38th Bomb Group

823 rd Squadron

71st Squadron

822 nd Squadron

405th Squadron

"The Sun Setters"

THE 38TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II) MAY, 2005

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings all! Your 38th BG Board has been busy keeping the Association going.

Al Kennedy has experienced a short delay (required by his business) in recording all of the 38th BG WW II historical data text research notes from Larry Hickey on CDs. These CDs will be super. They are already helping our newsletter Editor and in providing information to persons seeking information about the 38th BG experience in WW II.

Here is an example of how great the CDs are. Lyn Daker, VP of 345 BG, recently requested info about a 38 BG, aircraft we lost on November 27, 1943 in the Wewak area. By going directly to the date provided on Al Kennedy's CD's, we were able to provide the information requested plus a copy of the Crash Report and Map.

We are now hoping to be able to distribute the CDs to members in early 2006. For more on this project, see a report elsewhere in this newsletter.

We have received many telephone calls, letters, and emails, telling us how great the January newsletter was and how much people liked it. Thanks to David Gunn, our editor. We need your help to make the newsletter even better. Please write stories about your experiences in the 38 BG and send them to Dave Gunn (**pappygnk@juno.com)** for the newsletter and to Chris Guest (**sunsetterb25@aol.com)** for the Web Page.

Orland and Flora Gage are doing a great service by getting the newsletter printed and distributed. He has obtained a non-profit bulk mail permit for the association for mailings from Lewiston, ID. He was able to get printing and reduced rate bulk mailing service from Lewiston at less cost than Dave could get. Chris Guest is working on an improvement to the 38 BG web site. See an article in this newsletter for more information.

Bill McKinstry is doing a super job keeping our roster up to date. Keeping track of over 500 addresses is like trying to paint a moving train. Help Bill by informing him of any changes to your address. See more about this elsewhere in the newsletter.

Chick Alford has the plans for our 2006 reunion going in high gear. For more reunion information, look below.

Many Association members and others are wondering about the status of our 38th BG book "Saga of the Sunsetters". In late March, I asked Larry Hickey for the current status of the book. As on 5 May, he has not responded. Larry has been experiencing some health problems, from which we all hope he has a rapid recovery.

In closing, let us all say a prayer for our troops who continue to be in harms way serving our great country. May they return safely to their loved ones.

Jack DeTour

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**BE SURE YOUR DUES ARE PAID.
NO DUES - NO DISCS!**

BIG REDO FOR 38TH BG WEB SITE

Chris Guest has worked hard on a major redo of the web site. It has probably been uploaded by the time you read this. Chris has made a major move and is working long hours on his job which left little time for keeping up our web site.

Chris says he is, "stunned by the enormous amount of information I've gotten . . . But . .I starve for the littlest detail. It helps me to complete the puzzle. I'm thankful for anything. Hopefully, more will be forthcoming."

Help Chris out with your own recollections. Your personal view of what was going on is what makes the whole story interesting.

You can e-mail Chris: **Sunsetterb25@aol.com**

To go to the web site: **www.sunsetters38bg.com**

We own Chris a great deal of thanks for what he is doing!

2006 REUNION PLANS

Chick Alford has been busy setting up our next reunion. At present, the reunion is scheduled for **28th, 29th, and 30th of September, 2006.** The Mesa, Arizona, Holiday Inn is located a short 15-minute shuttle from the airport on the outskirts of Phoenix. Several visitor attractions are nearby.

Chuck has made preliminary plans based on the best rates and suitable accommodation right at the end of the tourist off-season time. Be sure to mark your calendar for these special days.

We will fill you in on **REUNION 2006** plans in future issues of **The Sun Setters.**

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NO DUES - NO DISKS
AND NO "The Sun Setters
Send them to:
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473 Evergreen Drive
Tonawanda, NY 14150

FROM THE EDITOR

David Gunn (no relation to "Pappy")

As President Jack DeTour has noted in his message, we now have copies of the Larry Hickey research notes. As the Editor, this has been both a great privilege and a great help in preparing this issue for you. You will note that this issue is 16 pages, 12 of which relate to the history of our group. We could not have done it without the disks. And we will try to incorporate most of the information on the disks relating to the period of our history which we are focusing on—in this issue, the period of May through August of 1942.

Accounts of various events recorded on the disks have differences in some details. We have adopted versions of the details which seem to us to best fit records provided. Even the versions of events that wwe find on the Internet have differences in details. We are not able to make definitive decisions for full accuracy. We welcome your comments and any corrections you may bring to our attention.

We have also used some items that have appeared in earlier issues. In addition, we have spent much time researching other sources and on the Internet. **We still need your help. Send us your stories—we cannot find YOUR stories on the Internet.**

In the previous issue, we said we would provide a cover sheet for your note book. We have decided to wait until our January 2006 issue to send that to you. That issue will be mailed in a large flat envelope and your cover sheet will not have a fold in the middle when you receive it.

There are some good items of news in this issue so read it from cover to cover. We hope you and your loved ones and friends enjoy it.

I strongly suggest that you go to the internet for much more information about some of the events reported in this issue. It would be even better if you took your grandchild or great grandchild with you for this exploration. They will find it even more interesting that you do. They are not getting this information in school and it will give them a much greater appreciation of the heritage you helped preserve for them.

Try these for starters:

www.sunwest-emb.com/wiseman/bmidway.htm
history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/coral.html (case sensitive)

An Australian site:

home.st.net.au/~dunn/coralsea.htm Note: press the SHIFT key and then the key just before the **1** on your keyboard to get that **~** following the **au/** in the address.

These addresses have been tested for accuracy.

*Items taken from previous issues of **The Sun Setters** are noted by **SS, 00/00** (month and year). Items may contain only a portion of the previously published story. Items may have information duplicating other items and may differ in details but they are the recollections of the contributors. We reserve the right to alter names or other details that may cause embarrassment to individuals or their families.*

IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

Our Secretary, Bill McKinstry, has forwarded the following names of our comrades who have passed on to their final post as reported to him since our previous listing.

71st Sgdrn.	Cadenhead, Leland F.
	McGlinshey, William J.
405th Sgdrn.	Beverage, Andrew L.
	Buswell, Walter S.
	Herrick, Harvey C.
822nd Sqdrn.	Wheatley, Edwin A.
823rd Sqdrn.	Cunningham, Henry P.
	Lepkowski, Sr., Leonard E.
	Negrey, John
	West, Albert C.
	Wurch, Arden E.

HQ	18
69th	2
70th	58
71st	150
89th	1
405th	169
822nd	89
823rd	90
UKNOWN	3

The World at War

As May 1942 rolled in, German forces in North Africa had retaken parts of the Libyan north coast. They were preparing to renew their offensive to recapture Tobruk and to press toward Egypt and the Nile.

The British command in Egypt was concerned that the German army in the Balkins might drive into Turkey and move toward oil-rich Iraq. This move could also present a threat to Egypt out of the middle east.

Rommel's forces continued to advance toward Egypt throughout the summer. The British, with major units from Australia and New Zealand fell back.

On the Russian front, Leningrad, a city of 3,000,000 had been under virtual siege since September 1941 Supplies were extremely scarce and rationing had been in place for months. In December 1941 alone, 52,000 people died from the cold or malnutrition. A mass evacuation was begun, using buses to carry people across frozen Lake Ladoga. The siege would continue for another year.

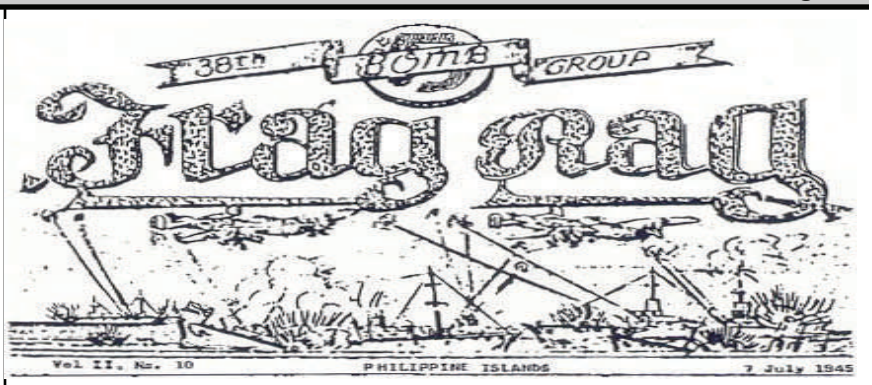
Before Moscow, the Russians had managed to push the Germans back a short distance, giving some breathing room to the Russian capitol. At the south end of the front, the Germans were still stalled at the approach to the Black Sea port at Sevastopol. As the spring thaw came to an end, the Germans renewed counter attacks all along the southern line.

The British Isles were subjected to frequent night bombing attacks. But because of British air supremacy over the continent, the RAF carried out large night raids over key German industrial centers. On 30 May, 1942, the RAF mounted a 1000 plane bombing mission to Cologne resulting in tremendous damage, destroying 13,000 houses leaving 45,000 people homeless.

