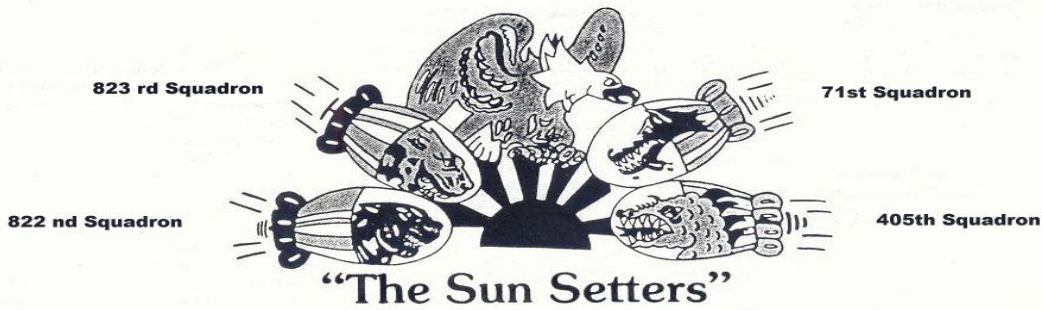


38th Bomb Group



**THE 38TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WW II)      SEPTEMBER, 2012**



**FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

**38th BG "LIMITED EDITION BOOK" HAS BEEN PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED:**

Yes - "Published" and "Distributed"- plus everyone, who ordered the book, should have had time to enjoy reading it and seeing what a good job Mike Kennedy did as our editor. We had 500 books printed and to date all but 60 have been sold. So if you want another copy, better order it now before they are all gone. Contact Orland Gage, at **337 Reservoir Drive, Lewiston, ID 83501**. His e-mail address is: [ogage@cablone.net](mailto:ogage@cablone.net).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We are only authorized to sell our "Limited Edition Book" to:

- (1) People who served in the 38th BG during WW II, plus their family members;
- (2) People who were members of the 38th BG Association, plus their family members.

**THANK YOU COMMITTEE:** Our 38th BG book committee (Chick Alford, Orland Gage, David Gunn, Al Kennedy and myself) deserve the credit for getting your book published. David secured a digital copy of the draft book from Larry Hickey. Al Kennedy was our point man and his son, Mike, did a super job editing the book. It was a long, hard and expensive battle - but we finally won. "Hip" "Hip" "Hoooooray"

**"THE CLOCK IS TICKING":** At our Seattle Reunion Business Meeting, we had a very important agenda item, which was - Whether to dissolve our WW II 38th Bomb Group Association or keep it going, as a non-profit organization, by allowing descendants of 38th BG members to vote and be elected to the three Association elected positions - P, VP, and S/T.

Burt Erickson made a motion to curtail the operation of our WW II 38th Bomb Group Association on 31 December 2012. The motion was seconded by Chick Alford. After a very long and heartfelt discussion on the proposal, the motion to curtail the operation of our WW II 38th Bomb Group Association on 31 December 2012, was approved with "YEAs" - and there was only one "NAY".

**FRIENDSHIP MEETING:** Future 38th BG Association meetings was also discussed and concluded that "Future 38 Bomb Group Meetings" would be "Friendship Meetings" and not "38 BG Association Reunions". One of our members volunteered to organize such a "Friendship Meeting" for this coming Fall; however, he was not successful. **So there will "not" be a "38 BG Friendship Meetings" this Fall.**

**IT "AINT" OVER -TILL IT'S OVER:** Although we will not have a "Reunion or "Friendship Meeting" this Fall, your currently elected 38th BG officers will continue to function through 31 December 2012.

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**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".

**OUR BOOK**  
**A FEW COPIES OF**  
**OUR BOOK ARE**  
**STILL AVAILABLE.**  
**Contact Orland for additional copies for yourself or as gifts for family**

Burt R. Erickson	HQ Squadron	TOTAL TO DATE	
Robert Sherrard	71st Squadron	Headquarters	23
Raymond Slaick	71st Squadron	69 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	3
George C. Hammack, Jr.	405th Squadron	70 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	63
Roy Evans	822nd Squadron	71 <sup>st</sup> Squadron	185
Donald Motsinger	822nd Squadron	89 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	1
Michael G. Alex	823rd Squadron	405 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	219
		822 <sup>nd</sup> Squadron	116
		823 <sup>rd</sup> Squadron	115
		Honorary	1
		Unit unknown	2

