38th Bomb Group

823 rd Squadron

71st Squadron

822 nd Squadron

405th Squadron

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II) MAY, 2007

TIME SURE FLIES WHEN YOU ARE HAVING FUN!!

We are going to have a big and enjoyable **38th BOMB GROUP REUNION** in Honolulu, Hawaii, **18 - 20 September, 2007. Make special note of the dates. This is a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday reunion, not our usual Thursday, Friday, Saturday shindig!** There are more details and special instructions on the back page and on the forms with the newsletter. Read them **carefully** to avoid confusion and disappointments.

But here are the highlights! Our Reunion Headquarters will be at the **Hale Koa Hotel,** which is a first class government hotel located very close to Waikiki Beach (see further details on the back page). Planned activities include visiting:

- **The Pacific Aviation Museum** with its B-25 honoring the Doolittle Raid, a Japanese Zero, and other WW II aircraft on display
- **Hickam Air Force Base** (some of you remember being here) where Headquarters PACAF has a "WALL OF HEROES" where our own 38th BG RALPH CHELI is honored, having been awarded the **Medal of Honor**. We'll view WW II, Korea, and Viet Nam memorabilia and have lunch at **The Sea Breeze**
- **The Arizona Memorial**, the final resting place for 1,177 Navy crewmen since December 7. 1941.
- **The Punchbowl National Cemetery** and scenic, historic downtown Honolulu.

There is a **16 JULY DEADLINE for signing up for you hotel reservations and the activities noted above. BE SURE YOUR REGISTRATIONS ARE MAILED TO ARRIVE BY 16 JULY!!!**

Your will want to spend some time visiting **our NEW WEBSITE** produced by Tom Behrens, son of Al Behrens. **www.sunsetters38bg.com** This is a first class site!. Check it out; you will be impressed and I think you will agree that it is among the best unit web sites out there. THANKS, TOM. If you don't have a computer, lean on a friend who has one; he'll enjoy visiting it with you. Or get your Public Library to let you use their computer and call their attention to it so they will steer others to visit the site, also.

Status of our 38th Bomb Group book: SAGA OF THE SUNSETTERS: Larry Hickey reports that the book will be in printing this Fall. He anticipates it will be a 625-page book with about 1,000 photos, plus maps, a color section, special art work, and massive appendices. It will be similar in size to his two previous books about the 22nd Bomb Group and the 345th Bomb Group.

Our Secretary/Treasurer is really the hub around which our Association orbits. He manages the money, tries to keep track of changes to our membership list, provides the information about our recently transferred **Ever Honored Members**, digs up more about our history, and sees to it that the newsletter is printed and mailed after the Editor, David Gunn, puts it together. And now he is the Administrator of our Web Site.

Please remember to say a prayer for our troops who are in harm's way for all of us around the world.

Jack DeTour

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NOTE DATE CHANGE

REUNION 2007

Honolulu, Sept. 18-20

IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

Our President has furnished the following list of named member comrades who have passed on to their final Post as reported to him since our previous listing. Their names have been added to the list of our "Ever Honored Comrades".

Frank R. Dunbar	71st	Charles L. Burton	822nd
Solomon Eckrote, Jr.	71st	Matthew C. Gac (Mac)	822nd
Thomas V. Farrell	71st	Billy F. Beard	823rd
Hugh O'Brion	71st	Sigmond Jackowski	823rd
Albert G. Oliver	71st	Robert J. Mettetal	823rd

TOTAL TO DATE

Headquarters	18
69th Squadron	2
70th Squadron	59
71st Squadron	156
89th Squadron	1
405th Squadron	171
822nd Squadron	94
823rd Squadron	96
Unit unknown	2

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We solicit your comments or notes of errors and the submittal of your stories or items of interest. We reserve the right to reject items and the right to edit items for space and suitability.

We also reserve the right to alter names or other details that might cause embarrassment to individuals or family members.

From the Editor - David Gunn

Our 2007 Reunion in Honolulu is rushing toward us. There has been a lot of e-mail traffic between Jack DeTour, Orland Gage, Tom Behrens, and yours truly over the past several weeks and we are excited. (I think Jack would say that he is exhausted.) Jack was held up in getting our activities final information from Pleasant Holidays for the newsletter.

Kay and I were in Hawaii in 2003 to celebrated our 60th anniversary and we are looking forward to this trip, too. We are planning a few extra days to get out to see Kawai (we didn't get to Kawai in 2003). We want to return to "the big island" this time to drive the Kona coast (we were on the Hilo coast in 2003) and to get to the coastal volcano park (we were rained out on that part last time). Then, we will go back to Molokai again. Tourists hadn't spoiled Molokai and our hotel dining table was at a wall with the waves lapping on the other side just a few feet below us. Besides, when I flew to Hawaii back in 1944, weather forced us to land at a Navy auxiliary field that was hung on the side of a mountain on Molokai. I could not find that in 2003 and want to find it this time.

I arrived at Nadzab and was assigned to the 38th BG in July of 1944 which is in the period of time covered in this issue. My personal experiences have added a tiny bit of spice to the research and reporting on the activities of the 38th and will continue to do so.

In my web surfing I recently found a site dedicated to large radio controlled flying models of military planes. Many have wing spans of over eight feet and some even more than twice that size. A B-25 is among this set. There is a link to a site that shows this B-25 model in its various stages of construction.

http://www.rcwarbirds.com/bombers.htm
http://flyinglindy.homestead.com/b25construction.html

My old tail gunner passed on a web address for a super model B-29 doing some fantastic flying. Since I only have dialup service, I did not view this site because it would take too long to download it. But you may want to try. The first B-29 bombing missions in 1944 are noted in this issue of the newsletter in "The World at War" columns.

http://users.skynet.be/fa926657/files/B29.wmv

Roy Lee Grover sent me pictures of a RC model C-17. The model wing span is 248 inches. The list of details about this model and what it can do is much too long to include here. If you will send me an e-mail, I will pass the pictures and details on to you: **pappygnk@juno.com**

Some years ago I read *The Wartime Journals of Charles Lindberg*. He spent several months in 1944 in the Pacific combat areas. Knowing this, I did more research on the dates and places of his experiences. This led me to the conclusion that he may actually have been in the fighter cover on one 38th BG mission. Read about it in **The World at War** and the **Keep on Movin'** columns. There's more at this site:

http://www.charlesdlindburgh.com/wwii/

The History Channel showed ***"Inside the B-25 Bomber"*** several months ago. This program has only recently become obtainable on DVD. Type that title into your search window on the Internet and you should get the A&E History Channel store page. The price is $24.95. The 50 minute program shows both low level combat in the southwest Pacific and medium altitude missions in Europe. The program also shows current restoration activity of B-25s.

When I was in my barber shop in January and visiting with my barber, as usual, another customer pricked up his ears as I talked about the 38th Bomb Group. He approached me when I stepped out of the chair and asked more questions. Bill was in the 38th missile group, successor to the 38th Bomb Group, in France during the early '50s. He wanted to know more about us. I sent him our January newsletter and he shortly sent a check to Orland to get on our "Friends" mailing list. He also wrote me a letter, telling me that the three squadrons of the group at that time still retained the emblems we flew with in the '40s.

So, talk up the 38th BG wherever you get a chance. You may find people who were related to someone in the 38th and would like to know more.

THE WORLD AT WAR

Everywhere around the world, the Allied initiative was in full swing in May of 1944. The Allied momentum of war was increasing. The German homeland was being pounded continually and public morale was sagging lower.

In Italy, the homeland was divided between the Allied occupiers and the German occupiers who were gradually retreating.

Japan had not yet begun to be a bomb target but the Allied noose that was drawing tighter was cutting off the resources of raw materials needed to maintain the homeland as a base for supplying the weapons of war.

Far away in the U. S. at the Fairfield-Suisun Army Air Base, B-25s had begun to arrive on 5 June. These were new B-25Js and their crews were destined to join the 38th Bomb Group in the Southwest Pacific. The base was a beehive of activity as these men swarmed through the crowded, smoke-filled Post Exchange Stores making last minute purchases or into theaters to catch the latest newsreels. What was happening on the French beaches was an inspiration to them as they looked forward to soon coming days when they could make their own attacks on the enemy in the Pacific..

WESTERN EUROPEAN THEATER

The 8th Air Force and British bombers had begun pounding the French channel coast positions of German artillery in mid-April. In mid-May, all French airports became the object of heavy bombing. On 21 May, the railroads of France and Germany became the objects of heavy bombardment. Communication lines in western Europe were being annihilated.

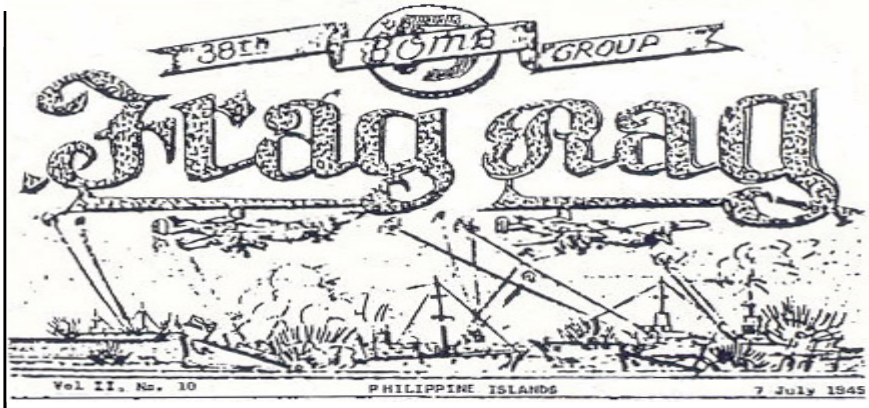
Hitler and his generals were sure that the Allied landings in France would take place soon. The questions was, just where?

On 6 June, **Operation Overlord** opened with an ever increasing movement of Allied men and equipment across the channel from England to the Normandy coast of France. The invasion was carried out under a fierce supporting naval bombardment and under an umbrella of planes that assured air superiority. The ears of the world were glued to radios waiting for the next news.

Before the D-day was out, prefabricated pieces of PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) were being laid from both sides of the channel. PLUTO would assure a sufficient supply of fuel to keep the offensive rolling.

Airborne forces parachuted at targeted points to divide the German attention and

*(Continued page 4, **The World At War**)*



KEEP ON MOVIN'

The 38th had been busy during April. But May found the ***Sun Setters*** called on to perform more routine errands much of the time. There were weather reccos and courier flights with a new role to play, escort missions for C-47s to and from Hollandia. It was not unusual for a 38th BG plane to fly up to Hollandia to escort a C-47 back to Nadzab and then find that the transport planes were grounded because of weather or not showing up for some unknown reason.

On 2 May, two planes from the 405th were assigned a strafing mission to Wewak and neighboring Boram strips. The two planes made three strafing passes, dropping 500-pound demolition bombs on the first pass. The constant attention to these bases assured that they would be essentially non operational as the Allied juggernaut consolidated its occupation of Hollandia and prepared to add Wakde Island to its forward operational air bases. The bombs added to the already unserviceable status of the Wewak complex.

Old **905**, one of the original 38th BG planes and already becoming a legend in the southwest Pacific, took a hit in the bomb bay from a heavy anti aircraft position on a hill near the Boram strip. The navigator was slightly wounded but the hydraulic system was knocked out. The plane landed safely even without the nose wheel being down and locked. Left in the wake of the ***Green Dragon*** operations were new potholes in the Wewak strips, two now unserviceable ***Nick*** fighters, a demolished truck, a smoldering mess of a supply dump and four Nipponese soldiers who received an early release from duty at this base and joined their "honorable ancestors."