In China, the dashing heroes of the Flying Tigers Volunteers, who had been carrying on their own battle with the Japanese, gave way to the USAAF 23rd Fighter Group, and many of them left the area. The Flying Tigers group was dissolved in July

In the Pacific, the repercussions of the Doolittle raid on Tokyo accomplished what the planners had envisioned. The American public celebrated the raid and the raiders who had taken off from "Shangrila". The raid also shocked the Japanese public who had been led to believe that their

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



THE 38TH'S LOST SQUADRONS

During the days after the air echelon of the 38th BG left the San Francisco area and reached Patterson, they flew a heavy schedule of service test flights, including cross country flights in the mid-west. In early May, they were equipped with the improved B-26B.

In the confusion of trying to position combat units along the long defensive perimeter in the South Pacific, various units were being separated from their Headquarters units and placed under orders from various commands along their route to deployment.

The personnel of the 69th and 71st exchanged places. So it was the 71st that became the 69th and headed to war. On 20 May, 1942, the 69th and 70th squadrons departed Patterson for Sacramento.

The first flight of three planes headed west; there were no maps and no briefing. The remaining planes and ground crews followed on their heels. Some of the planes had difficulties on the way but all reached Sacramento; one crew in a plane that had to be replaced, stopped at the Omaha factory for a new one.

At Sacramento, the armor plating, machine guns, and other equipment not necessary for the flight to Hawaii were stripped from the planes and extra fuel tanks were fitted into the bomb bay and other convenient cavities. The planes were flown to Hamilton Field and were given a final checkup by the crew chiefs and all tanks filled.

The first flight, led by Capt. Collins, left for Hawaii, Hickam Field, on 22 May. This was the first time medium bombers made the 13-hour flight over water. Between 22 May and 10 June the 69th and 70th squadrons ferried 26 B-26s to Hickam without a single mishap.

The equipment stripped from the planes at Sacramento and some members of the combat crews were flown to Hawaii by transport craft. Unfortunately, one of these planes crashed after losing an engine on takeoff. Ten men from the two squadrons died in the crash along with the other passengers.

With the looming of the Japanese attempt to take Midway less than two weeks away, the planes of the first 69th flight arriving in Hawaii on 22 May, were fitted with torpedo racks and the crews practiced torpedo tactics. Torpedoes had never been launched from planes flying at the speed of the B-26.

The three planes were rushed to Midway on 2 June. Two planes from the 22nd Bomb Group, only recently reassembled in Hawaii after arriving by ship three months earlier, were also ordered to Midway.

Capt. Collins, leading the four B-26s, reported, "At 0615, 4 June, the order was given to attack carriers 180 miles on a bearing of 320 degrees. We departed at 0625 and sighted the enemy at 0705. The formation of four B-26s turned slightly to the left and then sharply to the right in order to best pass through the ack-ack of the surface vessels. It was at this time that we sighted the six Marine single engine torpedo bombers which had left Midway about fifteen minutes before we did. They were just going in for their attack, and were approaching from our right and across our path. We did not see them again.

"At this time we went through heavy fire from all ships and met six Zeros head-on at an altitude of approximately seven hundred feet. We

*(Continued page 4, **The Lost Squadrons**)*

The Lost Squadrons

(From page 3)

dove to two hundred feet causing most of their fire to pass overhead. It is my opinion that it was at this point I lost my number two and three wing men (1st Lt. Watson, 69th Squadron, 38th BG and 1st Lt. Mayes, 18th Recon. Squadron, 22nd BG).

"By again turning right we made our attack from about twenty degrees off the (carrier's) bow. He was turning sharply to his right and consequently toward my left but we were inside of his circle and he would have slim chance to miss the torpedo if it made a true run. We released from about 800 yards from about 220 feet and 210 mph. Just after release I could see my number four ship slightly under and to our left making his attack. His navigator said that our torpedo hit the water cleanly and when last seen was making a true run toward the carrier.

"Zeros were still with us; after shooting down two and possibly three we still had one to contend with for the next fifteen or twenty minutes. We went through ack-ack by abruptly changing altitude when they appeared to be getting the range. We were making 255 m.p.h. by then and just getting into cloud formations that were spotty from 1000' to 2000'. Here the last Zero left us.**"**

Capt. Collins' plane received over a 200 holes and his hydraulic system was shot away; all prop blades had holes. None of the crew was seriously injured on the mission or during the crash landing on return to Midway. The surviving 22nd BG plane suffered similar damage. Collins and his crew were flown back to Hickam Field and took over one of the other squadron planes. All crew members of the four B-26s were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Sometime between 22 May and 25 May, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued orders that any squadrons of B-26s in transit to the southwest Pacific were to be assigned, one to Fiji and one to New Caledonia. That order was applied to the 69th and 70th squadrons.

On 13 June, on orders, he flew to New Caledonia with three other planes. Stops for refueling and rest were made at Christmas, Canton, and Fiji Islands. Two days after landing at Tontouta air field, joined by the remaining planes of the squadron, the squadron proceeded to Plaines de Gaiac, 130 miles north of Noumea.

Only one runway had been completed and there were no other facilities at this frontier outpost. The squadron was forced to camp in tents in the middle of the southern hemisphere winter. The men slept in flight jackets, with one blanket and with small fires in their tents for a week. Only crude toilet and mess facilities were available. Without ground transportation, it was necessary to hitchhike to streams for water. Food and supplies were poor. Some of the men with hunting experience went afield and brought back large buck deer, thus providing fresh meat.

In June, the ground echelons that were already in Australia, left to join the air echelons in New Caledonia and Fiji.

In late June and early July, the 70th Squadron planes arrived at Nandi Air Base in Fiji. One plane was lost during this transition with the loss of two men. On 9 July, the air echelon and the ground echelon were at last united. By the end of the month, the Squadron personnel were moved to a renovated village which proved to be an excellent location.

On 26 June, 80 officers and men from the Lexington (sunk at the Battle of the Coral Sea in early May) were attached to the 69th Squadron and the 69th also flew its first patrol mission. There were no maps; navigators had to make their own. On 3 July, 19 torpedo maintenance men, also from the Lexington, were attached to the 70th Squadron.

The two squadrons became the first medium bombing defenders on this southeast "corner" of the long Allied defensive perimeter in the South Pacific. The local populace and land based military regarded them as "saviors" and they were expected to perform miracles in fending off any Japanese attack force that might appear on the horizon.

It was at this time that all connection with the 38th Bomb Group was lost. Both Squadrons now took their orders from COMAIRSOPAC. Weather service, code agreements, and communications protocol were established by the Navy. Torpedo and skip bombing practice was the

The World at War -

(from page 3)

Capitol and their beloved Emperor were beyond the reach of American retaliation.

The Japanese military leaders, smarting under public reaction, were forced to bring home air units to assure a suitable defense of the homeland, thereby diminishing resources for action on their far flung offensive perimeter.

The Japanese Army high command, responsible for the campaign on the southern front, had been agitating for a further thrust on the southern front to isolate Australia from the United States.

They had established a base at Lae at the base of the Huon Peninsula on the northeast coast of New Guinea. Their planes were now able to mount raids on Port Moresby and northern Australia with greater ease.

The capture of Port Moresby would bring the Australian territories in easy range of patrol and bombardment. From Port Moresby they would have total control of the Coral Sea.

With Rabaul as a hinge point, a thrust down through the Solomon Islands would

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

*(Continued next column, **The Lost Squadrons**)*

The Lost Squadrons

(from previous column)

order of the day. Patrol missions and sectors were assigned by the Navy. Searches for downed airmen or survivors from sunken ships provided a bit of variety to the patrol duty.

In October, General Arnold visited the 70th in Fiji and the 69th on New Caledonia, commending them for fulfilling the mission of holding the line. They learned from these visitors that they were known in some quarters as "The Lost Bastards of the Pacific."

Several months later, B-25s replaced weary B-26s. During the latter part of 1942, flights of the 69th and 70th flew short periods of detached service at Guadalcanal for missions. The squadrons were still flying patrol and search and rescue missions at Fiji and New Caledonia. In mid-February, 1943, the 70th was left with only two planes fit for combat. At the end of the month, all flying B-26s were assigned to the 70th Squadron and the 69th now flew B-25s.

Collins, now a Major, was reassigned to 13th Air Force Headquarters. In March, new crews with new B-25s (modified with eight .50 cal. guns in the nose) began arriving in the 69th and the long-promised rotation home began for the veteran crews. Both Squadrons were assigned to the 42nd

The World at War - *(from page 4)*

bring New Caledonia and the Fiji Islands into range. The shipping lanes between the U. S. to Australia could be controlled.

Because Australia and New Zealand had committed significant forces to the British command in Egypt, they were not able to mount a significant defense of their own territories. The United States had committed itself to defensed the South Pacific.

The line of defense in the Pacific and South Pacific was long, more than 10,000 miles from Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians to Fiji and then to Western Australia.

Plans for extending Japanese control both in the south and in the east had begun even before the Tokyo raid.

The Doolittle raid had accomplished much more than the planners had conceived. American intelligence groups working in Australia, Pearl Harbor, and Washington, had begun to break down the Japanese naval operations code. Increased radio traffic interceptions began to pay off.

The intelligence corps analyzed the radio receptions and began to decipher them. Their efforts revealed that a major concentration of forces was being gathered at Rabaul in preparation for **"Operation MO".** This was to be a two pronged effort, but principally directed at capturing Port Moresby.

Originally, by many accounts, the plan called for as many as six fleet carriers which would ensure complete mastery of the Port Moresby area. Following the landing, some of the carriers would be detached to roam the northeast Australian coastal area and carry out significant raids to diminish Australian defenses and eliminate offensive capability.

