38th Bomb Group

823 rd Squadron

71st Squadron

822 nd Squadron

405th Squadron

"The Sun Setters"

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

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Our "**2006 Reunion**" at Mesa, AZ, 28 - 30 Sept 06 was super. We had 120 enjoy the Falcon Field Museum, where we toured the facility and viewed several low level fly-bys of six ship formations of light aircraft plus their B-25 D aircraft with its cannon and guns. For more **2006 REUNION memories** check the back page.

The "**Membership Meeting**" was very productive. The significant items approved were: **1**. Revising the 38th BG bi-laws to stay within the IRS criteria, so as to maintain our non-profit status; **2**. Donating $1,400 to place a 38th BG plaque, which will honor our fallen comrades, at the 5th AF Memorial, Hill Air Force Base; **3**. Having our next reunion in 2007 – Yes 2007 instead of waiting until 2008; **4**. Selecting Honolulu, HI, for the sight of our next reunion in the Fall 2007.

Our "**2007 Reunion**" will be in Honolulu, HI, **20, 21 & 22 September 2007**, which will be a non-peak tourist time and provide the best airline and hotel prices. Check the back page for a peek at our plans for ***REUNION 2007 IN HONOLULU.***

Our reunion schedule will include: Thursday: 20 September, Welcoming dinner; Friday: Day Tours; Evening, Dinner Show; Saturday: Day Tours; Evening, Farewell Banquet with entertainment at our hotel. See the back page for tours we are trying to line up. We will have the final program and registration/reservation in the May issue.

Regarding the status of our book, ***SAGA OF THE SUN SETTERS***, see "Reflections on Reunion 2006" on the back page.

Tom Behrens is our new webmaster. He is the son of Captain Albert Behrens, who was in the 822nd BS and is on the revered "In Ever-Honored Memory" listing of 38th Bomb Group veterans. Tom is a computer "Whiz", who is upgrading our 38 BG Website to "state of the art". You will soon begin to see the results of his work. Watch for a completely new look over the next few months. Check it out. We expect to add additional news, including reunion news, posted on the site in coming weeks. You can be among the first to know by checking it out. We are grateful to Tom for stepping up.

We all owe Chris Guess big time for starting the web page and being our webmaster for six years. Thank you, Chris, from everyone in our Association.

Orland Gage, our S/T, not only manages our money; but, does many other things for the Association. He is presently working to gaining access to the official records at Maxwell in a form we can use easily on our computers.

Al Kennedy presented his 38th BG WW II "Historical Data" package to all of those of us at Mesa. Thanks Al for a terrific job and to all who had a part in this endeavor. And ***AL NEEDS OUR HELP!!*** See how Al needs your help on page 19.

In closing, let us all remember to say a prayer for our troops who are in harms way fighting for this great country of ours.

Jack DeTour

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DUES ARE DUE!!
No dues, no news!

REUNION 2007
Honolulu, Sept. 20-22, 2007

IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

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

Algy K. Anderson	405th	
Dewey B. Haynes	822nd	
Alphonse Saccomando	822nd	
James Bennett	823rd	

Correction: We regret the error in spelling in our September issue:
Braxton E. Allran 823rd

TOTAL TO DATE	
Headquarters	18
69th Squadron	2
70th Squadron	59
71st Squadron	151
89th Squadron	1
405th Squadron	171
822nd Squadron	92
823rd Squadron	93
Unit unknown	2

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

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

FROM THE EDITOR

David Gunn

Along with everyone else, Kay and I enjoyed the reunion. So many had very kind words for us and the newsletter and we appreciated that. Jack had included complements for Orland, Jim, and me in his message but, as you see, it was very long and there wasn't room for that part.

As always, I got wound up on Internet research regarding several events covered in this issue. I was especially amazed at the complicated preparations that were made for the landings in the Admiralties and at Hollandia and what was done in such a short time and required the loan of resources from the Pacific fleet that had to be so closely timed.

The momentum of the Allies was picking up and no advantage must be lost. I found the reading on some sites to be fascinating, though long. So, I suggest you go to these sites and get more insight.

http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/AAF/IV/index.html/#contents

http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-P-Rabaul/index.tml#contents

Lee Grover, one of the original group to fly to Australia, has finally polished up his collection of stories about his experiences and published it through AUTHORHOUSE, entitled ***Incidents In the Life of a B-25 Pilot.*** Lee was kind enough to give me a self published, preliminary copy from which I have gleaned items of interest which I have used in the newsletter. Go to: ***www.authorhouse.com/bookstore*** In the search box put ***Roy Lee Grover*** or the title (above). It's priced at $14.95.

Over a year ago, I was contacted by Andy Farmer for help regarding the 38th BG. Andy's mother was the wife of Capt Long, the navigator on Col. Hawes' last flight which culminated in the crash of the plane into the Japanese carrier. He wrote this book, ***Finding the Way***, (234 oages) as a story of the heritage of all the family, using Long's letters and a broad group of other sources. The book is well written and has much background material against which the life of Capt. John Long is set. It presents Long's training to be a navigator, his time as an instructor, and his combat experience. The background information was really enlightening and interesting as well as the personal story. As one not benefiting from a intimate knowledge of B-25s and the 38th Bomb Group, Andy has done a good job. Long's wife later married Andy's father. Farmer also wrote a book about his own father, ***A Surgeon's Duty: The World War II Memoir of John L. Farmer***. His father was a surgeon before the war started and served with the Army from the New Hebridies to Okinawa and Japan. I enjoyed both books.

DID YOU KNOW THEM?

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

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

James Bower, navigator, 823rd: daughter, Julia
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Claude Carpenter, pilot, 405th: nephew, Dan.
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Ernest Crane, Cpl., 405th: Nephew David.
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George R Gable, Jr., 823, Nephew, David
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Richard Eckels (Eck), pilot, 405th: daughter Melanie,
ninieckels@peakpeak.com

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

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

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

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

THE WORLD AT WAR

As 1944 dawned, there was reason for optimism in "the free world". It reminded one of that old football game chant in the stands:

Push 'em back, way back!
Push 'em back, way back!

"The arsenal of the world" had been fully mobilized and was shipping the tools and supplies for war to far flung battle fronts around the world.

Aircraft built: 1942, 47,000; 1943, 85,000
Tanks built: 1942 and 1943, 148,000
Trucks built: 1,200,000
Ships built: 27,000,000 tons
(*the equivalent of 465 USS Missouri*)
(Liberty ships built, 1942, 1943: 2,750)
(*only 200 Liberty ships were lost to torpedoes, mines, explosions, and Kamikazies*)
(aid to Allies: $3,500,000,000)

Germany and Japan could not withstand the might of the Allies arrayed against them. The prophetic words of Admiral Yamamototo, killed in 1943, would take 21 more bloody months to see their fulfillment, "We shall be invincible for six months and then . . .)

WESTERN EUROPEAN THEATER

The air bombardment of the western continent continued virtually around the clock. Allied air losses were heavy because fighter escort all the way to many targets was not available due to the long range.

Berlin received New Year Greetings from the RAF—1,000 tons of bombs. Planes continued to deliver such cargo until on 20 January, no less than 2,300 tons of explosives and shrapnel were dropped. This was the 11th massive attack on Berlin in two months. This was the RAF's answer to Hitler's speech on New Years Day. Germany is determined to fight on rather than accept the fate of defeat and surrender.

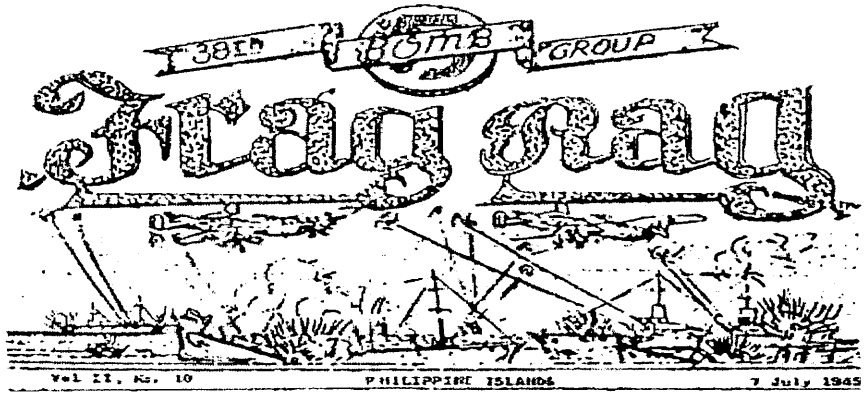
But the cost were great. On 12 January, in a 650 plane attack on German aeronautical industry, 60 American aircraft were shot down. But at the end of the month 800 bombers of the 8th Air Force bombed the industrial center at Frankfurt-on-main.

In early January, Allied aircraft began air drops of supplies and arms to the underground resistance partisans of France, Belgium, and Holland as well as Italian partisans in the north of Italy.

On 5 February, the Argentine government broke diplomatic relations with Vichy France, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. But ten days later, several Argentine officers, led by Peron, took over the Foreign Ministry offices to prevent any break with the Nazi led Axis powers.

The RAF, using a massive 6 ton bomb,

(Continued page 4, The World At War)



The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

The Group flew to Uligan (Ulingan) Harbor, on the north coast northwest of Madang on 8 January. This was the occasion of the first loss of the new year. As the planes approached the village and harbor from the south, Lt. Leo Braun (823rd) was hit by anti aircraft fire in his right engine. Flames quickly engulfed the nacelle and soon spread to the whole right side of his B-25.

He continued in the line of attack firing two more rounds from the 75 mm. cannon in the nose of the plane. The man who was Leo's copilot when they came overseas was flying nearby. He saw the whole thing unfolding before his eyes and knew that Leo was going down. He could not watch and turned his eyes away to the path he was flying. Leo continued firing the .50 caliber machine guns in the nose of his plane as it hit the ground at the south edge of the village. After contacting the ground, the plane slid on the road right through village. The bombs exploded from the heat of the burning plane setting fire to the buildings which were filled with arms and supplies. The scene was one of utter destruction.

The several barges in the harbor were strafed and bombed by other planes in the formation. General Kenney cited the crew for "Gallantry in Action," awarding the Silver Star posthumously.

Uligan Harbor

Uligan Harbor was again the target for missions on 9 and 11 January and the men were mindful of the tragedy of 8 January.

On 16 January, the Group made a barge sweep along the coast to the east of Uligan. As the formation turned to make a second run on some targets, Ed Riehl noticed Ralph Freek's plane continuing a flight path to the west away from the rest of the formation. The plane was never seen again. After the war, the plane wreck was located in the mountains a few miles to the south and west of Uligan near a village. The natives had reported the crash site to Australian authorities following hostilities in the area and aided in recovery of the bodies of all crew members.

More disconcerting to the attackers that day was seeing another of

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The 38th is *ON THE MOVE*

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their planes fatally wounded; the crew bailed out. As they descended, Japanese fighter planes in the area fired on the descending survivors.

The 822nd suffered a crushing loss on 21 January. Capt. David Bryant, Jr., C.O., took off in marginal weather from Durand just before 11 a.m. on an administrative flight to Dobodura. Bryant was a veteran of 58 combat missions. The flight should have taken less than an hour.

Twelve men aboard the plane: Lt, Stewart, squadron Intelligence Officer, Lt. Goodwin, squadron Finance Officer, Lt. Jones, from the 431st Fighter Squadron, and a crew from the 823rd who were to ferry a plane back to Moresby. Dobodura had not reported their arrival. A check was made. The plane had not landed at any other field in New Guinea.

The Fourth Fighter reported Radar tracking the plane as far as 10 miles southeast of Kokoda near the summit of the trail over the Owen Stanley mountains to Dobodura where their Radar plot lost it. An Australian patrol at Myola, N.G., reported the sound of a twin engine aircraft in a dive at about the same location as the last Radar plot. The patrol also said that natives reported a loud explosion at the same location.

One B-25 set out immediately to fly over the projected flight path in search of the missing plane. Lt. Payne searched over the local area and swamps until darkness forced his return to Durand Field.

