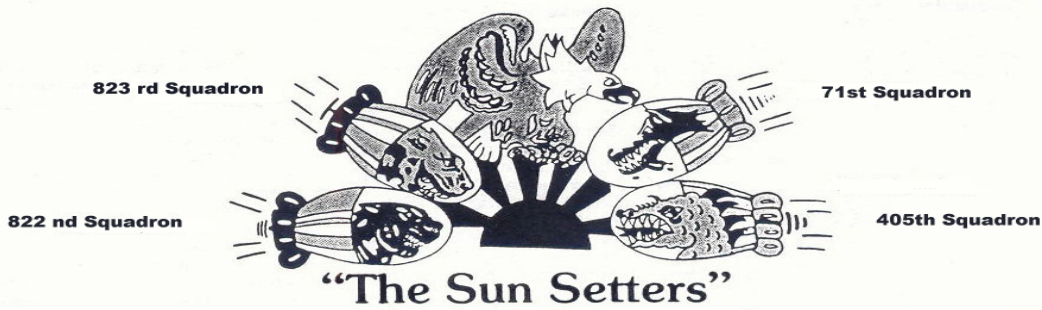


38th Bomb Group



THE 38TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II) MAY, 2009



.FROM OUR PRESIDENT

2009 REUNION: DAVID GUNN has planned a super Reunion in San Diego, CA. This year's "38th Bomb Group Reunion" will be held at the **Hilton San Diego Airport/ Harbor Island**. They have FREE Air Port Shuttle. You can also arrange to arrive 2 days earlier &/or depart 2 days later at the same \$110 rate. There is a lot to do and see in San Diego: 30 Sept., Welcome Dinner; 1 Oct., Aero Space Museum & Lunch at Bali Hai; 2 Oct., Air Show featuring the Navy Blue Angles Demonstration Team at Miramar Marine Air Base (You do not want to miss this one); 3 Oct., Visit the Point Loma National Cemetery and Monument, plus enjoy our Farewell Banquet Dinner. Remember, you get very little done by waiting until tomorrow; so, make your reservations NOW! (Deadline is 4 September 2009.) Be sure to tell them you are with the 38th BG Reunion to obtain the \$110 special room rate. Orland is enclosing the Registration Form and more reunion details. You may also check our website for late breaking reunion news: www.sunsetters38bg.com

NEWSLETTER: David Gunn continues to help perpetuate our Legacy by writing some of the special 38th BG WW II stories. Although he published the last phase of our WW II history in the September 2008 Newsletter, he continues to enhance our legacy by writing interesting stories for our newsletters. You can help by sending your WW II stories to Dave Gunn at pappygn@juno.com.

SECRETARY/TREASURER: Orland Gage continues to do a super job handling our finances, arranging for distribution of the Newsletter and placing historical data on our Website. He is the man for all seasons.

38th BG WEBSITE: Tom Behrens, with the help of **Orland Gage**, continues to produce one of the best sites on the web. It recently received a "B" rating with SEOENG.com for design efficiency, and a traffic rank in the top 31% by Alexa.com. We know people are reading the website, because we receive one or two emails or phone calls a week, asking about a family member who was in the 38th BG during WW II. You can help to make the website even better by sending tapes and/or DVD interviews to Tom Behrens or me. Our snail mail addresses are on page 2 on the Association Contacts list. Check it out www.sunsetters38bg.com. You will like it.

AGENDA FOR BUSINESS MEETING: If anyone has any agenda items for discussion at the San Diego business meeting, please send them to me. My email is: jackdet@hawaii.rr.com.

38th BG Book. Larry Hickey's best estimate is our book will go to the printer within 30 to 45 days and will be available before our reunion on 30 September 2009. The book will have 650 pages with about 1,000 photos. All pre-publication orders will be honored at the pre-publication price, and no one has to send in additional money. Our 38th BG website address will be in the book and our website will have a link to Hickey's company website: airwar-worldwar2.com. We hope to have a copy to present to the San Diego Museum, when we visit there during the reunion.

Jack DeTow

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

See you in San Diego.

The President pg. 1
 The Editor pg. 2
 Rodman Williams Re- members Wewak pg. 3
 Not Ready to Start pg. 3
 Calling All S2 Types pg. 8
 Treas. Report pg. 8
 Lake Murray pg. 8
 Doolittle Raiders pg. 8
 38th History DVD pg. 8

Reserve your hotel
 Buy your tickets
 Send your registration

**REUNION
 2009
 SAN DIEGO
 September 30
 to
 October 3**

IN EVER HONORED MEMORY

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

Richard E, Fitzwater	71 st	Dean Clark	822 nd
James C, Gryc	71 st	William H Daniels	822 nd
Charles S. Williams	71 st	William J. McKinstry	822 nd
		Herman Brooks	823 rd

TOTAL TO DATE

Headquarters	19
69 th Squadron	3
70 th Squadron	58
71 st Squadron	173
89 th Squadron	1

YOUR 2009-10 ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

President Jack DeTour
98-1108 Malualua St. Aiea, HI, 96701
808 487-2842 jackdet@hawaii.rr.com

Vice-President Chick Alford
10 La Grange Cir. Hot Springs, AR, 71909
501 922-4779 helengene@att.net

Secretary/Treasurer Orland Gage
337 W. Reservoir Dr. Lewiston, ID, 83501
208 746-0875 ogage@clearwire.net

Hdq. Rep. Burt Erickson
P. O. Box 687 Page, AZ, 86040
928 645-5394

Hdq. Alt. Rep. Warren E. Lee
6600 Peppermill Dr. Las Vegas, NV, 89146
702 221-0699 m-w-lee@earthlink.net