At the same time, a portion of the assembling fleet would push down through the Solomon Islands toward New Caledonia.

Admiral Yamamoto was eager to push the eastern defense line further east by capturing Midway Island. This would assure that the Americans could not use Midway to launch attacks on Japan and interfere with the Japanese free operation in the western Pacific.

He envisioned a strategy that would certainly bring the American carriers out and he determined that he would eliminate them. This would sharply reduce American ability to interfere with any operations the Japanese cared to pursue in southeast Asia.

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

"Zeke, Ruff, Nate" - 38th BG Guys Did It

Do you remember the long hours of aircraft recognition drills with all those silhouettes flashed every few seconds on a screen and we were supposed to quickly scratch a name down on the test paper? Well, it seems that some 38th Bomb Group guys were responsible for coming up with all those code names.

*The September 1995 issue of **"The Sun Setters"** had this story. Some additions from other sources have been made.*

Retired Maj. Gen. Frank T. McCoy Jr., 82, of Nashville, TN, died April 3 (1995) after a fall one week earlier. Born June 4, 1912, in Oklahoma City, OK, he practiced law before moving to Nashville in 1941 where he was called to active duty as a First Lieutenant and assigned to the 38th Bomb Group as Intelligence Officer before leaving Jackson.

In June 1942, Capt. McCoy, was transferred from the 38th to become the head of the Material Section of the Directorate of Intelligence of Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific area.

In 1942, he originated the Allied Code Name System for identification of Japanese aircraft used by the Allied Air Forces.

Since McCoy was from Tennessee, he originally assigned hillbilly names to Japanese aircraft: ZEKE, RUFE, NATE, JAKE. They were short and easily remembered. A modified Zero was given the code name HAP. It is said that when this came to the attention of General Henry "Hap" Arnold, the General was not amused and ordered that McCoy explain what he was up to when summoned before Gen. MacArthur's chief of operations. McCoy survived the ruckus but the code name was changed to HAMP.

His assignments included Australia, New Guinea, the Philippines, Virginia, and the Pentagon. He retired in 1968 with more than 5,000 hours as a pilot in command of 26 types of aircraft. He held a command pilot's rating in the Air Force.

His awards and commendations include Legion of Merit, Air Medal, Air Force Presidential Unit Citation, Air Force Commendation Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, Army Commendation Medal, and Navy Commendation Medal.

Another item was published in the SS January 1991 issue.

Were you aware two 38th BG'ers were instrumental in developing code designations of Japanese aircraft? S/Sgt. Francis Williams and Cpl. Joseph Gratton, initially assigned to 38th BG HQ at Jackson AFB, were reassigned to the newly formed Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit upon arrival at Ballarat, Australia. *(It would seem that the assignment actually came later.)* There was then much confusion in identifying SWPA Japanese aircraft - all single-engine fighters were Zeroes; anything else was a "Mitsubishi" or "Nakajima".

The increasing variety of aircraft required a system for identifying planes by type and capability to assist in developing combat tactics. Fran suggested using easily-remembered first names - male for fighters and float planes, female for bombers, reconnaissance, and flying boats, female names beginning with "T" were assigned to transport planes. Trainers were named after trees and gliders after birds.

With support of General MacArthur and Washington approval, the "MacArthur Southwest Pacific Code Name System" was initiated with 50 names. By late '42, the system was adopted by all US Army and Navy Air Forces, and subsequently the British Air Ministry gave its approval.

Some members may recall Williams as cartoonist for the "Bliss Blitz" issued to troops aboard the USS Bliss en route to Australia.

The list eventually contained code names for more than 120 aircraft. In the Summer of 1944, a Washington office took over responsibility for the list.

What's Gone Before

When Germany invaded Poland in September, 1939, many people . thought the U. S. would eventually be directly involved in the war. But there were some loud protests against U. S. involvement.

At that time, Japan was not considered to be our next opponent. The U. S. mobilized its industrial capacity and built weapons for the British. Increased manpower for the Army and the Navy were sought. Both the Army and the Navy enlisted aviation cadets for training as air crews.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed and our western frontiers were left virtually defenseless, frantic efforts were expended to shift resources to the Pacific. There seemed to have been no plans for deployments to the west. For the Army Air Force, crews were assembled and squadrons manned by men with a minimum of training and experience.

On 7 December, 1941, the 38th BG allotment of B-26s had just been brought to full quota. Seven weeks later it was ordered to proceed to San Francisco for overseas shipment. The ground echelon was shipped to Australia in late January but the flying personnel were reassigned at the last minute and sent to Patterson Field for further plane tests and training in March and April.

When the 38th sailed out the Golden Gate and joined a convoy on 31 January, 1942, aboard the Tasker Bliss, the 22nd Bomb Group was also part of the convoy heading for Brisbane. During the trip, the ships were blacked out every night and the enlisted men, at least some of them, slept "below the waterline" feeling as if they were in the submarine service. When they reached Brisbane, the first sign that one man remembered seeing was "Pilsner Beer, Draught and Bottle"

Within a few days they boarded the Bliss again and sailed for Melborne, winding up near the town of Ballarat where they stayed in homes until the tent camp was set up. At first, there was not much to do but put up tents, dig trenches, and put in time on the drill field.

The Ground Echelon in Australia

Before long other forms of duty appeared. It was time on the rifle and hand gun ranges with some time for Tommy Gun practice thrown in. Gas mask drill came too often and the men had to wear them while they were carrying on other duties.

The 38th and the 22nd Bomb Group ground echelons were the first medium bomb groups to arrive in Australia. The 22nd BG had received its B-26s several months before the 38th and had more experience. During March, the 22nd Bomb Group was waiting for its B-26s to arrive, being flown from Hawaii but the 38th Bomb Group B-26s were flown back to Patterson for further flight testing and practice. The 22nd Bomb Group would actually fly its first mission in early April while the 38th was crashing planes in "practice". It was the 22nd that dropped bombs first.

In April, part of the 38th traveled off to Darwin. This detachment included the group photo unit. John Heaney reported that a group left Ballarat going by train to Adelaide. They headed north by another train to Alice Springs. From there, their "travel was along a dusty, dirty road, we called it the 'Burma Road of Australia'. We stopped at Aussie camps now and then. On 29 April, we changed over to cattle railroad cars, open and slotted. Our destination campsite was Batchelor Field, 50 miles from Darwin."

From time to time there was an opportunity for some to mix and make friends with the Aussies, go to shows, eat at something other than the mess hall, or to down a few. Then there was the time to spend reading a bit of mail or writing some to those left behind in the great 48 so far away.

As day after day passed, it seemed like they would "be stuck here for the duration." Months drug by and still none of those planes the men had been expected to send off to bomb the Japs. This wasn't why we had sailed across the wide Pacific and those Japs seemed to be moving closer all the time.

The World at War - *(from page 5)*

The Doolittle raid confirmed his planning to the Japanese military leaders and an early strike was approved. The Coral Sea operation and the Midway operation schedules were moved up. In order to execute both plans, the carrier forces would be divided. Two fleet carriers and a light carrier were made a part of the supporting fleet units for "Operation MO."

The Midway operation would have four fleet carriers and a major fleet force. A smaller fleet with carriers would launch a diversionary attack in the Aleutian Islands in conjunction with the Midway operation

The Japanese had begun the war with a fleet that exceeded the combined Pacific fleets of Great Britain, the Dutch, the Australians and the U.S. They had more carriers and more experienced pilots.

While the number of submarines was approximately equal, the strength of the submarine fleet far exceeded anything that opposed them. They had larger submarines, several of which carried from one to three planes that could be used for observation or bombing operations. The range and operating speeds of the submarines exceeded those of the Allied navies.

Up to this time, their only fleet losses were small vessels, only one of which was as large as a destroyer.

The Japanese also knew that the Americans only had four carriers in the Pacific; the fifth, the Saratoga, was in a west coast yard being repaired. One of the carriers was believed to be in the South Pacific. They knew that all the remaining battleships were in west coast shipyards. They were confident that the disposition of the carrier fleet was valid.

The Battle of the Coral Sea

The Allied Intelligence corps was able to determine the date for the launch of **"Operation MO"** as being in the early days of May.

Admiral Nimitz sent the Lexington from east of the Solomon Islands to join Admiral Fletcher and his Yorktown force in the Coral Sea where they were to join a surface fleet under the command of the Australian Admiral Crace.

On 3 May, Fletcher heard that the Japanese force sent to the southeast had landed at Tulagi, near Guadalcanal. He rushed to interdict the Japanese force which consisted of a light carrier, several

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

The World at War - *(from page 6)*

The Battle of the Coral Sea *(continued)*

transports and a small supporting surface force. Early on the 4 May, his action was successful in destroying several flying boats and other damage to the small landing force.

Fletcher returned to the middle of the Coral Sea and the Fitch-Crace task forces. Crace was ordered west to guard the passage just east of New Guinea.

The Yorktown and the Lexington began searching for the screening fleet with two fleet carriers guarding the eastern flank of the major Japanese Port Moresby invasion fleet The two fleets began searching for one another on 7 May.

The U. S Navy pilots were able to engage and destroy part of the defending force of the light carrier. It was soon bracketed with bombs and sinking. The American carrier personnel were soon celebrating the report, **"**Scratch one flattop!**"**

The Japanese first spotted an American oiler and misidentified it as a carrier, leaving it helpless in the water after sinking its destroyer escort at about noon, 7 May.

