38th BOMB GROUP

823rd SQUADRON

71st SQUADRON

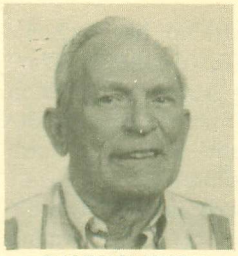
405th SQUADRON

822nd SQUADRON

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII) MAY 1999

The President's Message . . .



DALE HOWIESON

The computer world continues to amaze me, although I don't have a working knowledge of the science.

Chris Guest e-mailed me for information about a relative lost on a plane coming from Townsville to Port Moresby. It so happened that I was on a search mission for that plane. He has been developing a website for the 38th Bomb Group. I have sent him material and have encouraged him in this project.

If anyone is interested in getting in touch with Chris, here is his mailing address, his e-mail address and the website address: Chris Guest, 6713 Locust Street, Richmond Virginia, 23228; e-mail: *n2clplanes@aol.com*; 38th Bomb Group website: **http://hometownaol.com/n2clplanes/extreme/index.htm** (see following article).

Harry Terrell has had successful back surgery and is recovering in good shape. He plans to visit Las Vegas next month to monitor the hotels, visit Nellis Air Base and hopefully will be able to line up speakers, entertainment and possibly lunch on the Base. More information is coming.

Best regards to all . . .

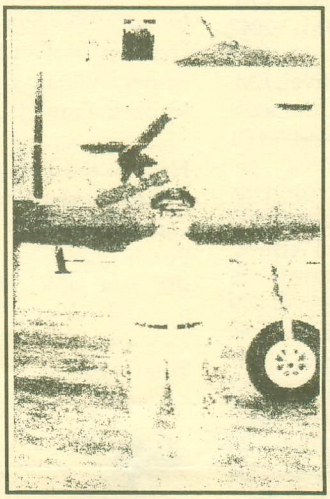
Dale

28 January 1944
Crash of a B-25G Mitchell After Leaving Townsville

Chris Guest writes — My wife's great-uncle, Charles Donald Plageman, was with the 823rd Squadron; he disappeared when he went with a crew to pick up a new B-25G in Townsville, Australia. He had flown 29 missions at the time he was killed. The following report was filed:

B25G-1, #42-64881 was received from the 4th Air Depot Group, Townsville for transfer to 38th Bomb Group. Took off from Garbutt Field for Durand Field, Port Moresby at 11:30 January 28, 1944. Plane never reached destination. A Radio check of all fields . . . failed to reveal 881's whereabouts. Radio message requesting crew and passenger list ... was received and answered, but message was garbled. Another radio message sent . . . answer not yet received. Rescue Service Advance Echelon 5th Air Force, APO 929 immediately notified. Extent of Rescue Service search unknown. Aircraft of 38th BG made intensive search of sea and coast within 100 miles range of Port Moresby. Aircraft of 38th BG enroute to Townsville for modification reported sighting possible wreckage 97 miles south of Port Moresby. Other aircraft of 38th BG made intensive search of this area. While searching this area, plane 42-64810 is also missing. Search for both planes continuing.

If any of you know anything about these events, please notify Chris. Thank you.



GOLDEN WINGS

METTETAL FLIES HIGH FOR 80TH BIRTHDAY

Reprinted from the Canton Observer October 1998

What does one give a spouse of 57 years for a birthday present?

When Plymouth Township resident Jean Mettetal was faced with that question, she decided nothing less than a B-25 bomber was good enough for her husband, whose birthday was October 6.

On September 26, she drove her husband, Bob, to Willow Run airport in Ypsilanti where he was eventually given his surprise birthday present: a one-hour ride in a restored vintage bomber.

"Somehow I felt 80 was a very important birthday and I wanted to do something really special," she said.

The biggest surprise came when he learned he wouldn't just be riding in the plane — he would be flying it.