71st Sqdn. Rep. Curtis R. Hunt
21557 Coffee Hollow Rd., Tahlequah, OK, 74464
918 458-0575 chunt615@dishmail.net

71st Sqdn. Alt. Rep. Paul Johnson
1054 New McNeil Ave. Lawrence, NY, 11559
516 371-3490 tahlahburin@aol.com

405th Sqdn. Rep. Harry E. Terrell, Jr.
20475 Upper Bay Dr. Newport Beach, CA, 92660
949 852-8015 heterrell@sbcglobal.net

405th Sqdn. Alt. Rep. David Gunn
19754 Santee Ln. Valley Center, CA, 92082
760 749-3769 pappygnk@juno.com

822nd Sqdn. John Grady
2707 George Ct., Rolling Meadows, IL, 60008
847-255-1223 jgrady@prodigy.net

822nd Sqdn. Alt. Rep. Grant W. Nelson
P.O. Box 696, Ferndale, WA, 98248
206-384-1788 gwnmin@comcast.net

823rd Sqdn. Rep. Charles T. Conner
4917 Ravenswood Dr., Apt 1010
210 674-0958 San Antonio, TX, 78227

823rd Sqdn. Alt. Rep. Bob Lamb
1277 Chipmunk Ct. Centerville, OH, 45458
937 432-9116 b-j.lamb2@donet.com

Editor, "The Sun Setters" David Gunn
19754 Santee Ln. Valley Center, CA, 92082
760 749-3769 pappygnk@juno.com

Editorial Advisor Orland Gage
337 W. Reservoir Dr. Lewiston, ID, 83501
208 746-0875 ogage@clearwire.net

Assoc. Editor Jim Thoren
1628 202nd Pl. SW Lynnwood, WA 98036
425 609-8180 mustang9@comcast.net

Association Web Site:
www.sunsetters38bg.com

Web master Tom Behrens
11206 Mist Moor Court Riverview, FL 33569
813 671-9089 tom@TomBehrensUSA.com

From the Editor - David Gunn

The big story in this issue is about the State of The Nation, United States, in 1941. We have all heard and read about Pearl Harbor, "the day that will live in infamy." What else was going on the western Pacific where a relatively small number of U. S. military personnel were caught up in the clenches of war and many of them would spend the next few years in POW camps?

Last January, Harlan Denning sent me a news clipping about the Royce Mission and wondered what I knew about it. I had read some about the Royce Mission earlier. In checking back on some of the details in the clipping, I became intrigued. I soon became involved in stories about what was going on in the western Pacific leading up to December 7, 1941, stories I had never heard and events I knew little about.

In the last decade or two there have been a number of books published dealing with the history of events in the western Pacific and containing a fuller story of events leading up to that fateful day. Some of the authors of these books have been able to access Japanese records of the period to give a fuller picture of what was going on in the '30s and early '40s. I feel that what happened in 1938 to 1941 is a necessary background to the history of the 38th Bomb Group. To know more about those early days helps me to know more about what I was involved in.

The story in this issue will set the stage for events leading up to the Royce Mission which will be told in the September issue. Some have called the Royce Mission the "first offensive mission by the U. S. in the war against Japan." In the four months that followed December 7, 1941, defeat after defeat, retreat and retreat, frustration and fear, slaughter and sacrifice, gripped our souls.

Men quickly entangled in combat fought valiantly, many in rolls they had not been trained for, to slow the aggressors. But unbreakable bonds of determination were being forged. This would lead to uncounted acts of valor and heroism, a great many of which would never be recorded or honored by medals and ribbons.

The Royce Mission took place a few days before bombs from B-25s exploded in Tokyo in a dramatic mission that overshadowed the Royce Mission. But we need to know about this daring mission of another group of B-25s that occurred in those days when the rising tide of Japan in World War II in the Pacific was slowing and the American tide would begin to run. The months of April, May, and June in 1942 were the beginning of a new hope.

I selected two books, recent publications, to give me a fairly full picture of the events leading up to and the first two weeks of World War II: **Fortnight of Infamy** by John Burton, (300 plus pages) and **December 8, 1941, MacArthur's Pearl Harbor**, by William H. Bartsch, (500+ pages). Both were a good read. By the time you read this I will also have read **Operation Plum: the ill-fated 27th Bombardment Group . . .** By Adrian R. Martin, published in 2008.

In the featured story of this issue you will find the 27th stuck with no planes and some escaping to Australia. In our next issue we will give you an account of their daring mission flying B-25s from a base right behind the Japanese lines.

Those of you who attended our reunion in Colorado Springs (2002) may remember a group who recorded oral interviews of some of our members at the close of the reunion. "Mysts of Time" reports that the years of developing a documentary featuring WW II eye witnesses have come to fruition. Their documentary, **Bomber's Moon: Girls Beneath the Bombs**, ran on Rocky Mountain PBS TV in early May. A DVD is available. You might see and hear yourself. Check **www.bombersmoon.com**

I want to take a moment to thank **Rodman Williams** for sending me his recollections of his mission to Wewak (see page 3). I also want to thank **Terry Popravak** for his complementary message to Jack Detour and his offer to share some of his experiences with us (see page 8).

"The Sun Setters" is a publication of The 38th Bomb Group Association (WW II), 337 W. Reservoir Dr., Lewiston, ID 83501. Copyright 2009, The 38th Bomb Group Association (WW II). No part of the contents may be reproduced in any form without written consent of the Association. All pictures are from 38th BG Association files and are the property of the Association unless otherwise noted.

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.

"The Sun Setters" is printed and mailed by **Lewiston Printing**, Lewiston, Idaho. Mrs. Snyder and Kathy Morgan go out of their way to help. They fix the Editor's goofs. We couldn't get the job done without them!

