38th Bomb Group

823 rd Squadron

71st Squadron

822 nd Squadron

405th Squadron

"The Sun Setters"

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

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!

2005 was a good year for the 38th BG and there is even better news for the year 2006.

2006 REUNION: We are looking forward to having a big and enjoyable 38th Bomb Group Reunion, which will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Mesa, Arizona, 28 – 30 September 2006. Chick Alford has been coordinating details closely with the Mesa area. See page 16 for tentative planned programs and hotel reservation details. The May 2006 Newsletter will contain your registration form, which will list reunion events and their costs. **You should make your hotel reservations directly with the Holiday Inn at the toll free number, (866) 799-2789, and ask for the "38th Bomb Group Block".**

Al Kennedy is finishing the preparation of the 38th BG WW II historical data and pictures on 15 CDs for final reproduction. He is looking for a company to produce the packages for shipment. We are expecting that these will be shipped by mid 2006 so you will have them before the Reunion. Al volunteered to do this project, which has cost him dearly in time, energy and dollars; so, each of us owes him a large debt of gratitude.

Bill McKinstry has been our Secretary/Treasurer since the early 1990s and he has recently announced that this will be his last year. Bill's performance has been outstanding; throughout the ups and downs of the market, our financial account has remained sound.

Orland Gage has volunteered to replace Bill and they are planning an orderly transfer. You will be advised when the transfer is completed. Orland, with Flora's help, does many things for the Association. He manages our membership roster. He sees that the newsletters are printed and mailed to you. Has put all our newsletters on the Internet with links to our web page. All this - plus he tries to keep your president out of trouble - which is not an easy task.

Chris Guest has plans for enhancing our "38th BG Web page". He has had some problems this last year which have delayed the update; but be patient. If you are handy with a computer and would like to help, please let Chris know. We can use all the assistance you might be able to provide.

David Gunn, with the assistance of Orland Gage and Jim Thoren, has published another super "Newsletter". Each one is better than the one before and we continue to receive many compliments about the Newsletter. So, please keep sending stories about your WW II experiences to Dave at (pappygnk@juno.com).

Larry Hickey has people working on our "38th BG Book" and he hopes to have it to the printer "this year" – maybe before our reunion. He still plans to attend at our reunion.

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

Meet you in Mesa, AZ. 28-30 September 2006 *Jack DeTour*

IN THIS ISSUE:

REUNION SCHEDULE page 16
The World at War page 3
A New Year Dawns, 38th BG History page 3
Jan. 4, 1943 Jap Convoy to Lae page 3
Ye Ole Nance page 4
Bismarck Sea page 7
Bail Out at 13,000 Feet page 11
A Milk Run? page 12
Lost Squadrons have a new home page 13
Hail the Ground Crews page 14
Private Issue Armour Plate page 14
Columbia B-25 Raised from Lake page 15
Lt. Col. Castle page 16
Mystery Photo page 16

MEET ME IN MESA!

September 28-30, 2006

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

IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

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

Harold V. "Swede" Larson	70th
Vernon R. Wilkinson	822nd
James M. Foley	823rd
Fred E. Mc Mahon	823rd

Don L. Evans Assoc., 22nd Bomb Group

TOTAL TO DATE	
Headquarters	18
69th Squadron	2
70th Squadron	59
71st Squadron	151
89th Squadron	1
405th Squadron	170
822nd Squadron	90
823rd Squadron	92
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

The 38th Bomb Group suffered the loss of a great friend in November. Don Evans, of the 22nd Bomb Group, passed away rather suddenly. Don was a real encouragement to me. My wife and I had lunch with him last May and he shared with us some of the work he was doing to get the 22nd BG's book finished and published by Larry Hickey. He had hired extra writers to get the final portions finished. He was pouring great amounts of his time and energy into the project.

Don responded to my questions on various occasions and I tried to answer some of his. He was also an alternate observer on the progress on the 38th BG book as it languishes in Hickey's office. I only recently learned that he had several health problems, any of which could have terminated his life long ago. None of this was evident to me as we had lunch together. Yet he persevered energetically the passionate desire to see that the mission the 22nd had carried out would be appropriately documented and memorialized. It is unfortunate that he did not live to see the culmination of the task to which he had devoted so much of himself. I salute his memory.

One of the special privileges I have is being on the receiving end of special items sent to me. The two items regarding the raising on a B-25 from Lake Murray, SC, are noted on page 15. Among other items, is one sent by Leland Frazee. It is copies of several newspaper pages published in 1942 by an Australian newspaper about what life was like during those early days at Ballarat. We also received several months ago, two pages of a Florida newspaper containing an interview with Andy Beverage (405th) shortly before his death last Spring. Roy Lee Grover sent us a copy of his 100-page book of stories and pictures. Bob Lamb has sent us a couple of stories which we plan to work into future issues.

Lynn Daker, 500th Squadron (345th BG) association President, sent a copy of a 13 page article about the February 1944 raids on Kavieng in which the 38th participated. One of the authors was Don Fetterly who also passed away while on a discovery/recovery trip to New Guinea in October. Walt Deas sent copies of several pages of various Australian newspapers, with articles from June, July and August of 2005 recalling the events of that night in 1942 when five 38th BG planes wound up over Grafton instead of Brisbane. Some include information we sent to Walt.

I owe much gratitude to those who have been so kind to send me these items. If I have not listed your submittal, please pardon me. It is possible I have not received yours; check with me.

One thing I have found in perusing the preliminary historical data disks is that there are so ***few stories from our ground echelon.*** Those were the men who did so much hard work making sure the planes would be ready to fly, making sure they were properly armed, taking care of the camp sites and preparing the food, (such as it was) the best they could in hot kitchens, sometimes with floods running through, for everybody. ***We would like to have more of those stories.*** The 38th could not have fulfilled its mission without you and we want to know more about what your life was like.

Perhaps the most significant record in this issue is the reports of the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. As we have noted before, there are many differences in the way stories are recorded, even in official records. This is particularly true of this great battle. There are hints of why one version differs from another. We have tried to sort through the various versions and piece together what seems to be the most likely story. Space does not permit a more detailed analysis and explanation of why we have chosen the form we have included in this issue.

We told you earlier about the magazine, **Bomber Legends**. Your editor was recently asked to furnish a story about our minimum altitude bombing missions to go with some pictures they had received from another source. We worked hard over a six-day period at the end of November and early December to fill that request. We submitted a 5,000 word story of the August 1943 raids on Dagua during which Capt. Cheli and his crew gave their lives. It is appearing in their January 2006 issue. We have not yet seen it but, as we promised, the B-25s and the 38th Bomb Group will be featured on their pages.

Last January, we promised you a cover sheet to put on the notebook binder you are keeping your newsletters in (you are, aren't you?). We had hoped to have the photograph CDs for selection of an appropriate picture. Since these are not yet available, we hope to include that cover sheet in the May 2006 newsletter package.

WEB SEARCHING: When searching for more information about events in the southwest Pacific, ***always*** include the year (1943, 1944). It helps! You can also find out more about the B-25 recovered from Lake Murray by searching: ***Lake Murray, SC, B-25.*** Some sites have several pictures taken during the recovery.

THE WORLD AT WAR

As 1943 rolled in, the Allied forces had halted or turned the tide in every theater. Supplies were still not adequate to replace losses, especially in the Alaska, China/ Burma/India (CBI), South Pacific, and Southwest Pacific Theaters. There was time to determine what was working and what was not.

In mid-January, Roosevelt and Churchill met for ten days at Casablanca. Stalin, devoting his attention to the winter offensive in Russia, was unable to attend. In the end, Churchill agreed that Britain would support a landing on the French coast in 1944. Roosevelt agreed that a landing in Italy could be made in 1943. Russia was assured of increased aid, planes and trucks. China was assured of increasing aid and an offensive in Burma.

The Australians and MacArthur were promised sufficient resources "to maintain the initiative." The European/African theaters were still to have priority for men and equipment.

ON THE CONTINENT

American and British bombers increased their forays over the continent, including British raids to Italy. On the night of 16 January, Berlin was subjected to a heavy raid by the British, the first in 16 months. In retaliation, London endured its first night raid by Germany since May, 1941.

During the month of January, the Eighth Air Force was strong enough to conduct its first raid over Germany. By 1 March, Allied air forces were flying raids around the clock over much of Europe; the British with saturation raids and two-ton bombs. Improved navigational radar was being used.

Germany mobilized all males 16 to 65 and women 17 to 45 for war work.

The increased bombings in Italy from England and Africa caused hundreds of thousands of Italian workers to demonstrate against the government which brought production of vital war materials to a halt.

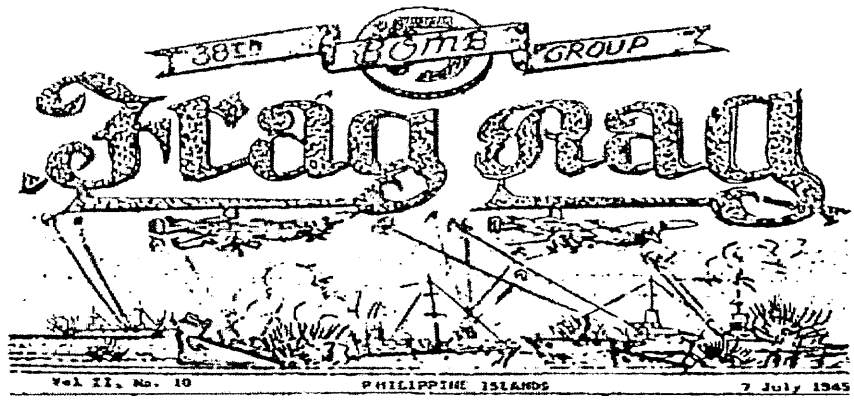
Orders were issued by Himler that by mid May at least 56,000 Jews would be killed.