Fortunately, Bob knew a thing or two about flying. He managed Mettetal Airport for about 40 years; flew bombers in the World War II Pacific Theater; and worked as a bomber flying instructor in his post-wartime days.

It was his first airplane flight since 1967, when a series of heart attacks sidelined his flying. He hadn't flown a bomber for 53 years.

Yet stepping into the cockpit of the vintage restored machine barely caused him to bat an eye. He was just as comfortable flying the plane in 1998 as he was when he flew in bombing missions in World War II.

"I was relaxed and enjoying it immensely," Mettetal said, "I don't get tense — I just fly."

Bob's birthday present was arranged through the Yankee Air Force Museum in Belleville, which bought the bomber a few years ago. Jean Mettetal contacted Ted Edmonds, who like the Mettetals is an active member, and he helped make the birthday wish fly. Edmonds, a Livonia resident, helps restore the vintage planes for the museum.

"I thought it would be very nice if we could do this," Edmonds said of Jean's request.

The bomber Mettetal flew was about 38 feet long with a wingspan of about 40 feet. The plane's normal speed is about 160 knots with a top speed of about 200 knots.

(Continued on page 3)

The 38th Bomb Group Association (WWII)

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"IN EVER-HONORED MEMORY'"

Since publication of the January 1999 newsletter and as of April 10, 1999, we have been informed of these veterans of the 38th Bomb Group that have gone to their final resting place.

"Rest In Peace, Brothers"

*Machetti, Leon 69th
*Baucom, George E. 70th
Blevins, Bill "B.B." (LM).....71st
Craig, James W. (LM) 71st
Gude, Henry P., Jr. 71st
*Alter, Howard E. 405th
Boutette, Harold A. "Red" 405th
Johnson, Emil R. 405th
Cunningham, James W. 822nd
Gaeke, Harry F. 822nd
Labiak, George J. 822nd
Nadow, Robert E. (LM) 71st
Smith, Frank O.....823rd
*Wilensky, Abe 70th

* Wartime comrade of the 38th BG.

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

HQ	16	71st	127	822nd	64
69th	2	89th	1	823rd	62
70th	44	405th	114	UNK	3

TOTAL = 433

ADDITIONAL LIFE MEMBERS
As Of 2/16/99

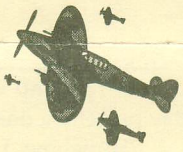
The Association has gained the following new Life Members since the listing in the January 1999 *Sun Setters* newsletter:

Devaney, Robert J. 89th
Eisner, William G. 822nd
Mrozek, Frank J. 823rd

Here is the breakdown, by squadron, of the total number of members who have contributed $100 to the Life Membership Fund:

HQ	71st	89th	405th	822nd	823rd	ASC
8	60	1	104	52	50	7
2	14		23	10	11	Dec'd

Total = 282



Larry Hickey advises he is back on track and should have a good input on the history by our next newsletter.

Read This And Tell The S/T!

1 Check your label for errors!
Got a winter residence?
Zip or Area Code changed?

2 Someone must remember:
John F. Campbell
John W. Egan
James A. Geyer
What Squadrons were they in?
Don't let them go unremembered.

3 Time flies! Here it is already May and there are 75 guys who haven't sent in their dues! Read the message above your name on the mailing label! ✈

S-T-R-E-T-C-H-I-N-G OUT ON THE INTERNET

Peter Dunn (Australia) has a home page featuring "Townsville at War" and the "Military Aircraft Crashes in Queensland"; the first one features details of military units serving in north Queensland, including the Sun Setters.

He is particularly interested in details of the war centering around Townsville. He is researching all military aircraft crashes in Queensland during WWII and would welcome any input from the Sun Setters.