Rodman Williams Remembers Wewak

(Rodman sent me this story in February. It is his recollection of what happened in the plane he was in the day Maj. Chelli flew his last mission.)

The second strike by the 38th on Wewak was on 18 August, 1943. Lt. Dave Bryant (later Captain and CO of the 822nd) was flying this Wolf Pack plane and I was his copilot. Our four-man formation was hidden during our approach by the low range of hills back of Wewak.

As we began our turn to pop over the ridge the sky was filled with black puffs of ack ack and stuff unseen. We settled down to 100 feet or less above the terrain for our approach. Glancing out the right window, I noted a large stream of tracers flowing just under the right engine and wondered what our number 4 man was shooting at. I turned towards Dave and saw outside his window the scene depicted in that painting that hangs in the Air Force Academy—Maj. Chelli's plane and crew headed out to sea with an engine enveloped in flames.

As I turned to look forward and to toggle our load of parafrags, Dave pushed an Aussie 10-pound note into my hand and yelled above the roar of the full throttled engines, "Here's that 10 quid I owe you if we don't come off of this." I replied, "Fine time for that."

Dave made a small upward evasive maneuver as we finished the run and headed for home.

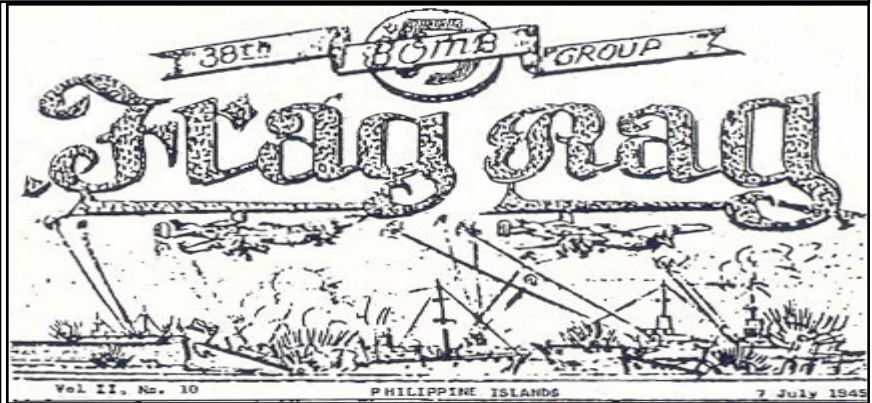
After landing I asked S/Sgt. Cooper, "What was number 4 shooting at?" He responded, "Sir, number 4 was on the left side of the formation. That was an enemy fighter that I promptly gave a face full of .50 caliber bullets to."

At the time Dave was pulling up, Cooper had fired at the Jap. His turret bicycle seat came loose and he fell over the hole left in the bottom when the droppable auxiliary fuel tank had been jettisoned. He hung on by one heel and one arm until S/Sgt. Beck (our radio/gunner) pulled him back up into the plane, saving his life.

S/Sgt. Cooper didn't get credit for shooting down a fighter and saving our lives because no one confirmed the kill.

I noted that this was my 13th mission. The enemy fighter must have been skidding in our prop wash when he fired or I wouldn't be telling this tale.

S/Sgt. Beck was later killed when Capt. Bryant, flying an administrative flight to Dobodura, ran into a bunch of those "rocks in the clouds" over the treacherous Owen Stanley range.



Not Ready To Start

The Commonwealth of the Philippines was granted semi-independence in 1935 with full independence to come in 1945. General MacArthur had served two hitches in the Philippines in the 1920s. He had retired after serving as Army Chief of Staff in 1935. President Manuel Quezon asked Gen. MacArthur to help in the organization of the Philippine Army in a position approved by President Roosevelt. From the position of Advisor, he was named Field Marshal of the Philippine Army by President Quezon.

Throughout the 1930s, Japan had expanded its resource base in the Chinese area. In 1930, they occupied Manchuria without more than verbal blusterings from Britain, the U. S., and the League of Nations. Manchuria also served as a base from which the invasion of China would take place in the mid 30s occupying the port city of Shanghai, an act condemned by the western nations.

The U. S. had a few aging cruisers and destroyers from WW I in its Asiatic Fleet. The U. S. was also responsible for several gunboats on the Yangtse River in China protecting American interests in China. In 1937 the Japanese sank the *Panay* on the upper Yangtse causing a major incident and increased tension between the U. S. and Japan. The Asiatic Fleet moved from Shanghai to Manila Bay.

The Japanese Air Force proceeded to indiscriminately reduce the Chinese cities to rubble with civilian casualties in the hundreds of thousands and creating devastation greater than the German blitzkrieg of the early 40s.

In the years leading up to December 1941, the Japanese designed fighters and bombing aircraft with performance capabilities far superior to American and British designs. Japanese designs emphasized maneuverability in planes manned by trained and experienced crews. The high degree of skill developed by their pilots would offset the lack of protective armor plating in combat. Their war in China furnished the opportunity for their airmen to gain much experience.

In the mid 30s there were officers in the U. S. Army Air Corps planning units who envisioned more for the Air Corps than a defensive and ground support role for the Corps. The Army Air Corps requested B-17s in 1936 for defense of military positions in Hawaii, Alaska and Panama. General George Marshal also moved toward a philosophy of offensive air warfare. An offensive capability would require more and better heavy bombers and fighter planes to provide cover for the bombers.

As Hitler became more aggressive, Britain, France and America participated in many diplomatic efforts to persuade Germany to give up further aggressive actions, to little avail. An anti-war movement was strong enough to deter the government of the U. S. from considering any major military buildup even though many military leaders were concerned that the U. S. was far behind the belligerent countries in Asia and Europe.