On 3 May, some planes were practicing formation flying between Nadzab and Lae while P-38s made passes at them. Tom King remembered that "the air was about as rough as I have flown in." One of the 38th B-25s led a group of A-20s on a mission at 6,000 feet over Wewak with the A-20s dropping their bombs when the bombardier in the B-25 triggered his bombs.

The Allied invaders at Tadji (Aitape) were trying to extend their perimeter in the tropical jungles surrounding the base and found themselves in short supply for rations and ammo and sloshing through the mud in very bad weather. On 6 May, a single plane from the 823rd Squadron was unable to spot the signal fire marking a drop location for the supplies they were carrying, in part because of the weather. On the following day they made a successful drop in an area among three signal fires at a village 35 miles south of Aitape.

While this crew was supplying aid to our men on the ground, 24 of the Group's planes, loaded with 500-pounders, hit Sawar 150 miles west of Hollandia. They also took photos of the coastal area for use by the planners of the Wakde landing scheduled for later in the month. Sawar was located on the mainland just south of Wakde Island. There were known Japanese positions along this coast. In addition to some ack-ack positions which had not committed serious damage, a Japanese stable with

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KEEP ON MOVIN'

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several tethered horses was observed. This was a mission to the extreme of the operating range of the B-25s and some pilots had not exercised the best fuel management and were forced to land at advance bases when returning to take on additional fuel.

On 11 May, the 38th BG mission was to Wakde Island with 500-pounders. They had orders **NOT** to drop bombs on the runway because Headquarters was counting on this island becoming an advance operational base as soon as possible after the projected landing. A few bombs did hit the runway but two planes on a parking ramp were set afire and other small fires were started.

On 14 May, bombing from medium altitude of several strategic spots on Wakde Island produced mixed results. Following the bomb runs, the planes circled down to low altitude for photo runs around Wakde and the smaller island close by. All planes survived the confusion of so many planes flying in various directions and the pictures served their purpose very well. As the planes departed, Lieutenant Booth, on his first mission as a first pilot, decided that the target deserved one more lick. His wingtip hit a tree on this fateful pass. The crash resulted in the death of all of the crew. A week later, the island was occupied by American troops who recovered the remains of the crew.

Wakde Island under attack, DON'T BOMB THE RUNWAY!!

The following day, three squadrons returned to concentrate on a fuel dump. Strangely the drums in the "fuel dump" jumped around when hit by the strafers, more characteristic of empty drums. Only one small fire was started.

On 16 May, the 405th and 823rd were assigned targets on the island and the 71st and 822nd were to bomb the Pacific Ocean – well, the channel between Wakde and its smaller neighbor. The channel was believed to be mined. Who could miss such a target? Well, one squadron somehow managed to miss the target; five bombs hit land! But the bombs dropped in the channel produced a large explosion.

On the 17th, three squadrons bombed Sawar village from medium altitude while Army troops made an unopposed landing on several miles of the New Guinea mainland westward from Wakde Island. This was followed on 18 May by the American landing on Wakde Island. By the 21st, fighter planes were operating from the Wakde strip.

Four days of operations followed west of Wewak where intelligence gathered from Jap POWs indicated a headquarters area existed. While the bombings seemed to be on target, very little specific results were observed.

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THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 3)

to drive to link up with the sea-bourn invaders to develop a solid front. Some of these met strong German resistance.

At the end of "***the Longest Day***", more than 150,000 men had landed on the beaches of France. Although they failed to meet their objectives for the first day, they had a solid hold on the coast of France.

The Germans were still not sure that the landings on these beaches were the main Allied offensive against the continent. They did not have sufficient forces in the area to set up a strong defense.

The swarming invaders continued into the night in an effort to reach their objectives and to keep the Germans off balance. The Germans were able to hold the tide back in some places.

The German defense was effective enough to keep the Allied forces from reaching their first day objective for several more days. The struggle went on into weeks but the Allies managed to consolidate their initial landing zones and to make additional air and sea landings.

General Rommel, responsible for the Normandy beaches, had said that the loss of the first battle on the beaches would leave the continent open to invasion. His assessment proved to be true.

The landings were on beaches between Cherbourg in the west and Le Havre in the east. The Americans were on the right flank to the west. The British armies formed the left flank on the east.

The hedge rows in the fields defied attempts to breach them. Even with firm air superiority, the cosmopolitan Allied armies pushed ahead and stepped back time after time.

The German armies labored under similar handicaps as those their brothers on the eastern front experienced. Hitler refused to consider any tactical withdrawal to better defensive positions. Twice Rommel requested that the German forces on the Cherbourg Peninsula be withdrawn but Hitler refused. They were to be left to be overwhelmed by the Allies.

On 13 June, the Germans launched Hitler's secret weapon, the V1 flying bomb, against England from the Channel Coast of northern France. These drone bombs carried 1800 pounds of explosive and flew at about 3,000 feet at a speed of approximately 375 m.p.h. Between this date and early September, over 8,000 of these bombs were launched against the English countryside and cities.

*(Continued page 5, **The World At War**)*

THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 4)

The 8th A.F. began shuttle bomb missions on 21 June between their bases in England and Russian bases, bombing the German refineries south of Berlin *en route*.

The German troops at Cherbourg had been cut off from their lines on 17 June. Fighting in this area continued until 30 June when the last German resistance ended.

The British on the left flank were endeavoring to take the city of Caen. On 1 July, the Germans launched a counter attack in this area only to be repulsed with the destruction of a large portion of their tanks. The British pushed to the northeast and north toward Belgium.

The U. S. recognized General Charles de Gaulle and his Free French as the *de facto* government of France on 11 July.

On 20 July, a bomb exploded shortly after the start of a meeting of Hitler and his Chiefs-of-Staff at his headquarters in East Prussia. The bomb, in a brief case, had been placed under the table near where Hitler would sit but had, by chance, been slid along the floor to the other end of the table. Hitler did not suffer serious injury but others died or suffered injury.

A sizable group of military and non military Germans, including several in Hitler's close political family, were implicated in the plot. Over 5,000 people were eventually tried and executed.

The Allies steadily built up their capacity along the shores of northern France so that more troops and supplies could be landed to join the campaign. The Americans pushed to the south, and west to the coast southwest of Cherbourg, and east toward the Seine River south of Paris. The Americans continued to push southwest from the Normandy beaches into Brittany and the western beaches of France. The Americans reached Brest at the western end of the Brittany Peninsula in the last week of August.

They had pushed south to the Loire River from St. Nazaire on the Atlantic coast to Orleans and thence to Troyes on the Seine River. St. Nazaire would remain a German pocket until the war ended in May of 1945.

The Allied perseverance and continual pressure in the air and on the ground would move their spearhead to the heart of Paris by August 25. They were welcomed by the French with inexpressible enthusiasm.

At the end of August, the Allied northern line in France lay generally along the Seine from its mouth east through Paris to Troyes.

*(Continued page 6, **The World At War**)*

KEEP ON MOVIN'

(From page 4)

OFF TO MERAUKE

On 23 May, an advance echelon of cooks and ordnance personnel flew to Merauke in C-47s with a complete kitchen and a few jeeps to set up a temporary camp. This camp was on the southern coast of New Guinea directly south of Hollandia on the north coast. The following day, a detachment of eight planes plus one administrative plane per squadron made the flight to Merauke except that one plane was forced to ditch in a major river east of their destination because of engine failure.

The 71st Squadron commander, Captain Sevy, had stayed with the sick bird dropping emergency equipment to the men in the swift flowing river and circling them for some time. He attracted the attention of natives in a village along the stream who set out in canoes to aid the downed men. Captain Sevy was relieved by Major Paquin when his fuel ran short. The natives brought part of the crew to their village and the remaining men managed to reach the river bank five miles down stream before approaching darkness forced Paquin to return to Merauke.

During the time the men were struggling on the river, Lieutenant Colonel Tanberg had arranged for a Dutch Naval Catalina to attempt a rescue. The following morning, an urbane Dutch Naval Lieutenant DeBruyn took off in his big black Catalina, being his own copilot and navigator, and assisted by a Javanese crew with Capt. Sevy.

They soon flew into what seemed like impossible weather. Lieutenant De Bruyn, with several years of experience in the tropical islands,

> " . . . seemed as cool and confident as he had the night before over maps and a bottle of beer.
>
> "At 3,000 feet we crossed the fabulous, mysterious Fly River, and to either side there was just the swamp, miles and miles of flat, unknown, unwanted swamp. . . Occasionally we caught sight of small groups of crude huts, built on a cluster of fifty foot stilts . . They were probably head hunters . .
>
> "Twenty minutes (later) . . we went into weather, real weather, heavy rain, visibility less than half a mile, ceiling zero. . . as we dropped down on the tree tops. . . Suddenly, . . we were out over a river, . . there was no opposite shore ahead, nothing but rain.
>
> " 'Now if they are where you said they were,' DeBruyn said in his precise English, ' It should be just ahead of us now.' He pointed out beyond the nose of the Cat. Slowly an outline of darkness took form – then, in sudden brilliance, a flash of bright light shot into the air and fell, trailing a graceful streak of white smoke into the water.
>
> "We circled the waving men and buzzed the river to choose a landing path among the driftwood. Safely on the water, we taxied in toward shore as the two rafts cast off and paddled out, fighting against the current . . . At the open blister, they were caught and helped in to coffee and first aid . . The rain fell harder than ever.
>
> "DeBruyn gunned his engines and started taxiing upstream to find the others, picking his way through the twisting stumps and logs which swirled crazily down the river. We taxied faster as he felt his way – then the Cat went up on the step and for several miles skidded along on the water, just not quite flying. . .
>
> "We found the others safe and relatively dry at a long, thatched building on a tiny rise of dry ground. There was a stilted walk leading to a steep ladder down the muddy bank. With loud encouragement from the natives, they slipped and stumbled down the ladder with their boat and paddled out to us.
>
> "Somehow, through the rain and river, DeBruyn took off and set course for Merauke. Over hot coffee and fruit cake, the eight men told their stories – of mosquitoes and noises and a tide that rose ten feet and fell during the night in the one case, and a clean guest house, stagnant water and weird, rancid meat in the other."

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KEEP ON MOVIN'

(From page 5)

After being hospitalized at Merauke overnight, the men were flown back to an American hospital. It took several weeks for them to recover from painful gasoline burns but they eventually recovered without permanent damage.

At Merauke, everyone tried to tell DeBruyn what an amazing job he had done. His modest reply was, "Yes, we were lucky, were we not?"

Luck, maybe, but no one would forget his "cool confidence" and amazing skill.

The Dutch Naval presence, of which DeBruyn was a part, was small but of symbolic importance - this was part of Dutch New Guinea – and important to the several thousand civilian population. There were several flying officers making up a full P-40 squadron, plus three B-25Ds, and the Catalina used for patrol and rescue purposes. They were supported by ground crews and basics contributed by the RAAF. Most of the Dutch flying officers had trained at Jackson, Mississippi, where the 38th had spent its early days.

An RAAF wing with a P-40 squadron and an A-31 squadron also operated from the flight strip. In addition, Australians manned several coastal defense sites. The Dutch and Javanese seamen and military personnel had choice peacetime houses in the town.