Peter's e-mail address is ***pdunn@st.net.au***; and home page is **www.st.net.au/~dunn/research.**

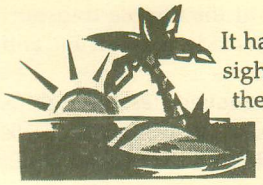
38th Bomb Group Association WWII

E-Mail Addresses as of 1/9/99

1	823	Barbour, A. Allen	*AL38BG@aol.com*
2	New	Brooks, Don	*dbrooks@hasco.net*
3	822	Byron, Wallace H.	*whbyron@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	405	Kuhner, George C.	kuhner1921@aol.com
10	ASC	Lee, Cynthia L. "Cindy"	leecl@email.msn.com
11	ASC	Maggart, Philip E.	macpenny@comteck.com
12	405	McCartney, Warren "Phil"	philnbess@humboldt1.com
13		McConnell, Bruce K.	bkmcconn@pe.net
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	Terrell, 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
21	822	Wilkinson, Vernon R.	wilkie22@juno.com
22	71	Williams, Charles S.	B25flyboy@aol.com
23	823	Zarfas, Harry	hzarfas@ix.netcom.com
24	Sun Setter	Aurdal, Mary Jane, Editor	Residence – aurdal@whidbey.com
25	Sun Setter	Aurdal, Mary Jane, Editor	Office – pacos@gte.net
26	Web Site	Guest, Chris, Webmaster	n2clplanes@aol.com

FLASHBACK!

BY LEE GROVER



It has amazed me how a smell, a sound or a sight can cause one to recall the feeling and the memory of incidents that have been long forgotten. One such incident taught me the feeling of age and I want to share it with you.

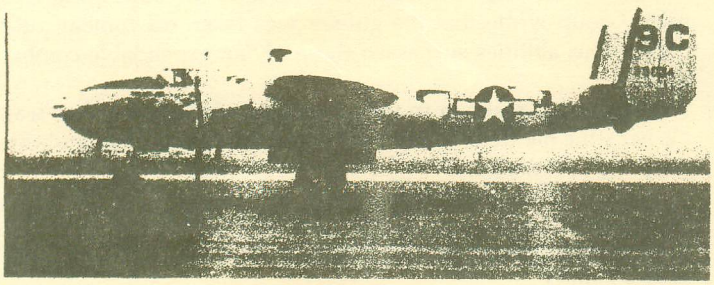
A few years ago, I was at the Palos Verdes Tennis Club located on a hill overlooking the ocean and the island of Catalina some 20 miles away. The sun was coming up and there were small whitecaps on the ocean. I was waiting for the other members of my Saturday foursome to arrive.

As I looked at the island, the light changed and I felt suddenly young and vigorous combined with a surge of invincibility — it was wonderful! I had forgotten what it felt like to be young. But, there was more ... the ocean was friendly and the island was an adversary. I was a superman. Then, the light changed as the sun rose and the feeling left me. My first thought was of what caused this feeling? And how could I get it back?

As I analyzed my feelings, I realized that when the 405th attacked Lae, New Guinea so many times, both in the medium altitude level and later in the "strafer" mode, we had always approached the target from the sea. The sea had no enemy troops on it so it was friendly. The land was the enemy. The feeling of invincibility was my old reaction to approaching the target when the apprehension and tension changed into the attack mode. The increased adrenaline made me into an invincible foe of the protectors of the target. I was young, full of life and powerful.

I had not really thought about the feeling of age, but that young feeling was something to savor even for that short moment. In the past, my reaction to sudden loud noises or movement in my peripheral vision has been an instant alert. This reaction has faded with time.

It is good that we forget some of our experiences, but they remain in our subconscious to be awakened with a smell, a sound or a sight. ✈



METTETAL FLIES AGAIN!

(Continued from page 1)

Edmonds said he was impressed with the ease in which Mettetal assumed pilot mode. "He flew it like he had just gotten out of one," he said.

Passengers in the birthday flight included children Steven and Suzanne and two grandsons, Robert and Frank. Other family members watched including Jean who opted not to join Bob on his flight. "(Joining the flight) would diminish the fact that this is my gift to him," she said.

