



38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII)

MAY 1990

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



J. D. Johnson

As the months pass and we approach our Reunion in Dayton in September, it is always sad to learn of members who were with us at the Nashville Reunion but who will not be with us in Dayton. We have learned

that Clifford Sutherland of Fort Worth, Texas, Squadron Representative for the 822nd Bomb Squadron passed away in December. Cliff served as a Bombardier with the 822nd after joining the Air Force in 1943. His contributions to the success of the Newsletter and the 822nd column will be sorely missed.

With the coming of our "Reunion '90" at Dayton, all members should give some thought to the Marine Corps slogan "A Few Good Men" — men who are willing to serve as officers in our own 38th Bomb Group Association. We also need some input regarding our Reunion '92 as to time and location. We have a great organization and just because we are a little older than we were in the 40's doesn't mean that we've lost the spirit or the pride that we've always had in our Combat Outfit. Working together we accomplished great things and still can if each member puts something into it.

Some of you recently received a Post Card showing a painting of "Simpson Harbor" by artist Michael P. Hagel of Hailstone Graphics, Arlington Heights, IL. The painting is of the raid by B-25s of the 5th Air Force on Simpson Harbor, Rabaul, New Britain, November 2, 1943. Mr. Hagel's father served as a radio operator-gunner with the 42nd Bomb Group, 13th Air Force. and has graciously donated a print of his painting to the 38th Bomb Group Association. It is being framed and will be on display at our Dayton Reunion. On behalf of all 38th BG members, we sincerely thank Mike Hagel for this gift and will display it at all future reunions.

**SEE YOU IN DAYTON
AT REUNION '90
SEPTEMBER 13-16, 1990!**

REUNION '90 DAYTON, OHIO SEPTEMBER 13-16, 1990

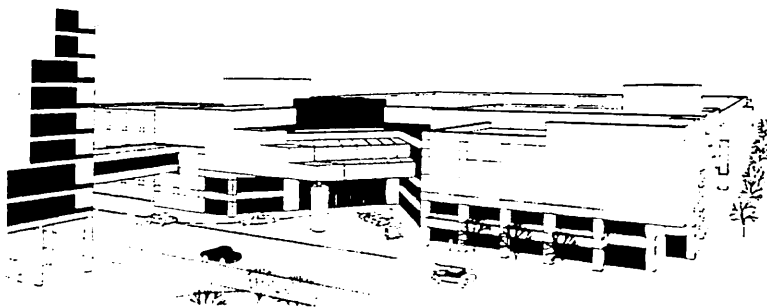
Planning for Reunion '90 continues apace as Bob Lamb and committee put the pieces in place for "the finest 38th BG session yet", and now urge the members to begin planning their attendance early.

GENE HUSTON AND HIS "FRIDAY NIGHTERS"



will provide the dance music at the banquet Saturday night. His 14-piece orchestra specializes in "Big Band" music from the 30's and 40's, but also boasts an excellent repertory of contemporary selections. Any special favorites? — let the Reunion Committee know in advance and Gene promises to do his best to fulfill your request.

THE DAYTON CONVENTION CENTER



setting for the Biennial Banquet is adjacent to Stouffer's Hotel and is connected thereto by covered walkway. The Dayton Convention Center has just undergone a multi-million dollar renovation to assure the finest in food and service, and "Fine Host" will utilize new on-site food preparation facilities to cater the event.

Negotiations are underway for the 823rd Squadron painting "Alcohol Busters of Formosa" to be on exhibit at the Air Force Museum, along with the 822nd's "Ordeal at Ormoc Bay". "Alcohol Busters" was accorded special recognition by its acceptance last July by the Art Museum Branch, U.S. Air Force, and also by the Aerospace Education Foundation's selection for July of its 1990 Calendar.

Lamb urges members to mail registration forms as early as possible to afford an attendance figure upon which to base final plans. It is also recommended hotel reservations be mailed early to assure your preferred accomodations, although all comers will certainly be served.

