38th BOMB GROUP

823rd SQUADRON

71st SQUADRON

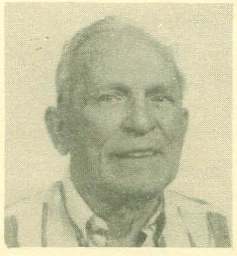
405th SQUADRON

822nd SQUADRON

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII) JANUARY 1999

The President's Message . . .



DALE HOWIESON

I WANT TO COMMEND Harlan and Dorothy Denning and Chick and Helen Alford on hosting the Little Rock Reunion. Thanks for a job well done.

We are getting an early start on the next Reunion in Las Vegas. The year 2000 will be a banner year for reunions and conventions, so we will have our reservations confirmed.

Harry Terrell has contacted the Convention Center for brochures on tours, hotels, etc. He is also planning a trip to check out the hotels and find the best one for the money. Harry has done this before so he knows what is involved.

My first thought was to hire professionals to handle the reunion but after talking to Terrell and McKinstry, we decided to do it ourselves. With all the past reunions as a guide and our own experience, we feel confident about succeeding. I will keep the membership informed as plans progress. Please feel free to offer suggestions.

Rosella and I wish each of you healthy and Happy Holidays.

Warm regards . . .

Dale

Convention Foot Notes

Although putting on the Reunion for the Group was a lot of work, it was a pleasure to do so. The many positive responses indicated all had a good time and that is what Reunions are about. Helen and I thank each of you for all the cooperation and understanding. This made the reunion very pleasant.

Our prayer is that the Lord will bless each of you with good health and happiness. See you in Las Vegas in 2000!

Chick Alford

NOTE: Anyone interested in Reunion memorabilia that was left over from our Reunions, contact Harlen Denning, Dale Howieson or Jim Thoren. Addresses, e-mails and phone numbers are in the roster.

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

By John L. Frisbee
Reprinted from the Air Force Magazine
October 1988

By the summer of 1943, General MacArthur's strategic plan of advance along the north coast of New Guinea to reach the Philippines was well underway, supported by Gen. George Kenney's Fifth Air Force.

In July, his troops had secured a foothold in the Huon Gulf area and were preparing for the next step — capture of the Japanese stronghold at Lae — scheduled for early September. But first, Japanese air power concentrated around Wewak, some 300 miles west of Lae, had to be neutralized.

General Kenney knew that Wewak and its satellite fields at But, Boram, and Dagua were being heavily reinforced. By mid-August, there were more than 100 bombers and bout ninety fighters on the four fields. It was time to strike.

On the night of August 16-17, fifty B-17s and B-24s hit the four fields. On the morning of the seventeenth, thirty-two B-25s from Port Moresby and Dodobura, escorted by eighty P-30s, strafed and para-fragged the fields.

For the Moresby-based B-25s, the 500-mile flight to Wewak was the deepest penetration into enemy-held territory yet made by medium bombers. Both the heavies and mediums were met by intense anti-aircraft fire but little fighter opposition. A follow-up daylight raid was laid on for the eighteenth, with Maj. Ralph Cheli, one of the most experienced Fifth Air Force Bomber pilots, leading the B-25s from Port Moresby

The previous August, Cheli, then a captain , had led a flight of 38th Bombardment Group B-25s from Hamilton Field in California to Australia in the first air movement of B-25s from the States to the combat zone. Two months later, the 38th moved to Port Moresby in southeastern New Guinea, and Cheli was given command of the 405th Squadron.

On March 3, 1943, during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, he led his squadron in the first daylight, masthead-level attack against a Japanese convoy. Now, on this fortieth combat mission, Ralph Cheli would take the Moresby B-25s over 500 miles of jungle and past 15,000-foot peaks to Dagua, a few miles west of Wewak.

Unlike the conditions during the first Wewak strike, the weather was bad on August 18. Only twenty-six of forty-nine heavy bombers reached their targets, bombing through broken

(Continued on page 3)

The 38th Bomb Group Association (WWII)

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"IN EVER-HONORED MEMORY'"

Since publication of the May 1998 newsletter and as of August 7, 1998, we have been informed of these veterans of the 38th Bomb Group that have gone to their final resting place.

