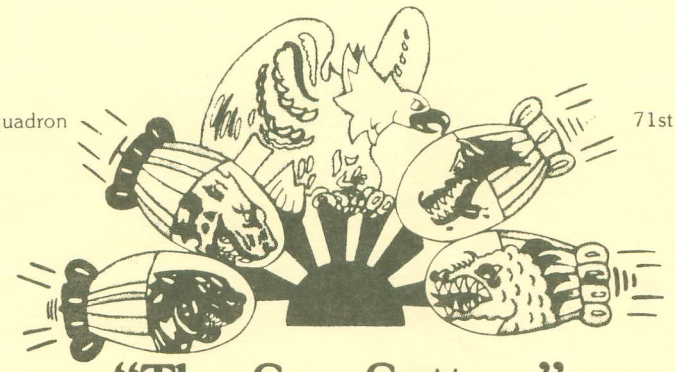
Group

823rd Squadron

71st Squadron

405th Squadron

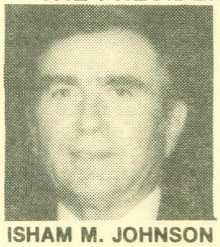
822nd Squadron



"The Sun Setters"

38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII) JANUARY 1991

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



ISHAM M. JOHNSON

In Dayton, I kept thinking "It doesn't get any better than this." Our thanks go to Jack Johnson and all his officers, plus a special note of appreciation to Bob Lamb and his crew for putting on a Class Act - Model program.

As we move toward San Antonio in '92, let me say I am proud to be your President and Reunion Chairman. My congratulations go to all the other officers who accepted their nominations and were elected to serve for the next two years. I believe there is a feeling among all of us to stay the course set by our predecessors.

We also want to continue to maintain high standards and have dedicated ourselves to preserving the fine record and memories of this great organization. We can do this by building a permanent memorial. This was discussed in Dayton as reported in the Reunion '90 Chairman's Report.

According to our By-laws your membership dues for '91-'92 should be paid not later than 31 January 1991. Please take care of this promptly and save Bill McKinstry, our Secretary-Treasurer, a lot of time and effort in keeping track of our membership.

FACT OR FICTION?

Early in '44, the first Aussie AF units returned from Africa to join in the SWPA effort--a great day for the natives, and papers hailed the intrepid airmen with front page photos of a Lancaster flying under Sidney Bay bridge.

Sidney was a rest area for B-25 crews who would fly their own planes on leave. The next day three 25s took off to return to combat--and in a normal, tight strafing formation, passed under the same bridge, waggled wings in farewell and headed north.

Landing at Brisbane to refuel, a cadre of brass greeted them on the ramp and really chewed them out for safety violations and damage to international relations. Asked to suggest appropriate discipline, the ranking offending officer responded, "Sir, I respectfully recommend everyone involved be immediately sent to combat"--it was so ordered!

---Fact or Fiction? Anyone confirm?---

MY FAREWELL MESSAGE

Jack D. Johnson

Rather than use up a lot of space telling you members what a great bunch you really are (you already know that), I'd like to pay tribute to

AL BARBOUR, who served as our Secretary-Treasurer--a wonderful job, Al.

BOB HUNTER, the driving force in selecting-Dayton for Reunion '90

AL WEST--TOM KIRBY--GERRY CARPENTER and to CLIFF SOUTHERN--CHARLES BENBOW who all served so well as Squadron Representatives.

LEW PAVEL, our Editor--may you have a long life, Lew; we need you.

MARY and KAY who collated, folded, stuffed, addressed, stamped and sorted the Newsletter envelopes.

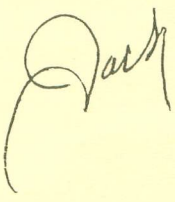
And to ALL THE MEMBERS who took the time to send in stories for "The Sun Setters". Keep- up the good work!

May all you veterans of the 38th Bomb Group have long and wonderful lives ahead of you, and join me in the 38TH BOMB GROUP REUNION PRAYER

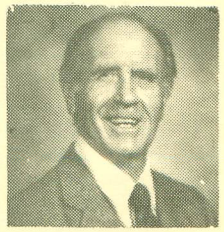
"DEAR LORD:

We ask You to watch over and bless this special group of men gathered here today, brought together from the four corners of this nation. We ask You to hold close to Your breast those young men of the 38th Group who never lived to enjoy the sweetness of life by hearing the laughter and cries of their children or to hold a grandchild in their arms. May Your perpetual light shine upon them forever. They will always live in our love and in our hearts and minds. We ask as we grow older and our ranks grow thinner that You bless and unite closer these very special men of the 38th brought together by their love for a noisy old flying machine called a B-25".