Early on the 22nd, twelve B-25s took off with assigned search sectors covering a 100-mile wide path over the mountains. Several crash sites were found. Checks revealed they were not the one being looked for. Al Behrens borrowed an L-5 and flew an intensive low altitude search in the area of the last Radar plot. Al saw an Australian party on the ground and dropped them a note asking if they knew of a downed B-25 in the area. They drew an arrow on the ground. He searched in that direction. Low fuel, weather, and approaching darkness forced him to return to base.

During the evening, Al worked out a method for dropping a note and then picking up a response. Taking off again on the 23rd, Al reported, "Our pick-up worked swell. Got all the information we needed. Located the wreckage on a ridge 7800 feet above sea level. Plane is completely demolished, no possibility of survivors. Fire burned most of identifying marks from the plane. We photographed the wreckage."

Al took off again on the 24th. The wreckage sited the previous day had been identified as a C-47. He had flown nearly 15 hours in the search and was exhausted when he returned with no real results.

The leadership of the squadron had to be reestablished. A new C.O. was appointed from among the available officers, the highest grade in the Squadron was a First Lieutenant. The records furnish no indication that this wreck was ever found.

On the 28th, Lt. Charles Plageman and a crew of the 823rd picked up a new B-25 in Townsville and took off for Port Moresby just before noon. The plane never arrived and was not found at any other field. Planes from the 38th searched from Moresby along the coast and to the south.

Another 38th plane on its way to Townsville for modification reported seeing possible wreckage about 100 miles south of Port Moresby. Other planes from the Group did an intensive search of the area without any results. During this search another plane from this group also disappeared and was never located by additional searchers.

Shipping sweeps were made along the north coast of New Guinea west of Madang toward Wewak. On 3 February, the group attacked But airdrome again. As the 71st lead flight was passing over the target, a projectile passed through the cockpit inflicting leg wounds to both pilots. Once over the target, the navigator tended to the copilot;s wounds which seemed more serious. The plane landed safely at Durand. Damage had been inflicted on parked aircraft and a fire in what was believed to be a supply dump was burning furiously as the Sun Setters left the area.

On 5 February, 12 planes attacked a small ship nearing Wewak in the early morning. Unknown to the attackers was the fact that the small ship was transporting about 100 Catholic missionaries and lay workers with children. These POWs were being transported to Wewak from Bogia by

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THE WORLD AT WAR

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attacked industrial centers in France in a night raid on 8 February.

In late February, Allied saboteurs damaged a Norwegian ferry boat carrying heavy water (for manufacture of atom bombs) destined for German laboratories.

On 4 March, the mighty 8th Air Force made the first day light raid on Berlin. The cost was very high; nearly 80 of its planes were lost to German fighters and anti aircraft guns. The RAF continued its devastating night raids and on 18 March 1000 planes dropped 3000 tons of bombs.

In mid-March, the Germans occupied Hungary. Within a week, they forced the Rumanian government to agree to occupation by the Germans. The resources of the two countries thus became available to the German war machine.

On 13 April, American planes began to bomb the German artillery on the French channel coasts in preparation for the forthcoming Normandy invasion.

THE ITALIAN THEATER

The British and American forces, including Free French Expeditionary units continued their push toward Rome. The next major task was to breech the Gustav Line which the Germans had established across the Italian peninsula. The new Italian Government tried several members of the replaced Fascist regime and executed a few of them including Mussolini's son.

On 22 January, Allied forces, including American Ranger and Paratroops units and British Commando teams, landed behind the German Gustav line at Anzio on Italy's west coast. Allied aircraft dropped 2,000,000 leaflets over Rome to announce the approaching Allied forces.

Land exchanged hands several times as the Germans effectively defended their positions. But slowly, the Allies gained ground.

As they approached Monte Casino, the New Zealand Corps Commanding General with supporting evidence from a British General in the area, demanded that the Catholic Abbey on Monte Casino be bombed. The British General had affirmed that when he flew low over the Abbey he could see German troops in the courtyard and the Germans could observe every Allied movement in the surrounding valley.

B-17 and B-25 bombers completely destroyed the shrine on 15 February, killing the Bishop and several Monks. After the war evidence seemed to confirm that the Germans had taken great care to keep their men out of the Abbey. (Even in 2006, this is still being debated.) They had also taken the priceless ancient manuscripts from the Abbey and transported them to the Vatican for safe keeping.

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

THE WORLD AT WAR (From page 4)

The Allies had gained nothing. The Gemans now manned the site and turned it into a fortress actually able to observe all Allied action in the vicinity.

There had been attacks and counter attacks by both sides in the Anzio sector. By the third week in February, the Germans had conceded that the superior air and naval support that the Allies arrayed to support the Anzio forces made it impossible for them to eliminate this salient behind their defensive line.

Spring rains made military operations difficult and hindered the movement of mechanized equipment. The Germans launched several probes along their line surrounding the Anzio beachhead. The Allied forces there were able to repulse the probes and managed to extend their lines in some places. Meanwhile the Allies were pouring additional troops into the Anzio perimeter.

Along the Gustav line probes were launched by both sides as they felt out the opponent's positions. The Germans began building fortified lines further to the north. They were preparing for a hard delaying action against the steady advance of the Allies once the Spring condition was favorable for larger operations.

The Italian populous in the north of Italy posed growing problems. Whatever war production the Germans were able to get from Italian industries in the north was curtailed as over 100,000 workers walked out on 1 March. Italian partisans were able to kill 32 German troops in late March for which the Germans, in revenge, executed 335 civilians, many of whom were Jews. Stepped up air operations against all means of communication limited German movements to the hours of darkness.

The struggle for Monte Casino continued. In one of those strange quirks of war, in April the fierce fighting for Monte Casino was suspended for two hours while the two armies removed their dead and injured from the field of battle. The Allied units loaned their stretchers to the Germans and gave chocolate to the wounded and stretcher bearers. But Mt. Casino would remain in German hands until mid-May.

Free French military units as well as units representing the Polish Government in exile joined the Allied forces in Italy. They were assigned to positions facing the Gustav line. The Allies were preparing for a major offensive as the weather became favorable. Skirmishes and major actions by both sides took place throughout April and into May along the Gustov line. The beachhead at Anzio was still separated from the stalled Allied juggernaut to the south.

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

The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE* (From page 4)

the Japanese. The ship had no special markings.

It is not often that we find a report from a witness to such an attack. However, such a story by one of the missionaries is available. Here are portions of that report.

> "Then I saw, with horror gripping me, 12 planes heading for our little boat . . The order came to lie down. Twelve planes against our little boat. This was the end of her and our end, too. . . . Bombs rained down and shook the boat as plane after plane, in quick succession, came over the unfortunate 'Dorish Maru', each one releasing a hail of machine gun bullets and shells. Thousands splashed harmlessly into the sea, but many struck the boat and passengers.
>
> "But the little ack-ack gun worked furiously, and the machine guns and rifles of the soldiers rattled in reply to the fire of each on-coming plane. Several crews of the ack-ack gun were wiped out, but there were always others to take over. The air was filled with smoke and dust, while bullets whistled and whined. . . .
>
> "I looked straight in the face of the first ones to come over, terrible and cruel things they were as they roared over the 'Dorish Maru', with their wings almost touching the masthead. . .
>
> "The last plane came over the boat, the doors of the bomb-bay opened but it did not release its cargo. This was fortunate, because the ack-ack gun had become jammed and was silent. A cry of immense relief arose from the survivors. . . . The stricken 'Dorish Maru' was able to crawl into Wewak Harbor, though very slowly. She was still going under her own power, though only at quarter or half speed."

Nearly 50 of the missionary group were killed and others were wounded. The account does not give a number for the Japanese that were killed or wounded.

By February, it had been decided that the cannon in the nose of the B-25G was not suited to the missions the strafers were running. Firing of the gun caused skin buckling and stress damage much too frequently requiring significant time to repair. The weight was a disadvantage. Charles Benbow reported, "I recall one incident where a projectile came loose from the casing, stuck in the barrel, and black powder spilled in the navigator's compartment - smoking became very bad for the health!!!"

Modifications were begun, removing the cannon and placing two more .50 caliber machine guns in the nose. These added to the devastation that could be wrought against the usual targets.

On 11 February, the air echelon was sent over the mountains to fly missions from one of the Dobodura strips. This eliminated the problem of returning from their targets and struggling with the clouds that built up over the mountains during the day.

THE ADMIRALTIES AND KAVIENG

The 38th Bomb Group, following orders from MacArthur and Kenney in early February for heavy bombing of the Admiralties, made its first missions to Los Negros on 13 and 14 February.

These missions were followed by a mission to Kavieng on 15 February in conjunction with the 345th Bomb Group. Kavieng had been under bombing attacks since late January. This attack was another large coordinated attack by the 5th Air Force. A-20s of the 3rd Attack Group were to attack along the water front of the town where the Japs had a sea plane base, wharves, and other harbor installations while B-24s were bombing Panapai strip to neutralize the defending fighter aircraft.

Following the A-20s, the 38th, with 24 planes, was to hit the town and waterfront. The 345th, with 2 B-25s, was to follow the 38th. P-38s from the 475th Fighter Group were to cover the bombers. The A-20s took off from Nadzab (one squadron with shorter range took off from Finschhafen) while the B-25s and B-24s took off from Dobodura.

*(Continued page 6, **ON THE MOVE**)*

The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

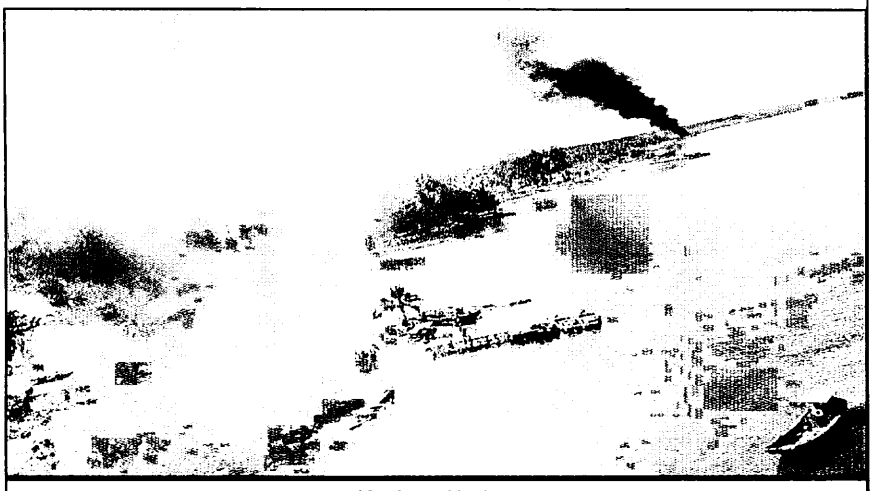
(From page 5)

The 38th arrived over Kavieng about an hour after the A-20s had worked over the harbor installations from east to west. The 71st, 405th, and 823rd each split into two four-plane flights and attacked the wharves and harbor area from the south. John DiFilippo's (823rd) plane crashed near Kavieng's Chinatown. It exploded on the beach and all five crew members were killed.

Pissonit was hit by ack-ack, setting an engine afire, just as they hit the target. Oil and hydraulic lines in the left nacelle were ruptured and the wheel dropped from the nacelle, the tire on fire. Pilot Frank Benson (71st) kept it flying for two or three miles before he was forced to ditch.

The gunner in the rear compartment had crawled across the bomb bay to the front compartment to escape the flames, being severely burned in the process. The radio operator was observed to parachute from the rear of the plane. His chute had hardly opened when he hit the water. Benson, along with his copilot and navigator, escaped from the plane after it crashed into the water. Finding only two companions with him in the water, Benson reentered the plane to search for the gunner but was unable to find him and left the plane. Benson tried to release the raft from the compartment above the left wing. He was forced to withdraw because of the fire. The plane sank amid the hissing of flames.