A square in the town was faced by the surrounding principal buildings. Flattened buildings in the town center were reminders of Japanese air raids earlier in the war. A long established Dutch cemetery was situated behind some of these buildings with a Chinese cemetery near by. The war had brought a military cemetery close by.

The rest of the town was stretched out along a road parallel to and a mile from the beach. Most of the houses along the road were simple structures, often built with salvaged crating and driftwood. Some had no door and a simple packed earth floor. But they were "immaculately clean" and with clean yards surrounded by carefully maintained split bamboo fences. Barefoot Chinese or Javanese scurried along the road or rode in solid wheeled carts pulled by slow moving oxen

The Americans were overwhelmed with generous help and cooperation from the Aussies and Dutch forces. The locals also went out of their way to provide entertainment and the ***Sun Setters'*** presence was announced before the movies There was a generous supply of fresh meat and beer from Australia shared with the visitors. Fresh fruit and vegetables were provided from the local gardens. The local people didn't know what dehydrated potatoes were and the Americans found themselves grasping for words to try to describe what dried eggs tasted like.

Nearly every Chinese family in town was a laundry like nothing north of Sydney. Several of the men discovered the availability of delicious Chinese fried rice, bean sprouts, and roast chicken. The RAAF had crab traps from which great soft shelled crabs were taken after every tide and shared with the visiting group. Shrimp, some as much as a foot long and weighing a half pound, were to be had by dropping a circular net into the slow moving waters around either of two jetties. "Small ones were used for bait." Major Pavlich landed the largest *barrimundi*, 6 1/2 pounds, taken by the group. This fish, a cod native to New Guinea, is prized by the Aussies.

The 38th had come to Merauke during the "dry" season which showed off the area at its best - "Dry roads, clear skies and a breeze which came in coolly off the water in the evening." But there were also hoards of mosquitoes which reminded the men of their days at Port Moresby. Fortunately, they were generally not carriers of malaria and, being somewhat slow cruisers, were easily slapped flat.

The camp site for the Group was in a cocoanut grove two miles from the strip. Because of limited transportation, the camp was closely grouped around a mess hall. Eight men were assigned to each tent, making for much inconvenience.

An intense mission schedule kept everyone busy and away from the tent area much of the time. While the flight crews were on missions the

(Continued page 7, ***Keep On Movin'***)

THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 5)

General Kluge one of the highest Generals on the Western front committed suicide in August to avoid trial and execution for his part in the attempt on Hitler's life. He was replaced by General Model, transferred from the Russian front. General Rommel, the Desert Fox and commanding on the western front, would wait until October to commit suicide to avoid the consequences of his involvement.

And In Southern France

On 15 August, Allied forces landed on the French Mediterranean coast between Toulon, a French Naval Base, and Cannes.The landing force comprised 2,000 transports and landing craft under the protection of 300 warships. Free French forces that had joined the Allied forces in North Africa were a part of the invading force.

The control of the coast from the Rhone River in the west to Nice in the east was established before the end of August. ***Operation Anvil,*** as the operation was dubbed, began applying additional pressure on the German forces in France and now separ-ated from the German forces in the north of Italy.

THE ITALIAN CAMPAGN

A lull had settled over the front lines in Italy south of Mt. Casino for several weeks. The Gustav Line across Italy along the Rapido River and south of Casino had been firmly established by the Germans and skirmishes along the line had failed to expose a weak link to the Allies. The Germans had established other lines of defense before Rome and another further to the north before Florence.

The Allied command shuffled available forces facing the Gustav line and brought in new units. At 2300 hours on 11 May, 2,000 Allied artillery opened up between Cassino and the sea. The infantry launched attacks at 2345 hours. In the Casino area, the Allies were forced to retire but in other areas, they were able to break through the Gustav line, crossing the Rapido and pushing northward.

Under pressure, the Germans began retiring from Mt. Casino. By 18 May, a Polish regiment hoisted its flag over the ruins of the Abbey.

In a few days the second German defensive line was breached. The Allied forces on the coast were pushing forward toward the Allied perimeter at Anzio which had endured isolation since the landing on 21 January.

On 23 May, the Allied units moved up the

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coast toward Anzio and those within the Anzio perimeter launched coordinated attacks. The Germans held firm for two days but were forced to retire toward Rome on 25 May pursued by General Clark.

On 4 June, as Germans withdrew from the northern side of Rome, Clark's forces entered Rome on the south side. The Germans began a general retreat north of Rome. As opportunity arose, they put up fierce resistance, stalling the Allied forces for a time. But continued pressure forced the Germans to move north again and again.

On 11 June, The U.S. 15th Air Force bombers made their first shuttle bombing mission from Italian airfields to Russia, bombing the Rumanian oil fields as they flew by.

On 15 July, the new Italian government returned to Rome.

In early August, units of the British South African Armored division entered Florence from which the Germans had withdrawn. From Rome on 4 June, the Allied forces had pushed the Germans approximately 140 miles north in 57 days.

A few miles north of Florence, the Germans had prepared a strong defensive line across the Italian peninsula labeled ***The Gothic Line.*** Having crossed the Arno River east and west of Florence, the Allies paused to regroup and consolidate their positions. They were also planning during the rest of August their assault on the enemy line.

THE EASTERN FRONT

On 9 May, Russian troops captured Sevastopol on the Crimean peninsula and the Germans evacuated all remaining strong points. Moscow celebrated with 24 salvos from 324 guns.

A general lull prevailed along the upper Russian front but the German front in the south had collapsed. The Russians now penetrated into Rumania and Poland and were knocking on the Czechoslovakian border. Behind the German lines were more than 250,000 partisans operating with supplies provided by 200 planes at night.

The Russian army of 1944 was a far different army than the one the Germans had battered to pieces in 1941/42. Stalin had directed the move of heavy defense industry into the Siberian interior away from the German air force.

The Russian T-34 medium tank had been put into production. A new heavy tank, IS2 Stalin, had followed In 1943. More aircraft

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ground personnel spent their time fishing or visiting Merauke town, the Javanese village across the river or the native villages along the beach.

The planes were sent on five missions averaging six hours each in the six days of operations during May. On 26 May, six planes took off to attack Babo far to the northwest. They encountered a weather front but managed to reach Babo dropping 100-pound demolition bombs and strafing the airfield, as well as near villages.

The airfield looked to be nothing more than a cleared strip of dirt with trails into close-in groups of trees sheltering parked planes and nearby crude base operation facilities. Nearby villages probably furnished rather primitive housing to the Japanese stationed at this outpost. It was important to neutralize this base which could launch air attacks against the Biak landing to the north scheduled for the following day.

The planes headed for Babo again the following day. Anticipated fighter cover failed to appear. But the ***Sun Setters*** seemed to have taken the Jap base by surprise. A number of Jap fighters were seen on the strip but there seemed to be no airborne defenders. Planes, buildings, and a ship at the dock were hit. Some probable machine gun firing was observed. The area was thoroughly strafed.

At Babo, caught the planes on the ground and set fires

Tom King suffered severe frustration as he, "had a Jap bomber in my sights when all eight guns jammed."

Bad weather kept the planes from flying a group mission on the 28th. On 29 May, the planes headed once more for Babo. Two planes returned because the engine of one plane caught fire on the way to the target. This turned out to be a lucrative target. The strafers saw some fighters taking off but were not intercepted by them. Other fighters warming up were strafed and bombed. Bombs were dropped on several planes and buildings and a barge in the harbor. What was apparently a fuel dump caught fire. Some heavy ack-ack positions were silenced.

On 30 May, weather kept the formation from reaching Babo which was close to the maximum range from Merauke. They spent so much time trying to find a way through the weather that Ed Maurer, Group Leader that day, decided they could not get to the target and get back to Merauke. In fact, he judged that they could not make the secondary target and expect to return to the base. Ed elected to take the third target option, Timoeka, which was on the way back to Merauke. There had been virtually no briefing about this target.

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After running through more showers, the planes finally broke out of the showers returning towards their new target. They could see Timoeka dead ahead. They dropped lower for the run over the strip. Andy Beveridge, flying on Ed Maurer's right wing, took two machine gun bullets through his windshield soon after he had started strafing fire.

As Andy related, ". . One (round) penetrated my left shoulder; the other went into the head rest. I don't know how it missed my face and head. At almost the same time, we got hit by three shells (approximately 37 mm). One exploded on the left engine nacelle. Some of that took out the left side cockpit windows and broke my left collar bone and went in my neck."

Momentarily dazed, Andy was not aware of the extent of his injuries. He continued down his flight path over the runway, trying to keep up with Ed and firing his guns. The navigator and the radio operator were firing at ground targets from the waist guns behind the bomb bay. Bud Simmons, the copilot, dropped the bombs. The turret gunner's voice over the intercom told the pilots that the navigator and radio operator had been hit and the right elevator and rudder were seriously damaged.

Andy called Ed to tell him they had to break off and return to Merauke as fast as possible. Ed took the group around for a second pass over the target. A long two and a half hours later, Andy landed and Tanberg had ambulances waiting. The three injured men were hustled off to a small Australian hospital for emergency surgery and care for several days before they could be evacuated back to Nadzab. They were later evacuated to the States where two of them spent several months hospitalized.

On 31 May, the group closed out the month with a split mission. The 71st split off from the main formation to hit Otawiri. The main mission flown by two squadrons returned once more to Babo. Their 100-pound parademo bombs started a large fire which they could see from over 60 miles after leaving the target.

Several Japanese ***Oscars*** and ***Zekes*** pounced on them as they left, making determined passes from above to within 50 yards. Four or five aerial phosphorus bombs were dropped by the ***Zekes*** who broke away immediately. The B-25 gunners blazed away at the fighters with three of them showing smoke as they left the battle. At least one was downed. One other B-25 suffered six holes in the scrap.

The detachment at Merauke closed out their service at this distant base with a mission on 2 June. Diverted from Babo because fighter cover was not available, they again hit Timoeka They plastered the area with 100-pound parademos, and returned to Merauke.

Preparations were begun on 3 June for returning to Nadzab. On the fourth, they said goodbye to their Dutch and Aussie friends and flew back to join all their buddies.

The detachment at Merauke had acquitted itself in the closing week of May.

Back at Nadzab, there was real excitement as three flying officers, three enlisted crewmen, and four ground personnel received orders to return to the States. Several officers and enlisted men were sent off to Australia for leave as others returned from leaves and furloughs.

Several enlisted men scraped out a volley ball court which led to some spirited play. Many of the men sent word home that air mail would speed up those much longed for reports from Stateside. The mail situation did begin to improve. All in all, the morale of the Group took an upward turn.

DETACHED SERVICE AT HOLLANDIA

Several of the crews who had been at Nadzab were ordered to fly to Hollandia on 4 June to support the Biak landing operation. Taking cots, clothing and supporting ground crew personnel, they set off for a period of detached service of their own.

The area of the Hollandia strip was covered with three to six inches of "red fluffy dust". The flight crews were billeted with units that had been assigned to Hollandia. The ground crews were billeted "on the line" with their planes. A sobering reminder of the dangers of hunting souvenirs

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left the drawing board and moved down the assembly lines. Il2 ground attack planes were replacing the aircraft which had been destroyed in the early phase of the war leaving the army virtually without air cover. The Yak 9 fighter began rolling off the lines in 1943, thousands of them.

American lend-lease equipment began flowing across the north pole. P-39, A-20 and B-25 aircraft began to arrive in Russia. Thousands of Studebaker trucks began arriving by the shipload.