...Always a friend,



JACK D. JOHNSON



SEE YOU IN SAN ANTONIO IN 1992!

REUNION '90 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Bob Lamb

Reunion '90 was a success in every way! With 438 attending (238 members), it is believed to be the largest ever. We added 55 members, mostly new (3 from Dayton area) but also some returning strays. Of the 55, 26 attended Reunion '90. Publicity in newspapers, verterans publications and other magazines helped.

We received 79 responses to a survey given to attending members, data to be used to guide Ish Johnson and his Reunion '92 committee. Bob Hocstedler (405th), Hills, IA, won a draw prize for having submitted his survey before the deadline.

Special thanks to Aub Sweezey (823rd) for obtaining the B-25 "Georgia Girl" for reunion weekend. Owner Randal Porter generously provided many of us an opportunity to fly in his bird, making several passes over the Air Force Museum's Memorial Park as a panoramic photo was taken in front of the 5th Air Force Memorial Friday morning. President Jack Johnson presented two of Steve Ferguson's paintings to Col. (ret.) Dick Uppstrom, Air Force Museum Director, during our Friday visit. "Ordeal at Ormoc" and "Alcohol Busters of Formosa" were subsidized by the 822nd and 823rd Squadrons and will hang permanently in the Museum.

Saturday afternoon 5 or 6 flights, 8 to 10 passengers each, were made form Green County Airport. Some wives and guests also received a flight in the 1945 B-25J with its original markings, a Norden Bombsight and several machine guns. An aviation gas fund has been established to try to bring "Georgia Girl" to San Antonio in '92.

Gene Huston's 12 piece band, "The Friday Nighters", played for 405 banquet quests with his music of the 30's and 40's adding much to the evening.

We regret only half the members attending the banquet opted to have portraits taken for our Memory Book which will hence not be as completed as hoped.

The officers and squadron representatives unanimously approved use of the surplus funds to establish a memorial in the Air Force Museum's Memory park. Work is proceeding to make this a reality as soon as possible.

YOUR 1991-92 ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

President.....**Isham (Ish) M. Johnson**
11018 Whispering Wind, San Antonio, TX 78230
Vice President.....**Sidney Sampson**
1011 S. Congress, Austin, TX 78704
Secretary/Treasurer....**William J. McKinstry**
473 Evergreen Drive, Tonawanda, NY 14150
71st Sqdn. Rep.....**Eugene E. Benson**
714 Grant Avenue, North Mankato, MN 56001
71st Sqdn. Rep.....**Robert W. Blair**
1280 Elm Street, Denver, CO 80220
405th Sqdn. Rep.....**Robert P. Fuqua**
7101 Tilton Court, Fayetteville, NC 28314
405th Sqdn. Rep.....**Ted Rich**
17 Elsinor, Lincolnshire, IL 60069
822nd Sqdn. Rep.....**Grant Nelson**
Box 696, Ferndale, WA 98248
822nd Sqdn. Rep.....**James B. Thoren**
8110 S. Possession Rd., Clinton, WA 98236
822nd Sqdn. Rep.....**Jack C. Wallace**
3191 Castlerock Rd., Oklahoma City, OK 73120
823rd Sqdn. Rep.....**William E. Hanrahan**
7580 Parker Drive, Mentor, OH 44060
823rd Sqdn. Rep.....**Dale W. Howieson**
4025 Webb Rd., Ravenna, OH 44266
Hdq. Rep.....**Thomas D. Kirby**
P.O. Box 416, Simi Valley, Ca 93062
Editor "The Sun Setters"....**E.L. (Lew) Pavel**
P.O. Box 915204, Longwood, FL 32791

VA - TRACER OF LOST BUDDIES

Interested in tracing the whereabouts of a long lost WWII buddy? A book on the subject was not available to everyone at Reunion '90 so Bob Lamb (823rd) decided to share his experience in locating his radio operator, Bob Schelin. "Unfortunately, I learned he died in March, 1985, but at least the search was over."