Aged planes (B-10s no longer needed by squadrons in the U. S.) had been sent to the Philippines in the late 1930s. In 1937 about two squadrons of 1934 vintage P-34s were assigned to the Islands. These outdated aircraft made up the only Air Corps unit, the Fourth Composite Group, for this western outpost until 1940.

In January 1939, plans for 24 combat ready air groups deployable by

(Continued page , page 4)

NOT READY TO START

mid 1941 were funded. When Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, the U. S. Army consisted of less than 200,000 troops with an aging officer corps. It was 17th in the world in size. Less than 500 tanks with light armor made up its armored cavalry. Its air corps was little more than a reconnaissance force. Its submarine fleet designs were inferior, its torpedoes of short range and unreliable.

With the start of the war in Europe in September of 1939, Japan moved to consolidate its holdings in Asia and to take over the colonial holdings in Southeast Asia of the weakened and distracted European nations. Japan needed the oil, rubber, and other raw materials for its expanding industrial machine.

The updated War Plans of the U. S. envisioned that Japan would try to push the U. S. out of the Philippines. In 1940, the Air Corps again increased its plans to 84 air groups by June 1942 for a possibly competitive air force. The initiation of Japanese aggression was considered possible in mid 1942.

One patrol squadron of long range Consolidated PBY-4 planes and a tender, the Langley, had been sent to the Philippines in the late 1930s. The planes had been the first to fly to this far away station. A second squadron arrived in June of 1940. A squadron of utility float planes was also delivered by ship to Manila.

In the summer of 1940, Japan signed the "Tri-partite Treaty" with Germany and Italy. With the fall of France and a new puppet government, Japan secured permission to establish bases in northern French Indo China. This was considered by the U. S. Military to be a dangerous development and the U. S. imposed a ban on further shipment of scrap iron and steel to Japan. Shiploads of this material had been the major source feeding the Japanese industrial empire for several years.

In July of 1940, Japan began deployment of a new fighter plane in China. It wasn't long before it dominated the skies over the Japanese/Chinese combat zones. Reports about this superior plane from the fighting zone were tragically discounted at the highest command levels in the U. S. and Britain. Unfortunately, the western nations ignored or made light of the capability of the Japanese to produce anything superior to the western nations.

Cooperative planning by the U. S. and Britain had begun shortly after war in Europe began in 1939. It wasn't until early 1941 that a mutual strategy document was released. This "ABC-1" document set the defeat of Germany as the first priority. Britain was to lead the campaign in Europe, North Africa, and the eastern Atlantic. The U. S. was responsible for the Western Hemisphere including any Japanese movement against the Pacific island approaches to British holdings in southeast Asia (Singapore), Australia, the Philippines, and Hawaii. The U. S. was also to protect the western Atlantic convoy routes.

Due to a critical need for fighter planes in late 1940, the U. S. Air Corps commandeered a shipment of fighter planes destined for Sweden. These P-35As reached the Philippines still equipped with Swedish instrumentation and insignia. This version was actually better than those being flown at that time by units in the U. S.

Admiral Hart went to the Manila docks in late 1940 and confiscated a shipment of A-27 attack bombers destined for Siam. These were very similar to the Australian Wirraway and the Douglas A-24. They were, in fact, a combat version of the North American AT-6 but with a three

bladed prop on a more powerful engine and sporting bomb racks and five .30 caliber machine guns. Their Siamese instrumentation and markings made them unsuitable for combat so they were designated for advance training of newly arrived and inexperienced pilots. Three aging B-18s were sent to the Philippines to replace obsolete B-10s, part of the 4th Composite Group, for defense of the Philippines during the year.

New pilots being shipped to the Islands were usually right out of flight school with no time in combat planes and no air-to-air gunnery experience. An ammunition shortage limited gunnery practice to firing .30-caliber ammo. The new pilots received lots of formation practice time.

In early 1941, the Japanese began a high priority training of units that could be withdrawn from China which were moved to Formosa. These units, with highly experienced pilots, received the latest in new equipment.

U. S. concerns for the possibility of war in the Pacific led to plans to allocate more aircraft to the forces in the Philippines in 1941. Support facilities were minimal. Airstrips for operating fighters and bombers besides Clark Field were essentially non-existent. Steps taken to increase the number and scope of new facilities were initiated but progress was extremely slow. In March 1941, 18 more weary and worn B-18s joined the earlier group of three B-18s to replace the B-10s that had been serving in the Philippines.

On 4 May 1941, the scheduled China Clipper brought Gen. Henry Clagett and his Chief of Staff, Col. Harold George to Manila to be the new Command Staff for the Army air units in the Philippines. Shortly thereafter, 31 crated, new P-40Bs were offloaded on the Manila docks. The Islands would now have the current first line U. S. Air Corps fighter.

Because of a major blunder in the U. S., no coolant had been shipped with the new planes. **Surely, they didn't need antifreeze in the Philippines!** An emergency shipment of Prestone was soon on its way. The planes would not be able to fly until the coolant arrived.

On 20 June, 1941, the Army Air Corps became the Army Air Forces under the command of Gen. Henry Arnold who would report directly to General Marshal.

On 25 July, Germany having invaded Russia, the Japanese were emboldened and moved forces to occupy strategic bases in the southern part of French Indo China. The Allied countries quickly countered with a ban on further shipments of oil to Japan and froze all Japanese assets in their countries. Japan immediately stepped up plans to assure that the U. S. would not be able to surround Japan and cut off access to the resources in the East Indies.

President Roosevelt very shortly recalled Gen. MacArthur to active duty and appointed him to command U. S. Armed Forces in the Far East. Navy Commander Hart advised Washington that more surface ships, submarines, and more patrol aircraft were needed.