Early on 8 May, search planes from both fleets were able to locate one another's carriers. Squadrons of dive bombers and torpedo bombers were launched, passing each other in the air on the way to the targeted carriers.

The American flyers seriously damaged the large fleet carrier, Shokaku, and it limped away to the north for repairs.

The Japanese planes kept up hours of attacks on the Lexington and Yorktown. The latter experienced significant damage but was able to continue its fighting operations. The Lexington took torpedo hits which did great internal damage to "Lady Lex."

Damage control crews did manage to continue landing aircraft until a large explosion deep in the ship made further efforts to save the carrier impossible. At the end of the day, the order was given to abandon the ship and destroyers stood by to aid in the orderly evacuation as some of its planes still in the air landed on the Yorktown.

The second Japanese fleet carrier, the Zuikaku, followed the Shokaku, slowly sailed north having lost most of its aircraft contingent to the American flyers defending their carriers and the guns blazing from

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

Australia's "Burma Road" from Don Mitchell's album, B-26 Marauder Historical Society WW II Archive web site

The Gathering Begins

July came; but it was winter. The fourth of July came; but there were no fireworks to celebrate the day. But things were stirring. Unknown to the men in Australia, a new 38th Bomb Group was forming in the U. S.

John Heaney wrote that the men in northern Australia at Batchelor Field left on 2 August **"**still ridding cattle cars.**"** The next day they left the train and loaded a truck convoy headed for Helen Springs then a place designated as Camp 6A, then Camp 16A. *(They were headed across the vast wilderness of northern Australia)*

"We slept on the open plains, the largest cattle ranch in the world - 2000 square miles. We left camp 16A for Mt. Isa, a lead mining town. On 8 August, we loaded a train leaving Mt. Isa and arrived at a town of 35 people at 10 a.m. the next day. We ate supper at 9 p.m. at Richmond. We arrived at Charters Towers at 10 a.m., 10 August, and met up with the Headquarters Squadron. The 38th is partly reunited."

On 3 August, the camp at Ballarat in South Australia was folded up and the men moved out. Traveling by train in Australia was not like back home. The Australian railroads used a different guage track in the various states. This meant that everyone had to change trains and everything unloaded and reloaded whenever they crossed into another state. The group was headed for the far north in Queensland Territory, their destination was a new field near Charters Towers, Breddon Field. They arrived on 21 August.

The Photo Section's Club Car from Don Mitchell's album, B-26 Marauder Historical Society WW II Archive web site

HOW TO BE A FINANCE OFFICER WITHOUT EVEN TRYING

Bob Fuqua - 405th (SS-5/94)

Commissioned a 2nd Lt. upon graduating from Aviation Cadet (Engineering) Class 41-4 at Chanute Field in January, 1942, my immediate assignment (with five others) was to the 38th Bomb Group, Jackson, MS. Upon arriving, we were told to separate belongings into "hold baggage" and "what you'll need to travel a few weeks." *(This was the second ground echelon.)*

In July, 1942, several of us were rotating assignments at the Presidio in San Francisco as Group Staff Duty Officer. One morning the Group Commander told me to report to the Army Finance Office downtown along with two armed escorts waiting in a car outside. He also advised I was to be the "Disbursing Officer" on the S.S. Boschfontein on which we would be sailing. This did not seem to relate to my Chanute training, but a new Lieutenant didn't argue with a Colonel, so off we went to the Finance Office.

Upon presenting my credentials, we were ushered into the highly secured vault area and the first difficulty arose - the escorts were armed only with G.I. 45's. They went back to the base for sub-machine guns while I went to the counting area to receive the funds. The Major behind the counter started counting - I had never seen so much money in my life! He stopped at $90,000, put it in a satchel and put me in an adjacent cubicle to recount it. I was handed a receipt to sign, told what the funds were to be used for, given a pad of receipts, a list of those to be paid once underway, and a lock for the satchel. The final instruction was to go immediately to the S.S. Boschfontein, and have the purser put the satchel in the ship's vault.

Several days later at sea, payment to the troops was at hand - $20 per man. The pay area was set up with two volunteers to oversee signing the pay sheet. It wasn't all that simple since satchel contents had to be verified when drawn from the vault and upon return. My only concern was to get rid of that satchel as soon as possible when we hit Australia.

Upon docking at Brisbane, I arranged to meet with the purser to retrieve the satchel. After getting settled in the Group area in Ascot Park, I had a staff car and two escorts with sub-machine guns assigned to me. We went to the dock, retrieved the satchel with verification of contents and exchange of receipts, then headed to the Finance Office.

I approached the counter with outward calm and confidence, plopped the satchel and keys down, gave my name to the officer behind the counter and expected to go through the same procedure as in San Francisco. Instead he asked if I had made en route payment, if the pay sheet was in the satchel, and if there had been any other expenditures, then wrote out a receipt, tossed the bag in the bin without opening it. With a grateful sigh of relief, we hastily headed back - I was again a happy maintenance officer.

My happiness was short-lived. Based upon my shipboard finance experience, I was assigned as Finance Agent to pay the troops the rest of their month's pay - so back to the Finance Office with properly armed escorts. After the security check, I was given a pay sheet showing the amount due each of the personnel. The big difference this time was the pay was in Australian, currency - 10, 5 and 1 pound notes—thankfully, no coins. After going through the counting routine to assure a proper amount in each denomination, I signed a receipt and the Finance Officer gave me a thorough briefing on the value of the pound versus the U.S. dollar, and also pointed out forcefully that the signatures had to match exactly those on the pay sheet. Armed with this information and the funds, we departed. I found out later an important omission of information.

Upon returning to Group, we had no secure area in which to hold funds, so arranged for immediate disbursement. About a third of the way through, I realized I had a problem in that when an individual requested 1 's for 10's or 5's, I obliged him - and I was running out of 1 pound notes. Fortunately, most of those who had been paid were in the

*(Continued bottom of next column, **How to be a Finance Officer**)*

The World at War -

(from page 7)

The Battle of the Coral Sea *(continued)*

the carrier decks. Most significant was the fact that the lost Japanese aviators were the cream of experienced flyers who could not be easily and quickly replaced.

To keep the Lexington from possible capture by the Japanese, she was torpedoed by American destroyers until she sank. The Yorktown and its task force retired from the scene in the night.

To the west, Admiral Crace had taken his station to prevent to Japanese landing force from coming through the passage on the east end of New Guinea. But the Japanese landing force coming south from Rabaul, stood by while waiting for the outcome of the carrier attacks and counter attacks. When the Japanese carriers were forced to retire to the north and unable to screen the invasion fleet from possible attack, **"Operation MO"** was suspended and eventually canceled.

Admiral Crace's force had been subjected to air attacks by Japanese land based aircraft but his skillful evasive actions had prevented significant damage. Ironically, some American bombers returning from a mission to the north had mistaken the fleet for Japanese ships and started bombing. The ships responded with antiaircraft fire and the planes soon withdrew without causing significant damage.

Further to the southwest, Australian home guard units had been stationed along portions of the north Queensland coast, with fixed bayonets and 20 rounds of ammunition each. Trains had been spotted near the coastal towns, their locomotives fired up and ready to evacuate citizens, especially women and children. The feared invasion would not come.

The first naval battle in history in which no surface ships exchanged fire had been fought. The American forces had experienced a taste of victory; the Japanese were no longer an unconquerable force. But those very slow torpedo planes were to be a frustration on another day.

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

How to be a Finance Officer

(from previous column)

area and we called them back to exchange their 1's for the larger notes although it did result in a number of disgruntled troops. But the pay sheet was properly signed and returned the next day.

That, thank goodness, was the end of my career in finance.

The World at War - *(from page 8)*

There was no time for rest. The Yorktown and its task force sailed away for Pearl Harbor. The damaged carrier would require six weeks for repair and there was no time to waste.

Meeting at Midway

The same effort by the intelligence forces had determined that the Japanese were preparing a major engagement on the east side of their perimeter. The U. S. could not be sure what the target was to be. Mindful of the attack on Pearl Harbor, top brass was tentatively planning for another attack at the still-recovering base.

The Hornet and the Enterprise had proceeded to the South Pacific after launching the Tokyo raid. They moved rapidly back to Pearl to re-provisioning.

The top Allied intelligence group in Australia devised a scheme for making a positive identification of the target code name for another big Japanese naval operation, believing it would be Midway Island.

Midway was instructed by under sea telephone lines to send a plain radio message to Pearl saying that its fresh water distilling plant was damaged and fresh water supply was limited. The Japanese swallowed the bait upon intercepting the message. They communicated the information to the fleet using their code name for the target.

When the decoded Japanese messages were given to planners at Pearl and Washington in mid-May, preparation for the defense of Midway swung into high gear. Only days remained before a great battle would engulf the rag-tag remains of the American Navy and the juggernaut, vaunted Japanese fleet.

Admiral Nimitz determined to use every available resource for the defense of Midway. B-17s and land-based fighters were quickly moved to the island base 1,000 miles from Pearl. PT boats were shifted to Midway.

