38th BOMB GROUP

823rd SQUADRON

71st SQUADRON

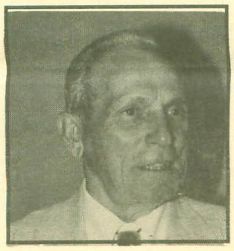
405th SQUADRON

822nd SQUADRON

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII) SEPTEMBER 1996

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



DALE W. HOWIESON

This will be my last message to the 38th Bomb Group as your President.

The Reunion at Seattle was enjoyed by all who attended.

The tours were just great as Seattle is in a beautiful part of the country.

It has been a wonderful experience for me to be President of this distinguished group. Corresponding and phone conversations with many of the members brought me closer to all of you.

I was impressed by the quick response received from the Squadrons on their officer candidates. It showed a responsibility and determination to keep the 38th Bomb Group going.

Thanks again to Bill McKinstry and his wife, Cledie, for their vital help in keeping financial records and membership data. Their efforts were a great help to me and the 38th Bomb Group.

Jim Thoren helped with advice on planning the Reunion and getting the newsletter printed and mailed. He has my warmest thanks and high regard.

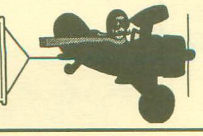
The Squadron representatives and alternates did a super job in manning the hospitality rooms. My thanks to all of you.

Special thanks to my wife, Rosella, who's been at my side for fifty years, for all her help during the past two years as your President.

I hope you will support our new President, Harlan Denning, with your help and encouragement to keep this great organization alive.

My best wishes to all of you and look forward to seeing you at the next Reunion.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

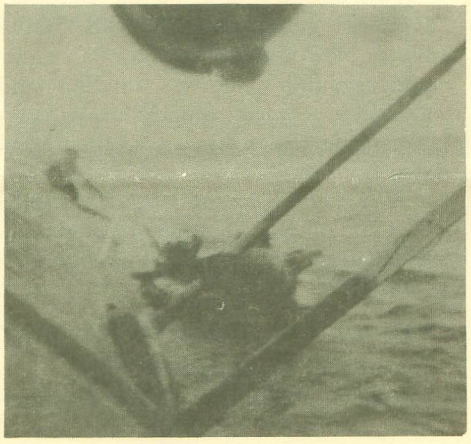


'96 Reunion Elects New Officers

The 1996 Reunion just held in Seattle was a huge success. Sorry that some of you missed it.

Harlan Denning, 405th Sq. was elected President; Chick Alford, 405th Sq., Vice President; and Bill McKinstry, 822nd, Secretary/Treasurer for the '97-98 term.

228 members and wives attended and the members present selected Little Rock, AR for the 1998 Reunion site. Chick Alford has agreed to host and handle the Reunion there.



EPIC RESCUE REVISITED

(Mr. Peter Fletcher "Binbrook", Binbrook Road, Wyee, NSW, Australia 2250, who was a member of An Australian air/sea rescue unit that participated in the rescue of a B-25 crew off Wewak, provided the following account of the rescue.)

On the 10th of November, 1944, we were alerted about 1 p.m. that a rescue was required. Along with Ian Wood, our skipper, we went to RAAF HQ to prepare the aircraft. We learned that a plane had been shot down over Wewak about 11 a.m.; one B-25 crew had escaped into a dingy. Ian had to decide about the rescue, knowing that under no circumstances were the aircraft engines to stop. Beaufort bombers were to cover us and the estimated time of arrival was 16:60. We had a 2 hour flight to Wewak where we located the dingy but saw no sign of our escort. We turned out to sea and waited their arrival. We were sorry for the crew as they had been rowing for 6 hours and would be devastated if we left them.

At 5 p.m. or so, the bombers arrived and went into action. We dropped in beside the dingy, brought a couple aboard, but we were moving too fast. We had to stop the engines to rescue the remainder. Takeoff was quick and we returned to Madang. I called an ambulance to pick up the crew but an aircraft from Nadzab picked them up and returned them to base.

We have spoken often about these Americans but never done anything about it, so I decided to make an effort in locating any or all of that crew and invite them to the next Catalina Reunion. *(Editor Note: Their reunion was held 7-14, September '96 but Peter would like to try for the next one. Those of you who may know something or were in the rescued crew, please contact him at his address in Australia. Peter mentioned a "Col. Brandt, but was not sure which B-25 GP. or Sq. he was with in the November '44 time frame. Newspaper account follows.)*

ASHGROVE PILOT LED EPIC RESCUE

MELBOURNE, August 12, 1944; Thursday - Flight Lieutenant I.J.L. Wood, of Ashgrove, captained a R.A.A.F. Catalina which rescued an American Mitchell medium bomber crew shot down two miles off Wewak.