N. AFRICA, AXIS IN THE PINCERS

The British Eighth Army continued its relentless pursuit of Rommel's *AfricaKorps* westward across the coastal zone of Libya. They entered Tripoli on 23 January, having advanced over 300 miles in just over three weeks of the new year. They were now approximately 300 miles from the Allied force which had landed in Northwest Africa in November 1942.

The combined Allied armies had moved over 900 miles from their November

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



A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943

On 2 January, the 71st Squadron started the New Year off for the 38th Bomb Group with a mission to Lae on the north coast of the Huan Gulf. They proceeded to the target, Dittyman's Creek Supply Dump at Lae, where they dropped 72 100 pound demolition bombs with instantaneous fuses. The bombs started fires in addition to fires believed started by an earlier raid by 22nd Bomb Group planes. Light anti aircraft (ack-ack) and machine gun fire was observed but no damage to the planes was experienced. There were no Japanese fighter attacks on the planes.

Maj. Offers killed, Cheli becomes 405th CO

While visiting his old outfit, the 22nd Bomb Group, Major Melville Offers took off in an A-24 dive bomber. The single engine died during a take off turn and Offers was killed in the crash. He had come to the 38th with "Shanty" from the 22nd the previous November and was the CO of the 405th Squadron. Offers was a West Point graduate, having previously been an enlisted man and a crew chief.

Ralph Cheli became the 405th Squadron CO. He had been looked upon as a leader for some time. Garrett Middlebrook recalls, ". . . nor do I remember him (Offers) ever flying missions with us. Cheli was always there and always with us on the missions and always in charge."

Convoy to Lae drubbed

On 6 January, a Jap convoy, five transports and 5 naval vessels, was spotted south of New Britain Island headed for Lae. General Kenney called for attacks on the convoy. On 7 January, 12 Mitchell bombers of the 38th BG hit the convoy shortly after 0800 hours. Just after "Bombs Away", the flights were attacked by five to eight Zekes. Two of these were shot down and one was seen to fall away trailing smoke. One of the 405th planes, ***The Egg Crate***, was shot down by an ack-ack hit in one engine. There were no hits on the convoy on the score card for the mission.

A second strike by ten 38th BG planes was made at about 1545 hours after the convoy had reached the Lae harbor. The bombers were again attacked by enemy fighters who scored a hit on ***Pistoff***, but the top turret operator, Cpl. William Holmes, drilled the fighter and sent him to the drink. The bomber limped back down to the Buna area with one engine shut down and ditched just off shore, all crew members being rescued. Again, no hits on the ships were recorded.

The Japanese lost several fighter planes; even more were seriously damaged. One 38th BG plane with several machine gun fire holes and a flat tire managed to make a safe landing. One crew member on another plane was killed and three wounded were taken off upon landing.

General Kenney announced that Allied planes had sunk one transport, damaged two others and a destroyer had also been hit. But the convoy was able to unload approximately 6,000 troops.

*(Continued page 4, **A New Year Dawns,**)*

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 3)

The next day, several heavy and medium AAF bombers and fighters with Australian Beaufighters continued the attack. Twelve B-25s set out to attack the remains of the convoy just after 0800 hours. Several more Jap planes were destroyed and all our planes returned safely. One transport was sunk and another received a direct hit. At least three other convoy ships were damaged by the attack which continued in a second raid in the afternoon. In the afternoon, 10 planes carried on the attacks on the convoy. Supplies and troops on the beach were strafed before all planes returned. Thirty-eighth Bomb Group records reports listed five Zeros downed in the morning raid and three more in the afternoon.

Two more missions were logged on 9 January to harass the remaining ships of the convoy. The record book notes that one transport was beached and that there was one less Zero to worry about in the future. The remaining convoy ships limped away for Rabaul that evening. The reinforcement of Lae had been a costly venture for the enemy.

Ye Ole Nance Goes Pooof

On 21 January, Bill Royalty recalls that he was in the crew of ***Ye Ole Nance,*** named for the wife of the Pilot, Bud Thompson, which had returned to 17-Mile. Their bomb load had been 300 pounders. They had experienced a strange bump sensation when they dropped their bombs at the target. The bomb bay doors were opened after parking and a service truck started refueling.

Someone discovered a bomb still hanging from the lower right shackle. It seems that when the bombs were loaded, no one had placed the release mechanism on that shackle when the plane had been change from carrying 500 pounders to carrying the smaller bombs. Apparently, when the bombs were dropped, the bombs in the top of the bomb bay bounced over this unreleased bomb causing the strange bumping sound.

A big discussion ensued regarding whether the bomb was alive but safe and what should be done. Apparently, the man refueling the gas tanks heard something about a "live bomb" and he took off running right off the wing and away from the revetment as fast as possible. Those in the discussion circle left, also, and Bill hurriedly exited the plane and found "safety" behind a log about 200 yards away.

After a few moments, things quieted down and several men started back toward the plane. But it was too late. The gas nozzle had been left locked in the "on" position and fuel was running over the tank filler and onto the ground. It ran behind a nearby tent where there was apparently a small fire burning which ignited the trickle of gas.

There was nothing to do but retreat again as the fire flashed up the line of the overflowing gas and onto the plane. In only seconds, the plane and gas truck became a flaming heap. The bomb blew and scattered the plane and truck all over the place.

January, busy and dangerous - even on the ground

During the rest of January, 74 sorties were sent to bomb the Lae airdrome and supporting facilities. Seven planes engaged in submarine search missions southeast of Port Moresby before January passed into the record books and five planes searched for downed aircraft.

Japanese planes came over the Moresby area frequently during the night. These raids caused the loss of considerable sleep and made it difficult for the ground crews to perform all their maintenance and repair tasks to keep as many planes flying as possible.

One man's diary noted that during one of the raids on another Moresby field, three men in one tent took to their slit trench for protection and the fourth remained in the tent. A bomb landed very close to the tent, severely injuring the men in the trench, only one of whom survived (two died before reaching the hospital), and killing the man in the tent.

*(Continued page 5, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS,**)*

The World at War - (From page 3)

landings at Casablanca to central Tunisia. The British Eighth Army moved into southern Tunisia in early February, The Germans and Italians, now in a squeeze, mounted a defense in Tunisia under a new commander. Rommel had been recalled to Germany. The long remembered battle for control of Kasarine Pass shifted back and forth.

Heavy damage was inflicted by bomber raids on the two principal cities of Tunis and Sousse in the northeastern coast.

The Axis forces survived at the end of a tenuous supply line. They had lost approximately 200 transport planes to U. S. fighter aircraft between Sicily and Tunis.

On 12 April, the Allies occupied Sousse, a city south of Tunis. By the end of April, they were virtually within sight of Tunis.

THE RUSSIAN FRONT

As January 1943 rolled in, Leningrad was in the middle of the second winter under siege. Hundreds of thousands had died because of the cold and the lack of sufficient food. On 11 January, Russian troops broke through the German lines and opened a narrow corridor into the city. The corridor remained under continuous shelling by the Germans. Dogged determination did make it possible to partially relieve the city's isolated and suffering masses.

January signaled a renewal of Soviet army activity all along the line stretching far to the south. At Stalingrad, the Russians continued to squeeze their lines around the Germans in the city.

The Germans received a small amount of supplies by air at two air strips within their perimeter. But the cost was great. The Germans lost about 500 planes bringing in supplies and evacuating sick and wounded.

Hitler refused to give permission for the besieged army to surrender in the face of the certain end. The fighting in the city was savage street by street, building by building conflict.

The biggest of the airstrips in Stalingrad was seized by the Russians by mid January eliminating a major resupply point for the Germans. Finally, on 31 January the 90,000 remaining Germans surrendered, 160,000 having died in the siege. This was the first break of the previously invincible Wehrmacht. Hitler was furious.

Further south, the Russians amassed large forces aimed at cutting off other German forces in the North Caucasus area. In early February, the Russians succeed in reaching the Sea of Azov (a small appendage to the Black Sea) cutting off the Germans in the North Caucasus.

To improve their position before the Spring thaw, the Germans launched a coun-

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

The World at War - (From page 4)

ter offensive in the middle of the southern front between Moscow and Stalingrad. Ground was exchanged several times. The fiercest fighting of the campaign took place as the Germans strove to avoid a route. The "super race" cry could not rally the troops.

The Spring thaw brought a halt in movement by either army. The Winter campaign had been extremely costly to the Germans. An estimated 1,000,000 men died; 9,000 tanks were destroyed, 5,000 planes and thousands of trucks were lost. Russian losses were also heavy but their replacement capability was improving while that of the Germans was deteriorating.

Hitler pushed for preparations of a major counter offensive to start as soon as the diminishing thaw permitted. The Russians foresaw the coming German thrust in the Kursk area and prepared strong redundant defensive positions. Hundreds of thousands of mines were placed in strategic areas.

The Germans unveiled the discovery of several mass graves in the Katyn Forest area in western Russia containing the bodies of over 4,000 Polish officers deported by Russia when the Russians had occupied eastern Poland in 1940. The Russians denied all knowledge of the find.

In 1989, Gorbachev revealed the 1940 order issued by Stalin for the execution of over 21,000 Polish military and civilians, many of whom were Jewish. Two other grave sites in Russia have since been revealed. Russia has never apologized to the Polish people nor has the question been adjudicated in a world court.

WAR IN THE ALEUTIANS

In mid January 1943, a small force of U. S. personnel were put ashore on Amchitka Island to build a fighter strip, which would cut the flying time to Attu by half. The Japanese discovered this new strip and bombed the area in mid February.

A few days later, an American Naval group, consisting of two cruisers, and four destroyers bombarded the Japanese positions on Attu.

Near the end of March, a Naval Squadron consisting of two cruisers and four destroyers, patrolling west of Kiska Island, encountered a superior Japanese naval force. A Japanese heavy cruiser, two light cruisers and eight destroyers were escorting a supply convoy headed for Kiska.

The outnumbered Americans engaged the Japanese force. A fire was started on the Japanese heavy cruiser. Other hits on the cruiser caused considerable damage.

