38th Bomb Group

823 rd Squadron

71st Squadron

822 nd Squadron

405th Squadron

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II) MAY, 2006

## IN THIS ISSUE:

The World War, pg. 3
A New Way to Fight, pg. 3
Training New Sguadrons, pg. 6
Overloaded B-25s, pg. 8
ATC Navigators, pg. 9
The 345th, A Pain, pg. 9
Done In By His Own Bomb pg. 10
Madang, Crashed Plane Becomes . .Reef, pg. 11
Dagua, here we come, pg. 12
Surviving a Parachute Jump, pg. 18
Did You Know Them? pg. 19
Editor Rides in a B-25 Again, pg. 20
Especially to Our Widows, pg. 20
REUNION INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION PACK - INSIDE THE NEWSLETTER

## MEET ME IN MESA!

**September 28-30, 2006**

Mark the date on your calendar. We will be looking for you!!!!

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Our 28-30 September Reunion will be a good one - so plan to attend. Chick Alford has arranged a most interesting schedule, plus, there will be important issues for members to address. The planned activities are located relatively near the hotel, which will allow us more time to visit and rest. A detailed listing and schedule is included with the reunion materials in this mailing.

**You need to take two actions right away.**

**(1). Make your hotel reservations with the Holiday Inn at Toll free number (800) 465-4329 and ask for the 38th BG Block.**

**(2). Complete and mail your "Registration Form"** included with the Reunion materials.

One of the major agenda items at the membership meeting will be a proposal to change the 38th Bomb Group Association By-Laws, so we can continue within the "IRS Rules" and remain a "Non-Profit Association". A committee has been developing a proposal, which will be presented to the membership for approval at the business meeting.

Each issue of our newsletter has been better than the last because of the great work of David Gunn with the help of Orland Gage and Jim Thoren. Their efforts are followed after each issue by many complimentary comments from members of our Association and others who have had the opportunity to read our newsletter.

Orland Gage also continues to perform an invaluable service in maintaining the rosters. He sees to the printing and mailing of the newsletters, plus keeps up the newsletter link to the Association's Web page current. He has a depth of knowledge about our Association, which helps in keeping the rest of us from getting too far off track.

Bill McKinstry has decided that he must step aside as our Secretary/Treasurer. Orland Gage has agreed to be our interim S/T until our next election at our reunion. All the records have been transferred. We all owe Bill big time for his many years of outstanding service to the Association as our S/T with Cledith's gracious assistance. THANK YOU BILL AND CLEDI !!!!

Al Kennedy has recorded the 38 BG WW II Historical Data and several collections of photographs on CDs. He now has a man working on a program to make the CDs easily searchable for a name, event, or date. Al has been negotiating with a CD production company in Oregon. We are planning to have the CDs ready for distribution at our 2006 reunion. Once again, Al is coming through like the champion he is. Because of the production cost structure, we expect to produce enough CDs so we can put them in major libraries, museums, and historical institutions. This will be at no greater cost than that required to produce a set for each of our regular members. This will enable us to place the record of the significant role the 38th Bomb Group played in winning WW II in strategic places for future generations to dig through.

**Here is the latest on our 38th BG book.** I e-mailed Hickey for a status update. I received a response from Joe Navarro informing me that he is now the point of contact for our book. He said he realizes the treatment we have experienced in the past was totally inadequate. He has restructured the staff and program which will hopefully make the book ready for us by our next September reunion. He also promised to give us a status report every two weeks. In addition, Joe has indicated that there are still a number of picture collections in their office and he is anxious to work with us in returning them to the original contributors.

We are still in need of help for Chris Guest in enhancing and maintaining the "38 Bomb Group Web Page". Please "sound off" if you can be of assistance.

**In closing, please remember to say a prayer for our troops who are in harms way - fighting for this great country of ours.**

**Meet me in Mesa 28 - 30 September 2006** *Jack DeTour*

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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*

I failed to mention in the last issue that the grandson of "Hoot" Gibbons sent me a disk with several pictures from "Hoot's" collection. I also received an e-mail a few weeks ago from Carl Gage, son of Carl Gage who flew as a bombardier with the 71st in 1943. He, along with other members of the crew, was awarded the DFC for a mission to Salamau on 30 June 1943. After some exchanges of e-mails, Carl, Jr., sent me a CD with several combat camera photographs that span the year of 1943. We will be reviewing the Gage collection for suitable pictures for our next issue. We appreciate such gifts.

Regarding the stories in this issue, I ask for your indulgence again. I have extracted data from the various records of events (sometimes several accounts of the same event in the disk files and woven these stories together to create an account that reflects what happened. Some of the records do not agree in every detail. I have taken what Jim and Orland and I have found and tried to paint a good picture for you.

**A good Internet site to browse.** During my ramblings on the Internet, I came across a site I think you might like to view. Take a look at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum Internet site: ***www.maam.org***

In its collection of several planes of historical interest, there are several in flying condition and seen at various air shows. The museum also offers rides in these planes the second weekend of each month at their Reading Pennsylvania Regional Airport, Spaatz Field location. They will celebrate their annual World War II Weekend the first weekend of June.

The museum has a B-25 restored to a 12th AF squadron plane. "***Briefing Time*** has been recognized as one of only three flying B-25s in the world restored to this level of completeness and authenticity."

The museum has a flight simulator program for the B-25 with many add-ons to increase your enjoyment. You can even paint your B-25 with the 405th or 823rd nose art. You can well enjoy a considerable amount of time at this site.

**Stories from the 1941-1945 home front era.** We would very much like to have some stories regarding the home front activities and recollections. Those who wrote us letters, sent us packages and Christmas gifts, stood in the gap for us, worked in defense plants and ship yards, and they have memories that need to be recorded. Take a little time to get them written down and send them to us for the newsletter.

**Do you have e-mail?** It has been some time since we have published an e-mail address list. Orland Gage has accumulated such a list to the best of his ability with information he has received. However, we have found that some of the information is out of date.

So, if you have e-mail, drop Orland or the editor a message with your current e-mail address. We will update our list which will help when we seek special information to help us write a better item for the newsletter.

**Cover sheet for your newsletter notebook.** We have been anticipating a chance to browse the photo collections that Al Kennedy has organized on CDs. We would like to be able to include more pictures in the newsletter. Once again I must tell you that we want to be able to browse through the pictures before creating a cover sheet for your notebook of our newsletters.

# IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

Our Secretary has reported that the following named member comrades have passed on to their final Post as reported to him since our previous listing.

| | |
|---|---|
| Ferdinand J. Adamcik | HQ |
| Calvin E. Gillespie | 71st |
| Robert Laczi, Jr. | 405th |
| Ferman Farina | 405th |
| Alfred Sellari | 823rd |

| TOTAL TO DATE | |
|---|---|
| Headquarters | 18 |
| 69th Squadron | 2 |
| 70th Squadron | 59 |
| 71st Squadron | 152 |
| 89th Squadron | 1 |
| 405th Squadron | 172 |
| 822nd Squadron | 90 |
| 823rd Squadron | 93 |
| Unit unknown | 2 |

# THE WORLD AT WAR
## May through August 1943

The tide of Axis advances had turned against them. In some theaters the action had not yet begun to flow against them but there was no question that there was light at the end of the tunnel. The question was, "How long is the tunnel?"

On the European continent, bombing was stepped up in northern France, Germany, and Italy. During the summer, Allied bombers were reaching even further - to Norway and to Austria. In coming weeks, bombers flying to Italian targets from England flew on to land in North Africa and then bombed Italy on the way back to their home bases.

The nightly RAF raids delivered heavy loads of destruction to many German industrial areas. On 16 May, heavy bombers, modified to carry huge bombs weighing in excess of 4 tons each, bombed the dams in the Ruhr valley. The Germans were able to make repairs enabling power generation within a few days.

In late May, the heaviest RAF raid to date, dropped 2,000 tons of bombs on Dortmund. On one night in late July, Hamburg was left in flames after 2,300 tons of bombs had been dropped.

On 8 August, Berlin radio announced that a million children, women, aged, and infirm citizens were being evacuated from the destruction and rubble of the city. Swiss news sources reported that the German populous was losing hope for a German victory. Even with much more destruction of its heartland, few believed that Hitler and his Nazi party would yield to the obvious ominous fate. The common people would be forced to live in despair for nearly two more years.

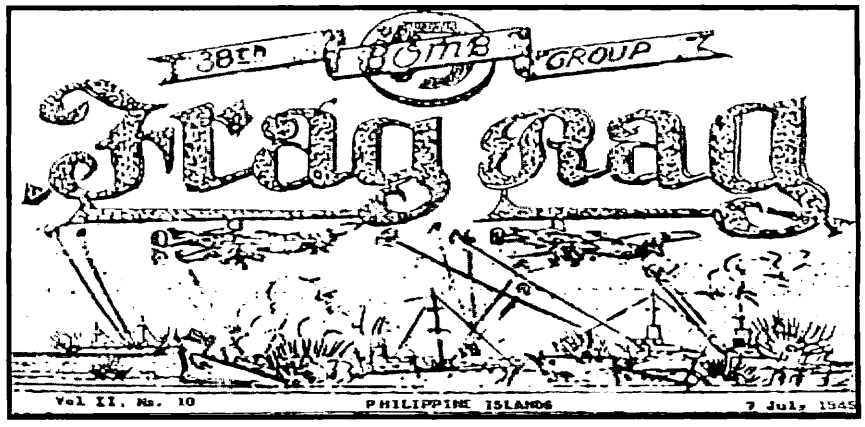
**N. AFRICA, THE END**

Against overwhelming Allied forces before them, and sunken rescue ships beyond the beaches they occupied, the German and Italian forces in Tunisia surrendered on 13 May. Over 200,000 men laid down their arms. General Alexander dispatched the news to London; "All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores."

Occupation of small islands in the Mediterranean was methodically pursued in preparation for the Sicilian landings.

On 1 August, 177 Liberators of the U. S. 9th Air Force in North Africa dropped 311 tons of bombs on the Rumanian Ploesti oil fields and refineries. At the very dear price of 54 bombers and 532 crewmen, nearly half of the refining capacity was put out of production. The oil fields had been the surprise target of the B-24s almost 14 months earlier.

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




# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

The month of May 1943 was a transitional month for the 38th BG. Modification of the 405th Squadron planes had begun in late April. Planes were still being rotated to Townsville for conversion to strafers and the crews that flew them south were being given R&R in Sydney. The 38th was building a reputation for itself when on leave and enjoying every minute of the "hardships" they endured in Sydney.

In addition to the installation of the four .50 caliber machine guns in the nose, a pod with two .50 caliber guns was installed on each side of the nose below the pilot compartment. A 20 mm. canon was also installed in the nose of some planes. The cannon was not well-liked by the pilots. The rate of fire was quite slow. To use it with any significant effect, the pilot had to line up on his target farther out and commit to a longer straight approach making him an easier target for the enemy ground gunners. It was also not effective on a heavy ship. With the eight .50 caliber machine guns, a pilot could get much closer to the target before rolling in for the final run. As he committed to his final approach and hit the trigger for those .50 caliber guns, the high rate of fire could produce a wider field of destruction and discouragement in a shorter time.

A cable was installed from each gun in the nose to the pilot's compartment and attached to a handle. The guns were charged by pulling the handle on the cable. This could be done on a jammed gun during a run on a target to clear the gun and put it back in action. The guns were fired using a single switch on the pilot's control column. A bombardier was no longer needed because the copilot would drop the bombs using a switch on the instrument panel. Flight engineers were also dropped from the crew on most missions.

As the modified planes returned to Durand, the crews began practicing low level strafing and bombing. That partly sunken ship, the ***Perth***, not far from Port Moresby was an often used target. They also practiced low level formation flying which required a different sense than formation flying at higher altitudes.

Both the 71st and 405th received a few new aircraft during May as well as aircraft that had been reconditioned in Australia. These replaced the planes lost or worn out in combat.

The squadron namesake picture appeared on the nose of the planes at this time, a Green Dragon head on the 405th Squadron planes with the red tongue forked at the end and each fork leading to one of the nose guns. Some one said, "They look tough as hell." It is reported that some planes had sirens on them. When a plane buzzed the field and turned the siren on, it would "scare the hell out of you."

A one-plane recco mission was flown on 2 May by the 405th to Dobodura with General Whitehead, CO of the 5th Bomber Command, and General Woods as observers.