YOUR ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

President J. D. (Jack) Johnson
807 Grand Avenue, Billings, MT 59102
Vice President Robert L. Hunter
2811 Locust Drive, Springfield, OH 45505
Secretary/Treasurer A. Allen Barbour
20706 Haynes Street, Canoga Park, CA 91306
71st Sqdn. Rep Charles M. Benbow
P.O. Box 445, Oak Ridge, NC 27310
405th Sqdn. Rep C.G. (Gerry) Carpenter
16680 TR 190, Mt. Blanchard, OH 45867
822nd Sqdn. Rep Clifford R. Sutherland
3413 Wren Avenue, Ft. Worth, TX 76133
823rd Sqdn. Rep Albert C. West
1628 Adams, Ottawa, IL 61350
Hdq. Rep Thomas D. Kirby
P.O. Box 26, Homet, CA 92343
Editor "The Sun Setters" Lew Pavel
P.O. Box 915204, Longwood, FL 32791

"IN EVER-HONORED MEMORY"

Since the publication of the January 1990 newsletter, six veterans of the 38th Bomb Group have gone to their final resting place:
Charles Benbow (71st)
Robert P. Hill, Jr. (405th)
Ken Houston (405th)
Ray Silber (405th)
Clifford R. Sutherland (822nd)
Fred C. Ulmer (71st)

Rest In Peace, Brothers

On behalf of all of their friends in the Association, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the widows and families of our departed comrades.

We thank those who have taken the time to notify us of the death of a 38th Bomb Group Veteran, affording us an opportunity to honor him with this final tribute. Names for this memorial column should be forwarded to our Secretary, Allen Barbour, who administers these records.

ADDITIONAL LIFE MEMBERS

The Association gained eight new Life Members since the January listing:

Jim Brady (823rd)
Charlie Burton (822nd)
Homer Cotham (823rd)
Bob Hunter (823rd)
"Pop" Kientle (823rd)
Joe McConnell (823rd)
F.A. Mowry (405th)
Russ Sigsworth (823rd)

Here is the breakdown by squadron of the total number of members who have contributed to the Life Membership Fund:

Hdqtr	5	822nd	18
71st	18	823rd	26
405th	45	TOTAL	112

These tax-deductible \$100 donations are invested in insured bank CDs and only the interest from these investments is used to finance Association operations. Members wishing to put the hassle of dues paying behind them should contact Secretary/Treasurer Al Barbour for particulars.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
September 13-16, 1990
REUNION '90
Dayton, Ohio

"BLACK SUNDAY"

(Minimally edited extract from diary of Alfred B. Colwell, Jr., Nav/Bomb, provided by his sister, Mrs. A.E. Seitz, Houston, TX, via Lawton Howell, 823rd)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"April 16 — Mission #48 — Hollandia. This was one day we won't soon forget. On the way to the target I was nervous as a cat and expected all Hell to break loose, but we reached Hollandia, dropped the bombs and had no trouble. Still shaky, I decided I'd been flying too much so started reading a magazine.

"About halfway back Co-pilot Jackowski tapped me on the shoulder and pointed ahead — south, east and west all socked in solid with black clouds, rain and wind. We had 2 hours gas left and it was 1½ hours home. The whole formation kept flying hoping for a hole somewhere ahead but soon we began to circle. The only clear spot was north but that was all Jap territory as was the area over which we were circling.

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

"The whole area was full of planes — B-24s, B-25s, A-20s and P-38s. We got down to 50 feet above the coast and followed it toward Saidor. I directed Polecat (Pilot Ed. P. Poletrack) to the right and left along the coast. He and Jack were both flying, dodging planes. Once our airspeed went down to 120 — looked like we'd have to ditch any minute. Now and then we'd lose sight of the coast and weave back and forth along our course to pick it up again.

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

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

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

"About this time we saw a B-25 and a P-38 coming in for landings from opposite directions. Neither probably ever saw the other — they crashed head on in the middle of the strip and exploded. Somehow one man got out of the 25 okay; another was dragged out badly burned (died later); the others were cremated.

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

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

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

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

"Several other planes of all types cracked up, but no one else was killed. One of our crews crashed on the coast about 20 miles from Saidor. A couple Aussies picked them up in a barge and brought them in next morning. Our plane was the only one out of the four from our squadron that was still in flying condition. We loaded all four crews in our ship and came back to Nadzab about noon.

"The other planes from our squadron managed to make it to Cape Gloucester (one smashing up) but we didn't lose a single man through the whole mess.

"They'll probably never let us know actually how many planes were lost."

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Having completed mission requirements, I flew with scratch crews for several days (as did everyone else not on missions) kicking out food, clothing, blankets, medical supplies everywhere we even suspected wreckage or downed crews in the dense jungle, and incorporated official errands from Nadzab to Saidor, Finschafen and Gusap, including service on a funeral detail for one of the casualties. In a future issue we will have a detailed account of this tragic event and its losses, supported by extracts from "Army Air Forces in World War II".)

PLAN NOW!!