The Japanese begin concentrating their fire on one American cruiser which took evasive action but was forced to a slow

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

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 4)

Thomas Kerby remembered when the planes came over and bombs started falling, "Of course, we all tried to reach a slit trench. I jumped into what I thought was a slit trench, but it was about a three- or four-foot hole infested with ants; as I hit the bottom I was completely covered with them!"

W, G, Holm's diary entry for 30 January recalls,

> "Two years ago I never thought I'd dig a hole and crawl into it to save my life. Tojo emptied his bombs about three hundred yards south of the runway last night. It seemed to be fifteen minutes before rocks and dirt stopped coming down and I was able to hear again. Snyder kept saying 'Don't worry, they won't get any closer.'. They seem to be good navigators because they stay above the clouds and drop them from there. We sent night fighters up last night and the ack-ack didn't fire. They brought down a bomber. It looked like a comet coming down."

Bits of Christmas mail dribbled in throughout January continuing to stir thoughts of being home again. Rumors began circulating early in January that the 38th BG would be going home very shortly. The men had experienced the debilitating effects of the heat, rain, insects and deprivations of tropic jungle living and easily gave credence to any rumors that dangled relief and stirred up hopes of being home soon. One man noted that the mosquitoes and food were becoming worse. In foggy retrospect, he recalled the "beauty of Rorona" during the ground echelon's early days in New Guinea in nostalgic memory.

A much needed letup in February

On 1 February, R. Pickard (71st) entered into his diary, "We have 18 planes left out of 28 in the two Squadrons." This meant that the planes were being rotated among the crews when they were assigned to fly missions.

The following article appeared in a Port Moresby Armed Forces news paper.

> **SOMEWHERE IN NEW GUINEA.**
>
> February 8, 1943, Another attractively designed officers club, the most pretentious attempted here, opened with a Saturday night dance.
>
> The club, built by the officers themselves, belongs to the B-25 Squadron. Long and low in the style of an airplane hangar, it was named Hardship Hangar after a wing which is becoming one of the most popular on the island. The wing is dedicated to those who haven't seen action yet.
>
> Lts. Howard Paquin of Friendship, N.Y. and Jack Lavers, Bakersfield, Calif., were the leaders on the project.
>
> On the wall is an aluminum plaque listing the names of squadron officers killed in action, with these words:
>
> ***"Don't count us lost, for we're not quite dead.***
> ***Right now we're scouting on ahead.***
> ***The future holds so much in store***
> ***with liberty evermore."***

Walt Krell noted that "Shanty",

> ". . . knew that plans were afoot to bring the 38th BG up to a four-squadron group soon. "Shanty" had returned to visit some of his friends in the 22nd BG and told me (Krell), 'Two more would have to be activated to come up to strength and you (Krell) could take over as C.O. of one of these new units if you (Krell) wanted to transfer to the 38th BG.'
>
> "It was in February 1943, that Grauer, Norton and I arrived at

*(Continued page 6, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS, **)*

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 5)

17-Mile in New Guinea to join the 38th. I became Group Engineering Officer, while waiting to form the new squadrons.

"Although my role there was not conducive to flying combat on a regular basis, individual pilots and crews all assigned within the two existing squadrons, there never seemed to be a co-pilot unhappy to have me take his place for a raid. Mostly I flew with Cox . . .

"It was not my impression that the air war was too hot during this first half of 1943 but things became increasingly more dangerous as the crews were ordered on longer flights to penetrate deeper into enemy territory. "

On 16 February, R. Pickard noted in his diary that, "the 90th Sq. (3rd Bomb Group) made its first raid since putting .50 caliber machine guns in the nose of their B-25s. One plane came back with 35 shrapnel holes."

On 22 February, W. G. Holm again wrote in his diary,

"Going to bed early this evening. Tojo was over four times last night and we hardly got any sleep. Most of the boys have been working on the runway today filling up the holes. He hit us on the second time over and 14-Mile on the last.

"I was on my knees in the bottom of a ravine and when the load hit it felt as though I went six inches in the air and down again. We didn't suffer any casualties. Our personnel and planes are dispersed well enough that they didn't catch us.

"When I run for the trench with my helmet on my head, it feels as big as a wash tub, but when the dirt starts flying and you don't know what's coming next, it feels about the size of a thimble.

"We've had one red alert tonight but nothing happened."

Late in the month, the Fifth Bomber Command ordered all units to practice in preparation for what they knew would be coming soon. The 38th, as Pickard noted, did a "practice raid on a simulated convey covered by P-39s acting as Zeros."

The 38th flew 24 missions during the month of February. On several occasions, they flew two missions in one day so that the Group actually flew combat missions on only 14 days. Eight were single ship recco missions, for the most part to the Markham Valley and to keep an eye on what was taking place around Wau. Five were submarine patrols south and east of Port Moresby where Japanese submarines were known to lurk for convoys coming up from Australia to Port Moresby and on one occasion, the patrol actually performed convoy escort service.

Early in the month, four attack missions were run to Lae by the 38th where the Japs had reinforced their base in January with two convoys, the earlier one having been fiercely attacked as it was arriving at Lae and as it departed. More attack missions were run on 22, 23, 24 February to the Lae area again. These missions involved six or seven planes. As noted above, there were times devoted to practice, but, as was common with other groups, more time was taken in February for rest and regrouping of organizations.

By the end of February, the 71st Squadron had been officially credited with destroying 16 enemy planes and the 405th, with destroying 10. The record preserved to 2005 is confusing in that it doesn't indicate whether or not these destructions were in air-to-air combat.

March madness

As March came sliding in, there was keen anticipation because of the special mission practicing that had been going on for the past few days,

*(Continued page 7, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS,**)*

The World at War - (From page 5)

speed when one engine broke down. A direct hit on the American cruiser started a fire and other hits opened a leak in the hull. The U. S. terriers (the destroyers) intervened and drove them off.

The Japanese transports retired from the scene as soon as the action began. The Japanese fleet ships, with limited fuel and concern that other U. S. ships and planes might appear, soon also retired.

Henceforth, the Japanese would be forced to rely on their submarine fleet to supply their Aleutian garrisons. This was another strategic victory for the Americans.

On 31 March, the American 7th Division was assigned to the invasion of Attu. This was a strange assignment in that the 7th Division had been training for several months in desert warfare.

On 26 April, six destroyers and three cruisers heavily shelled the landing beaches on Attu. On 30 April, the Division arrived at Cold Harbor. Final loading and somewhat favorable weather were all that was needed.

CHINA, BURMA, INDIA (CBI)

Prior to 7 December, 1941, most aid for the Chinese from the outside world had traveled by rail from the port of Rangoon in southern Burma to Lashio and thence over the Burma Road to Kunming. The Japanese had control of the Chinese coast and the capital had been moved to Kunming.

In 1942, Japan invaded the Malay peninsula taking control of Thailand and Burma. Driving north in Burma, they cut the Burma Road. China now depended on all aid being flown over the high mountains between India/Burma and China, "the hump."

This restricted military operations in China. Britain was defending the British Isles with its air force and North Africa with an army, consisting largely of forces from its Commonwealth allies. Little was available for more than a minimum defense in India.

Finally, action was taken in December, 1942, to build a road from Ledo in the north of Asam, India, to connect with the southern terminus of the Burma Road. In late December, construction of warehouses and yards, barracks and hospitals was begun. Construction on the road was soon commenced.

The U. S. sent large shipments of heavy construction equipment, much of which was unavailable anywhere else in the world. General Joseph Stilwell, long a leader of the Chinese military staff, was in charge of the project. Major General Raymond Wheeler, a high profile Army engineer, was in charge of construction. The project would cost over $130,000,000 and was considered an engineering marvel when completed.

The road was pushed through tropical jungles, swamps, and steep mountains night

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

The World at War - (From page 6)

and day through good weather and the torrential monsoon rains.

In early February a conference convened in New Delhi, and decided to reoccupy Burma and then attack Japanese forces in China. It was hoped that China would launch a move on its border with Burma.

An Indian Brigade, the "Chindits" under General Wingate, launched a two-pronged penetration. The southern group was intended to distract the Japanese attention from the action of the northern group under direct command of Wingate.

They infiltrated Japanese territory, cutting the railway linking southern Burma and the Japanese in north Burma. The guerrilla actions disrupted communications. They were supported by air drops at points selected a day at a time. They eventually had to withdraw to reorganize and rest.

In March also, a group of B-24s arrived to reinforce the U. S. 14th Air Force.

The Japanese launched one of their periodic "rice" offensives along the Yangtze River. The Japanese depended on these actions to obtain food for their armies which, at the same time, deprived the Chinese civilians and military of significant food supplies.

THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The last Jap reinforcement convoy from Rabaul to Guadalcanal was almost totally destroyed as 1943 rolled in. Six of eleven transports were sunk; one seriously damaged and four grounded to avoid sinking.

With the Emperor's approval, the evacuation of their remaining forces on Guadalcanal was ordered. The "Tokyo Night Express" missions by destroyers from Rabaul were frequently bombed by the planes from Henderson Field. The fierce defense by the Japanese persisted until the very end.

They evacuated about 12,000 men, but lost about 9,000 killed in the Guadalcanal campaign. American losses, exceeded by far by the Japs, were approximately 2,000 Navy, Marine, Army and flight personnel.

On 9 February, Admiral Halsey finally received word from Guadalcanal, " 'Tokyo Night Express' no longer has a terminus on Guadalcanal." New American forces arrived on the island in preparation for further operations. By 1 March, the Americans had landed in the Russell Island group, finding the Japs had already withdrawn.

American Intellegence scored another coupe. An radio intercept unit in the Aleutians picked up a message on 17 April from Admiral Yamamoto's flagship, then at the Truk naval base. Although Yamamoto's name was encoded, it was quickly recognized. The message was immediately forwarded to Washington.

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

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 6)

not only by the 38th BG but by all bomber and fighter units in the area. The month would be an action filled month for the Fifth Air Force.