There was now an urgency to improve and expand airfields to host the new planes scheduled to arrive in the Islands. New fields were needed. Efforts were hampered by the lack of sufficient equipment and personnel. There was, as yet, no provision for major maintenance shops and support facilities.

(Continued, page 5)

NOT READY TO START

Boeing's bid to build heavy bombers for the Air Corps had a nearly abortive birth in 1935. Because the prototype of the B-17 crashed during testing, the contract went to Douglas to build the B-18s. But persistent effort eventually brought forth the B-17 and the Model D of 1941 was impressive. Its range and speed at operational altitude made it a great leap forward for the Air Force.

Following the Argentia Conference (August, 1941, Argentia, Newfoundland) with the British, almost the whole planned production of B-17s through March 1942 was designated for Philippine defense. Four Heavy Bombardment Groups, one Light Bombardment Group, and six Pursuit Groups were chalked into the plans. Impressive, but still less than Colonel George or the War Department considered necessary.

During the summer of 1941, steps were taken to improve and expand facilities on Luzon to handle the projected increase in Air Force organizations and equipment. Clark Field was the only field that could handle the heavier planes that would be coming to the far western Pacific.

General Clagett revised his staff organization in preparation for implementing these plans. Fighter planes and light bombers could be broken down and shipped to the Islands. Heavy bombers were another problem.

B-17s BLAZE A TRAIL ACROSS THE PACIFIC

In a highly secret operation, nine B-17s took off from Hickam Field on 5 September. The first leg of this long flight was to a recently improved field at Midway Island. The second leg was to new field facilities at Wake Island. These were stops on Pan American's China Clipper path to Manila.

Beyond Wake Island, there were no air fields suitable for the B-17s on that route. From Wake Island, the Flying Fortresses had to fly south across the Japanese network of South Pacific island bases to Port Moresby, New Guinea, a distance of 2078 miles. Eight of the planes passed high above the Japanese-held islands during darkness but one had to return to Wake for repairs and then flew the route during daylight. All nine landed safely at Clark Field on 12 September. One suffered damage after landing which could not be repaired in the limited facilities available in the Islands. Their arrival was a great morale booster to local servicemen.

Another booster arrived on 29 September in the form of 50 much improved P-40Es - more powerful engine, more armor protection, more firepower, more range with a droppable tank, better pilot visibility through a new canopy. The P-35s were now retired. One squadron had to continue flying P-40Bs. The Philippine Army Air Corps gladly took the planes being retired by the Americans.

On 16 October, the first of a new shipment of 26 B-17s took flight from Hamilton Field, part of the 19th Bomb Group. Because the air fields at Midway and Wake Islands could not handle large numbers of planes, these B-17s flew the route individually at their best rate.

Bad weather for some, having increased fuel consumption, forced three of the planes to land at the Australian base at Rabaul. The field at Vunakanau was not suited to handling such heavy aircraft. Some of the planes had to be dug out and towed out of soggy grassy areas they encountered while on the ground. One plane lost two engines between Port Moresby and Darwin and then lost two props when the plane broke through the thin

surface of the Aussie field after landing. After waiting for repairs, this plane joined the others at Clark field more than a month after leaving Hamilton Field. This was the last bomber to be delivered before the outbreak of war.

On 20 November, the 27th Bomb Group personnel, a new group of fighter pilots, and an Air Base Group walked down the gang plank of the troop transport **President Coolidge** at Manila Bay. Twenty four more crated P-40Es were landed on the docks the following week. The men of the 27th Bomb Squadron would wait for their A-24 Dive Bombers. They were aboard the **USA Transport Meigs** which was near the Phoenix Islands when war came and was redirected to Australia sailing across hostile seas, as were other ships sailing to Manila.

General Brereton had been personally selected to head MacArthur's air force by General Arnold. His selection had been made because he was perceived to have special skills in establishing logistics and setting up maintenance and training operations. He had crossed paths with some of the B-17 crews at Wake Island while in transit by Pan American Clipper on his way to Manila. Landing at Manila in late October, he delivered a copy of the latest revision of the Rainbow Five war plan to General MacArthur.

In November, General Brereton made a survey of northern Australia and New Guinea for the purpose of exploring a shorter path from Port Moresby directly to the Philippines. Upon arriving over Clark Field, he was outraged to see the bombers and fighters lined up on the aprons of the runway, neatly assembled for quick destruction by enemy planes strafing and bombing the base.

Not only did the planes need a coat of camouflage paint to cover their shiny bodies but dispersal revetments were needed. Unfortunately, most of the area beyond the runways could not support the B-17's weight and was unsuitable for taxiways to link revetments. Nichols Field had limited capability due to the unstable soil it had been constructed on.

Space at all the more primitive fields the fighters could operate from was limited and undeveloped for dispersal. Since they were all dirt strips, clouds of dust obstructed the vision of pilots trying to follow the first plane into the air. This also increased the need for maintenance.

In late November, the 5th Air Base group left Luzon and landed on the north coast of Mindanao. They then traveled up the mountains to a plain where the Del Monte Pineapple Plantation was located. Their mission was to build a large air field for B-17s and smaller supporting auxiliary fields for fighters on this largest pineapple plantation in the world. It was located approximately 2,000 feet above sea level, rarely experiencing the clouds, fogs, and rainy stretches of weather experienced on the coastal plain.

The ground was firmly packed and well drained, presenting a minimum of problems for this urgent project. The work was launched and within days the main field, though not with all facilities completed, was operational. This would be the base for the next group of B-17s since facilities on Luzon were already overcrowded. This brought the bases at Port Moresby and Darwin much closer to the whole Philippine operating area. A group of satellite auxiliary fields were also built to enable a wide dispersal of more P-40s soon to arrive.