"The first step, write a letter to the person being sought and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Put only his name as the address on the enclosed envelope and his serial number if you have it. (The Veterans Administration will add his current address.)

"Address a larger envelope--

To Whom It May Concern
Veterans Assistance Service (027)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20420

and enclose your original letter with a note to Veterans Assistancce Service (027) explaining why you want to reach your buddy. Include his last known address if you have it, and ask for their help. The V.A. will forward your letter to him--but it will be up to him to contact you, thus protecting his right of privacy while opening a potential line of communication.

"Practically all veterans kept some National Service Life Insurance, the V.A.'s most common avenue for tracing. They will acknowledge your letter if they can't locate him or if he is deceased. Good Luck!"

JUST A REMINDER

DUES ARE DUE!

Your biennial dues of $20 for the 38th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION (WWII) are due by January 31, 1991.

Please mail check or money order to

WILLIAM J. MCKINSTRY
Secretary/Treasurer
473 Evergreen Drive
Tonawanda, New York 14150

"AS I REMEMBER THE B-25 AND PAPPY GUNN"

Second Installment--R.L. Grover, 405

As we were filing a clearance to return to our station, Col. Gunn walked into Operations and asked for the crew of the 38th Bomb Group B-25 parked nearest to Operations and due to leave that day. We identified it as our aircraft and Col. Gunn stated in no uncertain terms he expected that airplane, 2500 pounds of gun mounts. 12 mechanics from the 38th BG, their baggage, tool kits AND us to be off his base before noon. We protested the airplane could not hold all that stuff, but Gunn ignored our comments, and Base Operations personnel assured us "What Col. Gunn wants, Col. Gunn gits"--and we had better "git".

With a frantic effort, transportation was found for 10 mechanics and their baggage on a C-47. The rest of the material and our crew had to fit into that B-25. When the last tool box was squeezed on board, the tail of the aircraft started down as the nose wheel lifted from the parking ramp. The crew was certain the plane could not get off the ground with that load, particularly since because of runway repair the last 1,000 feet was unavailable. We were again reminded everything HAD to go and that "Pappy" often flew with a tail heavy aircraft--just loaded the back end while engines were running which kept the tail from going down. We were also informed EVERYONE used the shortened runway with heavily laden aircraft, and as we had a wind in our favor, no problem!

As I taxied out for take-off, the airplane seemed heavy, the runway extemely short and my position in life most perilous. On the bright side, here was a chance to emulate Jimmy Doolittle's aircraft carrier takeoff. With full trottle, flaps up and cowl flap cracked open a little, I released the brakes for a "Tokyo Raid take-off"--but we didn't fly off the runway as expected--we just rolled along. I called for flaps as we approached the break in the runway and pulled the airplane into the air to avoid the broken spot; however, the plane settled back down on the runway and it took the last 1,000 feet to get airborne again and we slowly gained altitude. At Pappy Gunn's insistance, we pulled a "hot pilot" stunt and had lived through it.

Stories about Gunn were legion. He liked to work on airplanes, often as boss mechanic on a repair or modification job. Having broken his right little finger, he had it set at the hospital with a splint. The splint got in the way as he worked on an engine, so he removed it. The finger healed crooked and bothered Gunn's holding the throttle of an airplane or a wrench or putting his hand in his pocket. He had the finger rebroke and reset, again with a splint--and again it proved so troublesome, he removed it. Back at the hospital he asked that the finger be removed. The staff agreed to fix the finger but would not amputate, whereupon Gunn reportedly cut it off with a pocket knife and had the hospital tidy up. (Legend?--perhaps--but the finger WAS missing.)

(To be continued in future issue.)

BALIKPAPEN REPRISE

Al Barbour piloted one of the 823rd Squadron's B-25s on the Balikpapen strike described by John Trease in his article on "Grumpy" in the May column.

The mission was flown 6/29/45. There were so many air units hitting Balikpapen that day that a Navy destroyer was assigned to act as command post/bombing coordinator. Unfortunately, the communications were abominable and as our 25s continued to circle without getting any resonse to repeated requests for permission to carry out their bomb run, the group leader grew increasingly concerned about their dwindling fuel supplies. (they were 5 hours into the mission and had another 5 hours ahead of them for the flight back.) Finally a decision was reluctantly reached to make the run without an official go-ahead from the boat and to get back to Palawan before they all had to ditch.