The P-38 fighter was equal or superior to anything the Japanese Army or Navy had in their arsenal. Fighter protection for the bombers was getting better with most missions having top cover. Skip bombing tactics were being taught to and being practiced by the light and medium bombers of the 3rd Attack and the 38th Bomb Groups.

"Pappy" Gunn and the representative of North American Aviation, Jack Fox, were placing four package guns, two on each side, and four more guns in the nose of the B-25. The "commerce destroyer", as it became known, was evolving and would see combat soon by the 3rd Attack Bomb Group.

March and the Battle of the Bismarck Sea

The first day of March was marked by the 38th with a single plane photo mission to Morobi and a patrol mission, both flown by the 405th. On 2 March, everyone was just waiting as long range patrol planes (B-17s and B-24s) were shadowing a large convoy leaving Rabaul and believed to be heading for Lae.

The Japs were using their airdrome at Lae as a base for their very frequent night raids over Port Moresby which often kept the Allied personnel awake most of the night. It was known that they intended to reinforce their army at Lae and to launch another offensive to reach Moresby. Lae was an essential guardian on the western flank of Rabaul.

Fifth Bomber Command had determined that it was critical that this convoy not reach Lae as the convoy in early January had done. Instead, this convoy's destination was to be the bottom of Huon Gulf.

On 3 March, the 38th, in conjunction with all available elements of the Fifth Air Force, participated in an attack on the Japanese convoy as it passed Finschaffen and turned into the Huon Gulf. The convoy was now within range of the bombers and fighters operating from Port Moresby and Dobodura (on the edge of the notorious Buna battle field).

The battle plan had been issued and all units had been briefed. Major Ralph Cheli led the 405th to the rendezvous point above the clouds and then out over the Bismarck Sea. Six B-25 ***Mitchell*** bombers followed Major Cheli's plane on this mission which would vindicate the dreams of air power of the General whose name they bore. Almost every available plane in the Fifth Air Force was somewhere in the great formation.

Reconnaissance reports placed the convoy of seven transport and supply ships, escorted by eight destroyers, southwest of Finschaffen. It was nearing 1000 hours as the great air armada approached the Japanese convoy.

Out in front of him, Cheli watched a swarm of Australian Beaufighters drifting down and picking up speed as they closed in on the convoy. As the planes approached the convoy, the ships turned to face the approaching planes bow on to present the least target area, expecting a Beaufort torpedo attack.

Instead, they presented a prime strafing attack target for the Beaufighters, each with four cannon and six machine guns mounted in the nose and wings. The devastating fire swept the length of every ship in the convoy, effectively disarming the deck gun mountings.

The Aussie planes were still clearing the area as a squadron of B-17s, flying at about 7,000 feet, began triggering their 1,000 pound bombs onto the ships. Some of the ships were already beginning to burn.

A covering group of Japanese fighter planes high above, had been unable to do anything about the Beaufighters down low on the water. But they now swooped down on the heavy bombers, pouring damaging

*(Continued page 8, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS,**)*

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 7)

fire into the big birds and ripping the wing from one which soon flipped over into a death dive to the ocean. Some parachutes were seen to blossom as members of the bomber crew bailed out. Japanese fighter planes were seen to attack the helpless men swinging below their 'chutes.

But the Jap fighters had only moments to savor the fruit of their attack. P-38s covering the Allied armada with an eagle eye swarmed down like angry hornets, and in the melee that followed, effectively cleared the sky, leaving only a few to retreat in fear from the scene. The victory had cost the P-38s three of their number. But the 39th Fighter Squadron had destroyed ten enemy planes and the B-17s gunners had been instrumental in decking another ten.

The last of the B-17 bombs reach the sea, scoring several hits and near misses as Cheli led the B-25s of the 405th, across the convoy. The convoy was now a confused group, each trying to maneuver to save itself. From low level, flights of two B-25s picked out targets and launched their bombs in skip bomb attacks against the sides of the ships, ***the first daylight skip bombing attack***. The planes flew into the uncoordinated fire from guns still manned by a few brave gun crews who had not been killed, injured, or just plain frightened by the Beaufighter attack on the ships.

Close behind Cheli's attackers came twelve more B-25s, "commerce destroyers" of the 3rd Attack Group's 90th Squadron, recently armed with eight forward firing .50 caliber machine guns in the nose. They sprayed their fire at the gun positions still firing from the decks of some ships. As they drew closer, they released their skip bombs and pulled up to clear the masts of the ships they bombed.

Another squadron of B-25s, the 71st Squadron of the 38th, quickly followed across the confused ships of the convoy. Some of the convoy had sunk; others were burning and lay still on the water. Still others were moving in uncontrolled courses or steaming in a seeming effort to rescue men who had been blown from the decks of ships or had abandoned burning and sinking craft. The 71st maneuvered to find the best targets among the disrupted convoy and dropped their bombs from about 6,000 feet.

The ***Mitchells*** were followed by A-20s, from the 89th Bombardment Squadron, and more B-25s from the 13th Bomb Squadron. When they had all departed, five ships were in the process of sinking and others were virtually motionless and burning in a sea that was littered with motionless bodies and flotsam, some of which supported stunned, injured, and hopeless figures clinging on. The departing planes dropped a life raft to a P-38 pilot floating in his May West life jacket.

When the bombers of the 38th returned to Durand, they learned that the Bomber Command was in high spirits, having received the initial reports of the maximum effort mission. An afternoon cleanup mission had been ordered.

For the 38th Bomb Group, "Shanty" O'Neal was to lead a mission to be flown by the very best pilots in the group. There were more crews than planes at the time so the afternoon mission would be flown with fresh crews for the most part. Choosing from among the best meant that some men who normally flew as first pilots would be flying as copilots.

Garrett Middlebrook, a first pilot when the 38th BG had flown to Australia in August 1942, was assigned to fly as copilot for Pittman. He recalled that, "Without having to concentrate on flying the ship, I had the opportunity to see a war drama of great magnitude unfold."

The Group flew northward over the mountains and the scene of the battle for Buna and out across the sea. They had rendezvoused with a

*(Continued page 9, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS,**)*

The World at War - (From page 7)

Because the U. S. had broken the Japanese code, it was soon deciphered. The message contained the information and the time table for Yamamoto's forthcoming inspection trip to the Japanese bases in the Solomons. It was decided that an effort should be made to intercept the Admiral's plane and to shoot it down.

Messages were sent to General Kenney to immediately send auxiliary P-38 fuel tanks to Henderson field from Australia. Another message was sent ordering the 339th Fighter Squadron at Henderson to execute the plan.

The mission was planned in such a fashion as to conceal the fact that the Americans had broken the Japanese code. Over the night of the 17th/18th, the tanks arrived by B-24s and were fitted onto the P-38s.

On the 18th, at 6 a.m., two twin-engine Japanese bombers and six escorting fighters took off from Rabaul, bound for Bougainville Island. One of the bombers carried Yamamoto and the other, his chief of staff.

At 6:20 a.m. a flight of 14 P-38s took off from Guadalcanal. The Japanese planes were sighted on schedule and 12 of the Lightnings approached the Japanese flight at high altitude to draw off their escorting fighters. The two principle P-38s then climbed from a very low level and attacked, shooting down the two bombers.

Yamamoto was killed when his plane crashed in the Bougainville jungle. His Chief of Staff was rescued from his ditched plane by a Japanese launch which had put to sea immediately.

All the Japanese fighters were shot down. One P-38 was lost and six were damaged.

Yamamoto's body was recovered and carried to Truk aboard his flag ship, Yamato. His ashes were returned to Tokyo on 21 May. At that time, an official announcement was made by the Japs regarding the action. On 5 June, solemn ceremonies were conducted in Japan in his honor.

The U. S. made no mention of "Operation Peacock" to avoid revealing that the U. S. could decipher the Japanese radio intercepts. This was the second time in two months when U. S. Intelligence had enable very significant scores. (See page 13, column 1.)

With the end of the Guadalcanal campaign, Marine units were sent to Australia for R & R.

BATTLE FOR NEW GUINEA

Only the very center of the Buno/Gona perimeter remained to be cleared after the Australians and Americans entered the Buna Mission on 2 January.

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

The World at War - (From page 8)

At the center was Sanananda. The Japanese had control of the high ground. The Allied units had to approach through swamps, narrow open corridors on the beaches or along well defended trails on high ground.

The Allied heavy bombers had been making reconnaissance missions and night raids on Rabaul. These were generally only one or a few heavy bombers, B-17s, and later, B-24s. These reconnaissance missions were keeping an eye on activity at Rabaul.

On 5 January, six B-17s of the 43rd Bomb Group and 12 B-24s of the 90th Bomb Group made ***the first daylight raid on Rabaul***. Nine ships were left sunk or burning and three enemy fighters were destroyed. The crew of one downed B-17 was rescued. However, General Walker, Commanding Officer of the Fifth Bomber Command was among the crew members of the second B-17 which failed to return.

After fierce fighting, the last resistance at Sanananda was overcome on 20 January. Final moping up of the Buna area was completed. Of the 350 prisoners taken during the bloody campaign, most were Chinese or Koreans, forced laborers for the Japanese.

With the end of the Buna campaign, the 32nd Infantry Division was moved to Australia where it would get a much needed rest and be reorganized.

Beyond the fatigue and frustration, there had been little in the way of adequate personal equipment. Weaponry was often unsuitable for the conditions in which the struggle was being contested.

Non-combat casualties far exceeded those inflicted by the enemy. Dysentery, malaria and other jungle ailments had affected more than half of the ground forces. In some flight and ground organizations, malaria affected very nearly all personnel. "Combat fatigue" rates were higher than in other theaters.

The 22nd Bomb Group had been in combat since April 1942. Their losses had been high. The planes that remained were well worn. The 22nd was sent to Australia for rest and reequipping.