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**FROM OUR PRESIDENT** (Continued from page 1)

**38<sup>th</sup> BG WEBSITE:** Tom Behrens has enhanced our website, which will continue to perpetuate our legacy long after our 38 BG Association stops operating on 31 December 2012. Tom will continue to monitor the website, which has been financed to year 2016. If you have any questions about the website, or would like to volunteer to help with improving the website, please contact Tom Behrens at: [tom@tombehrensusa.com](mailto:tom@tombehrensusa.com) Also, if you have any 38th Bomb Group audio recordings or videos, please to send them to Tom. **Check out our website. You will like it.** [www.sunsetters38bg.com](http://www.sunsetters38bg.com)

**In closing, let us all remember to say a prayer for our troops who are currently in harm's way fighting for this great country of ours. May they return home safely.**

*Jack DeTour*

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK— David Gunn**

It was 2004 at our Reunion in St. Louis, that I became the new editor of **The Sun Setters**. I had a desire to take all the stories that previous editors had placed in the newsletter and put them in some kind of a chronological order and republish them as a history of the 38<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group because Larry Hickey was making little if any progress on **The Saga of the Sun Setters** and there was little hope that such a history would be published in our life time. The January 2005 issue became the first in that proposed history series.

Fortunately, Al Kennedy had visited Hickey in the previous year and had collected copies of all the items our members had delivered to Hickey from which the book was "being written" and collected all the photographs that Hickey had received from our members for use in the book. At the time of the Reunion, he had sorted all the pictures into collections as donated and was soon to be able to return them to the original donors. The stories existed in collections of letters, diaries, and on sets of pages as they had been submitted. Al was having his staff retype these stories and records and wanted to process them onto Compact Disks so that they could be searched and read on a computer. Copies of these CDs and the more than 5000 photographs were eventually made available to all members of the Association at our 2005 reunion in Mesa.

Before the May 2005 issue of the newsletter was put together, Al made a preliminary set of these CDs available to me and I was able to put together the following newsletters using this material. Each year of the newsletter covered a year in the life of the 38<sup>th</sup> from its origination until the war ended and the 38<sup>th</sup> was deactivated. And the historical series was completed in 2009. Of course, not all the stories appeared in the newsletters. Other stories were forwarded to me, some of which appeared in the newsletter, particularly in the 2010 and subsequent issues.

Al's work and generosity made the task easier and the history better. I could not have written those four years of history without the product of Al's effort.

In October of 2009, I was tasked at the Reunion to visit Hickey and try to secure a firm date for the completed book. Three visits to Boulder in succeeding months failed to secure such a firm date but I was able to get a digital copy of "the book" as it existed. It was supposedly undergoing final editing for publication at some future date.

Again, Al went to work. He arranged that his son, Michael, would bring the digital copy into final form for publication. Hickey was convinced that we were actually using his material to publish a book and started legal action to prevent that. Over the following year, Al persisted in his effort and, with the help of Theo Allison, a Washington attorney, was able to reach an agreement so that we could publish the book which finally became available earlier this year..

It is personally rewarding to me that the newsletters could present a brief chronological history of our group while a substantial number of our veterans were still living. Many men and relatives, some relatives of our departed members, have expressed their appreciation for having even the brief and imperfect history. It is also rewarding to have been involved in finally bringing the larger history in a formal book to fruition even though

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

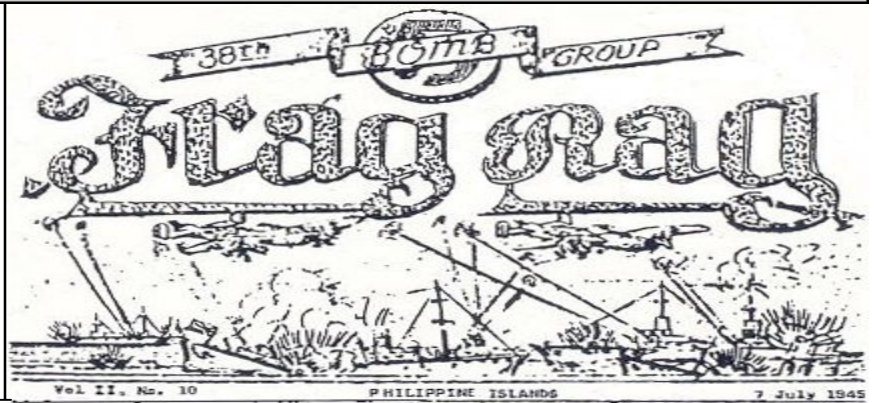
We also reserve the right to alter names or other details that might cause embarrassment to individuals or family members.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### AMERIPRISE STATEMENT