***Dirty Dora*** seems to have had an unusually hard time (remember one story in the previous issue). It is reported that this plane was out on

*(Continued page 4, **A New Way to Fight the War**)*

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 3)

a practice mission on 6 May when the life raft compartment door flew off and hit the tail assembly. This caused the pilot to lose control and he ordered everyone to jump, which they did. He managed to regain control just before it hit the water and returned to Durand. The report continues, "One of the men landed about 20 miles back in the jungle. They dropped him a map, a compass, cigarettes, and food this morning. He'll just have to get out himself. No doubt some natives will help him."

The island of New Britain with its strongholds at Cape Gloucester (Japanese name - Tuluvu) and Gasmata were in range and began to receive attention of the 38th. These strips were used by Japanese planes flying to bomb Port Moresby and Dobodura.

On 9 May, the 405th sent seven planes to Gasmata on the south coast of New Britain. On 10 May the 71st sent eight planes to Cape Gloucester at the western end of New Britain. Thus the pattern was set by the 5th Air Force to neutralize the western part of New Britain Island. Cape Gloucester would be hit time and time again until it was finally invaded in late December 1943 by the 1st Marine Division.

The 71st sent eight planes to Gasmata on 8 May and the following day sent seven more. The 38th sent eight missions to Gasmata, and two to Cape Gloucester in May. They continued to fly missions to Finschafen and Lai on the Huan Gulf during May.

Missions were being flown at medium altitude using the still unmodified planes of the 71st Squadron. On 12 May, the 405th flew a minimum altitude mission against Finschafen with good results. This was the first low level mission flown by the 405th with its recently converted strafers.

The Japanese continued their raids against 17-Mile which resulted in damage to the area but no casualties. But at Oro Bay, a few miles east of Dobodura, their bombing resulted in considerable damage. Oro Bay had become a major port for the Allies. It had been significantly developed and equipped in early 1943. A road had been constructed from the port to Dobodura, enabling the Army to bring in most of the supplies being shipped by sea to this area north of the Owen Stanley Mountains.

W. G. Holm (405th) recorded in his diary for 13 May,

> "Last night, "Random Harvest" was showing at the area outdoor theater. We had a raid in the middle of the show. That bright screen would have been a prefect target at night. I tried to get our truck away from the screen as fast as possible. After we were about 500 yards down the road, the boys behind the cab beat on the cab and yelled to stop the truck and get out. I pulled over, straddling the ditch, and as I got out of the cab the sky was full of flares. I could hear *daisy cutters* going off a short distance away. We got under the truck just as the bombs went off up on the hill. We could hear splinters hitting the truck, but none of us were hurt in the ditch.
>
> "We woke up this morning and the tent was full of holes. They were made by the *daisy cutters* last night but we hadn't noticed them. Two of the telephone wires above the tent were cut by shrapnel from the bomb that hit several yards from the tent.
>
> "It made ***Earthquake*** look like a sieve. The bomb had hit just in front of her nose. Another hit on the turret and bomb sight tent. This morning they pulled eighteen bomb sights out of it, pretty well beat up."

The men on the line worked to keep as many planes flying as possible; life was not easy and posed danger as well. Holm again noted,

> ***973*** (one of the planes known by its serial number) had two guns run away on her yesterday. Capt. Herry was flying and the upper left hand .50 in the nose jammed. After landing, they took her to the revetment. While working on her, one of the solenoids stuck and she fired 19 rounds before they could stop her.

*(Continued page 5, **A New Way to Fight the War**)*

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 3)

British officers were parachuted into Yugoslavia to help coordinate the Anti Axis Partisan efforts.

The North African Theater was replaced by the Italian Theater.

## THE ITALIAN THEATER

Much of the heavy bombing directed on Italy and Sicily was in preparation for the landings by Allied troops on Sicily and eventually Italy. The Sicilian landing took place on 10 July. The Island was fully occupied by Allied forces in less than six weeks.

During the invasion, plans were made for landing on the Italian mainland, large demonstrations by Italian workers were shaking the foundation of the Fascist government.

In late July, political movement in Italy was already greasing the skids to oust Mussolini. On 25 July, King Victor Emmanuel III replaced Mussolini with a new Premier to form a new government. Martial law was declared in all of Italy. Mussolini was exiled to the island of Ponza. During August, he was moved from one prison to another to foil German plots to rescue him.

In early August, the Allies were broadcasting radio messages to the Italian people warning of the imminent invasion.

On 12 August, an emissary of the new government entrained for Spain to meet with the British Ambassador. The Italian position was hopeless; they could not drop their German connection without help from the Allies. At the same time, Italian military representatives met with General Rommel in northern Italy endeavoring to keep up the appearance of some unity. The meetings in Spain ended two days later without any resolution. But the Italians began to pursue the possibility of an armistice with the Allies in meetings with the British ambassador in Spain.

In late August, Roosevelt and Churchill authorized Eisenhower to appoint representatives to Lisbon to negotiate with the Italians. As August ended, the Italian government was twisting in a dilemma.

## THE EASTERN FRONT

The Germans planned to assault the Russian salient into the German Front at Kursk when the Spring thaw gave way to more favorable weather for an offensive. They assembled more than 2,000 tanks, 2,000 aircraft, and 1,000,000 men for the offensive.

The Russians anticipated the German move. They laid minefields of high density, approximately 4,000 anti personnel mines and 4,000 anti tank mines per square mile, in the salient. Armored trains, over 20,000 artillery pieces including their awesome Katyusha rocket flame throwers, backed up their two armored armies and two airborne divisions. Their air forces were ready.

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

## THE WORLD AT WAR (From page 4)

When the fighting renewed on 6 July, 6,000 tanks and 4,000 air craft were engaged in the largest tank and aerial engagements in history. The Germans no longer had dominance in the skies.

In the following 13 days, the Russians yielded ground in various areas of the Kursk front, extracting a high price from the Germans. On 19 July, the Russians went to the offensive and pushed the weakened Germans back. Hitler agreed to the cancellation of the operation but insisted that the army give up no further area to the Russians.

By 24 July, the Germans were pushed back to their starting point and had suffered great losses in equipment and men. The Russians seemed to move at will, shifting their attack from one point on the front to another. From the front line west of Moscow south to the Black Sea, the Germans were daily being forced to retire.

Having lost so much equipment and so many men in the assault on the Kursk salient, they were unable to establish any effective resistance. The Russian forces, inspired by their victory at Stalingrad and their continuing success, now seemed to regard themselves as invincible. They pressed relentlessly westward toward the Dnepr River.

### THE WAR IN THE ALEUTIANS

The always treacherous weather in the Aleutians exacted a heavy toll on the Air Force. In the first six months of the Alaskan campaign, 72 planes were lost, only nine of which were combat losses.

The American 7th Division had received training for desert warfare. With the collapse of the Germans in North Africa, the 7th began training for amphibious landings at San Clemente Island off the Southern California coast. In late April, they shipped out. During the northerly cruise, they were advised that they were going to the Aleutians and were issued cold weather uniforms. Their mission would be the first sea-borne landing in enemy-held territory in WW II.

As the U. S. began the operation to retake Attu and Kiska, weather again delayed the departure of the landing force by a day. The force steamed toward Attu into increasingly bad weather which eventually delayed the landing by three additional days.

The Japanese on Attu had been warned by their intelligence service that an attempted American landing was imminent and had been on a standing alert. On 10 May, the Japanese troops on Attu stood down, believing that the American landing had been canceled because of the bad weather.

On 11 May, the Americans landed in several places on Attu in the midst of very bad weather which favored surprise. The bad weather also hindered the Task Force 16

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

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR (From page 4)

"The plane was pointing across the loop at ***Butch*** and the bullets ripped one ugly hole in one of the boy's hip and caught another in the knee. They both will live, I'm sure.

I was working on ***488*** in the next revetment at the time. As soon as I heard the shots I got into the truck and went over. Both boys were lying right where they had been working and were conscious. It seemed so long before the ambulance got there."

The 405th took off on 23 May for Rabaul. However, after topping off their tanks at Dobodura, bad weather forced cancellation of the mission. The planes returned to 17-Mile Strip.

One of the last of the original planes of the 405th Squadron, ***Filthy Lil,*** returned to Durand on 29 May. But, "She's had a new paint job and is just plain old ***899*** again. Since all of our planes have the ***Dragon Head*** painted on the nose in such a way that the four guns are red and sticking out its mouth, we have to call them by number now." Available records do not indicate who or how the squadron insignias were chosen.

Captain Tanberg had been in command of the 71st Squadron since March. On 23 May, the orders with his promotion to Major arrived.

During May, the combat action for the 38th picked up. The number of combat hours flown during May, 555 hours, was the greatest since January. Counting all the hours of low level strafing, bombing, and formation practice, the group had been busy during the month.

**Col. O'Neill congratulates first men to be rotated home.**

On 15 June, Walter Beck, Jerry Evans, Bill Lett, and Bill Royalty, became the first men to be rotated home. Rotations had been rumored. Now it had become a reality. There was a mild improvement in morale.

The ground echelon of the new squadrons for the 38th sailed in convoy from San Francisco in early June. They pulled into Brisbane on 14 June and were transferred to a smaller ship on the way to Townsville. Henry Fornwalt (later of the 823rd Squadron) recalled that this ship was, "a whole lot nicer than our original one." From what he had seen from the ship in the Brisbane harbor, he concluded that Australia "looked like a pretty nice place." After a brief stop at Townsville, they sailed for Port Moresby on 20 June. On the 23rd, they arrived and were picked up by the 38th BG welcome committee on the 24th and taken to their assigned camp area.

*(Continued page 6, **A New Way to Fight the War**)*

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 5)

The Japanese raids at night over the Port Moresby area sometimes took on the characteristics of a spectator sport. W. G. Holm recorded one of these in his diary.

> "We began to hear the characteristic whine of the bombers faintly. Then one of the searchlights went on as if they were jumping out of the ground, forming a long silver shaft, all of them circling us forming like a spider's web on two small specks in the dark sky. Then we could see great flashes throughout the hills, hear the reports and then see the little pink puffs below the planes, each time cheering as they got closer.
>
> "They made three runs on us. On the second run, the following plane began to smoke. As they turned out to sea toward the thunderhead after the third run, we could see flames and it was losing altitude fast. Everyone was standing up on the hill yelling as if they were at a football game."

The 71st Squadron planes were not yet modified. In the latter half of June, the 71st made a supply drop to the Aussies at BenaBena. The two squadrons made attacks on various Ramu valley villages and at Dumpu. The 405th flew most of the missions at minimum altitude while the 71st bombed from a few thousand feet.

In the latter part of June, Majors Tanburg and Cheli (pronounced Kelly) were moved to Group Headquarters. Ezra Best became the CO of the 71st Squadron. Williston Cox became CO of the 405th.

During June, the 345th Bomb Group moved in at Port Moresby with their B-25Gs. They began their formation and gunnery practice. Someone recalled that, "There are B-25s headed in every direction. These *Joe Blows* are worse than the 38th." This was only a foretaste of the distress the 345th was to cause.

On 26 June, the 71st was armed with 100-pound demolition/fragmentation bombs which were dropped on the Lae drome from 3,000 feet. These were conventional demolition bombs wrapped with heavy wire that became deadly fragments when the big bombs detonated spreading their destruction over a broader area than the demolition bombs alone. The 405th dropped 23-pound fragmentation bombs on their strafing run. Of interest is that a 20 mm. canon projectile penetrated one cockpit and took off half of the sole of one shoe of the pilot. He sustained no injury.

Near the end of the month the group bombed the Bobdubi area in support of the Australian ground forces arrayed against Mubo.

### *Training the New Squadrons*

When the air echelon that would become the 822nd and 823rd Squadrons arrived in Australia, they were sent to Charters Towers for training. Some of the men in the 71st and 405th were sent to Charters Towers to provide experienced leadership for the new squadrons and some of the new crews were transferred to the original squadrons.

Walt Krell was to become the CO of the newly formed 822nd and Barney Johnson became the CO of the 823rd. Bill Tarver, of the 405th, went with Krell in the cadre for the new 822nd Squadron to become the Operations Officer. He recalled his assignment.

> "Major Krell told me that, as Operations Officer, I would be responsible for training the 822nd in Australia. We accomplished this by having each member of my crew work with his counterpart in the 823rd.
>
> "Knowing how 'Shanty' felt about take-offs at 20-second intervals on alternate sides of the runway and getting into formation before flying back over the field, I put a lot of emphasis on this in working with the new pilots. We flew a lot of low-level training missions. We ruffled a bunch of Australian feathers using trains and towns as practice targets."

(Continued page 7, **A New Way To Fight The War** )

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 5)

barrage and air support. Landings were made at Holz Bay in the north and Massacre Bay in the south. The landing at Massacre Bay was accomplished with several casualties. Several landing craft encountered rocks and sank. Others were lost in collisions in the fog.