"Rest In Peace, Brothers"

Garritt, Stephen 70th
Adams, William E. Sr. 71st
Ware, Rueben M. 71st
Blankenship, Paul G. 405th
Donahan, William "Wild Bill"*.....405th
Lamb, Hershel A. (LM) 405th
Mudd, Charles B. 405th
Pavel, E. Lew (LM).....405th
Surabian, Fred K. (LM) 405th
Mowe, Robert E. 822nd
Wilhelm, J.P. (LM) 822nd
Gatchell, Charles C. 823rd
Hanrahan, William E. (LM) 823rd
Howell, Lawton (LM) 823rd
Twonbley, Arthur (LM).....823rd

Barry R. Sousley (his full name) of the 71st was listed previously in September.
*Not a member of this Association.

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

HQ	16	71st	123	822nd	62
69th	1	89th	1	823rd	60
70th	43	405th	111	UNK	3

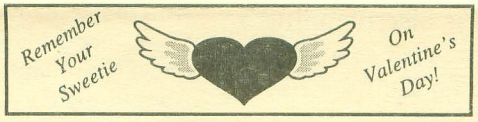
TOTAL = 404

ADDITIONAL LIFE MEMBERS
As Of 1/6/99

The Association has gained the following new Life Members since the listing in the September 1998 *Sunsetters* newsletter:
McKay, Ralph H. 71st
Saulsbury, Amos L. Jr. 71st
Thompson, Curtis..... 822nd
Here is the breakdown, by squadron, of the total number of members who have contributed $100 to the Life Membership Fund:

HQ	71st	405th	822nd	823rd	ASC
8	60	104	51	49	7
2	11	20	10	7	Dec'd

Total = 279



Jim Thoren, Ed. SunSetter

Thank all of you that have sent in memories and items for the SunSetter. Due to the amount of material available, your items may not appear immediately. All will be published over time in our newsletter. Be patient, please.

Special thanks to Ray Warner, Roy Lee Grover, Mat Gac, Harold Moss and the many others who have sent in items. Whether written for your loved ones or chronicling your military experiences, remember, the pen is mightier than the sword. So keep our memories coming to me. Thanks again.

NEW MEMBERS 1/9/99

1 71st, McKay, Ralph H.
2 71st, Silkunas, Stanley G.
3 71st, Teck, Jules G. (LM)
4 405th, Edwards, Clarence L., "Jack"
5 405th, Harrod, Royce
6 405th, Ivey, Ray
7 405th, Keating, Lawrence P.
8 405th, Milam, Wayman C.
9 822nd, Kinney, Howard P.
10 822nd, Maher, Richard P.
11 822nd, Thompson, Curtis
12 823rd, Dixon, E.L. "Les"
13 823rd, Mrozek, Frank J.
14 ASC, Drake, Donald D. "Don"
15 ASC, Maggart, Philip E.
16 ASC, O'Neill, Tom J.
17 ASC, Sousley, Barry R.
18 ASC, Sviben, Donald J.

38th Bomb Group Association WWII
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3	822	Byron, Wallace H.	*whbryon@aol.com*
4	405	Caswell, Everett L.	*ecasw@ibm.net*
5	New	Claringbould, Michael	*mjc@albury.net.au*
6	405	Crawford, Charles M.	*chuck7478@aol.com*
7	822	DeTour, Jack L.	jackdet@compuserve.com
8	822	Howieson, Dale W.	dwhowieson@webtv.net
9	ASC	Hickey, Lawrence	lhickey@concentric.net
10	405	Kuhner, George C.	kuhner1921@aol.com
11	ASC	Lee, Cynthia L. "Cindy"	leecl@email.msn.com
12	ASC	Maggart, Philip E.	macpenny@comteck.com
13	405	McCartney, Warren "Phil"	phil007@northcoast.com
14	822	McKinstry, Willialm. J. "Bill"	m38bgp@aol.com
15	ASC	Miller, Herb	hmiller307@aol.com
16	822	Riehl, Edgar A.	eriehl@worldnet.att.net
17	ASC	Sviben, Donald J.	Howard@acronet.net
18	405	Terrelll, Harry E. "Terry", Jr.	heterrell@fea.net
19	822	Thoren, James B. "Jim"	mustang@whidbey.com
20	822	Warner, Raymond F.	Computer only, for now
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S/T REMINDERS

Bill McKinstry, Secretary/Treasurer

1 Look at your address label on your SunSetters newsletter. Just above your name is a line stating your dues situation. 14 members have fallen behind in their dues for more than one term. This will be their last issue of the newsletter.