The three men clung to one parachute pack which provided flotation. A following flight of B-25s, apparently taking them as Japanese survivors of a small boat, strafed the three who dove under water for several seconds to escape injury. They held onto the parachute pack, rising and falling on the 10-foot rolling swells for nearly two hours, until rescued.



Kavieng Harbor

The 345th lost one plane and its crew. Two of their planes were forced to ditch. Their crews were rescued later in the day. A fourth plane managed to fly five miles from the target before it had to ditch because of an engine on fire. The crew escaped except for one man and hid on a small island for 48 hours before they were rescued.

The paramount story of the day was the rescue of most of the airmen who had escaped their downed planes. A Navy Catalina, ***The Arkansas Traveler,*** piloted by Lt. Nathan Gordon, was on station 100 miles southwest of Kavieng and covered by four P-47s. His first call was for an A-20 down about 35 miles from Kavieng. The Cat searched the area but found nothing.

Shortly, a B-25 from the 345th came along side and motioned for the Cat to follow, radio communication having been ineffective. The Cat was led to water covered with dye around a partially inflated raft. The Cat landed in heavily rolling seas. The landing caused some rivets in the hull to pop and water started leaking into the bilges. After searching the area and finding no one, the Cat took off.

The plane was hardly airborne before the pilot received a call relayed

*(Continued page 7, **ON THE MOVE**)*

THE WORLD AT WAR

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THE EASTERN FRONT

The Russians continued their unrelenting push against the Germans who were trying to make an orderly withdrawal in various sectors along the front which extending from Leningrad in the north to the Black Sea in the south. At times the Germans launched offensive drives against Russian strong points to slow the Russian advance.

On 1 January, the Russians were within 10 miles of the Polish border in some places. By the sixth, they were 12 miles inside what had been Poland. Fierce fighting frequently marked the action in the big bend of the Dniepr River. As at Stalingrad, Hitler refused to accept any adjustment in the lines that could represent a withdrawal by the German forces. The cost to Germany was more casualties and losses of significant quantities of weapons and materials.

Because of the unpredictable thrusts by the Russians at assorted points along the long front, German forces could not quickly be moved to reinforce the defending units along the line. In places where the Russian forces manage to surround German contingents, air lifts were hastily organized to provision the isolated groups. This did not often prevent the Russians from eventually overwhelming the trapped forces.

By the end of January, the German blockade of Leningrad had been broken. Rail communication with Moscow had been restored.

In early February on the southern Ukrainian front the Russians scored a big victory bringing them within 50 miles of the point from which Germany had initially launched its invasion of Russia. They also seized Nikopol, a major center for manganese production, thus depriving Germany of another critical war resource.

By mid March, the Germans had been driven back along the whole front from the far north to the Black Sea in the south, to the lines occupied in 1941 prior to the German invasion. German forces in the Crimean peninsula had been isolated for some time. The Germans had suffered catastrophic losses of men and material. At the end of March, in a total tirade of frustration, Hitler replaced the whole of the top command along the eastern front.

In early April, Germany began building underground factories for war production. Contracts were broken up and distributed to smaller firms to lessen the risks of losses when larger firms were immobilized by heavy bombing. Production of synthetic fuels was stepped up. Even with these measures, production began falling behind the needs or balancing the loses.

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THE WORLD AT WAR (From page 6)

Russian forces in the south reached the Czechoslovakian border by 8 April. The Spring thaw would curtail significant operations along the southern front.

Even though the German forces in the Crimea were in an untenable position, Hitler insisted that they would defend their position to the last man. Their position on the peninsula was a major force in preventing Turkey from joining the western Allies. Hitler refused a request from the military leaders that they be permitted to evacuate the Crimea. As April ended, the Russians were assembling forces for the final thrust against the Germans at Sevastopol.

In the north the Russians had entered Estonia and were pushing near the Lithuanian border. But Finland, aligned with Germany, refused to barter an end of hostilities with Russians on her land.

THE WAR IN THE ALEUTIANS

Continued effort was expended to improve the facilities and living conditions on American air bases on the western Aleutian Islands. Bombing missions were launched against the northern islands of the Japanese homeland from time to time. The distance was at the extreme edge of B-25 range and also a long trip for heavy bombers. Weather was far from favorable most of the time.

But the Japanese could not take things for granted and had to be ready to repel whatever military action might be directed against their northern home islands. This condition required the diversion of significant military resources which might otherwise be deployed on other fronts.

CHINA, BURMA, INDIA

Chinese forces began the new year by engaging Japanese forces in the far north of Burma. American Air Forces in this theater were ordered to increase their operations against the Japs to draw off their forces in the Pacific zones.

During the winter months, Chiang Kai-shek and President Roosevelt had several exchanges of words. Chiang wanted assurances of a larger loan from the U. S. and even threatened limiting American operations in China if his request was not responded to. Roosevelt countered with proposals to limit aid and assistance to China if it did not step up its own operations and construction efforts. Work was begun on construction of a base from which B-29s could operate against Formosa and the Japanese home islands.

Meanwhile, the US 14th Air Force continued operations from five air bases in southeastern China under General Claire Chennault. Bombers were reaching Japanese

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE* (From page 6)

from one of its P-47 escorts. The plane proceeded to the spot where three rafts with men were floating in the large swells. After landing, the Cat pilot was forced to shut down his engines to take the men on board from the rafts. The rafts and plane were under sporadic fire from Japanese shore guns.

The Cat took off again and, now headed for home, received another call. Gordon returned to Kavieng, this time to pick up the three men who had survived the crash landing of ***Pissonit*** (the 71st Squadron plane). During the pickup, they again came under fire from shore batteries. Norton was able to take off again and head for Finschhafen.

After flying about 20 miles, Gordon received another call. Two more life rafts had been sighted back at Kavieng. Two of his escorting P-47s had already headed for home because of diminishing fuel. The Cat now had nine men in addition to the crew of 10. With the extra weight of the water in the bilges, the plane was overloaded. The 345th B-25 still close by agreed to escort the Cat back to Kavieng and provide cover.

The men in the rafts had been under frequent fire from shore positions and a small boat was approaching. The B-25 straffed the boat. The rafts were close to the shore and the wind direction dictated an approach from land to sea. Gordon came across the shore at 300 feet and made a perfect landing close to the rafts. He again was forced to shut the engines down in order to have time to take the six men aboard.

Gordon fired up the engines once more and, with more popped rivets and more water in the bilges, he was able to make a lumbering takeoff from the heavily rolling sea. As the plane was taking off, the Japs threw a heavy barrage toward the struggling plane. Gordon managed to evade the fire as his battered plane once more headed for home with the 15 rescued men.

Once under way, crew members set to work to bail water that had been taken aboard in the bilges because of the popped rivets. Several hours later the plane landed at Finschhafen. The injured were transferred to a hospital ship in the harbor. The others were returned to Dobodura the following day.

It had been a very costly mission. Ten Allied planes and 25 men had been sacrificed at Kavieng. For his dauntless effort, Gordon was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and all members of his crew received a Silver Star.

On the following day, 16 February, the 38th BG and the 345th returned to search for and attack Japanese ships that were hurriedly loading and leaving Kavieng. Several small ships were sunk near the neighboring island of New Hannover. The Japanese base at Kavieng was now isolated, along with Rabaul and Wewak, to wither until the end of the war.

THE BIG MOVE

During February, the ground personnel had been making preparations for moving the Group to a new home at Nadzab while maintaining the planes and preparing them for missions. The thought of moving to a new home with a different environment was stimulating and the magnitude of the task demanded extra energy from all.

The air echelon returned to Durand for maintenance on 17 February only to return to Dobodura on the 22nd for operations until the end of the month. An attack mission on Momote in the Admiralties on 24 February was aborted because of weather. The next day, an attack on Wewak drew what one pilot recorded as, "the heaviest and thickest ack-ack I have ever seen." One plane was lost on this mission. On the 27th, the Group flew back to bomb Momote and installations on neighboring Manus Island.

During the month, several courier missions were run. Operations Officer Jesse Foley asked John Collins to pick up two Navy men to show them the area. Knowing he would log combat time for the flight, Collins agreed. They gave the Navy men a grand tour past Cape Gloucester to the Admiralties. As they were returning to Dobo, the Navy men asked, "What about this Goodenough Island we've heard about?"

Collins and crew had also heard about Goodenough, east of Dobo

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

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just off the north shore of New Guinea, and decided they would like to see it, too. There were some natives and an emergency fighter strip on the island but it had no great strategic value.

George Reed, the navigator, recalled, "We had been warned not to stare at the natives – 'Wear your shades!' - we'd been told - and what a sight! – all those beautiful, nubile, topless, light-colored girls! And what a bugeyed crew! – took Bud Yeoman three days to get his eyeballs to recede."

On 29 February, a "reconnaissance in force" was to be landed on Los Negros by the Navy. The 38th dispatched 24 planes to Los Negros to provide ground support on request. The takeoff from Durand was in the early morning darkness.

Capt. Henderson, (823rd), leading the Group, was first to take off. As they were lifting off and wheels were pulled up, the plane dropped back to the runway, skidding into the dirt. The copilot quickly cut the switches and no fire resulted. The crew scrambled from the plane in a hurry. Soon they gathered around their damaged plane. One man was missing.

They started to search the plane. In moments, Lt. Johnny Johnson, the navigator, was found slumped behind the pilot's seat where he rode during takeoffs. A piece of a prop blade had cut loose when the prop hit the steel matting as the plane sank to its belly. A chunk had come through the side of the plane and hit Johnny in the head. As the other planes continued their take offs not knowing their leader had crashed, the men lifted him from the plane. One of them headed for the tower in the darkness. An ambulance finally came to take Johnny to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The other planes assigned to the mission climbed high in the darkness and formed up on a new Group Leader. They headed over the mountains toward the Vitiaz Straits. The weather along the route worsened. The Group spread out as they struggled with violent down drafts and up drafts in the cumulus clouds. Another plane disappeared among the clouds and was never heard from. Other planes, finding themselves alone or unwilling to fight the weather anymore, turned to return to Dobo. Only three planes were able to make the rendezvous point.

After a short wait, the invasion command aboard the flagship requested an attack by the 38th BG planes on Japanese positions on both sides of the narrow entrance to Hyane Harbor. During their run over the target area, a Marine gunner on one of the landing barges mistook the planes for enemy planes and fired several rounds which did damage to the tail section of one plane.

Following their successful strafing of these positions, the ***Sun Setters*** were complimented for the effective attack and released them to return to Dobodura. During the return trip they were forced to fly through the severe weather they had previously encountered.

General MacArthur ordered more troops to Los Negros. The "reconnaissance in force" became a full fledged invasion. On 1 March, all four squadrons returned to the Admiralties to stand by to provide ground support as requested by the ground command. Each squadron had been give a code name that the ground command could call for strikes. The 405th was called and the planes, in single file, strafed and bombed the assigned area under a low ceiling and with in light rain. The ground command expressed great appreciation for the work. No further calls were received and the group returned to Dobo.

The Group left Dobodura on 2 March for another mission to support the forces that had landed on Los Negros on 29 February. As on 1 March, the 38th was to provide ground support as requested by ground command. The ***Sun Setters*** were surprised by the large landing force pulling in to the southeast side of Los Negros. The Group orbited their designated hold area and were eventually requested to hit a gun position giving the ground operations problems. Weather was poor and they were operating under a low ceiling once again. The planes pealed off and made their attack. With weather closing in, they returned to Dobo.

On another mission they provided ground support for the troops who

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installations in south China and Formosa and causing significant losses on Japanese movements in the channel between Formosa and the mainland.

While the Japanese were considering an offensive to advance from Burma into Assam, India, in early February, General Wingate and his Chindits began their own move into northern Burma to enable the Chinese forces under General Stilwell to also move into northern Burma from the east. Chindit paratroops were dropped into central Burma.

The Japanese launched their own offensive into India in early March. The Japanese, Chinese and British/Indian forces each moved into new territory in the isolated mountainous jungles of northern Burma. The Japs bombed a landing strip built by the Chindits in central Burma and used to resupply their units engaged against Japanese communications lines.