MacArthur's staff and British staff from Singapore had been conferring and coordinating efforts in preparation for anticipated Japanese actions. The U. S. State Department had been holding talks with the Japanese Foreign

(Continued, page 6)

NOT READY TO START

Office since mid-summer. Their objective was to stall, if not avert, any hostile action by Japan in the Western Pacific as long as possible.

Japanese fighter and bomber groups on southern Formosa were practicing strategies for escorting bombers from Formosa to Clark Field and Manila and return, something the Americans considered impossible. It was deemed a high priority that Japan should quickly establish air superiority when war came.

When the oil embargo was declared and with its foreign assets now unavailable, the Japanese decided they must take action to move into southern Asia and the east Indies to secure needed resources. The Emperor wanted to give more time for a possible diplomatic solution but a decision by October 15 was set.

The proposal for a Pearl Harbor raid was a late addition to considerations. There was considerable division of thought on this strategy but it soon became a firm part of the planning. If successful it would give the southern invasion forces time to complete their task before the enemy could counter their moves. Almost all the high level Japanese planners acknowledged that if a quick victory over the U. S. was not achieved, Japan would be defeated in the end.

JAPAN STARTS THE TIMER

Negotiations in Washington were not going well for either party. On 28 November, MacArthur received a warning message from Washington. Negotiations had broken down. Hostile action was possible at any time. General Brereton promptly ordered all air units to full 24-hour alert. Admiral Hart began a daily air patrol schedule over the South China Sea. Warnings were passed on the British at Singapore. Unknown to all, the Japanese "Pearl Harbor" attack group had hoisted its anchors in northern Japan and sailed toward Hawaii on 26 November.

The single radar set in the Philippines at Iba Field on the coast of Luzon west of Clark Field was operating 24 hours a day. B-17s were on reconn patrols to the north as far as the international 3-mile border of Formosa. MacArthur was scrupulous in observing his orders not to create an "international incident." Plans were made for a B-17 strike on the Formosa Base of Takao and southern Formosa air fields as soon as hostilities commenced.

On 1 December a coded message, "Climb Mount Nii-taka-yama on December 8," ordered all Japanese commands to carry out the planned attacks on the U. S. and British bases. The first Japanese overflight of Clark Field occurred shortly, tracked by the Iba Field radar. No intercept order was given. Daily Japanese high altitude photo reconns over northern Malaya were ordered. There could be no turning back regardless of what was going on in Washington.

A PB4Y-4 from Manila Bay spotted a convoy of over 30 ships in Cam Ranh Bay on 1 December. Another Catalina found more than 50 ships in the Bay on 3 December including Destroyers and Cruisers. This intelligence was flashed to Allied commands around the world. The following day, another Catalina found the Bay empty.

After more sightings of Japanese bombers and aircraft over the coastal area north and west of Manila, MacArthur approved orders on 5 December for Far Eastern Air Force fighters to intercept and shoot down any intruders over the Philippines. A decision was made to send half of the B-17s down to Del Monte, well beyond Japanese

range from Formosa.

IT STARTED IN MALAYA

High in the skies over northern Malaya, British Hudsons spotted two convoys headed west in the Gulf of Siam toward the Isthmus of the Malaya Peninsula on 6 December. As night took over, a British Catalina was sent from Singapore to try to establish contact with the convoys. Early in the morning of 7 December Japanese records show that this plane was sighted by a float plane and fired upon—the first shots fired in the Pacific Theater, more than 16 hours before the Pearl Harbor attack. The Catalina was again intercepted by five planes which fired on it, this time sending it crashing into the sea. For unknown reasons, the Catalina pilot had not notified Singapore.

Just before midnight on 7 December in Singapore, Japanese troops began landing on the beaches just north of the northernmost British airfield in Malaya. More than two hours before the Japanese strike at Pearl Harbor, the first major battle of the Pacific war opened under the supporting fire from Japanese war ships in the Gulf of Siam.

Back at Iba Field crew chiefs were keeping the engines of six P-40s warmed and ready for takeoff. Just after midnight on 8 December, the pilots rushed to their planes and took off to locate a formation of planes that showed up on the single radar screen in the Philippines. The formation was headed for Manila Bay from over the sea to the west. The P-40s climbed above a low overcast. At 10,000 feet the P-40s met the vector course the unknown formation was flying on but could not find any formation of planes. Actually, the four Japanese bombers were flying a weather reconn several thousand feet above them in the dark of night and above a wispy layer of clouds. The radar could not define an altitude. The report of the intruding planes was flashed to other fighter squadrons which immediately went on "standby alert."

PEARL HARBOR ATTACKED

At 0228 in the morning the Navy radio station at Cavite began picking up signals of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Twelve minutes later the reports were confirmed. Immediately Admiral Hart notified all units under his command that "Japan started hostilities" and to proceed with operations accordingly. The location of the Japanese action was not given.

MacArthur was awakened with the news at 0355 and General Brereton at 0400. MacArthur immediately called his most senior officers for a meeting at 0500. Brereton ordered all pursuit squadrons to readiness for action and the B-17s at Clark Field to be loaded for bombing missions to southern Formosa. B-17s already scheduled for a reconn mission to Formosa were forced to wait for their needed cameras to arrive from Manila. One B-17 was dispatched without cameras to fly north to near Formosa to spot any formations headed for Luzon.

General Brereton sought approval at MacArthur's headquarters to dispatch bombing missions but was thwarted by General Sutherland because MacArthur was behind closed doors conferring with President Quezon.