Crippled by enemy ack-ack, the

Continued on Page 2, Column 2 "EPIC"

The 38th Bomb Group Association (WWII)

1995/96 Officers & Directors

President:.....Dale W. Howieson, LM
6375 Coniston St., Port Charlotte, FL 33981
Vice-President:.....J. Lee Ranney, LM
6322 Palma del Mar, Apt. 1208
St. Petersburg, FL 33715
Sec./Treas.:.....William J. McKinstry, LM
473 Evergreen Dr., Tonawanda, NY 14150
HQ Rep. (Incl. 69, 70, 89th Sqdns. & Asc.)
Thomas D. Kirby, Sr., LM
P.O. Box 416, Simi Valley, CA 93062
71st Rep.: .....Hollie H. Rushing, LM
P.O. Box 175, Homer, LA 71040
71st Alt. Rep.: .....William J. Dixon, LM
34 Ranch Drive, Rochester NY 14622
405th Rep.: .....Sam Mazzara, LM
20542 Pebble Lane Huntington Beach, CA 92646
405th Alt. Rep.: .....Leo M. Shenko,LM
332 S. Ynez Ave., Monterey Park, CA 91754
822nd Rep.:.....Andrew A. Rimar, LM
522 Chase Dr., Corpus Cristi, TX 78412
822nd Alt. Rep.:.....Ted V. Lorenzetti, LM
40 Main St., Apt. 406, Stoneham, MA 02180
823rd Rep.:.....Lorne H. Nelles (94)
76 Wendover Ave., Tonawanda, NY 14223

"IN EVER-HONORED MEMORY'"

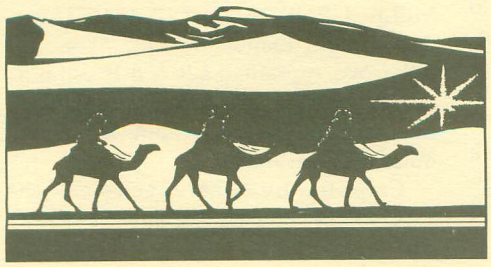
Since publication of the May, 1996, newsletter and as of August 30, 1996, we have been informed of these veterans of the 38th Bomb Group that have gone to their final resting place. Also, some inadvertently skipped in previous newsletters.

Roy R. Trumbo ..... (HQ)
Eugene E. Benson (LM) ..... (71st)
John Colna ..... (71st)
Harlod A. Kotsch ..... (71st)
Reginald R. Ross (LM) ..... (71st)
George Q. Strand (LM) ..... (71st)
George A. Cobb (LM) ..... (405th)
Robert A. Emmons (LM) ..... (405th)
Merle J. Liban (LM) ..... (405th)
George Milos ..... (405th)
Fred J. Halbig (LM) ..... (822nd)
Sheldon E. Hohenberger ..... (822nd)
Henry Inkman ..... (822nd)
Lewis J. Pence (LM) ..... (822nd)

By squadron, these are the members and wartime comrades that have passed away:

HQ	14	71st	103	822nd	52
69th	1	89th	1	823rd	48
70th	7	405th	90	UNK	3

TOTAL = 319



19 NEW MEMBERS FOR 1995-96

Orvin B. Curley 71st
James R. Cocke 405th
Jack Cox 405th
Robert F. Freund 405th
James B. Hovis 405th
Earl W. Perdue 405th
Donald A. Schopp 405th
Robert E. Stephens 405th
Melvin Williams 405th
Eugene E. Dunnington 822nd
Merrill E. Chamberlain 823rd
Robert B. Dowling 823rd
Henry Dylong 823rd
Paul Loves, Jr. 823rd
John Negrey 823rd
Samuel P.Provenzano 823rd
Michael A. Boccia ..... ASC
Greg M. Cox ..... ASC
Elmer M. Snyder ..... ASC

EPIC RESCUE from Page 1

Mitchell crash-landed on the sea opposite a large concentration of Japanese heavy coastal guns. R.A.A.F. Beauforts, which have renewed attacks on the beleaguered Japanese garrisons in New Britain and North New Guinea, kept the Jap gunners underground while the Catalina landed alongside a rubber dinghy into which the Americans had scrambled as their bomber sank.

While two Beauforts circled protectively over the dinghy, 18 others plastered shore installations until the Catalina took off. No shot was fired at the rescuers.

