dumps were again picked for the target. Seven planes of the 405th started out on the mission but one was forced back due to engine trouble. The planes came over the target between 3800 and 4100 feet and dropped a total

-77-

SECRET

SECRET

of forty-eight 300 pound demo bombs. The first flight of bombs fell in the area around the Dispensary and Voco point with three or four small buildings in the vicinity of the Dispensary seen to explode giving off black smoke. In addition to the buildings destroyed, a large black smoke fire was started on the shore on Voco Point near the beached transport. The second flight of bombs hit in the building area just North of the Jetties with unobserved results. The Japs greeted the formation with heavy and accurate ack ack fire shooting away the upper turret of one plane and putting several holes in the tail section of another. None of the planes were lost and all returned to base safely.



- Lt. Massie, Australian Ground Forces Intelligence, gives the changing situation. -

This day saw the inauguration of weekly meetings to be held in the intelligence section for all of the combat crews. The meeting started out with the singing of songs, which did manage to break the ice. Lt. Massie of the Australian Ground Forces Intelligence, on DS with the Group, gave the changing situation in the various phases of the ground activities around Buna and Sanananda Point, and the prospective movements in the direction of Muho and Salamaua of both the enemy and the Allied forces. Lt. Commander Monocci, the Naval Liaison Officer attached to V Bomber Command had a very interesting talk prepared on the activities of the Navy in the local area - the men were all deeply interested

-78-

SECRET

SECRET

in the talk he had to give and the naval warfare - he managed to satisfy the curiosity of all in relation to naval activities. Capt. Cheli, the Squadron Commander, then talked to the pilots and crews on policies of bombing and formation flying during raids, and the procedure for reporting the presence of enemy aircraft while in flight. Then Lt. Bender, the Statistical Control Officer gave the men the fact and figures of this group raids, missions, combat flying hours and enemy damage as a result of their attacks. The meeting went over big and all were looking forward to the next.

The 17th was a day of rest but the Lae area was not to be forgotten, for on the 18th attacks in that area were again carried out. The mission over Lae was coming around so regular that the men dubbed it a milk run. This time the area selected was the Jap motor pool and the supply dumps. The planes came over the target at 1900 feet and dropped the bombs in train along the South side of Hillside Avenue from Echoffs house to the New Transportation buildings. Some of the bombs fell in train along the South side of Markham Road in the vicinity of Greenwood and Laws store, while nineteen fell in the water. Two buildings near Echoffs house were set afire and two heavy explosions from the same area shook the planes at 2000 feet. One train of bombs hit near the native labor and police barracks causing small fires in the adjoining woods. The ack ack was heavy and intense but only one plane received any serious damage and he was able to return to base.

On the 19th a change of scenery was afforded the crews of the 71st Squadron. Seven planes took off to work over the Supply dumps at Malahang Drome. Crossing the target at 5700 feet, the formation dropped forty-six 300 pounders in and around the assigned target area. Black smoke was seen coming from the target area but no definite results were observed. The Nips at Lae couldn't stay out of the fight and threw up quite a bit of heavy and light ack ack. None of it was accurate except for one burst which put a few holes in the upper turret and tail assembly of one of the planes. A noticeable change was the fact that the weather in the target vicinity was quite good and there wasn't the usual rain and thunder storms.

The 20th was another day of rest but on the 21st, the Supply dumps at Malahang Airdrome was the target. Seven planes of the 71st Squadron started out but due to engine trouble, one was forced to return to base. Forty-seven 300 pounders were dropped in the target area and one direct hit was scored on a small building but no other results were observed. Lae Drome Joined in the attack and sent round after round of heavy caliber ack ack at the formation. None of the planes were damaged. Again

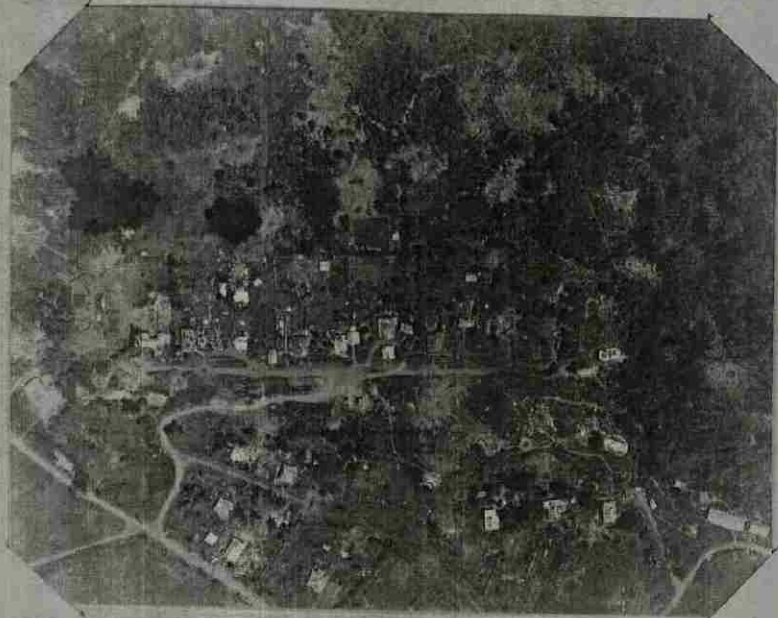
-79-

SECRET

SECRET

on the following day our planes returned to the same area only this time the Supply dumps on Lae Terrace were selected as the targets. The Japs now had a reason to shoot. The first flight dropped their bombs in and around terrace and across the road in the vicinity of Bungalows near the Burns Phillips Store. The area was seen to give off black and white smoke and the Burns Phillips Store was believed to be set afire. The second flight dropped their bombs on the south side of the Runway causing numerous small fires and one heavy black smoke fire about half way down the south side of the runway. After the bombing run was made, the planes went back to strafe the entire area but the strafing results were unobserved. In true fashion, the Nips threw up quite a bit of all types ack ack but as usual it was generally inaccurate.

"Terrace at Lae" - 24 January 1943 - apparently the word Lae had become a by-word with higher headquarters for again on the 24th, seven planes of the 71st squadron were sent up to unload their bombs. At lunch time the formation crossed over the target at 2000 feet and began laying their bombs on the Terrace and the Southeast end of the runway. About the only observed results



- Terrace at Lae or, "The Milk Run" -

were two direct hits on small buildings in the dispensary area. All of the bombs fell within the area between the Terrace and the Southeast end of the strip. The next day was a repetition

-80-

SECRET

SECRET

of the 24th only this time, it was the 405th Squadron hitting the "terrace at Lae". The first flight dropped two 1000 pounders 600 yards North of the Terrace which hit in the woods. Four of the bombs landed in the target area and bits of buildings were seen to fly up with the fire and heavy smoke. The second flight reported that their bombs (twenty-four 300 pounders) had landed in the target area and just West of the target area. As was the custom, after the bombs were away the formation went down to strafe the area and reported that an ack ack position at the Southwest corner of the East end of the runway was silenced and that in addition to this, strafing silenced three machine gun positions at the intersection of the roads north of the transportation building. There, of course, was the same heavy inaccurate ack ack fire to report when the planes returned to base. On the 26th the boys were given the day off but the 27th found the 71st Squadron going after the Supply dumps at Malahang airdrome - a sublet of Lae. The bombing run was made from West to East with the bombs falling on the south side of the Northwest end of the Runway and along the strip. One direct hit was observed on one small building but other results were unobserved, thus ending the series of "milk runs" on Lae for the month of January.

SECRET