As the B-25s moved into attack formation and began their low level pass over the target, the crews were surprised to see bomb craters opening up AHEAD of them. As Trease stated, a B-24 group had chosen that moment to make a high level runover the same area and Grumpy was crippled by a B-24 bomb blast. The plane augered in just offshore, fatally injuring the crew members in the forward end of the plane--Clarence Kowalski (P), Joe Rapaach (CP), Albert Conradi (N) and Rollie Heskett (Engr-Gun). However, the radio operator and tail gunner in the rear end survived.

Can any of our readers identify these two lucky survivors and tell us what happened to them after their rescue?

AND ANOTHER VERSION

provided by James K. Hailey (823rd), of Fort Worth, TX:

"We took off from Porto Princes, Palawan Island, Philippines, 6/29/45, and as we approached the target, we noted the railroad tracks to our left paralleling the warehouses. Suddenly the warehouses started exploding from left to right, one immediately after the other. I wondered how the buildings could be exploding so even. Smoke and debris was higher than we were.

"I looked down and saw Kowalski's aircraft below me with a gaping hole about two feet in diameter between #1 engine and the fuselage. I had a chance to look up and saw six B-24's at 10 or 12,000 feet with bomb bay doors open. It was the 90th Bomb Group--they had toggled their bombs through us. Kowalski must have been hit by one of their bombs. I heard later the back end crew (two gunners) were saved. Kowalski, along with the front end crew, was lost with the aircraft."

REUNION CHAIRMAN BOB LAMB

relaxing after two years of hard work planning for and staging the very successful 1990 reunion of the 38th Bomb Group (WWII) in Dayton, Ohio, September 13-16, while his grass in Kettering kept growing.

THE EDITOR SPEAKS

The most interesting part of reunions is re-living the past, sharing memories with others who were entangled in the same traumatic, dramatic period. My charge is to widen the audience for these experiences hrough "The Sun Setter". There was a wealth of material at Dayton shared by too few people that we would like to pass along.

We don't buy excuses like "it wasn't that important", "I can't write", "nobody's interested", "I'm not sure it was true". Look, fellas, let others write histories--we're interested in memories (fact or fiction), vignettes, unusual incidents, amusing experiences, tough duty. No writing talent?--that's our worry. Don't type?--we interpret hand printing and writing--just send us the basics INCLUDING squadron, time period, location (to early New Guinea types, "Dugapan" or "Tarloc" don't mean much, particularly when exhaustive searches of my excellent World Atlas come a cropper).

Deadlines are 4/1 for May, 8/1 for September, 12/1 for January--but send material any time. If it's not in the next issue, we ran out of space, had too many items from your squadron, had a like story in the preceding issue, or had too much material (very rare!). It will generally appear in the next issue.

UNSEEN ATTACKER

According to Dale Howieson, Ravenna, OH, in 1944 the 823rd squadron used a small rock island jutting from the sea a few miles from the mouth of Markham Valley, NG, for occasional target practice. Nothing grew or lived on the 100 foot stone and we had used it on numerous occasions without incident. Flying a low approach to the rock, we'd fire the 50 cal. guns at it, pull up, fly a rectangular pattern back, and repeat the procedure--strictly routine!!

On this occasion, however, after firing and pulling up, we all distinctly heard what sounded like a handful of gravel hitting the side of the plane. Puzzled, we checked everything we could but found nothing wrong with the plane nor did we see anyone in the area, so we began our second run.

Altitude and angle of attack were identical to our first run, and again we fired and pulled up. Again the same "gravelly" sound was clearly heard. We were still uncertain about the noise when a crew member came forward to announce someone was shooting at us! We began to prepare for action and scanned the area, but seeing nothing we decided to end practice and return to Nadzab, our home field.

After landing, the ground crew called us to the rear of our plane to see dozens of holes in the aft of the fuselage and in the stabilizer. The holes were irregular in size and shape, and after a great deal of speculation, we concluded they were the results of the "gravelly" sound we had heard, and, more importantly, were caused by our own ammo! We had unintentionally been trying to shoot ourselves down!

We continued to use the island for target practice, but never again did we use that combination of speed and angle. The area was hostile enough without giving the Japs any help.