Beginning Value, 20 April, 2012	\$37,095.53
Additions	\$8,839.00
Withdrawals	<3,490.43
Plus Interest	0.97
Ending Value, 19 July, 2012	\$42,445.01

Plus \$389.00 in my credit union. This is for bills less than \$100.00.



## MUSINGS AND ADVENTURES OF A STRAFER PILOT

Over the recent months, I have exchanged e-mails with Nini Eckels, daughter of Capt. Richard Wagner Eckels (Eck), who flew with the 405<sup>th</sup> squadron from March of 1945 until after the end of the war.

Richard Eckels joined the 38th at Lingayen, flying his first mission as a Green Dragon on March 12, 1945. On 22 April, he was among the 405th planes that received a lot of flack as they passed over a bridge approaching Taichu which nearly downed the 405th leader, Lt. Silver. On another bridge target on the 17th, his plane was in the flight that hit the bridge at Koryu and Lt. Boyce was shot down.

Eckels was one of those who flew the last two missions to Kyushu after "THE BOMB" in early August.

Richard was among a few who did not get to go home after the end of the war. Nini reported to me that her Dad was among a small group of Air Force officers, including J. Ryan and Walter (Red) Weddle (sp. ?) assigned at the end of the war to help reestablish the Philippine Air Force. Richard and "Red" were military buddies throughout most of his time in the Air Force.

Eckels became a Captain by the time he returned home.

Nini describes her Father as, "one tall, thin, Green Dragon pilot that made the rest of his way as an oil and gas land man. He loved the Colorado mountains, and was true blue to the end." He stayed in the reserves until the early 60s. During that time, he formed Eckels Energy in the Denver area, married and raised a family. He left his family an amazing collection of mementoes from his various exploits.

Copies of much of his collection of his days with the 38<sup>th</sup> were given to Larry Hickey for use in writing the "Saga of the Sun Setters." Unfortunately, none of it seems to have found its way into the book, to the disappointment of Nini and her twin brother, Richard, who now runs the family business.

Captain Eckels had a brother, Robert (Bob), who also served as a pilot of a B-26. But he was in Europe. He was shot down over the sea, plucked out of the water by Germans and held POW for 2 years. He was released and returned home shortly after the Germans surrendered, much to the family's joy, while Richard was still at Lingayen with the 38<sup>th</sup>.

Nini's Dad remained in the reserves into the 1960s. Nini relates a conversation with him at that time. "He had had a huge heart attack. We were sitting outside of the rehab building taking a break looking at a robin's egg blue sky. It was unusually warm

for late November. We heard from a distance planes coming towards us from the east. ... Turns out three of the Blue Angels were making a pass right over us. I thought my Dad was enjoying the brief show... until he said 'Those guys don't know how to fly, their planes are all automated. If they had to fly a B-25 they couldn't even hold on to it.' When I asked 'what could you do in your plane that they couldn't?' He simply replied, 'Mow a lawn.' "

Among the things Nini sent me was a copy of a short note her Dad had sent home after hearing of his brother's release from the German POW camp. It is written on a Green Dragon letterhead which I was not aware of (pictured below).



The Green Dragons

## FRIENDSHIP MEETINGS

As encouraged by resolution at the final Reunion in Seattle a year ago, feel free to organize a Friendship Meeting with your 38th Bomb Group FRIENDS. Such meetings can be for your friends in an area that you may define. The latest roster by Squadron is included in this mailing. Scan the zip codes to select an area that suits your desires.

If you have such meetings, inform Tom Behrens so he can put a notice on our web sight. Please inform the Editor of such meetings both before and after and with the news of what happened. We may be able to send out news notes from time to time for informing our mailing list. This goes for even any two or more members getting together. At the very least, send any news to Tom for the web sight. News of the passing of any of our old time friends should also be submitted.