The later were invaluable in transporting food, gasoline and ammunition to the rifle and new tank columns which could move rapidly through breaches in the German lines. They gave the Russians mobility which the German commanders could only dream of.

These dependable trucks moved supplies in to the fast moving Russian armies faster than the still largely horse drawn German army could retreat. In the six months following 1 June, 1944, the Russians were to kill or capture nearly a million men and a quarter million horses and other draft animals.

In the early months of the war, Stalin had been fearful of the political risks to his own position and had retained firm control of the Army leadership. As the war progressed, it was apparent that the commanders in the field needed to have greater freedom to devise strategies for the immediate problems they faced.

By mid-1944, the Russian Generals had been given the authority to plan and devise the master plans for the new offensive. Hitler was still calling the major moves on both the Eastern and Western front, most often thwarting the recommendations and decisions of his leading generals. ***Operation Bagration*** unleashed a new Russian version of the German ***blietzkreig*** that would stagger the entrenched ***Wehrmacht***.

The lull was broken on 30 May by a German attack on Russian forces in Rumania. Stout Russian resistance yielded very little to the Reich attackers in early June.

The Russians had been engaging in an effort to persuade the Finns to accept a negotiated peace on the northern front. The Finns refused to acknowledge all overtures.

On 8 June, the Russians opened a summer offensive along a line between Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland. By the 15th, the Russians had penetrated 15 miles into the Finnish lines along a 30-mile front. By 20 June, the Gulf of Finland was open once more to Russian ships.

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Along the center front, the Russian armies were approaching the Polish border and had advanced toward Lithuania. To the south, the armies faced each other on Polish soil.

The Russian air support was far greater than the German air support. Many of the German air units had been transferred to the western front in an effort to contain the forces landing on the Normandy beaches.

On 25 June, the Russians cut the road between Smolensk and Minsk trapping five German divisions. By 2 July, they were converging on Minsk. On the third, Minsk fell to the advancing Russians and 38 of the 40 divisions of the German Army Group Center were encircled. The Germans lost over 500,000 killed and captured troops, 2,000 tanks, and 10,000 guns.

The German Army Group North operating in the Baltic states was now in danger of being cut off. The Russians were able to place 320 guns in each mile of the important portions of their front.

The German General Model requested that the Northern Army be withdrawn to assist in the defensive action in the central front. Typically, Hitler refused.

On 1 August, with the Russians approaching Warsaw, the Polish patriots in Warsaw rose up against the hated Germans and hoped to establish a free Polish capital. RAF planes dropped supplies and ammo to the insurgent patriots.

For reasons never fully explained, the Russians held up their advance. The Patriots were left to be virtually annihilated.

On 4 August, fighter-bombers of the 15th Air Force in Italy, flew a major mission to bomb several Romanian airfields and landed at Russian bases before returning to Italy. They then carried out missions over Italian and German targets on their way to Britain, a two legged version of the shuttle between England and Russia.

Russian forces took time out to consolidate and regroup in early August after their rapid advances in most sectors.

After only a short pause, the Russians in the center of their front, suddenly burst through the German lines on a 45 mile front and turned north. Now, the German Army Group North was about to be isolated from the main German armies as had been foreseen by General Model. The isolation was temporarily avoided by fierce counterattacks by the Northern Army in Lithuania.

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was the marked graves of several Air Transport Command (ATC) personnel who had been shot by Japanese snipers as they were hunting for trophies to take home.

There had been a report that a convoy was moving down the west coast of Halmahera Island toward the western end of New Guinea. The Japanese were being forced to bring planes and supplies down from the Philippines and Indo China to bases at the western part of the New Guinea and to replace those lost at Babo. They were desperately trying to form a defensive line against the Allied Biak invasion,

When the ***Sun Setter*** planes arrived at Hollandia, the crews were put on an alert standby at their planes. After two days, there was still no word of a mission to attack the convoy. On 6 June, one squadron flew to Biak to strafe and bomb the tree covered areas beside the Borokoe strip. The density of the trees prevented any real evaluation of their success except that the bombs were dropped in the target area.

On 12 June, a Group mission from Nadzab dropped 1000-pound bombs on Jap positions along the Driniumor River east of Aitape. The enemy forces had moved from the Wewak area to this line near Aitape and were putting up a heavy offensive against the American perimeter.

Their only escape from the drawstring the Allies had around Wewak was to dissipate into small groups and to move south into the mountainous tropical jungle and westward to bypass Hollandia and join their forces in the Sarmi area. A small number managed to survive the hostile jungle and join other Jap units to the west. The Allied movements along the coast made the Japanese attempts to escape a futile venture.

JEFMAN AND SEMATE

The Japs were known to be reinforcing their air units in the Bird's Head area of New Guinea from their bases at the far western end of the island. At Nadzab, the B-25s were being fitted with 215-gallon tanks in the top of the bomb bay. On 15 June, the squadrons were ordered to send six planes each to Hollandia in preparation for raids on the Jap facilities in the far western portion of New Guinea. Because the retrofitting of the tanks had not been completed, the 822nd Squadron borrowed planes from the 71st.

This mission was to be the longest mission flown by B-25s to date, approximately 650 miles to the targets. It also turned out to be the roughest mission to date in 1944. This was to be another coordinated mission with the 345th Bomb Group sending four squadrons, the 38th sending four squadrons, and covered by four squadrons of P-38s. It was the first minimum altitude bombing and strafing mission of the important Japanese bases at Semate and Jefman. Semate was on a large island just off the far western end of New Guinea. Jefman, a small island with its Japanese base, lay between Samate and the New Guinea mainland.

The attackers were to fly a course to attack Semate from the west and fly straight on to Jefman. The 71st Squadron was leading the attack. As they bore down on the Semate strip, the target was alive with activity. A large number of fighters were parked in the revetments and around the strip. Some were warming up their engines and at least 15 were already in the air as others were taking off. Colonel Hall, Group Leader, hit a ***Zeke*** fighter before it could get its wheels up. Captain Kelly sent another that pulled up in front of him down to a blazing crash in the sea. Lieutenant Crockwell downed a ***Hamp*** just as it got airborne. The attackers were so low that one plane had to pull up in order to place his strafing fire on the control tower. Several of the planes taking off were cut down by the strafing guns of the ***Wolf Pack***. The P-38s above took on all the Nip fighters which were in the air.

The 822nd Squadron quickly followed the 71st across the target to join on an eleven-planes-abreast line approaching Jefman. The 405th was close behind followed by the 822nd. The smoke from the fires started by the first squadrons across Semate made it difficult to really evaluate what damaged had been inflicted.

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As the 71st and 822nd attacked Jefman in a line abreast, the planes at the ends of the line were screened out of the main target but their bombs took a toll in the villages and along the jetties on the small island. The enemy was still in the process of launching planes when the ***Sun Setters*** began their strafing runs. The 405th arrived and Captain Henderson and Lieutenant Swenson caught two fighters as they were lifting off and sent them into the water.

Japanese planes caught on the ground at Jefman Island

Five ***Hamps*** managed to make it into the air only to be engaged by the hungry P-38s above the bombers. Two ***Hamps*** made a close simultaneous attack on one B-25 only to receive short bursts from the turret gunner as they chandelled away. They were observed to make glancing contact with one another in their attempt to escape and were seen to crash into the ocean. Another ***Hamp*** failed to escape from his attack on the formation and was seen to crash into the water. As at Semate, enemy ack-ack was essentially ineffective.

As the 823rd flew from Semate to Jefman, turret gunners sent an attacking ***Oscar*** to join his brothers in the waters below. Some of the pilots reported that they had to fly on instruments as they crossed the target because of thick smoke from the destruction in the target area. One ***Val*** seemed to be so busy eluding the P-38s that he flew in front of the 822nd formation and was sent into the sea by the nose guns of 822nd planes.

As the group pulled away from the target, a ***Betty*** bomber was sighted and the ***Sun Setter*** leaders took up the chase. Soon the guns were firing and shortly the ***Betty*** hit the water and broke into pieces. The following planes made sure that none of the enemy bomber crew escaped to fight another day.

As the formations passed Sorong on the western tip of the New Guinea mainland, several sightings of shipping were noted and reported at the mission debriefing. The evaluation of the reports resulted in the scheduling of another mission on the following day.

The 71st Squadron led the mission on which the "King of Bombers" roared out of a peaceful sky and proceeded in an orderly fashion to turn the harbor into a graveyard for Japanese shipping. The 71st accounted for eight water craft which were left in sinking condition.

The 822nd left four craft heading for Davey Jones' locker. Only four planes from the 405th reached the target. In single ship elements, they strafed and bombed several vessels on the water, two of which were

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As August was drawing to a close, the Russians in the south executed a pincer movement that cut off 130,000 of the German and Rumanian 6th Army. Harried by the pursuing Russians, the German and Rumanian army crossed over the Danube, but not before many of the Rumanian units just surrendered to the Russians.

On 23 August, the pro-German premier of Rumania was deposed and arrested. The King appointed a moderate to form a new government which immediately accepted the terms of the unconditional surrender offered by Russia.

On 28 August, the advancing forces of the Russian 2nd Ukraine Front now threatened Hungary. A new government was formed in Hungary, declaring readiness to negotiate Hungary's surrender.

A freed Rumania declared war on Germany as the month ended. The vital Ploesti oil fields were taken over by the Russians on 30 August.

Hitler finally agreed that the Aegean Islands and much of Greece would be evacuated by the Germans in the last days of August and early September.

CHINA, BURMA, INDIA

On the northeast border of India and Burma, the British forces at Imphal, isolated by the Japanese invasion of the area in April, were supplied and reinforced by air. In May and through June, 20 or more B-25s flew in ammunition almost every day. The British held on to their positions in spite of enemy pressure.

Late in May, the Japanese offensive against Imphal and the isolated British Indian forces cut off at Kohima to the north, slowed. Firm resistance by the ever increasing number of British troops being ferried into the enclave had turned the tide.

In mid June, the British forces at Imphal and Kohima launched an offensive to join forces along the road between the cities. By 2 June, the Japanese are forced to speed up a withdrawal while contending with monsoon rains. In mid July the British forces succeed in encircling the remaining enemy forces in the area and thus ended the Japanese effort to invade India.

Further north an American force, which became known as Merrell's Mauraders, struck into northern Burma aiming to cut off advanced Japanese units and to head for Myitkyina. It would be necessary to take this post from the Japs if the Ledo Road were to be pushed to connect with the old Burma Road to open the land lines to China.

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Chinese units under General Stilwell in north India were also engaging the Japanese in north Burma. Their objective was also to clear the Ledo Road route to Myitkyina. There were airfields near this town which would provide a staging point for the planes flying over the hump from India to China. Pushing the Japs from this position would eliminate the frequent interception of the transport aircraft by Japanese fighters from this base.

In mid May, American and Chinese forces managed to occupy positions north and south of the city. These forces succeed-ed in wresting the airfield from the Japs. Additional Chinese troops were flown in to take part in the attack on the town. The Japanese garrison successfully resisted the Allied efforts and administered heavy losses to the Chinese and American attackers.

On 12 July the Allies mounted a renewed effort to take the city. Even with strong air support, they are repulsed. Finally, on 30 July the Japanese commander of forces in Myitkyina ordered his troops to leave the city and seek to join with forces to the south. As they departed, he took his own life.