As the Division penetrated the island, it was held up by fierce fire from Japanese defenders located on the high peaks and ridges overlooking the American advance. The fragile tundra turned to a muddy morass under the feet of the advancing troops and easily mired their tracked vehicles.

In the following days, the Americans found that the Japs had moved back to more favorable positions. Sensing defeat and unable to evacuate their wounded, they injected them with massive doses of morphine. They then detonated hand grenades on the bodies to assure they were dead and to spare capture by the Americans.

During their eleven-month occupation, they had dug an elaborate system of caves and tunnels. In danger of being taken by either the northern or the southern American forces, they retired to Chichagof Harbor on 16 May. They would make their final stand against an American force five times larger than their own.

In bad weather, the American forces endured numerous casualties from bombing by their own planes. The williwaw winds through Jarmin Pass dashed two Navy fighters against the steep mountainside.

On 17 May, the units advanced from both north and south occupied the positions evacuated by the Japs the previous night.

On 18 May, new Allied units and supplies were landed in the north. Preparations were begun for the advance on the Jap positions. But the enemy positions on the peaks overlooking the pass were difficult to dislodge.

As the Americans advanced from the north and south, they were held up by Japanese fire from the peaks above Clevesy Pass. An attack was launched on 24 May. The southern advance reached the top of Fish Hook Ridge on 25 May. There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting in the maze of trenches and tunnels dug by the Japanese.

In the early morning darkness on 29 May, the remaining 800 Japanese stole down from the mountains around Chichagof Harbor and launched a screaming attack and penetrating the American positions. The savage fighting continued throughout the day and into the night.

The Americans prevailed. All organized resistance ceased. The surviving 500 Japanese committed suicide with hand grenades. Only 28 wounded men had fallen into American hands. The Japanese had

(Continued page 7, **The World at War** )

## THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 6)

lost 2,352 dead. But the operation had been costly to the Americans.

The Allied casualty rate was approximately 25 percent. In proportion to force size, this invasion casualty rate was second only to Iwo Jima. There were over 3800 Allied casualties, 549 of whom were killed. Frost bite and other cold weather-related causes accounted for the majority of the casualties. Many men endured leg amputations.

Because of the bad weather, air support was available on parts of only eleven days of the eighteen-day campaign.

Plans for the recapture of Kiska Island were approved by the Chiefs of Staff. Construction of a strip on Attu, begun on 27 May, enabled P-38s and P-40s to cover the western flank of the Kiska invasion.

On Kiska, 150 miles to the east, the Japanese were being shelled every day by American destroyers. The only supplies being received by the garrison were unloaded at night from Japanese submarines. Kiska was now outflanked by Attu in the west.

On 8 June, the Japanese high commanded passed down an order for Kiska to be evacuated. Over the next several weeks, the island was subjected to repeated bombings and shelling by American naval units.

During June, the strip on Attu was improved to enable bomber operations to the Kurille Islands, Japan's most northerly territory. On 10 July, eight B-25s flew a nine-and a-half hour, 1,600-mile round trip mission to Paramushiro Island, the first land-based bomber attack on the Japanese home islands. A second and larger mission was flown on 18 July with a third one on 11 August, and a fourth on 11 September.

These missions, flown in extremely inclement weather, were some of the longest over water missions flown during the war by B-25s. The Americans lost three B-24s and seven B-25s. Following a Winter break, missions were resumed in the Spring. They continued to the end of the war.

On 19 July, plans for the invasion of Kiska were confirmed. Kiska was only 50 miles from the American advance air base at Amchitka Island. B-24s and B-25s had dropped over 1,200 tons of bombs in the previous month. On 26 July, in one raid, the Americans dropped 104 tons of bombs.

In the evening of this day three Japanese light cruisers, eight destroyers, and some submarines emerged from the fog surrounding the island. In hardly an hour, over 6,000 of the garrison had boarded the ships and submarines. Under cover of darkness they merged with the fog again, leaving the island without being detected by the U. S. Only the ghostly remains gave testimony to the invasion of American soil.

*(Continued page 8, **The World At War** )*

## NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 6)

The base was under the command of a "Chicken Colonel whose constant interference with the war effort was of so much help to the Japs." Walt seemed to be the target of the Colonel's disfavor and experienced continuing difficulty in establishing reasonable procedures for carrying out the training. The Colonel found many things to complain about and vented his irritation with the behavior of the men on the base and in town upon Walt at every opportunity.

Walt finally reached his limit and requested O'Neill's assistance with the frustrating Colonel.

> "'Shanty' had me pick him up in Townsville. We flew back to Charters Towers, and drove out to the headquarters just off the end of and slightly to one side of the runway. For 30 minutes 'Shanty' listened in deadpan silence while the old coot unloaded about 'new undisciplined Air Corps flying tramps'.
>
> "'Shanty', just promoted to full colonel, had borrowed the eagle insignias for his shirt collar. The eagle heads face right or left, according to how they are pinned on - 'Shanty's' little eagle faced the wrong way. As we were leaving, the CO spied the error, fetched an eagle facing the right way from his trinket box, proceeded to pin it on 'Shanty's' collar. 'Shanty' tensed up and I backed off a couple paces, but nothing happened and we left.
>
> "Wherever we went, 'Shanty' always did the flying. As we taxied out, 'Shanty' asked, 'Which runway leads over the old b's camp?' I cautioned 'The wind's the other way.' 'I didn't ask you about the wind,' he countered. The B-25 was light - 'Shanty' had it off halfway down the runway, flaps and wheels up by runway's end and still under six feet altitude. He swung over the Colonel's pyramidal tent, straddled the peak with his props and hauled up. We peeled around and looked down - the tent was smashed flat!
>
> "When I got back to Charters Towers, the old boy was waiting - did I know within minutes after he had given orders to Col. O'Neill to put a stop to aircraft flying over his area, some crazy pilot demolished the Colonel's tent with him still inside? He had suffered and could have been hurt. I was to track down the pilot. There would be a court martial he raged, red-faced and shaking his swagger stick in my face.
>
> "Then I told the old duck the pilot was Col. O'Neill himself who declared anyone stupid enough to set up headquarters in such a site was asking to get hurt, that he hoped he had made his point, and that he was at that moment en route to Brisbane to ask General Kenney (Commanding General, 5th AF) to assign a new training base for these critically needed combat units where they would no longer be such an inconvenience to the Colonel.
>
> "Within two days the Colonel had been relieved of his command and promptly departed the base, whereupon I made it eminently clear to the base paddle feet that O'Neill could quickly arrange for any of them to be shouldering muskets over the Owen Stanley Range - that their job was to provide the services the flyboys needed, **or else!** And things did improve."

During the training of the 822nd and 823rd at Charters Towers, the daily briefings emphasized, "Don't buzz the river beds!" The men wondered why this warning until a dust-covered fighter pilot showed up one day in Operations. With chagrin, he admitted, "I buzzed the river bed."

The original 38th squadrons had lost a plane that buzzed the river bed 11 months earlier at Charters Towers. The Aussies had strung strong, one and one-half inch steel cable for carrying a "*cable-car*" (called a "flying fox") used to haul wood across the river. The wood from the back country was burned in the boiler for the steam generating station on the town side of the river. The cables were impossible to see at 200 MPH.

*(Continued page 8, **A New Way to Fight the War**)*

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 7)

The new squadrons had flown the new B-25G models to Australia. Training included considerable practice in firing the 75 mm. gun in the nose. To the new men, it seemed like they flew endless hours of low level formation flying, and making uncountable landings. But the training ended with a big party with "numerous tubs of fish, chips and hundreds of bottles of Tooth's Bitter Pale Ale." They departed for combat at 17-Mile Strip at Port Moresby with humongous head aches.

### *OVERLOADED B-25s*

It seems that "Pappy" Gunn thought there was no load limit for a B-25. Lee Grover remembered an occasion when he had flown a plane to Eagle Farms in late 1942, to have gun mounts installed in the waist windows. They left the plane for the needed work and were told to return in two days. They were told the only transportation available to town was hitch hiking but there was a lot of traffic. As they were waiting on the side of the road, a staff car with a Lieutenant Colonel and driver in the front seat stopped. The Colonel crisply ordered, "Get in." They had traveled less than a mile when the Colonel asked, "What outfit are you from?" The three men, proud of their outfit, replied, "38th Bomb Group." The Colonel ordered the driver to stop the car and told his startled passengers, "Get out!" The car disappeared, leaving three bewildered 2nd Lieutenants standing beside the road.

Two days later they returned to pick up their plane and found out the Colonel in the staff car had been "Pappy" Gunn who did not seem to be on good terms with "Shanty" O'Neill at the time. As Lee was filing a clearance to leave, the Colonel walked in and asked for the crew of the B-25 parked nearest to Operations. Lee spoke up. Colonel Gunn gave orders that the plane was to leave by noon with about 2500 pounds of gun mounts and 25 of the 38th BG mechanics and their tool kits.

"Pappy" would not listen to any protests that there was not room for all the men and dead load. The base personnel made it clear that what the Colonel wanted, the Colonel got. The stunned and agitated Lieutenants hustled around and found transportation on a C-47 for 10 mechanics and their tool kits.

They then managed to get the rest of the load and the mechanics aboard, a tight fit in the back of the plane. When they loaded the tool kits, the tail started down and the nose wheel started rising. They protested that the load was too heavy and the runway was much too short because of repairs being made a thousand feet from the far end. They were assured that Colonel Gunn often flew a tail heavy plane and ALL the stuff had to go. The local handlers said that Gunn did it by starting his engines and then finishing the loading. They started their engines and the nose stayed down.

With considerable trepidation, the three Lieutenants and crew finished loading and headed for takeoff. Lee remembered the "Tokyo Raider" takeoff method. He locked the brakes facing into a good wind at the end of the runway. Grover called for no flaps and just cracked the cowl flaps. He ran the engine check and advanced the throttle all the way.

Then Lee "Jimmy Doolittle" Grover released the brakes. The heavy plane started responding to full throttle; everyone looked forward with white knuckles. As they reached the spot where a hole in the runway was being repaired, Lee called for flaps. He pulled the plane off the runway, clearing the repair work.

The plane just mushed through the air a short distance and settled back down on the runway. They used the last 1,000 feet of the runway to finally *get airborne*. Lee said of the incident, "I had pulled a 'hot pilot stunt', not on my own volition, but at 'Pappy' Gunn's insistence, and we lived through it."

In June of 1943, Bill Hanrahan and Jim Raine had flown across the Pacific to Eagle Farms. They were met by "Pappy" and invited to share a cold beer in his apartment after which they returned to the barracks

*(Continued page 9, **A New Way to Fight the War**)*

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 7)

Over the next three weeks, the bombing and shelling of Kiska by the U. S. continued at an increasing rate. Everything that the Japs had not destroyed before they left or taken with them was battered by the preinvasion bombing and shelling.

On 15 August, 100 Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs), Landing Craft Infantry (LCIs), and Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs) with nearly 35,000 Canadian and American men and combat equipment arrived at Kiska. They discovered for the first time that there were no enemy forces on the island.

But the invasion incurred about 200 casualties. Twenty-one died and fifty were wounded by Japanese booby traps or friendly fire. The remaining were victims of the cold which caused "trench foot".

Any threat the Japanese had posed to continental United States had been eliminated. The U. S. had airfields within range of the northern Japanese islands. Japan was forced to divert up to one sixth of its air force from the southern war zones to the northern islands' defense perimeter.

In future months the U. S. was able to redeploy much of its force from the Alaskan theater while the Japs were diverting resources to their northern zone.

### CHINA, BURMA, INDIA (CBI)

In early May, monsoon rains virtually halted work on the new Burma Road leading from Ledo in the State of Assam in north India. Forty-five miles of the road had been completed beyond Ledo into Burma.

The construction was being accomplished by two Engineering Airbase Battalions made up of African Americans reinforced in 1943. A fuel pipe line was being build along side the road.

Work on a new air drome in Assam was pushed which would enable a greater volume of supplies to be ferried to China and to support the operations on the Burma front. In February of 1943, the Air Transport Command had ferried 2,800 tons of aviation fuel and other supplies over "the Hump" to China. Each month passed, the tonnage grew but it could never provide everything needed. "The Road " was vital to future operations in northern Burma and in China.

Roosevelt decided in early May that a very significant Air Force strength should be supplied to China. In mid June, the headquarters of the U. S. 14th Air Force was set up in southern China.

This theater was the only one where no U. S. ground combat units were assigned. It was on the bottom of allocations for air units, as well.