General Wingate was killed in an air crash in the latter part of March. His Chindit forces had been effective in operations behind Japanese lines for some time.

In late March, the Japanese invasion of northeastern India was cause for alarm. They were being assisted by a contingent of nationalist Hindus who wanted to push the British out of India. Civilians in New Delhi were even being evacuated. But by the end of April, British and Indian forces were moved to the area and the situation was being stabilized as the Allies were marshaling forces to force the Japanese to retire.

On 19 April, a combined naval force, mostly British but including a Free French battleship, with three American destroyers and the carrier, Saratoga, bombarded a Japanese base on the islands north of Sumatra. This alarmed the Japs who thought they had eliminated any threats from Allied naval activity in the Indian Ocean.

In the far northeast of Burma, Chinese and American forces were preparing for an offensive operation to move further into Burma and take a Japanese base at Myitkyina. This would serve as a vital link in reopening the Burma Road for supplying troops and air units in China.

THE WIDE PACIFIC THEATER

The Japanese government sent new year greetings to its citizens in the form of major tax increases to support the war effort.

On Bougainville, a new airfield was completed at Piva which enabled more extensive operations against Japanese targets on New Britain.

Naval forces in the Gilbert and Ellis Islands hit Japanese positions at Kwajalein. Plans for landings in the Marshall Islands

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were being made. Air attacks on the Truk bastion were to be made to support projected Allied landings in the Admiralties and New Britain at the end of February.

At the end of January, the Navy landed forces on several Islands in the southern Marshal Islands, including Kwajalein. The landings were preceded by one of the heaviest naval and air bombardments in history at the time. Resistance on the various smaller islands varied but was quickly overcome. On Kwajalein, mopping up was completed on 7 February. The quick success here made it possible to move the schedule up for attacking Eniwetok in the northern Marshals.

Far to the north, American bombers stationed on Attu in the Aleutian chain bombed the northern most islands of the Japanese homeland for three consecutive nights in late January.

On 15 February, a small operation compared to most Pacific operations, landed almost 5,000 New Zealand and American men in the Green Islands. Because of the dense jungle on Nissan Island, the largest in the group, it had been difficult to make accurate estimates of Japanese strength. The carefully planned landing went off without a hitch. Only about 120 Japanese bodies were found in the dense jungle when offensive action was completed within a few days.

The building of an excellent fighter plane strip began at once and by 6 March the 5,000 foot strip was ready to receive planes that had been damaged at Rabaul as they returned to Guadalcanal. By 26 March, the big bomber strip was ready to support full operation. Fuel storage was installed; 16 large condenser units provided fresh water. There was no natural source on the island. Missions to the southern central Pacific originated from the Green Islands.

This base, 120 miles from Rabaul, completed the encirclement and neutralization of that once mighty Japanese bastion. It provided an excellent base for P.T. boats as well as the Allied aircraft.

Japanese forces on Bougainville continued to attack the American perimeter. They launched artillery assaults on the airfields in early March which forced the Americans to evacuate aircraft to nearby Allied bases. A determined effort by American troops, supported by tanks, pushed the Japanese back to their earlier positions by 15 March.

Throughout the remainder of March, the Japanese mounted further attacks on the Cape Torokina perimeter with some success. But the Americans each time drove them back. The last major assault by the Japs was made on 24 March.

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE* (From page 8)

were preparing to land on Manus Island.

After spending nine days living in tents out in Dobo's kunai grass and eating out of their mess kits, the air echelon returned to Durand on 3 March. The ensuing days were filled with packing the planes with the personal items and Group equipment the crews were to move up to their new home. The accretions of 15 months of life at Durand had to be sorted out and much had to be taken to the dump.

The date was just one year following the first great victory of the Allied air forces, the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. General MacArthur had declared that battle to be the most significant battle of his struggle in returning to the Philippines on the road to Tokyo. A year ago the Air Force was short of men and short of planes; the 38th had only two squadrons. Now there were four squadrons, more men and they were moving forward to a base in an area controlled by the enemy a year earlier. Their missions were now attacking areas far in advance of the targets they could reach in 1942 and 1943.

The ground echelon packed their equipment and supplies aboard C-47s which flew back and forth in a constant stream to Nadzab for a few days. The 405th Squadron moved over on 6 March. The men had to pitch tents as soon as they arrived. The 822nd flew their planes up to Nazab on the seventh and the 71st on the eighth. *(Editor: available records do not give a date for the 823rd but the mission records seem to indicate they may have moved on the fifth.)*

The 405th Squadron Historical Report records that,

> "Through the untiring efforts of every officer and man, the move from Port Moresby to Nadzab went off without a hitch. Some idea of the efficiency displayed can be gained from flight surgeon, Capt. J. F. Murphee's remark: 'I didn't lose a pill.' We started from scratch at Nadzab on March 6, 1944, but at month's end every one agrees that we are more comfortably situated than ever before. The camp has been neatly laid out, the mess hall is clean and roomy and each administrative and tactical section has adequate space in a portable building. The climate here is strictly tropical but a lack of mosquitoes makes up for a lot of discomfort brought on by the heat."

Nadzab was located in a broad valley through which the Markham River flowed on its way to the Huon Gulf near Lae, about 20 miles to the east. There was a broad alluvial plain which provided an ideal site for construction of several flight strips. Al Behrens recalled that there had been Japs coming down from the hills around the plain at night and sneaking into camps, stealing food from the mess halls, even killing men in bed. He, as well as many others, slept with his pistol in easy reach.

The moving was not permitted to slow the pace of combat. ***The Sun Setters*** attacked the Wewak complex again, after struggling through bad weather, on 8 March. Jap fighter planes attacked one of the 822nd planes which escaped by flying into a rainstorm.

On the tenth, the mission was aborted because of bad weather. But they returned to Wewak on 11 March. Cal Gillespie noted,

> "Hit Wewak from Nadzab, got an enemy large shell thru the left wing, just grazing the main wing tank and spare. Tore a 2 1/2 foot hole in upper side of the wing, tossing the aircraft upside down. Recovered with the help of my excellent co-pilot, Lt. Corning, when we were just off the tree tops. Took both of us to control the aircraft on the return trip as so much metal was turned back and interrupting the airflow of the left wing. We were very lucky to survive this one. A P-38, shot a Zero off my tail as we were struggling to return home."

On 12 March, the 38th pounded the Wewak complex from medium altitude. It was back to Wewak again on the 13th for a strafing mission.

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

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Again and again the 38th pounded the Wewak area: 14th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 29th. The Jap forces in the Wewak area were given no opportunity to interfere with the establishment of the Allied position in the Admiralties. The Japs moved their remaining planes west to their base at Hollandia.

The 38th usually experienced significant ack-ack and often were the target of Japanese fighters. The weather was often a significant factor in their effort to strafe and bomb the targets.

On one mission, Sam Mazara recalled,

> "Weather – Bad – Heavy cloud cover over target. We were flying over target (medium altitude) partially visual and immediately ran into heavy clouds. I was in the turret and after awhile sensed the plane going into a dive. It seemed like an eternity before I left the turret.
>
> "Now the plane was screaming. My chest pack was always safety-wired to the side of the compartment - just yanked and snapped it to my harness. I was making my way back to the escape hatch and could feel the plane slowly pulling out of the dive.
>
> "By the time I reached the hatch, Jimmy Kannette was going out. In his panic he had pulled the normal hatch release and not the red emergency hatch release. He was climbing down the hatch steps when I reached him and tried to tell him not to go. I started to help him in. Jimmy scratched and fought me.
>
> "Meanwhile, somehow his chute opened and billowed out, partially in the aircraft and partially out side. Now Jimmy could feel the aircraft pulling out of the dive/spin and worked with me in pulling him back in. His legs were bruised from bouncing against the fuselage and he had scratched me to a fair thee well."

At the end of the month, the 405th squadron historian reported,

> "Morale is fairly high despite the fact that everyone is tired after long days of hard work. A lack of replacements for the ground men who have been overseas for twenty-eight months provides a serious problem in maintaining squadron efficiency, health and morale. Some relief for this situation is anxiously awaited by all.
>
> "Combat crews are bitterly disappointed over the new ruling that eliminates the award of a Distinguished Flying Cross for completing fifty combat missions against the enemy. Their disappointment is based on the wholesale distribution of the award made to transport pilots who completed fifty missions without enemy opposition prior to the time of the new regulation."

Their new camp sported a new feature, a coke machine that could provide that delicious "pause that refreshes", one of the things back home that the men dreamed of. Unfortunately, the supply of coke syrup was sporadic. When the report that coke was available came, there was a sudden dinging in the camp as the men grabbed their canteen cups and rushed to get in line. One man wrote, "It is amazing to behold the 'lift' that occurs when Coca Cola syrup is available for our dispensing machine. Coca Cola syrup should be available at all times."

The following story appeared in an older edition of ***The Sun Setter*** and the date of the mission cannot be determined from available records. But it has a ring of authenticity and who is the one that cannot chuckle over it. The quality and quantity of food enjoyed by the *SeaBees* was legendary and envied. And there were those who insisted that joining the Navy assured that, at the least, one would "sleep in a clean bed and die with a full stomach."

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THE WORLD AT WAR

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However, occasional skirmishes continued through the end of May. The Americans enlarged their perimeter only slightly. Operations from the airfields continued unabated. after the middle of March.

This effectively ended the South Pacific campaign. Air and ground forces engaged in these islands were now assigned to join the northwestward advance of MacArthur in New Guinea on his way back to the Philippines.

In mid February, a large task force sailed from the newly acquired base in the Marshals to launch an attack on Truk, the Japanese "Pearl Harbor' in the south Pacific. Vice Admiral Spruance hoped to achieve a surprise. Unknown to the Americans, the Japanese Imperial Headquarters had ordered the governor of Truk to withdraw the fleet to Palau Island, a strategic victory for the Americans.

On 17 February, the nine carriers and six battleships, with their escorts, launched the attack. The air attack destroyed 265 Japanese planes, 200 of which were destined for Rabaul. One light cruiser, three auxiliary cruisers, two destroyers, five tankers and 25 other ships were sunk. Port and airfield damage significantly disrupted enemy operations. Fleet units sank additional ships that had escaped the attack on the harbor.

While this operation was in progress, another section of the task force landed Army troops and Marines on smaller islands in the Eniwetok area on 17 February. After eliminating resistance on some of these smaller islands, artillery was emplaced for firing on Japtan Island. On the morning of the 19th, a heavy barrage against Eniwetok preceded a landing by two Army battalions, followed by a Marine battalion. Japanese resistance ceased after two days and landings were made on Japtan, another heavily defended island in the group.

On 21 February, Japanese Prime Minister, General Hideki Tojo, assumed the position of Chief of the Japanese Army General Staff.

On 22 February, American Marines landed on Parry Island and on 23 February, Japanese resistance on the several islands in the Eniwetok area had been eliminated.

Also on 23 February, Rear Admiral Mitscher had guided his task force in attacks on Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Rota Islands. A large number of Japanese planes were destroyed in the air and on the ground.

On 20 March, the 4th Marine Regiment landed unopposed in the St. Matthias Islands north of New Ireland. This completed the isolation of New Ireland/Kavieng. Here, Emira Island became a base for small ships and aircraft.

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THE WORLD AT WAR *(From page 10)*

American Naval groups roamed the Caroline Islands area at will. On 30 March, an American naval task force launched a three-day attack on Japanese positions on Palau, Yap, Ulithi, and Woleai. During this operation, American carrier aircraft, for the first time, dropped mines which effectively destroyed much shipping. This assault eliminated the possibility of Japanese interference with the scheduled landings at Hollandia and Aitape in New Guinea.

On 31 March, Admiral Mineichi Koga, who had been appointed Commander In Chief of air and naval forces after the death of Yamamoto on 18 April, 1943, was killed when his plane crashed near Davao, on Mindanao. He had flown from Palau Island. His loss was keenly felt by the Japs. A replacement was not announced until 5 May.