On 3 August, Chinese units took over the city and took 187 Japanese prisoners, nearly all of whom were sick or severely wounded. Land communication with China would soon be restored.

Further to the southeast along the Salween river on the Chinese border with Burma near Lashio, Chinese units were engaging the Japanese. In this rugged mountainous jungle area, the see-saw struggled continued day by day. This was the area of the old terminus of the Burma Road at Lashio.

The nature of the terrain and the fragility of the land communication lines required these various movements into northern Burma to be supplied by frequent air drops. The monsoon rains interfered with combat operations as well as the air supply effort.

On 25 June, the Japanese at Lungling, east of the Burma border in China along the old Burma Road, dealt a bloody defeat on Chinese forces advancing on Lungling. The Japanese were also forced to supply forward garrisons by air drops.

On 5 June, USAF B-29 Superfortresses launched their first raid against Bangkok from India. On 15 June, B-29s now stationed in China, made their first bombing mission to the main Japanese Islands. Over 200 tons of bombs were dropped on the Yawata steel works on Kyushu Island.

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tied up side-by-side making a lucrative target. Other shipping was also bombed and strafed, some of which had already been stung hard. The 823rd had two ships in the area which joined with the 822nd Squadron planes in their devastating sweep of the harbor area.

The rampage of 16 and 17 June would leave the Japanese good reason to avoid exposing large concentrations of aircraft and shipping within range of the lethal ***Mitchells***. The 38th Bomb Group would be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for wrecking havoc on Japanese air and sea resources on these two days of effective intensive action.

The 345th Bomb Group followed in the wake of the 38th and hit Samate and Jefman as their primary targets.

In succeeding days weather restricted operations. This gave the ground maintenance personnel time to accomplish necessary maintenance. Several forays were conducted to the western part of the New Guinea, often with planes flying with minimum visibility which made it impossible to observe results of what bombing was being done. On 22 June, two planes of one 822nd flight circled Salawati Island and were intercepted by an ***Oscar*** and a ***Tony*** which managed to down one of the B-25s while closing to very close range.

Other planes in the group managed to take cover in rain squalls before the enemy could attack again. The loss of a plane and crew was considered a discouraging price for such meager results.

CAVE BOMBING AT BIAK

In the mean time, the ground forces seeking to gain a firm hold on Biak were being considerably troubled by Japanese forces sheltered in the caves in the cliffs back of the Mokmer airfield objectives. On 25 June, twelve B-25s left Hollandia to provide a special assist to infantry and construction engineers on Biak.

After landing at Mokmer, each pilot was taken in an L-5 on a ride to pin point the target caves. Back at Mokmer, they were briefed by a ground force officer. The B-25s were to approach from the sea, flying straight toward the cave targets, release their bombs and make an abrupt pull up to clear the top of the cliff.

Soon twelve Sun Setter B-25s circled out to sea and lined up, each with a pair of 1,000-pound bombs. As each plane turned to its bomb run, the nose guns opened a blistering barrage into the cave entrances. As the bombs hurtled toward the caves, the planes pulled up and circled for another run. The bomb fuses were set for long delays and the flyers had little opportunity to see what damage this unique attack was doing. Word came down the line that several bombs had waltzed right into the caves and silenced the pestering enemy. The engineers resumed their task while the infantry cleaned out remaining resistance. A new strategy definition for the minimum altitude bombers was written that day.

On 26 June, Manokwari was the secondary target and the 822nd Squadron planes encountered intense ack-ack. At least 50 holes were counted in one plane which also lost part of its right rudder. Two of three 405th planes were damaged but no crew members were injured. One crew of the 823rd reported killing at least 20 mounts of the Japanese Cavalry unit based in the target area. All four squadrons reported that they were so busy dodging ack-ack that it was difficult to fully assess the damage they had done.

The final mission for the month of June was flown on the 27th. Three planes from each squadron made a strafing and bombing attack on Ransiki Airdrome. Supply areas and machine gun emplacements were known to be hit but results were generally unobserved.

One B-25H assigned to the group was used for gun testing on the panel target. The plane was not used on any missions because of the difficulty in handling by one pilot, there being no copilot seat. Trouble with the turret dome blowing off was also experienced. Over 200 hours of combat training sorties were logged in training new flight crews, several of which had no previous B-25 experience. The replacements were gladly welcomed.

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Engine changes during June exceeded the number of changes made in May which had set a record. The high level of dustiness encountered in operations from Hollandia had taken its toll. Several missions from Merauke and Hollandia had also exceeded seven hours which had added to the stress on the engines. This resulted in the need for several more engine changes during the month.

JULY - NEW PLANES, CREWS, PRACTICING; LITTLE COMBAT

July opened up with a string of bad weather days that limited operations considerably. Strangely, on 4 July several signal flares disappeared from the storage area. Then, after dark, there were several flashes and lights arcing across the sky at low altitude. The seemed to be somewhat similar to signal flares. Could there have been a connection?

Practicing at Nadzab continued to keep old crews sharp and to prepare new crews for combat action. This no doubt gave rise to great relief by the Japanese who had been pounded during June. Only single ship weather reccos and a few courier trips to Hollandia and Wakde provided a few hours of combat flight time.

Those crews that were waiting for action at Hollandia were finally given an opportunity to search for ships in the Sorong area that had foolishly left the shelter of distance beyond B-25 range. Twelve Sun Setter planes started out on 10 July but eventually had to abort the mission because their fighter escort failed to arrive at the rendezvous point. Eager to find some useful errand, the planes returned to Biak, landed to refuel, and to solicit a ground support target. Their attempt was thwarted by weather, AGAIN!

Good fortune smiled on the fly boys on 13 July. At 0800 hours, the B-25s took to the air and a group formation with a P-38 fighter cover headed for Kokas for minimum altitude strafing and bombing. All four squadrons strafed and bombed the township area, the nearby support facilities and the waterfront. In addition to considerable damage from the strafing, bombs destroyed or damaged buildings and water front installations. Fires were started but other damage could not be assessed. Smoke concealed damage and delayed action fuses made it impossible to actually see where bombs landed in many cases. The Jap ack-ack, 'though heavy, was most inaccurate. One slug put a hole in one tire of one plane. A followup mission to Kokas was scheduled for the following day but the weather gave the township a reprieve.

On 15 July, desperate to see some action, twelve planes took off, headed for a Sorong shipping sweep. If the weather interfered, the planes were to contact Ground Liaison at Noemfoor for a support target. That failing, maybe Ground Liaison at Biak could provide a target.

After refueling at Biak's Mokmer strip, the planes were given a support target on a near island. The 71st Squadron led the way as the planes hit the assigned area. The Japs refused to give their positions locations away by not firing on the strafing planes and no results were observed. The planes returned to Hollandia.

Weather thwarted attempts by the Group to perform some useful service for the next few days. On 20 July, twelve planes again set out for the Jef Kasim Terminal. They searched for shipping in the area and bombed the terminal facilities with generally unobserved results. Ack-ack did minor damage to two planes. Three smoke columns swirled to 150 feet as the planes left the area. The planes searched nearby areas, skirting weather squalls, looking for more targets but finally turned for home with a general opinion that it was virtually useless to set out on such missions unless shipping was known to be in the area.

On 22 July, another such mission was ordered. Some small shipping

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On 7 July, B-29s again struck Kyushu, bombing the Sasebo naval installations.

In the eastern and southeastern provinces of China, the Japanese launched a large offensive. They succeeded in enlarging their territory of domination significantly. In the process, they overran several American 14th Air Force bases.

The situation in China was complicated by the fact that Chiang Kai-shek had to contend with the large Red Chinese movement which was fighting its own war in the northern provinces. As the Japanese enlarged their campaign to seize control of more of the southeastern provinces in the Spring of 1944, several of the provincial War Lords were bartering for Chang's withdrawal from his position as Generalissimo and withdrawal of U. S. recognition and support of his government.

The CBI theater is often called, "The Forgotten War". Only 250,000 soldiers were committed to this area. A large percentage of them were combat engineers, most of whom were engaged in the building of the Ledo Road and connecting it to the old Burma Road in order to open a land passage to China. Work on the road continued around the clock. The road was sometimes called "Pick's Pike" because the responsible engineer was General Pick.

The CBI was never recognized as an official "Theater". It was a network of military commands conducting operations in various areas. The British forces and some other Allied forces were under command of a British General. Stilwell was in command of General Pick and the construction of the Ledo Road which was sometimes called The Stilwell Road. He was also in command of Chang's Chinese Army.

The chain of command was often somewhat confusing. In certain areas of Command, Stilwell was subordinate to other commanders in the area while at the same time they were under his command in other areas of responsibility. The same was typical of other commanders in the area which sometimes complicated the execution of various operations. When the 20th Air Force moved in with its B-29s, they had to operate from bases of other Air Force commands, the 10th AF and the 14th AF.

THE PACIFIC THEATER

On 3 May, Japan's Imperial Staff and the inner cabinet finally agreed on the successor to Admiral Koga's position as Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese air and

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naval forces. Koga had been killed in a plane crash on 21 March on Mindanao. His death had been a great blow for all the military following so closely on the death of Yamamoto who was a national hero.

Admiral Soema Toyoda was elevated to the CiC position. Because he had no experience in command at sea, he did not inspire the confidence of those who would serve under him.

In the United States, there was also a new commander of the Navy. James Forrestal was appointed as the Secretary of the Navy, following the death of Frank Knox. This change did not disturb the operational commanders of the U. S. fleets.

Admiral Toyoda, inexperienced in battle, was regarded as an excellent administrator. He began planning a reorganization of the Japanese naval air forces along the lines of the American task forces.

Perceiving that the next American offensive would be to capture the Marianas Islands, he intended to draw the American fleet into the Marianas/Palaus/Carolines area. This would enable a combined action by all the land-based and fleet carrier aircraft in an attempt to destroy the American flotilla.

The Japanese task forces were placed under the command of Admiral Ozawa and were assembled in the Sulu Islands, south of Zamboanga on the southwestern tip of Mindanao. The forces included nine carriers escorted by a large force of battleships, cruisers and destroyers. The First Fleet's 540 aircraft were deployed on several islands off the north coast of western New Guinea and other islands in the eastern part of Dutch East Indies.

If the Americans were to succeed in landings in the Marianas, they would face 172 aircraft stationed among the islands.

On 11 June, aircraft from 15 American carriers began a three-day attack on Japanese shipping in the Marianas Islands (Tinian, Guam, Rota). Air superiority was quickly established with the destruction of a large portion of Japanese aircraft in the area. The U.S. aircraft were then assigned to the destruction of airfields and an escaping convoy. The American's had underestimated the strength of the Japanese garrisons on Guam and Tinian.

The American invasion force assemble off Saipan early on 15 June. Marines began landing following intensive preliminary bombardment and consolidating their beachhead by the end of the day. The Japs

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was found, strafed and bombed. Known ack-ack positions were strafed and numerous enemy personnel were seen running hither and yon in aimless patterns. Several of them went to be with their ancestors.

At Doom Island, the enemy ack-ack succeeded in putting holes in two of the planes. Two fires were seen at a fuel dump where approximately 2000 drums were observed as the planes retired. The 405th reported a large explosion had resulted from the strafing and bombing. It was learned that this was fuel and ammunition which the Nips would no longer be able to use. Jap ack-ack managed to throw up several water spouts in front of the withdrawing planes but doing no damage.