*(Continued page 9 , **The World at War**)*

## THE WORLD AT WAR (From page 8)

The British railway system in India was inadequately organized for carrying supplies from the port of Bombay to the Ledo Road terminus and the large airbase being constructed nearby. It took the intervention of American engineers to bring the necessary order to the transportation system.

Throughout the war, Britain was faced with a rising tide of independence spirit in India and Burma. Japan backed the Burmese independence movement. This made for tense diplomacy while the British and Americans were facing the Japanese.

### THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In late April, MacArthur's headquarters drafted the ***Elkton Plan*** which would coordinate the forces of MacArthur and Halsey for eliminating the Japanese base at Rabaul. The operation was codenamed ***Cartwheel.***

On 12 May, U. S. Naval forces bombed Japanese bases at Munda and Vila on New Georgia Island. Mine fields were laid to the northwest of New Georgia as a barrier to Jap naval forces from Rabaul. The occupation of New Georgia was the next step toward Rabaul. Invasion instructions were issued by Halsey's headquarters on 3 June. The 43rd division was to lead the invasion supported by two Marine Raider battalions.

On 7 June, planes from Rabaul made heavy raids on Guadalcanal to disrupt the preparations. The enemy lost 23 planes; the U. S. lost nine. On 12 June, a large force of bombers and fighters from Rabaul heading for Guadalcanal was intercepted by U. S. planes. Thirty one of the Jap planes were destroyed.

On 16 June, approximately 120 Japanese aircraft attacked Guadalcanal and the assembled ships. They paid a dear price. Swarms of planes from Henderson Field shot down nearly 100 of the attackers.

On 30 June, the U. S. task force landed contingents on small islands near New Georgia. The main force landed at Rendova Harbor on the northern end of Rendova Island across a channel from Munda, the primary objective. The Japanese sent planes to disrupt the landings, sinking one transport and damaging other ships.

The force at Rendova Harbor consolidated its position with little Japanese resistance. They began preparing for transporting men and material across the channel to Munda. On 2 July, a Japanese cruiser heavily shelled the position during the night and bombers attacked the area in great force.

On 3 July, the first forces landed about six miles from Munda on New Georgia and consolidate their position against little resistance. Forces moved throughout the area to attack and occupy smaller islands and outlying positions.

*(Continued page 10. **The World at War**)*

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR (From page 8 )

for a cold night. The following morning, they were loading 25 men and luggage to be taken to Townsville. Before the loading was completed, "Pappy" showed up with 13 additional people and their luggage.

Most of their passenger load was behind the bomb bay. Thankfully, the heavy bomb bay tank had been removed. He reported that the take-off with full forward elevator trim was quite an experience and that they had to hold the control column forward for level flight.

Arriving at Townsville, the plane stalled at 160 MPH when they were at 15 feet altitude over the end of the runway. As the plane dropped to the strip, Bill expected to see the struts pop right through the wings. After unloading their passengers they flew to Charters Towers where the 822nd and 823rd Squadrons were being formed and trained.

### *ATC Navigators Not to be Trusted*

Planes flying from the States to Australia were assigned an Air Transport Command navigator who had a celestial navigator's rating while the usual B-25 crew bombardier/navigator had received only "dead reckoning" training. In the May 2005 issue, we related the story of one of the planes in the original group whose assigned navigator botched the job on the flight from Canton to Fiji. Said navigator is credited with causing a flight of planes to wind up over Grafton at night instead of Brisbane. This is said to be the same navigator on the plane carrying Eddie Rickenbacher when it got lost in October 1942. After ditching, the seven men on board were saved three weeks later.

L. R. "Pop" Kienle, Jr., later of the 823rd, relates his crew's flight from Hawaii to Christmas Island in early July, 1943. The ATC navigator, "selected a dead-reckoning heading, shot a few sun lines, crawled up on the chart table and had a short nap." The pilots flew the course and the time but there was no island in sight. They started a square search, finally finding Christmas Island after an additional 90 minutes of flying. Needless to say, they had no kind words for the navigator. But he remained alert and working for the rest of the trip.

Kienle related that upon arrival at Eagle Farm, they bedded down in the chilly barracks. The man in the last bunk was supposed to turn off the light, a single bulb on the ceiling. "Mr. Last" looked up at the offending bulb from his bed, pulled out his ".45", shot out the light and put a sizable hole in the ceiling.

Aussie and American M.P.s showed up in a hurry. Everybody in the group kept their mouths shut. But the next night, "Mr. Last" used the light switch instead of his ".45".

The 38th flew almost 400 combat hours in June with their reduced strength while planes were being modified.

### *The 345th BG, A Pain Where a Pill Can't Reach*

On 13 July, the 38th BG was assigned to lead the 38th and 345th to Salamau. The 405th strafers led the attack. Their path into the target was down through a canyon. As they neared the bottom of the canyon they passed through a black curtain of flack from one side of the canyon to the other Then they flew through a red curtain of small arms fire. As they passed over the target one by one near the sea, they did a climbing turn to make themselves a harder target, the water looked as if was raining. It was! A rain of small arms projectiles was falling into the sea.

The 345th was approaching at an altitude of about 8,000. In the several minutes before the 38th had arrived at the target, one 405th pilot noted, "The 345th flew as if they were on a training mission." Their group commander continually identified his position, altitude, throttle settings, and air speed as he called various aircraft to advise them to close up the formation and to adjust the positions of the various squadrons in his group formation."

As another man recalled, "They chattered all the way to the target like a group of school children. They even gave away their altitude and time of attack."

Everyone in the 405th was furious. The 38th had always observed strict radio silence on the way to the target. This performance by the 345th

*(Continued page 10, **A New Way To Fight the War**)*

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 9)

was astonishing and disturbing. They credit this loose conduct to giving away the approaching formations to the enemy and causing the "hot" reception they received.

Eight of the ten 405th planes were seriously damaged and two men were wounded - one quite critically. Several of the planes landed at Dobodura, two on single engines.

Of those making it back to 17-Mile, Ed Adkins had his landing gear demolished over the target. He had the crew bail out over the Port Moresby area before he and the copilot made a belly landing on the crash strip at Jackson Drome. His landing was "beautifully executed." The crew members were all picked up in good condition.

Jack Pattie, who was one of the radio operator replacements that had recently arrived (he thought they were the first replacements), reported that the plane he was in counted, "260 some odd holes." He described their return from the target.

> "We got the right engine shot out and we didn't think we were going to make it. The 5th Air Force had zeroed in on the radio beam and they knew right where we were. The pilot kept asking me, 'Are you sure they know where we are ?' I said, 'Well, they keep answering me.' I was only hitting dashes, no dots. We never got over about 200 feet above the water since our right engine was gone. We were that way all the way to Dobodura, then we couldn't get the wheels down. So we just bellied in . . he just greased it in there beautifully. It turned out just fine. The plane never flew again."

Many of the men on the mission were so upset that they discussed signing a petition that they never fly with the 345th again.

The 405th did fly with the 345th again. The 345th was to lead a mission to Madang, their first strafing mission. Their assignment was to suppress the flak over the target as a squadron of B-24s flew past the target out to sea. The 405th was to hit the target to suppress the flack as the B-24s turned to start their bombing run.

The 345th leader decided to make a big 360 degree turn to line up for a "better run" on the target. This threw the timing off, putting the 38th BG planes over the target as the B-24's bombs were exploding. Nearly every 405th plane returned with dirt, bits of trees, or shrapnel picked up in the engine cowlings as they tried to fly between the bomb bursts.

### *Done In By His Own Bomb*

John Cooper remembered that the 71st Squadron crews were practicing gunnery and low level simulated attacks on 27 July. They at last had their strafer B-25s. He was on Erocoli Ducci's crew. Some of the crew would be trading off on missions because the 71st was now sending out five-man crews instead of seven. John had not flown in the morning practice but was scheduled to fly in the afternoon.

After the noon mess, he went to his tent to get his gear ready. As he was moving around he recalled to Al Steel, a tent mate, that he had been overseas for one year on this date. Al found a bottle in his things and they toasted the anniversary. Al confessed to John that he did not think he would last another year.

John started up the hill toward Operations. Along the trail, he was met by Ducci who told him that he would not be flying that afternoon. Ducci told John to send Norton, the flight engineer, down to the plane because he needed more gunnery practice.

A strange conversation followed. "Ducci asked me tell his mother how he died if I got home and he didn't. He also asked me to tell his fiancée that he loved her. Only when I promised did he return to Operations".

During the practice that afternoon, Cal Gillespie was flying on Ducci's

(Continued page 11, **A New Way to Fight the War**)

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 9)

On 5 July, the Tokyo Night Express managed to land 800 troops on Kolombangara, a large island just northwest of New Georgia. A naval battle ensued with the U. S. losing a destroyer and a light cruiser. The Japanese lost two destroyers.

American bombers began attacking Jap bases on Bougainville with growing intensity over the following days. The Allied forces advancing on Munda met increasing resistance. The thick jungle impeded close air support in some areas and some troops ran short of supplies, rations, and drinking water and were forced to rely on air drops.

The Japanese landed 1200 more men on Kolombangara. In the ensuing naval engagement, the Japanese lost a cruiser with its 482 men. American naval losses included one destroyer and damage by torpedoes to three cruisers.

The Americans began building an air field on the southern end of New Georgia at the site of one of the earlier landings.

On 14 July, the Japanese launched a heavy aerial attack on troop and shipping concentrations in the New Georgia area. American fighters shot down 45 of the 75 attacking aircraft. The Japanese limited further aerial operations to the night hours.

American troops operating in the New Georgia area, continually growing, reached 32,000 Army and 1,700 Marines by 22 July. By 25 July, the Americans had 539 airplanes in the Solomons and had shot down 316 Japanese planes, losing 71 U. S. craft.

In mid July, preparations for the future landing on Bougainville were initiated. This would be the final stepping stone on the way to Rabaul. There were preparatory bombings of the eight Japanese airfields and other installations on the island.

The advance on Munda met increasing heavy resistance and was very slow with heavy losses. On 1 August, the American forces reached the edge of the Munda airfield. The Japanese had orders to resist to the last man. However, the Japanese command realized that New Georgia could not be held. They concentrated on moving many of their men and much equipment to Kolombangara Island.

On 5 August, Munda airfield was in American hands after days of fierce and costly fighting. The field was quickly made serviceable. American planes began using the field on 13 August. The Americans set about mopping up remaining resistance on the whole of New Georgia Island.

The Tokyo Night Express continued to bring reinforcing troops to Kolombangara. On 6 August, four destroyers were intercepted just before midnight by six American destroyers. When the action was finished,

(Continued page 11, **The World at War**)

## THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 10)

three Jap destroyers had been sent to the bottom by torpedoes. The American force suffered no damage.

Three hundred Japanese troops managed to land on a nearby island but 1,500 men had lost their lives. Japanese forces on Kolombangara numbered about 12,000. Hundreds more were moved to the island each night from New Georgia. Two American battalions were deployed to interdict the escape route. Long range guns were sited on the north coast of New Georgia to shell the Japanese on Kolombangara.

The Americans made preparations for landing on Vella Lavella Island, northeast of Kolombangara. This move would neutralize the Japanese position on Kolombangara.

On the night of 12 August, a small advance American force landed on Vella Lavella to prepare for additional troops. They found few Japanese forces. On 14 August, a 6,000-man Allied amphibious force landed under strong aerial support.

Japanese destroyers were escorting 20 smaller vessels carrying 400 men on the night of 18 August. They were intercepted on there way to Vella Lavella by American aircraft and destroyers. While the Japs lost some of the lighters and men, they managed to land most of the reinforcements. The ships escaped from the intercepting Allied vessels and planes.

Because their forces were so widely dispersed in the New Georgia area, the Japanese decided to withdraw from the central Solomons. They concentrated their forces in the Bougainville area. The Tokyo Night Express began evacuating their troops from the various islands in the New Georgia area. The American forces were engaged in eliminating as many of the enemy as possible on the ground, by ship, and by aerial attacks.

Fighting continued for a few weeks in the New Georgia area before the Japanese finally completed their evacuation. Some of the action was a fierce delaying action, giving the Rabaul command time to plan and to establish their defense of Bougainville.

The Americans built additional airfields in the area. These would be needed to give the invaders of Bougainville much needed aerial support.

To the east of the Solomons, the Americans landed a small force of Marines and Construction Battalions (CBs) in the Ellice Islands. The CBs began building an air field on Nanamea. The base would support the soon to be launched attacks on Tarawa and Makin atolls in the Gilbert Islands. Nanamea eventually became a gas stop between Canton Island and Guadalcanal for planes flying from San Francisco to Townsville, shortening the ferry route significantly.