Two B-26 aircraft from the 22nd Bomb Group still remained at Hickam Field for final assembly after being broken down for shipment to Hawaii in February. Work was quickly completed. As the month was closing, the first elements of the 69th Bomb Squadron, 38th Bomb Group, reached Hickam. Torpedo racks were quickly fitted to the 22nd BG planes and two of the 69th's planes. The crews performed some perfunctory practice as torpedo bombers. The

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

MY TRAVELS *Willie Turner (SS 1/90)*

Willie J. Turner's 12-page handwritten diary of his trip (the second ground echelon) to New Guinea with the 405th and 71st. Originally provided by Richard A Salome, 405th.

Left Columbia, SC, for Patterson Field for shots, briefings. At 6 p.m. 7/10, boarded air-conditioned troop train (nice berth!) for St. Louis, Kansas City, El Paso, Tucson, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh, CA, arriving Camp Stoneman 5 a.m. 7/14. Visited Frisco twice, and 7/21 in to board the 'Boschfontein', a Dutch boat and crew. Overnight at the dock, into the Bay early, anchored, and then under the Golden Gate at 4, 7/22.

The boat had lots of guns and an American gun crew headed by Lts. Matson and Parks. Boat drill at 10 a.m. daily; several general alarms, but no danger. Shared a closet-size 5-bunk stateroom with Mike Murphy, Frank Thompson, Jack Thom, Gus Popper. The one porthole for ventilation was closed and blacked out at night; made it pretty hot crossing the equator. Shower situation very bad, only salt water, did get a bit of fresh water to shave and wash faces, but no laundry after boarding.

In the canteen could get cold drinks, candy, and cigarettes (stocked up at 70 cents a carton). Meals very good - Dutch menus, all kinds fancy-named foods, but fish every day got pretty old. Bob Fuqua, Homer Varel, Lt. Mattson and I played dime-limit poker every evening - passed the time and couldn't lose much.

On 8/11 entered New Caledonia harbor at 8 a.m.; dropped anchor at Noumea that afternoon. Only the two Navy officers went ashore. Left next a.m. with only an Australian destroyer to accompany us. Learned later had stopped only because 3 ships had been sunk in area recently.

On 8/15 woke up and saw Australia - at least some mountains, but even that looked good. Landed in Brisbane at 2:47 p.m. 8/15, and were billeted at a race track, but got into town next day - old looking place chock full of sailors and soldiers; very few cars except for army and a few civilian charcoal-powered ones. Several nice buildings had been taken over the General's for Headquarters.

On 8/10, some of our planes got in. Fuqua, AI Williamson, I and 60 mechanics went out to the field. Nice quarters in Officers Barracks, and mostly just looked the planes over.

On 8/22 back to Brisbane; 3 days later at 9 p.m. left for Charters Towers on a typical Australian train - narrow gauge and sorriest wooden cars I'd ever seen. Had to sleep on the hardwood seats, too short to stretch out - took 3 hours to get the kinks out. Stopped at a little station in middle of nowhere for tea and a sandwich for breakfast and dinner; stopped again to eat at another little place. Same routine for 3 days, arriving the fourth night at 3 a.m.

Breddon was a nice field with a tarred runway, 15 miles from Charters Towers. Our planes were there and I was assigned to the 405th under Major Harsh and was named Transportation Officer. Scheduled for Assistant Engineering Officer, but an advance echelon was ready to move out and I was named CO of the unit scheduled for a new field (Rorona) 10 miles from the Japs and 30 miles from Port Moresby, with only access by plane or a very small boat"

In a 9/8 meeting with Col. Castle and Squadron CO, learned my advance detail would move to Horn Island by air transport the next day. Took off at 10 a.m., arriving at Horn about 3. We set quarters in an old barracks with a thousand shrapnel holes in it, and I made arrangements to eat in the Aussie mess. Ten of our planes came in next day for my 10 mechanics to maintain."

(Turner's surface trip took 54 days from Columbia, SC, to Charters Towers, and 10 days later he reached his first combat zone base.)

Editor's note: Willie's note about the narrow guage railroad brings notice to a problem that plagued the movement of rail traffic during WW II. Australia had at that time three different rail guages. Queensland , Western Australia and parts of South Australia used a narrow gage, 1067 mm. New South Wales used the standard European quage, 1435 mm. Victoria and South Australia built with 1600 mm. The three guages are still in use but the state capitols are all linked by a standard guage. The port of Darwin did not have a connecting railroad to the rest of Australia until 2004. When considering the important part the transcontinental railroads have played in the U.S., this is an amazing situation.

ON THE WAY TO CHARTERS TOWERS

In mid-April, navigators finishing school at Sacramento, were assigned to the 38th BG at Patterson.

During May of '42, Aviation Cadet graduates were sent to Columbia, SC, and Meridian, MS, for B-25 training. In July, as John Cooper recalled, **"**Stuart Cooley and myself may have been the first members of the 38th Bomb Group. (*Editor: as it was then being reconstituted as a B-25 outfit.*) We had gone through air mechanics school, then Bendix turret school, then the 15th Recon. Squadron (B-26s) at Patterson, then to a B-24 outfit at Barksdale Field, Louisiana.

"We were in that last outfit for only two days when we were assigned to a barracks in which we were the sole occupants for three days. Then they started coming in from all different schools: radio, gunnery, air mechanics, etc. When we had all arrived, we were called out one morning and, as our names were called, we lined up in rows of seven men. We were told to introduce ourselves as this was the combat crew we would be going to war with. The pilot of our group of seven turned out to be Ercoli Ducci from Rochester, NY, and we had played baseball on opposing teams back in the teen days.**"**

On 19 July, orders were cut at Patterson sending 64 offices, including the newly graduated navigators, and 48 enlisted men as the 71st Bomb Squadron, under command of Lt. Col. Theodore Castle, to Sacramento. On 23 July, orders were cut at Barksdale Field for 64 officers and 48 enlisted men to make up the 405th Bomb Squadron and to proceed to Sacramento. Many of the pilots had only become Second Lieutenants in the Spring and some had no B-25 flight time.

As the air crews assembled at Sacramento, they were assigned new B-25s which they would fly to Australia. The planes had the guns and armor plate stripped off and other items removed to lighten the plane. These items were packaged to be shipped separately to Hawaii. Most of the planes had been equipped with small fuel tanks in the wing tip area. Additional tanks were installed in the bomb bay and another tank filled the bombardier's compartment.

Fuel tests, compass swinging and other preparation of the planes were done by the assigned crews. Many of the planes were named, usually by the assigned pilot. Ronald Preston gave an account of the naming of the plane he flew in. **"**Where did we get the name 'Filthy Lil'? Donald Hopkins, the co-pilot was a radio announcer from Montana and, when in his cups, was wont to roar out the ballad of Filthy Lil, which started like this:

"Now I had a gal and her name was Lil.
She never had a bath and never will - -
And stink - - -!"

You get the idea so - - - having started off as a maverick crew, the name somehow seemed appropriate.**"**

The planes and crews then flew to Hamilton Field in the San Francisco north-bay area. They were to fly in four-plane formations to Hawaii. An Air Transport Command (ATC) celestial-rated navigator was assigned to the lead plane in each four-plane element.

Preston commented that, **"**the combat crews in the early part of the war were poorly trained. Here they were, hastily thrown together, flying the Pacific with many unknowns. Our crew for ferry purposes, consisted of Lt. Sliney, pilot; Lt. Ted Rich, co-pilot; and myself as navigator. Also a radio operator, a flight engineer, and a gunner whose names I do not remember. Lt. Sliney had a limited number of hours in the B-25. Lt. Rich had less than ten and my experience in navigating over water was zero and very little over land.**"**

The bombardiers, flight engineers, and gunners were put aboard transport planes along with the equipment removed from the planes at Sacramento for the trip to Hawaii.

It was known before the planes took off that they would have only a few gallons of fuel left upon arrival at Hickam Field on Oahu. Throttle

*(Continued page 11, **On the Way to Charters Towers**)*

The World at War - *(from page 9)*

Meeting at Midway

four planes were quickly sent off to Midway.

On 26 May the Hornet and the Enterprise with the task force ships entered Pearl Harbor. They sailed on the 28th as the damaged Yorktown arrived and entered drydock. In three days, instead of the anticipated three months, the major repairs were made and she, with her task force elements, left Pearl on the 30th.

Planners had been aware that the Japanese were planning to deploy a network of submarines between Oahu and Midway on 1 June to determine when the American carriers would sortie to the defense of the Aleutians or Midway. This made it urgent that the Yorktown leave Pearl before the Japanese submarines were in place.

Planners were also aware that Japan had sent a small fleet north to strike the Dutch Harbor base in the Aleutian Islands, hoping to draw the American carriers in that direction while the landings were taking place at Midway. There would be fleet movement in that direction.

The American task force rendezvoused approximately 150 miles north of Midway. The Yorktown joined the others on 2 May.

On 3 May, the Japanese struck at Dutch Harbor doing considerable damage. In exchange the Americans were able to recover a downed Zero with very little damage. They learned much from this recovery which was to help shape the American strategy in future engagements with this plane.

The enemy encountered much difficulty in waging war in the far northern seas. Fog and overcast made it difficult to keep the battle force in order. Before withdrawing, they occupied two small islands at the western end of the Aleutians, Attu and Kiska, which were of no strategic value.Thus the stage was set for the greatest sea battle in history.

Within minutes of the attack on Dutch Harbor, search planes took off from Midway. In mid-morning, a PBY reported the approaching Japanese fleet in the west. B-17s were launched which bombed the fleet without doing damage. PBYs located a part of the invasion fleet approaching from the southwest about 1:00 a.m. on the fourth and scored some damage to a fleet oiler.