MY LAST MISSION

(This combat mission of a 4-ship element was led by Larry Kienle, the last remaining pilot of the original cadre of the 823rd Squadron, formed in Charters Towers 10/29/44.)

Allied ground forces had successfully made a beachhead on Leyte Island on October 19, capturig Tacloban Village Air Strip. Based on Morotai Island, the 38th BG strike this day was to support the Tacloban beachhead by neutralizing Japanese fighter strips on Mindano an Cebu Islands. The 823rd was to bomb and strafe the strip at Cebu City.

As we approached from due south, our low level attack was met with ack-ack, small arms fire and 3 Zero fighters, severely damaging the B-25 on my right wing and wounding my top turret gunner. Coming off target, my wing man ditched in the harbor and the crew crawled out on the wing. Our 3 remaining ships circled them once as my radio operator called in PBY rescue. As we left the harbor, the Jap fighters strafed the downed crew members off the wing.

With my gunner badly wounded, I decided to fly into Tacloban for medical assistance, and advised one wing man to return to Morotai. The other aircraft stayed with us. As we approached Tacloban at low level, we popped over a range of hills and our own trigger happy ack-ack shot down my last wing man.

I made a straight in approach to Tacloban, a metal strip, pulled off and bogged down in the sand. A radio-equipped Jeep pulled up and out jumped a rather small officer wearing a fatigue jacket, who immediately started chewing on me for landing on his fighter strip. (We were the first B-25 to land there.) I informed him of our wounded gunner, David Sheehan. He said, "We'll take the wounded man and you get that B-25 out of here". I said, "Sir, my ship's bogged down." He pointed out a nearby truck full of shovels an said, "Dig your own way out."

About that time a wave of Kamakazi hit the ships in the harbor--what sight with flack bursts covering the sky and P-38's and P-47's mixing it up with the Nips. That air battle in Leyte Gulf was the most spectacular military engagement I ever saw. There were about 30 ships in the harbor. The Jap aircraft were coming in from every direction with the P-38's and P-47's and Navy fighters diving down through flack. I watched this action for about 30 minutes while we dug out our B-25. It was the most courageous thing I ever saw.

After we dug three ditches for our wheels, we fired up and reached home at dusk. When we left the ship, my radio man asked, "Why did you say 'Sir' to the Jeep driver in the fatigue jacket?" Having met the man before at a ceremony in Port Moresby, I told my radio man "That 'Sir' was for General George Kenney."

The wing man shot down outside of Tacloban bellied into the swamp and walked to Tacloban. The PBY Catalina we called in was shot down by Jap Zero fighters when

(continued on next column)

REUNION MEMORABILIA AVAILABLE

While problems did occur with caps and shirts and delays in receiving the video, a limited inventory of reunion souvenirs is available on a first come-first served basis.

OLD FASHIONED GLASSES (11 oz.) with etched group isignia (screaming eagle)...$2 each; S/H (shipping and handling) $2 for one, $1.25 each add'l.

GLASS BUD VASES (10") with same design...$8 each; S/H $3 for one, $1.25 each add'l.

JACKETS with gripper snap closures, silver-grey color, B-25 on back, screaming eagle insignia over heart-- M size only...$29 each; S/H $3 for one, $2 each add'l.

T-SHIRTS with B-25 on front, group insignia with all five squadrons on back--XL, L, M & S $10 each; S/H $2 for one, $1 each add'l.

"Some of you used the post card survey to order items if you did not plan to attend. If still interested, please reorder along with your check payable to '38th Bomb Group Association (WWII)', to me at 2433 Glenheath Dr., Kettering, OH 45440. We should be able to fill your order within two or three weeks or refund your money.".
Bob Lamb, Chairman.

Negotiations Are Underway For
SAN ANTONIO - REUNION '92
Plan To Be There!

DEDICATION SPEECH

At the dedication of the 823rd and 822nd Squadron Paintings to the Air Force Museum of September 14, 1990, Jack D. Johnson, President of the 38th Bomb Group Assocation (WWII) delivered the following acknowledgement:

"This has to be a proud day for all veterans of the 38th Bomb Group, 5th Air Force WWII, as we gather to dedicate these paintings to the Air Force Museum. Regardless of what Squadron or what year or time period we were with the 38th, we can all take great pride in this day. We all served at different times and different places--Australia, New Guinea, Biak, Moroti in the Halmaheras, Leyte, Luzon and Lingayen Gulf, Palawan. Okinawa and finally Fukuoka, Japan. We each bring with us today memories from that time so long ago--memories of a time when we felt immortal and tomorrow seemed a long forever away. This, now is our tomorrow and our attempt to show generations we were here--we served and as we grew older we were tremendously proud of the fight we put up for our country. This is the start of the legacy we leave behind as we present to the United States Air Force Museum these paintings of the 38th Bomb Group in action."