*(Continued page 12, **The World at War**)*

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 10)

wing as they made a pass on the ***Perth***, the wreck in the Moresby Harbor used for practice. Cal recalled, "A bomb skipped off the water, hitting and knocking the tail off Ducci's plane. He rolled sharply to the right, almost into me as I violently tried to get away from his crashing plane"

Ducci's plane, ***Annette*** (named after his girl friend), crashed into the reef that held the wrecked ***Perth.*** The recovered bodies of the five men were buried with full honors in the military cemetery at Port Moresby.

Cooper recalled, "Ducci and I were products of Rochester, NY, and played baseball against each other. I fulfilled my promise - one of the most heart-wrenching things I have ever done."

Although still not at full strength, the 38th flew just short of 400 combat hours in July.

It was in July or August 1943 that "Shanty" received orders for a mission for the 38th BG. He and his squadron leaders went over the plans several times during the evening. It just didn't seem right. He had maintained that the only reason for rank was that you had a chance to argue with the Brass. Now it was time to use that privilege of his rank.

He reached for his phone and called General Ramey of the Advanced Bomber Command. He spared no words in describing the mission plans as "lousy, wrong bombs, wrong approach, wrong everything." He wanted them changed. General Ramey refused to listen and take other action.

"Shanty" jumped in his Jeep and drove down to 3-Mile Drome. He knocked on General Whitehead's door. Whitehead, Commanding General of the Fifth Air Force Advanced Headquarters, listened to "Shanty" repeat all the things he had told Ramey. The General stirred around in his shorts and slippers and raved about the mission. "Shanty" listening without replying. Finally Whitehead said, "Alright, O'Neill, but if anything goes wrong, you're through! Get Ramey on the phone for me!"

"Shanty" had been recognized for his insight and understanding on more than one occasion.

### *Madang, Crashed Plane Becomes a Coral Reef*

On 5 August, the 38th was on a mission to Madang to catch as many barges as possible. Captain Herry was the pilot of the lead plane. Major Williston Cox, CO of the 405th, was flying as Command Pilot on the lead plane. There is some conjecture that he was checking on Herry's performance as a flight leader. It seems that several pilots of the 405th felt that Herry was not gaining enough speed as he dropped down on his approaches to targets. As one man put it, "It is ironic that while he (Cox) was directing his attention toward us, he let Herry just float in on the target at about 225 miles per hour in a straight, shallow dive. This is the way Herry always approached a target and although we told him, pleaded with him and threatened him in an effort to get him to change tactics, he just absolutely refused to listen."

Herry's plane was hit over the target and ditched a few hundred yards off shore near a small island in the harbor. One plane circled back to see if there were survivors. Reports from this plane and others were that four men were seen swimming away from the wreck, one engine of which was burning fiercely even before it hit the water.

Four men were picked up by a Japanese boat and taken to the Japanese headquarters at Madang. Over the next few days they were questioned and beaten on various occasions. Occasionally they were given water.

One man had managed to swim to a small island in the harbor and hide. After about four days without food and water, the man hiding on the small island finally signaled the Japs who came out and took him prisoner. He was given scant rations and water when he was placed in confinement with the other members of the crew.

After nearly two weeks, Major Cox was flown to Rabaul for further interrogation. He was later shipped to Japan where he was held as a POW until his release following the Japanese surrender. He had lost about one third of his normal 190 pounds.

Interrogation of Japanese solders after the war revealed that the other

*(Continued page 12, **A New Way To Fight The War** )*

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 11)

four survivors and a fifth man captured previously, were subjected to extremely harsh and barbaric treatment. The fifth man is believed to have been Owen Salvage who was listed as MIA on 2 August. He was the copilot on the plane piloted by Capt. Uhler who is thought to have been captured and taken to Lae. At Madang, the captives were used for bayonet practice before they died and buried almost where they had fallen. This action was said to have been taken in retaliation for the death of one of their own men in the bombing raid.

Rumors of such treatment had filtered through the American camps. Many men were convinced that being taken prisoner was not an option.

*The April 1988 issue of the National Geographic Magazine carried an item about the finding of this plane by divers. Walt Deas has recently completed his filming of the wreck and is releasing a DVD,* ***The Bomber Reef,*** *about the 38th Bomb Group in New Guinea and the story of this wreck, now a coral reef.*

### *Dagua, here we come !*

The 38th flew three missions of more than 20 planes each to the north coast of New Guinea along Bogadjim road in the middle of August.

On 16 August there was a rush of work for the ground crews as they installed a special rack in the area of the fuselage previously occupied by the lower turret. The turret had been removed quite some time earlier as being unsuitable for low level missions. It had never proved to be an effective weapon system.

The rack being installed was to be used to hold an auxiliary fuel tank to extend the range of the strafers. The rack was designed to make the auxiliary tank jettisonable after the fuel was transferred to the wing tanks. The upper turret could not be operated with the tank in position.

As the racks were installed, a 300-gallon tank was also fitted into the rack. Work was pushed even into the night to get the racks and tanks installed for a mission scheduled for the 17th. The new racks had not been tested in flight and the crews had not had time to practice using the system.

Crews were awakened early on the 17th. At the briefing, they learned that the target for today was the Japanese Wewak complex of airdromes. The 405th would lead the formation and its target was the Dagua Drome about 18 miles west of Wewak. The 71st would continue another ten miles west to the But Airdrome. They were to pick up fighter cover in the Tsili Tsili area. The crews were instructed to abort their mission if they could not drop the new auxiliary tank.

At the rendezvous point, they were also to be joined by the B-25 squadron from the 3rd Attack Group. This squadron was to hit the Wewak and Boram strips.

The 405th took off first, climbing through a thin cloud layer and joined in formation to cross the Owen Stanleys. As they waited for the 71st, it soon became obvious that the latter were not coming up through the cloud layer. The 405th proceeded to cross the high mountain range and head for the rendezvous.

The fighter cover met them, as scheduled, but the 3rd Attack B-25s did not show. The attack formation of B-25s and P-38s proceeded up the Markham Valley. As they reached the upper end of the valley and started into the Ramu River Valley, the signal was given to drop the disposable tanks. The fuel had been transferred into the wing tanks.

Garrett Middlebrook was the leader of the second flight. His gunner reported the tank would not drop, Middlebrook and Emminger discussed the situation. Emminger finally snapped his parachute harness onto the spars above the tank and then jumped up and down on the tank. Suddenly, the tank fell away and he climbed into his turret, reporting his success to Middlebrook.

Garrett looked around and discovered to, his dismay, that all the planes seemed to have turned to return to Moresby. Even the P-38s were staying with the larger group of planes. He soon realized that the others must have experienced the same problem with dropping the tank. Suddenly a flash of light in front and below him revealed one B-25 still

*(Continued page 13,* ***A New Way to Fight the War*** *)*

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 11)

### THE BATTLE FOR NEW GUINEA

Following the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, there was a period of rest and regrouping for war weary troops and flyers as well as their supporting forces. Recent operations were reviewed and assessed. Modifications of various aircraft were planned and initiated. Replacements for lost and war weary planes began to trickle into the theater.

Fresh troops began to arrive. More suitable personal equipment was forthcoming. Jungle fighting would be reduced and hopping from one costal point to another would be more widely utilized.

The Bismarck Sea battle experience had confirmed the strategy and configuration for commerce destroyers. The B-25s of the 3rd Attack Group and the 38th Bomb Group were all scheduled for modification. As the mods were completed, air crews spent more hours in practicing the tree top strategy.

The results of the concentration of all available forces on the Japanese convoy on the Bismarck Sea would have a major affect on future operations against other Japanese installations.

The primary target in the high command's planning was the Japanese base at Rabaul. All other Japanese bases in the New Guinea and Solomon Islands were under the command of the Rabaul headquarters. The Allied operation, ***Cartwheel,*** was the focus of planners in Washington and the Pacific in May. This was MacAurther's plan for retaking the Philippines to fulfill his promise, "I shall return."

The Japanese still had strong points at Salamau, Lae, and Finschafen around the Huon Gulf. From these bases they could attack the Allied air bases being developed around Dobodura as well as Port Moresby. Along the northern coast of New Guinea to the west, they had several additional, though smaller, bases.

An emergency base was built at Tuluvu (Gloucester) on the north coast at the west end New Britain. This facility was mainly a refueling and cargo transfer point and where damaged Japanese planes could also land and be repaired.

Throughout the first six months of 1943, General Kenny carried on a continuous jousting for planes to replace lost planes and for increased combat strength. One of his bomb groups (the 3rd Attack Group) was a composite of light bombers (A-20s) and medium bombers (B-25s). One medium bombardment group (the 38th) only had two squadrons, diminished in capacity by its losses since entering combat in September 1942. The other medium bombardment group, the 22nd with B-26s, had been flying combat for a year with significant losses and

*(Continued page 13,* ***The World At War*** *)*

## THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 12)

a high number of hours on the remaining planes.

The heavy bombardment group flying B-17s had been in action from the beginning of the war. It had been reinforced with some B-24s in recent months. No more B-17s would be sent to the southwest Pacific.

As for the fighters, the badly outdated P-39 (and P-400 version) had performed valuable service in ground support and other low level assignments. But they did not have any capability for action against the Japanese fighters escorting Japanese bombers at high altitudes. The P-40s could do better if given time to reach the critical altitudes. Some P-38s had operated in the theater for several months and had proven to be a very capable match against the Jap planes. All the pilots were developing increasing skill.

When he was in Washington in May, General Kenny was promised additional planes. He would get one additional light bomber group (A-20s), two medium bomb groups (B-25s), and two heavy bomb groups (B-24s). There would be three additional fighter groups. These would arrive over the next few months. In addition, some replacement planes would be allotted.

Of great importance to Kenny was the allocation of air transport groups. The one group that was struggling to meet all the demands was made up of a conglomeration of modified war weary bombers and a few DC-3s (C-47s) and other assorted aircraft. He was promised three new Air Transport Groups. The early experience had given incontrovertible evidence that air transport capability was essential in this theater. Of concern to Kenny was the replacement crews for the Transport Groups for rotation. Some concessions were made but the promised schedules were adjusted over the weeks.

As for the planes, Kenny was uncertain about the replacement B-25s. He finally agreed to accept 65 B-25Gs (with a 75 mm. gun in the nose) along with permission to modify them as he deemed necessary. He was most uncertain about the B-25H models that were coming soon. The copilot seat and a couple of guns had been eliminated to permit installation of a cabin heater. He had no use for low level attack planes with heaters and finally won out. The planes were to be sent to the southwest Pacific without a heater and with the guns and copilot seat. He considered the B-25 copilot essential for acting as the bombardier and to take over for an injured or killed pilot.

When the B-25G arrived, Pappy Gunn had a great time running it through various "test" flights in combat conditions. It was found that all that fire power caused several problems: cracking in the leading edge of

(Continued page 14, **The World At War** )

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 12)

pressing straight for Wewak. It took him only moments to decide that he could not let this plane go on alone. Increasing his throttle setting and dropping his nose, he started closing in on the lone ranger. As he closed in, he noticed another plane closing in on the other wing of "the leader." He identified the "leader" as being Bill Gay. He had known Gay since the first day of flying school. They had shared many things together, often comparing notes and ideas and had a shared trust in one another beyond what most men experience.

He took note that the third plane was piloted by Berdines Lackness, one of those kind of guys who always carried a cheerful attitude and a good natured composure. The three planes formed up to face the enemy at Dagua.

As they crossed to the west side of the Sepik River valley, they entered a small valley separated from the coast, Wewak, and their target by a low ridge of foothills close to the coast. They stayed to the left against the foothills of the central mountain chain and flew lower than the coastal ridge. They were hoping to pass by Wewak without their presence being discovered. Five or six more minutes would bring them to the landmark for their turn to the Dagua air strip.

Suddenly, it was there and Bill Gay turned to his right to lead the formation up over the ridge and down to the target. As they topped the ridge and the target came into view, an astonishing sight greeted them. The air strip, lying parallel and just a short distance from the beach, was lined with groups of planes, service vehicles, and personnel. They nosed down with full power toward the strip with 24 .50 caliber machine guns literally pouring lead at the targets before them as their speed built to over 300 miles per hour. They had accomplished total surprise and there was no defensive gunfire coming to meet them.

The tracers were like lightning bolts telling the pilots just what they were hitting. Dust clouds rose along with smoke as fires were started. Planes and trucks were fully ablaze in moments. A gasoline dump at the east end of the strip erupted in rolling flames and smoke and exploding gas drums were hurled aloft. Middlebrook wrote later, "A zero sat facing the same direction I was flying. My fire power striking the wings and tail sections rolled it forward into another plane."