The first Japanese attack on the Philippines took place, not on Luzon as expected, but far to the south at Davao on Mindanao Island. A Japanese aircraft carrier from Palau had launched nine Zeros and 13 bombers from just 100 miles east of Mindanao. Finding nothing attractive at Davao, the planes flew south to a Catalina operating base

(Continued, page 7)

NOT READY TO START

and tender (a converted WW I "four stacker") at Malagal.

The tender, on alert and ready for action, started moving when the Japanese bombers started their attack at 0600. The skipper skillfully escaped bomb damage but two of his Catalinas tied up nearby were riddled, breaking into flames as their crew members escaped to the beach. Two of the strafing Zeros and one bomber were riddled by ack ack from the tender and the bomber later crashed near one of its escort fleet ships, the first Japanese losses to American action in the Philippines.

At Del Monte Field on the north coast of Mindanao, word of the Pearl Harbor attack was received at 0630. As ordered, two B-17s were launched to circle the Island in opposite directions to search the coast.

The first Japanese bombers heading toward Luzon were 200 miles north of Clark and beyond the Iba Field radar range. They bombed a small auxiliary field in the north. At about 0800, the Iba Field radar picked up a formation over Lingayen Gulf headed for Clark. The B-17s were ordered to scramble for safety dispersal. By 0830 14 B-17s were in the air and 36 P-40s were on their way to set up an intercept screen 50 miles north of Clark.

When the formation to the north on the Iba Field radar did not appear at the intercept line, there was confusion—what had happened to them? Actually, they had turned east and attacked an Army barracks near Baguio.

An attack on Clark did not seem imminent at 1030. The B-17s that had been dispersed in the air returned to Clark as did several of the fighters which had been on patrol for some time and their fuel was low. At 1130 Iba Field showed another large formation approaching. More bogies soon appeared on the screen. The fighters at Clark were still being refueled and oxygen supplies refilled. Fighters were ordered into the air to protect Clark. Just as the fighters were taking to the air, a formation of 53 bombers appeared at over 20,000 feet and began dropping bombs. The P-40s could not climb to confront them.

Bombers appeared over Iba Field as well. After releasing their bombs, the bombers turned away, their escorting fighter planes dove down to make devastating strafing passes on the fields. U. S. fighters sought to engage them and the air was filled with planes and debris.

The rest of the morning was filled with new and changing assignments to the fighters. The Iba Field radar had been destroyed. Planes landing and taking off from the dirt fields created clouds of dust hampering those following. To further complicate things, radio transmissions failed at various points.

Some of the new P-40s had not been flown for the customary "slow time" for engine break-in. Several pilots experienced engine failure under the sudden strain of combat conditions. Some of the guns had not been cleaned of the preservative grease and fired. As enemy planes were encountered, jamming was a common frustration.

On the ground at Clark, anti-aircraft gunners frequently misidentified friendly aircraft seeking to sneak in because of damage or for refueling during lulls in the fighting. Friendly fire was encountered by the flying pilots on several occasions.

Some of the fighter pilots were forced to hit the silk and some never returned after being killed in the brawling combat or as their planes crashed due to fatal damage.

MALAYA

Far to the southwest, the British Hudson bombers and Brewster Buffalo fighters experienced similar mauling. In the darkness of early 8 December, as the Japanese started their first landing in northern Malaya, they were spotted by British Hudsons. In the following minutes, the Hudsons, avoiding contact with the cruisers and destroyers escorting the landing party, managed to cause major damage to the transports. Their aggressive action caused the Japanese to withdraw, the only time a naval landing force was repelled from the beach by airplanes alone.

Before sunrise, Singapore experienced its first bombing by planes based over 700 miles to the northeast in French Indo China. This was a major rebuke for having ignored the warnings about the capabilities of Japanese aircraft.

As the supremacy of the Japanese attackers became apparent, orders were issued to move remaining planes further south. But the enemy had captured the key foothold in northern Malaya at Kota Bharu. Destruction of vital equipment and supplies had not been carried out.

By the end of the day, Japanese landing parties supported by advance bombing and close air support, were well on their way to Singapore from the north.

THE SINKING OF THE PRINCE OF WALES

At Singapore, the British dispatched "Force Z", the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* with four Destroyers, in the evening of 8 December to seek out and engage elements of the Japanese invasion fleet. On 10 December, a flight of Japanese plane spotted the surface battle group. Reports were flashed and other bombers and torpedo armed planes converged on their target. No help would come since the ships were operating under radio silence and their location was unknown. In slightly more than two hours, the two British capital ships had disappeared below the waves. The Royal Navy now had no Asiatic Fleet.

The fate of Malaya and Singapore was sealed.

LUZON, THE NEXT DAY AND

Back on Luzon, 26 P-40s, 12 B-17s, and most of the other available supporting planes were lost. At the only base that could support the heavy bombers only a portion of one runway was serviceable. Most of the support facilities were burned and bombed out. The radar at Iba Field having been destroyed, there was little capability for advance warning of future raids or for interception information.

Weather on 9 December gave the Americans a break. There were no Japanese attacks on the Islands.

Over the following days, many acts of valor took place among the men flying from Luzon and Mindanao. But the Japanese were relentless and aggressive. Landings were made at several places on Luzon. Defending American planes flew missions but with more losses and little effect.

As the number of flyable planes declined and the condition of the remaining B-17s required more maintenance than could be performed in the Islands, MacArthur approved orders for sending the B-17s to northern Australia on 17 December. Most of the remaining Catalinas were also ordered south. The departing planes carried as many pilots and key personnel as possible. The Catalinas were bound for Java. A few of the Catalinas were kept near Manila for future evacuation of key personnel.