On 18 April, 13th Air Force B-24s bombed the Jap base on Woleai Island in the Palau group. This mission demonstrated that the Japanese in the southern Pacific no longer could threaten Allied operations in New Guinea, and specifically the landings at Aitape and Hollandia.

On 29 April, U. S. Naval Task Force 58, with 12 carriers, launched a two-day attack against Truk and other bases in the area. All military installations in the area suffered severe damage and effectively eliminated future Japanese operations from this area.

THE SOUTHWESTERN PACIFIC

On 2 January, America's 32nd Division was put ashore under covering Naval fire at Saidor on the north coast of Huon Peninsula on New Guinea. Intensive bombing along several miles of the coast had preceded the landing.

In short time, they occupied the airfield. Weather was bad and no air cover could be furnished at the landing but air strikes on other Jap bases limited air interference. This was the last time the Army used carrier pigeons for communication.

Reinforcements were brought in on 10 January in response to information that the Japs had plans to launch an attack. The airfield became operational on 11 January and a dozen C-47s arrived with additional supplies and material. This proved to be of great significance in following weeks.

To the east, Aussie Forces advanced along the north coast from Finschhafen. They were closing in on Sio, where many of the Japs had taken refuge after evacuating Lai in the previous September. The occupation of Saidor would impede the Japanese withdrawal in the Sio area to retire to Madang in the west. The Americans at Saidor met with the Aussies forces on 10 February.

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE* *(From page 10)*

"A few 405th planes were sent to newly acquired tiny Los Negros Island (a single narrow strip) to lend support to ground forces on larger Manus Island across the strait. Arriving late afternoon, we were slated for dawn takeoff to attack areas designated by Manus ground command, then fly directly back to Nadzab since no refueling was available.

"That evening a golden-tongued sailor in the makeshift officers' club offered our crew a moonlight cruise around Los Negros ('a nightly sub patrol, but we haven't seen one yet') and we jumped at the chance for Navy chow. Dinner was great, and lounging on deck full of steak and REAL potatoes, the cruise was a delight!!!—until we reached the island's end leaving the protection of the strait.

"The PT boat started bouncing all over creation and the Navy boys thought the sight of three fly-boys hanging over the rail was hilarious. We had serious doubts we would be able to fly in the morning - but fly we did! - down the right side of the Manus strip, 50's blazing and laying anti-personnel bombs, then a right turn back to Nadzab, debriefing - AND THE BLESSED SACK!"

The 38th BG new camp at Nadzab was shaping up very well. Roadways were graded, the camp area was smoothed out, and fences were built. Some of the men even started gardens with hopes of augmenting the monotonous food menu. Bananas and papayas were easily grown. Before long, ball fields had been laid out and the games began.

The shower area didn't have shower heads but the water running out of the pipe nipples was great anyway. One day some of the men suddenly spied a small fish on the floor of the shower room, wiggling and flopping in the water. It had obviously come through the water line; after all, dirt, sand, and small gravel came out with the water. Why not a fish? After a few minutes of trying carefully to catch the fish and then admiring the "cute little thing," the fish was released in the puddles of a camp drainage ditch. The hardened warriors returned to their regular routine.

Toward the end of the month spirits rose when orders came in for six ground personnel to return to the states about 1 April. The surge of morale sagged quickly when it was realized that there were about 140 men in the outfit who had been overseas for 24 months. There were also several flight crews who were quickly approaching 50 missions and no replacements were in sight.

ON TO AITAPE AND HOLLANDIA

The Allies had schedule a landing in the Aitape area about half way between Wewak and Hollandia during the latter part of April. On 1 April, Captain Payne was leading the planes of *the 822nd* Squadron as the Group made a medium altitude attack on a small island just off the coast at Aitape, Tumleo Island.

On the approach to the target, the life raft compartment broke open and the life raft flew back, catching on the left horizontal stabilizer. The violent flopping of the raft damaged the left elevator. The plane went into a steep, out of control dive. While Payne and the copilot were fighting to regain control, the radio operator, T/Sgt. Weslie Brown decided to abandon the plane.

Managing to reach the rear escape hatch, he bailed out and was observed to land safely on land. The pilots' struggle was rewarded with success and they pulled the plane out of the dive at about 700 feet elevation. During the violent action three bombs had ripped from the shackles and the copilot jettisoned the whole bomb load as the pilot immediately headed for home. The remaining planes carried out the mission to the target and returned to Nadzab.

Brown's fate was unknown. The area was known to be thick with Japanese troops. It was also known that natives in the area were not friendly. Following the invasion of the area, some of the Japanese labor force, mostly non Japanese, indicated that they had seen Brown beaten

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The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

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for several hours by the Japs. There was no confirmed evidence and no identifiable remains were found in the area. Brown was believed to be yet another victim of Japanese brutality.

On 3 April, a large coordinated raid was launched against the three airfields and other facilities at Hollandia. The heavy bombers had worked the area over in the previous few days. It was known that there were numerous Jap fighter planes at the enemy base. Cut off now from Rabaul, planes were being brought into Hollandia from bases to the west in Java, Sumatra, and southeast Asia. There was reason to fear that the defense at this target would be vigorous. And it was a distant target. Everyone had talked for some time about when this mission would be scheduled.

All Groups were fully briefed on the evening of 2 April. Somber groups of men in the various squadrons were briefed early the next morning.

Four hundred planes of all types were launched; this being the longest mission for the medium and light bombers to date. The forward fields in the upper Markham Valley were utilized as staging facilities for refueling the shorter ranged planes. A B-24 blew up on takeoff and destroyed two 38th BG planes. This delayed the takeoffs of many planes at Nadzab.

West of Gusap, the 345th Bomb Group joined the 38th. Two hundred and thirty six bombers reached the target. Keeping inland, the armada cruised past Hollandia to the Lake Sentani area where they turned almost 180 degrees to take an eastern approach to the target.

The heavies hit first, followed by the A-20s. The mediums then formed lines of ten ships abreast and swarmed across the full length of the three airdromes. Planes, trucks, stacks of supplies, mountains of fuel drums, and a control tower at the old Hollandia strip were straffed and bombed.

Giving Hollandia the works

Leaving the area, some planes were in line to strafe and bomb a camouflaged freighter in the Hollandia harbor area.

Harry Terrell, flying copilot for Jack Denaut, recorded in his diary that they hit a tree over the target. The incident opened up a big hole in the leading edge of the right wing between the fuselage and the right engine. Terry wrote, "I could not believe how that engine kept running when that tree opened that big hole on the leading edge. You could see the lines sitting out in the wind." But the engine did continue to run and they finished their run over the target and made it back to Nadzab. Only light ack-ack was encountered.

The 345th lost one plane. The P-38 fighter cover effectively engaged the few Jap fighters that were launched against the raiders. The P-38s bagged 26 of approximately 60 interceptors while losing one P-38. The bombers accounted for another 73 destroyed on the ground. The planes returned to Nadzab with the crews exhilarated by a general feeling that this had been the most destructive raid experienced to date.

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THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 11)

The Allies now had complete control of the straits between New Guinea and their positions on the western end of New Britain. The Japanese were retreating westward toward Madang along the coast and in the Ramu valley where the Aussies had taken "Shaggy Ridge" after fierce conflict.

In early January, 1944, the Allied forces at Cape Gloucester were continuing their effort to expand their position and to join up with forces that had been landed at Borgen Bay. Work was begun on 3 January on the air strip but it wasn't until mid February that the base was ready to be the home of a P-40 fighter group.

The Japanese brought in reinforcements to counter Allied operations on the south coast of the western tip of New Britain at Aware opposite the Cape Gloucester perimeter. It was 10 February before the Allied landing forces at Aware finally united with those who had landed near the Cape Gloucester airdrome.

The Japanese in the area put up a stiff resistance in the thick tropical jungle, finally slipping silently into the eerie dank jungle swamps, retreating toward Rabaul in the east. By this time they were existing on very short rations and their native carriers were deserting their camps. The remaining soldiers had to carry their own loads plus additional common equipment.

For two days, the Allied Naval forces attacked Japanese convoys in the Kavieng area on New Ireland. Relays of Fifth Air Force bombers began softening up raids on the Admiralties in the later part of January.

Air raids on Rabaul had continued on almost a daily basis as weather permitted. These were usually carried out by 13th Air Force planes from the Solomon Island area. The Japs continued to send fighter planes aloft to engage the Allied planes.

On 26 January, Allied forces launched another big raid on Rabaul. Japanese Naval aircraft had been ferried to Rabaul only four days earlier to bring their number of fighters to 92. Most did not survive the Allied raid. Since the beginning of the air offensive against Rabaul in the previous October, nearly 900 enemy planes had been destroyed at this once dominating base.

Attacks continued into February often in the morning, at mid day and in the late afternoon to keep the Japs on edge and busy repairing holes in the runway. Shipping targets became scarce. Anti-aircraft positions were persistently hit. By mid February hardly a building stood in the city. The Japs had continued boring tunnels in the surrounding mountains and moving what could be saved into the tunnels.

On 19 February, the last significant fighter

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protection climbed to intercept the Allied attack. This was the last assertive effort. The Allies later declared their victory at Rabaul on this date although harassing raids continued on a regular basis. From now on, Rabaul would pose no threat to Allied operations in the southern islands area.

In early February, General MacArthur issued instructions that Rabaul was to be isolated by the seizure of Kavieng, on the northwestern end of New Ireland Island, and Manus Island in the Admiralties about 1 April. Kavieng had been a major base for Japanese operations and a transfer port for much of the shipment of supplies from their Naval bastion at Truk to New Ireland, Rabaul, and New Guinea.

On 11 and 13 February, American heavy bombers attacked the airbase at Kavieng. The base was rendered unservicable. On the 14th, the heavies concentrated on the Japanese fighter strip at Panapai, near Kavieng. A large force of over 120 bombers and fighters attacked the storage and harbor facilities at Kavieng on 15 February. Eight of the strafing A-20s and B-25s were downed. A Navy rescue Catalina PBY came into the area and rescued 15 of the down crewmen. (See story, page 5 and following.) Five more were rescued two days later.

The Japs quickly discerned that their end was near and assembled a handful of convoys to evacuate as many men and much material as they could from both Kavieng and Rabaul. Low level bomber/strafers returned in the following days to sink most of the escaping ships.

Kavieng had been virtually flattened. The Japs had lost 13 ships with, among others, the ground echelons of the Navy fighter groups who had flown the remaining planes to Truk. On March 20, the Navy landed forces virtually unopposed at Emirau Island, north of Kavieng, which closed the encirclement of Rabaul and Kavieng.

In early February, General Kenney passed word to Fifth Bomber Command that the Japanese installations in the Admiralty Islands were to be subjected to repeated bombings to prepare for a landing. The airstrips on Los Negros and Manus Islands had served as a staging point for the Japs at Rabaul and Kavieng for planes and supplies going to Wewak and Hollandia.

Air reconnaissance of the islands at low altitude reported sighting no vehicles or men and no anti-aircraft fire The airfields were pitted and overgrown. Estimates of Japanese strength on the islands varied widely.

On 24 February, MacArthur ordered a "reconnaissance in force" of the Admiralty Islands, scheduled for 29 February. Allied

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Ed Maurer recalled later that,

> "The thing that I remember best really didn't have anything to do with the mission. . . My granddad, who was following all of my activities, had clipped out an article in the New York Times wherein the Navy had come in a couple of weeks after we had hit it and claimed that they did it. They even had it in pictures. They took pictures of all the damaged airplanes and they were claiming that they neutralized Hollandia. I showed it around to the different squadrons and we laughed about that for months. There wasn't anything to neutralize. Anyway, it's quite typical of the Navy and the Marines, at least in my estimation. Their P.R. was top drawer to the point of bragging constantly."