2 Look at all the members in your respective squadron, especially the ones with the year "'96" in the paid "PD" column. Do you know them and why they are no longer active? Is their address incorrect? If so, let me know by a letter or a postcard.

3 Please check the roster included with this newsletter. Is all the information regarding you correct? Please send me a postcard regarding any corrections such as address, zip code and phone number. Many of the last two have been changed over the years.

4 Those members who go south for the winter should remember that our mail is Third Class and is not forwarded. If you have not informed me of your southern address, you will not receive the most important newsletter of the year containing the new roster, Ever-Honored and Life Member listings, or the newly amended Constitution.

5 My dictionary says "M" stands for 1000 and "K" stands for Kilo and thousand. I prefer "M". Thus, the "2M in the paid column of the roster is for those paid through December 2000.

6 Finally, I hope all of our members enjoyed a very merry Christmas and a Happy New year. Make plans now to attend the Las Vegas Reunion in the year 2000!

"Saga of the SunSetters"

During Reunion '98 in Little Rock, many members expressed a desire to find a way to preserve the history of the 38th BGp. What we have so far is the book in progress, *"The Saga of The SunSetters."* There is a wealth of historical material in the hands of our members that should be displayed in a suitable repository.

An ad hoc committee was formed at Little Rock consisting of Chick Alford, Mat Gac, Bob Hunter and Terry Terrell, lead man. Their mission: to find a repository and set up a system for gathering the historical material for display.

Presently we have three candidate sites: The Friends of the AF Academy Library; US AF Academy in Colorado; The National Warplane Museum, Elmira-Corning Airport, N.Y.; and the March Field Museum, March Air Reserve Base, CA. Mat Gac is checking out the Warplane Museum, and Terry, the March Field museum. The Friends of the AF Academy Library have already agreed to accept the 38th BGp material. This is a start and the committee is open to suggestions from the membership on other possible locations.

The committee needs to find out from the membership what memorabilia of historical significance they have and would like to contribute. They need to know if there is enough available to make an interesting display. We are all interested in passing on to future generations, what we did out there. This great heritage needs to be preserved for others to see.

Contact Terry Terrell at 20475 Upper Bay Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660-0741, e-mail: heterreell@fea.net

"Bomber Reef"

Walter Deas, Seawest Productions, 11 Platypus Ave., Sorrento Qld 4231, Australia, is looking for data on the 38th BGp., especially the 405th, for a book to be published, "Bomber Reef." Please contact him if you are interested in helping.

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clouds. Visibility was down to about two miles in rain and haze. Again, AA fire was heavy, but this time enemy fighters attacked the B-25s savagely and persistently.

Ten to fifteen Zekes and Oscars dived out of the clouds, concentrating their fire on Cheli's squadron. As the B-25s started their strafing run, an Oscar scored many hits on Cheli's plane, setting the right engine and wing afire. A crash was inevitable, but rather than disrupt the squadron at this crucial point by pulling up for a bailout. Major Cheli chose to continue the attack, dropping his bombs and strafing as flame streamed back from the doomed bomber.

As they pulled up from the most successful attack of the day, Cheli ordered his wingman to take the lead. He would try to ditch in the ocean.

There were varying reports as to what happened next: Cheli's B-25 exploded and crashed in the jungle or in the sea, or ditched successfully. All that was know for sure was that Ralph Cheli and his crew— 1st Lt. Vincent Raney, Flight Officer Don Yancey, T/Sgt. Raymond Warren, and S/Sgt. Clinton Murphree — were missing in action.

On October 28, 1943, Major Cheli was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous decision not to abandon the attack on Dagua.

Several months later, an unconfirmed Japanese broadcast reported that Cheli and three members of his crew had been taken prisoner. The story was not verified until after the war.