On 24 July, several planes from various squadrons at Nadzab were loaded with tents and other paraphernalia and ordered to fly to Biak and set up a temporary camp. Other planes that had been stationed at Hollandia for operations to farther targets were also ordered to Biak. The planes flying from Nadzab had recent arrivals as members of the crew flying with experienced pilots. These men were soon to get their first taste of combat. The 38th was about to extend its range of operations against Japanese bases not previously hit by B-25s.

THE DEMISE OF 905

Among these planes was ***Tokyo Sleeper***, a much revered plane assigned to the 405th Squadron. This plane had been among the first planes of the 38th Bomb Group that flew to Australia from San Francisco in the Summer of 1942. By this time ***Tokyo Sleeper*** had the enviable reputation of being the longest flying B-25 in the southwest Pacific. The 38th, and more particularly the 405th Squadron, were justifiably proud of this veteran of 158 combat missions. The second highest number of any bomber in the theater.

Tokyo Sleeper, also known as **905** (the last three digits of its serial number), was leading the group from Nadzab. As they approached Mokmer strip at Biak, **905** lined up for the landing. Mokmer strip was compacted crushed coral and slick when wet and none too long. The engineers were still working on the strip construction and some of their equipment was right at the end of the strip in front of the approaching plane.

Carte, a good pilot with much experience, had not landed at Mokmer before. He pulled up just a bit with a little throttle to clear the machinery and then tried to set the plane down. Because B-25s would float so easily with a little power, he was further down the strip than he really intended to be when his wheels touched down. When the runway ran out, old **905** ran off into some trees and its landing gear collapsed on one side. The men on board exited the plane in a hurry but no fire broke out.

Soon a small crowd collected around ***Tokyo Sleeper*** with heavy hearts as they surveyed the damage to their treasure. David Gunn, one of the new pilots about to enter combat, was flying copilot with Dorance Van Fleet as they flew up to Biak from Nadzab that day. He recalls that they landed several minutes after the accident. As they came to the end of the runway, Van Fleet stopped for a moment and gazed at the crowd around a plane in the nearby trees. Suddenly recognizing 905, he gave out a low groan in shocked sadness, softly breathing "**905**". Gunn, a new comer not knowing anything about the plane, wondered what that resign-ed sigh meant as Van Fleet taxied to a parking spot.

Tokyo Sleeper had flown its last flight. Listed among its credits were:

9 ***Zero's*** shot down
1 cruiser sunk at Rabaul
1 destroyer sunk at Hansa Bay
1 freighter sunk in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea

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Captain Jesse Foley, congratulates the Crew Chief, T/Sgt. Clyde Gillen405th COwater, for taking such good care of 905.

It was decided that the plane could not be reasonably repaired and it was scrapped out at Biak in the late days of July, 1944.

Weather limited operations to practice flying for the next few days. At least one combat mission was launched to a target near Ceram Island but the formation was turned back by bad weather.

"LINDY" FLYS FIGHTER COVER FOR 38TH???

On 27 July, a coordinated mission was launched by the combined forces of the 38th and 345th Bomb Groups. The target was Galela in the north part of Halmahera Island northwest of Biak. On this day, P-38s of the 475th Fighter Group were flying close cover over the attacking B-25s. Among the P-38 pilots was Charles Lindberg, "Lucky Lindy". Lindburgh had been flying combat operations with the Marines at Guadalcanal in April and had moved in with the 475th in late June.

At Galela, Jap planes were found in the dispersal area as well as ack-ack positions, trucks, and grading equipment. Tall trees around the revetment dispersal area and the speed of the B-25s made it difficult to depress the noses of their planes at the right moment to enable the best strafing. While much of the results could not be observed, fighter and bomber planes, trucks and grading equipment were strafed, several definitely destroyed. The control towers at both flight strips were bombed. Three black smoke fires, probably burning planes, were seen as the ***Sun Setters*** left the target area. A barge, loaded with fuel drums, in the Galela bay was left burning. The enemy now knew that there were no havens of safety from the devastating ***Mitchell*** strafers in the Halmahera Islands.

On 28 July, planes were packed up for return of the detachment to Nadzab but weather trumped that move. On the 29th, the crews got their gear together and flew back to Nadzab. July had not seen the best record of action against the enemy.

Several more new crews arrived at Nadzab in the middle of July. The old timers were excited but were also reserved in enthusiasm. One of the questions asked of the new arrivals was, "Are there more crews coming?" Most of these new crews had finished Replacement Training at Greenville Army Air Base at the end of May and had flown new B-25Js from Savannah, GA, to Townsville in June. The 38th BG had received a handful of the new J version B-25s following their modification with the

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launched a counter attack during the night. They suffered heavy losses and could not drive the Marines from their positions.

Two other groups of aircraft carriers launched planes against Iwo Jima and its neighboring island lying to the north. These attacks were renewed on the following day and neutralized any threat to the landings to the south by Jap aircraft from this sector.

The Marines carried out their struggle without the full cover of the American task force aircraft which were searching for an approaching Japanese task force. Nevertheless, they drove across Saipan, splitting the enemy forces and began the task of mopping up the mauled resistance.

On 19 June, fierce fighting in the sky cost the Japanese 400 ground and carrier based planes. This was the beginning of the Battle of the Philippine Sea. By the following day the Americans had located the Japanese task force. Submarines joined the attack on the enemy ships.

Three Jap carriers as well as other ships were sunk and three additional carriers, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers suffered major damage. The enemy admiral ordered a hasty retreat in an effort to save what remained of his fleet.

The Americans lost 130 planes, more than half having run out of fuel or having lost their way back to their floating bases in the early darkness. Commanders on both sides now knew that the Americans would eventually win the war. But the outcome would not be realized for nearly 14 more months.

The Japanese defense was determined, utilizing caves on the mountains effectively. In some actions the Americans suffered major losses in killed and wounded. On 6 July, the Japanese General and his associated Admiral committed suicide. The remaining officers led a final *Banzai* charge.

The remaining 3,000 enemy soldiers on Saipan launched a bitter assault on the Marines, penetrating the lines and engaging in determined hand-to-hand combat. After a few hours, the Marines launched a counter-attack and massacred the Nips.

Mopping up continued until 9 July. At a far northern point, the Marines found the remains of hundreds of Japanese civilians crushed to death on the rocks at the foot of the cliffs. The enemy had lost nearly 30,000 of its garrisoned troops. The cost to the Americans had been high, 14,000 killed and wounded.

In Japan, the Tojo government fell on 18 July. A new government was formed by General Koiso.

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On 21 July, Marine and Army forces landed on Guam following the usual pre-landing air and Naval bombardment. They encounter moderate Japanese defensive action as they established a firm beach-head. The island was defended by about 12,000 enemy troops. The American forces encountered obstinate enemy resistance in the following days.

On 24 July, Marines made their landing on Tinian. The air and naval bombardment was aided by bombardment from heavy guns on nearby Saipan. Some of the planes overhead were flying from newly activated bases on Saipan.

After some bitter fighting on Tinian, the last organized resistance occurred on 1 August and the mopping up began. On Guam,the last organized resistance occurred on 8 August. Airfields were being prepared on both islands even before the resistance ended. Some isolated resistance by the remaining enemy on Guam continued for a few more days before the last of the enemy had been eliminated. In 1972 a lone Japanese survivor finally surrendered on Guam.

Throughout the campaigns on Tinian, Saipan and Guam, the U. S. Navy made frequent raids on the Japanese position in the Bonin and Volcano Islands in preparation for the eventual invasion of Iwo Jima and the attempt to neutralize the Japanese air forces stationed in these islands.

THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC

As May opened on the calendar, The Americans were expanding and reinforcing their perimeter around Aitape east of Hollandia. Mopping up of Manus Island in the Admiralty's was drawing to a close. Preparations were also being finalized for landing on Wakde Island. The airstrip on Wakde would be the base for medium bomber operations in support of the planned landings at Biak Island.

Japanese forces surrounding the Aitape and Hollandia American perimeters were poorly equipped and on very short rations. They were weakened by sickness and without medical help. Their assaults on the American lines were unsuccessful. The Allied offensive was moving west so fast that there was little hope for any to escape to rejoin the main body of their forces.

As the Americans continued developing their facilities at Hollandia they were also preparing for their next landing at Wakde Island. This landing took place on 19 May. There was little resistance The Japs had

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installation of a solid metal nose with eight .50 caliber machine guns and two package .50 caliber guns on each side below the pilot's compartment. At least one veteran pilot in the Group who had an opportunity to fly one of the new "J" models had called it a "sweet plane."

With the new combat crews, a much smaller group of new ground personnel arrived. Several old time air crews were grounded to be sent home. Only a few long time ground personnel were also sent home. But it was an encouragement to the men some of whom had been working under very difficult circumstance for 24 months to "keep 'em flying." Old timers still working on the ground crews could see great opportunities for promotions to higher ranks as the ranking old timers headed home to the States.

August came in with more bad weather to the west. The squadron streets took on the usual pay day holiday atmosphere on 1 August as a variety of tables were set up for poker games, the last that they would have at Nadzab. The games went on far into the night by the light of Colman lanterns.

With new crews in each of the squadrons, a heavy schedule of formation flying and practice landings was posted. New pilots flew as copilots with experienced pilots in practicing low level bombing of old ack-ack emplacements. Softball again became a favorite pastime. Competition between units stationed at Nadzab was keen.

Much of the active combat area at MacArthur's spearhead was now beyond the range of the B-25s at Nadzab and even Hollandia. As soon as the development of the airstrips on Biak and nearby Owi could be accomplished, the 38th BG planes were to be sent forward with maintenance personnel.

Lectures were given to brief personnel on escape procedures in western New Guinea, the Halmahera Islands, and the Celebes Islands where future missions would soon be flown. The men were also briefed on the latest instructions for conduct should they be captured by the enemy. Actually, the poor weather enabled a more structured orientation of the recently arrived crews.

NON COMBAT TRADGEDY HITS 822ND

On the morning of 1 August, six 822nd Squadron airplanes, manned mostly with new crews, practiced formation flying. They landed and, after some changing of crews, took off so Captain Swonger could demonstrate another formation landing.

Lieutenant Mialka, a new pilot in the group, related.

> "We were just pulling into formation over the strip when I looked up at the first flight just in time to see Hoffman in number 3 position knock the lead ship's left rudder off. As the rudder was all that was gone, the ship stayed level and seemingly under control. Hoffman's ship slid out and for a moment all looked well. Suddenly without warning, it started up in a gentle climbing turn to the right. The right wing was bent up on the tip for approximately four feet. The ship was out of control.
>
> "Hoffman's plane then did what is best described as a wingover going up and over the number 1 and number 2 planes. I was number 2 in the lower element and, since I was only about 200 feet off the ground, I had not much room to maneuver. Hoffman's ship was then plunging directly toward me from above.
>
> "I pushed the stick forward and jammed in left rudder, jerking the right wing up to 90 degrees. Still the ship came toward us. I thought my last moments on this earth were running out swiftly. By a miracle the uncontrolled plane flashed past us and into the ground. Capt. Swonger's ship made a good crash landing but slid into a gully and burned. No one got out of either ship alive."

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Tragedy struck the 822nd and the 38th Bomb Group again on 18 August. Eight crews were briefed on a simulated mission to bomb the Gona Wreck near Buna. They took off and dropped their bombs. On the return from the target, the Group Commander, Lieutenant Colonel. Lausman, made passes at the formation in his B-25 as a Jap fighter might do to give the turret gunners practice.