September 13-16, 1990
38th Bomb Group Association
(WW II)
REUNION '90
DAYTON, OHIO

EDITOR'S NOTES

Dick Fields' letter re importance of personal memories (January column) generated enough material that we will have to hold some for future issues. Thanks! — but keep it coming — and PLEASE, name, address and squadron on anything you send. Of course, stories based on memory do stimulate comments — like those re Mat Gac's history. We'll get the facts right yet, but it has been said, "History is just a series of interesting fables agreed upon by the majority."

Al West (823rd) has checked reproduction quality of pictures sent us and has upgraded the contrast on several to usable quality. "Sunsetters" will appreciate your sending SWPA photos/snaps regardless of quality and we'll ask Al what he can do about them. Pictures will, of course, be returned.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

An association lives and dies by its membership. We all need to work at getting out the word there is a 38th BG Association — like John Wolf does.

Jack Johnson received a letter from Elmo G. Knutson, Sun City, AZ, which said in part: "A friend of mine from our days at the Greenville Army Air Base had a friend, John W. Wolf, visiting him. He knew we had both been in the 38th Bomb Group so he had us to dinner with our wives. I learned from John that there was a 38th BG Association. I would like to be associated with the Group and John gave me your address." See? It's easy — just talk it up!

THE B-25 MISSION THAT SHORTENED THE WAR

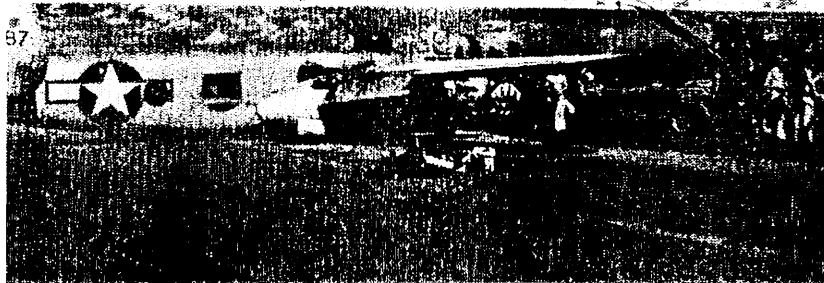
Allen Barbour, 823rd

The following report is not intended to downgrade the role of the Enola Gay in hastening the war's end in the Pacific. Its dropping of the BIG one was undeniably important, BUT the world should know of an unheralded B-25 mission that must have had a significant impact on the Japanese morale, spirit and their will to continue the fight. That mission surely deserves a share of the credit for shortening the Pacific conflict. While I cannot remember all the details, perhaps some of the other players can come forth with their accounts.

The mission was executed early in '45 — probably March — when the 38th GB was operating from its Lingayen airstrip. Japanese troops had been pretty well driven off Luzon and we were putting more strikes into Formosa to neutralize airdromes, troop concentrations, production and distribution networks.

Our target that day was a troop encampment a few miles inland about half-way up Formosa's west coast. I was co-pilot for Bob Campbell, leading 823rd's B-25s in the rear element. Identity of the lead squadron escapes me. We had supported enough of the Army's mop-up operations to learn these missions could be rough unless the enemy was caught by surprise, and therefore radio silence was essential.

We took off that fateful morning and headed north along Luzon's west coast and open water between the Philippines and Formosa. At Formosa's southern tip, we followed the



Anyone know who's plane this is?

west coast to the point where penetration to the target area was to begin. To our surprise and chagrin, the lead element continued northward.

Our navigator identified the river we were to follow and, unable to overtake the lead aircraft, bound by radio silence, and in imminent danger of having to abort this vital strike, Campbell made the type of horseback decision reflecting the individual initiative for which American military leaders are noted — he elected to hit the target with the 6 B-25s under his control. "That's all we need," he said as he banked left in a slow 270-degree turn, rolling out to lead the squadron due east along the river marking our overland route. Minutes later the navigator identified a bend in the river as our landmark for the target run, and signaled a turn north. Campbell banked left to attack heading as the other aircraft moved into line-abreast positions. Advancing throttles to the firewall, we picked up speed as we dived, rounded out at treetop level, and dropped even lower over open fields.

We toggled the bomb bay doors open and charged the machine guns, producing reassuring whams from the 8 nose and 4 side guns. On we sped, rising over trees and electric wires in our path. We reached the forest and the navigator pinpointed the target clearing directly ahead. Campbell depressed his gun trigger, raking the area with an awesome stream of 50-caliber rounds, slowing the aircraft with each burst and filling the cockpit with the smell of cordite. The other B-25s followed suit as we toggled out our cargos of parafrags. It was an exhilarating moment as we sped over the target, flushed with success in achieving complete surprise.