Cheli and at least two of his crew had in fact been captured and taken to a Japanese prison at Rabaul. Cheli was badly burned and "banged up." As the senior American POW at that time, he was interrogated and beaten frequently over the next several months but refused to give any information beyond name, rank and serial number. According to repatriated fellow prisoners, Cheli was always cheerful and optimistic, despite his atrocious treatment. Finally, the Japanese gave up and decided to send Cheli and about twenty the prisoners to Japan. On the evening of March 5, 1944, the POWs were put aboard a ship in a convoy bound for the home islands. Ninety minutes later, in one of the great ironies of the war, Fifth Air Force bombers attacked the convoy. The ship bearing Major Cheli and the other prisoners was hit. There were no survivors. (end.)

FYI: ARMY AIR FORCE WWII AWARDS POLICY

Jim Powell, 71st Sdn. writes: I am a former engineer-gunner with the 71st Squadron at Lilngayen, PI. On March 29, 1945, I was a crew member on B-25J #3056 which was hit by anti-aircraft fire at Byoritsu, Formosa, collided with the lead plane and ultimately crash-landed in southeastern China in Japanese-surrounded territory. Our crew was rescued from capture by Naval Intelligence personnel and subsequently returned to safety at 14th Air Force Headquarters in Kunming, China by the "Underground Railway" as the Air-Ground Aid Service (AGAS) was known. The whole crew was returned to Lingayen by mid-April to resume combat duties.

In September, 1995, I learned of an obscure Army Air Force WWII awards policy which was to make an appropriate flyng award to AAF personnel who had been killed, shot down inaction or taken prisoner before receiving a decoration in recognition of acts performed in aerial flight regardless of the number of missions flown.

Thus, I immediately applied to HQAFMPC/DPMAS, Randolph AFB, Texas, for the Air Medical but was turned down

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for lack of official documentation.

Later, having obtained additional back-up information, I reapplied through my local Congressman. Again, my application was rejected. Finally, through the efforts of Arizona Senator John McCain, who had been a North Vietnamese prisoner of war, and with copies of a Missing Air Crew Report (MACR) and a "Walkout Report" from the AGAS, I was officially notified of award of the Air Force Air Medical in November 1997.

However, it wasn't until April 17, 1998, 53 years after the incident, that the Air Medal was presented to me. It was presented by Air Force Col. Robert Cox of Los Angeles AFB during an impressive Retreat ceremony at Ford MacArthur, San Pedro, California.✈

— *Memories* —

Ray Warner, 823rd

In last summer's SunSetter, Larry Hickey inquired about the accidental plane crash that killed Blieck and Muller. I remember the incident. They were out making practice runs on a US destroyer in Lingayen Gulf and the wings came off. Everyone started checking their planes for wrinkled skin or popped rivets after this incident and I recall seeing one plane with a severe warp in the fuselage aft of the wing section.

I don't remember Muller, but checking the flight rosters for mission no. 315-7A-A1S for the Squadron 822nd, date 10 November, 1944; C. W. Blieck was co-pilot on a/c 808 call sign C65G T/O 0800. Other crew members: Pilot Polansky, E. S.; 1st Lt. Co-Pilot Blieck, C.W.; 2nd Lt./Navigator Crutchfield, W.C.; 1st Lt./ Radioman Gabel, W.A.; Cpl./Gunner Gaffney, G. D.; Sgt. Engineer Helllman, F. M.; S/Sgt. XXF Zackman, R. V.; S/Sgt

As you may recall, the mission on November 10 was Ormock Bay. A/C No. 808 landed at Leyte after the attack on Japanese destroyers and transports in the Ormock Bay. The group received a presidential citation for this one.

An interesting account of this mission was written by Lawrence Cortesi in 1983. His account is fairly accurate but one omission that I resent is that he replaced an active participant Dean M. Clark pilot of A/C 967 and crew with a fictitious crew piloted by one of the persons who helped supply data for his book.

I have always enjoyed reading Cortesi's books, but on this occasion I take exception. To make matters worse, Cortesi sites an article in Aerospace Historian Magazine by Clark, Dean: "A B-25 Over Ormock" I have been writing to different sources for years to find this article, to no avail.