In early morning darkness on 4 May, flight crews on Midway were awakened to

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

The World at War - *(from page 10)*

Make readyfor the approaching battle. The Japanese carrier strike force was approaching from the northwest. Their carrier pilots were also astir in preparations for the attack on Midway.

The Japanese bombers took off in the darkness with covering fighters. Search planes were also launched but they did not discover the American carriers lurking northeast of Midway.

The approaching planes were detected on Midway RADAR at 6:00 a.m. Every available plane was sent aloft: 27 Navy and Marine fighters, 6 Marine torpedo bombers, 4 U. S. Air Force (USAAF) B-26 bombers (armed with torpedoes), 11 Marine dive bombers, 19 USAAF B-17s, 30 Navy Catalina PBYs (already in the sky).

Shortly before the RADAR sighting, one of the Catalinas spotted the approaching carrier fleet. Its report of the carriers and location was noted at Midway and in the U. S. carriers. The carriers began moving toward the Japanese carriers and made ready to launch their planes.

The planes from Midway encountered very effective Japanese fighter cover as they approached the Japanese fleet. Many of the bombers, including two B-26s, were shot down. Little damage was done to the enemy.

By calculation, the U. S. carrier planes arrived over the Japanese carriers just as their planes were returning from Midway. The Japanese command decided a second attack needed to be made on Midway.

Preparations had been made to send another attack force to locate the American carriers. In deciding to send another attack on Midway, the Japanese now had to remove the torpedoes that were loading and to reload their planes with bombs for Midway. This created a dangerous condition on their decks, bombs and torpedoes plus armed planes and planes refueling.

The first squadrons of U. S. carrier planes were badly mauled by the Japanese defensive air units. Those slow torpedo planes were no match for their assigned task. None of the American torpedo bombers would survive.

The evasive actions taken by the Japanese fleet had resulted in a confused condition. They were no longer arrayed in a suitable formation to support one another from air attack.

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

ON THE WAY TO CHARTERS TOWERS - *(from page 10)*

settings were critical. One crew, after leveling off at the assigned cruise altitude, found themselves falling behind the other planes in their flight. The pilots initiated a careful check of their procedures. They found that the cowl flaps had not been closed, resulting in additional drag which caused them to fall behind at the designated throttle settings. Fortunately, the navigator, with little previous navigation experience, was able to help them keep on course and they landed safely at Hickam.

Several planes landed at the air base at Hilo on the big island of Hawaii because of low fuel. This was about 150 miles closer to San Francisco. Lt. Col. Theodore Castle, 38th Bomb Group Commanding Officer, was one of these pilots. It is told that he ran out of gas before he could taxi to the parking ramp. It was reportedly found that a "cellophane" washer had not been removed at one of the fuel line joints from the tank in the bombardier's compartment during assembly. This prevented the transfer of fuel from that tank to the wing tanks. This incident is reported to have had a disturbing affect on Castle's mind which played a part in his later replacement.

In Hawaii, the tanks in the bombardier's compartment were removed. The armor plate was replaced and the guns and other equipment were placed on board for the remainder of the trip to Australia. Since they had been notified that they would be in **"**combat zone**"** after leaving Christmas Island, a few pilots managed to get the guns installed before leaving Hawaii.

The base commanders in Hawaii were anxious to move these transient groups on as soon as possible. Roy Lee Grover was running a fever before they left Hawaii. But transients were not readily fitted into the sick call list. He was advised to seek medical assistance at Christmas Island. Upon arrival at Christmas Island, he was running a temperature of 102 degrees and sought aid. The oil pressure gauge in the plane was not working and the base commander refused to let them proceed.

So Lee recuperated on the beaches of Christmas Island. He had heard that there were only three trees on Canton Island, their next stop. While recuperating, he gathered about 50 small coconut palms and loaded them in the plane. He had plans for planting **"Grover's Grove"** when he arrived at Canton Island. The replacement guage was slow in arriving and he had to unload the trees.

Suddenly, one day they were ordered to get airborne for Canton in a hurry and there was no time to reload the trees. Their replacement guage had flown past them and was waiting at Canton Island.

Garrett Middlebrook reflects, **"**We flew the Pacific under extraordinary circumstances. I doubt if any present day airline pilot would believe us if we told him we went into tiny dots, like Christmas Island and Canton Island with no radio navigational assistance whatever.**"**

On arriving in Fiji, Wilmore Pavlich and William Gay, in the Bird Dog, found that their wheels were not down and locked. They tried diving the plane and then a sharp pull up trying unsuccessfully to get the wheels locked. They were running low on gas as they circled the field and a storm was approaching. The only option left was a wheels-up landing.

Paul Blankenship also landed wheels-up out of gas at Fiji after trying to navigate around the storm. The ATC navigator got lost. Some timely effort by the pilot got a fix from a radio station that only operated a few minutes each hour. This enabled them to get to their destination. They landed in the sugar cane just short of the runway. These two planes were repaired and eventually flown to Australia for combat duty.

The ATC navigator that got lost was the navigator on the Eddie Rickenbacker flight that got lost in the same general area several months later. This B-17 was forced to ditch and the survivors spent 30 days in life rafts.

*See the item, **"Tragedy Over Grafton",** page 12*

The planes had successfully completed this long trans oceanic flight with insufficient maps and only minimally equipped for such a venture. Their stay at Amberly was short and they proceeded north to Breddon

*(Continued page 12, **On the Way to Charters Towers**)*

ON THE WAY TO CHARTERS TOWERS - *(from page 11)*

Field near Charters Towers. The landing strip at this newly constructed field had been oiled only hours before the arrival of the first planes.

One of the group remembers, **"**I think my flight over could best be described by this old adage; we experienced many moments of extreme boredom followed by moments of stark raving terror.**"**

At Breddon, the ground echelon was reunited with the air echelon. But there had been a major change in personnel when B-25s were assigned to the 38th Bomb Group in May and June. The Group now consisted of only two Squadrons, the 71st and 405th. There were additional shifts of personnel between the two squadrons after their arrival. A new team of ground support personnel and flight personnel had to get acquainted.

Even before the group could get solidified, preparations were being made to move to a base near Port Moresby on New Guinea. Before the plans could be carried out, new orders were issued to send some personnel to Horn Island at the northern tip of Australia's east coast as August of 1942 came to a close.

M. F. Goodfellow recalled that Lt. Louis Ritacco caught chickens at the Breddon facility. It seems that Aussies had just turned the chickens loose when the people left the area and headed south. Ritacco, **"**having had some butcher experience, plucked and cooked them tent-side quicker than we thought possible.**"**

Chow time at Breddon from Don Mitchell's album, B-26 Marauder Historical Society WW II Archive web site

TRAGEDY OVER GRAFTON

One 71st Squadron flight leader, anxious to get this trip over with and to find out what Brisbane was really like, managed to get the planes in the flight refueled and off the ground again after their flight from Fiji to New Caledonia on 14 August. The end result was a late arrival after dark at about 6:30 p.m. in late Winter at the Australian coast.

Their unexpected arrival in the dark and at the wrong place resulted in an air raid alarm that further complicated the situation. They were off course and about 150 miles south of Brisbane. Due to the black out, they could not identify their position. Some features on the area could be observed. They made out a river and assumed it was the Brisbane River and followed it expecting to come to the planned destination, Amberly Field. Actually, they were following the Clarence River and wound up over Grafton. Gas was very low; two of the planes were desperately in need of a place to put down..

A Corporal of an Australian Signal Section stationed at a small air field at Grafton, heard the sound of circling planes and went outside the

*(Continued page 13, **Tragedy Over Grafton**)*

The World at War - *(from page 12)*

Another wave of U. S. planes, from the U. S. carriers, arrived and set their sights on the Japanese carriers. Before noon, crews of two Japanese carriers had been ordered to abandon ship.

Shortly before noon, Japanese planes located the Yorktown. The carrier that had survived at Coral Sea took three hits which slowed the carrier. Its damage control crews were soon able to bring the ship back to full speed.

In early afternoon, Japanese torpedo planes scored more hits. At 1500 hours, the crew of the Yorktown began abandoning ship. Several of its planes landed on the Enterprise when they returned from their mission.

While this was going on, the American pilots were systematically putting the Japanese carriers out of operation. By 1700 hours, a third Japanese carrier was abandoned. And the last of the Japanese carriers, from which the attacks on Yorktown had been launched, was so severely damaged before sunset that it was finally abandoned in the early morning darkness of 5 June. All eventually sank.

Meanwhile, the Yorktown continued floating and the fires seemed to be dying down. The ship seemed to be salvageable. A salvage party was put aboard and the ship was taken into tow by a Navy tug.

A Japanese submarine located the Yorktown under tow and soon scored more torpedo hits. The salvage party abandoned ship again and the Yorktown slid beneath the waves on 5 June.

Throughout 4 June, U. S. aircraft continued to dog the Japanese fleets, scoring some damage to other Japanese ships. By evening, Admiral Yamamoto issued an order to abandon the battle for Midway. The U. S. had survived its greatest Naval battle.

From this date, the Japanese could no longer launch offensive naval strikes at will It would be nearly a year before the two fleet carriers damaged at the Battle of the Coral Sea would rejoin the fleet. The U. S. now had control and could strike at will. Just six months after the Pearl Harbor attack, the once inferior American fleet was now the dominator.