The Mettetals have lived in the same Marlowe Street home for 48 years. Bob Mettetal retired from Mettetal Airport in Canton Township in 1987 when it was sold. The airport is named for Bob's father, Raphael. ✈

"Win Some – Lose Some"

by Ray Warner

It was February 1945 and I was a 20-year old 2nd Lieutenant navigator in the 405th Squadron, 38th Bomb Group, 5th Air Force, stationed at Lingayen, Luzon, Philippines.

A reconnaissance plane reported to our intelligence that it had spotted a Japanese cruiser and two destroyers in the China Sea between China and Formosa (now Taiwan), heading in a southwesterly direction.

Our job was to intercept them and destroy them.

Six of our B-25s were loaded with four 500 pound bombs with 4 to 5 second delay fuses used in skip bombing against ships.

The pilot chosen to lead the mission was a Lt. Colonel fresh over from the states. I can't remember his name, but I remember he was an older man with a pronounced mustache and we called him, "Yosemite Sam." He was greedy for fame and glory.

I was chosen as the lead navigator. I probably was the youngest in our group but on experience I had about 35 missions under my belt at that time. My job was to figure an interception problem based on the position of the Japanese ships, their speed and direction, and our speed and direction, to intercept them at a given point. I used their information plus our time to load bombs and get in the air to figure how to intercept them and destroy them.

Actually, it is not a difficult problem. When I was in navigation school in Monroe, LA, we used to do interception problems on trains coming out of Atlanta, GA. The only problem we had was that they did not always run on time.

Our flight time to intercept was between 2 and 3 hours and when we were about 2 minutes away, I told Yosemite Sam to get ready. Two minutes came and went, and no ships. One problem we encountered was a change in weather and we were right down on the deck in rain and fog.

The next step was to fly a search pattern: one-half mile south, one-half mile east and one-half mile north in an increasing search, expanding the area until we found them. We continued our search until our fuel supply was low and we had to return to our base. Poor ol' Yosemite Sam did not catch that Japanese varmint and get his fame and glory.

The next day I was called to headquarters for a meeting (instigated by a disgruntled Yosemite Sam) with the C.O. and the head navigator of my group, a Captain. I brought my log and all my calculations on the interception problem.

The group navigator went over my calculations three times and did his own interception problems. He concluded that I was 100% correct. That ended it — win some, lose some. I always wondered if there really was a cruiser and two destroyers, or whether the Japanese radioed the information to us as a sham.

I finished my tour with 54 missions and went to Manila for a boat home. The 38th moved up to Okinawa and I heard later than old Yosemite Sam got his fame and glory when he was shot down on a raid in Nagasaki Harbor, Japan. The varmints got him.

This story is not a blood and guts tale, but a routine story of doing your job. Yosemite Sam lost and I won – the satisfaction of doing my job for Uncle Sam. ✈

ATTENTION: Correction to item regarding Walter Deas in January Sun Setter. Walter is producing a VIDEO on Bomber Reef, instead of a book.

From the Los Angeles Times, March 8, 1943 provided by SmSgt Harold W. Moss, Ret.

FLYER RELATES THRILLING BISMARCK SEA VICTORY

(The following eyewitness account of an air attack on the Japanese convoy at the entrance to New Guinea's Huon Gulf was written for the AP by **Capt. W. S. Royalty** of Peoria, Ill., navigator in a Mitchell bomber which scored a direct hit on a transport. Three Japanese light cruisers, seven destroyers, a dozen transport and cargo ships and 102 planes were destroyed during the battle of which he presents one phase.)

SOMEWHERE IN NEW GUINEA, March 6 — We took off as No. 7 in a flight of B-25s about 8:30 a.m. We had heard several reports as to what the convoy consisted of. Naturally everyone was a bit nervous in anticipation.

We knew from previous experiences, that there would be Zeros protecting the ships, but we also knew we were to have some P-38s for top cover. After the way these P-38s have shown themselves in the past two or three months, it made us feel fairly safe from the Zeros.