Last year, I traveled to Leechburg, PA and talked to Dean. He couldn't remember writing such an article. Incidentally, Dean put me in touch with the 38th Bomb Group Association.

MORE . . .

March 2, 1945, mission 61C2A Taichu, Formosa, 3 points for flying time, 1 point for AA. Now find this on a map. My old rescue maps have long since disappeared and have to use a National Geographic dated 1968. All names have changed in Formosa (Taiwan) and it may be hard to ID this one.

Can't find the target by that name but there is a river that was north of the target area that went due east that we used as a check point. Taichu was about 60 miles north of the Pescadores, a couple miles inland and a couple miles south of this river. On the NG map, there is a river called Tachia and a small town in 1968 called Tachia. This fit the description of what I recalled as the target area. We flew up the coast of Formosa, all seventy-two of us, then everybody turned east along the river and then south a few miles inland. The 345th continued onto their target due south and the 38th turned due west to attack the Taichu airfield. We were lined up, wingtip to wingtip, and strafing across the strip toward the planes and hangers. Slightly west of the strip in about the number two aircraft position was a tower at about our same altitude. It was the firing position of the most accurate anti-aircraft gun that I had ever encountered. Our gunfire was undershooting and hitting the ground at the base of this tower but he was shooting right down the nose of the number two plane.

I saw a B-25 hit the dirt and explode as we passed, and each flight after us suffered damage. One of the planes that was hit by this AA tower limped out of the area and headed for the shore. It crashed a short distance offshore and then the panic began.

The co-pilot of this flight was Randal Samples from Blue Field, West "By God, Virginia. Samples was one of the funniest guys that I have ever met and he made a comedy out of this adventures. Samples didn't stand over 5'2", and we all wondered how he could have gotten into the Air Corps. His legs were so short that he couldn't reach the brakes or rudder peddles to the full extent. His favorite expression to his fellow pilot when he was landing a plane was , "You stomp the left pedal and I'll stomp the right." His fellow pilot that day was an ex-gunner from a B-17 that came out of the 17th Bomb Group of early Philippine war who was the exact same height. (Please forgive me but I cannot recall his name.) He came back to the states in '42 and got involved in pilot training after the 19th broke up in Australia.

Samples' plane made it down to the water's edge out in the Formosa strait about two miles from shore. The plane landed and the panic of escape ensued. As Samples described it, the escape hatch was right over the co-pilot's head and it was his responsibility to release the catch and be the first out to help others. Wrong. He released the catch okay but, as Samples tells it, three people stepped on his fingers before he had a chance to move. Finally all personnel were out, the raft released and everyone jumped in since the plane was going to sink in a matter of seconds. They began to paddle desperately to clear the downdraft of the sinking airplane. The raft would not move. It was hung up on something! And the plane continued to "float". They had landed on a sand bar a few inches below the water.

At this point, they noticed activity on shore and decided to climb back into the B-25 and man the turrets. In the meantime, the air-sea rescue was flying overhead but hesitated to land since they could see the sand bar. There was some radio conversations from the group leader to air-sea rescue which involved some rather nasty language and the plane finally located a spot and made a landing. Samples, et al, had to paddle quite a distance to reach the plane but they made it in record time. Damp clothes but high spirits prevailed and shortly this crew was back at the Navy Rescue station near Lingayen to the northwest. Samples commented on the luxurious living conditions of the Naval Base, "The silverware was so heavy I couldn't lift it!"

In writing this 53 years after it happened, I am having trouble influencing my mind that the incidents that occurred, the strike I was on and the rescue, happened on the same day. Reading of a plane down in the water off the target stirred this story in my thoughts.

Samples could have made up this fantastic story of his escape, but we did lose a plane, the crew was rescued, and he was the copilot. Major Davis was the group leader flying the 822nd on the occasion I was the lead navigator on my March 2 mission. I remember in Samples account that he referred to "L.C. Sub-Buster Hawes" as the CO who had words with the Navy about the landing of the seaplane to pick up his crew. In Samples' account, Hawes had threatened disaster to the seaplane if it didn't respond rapidly. A number of planes succumbed to that AA tower on Taichu and I apologize for making light of the rescue. But that's the way Samples told it to me. ✈