## A COUSIN MOURNED

### Harm's Way

When I went digging on the net for clues about my cousin's death in World War II I learned he was a member of the 38<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group – that used B-25s in skip-bombing and strafing modes, supporting our advance in Papua, New Britain and the Philippines, incurring heavy casualties. It suffered, too, in the catastrophe of April 16, 1944 – ‘Black Sunday,’ it was called – when thirty-seven planes were lost to weather those who planned did not foresee.

I read the S-2 officer's report (it's now declassified) on how John's plane was lost: five Mitchells hit Siasi, in the Sulu Archipelago (a sixth turned back to Morotai for ‘failure of a fuel transfer gauge.’) The passes made were twenty-two; the minutes spent on target, thirty-five; the flak encountered, ‘light’ – enough to down the ship in which John Ditto flew, and end the lives of all its valiant crew.

–James M. Moose

## The Sun Setters, an Illustrated History

A project taking twenty six years produced a ten-pound book of facts and photographs that tell the story of the 38<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, subtitled, “from Australia to Japan.”

The name they gave themselves implies they were a scourge of Dai Nippon – the Empire of the Rising Sun – a boast that history will validate.

Here listed are their planes – B-25s – the pilots and the crews, both air and ground, with missions flown and casualties, and anecdotes illumining the feats of those who served, the whole a celebration of the Group's accomplishments and homage to the living and the dead.

The book's completion was a triumph for the men who pushed to have it done, a tragedy, as well: subscribers who financed the work were veterans who yearned for such a book, but most were dead before it came to pass.

–James M. Moose

A few weeks ago I received an e-mail from a man searching for information about his cousin who flew with the 38th in the 405th Squadron. Jim's cousin was John Ditto, Captain Vick's copilot that day at Siasi. Jim, a junior watch and division officer on the USS Oak Hill (LSD-7), visited Morotai in early January, 1945, on the way to the landing at Lingayen. He bought one of our books I had. Jim then sent me these items of free verse, giving permission to use them.

## NIGHT FLIGHT

I, too, have slipped the surly bonds of earth,”  
and pierced the skies on darkened, unseen wings;  
Starward I've climbed and joined the birth  
of moonlit clouds—and done a thousand things  
You have never dreamed of—dived and spiraled and  
glided—high in the darkened silence.  
Soaring there, I've chased the distant beams along,  
And flung my thund'ring craft through open seas of air.  
Up, up the corridors of space, I've reached  
The unreal exhilarating crests  
Where few have flown with easy grace.

And while with singing, praying heart I've trod  
The high and endless halls of heaven,  
Felt on my shoulder the reassuring hand of God.

David J. Gunn

More than 30 years ago, I came across John G. Magee, Jr.'s verse High Flight, familiar to most people. My heart once more took flight as I experienced a kinship of spirit in the thrill of flight. During my all too short years of flying I especially enjoyed flying at night. In just a few minutes and with misty eyes, my words flowed onto paper with the rhythm of John Magee. The paper was “lost in my files” for nearly 20 years until I was writing my memoirs for my family. I trust that none will be offended that I have borrowed significantly from his thoughts nor that I have desecrated the art from his heart. I've written no other verse.

## From the Editor's Desk (Continued from page 2)

the newsletters and the book are imperfect records. But neither could have come about without Al's very significant effort, and I thank him for all he did to make it possible.

Orland Gage has been very helpful in arranging for the printing and distribution of the newsletters. He and Jack DeTour expended considerable time in searching the records of those who had ordered books from Hickey and confirming addresses to provide Al with the labels for shipping the book.

General MacArthur, in a speech at the end of his career, said that, “Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.” I loved flying – yes, even combat flying. I alter MacArthur's words to fit my feelings: “Old pilots don't die; they just fly away.” Leonardo de Vinci four hundred years ago said, **“For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned upward for there you have been and there you will long to return.”**

**ABOUT KAY:** Many of you have sent messages of encouragement and good wishes for Kay since her stroke 13 months ago. We thank all of you and wish for time to respond to all. The stroke left her with impaired memory—vascular dementia. She is often confused about where we are and who I am. Physically, she has no impairment. She dresses herself, helps with the housework and meals.

We continue to go to our local Applebee's on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. We have a good time together. They have been wonderful to us. In June we flew to Reno for Father's Day and our middle daughter's birthday. We also saw our month-old third great grandchild. Kay took the trip very well. I am her caregiver and doing well.