Also on the 17th, word had been received that the 27th Bomb Group A-24s would land at Brisbane on the 22nd. General Brereton decided it was time to save as many

(Continued, page 8)

NOT READY TO START

skilled pilots as possible. The 27th BG Commanding Officer, 22 pilots, and his Group personnel left Nichols field at night in two B-18s and a C-39 for Del Monte for fuel. There were several other fighter pilots and AAF maintenance officers on board. The following night they headed for Tarrakan, Borneo, for another fuel stop. They arrived in Darwin on 22 December and Brisbane on the 24th.

After more days of struggle with decidedly superior forces nine P-40s left Clark Field early in the morning of the 22nd amidst a frustrating ground fog and the usual clouds of dust to attack the Japanese landing operation at Lingayen. The straggling and broken formation reached the landing flotilla and made individual passes dropping bombs and strafing. They tangled with enemy fighters but most returned to Clark in spite of the uneven odds.

On the 23rd, mechanics at Batchelor had readied nine B-17s for a mission to bomb the Japanese landing at Davao. For this extreme range mission, the plans carried four 500-pound bombs and a bomb bay fuel tank. After bombing at dusk, they proceeded to Del Monte. Actually little damage was done at Davao. But the men at Del Monte were encouraged; as long as planes came up from Darwin there was hope for passage out of the Philippines.

Five of the planes were able to take off the following day directed to bomb the invasion fleet at Lingayen. The few bombs they dropped were a futile gesture but they returned safely to Del Monte. All the B-17s returned to Darwin in the next couple of days.

With additional landings on Luzon, MacArthur ordered a retreat of his forces to Bataan Peninsula on 24 December. The order to quickly withdraw to Bataan resulted in many valuable supplies being left to the approaching enemy. On this day, MacArthur also ordered General Brereton to Australia. After an abortive takeoff in one PBY the party of several officers finally left Luzon in the dark of night in another PBY. The remaining PBYs had been damaged beyond repair. No more left Luzon. Future evacuations would be by submarines.

In a little over two weeks time the battle in the Philippines was essentially decided. It would take the Japanese several weeks to overcome further resistance and to consolidate their gains but Japan's rising sun was still rising.

For the time, it was urgent that whatever U. S. forces could be organized and deployed engage in a delaying action to blunt the Japanese effort to conquer all the Southeast Asia and Southwestern Pacific islands.

The 27th Bomb Group returned to action in February. With their new A-24s, they flew to do battle in Java. On 24 March, 104 officers and enlisted men of the 27th were assigned to the 3rd Bombardment Group. Their C. O., Major Davies, became the C. O. of the 3rd. In early April, former members of the 27th would fly some of the B-25s just acquired by the 3rd on a dramatic mission back to the Philippines - the Royce Mission. (Report coming in September issue.)

During April and the first three days of May, a number of officers and enlisted men of the 27th were evacuated from the Philippines in five submarines. The rest fought as infantry until the fall of Bataan and Corregidor.

CALLING ALL S2 TYPES

In January, Jack DeTour received an e-mail from **Terry Popravak**. Terry is stationed with the Air Force in Seoul, Korea, and has been reading our newsletters and intends to send us notes that might be of interest to us about what the Air Force is doing these days..

Terry is "an S2 type" and would be interested in corresponding with any old S2 types in our group. He would like to share how they do things today and hear about what they did way back in the early 1940s.

If you would like to compare notes with Terry and encourage him, send an e-mail at:

terrylin105@yahoo.com

TREASURER'S REPORT

We are holding our own.

AMERIPRISE STATEMENTS FOR 2009

Beginning Value 17 January 2009 \$64,860.31

Plus interest for 1st Quarter \$455.42

Plus net additions and withdrawals \$832.09

Ending Value 17 April 2009 \$66,147.82

Orland Gage

RECOVERED PLANE CREWS MEMORIAL

B-25 crews training at Columbia, S. C., in the early 1940s, used Lake Murray for skip bombing and gunnery practice. Five B-25s crashed into the lake and 13 crew members were killed; some bodies were never recovered. Four of the planes were salvaged during the war.

In 2005 the fifth B-25 was recovered from 150 feet of water and is undergoing restoration at the Southern Museum for Flight in Birmingham, AL. It lost power in one engine and crashed on April 4, 1943. The plane is the second oldest complete B-25 known to exist.

In April 2009, an historical marker was dedicated at the place the raised plane was removed from the lake. A daughter of the bombardier on the recently recovered plane attended the ceremony which also honored all the men who died in training at Lake Murray.

(We reported on the recovery in a previous issue. We urge members of the 38th who trained at Columbia to send us stories, especially about things that happened at Lake Murray.)

DOOLITTLE TOKYO RAIDERS REUNION

Five of the nine surviving raiders on that dramatic and inspiring mission attended the 67th anniversary reunion in Columbia, S.C., 16 - 18 April. They have committed to holding reunions until only two are able to attend.

It was at the Columbia Army Air Base that the famous raiders volunteered for "a **dangerous mission**." Several thousand people attended the special events of the week.

(Our thanks for these two news items goes to Bill Smith, son of the 405th Squadron Bill Smith, who ditched at Tarrakan, Borneo, on 30 December, 1944, and who, with his crew, was rescued together with my crew, on 1 January, 1945.)

38th BG (M) NARRATIVE HISTORY DVD

Narrative accounts of 38th BG missions from the beginning in New Guinea until the end in August 1945 have been assembled on a DVD (3.1 gigs). Orland has attempted to provide some history for the younger generations who have been told very little about the war by their Dad or Grand Dad who were members of the 38th BG. It is dedicated to the heroes who failed to return and to those who became known as "the Greatest Generation."

It is available for a donation of \$15 plus \$3.00 S/H to the 38th BG Association. You can mail your check made out to the 38th Bomb Group Association now to Orland. It will also be available at the reunion.