During an intensive low-level attack on Wewak, two Mitchells and a Boston were shot down off the shore in full view of the enemy. The crew rescued by the R.A.A.F. was the only one which came down under control. Two of the crew were badly wounded.

CATALINA'S CREW - Flight Lieutenant Wood had as crew: Flying Officer B.W. Bently Magill (S.A.), navigator; Warrant Officer A.V. Dawson (Narrogin, W.A.) second pilot; Sergeant P. Fletcher (Southport) wireless operator; Sergeant J.W. Renwick (Bankstown, N.S.W.) flight engineer.

While the Catalina was on the way, Beauforts circled the dinghy for several hours to counter any Jap attempt to send boats out to capture the Americans.

The Catalina landed right under the Japanese guns and took off in a difficult swell. It was well after dark before the Catalina reached its destination but the pilot put the machine down in an excellent night landing.

Colonel Brandt, of the U.S.A. A.F. has thanked the A.O.C. of Northern Command, R.A.A.F., and all his men who took part in the rescue. He cited it as another example of the splendid cooperation between the U.S.A.A.F. and the R.A.A.F. and asked that his personal commendation be conveyed to the Catalina crew.

Wreckage found believed bomber lost in WWII

Submitted by Ken Darrow (now dec'd)

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Wood gatherers have found the wreckage of a plane believed to have been an Allied bomber in World War II, a report said Sunday.

The official Antara news agency said skeletal remains, including four skulls, were inside the plane, found in a mountainous jungle on Buru island in Maluku province.

The agency quoted 1st Lt. Priyo, spokesman of the Maluku Military Command as saying six bombs, 260 rounds of ammunition, six pistols and a rifle were found in the wreckage.

He said the plane was believed to have hit the mountain during WWII. There was no evidence at the site identifying the victims, the plane or its country of origin, he said.

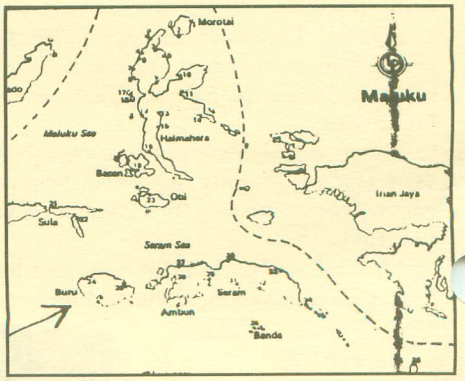
• • •

Submitted by Dale Howieson:

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The wreckage of a B-25 bomber that crashed during WWII has been found by copper miners in the New Guinea jungle, a U.S. Embassy spokesman confirmed Thursday.

The embassy is sending an official to investigate the wreckage, said spokesman Stromme Craig. He declined comment on a report that the miners found five skeletons in the wreckage.

The miners who found the wreckage work for Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of the U.S. mining company Freeport McMoran. Freeport officials weren't immediately available for comment.



CLAYTON'S BLUFF

"The true story of an amazing wartime adventure in the Pacific."

by Captain Elliott Arnold

The Ormoc Bay show was over and there were a lot of Nip ships that would never reach destination. It was short and very sweet. In less than seven minutes just a little before noon on November 10, 1944, thirty B-25s from the Fifth Air Force had sunk three destroyers, a destroyer escort and six transports — had seen them explode and go down in Ormoc Bay.

Three other transports and another destroyer were badly damaged, but the flyers couldn't hang around to see what happened to them. The planes had had rough going. They had run into thick antiaircraft, murderous cross-fire, heavier than many of them had ever seen before; and now that the job was finished, they had to get out of there.

Seven of our B-52s were shot down before the morning was out, but many of the crews were rescued. Eight other planes were damaged. Fifteen planes lost or damagedd out of thirty was a heavy price—but the victory was as heavy, because the ships had been on their way to reinforce the Jap garrisons trying to fight off defeat on Leyte. And besides, we never minded losing planes as long as we could save the men who went down in them.

The flying men knew they had done a good job, and now they were going home. Some of them were having a hard go. There was P-47 escort that day, and the fighter planes buzzed around the twin-engine strafer-bombers which were crippled, and protected them.

The B-25 piloted by Major Edward R. McLean, a blond, wavy-haired Texan, was in trouble. McLean tried to keep it going, but after a while he saw he could never make it home. He crash-landed in the water, and the plane broke open in the middle.

The six men in the crew crawled out safely. They freed their life raft. It took them half an hour to inflate it. Then they climbed aboard and started to paddle. It was late in the afternoon of the tenth.