Lieutenant Mialka was again involved in this practice operation. In less than three weeks time, during practice flying, he was to see another tragedy unfold. Colonel Lausman made,

> ". . two passes from the left coming very close each time. On the third pass he pulled up about 300 yards at 8 o'clock and bored in. I remember thinking at the start 'That crazy son of a bitch is going to try and fly between me and the lead ship.' Skimming across the top of the formation in an attempted climbing turn, he barely missed the lead ship. His wing struck Shannon's ship, flying number 2, on the fuselage above the bomb bay.
>
> "Immediately after the crash, the Colonel's plane lost half the left wing and peeled up and over into a half roll to the left. The ship then nosed straight down still turning to the left. Before striking the water the tail assembly disintegrated presumably weakened by pieces of the broken wing hitting it. The stricken plane plunged into the water at a high rate of speed sending up three plumes of water not unlike three bomb bursts. This was caused by the two nacelles and fuselage. No one was saved.
>
> "Lt. Shannon, in **869**, reduced airspeed and flew straight on Strangely enough his life raft, loosened by the impact, flew out and landed fully inflated directly where the Colonel's ship had crashed. The formation broke up to return to base.
>
> "A large hole had been torn in the top of the fuselage. He was extremely lucky as a hit anywhere else would have put him out of control and I would have lost another good friend. As it was, all the formation planes landed without mishap."

This was a grim reminder that not all flight crew fatalities were caused by enemy action or other problems encountered on combat missions.

Finally, on 16 August, the 823rd was briefed for the first mission of the month. The target was Namlea, southwest of Biak. They flew their B-25G-1s up to Biak Island from which the attack would be launched. The ***Terrible Tigers*** were joined by their P-38 fighter cover as they headed for the target. As they neared the target, they encountered very hazy weather, limiting visibility, and a 3,000 foot ceiling. They swept over the target with their forward guns blazing away and loosed a string of 227 23-pound parafragmentation bombs

The bombs drifted down across two medium ack-ack positions, across the runway, and into revetment areas near the runway giving the planes time to fly beyond the effective range of the exploding bombs. These small bombs sent clouds of jagged shrapnel in every direction as they exploded upon contact, spreading death and destruction. The planes pulled up and turned for another strafing run over the target to silence machine gun positions that had escaped their original run. The results of their effort could not be determined because of the dust and smoke caused by their strafing barrage and the exploding bombs.

There had been no intercepting Jap fighters and the ground firing was light and inaccurate. They found no shipping in the area to report. All of the crew members on this mission were recent arrival inexperienced personnel except for the six pilots who were veterans of many missions.

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dug caves in the hard coral under the thin layer of soil on the island. They used these for shelter from the heavy pre-landing bombardment. From the shelter of these caves, they launched attacks on American positions during the first night after the landing.

The Americans landed on the New Guinea mainland opposite Wakde and advanced toward Sarmi to the west in the following days. Japanese resistance was strong.

On 25 May, a very large invasion task force departed from the Hollandia. The invaders landed on Biak on 27 May, just 36 days after the landing at Hollandia and eight days after landing on Wakde. The Japanese resistance was strong and the southwest Pacific's first tank battle developed. The Americans were driven back to their original beachhead area.

In early June, infantry supported by tanks and artillery, forged out of the beachhead and advanced into the interior plateau. The nature of the terrain slowed them down more than the enemy.

On 7 June, the high priority target, the capture of Mokmer airdrome, was achieved. The artillery began its efforts to neutralize the Japanese fortifications in the cliffs east of Mokmer from which the enemy were able to harass the construction engineers working on the field. Eventually, the 38th BG B-25s were called in to launch bombs into the caves as they approached from the sea (See page 11, col. 2.) This enabled the engineering forces to work with less danger in making the strips serviceable,

The small islands just off the coast of the landing zone of Biak were quickly occupied without serious resistance. A PT boat base and airstrips were soon in operation.

Japanese resistance remained strong in the area of the caves west of the three airdromes on Biak. Even with the use of tanks and flamethrowers, the American infantry had no real success.

On 22 June, American fighter planes began operations from Mokmer. Mopping up operations would continue for several days. The Japs were fighting to the death. Small Japanese groups withdrew from the caves and retired to the plateau area where they would continue guerrilla warfare without any reinforcements and supplies.

American forces continued to eliminate small pockets of Japanese throughout July and early August. Officially, operations on Biak ended on 20 August. Occasional lone Japanese soldiers infiltrated American forces for several weeks.

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Meanwhile, in early June preparations were begun for another leap to the west. The island of Noemfoor had three airfields which would furnish air operations bases for control of the seas west of Biak.

Throughout the month of June, the Japanese forces around the Allied perimeters at Aitape and Hollandia carried out attacks. The Americans were forced to make adjustments in their lines, sometimes yielding ground and then again advancing This was also the situation to the west of Wakde Island on the north coast of New Guinea.

In late June, Charles Lindbergh joined the 475th Fighter Group at Hollandia. He had been at Guadalcanal in April flying with the Marines. He was acting as a civilian consultant and observing combat operations to gather information for future aircraft design.

Lindbergh flew several combat missions with the 475th. During this time he was able to demonstrate improved engine settings that increased the range of the P-38s. The group pilots were not at all receptive since they were already flying seven-hour missions in the confining cockpits of their P-38s. (See page 14, Col. 1.) In mid-August, after flying several combat missions and being credited with one kill, Lindbergh returned to the States.

The Commanding Officer of the 475th would be relieved of command and sent Stateside for permitting this honored civilian to fly combat with his men.

On 2 July, American and Australian units landed on Noemfoor Island after an intense bombardment. There was no initial resistance. A reserve parachute regiment was called in to drop on one of the airfields. The hard landing zone and a wind made this landing difficult for the inexperienced unit and several men were killed. A second drop on the following day brought further similar casualties as did another drop on 4 July. The rest of the regiment was airlifted into the field.

Following the only real attack in force by the Japs, their 400 man force was annihilated on 5 July. On 6 July, squadrons of Australian P-40 fighters arrived and commenced operations. The remnants of the Japanese were destroyed in mid-August and American units were moving out for other operations.

On 29 July, the Americans made another leap forward. Without air support and without a preliminary bombardment, American Infantry and Cavalry forces make a surprise landing near Sansapore. There was scant resistance. This placed American troops within 60 miles of the western tip of New Guinea

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The new crew members had now experienced combat.

On 20 August, six planes took to the air again, heading to the northwest and Talaud Island to bomb villages and storage warehouses. They had been more than four hours in the sky when the planes dropped down to strafe and bomb their targets. Their guns raised dust throughout the villages and bombs were seen to destroy at least two warehouses. Machine gun positions near the jetty and on a Sugar Charlie threw up meager and inaccurate fire but received devastating fire in return. The B-25s returned to Biak, again without being intercepted.

On 21 August, the planes took off from Biak and flew to the northwest through the beautiful clear skies over a smooth ocean, headed for Kaoe. As they neared the east side of Halmahera Island, they were joined by their P-38 fighter cover. Their strafing fire was seen to enter buildings around the two flight strips as they passed, releasing 259 of the small but devastating parademo bombs. Buildings, planes, trucks, machine gun placements, and other equipment were the receivers of the unwelcome bombs. Three ack-ack gun pits with dummy gun barrels, tree trunks, were observed but smoke obscured other observations of the target area.

As the planes left the area, shipping and an extensive warehouse area and noted for future treatment. Japanese fighter interception failed to materialize. The Japanese seemed to be conserving their resources for some future engagement.

In the next few days, operations were limited to two successful weather reccos in spite of bad weather.

On the 25th, a cluster of 405th Squadron and 823rd Squadron planes arrived on Biak. Bad weather over the next few days gave the new arrivals a opportunity to set up their camp area. In general, the 38th Bomb Group set their tents up within the areas assigned to other Groups already operating from Biak. Line personnel set up tents near their planes. A hard coral floor under meager soil made it difficult to drive tent pegs and to carve out foxhole bomb shelters. Japanese bombers often snuck in during the night to drop a few bombs.

Tent flaps were sometimes extended fully out to the side and angled along the edge so that rain runoff flowed from a central point. These streams of water provided "showers" for the men as they crouched at the edge of the canvas sides. Shaving and washing were done out of helmets. Outside the general tent areas, debris, most of which was Japanese equipments and munitions, littered the terrain. Water for drinking was drawn from military water trailers scattered in convenient locations. This was primitive living compared to what had been left behind at Nadzab. A mess hall was erected which served officers and enlisted men of the Group.

Occasionally a Jap trooper would attempt to sneak into the many, many tent areas along the shore, usually to obtain food. On one such occasion, some members of the 38th were among those who detected and detained the intruder.

Back at Nadzab, the remaining ground personnel were left with the task of dismantling the tent floors and frames and other structures that had provided so much convenience during the previous few months. The movement of the 822nd and 71st squadrons was scheduled and then delayed because there was still no room for them at Biak.

The last mission of the month was flown on 29 August. Planes of the 823rd joined planes of the 345th Bomb Group in another attack to Kaoe township and the airdromes. While smoke and dust made it difficult to fully assess the success, the mission was considered to be very effective as several buildings were seen to be blazing as the planes headed

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for home. Some small shipping was strafed just off shore. Once more there was no interception.

August had seen the lowest level of combat operations by the 38th Bomb Group since its arrival in Australia/New Guinea in September, 1942, when the group had flown its first three missions. Combat in August had been flown by the 823rd Squadron. The 823rd and 405th combat units were finally joined by the 822nd and 71st Squadrons on 31 August. These men would not see their comrades in the supporting ground units again for several weeks.

The remaining men and equipment would soon be boarded on ships destined for an island yet to be taken by American forces to establish a new home for the ***Sun Setters.***

In March of 1944, the 38th B. G. had moved from Port Moresby to Nadzab, hardly 200 miles, after 15 months of operations from Durand Drome. At the end of August of 1944, they moved to Biak, a distance of approximately 900 miles, for operations after a scant 6 months at Nadzab. The pace of the war had accelerated considerably for the ***Sun Setters.*** Where would they be in six more months, or in another year?

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On 25 August, the Japanese launched their first daylight air raid against this landing. The feeble gesture netted no real gain.

The Japanese resistance around the Aitape perimeter continued into August. During July there were major engagements which, for a time, isolated some American units. But by the end of August, operations were considered ended.

Since mid-April, the Allies had made five leaps to the west from Nadzab totaling over 1,000 miles. This left those Japanese forces remaining on New Guinea to be debilitated by sickness and injury and starvation. There were no more supply convoys to bring them aid nor to evacuate them.

Preparations for the next big leap were already being finalized. This leap would take place in mid-September.

Meanwhile, On the Home Front

Kay Gunn

SEND US YOUR HOMEFRONT STORY

David and I were married a few days after his commissioning at Yuma Army Air Base which I had witnessed. I traveled with him to Sacramento where he began flying B-25s. I filled my time in a cute little old house on a green and woodsy lot. Sacramento was a pleasant town with lots of woodsy places and I enjoyed the city especially when my new husband was able to be with me.

After a short time as an instructor, David was transferred to South Carolina for RTU training. We traveled by train to Columbia and eventually to Greenville. He became part of a crew for training and we got to know other officer couples. After finishing training, we spent three days seeing Washington, DC, before he had to fly away to Sacramento with his crew. With some other Army wives, I made it to Sacramento to spend a few more nights with him before he had to leave, flying off across the Pacific.