As they reached the area surrounding the strip, 23-pound parafrag bombs dropped from the three bomb bays. These small objects created awesome damage as they drifted down beneath their small parachutes and exploded instantly upon touching anything, hurling destructive shrapnel in every direction.

When they crossed out over the water and the bomb bay doors closed, as Middlebrook later wrote, "by military tradition, by instinct, by the urge to survive and all that is holy, we became outrageous, unabashed cowards! It was now time to flee for our lives."

A few Japanese planes already in the air closed in on the bombers. In turning in on the speeding formation from above, one fighter exposed his whole upper surfaces and an alert turret gunner sent him straight down to the water. But there were other fighters aggressively pushing their attacks.

The Japanese fighters continued to dog the three B-25s as they headed east at over 250 MPH. Bill Gay took a course out to sea as they approached Wewak. He hoped to avoid attracting more fighter planes from the Wewak dromes.

After passing Wewak, Gay brought the formation back to the coastal jungle. Once over land, the fighter attack increased; perhaps because the glare and reflection over the water had worked in the favor of the fleeing bombers. Gay took advantage of every change in the contour of the land below, dropping down into little coves, up over the small hills, down into the gaps between the trees along a river course.

The race of bombers and fighters continued eastward far from the target and down the Markham Valley. Gay's turret gunner reported that he had fired his last bullet. He kept turning his turret and guns in simulation

(Continued page 14, **A New Way To Fight The War** )

# A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 13)

of firing to keep the enemy from taking advantage of the situation. The two other planes, noting the situation, moved in a bit closer to provide more protection. Some of the enemy planes had given up the pursuit but the two most dangerous continued their attacks from time to time. The long race at high power was sucking gas from the tanks at a prodigious rate.

Soon after the fleeing bombers reached the mouth of the Markham valley, the persistent fighters gave up the game and turned toward home. The running battle had lasted for 45 minutes, at least.

The pilots eased back on the power as they climbed among the clouds along the ridge of the mountains. They found a gap and passed to the other side. Soon they descended to land at 17-Mile.

After landing, the ground crews were hardly ready to believe these three planes had actually carried out the mission assigned to twelve. But the Intelligence Officer was excited and grabbed the cameras from Gay and Middlebrook's planes. Lackness did not have a camera on his plane. Gay's camera had malfunctioned but Middlebrook's camera disgorged some excellent pictures of major damage at Dagua. The three were credited with destroying 17 Jap planes.

Emminger had scarcely 50 round of ammo in his turret guns. Middlebrook's plane had several holes in the rear control surfaces.

Bill Gay's own personal decision and dedication had inspired both Berdines Lackness and Garrett Middlebrook. The greatest credit belonged to him.

It was later learned that the 3rd Attack had been delayed during takeoff but had reached the Wewak dromes and inflicted considerable damage on planes lined up for takeoff, apparently for a mission to American base targets.

Major Ralph Cheli asked the three pilots to join him in Bill Gay's tent later. He conveyed, the 5th Bomber Command's CO, General Whitehead, gratitude and appreciation for the effort the three crews had made to carry out the mission. Cheli had commanded the 405th Bomb Squadron for several months and was a veteran of such combat experience.

Cheli was well liked by the men. He had time for talking things over with the men. He loved to fly and each mission was "fun" for him. But he did not seem to really take the Japanese flyers seriously. Because of his position at Group Headquarters, he had many duties and did not really have to fly many missions. But he resented being denied more opportunities to be part of the attack missions.

During this conversation he remarked at being left out of the "fun". The three pilots told him it wasn't "fun". But he continued to express regret at having missed the "fun". This didn't set well with the pilots and more hard words were said. Cheli left after stating he would lead on the next attack at Wewak.

After Cheli left, Bill Gay said, "Cheli has been very lucky on all his missions. I just hope his luck never runs out because if it does the "fun" runs out too."

That evening orders came down for another strike by the same groups to the same targets the following day. This time Cheli would lead the 38th in a 405th plane. Bill Gay was designated to lead the second four-plane flight and Middlebrook was to lead the third. The 71st would attack at But Airdrome.

During the night, ground crews had worked furiously to solve the tank drop problem. Their effort paid off as the tanks dropped away at the desired point.

At the early morning briefing, Middlebrook strongly urged that they not cross the ridge at the same point the three planes had used on the 17th.

(Continued page 15. **A New Way to Fight the War**)

# THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 13)

the wing near the fuselage and skin breaking loose in the side gun blast areas and near the bomb bay. The Townsville Service Depot devised remedial steps that involved the fabrication of 97 parts, 52 of which could be fabricated at Townsville.

Extra B-24 tail turrets were finally allotted to the theater so that they could be installed as nose turrets to permit the planes to respond to the head on attacks by the Japanese fighter planes.

Kenny insisted that he needed P-38s instead of planned P-40s. Eventually the P-38 allotments, two groups, were augmented by a P-47 group which arrived in Australia late in June.

His pleas for additional personnel to permit rotation of crews that had flown for several months was also heard. Promises were made although not in total agreement with the formulas that Kenny proposed.

The 345th Bomb Group arrived in Australia in early May, equipped with B-25s. They flew their first mission in July. The 822nd and 823rd Squadrons for the 38th Bomb Group arrived in July and began training in Australia. Some shifts in personnel were made from the experienced combat squadrons to provide experienced leadership. They would not be ready for combat until October.

As June rolled in, more fighters and bombers arrived. By the end of July the trickle of new equipment had become a significant flow.

The Townsville Depot was capable of performing all propeller repairs and making propeller blades by July. They were also removing winterizing equipment from the new planes arriving from the States. Fewer planes were being delivered to the theater with such equipment.

A P47 group arrived in the theater in June. They entered combat in August. It was soon realized that the P-47s needed a large belly tank to extend their range for effective combat. By August, 1200 belly tanks for the P-47s and the P-38s were being manufactured in Australia each month.

At the same time, the Japanese were having problems maintaining their supply of replacement planes and pilots. As the months progressed, their losses were increasing. Replacement pilots were not as experienced and this increased their losses against the ever growing number of American planes and pilots. They transferred combat flight groups from the Netherlands East Indies and from southeast Asia.

The Tony fighters moved into Rabaul in August. American fighter pilots had to get acquainted with this new plane whose performance was better than the Zeke and Zero.

(Continued page 15, **The World At War**)

## THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 14)

The lull in southwest Pacific combat in this period also permitted the initiation of construction of much more suitable equipment in the States. Changes were made to the equipment of fighting personnel. Before the end of 1943, medium tanks (the Sherman) would be sent to the theater. There was a need for more suitable landing craft. This would permit movement of troops and equipment from place to place along the shore of the impenetrable jungle on these islands.

The small bulldozers were no match for the jungle when it came to building airfields and other bases. Stronger construction equipment would be needed. Some of it would need to be disassembled for air transport. American ingenuity was tapped to provide these and many other necessities.

The rest and recuperation of infantry troops during the period provided an opportunity for more suitable training and reequipping.

After the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, the Japanese realized that the Huon Gulf bases were becoming more vulnerable. They began building up the Madang base from which they were sending supplies overland to Laé. The trail, over 150 miles, led south into the interior to the Ramu and then the Markham Valley and southeast to Lae. They were also developing Wewak into a major base for their Army air forces. Both bases guarded the western flank of Rabaul.

The Australians at Wau had been pestering the Japs at Salamau and Lae for many months. At the end of April, the Australian Kanga Force at Wau was relieved by the Australian 3rd Division.

Planning for the reduction of Lae began in June. The strategy was to pressure the Japs at Salamau enough to draw troop reinforcements from Lae. This would weaken the Lae base prior to an attack on Lae in September. The Australian force's only means of supply was by air to the landing strip at Wau.

To ease this situation, a sea borne landing was planned at Nassau Bay a few miles to the south and east of Salamau. This would hopefully convince the Japs that Salamau was the next major objective of the Allies.

At the end of June, American and Australian forces landed at Nassau bay. The landing proved to be difficult because of the rocks and unusually heavy surf. Several of the barges carrying equipment and supplies were damaged or lost. The landing force was made up primarily of inexperienced troops who had received inadequate training.

The group struggled with inappropriate

(Continued page 16, **The World At War** )

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 14)

**Raining destruction at Dagua**

The enemy would be expecting them and they would be looking for them at this point.

Again, the formation hugged the foothills to the south and behind the low range between them and the north coast and Dagua. A low cloud cover hanging close to the ridge separated the B-25s from their P-38 cover flying above the clouds.

As they drew abreast of the dropoff point in the ridge, enemy fighters pounced on them. The fighters seemed to direct most of their attention on the squadron leader. Cheli chose the same abrupt dropoff in the ridge of the coastal range, much to Middlebrook's consternation, as his turning point to approach the target. Even as the formation crested the ridge, the enemy attackers increased their concentration on Cheli's plane as well as increased attacks on his wing men.

Jap fighters were waiting and dove from above to intercept the leader in an attempt to break up the formation. Each flight of B-25s made its turn in a timed sequence to assure proper spacing for the attack while the enemy fighters swept over and through the formations.

As Middlebrook finished his turn to the target he was shocked to see that Cheli's right engine was emitting smoke. The smoking engine was soon fully ablaze involving more of the right wing.

Cheli continued to press his strafing attack and dropped his bombs on the target without pulling away to seek his own safe escape and thereby breaking up the attack formation. After dropping his bombs and moving out over the water, he finally signaled his wingman, Pittman, to take over as he dropped down to ditch in the water. He made a controlled ditching and four men were observed to emerge from the plane as it sat for a few moments in a nose down position.

As Middlebrook was ready to launch his strafing attack, a crew member advised all on board that their number three man, Donagan, had been hit, had fallen away, and was now lost to sight. The crew was now contemplating the loss of two of their companion planes and crews. After strafing on their approach to the air field, the planes dropped clusters of 23-pound parafrag bombs to spread further havoc among the planes and service vehicles on the ground.

When the planes left the target, they moved into a low cloud bank just off shore to elude the Japanese fighters. After flying eastward for a few minutes, they emerged from the clouds to find their friendly P-38

(Continued page 16, **A New Way to Fight the War** )

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR

(From page 15)

fighter cover. The fighters took over the fight with the still pursuing Jap fighters. Even then, the B-25s had gotten in good licks against the enemy fighters. A couple of the B-25 pilots had scored fatal hits with their nose guns on two of the enemy planes. Several of the B-25s had been damaged and some pilots had difficulty in bringing them home.

Capt. Pittman nursed his plane, with engines damaged by machine gun and 20 mm. cannon fire, back to 17-Mile Strip. Every blade of both props had been holed. Spent cartridges and enemy bullets rolled around in the plane.

Donagan had been forced to drop out of the formation when his plane was seriously damaged by attacking fighters. The rudder cables were badly damaged and the right aileron was useless. The copilot and navigator were both incapacitated by wounds. Donagan suffered three wounds in the upper right arm and shoulder. The turret gunner was wounded and the plexi-glass turret dome was shot away, shards cutting the gunners face. He dropped from his position to the floor of the compartment. The radioman/gunner also suffered a minor wound. More than 200 bullets rolled around in the plane. The hydraulic system had also been rendered useless.

The radioman eventually climbed across the bomb bay crawlway to render aid to those in the front compartment. After giving first aid to the best of his ability, he removed the copilot from his seat and took the seat himself, assisting Donagan in controlling the plane and flying home.

The results of the fierce defense by the returning bombers and the loss of two planes were obvious as the surviving planes taxied to their revetments. The losses cast a pall over air crews and ground crews. The Intelligence Officer moved from plane to plane, taking the reports in subdued tones and picking up cameras. The ground crews in the empty revetments sat in gloomy silence.

Suddenly word swept through the area that Donagan had just landed at the 7-Mile Drome crash strip. By whatever means they could, many of the men made their way to the crash strip.

Donagan had landed without wheels or flaps at 160 miles per hour. The tail control surfaces were virtually shredded. He had flown the plane home with most of the controls in a non functioning condition using his engines for directional control. Even the doctors could not understand how he had maneuvered the damaged plane back to Moresby with only one arm, let alone making such a good landing that none of the crew suffered further injury.

By assessing all accounts, it is believed that Cheli made a deliberate decision to do the most possible damage to the enemy in his final moments of flight. His right engine had possibly been hit before he crossed the ridge which caused him to turn before he really wanted to. Maintaining his position at the head of the squadron was essential to the completion of the attack. Death was an almost certain end. So, the man who loved flying and found such "fun" attacking the enemy, devoted himself to the completion of the mission.