They paddled for a little while, orienting themselves, and then they saw two native canoes coming toward them. Two natives sat upright and stiff in each canoe. The airmen were not sure where they were. They had two revolvers among the six of them. The other guns had been lost in the crash. The two guns were brought out, and the men waited.

"The two canoes pulled up," McLean said. "The natives seemed excited. One of them spoke a kind of English. When we told him we were Americans, he translated for the other men, and then they all started to jabber. They were crazy excited. The first Joe told us he hadn't seen Americans for many years, and he kept grinning at us. It sounded like a Chamber of Commerce speech back home.

"He told us there were no Japs on his island, and he asked us to come with him. We decided they were all right, so we said okay. They tied our life raft to their canoes and hauled us to the island. Whatever doubts we may have had about the honesty of these birds passed away when we saw the shore.'

"There must have been about five hundred people there — old men and young men and women and small children. The guy who had done the talking to us in the canoe shouted something to them, and then they all started to cheer. The little kids ran out into the water and began to pull in the raft by hand.

"Our tail-gunner was hurt from the crash, sort of bruised on the chest, and some of the men came out into the water and carried him out of the boat. I never saw anybody handle anyone as carefully as they handled him.

"They brought us to the house of the chief official in the village. They gave us first aid, and then they took all our clothes to be washed and fixed up. We weren't in the place half an hour when they came in with big plates filled with fried chicken and eggs and potatoes. I never saw such a feast. They were all singing and laughing, and some of them were crying, they were so glad to see us. Finally came the pay-off. Someone produced a half-pound tin of coffee and some sugar. We found out they had been hoarding that coffee for more than three years, and they brought it out for us."

The Americans were given native clothing—of a sort— while their own clothing was being cleaned. They sat in the house, stuffed with food and good feeling, and then the villagers began to troop through the house to observe them.

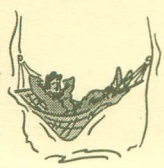
"It was as if we were exhibits in a museum or something," McLean said. "We were sitting there covered with some kind of grass, and one by one all the people stepped in and looked at us. Sometimes they just looked with a serious expression on their faces, without saying anything. Some of the girls giggled and ran out. The little kids came up and touched us as though they were unable to believe we were real."

The natives themselves, he said, wore rags, but everything they had on was immaculate. They were clean and proud. A few hours after the airmen arrived, a native Catholic priest arrived and held mass in gratitude for their deliverance.

The flyers had a good night's sleep in the official's house, and when they awoke the next morning they found another platter of fried chicken and eggs waiting for them. They began to wonder what was the use of ever returning home.

After breakfast the native who had greeted them in the boat, and who now accounted himself a close friend, visited them; and after a long talk he agreed to take one of the flyers in a native canoe to the nearest outpost of white men to call for help. McLean went with him and the two of them started off at nine o'clock on the morning of the eleventh.

The rest of the men stayed in the official's home and rested. They were treated for their bruises, and native musicians came to sing for them. It was a pleasant and relaxing day, and they continued to eat well, and the natives provided some local brew made from coconuts that was very inspiring to drink.



The idyll ended that night. Just before nine o'clock a man rushed in, greatly excited. He said that great numbers of Japs were arriving in small boats and some were already clambering on shore.

Now the villagers took command with efficiency. They had had dealings with Nips before. They whisked the Americans into the hills. The bruised tail-gunner was carried by two natives in an improvised stretcher. All the flyers were brought to a large cave. Following them were the women and children and old men from the fillage, bringing along whatever livestock—chickens and pigs— could be carried. The men remained behind to deal with the Japs.

Everyone remained awake that night in the cave on the hill. All was siltent below. Then the next morning a native came up from the village. He reported on what was going on below. "The Nips," he said, "are sailors, survivors from a shpping strike that sank several of their vessels." There were about two hundred of them. Apart from a few small weapons and knives, they were not armed. They were commanded by three officers. To keep them quiet, the natives had promised to round up enough canoes to get them back to their own bases.

• • •

Continued Next Issue

DECEMBER 13, 1963: "North American Aviation Newsletter", *"Los Angeles Skywriter"*

HISTORY OF 'LIL FOX' ARMAMENT TELLS HOW LA REP HELPED WIN WAR

Editor's Note: The historic battle of the Bismarck Sea might well have had a different ending had it not been for the B-25s and the efforts of one very stubborn North American field representative. the following is excerpted from the story of how that man put muscles in the Mitchells, as told by John J. McDevitt, editor of LA Division's Service News.