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Within days, the Japanese High Command was making plans to invade New Caledonia, Samoa, and the Fiji Islands.

On 2 July, an Australian Brigade was ordered to Milne Bay. Plans were made by July 15 for an Allied occupation of Buna and the northeast coast of New Guinea. An

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

The World at War - *(from page 12)*

Australian force from Port Moresby had already reached Kakoda on 13 July.

A plan was set forth on 21 July for the Allies to occupy the Solomon Islands. By the end of July, MacArthur revealed plans to recapture New Britain, New Ireland, and the Admiralty Islands.

But counter plans were being made by the Japanese. On 19 July, a Japanese contingent set sail from Rabaul to capture Buna and Gona. By 23 July, they had landed and started pushing the Aussies back from Wairopi. The Japanese continued to push the Aussies back up the trail and to within 60 miles of Port Moresby by the end of August. The Japanese send raids over Port Moresby almost daily.

In the later part of July, the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal and started building an airstrip. They did not seem to be aware that at that very moment, the U. S. was assembling an invasion force which was to land on Guadalcanal on 7 August. On 8 August, the Americans seized the airfield the Japanese had started building and renamed in Henderson Field.

On the night of 8/9 August, a Japanese naval squadron surprised the Guadalcanal invasion fleet at Savo Island. They succeed in sinking four Allied heavy cruisers and damage other major fleet units. They withdraw having suffered little damage.

The Allies withdrew support units leaving the Marines already landed on Guadalcanal with a minimum of supplies. The Marines rushed to complete the runway begun by the Japanese.

In succeeding days with stiff resistance by Marine units, the force survived until new units and supplies could be landed. Some supplies were flown in on 12 August. Destroyers landed more supplies on 15 August. Construction units managed to make the field serviceable as a fighter base by 20 August. But at the end of August, Henderson Field was still only a fiercely defended beachhead.

The Japanese persistently land reinforcements for their forces. A long and bloody battle for Guadalcanal lay ahead.

On 25 August, a Japanese contingent from Buna landed at Milne Bay only to find the Australians in an established position a few miles from their landing beaches. After some advances by the Japanese, the Australians launched an effective counter attack on 31 August. The enemy was forced to withdraw toward its landing beaches.

TRAGEDY OVER GRAFTON - *(from page 12)*

drill hall to see the planes. Against the night sky, he was able to identify them as American Billy Mitchell planes, not some Japanese planes causing the confusion.

He managed to establish communication with the planes by switching the lights on the tennis court on and off in code. The response identified the planes as American and stated the urgency that two of the planes were running out of fuel and the crews were bailing out.

After cutting through layers of authority in the blackout situation, nearby residents were urged to drive to the small airfield to line up on each side of the field with their headlights indicating the landing area. Two of the planes managed to land on the short, grassy, slick field after clearing the buildings. The field was much too short and the planes skidded beyond the landing area, going through a fence, nose wheels collapsing in the soft dirt. The planes ended up nose down but the crews were uninjured.

John Donegan related the tragic account of the jump from his plane. **"**We were just getting ready to bail out when Lt. Herb Weiner, Lynn, MA, accidentally pulled his rip cord and his parachute billowed open inside the plane. "We didn't have an extra chute, and we knew there was no use jumping with the open one. It would either get tangled up with the plane or would fail to umbrella out. The only way out was a double jump. So he and I fastened ourselves together with our belts. He locked his arms around my waist, and I hooked my legs around his body. Then we jumped, but it didn't work. The sudden opening of the parachute broke our belts and tore us apart. After that one jarring jerk, I was floating down alone.**"** Werner's body was found and he was buried in Australia.

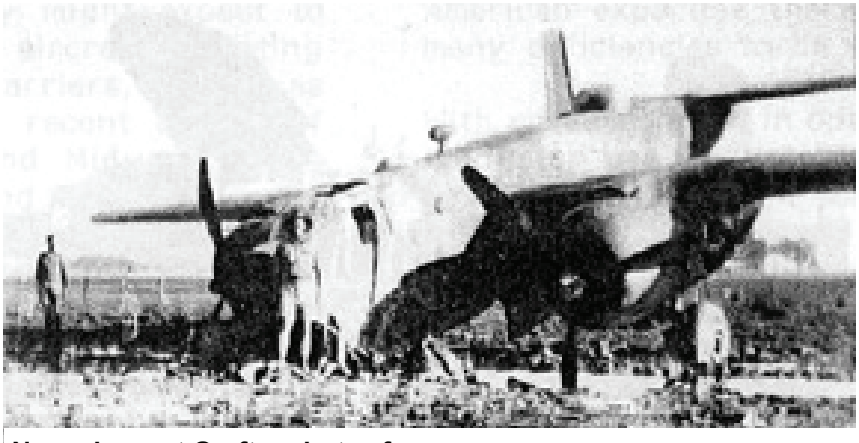
The other jumpers landed in fields near Casino. Local residents, having heard explosions resulting from the planes crashing, found the survivors and offered care for them until authorities picked the men up in the morning. One man had a broken leg and one man had severe hand injuries. The others survived their ordeal with minor injuries.

The remaining plane, having finally received help and directions and with sufficient fuel, made its way north approximately 50 miles to an air station at Evans Head. After a safe landing, the plane was parked on a taxi way a short distance from the hangars and administrative buildings and the crew were taken to the military barracks at the field.

But fate would play another trick. In the early morning hours, a service truck drove across the field on its usual rounds. The driver had not been told about the parked plane. In the early morning darkness, the truck drove into the parked plane rendering it unserviceable.

The rescued men from all the planes were taken by road to Amberly to be reunited with their other comrades of the 38th Bomb Group. The plane at Evans Head and the two planes at Grafton were eventually carried by truck to Amberly for repair.

*(More page 14, **The Grafton Episode**)*



Nose down at Grafton, but safe. from Don Mitchell's album, B-26 Marauder Historical Society WW II Archive web site

60th ANNIVERSARY, 48 HOURS IN ENEMY TERRITORY - David Gunn *(Concluded from Jan. 2005)*

In the January issue, our story left the survivors of the Tarakan Mission on 30 December, 1944, hidden in ferns listening to the sounds of and smelling the cigarette smoke of a Japanese patrol approximately 15 feet from them. That was on 31 December, 1944.

A long time after hearing no more sounds, I crept to the edge of the ferns and looked across the mudflat. The signs of our crossing in the night were still clearly visible. The marks we had left on that eight-foot muddy bank were obvious. The Japs must know we were near.

It had been a cloudy and showery day so I knew the Cat wouldn't be able to get there. No one seemed much interested in eating but we did pass around a small pack of "Charms" that was in our survival food packs. Shoeless Bill Smith sat on the edge of our raft and "cleaned" our .45 cal. Colt Automatics, using mosquito repellant.

In late afternoon a large launch with two machine guns and several men cruised past. As night overtook us, a gloomy New Year's Eve settled in. We wondered about our own future and had disturbing thoughts of loved ones and home.

I kept mulling over in my mind how we could move with the two men having broken arms and "Pop" having difficulty moving around much because of his back injury. But I knew we would have to move soon. The Japs obviously knew our approximate location. Having carefully read the intelligence reports about the area, I knew that if we could penetrate to the interior about 10 miles to the west and south, we might connect up with friendly natives who could contact Allied forces. But I wanted to stay near this location until we had at least one day of good weather. I was confident that the Cat would come looking for us.

The next morning, the sun was bright — a good day for a rescue! That canoe came by again.

In mid-morning, we heard the drone of heavy engines and a big black B-24 hove into sight about 1,000 feet above the trees to the west of us. He was flying "fighter cover" for the Catalina that followed closely. We went into a frantic routine of waving our yellow and blue tarp and anything else we had. Several of us had an emergency signaling mirror. We began flashing those toward the Catalina. The Cat circled in our direction and the wingtip floats started to lower. I knew we had been spotted.

We started pumping up the raft (it leaked badly). The high tide had started receding but was still near the top of the bank we were perched on. We towed the raft from the ferns to the water. The injured men were placed in the raft and the rest of us swam along side towing the raft through the water. The Catalina, now on the water, slowly taxied toward us.

As we were approaching the Cat, the four men, who had separated from us, began raising a cry from near where we had been on the island. The Cat crew took gun positions but I called from the water "friendlies, friendlies" and they relaxed. Now the pilot had a problem. He would have to shut the engines down while waiting for a couple of his men to paddle to shore to pick up the rest of our party. But he had experienced trouble getting one of the engines started that morning.

Members of the Cat crew assisted us aboard and then took our raft to pick up the men who had been separated from us. As the raft was returning, a couple of the Cat crew started cranking the inertial starters on the engines. One came to life promptly. The other coughed and choked and died. It took at least three efforts before the second engine gave real signs of life and finally started purring like a kitten.

At last we were all aboard and the Cat headed out across the channel gaining takeoff speed. As we broke water we could see a speeding boat some distance to our right headed in our direction. But now we were climbing and headed for Morotai. The crew gave us some dry clothes and we feasted on roast turkey they gave us. Before long most of us fell into sleep. The pilot invited me up to sit in the right seat.