On the fifth, the planes returned to the Hollandia area to attack supply dumps, barges, and waterfront facilities with 500 pound demolition bombs. Some planes were assigned the task of taking low level oblique photographs needed by planners of the projected landing at Hollandia later in the month. This required a flight path at a constant altitude and air speed with no regard to anti aircraft fire or other enemy action as much as possible to permit the photographers to make continuous strips of pictures of the landing beaches for the coming invasion.

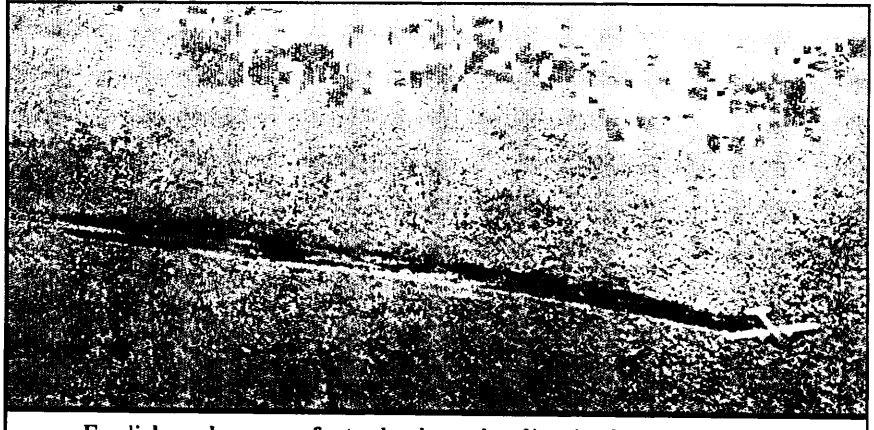
On 8 April, weather forced the planes bound for Hollandia to attack the secondary target near Wewak. In addition to strafing and bombing, they dropped propaganda leaflets in Japanese. They left fires in the target area as they returned to Nadzab.

The weather was a factor on 9 April when they dropped incendiary bombs just east of Aitape, approximately half way between Wewak and Hollandia. A landing was also to be made at Aitape concurrent with the Hollandia landings. No fires were seen as they left the area, probably because the kunai grass was just too wet to burn.

On 12 April, there was a return mission to Hollandia. The specific target was a supply dump and personnel area where 500 pounders were again dropped from medium altitude. Fires and damage to two buildings were observed in the target area as the planes retired. Moderate but inaccurate anti aircraft fire did not have any affect on the bombers.

But on the return to Nadzab, Matt English dropped away from the formation in the upper Sepik River area and was finally seen to make a good wheels up landing in the kunai grass. As planes circled above them, the crew was seen to exit the plane and appeared not to have experienced serious injury. The other planes dropped what supplies and carbines they had.

After returning to Nadzab, one plane loaded up with arms, ammo and supplies flew up to the area. They observed a large fire near the plane and saw the crew grouped together.



English makes a perfect wheels-up landing in the Kunai grass

After dropping the load of supplies in the waning daylight, the crew

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(From page 13)

was observed to retrieve the supplies and appeared to be uninjured. Air searches in the following days found no sight of the survivors. Japanese patrols were known to be active in the area. But the fate of this crew has never been positively determined. The plane wreckage was still observable from the air in 2001, fifty seven years later.

In spite of bad weather which caused the cancellation of a mission on 14 April, one plane did fly to the area. The downed plane was strafed repeatedly to make it useless to the Japanese for any intelligence purposes. No survivors were seen.

Gene Benson recalled this day as one of the saddest of all during his tour with the 38th. He was assigned to fly cover for a Catalina searching for an A-20 crew that had ditched on the 13th east of Hollandia. A raft with two men was sighted after searching for about an hour. Gene circled the raft and called the Catalina. In rough seas and a brisk wind, the rescue craft landed and took the two men aboard. The Cat then had a difficult time trying to take off in the heavy seas. At last it seemed to lift into the air but shortly it stalled and crashed into the sea "exploding into a huge fire ball." Gene broke radio silence and called Nadzab in the clear. Base requested that he remain in the area until another Catalina could reach the site.

Gene circled and searched the area but could find no trace of survivors among the debris. The second rescue plane reached the area, landed and made a closer search without finding any sign of the Catalina's crew or of the men they had rescued.

This episode is but one of many that caused all aviators to hold the Air Rescue organizations in highest esteem. Gene, himself, had been among those rescued. (See page 6.) They risked their lives and enemy fire repeatedly and sometimes lost their planes and their determined and courageous men. These crews even searched for men seen to land near water in an emergency. Those flying the missions knew that there was always hope of rescue if they had to land in enemy territory. *(The Editor owes his life to them as did several other 38th BG flyers.)*

BLACK SUNDAY

The fifteenth of April 1944 is a day that will live in Southwest Pacific air warfare history for many years. Terry Terrell prefers to call it ***Bloody Sunday.*** The crews assigned to fly another big coordinated mission to Hollandia hit the flight line at daybreak. The weather was "stinkin"; the Nadzab base was "socked in". After huddling under wings until they were soaked, the crews were told they could return to their squadron areas, but to stay on alert.

In mid morning the weather broke a little and they were off to the flight line again. Alfred Colwell, Jr., (navigator/bombardier) wrote in his diary,

> "The various groups of bombers and fighters finally took off just before noon. On the way to the target I was nervous as a cat and expected all hell to break loose, but we reached Hollandia, dropped the bombs and no trouble.
>
> "Still shakey, I decided I'd been flying too much so started reading a magazine. About halfway back, copilot Jack Jackowski tapped me on the shoulder and pointed ahead – south, east and west all socked in solid with black clouds, rain and wind. We had two hours gas left and it was one and a half hours home.
>
> "The whole formation kept flying hoping for a hole somewhere ahead but soon we began to circle. The only clear spot was north but that was all Jap territory as was the area over which we were circling."

The raiders had flown eastward from the target down the Sepik River valley south of the coastal range and of Wewak. The weather between them and home was increasingly threatening. The weather ahead of

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bombers had been targeting the Momote airdrome for several days. The weather frequently interfered with the air attacks on Momote and on the airfield on adjacent Manus Island, Lorengua.

Units of the American 1st Cavalry Division and other attached organizations composed of approximately 1,000 men landed on the 29th near Momote airfield on Los Negros Island. It was lightly defended and the field was quickly captured.

Because the Japanese were thought to outnumber the Americans, the landing site was consolidated into a smaller perimeter to strengthen positions against night attacks on that first day. Unfortunately, there was no barbed wire among the supplies.

MacArthur had watched the landing operation from a cruiser in the landing force. After landing to inspect the operation in the afternoon in heavy rain, he ordered that the island was to be occupied and held at all cost. He ordered the large force of reinforcements standing by at Finschhafen to move forward at once. The operation on Los Negros was to become a full offensive engagement.

Japanese infiltrated the positions on that first night but gained no great advantage. . Air drops of supplies by three B-25s early on 1 March encouraged the landing force. Later in the day, five B-17s made drops of blood plasma, grenades, ammo, and mines - again no barbed wire

On the second night, Japanese infiltrators created confusion and mayhem. But their losses were great, although several of the Allied troops were killed. It was later learned that over 4,000 Japanese soldiers were quietly waiting in the jungles and palm plantations.

On 2 March, Allied reinforcements reached the island: six destroyers, two cruisers and numerous other craft loaded for business. One destroyer took a heavy hit from Japanese artillery as they waited.

Men and equipment were landed and, by nightfall, Momote field was securely in Allied hands. Still there was no barbed wire available. Poor weather severely limited the planned air support but bombers and fighters that reached the zone provided effective support.

During the night of 3 March, the Japs launched a vigorous counter-attack suffering considerable losses. They were repulsed and were never able to make such large attacks again. In an early morning ruse, a party of Japanese came marching down a road near the perimeter reportedly singing "*Deep in the Heart of Texas.*" They were quickly wiped out by mines, rifle and machine gun fire, and grenades.

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Intensity of the action was indicated by the fact that in front of one sector lay the bodies of 168 Japanese. The two machine guns had fired nearly 9,000 rounds of ammo.

Navy Construction Battalions were waiting to return the field to operating condition. On the first few nights, they became infantry men, assisting in the defense of the small perimeter, while waiting to put their tractors and bull dozers into operation.

By 8 March, Los Negros was firmly in Allied hands and American ships entered Seeadler Harbor without Japanese hindrance. Seeadler Harbor, an excellent deep water harbor, was destined to become a large American Naval Base providing every service available to the fleets west of San Diego.

A fighter squadron began operations from Momote on 9 March and more air units arrived the following day. It was soon decide that there would be no invasion of Kavieng. It would be bypassed, neutralized and isolated like Rabaul.

Four smaller islands lay along the north side of Seeadler Harbor in a line to the west of the north tip of Los Negros. One of these was soon occupied after some stiff defense by the Japs. Artillery was positioned here to provide support for a landing on Manus Island across the harbor to the south.

The Americans landed on Manus on 15 March and launched a double pronged attack on the small airfield at Lorengau. The attack continued for three days with tank support. After hard fighting at a handful of Japanese strong points, resistance ended. Other American units were cleaning up various spots of resistance on Los Negros. Cleanup of the Japanese in the Admiralties continued until mid April.

The Japanese transferred all their remaining fighter planes and their Air Force Headquarters at Wewak to Hollandia in the middle of March. Japanese reinforcements for New Guinea would have to come from the west - the Halmahara Islands, the Celebees, the Philippines, and southeast Asia.

General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz agreed on 14 March that raids on the Japanese at Hollandia would be carried out by carrier based planes in preparation for a landing. But it was critical to the plans that the Japs remained convinced that the next American landing on New Guinea be at Hansa Bay between Madang and Wewak.

Fifth Air Force bombers began the softening up of Hollandia on 30 March. Raids continued on the 31st with the heaviest raid launched on 3 April. At least 300 Japanese planes were destroyed in these missions. Japanese resistance had become insignificant.

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them in the Ramu River valley was forbidding and Ed Maurer, leading the 405th, turned a little northward where the Sepik and Ramu rivers emptied into the Bismark Sea, choosing to fly along the coast through the Vitiaz Strait.

Ed recalled,

> "You could see out in front of you that the clouds were topless. They were completely out of sight and just as black as it could be. . . It was like a roadblock across all avenues of escape, . . . I started collecting planes, particularly the fighter planes. I guess we had Lightenings (P-38) and P-40s. . . I was picking up strays along the way. I remember a group of P-38s . . . that had been covering us – they asked if they could stay in close to us to get them through the weather. Fighter pilots are a lot of good things, but what they are not are instrument pilots and they don't even aspire to it and they never cared about it. That's the honest truth. I accumulated a bunch of planes, A-20s included.
>
> "Everybody in the group at that time knew I could fly instruments very well. I had done it many times before! The supply division of the Air Corps had some Polaroid glasses. It was a rubberized frame . . . There were at least five different colors of Polarized filters. You could pick the one that you wanted and that was most effective. I found that it was an almost orange/amber color. It was the denser. But these would separate the weather for you – you could see in three dimensions. Why everybody didn't use them, I don't know. I was one of the very few.
>
> "I had the orange goggles on just for occasions such as that, for instrument flying and for leading the group or the entire strike force because I could pick out the avenues open around the cloud tops. You wouldn't believe how much that sharpened everything up. It made a tremendous difference. I had them around my neck all the time. When I got into weather, I put them on. . . .
>
> "I stayed over water. Water has no terrain that you can run into and if you can see the waves and whitecaps, you're all right. I stayed down on the water and it just kept getting blacker and blacker but you could always see the whitecaps. We were flying so low the prop tips were picking up a vortex.
>
> "(We came to a place where) there's a pretty sheer face of a mountain on the land side. I know there were some A-20s that were flying with us. They were flying with me along with the fighters in close wing to wing formation. For some darn reason, I have no idea why, the lead guy turned in and the whole bunch of them, nine or ten A-20's flew into the cliff. You could see; it was just like throwing napalm bombs against the face of a cliff. . . . Everybody following the leader. I was screaming and yelling at them to turn back. Maybe he thought that he saw an opening. You could see the flashes (as they hit the mountain).
>
> "I think there were some P-47s on that mission and they were trailing along also, but I know I had a bunch of 38s with me. When we got to Finschhafen, I felt that we had it made. All we had to do was come around the corner and up past Lae and right up the Markham Valley and just stay down on the treetops. . . There wasn't anything in the way to hit then because it is all valley. That's what we did. The area was saturated with everybody trying to land at once."