Fighter groups in the New Guinea theater were still equipped with outdated P-39s and P-40s. One group equipped with 80 P-38s was the only group able to tangle with the Japs at high altitude. The P-39s could not reach the altitude at which the Japanese conducted their air raids on Port Moresby. There was often not enough warning of impending raids to give the P-40s time to reach the effective combat altitude.

Morale was impaired by the long tours of undermanned combat, the heat, poor food, the rain and mud, and little recreation.

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

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 8)

squadron of B-17s which was leading the attack. The "heavies" finally turned toward the scene of the morning's devastating attack. They approached from the northeast to avoid the glare off the water of the afternoon's lowering sun.

The dark gray sea was a somber background for the devastation that floated on its surface. One ship, ablaze from stem to stern, gave mute evidence that perhaps hundreds had lost their lives. There were other ships marked by pillars of smoke from smaller fires below deck. They sat motionless in the water. Two or three moved slowly and aimlessly through the water. A destroyer was circling in the water, too fast to be picking up survivors. Was it possibly not under control because of damaged steering gear or because there was no one at the helm?

A group of A-20s swarmed across the sea littered with debris and men hanging on or draped over whatever floated. Obviously, there had been many more who had tired since the earlier attack, victims of fatigue or sharks.

B-25s of the 3rd attack Bomb Group skittered low across the water strafing and bombing. They were soon joined by the planes of the 71st Squadron searching for the most fruitful targets which were getting fewer by the moment. Some of the 405th joined the cleanup crew to assure that there would be nothing left of value to join the enemy forces at Lae.

Still regarding the action from his observation point above and listening to the radio chatter of the planes below, Pittman chuckled and called aloud over the roar of the engines, "The guys in the 90th are arguing over who gets which target." There really wasn't much left to bomb.

Suddenly, over the intercom, the top turret gunner called out that he thought there was a ship on the far horizon. He had the best view and was watching for any enemy fighters that might be lurking. No matter which way the plane turned, he had the advantage of a 360 degree view.

Pittman continued his circling course until he was headed toward the north. Sure enough, slowly sinking below the horizon was the tall superstructure of a retreating war ship. Middlebrook, grabbing the binoculars from their case and putting them to his eyes, began focusing on the object on the horizon. In a few seconds, he was positive that it was a Japanese ship. He handed the binoculars to Pittman who took them in one hand and placed them to his eyes.

Almost immediately, speaking a question in his mind, he made his decision to do what he could to assure that this ship did not escape to safety. His wing man grasped the situation almost at once and knew that the had something other than a burning, sinking ship to take care of.

The minutes passed all too slowly as the two planes closed on their query. As they came within range, the ship, a destroyer, lobbed a broken series of ack-ack. The destroyer turned into the two approaching planes. It didn't seem to have a full quota of guns firing; probably it had been damaged in the morning melee. There didn't seem to be any tracers coming at the B-25s but the winking of muzzle fire could be seen when one looked closely.

The planes lined up for approaches on opposite sides of the target. Pittman began a shallow dive and the gun in the nose chattered away. The dive angle was steep enough to permit the turret gunner to begin firing forward, sweeping the deck with his fire. The enemy gunners seemed to clear away from their positions in the face of such fire power.

As they approached closer, the bomb bay doors were opened. Pittman leveled out to clear the superstructure. The bombardier soon spoke those welcome words, "Bombs away" and a thud announced to all the crew that the bomb bay doors had closed. Pittman turned away at 90 degrees and then another turn so the crew could take stock of the action.

*(Continued page 10, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS,**)*

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 9)

As Middlebrook recalled, "The explosion was so great that I was startled in disbelief. Two bombs penetrated below deck into the interior of the ship and exploded a fraction of a second apart. The entire ship seemed to rise several feet, almost out of the water, while a series of other bombs, dropped by our wingman, exploded just along its hull on the opposite side from us sending up water geysers higher than the superstructures, and, at the same time, splitting the outer platting of the vessel with tremendous concussions."

It seemed only seconds before the two halves of the destroyer began to sink, one end of each half rising above the water as the other end slid into the dark, murky depths of the sea. There were few survivors. The two planes headed for home as the crews contemplated the destruction they had created.

When all planes had returned to Moresby, it was learned that one of them had taken incoming fire and there were holes in the skin to prove it. But no one had been injured.

During the night, PT boats glided through the flotsam to render a *coup de grace*. On the following day, planes from another group returned to the scene but there was only a very large oil slick and nothing worthy of further attention. Undoubtedly, many of those who had survived the sinking of their ship did not survive the numerous sharks which lurked in the Gulf. While some survived to reach shore, being rescued in some way, none of them reached Lae in any condition to reinforce the base. It was estimated that not more than approximately 3000 of the 6000 or so troops and sailors survived. Some made it to shore and Lae, most survivors were rescued and returned to Rabaul.

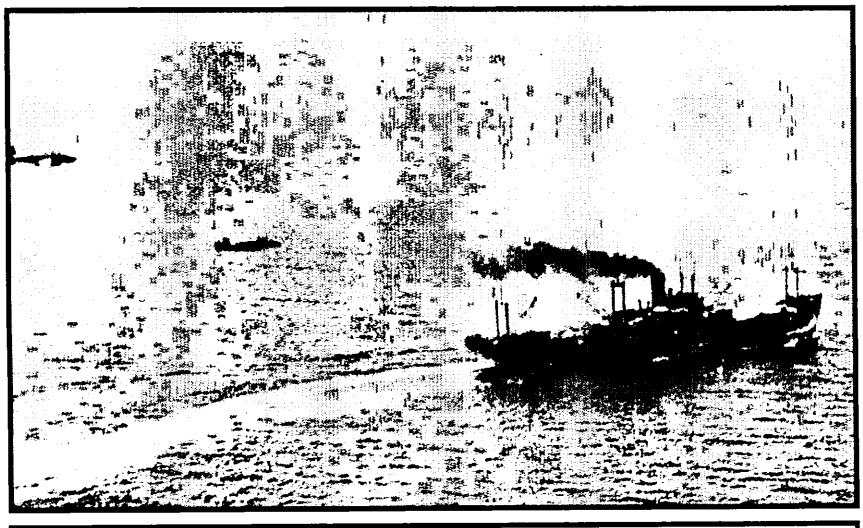
General George Kenney, forwarded the following message to the CO of the Fifth Bomber Command:

"Please extend to all ranks my gratitude and felicitations on the magnificent victory which has been achieved. It cannot fail to go down in history as one of the most complete and annihilating combats of all time. My pride and satisfaction in you all is boundless. *(signed)* MacArthur."

Kenney included his own enthusiastic commendation to General Whitehead: "Congratulations on that stupendous success. Air Power has written some important history in the past three days. Tell the whole gang that I am so proud of them I am about to blow a fuse."

At the end of the war, MacArthur declared that the Battle of the Bismarck Sea was "the decisive engagement" of the war in the southwest Pacific.

*(Continued page 11, **A New Year Dawns,**)*



B-25s close in for a kill. This Air Force photo does not identify the B-25s or the specific engagement pictured. But you get the idea.

The World at War - (From page 9)

Replacement aircraft were not arriving in the theater in any substantial numbers. Planes still operating had high combat hours. They were kept in operation by scrounged parts from wrecked planes and patches over the holes in their skin were sometimes contrived from tin cans. Increased required repair and maintenance time kept the number of planes ready for a mission to a minimum. The Japanese aircraft in the theater far outnumber the Allied planes.

General Kenny's constant requests for more repair parts and more replacement planes usually went unfulfilled. The southwest Pacific would only get what was not needed in the European/African theater.

Therefore, the war effort in this theater was only a holding action and a wait for new equipment and reinforcements for several weeks. This time permitted some rest for the weary men and worn equipment. It also provided a time for gathering equipment more suitable for combat in this environment. Training of personnel incorporated lessons learned during 1942.

General Kenney started setting up critically needed aircraft service centers in eastern Australia. The center at Townsville was to become the largest such facility outside the U. S. Building materials were in short supply. Australian laborers refused to work overtime and on Sundays to build the several large hangers, warehouses, barracks and other base facilities. Kenny was forced to rely on U. S. military personnel. Their construction and mechanical service went on for 16 to 18 hours a day.

Soon, the rebuilding of engines was being accomplished on an assembly line basis. Auxiliary fuel tanks for P-38s and other special parts for some modifications were manufactured in the service centers.

He arranged for Australian manufacturers to make some of the replacement parts which were difficult to obtain from the States in a timely manner.

Kenny realized the planes of the Fifth Air Force needed to be adapted to meet the unique strategies for combat in this theater. He had been interested in skip bombing for some years. He believed that skip bombing would result in a greater number of bombs hitting the ship targets and even more precise placement of bombs on land targets. Bombing of ships from medium or high altitude often produced no damage to the enemy because ships could take evasive action before the bombs landed.

He had been introduced to Capt. Paul Gunn and observed that this ingenious man could help further his own innovative ideas.

Gunn had enlisted in the Navy in the later

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

The World at War - (From page 10)

part of WW I as a machinist's mate and wanted to become a pilot. The war ended before that happened. Soon after the war, the Navy instituted an enlisted pilots program and Paul Gunn signed up. He became an excellent pilot and served a tour as an instructor at Pensacola.

After some time with the Navy, getting married, and working in various places, he wound up in the Philippines, operating an airline. When WW II started, he was quickly impressed into the Army, given the rank of Captain, and given the job of using the airline planes as an Army transport service.

His experience and knowledge of the western Pacific Islands were invaluable to the Army. His wife and children were interned in the Japanese camp at Santo Tomas University in Manila. His many escapades would eventually make him an eccentric legend.

Back in Australia, and by now known as "Pappy", he was given various assignments with the 3rd Bomb Group and carried on his own personal war at times. He was known to take a plane, any plane, and attack his own targets of opportunity.

General Kenney huddled with Gunn and gave orders for him to put four .50 caliber machine guns on an A-20, in the nose and attached onto the side. Part of Gunn's assignment was to prepare these A-20s to approach their target, strafing as they came in, and to drop a bomb to skip into the side of a ship. Over several months, bombs and bomb fuses were modified and tested for this application.