I returned to my parent's home in southern California that June. My father, a retired machinist, had answered "the call" and was the foreman of a small machine shop in our nearby town. He trained women, housewives, to be machinists, something he never thought could be done. They manufactured parts for the war industry.

So I became the farmer, doing what was necessary to keep 16 acres of oranges growing (irrigation, catching gophers). My mother had become a member of a team of country housewives who spent part of each night in an observation station on a nearby hilltop, watching and reporting any airplanes flying within sight or sound. I had two sisters at home who shared in doing the housework.

In September, 1944, I returned to the college where David and I met, for my final semester. I had worked my way through my previous college terms as a book binder. With my spousal allowance, I was now able to really enjoy my last semester of college, living in a dorm room with five other girls and only having to do my studies and enjoy college life. I would write David letters every day. But there was all that tension of wondering if I would get a letter from him each day and hoping it would not be my last.

I finished college in January and returned to the home of my parent's and the work of being a "rancher." I bought a 1936 Pontiac from friends and learned to drive on the country roads of southern California.

I could not tell much about what David was doing, except that he flew. Sometimes there was a move and a new APO number but just where he was flying was a mystery – somewhere in the south Pacific. I knew he took a couple of leaves in Australia and received a few letters from one family he met there.

Time dragged on and on; there was always a sense of apprehension. Would the war ever end? Would I ever see David again? Why did time pass so slowly? Why did I suffer so with this feeling of loneliness? Everything seemed so hopeless.

David wrote in early January, 1945, that I would hear some bad news about him but that he was OK and for me not to worry about him. Then I received a telegram from the War Department; he was "Missing in Action." Whew!! If I had not been warned ahead of time I would have been in a terrible panic. Thank God!! He was OK! He had been rescued.

I was outside walking around the loop of our hill top driveway early in the morning on May 1, 1945. I thought I heard someone call my name. I turned and in seconds a figure appeared among the orange trees. It was David and he was taking my picture. In moments I was in his arms!

What a day! After spending time with my family, we took off for La Jolla and the hotel where we had honeymooned 20 months earlier.

The war in Europe ended in a few days. Then we were off to the Army Relocation Center at Santa Monica. While we were there, David was able to attend my college graduation ceremony. David was soon released from active duty and in time to enroll in Summer School.

Shortly after Summer School finished, Japan agreed to surrender. At last the war was over and we all took up new lives.

In retrospect the war experience gave me strength and courage for our future. The war remains very real and scary to me to this day.

THE SECT./TREAS. REPORTS HE HAS DONE ANOTHER HATCHET JOB

Secretary/Treasurers Report for May 2007

The size of the mailing roster has been reduced considerably for the May printing. I mailed dues envelopes to those members who had not paid their 2007-2008 dues. The dues members who failed to reply by April 25th have been removed from the active roster and placed on the missing list.

I also mailed letters to all widows on the roster who had not previously requested the news letter asking them to confirm their desire to continue receiving the news letter. The letter asked them to reply by the first of April and those who failed to reply would be removed from the roster. The reply was very poor and I have removed almost 100 widows from the mailing roster.

The association now shows about 375 names on the active roster. All members that have been dropped were notified that they owed dues and the widows who failed to reply to the letter have been dropped from the roster. This will reduce our printing costs.

I suspect that a good many of the widows may be living with one of their children at their old address because not many news letters mailed to widows are returned to me.

I have news letters that were returned to me because the member was temporarily away or had moved and failed to file a change of address. These cost $1.11 for each one returned and if the member requests the news letter it costs another $1.11 to mail to the new address.

Such are the complaints from the S/T. I hope the members will understand the reason for removing members from the active roster.

Orland F. Gage, S/T

OUR NEW WEB SITE - UP AND RUNNING

Our website is growing day by day! We encourage everyone to visit our new website:

http://www.sunsetters38bg.com

Sign up, and become contributors - of articles, links, or photos. We are continually adding to the website, and we are getting ready to grow our archive with the documents that we have recently acquired from the Air Force Historical Research Agency. We are now working with a volunteer who will be uploading all of the 823rd's documents, which should begin very soon.

We've also added a significant number of links for those people who enjoy surfing sites that are oriented toward this field of interest. Please contact the webmaster if you find sites of interest that are not listed.

When you register on the website, you'll be able to access past issues of the Newsletter in PDF format, and also have access to a forum page.

Our website is turning into a great web destination and we look to you, our members, to make it even better!

Please ask how you can be a part of preserving the 38th's great legacy. Tom Behrens, our new web master, will give you whatever help you need.

DID YOU KNOW THEM?

If you knew any of these men who were in our group, their loved ones would be most appreciative if you would contact them. We have included an e-mail address for your use.

Theodore Anagnos, Sgt. 823rd, MIA, niece, Chris, and grand nephew, James, seeking info: *jamespra@houston.rr.com*

Paul Blankenship, pilot, crash landed Fiji 1942, grand son, Joel: *jlay@mercedesofknoxville.com*

Arthur Blenman: Son, Alan, would like info and pictures: *alan_blenman@yahoo.com*

James Bower, navigator, 823rd: daughter, Julia: *jab@io.com*

Claude Carpenter, pilot, 405th: nephew, Dan: *dan.carpenter@mchsi.com*

Ernest Crane, Cpl., 405th: nephew David: *david.dubard@thomson.com*

___ **Dolson,** flt. eng./gunr, 405th (1945), son David: *david.h.dolson@boeing.com*

Richard Eckels (Eck), pilot, 405th: daughter: Melanie, *ninieckels@peakpeak.com*

George R Gable, Jr., 823rd, nephew, David: *hackman15@excite.com*

Ted Grimes, 71st communication, Uniontown, Ohio, grandson, Richie, still seeking info: *rtgrimes@mail.com*

Albert Gunkler, navigator, 823rd, info needed for tribute, Donald: *donaldalpha200@yahoo.com*

Vincent Haws, T/Sgt., 71st, radio man, brother, Art/Alice Haws: *adoubleaa@comcast.net*

Clarence Miller, F/O, KIA Rabaul, nephew, Randy: *randyalbright@yahoo.com.*

Fred J. Miller: son, Terry, information, pictures: *terry.m.miller@sbcglobal.net*

Joe Murphy, navigator, 71st: grandson, Chris: *chris_chiesa@hotmail.com*

Fred Nelson, pilot, 71st, 823rd: son, John: *smnelson@adelphia.net*

Michael Rutigliano, Sgt.: down at Cebu, 11/1/44, nephew, Dennis: *WTAIL9@yahoo.com*

Howard Stoddard, Lt., 822nd, nephew, Neil, seeking info: *getneil@verizon.net*

IMPORTANT REUNION DOPE ! ! !

Our President has done all the hard leg work to put together a great reunion package that will provide us a great time at a minimum cost. So carefully observed the special directions to minimize confusion and disappointment for a wonderful time in Hawaii.

HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS: The Hale Koa will be our Reunion Headquarters. This government hotel is a first class place close to the Waikiki beach. It is primarily limited to use by retired military and retired government employees (receiving government retirement income). Those of us who do not qualify, will be housed as guests of our members who do qualify. However, the Hale Koa may very well not be able to accommodate all who will be coming together for the reunion.

The Hale Koa has arranged to accommodate the non-eligible guests above the number for whom lodging is available at the Hale Koa, at two nearby first class hotels at prices significantly below their usual rates.

THE AQUA PALMS is located approximately two blocks from the Hale Koa. This hotel is listed in the AAA book as a "Smoke Free Premises". THE ILIKAI is approximately another block from the Hale Koa but offers more accommodations per room. Those who are not retired military or government employees (do not receive government retirement pay) **MUST** fill out the alternate reservation form (Non-Eligible Members Request Form) indicating which alternate hotel you prefer. By early August, you will be notified whether you have been assigned rooms at the Hale Koa, the **Aqua Palms**, or the **Ilikai hotel**. The maximum rate at the Hale Koa is $128 per night.

Qualifying retirees should submit the designated RETIREE form.

The rates quoted will apply from 16 to 23 September so you can arrive a little early and stay over for a couple of days, or stay longer and visit some other islands.

MAIL or FAX **to the HALE KOA** AS INSTRUCTED ON THE FORM. **PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE RESERVATIONS BY CONTACTING THE HOTEL DIRECTLY by phone or on-line. In case you need to cancel your reservation, note the conditions on the form and call the Hale Koa at the phone number on the form. Note that you must provide a credit card/ debit card number.**

TRAVEL: Jack suggests that you check some web sites for reservations but DON'T overlook checking the individual airline web sites. Each city of departure will have a different popular airline to get you to Honolulu.

You can check:

www.travelocity.com www.orbita.com www.cheapseats.com

Note that you may save a couple of bucks by purchasing the Waikiki shuttle tickets directly. But you may want to get that "romantic floral lei welcome" from Pleasant Holidays on the activities reservation form in the package with the newsletter. The **Reunion Registration Form** provides an option for being met at the airport by **Pleasant Holidays** with a lei and van transportation to the hotel. If you select this option and your airline schedule changes, be sure to coordinate the change with **Pleasant Holidays**, (808) 495-1835.

This form must be mailed to arrive by 16 July, to:

Pleasant Holidays
Attention: Dale Iwasaki, Hawaii Group Department
1601 Kapiolani Blvd.
Honolulu, HI 96814

Be sure to register at the Reunion table at the Hale Koa between 10 AM and 4:30 PM on TUESDAY, 18 September.

Our Welcome dinner will be at 6 PM at the Hale Koa, Aloha informal dress.

Our Farewell will be the Hale Koa Luau Dinner Show at 5 PM on THURSDAY evening, Aloha informal dress.

Wednesday evening is open so that you can make your own dinner arrangements with your special group of friends.

"Bomber Reef " - Relatives View Film

Walt Deas received this letter of special interest. If you haven't viewed this film about the fate of a 38th BG plane and the tragic fate of its crew, you should get the DVD! It shows the present life of the plane as a coral reef near the coast of New Guinea.

Dear Walter;

We showed the ***"Bomber Reef "*** at our center in Port Chester, NY, yesterday and I just wanted to let you know how much we all enjoyed it.

We received a phone call two days prior to showing the film from the family of Lt. Louis J. Ritacco that they would becoming from Florida to see the film. His brother who raised him, his nephews and their children joined us for the film. We also received calls from his friends in Port Chester who remembered him and from other veterans in Port Chester who wanted to see the film.

The film was a little hard for his brother to watch and he had to leave the room but his nephews and great- nephews watched every second of it. They were so proud of their uncle and his fellow pilots. One of the great-nephews is a teenager but remembers his grandmother showing him the same picture of his uncle that you used in the film.

The family stayed after the film was over sharing stories of Louis Ritacco and re-uniting with friends they haven't seen in over 30 years.

The film was very moving and powerful and everyone here who watched was so moved by it. As time goes on, we are losing more and more veterans from WWII and your film will help keep their story alive. It was beautifully told and so poignant.

Yesterday, was a very special day in Port Chester and one that will live on in all our memories.

I gave the Ritacco family your e-mail as they wanted to contact you directly and obtain copies of the film.

Sincerely,
Maryann Nielsen, Assistant Director
Senior Community Center, Port Chester, New York

For a copy of this DVD, (GET IT !!) send $39.95 to:

Walt Deas,
11 Platypus Ave.,
Sorrento,
Queensland 4217,
Australia