There were other planes besides Ed's flock. Harry Terrell remembers,

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"On the return leg we hit bad weather at the Finisterre Range so Eddie Maurer broke off – our flight buzzed over Madang and out to sea and were diverted to Cape Gloucester. We paralleled the coast about 20 feet off the water, circling about 50 feet, visibility one mile at the most. The land was 'socked in' solid.

"We broke over land once and banked steeply to avoid the hills. Almost lost sight of our leader. We broke into the open and saw Cape Gloucester and headed in. We landed after having our right engine cut out on the 'Go-Around'. We landed on our second pass, Five B-25s and one B-24 set down there. Stayed with the 1st Marine Division, damn nice!...The Marines set up cots for us in the mess hall, gave us an excellent supper & treated us swell – had plenty of cigarettes and doughnuts and coffee. We were right down by the ocean, swell. We stayed up 'til 12:00 talking about the narrow squeeze that day."

Other small groups and single planes flying alone feeling their way into the Vitiaz Strait were watching their gasoline gages getting close to the "Empty" mark. Al Colwell was in one of those planes and his diary continues,

Around, around, up, down – the situation was getting no better fast. We'd been circling for an hour and now our only hope of getting down safely was to make Saidor, about 30 minutes away. *(At the western end of the Vitiaz Strait.)* The weather in that direction looked even rougher, but we would be over water most of the time. We had just decided to leave the formation and go it alone since the others all seemed to have more gas when suddenly we all spied a little hole just over the coast and the water. Everyone nosed down and dove for it. Just as we got over the water we hit rain and wind – couldn't see a damn thing.

"The whole area was full of planes – B-24s, B-25s, A-20s and P-38s. We got down to 50 feet above the coast and followed it toward Saidor. I directed Polecat (Pilot Ed P. Poletrack) to the right and left along the the coast. He and Jack were both flying, dodging planes.

"After 30 minutes of this we suddenly saw a strip just ahead of us. Jack dropped wheels and flaps and Polecat nosed her down for a landing – didn't have any idea how long the strip was or what was at the other end – couldn't see that far – but there wasn't much choice. Polecat never made a better landing and we didn't slide at all when he applied the brakes. We taxied over to one side. It was raining to beat hell but we piled out right in the middle of it.

"Sitting at the end of the runway were three banged up 71st ships. Two landed okay and stopped; then the third came in and ploughed right through them – no one hurt.

"As we walked over to the strip, one of our planes broke through the rain about halfway down the strip (it turned out to be Harvey). He couldn't see a thing either so he set her down, began to brake and started skidding to beat the devil. He was doing okay until he ran off the strip and hit the mud. Then the plane started skidding sideways and suddenly the landing gear gave way and down she went on a wing and the belly. She was one hell of a wrecked ship but the whole crew came crawling out without a scratch.

"About this time we saw a B-25 and a P-38 coming in for landings from opposite directions. Neither probably ever saw the other – they crashed head on in the middle of the strip and

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The bomber raids continued through April. In mid April, the bombers began roaming further to the northwest. Attacks were made on Wakde Island to eliminate Japanese interference from this base on the soon to come Hollandia landings.

Black Sunday

Bad weather at Nadzab hindered the planned takeoff of the large bomber mission to Hollandia on 16 April, 1944. But approximately 300 bombers and fighters eventually reached the target with excellent results. As the planes were returning to Nadzab from the target, they begand to run into the bad weather centered between Finschhafen and Madang. The Ramu Valley was closed in solid and with high mountains on both sides of this route to the Markham Valley; few planes attempted the valley route back to Nadzab.

By going a bit north out over the water in the Wewak/Madang area, They were over the water at the west end of the straits between Gloucester and the New Guinea coast.

The wall of clouds thickened and grew from the water to as high as they could see. Rain pelted the windshields when the planes probed into the clouds. Fuel was getting very low, especially for the fighters and the A-20s. A few planes broke off to the north and managed landings at Cape Gloucester. Most of the fighter pilots and the A-20 pilots joined bomber groups who had navigators and pilots who knew something about instrument flying.

Some groups managed to make it through the rain at wavetop height to Finschhafen and around the peninsula headlands back to Lae and up the Markham Valley to Nadzab. A significant number managed to make it into the Saidor strip. There were so many arriving there with virtually no gas and pilots desperately disregarding any instructions from the tower, made straight in approaches as soon as they sighted the field.

This led to planes making landings in both directions and, in at least one case, a head on collision on the strip killing the occupants of both planes. Some crash landed on nearby beaches.

For several days after, planes from Nazab and other bases devoted hours in searching for missing planes. Even in 2006, there are nearly 10 planes still not accounted for. A lost B-24 was located in the near mountains in 2001, The remains of the crew were removed to Hawaii and were eventually identified. Several of them were buried at Arlington National Cemetary in April of 2006; a few were taken by families to cemeteries near their homes.

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THE WORLD AT WAR *(From page 16)*

The 5th Air Force lost 37 planes and many crewmen on 16 April, 1944. It was the largest single day loss due to weather in Air Force history.

On 22 April, 84,000 men were landed at Aitape (between Wewak and Hollandia),Humbolt Bay and Tanahmerah Bay. Over 250 ships were involved in this landing and the "loan of carriers and aircraft from the Pacific fleet required precise planning and execution because they could be used at Hollandia for only three days. The Humbolt Bay and the Tanahmerah Bay forces, 25 miles apart, launched their pincer movement.

Close air support for the landing and initial phase could only come from the carriers because Hollandia was 400 miles from the main fighter base at Nadzab, too far for effective support by 5th AF fighters. The intensive preinvasion bombardment and air attack caused the Japs to withdraw inland at Hollandia and the landings were lightly resisted.

The Japanese personnel at the Hollandia sites were primarily air base personnel. Only one in ten carried a rifle. The Japs were not prepared to resist an American landing at this site. In spite of major unpremeditated geographical problems. forces from the two landings joined their pincer attack at the prearranged location of Cyclops Drome in four days.

The Tanahmerah Bay landing party experienced great difficulty in keeping their point forces supplied because of rough trail conditions and bad weather,

In the Aitape area, the Americans quickly occupied the Tadji airfield. Here, too, the Japanese were not prepared to resist an American landing.

The forces that landed at Tanahmerah Bay occupied the Hollandia's Cyclops airfield on 26 April and joined with the forces that had landed at Humbolt Bay.

The landing forces at Aitape had their first real encounter with Japanese forces on 28 April. Units were deployed to the east of the landing area to hold up Japanese forces that had been withdrawn from Wewak and sent to the Aitape sector. Japanese attacks on the Aitape perimeter would continue for many weeks with serious losses by the American forces.

During the days before the Hollandia landings, the Aussies kept pressure on the Japs east of Wewak. They had been moving west, down the Ramu Valley toward the coast and Madang which forced the Japs to keep forces in that area instead of moving them toward Aitape and Hollandia. Two days after the Hollandia landings, the Aussies walked into Madang as the Japanese retired toward Wewak. The Aussies entered

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exploded. Somehow one man got out of the B-25 okay; another was dragged out badly burned died later); the others were cremated.

"The situation was worse than ever now. The strip was blocked and the poor guys still in the air were about to go wild. All were running out of gas. The A-20s began coming in anyhow, the first one almost missing the burning wreckage but clipped off a wing; the second blew a tire. His nose wheel collapsed and he skidded through the burning planes – both fellows got out okay.

"The boys with the winches walked right into the burning, exploding mess, hooked on to it and dragged it from the strip. Part of a burnt body slid out from the B-25.

"Hamilton, another of ours, came in next. He blew a tire – skidded off the strip but his plane wasn't damaged too badly. Next, two A-20s and a P-39 all came in almost at once, all gliding in out of gas. The P-39 hit the strip on his belly and the A-20s were right behind. Both pulled up their wheels and hit on their bellies. Not one of the three was hurt.

"By this time it wasn't even exciting. I was drenched to the skin and beginning to feel sick. Caught a truck and went for hot coffee and something to eat. We couldn't find a place to sleep so seven of us finally went over to the hospital, put on a sick act and they put us to bed with a few sleeping pills for the night.

"Several other planes of all types cracked up, but no one else was killed. One of our crews crashed on the coast about 20 miles from Saidor. A couple Aussies picked them up in a barge and brought them in the next morning.

"Our plane was the only one out of the four from our squadron that was still in flying condition. We loaded all four crews in our ship and came back to Nadzab about noon the following day."

The Saidor control tower had early on just given up. No one paid any attention to the tower's directions because everybody was in an emergency situation. Wrecks were strewn down both sides of the runway and at the ends.

The pilot of the B-25 that met the P-38 at midstrip was Lt. Robert Huhn. He and the navigator, Lt. William Barron, were killed in the crash. The copilot, Lt. Fred Rogers, and the radio man, T/Sgt. Joe Carroll, were dragged from the pileup but later died because of extensive burns. This was Carroll's fiftieth mission. S/Sgt. Marshall Daniel was thrown clear of the wreck at impact, spent several weeks in the hospital with cuts and suffered severe shock, but was eventually returned to his unit.

Over the following few days, planes were sent out to search for downed aircraft in the Vitiaz Strait and over the near mountains. Two 405th planes were among the searchers on 19 April. One plane found the crash site of an A-20 and dropped supplies to the downed crew. Their position was radioed to Fifth Bomber Command so that rescue could be effected. No survivors were found at another crashed A-20.

Weather continued to play havoc with mission schedules throughout the month. On 21 April, another mission in preparation for the big landings in the Hollandia area was sent to Tadji (Aitape). The big landings at Hollandia and Tadji took place the following day.

After being forced to abort a mission on the 26th, planes went to Hollandia on 27 April to drop ammo and other supplies to the troops who had landed on 22 April. Tom King, of the 822nd Squadron recalled, "The men were very glad to get the supplies and were really scrambling after them."

On 28 April, the 38th flew the longest mission to date, going to Wakde Island, well beyond Hollandia. It was an almost 1250 mile round

(Continued page 18, ON THE MOVE)

The 38th Is *ON THE MOVE*

(From page 17)

trip. Gasoline consumption studies of the Hollandia missions indicated that there should be no problem making the trip, provided there were no weather problems such as on 16 April.

Tom King started for Wakde on the 28th, only to experience cutting out by his left engine and returned to Nadzab. A magneto problem or water in his gas was believed to be the problem.

Al Berhens got as far as Hollandia when his left engine blew a cylinder head. Al shut the engine down and feathered the prop and turned toward home, dropping his bombs on targets of opportunity. He fired all his ammo and dropped everything possible to lighten the plane.

Flying low over the water, he hoped to reach Saidor but decided to turn back to Tadji where the Allied invasion force had landed on 22 April. Japanese forces were in the surrounding jungle. The base engineers were working day and night under sniper fire to refurbish and extend the Jap strip. After a quick eyeball of the strip, Al landed, and burned out the brakes trying to stop on the 2400 feet of runway. He skidded off into the mud at the end of the strip but everybody left the plane uninjured. The flyers found refuge and a bed for the night in an Army hospital.

Wakde Island, west of Hollandia, was strafed and bombed with little opposition at the end of April. Fires among the parked planes and in the supply dumps were observed as they left. The Sun Setters made it back to Nazab with more than adequate reserves of fuel in their tanks.

At the end of April, Nazab, their new home for only two months, was certain to become a rear area base in a short time. The 38th had moved to Nadzab in early March after 15 months at 17-Mile Strip (Durand) at Port Moresby, about 200 miles to the south. With the Allied momentum picking up, a moving was looming on the horizon But for now, planes could be sent to advance dromes, gas tanks topped off, and then flying to far targets before returning home to Nadzab.