Kenney also had visions of what a rain of 23-pound parachute fragmentation bombs could do when scattered over a wide area. He had participated in the development of such a bomb in the pre-war years. Just before his departure from the U. S. for Australia, he had found 3,000 of these still in an Army warehouse and had requested their shipment to Australia.

Gunn was given the job of designing a bomb rack that would drop these small bombs individually from A-20s and later, B-25s. The parachutes attached to the bombs provided a delay so that the plane could get out of harm's way before the instantaneous fuses detonated the bomb upon impact, scattering highly destructive and deadly shrapnel in all directions.

With some modifications to beef up the frames and skin of the planes, these modifications proved feasible and produced gratifying results when the strategy was applied.

But Kenney wanted more machine guns up front. The A-20 was not capable of carrying more guns and its bomb load was limited because extra gas tanks in the bomb

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

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 10)

The 3rd Bomb Group received it's first Presidential Unit Citation for its part in this history-making engagement. The B-25 had proved it's self to be truly a"Commerce Destroyer".

The Japanese in three days had lost a complete convoy and would never again try to reinforce Lae and Finschaffen from their Rabaul base by such convoys. Submarines and barges were able to move some supplies into Lae but continuous Allied search missions made such efforts risky and inadequate.

During March, Capt. Tanberg, became the CO of the 71st Squadron. His promotion to Major would arrive in May. He had flown with the Group when it left the States in August 1942.

Bailout at 13,000 feet

On 28 March, the 405th left on a mission to search for a submarine in the Salamau/Lae area. Some planes encountered extremely turbulent weather as they climbed to pass through the Kokoda Gap. Charles Smith, navigator, recalled the events that followed in ***Dirty Dora***:

> "We were flying with Blankenship on a combat mission, climbing out over the Owen Stanley Range in the vicinity of Kokoda Pass. At approximately 13,000 feet, the aircraft started whipping from one side to the other with the nose dropping. Later, I heard it went into a falling leaf as the result of stalling.
>
> "I had often said openly and to my pilot that when I felt the aircraft was no longer safe in flight, I would bail out. I would not need any pilot to tell me to go.
>
> "There was no cockpit conversation during the period the aircraft got into trouble. I yelled to O. E. Miles, our bombardier who was in the nose, to come back and bail out. I pulled the 'chutes off the top of the bomb bay and we snapped them on.
>
> "I opened the inner door on the floor. Then I pulled the lever which released the outer hatch into space. I went out first followed by Miles.
>
> "I estimate we bailed out approximately 1,500 feet above the plateau. Both O. E. and myself were in sight of each other throughout the landing since the grass was approximately three or four feet high, no trees. We floated down and landed on this 9,000 foot plateau which was grassed.
>
> "I landed near the edge of the grass where the wooded area started. I believe he landed some two hundred feet from me. I landed with one foot in a small stream of water and the left foot on the bank. I hit very hard with my left foot & leg.
>
> "There happened to be two Australian soldiers living in the vicinity who were maintaining a telephone line between Port Moresby and Buna. They at first thought we were the advance of a Japanese invasion by air and came running with guns (rifles) at the ready. They soon found out we were not Japs.
>
> "Due to my injured left leg I could not walk alone. They helped me and the four of us walked to their campsite. We stayed with the Australians up in the mountains until I was able to walk.
>
> "After approximately one week we were told to walk to the Kokoda airstrip, 27 miles overland, where we would be picked up by a small plane and brought back to Port Moresby. We walked accompanied by the Australians and Fuzzie Wuzzies approximately half-way the first day where we stayed in a hut for the night, then to the airstrip the following day.
>
> "The aircraft flew us to our home base, 17-Mile strip (Durand) at Port Moresby. I believe O. E. Miles and myself were the only 38th BG individuals to bail out in New Guinea during that first year of combat."

*(Continued page 12, **A NEW YEAR DAWNS, **)*

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 11)

Dirty Dora as able to return to 17-Mile, the ground crew found that all the antennas had snapped off and that when Smith had release the front hatch, it had had slid sidewise in the air, hitting one prop blade, leaving a bad nick. It had then hit a tail stabilizer on the way to the rear.

On 29 March, the 405th started a mission to Lae but only one plane found the target due mostly to the weather. On 30 March, the 405th sent a six-plane mission over the mountains to bomb the jetty at Finschaffen at the eastern tip of the Huon Peninsula.

Most of the flying during March had been for patrol missions with a few photo recco missions thrown in. The Group's total combat flying time for February and March did not equal what had been flown in January, which had totaled 551 hours.

The monotony and fatigue, the lack of recreation and good food, the constant threats of malaria and other fevers, and the recent nostalgia of Christmas continued to foster an environment in which rumors were born and passed on with hope that they might be true. In March, one man wrote, "We hear that fifteen percent of the squadron will be sent home (or relieved) every month. I hope there's something to it. It's to start next month."

April, more guns in the nose, new planes (at last!) and SYDNEY!

The month of April 1943, was rather quiet. On 4 April, the 405th flew a seven-plane mission against Heath's Plantation near Lae and on the 6th the 71st flew a seven-plane mission against Salamaua. The balance of the month's missions were one or two planes flying patrol, reconnaissance or photo missions. Most sorties were short with only 121 total combat hours being flown by the whole group during the month.

"There's no such thing as a Milk Run"

"Routine Submarine Patrols" were not always routine. On 9 April, Forrest Darby flew a 405th patrol to the southeast of Port Moresby out over the Coral Sea looking for those Japanese submarines that lurked in hope of catching an Allied ship lagging in a convoy headed to Port Moresby. He recorded his memory of that mission.

> "I remember this mission and it was a "milk run". Being a "milk run", I had a couple of extra bombardiers with me getting in some flight time; also, my dog, Zero. We were out patrolling for submarines.
>
> "On coming in to land, the right gear would not come down. We tried to crank it down manually but it just wouldn't work. I had not landed at Jackson Drome before so I made several passes getting the lay of the land. No radio contact. (A small swale ran along one side of the dirt emergency strip which was located beside the main strip.) I figured that if I put the left gear right into the swale and then kept the right wing up as long as possible, it would lessen the damage to the B-25.
>
> "After a while we were running out of gas and it was getting dark – of course, no lights. I made several passes with the idea of putting the left gear into that swale. On every pass I got a red light from the tower. So, just about dark, I took the bull by the horns and carried out my plan. Fortunately, I was successful, the left gear rolled down the swale, (the plane) slowed down and finally settled on the right wing tip – very little damage.
>
> "Scared hell out of my dog, Zero. After this incident, when we went on a mission I had to carry him onto the plane."

In mid morning of 12 April, "Tojo" pulled the first daylight raid in seven months over the Moresby airdrome complex. Fifty bombers, accompanied by 50 fighters, came over at the usual high altitude, 25,000 plus feet. No bombs were dropped on 17-Mile; but 14-Mile, 7-Mile and 4-Mile were recipients of "greetings".

*(Continued page 13, **A New Year Dawns,**)*

The World at War - (From page 11)

bay were needed for many of the missions.

It was soon realized that a B-25 could carry more guns and more bombs and had bomb bay space for tanks needed to increase its range. The fire from eight .50 caliber machine guns proved very discouraging to gun crews in anti-aircraft gun positions on the ground or on ship decks. A higher percentage of bombs were hitting the targets. The B-25s of the 3rd Bomb Group were soon modified into this "commerce destroyer" configuration.

General Kenney had requested that planes delivered from the factory should be delivered without equipment not needed in southwestern Pacific. This request was not always granted.

The Battle for Wau

The Japanese had not given up on their hopes for capturing Port Moresby. In the latter part of January, a force of 3,000 men was sent from Salamau into the interior mountains to take the airfield at Wau, about 150 miles west of Buna. They planned on using this air strip as a base for another effort to reach Port Moresby.

Wau had been the scene of a significant gold discover in the 1920s. Errol Flynn had sought his fortune in the Wau gold fields before finding it easier in Hollywood. The very life blood of the Wau gold fields had been a one-plane airline which brought food and machinery to Wau and carried out the product of its mines.

In April of 1942, the Australian Kanga Force had occupied Wau. The small Force was supplied by air drops and by cargo planes able to operate from the short flight strip which had a 12 percent grade differential from end to end on a mountain side..

The Kanga force of about 500 had engaged in harassment and spy activities on the Japanese bases at Salamau and Lae.

The Japanese decided to use a trail to Wau not known to the Aussies. When their activity was discovered, they were close to the Aussie base which was defended by only a portion of the small group. The main portion of the Kanga Force was out on a mission to harass the Japanese at Mobu

Intense fighting occurred, the Japs succeeding in reaching the air strip. An urgent call was made to Port Moresby. A break in the weather permitted C-47s to bring troop and artillery reinforcements, landing even as the Japanese shot at them from the perimeter of the field. Bombers and fighters were sent out to bomb and strafe the Japs who were eventually forced to withdraw suffering considerable casualties. Several Japanese planes were lost during the fray.

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

The World at War - (From page 12)

The Battle of the Bismarck Sea

In the latter part of February, radio intercepts by the Allied Intelligence groups indicated that the Japanese were making plans to send a large convoy to reinforce their position at Lae.

They had transferred 100,000 personnel from China and Japan intending to build up the Rabaul sector. At any rate, Lae must be strong enough to repel any Allied offensive action in the area and along the northern New Guinea coast.

General Kenny immediately marshaled his under-equipped Fifth Air Force and made plans to assure that the convoy would never reach Lae. This operation was to be the first large application of his "commerce destroyers."

The mission was carefully rehearsed, with the old Perth shipwreck near the Port Moresby harbor as the practice target.

On 28 February, a convoy, escorted by several destroyers and covered by up to 100 fighter planes, left Rabaul under cover of poor weather. The ships headed for Lae had been loaded so as to expedite the unloading of their military supplies in the quickest order. It had been accepted that there would be significant losses but Lae must be reinforced.