Twenty-one years ago when the battles of the South Pacific were raging, a member of North American's band of field service representatives, Jack Fox, helped to fashion a knockout punch from which the enemy never fully recovered.

Armed with a hacksaw, Fox set out to prove that the B-25 Mitchell — if he could get his way — if he could get his way — was potentially the greatest fighting plane in the world. At North American in Los Angeles, aerodynamicists and stress analysts would demand that the airplane be grounded when they learned what "Jack the Ripper," as they called him, had done to it.

Important Test

The battle of the Bismarck Sea was shaping up as an important test for U.S.S. forces. It was a battle that would make the Mitchell's famous as the scourge of enemy shipping in the South Pacific.

When the first group of B-25s arrived in Australia soon after the Pearl Harbor attack, they were equipped with a single .30 cal. machine guns in their noses and a pair of .50s in the upper and lower turrets to cover the sides and rear.

This never suited Fox. As far as he was concerned, there would have to be more guns and they would have to be bigger.

Backing

Fox got eager support form Col. Paul (Pappy) Gunn, hero of of the Philippine campaign, and Capt. T.R. Tomkins, another handy man with a hacksaw. While the Army Air Force officers pushed through an official approval from headquarters in Brisbane, Fox went to work on the first B-25.

In 12 days, it's nose bristled like a porcupine with a cluster of four .50 cal. machine guns in the center and a pair on each side of the fuselage. One short burst would disintegrate a Zero.

Fox modified 10 aircraft which were ferried from Australia to Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Enemy Nears

It was soon afterward that reconnaissance reported two Japanese armadas, each with 11 ships, heading with reinforcements to their battered and blockaded bastions at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea. Aboard the ships, intelligence officers estimated, were 20,000 troops.

The 10 modified Mitchells, led by Maj. Ed Larner of San Francisco, were sent to intercept the fleet in the Bismarck Sea. Screaming wide open just above the whitecaps, they bore down on the ships with 80 machine guns going full blast. The steel slugs punched dotted holes in the vessels' sides, and as the Mitchells hurdled the masts and thundered away, the ships were torn apart by five second fuse bombs skipped against them.

The B-25s wiped out the entire fleet of 22 ships and 20,000 troops to the last man. Every Mitchell returned safely to base.

Request

When North American's Engineering Dept. learned the details of the battle, it cabled Fox asking him to send drawings of the armament modifications immediately.

Fox's answer is considered almost a classic in the aviation industry:

"When we make some more installations, we're going to make some drawings."

Fox did just that. He installed a 20 mm. nose cannon, then prepared a complete set of engineering drawings and sent them to Los Angeles. North American immediately began incorporating the modifications that had made the B-25 Mitchell the terror of the South Pacific.

But Fox still wasn't finished.

Surveying one of the factory modified aircraft one day, he stared unbelievingly at the landing lights tucked in the leading edge of the wings. Kicking himself for having overlooked this piece of virgin territory, he pulled out his hacksaw, tore out the lights and installed a pair of .30 cal. guns on each wing.

More Guns

The plane now had 12 machine guns and a 20 mm. cannon firing forward.

After the plane had flown about 30 hours and had completed two combat missions., Fox noted the modification in a routine field service report. The Engineering Dept. ordered the plane grounded, insisting that it wasn't airworthy.

The twin .30's stayed in the one plane, but Fox relented and modified no more B-25 wings.

Months later on a trip to Australia, Fox heard about a B-25 that had just arrived from the states. What intrigued Fox is that the aircraft packed a potent 75 mm. cannon in its nose.

The plane was at Port Moresby the same day. The only thing that dulled the gleam in Fox's eye that no papers were on the plane indicating whether the big guns had ever been fired.

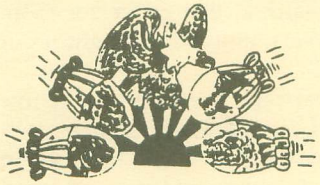
So Fox and Pappy Gunn flight tested the 75. As Fox recalls, "It was like hitting a small bump in the road."

Joins Raids

With Gunn at the controls and Fox handling the big cannon, the plane joined several Mitchell raiding parties. On one raid, Gunn peeled off the formation and zeroed in on a transport plane which had just landed at a Japanese air field.

From a mile and a half away, Fox let loose with a high explosive shell and scored a direct hit on the transport lumbering up the taxi strip. Pieces of the big plane scattered like tenpins.

The Mitchell howled over the field so low that panic-stricken batteries firing from opposite sides raked each other.●



"The SunSetters"
6375 Coniston St.
Port Charlotte, FL 33981

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 38
98236