The Japs reported a few days after the mission that Cheli had been taken prisoner. He was moved to Rabaul. Some time later Tokyo reported that he had been placed on a ship bound for Japan which was sunk by American bombers. However, his remains were found at Rabaul after the war and were returned to the U. S. and interred at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery south of St. Louis.

In an unofficial radio broadcast on 27 February, 1944, Tokyo reported that TSgt. Raymond Warren and SSgt. Clinton Murphree (an Australian flying with Cheli that day as observer) had been taken as prisoners.

*(Continued page 17, **A New Way to Fight the War** )*

## THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 15)

rations for two days before they could get sufficiently reorganized and begin moving northwest along the coast. A detachment moved inland quickly to establish contact with the Australians engaging the Japs at Mubo. This provided a new and more ample supply link for the Aussie 3rd Division. In mid August, the Aussie units with the landing force moved inland from the coast to join the 3rd Division approaching Salamau from Mubo.

The American units continued their advance along the coast, reinforced with artillery and other equipment landed at Tambu Bay in mid July.

The landing at Nassau Bay had taken place almost simultaneously with landings on Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands in the Solomon Sea and north of Milne Bay and the landing on New Georgia Island in the Solomons (see page 9). This put added pressure on the Japanese Command at Rabaul in the disposition of its forces.

Reconnaissance by long distance heavy bombers disclosed the buildup of facilities in the Wewak area. Two air strips were being developed at Wewak, another at Dagua about 10 miles northwest of Wewak and a fourth at But, about 10 miles beyond Dagua. The Allies were careful to display a minimum of attention to these ventures.

Wewak was beyond the range of fighter planes. The range from Moresby was marginal for the mediums and they needed fighter cover. While waiting for a more advanced base, more attention was given to the facilities at Madang and to the southeast along the northern coast of New Guinea.

A scouting party was sent out in June to explore an area in the lower Markham Valley southwest of Lae and west of Salamau. A small, old strip existed at Marilinan. In its rough condition it could only accommodate C-47s. A better location was found four miles distant at Tsili Tsili where another abandoned strip could be improved and made into a larger field.

A contingent of Australians was ordered overland from Wau to Marilinan. Confrontations with Japs took place at times. The jungle was extremely thick in places. Forward visibility was often limited to less than five feet. More fatalities were caused by small arms fire in dense jungle than from other causes. The Aussies joined the construction personnel being flown in to Marilinan.

In early July, equipment was flown in, reassembled and transported to Tsili Tsili. Two and half ton trucks were cut in half and flown in on separate planes. There, the parts were welded and bolted back together. The kunai grass clogged the hardly adequate small scrapers. The small graders

*(Continued page 17, **The World At War** )*

## THE WORLD AT WAR (From page 16)

bobbed over the ground creating the new strips with small bites.

By dint of hard work with the small tractors and graders, a 7000-foot strip was ready for 150 transports a day by mid July. On 26 July, the first fighters landed and soon 75 hardstands were available at a larger companion air strip.

A small force of Australians had held out at Bena Bena about 75 miles to the northwest with a small strip and were supplied by air drops. During the construction at Tsili Tsili, Kenny had requested that the Bena Bena force create a diversion by raising dust to indicate a larger strip was being constructed. The Japs did not discover the improvements at Tsili Tsili until early August.

Japanese bases at Madang and eastward were subjected to bombing missions whenever the weather permitted. Bases on New Britain, particularly the western portion, were also bombed. The heavy bombers continued attacks on Rabaul. Heavy bombers were used for recco missions.

The flow of planes from the U. S. and the increasing attrition of the Japanese planes and pilots had brought a near equity in the opposing air forces. The U. S. 5th Bomber Command now had 64 heavy bombers in two groups, and 58 B-25s in two groups. The number of fighter planes had grown with one new group of P-38s and one group with P-47s augmenting the longer serving fighters already in the area.

One new group of B-24s was stationed at Darwin in July. They were bombing the Java-Sumatra-Borneo area. On 13 August they surprised the Japs by bombing the oil field and processing facilities at Balikpapen.

By 1 August, an increasing number of Japanese planes were noted at the Wewak complex. By 13 August the total number of planes, including fighters, light and medium bombers, was well over 100.

General Whitehead now had the capability of launching the largest concentration of bombers since the Bismarck Sea battle. The medium bombers could now be covered by a host of fighter planes.

In the darkness of early morning on 17 August, 48 B-17s and B-24s began raining bombs on the Wewak complex. Soon after daylight, B-25s of the 38th Bomb Group waited for their fighter cover and the 3rd Attack in the upper Markham Valley. The 3rd Attack did not show. Most of the 26 planes of the 38th BG could not drop the now empty auxiliary tanks and were forced to abort the mission. Only three pressed on alone since the fighter cover stayed with the larger group forced to abort the mission.

Their attack on Dagua was a total surprise. They strafed the strip with destructive

*(Continued page 18, **The World At War**)*

## A NEW WAY TO FIGHT THE WAR (From page 16)

Other sources reported that three men were rescued from the crash area by a Japanese fishing boat. They were brought to shore and examined by a Japanese doctor before being taken to the Headquarters of the 59th Fighter Sentai for interrogation.

Cheli was wearing only his pants and seemed to have no serious injuries. TSgt. Raymond Warren had suffered a head injury not considered as life threatening. SSgt. Clinton Murphree (an Australian flying as observer) had a serious abdominal injury. The examining doctor was surprised to learn later that both men had died, since he did not consider Warren's injury to be serious and survival likely.

Several men of the 405th were cited for the devotion to duty on this mission over Dagua. The 71st had also scored heavily at But Airdrome that day. Several crews were given special recognition for having shot down intercepting fighters in aerial combat in the target area.

The final accounting for the two days of attack on the Wewak area airdromes credits the 3rd Bomb Group and the 38th Bomb Group with destroying over 200 Japanese planes. This does not account for planes seriously damaged on the ground and in the air fights. The Allied fighter escorts made additional contributions to this total.

Japanese sources indicate that they did not have this many planes in the Wewak area at the time. But Hiroyuki Shindo, an assistant professor in the Military History Department of the National Institute for Defense Studies, Tokyo, wrote of these two missions, ". . . the Fourth Air Army was reduced to an operational strength of just over 30 planes. The destruction of the Japanese air forces meant that the Allies could now conduct air operations more or less freely . . ."

Cheli was subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic devotion to duty.

Another mission was run to the two western airstrips of the Wewak complex by the 38th Bomb Group on 21 August. Barges and more enemy planes were destroyed and another B-25 made use of the 7-Mile Drome crash strip on return.

On one of the Wewak missions, "Bud" Yoeman reported that his plane's electrical system was shot out over the target. They had been damaged by ground fire over the target. Dick Slve, navigator, discovered a 250 pound bomb hanging from one shackle snap and only a few short inches of the safety wire in position. They remained close to the deck until they were no longer being attacked by enemy fighters.

Then Louis Rice took the plane to a higher altitude while they tried to figure out how to get rid of the bomb. Once in more stable air, Slve took a thin dime from his pocket. It might work to unscrew the screw in the bomb shackle. Yoeman held Slve's legs under his arms as Slve descended head first into the bomb bay. He could only work a few minutes each trip into the bomb bay. After numerous trips, Dick was successful in removing the screw and the bomb fell away free. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

On 25 August, planes from both squadrons struck the bivouac area and shipping at Hansa Bay. This finished the combat action of the 38th Bomb Group for the month of August. It had been a month of intense and dramatic action. It had also recorded the loss of several planes and crews. With all planes modified and the pace of the combat picking up, the 38th had flown over 975 hours of combat in August.

Cheli had been regarded as, in Isham Johnson's words, "an excellent pilot, fearless under combat conditions and always leading the tough sorties. . . Some people you meet and later forget. Ralph Cheli was the kind you meet and remember forever."

On recent missions, several planes had their top turret cover blown away. Gunners stuck to their position in some instances. Some of the pilots debated the problem, concluding that the vibration of the guns firing and the stress of air speed resulted in fatigue in the plexi-glass. This problem would require study and action to remedy in future weeks.

# SURVIVING A PARACHUTE JUMP

*Ray Slaick, Junior, was only 11 years old when his father lied about his age to get him into the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the depression where he could get regular food and clothes. On paper, he was 14 years old. He was quite large and muscular for his age and called "The Big Indian".*

*When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Ray found himself at supposedly 17, a member of the Army. He had been given some mechanical training in the CCC and was given aircraft engine training in the Air Force. By his real 15th birthday (18 on paper) he is said to have had 40 or more missions in New Guinea. Here is his story of a special experience as a mechanic. The story has been edited for continuity and space.*

On June 7, 1943 at 8:30 in the morning, Major Best and Captain Armor and I were chosen to go out and test a brand new engine on an aircraft that had been shot up bad. It was generally just a milk run of about 45 minutes to an hour to see that the engine was all right.

We were flying along towards the 30-Mile Strip. Suddenly, as I was standing behind the Skipper Best, the plane started vibrating furiously. It was as if someone was pounding on top of the aircraft. Best turned around to me and said, "What in the world is this? I can't hold this plane." Come to find out, the life raft had popped out of the container and had inflated. A rope tied on it was just beating on top of the plane.

Finally Best looked at me and he says, "Sergeant, you've got to bail out of this craft. It's gonna go down." He looked at Armor and he says, "you've gotta get out of here, Armor, this thing's gonna go down." Armor was flying copilot. Just the three of us were aboard the ship.

So immediately I grabbed a chest pack. It was an 18 footer, and mine was a 24 footer because I weighed so much. I specifically got out of the airplane by kicking out the bottom hatch. I sat down and put my feet in there, and then I couldn't get through this thing because of my pack. So what I had to do was just suck my gut in and get the pack down.

Armor put his feet up there for me to grab a hold of so that I could push out on them. But I couldn't get away from the plane because the boomin prop wash was holding me to the plane. Finally, I just kind of pushed on the plane and got away from it.

I pulled the rip cord on this thing and I just went almost straight down like a rock. When I landed I hit this tree limb. I broke the limb off, and just tore my left leg up terribly bad - no broken bones, but just gashes and cut it. In 1970 I had a serious operation on my left leg from all that.

When my chute popped open it was so fierce with this 18 footer that I lost my boots (I had those Aussie boots on) and my gun (I had it real loose around me with the holster), and web belt and it all came off. The only thing that I hit the ground with was a pair of sox that I had on.

I didn't lose my pants, but they came almost down, but I grabbed them before they fell. I held my chute ring in my hand, which I still have to this day. The print of the ring stayed on my hand for months and months because I had grabbed it so tight. I don't remember saying "Geronimo". The first thing that I thought of when my parachute opened was these words, "God bless the silk worm," and I got hysterical laughing.

So anyway, when I landed and hit that tree I don't know how long I hung there, but it was several hours I'm sure. I'd say that I was probably 30-40 feet above the ground. The chute snagged on the tree, and I'm just hanging there. Below me was just dense jungle, and I couldn't see the ground so I really didn't know how high I was, but I knew that I had to get down and do something because I was bleeding so bad.

So I noticed in my backpack here there was a little container that carries all of the medicines, sulfa powder and the little thing of matches, and then it had a big Bowie knife in it. So I cut my harnesses and left the one side here holding onto the chute so I could climb down. It was like a rope. The whole chute came down when I came down. I fell down hard.

The first thing I saw was a spider, which was about as big as a silver dollar. He was a monstrous looking thing on a web. It didn't frighten him when I fell in front of him. He just sat there. I was still hysterical, and that scared me so bad seeing that spider. I'm still fearful of them today.

I got down and got my knife out and started hacking. I knew I had to get someplace where I could see sky. I figured that they'd be looking for

*(Continued page 19, **Surviving a Parachute Jump**)*

# THE WORLD AT WAR

*(From page 17)*

machine gun fire and dropped highly destructive fragmentation bombs. After leaving the target, they picked up Japanese fighters who were determined they should not escape. They did survive and returned to 17-Mile and won plaudits from higher Headquarters.

The 3rd Attack Group, who had been late to the rendezvous at Marilinan, hit their targets at Wewak with equal surprise and left great devastation. The success of the raids and with more succulent targets left behind, as shown in the photographs, caused the Bomber Command to order a followup mission for the next day.

The faulty tank drop mechanism was fixed during the night as the ground crews made the planes ready for the second mission the next day.