Various accounts indicate different numbers of ships throughout 1 and 2 March as the ships sailed westward on the north side of New Briton. It is believed that several ships were also headed for Wewak and Madang. Late on 2 March, a convoy was spotted by a B-24 turning into the Vitiaz Straights between New Briton and New Guinea. This was the convoy headed for Lae. B-17s were called in and one transport was badly damaged late in the afternoon on the 2 March.

Two destroyers took off between 800 and 900 of the troops before the ship sank. The destroyers sailed away at high speed to discharge their cargo during the night at Lae and to rejoin the convoy early on the morning of 3 March as it was turning toward the Huon Gulf near Finschhaffen. There were now eight destroyers covering seven transports. The weather was clearing.

As it passed Finschaffen, the convoy was now within the range of the coordinated attack squadrons. At carefully planned times, RAAF A-20s took off to attack the airfield at Lae to prevent the fighter planes from assisting the convoy. Other A-20s, B-25s, B-17s, P-38s, P-39s, and P-40s took off from various Allied fields.

(Continued page 14, The World at War)

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 12)

The P-38s were the only Allied fighters that could contest the Japs effectively at that altitude. The Jap bombers looked like a line of big birds floating across the area with smaller birds circling and diving over them. During the fray, two P-38s "dead sticked" into 17-Mile out of gas. Quickly refueling, they streaked aloft to rejoin the battle for the sky over Port Moresby. The enemy repeated with a similar attack again on 13 April.

April saw the first replacement aircraft coming in. The first of these arrived on 10 April, but they were "old" planes transferred from some other Group. However, on the 17 April, four new planes arrived from the States, followed by more than eight additional before the end of the month. These planes had eight forward firing .50 caliber machine guns.

In addition, the 405th's old planes were being sent south to Australia for modification into the eight forward firing gun configuration. Most of them were also equipped with a 20 mm cannon which was neither effective or popular with the crews and was later removed. The crews were given several days of R&R in Australia while the planes were being modified.

One man remembered the great time several of the crews had riding from Brisbane, where the modifications were being done, on down to Sydney. The time spent in Sydney did much to relieve the tension that had built up in the seven months of combat. The 38th began building a reputation in Sydney that would continue throughout the war.

Planes of the 71st Squadron began departing for Australia for the new nose modification late in the month but the completion would take until some time in May. The 71st crews also made the trip to Sydney for much needed R&R.

Photo recco missions were flown by one or two planes on several days of the month. There were also training missions, particularly for formation flying. Some air crew members regarded the formation flying skill of some pilots as being as hazardous as enemy interception.

But the lull before the storm was about to end.

The "Lost Squadrons" finally have a home

Just before 1943 dawned, Major Collins, 69th CO, flew to Brisbane. The B-26s had seen heavy action and were well worn. It had been determined that B-25s would replace the B-26s as they became unsuitable for combat. Collins was to bring back a B-25, modified with eight forward firing .50 caliber machine guns, to start orientation flying.

Capt. Behling became the acting CO. He was highly regarded by all in the 69th. The Squadron was assigned to fly combat missions from Guadalcanal on 31 December 1942. Shortly, Capt. Behling's plane was shot down on a mission to Rekata Bay. His loss was a major blow to the members of the 69th.

In the middle of January, the flight crews were returned to Efate, northern New Hebrides Islands. The Squadron was down to 12 planes and had only six navigators. During January, the remaining B-26s of the 70th Squadron were operating with the 69th at Guadalcanal. There was word that the Squadron was to be relieved and returned to the States. This anticipation was dashed when they were once more ordered to Guadalcanal, arriving in early February.

Major Collins had returned in late January and bolstered morale when he told the men he had been informed that they would be returned to the U. S. after the next Guadalcanal tour. As it turned out, Collins was soon transferred to the Thirteenth Air Force which had been activated in mid January in the Solomons.

The 69th Squadron was then sent to Fiji in February and its remaining B-26s were transferred to the 70th Squadron which had only two B-26s left. On 27 March, the 69th and 70th were assigned to the 42nd Bomb Group which was being transferred from Oregon to combat in the South Pacific.

With all the B-26s now assigned to the 70th; the 69th was being equipped with the new strafer version of the B-25. The two squadrons soon

(Continued page 14, A New Year Dawns,)

A NEW YEAR DAWNS, 1943 (From page 13)

began devoting a great amount of time to practicing low level strafing and bombing tactics.

So it was that in March, "The Lost Bastards of the Pacific" became a part of the 42nd Bomb Group. As they waited for the parent Group to arrive, they were sharpening their skills and capitalizing on their combat experience. New crews were also arriving to relieve some of the veteran crews who returned to the States. Many of them became instructors or in other ways shared their experience with inexperienced personnel. The men they groomed would go to combat with much more savvy than these men had when they left San Francisco in May, 1942.

HAIL THE GROUND CREWS

William Hanrahan (SS 9/92)

Ground support personnel at Port Moresby worked under the most primitive conditions imaginable, fighting off hordes of mosquitoes while striving for maximum readiness of assigned aircraft. Early morning hours were shattered by the moanings of B-25s being power-checked for the day's mission, with that lonely sound always resulting in a touch of queasiness of flight crews in anticipation of the target and the weather conditions for that day.

The steady diet of Australian corned beef and the potato mixture served in the mess hall became inedible in a very short time. Occasionally a "fat cat" (usually a B-25 to be modified) would fly to Townsville and upon return would load up with fresh vegetables, meat and beer for the squadron, but these bonanzas were few and far between and many of the flight line personnel survived on the emergency rations salvaged from the plane's life rafts. Such rations were seldom of moment since if a B-25 ditched in the water, the crew was picked up relatively quickly by the Japanese or by our own rescue teams and rarely, if ever, had a chance to use them.

Flight crews were afforded periodic trips to Australia to regenerate their bodies but R & R trips were infrequent for ground personnel. Some units constructed stills from aircraft parts and brewed their own moonshine mixed with powdered juice from rations for flavoring. Grains for these concoctions were usually supplied by crews returning from Australia and generally tasted better than the Corio whiskey available there.

Rearming 25's, with their tremendous appetite for .50 caliber ammunition, and loading bombs required strenuous efforts by ground personnel, and was usually accomplished in the evening or night after the target and type of bomb load was assigned by Bomber Command.

Waiting for their assigned aircraft to return from a mission was a time of anxiety for ground crews since any discrepancies in performance or damage to the unit had to be corrected immediately to assure maximum squadron strike capability with the limited equipment available. Their heroic efforts to keep "their" planes in the air (in spite of night time raids, tropical rain, heat, and humidity) were, in essence, comparable to those of the men who took the planes over the targets and are certainly most deserving of recognition.

Private Issue Armour Plate

R. L. Grover, 405th

from his book

When the 38th Bomb Group changed from medium altitude bombing (5000 ft.) to low level skip bombing in the strafer mode, my greatest concern was the small arms fire that would be directed up from the enemy troops on the ground under my airplane. We had armor plate behind the pilots but nothing to stop the projectiles coming up from below us.

When I got a chance to fly down to Townsville, I stopped at a hardware store and bought a cast iron stove lid of about 10 inches in diameter. I sat on it during my remaining missions. It was a great comfort to me to feel safe from being maimed. The stove lid never deflected any ground fire but I had such great pleasure in knowing that it was under me. It truly was one of my most treasured possessions.

I do not remember to whom I passed it on when I left New Guinea but I do remember the comfort that stove lid gave me.

The World at War - (From page 13)

At 9:55, attacking RAAF Beaufighters coming in low were apparently misidentified as Beauforts bringing a torpedo attack. The Japanese turned directly into the attacking planes which rained 20 mm cannon and .50 caliber machine gun fire from one end to the other.

The B-17s then attacked from medium altitude, causing the convoy formation to break up. Japanese fighter planes covering the convoy could not dive through the air armada to attack the planes flying at low altitude. The B-17s were furiously attacked. Allied P-38s took on the high flying Japanese covering fighters.

Following the B-17 attack, seven B-25s flying at low altitude, skip bombing the staggering transport ships. Thirteen of the modified B-25 "commerce destroyers" followed, flying across the convoy ships at minimum altitude strafing, then bombing.

Another six B-25s flew across the destruction at higher altitude, dropping more bombs. A-20s followed at medium altitude and more B-25s made a final run over the devastated convoy.

One B-17 was shot down and three P-38s would not return to their base. Japanese fighter planes were seen to strafe the American survivors descending under their parachutes or in the water.

In the space of 15 minutes the seven transports were sunk, sinking, or drifting without power. Three of the destroyers were sunk or would not survive.

In the afternoon more flights of bombers and fighters returned to the scene to assure that none of the ships would survive. Another destroyer engaged in taking surviving crew from one of the previously immobilized destroyers was bombed and left in a sinking condition. Surviving personnel drifting in the water or on rafts were strafed. Navy PT boats cruised through the area during the night to continue the annihilation. No survivors were to reach Lae.

More planes returned on the 4 March to bomb and strafe some of the derelicts. The devastation was awesome.

The results of this carefully orchestrated application of all available force in a highly coordinated attack was starkly visible. Bodies and flotsam floated on the waters of Huon Gulf. The Japanese never again attempted sending a convoy to Lae. What supplies that base received in the future came by submarine, barges or small boats sneaking along close to shore at night. As at Buna, this was a most inadequate means to maintain a fit fighting force.

Subsequent to this battle, the 38th Bomb Group B-25s were modified into commerce destroyers.