(Continued next column)

The Grafton Episode

As 1992 approached, an article in the RAAF Association's *Wings* magazine sparked interest in the Grafton area and the Clarence River Historical Society went to great lengths to accumulate eye witness accounts of the events of the evening of 14 August, 1942. These were compiled along with the results of other research into a book, "Bombers over Grafton".

Due to the efforts of a legislator from the Grafton area, an "official report" had been compiled shortly after the war which was used in an effort to secure night operation lighting for the Grafton airfield. This report was also used in compiling the book.

The Sun Setters Editor will make an effort to secure a copy of this book for our records. Much of it is contained on the disks containing Larry Hickey's research notes.

48 HOURS IN ENEMY TERRITORY

(from previous column)

While we sat around on Tibi Island, we had called ourselves "The Borneo Beach-headers"; we had established a beach head, hadn't we? We all signed a 10 guilder note attesting to that very restricted club membership. What a great way to celebrate New Years Day, 1945!

I had spent much time praying, more for my wife than myself. I later learned that Pat Welch had called the small group to prayer on the second day. By God's grace, we had renewed hope of being home again!

Upon landing at Morotai, we were taken to the hospital. Most of us were released after a few days to return to the 405th camp. We learned that the 405th had lost the number two plane and crew of our formation over the target. So, it was a bittersweet reunion.

EPILOGUE: In 2000, Jim Wallace gave me the name and military designation of the rescue group, the 2nd Emergency Rescue Squadron. I located their web site. I left a message telling them how much I owed them. Within a half hour, I had a reply. Their web master told me that the pilot who rescued us was his uncle. Unfortunately, Capt. Wientjes, pilot of Playmate 42 on 1 January 1945, had passed away a few years before -1979. This organization rescued several 38th BG men in late 1944 while we were stationed at Morotai.

SPECIAL RECONNECTION: In the late summer of 2001, I was browsing the prologue of "THE GHOST SOLDIERS" by Hampton Sides, in a Costco store. I suddenly recognized that I was reading about a handful of men brought into my ward at the hospital in 1945. They had been the survivors of the Japanese slaughter of 150 POWs at the Palawan Island Japanese POW camp on 14 December, 1944, just two weeks before our mission. Such would have been, in all probability, our fate had we been captured on Tibi Island.

Research Data from Hickey

As we reported in the previous issue, Al Kennedy has reduced over 2000 pages of Larry Hickey's research notes and textual data to digital format on CDs. A set of these disks was placed in the hands of the Association Board Members for review. There is a small amount of this material yet to be incorporated. This has been delayed by Al's business commitments but is expected to be available in mid summer.

Al has used the services of some key members of his staff to get this job done. Much of the material was in poor form when he was able to get it from Hickey. In many cases, the sheets had to be closely examined by magnifying lenses and yes, even microscopes to determined what the text says.

As soon as the remaining material is available for final review, CD copies will be made and mailed to **all paid up members.** They should be in the hands of our members by early 2006, with some hope that it can be sooner.

These disks are computer searchable by names of people and places and by date. If you don't have a computer available to you, perhaps a family member can help you or you can take the disk to a library and use a computer there.

The photograph collection disks will follow shortly. Al may find it necessary to rescan many of these pictures for better quality. But we would like to be able to put these in your hands by the time of our 2006 reunion in 17 months. The complete set of disks will be approximately 10 in number as presently estimated.

As those of you at the St. Louis reunion recall, complete sets of these disks will be sent to **all paid up members and life members without additional charge.** So be sure to send your dues to Bill McKinstry and be sure he has your correct address.

HELP OUR SECRETARY!!!!

Bill McKinstry does a great job, a job that most of us would not want to do.

Bill prepares a letter of condolence from us to the loved ones of each of our comrades when he has filed his final flight plan. There are more of them these days. Take note of the latest departures elsewhere in this issue. Do you want that job?

Bill also keeps tract of our finances. Keeps sending out word to our backslidden members to remind them that we need the dues if we are to continue sending out newsletters. And then there are those goodies (the Hickey research data and the photo collections of several members) we want to send to every **PAID UP MEMBER** in the next several months.

But we need your dues **and your correct address** if we are going to be able to deliver the CDs to you.

Every time we send out a newsletter, Orland gets several back because the Post Office says the address is incorrect. He pays a return postage fee for every one of them. Then he has to try to get the newsletter to a corrected address. That cost some real money because they have to be sent first class!! And Bill hates putting out that money.

Help Bill out by sending your dues and be sure he has your correct address! Then he'll let Al Kennedy have the money to make a set of CDs for you and let Dave Gunn and Orland Gage keep sending you these newsletters.

THE BOMBER REEF - Walt Deas' Project

Walt reports that he has completed the narration for the video/DVD, THE BOMBER REEF, which is now undergoing final review. Walt has put a great deal into this project. This documentary will be a great help in perpetuating the 38^{ths} record in the southwest Pacific.

The Sun Setters looks forward to the opportunity to let you know this work is available.

DID YOU KNOW THEM?

THANKS to those of your who responded to the requests for help in contacting those who are seeking information about loved ones who served along side of us during WW II. We have more requests for such help. We hope you can clear the cob webs that have collected in your brains over the years.

Please get in touch with David Gunn if you can help. He will forward the information you can give if you do not care to have personal contact. Otherwise, he will try to put you in personal contact with the searcher. His phone number, e-mail address, and postal address are on page 2— he's the Editor.

These people yearn to know more about that loved one.

Lt. Crawford Marvin Brown, (405th), Daughter seeking info

William L "Hoot" Gibbons, Daughter seeking info., has pictures but needs names for faces, will share.

Ancil W. Hopper, (405th), Family seeking info.

Barney Johnson, (405th, 71st, 823rd), Son seeking info.

Lt. Ralph Klus, Jr., Daughter seeking info.

Alan Libes, (405th), nieces seeking info.

Capt. John Long, (822nd), Daughters seeking info.

Lt. Tommie Martin, (405th) Nephew seeking info.

Ed Morse, Grandson seeking info.

John Mutu, (71st gunner), comrade seeking to renew contacts.

Capt. J. C. O'Donnell, Nephew seeking info and pics of J. C., and of planes MIMSIE and HAIRY MONSTER.

Ralph Overholt, (71st), Now over 90, Granddaughter seeking info.

SSgt. Charles, "Chuck" Donald Plageman, (823rd radio op.) our own Chris Guess is seeking info.

Sgt. Nicolas Rock, (822nd), Son seeking info. Will share pics.

Lt. Leonard Williamson "Russ" Russell, Nephew seeking info.

Thomas S. Russo, Son seeking info.

Lt. Richard P. Schumacher, (71st, MIA at Wewak) Granddaughter seeking info.

Lt. John Ralph Stack, (823rd, Nav. ?) On John Weiland's crew down at Wewak,. Niece seeking info.

Ken Upton, Son seeking info, has pics to share.

Herb Witchter, (71st communication group), Brother-in-law seeking info and contact with men who served with him.

Middlebrook's Book, revised, reissued

New Guinea is home to Garrett Middlebrook and the men of the 405th Squadron, 38th Bomb Group, 5th Air Force. Along with the crews of the 71st Squadron, "Middie" and friends embark on a series of hair raising low level attacks aimed at doing as much damage to the Japanese as possible.

Air Combat at 20 Feet recounts in stark detail the devastating effects of concentrated gunfire from his specially modified B-25 Mitchell bomber. The plane was armed to the teeth with .50 cal. machine guns and a 20 mm. cannon that made hash of enemy shipping, aircraft, various structures, and personnel. Middlebrook loses many friends and the reader quickly discerns war's unrelenting toll on its unfortunate participants. Middlebrook's descriptions of cruel Japanese captivity of downed friends evokes both sympathy and horror. The author's recollections are vivid and detailed as the book is based on his substantial WWII journal.

Air Combat at 20 Feet is action packed and spares nothing in terms of its graphic narrative and frank content. A word of caution: Middlebrook makes no attempt to hide his *wartime* hatred of the Japanese; sensitive readers might wish to look elsewhere. Of note: Middlebrook's repeated encounters with a determined Japanese ace and the latter's subsequent destruction *likely* at the hands of P-38 ace Dick Bong! *Highly Recommended*

This edition also features two additional chapters absent from the initial printing and additional photos. Order this text direct at: **www.authorhouse.com**

Great New Magazine!!

I was recently in a medical office waiting room and looking for something to read. In moments I came across a magazine called **"Bomber Legends."** This magazine is published by The B-24 Bomber Club as a follow up to their "Briefing Journal" which was suspended after 34 years of successful publication. "The main goal . . is to preserve the history of the bombers and their crews." The magazine is printed on high quality paper which does full justice to photographs and much of it is in full color. Their offices are located in Ramona, California. They were kind enough to send me three of their back copies.

Most of their stories have been about the "heavies" and at least one about B-26s. Rest assured, we will try to see that they feature a 38th BG story from time to time. Most of the advertising (and there is only a modest amount) is related to military aviation museums, books, art, and events.

It is published four times a year. The subscription rate for **WW II veterans** is $20.00 for one year. Their address is: Bomber Legends Magazine, 1672 Main Street, Ste. E, PMB-124, Ramona, CA, 92065-5257.

Their web site is: **www.bomberlegends.com**

HELP , NAMES OF PLANES OVER GRAFTON 8/24/42 -

If you have notes or other evidence or firm recollections of the names of the planes who were in trouble over Grafton, please contact the editor. Walt Deas needs our help in completing his video/DVD.

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