This time the full force of both groups of B-25s hit the targets. The Jap fighters were waiting for them but the air cover minimized the Allied losses and destroyed several enemy fighters in the air. The bombers sent some of the intercepting fighters to fiery ends. All four strips in the Wewak complex suffered devastating damage.

On this day, Major Cheli (pronounced Kelly) led the 405th. The enemy fighters hit the squadron even before they topped the ridge and descended on Dagua. Cheli's plane was a primary target of the fighters.

The plane was already on fire as they swept over the ridge but Cheli retained command of the group until after they reached the sea. He then passed the leadership to a wingman and ditched his plane. He was soon captured and eventually transported to Rabaul. He was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. His remains were located at Rabaul after the war and were buried at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetary south of St. Louis.

The total affect of the missions on all the Wewak airdromes was tallied as over 200 Japanese planes destroyed on the ground and in the air. A large quantity of ground service equipment was also destroyed.

The Japanese air superiority vanished in these two raids. The Americans now had air superiority in the Southwest Pacific Theater which would only increase as the war progressed.

Additional missions to the Wewak complex were made a few days later and in the months to follow. Wewak was neutralized and bypassed. The Japanese at Wewak were left to wither until they surrendered after Japan surrendered in September 1945. Continuing raids on other Japanese targets on the north coast of New Guinea were made throughout the month of August.

## SURVIVING A PARACHUTE JUMP *(From page 18)*

me. I then realized something that they told me at survival class. They said if you're shot down in the jungle, don't move. "Stay where you are so we can find you." I didn't know whether Best had made it back or didn't.

First of all I was conscious enough and had sense enough to realize I had to build a fire. Then I hacked out enough to where I'd have a walk around area of maybe four or five feet wide. The jungle was so dense that you couldn't see anything. I did find dry wood. I started a fire.

I couldn't walk very far because my leg was bleeding too bad. I could stand up, but painfully. When I got my wounds dressed I built the fire. Then I realized I was going to have to build three fires around me so that I could sleep in the middle of them and keep the animals or whatever was around away from me.

Whether it (about head hunters) was true or not I don't know, but I was frightened to death out there. The first thing that happened was I realized that I didn't have any water. I didn't have any food. I didn't have any shoes; I didn't have a gun. How in the world am I going to survive?

I remembered that they said if we dug these roots we could drip water out of it and we could drink it. I decided to dig these roots, and cut the bamboo shoots down. I knew that there was a lot of water in the bamboo.

Who in the world would come after a lowly Tech Sergeant in the middle of the jungle when the war was going on? We had always heard that if you get shot down brother, that's it, or if you have to bail out that's it. I was really ready to die. I kept those fires going.

I woke up one morning - it was just getting a little light - and I looked around. There was I don't know how many wild boars just standing there around this little opening where I was in between these fires that were still burning. I knew that as long as I stayed in there I was safe. Suddenly this big boar took a lunge at me. I jumped on this tree I had fixed like a ladder. I climbed up this tree and this boar caught my calf of my left leg, and gashed me. They stayed there for about two days before they went away.

The first person that I remember seeing was a native that must have been seven feet tall. He looked taller at the time. He was a giant of a man. He had a bushy head of hair that you couldn't have put it into a washtub. He had these great big strings around his biceps, which were like a giants to me. He had paint all over him, like one of those color pictures. The guy was fierce looking. I thought then that I'm going to be eaten. Suddenly he let out this blood curdling scream, and there must have been 20 of them show up just out of nowhere around me. I knew that I was going to be eaten and that was all there was to it. I remember saying this to this great big guy, because he seemed to be the chief, "Please don't kill me."

Then I heard this voice say, "Oh, it's OK Matey, they ain't going to eat ya." This guy shot three times to get order back because they were ripping up my parachute. And I said, "Thank God somebody can hear me here."

They picked me up to carry me to this river bank. I was within a quarter of a mile of this bloomin river and I was perishing for water.

They sent B-25s over to look for me. They started dropping me some notes. Major Best later said that keeping the fires burning was the best thing that ever happened to me because they could see exactly where I was.

*(Continued next column, **Surviving a Parachute Jump** )*

# DID YOU KNOW THEM?

We are changing the way we have been doing this column. We have been unable to close the loop and put you in contact with the seeker on various occasions because the seeker did not respond to our message for direct contact.

Therefore, we are including the information necessary for you to contact the seeker directly. So it is up to you. We trust this will expedite the connecting process.

We have had opportunity to supply the information sought on some occasions. Be assured, these seekers will greatly appreciate your contact.

**John H. Di Filippo** (pilot). 823rd. Down at Kavieng. Brother, Rich Di Filippo, would like to find a picture of John or get in touch with anyone who knew John: ***rdifilippo@swbell.net***

**Lt Carl Gage**, 71st. Son, Carl Gage, would like to hear from you:***carl@ivfneedles.com***

**John (Jack) Hartzell**, 1944/45, Okinawa, had a "snarling Black Panther" on back of A-2 jacket. Son, John, seeking info. (Editor: I have advised John that his father may have been with 345th): ***jjhartzelljh@netscape.net***

**Samuel W. Soto**, Flt/O with the 405th.,lost 5/15/1946 on a recon flight with 2 Lt. Robert H. Lorang. Cousin Robert Lopez, (562) 425-3980, hm., (626) 945-7653, cell: ***realrobert@earthlink.net***

**Raymond Warren**, Radio Operator, down with Cheli. Nephew would like to communicate with anyone who knew his great uncle or witnessed the crash. Tom Baldwin: ***thebaldwinfamily@sbcglobal.net***

## SURVIVING A PARACHUTE JUMP *(From Column 1)*

Tanberg dropped me a note in the area and says, "Don't move we're coming to get you." Best dropped me one that says, "Good news, they'll get to you in the morning." So he knew about how far they were.

They got to me the next morning, but it took two days to get me out of that jungle area. We had to cross this river. When they crossed this river they tied me on some logs and the bloomin river was swollen, and the logs turned over, and there I was under the logs tied to them. But the natives got me upright before I drowned. They got me across and they carried me back through the jungles.

The bad part of all of this was that Dr. Sharp, Captain I believe he was at the time, told me the first thing when he saw me, "Now Sergeant, I want you to go take a good shower."

That bloomin shower that I took broke me out from one end to the other with every kind of germ and disease in the world in that water. It was not even smart to have had that happen to me. Anyway, they got me well again and I went to Sydney.

Down there they said, "You just look terrible." I looked like a meat grinder, that's what the guys said. I looked like I had been through a meat shredder, with all of the cuts and the bruises.

After my leave in Sydney, I came back and flew 24 more missions.

# EDITOR RIDES IN A B-25 AGAIN

For years after leaving the service, the sound peculiar to B-25 engines would cause me to rush outside and look up to find the plane. Sometimes I was fooled by an A-26 (later redesignated as B-26). I was located in southern California after the war. The National Guard at Long Beach had B-25s and Talman flew a couple of B-25s as photo planes for Hollywood out of the Orange County Airport so it was not unusual to hear them for several years.

When I was flying B-25s in 1943/44, I often wished I could take my wife for a ride. The opportunity never came. When I left the Philippines in 1945, I never flew in one again. But the desire never really went away. It had turned into a fantasy dream.

In early April of this year, our youngest daughter came to spend the Sunday afternoon with us. At dinner she gave me a large envelope. I opened and glanced at the material. It described the B-17, B-24, and B-25 which the Collings Foundation sends out on tour to many air shows each year. The great 5x7 picture of a B-25 caused me to pause. But I didn't really read the printed material, reading at the table is not supposed to be good manners.

My daughter kept saying, "Read it Dad!" Even then I didn't get it. She finally had to come right out and tell me there was a certificate good for a flight in the front compartment of the B-25 and she had scheduled me for 9 A.M. on April 22 at the Gillespie Field Air Show.

I was overwhelmed. As the afternoon wore on, I kept thinking about that certificate and my mind kept going back to my dream. I finally told my daughter, "I can't go on that flight without your Mother." They just looked at me as if to say, "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

The next day, I called Collings and booked Kay for the other front compartment seat even though I considered it an extravagance.

So it was on 22 April that Kay and I boarded that B-25 and had a 45 minute flight over the San Diego County back country foothills. We really weren't very high in the air. I watched the altimeter hovering around 2500 feet which meant we were quite low since some of the ridges and peaks in the area are anywhere between 1500 and 3000 feet above sea level. We sat for some time in the bombardier's compartment scanning the neighborhood swimming pools and gardens as well as some of San Diego's large water reservoirs lakes.

What a ride? A dream come to life! We would both go out and do it again tomorrow!

# COLLINGS FOUNDATION AIR SHOW TOUR

***California***

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shafter | 5/13, 14 | Van Nuys | 5/14, 15 | Burbank | 5/16-18 |
| Mntn View | 5/18-23 | Hollister | 5/23-25 | Monterey | 5/25-27 |
| Sacramento | 5/27-29 | Livermore | 5/29-31 | Vacaville | 6/1-3 |
| Marysville | 6/3-5 | Chico | 6/5-7 | Crescent Cty | 6/7-9 |
| North Bend | 6/9. 10 | | | | |

***Oregon***

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corvallis | 6/10-12 | Redmond | 6/13-15 | The Dalles | 6/15-17 |
| Aurora | 6/17-20 | | | | |

***Washington***

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yakima | 6/20-22 | Bremerton | 6/22-24 | Port Angeles | 6/24-26 |
| Burlington | 6/27-29 | Everett | 6/29-7/1 | Seattle | 7/1-5 |
| Boise, ID | 7/5-7 | Casper, WY | 7/7. 8 | Frt. Collins, CO | 7/8-11 |
| Lincoln, NE | 7/11-13 | St. Cloud, MN | 7/13-15 | Minneapolis, MN | 7/15-18 |
| Sheboygan, WI | 7/18-20 | Racine. WI | 7/20-22 | Chicago/Whlng,IL | 7/22-25 |
| Valpariso, IN | 7/25-27 | Kankakee, IL | 7/27-29 | West Chicago | 7/29-31 |
| Indianapolis, IN | 8/1-3 | Huntington, IN | 8/3-5 | Detroit. MI | 8/5-8 |
| Pittsburg, PA | 8/8-10 | State College, PA | 8/10-12 | Penn Yan. NY | 8/12-14 |
| Syracuse, NY | 8/15-18 | Massena, NY | 8/19-21 | Plattsburgh, NY | 8/22-24 |
| Montgomery, NY | 8/24-26 | Trenton, NJ | 8/26-28 | Coatesville, PA | 8/29-31 |

*The September to November schedule will be published in the September issue of the newsletter.*

# ESPECIALLY TO OUR WIDOWS

In September, we will be distributing a set of CDs containing several photograph collections our members brought home with them from the Southwest Pacific. With these photo disks, there will also be a couple of disks with a collection of Larry Hickey's research notes gathered to be the basis of his book about the 38th Bomb Group.

Each of our members will receive a set of these disks. Because your husband was a member of our group, you are entitled to receive a set, also, at NO CHARGE TO YOU, even the postage is prepaid. BUT, we need two things from you.

(1) We need to know that you want this set of CDs.

(2) We need to confirm your U. S. Postal Service address so that we ship them to you correctly. There will be a significant postal charge for each set and we do not want to have to pay for returns because of an incorrect address.

SO please sit down **today** and send a note to Orland Gage saying "Yes, I want a set of disks. Please send them to me at (your correct mailing address)." No additional cost for you.

Orland's address is 337 West Reservoir Dr., Lewiston, ID 83501.

We would count it a privilege to continue sending you our newsletter. If you do not want the disks but wish to continue receiving the newsletter (at no cost), just write, "Newsletter only, to (your current mailing address). If you wish to make a donation to cover the cost, producing and mailing three newsletters each year costs approximately $10.00. Make your check to "38th Bomb Group Association"

**Widows are welcome to attend our reunions.** There are almost always some at our reunions along with other family members.

# For Your Emergency Pack

Bill Hanrahan takes a look at the handbook, ***Escape from the Jungle.*** *(Editor: I never saw this book. Did you?)*

The emergency list of items and medical supplies suggested to be stored in the parachute pack would have looked like the bottom of a collection drawer in our kitchen. The medical components contained everything but an anesthetic. Can you imagine using castor oil in the jungle. They should have issued corks!

Oh, yes, spare ammunition. Most crew members felt lucky to hit a large barrel at 20 feet.

The psychological affect of the book was rather adverse when superstitious actions could sometimes affect our hopes of survival. In other words, if you do not prepare, you would not need it. As some might say, "To hell with it! It won't happen to me."

*(Editor: But I sure wished there was some gun oil in my pack when I was sitting in the Borneo jungle.)*