Then an abrupt change in scenario. A line of aircraft was bearing down on us head-on, filling the air with tracers and hot lead, fragmentation bombs exploding behind them. We were looking directly at the business end of a B-25 strafing attack! An instant of wild evasive maneuvering as we sought to avoid collision with the oncoming B-25s but at a combined closing speed of 600 mph, it was over almost in an instant — the other strafers whipped over, under, around, through our group and were gone.

Miraculously, we suffered no casualties. Once safely over the water, we climbed to 5,000 feet, circled once to allow stragglers to catch up, and reassembled for the long flight home, relieved to note all of the lead squadron were in formation ahead.

As we surmised, the mission debriefing revealed the lead squadron had belatedly

recognized its navigational error and had turned inland further north to make its target run north to south. It could have been disastrous for us and certainly dramatized the inherent dangers of exercising individual initiative without communication. However, the favorable outcome must have absolutely devastated the enemy — picture the disheveled Japanese CO surveying the results of our strike, lamenting to his Exec, "How can honorable Nipponese possibly hope to defeat enemy which can execute a coordinated attack like that?"

"17-MILE" CIVILIZED?

Recently "The Sun Setters" received a letter from Mrs. G.N. (Joy) Kinney of West Des Moines, IA, re her uncle, Dale Wilson, who joined the 823rd in 9/43, and was shot down off Cape Boram (Jack Wieland's plane?) on his 13th mission 11/27/43. Subsequently his parents heard from three different people on the west coast who had copied messages from Radio Tokyo that named Dale and his crew as POWs at Wewak, and gave his parents' names and hometown which aroused false hopes for his survival. Joy has been searching for someone who knew Dale in New Guinea and remarked upon going through his letters "I was surprised to see he'd typed most of them! It was more civilized than I thought." I was able to correct some of Joy's impressions of living conditions — unfloored tents, canvas cots, mosquito netting, cold showers in an unroofed enclosure and a hole in the ground with a rough board seat in a canvas-roofed enclosure; food, supplied by Australia, too often consisted of bully beef, dehydrated potatoes and dehydrated cabbage (even on flying days contributing much to the actual physical distress of crew members). In a subsequent letter Joy remarked "I really appreciate the information about living conditions. My comment about it being 'more civilized' than I thought was due to my naivete more than anything. Your generation would be appalled at how little we know about the war, the conditions and experiences you've been through, and how we take our way-of-life for granted, not really realizing what your generation had to pay for it."

Joy, whose husband served in Viet Nam, has ordered a copy of "Saga of the Sun Setters", but would appreciate any specific information she can gather about Dale and his relatively short, tragic career in the 38th.

Headquarters Squadron

Tom Kirby
Representative



As an addendum to Mat Gac's outstanding historical piece in the January "Sun Setters", Gil Smith (70th Bomb Squadron) wrote that the 69th and 70th Bomb Squadrons actually headed for the South Pacific in B26s, not B25s.

Four of their planes arrived in Hawaii in time to take part in the Battle of Midway. Two were shot down and the other two were badly damaged. Although the latter two made it back to Midway, they crash-landed and never flew again.

The rest of the B26s were loaded with bombs and placed on alert at various air fields in Hawaii in case the Japanese came on past Midway. When that did not materialize, the 70th continued on to the Fiji Islands and the 69th went to New Caledonia, their main bases until they moved to Guadalcanal in mid '43. Gil returned to the States in October '43.

71st Squadron

Charles M. Benbow (deceased)
Representative



Rodman H. Williams, Albany, GA, wrote challenging the Editor's Note re the 75MM cannon in Mat Gac's "Early History of the 38th BG":

"My records and memory indicate the 822nd and 823rd Squadrons arrived in the area with B25G's with factory installed 75MM cannon about August, 1943. We used the cannon until about February, 1944, when the 75 was replaced with two more 50 calibre machine guns and the model number changed to B25G-1.

"Some frame and skin had to be beefed up and the weight restricted our range. On individual targets like barges, the cannon wasn't too effective (inaccuracy due to pilot aim). I recall one incident where a projectile came loose from the casing, stuck in the barrel, and black powder spilled in the navigator's compartment — smoking became very bad for the health!!!