My Last Mission (con't)

taking off from a secret location on the Mindano Island coast. The crew taxied the PBY back to shore, spent the night repairing damage, got her airborne the next day and flew back to base on Morotai Island.

The only personnel I can remember on this mission were Fred McMahon, navigator, Robert Gemmer, pilot of the ditched B-25, and David Sheehan, my gunner, who died from wounds.

HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON

Tom Kirby
Representative

Reunion '90 in Dayton was really a great fun – time – – the Committee did an outstanding job. I was personally elated to see Charles Kostonbauder (my old tent buddy) and Dick Hoffman, both of Group Intelligence, and to make several new friends – – that's what it's all about!

Congratulations to M/Sgt Albert Machiajewski (gunner) who was finally awarded his Silver Star for downing a Zero over Lae, NG, 10/24/42, while on a lone "milk run" reconnaissance flight. It was ceremonially presented by Tac Air Group CO Col. Jonieg at the Greater Pittsburgh Int'l Airport, closest location to Al's home on 11/2/90.

A reminder to Reunion attendees who promised to send special orders with names and command identities to help Larry Hickey finalize chronology of the 38th 11/41 – 8/42. Now working around that period, he needs that material NOW.

Were you aware two 38th BG'ers were instrumental in developing code designations of Japanese aircraft? S/Sgt Francis Williams and Cpl Joseph Gratton, initially assigned to 38th BG HQ at Jackson AFB, were reassigned to the newly formed Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit upon arrival at Ballarat, Australia. There was then much confusion in identifying SWPA Japanese aircraft--all single – engine fighters were Zeroes; anything else was a "Mitsubishi" or "Nakajima". The increasing variety of aircraft by type and capability was needed to assist in developing combat tactics. Fran suggested using easily – remembered first names--male for fighters and float planes, female for bombers, reconnaissance, and flying boats; names beginning with "T" were assigned to transport planes with trainers named after trees and gliders after birds. With support of General MacArthur and Washington approval, the "MacArthur Southwest Pacific Code Name System" was initiated with 50 names. By '42, the system was adopted by all US Army and Navy Air Forces, and subsequently the British Air Ministry gave its approval. (Members may recall Williams as cartoonist for the "Bliss Blitz" issued to troops aboard the USS Bliss en route to Australia.)

71ST SQUADRON

Eugene Benson
Robert W. Blair
Representatives

THE FLYING CHICKEN

Ted Broughton, Palentine, TX, believes many serving with the 71st Sqdn from Hollandia, NG, to the Philippines will remember "Daisy Mae", the flying chicken.

Ted was invited to dinner by a Malay missionary, and later visited the family to play Santa Claus to the kids, gave the missionary a flashlight and his wife a pair of scissors. "They were very pleased, and gave me a full-grown hen".

"I had all intentions of cooking her but not having the proper equipment, decided to fatten her. The very next day she laid an egg. I was so thrilled, I fed her again and definitely called off the execution though she didn't lay the next day. The folowing day we were moving up, so it was her chance to go for an airplane ride. So I made her a box, made sure she got plenty of air and fed her and watered her well before takeoff.

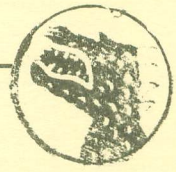
"When we landed the pilot asked, "How's the chicken?" I took a look; lo an behold, she had laid another egg while flying at several thousand feet, traveling several miles a minute. I could hardly believe it."

"That's what I call patriotism--regardless of hardships and abnormal circumstances, she carried on her work as if nothing had happened--so I housed her in GI tent with modern conveniences. I think she's the only hen that ever laid an egg in the air--if not, I'll bet she's the only hen that has laid an egg while flying in the combat zone."

Ted informs that Daisy Mae advanced rapidly in rank--she got a promotion with every egg and had worked herself up to 4-star general, but then flew into her nest and broke two eggs. Broughton 'busted" her back to private--but she came back cackling--and laying!