Squadron strength

We receive questions regarding the strength of a squadron in personnel and planes and plane capacity and performance. We have extracted the following data for the month of April, 1944 from the 405th Bomb Squadron files.

	Officers	Enlisted	Total
April 1,	75	275	350
April 30,	68	287	355

Air Crews.

	Pilots Trained	Air Crews other than Pilots Trained
April 1,	30	15
April 30,	30	15

Aircraft	Serviceable		Not Serviceable (out for maintenance)	
	April 1,	April 30,	April 1,	April 30,
B25-D	1	2	2	2
B25-C-1	15	16	2	

Squadrons were of approximately equal size. Number of personnel in Group Headquarters is not known.

The 822nd and 823rd joined the Group with B-25G models. Most of these had been modified by removing the cannon and replacing it with two .50 cal. machine guns in the cannon tunnel. They had six guns in the nose and one on each side. The B-25C and D models had four guns in the nose and two on each side.

Armament: (The nose and side guns were .50 cal. fixed forward firing)
400 rounds for each nose and side gun
400 rounds for each turret gun, .50 cal. (two guns)
500 rounds for each waist .30 cal. machine gun (two guns)
Fuel Load – 670 gallons in main wing tanks, 304 gallons in outboard wing tanks, 150 gallons in turret tank; oil, 140 quarts in each nacelle.
Fuel consumption, B-25C and D models averaged approx. 145 gph.

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

THE WORLD AT WAR

(From page 17)

Alexishafen at the end of April.

On 29 April, American base engineers opened the Hollandia and Aitape airfields for air operations. Allied momentum was picking up rapidly. Multiple operations would soon be launched. MacArthur's object was to destroy the Japanese 18th Army in the Wewak area.

THE BOMBER REEF DVD

As you can read elsewhere in this newsletter, those attending the Thursday night welcome dinner at the Reunion in Mesa, viewed this great DVD produced by our friend, Walt Deas in Australia. Several of them ordered personal copies.

The DVD production was awarded international recognition in a competition in Chicago a few days after it was shown at the reunion. Others of our members who were not at the reunion, have also ordered the DVD for themselves and for some members of their families.

To remind you, this production centers on the finding of Captain Herry's B-25 which was shot down near Danang, New Guinea, in August of 1943. Only one man of those on the plane that day survived, experiencing more than two years of captivity and brutal treatment. The story is on the DVD.

The plane was located in the 1990s by recreational divers. Walt and his wife later visited the site. They made an underwater video recording of the plane which has become covered with corals which gracefully adorn this memory of men of the 38th who gave their lives for our country.

The story is set in the beauty of modern New Guinea and the people who live there today.

Order a copy for your special memorabilia of that era of our lives and to introduce your loved ones to the reality of what we were flying for. Many of your friends, especially of a younger generation, will be introduced to the people who struggled through those years torn by loyalties to their country and the harsh treatment by those who invaded their homes.

Drop a $39.95 check made out to Walt Deas, to him at:

11 Platypus Ave.,
Sorrento,
Queensland 4217

Reunion 2007 September 20 - 22

HULA TO HONOLULU

AL KENNEDY NEEDS OUR HELP!!!

By now, all of our members should have the discs of pictures (over 5,000) and records that Al Kennedy has worked so hard to prepare for us. If not, check with Orland. His address and phone are in the box on page 2.

Al has two *special requests!* Al would like to **improve the captions** that go with the pictures. Please take some time to go through the pictures and captions. Scrape the jungle rot from your brains and look the pictures over carefully. Please send Al all the information you can on pictures you can identify so that he can revise the captions so they will mean so much more. 1 May deadline!!

Alhas several of the collections of photographs and does not know how to return the actual collections to the appropriate party. Check the names of the people who contributed their collections (see the Captions list). **If you know how to contact them or their survivors,** please send Al that information.

Please do this as soon as possible so Al can put these valuable materials in the proper hands.

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORTS DUES ARE DUE

The New Year ushers in the first term for your new S/T. I wish to thank Bill McKinstry for his efforts to train me to take his place before he resigned. The pressure of preparing for a different life style proved to be difficult and the time remaining in the day was too short to do justice to the position he had held for almost 16 years. You did a marvelous job Bill for the Association and may all of your days be filled with fond memories of your accomplishments.

The month of January ushers in a new biennial pay period and all those who pay dues should look on the address label for their dues status. The members who do not pay dues on time and are **delinquent after March 2007 will not receive the May 2007 news letter**. Many of you are paid up through 2008 and some are paid through 2010. During 2006, we had two more dues paying members convert to Life membership. We are picking up a few more Friends (F) of the 38th and they are welcome. ***Please remember to read the news letter label for your status.***

Our treasury has declined after paying for the Mesa reunion and our increased newsletter printing costs. Printing 20 pages of our history costs more than the old four page newsletter but we have the capital to continue until we finish the remaining two years of the war. We still have about $63,000 remaining and that will see us through many more years of publishing the newsletter.

The only other expense that we have is our web site. I wish to thank Chris Guest for his many years of service as our web master. He has moved to the old family farm and a phone modem is all that is available in his area. Thank you, Chris, for all of your labor and caring for the website.

Our new web master has steered the association to a new web host and cut our yearly costs nearly in half. Tom Behrens, the son of Al Behrens of the 822nd has a deep and abiding interest for all things involving the 38th Bomb Group. Welcome aboard Tom.

Orland Gage S/T

MEANWHILE--ON THE HOME FRONT

(EDITOR: *I already had a story to start this column off with when I received a letter from Laurie Bertram. I somewhat reluctantly decide to use her story first. Thanks, Laurie for your letter from which I quote below. I hope this will trigger some other letters with such stories. Laurie is an Aussie "war bride" which adds to the nostalgia.)*

"The issue (*our September newsletter*) was so interesting to me as I lived in Brisbane, Australia, at the time. We had newsreel theaters you could dash into on your lunch hour and in about 15 minutes get the latest update on what was happening in Europe, New Guinea, and later all the islands.

"It had been the Aussie Army who clambered up the Owen Stanley Range, two steps forward, slipping back one on the mud - it looked terrible!

"I worked for General MacArthur's headquarters in an Air Technical Intelligence Unit in the AMP building in the heart of the city and saw him almost every day when he was in the city. Later I moved with the Air Tech to Eagle Farms airfield as one of the only three civilian women on the field.

"We had to have a security clearance and carried an identity card similar to a charge card. We were located in Hangar Y where the boys were rebuilding a captured 'Tony', I believe, and later were to do a 'Betty' bomber (which never was rebuilt).

"The girls typed intelligence reports and when finished, the Japanese fighter was tested against a British 'Spitfire'.

"These were thrilling times for me. I recall vividly watching the Japs get pushed back, a tense time when an American fighter plane had to circle the field until it ran out of gas so as to make his landing, wheels wouldn't come down. We all watched and prayed that plane down and it eventually landed without mishap - but there were some tense moments.

"My uncle Phil was a plantation manager in Papua for many years previous to the war and when the Japs were advancing, joined the New Guinea Voluntary Riflemen, possibly a Coast Watcher (?). He joked in later years of being hunted by his associates for blowing up bridges as they were forced to leave and eventually returned to Australia. My Aunt volunteered to drive staff cars for the American personnel throughout their stay in Brisbane.

"When the big push up the Pacific Islands forcing the Japanese back started and MacArthur moved up north, I was transferred to General Kenny's H.Q. in radio communications where I met Martin. He was in Brisbane after being shot down and working on soldier voting. We were married January 20, 1945.

"All the names in your newsletter - Rabaul, Wewak, Dobodura, Truk, Kavieng, Cape Gloucester, New Britain - are so familiar to me as I followed you boys up the islands via news reels and radio as you pushed the Japs back.

"Thank you all for saving Australia while our servicemen were over in Europe. The camaraderie and loyalty of the 38th amazes me and I hope you will be meeting together for many, many years to come.

"My best wishes to all.

Laurie"

Dues are Due - Check your address label!

PLEASE SEND US YOUR HOMEFRONT STORIES

REFLECTIONS ON REUNION 2006

As many had feared, it was hot in Phoenix when we met for Reunion 2006. But the hotel and tour coaches were comfortable. We made considerable use of the shade in front of the CAF museum on Friday where we were able to lay our hands on four B-25s, one of which was flown in, landing while we were there. It also made a low flyover just before we left.

There seemed to be a great new enthusiasm for the continuance of our Association, so different than the mood as we gathered in St. Louis in 2004 with a possibility expressed by several that we should perhaps disband.

We had a very good turnout of members and family members. We also had several new ***"Friends of the 38th"*** anxious to make contact with 38th Bomb Group members who might have known their loved ones. The older members were energized by the enthusiasm of these younger people to know more about us..

The welcome dinner on Thursday evening was climaxed by a showing of the Walt Deas production of ***"Bomber Reef."*** Several placed orders for this award winning documentary. On October 1, we received news that this production had been awarded a Certificate of Merit by the juries of the 42nd INTERCOM International competition and it was among the award winners shown at the International Film Festival in Chicago, October 16.

Friday evening the group enjoyed the dinner theater meal followed by a presentation of "***The Chorus Line.***" The show received mixed reactions from the attendees.

At our business meeting a motion was presented by a member who stated that we were all getting older and he felt we should meet every year to renew our contacts with one another more often while we still could. So, the Association membership in attendance voted overwhelmingly to have reunions every year.

Representatives from Larry Hickey's publishing venture, presented an update on "our book." They showed us a thick notebook containing a draft of our book, far from finished. It was a bit encouraging to be informed that two writers are working full time to bring our book to completion but the actual publication date is still a hazy guess, six months to a year and a half. So, what's new?.

Following a long and busy meeting, we adjourned to lunch at the Organ Stop Pizza place. We were treated to a private concert and lunch. We listened to a program which included several numbers requested by attendees. The concert was presented on the largest Wurlizter theater pipe organ in the world. At times, the whole building was vibrating in response to some of the over 5000 pipes as we feasted on all we could eat of four different pizzas.

Our final banquet on Saturday evening was enjoyed by all in attendance. We were entertained by the ***Fantasy Five*** who, again, included requests from the diners in their instrumental entertainment. A surprise and unscheduled event in the evening was a lovely bride in her wedding dress parading through our room with her groom. They had just been married in the room next door and she wanted to show off her lovely wedding dress. Helen Alford gladly ushered them into our dinning room.

After dinner, several members took advantage of a small dance floor in front of the head table and the music of the ***Fantasy Five,*** demonstrating that old timers still enjoy performing, and rather well. Past President Harry Terrell was a bit restricted by spinal problems but seemed to push them aside as he responded to several of the fairer gender and his problems seemed to fade away as he charmed us all with his grace on the dance floor.

After most of the revelers had moved on, one of our old timers was tricked by the edge of the dance floor and fell, suffering a cut on his scalp which put an end to the dancing. With concerned attention by those remaining and care from an expert in the group, he made his way from the room under his own power. Most of the crowd had moved out to prepare for a return home on the following day or for the day trip to the Grand Canyon.

More than one uttered a regret during our farewells that our reunion had passed so quickly. Many expressed the hope that the **2007 Reunion** would hurry along and bring us and many others together in **Honolulu**.

Several went on the day trip to the Grand Canyon before calling it quits.

Join us and *Hula to Honolulu*

We checked out that B-25H ammo.

REUNION 2007 - HONOLULU

Our next reunion - September 20-22, 2007. Start stuffing the piggy bank and plan to be with us in Honolulu.

Jack has several things on his planning list:
Pacific AF and Gen. George Kenny HQs. on Hickam Air Force Base - Aviation Museum of the Pacific on Ford Island - Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor - Punchbowl National Cemetery - Hawaiian Lua at Hale Koa Hotel - great dinners, entertainment, shows and time to sit around and renew acquaintances and even make a few new friends. More information and registration forms in the May issue.

WATCH THE WEB SITE FOR MORE DETAILS!!