"On one mission covering Marines on Gloucester, New Britain, I believe we went in 9 abreast on a long, flat, straight run. We started firing well before crossing the beach and I got off 13 75MM rounds. The cannoneer was right busy! Learned later we wreaked much havoc."

405th Squadron

Gerry Carpenter
Representative



Lee Grover, Santa Maria, CA, commented on Mat Gac's history of the 38th to clarify a few points:

"The 38th Bomb Group was ordered to Australia by mistake. It was the 38th Air Base Group that was expected and needed, not the ground personnel of a Bomb Group. The ground crews were stationed in Adelaide trying to do the job of an Air Base Group until they were moved to Brisbane and then to

Charters Towers to join the new flight crews. The flight crews were taken from several organizations including the soon-to-be B-26 transition unit at Tampa Bay. The 69th and 70th were B26 units at the time of the Midway battle, and not B25 units until later.

"The first real strafing attacks were on the Lae convoy in January, 1943. The 3rd Group had the 8 forward firing 50 calibre gun configuration. The 38th had not as yet been converted and were led into the low level bombing runs by Australian Beaufighters.

"There were no top turrets swinging automatically to a frontal attack mode until arrival of the B25J models in 1944. The 1942-43 aircraft were B25C and Ds."



822nd Squadron

Clifford Sutherland (deceased)
Representative

Bill McKinstry, who wrote of the Okinawa typhoons (9/89 issue), had supplied snapshots at that time which only now are reproducible thanks to Al West's magical upgrading in contrast. Bill's tent (left) was reinforced after the first storm with burned out 50 calibre gun barrels for stakes and survived typhoon #2 in fine fashion.



Tent mates (lower, L-R) Colt Auter, Ralph Meder, Neil Barnhart, and McKinstry (the only one in membership roster — anyone know where the others are?)



Note remnant of mess hall at left.

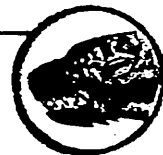
"THE 25's ON TV"

Rodman H. Williams (71st and 822nd) informed "The Sun Setters" that on TV — Discovery Channel 31 (in his area, Albany, GA), he watched "Wings — The Mitchell B-25" — development, testing, production, combat (N. Africa, Europe, SWPA), and modification. He reported it to be very interesting and recommends

members check their public television schedule regularly or contact their local station to determine when it will be shown in their area.

823rd Squadron

Al West
Representative



Al West notes, "I got a kick out of the guys telling how long it took to get into combat. Can anyone beat my time? I left San Francisco 2/3/45, was shot down at Formosa (ditched) 3/2/45 — total, 27 days." ("Sun Setters" wants to know — is that a record? — Ed.)

THE STORY OF "GRUMPY"

— John L. Trease

In selecting strikes to be painted for "Saga of the Sun Setters", Larry Hickey opted for one of the missions against alcohol plants in Formosa and called me for information on "Grumpy", Fred Pavaglio's plane on the strikes. That brought back vivid memories of the Borneo strikes from Palawan in support of the 13th AF.

I had been sent down by Joe Wehand to handle Operations for Jack Johnson, CO of the 823rd. The Palawan operation of preinvasion pounding of Balikpapan was run mostly by the 13th, and because of poor communications, transportation, supplies and exhausting missions (10:30 hours average), it seemed like a Chinese fire drill.

With Johnson ordered back to Lingayen, I had to get a replacement for the next day's strike. Clarence Kowalski, who was nearing the end of his tour, was one of the flight leaders who volunteered. The next day "Grumpy" and crew went down in a bomb blast from B-24s over the target at the same time. Kowalski almost made it, ditching near Royal Australian Navy ships which rescued the two rear crewmen. (At the Colorado Springs reunion years later I learned James K. Hailey had flown on Kowalski's wing and witnessed the entire episode.)

Back at Lingayen I was assigned another plane and had the same emblem painted on "Grumpy II". It was still flying when I left Okinawa — does anyone know what happened to her?

SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY

Lawton Howell (823rd), 133 Ole Hickory Trail, Carrollton, GA, informs us that the VA has denied his claim based on hearing loss and severe ringing in both ears on three occasions.

The VA apparently reacts to hearing claims in an inconsistent manner, some allowing, others denying. Ye olde Ed filed in Kansas City in '58 upon recommendation of a recognized specialist and was rejected because he "had not been treated for a hearing disorder in the service" — despite written attestation that such complaints often manifest themselves years after the exposure.

Two members have loaned Howell their claim records, but he feels additional documentation could strengthen his "in line of duty" claim and would appreciate hearing from anyone receiving disability pay for either complaint.