COLUMBIA B-25 RAISED FROM LAKE

Recently two reports of the salvaging of a B-25 arrived on the Editor's desk. Sam Yarid (822nd) sent us a clipping from Charleston's ***The Post and Courier****, dated September 29. Sam recalled in his note, "Many of us have fond memories of learning skip bombing techniques on that body of water. Bill Smith, Jr. (son of Bill Smith of the 405th, 1944/45), sent us a copy of the November 2005 issue of the* ***Lake Murray Magazine*** *containing a lengthy article about the plane and its salvage. We appreciate their sending us the reports.*

On 4 April, 1943, not quite a year after the Doolittle raid on Tokyo, a B-25C from the Columbia Army Air Base was practicing skip bombing on an island in Lake Murray, S. C. Bryce Lever, 19 years old at the time, was digging worms for fishing. He still remembers the plane flying over and then losing power. It ditched and floated long enough for the crew to be rescued. The plane sank in 150 feet of water. Four of the crew were later killed in action.

The plane was located in 1993 by a Navy Reserve diving and salvage unit. Robert Seigler, a Columbia resident, researched the wreck and eventually negotiated with several agencies securing exclusive salvage rights. He was determined. "Bringing it back was something that just had to be done. It was our history."

No agency or organization in the area was willing to accept the responsibility for restoring and exhibiting the plane. Eventually Seigler located the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, AL, and secured an arrangement with them to take the plane when salvaged.

Seigler enlisted the services of several professionals and many volunteers. Running the expedition was veteran military plane salvager, Gary Larkins. Larkins headed the expedition which brought a war time P-38 from the depths of a Greenland glacier several years ago. Members of a Florida cave exploration group volunteered and handled most of the deep water diving required to prepare the plane for lifting from the Lake.

Diving to such a depth presents significant hazards. Only a few divers in this country engage in operations at such depths.

The Lake bottom is covered with silt which also covered the plane. This presented its own problems. The silt would rise into the water clouding the scene when it was so much as touched. Visibility was very near zero inches and divers worked by feeling more than by sight.

As the actual raising time approached, throngs of people accumulated around the lake. The plane was raised in mid September, 2005, from the lake bottom and maneuvered close to the shore. Much of the silt was washed from the plane and additional necessary work was performed prior to removal from the lake. It was nearly midnight when it was brought on shore. It was disassembled and trucked to the museum. It will take several years and considerable money to restore and place it on exhibition.

Exclusive filming rights were secured by The History Channel; no broadcast date has been scheduled.

The crew of the plane at the time of ditching was, Lt. William Fallon, Lt. Robert Davison, Lt. Henry Mascall, Lt. James Carney, and Sgt. Robert Burns. Another B-25 ditched without fatalities four hours after the salvaged plane sank to the bottom of Lake Murray. Thirteen other flyers from Columbia died when three other planes crashed into the lake in 1942 and 1943.

DID YOU KNOW THEM?

Thanks again for those who have responded to this column in previous issues. We have added a few names and removed a few. Those who seek information really appreciate the response we are able to forward to them.

We have also listed the names of former buddies that they would like to contact or any information about them.

Frank L. D'Arcy, Family seeking info.
Hubby Beers, pilot, Grandson seeking info
Al Behrens, in New Guinea 10/43 to 7/44, Son seeking info.
S/Sgt. Carl Dubke, 405th, Nephew seeking info. Carl was KIA at Tarakan on 12/30/44.
Steve Fifik, Son seeking info.
Ted Grimes, Grandson seeking info.
Lt. Paul (Pete) Harrison 71st Sqdrn., Brother-in-law seeking info for Paul's sons.
Howard "Hodee" Holton, gunner, Granddaughter seeking info.
Lt. James A. Hungerpillar, pilot, 71st, Nephew seeking info.
Lt. Ralph Lambert, 405th, Brother seeking info.
Capt. J. O'Donnell, planes *Mimsie*, *Harry Monster*, Nephew seeking info.
Lt. Everett (Fritz) Rice, 71st, KIA Rabaul, Nephew seeking info.
Maj. Bill Ruark, 405th, *Dirty Dora*, Son seeking info.
Thomas Russo, 71st (?), Son Seeking info.
S/Sgt. Warren R. Sikes, Son seeking info.
Lt. Garfield "Gary" or "Si" Simon, 405th, Navigator Grandson seeking info.
Arthur F. Tacy, *Dirty Dora*, Grandson seeking info.
Sgt. Donald Weeks, Two sons seeking info.
George "Rip" L. Winkler, 822nd, on detached assignment to 38th, 11/44, Son seeking info.

MEN SEEKING INFO ON FORMER BUDDIES

Who was the mess sergeant in New Guinea that was transferred into Headquarters Squadron and was reassigned to an Undertaker job? - Leland Frazee seeking info.

Lt. Vincent Jamme, pilot; Sgt. Denver Bryant, Flight Engineer; Pvt. Martine Bernstein, Gunner - Training crew buddies, Robert Bucholz seeking info.

M/Sgt. "Red" Gowen, 1st Class Air Mech. "Teacher" Brooks - Joe Perret seeking info. "Would like to chit chat with old buddies."

Walt Deas - *Bomber Reef*

At last word, Walt is still trying to arrange for reproduction and distribution of his great DVD. We hope to be able to give you information on buying this DVD in May.

Our Newsletters are on the Internet

Orland Gage has set up a web site with most of our newsletters since 1987 available to all members and anyone interested in WW II. Check the site out and suggest it to your friends: **http://38thbgpsun-setter.com/**

2006 REUNION PLANS

The 38th Bomb Group reunion, will be at the Mesa, Arizona Holiday Inn, Arizona 28 – 30 September 2006. Chick Alford has been coordinating the reunion and here are some tentative plans:

Thursday - Registration
Welcome dinner (casual dress, shorts OK).
Friday - Continue Registration
Breakfast on your own in the hotel restaurant;
Tour and lunch, Commemorative Air Force and Flying Museum near Mesa;
Dinner and a great concert at Barleen's Arizona Opry
Saturday -
Breakfast on your own in the hotel restaurant
Squadron and Group meetings
Luncheon on your own - optional shopping for the ladies and golf for the men;
Banquet and entertainment at the motel
Sunday - Breakfast on your own, check out.

The Mesa Holiday Inn is close to the Phoenix Airport with a 15-minute free shuttle ride. Chick has arranged for a block of rooms at the special rate of $72.12, tax included, per night. The rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates when booked for the reunion dates.

Jack and Chick urge you to book early. Call the Holiday Inn direct at the toll free number, (866) 799-2789, and ask for the 38th Bomb Group Block. This will help Chick in finalizing the arrangements.

More details and registration forms in the May newsletter.

MEET ME IN MESA

Lt. Col. Theodore Castle

We are aware that there have been questions as to what happened to Castle after his short stint as CO of the 38th when it flew to combat and in those early weeks in Australia. There has even been some speculation that the former **Castle Air Force Base** at Merced was named in his honor.

Lt. Col. Theodore Castle commanded the 38th Bomb Group until he was hospitalized in late 1942. He was then assigned as training officer at Santa Maria Airbase until the end of the war. After the war he remained in the reserves, being promoted to full Colonel on Feb. 15, 1946. He worked for Boeing on the Apollo space missions and died in 1979.

But **Castle AFB** was named for another Castle. On Christmas Eve 1944, Brig. Gen. Frederick Castle rode his flaming B-17 to his death while leading the biggest bombing mission of World War II during the Battle of the Bulge. He was air commander and leader of more than 2,000 heavy bombers in a strike against German airfields on 24 December 1944. He was posthumously awarded the U. S. Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic action. The former Merced Army Air Base was named in his honor on 13 January, 1948.

The Editor was a student at the Merced AAB April to June 1943, where he flew the Vultee "Vibrator" BT-13. His final flight, in the front seat, included a 6,000 foot spin descent in a BT-13, at his instructor's order, with a wooden monocogue aft the second seat. The instructor was somewhat chagrined when he noticed that monocoque after landing. Regulations limited spins in that model to three turns.

MATTHEW ENGLISH CRASH HELP SOUGHT

In April 1944, English, 822nd, crashed landed his plane somewhat south of the north coast of New Guinea while returning from a mission. The crew was seen to emerge from the plane and are know to have survived a few days. Suddenly, the survivors disappeared. Capture and execution by the Japanese is suspected.

The English family is still seeking information that would substantiate a request for a search of the area by the Army Grave Identification group.

If you have any information or participated in the supply drops, the family would appreciate a contact from you. Please get in touch with Steve Cushman who is assisting the family in this effort: **Adventure@GoRemote.net**

Back to the Battle of Midway

Jim Thoren brought the December issue of the Pacific Wrecks newsletter to our attention. Among the many interesting items in the issue is the offer of a painting of Lt. Muri's 22nd BG B-26 swooping a few feet above the deck of a Japanese carrier at Midway. The item mentions this attack by 22nd BG and 38th BG planes. Not mentioned is that these B-26s were led by Capt. Collins of the 69th Bomb Squadron, 38th Bomb Group.

Check out this and other interesting items: ***www.pacificwrecks.com***

MYSTERY PHOTO

The B-25 crew and plane photo appearing on the back page of our September issue was sent to the Editor by Al Wysock of Wilmington, Delaware. Al had located the Editor on the Internet.

Al is a police officer who has collected WW II memorabilia since he was eight years old. His wife saw two pictures of B-25s at a garage sale and grabbed them up for Al. The plane in the picture carried the name, ***Brooklyn Dodger.***

Dick Field responded to our question by e-mail. "As to the picture on the back, Lt. Hoover - I flew several missions with him. When I was ready to come home, January. 1945, I went to Biak. There I was waiting for transportation when Hoover looked me up. He asked if I would be a part of his crew to fly a B-25H back to the U. S. There were 76 of them in Townsville looking for pilots to fly them.

"I went along exactly the way I came over - New Caledonia, Fiji, Canton, Christmas, Hawaii. At Hawaii, he (Hoover) begged off flying to the States so they put us on a brand new C-54 to fly to San Francisco.

"Lt. David Thornton - I never remember him in our Squadron but I met him at our reunion in Allentown, PA, 1984. Sgt. Ferraro - I knew him well. I remember him on Morotai in the tent next to mine. These were people in the latter days of 1944 and January, 1945."