Our planes were the first flight over the rendezvous point, which was some distance from the convoy's last reported position south of Finschhafen. We circled around, waiting for the rest of the planes in the coordinated attack.

Planes Swarm Out

As we made the first circle we could see coming from the mountains an almost unbelievable number of planes. A number of B-17s were getting into formation slightly above us. Below us three separate flights of B-25s were already in formation and beginning to circle. Below also were a great number of Beaufighters, A-20s and P-40s, all in formation more or less.

A few thousand feet above, I counted a number of P-38s in formations of twos, threes and fours. It was the most concentrated flight of aircraft any of us had ever seen. After we had circled twice, all the planes started for the convoy at once. Our flight followed two flights of three B-17s each.

Cruiser Opens Fire

About 30 miles out, we saw some ships of the convoy. Nearest to us as we came closer were what seemed to be two cruisers and three destroyers. These ships were making violent maneuvers and their wakes were stringing out 10 to 12 times their lengths. I counted six transports and cargo vessels on the other side of these warships and at least two more warships still farther on. The warships were moving fast, but the cargo ships seemed to be almost at a standstill.

We followed along behind the B-17s as they flew parallel to the line of warships and the nearest cruiser threw three broadsides at us — it looked like the whole ship was lighted up. As we got opposite this ship, the B-17s turned off to go over the convoy.

Our flight went on for a minute or more and then turned in also. As we turned, another broadside left the cruiser and immediately afterward, one of the bombs from a B-17 hit that ship at dead center and huge clouds of smoked billowed out.

I didn't have the time to watch it anymore. Below I saw almost an endless stream of planes strafing and bombing every ship in the convoy. A B-25 scored a direct hit on a large transport — and the whole stern blew up and burned fiercely.

We lined up on three transports and started a bombing run and then I saw seven or eight Zeros at about 12 o'clock (straight ahead) a long way off. Almost at the same time, several P-38s came down on them. They started some good dogfights, but other things happening attracted my attention.

We were just dropping our bombs at the middle transport of three. Pictures showed later that we made a direct hit and some near misses.

As we turned to leave for home, we saw at least five ships smoking and three of these flaming. A-20s, Beaufighters, B-25s and B-17s were still strafing and bombing all the ships I could see.✈

The following from the Press-Enterprise, November 5, 1990 is also contributed by Harold Moss. Harold adds that he didn't know of any 38th BGp B-25s with a belly gun. He is in the process of writing his own story.

U.S. Airman Gets Award For WWII Gallantry

COROAPOLIS, PA — More than 48 years after gunning down a Japanese fighter plane and helping to save his crew in World War II, a former U.S. airman has been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action.

About 1,000 members of the 911th Tactical Air Group stood in formation at Greater Pittsburgh International Airport on Saturday as Albert Machajewski received the award.

On another autumn day, October 24, 1942, Machajewski was the belly gunner in a B-25 looking for enemy ships that might be on their way to invade New Guinea in the Pacific Ocean.

"This was supposed to be an easy one," he said.

About six Japanese Zero planes attacked the lone bomber and "all hell broke loose," according to Machajewski, who is now 71.

He sprayed gunfire at the fighters and saw one go down in smoke. Another gunner downed a second Zero and the B-25 got away.

"We had no time to be afraid because we were too busy fighting them off," said Machahewski, who lives in Mount Lebanon, a Pittsburgh suburb.

In a May 16, 1945 letter recommending the Silver Star for Machahewski, Capt. Dorence Van Fleet of the 38th Bombardment Group wrote that the gunner was taken off combat duty because his abilities surpassed those of "an expendable combat man."

His initial reaction to the nomination for a Silver Star was "What's the big deal?" He forgot about the award after the war, busy with a family and his career with Western Electric Co.

When Machajewski found time to research why his Silver Star nomination was never pursued, he found his records had been destroyed in a fire at the National Personnel Record Center in St. Louis. ✈

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