405TH SQUADRON

Robert F. Fugua
Ted Rich
Representatives



Most submissions cover a single memorable event, but Ray Lewman, Houston, TX, seemed to thrive on problems.

"My first mission was over Manokawri, NG, with Red Davis as pilot. as we approached I could see gun fire off to the right which hit our right engine. Davis immediately headed for Biak where the engineers building a strip moved off the runway long enough for us to land.

"On my second mission bomb shrapnel and intense ground fire resulted in over 100 holes in the plane.

'My third mission was over Halmhera air field. We were behind the lead plane and were caught in the blast of its 100 lb. bombs. Several of the crew were slightly wounded but we got off the target with everything operating. That was my last co-pilot mission.

"My fourth mission I was so damn nervous I do not recall how we got off the ground and back again. We ran into weather and could not get to the target. However, after that I settled down and flew many more missions, all but two of which were uneventful.

"In a 9-plane abreast formation over Kendari, the plane on my right was crowded on top of us. I looked up and judged he was only 5 feet above us and ahead was a row of tall trees. Our only option was to go through the trees, which we did without any problem except for limbs hanging all over the plane when we returned.

"My last mission we went down the dirt runway of an air field in the Philippines just after a rain and, when firing the 50's, mud splattered on the windshield. I did see the tall trees ahead and pulled up as fast as I could, but after I cleared them, I couldn't get any of the crew to climb out and clean the windshield. Luckily, we flew through a rain squall which did it for us."

"REMEMBER THE ALAMO" Reunion '92, San Antonio, TX

822ND SQUADRON

Grant W. Nelson
James B. Thoren
Jack C. Wallace
Representative

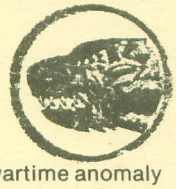
G.W. Nelson reports as his most exciting experience, a takeoff from a converted fighter strip right on the beach at Lyngayen Gulf, PI, to make a long trip to take out a refinery on Formosa.

"We were lined up for take off, fourth to go, and, as co-pilot I dropped 20 degrees of flaps. As our turn approached, Milt Costello reved up the engines as we both stood on the brakes. The plane ahead of was 1/4 the way down the strip when we let her go. We were rocketing down the runway when the air was suddenly filled with red flares from the tower. The plane ahead of us had blown a right main tire. As it slewed around the runway, brakes smoking, we came down on him like a freight train. Going too fast to hit the brakes, Milt was trying to get the nosewheel up and I was holding the throttles to the fire wall with one hand, ready to pick up the wheels with the other. I knew we were going to hit the other plane so I threw down full flaps. We rose up over the troubled plane like an elevator thanks to the increased lift, bounced down the other side of the plane and staggered into the air almost completely stalled out. I flipped up the wheels to give us a little more speed and helped Milt keep the control column foward to compensate for the action of the flaps. It seemed like an eternity before I could milk up the flaps and we could start to join the group. I looked back at navigator N.J. O'Brien who was white as a sheet but still twirling three coins as he wiped the sweat from his brow. We continued the mission, too busy to think about what had happened.

"Not until we returned, were debriefed and had our shot of whiskey from Doc Sawyer did the full impact hit me. I kept thinking if it hadn't been for our crew chief. Sergeant Evans, who had those engines fine-tuned, we would all have been history."

823RD SQUADRON

William Hanrahan
Dale W. Howieson
Representatives



A humorous but serious wartime anomaly occured in 2/44. The 38th Group with fighter cover departed Port Moresby via the Markham River Valley to destroy enemy aircraft at Wewak. The Japs had the same end in mind with their bombers and fighters headed for Port Moresby. The two formations passed each other on opposite sides of the Valley. In the ensuing melee with both formations making 180 degree turns, aircraft were all over the sky before both groups could reform to return to their respective bases. Witnesses Dale Howieson and Sam Zorich stated fighter covers of both sides adhered to their orders to protect their own bombers; as a result not a bomb was dropped nor a shot fired.

John Trease reports conversations at Dayton re a possible reunion of La Junta,. CO, Army Air Field veterans prompted an inquiry to the Chamber there. He notes a reunion of those who were stationed or trained there is planned for 9/11-23/92, marked the 50th anniversary of the base.